



Volunteering Statistics

General Social Survey 2025

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Volunteering in Contemporary Australia

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Survey (GSS),¹ 9.5 million people volunteered in Australia in 2025 in either formal or informal volunteering or both. This is equivalent to 42.8% of the Australian population over 15 years of age.²

Volunteering rates remain steady, with more than 5 million people volunteering formally through an organisation in 2025, similar to 2020 results. While the rate of participation in formal volunteering has not recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, Australians spent significantly more time volunteering through an organisation in 2025, with a total of 618 million hours volunteered compared to 490 million hours in 2020. This is a particularly significant finding that highlights the resilient nature of volunteering since 2020, despite Australians facing increasing cost-of-living pressures. Informal volunteering rates also remain steady at 29.5% (or 6.553 million people).

These findings are positive in the context of increased cost-of-living challenges during the past five years, with more households experiencing financial stress across all indicators measured in the 2025 GSS compared with 2020. Notably, this data was collected in 2025, prior to the fuel crisis in 2026, which has seen volunteers and volunteer involving organisations face increased fuel cost pressures due to the Middle East conflict, resulting in some organisations – particularly those that are heavily dependent on transport – struggling to maintain services. This impact is likely to be reflected in the 2026 GSS results.

Other key findings about volunteering in the 2025 GSS include:

- Adults aged 35-44 years and 45-54 years were most likely to volunteer in 2025
- Young people are volunteering, with 16.4% of Australians aged 15 to 24 volunteering with an organisation and 22.9% engaging in informal volunteering
- Formal and informal volunteering were highest in remote areas of Australia
- The most common organisations that people volunteered for in 2025 were sport and recreation, religious groups, and community and cultural groups
- Most volunteers have been active for 10 years or more, but a considerable amount of people got involved in volunteering in the previous 12 months
- Socio-demographic characteristics showed that volunteering was more common among people employed, were currently studying, or had achieved a tertiary degree or higher
- Australian volunteers were most likely to undertake volunteering for altruistic reasons, such as helping others or their community
- Most Australian volunteers incurred some form of expense associated with their volunteering, with expenses for transport, travel or motor vehicle the most common.

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

² Unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics 2025 General Social Survey data with double counting removed

Introduction

This report outlines Australian volunteering statistics from the 2025 General Social Survey (GSS) published on 6 May 2026.³

The GSS is a compulsory survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), collecting official national data on the social characteristics, wellbeing and social experiences of people in Australia. The GSS is considered the most reliable source to provide national estimates of volunteering in Australia. The GSS is used as a key data source for Government modelling and policies, such as the Measuring What Matters Wellbeing Framework, where it is used as an indicator for social cohesion. Other official sources for statistical information about volunteering are collected by the ABS through the Census and Time Use Survey. It is the ABS's ability to conduct compulsory surveys under legislation and the resourcing government commits to the ABS, that ensure surveys such as the GSS are able to achieve high sample sizes and strong response rates.

The 2025 GSS marks the first official statistics for volunteering produced by the ABS since 2020, with previous surveys conducted in 2019, 2014, 2010, 2006, and 2002. A further four annual surveys will follow this current dataset, including later in 2026. The ongoing time series questions related to unpaid voluntary work through an organisation, allows policy makers, peak bodies and organisations within the volunteering ecosystem to understand rates of participation and the characteristics of volunteering in Australia.

Prior to the commencement of the 2025 GSS, the ABS conducted a review of the Voluntary Work module for the GSS, to ensure data items and categories reflected stakeholder needs and contemporary volunteering. Feedback was sought and collated from the volunteering ecosystem during this review, including from Volunteering Australia. The review resulted in a light-touch redevelopment that significantly improved the Voluntary Work module for the 2025 GSS. While no items have been removed from the 2020 GSS in the redevelopment, some volunteering data cubes have been expanded and new data items have been included to provide a more complete picture of volunteering. These have been highlighted in the findings below.

This report outlines the GSS volunteering survey statistics, collected from Australians aged 15 years and over, during a two-month period from May 1st to June 28th, 2025. In addition to this, as the GSS did not collect information about volunteering since 2020, the report draws on other sources of volunteering data for specific data items that align with those in the 2025 GSS. This provides context about any trends that were observed in volunteering participation between 2020 and 2025.

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as ‘time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain’.⁴ This report deploys this definition, thereby providing information about formal and informal volunteering. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines formal volunteering as ‘unpaid voluntary work through an organisation’ and informal volunteering as ‘the provision of unpaid work/support to non-household members, excluding that provided only to family members living outside the household.’⁵

Interpreting the 2025 results

The 2025 GSS continues to present the time series of unpaid voluntary work through an organisation, while also providing estimates for informal volunteering that were first introduced in the GSS in 2019. Capturing both these estimates of volunteering modes provides a more complete picture of volunteering in Australia. However, they should not be combined to provide a total estimate of volunteering in Australia. This is due to the different reference period for unpaid voluntary work and informal volunteering. For example, the question for unpaid voluntary work relates to the 12 months preceding the survey, while prompts for informal volunteering by the ABS are based on the four weeks preceding the survey in order to mitigate memory-bias. In addition, many Australians engage in both formal and informal volunteering and are therefore counted in both estimates. As a result, combining the total estimates for people who undertook formal volunteering and informal volunteering would produce an overestimate of volunteers.

Importantly, the GSS also provides (unpublished, but approved) a total for the number of people in Australia who volunteered in either formal or informal volunteering or both in 2025, by only counting each volunteer once and removing double counting. This allows the ABS to derive a more refined number. As such, 9.5 million people volunteered in Australia in 2025 in either formal or informal volunteering or both. This is equivalent to 42.8% of the Australian population over 15 years of age.

