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Title	Making a difference: A research report on student volunteering in UCC
Authors	Powell, Fred;Scanlon, Margaret;Galvin, Martin
Publication date	2018-11-01
Original Citation	Powell, F., Scanlon, M. and Galvin, M. (2018) Making a difference: A research report on student volunteering in UCC. Cork: University College Cork.
Type of publication	Report
Link to publisher's version	https://www.ucc.ie/en/engagement/
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Download date	2026-11-06 04:15:36
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/7182

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



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MAKING A **DIFFERENCE**

A Research Report on Student Volunteering in UCC

'Social gifts and actions carrying no explicit or implicit individual right to a return gift or action are forms of "creative altruism"... they are creative in the sense that the self is realised with the help of anonymous others'. (Richard Titmuss, 1970)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research report is an initiative of the University College Cork Civic and Community Engagement Committee, with support from Dr Rónán Ó'Dubhghaill Vice-President for External Relations.

The research team would like to thank the many students who participated in the online survey, focus groups and interviews. We would like to especially thank Martin Scally (former President of the Students Union), Eleanor Donoghue and Mary McNulty (UCC Career Services) for their help in administering the online survey. Thanks also to Olive Byrne and Paul Geeleher (UCC Plus), Dave Carey (PASS), Michelle Whyte and James Boyle (UCC Societies), and Alan Hayes (Students Union President) for their assistance. Thanks also are extended to Kate Morris and Emma Kavanagh (Campus Engage) for their valuable insights on student volunteering in Ireland. We are also grateful to Professor Ronnie Munck for providing insights on an earlier DCU study on volunteering, which informed the development of the student survey.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1.1.Background

1.2.Aims of the Research

1.3.Research Methodology



3.1. Volunteering Roles

3.2. Areas in Which Students Volunteer

3.3. Why Are Some Areas of Volunteering More/Less Popular than Others?

3.4. Organisations and Initiatives That Benefit from Student Volunteering





REFERENCES

APPENDIX



2.1.Rates of Participation in Volunteering

2.2.Pathways into Volunteering

2.3. Sources of Information on Volunteering

2.4.Patterns of Volunteering and Time Commitment



4.1. Motivations for Volunteering

4.2. Benefits of Volunteering

4.3. Challenging Aspects of Volunteering

4.4. Levels of Satisfaction with Volunteering Experience

4.5. Spotlight on Volunteering



6.1. Encouraging Volunteering

6.2. Volunteering after Leaving College



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland are still at an early stage in recognising student volunteering and student-led engagement activities. Not surprisingly then, research on student volunteering, and on the potential benefits for communities, HEIs and young people themselves, is limited in the Irish context. In this report, we seek to contribute to this under-researched field of educational and social research. Based on a survey of over 2,000 students at University College Cork (UCC), the report represents one of the most comprehensive studies of student volunteering in Ireland to date.

The importance of community engagement, including volunteering, has been highlighted in a series of policy reports, including ***The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*** (2011), which identifies engagement as one of the three core roles of higher education, alongside teaching and research. Objective 2 of the ***Higher Education System Performance Framework*** requires of institutions that a proportion of students are involved in volunteering. Indeed, over 50% of students in higher education in Ireland have done, are doing, or plan on doing volunteer work, according to The Irish Survey of Student Engagement 2016.

As a signatory of Ireland's Campus Engage Charter since 2014, UCC has committed to a view that HEIs should have 'open engagement with their community and wider society and that this should infuse every aspect of their mission' (Campus Engage, 2014). This research project, initiated by the UCC Civic and Community Engagement Committee, advances this agenda by deepening our understanding of student volunteering across access, pathways, motivation, patterns and barriers and the impact of volunteering. It highlights, from a student perspective, what HEIs can do to further promote volunteering. That so many students took the time to respond to the survey in UCC warrants deep consideration of their views and a meaningful response.

Key findings of the research on student volunteering in UCC:



46% of the **2,038** students surveyed say they have volunteered in the previous six months.

Base =2038



58% of these students report that they volunteer on an 'ongoing basis', while **37%** volunteered for 'occasional or one-off events', such as fundraising or organising an event.

Over the previous month, **21%** volunteered for 1-3 hours and **36%** between for 4-9 hours. Almost one in ten respondents volunteered for over 21 hours.

Word-of-mouth' is the primary way students find out about volunteering opportunities.

Students are engaged directly with people across youth work **(40%)**, sports/exercise/ outdoor activities **(29%)** and tutoring/ supporting learning **(22%)**.

Comparatively few students are involved in conservation and environmental causes **(7%)** or animal welfare **(6%)**.

Most students became involved in volunteering ***before*** they came to UCC. Prior involvement appears to cultivate a commitment to volunteering that continues into third-level education.

Altruistic motivations are commonly cited as the reason to volunteer **(85%)** – the desire 'to give something back' and 'to help others'.

Time commitment is the main challenge to participation in volunteering. Academic work, part-time jobs and, in some cases, a lengthy commute to and from college make volunteering challenging and can curtail participation.

Offering 'more one-off volunteering opportunities' and increasing 'publicity and awareness of volunteering' are the most important means by which the university can encourage volunteering.

The majority **(63%)** were 'very satisfied' with their experience, and one third were 'somewhat satisfied'. Only **1%** of respondents said that they were dissatisfied.

The evidence suggests that volunteering is deeply valued by our students. They report significant social and personal development gains accrued from volunteering, a sense of 'making a difference to others', of being part of the community, meeting new people and making new friends, all positively impacting their own lives. It is also valued as a means of career development, through gaining work experience and related skills.

However, the social value contributed by student volunteers, evidenced by the data here, has been largely underestimated and often goes unrecognised. There is a need to publicise and build awareness of student volunteering locally and nationally. Students see a strong role for HEIs in encouraging volunteering. However it is vital to underpin this with a solid rationale grounded in citizenship and co-production with community. UCC is well poised to build on its very strong culture of student volunteering and to lead, in partnership with the other Irish universities and the Union of Students in Ireland, a national conversation on the importance of student volunteering in nurturing socially aware citizens that will actively contribute to the values and quality of Irish life during the 21st century. The evidence gathered in this research suggests that student volunteers are the cornerstone of higher education community engagement in Ireland, and the future bedrock of civil society.



1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Higher education institutes (HEIs) in Ireland are still at an early stage in recognising student volunteering and student-led engagement activities. Not surprisingly then, research on student volunteering, and on the potential benefits for communities, HEIs and young people themselves, is 'severely limited in the Irish context' (Campus Engage, n.d.). In this report we seek to contribute to this under-researched field of educational and social research. Based on a survey of over 2,000 students at University College Cork (UCC), the report represents the most comprehensive study of student volunteering in Ireland to date.



Over the last few decades, HEIs across the world have embraced civic and community engagement as a strategic priority in order to increase impact and tackle challenges that matter to local communities. In Ireland the potential benefits of community engagement have been highlighted in a series of policy reports, including ***The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*** (2011), which identifies engagement as one of the three core roles of higher education, alongside teaching and research. It calls for a move beyond piecemeal or disparate activity to a comprehensive set of mission-driven interventions to support university civic engagement, including volunteering. The strategy argues that the relationship between the university and the community is particularly important in the context of the promotion and achievement of greater equality in higher education. It calls for greater engagement and partnership between HEIs and community and voluntary groups and sees partnerships, including volunteering, as significant for progressing equality, community development and social innovation.

As a signatory of Ireland's Campus Engage Charter since 2014, UCC has committed to a view that HEIs should have 'open engagement with their community and wider society and that this should infuse every aspect of their mission' (Campus Engage, 2014). Led by the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Charter commits UCC to building 'a campus community imbued with civic culture' and pursuing aspirations to 'open [their] campus to local communities' (Campus Engage, 2014). Indeed, student volunteering is emerging



as an important dimension of HEI community engagement. Over 50% of students in higher education in Ireland have done, are doing, or plan on doing volunteer work, according to ***The Irish Survey of Student Engagement 2016.*** This is encouraged through awards programmes, related measures to credentialise volunteering and the studentvolunteer.ie website, which is a collaborative initiative of Irish HEIs that is directly responding to national policy at a sectoral level. In UCC, 491 students registered with studentvolunteer.ie in the 2017-2018 academic year. Of this, 239 signed up for volunteer opportunities via the system, logging a total of 10,528 volunteer hours.

Previous research suggests that students volunteer for altruistic, social and instrumental reasons. A major survey of student volunteering in the UK, for example, found that the most important reason for volunteering was to help others/the community, followed by a desire to learn new skills, meet personal needs/interests and gain work experience (Holdsworth, 2010). Similarly, research conducted by Dublin City University found that the two main reasons for volunteering were altruism (to help others and give something back to the community) followed by a desire to gain work experience and develop new skills (Garvey ***et al***., 2015). Meeting people and making friends is another important reason for volunteering, though in the studies reviewed here it was ranked after altruistic and instrumental motivations. Research on the potential outcomes of volunteering indicates that it can enhance students' academic development, life skill development and sense of civic responsibility (Astin and Sax, 1998; Brewis ***et al.***, 2010). Importantly, volunteering at university has been found to enhance a student's likelihood of volunteering in the future (Brewis, 2010; Smith ***et al.***, 2010). Volunteering can also play an important role in developing students' community awareness and integration into communities outside the university. In one study, students identified the opportunity 'to burst out of the student "bubble" as one of the most valued aspects of volunteering' (Brewis ***et al.***, 2010: 9; see also Braime and Ruohonen, 2011). However, previous research also shows that students face a number of barriers to volunteering, including lack of time due to academic workload, insufficient information



on volunteering opportunities, not wanting to make a long-term commitment and lack of transport (Garvey ***et al.***, 2015; Brewis ***et al.***, 2010). The rising cost of education, and the need to undertake more paid work, may further reduce the time available to volunteer (Smith ***et al.***, 2010). A key message in many initiatives to increase youth and student volunteering is the development of more flexible volunteering opportunities ***(Ibid.)***.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH 1.2

The research project set out to explore students' experiences of volunteering. We looked in particular at how students find out about volunteering opportunities; patterns of volunteering during term time; the areas in which students volunteer; the motives and benefits associated with volunteering; and the challenges which student volunteers encounter. We also set out to identify barriers to volunteering, as identified by students who had ***not*** volunteered during the previous six months, and what more the university could do to promote volunteering.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research reported here is based on an online survey of UCC students which was administered from March-June 2018, as well as in-depth interviews and focus groups with 11 student volunteers. The survey was the primary research instrument and was designed to provide a broad overview of students' experiences of volunteering, while the qualitative element of the research, although limited, afforded the opportunity for a more in-depth analysis of specific issues, some of which emerged from the survey. Ethical clearance was sought and given via the university's ethics committee, SREC.

1.3.1 ONLINE SURVEY

The research was based principally on an online survey which examined pathways into volunteering, motivations and challenges and the factors which promote or constrain volunteering amongst UCC students. An initial literature review informed the development of the questionnaire, both in terms of sensitising us to relevant subject areas for inquiry and identifying potential questions that have proved successful in previous research into volunteering. The survey was designed to include the perspectives of those who had volunteered over the previous six months (which roughly equated to the beginning of the academic year) and those who had not volunteered during this period. In this way, we hoped to elicit information on students' recent experiences of volunteering, as well as the reasons why some students might choose ***not*** to volunteer. All respondents were required to answer an initial filter question, after which each group (volunteers and non-volunteers) were directed to separate sets of questions. Some questions were common to both groups, including those relating to demographics (gender, age), course information, views on what more the university could do to encourage volunteering and the likelihood that they would volunteer in the future. The questionnaire consisted mainly of 'closed' questions, though a small number of open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their views on volunteering in more detail.

Details on the project and instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, including a definition of what constitutes volunteering, were provided on the first page. After reading this information, students were required to provide their informed consent to participate in the survey (by choosing the 'agree to participate' option) before they could proceed to the main body of the questionnaire. In light of current guidelines on the age at which young people can provide informed consent, only students aged 18 or over were invited to complete the survey.

Prior to launching the survey, we undertook a pilot testing phase to assess the feasibility of the questionnaire. Participants were asked to comment on: the clarity of the instructions and questions, the relevance of the questions asked, the time it took to complete and the layout of the questionnaire and ease of navigation. Feedback from the pilot informed the final version of the questionnaire.

