

Snapshot 2004:
volunteering report card



AMP Foundation and Volunteering Australia have joined forces to provide a snapshot of volunteering in Australia



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Who remembers our exhilaration when the volunteers did us proud at the Sydney Olympics or the gratitude we felt when the volunteer firefighters fought some of the worst bushfires ever the following year? Who remembers the promises we made to them all in the International Year of Volunteers?

Active volunteer involvement has always been a feature of community life in Australia. Caring and concerned indigenous communities existed long before western settlement and subsequent waves of migrants brought with them their own versions of volunteering. It is this powerful combination of informal support within indigenous, migrant and other communities and the formal volunteering through organisations that strengthens Australian society and increases our capacity to solve complex social problems.

AMP Foundation and Volunteering Australia have joined forces to provide a snapshot of volunteering in Australia. New research has been at the forefront of this endeavour with the partnership commissioning the collection and analysis of data to improve the knowledge of the sector.

Snapshot 2004 shows that volunteering in Australia is a diverse, ever-adapting movement. It is also an inclusive movement. Contrary to traditional stereotypes of the 'typical' volunteer, volunteers are strongly represented across gender, educational and economic divides.

Market researchers Newspoll were commissioned in November to investigate attitudes and behaviour in volunteering in 2004. Newspoll conducted a telephone survey of 1200 Australians over the age of 18 years from all Australian cities and rural and regional areas.

Associate Professor Duncan Ironmonger and Faye Soupourmas have also made a significant contribution to *Snapshot 2004*, reporting on how Australia's volunteering sector compares to international trends on time spent on volunteering. This work utilised data from the Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS), a cross-nationally harmonised set of international time use surveys.

The results of this research paint a robust picture of volunteering in this country in terms of participation, awareness and time spent on volunteering. The Newspoll data supports a trend toward increased volunteering participation already identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This result contrasts with international trends towards lower volunteering participation rates.

Snapshot 2004 also reflects on the progress Australia has made toward meeting the objectives set out in the *National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year*¹. The Agenda identified six major objectives which would ensure the viability of the volunteering sector if met. Strong inroads have been made into achieving these ambitious objectives. The gains that have been made, such as laying the foundations for a volunteering culture among the corporate sector, hint at the enormous potential for volunteering in our community if the objectives can be fully achieved.

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Volunteering: a growing trend in Australia

The number of Australians who actively volunteer has recently become of interest to us as a community. It is heartening therefore to note an upward volunteering trend emerging in Australia. This trend is verified through two types of data collection undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). In 1995 the ABS undertook the first national random sample survey of voluntary work²; and two subsequent data collections have been undertaken. In addition, volunteering is recognised as a recordable activity in Time Use Surveys. Taken together the random sample surveys and time-use surveys provide a sound basis from which to observe or predict trends.

Volunteers downunder defy international trend in volunteer participation rates

Information from international volunteer surveys, which ask a stylised question about how much time was spent in volunteering over the previous twelve months, shows that in terms of the formal volunteering rate, Australia over the last twenty years has moved slightly ahead of the US and Canada.

By 2002 more than a third of all adult Australians completed some sort of volunteering through an organisation over the year³. In 2003, 29 per cent of US citizens⁴ volunteered in an organisation while 27 per cent of Canadians⁵ volunteered in 2000. Data from the Netherlands indicate that 37 per cent of their adult population participated in organised volunteering in 2000⁶.

Although over half of the UK population volunteered in 1990, by 1995 the rate had dropped by 3 per cent⁷. The collection of data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2000 shows another decline, although this is refuted by the Citizenship Survey conducted by the Home Office⁸. Either way, both sets of data include people between the ages of 16 and 18 which the Australian figures do not.

