

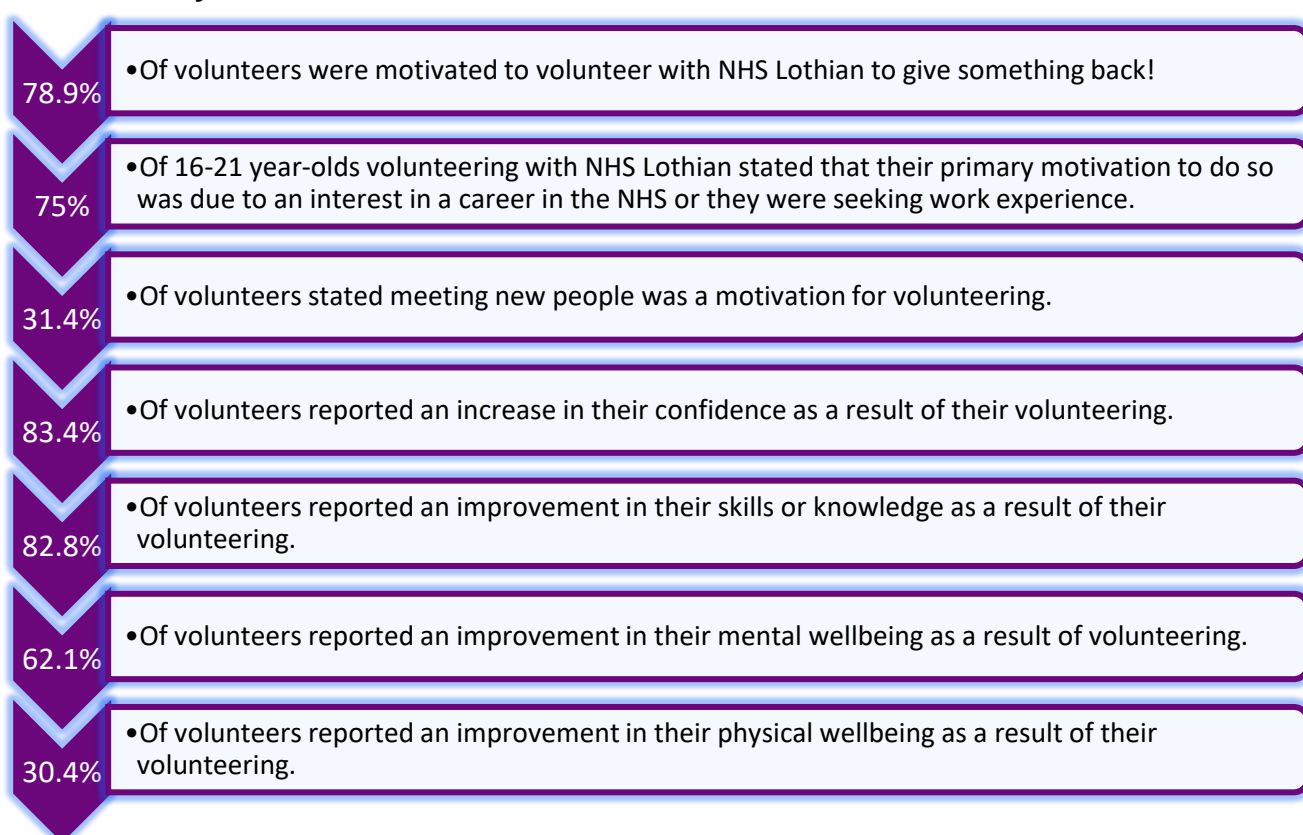
Understanding the impact of Volunteering with NHS Lothian

Survey Report 2023

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 Strategic Plan 2018-2023.' To find out if volunteering with NHS Lothian is transformational for our volunteers an anonymous annual survey is conducted.

