

THE PARTICIPATION OF  
**MALTESE**  
**OLDER PEOPLE**  
IN THE  
**VOLUNTARY**  
**SECTOR**



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*in collaboration with*

The Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing  
*and*  
The Office Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

“Empowering older people to age in good health and to contribute more actively to the communities in which they live, including through volunteering, will help our societies to better cope with demographic ageing in a way that is fair and sustainable for all generations. Volunteering needs and deserves targeted support and an enabling policy environment. Its intergenerational dimension also needs to be more broadly acknowledged and promoted”.

AGE Platform Europe, (2011). *Active ageing through volunteering*. Accessed 19/2/14 from [http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/2011\\_older\\_volunteers\\_position\\_Final.pdf](http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/2011_older_volunteers_position_Final.pdf)

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**Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing**  
**Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations**

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MARVIN FORMOSA



# FOREWORD



It is a privilege for me to write a foreword to this research study on volunteering patterns in later life. The quest of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing is to transform Malta's public policy on matters relating to ageing and later life. Far from conceptualising and treating older people as the primary beneficiaries of voluntary activities, the Parliamentary Secretariat recognises older adults as key players in welfare programmes. Our objective is not solely to envisage the role of voluntary services in the provision of improved levels of ageing services, but also to predict how the contribution and potential of older people as voluntary workers can be enhanced and sustained in the years to come. This reorientation in perspectives is not to be underestimated. For many years, the central concern and objective of Maltese public policy on ageing focused on meeting the rising demands on social and health services, especially long-term care, claimed by a rising number of potential number of older adults. The Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, as its name suggests, is committed to shift the dominant bio-medical model of welfare towards a progressive agenda where older persons are perceived as primary actors in their own right, from recipients to providers. This goal is not simply a reaction to novel social and economic conditions characterising ageing and later life in Malta, but is also strongly driven by the government's aspiration to enable elders to engage in more active, productive, and successful lifestyles, a scenario that is only possible through empowering policy agendas.

A promising avenue for a more positive programme on ageing is, undoubtedly, volunteering. Older persons are a crucial resource in the government's drive to make Malta one of the best European Union Member States to grow old in, as well as to advance the country's overall quality of life. Older persons are already contributing in various ways to the improvement of Maltese society. For this, I thank them and wish them well for the future. However, the Parliamentary Secretariat is also committed to raise the levels of older volunteering, in terms of volunteering hours, the quality of provided services, and the personal satisfaction of older volunteers. We are aware that for this to happen there is an urgent need to enact public policies that ensure a supportive, protective and facilitative environment for older volunteerism. The Parliamentary Secretariat is willing to help organisations develop professional human resource policies to recruit, train and retain older volunteers, as well as identify active, motivated and committed older individuals who have the potential to act as leaders. On their part, organisations are encouraged to focus on the potential resource that population ageing provides society, strive to highlight the potential contribution that older people can make, rather than their limitations, as well as seeking to include more age-friendly approaches to volunteer participation such as, for example, shorter term engagements and flexible timings, so as to boost the involvement of older volunteers. Good practices in older volunteering are only possible through strategic partnership between all stakeholders.

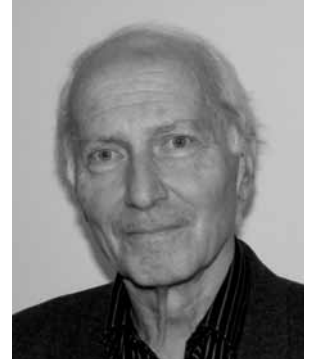
I would like to end this foreword to thank all those that helped make this research study and publication possible, especially the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations for envisaging this project and seeking this Parliamentary Secretariat's collaboration, and the non-governmental organisations and older volunteers whose positive reception made this research venture a real possibility. Last but not least, gratitude goes to Marvin Formosa whose meticulous research skills are highly evident in this report, and whose policy recommendations will surely serve to inform better planning for local public policy on ageing welfare.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Justyne Caruana'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

**Hon. Justyne Caruana**  
**Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing**

# FOREWORD

The initiative to commission a study on the involvement of the older persons in the voluntary field followed a similar study already conducted with respect to the involvement of young people which was published in 2012. In the case of the youths' study, collaboration was sought with the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sports of the time; for this project on the older persons we sought collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretary for the Older persons. What instigated this present research, as I indicated to Prof. Formosa when I first canvassed his interest in doing the study, was the perception that civil society as a whole has much to gain from the participation of the older persons in volunteer work, and that such participation is beneficial to the older persons themselves.



The important consideration where civil society and, indeed, the country as a whole, is concerned is that the Maltese population is ageing in common with our other European partners, as the statistics confirm. This has negative implications, but the positive implication is that people are living longer and more healthy lives, that the level of medical and social care in our country has grown, and that as an outcome they can look forward to enjoying a long retirement. Retirement is not always, however, happy and self-fulfilling and, as is well known, can, in some cases become a burden to the individual instead of a gain. It can mean years of boredom, loneliness and social exclusion. Volunteering is one way to avoid this situation; to find a purpose in life, to meet people, to learn new things, to stay healthy and active, to use one's skills and knowledge to good purpose, and to derive the satisfaction that comes from doing something freely for someone and for a good cause. In short, volunteering offers one of the best conduits for active ageing.

What society gets in return is the benefits that accrue from volunteering work and that can touch the lives of thousands of people. It is important to emphasise these benefits because an ageing society is nearly always regarded negatively. It is important in such a society however that the older persons should be represented not as a national burden to be provided for without any return, as unfortunately is often the case in our country, but as a precious resource – precious because many retired people are very experienced, and often highly qualified people, and because they have the time to give, and by their giving to strengthen civil society and our institutions. Seen from another perspective it benefits the country to have an active older persons population socially and economically because physical and mental health brings down the costs of health care and social services that are related with the diverse problems, many of them chronic, brought about by unhealthy ageing. On the other hand, the promotion of active ageing requires a sustained campaign against old and deeply ingrained prejudices about ageing in our society whereby old age is stereotyped as a time of mental and physical disability, and the older persons as useless for themselves and for others.

This study has another, more important, purpose besides raising awareness and information-gathering, namely to facilitates policies for active ageing that encourage the involvement of the older persons in the voluntary field. In this respect let me put together some thoughts of my own. First, it is important that the older persons should be encouraged to become more proactive themselves in the field of volunteering by setting up their own voluntary organisations rather than simply engaging themselves with those that already exist. There are very few, if any, organisations set up presently to directly benefit the older persons and in my experience these are mainly concerned with pension issues.

We need more organisations that address the social, health, and educational needs of the older persons particularly and to protect their rights, and we need the initiative to set up these organisations to come from the older persons themselves because they are the best placed to identify and understand these needs and how to respond to them. The older persons should also be encouraged to set up organisations for the purpose I hinted at earlier; namely to pool the expertise I referred to and in this way they render themselves and the services they can offer, a resource offered gratis to society in general and to other voluntary organisations that need them. I am thinking of such as lawyers, accountants, tax experts, advertising specialists, media specialists, teachers, researchers, and so on.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'K' followed by a horizontal line and some smaller, less distinct characters.

**Prof. Kenneth Wain**  
**Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations**

# PREFACE

This publication is concerned with the interface between volunteerism and later life, with a special focus on the role that older adults can play in ensuring a better future for present and future generations. One of every four Maltese citizens is aged 60 and over, a state of affairs that will impact greatly on how local public policy is planned, coordinated and implemented. The ageing of Malta's population warrants that government and civil society alike ceases to perceive older adults as a homogenous category, characterised by frailty and dependency, and instead, look at the immense opportunities that arise if older cohorts are mobilised into a productive force. In addition to active participation in the labour market, another highly promising area of policy development in productive ageing is volunteering. Indeed, all societies are experienced by a significant increase of people's life- and health-expectancies, so that a large percentage of older citizens enjoy some fifteen to twenty years of active retirement. An undisputed premise is that the presence of older persons in volunteering roles holds an important potential for the securing of sustainable futures. Continuing engagement in formal volunteer activities at older ages benefits the health and well-being of the volunteers themselves, the non-governmental organisations in which they volunteer in, the clients served by organisations, as well as society in general. Yet, numerous studies show many older adults remain uninvolved in volunteering opportunities, highlighting the numerous obstacles that stand in their way, and the lack of relevant policy that strengthens and supports older volunteering. One crucial issue concern is that the field of volunteering is firmly located in, and around, the younger and adult 'territories' of the life course, with older persons being generally excluded from both policy discussion and empirical research. Hopefully, this publication addresses some of this imbalance.

This research study delves into the patterns of older volunteering, and the extent to which such activities can be individually enriching and socially beneficial to the community, whilst also recommending possible policy strategies targeting an improvement in older volunteering in the Maltese Islands. This study locates enormous potential for increasing the number of engaged older Maltese citizens in volunteering engagements. With some 75,000 healthy older adults, with no caregiving responsibilities, this is surely a resource that Maltese society can neither ignore nor side-line. Given the frequent calls for volunteers in public and private forums, this untapped potential does not make sense, and should prompt non-governmental organisations to ensure that they recruit this possible pool of informal workers. The number and percentages of volunteers aged 65 years and older varies by countries (Hank and Erlinghagen 2009). Denmark and Sweden (18 per cent), and, particularly, the Netherlands (21 per cent) are generally characterised by the highest shares of older volunteers. On the other hand, the proportions of volunteers in Italy (7 per cent) as well as in Greece and Spain (3 per cent) are disappointing. Somewhere in the middle finds Belgium, France, and Switzerland (15 per cent) which are followed by Germany and Austria (9 per cent). The percentage of older volunteers in Malta stands at 8 per cent, and hence, positioning itself with the latter cluster. Policy research on older volunteerism is not only desirable but also necessary since many studies demonstrated that to engage in unpaid productive activities individuals need to be equipped with particular resources, ranging from professional volunteer administration and management, which enhances organisations' ability to match older individuals' preferences and skills, to adequate opportunities to be active volunteers. This study provides the necessary stimulation for a serious discussion on the best way forward in policy strategies that act as a catalyst for increasing the number of older persons in voluntary activities.

**Dr. Marvin Formosa PhD**  
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Kenneth Wain who not only foresaw the potential of the herein research study, but whose help and support proved invaluable to the planning and carrying of this policy exercise. Hon. Justyne Caruana's enthusiasm for this project was also crucial towards this project's completion. Gratitude also goes to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing for the invaluable financial support for the planning, carrying out and publishing this research project. Marika Farrugia who works at the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations also deserves special mention for her help in contacting non-governmental organisations and efficient administrative skills which were essential for the smooth running of the logistics underlying this research project.

Gratitude also goes to a whole host of people who, in casual conversation and in earnest dialogue, influenced the direction and content of this research report. Special thanks goes to various non-governmental organisations and older volunteers who have received me in their offices, and sometimes even at their personal residences, who not only took precious time off their busy schedule to complete questionnaires, but also provided valuable verbal data.

Marvin Formosa



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is a core expression of civic participation and democracy, putting values such as solidarity and inclusion into action, and contributing to the harmonious development of our societies. It plays an important role in sectors as varied and diverse as education, youth, culture, sport, environment, health, social care, consumer protection, humanitarian aid, development policy, research, equal opportunities and external relations. Volunteering is also an important learning opportunity since getting involved in voluntary work provides citizens with new skills and heightens their sense of belonging to society.

Older volunteerism has become a crucial dimension of civic engagement as the traditional type of volunteer - that is, wives whose children are at school - are increasingly joining the paid labour force. Nowadays, older volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource, a reliable and experienced labour pool. Older volunteers work with a range of people ranging from prisoners to abused and neglected children, and in diverse settings such as day care centres and schools. These activities do not only contribute towards wider socio-economic benefits but also serve to improve the quality of older people's lives. Unfortunately, international studies report that volunteering peaks in midlife but then experiences a decline in later life (Hank and Erlinghagen, 2009). Older adults with the lowest rate of participation in volunteering tend to have lesser incomes, lower education levels, and a background in more physically demanding jobs. Hence, even if opportunities for older persons seeking volunteer work are ample, better policy interventions are warranted to engage a larger share of those with limited education and work experience not well-matched to the volunteer opportunities. Particularly needed is more funding for training programmes that target low-income older persons, and broader communication networks that connect elders to available volunteer opportunities. Public-sponsored outreach programmes that highlight the advantages of social engagement while receiving pension benefits are also required.

Prior to discussing the goal and objectives of this study, it is opportune to present a number of operational definitions of terms that will feature continuously throughout this report. Throughout this research report, 'volunteering work' is defined as

...unpaid work provided to parties to whom the worker owes no contractual, familial or friendship obligations...