Similarly, the participation rates in Canada and the Netherlands are declining. In contrast, 10.4 per cent more Australians over the age of 18 were volunteers in 2002 than in 1995⁹. The US participation rates are also increasing, although there is some belief that inclusion of people as young as 15 combined with the way in which volunteering is defined in the States makes for a less useful comparison. It is clearly evident from the data that Australian volunteers are challenging the international trend towards lower volunteer participation.

Recent national time-use surveys conducted by the ABS clearly indicate that over the last twenty years, Australian volunteers are giving an increasing amount of their unpaid time to community organisations and groups.

Time spent on volunteering for an organisation has increased by 18 minutes per week from 1987 to 1997. In 1987, Australians on average spent nearly half an hour (27 minutes) per week volunteering in an organisation¹⁰. By 1997, Australians spent three quarters of an hour per week volunteering¹¹.

The macro statistics on the time Australians spend on formal organised volunteering is significant. Based on data from time-use surveys:

- Australian volunteers donated 510 million hours to community organisations in 1997
- by 2000 this had risen to 704 million hours per year¹².

“It is clearly evident from the data that Australian volunteers are challenging the international trend towards lower volunteer participation.”



Giving time to organisations

Data from the Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS)¹³, a cross-nationally harmonised set of international time-use surveys composed of identically recoded variables, shows that Australia is placed together with the United States at the lower end of the spectrum of time given to volunteering. However, if data from other sources is factored in Australia is at the higher end in terms of participation.

In the late 1990s, Australians and Americans respectively spent 45 and 40 minutes per week volunteering. In contrast, men and women in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom spent on average 88 and 94¹⁴ minutes per week. However, unlike Canadians whose time spent on organised volunteering has decreased over the last decade (to 54 minutes per week in 1998), Australians by the late 1990s were increasing the time they spent on volunteering through an organisation.

While the time spent on volunteering through organisations is on the decline in Canada it is increasing in Australia, United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States.

Men give more time in the Netherlands and the US – Women give more time in the UK, Australia & Canada

The time-use figures from the MTUS data set show that men in the Netherlands and the US undertake more volunteering for organisations than women in their countries. In 1995 men completed 103 minutes per week in the Netherlands; women 74 minutes. Men in the US volunteered 45 minutes per week; women 35 minutes.

In contrast, women in the UK, Canada and Australia give more time to organisations. Women in the UK donated three quarters of an hour more to organised volunteering than their male counterparts. On average in 1995, UK women undertook 116 minutes per week of volunteering, compared to only 71 minutes per week for men. The differences between women and men in Australia and Canada are not so dramatic. Women in Australia gave eight minutes per week more than men did in 1997. Canadian women gave an additional 3 minutes per week to volunteer activities compared to Canadian men in 1998.

International comparisons of organised volunteering from the Multinational Time Use Study, 1980-2000

Average minutes per person per week

Year range	USA	Australia	Canada	UK	Netherlands
1980 - 1984					
men			31.7		90.7
women			33.7		61.8
adults			32.7		76.1
1985 - 1989					
men	41.3	26.5	53.2	33.4	91.9
women	45.7	27.3	62.5	37.8	76.2
adults	43.5	26.9	57.9	35.6	83.9
1990 - 1994					
men	36.7	40.5	50.8		87.4
women	27.6	40.5	63.0		78.0
adults	31.8	40.5	57.0		82.7
1995 - 1999					
men	45.4	41.3	53.0	70.8	102.5
women	35.3	48.9	55.7	116.1	74.0
adults	40.1	45.1	54.4	94.0	87.9

“by 2002 more than a third of all adult Australians completed some sort of volunteering through an organisation over the year”

The National Agenda on

Chart 1: International comparisons of Organised Volunteering from the Multinational Time Use Study, 1980-2000