Summary



Survey Distribution

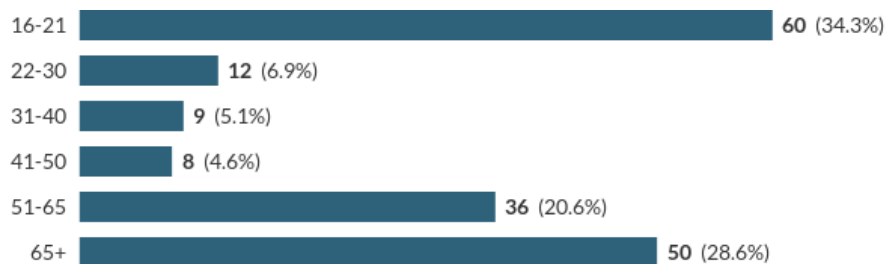
In January 2023 our annual impact survey was shared via email with 608 volunteers, which included 90 'inactive volunteers'. This included those who were taking a break from volunteering for a variety of reasons at the time of the survey, including, health, studying and caring responsibilities.

The survey was open for 6 weeks from 5th January to 17th February. The survey was promoted via email and via the Voluntary Services Managers interactions with volunteers.

2023 Survey Responses

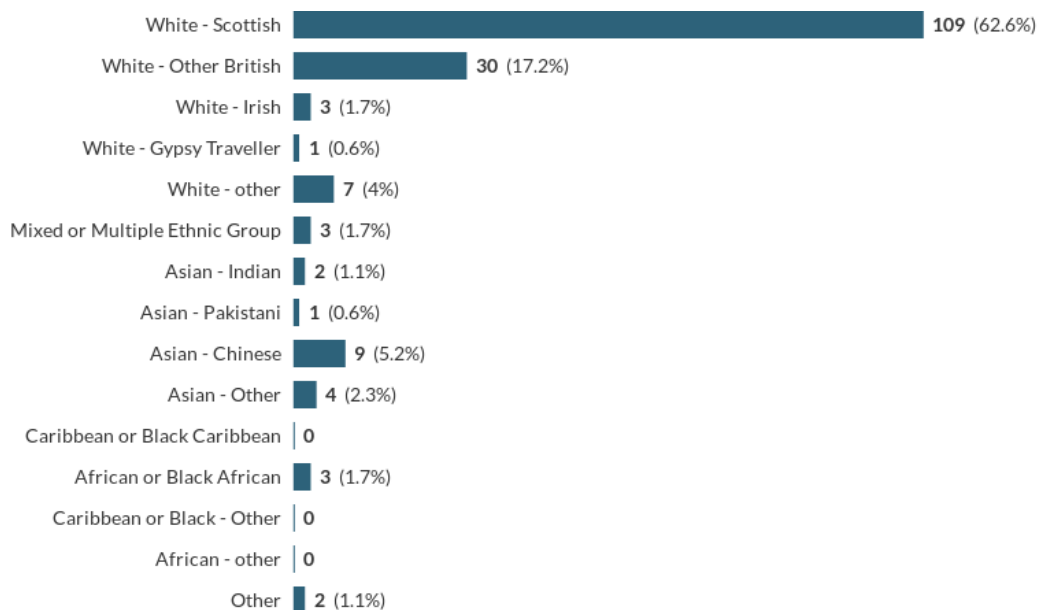
175 volunteers participated in the survey, which is a 29% response rate. 94.9% (166) of respondents described their volunteering status as active which means just over a third of active volunteers participated in the survey (32%).

5.1% (9) described themselves as currently inactive and 0.6% (1) chose not to respond. 72% (126) of respondents described themselves as female, 25% (44) as male, 1.1% (2) as non-binary and 1.1% (2) preferred not to say. One person chose not to respond. 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 16-21 (34.3%) and 65+ (28.6%).

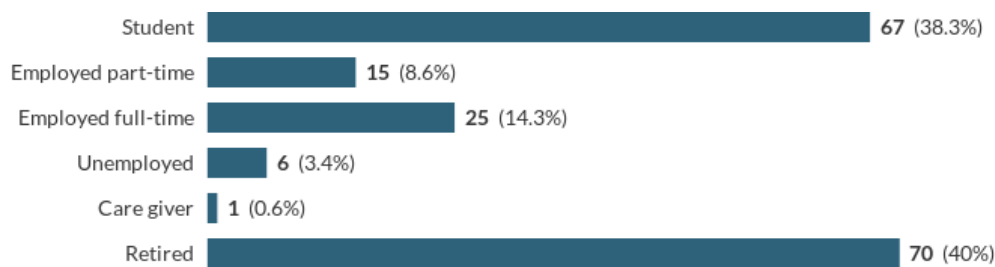


There are some changes to the age profile of respondents compared to the 2022 survey with reductions in the number of volunteers aged between 22 and 65. We have also seen an increase in the number of 16–21-year-olds and 65+. This is most likely due to some targeted promotion work we have undertaken with university and college students and people who have retired. This also follows the trend in 2022 where we saw a decrease in the number of working age people volunteering due to the easing of pandemic restrictions and those who had been able to volunteer returning to work.

