A row of blue and purple t-shirts hanging on a clothesline outdoors. A person's arm is visible on the right, holding a hanger with a purple shirt. The background shows a brick wall and some greenery.

Examining the motivations and emotions
linked to the formation of a Voluntary
sewing group formed in response to
Covid-19

*'Tamworth Volunteers – Sewing for NHS
and Healthcare Workers'* (April – June
2020)

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Research Undertaken

- Mixed methods research took place with 99 participants during the period of UK Covid-19 community lockdown and social distancing in April/May 2020
- The study considers the responses of individual research participants within a Tamworth community group forming as a direct result of Covid-19
- It examines the emotions and motivations of community voluntary involvement during the lockdown period of Covid-19 (April – June 2020)

Key findings of the study

- As well as the purposeful craft output, this construction of community space may have generated the start of something that could have long term value to the area
- Some 61% of research participants had never volunteered their time or resources before and indicated motivation to do more for their community during and post Covid-19
- The research shows that there is a wealth of resources and ingenuity that may be useful as we move into the post Covid-19 era in UK and world history
- Emotions are important when taking the decision to join a voluntary community group, linked to purpose, need and supporting their own geographical community



- Relatively little attention has been paid to informal community groups and activities (Toepler, 2003; McCabe and Phillimore, 2018)
- During the immediacy of lockdown under Covid-19 requirements, these ‘under the radar’ groups came to the fore when responding to risk and need and are important when considered to be part of ‘civil society.’
- These small, community led groups have formed seemingly overnight to address immediate need in a swift, responsive way that many statutory or more formal organisations are often unable to do (Streets, 2020)

- This research is interesting as it examines the motivations and emotions behind collective action during the Covid-19 health crisis we are currently experiencing
- It considers the volunteering activities of individuals in and around a small market town during a period of national crisis.
- An online questionnaire asked participants about how they heard about the group, what their emotions and feelings were about joining and the motivations of why they chose to join.
- It seems reasonable to surmise that Covid-19 will alter all communities once this period of history has passed and that the sense of community and mutual purpose might be of particular interest given the social and financial impact of Covid-19 on all communities across the globe.

