

Voluntary and Community Groups in Scotland

May 2022

Introduction

Voluntary organisations are groups working to achieve social or environmental goals. They are independent, self-governing, non-profit driven, and run by unpaid boards. Many voluntary organisations opt for charitable status and these registered charities tend to dominate any mapping of the voluntary sector due to their higher profile and visibility.

A lack of information on the activities of groups **without** charitable status has been identified as a major gap when trying to convey the size and shape of the sector at national and local level. This briefing seeks to address that gap by using data from Third Sector Interfaces (through MILO, the shared database managed by SCVO) to profile the thousands of small community groups without charitable status active across Scotland.

Key findings

Voluntary and community groups play a significant role in communities right across Scotland, across all types of activity.

- The combined number of charities, community groups and social enterprises in Scotland currently sits at just over **46,500**.
- There are currently **20,042** groups without charitable status recorded in the MILO database or registered as community sports clubs - these will be called 'community groups' for the rest of this paper to distinguish them from the wider voluntary sector.
- For every 10 Scottish charities there are a further 8 community groups.
- Community groups without charitable status have a different profile to charities, with more emphasis on sport and recreation, and less on religion and social care.
- 6,671 Sport, Culture and Recreation groups account for a third of community groups.
- 4,746 community groups provide social services, with services for children and young people making up a large part.
- 1,864 community groups are involved in Community, economic and social development, including 452 village halls and community centres.
- Rural areas have particularly high levels of voluntary groups. In Orkney, Dumfries & Galloway and the Highlands there are more community groups than charities.

1. Methodology

The primary data source used by this paper is the MILO database, using data collected by Scotland's [Third Sector Interfaces](#). A data snapshot taken on January 2022 listed just over 22,000 organisations classified as Voluntary Organisations.

Supplementary data has been sourced from the 'Civil society organisations in Scotland' dataset developed by the University of Stirling in 2017/18, created by merging OSCR and Milo data, and adding additional classifications and geographical information. The final dataset deposited with the UK Data Service is accessible [here](#).

These two datasets were checked against each other, then linked to public data using postcode fields. Further cleaning and deduplication were carried out manually.

Additional data on 553 Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) based in Scotland was extracted from the HMRC register and appended to the MILO dataset, adding 421 clubs.

The key thing to highlight with this methodology is that the MILO database is used primarily as a CRM tool by TSIs, not as a mapping tool. Many TSIs only record groups that they support or have interactions with. Any sector estimates in these areas will be an undercount. Nevertheless, MILO remains our best source of data for unregulated groups.

- **The MILO and CASC dataset covers 20,042 voluntary and community groups.**
- **This dataset holds the most up to date national level information available on non-charitable voluntary organisations in Scotland.**
- All Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) hold data on significant numbers of community groups active in their area, but some record more data in MILO than others.
- The dataset includes Names, Postcode, TSI/ Local Authority area, and activity area.
- No financial or workforce data is available for these community groups but given their nature it is assumed they are primarily volunteer run with no or very few paid staff, with low levels of income, expenditure and assets.
- Some organisations do not fit neatly into 'sectors' – for example 589 of Scotland's 1,200 Community Councils have a record in MILO but for the purposes of this report they have been excluded due to their statutory function.
- The dataset excludes local offices and branches of national charities. It does include local branches which are independent bodies. However, the relationship between national bodies and local branches is not always clear cut.
- The voluntary sector is dynamic and always changing. New groups are formed to meet emerging needs and interests, while other groups can fade away. The finalised dataset will be out of date almost immediately. Despite this caveat mappings carried out in 2002 and the 2017 and 2022 snapshots suggest that the general size and shape of the community sector remains roughly similar.
- Finally, many groups will be very small, some existing only as online groups, and the dataset will be missing many of these below-the-radar organisations.

2. Number of organisations

The combined number of charities, community groups and social enterprises in Scotland recorded by regulators and infrastructure bodies such as TSIs and social enterprise support bodies currently stands at **46,549**.

