STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND | 2024

volunteering queensland

Volunteering Queensland acknowledges the Jagera people and the Turrbal peoples of (Meanjin) Brisbane, the land upon which our office stands and all the traditional lands of the many Queenslanders who contributed to this report. We recognise the significance of their connection to place and community on these lands and pay respects to Elders past and present.

We celebrate the ongoing contributions of the First Nations People of this land.

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STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND 2024 REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volunteering weaves strong threads throughout the entire social fabric of Queensland's many unique and diverse communities. An estimated 64.3% of Queenslanders (2,800,000 people) aged 15 years and over volunteered between July 2022 and July 2023.

This includes both formal volunteering (through a formally recognised organisation) and informal volunteering (through spontaneous, self-organised and non-affiliated individual or group activities such as helping a neighbour or collecting litter along a beach with friends).

Queensland, consistent with other Australian States and Territories and many countries around the world, is experiencing a decline in volunteering, both in the number of people who volunteer and the overall time they volunteer. Nevertheless, Queenslanders willingly gave a combined 719,000,000 hours of their time across this 12-month period, volunteering an average of over five hours per person per week.

The barriers to volunteering are multifaceted and this research identifies several key barriers, notably people's restrictions on time and impacts associated with the rising costs of living. Over 23% of those surveyed who did not volunteer said they had never been asked or were unsure how to volunteer.

This research highlights that Queenslanders do want to volunteer. Nearly 30% of those surveyed, regardless of whether they currently volunteer, stated that they would like to volunteer more, and most people who currently volunteer wish to keep on volunteering.

Although volunteering is time willingly given, volunteering is not free to undertake. Both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations incur direct and often significant expenses. This report estimates that the average cost for a person to volunteer is $15.57 per hour (tripled from $4.76 per hour in 2020). The average cost incurred by organisations utilising volunteers is $5.09 per volunteer hour.

Positively, volunteers have reported an increase in the amount that they are reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses. In 2020, volunteers on average were reimbursed only 11.4% of their out-of-pocket expenses. This has increased to 21.0% in the 2022-23 financial year. This is a significant and important increase as the cost of volunteering was cited as a major barrier for Queenslanders wanting to volunteer.

Volunteering also incurs opportunity costs for both volunteers and the organisations that enable volunteering. All costs combined, this report estimates that the cost of volunteering in Queensland was $25 billion in the 2022-23 financial year.

This research finds that the economic value of volunteering in Queensland was over $117 billion in the 2022-23 financial year. While volunteering is not done for financial gain, the benefits can be quantified. This is the sum of commercial benefits ($22.8 billion), individual benefits ($54.5 billion), and civic benefits ($40.5 billion). The civic benefits include the cost to replace the labour that volunteers contribute to Queensland, estimated at $31.3 billion.

Comparing the costs to the benefits, Queensland's volunteering is estimated to return a benefit of $4.70 for every $1 of cost.

If Queenslanders who wish to volunteer were better supported, this report estimates that the State of Queensland could realise over $10 billion more in benefits over the next three years.

The cost to replace the labour that volunteers contribute to Queensland is estimated at

$31.3 billion
per year

Volunteering: Time willingly given for the common good without financial gain.

KEY FINDINGS

64%
of Queenslanders volunteered in 2023

2.8
MILLION PEOPLE

People spent an average of

21.6
HOURS PER MONTH

OR

719.8
MILLION HOURS
volunteering in 2023

The **value** of volunteering to the Queensland community is

$117.8 BILLION

For every **$1** invested in volunteering ...

$4.70 is returned

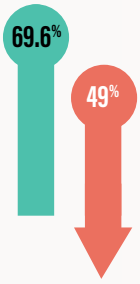
KEY FINDINGS FROM VOLUNTEERS

Participation — 2020 (Queenslanders aged 18+ surveyed in 2020) — 2023 (Queenslanders aged 15+ surveyed in 2023)

Participation

Down over 10%

Formal volunteers (volunteering with an organisation) as a percentage of volunteers



Down over 20%

Informal volunteering

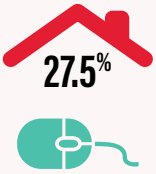
Down over 15%

Number of hours volunteered each month

Down just under 20%

People are volunteering in their local community, at home or online

in their local community



at home or online

People are motivated to volunteer

- **64.2%** To help others
- **41.3%** For enjoyment
- **37.5%** To be active

Top 3 ways people find volunteer roles

- **56.6%** Word of mouth
- **37.9%** Social media
- **24.0%** Google search

Top 3 barriers to volunteering more

- **41.8%** No time
- **14.5%** Costs
- **13.1%** Health reasons

KEY FINDINGS FROM VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

Top 3 recruitment channels

80.8%
Word of mouth

61.9%
Social media

54.6%
Website

Top 3 recognition, engagement and retention strategies

71.7%
Volunteer training and development

62.7%
Personal relationship building

54.7%
Awards and formal recognition

Top 3 barriers to volunteering (as perceived by volunteer managers)

66.4%
No time

46.7%
Health reasons

38.4%
Burnout

Top 3 issues in volunteering

87.0%
Volunteer retention

86.5%
Volunteer health and safety

77.7%
Volunteer recruitment

Top 3 challenges of the last three years

1. Volunteer hours have decreased
2. Volunteers need more training
3. Fewer people want to volunteer

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

29.1%

of volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years

27.6%

of non volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years

26.8%

of volunteer managers say that more people will be volunteering with their organisation in 3 years

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

For every $1 invested in volunteering ...

$4.70 is returned

The value of volunteering to the Queensland community is

$117.8 Billion

The labour replacement cost to replace all volunteers is

$31.3 Billion

Volunteering improves workplace productivity by

14.7%

113,000 jobs in Queensland were created in 2023 through expenditure on volunteering

The increase in individual wellbeing attributable to volunteering is

+4.4 percentage points

Volunteer involving organisations spend an average of

$5.09 per volunteer hour

Cost for volunteers

2020 2023

Average volunteer expenses per hour

$4.97

$15.57

Up by over 300%

Reimbursement rate to volunteers from organisations

11.4% 21%

Up by nearly 10%

Percentage share of total expenses

Volunteers **76.2%**

Volunteer involving organisations **23.8%**

Costs and benefits of volunteering (Queensland)

Costs ($ million)			
Direct costs		***Sub-totals***	***Totals***
Volunteer expenses	$8,849.9		
Volunteer involving organisation expenses	$2,769.8	$11,619.7	
Opportunity costs			
Volunteers' time	$12,863.7		
Volunteering investments	$489.2	$13,352.9	**$24,972.6**
Benefits ($ million)			
Commercial benefits			
Producers' surplus	$2,155.1		
Productivity premium	$20,640.9	$22,796.0	
Civic benefits			
Employment	$6,556.5		
Taxes	$2,608.6		
Volunteers' labour	$31,337.8	$40,502.9	
Individual benefits			
Volunteers' dividend		$54,455.7	**$117,754.6**
Social return on investment			
Benefit: cost ratio	**4.7 : 1**		**$92,782.0**

*For more information and definitions on the items referred to in this table please view the full **State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 Report** which can be found on Volunteering Queensland's website.*

Message from Her Excellency the

GOVERNOR

As Governor and Patron of Volunteering Queensland, I am pleased to endorse this comprehensive report, which provides valuable insights into community life and many uplifting statistics on the number and type of people involved in worthy causes.

The finding that some 2.8 million people aged 15 and above engaged in formal or informal volunteering activities in 2023 is welcome news.

The value of this volunteering to our State is estimated at over $117 billion, providing extensive commercial, civic and individual benefits. And the return on investment -approximately $4.70 for every dollar spent on volunteering - highlights the importance of volunteering to the Queensland economy.

Volunteers constitute a significant portion of the labour force, surpassing both the private and public sectors. That the volunteers themselves give up millions of hours and shoulder much of the cost says much about the kind of people involved.

I am always greatly heartened to see the contribution of the volunteer sector acknowledged when the Australian Honours and Awards are announced, and I expect to see the same during 2024.

Notably, the report states that nearly two-thirds of Queensland residents volunteer in some form, and 30% of the community has expressed a desire to volunteer more in the next three years. This points to a bright future for volunteering in our State, and I am confident Volunteering Queensland as a peak body can rise to the challenge of maximising voluntary contributions, increasing the impact of the sector, and above all inspiring more Queenslanders to volunteer.

I extend my thanks on behalf of all Queenslanders for your continuing efforts to give voice to an industry that is so essential in sustaining communities, families and individuals across our State.

HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE
Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland

Message from the

MINISTER

Volunteers and volunteer organisations make a tremendous contribution to Queensland's social and economic wellbeing.

Volunteering Queensland's second State of Volunteering in Queensland Report captures a valuable snapshot of the Queenslanders rolling up their sleeves and freely giving their time and talents to help others, while also measuring their significant social and economic contribution.

As this report highlights, the work of volunteers annually represents up to $117 billion to the Queensland economy, delivering a return of around $4.70 for every dollar invested in volunteering.

Around 2.8 million Queenslanders volunteered during 2023 either formally through thousands of volunteer involving organisations or informally helping out in their local neighbourhood and broader community and many have indicated they would happily do more if they could.

This number represents two out of every three Queenslanders aged 15 years and over, who volunteer in some capacity, making volunteering Queensland's biggest industry by labour force.

The work of volunteers is critical to supporting Queenslanders' recovery from extreme weather events, reducing social isolation and loneliness, and growing community cohesion through diverse volunteer organisations and state's network of 128 Queensland Government funded Neighbourhood Centres.

The Miles Government continues to back the great work of our state's volunteers investing $2.6 million over five years, including more than $527,000 in the 2023/ 2024 Budget to support Volunteering Queensland, the state peak body for volunteering and lead coordinating and training organisation for volunteers.

I want to thank all Queensland's volunteers for their amazing dedication and contribution to our state and people as the backbone of so many of our communities.

The Miles Government is committed to nurturing and growing the capacity and capability of the state's 2.8 million volunteers through our ongoing, close partnership with Volunteering Queensland.

THE HONOURABLE
Leeanne Enoch MP
Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & CEO

Volunteering Queensland is pleased to present the second State of Volunteering in Queensland Report, a significant and timely piece of independent research building on our inaugural State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report. We hope that this comprehensive analysis of volunteering will be of value to everyone involved with volunteering. This includes Queensland's large and diverse volunteering sector as well as our broader Queensland and Australian communities.

As the peak body, Volunteering Queensland is solely dedicated to advancing, and promoting volunteering, helping to build a stronger, more inclusive and connected Queensland. This research provides valuable insights into the economic and social value of volunteering so that, together with our sector we can create opportunities for volunteering to grow and flourish.

This report provides valuable insights into how Queensland's changing social and economic landscape is impacting the volunteering sector. To successfully navigate these shifts, which present both challenges and opportunities, we need this powerful evidence-base to understand and effectively respond to the changes and inform our policy, advocacy and actions.

This research recognises the multifaceted demands that Queenslanders are experiencing across all areas of their lives and the impact this has on their volunteering. Volunteering is not free and needs support and investment from all levels of government, business and the broader community.

Currently, investment in volunteering returns strong value, estimated in this research to be $4.70 for every $1.00 invested. The report also highlights that Queenslanders want to volunteer and say that it is their intention to increase their volunteering. Help is needed for this vital resource to thrive and continue to contribute to the wellbeing of our State.

Queensland's volunteering sector is to be commended for its 'can do' attitude, remarkable resilience and adaptability, and unflagging dedication to service for the benefit of our communities. Research such as this is a powerful reminder of how critical volunteering is to our State.

This report is the outcome of a successful, far-reaching collaboration between many individuals and organisations contributing their rich and diverse expertise, knowledge, advice and experience. Contributors included members of the advisory committee, the thousands of Queensland residents and volunteer managers who participated in surveys and focus groups, the Institute of Project Management, fellow volunteering peak bodies, and our committed team. Please accept our gratitude and thanks.

We encourage you to read, share, discuss and use this report with colleagues and other key stakeholders. It is our hope that you find it an invaluable resource to guide and inform your volunteering programs and endeavours and help ensure a vibrant, sustainable Queensland volunteering sector. Our vision is for a sector that is acknowledged and adequately supported and resourced to enable it to continue to grow and deliver significant economic, social, cultural and environmental value and impact to Queensland and its people.

Linda Lavarch
Chair | Volunteering Queensland

Mara Basanovic
CEO | Volunteering Queensland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We celebrate the ongoing contributions of the First Nations People of this land.

This is an independent report commissioned by Volunteering Queensland. It was authored by Paul Muller from the Institute of Project Management who worked closely with the Volunteering Queensland State of Volunteering Project Team, comprising Rikki Anderson, Samuel Delamoir and Andrew Bartlett.

This report could not have been prepared without the valuable contribution of the following:

Project Advisory Committee

- Rikki Anderson, Senior Advisor, Volunteering Queensland (Co-Chair)
- Natasha Doherty, Immediate Past Board Director, Volunteering Queensland (Co-Chair)
- Brad Cooper, CEO, Volunteering Gold Coast
- Kathryn Dyble, Director, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
- Darryl Ebenezer, CEO, Queensland Water and Land Carers
- Matthew Gillett, Quality, Advocacy and Media Lead, Endeavour Foundation
- Michael Kerr, Immediate Past Councillor, Douglas Shire Council
- Professor Leonie Lockstone-Binney, Deputy Director, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith Business School, Griffith University
- Jasmine Renny, 2023 Queensland Youth Volunteer of the Year
- Narelle Thorne, Advisor, Social Investment, Social Investment Australia, Rio Tinto
- Dave Whimpey, CEO, Surf Life Saving Queensland

Project Launch Panel Discussion Members

- Emeritus Professor Myles McGregor-Lowndes OAM, former Director, Australian Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNS)
- Professor Leonie Lockstone-Binney, Deputy Director, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith Business School, Griffith University
- Kathryn Dyble, Director, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

- Dave Whimpey, CEO, Surf Life Saving Queensland
- Paul Muller CPD, Director, Institute of Project Management
- Rikki Anderson, Senior Advisor, Volunteering Queensland

Our appreciation is extended to:

- Queenslanders with Disability Network for their advice on inclusive language and content.
- Inala Elders Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for their advice on inclusive language and content.
- The Centre of Volunteering NSW for their support and generosity in enabling the translation of the survey instruments into languages other than English.
- Report Designer – Cally Browning, Bare Creative.

Most importantly, we extend our sincere thanks the thousands of Queensland individuals and organisations who generously gave their time and shared their knowledge, expertise and experiences via surveys, focus groups and during the broader consultation process.

Finally, acknowledgement and thanks are extended to all the staff of Volunteering Queensland for their outstanding contribution and commitment to the production of this important report. Led by Rikki Anderson, Senior Advisor, Volunteering Queensland, with the assistance of Samuel Delamoir, Manager Advocacy, Policy and Research, Volunteering Queensland and Andrew Bartlett, Advocacy Advisor, Volunteering Queensland, the whole team worked diligently to realise this defining publication.

Disclaimer: *The analysis and opinions presented in this report are primarily those of the author. While this report was commissioned and published by Volunteering Queensland its publication does not necessarily imply agreement or endorsement of the views expressed herein by Volunteering Queensland.*

Explanatory note: *Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between totals and the sums of the component items. Proportions, ratios and other calculated figures shown in this report have been calculated using unrounded estimates and may be different from, but are more accurate than, calculations based on the rounded estimates.*

Disclosure: *This report was prepared with the support of generative artificial intelligence technology to assist the writing process. It is important to note that while generative artificial intelligence has aided in composing the text, the analysis and findings presented in this report are solely those of the principal author.*

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

EQUATIONS

INTRODUCTION

> The extensive dataset tells the story of volunteering in the State, capturing the specifics of the contemporary volunteering landscape in Queensland.

Commissioned by Volunteering Queensland, this comprehensive report offers a timely overview of the State of Volunteering in Queensland in 2024. It serves as an invaluable resource for policy and decision makers, community leaders, volunteer managers, volunteer involving organisations and engaged citizens and groups with an interest in volunteering alike.

The objectives of this report are threefold:

1. To quantify the economic and social value of volunteering.
2. To provide insights into the characteristics and challenges of volunteers, volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations.
3. To advance evidence-based data that can inform effective stakeholder decisions.

This report complements and extends previous work in this field, including the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report and research undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

One of the standout features of this report is the depth and scale of the research that underpins the work. Its analysis is motivated by one of the largest-ever population-representative surveys conducted exclusively on volunteering within Queensland, comprising a sample of 1,516 individuals. This is supported by the most extensive single survey of volunteer managers in the State, involving 833 respondents[1].

This extensive dataset enables a deep understanding of volunteering from the volunteer, managerial, and organisational perspective, making the findings of this report particularly relatable and reliable. It tells the story of volunteering in the State, capturing the specifics of the contemporary volunteering landscape in Queensland.

Anchoring the report is a robust cost-benefit analysis that quantifies the economic and social value that volunteering delivers to Queensland. The principal finding reveals that the benefits of volunteering significantly outweigh the costs, resulting in a substantial return that enriches the whole community. For every dollar invested in volunteering, there is an economic return of $4.70.

Ultimately, this report is designed to be more than a compendium of statistics and observations; it aims to be a catalyst for informed policy and decision-making and action. By drawing quantifiable evidence from authentic experiences, we hope to continue to inform the strategic direction of Queensland's volunteering sector.

[1] These surveys were concurrently undertaken in every State and Territory in Australia, resulting in a national dataset of 6,830 individuals and 3,948 volunteer managers.

METHODOLOGY

Note: a more detailed account can be found in Appendix A: Methodology detail.

To assess the State of Volunteering in Queensland, two primary research projects were conducted in July 2023.

The first project was a general survey of Queensland residents and is referred to in this report as the **Public Survey**.

The Public Survey asked a range of questions about individuals' volunteering participation (both formal and informal), motivations, barriers, impacts on employment, and future intentions. The analysis of this data is presented in Section 1 of this report. Additional data collected on volunteers' expenditure is used as an input for the cost-benefit analysis presented in Section 3.

The second project was a survey of volunteer managers in Queensland and is referred to in this report as the **Volunteer Manager Survey**. The definition of a volunteer manager used in the survey included persons who "supervise, organise or coordinate" volunteers.

The Volunteer Manager Survey questioned managers on a range of topics, including their organisational structure (if applicable), the demographics of their volunteer workforce, recruitment and retention strategies, expenses, current and emerging issues, and growth projections. The analysis of this data is presented in Section 2 of this report. The data on volunteer management expenses is also used as an input for the cost-benefit analysis presented in Section 3.

In addition to their distribution in Queensland, these surveys were concurrently fielded in every State and Territory in Australia. To promote participation from a broad cross-section of the community, the surveys were professionally translated by Multicultural NSW into the following 11 languages.

- Arabic
- Chinese (simplified)
- Chinese (traditional)
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Nepalese
- Persian (Farsi)
- Punjabi
- Spanish
- Vietnamese.

After preparing the data for analysis (Appendix A), the following valid samples of the Queensland and Australian public and volunteer managers were analysed. These samples are among the largest ever collected in volunteer specific surveys in Queensland and Australia.

Interpretation of findings

It is beyond the scope of this report to propose hypotheses for or explanations of its findings. While it is evident that factors like age significantly influence whether someone volunteers, the report does not attempt to explain why this is the case. Such an exploration is beyond the scope of this study, especially as the underlying reasons are likely to be contextual, complex, and nuanced.

Stakeholders in the volunteering sector are therefore encouraged to reflect on and share their own experiences to understand the findings. In other words, discuss this research with fellow volunteers, volunteer managers, and interested groups, accepting that the theories collectively developed may differ and sometimes even conflict with each other.

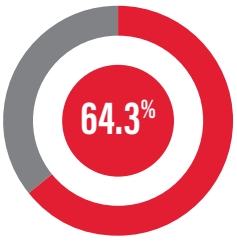
This engagement will be particularly useful at the local or organisational level and, when applied, may lead to opportunities to enhance the value of volunteering to individuals and the Queensland community.

Table 1: Public and Volunteer Manager Survey sample sizes

	Queensland	All of Australia
Public Survey	1,516	6,830
Volunteer Manager Survey	833	3,948

SECTION 1: VOLUNTEERS

KEY FINDINGS



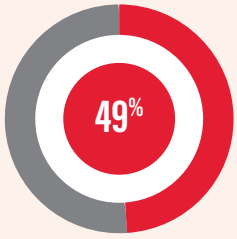
Percentage of the population aged 15 and over who volunteer

Total Queenslanders aged 15 and over who volunteer

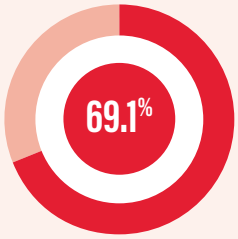
2.8
MILLLION

Average hours volunteered per month

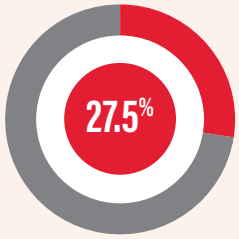
Total hours volunteered in Queensland



Formal Volunteers (as a percentage of volunteers)



Informal Volunteers (as a percentage of volunteers)



Percentage of volunteering done onlline or at home

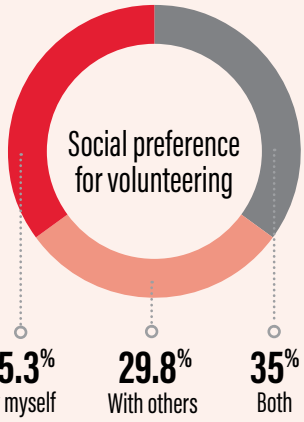
Top 5 volunteer motivations

Top 3 ways people find volunteer roles

56.6%
Word of mouth

37.9%
Social media

24.0%
Google search

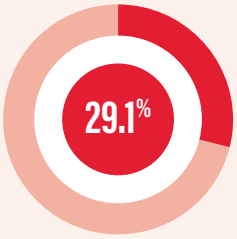


Top 5 barriers to volunteering more *(volunteers)*

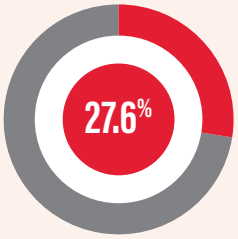
- **41.8%** No time
- **14.5%** Costs
- **13.1%** Health reasons
- **12.3%** Burnout (over-volunteering)
- **11%** Not interested in volunteering more

Top 5 barriers to volunteering more *(non volunteers)*

- **62.6%** No time
- **23.3%** Not sure how/ never been asked
- **17.9%** Health reasons
- **17.6%** Not interested in volunteering
- **13.1%** Lack of confidence



Volunteers who intend to volunteer more in 3 years' time



Non volunteers who intend to volunteer more in 3 years' time

Volunteer participation

For the purposes of the Public Survey, volunteering was defined as follows.