Wilson and Musick, 1997 : 694

In Malta, volunteering is defined by the Voluntary Organisations Act (Government of Malta, 2007). Hence, a 'volunteer' is a person who provides unremunerated services through or for a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Voluntary activity is undertaken by a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and without regard to financial gain. The Act also defines the 'voluntary sector' as that including voluntary organisations, volunteers, donors who make voluntary grants of money or assets to voluntary organisations, beneficiaries of the services of volunteers and voluntary organisations, and the administrators of such organisations. Turning our attention to later life, the terms 'older people/adults/persons' are attributed with a distinctively qualitative meaning. As affirmed by gerontologists, 'chronological age' is inadequate as a method to differentiate older adults from younger peers since this approach neglects other significant social factors ranging from individual biographies to structural relations. Hence, the terms are used to refer to

...people, whatever their chronological age, who are either retired from the labour market or in a post-career transition, and who are no longer involved in the major responsibilities for raising their children.

Findsen and Formosa, 2011 : 11

Later life is thus contrasted with middle-age when adults' lives revolve principally around their work careers and raising young children. This definition is promising because while it introduces parameters as who is 'older' and who is not, it does not utilise them in a categorical manner.

The goal of this research study emerged as the result of three key aspects. First, the initiative of the European Union [EU] to designate 2011 as the European Year for Volunteering. Secondly, the lack of research data available on older volunteers in Malta. And finally, the fact that the year 2012 was designated by the EU as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. This project aimed to explore and analyse the state of older volunteerism in Malta. In an attempt to meet this strategic goal, this study was directed by five key objectives:

- **Key demographics and determinants of older volunteering.** One objective was to uncover the demographics of older volunteerism: which sectors of older people are more or less willing to volunteer? How do age, marital status, social capital, income and past/present occupational status, education attainment and qualifications, subjective health status, and geographical residence affect older volunteerism?
- **Volume and nature of volunteer work in later life.** The study asked: do people start volunteering more after they retire from paid employment? What is the average amount of hours spent in volunteering every week? Is the voluntary service formal (arranged through an organisation) or informal (arranged by individuals)? Does the activity require a regular time commitment? What is the nature of the activity?
- **Motivations.** A third objective was to discern the motivations that inspire and encourage older volunteerism: how do volunteers explain their motivations? Do people understand their motivations? Do younger and older persons volunteer for the same or different reasons? Why are some more willing to volunteer than others? In what ways does religion provide a spiritual rationale for volunteering?
- **Barriers.** A fourth objective was to uncover and highlight those barriers faced by older adults in their pursuit of taking part in volunteer activities: what extent do low income, lower level of education, time commitment, financial constraints, lack of volunteering opportunities that are both appealing and flexible, caring responsibilities, and unwelcome organisational cultures preclude older volunteers for volunteering?
- **Social policy.** A final task consisted in developing social policy strategies to recruit and support older persons as volunteers, in urban and rural/remote areas, both now and in later years when they retire or change their work practices. This objective involved forwarding effective programme designs that recruit, manage, and retain older volunteers, which in turn lead to higher levels of social cohesion, social equity, and social inclusion.

This research study hoped to act as an important catalyst in creating an enabling environment for older volunteerism in Malta, improve the quality of older volunteering, recognising the volunteering efforts of older persons, and finally, raising awareness about the value and importance of volunteering in later life. This goal is presented in nine parts. Subsequent to this introductory piece, the second and third sections overview the concepts of ageing and older volunteerism. The fourth section presents a brief synopsis of the research designs guiding the empirical part of this study. The fifth and sixth sections present the data of the empirical project, focusing on the determinants of older volunteering in Malta, and the motivations and barriers involved. The seventh and eighth sections report on the benefits of older volunteering and what constitutes good practice in older volunteering. The final section brings the report to a close by recommending policy strategies for improved levels of older volunteering in Malta.

# 2 AGEING, OLDER PERSONS, AND LATER LIFE

## 2.1 The international context

The last century witnessed unprecedented demographic changes to the extent that it has been termed as the 'age of ageing' (Magnus, 2008). As a result of declining fertility and mortality levels, all countries throughout the world registered an improvement of life expectancy at birth, and subsequently, a growth in the number of older persons. Population projections by the United Nations (2010) report that the world's number of people aged 60 years and over is expected to almost triple in the next 40 years (from 737 million to 2 billion) - see table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: Population aged 60 years and over by continent

Population aged 60 years and over						
Continent	Number (000s)		Percentage of total		Share of the 80+ population	
	2009	2050	2009	2050	2009	2050
World	737,275	2,008,244	11	22	14	20
Africa	53,770	212,763	5	11	8	10
Asia	399,881	1,236,103	10	24	11	18
Europe	158,503	236,426	22	34	19	18
Latin America & Caribbean	57,039	186,036	10	26	15	22
North America	62,744	124,671	18	28	21	29
Oceania	5,338	12,246	15	24	19	27

Source: United Nations, (2010)

In the year 2009, 11 per cent of the world's population was 60 years or over, a percentage that added up to a total of 737 million adults. In the year 2050, it is projected that this figure will rise to 22 per cent of the world's population. This means that whilst the global population would have increased from around 6 billion in 2000 to 9 billion in 2050 - a 50 per cent increase - the world's older population will increase by 300 per cent in the same period. On a regional basis, 22 per cent and 18 per cent of European and North American populations respectively were aged 60 or over in 2009. Developing countries will experience the steepest increase of the older population segment. Today, over 60 per cent of the aged population are living in developing countries, with this number projected to increase by 75 and 85 per cent in the years 2025 and 2050 respectively. Some countries such as China, Brazil and Nigeria will double their number of older adults in the coming fifteen years. This is astounding considering that it took Western European countries around hundred years to reach such percentages of older adults.

The dominant equation of retirement with a loss of status and role, and hence, a complete dependence on state welfare is too simplistic in the face of a globalised, diverse working world, that we now live in. Whilst social network dynamics do not necessarily become less forceful in retirement, in post-industrial and consumer societies, employment is not the only means of achieving social worth. Although it is understandable that with the end of work one's 'bridging' social capital (weaker but more cross-cutting ties useful for 'getting ahead') tend to decrease, retirees can still tap onto their 'bonding' social capital (strong bonds with family members that are good for 'getting by'). This is because retirees have ample opportunity to engage in more activities and enrol themselves in organisations to increase their pool of acquaintances and friends. Indeed, they are placed in a lifespan 'convoy' of social networks and support, where each person moves through life



surrounded by a 'convoy' of people to whom s/he is related through the exchange of support. The convoy may be conceived as three concentric circles, representing different levels of closeness. Whilst the closer relationships are determined more by emotional attachments (usually family), the relationships in the outer circles are determined mostly by role requirements (such as with co-workers). Although retirement role-centred networking does decline, the total network size remains equal. Even the recently widowed eventually shift away from their closest relationships to make new friends after a few years, and hence, responding to novel needs. Older persons are also increasingly engaging in volunteering activities to improve their social networking, with many meeting the full obligations of grandparenthood which serves to solidify further their familial relationships.

In post-industrial and consumer societies, employment is not the only means of achieving social worth. Rather, personal and social identities are expressed by ways of life that are shaped by the consumer society and other numerous activities aside from work. On the basis that societies have experienced a transition from an organised and class-oriented organisation of life, towards more individual and more 'private' lifestyles, Gilleard and Higgs (2000) argued that younger and older people share the same possibilities of expressing themselves by way of respective patterns of consumption. In this view, the change from gainful employment to retirement loses much of its significance, as patterns of consumption become more decisive for one's own identity than paid work. Older persons are now experiencing unprecedented opportunities to engage in identity-work as societies place more emphasis on human agency and "self-government that emphasises personal entitlements linked to personal responsibilities" (ibid. : 7). Later life, it is argued, has latched upon the consumer revolution to transform itself into a 'cultural field' in which actors face a multiplicity of choices, opportunities, and futures. Older persons are, within some limits, living their life as they please before being overtaken by physical frailty. Retirement is, as a result, currently underpinned by the post-war transformations in the nature of global capitalism, in cumulative improvements at all ages, and in health, and happiness.

In recent years, most post-industrial countries experienced positive upturns in economic activity amongst older persons. This occurred as national agendas restricted policies encouraging early retirement, developed learning programmes that train older persons, supported gradual pathways to retirement, and introduced work incentives in pension schemes. Accordingly, the life course that people now follow before they define themselves, or are defined by others, as retired has become increasingly complex and blurred. As Phillipson (1993) argued, the transition into retirement can include some or all of the following: labour market factors such as forced and voluntary early retirement, redundancy (voluntary or compulsory), labour market/supply issues (unemployment), and personal factors (ill health, caring responsibilities). Such changes indicate that the adult and later years are not primarily characterised by a 'labour-exit' transition but by a diverse engagement with civil society that can be summarised as follows: citizenship transitions constructed around closer involvement with family, friends and community based networks; consumer and leisure transitions constructed around the development of more individualised lifestyles; and work transitions constructed around new types of engagement with paid work.

Although it is the consumption of the products of mass culture and exposure to mass media that most distinguishes the identities and life-styles of contemporary older persons, it remains important to emphasise that not all older persons can equally participate in such endeavours. Despite the positive outlooks of some researchers on the agentic potential of later life, the quality of life of significant sectors of older persons remains limited and deprived, due to social exclusion and class inequalities. Focusing on deprived neighbourhoods, Scharf and colleagues (Scharf et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2004) found ample evidence of social exclusion amongst older persons who were excluded from basic services, material resources, civic activities, social relations and other aspects of the wider-neighbourhood.

## 2.2 The Maltese context

According to the 2011 Census, the total population of Malta totalled 416,055 (National Statistics Office, 2012a). The development of an ageing population in Malta was experienced in a slower fashion than in other countries. Spanning a period since 1851, one does not notice any marked change in the age composition of the Maltese population prior to the twentieth century (this was in sharp contrast to what happened in other countries which were already in the process of their demographic transition). In 1901, 34.1 and 5.4 per cent of Malta's population were in the 0-14 and 65-plus age groups respectively. However, as the 20th Century progressed, the proportional representation of these segments fluctuated within very narrow margins, reaching 37.4 and 6.8 per cent in 1957 respectively. However, during the second half of the 20th Century the 0-14 and 65-plus age groups decreased and increased to the extent of reaching 14.8 and 68.9 in 2011 respectively. The Maltese median age in 2011 stood at 40.5 years, up from 38.5 years in 2005.

These demographic transitions were largely the result of a declining birth rate together with an increasing life expectation for both men and women. On one hand, whilst the crude birth rate in Malta was relatively stable over the first half of the 20th Century, at around 38 annual births per 1,000 population, it has declined steadily since, reaching 9.6 births per 1,000 population in 2010 (National Statistics Office, 2011). The total number of live births registered in 2010 stood at 4,008. Although there was a slight increase of 0.4 per cent in births compared to 2008, the fertility rate remained unchanged at 1.4 in 2009 and 2010, down from 1.7 in 2001 (*ibid.*). On the other hand, at the end of the World War II, life expectation in Malta was around 43 and 46 years for males and females respectively. In 2010, these figures reached 79.2 and 83.6 for men and women respectively (EU 27 average: 70/78 years for men/women) (Eurostat, 2012) (table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2: Life expectancy by gender

Year	1892	1912	1922	1932	1948	1957
Men	41.2	43.3	45.9	41.4	55.7	65.7
Women	42.8	44.7	45.2	43.5	57.7	68.9
Year	1967	1985	1995	2005	2010	
Men	67.5	70.8	74.9	77.7	79.2	
Women	71.6	76.0	79.5	81.4	83.6	

Source: Camilleri, (1993); National Statistics Office, (2007); Eurostat, (2012)

The 2011 Census indicates clearly that Malta is an ageing population. Table 2.3 provides a breakdown of the total population aged 60 years and over for the year 2012 (National Statistics Office, 2013a). It highlights how the total number of persons aged 60 and over totalled 102,026 - 24.2 per cent of the total population. The largest share of the older population is made up of women, with 55 per cent of the total. In fact, the sex ratios for cohorts aged 65 plus and 80 plus in 2010 numbered 76 and 56 respectively. Amongst older cohorts, there is twice the number of older women than men. It is also noteworthy that amongst EU countries Malta has the smallest gender difference both with respect to single and to adult households, and it is also the only country where more women aged 80 and older live in 'other' or 'couple' households than alone. In addition to another nine EU countries, the majority of women aged 80 and older live alone. Moreover, Malta is one of only five EU countries where more than 50 per cent of men aged 65-plus live with their spouses.