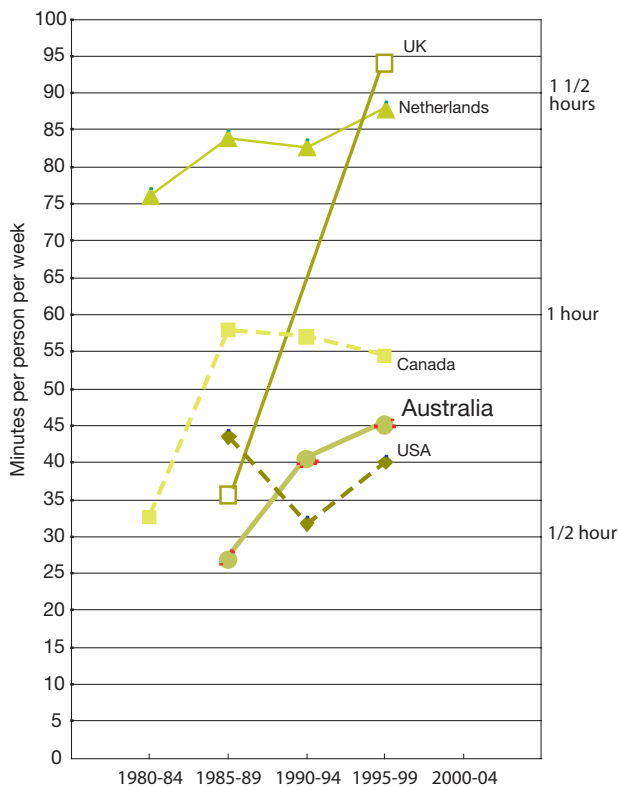
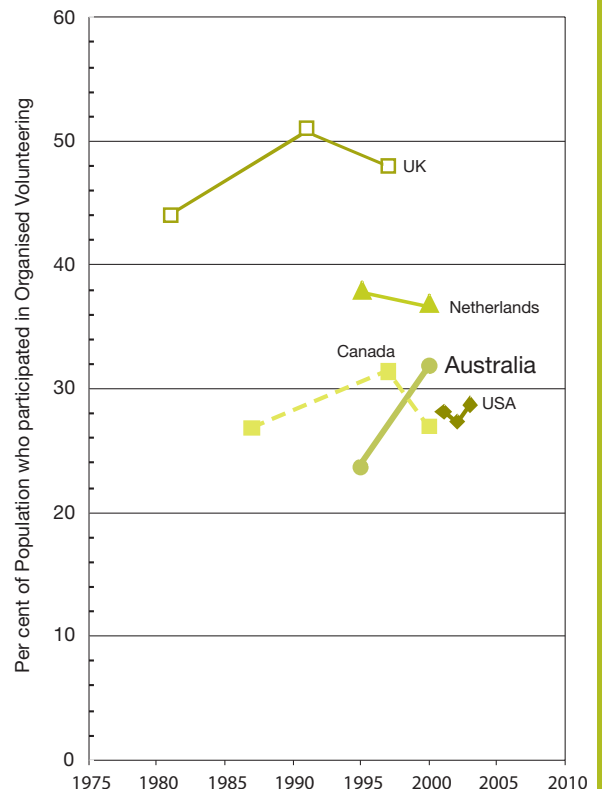


Chart 2: Participation Rates for Organised Volunteering from selected countries, 1980-2004



Formal Organised Volunteering – The tip of the iceberg

The international MTUS data set and surveys of voluntary activity exclude informal, direct service to other households and individuals in Australia. The time spent providing informal volunteer services to households is therefore not analysed due to constraints in other data sets, which focus primarily on formal volunteering through organisations. However, the Australian time-use surveys do provide information about direct, informal volunteering. According to the 1997 Australian time-use survey, the hours purported to be spent on informal volunteering is nearly three times as large as formal organised volunteering¹⁵.

Predicting Trends in Australian Volunteering – Are we all volunteers?

Current trends indicate that volunteering in Australia is not at the margins of community life. Volunteering time and energy to organisations and other households has become an increasingly important part of Australian life. Volunteers are everywhere in Australian society – they can be found in our hospitals, schools, art galleries, sports clubs, parks, beaches and emergency organisations. Based on current indications, close to 40 per cent of people over 18 years in Australia will volunteer their time, energy and skills to an organisation by 2005.