The 2025 GSS collected data relating to sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation using the ABS’s standardised method.⁶ A small number of people in the survey did not report a gender or reported a term other than male or female. This means that volunteering estimates for people who did not identify as a male or female are not reflected through a separate category, but are included in the data for total persons for confidentiality and statistical validity reasons.

⁴ <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/resources/definition-of-volunteering/>

⁵ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

⁶ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/2020>

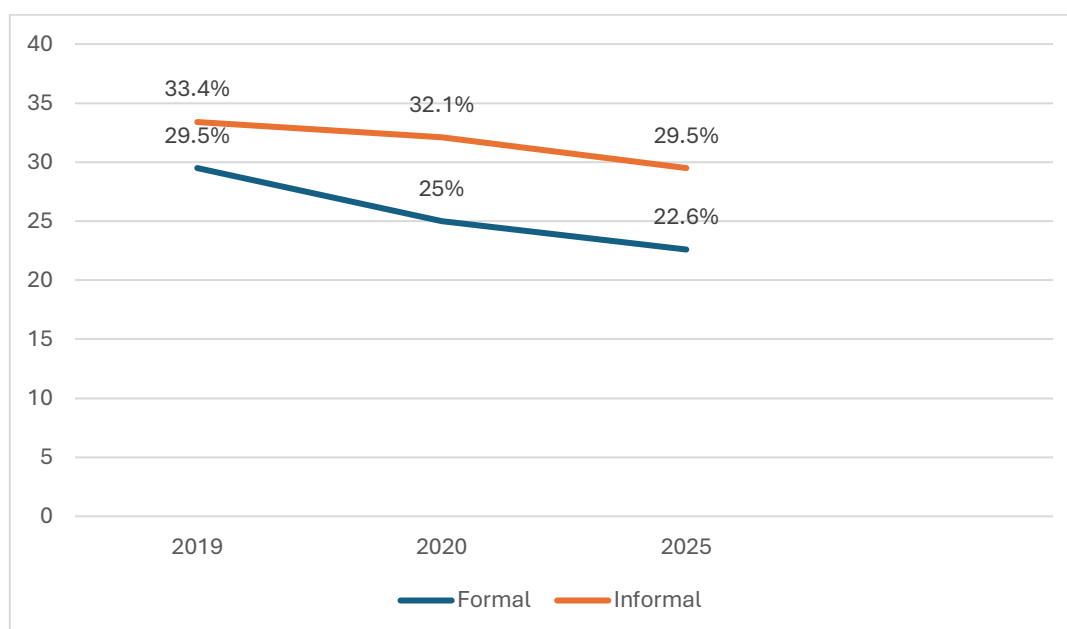
Further detailed information about the methods used in the 2025 GSS can be found at <https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia-methodology/2025#history-of-changes>.

Australia's volunteer workforce

Overall volunteering rates remain steady in 2025, with 9.5 million people volunteering in Australia in either formal or informal volunteering or both, equivalent to 42.8% of Australians over 15 years of age. The data shows that more than 5 million people (or 22.6% of the population aged over 15) volunteered formally through an organisation in 2025. This is similar to 2020, when 25% of Australians volunteered formally, and shows that the rate of formal volunteering stayed stable despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2025, formal volunteering continued to remain stable against a backdrop of growing cost-of-living pressures, highlighting that volunteering is both resilient and responding to need.

The number of people who engaged in informal volunteering in 2025 was 6.553 million (or 29.5%), a rate similar to levels in 2020. As shown in [Figure 1](#), informal volunteering rates have tended to be higher than formal volunteering since first being measured by ABS in 2019. For example, when the ABS first measured informal volunteering in 2019, the rate of informal volunteering was 33.4% (or 6.676 million), before falling slightly in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic to 32.1%. In 2025, informal volunteering remains steady at 29.5%.

Figure 1: The short-term trend in formal and informal volunteering since 2019.



Formal volunteering

The results show that an estimated 5 million (5,007,000) people engaged in unpaid work through an organisation in 2025, a rate of 22.6% of people aged 15 and over. This is compared to 25% who volunteered in 2020, with analysis by the ABS showing that there was no statistically significant difference in unpaid work through an organisation from 2020 to 2025.

This means that, although the rate of volunteering has not recovered to levels prior to COVID-19, it has stabilised in the five years since the COVID-19 pandemic. With research showing that wellbeing and volunteering are often intertwined, several factors may be impacting on levels of volunteering in Australia. According to social characteristics and wellbeing data in the 2025 GSS, Australian households have continued to experience financial stress since 2020. For example, more households experienced financial stress across all indicated ABS measures of financial stress in 2025 compared with 2020. Also, the ABS measure for overall life satisfaction declined slightly in 2025 to 7.1 compared with 7.2 in 2020. This represents an overall decline from 7.6 in 2014.⁷

Formal volunteering by gender

Both females and males did unpaid voluntary work through an organisation at a similar rate in 2025, with 23% of females volunteering formally and 22% of males volunteering formally. However, as highlighted in [Table 1](#), the rate of formal volunteering among females fell by 3.5% in 2025, compared to 2020 when 26.5% of females volunteered formally. One factor that may explain this decline among females, is the finding in the broader social characteristics and wellbeing statistics of GSS which show that more females felt 'always' or 'often' rushed for time in 2025 (38.1%) compared to 2020 (34.5%).⁵

Table 1. Formal volunteering by gender, year

Gender	2025	2020	2019
Females	23%	26.5%	28.1%
Males	22%	23.1%	29.4%
Total	22.6%	25%	29.5%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

⁷ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

Formal volunteering by gender and age

The 2025 GSS also provides a breakdown of unpaid voluntary work through an organisation by gender and age group. It should be noted, that the most of age group categories have narrowed to ten years in the 2025 GSS compared to fifteen year bands in 2020, making it difficult to make precise age comparisons between these time points.

