

Environmental Volunteering Survey Analysis

Feedback was collected from volunteers via an online survey sent out to everyone who booked on to attend the Environmental Volunteers Celebration and Networking Event on the 19th of January (paper copies were also provided). 100 individuals attended this event from over 48 different environmental voluntary groups.

71 people filled out the survey. The key feedback from this is reflected below. This feedback provides a snapshot of the views held by individual volunteers and environmental voluntary groups in the city, which can provide baseline data to measure volunteer satisfaction and perception of the Council. However, further engagement would be needed to gain insights from a larger proportion of environmental volunteers in the city to draw conclusions that were fully representative.

Headlines

- The two most popular types of volunteer activities amongst respondents were litter picking (69%) and supporting nature/wildlife (51%). Some respondents also interestingly added in 'reporting fly tipping' as a voluntary activity which they participate in.
- 56% of volunteers indicated that all their voluntary work is done in their local area. The two most popular locations were S11 and S6.
- The most popular motivation for volunteering was because **they care about the planet and climate change** (83% of respondents).
- **94%** of respondents said that volunteering **helps them to feel connected** to their communities.
- **78%** of volunteers also agreed or strongly agreed that they felt **proud of the area they live**.
- 93% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering positively improves their mental wellbeing.

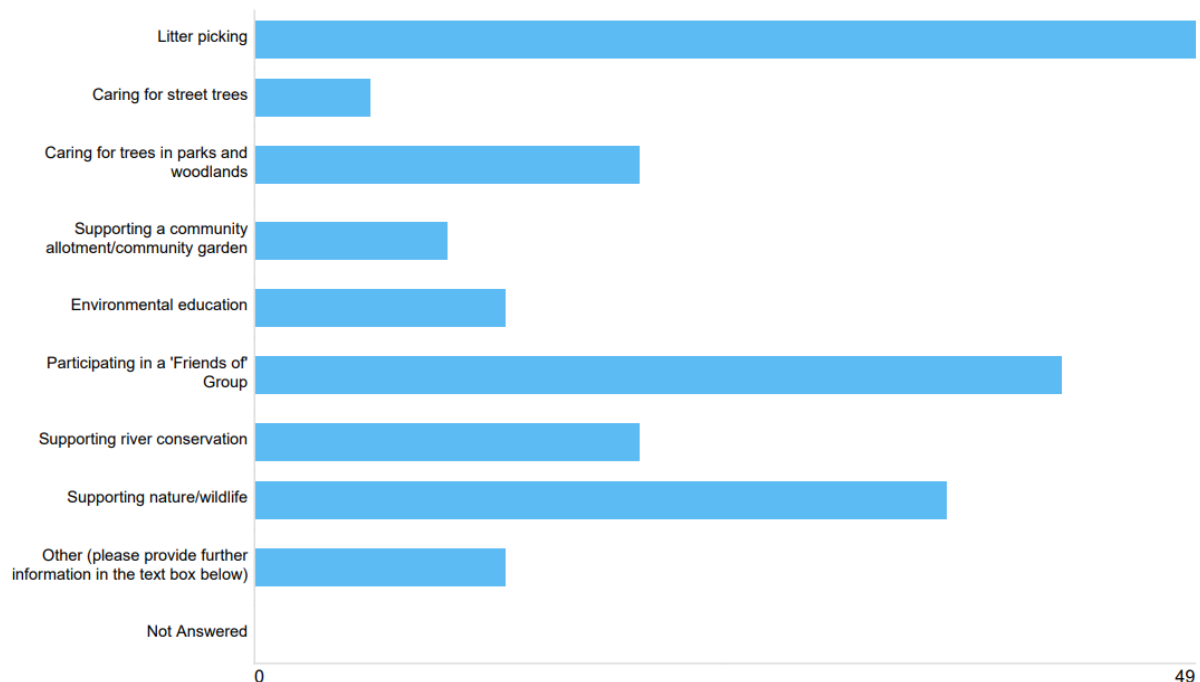
- 60% of volunteers claimed they face barriers when volunteering. The most common barriers which were reported were 'Knowing who to contact' (30%) and 'Not having enough time' (28%).
- **52% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that Sheffield City Council supports the work they do as a volunteer.**
- 48% of volunteers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were clear on what the Council can do to support them.
- 76% of respondents said they would be interested in attending another event like the Environmental Volunteers Networking Event in the future.