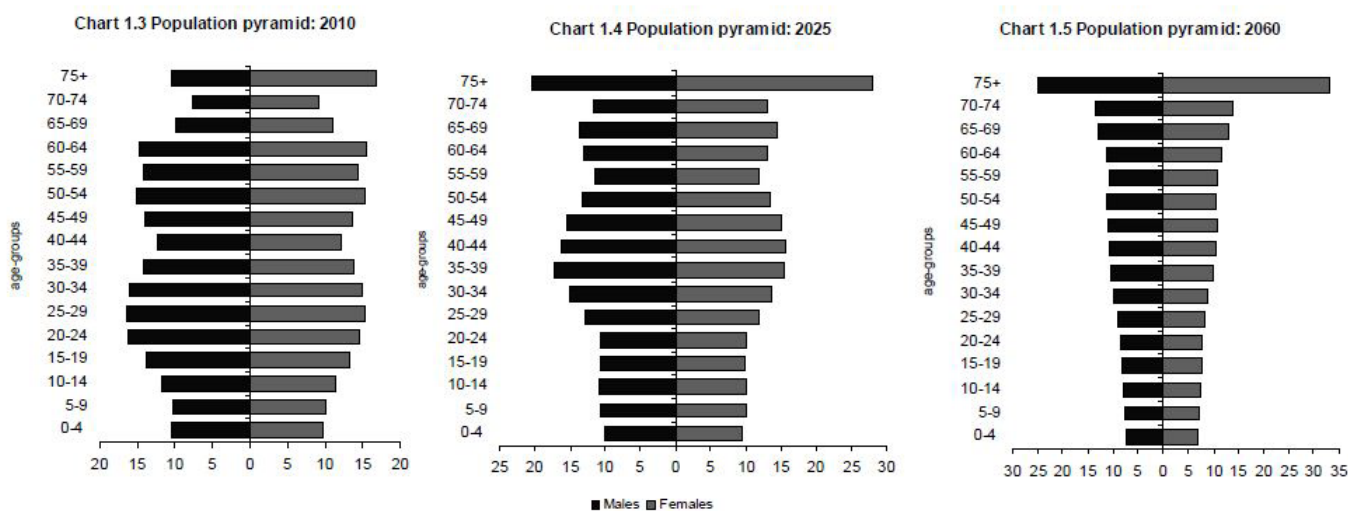
**Table 2.3: Total population by age: 31 December 2012**

Age	Males	Females	Total	Per cent of total pop.	Masculinity ratio*
0-59	163,419	155,919	319,338	75.8	105
60+	46,461	55,565	102,026	24.2	84
65+	31,720	45,470	77,190	18.3	70
80+	5,548	10,095	15,643	3.7	55
60-64	14,741	15,007	29,748	7.1	98
65-69	13,243	14,260	27,503	6.5	93
70-74	7,039	8,292	15,331	3.6	85
75-79	5,890	7,911	13,801	3.3	74
80-84	3,291	5,558	8,849	2.1	59
85-89	1,684	3,136	4,820	1.1	54
90+	573	1,401	1,974	0.5	41

\* Number of males per hundred females. Source: NSO, (2013a)

The Maltese population is evolving out of a traditional pyramidal shape to an even-shaped block distribution of equal numbers at each cohort except at the top (figure 2.1). From a policy perspective, population pyramids visualise cohorts that will be entering pensionable age in the future. The top of the pyramid indicates a typical flag effect on the female’s side, whereby their longevity is marked by higher numbers of old-old women and centenarians. When translated some 20 years in the future this age-gender pyramid would bring a new quadrangle-like shape and a narrowing of the base of the pyramid. The advantage of women over men in life expectancy tables also means that, similar to international statistics, married men and widowed women are over-represented in later life. This has clear implications for social/health care policy, noting how by age 70 whilst the majority of women are widows, most men are still in married relationships. Demographic statistics also highlight how older women tend to be in possession of lower levels of social and financial capital when compared to male peers. Indeed, despite the fact that women live longer, older women experience greater degrees of vulnerability. Many also find themselves constrained in a ‘caring’ straightjacket, as they tend to marry men older than themselves, who would need various levels of social and health support.

**Figure 2.1: Malta’s present and projected population pyramids (2010, 2025, 2060)**



# 3 OLDER VOLUNTEERISM

## 3.1 The European context

Using data from the 2004 *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe*, Hank and Erlinghagen (2009) forward detailed information relating to the participation in volunteering of the population aged 50 years or older in 11 European countries (table 3.1). Data indicated a clear north-south gradient. Denmark and Sweden (18 per cent), and particularly the Netherlands (21 per cent), were characterised by the highest shares of older people reporting to engage in volunteering. Belgium, France, and Switzerland (14-15 per cent), followed by Germany and Austria (8-10 per cent), constituted a group of countries with medium levels of participation. The proportions of older volunteers in Italy (7 per cent), as well as in Greece and Spain (2-3 per cent), were clearly below the Continental European average of 10 per cent. In all countries, the probability of 'taking-up' voluntary work was lowest among those in the oldest age group (75 years or older), and whose health was less than very good in either waves (or whose health deteriorated between waves). More highly educated and younger-old individuals, as well as those who were not gainfully employed, exhibited the highest propensity to volunteer. Gender and partnership status did not bear any statistically significant association with volunteer take-up. As regards the 'giving-up' of volunteering, volunteers whose health was less than very good, and with lower levels of educational attainment/qualifications and income, exhibited the highest odds of not participating or withdrawing from voluntary engagement.

TABLE 3.1: Volunteering by selected European countries

Country	Sample Size	Volun-teers	Frequency of volunteering			Main motivations (percentages)	
			Almost daily	Almost every week	Less often	To be useful	I enjoy it
Sweden	3,009	17.7	13.0	41.2	45.1	64.5	70.8
Denmark	1,635	17.1	11.3	48.8	39.9	70.3	67.4
Germany	2,941	10.0	17.5	46.1	36.4	64.3	68.9
Netherlands	2,874	20.6	16.8	59.4	23.8	66.2	77.3
France	1,739	12.9	22.4	44.5	33.1	73.1	62.5
Switzerland	951	14.3	(.)	40.4	46.5	71.1	59.8
Austria	1,938	8.7	(.)	42.5	54.6	59.2	64.6
Italy	2,506	7.1	17.7	42.7	39.6	79.0	31.4
Spain	2,363	2.4	(.)	(.)	63.2	74.2	(.)
Greece	1,972	3.0	(.)	39.7	44.6	67.5	(.)
All	21,928	9.6	17.8	45.1	37.1	69.6	60.7

Source: Erlinghagen and Hank, (2006); (.) Data not available

The *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement* also reports that among those who volunteered, almost one-fifth (18 per cent) had done so almost daily, nearly one-half (45 per cent) had been engaged almost every week, and slightly more than one-third (37 per cent) had worked less often (Erlinghagen and Hank, 2006). Irrespective of the overall level of volunteering in a country, the two most frequently mentioned motivations to volunteer were 'the desire to contribute something useful' (70 per cent) and 'the pleasure derived from volunteering' (61 per cent). Beyond the social value of their activity, the majority of older volunteers expected a non-monetary personal gain. Indeed, the impact of critical life events such as retirement, widowhood, or health shocks - mediated through changes in individuals' social roles - has a major influence on the 'taking up' or ceasing volunteering. Whilst age and married or living with a partner generally register a negative relationship with volunteering in later life, the opposite tends to be the case with respect to being retired,

health status, psychological well-being, education and income (Hank and Erlinghagen, 2010). There appears to be no gender differences with regard to volunteering in later life, although some studies have found that women volunteer more than men (Carr, 2009).

The benefits for older adults participating in formal volunteer activities are well-documented. Older volunteerism benefits the health, psychological, and social well-being of participants, as well as bringing rewards to non-governmental organisations themselves and wider society:

- **Health benefits.** Volunteerism has been found to soften the effects of ageing on mortality rates, help offset the loss of purpose felt by many older adults, as well as to lead to an overall improved quality of life (Grimm et al., 2004). At the same time, volunteerism has been found to reduce despair and depression, two conditions strongly linked to heart disease and worsening physical health in older adults (Tang, 2008).
- **Psychological well-being.** Volunteerism helps older adults develop knowledge and skills that boost their self-images and mental outlooks. Greenfield and Marks (2004) document how formal volunteering helps older adults mitigate the loss of a sense of purpose. Involvement in meaningful social interactions helps countering personal losses as older adults place greater importance on emotionally meaningful activities from contributing to help others (Li and Ferraro, 2005).
- **Societal benefits.** Volunteerism is especially beneficial for the health and education areas, two sectors that are now facing labour shortages (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005). For example, older volunteers have proven effective in reducing hospitalisation rates and improving family well-being as a result of their involvement in home visitation programmes for the disabled and chronically ill (Zedlewski and Butrica, 2007).
- **Organisational benefits.** Herein, benefits included strong commitment, loyalty, establishing good rapport with people in their own age group, understanding of older people's issues, and doing the job (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005). Indeed, many coordinators' confirm that retention of older volunteers is excellent, as volunteers only stopped volunteering when their life circumstances changed drastically or their health declined significantly (Smith, 2004).

Research has also focused extensively on the barriers facing older adults who wish to participate in volunteering activities which can hinder, and sometimes even prevent, their participation. Practical barriers range from a lack of access for both physically frail and disabled elders to a lack of legislation on health and safety. Lack of access for disabled volunteers is something coordinators feel they had little control over as disability-friendly venues tend to be few and far between, and feel that there is no simple solution to making suitable access to premises at the top of flights of stairs or in inaccessible locations. Butrica and colleagues (2009) proposed that older individuals start or stop volunteering because of costs and benefits associated with these actions. They hypothesised that changes in health, work, marital status, and so forth, altered the costs and benefits of volunteering. They concluded that it may be easier to influence volunteers staying (or not quitting) than it is to get them to start. Other challenges include insufficient connections between older adults and potential volunteer opportunities, outdated models for volunteering, and transportation and cost barriers. On the other hand, one key factor that facilitates the extent of older volunteer participation is the structure of volunteer organisation. Organisational support, if properly structured, can sustain older volunteers and keep them actively involved. For example, older volunteers rate the choice of activities and ability to set up schedules as very important because some may take multiple roles simultaneously as an employee, a caregiver, and/or a grandparent (Tang et al., 2010). Therefore, provision of flexibility in choosing volunteer activities and schedules overcomes barriers to engagement.

## 3.2 The Maltese context

The number of voluntary organisations registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations in July 2013 amounted to 819. The setting up of voluntary organisations under Maltese law is regulated by the *Voluntary Organisations Act* (Government of Malta, 2007). The law was introduced by means of Act XXII of 2007 with the intention of regulating a wide-ranging sector which had hitherto been largely left to its own devices. The law also established the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisation, who is the authority in charge with overseeing the enrolment process for voluntary organisations. According to the Voluntary Organisations Act, a Voluntary Organisation is an organisation which is created or established for any lawful purpose, as non-profit making, and is voluntary. The law also establishes a procedure for the enrolment of Voluntary Organisations in a 'Register of Voluntary Organisations'. Enrolment requires the fulfilment of a number of requirements, including the submission of annual accounts and annual returns, and identification of the administrators of the organisation, and confers a number of important advantages to the organisation, including: (i) making collections without the need to obtain any further authorisations, (ii) receiving or be the beneficiary of grants, sponsorships or other financial aid from the Government, any entity controlled by the Government or the Voluntary Organisations Fund, (iii) being the beneficiary of any policies supporting voluntary action as may be developed by the Government, (iv) receiving or be the beneficiary of exemptions, privileges or other entitlements in terms of any law, and (v) be a party to contracts and other engagements for the carrying out of services for the achievement of its social purpose.

Older volunteering received a specific mention in the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* (Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, 2013). The strategic policy emphasised that older volunteerism softens the effects of ageing on mortality rates, improves psychological well-being by boosting self-image and mitigating against the loss of a sense of purpose, as well as augmenting one's social networks following retirement. However, it also underlined that not only volunteering peaks in midlife but then experiences a decline in later life, but that older adults with the lowest rate of participation in volunteering tend to have lesser incomes, lower education levels, and a background in more physically demanding jobs. Hence, even if opportunities for older persons seeking volunteer work are ample, better policy interventions are warranted to engage a larger share of those with limited education and work experience not well-matched to the volunteer opportunities. The strategic policy recommended that what is particularly needed is more funding for training programmes that target low-income older persons, broader communication networks that connect elders to available volunteer opportunities, as well as public-sponsored outreach programmes that highlight the advantages of social engagement. Two key policy recommendations relating to older volunteering were put forward – namely, (i) developing and implementing national programmes to involve older people as volunteers, particularly targeting those at risk of social exclusion, and (ii) managing an online platform that matches retirees with volunteer opportunities, enabling organisations to communicate with potential helpers, and providing information as how to get involved with community and voluntary organisations (ibid.).

Recent years experienced a proliferation of publications and presentations on volunteerism in Malta. The National Statistics Office has published a number of reports relating specifically to the number of older persons engaged in local volunteering. The Time-use study (National Statistics Office, 2004) collected information on how the Maltese population, aged 10 years and over, spends its time. Although its data is more than a decade long, it forwards data sets that have not been replicated since. Data demonstrate that in 2002 persons aged 65 years and older engaged in volunteering activities for about 0.7 and 0.9 hours every weekday and weekend respectively (national average: 0.4/0.8). The same study reports that retired persons (60-plus) engaged in volunteerism for about 0.8 and 1.0 hours every weekday and weekend respectively.

