

Diversity in UK Volunteering

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A Word From Our Deputy CEO

Charity volunteers face many challenges, especially in the face of fast-paced, modern lives and in particular given the current increased economic factors which impact us all.

We commissioned this research to broaden our understanding of these ever-changing needs and the pressures they are under. In our findings, it is remarkable to see the tremendous commitment and engagement of both BAME and all UK volunteers in supporting their local causes with passion and dedication. While it is disheartening to witness the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on these caring individuals, it presents an opportunity for greater levels of support from the wider charitable sector.

Owais Khan

Deputy CEO
Human Appeal



Some Background

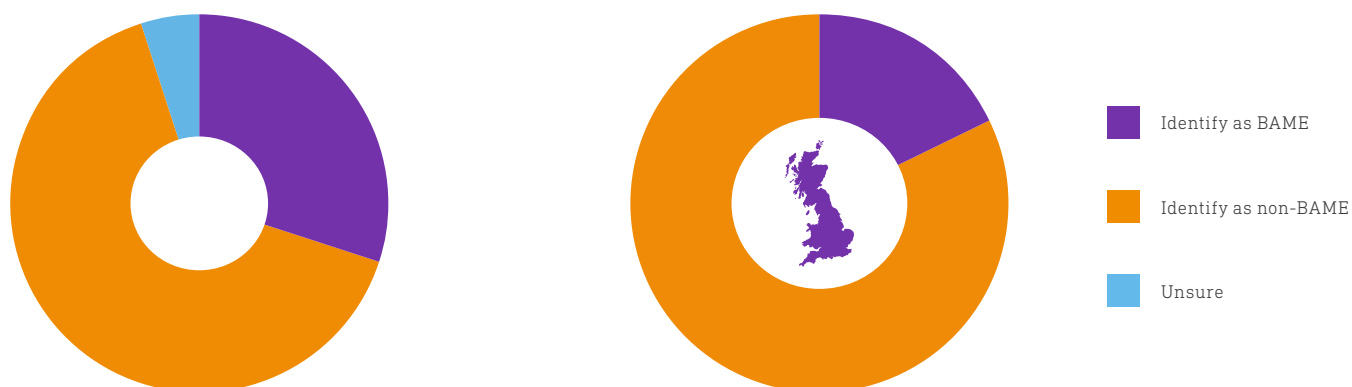
The Cost Of Living crisis has reverberated through the nation, affecting all aspects of life. Not least of these is the volunteering sector. The number of people volunteering each year in the UK has shrunk as a direct result with people needing to prioritise time dedicated to paid work in the face of rising costs. Also in decline is the number of annual hours spent volunteering.

However the results from the research documented here have shed new light on just how profoundly UK volunteers are being impacted by the economic situation. Indeed, it is overwhelmingly volunteers who identify as BAME who are most affected - particularly when it comes to (on average) increased volunteering efforts during the Cost Of Living crisis as compared to nonBAME volunteers. BAME volunteers also lend their support over a wider range of causes and in areas that face greater strain and underfunding. This is despite often facing higher personal costs when volunteering.



Volunteers

We surveyed **1003** active volunteers in the UK.



Of the volunteers surveyed:

- **Over 30 percent** (self) identified as BAME,
- **65 percent** identified as nonBAME,
- With the remaining **5 percent** unsure

According to the 2021 census **18 percent** of the British population identify as BAME, with **82 percent** identifying as non-BAME.

The Volunteering Crisis

In June 2023 the National Council of Volunteers (NCVO) launched its Time Well Spent report, concluding that in its current form volunteering is in decline. Some **40 percent** of organisations surveyed noting a decline in the number of hours and number of volunteers giving their time to organisations.

This research reveals that this recent decline is linked directly to the Cost of Living crisis.