Full analysis

1) Volunteering in Sheffield

Question 3: What type of volunteering do you do for the environment? (Select all that apply)

Volunteering types

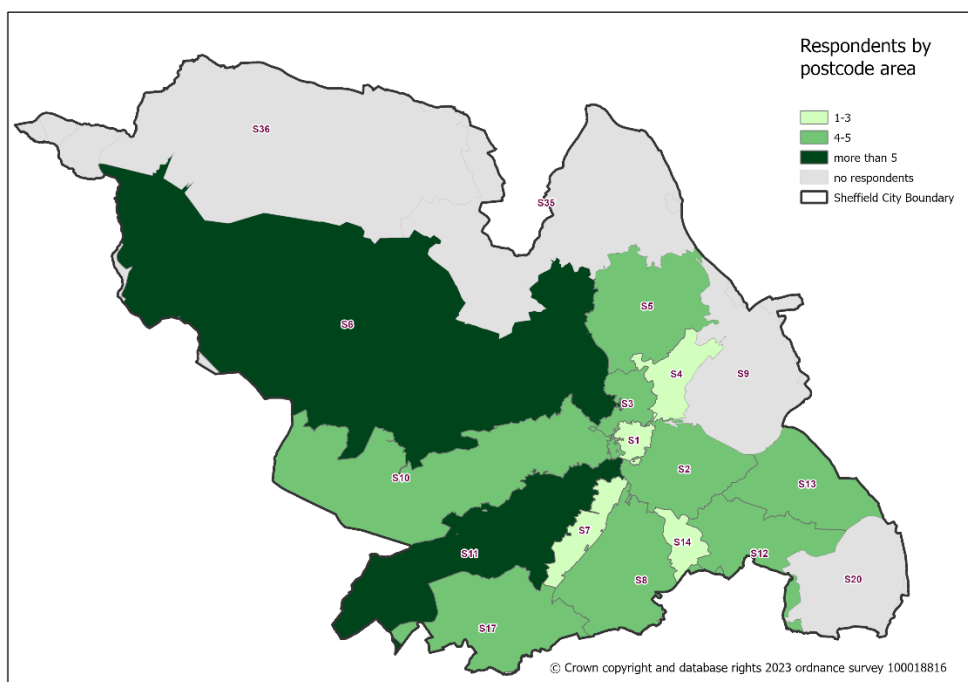


The two most popular types of volunteer activities amongst respondents were litter picking (69%) and supporting nature/wildlife (51%).

21 respondents also added comments in 'other' and described their involvement in activities such as: reporting fly tipping, holding a management or committee position, restoring buildings, and raising funding. This illustrates the diverse roles that volunteers take on and suggests that volunteers have their own unique definitions of the work they do.

Location

Respondents were asked for the first part of their postcode to capture where they were from. Respondents were also asked what proportion of their volunteering was carried out in their local area. 56% of respondents indicated that all their volunteering is carried out in their local area, and 38% of respondents indicated that at least some of their volunteering is carried out in their local area. With only 6% of respondents indicating that all of their volunteering is done outside of their local area. From this, we can reasonably assume that the postcodes of respondents also represents where most of the volunteering from these respondents is taking place.



The map above indicates the spread of respondents across different postcode areas in Sheffield.