Among the age groups for all persons ([see Table 2](#)), those aged in the middle age brackets (35-44 years and 45-54 years) were most likely to volunteer formally in 2025 with 27.1% and 28% volunteering formally respectively. There was one notable difference in formal volunteering across age groups and gender, with females aged 35 to 44 more likely to engage in unpaid work through an organisation (30.5%) compared to males aged 35 to 44 (24.9%).

Table 2. Formal volunteering by age groups, gender

Age Groups	Males	Females	Persons (a)
15 to 24	15.7%	14.1%	16.4%
25 to 34	13.2%	13.1%	13.1%
35 to 44	24.9%	30.5%	27.1%
45 to 54	30.6%	26.8%	28.0%
55 to 64	23.4%	27.5%	24.9%
65 and over	25.6%	26.5%	25.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. (a) includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated.

Annual hours of formal volunteering hours undertaken

This variable has been expanded in the 2025 GSS to include both gender and age totals. The results show that significantly more time was contributed by Australians to unpaid work through an organisation in 2025, with approximately 618 million hours spent volunteering in 2025, up from 490 million hours in 2020. This is a particularly significant finding that highlights the resilient nature of volunteering since 2020, despite Australians facing increasing cost-of-living pressures.

A closer examination of the data in [Table 3](#) shows that of those who volunteered formally, it was most common for people in all age groups to volunteer between 1-20 hours in the previous 12 months. In addition, while the trend showed that as the number of hours increased, the percentage of people who volunteered gradually decreased. However, there were still a considerable amount of people who volunteered 100 hours or more among all age groups (31.3%). For example, 34.8% of older volunteers aged 55-64 years volunteered 100 hours or more.

Table 3. Volunteers, numbers of hours of volunteered annually, all persons, by age

Persons (a)	1-20 hours	21-99 hours	100 hours or more	Total hours (millions)
15-24	#43.1%	#32.5%	19.6%	40.3
25-34	36.3%	#35.0%	#30.4%	*80.3
35-44	48.2%	26.8%	24.6%	72.6
45-54	#45.5%	28.9%	26.8%	78.4
55-64	33.2%	32.2%	34.8%	*125.7
65 and over	28.7%	27.6%	43.7%	223.2
Total	39.3%	29.5%	31.3%	618.2

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 12.3: Annual hours of voluntary work, by persons aged 15 years and who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months. (a) Includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution. * estimate has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. ** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.*

Table 4. Volunteers, numbers of hours of volunteered annually, males, by age

Males	1-20 hours	21-99 hours	100 hours or more
15-24	#46.6%	#31.0%	#33.0%
25-34	28.6%	#34.1%	#36.4%
35-44	#41.0%	25.3%	#35.5%
45-54	#47.7%	#27.5%	22.8%
55-64	#31.0%	#35.6%	#30.4%
65 and over	33.3%	24.4%	42.0%
Total	38.5%	28.3%	33.1%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 12.3: Annual hours of voluntary work, by males and age, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Table 5. Volunteers, numbers of hours of volunteered annually, females, by age

Females	1-20 hours	21-99 hours	100 hours or more
15-24	#52.2%	#23.4%	#17.0%
25-34	#41.0%	#30.4%	#27.8%
35-44	#52.9%	#28.7%	17.5%
45-54	#41.9%	29.2%	#29.0%
55-64	#34.0%	27.3%	#38.1%
65 and over	23.9%	30.1%	45.3%
Total	40.1%	29.0%	30.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 12.3: Annual hours of voluntary work, by females and age, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

State/Territory formal volunteering participation

The rate of unpaid work through an organisation was broadly similar across Australian states and territories in 2025, with few material changes in formal volunteering rates across Australia compared to results from 2020. However, the data in [Table 6](#) shows a considerable decrease in formal volunteering in the ACT in 2025, with rates falling from 30.9% in 2020 to 22% in 2025.

Table 6. Formal volunteering rate by state/territory, year

State/Territory	Formal volunteering rate 2025	Formal volunteering rate 2020
New South Wales	22.3%	23.1%
Victoria	21.8%	24.4%
Queensland	22.0%	25.4%
South Australia	23.6%	26.2%
Western Australia	23.9%	25.6%
Tasmania	27.5%	30.2%
Northern Territory	26.7%	28.4%
Australian Capital Territory	22.0%	30.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 6.3: Social experiences, by state and territory, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Formal volunteering by remoteness area

While most of the categories in this variable remained the same in the 2025 GSS compared to 2020, the categories of 'outer regional' and 'remote' are now presented separately. These categories were combined in 2020. The results (see [Table 7](#)) show that formal volunteering was most common in regional and remote areas of Australia in 2025, with people aged 15 and over more likely to do unpaid work for an organisation if they resided in remote areas of Australia.

