

Volunteering in Australia Research Brief

OVERVIEW

About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia (VA) is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. We have a vision of a strong, connected, and resilient Australian community through volunteering. Our purpose is to lead, strengthen, and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

Project Background

Volunteering Australia has been funded by the Australian Government to lead the development of a National Strategy for Volunteering. The project will deliver a National Strategy owned by the volunteering ecosystem that will provide a blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia. The project will deliver two outputs: Volunteering in Australia (VinA) research and a National Strategy for Volunteering.

RESEARCH BRIEF

Research Aims

The aim of the Volunteering in Australia research is to build a robust evidence-base to inform the National Strategy for Volunteering. This will require research into the state of contemporary volunteering and analysis of trends in volunteering.

Process

The Volunteering in Australia research is a similar exercise to existing State of Volunteering research, providing a baseline of information on volunteering and how it is changing over time. Volunteering Australia is looking for a research partner to undertake the Volunteering in Australia research. It is envisaged the research will be a combination of analysis of existing data and new data collection and could provide a framework for an annual research report.

Given the research questions, it is anticipated that the research will be primarily quantitative, but we are keen to explore whether there is complementary qualitative research that is desirable (for example, exploring volunteer participation from the perspective of a particular group).

The Volunteering in Australia research questions have been informed by the National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group (meeting held 16 December 2021) and will be refined with selected research partner(s). The questions are grouped below into four modules.

Ideally, a single research partner would deliver all the modules, but the research could be delivered by several partners.

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Definition of Volunteering

The National Strategy for Volunteering project will be guided by the current definition of volunteering: 'volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.' The definition allows the project to consider the breadth and diversity of volunteering activity in our communities and how it is evolving over time. The definition includes formal volunteering, which takes place within organisations, informal volunteering, which takes place outside the context of an organisation, and employee volunteering, which is employee time donated by an entity.

Research Questions

Module A: The Volunteer Perspective

- 1. Volunteer participation:** What are the rates and patterns of volunteering behaviour (formal and informal)? How does participation vary according to age; gender/sex; geography; cultural background; family structure; income and employment status; migration background; sector and type of volunteering (including whether volunteering is online)? Who do volunteers engage with during their volunteering (e.g., children, older people, particular cultural groups)? Do people volunteer locally, nationally, or internationally? Where and how would volunteers/non-volunteers like to volunteer?
- 2. Volunteer barriers:** What stops people from volunteering? How do these barriers vary by age; gender/sex; geography; cultural background; family structure; income and employment status; migration background; sector and type of volunteering? What are the costs to the individual volunteer of volunteering (out of pocket expenses minus reimbursement)?
- 3. Volunteer motivations:** Why do people volunteer? How do motivations vary by age; gender/sex; geography; cultural background; family structure; income and employment status; migration background; sector and type of volunteering? What are factors that motivate individuals to move from spontaneous/informal to planned/formal volunteering?
- 4. Volunteer satisfaction:** How satisfied are people with their volunteering experience? How does the volunteer experience vary by age; gender/sex; geography; cultural background; family structure; income and employment status; migration background; sector and type of volunteering? What are the determinants of volunteer satisfaction?
- 5. Volunteering trends and innovations:** How is the nature of volunteering participation changing over time? What are the trends in volunteering participation (formal and informal)? How are motivations and barriers changing over time? How are satisfaction levels changing over time? Are volunteers engaging and doing things differently in contemporary Australia?

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Module B: The Organisational Perspective

- 6. Organisational perspectives and challenges:** How are organisations recruiting and engaging volunteers? What are the challenges and barriers to engaging volunteers? How do these differ by organisational size, sector, geography, and degree of formality of the organisation? Where are volunteers needed? What are the costs associated with engaging volunteers?
- 7. Organisational trends and innovations:** How have volunteer engagement and management practices changed over time? What are organisations doing differently? What organisational practices are effective in attracting and retaining volunteers? How do organisations think volunteer involvement might need to change in the future? What are the drivers of these changes?

Module C: Supply and Demand Analysis

- 8. Supply and demand:** To what extent is there an alignment between the types of roles volunteers want to undertake, the sectors/areas they are interested in volunteering in, and the needs of volunteer involving organisations? How does this vary geographically (for example between metropolitan and regional/remote/rural Australia)? How might this change in the future? Where are we likely to experience a short fall in volunteers?

Module D: The Value of Volunteering

Recent State of Volunteering reports at the State/Territory level have included putting a monetary value on volunteering through a cost-benefit analysis.

- 9. The value of volunteering:** What is the value (social, economic and/or cultural) of volunteering in Australia? What value does volunteering contribute to volunteers, to volunteer involving organisations, and to broader society? How best should we measure this going forward?

Note: there is also interest in developing an Australian Volunteering Index, which would draw on the data and analysis generated in the Volunteering in Australia research and then be used to track publicly how volunteering is faring over time. Currently, this is being considered a separate project that might lead on from the 2022 Volunteering in Australia research report.

