

Key Volunteering Statistics

January 2021

Disclaimer

These statistics have been compiled primarily from external sources. While every effort has been made to provide accurate and up to date data, Volunteering Australia does not accept any liability for the accuracy, reliability or completeness of data in this summary. Users are encouraged to visit the source report to assist in the understanding of the data and context of information provided.

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Introduction

This document provides key statistics about volunteering in Australia.

Multiple sources of data on volunteering exist and this document draws on relevant information from across this data landscape. A key source of data utilised is official statistics produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), specifically the General Social Survey which includes a series of questions about volunteering. The most recent data available is the 2019 General Social Surveyⁱ.

This document provides largely a national picture, with some State and Territory breakdowns being provided where the data is available. Increasingly, States and Territories are producing their own 'State of Volunteering' surveys and reports which are a rich source of information within each jurisdiction. These can be found via the State and Territory peak volunteering bodiesⁱⁱ.

Australia's definition of volunteering is "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."ⁱⁱⁱ This document deploys this definition and hence includes information on formal and informal volunteering. The ABS defines 'formal volunteering' as unpaid voluntary work through an organisation and 'informal volunteering' as the provision of unpaid work/support to non-family members outside of the household.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on volunteering. Research commissioned by Volunteering Australia from the Australian National University estimated that two thirds of volunteers (65.9%) stopped volunteering between February and April 2020. Volunteering Australia also undertook a stakeholder survey in April 2020, which revealed 80% of organisations had stood down volunteers because of COVID-19 restrictions. A further survey was issued in December 2020 and the findings will be available in February 2021. The ABS also included a question on volunteering in the December iteration of the COVID19 Household Impacts Survey, and this data will be released late February 2021.

For further information on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering, see the following factsheets:

Volunteering and the early impact of COVID-19 (May 2020)

Volunteering and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 (forthcoming March 2021)

Note: Throughout this document, estimates marked with a '#' have a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Volunteering numbers and rates

Formal volunteering

Across Australia, it is estimated that nearly 6 million (5.897 million) people volunteer through an organisation annually. This is almost one third (29.5%) of people aged 15 years and over.

Formal volunteering rates (volunteering through an organisation) are similar across the country.

Formal volunteering rates by State/Territory (ABS, 2019)

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Formal volunteering rate</i>
<i>New South Wales</i>	28.9%
<i>Victoria</i>	32.1%
<i>Queensland</i>	26.5%
<i>South Australia</i>	27.1%
<i>West Australia</i>	27.1%
<i>Tasmania</i>	34.2%
<i>Northern Territory</i>	28.7%
<i>Australian Capital Territory</i>	29.8%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 15

The rate of volunteering through an organisation has declined over time: 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).

Alternative sources provide different estimates for volunteering and of trends over time.

For example, according to the 2016 Census^{iv}, 3.6 million people of 19% of the population aged 15 years and over were engaged in voluntary work through an organisation or group. This represents a 1.2% increase from the 2011 Census results, where 17.8% of people responded they were engaged in voluntary work.

The 2016 Giving Australia Survey^v estimated that 8.7 million people volunteered their time to charities and Non-Profit Organisations in 2016, which is 43.7% of the population. This is an increase from the 2005 Giving Australia survey which estimated 41% of the population volunteered.

Key characteristics of formal volunteering

- Based on GSS 2019 data, 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%) involves 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.

Further detail on these characteristics is provided in sections below.

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 2019 GSS survey. This is 33.4% of the population.

Informal volunteering rates tend to be higher than formal volunteering. This pattern is consistent across the country.

Informal volunteering rates by State/Territory (ABS, 2019)

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Formal volunteering rate</i>
<i>New South Wales</i>	29.1%
<i>Victoria</i>	36.0%
<i>Queensland</i>	31.9%
<i>South Australia</i>	36.3%
<i>West Australia</i>	35.6%
<i>Tasmania</i>	36.3%
<i>Northern Territory</i>	42.3%
<i>Australian Capital Territory</i>	40.9%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 15

Most people (87.2%) informally volunteered for between 1 and 20 hours. However, over one in four (25.2%) of people aged 55-69 informally volunteered for 21 hours or more.

The most common types of informal volunteering were 'Domestic work, home maintenance or gardening' (41.9%), 'Providing transport or running errands' (42.4%) and 'Providing emotional support' (50.5%).

Geography

The rate of formal volunteering is higher in regional areas than capital cities.