Volunteering - three years on

In the International Year of Volunteers 2001 (IYV), Volunteering Australia and its partner Australian Volunteers International conducted a nation-wide consultation and survey to determine the major volunteering issues. A legacy of the consultations was a document to guide the development of volunteering in Australia over three to five years. Three years on from the publication of *A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers* we are able to report on the achievements.

The consultation clearly highlighted some major areas of concern and a comprehensive set of solutions to the problems encountered by the volunteer sector. Subsequently the *National Agenda* document identified six major objectives which would, if met, ensure the long-term viability of volunteering and the protection of volunteers in Australia. As a guide to volunteer-involving organisations, governments and the private sector, a number of tangible ways in which the objectives could be met were suggested by respondents to the survey and consultation. A full copy of the *National Agenda* can be found on the Volunteering Australia website www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Recognise

Objective one: 'Publicly respect and value, in enduring, formal, and tangible ways, the essential contribution that volunteers make to building and sustaining the Australian community'

This objective actively sought, amongst other things, a permanent inclusion of a volunteer question in the census of the Australian population. In the discussions leading up to decisions about the next census the ABS has decided to concentrate on the broader area of unpaid work. A second proposal to collect volunteer data seems more likely, with the ABS making a commitment to run a survey as part of the General Social Survey in 2005/06 plus a continuation of the Time-Use Surveys project.

Funding for research into volunteering remains ad hoc and although a number of pieces of research were undertaken in IYV the approach has remained largely random. In 2004 a comprehensive data base of researchers and research into volunteering has been compiled and a Research Framework developed to focus attention on potential research areas. Both the database and the Research Framework can be found on the Volunteering Australia web site www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Volunteering time and energy to organisations has become an increasingly important part of Australian life



Volunteer management and involvement is mentioned in a number of industry standards and Awards but not to the comprehensive level suggested and required by the National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations. The long-term strategy is that the national standards for involving volunteers will be used as a benchmark for all organisations involving volunteers.

Outcomes under this objective that have not received much attention to date are a specific volunteer medal in the Order of Australia Awards and recognition from corporate sponsors that small volunteer projects and volunteering infrastructure organisations merit funding. More work is needed to ensure the contributions of volunteers are recognised and quantified in the annual reports of not-for-profit organisations.

It should be mentioned, though, that an increasing number of Australian citizens are receiving awards for their volunteer work. Business is also starting to recognise, at least through employee volunteer programs, that smaller organisations merit support. The sector itself needs to demonstrate how it values the work of volunteers.

Protect

Objective two: 'Ensure that volunteers have legal status and are afforded protection through every piece of legislation and public policy that affects them and their work'

Although this objective has had limited progress, all states have enacted volunteer protection acts since the International Year of Volunteers. However, it would be true to say that the value of some of the legislation is still being debated. In terms of general legislation a comprehensive approach on the impact on volunteers in the workplace is yet to be undertaken by the various jurisdictions in Australia. Taken in combination with the insurance crisis, the lack of movement in this area remains a concern to the volunteer sector.

Sustain

Objective three: 'Ensure that all new legislation, by-laws and public policies, developed at any level of government, which may affect volunteers and their work, works only to facilitate and sustain volunteering'

Focusing on sustainability, this objective has also had a weak take up rate. Governments have implicitly recognised the principles of volunteering yet are unwilling to explicitly support them. Clearly more education of governments in all jurisdictions needs to be undertaken by volunteer-involving organisations.

A positive outcome is that some states have designed compacts or agreements with the sector which put a consultative framework around the development of policy or legislation relevant to community or voluntary organisations. While the efficacy of these arrangements is yet to be tested, the intent is promising. More specifically, several designated 'units', 'offices' or 'sections' for volunteering have been created within government departments to actively encourage and support the growth of volunteering within a particular jurisdiction.