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:



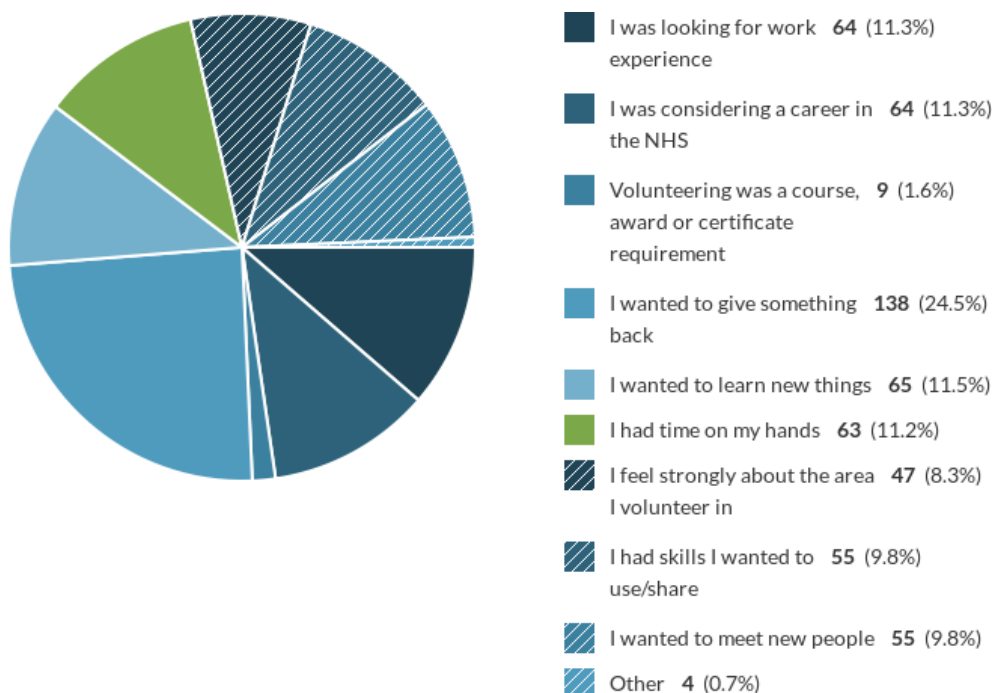
NB: percentages total more than 100% as respondents were able to select all options they felt applied.

When compared to the survey conducted in January 2022 there are shifts in the economic status of respondents; with a 9.8% increase in the number of volunteers describing themselves as students, this is 20% higher than in 2021. We have seen a slight reduction in the number of volunteers describing themselves as retired (down by 4.6%). However, we note a fairly stable number of people in employment, however, the number in full-time has increased and those in part-time has decreased. It is possible that the slight dip in the retired numbers is attributable to cost of living challenges and some previously retired people returning to work. We have also seen a number of retired volunteers coming to the end of their volunteering contributions.

