



The Digital Volunteers of Denmark

— about the work done by administrators
and moderators in 9000 Facebook groups

By

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Introduction

Where do you go if you want to know what's happening in your local community, get good parenting advice, learn more about your hobby, express sympathy for political causes, or gain knowledge and support when you have a serious illness? Perhaps to a Facebook group?

If the answer is yes, you're not alone: 70 percent of the population over 18 years old are members of a Facebook group, and four out of five members are active on a weekly basis or more.

The new digital volunteering

In this report, we will take a closer look at the volunteer work done by administrators and moderators in Facebook groups. The report is based on a mapping of 9,000 Facebook groups with 50 million memberships, two surveys with approximately 400 digital volunteers and a representative sample of 2,000 Danes, 15 interviews with current and former digital volunteers, several years of observations and participation in hundreds of Facebook groups, and a review of the most important research in digital and analog volunteering.

Denmark's digital civil society on Facebook

At the start of 2022, TrygFonden and Analyse & Tal published the first mapping of the thousands of Facebook groups, which we dubbed Denmark's digital community centers. In these digital civic centers, citizens discuss everything from childcare and dog breeding to health and local urban development. The mapping shed light on a remarkable extent of knowledge sharing, inspiration, advice, assistance, debate, protest, and information constantly exchanged under the skilled management of thousands of digital volunteers. Since 2022, Analyse & Tal

and TrygFonden have continued to explore the vast voluntary effort that underpins the existence of more than 9,000 digital community centers for Danes to meet in.

The digital volunteers spend several hours each week maintaining their community centers at all hours. They keep the worst internet trolls at bay, handle conflicts among members, drive the debate forward, weed out hate speech, misinformation, and personal attacks, share their knowledge, keep discussions on track, encourage members, and take care of inquiries from media, politicians, authorities, and researchers like ourselves.

The digital community centers are a beacon in the tech twilight

Despite the large adherence to the digital community center movement from the public and a tremendous voluntary engagement among administrators and moderators, the citizens' digital civil society has somewhat flown under the radar in the debate about social media, distress, volunteering, and democratic participation.

With this mapping, Analyse & Tal and TrygFonden hope to establish the digital community centers on Facebook as a recognized part of civil society and their administrators and moderators as contributors to the Danish voluntary sector.

It seems that Danes are extremely motivated for – and competent at – running and participating in good digital communities. In an increasingly digital world, it's important to recognize these new and good forms of citizenship.

This report is addressed to everyone interested in civil society, volunteering, democracy, citizenship, social media, and digitalization. We especially hope that the volunteers in Denmark's digital community centers will read this and feel acknowledged for their great work.

Happy reading

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About the study

Digital community centers, civil society and volunteering...

... on Facebook

This report explores the voluntary engagement of Danes in groups on Facebook. In the study, we will use three core concepts, which we introduce on the next page.

Much has been omitted

It is important to note that other digital platforms and infrastructures such as Reddit, Mastodon, hestenettet.dk, and bold.dk also host citizen-driven digital communities. Additionally, there are several digital help and advisory services available, for example through organizations like GirlTalk, Save the Children's SletDet, the Children's Helpline chat, the Red Cross' ready helpers, and SAGA's facilitated conversations among youth on Discord. These initiatives also involve digital volunteering.

Since this mapping specifically addresses the digital civil society on Facebook, it does not provide a comprehensive picture of the overall significance of digital platforms for citizenship, volunteering, and civil society in Denmark. There are more "digital volunteers" than those we study, and there is a digital civil society outside of Facebook. However, these are not the focus or the subjects we are dealing with in this report.

In our own representative population survey, however, we did ask whether the respondents engage in "other digital voluntary work" in order to encompass the total digital volunteering. VIVE broadly investigates "virtual

voluntary work" in their mapping of volunteering in Denmark. How our results differ from VIVE's can be found in Chapter 7.

What counts as volunteering and citizenship?

With this mapping, we aim to contribute to the conversation about what volunteering can look like in the digital age, and to warn that we risk underestimating the voluntary and civil society engagement of Danes if we only look for it in its more traditional forms. There are several definitions of what volunteering is and is not. In some of these, one can only be considered a volunteer if the effort one makes takes place through an organization or association. We believe that such a limitation risks underestimating the engagement of citizens. The discussion about what counts as voluntary work will be revisited in Chapter 8.

Disclaimer

In this study, we will use the concepts mentioned on the next page because we believe they accurately describe the activity and practice that we are investigating. None of the terms are "fixed" or established in the research, and as mentioned, there will be overlap with other practices and forums in the digital sphere.

The study's core concepts:



Digital community centers

Public and private Facebook groups with at least 100 members*, which are run on a voluntary basis. In some parts of the report, we will refer to the digital community centers as "the groups" because it is shorter.



The digital civil society

The entire landscape of digital community centers on Facebook, of which we have mapped 9,000.



Digital volunteers

Danes who voluntarily administer and moderate digital community centers with more than 100 members.

* In this study, we have set a limit at 100 members, with the purpose of highlighting small local groups or niche hobby groups without including private family groups. See [Appendix 2](#) for methodological considerations related to this delimitation.

Disclaimer

Facebook as a platform for the digital civil society

The authors of this report observe and acknowledge the challenges and problems arising from Denmark's digital civil society being built on a communication infrastructure whose business model is designed to retain user attention and maximize profits through advertising. This model is based on values and ethical guidelines tailored to an American cultural context, and the use of data and prioritization of content is largely opaque.

In this report, we are interested in how Danes use the digital infrastructure available to them and how to design a digital infrastructure that provides the best possible conditions for a digital civil society and citizen initiatives. We celebrate the industriousness and citizenship evident in the bustling activity within Facebook groups.

Therefore, we will limit ourselves to the following general remarks about the platform: Using Facebook as a platform is both a blessing and a curse for Denmark's digital civil society. The diverse landscape of groups, which we illuminate in this report, exists partly due to Facebook's practical and economic accessibility, and the platform is especially attractive because of its widespread use among Danes.

However, help is rarely if ever available for the digital volunteers who suddenly find their digital communities shut down, for example, due to copyright infringement because a member uploaded a video with a song playing in the background, or because the group's members use

too many English swear words. Facebook also does not offer customer service that includes contact with Danish-speaking employees.

Meta's content, webinars, guides, and materials are primarily aimed at advertisers and other commercial entities, while Meta's information pages translated into Danish are often faulty, contain English content examples, and are vague regarding which features apply to which groups now and in the future.

In our conversations with digital volunteers, we heard both great frustration and joy expressed about the platform as the fundamental infrastructure for the digital civil society. The frustrations are particularly visible when Facebook changes the platform's structure without notice, removes tools and administrative measures that the volunteers value, or sanctions Danish groups without explanation or opportunity for dialogue.

Through our own analyses of data sharing, hate speech, and misinformation on social media, we have critically contributed to the debate on the power and democratic influence of tech giants. In the current study, it has been frustrating trying to guess the size and activity of Denmark's digital civil society while Facebook (alone) has access to the exact figures.

Methods and data sources

This report aims to highlight a digital civil society and a group of digital volunteers, for which there are no official registers or statistics. To map, quantify, and understand digital community centers, digital volunteers, and the digital civil society, we have applied a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods – both digital and otherwise – that together have enlightened us about the scope, content, and impact of Danes' digital volunteering on Facebook.

As the report is based on multiple types of data, for simplicity, we will refer to the different data sources by letters (read more about the data sources in appendices 1-3).

A.

Public data collected from Facebook

A.i. We have collected the public names, membership numbers, descriptions, rules, age, and number of administrators of 9000 Facebook groups.

A.ii. Additionally, we have collected an anonymized sample of the debates from the past 14 days in 2,418 public groups (see [Appendix 2](#)). This sample has been used to estimate the activity levels in the digital community centers.

B.

Netnographical analysis: We have since 2017 continuously signed up to, observed and taken part in the debates going on in a string of digital community centers, based on a diversity in size, topic, age, purpose, and rules. We have conducted netnography (Kozinets 1998) in 400 public and private groups.

C.

Semi-structured interviews: We conducted interviews of between 1 and 2 hours in length with 15 administrators and moderators of Facebook groups, focusing on their experiences, practices, and motivations. These interviews also formed the basis for the case studies in the report.

D.

Survey distributed to administrators and moderators:

We distributed a survey to a section of the administrators and moderators through Facebook Messenger. The survey was answered by 408 volunteers, and it focused on the digital volunteer work, as well as motivation and well-being.

E.

Representative survey of 2000 Danes: Survey focusing on the Danish people's membership in, benefits from, and observations in digital community centers. The survey was distributed through Voxmeter.

F.

Orientation in volunteerism literature and knowledge sharing with researchers and experts: We have had preliminary discussions with experts and researchers in volunteerism. We have also reviewed literature on volunteerism in Denmark and digital volunteerism in general. See the bibliography and names of the involved researchers at the end of the report.

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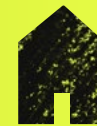
Denmark's digital community centers in 2023

In this chapter, you will get an overview of the landscape of 9,000 digital community centers that we have identified and mapped between 2017 and 2023. We have divided the community centers into 18 different categories to indicate where the Danes primarily are on Facebook. The mapping and categorization are based on publicly available data that we have collected from Facebook. (see an overview of data sources on [page 300](#), refs. A.i and A.ii).

This chapter will include:

- The historical Danish community center movement and its parallels to Denmark's digital community centers on Facebook today.
- The landscape of digital community centers in 2023.
- Daily activities in the digital community centers.
- A summary of the unique democratic and civic potential of the digital community centers.
- The development of the digital community center movement.

Key numbers:



9.000

digital community centers



~ 50M.

memberships



85,000

comments a day



34%

more memberships since 2021
The same period saw the number of community centers grow by 6 pct.

”

We now have 11,500 members, and there are 24,000 people living in Allerød Municipality. I think we have a strong representation among those who are in the age group and use Facebook.

Jacob Beer

Allerød Municipality - Help each other! 👍
Remember no buying/selling

”

A lot of people say that we need to focus more on communities, but we already have all these communities trying to reach you.

Marie Blønd

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAdultInTheRoom

”

It's important for this group to keep existing. More important than any individual. I am proud that I created it.

Quote from our survey among administrators and moderators

The girl's community for everything



Canan Pektas

33, social worker

Time commitment: 1 to 2 hours a day



ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15) 31,000 members

Founded in 2016

Category: Identity

About the community center:

The group was started in 2016/2017 by Canan and her friends as a platform where you could talk about everything, not just makeup. Originally, it was intended as a group for close friends, but it quickly grew and became known for its live features and the good guidance offered in the group. Today, the group is a forum for women of various backgrounds and nationalities. Questions in the group can cover anything: From nails and hair to honor conflicts and relationship troubles – even washing machines and insurance.

Canan's road to the role of administrator:

Canan and her friends were originally members of a large makeup group. They wanted a group where they could

discuss a broader range of topics, which led to the creation of ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15). They invited friends and friends of friends and had actually intended it to be just a group for close friends. However, the group was popular and quickly grew to several thousand members.

In practice:

Canan spends an average of 1 to 2 hours a day approving anonymous posts, monitoring discussions, coordinating with other administrators, and communicating with members of the group. Canan often uses her expertise as a social worker, even in personal threads with members in crisis, and she is very careful about how she comments in the group to avoid showing personal opinions, as some of her clients may be among the members. Over time, the group has had many different initiatives such as live videos, a book club, a blog with "story of the week," physical "meet your administrator" events, and advertisements, where the proceeds went to charity.



I remember we had a woman with a child who wrote about her husband being violent towards her. Very quickly, there were more than 100 comments where people suggested help and crisis centers she could go to.

Canan Pektas

Most motivated when:

Canan sees great value in the anonymous posts, where members can write about their problems and other members contribute with advice, help, and inspiration. The anonymous posts often deal with very intimate and personal matters, such as sexually transmitted diseases, sex life, family crises, relationship issues, violence, social control, and honor conflicts. There are several professional members in the group, including social workers, doctors, and personal trainers, who offer guidance and suggestions. The group is especially an important space for young girls with ethnic backgrounds other than Danish, who do not know where else to turn. She is happy to be able to provide a platform where people can get help – even when they are at their lowest.

Least motivated when:

Canan is least motivated when members are prejudiced against each other or get into heated arguments. This happens especially in debates about sexuality and politics, which is why discussing

politics has been banned in the group. Canan has also experienced the group being hacked by fake profiles that then twisted the comment threads to always be about religion.

Worth mentioning:

ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15) has helped a lot of women who have faced major crises, such as experiencing violence, infidelity, and racism. The administrator team, which consists of five people with a background in social work, has considered turning the group into an association so they could seek support and become more formalized. However, the assessment is that it would require too much work.



[user]

Dear girls, this isn't a post where I'm seeking advice, but a message to all you wonderful girls, with brothers, sons, friends, and cousins.

I want to share my story with you.

Some years ago, I was going to marry the man I thought was my Prince Charming. He was everything I wanted in a guy. He was perfect in my eyes. He did everything for me and rushed to my side at the slightest issue.

I knew him for a year before we got married. He was my first love, and I felt it was the right thing. I thought I knew him well.

When we got married, we obviously had intercourse, which was my first time. A "small" "problem" occurred; I did not bleed, and he believed I had been with many others. The guy I loved became my biggest nightmare. I tried to explain that not everyone bleeds the first time, but he didn't trust me. He was completely consumed by the idea that I was the dirtiest person on two legs, and he wanted a divorce. To avoid being "laughed at," we waited a few months during which I tried to prove to him that I was a virgin, with everything from talking to doctors to articles. He abused me, everything from violence to yelling. My family isn't old-fashioned so they trusted me, but his family spit on me when they had the chance. Girls, my heart burned. The man who used to love me, wished me only bad things.

I was left with the most surreal feeling in life. I often thought about taking my own life. I always hoped that the guy I ended up with would be my first and last partner. That wasn't the case for me.

It took me years to return to my "normal" self. With help from psychologists, my lovely family, and friends.

Please girls – Teach your sons, brothers, cousins, and friends that not all girls bleed the first time!

And that they can destroy lives!

503

88 comments



Anonymous member

Are there any girls from the Middle East who have worked in a nursing home with elderly people? Was there a lot of racism, and what was it like in general? I would like to get a part-time job, but I'm a bit afraid that there might be a lot of racism or something similar.

22 comments

[user]

I am a trained social and healthcare assistant, and through my internships and previous work in nursing homes, I have not experienced racism or discrimination. On the contrary, I have always been met with respect, kindness, and smiles from my residents.

9

[user]

There are always some, but they eventually accept that you are part of the work once they get to know you better. It fundamentally comes down to the fact that they only know about immigrants from what they hear in the news.

7

[user]

I am not Muslim or anything like that, but I will still allow myself to respond. When I worked in nursing homes, I often saw colleagues of different ethnicities being met with racist remarks. Residents would refuse to be helped by them or similar situations. I think you need to consider how strong your psyche is, and then try it out. Unfortunately, racism exists just as much in public as it does in nursing homes. Sadly, they don't know anything other than what they grew up with.

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The community center: A long tradition of meeting over our shared agendas

Denmark's historic community centers began as part of a democratic movement from the 1880s onward, in response to a political assembly ban that made it illegal to use public schools for association meetings, (which were often political).

In these citizen-driven houses, *"people were educated in democratic leadership principles and gained a sense of influence and co-responsibility"* (Wøllekær & Frandsen, 2014, p. 14).

The houses were a political manifestation of the peasants' self-ownership and a protest against the government's desire to control speech and assemblies nationwide.

Although they could be privately owned, cooperative, or association-owned, it was important for their narrative that these were the people's own houses, and that they hosted diverse activities started by the local community. These activities included education, debate, and formation, but parties and gatherings around interest-based activities and hobbies also played a significant role in the houses.

"Few 'movements' passed by the assembly house doors – even though there were many movements: lecture associations, cooperative organizations, agrarian associations, smallholder movements and Georgism, peace issues and defense movements, temperance movements, women's issues, and many others."

(Wøllekær & Frandsen, 2014, p. 35)

Since the 1880s, the assembly house has evolved and taken on various forms. In the 1960s, community centers were established with partial public support, and in the 1970s, several municipalities established cultural houses, which were still often operated by associations with citizens leading.

There are many similarities between Facebook groups and Denmark's historic community centers:

- Both are forums for public assembly and conversation, and they both offer equal access for members to set the agenda.
- Both express a broad popular desire to connect with each other and have a forum that includes coziness, debate, information, political struggles, parties, and gossip.
- In both cases, their rules/guidelines, admission process, and statutes provide insight into the citizens' understanding of good companionship and debate.
- Both are started, driven, and led by citizens, who establish and manage the houses as either board members, administrators, or moderators.
- Both depend on a continuous and extensive volunteer effort to survive.

Reflection

Are the digital community centers democratic forums or top-down clubs with no member influence?

If the administrators and moderators of digital community centers are not elected in the same way as the boards of associations, can we really call it a democratic debate?

It is valid to question whether digital community centers are "owned by the citizens" when the majority are not organized under a formal democratic structure. Based on our observations and studies, there are varying degrees of influence in different community centers, but as we will present later in the study, 85% of the digital volunteers include the group members' perspectives in how they manage the group.

We might also question whether a formal association structure genuinely guarantees democratic operations in other community groups: It is not unheard of for association boards to cling to power, fail to hold their general meetings on time, and generally make it difficult for members to exert influence and implement changes.

The administrators and moderators in a group always have the first and last word, but the fact that it is easy and "free" to create groups creates competition between them, which does not exist in homeowners' associations or sports clubs. We see that without a physical house (which requires monetary resources for establishment and operation), more

community centers often pop up within the same theme or the same city, because there are simply more versions of what the best community center looks like: In some community centers, one may buy and sell, seek a lost dog, or discuss party politics – in others, one may not.

The diverse landscape of community centers helps to balance the power in the administrator role. People turn towards groups where the quality of the content is highest and the rules best match their preferences.

Among our 9,000 digital community centers, we see examples where administrators and moderators have been elected, and of course, we have also observed examples of less democratic operations and leadership.

As we will see in chapter 7, a majority of the digital volunteers would appoint a new administrator from among the members, for example through a vote, if they were prevented from continuing to lead the group themselves.

It is our view that the vast majority of digital volunteers take pride in offering the best digital community within their "area" and take members' wishes seriously.

The powers of administrators and moderators also allow for swift action – which is sometimes very important to keep the digital community centers free from spam and harassment. Unlike physical associations, it is also easier (due to the digitalization of the community center) for new members to spread less relevant or outright harassing content to all other group members.

When the community center became digital

The fact that Danes have established and currently participate in at least 9,000 Facebook groups illustrates an ongoing desire and need to create and maintain popular arenas for debate, knowledge sharing, socializing, boasting, complaining, fun, and seriousness. Against this backdrop, we find it most accurate to describe the buzzing landscape of Facebook groups as a digital renaissance of the community center movement.

Digital community centers differ from physical ones by not necessarily being geographically anchored. Instead, communities are established based on common professionalism, interests, life situations, health conditions, political and ideological currents, demographic factors such as ethnicity, gender, age, etc. However, our categorization shows that city and regional groups still constitute a large category in the digital landscape (see pages 46+47).

When there is no physical community center, the gymnastics club does not need to share space with crocheters, role-players, or single fathers. This has the advantage that everyone can "meet" in their community center around the clock. It also allows citizens to pursue more diverse and niche interests, because they are not dependent on there being enough people in the local area who want to join a woodturning club.

Although one might fear that digital community centers would become very narrow, precisely because crocheters do not share space with single fathers, the community centers in this study all share one platform (Facebook) and we see both an ecosystem and an exchange between the different community centers because links to other community centers are often shared, and also that often more specialized/narrower

community centers emerge from one larger one – for example, a local pet group or a group dedicated to local politics, which springs from a large city group. The digital nature of community centers also allows participation in communities for those who, due to various functional variations, cannot show up every Thursday at 7:00 PM.

On the next page, you can see a small selection of digital community centers.

It is difficult to highlight just a handful of the community centers because the landscape is so diverse and rich, but we hope to give readers a small insight into how the digital civil society offers a community for everything.

The assembly houses of the 1880's

Associations of self-owning farmers, education, and populist power.



The community centers of the 1960's

Youth revolts, democratic inclusion and user management.



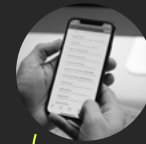
The culture houses of the 1970's

Municipally supported cultural arenas.



Today The digital community center

Numerous and not necessarily geographically anchored.



Denmark's community centers

Roskilde – we help
each other

41.900 👤

A group where we
pretend we are the
government

10.700 👤

Esbjerg –
EVERYTHING IS
ALLOWED

36.500 👤

The healthcare
system must also
include dental care

123.600 👤

Dating for chubby
men and women
(18+)

800 👤

Nanny and
substitute grand-
mother network –
covers all of
Denmark

16.600 👤

Anti-inflammatory
diet – inspiration
for impatient
cooks

32.100 👤

Confirmation trans-
portation for the
financially vulnerable
(FREE)

10.000 👤

Network for breast-
feeding – 0–2 years

27.600 👤

All of us with dog(s)
and a sense of humor

30.100 👤

Danish solo
freelancers

33.600 👤

Denmark's MC women
– women only

1.800 👤

Hiking with others

11.400 👤

Why are we so preoccupied with community centers?

Why are we interested in the Danish civil society on Facebook?

Facebook is still the social media platform the Danes use the most, with 59 percent of people aged 15 to 75 actively using the platform daily (Danish Broadcasting Company Analysis 2024). Therefore, Facebook provides us with insight into the digital lives of the most amount of Danes. Moreover, we are particularly focused on the solutions which best nurture citizens' active citizenship, and here, Facebook's group format is especially noteworthy.

In 2022, TrygFonden and Analyse & Tal mapped the Danish landscape of digital community centers focusing on their significance for digital democracy. This mapping and our subsequent research have helped us identify some characteristics of digital community centers that make them valuable democratic communities. The following pages are a condensed summary of the previous analysis and our subsequent research collaborations. Read more in our other publications, which can be found in the bibliography.

The digital community centers are unique democratic arenas because...

They are member based instead of follower based

All members of a group can set the agenda through posts and comments. This contrasts sharply with the more individual-oriented digital infrastructure on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and especially Facebook's own page format. In a follower-based infrastructure, individual people or organizations have an account or channel with a following. The followers

can debate in the comments on the account holder's posts, but it is always the account holder who initiates the content. For example, we can follow Mette Frederiksen or TV 2 News on Facebook and interact with their posts, but they typically don't follow us, and therefore our posts do not appear in their feeds.

In contrast, the group infrastructure on Facebook provides a shared space where all group members have the opportunity to make posts within the group's rules. In these groups, Danes discuss their own agendas to a greater extent.

Citizens control the narrative

The group format allows citizens to influence membership admission, rule-setting, and content regulation within the group. While Facebook's rules and guidelines must be followed, it is the individual group's administrators and moderators who decide, negotiate, and maintain the boundaries in their own community.

Through these groups, more citizens gain direct experience in navigating the difficult balance between freedom of speech and a safe space for expression. And if you think the administrator is a tyrant? Then start your own group. If you're right, it might become a success. If no one follows you out the door, then perhaps the original group was happy to see you go.

They are established and maintained on a volunteer basis

The power dynamics are different when citizens moderate other citizens, compared to when media, politicians, and their staff set the limits for public debate. We often see that the digital volunteers (and members of the digital community centers) appeal to the voluntary nature of the role. When someone wants to complain, they often encounter comments like: "This is Tove's group, which she runs on a voluntary basis. If you don't like how things are run here, then find your own way out." Moreover, the groups, based on their foundation in voluntarism, exist for the sake of the community, not for gaining votes, article views, or reach.

Professor of Journalism Michael Schudson specifically emphasizes that a democratic conversation is conditioned, among other things, by citizens'

equal access to the floor and their influence on the rules of the conversation (Schudson, 1997, p. 307). This supports the group format by being membership-based, driven by citizens, and "free" to create.

We gather around something we have in common

The basis of the groups is always something we have in common: our city, our profession, our diagnosis, our parenting, breeding Bichon Havanais dogs, being on disability pension, or having been young in the 80s. No matter how much we disagree, we are in the groups because we have something in common, and we have joined because we are interested in the group's theme. This trend is also reflected in many of the digital community centers' names and group descriptions, which often start with "For all of us who..." or "We who live/love/practice..."

In the groups, greater emphasis is placed on the "social" aspect of "social media." Here, there is room for social, problem-solving, and political conversation. The social exchanges and what we have in common form the glue that makes it possible to also talk about the more difficult things, while simultaneously fostering the desire to participate (Schudson, 1997, p. 299).

The digital community centers are smaller and more intimate communities

In addition to being based on a common denominator, digital community centers are also, on average, smaller and have fewer members than the follower count of Facebook pages belonging to the media or to politicians. The 9,000 Facebook groups average around 5,500 members, whereas politicians' and media pages average around 27,000 followers. The larger a digital forum is, the more abstract the perception of the recipient of a post or comment becomes. Who are the 500,000 others following TV2's Facebook page? What do they have in common?

We also observe that in many groups, even those with thousands of members, there is a perception of a confidential community among the members, and they are heavily sanctioned if they share (sensitive) content from the group outside of it. Additionally, due to the mix of everyday chatter, aid and care, news sharing, advice, leisure and humor, complaints, information sharing, small dramas, and debates, a more personal and trusting atmosphere is built because the conversation often involves sharing more about

oneself, one's experiences, and one's daily life. This, combined with the other factors described in this section (volunteer citizens in administrator and moderator roles, member-based infrastructure), overall strengthens the intimacy and trust within the group. Trust is understood as the belief that the counterpart (the other members) fundamentally means well for us (Hoff-Clausen, 2010, p. 60), and also trust that violations are indeed sanctioned by those responsible.

We can also see that the size of the group or page correlates with the tone of the debate: The more followers or members a page or group has, the more linguistic attacks the debate contains. The effect is the opposite for linguistic recognition (Analyse & Tal, 2022).

The debate tone is better in the groups

The debate in the groups can indeed get heated, but on average it contains less than half as many linguistic attacks as the debates in the comment sections on media pages and only a quarter as many attacks compared to politicians' pages.

We can see that the rules in digital community centers are "stricter," often requiring kindness and politeness rather than simply prohibiting problematic or illegal behavior. We also observe that the digital volunteers moderate more rigorously if members are too unruly. It also makes a difference that members often have to confirm that they will follow the rules when they join the group. Digital community centers also frequently require that members are not anonymous or that their profile is not newly created, to avoid trolls and spam. However, some groups allow anonymous posts, making it easier to discuss sensitive or taboo subjects. The groups also contain more linguistic recognition than media Facebook pages (Read more about the mapping of recognition, attacks, and hate in [Analyse & Tal 2022](#)).

In the groups, politics is more often dressed up as everyday conversation

But is the tone of the debate simply better because it is easier to talk about dogs than about integration policy? Maybe. But even in the most "harmless" and seemingly apolitical groups, Danes still debate with each other.

Is it worse to dock a dog's tail than a pig's? Should you only breed dogs with pedigrees? Do the authorities respond too slowly in cases of "puppy mills"? Every community center has its own dramas, so it's not a given that the debate about pets is conducted harmoniously.

Moreover, discussions and disagreements in the group often reflect current political agendas. Should children of all genders be allowed to wear dresses in daycare? How is housework and pension divided at home? How much space should mountain bikers take up in the forest? Can a role-player play a character of a different ethnicity than their own? What chemicals are permissible for weed control in the garden?

In the groups, political questions are often discussed based on members' own experiences and insights, which we believe lowers the barrier for individual participation. This is not to say that there aren't also many high-political, theoretical, ideological, and knowledge-heavy political debates in the digital community centers. 640 of the digital community centers are categorized as primarily political groups and protest groups.

They function as a training ground for political and democratic engagement

In the groups, citizens practice articulating their thoughts in writing, debating with people they don't know, clearing up misunderstandings, motivating others to take action, and expressing criticism or sympathy in relatively safe digital environments. Maria Bakardjieva has studied a Bulgarian web forum for mothers, where she also observes how the forum overflows with "everyday political talk." According to Bakardjieva, this everyday talk has the potential to shift individuals' political positions or motivate them toward further political engagement (Bakardjieva, 2012, p. 1358-1359).

They keep the Danes organized and ready to mobilize

Professor Emeritus of Media and Communication at Lund University, Peter Dahlgren, has reached a similar conclusion. He writes how "[...] civil society can serve as a training ground that 'grooms' citizens, preparing them for civic participation and political engagement." (Dahlgren, 2006, p. 272). If members of a group are threatened in what they have in common, there is

a shorter path to formal political mobilization and action, as they already constitute an established "we."

If something suddenly threatens "us parents" or "us on Amager," we are already assembled and can take action. The groups have often been the driving force behind protests and citizen proposals, just as political groups recruit their members in "non-political" groups.

The digital community centers keep Danes organized and ready to mobilize, representing a latent political potential.

The digital community centers build demographic bridges

In the debate about echo chambers on social media, we sometimes forget that in our physical everyday lives, we often interact with people who resemble ourselves. Here, our previous studies suggest that the groups introduce us to other people and viewpoints.

We are not necessarily from the same part of the country, or of the same ethnic background, age, and income level, just because we care for children at home, live in Næstved, were children in the 80s, or suffer from a rare metabolic disease. Through the groups, we meet people with different demographic backgrounds (Sivertsen, M. F., & Thomsen, M. S. S., 2023).

As part of our representative population survey (source E), we asked how many people felt that they had been introduced to people they otherwise would not have met, and opinions they otherwise would not have heard, through a Facebook group. Read more in Chapter 6.

The digital community centers show that we want to participate

The multitude and diversity of digital community centers represent a broad civic desire to connect with one another. When we can map 9,000 community centers with 50 million memberships, it shows that citizens in Denmark have a strong interest in participating in a public digital conversation.

We want to listen, contribute, discuss, help, be inspired, organize, support, criticize, complain, and learn from each other.

In the box below, you can see the average daily activity in digital community centers compared to the average daily activity on Danish politicians' and media's Facebook pages. On 2,175 politicians' pages, 250 posts are published daily, receiving 7,700 comments. On 471 Danish media pages, 1,500 posts are published daily, receiving 55,550 comments.

In our 9,000 digital community centers, 21,000 posts are produced daily, receiving 85,000 comments. The daily content in the digital community centers is equivalent to 2,200 newspaper columns (each with 7,500 characters). Citizens are creating and sharing quite large amounts of content daily.

Average daily activity in various places on Danish Facebook (avg.)*

Politicians' pages	Media pages	The digital community centers
(2,175 pages)	(471 pages)	(9,000 groups)
Posts: 250 Comments: 7.700	Posts: 1,500 Comments: 55,550	Posts: 21,000 Comments: 85,000

* The average daily activity is calculated for 2,175 politician pages and 471 media pages based on an average of all posts and comments published in the first half of 2023 (collected via Facebook's API). For the digital civil society, the average is estimated based on our sample from public groups (Data source A.ii).

The daily content in the digital community centers is equivalent to 2,200 newspaper columns (each with 7,500 characters)



Disclaimer

Of course, not everything is sunshine and roses

In our earlier mapping and analysis of Denmark's digital community centers and now Denmark's digital volunteers, we have put particular emphasis on the many positive qualities of the digital community centers. Our data overwhelmingly indicates that they indeed make a positive difference for their members, and that most digital community centers are run with respect for Danish law and member safety, showing low tolerance for problematic and illegal behavior. Considering that anyone with a Facebook profile can create a group, and given the number of groups in our mapping, we are positively surprised by how constructive and safe the majority of the landscape appears to be.

However, we have also observed some challenges and examples of more problematic uses of the group format. On the milder end, we see instances of people seeking (or offering) under-the-table work. In homework assistance groups, children and young people receive tempting offers from people willing to do their schoolwork for them for a fee.

In health-, disease-, and diet-related communities, we see examples of misinformation that is more likely to remain unchallenged, either because the administrator either shares the belief or simply does not crack down on undocumented claims. Some groups become breeding grounds for distrust in established knowledge and authorities.

Other groups are "anti-groups" against certain religious and minority ethnic populations. Here, the tone often becomes very hateful, and the accumulation of specific negative narratives can potentially lead to the radicalization of the group's members.

Some groups function as digital pillories for internet scammers, bad landlords, and unfaithful partners. These groups are also problematic because they conduct digital "trials" parallel to the actual judicial system.

Conversely, groups have collectively stopped several major fraudsters and individuals guilty of abuse and harassment by gathering documentation. These groups justify their existence by claiming that, according to their members, there is often no help to be found from authorities.

Another phenomenon is groups where private individuals offer loans to other private individuals. Borrowers are often economically vulnerable and resort to private loans because they are already deeply in debt. The terms of these loans are often extremely unfavorable and sometimes illegal, with collection often involving public humiliation and harassment.

In some assistance groups, we see citizens disclosing extremely sensitive personal information about themselves and their families in their pursuit of receiving items and money. Some assistance groups conduct "draws" of 100 kroner or a used phone, where the donor chooses someone in the comment thread who deserves the "prize." This creates problems related to self-exposure, discrimination, and arbitrary criteria for who is "most in need."

In some of the groups, we have also observed examples where "helpers" have demanded payment upon delivery of donations, for example in the form of sexual services. We have also seen examples where the economically vulnerable have been recruited for "work" in pyramid scheme-like businesses that promise much but in reality result in further impoverishment of members through deposits or the purchase of goods for resale.

Additionally, there are cases where criminals use assistance groups to lure vulnerable individuals into laundering small amounts of money for payment. In assistance groups, private loan sharks find vulnerable borrowers whom they offer loans to via private messages. Assistance groups gather a large number of vulnerable people, which tempts those who are not acting in good faith.

9,000 community centers divided into 18 categories

1. Interest and hobby groups

2,101 community centers / 12.8m memberships

For example, pets, sports, cooking, fan groups, gaming, kitchen gardening, crafts, collectors, genealogy, outdoor activities, beauty

2. Practical groups

1,690 community centers / 14.4m memberships

For example, groups for organizing carpooling for commuters, buy-and-sell, lost and found for items, animals, and people, groups for finding jobs or housing

3. City, regional, and local groups

1,366 community centers / 6m memberships

For example, "Ebeltoft for Everything and Everyone," "All of Us in Hørsholm," "Skovlunden Garden Association," "Møn - Info," "Høje-Taastrup Municipality in Pictures"

4. Politics and protest groups

640 community centers / 2.6m memberships

For example, "We Who Support Venstre," "Parents' Movement #IsThere-AnAdultInTheRoom," "Dentistry Paid by Taxes," "No to 5G!," "Free Storebælt Bridge!," "Aalborg Discusses Politics"

5. Professional groups

552 community centers / 1.9m memberships

For example, "Danish Teachers in Upper Secondary," "Mechanical Engineers," "Nursing Students," "Auditions for Professional Performing Artists," "SSP Council"

6. Assistance groups

469 community centers / 1.7m memberships

For example, "Help for Vulnerable and Reform-Affected," "The friendly residents," "Free Confirmation Transport," "Fyn Kindness," "Help for Crisis-Affected"

7. Groups related to organizations

428 community centers / 684,002 memberships

For example, "Volunteers at Roskilde Festival," "Employees at Danfoss," "Grindsted Boarding School," "UC Syddanmark Haderslev"

8. Health and treatment groups

287 community centers / 741,446 memberships

For example, "Relatives of Dementia Patients," "Young people with ADHD," "Pancreatic Cancer," "Us in IVF Treatment," "Wheelchair Users from All Over Denmark," "Dizziness"

9. Advice and counseling groups

262 community centers / 2.8m memberships

For example, "Girls and Problems," "Ask an Accountant," "Household Tips and Cleaning Advice," "Electricity Prices and Consumption - Denmark," "Free Help for PC, Mac, and Mobile"

10. Relations: Friends, dating, and network

236 community centers / 940,401 memberships

For example 'Find a Friend', 'Singles 50+', 'Holiday Friends', 'Polyamory in Denmark', 'Internationals Frederikshavn Municipality'

11. Parent groups

213 community centers / 613,392 memberships

For example 'Term May 2023', 'Solo Mom', 'The Dad Group - Only for Fathers', 'Strong-Willed Children', 'Bottle-Fed with a Clear Conscience', 'For Parents of Teenagers'

12. Spiritual and religious groups

194 community centers / 679,736 memberships

For example "Muslims in Denmark", "Modern Witches", "Ghosts and Spirits", "Christians in Denmark", "Spiritual Central Jutland", "Catholics in Dialogue"

13. Leisure and humor groups

176 community centers / 1.8m memberships

For example "Quotes of Life", "Danish Humor", "OCD - Wordplay, Quote Fun & the Like", "A Group Where We All Pretend to Be Boomers", "Dirty Jokes and Corny Satire"

14. Identity groups

167 community centers / 586,840 memberships

For example "All of Us Over 60 Years", "Big and Beautiful", "Young Kurds in Denmark", "LGBTQIA+ Groups", "Feminist Men's Group"

15. Diet and lifestyle groups

105 community centers / 972,374 memberships

For example weight loss, vegan diet, keto, fasting groups, "Gluten-Free Restaurants", "Nupo Diet - Support for a New Lifestyle", "Sense Only for Men"

16. Alternative therapy groups

51 community centers / 149,725 memberships

For example "Nature is Your Medicine", osteopathy, acupuncture, "Free Online Healing", "HEALTHCARE FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH IN DENMARK"

17. Warning groups

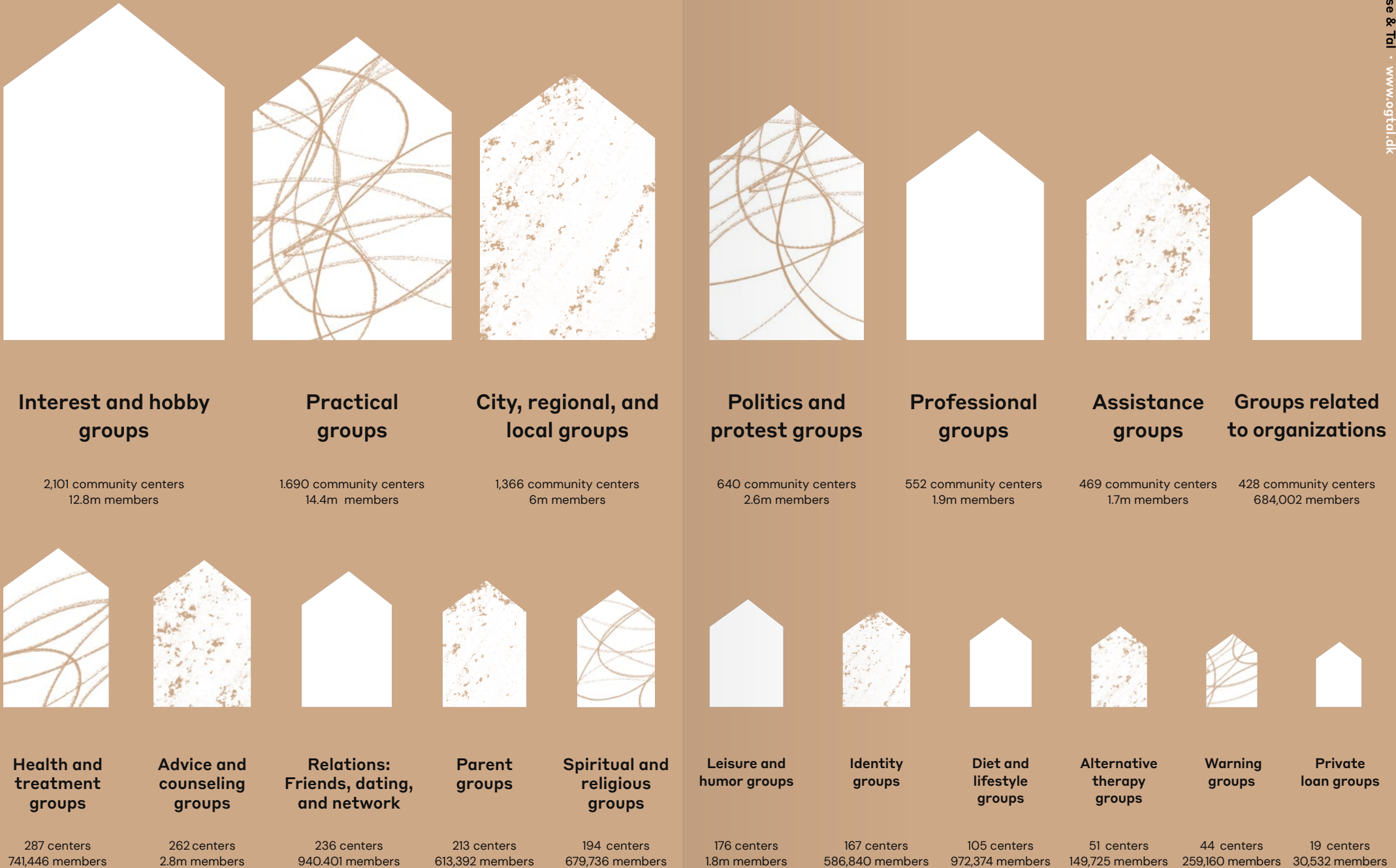
44 community centers / 259,160 memberships

For example "Bad Landlords", "Warnings Against Scammers and Fraud", "Puppy Mills - Warnings", "Danish Fake Profiles"

18. Private loan groups

19 community centers / 30,532 memberships

For example "Borrow Money from Individuals", "Payment Assistance", "P2P Loans RKI No Obstacle", "Payment Assistance ONLY FOR GIRLS"



Jacob has become the digital mayor of Allerød



Jacob Beer

52, Higher Commercial Examination Programme



Allerød Municipality – Help each other!
11,500 members

Founded in 2015

Private group

Category: City, regional and local groups

About the community center:

The Allerød Group is established to help each other in the Allerød Municipality. No problem is too big or too small? Have you lost your bike, your wallet, or has your stick insect run away? Do you want to find someone to go for a run with? The idea is to build a network where people can help each other with anything. It is also used to inform each other about what is happening in the local community.

