

Impact of Volunteering with NHS Lothian Survey Report 2022

Background

'Volunteering is transformational: for the volunteer, for the beneficiary and for communities' – is the aim set out in 'A Nation with Ambition' and echoed in 'Volunteering Well – NHS Lothian Volunteering Strategy 2018-2023.' To find out if volunteering with NHS Lothian is transformational for our volunteers an anonymous annual survey is conducted.

Key Findings

- 82.3% of volunteers were motivated to volunteer with NHS Lothian to give something back.
- 88.8% of 16-21 year olds volunteering with NHS Lothian were motivated to do so due to an interest in a career in the NHS or because they were seeking work experience.
- 34.2% of volunteers stated meeting new people was a motivation for volunteering.
- 72.4% of volunteers reported an increase in their confidence.
- 66.8% of volunteers reported an improvement in mental wellbeing.
- 35.7% of volunteers reported an improvement in their physical wellbeing.
- 81.5% of volunteers reported an improvement in their skills or knowledge.

Survey Distribution

In January 2022 the survey was shared via email with 556 active volunteers who were making a weekly contribution of 2 or more hours a week. The survey was also shared with 150 'inactive volunteers' The inactive volunteers were a combination of volunteers who provide occasional or annual support for a specific event, who were stood down as the result of a Covid Age Risk Assessment or were taking a break for study or person reasons.

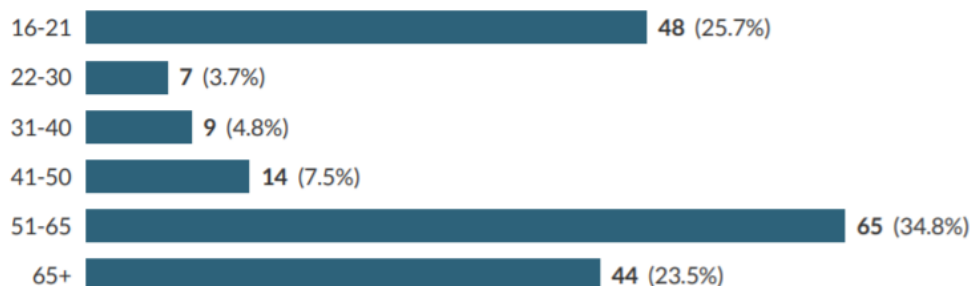
The survey was open for 6 weeks from 4th January to 16th February. The survey was promoted through a feature in 'Volunteering News', on email signatures, through a reminder email to all volunteers and through Voluntary Services Managers interactions with volunteers.

The Respondents

187 volunteers participated in the survey. 90.3% (168) of respondents described their volunteering status as active which means just under a third of active volunteers participated in the survey. 6.5% (12) described themselves as currently inactive and 3.2% (6) as other. Those describing themselves as other were on a break, considering retiring or retraining to take on a different volunteering roles.