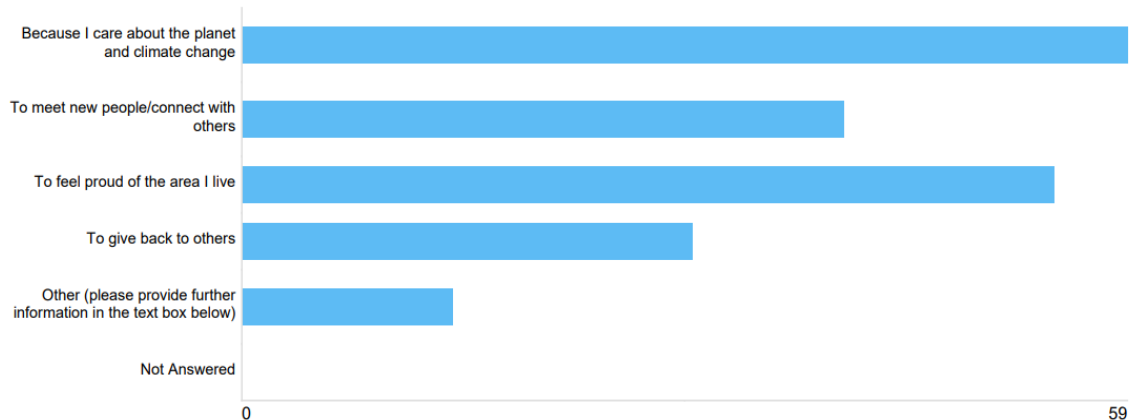
The map above illustrates that there is disparity in the spread of environmental volunteering across the city. Further work could be done to understand why some areas of the city may have less environmental volunteer engagement such as greater levels of deprivation. Once greater understanding is achieved, the Council could then work with communities to help mitigate these barriers and foster equality of access across the city.

Motivations for volunteering

Respondents were asked to reflect their motivations for volunteering to help the Council to better understand why people dedicate their time to environmental efforts, to help inspire more people to get involved.

Question 1: I volunteer for my local environment... (please select as many statements as apply)

Motivations for volunteering



The graph above indicates the different motivations volunteers have for caring for their local environment.

83% of respondents indicated that a key motivation was because they care about the planet and climate change. This is an interesting revelation, as whilst climate change can be more easily linked to environmental voluntary efforts such as tree planting, other voluntary efforts are less easily linked to carbon reduction. However, these results indicate that a passion around reducing climate change can inspire wider environmental efforts.

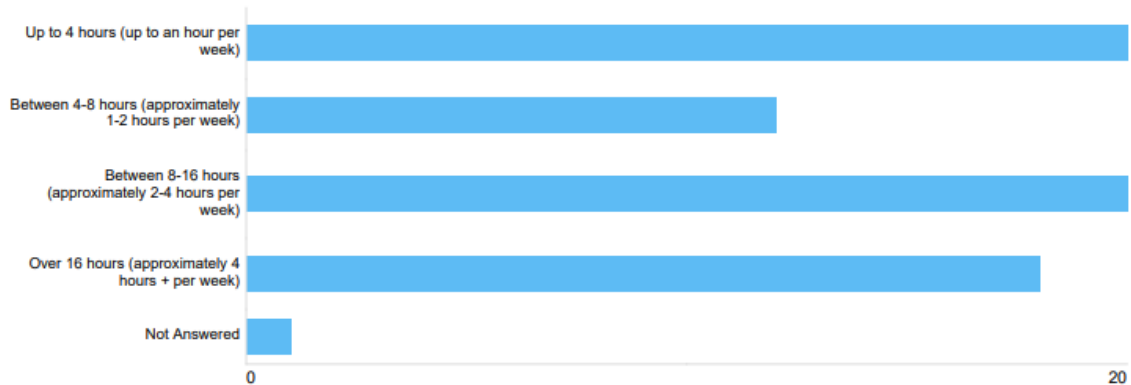
19 respondents also listed other motivations for volunteering for their local environment, including: to have fun, develop new skills, get exercise, and improve mental wellbeing. This indicates that people's motivations for volunteering are specific and personal, meaning is no 'one size fits all' approach to engaging new volunteers.