From feedback from individual TSIs we know that many areas do not record groups on MILO unless they have specific interactions with that group, and so the number in some areas is an undercount. The total number is likely to sit comfortably over **47,000**.

Voluntary Sector in Scotland in 2022	Number of Orgs
Scottish voluntary sector charities ¹	23,838
UK-wide charities operating in Scotland	1,152
Community groups without charitable status on MILO ²	19,489
Community Amateur Sports Clubs ³ (CASCs)	553
Subtotal of charities and community groups	45,032
Community Interest Companies limited by guarantee without shares ⁴	968
Credit Unions ⁵	79
Social Enterprises not covered by any category above ⁶	470
Other Scottish voluntary groups without charitable status not recorded by any regulator or on MILO	<i>unknown</i>
Total charity, community and third sector groups	over 46,549

¹ Charities data from OSCR. The figure of 23,838 Scottish charities excludes public bodies (NDPBs) and formal education providers such as universities and colleges, with 122 charities excluded.

² The MILO dataset also contains charities, CASCs and CICs which have not been included in the 19,489 figure but instead counted under each regulator.

³ CASC data from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-amateur-sports-clubs-casc-registered-with-hmrc--2>.

⁴ Data from CIC Regulator [Annual Report 2020](#) and Companies House [register](#)

⁵ <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/credit-union/2020/2020>

⁶ Estimate based on data from [Social Enterprise Census 2019](#)