**TABLE 3.2: Volunteer work per weekday and weekend by age and employment status (2002)**

Weekdays								
Age	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	44-54	55-64	65+	Total
hrs / %	0.5/2.1	0.2/0.8	0.1/0.4	0.2/0.9	0.2/0.8	0.8/3.3	0.7/2.9	0.4/1.7
Weekend								
Age	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	44-54	55-64	65+	Total
hrs / %	0.9/3.8	0.5/2.1	0.5/2.1	0.7/2.9	0.8/3.3	1.0/4.2	0.9/3.8	0.8/3.3
Weekday								
Status	employed	unemployed	student	Retired	housekeeper	other	Total	
hrs / %	0.3/1.3	0.3/1.3	0.3/1.3	0.8/3.3	0.4/1.6	0.7/2.9	0.4/1.7	
Weekend								
Status	employed	unemployed	student	Retired	housekeeper	other	Total	
hrs / %	0.6/2.5	0.6/2.5	0.8/3.3	1.0/4.2	0.8/3.3	0.9/3.8	0.8/3.3	

Source: National Statistics Office, (2004)

In 2002, older volunteers were involved, generally, membership in religious organisations, human health activities, social work activities without accommodation, veterinary services, and social work activities with accommodation, in respective order (National Statistics Office, 2004)

The News Release *International volunteer day for economic and social development 2012* (National Statistics Office, 2012b) reported that in 2011 around 8 per cent of persons aged 12 and over were doing some form of voluntary work. The largest share of these persons, 37 per cent, were aged between 25 and 49, followed by those in the 50-64 age bracket, at 30 per cent. The number of persons aged 65 and over in volunteering was 5,400 (18.1 per cent of total volunteers) (tables 3.3 and 3.4). A recent study found that many older persons in Malta volunteering in green activities in their goal to preserve the earth for future generations even though they will not personally see the benefits (Formosa, 2012). It was argued that there is great potential for increasing the number of older volunteers in eco-friendly non-governmental organisations, and that advertising green volunteering as a means of self-actualisation in later life warranted.

**TABLE 3.3. Persons doing voluntary work by type and age group (frequency) (2011)**

Type of voluntary work done	12-24	25-49	50-64	65+	Total
Within a voluntary organisation	1,850	5,060	4,220	2,100	13,240
Within another entity	2,340	5,280	4,160	2,880	14,650
Informal (e.g. helping a neighbour)	*	*	610**	*	1,950
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>11,020</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>5,400</b>	<b>19,840</b>
* Under represented: estimate based on less than 20 counts; not provided.					
** Under represented: estimate based on 20-50 counts					

Source: National Office of Statistics, (2012b)

**TABLE 3.4. Persons doing voluntary work by type and age group (percentages) (2011)**

Type of voluntary work done	12-24	25-49	50-64	65+	Total
Within a voluntary organisation	14.0	38.2	31.9	15.9	100.0
Within another entity	15.9	36.0	28.4	19.7	100.0
Informal (e.g. helping a neighbour)	*	*	31.6**	*	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Under represented: estimate based on less than 20 counts; not provided.  
 \*\* Under represented: estimate based on 20-50 counts.

Source: National Office of Statistics, (2012b)

Turning our attention to the total number of volunteers, the same News Release (National Statistics Office, 2012b) reported that 80 per cent of voluntary workers were engaged in organisations providing institutional care, organisations involved in religious activities and organisations engaged in other social activities. 36 per cent of those doing voluntary work within organisations said they had a supporting role, while 30 per cent held an administrative role. Around 41 per cent of those volunteering had been doing this unpaid work for more than 10 years, as opposed to a third that had been offering their help freely for less than 5 years. Nearly half these volunteers said they felt it was their moral duty to carry out voluntary work. Another 20 per cent said they considered their voluntary work as recreation and as it helped them to meet new people. In a typical month, a quarter of the persons engaged in voluntary work spent around 10-19 hours volunteering, whereas a third spent less than 10 hours. Results also reveal that, at 28 hours per month, men spend an average of 8 more hours per month doing voluntary work than women.

At the time of this report's completion, the National Statistics Office published the News Release International volunteer day for economic and social development 2013 (National Statistics Office, 2013b). Herein, it was reported that in 2013 the number of volunteers aged 12 and over, and living in private households, was 29,830. More than half the total number of volunteers - 14,930 or 50.1 per cent - were aged 50 years and over. Volunteers aged 65 years and over amounted 6,100 or 20.5 per cent of the total number of volunteers. Moreover, in 2012 persons aged 65 years and over performed an average of 22 hours of voluntary work in a typical month, which rises to 28 hours for all retirees.







# 4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a case-study approach to investigate the phenomenon of older volunteerism in Malta. Definitions of case studies vary but, in essence, all promote the notion that the researcher aims at knowing a single entity or phenomenon - that is, the case - through the collection of data through various procedures: "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989 : 23). Data was collected in three distinct stages.

The first exploratory phase of data collection consisted in open-structured interviews with coordinators of voluntary organisations. Both random and purposive sampling procedures were utilised to select interviewees. As much as 28 representatives were contacted and took part in this exploratory phase of research. The interviews were conducted both in person and through the phone medium. The goal of these interviews was to collect data on key characteristics of older volunteers, organisations' administrative and recruitment strategies, opinions about older volunteers, and other general issues relating to older volunteers.

The second extensive phase of data collection included the participation of older volunteers, aged 60-plus and selected through convenience sampling, in a self-administered survey. The number of older volunteers taking part in the survey amounted to 118. The operationalisation of variables included in the questionnaire is presented in table 4.1. The questionnaire, in both the English and Maltese languages, is found in Appendix A. In the final intensive phase of data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 39 older volunteers. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is normally required to ask specific open-ended questions but is also free to probe beyond them if necessary. The interview develops as a joint product of what the interviewees and interviewers talk with each other. Therefore, semi-structured interviews contain the advantages of both standardised and non-standardised interviews - such as flexibility, control of the interview situation, and collection of supplementary information (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). The interviews also sought to capture the extent that voluntary organisations facilitate or hinder older individuals to engage in volunteering. They focused on the importance of activity choice, time, schedule, responsibility change, and workload as perceived by older volunteers. These are considered as indicators of role flexibility, or the extent to which volunteer role demands can be adjusted to meet various expectations for time commitment, work schedule, and activity type. The interview guide for semi-structured interviews is presented in box 4.1.

## BOX 4.1

### Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews with older volunteers

- Why do you volunteer? Are these expectations being met?
- What are the major benefits of volunteering?
- Do you find other needs or fulfilments being realised that originally you had not expected prior to volunteering?
- Describe your relationship with the other volunteers and the voluntary organisation you volunteer with?
- Do you think voluntary organisations facilitate or hinder older individuals from volunteering?
- What is your perception of the available activity choices, timing, schedules, responsibilities, and workload?
- What could be done to make volunteering more rewarding to you?
- How important is training for doing volunteer work? Is such training available? What hinders you from volunteering in a more active manner?
- Why do you think other older persons do not engage in volunteering?
- Why do some older volunteers stop volunteering?

**TABLE 4.1: Variables in the quantitative research**

<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>	
Demographic features	Age: 1 = less than 59, 2 = 60-64, 3 = 65-69, 4 = 70-74, 5 = 75-79, 6 = 80 plus; Gender: 1 = Male, 2 = Female; Place of residence: 1 = Southern harbour, 2 = Northern harbour, 3 = South Eastern, 4 = Western region, 5 = Northern, 6 = Gozo
Organisation	1 = human health activities, 2 = animal/veterinary activities, 3 = social work activities without accommodation, 4 = social work activities with accommodation, 5 = other
Volunteer work	1 = administrative role, 2 = organisation's activities, 3 = supporting role
Volunteering history	1 = less than five years, 2 = five to ten years, 3 = more than ten years
Life-course volunteerism	1 = used to volunteer before reaching 60th birthday, 2 = started volunteering only after reaching 60th birthday
<i>Independent variables</i>	
Marital status:	1 = single, 2 = married, 3 = separated/divorced, 4 = widowed;
Having grand/children	1 = Yes, 2 = No;
Household type:	1 = alone, 2 = living with children, 3 = with spouse/partner, 4 = with partner and children, 5 = other;
Social integration:	Sum of scores on three items on a five-point scale (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree): (a) I do not feel I belong to anything called a community, (b) I feel close to other people in the community, (c) my community is a source of support
Educational attainment	1 = no schooling, 2 = primary education, 3 = secondary education, 4 = post-secondary, 5 = tertiary education.
Educational qualification	1 = no qualifications, 2 = school-leaving certificate, 3 = 'O', 4 = intermediate level, 5 = 'A' levels, 6 = post-secondary certificate/diploma, 7 = university certificate/diploma, 8 = first degree, 9 = masters degree, 10 = doctorate.
Past/present occupation	1 = senior officials and managers, 2 = technicians and professionals, 3 = clerical, 4 = shop/sales workers, 5 = skilled fishery and agricultural workers, 6 = craft and related trade workers, 7 = plant and machine operators and assemblies, 8 = armed forces, 9 = elementary occupations, 10 = family worker
Monthly income	1 = less than €500, 2 = between €501 and €800, 3 = more than €801
Subjective health	1 = excellent, 2 = very good, 3 = average, 4 = fair, 5 = poor.
Self-efficacy	(1 = Agree, 2 = Disagree): (a) I manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough, (b) if someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want, (c) it is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals, (d) I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events, (e) thanks to my resourcefulness, I can handle unforeseen situations.

Self-esteem	(1 = agree, 2 = disagree): (a) I am satisfied with myself, (b) I think that I am no good at all, (c) I have a number of good qualities, (d) I do things as well as most other people, (e) I have much to be proud of.
Religiosity	Responses (1 = not at all, 2 = not very, 3 = somewhat, 4 = very) to a question 'How religious are you?' The scale scores were treated as continuous variables.
<b>Dependent variables</b>	
Volunteering hours	1 = > 10 hours, 2 = 10-19 hours, 3 = 20-29 hours, 4 = < 30 hours (weekly)
<b>Applied variables</b>	
Motivations	1 = filling the void left by retirement, 2 = filling the void left by children 'leaving home', 3 = to feel a useful member of society, 4 = helping people in need, 5 = staying healthy and active, 6 = meeting people and make friends, 7 = a wish to improve society, 8 = wanting to help the less fortunate, 9 = enjoying the activity, 10 = other
Barriers	1 = finding time, 2 = making up the lost work time, 3 = reduces personal time with family, 4 = finding time, 5 = pressing work/family needs, 6 = volunteer work is not always interesting, 7 = other
Benefits	<i>Personal development:</i> (a) my confidence in my own abilities, (b) my sense of self-esteem; (c) I am making a useful contribution, (d) try new things, (e) have things to look forward to; <i>Skills development:</i> (a) my social and communication skills, (b) work as part of a team, (c) make complex decisions, (d) lead or encourage others, (e) general job-related skills, (f) technical skills, such as office work or I.T. skills; <i>Health and wellbeing:</i> (a) physical health and well-being, (b) mental health and well-being; <i>Social capital:</i> (a) range of friendships, (b) attendance at social events; (c) my trust in other people; (d) I am not alone, (e) awareness of other people's feelings.



# 5 DETERMINANTS OF OLDER VOLUNTEERING

The research sample consisted of 118 older volunteers, 58 men (49.2 per cent) and 56 women (47.5 per cent) from a total 29 different localities (see table 5.1). Most respondents were aged in the 65-69 age bracket (44.1 per cent). The majority were married (70.3 per cent), having children (79.7 per cent) and grandchildren (77.1 per cent), living with their spouses/partners (56.8 per cent), and residing in the Northern Harbour Region (27.1 per cent). Most respondents attended up to 'tertiary education' (40.7 per cent), were 'fully retired from work' (44.1 per cent), earned more than 801 Euros (40.7 per cent), and perceived their health as 'very good' (50.8 per cent).

TABLE 5.1: Sample characteristics - Independent variables (N = 118)

Age (%)		Educational attainment (%)	
60-64	33.1	no schooling	0.0
65-69	44.1	primary education	6.1
70-74	16.1	secondary education	22.9
75-79	6.8	post-secondary	20.3
80 <	0.0	tertiary education	40.7
Gender (%)		Educational qualification (%)	
Male	49.2	no qualifications	12.7
Female	47.5	school-leaving certificate	16.1
Residence (%)		'ordinary' levels	13.6
		intermediate level	3.4
Southern Harbour Region	39.0	'advanced' levels	3.4
Northern Harbour Region	27.1	post-secondary certificate/diploma	23.7
South Eastern Region	13.6	university certificate/diploma	0.0
Western Region	10.2	first degree	16.9
Northern Region	10.2	masters degree	6.8
		doctorate	3.4
Marital status (%)		Past occupation (%)	
single	6.8	senior officials and managers	3.4
married	70.3	technicians, associate professionals	29.7
separated/divorced	0.0	clerical	29.7
widowed	10.2	shop/sales workers	2.5
Parenthood (%)		skilled agricultural, fishery workers	2.5
		craft and related trade workers	2.5
Yes	79.7	plant and machine operators	2.5
No	13.6	armed forces	0.0
Grandparenthood (%)		elementary occupations	0.0
		family worker	23.6
Yes	77.1	Occupation/Retirement (%)	
No	16.1	in paid work	19.5
Household type (%)		unemployed, looking for work	0.0
		fully retired from paid work	44.1
Alone	13.6	never been in paid work	13.6
living with children	12.7		
with spouse/partner	56.8		
with partner and children	3.4		

Monthly income in Euros (%)		Subjective health (%)	
>500	9.3	excellent	16.9
500-800	33.1	very good	50.8
<801	40.7	poor	11.0
		very poor	0.0
		fair	18.6
<b>Social integration*</b>	4 (median), 3.9 (mean)		
<b>Psychological well-being*</b>	self-efficacy: 4.0 (median), 4.3 (mean) self-esteem: 4.0 (median), 4.4 (mean)		
<b>Religiosity*</b>	3.0 (median), 3.4 (mean)		

\* (1 = minimum score, 5 = maximum score)

Most respondents held 'post-secondary' qualifications (23.7 per cent), with past occupations as 'technicians, associate professionals' (29.7 per cent) and 'clerks' (19.7 per cent). Some 13.6 per cent, all women, were never in paid employment ('family workers'). The respondents scored higher-than-average scores in social integration (median: 4; mean: 4.3), self-efficacy (median: 4; mean: 4.3) and self-esteem (median: 4; mean: 4.4). Interestingly, respondents scored only average scores in religiosity (median: 3; mean: 3.4).

