



Youth Volunteering Key Statistics

August 2023

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This document provides key statistics about youth volunteering in Australia.

The data presented here is taken from several sources, specifically Volunteering in Australia research undertaken in 2022 to inform the development of the National Strategy for Volunteering, the General Social Survey (GSS) 2019 and 2020, the Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys (the February, March, April, and June waves).

This factsheet focuses on national data. Increasingly, state and territory volunteering peak bodies 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 volunteering peak bodies.¹

Data presented in this factsheet classifies respondents into age groups, and different classifications are used across the surveys included. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 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.

Australia's definition of volunteering is "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."² This document deploys this definition and hence includes information on formal volunteering, undertaken through an organisation or group, and informal volunteering, done outside a formal organisation.

Key findings

- 25.0 per cent of people aged 18-24 years volunteered formally (through an organisation or group) in 2022. This is an estimated 572,635 volunteers aged 18-24.³
- The proportion of people aged 18-24 years who had volunteered formally in the previous 12 months fell from 36.5 per cent in late 2019 to 25.6 per cent in April 2021. This decreased slightly to 25.0 per cent in 2022.
- Volunteers aged 15-24 are more likely than those in other age groups to volunteer for fewer hours. However, the proportion of young volunteers who volunteer for 100 hours or more increased significantly between 2019 and 2020.
- Volunteers aged 18-29 years are more likely than average to volunteer for particular types of organisations, accounting for 37.8 per cent of volunteers in Animal Welfare organisations and 28.8 per cent of volunteers in Health organisations. They are less likely to volunteer for Aged Care (7.5 per cent of volunteers in this sector), Arts / Heritage (9.9 per cent), Environment (12.4 per cent), and Sport / Recreation (11.3 per cent) organisations.

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

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

³ Based on an estimated population of 2,290,541 people aged 18-24 in Australia in the 2021 Census

- Younger people are relatively more likely to volunteer in the field or over the internet, whereas older people are more likely to volunteer in person at the organisation.
- Formal volunteering among young people increased gradually between 2006 to 2016, but decreased significantly between 2016 and 2021, which includes the impact of COVID-19. Between April 2021 and April 2022, people aged 18-24 were the only age group for which the rate of formal volunteering **did not increase**.

Rates of volunteering

- 25.0 per cent of people aged 18-24 years volunteered formally (through an organisation or group) in 2022. This is an estimated 572,635 volunteers aged 18-24.
- In 2022, the rate of volunteering rate was a little higher amongst older Australians (55 years and older) than amongst those aged under 55 years. There was very little difference in volunteering rates by age for those under 55 years of age.

Proportion of people who volunteer formally, by age, 2019, 2021, 2022

Age group	Late 2019	April 2021	April 2022
18-24	36.5	25.6	25.0
25-34	30.3	22.6	25.1
35-44	34.7	21.5	23.5
45-54	39.4	21.4	24.9
55-64	34.0	26.2	27.9
65-74	41.8	28.3	32.5
70 years and over	41.9	28.6	31.6
Total persons	36.0	24.2	26.7

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

- In 2019, 36.5 per cent of people aged 15-24 had volunteered informally in the previous 4 weeks. This number decreased to 27.2 per cent in 2020.