Jacob's road to the role of administrator:

Jacob needed information about his local area, which he tried to Google. He came across a similar group for a town in Jutland and was inspired. He is the founder of the group and is its only administrator. He is concerned that it might become difficult

to agree on a direction if more people join.

In practice:

Jacob spends about 2 hours a day managing the group, but he checks it up to 100 times a day. He has learned from experience that it pays off to be actively engaged in the discussions. If you let things slide, people quickly get the impression that they can get away with anything. In addition to approving new members, moderating, updating the group's description and rules, handling private messages, resolving conflicts, and providing useful information in the group, he has also introduced the "monthly cover image," where members can suggest and vote on which image submitted by the members should be the group's cover image for the upcoming month. He creates a weekly "Marketplace" post where local businesses can comment with news, offers, and discounts.

Most motivated when:

Jacob is primarily motivated by the fact

that he can help others learn about what is going on in Allerød. Additionally, he feels happy when someone recognizes his voluntary efforts, "e.g., the media or researchers like you."

Least motivated when:

Jacob is not very fond of scolding others. He says, "I'm not conflict-averse, but it certainly doesn't give me energy." Additionally, it has been somewhat frustrating for him when he receives criticism for making posts or recommendations in the group as an "ordinary member." "People might think I speak with too much authority when I participate as an administrator. But I just want to share my knowledge and experience as a fellow citizen."

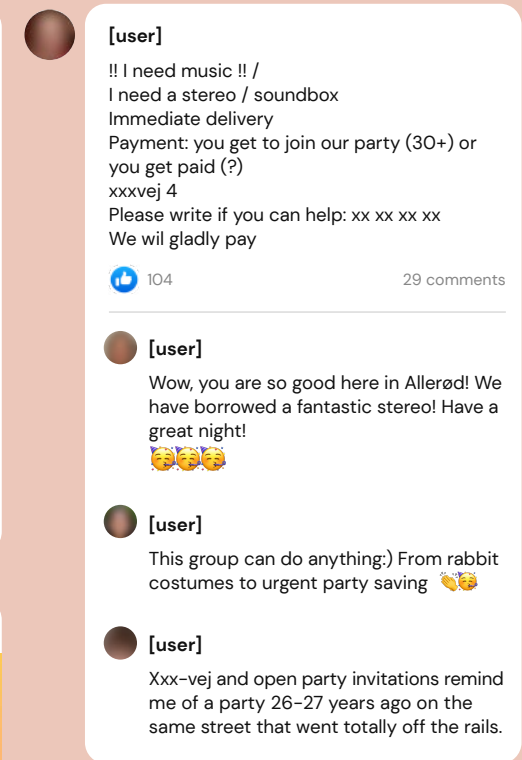
Worth mentioning:

Jacob deletes around 20 posts or comments per week, usually because they violate the group's rules on relevance, contain offensive language, or are hostile.

The idea of a weekly "marketplace" post arose during the pandemic when Jacob wanted to support local businesses. Initially, offers and advertisements were not allowed, but the marketplace created a format that everyone continues to appreciate and doesn't overwhelm the group.

Jacob does not allow the group to be flooded with outright partisan political debate. A separate group has been created for politics in Allerød. But what is politics, really? "People discuss politics all the time, and I don't stop it as long as it's done in a respectful manner."

Several new groups have emerged from the main group, such as Politics in Allerød, a walking group, a knitting group, a dog-walking group, and a COVID aid group.



”

The rules for maintaining a respectful tone are not made for my own sake. I'm used to the internet and can personally handle a harsh tone. However, I am very focused on ensuring that the Allerød group remains a safe space in the tumultuous Facebook sea. It might sound a bit lofty, but it's important to me that everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinions. There shouldn't be a small group of internet warriors dictating what you can write.

Jacob Beer

Development: A digital civil society in constant growth

Community center expansion

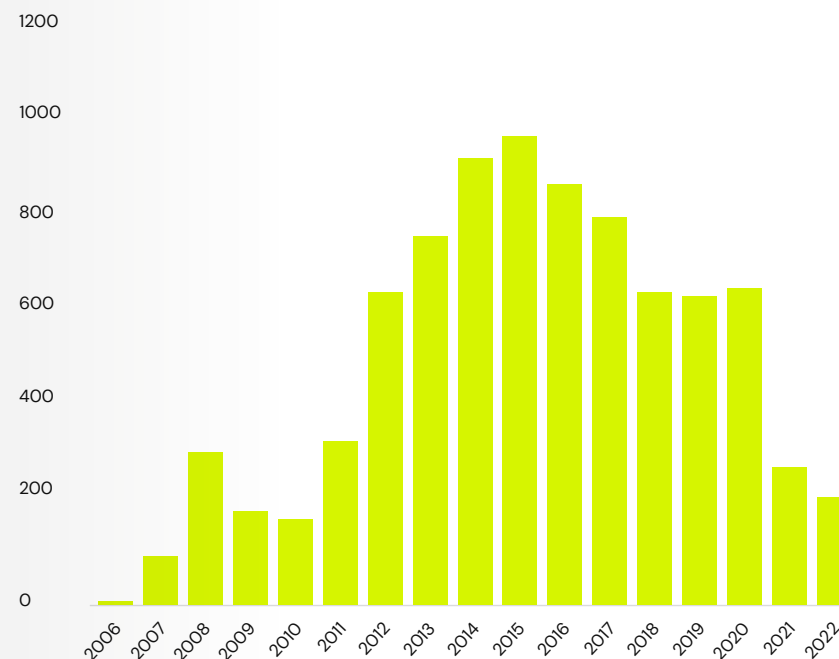
The first digital community centers on Danish Facebook were established in 2006. In the early years, it was primarily city, regional, and local groups and interest and hobby groups that spread. It is now difficult to find a city or region in the country that does not have at least one local group on Facebook. In Appendices 4 and 5, you can see when groups within the 18 categories were particularly established.

The growth in the number of groups was greatest from 2014 to 2016, when Facebook seriously prioritized promoting the group format. From 2012 to 2020, more than 600 digital community centers were created each year. It appears, however, that the demand for some groups has gradually declined, or that the "market is saturated." In any case, fewer new groups have emerged in recent years.

Still, more than 200 groups were created annually in 2021 and 2022, especially political and protest groups, parenting-related groups, and groups related to organizations. New political movements require new community centers, so it makes sense that these continue to emerge. On average, there has been a 6 percent increase in digital community centers since 2021.

Some group categories experience high demand in particular periods. The number of support groups and political and protest groups both increased significantly in the wake of major social reforms in 2014 and in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Figure 2.1
Digital community centers distributed by year of establishment



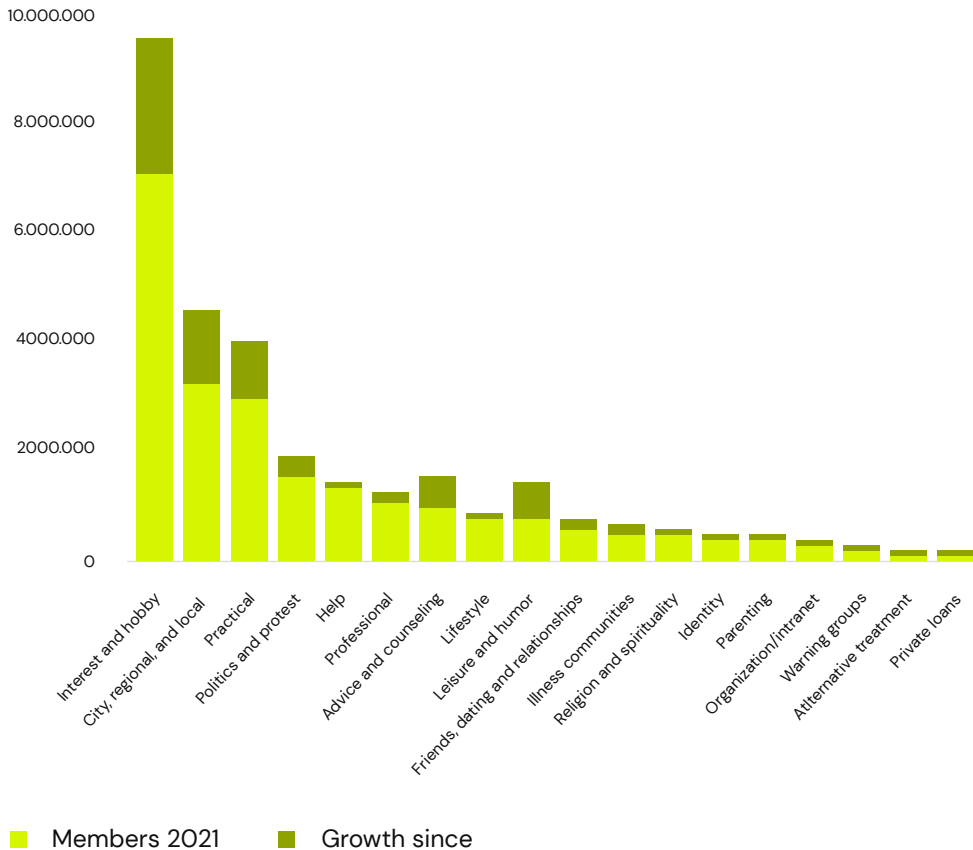
Member growth

The overall digital civil society has seen a 34% increase in membership since 2021. The digital community centers in the categories of "interest and hobby," "leisure and humor," "city and region," "parenting," and "advice and counseling" have particularly experienced membership growth. There is still interest in joining digital community centers. One explanation could be that once someone discovers one digital community center, they are more likely to notice other types of community centers over time. In fact, 69% of members belong to community centers across multiple of the 18 categories (see Chapter 5).

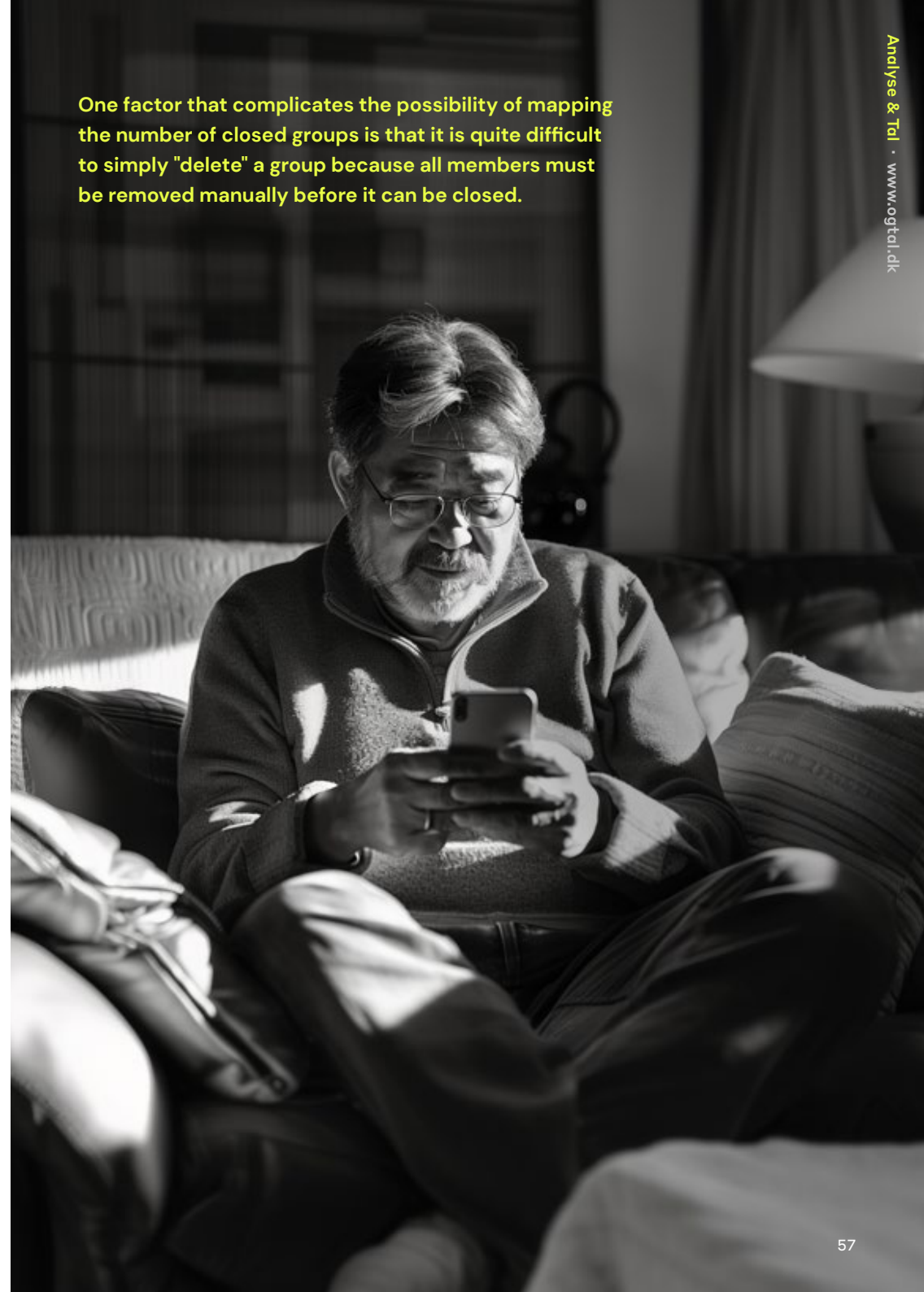
How many digital community centers close or become inactive?

As part of the mapping of the digital civil society, we have also estimated how many of the digital community centers "close." One factor that complicates the possibility of mapping the number of closed groups is that it is quite difficult to simply "delete" a group because all members must be removed manually before it can be closed. Therefore, inactive community centers can still appear in Facebook searches.

Figure 2.2
Membership growth in digital community centers by category



One factor that complicates the possibility of mapping the number of closed groups is that it is quite difficult to simply "delete" a group because all members must be removed manually before it can be closed.



3

Digital volunteerism on Facebook

In this chapter, we examine what it means to be a volunteer administrator or moderator in Denmark's digital community centers. The insights in this section are primarily based on a survey with responses from 408 digital volunteers that we contacted via Facebook Messenger.

Additionally, we have qualified the insights through our interviews with digital volunteers, literature on volunteerism, and some results from our representative population survey (see the overview of data sources on [page 300](#), ref. C, D, E, and F).

This chapter will include:

- Key numbers about the digital volunteers and their work.
- How many Danes are digital volunteers on Facebook?
- What does the volunteer work consist of?
- How many hours do they spend on their volunteer work?
- They digital community centers are open 24/7 – for better or for worse.
- How long do the volunteers stay in their digital community center?

Key numbers:



20,000

digital volunteers manage and moderate the 9,000 digital community centers we have mapped. However, the number is likely higher, as 11% of Danes in our representative population survey reported that they are administrators or moderators of a Facebook group.

Data source A.i og E / n=2.000



82%

of the digital volunteers are active every day.



76%

have been administrator or moderator for 3 years or more.



4.6 hours

is the number of hours the digital volunteers spend a week on average – on their most active digital community center.

”

A clear set of rules is crucial for the group to function well. It could take an entire workweek or up to 60 hours to manage the group in the beginning until we formulated a clear set of rules that we could refer to.

Helle Kiel Hauglund
Happy Crocheting

”

I don't engage in debates in the group myself. I am very aware of the position I hold as an administrator. I am also a social worker, so some of my clients might be in the group.

Canan Pektas
ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15)

”

When we call for new volunteers and people ask, "How much time do you spend?" we laugh amongst ourselves and say, "Don't mention the real number, or we'll never get anyone to join."

Marie Blønd
The Parents' Movement
#IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

“I am the group's Gandalf: You shall not pass!”



Dan Kreutzfeldt

32, train driver, has a 2-year basic education from business school

Weekly time commitment: 7-10 hours



What's Happening in Nordvest 25.000 members

Founded in 2018

Public

Category: City, regional, and local groups

About the community center:

What's Happening in Nordvest is a local gathering place for the Copenhagen NV district, created by the local media NordvestLIV. Most things are allowed – as long as they are local. Everyone is welcome to contribute with events, posts, surveys, requests, pictures, debates, and articles about life in Nordvest. However, posts about buying and selling property or items are not allowed. If a post is not local, it is not permitted, and group members are encouraged to help report content that does not comply with the rules.

Dan's road to the role of moderator:

Dan was recruited for his role as a moderator in the group by the local media NordvestLIV in 2018, because as a well-

known local enthusiast, he was already very active in the group and frequently reported content that violated the group's rules. NordvestLIV occasionally shares articles in the group, but it is mainly Dan who handles the daily operations.

In practice:

Dan spends between 7 and 10 hours a week on the group. He checks several times a day and sees it as his primary duty to keep the group free from irrelevant content and spam. Dan deletes between 10 and 20 posts a day that do not comply with the group's rules and guidelines. He often checks whether the content in the group is authentic by looking at the profiles of those who post. Additionally, he shuts down debates and discussions that go off track. In these situations, the involved members receive a message in their private inboxes:

"I often go in and ask under a post why it is relevant to Nordvest. It should either be obvious or clarified by the author."



There has been a lot of negative media coverage of Nordvest, but the members are good at coming together to highlight all the positive aspects of the area. The group has been important in maintaining the positive local community.

Most motivated when:

Dan is motivated by gaining knowledge about the local community and forming new relationships. "People can recognize me on the street." Additionally, he is motivated by maintaining high-quality content in the group. It also motivates him to see people having good conversations and being eager to help each other through the group.

Least motivated when:

Dan is least motivated when the fight against spam feels endless. For a period, the group had a lot of problems with spam. Members, who may have been hacked, shared pornographic content and Christian propaganda, and members could suddenly (after a change by Facebook) invite everyone in the group to spam events. This created a lot of work. Additionally, he spends extra energy on the few boundary-pushing members. *"There are always some who repeatedly challenge the rules. They have to test whether this or that type of post is acceptable. With these types of members, I can go in and mark that*

their posts must always be approved."

Worth mentioning:

Bjarne the cat has become a local star in the group. News about the large red cat once took up so much space in the group that a local pet group had to be created.

Dan mentions that there are several users who are never visible in the group with posts and comments, but who are good at reporting content that violates the group's guidelines. This type of shadow administration is a great help.



[User]

To those of you who are tired of the noise and pollution from the Copenhagen Historic Grand Prix.
The association Grandprix free City is gathering signatures to stop their permit for another 3 years! It doesn't fit into the concept of a "green city" and should be held farther away from a residential area.
Here are 3 important things you can do to make Copenhagen free of the race:

Be excited by these news:
We have had a citizen proposal approved by the Copenhagen Municipality. If we get 5,000 Copenhageners to sign the proposal, the politicians will have to address it. Awesome! But hurry, because they will soon decide whether the race should be allowed for another 3 years.

Support the proposal:
To sign, you must live in the Copenhagen Municipality and create a user, which must be verified with MitID/NemID:[Link].
It is not very well explained there, so email the municipality at kobenhavntaler@kk.dk if you have trouble.

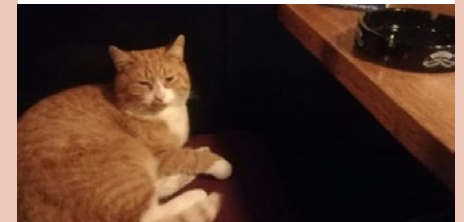
Share the proposal:
Share the link with your neighbor, send an email to your contacts, or post on Facebook. Here at Grandprix free City, we will soon reach out to the press and create flyers you can print out and hang in your neighborhood. There's still some way to go – but together we can do it!

80 60 comments 9 shares



[User]

So, Bjarne was at the pub yesterday. He got some water at Jeppe's Bodega, and we had a chat about the meaning of life. He didn't want to sit at the bar but preferred to take a nap in the back room. He asked me to let you know that he's completely done with giving autographs. When he finished his nap, I carried him across Frederiksborgvej and dropped him off at the cemetery. I love Bjarne.



594 72 comments 5 shares



[User]

Hi friends,
I talked yesterday with [Name] (the homeless person in front of Netto) .. it's starting to get cold in the evenings, and I promised him I would look for the following items:
Gloves
Thermal underwear
And a sleeping bag
Please reach out to me if you have any of these items to spare, and I'll gladly come pick them up.

360 39 comments 2 shares

Thousands of Danes volunteer at a community center on Facebook

What counts as digital volunteerism and as a digital community center?

The purpose of this report is to highlight and acknowledge the voluntary efforts that enable 70% of the adult population to meet in a citizen-driven digital civil society on Facebook. However, it is difficult to provide a precise estimate for the most important question: How many volunteers are there? The number of digital volunteers depends on the definition of a digital community center and the definition of a digital volunteer.

In our mapping, we have defined a digital community center as a public or private group with more than 100 members. We have also chosen to include practical groups for carpooling, job searching, and the exchange of clothes and items. This is partly because we also observe community debate in these groups, but also because we believe that practical assistance between people who do not already know each other can be considered a civic civil society activity.

The volunteer efforts of the members

An effort that we did not anticipate, but have observed and tried to highlight particularly through our survey and interviews, is that of a smaller group of "core members" who do not manage or moderate the group. These core members are especially quick and dedicated in terms of reporting content and reminding other members of the rules. Several groups also have "group experts" who provide a lot of advice within the group's topic (see chapter 6).

However, it has been difficult for us to quantify this effort, and the activities of "shadow administration" and group experts are therefore not "counted" when we estimate the number of digital volunteers or the number of hours for digital volunteer work.

20,000 volunteers in our mapped digital civil society

Part of the reason why the exact population of digital volunteers is difficult to determine is that there are no publicly available data on the number of active Facebook groups in Denmark. We have mapped 9,000 public and private digital community centers with more than 100 members. In these, there are 20,000 registered administrators and moderators. However, we also know from the survey that many digital volunteers manage more than one group, which suggests that the actual number might be smaller.

The hidden landscape

Conversely, we still often come across public and private groups with more than 100 members that are not included in our mapping, indicating that the landscape is much larger than what we have mapped. The groups we are missing are both large and small, recently established and over a decade old, so there is no pattern to base our observations on.

No secret groups present

We also know that there is an entire landscape of "secret groups" that are not included in our mapping. These secret groups cannot be found through a search on Facebook, and you can only join them by receiving an invitation from another member. The secret groups typically deal with taboo or sensitive topics, and we only know about some of them because they are referred to and mentioned in discussions in public and private groups. We believe (based on observations in other groups) that the secret groups are also often citizen-driven and make a difference for specific and vulnerable groups (such as victims of violence, individuals with mental health issues, etc.).

How many run groups for work purposes?

Another obvious source of error in the estimates would be if a large part of the administrators and moderators run the groups as part of their work.

For example, in our survey and as a case in this report, there are groups like "The National Association of Drop-In Centers' Digital Drop-In Center," which are managed by professionals as part of their job. However, 96% of respondents stated that they perform their tasks as administrators and moderators without pay.

How many groups are inactive?

We estimate that 4.4% of the groups are inactive (see [page 56](#)), either because the link to them is dead or because there have been no posts or comments for an extended period. However, we do not consider the 4.4% to be a significant enough dropout rate to adjust our minimum estimate of digital volunteers downward.

The population survey suggests up to twenty times more digital volunteers

In our representative population survey, we primarily inquired about Danes' membership and participation in one or more of the 18 categories of digital community centers that we described in Chapter 2.

At the end of the survey, we also asked whether respondents (in addition to being members) are "moderators or administrators in one or more Facebook groups."

Here, 11% of Danes answered that in addition to being a member of at least one of the 18 types of groups, they are also an administrator or moderator in one or more Facebook groups. 11% of the adult Danish population corresponds to 500,000 people, which is twenty-five times more than the 20,000 we have identified.

In this survey, participants were not asked to specify the size of the group or whether their engagement is voluntary, so the number managing a group within our definition of having more than 100 members is likely smaller. The exact number of Danes who volunteer in a digital community center on

Facebook is therefore somewhere between 20,000 and 500,000. What is certain is that tens of thousands of Danes make a broad effort in digital community centers – and most do so on a daily basis. The point is that the good digital public debate and the positive dynamics we described in Chapter 2 do not arise or maintain themselves.

It takes a corporation the size of Matas to support Denmark's digital civil society

If we work from the lowest estimate of 20,000 digital volunteers, their work effort (4.6 hours per week) corresponds to more than 2,400 full-time equivalent positions. By comparison, the nationwide cosmetics Matas chain is operated by 2,107 full-time employees.

In the following section, we will look into the nature of the voluntary work involved in running the digital civil society.

81% of digital volunteers are involved in more than one digital community center

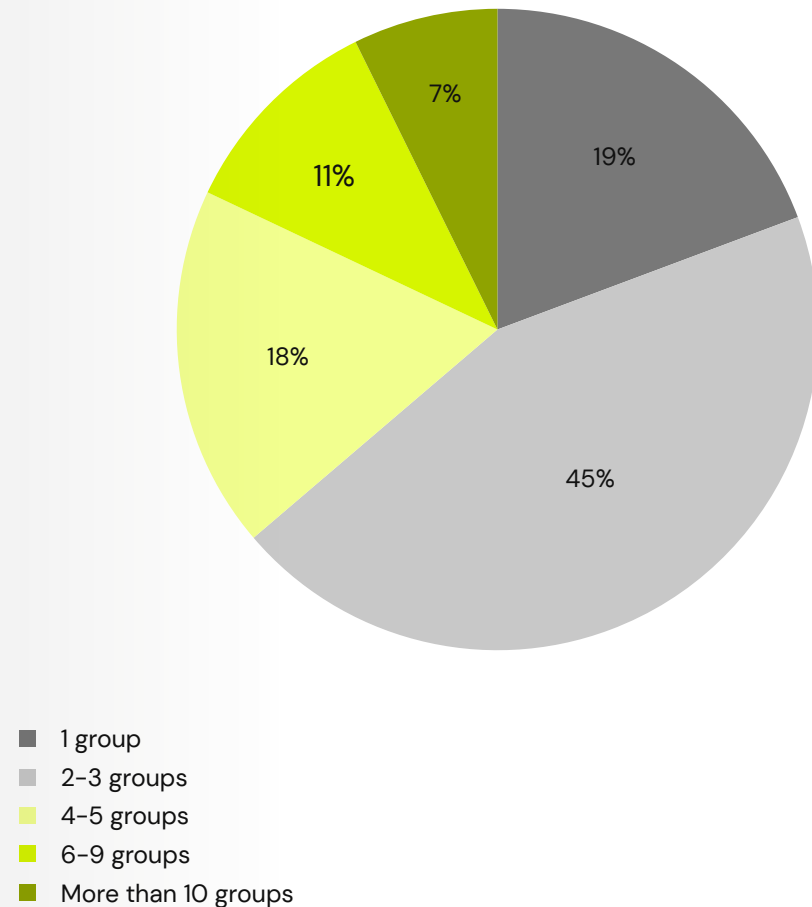
A full 81% of the 408 digital volunteers who responded to our survey answered "yes" to the question "Are you a moderator or administrator in more than one Facebook group?" Most digital volunteers are administrators or moderators in 2-5 groups (63%), but a significant portion (18%) are active in 6 or more groups. Thus, one digital volunteer task rarely comes alone. One respondent in our survey wrote in the open response:

"As an administrator in over 60 FB networks, I have a very thorough understanding of how to best activate, motivate, and set requirements for membership."

The majority of digital volunteers take on responsibilities in multiple groups, perhaps because the work involves some content and skill overlaps and can be performed at the same time and place if they have their preferred digital equipment - computer, smartphone, or tablet - at hand. Among our interviewees, several also manage more than one group, often within different categories among the 18. Helle, whom you will meet as a case later in the report, serves more than 10 digital community centers, despite being on early retirement due to several health challenges.

Casper, who runs both a city group and a professional group, mentions in his interview that the city group requires the most attention, while the professional support group practically runs itself on a daily basis.

Figure 3.1
How many Facebook groups do you administer or moderate?



For most, it involves daily work with a wide range of tasks

In our survey, we asked digital volunteers to indicate how often they perform various tasks related to running a digital community center. On the next page, you can see an overview of how frequently the different tasks are performed. If we sum up the number of respondents who say they perform at least one task on a daily basis, the figures show that 82% of the volunteers are active in their group daily. Additionally, 11% are active in the group one or more times per hour.

Monitoring

67% follow the conversation and activity in the group on a daily basis. Several of the digital volunteers we interviewed emphasized that it is important to have a continuous sense of the group's atmosphere so that potential conflicts can be addressed early. We will return to this constant vigilance in Chapter 4, where we shed light on the digital work environment.

Membership growth

Many volunteers also spend time daily and weekly approving new members (77%) and posts (44%), while several on top of that advise members regarding the group's theme (52%). As we highlighted earlier in Chapter 2, manual member admission is a key element of digital community centers. Administrators often put considerable effort into formulating admission questions, reading membership requests, and screening new applicants' profiles for authenticity. This is one of the most important defenses that groups have against spam, as well as harassment and misinformation.

Moderation

The digital volunteers also make sure to delete, hide, or restrict posts and comments that either violate the group's or Facebook's rules. 46% moderate content weekly that goes against the group's rules. The need for moderation varies, even over time. One volunteer wrote in their open response that daily moderation was necessary for a long period due to the discussion of controversial topics. However, they noted that the hard work pays off:

"For a long period, we had to moderate daily because controversial topics were being discussed. We enforced a strict line from the start, and it seems like the trouble has died down."

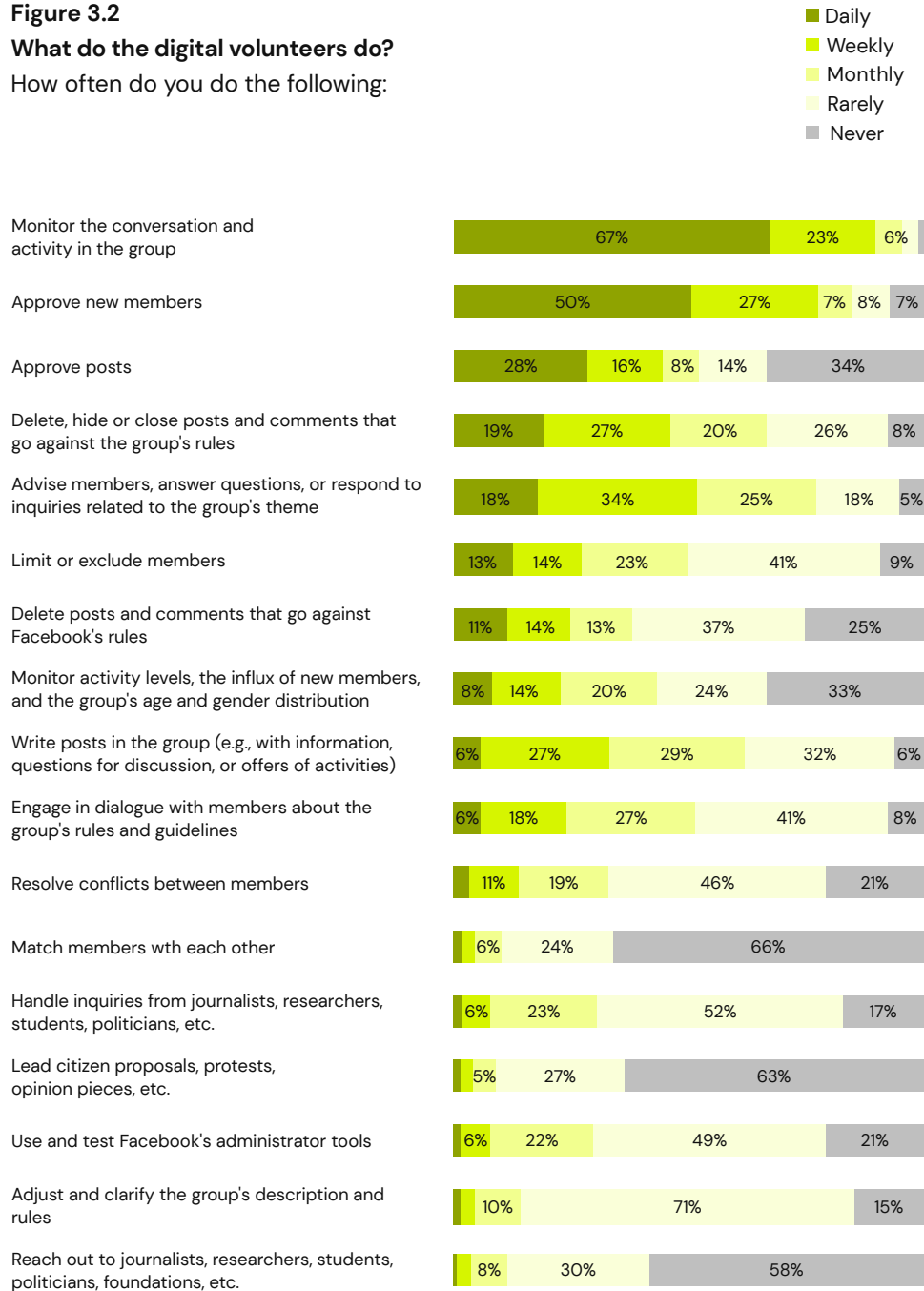
Another volunteer described a similar trend where it was necessary to be very actively moderating for a period:

"I spend a lot of time on behavior regulation with regards to how people generally behave on social media and what we want to give airtime to in this group. [...] Our members have become very well-behaved, and our group gets a lot of praise for our very consistent 'leadership style,' but it has taken several years to get here. When I joined 6 years ago, there were a lot of conflicts, and especially the moderator team was under heavy fire. We have gradually eradicated this, and although I occasionally need to be strict, these instances are now far apart."

Other types of moderation: Dialogue and exclusion

Administrators and moderators always have the final say, but a quarter engage weekly or more frequently in discussions with members about the group's rules (36%) or conflict resolution between members (13%). For 28%, it is a weekly or more frequent task to limit or exclude members who do not adhere to the rules.

Figure 3.2
What do the digital volunteers do?
 How often do you do the following:



Ongoing servicing

62% of administrators also contribute daily, weekly, or monthly to the discussion by writing posts with information, asking questions, or offering activities relevant to the group's members.

Additionally, many have, at some point in their volunteer work, tried to influence society through such means as citizen proposals, protests, opinion pieces (37%), or by reaching out to and engaging in dialogue with journalists, researchers, politicians, and similar figures (43%). The work often extends beyond the group discussions themselves. One volunteer writes, for example:

"[I] occasionally write to local politicians. I write consultation responses when, for example, the planning strategy is in consultation. I participated last year in Green Saturday with a wild garden booth. I share relevant posts from the press and from other groups. I share plants from my garden with others in the group. I arrange trips/events for the group's members."

The dialogue with the wider society

For many volunteers, the work extends beyond the digital platform into various physical spaces. This happens, for example, when digital volunteers organize events, hold workshops, or assist vulnerable groups. Here, an administrator describes how they help and support citizens who are on sick leave:

"I sometimes act as a companion/representative for citizens on sick leave who have problems with their case dragging on at the job center, or if there have been errors in their case processing. Additionally, I hold meetings with the head of the municipal job center and the social services director about once every four months, where we work together to improve conditions and the methods of case processing."

The many hats of the digital volunteers

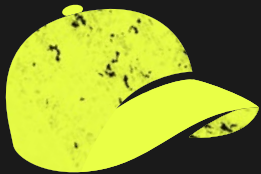
In addition to the tasks we asked about directly, the many open responses have given us insights into other tasks that digital volunteers handle. The tasks in digital community centers vary according to the group's type and

purpose. In groups for political protest, time is spent organizing protests, drafting citizen proposals, or writing opinion pieces. In crafting groups, time is spent ensuring that published patterns are not subject to copyright. In advisory groups, administrators spend time directing members with similar questions to the relevant threads.

Based on the responses and our observations in digital community centers, we have identified eight different functions that digital volunteers often perform. These functions will vary in importance depending on the group, and some groups may designate one volunteer as the primary gatekeeper while another serves as the spokesperson. In most digital community centers, digital volunteers perform many varied tasks and take on many roles.



The many hats of the digital volunteers



Guard: The digital volunteers approve new members and set up and review membership applications. They often check if profiles' friends, photos, and content appear authentic, aiming to minimize trolls, spam, and harassment.

Editor: The digital volunteers review, approve, and solicit posts published in the group. They drive the debate forward, engage members through posts and comments, and acknowledge valuable contributions.

Moderator: The digital volunteers wear the whistle around their necks. They moderate the discussion by deleting content that violates either Facebook's or the group's rules, as well as "educating" or sanctioning members who overstep the boundaries. They also frequently mediate between members who have come into conflict.

Secretary: The digital volunteers formulate and update the group's rules and description, which function as a kind of charter and social contract among the members. They create polls about the group's rules (e.g., should we allow relevant businesses to advertise once a week? Should we allow anonymous posts?) and write newsletter-like posts with information, warnings, or updates if they notice new trends or changes within the group.

Expert advisor: Many digital volunteers are (or become) experts in the group's subject matter, which means they end up spending a lot of time helping members by answering questions – both in their inbox and in the comment threads.

Analyst: Some administrators monitor the group's activity levels, such as gender and age distribution, and remove inactive members. They pay attention to how much reach the posts have, how many members have joined in the past month, and the general amount of posts and comments in the group.

Spokesperson: In political and protest groups, or groups that seek to influence an agenda, digital volunteers often act as spokespersons in the media. Marie Blønd, whom you will meet later in this report, served as a spokesperson for the massive Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom for several years, alongside dozens of other digital volunteer activists.

Archivist: Digital community centers often become digital archives of knowledge, support, and advice within their subject area, whether it is about preserving old buildings or elementary school teaching. Digital volunteers often help direct people to the right support partners or help find relevant information within the group. The most ambitious ones ensure that outdated or incorrect information is deleted or highlighted.

Fighting for copyright and a positive atmosphere



Helle Kiel Hauglund

41, office assistant

Weekly time commitment: 7-10 hours



Happy Crocheting 43,000 members

Private group

Founded in 2015

Category: Interest and hobby

About the community center:

Happy Crocheting is a community for crochet enthusiasts. Here, members can showcase their crochet projects, get inspiration, and receive feedback – and all communication must be in a cheerful, friendly, and pleasant tone according to the description.

Helle's road to to the role of administrator:

Helle was asked to join the administrator team in 2017 because she had a good understanding of copyright laws. At that time, many crochet patterns were being shared even though they were protected by copyright. Helle set out to address this issue and ensure legal compliance. When she started, the group had around 17,000 members, and now there are nearly 43,000.

In practice:

Helle found that there was a lot to do when the group was smaller and didn't have a clear set of rules yet. At times, she spent up to 60 hours a week managing the group. Now, the administrator team has established clear rules, so today Helle spends just a few hours a week on it. Helle's keen eye for copyright means she primarily monitors the rules regarding copyright. She also works to maintain a positive tone in the group and ensures that members speak positively about each other's crochet projects.

Most motivated when:

Helle is motivated by the community and her passion for crocheting that she shares with the thousands of members in the group. She values the positive interactions where members praise each other and provide each other with feedback and inspiration for creative and beautiful crochet projects.

”

Least motivated when:

Challenges arise when members make malicious or condescending comments about others' crochet projects or fail to respect copyright regarding Ternet Ninja, Kaj Bojesen, or other popular designs. Helle always tries to be constructive and accommodating, but she has had conflicts where she had to remove people from the group. "We always start by giving a yellow card," says Helle. "But if people continue to break the rules, they are kicked out."

It's a lot of work to run a group like this, and sometimes I think about shutting it down. If Helle ever gets tired of it, the group will stop there. She does a very, very large job, and she has a much better handle on the administrative side and copyright rules than I do. As long as there is peace and order, and Helle is there, the group will continue as it is now. Personally, I've completely lost the desire to crochet; right now, it's the knitting needles that appeal to me.

Administrator and founder of the group, Lykke Bek

Worth mentioning:

Happy Crocheting has also hosted events where members meet in person. Previously, about 20 people would go on an annual cottage trip together.

[User] 🙄🙄

[Sharing a video from TV2 Kosmopol with the headline: "Anja crochets vaginas in the name of equality - These include the sneaky vagina, the fringe vagina, and the scratchy vagina."]

79 106 comments

[[User] I think it's fantastic! I would love to have a vagina blanket, but unfortunately, my skills aren't up to that level. There is a big taboo around how a woman looks down there and how different we all are. Young men have a distorted view of the vagina from porn movies where the labia have gone through plastic surgery and possibly even bleaching. So I think it's an exciting, fun, and creative way to showcase and focus on our differences. And it doesn't harm anyone.

[User] I think the yarn should be used to make hats, teddy bears, or octopuses for premature babies or hats and mittens for the homeless. In my opinion, it's a waste of yarn.

[User] Good heavens, what an idiot...

Helle Kiel Hauglund

Copyright - a little reminder: We take copyright issues very seriously in this group. Rosendahl holds the copyright on ALL KB figures; you are not allowed to buy or sell these figures - not even the patterns.

Various magazines hold the copyright on ALL patterns printed in their issues; you are not allowed to share pictures of these patterns. There is already a case of a group being shut down due to copyright infringement - a magazine sent a lawyer after them.

So when we (the admins) say that you are violating copyright when we delete posts, and when we repeatedly say that copyright violations can lead to the group being shut down, it's not a joke - it's deadly serious!

143

”

If they don't like our way of moderating, no one is forcing them to stay.