1.3.2 SURVEY DISSEMINATION

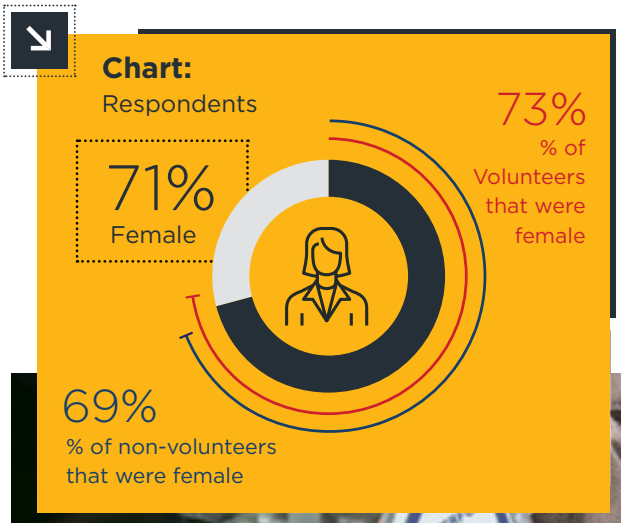
The questionnaire was administered online (using 'SurveyMonkey') from March to June 2018. At the research team's request, the Students' Union forwarded an email to students, informing them of the research and inviting them to complete the questionnaire, which could be accessed through a web link. This initial email was followed by reminders, sent out in late March, April and May. In addition, the online link to the questionnaire was sent to students through UCC Career Services.

In total, 2,626 students accessed the online survey. However, a significant number (583) did not complete a sufficient number of questions to be included in the analysis: in most cases they answered the first question (on whether they had volunteered in the last six months) but did not proceed further. In addition, five students did not provide consent to participate and consequently they were not able to proceed to the main body of the questionnaire. The remaining 2,038 students either completed all

questions or a sufficient number to be counted as valid responses. After the survey was closed, the data was downloaded onto SPSS for analysis. Responses to open-ended questions were coded and analysed thematically.

1.3.3 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Most survey respondents (71%) were female, and women made up the majority of both volunteers (73%) and non-volunteers (69%).



1.3.4 FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

In addition to the online survey, focus groups and interviews were carried out with 11 student volunteers (six male and five female) from the UCC Plus+ Homework Club, the Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS) service and several UCC societies. The findings from the survey informed the development of the topic guide for this qualitative phase of the research. Participants were asked about current and previous volunteering roles, their motivations for volunteering, the benefits and challenges associated with volunteering, their views on why some types of volunteering are more popular than others (as indicated in the survey) and what more the university could do to support student volunteers. Interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.



2.

PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERING



2.1 RATES OF PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEERING

Table 1:
Rates of participation in volunteering



Of the 2,038 students who completed the questionnaire, 46% (931) of respondents had volunteered in the previous six months, while the remaining 54% (n=1,107) had not volunteered during this period. Interestingly, the majority of students with no recent experience of volunteering indicated that they had volunteered at some point in the past. If we look at this in terms of our overall sample, only 9% of respondents said that they had ***never*** volunteered (see Table 1).

In this section, and the following two sections, we will focus on the findings from the 46% of respondents with recent experience of volunteering, before turning to look at the potential barriers to participation identified by the 54% who do not volunteer.

2.2 PATHWAYS INTO VOLUNTEERING

The majority of student volunteers became involved in volunteering ***before*** they came to UCC (Figure 1). Only 21% volunteered for the first time whilst at university. There were variations in relation to gender and age. A smaller percentage of male students (73%) were involved in volunteering prior to coming to UCC, compared with female students (81%). Not surprisingly, students aged 23 and over were more likely to have volunteered before coming to UCC (85%), compared with students under 23 (77%). Responses to a later open-ended question (see section 3) suggest that many students continue to volunteer 'at home', while also taking up new opportunities for volunteering in college.

In the course of the focus groups and interviews, students identified a number of pathways into volunteering, including schools, FE colleges, youth clubs and sports. In some instances, students had progressed from being members of an organisation (e.g. Scouting Ireland, the Irish Red Cross) to a volunteering role. It was noted that Transition Year, in particular, provides young people with opportunities for voluntary activity, but these opportunities are more limited in 5th and 6th years as schools focus on preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination. Nonetheless, some students had been involved in volunteering for much of their adolescence, as the following examples illustrate:

Figure 1:
When did you first get involved in volunteering?



79%
Before I came to UCC

21%
Since I became a student at UCC

Base = 920



"My sister went into Transition Year and she was going for the Gaisce Award, and as part of that you have to do volunteering. My sister, she signed up to do it with the Irish Red Cross. And I was sitting at home and my mom said, 'go on, get off the telly and do it as well'. So I got wrapped up into the Red Cross and I'm in it close to nine years now. I stayed on the whole time, and my sister did as well. When I did my Gaisce Award, when I went into fourth year, I did it with the Red Cross as well. I went all the way from being a little lad who knows nothing about first aid to, I'm an EMT now, which is like a step below a paramedic."

"For me it started a long time ago when I was in Foroige [youth work organisation]. I joined that when I was 12. And every year there were projects to do, we had a list of them. That's where it started for me."

Other students had volunteered periodically, or for one-off events, while in school, before taking up more long-term volunteering opportunities in UCC:

"I kind of started very young as well. Like, when I was in primary school we would do the sponsorship walk once a year. But that would be the class that were doing it, so we did it as a group. It wasn't until Transition Year that you started signing up for things yourself. I volunteered with St Vincent de Paul, I did a couple of bucket collections for them. They get you to do loads of stuff in Transition Year... but after that there's a good bit of a break because everyone's preparing for the Leaving Certificate."

"I volunteered with a rugby summer camp, it was an under-age camp, for a week. It was 'cos I played rugby myself, so it was an inter-club kind of initiative. I loved it, I was teaching little kids how to play rugby. That was the first bit of volunteering that I did before I came to UCC... I was in Junior Cert at the time, I was around 15 or 16."

"I've always done bits and bobs everywhere. But what stands out is, during Transition Year, I volunteered, I went to a church in Bishopstown once a week. It wasn't a service, it was activities that were put on for people with intellectual disabilities. I used to go there and play the games and stuff like that. One of the founders of [our] school was involved in the church and she asked for volunteers. It wasn't a school-run programme but that's where the connection was. But my first proper major involvement [in volunteering] was in UCC. I've done quite a lot of volunteering in different avenues in UCC."

Students' early experiences of voluntary activity – particularly where it was over an extended period – encouraged them to seek out new opportunities for volunteering when they started university:

"I got involved in scouts and I stayed in scouts and that built up my disposition to volunteering. Then when I got up here I didn't want to hang out with the same people from home, I wanted to get out and meet new people and do other things. So that's why I got involved with the society... You get used to doing it [volunteering]."

"From a very young age I liked being involved in things, so by the time I got to university, when there were opportunities to get involved in Peer Support or to join the dance committee, I took them. Like, it all adds up. I think if you have it from a young age, if you are encouraged from a young age, it will really encourage you to keep it going when you are older."

The latter observation is supported by research showing that young people who volunteer while in school are more likely to volunteer later in their lives (see Smith ***et al.***, 2010).

2.3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING

As Figure 2 illustrates, students find out about volunteering opportunities in a variety of ways. Family and friends are amongst the main sources of information, which illustrates the role of 'word-of-mouth' communication and knowing people who are already involved with an organisation or cause. This was reiterated in the comments section, e.g. 'my brother is a scout leader', 'my friend regularly helps at the dog shelter in Mallow and myself and a few other friends decided to join'. Schools are another important source of information, identified by just over 40% of respondents.

Once in college, students found out about volunteering opportunities from a number of sources, primarily through UCC clubs and societies (39%), the Students' Union (14%), the UCC Volunteering Fair (12%) and the UCC Works Award Programme[1] (11%). A relatively small proportion of students identified the website 'studentvolunteer.ie' as a source of information, and most of those who participated in focus groups and interviews had not heard of the site. The Internet and social media were sources of information for over one-quarter of respondents, and were well ahead of 'traditional' media sources such as newspaper and TV advertisements (less than 7%). This may be because students increasingly rely on new media for information, but could also reflect the different ways in which organisations publicise volunteering opportunities.

One in ten respondents indicated that they had found out about volunteering opportunities in other ways (Figure 2), for example, from their employers or lecturers, though membership of a church or through participation in sports or

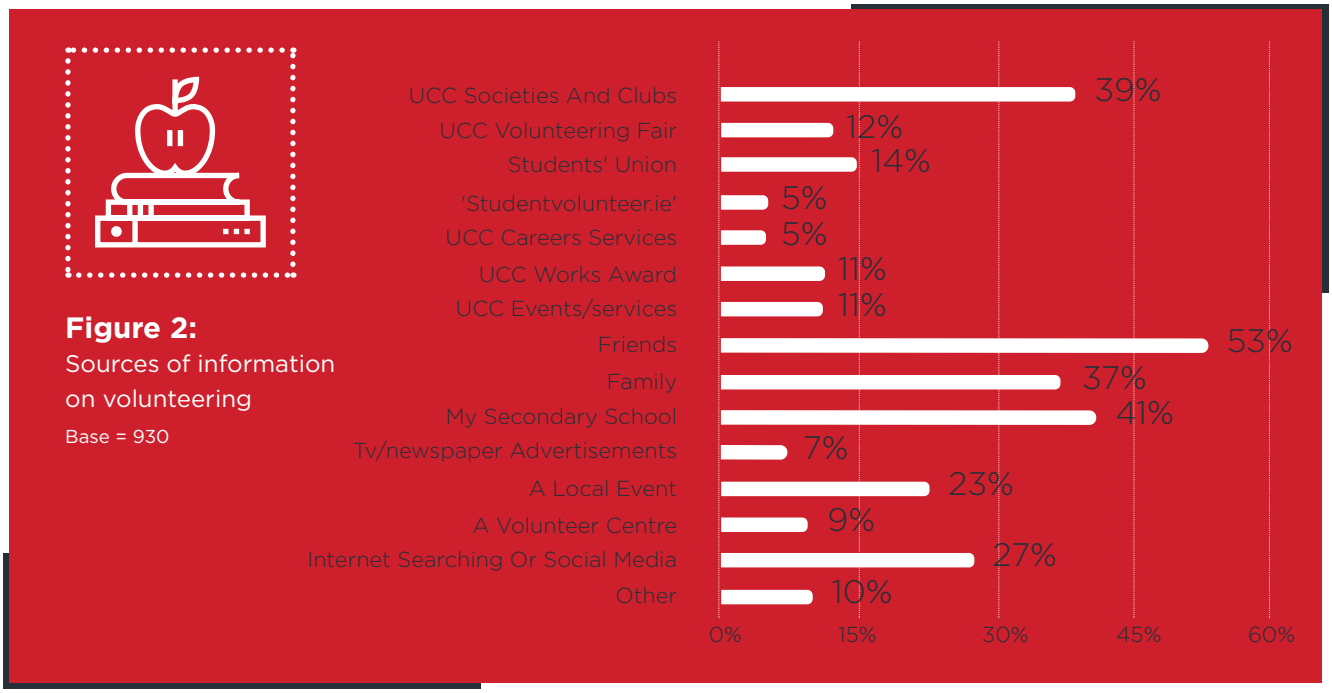


Figure 2:
Sources of information on volunteering
Base = 930

1 The UCC Works Award 'enables students to receive formal recognition for the learning gained from their involvement in extra-curricular activities inside and outside of UCC'. There are four different pathways within the programme, including the Volunteering and Community Engagement Pathway. See https://www.ucc.ie/en/careers/uccworks/ for further details.

youth clubs. Some respondents had progressed from being youth members to volunteering roles (e.g. 'I was a scout, now I'm a scout leader', 'I was a youth member and moved on to adult volunteer', 'through a youth club I was previously involved with'). This highlights the importance of prior involvement in sports and youth clubs in building a future volunteering base. In a few cases participants (mature students) reported that they had become volunteers because their children were members of clubs.

The focus groups and interviews also highlighted the importance of word-of-mouth communication as a source of information and recruitment: for example, several participants volunteered with organisations or initiatives that had been recommended to them by friends, fellow students or lecturers.

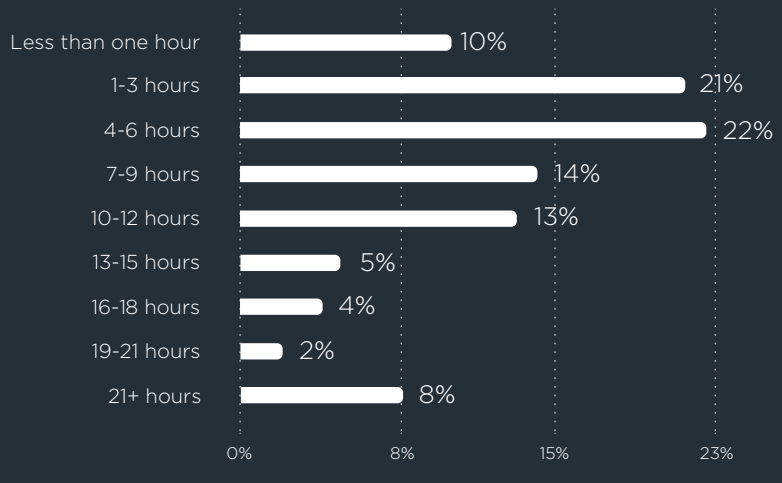
PATTERNS OF VOLUNTEERING AND TIME COMMITMENT 2.4

Students were asked about their patterns of volunteering over the last six months. The majority of respondents (58%) indicated that they volunteer on an 'ongoing basis' while a significant minority (37%) volunteered for 'occasional or one-off events', such as fundraising or organising an event. The remaining 5% of respondents indicated that they were involved in both ongoing and occasional volunteering or that their patterns of volunteering had varied over the six months. In some instances, students reported that they were heavily involved in volunteering over the summer months but that their commitment dropped to occasional events during term time, e.g. 'I volunteer continuously during the summer months and one-off otherwise'.

