



Leading Employee Volunteering

UK EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING 2022-23

Pioneering analysis
of employee volunteering
in the UK



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INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure and honour to introduce the inaugural UK Employee Volunteering Report 2022-23 from not-for-profit social enterprise Works4U. Despite this activity being carried out by corporates and other businesses in the UK for more than six decades there is a surprising lack of statistics on employee volunteering. This report begins to address this gap in data, providing pioneering analysis that will hopefully develop much further in the future.

Employee volunteering has developed from the 1960s where there was discussion and debate whether corporates had a social responsibility or not to today's world where employee volunteering can be considered a normal business activity. However, most of the data and information that supports this is anecdotal or snippets of analysis by studies whose main focus is something else.

This report provides for the first time insight into employee volunteering from an employee's perspective. As well as how much employee volunteering takes place it gives analysis on how it takes place, how much time is available for employees to volunteer, the perception of the impact of employee volunteering and whether employees think employers are doing enough to promote volunteering.

We hope employers find this report useful as part of the evaluation of their employee volunteering activities.

Last, but not least, a huge thank you to all the people who participated in the survey and interviews.

Dominic Pinkney
CEO
Works4U



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides brand new insight into the common practice of employee volunteering ('EV'). For the first time, we now have some understanding of how EV works from the employee perspective.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought almost a complete halt to EV and this research helps answer the question of whether EV has recovered to pre-pandemic levels or not.

The analysis for this report is based on an anonymous survey that was promoted in 2023 to employees across all United Kingdom nations as well as interviews carried out. It was open to any employer with 5 or more employees. Page 16 gives more detail on the collection and analysis of the data used for this research.

There are many take-aways from this research but one of the key findings is that not only has EV recovered to pre-pandemic levels, it has significantly increased. In addition, employers are playing a significantly increased role in the organisation of EV for its employees. See section 5 on page 10 for more detail.

Despite employers playing an increased role the overwhelming and unambiguous feedback from employees (almost 95%) is that they think employers should do more to promote volunteering opportunities.

KEY FINDINGS

Employee volunteering has increased significantly compared to before the pandemic

Almost 95% of survey respondents stated employers should do more to promote volunteering opportunities for their employees

“When we come back from volunteering we are really hyped up and productivity increases”

Survey Respondent

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The clear message that employees want employers to do more is corroborated through other analysis from this research. Almost a quarter (24.7%) of the survey respondents did not know how much time their employer gave them for volunteering. When those who had not participated were asked why they did not get involved in EV 28% of respondents said their employer allows it but does not promote it.

Employees want to do more employee volunteering. 98.4% stated that they would volunteer again with work.

28% reported the barrier to them participating in EV is due to being too busy at work. 19% reported no one had asked them to get involved in EV. Over a quarter (27%) stated that they had to organise the EV themselves rather than their employer.

72% of those who said their employer allowed volunteering said they had 1 day (39%) or 2 days (33%) per year available to them. 3% of respondents said their employer had a flexible programme with time allowed dependent on the activity or project.

Nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of respondents rated the impact of their employee volunteering as a 4 or a 5 (5 being the highest option). 8.9% stated they felt the impact was 2 or lower.

53.6% of survey respondents said they volunteered outside of work and further 20.8% stated they used to.



Our research analysis shows positive trends of increasing levels of employee volunteering, however, it appears employers are not keeping up with the demand for this activity from employees.