TABLE 5.2: Volunteering patterns - Dependent variables (N = 118)

<b>Volunteering hours per week (%)</b>	
1 - 9	66.9
10 - 19	19.5
20 - 29	3.4
30 - 39	6.8
40 +	3.4
<b>Organisation's main activity (%)</b>	
Human health activities	14.5
Animal/veterinary activities	24.6
Social work activities without accommodation	33.8
Social work activities with accommodation	0.0
Other	27.1
<b>Type of volunteer work (%) (respondents could pick more than one activity)</b>	
administrative role	12.7
active role in organisation's activities,	62.4
supporting role in organisation's activity	50.2
other	37.3
<b>Volunteering history (%)</b>	
used to volunteer before reaching 60	59.3
started volunteering only after reaching 60	40.7
<b>Length of volunteering (%)</b>	
less than five years	50.8
five to ten years	16.9
more than ten years	32.2



A significant percentage of respondents engaged in volunteer activities in 'social work activities without accommodation' (33.8 per cent), performed an 'active role in organisation's activities' (62.4 per cent), and volunteered from 2 to 40 hours per week. The majority were already engaged in volunteering activities before reaching their 60th birthday (59.3 per cent), although most had been volunteering for less than five years (50.8 per cent). Statistical analysis of data uncovered the following inferences:

Null hypothesis: No relationship between age and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0.000).  
Inference: Persons aged 60-74 years contribute longer hours of volunteering.

The study uncovered a negative relationship between chronological age and volunteering hours. In this study, there were only 8 volunteers aged 75-plus, and all of them volunteered 10 or less hours per week. All respondents who volunteered more than 30 hours per week were aged in the 60-74 age bracket.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between gender and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0.000).  
Inference: Older men contribute longer hours of volunteering.

This study found that although both older men and women volunteer in later life, older men tend to volunteer for longer hours. In the case of persons volunteering 30 hours or more, the data registered 12 men and no women. One possible explanation is that older women experience 'double jeopardy' lifestyles as their daily lives face the brunt of both ageism and sexism which may function to hamper their possible aspiration to engage in older volunteerism. Older women are less likely to earn a full pension due to breaks in their employment patterns and by rarely being covered by occupational pensions, so that it is not surprising that studies indicate a stronger prevalence of at-risk-of-poverty lifestyles amongst older women. Older women are also generally expected to shoulder family-care responsibilities.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between marital status and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0.000).  
Inference: Married older persons contribute longer hours of volunteering.

This study found that married older persons tend to volunteer for longer hours when compared to single and widowed peers. This result was to an extent a surprising one in that one expects the latter to have more free time to engage in volunteering activities. One possible explanation is that the significant number of married men in the sample implies that later life is strongly characterised by gender-traditional roles whereby older women remain solely responsible for the household's domestic and caring responsibilities, which provides men with the necessary free time to engage in activities outside the home. The fact that single and widowed older persons enjoy less-than-average levels of social capital, also imply that they remain lacking in bonding networking roles, which constitute a crucial link to volunteering across the whole life course.



Null hypothesis: No relationship between household composition and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0.000).  
Inference: Older persons living with partners/spouses contribute longer hours of volunteering.

Again, the results regarding volunteering input by household composition were surprising. Data analysis located a strong relationship between volunteering activity and persons still living with their partners/spouses. Contrary to expectations that older persons living alone have more free time to contribute to longer hours of volunteering, data found that older persons living with spouses/partners volunteered for longer hours. This demonstrates clearly that free time is not a vital independent variable explaining engagement in older volunteering. Rather, it is one's social networking capital, of which married persons tend to hold higher-than-average levels, which comes across as a stronger variable explaining the patterns of volunteering in later life.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between being parenthood and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Significant result: 0.000).  
Inference: Older persons who are also parents contribute longer hours of volunteering.

The study uncovered a positive relationship between parenthood and having children on one hand, and older volunteering on the other. Again, this went counter to expectations that older persons with no children have more leisure time on their hands, and therefore, more opportunities to volunteer. In this study, there were only 16 volunteers who claimed to have no children and all volunteered 10 or less hours per week.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between grandparenthood and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0.000).  
Inference: Older persons having grandchildren tend to be more attracted towards volunteering opportunities than peers with no grandchildren, although the latter tend to contribute towards longer hours of volunteering.

The study uncovered a positive relationship between having grandchildren and grandparenthood on one hand, and older volunteering on the other. Again, this went counter to normal expectations that older persons with no grandchildren have more leisure time, and therefore, more opportunities to contribute towards volunteering. In this study, there were only 19 volunteers who claimed to have no grandchildren. However, it is noteworthy that half of respondents with no grandchildren volunteered for 21 hours or more per week. On the other hand, 91 older persons claiming to have grandchildren volunteered an average of 10 or less hours per week. This is predictable since in contemporary Malta many grandparents tend to provide substantial hours of care to their grandchildren, especially during school holidays, which would leave them with less opportunities for volunteering.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between educational background and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0:304)  
Inference: Older persons with higher-than-average levels of educational attainment/qualification contribute longer hours of volunteering, although the result was non-significant as per statistical standards

Reflecting trends found in international research, better-educated older adults contribute longer hours when compared to their peers. Whilst no respondent claimed that s/he has 'no schooling' experience, as much as 72 respondents claimed to have attended post-compulsory education. Possible explanations for such an inference include that better-educated elders are more socially connected as well as possessing a wider range of skills that are needed by non-governmental organisations. However, one must remain cautious as regards the strength of such a result since the level of significance for the test was 0.304, and therefore higher than the 0.05 level at which results are deemed significant.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between income and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0:800)  
Inference: Older volunteers tend to have higher-than-average levels of income, although the result was insignificant as per statistical standards.

This study finds that older adults with higher levels of income contribute longer hours of volunteering. Whilst only 11 respondents earning less than €500 were found in the sample, as much as 40 respondents earned more than €801 per month. However, one must remain cautious as regards the strength of such a result since the level of significance for the test was 0.800, and therefore higher than the 0.05 level at which results are deemed significant.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between health and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0:001)  
Inference: Older volunteers enjoy positive levels of health.

Reflecting international studies that claim that poor health constitutes a significant barrier to volunteerism in later life, the study found volunteering in later life to be positively correlated with positive health subjective status. A significant majority of respondents, as much as 89.0 per cent, claimed that their health was either 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between psychological well-being and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0:255)  
Inference: Older volunteers enjoy positive levels of 'self-efficacy' and 'self-esteem' psychological well-being, although the result was insignificant as per statistical standards.

The examination of the relationship between psychological well-being (self-efficacy and self-esteem) and volunteerism is a positive one. However, one must remain cautious as regards the strength of such a result since the level of significance for the test was 0.255, and therefore higher than the 0.05 level at which results are deemed significant.

Null hypothesis: No relationship between social integration and older volunteering.  
Result: False/Rejected (Levels of significance: 0:504)  
Inference: Older volunteers enjoy positive levels of 'social integration', although the result was insignificant as per statistical standards.

The examination of the relationship between social integration and volunteerism in later life finds that volunteers tend to score high on social integration. However, one must remain cautious as regards the strength of such a result since the level of significance for the test was 0.504, and therefore higher than the 0.05 level at which results are deemed significant.

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between religiosity and older volunteering.  
Result: True/Accepted (Levels of significance: 0:853).  
Inference: Perceiving oneself as a 'religious' person is not a determinant of volunteering in later life, although the result was insignificant as per statistical standards.

The examination of the relationship between religious values and volunteerism in later life finds that volunteers registered average scores on religious values. However, one must remain cautious as regards the strength of such a result since the level of significance for the test was 0.853, and therefore, higher than the 0.05 level at which results are deemed significant.

In retrospect, older volunteerism - similar to most other behaviours - emerges from the relationship between individuals and environments. Whilst the environment is often characterised by its physical and its social-structural aspects, individuals are typified by their relatively stable personal characteristics and/or traits. Social-structural characteristics - like age, gender, race, and socioeconomic class - define an individual's position in the social structure. Social-structural positions, in turn, prescribe functions and roles in society and imply differential access to society's resources and opportunities. Personality traits are thought to describe an individual's basic approach to life and as such to be related to life-style preferences and behaviour choices. Contingent on the fact that many behaviours arise as a function of role prescriptions, of life-style preferences, and of opportunities and resources to perform them, social-structural characteristics and personality traits constitute key variable in explaining volunteer activity in later life.

# 6 MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

## 6.1 Motivations

Understanding motivation is central to virtually all aspects of volunteer programmes, but especially the recruiting and maintaining the commitment of volunteers. Indeed, the recruitment and retention of volunteers are more effective when volunteer programmes appeal to the specific needs and motivations of potential and actual volunteers. Data uncovered a range of motivational categories that encouraged older persons to become and maintain one's volunteer status. Of course, these categories are not absolutely distinct and most volunteers seem to have multiple reasons for volunteering.

TABLE 6.1: Respondents by motivations for volunteering

Motivations (%) (respondents could pick more than one motivation)	
filling the void left by retirement	18.6
filling the void left by children leaving home	25.4
to feel a useful member of society	55.9
helping people in need	74.5
staying healthy and active	33.0
meeting people and make friends	67.7
a wish to improve society	80.5
wanting to help the less fortunate	70.3
enjoying the activity	33.9
other	12.7

Survey data found that the majority of respondents were motivated to engage in volunteerism by a 'wish to improve society' (80.5 per cent), 'wanting to help the less fortunate' (70.3 per cent), 'meeting people and make friends' (67.7 per cent), and 'to feel a useful member of society' (55.9 per cent). Other reasons why older persons in the study felt an urge to engage in volunteering included 'enjoying the activity' (33.9 per cent), as a means to 'staying healthy and active' (33.0 per cent), and finally, 'filling the void left by children leaving the home' (25.4 per cent) and 'filling the void left by retirement' (18.6 per cent). Qualitative data uncovered six key types of motivational categories including 'altruistic motivation', 'ideological motivation', 'egoistic motivation', 'social relationship motivation', and 'leisure-time motivation'.