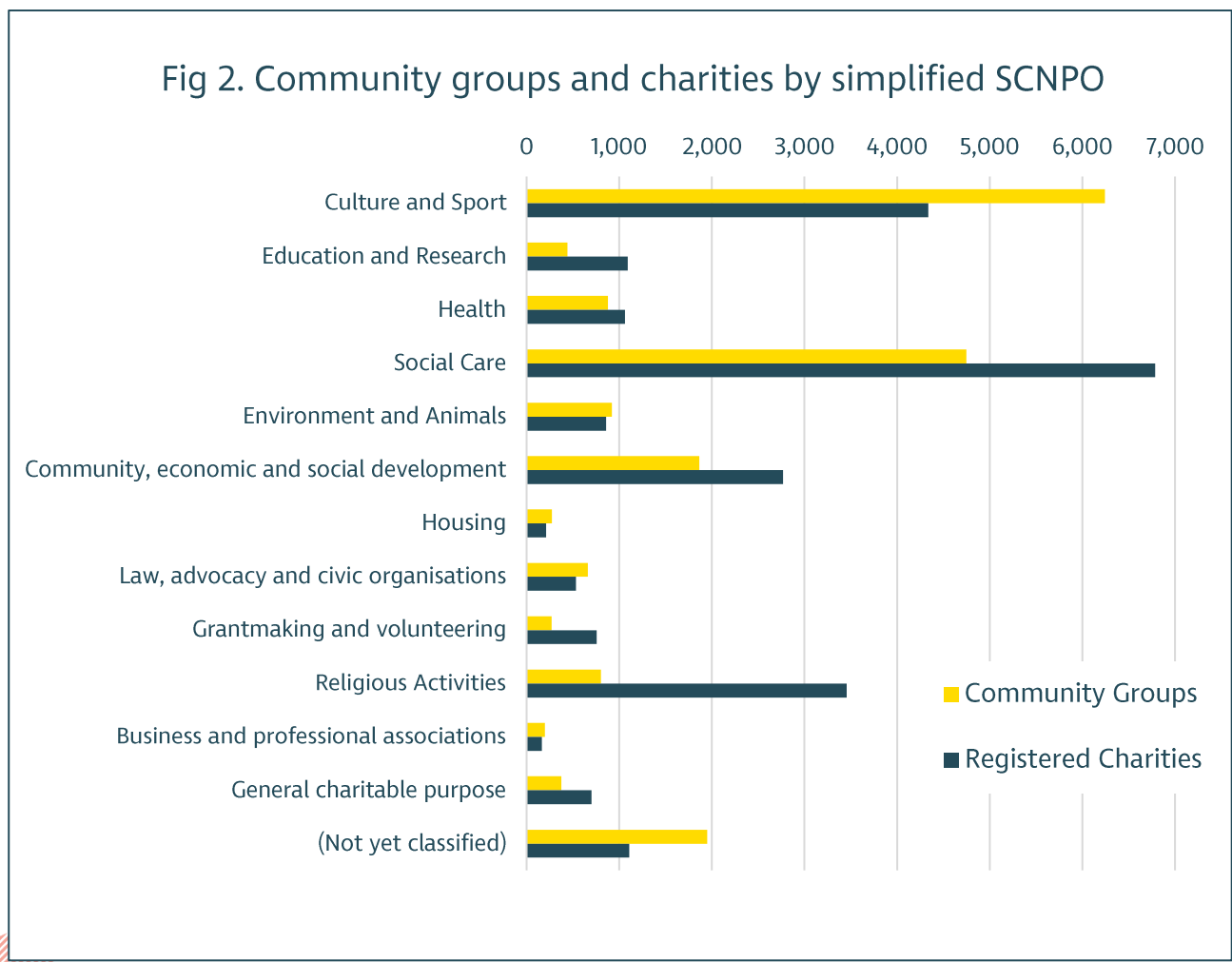
3. Main activities of community groups

- 6,242 Sport, Culture and Recreation groups make up almost a third of community groups.
- 4,746 community groups provide social services, with services for children and young people making up a large part of this group, followed by services for older people and people with disabilities.
- 1,864 community groups are involved in 'Community, economic and social development', including 452 village halls and community centres.

As the graph and tables below highlight, community groups without charitable status have a similar but slightly different profile to charities – sport and recreation groups are more likely to be unregistered, whereas churches, scouts and guides, and grant-makers are more likely to be registered charities.

Feedback from TSIs suggests that most groups without charitable status tend to be smaller, usually operating with no paid staff.

In recent years many TSIs and other bodies have been working hard to support voluntary organisations with paid staff and/or liability risks such as leases or contracts to incorporate. However, incorporation and/or charity registration is not appropriate or desirable for many groups. This can be due to small groups wanting to avoid the additional paperwork. There has also been a move towards mutual aid, particularly during the recent pandemic, which emphasises support models based on ‘solidarity not charity’.



The community groups and charities in this dataset have been classified by SCVO and University of Stirling researchers using a modified ‘SCNPO’ version of the [International Classification of Non-Profitmaking Organisations](#) (ICNPO) with each organisation assigned a primary field of work. This gives a good overview of activities but does not capture the

complexity of most voluntary organisations' activities. For example, only around 2,000 groups have 'Health' assigned as their primary field of work, but thousands of other organisations will have health and wellbeing as one of their secondary aims such as sports clubs, youth groups, activities for people with disabilities.

Table 1. Groups by Primary areas of work – simplified SCNPO	Community Groups	Scottish charities	Total
Culture and Sport	6,671	4,336	11,007
Education and Research	442	1,092	1,534
Health	879	1,063	1,942
Social Care	4,746	6,787	11,533
Environment and Animals	921	858	1,779
Community, economic and social development	1,864	2,770	4,634
Housing	272	212	484
Law, advocacy and civic organisations	660	532	1,192
Grant-making and support	269	757	1,026
Religious Activities	804	3,455	4,259
Business and professional associations	199	166	365
General charitable purpose	375	701	1,076
(Not yet classified)	1,951	1,109	3,060
Total	20,053	23,838	43,891

Table 2. Groups by SCNPO Classification	Community Groups	Scottish Charities	Total
1100 Culture and Arts	2,049	2,787	4,836
1200 Sport and Recreation	3,308	1,037	4,345
1300 Other Recreation and social clubs	1,315	512	1,827
2100 Primary and secondary education	31	63	94
2110 Parent-teacher associations	148	185	333
2120 Educational foundations	5	281	286
2200 Higher education	43	45	88
2300 Other education	149	428	577
2400 Research	39	7	46
2410 Medical research	27	89	116
3100 Hospitals and Rehabilitation	189	43	232
3200 Care homes	60	59	119
3300 Mental health and wellbeing	168	233	401
3400 Other health services	308	669	977
3450 Addictions support	155	59	214
4100 Social services (general)	336	552	888
4110 Services for children and families	920	472	1,392