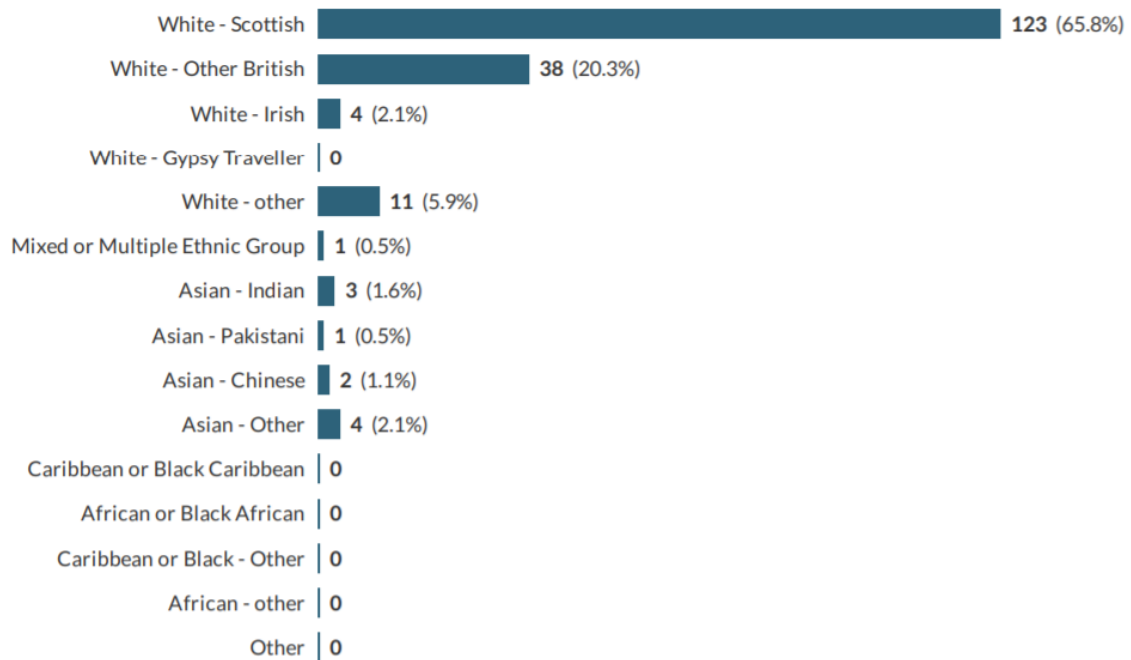
79.1% (148) of respondents described themselves as female and 20.9% (39) as male.

The age of the respondents reflected the age profile of the volunteer team at the time the survey was conducted. The largest groups of respondents were aged 51-65 and 16-21.

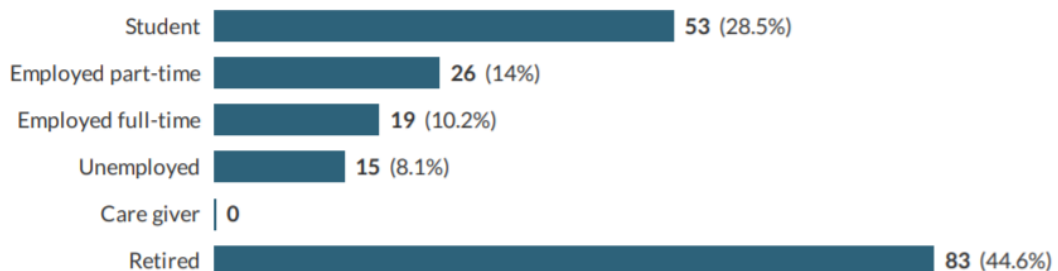


There is some changes to the age profile of respondents compared to the 2021 survey with reductions of approximately half in the number of volunteers aged between 22 and 51 and an increase in those over the age of 51. This is most likely linked to the easing of pandemic restrictions, ending of furlough, etc. making volunteering more difficult for/less desirable to those in employment. This has coincided with an increased confidence amongst older people that is safe to volunteer. NHS Lothian's implementation of the Covid Age Risk Assessment will also be impacting on the age profile of the volunteer team as a number of volunteers (most frequently from the 65+ group) are stood down.

Similarly, the way in which respondents described their ethnic background was reflective of the volunteer team.



Volunteers were asked to give a broad indication of their economic status



NB: percentages total more than 100% as respondents were able to select all option they felt applied.