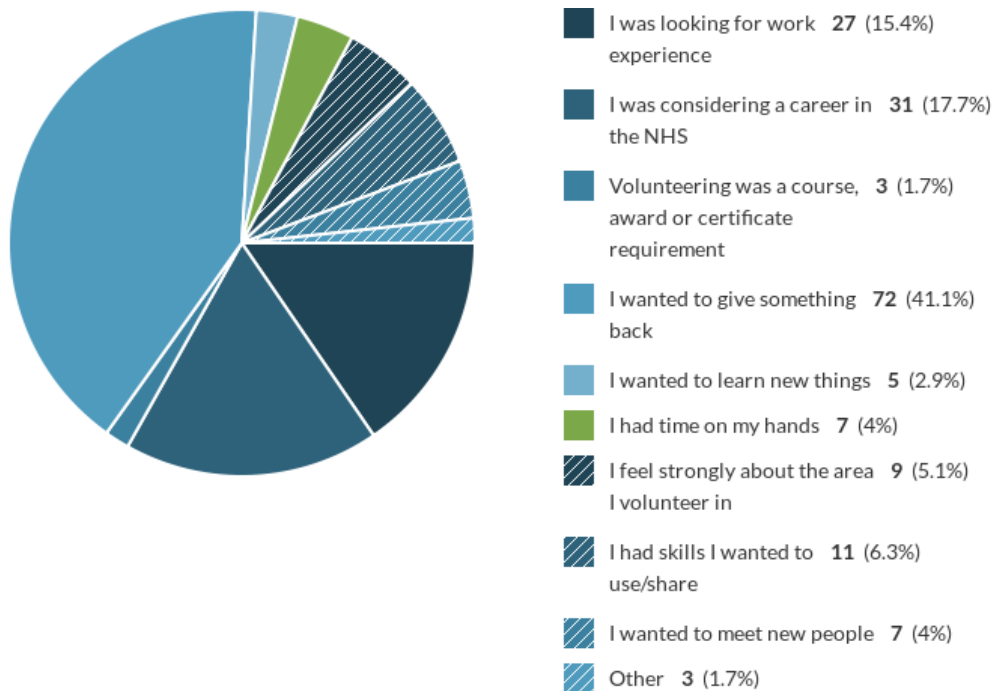
What Motivates Individuals to Volunteer with NHS Lothian?

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?



The most important motivation in the volunteering 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)

As in the 2021 and 2022 surveys the most commonly reported motivation to volunteer with NHS Lothian was to give something back with 138 volunteers reporting it as a motivating factor and 72 (41.1%) reporting it as the the most important motivation. There is a reasonable increase in the number of people stating that their main motivation for volunteering was to gain experience from a work perspective (8.4% increase) and those who were considering a career in healthcare (3.6% increase).

There were some sizeable differences in motivations across the different age groups and economic status.

95.3% (61) of those listing their economic status as student or unemployed reported wanting work experience, or had been interested in a career in the NHS or both among their motivations for volunteering. Of these 75% (48) listed that wanting work experience or interest in a career in the NHS as their main motivation for volunteering.

Of the volunteers who listed themselves as retired 92.8% (65) reported their reason for volunteering to include giving something back, of these 64.3% said this was their primary motivation to volunteer. 11.4% (8) said their primary motivation was to use/share skills they had and 7.1% (5) said they had time on their hands as their main reason to volunteer. 5.3% (4) wanted to meet new people, 7.1% (5) were passionate about the area of their volunteering and 1.3% (1) wanted to learn new things.

We were keen to understand if their experience with NHS Lothian had addressed their initial motivations. 79.9% (139) reported yes, 13.8% (24) said in part, 2.3% (4) said no and 4% (7) were not sure.

Of those who reported their motivations had not been met, two (2) were currently inactive and one (1) reported feeling there was a lack of things for them to do and skills for them to use e.g.,

‘for the full time I have been volunteering the only skills I have used is filling water jugs in between talking to patients’ - Prefer not to say, 16-21, Employed full time.

Those who were unsure or said their expectations had been met in part gave the following as reasons; they had wanted to meet more people their age, they want to do more and feel limited by the volunteer role, they were too new to comment, they had changed their mind about a career in NHS.

Those reporting yes frequently highlighted gaining experience, feeling valued, having a purpose, feedback from staff and patients and gaining real life insight into the NHS.

“I think this opportunity is great and anyone wanting to go into this sector should try it out, it has gave me a real insight on the day to day hospital staff have to deal with and the real impact staff and volunteers make on the patients.” Male, 16-21, Student.

“I really feel a valued part of a team within the hospital and that both staff and patients (and their families) appreciate what I am doing. I find it a very fulfilling part of my week.” Male, 51-65, Retired.

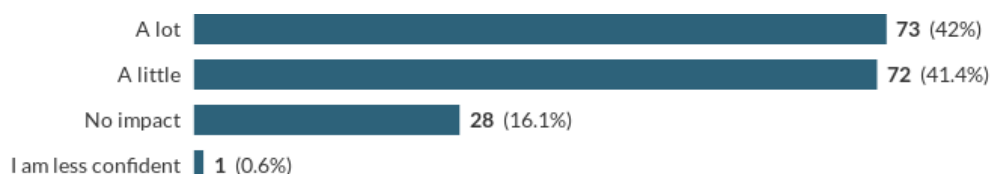
“I have had really great experience to confirm that the NHS is definitely where I want to work.” Female, 16-21, Student.