4111 After school clubs	-	124	124
4120 Pre-school day care	177	503	680
4130 Services for young people	890	390	1,280
4131 Scouts, Guides etc	755	2,872	3,627
4140 Services for people with disabilities	484	591	1,075
4150 Services for older people	686	297	983
4160 Services for women	69	93	162
4170 Carers Organisations	144	83	227
4180 Refugee and migrant services	17	31	48
4200 Emergency and relief	72	82	154
4210 Homelessness support	39	43	82
4300 Income support and tackling poverty	156	601	757
4330 Food and foodbanks	-	54	54
5100 Environment	712	598	1,310
5200 Animals	209	260	469
6100 Community development	994	1,539	2,533
6111 Village halls and community centres	452	988	1,440
6112 Community transport	47	57	104
6140 Credit Unions	101	-	101
6120 Economic development	28	42	70
6200 Housing inc Tenants Associations	243	71	314
6210 Housing associations	29	141	170
6300 Employment and training	243	138	381
7100 Civic, advocacy and rights organisations	452	272	724
7110 Ethnic minority associations	36	89	125
7121 Sexuality/LGBT	17	17	34
7200 Law and legal services	124	71	195
7210 Advice services	30	74	104
7230 Offenders/ex-offenders support	3	8	11
8100 Grant-making foundations	158	690	848
8200 Umbrella and support bodies	111	67	178
10100 Religious activities	-	527	527
10110 Congregations, e.g. Churches. Mosques	804	2,928	3,732
11100 Business and professional associations	199	166	365
12100 Not elsewhere classified	1,951	1,109	3,060
12200 General charitable purpose	280	701	981
12300 Charity shops	91	-	91
Total	20,053	23,838	43,891

4. Geography

- For every 10 charities in Scotland there are a further 8 community groups on MILO – or a ratio of 1 to 0.8. In many areas the ratio is 1 to 1.
- Rural areas have particularly high levels of community groups – for example in the Highlands, Orkney, East Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway, there are more voluntary and community groups recorded than charities.
- Even areas not typically thought of as rural can be home to one community group for every registered charity – for example Inverclyde, North and South Lanarkshire, and East and West Dunbartonshire.
- Voluntary organisations are particularly important to island communities: on Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles (Na h-Eileanan Siar) there are over 20 charity and community groups for every 1,000 people.

Urban/rural profile

Voluntary and community groups are active across all types of areas, from urban to remote rural. In all areas other than ‘Large Urban’ areas their numbers and proportions are close to those of registered charities – see Fig 3 below.