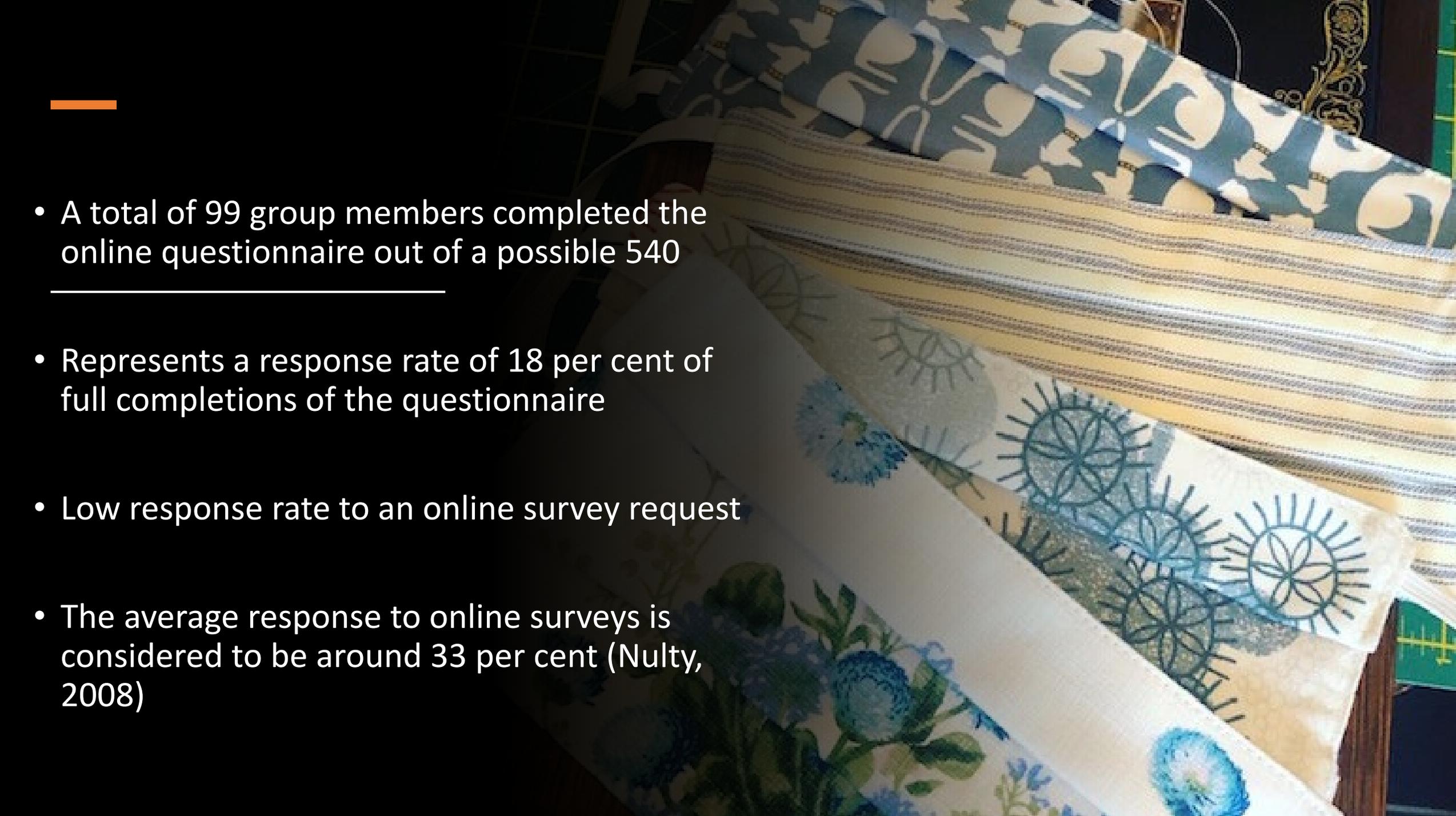
Formation of the voluntary group

- This *Tamworth Volunteers – Sewing for NHS and Healthcare Workers* group formed at a time where PPE equipment supply was insufficient to meet the needs of those on the frontline of NHS working as well as the myriad of carers and small community organisations in the area who need protective and comfort items to work safely with clients, residents and patients
- This Tamworth group were an echo of what was termed ‘Scrub Hubs’ forming across the UK to help a nationwide shortage of protective and comfort items for health professionals (Murray, 2020). The ‘For the Love of Scrubs’ Facebook group had 40,000 members during the lockdown period of the Covid-19 crisis
- This Tamworth group had 540 group members at the time of this study

Data Collection

- An online survey was designed using the JISC Online Survey
- Data was collected by way of survey completion by those wishing to participate in the research who had signed up as members of the Facebook page for the group.
- The survey asked both quantitative and qualitative questions of participants.
- The online survey took place in May 2020, almost exactly two months after the group first formed on the social media platform Facebook. The main body of the survey consisted of 10 closed and 8 open questions.



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- A total of 99 group members completed the online questionnaire out of a possible 540