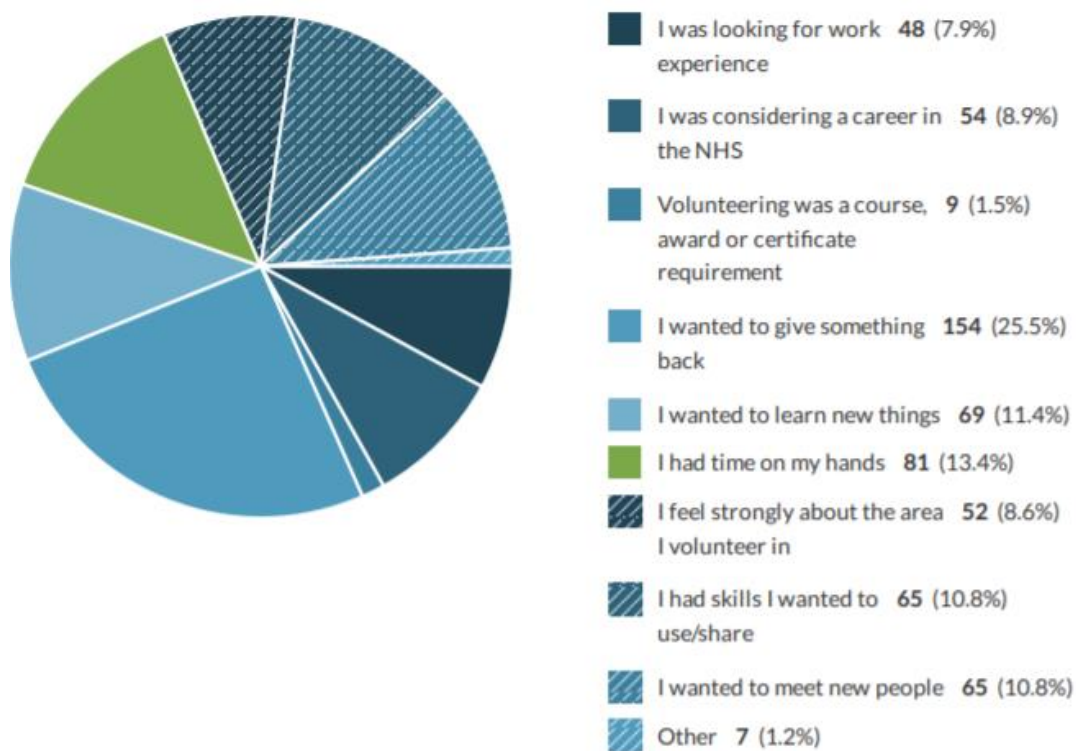
When compared to the survey conducted in January 2021 there are significant shifts in the economic status of respondents; with a 10.4% increase in students, a 6% increase in those describing themselves as retired, and 9.2% decrease in those describing themselves as in full or part time employment. The decrease in those volunteering alongside employment appears to be linked to the easing of pandemic restrictions which saw significant numbers of volunteers in employment

retire from not just the NHS Lothian volunteer team but across the majority of volunteering organisations.

What Motivates Individuals to Volunteer with NHS Lothian?

