

Volunteering among young adults in Ireland

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VENUE

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Conference

AUTHOR

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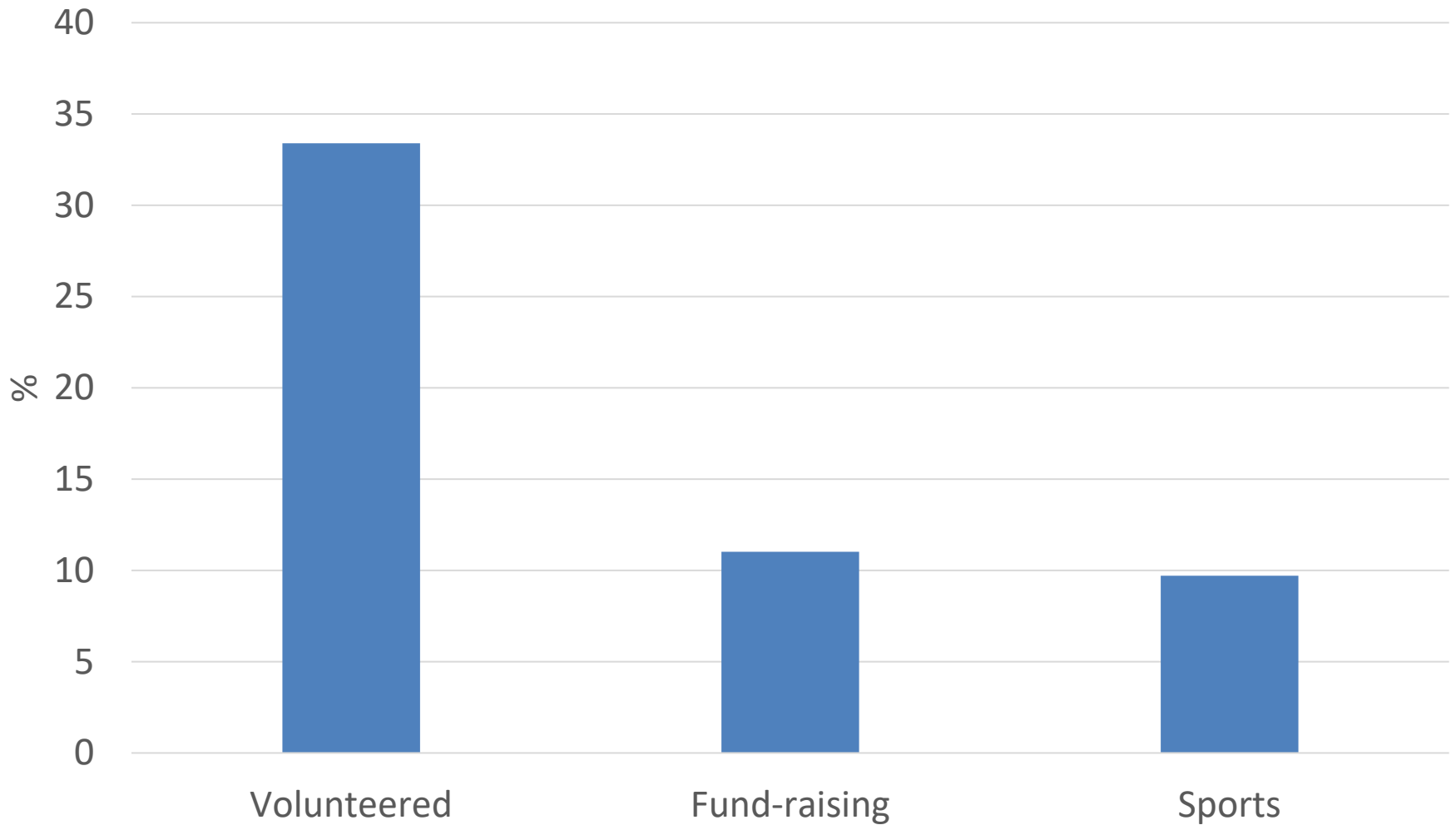
Background to the study

- Importance of young people feeling connected, respected and contributing to their world (BOBF, 2019)
- International research shows the benefits of volunteering for young people as well as for communities as a whole
- Lack of systematic research on volunteering among Irish youth
- Part of a broader study on civic and political engagement with DRCD and DCEDIY

Focus of the study

- Broad definition of volunteering – coaching sports teams, fundraising, working with charities and environmental groups
- Using Cohort '98 data, look at non-sports and sports volunteering separately at 20 years of age
- Research questions:
 - Which factors are associated with (sports and non-sports) volunteering at 20 years of age?
 - What is the relationship between volunteering and outcomes among young adults?

