

# Volunteering, Health & Wellbeing

What does the evidence tell us?



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# Scope...

- ✓ Volunteering, health & wellbeing
- ✓ Scottish volunteering context
- ✓ Implications for Scotland's H&W



# Volunteer Scotland's report: “Volunteering, health & wellbeing”



## **Current perceptions**

- Volunteering is a 'good thing'
- Good for beneficiaries and volunteers
- Positive health and wellbeing impacts
- More = better

## **Is this true?**

- Are there benefits? Who benefits? Why do they benefit?
- Are there losers as well as winners?

# Health & Wellbeing

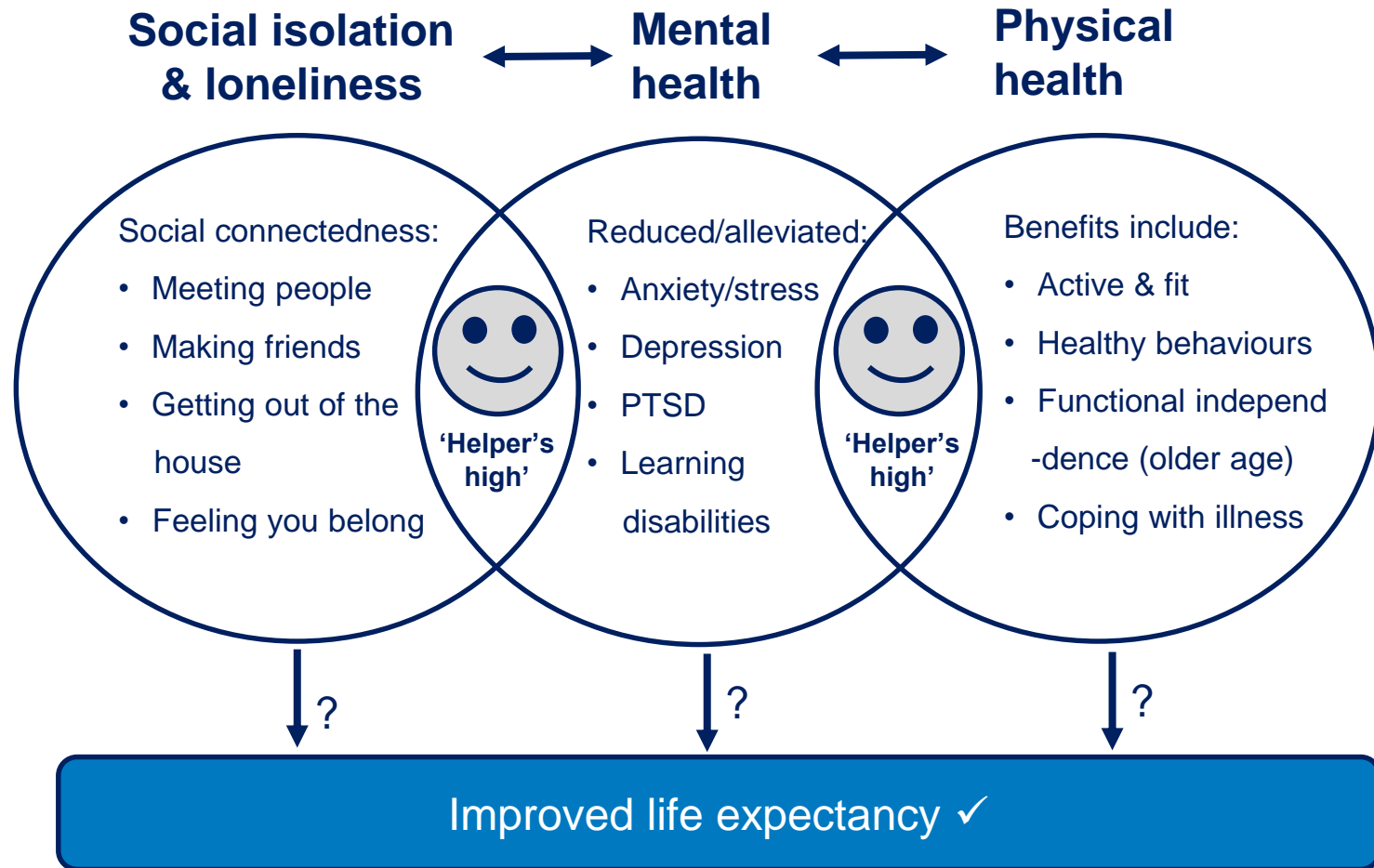
VOLUNTEERING



- Improved mental & physical health
- Reduced social isolation & loneliness

Improved community wellbeing?