Table 7. Formal volunteering rates by remoteness areas

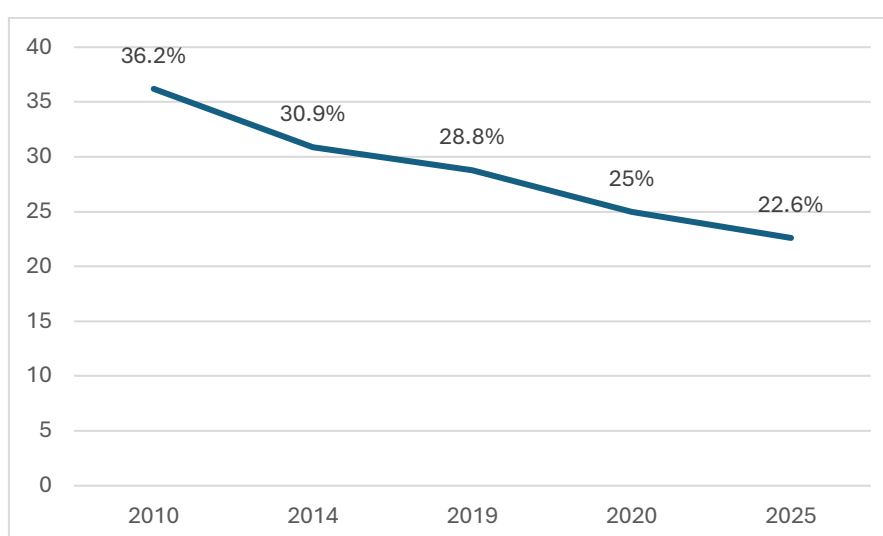
Remoteness area	Formal volunteering 2025
Major cities	20.9%
Inner regional	26.7%
Outer regional	28.0%
Remote	34.0%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 7.3: Social experiences, by remoteness area, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Long term trend in formal volunteering

The long-term trend of formal volunteering has seen a decline since the peak of 36.2% in 2010. The rate of formal volunteering fell to 28.8% in 2019, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, there were further disruptions to formal volunteering due to the pandemic, with formal volunteering decreasing to 25%. However, the 2025 data shows that the rate of formal volunteering has not changed significantly in the past five years, with levels remaining steady at 22.6%. It should again be noted that informal volunteering rates were not measured prior to 2019. However, volunteering continues to evolve and there have been indications of a shift towards informal volunteering, with some evidence showing that informal volunteering was less impacted in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸

Figure 2. The long-term trend in formal volunteering



⁸ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

Informal volunteering

The number of Australians who volunteered informally in 2025 remained steady at 29.5% (or 6.553 million), similar to 2020 when around 6.5 million or 32.1% volunteered informally, with analysis by the ABS showing no statistically significant difference in informal volunteering between 2020 and 2025. This figure represents a higher number of people engaging in informal volunteering than formal volunteering, which is consistent with 2020 and the long-term trend of how volunteering has evolved over time. It is also important to note that informal volunteering is based on measuring a more narrow timeframe of 4 weeks prior to the survey, while formal volunteering is measured on the 12-month period before the survey to provide an annual figure for formal volunteering.

Table 8. Informal volunteering rates by gender, age

Age Groups	Males	Females	Persons (a)
15 to 24	19.7%	26.7%	22.9%
25 to 34	32.0%	32.4%	32.5%
35 to 44	35.0%	38.6%	36.1%
45 to 54	33.8%	33.0%	33.0%
55 to 64	23.5%	29.9%	26.1%
65 and over	24.9%	27.3%	26.0%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. (a) includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated.

State and Territory informal volunteering participation

With the exception of the Northern Territory, informal volunteering rates were broadly similar across Australian states and territories and were comparable to results from 2020 as shown in [Table 9](#). However, there was a considerable decline in informal volunteering in the ACT in 2025, falling to 28.5%, representing a ten percent decline from 2020.

Table 9. Has undertaken informal volunteering in last 4 weeks.

State/Territory	Informal volunteering rate 2025	Informal volunteering rate 2020
New South Wales	28.5%	33.8%
Victoria	30.1%	31.0%
Queensland	30.2%	32.6%
South Australia	29.3%	28.9%
Western Australia	29.9%	30.0%
Tasmania	27.8%	32.9%
Northern Territory	38.0%	36.2%
Australian Capital Territory	28.5%	38.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 6.3: Social experiences, by state and territory, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Informal volunteering by remoteness area

The categories of ‘outer regional’ and ‘remote’ are now presented separately in the 2025 GSS, having previously been combined in 2020. Although informal volunteering was most common in remote areas of Australia (34.2%), there were less differences across the other areas of Australia (see [Table 10](#)).

Table 10. Informal volunteering rate by remoteness area

Remoteness area	Informal volunteering 2025
Major cities	29.2%
Inner regional	30.1%
Outer regional	30.2%
Remote	34.2%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 7.3: Social experiences, by remoteness area, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Type of unpaid work/support provided

In line with results from the 2020 and 2019 GSS, the most common types of unpaid work/support provided to non-household members for all persons continue to be emotional support (48.4%), transport or running errands (41.2%), and domestic work, home maintenance or gardening (40.6%) (see [Table 11](#)). As these figures include support to family member outside the household, which are excluded from the estimates for informal volunteering, this data is not directly equivalent to informal volunteering.

Table 11. Type of unpaid work/support provided to non-household members by gender

Type of unpaid work/support provided to non-household members in last 4 weeks(b)	Males	Females	Persons
Domestic work, home maintenance or gardening	47.4%	34.9%	40.6%
Providing transport or running errands	42.3%	40.4%	41.2%
Any unpaid child care	12.7%	23.6%	18.4%
Any teaching, coaching or practical advice	15.5%	12.0%	13.6%
Providing any emotional support	36.4%	59.1%	48.4%
Personal care or assistance	12.4%	16.5%	14.3%
Lobbying or advocacy	2.1%	3.1%	2.6%
Community assistance	4.7%	5.6%	5.2%
Environmental protection or animal welfare	3.1%	2.8%	3.1%
Any other help	12.1%	10.2%	11.2%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 14.3: Characteristics of unpaid work/support, by gender and age, persons aged 15 years and over who provided unpaid work/support to non-household members in last 4 weeks, proportion of persons. (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Recipient of unpaid work/support provided

Table 12 provides a breakdown of the recipient of unpaid work/support, with most Australians providing support to those in their immediate family or social network. As the estimate of informal volunteering excludes support provided to a relative in another household, this data shows that informal volunteering (as estimated in the GSS) was most commonly directed towards friends.