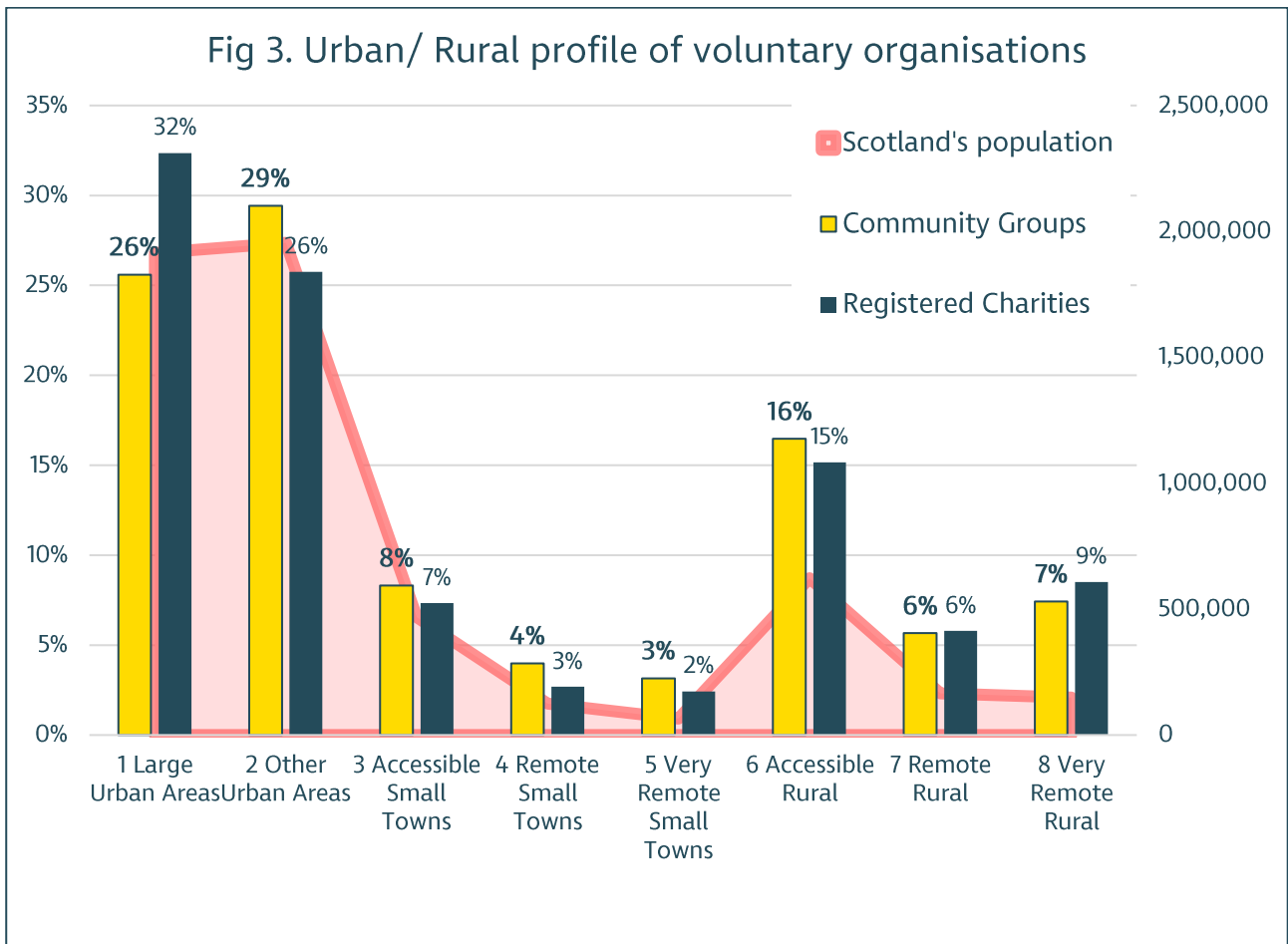
However, both community groups and charities are of particular importance in accessible and remote rural areas.

- While only 11% of Scotland’s population live in ‘Accessible Rural’ areas, 16% of community groups are based here¹.
- Only 6% of the population live in ‘Remote’ or ‘Very Remote Rural’ areas, but 13% of community groups and 15% of charities are based here.

Note: many groups do not have recorded postcodes that could be matched into Postcode directory files, and these are not shown in the graph.

¹ Urban/Rural classification and population estimates: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/2011-based-special-area-population-estimates/population-estimates-by-urban-rural-classification>

Fig 3. Urban/ Rural profile of voluntary organisations



Next steps

Following on from this paper, we propose from this point forward to incorporate data on community groups without charitable status into the [SCVO Sector Stats](#) to highlight the impact that community groups make in communities right across Scotland, and the huge variety of activities and services they provide.

Contact

This document was co-produced by SCVO and the TSI Network, with input from a number of individual third sector interfaces.

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For more information on the voluntary sector in a specific area please contact the relevant TSI: www.tsi.scot/tsi-directory