Formal volunteering rates and numbers by capital city or region (ABS, 2014)

<i>Residence</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Rate in capital cities</i>	30%
<i>Number in capital cities</i>	3.74 million
<i>Rate in regional areas</i>	34%
<i>Number in regional areas</i>	2.06 million

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2014 Table 22

Note: analysis of data on regional/capital cities is not available for the 2019 GSS Survey.

Demographics

Gender

Volunteering rates for males and females are similar.

Formal and informal volunteering rates by gender (ABS, 2019)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Rate of formal volunteering</i>	<i>Rate of informal volunteering</i>
<i>Women</i>	30.7%	33.9%
<i>Men</i>	28.5%	32.6%
<i>Total persons</i>	29.5%	33.4%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 3

However, the type of volunteering, hours of volunteering and length of time someone has volunteered vary by gender. For further information, see below and the *Volunteering Australia - Gender and Volunteering* Factsheet (forthcoming March 2021).

Disability

In 2019, 25.7% of people with disability volunteered for an organisation, compared to 31.1% of people with no disability. People with disability make up nearly one in four (24%) of all people volunteering for an organisation.

In relation to informal volunteering, 31.9% of people with disability undertook informal volunteering in the four weeks prior to the survey, compared to 33.8% of people with no disability. People with disability make up over one in four (27%) of all people volunteering informally.

Formal and informal volunteering by health status (ABS, 2019)

	Formal volunteering		Informal volunteering	
	Number	% of volunteers	Number	% of volunteers
People with a mental health condition	580,400	10%	931,000	14%
People with a long-term health condition	2,423,000	41%	3,009,000	45%
People with a disability	1,472,600	24%	1,833,000	27%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 4

Cultural and linguistic diversity

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are more likely to volunteer informally in their community rather than formally through an organisation.

31% of people whose main language is English volunteer formally (through an organisation), compared to 18.9% of people whose main language is another language. In relation to informal volunteering, 34.5% of people whose main language is English volunteer informally, compared to 27.3% of people whose main language is another language.

Formal and informal volunteering by cultural and linguistic diversity (ABS, 2019)

Cultural and linguistic diversity	Formal volunteering rate	Informal volunteering rate
Born in Australia	30.9	33.5
Total migrants	26.5	32.8
Born in another country – recent arrivals	20.3	31.8#
Born in another country – other	28.8	34.1
Main language spoken at home		
English	31.3	34.5
Other language	18.9	27.3

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Tables 5 and 7

Note: Throughout this document, estimates marked with a '#' have a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

Volunteering and Settlement in Australia (2019)

% VIOs who recruited volunteers identifying as from migrant or refugee backgrounds in 2018-19	%
Migrant and refugee	65%
Migrant (only)	23%
Refugee (only)	5%
None	5%
Unsure	2%

Source: Volunteer Australia and Settlement Council of Australia, May 2019

A report^{vi} on giving and volunteering in culturally and linguistically diverse and First Nations communities in Australia by CIRCA found that both communities are deeply involved in volunteering and sharing for cultural maintenance and community wellbeing:

‘CALD participants described volunteering as an inseparable element of their culture that needed to be passed onto the next generation and shared with other Australian communities.’

Similarly, for First Nations participants *‘sharing, giving and helping others are integral to Indigenous culture and play a key role in maintaining culture and traditions.’*

Age

People volunteer across the lifecycle. Based on 2019 GSS data, people aged 40-54 were more likely to have participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation (36.2%) than those aged 70 years or more (24.5%). People aged 25-39 has the highest rate of informal volunteering (38.8%), closely followed by the 15-24 and 40-54 age cohorts.

Older people are more likely to volunteer in welfare, community and health settings. The proportion of volunteers over 65 years of age is 17% (16.6%). However, 30% of those who did voluntary work for welfare or community organisations are aged 65 years and over, 19% for health organisations and 27% for both types of organisations.^{vii}

Formal and informal volunteering rates by age (ABS, 2019)

Age	Formal volunteering rate	Informal volunteering rate
15-24 years	28.8	36.5
25-39 years	25.7	38.8
40-54 years	36.2	34.0
55-69 years	29.0	27.3
70 years and over	24.5	26.9

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 7

The Giving Australia 2016 Report found that younger Australians were more likely to have volunteered in the previous 12 months, with nearly half (47%) of 18-24-year old’s having volunteered, compared to 28% of those aged 55 and over.