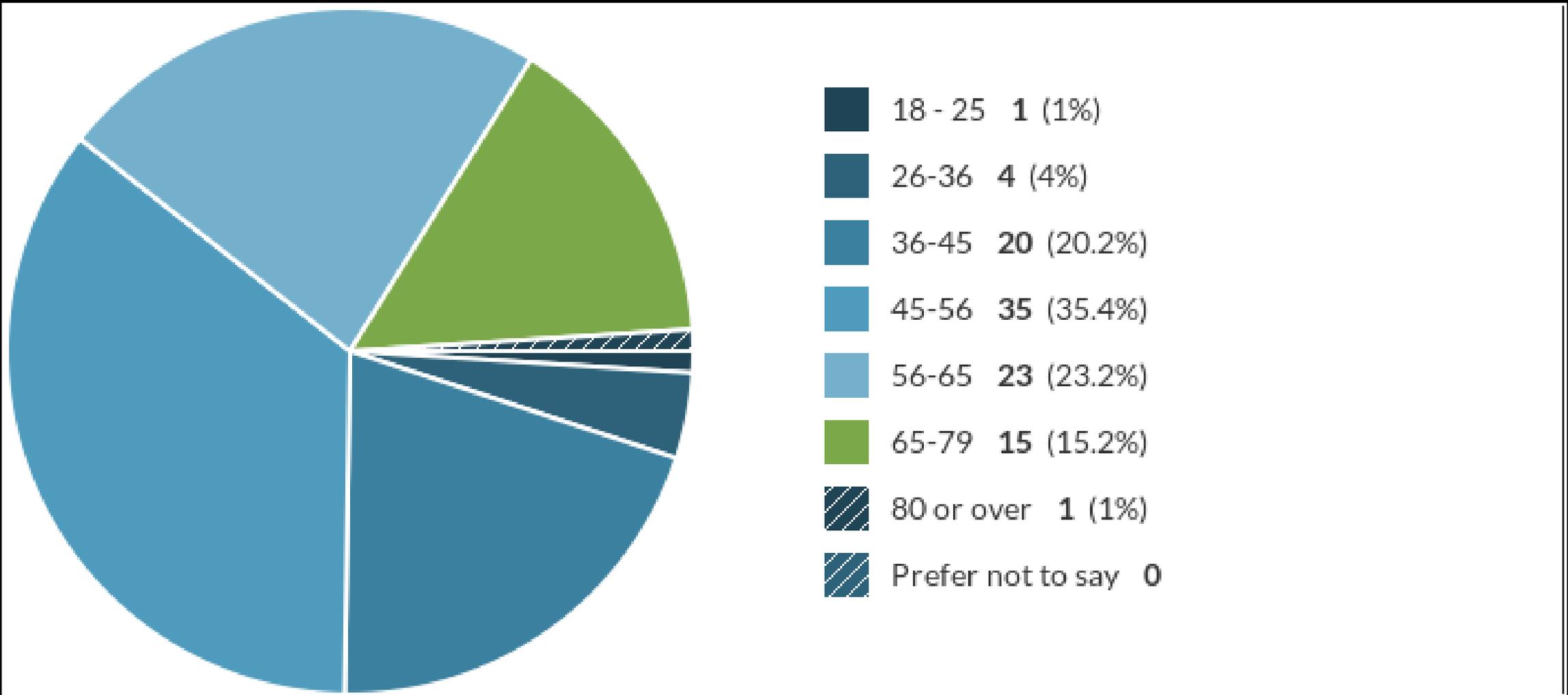
 - Represents a response rate of 18 per cent of full completions of the questionnaire
 - Low response rate to an online survey request
 - The average response to online surveys is considered to be around 33 per cent (Nulty, 2008)

Importance of geographical location to volunteering

- Of the 99 interview participants, some 74% lived in Tamworth itself
- 12 % lived in outlying villages
- Only 14% of research respondents lived outside of the immediate Tamworth area.
- This was important when considering the question regarding the importance of whether it mattered that this was a Tamworth group in terms of joining.

