

**Research on Volunteering in Scotland
Research Findings Scotland No. 4
January 2004**

This Research Findings Scotland is the fourth in a series of bulletins on research into volunteering in Scotland to be published by Volunteer Development Scotland. The findings are taken from an omnibus survey on informal volunteering, carried out for Volunteer Development Scotland by NFO System Three Scottish Opinion Survey.

A sample of 1060 adults aged 16 and over were interviewed 'in-home' in 52 sampling points throughout Scotland during the period 26th February to 5th March 2003.

Background to the VDS NFO System Three survey - March 2003

This NFO survey was designed to capture the levels of informal volunteering of adults across Scotland. Informal volunteering is helping a friend or neighbour in a self-managed way, e.g. helping them with some gardening or watching their home while they are on holiday. People who assist their friends and neighbours in this way don't necessarily consider their activities to be informal volunteering; hence the survey methodology employed the use of a showcard, listing examples of informal volunteering activity.

For the purpose of these Research Findings, those who have taken part in any of these activities listed are 'informal volunteers'.

The Key Findings

81% of adults in Scotland have volunteered informally in the last year. This indicates, that although people do not identify themselves as a volunteer in the traditional sense, many people across Scotland are helping out friends and neighbours on a regular basis.

According to the latest poll on formal volunteering¹, 38% of adults in Scotland volunteer currently or have volunteered at some point in their lives. This indicates that those who classify themselves as a volunteer are in the minority in Scotland while those who simply help out friends and neighbours when needed are in the majority. This gives Scotland an image of being a helping nation, an image that is supported by the levels of helping going on in local communities.

This is indicative of the concept of social capital. Social capital emphasises the strengthening of social networks, through trust and reciprocity between individuals, something to which helping a friend or neighbour, or volunteering through an organisation can contribute. Social capital may also contribute both economic and social benefits, which is key to a range of policy areas for both local and national government. Therefore, volunteering, either formal or informal, contributes to the social capital of our communities and our country. Those who know their neighbours and who help them out are contributing in as valid a way as those who volunteer on a more regulated basis.

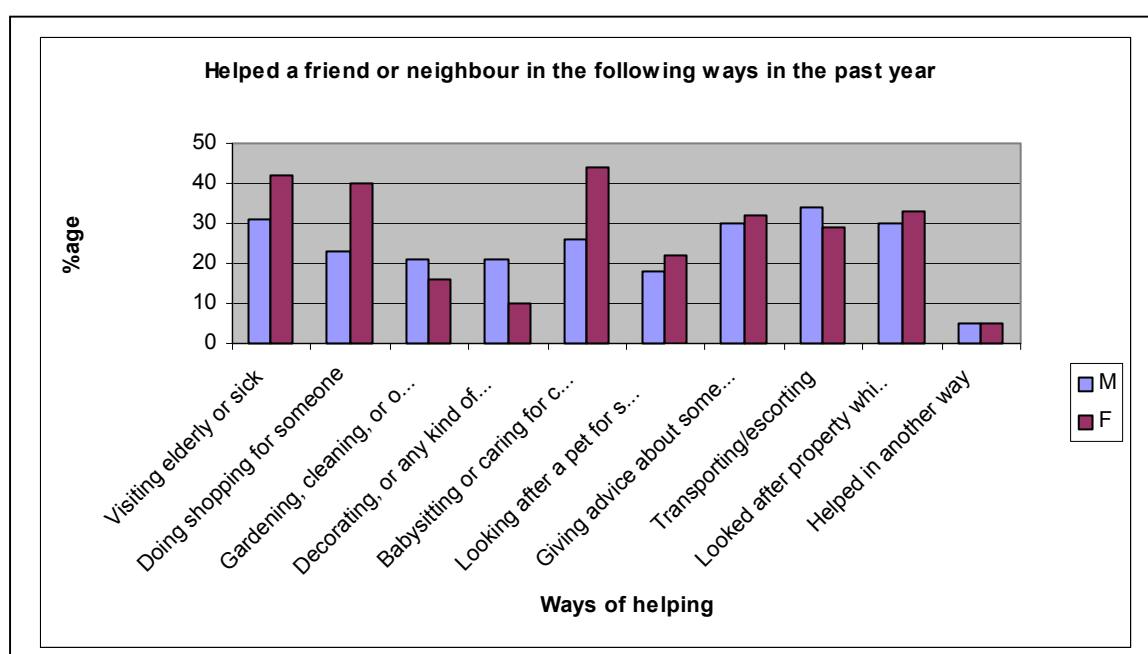
Although figures indicate that on the whole, most people help their neighbours and friends, there are some marked differences when we delve deeper into variables such as social class, age and geographical area.