Volunteering is defined here as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."

Volunteering is helping someone or something (even if you don't call it volunteering).

You do not receive money for this, but maybe someone pays for your food, travel or other costs.

It includes volunteering organised by your employer or school.

It does not include work you do to receive a government allowance (such as a mutual obligation requirement) or as part of a court order (like community service).

It does not include only helping your family or people living in your house.

An example that is volunteering: coaching your child's football team, because people outside your household and family also benefit.

Another example is helping a neighbour mow their lawns or put their bins out.

An example that is not volunteering: helping your flatmate, cousin or sister with their homework.

This definition aligns with the Volunteering Australia definition of volunteering and subsequent guidance. For a discussion of the empirical benefits of this approach, see Appendix B: ABS Comparison.

The following question was asked.

Even if you did not think of it as volunteering, did you volunteer for any of these activities in the last 12 months?

Include any seasonal, occasional, spontaneous, one-off or online jhelp you gave.

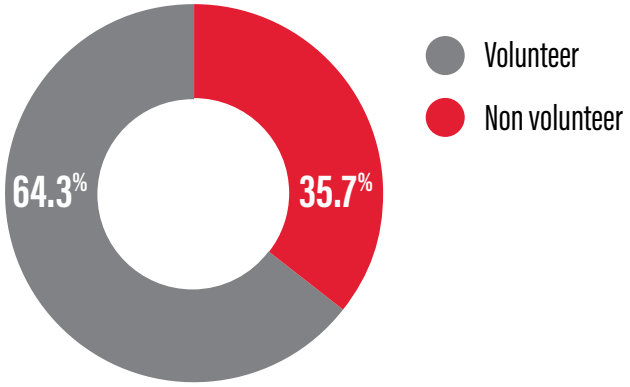
Tick all that apply.

- ☐ *Resource support (for example: meal sharing, translation, transport, running errands)*
- ☐ *Social or wellbeing support (for example: personal care, assistance, companionship)*
- ☐ *Support in someone else's home (for example: domestic work, home maintenance, unpaid child care)*
- ☐ *Teaching or coaching (for example: as an unpaid mentor, advisor, leader)*
- ☐ *Administrative support (for example: fundraising, book-keeping, customer service)*
- ☐ *Skilled support (for example: pro bono work, workplace or school supported activity)*
- ☐ *Emergency support (for example: during a pandemic or natural disaster)*
- ☐ *Event support (for example: at a festival, school, ceremony)*
- ☐ *Sport and recreation support (for example: coaching, officiating, organising, providing transport)*
- ☐ *Advocacy (for example: creating or sharing media, campaigning, protesting)*
- ☐ *Governance (for example: as an unpaid official, board or committee member)*
- ☐ *Environmental or animal protection (for example: clean-up, citizen science, rescue, rehabilitation)*
- ☐ *Faith based or cultural support (for example: religious instruction,*

pastoral care, sharing culture)

- ☐ *Other community contribution (for example: aged care, veterans support, food or goods distribution)*
- ☐ *I did not or could not volunteer in the last 12 months.*

Figure 1: Percentage of Queensland residents aged 15 and over who volunteer



A total of 64.3% of Queensland residents aged 15 and over, or 2.8 million people, contributed to the community as volunteers in 2023.

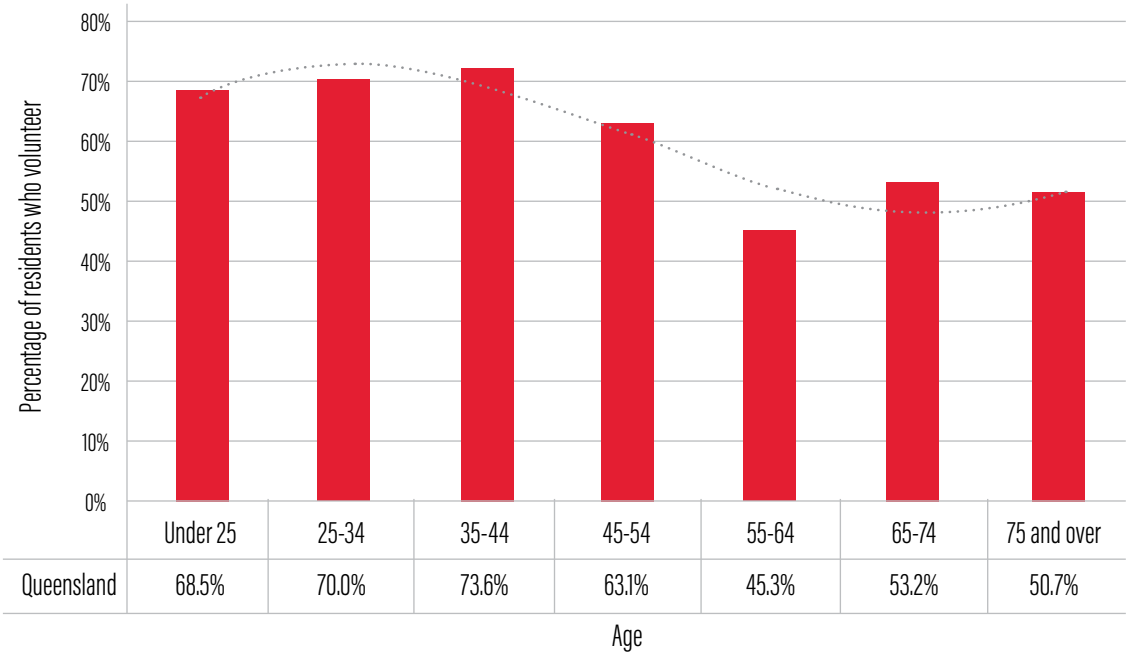
The following statistically significant observations were made about whether or not a person was a volunteer in Queensland.

- As age increased, the likelihood of a person being a volunteer decreased.
- The more hours a person worked for pay, the more likely they were to be a volunteer.
- If a person had caring duties at home, they were more likely to be a volunteer.

Gender, location, ethnic identity, and disability status made no significant difference to whether or not a person was a volunteer.

Noting the correlation between age and volunteering status, the following age-related insights about Queensland volunteers were observed.

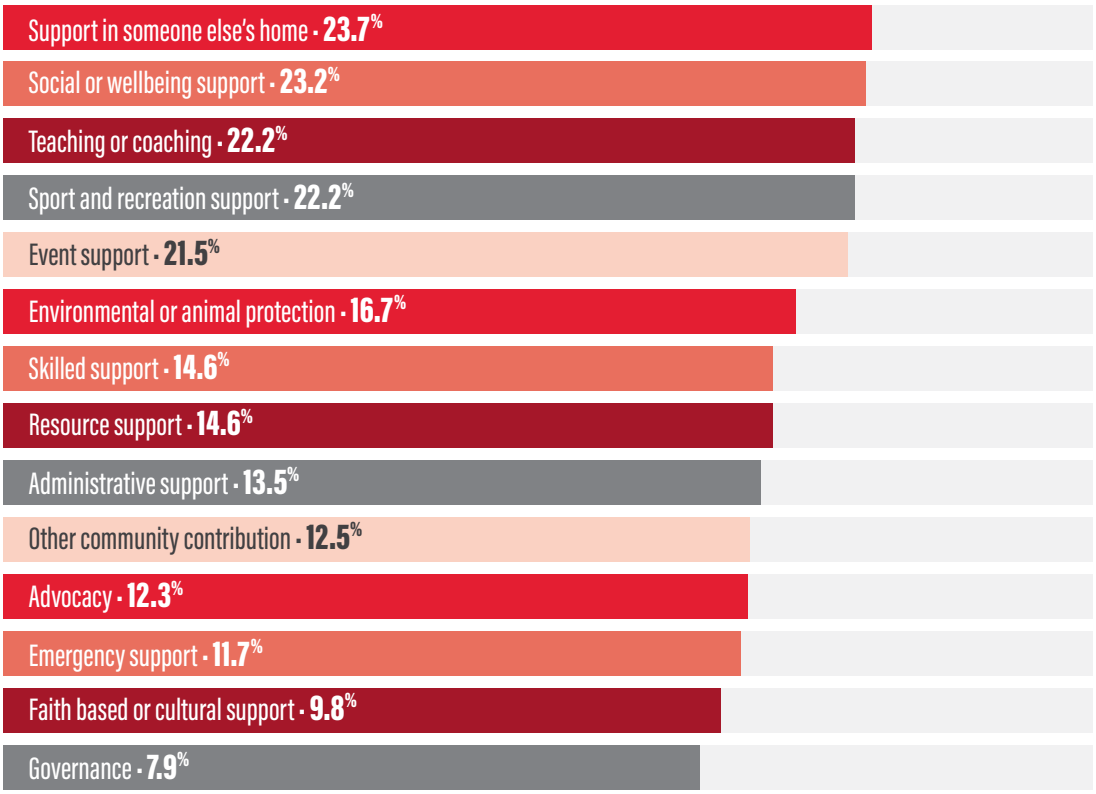
Figure 2: Volunteering participation in Queensland by age cohort



The red trendline overlaid on this figure shows that the relationship between age and volunteering in Queensland is not linear and that different stages of life correlate with different levels of volunteering.

Queensland volunteers also identified various methods of contributing to their community, as illustrated in the figure below. On average, they cited 2.3 different forms of volunteering from the list of 14 options.

Figure 3: The ways in which people contribute to their community as a volunteer



Formal versus informal volunteering

This report defines formal volunteering as volunteering with an organisation or community group, whereas informal volunteering refers to any other volunteering as outlined below.

The following three questions about formal and informal volunteering were only shown to people who identified as volunteers.

Was any of your volunteering in the last 12 months as a member of an organisation or community group?

- ☐ *Yes*
- ☐ *No*

On average, how many hours did you volunteer for these groups each month?

As well as regular hours, include any seasonal, occasional, spontaneous, one-off or online volunteering you did.

- ☐ ***Not-for-profit organisation(s)*** *such as sporting clubs, environment and conservation groups, animal welfare groups, special interest or hobby groups, youth groups, political parties, churches or charities*
- ☐ ***Government service(s)*** *such as public schools, hospitals, libraries, emergency or local government services*
- ☐ ***Private/ commercial organisation(s)*** *such as private schools, aged care, facilities, festivals or events*

On average, how many hours do you volunteer each month without being part of an organisation or group?

Do not include unpaid help or caring only given to your family or people living in your house.

Include things like domestic work, home maintenance or gardening outside your home, transport, or running errands, unpaid childcare, teaching, coaching or practical advice, social support, personal care or assistance, lobbying, advocacy or campaigning for a cause, helping out in the community or environmental or animal protection.

As well as regular hours, include any seasonal, occasional, spontaneous, one-off or online helping you did.

Enter zero (0) hours if you did not volunteer this way.

The definition of informal volunteering shown to respondents here is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) list of informal volunteering activities used as prompts in its General Social Survey (see also Appendix B: ABS Comparison).

Among the residents of Queensland, it was found that:

- 44.4% donated their time informally without organisational support (69.1% of volunteers).
- 31.5% did so in formal settings with volunteer involving organisations, such as not-for-profit, government and private organisations (49.0% of volunteers).
- 21.1% volunteered both formally and informally (38.6% of volunteers).

The following statistically significant observations were made about formal volunteers in Queensland.

- Younger volunteers were more likely than older volunteers to do so formally.
- The more hours a person worked for pay, the more likely they were to volunteer formally.
- People living with disability or caring duties were more likely to volunteer formally.

Gender, location, and ethnic identity made no significant difference to whether or not a person was a formal volunteer.

In formal settings, Queensland volunteers contributed an average of 18.6 hours per month to 3.4 different organisations. People volunteering informally gave just over half that time at 10.9 hours per month.

Overall, volunteers in Queensland contributed an average of 21.6 hours per month, month, equating to just over 5.0 hours per week. In aggregate, volunteer contributions in Queensland amounted to 719.8 million hours over the previous 12 months.

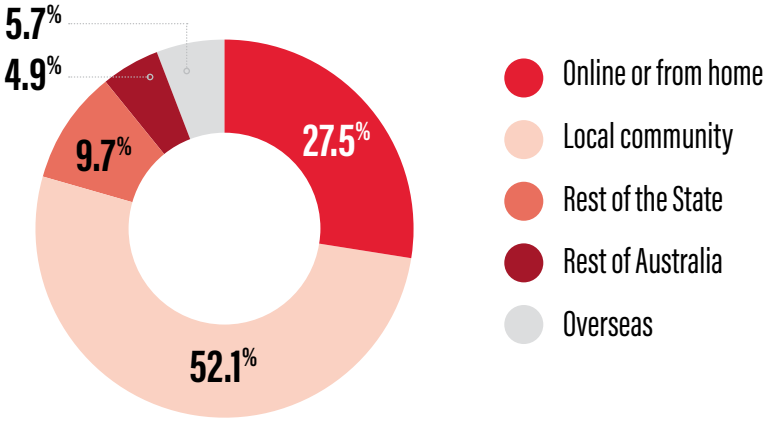
Place of volunteering

The following question was asked of Queensland residents who volunteer.

What percentage (%) of your volunteering is done...

- ☐ *Online or from home*
- ☐ *In the local community*
- ☐ *Elsewhere in the State*
- ☐ *Rest of Australia*
- ☐ *Overseas*

Figure 4: Where volunteers volunteer in Queensland



Over 50% of people are volunteering in their local community followed by over 25% of people volunteering online or from home. The following statistically significant observation can be made about online or at home volunteering in Queensland.

- People living with a disability were far more likely to volunteer online or at home.

Gender, location, ethnic identity, carer status, and hours worked for pay made no significant difference to whether or not a person volunteered online or at home.

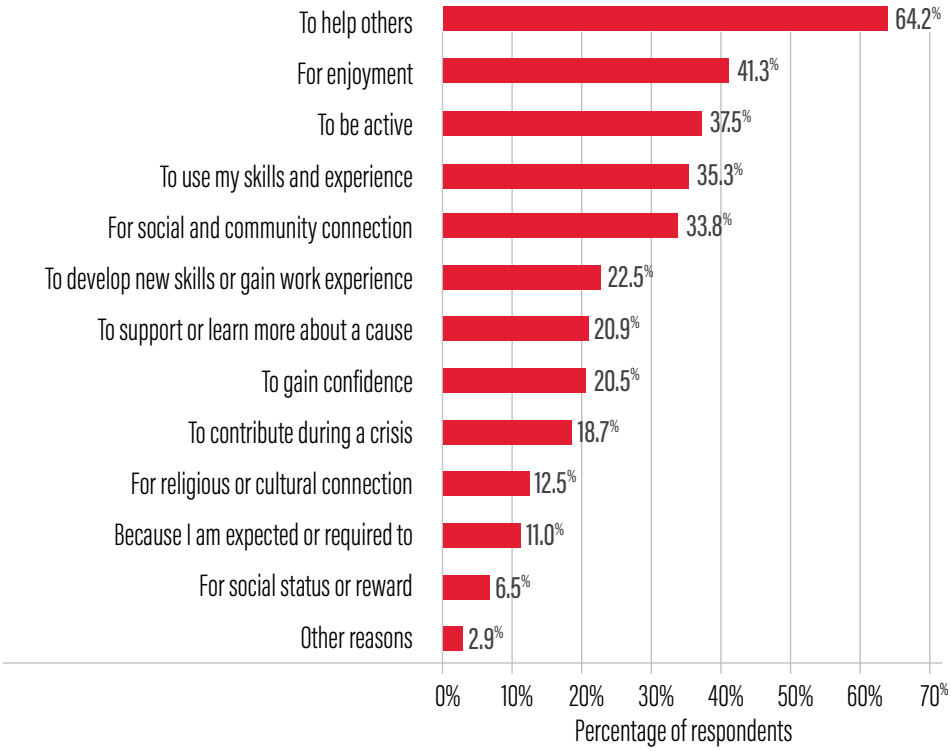
Volunteer motivations

Queensland residents who volunteer where asked, "*Why do you volunteer?*"

The list of options presented to them is shown in the figure below, in order of most to least frequently selected.

On average, Queensland residents reported 3.3 different motives for volunteering from the list of 13 possible responses.

Figure 5: Volunteer motives for volunteering



Volunteer recruitment

People who identified as volunteers in the survey were asked, *"How do you find opportunities to volunteer?"*

The list of options presented to them is shown in the figure below, in order of most to least frequently selected.

On average, Queensland volunteers cited utilising 2.2 different recruitment channels to find volunteering opportunities from the list of eight options.

Figure 6: How volunteers find opportunities to volunteer in Queensland

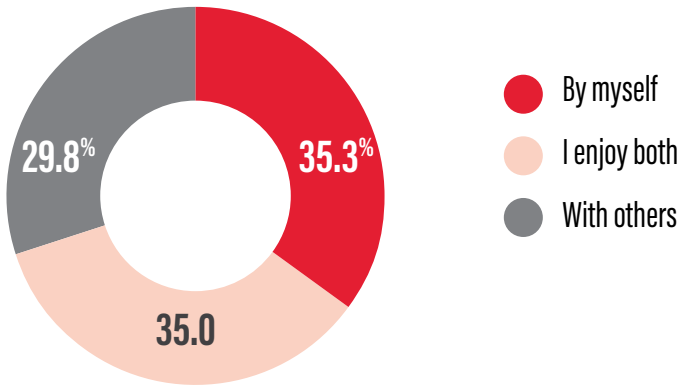
Social preference

The following question was asked of Queensland residents who volunteer.

"Do you prefer to volunteer by yourself or with others?"

- ☐ *By myself*
- ☐ *With others*
- ☐ *I enjoy both*

Figure 7: How people prefer to volunteer in Queensland



The following statistically significant observations were made of the 35.3% of volunteers who exclusively preferred to do so alone.

- Older volunteers were more likely to prefer to exclusively volunteer alone.
- Men were more likely to prefer to exclusively volunteer alone than women.
- First Nations volunteers were more likely than others to prefer to exclusively volunteer alone.
- People living with disability were more likely to prefer to exclusively volunteer alone.

Location, hours of paid work, and multicultural identity made no significant difference to whether or not a person preferred to volunteer exclusively alone.

> **Men were more likely to prefer to exclusively volunteer alone than women.**

Barriers to volunteering

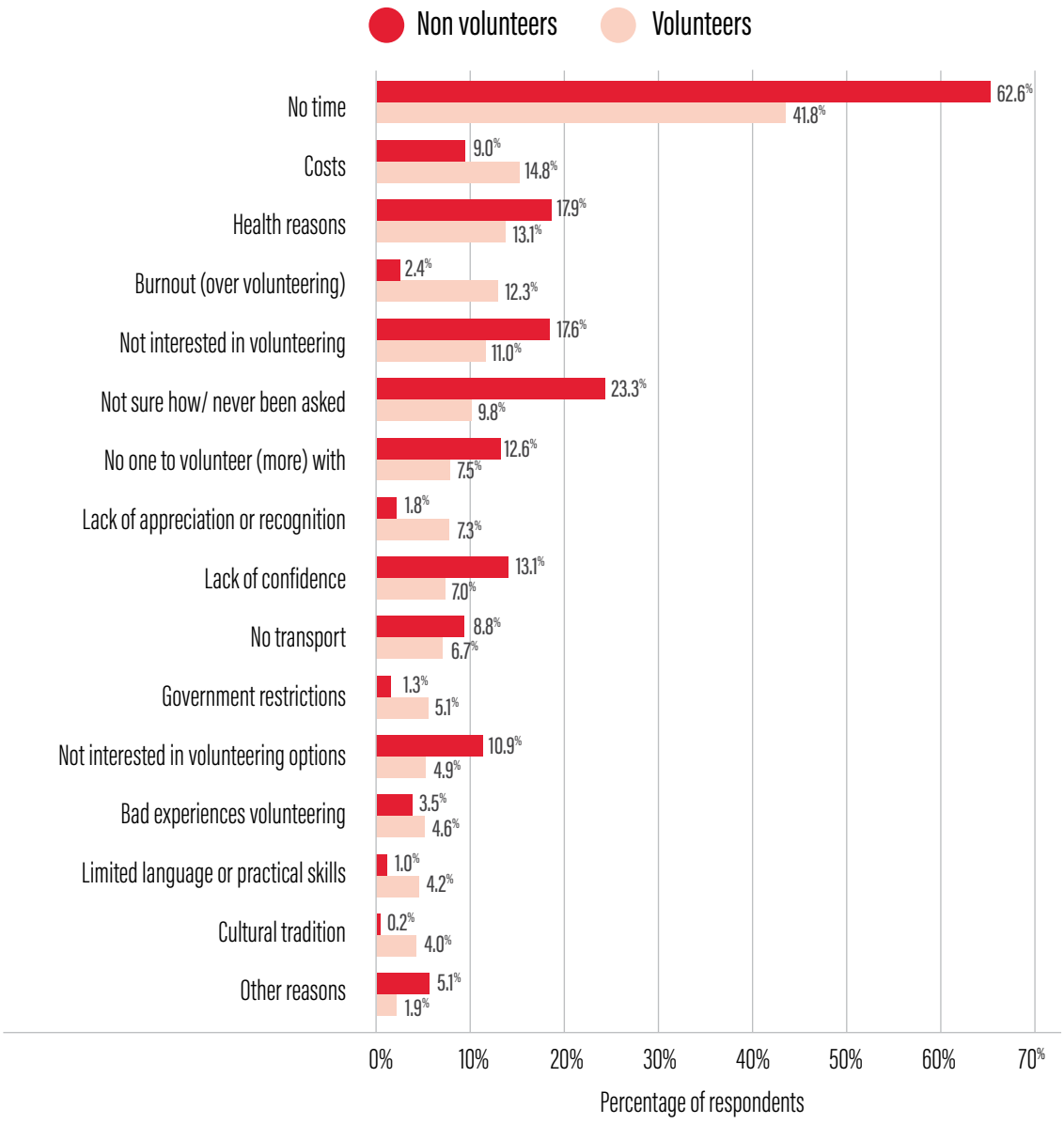
The following question was asked of all Queensland residents in the Public Survey.

*"What stops you giving **more*** time as a volunteer?"*

*The term "more" was only included for existing volunteers.