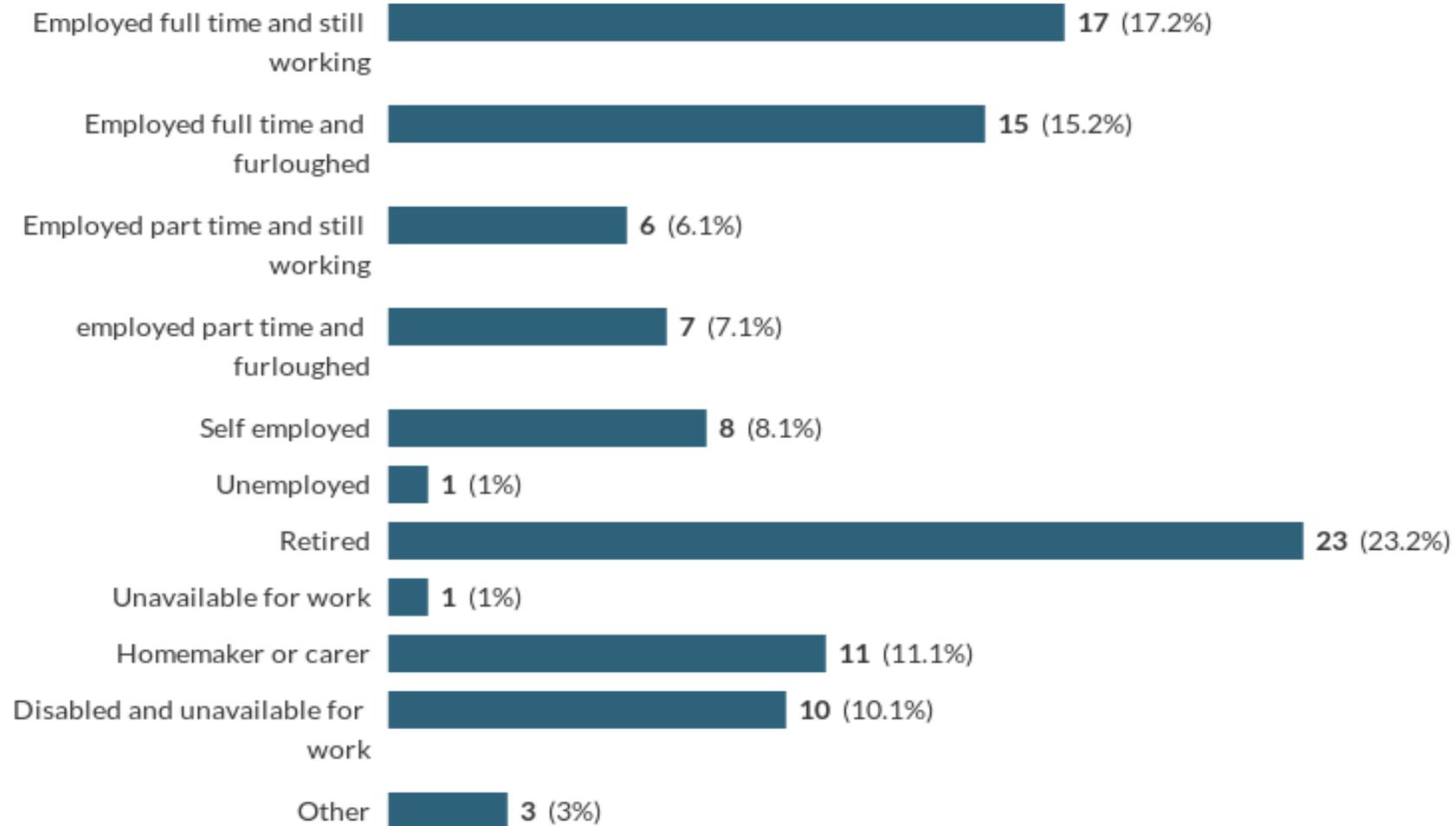


- 80% of respondents felt that the fact that this was a Tamworth group had been important to their reasons for joining
- Only 20% of respondents indicated that the location of the group made no difference to their decision to join



(Diagram 1) showing age bracket of volunteers

Your current situation regarding employment and occupation of time



Reasons for Volunteering time & resources: 6 clear themes

- Group members had a connection with NHS and healthcare staff
- Helping their own community of Tamworth
- Doing something practical to support NHS and healthcare workers at a critical time
- Feeling proud, needed and/or valued
- To help their own mental health or wellbeing in doing something practical
- Enjoying the positive nature of group membership

Emotions & Feelings connected with the collective of Volunteering

- The research questionnaire aimed to capture some of the emotions and feelings of volunteers during the pandemic connected to volunteering for this group, a time in history when we will look back upon and consider for some generations.
- Respondents offered qualitative comments to this question linked again to feeling part of a community effort to help, for some there was anger at the political aspects of Covid-19, some felt a sense of pride and a sense of community cohesion.