Formal volunteering numbers and proportions by age (Giving Australia 2016)

Age	Number of volunteers 000s	% all volunteers
15-17 years	347.4	6%
18-24 years	564.5	10%
25-34 years	931.0	16%
35-44 years	1,244.1	21%
45-54 years	966.2	17%
55-64 years	773.9	13%
65-74 years	656.8	11%
75 years and older	314.4	5%
Total	5.8 m	100%

Source: Giving Australia, 2016

Labour force status

Over a third (34.4%) of part-time employees' volunteer. They are the most likely segment of the labour force to volunteer, followed by people working fulltime (30.7%).

Formal and informal volunteering by labour force participation (ABS, 2019)

Labour force participation	Formal volunteering rate	Informal volunteering rate
<i>Employed Full-time</i>	30.7	37.5
<i>Employed Part-time</i>	34.4	36.6
<i>Unemployed</i>	23.4#	40.1#
<i>Not in the labour force</i>	25.4	24.4

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 7

Research data also demonstrates that volunteering can support a pathway to paid employment. For example, in a 2018 SEEK survey, 85% of recruiters thought volunteering was just as credible as paid work if it was relevant to the role or industry.

Relationship between volunteering and employment (SEEK, 2018)

Pathway to employment	Australia
<i>% employers who believe volunteering is a credible way to gain real world experience</i>	95%
<i>% recruiters who believe that volunteering is just as credible as paid work if it is relevant to the role or industry</i>	85%
<i>% employers who believe volunteering gives an advantage at job interviews</i>	92%

Source: SEEK, Get ahead in volunteering in 2018^{viii}

Household type

Households that comprise couples with children are the most likely (37.3%) to volunteer formally. Along with couples without children (34.5%), this group also has high levels (34.1%) of informal volunteering.

Formal and informal volunteering by household type (ABS, 2019)

Household type	Formal volunteering rate	Informal volunteering rate
<i>Couples with children</i>	37.3	34.1
<i>One parent family with dependent children</i>	23.0	25.6#
<i>Couple only</i>	27.2	34.5
<i>Other one family households</i>	22.2	28.6
<i>Lone person</i>	23.4	32.5
<i>Other households</i>	23.5#	30.3#

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 7

Level of education

Volunteering is associated with higher levels of post-secondary education. 33.4% of formal volunteers in Australia had achieved a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. However, nearly a third (31.5%) of volunteers have a level of education at Advanced Diploma/Diploma and a quarter (24.6%) have no post-school qualifications.

Formal and informal volunteering by level of education (ABS, 2019)

Highest level of education achieved	Rate of formal volunteering	Rate of informal volunteering
<i>Bachelor's degree or above</i>	33.4	37.5
<i>Advanced diploma / diploma</i>	31.5	35.5
<i>No post-secondary education</i>	24.6	27.6

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 7

Income

People volunteer across the income distribution. For example, the lowest quintile (those in the bottom 20%) have a formal volunteering rate of 26.1%; those in the highest quintile have a formal volunteering rate of 30.0.

Formal and informal volunteering by income (ABS, 2019)

Main source of household income	Rate of formal volunteering	Rate of informal volunteering
<i>Employee income</i>	30.5	35.7
<i>Unincorporated business income</i>	31.4#	39.2
<i>Government pensions and allowances</i>	20.5	24.7
<i>Other income</i>	34.5	32.4

Gross household income	Rate of formal volunteering	Rate of informal volunteering
<i>Lowest quintile</i>	26.1	28.3
<i>Second quintile</i>	23.0	30.0
<i>Third quintile</i>	33.4	34.5
<i>Fourth quintile</i>	32.8	36.8
<i>Highest quintile</i>	30.0	38.6

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 7

Method of travel

In the 2016 Census, adult volunteers' methods of travel in their organisational capacity were as follows:

- Public Transport – 11%
- Personal Vehicle – 65%
- Active Transport – 5%
- Worked at home – 18%^{ix}

Level of satisfaction with volunteering

In 2011, the National Survey of Volunteering Issues^x found that the level of satisfaction among volunteers was:

- Very satisfied – 47%
- Satisfied – 45%
- Unsatisfied – 5%
- Very unsatisfied – 3%
- Not sure – 1%.

In the 2016 State of Volunteering report^{xi}, 93% of survey participants responded that they had seen positive changes because of their volunteering efforts.