“I feel really useful on the ward. Both by helping the nurses with small tasks and also by cheering up the patients.” Female, 31-40, Employed full time.

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 at all reported feeling confident prior to volunteering. The one volunteer who indicated their confidence had declined stated this had been due to a lack of tasks to complete and interactions with staff on the ward they were placed in. People reporting that their confidence had improved a lot made the following comments;

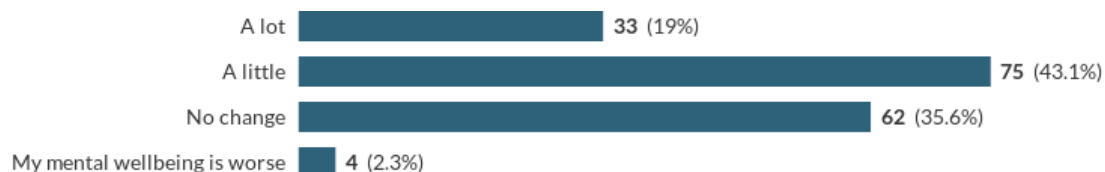
“I’m much more confident when talking to new people and I’m much more at ease in the hospital environment.” **Female, 16-21, Student**

“Before I did little and was not connected to the world. I am more so now - it's good to get out!” **Female, 51-65, Carer**

“I am more outgoing after volunteering as a result of talking to patients and staff.” **Female, 65+, Retired**

“I’ve gained a lot of self-confidence and personal self-worth by helping in the busy wards.” **Male, 51-65, Retired**

Has volunteering improved your mental wellbeing?



The four (4) volunteers who indicated their mental health was worse gave the following reasons:

“hospital environments can be very stressful for a young person”

“I’m finding it slightly difficult to cope after dealing with very sick patients”

“I volunteer at the children's cancer ward and that takes a toll on me emotionally at times”

“patients have discriminated me because I am Asian”.

Volunteers who reported that their mental wellbeing had improved a little or a lot made the following comments;

“Volunteering gives me a sense of worth that was missing when I retired.” **Male, 51-65, Retired.**

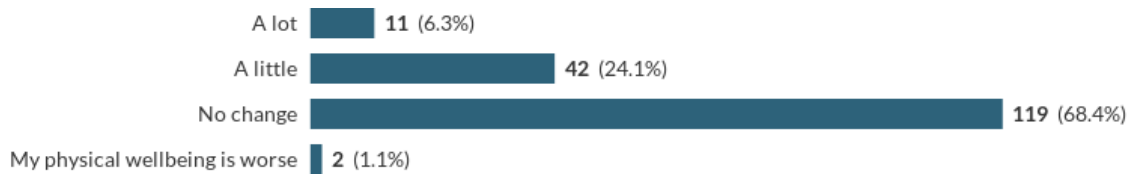
“I was in poor mental health before volunteering - I'm much better now.” **Male, 51-65, Retired.**

“I find the volunteering very fulfilling and this has improved my mental wellbeing.” Female, 41-50, Employed full-time.

“I was widowed very suddenly in 2019 and have had to rebuild my life. Volunteering has helped with this.” Female, 65+, Employed part-time.

“It’s a really rewarding way to spend time and has made me feel better in myself.” Male, 22-30, Employed full time.

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;

“Being active and got a purpose in life as a cancer suferer, it has improved my life.” Male, 65+, Retired.

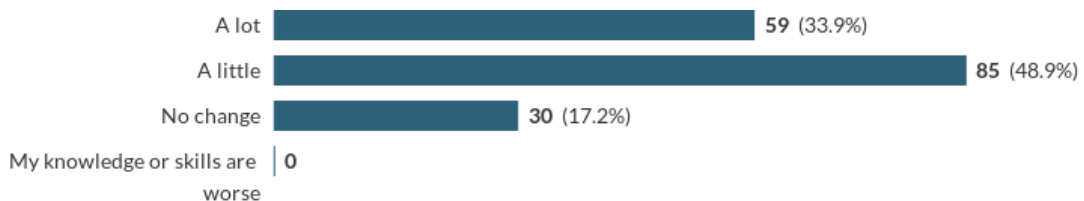
“Being on my feet a lot in the wards makes me physically active much more than I used to be.” Male, 51-65, Retired.