A sense of Community: Feelings of APPRECIATION

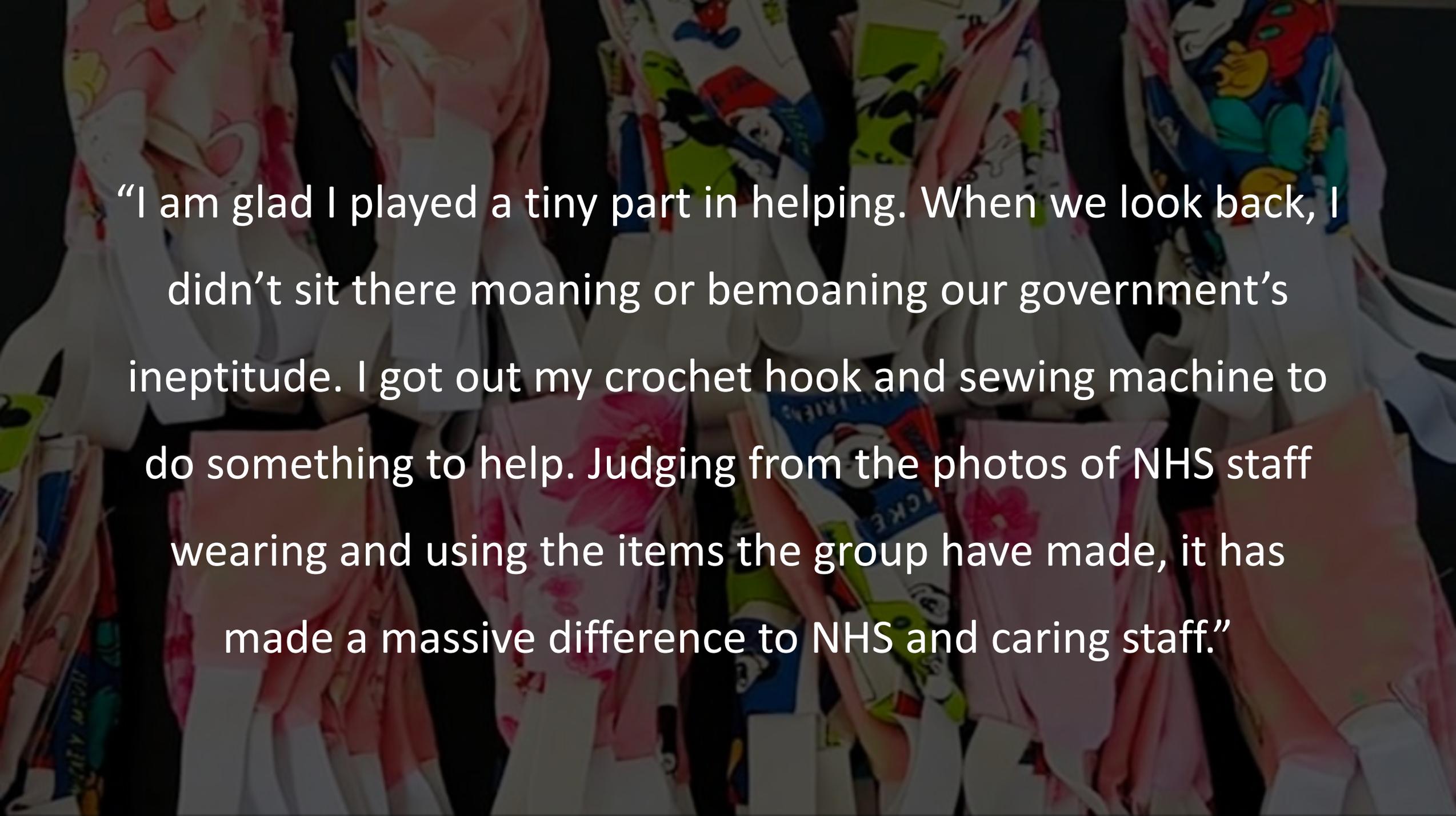
“We’re in an extraordinary phase of history and I felt the need to contribute. I’m disabled and work from home, but I am a crafts person and have the skills to contribute a little by sewing and crocheting items. If we all offer a little bit to community, wouldn’t the world be a nicer and safer place? I wanted to feel that I’d done something to support others during this awful time.”

