

General Social Survey 2025: at a glance fact sheet

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Written by: Volunteering Australia (Policy, Advocacy & Research Team)



General Social Survey 2025: Fact Sheet

Key takeaways:

- 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.²
- This is equivalent to 42.8% of the Australian population over 15 years of age.
- Volunteering rates remain steady, with more than 5 million people volunteering formally through an organisation in 2025, similar to 2020 GSS 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 and barriers to participation.
- 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.
- 1-20 hours a year was the most common time spent volunteering formally, with 39.3% of people doing so, while many also volunteered 100 or more hours (31.3%), particularly older adults aged 65 years and over (43.7%).

¹ [General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2025 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

² Unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics 2025 General Social Survey data, with double counting removed

Formal Volunteering

- Formal volunteering (volunteering through an organisation) has remained stable since the COVID-19 pandemic, despite cost-of-living barriers, with 22.6% of people (5.007 million) aged 15 years and over volunteering through an organisation.
- Formal volunteering was broadly similar across all the states and territories (Tasmania 27.5%, Western Australia 23.9%, New South Wales 22.3%), but highest in remote areas of Australia (34%) and lowest in major cities (20.9%).
- Males and females volunteered formally at a similar rate, with 22% and 23% respectively.
- Adults in the middle age brackets (35-44 years and 45-54 years) were most likely to volunteer in 2025, with 27.1% and 28% respectively.
- Most people volunteered for at least one organisation (66.2%), volunteered in person (95%), and through organisations in sport and recreation (33.3%), religious, faith-based or spiritual (22.9%), and community and cultural groups (17.6%).
- Most people had been formally volunteering for ten or more years (40.3%).
- 11.5% of formal volunteers started volunteering for the first time in 2025.
- Australians continue to be motivated to volunteer for altruistic reasons to help others or their community (65.2%).
- 2025 saw a significant increase in formal volunteering hours, with 618 million hours spent volunteering, up significantly from 490 million hours in 2020.
- 1-20 hours a year was the most common time spent volunteering formally, with 39.3% of people doing so, while many also volunteered 100 or more hours (31.3%), particularly older adults aged 65 years and over (43.7%).

Informal volunteering in 2025

- Informal volunteering remained stable since COVID-19, with 29.5% (or 6.553 million) people aged 15 and over volunteering informally.
- In total, 42.8% (or about 9.5 million people) engaged in either formal and informal volunteering or both in 2025.

Socio-demographic characteristics of volunteering in 2025

- Australians were most likely to volunteer formally if they were employed full-time or part-time (23.4% and 25%), currently studying (24.3%), or had a bachelor degree or above (30%).
- 24.1% of people born in Australia and 20.8% of other migrants volunteered formally.
- 32.7% who spoke a language other than English volunteered informally.

Volunteering expenses in 2025

- Most volunteers (54.4%) incurred volunteering expenses in 2025, with slightly more males (56.3%) than females (52.8%).
- Volunteering expenses were common for transport, travel, or motor vehicle use (40.8%), while 21.8% incurred expenses for food and drink, and 15.6% for membership, licenses or screening checks.
- A total of 49.4% of people did not receive reimbursement for volunteering expenses.

The long-term volunteering trend

- The rate of formal volunteering declined from a peak of 36.2% in 2010 to 28.8% in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, falling further to 25% during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 data (25%) and 2025 data (22.6%) demonstrate stability in formal numbers over the intervening years.
- Informal volunteering rates have tended to be higher than formal volunteering, since the ABS first measured this in the 2019 GSS, and have been less impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In 2019 when the ABS first measured informal volunteering in the GSS, 6.676 million or 33.4% of people volunteered informally, before falling slightly in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic to 32.1%, and stabilising in 2025 to 29.5%.

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