Table 12. Recipient of unpaid work/support by gender

Recipient of unpaid work/support(b)	Males	Females	Persons
Relative in another household	61.5%	64.2%	62.4%
Friend	49.8%	52.6%	51.7%
Neighbour	12.1%	10.7%	11.4%
Work colleague	13.1%	13.6%	13.5%
Other person	6.9%	7.6%	7.3%
Community or neighbourhood	8.4%	7.9%	8.1%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 14.3: Characteristics of unpaid work/support, by gender and age, persons aged 15 years and over who provided unpaid work/support to non-household members in last 4 weeks, proportion of persons. (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Total volunteering numbers

The population estimates and percentages of Australians aged 15 and over who engaged in either formal or informal volunteering or both in 2025 are presented in [Table 13](#). The results show that 9.5 million people in Australia volunteered in either formal or informal volunteering or both in 2025, representing 42.8% of the population. Importantly, the numbers or proportions of formal volunteers and informal volunteers cannot be summed to determine total volunteer numbers, as people who undertook both formal and informal volunteering are included in these estimates and would be double counted if the two estimates are summed.

Table 13. Engaged in informal volunteering or formal volunteering or both, by gender

Count – Estimate ('000) & proportion (%)	Man	Woman	Total
Did unpaid voluntary work in last 12 months and did informal voluntary work in the last 4 weeks (volunteered both informally and formally)	920.1 8.7%	1,102.8 10.1%	2,055.1 9.3%
Did unpaid voluntary work in last 12 months and did not do informal voluntary work in the last 4 weeks (only volunteered formally)	1,422.8 13.4%	1,440.0 13.1%	2,955.8 13.3%
Did not do unpaid voluntary work in last 12 months and did informal voluntary work in the last 4 weeks (only volunteered informally)	2,062.0 19.4%	2,315.5 21.1%	4,501.3 20.3%
Total people who either did voluntary work in the last 12 months and/or informal voluntary work in the last 4 weeks (total people who did formal or informal volunteering or both)	4,415.0 41.5%	4,847.1 44.3%	9,499.5 42.8%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Custom table: Whether did voluntary work for organisation in the last 12 months and/or informal voluntary work in the last 4 weeks by Gender estimate.

Volunteering across key socio-demographic characteristics

Labour force status

The findings in [Table 14](#) show that for both formal and informal volunteering, it was more common for Australians to volunteer if they were employed full-time or part-time, thereby following a consistent trend from 2020. This is a key finding given the relationship between employment and volunteering. Research commissioned by Volunteering Australia in 2022 highlighted that people who were employed were more likely to volunteer than people who were not in paid employment.⁹ However, this finding should not underestimate the considerable

⁹ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

amount of people who were unemployed and were not in the labour force, who made an important contribution to volunteering organisations in 2025.

Table 14. Formal and informal volunteering rates by labour force status, year

Labour force status	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
Employed full-time	23.4%	23.3%	34.9%	35.9%
Employed part-time	25.0%	29.8%	28.3%	39.6%
Unemployed	12.2%	#26.3%	#31.3%	29.7%
Not in the labour force	20.7%	22.8%	22.5%	23.4%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Education

The 2025 GSS collected data for volunteering by education status for the first time. The results in [Table 15](#) show that there was very little difference in the participation rates of formal and informal volunteering between those currently studying and those not currently studying.

Table 15. Formal and informal volunteering rates by study status

Current study status	Formal volunteering	Informal volunteering
Currently studying	24.3%	28.9%
Not studying	22.3%	29.6%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3 Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Level of highest non-school qualification

The findings in [Table 16](#) show that both formal and informal volunteering were more common among Australians with a higher level of education achieved, following a consistent trend from 2020.

Table 16. Formal and informal volunteering rates by education level achieved, year

Level of non-school qualification achieved	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
Bachelor Degree or above	30.0%	31.4%	36.6%	38.4%
Advanced Diploma/Diploma or below	22.3%	24.6%	30.9%	34.0%
No non-school qualification	14.8%	18.0%	20.6%	23.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Volunteering by migrant status

Participation in both formal and informal volunteering was strong regardless of migrant status. However, there were several key differences in the data (see [Table 17](#)). For example, those who were born in Australia were more likely to volunteer formally (24.1%) than total migrants (19.5%). While recent migrants and temporary residents were more likely to volunteer informally (38.7%) than people born in Australia (27.7%). This is consistent with data from 2020.

Prior research by Volunteering Australia has also shown that a significant portion of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, participate in volunteering.¹⁰ In addition, among CALD communities, the type of volunteering has been found to be a more meaningful predictor of volunteering, rather than the general propensity to volunteer.¹¹ For example, in CALD communities, volunteering is understood through cultural and religious lenses, meaning that people in these communities may volunteer for reasons such as an act of service without any personal benefit, a form of cultural obligation, or to fulfill interests and hobbies.¹²

¹⁰ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

¹¹ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

¹² <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Story-Project-FINAL.pdf>

Table 17. Formal and informal volunteering rates by migrant status, year

Migrant status	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
Born in Australia	24.1%	27.2%	27.7%	31.9%
Recent migrants and temporary residents(a)	14.3%	15.0%	38.7%	37.3%
Other migrants(b)	20.8%	22.3%	31.4%	31.0%
Total migrants	19.5%	19.7%	33.2%	32.4%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 4.3: Social experiences, by migrant status, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. (a) Those born overseas and arrived in Australia in the last ten years and have stayed or are planning to stay more than 12 months. They may be Australian citizens or citizens of another country. Excludes New Zealand citizens. (b) Those born overseas who arrived in Australia more than ten years ago. Also includes NZ citizens, irrespective of when they arrived in Australia.