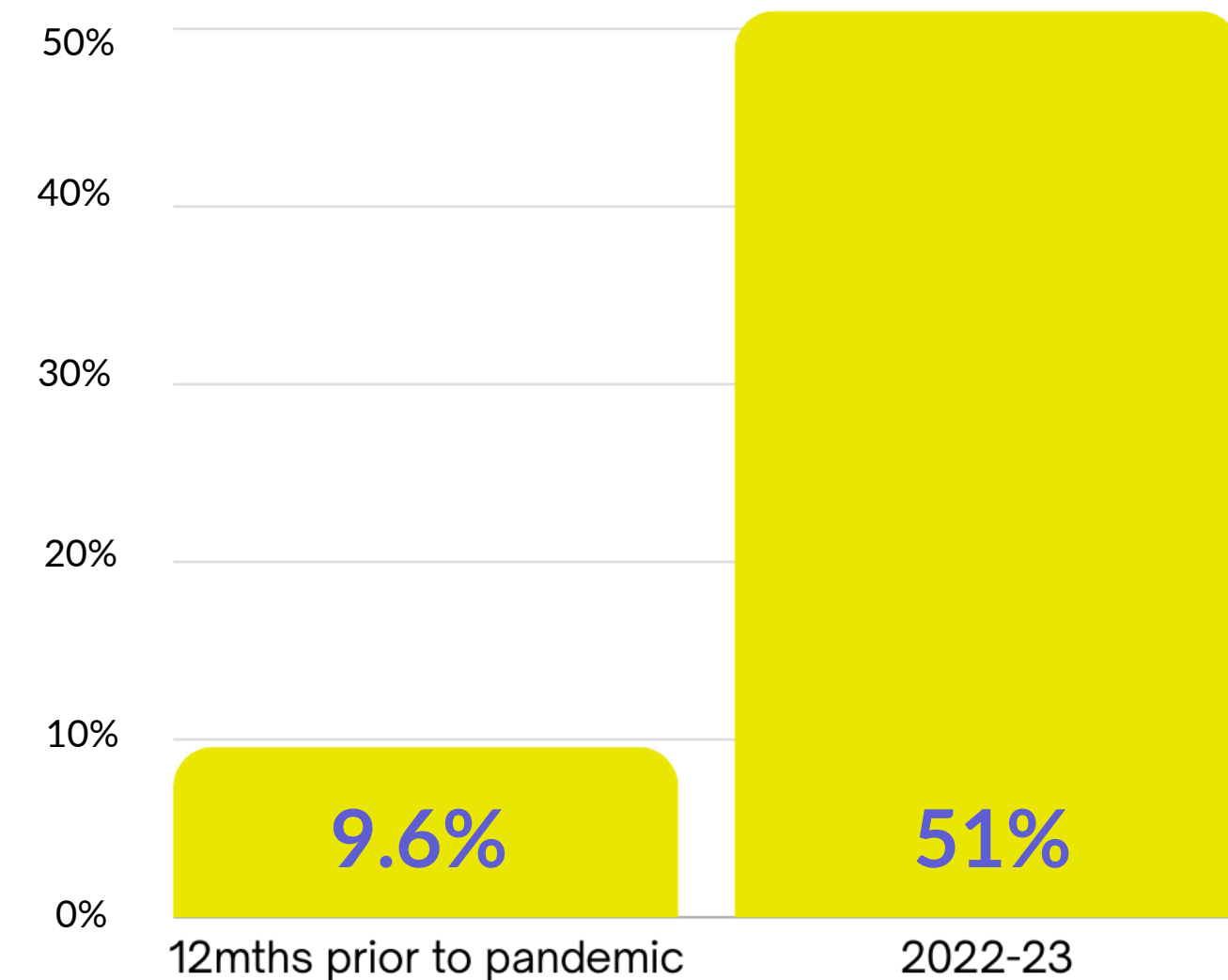
1. HAS EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING RECOVERED AFTER THE PANDEMIC?

The results of the survey show that EV is growing and that employers are playing a much more active role in supporting their employees to volunteer.

The analysis of responses from survey participants compared how employers supported employees to volunteer from the year prior to the pandemic to the last 12 months. Only 9.6% of employers organised volunteering for their employees in the year before the pandemic compared to 51% in the last 12 months.

This analysis confirms what employees are telling Works4U through our interviews and day-to-day work. Rather than it being something extra or special, it is increasingly expected by employees that their employer should offer and support them to volunteer. Employee volunteering has now come to be perceived by employees as business as usual, but employers are still catching up to this.

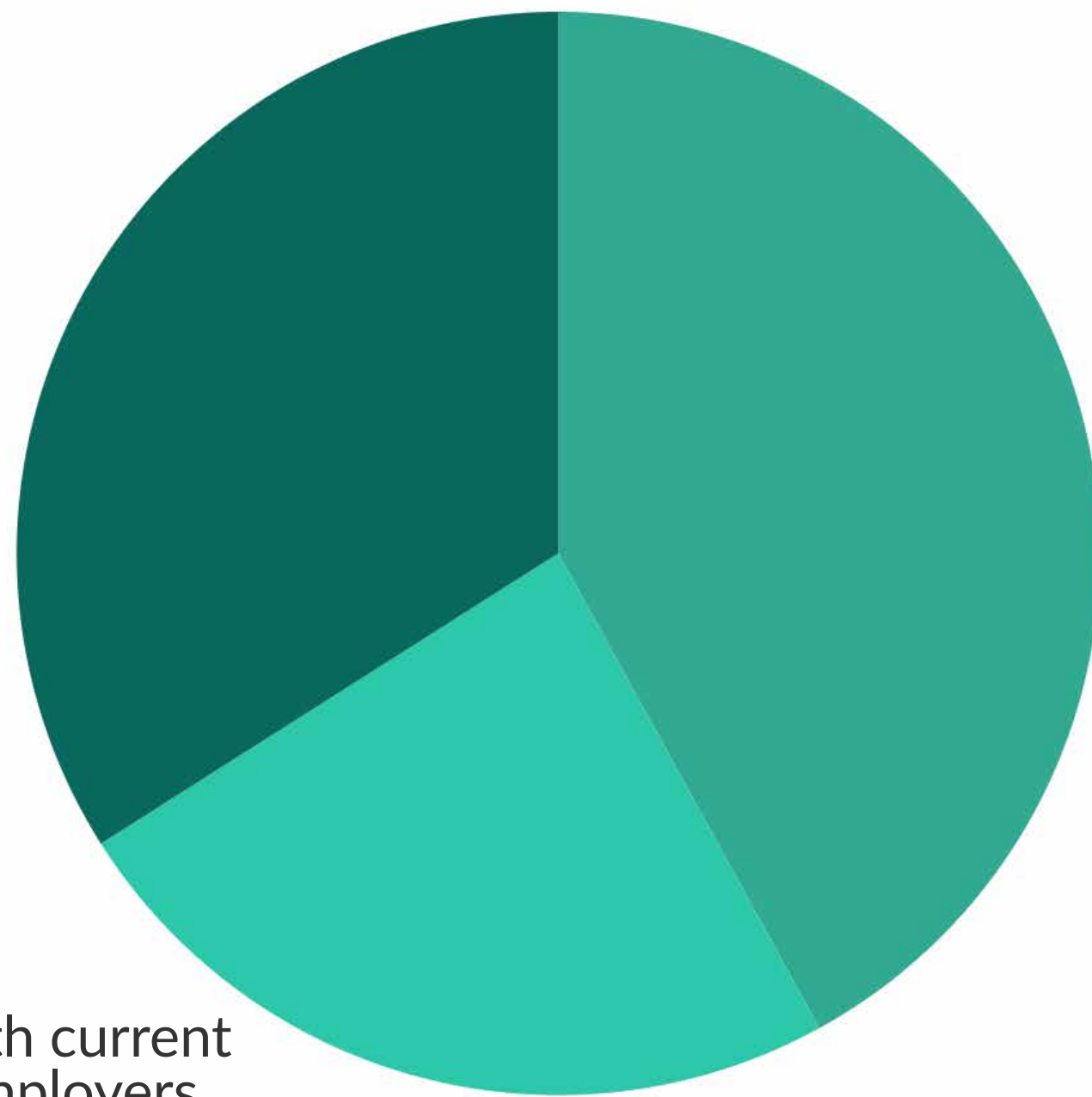
Employers organising employee volunteering