“Going up and down the wards and sometimes going home on foot from the hospital which is a good hour walk” Female, 16-21, Student.

“I’ve lost weight , become more physically active and feel better within myself.” Male, 51-65, Retired.

The two volunteers who noted their physical health had declined attributed this to their age and a need to be seated during periods of their volunteering.

Has volunteering improved/devloped your skills or knowledge?



56.7% (17) 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 had prior experience from professional backgrounds and training that they were using as opposed to acquiring new skills.

45.8% (66) of those reporting their skills or knowledge had improved a lot where students or unemployed and made comments like;

“Increased my skills of interacting with people and being caring.” **Male, 16-21, Student who wanted to give something back and find out more about a career in the NHS.**

“It’s given me insight in other non-academic aspects which I didn’t realise I lacked, given me more of an open mind and how to approach certain things.” **Female, 16-21, Student who was looking for a career in the NHS and an opportunity to gain some work experience.**

“Has helped with my confidence, team working, kindness and socialising skills by volunteering with the NHS” **Male, 16-21, Student who is hoping to move into a role within the NHS.**

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 five respondents reporting they didn’t feel they were making a meaningful contribution two chose not to comment further on their reasons, one indicated they were too new to their role to comment and another mentioned challenges in engaging patients in conversation. A final comment indicated challenges with staff within the ward had left them not knowing what to do.

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.

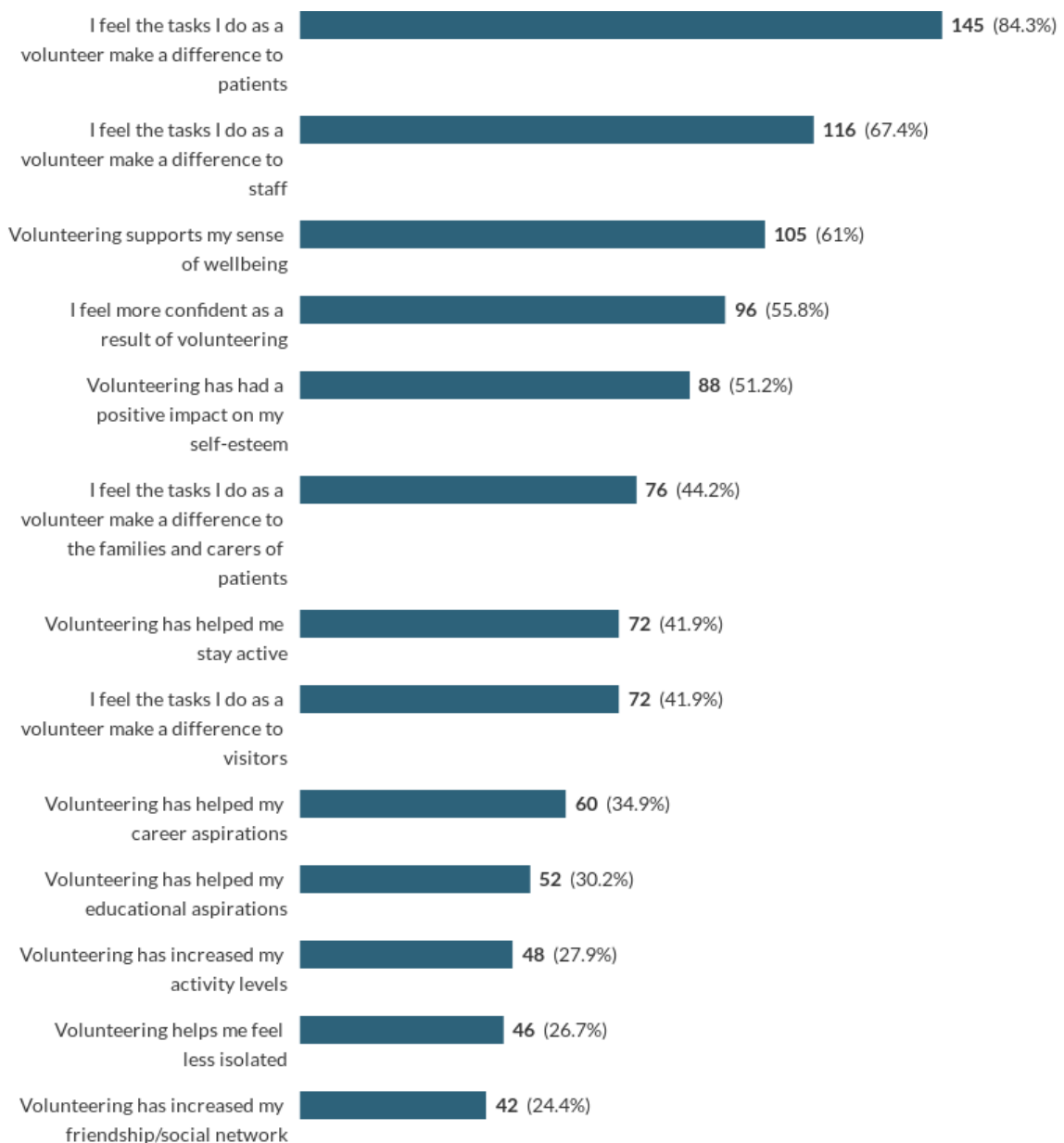
Volunteers made comments like;