Hours completed

Respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of hours they dedicate to environmental volunteering.

Question 2: On average, how many hours per month do you volunteer to look after the environment?

Hours of volunteering per month



This graph indicates the average number of hours per month that respondents dedicate to environmental volunteering.

Respondents completed an average of 10 hours a month. Some volunteers even indicated in the free text box that they often do more than 20 hours a week. This illustrates the value that environmental volunteers bring to their communities through the amount of time they dedicate to caring for their local environments.

Community and Wellbeing

Respondents were asked a series of questions to rate themselves from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' to a number of statements about their experience and perception of the volunteering work they do.

- A resounding **94% of respondents said that volunteering helps them to feel connected to their communities**, with only 2.8% of respondents disagreeing.
- 78% of volunteers also agreed or strongly agreed that they felt proud of the area - they live.
- 93% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering positively improves their mental wellbeing.

These figures illustrate the value that environmental volunteering brings to the individuals themselves, showing how by supporting more people to volunteer, we can foster more social connection, pride, and overall greater wellbeing amongst residents.

2) Barriers to volunteering

Accessibility

When asked if they believed that environmental volunteering is accessible for all, 31% of volunteers disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates a significant

proportion of volunteers who believe that there are barriers preventing some individuals from getting involved.

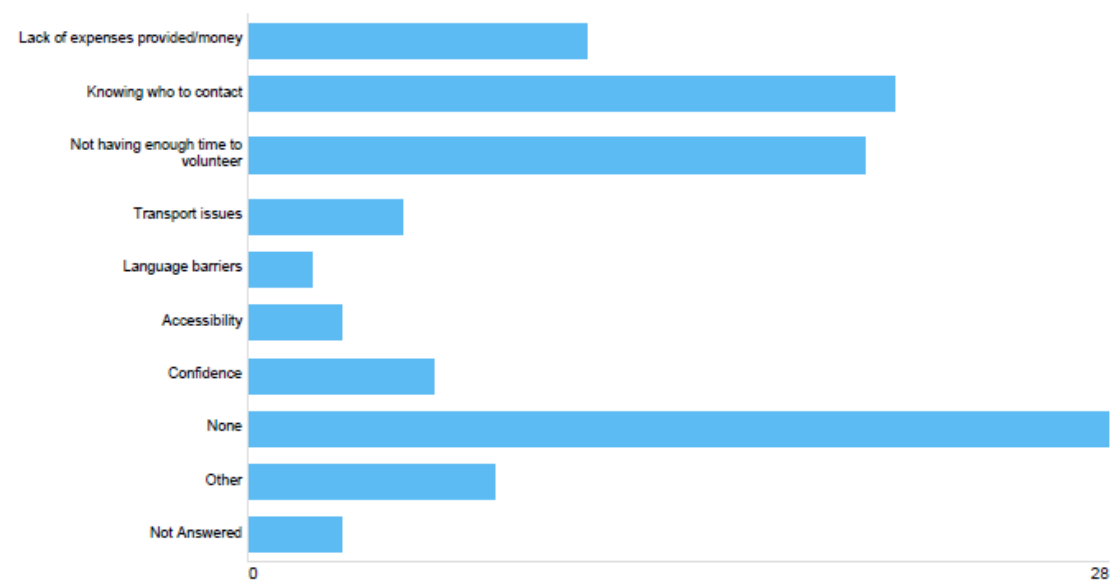
Covid-19

When respondents were asked whether they felt that the aftermath of the pandemic was still negatively affecting volunteering, just over half of respondents agreed. The views on this topic were relatively split, indicating that Covid-19 is still viewed to be a barrier to volunteering, however further research needs to be conducted particularly with those who are not currently volunteering as this may be a barrier preventing potential volunteers.

Respondents were also asked to reflect on any barriers they face when volunteering in their local environment.

