



The UK Voluntary Sector Workforce Almanac

Published by NCVO in 2007

Sponsored by SocietyGuardian

Purchase a copy of the complete almanac from the [NCVO website](#).

Executive Summary

The continued overall growth of the UK voluntary sector workforce is still very much in evidence. As the number of paid employees in the voluntary sector has increased, so has interest in the role of the voluntary sector as an employer and the social and economic significance of this role.

This summary outlines the characteristics of the voluntary sector workforce and identifies how it has changed over the ten-year period between 1996 and 2005.

The voluntary sector's workforce has greatly increased

The UK voluntary sector workforce has grown from 483,000 employees in 1996 to 611,000 employees in 2005. This is an increase of 128,000 employees (26%) in ten years.

There appears to be no sign of this expansion slowing down, particularly in light of the sector's expanding role in public service delivery. This growth provides further opportunities for people to work within the voluntary sector and affirms the sector as a key part of the UK labour market.

Part-time work is a significant part of voluntary sector employment

Nearly four out of ten workers in the UK voluntary sector (39%) are working part-time, equating to 236,000 employees. This proportion is much higher than in the public sector (29%) and the private sector (23%). The large number of part-time workers is a significant part of the voluntary sector workforce. This has implications for the management of human resources both in terms of organisational and individual development.

Voluntary sector employees work mainly in professional occupations

More than four out of ten voluntary sector workers (43%) are employed in 'associate professional and technical' and 'managerial and senior official' occupations. This professionalisation of the voluntary sector increases the attractiveness of the sector as a career choice.

Huge expansion in voluntary sector workers employed in social work activities

The period 1996-2005 saw a huge increase in the number of voluntary sector workers employed in 'social work activities without accommodation' – from 149,000 employees in 1996 to 277,000 in 2005 – an increase of 86%. The transfer of social care activities from the public sector may in part explain this substantial increase.

Voluntary sector employees are concentrated in small workplaces

One-third of voluntary sector workers (32%) are employed in workplaces with less than ten employees [1]. This is vastly different to both the private sector (25%) and the public sector (8%). Due to this it makes the task of providing support such as training and development much more difficult for voluntary sector employers.

Most of the voluntary sector workforce is female

More than two out of three of the voluntary sector workforce (69%) is female. This compares with the public sector (64%) but contrasts with the private sector (40%). The high proportion of women in the voluntary sector has implications for employment policies and practices.

Voluntary sector employees are highly qualified

Two out of three voluntary sector employees (67%) have a qualification at 'A' level or beyond. Within this group, one-third of voluntary sector employees (33%) have a degree level qualification. Between 1996 and 2005 the number of voluntary sector employees with a degree increased from 132,000 to 188,000, an increase of 43%. This again gives weight to the suggestion that there has been a professionalisation of the voluntary sector.

Employees are now highly qualified and see a career path within the voluntary sector.

Looking ahead: the voluntary sector's workforce in the second half of the decade

The increasing emphasis on the delivery of public services, the changing characteristics and working patterns of the sector's employees and the increased professionalisation of the sector bring both challenges and opportunities.

These findings show that between 1996 and 2005 the voluntary sector has become an increasingly important deliverer of services, particularly social care, to the public.

The voluntary sector's employees are now different in character from 1996. They are now more likely to be employed in social work activities in a professional capacity and to be highly skilled.

The voluntary sector also has a high proportion of employees who are female, working part-time hours and in small workplaces. All these factors make it imperative for employers to concentrate on the management of human resources both in terms of organisational and individual development.

With planning and foresight, the growth already experienced will lead to a professional and thriving sector.

1 The size of the workplace refers to the total number of employees at the respondent's workplace.