Outputs

- Early Insights report (to be delivered in May 2022)
- Final report, including first and final drafts for each (with final draft delivered July 2022)
- Presentation at launch event
- All raw data (from new data collection)

Dissemination of the research will primarily be the responsibility of Volunteering Australia, but research partners should identify if they are able to undertake dissemination.

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Methods

Volunteering Australia is interested in receiving proposals from researchers about the methods they recommend for meeting the desired aims of the project. It is envisaged the agreed approach could be something that can be replicated in future years.

Volunteering Australia currently uses official ABS data extensively in its policy and advocacy work. Researchers should be mindful of this and demonstrate how any new data collection could complement existing official data.

TIMELINE

20 Dec 2021	Expression of Interest process opens for research partners
10 Jan 2022	Deadline for Expressions of Interest
w/b 24 January	Meetings with shortlisted research partners
w/b 7 th February	Meeting of National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group
w/b 14 th February	Research partner selected and briefed
May 2022	Early Insights report released in National Volunteer Week
July 2022	Final Volunteering in Australia Report released
Aug 2022	Project finalised

VALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Capability
 - Ability to achieve proposed outcome
 - Demonstrated experience undertaking similar research/projects
2. Key Personnel
 - Ability to work collaboratively and flexibly
 - Willingness to operate in good faith and in an open and transparent manner, which may include increased communication and/or reporting compared to conventional research projects
3. Capacity
 - Ability to meet delivery timeframe
 - Willingness and internal capacity to actively manage project
4. Value for Money
 - Ability to meet overall objective of project and deliver outcomes sought
 - Cost
 - Non-cost factors such as fitness for purpose, quality, delivery, service, and support

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RESPONSE DETAILS

To respond to this brief please provide a short proposal (2-4 pages) which includes:

- A summary of your proposed approach
- A quote
- Short CVs of the researcher/s who will be involved in the project
- Two examples of relevant work

Please send responses to:

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National Strategy Director
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0432 600 812

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

State of Volunteering in Australia report 2016

The last national State of Volunteering report was produced in 2016. This report was undertaken by Volunteering Australia in collaboration with PwC and was based on surveys administered to volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, and companies with employee volunteering programs.

The report investigated four headline questions:

1. Are the current volunteer engagement and management practices appropriate for the future?
2. Is there alignment between the types of roles volunteers want to undertake, the sectors they are interested in volunteering in, and the needs of volunteer involving organisations?
3. What is the appropriate framework to support informal volunteering?
4. What are the necessary steps that need to be taken to future proof volunteering?

The 2016 report included seven key findings and contained a section on 'Future-proofing the volunteering sector,' which detailed possible steps for addressing the key findings.

In addition to surveys the report also undertook a brief literature review and used datasets obtained from GoVolunteer. It should be noted the methodology used for the State of Volunteering in Australia report 2016 was different to the methodology that has been employed by the state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies over time to produce state-based State of Volunteering reports.

The State of Volunteering in Australia report 2016 can be accessed [here](#).

State of Volunteering in Australia report 2012

In 2012 Volunteering Australia produced a report reflecting on ten years since the International Year of Volunteers. The report looked at demographics and trends in volunteering, with data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Volunteering Australia's National Survey of Volunteering Issues (now defunct), and the findings of other consultation and research mechanisms. This report did not undertake new data collection on volunteering demographics or trends.

The report also included progress indicators against the Strategic Objectives in the National Agenda on Volunteering and identified options for further progress against these objectives. The 2012 reporting included a 'Looking Forward' section that identified the key strategic drivers of volunteering in the immediate future, the levers required to influence change, and the fundamental questions requiring resolution.

The State of Volunteering in Australia report 2012 can be accessed [here](#).

State and Territory Volunteering Peak Body Research

Over the years most of the state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies have commissioned their own State of Volunteering reports. With the exception of VolunteeringACT's 2013 report, the state-based reports have been produced in collaboration with the Institute of Project Management (IPM) using a common methodology, which has evolved over time.

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The following reports have been produced using IPM's State of Volunteering methodology:

- [State of Volunteering in Tasmania report \(2014\)](#)
- [The Economic, Social, and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia \(2015\)](#)
- [State of Volunteering in Tasmania report \(2019\)](#)
- [New South Wales State of Volunteering report \(2020\)](#)
- [State of Volunteering in Victoria report \(2020\)](#)
- [State of Volunteering in Queensland report \(2021\)](#)

Giving Australia Research

In 2016 the Giving Australia research was released, which provided critical information about giving and volunteering behaviours, attitudes, and trends in Australia. The 2016 report followed a 2005 iteration and aimed to provide a fresh picture of the giving and volunteering landscape to support evidence-based decisions and stimulate conversation about all kinds of giving.

The Giving Australia research was an initiative of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership and was comprised of five separate reports: individual volunteering; individual giving; philanthropy; nonprofit organisations; and business giving and volunteering.

More information on Giving Australia, including the five reports can be accessed [here](#).