2. IS EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING A LONG-TERM ACTIVITY?

Of survey respondents who had volunteered with work, 66% stated they had volunteered with work in previous years either with their current employer (42%) or with their previous ones (24%). 34% stated this was the first year they had volunteered.

34%
First time
employee
volunteering



42%
Volunteered previously
with current employer

24%
Volunteered with current
and previous employers

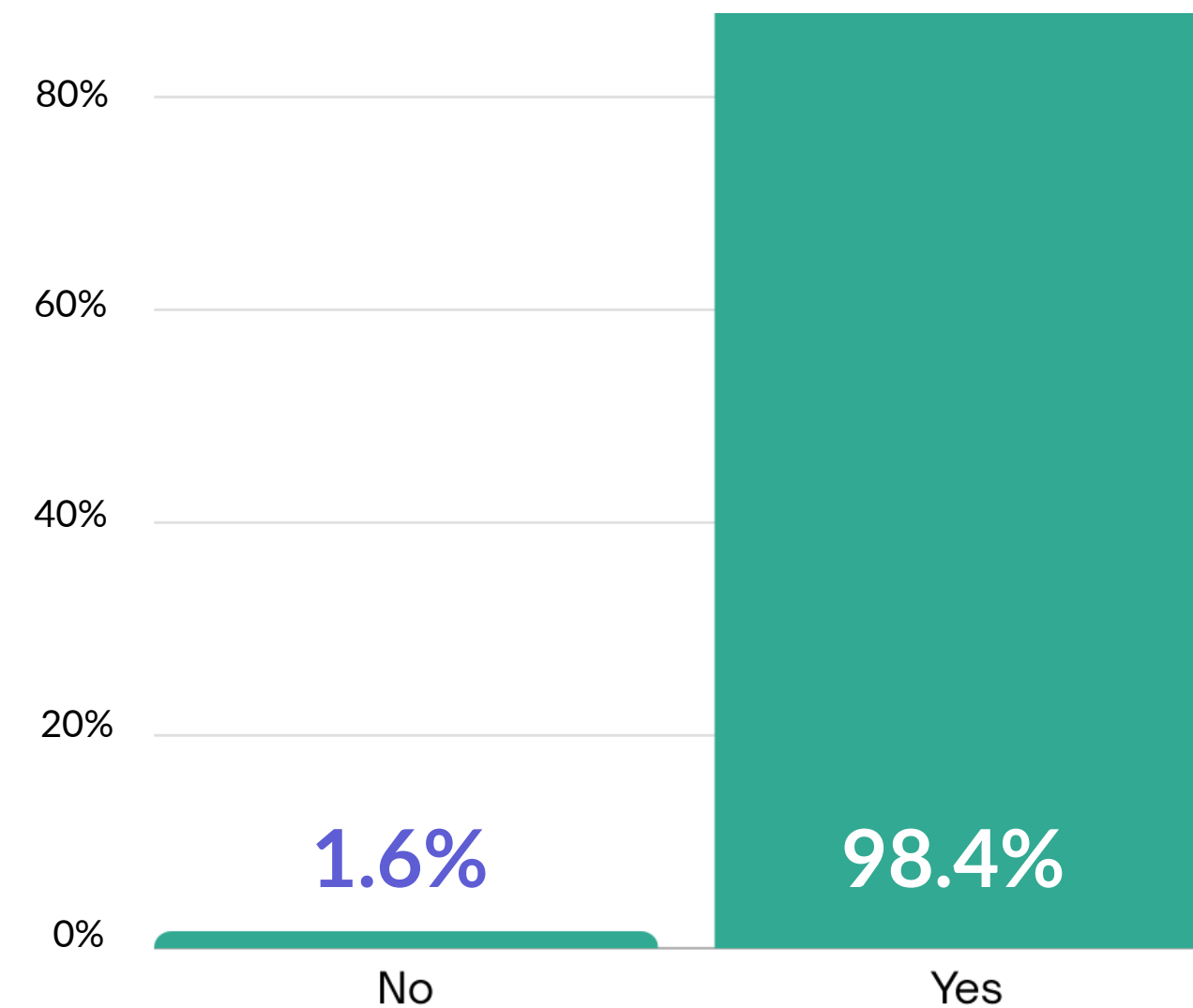


3. WOULD YOU VOLUNTEER WITH WORK AGAIN?

Survey respondents were emphatic in regards to the question of whether they would volunteer with work again. 98.4% stated a clear 'yes' that they would. Of the 1.6% who said 'no', the reason for this was that they had too much work to enable the time to do it.