Volunteers reported an average of 1.7 barriers compared to an average of 1.6 barriers reported by non volunteers from the list of 16 options presented to them.

Figure 8: Barriers to volunteering (more) in Queensland



The following statistically significant observations were made about Queensland residents who identified a lack of time as a barrier to their volunteering.

- The more paid hours worked each week, the more likely they were to identify time as a barrier.
- The younger they were, the more likely they were to identify time as a barrier.
- Women were more likely to identify time as a barrier than men.
- First Nations people were less likely than others to identify time as a barrier.
- People living with a disability were less likely than others to identify time as a barrier.

Location, multicultural identity, carer status, and the number of hours a person volunteered each week made no significant difference as to whether or not a person identified a lack of time as a barrier to volunteering (more).

None of the demographic factors previously considered significantly correlated with costs or burnout as barriers to volunteering. Neither did the amount of time a person gave as a volunteer.

The following statistically significant observations were also made about the Queensland residents who reported being not sure how or never been asked to volunteer (more).

- The younger they were, the more likely they were to report being unsure how or never been asked to volunteer.
- People who identify as multicultural were more likely than others to report being unsure how or never been asked to volunteer.
- People with caring duties were less likely than others to report being unsure how or never been asked to volunteer.

Gender, location, First Nations identity, disability, and the number of hours a person worked for pay each week made no significant difference as to whether or not a person reported being not sure how or never been asked to volunteer (more) as a barrier.

The top five barriers to volunteers volunteering more were, in order:

1. No time – 41.8%
2. Costs – 14.5%
3. Health reasons – 13.1%
4. Burnout (over-volunteering) – 12.3%
5. Not interested in volunteering more – 11.0%

The top five barriers to non volunteers participating were, in order:

1. No time – 62.6%
2. Not sure how/ never been asked – 23.3%
3. Health reasons – 17.9%
4. Not interested in volunteering – 17.6%
5. Lack of confidence – 13.1%

Things that make volunteering harder

The following question was asked of all Queensland residents in the Public Survey.

Do any of the following make it hard for you to volunteer with others?

- ☐ *Your age*
- ☐ *Your gender*
- ☐ *Where you live*
- ☐ *Your employer*
- ☐ *Your ethnicity**
- ☐ *Your English language skill**
- ☐ *Your sexuality**
- ☐ *Your disability**
- ☐ *Your caring duties**
- ☐ *None of these make it harder for me to volunteer with others*

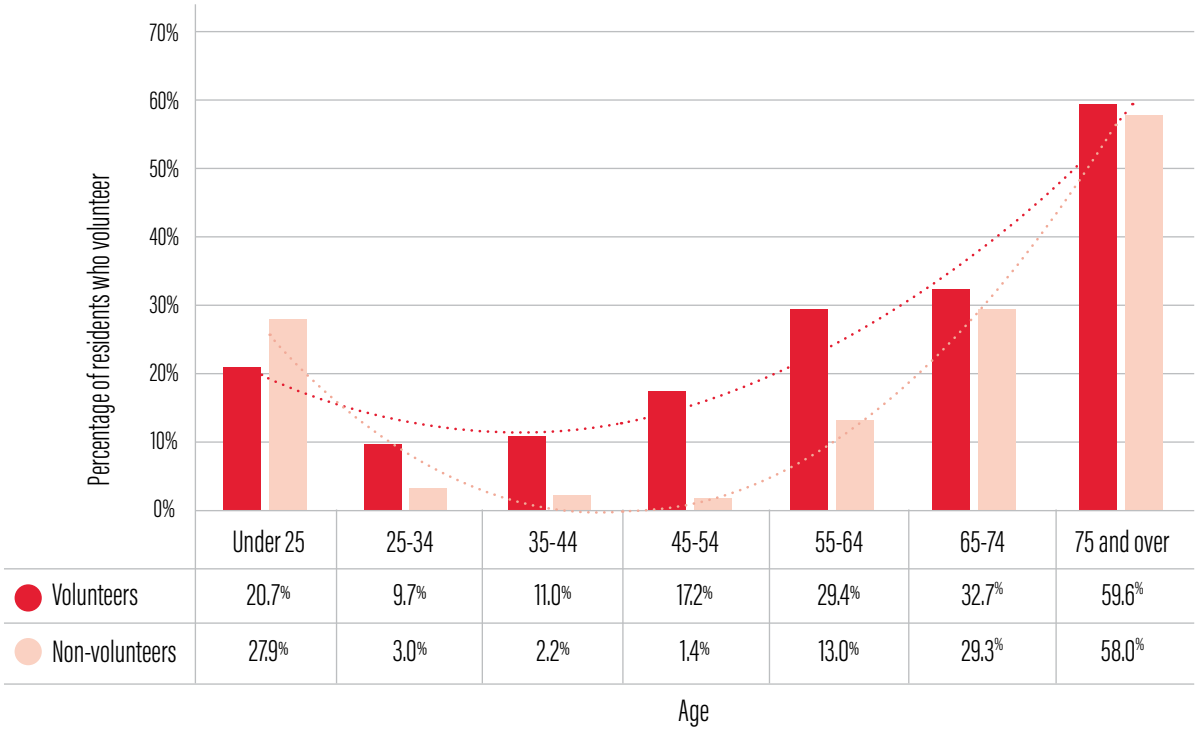
The questions marked * were only shown to people who identified as, in order, First Nations or multicultural, non-native English speakers, non-heterosexual, living with disability, or having caring duties.

For context, 46.6% of non-volunteers and 51.9% of volunteers in Queensland reported that one or more of the demographic factors they were asked about limited their ability to volunteer with others.

Age

The data reveals how various age groups in Queensland perceived their age as a barrier to volunteering with others.

Figure 9: Those who report that their age makes it harder to volunteer with others



	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over
Volunteers	20.7%	9.7%	11.0%	17.2%	29.4%	32.7%	59.6%
Non-volunteers	27.9%	3.0%	2.2%	1.4%	13.0%	29.3%	58.0%

Gender

Men were more likely than women to perceive their gender as something that made it harder to volunteer with others.

Table 3: Those who report that their gender makes it harder to volunteer with others

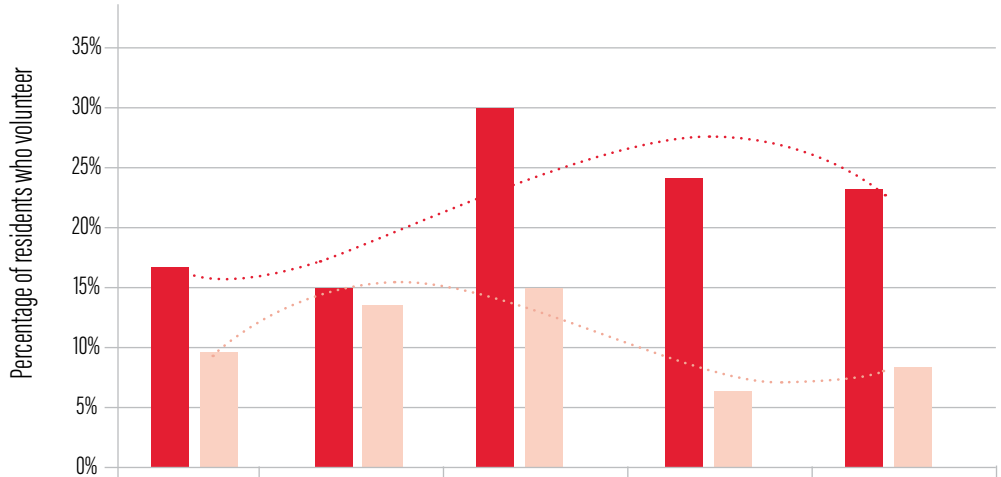
	Volunteers	Non volunteers
Men	7.7%	2.8%
Women	5.2%	1.6%

The experience of people who identified with other genders is not reported due to the sample size being so small as to be unreliable.

Location

Where you live plays a significant role in how easy or difficult you find it to volunteer with others. The further you live from a major city, the harder you find it to volunteer with others. This is especially true for those who are already involved in volunteering. They feel the challenges of location much more strongly than those who are not volunteering at all.

Figure 10: Those who report that their location makes it harder to volunteer with others



	Major City	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
Volunteers	16.9%	15.2%	29.9%	24.2%	23.3%
Non volunteers	9.8%	13.6%	15.4%	6.4%	8.5%

Employment

A total of 4.8% of non volunteers and 9.2% of volunteers in Queensland reported their employer as something (or someone) that made it harder to volunteer with others.

The following statistically significant observations were made about Queensland residents who identified their employer in this regard.

- The more paid hours of work done each week, the more likely they were to report that their employer makes it harder to volunteer with others.
- The younger they were, the more likely they were to report that their employer makes it harder to volunteer with others.
- Men were more likely than women to perceive their employer as making it harder to volunteer with others.
- First Nations people were more likely than others to report that their employer makes it harder to volunteer with others.

Location, multicultural identity, disability, and carer status made no difference as to whether or not a person perceived their employer as something (or someone) that made it harder to volunteer with others.

Ethnicity and language

A number of people who identified as First Nations or multicultural perceived their ethnicity as something that made it harder for them to volunteer with others.

Of interest, more non volunteers than volunteers for whom English was an additional language perceived this as something that made it harder to volunteer with others.

Table 4: Those who report that their ethnicity or language makes it harder to volunteer with others

	Volunteers	Non volunteers
First Nations	13.7%	8.0%
Multicultural	5.6%	2.1%
English as a second language	3.5%	8.3%

Sexual identity

A total of 13.9% of volunteers who identified as other than heterosexual perceived their sexual identity as something that made it harder to volunteer with others.

This percentage was notably higher than the 9.3% of non volunteers of the same identity who felt similarly limited.

Disability

A total of 46.5% of volunteers living with disability reported feeling that their disability was something that made it harder to volunteer with others. A further 76.3% of non volunteers with disabilities felt similarly.

Caregivers

For individuals with caregiving responsibilities at home, 22.2% of respondents reported that these duties made it harder to volunteer with others.

The figure for non volunteers was much higher at 38.2%.

Intent

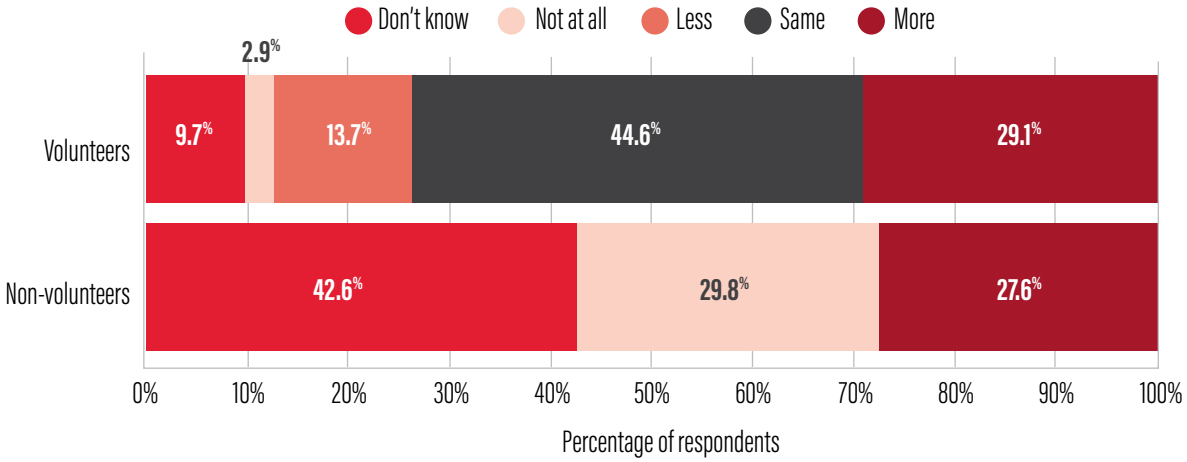
To conclude the Public Survey, Queensland residents were asked the following question.

> *"Finally, in three years' time are you likely to be volunteering **more** or **less** than you did in the last 12 months?"*

- *More*
- *About the same**
- *Less**
- *Not volunteering at all*
- *Don't know*

* Non volunteers were not presented with the options to answer "About the same" or "Less."

Figure 11: Future intent of Queensland residents to volunteer



In total, 28.6% of Queensland residents indicated an intent to be volunteering more in three years' time.

Excluding those uncertain respondents who said they "Don't know," the following statistically significant observations were made about people's intent to volunteer in three years' time.

- The younger the respondent, the more likely they were to be volunteering the same or more in three years' time.
- The more hours they worked for pay each week, the more likely they were to be volunteering the same or more in three years' time.
- First Nations people and those who identify multiculturally were more likely than others to be volunteering the same or more in three years' time.
- People living with caring duties at home were more likely than others to be volunteering the same or more in three years' time.
- People living with a disability were less likely to be volunteering the same or more in three years' time.

Gender and location made no significant difference to a person's intent to volunteer (more).

Key comparisons

Comparisons between the Queensland findings presented in this Section, the findings for all all other Australain States and Territories in the same period, and the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report (which reports on data collected in 2020) are highlighted here.

It is important to note that comparisons between the 2020 and 2023 data cannot be used to suggest trends. Trends require multiple data points to establish a reliable direction, such as whether something is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same over time. Although straight lines can be drawn between many of the data points shown in this table, there is not enough information to say whether these lines will continue in the directions indicated.

It should also be noted that data collection for the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report was undertaken across November 2020-January 2021 when the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had significantly altered the work, travel and daily pattern of life across the entire State.

Table 5: Volunteering comparisons between Queensland 2020 and 2023 and Australia 2023

	Queensland 2020	Queensland 2023	Australia 2023
Percentage of the population who volunteer	75.7%	**64.3%**	66.2%
Average hours volunteered per month	24.9 hours	**21.6 hours**	20.3 hours
Formal volunteers *(as a percentage of volunteers)*	69.6%	**49.0%**	49.9%
Informal volunteers *(as a percentage of volunteers)*	85.8%	**69.1%**	68.0%
Percentage of volunteering done online or at home	28.5%	**27.5%**	26.1%
Top 5 volunteer motivations	1. To help others 2. For social and community connection 3. To use my skills and experience 4. To support a cause 5. To be active	**1. To help others** **2. For enjoyment** **3. To be active** **4. To use my skills and experience** **5. For social and community connection**	1. To help others 2. For enjoyment 3. For social and community connection 4. To be active 5. To use my skills and experience
Top 5 barriers to volunteering more *(volunteers)*	1. No time 2. Health reasons 3. Costs 4. Government regulations/ restrictions 5. Not interested in volunteering more	**1. No time** **2. Costs** **3. Health reasons** **4. Burnout[2]** **5. Not interested in volunteering more**	1. No time 2. Costs 3. Burnout 4. Health reasons 5. Not interested in volunteering more

Top 5 barriers to volunteering *(non volunteers)*	1. No time 2. Health reasons 3. Not interested in options in my area 4. Costs 5. Not sure how/ never been asked	**1. No time** **2. Not sure how/ never been asked** **3. Health reasons** **4. Not interested in volunteering** **5. Lack of confidence**	1. No time 2. Not sure how/ never been asked 3. Not interested in volunteering 4. Health reasons 5. Lack of confidence
Volunteers who intend to volunteer more in 3 years	28.0%	**29.1%**	31.9%
Non volunteers who intend to volunteer more in 3 years	10.6%	**27.6%**	28.2%

Even though it cannot be said that one caused the other, it is worth noting one set of changes between 2020 and 2023. The number of people who are not volunteering has increased by 11.4 percentage points. At the same time, the number of non volunteers who say they plan to volunteer more in the next three years has also gone up, and even more so, by 14.0 percentage points.[3] So, while it cannot be said that the two are related, both increased and that is interesting to note.

The State of Volunteering in Queensland 2023 Public Survey also included respondents aged 15 and over. In 2020, only respondents aged 18 and over were included.

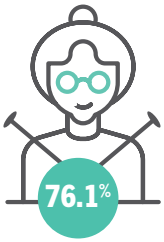
[2] Note that "Burnout (over-volunteering)" was included as an answer option for the first time in 2023.

[3] See the Glossary for an explanation of the difference between "percentage points" and "percent change."

SECTION 2: VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

KEY FINDINGS

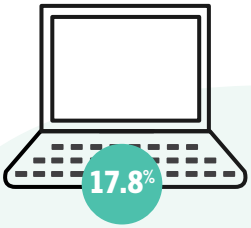
Key inclusion metrics *(the percentage of volunteer managers that include these demographics in their programs)*



76.1%
Aged 65+

50.8%
Aged under 25

31.2%
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)



17.8%
Online or remote

Top 3 recruitment channels

80.8% Word of mouth

61.9% Social media

54.6% Website

Top 3 recognition, engagement and retention strategies

71.8% Volunteer training and development

62.7% Personal relationship building

54.7% Awards and formal recognition

Top 5 barriers to volunteering

66.4% No time

46.7% Health reasons

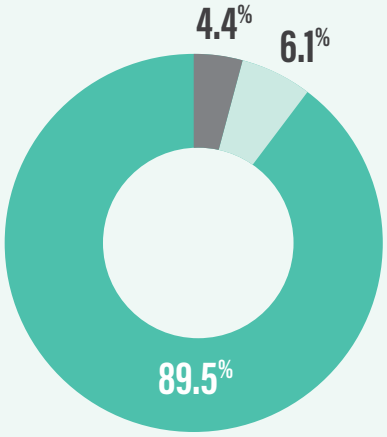
38.4% Burnout

36.4% Loss of interest

28.3% Loss of connection

Who pays for volunteering programs

(paid managers)



- The organisation
- The volunteer manager (reimbursed)
- The volunteer manager (direct)

The 3 biggest changes of the last 3 years

(as perceived by volunteer managers)

Volunteer hours have decreased

Volunteers need more training

Fewer people want to volunteer

Top 5 issues in volunteering

(as perceived by volunteer managers)

87.0% Volunteer retention

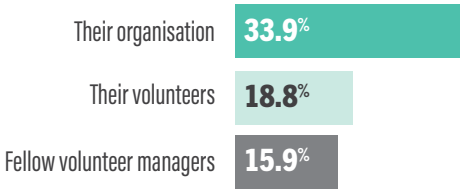
86.5% Volunteer health and safety

77.7% Volunteer recruitment

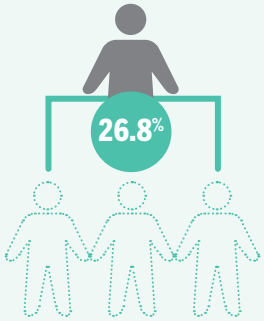
73.6% Volunteer fatigue

77.7% Volunteer management

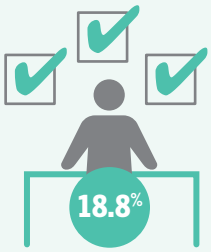
Top 3 sources of help utilised by paid volunteer managers



Top 3 sources of help utilised by unpaid volunteer managers



Volunteer managers who say more people will be volunteering with their organisation in 3 years' time



Volunteer managers who say they will be doing more with their organisation in 3 years' time

Sample demographics

The Volunteer Manager Survey commenced with the following question.

> *"Do you manage (supervise, organise or coordinate) other volunteers?"*
>
> *Tick all that apply.*
>
> ☐ *Yes, in a paid role*
> ☐ *Yes, as a volunteer*
> ☐ *No*

This was a qualifying question, and persons who responded "No" were exited from the survey and their response not counted.

In total, 44.9% of valid Queensland responses reported managing volunteers in a paid capacity, while a larger proportion, 59.3%, said they managed volunteers in a volunteer role themselves. In this report, these volunteers are referred to as "unpaid volunteer managers." Only a small fraction, 4.2%, carried out both roles.

Note that this does not mean that 44.9% of volunteer managers in the State are paid – it is only an observation about the Volunteer Manager Survey sample.

> *What type of organisation or group do you manage volunteers with?*
>
> *If you manage volunteers with multiple organisations or groups, choose the one you do the most work with.*
>
> *Please answer all remaining questions specifically for this organisation or group.*
>
> *You are welcome to complete this survey again for any other organisations or groups you manage volunteers with.*
>
> ☐ *Not-for-profit/ community organisation or group*
> ☐ *Government department/ agency*
> ☐ *Privately owned/ commercial enterprise*

The overwhelming majority of respondents in Queensland (77.9%) managed volunteers within a not-for-profit or community organisation. Government departments or agencies made up 20.5% of the sample, and 1.6% of respondents reported managing volunteers within a privately owned or commercial enterprise.

Again, it should not be assumed that this represents the population-wide distribution of volunteer managers in the State in each of these sectors.

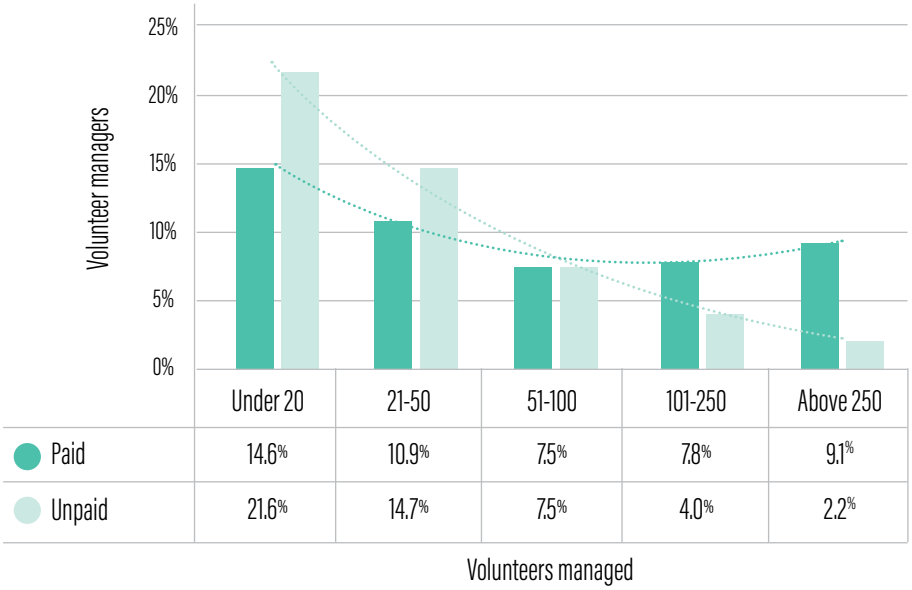
The following question was also asked in the Volunteer Manager Survey.