ANGER- at lack of PPE equipment and for political reasons

“I see NHS workers on the tv working long, uncomfortable and dangerous hours. I am only asked to sit at home. It is the least I can do. It has been lovely to see the rapid join up of the group, all Tamworth folk coming together making a difference. Lovely.”

“I think it disappointing to think the government were so ill prepared for what unfolded compared to other countries. I feel happy to have been involved, that I could support by producing garments... a drop in the ocean but working together is achieving at least something towards the cause!”

“Love the group and thankful to be a small part but angry we’ve had to do it.”



“I am glad I played a tiny part in helping. When we look back, I didn’t sit there moaning or bemoaning our government’s ineptitude. I got out my crochet hook and sewing machine to do something to help. Judging from the photos of NHS staff wearing and using the items the group have made, it has made a massive difference to NHS and caring staff.”

PRIDE and feeling a patriotic connection to the purpose of the group

“I feel a little bit proud to be doing something for my country (albeit minuscule) compared with the doctors and nurses. You feel so helpless at home and this enables me to be a part of something lovely and useful. “

“I am proud to be part of this group, and so pleased I found it. I think the ladies who set it up have been inspirational. I like to think that groups like ours are playing an important part in helping the NHS, care workers, key workers etc, by providing scrubs, masks, headbands, laundry bags etc.”



Reminiscent of being at War

“It feels reminiscent of the war era where everyone joined regardless of class/money/status to become one and fight for a common goal. It has restored my faith in humankind and made me proud to be British.”

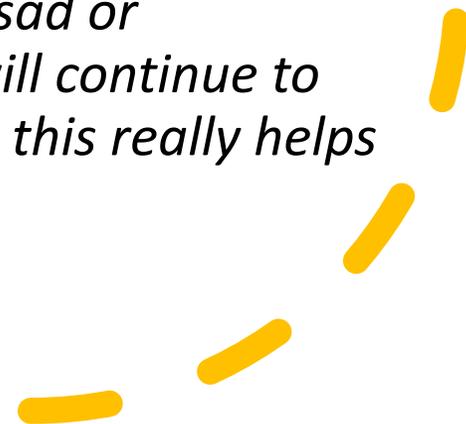
“These are such devastating times for many people and such suffering is taking place. It helps tremendously to know that we are, as a group and as individuals, helping to ease that suffering for so many people. Whilst I couldn’t be a part of helping the nation through CV-19 as a nurse, I have been able to help those nurses to work a little more safely and a little more comfortably through it. (A bit like the land girls taking on the farming during the war 😊)”

Relief of personal
Anxiety: helping the
mental wellbeing &
health of individual
group members

“The group posts make me smile and that helps my mental wellbeing too, being part of something.”

“I had depression and volunteering helped me to cope. And glad that volunteering in this group help the community.”

“I am proud to be part of a wonderful group and cannot believe how Tamworth residents came together offering numerous skills or general support. I think if I was not part of this group I would be lonely and would find it difficult to keep occupied. Whilst me mental health is fine I know from experience it doesn't take much to become sad or depressed. When the group winds down I will continue to help others however I can. On a selfish note this really helps me.”



Growing sense of community spirit

“If people just made a small effort to reach out in their local communities, all of our lives would feel enriched. So few people volunteer or make an effort to even help immediate neighbours. I’m hoping that after Covid-19 there may be far more people willing to be active volunteers rather than passive and apathetic bystanders. I hope there are some positives that come out of the thousands of deaths, out of our hopeless and devious government. They have recently shown that it’s one rule for us and one for them... that makes me think that volunteering for your own community is even more important. If we don’t look after ourselves, I have no confidence that the state will do so.”

RESEARCH SUMMARY

- Emotional connection to purpose is vital when choosing to volunteer time or resources to a community cause
- A geographical connection to volunteering is important
- It seems reasonable to surmise that Covid-19 will alter all communities once this period of history has passed
- The sense of community and mutual purpose might be of particular interest given the social and financial impact of the pandemic on all communities across the globe

