



# **Youth Volunteering Key Statistics**

**August 2022**

## Youth Volunteering

This document provides key statistics about youth volunteering in Australia.

The data presented here is taken from several sources, specifically the General Social Survey (GSS) 2019 and 2020, the Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys (the February, March, April, and June waves), the 2022 Census, the Mission Australia Youth Survey 2020 and 2021, and four waves of data from the Life in Australia survey conducted by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.

This factsheet focuses on national data. Increasingly, States and Territories are producing their own 'State of Volunteering' surveys and reports which are a rich source of information within each jurisdiction. The NSW State of Volunteering 2021 Report, for example, includes a chapter on youth volunteering specifically. This and other reports can be found via the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Data presented in this factsheet classifies respondents into age groups, and different classifications are used across the eight surveys included. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) typically considers 'youth' to include people aged 15-24 years. To include the full extent of trends in youth volunteering, the data presented in this document captures respondents aged 15-34 years across the different datasets. The age brackets used in each survey are shown in the tables below.

Additional national data, including data on the characteristics of voluntary work undertaken by young people and their motivations for volunteering, would provide greater clarity on youth volunteering in Australia.

Australia's definition of volunteering is "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."<sup>2</sup> 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.

Volunteering Australia acknowledges that the surveys used to collect the data presented here are not inclusive of the diversity of gender identities in our community. This document uses the terms 'woman/female' and 'man/male' to denote those who have selected 'female' or 'male' respectively as their sex in their response to each respective survey. Volunteering Australia recognises that only those who identify as female or male are represented in these statistics.

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/contact/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/resources/definition-of-volunteering/>

## Key findings

- 592,300 young people volunteered for an organisation or group in Australia in 2020, according to the 2020 General Social Survey.
- 830,500 young people volunteered informally in the community in the 4 weeks prior to the 2020 survey.
- The proportion of people aged 18-24 years who had done voluntary work through an organisation or group in the previous 12 months fell from 36.5 per cent in late 2019 to 25.6 per cent in April 2021. Younger volunteers—aged 18-24 years and 25-34 years—were among the least likely to have stopped volunteering.
- However, according to the Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys, youth volunteering has yet to show signs of recovery. Young people (18-34 years) are the only age group in which volunteering rates continued to decrease month-on-month during the first half of 2021.
- According to the Mission Australia Youth Survey, volunteering was the 4th most commonly reported activity for young people in 2021, with 41.1 per cent of respondents aged 15-19 being involved.<sup>3</sup>
- Census data shows that, between 2016 and 2021, the number of people aged 15-19 years who volunteer declined by 29 per cent, and the number of people aged 20-24 years who volunteer declined by 26 per cent. This is larger than the 19 per cent decrease in the total number of volunteers.<sup>4</sup>

## Formal volunteering

- In 2019, **28.8 per cent** of people aged 15-24 (**852,400** people) volunteered through an organisation or group. In 2019, **36.5 per cent** volunteered informally (the second highest of any age group).<sup>5</sup>
- **852,400** people aged 15-24 volunteered through an organisation and **1,081,000** volunteered informally in 2019.
- In 2020, **19.4 per cent** volunteered formally and **27.2 per cent** volunteered informally, the **most significant decrease** of any age group in both categories.
- **592,300** people aged 15-24 volunteered through an organisation and **830,500** volunteered informally in 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/2087-mission-australia-youth-survey-report-2021/file>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/comparison-volunteering-rates-2006-census-population-and-housing-and-2006-general-social-survey/jun-2012>

<sup>5</sup> 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 the GSS, respondents are asked to consider formal volunteering undertaken in the past 12 months, and informal volunteering undertaken in the past 4 weeks.

Proportion of people in Australia who volunteer through an organisation or group, by age, 2019 and 2020

Age group	2019		2020	
	Proportion	Estimate ('000)	Proportion	Estimate ('000)
15-24	28.8	852.4	19.4	592.3
25-39	25.7	1,441.8	20.9	1,152.2
40-54	36.2	1,729.8	30.5	1,473.4
55-69	29.0	1,184.7	24.9	1,032.1
70 years and over	24.5	638.1	28.0	765.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2020) 'Table 3.3: Persons aged 15 years and over, Social Experiences—By Age and Sex, proportion of persons [data set], General Social Survey, Australia; Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2021) 'Table 2.3: Persons aged 15 years and over, Social Experiences—By Sex and Health Characteristics, proportion of persons [data set], General Social Survey, Australia

Proportion of people in Australia who volunteer informally, by age, 2019 and 2020

Age group	2019		2020	
	Proportion	Estimate ('000)	Proportion	Estimate ('000)
15-24	36.5	1,081.0	27.2	830.5
25-39	38.8	2,178.9	38.9	2,149.3
40-54	34.0	1,623.8	32.7	1,581.3
55-69	27.3	1,113.4	29.1	1,205.3
70 years and over	26.9	698.9	26.1	714.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2020) 'Table 3.3: Persons aged 15 years and over, Social Experiences—By Age and Sex, proportion of persons [data set], General Social Survey, Australia; Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2021) 'Table 2.3: Persons aged 15 years and over, Social Experiences—By Sex and Health Characteristics, proportion of persons [data set], General Social Survey, Australia