Participants were also asked to indicate the number of hours they had volunteered over the last month (see Figure 3). Of those who had volunteered during this period, the majority (70%) indicated that they had volunteered between 1 and 12 hours, though almost one in ten respondents volunteered for over 21 hours. The largest single category was 4-6 hours (22%), followed by 1-3 hours (21%) and 7-9 hours (14%).

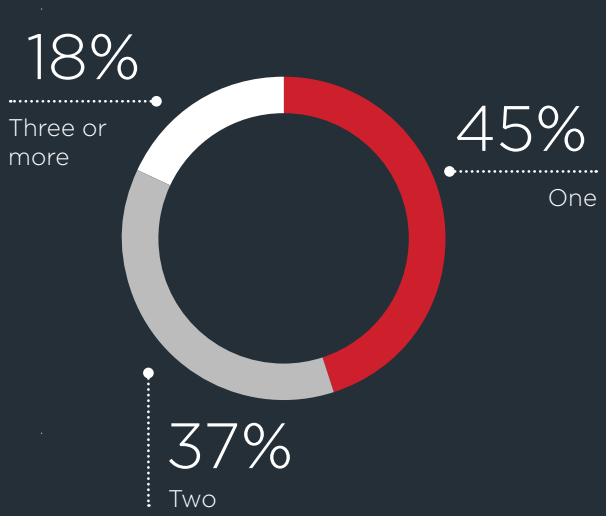
Finally, students were asked how many groups/initiatives they had volunteered with over the last six months (Figure 4). Most participants indicated that they volunteered with one (45%) or two (37%) groups/initiatives, while nearly one-fifth volunteered with three or more. Students' replies to a subsequent open-ended question (on the type of volunteering undertaken) indicates the range of organisations and initiatives that benefit from student volunteering, including youth clubs, sports organisations, charities, credit unions, UCC clubs and societies and others (see section 3, Table 2).

Figure 3:
Number of hours volunteered in last month



Base = 840. 89 respondents indicated that they had not volunteered in the last month and were not included in calculations for this table.

Figure 4:
Number of groups/initiatives volunteered with in the last 6 months



Base = 924



3. TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

The survey findings indicate that students are involved in a wide range of volunteering activities (see Figure 5), the three main categories being: youth work (40%), sports/ exercise/outdoor activities (29%) and tutoring/ supporting learning (22%). Community projects, befriending/mentoring and health-related initiatives are also significant areas of student volunteering. On the other hand, comparatively few student volunteers are involved in animal welfare (6%) and conservation/environmental causes (7%). There are parallels here with an earlier Dublin City University study, which found that conservation/environmental issues was the lowest ranking area of student volunteering (Garvey ***et al***., 2015). This is somewhat surprising, given the increased publicity around environmental issues over the last decade, and the widespread assumption that environmental issues are of particular concern to young people.

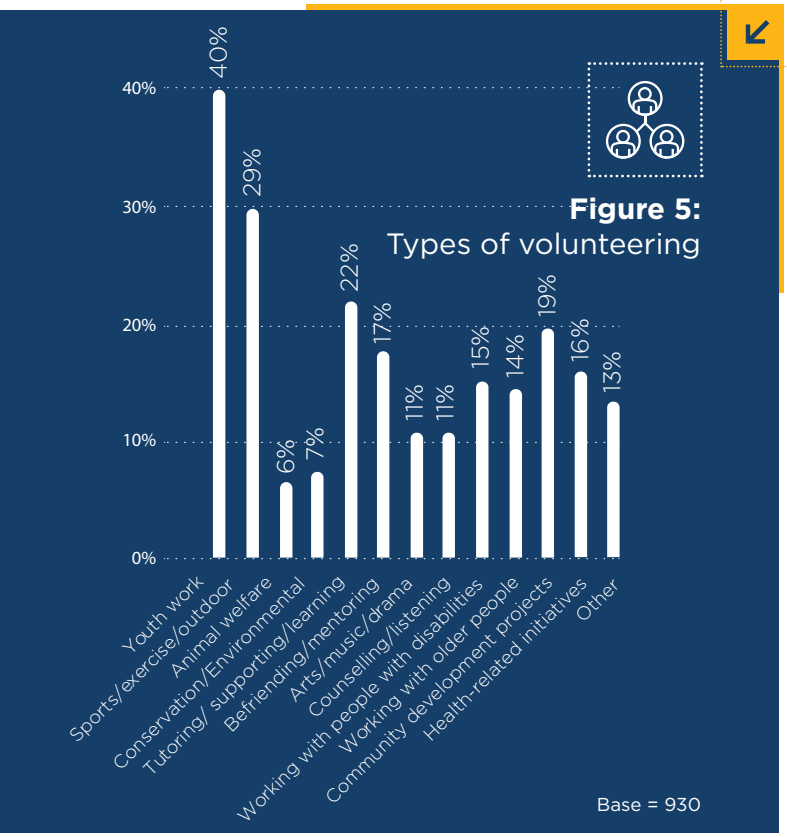


Figure 5: Types of volunteering

VOLUNTEERING ROLES 3.1

In an open-ended question, participants were asked to provide information on the types of volunteering they had undertaken in the last six months. There was a very high response rate (97%, n=905), yielding a wealth of data on the areas in which they volunteer (see section 3.2 below) and the roles they play. The types of work which students undertake can be divided into the following five categories:

- **Working with citizens.** The majority of respondents indicated that they work directly with people, for example coaching local football teams, visiting older people, tutoring children in homework clubs and so on. Responses suggest that, in most cases, this involved working with children and young people, including fellow students. There are clear parallels here with previous studies that indicate that young people are the main beneficiaries of students' voluntary activities (Smith ***et al.***, 2010). However, volunteers also work with older people, people with disabilities (of all ages) and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, e.g. the homeless.
- **Fundraising.** Students are involved in different types of fundraising (street collections, bag-packing at supermarkets, sponsored events, charity shops, etc.) on behalf of charitable organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, Pieta House, the Hope Foundation, Trocaire, the Simon Community and Marymount Hospice. In some cases, students identified a particular cause (e.g. cancer research, support for children with autism) rather than an organisation.
- **Administrative and committee work.** Where students were involved in administrative or committee work, it was often within UCC, for example, chairing a society.
- **Physical work.** For example, involvement in Tidy Towns, working on community gardens, etc.
- **Advocacy/awareness-raising.** Some students volunteer with organisations that have a strong advocacy or awareness-raising role, e.g. Amnesty International, Friends of the Earth and other environmental groups.

Of the different categories listed above, students were primarily involved in: (i) working directly with people and (ii) fundraising. On the other hand, comparatively few students appeared to be involved in advocacy or campaigning work. Students were more likely to work with charitable organisations and youth/sports clubs, than with organisations with a clear advocacy role. Moreover, as noted above, only 7% of students were involved in conservation/environmental issues. We will return to the issue of why certain types of work appear to be more (or less) popular with student volunteers later (see section 3.3).

3.2 AREAS IN WHICH STUDENTS VOLUNTEER

In the following sections, we will look in more detail at the different areas in which students volunteer. These are listed in descending order from the highest ranked to the lowest (as indicated in Figure 5). As noted above, student volunteers can undertake different roles within their chosen area; for example, a student volunteering with a youth work organisation could work directly with children and/or fundraise on behalf of the club.

3.2.1 YOUTH WORK

Students volunteer with a range of youth work organisations, including Scouting Ireland, the Girl Guides, Foroige, the No Name Club, Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service, Youth Work Ireland, Edmund Rice Summer Camps and Clare Youth Action.[2] It was clear from students' comments that volunteering with a youth work organisation often involved ongoing (sometimes weekly) commitment. For example:

"I am a scout leader for my local group in my town. I run the meeting every Friday and make sure all meetings are planned and organised."

Students also described their engagement at annual events, particularly summer camps:

"I am a volunteer leader for a summer camp for disadvantaged children, we fundraise throughout the year to fund the camp which is completely free for the kids."

"I am a volunteer leader of a children's camp for over four years, doing sports, arts and crafts, music, games, etc."

In some cases, students were involved in more than one youth-related activity; for example, volunteering as a scout leader and as a football coach. Furthermore, some had progressed from one form of youth-related volunteering to another. For example: 'I volunteered in a youth centre and I'm currently volunteering with a drug and alcohol youth service'. Although the majority of volunteers appeared to work directly with young people in clubs, camps and centres, a few described being involved at different levels of an organisation:

"I work with local young people in Youth Work Ireland Tipperary and soon hope to get involved in Youth Work Ireland Cork. Through these groups, I am also on the Board of Directors of Youth Work Ireland nationally, through which I get involved in many national and international youth events."

For some students, becoming a youth work volunteer represented a continuation from when they had been members themselves: 'I volunteer with a local youth group that I had previously been a member of when I was younger', 'I'm a scout leader with my home scout group and I have been involved since I was 10', 'I've been an Irish girl guide leader for four years and before that I was a younger leader from 15-17'. The progression route in the uniformed organisations may help explain why so many students volunteer with groups such as Scouting Ireland, which was one of the most frequently mentioned youth work organisations in the survey.





2 In some instances, participants referred to working at a 'youth club' or 'youth centre', without providing further details; therefore, the range of organisations with whom young people work is likely to go beyond those listed here and in Table 2.

3.2.2 SPORT AND EXERCISE

The survey indicates that students are involved in coaching and providing support for a wide range of sports and outdoor activities, including:

- **Team sports:** Primarily hockey, rugby, football, soccer, camogie and hurling.
- **Swimming and water-sports:** Including sailing, rowing and kayaking. Some students were also involved in water safety initiatives, often in a training capacity. For example: 'I volunteer at my local pool teaching kids water safety with Irish Water Safety'.
- **Athletics and gymnastics.**
- **Racket sports:** Principally badminton and table tennis.
- **Martial arts:** Including taekwondo-do, boxing and karate.
- **Others:** e.g. mountaineering.

Students performed a number of roles, principally coaching children and young people, either in local clubs or in UCC. Again it was clear that volunteering with sports clubs represented an ongoing commitment on the part of students, e.g. 'I run the "Kid's Class" (age 6-10) in my local boxing club every Friday night'. They were, to a lesser extent, also involved in fundraising for clubs and organisational/committee work.

3.2.3 TUTORING/ SUPPORTING LEARNING

Students were involved in tutoring and supporting learning within UCC and in local communities. They volunteered through:

- The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme, which provides support to first-year UCC students. Undergraduate students from second year onwards (PAL Leaders) are recruited and trained to run the scheme.
- Homework clubs, whereby students help school children with homework and revision. In most cases, respondents said they volunteered through the UCC Plus+ Homework Club, but they also volunteered with clubs organised through schools and churches.
- Science exhibits and other outreach events such as Brain Connections, Walk like a Dinosaur (exhibit as part of science week) and the Cell Explorers initiative, where teams from UCC visit primary and secondary schools and show children and young people how to carry out science experiments.
- The SUAS programme, which works with children in disadvantaged communities to improve their literacy skills through one-to-one mentoring and learning materials.

In their comments, some students referred to working specifically with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, through homework clubs and SUAS:

"I took park in the SUAS teaching programme, going to a disadvantaged school to help children read."

"I tutor secondary school students who ordinarily would not be able to afford grinds."

While most students appeared to be involved in ongoing tutoring/mentoring initiatives, particularly through the homework clubs and SUAS, others described their involvement in occasional or one-off educational events, such as Culture Night:

"I volunteered at a showcase for secondary school students, helping run the 'Walk like a Dinosaur' exhibit. I volunteered to help out at the BEES Culture Night event: setting up and manning an area to explain certain rocks/minerals to visitors. I volunteered at this year's IGRM (Irish Geological Research Meeting), which was held in UCC. Mainly setting up, directing people where to go, signing people up and handling microphones for questions after presentations."



