

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WEDS 09/01/08

VOLUNTEERING LEVELS FLAT SINCE 2003

- ***Older volunteers decline by a third (since 2001), despite campaigns***
- ***Government strategy fails to deliver rising volunteer numbers thus far***

Volunteering levels have been fluctuating (18-20%) but remained broadly flat since 2003, with a notable slump amongst 54-64 year olds (down by a third, from 23% in 2001 to 16% in 2007), as the Government's strategy thus far fails to deliver rising volunteer numbers - according to a new briefing out today ([see attached summary slides](#)).

Leading not for profit sector think tank and research consultancy nfpSynergy's *British Volunteering 2001-2007* briefing draws upon a representative sample of 3000 16+ year olds throughout Britain, tracking who volunteered, how and how often, throughout 2001-2007.

Almost one in five (19%) people volunteered their time in 2007 - most commonly (10%) by specifically supporting a charity/voluntary organisation, trailed (6%) by playing a community role such as a school governor. Moreover, there has in fact been a slight broad trend, since 2003, away from volunteering for charity/voluntary organisations, towards taking on community roles.

Interestingly, in 2007, some of the old stereotypes about who volunteers still apply:

- Women (21%, vs 16% men),
- Higher social grades (22% AB; vs 15% DE),
- Older age groups (20%, 45-54 years; vs 16% 16-24 years),
- Donors (21%; vs 11% non-donors – it thus, in fact, being a myth that people generally give time *instead* of money)
- Worshipers (29%; vs 15% non-worshippers – regular worshippers thus being twice as likely to volunteer as those who are not)

... are still more likely to volunteer.

And the Government's spend on volunteering bears little relation to demographic shifts. Although current demographic differences are less pronounced than in 2001, volunteering amongst 25-34 year olds, who have hardly been targeted, rose from 11% in 2001 to 18% in 2007; whilst amongst 54-64 year olds, who have been targeted, levels have slumped by a third, from 23% in 2001 to 16% in 2007.

nfpSynergy's Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, commented:

"Since 2003, volunteering levels in Britain have been fluctuating but broadly flat. Moreover, in some age demographs - notably older ones, and despite targeted campaigns – levels have notably slumped; whilst they have risen amongst other far less targeted groups, like 25-34 year olds. The Government's strategy bears little relation to trends; and has failed to deliver rising volunteer numbers thus far."

nfpSynergy's recent report, [The 21st Century Volunteer \(2005\)](#) - which offers an analysis of trends plus suggestions for boosting British volunteering - can be downloaded for free at www.nfpsynergy.net

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS: To interview nfpSynergy's Joe Saxton about the significance of these latest findings and to discuss strategies for boosting British volunteering, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- **nfpSynergy**

nfpSynergy (www.nfpsynergy.net) is the UK's *only* think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - nfpSynergy has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.

- **Joe Saxton, Driver of Ideas, nfpSynergy**

Joe Saxton co-founded *nfpSynergy* in 2002 after fifteen years experience in the voluntary sector, including as a director of the RNID (Britain's largest charity for deaf and hard of hearing people) and as a trustee of the RSPCA.

Joe is Chair of the Trustees of the Institute of Fundraising (www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk) - the professional body for fundraising and the largest individual representative body in the voluntary sector, with 4000 individual members and 200 organisational members. He was recently named one of the hundred most influential people in UK social policy by *The Guardian* and has been voted the most influential person in UK fundraising by *Professional Fundraising* for the last three years. Joe was named one of the *Ten People of Tomorrow* by public affairs agency, AS Biss, in 2006. He has recently (October 2007) been named by the *Evening Standard* as one of London's Top 50 Most Influential people in Social Affairs.

A well-known and respected voice within the charity world and frequent face at sector conferences, Joe has contributed - via original research, opinion pieces and interviews - to a wide range of specialist and mainstream media, both print and broadcast, from *Third Sector* and *The Guardian* to *BBC Breakfast* and *BBC Radio 4*.