Languages spoken at home

In 2025, there was a small difference in formal volunteering between people who spoke English only and people who spoke a language other than English (see [Table 18](#)), making this result consistent with data from 2020. While for informal volunteering, there was some evidence to show that people who spoke a language other than English were more likely to engage in informal volunteering than people who spoke English only, consistent with the results by migrant status. This contrasts the data from 2020 which showed no meaningful difference.

Table 18. Formal and informal volunteering rates by language spoken at home, year

Language spoken at home	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
English only	23.6%	25.7%	28.5%	32.0%
Language other than English	18.9%	18.2%	33.1%	32.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Living situation

The categories for this item have been significantly expanded in the 2025 GSS (see [Table 19](#)). For formal volunteering, there were no major differences between type of living situation, however, the results did show that formal volunteering was more common among the category 'parent in couple with children under 15' (31.6%). Similarly, there were broad similarities between most of the types of living situations and informal volunteering.

Table 19. Formal and informal volunteering rates by living situation

Living situation	Formal volunteering	Informal volunteering
Parent in couple with children under 15	31.6%	34.8%
Parent in couple with youngest child 15 years and over	25.1%	21.6%
Lone parent with children under 15	#23.8	#37.6%
Lone parent with youngest child 15 years and over	26.2%	#34.1%
In couple with no children	21.2%	29.1%
Non-dependent child (15 years and over)	11.9%	26.9%
Dependent student 15 to 24 years	21.9%	16.9%
Lone person 15 to 64 years	19.1%	36.6%
Lone person 65 years and over	25.4%	33.0%
Other	13.0%	30.0%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Main source of household income

The results in [Table 20](#) showed that people volunteered across the household income distribution in 2025, and the percentage and distribution among these household income sources were similar to 2020.

Table 20. Formal and informal volunteering rates by household income source, year

Household income source	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
Employee income	22.5%	24.6%	31.4%	34.4%
Unincorporated business income	35.4%	#39.2%	30.9%	34.4%
Government pensions and allowances	18.6%	19.4%	23.2%	25.8%
Other income	29.0%	36.4%	27.4%	31.4%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Weekly gross income quintiles

There were broad similarities in formal volunteering across the income quintiles in 2025 and 2020. However, as shown in [Table 21](#), the data does show that a larger gap had emerged in formal volunteering rates between the lowest and highest quintile in 2025 than in 2020.

Table 21. Formal and informal volunteering rates by weekly gross income quintile, year

Weekly gross income quintiles	Formal volunteering 2025	Formal volunteering 2020	Informal volunteering 2025	Informal volunteering 2020
Lowest quintile	16.6%	20.1%	23.8%	24.6%
Second quintile	21.6%	23.2%	29.5%	28.7%
Third quintile	26.3%	26.0%	29.0%	36.5%
Fourth quintile	23.8%	28.1%	34.0%	33.2%
Highest quintile	25.0%	27.1%	33.1%	39.6%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 10.3: Voluntary work and unpaid work/support, by personal characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over, proportion of persons.

Government support has been the main source of income in last 2 years

For people who had government support as their main source of income in the last 2 years, 19% volunteered formally and 24.6% volunteered informally in 2025.

Characteristics of voluntary work

There have been several updates to this volunteering module in the 2025 GSS. New categories of aged care and disability were added, homelessness has been added and combined with welfare and homelessness, and health/welfare has been revised to health or mental health in 2025.

In 2020, people were most likely to volunteer for an organisation related to sport and physical recreation, a religious, faith-based or spiritual organisation, or within education and training. This trend has changed slightly in 2025. Volunteering was most common in sport and physical recreation, increasingly slightly to 33.3% in 2025 compared to 30.7% in 2020. This was followed by volunteering in a religious, faith-based or spiritual organisation (22.9%) which remained largely unchanged from 2020. However, volunteering within an education and training organisation fell from 18.8% in 2020 to 14.2% in 2025. While volunteering through a community or cultural group increased from 15.7% in 2020 to 17.6% in 2025.

There were also differences between males and females in the organisations they formally volunteered for (see [Table 22](#)). Most notably, males (40%) were more likely to volunteer in sport and recreation than females (27.9%), while females were more likely to volunteer in community or cultural groups (20.1%) than males (15.2%), and through organisations associated with parenting, children and youth (15.4%) compared to males (8.1%).

Table 22. Volunteers, type of organisations volunteered for by gender

Type of organisation(s) volunteered for(b)	Males	Females	Total persons
Arts or heritage	6.3%	5.0%	6.6%
Business, professional or union	4.2%	3.2%	3.5%
Community or cultural groups	15.2%	20.1%	17.6%
Education and Training	11.7%	15.4%	14.2%
Parenting, children and youth	8.1%	11.7%	9.8%
Emergency services or disaster relief	7.2%	4.1%	5.6%
Environment protection or animal welfare	5.4%	5.8%	5.8%
Welfare or homelessness	5.5%	7.5%	6.3%
Aged care	3.8%	3.9%	3.8%
Disability	2.7%	3.8%	3.2%
Health or mental health	2.5%	6.3%	4.3%
Law, justice or political	3.3%	2.3%	3.1%
Religious, faith-based or spiritual	22.7%	23.8%	22.9%
Sport and physical recreation	40.0%	27.9%	33.3%
Other	8.1%	10.6%	9.6%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated). (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Number of volunteering organisations

About two thirds of volunteers (66.2%) volunteered for a single organisation in 2025, a very similar rate to 2020 when 66.4% volunteered for one organisation.

