



National Strategy
for Volunteering



Volunteering in Australia: Volunteering experiences by sector

This factsheet presents data on volunteering collected in 2022 as part of the Volunteering in Australia research. It focuses on the volunteering experience, including volunteer motivations, how volunteering is undertaken, and satisfaction with volunteering, and how these vary across sectors. This factsheet presents data from the April 2022 ANUpoll survey, which collected data from 3,587 people aged 18 and over in Australia.

Note: although the ANUpoll sample is representative of the Australian population, some estimates below are based on small sample sizes and should be used with caution. Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering is "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain" which covers both formal and informal volunteering. However, this document focuses on formal volunteering, undertaken through an organisation or group.

Key findings

- Most people indicate that they volunteer for personal satisfaction and doing something worthwhile (71.9 per cent of volunteers) or to help others and the community (61.4 per cent). However, motivations to volunteer vary across sectors. For example, people who volunteer for children/youth or sport/recreation organisations were more likely to volunteer due to family involvement than people volunteering in other sectors, while those in education/training, human rights, or cultural/ethnic groups were more likely to volunteer because they felt obliged compared to people who volunteered in other sectors.
- Across sectors, a majority of volunteers undertake their voluntary work in person at the organisation or in the field. However, a large proportion of volunteers engage with their organisation remotely – in some types of organisations, more than half of volunteers undertake their voluntary work online.
- There are no significant differences in satisfaction with volunteering between sectors. Across sectors, more than 85 per cent of volunteers in each sector reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their volunteering experience in April 2022.



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Motivations to volunteer

Most people indicate that they volunteer for personal satisfaction and doing something worthwhile (71.9 per cent of volunteers) or to help others and the community (61.4 per cent). However, motivations to volunteer vary across sectors.

- People who volunteer for children/youth (35.7 per cent) or sport/recreation (38.1 per cent) organisations were more likely to volunteer due to family involvement compared to those who volunteer in other sectors.
- Social contact was a more influential motivation to volunteer in emergency services (52.6 per cent), arts/heritage (48.9 per cent), and aged care (45.1 per cent) organisations than in other sectors.
- People who volunteer for mental health (21.3 per cent), education/training (21.1 per cent), and animal welfare (18.3 per cent) organisations were more likely to volunteer to gain work experience than those in other sectors, and those who volunteer for disability (49.8 per cent), arts/heritage (48.2 per cent), and education/training (45.6 per cent) organisations were more likely to volunteer to use their skills and experience than those in other sectors.
- People who volunteered for education/training organisations (12.0 per cent), human rights organisations (9.7 per cent), or cultural/ethnic groups (11.1 per cent) were more likely than those in other sectors to report that they volunteered because they felt obliged.
- Volunteers in emergency services (28.5 per cent), human rights (19.1 per cent), cultural/ethnic groups (11.9 per cent), mental health (11.4 per cent), and environment organisations (11.4 per cent) were the most likely of any sector to volunteer in response to a disaster or emergency.

Reasons for volunteering, by type of organisation, April 2022¹

	Personal satisfaction / to do something worthwhile	Family involvement	Social contact	Religious / faith-based beliefs	To be active	To learn new skills	Help others / the community	Gain work experience	Use skills / experience	Felt obliged	Just happened	In response to a disaster / emergency
Aged Care	80.0%	26.5%	45.1%	32.5%	46.4%	24.3%	64.5%	7.2%	32.0%	6.4%	12.4%	8.3%
Animal Welfare	82.1%	21.3%	32.2%	7.4%	33.3%	18.3%	52.7%	18.3%	30.6%	6.3%	8.7%	9.6%
Arts / Heritage	85.9%	11.4%	48.9%	14.6%	35.4%	31.5%	70.3%	6.2%	48.2%	5.1%	11.5%	2.9%
Children / Youth	69.6%	35.7%	22.6%	21.1%	23.8%	24.1%	70.5%	7.2%	32.7%	5.5%	9.2%	3.7%
Community Services / Welfare / Homelessness	76.4%	7.8%	34.0%	15.3%	33.7%	18.4%	75.6%	10.0%	31.6%	6.6%	11.0%	6.8%
Cultural / Ethnic groups ²	78.6%	14.4%	43.3%	18.6%	31.2%	21.0%	75.8%	16.0%	42.4%	11.1%	10.3%	11.9%
Disability	84.2%	29.2%	37.1%	20.0%	44.8%	39.3%	71.7%	18.2%	49.8%	1.1%	9.4%	5.5%
Education / Training	76.9%	25.0%	33.1%	19.2%	31.6%	30.4%	71.3%	21.1%	45.6%	12.0%	7.5%	2.4%
Emergency Services / Disaster Relief	81.7%	8.7%	52.6%	12.0%	37.2%	39.6%	80.9%	10.0%	42.4%	7.2%	5.9%	28.5%
Environment	81.5%	13.7%	45.0%	5.3%	33.1%	25.1%	61.1%	2.5%	35.0%	4.9%	8.7%	11.4%
Health	67.0%	6.1%	27.0%	13.8%	16.2%	18.7%	72.2%	16.5%	29.2%	4.9%	13.9%	9.3%
Human Rights / Justice / Legal	73.3%	10.3%	31.8%	33.3%	32.7%	23.5%	77.2%	6.8%	42.3%	9.7%	18.3%	19.1%
Mental Health	87.8%	13.1%	16.2%	18.8%	23.8%	37.4%	72.9%	21.3%	40.3%	4.2%	2.9%	11.4%
Religious / Faith-Based / Spiritual	73.2%	22.6%	29.8%	76.8%	25.5%	16.1%	65.9%	9.1%	34.9%	8.8%	12.3%	5.2%
Sport / Recreation	74.6%	38.1%	44.3%	5.8%	34.9%	21.1%	59.2%	5.4%	34.8%	9.0%	12.8%	2.0%