Question 8: What barriers (if any) do you face when volunteering? (please select all that apply, if 'other' please provide more info in the text box provided below)

Barriers to Volunteering



The graph above shows the most common barriers which respondents said they faced when volunteering in their local environment.

60% of respondents said they do face barriers to volunteering, whilst the most common barriers which were reported were 'Knowing who to contact' (30%) and 'Not having enough time' (28%). This indicates that the Council needs to look into how to remove some of the barriers that volunteer face, not only supporting current volunteers to get involved more easily but also supporting volunteers to get involved for the first time.

3) Feeling supported

73% of volunteers either agreed or strongly agreed that they generally feel appreciated for the work they do. Furthermore, 52% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that Sheffield City Council supports the work they do as a volunteer. Whilst 27% of volunteers either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

48% of volunteers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were clear on what the Council can do to support them, with 30% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, 61% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that they knew where to go to pursue new volunteering opportunities, 27% of volunteers either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

This indicates that, in general, most volunteers are aware of where to go to pursue external volunteering support- whereas less volunteers are aware of what the Council can specifically do to support them. Therefore, greater work needs to be done to improve the way we communicate our offer to environmental volunteers, as well as ensuring volunteers feel supported and appreciated by the Council.

When asked for comments on how the Council could better support environmental volunteering, 45 responses were given which have been summarised into the following themes:

- A more joined-up approach to cross-departmental working.
- Point of contact/unclear who to ask regarding environmental issues.
- Improvements needed to Council reporting system.
- More enforcement and education to reduce and prevent litter, graffiti, and other environmental issues.
- Change of Council culture to be more open and engage with diverse cultural groups.

These suggestions mirror the issues and concerns which have come to light throughout engagement with community groups and our response to these are reflected in the key aims of the strategy.

4) Event feedback

This survey was also used to collect feedback for the Environmental Volunteer Networking Event which was hosted by the Council on the 19th of January. 54% of survey respondents said that they attended the event (38 individuals). Of those who attended, **76% of respondents said they would be interested in attending another event like this in the future.**

Respondents were asked to provide general feedback for the event through free text boxes.

Comments for what worked well for the event generally covered the rare opportunity to meet other groups and the positives that networking can bring.

Some of the comments received included:

“Hearing other groups”

“I picked up some useful contacts.”

“It was great that so many people attended. And great that the Council are trying to reach out to volunteer groups, a good opportunity to network too.”

“It was a positive move to get everyone together and a good start.”

Comments for what could be improved for next time generally covered improvements such as, a wider variety of speakers, shorter presentations, and more time for networking.

Some of the comments received included:

“More time for best working and list of participating at the event and what organization they work on.”

“Less speakers, more networking and planning/sharing together.”

“A greater number of much shorter presentations along with table discussions etc would have been better, I think.”

“It didn't feel like a celebration..There could have been an introduction of all the groups represented in the room. And a thank you from the organisations they volunteer for. The rest of the time could have been spent networking - over a sandwich.”

5) Demographics

The following section breaks down the demographics of respondents.

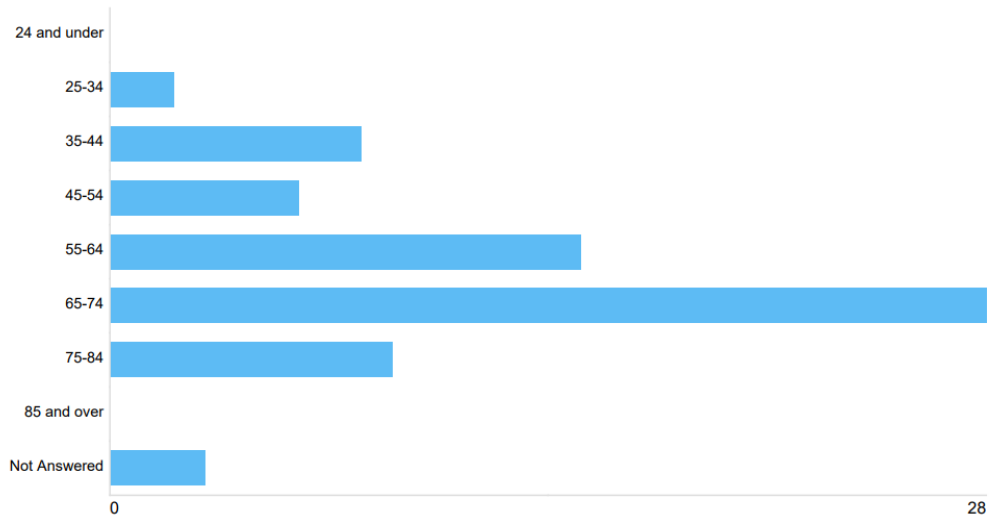
Age:

The most common age range of respondents was 65-74 (39%). Furthermore, 52% of respondents were over the age of 65, whereas only 16% of the population of Sheffield is over 65 (Census, 2021).

This suggests that most people engaged in environmental volunteering are older, this may be due to being retired, and having more time to dedicate to volunteering. The Council could therefore look into how it is engaging younger people to volunteer in their local environment.

Question 17: What is your age range?

age



The graph above indicates the age ranges of respondents.

Gender identity:

48% of respondents identified as female, and only 38% of respondents identified as male (with the rest of respondents choosing not to answer). This is generally reflective of the wider population as 51% of people in Sheffield are female.

Sexuality:

79% of respondents identified as heterosexual, and 6% of respondents identified as Bi or Gay/Lesbian, compared with 4% of the Sheffield population (2021 census). This suggests that this group of respondents were representative of the population of Sheffield in relation to sexual identity.

Race/Ethnicity

89% of respondents described themselves as White, with 11% of respondents identifying as non-white ethnic minority groups. This is less representative than the current population of Sheffield, being 74.5% White and 20.9% Non-White (Census 2021).

Sheffield is not alone in the lack of equal racial and ethnic representation across the environmental voluntary sector. Recent research indicates that just 7% of people working across environmental charities identified as people of colour, compared with 14% in the UK workforce at large (RACE report, 2022).

Further work should therefore be done to improve racial representation amongst environmental volunteers by working with diverse groups to understand and help overcome potential barriers.

Disability

11% of respondents indicated that they have a disability or long-term health condition, compared to 19% of the general Sheffield population (SCC Community Knowledge Profiles).

Data from other research indicates that there is not much difference between the proportion of people with or without disabilities taking part in volunteering, however research indicates that there a number of barriers which people with disabilities specifically face including disablist attitudes which can place inaccurate limitations on what people believe that volunteers with disabilities can do (Southby & South, 2016).

Carers

14% of respondents indicated that they are an unpaid carer for a family member or someone else, compared to around 10% of Sheffield (SCC, Community Knowledge Profiles).

A person having caring responsibilities may impact their ability to volunteer due to not having enough time, or not having access to respite care to enable them to volunteer.

Summary

In conclusion, the data collected from this survey provides the Council with baseline data to measure environmental volunteers' current perceptions of the Council, their experiences, and their motivations for volunteering. Through better understanding the experiences of environmental volunteers the Council can shape future work to ensure we are supporting and empowering residents from all backgrounds to get involved in caring for their local environment.

References:

Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, available at:

https://sheffield.communityinsight.org/?indicator=ks201ew0002_dr_20210101#

RACE Report: [The RACE Report - Racial Action for the Climate Emergency \(race-report.uk\)](#)

SCC, Community Knowledge Profiles: 1) Carers: [Carers Community.pdf \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#) 2) Disability: [Disabled People Community.pdf \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#)

Southby, K, & South J, 2016. Volunteering, inequalities and barriers to volunteering: a rapid evidence review. Available at: [74208298.pdf \(core.ac.uk\)](#)

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