

# **VOLUNTEERS COLLECTIVE**

## **2023 - 2024 IMPACT REPORT**



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# INTRODUCTION

The **Volunteers Collective** was launched in June 2023 to continue the volunteering legacy from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Made up of over 2,000 registered volunteers from across the West Midlands and beyond, the Volunteers Collective connects organisations with experienced, enthusiastic volunteers to support their events. This has involved working alongside several sports and cultural organisations to support activities which vary in size and scale, from community-led events; to large-scale arts and culture festivals; to major sporting championships. This report documents their journey from June 2023 to April 2025.

When the Volunteers Collective was set up, volunteers from Birmingham 2022, previously known as the 'Commonwealth Collective' were invited to continue their volunteering journey by signing up to the 'Volunteers Collective'. This new portal would act as a database of volunteers for the region and place to advertise opportunities for eager volunteers. **Over 2,000 individuals responded, and this group became the United By 2022 Volunteers Collective.**

The original aim of the Commonwealth Collective was to create a place-based volunteer workforce that was representative of the West Midlands.

The Volunteers Collective was established in direct response to learnings from London 2012 Olympics - where volunteer Personally Identifiable Information could not be passed on to other organisations looking for volunteers.

This value of inclusion continues today; as such, the previously closed portal is now open again to any individual interested in volunteering, so as to encourage a diverse range of age and experience.

This is with a particular focus on increasing the number of young people engaged with the Volunteers Collective.

On the portal, **United By 2022 are able to disseminate volunteering opportunities to their volunteers on behalf of partner organisations looking for volunteers.** They work with partner organisations to promote the events they deliver which need volunteering support.





Between June 2023 and March 2025, the Collective was funded under United By 2022's Trailblazer programme from the West Midland Combined Authority Legacy Enhancement Fund. Data about Volunteering was presented as part of **this report**, outlining the impact all programmes made towards the organisation's Theory of Change. This report aggregates that data, with some fresh insights from 2025 to publish a fully updated Volunteers Collective evaluation report, 2 years since its inception. It discusses outcomes related to United By 2022's organisational Theory of Change, focusing on the areas where the Volunteers Collective has had the most impact; namely wellbeing, skills, representation, and networks, re-ordering them in line with the most significant contributions made by the Volunteers Collective.

**Volunteers consistently played an active role in shaping the atmosphere and participant experience** across the events they engaged with, often going beyond their assigned duties to foster a sense of community, joy, and inclusion, regardless of the tier of engagement United By 2022 have had in the event. Across the dataset, many took personal initiative to create memorable, welcoming environments for attendees.

At 'The Next Chapter' event, an interactive exhibition held at new street to celebrate the impact of United By 2022's Trailblazer programme, one volunteer shared: *"two musicians were playing and people just [were] walking past, I decided to combine Bhangra dance with the music they were playing and a crowd developed watching us then Perry joined in, great fun had by all."*

The Collective enables volunteers to feel ownership and creativity throughout events, embracing their role as ambassadors for the city's vibrancy, and bearing the baton of Birmingham 2022.





One volunteer at Birmingham Light Festival in February 2025 recounted: *"[I was] managing the queue for the Silent Disco in Centenary Square. I decided the best way to manage the queue AND keep warm was to dance, which I did for 3.5 hours. I was able to encourage people of all ages, cultures and abilities to take part."*

Such reflections illustrate the Volunteers Collective's wider contribution: **volunteers not only supported delivery but actively shaped the spirit of each event through their energy, initiative, and personal pride.**

It is this ambition, ownership and pride – no doubt ignited by Birmingham 2022 and stoked by United By 2022's ongoing work – which makes the Volunteers Collective the asset to the region that it is. This report outlines its achievements, impact, and learnings over the past two years with the intention of igniting more positive volunteering stories in the years to come.



# SUMMARY OUTPUTS AND IMPACTS

**26,828** hours  
of volunteering  
completed

**2,238**  
volunteers  
registered  
on the portal



**990** volunteers  
have submitted at  
least **one** expression  
of interest

**532** volunteers  
have **taken**  
**part in one**  
**or more**  
volunteering opportunity<sup>1</sup>



**1,359**  
volunteering positions  
have been filled across  
**99** opportunities

Volunteers  
have **supported**  
**events at 71**  
**unique locations**  
across the region



**36%** of active  
volunteers are from  
the top 20% most  
deprived areas of the UK

Active volunteers have  
completed on average  
**34 hours of**  
**volunteering**  
via the Collective



**93.2%**  
of volunteers  
said they enjoyed  
their volunteering  
experience

**90.5%**  
of volunteers  
rated their  
experience '**good**'  
or '**excellent**'



**97.9%**  
of volunteers rated  
communication from  
the Volunteers Collective  
'**good**' or '**excellent**'

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report this group is referred to as 'active volunteers'.





# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Since its inception, the Volunteers Collective has worked alongside several sports and cultural organisations to support their events which vary in terms of size and scale, from community-led events, to large-scale arts and culture festivals, to major sporting championships. Some notable examples include:

## School Games Legacy Celebration (June 2024)

Organised by Sport Birmingham and Birmingham School Games, this event aimed to promote inclusivity in sports by giving primary school children with SEND the opportunity to try different activities and games. Taking place at Alexander Stadium, **over 300 young people from across Birmingham attended the event.** The Volunteers Collective provided a 'Bronze' tier service by publishing the opportunity on the portal, gathering interested volunteers, and sharing the information directly with Sport Birmingham.

42 volunteers were there to support through a variety of tasks, including: assisting with registration, chaperoning school groups between activities, supporting activity leaders by keeping the site organised, and engaging with students. Sport Birmingham also provided volunteers with safeguarding training and neurodiversity & inclusion training. **210 hours of volunteering were completed at this event.**



## Birmingham Light Festival (February 2025)

Birmingham Light Festival was organised by Birmingham's City Curator, Alex Nicholson-Evans, and the team at Outdoor Places, Unusual Spaces (OPUS). In its inaugural year, the free-to-access event featured light installations and artwork scattered throughout Birmingham City Centre, as well as offering interactive activities and performances. As a 'Gold' tier service, the Volunteers Collective managed every stage of the volunteer process, including volunteer applications, the selection process, shift and role allocation, training, and on-site management. Across the four nights, **60 volunteers welcomed and directed visitors** across the festival sites, encouraged visitor interaction with the installations, managed queues, and gathered guest feedback. Volunteers were on-site rain or shine and ultimately contributed **775 volunteering hours at the event**.



## SportAccord 2024 (March 2024)

SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit is an annual sports conference that brings together **over 1,500 global sports leaders and key decision makers** to gather, network, and advance their respective sport, services, and facilities. The event was hosted at Birmingham's International Conference Centre, with volunteers based there as well as at transportation links and hotels across the city. Volunteers were on-site before, during, and after the conference, welcoming delegates to the city, assisting with accreditation, directing delegates to meetings and workshops, assisting with meeting room set-up, and supporting the media team with their work. As a 'Gold' tier service, the Volunteers Collective was heavily involved across the entire volunteer recruitment process: sifting applications, allocating shifts, creating training material and the volunteer handbook, and many other tasks. Across 10 days, **113 volunteers contributed nearly 2,290 volunteering hours**.



## Volunteers Collective Portal

The Volunteers Collective uses an online portal, where volunteering opportunities are shared, and volunteers can view multiple opportunities across the region and sign-up for events that interest them.

The portal is also useful as a database that includes relevant information about each volunteer, including their contact details, dietary requirements, accessibility requirements, and uniform sizing. With this information readily accessible, event organisers can better prepare for volunteers supporting their event.



## Event Management

Between June 2023 and April 25, the Volunteers Collective offered a tiered package to cater to organisations' specific volunteering needs. While the Bronze tier was a free service, Silver and Gold are paid services.

- **Bronze:** The Volunteers Collective team will publish the event on the portal to share with a database of experienced and dedicated volunteers. The team will then send the information of interested volunteers to the event organisers, including names, contact information, and other relevant details.
- **Silver:** In addition to the services listed for the Bronze tier, the team will review volunteer applications, allocate roles and shifts, and help with other preparation work as needed, such as training materials.
- **Gold:** The Volunteers Collective team will manage every stage of the volunteer process, including, but not limited to: volunteer applications, selection process, communication with volunteers, shift and role allocation, training and handbook creation, on-site management, and post-event feedback.

In addition to these services, the Volunteers Collective has developed a 'Volunteer Ready' checklist for event organisers who may not have used volunteers in the past, so they know how to be prepared when volunteers arrive. This helps to improve the process for both volunteers and event organisers, increasing satisfaction and enhancing the event experience.

After each event is complete, individuals who volunteered at the event receive a post-event feedback survey. **These surveys are used to continually improve the Volunteers Collective programme and the service provided using volunteer input.**



## Event Types

When events are published on the portal, event organisers can select multiple different 'event tags' to identify and differentiate the type of volunteering taking place at the event. There are 20 possible tags for events, 7 of which have been used by events to date. Short descriptions, defining these event tags, can be found below:



### Arts, Culture & Entertainment

Events where arts and culture activities are a major focus, including but not limited to visual art, dance, music, and performance.



### Social Work & Community Development

Events that are organised by community organisations, are heavily influenced by community members, or cater specifically to communities and their development.



### Sports & Leisure

Events where sports or physical activities are a major focus. This could include major sporting competitions; sport conferences; fun runs and races; or community sport events.



### Child & Youth

Events where many or most activities are geared towards children or young people.



### Mentoring & Advocacy

Events that are organised by mentor-mentee partnerships, particularly between community organisations and young people. This partnership is key to the event's development and also gives young people the opportunity to be involved and learn new skills.



### Education & Support

Events where many or most activities encourage participants, particularly children and young people, to engage and develop new or existing skills in sport, arts, or other activities.



### Disability Services

Events where disability inclusion is a major focus. This could be inclusive sporting competitions, disability festivals, or educational events.