Volunteering at age 20 (in past 6 months)



Predictors of volunteering

- Individual characteristics
 - Gender
 - Disability/SEN; perceived health
- Family background
 - Maternal education, income, housing tenure
 - Family structure
 - Migrant origin
 - Mother involved in voluntary groups
 - Religious attendance
- Peers: size of group and whether parents had met them

Predictors (2)

- Neighbourhood characteristics
 - SAPS area-level disadvantage and age profile
 - Neighbourhood disorder
 - Availability of facilities for children and young people
 - Public transport
- School experiences
 - Attitudes to school at 13
 - Transition Year participation
 - Leaving Certificate performance
 - Post-school pathway
- Extra-curricular activities at 9, 13 and 17 years: sports, cultural activities and other clubs

Individual and family background

- Gender
 - Young men more involved in sports volunteering (as in organised sports more generally)
 - Young women slightly more involved in other types of volunteering (e.g. charities, environmental groups)
- Having a disability/SEN is linked to lower levels of sports volunteering
- Family background
 - Those from more advantaged families (with higher levels of parental education) are more likely to volunteer
 - Lower among migrant-origin youth
 - Religious attendance is related to higher levels
 - Higher with integration of family and peer networks

Neighbourhood characteristics

- Young people from rural areas are more involved in sports volunteering but do not differ in engagement in other forms
- Having local facilities and access to public transport helps involvement in sports volunteering but only matters for other kinds of volunteering for those in urban areas
- Volunteering levels are higher in more residentially stable areas

Educational experiences

- Those who took Transition Year are more involved in volunteering
- Liking school and getting on well there also make a difference to involvement
- But Leaving Certificate performance matters more in urban areas
- Those who go on to higher education are more involved in volunteering

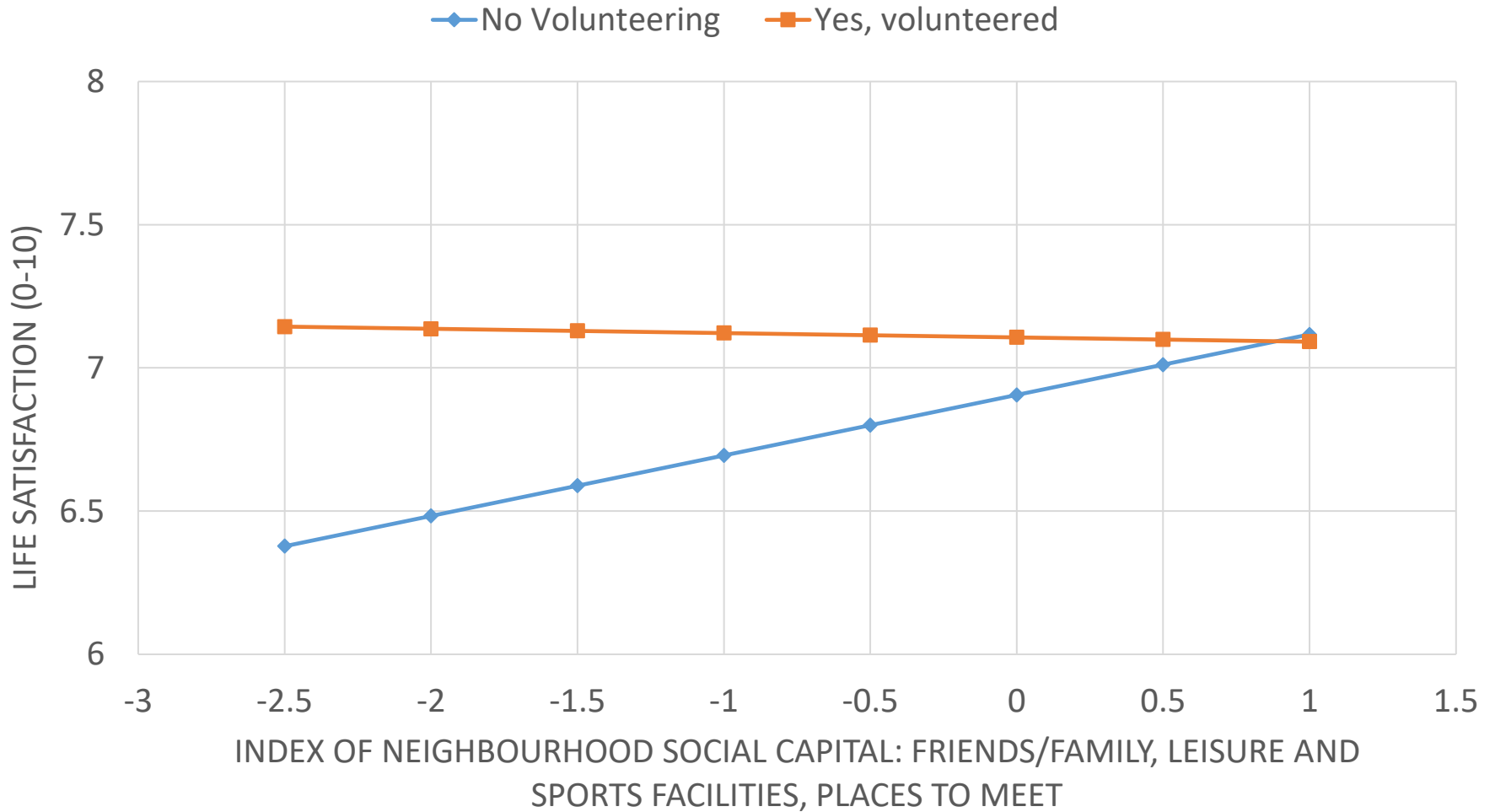
After-school activities

- After-school activities are an important pathway into later volunteering
- Partially explain family background differences
- Sports involvement → volunteer with sporting organisations
- Cultural activities (music or drama) or involvement in clubs (youth clubs/ Scouts/ Guides) → non-sports volunteering at 20