This shows that there is a strong and overwhelming desire from employees for their employers to support and organise employee volunteering. This supports the notion that although employers are increasing their activity in this area, they are still far behind the demand from their employees.

Would you volunteer with work again?



4. BARRIERS TO EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING

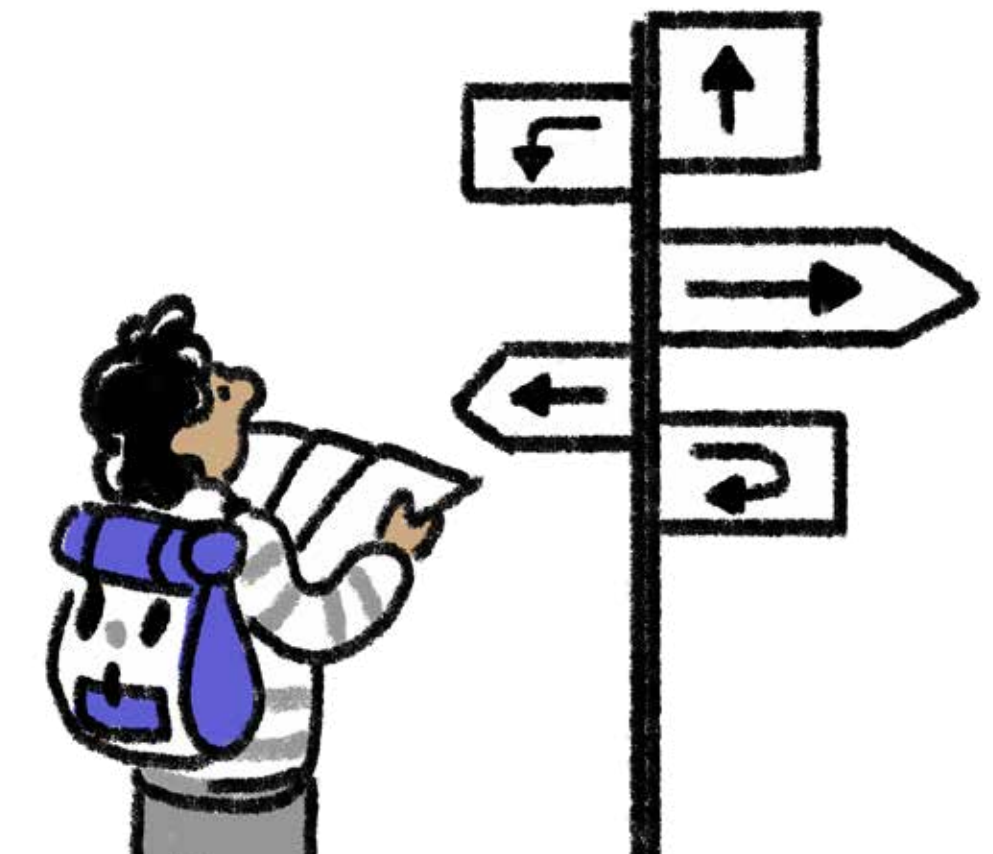
Our survey and analysis also looked into the reasons why people did not volunteer through work and offered respondents a chance to indicate factors that prevented them for participating, including an option to say they were not interested.

Section 6 shows that 40% of respondents said their employer did not offer this. Of the employees who did work for organisations where EV is offered but chose not to participate, 60% stated that because they already volunteer outside of work was a barrier to participating at work. 60% also stated they are too busy at work and an almost identical number stated that their employer allows it but does not promote it. 13% specified that their employer offers it but they need to organise it themselves and they are too busy to both organise and participate.

40% of respondents said that no one had asked them which, with the above, matches repeated long-running voluntary sector analysis of the main reasons why people generally do not volunteer, that they have not been asked and that they do not have enough time.

6% of respondents said they were not interested in EV and 3% said they were sceptical about the impact of volunteering through work (see also Section 7, page 12).

Voluntary sector organisations who promote volunteering with their organisation and/or promote volunteering to others, do not seem to promote or organise employee volunteering for their staff. This could be a reflection of a resource-strapped sector where many smaller charities struggle to keep up to date with all their policies but also some feedback suggests there could be additional reasons. One survey respondent wrote, 'I already work in the non-profit sector ... When volunteering and "going the extra mile" is already part of the day job I think the organisations are hesitant to suggest people do even more.'



Some interesting and commonly themed comments of note from respondents included:

'My work does quite a lot of fundraising, rather than volunteering work time.'

'My work recently updated their policies and has just introduced a volunteering policy so this will hopefully lead to a wider promotion of the benefits of volunteering.'

'We are a charity who organises and promotes volunteering ourselves, but as far as I'm aware we have no policy in place to give us the chance to volunteer in work hours.'

5. HOW EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING IS ORGANISED?

This area of analysis brings brand new insight to the practicalities of how EV is organised within an organisation.

