

Volunteering in Australia: Facts and Figures

Who volunteers?

32% of Australians over the age of 18 years volunteered their time and energy to not for profit organisations during 2000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2001). This is an increase from 24%, estimated in 1995 (ABS 1996)

Both men (31%) and women (33%) volunteer. The peak age is 35-44 years (40%). Men employed on a full-time basis were found to volunteer at a higher rate (34%) than women employed on a full-time basis (31%).

On average people volunteer for 1.4 hours per week or 72 hours annually. Young people volunteer for an average of 1.1 hours or 60.5 hours per year.

People from English speaking backgrounds mostly define volunteering in terms of activity. People from indigenous cultures do not separate public and private spheres. Reciprocity and strong kinship ties define the concept of volunteering in indigenous populations (Kerr, Savelsberg, Sparrow and Tedmanson 2001)

What is the value of volunteering to Australia?

Volunteers contribute approximately 2,200 million hours at a value of \$42 billion per annum (Ironmonger, 2000)

Where do people volunteer?

Volunteers are involved in a wide variety of not-for-profit organisations. The sectors in which these organisations operate include: Arts/Culture, Welfare/Community, Sport/recreation, Education and youth development, Religious, Health, Environment and Animal welfare.

What do they do?

The most common volunteering activities are fundraising (56%), management (45%), teaching (44%) and administration (41%). Volunteers work in a wide range of activities such as performing, coaching and refereeing, performing and media production, befriending and counselling, fundraising and sales, preparing and serving food, transporting people and goods, repairing, maintenance and gardening, management and committee work, personal care, teaching, instruction and providing information, administration and clerical.

People tend to choose volunteer activity that reflects their paid employment. Professionals teach (65% compared to 44% overall) and tradespeople choose maintenance, repairs and gardening work (47% compared to 25% overall) (ABS 2001)

Why do people volunteer?

Reasons for volunteering in the general community include being of service to the community (47%) and personal satisfaction (43%). Young people aged 18-24 volunteered for personal satisfaction (40%) and to help others in the community (40%), to gain new skills (13%) and gain work experience (17%).

The most common reason people from indigenous and non-English backgrounds volunteer include: to gain work experience and develop skills; to do something worthwhile and help others and to be active (Kerr et al 2001)

Regional differences

There are differences between the numbers of people who volunteered in rural and metropolitan areas. The state with greatest number of rural and regional volunteers was Western Australia (45%)* and the greatest number of metropolitan volunteers lived in Adelaide (36%). The least discrepancy between city and country occurred in Northern Territory. The percentage of volunteers in Darwin was 31.6% compared with 32% in rural Northern Territory.

*This and the following percentages are estimated from the number of people in each state who volunteer.

State	Metropolitan¹	Non metropolitan²
New South Wales	24%	37%
Victoria	28%	43%
Queensland	30%	32%
South Australia	35%	44%
Western Australia	28%	44%
Tasmania	31%	35%
Northern Territory	31%	32%
Australian Capital Territory	36%	-

¹This refers to capital cities only, except in the case of ACT where the figure represents the whole of the ACT

²This applies to the whole state/territory but not the capital city

International figures:

Countries are interested to know the estimates of citizens who volunteer. Even though the methods of research may be different the following figures give a glimpse of volunteering internationally.

Country	Percentage of population volunteering	Reference and year
Japan	25%	<i>White Paper on the National Lifestyle, 2000</i>
United States of America	44%	<i>Giving and Volunteering in the United States, , Independent Sector, 2001</i>
Germany	34%	<i>Volunteering in Germany, 2001, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women & Youth</i>
United Kingdom	48%	<i>National Survey of Volunteering in the UK, 1997, Institute for Volunteering Research</i>
Ireland	33%	Ruddle, H & Mulvihill, R, <i>Reaching Out: Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Republic of Ireland - The 1994 Survey, 1995</i>
Canada	26%	<i>2000 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, Statistics Canada</i>

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