> *"Approximately how many volunteers were you responsible for over the last 12 months?"*

The figure below illustrates the number of volunteers managed by each of the responding volunteer managers.

44.9% of valid Queensland responses reported managing volunteers in a paid capacity, while 59.3% said they managed volunteers in a volunteer role themselves.

Figure 12: Number of volunteers managed by role in Queensland



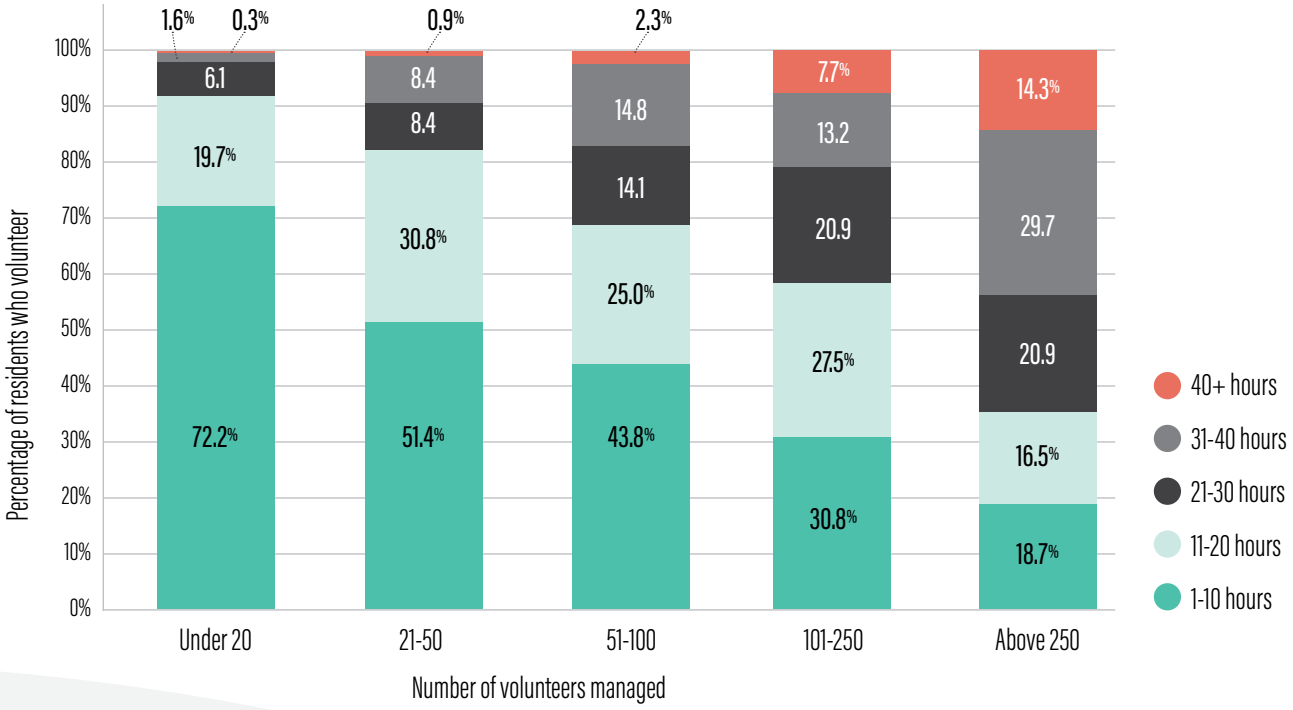
As the data and trend lines show, paid volunteer managers are more likely to oversee a larger number of volunteers compared to their unpaid counterparts. However, it is worth noting that a small number of volunteer managers can also be responsible for managing large groups of volunteers without payment.

"Approximately how many hours per week do you spend managing volunteers?"

The relationship between the number of hours a responding volunteer manager contributed each week and the number of volunteers they managed was statistically significant.

This figure below shows that the number of hours contributed by volunteer managers increased with the number of volunteers they managed. For example, 72.2% of volunteer managers who contributed 1-10 hours per week managed less than 20 volunteers, whereas only 18.7% of the same volunteer managers managed more than 250 volunteers.

Figure 13: Number of volunteers managed by hours contributed per week



The following factors significantly impacted the number of hours that a volunteer manager reported contributing.

- Location: The closer the volunteer manager lived to (or in) a major city, the more hours they contributed per week.
- Gender: Men who manage volunteers contributed more hours per week than women.
- Workforce status: Paid volunteer managers contributed more hours per week than unpaid volunteer managers.
  - Unpaid volunteer managers who responded to the survey contributed an average of 12.1 hours per week.
  - Paid volunteer managers who responded to the survey contributed an average of 19.2 hours per week.

The volunteer manager's age made no significant difference to the number of hours that they reported contributing.

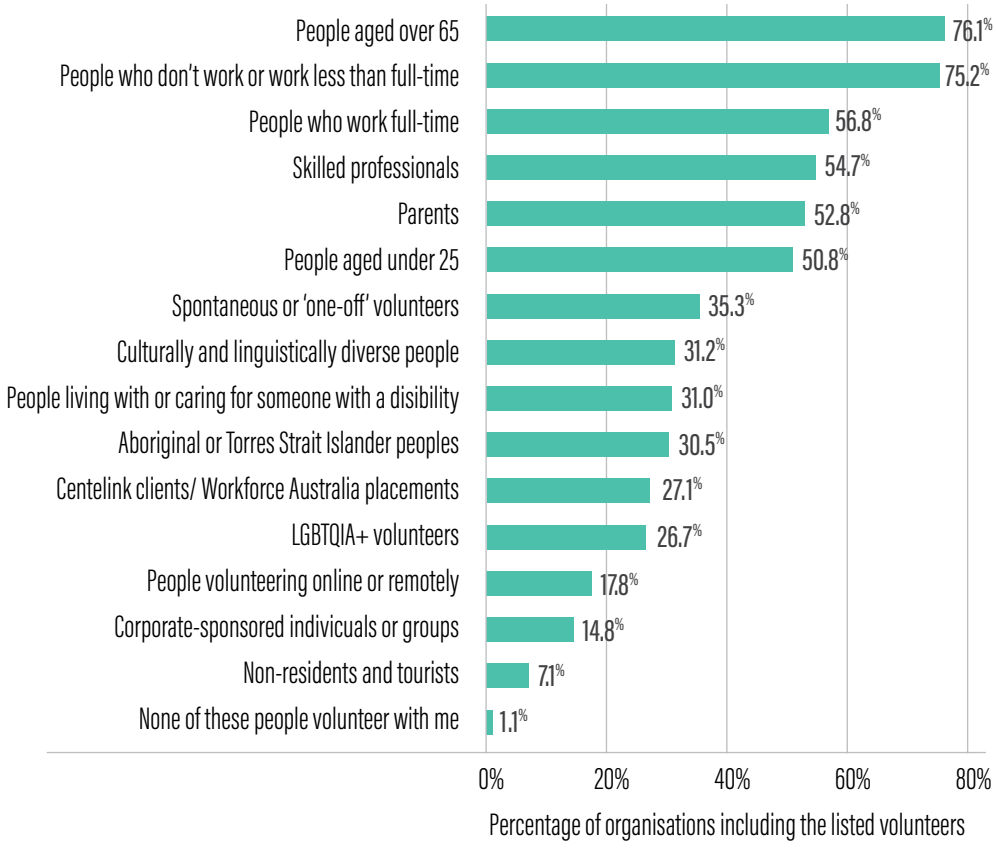
Volunteer inclusion

Volunteer managers in Queensland were asked, "***Who*** *volunteers with you?*"

Their responses presented below provide a snapshot of the diverse groups that volunteer involving organisations engage, the different forms of volunteer engagement, and their different employment and life contexts.

The options overlap, capturing both demographic and occupational characteristics. Volunteer managers in Queensland reported engaging an average of 6.0 different options in their organisation from the list of 15 provided.

Figure 14: Characteristics of volunteers included in volunteer involving organisations



** The category "Culturally and linguistically diverse people" includes newly arrived migrants and refugees.*

This data simply highlights whether organisations involve volunteers from the listed demographics ('yes/ no'). It does not represent the actual rate of volunteer participation from these demographics.

The next table compares two key metrics for various demographic groups. First, it shows the rate at which each demographic group engages in formal volunteering. Second, it presents the percentage of managers who are responsible for overseeing 50 or more volunteers and have reported including members of these demographic groups in their volunteer programs.[4]

Table 7: Inclusion among larger volunteer involving organisations in Queensland

	Percentage of formal volunteer population	Inclusion rate in large organisations (50+ volunteers)
People aged over 65	9.9%	**83.3%**
People aged under 25	22.0%	**67.9%**
First Nations peoples	15.1%	**46.8%**
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people	17.1%	**43.8%**
Non-heterosexual volunteers	17.0%	**41.4%**
People living with disability	20.7%	**40.0%**

This observation gives insight into how volunteers from the specific demographic groups are distributed within larger organisations that involve volunteers. If there is a wide difference between the two figures presented in each row of the table, it suggests that volunteers from that demographic group are spread out more broadly across various formal volunteering organisations. On the other hand, a smaller gap indicates that these volunteers are more concentrated within specific organisations.

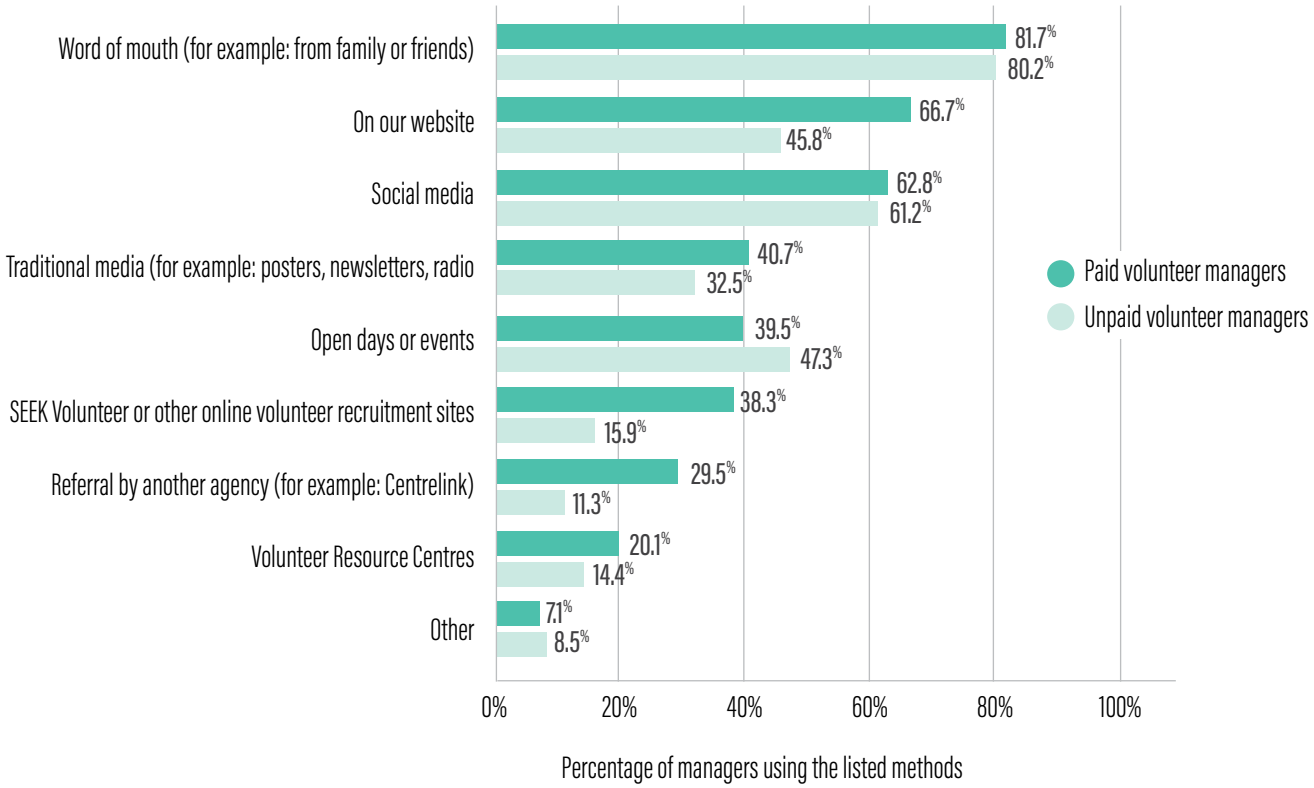
Volunteer recruitment

The Volunteer Manager Survey next asked, *"How do you typically attract volunteers?"*

For additional insight, these recruitment methods are separated according to whether the volunteer manager is paid or unpaid. An average of 3.9 of nine concurrent recruitment methods were reported by paid managers in Queensland from the list of eight provided, compared to 3.2 methods used by unpaid managers.

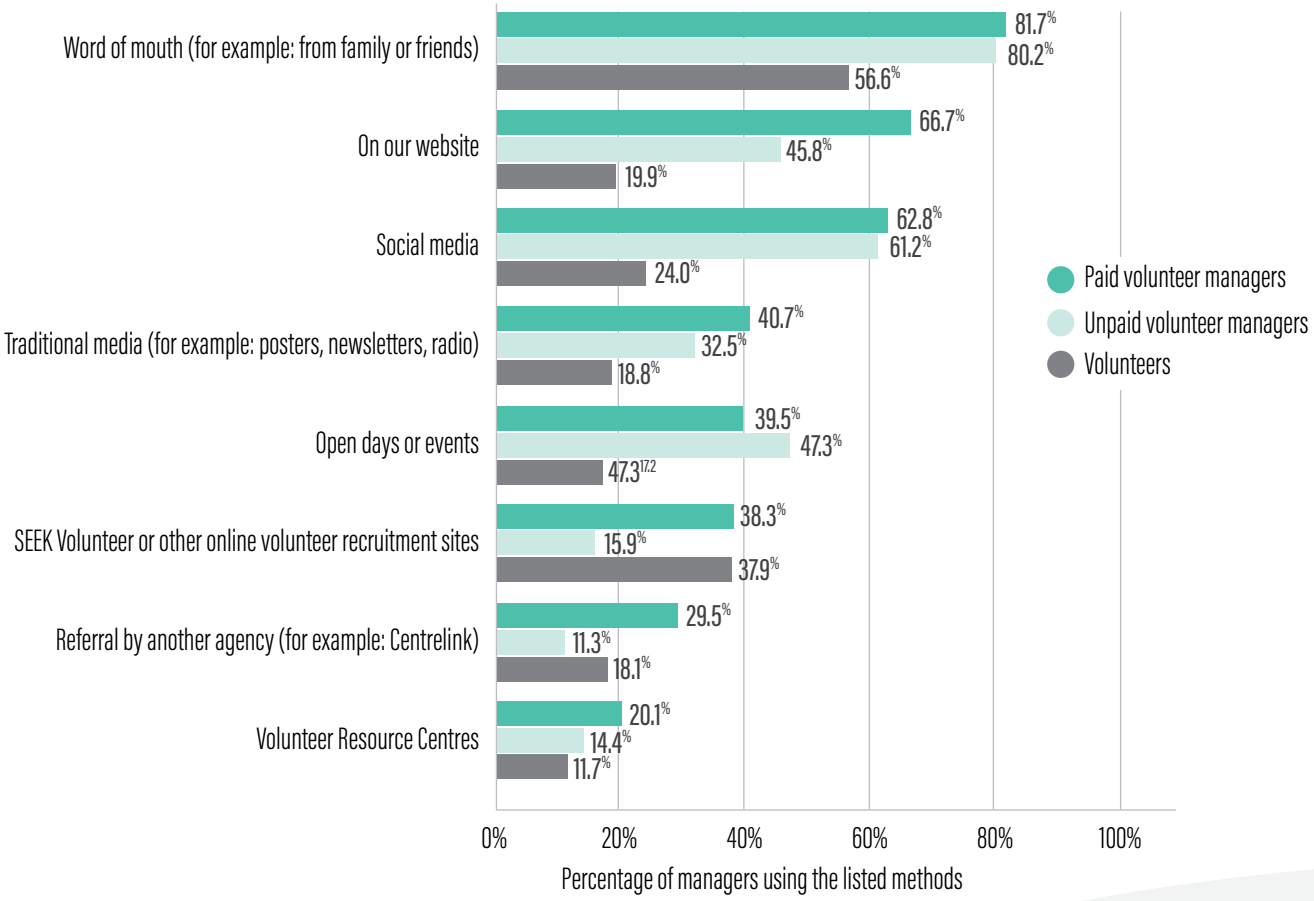
[4] Expecting managers of smaller groups of volunteers (less than 50) to have a diverse volunteer base that is population representative is inappropriate, as smaller teams may operate with different objectives and constraints. Excluding them in this analysis helps to avoid drawing misleading conclusions about what demographic representation 'should' look like in the volunteering sector.

Figure 15: Recruitment strategies for paid versus unpaid volunteer managers



Compare these strategies in the next figure to how volunteers themselves identify opportunities to volunteer, reported in Section 1.

Figure 16: Comparison of recruitment methods used by volunteer involving organisations and volunteers



Note that it is reasonable to expect that volunteer managers would use more recruitment channels than individual volunteers use. Indeed, it was reported in Section 1 that volunteers rely on an average of only 2.2 different channels to source their volunteering opportunities.

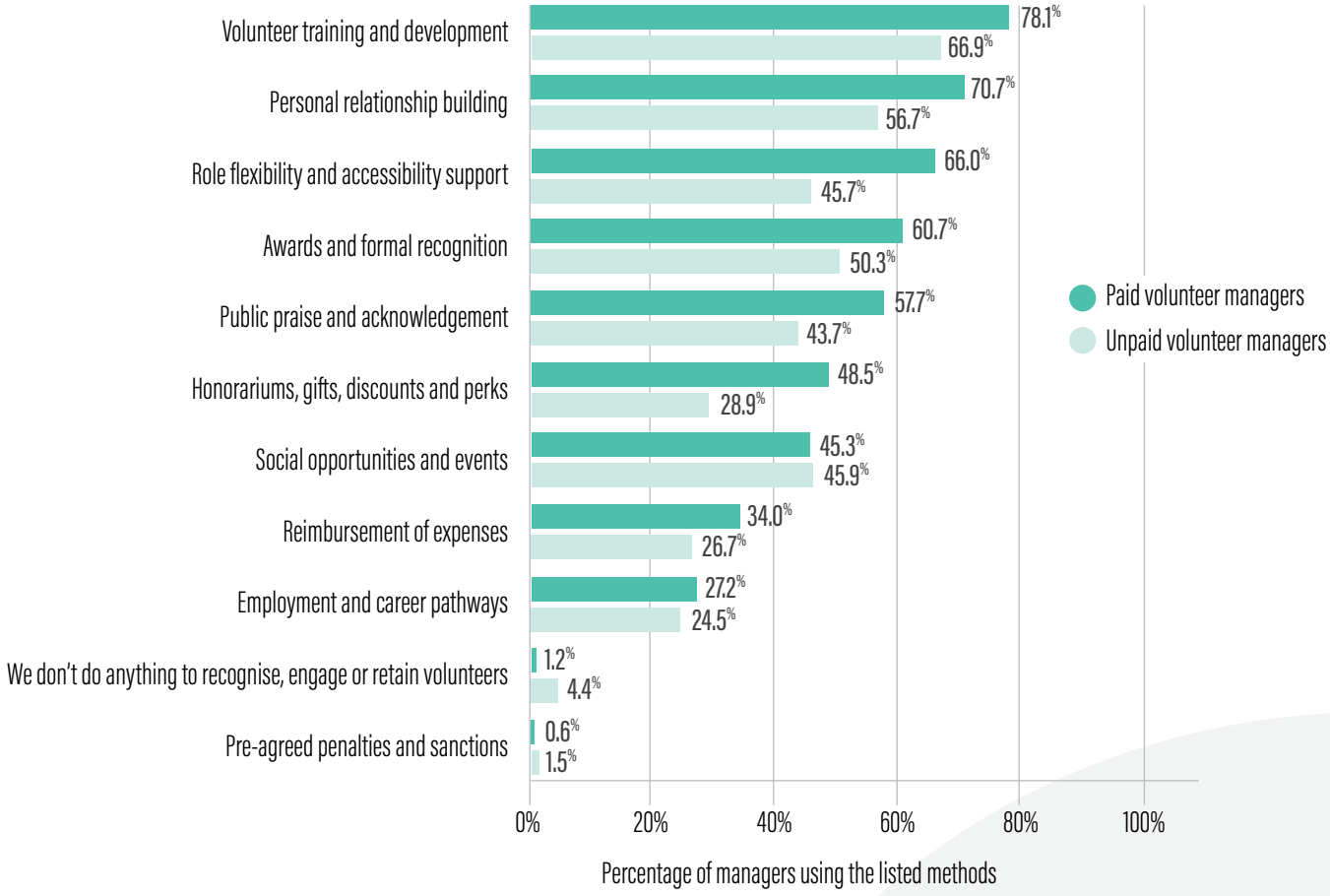
Volunteer recognition, engagement and retention

The Volunteer Manager Survey asked, *"How do you recognise, engage and retain volunteers?"*

Volunteer managers were presented a randomised list of 20 options to indicate the methods they use. To better understand the data, these 20 options were consolidated into the categories listed in the figure below.[5]

The approaches of paid and unpaid volunteer managers to recognition, engagement and retention are shown in the figure below. In Queensland, paid volunteer managers reported using an average 4.9 different methods to recognise, engage and retain volunteers. Unpaid volunteer managers reported using 3.9 different methods from the reduced list of 10 potential methods.

Figure 17: Methods used by volunteer managers to recognise, engage and retain volunteers



[5] See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of the consolidation process.

TURF analysis[6] identified the minimally optimal mix of methods a volunteer involving organisation could use to recognise, engage and retain volunteers. The analysis assumed that volunteer managers are prioritising their retention, recognition, and reward strategies according to what volunteers themselves find most meaningful.

1. Volunteer training and development has the most individual impact, as it is employed by 71.5% of volunteer managers in Queensland.
2. When a second strategy, personal relationship building, is added to it, coverage is increased to include 87.4% of all responding volunteer managers. In other words, 84.8% of volunteer managers in Queensland use either one or both of volunteer training and development and personal relationship building as recognition, engagement and retention strategies.
3. Adding awards and formal recognition to these two strategies increases reach to include the preferences 91.8% of all volunteer managers in Queensland. Even though this is only the fourth most popular strategy for paid volunteer managers, it is the most effective for maximising reach when used in combination with the top two.

