

Key Statistics about Volunteering in Australia: The General Social Survey

A reliable source of data on volunteers and their characteristics is the Australian Bureau of Statistics' General Social Survey (GSS). The most recent published data is from the 2019 survey and can be found [here](#).

Rates of formal volunteering in 2019¹

- Almost one third (29.5%) of people aged 15 years and over volunteered through an organisation in 2019.
- Formal volunteering rates are similar across the country: NSW 28.9%; Victoria 32.1%; Queensland 26.5%; South Australia 27.1%; West Australia 27.1%; Tasmania 34.2% NT 28.7%; ACT 29.8%.
- Across Australia, this is nearly 6 million (5.897 million) people volunteering for an organisation in 2019.

A decline in the formal volunteering rate and hours, over time

- The rate of volunteering through an organisation has declined: for people aged 18 years and over, the rate has declined from 36.2% in 2010 to 28.8% in 2019.
- The decline is most evident for women, whose rate decreased from 38.1% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2019.
- Volunteers contributed 596.2 million hours to the community in 2019. This is a 20% decrease in the total number of volunteering hours from 2014 (743.3 million hours).

Characteristics of formal volunteering

- Men and women now volunteer at similar rates, 30.7% and 28.5 % respectively (aged 15 years and over).
- Women are more likely to have volunteered for more than 10 years (43.0% of female volunteers compared to 32.9% of males).
- People aged 40-54 years are more likely to volunteer (36.2%) than other age groups. Volunteering rates for other age groups are: 15-24 (28.8%), 25-29 (25.7%), 55-69 (29%) and 70 years or more (24.5%).
- The most common types of organisations for which people volunteered were those relating to sport and physical recreation (39.1% of volunteers), religious groups (23.3%) and education and training (21.8%).
- 61% of people volunteered for one organisation only, 24% for two and 15% for three or more.
- During 2019, nearly all formal volunteering (98.3%) involved volunteering in person, in the office or the field, but 8.5% of people said they volunteered over the internet and 9.5% over the phone.

New data on informal volunteering²

- The 2019 GSS was the first time that ABS have collected data on informal volunteering.
- Over 6.5 million (6.676 million) people aged 15 years and over provided informal volunteering support in their community in the four weeks prior to the survey. This is 33.4% of the population.
- Informal volunteering rates tend to be higher than formal volunteering.
- Informal volunteering rates by State and Territory: NSW 29.1%; Victoria 36.0%; Queensland 31.9%; South Australia 36.3%; West Australia 35.6%; Tasmania 36.3%; NT 42.3%; ACT 40.9%.

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¹ 'Formal volunteering' is unpaid voluntary work through an organisation

² 'Informal volunteering' is the provision of unpaid work/support to non-family members outside of the household.