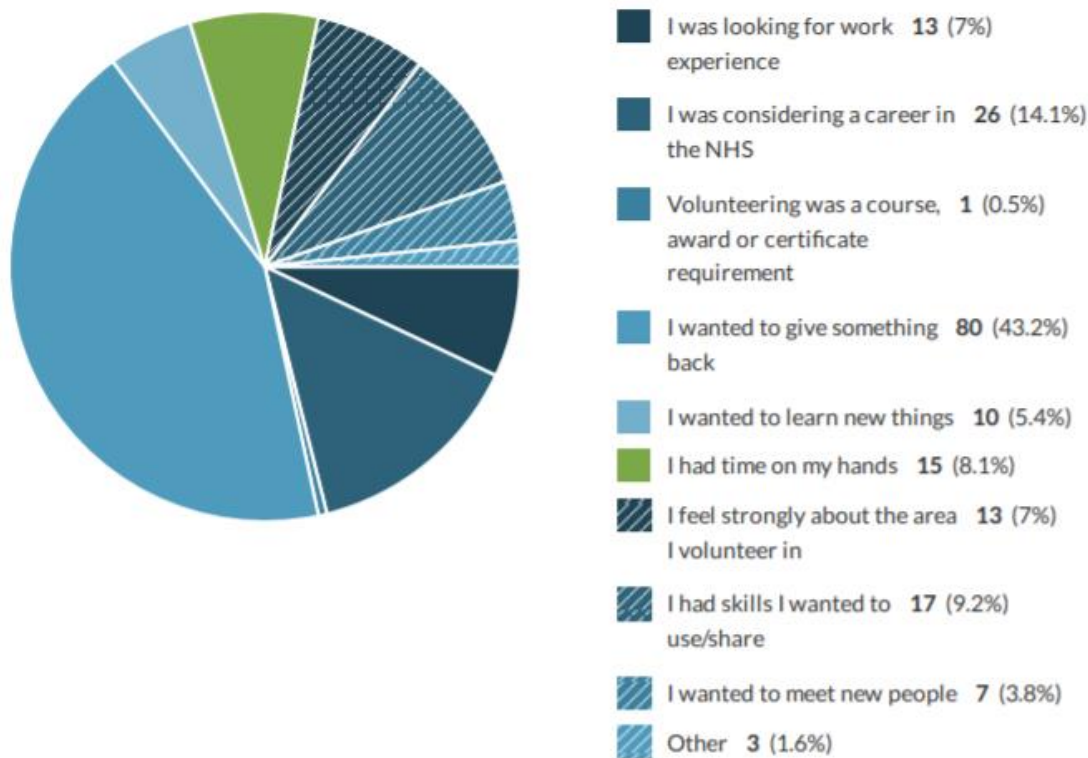
We were keen to understand what motivated individuals to volunteer with NHS Lothian/what was the volunteer's desired outcome and if those motivations had been adequately addressed/that outcome achieved. Volunteers were asked to select from a list of possible motivations and given an 'other' option too. The list was based on data from application forms, interviews and national research.

What motivated you to volunteer with NHS Lothian?



NB: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

The most important motivation in the volunteering with NHS Lothian



As in the 2021 survey the most commonly reported motivation to volunteer with NHS Lothian was to give something back with 154 volunteers reporting it as a motivating factor and 80 (43.2%) reporting it as the the most important motivation.

There was some significant differences in motivations across the different age groups and economic status. 88.8% (68) of those listing their economic status as student or unemployed reported wanted work experience, being interested in a career in the NHS or both among their motivations for volunteering. 4.4% (3) noted wanting to gain new skills as a motivation for volunteering. Of these 52.9% (36) listed that wanting work experience or interest in a career in the NHS as their main motivation for volunteering. 7.3% (5) reported learning new skills as their main motivation.

No volunteer who reported their economic status as retired or their age as over 51 listed work experience, interested in a career in the NHS or wanting to learn new skills as a motivation for volunteering. 46.9% (39) reported wanting to give something back, 15.6% (13) having skills they wanted to use/share, and 14.4% (12) having time on her hands, 6% (5) wanting to meet new people as their main motivation for volunteering.

We were keen to understand if their experience with NHS Lothian had addressed their initial motivations. 83.3% (155) reported yes, 3.2% (6) said no and 13.4% (25) were not sure.

Of those who reported their motivations were not being met two were currently inactive and one reported feeling underutilised *'I feel I can so more, but their isn't anything else for me to do'* Female, 51-65, Retired. Those who where unsure also indicated feeling underutilised, and that they would like the oppourtinty to meet more people. Several felt they were too new in role to comment.

Those reporting yes frequently highlighted learning, feeling valued, feedback from staff and patients and one noted they had gained employment 'I got a job out of it' Female, 41-50, Employed.

'I've shared skills and developed new ones by observing lovely trained staff. I've attended courses and met new volunteers online with similar values to mine. I feel staff (and patients have appreciated my input)' Female, 51-65, Retired.

'I wanted to learn more about the everyday life of midwives and nurses and volunteering has given me a great insight into that. Also I wanted to help patients and staff and I feel that giving my time is a great way to free staff to work at their best' Female, 31-40, Student.