Census 2016 and 2021

- The Census of Population and Housing includes a question on volunteering through an organisation or group. Although this is the same question included in the GSS, Census data consistently records a lower number of volunteers. Due to the limitations of the Census questionnaire, the ABS considers the GSS figure to be the more accurate estimation of the rate of formal volunteering in Australia.<sup>6</sup> However, Census data is useful for comparing the rate of volunteering between geographical areas and over time.
- Census data shows that, between 2016 and 2021, the number of people aged 15-19 years who volunteer declined by 29 per cent, and the number of people aged 20-24 years who volunteer declined by 26 per cent. This is larger than the 19 per cent decrease in the total number of volunteers.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/comparison-volunteering-rates-2006-census-population-and-housing-and-2006-general-social-survey/jun-2012>

Age group	2016			2021		
	Volunteer	Not a volunteer	Not stated	Volunteer	Not a volunteer	Not stated
15-19	285,547	1,016,653	119,391	203,748	1,165,226	88,831
20-24	268,797	1,177,745	120,254	199,366	1,273,580	106,592

Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2022) 2021 Census, Australia

### Mission Australia Youth Report 2021

- When young people were asked what activities they are involved in, volunteering was the 4th most commonly reported, with **41.1 per cent** of young people being involved.

State/territory	Proportion of young people who were involved in volunteer work, 2021
Australian Capital Territory	40.1
New South Wales	44.5
Northern Territory	34.0
Queensland	43.9
South Australia	37.7
Tasmania	47.3
Victoria	35.5
Western Australia	44.1
<b>National</b>	<b>41.1</b>

Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2021, available at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/2087-mission-australia-youth-survey-report-2021/file>

## Volunteering hours

Most people aged 15 to 24 volunteered for 21 hours or more in 2020. The proportion of young people who volunteered for 100 hours or more increased substantially in 2020 compared to 2019, the most of any age group.<sup>7</sup>

### Annual hours by age (proportions, ABS, 2020 and 2021)

Age group	2019			2020		
	1 to 20 hours	21 to 99 hours	100 hours +	1 to 20 hours	21 to 99 hours	100 hours +
15-24	<b>48.5#</b>	<b>50.2#</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>40.8#</b>	<b>30.2#</b>	<b>21.6#</b>
25-39	53.8	26.8	21.1	48.6	31.6	19.4
40-54	41.1	25.5	33.0	40.5	34.6	26.3
55-69	38.2	29.6	31.1	30.8	39.0	30.1
70 years and over	22.2	30.3	51.3	25.2	31.0	45.2

Source: General Social Survey, ABS, 2019 Table 9; General Social Survey, ABS, 2020 Table 11

<sup>7</sup> These proportions have a high margin of error (>10 percentage points), which should be considered when interpreting this information

## Youth volunteering and COVID-19

In April 2021, Volunteering Australia commissioned the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods to undertake analysis of the experience of volunteers during COVID-19. Their analysis draws on the ANUpoll which involves a regular survey of around 3,000 Australians that produces nationally representative results.

The decline in volunteering during COVID-19 was substantial. The proportion of Australians who had done voluntary work in the previous 12 months fell from 36.0 per cent in late 2019 to 24.2 per cent in April 2021. Among people aged 18-24 years, the proportion of people who volunteered in the previous 12 months fell from 36.5 per cent to 25.6 per cent. This decrease is lower than average, but nonetheless represents a significant decline.

- Volunteers aged 45-54 were more likely to have stopped volunteering than other age groups.
- Younger volunteers—aged 18-24 years and 25-34 years—were among the least likely to have stopped volunteering.

### Volunteering during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2021)

<b>Per cent of Australians who undertook volunteering in the preceding 12 months, by age—late 2019 and April 2021</b>	<b>Late 2019</b>	<b>April 2021</b>
18-24 years	<b>36.5</b>	<b>25.6</b>
25-34 years	30.3	22.6
35-44 years	34.7	21.5
45-54 years	39.4	21.4
55-64 years	34.0	26.2
65-74 years	41.8	28.3
75 or more years	41.9	28.6

Source: ANU Centre for Social Research Methods, 'Volunteering during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2021)'

However, data from the Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys conducted by the ABS in 2020 and 2021 indicated that volunteering among young people has not recovered during the first half of 2021. Where volunteering rates among other age groups increased between February and June 2021, volunteering rates of people aged 18-34 have continued to decrease.

### Whether did unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in the last four weeks (proportions, ABS, 2021)

<b>Age group</b>	<b>February 2021</b>	<b>March 2021</b>	<b>April 2021</b>	<b>June 2021</b>
18-34	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>8.9</b>
35-64	13.7	14.0	17.7	15.5
65 and over	20.3	22.5	25.0	23.1

Source: Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey (February 2021 Table 6, March 2021 Table 5, April 2021 Table 24, June 2021 Table 25), Australia

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