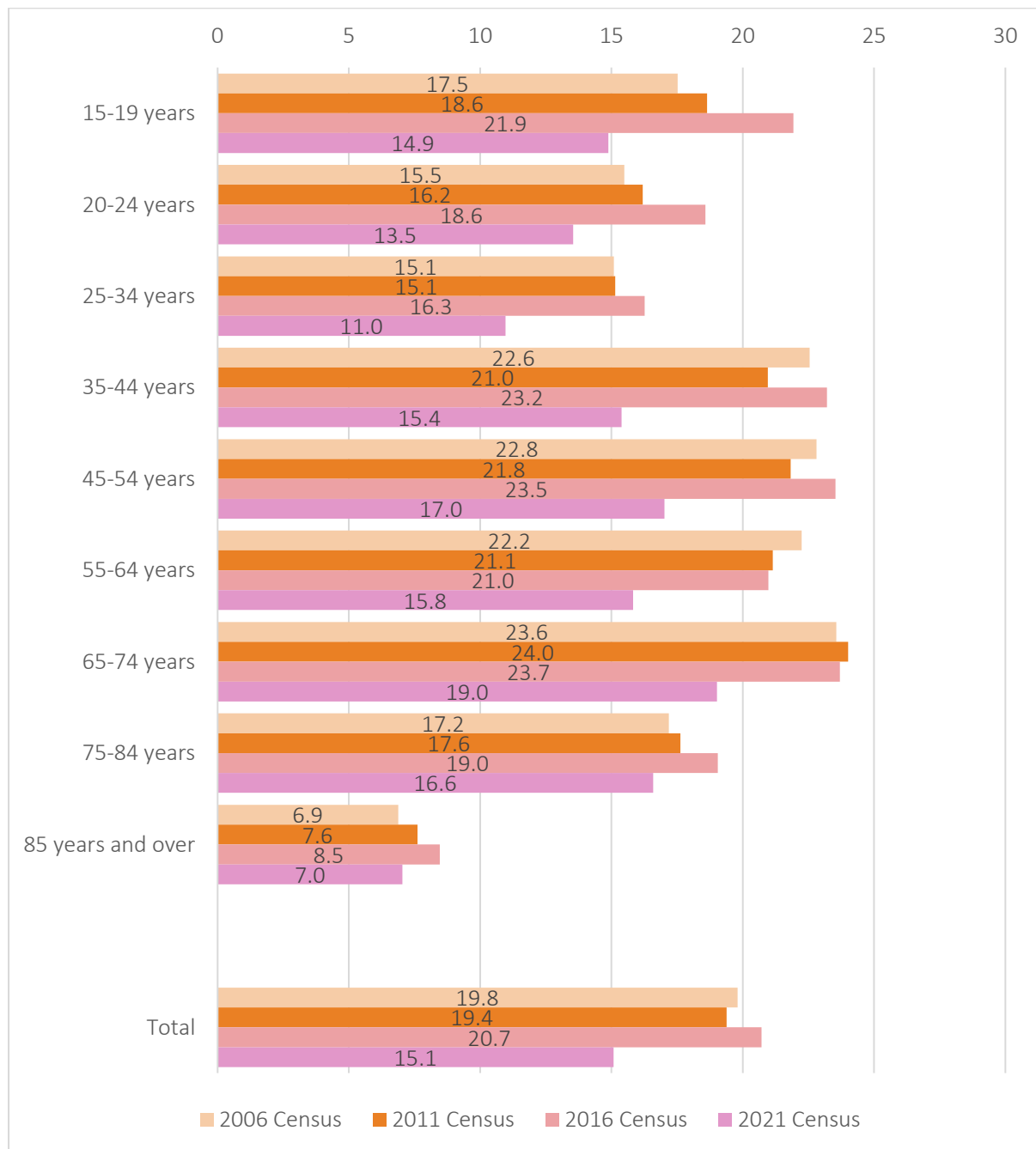
Proportion of people who volunteer informally, by age and sex, 2019 and 2020

Age group	2019		2020	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
15-24	33.9	39.0	28.9	25.1
25-39	39.8	37.1	39.7	39.0
40-54	33.2	33.9	34.3	31.8
55-69	28.6	25.7	26.1	32.8
70 years and over	28.0	27.1	23.3	29.5
Total persons	33.9	32.6	31.8	32.4

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 data shows that there was an increase in volunteering amongst young adults (15-24 years) between 2006 to 2016, but then a big drop between 2016 and 2021, which includes the impact of COVID-19. For those over 25 years of age there were relatively small changes in the rates of volunteering between 2006 and 2016, but similar to young adults, there was a substantial decline in volunteering between 2016 and 2021.

Census-based estimate of volunteering rates, by age, 2006 to 2021 (%)



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

Time spent volunteering

- Volunteers aged 15-24 are more likely to volunteer for fewer hours. However, the proportion of young volunteers who volunteer for 100 hours or more increased significantly between 2019 and 2020.