3.2.4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Under this category, student volunteers described a range of community based activities in which they were involved, including:

- Improving local areas through gardening, painting and other renovation work, and through initiatives such as Tidy Towns and Mad about Cork, which one volunteer described as 'a completely voluntary movement that aims to improve Cork City through guerilla gardening and street art'.
- Participating in community organisations and local branches of national organisations such as Muintir na Tíre and Macra na Feirme (e.g. 'I am deputy chairperson of my local Muintir na Tíre Community Council').
- Volunteering with a credit union (e.g. 'I am a Director in my local Credit Union and serve on several committees').
- Organising and running community events (e.g. 'running a community fun day', 'face-painting at our local school during Christmas when Santa's grotto was open') and helping out at community associations and centres (e.g. 'I volunteer in the local community centre on reception').
- Participating in community alert schemes.

3.2.5 BEFRIENDING/ MENTORING

In the majority of cases, students were UCC Peer Support Leaders, who provide help and support to first-year students (see section 4.5.1 for further details). Outside of UCC, some students volunteered with the youth mentoring programme Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS). Students also visited elderly people at home or in nursing homes (discussed below). In some cases, students had progressed from one mentoring/ befriending role to another, for example:

"I was a mentor in my orchestra in Wexford. I helped settle in the new members and helped them make friends. I was a Meitheal leader in secondary school where I helped first years with the transition to secondary school. "

The main beneficiaries of mentoring/befriending activities described in the survey were children and young people (particularly fellow students) or elderly people.

3.2.6 HEALTH-RELATED INITIATIVES

Students are involved in fundraising for hospitals, hospices and charities such as the Irish Cancer Society and the Alzheimer Society. Several were members of the UCC Cancer Society, which sets out to promote awareness about cancer and cancer prevention, as well as fundraising for cancer charities during the college year.[3] Students also work directly with different groups of people:

"I provide support for families with children who have been diagnosed with Tourette syndrome."

"I am a member of the Irish Red Cross and have volunteered at a number of events to provide first aid care."

"I volunteer regularly at Barretstown (overnight

3 For further details see: https://cancersoc.ucc.ie/about-us/

camp for kids with serious illnesses, e.g. cancer).”

“[I volunteer] with a mental health group that uses art and other creative mediums to help people with mental health problems in the community.”

“I volunteered in a youth centre and I’m currently volunteering with a drug and alcohol youth service.”

In addition, students are involved in awareness-raising initiatives around health and well-being, for example through First Fortnight[4].

3.2.7 WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The survey findings indicate that student volunteers tutor and provide support to people with disabilities across a range of activities, including music, drama, arts and crafts and sports. For example:

“I volunteered with The Brothers of Charity in aiding the assistance of people with disabilities. This includes anything from helping them with their lunch, helping them complete a jigsaw puzzle, taking part in their water activities and more.”

“I help out in a drama and dance class for people with special needs, mainly Down Syndrome.”

“I taught computer skills to residents at a disability home.”

“I am a horse riding instructor to adults and children with disabilities.”

“I help out adults and children with special needs in the Nenagh Special Summer Camp.”

Several students were involved in coaching, as part of the Special Olympics. In addition, they undertook fundraising for a number of organisations that work with people with disabilities, including Down Syndrome Ireland and Irish Guide Dogs.

3.2.8 WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE

In most cases, respondents said that they visited older people, either in their own homes, in nursing homes or in day centres. They described ‘keeping people company’, reading, playing music and engaging older people in different activities, including arts and crafts, cards and board games. For example: ‘I visit my local nursing/rest home every weekend… I aid in listening to those who may feel they have no one to talk to’, ‘I volunteered for a befriending opportunity for older people that I found through a UCC talk’. Some students also helped older people to use computers and social media, for example: ‘I teach people at my local nursing home to use computers (Skype, email, etc.) so they can keep in contact with relatives and not be so alone’. In addition, students were involved in the ‘meals-on-wheels’ service, which provides regular meals and social contact for many older people, thereby helping them to remain at home and in better health (see O’Dwyer and Timonen, 2008). Finally, respondents participated in fundraising for organisations and initiatives that support older people.

3.2.9 ARTS, MUSIC AND DRAMA

Students are involved in teaching, performance and direction, for example: ‘I play music and sing in a folk group at our local church every second Saturday’, ‘I volunteer at home in Waterford in children’s theatre camps’, ‘I am the musical director with the High Hopes choir’, ‘I sometimes volunteer with Fighting Words Cork which hosts creative writing workshops for primary school children’. They also provide support at several film festivals (Cork Film Festival, the Indie Cork Film Festival, the Cork French Film Festival) and other events, including the First Fortnight Festival, the Clonmel Junction Festival and the Quarter Block Party.

4 First Fortnight is a charity that ‘challenges mental health prejudice through arts and cultural action’. For further details see http://www.firstfortnight.ie/about/

3.2.10 COUNSELLING/ LISTENING

The primary route through which students become involved in counselling or listening services is Niteline, 'a listening service for students run by students' that operates via free phone and instant messaging. Others volunteered with Childline or with charities that support people suffering from depression or who are at risk of suicide, including Aware and SOSAD (Save Our Sons And Daughters). In the following example, one student describes the nature of her work with Childline:

"I am a Childline volunteer, in the ISPCC offices. I complete a four-hour shift every week on the phone lines for the ISPCC. It is a service for children who wish to ring and talk to someone in confidence as they may have no one or wish to talk to no one else in their lives about things going on within their lives. There may be abuse or other matters that are important to the child."

3.2.11 CONSERVATION/ ENVIRONMENTAL

Students volunteer with a number of organisations and initiatives, including Friends of the Earth, Seal Rescue Ireland, Climate Ambassadors and BirdWatch Ireland. In addition, several respondents were committee members of the UCC Environmental Society. However, as noted above, this was one of the areas with the lowest levels of student volunteering, and comparatively few details were provided in the open-ended question. We will return to this issue later in the section.

3.2.12 ANIMAL WELFARE

Only 6% of survey participants volunteered in support of animal welfare, making this the lowest ranked area of student volunteering (see Figure 5). The survey indicates that most of those who do volunteer in this area either help out in animal shelters or fundraise on behalf of animal welfare charities. One student described the outcomes of undertaking volunteering with animal shelters: 'To see the change in the dogs' behaviour for the better – a lot of them are lurchers who have been shockingly abused. It is wonderful to see them gain trust again'.

3.2.13 OTHER

As well as the main categories listed in Figure 5 above, students identified a number of other fields in which they volunteer, including work with the homeless, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children in direct provision, where they help organise Christmas and Easter parties. It was clear from the responses that student volunteers provide support to some of the most vulnerable groups in Irish society:

"I volunteer with kids from disadvantaged areas with St Vincent de Paul and try and make sure they have as much fun as possible by providing them with a safe, comfortable environment in which they feel free to be themselves and make new friends. I also volunteer with the homeless."

"Every other weekend I volunteer at a soup kitchen in Tralee."

"I work with people affected by homelessness and suffer mental health issues. I also volunteered with the Lantern Project which works with isolated people and I've also been involved in fundraising with Hope."

One student also described efforts to raise awareness about the problem of homelessness:

"I'm volunteering with Simon Society UCC. Slept outside of the Boole library during Homeless week, collected money at different balls by doing the cloakrooms, raised awareness of homelessness, etc. First and second (current) year of college."

In addition, some young people had volunteered

overseas, in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa:

"I volunteer abroad in Romania with a local charity. The work involves working with adults who have been institutionalised since birth and have developed physical and mental disabilities because of this."

"I was an overseas volunteer with the Hope Foundation in Kolkata."

"[I'm] travelling to Zambia this summer to volunteer as a teaching assistant for 8 weeks."

"Volunteered in an orphanage in Africa, volunteer with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust."

"Volunteered in Uganda with a HIV prevention program as well as first aid and sexual health."

"I volunteer with Action Aid UK in women and girls rights who live in poverty, the Together For Yes Campaign, I'm a youth ambassador with the ONE campaign, we say poverty is sexist and want equality for women and girls."

Finally, some students were involved in the campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (e.g. 'I have canvassed for the repeal of the 8th campaign'; 'I help out with the Repeal campaign where I can').



WHY ARE SOME AREAS OF VOLUNTEERING MORE/LESS POPULAR THAN OTHERS? 3.3

Although our research indicates patterns of volunteering, it is not clear why students get involved in particular areas, such as youth work, sport and mentoring/tutoring, rather than environmental issues and animal welfare. Do students regard some causes as more important? Do they believe they are more likely to be able to make a difference in certain areas? Or are there more accessible routes into volunteering in these areas?

It was beyond the scope of the current study to consider these issues in any detail. However, we did ask interview and focus group participants for their views on why so few students appeared to volunteer with environmental causes. While all participants felt environmental issues were important, only two had any experience of volunteering in this area. Several participants noted that they preferred to work directly with people and derived an immediate sense of satisfaction from helping others. One volunteer contrasted this sense of satisfaction with the 'frustration' of some eco-friendly initiatives, where the 'end product' was not always evident:

"I remember a family friend of mine used to collect rubbish from Lough Hyne, in a kayak, and he used to do that a lot... But you'll see that it will just happen again and he'll get frustrated and it is frustrating when you have done something like that and you've got eight bags of rubbish out of the lake and you go back again and it's the exact same. I think you have to be committed to a long-standing struggle... I think it's just a cycle of frustration... It's not to do with a lack of care, we all know about global warming. You can get involved but you don't see the end product. Whereas helping someone, being able to see the





impact you have had personally, gives a great sense of fulfilment."

Furthermore, several students had chosen to volunteer with groups or initiatives which had previously supported them in some way, or which were personally important to them. This personal history dimension again seemed to steer students away from environmental causes, which were seen as important, but in an abstract sense. As one participant pointed out:

"From a volunteering point of view, I suppose my involvement with Pieta House and then with Peer Support were, I kind of had an involvement or got help from them so I was giving back. Whereas with the environment, I'm aware of the issue obviously but it's nothing that I'd... if someone came into the class tomorrow and said we're looking for volunteers to volunteer with something to help the environment I wouldn't be rushing to put my hand up."

In the same focus group it was noted that because so many jobs require good communication skills, a volunteering role which involved working with people would be a better addition to one's CV. Indeed, one student suggested that the way in which volunteering is promoted to students as a means of boosting their career prospects may inadvertently deter them from volunteering with environmental causes, which are seen to be of little interest to potential employers:

A. *"It may also be due to, you know, we're told especially when you get involved in volunteering in UCC, that the more volunteering you do, the more employable you are, that's what employers are looking for, especially human contact, social contact, so if you are volunteering for an environmental organisation maybe they [students] are thinking that that isn't, it's not my personal opinion, but maybe students are saying 'oh that's not going to look great on my CV, employers aren't going to say "oh they have loads of..."*

B. *"You might be seen as an activist or something!"*

A. *"Yeah! [Laughter] But say you are going on to do social work or something. If you have loads of experience with Peer Support or St Vincent de Paul or Edel House, rather than an environmental organisation, they are going to take you."*

Finally, three of the students we spoke to said that there were very few routes into volunteering with environmental/conservation causes within UCC. For one student, lack of opportunity, rather than lack of interest, explained the low numbers volunteering in this area:

"It's not about a lack of interest because I think people are interested in that. But off the top of my head, I couldn't tell you somewhere where you could volunteer to help the environment... For UCC students, it's like 'how do I volunteer with the environment in UCC?' You have to ask yourself. I can't think of an answer. Where would you? For lots of stuff there's... something for that in UCC, but if it's the environment, I can't think of a single thing."

On the other hand, another interviewee (who studied the impacts of climate change as part of his course) argued that the lack of opportunities for volunteering in this area reflects

a wider ambivalence in Irish society towards environmental issues and conservation:

"But in Ireland I don't think there is a huge focus on the environment anyway... There's a lot of regulation around it but in terms of people's natural disposition towards it, and the kinds of attitudes, there wouldn't be that huge [interest], you know. Even recycling, it has only become properly accepted as a normality in the last couple of years... People think that they do these few little things and they think 'that's fine, that's grand', they've done their bit for the environment."

Two out of the eleven students who participated in the qualitative element of the research had some experience of volunteering with environmental groups/initiatives. Both had chosen to volunteer in this area because it was directly related to their postgraduate studies on climate change. However, the interconnection between study and volunteering eventually led one student to stop volunteering with environmental initiatives: 'It's too close to what you do in work almost, it's too similar and it's not what I want to do when I'm not in work... It's easier to think about something that's more personal, I guess, and less "big picture"'. At the time of the interview, this student was about to start a new volunteering role with a youth work organisation. When asked for their views on why relatively few students volunteered with environmental causes, both students raised similar issues to those outlined above, particularly in relation to the absence of a progression route into volunteering in this area (such as those which exist in sports and youth work), a lack of awareness of existing opportunities and stereotypes of environmentalists, e.g. as latter-day 'hippies' and 'tree-huggers'.