Nature of organisations and activities

Type of organisation

In 2019, overall people were most likely to volunteer for a sport and physical recreation organisation (39.1%), followed by religious organisations (23.3%) and education and training (21.8%).

Men are more likely than women to volunteer for sport and physical recreation – 47.5% and 30.5 % respectively. Women are more likely to volunteer than men in ‘parenting, children and youth’ and ‘health and welfare’ organisations.

Formal volunteering rate by type of organisation (ABS, 2019)

Type of organisation	Persons	Females	Males
Arts/Heritage	5.1	6.4	4.7
Business/Professional/Union	2.5	2.1#	3.3#
Community/Ethnic groups	11.6	13.1	9.2
Education and Training	21.8	21.2	21.7
Parenting, children and youth	12.3	16.4	9.3
Emergency services	4.7	3.6	7.2
Environmental/Animal welfare	6.0	4.8	5.8
International Aid/Development	1.8	2.3#	1.1#
Health/Welfare	11.6	15.6	7.1
Law/Justice/Political	1.0	1.2	1.3
Religious	23.3	21.8	24.3
Sport and physical recreation	39.1	30.5	47.5
Other	8.1	7.9	7.4

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

(Totals add up to more than 100% as people volunteer for more than one type of organisation.)

Nature of volunteering activity

Most reported volunteering is undertaken in fundraising / sales roles followed by management / operations and coaching / refereeing.

Type of volunteering activity (ABS, 2014)

Type of voluntary activity spent most time on in last 12 months	Australia
Fundraising/sales	23%
Management/committee work/coordination	12%
Coaching/refereeing/judging	14%
Food preparation/serving	14%
Teaching/instruction/providing information	15%
Administration/recruitment/information management	12%
Befriending/supportive listening/counselling/mentoring	10%
Repairing/maintenance/gardening	9%
Other	21%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2014 Table 23

Number of volunteering organisations

Almost two thirds of volunteers (61%) work for a single organisation while 14.7% of people volunteer for three or more organisations.

Number of organisations volunteered for in last 12 months (ABS, 2019)

Number of organisations	% of volunteers
One	61.3%
Two	24.5%
Three or more	14.7%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

Reasons for volunteering

People reported multiple motivations for volunteering with the most often cited being to help others, for personal satisfaction and to do something worthwhile. One in five people (20.8%) of people reported undertaking volunteering to learn new skills or gain work experience.

Reasons for being a volunteer (ABS, 2019)

Reasons	Persons	Females	Males
Personal satisfaction/To do something worthwhile	66.9	67.9	65.4
Help others/Community	73.0	77.2	69.4
Personal/Family Involvement	41.2	42.1	39.7
Social contact	35.7	38.9	32.0#
To be active	32.9	34.4	31.4
Use skills/Experience	38.4	38.4	38.1
To learn new skills/Gain work experience	20.8	21.2	18.7
Religious beliefs	17.3	16.7	16.4
Just happened	10.4	10.8	11.3
Felt obliged	9.2	7.2	11.4
Other	2.7	2.1	3.2#

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

The main reason people first became involved in volunteering is that they knew someone who was involved or that they were asked.

How first being involved in voluntary work (ABS, 2019)

How first became involved	Proportion of persons
Knew someone involved/was asked	17%
Self-involvement in organisation	14%
Saw advertisement/found out about it myself	9%
Other	10%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

Family history may be a predictor of future participation, with 69% of all volunteers having parents who also undertook voluntary work. In addition, most volunteers reported as being personally involved in a volunteering organisation or endeavour as a child. (The most recent data is from the 2014 GSS.)

Family history of volunteering (ABS, 2014)

Family history	Australia
Volunteers' parents have volunteered	70%
Volunteers' parents have not volunteered	21%

Childhood activities (ABS, 2014)

Activities participated in as a child	Australia
Organised team sport	83%
Youth group	59%
Arts/culture related activities	50%
Did some kind of volunteer work	44%
Raised money door-to-door or in public place for a cause or organisation	42%
Active in student government	14%
Active in a religious organisation	34%

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2014 Table 23

Nature of volunteering

During 2019, nearly all formal volunteers (98.3%) stated their work 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.

How voluntary work was undertaken (ABS, 2019)

<i>How voluntary work was undertaken</i>	<i>Proportion of persons</i>
<i>In person/at the organisation/in the field</i>	98.3
<i>Over the internet</i>	8.5
<i>Over the phone</i>	9.5
<i>Other</i>	2.4

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

Duration of volunteering

A large proportion of people (38.1%) have volunteered for more than 10 years. Women are more likely (43.0%) than men (38.1%) to have volunteered for ten years or more.