'The feedback that I receive from patients and staff confirms that I am adding value' Male, 51-65, Retired.

What Difference Does Volunteering Make?

'Volunteering for All' the Scottish Government's national framework for volunteering highlights multiple benefits for volunteers and the fact that different opportunities will lead to different benefits. Benefits to physical health, social benefits, mental wellbeing, and instrumental benefits are all noted. Our survey asked questions to explore these areas to understand what if any of these benefits NHS Lothian volunteers are gaining.

Has volunteering increased your personal, social or professional confidence?



Those reporting no impact all reported feeling confident prior to volunteering. People reporting that their confidence had improved a lot made the following comments;

'Before I found it quite difficult to connect with people who are very different from me. I saw sickness and disease as something that was scary and not to be confronted. Now, my experiences have taught me how providing that little bit of support is so beneficial to the individual but also you gain a lot back.' Male, 16-21, Student/employed part time.

'I can be quite socially anxious, so being pushed to talk with people outside of a school environment has helped me further my skills outside of a school setting' Female, 16-21, Student.

'Taught me that I have something to give' Male, 65+, Retired.

'I feel a lot more confident in the career choice I want to make' Female, 16-21, Student.

'Before volunteering, I was relatively quiet but now I would say my confidence has improved' Female, 16-21, Student.

Has volunteering improved your mental wellbeing?



The two volunteers who indicated their mental health was worse decline to provide any further comment. Those sitting no change largely said their mental health was good prior to volunteering. One noted that *'I feel that I am doing something worthwhile but it can be stressful'* another noted that they enjoyed volunteering but that it can be 'upsetting' when patients die. Volunteers who reported that their mental wellbeing had improved a lot made the following comments;

'Help my mental health dramatically, where I've not been on any medication in 5yrs now' Female, 41-50, unemployed.

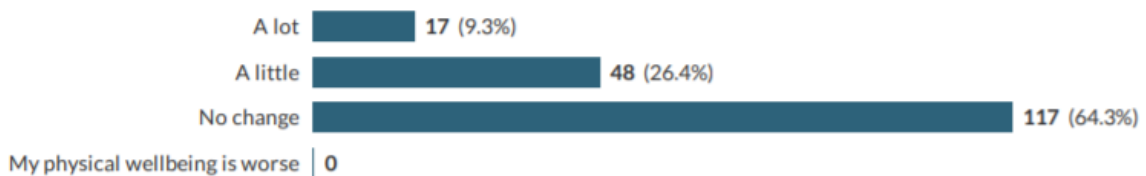
'I was at a very low ebb, full of self loathing and low self esteem - volunteering has changed this greatly' Male, 65+, Retired.

'Especially during lockdown and still now I find speaking to others and giving back to others brings me a lot of happiness.' Female, 16-21, Student.

'Volunteering has given me a purpose and being able to help other people takes me away from self' Female, 51-65, Retired.

'It feels nice to help another person' Female, 22-30, Student.

Has volunteering improved your physical wellbeing?



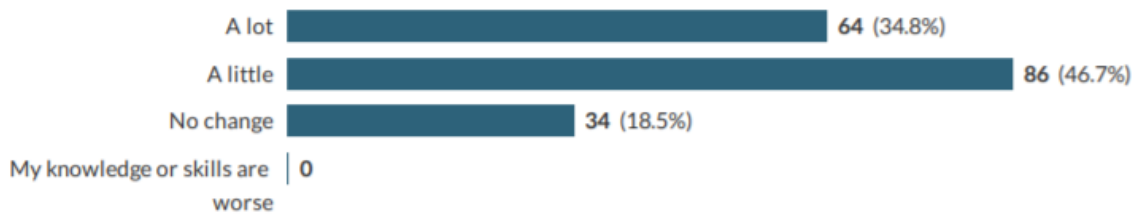
Almost all the comments made by those who reported a little or a lot of improvement in physical health commented on how much walking was involved in their volunteer roles making the following comments;

'My time on the ward is three hours of non-stop activity. So better than sitting watching TV' Male, 51-65, Employed.