> **Volunteer training and development has the most individual impact, as it is employed by 71.5% of volunteer managers in Queensland.**

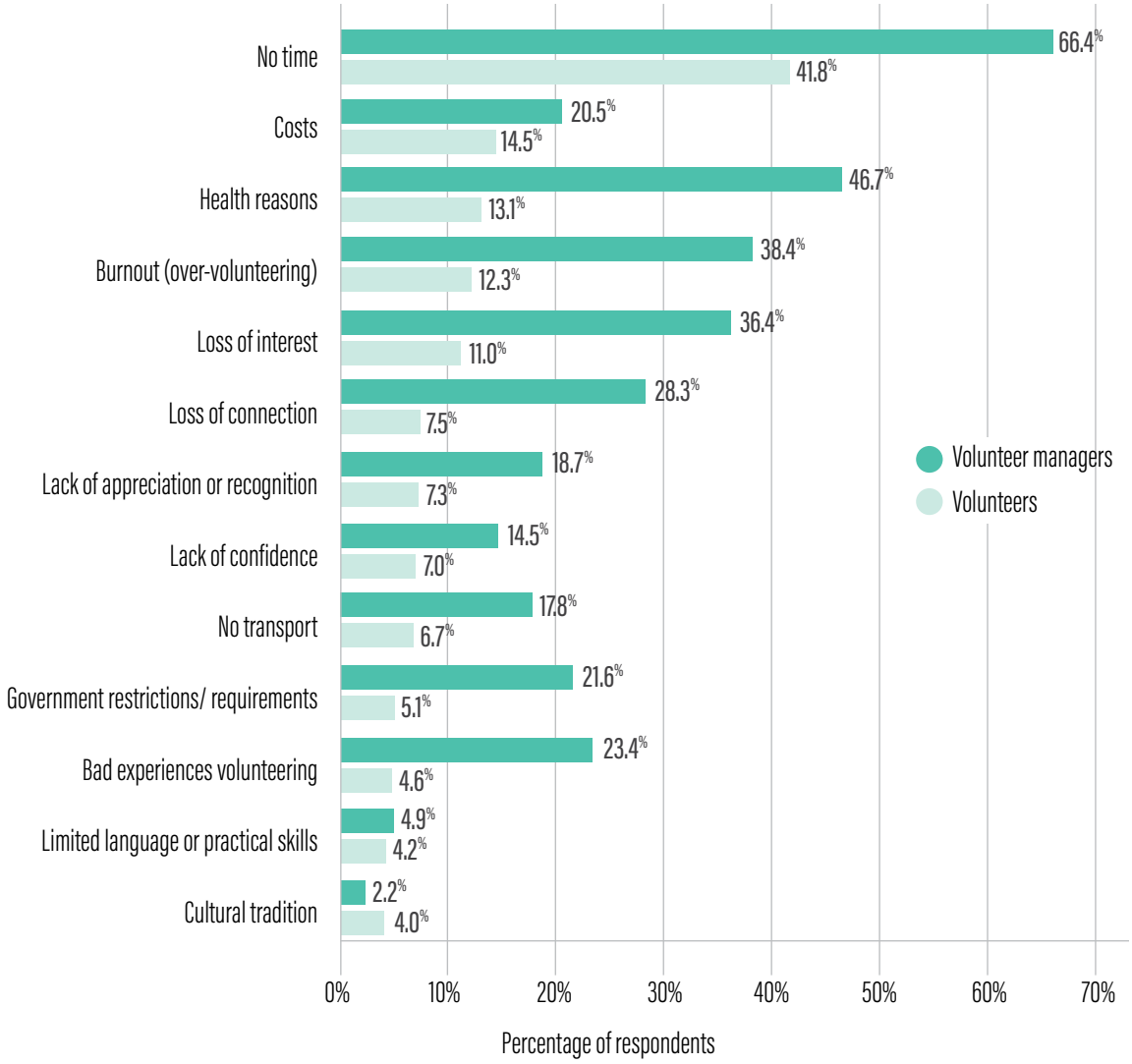
[6] See Appendix A: Methodology detail.

Barriers to volunteering

When asked, *"Why do you think people stop volunteering with your organisation or group?"* volunteer managers were given the same list of options to choose from that participants were given at the equivalent question in the Public Survey.

In the figure that follows, the barriers perceived by volunteer managers (both paid and unpaid) are compared to the barriers reported by volunteers. The barriers reported by non volunteers are not included here and can be reviewed in Section 1.

Figure 18: Barriers to volunteering identified by volunteer managers versus volunteers.



On average, each manager listed 3.4 barriers, while individual volunteers reported 1.6 barriers from the 13 options provided. This is expected as managers are accounting for all volunteers, whereas volunteers are only reporting for themselves.

The cost to volunteer managers

Section 3 of this report examines in detail the costs and benefits of volunteering in Queensland, including the expenses organisations incur supporting their volunteers. Volunteer managers were also asked the following question about these costs.

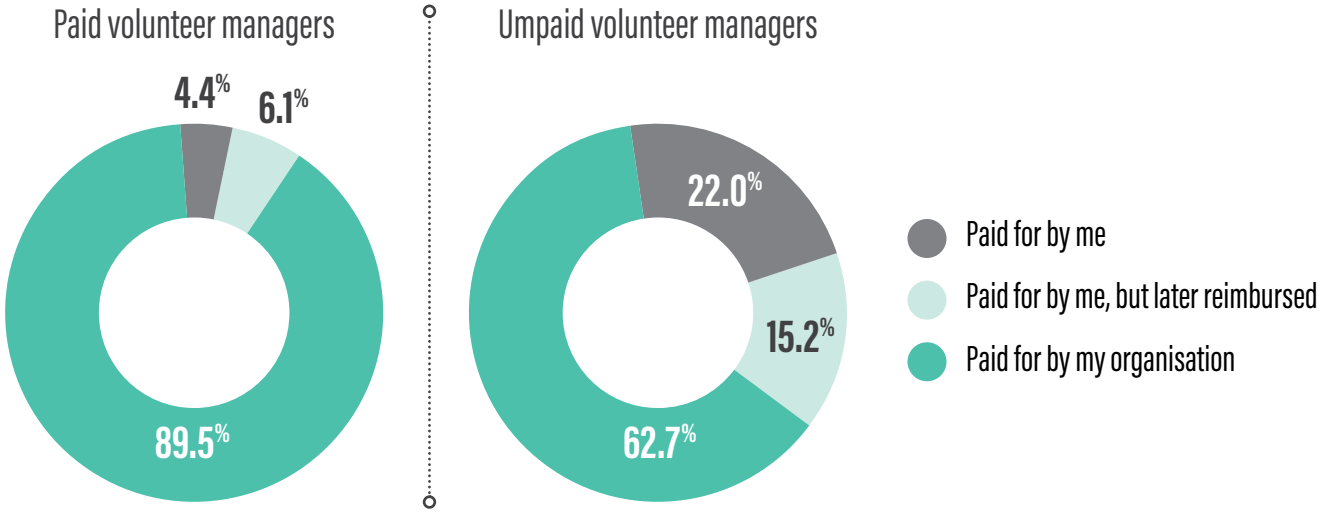
"How much of (these expenses) did you pay for out of your own pocket?"

These totals should sum to 100%.

- ☐ *Paid for by me*
- ☐ *Paid for by me, but later reimbursed*
- ☐ *Paid for by my organisation*

Significant direct and subsidised costs were incurred by volunteer managers in Queensland in the performance of their duties.

Figure 19: The burden of volunteer management expenses



Three years of change

Volunteer managers in Queensland were surveyed on the changes they have observed in their sector over the past three years. While some managers reported seeing no significant changes, others noted either improvements or deteriorations in various aspects.

To quantify these perceptions, a **net favourability score** was calculated for each answer option. This score represents the difference between the percentage of managers who reported positive changes ('More') and those who reported negative changes ('Less'). Expressed in percentage points, this net favourability score serves as a useful measure of the overall sentiment regarding each specific change in the volunteer sector. The table that follows is arranged in descending order using the absolute value of these net favourability scores, from highest to lowest.

Additionally, the table includes a 'volatility ranking' for each change. This ranking measures how much consensus there was among managers about whether conditions have remained "About the same." The question with the highest volatility ranking of one means that the fewest number of managers indicated that the situation remained "About the same" over the previous three years. In simpler terms, the volatility ranking sorts the questions from the least stable to the most stable, based on managerial perceptions of change over the last three years.

This is the actual question asked.

"How has volunteering changed for your organisation since 2020?"

The options that followed are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the Volunteer Manager Survey.

Table 8: Percentage of volunteering sector change over the last three years.

	Less	About the same	More	Net favourability	Volatility
Hours people want to volunteer	42.1%	49.9%	8.0%	-34.1	3
Amount of training volunteers need	6.3%	54.6%	39.1%	+32.8	7
Number of people who want to volunteer	46.5%	36.5%	17.0%	-29.5	1
Board-level volunteers are available	36.0%	57.2%	6.8%	-29.2	9
Number of youth/ young people who want to volunteer	44.3%	38.0%	17.7%	-26.6	2
The direct and indirect costs to volunteers	13.2%	53.2%	33.5%	+20.3	5
Volunteers want flexible hours	6.8%	66.9%	26.3%	+19.5	11
Organisations want to volunteer employees' time	31.1%	54.1%	14.8%	-16.3	6
People want to volunteer occasional hours, rather than regular hours	14.2%	56.8%	29.0%	+14.8	8
Volunteering is done online or from home	29.4%	52.0%	18.6%	-10.8	4
Volunteers are claiming expenses	21.4%	65.6%	13.1%	-8.3	10

It is worth highlighting that 44.3% of volunteer managers perceived a decline in the number of young people wanting to volunteer over the past three years. Specifically, 26.6% more managers reported a decrease (as opposed to an increase) in youth participation. However, the evidence of the Public Survey indicated that the younger a person was, the more they likely it was that they volunteered.

The following statistically significant observations were made of the volunteer managers in Queensland who felt the number of young people wanting to volunteer had decreased over the last three years.

- The younger the volunteer manager, the more likely they were to believe the number of youth volunteers was decreasing.
- The closer the volunteer manager lived to a major city, the more likely they were to believe the number of youth volunteers was decreasing.

Gender, the number of hours spent managing volunteers and the number of volunteers under management made no significant difference to a volunteer manager's perception of a decline in the number of young people wanting to volunteer over the past three years.

Issues in volunteer management

Volunteer managers in Queensland were invited to share their perspectives on the significance of various issues and challenges that are frequently reported in their sector. The survey aimed to gauge how these professionals ranked the importance of these common issues in the context of their day-to-day operations and overall strategy.

Figure 20: Volunteer-related issues and their relative importance to volunteer managers.

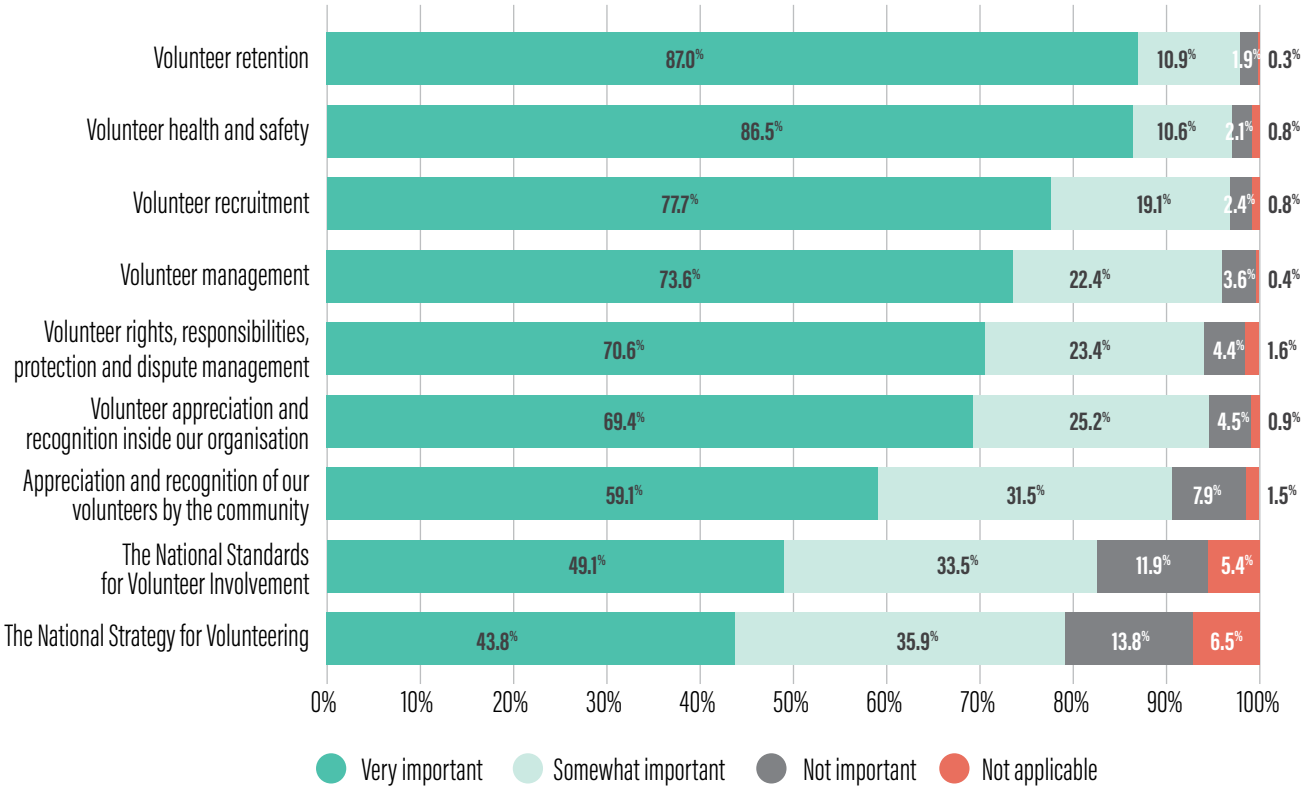


Figure 21: Organisation-related issues and their relative importance to volunteer managers

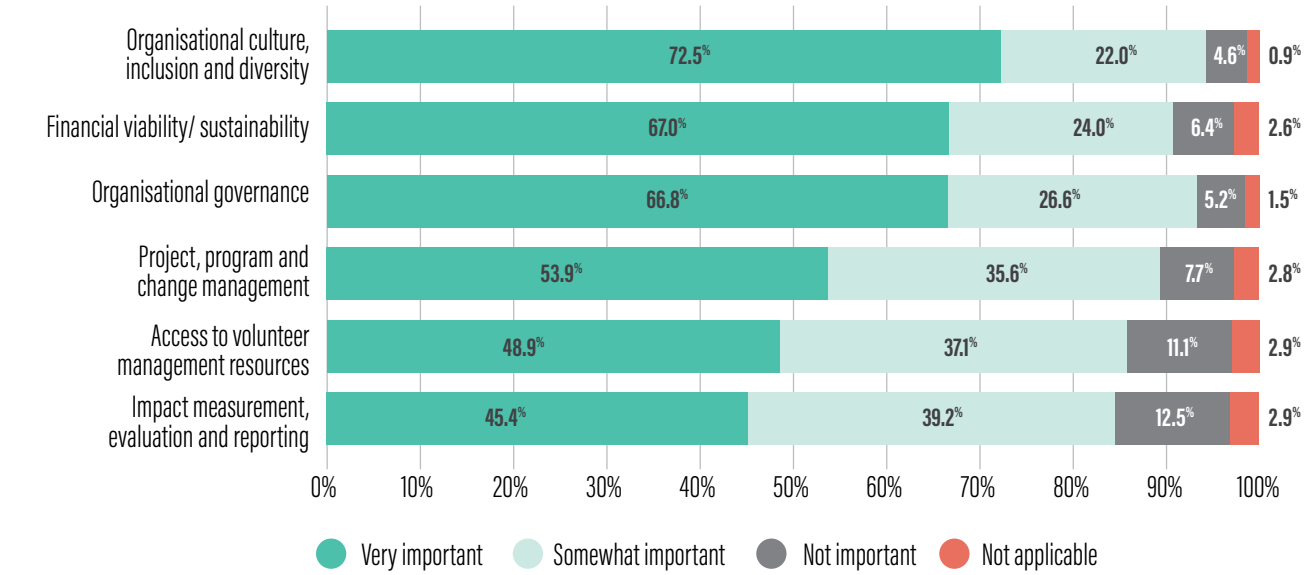
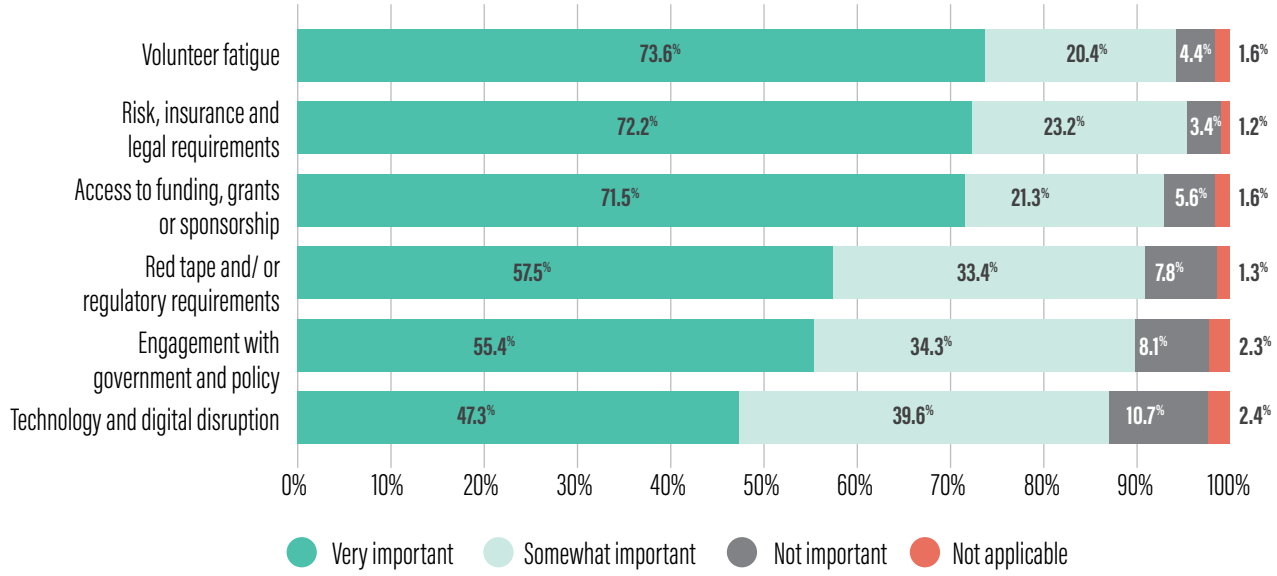


Figure 22: External issues and their relative importance to volunteer managers



In order of priority, these were the top five "Very important" issues for volunteer managers in Queensland.

1. Volunteer retention – 87.0%
2. Volunteer health and safety – 86.5%
3. Volunteer recruitment – 77.7%
4. Volunteer fatigue – 73.6%
4. Volunteer management – 73.6%

A helping hand

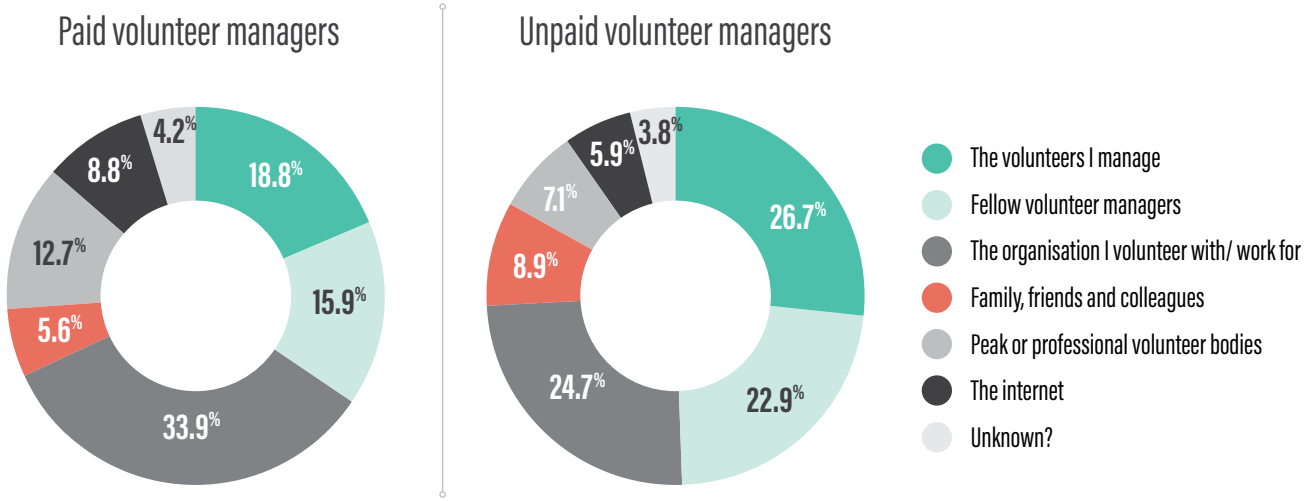
The following question was asked in the Volunteer Manager Survey for the first time.

"Where do you go when you need help with volunteer management?"

These totals should sum to 100%.

- ☐ *The volunteers I manage*
- ☐ *Fellow volunteer managers*
- ☐ *The organisation I volunteer with/ work for*
- ☐ *Family, friends and colleagues*
- ☐ *Peak or professional volunteer bodies*
- ☐ *The internet*
- ☐ *Other sources of help*

Figure 23: Where volunteer managers in Queensland seek help with managing volunteers



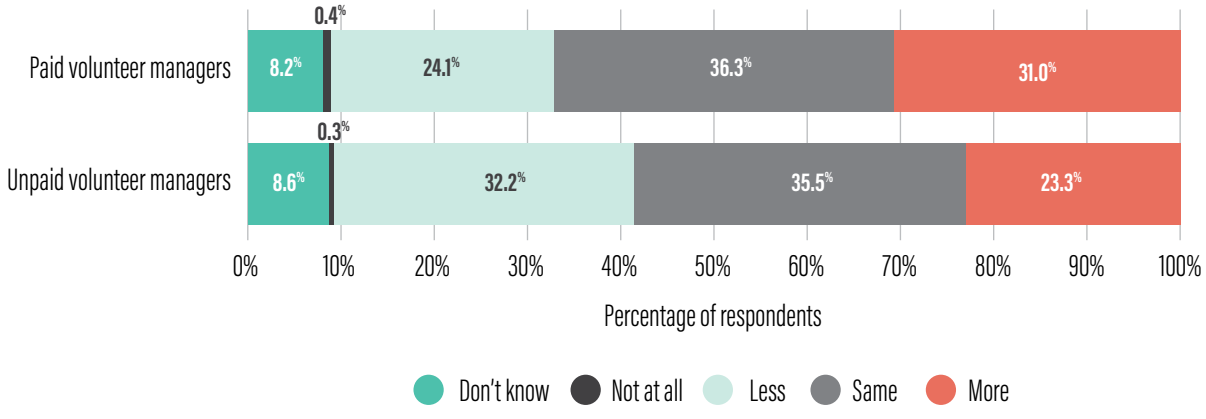
Organisational optimism

The following question was asked of respondents to Volunteer Manager Survey.