The findings point to a number of possible reasons why comparatively few UCC students volunteer in the area of environmental protection and conservation, but this issue warrants further investigation in order to boost student engagement in this area.

ORGANISATIONS AND INITIATIVES THAT BENEFIT FROM STUDENT VOLUNTEERING 3.4

The findings from our open-ended question on the types of volunteering undertaken suggest that a wide range of organisations and initiatives benefit from student volunteering (see Table 2)[5]. In addition, UCC clubs and societies rely on student volunteers for their administrative, management and (in the case of sports clubs) coaching functions. Some of those mentioned in the survey included the Surgeon Noonan Society, the UCC Star (Student Action for Volunteers) Society, UCC Friends of MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), the UCC Cancer Society, the UCC SÁMH Society, the Feminist Society, the Musical Society, the Environmental Society, the Karate Club, the Badminton Club, the Squash Club and others.





5 It should be noted that not all students identified the organisation with which they volunteer, therefore the full list is likely to be even more extensive.

Table 2:

Organisations and initiatives that benefit from student volunteering

A

ActionAid
Age Action
AIESEC
Alzheimer Society
Amnesty International
Animal Care Society
Association of Irish Riding Clubs
Association of Medical Students, Ireland
Aware

B

Barretstown Camp
Bessboro Day Care Centre
BirdWatch Ireland
Brothers of Charity

C

Climate Ambassador programme
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
Community Alert Scheme
Concern
Cope Foundation
Cork Deaf Association
Cork Film Festival
Cork Penny Dinners
Cork Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Credit Unions

D-E

Down Syndrome Ireland
Dress for Success
Edmund Rice Camps
Enable Ireland
Enactus Ireland
Engineers Without Borders Ireland

F-H

Fighting Words
First Fortnight
FLAC
Focus Ireland
FoodCloud
Friends of the Earth
Foroige
GAA
Girl Guides
Gorta/Self Help Africa
The Hope Foundation

I

Irish Cancer Society
Irish Guide Dogs
Irish Heart Foundation
The Irish Heart and Lung Transplant Association
Irish Kidney Association
Irish Pilgrimage Trust
Irish Pony Club
Irish Red Cross
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)
Irish Water Safety

J-L

Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
The Lantern Project
Le Chéile
Lions Clubs

M

Macra na Feirme
Mad About Cork
Marymount Hospice
Meals on Wheels
Meitheal
Men's Sheds
Mercy Hospital
Muintir na Tíre
Multiple Sclerosis Ireland

N-P

Nenagh Special Needs Summer Camp
Niteline
The One Campaign
The No Name Club
Pieta House

R

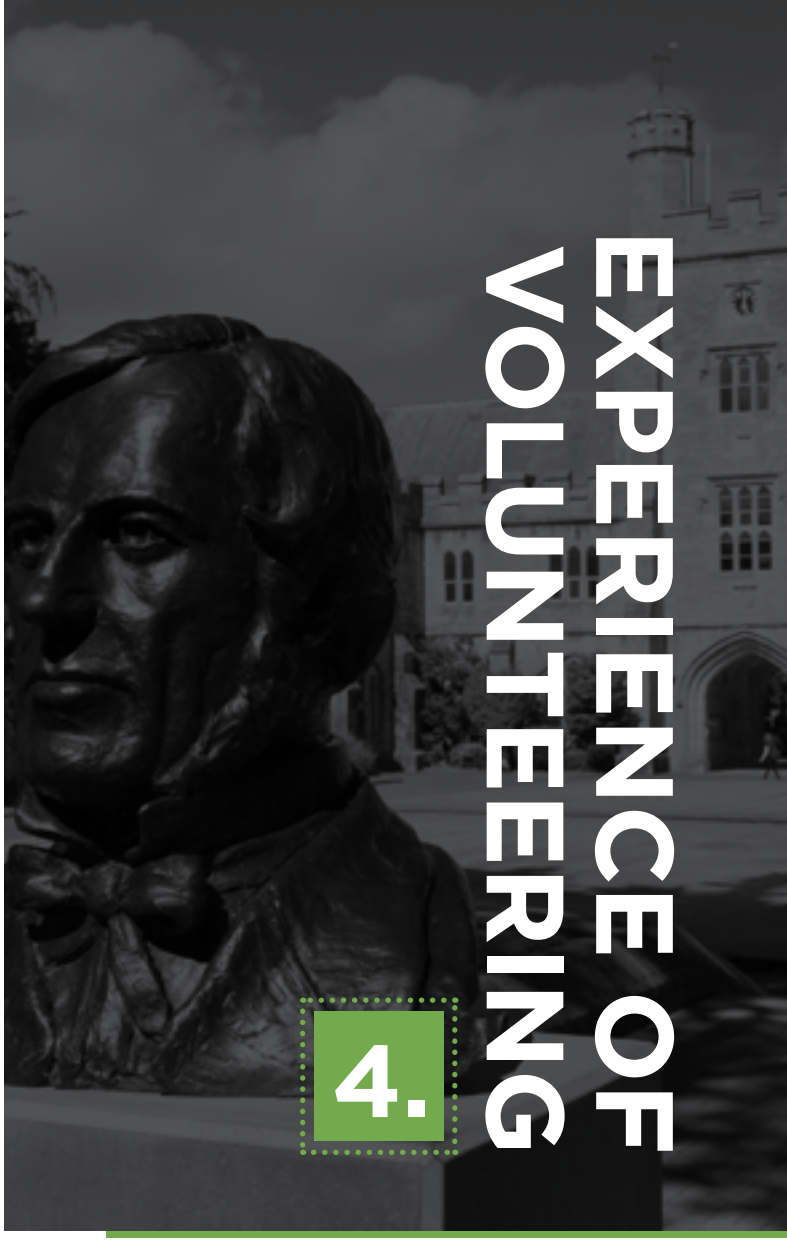
ReachOut Ireland
Rescue Animals Ireland
Reserve Defense Force
The Rosetta Foundation

S

Saoirse Foundation
Save Our Sons and Daughters
Scouting Ireland
Seal Rescue Ireland
Shine a Light Suicide Awareness Group
Simon Community
Special Olympics
Spunout.ie
St John Ambulance Ireland
St Luke's Home
St Vincent de Paul (SVP)
Suas

T-Z

Tidy Towns
Trócaire
UCC clubs and societies
William Winder Foundation
Youth Work Ireland (YWI)



4. EXPERIENCE OF VOLUNTEERING

In this section we will outline the findings related to student motivation for volunteering, the benefits and challenges of volunteering and their overall levels of satisfaction with the volunteering experience.

4.1 MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING

Previous research suggests that students' motives for volunteering may be altruistic, social (e.g. to make friends) or instrumental (gain work experience, develop new skills). In light of this, students in the current study were presented with a list of possible reasons for volunteering and asked to rate them in terms of importance in their decision to volunteer (Table 3). Altruistic motives – the desire 'to give something back' and 'to help others' – were ranked as important or very important by over 85% of respondents, while the 'opportunity to gain work experience and enhance my CV' was important or very important to 63% of respondents. A slightly smaller proportion (59%) identified social reasons (meeting people and making friends) as important or very important.

Table 3:
Reasons for volunteering

	very important	important	fairly important	slightly important	not important	Total (n)
To give something back to the community	49.51%	36.46%	9.28%	3.78%	0.97%	927
Opportunity to gain work experience and enhance my CV	33.59%	29.81%	17.06%	11.23%	8.32%	926
To help others/make a difference	58.23%	31.97%	7.75%	1.83%	0.22%	929
Chance to meet new people and make friends	25.59%	33.26%	19.87%	14.47%	6.80%	926
Help me develop new skills	33.80%	38.66%	17.06%	6.59%	3.89%	926
Cause was really important to me	45.31%	33.66%	16.07%	3.24%	1.73%	927
Opportunity to gain a UCC Works Award	5.95%	7.14%	10.38%	12.54%	64.00%	925
Something to do in my spare time	10.08%	22.64%	23.62%	20.48%	23.19%	923
I was asked to become a volunteer	9.85%	17.10%	19.05%	16.34%	37.66%	924
Other (please specify)						16



In a follow-up question, students were asked to identify their main motivation for volunteering. As Figure 6 indicates, the two main reasons were again altruistic (a desire to help others and give back to the community), followed by instrumental considerations (enhance CV and gain work experience). Although 59% of students agreed that a desire to meet people and make friends was an important reason for volunteering (Table 3), relatively few students (4%) said that this was their ***primary*** motivation (Figure 6). The research suggests that while students volunteer for a range of different reasons, altruistic motives take priority.

The findings were very similar across male and female cohorts, particularly in relation to gaining work experience (ranked as their main motivation by 17% of male and 16% of female students) and meeting new people (ranked equally at 4%). While both cohorts indicated that they were primarily motivated by altruistic considerations, there was some variation: 31% of male students indicated that they were principally motivated by a desire to give something back to the community, compared with 24% of female students; whereas a desire to help others was ranked higher by female students (34%) than by their male counterparts (27%).

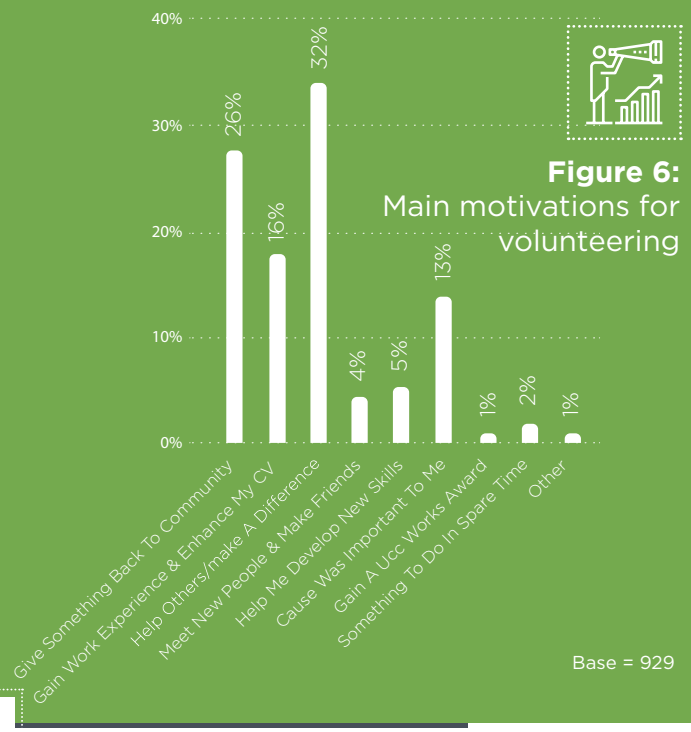


Figure 6: Main motivations for volunteering

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING 4.2

Students were also asked about the perceived benefits of volunteering. The responses were overwhelmingly positive (see Table 4), indicating that students had benefitted across all areas, particularly in terms of their sense of 'making a difference to others'. The majority of respondents also agreed (or strongly agreed) that volunteering had provided them

Table 4:
Benefits of volunteering

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	Total
Meeting new people and making friends	41.12%	42.84%	11.95%	3.12%	0.97%	929
Gaining work experience and enhancing CV	47.20%	37.63%	10.54%	3.33%	1.29%	930
My sense that I am making a difference to others	50.81%	41.78%	6.12%	0.97%	0.32%	931
Broadening my perspectives/learning from volunteering	48.39%	39.46%	9.03%	2.69%	0.43%	930
Developing new skills	43.66%	43.33%	10.00%	2.69%	0.32%	930
Boosting my self-confidence	37.03%	39.61%	18.30%	4.09%	0.97%	929
Enhancing my ability to work independently	36.28%	42.30%	15.82%	4.84%	0.75%	929
Increasing my sense of being part of the community	42.90%	42.26%	12.04%	2.26%	0.54%	930
Other (please specify)						3

with the chance to gain work experience and enhance their CV, develop new skills and work independently. Most participants also agreed that they had derived social benefits from volunteering, including meeting new people, making friends and increasing their sense of being part of the community. Finally, the survey findings highlight the personal development gains from volunteering, with most respondents agreeing that the experience had broadened their perspectives and boosted their self-confidence.

In response to an open-ended question, students provided further details on their motives for volunteering and how they felt they had benefitted from the experience. Altruistic motives, and the sense of satisfaction they derived from being able 'to give something back' and contribute to the well-being of others, were important themes as the following comments illustrate:

"I was involved in Community Games as a child and looked up to the volunteers. So I wish to give back and help the games continue."

"I felt I was giving back to the community, which I was heavily involved in as a teenager."

"I enjoy the feeling of helping others and seeing them succeed."