How long ago a volunteer (proportions, ABS, 2019)

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
<i>Less than one year</i>	15.4	11.0	19.3
<i>One to five years</i>	35.7	35.9	34.8
<i>Six to nine years</i>	10.7	10.8	10.5
<i>Ten years or more</i>	38.1	43.0	32.9

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 8

Volunteering hours

Over one in four volunteers (28.3%) undertake voluntary work for an organisation for 100 hours or more each year.

Annual hours by sex (proportions, ABS, 2019)

<i>Hours</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
<i>1-20 hours</i>	41.6	40.9	42.2
<i>21-99 hours</i>	30.0	30.8	29.0
<i>100 hours or more</i>	28.3	29.1	27.0

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 9

Using the 2014 GSS data (the latest data available on this breakdown), there was a wide variation in the number of hours of work done by volunteers across different sectors. Over 50% of volunteers contributed

more than 50 hours a year. Nearly one in five (18.7%) volunteers undertake voluntary work for over 200 hours in the year.

Volunteers in emergency services volunteer more hours than in other sectors. Two thirds (67.2%) of emergency service volunteers contribute 50 hours or more.

Volunteering involvements, type by annual hours (proportions, ABS, 2014)

Type(s) of organisation(s) did unpaid voluntary work for in last 12 months	1 to 10 hours	11 to 49 hours	50 hours or more	100 to 199 hours	200 hours or more	Total involvements	Total hours
Sport and physical recreation	21.4	37.8	19.4	13.0	8.9	100.0	100.0
Welfare/Community	27.0	31.7	15.5	12.0	13.8	100.0	100.0
Religious	13.6	35.2	15.4	19.7	16.0	100.0	100.0
Education and training	33.8	42.4	11.5	6.9	5.1	100.0	100.0
Health	44.8	30.5	7.8	9.9	9.9	100.0	100.0
Parenting, children and youth	29.2	36.7	13.7	11.4	6.5	100.0	100.0
Arts/Heritage	27.3	37.5	14.7	13.7	7.6	100.0	100.0
Business/Professional/Union	16.5	27.4	32.0	13.8	12.2	100.0	100.0
Emergency Services	6.8	23.8	15.9	27.0	24.3	100.0	100.0
Environment/animal welfare	24.7	38.0	9.1	14.2	13.8	100.0	100.0
Other	21.5	46.0	8.3	13.2	11.8	100.0	100.0
Total volunteering involvements	25.4	36.6	14.7	12.5	10.8	100.0	100.0
All volunteers (%)	17.5	31.5	16.9	15.3	18.7	100.0	100.0

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2023 Table 24

Volunteering involvements, type by annual hours (estimates, ABS, 2014)

Type(s) of organisation(s) did unpaid voluntary work for in last 12 months	1 to 10 hours	11 to 49 hours	50 hours or more	100 to 199 hours	200 hours or more	Total involvements	Total hours millions
Sport and physical recreation	446.8	788.1	405.1	272.3	184.9	2,087.7	157.5
Welfare/Community	367.2	431.4	210.8	163.6	187.3	1,360.2	141.1
Religious	156.4	403.3	176.3	226.3	183.7	1,146.1	147.6
Education and training	504.1	633.3	172.3	102.3	76.3#	1,492.0	71.2
Health	284.8	194.3	49.9#	63.3#	63.1#	636.4	43.4
Parenting, children and youth	98.4	123.6	46.2#	38.5#	21.8#	337.1	17.9
Arts/Heritage	65.3#	89.7	35.1#	32.9#	18.1#	239.3	18.5
Business/Professional/Union	22.9#	38.2#	44.6#	19.3#	17.0#	139.3	15.9#
Emergency Services	15.4#	54.1	36.1#	61.3#	55.1#	227.2	42.5
Environment/animal welfare	61.1#	94.2	22.6#	35.2	34.1#	247.8	29.4
Other	146.0	312.0	56.2	89.7	80.3	678.3	58.3
Total volunteering involvements	2,180.0	3,142.8	1,266.6	1,075.0	928.0	8,595.7	743.3#
All volunteers	1,015.1	1,824.9	979.7	886.5	1,082.8	5,790.6	743.3#

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2014 Table 24

Volunteer Involving Organisations and recruitment

On-line recruitment is particularly strong in the community services sector.

