

Youth Volunteering Key Statistics

August 2021

Disclaimer

These statistics have been compiled primarily from external sources. While every effort has been made to provide accurate and up to date data, Volunteering Australia does not accept any liability for the accuracy, reliability or completeness of data in this summary. Users are encouraged to visit the source report to assist in the understanding of the data and context of information provided.

Introduction

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 'Volunteering during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2021)' study conducted by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, and the Mission Australia Youth Survey 2020.

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.¹

The latest Census of Population and Housing will be held on 10 August 2021 and asked about volunteering. This data will be available in 2022.

Data presented in this factsheet classifies respondents into age groups, and different classifications are used across the eight surveys included. The 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."² 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.

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

Key statistics

- 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.
- According to the Mission Australia Youth Survey, volunteering was the 4th most commonly reported activity for young people in 2020, with 43.3 per cent of respondents aged 15-19 being involved.³
- The proportion of people aged 18-24 years who had done voluntary work 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.

Volunteering rates

General Social Survey 2019

- In 2019, **28.8 per cent** of people aged 15-24 volunteered formally and **36.5 per cent** volunteered informally (the second highest of any age group).
- **852,400** people aged 15-24 volunteered through an organization and **1,081,000** volunteered informally in 2019.

Data from Tables 3.1 and 3.3, *General Social Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2019: "Has undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in the last 12 months,"* and *"Has undertaken informal volunteering in the last 4 weeks."*

<i>Age group</i>		<i>15-24</i>	<i>25-39</i>	<i>40-54</i>	<i>55-69</i>	<i>70 and over</i>
<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Formal</i>	28.8	25.7	36.2	29.0	24.5
	<i>Informal</i>	36.5	38.8	34.0	27.3	26.9
<i>Estimate ('000)</i>	<i>Formal</i>	852.4	1,441.8	1,729.8	1,184.7	638.1
	<i>Informal</i>	1,081.0	2,178.9	1,623.8	1,113.4	698.9

Source: *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia*, available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/2019>

General Social Survey 2020

- 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 organization and **830,500** volunteered informally in 2020.

Data from Tables 9.1 and 9.3, General Social Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2020: “Has undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in the last 12 months,” and “Has undertaken informal volunteering in the last 4 weeks.”

Age group		15-24	25-39	40-54	55-69	70 and over
Proportion	Formal	19.4	20.9	30.5	24.9	28.0
	Informal	27.2	38.9	32.7	29.1	26.1
Estimate (‘000)	Formal	592.3	1,152.2	1,473.4	1,032.1	765.1
	Informal	830.5	2,149.3	1,581.3	1,205.3	714.5

Source: General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/2020>

Mission Australia Youth Report 2020

- When young people were asked what activities they are involved in, volunteering was the 4th most commonly reported, with **43.3 per cent** of young people being involved

Data from the Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2020

State/territory	Proportion of young people who were involved in volunteer work, 2020
Australian Capital Territory	39.2
New South Wales	46.4
Northern Territory	44.7
Queensland	43.2
South Australia	38.1
Tasmania	54.3
Victoria	42.0
Western Australia	42.8
National	43.3

Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2020, available at: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-11/apo-nid309542.pdf>

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.⁴

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

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

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

The impact of 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)

<i>Per cent of Australians who undertook volunteering in the preceding 12 months, by age—late 2019 and April 2021</i>	<i>Late 2019</i>	<i>April 2021</i>
18-24 years	36.5	25.6
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)

<i>Age group</i>	<i>February 2021</i>	<i>March 2021</i>	<i>April 2021</i>	<i>June 2021</i>
18-34	11.3	11.1	9.3	8.9
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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¹ <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/contact/>

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

³ <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-11/apo-nid309542.pdf>

⁴ These proportions have a high margin of error (>10 percentage points), which should be considered when interpreting this information