In the main, volunteer-involving organisations have worked well with the peak bodies to ensure that diverse viewpoints in relation to government policy or new legislation are presented to the relevant bodies. Regrettably this has not translated into the volunteering peak bodies providing volunteer impact statements on legislation or policy likely to affect volunteering. This is clearly an important area that needs attention.

Support

Objective four: 'Acknowledge that the activity of volunteering is not without cost and develop means by which Australian volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are supported and funded to provide valuable services'

Significant progress has occurred in achieving some of the outcomes sought, including:

- the Commonwealth Government has held a Senate Inquiry into insurance
- there have been several meetings of a Ministerial Council to explore the issues around insurance
- tort reform with respect to civil liability has subsequently been implemented in a number of jurisdictions.



“volunteer-involving organisations have worked well to ensure diverse viewpoints on policy or new legislation affecting volunteers are presented to government”





“ It is pleasing to report that many organisations have undertaken training on the implementation of the National Standards for Involving Volunteers ”

It is important to note that organisations, still reporting the high cost and increases in insurance premiums, are yet to feel the positive impact of tort reform.

A certain amount of work has been undertaken in the emergency management sector around out-of-pocket expenses, including a recommendation by the Western Australian Minister for Police and Emergency Services for a national tax rebate system for emergency service volunteers throughout Australia.

The desired outcomes around budgeting and financial allocations for volunteer programs are difficult to measure. At this point it is assumed that there has been very little change in this area.

Excel

Objective five: 'Ensure excellence in all levels of volunteer involvement and volunteer management to encourage, protect and enhance the work of volunteers'

It is pleasing to report that many organisations have undertaken training on the implementation of the National Standards for Involving Volunteers. Over 2000 organisations have purchased copies of the standards. A number of additional resources and tools have been developed to assist organisations wishing to implement the standards including a workbook, a guide and a risk management tool.

Over the next twelve months the Standards Review Panel will reconvene to assess feedback from the sector on the functionality of the standards and the possible development of an accreditation process. The standards have also been adapted in several publications commissioned by government.

Evolve

Objective six: 'Ensure that volunteering is a potent, dynamic and unifying social force for community benefit by acknowledging and accepting that it is a diverse and evolving activity'

This objective is one of the biggest challenges facing volunteer organisations, given that rapid change is occurring in the sector.

Traditionally not-for-profit organisations have relied heavily on a stable and ongoing volunteer workforce, that is to say volunteers who are willing to commit time and energy to an organisation on a long-term basis. Recent changes and identifiable trends have created both recruitment and retention difficulties for volunteer-involving organisations.

Young people, baby boomers and employee volunteers are entering volunteering with a different set of expectations. Young people, for example, want short-term project based volunteering in organisations that either can provide skill development or involvement in a cause that interests them. Some organisations are responding well to the needs of young people by re-designing jobs and making the work environment more youth friendly.

A great deal of work has started on the notion of corporate or employee volunteering. The global Engage campaign had a successful Australian launch in 2003, supported by the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership. A growing number of corporations are supporting and encouraging staff to use their skills for community benefit. Employee volunteers, whilst they might volunteer as individuals, also join with co-workers to undertake 'done in a day' projects. A successful 'team challenge' was held in 2003 with over 60 team opportunities being offered to corporate volunteers.

Similarly, organisations are challenged to provide a work environment that is conducive to participation by baby boomers who are also looking for shorter-term involvement so other needs in their lives can be met. It is anticipated that baby boomers will be combining part-time work, leisure, travel and minding grandchildren as well as community work. Some parts of the sector have adapted well to the new trends in volunteering and have redesigned volunteer roles to accommodate these different groupings of volunteers; other organisations are struggling to recruit volunteers for the particular type of volunteer work being offered.