On-line volunteer recruitment (Viktor, 2019)

Sector	Number of advertisements	%	Ratio of applications to positions (x:1)
Community service	4,604	34%	14
Other	2,657	19%	14
Seniors	2,259	17%	9
Disability Services	999	7%	9
Education	794	6%	15
Young people	743	5%	16
Health	633	5%	32
Environment and conservation	506	4%	18
Arts & culture	262	2%	23
Emergency response	151	1%	11
Total	13,608	100%	210,209
	advertisements		applications

Source: Viktor data set, on-line recruitment, 2019

Volunteer training

Most volunteer training happens on the job or is classroom based.

How volunteer training takes place (Johnson T, 2020)

Type of training	% who offer
On the job	71%
Classroom based	63%
Paper based (worksheets, reading)	44%
Peer mentoring	38%
Email	25%
Online courses	20%
Recorded videos (You Tube etc.)	19%
Webinars or video chats	8%
Online platform	4%
Social media (Facebook group etc.)	3%
Average hours volunteer induction and orientation	14 hours

Source: Volunteer Management Progress Report, Johnson T, 2020 (international data)^{xii}

Corporate volunteering

Corporate or employee volunteering is defined as allowing staff to engage in unpaid work for a community organisation during work hours for a wider societal benefit, and for the possible benefit of the volunteer and for the corporation.^{xiii}

A 2019 survey found 78% of companies have a volunteering program, with 15 % of employees participating in corporate volunteering.

Corporate Volunteering in Australia: a snapshot (2019)

<i>Findings</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Companies that have a volunteering program</i>	78%
<i>Employees who participated in corporate volunteering</i>	15%
<i>Amount contributed by corporate volunteers (cash, employee time, in-kind and management costs)</i>	Over 1,000,000 hours Average 27.5 hours per volunteer
<i>Proportion of corporate community budget in time</i>	10%
<i>Available FTEs not utilised in corporate volunteering</i>	500 FTE per annum

Source: LBG Corporate Citizenship and Volunteering Australia, 2019^{xiv}

The value of volunteering

Economic value

Estimates of the economic value of volunteering vary significantly depending on the valuation method used. The most common method is the monetary value of volunteers' time based on a notional hourly wage rate. However, different figures may be used for the amount of voluntary work being done, the hourly wage rate, and projections of future growth in volunteering. There is also a broader debate about how to calculate a dollar figure for the social and cultural value of volunteering.

In the 2012-13 National Accounts, volunteering was estimated to have an imputed value of \$17.3 billion.

Non-profit institutions volunteering hours and value (Australian National Accounts, 2012-13)

<i>Non-Profit Institutions</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Number of organisations</i>	56 894
<i>Income</i>	\$107.5 billion
<i>Assets</i>	\$176.0 billion
<i>Employment</i>	1,081,900 persons
<i>Volunteers</i>	3,882,300 persons
<i>Volunteering hours</i>	520.5 million hours
<i>Imputed value of volunteer services (replacement cost methodology)^{xv}</i>	\$17.3 billion

Source: Australian National Accounts: Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account, 2012-13

Non-profit institutions (NPIs) surveyed by the ABS in this report were those registered with the ATO.

ABS Satellite Accounts 2006-07

The contribution of the volunteer workforce was estimated in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account to provide over **\$14.6 billion** of unpaid labour to not-for-profit organisations in 2006-07. A revised national figure for the economic contribution of volunteers has not yet been released.^{xvi}

Social and community value

Analysis^{xvii} of the 2010 GSS showed that volunteers were much more likely to be involved in other aspects of community life than non-volunteers:

- Volunteers (82%) were more likely than non-volunteers (55%) to have attended a community event recently.
- Volunteers (44%) were much more likely than non-volunteers (15%) to have ever provided a service or activity in their local area.
- 62% of volunteers agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that most people could be trusted, compared with 50% of non-volunteers.
- 82% of volunteers were delighted, pleased or mostly satisfied with their lives, compared to 75% of non-volunteers.
- People who volunteered through an organisation (64%) were more likely to provide informal assistance to someone outside their own household than non-volunteers (41%).