Another key responsibility of volunteers is their work with Perry the Bull - the official mascot of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This mascot has since been adopted by United By 2022, who facilitate Perry's visits to local events, schools and community organisations. During these visits, Perry is chaperoned by volunteers who manage engagement and interaction with the public.





## Volunteer Training with Skills360

Working alongside Skills360, United By 2022 has launched multiple online training sessions for Volunteers Collective members to learn new skills and boost confidence. These trainings cover topics such as health and safety, security, safeguarding, and diversity and inclusion.

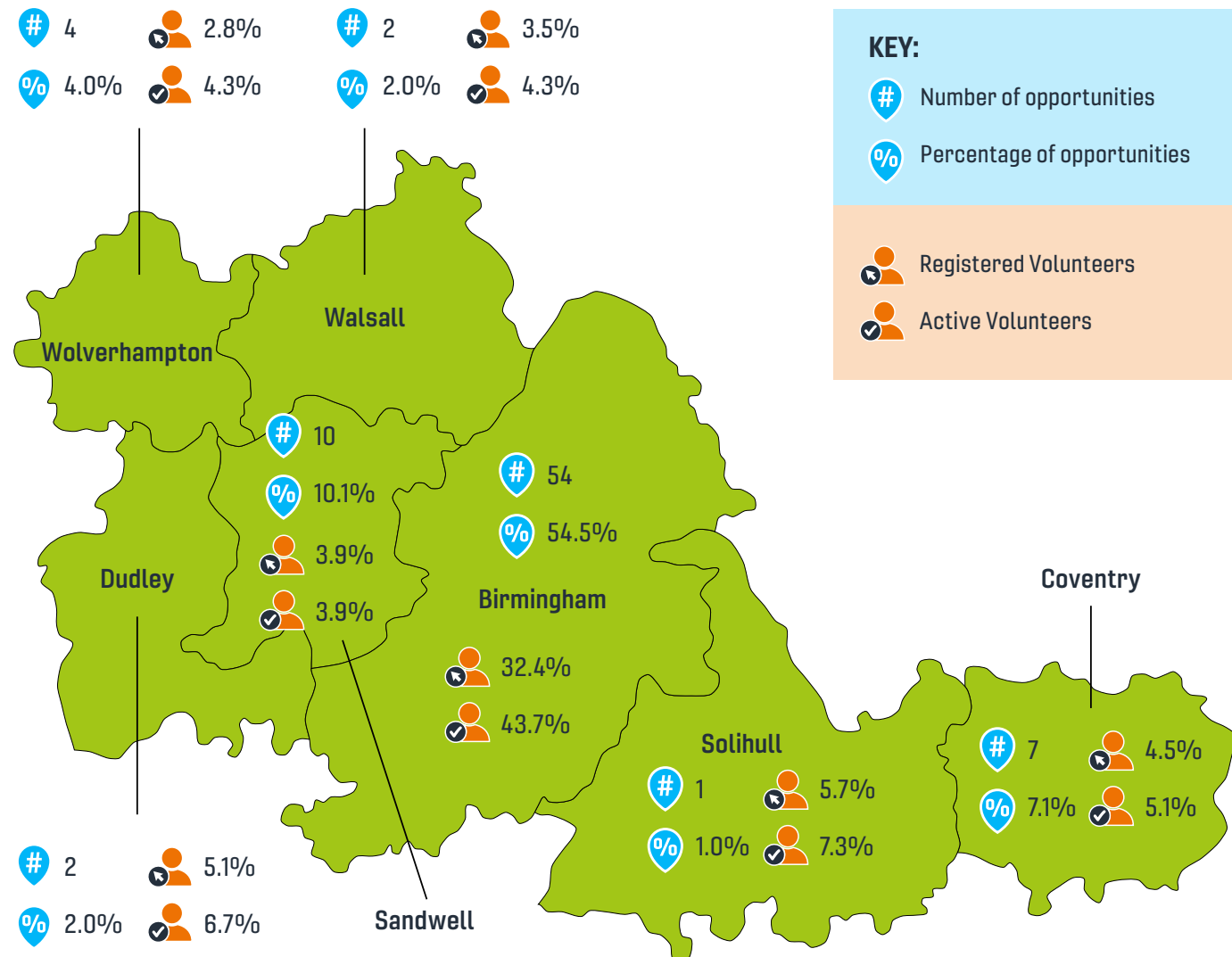
The Volunteers Collective also created two 'onboarding' trainings, which all new volunteers must complete before they can view opportunities on the portal. One of these sessions introduces the basic concepts of volunteering and the Volunteers Collective Agreement and Values. The other training discusses challenging situations a volunteer might face on shift and how to address them appropriately.

These training sessions give individuals who are new to volunteering an opportunity to learn about what to expect when supporting an event. Originally, all members of the Collective volunteered at Birmingham 2022, making them highly experienced and able to support large-scale events. As the Volunteers Collective welcomes new members, this training is essential in order to open volunteering to people who may not have had access to these opportunities before, and thus gives new volunteers the confidence to get involved.



# ACTIVITY AND LOCATION OVERVIEW

## Volunteering Opportunities, Registered Volunteers and Active Volunteers



| Local Authority   | Number of opportunities | Percentage of opportunities | Registered Volunteers | Active Volunteering |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Other Local Authorities outside the West Midlands         | 0                       | 0.0%                        | 23.2%                 | 9.6%                |
| Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands <sup>2</sup> | 19                      | 19.1%                       | 0.0%                  | 15.3%               |

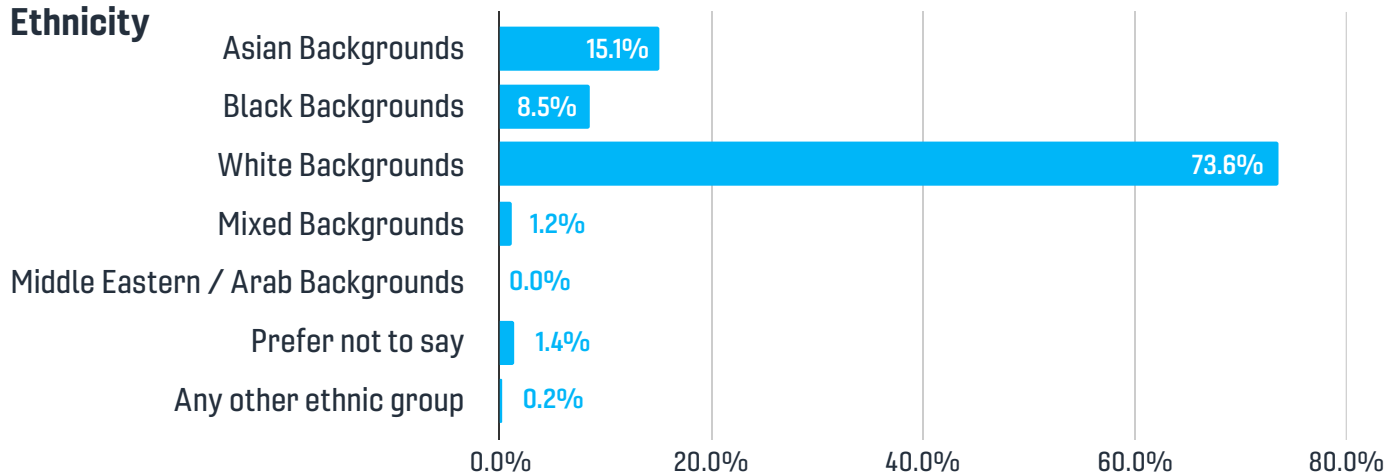
<sup>2</sup> These include 23 other local authorities including: Bromsgrove, North Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcester, Tamworth, Stafford.



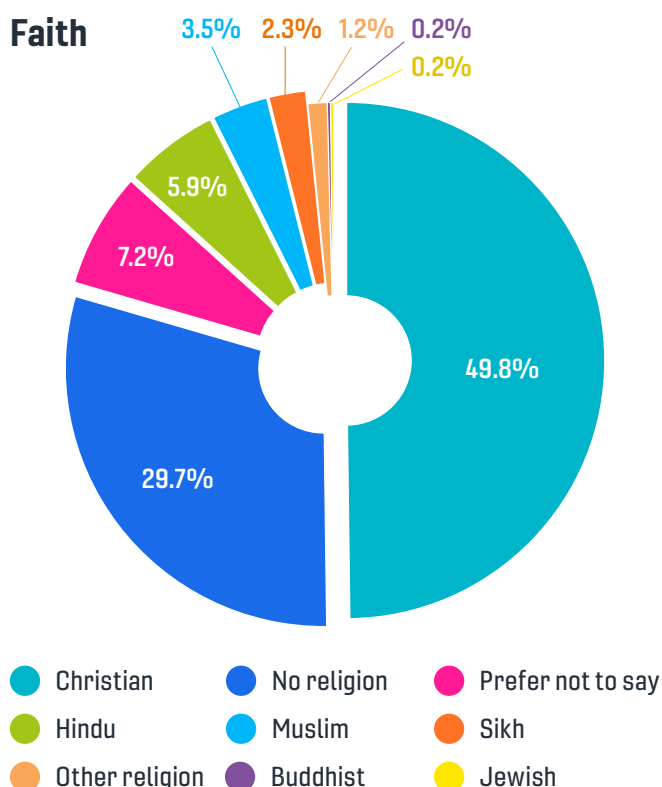
# ENGAGEMENT & DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In the below section we have outlined the demographic breakdown of Volunteers. Where only one data set is presented, it is that of active volunteers. Where two comparative datasets are presented it is the sample of active volunteers, compared to everyone who is registered on the portal. In this instance, two datasets are presented because there is significant discrepancy between the demographics of those registered and those who are active.