**Altruistic motivation.** Most volunteers provided altruistic types of responses when asked why they volunteer, highlighting how they wanted to help, be useful, contribute to the community, and having a sense of responsibility towards more vulnerable peers. It was evident that there are intrinsic psychic rewards since helping others makes the contributor feel good:

Helping the needy is never a bad thing to do. On the contrary, in my opinion it's our duty to see who they are and help them as best we can. God forbid if we think only of ourselves! I feel I'm very lucky, I'm still in good health and I don't depend on anyone to live a normal life. However, there are so many people who are in need! (older volunteer, male, 65 years)

*Li tgħin lil min hu fil-bżonn qatt mhu ħazin. Anzi, jien ngħid li huwa d-dmir tagħna li naraw min hu inqas ixxurtjat minna u ngħinuh kif nistgħu. Allaħares naħsbu fina biss! Jien inħossni furtunat ħafna, għadni b'saħħti u m'għandi bżonn ħadd biex ngħix normali. Iżda kemm hawn min għandu bżonn! (voluntier anzjan, 65 sena)*

**Ideological motivation.** Some volunteers were motivated by an ideological commitments, especially when agreed with the particular values represented by a voluntary organisation and/or by a particular case. Indeed, some voluntary organisations overtly only recruit those volunteers who embrace similar ideological beliefs. This was especially the case for volunteers in environmental and animal welfare organisations

We are all equal on this world, we all have feelings, we are capable of emotions. Animals have a right to share this world with us and to have decent lives. People in Malta need to understand that it is immorally wrong to neglect or abuse animals. What's good for humans is also good for animals. (older volunteer, female, 63 years)

*Kollha kemm aħna ugwali mis-sema 'l isfel, kollha għandna s-sentimenti tagħna u kapaci nħossu l-emozzjonijiet. L-annimali għandhom dritt jaqsmu din id-dinja magħna u jgħixu ħajja deċenti. F'Malta, in-nies jridu jifhmu li hija ħaġa moralment ħażina li ma tagħtix każ l-annimali jew tabbużhom. Dak li huwa tajjeb għall-bnedmin tajjeb għall-annimali wkoll. (voluntiera anzjana, 63 sena)*

**Egoistic motivation.** On a somewhat different plane, some older volunteers displayed egoistic motivational trends as they claimed to be motivated by wanting approval, needing to avoid feelings of guilt, and wanting to cope with anxiety. Therefore, one needs to make a distinction between volunteering that is 'other-oriented' and helping that is oriented towards serving the incumbent's psychological needs. Indeed, many accentuated how they engaged in volunteering to 'fill a gap or void in life,' 'managing the transition from paid employment to retirement,' 'coping with a bereavement,' or 'adjusting to children leaving home':

Helping out makes you feel good. You feel you're being useful to society, you're giving back something of what you've got. Time is precious, isn't it? I feel relieved when I help out. In fact, it's the other way around, I feel drained here at home when I don't. Time stands still, you feel empty when you don't do anything. (older volunteer, female, 61 years)

*Meta tgħin tħossok tajjeb. Tħossok li qed tkun utli għas-socjetà, li qed tagħti xi ħaġa milli għandek. Il-ħin prezzjuż hux? Jien inħossni nistrieħ meta mmur ngħin. Fil-fatt bil-kontra, inħossni għajjen hawn id-dar meta ma mmurx. Il-ħin ma jgħaddi qatt, tħossok vojta meta ma tagħmel xejn. (voluntiera anzjana, 61 sena)*

**Social relationship motivation.** In a significant number of cases volunteering is essentially a social phenomenon. Many volunteered to engage in a social activity with their friends or in the search of new friends, the people they help, and other staff with whom they work. Moreover, it was evident that friendship motivates volunteers to continue in their roles because of both their loyalty to particular people and the pleasure of their social interactions:

I started helping out when a friend of mine and I decided to do something for the greater good and twice a week we go to visit primary level school children. We were both teachers and we really feel at home...We enjoy meeting other teachers. (older volunteer, female, 64 years)

*Bdejt immur ngħin meta jien u l-ħabiba tiegħi ddeċedjna li nibdew nagħmlu xi ħaġa għall-gid u darbtejn fil-gimġha mmorru naqraw lit-tfal tal-iskola primarja. Aħna konna t-tnejn għalliema u nħossuna fl-ambjent veru tagħna... Nieħdu pjaċir niltaqqgħu mal-għalliema l-oħra. (voluntiera anzjana, 64 sena)*

**Leisure-time motivation.** Some older persons who have significant leisure time on their hands are motivated to engage in volunteering (conversely, being 'too busy' is a disincentive to volunteering), as a means to do something enjoyable and interesting, or to enhance personal development by learning new skills and gaining training:

God bless me, I'm seventy years old and still feeling good. Thank God for my voluntary work, otherwise I wouldn't know what to do. As I've already mentioned to you, I didn't get married and therefore don't have anything to pass time away. I worked till I was sixty one years old, and although I don't get paid anymore, I do it with the same level commitment. (older volunteer, female, 69 years)

*Alla jbierek għandi sebgħin u għadni nħossni tajba. Imnalla jkun il-volontarjat għaliya għax kieku ma nafx x'naqbad nagħmel. Jien, kif għà għedtlek, ma żżewwiġtx u għalhekk biex nimla l-ġurnata ma għandix. Hdimt sa wieħed u sittin, u għalkemm issa ma nithallasx, nieħdu bis-serjetà daqs li kieku nithallas. (voluntiera anzjana, 69 sena)*

Moreover, research findings point to other distinct trends of volunteer motivation. First, older volunteers are much less likely than younger volunteers to be motivated by material rewards:

I can't go to Mass, receive Holy Communion, read the Bible and then do nothing else when I'm surrounded with so much problems and people in need. You need to ask yourself how should a Catholic behave. Without a shadow of a doubt, one needs to roll up one's sleeves and get going with the nitty gritty. (older volunteer, male, 63 years)

*Jien ma nistax immur quddies, nitqarben u naqra l-Bibbja, u mbagħad nibqa' idi f'idi meta qiegħed imdawwar b'daqstant problemi u nies fil-bżonn. Trid issaqsi lilek innifsek fuq dak li Kattoliku għandu jagħmel. Bla ebda dubju wieħed irid ixammar idejh u jmid għonqu għax-xogħol. (voluntier anzjan, 67 sena)*

Moreover, whilst older volunteers are less likely to admit having status/reward motivations, at the same time most older people are interested in older volunteerism as a form of personal growth:

In fact, my friend and I don't like it when others praise us or make a big deal about something. Last year, they asked me for a short interview for a website, picture and all. I declined, it was all in vain...they really did try hard to convince me. There's nothing more satisfying than doing your duty and going home without any fanfare (older volunteer, female, 71 years).

*Jien u l-ħabiba fil-fatt niddejqu meta joqogħdu jfaħħruna jew jagħmlu ħafna plejtu. Is-sena l-oħra riedu jagħmluli intervista qasira għal fuq il-website bir-ritratt b'kollox. Ma aċċettajt, għalxejn...tgħidx kemm qaluli. Ma hemmx xejn isbaħ milli tagħmel dmirek u tmur id-dar bil-kwiet. (voluntiera anzjana, 71 sena)*

This section identified seven categories of motivations to volunteer in later life: altruistic, ideological, egoistic, social relationship, leisure-time, and personal growth. However, when older volunteers are asked why they volunteer, the most common responses included 'wanting to help', 'wanting to be useful', and 'having a sense of responsibility'.

## 6.2 Barriers

Survey data found that the key barriers to older volunteeris, as perceived by volunteers, constitute 'pressing work/family needs' (44.1 per cent), 'finding time' (50.8 percent), because it 'reduced personal time with family' (42.4 per cent), 'volunteer work is not always interesting' (16.7 per cent), and 'making up the lost time in volunteering' (38.1 per cent).

TABLE 6.2: Responded by perceived barriers to older volunteering (N = 118)

Barriers (%) (respondents could tick more than one answer)	
finding time	50.8
making up the lost work time	38.1
reduces personal time with family	42.4
pressing work/family needs	44.1
volunteering is not always interesting	16.7
other	24.6

The analysis of qualitative uncovered a number of barriers that prevented older people from volunteering. These can be characterised as stemming from older people's perceptions and attitudes, practical barriers, cultural barriers, and policies and practices of organisations.

**Perceptions and attitudes.** Older people may be reluctant to volunteer because they believe that they cannot perform the volunteer activity due to lack of confidence. As a result, some older adults may not believe that they fit the picture of a volunteer. Hence, there is a need to promote the diverse range of volunteer activities and emphasise the diverse people who volunteer:

Many of the community's senior citizens are not aware of their abilities. They think that now that they're retired they're good for nothing. You could say that through retirement they've become disempowered whilst they still have a lot to give. They tell me: "now I've grown old", "you want youths not old people", "we get tired quickly". (NGO manager)

*Ħafna anzjani fil-komunità ma jafux bil-ħiliet li għadhom. Jaħsbu li issa la rtiraw mhuma kapaċi għal xejn. Tista' tghid li permezz tal-irtirar isiru disempowered meta jkun faddallhom ħafna x'jagħtu. Jgħiduli: 'issa jien kbirt', 'intom tridu nies żgħażaġh u mhux xjuħ', 'aħna ngħajjew malajr'. (Maniġer ta' NGO)*

**Practical barriers.** Organisations may need to be more flexible with respect to volunteer options to address external factors such as time constraints and travel difficulties. Other practical barriers that may impede older volunteering including functional health problems, and monetary constraints such as out of pocket expenses for transport and telephone calls:

If I didn't have a full pension I would have definitely not been able to go. I need fifteen euro a week for petrol, just to come and go. True, the buses are cheap, but you really waste alot of time using them. I want to be here as early as possible because I have house chores and cooking to do. (older volunteer, female, 76 years)



*Li kieku ma għandix il-pensjoni full żgur li ma nkunx nista' mmur. Għandi biss xi ħmistax-il euro fil-ġimgħa petrol biss biex inkun nista' mmur u niġi. Il-karozza tal-linja irħas veru imma taħli ħafna ħin hekk. Jien irrid inkun hawn kmieni kemm jista' jkun għax ikolli faċendi u rrid insajjar. (voluntiera anzjana, 76 sena)*

**Cultural barriers.** In some instances, a lack of understanding or knowledge of what volunteering entails, and there needs to be further promotion of the broad experiences available through volunteering.

I had heard of this organisation and others like it but thought that to come here and help out you had to come everyday. It was only when my friend started coming and told me that there is no need to come everyday and there isn't all that much to do. Maybe I could suggest that they go on radio and explain exactly what it is we do. (older volunteer, female, 68 years)

*Kont ili nisma' b'din l-għaqda u oħrajn, imma kont naħseb li biex tiġi hawn tgħin, trid tiġi hawn kuljum. Kien biss meta ħabiba tiegħi li bdiet tiġi u qaltli li ma hemmx għalfejn tiġi kuljum u li ma kienx hawn affarijiet kbar x'tagħmel. Forsi nista' nissugġerixxi li jmorru fuq ir-radju u jfiehmu eżatt x'nagħmlu. (voluntiera anzjana, 68 sena)*

**Age discrimination.** Whilst this study did not specifically research the linkage between age discrimination and older volunteering, data indicates that 'ageism' arises as a possible barrier to older volunteerism. Offering older volunteers uninteresting, undemanding and a narrow range of tasks is another facet of ageist practices, as organisations often tended to assume that older people 'were content with undemanding tasks like making the tea or arranging the flowers.

I don't like saying this but I sometimes feel as though they take us for granted, as if we can always come because we don't work. I sometimes feel that us senior citizens are used when need be on too many occasions. I don't agree with the notion that we should always make tea and coffee and always be looking for a venue for the Christmas dinner. True, we're not as qualified as others may be, however, how shall I put it, they could give us more important work to do. (older volunteer, male, 70 years)

*Niddejjaq ngħidha din imma nħoss li ġieli joħduna for granted, qisu dejjem nistgħu niġu billi aħna ma naħdmux. Ġieli nħoss li aħna l-anzjani nsoddu t-toqob wisq. Jien ma naqbilx li aħna dejjem nagħmlu t-kafe u li dejjem naraw fejn ħa nagħmlu l-ikla tal-Milied. Veru li m'għandnix kwalifiki daqs l-oħrajn, però kif ħa naqbad ngħidlek, jistgħu jagħtuna xogħlijiet iżjed importanti. (voluntier anzjan, 70 sena)*

This section has explored the structural dimension of volunteering in relation to older volunteers' and organisers' perceptions of the barriers to volunteering as a key productive ageing activity. Findings suggest that there is a complexity of issues surrounding barriers to volunteering in later life. These include financial costs, lack of flexibility on behalf of organisations, and age discrimination. Many older people, particularly young-old persons, are looking for a flexible, balanced retirement and may not want to be tied down to a routine. Volunteering needs to be promoted to older persons as an activity of choice among a range of options.



# 7 BENEFITS

Research data uncovered a range of benefits emerging from the participation of older adults in older volunteering. Older volunteering benefits both older volunteers themselves as well as the non-governmental organisations which are the recipients of volunteering services. The significant majority of respondents credit their engagement in voluntary activities to bestow them with a range of benefits. The majority of respondents claimed that as a result of volunteering they experienced an improvement in their personal development - namely, the 'sense that they are making a useful contribution' (77.1 per cent), 'willingness to try new things' (66.9 per cent), 'the sense that I have things to look forward to' (66.1 per cent), 'confidence in their own abilities' (63.6 per cent), and their 'self-esteem' (53.4 per cent).

**TABLE 7.1: Respondents by benefits 'before' and 'after' volunteering (N = 118)**

<b>Personal development</b>	<b>increase</b>	<b>no change</b>
confidence in my own abilities	63.6	36.4
sense of self-esteem	53.4	46.6
sense that I am making a useful contribution	77.1	22.9
willingness to try new things	66.9	33.9
the sense that I have things to look forward to	66.1	33.1
<b>Skills development</b>		
my social and communication skills	50.8	46.6
my ability to work as part of a team	62.7	37.3
my ability to lead or encourage others	66.1	33.9
general job-related skills	50.0	50.0
technical skills (e.g office work or I.T. skills)	46.6	43.4
<b>Health and well-being</b>		
my physical health and well-being	50.0	50.0
my mental health and well-being	63.6	36.4
<b>Social capital</b>		
my range of friendships	81.4	16.1
my attendance at social events	66.1	33.9
my trust in other people	59.3	40.7
feeling that I am not alone	40.7	29.7
my awareness of other people's feelings	57.6	20.3

The majority also reported an improvement in their skills development including an 'ability to lead and encourage others' (66.1 per cent), an 'ability to work as part of a team' (62.7 per cent), 'social and communication skills' (50.8 per cent), and 'general job-related skills' (50.0 per cent). As found in international data, persons' levels of health and well-being also increased: 'mental health and well-being' (63.6 per cent) and 'physical health and well-being' (50.0 per cent). Finally, volunteers claimed an improvement in their levels of social capital: my range of friendships (81.4 per cent), my attendance at social events (66.1 per cent), my trust in other people (59.3 per cent), and my awareness of other people's feelings (57.6 per cent).