'Having terminal cancer, volunteering has improved my health. Doctors tell me to keep doing volunteering as it has extended my life' Male, 65+, Retired.

One volunteer who reported no change in his physical wellbeing stated; *'Walking up and down is balanced by the Tunnock's teacakes'* Male, 51-65, Employed.

Has volunteering improved/developed your skills or knowledge?



91.1% (31) of the respondents reporting no change were retired. The majority of those who reported no change in their skills or knowledge made reference to the fact they were using skills or knowledge they already had in their role *'Volunteering makes use of skills I already had'* Female, 51-65, Retired. One noted as they volunteered on their own there had not be the opportunity to develop and another noted they had not set out to acquire new skills.

59.4% (38) of those reporting their skills or knowledge had improved a lot where students or unemployed and made comments like;

'I feel I understand working of the ward much better now and it has been really good to gain a small understanding what working as part of the hospital team feels like' Female, 16-21, Student, who listed one of her motivations for volunteering as considering a career in the NHS.

'I have learned a lot about the inner workings of a ward and the different roles that are available within the ward' Female, 16-21, Student, who listed on of her motivations for volunteering as considering a career in the NHS.

'Chance to really work on communication skills with people of all ages and backgrounds' Male, 16-21, Student, who did not list an interest in a career in the NHS or seeking work experience as a motivation for volunteering.

Do you feel/think your volunteering makes a meaningful contribution?

Research tells us that volunteers who feel they are making a meaningful contribution are more likely to continue to volunteer than those who do not.



Of the two respondents reporting they didn't feel they were making a meaningful contribution one stated it was not applicable as she is currently taking a break from volunteering as she is working as a vaccinator. The other who was female, 16-21 and a student reported *'I feel in the way of the staff and that I don't have anything I can do to help'*. Those reporting feeling they were making a large meaningful contribution all referenced receiving feedback from patients or staff underlining that feedback is an important way of letting volunteers know what they are doing is of value. Volunteers made comments like;

'The staff think of me as one of the team, able to help wherever possible' Male, 51-65, Unemployed.

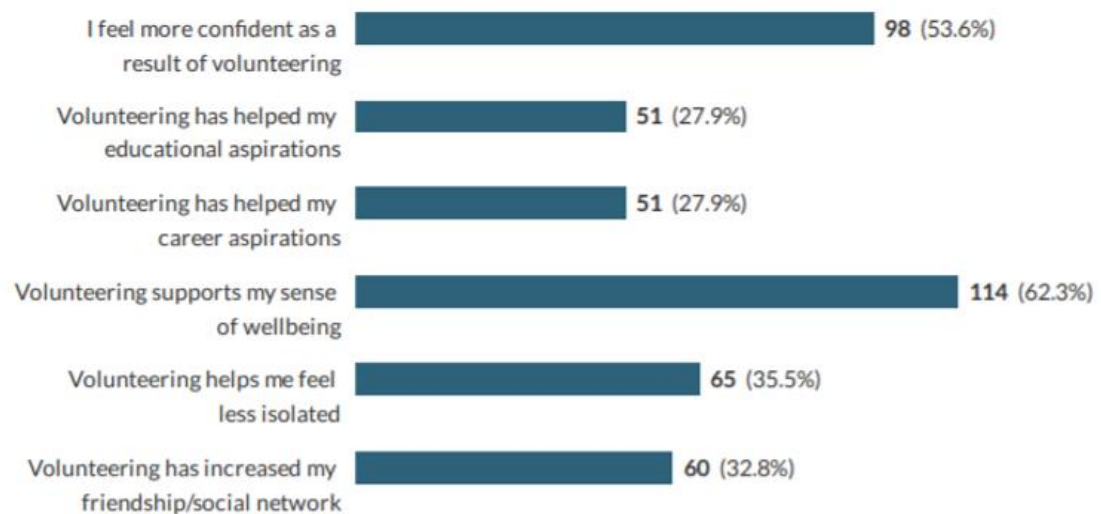
'As a welcome guide I'm the first person most people see and engage with when they arrive at the hospital. Most People are nervous and anxious coming in. Having the right people skills and giving a positive experience I know makes a difference from the responses and feedback from patients and others' Female, 51-65, Retired.