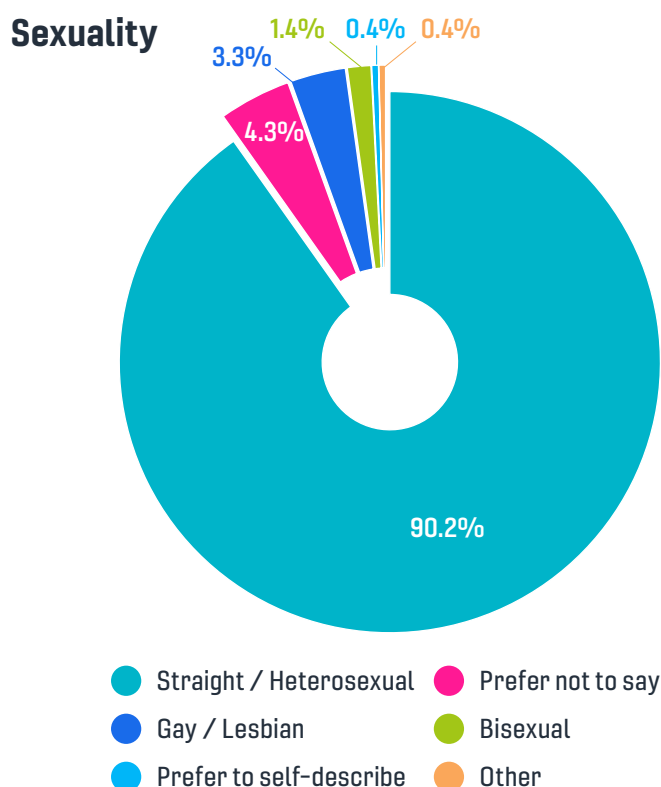
## Ethnicity



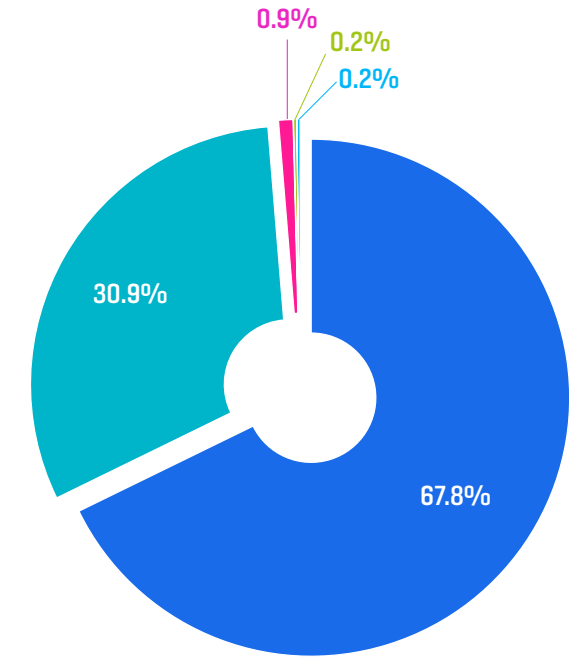
## Faith



## Sexuality

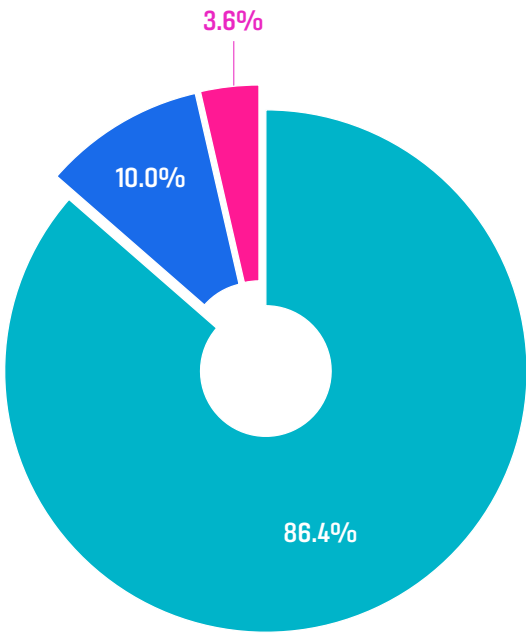


Gender



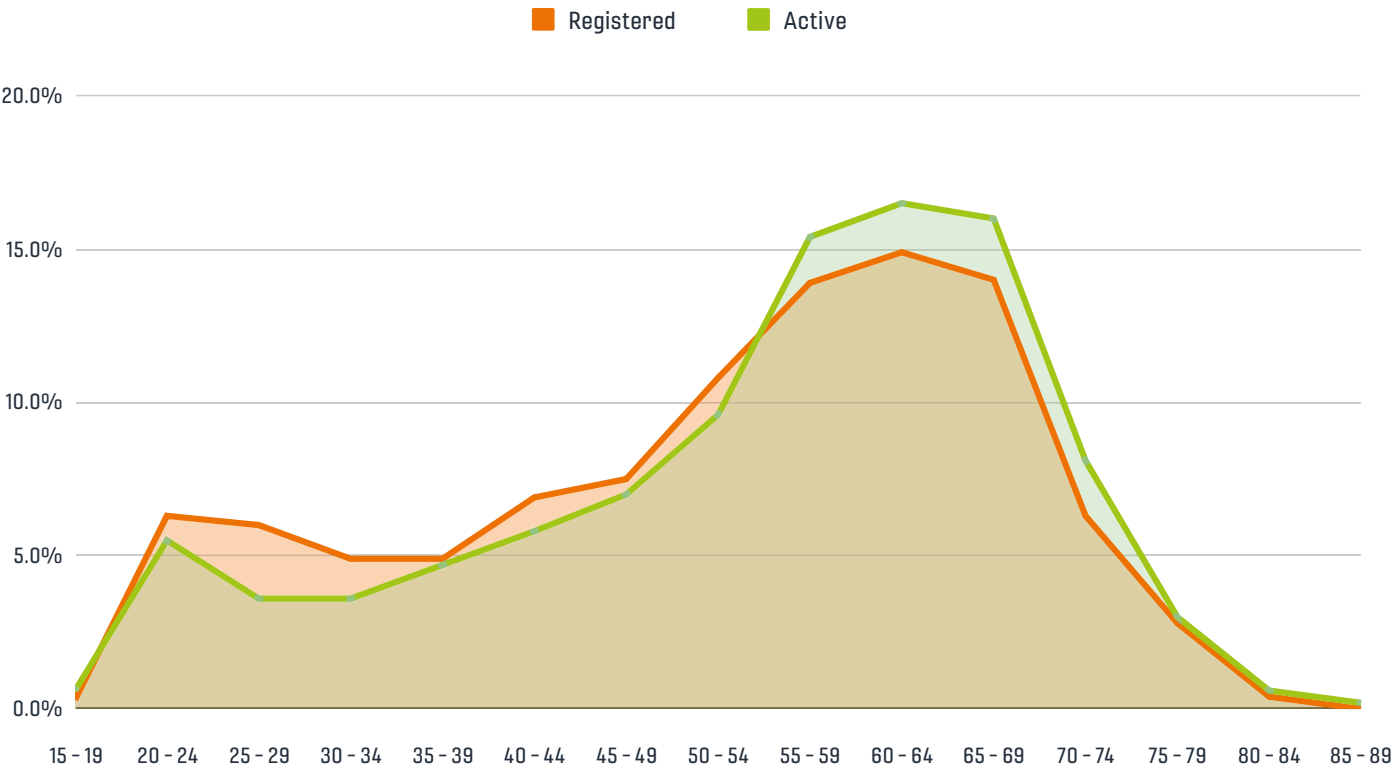
- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Transgender
- Non-Binary

D/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health condition



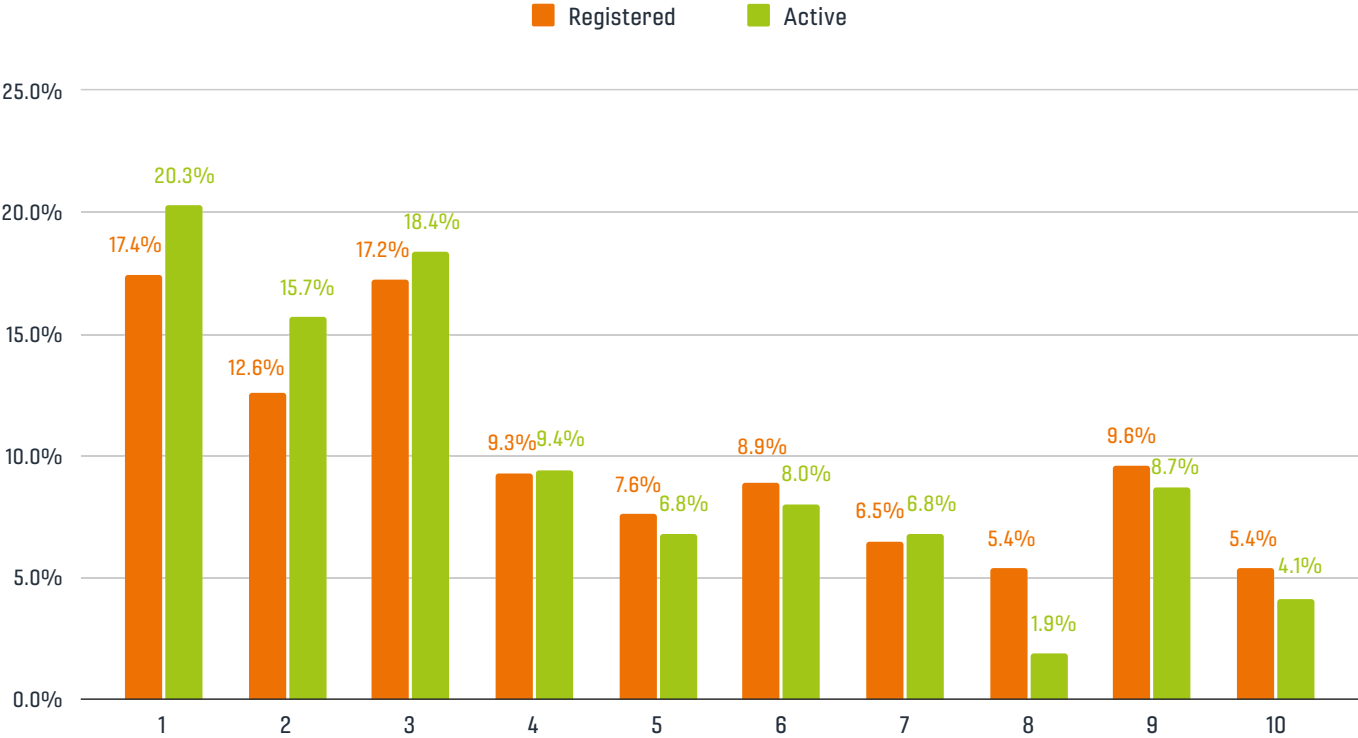
- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

Age





## Indices of Multiple Deprivation



Since its inception in 2023, to April 2025, United By 2022 have supported 99 events with volunteers. As above, this has been across a range of levels of involvement. End-to-end, ‘Gold’ Standard volunteering opportunities have been provided to 6 events, ‘Silver’ preparatory involvement to a further 6 events, and access to the pool of volunteers at 83 events via the ‘Bronze’ Tier packages.<sup>3</sup>

These events have taken place with 41 different partners, significantly building the variety of opportunities on offer, whilst also facilitating stronger networks between individuals and organisations who may not have connected in the past. 46% of the partner organisations have worked with the Volunteers Collective more than once, with some, such as Run Through and Sport Birmingham using the Collective very frequently, allowing relationships to build over time.