How volunteers and non-volunteers contribute to community life (ABS, 2010)

<i>Volunteer participation in community life</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Non-volunteers</i>
<i>Attend a community event in last 6 months</i>	81.8%	55.2%
<i>Ever provided a service in their local area</i>	44.4%	15.1%
<i>Agreed that most people could be trusted</i>	62.2%	49.5%
<i>Feel able to have a say in the community on important issues all or most of the time</i>	33.5%	26.5%
<i>Delighted or pleased with their lives</i>	47.9%	40.7%

Source: Voluntary Work Australia, ABS, 2010 Table 7

Financial costs

About half of all volunteers reported incurring costs to volunteer, with the most common being travel and phone.

Financial costs of volunteering (General Social Survey, ABS, 2014 table 23)

<i>Expenses personally incurred as a result of volunteering</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>% all volunteers incurring expenses</i>	53%
<i>Phone calls</i>	32%
<i>Postage</i>	8%
<i>Travel costs</i>	42%
<i>Meals</i>	14%
<i>Other</i>	14%
<i>No expenses</i>	47%
<i>Expenditure reimbursement available (all volunteers – incl. those not incurring)</i>	10%

The most up to date analysis uses data from the 2014 GSS. (The question was not asked in the 2019 survey.)

Trends in volunteering

National

The rate of volunteering through an organisation has declined over time. For people aged 18 years and over, the rate has declined from 36.2% in 2010 to 28.8% in 2019. Both men and women are volunteering less. However, the decline is most evident for women, whose rate decreased from 38.1% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2019.

In the 2019 GSS, more females (43.1%) reported 'Always' or 'Often' feeling rushed for time than males (35.8%). Females aged 15-24 years are more likely than males aged 15-24 to report feeling rushed for time (55.7% compared to 37.1%). Similar data came from the 2014 GSS^{xviii} - 45% of women and 36% of men were 'Always' or 'Often' rushed or pressed for time, compared with 21% of women and 28% of men who were rarely or never rushed or pressed for time.

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).

The review of the Volunteer Management Activity^{xix} undertaken for the Department of Social Services highlighted several ways in which the volunteering landscape in Australia is changing:

- The population is ageing, the workforce is contracting, and people are more discerning about how they want to volunteer their time.
- There is growing demand for services that traditionally rely heavily on volunteers to supplement government funding (such as community, aged and disability services).

- Government programs are encouraging volunteering to engage people experiencing disadvantage, for example to meet mutual obligation requirements or to help build skills and relationships for people living with a disability.
- Information technology is providing new opportunities for people to find a volunteering opportunity that suits their interests and circumstances, and to volunteer in different ways.

The term ‘new volunteerism’^{xx} has been used to portray how volunteering is becoming more episodic, more self-oriented in volunteer motivations and taking place with weaker organisational attachments.

The 2016 State of Volunteering in Australia report found an increasing misalignment between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering.^{xxi} For example, arts and culture and animal welfare tend to be oversubscribed; disability services, community services, aged care and education have high volunteer vacancies.

Global

The following global trends in volunteering policy and practice have been identified^{xxii}:

- Concern for the effects of time pressure on individuals
- Variations in the definition and value of volunteering from country to country
- Demographic changes and volunteer programs that concentrate on the extremes of the age continuum
- The importance of pluralistic approaches to recruitment, engagement and management
- Recognition of the role of volunteering in building community, reciprocity, social solidarity and citizenship
- The role of information technology in volunteering

Volunteering has undertaken significant digital advances over the last decade.

Deployment of digital tools (Johnson T, 2020)

<i>Digital tools for volunteer management on a regular basis</i>	<i>% VIOs using</i>
<i>Volunteer opportunity listings</i>	73%
<i>Online application forms</i>	63%
<i>Email newsletters</i>	54%
<i>Time tracking</i>	51%
<i>Background screening</i>	45%
<i>Shift scheduling</i>	41%
<i>Online document sharing</i>	34%
<i>Online volunteer training</i>	32%
<i>Video conferencing</i>	16%
<i>Broadcast texts</i>	14%
<i>Online collaboration / editing</i>	14%
<i>Discussion forums / chat</i>	11%
<i>Automated email drip campaigns</i>	6%

Source: Volunteer Management Progress Report, Johnson T, 2020^{xxiii}

Challenges for volunteer managers

The challenges for volunteer management have stayed remarkably consistent in recent years (prior to the COVID19 pandemic).