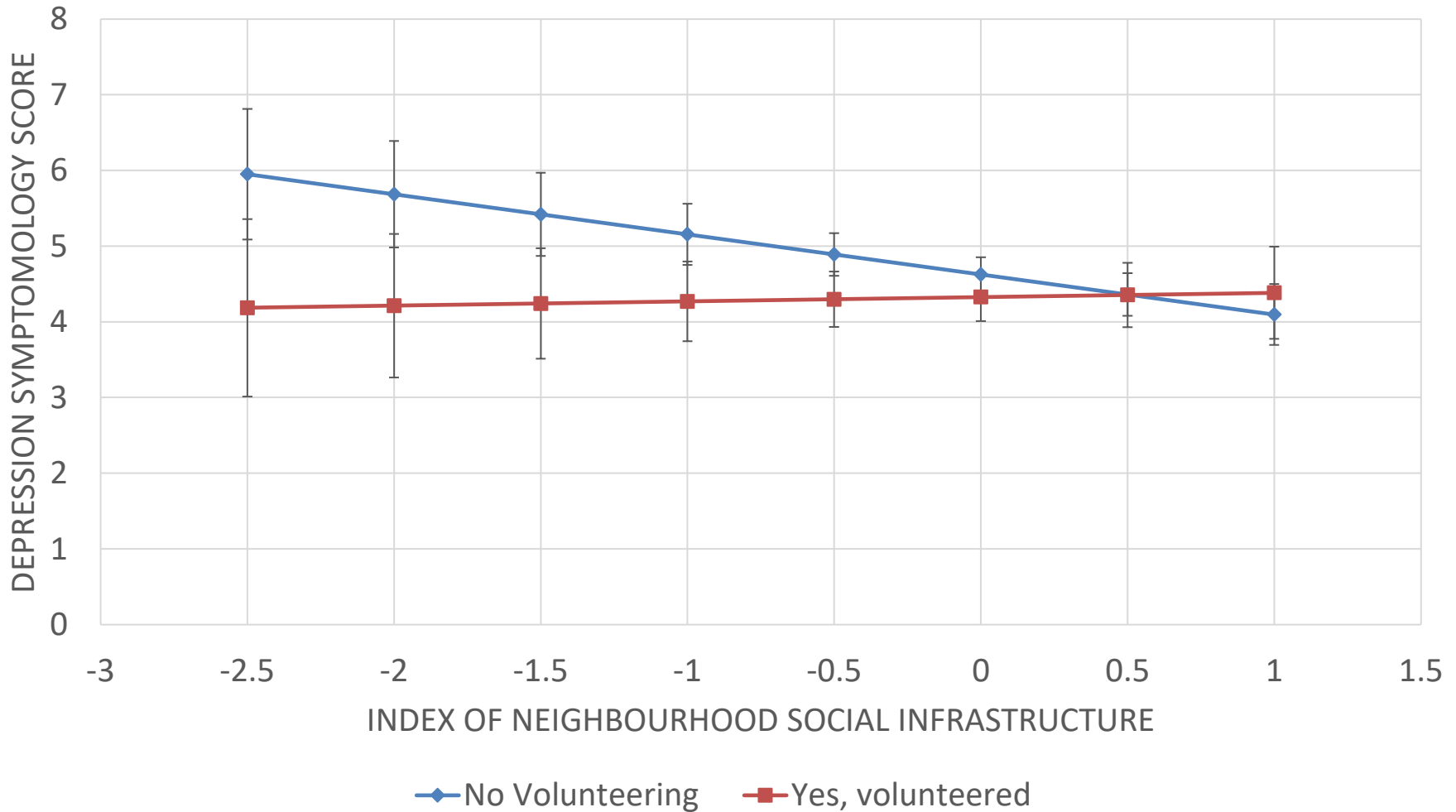
Benefits of volunteering

- Volunteers: more satisfied with lives and feel more confident of themselves as adults, controlling for these outcomes at 17 years of age and a range of background factors
- No significant association with depression or social trust
- But volunteering helps protect wellbeing of those living in areas with a weaker social infrastructure (fewer facilities/family/friends): life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, adult identity and social trust

Buffering effect of volunteering for life satisfaction



Buffering effect of volunteering for depression



Conclusions

- Role of early involvement in organised activities, especially sport and culture
- But these activities largely require payment, highlighting the importance of subsidised activities for more disadvantaged groups
- Importance of Transition Year in fostering volunteering – potential lessons for the rest of senior cycle
- Broader efforts to promote school engagement and achievement will have a positive spillover effect on volunteering
- Importance of buffering effect of volunteering in more disadvantaged areas points to the value of greater involvement of young adults as volunteers in community development initiatives