Helle Kiel Hauglund

4.6 hours of volunteer work a week

In our survey that we sent to administrators and moderators, we specifically asked how much time their digital volunteer work requires.

On average, digital volunteers spend 4.6 hours a week on the group that they spend the most time on. This is a conservative estimate of the total digital volunteer work since the survey also showed that 81% of digital volunteers run more than one digital community center.

According to VIVE's volunteer mapping, Danish volunteers spend an average of 15.5 hours per month on their volunteer work, which VIVE converts to just under 4 hours per week (VIVE assumes that a month has 4 weeks). Using the same calculation for digital volunteers, the number is 18.4 hours of monthly volunteer work.

Many digital volunteers point out that the workload varies greatly during different periods. Initially, it is necessary to establish a debate culture and a common understanding of the rules, and there will be periods of intense activity in the digital community centers. Similarly, we can see that we have a small group of digital volunteers with an enormous time commitment, which pulls the average up.

In the next chapter, which deals with the digital volunteers' work environment and workload, we will look at what it means for the work to be digital. Many digital volunteers point out that even though the total number of hours may not seem high, the groups require attention and mental energy at all times because they never close.

Figure 3.3
Approximately how many hours per week do you spend on average being an administrator/moderator in the group you spend the most time on?

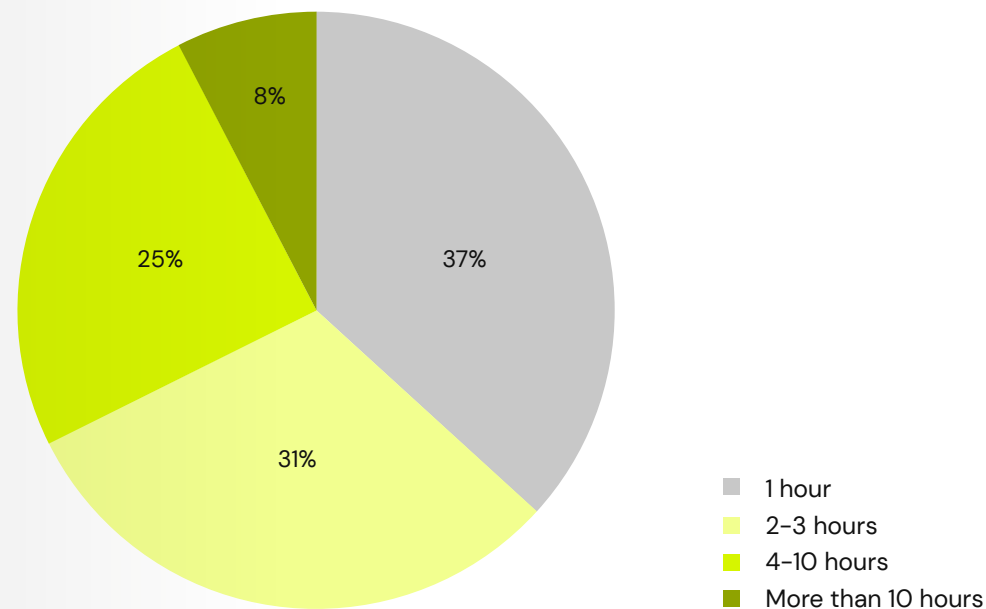


Figure 3.3: Data source D / n=408 (See appendix 1)

”

I actually dislike "recruiting" new volunteers because I often think they don't know what they're getting into. They risk spending a lot of hours. But on the other hand, someone has to put in those hours for it to make a difference.

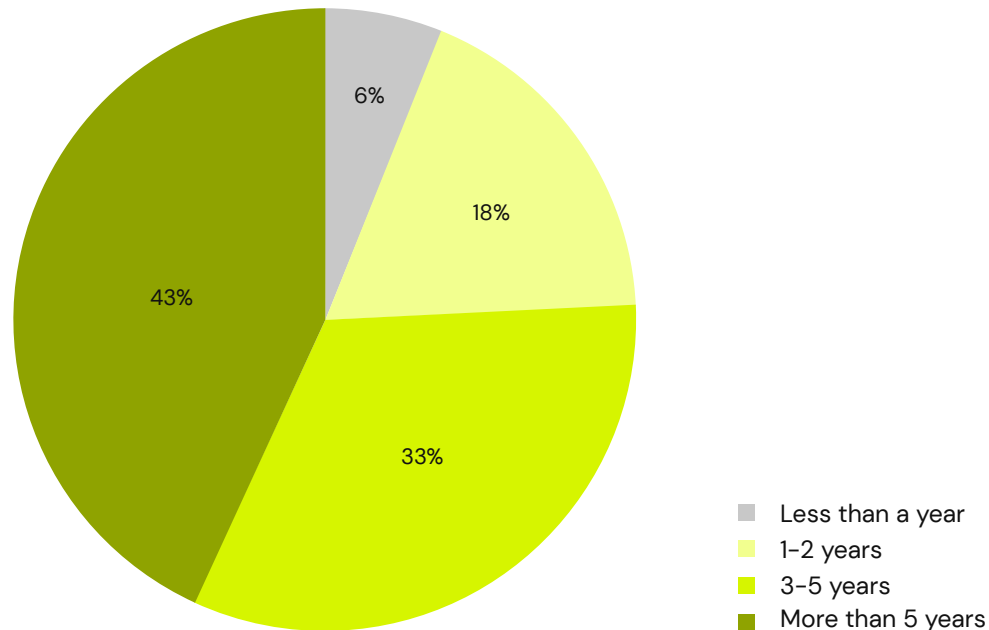
Marie Blønd,

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

As long as my heart beats...

When we look at how long digital volunteers have served as administrators or moderators, we see that 76% have held the role for three years or more, while 43% have been engaged for more than five years. Only 6% have been administrators for less than a year. The task of leading and moderating Facebook groups is often a long-term commitment.

Figure 3.4
For how long have you been an administrator/moderator in your Facebook group?



Our survey among moderators also shows that nearly half (49%) founded their own group. A third (33%) were recruited to the role by another administrator, and 18% took over from a previous administrator. This indicates that many have created their groups based on personal interest, need, or a desire to create positive change.

For many administrators, their Facebook groups and the community that forms there become a deeply personal matter, and it becomes important to preserve and protect it.

For example, one administrator describes creating their group out of a need to connect with others going through the same difficult situation:

"I was in a situation with a family member with cancer and I felt very alone, so I created the group to have someone to lean on who would understand what I was going through."

Another administrator tells us about inheriting the group from their father:

"I took over the group from my father. He passed away on June 25, 2022, and it was his 'little child.'"

For many, the role of administrator stems from a deep investment or interest in a particular topic or cause. This may be why many remain in the role for an extended period.

... I will love you

"I will be active until I draw my last breath," says Dan Kreutzfeldt, who administers the group What's Happening in Nordvest. This level of commitment is also reflected in the survey among group administrators, where 67% respond that they intend to continue managing their groups for as long as they can.

Most administrators do not want to see their groups shut down if they are unable to lead them. Only 9% would choose to make their group inactive under such circumstances, while 83% prefer to hand over the leadership to someone else. Jacob, who leads the group Allerød Municipality – Help each other! 👍 Remember: No selling and buying, shares this sentiment:

"I will run the group as long as I can stand up. Worst case, I would hand it over to someone else. Perhaps someone who has offered to take over and shown interest."

For the most dedicated volunteers, the role of administrator is something they wish to fulfill as long as possible, and if they can no longer do so, they want the group to continue under the leadership of other dedicated individuals. As one administrator describes it, the group has:

"...become a bit like a guinea pig or a plant. You feel a obligated to keep it alive and thriving."

Recent studies suggest that Danish volunteer engagement has undergone changes in recent years. In the book "Den nye frivillighed" (The New Volunteering), Dahl-Gren points out that the volunteer sector is subject

to the same societal changes as other sectors, including how digitalization provides new opportunities for interaction (2019).

One of the most notable trends is that more Danes choose to engage in time-limited periods instead of committing for longer durations (see CFSA 2021; Dahl-Gren 2017; DUF 2020; The National Council for Volunteering, et al. 2021). Today, more volunteers choose to engage in temporary and time-bound activities – such as organizing events, fundraising, participating in actions, and similar activities. For instance, the Center for Volunteer Social Work shows an increase in the proportion of volunteers who describe their engagement as periodic, from 43% in 2017 to 46% in 2019 (CFSA 2021).

When we compare this with the engagement among digital volunteers in the survey, we do not see the same trend. Most of them have been engaged in their roles for several years, and few have thought about stepping down. Contrary to the general movement towards shorter or more periodic volunteer work, the administration of digital community centers seems to be a long-term commitment for many. The engagement is more enduring than other volunteer activities such as organizing events or helping with a fundraiser. For some, like Dan Kreutzfeldt, the commitment is something the volunteers dedicate themselves to until they "draw their last breath."

4

The work environment of digital volunteers

Digital volunteer work encompasses a wide range of tasks, where volunteers must balance roles as editors, moderators, advisors, spokespersons, and much more. On average, this work requires 4.6 hours per week.

As in any other job, the work environment for digital volunteers is crucial for their motivation and well-being. In this chapter, we look into the work environment of Facebook group administrators and moderators.

In this chapter, we draw on a survey conducted among administrators and moderators as well as qualitative interviews (see overview of data sources on [page 300](#), ref. C and D).

This chapter will include:

- What motivates the digital volunteers?
- What demotivates the digital volunteers?
- How often do the digital volunteers handle problematic behavior?
- How is the mental work environment for administrators?
- To what extent do the members contribute to the administration of the group?

Nøgletal



75%

respond that they are motivated by being able to help those in need. Similarly, 74% describe that they are motivated by being able to do something important for the local community. In general, many are motivated by knowing that their work makes a difference.



51%

of digital volunteers respond that the greatest demotivation for their work is when group members are rude to each other.



95%

see their work as always ongoing. Nearly one in four is not comfortable taking more than one day off.



72%

run their community center together with others.



8%

feel lonely in the administrator role.

”

People can potentially dig up very personal information about you on your Facebook profile. I have certainly received my share of hate messages, for example, that time when I compared the budgets for daycare institutions with the defense budget in a debate.

Marie Blønd, The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

”

Sometimes you think: Do I really have the energy for this? When people completely freak out because you deleted their comment and you think: "Can't you see how inappropriate it was, what you wrote?" Then I spend a lot of time writing to them and saying: "Remember to read through your comment before hitting send," and "write as if you were speaking to a stranger on the street." If they don't like our moderation, no one is forcing them to stay.

Sometimes it seems as though people think we get paid to be administrators and moderators. Then you can't help but feel: "We have lives outside of Facebook – what do you expect?"

Helle Kiel Hauglund, Happy Crocheting

What motivates the digital volunteers?

Doing something for others

What motivates moderators and administrators to spend so many hours running digital community centers? The primary driving force among administrators in the study is the desire to help those in need. It's also about doing something for their local community, doing something they are good at, and participating in a social community.

The lowest scoring among the different motivational factors is the more career-oriented motivation of being able to enhance one's CV, as well as gaining recognition from either the surrounding community or the group's members. Perhaps many of the volunteers have never considered that their work in digital community centers could be used on a CV, but generally, there is not much focus on recognition among the digital volunteers.

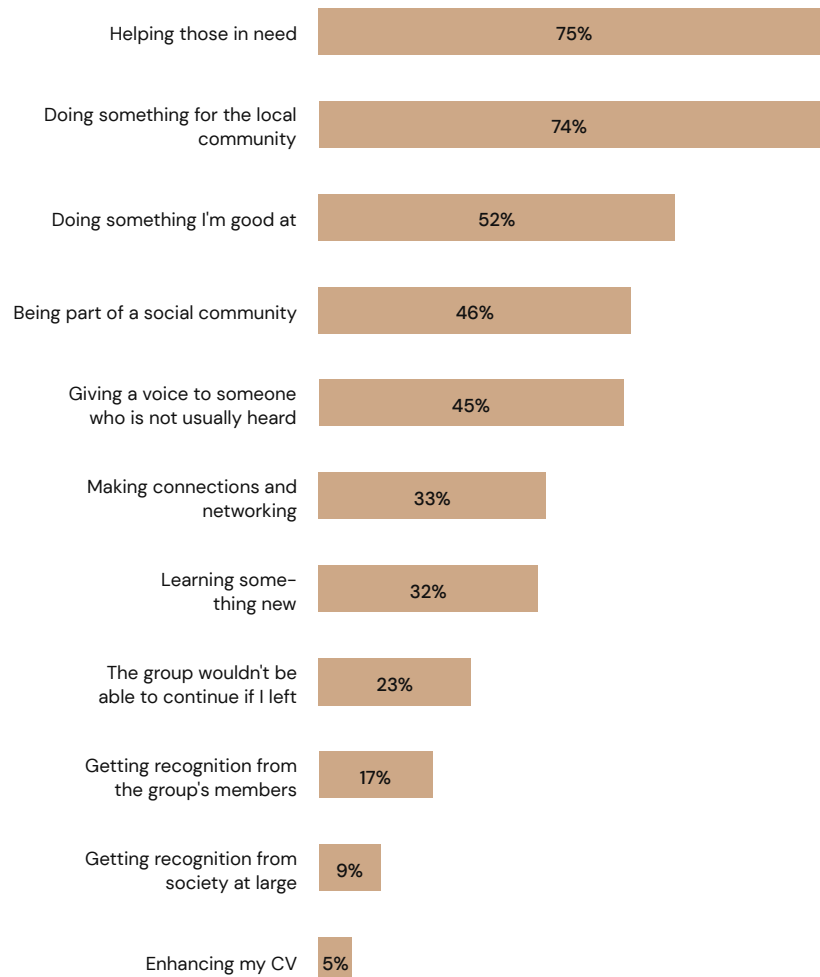
Previous studies indicate that the desire to make a difference and to be part of a community also ranks high among other volunteer groups (CFSA 2021; VIVE 2021).

Digital volunteers are largely driven by the desire to help others and create positive change. One administrator writes that they are driven by social indignation:

"I am motivated by social injustice. Many receive unreasonable rejections from municipalities, social centers, and disability centers. I help people find money in various funds/grants."

Figure 4.1

How important is the following for your willingness to be an administrator/moderator? The percentage of respondents answering "Very important" and "Important":



Open responses to the question:

Is there anything that motivates you that is not on this list?

”

There is often poor breastfeeding support in the public sector (I know this because I work in the field and have three children). Not everyone can afford private breastfeeding help, but in our group, you can get free, qualified breastfeeding guidance.

”

That there continues to be a safe space for overweight people where they feel appreciated for who they are and a not always singled out.

”

It has been exciting to see the group grow and to see members benefit from each other's experiences and stories. When I started the group, several other outdoor groups expressed skepticism, but the group has gradually grown, and there haven't really been the conflicts between members that I have seen in many other groups.

Quotes from administrators/moderators.

What demotivates the digital volunteers?

A bad atmosphere and distrust

When we ask about what demotivates digital volunteers, more than half of the administrators point to negative and ugly comments from group members as a significant factor. Additionally, nearly half state that their engagement falls when members do not follow the group's rules. Another aspect that can wear down job satisfaction is distrust from members – either by questioning the administrator's decisions or by doubting the intention behind the group. A negative atmosphere and lack of support from group members are the primary reasons digital volunteers become tired of their work. One administrator writes in the open responses:

"I sometimes feel disappointed in how adults behave on the internet (...)"

Facebook's infrastructure is important

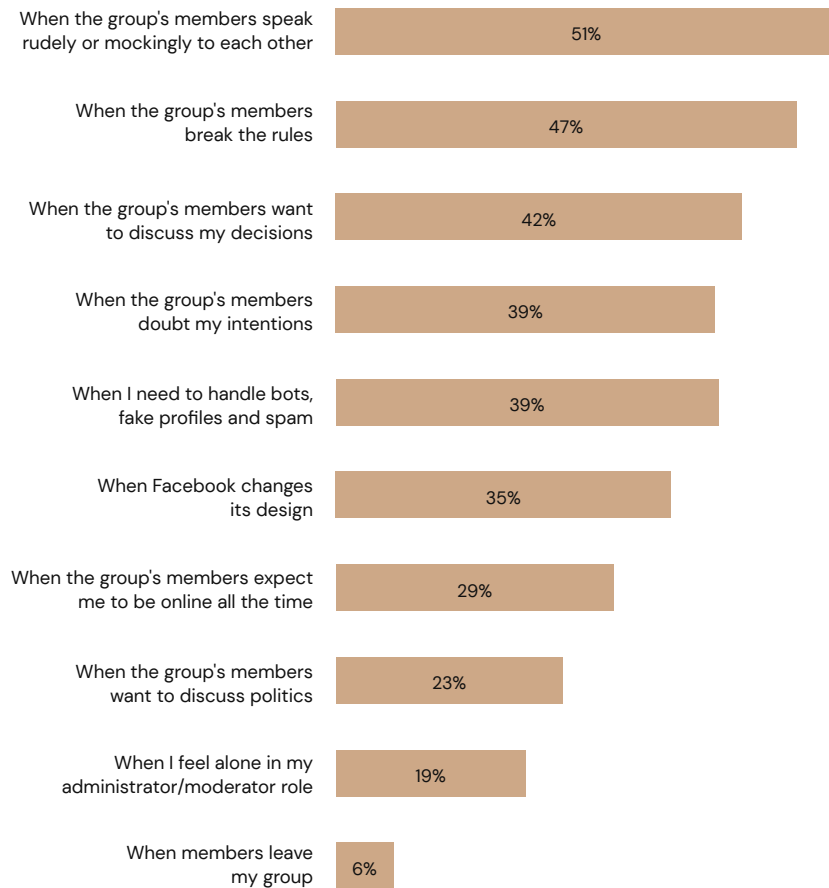
About a third of the administrators and moderators in the survey (35%) report that they become tired of their work when Facebook changes its design. Facebook as a platform is also a recurring theme in the open responses. One administrator shares their frustration:

"When Facebook puts me in "Facebook jail" for a period because I have been too active – or puts opaque restrictions on my Facebook work."

Several administrators and moderators express frustration over being blocked by Facebook for being "too active" in their groups. Additionally, there is irritation over design changes that cause shifts in workflows and difficulty in accessing support, which is only offered in English.

Figure 4.2

How important is the following for you to get tired of being an administrator/moderator? The proportion who answer "Very important" and "Important":



Open responses to the question:

Is there anything that demotivates you that is not on this list?

”

Just my general time usage. I also want to be with my family and sometimes wonder why I also have to take on this task. No one is asking me to do it. I've even CREATED the work myself 😊 without pay. And without recognition or results. It's actually just work 😞

”

When people think they can say anything to you (like if their comment/post gets deleted)! And then they get even more offensive when they are blocked from the group. When people find my address online, threaten me on Messenger, and also send threats via text!

”

When members refuse to listen, when they break the rules, or when they demand special treatment and the right to be rude to others. But the absolute biggest frustration is that Facebook support is impossible to get into contact with, and there are very often errors in their system that are quite severe.

”

When others try to take over a group with a lot of members because they don't want to build their own group. They capitalize on other groups and try to change the entire agenda of the group.

Quotes from administrators/moderators

An administrator with multimedia experience gets help from the digital toolbox



Casper Thede Olsen

37, multimedia designer and logistics coordinator.



6430 Nordborg
7,486 members

Founded in 2019

Category: City, regional, and local



WordPress Denmark
5,874 members

Founded in 2012

Category: Professional

About the community center:

Casper is one of the 80% of digital volunteers who is an administrator or a moderator in multiple groups. 6430 Nordborg is a forum for everyone who lives in the postal code 6430 or has connections to it. You can check in on what is happening in the local area, post lost and found notices, start a debate, find communities, organize local initiatives, share experiences, and find knowledge about various topics.

The WordPress group is a Facebook group for users, developers, and other enthusiasts who work with WordPress. The group operates on a "help yourself" basis, and assistance is given in the comments sections so that others can find the same help by searching the group. The group is used to seek advice, to find paid assistance for a specific

task, to get inspiration, and to share useful tips.

Casper's road to the role of administrator:

Casper was initially recruited as an administrator in the Nordborg group by its founder, Sanne, because he was good at reporting content that violated the group's rules. Today, Casper has taken over the group and runs it with another digital volunteer.

The WordPress group was, as Casper describes, a "zombie group": The administrators were inactive, and it was "dead" except for a few unserious posts and spam. Casper contacted the administrators and asked if he could take over the group, and eventually, he was granted control. Since then, the group has experienced significant membership growth, and the professional collaboration among the members is flourishing.

In practice:

Casper is good at navigating Facebook's digital toolbox and uses many of the group format's features to make administration easier for himself. As a result, he spends "only" about an hour a day managing the groups. The 6430 Nordborg group demands most of his attention by far.

Caspers favorite digital tools:

- Getting a notification if someone uses certain words that suggest the rules are being broken.
- Restrictions that makes it so that comments can only be made every 5 minutes if a discussion is becoming overheated.
- Automatic suspension of members if he deletes more than 5 comments and 2 posts from the same person.
- Pre-criteria for automatic approval of members, based on the profile's age and their location.
- Getting a notification if a post receives more than 35 reactions in an hour.

Balanced volunteering:

Casper cannot monitor the group during working hours, so it has been necessary for him to establish a culture that allows him to be active in the group outside of working hours only. In the WordPress group, Casper involved the members in deciding what the revived group's rules should be. Therefore, the rules have been developed collaboratively.

Worth mentioning:

Casper has had good cooperation with the police and the municipality when a fire broke out in a local apartment block, where the authorities communicated to

citizens through the group. The police requested information from citizens, for example, asking if anyone might have unknowingly filmed the perpetrator. On this occasion, the group demonstrated its value as a coordinating platform for the local community, as people donated clothes and opened their homes to those affected.

For a period, there was discontent and disagreement, resulting in some members creating their own local groups. However, Casper does not take this too seriously. When some of the most active complainers left, he saw that other citizens became more motivated to participate in the group's discussions. Since then, almost all the new groups have been closed down again.

[User]

Hi school children and their parents 😊
Remember that your kids should have bike lights on their bikes. It's especially the young ones that don't have them on from 7.30 – 8.00

41
 10 comments
 1 share

[User]

And remember your helmet 🙏❤️

[User]

Adults should also wear lights when they are out in traffic. They aren't much better than the kids.

[User]

Thank you to Nordborg for welcoming us – the new residents. There are great shops, beautiful nature, and peace. Everything we were looking for. 😊😊😊😊

Haven't seen any trash around the lake, and there hasn't been noise or trouble.

I don't get the critique that Northern Als gets ... You get everything at half the price.

303
 49 comments

[User]

Update: SOLVED!! I am crying with gratitude for the helpfulness in the group – the attack has stopped – thank you so so much to Kim for the help – and thanks to those who offered help.

SOS – I'm getting flooded with spam orders on my page – what do I do to stop it!!!!

8
 9 comments

[User]

What formulas do you have running on your page? And what are your blocking options?

[User]

Write me a message, I'll help

”

When tensions are high, you meet people who acknowledge the work that must be behind the moderation. There are also people who post messages expressing gratitude for the effort. However, it is often when there is conflict and disagreement that our efforts become evident to the members. In September, someone wrote that we were doing a fantastic job and that they wanted to give us a gift. We responded that we didn't do it to receive anything and politely declined. It should not be said in the community that we can be bought.

A job that is hard to take a break from

Besides the weekly hours they put in, we also asked whether administrators and moderators think of their volunteer work as a continuous activity or something that happens at specific times. A full 95% believe that their work is ongoing and not performed at set times. One volunteer writes in their open response:

"During every holiday and vacation, we close the group for posts. We announce that we are on vacation from this date to that date. It is important that we, as administrators, are not overburdened and that we have time off. I cannot demand that people who volunteer in my group are always available. That's why it is important to take breaks sometimes. It can never become a burden for my co-administrators. I own the group, so what I put on myself is my own concern."

Digital volunteer work does not require being there physically and can be done at any time. The work is always accessible via phone and is just a click away. However, this also means that you rarely have time off.

As previously shown, 82% of administrators and moderators are active on a daily basis, and 11% check in at least once an hour. Therefore, digital volunteer work seems to be flexible but also constant for many.

When we ask how long volunteers feel comfortable being absent from the group, more than half (57%) say they feel comfortable being absent for a few days.

What if something happens while I'm gone?

22% respond that they feel comfortable being away for at most one day,

and 2% are not comfortable being away from the group at all. Bjarne W. Andresen, who administers the group Pedagogical Network says that it a stress factor when he can't constantly check in on the community:

"What if someone is calling someone else a huge jerk right now, and I don't see it for three hours – by then, the situation has already escalated. If I address it immediately, it's easier to handle. So I check often for my own sake. If I were at work or at school, and I knew I couldn't check during the day, it could really stress me out."

Running the digital community centers is something that is hard to take a break from. Many feel obligated to check in on the group often, and it does not feel good to let the conversations manage themselves.

Flexibility...

Previous studies indicate that there have been a number of changes in the landscape of volunteerism in recent years. In chapter 3, we described how the voluntary engagement of Danes is increasingly time-limited rather than a long-term commitment. Another related development is that traditional, organized volunteerism is now being supplemented by more flexible forms of engagement.

Figure 4.3
Is the work ongoing, or have you limited it to specific times during the day/week?

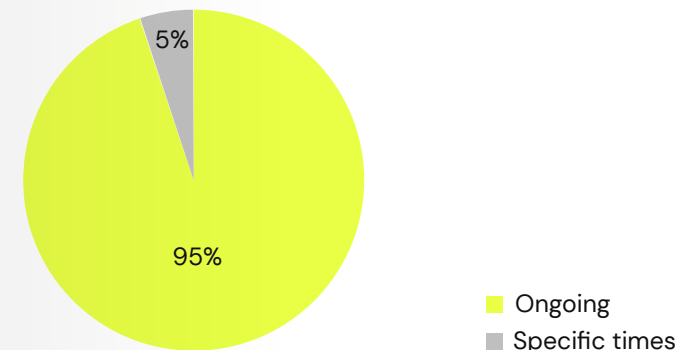


Figure 4.3: Data source D / n=408 (See appendix 1)

”

When I am visible as a moderator, I receive praise and support, but if I have been, for example, at the cinema and there has been some spam in the group for a few hours, people can get quite indignant.

If they only knew how much is done in the back room; how much spam and irrelevant content they never see. But the activity in the back room is rarely praised.

Dan Kreutzfeldt, What's Happening in Nordvest

The shift is clearly seen in the fact that Danes are increasingly participating in episodic and time-limited volunteer work (see e.g., CFSA 2021; Dahl-Gren 2019; Frivilligrådet et al. 2021; DUF 2020).

The trend towards more flexible volunteer work, which can be adjusted up or down as needed, has proven particularly popular among young people (Dahl-Gren 2017; Frivilligrådet et al. 2021; Grubb and Skov Henriksen 2018; Ibsen and Levinsen 2016). This flexible engagement allows young people to take on smaller tasks that can be adapted to changing life situations and schedules. For example, the Danish Youth Council highlights micro-volunteering and ad hoc work groups as attractive opportunities for those who want to engage in volunteer work on their own terms, even during busy periods (DUF 2020).

When we look at the engagement of Facebook administrators, it also takes a flexible form, as the work is rarely tied to specific times or days of the week, but rather happens continuously.

One volunteer writes in our open responses that flexibility is part of the motivation:

"I get to do it in the amount I can handle. Since I am outside the labor market, it is a relevant activity for me to be able to help others."

...or a never ending duty?

But the responses we receive from administrators and moderators also show that many check their groups every hour, and a quarter do not feel comfortable being away from the group for even a day.

Although the work is fundamentally flexible, it also comes with an expectation of always being available and ready to resolve conflicts and rule violations.

Having the work always be accessible via the phone can have both its advantages and disadvantages. It offers volunteers flexibility in their work, but it also creates pressure to always be ready. This is described by Marie Blønd, who is an administrator in the Facebook group The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom which has more than 38,000 members:

"You feel immense pressure to maintain the pace and keep posting, to be available 24/7. The advantages of the digital world are also its disadvantages. Everyone can reach you at any time of day. But you can also reach other people at any time of day."

Being active at all hours of the day is mostly an advantage for Marie's activism, but it also puts her in a position where she is always available for questions, criticism, or other inquiries from the group's members. Bjarne W. Andresen, who is an administrator in the Pedagogical Network, says in his interview:

"If you count the hours I spent, the number might be fairly low, but it became dominant in my daily life and took up a lot of my attention. Sometimes, I failed to be properly present in other contexts because I constantly had to keep an eye on the group."

The constant availability and lack of clear and distinct lines between work and private life is a potential challenge to maintaining a healthy and balanced work environment for the volunteers.

How often does problematic behavior need to be addressed?

We have also investigated how often the volunteers have to handle various types of problematic behavior: Fake profiles and spam, harassment and threats, as well as difficult inquiries. The next pages provide a complete overview of the responses.

Fake profiles and spam are the most common problems. 92% respond that they have received membership requests from profiles they deemed to be fake. Many often see spam attempts and fake news in their groups.

Harassment and threats are less frequent but still a problem for many. Half have experienced harassment directed at themselves or other administrators, and about two-thirds have witnessed harassment between group members. Over a third have also experienced threats directed at themselves or other administrators. Nearly half (45%) have seen fraud attempts or exploitation.

More than half (55%) have received inquiries from members who were in difficult life situations, and 21% from members who felt they were in danger.

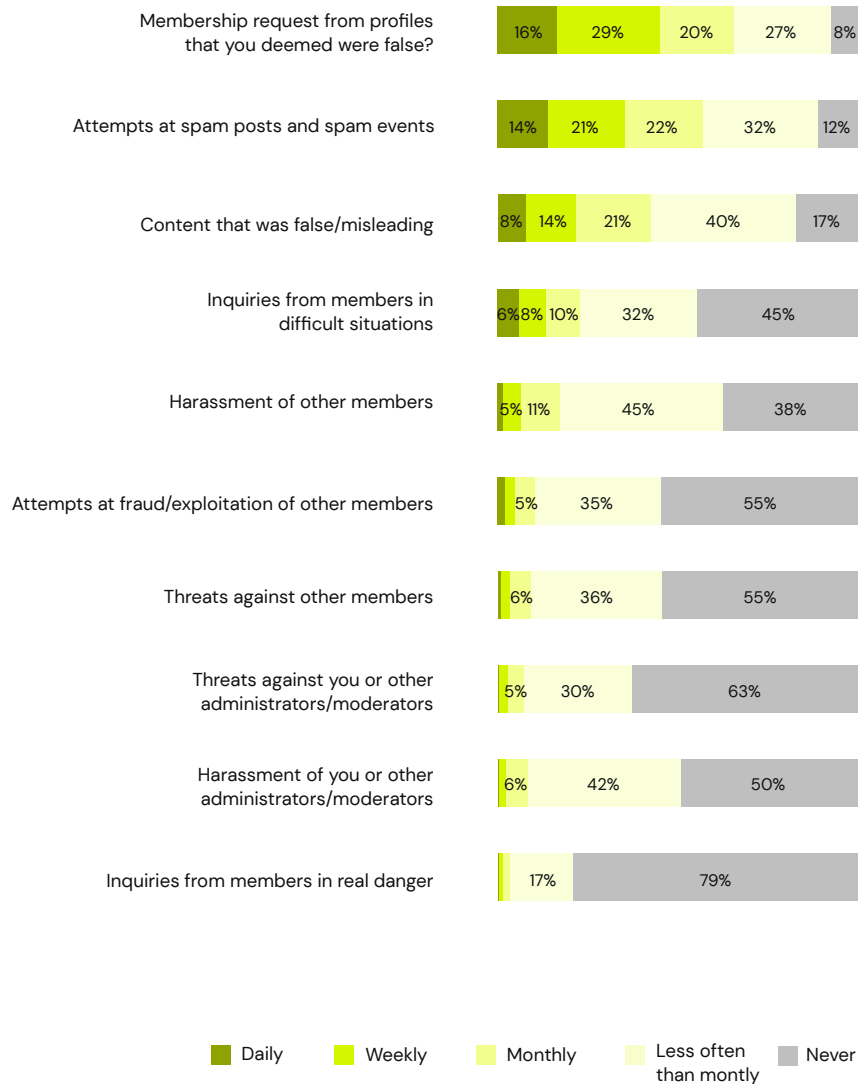
A problem for the work environment

It is important to note that figure 4.4 on the next page is categorized by how often administrators and moderators encounter different types of problematic behavior: daily, weekly, monthly, or less frequently. For those who experience these problems often, it can be particularly burdensome. A study by the organization Ingerfair (2020) points out that negative experiences such as harassment and threats can be highly detrimental to

volunteers' well-being. Even rare experiences pose a potential workplace environment issue.

We also asked about how situations involving problematic behavior in the group were handled. In half of the cases (51%), the members in question were excluded. In some instances, other members intervened and managed the situation (15%). 11% felt that they did not get any assistance or had someone to talk to during the situation.

Figure 4.4
How often have you experienced the following in your group?



”

We have had a lot of problems with spam. Some want to sell bitcoins, and some profiles flood the comments with repetitive content. These are the hardest to weed out. I caught many of them by requiring approval for new members' posts during the first month. Some have probably hacked an existing account, because otherwise I would have caught them during the membership approval process.

Bjarne W. Andresen
Pedagogical Network

”

Female administrators are far more likely to be victims of threatening behavior outside of the group.

Jacob Nielsen
TAAGF – Total Abolition of Mutual Support Obligations

”

We had one case with a young man who was mentally unstable and made some disturbing posts. We contacted his parents, who managed to reach him. It was pure luck that we found his parents through his profile.

Casper Thede
6430 Nordborg and WordPress Denmark

A lot of digital team spirit

72% of the digital volunteers in the survey manage their Facebook groups together with others. 59% work in a smaller team consisting of 2–4 volunteers, while 12% are part of a larger team of more than five volunteers.

Several mention in the open responses that the volunteers actively rely on each other in their work. They often consult with each other about the group's rules and how situations should be handled. One administrator writes:

"We are a group of administrators who consult each other in a Messenger chat group about topics/posts/reports before making a decision if it is a post or a topic we haven't encountered before."

Collaboration with the team often involves exchanging ideas and experiences, especially when it comes to the group's rules and new issues. However, for some, it provides more flexibility and freedom to be the sole person in charge. Jacob Beer, has considered getting help, but he fears that it would be too time-consuming and frustrating to constantly have to agree on the group's direction.

"Once in a while I approve a post that I normally wouldn't approve. In those cases it is a lot easier to be alone on the job."

Co-operation eases the burden

Administrator Helle Pedersen tells us in her interview:

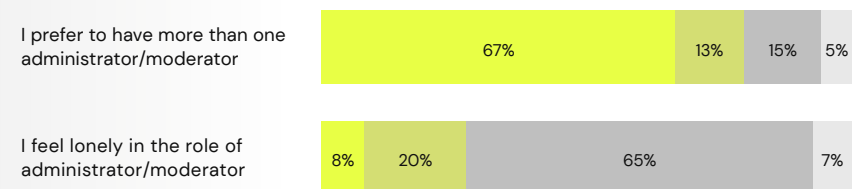
"It is important to have multiple administrators. Both because of the workload – no one can be at the computer 24/7 and in case one person passes away, there is someone to carry it on."

67% of the volunteers in the survey, like Helle, prefer to have more than one administrator on the team.

Only 8% feel lonely in their role as an administrator, which is likely due to the fact that many share the responsibilities and challenges of the work with others. The community among the administrators can thus reduce the feeling of being alone with difficult decisions.

Considering that 46% of the volunteers find great motivation in the social community, collaboration between administrators is also valuable (see [page 98](#)). It can not only lighten the workload but also bring job satisfaction. In the Breastfeeding Network Facebook groups, they have structured the moderating work with schedules and organized physical meetings with communal dining to ensure motivation among the volunteers. Read more in the case study on the next page.

Figure 4.5
Do you agree with the following statement?



- Strongly agree or agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly disagree or disagree
- Don't know / Not relevant

Breastfeeding help and support - 24/7



Maria Pihl Fly Bekke

30, Midwife



Breastfeeding Network Group for children aged 0-2
27,500 members

Founded in 2016



Breastfeeding Network Group for complete milking
1,900 members

Founded in 2018



Breastfeeding Network Group for children aged 2+
3,500 members

Founded in 2016



Breastfeeding Network guidance group
17,100 members

Founded in 2009

*Private groups
50,000 members in total
Category: Parenting*

Breastfeeding Network started in 2007 as a network for breastfeeding mothers and has developed over time into an association with the purpose of providing support and guidance to breastfeeding mothers and their families, as well as spreading evidence-based knowledge about breastfeeding. The association's primary activity today takes place on Facebook, where Breastfeeding Network operates four Facebook groups: Three network groups and one guidance group. In the network groups, members can help each other and share joys and challenges related to breastfeeding - under the supervision of the moderators. In the guidance group, Breastfeeding Network's volunteer advisors are ready to provide support every

Monday at 12 PM and are available for 48 hours from the time they respond to an inquiry. Breastfeeding Network now has a structured training program that must be completed if you want to become a volunteer breastfeeding advisor or moderator. The advisor training consists of 190 hours over 9 months with both theoretical and practical lessons, while the moderator training is shorter and can be completed in 2-4 weeks. Breastfeeding Network has also created its own [Wikipedia page about breastfeeding](#).

Maria's road to the role of administrator: Maria used Breastfeeding Network's Facebook groups when she had trouble with breastfeeding her first child. After her maternity leave, she continued to stay at home but missed using her professional skills. When she became pregnant again and knew that she would

continue staying at home for the next few years, she applied to become a breastfeeding advisor. Here, she could both use her professional skills and give back to the groups she had benefited from. Since 2018, she has been engaged as a volunteer in various roles and has now become one of the coordinating forces in the association.

In practice:

Maria spends an average of 8–10 hours per week on Breastfeeding Network activities. She typically handles two breastfeeding guiding sessions per week, during which she is available to a breastfeeding mother for 48 hours. On top of that, she takes moderator shifts in the network groups every other week. The practice here is that all posts are screened before being published. Some need to be linked to the FAQ, some are rejected because they are not about breastfeeding, and some are approved but monitored because they could potentially invite debate, which is not allowed in the groups. In these cases, Maria may set the tone in the comments: "Feel free to offer support and encouragement..." There can also be posts that require a quick response and need to be referred to the healthcare system. These can involve new mothers who cannot wake their newborns or other posts indicating that a mother or baby is not thriving. When Maria is on duty, she checks in 5–6 times a day and

always starts early in the morning to see what has been posted overnight. Finally, Maria is one of the coordinating forces at Breastfeeding Network. She serves on the board, schedules moderator shifts, updates the Breastfeeding Network's moderator handbook, and coordinates with the other admins.

Most motivated when:

Maria feels particularly happy when she feels that her support and guidance makes a difference. "Sometimes I meet a mother who is overwhelmed, and I get the conversation started: 'Do you actually want to breastfeed?' and I can feel the relief coming through the screen." Maria also feels proud when she sees Breastfeeding Network being recognized for its expertise and contributions to the field. She is also a member of a group for midwives and finds that 8 out of 10 times, questions about breastfeeding are referred to Breastfeeding Network's Wikipedia page. Overall, it is motivating for Maria to see how Breastfeeding Network makes a difference and supports many mothers who have breastfeeding problems.

Least motivated when:

When Maria occasionally meets angry members, she has to grit her teeth and ask them to write to the board. She can also be frustrated by the obstacles that come with being a digital association. For example, Breastfeeding Network is not

allowed to borrow the volunteer center in Odense because the association does not have a physical headquarters and does not conduct physical activities. Finally, it frustrates Maria that Facebook does not follow its own rules when it comes to showing pictures of breasts and nipples. It is permitted when the images are shared for medical or health purposes – or when it involves breastfeeding. Nevertheless, Facebook once threatened Breastfeeding Network with shutting down their groups because of nipple images, so they have to reject these images, even though they are medically relevant and important for questions about issues like sores and mastitis.

Worth mentioning:

It has taken time to find a good model for volunteering at Breastfeeding Network. Previously, people experienced burnout because they felt they had to be available all the time – especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when questions about vaccines flooded in. To protect the volunteers, Breastfeeding Network has created more structure with schedules and well-defined shifts and tasks: "When you are not on duty, you are off." Breastfeeding Network checks in with the volunteers one-on-one and has organized physical meetings with communal meals for the volunteers. To become a volunteer at Breastfeeding Network, you must fill out an application form and

be approved in a video interview. After that, you can take the course to become either a moderator or a breastfeeding advisor.

[bruger 1]

When can you give your baby a pacifier? My baby baby is a week old and suckles all the time! It hurts and I could use some relief ❤️



20 comments

Moderator

Hi dear
First of all, congratulations on your baby 🥰 and hugs! Breastfeeding is not supposed to hurt 🥰 Perhaps you can use our faq? There's something about breastfeeding pains and pacifiers [[Link to the FAQ on Breastfeeding Network's web page](#)]

[User 2]

Maybe it's the technique that's causing you trouble? Breastfeeding also hurt for me at the beginning, but after a visit from a breastfeeding advisor, it became completely painless. ❤️

[User 4]

I agree about looking at the technique! I found it very helpful to search for "deep latch" on YouTube 🥰 You might want to try that and see if it helps with positioning the baby 🥰 As for pacifiers, I just want to mention that it never worked for us 🥰 I don't know if we introduced it too late – we waited until we had mastered the technique and breastfeeding was no longer painful (6 weeks).

It is not always cold at the top

For some, the work is lonely..

18% of the digital volunteers agree or strongly agree with the statement, "As an administrator/moderator, it can be difficult to participate in the group's conversations because my role is more powerful." For some, it can indeed be challenging to engage on equal terms with others because they have special responsibilities or authority in the group. We have also observed that members have criticized administrators for "advertising" when they make recommendations.