A number of pieces of research around cultural diversity, indigenous communities and volunteer involvement, baby boomers and young people have been or are being undertaken. Information from the research has given rise to various strategies to assist organisations and communities to recognise the changing nature of volunteering.

There are a number of on-line volunteer recruitment sites available in Australia, the most successful of which is the GoVolunteer web site which has around 80,000 volunteer jobs and has had over one million individual visitors over three years. Although the web site lends itself to advertising the types of volunteer roles suitable for those restricted by mobility, geography or paid work commitments, the sector is yet to create a substantial number of suitable roles.

Overall a significant amount of work has been undertaken to achieve this final objective. The sector is slowly coming to terms with the changes that are affecting the traditional volunteer roles and recruiting techniques.

The state of play - three years on

The *National Agenda* was an ambitious document based on information from those who work in the sector, volunteers, business people and government representatives. That it has not completely achieved its goals three years on is a reflection on the under resourced state of many not-for-profit organisations; the ad hoc and unilateral approach to volunteering, and the infrastructure that supports it, taken by some governments; and the impact on the voluntary sector of business imperatives.

Volunteering is owned by the community and as such the *National Agenda* was never intended simply as a log of claims to government. However, the prevailing international view is that government must accept and undertake the role of enabler and facilitator. The role of government is to create the policy and legislative environment in which volunteering may flourish. Within this context there is a significant opportunity for government to continue to engage with the volunteering peak bodies to develop policies, programs and initiatives which provide much needed support and recognition to volunteers and the organisations that provide the opportunities for involvement.

The sector itself must also act to ensure that it exemplifies the model of best practice for volunteer involvement if it is to continue to foster the involvement of the millions of Australians who choose to donate their time for the benefit of the whole community.

What the people say

As it is two years since the publication of the most recent ABS volunteering data and three years since the International Year of Volunteers we commissioned Newspoll, a leading provider of opinion polling and market research, to investigate attitudes and behaviour in volunteering in 2004.

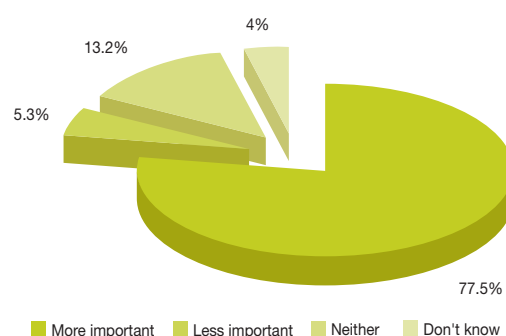
In October 2004 Newspoll conducted a telephone survey of 1200 Australians over the age of 18, from all Australian capital cities and rural and regional areas. ABS data was used to weight the results to reflect Australia's population distribution and demographic characteristics.

The Newspoll research reinforces what is already known about volunteering in Australia - it is a vibrant and growing movement. The importance placed on volunteering by Australians is on the rise, as is their awareness of volunteering.

The Newspoll data is in line with the trend of increased volunteering identified by the ABS over the past ten years¹⁶, with 46 per cent of respondents surveyed having given their time willingly to not-for-profit organisations in the previous year.

The practice of volunteering is strongly valued in Australian communities. Almost eight in ten (78 per cent) of respondents believe volunteering is more important for the community now than it was five years ago (Figure 1). The community benefits of volunteering are undisputed, with volunteering long identified as an important contributor to social capital, a measure of the connectedness and wellbeing of communities.