Annual hours spent volunteering formally, by age, 2019 and 2020

Age group	2019			2020		
	1 – 20 hours	21 to 99 hours	100 hours or more	1 – 20 hours	21 to 99 hours	100 hours or more
15–24	48.5#	50.2#	9.9	40.8#	30.2#	21.6#
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	29.7#	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: Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2020) 'Table 9.3 Persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, Annual hours—By Age and Sex, proportion of persons' [data set], General Social Survey, Australia; Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2021) Table 11.3 Persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, Annual hours—By Age and Sex, proportion of persons' [data set], General Social Survey, Australia

- The Volunteering in Australia research found that, in 2022, older volunteers (those aged 55 years and over) spent more time volunteering on average (263 hours) than those aged 54 years or under (123 hours).

Types of organisations and activities

- Volunteers aged 18-29 years are more likely than average to volunteer for particular types of organisations, accounting for 37.8 per cent of volunteers in Animal Welfare organisations and 28.8 per cent of volunteers in Health organisations. They are less likely to volunteer for Aged Care (7.5 per cent of volunteers in this sector), Arts / Heritage (9.9 per cent), Environment (12.4 per cent), and Sport / Recreation (11.3 per cent) organisations. The table below shows the proportion of volunteers in each age group, for each type of organisation. For example, of those who volunteer for Aged Care organisations, 7.5 per cent are aged 18-29 years.

Type of organisations volunteered for, by age, April 2022

Organisation type	18-29 years	30-49 years	50-64 years	65 or more years
<i>Aged Care</i>	7.50%	18.10%	28.90%	45.60%
<i>Animal Welfare</i>	37.80%	31.10%	19.70%	11.40%
<i>Arts / Heritage</i>	9.90%	27.10%	23.30%	39.80%
<i>Children / Youth</i>	16.70%	51.70%	19.60%	12.00%
<i>Community Services / Welfare / Homelessness</i>	17.90%	23.60%	30.10%	28.40%
<i>Cultural / Ethnic groups⁴</i>	19.50%	19.10%	33.90%	27.60%
<i>Disability</i>	17.60%	30.60%	21.00%	30.80%
<i>Education / Training</i>	19.80%	36.00%	23.30%	20.90%
<i>Emergency Services / Disaster Relief</i>	17.80%	26.40%	19.30%	36.50%
<i>Environment</i>	12.40%	31.10%	29.00%	27.50%
<i>Health</i>	28.80%	21.60%	17.60%	32.10%
<i>Human Rights / Justice / Legal</i>	18.50%	41.40%	17.60%	22.50%
<i>Mental Health</i>	16.10%	41.20%	29.80%	12.90%
<i>Religious / Faith-Based / Spiritual</i>	18.40%	34.10%	21.50%	26.00%
<i>Sport / Recreation</i>	11.30%	32.70%	31.30%	24.60%