On the previous page, we also saw that 8% can feel lonely in their work. For some, the administrator role is associated with loneliness and isolation from the rest of the group's members. This may potentially be related to the fact that 28% of administrators handle the work alone. These solo administrators manage their group without direct support from others and thus handle problems and tasks by themselves.

A study conducted by Ingerfair and the Velliv Association maps out the psychological work environment in volunteer organizations (2020). A common form of "negative experience" among volunteers is loneliness in their work. 34% are lonely to a high or very high degree. According to Ingerfair, loneliness can negatively impact volunteers' well-being and is considered very burdensome.

...but not for most

The study by Ingerfair suggests that loneliness often comes from the volunteer being physically isolated or feeling alone in their work. In both cases, the volunteer lacks professional sparring and support. Seeing it this way, one would expect that volunteers in digital community centers, who

are physically alone, would experience significant loneliness. That is why it is surprising that only 8% feel lonely in their work.

The low percentage of volunteers experiencing loneliness may be related to the fact that many share the administrative tasks with others. It might also be because many administrators receive help and support from the members of their groups. In chapter 6, we look into how group members often play a crucial role in creating well-functioning community centers.

”

I have made a lot of friends through the movement. For example, there was a woman who reached out to me in a very caring way. She could tell from my messages in the group that I was feeling overwhelmed.

The first time she called, I didn't know her at all, and she had just found my number online. But she said to me, "I can see that your tone has changed, and I want to know if you're okay." We have been calling each other regularly since then, and she has been a valuable sparring partner, just like the rest of the administrative group.

Marie Blønd,

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

Job satisfaction and well-being in the digital community centers

Motivation and job satisfaction

The administrators' and moderators' motivation is largely driven by the desire to help others and make a difference. They want to be a part of a social community and feel competent in their work. However, they also encounter challenges that make them tired of their work: Negative comments, rule violations, and distrust of their decisions. Additionally, there can be issues related to Facebook's rules, design changes, and lack of support. The platform's infrastructure can either aid or hinder engagement.

Understanding what motivates and demotivates the administrators and moderators is essential for recruiting and maintaining volunteer engagement in our digital community centers. As Dahl-Gren emphasizes, "The better you understand each volunteer's motivation (...) the better chance you have of creating a smooth, inspiring engagement" (Dahl-Gren 2019).

Understanding motivation and demotivation is also crucial for the volunteers' work environment. Experiencing job satisfaction, being motivated, and finding one's work meaningful are critical for a good psychological work environment. The work environment in digital community centers is significant, just as it is in any other volunteer organization. It's not only about maintaining engagement and efficiency but also about ensuring that administrators and moderators thrive in their roles.

What can challenge the work environment?

The work environment for digital volunteers can be challenged in various ways. A negative atmosphere and distrust are common work environment problems. Some volunteers have responded to those challenges by implementing a strict moderation policy. This approach reduces

their workload and potentially prevents the development of a culture of constant dissatisfaction. However, for many volunteers, it is a delicate balance between offering free-flowing debate for as many members as possible and not overburdening themselves with work around the clock. Marie Blønd, administrator in the Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom, whom you will meet later in the report, says:

"[...]We have had periods, where we were told that we were both too tough and not tough enough at the same time."

At the same time, Facebook's technological framework greatly influences both motivation and overall job satisfaction. The way the platform's infrastructure and technical setup operate can either help or hinder engagement. That is why it is important to address and optimize these aspects.

Being constantly available can blur the lines between work and personal life, creating mental pressure for the volunteers. Canan Pektas, the administrator of the group ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15), states in her interview:

"There is activity all the time, every day, constantly. The administrator team has to be online every day or even multiple times a day to monitor the discussion."

It can seem stressful that the work is seemingly never-ending and difficult to take a break from. Many volunteers also have to deal with problematic behavior such as spam, fake news, harassment, and threats.

However, most administrators are not alone in facing these challenges: Three out of four share the task with others, which both eases the workload and creates a sense of community. This may be why only 8% of the volunteers feel lonely in their work, a relatively low figure compared to other studies of volunteer work environments.

Another reason for the low level of loneliness could be the members' engagement in the community centers – a topic we will explore in the following chapter.

5

The public's engagement in digital community centers

In this chapter, we look at Danes' use of digital community centers. We asked a representative sample of the population which Facebook groups (within our 18 categories) they are members of, what they gain from their membership, how they are active, and how much they participate.

The chapter is primarily based on our representative population survey, our public data collected from Facebook, and our interviews with moderators and administrators. (See an overview of data sources on [page 300](#), ref. A.i, C, E).

This chapter will include:

- Where in Denmark do the digital community centers followers come from?
- How many Danes use the digital community centers?
- How and how often are the members active?
- What are the demographic characteristics of the Danes who are members of digital community centers compared to the rest of the population?
- What do we contribute with as members?
- What do we get out of being members?
- How is problematic behavior experienced in digital community centers compared to other social media platforms?

Key numbers:



All kinds of citizens meet

The digital community centers have support from the population across gender, age, education, and employment. They seem to hold particular value for society's most vulnerable.



69%

of the adult population is a member of a digital community center.



56%

of the population over 18 years old are active in a digital community center weekly or more.



1M

of us report that we have been introduced to people we otherwise wouldn't have "met" or encountered opinions and perspectives we otherwise wouldn't have "heard" through the digital community centers.

”

On a quiet Sunday, I just want to say THANK YOU to all of you in the group. I don't know how I would have gotten through many of life's rollercoaster bumps without all the good advice and comforting words you have given me. You know who you are. And to the new members here: You are lucky because this truly is one of the best corners of Facebook land.

Post from a member of
a parents group

”

The members often prove that this is a group that gives life. It is often very moving and life-affirming to be a part of, and it is, of course, motivating to know that you can help save a life.

Comment from a digital
volunteer in a survey

”

"I once guided a woman who was in a relationship and expecting a child with another woman. They had discussed whether both could breastfeed, even though only one had been pregnant. I shared a lot of information about it, and she was so grateful afterward for being seen and heard without judgment, as she hadn't dared to ask elsewhere. I was really proud that she felt safe enough to reach out to us."

Maria Pihl Fly Bekke
Breastfeeding Network groups

Broad support for the digital community centers

We conducted a representative survey among 2,000 adult Danes, focusing on their co-creation, benefits from, and observations in the digital community centers.

The survey shows that 69% of Danes are members of one or more Facebook groups, indicating broad support among the population.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, digital community centers cover a wide range of topics, from leisure and humor to city and local groups. We have distilled this diversity into 18 categories of digital community centers.

These 18 categories are far from exhaustive, and the purposes of the groups within each category vary. In our mapping of [Denmarks Digital community centers](#) from 2022, we provide a more detailed account of the different types of community centers.

Participants in this survey were presented with these categories when asked which digital community centers they are members of. On the opposite page, you can see the distribution of Danish membership within the 18 categories of digital community centers.

The local community center is still popular

Digital community centers allow us to create gathering places based on more than just geography, since there is no travel time to a digital group. This enables people to come together around niche problems and interests in a way that would not have been possible before.

Almost half of Danes are members of one or more city, regional, and local

groups (47%). The community center for the local community remains a popular place to meet and discuss everything happening in their shared local areas.

In Chapter 2, we described how city and regional groups account for 1,366 community centers. However, a total of 3,950 out of 9,000 community centers mention a city or postal code in their name or group description. Many groups that fall under one of the other 17 categories are also geographically anchored, as it is practical to join a local "Find a Friend" group, for example. See the map of groups with geographical anchoring on [page 136](#).

Figure 5.1

Are you a member of one or more of the following types of groups on Facebook?

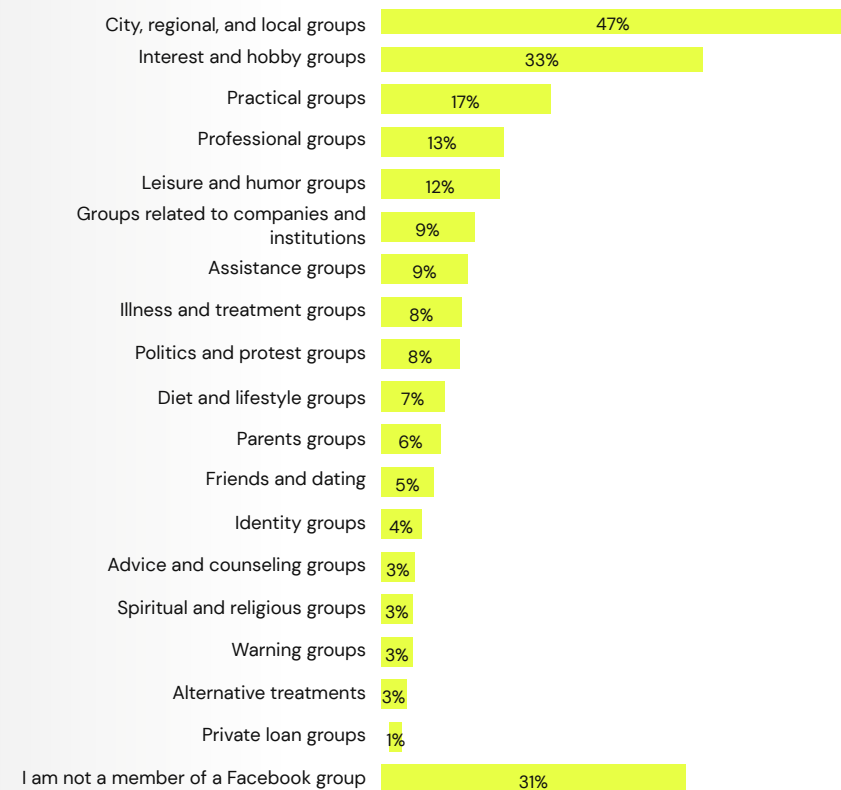


Figure 5.1: Data source E / n=2000 (See appendix 1)

A third (33%) of Danes are also members of one or more interest and hobby groups. This shows that Danes primarily engage in Facebook groups that deal with everyday topics such as our hobby activities, local communities, and using the infrastructure to organize practicalities: Finding jobs, arranging carpooling, or searching for and reporting lost persons and pets.

The digital community centers also allow us to gather around more niche topics, where there might not be enough people in a local area to form a group, such as Korean cooking, UFO hunting, or a support group for a rare disease.

Professional communities are also popular (13%), and our netnographic work shows that these groups facilitate serious professional sparring and inspiration.

Additionally, many of us (12%) enjoy joining groups where people can share jokes, funny videos, or inspirational quotes (Leisure and humor groups).

One group rarely stands alone

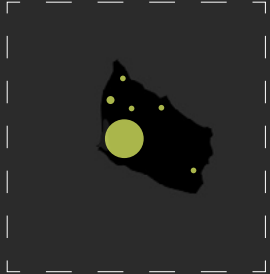
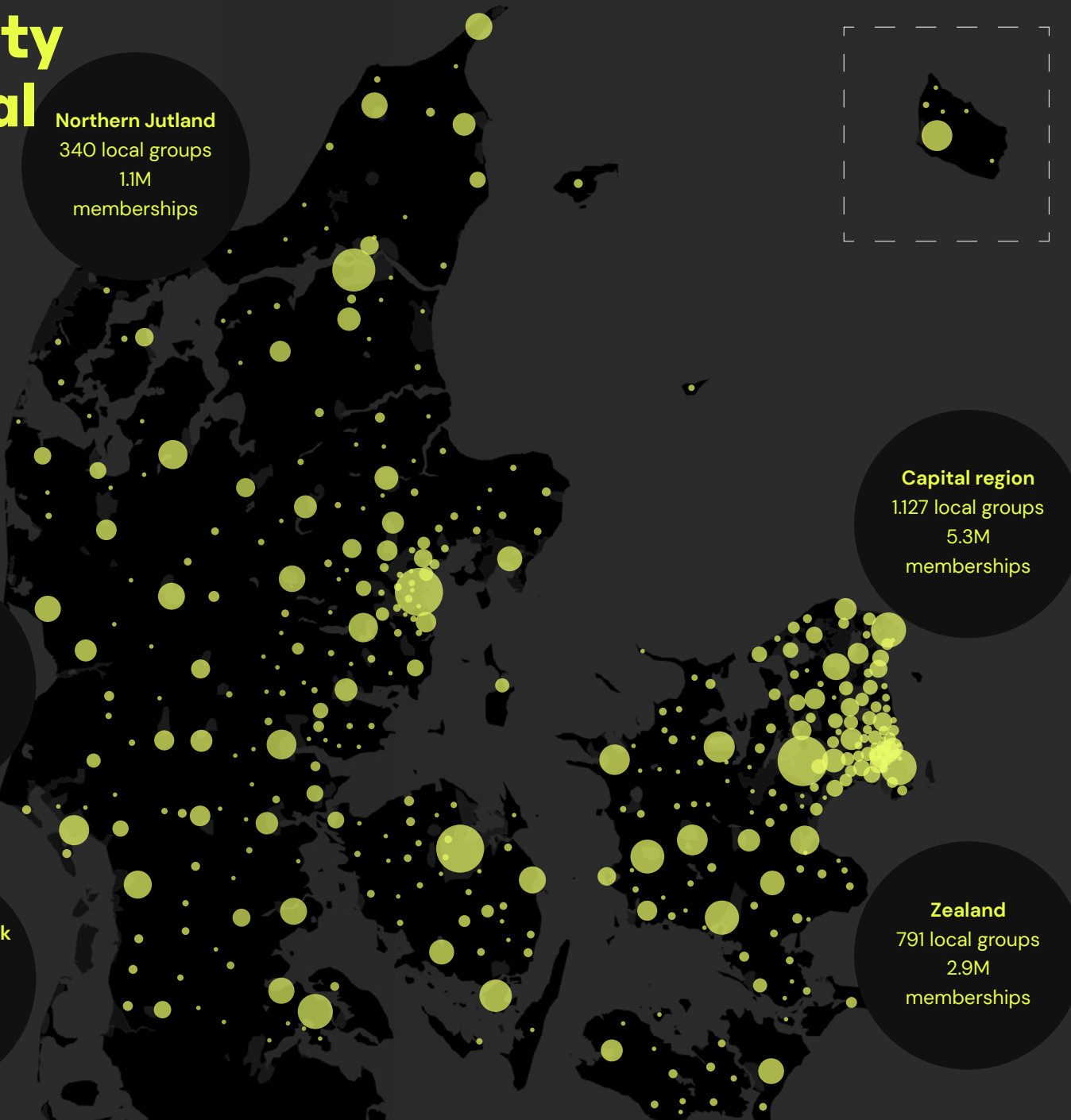
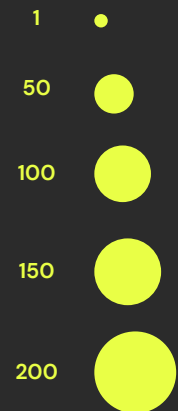
71% of citizens are also members of various categories of community centers. Only 29% are members of groups within one of the categories, while 53% are part of 2 to 4 different categories. 19% respond that they are active in groups within 5 or more categories. This indicates that a significant portion of Danes join digital community centers on Facebook in a variety of categories.

Number of group categories that the respondents are a member of:

NUMBER OF CATEGORIES	PERCENTAGE
1	29%
2	25%
3	17%
4	11%
5	8%
6	5%
7	3%
8	1%
9	1%
10	1%

The digital community centers are a national phenomenon

A visualization of the 3,950 out of 9,000 Facebook groups that mention a postal code or a city in their name or group description. These can be city and regional groups, but also include locally rooted groups within the remaining 18 categories, such as local hobby or protest groups.



The digital community centers are buzzing with activity

We have analyzed how membership numbers in digital community centers reflect the Danish population to identify any over- or under-represented groups.

Figure 5.2 shows the gender distribution among the members of the digital community centers (yellow) and the adult Danish population in general (brown). Among the community center members, women constitute 49.5%, as do the men. The remaining 1% are non-binary individuals. This almost mirrors the general distribution in the adult Danish population, although official statistics only differentiate between women and men and therefore do not include non-binary individuals. This means that women and men are equally well represented in the digital community centers.

When we look at the age distribution, we notice that it also largely follows the distribution in the adult Danish population. However, the youngest and oldest age groups are slightly underrepresented, while the middle age groups are slightly overrepresented. This indicates that the very young and the elderly Danes are less likely to be members of digital community centers, although the differences are only a few percentage points. There is also widespread membership in the digital community centers across education and employment.

Overall, the digital community centers appeal to all gender, age, education, and employment groups.

Figure 5.2
Gender

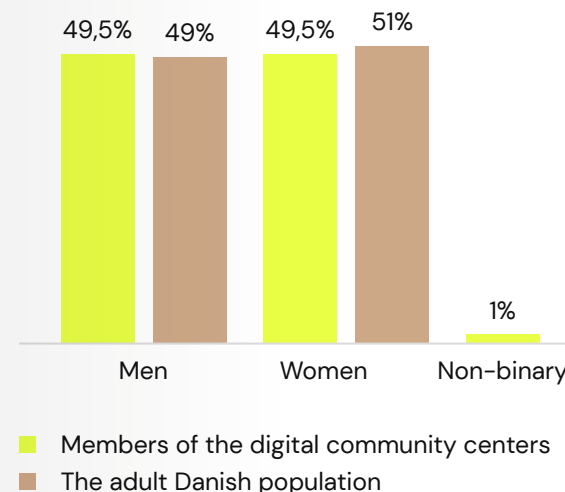
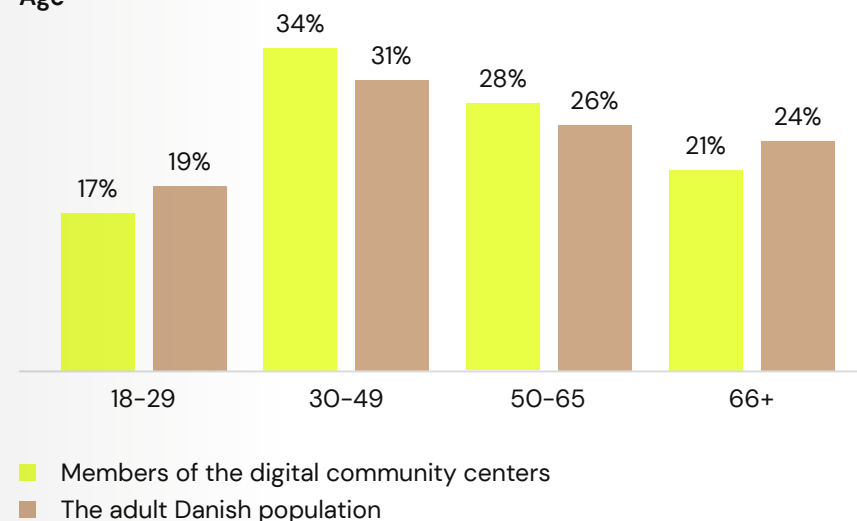


Figure 5.3
Age



What do we do in the digital community centers?

We asked how often respondents are active in the Facebook groups they are members of. 48% are active daily, and 92% are active monthly or more. On average, members spend 2.7 hours per week in the groups. On the next page, we will elaborate on the activities Danes engage in within these groups.

15% of the members post one or more times a week, and an additional 62% do so monthly or occasionally. Only 23% do not start discussions and conversations at all, indicating broad involvement and activity among the members.

The most frequent activity is scrolling through posts and comments and keeping up with what other members write on the page. 69% of the members do this weekly or more often. Jesper, who is an administrator in two groups about social interaction and well-being, describes the seemingly passive members as follows:

"I initially thought that many members were completely passive, but now I can see from Facebook's statistics that the reach of the posts is still really large. So, there must be many who are just observing."

Jesper has noticed that even though his pages do not always receive many likes and comments, they are still read by many.

The authors of this report firmly believe that it "counts" as active membership and citizenship to read other people's opinions, experiences, and stories. We would also consider it participation to attend lectures and debates at Folkeuniversitet (The People's University) or a library, even if

we do not contribute ourselves.

Professor and Professor Emeritus of Rhetoric at the University of Copenhagen, Lisa Villadsen and Christian Kock, point out that listening to and reflecting on others' opinions should be recognized as an important civic act:

"[...] citizens also practice rhetorical citizenship when they are not actively engaged in political deliberation. Interpersonal discussions, as well as consideration of arguments in one's own mind, assessing and weighing arguments to form one's own opinion, are also rhetorical practices (Kock & Villadsen, 2017 s. 574).

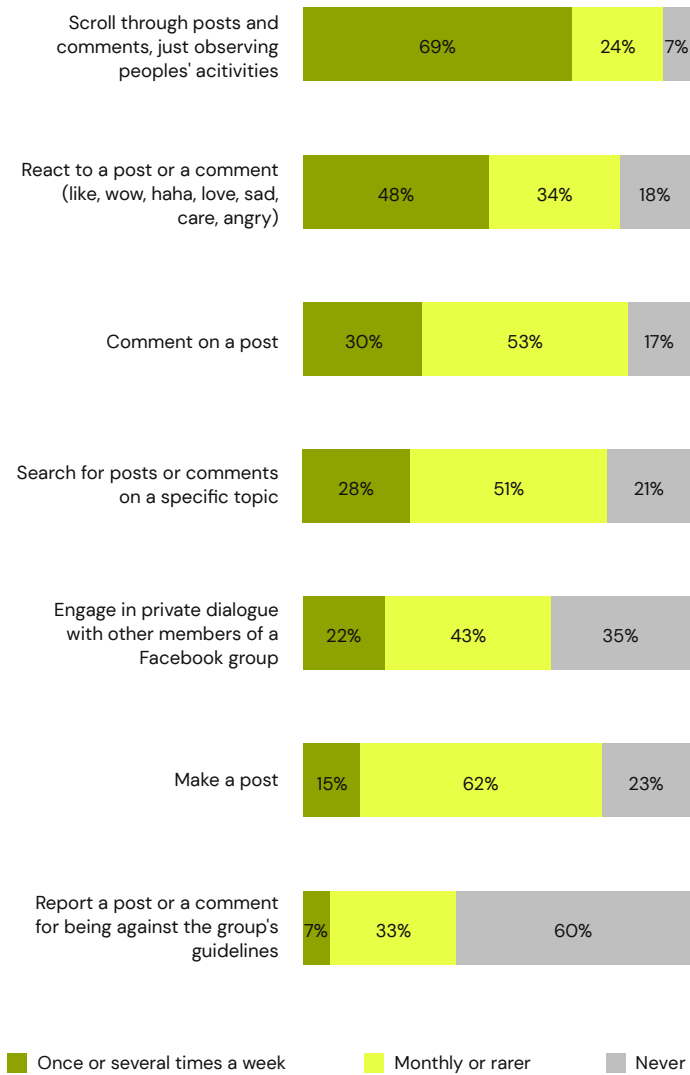
Additionally, we know that it means a lot to some members to feel part of a community without being obliged to perform. Program Manager at the National Association of Drop-In Centers' Digital Drop-In Center, Marika Sabroe, explains:

"One person told us that for many months she just observed the group without ever sharing, liking, or commenting on anything. But slowly she found the courage to do so. That is an advantage of the digital space: You can be part of it and 'lurk' for a long time and participate gradually."

For some, lurking or reading along in the group can be a part of getting to know the group, and then gradually engaging in it more actively. This is particularly possible because the community is digital.

A significant portion of the members regularly engage by reacting to posts and comments (48%), commenting (30%), searching for specific content, or having private conversations with other members. There is, therefore, lively activity in the discussions.

Figure 5.4
How often do you perform the following actions in a Facebook group?



A fan club for the region



Kirsten Sydendal

53, Master's degree.



**Lolland-Falster
Lovestorm**
40,000 members

Founded in 2015

Public group

Category: City, regional, and local groups

About the community center:

Lolland-Falster Lovestorm is a group dedicated to sharing positive stories and experiences from the Lolland-Falster region, often accompanied by photos and videos. The group was formed in 2015 as a response to TV2's documentary "On The Edge in Nakskov" and the generally negative media portrayal of Lolland-Falster. Since then, the group has grown into a strong online community and a regional association with business partnerships, physical events, and a long list of ideas and activities that put a positive spotlight on Lolland-Falster.

Kirsten's road to the role of administrator:

In 2015, many residents of Lolland and Falster were angry and frustrated with how the area was portrayed in TV2's documentary "On The Edge in Nakskov," particularly in the trailer for the series. Instead of launching a backlash against TV2, Kirsten, together with the local women's network Quality Lolland-Falster, started a love storm. They wanted

to share the good life and positive experiences of Lolland-Falster. The group gained 20,000 members within the first four days, and in December 2016, Lolland-Falster Lovestorm became an independent association, with Kirsten currently serving as its chairperson.

In practice:

Kirsten approves all posts and new members in the group. She works with two other co-administrators but often handles the most difficult decisions herself. She spends time maintaining a positive tone in the group and explaining to members why certain posts are not approved. Kirsten and the rest of the board also spend time managing the association's finances, establishing new business partnerships, hosting annual parties, and maintaining good relations with municipalities, businesses, and civil society. In 2020, she reduced her working hours to have more time for all these activities.

Most motivated when:

For Kirsten, Lolland-Falster Lovestorm is a community project. She is proud of the community they have created, where thousands of volunteers engage and share positive stories. Kirsten feels particularly happy when people outside of Lolland-Falster recognize the group,

and she is proud that Lolland-Falster Lovestorm has helped change the negative media image of Lolland-Falster. She sees great potential for the group to contribute even more to the development of the area.

Least motivated when:

Being an administrator can be draining for Kirsten, as she spends a lot of time enforcing rules, managing conflicts, and acting as the ultimate judge in disputes. In the Facebook group, for example, repeated posting of commercial content is prohibited. But what about professional photographers who post pictures as private individuals? Kirsten tries to enforce fair practices but loses some motivation when difficult and personal conflicts arise over content moderation.

Worth mentioning:


Kirsten has given lectures in both London and Washington about the group's success. She has a strong desire for Lolland-Falster Lovestorm to be recognized as a platform for positive stories about the area and dreams of the community around Lolland-Falster Lovestorm becoming a real workplace with support from foundations and greater collaboration with businesses, local associations, and passionate individuals.

[User]

Last Friday at 2 PM, we were taking the ferry Lolland from Tårs to Spodsbjerg. It was incredibly hot, and I almost got heatstroke. I asked a lady in the café if she could help with an ice pack to cool me down. She then brought a large bag of frozen blocks for me to use.

I would like to thank her very much for her help. It was incredibly kind of her, and it saved my day. ❤️🙏❤️

Thank you kindly. ❤️❤️❤️




👍🙏 472 8 comments 14 shares

Kirsten Sydendal

I know we haven't reached our goal yet. There is still plenty of work to do.

BUT ... I did a Google image search for "house Lolland" in 2017 and now in 2020. Can you see the difference? Something has definitely changed.



👍❤️ 261 54 comments 2 shares

”

I wish I could hire someone to professionally moderate the debate in the group, perhaps just on Saturday mornings, so I don't have to handle that task alone. I don't have the time for it now. Imagine the debate we could have about the development of Lolland-Falster. There is enormous potential for us, as a civil society, to contribute more directly to societal development.

Kirsten Sydendal

Why do we join the groups?

Our survey shows that 69% of the population over 18 are members of a Facebook group within at least one of our 18 categories. This corresponds to 3.3 million people. Out of these, 92% are active on a monthly basis, indicating active membership. Naturally, this high level of participation makes us curious about what motivates Danes to engage in these digital community centers: What do we gain from it?

Many do it to keep themselves updated with information and knowledge

When asked about their motivation for being a member of a Facebook group, over half (58%) respond that they are motivated by the ability to stay updated on what is happening in their area of interest. Here, it is important to remember that "area" in this context can mean a lot of different things, from their local area, to their professional area of expertise, depending on the group's theme. Therefore, 2 million people stay updated on matters relevant to them through these digital community centers.

37% are motivated by the desire to learn something new, indicating that these community centers are also places we go to gain knowledge. 38% say they are motivated by getting information about activities they can participate in, suggesting that the groups also provide an attractive infrastructure for planning and coordinating activities outside of the groups themselves.

Community, relations and fun

Many are also motivated by the social life in the groups: Participating in a social community (20%), seeing members supporting each other in the group (14%), and gaining contacts and networks through membership (13%). Additionally, 26% are simply motivated by the enjoyment of being a member.

Happy to give

Some are motivated by helping someone in need (13%), sharing their knowledge (14%), or doing something good for the local community or a cause (10%).

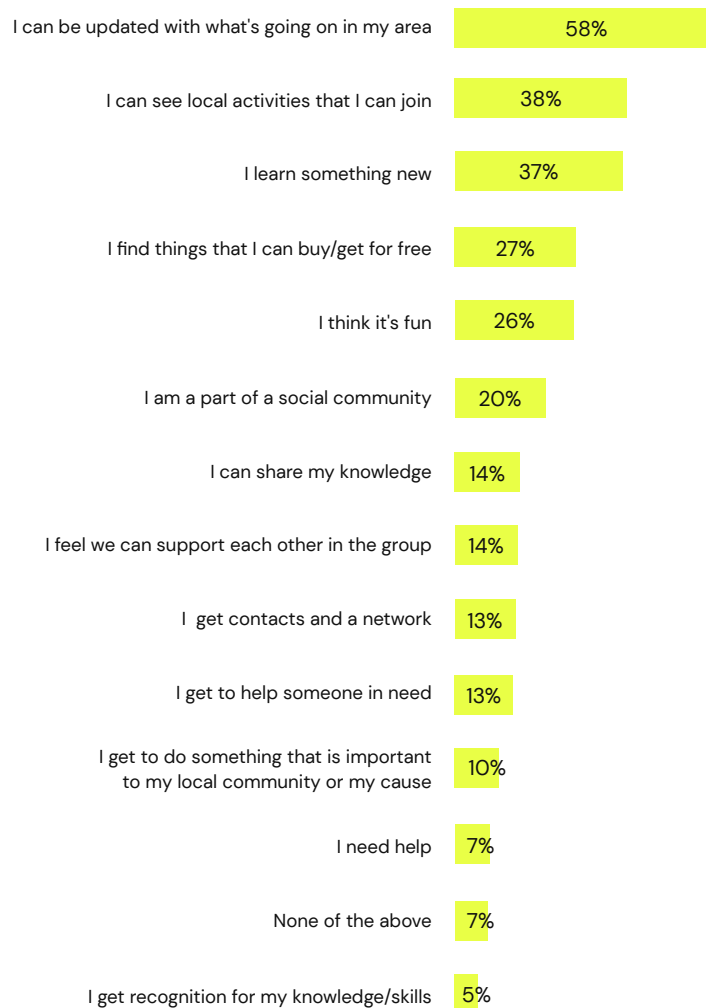
A personal reward

27% respond that they find things they can buy or get for free, while 7% are motivated by the possibility of receiving help. 5% are motivated by the opportunity to gain recognition for their knowledge or skills.

Are we motivated by different things?

We have tested for significant differences in motivation across gender and age. Women are overrepresented in "I get information about activities I can participate in," "I can stay updated on what's happening in the field," "I find things I can buy/get for free," and "I feel we support each other in the group." Men are overrepresented in "I can share my knowledge" and "I can get recognition for my knowledge/skills."

Figure 5.5
What is your motivation to join a Facebook group?
 Choose one or more.



What contributions do we make in the digital community centers?

Our interviews, netnographic observations in the groups, and the thousands of group descriptions summarizing each group's purpose all document that the digital community centers have become a hub for the exchange of knowledge, support, advice, comfort, complaints, recognition, items, food, good ideas, thoughts, questions, pictures, stories, and news.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, part of the value of the community centers is that they are forums for a potpourri of social, practical, personal, and political agendas. In Chapter 2, we also argue that citizens' everyday conversations have democratic and societal value in themselves.

However, we have also been interested in quantifying how many of us, through the digital community centers, provide and receive more "demanding" contributions than just being available for dialogue with fellow citizens. In the following pages, we will analyze the results we obtained when we inquired about how many members have been on the giving or receiving end of various contributions in the digital community centers. The conclusion is that the community centers also facilitate the exchange of demanding, concrete, and physical contributions.

This point is also supported by other research. For example, Carlsen et al. (2020) mapped coronavirus support groups on Facebook and show that 10% of Danes' informal assistance during the first lockdown was organized through social media.

They also conclude that Facebook groups help overcome a common problem in civil assistance: People with smaller networks receive less

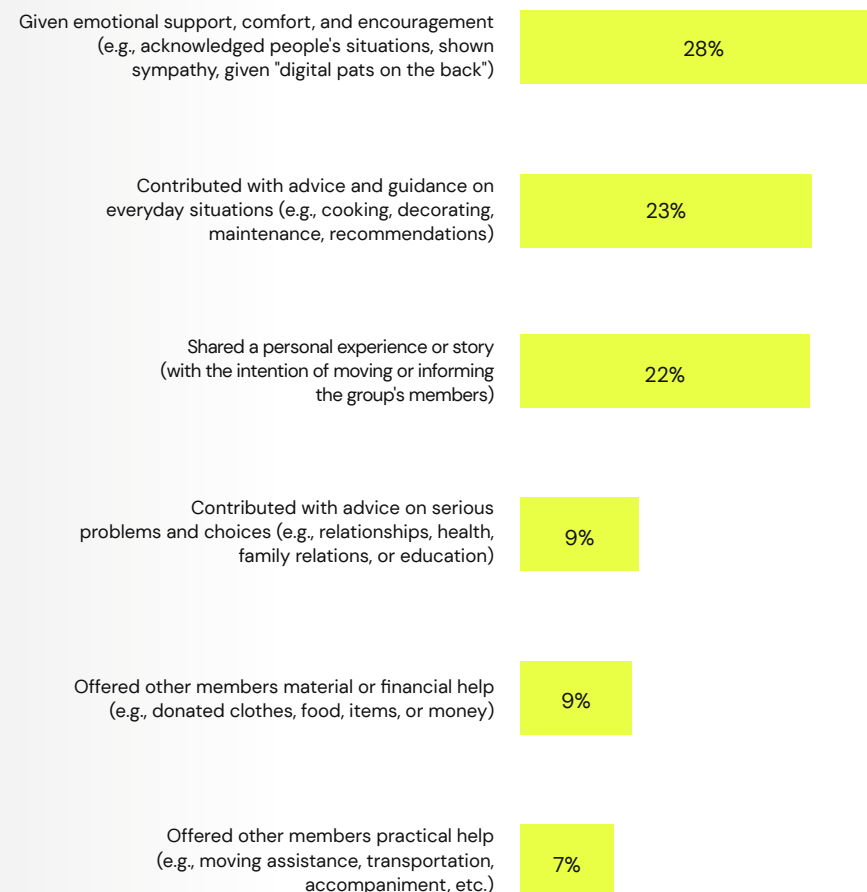
help. Through the groups, we often help people we don't know. (Carlsen, Toubøl & Brincker 2020, p. 10)

What contributions do the members recognize themselves making in the digital community centers?

When we ask about the different types of contributions people have made through the groups, the top contribution is that members provide emotional support, comfort, and encouragement to other members. This is recognized by 28% of the members as something they have done. 23% have contributed with advice and guidance on everyday situations and dilemmas, and almost the same proportion (22%) have shared personal experiences and stories to inform and move other members.

Even when we look at more demanding contributions, many can recognize themselves as having been contributors. Nearly one in ten have provided advice and guidance related to more serious life problems and choices (9%) or offered material or financial assistance to others (9%). 7% have offered other members practical help, for example moving assistance, transportation, or accompaniment. Although these 7–9% may sound like low numbers, they still represent 200,000–300,000 Danes who have provided material and practical help to others through a Facebook group.

Figure 5.6
Which of the following have you done in a Facebook group?
Choose one or more.



What contributions have we received in the digital community centers?

We have also inquired about what members themselves remember having received as members of the digital community centers.

We affect each other in the digital community centers

41% of the members recognize that they have read posts that made them think, and 27% have read posts that touched them emotionally. This clearly shows that there are people who read the personal experiences and stories that 22% share, as mentioned on the previous page. These personal stories are a significant part of what members gain from the groups.

At the same time, the groups are also a place where members are influenced by the ongoing debates. 12% of the members (equivalent to 400,000 people) respond that they have changed their views or opinions on various topics that have been debated in the digital community centers.

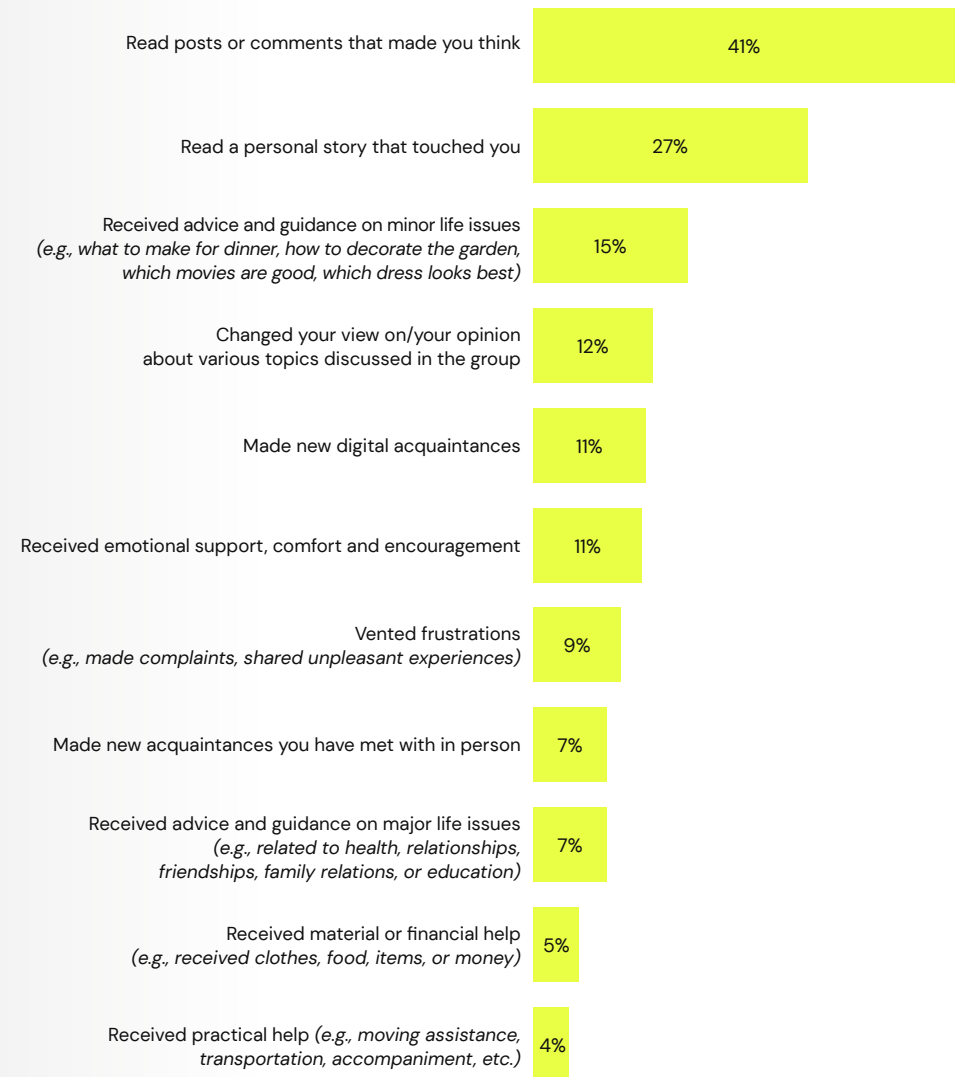
Some gain digital and physical acquaintances

11% of the members have gained new digital acquaintances through a digital community center, while 7% have gained physical acquaintances. Again, we see evidence that the digital and physical spheres often overlap.

A smaller (but not insignificant) proportion recognize themselves as recipients of material or financial assistance (5%) and practical assistance (4%). When we look more closely at what is given and received, it appears that there is a smaller group for whom the digital community centers hold particularly high value. This means that members gain very different things from being part of the groups.

Figure 5.7

Have you personally benefited from any of the following in Facebook groups?
Select one or more options



Women are more likely to receive advice and have their thoughts provoked, while men form new digital relationships

We have again tested for significant differences in the contributions we receive across gender and age. Women are overrepresented as recipients of advice and guidance and as recipients of emotional comfort and support. They are also more likely to have read posts that made them think. On the other hand, men have a small but significant overrepresentation in forming new digital acquaintances.

These trends align with our finding of several large digital community centers exclusively for girls and women, often involving conversations about relationships, starting a family, and difficult relationships. Conversely, we have found only a few similar communities for men, and they were significantly smaller. When looking at these preferences (see [page 163](#)), it is also evident that genders to some extent prefer different communities and thus will also derive slightly different benefits.

It is not just echo chambers

Do the members hear their own echoes?

To further understand how much the digital community centers bring us into contact with different people and viewpoints, we tested specific statements in our survey on the 69% of the population who are members of a digital community center (see Figure 5.8). 32% (over 1 million people) agree or strongly agree that Facebook groups introduce them to people they would not have otherwise "met" (25% disagree or strongly disagree). 27% agree or strongly agree that Facebook groups introduce them to viewpoints they would not have otherwise heard (27% disagree or strongly disagree). For both questions, a significant number answered "neither/nor" or "don't know." This means that digital community centers are forums where a third of the members believe they are breaking out of their own bubbles, both in terms of people and perspectives.

One can argue that this is both a large and a surprisingly small proportion of people who have this experience. Community centers based on cities or regions are the most popular among the population, and these often have many thousands of members. In this understanding, most should be "agreeing" that Facebook groups introduce them to people they would not have otherwise met. However, the question's wording can be seen as somewhat unclear, and we know that people tend to be somewhat reluctant to admit their own influence or benefits. Nevertheless, we maintain that the million people who admit to having encountered new viewpoints and new people are positive results for digital democracy.