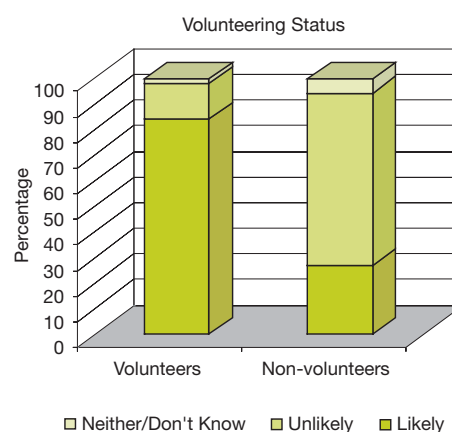
Figure 1. Perceived importance of volunteering compared to 5 years ago



The data also shows a growing awareness of volunteering, with 72 per cent of respondents saying they are more aware of volunteering now than they were five years ago.

The majority of respondents (54 per cent) anticipated volunteering within the next twelve months. The research found that volunteering begets volunteering - 84 per cent of the respondents who have volunteered in the previous year anticipate volunteering in the next twelve months (Figure 2). More than one quarter (27 per cent) of those intending to volunteer next year did not volunteer last year. This suggests that although a high proportion of those volunteering continue from one year to the next, a considerable proportion of volunteers in any year did not volunteer in the previous twelve months.

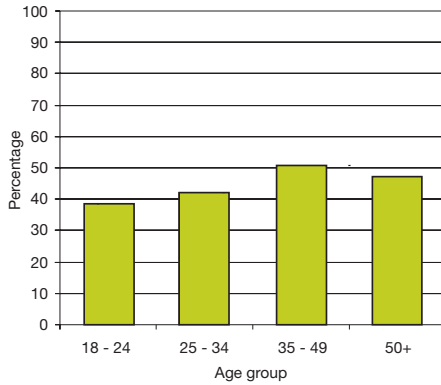
Figure 2. Likelihood of volunteering within next year



Who volunteers?

Volunteering is an inclusive, dynamic movement. Contrary to outmoded stereotypes about the 'typical' volunteer, volunteers are strongly represented across all demographic categories. The Newspoll data recorded a relatively even spread of volunteering across age groups, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Volunteer participation as proportion of age group



Volunteering is also quite evenly distributed according to gender, socio-economic status, income and employment status. Figure 4 demonstrates the high levels of participation in volunteering by Australians across a range of demographic distinctions. The data highlights the diversity of volunteers and the relevance and importance of volunteering to Australian society.

Figure 4. Volunteering as a proportion of demographic categories

Sex		Children		Marital status		Work status		
M	F	Yes	No	Married	Single	Full time	Part time	Not at all
44%	48%	54%	42%	50%	42%	43%	55%	46%

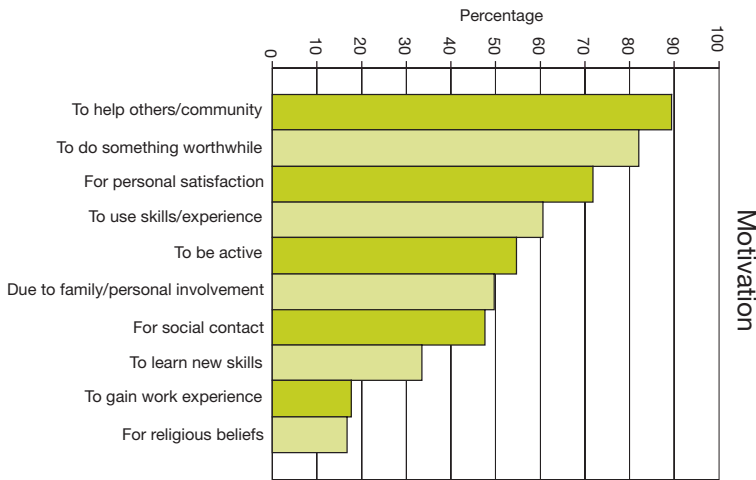
Motivations/Impediments

The major reasons identified for volunteering by Newspoll are mostly altruistic in nature. Figure 5 shows these reasons in the order recorded by Newspoll. Respondents were able to identify multiple reasons for the participation or non-participation in volunteering. As with the ABS data collected in this area, the findings do not add up to 100 per cent for this reason.