Volunteer Management challenges (Johnson T, 2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1	Recruitment	Recruitment	Recruitment	Recruitment	Recruitment
2	Support and buy-in	Respect & reliability	Respect and buy-in	Respect and buy-in	Respect and buy-in
3	Time	Roles & matching	Retention	Retention	Time
4	Financial investment	Retention	Roles and matching	Roles and matching	Roles and matching
5	Retention	Time	Time	Time	Retention

Source: Volunteer Management Progress Report, Johnson T, 2020^{xxiv}

Spontaneous volunteering

Potential ‘spontaneous volunteers’ are people who seek or are invited to contribute their assistance during and/or after a disaster, and who are not affiliated with recognised volunteer agencies, and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience.

Following Victoria’s 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, more than 22,000 potential spontaneous volunteers offered their help online, via the Go Volunteer website, and by a phone hotline managed by the Victorian Government.^{xxv}

A surge in interest from the public has occurred in support of the emergency COVID-19 response. In partnership with their relevant Governments, the State and Territory peak bodies for volunteering have established registration and matching platforms to organise assistance from spontaneous volunteers. For example, Volunteering Queensland in partnership with the Queensland Government received over 28,000 registrations for the ‘Care Army’^{xxvi}.

Volunteering in charities and the wider not-for-profit sector

The ACNC Australian Charities Report 2018^{xxvii} reported that:

- Charities employ more than 1.3 million people.
- Volunteer numbers across Australia’s charity sector increased to 3.7 million, up 12% on the previous year’s figure of 3.3 million.
- Half of Australia’s 55,000 charities operate without any paid staff.

In 2010, the Productivity Commission estimated that there were around 600,000^{xxviii} not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) in Australia.

In 2006-07, over 4.6 million Australians volunteered with the NFP sector (out of a total of 5.2 million volunteers).^{xxix}

Around two-thirds of these volunteers worked for small NFPs that do not have paid employees.^{xxx}
Volunteers provided 623 million hours of work to the NFP sector (equivalent to 317,000 full-time positions).
^{xxxi}

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- ⁱ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release#voluntary-work-and-unpaid-work-support>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/contact/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/resources/definition-of-volunteering/>
- ^{iv} <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>
- ^v https://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/giving_australia_2016_report_-_individual_giving_and_volunteering.pdf
- ^{vi} Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) 2016, Giving and volunteering in culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities, pp vi-vii, June 2016. https://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/giving_and_volunteering_in_cald_and_indigenous_communities.pdf
- ^{vii} Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey 2016*.
- ^{viii} <https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice/get-ahead-in-volunteering-in-2018>
- ^{ix} Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Census 2016 – Employment, Income and Education, Census of Population and Housing, 2016*
- ^x *National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2011*, op. cit., Table 15
- ^{xi} <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>
- ^{xii} [Volunteer Progress Report 2020.pdf](#)
- ^{xiii} The Allen Consulting Group *Global Trends in Skill-based Volunteering, report prepared for NAB*, The Allen Consulting Group, 2007, p1.
- ^{xiv} <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Corporate-Volunteering-Snapshot.pdf>
- ^{xv} Refer for more information on valuation methodology and options
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/5256.0Appendix62012-13>
- ^{xvi} Volunteering Australia, *State of Volunteering in Australia 2012*, Volunteering Australia, 2012, p.10
- ^{xvii} Voluntary Work Australia 2010, op. cit., p.26-27
- ^{xviii} <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/2014#summary-of-findings>
- ^{xix} <https://www.dss.gov.au/communities-and-vulnerable-people-programs-services-volunteer-management/report-on-the-review-of-the-volunteer-management-activity>
- ^{xx} Hustinx, L., Cnaan, R.A. and Handy, F., 2010. Navigating theories of volunteering: A hybrid map for a complex phenomenon. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 40(4), pp.410-434.
- ^{xxi} <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research/stateofvolunteering/>
- ^{xxii} The Allen Consulting Group *Global Trends in Skill-based Volunteering, report prepared for NAB*, The Allen Consulting Group, 2007, p1.
- ^{xxiii} [Volunteer Progress Report 2020.pdf](#)
- ^{xxiv} [Volunteer Progress Report 2020.pdf](#)
- ^{xxv} Australian Government, *Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit 2010*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government, 2010, p. 2 & 5.
- ^{xxvi} <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/volunteers/care-army>
- ^{xxvii} <https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/reports/australian-charities-report-2018>
- ^{xxviii} <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/not-for-profit/report/not-for-profit-report.pdf>
- ^{xxix} *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*, op. Cit., p. 251
- ^{xxx} *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*, op. Cit., p. 250
- ^{xxxi} *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*, op. Cit., p. 251