¹ Research Findings Scotland No2, Volunteer Development Scotland, 2003

Gender

More women than men have helped a friend or neighbour in the past year, which correlates with the findings of other studies such as the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering², which also found that women were more likely to volunteer informally than their male counterparts.

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
HAVE HELPED A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS IN THE LAST YEAR	81	78	83
HAVE NOT HELPED FRIEND/NEIGHBOUR	19	22	17



Within the figures of males and females who help their friends and neighbours there are a wide range of varieties undertaken. Within these activities there are ones more specifically taken up by either males or females. The helping roles taken on by females are reflective of traditional female roles around the house such as doing shopping for someone, babysitting and visiting the sick and elderly. Male roles are more reflective of physical tasks such as gardening, decorating and transporting.

² The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering, Justin Davis-Smith, 1997

Age

Volunteering also peaks at certain times of life, for example more 16 to 24 year olds and 35 to 44 year olds have helped out a friend or neighbour than any other age group. This is reflective of the life cycle of these age groups which may have more free time, or be at a stage of their life where trust and reciprocity are of particular importance, e.g. having a young family.

As with the other demographic variables, the activities undertaken to help others vary across the age ranges. Those over 65 are least likely to take part in any physical activity such as babysitting or decorating but are more likely to visit the elderly or sick. In comparison to this, 50% of those between the ages of 16 and 24 helped out by babysitting or caring for children. In contrast to these figures, those between the ages of 45 and 54 are the most likely of all age groups to provide advice/letter writing and transporting than those in any other age group.

Social Economic Class

As regards class, more helping is done by those in the middle to upper classes than in the lower class level. In terms of geographical area, those in the North and West of Scotland are more likely to have helped than those living in the East and South of Scotland.

Those in the upper classes are twice as likely as their lower class counterparts to give advice to their neighbour or help with transportation. This highlights differences in knowledge and access to transport as a class divide. In contrast, the lower classes are most likely to help out with more physical based activities such as gardening and general household repairs.

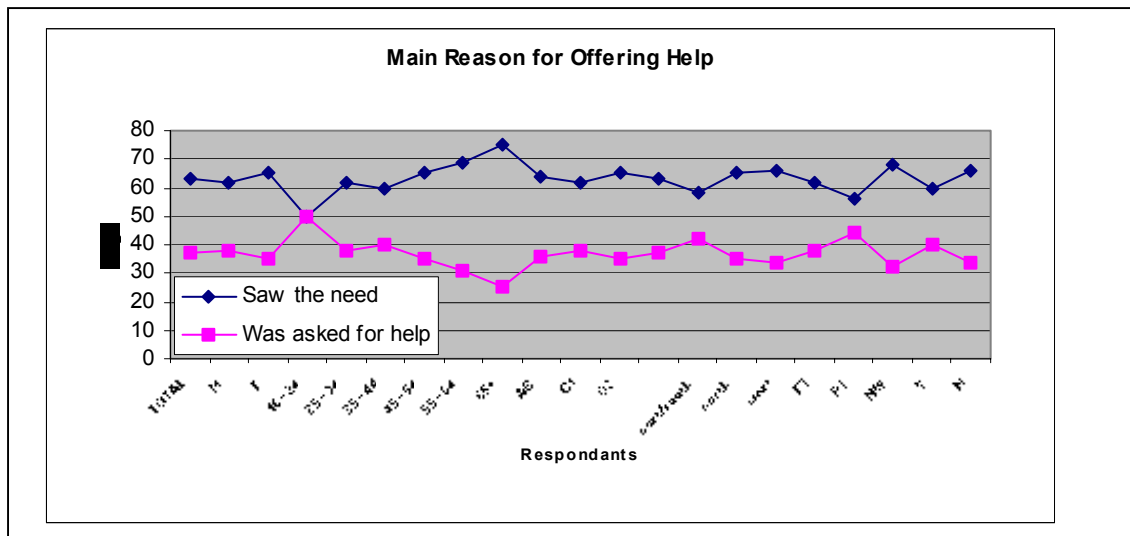
	East/South	North	West
HAVE HELPED A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS IN THE LAST YEAR	78	84	82
HAVE NOT HELPED FRIEND/NEIGHBOUR	22	16	18