Table 23. Volunteers, number of organisations volunteered for by gender

Number of organisations volunteered for	Males	Females	Total persons
1	67.1%	65.6%	66.2%
2	22.7%	23.5%	23.3%
3 or more	10.2%	10.8%	10.5%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated).

First became involved in formal volunteering

Longevity of volunteering continues to be a feature among Australians ([Table 24](#)), with both males and females more likely to have volunteered for ten years or more (40.3%), with this time-period also being highest in 2020 (43.5%).

Table 24. How long ago first become involved in formal volunteering by gender

How long ago first became involved in unpaid voluntary work	Males	Females	Total persons
Less than one year	11.9%	9.2%	11.5%
One to five years	35.0%	35.2%	34.5%
Six to nine years	13.3%	14.3%	13.5%
Ten years or more	39.6%	41.4%	40.3%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated).

How became involved in formal volunteering

This volunteering module has been updated in the 2025 GSS to include more categories and data for males and females.

As shown in [Table 25](#), the 2025 GSS highlights that knowing someone who participates in volunteering, is a significant factor in becoming involved in volunteering among both males (51.1%) and females (49.7%). This item was also asked in the 2020 GSS, with 43.7% people reporting that they were most likely to volunteer if they knew someone or were asked.

Table 25. Volunteers, how first became involved in formal volunteering by gender

How first became involved in unpaid voluntary work	Males	Females	Total persons
Word of mouth, knew someone involved/was asked	51.1%	49.7%	50.3%
Self involvement in organisation	32.5%	32.9%	32.5%
Traditional media/social media	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%
Searched online	3.3%	2.9%	3.1%
Open days or events	2.2%	1.2%	1.7%
Referral by Volunteer Resource Centre or another agency	1.5%	0.4%	0.9%
Other	8.3%	11.0%	10.1%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated).

Nature of formal volunteering undertaken

Formal volunteering continues to predominantly occur in person/at the organisation/in the field, with 95% of Australians undertaking formal volunteering this way (see [Table 26](#)). However, it should be noted that volunteering over the internet has increased since 2020, with 21.1% undertaking volunteering this way, compared to 17.3% in 2020.

Table 26. Mode of formal volunteering by gender

How unpaid voluntary work was undertaken(b)	Males	Females	Total persons
In person/at the organisation/in the field	94.8%	95.8%	95.0%
Over the internet	21.8%	20.7%	21.1%
Over the phone	12.3%	14.3%	13.5%
Other	2.3%	4.2%	3.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: How unpaid voluntary work was undertaken, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated). (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Reasons for being a volunteer

This volunteering module has been updated in the 2025 GSS to include more categories.

The 2025 GSS shows that the reasons for volunteering among Australians are extensive, with participants in the survey likely choosing more than one item to describe their reason for volunteering. In addition, there were no considerable differences between the reasons males chose to volunteer and the reasons females chose to volunteer (see [Table 27](#)).

Most Australians continue to indicate that their motivations to volunteer are for altruistic reasons, with 65.2% volunteering to help others or community, supporting the results from 2020 which found this category to be the main motivator for Australians (74.2%). Also, 62.8% of Australians reported that they volunteered for personal satisfaction or to do something worthwhile, similar to results from 2020 when 66.2% reported this reason. In addition, Australians are motivated to support a cause (34%), to be active (29.6%), and to use skills or experience 24%.

Table 27. Reasons for volunteering by gender

Reasons for being a volunteer(b)	Males	Females	Total persons
Personal satisfaction or to do something worthwhile	65.0%	60.4%	62.8%
Help others or community	65.5%	66.5%	65.2%
To support a cause	34.0%	34.6%	34.0%
Personal or family involvement	30.9%	32.6%	31.6%
Social contact	30.0%	29.0%	29.1%
Religious beliefs or cultural connection	20.8%	21.5%	20.8%
To reduce own loneliness	5.6%	5.0%	5.9%
To be active	30.7%	27.8%	29.6%
To learn new skills	18.2%	17.7%	18.8%
To gain work experience	7.8%	7.7%	8.5%
To use skills or experience	25.9%	22.5%	24.0%
In response to disaster or emergency	8.1%	4.7%	6.4%
Felt obliged	10.0%	6.8%	8.7%
Other	4.4%	2.8%	3.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated). (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Reasons for not doing formal volunteering

This item represents a new volunteer module in the 2025 GSS. Participants in the survey had the option to choose more than one item in this module, and therefore most likely chose more than one reason for not doing formal volunteering in 2025.

The main reason chosen for not volunteering formally was 'no time', with 47% Australians who do not volunteer selecting this reason. Males and females equally selected this reason, and it was also most common among the age cohorts as shown in [Table 29](#) below. This finding supports the findings in the GSS relating to social characteristics and wellbeing, that showed that Australians continue to feel 'rushed for time' in 2025 (34%), compared to 33% in 2020. The

Productivity Commission's inquiry into philanthropy in 2024 stated that work and family commitments are key reasons preventing people from volunteering, further supporting time limitations as a barrier to volunteering.¹³

Table 28. Reasons for not volunteering by gender

Reasons for not doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation(b)	Males	Females	Total persons
Not interested or no need	40.6%	30.5%	35.5%
Not sure how or never been asked	17.9%	14.8%	16.1%
No transport	2.1%	4.0%	3.2%
Financial reasons	7.8%	8.8%	8.1%
No suitable opportunities	9.4%	10.3%	9.8%
No childcare available	2.2%	4.2%	3.1%
No time	44.5%	50.0%	47.0%
Health reasons	10.0%	13.4%	11.7%
Language reasons	1.3%	2.3%	1.7%
Lack of confidence or practical skills	4.5%	5.7%	5.1%
Bad experience with previous volunteering	2.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Other reason	11.4%	11.2%	11.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 13.3: Reasons for not doing voluntary work, by gender and age, persons aged 15 years and over who have not undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months. (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