"In three years, are people more or less likely to be volunteering with your organisation or group?"

- *More*
- *Less*
- *About the same*
- *Not volunteering at all (our organisation will have closed or our group will have ended)*
- *Don't know*

Figure 24: The likelihood of people volunteering with the volunteer manager's organisation in three years



In total, 26.8% of both paid and unpaid volunteer managers believed people would be volunteering more with their organisation in three years' time.

As with the Public Survey question on intent (Section 1), this question was examined through the lens of optimism. For example, if a volunteer manager said that people were "More" likely to be volunteering for their organisation in the three years, they were showing a high level of optimism about the future of their organisation.

This was more optimistic than managers who thought the number of people volunteering for their organisation would be "About the same," and so on down the options to "Less," and "Not at all."

Excluding those uncertain respondents who said they "Don't know," the following statistically significant observations were made about the optimism of volunteer managers in Queensland.

- The closer a person lived to a major city, the more optimistic they were about their organisation's future.

Age, gender, the hours spent managing volunteers, and the number of volunteers under management made no significant difference to a volunteer manager's optimism for their organisation.

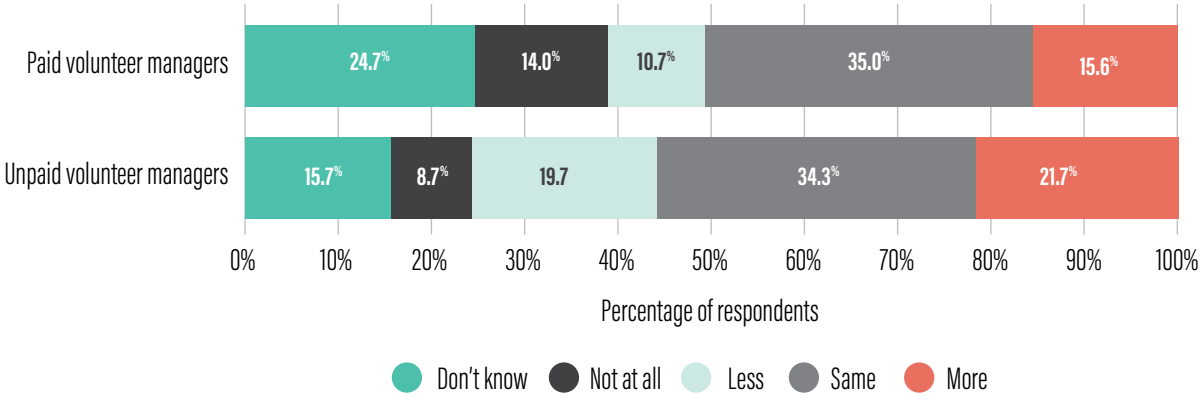
Intent

The final, non-demographic question in the Volunteer Manager Survey was as follows.

"How likely are you to be with your organisation, as a volunteer manager, in three years?

- *Still here, doing more hours*
- *Still here, doing less hours*
- *Still here, doing about the same hours*
- *Not here at all*
- *Don't know*

Figure 25: The likelihood of a volunteer manager being with their oganisation in that role in three years



In total, 18.8% of both paid and unpaid volunteer managers believed they would be doing more hours as a manager with their organisation in three years.

As per the previous question, the further along the scale from "Not at all" to "More" a volunteer manager was, the more optimistic they were considered to be about their future with their organisation.

Age, location, gender, hours spent managing volunteers, and the number of volunteers under management made no significant difference to a respondent's optimism for continuing as a manager with their organisation in three years.

Key comparisons

Comparisons between the Queensland findings presented in this Section, the findings for all of Australia in the same period, and the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report (which reports on data collected in 2020) are highlighted here.

Table 9:Volunteer management comparisons between Queensland 2020 and 2023 and Australia 2023

	Queensland 2020	Queensland 2023	Australia 2023
Key inclusion metrics *(The percentage of volunteer managers that include these demographics in their programs)*	74.9% include volunteers aged 65+ 29.0% include volunteers aged under 18 23.3% include CALD volunteers 10.2% include online or remote volunteers	**76.1% include volunteers aged 65+** **50.8% include volunteers aged under 25** **31.2% include CALD vols** **17.8% include online or remote volunteers**	74.2% include volunteers aged 65+ 47.4% include volunteers aged under 25 32.3% include CALD volunteers 17.0% include online or remote volunteers
Top 3 recruitment channels	1. Word of mouth 2. Social media 3. Open days and events	**1. Word of mouth** **2. Social media** **3. Website**	1. Word of mouth 2. Social media 3. Website
Top 3 recognition, engagement and retention strategies	Not comparable *See Appendix A*	**1. Volunteer training and development** **2. Personal relationship building** **3. Awards and formal recognition**	1. Volunteer training and development 2. Personal relationship building 3. Awards and formal recognition
Top 5 barriers to volunteering *(as perceived by volunteer managers)*	Not measured	**1. No time** **2. Health reasons** **3. Burnout** **4. Loss of interest** **5. Loss of connection**	1. No time 2. Health reasons 3. Burnout 4. Loss of interest 5. Loss of connection
The 3 biggest changes that occured in the last 3 years *(as perceived by volunteer managers)*	1. Corporate vounteering is decreasing 2. Fewer tertiary students want to volunteer 3. Volunteers need more training	**1. Volunteer hours have decreased** **2. Volunteers need more training** **3. Fewer people want to volunteer**	1. Volunteer hours have decreased 2. Volunteers need more training 3. Fewer people want to volunteer

Top 5 issues in volunteering *(as perceived by volunteer managers)*	1. Financial viability/ sustainabiity 2. Volunteer retention 3. Access to funding 4. Organisational governance 5. Volunteer appreciation and recognition inside our organisation	**1. Volunteer retention** **2. Volunteer health and safety[7]** **3. Volunteer recruitment** **4. Volunteer fatigue** **4. Volunteer management**	1. Volunteer health and safety 2. Volunteer retention 3. Volunteer recruitment 4. Organisational culture, inclusion and diversity 5. Volunteer management
Volunteer managers who say more people will be volunteering with their organisation in three years' time	28.2%	**26.8%**	29.5%

[7] Volunteer health and safety was not given as an answer choice in 2020.

SECTION 3: THE VOLUNTEER MANAGER EXPERIENCE

Following analysis of the primary data, a series of online focus groups were conducted to better understand the lived experience of volunteer managers in Queensland. The objective was to gather qualitative data on their management practices, challenges, and insights. The focus groups were organised around the topic, *"What does a good volunteer experience look like in volunteer involving organisations?"*

Participants were recruited through targeted outreach. This involved coordinating with local volunteer organisations, distributing calls for participation on social media platforms, and sending emails to potential participants from a database of volunteer managers.

Five focus group sessions were run, each lasting 90 minutes. The sessions were held online using a secure and user-friendly video conferencing platform that allowed for interactive discussions. This format was chosen to facilitate participation from a geographically diverse group of volunteer managers in Queensland. A total of 16 volunteer managers participated.

A semi-structured discussion guide was developed to steer the conversations. Key questions included:

1. *What value does a dedicated volunteer manager add to an organisation and its volunteers?*
2. *What difference does having a paid volunteer manager make to an organisation?*
3. *How do you approach volunteer recruitment? Given more time and resources, what else would you like to be able to do?*
4. *How do you keep your volunteers engaged and enthused? Given more time and resources, what else would you like to be able to do?*
5. *What else do you do to retain volunteers? Given more time and resources, what else would you like to be able to do?*
6. *What are some examples of the best and worst volunteer experiences you have observed?*

Each focus group was moderated by a trained facilitator who ensured that discussions remained on topic and that all participants had the opportunity to contribute. The sessions started with a brief introduction and overview of the study's objectives, followed by a round of introductions from the participants. Discussions were then guided by the predetermined questions, but also allowed for organic, participant-led conversations.

Many, but not all, of the focus group respondents brought decades of professional experience as a volunteer manager to their focus group. It was interesting to observe cross-table conversations spontaneously emerge as people exchanged ideas and expertise.

To illustrate the diversity of participants, the experiences shared by S6[8] regarding the role of a volunteer manager in a public health setting, stand out due to the sheer scale and complexity of compliance requirements. This could be contrasted with the perspectives of S9 and S10, who operate in grassroots organisations where resources

[8] To preserve the anonymity of participants, they are coded S1-S16 and identifying information about their organisation has been redacted.

are limited, and the volunteer manager often juggles multiple roles. The key person risks and the sustainability challenges highlighted in their experiences provided a unique insight into the relative experiences of smaller organisations.

S5's description of a hybrid model, involving both regional volunteer managers and a centralised coordinator, was also unique compared to the more common models of either centralised or decentralised management.

Similarly, the focus on volunteering among diverse groups such as First Nations, migrants, and vulnerable women, as mentioned by S8, highlighted the role of a volunteer manager in catering to diverse and potentially underserved populations. As pointed out by S1, the cultural and regional differences in volunteerism across various parts of the State, especially between urban, rural, and First Nations communities, present a unique challenge that may not be as pronounced in more homogenous settings.

The account from S14, who manages a virtual volunteer team nationally, was also distinct in terms of the remote nature of the work. When compared to more traditional, location-based volunteer management, specific challenges and opportunities were identified.

All sessions were recorded with the consent of the participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of the data collected. They provided informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the study.

Transcripts of the discussions were then created for detailed analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify and categorise key themes and patterns in the responses. This involved a systematic review of the transcripts, deidentification and coding of data, and analysis of emerging themes.

It is acknowledged that potential limitations of this approach include the self-selecting nature of the participants and the limited number of focus groups, which may not fully represent the diversity of volunteer management experiences in Queensland. That said, the analysis revealed several interesting insights into volunteer management in the State, especially in relation to the volunteer experience.

The value of dedicated volunteer management

Unsurprisingly, the volunteer managers interviewed were unanimously enthusiastic about the value a dedicated volunteer manager adds to an organisation. The experiences shared indicate that volunteer managers are crucial in creating a structured, cohesive environment for both the organisation and its volunteers. Underpinning the discussion, however, was a servant-leader model of management that aligned with and supported the altruistic motivations of their volunteers.

A number of themes were identified in the focus group discussions and are summarised in the table below.

Table 10: The benefits of having a dedicated volunteer manager

Theme	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Structured processes and clear messaging	6	8.1%
Volunteer recruitment and retention	6	8.1%
Centralisation of processes	5	6.8%
Volunteer inclusion and team integration	5	6.8%
Dedicated management for better outcomes	5	6.8%
Volunteer program sustainability	5	6.8%
Consistency across regions	4	5.4%
Managing policies and succession planning	4	5.4%
Compliance and risk management	4	5.4%
Volunteer feedback and advocacy	4	5.4%
Diverse volunteer needs and trends	4	5.4%
Volunteer autonomy and cultural diversity	3	4.1%
Point of truth and stability	3	4.1%
Recognition of volunteer contributions	3	4.1%
Diversity in volunteer management	3	4.1%
Organisational support and structure	3	4.1%
Volunteer engagement and motivation	3	4.1%
Process-driven approach	2	2.7%
Localised volunteer management	2	2.7%

The following extracts give context to these findings.

1. Organisations transitioning to a more centralised system, like the one mentioned by S4, benefit from consistency across regions. This prevents the duplication of efforts and ensures a uniform experience for volunteers in different locations.
2. As S4 highlighted, a structured approach under a volunteer manager leads to clearer messaging. This enhances the connection between volunteers and the organisation, making volunteers feel like an integral part of the team, rather than outsiders.
3. S2's experience underscored the importance of having a dedicated person as a single point of truth. This setup offers stability, ensuring that volunteers have a clear go-to person for issues or questions, thereby simplifying processes and decision-making.

4. The role of volunteer managers in providing support and guidance, especially in complex environments (as described by S6), is invaluable. The extensive compliance and risk management requirements in such settings make the presence of a skilled volunteer manager essential.
5. As discussed by S1 and S5, volunteer managers can navigate the cultural diversity of different regions. They ensure that while there is a central policy in place, local cultural nuances are respected and incorporated.
6. The role of the volunteer manager in retention and recruitment is also significant. Managers help maintain volunteer engagement and satisfaction, as seen in the experiences shared by S14 and S15, which are vital for the sustainability of volunteer programs.
7. The ability to provide strategic direction and keep teams focused, as mentioned by S16, is another critical aspect of volunteer management. This continues into direct recruitment and retention efforts, ensuring volunteers are well-supported and the organisation's goals are met efficiently.
8. Volunteer managers play a crucial role in building team strength and providing a structure within which volunteers can operate effectively, as also highlighted by S16.
9. The ability to advocate on behalf of volunteers within and to the larger organisation, ensuring their needs and concerns are addressed, is another key benefit of having a dedicated volunteer manager, as noted by S10.
10. A dedicated volunteer manager not only improves the experience for volunteers but also positively impacts the organisation's reputation. This enhancement is crucial for attracting and retaining volunteers, as discussed by S3 and S5.

Several respondents also talked about the passion, hardworking nature, and selflessness of others in their position. Having managers share the same motivations and attributes as their volunteers was felt to be an essential ingredient of successful volunteer management.

Paid versus unpaid volunteer managers

Conversations on the differences in experiences for paid versus unpaid volunteer managers revealed some interesting contrasts.

Table 11: Paid versus unpaid volunteer managers

Difference	Paid volunteer managers	Unpaid volunteer managers
Scope of responsibility	Clear delineation of responsibilities, allowing volunteers to focus on their roles without concern for management issues.	Volunteers may need to assume additional responsibilities due to the absence of a dedicated manager.
Role focus and time allocation	Has a dedicated role with the ability to concentrate on tasks, supporting and recognising volunteers.	Often has a generalist role, integrating volunteer work as part of all activities.
Resource allocation	Access to organisational resources enhances their ability to manage risks and train people effectively.	Limited access to resources, may struggle with effective risk management and volunteer training.
Volunteer safety	Improved ability to ensure volunteer safety due to dedicated focus and resources.	Safety management can be challenging due to knowledge and resource constraints.
Consistency and standards	Can establish and maintain minimum expectations and standards across various groups, leading to more consistent outcomes.	Challenges in establishing and maintaining consistent standards due to variability in volunteer groups.
Strategic focus	Enhanced capacity to educate and develop processes, leveraging external opportunities such as government funding.	Limited capacity for educational development and process improvement.
Organisational continuity	Provides organisational continuity, ensuring consistent volunteer management and program delivery.	May lack organisational continuity, leading to inconsistent volunteer management.
Impact on volunteer engagement	Paid position emphasises the importance of volunteers, validating their contributions and affirming their roles.	The absence of a paid manager may lead to less structured engagement and support for volunteers.
Personal investment	While committed, the approach is more professional, with a focus on meeting organisational goals and KPIs.	Often driven by personal passion and commitment, leading to a deep investment in the organisation's mission.
Work hours	Although paid for specific hours, may end up working extra or flexible hours due to the nature of volunteer activities.	Regularly works unpaid hours, especially during weekends and outside normal business hours, to support volunteer activities.

The differences between paid and unpaid volunteer managers in the experiences shared can be categorised as either explicitly stated or implied. The extent to which these differences are stated outright or implied through the context of the conversation is discussed below.

- Scope of responsibility
  - Stated: The clear responsibilities of paid volunteer managers were mentioned.
  - Implied: The assumption of additional responsibilities by volunteers in the absence of a paid volunteer manager is implied.
- Role focus and time allocation
  - Stated: Participants explicitly mentioned that paid volunteer managers have a dedicated role and can focus on management tasks.
  - Implied: It's suggested that unpaid volunteer managers often juggle volunteer work with supporting activities, generally implying a greater burden.
- Resource allocation
  - Stated: The ability of paid volunteer managers to manage risks and train people effectively due to better resource allocation was explicitly mentioned.
  - Implied: The struggles of unpaid volunteer managers in these areas are more implied, based on the contrast with paid volunteer managers.
- Volunteer safety
  - Stated: Paid volunteer managers' improved ability to ensure safety was explicitly stated.
  - Implied: The challenges for unpaid volunteer managers in safety management are implied through the context.
- Consistency and standards
  - Stated: Participants directly mentioned that paid volunteer managers can maintain consistent standards.
  - Implied: The difficulty for unpaid volunteer managers in achieving this consistency is inferred from the comparison.
- Strategic focus
  - Stated: The benefits of having a paid volunteer manager in terms of education, processes, and the realisation of strategic opportunities were clearly stated.
  - Implied: The limitations for unpaid volunteer managers in these areas were not explicitly stated, but can be inferred.
- Organisational continuity
  - Stated: The contribution of paid volunteer managers to organisational continuity was explicitly discussed.
  - Implied: The lack of continuity with unpaid volunteer managers is inferred.
- Impact on volunteer engagement
  - Stated: The positive impact of having a paid volunteer manager on volunteer engagement was explicitly mentioned.
  - Implied: The potential impact on engagement without a paid volunteer manager is implied.

- Personal investment
  - Implied: The professional versus personal investment levels of paid and unpaid volunteer managers, respectively, are implied through their approaches and commitments.
- Work hours
  - Stated: The flexibility and extra hours worked by paid volunteer managers were explicitly mentioned.
  - Implied: The extent of unpaid work by unpaid volunteer managers, especially outside of standard hours, is more implied.

While there was a general acknowledgment of the value of paid volunteer managers, one respondent (S4) emphasised the unique heart and dedication that volunteers as managers bring, which might differ from that of paid workers. This perspective stands out as it challenges the notion that paid roles inherently bring more value or skill to an organisation.

A statement by S8 about others assuming they are paid, despite being a volunteer, is especially interesting. It suggests that the perception (or even expectation) of professionalism or commitment in volunteer management might not necessarily correlate with being in a paid position.

Another outlier was the mention of unpaid overtime among paid volunteer managers (S6, S7, S8, S9). This contradicts the general assumption that paid roles have defined and delimited hours. It highlights a specific issue within the nonprofit sector, where even paid positions may involve a significant amount of unpaid labour, blurring the lines between paid and volunteer work. This acceptance and normalisation of unpaid overtime in the sector is a nuanced view not commonly expressed in discussions about paid versus volunteer work.

Volunteer recruitment

Understanding the recruitment practices of volunteer managers enriches the qualitative findings of the previous sections of this report.

In this instance, focus group participants were asked about their current approaches to recruitment, and what else they would like to be able to do, given more time and resources. A high-level summary of the themes they returned to in conversation is presented in the table below.

Table 12: Paid versus unpaid volunteer managers

Theme	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Skill assessment of volunteers	6	9.1%
Online volunteer portals	5	7.6%
Impact of Covid pandemic on volunteer recruitment	5	7.6%
Engaging volunteers in meaningful work	5	7.6%
Community social media engagement	4	6.1%
Recruitment of pre-retirement age volunteers	4	6.1%
Volunteer training and onboarding	4	6.1%
Targeted recruitment for specific skills	4	6.1%
Leveraging word-of-mouth for recruitment	4	6.1%
Volunteer waiting lists	3	4.5%
Younger volunteers post the Covid pandemic	3	4.5%
Volunteer retention strategies	3	4.5%
Challenges in managing volunteer capacities	3	4.5%
Community outreach for volunteer engagement	3	4.5%
Strategic pairing of volunteers	2	3.0%
Collaborations with educational institutions	2	3.0%
Expanding volunteer roles for organisational growth	2	3.0%
Digital marketing for volunteer recruitment	2	3.0%
Addressing volunteer safety concerns	2	3.0%

Reflecting on the strategies currently utilised to recruit volunteers, volunteer managers argued for a blend of traditional and modern approaches, especially in response to the changing landscape of volunteering in Queensland.

One strategy that was strongly endorsed was the use of online platforms to advertise volunteer opportunities. The Volunteering Queensland portal was frequently cited in this context. This platform allows organisations to reach a broad audience of potential volunteers, making it easier to connect with individuals interested in volunteering. One manager in particular highlighted this approach's success, noting that 60 percent of their volunteers were sourced this way.

In addition to online platforms, community social media pages played a vital role in local volunteer recruitment. Managers utilised partner platforms to post calls to action and announcements for specific events or needs within the community. Going beyond their own social channels, this approach proved effective in engaging local groups and rallying support for various causes and events.

Managers also emphasised the importance of understanding the skills and backgrounds of their volunteers. An example given was the case of a semi-retired volunteer with a banking background who was successfully matched to a role that

leveraged his financial expertise unrelated to core service delivery. The concept of creating meaningful volunteer roles was also prominent in the discussion. Volunteer managers strived to ensure that the new roles offered were not only beneficial to the organisation but also rewarding and fulfilling for the volunteers.

Additionally, managers noted shifts in volunteer demographics and motivations, particularly post the Covid pandemic. They observed an increase in younger volunteers who were hesitant to return to full-time work and sought volunteering as an alternative. This shift required some managers to effectively adapt their strategies to engage with what was for them and their organisation a new, younger demographic.

Lastly, some managers mentioned the challenge of managing volunteer capacities, especially when dealing with a surplus of volunteers. Strategies such as maintaining waiting lists and strategically pairing new and experienced volunteers were employed to handle these situations effectively.

In envisioning future strategies for volunteer recruitment, managers expressed a keen interest in exploring new and innovative approaches that would enhance their ability to attract volunteers.

The most desired future strategy was an increased use of digital marketing. Managers recognised the untapped potential of digital platforms to reach a wider, more diverse audience. They saw opportunities in creating more engaging and targeted online content, such as short videos and interactive posts, which could appeal to potential volunteers. It was felt that this approach might not only increase visibility but also be utilised to make the process of expressing interest in volunteering more accessible and less intimidating.