BAME Volunteering Practices

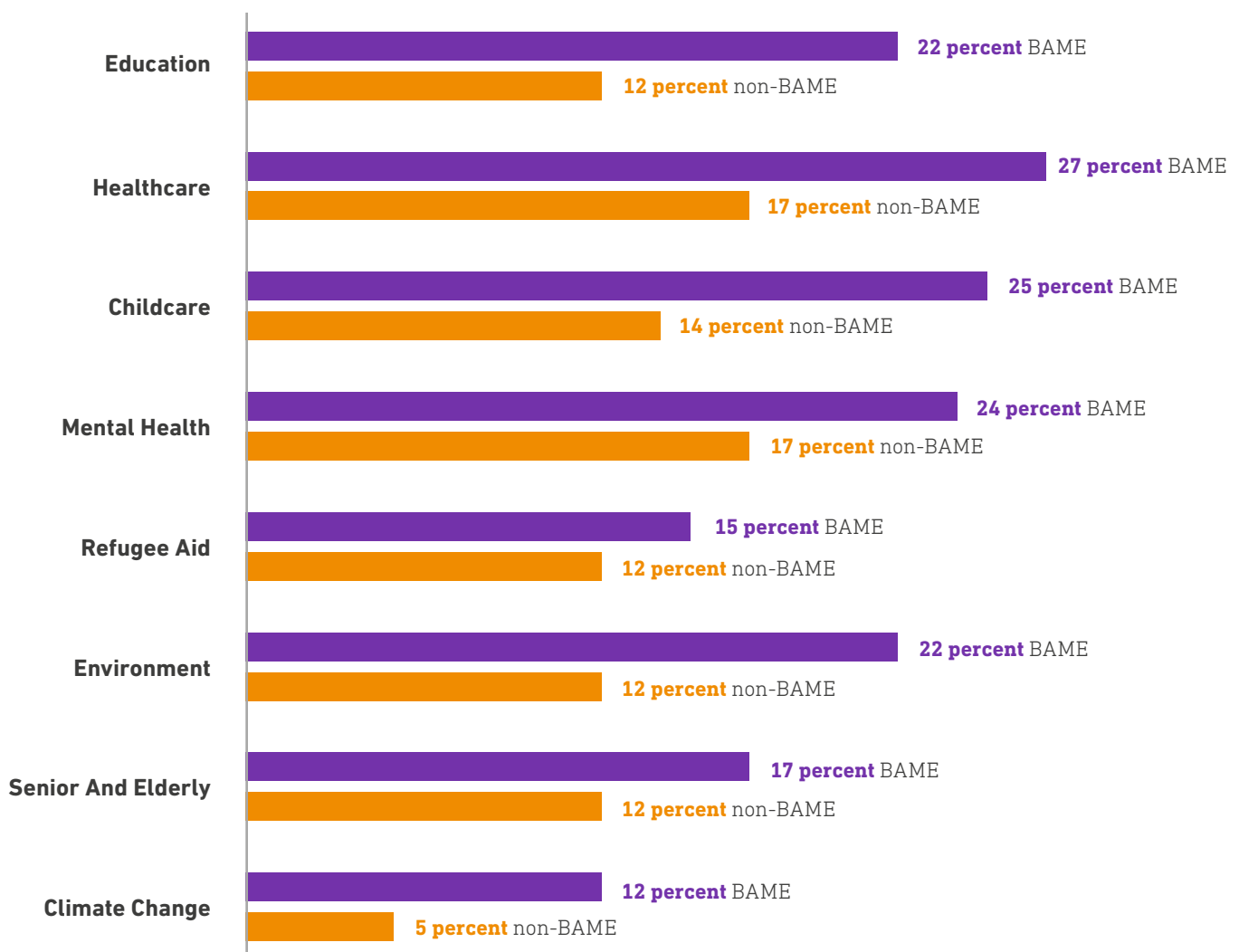
Not only do BAME Brits volunteer on average more frequently than their non-BAME counterparts, but they also volunteer for a wider range of social causes.

Volunteers working with refugees are **3** times more likely to identify as BAME.

The only area where non-BAME volunteers outweigh BAME volunteers is in fundraising. However at **19 percent** non-BAME and **18 percent** BAME the one percent difference is marginal.