"[I like] being a part, albeit small, of a movement that's trying to build a more equal, progressive society."

"I like helping others and feeling like I have had a positive impact on peoples' lives."

"It's great to see the kids benefit from sports and to challenge them to do the best they can."

In the course of the interviews and focus groups, some students reported that they had become volunteers with initiatives or groups from which they had previously received support. For example, one student explained why her own experience with mental health problems motivated her to become a volunteer with a project that promotes good mental health:

"Growing up I had issues with my own mental health, so this guy coming in saying, 'we have a project [on mental health]', it kind of fit with me, like the timing, 'cos it was actually that time that I had sought help. So I thought, if I'm trying to get myself better maybe I can help other people as well. And that's kind of where it came from."

While the desire to help others and 'give something back' was important, students also highlighted the **social and personal benefits** which they themselves derived from volunteering:

"It has exceeded all my expectations. Firstly, it has been a lot more demanding than I expected but the rewards have been so much more than I could have imagined: the friends I have made, and life lessons I have learned, I will take with me."

"I got to know a lot about UCC and the services available. I also had the opportunity to make friends with people from different courses and year groups."

"I especially enjoy volunteering for my local animal shelter as it serves as a combination of stress relief for me, and socialisation for the animals."

"It's highly enjoyable, and on top of it all you get to feel like you're making a difference. I've become surrounded by people interested in the same things I am, and even things I'm not, and we all consider each other to be friends."

Participants also enjoyed the **sense of community** that comes with volunteering (e.g. 'being made to feel a part of the team', 'this society is full of amazingly kind people who are all passionate about the same things I am', 'I'm glad to feel like I am an active participant in the communities I belong to'). Personal development was another important theme, for example:

"I feel that all of the experiences help me develop as a person, which is very important for me."

"I feel that my experience of volunteering has helped me grow as an individual and give back to the community at large."

"Any volunteering I've done has enriched my own life greatly."

Learning new **skills** was seen as another important benefit of volunteering:

"I've learned and gained so many skills that will equip me for the professional world ahead. As a result of volunteering I have been recognised and would encourage anybody to make it part of their student experience. I was awarded the runner-up prize for the Employability Star Award[6]. I am so grateful for all of the opportunities that I have received to date and cannot wait to transfer my skills into my professional life."

The experience of volunteering can also inform career choices, as the following example illustrates:

"I love doing what I do, I have made great connections with the kids and through volunteering I realised that was the type of work I wanted to do for the future. I am now studying intellectual disability nursing."

The benefits derived from volunteering will be returned to in section 4.5, when we look in more detail at two volunteering initiatives organised through UCC.

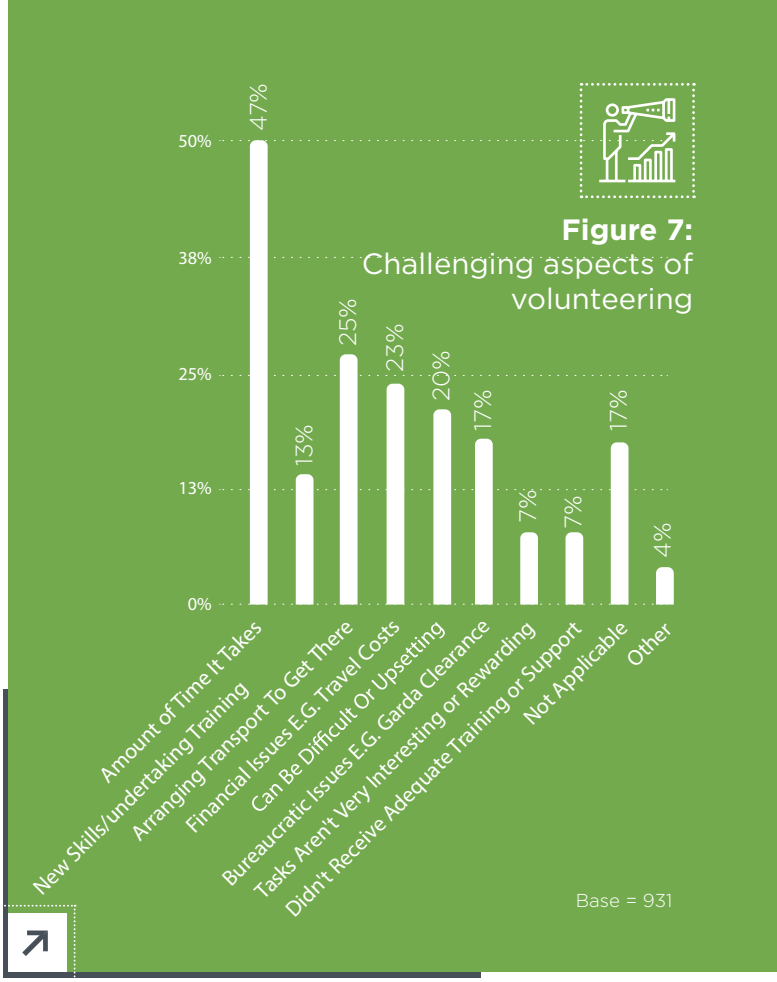


Figure 7: Challenging aspects of volunteering

4.3 CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF VOLUNTEERING

Students were asked if they found any aspects of volunteering to be challenging or difficult. As Figure 7 illustrates, the main challenge associated with being a student volunteer is the time commitment it involves, which was identified by nearly half of survey respondents. Students commented on having to balance different commitments, for example: 'Trying to balance college work, etc., around volunteering can be very challenging, especially if you are heavily relied on in the service'. Other practical difficulties associated with volunteering included arranging transport (25%) and the financial costs involved (23%). In relation to the volunteering role itself, one-fifth of respondents indicated that they found some aspects of the work difficult or upsetting, while 7% reported that they had not received adequate training or support. On the other hand, 17% of respondents indicated that they had not experienced any challenges in their volunteering role.

In an open-ended question, student volunteers provided further details on why they found certain aspects of the role difficult. Several comments related to teaching and/or working with children, for example:

"Learning to teach adolescents [and] pre-teens without losing your patience and being able to clearly convey concepts."

"Having the patience to work with 30 hyper children."

"Difficulty thinking of something new to teach."

However, working with other volunteers and staff members could also be challenging, as the following comments suggest:

"Dealing with other volunteers who mean well but aren't always well-suited to the role they are in."

"Other volunteers not committing fully."

"Sometimes in can be difficult to make a

6 The UCC Works Employability Star Award is awarded to students who have received four or more UCC Works Awards by their final year in UCC.

difference, working with a wide range of individuals from various backgrounds."

In a few cases, students spoke of a lack of support from the organisation, poor management and coordination or 'office politics'. For example:

"Some organisations I have worked with/ volunteered for are extremely disorganised, even the big Irish organisations who are household names. I feel they could do much much more to coordinate their volunteers. I was a long-term volunteer with one of them and was expected to have the same responsibility as staff members in coordinating the rota, etc. I don't believe there was a specific volunteer coordinator and this led to many volunteers becoming disillusioned with the organisation. A number of volunteers at the organisation expressed their dismay at the organisation's choice to hire a third-party agency to ask for donations in a door-to-door sales manner and the organisation didn't take our concerns on board."

Another respondent spoke of being disheartened by the lack of recognition of student volunteers by the local community, as well as the negative portrayal of students in some sections of the media:

"Lack of recognition of this by the community around UCC – myself and fellow students volunteer our collective butts off, but who in the local community says anything about that when [radio show] takes a swipe at those pesky students? Utterly disheartening, but you learn to just breeze past it I suppose."

Similarly, another student stated that 'the lack of appreciation which is shown to volunteers for all their commitment makes students reluctant to undertake the same long-term position again'.

Focus group and interview participants identified the time commitment involved in volunteering as one of the main challenges. The chairperson of one society (who also volunteered in other areas) noted that the organisational aspect of his role can be far more time consuming than people realise:

"It's difficult finding that balance between academic work and volunteering and having a sleep schedule, you know! Because a lot of times, the meeting might be one hour... but you might spend another hour trying to organise that meeting. So there is a lot of work that people don't see. So if people see you have an event, [they think] you were volunteering for four hours during the event. But there were five meetings before that, they were all an hour long and you were planning all those meetings as well. So it's a time thing. And you don't realise what a time thing it is until you are in the midst of it."

According to the chairperson of another society, differing levels of commitment by volunteers leads to an uequal distribution of tasks. He noted that much of the committee's work was carried out by a few dedicated members, while others contributed very little, particularly in relation to the behind-the-scenes, routine tasks:

"In my current role as chairperson, it's hard to depend on people. Some people would be far more active than others... So when we were organising a charity gig, I pretty much did everything... The challenges are nothing to do with volunteering itself, it's just the people."

He went on to argue that students who volunteer primarily to boost their CV are less likely to be as committed to the role as those with a genuine interest in the area:

"It's nice to put it [volunteering] on your CV but that's not the reason I would do it, it's not the reason that a lot of people that are actively engaged would do it. But there are a lot of people who would just be on the fringes, to put it on their CV, to say they have done it. But they wouldn't actually be doing it. So I can say I helped organise the charity gig, but the people who did nothing can also say they helped organise it too because they showed up and sold tickets for an hour, but disproportionately, because I've done far more work than they have, but they're still saying the same thing."

These comments raise wider issues around

differing levels of commitment to volunteering, and the disparity between those who are 'actively engaged' and those who are on 'the fringes'.

4.4 LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Finally, students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their volunteering experience on a five-point scale, ranging from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied', with an additional category for those who were unsure. As Figure 8 illustrates, the majority (63%) were very satisfied, while nearly one-third described themselves as being 'somewhat satisfied'. Only 1% of respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied (the two categories for dissatisfaction are merged in Figure 8 as the numbers were so small). The findings suggest that while students may encounter challenges in their volunteering role, the majority were, to varying degrees, satisfied with their experience.

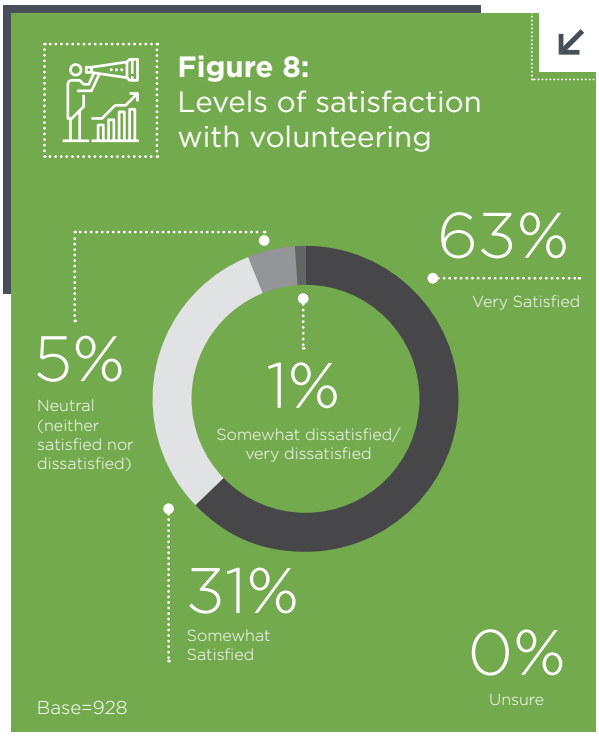


Figure 8: Levels of satisfaction with volunteering

4.5 SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERING

In the following section, we will look in more detail at two volunteer-led initiatives (Peer Assisted Student Support and UCC Plus+ Homework Club) in order to illustrate some of the themes discussed in this chapter i.e. motivations and the benefits and challenges associated with volunteering. Volunteers from these groups responded to the survey and subsequently participated in focus group discussions. The findings reported below are derived from the focus groups.

4.5.1 PEER ASSISTED STUDENT SUPPORT

Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS) is a service to support first-year students in UCC. At orientation, all undergraduate first years are linked with a peer support leader, a current UCC student studying the same programme. Each peer support leader provides their group of students with a tour of the campus and maintains regular contact in the course of the year through monthly emails. Students are also able to contact their peer leader at any time, should they have questions or concerns.

In the course of the focus group, peer leaders discussed their **motives** for volunteering with PASS. In some cases, students said that their own positive experience of the transition to university had made them want to provide similar support to incoming students, for example:

"When I came to UCC last year as a mature student, the Mature Student office and other people were very helpful. We got to come into UCC a week before everyone else, we got tours, we were shown around. I appreciated that my transition in to university was made a lot easier and a lot less stressful than it would have



been otherwise. So I just felt that I should help somebody who is coming in this year. That's basically why I did it."