“Just the feed back I get. The thank yous I get and the smiles on the patients faces sums it up.” **Female, 51-65, Employed full-time.**

“Being able to talk to patients and have them tell me they're happy i'm there to listen or help with small things helps make impact apparent.”
Non-binary, 16-21, Student.

“I always receive so much positive feedback from the staff and patients which shows that my work as a volunteer is greatly appreciated.”
Female, 16-21, Student.

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



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

There were some sizeable changes to responses to these statements when compared with 2022's results most notably in the following areas.

We have seen a sizeable decrease across some areas, most notably across the contribution volunteering has made to friendship networks (decrease of 8.4%) and isolation levels (decrease of 8.8%). It's possible that this is due to an increased ability outside of volunteering to spend time with friends and family as restrictions have eased and therefore volunteering is not meeting this need in the same way.

The other notable decrease has been in the degree to which volunteers feel their contribution makes a difference to staff, we have seen an 8.6% decrease compared with 2022 in this area. It is possible that this is due to current staffing pressures felt across services and volunteers feeling that they can make less of an impact as a result of this. The flip side of this decrease is that volunteers have indicated an increased sense that their volunteering contributions make a difference to patients (increase of 6.7%) so it's possible although volunteers feel they are supporting staff less, they feel they are supporting patients more.

We have also seen an increase in the extent to which their experience of volunteering has supported their career aspirations (increase of 7%).

Improvements volunteers would like to see

“Could be improved by staff expecting to see you on your shift and being aware of your role/presence.”

“More on site training would be good”

“Hospitals/Care centres should have more games, entertainment, dementia games to increase memory & brain activity.”

“Sometimes i'm not sure how to approach staff to ask if they'd like me to do something in particular because they're obviously very busy.”

“Adequate secure space to leave personal belongings and coat. Cupboard often has a lost key.”

“More training around calling out bad practice, more welcome from staff and build awareness of volunteering more”

Final comments from our NHS Lothian Volunteers

“I love being part of the NHS Lothian volunteering community!”

“The support of volunteering managers has made the volunteering experience very straightforward and enjoyable from the beginning so thank you to them!”

“A pleasure and a privilege - I look forward to every day.”

“Enjoying it very much so far and may increase my hours.”

“Been doing volunteering since October 2021 and I wish I had done it sooner.”

What next?

Following this year's feedback, the voluntary services team will:

Continue to raise awareness of our NHS Lothian volunteers across all of our staff and sites.

Implement volunteer noticeboards where it is possible to do so within wards, include volunteer pictures, role descriptions and timetables to inform staff of the role of volunteers.

Explore opportunities to promote and raise awareness of volunteers with staff across the staff bank.

Continue to explore and build robust pathways for volunteers wishing to gain employment within the NHS.

Liaise with colleagues and the NHS Lothian charity where additional resources for meaningful activity are required.

Review our training offer and consider the current need and demand for face to face training and the resource implications for this.

Review access to safe spaces for volunteers to leave belongings.

Explore and develop opportunities which offer greater social interaction between volunteers.

Encouraging staff to show appreciation for volunteers. For example by nominating them for Celebrating Success Awards.