Source: Biddle, Nicholas, 2022, "ANU Poll 50 (April 2022): Volunteering, aged care, policy priorities and experiences with COVID-19", doi:10.26193/AXQPSE, ADA Dataverse, V1

¹ Colours correspond to the value of each cell, with darker green representing higher values and lighter green/white representing lower values

² Including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Groups

How volunteering was undertaken

Across sectors, a majority of volunteers undertake their voluntary work in person at the organisation or in the field. However, a large proportion of volunteers engage with their organisation remotely – in some types of organisations, more than half of volunteers undertake their voluntary work online.

- Over two-thirds (69.4 per cent) of volunteers undertook volunteering in person at the organisation they volunteer for, and four-in-ten (41.5 per cent) undertook volunteering in person in the field. Over the internet (30.2 per cent) and over the phone (16.9 per cent) were also quite prevalent modes of volunteering.
- Volunteers in aged care (55.3 per cent), human rights, justice, and legal (55.3 per cent) and mental health organisations (54.2 per cent) were more likely to have volunteered over the internet compared to other sectors, while those in children and youth (28.6 per cent), sport and recreation (28.5 per cent), emergency services and disaster relief (26.2 per cent), and community services, welfare, and homelessness (25.8 per cent) were less likely.
- Volunteering over the phone was most common in aged care (42.1 per cent), human rights, justice, and legal (42.1 per cent), and mental health organisations (37.5 per cent) compared to other sectors, and least common in children/youth (18.8 per cent), education and training (18.5 per cent), and environment organisations (16.0 per cent).

How volunteering was undertaken, by type of organisation, April 2022

	At the organisation	In the field	Over the internet	Over the phone
Aged Care	76.3%	50.0%	55.3%	42.1%
Animal Welfare	59.2%	51.0%	38.8%	20.4%
Arts / Heritage	74.7%	38.9%	32.6%	20.0%
Children / Youth	69.5%	43.5%	28.6%	18.8%
Community Services / Welfare / Homelessness	74.5%	47.9%	25.8%	22.8%
Cultural / Ethnic groups*	76.6%	38.3%	46.8%	31.9%
Disability	69.4%	46.8%	37.1%	21.0%
Education / Training	75.1%	39.3%	41.0%	18.5%
Emergency Services / Disaster Relief	79.8%	65.5%	26.2%	28.6%
Environment	52.1%	70.2%	29.8%	16.0%
Health	59.3%	47.3%	34.1%	27.5%
Human Rights / Justice / Legal	76.3%	50.0%	55.3%	42.1%
Mental Health	60.4%	45.8%	54.2%	37.5%
Religious / Faith-Based / Spiritual	82.6%	34.3%	29.6%	22.6%
Sport / Recreation	74.1%	56.3%	28.5%	22.4%

Source: Biddle, Nicholas, 2022, "ANU Poll 50 (April 2022): Volunteering, aged care, policy priorities and experiences with COVID-19", doi:10.26193/AXQPSE, ADA Dataverse, V1



Satisfaction with volunteering

There are no significant differences in satisfaction with volunteering between sectors.

- More than 85 per cent of volunteers in each sector reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their volunteering experience in April 2022.

Satisfaction with volunteering, by type of organisation, April 2022

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Aged Care	44.7%	46.5%	0.9%	2.6%	5.3%
Animal Welfare	42.9%	40.8%	0.0%	8.2%	6.1%
Arts / Heritage	42.1%	48.4%	2.1%	5.3%	2.1%
Children / Youth	46.1%	47.4%	0.0%	5.8%	0.6%
Community Services / Welfare / Homelessness	41.2%	49.8%	0.4%	4.5%	4.1%
Cultural / Ethnic groups*	40.4%	48.9%	0.0%	8.5%	2.1%
Disability	45.2%	45.2%	1.6%	6.5%	1.6%
Education / Training	39.9%	50.9%	0.6%	4.0%	4.6%
Emergency Services / Disaster Relief	45.2%	41.7%	1.2%	7.1%	4.8%
Environment	43.6%	45.7%	0.0%	7.4%	3.2%
Health	41.8%	48.4%	1.1%	4.4%	4.4%
Human Rights / Justice / Legal	50.0%	36.8%	2.6%	7.9%	2.6%
Mental Health	31.3%	54.2%	0.0%	8.3%	6.3%
Religious / Faith-Based / Spiritual	40.9%	55.7%	0.0%	2.2%	1.3%
Sport / Recreation	40.7%	52.9%	0.4%	3.0%	2.3%

Source: Biddle, Nicholas, 2022, "ANU Poll 50 (April 2022): Volunteering, aged care, policy priorities and experiences with COVID-19", doi:10.26193/AXQPSE, ADA Dataverse, V1



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