What do our background variables say about the diversity of the members?

The groups will attract people with divergent opinions, political stances, and backgrounds to varying degrees. Members of "No to 5G" groups likely agree on at least one thing and may also share other characteristics, while not everyone necessarily sees the world the same way because they live in Næstved or own a german shepherd.

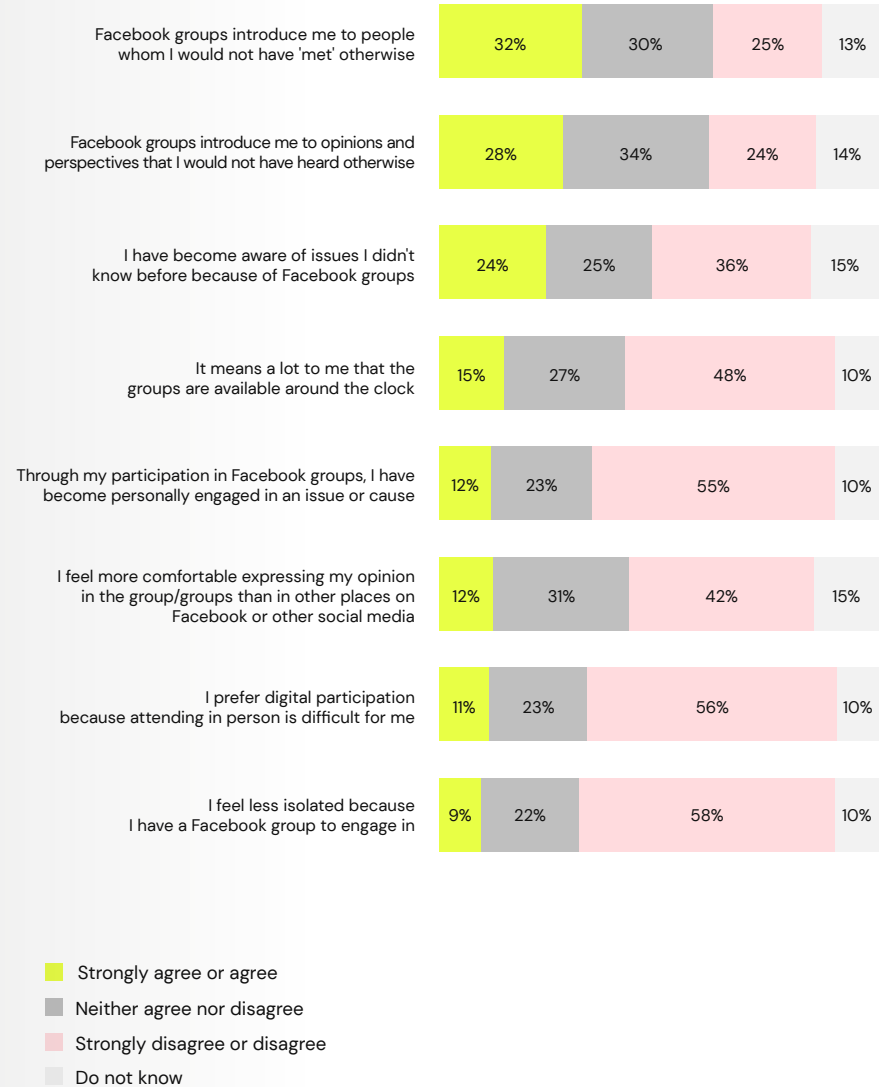
However, according to our observations and interviews, disagreements also arise in community centers for supporters of specific political agendas or ideologies. For example, what method should be used to calculate minimum staffing ratios? It is certainly different how the community centers facilitate when people with different backgrounds meet online. Therefore, we have also looked at demographic variables.

Birds not of a feather also flock together in the digital community centers

Figure 5.8 provides insight into the population's own perception of diversity in digital community centers, but self-reported perceptions are one thing, and actual numbers are another. We have tested for demographic diversity within our 18 group categories.

Within all categories, the digital community centers (those large enough to calculate distributions) bring the population together across gender, age, educational level, and employment status. The most glaring homogeneity is found in parent groups concerning age, where 81% of members are between 30 and 49 years old, while older individuals are almost entirely absent.

Figure 5.8
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



Overall, the different types of groups appeal broadly across our background variables. However, there are, of course, demographic groups that are overrepresented and underrepresented in the different categories. We will look at some of these nuances below.

Age

Age is divided into these categories: 18–29, 30–49, 50–64, and 65+

(See appendix 6)

Regarding age distribution, we can see that particularly support groups, political and protest groups, and professional groups bring together people across different ages, while parent groups, as mentioned, especially appeal to people in a specific life phase and age. The 50–64 and 65+ age groups are overrepresented in disease and treatment groups, where health issues become more frequent.

The aforementioned two age categories are also overrepresented in interest and hobby groups, as well as in city, regional, and local groups. The 18–29 age group is overrepresented in groups for relationships, friends, and dating.

Education

Education is divided into these categories:

- No vocational education
- Vocational education
- Short higher education
- Medium higher education
- Long higher education

(See appendix 7)

Most of our group categories facilitate meetings between people broadly across different educational levels. In city, regional, and local groups, interest and hobby groups, political and protest groups, advice and counseling groups, and parent groups, people frequently meet across educational divides. In professional groups, there is an overrepresentation of people with medium and long higher education degrees.

In disease and treatment groups, on the other hand, people with long higher education degrees are underrepresented, which may suggest that they have less need for resources to navigate the healthcare system or life with illness.

In leisure and humor groups, people with long higher education degrees are also underrepresented, while those with vocational training are overrepresented. People with medium higher education degrees are overrepresented in groups for alternative treatment and spiritual and religious groups.

Unemployed individuals, flex workers, and people on public support are overrepresented in support groups and also in disease and treatment groups, where regular wage earners are underrepresented.

Full-time wage earners are also underrepresented in identity groups, diet and lifestyle groups, and groups for alternative treatment. Here, part-time wage earners and retirees are overrepresented.

That part-time wage earners are overrepresented in groups for alternative treatment aligns well with our observations that alternative practitioners often work part-time as therapists and part-time in other jobs, and particularly recruit clients through communities for alternative treatment.

Employment

Employment is divided into these categories:

- Self-employed
- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Unemployed, flex job, and public assistance
- Retired (including early retirement and senior pension)
- Currently in education

(See appendix 8)

Retirees are overrepresented in city, regional, and local groups, interest and hobby groups, disease and treatment groups, political and protest groups, and groups for relationships, friends, and dating. This includes both senior and early retirees.

In Figure 5.9, it can be seen that women (yellow) are particularly prevalent in groups related to diet and lifestyle, alternative treatment, and disease and treatment groups. They also make up the majority of members in support groups, as well as in spiritual and religious groups.

Men (gray) constitute the majority in groups for relationships, friends and dating, politics and protest, groups related to businesses and institutions, and leisure and humor groups.

There are also several group categories where the members are more equally distributed by gender, such as in many city, regional, and local groups and interest and hobby groups. Additionally, the gender distribution is fairly even in advice and counseling groups, as well as in parent groups.

Figure 5.9

The gender distribution among members in the 18 different community center categories

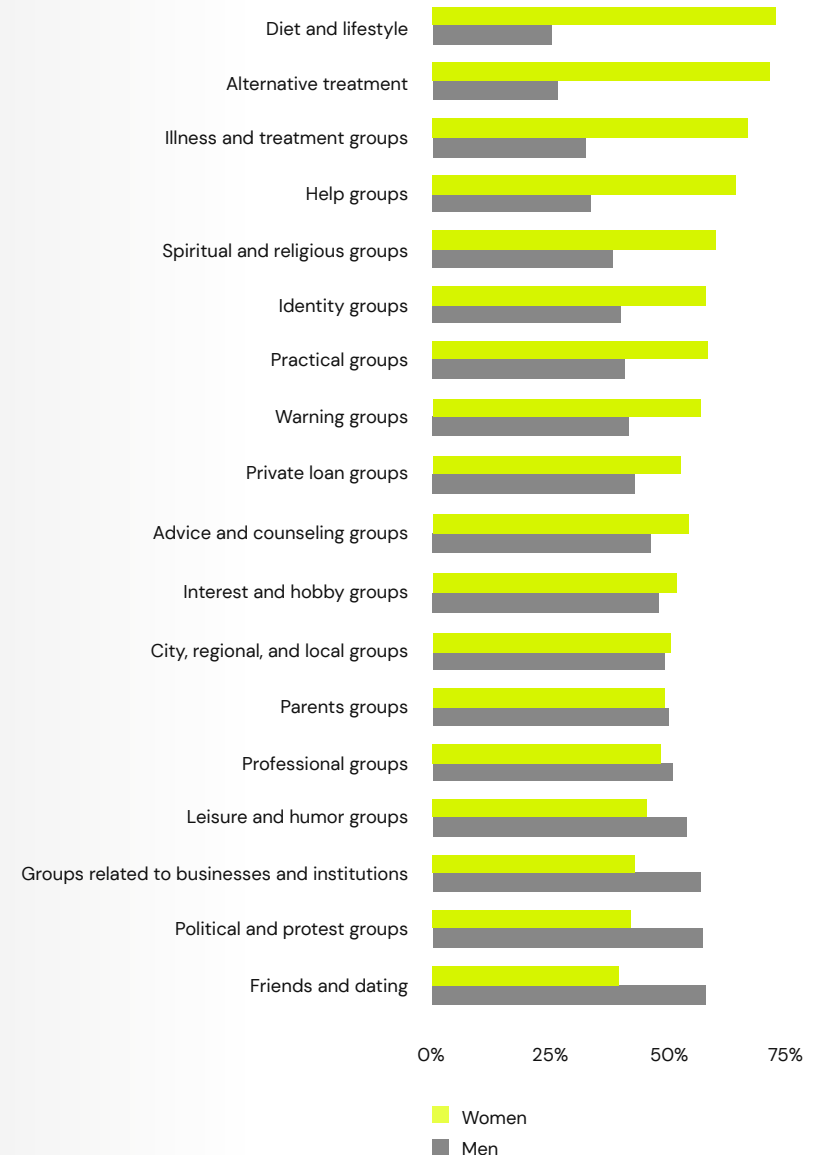


Figure 5.9: Data source E / n=1366 (See appendix 1)

Question: Are you a member of one or more of the following types of groups on Facebook? // What gender do you identify as? *Note: Private loan groups have few observations. (n=21)

The digital community centers mean something for many and a lot for a few

When looking at what the population gains from being members of the digital community centers, it is clear that they matter to most people. For many, the engagement is primarily about information, good advice and guidance, stimulating thoughts, and staying updated in their field. However, for a smaller portion of the population, the groups are of much greater and more critical importance.

The critical needs of the particularly vulnerable

A picture emerges of a small segment of the population (5–7%) who receive practical, material, and financial help through the groups. When we ask which groups matter most to Danes, "private loan groups" are, for example, at the very top. Although only a very small group of Danes are members of this type of group (1%), they have a significant impact on the lives of their members. Figure 5.10 shows that some groups fulfill more critical and basic needs, which are indispensable for those who need them: If one lacks friends and a partner, the possibility of finding them is of great importance.

Disease and treatment groups also rank high on the list of groups that matter to their members. In disease and treatment groups, it is often mentioned that "one must be strong to be sick," and that it requires a lot to navigate the offerings of the healthcare system. Members help each other with this, and the demographic variations on the previous page show that some groups particularly need support and advice regarding, for example, illness and treatment.

Where the welfare state falls short, the digital volunteers step in

In our overview of the growth of the digital civil society ([see page 56](#)) we saw how support groups particularly emerged in connection with the social reforms in 2014 and the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital civil society also arises as a "response" to the challenges that citizens still face when the state or the welfare society "lets go," just as the "traditional" civil society does (Boje 2020).

Overall, it makes sense that those experiencing hardship use any means necessary to make ends meet, find answers to their questions, or find solutions to their challenges. However, it can also be tough to run a community where the common denominator is that the need or frustrations are great.

In Chapter 7, you will meet Susanne, who was one of the tens of thousands of Danes who became a "neighbor helper" when her daughter was affected by social reforms. The digital civil society still includes hundreds of active support groups where Denmark's growing number of economically vulnerable people receive help to get through the month.

In Breastfeeding Network's Facebook groups, one can get help, support, and advice on breastfeeding. Getting breastfeeding started after giving birth is something many new mothers struggle with, but hospitals and the healthcare system often lack the time and resources to provide the necessary guidance. Instead, one can hire a lactation consultant for a hefty fee – or go on Facebook and use the volunteer guidance in Breastfeeding Network's guidance group. Here, volunteer breastfeeding counselors, who have completed a voluntary 190-hour training course, are available to you for 48 hours. See the case about Maria on [page 118](#).

In the following pages, you will meet Jesper, who took matters into his own hands when he was in a custody battle eight years ago and could not find free advice that was focused on the children.

"There was no free and legally correct advice in custody cases that focused on the child."



Jesper Jensen

42, has a vocational education but is currently a student in a professional bachelor's program inspired by his digital counseling work.



Custody Counseling – With the Child in Focus
533 members

Founded in 2022

Category: Advice and counseling



Custody and Well-being – For the Good of the Child
7087 members

Founded in 2014

Closed in 2023

Category: Advice and counseling

About the community center:

The purpose of the group is to provide advice and support to divorced parents and their children. The group operates as an "advisor to user" group, meaning that only the group's advisors respond to threads, and no one else. The goal is to help parents and children who are in contact with public authorities - primarily the Family Court or the municipality - to stay focused on the best interests of the child and to ensure that the rights of both the child and the parents are upheld. The group's advisors have extensive experience in counseling parents before, during, and after divorce, as well as a broad knowledge of the legislation and the system's structure and procedures. They can also participate as assessors if possible.

Jesper's road to the role of administrator: Jesper's own custody case made him realize that free and legally correct advice in custody cases was scarce for parents. Therefore, in 2014, he established the group "Custody and Well-being – For the Child's Best." Initially, the group was peer-to-peer, but he quickly realized that it was too vulnerable to let people advise each other because the rules in this area are complicated and constantly changing. The group was therefore converted into a free expert advisory group.

Eight years, 7,000 members, and thousands of counseling sessions later, the group became a bit too much for Jesper. He then started over with the group "Custody Counseling – with the Child in Focus." In the new group, he hopes to eliminate some of the old group's bad habits and set a few more boundaries in the counseling - for his own well-being.

In practice:

Today, Jesper still offers expert advice on custody cases. He has tried group counseling, in-person counseling, and telephone counseling - all coordinated via Facebook. People prefer 1:1 counseling, ideally by phone or digitally. At its busiest, Jesper handled 1,500 counseling sessions a year. He estimates that he spends 2 hours a day actively counseling and

1 hour monitoring the group. However, he thinks about good responses to inquiries most of the day. Jesper also writes informational posts when significant legislation in the area changes.

Most motivated when:

Jesper is motivated by the need for free quality counseling, which is in short supply, and the results that his work brings. The results are, for example, when a family, with his help, reaches an agreement about Christmas, or when he initiates a parental dialogue that has been stalled for a long time. However, he is also driven by the fear of where people might turn for family counseling if they don't come across him and his group.

Least motivated when:

Jesper sees many sad stories, difficult fates, and family relationships in turmoil, and some counseling sessions are hard to let go of. It is also demotivating for him when he advises someone who only wants a specific answer and is unwilling to listen or make compromises for their children.

Worth mentioning:

Jesper has had between 0 and 4 collaborators in the form of other digital volunteers. However, he finds that people drop out over time. Even when he's the only one counseling, around 1,000 people a year receive advice and answers to their

questions. He also struggles with the fact that those most motivated to engage in the group sometimes focus more on gender conflicts or fighting the system than on the children's welfare. This is the kind of energy he wants to avoid in his new group.

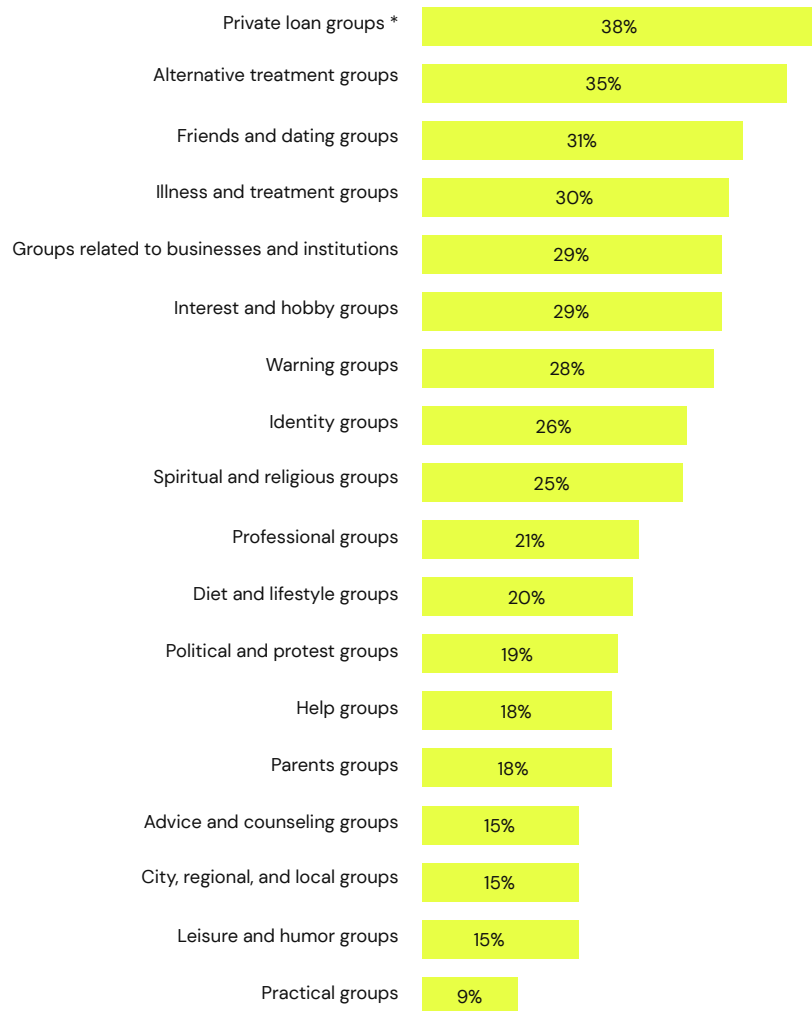
Jesper founded an association based on the group "Custody and Well-being" to establish a more formal presence. The association was helpful when Jesper needed to apply for §64 funds from Gladsaxe Municipality and when he borrowed the volunteer house and the library in the municipality. Jesper wishes to establish an association based on his new counseling service. However, the administration and paperwork make it overwhelming.

People often want to offer money for Jesper's counseling. But it's a principle for Jesper that the service should be free. However, he would like to be able to treat his advisors to lunch occasionally. He applied for financial support once, but it was a huge effort, and he was rejected because he didn't have a commercial model with user fees.



I lost my administrator partner. She went on sick leave and is on welfare benefits, and the municipality says she is not allowed to do voluntary work that is relevant to her job as a social educator. They have determined that her counseling in the group counts as voluntary work.

Figure 5.10
How significant are the groups in your life?
The proportion who answered "Very significant" or "Significant"



A digital community center is a 24-hour service

The digital community centers are communities that are accessible around the clock. This is very important for 15% of the members (see Figure 5.8). We have observed how several members have received help, comfort, advice, and guidance at all hours of the day and night. Whether you're lying awake again because you can't sleep due to racing thoughts, when your baby wakes up with a high fever at 3:00 AM, or when you're stranded on a country road because the last bus has left. It's comforting that there are often others with anxiety, other parents, or locals on their way home from night shifts who can be reached.

As Maria Pihl Fly Bekke, an administrator in the Breastfeeding Network, mentioned, Breastfeeding Network's Facebook groups are active around the clock: *"I always start by seeing who has posted during the night - because there is always someone who has posted during the night."*

People with disabilities can participate from home

11%, equivalent to 350,000 Danes, state that they prefer digital participation over physical participation. In our interviews and through our observations, we have gotten the impression that the digital community centers have special value for those who, due to physical or psychological challenges, find it difficult to participate and contribute to other social, political, and interest-based communities. Marika Sabroe from the National Association of Drop-in Centers, whose group you will read about on the next page, says this about digital participation in the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center:

"Our users tell us that, for example, they suffer from anxiety or a personality disorder, which makes them uncomfortable being with others outside the home, or they just quickly become tired. In the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center, can participate on their own terms. Physical meetings require both travel to and from the location, and it can be harder to withdraw when their social battery is depleted."

And not only can people with different functional variations experience easier access to communities and discussions, some also find that they can gain expert status and take on responsibility within the groups because the conditions are different. In a city group on Zealand, for a time, it was the local Hus Forbi seller who acted as the moderator of the group. The same point is mentioned by our digital volunteers:

“People on the fringes have another chance to participate in the local community without being judged as much. For example, you can’t see on Facebook what diagnoses you have, if you’re homeless, or if you’re missing a tooth.”

Jacob Beer

Allerød Municipality - Help each other! 👍 Remember, no buying/selling

You can gain recognition as a gardening enthusiast with social anxiety through the digital community centers, and even if you’re no longer able to work as a craftsman, members will gladly line up for your good advice if you upload a picture from the construction site.

10% of members feel less isolated

10% of members agree that they feel less isolated because of the digital community centers. Offering vulnerable groups a community is also something frequently mentioned as a motivation in the open responses from our digital volunteers when we ask: *Is there anything else that motivates you, which isn’t on the list above?*

“To be able to provide a ‘safe space’ for those who might not be able to speak out as loudly in everyday society.”

“The joy of hearing many lonely people say they’ve found a network, some even find a partner, even though it’s not a dating group - that’s happiness. 😊”



In Denmark's first digital drop-in center, they are still together – apart.



Marika Sabroe

Program Director at the National Association of Drop-in Centers



National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center

752 members/users

*Founded on 11th of March 2020.
Category: Assistance Group (with social work professionals)*

About the digital community center

When Denmark went into lockdown on March 11, 2020, Marika Sabroe, the Program Director at the National Association of Drop-in Centers, knew exactly who would be particularly affected: The users of Denmark's drop-in centers. On that same day, she established Denmark's first digital drop-in center on Facebook. In a short time, the group received 300 membership requests, and with the help of TrygFonden's COVID fund, Marika managed to staff the roles of administrators and moderators with trained personnel who were available from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM, seven days a week. The group is not a volunteer-run digital community center but an example of how digital platforms can also be used innovatively in social work.

In practice:

In the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center, socially vulnerable citizens are offered digital

social interaction, daily facilitated activities, group sessions, and advice and guidance from professionals, such as social workers, dietitians, counselors that help you quit smoking, and sleep coaches. All activities take place together apart. Every morning, the group's users can greet each other in the communal "good morning post," where they can also share their plans for the day and a photo. The group's daily activity might include a walk, home spa, group cleaning, or a creative workshop. Additionally, theme weeks focus on drinking water or physical activity, and group sessions cover topics like nutrition or self-esteem. The group also trains leaders among the users so they can conduct activities that interest them. For all activities, threads are created in the group or group rooms where users can share how they are progressing with the activity.

Marika explains that it motivates and commits the users when, for example, cleanup threads with "before and after" pictures are made, where users and staff cheer each other on. The staff also follow up if a member has mentioned being ill or has a meeting with the municipality.

”

With the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center, I found that when I for example logged into a knitting meeting, members were eager to show off their homes. This included people who are otherwise very closed off or private and rarely have guests. In this way, we get closer to people digitally than in traditional social work, where we rarely visit the users' homes.

Marika Sabroe

The pandemic ended, but the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center endured

It was difficult for Marika and her team to predict what the post-pandemic period would mean for the interest in the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center. When the pandemic subsided and the physical drop-in centers reopened, some of the group's approximately 800 users left with a "thanks for now." However, many users returned, and new users continue to join. Today, the group is maintained by two regular staff members and two student assistants at the National Association of Drop-in Centers.

When we interviewed Marika at the beginning of 2023, she could tell us about the activity level in the group over the previous 28 days: 283 posts, 8749 comments, and 9995 reactions.

"We are not a competitor to the physical drop-in centers. Some people use both services, but many of our current users prefer the digital format. They may have

physical or mental disabilities that make it difficult to get out much. But they form quite strong relationships through the group and really cheer each other on on a daily basis."

Worth mentioning:

In the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center, users behave very well towards each other, and they have only had to exclude one member right at the beginning: "When we first opened the National Association of Drop-in Centers' Digital Drop-in Center, we tried a few times to ask some users to delete their posts as they were over the line. It was important for the user to delete it themselves, as there is also some learning in that. Since then, we haven't had to moderate the conversation."



National Association of Drop-in Centers

GOAL OF THE DAY 🎯

Let's set a goal for the day together. In the comments, tell us and share a photo of what you need to get done today 🙌🙌

My kitchen drawers need to be cleaned, and I have to take out the cardboard and paper.

Remember, if it's hard to get started, you can use the egg timer exercise illustrated in the drawing below

I look forward to seeing pictures of what you have set as your goal for the day 😊😊

Best regards,
Maria



Comment from administrator

@User1, didn't you also have a couple of boxes to empty? That could be your goal for the day.



Reply from [User1]

That and mopping the floor. But first, a cup of coffee, I'm sitting on the train home now ❤️



Comment from [User 2]

I need to do laundry, fold clothes, put them away, and hang up the wet clothes. I haven't managed to put them away yet, but the rest is done. 🙌

[Picture of laundry hanging out to dry]



Comment from [User 3]

My goal is to open my computer and:
- check e-Boks
- check mail for Folkets Hus
- pay the plumber



Reply from Administrator

That sounds like a good goal, and it's definitely important to get those done, but it can take a lot of energy. How do you feel about the many digital solutions?



Reply from [User 3]

I generally feel okay with digital tasks, but my concentration and memory can be a big challenge. I'm super proud to have achieved today's goal.

6

A collective project - members helping out

In this chapter, we focus on the collaboration between digital volunteers and members, and discuss the significant mutual benefits that digital volunteers and members gain from being active in the digital community centers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, members play a crucial role in ensuring that the group becomes – and remains – a good community.

For this discussion, we use data from our interviews, our survey of digital volunteers, our representative population survey, and our netnographic studies. (See overview of Data Sources on [page 300](#), ref. A.i, C, E).

This chapter will include:

- How much the digital volunteers want to get involved.
- How much the members contribute to the daily maintenance of the group.
- Whether the members perceive the digital community centers as better digital forums than other places on social media.
- A discussion of the concept of digital literacy in relation to the digital community centers.

Key numbers:



A good group is a team effort, and the members are highly involved in maintaining the community in the community centers.



Overall, members experience less spam, harassment, misinformation, hate speech, threats, and scams in the digital community centers compared to other places on social media.



66%

of the digital volunteers believe that the best scenario is for their digital community center to run itself without their intervention.



74%

of the digital volunteers believe that members are good at reporting content they think violates the community center's rules.



85%

of the volunteers consult the opinions of the group members about how to run the group.

”

If someone is upset about our rules and how I enforce them, I often ask if they have any ideas on how we can do better. This approach makes people feel more included, better understand our situation, and recognize our decisions.

Kirsten Sydendal
Lolland-Falster Lovestorm

”

I am surprised by how many people have thanked me for taking the time to improve the discussion thread – even if they were the ones being corrected.

Bjarne W. Andresen
Pedagogical Network

”

I love it when the groups run smoothly. It's so wonderful that I can help others – whether they are looking for a new friend, advice on caring for their houseplant, or a recipe.

Helle Pedersen
Seeking a Friend 40+, 50+, 60+ and Girls only, mostly 18–35

A good group is a team effort

When we look at how administrators prefer their groups to operate, two-thirds express that they agree or strongly agree that the ideal situation is for their Facebook group to run itself without their intervention. One administrator shares this example from their own group, which is almost self-sustaining:

"It is primarily a member-driven group; we just try to maintain safety and involve those who normally don't take the initiative themselves."

The desire for a self-sustaining group may be due to a significant part of the administrators' work being focused on maintaining a positive atmosphere in the groups. This work can be demotivating, especially when members oppose the administrators' decisions. Wanting a group that runs itself may therefore come from a desire for self-regulating conversations and constructive communities.

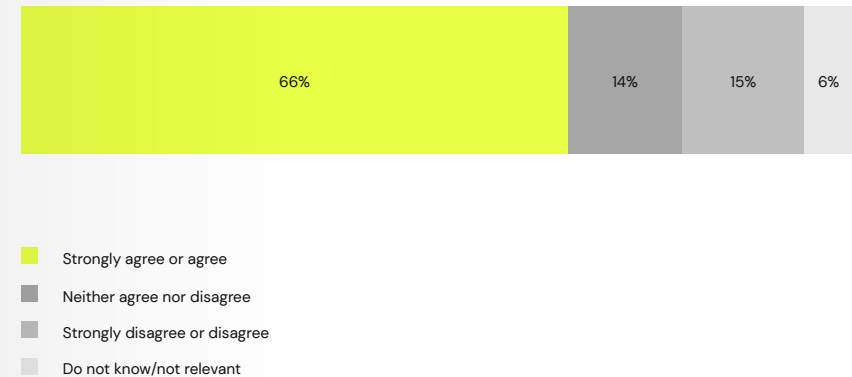
85% of administrators listen to members' suggestions on how the group should be managed. This includes accepting members' posts, comments, and private messages with feedback on their work (60%), conducting polls in the group (16%), or involving members in other ways (9%). One administrator describes:

"We often have discussions with members, and we also invite them into 'Rooms' to discuss the administration of the group."

Members are frequently involved in decisions about the group's management, and their perspectives are valuable to the administrators. A good group is often a team effort, involving both the administrators and the members.

Figure 6.1

How much do you agree with the following statement: The ideal scenario is for the group to run itself without my intervention.



... and especially certain members are a help

Figure 6.2 shows that members in Facebook groups can play an important role in ensuring that conversations proceed as they should.

Nearly three-quarters of administrators agree or strongly agree that members are good at reporting posts and comments that violate the group's rules and at reminding each other of the rules.

Just over half of the administrators believe that it is primarily a smaller portion of the members who significantly contribute to the group's dynamics and conversation with posts and comments. Additionally, 43% agree that it is often the same members who have difficulty maintaining a good tone.

This experience is shared by Bjarne W. Andresen, a former administrator in the Pedagogical Network, who says:

"Particularly some members contribute to driving the group. Out of a hundred reports, 70 of them are made by the same 10 people."

The administrator of the group 'What's Happening in Nordvest', Dan Kreutzfeldt, also says:

"There are several users who are never particularly visible in the group with posts and comments, but who are good at reporting content that violates the group's guidelines."

Dan points out that these types of "shadow administrators" are a great help. This activity could clearly also be described as digital volunteer work, and it is highlighted here, even though it has not been possible to quantify the effort. However, it underscores that members are also dedicated to the daily operations of these digital community centers.

Figure 6.2

How much do you agree with the following statements. The proportion of those who answered "Strongly agree" or "Agree":

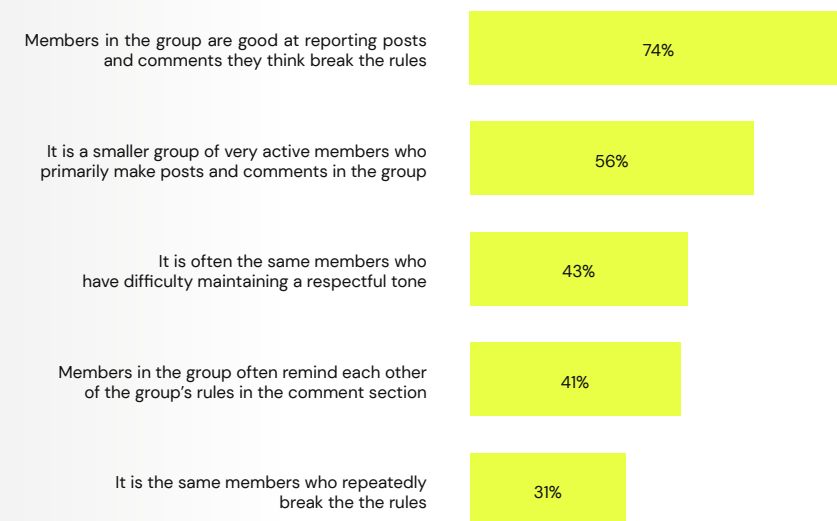


Figure 6.2: Data source D / n=408 (See appendix 1)

”

I have cracked down hard on people making fun of each other or making mocking and sarcastic remarks. In such cases, I have written directly to the parties involved and asked them to edit their comments, otherwise I would do it for them. Most chose to edit themselves, and everyone in the group can see how comments are edited. If I didn't hear from them, the comment was deleted. Many have responded with, "I just lost my cool for a moment."

There are a few who respond angrily, but it's maybe only 10 out of 47,000. And that is quite impressive.

Bjarne W. Andresen
Pedagogical Network

”

Members are the "angriest" when they believe we are moderating unfairly - when we have turned off comments or deleted a post. They feel that their freedom is being restricted. However, people also recognize that we have to listen to a lot of complaints. Some have sent private messages thanking me for getting involved in the discussion and making sure people behave properly.

Casper Thede
6430 Nordborg and WordPress Denmark



The digital community centers are seen as safe(r)

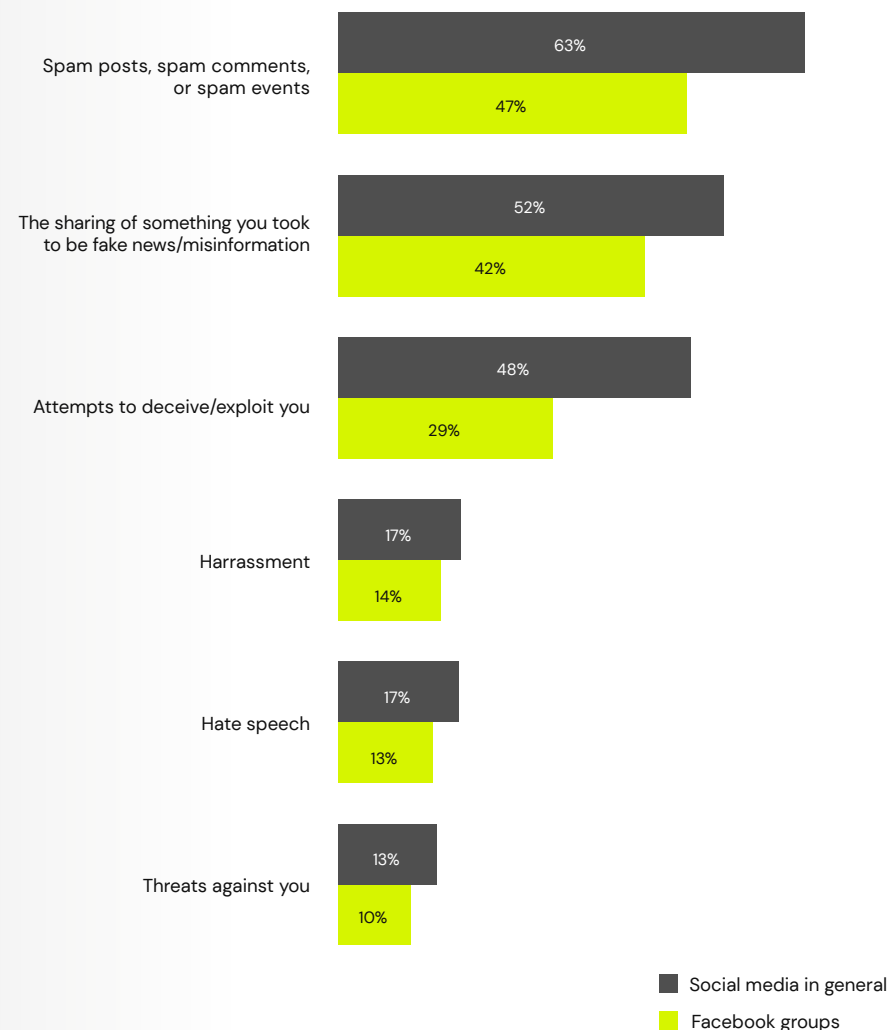
In our first mapping of Denmark's digital community centers in 2022, we used three algorithms to demonstrate that the tone in public digital community centers is better than on media and political pages.

COMMENTS FROM:	ATTACKS	RECOGNITION
The media's Facebook pages	5%	13%
Politicians' Facebook pages	8%	24%
Public Facebook groups	2%	21%

We know that, generally speaking, the tone is better in digital community centers, and the mapping of the volunteers' work also clearly shows that we especially have the digital volunteers' hard and constant work to thank for the reduction of spam, trolls, threats, attacks, and harassment.

When we ask members about their experiences with problematic behavior in Facebook groups and on social media in general, it also appears that members generally perceive the groups as safer places in the digital landscape, although they are obviously not free from unpleasantness. We also observe that members appreciate an administrator who is good at setting boundaries.

Figure 6.3
How often are you exposed to the following on social media and in Facebook groups? The proportion of those who answered "monthly" or more often.



Pedagogical moderation in the community center for the pedagogical profession



Bjarne W. Andresen

57, Master's degree in childrens' literature,
pedagogue in early retirement



**Pedagogical
Network**

53,300 members

Founded in 2007

Category: Professional group

About the community center:

The Pedagogical Network was a forum for knowledge sharing and debate about work and education in the pedagogical field. The group's feed was filled with excellent pedagogical activities, parent relations, special education programs, and leadership, as well as feedback and input on assignments for pedagogical studies. The comment section was often lively with political debate on everything from minimum staffing ratios and COVID measures to the harshness in the public sector and collective bargaining negotiations. Many members of the group were pedagogues, but it was also open to journalists, politicians, professional associations, parents, and others, who contributed personal stories and could ask questions to the group's members.

Bjarke's road to the role of administrator:

Bjarne was recruited as an administrator by the group's founder, who wanted to retire from managing the group. Several members volunteered but quickly dropped out again. In the end, when it seemed the group might become inactive, Bjarne stepped in.

Before Bjarne took on the role of administrator, he was an active member who often made suggestions for the group and reminded people to keep the tone respectful.

In practice:

Bjarne's approach to the role of administrator reflects his professional background. He engaged in dialogue about the group's rules through polls and open questions. For example, it was put to a vote whether the group could be used for recruiting staff for daycare centers. As an administrator, Bjarne offered a great deal of involvement and pedagogical guidance to the members. He moderated content that was not relevant to the group's purpose and also limited harsh or angry posts.

One rule he introduced was to prohibit "indignation posts" about cases and situations that everyone agreed represented poor pedagogical practice. Posts needed to have nuance, be inquisitive, or elevate the debate to a new level.



Sometimes I have deleted a post or a comment and then sent the text back to the author, asking them to rewrite it. Their work shouldn't go to waste, but the post still needs to comply with the rules.

Bjarne W. Andresen

However, everyone received a personal explanation and message when Bjarne rejected content. Some reacted with anger and complaints, but many welcomed his feedback and corrections kindly. "Many people wrote that they were grateful for the way I handled it, and when I stepped down, I received a lot of praise and thanks."

Most motivated when:

Bjarne is primarily motivated by the group's efforts to elevate the level of pedagogical practice in Denmark. Additionally, he has gained enormous insight into what is happening in the field, met new people, and been invited to participate in other professional conversations, such as podcasts.

Least motivated when:

Bjarne is least motivated when receiving harsh criticism from members. He has felt misunderstood when accused of being power-hungry or censorious, because, as he says, "it is actually not the power over you that drives me to spend time on this."

Worth mentioning:

In Bjarne's own words, he checked the group "many many times a day." The group's constant demand for attention was the main reason he wanted to step down as an administrator.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bjarne became very busy. The entire profession was in crisis and confused about lockdowns, emergency care, and cleaning requirements. During that period, he was active in the group for three hours a day.

Note: When Bjarne wanted to stop as an administrator, the group was handed over to BUPL (Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators), who later made it inactive, encouraging members to move to another similar group, now named "Pædagog til Pædagog" (Pedagogue to Pedagogue). Pedagogical Network has been preserved as an archive for debates and knowledge sharing.



Bjarne W. Andresen

I deleted two posts today. One featured a funny pumpkkin sculpture, and the other was a joke about alcohol versus coffee. Both made me smile, but they are not relevant here in this group. There are plenty of Facebook pages and groups created for fun and humor. I appeal to you to use those for such posts and stick to professional content here in Pedagogue 😊
Best regards,
Bjarne, admin

Edit: I also removed a video of a child playing with a sanitary pad. For the same reason as above. I see a risk of digital bullying of the child when their friends rediscover the clip in five to ten years.

215 20 comments

[User 1]

It's a shame that there's less and less room for fun, but we are all different, which is fantastic. Remember to have some fun out there. 🙌



Bjarne W. Andresen

There's plenty of room for fun on Facebook. You can definitely find groups and pages created solely for that purpose. I follow some of them myself. But there's no need to mix the content of different groups.

[User 2]

[User 1] If we dilute the content with irrelevant posts, those who share relevant content will disappear.

[User 3]

We needed a visible and present admin in here. Thank you.



[User 4]

I am really upset... We just got this letter from our children's daycare, and fortunately, it did not involve our children and their educators, but I think it's terrible that some are being exposed in this way...
Poor educators, parents, and children who are involved...
What do you think about what TV2 is doing here with hidden cameras under the guise of being educators???