The majority of events taking place (72.7%) were in some way related to sport, but opportunities also covered a broad range of other areas, as shown in the figure below. These event tags have been used in the outcomes section of the report to compare difference to impact based on the categorisation of volunteering opportunity. Events can have multiple tags. Descriptions about each can be found in the programme overview.

46%

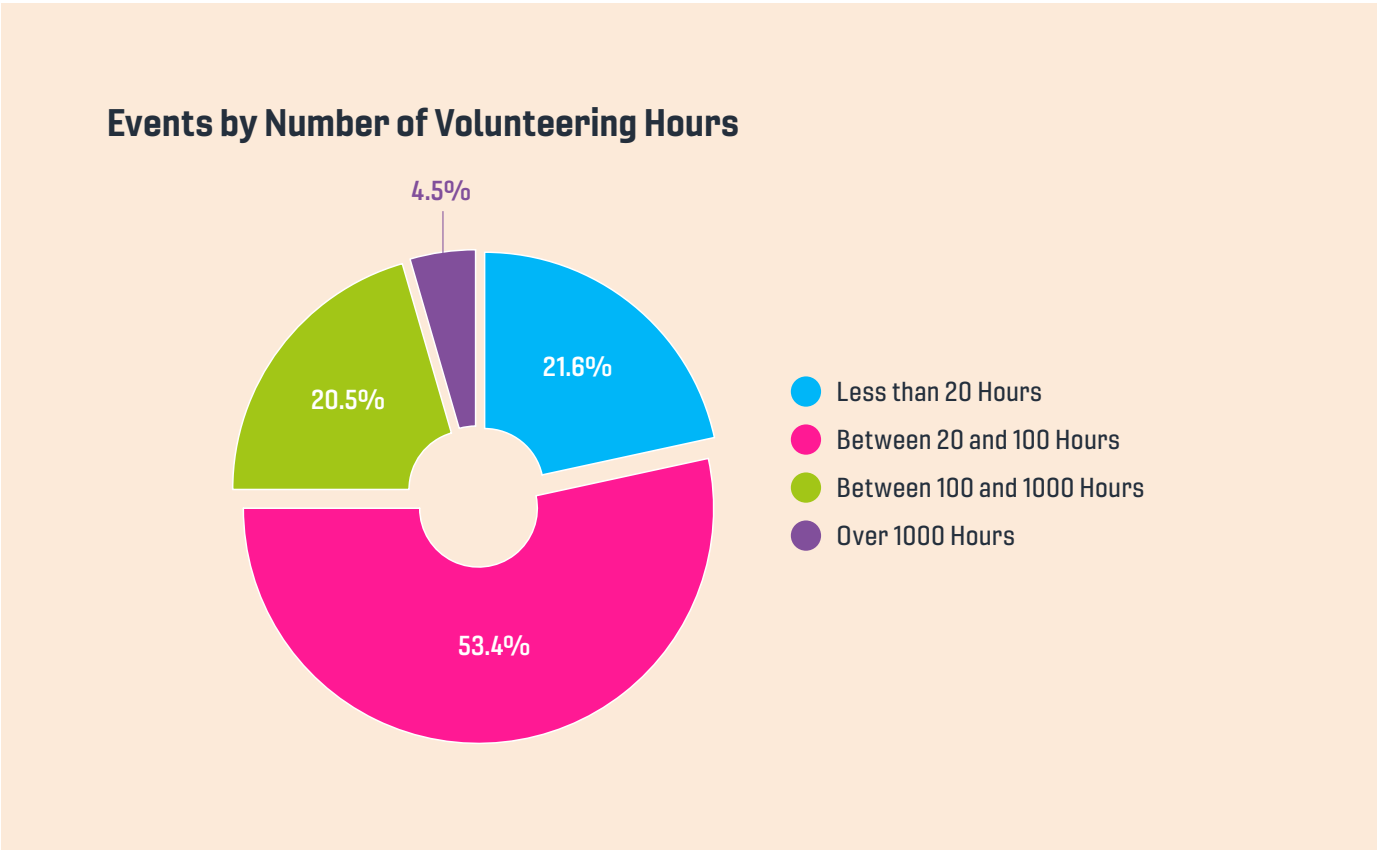
of the partner organisations have worked with the Volunteers Collective more than once.

<sup>3</sup> Four events did not have a ‘tiered’ categorisation

| Event Tags by Volunteering Opportunity | Number of events | Percentage of events |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| Sports & Leisure                       | 72               | 72.7%                |
| Arts, Culture & Entertainment          | 27               | 27.3%                |
| Child & Youth                          | 22               | 22.2%                |
| Social Work & Community Development    | 15               | 15.2%                |
| Disability Services                    | 13               | 13.1%                |
| Education & Support                    | 9                | 9.1%                 |
| Mentoring & Advocacy                   | 5                | 5.1%                 |

The opportunities also represent a vast range of levels of engagement. Some events – the World Trampolining Championships, IBSA World Games, Birmingham Festival 2023 – utilised thousands of Volunteer hours. Some events, like the British Basketball Trophy Finals and Godiva Festival used hundreds of hours, while smaller community events used less than 30 volunteer hours.

The range of event scales have been outlined in the below figure using the total number of volunteer hours completed at the event. The highest number of volunteering hours for a single event was 10,578 volunteering hours, the median value 50 volunteer hours, and the event using the lowest number delivered 6.5 volunteer hours.



**Events took place at 71 different locations across the West Midlands, with all 7 Local Authorities areas** of the broader West Midlands Combined Authority benefiting from the Volunteer Collective's expertise. Over half of the 99 events were in Birmingham (54). The local authority with the second highest number of events was Sandwell (10) and then Coventry (7). Solihull, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton all saw between 1 and 4 events each. 19 events were held at a range of other local authority areas within the West Midlands, and no events were held outside of it.

This data, compared with the home locations of active and registered volunteers can be found in the 'Activity and Location Overview' section of the report.

Of the 2,238 volunteers registered as part of the Collective, 990 individuals have engaged with the platform, expressing interest in a volunteering opportunity at least once. 532 individuals have gone on to take part in at least one volunteering opportunity. These 532 individuals – 506 of which were volunteers at Birmingham 2022, 26 of which are new to the Collective – have **delivered a total of 26,828 volunteering hours building their skills and networks, and positively affecting their wellbeing**, whilst also supporting partner organisations to deliver high quality events.

As shown in the demographic breakdown, active volunteers (those who have taken part in at least one volunteering opportunity) are from a broad range of backgrounds. 74.3% of active volunteers are from white backgrounds; 14.3% from Asian backgrounds; 8.5% from Black backgrounds; and 1.2% from mixed heritage backgrounds. A large number of volunteers (50.2%) identify as Christian. 9 in 10 identify as heterosexual/straight. There are over double the proportion of people identifying as female (68.3%) taking part in volunteering opportunities than those who identify as male (30.5%). 8.8% of active volunteers identify as d/Deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or having a long term health condition.





The demographic breakdown presented earlier in this report shows the characteristics of the group who are actively undertaking volunteering opportunities via the portal. When comparing these characteristics, there is very little discrepancy between the demographic breakdown of the 2,238 volunteers registered on the portal and the 532 individuals taking part in opportunities. This shows that no identity group listed earlier is more or less likely to actively engage, once they are registered on the portal.

There were three demographic characteristics where there was discrepancy: age, home location of the volunteer, and the levels of deprivation associated with where that individual lives. These three discrepancies are highlighted in the demographic breakdown, comparing 'active' and 'registered' volunteers.

Firstly, the age profile of volunteers who are actively taking part is older than those who are registered on the portal. Active volunteers reach a more pronounced peak between 55 – 65 compared to a more gradual spread of younger ages of those registered on the portal. As noted, it is this datapoint which has provoked United By 2022 to open the portal for active registration – **to encourage more young people to register and then participate in volunteering, due to the proven positive effects of the activity on mental health.**

Moreover, active volunteers were much more likely to be from the West Midlands, compared to the sample registered on the portal.