The results of this part of our survey are quite revealing with less than half (43%) stating that the opportunity was promoted at work and they signed up to do it compared to over a quarter (27%) stating that they organised it themselves. Nearly a fifth (18%) said they got involved as a colleague encouraged them to do it. These are strong indicators that employees themselves are doing a lot of the work to engage in EV activities as well as encouraging others which in turn suggests that many employees are more committed to doing this than their employers.

Although these results further show that employers are increasing their activity in this area and an increasing proportion are organising employee volunteering for their staff, they are not close to maximising the benefit and impact of having an employee volunteering programme. Even when employers have employee volunteering availability for their staff, many do not promote it. One respondent commented, 'Wasn't told about it until I was asking about annual leave and was told I would get 2 extra days for voluntary work.' Section 6 (page 11) also reveals that a significant proportion of employees did not know how many days their employer allowed for volunteering.



6. HOW MUCH TIME DO EMPLOYERS ALLOW FOR VOLUNTEERING?

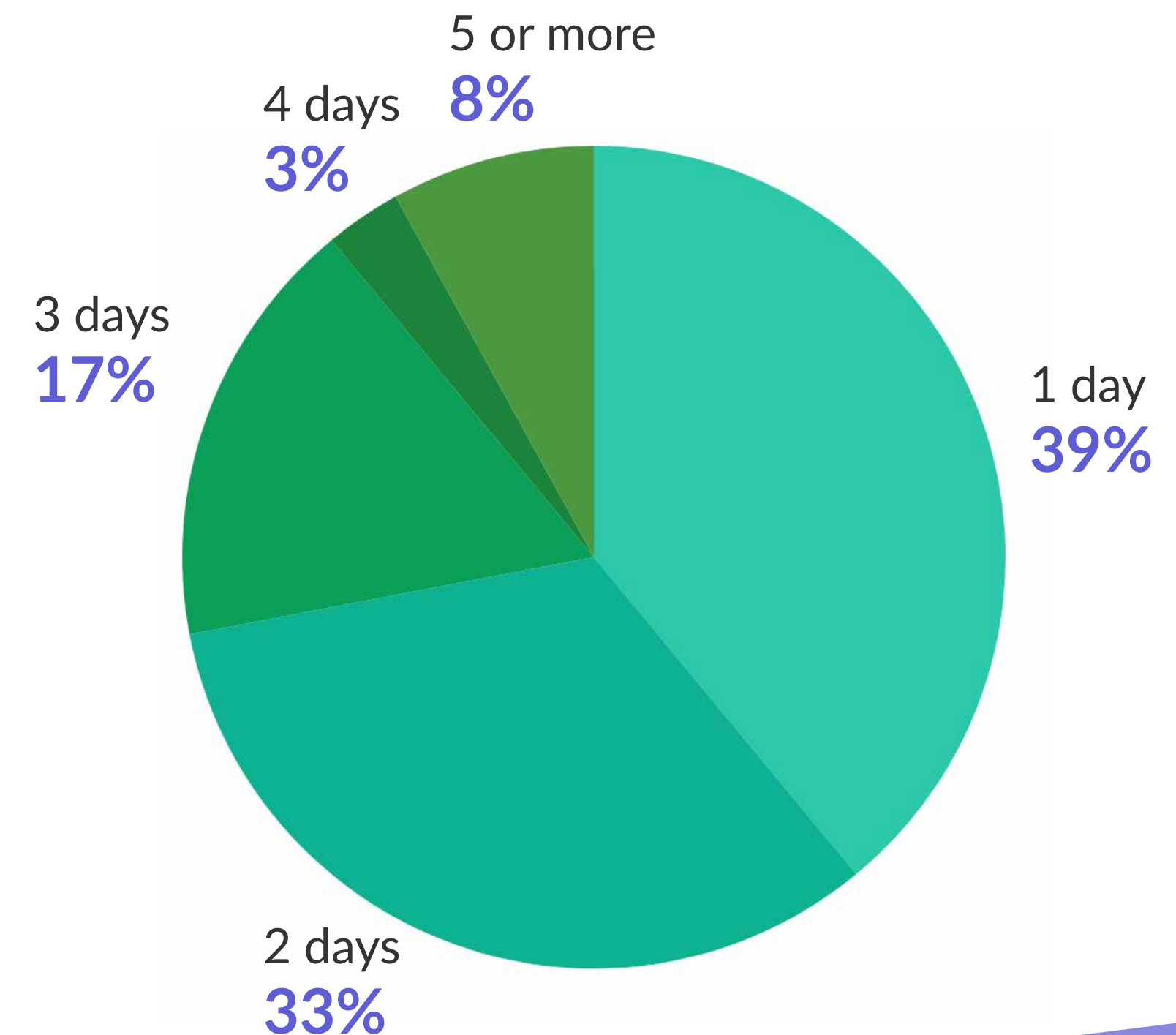
Through delivering Works4U's services we know very well that there is a huge variety of time allowed by employers for their employees to volunteer including many employees who do not know how much time they are allowed. The results of the survey matched our experience and show there is very little consistency and that many employers do not promote this allowance to their employees.

The most telling statistic from this survey question is that a quarter (24.7%) were not sure how much time their employers allowed for volunteering. This alone shouts very loudly that many employers are not promoting effectively EV to their employees.

40% said no time was given by their employer to volunteer.