[Image]

43 285 comments

[User 5]

I feel the opposite – I think it's VERY important that the reality is exposed. This is a middle finger to the staffing ratios, not to the educators. I can stand by everything I do, given the conditions I operate under, and I hope all educators feel the same way, which is why a hidden camera wouldn't scare me. It's for the children's sake, and it's part of the debate. ❤️

[User 6]

What happened to the demand for anonymity?? And why should individual institutions be held accountable for the skewed staffing ratios when almost all educators, parents, etc., are shouting as loudly as they can to the politicians? And when the journalists have already been denied... Phew... I hope this doesn't lead to sanctions against those involved. 😊

A shared benefit: Digital democratic education

One of the many benefits that both digital volunteers and members gain from being part of the digital civil society is the enhancement of skills in digital democratic debate. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is highly valuable for more people to gain experience with the difficult dilemmas involved in providing free yet safe digital communities.

We learn together

Several administrators point out that the workload in a digital community center is greatest in the beginning, when the group needs to find its common voice and a shared interpretation of the rules. One of the digital volunteers we interviewed says:

"The tone in the group changes because people change. We also learn together. Hundreds of people have received digital education through the movement."

– Marie Blønd, The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

But we also appreciate the zero tolerance approach

Once this negotiation is more or less in place, the digital volunteers also express that they have little patience with members who violate the rules. One administrator writes:

"We have an absolute zero-tolerance policy towards any posts and comments that do not contribute to a good conversation, do not stay on topic, are not relevant to the author's intention with the post, or in any way attack or belittle others."

We have previously pointed out that the advantage of digital community centers is that you always have the option to create your own groups or find other groups to be active in if the current approach doesn't suit you. This accessibility creates a natural "competition" between groups and motivates digital volunteers to offer the best possible communities without having to tolerate anything.

Many administrators we have spoken with also experience recognition from members when they set boundaries. Jacob Beer says:

"When I moderate, people notice that I make an effort to ensure it's a safe place. Sometimes people acknowledge the time and effort I put in."

We know from our research that digital volunteers are motivated by helping others and offering good communities they feel are lacking. Good administration is also a valued benefit.

"I often start new groups when there are no existing ones of the kind I seek and wish to participate in, if there is a lack. So I create something I wish were available. It's about both the theme and the tone/atmosphere in a group; for example, some moderators/founders are unable to run a good group where people feel safe. That's the kind of group I don't want to participate in."

Our research indicates that digital volunteers often make an extra effort in educating, communicating, and engaging with members. Marie Blønd writes:

"I have seen people go from what I would call trolls to being activist and political allies on my page. But it requires a huge amount of dialogue behind the scenes, and many would probably give up and just kick them out."

Our studies also show that group members are active in reminding each other of the group's rules and reporting problematic content. Several members also report that:

"...when someone attacks the administrator, the members step in."

– Bjarne W. Andresen, Pedagogical Network

In the digital civil society, both volunteers and members gain practical experience in debating, setting boundaries, supporting each other, adopting, and negotiating rules.



7

There are more digital volunteers than we think

In this chapter, we investigate the number of volunteers on digital platforms – both on Facebook and in the digital world in general. We compare the results from our population survey, where we asked citizens about their volunteer engagement, together with VIVE's latest volunteer survey from 2021.

The chapter will show that the extent of online volunteering is greater than we previously thought, and we will take a closer look at who these digital volunteers are. Do they differ from traditional volunteers – and if so, how? At the end of the chapter, we will conclude with a discussion on whether digital volunteering poses a threat to traditional volunteering, or whether it, on the contrary, increases the chances for new groups to gain experience with volunteer work.

This chapter will include:

- What percentage of the adult population engages in volunteer work in Denmark?
- To what extent do digital volunteers resemble traditional volunteers?
- Is digital volunteering a threat to community life?
- Can the digital format engage new groups of volunteers?

Key numbers:



83%

of administrators and moderators consider their efforts as volunteer work.



13%

of the adult population are administrators or moderators of a Facebook group or engage in other online volunteer work.*



96%

of administrators and moderators are not paid for their work.



74%

of digital volunteer administrators and moderators do not have an association or organization behind them.

Data source E / n=2000 og Data source D / n=408 (See [appendix 1](#))

* It should be emphasized here that not all administrators and moderators are necessarily digital volunteers. Some of them undoubtedly run a family group or a group for a circle of friends.

Data basis for comparison:

Our population survey:

Analyse & Tal has conducted a population survey through Voxmeter, sent to a representative sample of the population over 18 years old, collected in September 2023. The sample consists of 2,000 responses.

VIVE's latest volunteer survey is based on a representative sample of over 15,000 Danes over 16 years old. VIVE has conducted volunteer surveys in 2004, 2012, 2017, and 2020. In this chapter, we compare our results with the findings from VIVE's most recent volunteer survey, which was conducted in 2020 and published in 2021.

What does this mean for our study?

The fact that our sample is significantly smaller than VIVE's means that our statistical uncertainty is somewhat greater than theirs. We have therefore been meticulous with our test statistics to ensure that any differences we discuss are not merely due to sample noise but can actually (with high probability) be attributed to real statistical differences.

Data from Statistics Denmark are also included in this section because we want to compare the volunteers with the entire adult Danish population. The figures are the latest available from the StatBank, which for gender and age are from the 4th quarter of 2023 and for education from the 3rd quarter of 2021.

When the reforms hit, thousands of Danes stepped up as neighbor helpers



Susanne Jakobsen

67, trained arts and craft teacher for adults, retiree.
Weekly time commitment: 10–15 hours.



**Neighbor Helpers
Copenhagen N, NV and Ø**
2,750 members

Founded in 2017

Category: Assistance group

About the community center:

Neighbor Helpers is a social movement and a network for protest and practical help for those affected by reforms, which emerged on Facebook in 2016. The group was formed in opposition to cuts in benefits for the most vulnerable citizens, leading to increased poverty. Susanne's group is one of about 30 local Neighbor Helper groups. The group's primary purpose is to serve as a practical forum where vulnerable and reform-affected individuals can seek and offer food, clothing, furniture, advice, and things – essentially anything except medicine, gift cards, money, and tobacco. The group's second purpose is to be a part of the national protest movement against the deterioration of the social safety net.

Susanne's road to the role of administrator:

When Susanne's daughter was affected by the cash benefits cap, she joined and became active in the national Neighbor Helper group. She was then asked if she would lead a local group in her area. Three of them founded the local group together.

In practice:

Susanne's work involves approving new members and posts, as well as responding to around 20 private messages per week. Additionally, she organizes dinners, collecting and distributing surplus food, Christmas aid distribution, searching for grants, and selling items at the Christmas market.

Most motivated when:

Susanne is fundamentally motivated to run the group because she can see and feel that there is a great need for it. It makes a difference for local vulnerable and reform-affected individuals time and again.



You shouldn't have to defend or explain why you're seeking help. Our goal is to provide people with as much assistance as we possibly can. That's why we take a hard stance against shaming.

Susanne Jakobsen

Least motivated when:

It is most demotivating when people misuse the format: both when "helpers" promise all sorts of things they don't ultimately deliver on, and when "recipients" abuse people's trust, behave rudely, or don't show up to collect donations as agreed. "Helpers" and "recipients" are in quotation marks because members often find themselves in both roles.

Susanne describes how she experienced the most rule violations at the group's inception: *"But it seems like people have learned our rules over time and now know how things work."*



[User 1]

2400 NV

My son (13 years old) has severely high blood pressure, and the hospital has said we need to measure it twice a day to monitor it... Neither the hospital nor our GP has a monitor for loan, so we have to get one ourselves, which I simply can't afford (all my money already goes to medication). So I wanted to ask if anyone has one they no longer use.

[User 2]

Have you found one yet? I have one in Valby you can get.

[User 3]

I have one you can get.

[User 4]

I can drop by with one, if you're home later 😊



Susanne Jakobsen

A family in outer Østerbro needs assistance from the community. I hope someone can step in 🙌❤️

2100 Copenhagen

The money is gone, the accounts are empty, and the car is sold. There's nothing left, so I'm seeking food.

If I can choose, the focus would be on:

- Rye bred
- Toast
- Cold cuts
- Canned tomatoes
- Beans in tomato sauce
- Canned chili beans
- Onions
- Carrots
- Frozen pizzas
- Strawberry jam
- Meat
- Tuna
- Mackarel

There is literally no money. So I can't buy food from various cheap to-go offers. Anything else is also greatly appreciated. I am working very hard to regain balance after my catastrophic financial situation in 2022. And I have limited possibilities for pick-up...



21 comments

VIVEs mapping of virtual volunteerism

There has long been an interest in mapping and tracking the development of volunteer engagement among Danes, and the National Research and Analysis Center for Welfare, VIVE, regularly publishes a status on volunteer engagement in Denmark.

VIVE's latest volunteer survey (2021) shows that a full 40% of Danes between the ages of 16–89 engaged in volunteer work in 2020. This proportion has remained fairly stable since their measurement in 2004.

The volunteer work of Danes spans a wide range, including everything from board and committee work to practical tasks such as cleaning, shopping, teaching, shop work, driving, secretarial work, and website development. VIVE also inquires about participation in so-called virtual volunteer work, described as "activities on the internet that can be considered voluntary unpaid work."

Here, 6% of the population responded that they perform virtual volunteer work. One-sixth of them stated that they exclusively perform virtual volunteer work, while five-sixths perform both virtual and other volunteer work. When VIVE in 2020 asks about virtual volunteer work, an explanatory note is included in the question. The specific wording of the question is:

"Now we have some questions about virtual volunteerism. By virtual volunteerism, we mean activities on the internet that can be considered voluntary unpaid work.

Have you engaged in virtual volunteer work in the past year?

Virtual volunteer work refers to voluntary work performed without meeting face-to-face. This can include helping with the administration of social media, online tutoring, advising, or similar activities.

However, it does not refer to personal use of social media, blogs, and the internet in general."

So, "helping with the administration of social media" is considered volunteer work, while "personal use of social media" is not. How might the Denmark's moderators and administrators have interpreted this?

Being an administrator and moderator is not about helping other people manage social media profiles but about running and managing a group community and a debate. It is possible that administrators and moderators might have considered their efforts as "personal use of social media" and therefore answered no to performing virtual volunteer work. This is likely because administrators and moderators use their personal profiles to fulfill this role.

In the 2012 survey, VIVE specifically mentioned Facebook pages as an example of something that is not considered volunteer work, while managing and running a Facebook group was not mentioned. This wording might have led many digital volunteer administrators and moderators to not consider their work as virtual volunteer work in 2012.

Definition of virtual volunteerism

Although VIVE does not mention Facebook groups in their explanation of virtual volunteerism, the work of administrators falls under VIVE's definition of volunteer work – as long as it benefits others beyond family and close networks.

According to VIVE, volunteer work is unpaid, voluntary, benefits others beyond oneself and immediate family, is active, and is performed within an organizational context, which can be either public or private (see the definition box).

VIVE's definition of volunteerism includes 'voluntary work in informal contexts.' According to VIVE, informal volunteerism typically has a more network-based, grassroots, and loose organization than the volunteerism that occurs in associations and organizations (VIVE 2021, 21).

Examples of such activities mentioned by VIVE include Friendly Neighbors and Neighbor Helpers, both of which we find in our data on Facebook groups. See the case of Susanne Jakobsen, who runs "Neighbor Helpers Copenhagen N, NV og Ø," at the beginning of the chapter.

In a question about which volunteer tasks were performed, VIVE specifically mentions "administering a Facebook group (broader than a group for friends and family)" as an example of volunteer work over the internet. However, VIVE's framing of virtual volunteer work is different, and as described, it is likely that many administrators and moderators did not see themselves in this description.

VIVE's definition of volunteerism:

Volunteer work is understood as an activity that:

- Is unpaid (though with the possibility of expense reimbursement)
- Is voluntary (e.g., not mandatory activation)
- Is performed within an organizational context, which can be either public or private
- Benefits others beyond oneself and immediate family
- Is active (i.e., mere membership in an organization is not enough)

VIVE specifically mentions "voluntary work in informal contexts," also called "informal volunteering": *Voluntary work that is not organized within formal structures but still benefits people other than family and close network and is not merely a spontaneous one-time activity (e.g., helping an elderly lady cross the street).*

More digital volunteers than previously thought

Our representative population survey (data source E) indicates that more people engage in digital volunteer work than what is shown in VIVE's study.

The reason is likely because we ask specifically about being a moderator or administrator of Facebook groups, leading more people to "recognize" themselves as digital volunteers compared to when VIVE asks about virtual volunteering.

However, precisely how many people engage in digital volunteer work today is not entirely clear from our survey. In our population survey, we asked if one is a moderator or administrator of a Facebook group. We did not specify that the group should not be solely for family or close acquaintances, which is a requirement for an effort to be considered volunteer work.

We further asked whether they do "other digital volunteer work" – this could include digital chat counseling for an organization or administrative tasks.

In our survey, 13% of the population over 18 years old responded that they are either moderators or administrators of one or more Facebook groups and/or engage in other digital volunteer work.

11 out of the 13% are involved as administrators and moderators. The remaining 2% have performed "other digital volunteer work."

13% of the population over 18 years old corresponds to more than 600,000 people, but as mentioned, some of these may lead very small Facebook groups for family or friend groups. Therefore, the number of digital volunteers remains uncertain (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, from our population

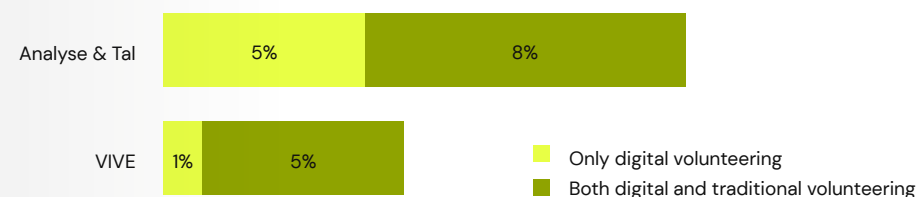
survey, we can at least see that the potential for digital volunteer work is quite significant. 11% of the adult population, i.e., around 500,000 people, have tried managing a Facebook group. This suggests that the role of administrator and moderator is accessible to many, and the potential for becoming a volunteer on Facebook is substantial.

If we count all those who respond that they are administrators and moderators as digital volunteers – while also acknowledging that some of them may not be – we find that digital volunteering is about twice as large as VIVE finds: 13% compared to 6% of the adult population. This is shown in Figure 7.1. The truth likely lies somewhere between our and VIVE's numbers.

We also find that 5% of the population exclusively engage in digital volunteer work, while 8% perform both digital and traditional volunteer work.

Overall, our results indicate that a larger proportion of the population is engaged in digital volunteer activities than previously shown, and that digital volunteering thus plays a more prominent role than we had previously believed.

Figure 7.1
The proportion of the adult population that administers or moderates a Facebook group or engages in other digital volunteer work



Among the volunteers themselves, we see that they sometimes doubt whether it counts as being an administrator or moderator of a Facebook group. In our interviews with administrators and moderators, we found that

some of them were uncertain whether their efforts could be considered "real volunteer work." This also applied to some digital volunteers who led large groups.

As Bjarne W. Andresen, administrator of the Pedagogical Network, says:

"If I think about it, I would consider it volunteer work. But I might be inclined to think that working in front of a screen doesn't count."

Similarly, Dan Kreutzfeldt, administrator of What's Happening in Nordvest, did not consider his work in the Facebook group as volunteer work for several years because it wasn't within the framework of an organization:

"I used to see my work with the Facebook group as a service to the local community. But I understand that it is actually volunteer work. It's quite a lot of hours. For many, I think the difference between volunteer work and services is whether it is organized under a recognized organization."

However, this is not the majority opinion among digital volunteers.

Most administrators see themselves as volunteers

In our survey of Facebook administrators and moderators, most consider their efforts as volunteer work, according to Figure 7.2.

83% of the administrators and moderators who responded to our survey see themselves as volunteers, while 17% either do not or are unsure ("don't know"). Although most digital volunteer administrators and moderators regard their work as volunteer work, a significant minority do not or are unsure.

We asked the 17% why they do not consider their work volunteer work. Half of them responded that they see Facebook work as a hobby; for one in five, it is because the work is not conducted under a formal organization; and about one in seven answered that they receive payment for it. However, relatively few receive payment for their role as an administrator/moderator.

Figure 7.2
Would you describe your administrator/moderator effort as volunteer work?

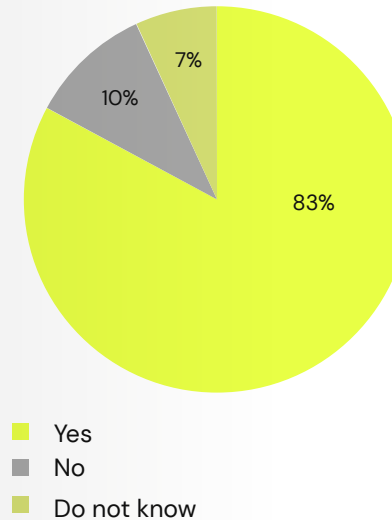
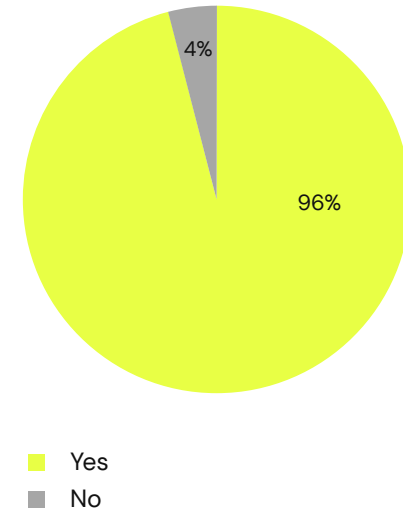


Figure 7.3
Are your efforts as administrator/moderator unpaid?



96% of digital volunteers are unpaid

The vast majority is unpaid, as shown in Figure 7.3. A full 96% of the administrators and moderators who responded to the survey receive no payment for their efforts.

The 4% who do receive payment might be administrators of a Facebook group under a formal association or organization. This could include people employed to manage a Facebook group for, for example, the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, the Red Cross, or private companies that see benefits in marketing specific products through Facebook groups. We also see quite a few self-employed individuals, such as those offering alternative treatments, who have an interest in gathering a Facebook group around their specific services. Finally, there may be examples of digital volunteers like Kirsten Sydendal in Lolland-Falster Lovestorm, who receives a small fee for managing both the Facebook group and the Lolland-Falster Lovestorm association, as described in the case study in Chapter 5.

How much do the digital volunteers resemble their traditional counterparts?

Let's take a closer look at the 13% of the population who report doing digital volunteer work in our survey. They are either moderators or administrators of one or more Facebook groups and/or active in other digital volunteer work such as digital counseling services, online tutoring, or open-source development.

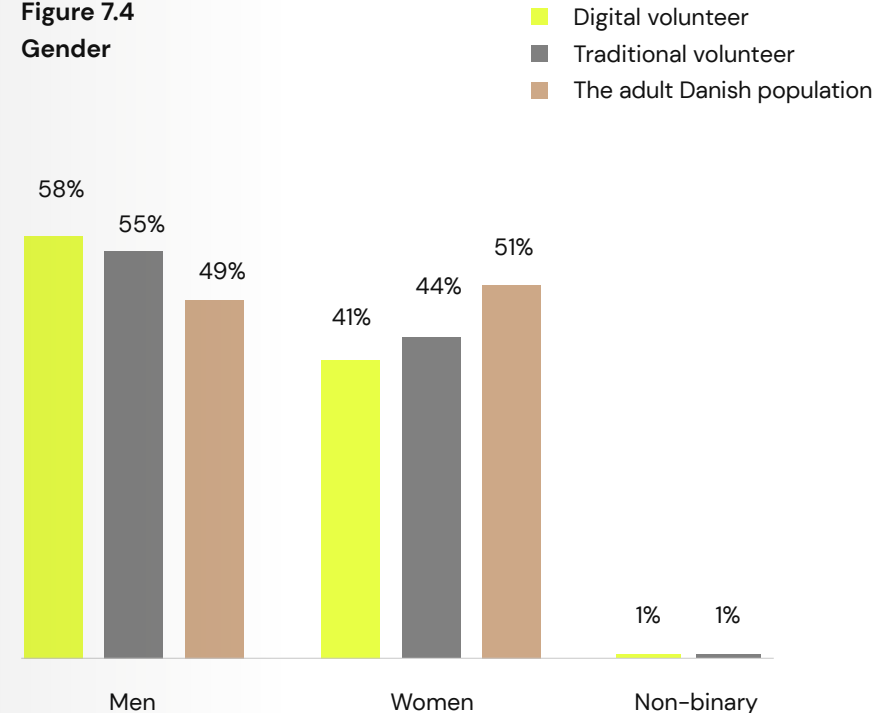
On the following pages, we examine the demographic characteristics of digital volunteers and traditional volunteers in our representative population survey. We compare the two groups to assess whether digital volunteers have a different profile compared to traditional volunteers – those who volunteer in physical settings like homework cafes, as football coaches, in thrift shops, and generally in the physical world.

We also compare the proportion of volunteers within various age and education groups to the population as a whole. This gives us a sense of whether certain groups are over- or under-represented among digital volunteers.

It should be noted that, as previously shown in the chapter, there is an overlap between digital and traditional volunteers, as 8% of the population over 18 years old, according to our survey, are both digital and traditional volunteers¹.

¹ The group of digital volunteers in the following analysis includes both those who are exclusively digital volunteers and those who are both digital and traditional volunteers. Similarly, the traditional group includes both those who are exclusively traditional volunteers and those who are both traditional and digital volunteers.

Figure 7.4
Gender



Most digital volunteers are men

The typical volunteer is a man. VIVE's volunteering survey also shows this. As seen in Figure 7.4, men outnumber women in both digital and traditional volunteering. The difference is greatest in digital volunteering, where 58% of digital volunteers are men compared to 41% women, with 1% being non-binary.

Digital Volunteers are Younger than Traditional Volunteers

Looking at the age distribution among digital and traditional volunteers, all age groups are well represented. There is an over-representation among those aged 30–49 and 50–65 among digital volunteers, while most volunteers over 66+ volunteer traditionally in settings like homework cafes, thrift shops, and other face-to-face situations.

Figure 7.4: Data source: Our own findings from Statistics Denmark's StatBank. Data source E: / n=2000 (See appendix 1)

Comparing digital volunteers within different age groups to their proportion of the population shows that being a digital volunteer is fairly common across ages.

15% of young people aged 18–29 are digital volunteers, making up 19% of the population. Thus, young people are slightly underrepresented, but only by 4 percentage points relative to their population share. Young people have not completely left Facebook, as sometimes suggested in public debate. One in seven digital volunteers is aged 18–29.

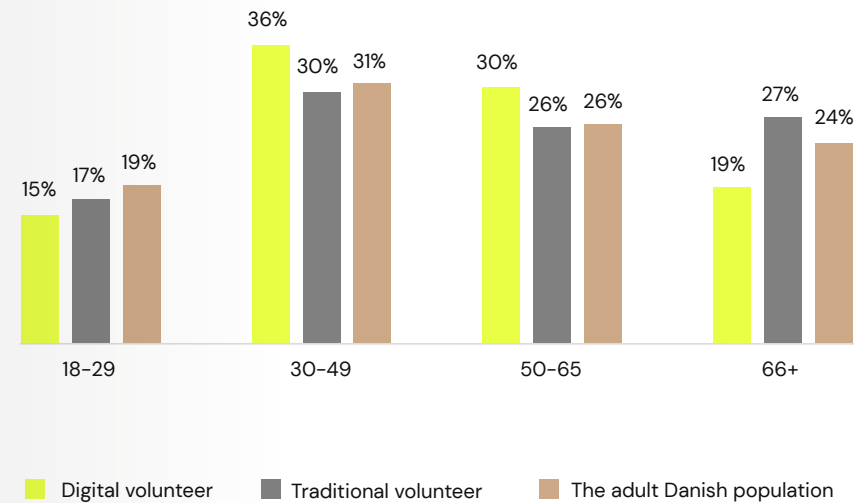
The largest group of digital volunteers is those aged 30–49. They make up 36% of digital volunteers compared to 31% of the population, thus being overrepresented relative to their population share. Those in the age group that are parents of young children form the largest proportion of both digital and traditional volunteers.

VIVE's volunteering figures also show that volunteering is most prevalent among people aged 36–45.

The 50–65 age group is also overrepresented among digital volunteers relative to their population share, while those over 66 are underrepresented. Thus, it is not the country's pensioners who are managing Facebook groups, but nearly one in five digital volunteers is over 66 years old.

Our data shows that digital volunteers exist across all ages, though there are slightly fewer among the young and the elderly.

Figure 7.5
Age



Digital Volunteering Attracts More People Without Formal Education than Traditional Volunteering

Our survey shows – in line with VIVE's – that volunteering is most common among people with higher education. This also applies to digital volunteering. People with higher education are overrepresented relative to their population share. Conversely, skilled workers are underrepresented, with 25% of digital volunteers being skilled workers compared to a population share of 32%.

People without vocational qualifications are also underrepresented. However, we see that people without vocational qualifications make up 15% of digital volunteers compared to 11% of traditional volunteers. The difference is significant. The survey suggests that digital platforms may help more people in this educational group, which is the least represented in volunteer work, engage in volunteering.

Figure 7.6
Education

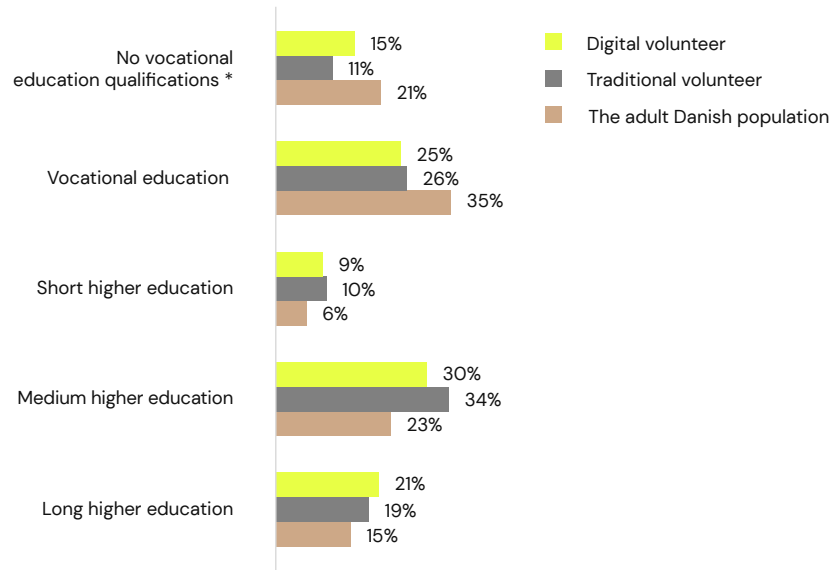
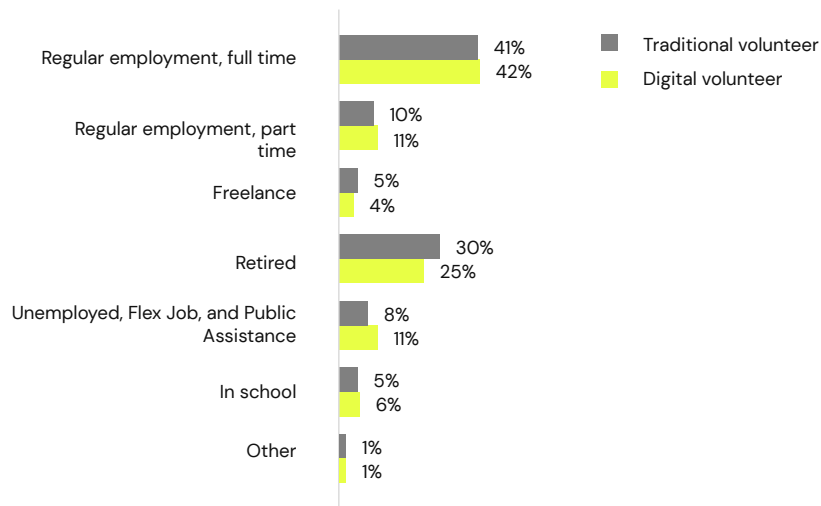


Figure 7.7
Employment



Slightly More Digital Volunteers Among Those on Public Assistance

Looking at employment status, there is not much difference in the number of digital versus traditional volunteers. The largest group of both traditional and digital volunteers are full-time employees, with slightly more than 40% being volunteers. Next are retirees (including senior pensioners and those on early retirement), who make up 25% of digital volunteers.

We see that more retirees volunteer traditionally rather than digitally, which is not surprising given that the oldest age group is underrepresented among digital volunteers. However, in our fieldwork, we observe quite a few early retirees taking on digital volunteer roles.

Conversely, in the group of unemployed people, flex jobbers, and those on public assistance (including social security and sickness benefits), more are digital volunteers than traditional volunteers. However, these are small groups, so the difference is not significant.

About 9% of the population receives unemployment benefits, social assistance, sickness benefits, parental benefits, and other support (AE 2023).

Our survey shows that this group makes up 11% of digital volunteers. Our survey is based on a sample, and while 2,000 responses are relatively robust, the groups become small when focusing on a segment that constitutes a small portion of society. Therefore, the uncertainty is high, and we cannot draw firm conclusions from the numbers.

However, the results indicate that this group of public assistance recipients is not underrepresented among digital volunteers. The responses in our population survey suggest that digital volunteering is slightly more accessible for a group of people who often have psychological, physical, and/or social challenges, such as social assistance recipients and those on sickness benefits. This group is generally less represented among volunteers in Denmark (VIVE 2021).

Figure 7.6: Data source: Our own findings from Statistics Denmark's StatBank. *In the population survey by Analyse & Tal, participants are 18+ years old, whereas in Denmark's Statistics, they are 20+ years old. Data source E / n=2000. Figure 7.7: Data source E / n=2000 (See appendix 1)

Is digital volunteering a threat to association life?

In recent years, studies on volunteering point out that there have been changes in the volunteering landscape. In the book "The New Volunteering," Ellen-Margrethe Dahl-Gren (2019) highlights that conventional organized volunteering through NGOs, football clubs, and other associations is now being complemented by more dynamic and flexible forms.

Studies indicate that an increasing portion of volunteer engagement takes place outside the realm of organizations, and the traditional membership model is under pressure (SFI 2014; Rambøll 2017). The proportion of volunteers who are members of the association they volunteer for has declined. A survey among all sports associations under DIF and DGI shows that from 2015 to 2022, there was a 16% decline in the number of volunteer positions, and one in four associations faces challenges in managing the association's interests and development due to a lack of volunteers (DIF 2023).

The same pattern is seen among social actors in the volunteering sector – especially retaining volunteers for long-term and essential organizational activities is a challenge (VIVE 2018-1).

This is also reflected in what the volunteers themselves say. The organization Ingerfair shows in a survey that one of the most prominent challenges for volunteers is maintaining engagement among their volunteer colleagues (Ingerfair 2022).

Instead, new types of volunteering are emerging in loosely connected networks and grassroots initiatives on digital platforms, often organized

independently of traditional volunteer organizations. The trend is that a larger portion of volunteer engagement is carried out as single issues and ad hoc in connection with specific activities (VIVE 2021; VIVE 2018-1; Dahl-Gren 2019).

Digital engagement and digital media are often linked to the new forms of volunteering and the movement towards more episodic, informal, and self-organized engagement. For example, Grubb has examined young people's participation in non-membership-based, digitally coordinated voluntary work and argues that young people's flexible and activity-oriented engagement aligns well with digital organization (Grubb 2016).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a surge in digital volunteering, often characterized by informal assistance outside of association structures (Toubøl and Carlsen 2020).

The digital volunteering we map in the digital community centers seems to be part of the "new volunteering" – and yet not. The role of administrator or moderator for a Facebook group is more self-organized and flexible because it takes place digitally. But for most, it is not sporadic and ad hoc. As chapter 3 showed, 75% of administrators and moderators in our survey (Data source D) have been doing it for more than 3 years, and 43% of them for more than 5 years.

Volunteering in Facebook groups resembles traditional volunteering in that it is obligatory. Most administrators and moderators have been doing it for a long time and expect to continue. They often feel they can't take a break for very long.

As shown in chapter 4, digital volunteers spend more hours per week than traditional volunteers, and many find it hard to take a break from checking the Facebook group daily, with 11% doing so every hour or more frequently. For some administrators, the role feels even more obligatory than "just" volunteer work.

"I have felt it as an obligation, but I have regarded the others in the group as volunteers. Volunteer work, I feel, is something you can come and go from. And I don't feel that I can," says Jesper, who administers the group *Custody Counseling – With the Child in Focus*.

Being an administrator and moderator is not something you can tap in and out of from one day to the next. Facebook group volunteering does not meet the sporadic and uncommitted nature highlighted as characteristic of the new volunteering in research.

On the other hand, the voluntary work usually takes place independently of formal organizational structures.

Most voluntary work in Facebook groups takes place without an association

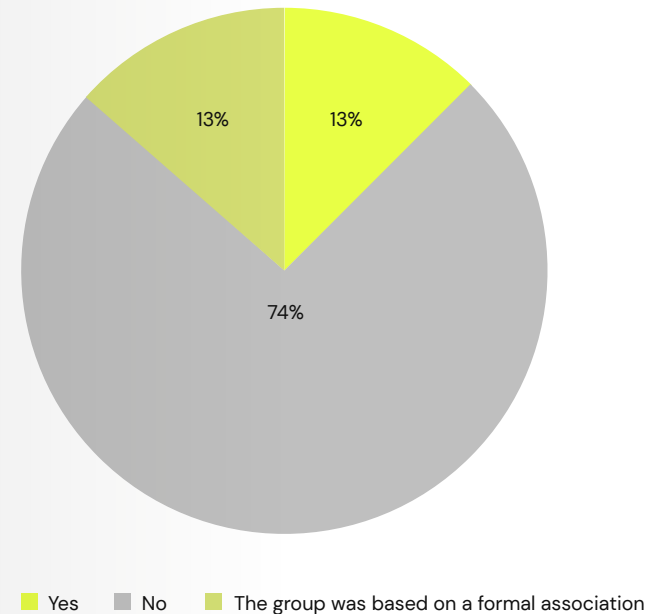
Nearly three out of four administrators and moderators do not have an association or organization behind them. This is shown in our survey (Data source D), where we specifically asked about it. 14% started the Facebook group based on an already existing association.

This could, for example, be local sports clubs, Red Cross groups, or various other associations that existed before and created a Facebook group to communicate.

13% of the administrators and moderators who responded to our survey have started an association based on the Facebook group. An example of such an association is "Lolland-Falster Lovestorm," which started as a Facebook group to share good stories about Lolland-Falster but has now become an independent association with business partnerships, members, and finances. See the case of Kirsten Sydendal and Lolland-Falster Lovestorm in chapter 5.

Figure 7.8

Is there a formal association based on the group?



However, the most common is that voluntary engagement in Facebook groups takes place outside of formal organizations and associations, according to Figure 7.8. Most administrators and moderators who do not have a formal structure today could not imagine establishing an association based on the group. This is shown in Figure 8.2. Only 9% of those who do not have a formal association structure today could imagine establishing one, and an additional 22% answered "maybe."

So, is it a threat to traditional volunteering?

The digital volunteering we have mapped in Facebook groups differs in some ways significantly from traditional volunteering. In other ways, it does not.

Being an administrator and moderator is often time-consuming, long-term, and hard to take a break from. It is very obligatory. But it is at the

same time more flexible to fit into everyday life because it can be done from home, requires less physical activity and social contact, and does not need to be done at specific times.

In our survey, we see that a majority of 65% of digital volunteers are also traditional volunteers. So, it is far from all digital volunteers who have turned their backs on traditional civil society.

In research, Enjolras and Eimhjellen point out whether digitally facilitated forms of voluntary work will displace traditional types of membership-based engagement in established organizations, or whether the different forms and contexts of digital work will supplement each other. They assess that digital volunteering does not seem to challenge the traditional organizations' role as infrastructure for voluntary engagement – associations still play a central role in mobilizing and retaining voluntary engagement (Enjolras and Eimhjellen 2018).

VIVE's latest volunteering survey shows an increase in informal volunteering outside organizations and associations as well as virtual volunteering, but it also shows that membership-based volunteering is not decreasing (VIVE 2021).

This also suggests that digital volunteering does not necessarily pose a threat to traditional and membership-based volunteering.

However, it is also true that traditional volunteers are older than digital ones. So, if it is a matter of generational preference and not a preference related to one's other life phase (work life, family, social network), it cannot be ruled out that "traditional" (if understood as physically anchored, formal, and inflexible) volunteering will experience a decline in favor of informal and digital formats.

Figure 7.9
Could you imagine establishing a formal association based on your group?

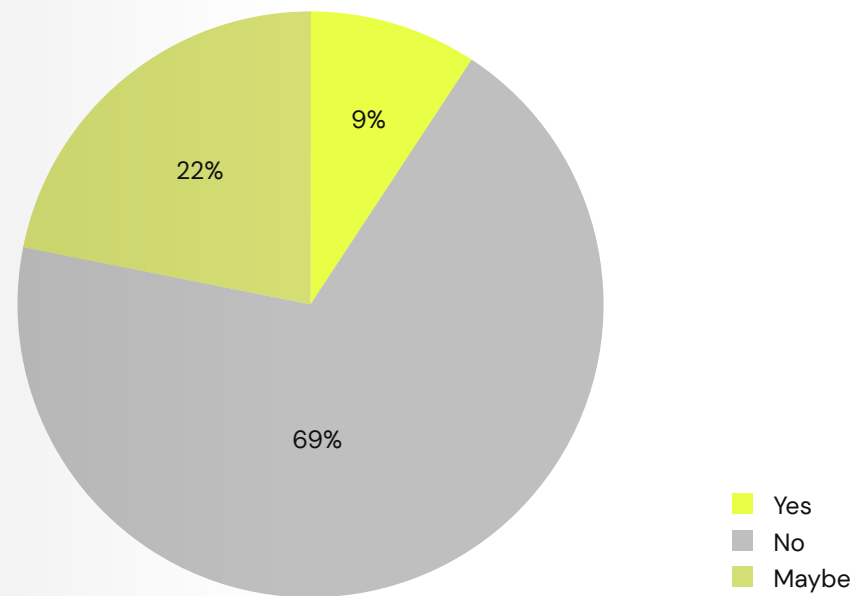


Figure 7.9: Data source D. Filter: The question was only asked to the ones who answered "no" to the question "Is there a formal association based on the group?" / n=302 (See [appendix 1](#))

Can the digital format engage new groups of volunteers?

Several volunteering studies indicate that especially vulnerable groups in society do not have equal access to volunteering communities (Democracy Commission and DUF 2020; Volunteering Council 2021; SFI 2005; VIVE 2018-2; VIVE 2021).

VIVE, for example, shows that volunteer engagement among citizens receiving disability pensions or social assistance is lower than the general population. Recipients of social assistance and disability pensions often feel that their physical and psychological challenges are not sufficiently considered in volunteer work, and 27% feel they do not have the necessary resources, compared to only 13% in the broader population.

Poor health can also prevent someone from doing volunteer work. According to VIVE (2021), about 20% of people with poor or very poor health volunteer, compared to nearly twice as many of those with good or very good health.

In our interviews, we encountered several administrators who said that the digital format had a significant impact on their ability to volunteer – precisely because it was more compatible with their health.

This is the case, for example, for Helle Pedersen, who has epilepsy and is on a disability pension but still manages to administer 12 Facebook groups from her apartment. Helle mentioned that flexibility meant a lot to her:

"Epilepsy medication has a downside, which is that sometimes you have to withdraw. So, it is nice that I can manage this 'freelance job' as an administrator and make a difference for some people."

Susanne Jakobsen, who is the administrator for "Neighbor Helpers Copenhagen N, NV og Ø," also benefits from the digital format because her mobility makes it harder for her to be physically present. She can no longer work as a hospital aide or night nurse due to physical limitations, but working as a digital volunteer is a good alternative way to make a noticeable difference for the vulnerable in the local community.

In the research literature, there is a discussion about whether digital platforms have the potential to mobilize new groups into volunteering.

The results point in different directions. In a German study, Ackermann and Manatchal (2018) argue that digital volunteer work seems to both reinforce existing inequality patterns in volunteer work and has the potential to mobilize new kinds of people into social participation. The flexibility and anonymity of the Internet mean fewer demands, lowering the threshold for digital volunteering, according to the researchers. It does not require the same resources, social networks, or explicit commitment, creating new opportunities. However, digital engagement requires some technical skills and knowledge of platforms. Ackermann and Manatchal summarize that online volunteer work can create inequality by requiring specific resources or skills, but mobilizing new groups seems possible.

We see the same in our survey. As shown in this chapter, digital volunteers largely have the same profile as traditional volunteers: Most are men, most are middle-aged, and most have higher education.

However, our survey also suggests that digital volunteering is more accessible for some of the groups that have the weakest connection to volunteering in general. This includes people on various types of public assistance and those without vocational qualifications.

Our survey also shows that 35% of digital volunteers exclusively volunteer online. Perhaps the role of administrator or moderator makes it possible for new groups of people to volunteer?

Lower social access barrier

A group led by the Volunteering Council points out that people in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations often want to volunteer but face various obstacles. In addition to lacking necessary resources and poor health, it can also be a matter of simply not being invited into the communities. Many traditional volunteers are invited through recommendations from friends and acquaintances. A weak social network, without connections to civil society, can make it difficult to find a way into traditional volunteer communities (Volunteering Council et al. 2021).

On Facebook, it is not necessary to have a personal relationship with an administrator to be accepted as a new administrator or moderator.