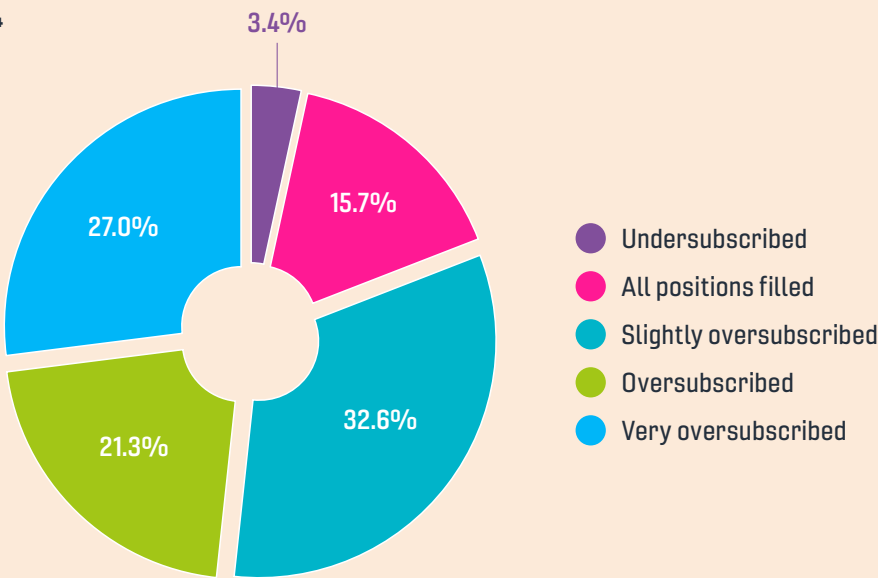
23.2% of the volunteers registered on the portal are from outside of the region, compared to 9.4% of active volunteers. This shift is perhaps due to the shift in focus, from the national event which recruited initial volunteers to the Collective (Birmingham 2022), to the more localised offering from United By 2022, which is **focusing its volunteering efforts on benefiting the region and attracting events to take place here.**



The knock on effect of this geographical shift is engagement from a higher proportion of individuals from areas of higher deprivation. **30% of the volunteers registered on the portal were from the 20% most deprived areas of the UK.** 36% of active volunteers were from these areas.

Generally, volunteering opportunities disseminated through the portal were very popular, with only 3 events out of 99 being undersubscribed. Over 75% of all opportunities were oversubscribed. Amongst the **most popular opportunities were to be a Perry Chaperone in 2023** – 3000% oversubscribed at 150 applications for 5 positions and, more recently for the British Open Squash in June 2024, receiving 49 applications for 10 positions.

Levels of interest<sup>4</sup>



Active volunteers have completed on average 34 hours of volunteering. The majority of active volunteers (34.6%) have completed between 8 – 24 hours of volunteering and 32.6% have completed between 24 – 56 hours. A smaller proportion (15.4%) have limited their engagement to less than 8 hours. On the highest end of engagement, 13.4% of active volunteers have completed 56 – 112 hours, and 4% have done in excess of 112 hours of volunteering.

**The highest number of hours completed by one volunteer is 231 hours.** The fact that half of those engaging have completed over 25 hours of volunteering over the course of their engagement shows that the Volunteer Collective is successfully enabling individuals to engage in deep, longer lasting work, whilst also allowing a large volume of people to access volunteer opportunities.

<sup>4</sup> This metric is calculated by dividing the total number of applications for a position by the total number of positions available. A percentage is then derived. <100% – Undersubscribed; 100% = All positions filled; 100% – 150% slightly oversubscribed; 150% – 200% Oversubscribed; 200%< Very oversubscribed

# KEY OUTCOMES



Following a sample of events, volunteers who took part in the opportunity were sent a survey to offer feedback on the experience, as well as data on the intended outcomes of the Volunteers Collective programme. Results were collected across a sample of 51 different events, by 457 volunteers.<sup>5</sup> This sample has been used to assess the ongoing impact of the Volunteers Collective on four outcomes from United By 2022's Theory of Change. These are: wellbeing, skills, representation and networks. Qualitative and quantitative data from these surveys has been paired with primary qualitative data collected as part of the **2023-24 Impact Report** and presented below. Where the 2023-24 Impact Report report includes data up to the end of 2024, this includes information up to April 2025.

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout the outcomes section of the report samples are between  $37 < n < 457$  and varying according to cross analysis undertaken by event type



# KEY OUTCOMES: WELLBEING

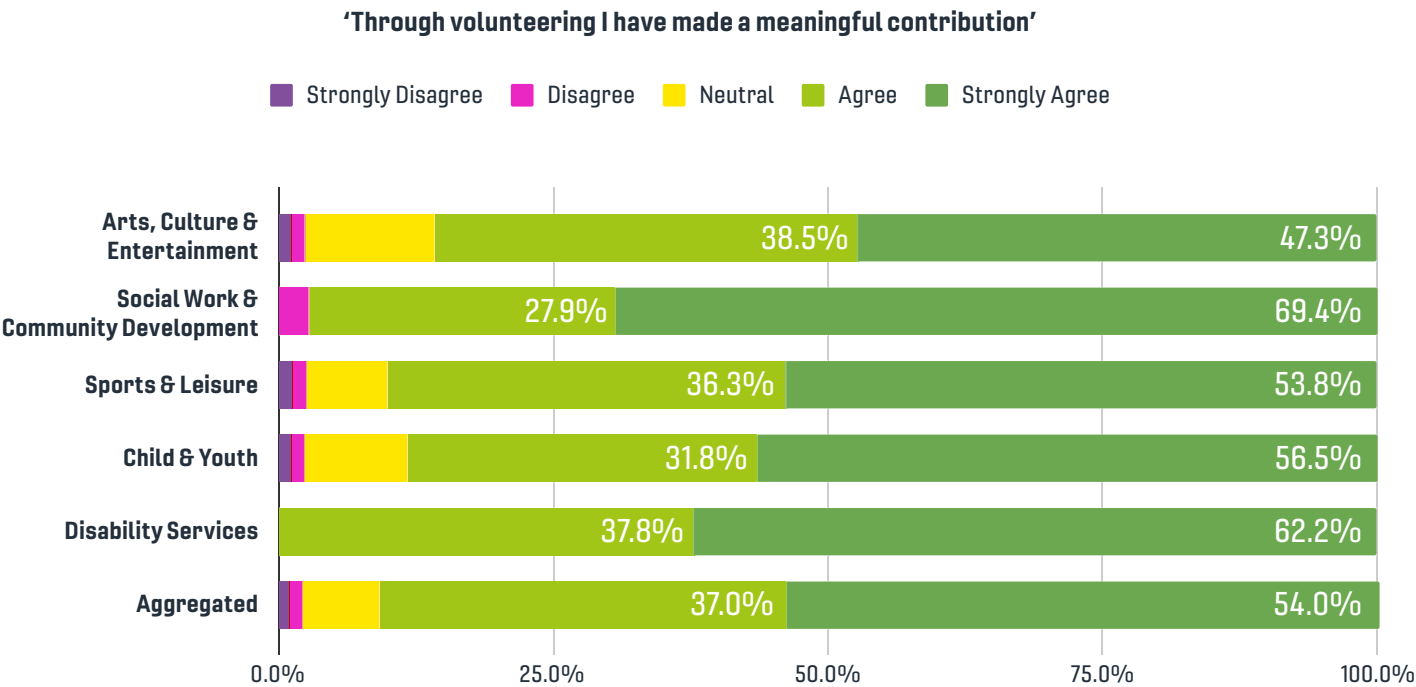
Individuals feel an increased sense of wellbeing through engaging as volunteers and participants, as well as through delivering projects as staff.

Volunteers were asked the extent they felt that they had made a meaningful contribution via their volunteering. Across a sample of 457 volunteers and 51 events, 93% of volunteers agreed that they had.

The figure below shows how sentiment on this indicator varied depending on the type of event the volunteers had taken part in. At events focused on 'social work & community development' or 'disability services', volunteers were much more likely to report that their contribution mattered.

This was least likely at 'arts, cultural or entertainment' events, where volunteers were 5% less likely to do so, compared to the aggregated sample.

## Volunteer Wellbeing Indicators by Event Type



Many members of the Volunteers Collective expressed how their involvement had positively influenced their wellbeing, offering emotional, social, and physical benefits. A common theme was the boost to confidence, with one respondent stating, *"Volunteering has really helped me with my confidence and also really feeling a part of something special helping others."* Others highlighted how volunteering helped them regain a sense of purpose, and noted, ***"Feeling like I have a purpose in life again"***.

Several volunteers emphasised how volunteering had lifted their mood and provided a positive outlet. One described it as *"Mood boosting and [I] like the engagement"*, while another summed up their experience as, *"Emotional, physical and spiritual impact resulting in a sense of purpose"*. Others found it helped with their mental wellbeing, saying, *"Meeting new people, helping with my depression"*.

For some, volunteering helped them cope with difficult personal circumstances. One individual shared that it helps to get them *"out of the house [...] filling the gap left by bereavement"*. Another attributed its value to meeting new people. Others found that staying engaged with volunteering provided structure and motivation, such as, *"Keeping active and keeping the brain engaged"*.

Social interaction played a significant role in wellbeing for many, with respondents offering *"Meeting other people, camaraderie, sense of all pulling together,"* and *"Meeting new and old friendships,"* as reasons for their engagement. Another expressed ***"It has positively added to my life in terms of new connections and improved wellbeing through the enjoyment it gives me to play a part in delivering events in my community."***

A sense of achievement and contribution also advanced wellbeing. One respondent reflected on *"feeling satisfied [they'd] helped customers enjoy their day of sport, for example"*. Another stated, *"the opportunity to give something back to the community and the making of new like-minded friends"* was a principal contribution to improved wellbeing. One volunteer found it particularly rewarding, saying, *"feeling useful and having a purpose"* was a key impact for them.

The opportunities provided to the Volunteers Collective aimed to contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of those who participated as volunteers across a range of events.



**Across the board, volunteers consistently reported that having the opportunity to interact with members of the public and event participants gave them a strong sense of enjoyment, pride, and connection.**

The events contributed positively to their mental wellbeing by offering fun, meaningful engagement opportunities and a shared sense of purpose with others.

Frequently, volunteers reflected in post-event surveys that they appreciated the social opportunity which volunteering provided them, be it a chance to socialise with other members of the Collective, or with members of the public and event attendees.

A volunteer who participated in the Speedo Aquatics GB Diving Championships reflected that *"Meeting new volunteers and seeing so many children excited and wanting to get involved was amazing. Meeting the champions themselves and their families and listening to their story [of] how they got involved was just wonderful."* Similarly, a volunteer who assisted at the Birmingham Light Festival remarked that *"chatting to so many lovely people"* was their personal highlight of the event.