For another student, volunteering with PASS was a way of meeting people and feeling more connected to the university:

"For the first couple of months [in university], I felt like I didn't feel as connected, I felt like you're going to lectures and you're sitting next to anyone, you didn't have friends, like good friends. So I was thinking if I joined Peer Support that would help me interlink, and I think that's one of the best things that I've ever done... So I signed up to experience more, get the most out of it. Push myself out there."

When asked whether they felt they had **benefitted** from becoming peer leaders, participants again highlighted the social dimension of volunteering with PASS, which had helped them meet other students and make friends, as the following comments illustrate:

"It's a great experience, you get to meet students from different years and different courses. I'm doing support for international students so you get to meet people from all over Europe... You feel much more connected to the college, part of the college, whereas for the first six months of last year [his first year], I felt 'should I be here at all?' Whereas now I feel much more part of it. So, you are helping other people but you are helping yourself as well. I'd definitely encourage everyone to do it."

"You meet so many people... you click with people, you make lots of friends... We [peer leaders] have social nights, we run the tea stand, you do training together. It's literally like a little family... You're never lonely in Peer Support. Even if you are shy it helps you come out."

Students also reported that volunteering with PASS had increased their confidence and enabled them to develop their communication skills. The three-day training which all peer leaders undergo was singled out for particular praise in terms of preparing them for their volunteering role (e.g. 'the training prepares you for every scenario under the sun') and imparting important skills, such as public speaking. In some cases, involvement in PASS has led to other opportunities, including paid work:

"I think it opens up doors for a lot of other things... when you are in peer support, other departments will ask [the coordinator] 'are there students available to do this, that and the other?' And some of that is actually paid work then. So that opens doors and, as students, any bit of money is appreciated. [Laughs] Me personally, I've been able to get involved in the Higher Options events in Dublin where you try to sell the university to students. I was invited to go up to Dublin this year and that was through Peer Support. They would have put my name forward when they said 'we need a student from this course or that course'. So it gets you other places."

Peer leaders felt that there were very few **challenges** associated with this role, other than the time involved and the need to balance different commitments. It was acknowledged that the public speaking element of the role – whereby peer leaders give a tour of the campus to their group – could be challenging for some students, though again it was felt that this could be addressed through training:

"I remember a girl at my training day and the thought of getting up in front of people just completely melted her. She completely went into shock, like she just couldn't do it. But at the end of the two days of training she was actually able to get up and do it. So while that wasn't a difficulty for me, 'cos I'm used to doing things like that, but I can see how the programme would help people to overcome their difficulties or their fears."

The importance of training and support for volunteers, which was a recurring theme in this focus group, has also been raised in previous research on volunteering (Evans and Saxton, 2005).

4.5.2 UCC PLUS+ HOMEWORK CLUB

The Homework Club scheme is an initiative whereby UCC students volunteer to be placed in one of seven Cork-based secondary schools to help Junior Cycle students with their homework. The scheme is organised through the UCC Plus+ Programme, which aims to foster closer relations between UCC and DEIS schools, and provides support to students who enter university through the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR).

In explaining their **motives** for becoming involved in the homework club, focus group participants highlighted the support which they themselves had received from UCC Plus+ and their desire to give something back to the programme. For example, one volunteer explained:

"When you come in through the HEAR scheme, they [UCC Plus+] will do anything for you. You can come to see them with anything from a small problem to a huge problem, and they will help you as much as they can... So you do have this sense of wanting to help them as they have helped you. So, I first volunteered with UCC Plus+ when I was in 2nd year. I did the orientation for incoming students. And then last year they asked me if I wanted to do homework club and I said 'yes'... It's really nice being able to help UCC Plus+ and making a difference in the students' lives as well."

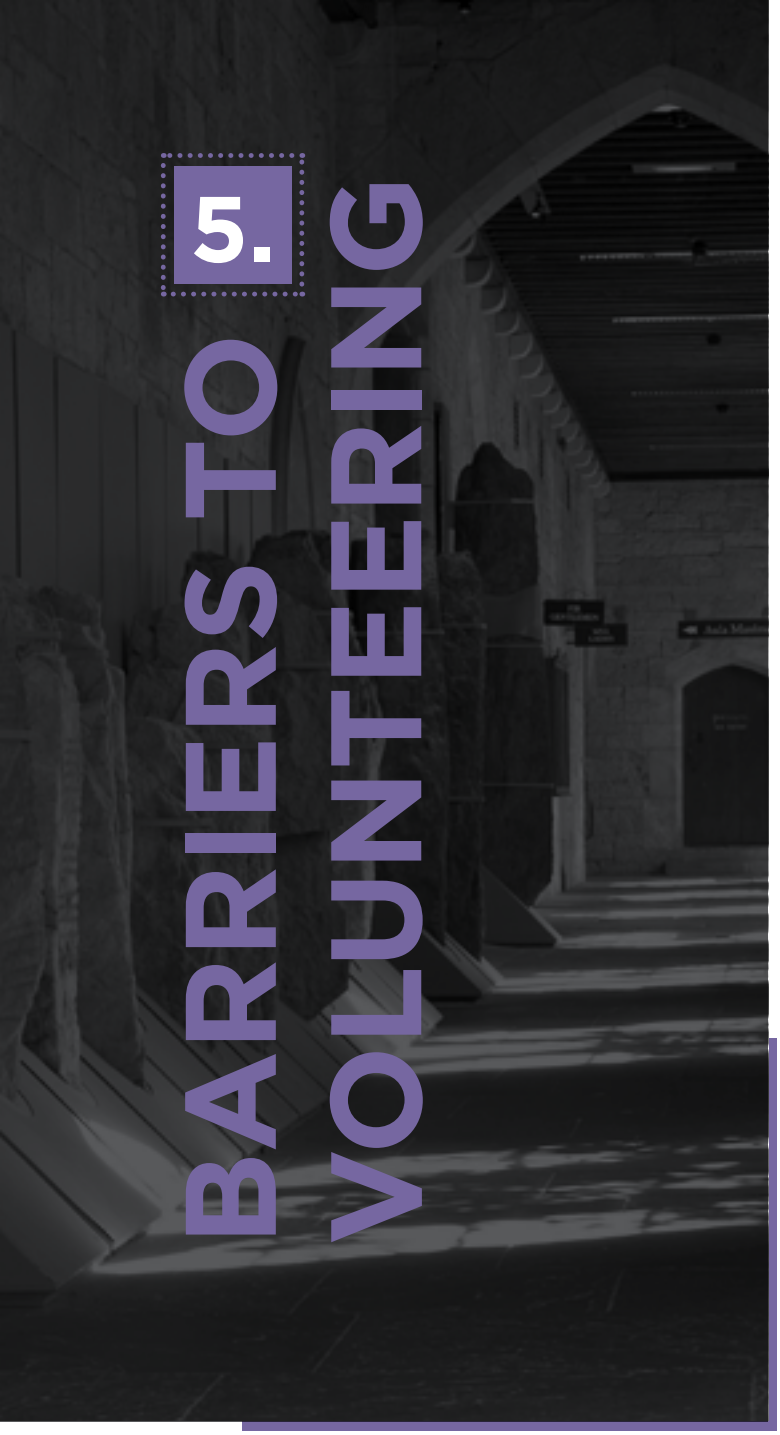
When asked about the most **rewarding** aspects of the role, volunteers spoke of the satisfaction they derived from helping young people, not only in relation to their homework, but also in encouraging them to think about going on to post-secondary education. Many of the young people attending the homework club would have no family history of higher education and so would know little about course options, college life, the availability of grants, the different access routes and so forth. Focus group participants noted that it was 'sad' to see young people from DEIS schools already ruling out the option of going on to third-level education, because they thought it was too expensive or because they lacked confidence. Therefore, talking to these young people informally about college and the supports available to them, and encouraging them to consider third-level education (either HE or FE) as an option, was seen as an important part of the tutor's role, as one student explained:

"It's not just an academic endeavour. When some people sign up [to become tutors] they think it's just a homework-based thing, you don't realise the rapport you are going to have with them, and the questions they are going to ask about college, and the fact that what you say, they're going to be listening. They want to know about college, and access routes and grants. That's equally important as helping with their homework, it's probably more important, I would say."

Because the focus group participants had themselves come to university through the HEAR scheme, they felt that they were particularly well equipped to understand and empathise with the uncertainties and concerns which young people from DEIS schools might feel about progressing to third-level education. At the same time, working in a homework club could be an eye-opening experience, as one student pointed out:

"It gave me another perspective. We like to think there's a level playing field, but there isn't. We're not all granted the same opportunities."

Students were also asked about the most **challenging aspects** of their role as volunteer tutors. One student noted that while he had built up a good rapport with the young people in the homework club, occasionally it had been difficult to motivate individual students. The importance of getting 'buy-in' from teachers (who act in a supervisory capacity during homework club) and of establishing a clear demarcation of roles for staff and volunteers was also noted. Despite encountering some challenges in the course of volunteering with homework club, students were enormously positive about the experience. Like the PASS students, they reported that the training they received beforehand was important in preparing them for their role.



5. BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

As noted earlier, the survey was designed to include the perspectives of those who had (or had not) volunteered over the previous six months. In this way, we hoped to find out about students' recent experiences of volunteering, as well as the reasons why some students might decide ***not*** to volunteer. In the following section, we will outline the findings from the latter group, focusing on their views on the barriers to volunteering. Previous research suggests that students may be deterred from volunteering due to lack of time, not understanding what volunteering entails or not knowing how to get involved while at university (Brewis ***et al.***, 2010; Garvey ***et al.***, 2015). The current survey asked non-volunteers if any of ten potential barriers prevented them from volunteering (Figure 9).

The major barrier to volunteering reported by respondents is lack of time owing to college work (77%), part-time work (41%) and, in a smaller number of cases, family commitments (16%). In the comments section, respondents highlighted the various demands on their time, particularly part-time employment:

"I'm busy working, studying and family commitments at the moment, unfortunately."

"I can't afford to use my spare time, I work in my spare time because I need the money."

"I can't afford to take time off of paid work to volunteer, even though I would like to."

Comments such as these suggest that volunteering can have financial implications, particularly for those who need to work during term time to support themselves, an issue which has also been raised in previous research (see Smith ***et al.***, 2010). In some instances, students have to commute long distances to college, further limiting their opportunities to volunteer. For example: 'I travel two hours up and down to college every day', 'commuting from home and volunteering while also working doesn't work', 'travelling a long distance to and from college, [it] just isn't feasible to stay in the city all day, go home and come back in again as most societies run things in the evening'. The timing of events was also raised by another student: 'I have tried to get involved but the events are often on during college times that don't suit or are too late in the evening'. In addition, several participants said that they are involved in sports, which limits the time available for other activities.

Apart from the time commitment, many students are also deterred from volunteering by not knowing how to get involved (31%) or not being sure what they can contribute (22%). Lack of transport and the perception that volunteering could be expensive was identified by nearly a quarter of students (24% and 23% respectively). Furthermore, over one-third of respondents indicated that they wanted to relax in their spare time. On the other hand, a comparatively small proportion cited a lack of interest in volunteering (9%) or in a particular cause/initiative (13%) as

reasons for not volunteering.

In addition to the barriers listed in Figure 9, 4% of respondents identified other factors which deterred them from volunteering. One student, for example, said that he did not want to volunteer because he 'hates asking people for money', while another expressed doubts about where the proceeds from fundraising go: 'I don't believe money goes where it is supposed to'. Other responses suggest that students may find it difficult to make the first step into volunteering because they are still settling in (in the case of first-year students), they are 'shy' or 'not confident enough', or do not know others who volunteer ('I have few friends at college and less that volunteer'). Furthermore, two students highlighted the fact that it is difficult for students who go on placements to volunteer as they are unable to give a long-term commitment: 'I'm on work placement in Dublin for first semester and Cork for the second semester and no one would take short-term volunteers'. The need for more short-term volunteering opportunities was also highlighted in students' suggestions on how to increase rates of volunteering, which we look at in Section 6.

Interview and focus group participants were also asked for their views on the barriers to volunteering. They raised similar issues to those outlined above, particularly in relation to time commitments. In addition, one volunteer noted that the need for Garda vetting could be off-putting, particularly for those who only want to be involved in occasional or one-off events. In the following example, he talks about the difficulties in getting student volunteers to help out at the parties held for children in Direct Provision:

"One of the difficulties, that doesn't apply to me, but which is an issue for others, is the child protection and Garda vetting. I have all that done already with the Red Cross. But it's an annoying process. And if you don't know you need it, you won't find out until it's too late. A lot of students when they volunteer it's like:

[Organiser]: 'There's a party on today, do you want to give a hand?'

[Student]: 'Oh yeah, I'd love to give a hand'.

[Organiser]: 'Well you can't because you haven't done the training or you're not cleared.'

It's all the red tape around that kind of thing. It used to be the case that you say 'an event is on' and you never know how many people are going to turn up to help. But now people just can't turn up [because of the vetting process], and that's an issue.