# Health & wellbeing benefits



# Does age matter?

Young



Old



- Significant emphasis on careers & skills
- Not enough on subjective wellbeing
- Particularly important for building social skills, social capital & confidence
- And...combatting mental ill-health and loneliness



- 35 – 44 age group has highest vol. rate = 33%
- But evidence of role strain
- Lack of evidence on +ve health and wellbeing impacts



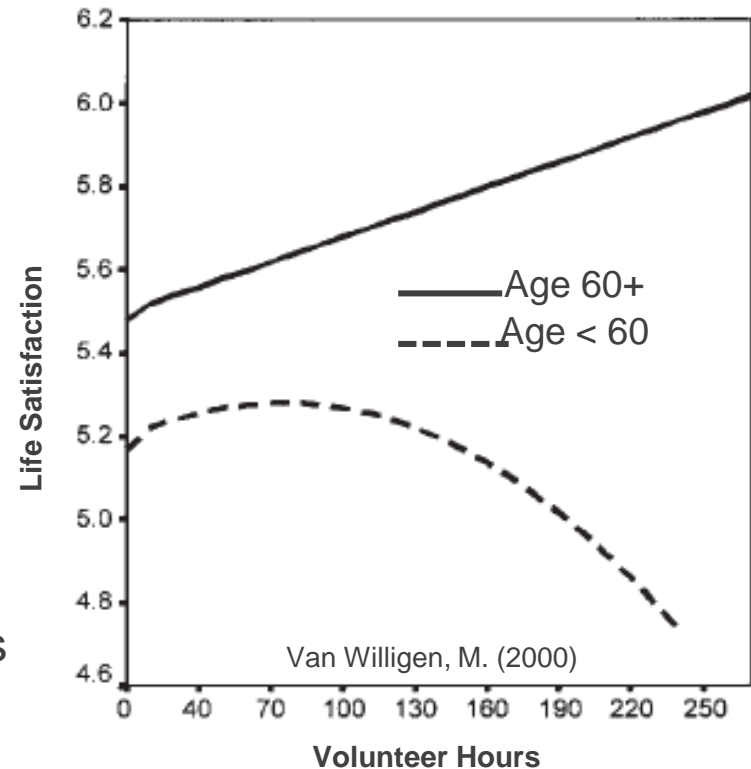
- Those retired & subject to 'role identity absences'
- Reducing social isolation & loneliness
- Physical health benefits
- The 'inoculation effect'

# 'Facilitators' affecting H&W

- **Dose-response effect** – frequency and intensity of volunteering ✓
- **Motivations** – altruism vs. self-interest ✓
- **Recognition** – thanks, appreciation and recognition ✓
- **Volunteer role** – type of role, responsibilities, social engagement ?

# Possible adverse impacts

- Role strain and stress (multiple roles)
- Burnout (no. of hours volunteering)
- Physical health (esp. for older volunteers)
- Challenging /emotionally demanding roles



Possibility that H&W would improve if they stopped volunteering!