The proportion of businesses offering 5 or more days increases compared to those offering 4 days which is an interesting area for further research. 3% said their employer offered a flexible programme with no maximum limit set, stating the allowance was 'really flexible – case by case' and would 'depend on the volunteering opportunity'.

As time offered by employers increases, the proportion of employers decreases but increases again when it gets to 5 or more days:



7. IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING?

The impact of EV is one of most important considerations when organising community projects so it is interesting to see for the very first time, across the UK, how employees perceived the impact of their volunteering work?

We asked survey respondents how much impact did they feel their volunteering with work had by rating it from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. The weighted average of the responses was 3.9.

Nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of respondents rated the impact of their EV as a 4 or a 5. This is a little higher than we expected, but over a quarter (26.6%) rated the impact as 3 or lower although only 8.9% stated 2 or lower.

This is just a small but useful insight into an area that we hope to provide more detailed analysis in the future. Utilising this survey's insights and through our work and interviews carried out as part of this study we know great EV is taking place but more development is needed to not just increase the impact of volunteering but also to communicate it.

We know sometimes employee volunteering is carried out but the need for and impact of the volunteering is not made clear whilst doing it and/or is not communicated back to the volunteers. At Works4U we always brief volunteers explaining why their work is needed and the difference it will make as well as providing an impact report following each project.



‘When evaluating employee volunteering programmes, volunteer hours is vanity, volunteering culture is sanity and impact is king’

Download the “9 Expert Tips for Developing an Employee Volunteering Programme” [here](#).

8. DID RESPONDENTS ALSO VOLUNTEER OUTSIDE OF WORK?

The survey asked respondents if they also volunteered outside of work as we have often heard speculations and opinions in this area, e.g. the people who volunteer at work are usually the ones who volunteer outside of work as well. Our results showed there is a some truth to this assertion, with a small majority of those who volunteer at work also volunteering outside of work, but it is not exclusively true.

53.6% said they volunteered outside of work and further 20.8% stated they used to. Just over a quarter, 25.6%, however, stated that they did not volunteer outside of work.

Respondents also provided some information on their outside of work volunteer roles which showed a large variety of activities:

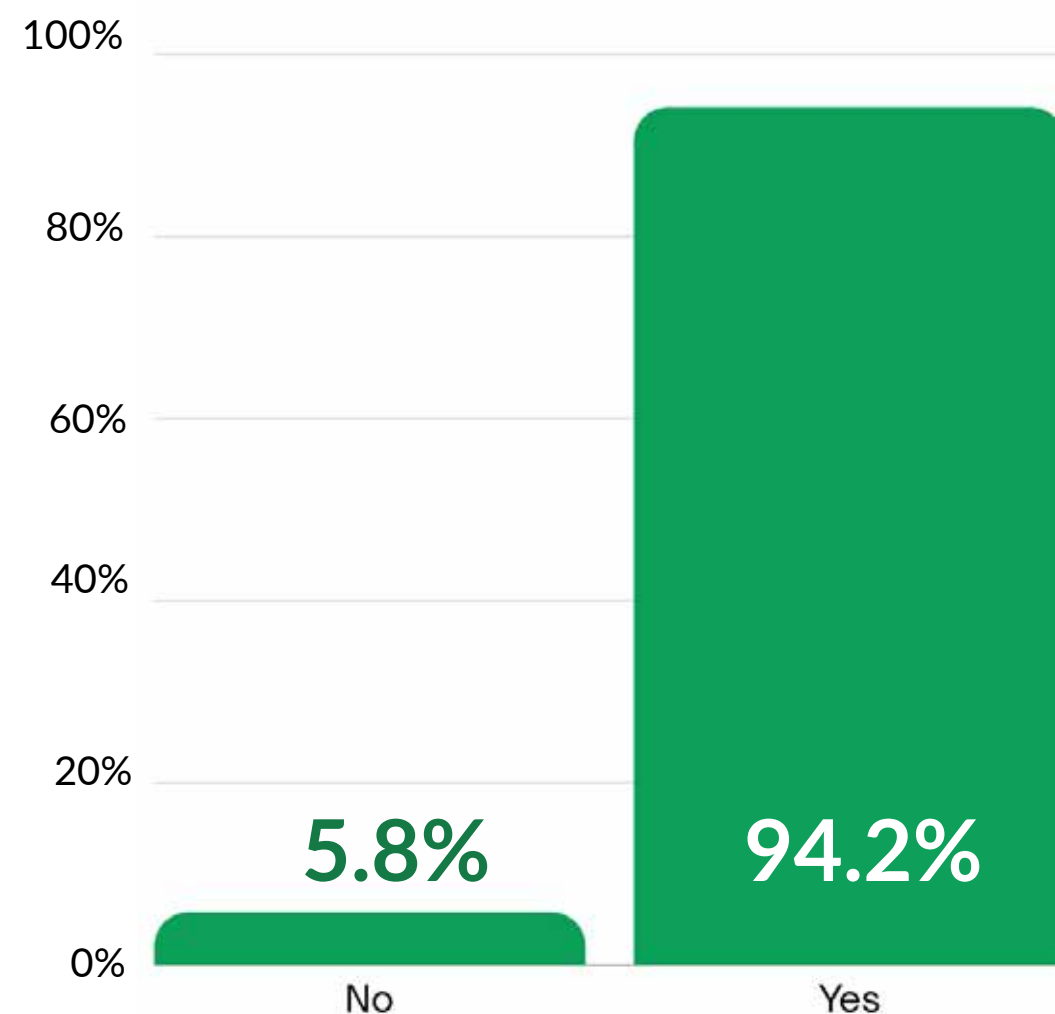
- Charity Trustee (most common response)
- Foodbank
- Schools
- Parkrun
- Supporting elderly (shopping, dog walking)
- Management committee of club or association (e.g. sports club)
- Political activism (Political parties, Unions)
- Charity Shop



9. SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO MORE TO PROMOTE VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES?