The analysis of verbal data elicited various benefits on behalf of the volunteering activity towards the volunteers. Benefits included health, psychological, as well as social advantages. Volunteers indicated that they experienced improved physical functioning as a result of 'helping out'. Perceptions of positive changes in their physical health was highly common amongst older volunteers. For instance, volunteering was credited with aiding them to higher levels of exercising and better nutritional intake:

Waking up and going somewhere is already much better than staying home doing nothing. When I'm at home I eat too much. Keeping active does help, there's always something to do, there's nearly no time at all to rest. True, it's not a form of physical training but you definitely move about more. (older volunteer, female, 69 years)

*Li tqum u tmur x'imkien bi skop għa ħafna aħjar milli toqgħod id-dar bilqiegħda. Meta nkun id-dar niekol iżżejjed. Iżżommok attiv tgħin. Dejjem hemm xi ħaġa x'tagħmel, kważi ma jkun hemm qatt ħin tistrieħ. Vera li mhux xi forma ta' training imma żgur li tiċċaqlaq iżjed. (voluntiera anzjana, 69 sena)*

Volunteers indicated that the experience of volunteering resulted in improved levels of emotional well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and overall morale. Respondents reported that the act of 'helping out' resulted in higher degrees of happiness, optimism, and self-worth on one hand, and fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and somatisation on the other.

Looking at all you've done and the number of people that you've helped, you definitely feel better and more satisfied with your life. If you have a small problem you definitely forget it whilst working. Outdoors you charge your batteries for afterwards, when you go back home. (older volunteer, male, 61 years)

*Meta thares lejn dak kollu li għamilt u lejn in-numru ta' nies li tkun għent żgur li tħossok aħjar u iżjed sodisfatt b'ħajtek. Jekk ikollok xi problema żgħira żgur li tinsa kollox meta tmidd idek għax-xogħol. Fl-arja aperta tiċċarġja l-batteries għal wara, meta tmur id-dar. (voluntier anzjan, 61 sena)*

Volunteering also served as an 'expression of active social engagement' and aided in combating loneliness, leading to social networking, and useful in gaining 'useful' social contacts. In other words, volunteering emerged as a successful strategy in combating both social isolation and social exclusion. Volunteering also resulted in gaining improved levels of social capital, in addition to developing more 'structure' in retirement:

Ever since going there we've made alot of friends. I must admit, I'll be looking forward, not only to helping out but to meet people and even make new friends. My son asks us, "but how many people do you know?!" - well, you have to live life to the full, what's the alternative, becoming a hermit, at home alone?! (older volunteer, female, 74 years)

*Għamilna ħafna ħbieb minn mindu bdejna mmorru. Ikolli nammetti li nkun looking forward mhux biss biex ngħin imma biex niltaqa' man-nies u anki nagħmel ħbieb godda. It-tifel jgħidilna 'imma kemm tafu nies?!' - heqq, mhux trid tgħix, mela qisek mumja d-dar waħdek?! (voluntiera anzjana, 74 sena)*

Contrary to the ageist assumptions that sometimes pervade contemporary social institutions, including voluntary organisations, older volunteers have a number of assets and qualities to offer. These include 'empathy' as older people have lived through enough experiences to enable them to understand the problems of others, 'availability' as people who have retired from paid work or have finished child rearing tend to have more spare time and can be flexible about when they participate, 'loyalty' as older people spend more time on their volunteering and remain longer with their organisations than younger peers, and 'confidence' and 'authority' as older volunteers are generally able to ask questions about the way things were run, to manage themselves, and to nurture younger volunteers. In the words of one programme director:

If it weren't for senior citizens we would definitely close down. Look, today women work and men either have hectic jobs or more than one. Senior citizens represent a big resource. You could say that the committee is all made up of senior citizens. You can rely on them because they are always dependable. As senior citizens we have time on our side. (NGO manager)

*Kieku ma jkunux għall-anzjani kieku zgur li nagħlqu. Ifhem, in-nisa illum jaħdmu u l-irġiel min għandu xogħol impenjattiv u min għandu iżjed minn wieħed. L-anzjani huma riżors kbir. Tista' tgħid li tal-kumitat huma kollha anzjani. Tista' toqgħod fuqhom għax issibhom dejjem. L-anzjani għandna l-ħin favur tagħna (Maniġer ta' NGO)*

Programme directors also highlighted how older volunteers bring to the voluntary experience high levels of 'patience' and 'tolerance' (older volunteers are generally more able to stay calm, see issues from a number of perspectives, and work at a steadier pace), as well as 'reliability'. This is mostly due to older people being generally more willing to see a project through, be more tenacious, have an interest in the activity, and be more altruistic than younger volunteers.







### **8.1 Recruiting older volunteers**

This study demonstrates clearly that the 'best' way to recruit older volunteers is through word-of-mouth or personal contacts. Many interviewees recounted how they became engaged in volunteering following the advice of friends and acquaintances. It results that even with programmes that use mass media advertising to recruit volunteers, personal contact is imperative for recruiting new volunteers. Personal solicitation is more effective than advertising because most volunteers do not seek to 'help out' on their own initiative, but generally because someone asks them to accompany him/her. It is interesting that a study by Kieffer (1986) reported that a key reason that non-volunteers give for not volunteering is 'no one asked me'! This means that voluntary organisations are to develop a systematic way of recruiting new volunteers through personal solicitation that sees current volunteers generate lists of potential volunteers.

It remains, however, that programmes that recruit only through personal contacts are unlikely to grow as they tend to recruit only from a narrowly defined population. To the extent that volunteer programmes want to grow and increase their numbers of volunteers, they need to devise some ways of recruitment using mass-media-based campaigns. Effective campaigns include strategies administered through target marketing and market research, which appeal to the specific motivations of potential volunteers. Whilst older people who have volunteered in the past are relatively easy to recruit, effective mass media campaigns and/or with volunteer programmes that match the skills and interests of a targeted population are generally successful in recruiting older persons who have had no previous experience in formal volunteer work. This study also demonstrates that one sector of retirees who are easily recruited through mass advertising campaigns are those who have a strong sense of 'community rootedness'. This term refers to the sense of attachment and commitment that people feel for their neighbourhoods and communities. Community rootedness does not necessarily mean feeling connected to neighbours since a community can be geographically dispersed. What is important that individuals feel strong ties with an identifiable group that may range from a church, neighbourhood, an ethnic group, persons with disabilities, to a sports association. An effective recruitment strategy to recruit older persons with 'natural' community ties should emphasise and build on the community attachments of potential volunteers. This strategy requires an understanding of the specific community ties of potential recruits and developing recruitment messages that stress these ties. A possible issue here is that 'non-joining' older people tend to ignore volunteer job postings. Indeed, to reach relatively isolated older persons for volunteering purposes, it is necessary to develop, even at times, aggressive outreach strategies. However, advertising or providing information is not enough. Recruiting people who are outside of natural markets also requires special efforts to overcome specific barriers to volunteering.

Other possible recruitment strategies include the production of a newsletter and posters. Newsletters consist one of the best and least expensive marketing tools to raise awareness of volunteer projects, organisations, and opportunities in an attractive and well written manner. The goals of such newsletters are to (i) introduce, build awareness, let people know the organisation's needs, (ii) initiate potential partnerships when others see what you are up to, (iii) recognise contributions and show appreciation of partners and volunteers, (iv) share useful information - new interesting links and facts provide a useful tool, (v) promote upcoming events and the other activities (gatherings), and (vi), making it easy for people to receive and pass on information. The distribution of posters where people congregate, such as community centres, libraries, grocery stores and local gyms, is a common way to get a message across and attract volunteers. This is especially true for older persons, although the posters need to be printed in large characters.

As well as being attractive and eye catching, it is best if posters should have an identifier that this aimed at boomers (for example, “are you in your 50’s to 60’s?”), a catchy tagline, the answer to “What’s in it for me?”, brief explanation on what is expected of them and who it will benefit, registration and contact details, and if possible, testimonials.

## 8.2 Retaining older volunteers

Retaining volunteers is as crucial as recruitment for the survival of volunteer organisations. Coordinators remarked how volunteers who quit after a short time are costly as they take away their acquired learning and leave nothing behind. Although turnover is a right of volunteers and a natural component of volunteer management, it is especially a problem when organisations make extensive investment in volunteer training and supervision, volunteering roles require long-term commitments, and clients can be harmed when volunteers leave. One of the important findings of this study is that organisations who are selective in recruiting their membership are less likely to have damaging levels of volunteer turnover. When volunteers are recruited carefully and selectively, they are more likely to be involved, active and committed to voluntary organisations. Indeed, a selective process of recruitment can help screen out people who are likely to drop out of the programme. This study also found that volunteers are more likely to stay, and less likely to quit, if their volunteer job meets their individual needs that may range from a need for experience, need to express feelings of social responsibility, need for social contact, need to respond to the expectations of others, need for social approval, need for future rewards, and need to achieve. If volunteers perceive their work as successful, they will feel competent enough to make further commitment. The implications here are threefold. First, the most effective way to sustain the commitment of volunteers is to provide for satisfying experiences. Volunteers who believe that they are capable of helping and that their investment is worth their efforts are much more likely to continue their work than those who feel frustrated, rejected and incompetent. Second, intrinsic rewards are more critical for volunteers than paid workers in the sense that it is easier for volunteers to quit. If a job is intrinsically uninteresting, it is difficult to attract, and even more difficult to keep, volunteers. Finally, people are willing to commit their time when they believe that the cause and goals are worthy. The more people believe in the purpose of the organisation, the more committed they will be to committing their time and continuing to work. It is important that volunteer organisations recruit people who share their ideology and values, and offer training in values and ideology rather than just skills.

### Box 8.1

#### Five key principles that enhance volunteer retention

- selective recruitment and matching volunteers with appropriate assignments, whilst screening out people who are likely to become uncommitted volunteers,
- careful monitoring of new volunteers can help avert the post-honeymoon blues effect during the first few months of volunteering,
- offering intrinsic rewards - that is, jobs that are challenging, interesting and important,
- sustaining the commitment of volunteers by providing successful experiences, and
- ensuring that friendship is a key characteristic of volunteer groups.

It is also important for volunteer organisations to shield volunteers from the possibility of experiencing burnout. Volunteers experience burnout when they become overcommitted, they care and work so much that they become physically and emotionally worn down. Generally, burnout has four separate forms or causes - namely, (i) grief, especially when volunteers work with clients who are ill and dying, (ii) frustration, when volunteers find their efforts being thwarted, personal intrusion, when volunteers are called on to help in ways that are inappropriate and that intrude on their private lives, and (iii) time demands, when volunteers spend so much time volunteering that they (or their families) believe that they are giving too much. Volunteer organisations can address the problem of grief by acknowledging that volunteers feel unhappiness so that they offer ongoing support groups and supervision. As regards frustration, volunteer organisations are to provide appropriate monitoring so that volunteers do not work in isolation. This will enable organisations to intervene to improve the situation, and hence, reduce the cause of frustration. Volunteer organisations can deal with the issue of personal intrusion by setting careful guidelines that help volunteers say 'no' when they might feel pressed to help in ways that would disrupt their own lives. Finally, programmes must also be protective of volunteers in terms of the time demands that are placed upon them by recognising that volunteer time must be limited and even disallowing them to contribute further hours.

### **8.3 Style of management**

Appropriate management and support are essential in ensuring that the benefits of volunteering by older people are maximised. Once volunteer organisations have given older volunteers a task to do, it is not simply a case of leaving them to get on with it. It is important that organisations get to know each volunteer which enables them to assess which of them would appreciate and respond to more formal management methods and which of them would not. It is also commendable that volunteers are given an 'open door' access to their supervisors/managers and that they are invited to consult them at any time if they have problems with the work or even personal issues. One-to-one meetings with their direct supervisors/managers is also advisable as this allows the voluntary organisation to supervise discreetly the volunteer's work.

As many older volunteers are looking for a challenge rather than some monetary return it is best if the organisation provides them with possibilities for 'career development'. Although not every volunteer will want to move on to more demanding and responsible work, all should be given the chance to do so if they want to and are up to the task. The voluntary, rather than employment, character of the activities also necessitates that, as much as possible, volunteers are given the opportunity to work at their own pace, adequate rest periods, shorter work sessions, and opportunities for mentorship. There are also a number of measures that make up good practice in managing older volunteers. For example, organisations should insist that everyone puts in an expenses claim. Although some volunteers may say that they do not wish to claim expenses, it should be clear that this unfairly stigmatises the people who need to claim expenses. If necessary, set up some system where those who wish can discreetly give their expenses back to the organisation. Older volunteers, as already accentuated, should be helped with transport, either by giving them lifts or paying their public transport expenses. Holding meetings in the late evenings should be avoided as older volunteers are often understandably reluctant to use public transport at night. Another good practice is the setting up of an effective grievance procedure. If after discussions with their manager, a volunteer is still unhappy about something, there should be a simple and confidential procedure that enables them to raise the matter with someone in the organisation who is not involved in their work. Finally, it is vital that older volunteers are involved in decision-making, and being represented on management committees.