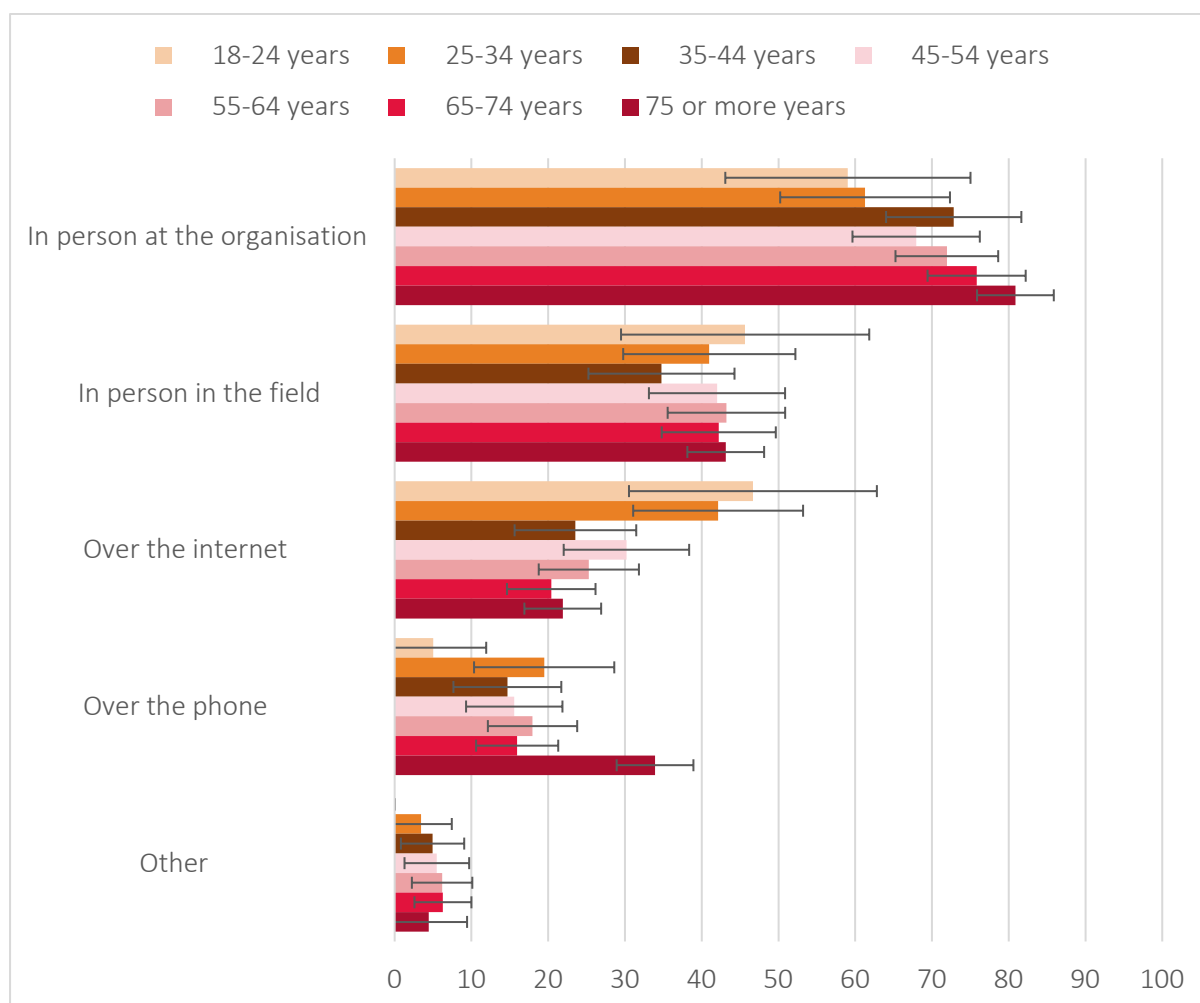
Source: Biddle, Nicholas, 2022, "ANU Poll 50 (April 2022): Volunteering, aged care, policy priorities and experiences with COVID-19", doi:10.26193/AXQPSE, ADA Dataverse, V1

Mode of volunteering

- There are some differences by age in how people volunteer, though perhaps not as much as one might assume. Older people are relatively more likely to volunteer in person at an organisation or over the phone, whereas younger people were more likely to volunteer in the field or over the internet.

⁴ Including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Groups

Mode of volunteering, by age, April 2022



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

- About 9 in 10 people aged 18-29 years report that they are satisfied with their experience volunteering, about the same as other age groups. However, young volunteers are less likely than average to report that they are 'very satisfied.'

Satisfaction with volunteering, by age, April 2022

Age group	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
18-29 years	25.8%	65.0%	0.0%	9.2%	0.0%
30-49 years	38.5%	52.3%	0.2%	7.7%	1.4%
50-64 years	38.2%	53.9%	0.0%	5.1%	2.8%
65 or more years	47.0%	44.5%	0.5%	2.9%	5.0%
Total persons	38.1%	53.1%	0.2%	6.2%	2.4%