There are three stand-out areas where BAME volunteers volunteer more on average than non-BAME volunteers. They are: **healthcare, childcare and education.**

The stats are as follows:



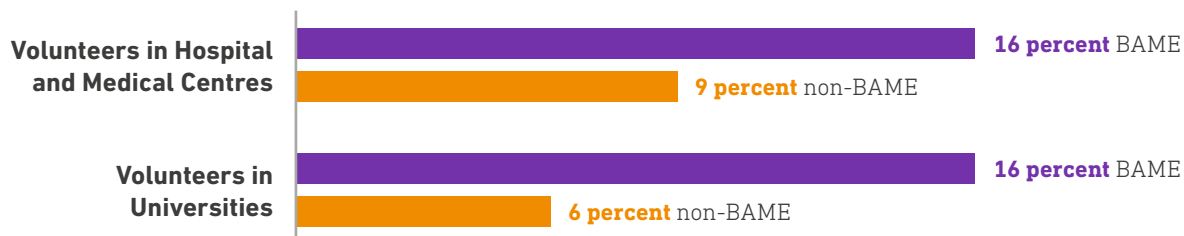
The Importance of the BAME volunteering boost

To truly understand the extent to which BAME volunteers play a vital role not only in volunteering but in supporting the UK as a whole, we need to look at the sectors where they are volunteering their time.

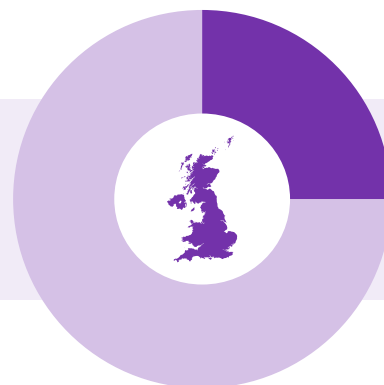
Education, healthcare and mental health are most notable, all three being largely controlled and administered by the public sector. In light of the fact that both schools, and the NHS face a funding crisis, become heavily reliant on volunteers who can provide services, support functions and take on other roles at no cost to the organisations. As the Cost Of Living Crisis continues, the UK's public sector leans on its volunteers more and more.

The statistics revealed by our research exemplified this reliance to support public services. Of the BAME volunteers surveyed, some **16 percent** volunteered specifically in hospital and medical centres as opposed to **9 percent** of non-BAME volunteers. Similarly, **16 percent** of BAME volunteers offered their services to universities, as opposed to **6 percent** of non-BAME volunteers.

Another noticeable area of support is the fight to combat the climate crisis. In March 2022, the Mayor of London's office released a study that found that self-identifying BAME Londoners were more likely to experience the effects of the climate crisis, as many lived in areas that lacked green spaces, had increased pollution and due to poor infrastructure were likely to feel the effects of extreme weather conditions.²



BAME students are estimated to make up **25.1 percent** of the student population in the UK, meaning that more BAME students volunteer per head at University than non-BAME.¹



¹ Higher Education Student Data 2019/20 | HESA." n.d. [www.hesa.ac.uk](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/09-02-2021/he-student-data-201920..). Accessed August 2, 2023.

² BAME Londoners more likely to be affected by climate emergency." Greater London Authority, 17 March 2022, <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/bame-londoners-bear-brunt-of-climate-emergency>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

The Hidden Costs of Volunteering

Though volunteers give their time to charities, causes, companies and organisations for free, the act of volunteering itself can prove costly. Volunteers give not only their time but often pay multiple expenses.

Our research found that:

- Some **29 percent** of all UK volunteers surveyed had no cost associated with their volunteering
- Just **8 percent** of all UK volunteers had their expenses reimbursed by the organisation they volunteered with.

Meanwhile:

- **36 percent** of volunteers personally paid for travel costs
- **18 percent** for data or wifi use while volunteering
- **12 percent** had to account for time lost from their own paid work

These numbers further reveal a higher percentage of BAME-identifying volunteers on average experiencing higher personal cost than their non-BAME-identifying counterparts.

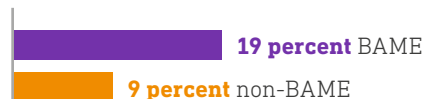
Travel cost saw similar figures with personal costs for travel being paid for by:



Data and/or wifi costs incurred were shown to affect:



Another stark contrast is between those who stated that, due to their volunteering commitments, they lost hours in paid employment, which is a significant rise in comparison to their nonBAME counterparts:



Similar discrepancies emerge in the personal payment of costs incurred for accommodation while volunteering:



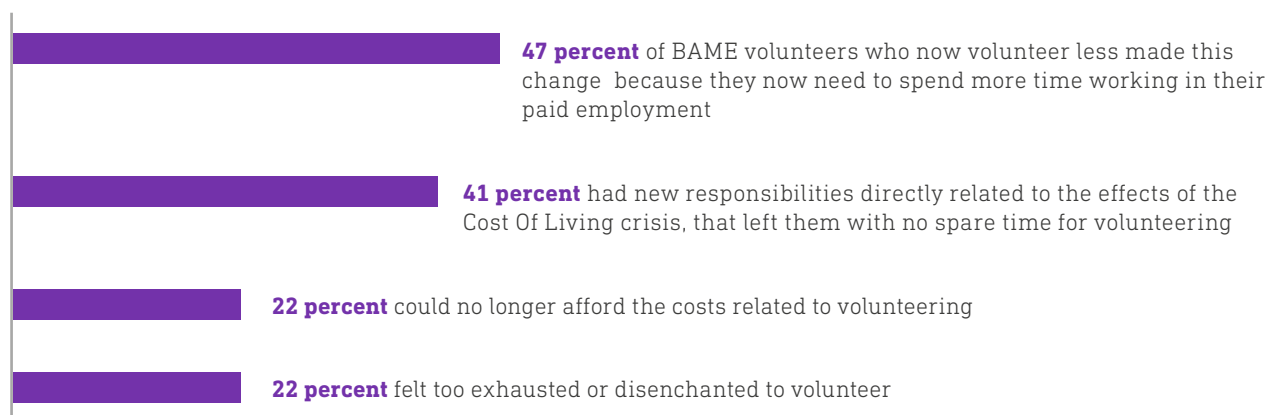
Volunteering in the Cost Of Living Crisis

The Cost Of Living crisis has had a negative effect on volunteering. One third - **33 percent** - of all volunteers stated that they volunteer less frequently as a direct result of the Cost Of Living crisis. This represents a drop of one third overall across all volunteering efforts.

This further breaks down to:



The reasoning is as follows:



However despite the overall drop in time spent volunteering, others have responded to the economic pressures by increasing the time they dedicate to causes. Over **one third - 36 percent** - of BAME volunteers stated that they now volunteer more as a result of the Cost Of Living crisis, whereas **23 percent** of non-BAME volunteers began volunteering more.

Supporting BAME Volunteers

The data clearly indicates that volunteers, particularly those who identify as BAME, need further support from both the organisations they work for and from the creation of new government policy and support systems.

To understand how to better support volunteers we should look not only at the personal costs incurred by volunteering, but also at the benefits that volunteers already gain from the experience.

In some cases it is not always possible for charities and organisations, many of which are heavily reliant on volunteers to continue operating, to provide financial support towards costs incurred. However, by increasing benefits in other areas, they can provide greater support to volunteers, and increase the social and economic benefit of volunteering.

It is also important to understand why people volunteer. The 'why' also holds great value for individuals.



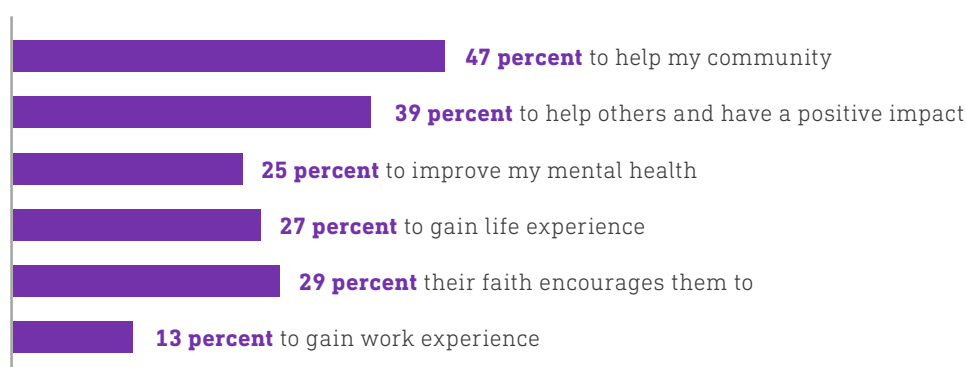
The Why Behind Volunteering

We asked the BAME volunteers that we surveyed what the primary motivation behind their volunteering was. Their responses shed light for organisations, as to how they can create incentives both to retain current volunteers and increase volunteer numbers. It also provides insight into why the volunteers choose the causes they support and how they may benefit from assistance in other aspects of their lives.