These findings support what is known about volunteer motivation: that people volunteer for both altruistic reasons and for the personal and other benefits experienced.

The Newspoll research reinforces what is already known about volunteering in Australia – it is a vibrant and growing movement

Figure 5. Motivations for volunteering



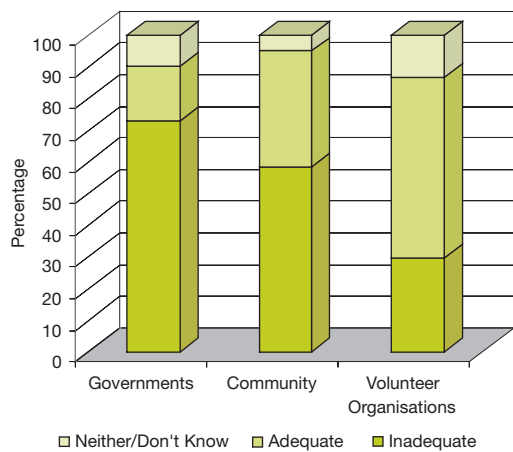
Of those surveyed who did not volunteer in the past year, 71% reported not having enough time to volunteer. Full time workers and people with children were more likely to record this response. The likelihood of survey participants identifying a lack of time as a barrier to volunteering also correlated with higher socio-economic status, income and level of educational attainment.

Recognition of Volunteers

Most respondents felt volunteers are inadequately recognised by government and the wider community. According to the Newspoll research, volunteer-involving organisations are considered to perform better in recognising volunteers.

Governments are generally supportive of volunteering but have some way to go in recognising the work that volunteers do.

Figure 6. Adequacy of recognition of volunteers



To facilitate a greater awareness of the issues affecting volunteers, Volunteering Australia developed a set of principles of volunteering. These principles were developed in consultation with the volunteering sector, unions and government.



Principles of volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- Volunteer work is unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances

References and Notes

- 1 Volunteering Australia 2001, *A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers*
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995) *Voluntary Work Australia 1995*, Catalogue 4440.0, ABS: Canberra
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002) *General Social Survey Australia 2002*, Catalogue 4159.0, ABS: Canberra
- 4 Bureau of Labor Statistics (2002) *Volunteering in the US, 2002*, BLS: Washington, D.C.
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- 6 NOV/SVM (2002) *Onvoltooid toekomst Trendrapport Vrijwilligerwerk*, NOV/SVM: Utrecht
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- 9 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002) *General Social Survey Australia 2002*, Catalogue 4159.0, ABS: Canberra. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *Voluntary Work Survey, 2000*, Catalogue 4441, ABS: Canberra.
- 10 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1988) *Pilot Time Use/Time-use Survey, Sydney 1987*, Catalogue 4153, ABS: Canberra.
- 11 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) *How Australians Use their Time, 1997*, Catalogue 4153, ABS: Canberra.
- 12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000) *Voluntary Work Australia 2000*, Catalogue 4441.0, ABS: Canberra
- 13 The Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS), established collaboratively by Duncan Ironmonger (The University of Melbourne), Jonathan Gershuny (University of Essex) and Andrew Harvey (St Mary's University, Nova Scotia) in 1998, is a cross-nationally harmonised set of time-use surveys composed of identically recorded variables. Regularly updated, the current version of the MTUS dataset comprises some 35 time-use surveys from ten different countries and gives us the opportunity for the examination of international differences in how we spend our time. Specifically, the MTUS data set was used to compare the time Australians spend on volunteering through organisations with other countries.
- 14 The dramatic increase in the time spent on volunteering (from 36 to 94 minutes per week over eight years) in the UK may be due to changes in time use/time-use survey methodology.
- 15 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) *How Australians Use their Time, 1997*, Catalogue 4153, ABS: Canberra.
- 16 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Voluntary Work Survey 2000*, Catalogue 4441.0 ABS: Canberra

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