This question in our survey was to test the hypothesis, based on our day-to-day work, that employers could do more to promote volunteering to their employees. Survey respondents were asked if employers, in general as opposed to necessarily their own employer, should do more to promote volunteering opportunities?

A staggering 94.2%, far higher than anticipated, stated 'yes; and only 5.8% said 'no', employers do enough to promote employee volunteering opportunities.



Some of the comments to this section were interesting:

“As a business owner I should consider this more.”

“Larger organisations can do that far more easily than smaller organisations which may not be able to afford to give people additional time off work”

“They could be incentivised by government, e.g. reduced taxation on employee volunteer hours”

“Need to include line managers talking to teams and individuals about opportunities”

“Volunteer opportunities can add significant value for employees seeking development/fulfilment, and employers benefit from a more engaged and enthusiastic workforce who have had the opportunity to develop themselves in new ways.’

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey findings and analysis in this report, Works4U makes the following recommendations for employers which will help maximise the impact and benefit of employee volunteering:

(i) Embrace employee volunteering as a business usual activity.

The clear trend, in the perception of employees, is that volunteering through work is no longer a 'nice to have' but is seen as a business-as-usual activity. The businesses that can make reality match their employees' perception will reap the benefits.

(ii) Provide more resources for employee volunteering

Either through internal team(s) or outsourced expert help, employers will be able to maximise the impact of their employee volunteering scheme by encouraging and supporting employees to volunteer. It will also help focus the volunteering into activities that align with business priorities/objectives.

(iii) Promote employee volunteering schemes

More than 94% of respondents to the survey said employers need to do more of this. A quarter of employees do not know how much time they are allowed for EV which suggests employers are not promoting it as effectively as they could. If they are not promoting their scheme, then employers are not getting the benefits from having one.

(iv) Remember and maximise the business benefits of employee volunteering

The survey shows the trend that employees are leading their employers regarding EV, however, the businesses who recognise and can maximise the business benefits of these schemes are gaining the advantage. It seems many employers feel they need to have an employee volunteering scheme without realising its benefits. All EV schemes have a cost, but the significant multiplier return of investment experienced by businesses who fully embrace this comes from: talent acquisition, talent retention, developing skills, team/culture building and demonstrate your CSR/ESG credentials etc.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESPONSE

An online survey was created using the SurveyMonkey platform and promoted across the UK in 2023. It was open to any employee of any employer, in any sector, where there were 5 or more employees.

As a new survey, it was designed to be quick to complete but also included options for more qualitative responses. The survey was branched so respondents who had not volunteered through work would not see irrelevant questions. A maximum of 12 questions were presented to respondents, including the optional competition question. The average time spent on the survey was 4 minutes.

The survey was promoted predominantly through LinkedIn advertising and through Works4U's social media and wider networks. It was not promoted directly to Works4U's clients. There were a total of 546 responses to the survey which included online survey responses and some data collected from interviews/groups.

The number of people in the UK working is approximately 30.2million according to the ONS (Dec 2023). Statistically, this sample size gives a confidence level of 98% and a margin of error of +/- 4.99%.