Another strategy mentioned was the intent to form stronger collaborations with educational institutions. Managers were interested in tapping into the energy and enthusiasm of younger generations, such as university students. By establishing partnerships with universities, TAFEs and schools, they could create a pipeline of young volunteers who are eager to gain experience and contribute to their communities. These collaborations could include internships (noting that internships are not volunteering), volunteer credits as part of coursework, or even joint events and projects.

Furthermore, managers were interested in expanding the scope of volunteer roles to include more skill-based and professional opportunities. This would not only make volunteering more appealing to individuals with specific skill sets but also benefit organisations by tapping into a wider range of talents and expertise.

Lastly, there was an interest in enhancing volunteer training programs to offer more comprehensive and role-specific guidance. Enhanced training would ensure that volunteers are well-prepared and confident in their roles, leading to more effective volunteer involvement and potentially higher retention rates.

> “The most desired future strategy was an increased use of digital marketing.

Volunteer retention and engagement

Volunteer managers reported employing a variety of strategies to engage and retain volunteers. The emphasis throughout was on prioritising frequent small to medium-sized acts over grand, one-off gestures (even if those large-scale events were seen as ultimately desirable).

Table 13: Engagement and retention strategies of volunteer managers

Theme	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Recognition and appreciation	16	24.6%
Engagement and involvement	9	13.9%
Communication	8	12.3%
Training and development	7	10.8%
Flexibility and adaptability	6	9.2%
Creating a supportive environment	5	7.7%
Building relationships	4	6.2%
Utilising technology	3	4.6%
Community and team building	3	4.6%
Rewards and incentives	2	3.1%
Feedback and evaluation	2	3.1%

Many volunteer managers emphasised the importance of acknowledging volunteers' contributions. This recognition was either formal, such as certificates of appreciation or service awards, or informal, such as thank you notes, birthday acknowledgments, and personal praise. Celebratory events like end-of-year functions and National Volunteer Week celebrations were also highlighted as effective ways to show appreciation.

- S3 mentioned issuing certificates of recognition and inviting volunteers to end-of-year celebrations.
- S1 spoke about the importance of informal recognition activities such as phone calls, emails, or SMS.
- S2 highlighted structured thank you events, like National Volunteers Week and Christmas functions, where long-service badges and awards are presented.
- S14 mentioned sending sunflower seeds as a token of appreciation, symbolising growth and gratitude.
- S13 described hosting morning brunches and boat rides on International Volunteers Day as a form of acknowledgment.

Providing enjoyable activities and social gatherings, such as (virtual) morning teas, group outings, and special events like whale watching or farm visits, was mentioned as a key strategy. These activities not only served as a form of recognition but also helped build a community among volunteers, fostering connections and a sense of belonging.

- S2 organised familiarisation tours and outings as part of volunteer training, doubling as a reward.

- S12 mentioned creating a fun environment by offering cakes and other delights at events.

Several managers highlighted the importance of offering training sessions and workshops. These not only equip volunteers with necessary skills but also serve as a form of engagement and recognition. Contextualising training to the volunteers' roles and interests enhanced their experience and commitment.

- S5 extended training opportunities to volunteers, including first aid, safety intervention, and mental health training.
- S14 aimed to provide more tangible and practical workshops that combined learning with social connection.

Building a strong sense of community and belonging among volunteers was a recurring theme. This was achieved through regular check-ins, creating online communities (for example Facebook groups), and using inclusive language.

- S7 used inclusive language such as "joining our volunteer family" in communications to foster a sense of belonging.
- S16 created a virtual team with regular online catch-ups and a newsletter to build a sense of community.

Flexibility in scheduling and understanding the personal lives and constraints of volunteers was seen as crucial. This approach helped volunteers balance their commitments and increased their willingness to continue volunteering.

- S9 emphasised the importance of flexibility, allowing volunteers to choose their schedules and workloads.

Understanding individual motivations and interests and tailoring their volunteer experience accordingly was noted as effective. This could include assigning roles based on skills and interests, and personal touches like handwritten notes.

- S6 discussed managing volunteers as you would staff but thanking them as you would family, and negotiating roles based on their preferences.
- S4 sought to move into more personalised recognition, such as handwritten Christmas cards.

For many, keeping volunteers informed through newsletters, updates, and regular communication was key. Positive feedback, especially when shared from external sources including community members or beneficiaries, was also found to be particularly motivating.

- S4 maintained engagement through monthly newsletters, activity books, and certificates of appreciation.
- S16 used a variety of communication methods, acknowledging that different volunteers prefer different channels.

Giving volunteers platforms to share their experiences, ideas, and feedback encouraged a sense of ownership and value in the program.

- S3 proposed bi-monthly sessions to allow volunteers to share their experiences and have "a voice" in the program.

Addressing volunteers' practical needs, such as travel costs, can enhance their ability to participate and their overall satisfaction.

- S2 expressed a desire to help offset volunteers' travel costs, recognising the financial burden it can impose.

Encouraging a culture where everyone, including all volunteers and staff, recognise that each other's contributions equally contribute to creating positive and supportive volunteering environments.

- S1 and S8 both emphasised the importance of creating a culture where everyone acknowledges each other's contributions, enhancing the sense of community.
- S8 also mentioned the success of intergenerational activities in keeping volunteers engaged and attracting more volunteers.

If given more resources and time, volunteer managers expressed a desire to expand on these strategies, particularly in areas such as personalised recognition, more frequent and larger-scale social events, and expanded training and development opportunities.

Good and bad experiences

To illustrate the impact of volunteer management more completely, participants were invited to share exemplary observations of good and bad volunteer experiences.

One notable response described an otherwise disinterested security guard whose decision to volunteer was influenced by observing a group of volunteers' empathetic and compassionate approach toward an individual with a troubled history. In this instance, witnessing compassion and understanding in a volunteer setting was a powerful motivator for them to join the organisation.

The concept of 'volunteer champions' was also highlighted as a beneficial practice. In this model, paid staff members undertook less desirable tasks, thereby enabling volunteers to engage more meaningfully in their roles. This approach not only empowered volunteers but also promoted a collaborative and respectful culture between paid staff and volunteers.

Lastly, recognition and support, particularly for long-term volunteers, played a crucial role in positive volunteering experiences. Acknowledging volunteers' contributions and ensuring they do not feel overlooked, coupled with appropriate support, were seen as essential for maintaining their engagement and satisfaction.

Several challenging experiences were also shared.

More than one manager related to an example that highlighted a lack of volunteers' accountability for their adherence to the policies and procedures of the organisations they represented. The situation was further aggravated when these issues remained unaddressed, leading to ongoing representational problems for the organisation. Although separately shared, this stood in stark contrast to the positive security guard example cited above.

Another significant challenge discussed was the existence of double standards within some organisations. In the cases cited, paid staff were afforded certain liberties or benefits that were not extended to volunteers. This disparity created a sense of inequality and exclusion among the volunteers, undermining the potential for a harmonious and collaborative relationship between them and others in the organisation.

The discussions also touched on the resistance to change, particularly from longer-serving volunteers. This resistance was often rooted in a reluctance to adapt to the evolving needs and directions of their organisations. When not managed effectively, it was observed that such resistance inevitably led to toxic environments, hampering the overall functioning and morale within the volunteer community.

A specific issue of poor change management was also shared. In the example, some volunteers had their roles made redundant due to a shift in the organisation's focus.

The management of these transitions was poorly executed, leading to volunteers feeling undervalued and discarded, especially among those who had dedicated many years of service. This poor outcome not only affected the individuals directly involved but also had broader implications for the organisation's reputation and its ability to recruit new volunteers.

Lastly, unmet expectations and a lack of clear volunteer role definition were common issues that led to volunteer dissatisfaction and disengagement. Volunteers often found themselves in situations where their roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined or communicated. This mismatch between expectations and the reality of their roles often led to a sense of disillusionment and a decrease in engagement and productivity.

Taken together, these insights emphasise the need for thoughtful and effective volunteer management strategies, which depend in turn on dedicated volunteer managers. Such strategies should not only address the immediate needs of volunteers but also align with the broader goals and evolving dynamics of the organisations they serve.

> **"... these insights emphasise the need for thoughtful and effective volunteer management strategies.**

Rio Tinto

SECTION 4: THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

Key findings

Cost-benefit analysis is the Australian Government preferred approach to valuing the social and economic impacts of an activity or intervention. A discussion of the cost-benefit methodology and its application in this Section can be found in Appendix A of this report.

The value of volunteering to Queensland across the entire community is the sum of the social and economic benefits enabled. This analysis values these benefits at $117.8 billion.

This amount is significantly greater than previous estimates based only on price or economic impact, yet it is likely to be an underestimate given the limitations of the available data and forensic techniques.

Table 14: Costs and benefits of volunteering (Queensland)

Costs ($ million)			
Direct costs		*Sub-totals*	*Totals*
Volunteer expenses	$8,849.9		
Volunteer involving organisation expenses	$2,769.8	$11,619.7	
Opportunity costs			
Volunteers' time	$12,863.7		
Volunteering investments	$489.2	$13,352.9	**$24,972.6**
Benefits ($ million)			
Commercial benefits			
Producers' surplus	$2,155.1		
Productivity premium	$20,640.9	$22,796.0	
Civic benefits			
Employment	$6,556.5		
Taxes	$2,608.6		
Volunteers' labour	$31,337.8	$40,502.9	
Individual benefits			
Volunteers' dividend		54,455.7	
Social return on investment			**$92,782.0**
Benefit: cost ratio	**4.7 : 1**		**$117,754.6**

By contrasting the net value of volunteering in Queensland with the cost of inputs, it can be seen that for every dollar invested, **$4.70** is returned (the benefit-to-cost ratio).

The net (or social) return on investment – the difference between benefits and costs – is **$92.8 billion**.

Because the external benefits of volunteering significantly outweigh the costs involved, this leads to what economists would term an efficient outcome. In simpler terms, there is a substantial economic, social, and cultural 'profit' in volunteering.

A plain English explainer of the costs and benefits described in this table can be found at Appendix C.

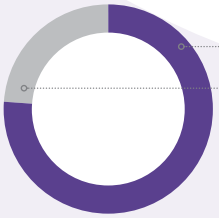
Other findings of interest about the costs and benefits of volunteering in Queensland are summarised below.

Key findings about the costs and benefits of volunteering in Queensland in 2023

Average volunteer expenses per volunteer hour

Average volunteer involving organisation expenses per volunteer hour

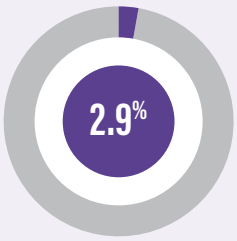
Percentage share of total expenses



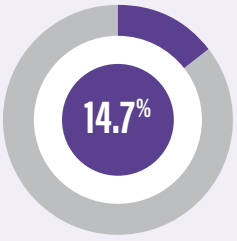
Volunteers | **76.2%**

Volunteer involving organisations | **23.8%**

The contribution of volunteering expenditure to Gross State Product (QLD)



The extent to which volunteering improves workplace productivity



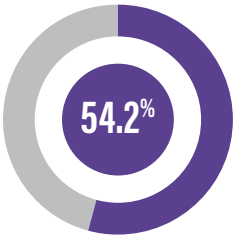
Jobs created in all sectors by expenditure on volunteering

The volunteering workforce is the largest industry by total employment in QLD

Increase in individual wellbeing attributable to volunteering

percentage points

Non volunteers' attribution of community wellbeing to the impact of volunteering



Except in limited cases, direct comparisons to the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report report are not made in this Section due to two major changes to the study methodology.

The larger sample size and analytic improvements have made it possible to more precisely value the expenses incurred by volunteer involving organisations, especially as they relate to the expenses incurred by individual volunteers. Volunteer involving organisation costs were estimated using different methods in 2020 and 2023.

The first-time inclusion of the volunteer dividend also makes direct year-to-year comparison of the benefit to cost ratio inappropriate. Both these changes were recommended as directions for future research in previous reports.

Other differences between 2020 and 2023 that make direct comparison problematic are noted below.

- The inclusion of respondents aged 15 and over in the 2023 Public Survey. In 2020, only respondents aged 18 and over were included.
- Non-linear changes in the Queensland population, workforce composition and the price of labour between 2020 and 2023.
- Non-linear changes to national income and product accounts, trade data, producer and consumer price indices, and other relevant sources of information used in input-output modelling (Appendix A).

All of these changes have the effect of distorting the true differences in value over time. It is beyond the scope of this study to make the complex adjustments to the 2020 data necessary for reliable comparison.

It is also beyond the scope of this study to prepare an analysis of the costs and benefits of volunteering to all of Australia to the level of rigour applied here.

Costs

Volunteering is often assumed to be selfless act that costs nothing, but this isn't accurate given the context in which volunteering takes place. Before pricing each of the costs that enable volunteering in Queensland, here is a quick summary of why volunteering is not 'free.'

The economic cost of volunteering and its associated activities in Queensland is calculated to be **$25.0 billion**. This figure is a combination of two distinct components: direct costs of $11.6 billion and opportunity costs of $13.4 billion.

Recognising these costs helps us understand both the immediate financial implications of volunteering, and the economic choices and societal values that underpin its practice.

A more theoretical explanation of the costs measured here can be found in Appendix A of this report. A much simpler explanation of how these values were derived can be found in Appendix C.

Direct costs

In this report, the term "direct costs" is used to estimate the financial impact volunteering has on the overall demand for goods and services in Queensland in 2023. These costs are the sum of expenditures made by both individuals and organisations to facilitate volunteer activities.

The direct cost of volunteering and its associated activities in Queensland is **$11.6 billion**. This amount is a combination of two distinct components: costs to individuals of $8.8 billion and costs to organisations of $2.8 billion.

To eliminate the risk of double counting, intermediate inputs like production costs are included in these figures and are not tallied separately. In practical terms, this means that the costs involved in organising volunteering events are considered to be part of the final purchase price. Similarly, expenses such as equipment, labour, and utility overheads for providers of volunteer-enabling goods and services are assumed to be fully offset by their sales revenues.

Costs to individuals

The Public Survey asked the following question of volunteers.

*On average, how much money do you **personally spend** each month on your volunteering?*

Please provide a rough estimate or best guess for each.

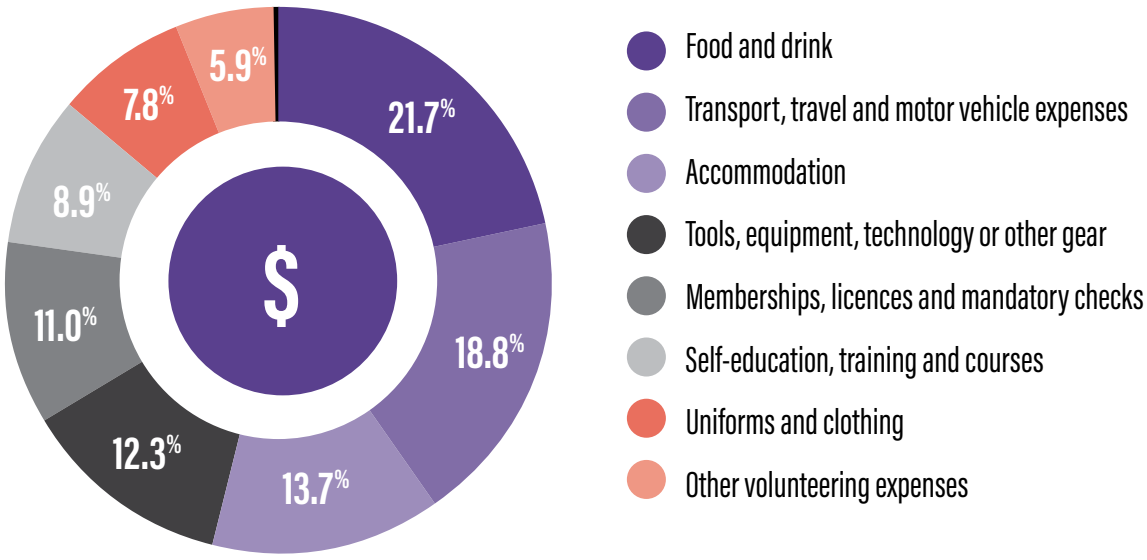
Enter zero (0) if you did not spend anything in a given category.

The expenditure categories are listed in the figure below.

Volunteers in Queensland reported spending an average of $336 per month, or $15.57 per hour they volunteered. In 2023, this was a gross amount of $4,000 per volunteer, compared to a gross amount of $1,600 per volunteer in 2020.[9]

Volunteers in Queensland also reported that, on average, they were reimbursed for 21.0% of their expenses, compared to 11.4% of expenses reported as being reimbursed in 2020.

Figure 26: Breakdown of volunteer expenses each month by category in Queensland



The total direct costs to volunteers in Queensland over the 12 months are calculated by annualising the average cost to volunteers each month (net of reimbursements) and multiplying that amount by the number of volunteers.

This means that for the 12-month period analysed, the net out-of-pocket costs (direct expenses) for volunteers in Queensland totalled **$8.8 billion**.

[9] The observed escalation in the financial burden of volunteering in Queensland cannot be solely attributed to inflation, despite its undeniable impact. It may also be rooted in a heightened cost sensitivity among volunteers, a shift likely driven by prevailing economic conditions. In other words, in these tougher economic times, volunteers are possibly more aware of (and less willing to write off) their incurred expenditure.

The following statistically significant observations were made about the amount Queensland volunteers spent on their service per volunteer hour.

- The younger the volunteer, the more they spent on their volunteering per hour.
- Men reported spending more than women per volunteer hour.
- The greater a volunteer's household income, the more likely they were to spend more per volunteer hour.

Location, ethnic identity, disability or carer status, and paid hours of work made no significant difference to how much a person spent on their volunteering per hour.

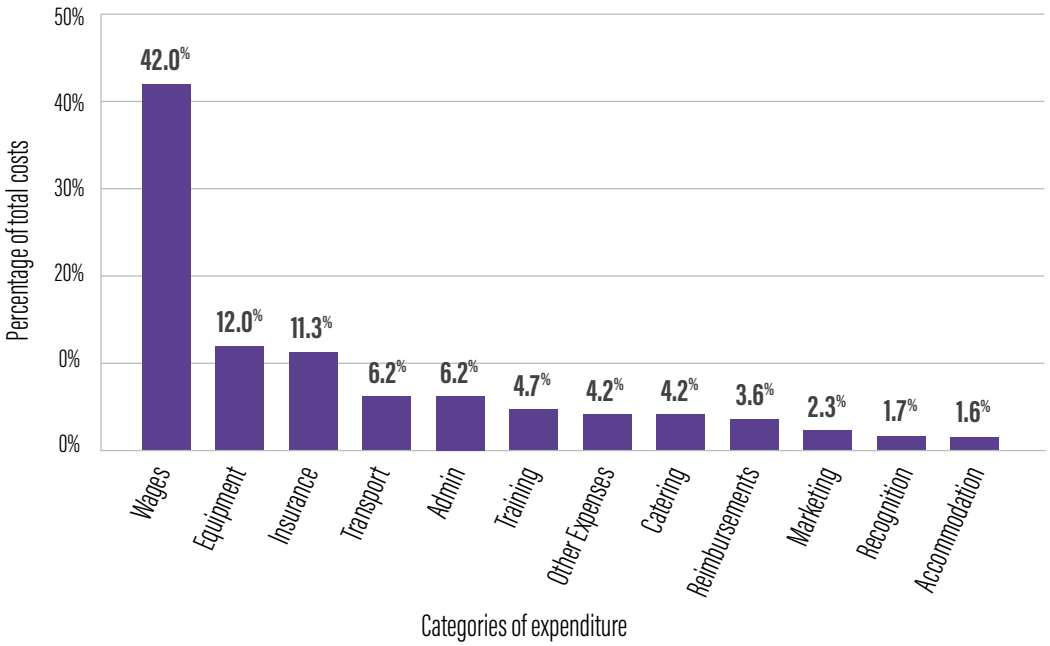
Costs to volunteer involving organisations

The Volunteer Manager Survey asked the following question of respondents.

*How much did it cost to manage **your** volunteers over the last 12 months?*
*Include volunteering-related expenses **you and your** organisation incurred.*
Your best estimate is good enough!
Please enter zero (0) if you did not spend anything on a category.

Organisations in Queensland that involve volunteers reported spending an average of $94.95 per volunteer per month, or $5.09 per formal volunteer hour.[10]

Figure 27: Breakdown of volunteer involving organisations' expenses by category



As expected, paid volunteer managers reported spending significantly more on salaries and wages in their organisations compared to unpaid managers. Apart from this, the distribution of expenses across various categories remained roughly the same for both paid and unpaid volunteer managers.

The total direct costs incurred by volunteer involving organisations in Queensland over a 12-month period are calculated by annualising the average monthly cost

[10] In this calculation, informal volunteers are not included because, according to the definition used in this report, volunteer managers do not oversee or support informal volunteering activities

per volunteer to these organisations and multiplying it by the number of formal volunteers in the State.

In 2023, the direct cost to volunteer involving organisations in Queensland was **$2.8 billion.**

This indicates that volunteers shouldered 76.2% of the financial burden associated with their volunteering, while volunteer involving organisations covered the remaining 23.8%.

Indirect costs

To assess the opportunity costs of volunteering, this analysis makes a hypothetical assumption that there is no volunteering activity taking place in Queensland. In this scenario, all the resources currently being used for volunteering, whether they are human labour or financial investment, would be redirected to other productive activities.

Opportunity costs are calculated by estimating the potential financial returns that these resources could generate if they were allocated to other endeavours instead of volunteering. This provides a clearer understanding of the economic trade-offs involved, helping us grasp what is being sacrificed when these valuable resources are chosen to support volunteering rather than being used for other potentially profitable activities.

The total indirect cost of **$13.4 billion** is the sum of the opportunity costs of volunteers' time ($12.9 billion) and the opportunity costs of investments in volunteering ($0.5 billion).

Opportunity cost of volunteers' time

To accurately calculate the opportunity cost to volunteers of their labour, this analysis takes into account the variability in wages among different groups. The opportunity cost is calculated using the average weekly earnings for both part-time and full-time workers within each age cohort.

This average is then reduced by a 35% effective rate of tax, which accounts for all forms of direct and indirect taxation. The resulting hourly rate is further adjusted to reflect the workforce composition of Queensland, comprising full-time, part-time, and non-participating individuals, segmented by age group.