Older volunteers are not unlike younger peers in their need for recognition and appreciation. Some may even feel a greater need to be recognised as they face declining opportunities to engage in productive ageing. Recognising the contributions of older volunteers provides a sense of performance evaluation, the encouragement to do more, whilst also assuring volunteer themselves and their families that they are not being exploited. Hence, voluntary organisations are called up to organise recognition award ceremonies which also function to allow the families to become more familiar with the volunteer organisation and what it does. Recognition award ceremonies also serve to confirm that older volunteers are not second-class workers.

In implementing policy on older volunteering in Malta, there is a pressing need for the implantation of a number of policies and strategies that promote and support older volunteering. Encouraging the participation of older adults in volunteering involves two distinct processes, first the setting of policy recommendations, and secondly the implementation of strategic actions.

### 9.1 Policy recommendations

**National level.** The volunteering of older people, and its irreplaceable value for a vital voluntary sector and for the cohesion of society as a whole, should be recognised at a national level. The Maltese government is called upon to draw attention to the key potential that productive ageing has in improving the quality of life of older persons and Maltese society in general. It is vital that the government records formally the guiding values, principles and ethics for older volunteering, take concrete actions to promote volunteering among older adults whilst removing legal and administrative obstacles, and encourage the development of voluntary activities for all age groups based on greater solidarity between generations. Such a standpoint is also to (i) recognise the importance of volunteering, (ii) provide mechanisms to exchange information, experience and good practice on the opportunities that exist, and (iii), foster the active participation of older volunteers in developing and shaping their environment as a means to promote social cohesion. The provision of training for the management and development of voluntary activity amongst older people is also to be highlighted. At the same time, funds allocated to programmes that promote and strengthen the voluntary sector are to focus more on motivating and integrating new groups of older people (such as vulnerable groups and people at risk of social exclusion).

**Local Councils.** Regional and local authorities should play an important role in facilitating older volunteering. This can be done by (i) putting in place policies and measures that encourage older volunteering, (ii) providing information on volunteering opportunities, and fostering training for older volunteers and those coordinating/managing activities, (iii) minimising the bureaucratic and financial constraints that volunteer organisations face, (iv) tangibly supporting older volunteering as a way to promote healthy ageing and social inclusion of older individuals, and (v), ensuring that volunteers are valued but that they are not exploited as cheap labour to replace professional services. It is also necessary that local councils play an important role in enabling and supporting older volunteering by developing support structures, providing space, offering public relations and providing basic financial support. On a more practical level, local councils are called upon to encourage and fund older volunteering programmes in their regions, whilst also serving as a local hub for effective cooperation between stakeholders if initiatives and measures are to be sustainable (for example, by organising information sessions and occasions where organisations offering volunteering placements and prospective volunteers can meet, or by promoting the creation of social partnerships).

**Voluntary organisations.** Civil society should put pressure to ensure that policies relating to volunteer organisations do not discriminate against older adults (for example, by assessing their practices for deep-seated assumptions about older volunteers capacities and interests). Older volunteers need to be encouraged by stressing the value of their contribution, the mutual benefits to be gained by their participation and by the tailoring of activities according to individual strengths, commitment and availability. Older people's organisations and volunteer-based organisations should be involved in the definition, development and implementation of policies promoting volunteering at all ages.

**Academia.** Academic and education institutions play a central role in facilitating, supporting active ageing and older volunteering. However, at present there is limited academic research on older volunteering, and in this regard higher education institutions in Malta are called upon to research the number of older volunteers and their contribution to society, introduce intergenerational volunteering programmes in schools and universities, and develop tools to certify competences and skills acquired through informal learning and volunteering (therefore, granting public recognition to informal learning and competences acquired through volunteering). It is also warranted that academic centres, especially those specialising in gerontology and lifelong learning collaborate in education and training of volunteers by disseminating a positive image of older volunteers.

**Online bank.** One needs to take advantage of the digital revolution which includes new social networking technologies that connect individuals at a very rapid pace. The function of an online database is to match retirees with local volunteer opportunities, as well as second careers in teaching, public service and non-profit service. This platform will combine a volunteer management system, enabling organisations to communicate with and manage their volunteers, with a portal website providing information for individuals and companies about how to get involved with their local community and voluntary organisations.

## **9.2 Strategic recommendations**

**Recruit participation in older volunteering by older persons who are ageing actively.** Older adults who are ageing actively attend community centres, go to the cinema, restaurants, theatres, and libraries, as well as spending extensive time with family, friends, and acquaintances. Hence, the most efficient recruitment strategies will involve locating new volunteers in such places through more effective and efficient advertising.

**Focus on the possibilities of volunteering in Pre-Retirement Programmes.** There is a real urgency in planning and carrying out learning programmes for who will be retiring in the subsequent years. A component in such learning programmes must focus on 'volunteering'. Volunteering is to be presented as an interesting and constructive way to spend time in later life. Facilitators should present learners with the vast range of volunteer organisations in which one can volunteer during retirement.

**Advertise volunteering as a means of self-actualisation rather than as a form of unpaid work.** Running counter to the general emphasis on paid work, an educational campaign on volunteering is warranted, one which presents this activity as a way to make new friends, do something worthwhile, and achieve personal fulfilment and growth.

**Make more efficient and effective of the mass and social media.** Older persons tend to watch television and listen to radio more than any other younger cohort and generation. The mass media should be used to inform older adults of the benefits of volunteering and the kinds of positions available. At the same time, older adults are no exception to digital citizenship, and many hold online accounts in social media ranging from Facebook to Twitter.

**Design volunteer roles that do not necessitate high levels of education.** As people who are more educated, younger and in better health tend to participate more actively in volunteering opportunities, there is a need to ascertain that there are available roles for people who might be in relatively poorer health and in low-income brackets by offering transportation, reimbursement for travel and free lunches.



### 9.3 Coda

The goal of this project was to study the demographics and determinants of older volunteering, volume and nature of volunteer work in later life, conduct an analysis of motivations, barriers and institutional capacity concerning older volunteering in Malta. Key conclusions include:

**Key demographics and determinants of older volunteering.** Typical older volunteers are married and living with their spouse, have vertically extended families that include children and grandchildren, and above all, enjoy higher-than-average levels of educational attainment/ qualification, health and income. Although both older men and women engage in volunteer activities, older men volunteer for longer hours when compared to female peers.

**Volume and nature of volunteer work in later life.** A significant percentage of respondents engaged in volunteer activities in 'social work activities without accommodation', performed an 'an active role in organisation's activities', whilst volunteered about three to four hours per week. The majority of older volunteers were already engaged in volunteering activities before reaching their 60th birthday, although for not more than 5 years.

**Motivations.** The study found that the majority of respondents were motivated to engage in volunteerism by a 'wish to improve society', 'wanting to help the less fortunate', 'meeting people and make friends', and 'to feel a useful member of society' - in that respective order. In addition, the study identified seven categories of motivations to volunteer in later life: altruistic, ideological, egoistic, social relationship, leisure-time, and personal growth.

**Barriers.** The study found that the key barriers to older volunteerism, as perceived by the older volunteers themselves, are far from age, health problems, and income levels. Indeed, barriers ranged from 'pressing work/family needs', 'finding time', because it 'reduced personal time with family', 'volunteer work is not always interesting', to 'making up the lost time in volunteering' - in that respective order.

**Benefits.** Respondents credit their engagement in voluntary activities to bestow them with a range of benefits - namely, 'sense that they are making a useful contribution', 'willingness to try new things', 'the sense that I have things to look forward to', 'confidence in their own abilities', and their 'self-esteem'. Others also reported an improvement in their skills development including an 'ability to lead and encourage others', and an 'ability to work as part of a team'.

**Social policy.** On the basis of data, the study forwarded a number of policy and action strategies - at national, local, and community levels - to increase the number of older volunteers. Strategic recommendations included expanding participation by older persons who are ageing actively, presenting volunteering as an option in Pre-retirement Programmes, and advertising volunteering as a means of self-actualisation rather than as a form of unpaid work.

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# APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 1 Age  60-64  65-69  70-74  
 75-79  80+
- 2 Gender  male  female
3. Place of residence \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Marital status  single  married  
 separated/divorced  widowed
- 5 Do you have children?  yes  no
- 6 Do you have grandchildren?  yes  no
- 7 Educational level  no schooling  primary education  
 secondary education  post-secondary  
 tertiary education
8. Educational qualification  no qualifications  school-leaving certificate  
 'O' levels  intermediate level  
 'A' levels  certificate/diploma  
 first degree  masters degree  
 doctorate
9. Which of the following phrases best describes what you are currently doing?
- In paid work, including part-time or self-employment  
*go to question 10a, and skip questions 10b and 10c.*
- Looking for work  
*go to question number 10b, and skip questions 10a and 10c.*
- Wholly retired from paid work  
*go to question 10c, and skip questions 10a and 10b.*
- have never been in paid work (homemaker)  
*skip questions 10a, 10b, and 10c, and go to question number 11.*
- 10a. If in 'paid full/time employment' what is your key occupational background?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10b. If 'looking for work' what was your last occupation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10c. If 'wholly retired', what was your last occupation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you live  alone?  with children?  with spouse/partner?  
 with partner & children?  
 in any other arrangement?

12. Income per month  less than €500  
 between €501 and €800  
 more than €801

13. How do you rate your health?  excellent  very good  
 average  fair  
 poor

14. These statements reflect your personality. Tick whether you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

	Agree	Disagree
I manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough		
If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want		
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals		
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events		
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I can handle unforeseen situations		
On the whole I am satisfied with myself		
At times I think that I am no good at all		
I feel that I have a number of good qualities		
I am able to do things as well as most other people		
I have much to be proud of		

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = you strongly agree and 5 = you strongly disagree, do you agree or disagree with the following statements

I do not feel I belong to anything called a community \_\_\_\_\_

I feel close to other people in the community \_\_\_\_\_

my community is a source of support. \_\_\_\_\_

16. How religious are you?  not at all  not very  
 somewhat  very



## VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION

17. Which organisation do you volunteer for?

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18. What type of work do you perform?  administrative role  
 active role in organisation's activities,  
 supporting role in organisation's activity  
 other

19. On average how many hours a week do you volunteer for? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

20. How long have you been volunteering?  less than five years  
 five to ten years  
 more than ten years

21. Did you engage in volunteering previous to your 60th birthday?  Yes, I used to  
 No, I only started volunteering after

22. What motivates you to volunteer? (you can tick more than one reply)

- filling the void left by retirement
- filling the void left by children 'leaving home'
- to feel a useful member of society,
- staying healthy and active
- meeting people and make friends
- a wish to improve society
- wanting to help the less fortunate
- enjoying the activity
- other

23. What is/are the key barriers you face in engaging in volunteering? (you can tick more than one reply)

- finding time
- making up the lost work time
- reduces personal time with family
- pressing work/family needs
- volunteering is not always interesting
- other

People can benefit from volunteering in a number of ways. Please tick the box to indicate whether the following have increased or remained the same as a result of your volunteering

	Increased	no change
<b>Personal development</b>		
24. My confidence in my own abilities		
25. My sense of self-esteem		
26. My sense that I am making a useful contribution		
27. My willingness to try new things		
28. The sense that I have things to look forward to		
<b>Skills development</b>		
29. My social and communication skills		
30. My ability to work as part of a team		
31. My ability to lead or encourage others		
32. General job-related skills e.g. time management, literacy/numeracy skills		
33. Technical skills, such as office work or I.T. skills		
<b>Health and well-being</b>		
34. My physical health and well-being		
35. My mental health and well-being		
<b>Social capital</b>		
36. My range of friendships		
37. My attendance at social events		
38. My trust in other people		
39. Feeling that I am not alone		
40. My awareness of other people's feelings		







Marvin Formosa has done policy makers and volunteer organisations a great service by providing them with data and insightful commentary on voluntary service in later life. Dr. Formosa's pioneering work is a key source for prospective researchers as well as a catalyst for debate through its powerful argument that later life constitutes a moment of personal and social possibility.

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This study provides refreshing new perspectives about older volunteers in Malta. It challenges accepted views and re-affirms others. It will certainly prove an excellent basis for policy development on older volunteerism. Dr. Marvin Formosa's publication will soon become the handbook for organisations wishing to promote and consolidate the commitment of older volunteers.

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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT  
FOR RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY  
AND ACTIVE AGEING  
PALAZZO FERRERIA, REPUBLIC STREET, VALLETTA, MALTA

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