Some **29 percent** of BAME volunteers said they were motivated by the demonstrable outcome and impact that their volunteering would have, and just over a quarter (**26 percent**) of volunteers needed their volunteering time to align with their interests and patterns.

The motivations behind where volunteers choose to donate their time was proven to also be important to them. The results behind each decision were broadly similar, but there were a few standout motivators for where BAME volunteers were volunteering their time.

The benefits that come with volunteering also served as motivation. The survey found that just over **one in five - 21 percent** - of BAME volunteers said they were motivated by the level of responsibility they would take on as a volunteer. And a joint **18 percent** said they were motivated by the training and support they would receive, or the type of skills they would learn in their volunteering role. This is a higher proportion than the non-BAME volunteers, who, for the same training and upskilling motivations, reported **14 percent** and **13 percent** respectively.

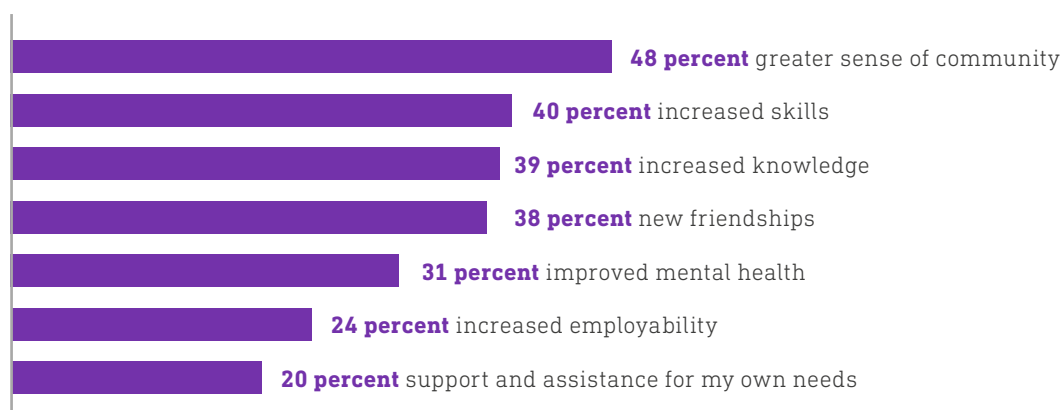


Benefits felt from volunteering

The fostering of community and friendships was considered a large benefit by the BAME volunteers surveyed. Alongside this, increased skills, **40 percent**, and knowledge, **39 percent**, and increased employability, **24 percent**, ranked highly as benefits among respondents.

Volunteering was also seen to support the personal needs of the volunteers, with almost one third of BAME volunteers reporting improvements to their mental health, and one fifth of BAME volunteers also gaining support and assistance for their own personal needs.

Of all the benefits listed, the below ranked the highest among BAME respondents:



Moving Volunteering Forward

In light of the above findings, and the ongoing Cost Of Living crisis, how do we support both volunteers and the organisations they support moving forward?

It is clear that the answer to this question requires a multi-faceted approach. The clear reality is that as the Cost Of Living crisis continues, our need for volunteers increases. Therefore, the act of volunteering must be as cost-effective as possible.

The responsibility falls both to the organisations that employ volunteers and the creation of government policies and practices to provide further support to all volunteers.

Our research reveals that community involvement is a large motivator for BAME volunteers, and similarly that disenchantment is a pivotal demotivator during the Cost Of Living crisis. But as our study shows, the largest motivator is an increased sense of community, whilst additional incentives to donate time in support of causes come from increased skills, education and employability.

To combat disenchantment, the rewards to volunteering need to be increased. Government policy surrounding benefits to volunteer public funding to local community spaces; grants to support volunteers and their outgoings; certificates of recognition for volunteers; and connection with volunteering activities to official and unofficial courses, would all increase the social benefit of volunteering and provide a greater incentive for engagement to grow once more.

Finally, recognition of volunteers is key. We must understand, mark and celebrate the role that BAME and non-BAME volunteers play in the sector. They are the backbone of British volunteering.





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