¹³ <https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/philanthropy/report/philanthropy.pdf>

Table 29. Reasons for not volunteering by age groups

Reasons for not doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation(b)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Not interested or no need	45.1%	35.8%	27.2%	28.0%	35.1%	39.2%
Not sure how or never been asked	22.1%	19.8%	15.2%	12.3%	14.7%	11.1%
No transport	5.8%	1.8%	2.9%	2.9%	2.0%	3.7%
Financial reasons	7.8%	11.7%	14.7%	7.0%	4.6%	2.4%
No suitable opportunities	11.1%	11.3%	11.9%	7.1%	9.5%	7.8%
No childcare available	#0.2%	6.6%	8.5%	1.5%	0.0%	#0.2%
No time	45.0%	57.7%	57.7%	56.6%	43.8%	24.0%
Health reasons	3.9%	4.3%	7.0%	11.0%	15.6%	27.8%
Language reasons	0.5%	#0.8%	2.7%	1.4%	2.4%	3.2%
Lack of confidence or practical skills	7.5%	6.5%	5.2%	4.8%	3.6%	2.9%
Bad experience with previous volunteering	#1.0%	0.7%	#1.8%	1.1%	1.9%	1.6%
Other reason	11.2%	9.5%	10.0%	12.6%	11.9%	15.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 13.3: Reasons for not doing voluntary work, by age, who have not undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months. (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item. # estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Volunteering expenses

Whether incurred volunteering expenses

Volunteering expenses is a new item in the 2025 GSS. According to the data in [Table 30](#), most volunteers (54.4%) incurred expenses for unpaid voluntary work in 2025, with slightly more males indicating that they had (56.3%) than females (52.8%). This figure is supported by data from the 2022 ANUpoll which showed that 54% of volunteers incurred expenses for unpaid work, suggesting that it continues to be more common for volunteers to incur expenses from volunteering.¹⁴

State volunteering surveys have previously collected information about volunteering expenses and provide some insights about the amount of expenses for unpaid voluntary work incurred by Australians. The most recent figures from New South Wales showed that in 2025, volunteers incurred approximately \$15.45 in expenses per hour,¹⁵ while 2025 figures from Victoria highlighted that volunteers reported an average of \$235 in expenses per month.¹⁶

Table 30. Whether incurred any volunteering expenses by gender

Whether incurred any expenses for unpaid voluntary work	Males	Females	Total persons
Expenses incurred	56.3%	52.8%	54.4%
Expenses not incurred	43.7%	47.3%	45.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated).

Type of expenses incurred

The type of unpaid voluntary work expenses incurred is a new volunteer module in the 2025 GSS. The data shows that the most common form of expenses incurred were for transport, travel or motor vehicles expenses, with 40.8% of volunteers reporting this. While this percentage is considerably higher than all other figures shown in [Table 31](#), it is likely that Australians incurred several other expenses in addition to transport, travel or motor vehicles expenses, given that participants in the survey could select more than one item for this question.

¹⁴ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.volunteering.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/04278-NSW-State-of-Volunteering-REPORT-RGB-ART-10-Dec-2025.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/VV0012-VV-SOVR-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Table 31. Types of volunteering expenses incurred by gender

Types of expenses incurred for unpaid voluntary work(b)	Males	Females	Total persons
Uniforms and clothing	9.6%	5.4%	7.8%
Transport, travel or motor vehicle expenses	42.6%	40.1%	40.8%
Food or drink	22.4%	21.8%	21.8%
Accommodation	6.5%	3.2%	4.6%
Memberships, licenses or mandatory checks	17.2%	14.9%	15.6%
Self-education, training or courses	6.6%	6.5%	6.5%
Tools, equipment, technology or other gear	15.0%	8.9%	11.6%
Administrative expenses	9.7%	7.8%	8.6%
Other volunteering expenses	10.6%	7.9%	9.1%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated). (b) Components may not add to total as people may have chosen more than one item.

Received reimbursement for volunteering expenses

Whether Australians received reimbursement for unpaid voluntary work is a new volunteer module in the 2025 GSS. This item helps to provide further context about whether volunteers have received reimbursement for the type of expenses shown in [Table 31](#). The results show that 49.4% of people incurred expenses but did not receive reimbursement, with only a small difference between the number of males reporting this (50.9%) compared to females (47.3%).

There may be several reasons as to why volunteers did not receive reimbursement for expenses in 2025. Findings from the 2022 ANUpoll showed that 22% of people incurred expenses in 2022, but reimbursement was not available or offered, while 17% had expenses but did not apply for reimbursement even though it was offered.¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>

Table 32. Whether received any reimbursement for volunteering expenses by gender

Received any reimbursement for volunteering expenses	Males	Females	Total persons
Expenses incurred and reimbursement received	5.0%	5.1%	5.0%
Expenses incurred and reimbursement not received	50.9%	47.9%	49.4%
Expenses not incurred	43.7%	47.3%	45.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (May 2025). Table 11.3: Characteristics of voluntary work, by gender, persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, proportion of persons (includes persons whose gender was non-binary or not stated).

About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. The seven state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies work to advance and promote volunteering in their respective jurisdictions and are Foundation Members of Volunteering Australia. Volunteering Australia's mission is to support a thriving volunteering ecosystem in Australia by promoting and advocating for volunteering and providing leadership at a national level.

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