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

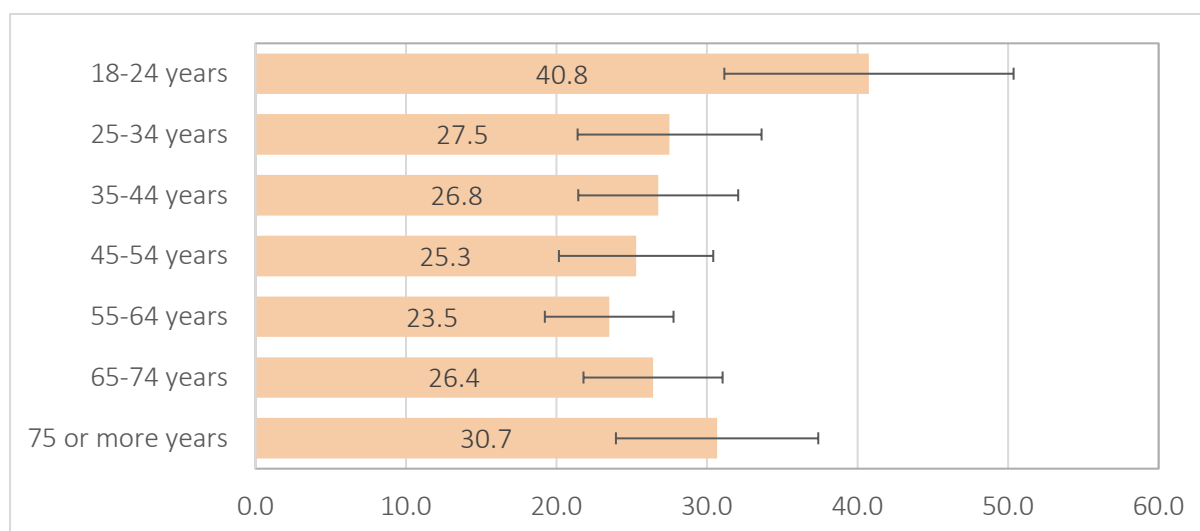
Reasons for volunteering or not volunteering

- Those aged 18 to 34 years are more likely to report financial reasons for not volunteering (25.5 per cent) compared to those aged 35 to 54 years (16.7 per cent) and those aged 55 years and over (9.3 per cent).⁵
- Older Australians were less likely to report a lack of suitable opportunities as a reason they do not volunteer. This indicates that younger volunteers may have more difficulty connecting with volunteering opportunities that interest them.

Impact of COVID-19

- COVID-19 had a significant impact on youth volunteering. There are differences in rates of stopping volunteering due to COVID-19 between age groups. The highest proportion of volunteers stopping due to COVID-19 was for 18 to 24 year olds (40.8 per cent, though this difference was not significant when other demographic characteristics are controlled for, see section 8.4), and the eldest age group of 75 years or older (30.7 per cent).

Stopped volunteering activity due to COVID-19, by age, April 2022



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

- Census data shows that there was an increase in volunteering amongst young adults (15-24 years) between 2006 to 2016, but then a big drop between 2016 and 2021, which includes the impact of COVID-19. For those over 25 years of age there were relatively small changes in the rates of volunteering between 2006 and 2016, but similar to young adults, there was a substantial decline in volunteering between 2016 and 2021.

⁵ <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>, 38

- The rate of volunteering fell between late 2019 and April 2022 for all age groups. The biggest decline was amongst those aged 45 to 54 years, with an almost halving of the rate of volunteering for this age group (a drop from 39.4 to 21.4 per cent).
- Between April 2021 and April 2022, people aged 18-24 were the only age group for which the rate of formal volunteering **did not increase**. The Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys also found that youth volunteering has yet to show signs of recovery since its decline at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix: definitions and data sources

This document provides key statistics about youth volunteering in Australia.

The data presented here is taken from several sources, specifically Volunteering in Australia research undertaken in 2022 to inform the development of the National Strategy for Volunteering, the General Social Survey (GSS) 2019 and 2020, the Household Impacts of COVID-19 surveys (the February, March, April, and June waves). Data from the Volunteering in Australia research was collected in late 2019, April 2020, April 2021, and April 2022.

The data in the General Social Survey (GSS) 2019 was collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) between 29th April and 20th June 2019, and data in the GSS 2020 was collected between 15th June and 5th September 2020. The GSS 2020 is the most recent publication, and can be found [here](#).

The Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey was a series of monthly surveys conducted between August 2020 and June 2021, which collected data on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lifestyle and wellbeing of Australians. The timeseries release includes data on volunteering collected between December 2020 and June 2021, and a detailed module on unpaid voluntary work was included in the March 2021 survey. The final release can be found [here](#).

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 the 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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