Other common trends in volunteering imply that those with children are more likely to help than those without and that those working fulltime are more likely to help than their part time or non-working counterparts.

Working Status

Those working full time are more likely to provide help in terms of giving advice, transporting and looking after property. This may be an indicator that those working full time are 'more qualified' to give advice, are more likely to have access to transport and live in areas where neighbours go away often and are trusted to look after property for their neighbours. Those working part time are more likely to visit the elderly or sick, do shopping for someone and babysitting. These are typical daytime activities that you may expect would be more easily undertaken by those with more free time during the working week.

Why People Help



Across the board, most people help because they saw a need. Only one third of people help out because a friend or neighbour asked them. Within the demographic variables, there are trends of those more likely to offer help than others. Within the age groupings, those aged 65 and over are the most likely to offer help while those between 16 and 24 are the least likely. This indicates that altruism may be a thing of the past or that society today is not so geared towards offering help to friends or neighbours.

In common with the likeliness to volunteer, those living in the East and South of Scotland are least likely to offer help to their friend or neighbour than their counterparts in the North and West. A further interesting trend in within the working status category: those not working are the most likely to see a need to help despite being the least likely to help.

Summary of the Research Findings

- ❑ Compared with formal volunteering figures of 38% of adults in Scotland, 81% are helping a friend or neighbour thereby informally volunteering.
- ❑ Women are more likely to help than men
- ❑ Those living in the North and West of Scotland are more likely to help than their counterparts in the East and South
- ❑ Women take on more traditional female roles in their helping while men take on more physically demanding roles
- ❑ Those in the higher social classes are more likely to transport and give advice, giving an indication of a class divide as regards access to transport and knowledge
- ❑ Altruism is more evident in those in the 65+ category than in any other age category, with 16-24 year olds being the least likely to help a friend or neighbour

The Scottish Centre for Volunteering Research

The strategic review of Volunteer Development Scotland, the national centre for excellence in volunteer development confirmed the need for more research into volunteering in Scotland. With the support of the Lloyds TSB Foundation, VDS appointed a research co-ordinator, Laura Baird, in late 2002 whose role is to establish the Scottish Centre for Volunteering Research. The department has since expanded with the recruitment of a research assistant, Christine Reilly and through collaboration with the Department of Geography, University of Dundee, an ESRC CASE PhD student, Helen Timbrell.

The aims of the Scottish Centre for Volunteering Research are to promote research into volunteering in Scotland, and to develop knowledge and understanding of volunteering which is relevant to practitioners and policy makers. A research strategy has been produced committing the Centre to undertake and commission research into volunteering in Scotland which:

- is relevant to VDS members, networks and others with an interest in volunteering
- complements existing research into volunteering in Scotland
- explores aspects of volunteering in Scotland which are currently under-researched
- provides qualitative research, as well as meaningful statistics, on volunteering in Scotland to inform the department of social policy

The Centre will disseminate research findings in such a way as to maximise the impact on policy and practise.

References

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering, Justin Davis-Smith, 1997
Research Findings Scotland No. 2, Volunteer Development Scotland, 2003