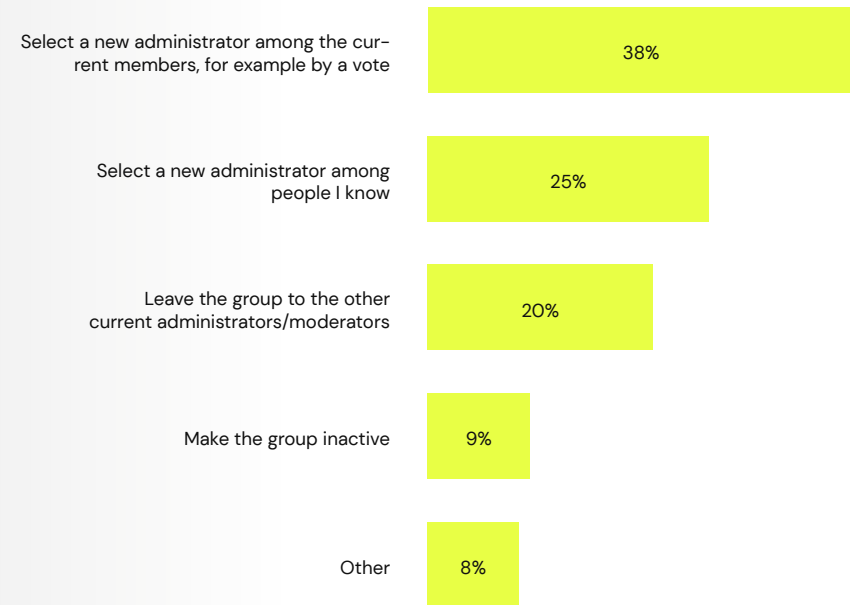
In our survey of administrators and moderators (Data source D), we asked them what they would do if they were suddenly unable to continue managing the group. Only 25% answered that they would appoint a new administrator from people they know. A majority of nearly 38% would either appoint a new administrator from among the group members or let the members vote on it. Another 20% would leave the administrator role to their existing co-administrators.

From the qualitative interviews, it is our experience that it is quite common for the administrator team not to know each other personally. Helle Kiel Hauglund, who is a moderator in Happy Crocheting, told us that she was appointed because she had a handle on copyright rules – but she did not personally know the previous administrator. Helle Pedersen, who is an administrator in several friend groups, a group about houseplants, food leftovers, and several others, also did not have private relations with the administrators in the 12 groups she became an administrator for:

“It was a bit by chance that I became an administrator for so many groups. Sometimes I was asked, other times they needed an administrator, so I stepped in.”

Figure 7.10

If you, from one day to the next, became unable to maintain your group, what would you want to have happen to it?



The flexibility and wide accessibility of the Internet lower the entry barrier, and according to Ackermann and Manatchal, this can mean that the threshold for digital volunteering is lower. It does not require the same resources; it does not have to happen at fixed times and does not require the same social network (Ackermann and Manatchal 2018).

The role of administrator and moderator in Facebook groups can thus give more people the opportunity to gain skills and competencies through volunteer work.

That new groups have the opportunity to engage in volunteering is important, as it is associated with the development of democratic competencies, advocacy, and influence (Democracy Commission and DUF 2020). Tens of

thousands of Danes of all ages, with and without education, and both in and out of employment get to experience the challenge of managing and maintaining a community, ensuring a good tone, and enforcing rules fairly so that members do not leave. Marie Blønd, who is a digital volunteer in the Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom, says:

“Activist work has taught me to delegate. To see people's qualities. To give them the confidence to take on things they have never tried before. People say they have grown exponentially from sitting on our committees, and many find it hard to leave the movement's committee, even though it could occasionally take up all their time.”

It is hard to turn a blind eye to the democratic and digital upskilling that both the digital volunteers and members gain through the digital civil society.

Members' Ad Hoc Volunteering

Before we conclude the discussion on digital and traditional volunteering, we will briefly touch on the contributions from the members of the digital community centers.

As we saw in Chapter 6, some members contribute practical, financial, and material help through the digital community centers, while several provide good advice and guidance on minor and major everyday challenges. Even more offer emotional comfort and support to fellow citizens.

Those who may have a lot of knowledge in a particular area or periodically a lot of empathy to share, but for one reason or another cannot (or will not) offer a physical and/or regular commitment, have the opportunity through the digital community centers to help their fellow citizens and at the same time feel competent and knowledgeable.

The members' sporadic ad hoc volunteering is evident in both our observations, the survey of the population's use of the community centers, and our responses from the digital volunteers.

The digital volunteers report that one of the things that motivates them in their work is to create and run a platform through which citizens can help each other:

“There are many members who are good at stepping in and willing to help when a member is in trouble. It warms my heart that we have such a community where we can be there for each other.”

Canan Pektas – Alt om Alt Girls (15+)

In the Breastfeeding Networks groups, members also help and support each other extensively – even in the middle of the night, you can often find a breastfeeding mother online.

“I am glad that the Breastfeeding Network has created a space for breastfeeding women where they can safely ask anything related to breastfeeding, and that our members are generally great at offering advice, encouragement, and sharing experiences.”

Maria Pihl Fly Bekke – Breastfeeding Networks groups

The members' ad hoc volunteering has been difficult to quantify and is not included in the 13% digital volunteering we have mapped.

Epileptic and on early retirement: “This is where I can make a difference”



Helle Pedersen

60, degree in office management, early retirement, former telephone operator at the directory assistance.



Seeking a Friend 40+, 50+, 60+ and Girls only, mostly 18-35

Several thousand members

Founded in 2012

Category: Relations

About the community center:

The "Seeking a friend" groups come in several versions, so there is one for women of all ages. In these groups, you can find new friends – for example, someone to accompany you to sports, concerts, cafes, or just new friends to chat with online. For newcomers to an area, these groups can be useful for establishing new relationships in the local community.

In practice:

Helle has epilepsy, and after the directory assistance service closed, she went on disability pension. But Helle still wanted to make a difference for others. The role of administrator suits her well because she can do it quietly from home. She spends 3–4 hours each day

managing her groups. It especially takes a lot of time to check new applicants and ensure that no fake profiles get in. Helle has been a dedicated administrator for many years; in the Houseplant group, she celebrated her 10-year anniversary as an administrator. In the friend groups, Helle draws on her knowledge of the country's postal codes. She has created 9 regions with postal codes in each region: "Funen has become its own, and Zealand has three regions, since it can be a long trip to a café if you meet someone from the other end of Zealand."

Most motivated when:

Helle is particularly happy that she has the opportunity to help other people and support communities across the country through her role as an administrator. The 5 friend groups that Helle co-administers also refer to an additional 35 local groups, making it possible for people to find friends in all corners of the country. It is motivating for Helle to see when people find each other. She loves when there is good activity in the groups and people generally follow the rules.



Least motivated when:

The worst is coming home from an event late at night and discovering that the discussions in the groups have gotten out of control. Helle feels that she cannot take a day off, even for a single day. There is an expectation to always be available – which is why Helle prefers to have multiple administrators for a group. It is a big and demanding job.

Worth mentioning:

Helle's heart is with Holbæk Football Club (HB&I), where she faithfully attends all home games and writes reports, which she posts in the Facebook group "Holbæk B&I's Supporters." She grew up with the club, where her father sold programs at the entrance, and her brother played football. Helle has had a regular seat at the club for 40 years and is called "the walking encyclopedia" because she keeps track of all current and former players in the Facebook group "HB&I: Info on former players, coaches, and other active members of the club." Over the years, Holbæk Football Club has become Helle's second family.

I am a former telephone operator at the directory assistance. In the friend groups, I have created 9 regions, each with postal codes. Funen has become its own, and Zealand has three regions, as it can be a long trip to a café if you meet someone from the other end of Zealand.

Helle Pedersen



Helle Pedersen

@all Many people write correctly under the region where they live, but only mention age and city. This makes it difficult to find friends with common interests or activities. So please remember to include NAME, AGE, AND INTERESTS when updating your posts 😊 I hope you all have had a good start to the first two weeks of December 😊😊



[User 1]

Phew, I'm trying and it's not easy 🙄🙄
My name is [name] and I'm looking for friends to talk to about everything and meet up with. I am 33 years old. I have 2 wonderful kids and live in [City 1].
I miss having someone to talk to when something good or bad happens. I can meet up both with and without kids. Someone who chooses me and doesn't go behind my back. Someone who can also meet up for birthdays, New Year's, etc.
I like everything from cars, horses, crafts, good food, nature, and much more.
I hope there's someone out there 🙏🙏❤️
Happy New Year



11

13 kommentarer

[User 2]

Your son looks so cute, how old is he?

[User 1]

[User 2] Thank you so much, he is 7 months old 🥰 He is so sweet

[User 2]

Lovely age 🥰 I have a daughter who is almost 2

[User 3]

What a lovely picture of you guys 🥰🥰
- I am 28 years old and live in [City 2] with my husband. Together, we have a 4-year-old son and are expecting a new baby at the end of February 🥰 You are more than welcome to write to me 🥰

(Fortsat)

[Bruger 4]

I live in [City 3] with my two small children, and I also miss having a friend to do everything and nothing with!
A bit about me: my name is [Name] and I am 24 years old. I bought a house in [City 3] with my dear husband, and we are in the middle of completely renovating it. I became a mom at 20, to my son [Name], who is 4, and I also have a daughter – [Name], who is 2 and a half. You are very welcome to write to me if you would like to. 🙏

[User 1]

[User 4] That sounds so nice! I would love that 🙏🙏

[User 5]

I am from [City 4] and have 4 girls 🥰🥰❤️ You are very welcome to write. I sometimes feel a bit lonely even though I have so many children and a boyfriend. It's just not the same as having a good friend. And hey, I'm also 33 (24) if anyone asks 🙏🙏

[User 1]

[User 5] Oh, I know that feeling all too well. I definitely have to write to you 🙏🥰 Yes, exactly, forever a twenty-something 🙏

[User 6]

I don't have any children, but I do have nieces and nephews, so I have plenty of children in my life 🥰 I am 32 and live in [City 5]. You are very welcome to write to me in a private message. 🙏

[User 7]

Why are we so bad at keeping in touch, beautiful? 🙏 Let's see each other soon ❤️ This fat pig here (meaning me, you know) just needs to pop out this baby and then I'm ready 🙏🥰❤️❤️ I miss you!

[User 1]

[User 7] I miss you too, beautiful ❤️❤️ Yes, let's see each other as soon as your little one is out 🙏

8

Digital community centers as social actors

In this chapter, we look at how digital community centers interact with the broader society and explore the advantages and disadvantages of being an "informal" actor. As the chapter will show, many of the digital community centers we have encountered through the study manage to make an impact on the society around them – some have even created political change. However, several of these community centers struggle to be recognized and acknowledged for their knowledge, experience, and efforts. Additionally, many face challenges in realizing their ambitions due to a lack of funding. Some digital community centers possess significant untapped potential, and it would be worthwhile to explore ways to increase their visibility, strengthen their ties to traditional civil society, and devise new economic opportunities to support informal citizen movements and community groups on Facebook.

This chapter will include:

- How and when have the digital community centers had an influence on society at large?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages with being an informal actor, who wishes to make a difference and affect certain agendas?
- What do the digital community centers need to strengthen their framework?

Key numbers:



According to the digital volunteers, there are both advantages and disadvantages to being a digitally and informally organized civil society actor.

The advantages include less bureaucracy and administration, low-threshold mobilization, more freedom, effective communication, and flexibility.

On the downside, there is no opportunity to apply for financial support for your project, protest, or event. Nor can you rent premises through the municipality or set up fundraisers. Additionally, you are not automatically considered in the political process and are often overlooked as an expert.



60%

of the digital volunteers have had contact with the media, NGOs, researchers, or other actors in society.(Data source D)



3,000

The 24 most popular citizen proposals have been shared 3,000 times across 721 public groups.

The digital tool CrowdTangle was used for the analysis. The figures cover shares from March 2018 to December 2023.



51,000

times has a Facebook group been mentioned in the media between January 2018 and December 2023.

”

More politicians and media are learning that when they speak condescendingly about "the people," the people respond. Politicians are becoming more educated on speaking respectfully about people's movements.

Marie Blønd

The Parents' Movement
#IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

”

The police are the only ones who can post without having to be approved first. However, I generally do not collaborate with anyone, as I have had only bad experiences with that.

Digital volunteer in our open responses

”

Our expertise often gets lost. We are not invited to provide consultation responses or share knowledge with organized civil society. I believe I am one of those who has heard the most about parents' experiences with the system.

Jesper Jensen

Custody Counseling –
With the Child in Focus

”

Our guidance is free, so we reach those who do not have the means to buy breastfeeding guidance. The large network groups are open around the clock. Here, you can get answers from a fellow mother.

Maria Pihl Fly Bekke

Breastfeeding Networks groups

The digital community centers are in touch with the world around them

Digital community centers are not an isolated phenomenon on Facebook, disconnected from the outside world. On the contrary, 60% of administrators and moderators in our survey (Data source D) reported having had contact with the media, NGOs, or other societal actors.

One in three administrators has had contact with the media, and one in five administrators has had contact with political parties and businesses. Thus, there is an exchange between the digital community centers and other societal actors, and Facebook groups play an active role in society.

We can also see that Facebook groups play a role in the media's coverage of various issues. In an unpublished study, we searched for the terms "Facebook group," and "group on Facebook," on Infomedia and found 51,083 mentions between January 1, 2018, and December 6, 2023 (when the mentions were counted).

Additionally, we see that many of the citizen proposals that received a lot of votes have an associated Facebook group. In the same study, we used the tool CrowdTangle to investigate how the URLs of the 24 citizen proposals that have received the most signatures since 2018 were shared across public Facebook groups. The 24 citizen proposals were shared 3,081 times in 721 different public groups between March 2018 and December 2023. We cannot map shares in private groups. However, it is clear that the groups are used to mobilizing support for more formal political protests, and many groups have achieved media coverage included in Infomedia's database.

We will explore the political potential of the digital community centers on the following pages through three cases.

Figure 8.1

Have you, in relation to the group, had contact or collaboration with any of the following actors? For example, have they used the group to get in touch with the group's members?

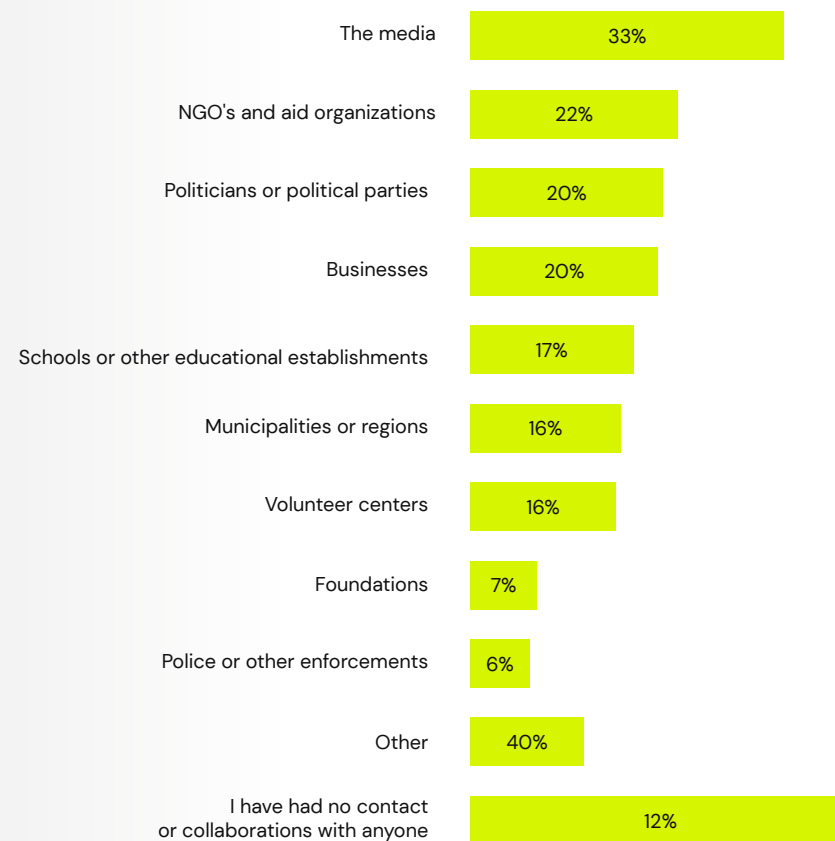


Figure 8.1: Data source D / n=408 (See appendix 1)

Peoples' movements on Facebook leave political footprints

Parents, recipients, and the aggrieved: Organize yourselves!

Several of the administrators we interviewed for the study lead groups that fight for a cause. Some have a specific political goal, while others fight for a social cause and want to make a difference through their Facebook group.

In Chapter 4, we saw that what motivates most administrators and moderators is helping those in need (75%) and making a difference in the local community (74%). In Chapter 5, Figure 5.8, we noted that 24% of members say they have become aware of issues they didn't know about before through the digital community centers. Fifteen percent (equivalent to 500,000 Danes) say they have become personally engaged in a cause through the digital community centers.

From our interviews with administrators and moderators, we have learned that in many cases, they have succeeded in making a difference through their volunteer engagement on Facebook. In this chapter, you will meet three digital volunteers from some of Denmark's largest political Facebook movements.

Mobilizing parents across the country

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom was formed on March 12, 2019, by frustrated parents when Parliament rejected SF's proposal for minimum staffing ratios. The Parents' Movement quickly mobilized thousands of parents in a nationwide protest in over 60 cities. On April 6, the movement took to the streets for the first time across the country.

The movement organized protests nationwide and played a significant role in the popular mobilization of parents across the country. As administrator Marie Blønd told us:

"We organized protests in 60 cities in three weeks. That's when I realized what Facebook could do in terms of mobilization. Suddenly, we had a blueprint: You need to set up a local Facebook group, you need to name it in a specific way, and you need to notify the authorities about your protest."

The Parents' Movement managed to arrange many local and national protests, run campaigns, and keep the pressure up during negotiations, where Marie and the other administrators were in contact with the politicians negotiating the issue. On January 1, 2024, the new law on minimum staffing ratios came into effect – a year earlier than planned.

I couldn't not do it! This is about our children



Marie Blønd

46, Master of Science



Parents' Movement
#IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom
DK (+ 60 local groups)

38,500 members

Founded in 2019

Private group

Category: Politics and protest

Marie's road to the role of administrator and spokesperson:

At the end of her maternity leave in 2019 – and in the middle of transitioning her youngest child to daycare – Marie Blønd became increasingly frustrated with the lack of political action in the daycare sector, which had only seen cuts since her eldest daughter's time in daycare. When parents created a protest group on Facebook, Marie immediately joined. She offered to contribute as much as she could and gave everything she had in the last month of her maternity leave. The Parents' Movement was born, and a few days later, she was working around the clock, helping to plan protests, responding to inquiries from journalists, and advising other administrators on setting up and

running local protest groups. For the next two years, Marie spent an average of full-time hours on the Parents' Movement – alongside her paid job. The group continues to fight for genuine minimum staffing ratios, but Marie has stepped down as a spokesperson.

In practice:

As a spokesperson, Marie had a continuous dialogue with the group's 5–6 moderators and 4 administrators, as well as the rest of the group's committee, which initially consisted of up to 30 of the most active volunteers. She planned and published posts and content on the national and local Facebook groups, moderated the group's debates, kept up with political and research developments in the daycare sector, found personal stories from members and passed them on to the relevant media, participated in the debate across all media platforms, created demo guides and coordinated across the local Facebook groups, analyzed the impact of various posts, and developed a national content strategy based on this analysis.

”

I am not the activist type. But I was professionally interested in digital mobilization, and I was personally committed to the cause.

If you want minimum standards for more care, you also need to act compassionately. We have tried to enforce this in the group, while also allowing space for frustration and activist passion.

Marie Blønd

Most motivated when:

Marie is most motivated by her sense of justice: The opportunity to have a direct impact on people's daily lives. Especially the children's daily lives, as they are a large population group without voting rights and a voice in public debate. It also means a lot to her to be a role model for her daughters: To show that one should dare to get involved. During her stint as spokesperson, she was motivated by the support from the members of the group. It was important for her to constantly check if the things she said and wrote in public were well received by the other parents. She often asked members for input before and after debates.

As a spokesperson, she was also personally in the line of fire from the press and during disagreements within the group. In these situations, the voluntary full-time work felt especially hard.

Worth mentioning:

Marie often got directly involved in moderation only when she needed to uphold the group's culture, take decisive action, or give a stern reminder. People knew her face and greatly respected her when she reminded members that the moderators in the group manage the debate on a voluntary basis.

Least motivated when:

However, she has also been close to quitting several times: When there weren't enough hours in the day, when she felt it was affecting her own children, or when she feared for her job: "Whether they thought I was too political, that children were too unserious a topic to be so invested in, or whether they felt I was too busy with my activism."

The group did not have many rules in the beginning because the main point was to mobilize as many as possible. Over time, however, it became necessary to set some relevance criteria because many wanted to use the group's reach and platform to promote other more or less related political issues. Here, the committee had to be consistent to prevent the purpose from being diluted.



[User]

As an offshoot of a post yesterday:

How about if the CHILDREN went on strike?

What I mean is ONE day where EVERYONE keeps their child/children home from daycare/schools to raise awareness about children in general.

Yes, it would require some extra effort from the adults – and those who are up for it could stay home themselves. BUT it wouldn't require everyone to miss work!!

ONE day – with completely empty institutions across the board, that would send a clear and loud message.

Thoughts??

158 158 comments 1 share



[User]

I have nominated [Name] as this year's FANTASTIC VOLUNTEER

Feel free to nominate your own local moderator 🧡

[Link to fantastiskefrivillige.dk]

108 20 comments



Victoria Velásquez

I need your help 🧡

I have the great privilege of being the new children, youth, and education spokesperson for The Red/Green Alliance 🧡

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this group, I look forward to fighting side by side with you! 🧡

I need specific advice. I couldn't find the practice estimator (a tool to measure time spent with each child in an institution) even though it is ready. So I asked the ministry if they could share it.

And now I get this response as you can see in the picture.

This is concerning. Is there a breach of promises and agreements on the way here?

The report IS made. So I don't understand this secrecy towards the rest of Parliament and the public. Do any of you know why this is?

I am meeting with the minister on Friday.

What is important for me to address? And what is important for me to say?

I hope you are doing well and having a wonderful weekend 🧡❤️ the fight for a good life for our children continue 🧡🧡

Best regards, Victoria

147 87 comments 13 shares

Fighting against mutual support obligations

The group TAAGF – Total Abolition of Mutual Support Obligations was co-founded by Jacob Nielsen, who is an early retiree who was thoroughly fed up with the rules that required a spouse's or partner's income to be deducted from one's state, disability, or senior pension. Jacob and his co-founder Henrik wanted to give everyone on public benefits their financial independence back, so their income would not depend on their partner's. It also didn't seem right that people who met later in life or where one was on a disability pension were financially penalized for pursuing love and moving in together.

A citizen proposal had been made to abolish mutual support obligations, and Jacob and Henrik wanted to bring attention to it with their new Facebook group. The group quickly gathered more than 50,000 members. Jacob, Henrik, and 8-10 other administrators and moderators, whom they quickly recruited, suddenly found themselves leading a citizen movement that held protests and communicated with politicians and the press.

TAAGF's materials became attachments to parliamentary proposal B34, which aimed to remove mutual support obligations for everyone, based on the citizen proposal in 2019. However, the parliamentary proposal was rejected.

TAAGF went all out to convince the politicians. In the following years, Jacob had close contact with politicians from various parties, whom he also invited to post in the group while ensuring that members maintained a positive and constructive tone in the comments. "If you want someone's help, you shouldn't start by insulting them," says Jacob, who strategized for the group and spent many hours on campaign work.

Despite never having been politically active, he suddenly found himself in the middle of political negotiations, becoming a regular guest at Parliament and discussing deduction rules with a department head at the Ministry of Employment, who called him when the Facebook group wanted to release a new campaign video. TAAGF organized protests in various parts of the country, and at the protest at the opening of the Parliament

in 2022, 3 ministers and 11 MPs came to greet the group, have a good chat, and take pictures.

The efforts paid off, and on January 1, 2023, the law on mutual support obligations for state, disability, and senior pensioners was abolished. Since then, the group has focused on the implementation of the legislation and other types of deductions in pensions, such as those you could receive from solar power surplus, stock capital, and worker's compensation.

”

I have never been politically active. I met Henrik in another illness group and we started bringing attention to a citizen proposal – a little too much attention if you ask the administrator of the group. So we made our own group. I blew up, and a couple of weeks later, the citizen proposal had gone from 7,000 signatures to 70,000. These days we are in constant contact with politicians, we arrange protests, take part in political negotiations and have become a real political movement.

Jacob Nielsen,
TAAGF – Total Abolition of Mutual
Support Obligations

In Jacob's group, you're also nice to politicians that you are furious with



Jacob Nielsen

47, no vocational education, former warehouse worker, mover, purchaser, now in early retirement due to four back operations.



TAAGF – Total Abolition of Mutual Support Obligations

62,400 members

Founded in 2019

Category: Politics and protest

Jacob's road to the role of administrator:

Jacob met Henrik in another health group where they were both active members. Together, they decided to start TAAGF to raise awareness about a citizen proposal that aimed to abolish mutual support obligations. The citizen proposal had 7,000 signatures, but after a month in which the TAAGF Facebook group exploded in membership, the proposal surpassed 50,000 votes. Jacob and Henrik brought in more administrators to handle the growing number of members.

In practice:

Jacob has at times spent many hours managing the group and fighting for the cause. His work has involved running the debate in the group and ensuring that communication about the rules is

factually accurate, as well as organizing protests, having meetings with politicians and authorities, and making political contributions. Jacob is the group's "spin doctor." He decides the group's policies and maintains contact with politicians, whom he invites to post in the group. Since the group's aim is to create political change, it is very important for Jacob that the debate within the group remains civil. "We are not in the business of calling anyone out or speaking down to anyone. We prefer to elevate those who make a positive difference for the cause."

There is a strict stance against condescending tones, us-versus-them rhetoric, and political debates that do not pertain to mutual support obligations.



I regularly get politicians to post in the group, and I keep a close eye on those who comment. Maintaining a good tone is incredibly important to us. We want to collaborate with the politicians, so it's important to treat them well. If you want someone's help, you shouldn't start by insulting them.

Jacob Nielsen

Most motivated when:

Jacob is most motivated when feeling that the group can create political change. The members have succeeded in convincing several politicians to support their cause, and Jacob has also had discussions with high-level officials in both the Ministry of Employment and ATP. The ultimate victory was the abolition of the mutual support obligation for disability, senior, and state retirees on January 1, 2023, with TAAGF's framework included as an appendix to the parliamentary proposal.

Least motivated when:

Jacob is least motivated during periods of low activity, such as summer vacations, or when the group feels stagnant. He also finds it challenging to deal with people who are upset about having their comments deleted for violating the rules. He once experienced a furious group member calling him on Messenger, demanding to know where he lived.

Worth mentioning:

Jacob has close connections with politicians across the political spectrum, is a regular guest at Parliament, and has even considered running for political office as a result of his work with TAAGF. The group holds protests, including at the opening of Parliament, and has worked closely with politicians to advance their cause. Jacob has been contacted by a press chief and a department head in the Ministry of Employment regarding the launch of a campaign video, and he is not shy about engaging in professional discussions about the rules for mutual support obligations with civil servants.



Jacob Nielsen

VACATION TIME IS OVER

Feel free to give the Minister good arguments for why more changes need to be made in the pension system.

Do it in a respectful tone, and feel free to like others' comments on the matter.

See the TAAGF group's comment under the Minister's post, or in the comments below.



[Comment from User 1]

Once upon a time, there was a Social Democrat who worked for the people at the bottom of society. But that was a long time ago.



Jacob Nielsen

[User 1] KEEP IT FACTUAL



[User 1]

Jacob Nielsen Yes? I think it is un-factual to think otherwise.



Jacob Nielsen

[User 1] but this group is not about your party political opinion, otherwise, we would never have achieved anything.



[User 1]

Jacob Nielsen - I am only responding to what you posted about a Social Democrat.



Jacob Nielsen

[User 1] then please elaborate on how your response can be useful in relation to the group's and my efforts regarding future changes in pension legislation?

We have been successful in presenting factual arguments and seeking dialogue and cooperation with all parties who want that.

The Facebook group that helped the Denmark Democrats get into Parliament

Trine Harmuth Andersen was frustrated that Inger Støjberg was pressured to step down as deputy leader of the Liberal Party (Venstre) and that the party was ready to vote for an impeachment trial. Trine and her friend Jana decided to create a support group for Inger Støjberg: Danes Support Inger Støjberg 🇩🇰❤️. The original purpose was to show Inger Støjberg that she had acted correctly in the case of separating minor married or cohabiting asylum seekers – known in the media as the "child bride case."

The group grew, gained thousands of members, and Trine got to know both Inger Støjberg and the Denmark Democrats (Danmarksdemokraterne), the new party that Inger Støjberg founded.

During the 2022 election campaign, the Facebook group played a key role for the party. "Although we are not part of the party, we have promoted all of the Denmark Democrats' politicians. I wrote to Søren Espersen and Peter Skaarup as soon as they were listed and said: 'Welcome to the family!'" says Trine, explaining that they made sure to introduce all the new parliamentary candidates in the group and allowed them to post.

The Denmark Democrats were a very newly founded party at the 2022 election, and therefore the party had not yet built a network of local branches. But Trine and Jana communicated about the Denmark Democrats' policies, got the group's members to invite new members, and shared information about the routes when the party's candidates toured the country.

"Local branches are of course necessary for a party to run in municipal elections and receive support funds. But in many ways, we are a good alternative – significantly less bureaucratic," says Trine.

The support group for Inger Støjberg grew, gaining over 50,000 members, and it became a space for gauging the sentiments of the party's supporters. Trine could inform Inger Støjberg and the party about what the members cared about, what they were frustrated or worried about

– and the party could test how new statements and policy ideas would be received in the group.

"Politics is about having different opinions, discussing them, and finding different solutions," says Trine. "In our Facebook group, members can actually be heard. That's something many parties struggle with today."

There is no doubt that having a Facebook group with 56,000 members who enthusiastically organized the election campaign, recruited new members, and shared information about the party's candidates and policies during the 2022 election had a significant impact on the Denmark Democrats, which was a completely new political party at the time. Inger Støjberg also confirms this. She says about the group:

"It's wonderful that dedicated people like Trine, along with Jana, have used their creativity in such a constructive and positive way. I am deeply impressed by the persistence and passion they show for the project. Especially during the 2022 election campaign, we could feel the positive impact of the Facebook group. The countless hours are highly appreciated, both on a personal level and certainly on behalf of the party. So, a big thank you to both of them and the group."

The Denmark Democrats ended up storming into Parliament with over 8% of the votes.

”

"We helped start a political party. We created a movement, went out and tested the waters, and helped lift up new politicians."

Trine Harmuth Andersen,
The Danes support Inger Støjberg 🇩🇰❤️

“The group was absolutely crucial for the Denmark Democrats' breakthrough into Parliament”



Trine Harmuth Andersen

44, technical designer and freelancer.



The Danes support Inger Støjberg 🇩🇰❤️
56,900 members

Founded in 2020

Category: Politics and protest

About the community center:

The Danes support Inger Støjberg 🇩🇰❤️ as the name suggests, is a group for those who support Inger Støjberg's views and political stance. As stated in the group description, there is "high tolerance and far to the door" in the group, and as long as you have "your heart in the right place," you are welcome, whether you are part of Inger Støjberg's party or not.

Trine's road to the role of administrator:

Trine and Jana were both frustrated that Inger Støjberg was pressured to resign as deputy leader of Venstre. The then-chairman, Jakob Ellemann, had just announced that Venstre would vote for an impeachment trial if the Parliament's legal team found reason for it. And later, the impeachment happened. Jana took the initiative to create the support group for Inger Støjberg, and Trine quickly became an administrator

alongside Jana. The point of the group was to show Inger Støjberg that Danes supported her and that she had acted correctly in the child bride case.

In practice:

Trine has spent many hours managing the group, especially during the 2022 election campaign, where the Facebook group played a major role in communicating the Denmark Democrats' policies, sharing information about the routes when politicians toured the country, and getting group members to spread the word and create awareness. During the campaign, Trine was active in the Facebook group for up to 8–12 hours a day. But even before the campaign, she spent many hours on the group. She was involved in promoting and organizing the thank-you celebration after the impeachment, where 4,000 people showed up at Visborggaard Castle. Although the Facebook group operates independently of the party, she and Jana coordinate with the Denmark Democrats, and politicians from the Denmark Democrats often post their views in the group and have the opportunity to test and gauge what the group's many thousands of members think about various issues.



In our Facebook group, members can actually be heard. That's something many parties struggle with today."

Trine Harmuth Andersen

Most motivated when:

Trine is driven by politics: "It's about my children's future," she says, referring to issues like immigration and cancel culture. She is especially motivated by seeing how much the Facebook group means to Inger Støjberg and the party. Trine and her co-administrator Jana were invited to the opening of Parliament, and they regularly stay in contact with Inger Støjberg, which makes them feel valued and appreciated.

Worth mentioning:

At one point, a company asked Trine if she would sell the Facebook group for 200,000 DKK. But the group was not for sale: "With all the hours we have put in over the last three years? It's like our little child. Or our dog. And you don't sell your dog."

Least motivated when:

For Trine, it can sometimes become overwhelming when she gets caught up in a media storm involving Inger Støjberg and the Denmark Democrats. She declined to participate in a documentary about Inger Støjberg for this reason. Trine also gets frustrated at times with Facebook's rules. In debates about Muslims, mink, COVID-19, and spike protein, they have clashed with Facebook's guidelines several times.



Trine Harmuth Andersen

Head over to the Denmark Democrats' Facebook page and share your biggest wish for this year 🎄 Merry 1st of December, everyone! 🌲



370 54 comments



Trine Harmuth Andersen

🇩🇰🇩🇰🇩🇰 Inger is so cool 🎵👏 Danmarksdemokraterne - Inger Støjberg she fights for the common person 👏



169 17 comments



Susie Jessen – Denmark's Democrats

Last night, the two of us walked around Copenhagen and enjoyed the sight of the Danish flag in the streets. Like father and daughter. But also good parliamentary colleagues. It was so beautiful with the Danish flag everywhere. 🇩🇰 Our wonderful, old, beautiful flag. And the backdrop was just right. Because we had just been informed that the government will support the Denmark Democrats' proposal, which is being debated in Parliament today, for a ban on flying 🇩🇰 foreign flags. Great job by Søren Espersen, who is the spokesperson and author of the proposal 🙌 Have a good day, everyone. 😊



201 14 comments

- [User]**

Perhaps it could be expanded to include other religious flags too.
- [User]**

Good proposal 👏🇩🇰🇩🇰🇩🇰
- [User]**

We don't use or flag enough, it is so pretty 🇩🇰🇩🇰🇩🇰
- [User]**

Great update. Thank you Søren, Susie and all of DD 🇩🇰

Politics is one thing...citizenship makes an impact too

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom, TAAGF, and Danes Support Inger Støjberg are all political groups. However, within most categories, we observe that the digital community centers leave social and attitude related imprints, and the administrators are motivated by making a difference.

The civil preparedness of city, regional, and local groups

Several city and regional groups manage to make an impact in their local communities and make a difference, even if they don't have a specific political purpose.

The city group 6430 Nordborg, administered by Casper Thede Olsen, truly came into its own during a fire in the town. Authorities communicated to residents through the group, and citizens had a direct line to request information from authorities and police.

"After a fire in the town, city life was dead because one of the main roads was not reopened. People couldn't go shopping. We discussed this a lot in the group, after and then someone contacted the municipality. We think it had an effect because suddenly all the parties in Sønderborg Municipality had the good idea to reopen the main street," says Casper. At the same time, the group functioned as a coordinating platform for the local community, as people quickly donated clothes and opened their homes to those affected by the fire.

Lolland-Falster Lovestorm emerged as a reaction to TV2's documentary "On the Edge in Nakskov," which painted a rather dystopian picture of the

region. This made Kirsten Sydendal angry, and together with a local women's network, she founded Lolland-Falster Lovestorm. Instead of starting a shitstorm, they wanted to send out love. Lolland-Falster Lovestorm became a forum to share good stories about Lolland-Falster and show all the good, beautiful, and life-affirming things in the area.

The Facebook group has grown to 40,000 members and has become a formal association with private members and business partnerships, an ambassador corps of dedicated individuals, close contact with the island municipalities in the region, and collaborations with local actors. Kirsten has given many lectures about the success of the Facebook group – mostly in Denmark, but also in London and Washington.

Lastly, we have observed how city and regional groups have been the primary communication channel for citizens during the weather-related 100-year events we experienced in 2023. Is the dam breached? You hear it first in the local group. Is the power out? In the local group, someone has already called the utilities and obtained the available information.

Overall, there are many groups that manage to make a difference, even if their overarching ambition is not to change society or influence politics. Think of Jesper's thousands of voluntary family counseling sessions that have enabled more children and parents to see each other despite difficult divorces. Or the Breastfeeding Networks Facebook groups, where families can get advice, help, and support for breastfeeding – from peers and volunteer breastfeeding counselors who have taken 190 hours of training to provide accurate and professional support and guidance.

Or think of ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15), where girls and women can get help from a professional administrator team consisting of social workers and group members. Canan, who is an administrator in the group, has seen posts seeking advice and guidance on very intimate and personal matters, such as sexually transmitted diseases, sex life, family crises, relationship problems, violence, social control, and honor conflicts.

In many Facebook groups, we find examples of the group making an impact in society, creating change, and making a tangible difference for other people.

An overlooked civil society actor

Our empirical data shows that many digital community centers manage to make an impact on their surroundings, influence political decisions, and make a difference for the people or local community.

As described in the previous chapter, most digital community centers are not associations, and the work with them is considered "informal volunteering" (VIVE 2021). They are characterized by more network-based, grassroots, and loose organization. Therefore, they do not have a business registration number (CVR-nummer).

For many digital community centers, this form of organization works well, and its accessibility means that citizens have thousands of community centers to meet up in.

However, for some digital community centers whose activities and ambitions are large, some dilemmas and frictions arise in relation to their organization, their status, and their potential as actors in civil society.

These frictions, particularly related to economy, administration, visibility, and recognition, are addressed below. The section touches on the dilemmas that arise when one does not quite fit (and maybe does not want to fit) into the association box, which constitutes the primary form of organization in civil society.

Informal organization offers both freedom and limitations

The advantages of informal organization are evident: Digital volunteers find that the groups can be agile, accommodate internal disagreements, and keep the primary focus on the "project" and content rather than administration.

As Jacob Nielsen, who administers the political group TAAGF – Total Abolition of Mutual Support Obligations, says:

"I have considered whether we should transform the Facebook group into a formal association. But one must ask: Where do we have the most influence? As a citizen group, we can shout loudly, and we can demand action without having to present economic calculations. We are far freer than formal organizations and parties. Ældresagen (Dan-eAge Association) cannot say a word without setting a team of economists to work first. My assessment is that we have a better handle on the cause by remaining a citizen group. The other day, 11 Members of Parliament, three of them ministers, came to our protest. We are involved in negotiations, and the politicians listen to us."

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You could definitely feel at the beginning that our cause – and family policy in general as a non-existent political field – was scoffed at. We were called everything from "hysterical women who just wanted more" to "a movement of educators who wanted higher salaries." It was difficult for us to convince both the media and politicians of our authenticity – that there was an extremely large number of parents across the political spectrum who had had enough of this area being the lowest priority, but the highest in municipal budget cuts. In the beginning, we faced both suspicion and ridicule.

Marie Blønd,

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

But when you are not an association, what are you in the eyes of the world?

Marie from The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom also highlights the freedom in the loose structure. However, it is also her experience that the outside world can have difficulty understanding what a Facebook group is and is not. In our interview with her, Marie said:

“The media kept calling us an organization, and as a completely green spokesperson, I was often treated as a media-trained professional. We are ‘just’ a movement of volunteers and frustrated parents. And it is important for our independence that we continue to be that.”

As described in the highlighted quote, Marie has experienced being called a group of "hysterical women who just wanted more" and "a movement of educators who wanted higher salaries." She found it difficult to convince the media and politicians of the movement's authenticity, and they were met with suspicion and ridicule.

No funds without a CVR number

The best argument for organizing as an association is that it is difficult to handle money if you are not an association. In the following, we will discuss the dilemmas associated with establishing an economy around your digital community center. This issue is far from relevant for all digital community centers, most of which do not have ambitions of becoming workplaces or organizing large protests. However, we want to elevate the debate on behalf of the actors who have big ambitions for their community centers.

To be able to apply for funds or grants from the Ministry of Social Affairs, you need a CVR number and must be registered as an association. This ensures that the funds and the state are not accessible to private individuals and anyone seeking support.

Although Jacob from TAAGF generally believes that TAAGF best supports its cause by being a citizen group rather than an association, he has found it challenging not being able to have an economy in the movement. TAAGF wanted to raise money so that members attending protests could get

coffee and a sandwich. However, they could not do this due to the fundraising committee's rules on when you can be approved for fundraising. Rules that are, incidentally, adopted for good reasons to prevent fraud and ensure propriety.

Instead, TAAGF has had to rely on small donations and private initiatives from members. Some bought a few t-shirts with the TAAGF logo and handed them out to other protest participants. Others brought coffee, and still others helped finance train tickets on their own initiative so more people could attend a protest.

Jacob does not have an overview of what it has cost him to lead the Facebook group project, but it is several thousand DKK for transport, website, etc., out of his disability pension.

In The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom, they approached the financial challenge differently. Marie and the administrator group simply created a support association alongside the Facebook group. Marie Blønd says:

“We founded a support association that could handle memberships and money. You just can't hold protests without money. And we didn't want to be dependent on donations. As an unorganized activist movement, we can take advantage of momentum and rally in a few hours. We couldn't manage to transform the movement into an association with a board that everything had to go through. We already had the committee.”