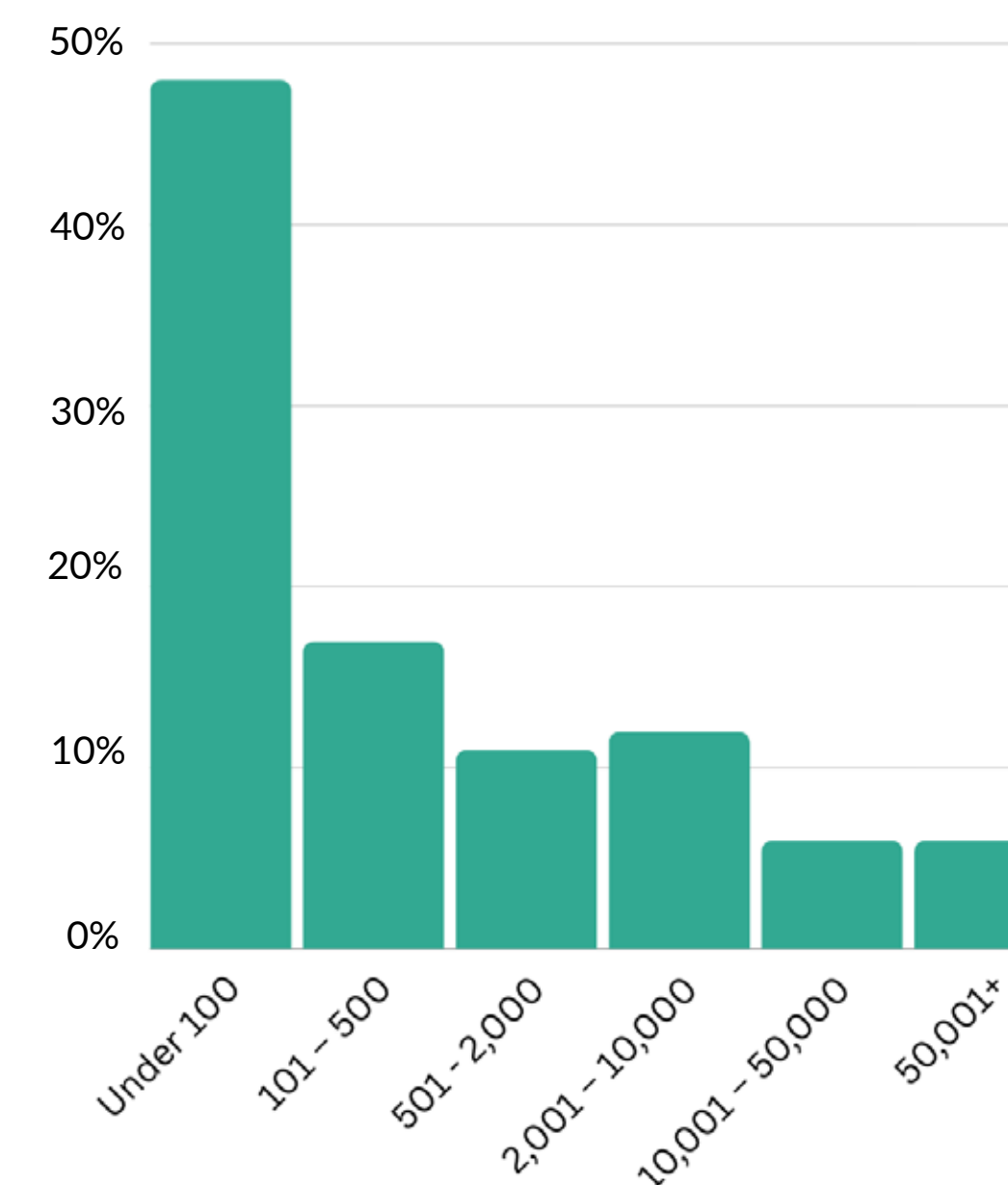


How the survey was promoted

To incentivise participating in the survey a prize of £200 for a charity of the winner's choice was offered. 52% of online survey respondents chose to enter the competition.

An employee from a Scottish organisation was randomly selected as the winner. A £200 donation to their chosen charity, [Ménière's Society](#), has been made by Works4U.

Respondents by size of employer (number of employees)



ABOUT WORKS4U

Works4U is an award-winning and internationally recognised not-for-profit social enterprise whose social mission is to integrate businesses with the community through impactful and transformative volunteering.

Since 2009 we have helped tens of thousands of employee volunteers to support community projects and now leading employee volunteering in the UK to improve practice and impact.



Employee Volunteering Programme Delivery

We are here to ensure your volunteering programmes deliver impact through meeting social priorities. From ad hoc projects to year-round programmes, Works4U will source and deliver impactful, transformative projects to match social needs with your goals. It provides a full managed comprehensive service including risk assessments, site visits, on-the-day supervision and impact reporting.

Consultancy

From producing plans to implement or develop an employee volunteering programme through to 'health checks' we provide tailored support to help you get the most from your programme. This can include a wide range of activities dependent on your needs: informal café sessions, formal consultations, workshops and development programmes.

Networks

Works4U has set up and runs the national Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) network for voluntary sector organisations enabling peers to come together to share and learn good practice.

Research & Guides

As well as this report, Works4U produced the ground-breaking '[Monetary Value of Trustees 2023](#)' research which has caused a significant re-evaluation of this essential charity role. In 2023 Works4U also produced the '[9 Expert Tips for Developing an Employee Volunteering Programme](#)' free guide.

Quality Standards

In 2023 Works4U launched the Lead Volunteering Organisation (LVO) quality standard for volunteer infrastructure organisations and will launch soon the Employee Volunteering Accreditation (EVA), the world's first dedicated employee volunteering quality standard (see page 18 for more information).

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING ACREDITATION (EVA) QUALITY STANDARD

World's First Employee Volunteering Quality Standard

For the very first time, there is a dedicated standard for a globally undertaken business activity. The [Employee Volunteering Accreditation \(EVA\)](#) quality standard from Works4U promotes and raises good practice in employee volunteering and ensures community impact focus and alignment to business goals.

Employee Volunteering Accreditation

EVA is a robust and independently assessed accreditation for businesses committed to employee volunteering who want to demonstrate to their staff, potential staff, partners, clients, investors and stakeholders they walk the talk regarding ESG, CSR and social impact.

Although a rigorous process, you are supported throughout with advice and guidance of evidence to provide to support your submission. Businesses can carry out the accreditation at their own pace, but 3-4 months will be a likely time period to complete the process. Once obtained the EVA accreditation lasts for 3 years and successful business can use the quality standard badge to showcase their employee volunteering credentials as they wish.



Launching Soon

The EVA quality standard is launching soon and if you would like to find out more or to gain the extra kudos of your business being one of the first to obtain the standard, please contact us:

Web: www.evaqualitystandard.com

Email: enquiries@evaqualitystandard.com



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