Certainly, for many volunteers, events provided volunteers with the opportunity to connect – or reconnect – with other volunteers. One volunteer who assisted at Birmingham Weekender enjoyed *“catching up with fellow volunteers who have now become friends”*, as did a volunteer at SportAccord 2024 who reflected that *“it was great working with people I have had the pleasure of volunteering with before and it’s great to be able to call them friends now.”* In this regard, **the Volunteers Collective provides its participants with opportunities which combat social isolation and contribute to their wellbeing.**

Volunteering opportunities also enabled a sense of civic pride within the Collective, which contributed to volunteer wellbeing, with one volunteer remarking that at Joe Lycett’s International Day of Birmingham, *“there was a great atmosphere in Victoria Square, of friendship and fun. The Brummie themed elements both made me smile, and made me proud of my city,”* and another stating that *“it felt so good to be part of SportAccord Event and [I felt] proud to represent Birmingham.”* One volunteer at Birmingham Weekender captured the sense of hometown pride reflected by many, stating that they *“felt very proud that all this was happening in [their] home city”*.

Several volunteers indicated that they felt an improvement to their mental health after engaging with the Volunteers Collective, with a volunteer for SportAccord 2024 reflecting that a *“personal highlight was being able to step out of my comfort zone and volunteer at this prestigious event. It helped me overcome some of my anxiety levels and enhance my confidence to be able to interact with professionals!”* A number of volunteers echoed the sentiment that assisting with events helped them to build confidence and resilience, with others noting that the opportunity to actively participate in sports activities contributed positively to their mental health as well as their physical wellbeing.



Consistently, feedback indicated that opportunities provided through the Volunteers Collective fostered a sense of purpose in participants. Volunteers repeatedly reflected that they felt “valued” and “appreciated” at events, with one volunteer stating “we made people smile, [that’s] always a good feeling.” Following the Access For All event, a volunteer reflected that “from the minute I walked in and throughout the event I felt valued and welcomed.”

This sentiment was echoed by a volunteer at the England Athletics 2024 Championships: *“It was a pleasure to volunteer and help competitors and their families purchase tickets and help with registration. It’s always wonderful meeting volunteers who I have met at the [Birmingham] Festival and Commonwealth Games. It’s very humbling and I always come away feeling I have made a difference.”* This sense of purpose certainly represents a positive impact on volunteer wellbeing.

In particular, volunteers appreciated the opportunity to harness their local knowledge for the benefit of the wider community, with one volunteer at the UK Athletics Indoor Championships 2025 stating, *“everyone is like a family, looking after each other, and helping out with anyone facing a difficulty or challenge. I was happy to help and direct athletes or members of their team around the arena, having extensive knowledge of the place, because of several volunteering opportunities. That makes me happy, knowing I’ve helped others, and made a difference, even in a small way. That is the essence of why I volunteer.”*







## Rebuilding Confidence and Connection

After years of being a full-time carer for her mother, Bali found herself trapped in a cycle of isolation. Her days were repetitive and lonely, with few opportunities to break away from her responsibilities. When the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games brought a surge of volunteering roles, she signed up, hoping to find some respite. Although the Games' experience was initially uplifting, Bali felt adrift once it ended. *"I didn't know where to go or what to do next,"* she explained. She was relieved when United By 2022 launched the Volunteers Collective, offering former Commonwealth Games volunteers continued opportunities to volunteer across Birmingham.

Bali's first United By 2022 engagement was at a relaxed performance at the Birmingham Hippodrome. The audience included individuals with disabilities, and Bali **found joy in making the environment welcoming and inclusive**. *"It was amazing,"* she said. *"You see people light up when they feel truly comfortable."* The structured yet flexible approach of United By 2022 suited her needs perfectly. *"I could choose events that worked for me, with no pressure to commit beyond what I could manage,"* she shared.

For Maureen, United By 2022 was more than a platform—it was a bridge back to her creative side. As a part-time accountant, Maureen wanted to engage in activities outside her professional sphere. She began volunteering at the Sue Ryder charity shop, a cause close to her heart due to personal experiences with bereavement. While there, she used her artistic side to design window displays, a stark contrast to her usual number-focused work. *"It allowed me to connect with people in a completely different way,"* she said.

Bali and Maureen's paths crossed at a United By 2022 event, and the connection they forged would go on to change both their lives. Bali shared her struggles with one of her family member's mental health, and Maureen's work at Sue Ryder inspired Bali to encourage her family member to volunteer there. At first, the family member was hesitant, but with Maureen's support, she began working in the shop, helping with mannequin displays and other tasks. *"It's brought her out of her shell,"* Bali said. *"I can't thank Maureen and United By 2022 enough for helping her find confidence."*

Through United By 2022, both Bali and Maureen extended their volunteering to events like the Birmingham Weekender and Joe Lycett's International Day of Birmingham. These roles exposed them to a vibrant cultural scene and introduced them to fellow volunteers. *"We're like a little family,"* Maureen remarked, reflecting on the **sense of belonging she found through the Collective**. Bali echoed this sentiment, noting how volunteering had reignited her sense of purpose. *"It's given me so much more than I ever expected,"* she said.



# KEY OUTCOMES: SKILLS



Organisations and individuals will be better skilled and more confident to deliver work and to seek new work.

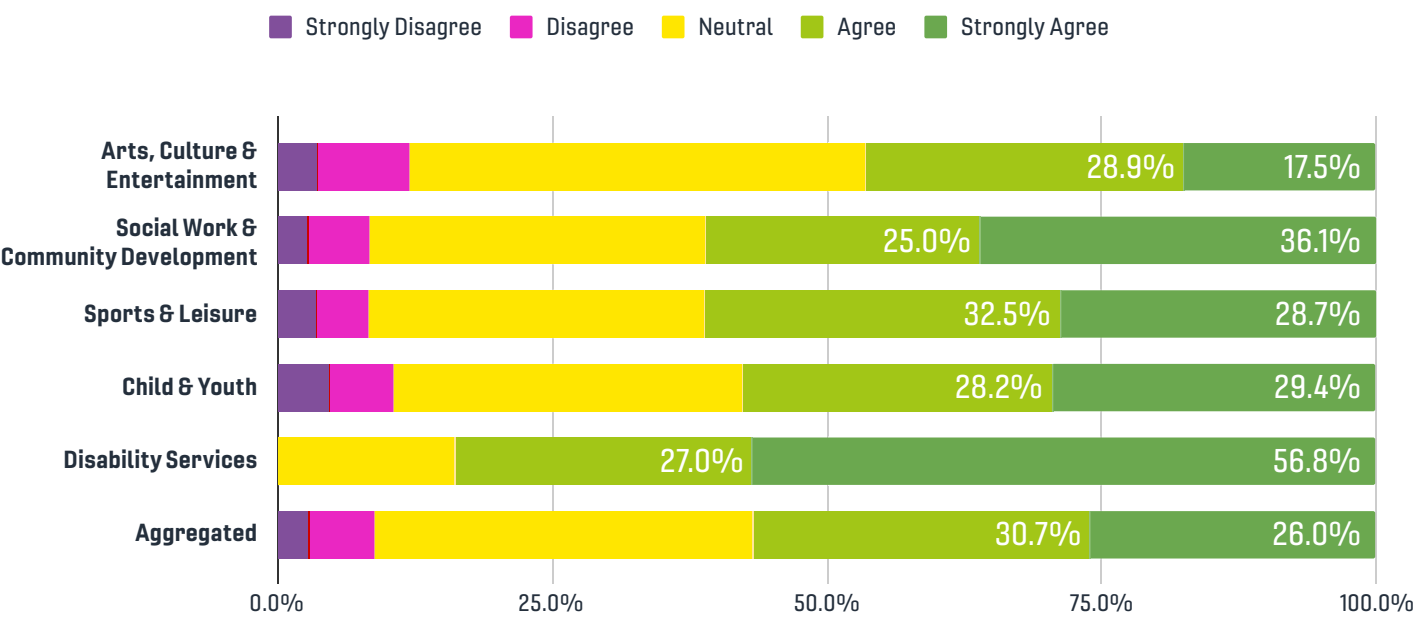
Generally, skills outcomes were lower for volunteers compared to the equivalent wellbeing scores outlined in the previous outcome. 56.7% of volunteers said they gained new skills as a result of their experience. 71.3% of volunteers said they had developed existing skills as a result of their engagement.

Their skills growth was also slightly lower than that of other Trailblazer programme stakeholders – as shown in the [23-24 Trailblazers Report](#). This is perhaps due to the greater emphasis the Volunteers Collective programme has on fostering stronger wellbeing and connection, as opposed to using it as a method to develop tangible skills.

Therefore, whilst the quantitative data might suggest skills as a subsidiary outcome for engaged volunteers, the qualitative data which backs it up shows the value of the impact nonetheless.