Similarly, an earlier study on volunteering in Ireland found that some young people regarded the Garda vetting and application procedures to be 'daunting or unnecessarily time consuming' (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2011: 41).

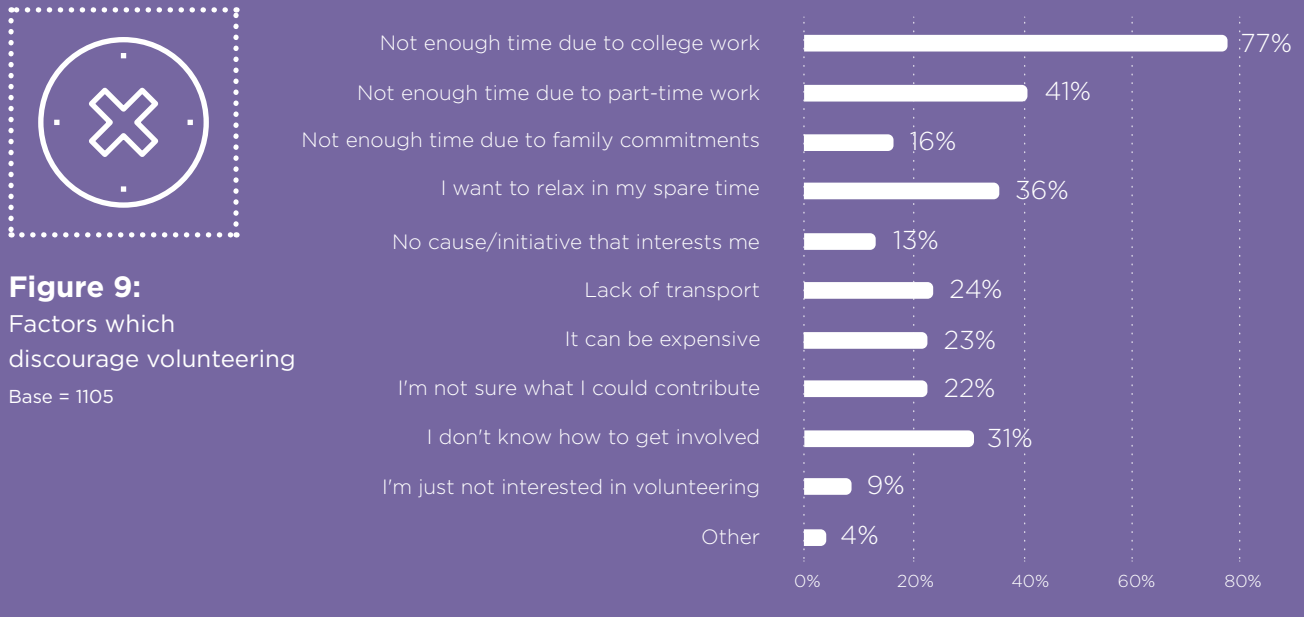


Figure 9:
Factors which discourage volunteering
Base = 1105



FUTURE VOLUNTEERING

6.

In the final section of the report, we look at respondents' views on what more the university could do to encourage volunteering, and the likelihood that they themselves would volunteer in the future. All students (both volunteers and non-volunteers) were invited to respond to these questions.

6.1 ENCOURAGING VOLUNTEERING

Participants were presented with nine potential strategies, and asked if they thought these would encourage more volunteering amongst students (see Table 5). While there were differences between the two groups (volunteers and non-volunteers), both agreed that offering 'more one-off volunteering opportunities' and increasing 'publicity/awareness of volunteering' were the most important means by which the university could encourage volunteering. On the other hand, offering 'more ***long-term*** volunteering opportunities' was the lowest ranked suggestion amongst both groups, particularly non-volunteers (14%), who were significantly less likely to think that this would attract additional recruits. The importance of transportation was again highlighted: four out of ten volunteers and just over one-third of non-volunteers indicated that offering transport to local organisations that need volunteers would be helpful. As Table 5 illustrates, providing training and introductory or 'taster' sessions were seen as important by nearly one-third of non-volunteers and by 38% of volunteers.

In an open-ended comments section, students elaborated on their answers and provided some additional ideas. Several respondents noted that students needed to be informed of volunteering opportunities at different times of the year, not just at the beginning of the year. This is particularly important for first-year students who are still settling in during the initial months:

"Encourage more students who are not currently involved in volunteering to join mid-year if they have not already, if they have missed the clubs and society days, as volunteering opportunities are only promoted at the start of the college year."
(volunteer)

"I tried to volunteer for a number of places in UCC but as it was not in September there was no availability – maybe have more volunteering training/availability after Christmas to encourage volunteers who are just settling into UCC."
(volunteer)

There were also a number of suggestions around how to raise awareness, for example:

"A very simple thing to increase my potential interest would be to have representatives of voluntary positions talk for five minutes before lectures and to hand out leaflets."
(non-volunteer)

"Host organisations in need of volunteers on campus to attract busy college students and enable them to sign up right then and there."
(non-volunteer)

Table 5:

What more could the university do to encourage volunteering?

	Volunteers	Non-volunteers
Provide introductory or 'taster' sessions	38%	30%
Offer more one-off volunteering activities	57%	52%
Offer more long-term volunteering opportunities	26%	14%
Offer more opportunities to gain recognition/awards for volunteering	31%	24%
Increase publicity/awareness of volunteering on campus and/or online	60%	47%
Offer more social events/networking with students who volunteer	36%	27%
Offer training programmes	38%	31%
Offer transport to local organisations that need volunteers	41%	34%
Nothing the university does makes much difference to the numbers of people who want to volunteer	3%	14%
Other	4%	2%
	N=929	N=1102

"Actually show us... how volunteer organisations actually help. If the problem is out of sight, it's out of mind."
(non-volunteer)

"Offer talks on what volunteering can contribute to your own life."
(non-volunteer)

Several participants in the focus groups and interviews noted that the UCC Volunteering Fair was particularly effective in attracting new recruits, and recommended that it be held more than once a year. Sending out emails about volunteering opportunities to all students was regarded as less effective because mass emails are often ignored. Furthermore, one student argued that while sending emails to all students might sometimes result in an intial upsurge of interest, this was unlikely to be maintained:

"You could send out emails to people asking if they wanted to join homework club but it just wouldn't work. Because there would be an influx of people and the drop-out rate would be extortionate. And then you've got to filter people out."

Issues were also raised in the survey in relation to the time and place of volunteering opportunities:

Have events during the day as opposed to in the evenings as I would have to get the bus numerous times during the day and that is expensive.

Offer ways to volunteer in spare time, e.g. by managing part-time a social media presence for causes, or other more administrative opportunities to volunteer.

Other suggestions included: the provision of transport or free car parking on campus, providing additional information in particular areas of volunteering (e.g. overseas opportunities, animal welfare) and promoting volunteering through courses (e.g. 'promote volunteering opportunities especially in part-time courses like Autism Studies and Mental Health'). A few students suggested that volunteering become a course or college requirement. While this policy would very likely increase rates of volunteering, it would at the same time undermine the principle of voluntary engagement. Finally, a few comments highlighted the fact that people themselves needed to want to volunteer and that there were limits to what the university could do:

"At the end of the day people need to want to volunteer. You can't force someone to give up their time. I think the university actually does great work facilitating volunteer programmes."

"But all of this [university's efforts] is still secondary to a person's willingness to volunteer. While it will boost the numbers of students signing up for the experience, it will not guarantee them deciding to continue."

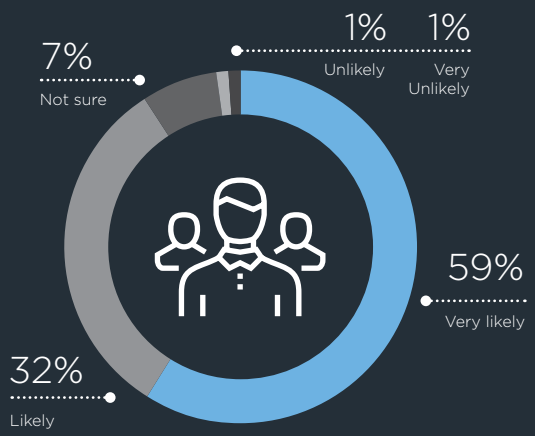


VOLUNTEERING AFTER LEAVING COLLEGE 6.2

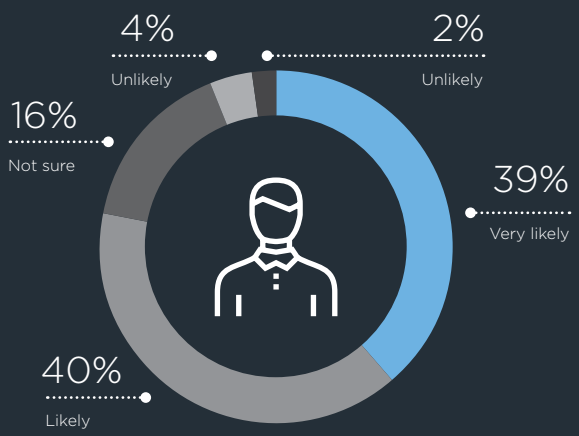
All students were asked if they thought it likely that they would volunteer in the future, after leaving college. The findings were very positive, with 91% of volunteers and 79% of non-volunteers indicating that they are likely or very likely to volunteer. The latter result is striking because it suggests a temporary stepping back (due to the issues raised in section 5) but an overall dispositional commitment to volunteering which these non-volunteer students would hope to activate in the future.

Table 6:

Likelihood of volunteering after college



Volunteers
N=928



Non-Volunteers
N=1107



7. CONCLUSION

The evidence in this research study suggests student volunteering produces active and socially aware citizens who will contribute to the values and quality of Irish life during the 21st century.

Volunteering is, as 94% of UCC student volunteers in the study reported, a satisfying experience. Furthermore, altruistic motives, or the desire 'to give something back' and 'to help others', were ranked as important or very important by over 85% of respondents.

The study clarifies how, through volunteering, students are making a positive contribution to the community both locally and globally, a reality that often goes unrecognised by a critical media that sometimes likes to socially construct students, in the words of one respondent, as 'pesky'. The social reality described by students in this comprehensive study of student volunteering is very different. The commitment to volunteering they describe is impressive: over 46% of them had volunteered in the previous six months, and volunteering would appear to be integral to their lives. For many students, volunteering commences in secondary school and continues at university.

This social value student volunteers contribute is largely underestimated. Indeed, volunteers, whether they are students or community members, are often the invisible and unsung heroes of social prosperity. They help to create, build and maintain an active university and community life, while practicing citizenship in an everyday context within, and most importantly, outside the gates of the university. This helps to develop a flourishing civil society.

Clearly, volunteering is challenging for many of the students in the current generation. They are experiencing economic pressures that were not experienced by previous generations and this is in some cases curtailing their ability to volunteer. 79% of the students who do not currently volunteer expect to volunteer in the future, suggesting they face immediate barriers to do with time and affordability, rather than disposition. In some instances, students have to commute long distances to university each day, while others travel and work, which limits the time and energy they have to volunteer.

Recommendations

1. Endeavor to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to fully participate in university community life through engaging in voluntary activities inside and beyond the gates of UCC.
2. Work together as a university community to address the opportunities and challenges identified by students in this report; while providing enhanced support at the strategic and coordination levels.
3. Respond to the 85% of students that identify ***altruistic*** reasons for volunteering, through foregrounding this value orientation in our approach to volunteering.
4. Given Ireland's commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), and UCCs world status as a Green Campus, consider steps to promote student engagement in volunteering in support of environmental protection and animal welfare.
5. Publicise students volunteering on an ongoing basis, and build awareness by offering more short-term voluntary opportunites and events to learn about volunteering opportunities.

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APPENDIX

Demographic Profile of Respondents & Course Details

Table 1:
Gender

	Volunteers	Non- volunteers	All respondents
Female	73%	69%	71%
Male	26%	31%	29%
Transgender	<1%	<1%	<1%
	917	1082	1999

Table 2:
Age

	Volunteers	Non- volunteers	All respondents
18-22	76%	79%	78%
23 or over	24%	21%	22%
	924	1091	2015

Table 3:
Type of Course

	Volunteers	Non- volunteers	All respondents
Undergraduate	84%	85%	85%
Postgraduate	12%	12%	12%
Adult and Continuing Education (ACE)	3%	2%	2%
Other	<1%	<1%	<1%
	924	1092	2016

Table 4:
Full-time/part-time

	Volunteers	Non- volunteers	All respondents
Full-time student	94%	96%	95%
Part-time student	6%	4%	5%
	921	1091	2012

In interpreting rates of volunteering keep in mind more females than males took the survey (see section 1.3.3)







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