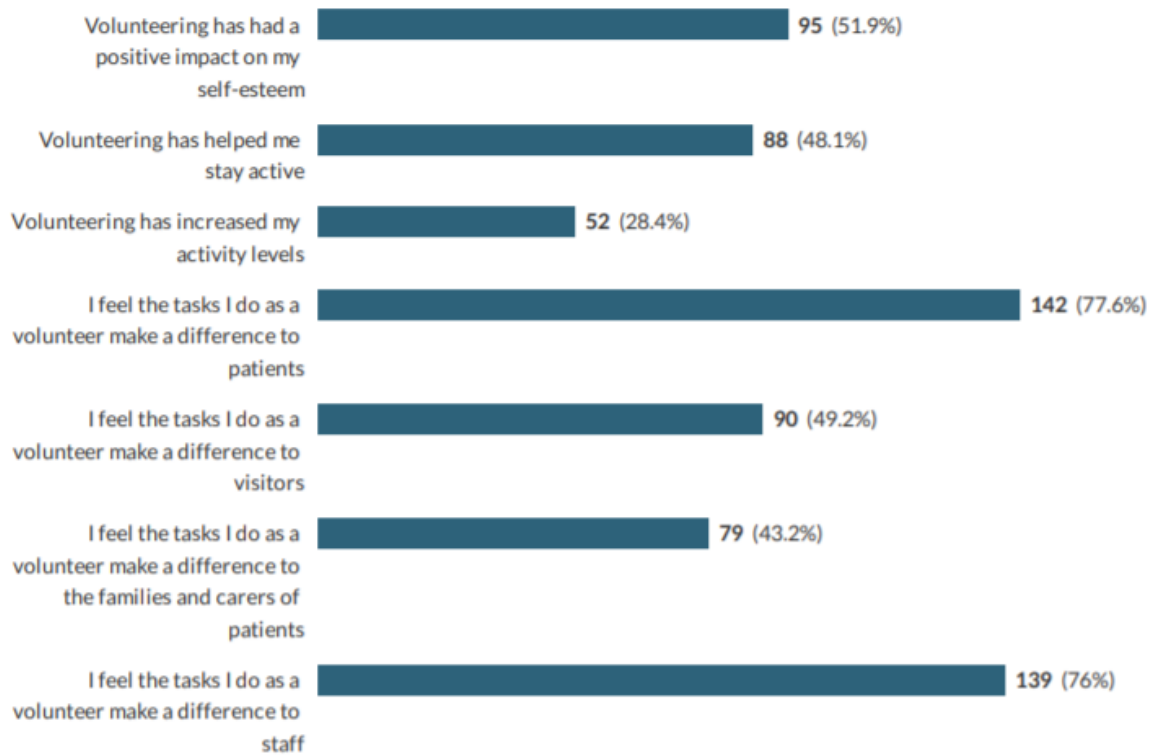
'I have seen how hard the staff work and how busy the wards are, so being able to take a little bit of pressure from them is great' Female, 16-21, Student.

'If I can make a patient laugh or smile, that in itself is a meaningful contribution' Female, 51-65, Unemployed.

'I'm fortunate in that there is at least always one member of staff who will tell me on a shift how much they appreciate my presence' Male, 51-65, Employed.

We offered volunteers the opportunity to make select from a number of statements about potential positive impacts of volunteering for themselves and others the ones they felt were true.





Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

There is only very minor variance of 1-3% in the percentage of volunteers indicating a statement was true to them when compared to the 2021 survey results.