## Volunteer New Skills Indicators by Event Type

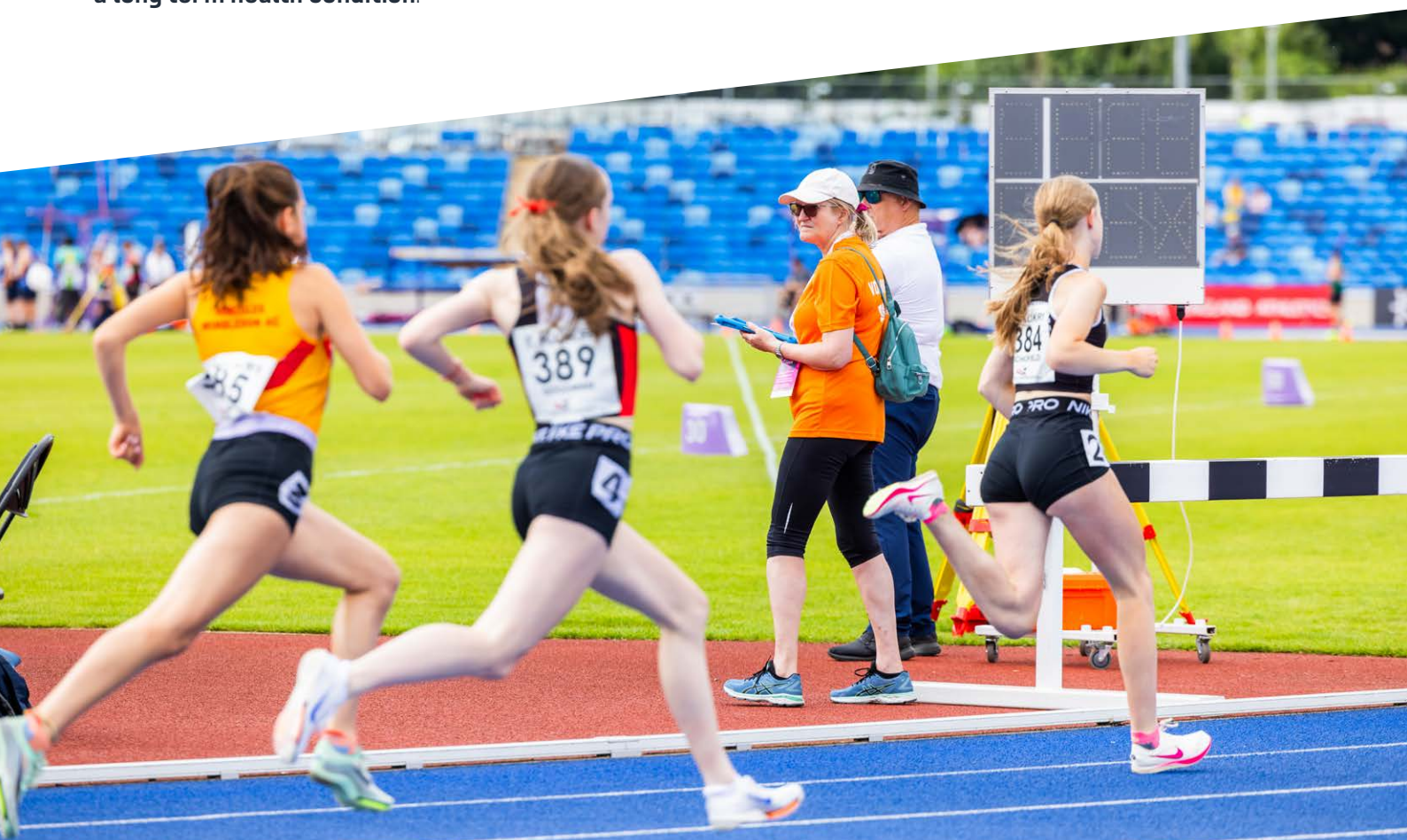
‘I have gained new skills as a result of engaging with this volunteering experience’



There were two principal discrepancies in new skills growth at different types of event. This was also mirrored in the wellbeing outcome. At 'Arts, Culture & Entertainment' events, participants were 10% less likely to gain new skills, while at 'Disability Services' events they were 27.1% more likely to. The same level of discrepancy was not present in similar analysis for growth of pre-existing skills, suggesting that the 'Disability Services' volunteering offer in particular, is indeed offering volunteers the opportunity to grow and develop their skillset via new experiences. Whilst not an outcome measured as part of the Volunteer Collective's activities – this speaks to the broader **United By 2022 mission to grow knowledge and skills of working with people who identify as d/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health condition.**

The wealth of engagement opportunities provided to thousands of prospective volunteers through the Volunteers Collective aimed **not only to encourage volunteers to contribute to their local communities but to provide them with opportunities for personal growth, building skills, and taking on new challenges.** Post-event reflections indicate that many volunteers gained new skills, or consolidated existing skills through volunteering with the Volunteers Collective. These skills were varied and encompassed communication, event support, teamwork, and problem-solving. Several noted that their experiences contributed to their confidence, particularly when working in large-scale, busy, multicultural environments.

At sporting events in particular, volunteers reflected positively on gaining understanding of the rules of sports which were new to them, and appreciated the opportunity to learn how to time-keep and keep score for these games, in many cases operating equipment which was new to them to do so. A volunteer at the England Athletics 2024 Championships remarked that their *"highlight from volunteering for the event was learning a new skill by inputting the [athletes'] coach details into an Excel spreadsheet, and linking to a new database to find out if they have their coaching license."* Indeed, across many events, volunteers appreciated the opportunity to develop new skills around operating technology such as contactless payment devices and QR code scanners.





After volunteering at SportAccord 2024, one volunteer, who reflected on the event as a *“fantastic experience”*, remarked *“I have learned how to scan a QR code and print out an Accreditation Pass.”*

One volunteer reflected that the instruction from sporting officials at a Goalball UK Regional Tournament allowed them to take on a new challenge: *“My previous volunteering has tended to be with the spectators, so it was a new challenge to be part of the actual competition”*, with another volunteer stating *“I am normally a meet and greeter. I volunteered for Goalball, as they needed officials on the game, which I had never done before. I was a little worried to try it but with excellent guidance from the other officials I had a brilliant day and put my name down for future events.”*

This sentiment was echoed by volunteers at the Kabaddi World Cup 2025 who remarked that *“the officials were really passionate about the sport and took time to explain the rules to [volunteers],”* and the Yonex All England Badminton Championships, who stated that *“learning the rules of badminton and the skills used to play has inspired me to do badminton.”*

Volunteers who assisted at a range of events also appreciated the opportunity to build skills in working with children, and particularly in working with those with additional needs. One volunteer who volunteered at an Access For All event remarked that *“it was so useful to know about the support available to students after secondary school”* and felt that this would benefit them in their work at a school for students with SEND.

This volunteer went on to state that building *“new skills out of my comfort zone”* was a highlight of the experience. Another volunteer at the Birmingham School Games Legacy Celebration noted that ***“engaging and interacting with children with learning disabilities have been valuable skills which I had never experienced before. It taught me a lot about communication and patience which are personally rewarding.”***





## KEY OUTCOMES: REPRESENTATION



*Organisations and individuals who have traditionally been excluded on the grounds of age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability will be better platformed, funded and empowered.*

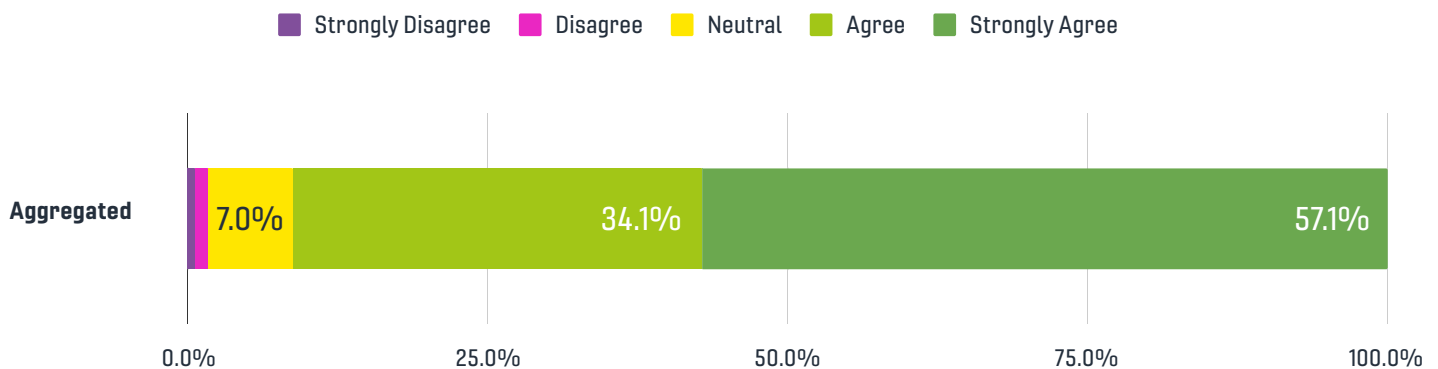
Many members of the Volunteers Collective reflected that the events which they took part in not only provided them with an opportunity to interact and engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, but that the events themselves platformed those who are often underrepresented in society.

'Through my engagement with this volunteering opportunity I was able to interact with others from different backgrounds to my own' scored the highest of all outcome indicators, with 91.2% agreeing with the statement after engagement in events. There was minimal variation in agreement on this indicator – sentiment did not vary due to event scale, location, or event type – with the anomaly of 'Disability Services'.

This shows that across all Volunteer Collective engagement, one of the most successful impacts is the ability to connect people from different backgrounds. This impact was present regardless of the type or scale of opportunity you engaged with. This outcome will become more impactful with increased diversity within the pool of volunteers registered on the volunteer portal, and taking part as active volunteers.

### Representation Indicators

**'Through my engagement with this volunteering opportunity I was able to interact with others from different backgrounds to my own'**



Several volunteers emphasised that the events they participated in engaged individuals across a wide age range, with volunteers at Bring the Power Dudley Festival, Boldmere Christmas Festival, and Birmingham Weekender commenting on an *“exciting atmosphere with all ages enjoying themselves”*, and reflecting that *“it was fun to see people both old and young from various backgrounds joining in with the event.”*

Volunteering opportunities also provided a welcoming atmosphere for participants of a range of cultural backgrounds; volunteers welcomed the opportunity to *“interact with others from different backgrounds to [their] own”*. This notion was reiterated time and again as volunteers reflected on their personal highlights: *“There was a lovely atmosphere at the event and everyone was happy to be there.”* Others remarked that *“it was a learning experience for me to be involved with a culture different from [their] own.”*

Opportunities for cross-cultural exchange provided volunteers with the opportunity to expand their cultural horizons, with one volunteer reflecting that *“the opportunity to mix with a different community from my own and increase my understanding of Ramadan”* was a personal highlight, and another reminiscing over *“meeting other people from across the world and laughing with them although we couldn’t understand each other’s language”*.