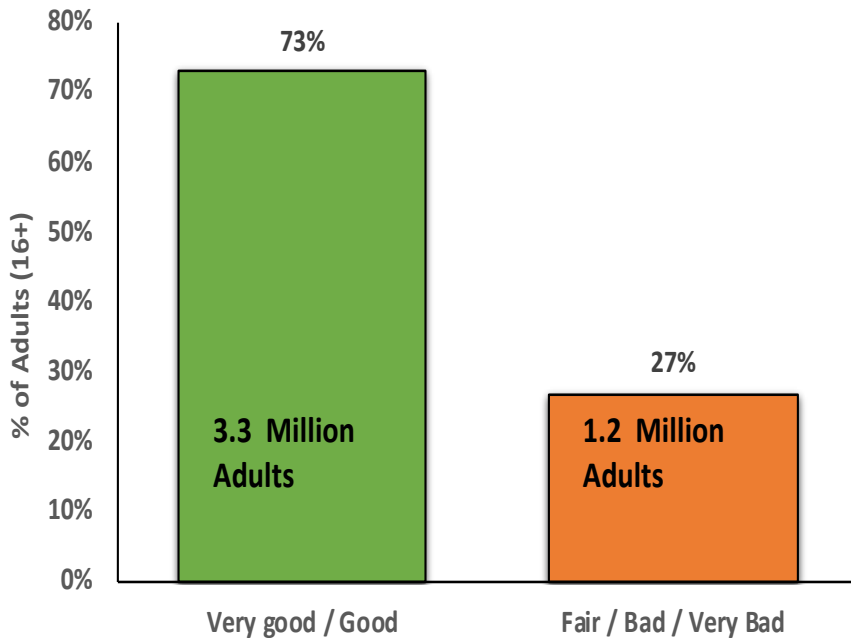


# Scottish Volunteering Context

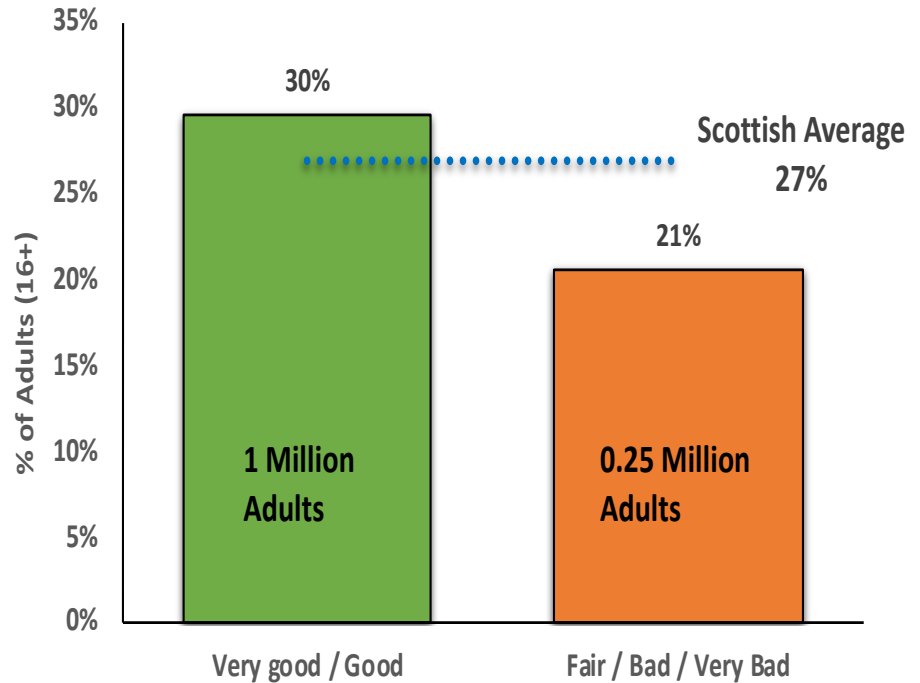
## Health & Wellbeing

# General Health – Scottish population

General Health – Scottish Population

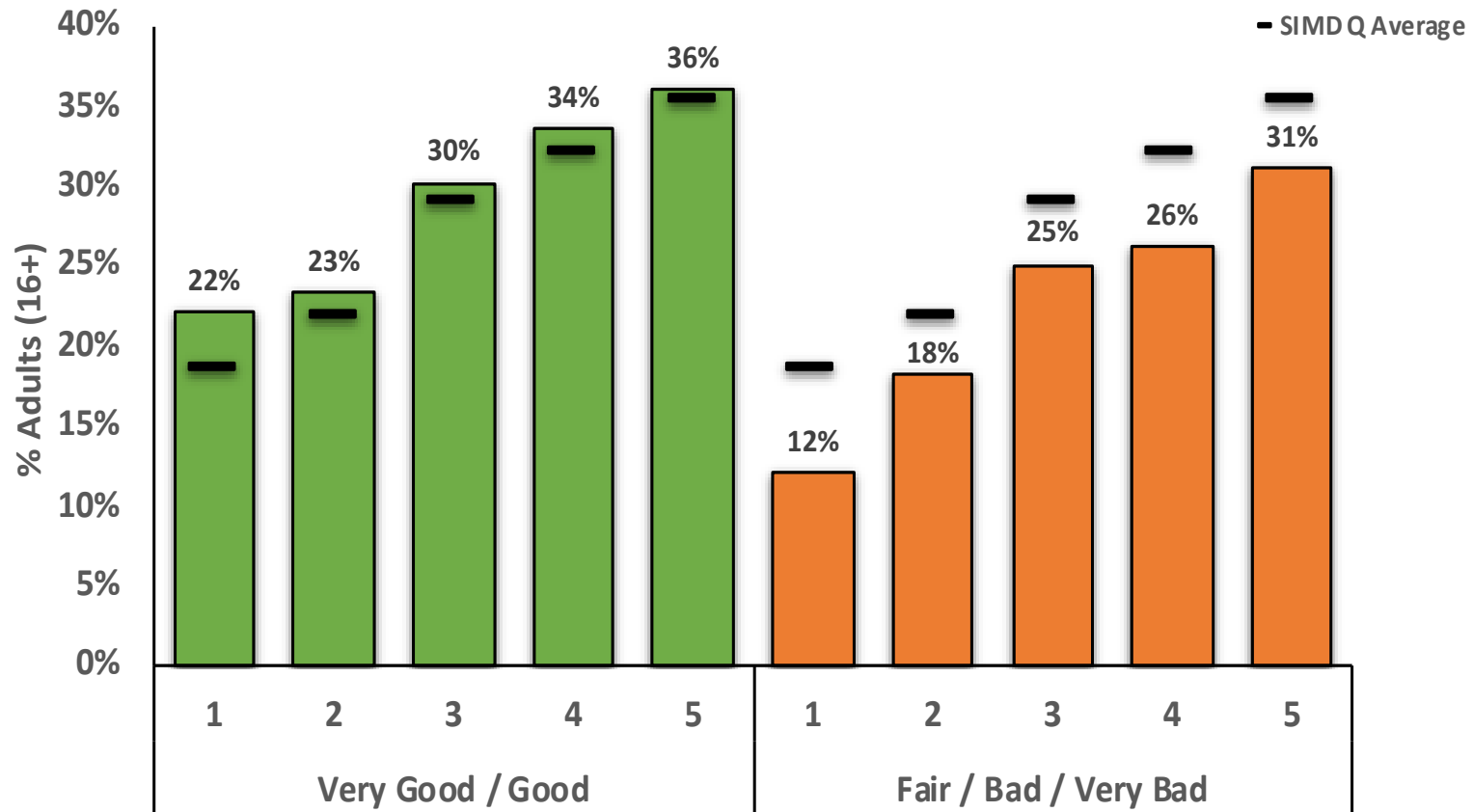


Volunteer participation and General Health



# General Health – SIMD Q

## Volunteer participation and General Health - SIMD Q

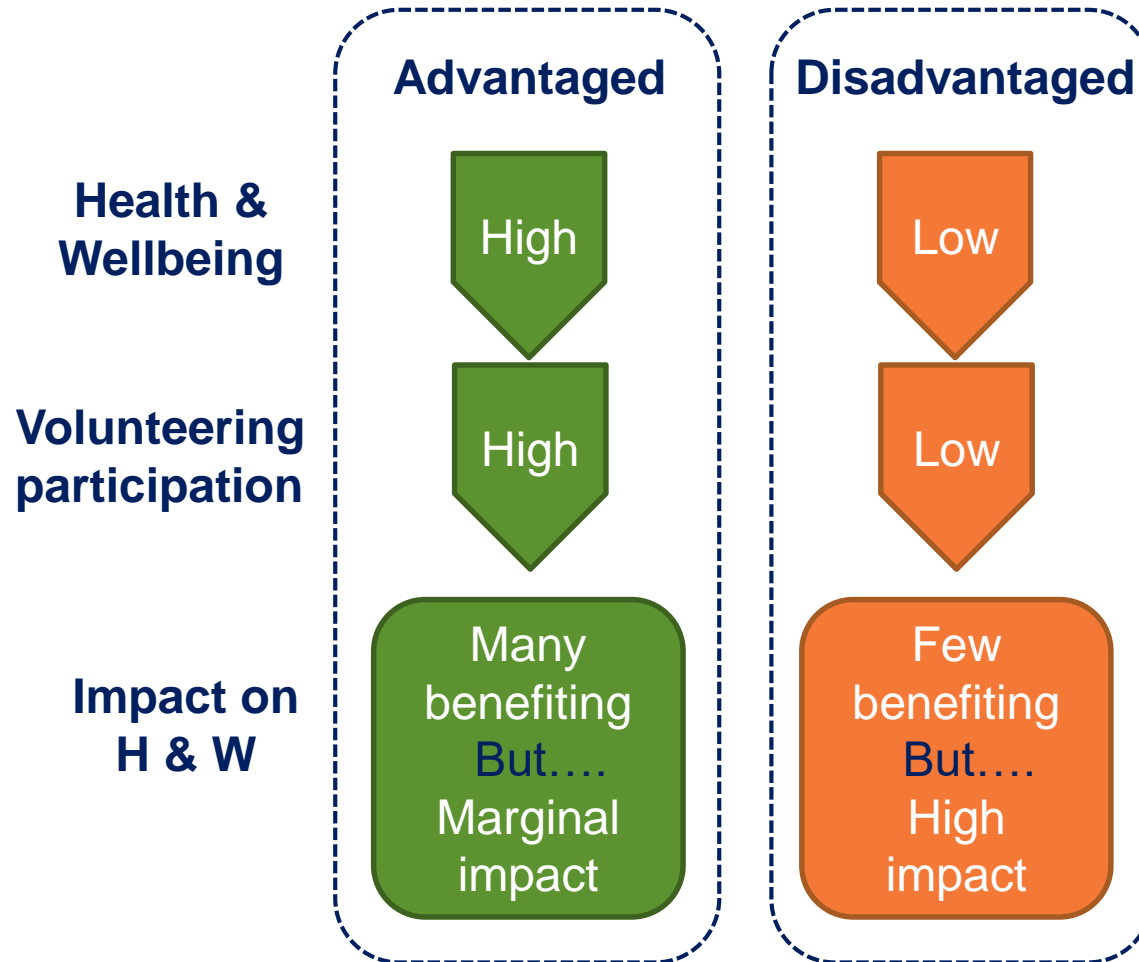


# Deprivation & mental health

| Impact of deprivation on indicators of mental ill-health |                                    |                                     |              |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Indicators   | SIMD Quintile 1<br>(most deprived) | SIMD Quintile 5<br>(least deprived) | % difference |
|  | % of adults aged 16+               |                                     |              |
| GHQ-12: scoring 4 or more                                | 24%                                | 14%                                 | 10%          |
| Depression – reporting 2 or more symptoms                | 20%                                | 5%                                  | 15%          |
| Anxiety – reporting 2 or more symptoms                   | 17%                                | 7%                                  | 10%          |
| Self-harm  | 10%                                | 7%                                  | 3%           |
| Attempted suicide  | 12%                                | 4%                                  | 8%           |

Source: [Scottish Health Survey - 2017 edition](#) – Volume 1, Main Report

# The 'Catch-22'



# Further information

## Reports:

- [Volunteering Trends in Scotland: Scottish Household Survey 2007 – 2017:](#)  
Volunteer Scotland
- [Volunteering, Health & Wellbeing - Summary Report:](#) Volunteer Scotland
- [Volunteering, Health & Wellbeing - Full Report:](#) Volunteer Scotland
- [Young People Volunteering in Scotland, 2016:](#) Volunteer Scotland
- “Differential benefits of volunteering across the life course”: Van Willigen, M. (2000)

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