Although the experiences of the two groups differ, both encounter challenges in not being able to apply for funds for their activities as an informal actor.

The administrative burden is the biggest barrier to becoming an association

The thing that would obviously validate most groups as civil society actors would be to establish an association.

But as previously shown, more than 2 out of 3 digital volunteers in our survey respond that they could not imagine establishing a formal association based on the group, as seen in Chapter 7.

Especially for those who do not need to establish an economy or be recognized as a formal civil society actor, it is difficult to come up with a good argument to become an association.

But even for those who want to scale up their community center to also have an economy and be a formal actor in their field, there is reluctance: It is a hard task to run a real association with general assemblies, membership registration, and an economy that must comply with anti-money laundering regulations, GDPR legislation, etc.

The administrative burden is more than most digital volunteers can handle or are motivated for. Jesper ran an association for a few years in connection with his advisory work in the Facebook group "Custody and Well-being – For the Good of the Child" because it allowed him to borrow premises from the municipality for his counseling. But running the association became too burdensome, and today the association is closed.

This means that it is impossible to apply for support to provide visitation counseling in Jesper's Facebook group for parents in difficult divorce cases. The same is true for the community and social work advice in Canan Pektas' girls' group, ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15), where especially girls with different ethnic backgrounds seek advice and help on issues, both small and large. Both heartache and hair care, but also help on how to get out of an abusive relationship or how to handle experiences with discrimination and racism. Canan from ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING – girls only (+15) says they have considered transforming the group into an association, but it has not been possible: "People have jobs on the side; it takes too much to become an association."

So, even though it is a motivation for some digital volunteers to be able to achieve financial and practical advantages that would make it possible to elevate digital volunteer work to new levels, digital volunteers lose steam due to the administrative burden.

Forming an association is no guarantee for an economically sustainable project

The challenges of establishing an economy are not just about the association structure or lack thereof. Even for the Facebook groups that have a formal association structure, it can be difficult to find the energy to apply for funds or find funds to apply to for the type of activities they want to do. Raising one's ambitions with volunteer efforts is generally a challenge in the volunteer civil society (DIF 2023, VIVE 2018-1, Ingerfair 2022).

As Kirsten Sydendal, administrator of Lolland-Falster Lovestorm, says:

"There are funds that might want to support us. But we currently do not have enough volunteer resources to write grant applications, where the funding might run out after a year or two. We have been focused on creating a sustainable foundation based on contributions from several local donors. This way, the entire rug cannot be pulled out from under us on short notice. It takes several years to make such

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"It is thought-provoking that there are no opportunities to apply for funding to 'buy' work hours to run large democratic popular movements, while many other causes have lobbying firms that can fight their cases with financial backing."

Marie Blønd,

The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom

a financial foundation strong, but that is the way we believe is the safest to go, considering the opportunities we have right now.

Kirsten is working on Lolland-Falster Lovestorm building a stronger economy over the years and becoming more of an actor in civil society on Lolland-Falster. Her dream is for Lolland-Falster Lovestorm to one day become a real workplace:

“If our ambitions are really to come to life, it requires some paid people to lift it. We could do much more for Lolland-Falster if we became a real workplace.”

Maria from the Breastfeeding Network groups has also experienced challenges with raising funds:

“It is difficult to apply for funds because you often need to have income from other sources or existing funding already. The last time we wanted to apply for a fund, the requirement was that we had a turnover of at least 15,000 DKK! We have a sparse economy where volunteers donate optional amounts – and people on maternity leave, who are our target group, are often not the most financially strong.”

Maria also emphasizes that it takes a lot of work to apply for funds. It is a big job to understand how to tailor the application to the specific fund, and some funds are concerned about how the statutes are formulated: ***“Even though we were actually in the target group for a certain fund with the work we do, we had to call an extraordinary general assembly to vote on statute changes to have it written down.”***

Similar sentiments are expressed by Marie from The Parents' Movement #IsThereAnAdultInTheRoom. Even though the Parents' Movement has a support association and has tried to apply for funds, they have not had success with it.

“We tried to apply for funds, but it is incredibly time-consuming. People do not become activists to apply for funds. And we were still judged to be political.”

Thus, there are some dilemmas in terms of scaling up the activity in one's digital community center: More work in the group or the expansion of the group's activities requires funding; more funding requires formalization; formalization requires more work, and applying for funding requires more work. In addition, as Marie Blønd highlights in the quote on the previous page, there is no obvious funding to apply for if you want to be “bought free” to run your digital community center or movement full-time for a period.

Digital volunteers experience lack of visibility as knowledge actors

It is not just the financial constraints that create frictions. Several digital volunteers experience that their community centers are epicenters for knowledge, opinions, and coordination within their “field.”

Jesper from Custody Counseling – With the Child in Focus has experienced that he is not met with the same recognition as established associations in society when it comes to being heard and included in the public debate on custody counseling. He says:

“Our expertise is often lost. We are not invited to provide consultation responses or share knowledge when something happens in the field. I am probably one of those who have heard the most about parents' encounters with the system.”

Despite conducting thousands of consultations about interactions, Jesper does not feel that the surrounding society activates his knowledge and experience.

Some digital community centers have untapped potential

The vast majority of digital community centers are not organized like the traditional civil society – and have no plans to ever become that.

Our focus in this study has not been to investigate the comparative quality of the digital community centers' counseling, guidance, or knowledge compared to formal associations' offerings. Nor have we answered how digital volunteers can and should best be supported in their work. We can only state that there are many competent digital volunteers who make a great effort for the benefit of others – but who struggle with gaining

acceptance from the outside world and do not always have the same opportunities to do their work as the more traditional civil society has.

We end the chapter by pointing out three potential areas that remain untapped as long as digital community centers do not have the means that provide access to traditional civil society.

The potential for visibility

The greatest untapped potential lies in making the digital civil society more visible to the outside world. Several digital community centers are epicenters for knowledge, stories, opinions, and professional counseling within their specific field. This knowledge is not necessarily included when a public authority invites to a meeting about a certain topic, or when civil society or the state organizes conferences or hearings.

This may also be because the Facebook groups are not easy to find. We have done extensive research to map the 9,000 digital community centers and have obtained a unique overview of which subject areas and communities of experience are organized on Facebook. But for everyone other than Facebook itself, the group landscape is difficult to get an overview of. You do not easily find contact information and phone numbers for the most influential digital community centers in a field without doing a lot of groundwork first. With this mapping, we have come some way in bringing the digital community centers into the light, but we are far from finished.

The potential for economic innovation

The research field has recognized for several years that volunteering can also take place outside formal association structures. But opportunities, assistance, and financial support for civil society are still largely built around the traditional association life and CVR numbers.

Especially administrators in the digital community centers that bear a significant social responsibility, become a political actor, or meet great support to expand their activities, call for opportunities to apply for financial support. Perhaps one could look at the possibility that some of the well-functioning and professionally competent digital community centers could receive some form of financial assistance that would make

it possible to expand or raise the quality of their activities.

What the criteria should be for receiving support, and how it should be done in practice, has not been the focus of this report but requires further investigation.

The potential for better cooperation

There is also great potential in connecting the digital civil society on Facebook more closely with the rest of civil society, especially because there are many overlaps between their activities.

Some of the administrators we have spoken to call for better collaboration between the "traditional" and "digital" civil society. Susanne from The Neighbor Helpers in Copenhagen N, NV, and Ø is one of those who helps vulnerable people navigate the opportunities and offers in traditional civil society. She says:

"If I had to ask for something from the 'traditional civil society,' it would probably be an easier overview of all the free counseling services, grants, support schemes, surplus food distributions, and opportunities for Christmas help, etc., that are available for vulnerable people. This service [to provide guidance on the offers] is often one we provide a bit manually."

Additionally, some digital volunteers call for being able to get advice in special situations where they, for example, see members in danger or suspect criminal activities.

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"Sometimes you have to act fast and get a healthcare provider involved. I remember a mother writing that she couldn't wake her three day old baby that had slept for seven hours straight. Something like that gets your alarm bells ringing!"

**Maria Pihl Fly Bekke,
Breastfeeding Network's Groups**

9

Conclusions

The digital civil society is buzzing in all parts of the country...

...so let's get it on the map

Our study sheds light on the volunteer work that administrators and moderators perform in digital community centers on Facebook and the impact this work has on the general population.

Among the digital volunteers, there is a group of citizens that are not organized across platforms and have not been unequivocally recognized as part of Denmark's volunteer sector and civil society. For this reason, their collective efforts and impact have not been fully mapped and analyzed until now.

Generating the insights in this report required a large methodological toolkit, including qualitative, quantitative, traditional, and digital methods. The results span more than 250 pages, which we believe is necessary to do justice to the digital volunteers.

Through this study, we aim to achieve two things:

- To ensure that digital volunteers feel understood, acknowledged, and recognized for their work, gaining a better understanding of the difference they make from a broader societal perspective.

- To help professionals connected to the volunteer sector, civil society, social media, established media, and political decision-making realize the digital civil society's influence and effectiveness as a democratic and civic movement.

Our overall conclusion is that the digital civil society on Facebook should not be overlooked. The following summarizes why.

The population has established a gigantic and diverse civil society on Facebook

69% of the adult Danish population gathers in at least 9,000 digital community centers on Facebook. Additionally, 56% of the adult Danish population is active in a digital community center weekly or more often, which means that they are popular and in demand. The community centers attract citizens across gender, age, education, and employment, and 1/3 of the members agree that through these digital community centers, they are introduced to people and perspectives they otherwise would not have encountered. Overall, they are not echo chambers.

The digital civil society on Facebook constitutes a significant engine that facilitates millions of citizens having access to knowledge sharing, inspiration, advice, help, debate, protest, support, mobilization, entertainment, relationships, and material goods around the clock. Both the number of community centers and the number of members is continually growing.

We have dedicated volunteers to thank for the vast majority of communities

According to our survey, 96% of the community centers are run on a voluntary basis.

The 9,000 digital community centers in our mapping are run by 20,000 digital volunteers. However, our population survey indicates that many more, perhaps even up to 13% of citizens, engage in digital voluntary work.

The digital volunteers are a diverse group with very different backgrounds. Compared to traditional volunteers, there is a higher proportion of men, a lower average age, an overrepresentation of people without

education, and slightly more on public financial support. The majority are (or have also been) involved in “traditional” voluntary work, in addition to their work in their digital community centers.

Our mapping also suggests that digital volunteerism has the potential to engage a group of citizens who find it challenging to volunteer within a “traditional” framework. We have observed and spoken with several volunteers who, due to functional variations, cannot engage in traditional voluntary work but make a significant effort as digital volunteers.

Digital volunteerism is neither sporadic nor non-committal

The task of running a digital community center requires more weekly time on average (4.6 hours/week) than traditional voluntary work (4 hours/week). Furthermore, 82% of digital volunteers are active daily. They are motivated by the opportunity to help someone in need and to make a difference. They are particularly demotivated when members speak rudely to each other or do not respect the community center’s rules.

The digital voluntary effort is long-lasting and stable: 76% have held the job for three years or longer. 67% say they intend to continue managing their groups for as long as they are able.

The digital format is crucial for the community centers' impact, but having a round-the-clock job is demanding

The fact that the digital community centers never close is one of the biggest advantages for members but also a demanding aspect for digital volunteers, who spend much of their time and mental energy on them. However, our mapping also shows that only a small group of digital volunteers feel lonely in their work, despite digital volunteerism rarely offering frequent physical meetings in a traditional sense. Most digital volunteers feel like part of the communities they facilitate.

The digital civil society means a lot to many and much to the few

The benefits for individuals range from the opportunity to stay updated in their field to lifesaving help and advice. For economically and socially vulnerable people and those with functional variations, the benefits seem particularly significant, as they can find everything from children's clothing

and an assessor to advice and guidance from social workers and nurses – from home.

The benefits for society in a broader perspective are mainly a citizen-driven infrastructure that allows the population to help each other with very close-to-home issues, such as tips on breastfeeding or sparring on woodturning, and when a tree has fallen across the main road, or someone is left without a roof over their head after a fire.

Additionally, a large part of the population, both volunteers and members, receive digital and democratic education by negotiating rules and boundaries in the digital community centers. Last but not least, digital community centers represent a huge potential for political mobilization and influence. Several political movements have been born out of digital community centers, and several have successfully raised their issues high on the political agenda in Denmark.

The digital civil society operates in a gray area between formal and informal organization

The vast majority of digital community centers are not organized within an association structure, and most digital volunteers do not wish to be. The reluctance towards more formal organization relates both to the benefit of being a free and independent citizen group and to the lack of capacity for the administrative burden of statutes, general meetings, boards, and accounts.

However, digital community centers are rarely without governance. In most community centers, members and/or their content are screened by a digital volunteer, and the group's rules and description help to constitute and define the community. Rules range widely from Facebook's suggested "be kind and courteous" to "you may not post pictures of your children in hopes of receiving more help," "it is not allowed to help each other with prescription medication," or "it is not allowed to contact other group members through private messages unless permission is given in the comment thread." Digital volunteers and members do much to limit problematic content and behavior and keep the group's activity on track.

But a lack of association status means that digital volunteers have poor opportunities to seek financial support for events, protests, renting premises through the municipality, or setting up fundraisers. Some digital volunteers also find it harder to be recognized outside the group as experts in an area, and they are not invited to contribute to the rest of civil society's and the state's activities and dialogue unless they speak up. And even then, the outside world does not always take them seriously.

However, digital community centers are not isolated or invisible. 60% of digital volunteers have, through their digital community center, had contact with other societal actors, from intelligence officers to media and politicians.

How can we best support the digital civil society?

Lastly, in this report, we will consider and suggest how different actors can best benefit from and support the digital civil society in the future. One of the overall points of this report is that the digital civil society is very large and diverse, and we will therefore be cautious about making overarching statements about any unequivocal and collective needs.

In connection with the launch of this survey, we will have a summit for digital volunteers, where we will ask more about how the digital civil society, according to the digital volunteers, can have even better conditions and who can play a role in this. We will also invite interested parties to a professional day about the digital civil society and its potential in collaboration in August 2024.

1.

Know your corner of the digital civil society and keep up with its development

Most sectors should be interested in the exchange of information, support, opinions, and advice that takes place between citizens in the digital community centers in their field – whether in vulnerability, health and disease, sustainability, local communities, education, and various professional areas. It should be part of all stakeholder analyses to look at the digital civil society.

2.

Listen when representatives of digital community centers want to speak...

Media, politicians, and organizations should answer the phone if representatives from digital community centers call, just as digital community centers can be encouraged to provide input to hearings and be invited into the public debate on other platforms. Digital community centers buzz with debate, experiences, and knowledge within their respective areas.

3.

...But contact and involvement should be done with respect

However, we have also seen several journalists, researchers, companies, and politicians stumble when they try to use digital community centers as advertising pillars or recruitment opportunities without having talked to the digital volunteers beforehand. Some digital community centers just want to be left alone by all stakeholders who are not the target audience.

4.

Respect the digital civil society in its informal uniqueness

We experience a group of volunteers who often want to maintain their freedom and flexibility. We believe it would be pointless and possibly harmful to try to fit them into a box of traditionally organized volunteerism under a large organization. But there are many potentials for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

5.

Investigate the need for financial support for informally organized change agents such as digital community centers

This could, for example, involve operational and project funds, so that digital volunteers could take on even more work in the groups for a specific purpose: Could we experiment with involving local politicians in debates in the digital community centers in connection with municipal elections, moderated and facilitated by digital volunteers? Could digital community centers form the framework for a new form of citizen assemblies, citizen panels, or focus groups with the potential to involve more of the people who are not able to participate physically?

Funds could also be provided in the form of grants that could be applied for if a group takes on a particularly large responsibility over a period, requiring much of the volunteers, for example, in connection with 100-year events. We encourage foundations and other public and private pools to investigate the need for financial support – and then think about what forms such support models could take.

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The digital civil society is in the hands of an American tech giant

Our survey underscores that a member-based digital infrastructure where citizens themselves can establish and manage digital communities and digital debate is a successful and well-used format.

However, the fact that the digital civil society on Facebook is so enormous also raises democratic alarm bells: An American tech giant, which has little interest in Denmark, is the provider of the technology that supports it all.

Some digital community centers are closed from one day to the next, and if your community center is closed, it is, according to digital volunteers' accounts, exceedingly difficult to get it reopened. Meta, Facebook's parent company, offers no customer service in Danish, and when, after much effort, you are connected with support somewhere far away in the world, they do not have the authority to reopen the group, and the digital volunteers' efforts and motivation are not immediately considered when judgments are made.

At the same time, Meta frequently changes the toolkit for digital volunteers, and training or guidance on new or changed functions is scarce in Danish. Similarly, adjustments are made that one suspects mainly benefit Meta's traffic numbers but make the work difficult for digital volunteers (for instance, that you can no longer limit the intake of new members in public groups).

We recommend that Danish and European entities pressure Meta (and similar actors) to further develop their platforms to best support citizen-driven digital communities. There is a huge demand for them, and the platforms should be grateful that so many volunteers are willing to

put effort into running communities of such high quality as we see in Denmark's digital community centers. Neither Meta, the volunteers, nor the members would be without their buzzing activity.



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Thanks to:

Experts and researchers in volunteering and digital communities:

- Nadia Nikolajeva, founder of "Ansvar For Feedet" and digital advisor at Navi Media
- Thomas P. Boje, Professor, Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University
- Jonas Toubøl, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen
- Hjalmar Bang Carlsen, Associate Professor, Center for Social Data Science (SODAS), University of Copenhagen
- Lars Skov Henriksen, Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University
- Ane Grubb, PhD specializing in new forms of volunteering
- Andreas Hjorth Frederiksen, Chief Innovation Officer, Red Cross
- Ivar Eimhjellen, Senior Researcher, NORCE Norwegian Research Centre, Bergen
- Malthe Lindholm Sørensen, Analysis Consultant, Center for Volunteer Social Work
- Mette Hjære, Team Leader for Data and Analysis, Center for Volunteer Social Work
- Helle Hygum Espersen, Chief Analyst, VIVE

Partners at TrygFonden:

- Natasha Al-Hariri, project manager
- Christoffer Elbrønd, project manager
- Christian Nørr, documentarist
- Anders Hede, head of research

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Analyse & Tal is a cooperative analysis bureau with offices in Copenhagen, Aarhus, and Oslo. We specialize in measuring the things that are difficult to measure and combine classic methods with new digital approaches.

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Appendix: Methods & data

Appendix 1: Data overview

Ref	Headline	Data	Description	Method
A.i	Public information on individual Facebook groups.	Data from the "About" page of 9,000 public and private groups.	Name, description, number of members, age, rules, number of administrators.	Collection and manual categorization: data is categorized into 18 categories and identification of postal code and city where mentioned.
A.ii	Content sample from a subset of public Facebook groups.	Content sample from 2,418 groups set to "public": 253,328 comments and 60,539 posts.	Sample composition: consists of posts, comments, and replies published under the "debate" tab. The content sample is used to estimate activity levels and conduct content analysis.	Sample is collected continuously over 6 months, capturing the most recent 14 days of debate for each group.
B.	Netnographic analysis.	Archive data in the form of screenshots, observations, and notes from 400 groups. all collected data is anonymized and potentially paraphrased if the content could be personally identifiable.	We have since 2017 been joining, observing, and participating in debates in various Facebook groups. We were transparent about the purpose of our work when membership required a specific affiliation to a place or professional group that we were not part of naturally.	The population of community centers for netnographic (web-ethnographic) analysis was selected based on a spread in size, subject, age, purpose, and rules.
C.	Interviews with digital volunteers.	15 interviews with administrators and moderators.	Interviews with administrators and moderators from different types of groups with different ages and sizes.	Semistrukturerede interviews af 1-2 timers varighed. 13 fysiske og 2 pr. telefon. 1- 2 hour long semi-structured interviews. 13 were done in person, 2 over the phone.
D.	Survey sent out to Facebook group administrators and moderators.	426 completed surveys. 96% of these are unpaid administrators or moderators. This means that we had 408 responses.	1,329 groups with a total of 3,180 administrators and moderators were contacted manually. However, many messages went to "message requests" instead of the inbox, so it's unclear how many saw our message. Most responses received were positive. The process was resource-intensive due to repeated restrictions imposed by Facebook.	Manual contact via Facebook with a link to a 35-question survey, including open-ended responses, set up in SurveyXact. statistical analysis, visualization, and qualitative analysis of open responses were conducted.
E.	Survey on Danes' use of Facebook groups.	Answers from a representative panel of 2,000 Danes.	22 questions, including open-ended responses. sent out in June 2023.	Sent through Voxmeter's panel. statistical analysis, visualization, and qualitative analysis of open responses.
F.	Review of literature on volunteering.	Reading mappings of volunteering in Denmark and research on digital volunteering in Denmark and internationally.	Focus on previous mappings of the extent of digital volunteering and differences between digital and 'traditional' volunteering.	Semi-structured interviews of varying lengths with 8 volunteering experts, followed by a review of research and reports.

Appendix 2: Data source A

What types of groups are there?

Anyone can create a "public", "private", or secret group on Facebook. Our mapping contains "public" and "private" groups.

In public groups, anyone with a Facebook profile can see the content and the debate in the group. In private groups, you must be a member to see the group's content. Secret groups cannot be found through a Facebook search, and membership can only be obtained through a personal invitation from a member.

What is the mapping of the digital civil society based on (A.i)?

The mapping and categorization of the 9,000 public and private groups are based on information that is available to anyone looking at the groups from the outside without being a member (e.g., the group's name, number of members, description, and rules).

Anonymized content sample (A.ii) collected from "public groups"

The collected sample of posts and comments, used to analyze activity levels, the proportion of closed community centers, levels of attacks and recognition, and the number of unique active members, comes solely from groups that at the time of collection had the Facebook setting "public."

Anonymization of examples from our cases

To give an impression of the activity and debate in the groups included in the study as cases, we have used examples of debate from the groups. We have anonymized these examples. Where we deemed it necessary to achieve full anonymity, we have also paraphrased the statements.

Why have you set the threshold for a digital community center at 100 members?

In the mapping, we wanted to include both the largest digital communities of citizens and the more niche communities, or communities that were small at the time of collection but might demonstrate growth potential in later mappings.

Some of the smallest groups we have included in the mapping are "Dreams of the Future Society" (103 members) or "Teaching Prevention of Sexism and Racism" (107 members). Despite their modest sizes, these groups appear to be forums for dialogue between members with overlapping interests.

There are also groups with fewer than 100 members where citizens seem to have common interests without knowing each other personally – however, these are not included.

Groups that were clearly private family groups with 100+ members are also not included in the mapping.

Appendix 2 (Cont.): Data source A.i

How the population of 9,000 groups was collected

The starting point was cities and “related groups”

The 9,000 groups in the mapping were identified through 'networked sampling'. The method is illustrated below. We used Facebook's search function to look up the 100 largest cities in Denmark. For each search, Facebook provides the top-100 groups related to the city name. We click on each of the 100 groups and save the link to the group's public front page in an Excel sheet.

On the front page of each group, Facebook suggests three related groups. The relation appears to be both thematic and based on member overlap. We save the link to the related groups, their related groups (and so on) until we encounter groups already on the list. Then we search for a new city name and start over with 100 new results. As we progress, more and more groups will already have been collected. Additionally, we have continuously supplemented with groups we have been made aware of.

Testing for collection bias

Facebook highly customizes its results to the profile that searches. One can assume that through our sampling, we are initially suggested groups that fit our primary analyst (female, 25–35, living in the metropolitan area, who "likes" certain musicians, parties, TV series, organizations, etc.). To test how significant this bias has been in our group collection, we repeated the collection from another profile: male, 42 years old, interested in cars and the stock market. Although it was very evident that groups for car sales

and investment networks appeared faster when sampling through his profile, the results eventually balanced out: we reached knitting groups at some point; it was just in a later stage in the chain of “related groups” than through our analyst's profile. Network sampling thus proved suitable for this type of mapping. However, the mapping cannot be seen as a complete mapping of Danish Facebook groups.



Since we conducted our collection, Facebook has updated its interface. Related groups are no longer displayed. Instead, Facebook encourages the use of their new “discover” universe, which suggests groups based on themes, geography, and content you have interacted with: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/discover>.

Appendix 2 (Cont.):

Data source A.ii

Web scraping of content sample from public groups

Since there are no official data sources for public Facebook group data, the data has been collected through web scraping. Web scraping is a technique where a scraper (a computer program) automatically retrieves data from publicly accessible websites. For this project, we used two different web scrapers: one open source and one custom-developed scraper.

Facebook actively works to make it more difficult to collect data through web scraping. This has made data collection significantly harder since we last mapped the landscape of Danish Facebook groups. To gather data from a broad enough sample of public groups, we limited the collection to the most recent 14 days of activity for each group. For some groups, data was collected for more than 14 days, but for these, we only include the 14-day period with the most activity. The collection was continuous, meaning that the same 14 days of activity are not present in each group.

The content collected from the public groups includes the most recent 14 days of:

- Posts
- Comments
- Replies

Collection Strategy

Collecting data from 2,870 public Facebook groups took place over a 6-month period from March 2023 to September 2023. Since the web

scraper can gather data from a limited and varying number of groups per day, we employed a waterfall strategy. This means that when the web scraper starts collecting data from a group, it retrieves data from the past 14 days, and then it begins anew with the next group and collects data from the previous 14 days.

This has the consequence that there is a significant number of groups for which we do not have information from the same time frame. On the one hand, it is more challenging to analyze how the groups develop over time. On the other hand, our method ensures that our data is not influenced by single events, as data is collected continuously over a period of six months.

Number of groups we collected content from:

Out of the 2,870 Facebook groups included in the content sample, we gathered data from 2,418 groups. Of the missing 466 groups, 125 are inactive, which corresponds to 4.5%.

Appendix 2 (Cont.):

Data source A+B

Ethical considerations

What does the Data Protection Act say?

The Data Protection Act permits the processing of personal data if the processing is necessary to perform research that is in the public interest (Article 6.e). This wording is very broad and constitutes the general basis for conducting most research.

The study, which is 100% funded by funds from the independent and non-profit entity TrygFonden, aims to strengthen the digital democratic debate. The goal is achieved by creating new knowledge about the voluntary work that underpins Denmark's digital community centers. The study is publicly available.

When is something public and private in relation to Facebook groups?

In our study, we have given much thought to how we could study the digital civil society while respecting the personal information of digital volunteers and members.

- We have therefore mapped the groups based on data that is publicly available to anyone with a Facebook profile: the group's name, description, number of members, creation date, etc.
- We have collected content samples from the groups that have the Facebook setting "public," where content is visible to anyone with a Facebook profile.
- We have conducted netnographic fieldwork in both public and private groups. Netnography involves joining, observing, participating in, and taking notes on these groups. All notes and observations

are anonymized and will be deleted after the project is completed. If membership in the group required a specific affiliation, such as a place or a professional group, which we did not naturally belong to, we were transparent about the purpose of our work when applying.

What guidelines exist for research in digital communities?

In the field of research in digital communities, it is still debated when a forum can be said to be "public" and "private."

Public groups are considered public forums. For groups with the setting "private," the assessment becomes more complicated. The fact that a group has the Facebook setting "private" is not decisive for whether the group is legally considered a private forum.

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH) writes the following:

"A general rule is that the stricter the access restriction, the greater the caution the researcher should exercise. On the other hand, technical access restrictions and 'private' groups may aim to protect expressions that are essentially public. For example, Facebook groups with thousands of members must be considered public even if the technical setting indicates that the group is 'private' or only for 'friends.'"

Aarhus University writes the following in their guidelines for internet research:

"It has not been officially determined when closed forums on social media are considered genuinely open. In the absence of an official position, a 'rule of thumb' would be that closed forums with more than 200 members should be considered open. That is, personal information posted by the person themselves in a closed forum with more than 200 members can generally be considered published by the person themselves."

The guidelines also state that consideration must be given to the type

Source 1: <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/retningslinjer/hum-sam/forskningsetisk-veileder-for-internettforskning/lse/saerligt-om-forskning/behandlingsgrundlag-og-oplysningspligt/forskellige-behandlingssituationer/some>

Source 2: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/informationssikkerhed/databeskytte>

of community. If it involves communities where users share sensitive personal information, this should be included in the assessment of the group's status as public or private. It should also be considered whether the members' intention with the group is for the content to be private.

Therefore, we have not joined groups formed around sensitive topics such as diseases, sexuality, or political affiliation without having personal access to the group. We have also not used or reproduced content from private groups, except for those included as cases, where we bring anonymized and/or paraphrased examples of posts and comments in agreement with the group's digital volunteers.

Appendix 3: Data source D

Survey for administrators and moderators of Facebook groups

The survey for administrators and moderators was sent out to a broad sample of digital volunteers. We contacted digital volunteers in a selection of groups that vary in size, age, number of administrators, category, and status as public or private. The overview of these parameters is enabled by Data source A, data from the "about" page of 9,000 public and private groups.

The distribution period was from January 2023 to August 2023. A total of 1,329 groups with 3,180 administrators and moderators were contacted manually. However, the messages end up in "message requests" rather than the inbox. Therefore, we do not know how many people saw our message, but the majority of responses we received were positive. The process was resource-intensive because we repeatedly experienced limitations imposed by Facebook.

The survey included 35 questions, including open responses, set up in SurveyXact. A total of 610 people started the survey, while 426 people answered all questions. Of these, 96% are unpaid administrators or moderators. The final number of digital volunteers in the study is therefore 408. 93% of our responses come from administrators, and 7% from moderators. In the reporting, responses from administrators and moderators are combined.

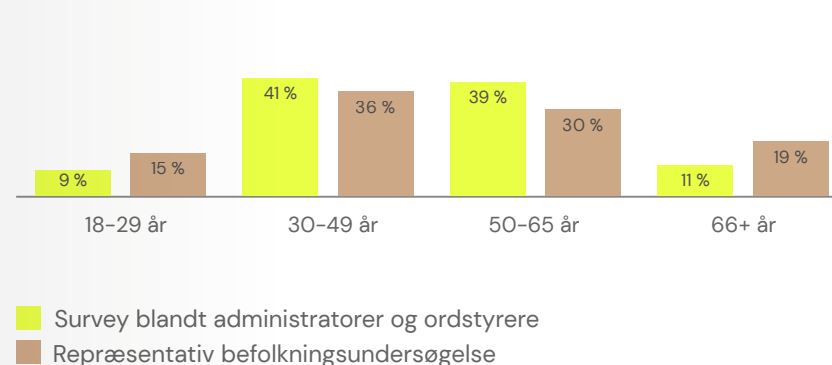
The survey of digital volunteers is not representative

When comparing the results from the survey among administrators and moderators with the representative population survey, there are gender and age differences among the respondents. The survey among administrators and moderators has slightly more women compared to the

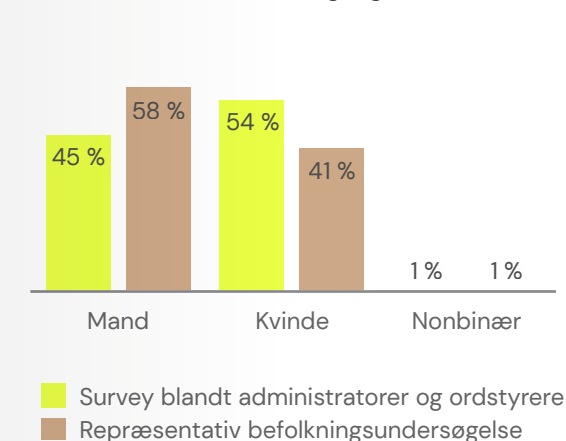
representative population survey. Additionally, the survey has slightly fewer young and elderly respondents. Therefore, the results are not representative in terms of gender or age.

However, the differences in gender and age distribution are not particularly large. Therefore, we have chosen not to adjust for the small overrepresentation of women and the 30–65 age group in the data.

Age distribution among digital volunteers in the two surveys

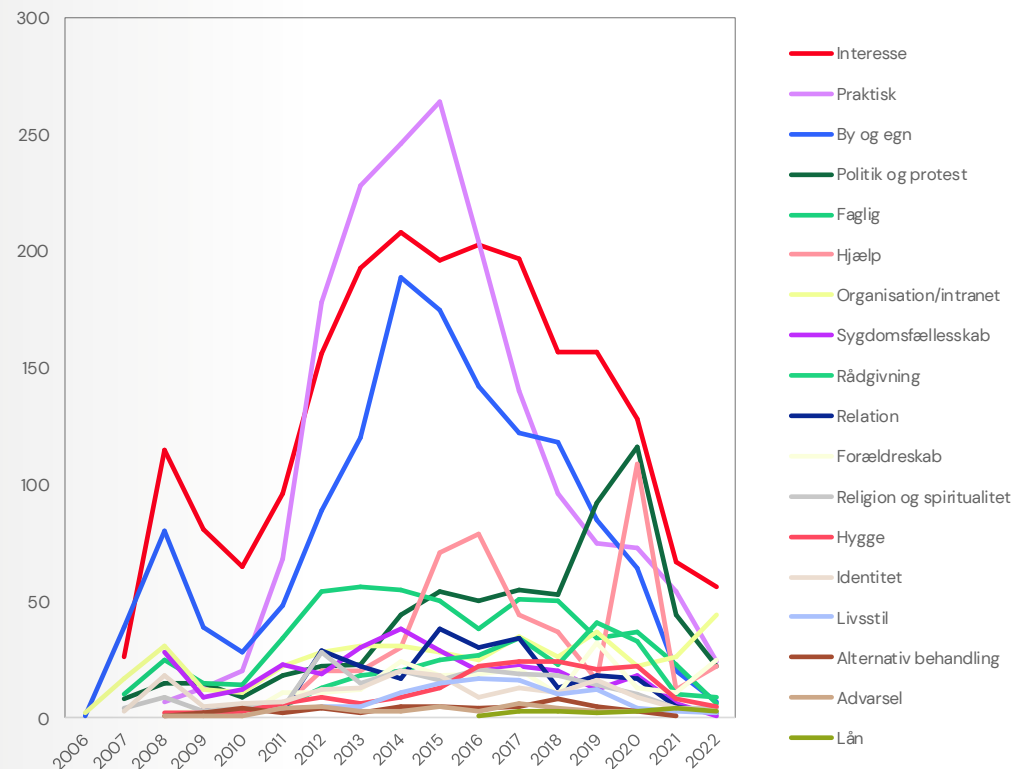


Gender distribution among digital volunteers in the two surveys



Appendix 4: Group growth in the digital community centers

- We do not know what proportion of the Danish community house landscape our sample of 9,000 groups represents.
- We also do not know if our collection method (networked sampling via Facebook's recommendation algorithms combined with searches of the 100 largest Danish cities) skews the population. The algorithm is likely influenced by the user collecting the data (we have used both users with and without profile histories to collect data), the recency of the groups, and several other opaque criteria.
- Therefore, we can only show *when* the 9,000 groups in our sample were created between 2006 and 2022, as seen here:



Appendix 5: Membership growth in the digital community centers

- Membership growth is only calculated for groups where we have observed membership numbers both in 2021 and 2023 (5,023 groups).
- In the groups for which we collected membership numbers in both 2021 and 2023, the number of memberships increased by nearly 8 million (34.6%).
- Membership growth in the individual categories can be seen below:

Kategori	Antal grupper	Medlemmer 2021	Medlemmer 2023	Medlems vækst
Interesse og hobby	1.322	7.172.724	9.771.212	2.598.488 (36,2 pct.)
Praktisk	453	3.055.860	4.085.327	1.029.467 (33,7 pct.)
By og egn	960	3.266.262	4.646.781	1.380.519 (42,3 pct.)
Politik og protest	404	1.604.398	1.981.656	377.258 (23,5 pct.)
Faglighed	277	1.026.377	1.302.916	276.539 (26,9 pct.)
Hjælp	291	1.393.112	1.485.472	92.360 (6,6 pct.)
Organisation/intranet	131	268.583	340.711	72.128 (26,9 pct.)
Sygdomsfællesskab	238	521.908	684.757	162.849 (31,2 pct.)
Brevkasse og rådgivning	148	976.022	1.516.997	540.975 (55,4 pct.)
Forældreskab	141	351.868	513.513	161.645 (45,9 pct.)
Venner, dating og relationer	162	618.909	767.237	148.328 (24,0 pct.)
Religion og spiritualitet	143	474.389	586.525	112.136 (23,6 pct.)
Hygge- og humor	73	738.334	1.436.431	698.097 (94,6 pct.)
Identitet	117	382.074	496.979	114.905 (30,1 pct.)
Livsstil	81	784.719	860.602	75.883 (9,6 pct.)
Alternativ behandling	43	121.356	143.967	22.611 (18,6 pct.)
Advarselsgrupper	35	155.705	231.724	76.019 (48,8 pct.)
Private lån	4	11.841	12.729	888 (7,5 pct.)
I ALT	5023	22.924.441	30.865.536	7.941.095 (34,6 pct.)

Appendix 6: Age groups distributed by group categories

- The yellow cells indicate overrepresentation, and the gray cells indicate underrepresentation. If there are too few observations for statistical analysis, the text is colored light gray.

	18-29 år	30-49 år	50-65 år	66+ år
By- og sted-grupper	14%	35%	30%	21%
Venner og dating	30%	30%	26%	14%
Hjælpegrupper	16%	47%	29%	8%
Sygdom og behandlingsgrupper	6%	34%	43%	17%
Forældregrupper	10%	81%	9%	0%
Faglige grupper	18%	46%	24%	12%
Politik og protestgrupper	11%	41%	30%	18%
Interesse- og hobbygrupper	13%	37%	33%	17%
Grupper relateret til virksomheder og institutioner	19%	50%	22%	9%
Brevkasse- og rådgivningsgrupper	21%	49%	17%	13%
Praktiske grupper	13%	43%	31%	13%
Identitetsgrupper	12%	35%	28%	26%
Kost og livsstil	12%	44%	31%	13%
Alternativ behandling	2%	57%	29%	12%
Spirituelle og religiøse grupper	18%	60%	17%	5%
Hygge- og humorgrupper	13%	38%	38%	11%
Private lånegrupper	10%	81%	5%	5%
Advarselsgrupper	8%	57%	27%	8%
Gennemsnit indenfor aldersgrupper	14%	48%	26%	12%

Appendix 7: Education distributed by group categories

- The yellow cells indicate overrepresentation, and the gray cells indicate underrepresentation. If there are too few observations for statistical analysis, the text is colored light gray.

	Ingen erhvervs-kompetancegivende uddannelse	Faglig uddannelse	Kort videregående uddannelse	Mellemlang videregående uddannelse	Lang videregående uddannelse
By- og sted-grupper	13%	25%	9%	34%	19%
Venner og dating	17%	27%	12%	28%	17%
Hjælpegrupper	16%	25%	10%	31%	18%
Sygdom og behandlingsgrupper	13%	27%	11%	37%	12%
Forældregrupper	7%	22%	7%	34%	29%
Faglige grupper	7%	14%	5%	43%	30%
Politik og protestgrupper	13%	27%	8%	33%	20%
Interesse- og hobbygrupper	14%	26%	9%	34%	16%
Grupper relateret til virksomheder og institutioner	13%	25%	7%	26%	29%
Brevkasse- og rådgivningsgrupper	19%	19%	8%	32%	22%
Praktiske grupper	15%	22%	10%	35%	19%
Identitetsgrupper	12%	22%	8%	41%	18%
Kost og livsstil	12%	23%	10%	35%	20%
Alternativ behandling	8%	29%	4%	39%	20%
Spirituelle og religiøse grupper	12%	23%	5%	40%	20%
Hygge- og humorgrupper	13%	30%	10%	30%	16%
Private lånegrupper	14%	14%	24%	24%	24%
Advarselsgrupper	15%	28%	8%	18%	30%
Gennemsnit indenfor beskæftigelsesgrupper	13%	24%	9%	33%	21%

Appendix 8: Occupation fordistributed by group categories

- The yellow cells indicate overrepresentation, and the gray cells indicate underrepresentation. If there are too few observations for statistical analysis, the text is colored light gray.

	Selvstændig	Lønmodtager fuldtid	Lønmodtager deltid	Ledig, flexjob og offentlig forsørgelse	Pensioneret	Under uddannels e
By- og sted-grupper	3%	44%	9%	11%	27%	6%
Venner og dating	6%	42%	9%	12%	23%	8%
Hjælpegrupper	5%	46%	8%	22%	14%	5%
Sygdom og behandlingsgrupper	4%	34%	13%	18%	27%	5%
Forældregrupper	2%	71%	10%	12%	1%	5%
Faglige grupper	4%	55%	11%	5%	17%	8%
Politik og protestgrupper	3%	41%	12%	13%	27%	4%
Interesse- og hobbygrupper	4%	43%	11%	11%	24%	6%
Grupper relateret til virksomheder og institutioner	2%	57%	11%	8%	11%	11%
Brevkasse- og rådgivningsgrupper	5%	44%	13%	10%	13%	16%
Praktiske grupper	5%	44%	9%	15%	20%	7%
Identitetsgrupper	1%	31%	17%	12%	34%	5%
Kost og livsstil	4%	38%	15%	11%	23%	8%
Alternativ behandling	0%	31%	22%	16%	24%	6%
Spirituelle og religiøse grupper	7%	40%	23%	12%	12%	7%
Hygge- og humorgrupper	3%	49%	13%	12%	19%	4%
Private lånegrupper	5%	67%	5%	19%	5%	0%
Advarselsgrupper	5%	55%	10%	15%	12%	3%
Gennemsnit indenfor beskæftigelsesgrupper	4%	46%	12%	13%	18%	6%

Appendix 9: The population's social media usage in general

– Which of the following social media channels do you use?