Some volunteers felt that the welcoming, inclusive environment which defined United By 2022 volunteering opportunities captured the essence of the spirit of Birmingham: *"I loved how friendly the atmosphere was and how people were engaging with one another. The Light Festival reinforced my love for the Brummie spirit."* Certainly, organisers of the Volunteers Collective championed inclusivity and diversity, with volunteers remarking that **"all of the organising team were very welcoming and created a very inclusive environment."**

One volunteer outlined how the Volunteers Collective is enriched by the diverse life experiences which its members bring to the project: *"I think the variety of people you meet is very interesting. [...] People you work with are so much fun and bring so much different life experience to the volunteer group."*

Beyond the Volunteers Collective comprising participants from diverse and often under-represented backgrounds, volunteers consistently appreciated that the events which they participated in championed and were accessible to those with disabilities.

A highlight for countless volunteers across a range of events was providing assistance to attendees with access needs, and many relished the opportunity to watch para athletes perform at sporting events such as the Goalball UK Super League Tournament and the British Junior Para Swimming Championships, and reflected on how eye-opening and inspiring the experience was. One volunteer remarked that whilst volunteering, they *"met one of the Paralympics GB netball team, which was a real privilege and an informative conversation"*.

Certainly, the volunteering opportunities provided to members of the Collective were not only inclusive and accessible to volunteers from a range of backgrounds, but they provided a platform for minority identities to be championed and diversity to be celebrated.





## KEY OUTCOMES: NETWORKS



*Organisations and individuals will be better networked, particularly across sectors which currently operate in silo.*

A principal element of the Networks pillar was providing organisations with better access to a broad range of volunteers, and volunteers with access to new opportunities. These event organisers indicated that they had had a positive experience; 94.4% of organisations using volunteers said that the volunteers were actively engaged, and that the quantity of volunteers supplied had met their needs. Whilst only 16.7% of the organisations we spoke to said that they required volunteers to have specific skills, 100% of the organisers who had this requirement said that they were given volunteers with the skills they needed.

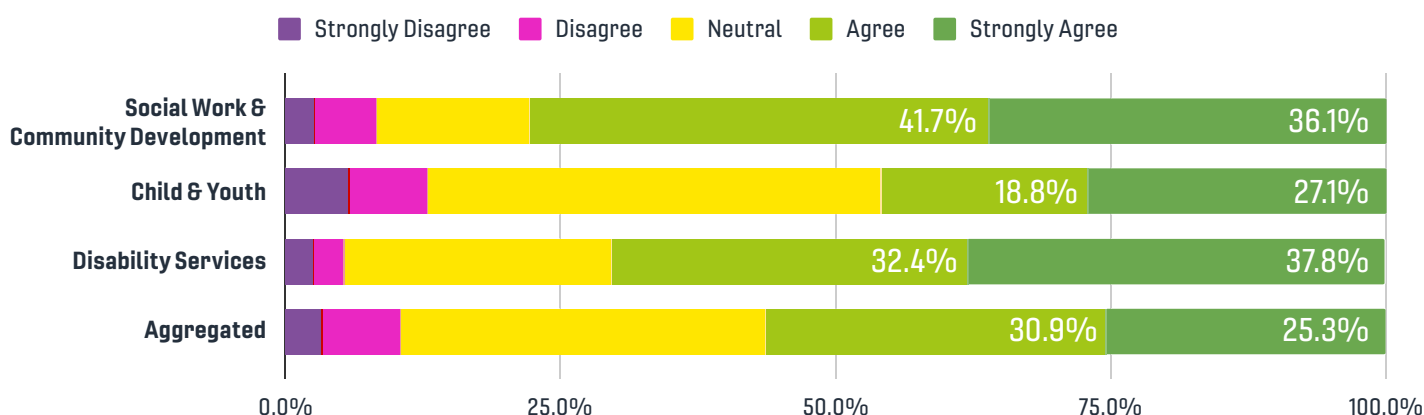
94.4% of event organisers said that overall they were satisfied with the volunteers they were supplied with. This displays the value organisations held in the volunteers they used. As is highlighted in the case study below, this was mirrored in volunteers' experiences of connecting with new organisations and friends through the Collective.

The other element of this outcome was the extent to which volunteers felt that their engagement in the Volunteers Collective had given them access to opportunities they did not have previously. 56.2% agreed across all event types.

Volunteers who had taken part in 'Social Work & Community Development' events were 21.6% more likely to report accessing new opportunities. This was also the case for 'Disabilities Services' events – who were 14% more likely to report access to new opportunities. The only event type which was more familiar to volunteers were 'Child & Youth' events – where the sample was 10% less likely to identify access to a new opportunity, when compared to the aggregated sample.

### Network Indicators By Event Type

**'As a result of engaging with this volunteering I have access to opportunities I did not have previously'**



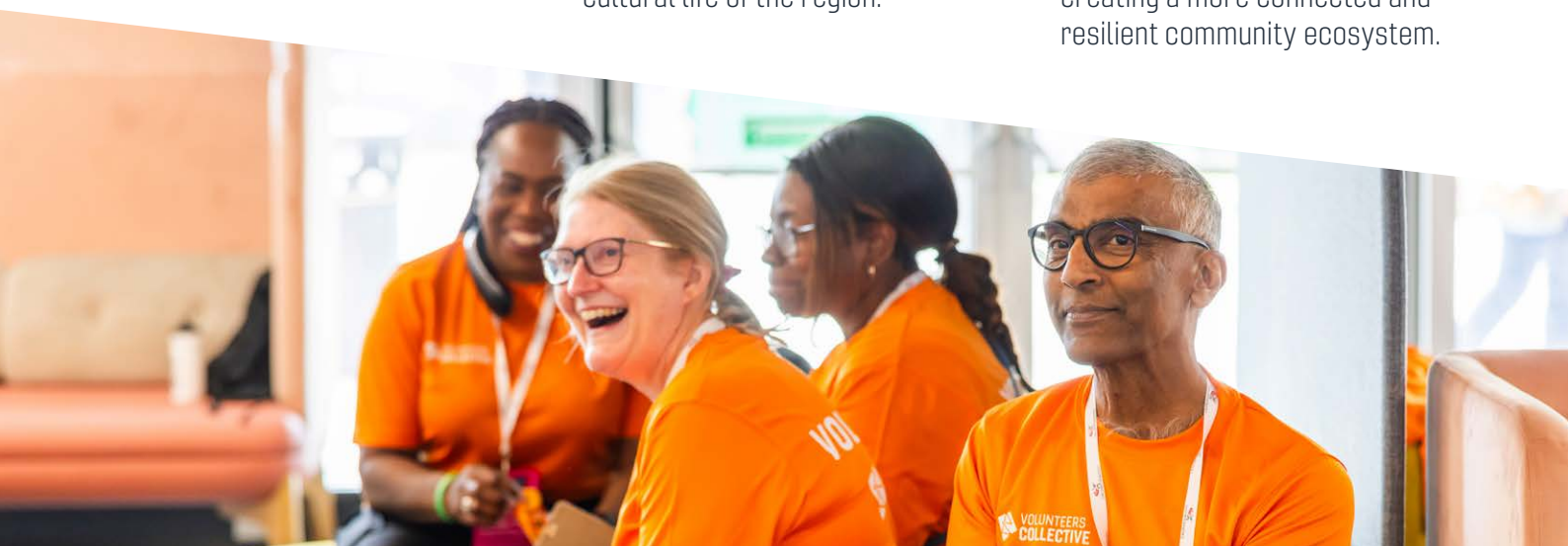
# CONCLUSION

The Volunteers Collective has established itself as a distinctive and impactful legacy initiative, sustaining the energy and ethos of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games while adapting to meet the evolving needs of both volunteers and event organisers. Over the past two years, it has demonstrated that volunteering, when thoughtfully managed, can extend far beyond transactional support, generating deep-rooted benefits for individuals, communities, and the wider West Midlands.

The programme's breadth and scale are remarkable – **over 26,000 hours of volunteering delivered across 99 events by more than 500 active volunteers**, with many contributing repeatedly over time. From local festivals to international sporting events, the Volunteers Collective has enabled events of all sizes to flourish, while consistently delivering high levels of satisfaction for both volunteers and partner organisations. The tiered service model has proven highly effective, allowing organisations to access flexible support while preserving a consistent focus on wellbeing.

Beyond the substantial quantitative impacts, **volunteers also consistently reported profound improvements to their confidence, wellbeing and social connections** – benefits that resonate deeply in a post-pandemic context where isolation and disconnection remain widespread challenges. Qualitative insights reveal how the Collective has provided **a bridge back into society for individuals managing anxiety, bereavement, and long-term caregiving responsibilities**. It has fostered new friendships, civic pride, and creative self-expression, demonstrating the value of volunteer-led joy and engagement initiatives in the cultural life of the region.

Building on its powerful contribution to wellbeing, the programme has also contributed to skills development, inclusion, and networking. The diversity of event types has given volunteers access to new learning opportunities, particularly in disability services and youth engagement contexts. Representation has improved, with active volunteers more likely to live in areas of higher deprivation, though clear opportunities remain to diversify engagement by age and location. The Collective has also deepened relationships between organisations and sectors that may otherwise operate in silos, creating a more connected and resilient community ecosystem.



As United By 2022 looks ahead, the Volunteers Collective offers a compelling model for how cities can invest in people-powered infrastructure, not only for delivering events but for nurturing wellbeing, inclusion, and belonging. The past two years have demonstrated the potential of sustained volunteer engagement to transform individual lives and community dynamics, delivering measurable positive outcomes and creating a proven model for sustaining a legacy of civic pride and connection. The thousands of volunteer hours, the success of partner events and the profound, life-changing impact on the wellbeing of hundreds of volunteers achieved through this initiative stand as testament to what can be achieved.

Building on these proven foundations, the programme is well-positioned to expand its reach and deepen its impact across the region. Through strategic investment and strengthened cross-sector partnerships, the Volunteers Collective stands ready to play an increasingly vital role in advancing the region's cultural and civic engagement initiatives, creating even greater opportunities for community connection and individual growth in the years ahead, cementing the West Midlands as a region that champions volunteering.

**The Volunteers Collective stands ready to play an increasingly vital role in advancing the region's cultural and civic engagement initiatives.**







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