A straightforward leisure/ work trade-off model is then applied, valuing the opportunity cost of a volunteer hour at the income that could be earned by working an additional hour. This approach assumes a flexible labour market model and assumes the availability of additional work opportunities.

The opportunity cost of leisure varies by age: it is relatively low for the very young and the very old, who are less likely to be participating in the workforce or may be underemployed. The opportunity cost is higher for age groups with greater workforce participation and labour market value.

According to this model, the hours contributed to the Queensland community through volunteering equate to an opportunity cost of $12.9 billion. This figure is a monetary estimate of what volunteers gave up in potential earnings by dedicating their time to unpaid work.

Table 16: Opportunity costs of hours contributed to the community by volunteers

Age	Opportunity cost of volunteers' time $/ hr	Average hours volunteered per month	Total volunteers	Total opportunity cost ($millions)
15-24	$9.27	22.6	474,000	$1,190.7
25-34	$21.92	24.3	530,500	$3,391.8
35-44	$27.94	21.3	545,600	$3,890.9
45-54	$28.29	13.3	449,100	$2,027.1
55-64	$20.46	27.8	294,200	$2,008.5
65+	$3.19	19.1	484,200	$354.6
				$12,863.7

Opportunity costs of diverted resources

A similar assumption is made about the opportunity cost of purchases made by both individual volunteers and the organisations that utilise them.

If these purchases were withheld (in a hypothetical scenario where the community places no value on volunteering) then their financial resources could be redirected toward long-term investment opportunities, considered here to be the next best alternative use.

The metric used for evaluating what that profit might be (the long-term investment opportunity cost) is the 10-year Australian government bond rate, which stood at 4.2% in October 2023, the time this calculation was made. Using this rate as a benchmark, an estimate of the financial implications of the resources allocated to volunteering activities can be made.

Therefore, in 2023 the gross opportunity cost – that is, the potential value of gains missed out on by individuals and organisations due to their expenditure on volunteering – is 4.2% of the direct costs enabling volunteering ($11.6 billion), or $0.5 billion.

The benefits of volunteering

Volunteering in Queensland has a multi-dimensional impact, changing the economic, social and cultural capital of individuals, organisations, and communities. These varied forms of capital are transformed into economically valuable outputs that offer wide-ranging benefits, contributing to the collective welfare of society.

It is calculated that volunteering in Queensland enabled $117.8 billion worth of benefits across the community. These were the sum of commercial benefits worth $22.8 billion, civic benefits valued at $40.5 billion, and individual benefits of $54.5 billion.

A more theoretical explanation of the benefits measured here can be found in Appendix A of this report. A much simpler explanation of how these values were derived can be found in Appendix C.

Commercial benefits

In this report, the term "commercial benefit" is used to distinguish the financial gains enjoyed by ordinary businesses and the employers of volunteers. These benefits include increases in productivity and skill development among employees as well as

purchases made by individuals and organisations in the course of their volunteering efforts.

The commercial benefits generated by volunteering in Queensland are valued at $22.8 billion. This is the sum of producers' surplus ($2.2 billion) and the productivity premium returned to employers ($20.6 billion).

Producers' surplus

The term "producers' surplus" refers to the economic benefits that producers gain from selling their goods or services in the market. This benefit is calculated as the difference between the price a producer receives and the minimum price they would be willing to accept for it. This surplus can be alternatively described, albeit not perfectly, as net profit.

In Queensland, businesses receive a net commercial benefit linked to the sales of goods or services that are either intermediate or final products consumed in the course of volunteering.

Input-output modelling is a method used in economics to understand how different sectors within an economy interact with each other. It illustrates the flow of goods and services between sectors, helping to predict the output effect of a change in demand for a particular industry.

Employing input-output modelling methodology (Appendix A), it is found that the volunteering-related expenditure of $11.6 billion increases the overall output in Queensland economy by $20.3 billion. This calculation includes the production of intermediate goods and accounts for imports worth $4.5 billion.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) by volunteering to the Queensland economy is $11.3 billion, which equates to 2.9% of the State's Gross State Product of $384.5 billion. This is similar in scale to Queensland's real estate services sector, which contributed $11.4 billion in GVA.

Considering that material inputs and existing infrastructure are already accounted for, when the cost of labour and taxes is subtracted from this GVA, a theoretical producers' surplus of $2.2 billion is revealed.

This surplus is a fair return on investment for providers of capital and is assumed to offset the opportunity cost of using land or buildings for other purposes. It is important to clarify that this surplus to producers is distributed among all firms in Queensland contributing intermediate or final goods and/ or services consumed by volunteering activities, not just those directly involved in volunteering.

Productivity premium

The Public Survey asked the following question of all respondents.

Now we'd like you to think about how volunteering impacts [your/ people's] work.*

For example, employees who volunteer outside of work might be happier, have stronger networks or develop skills that make them better at their job.

On the other hand, they might need to take a few more days off, feel like they can do less or be more tired due to their volunteering.

So, do you think volunteering outside of work has a positive or negative impact on [your/ people's] employment?*

- *Positive - volunteering makes people more productive at work (better at their job)*
- *Negative - volunteering makes people less productive at work (worse at their job)*
- *Volunteering makes no difference to people's productivity at work*

* Volunteers were asked directly about "your" work and non volunteers were asked about "people's" work.

The analysis below indicates that the act of volunteering is largely seen as having a positive or neutral impact on work performance. Those who actively volunteer are more likely to attribute increased productivity to their volunteering.

Table 17: Percentage of residents on how they believe volunteering impacts work performance (Australia)

	Volunteers	Non volunteers	Total
Less productive	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%
No change	39.0%	61.7%	46.7%
More productive	57.1%	34.4%	49.4%

To further quantify productivity, if respondents said that volunteering made them or others more or less productive, they were asked the following question.

Lots of things contribute to workplace productivity.

These include:

- *The physical conditions and culture of the workplace*
- *The technology and tools available to do the job*
- *Your skills and experience*
- *Your personal and professional networks*
- *Your physical and mental health*
- *Your satisfaction with your job and life*

*As a percentage, **how much** more* productive at work are you because of your volunteering?*

* If respondents expressed that volunteering made them or others less productive, they were asked how much "less" productive they felt. If they answered, "no difference," they were not shown this follow-up question.

Table 18: The extent to which residents believe volunteering impacts work performance (Australia)

	Volunteers	Non volunteers	Total
Less productive	-25.8%	-27.0%	-26.2%
More productive	32.4%	30.0%	31.8%
Productivity multiplier	17.5%	9.3%	49.4%

The differences in perceptions between volunteers and non volunteers were statistically significant, underscoring the impact of personal experience on the belief that volunteering affects work performance.

Applying these rates to the cost to employers of labour per age cohort (replacement cost) as per the formula in Appendix A enables the quantification of a 'productivity premium' enjoyed by employers as a result of their employees' volunteering.

For consistency in reporting, the productivity multiplier was derived from the national sample and held constant for all States and Territories. Other equation inputs were specific to Queensland.

The extent to which volunteering in Queensland improved the productivity of employees is estimated to be **$20.6 billion**.

This benefit is separate to the (soon to be discussed) wellbeing benefit directly enjoyed by volunteers, even if a fraction of the productivity premium is returned to employees in the form of increased wages.

Statistically significant observations about the productivity multiplier follow.

- The younger a person was, the higher their productivity multiplier.
- The more hours a person worked for pay each week, the higher their productivity multiplier.
- People who identified as First Nations and multicultural were more likely than others to assign a higher percentage of their workplace productivity to volunteering.
- People living with disability were more likely to report a lower productivity multiplier.

Gender, location, and carer status made no significant difference to a respondent's productivity multiplier.

Civic benefits

In this report, a "civic benefit" is the valuable contributions made or inspired by volunteers that, in their absence, would have to be supplied by the State Government to maintain the current standard of community living. These contributions can be understood as costs that the government avoids incurring because volunteers are stepping in to provide those services or benefits.

For example, if volunteers are cleaning a local park, the government saves on the cost of hiring workers for that task. In essence, civic benefits represent a form of financial relief for the government, allowing it to allocate resources elsewhere.

The civic benefits enabled by volunteering in Queensland are valued at **$40.5 billion**. This is the sum of employee wages ($6.6 billion), taxes ($2.6 billion) and the theoretical replacement cost of volunteers' labour ($31.3 billion).

Important civic benefits acknowledged but not quantified by this analysis include the inbound tourism generated by volunteering in Queensland, as well as costs potentially saved by the civil systems of health, emergency services, criminal and social justice, to name but a few.

Beyond these economic factors, some forms of volunteering have a notable environmental impact. Many volunteers are actively contributing to conservation and sustainability initiatives. While these environmental contributions may not be easily quantifiable, they are nonetheless vital for the long-term health and wellbeing of both communities and the environment at large.

For that reason, the estimate of civic benefits is likely to be significantly understated, and these gaps are recommended as directions for future research.

Employment

The input-output model (Appendix A) shows that volunteering motivated expenditure in Queensland generated 113,000 jobs across all sectors of the economy. Of these, 74,000 were full-time positions.

It is important to note that these are not jobs solely within the volunteering sector; rather, these jobs are created economy-wide. For instance, volunteering contributes to the demand for professional services such as training, administration, and logistics. This creates new employment opportunities in those industries.

The model quantifies the wage benefits generated by these jobs as being worth $6.6 billion. This figure directly benefits households, augmenting their disposable income and, consequently, their purchasing power.

This also means an equivalent welfare cost is avoided by the government. As more people become employed thanks to the ripple effects of volunteering expenditure, fewer people rely on unemployment benefits or other forms of social assistance. This results in an equivalent saving for the government, which can reallocate these saved funds to other critical sectors like healthcare, or they can choose to reinvest in volunteering.

Taxes

The input-output model also reveals that Queensland's volunteering-related expenditure of $11.6 billion generates **$2.6 billion** in tax revenue for the government.

It is important to note that the tax revenue generated is not necessarily proportional to the investment made by each tier of government in the volunteering sector. Different levels of government – federal, state, and local – may contribute different amounts to support volunteering but may benefit differently from the generated tax revenue.

Yet despite generating significant tax revenue, it is unlikely that the government reinvests an equivalent amount back into the volunteering sector. In other words, the financial contributions that the volunteering sector makes to public coffers may not be fully reciprocated through government funding or support for volunteering activities.

Volunteers' labour

It was noted in Section 1 of this report that volunteers in Queensland contributed 719.8 million hours of their time to various individuals, causes and organisations. The replacement cost of that labour is the expense that beneficiaries would incur if they had to hire paid professionals to do the same work.

Because volunteers bring a diverse set of skills and professional experience to their roles, adding specialised value to the services they provide, volunteer labour cannot be simply substituted with minimum wage workers. It is more accurate to use median wage data tailored to each age cohort of volunteers, accounting for the varying levels of expertise and skill sets they offer.

In addition to the base wage, there are several other costs associated with employment that need to be taken into account. These include the administrative and capital overheads that would be incurred for each working hour, as well as the minimum requirements of the Australian Government's superannuation guarantee. To allow for these, an additional 15% has been added to the median wage data for each age group.

This approach assumes that the value of the activities provided by each volunteer is equivalent to the value of their direct employment, accounting for their age. This is not a perfect accounting of the value of the services provided by volunteers but is more reliable than approaches that price volunteer labour at the minimum wage. Improving the replacement cost method is encouraged as a direction for future research. [11]

On these terms, the cost to the Queensland community (and avoided by government) of replacing volunteer labour is **$31.3 billion**.

Table 19: Replacement cost of hours donated to the community by Queensland volunteers

Age	Replacement cost of volunteers' time $/ hr	Average hours volunteered per month	Total volunteers	Total replacement cost ($millions)
15-24	$20.59	22.6	474,000	$2,644.8
25-34	$45.28	24.3	530,500	$7,005.7
35-44	$55.68	21.3	545,600	$7,755.3
45-54	$58.44	13.3	449,100	$4,187.5
55-64	$52.29	27.8	294,200	$5,134.8
65+	$41.49	19.1	484,200	$4,609.7
				$31,337.8

Note that the replacement cost of a volunteer's labour is much greater than the opportunity cost of a volunteer's time. This is because the replacement cost includes all the costs an employer would have to pay (including taxes, superannuation and administrative costs), whereas the opportunity cost is only a measure of what a volunteer would receive 'cash-in-hand' if they were paid.

> **On these terms, the cost to the Queensland community ... of replacing volunteer labour is $31.3 billion.**

[11] The potential intrinsic value that results from a volunteer's willingness to donate their time at below market rates is considered in the Volunteer Dividend below.

Opportunity cost is also discounted by the number of people not in the labour force. Using this approach, if a person is not in paid work, then there is no opportunity cost to their time when it comes to volunteering.

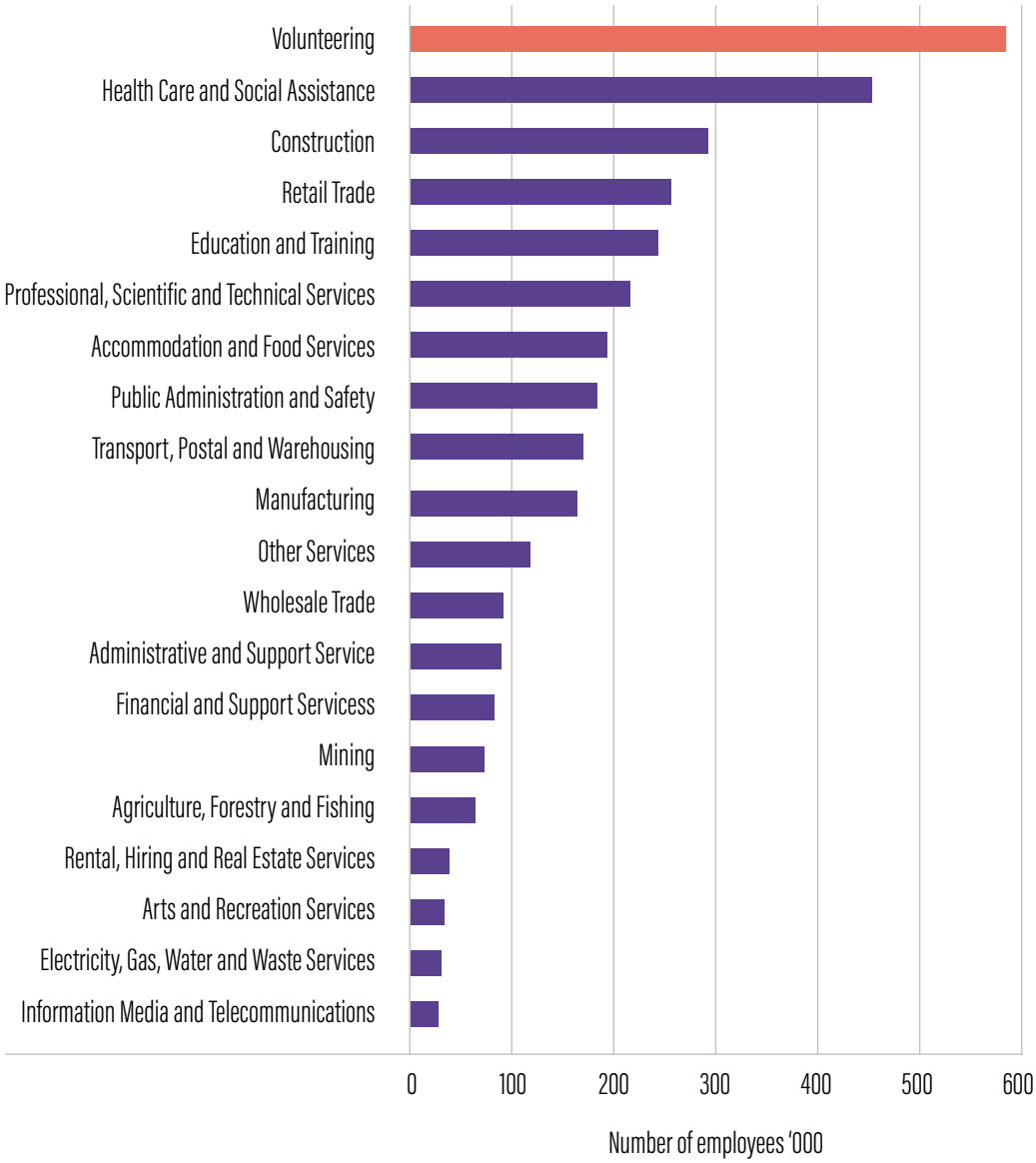
Therefore, the opportunity cost of time for people over 65 is quite low at an average of $3.19 per person, as most people at this age are no longer in paid work. However, of the people who are in paid work at this age, their average replacement cost to employers is $41.49 per hour.

To illustrate the scale of the volunteering sector, the replacement cost of volunteer labour in Queensland is compared with the total compensation given to employees in both the government and private sectors.

The results were eye-opening. In Queensland, the volunteering sector is equivalent to just over half of the entire workforce. Furthermore, it is over two-thirds the size of the workforce in the private sector and over 2.25 times the size of the workforce in the public sector.

As such, the volunteering sector is an industry that is relied upon and, converting the replacement cost of volunteering into an equivalent number of full- and part-time jobs, it is the largest industry by employment in the State.

Figure 28: Volunteering as an industry by employment



Individual benefits

The benefits described to this point are the tangible benefits provided to the community, also known as the 'outputs' of volunteering. These outputs have been quantified to illustrate the new value they add to others.

Now, the focus shifts to explore another important dimension of volunteering: the intrinsic satisfaction or wellbeing benefits that volunteers themselves experience as a result of their participation. This aspect values the emotional and psychological rewards that volunteers gain.

In economic terms, when individuals engage with volunteering through an act or a purchase, it is assumed they derive some level of benefit or utility from that decision. The rational economic framework suggests that people act to maximise this utility and would not intentionally make decisions that diminish it. Consequently, each act of volunteering and its related consumption comes with an implied benefit to the individual beyond the value added to employers and the community.

At a minimum, this benefit is equal to the costs individuals bear in the pursuit of their volunteering. Therefore, using the revealed preference method, it can be said that in Queensland, volunteers enjoyed at least $21.7 billion in individual benefits from their volunteering. This is the sum of the money they spent ($8.8 billion) and time they contributed ($12.9 billion).

But how much more would individuals be willing to pay to experience the full range of benefits that come from volunteering? And what about those who are not volunteers – do they derive benefits from the volunteering of others, even if they are not directly participating?

In answering the first question, the value of the benefits that volunteers personally accrue is estimated to be **$54.5 billion**.

Compelling evidence is also put forward to show that even non volunteers significantly value the contributions to society made by their volunteering peers.

Volunteer dividend

Economists assume that markets, where transactions occur, serve as a social good because exchanges only happen when both the buyer and the seller perceive value in the transaction.

For sellers, value is realised when they make a profit that surpasses their production costs, a metric already discussed in the sub-section on producer's surplus ($2.2 billion). For buyers, value is achieved when they perceive that they have gotten a "bargain," meaning they would have been willing to pay more than the actual price to satisfy their need. A consumer's surplus is thus the additional benefit or utility an individual receives beyond the cost associated with an activity or consumption.

In many analyses, consumer surplus plays a critical role in evaluating the net costs or benefits of an activity, most notably for evaluating the efficiency of markets. If consumers derive more value from a product or service than what they pay for it, this is a sign that resources in the economy are being allocated efficiently.

An appreciation of consumers' surplus is essential in shaping public policy. Knowing how much additional value people get from public goods like transportation or healthcare can inform ticket pricing or the allocation of subsidies. A high net consumers' surplus across a lifetime of activities typically correlates with a high quality of life.

In this context, volunteers are the consumers. They finance their participation through the resources they purchase to enable their volunteering ($8.8 billion) and the opportunity cost of the time they contribute ($12.9 billion). Understanding the surplus of volunteers as a form of dividend allows us to go beyond these zero-sum returns to price the intrinsic value that volunteers gain from their activities.

This intrinsic value is above and beyond any tangible rewards and includes all the realisation of all the motivations for volunteering discussed in Section 1. Assuming no harm is done to others, a high consumers' surplus justifies the allocation of resources towards a volunteer program, as it indicates (if nothing else) that volunteers are deriving significant benefits from their involvement.

A better understanding of consumer surplus can also aid in volunteer engagement and retention. The more intrinsic returns that volunteers perceive, the more likely they are to continue their activities in the long term, making them more effective and committed contributors, leading to better outcomes for the individuals and causes they support.

When volunteers report higher levels of wellbeing, life satisfaction, or happiness compared to non volunteers, this difference can be considered an expression of their volunteering specific consumers' surplus. That difference serves as a measure of the "excess utility" that volunteers receive from their activities.

Labour economists also refer to this excess utility as a "psychic wage." This is the non-monetary satisfaction or psychological benefits that individuals derive from their work, beyond just the financial compensation. This concept recognises that some people may be motivated by factors such as job satisfaction, a sense of purpose, social recognition, or personal fulfillment, in addition to their salary or wages. It is used to explain why, for example, jobs in the arts sector are in such high demand even though wages are relatively low and insecure.

Government agencies around the globe are increasingly requesting a quantification of the wellbeing benefits stakeholders might accrue (or lose) in formal cost benefit analyses presented to them. In the absence of specific methodological direction from the Queensland and Australian governments, the method stipulated in the United Kingdom and New Zealand for quantifying the changes in wellbeing that volunteering might induce is applied.

In the Public Survey, all respondents were asked the following question.

On a scale of 1-100, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 100 is completely satisfied, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Self-rated life satisfaction scales like this are regarded as reliable measures of wellbeing for several reasons.

Foremost, they are straightforward and easy to administer, offering broad accessibility. They also capture the nuanced, subjective experiences that are crucial for a holistic understanding of webeing. Importantly, they have been found to correlate well with other objective and subjective indicators, such as income and health status, and demonstrate good test-retest reliability. They are also adaptable to diverse cultural settings.

For those reasons, life satisfaction scales are utilised by a wide range of stakeholders, including academic researchers, government bodies, healthcare providers, economists, corporations, and international organisations like the World Bank and United Nations. Their widespread use across multiple sectors attests to their reliability and versatility in measuring wellbeing.

In the sample of over 6,800 Australian residents, it was found that being a volunteer was associated with a 4.4-point increase in life satisfaction, a proxy for wellbeing. Whereas only 0.6% of the overall variance in wellbeing could be explained by volunteering, there was a less than one in 1,000 chance that the relationship observed was due to random error.

Surprisingly, the number of hours spent volunteering did not significantly impact one's sense of wellbeing. This indicates that the mere act of volunteering is enough to produce wellbeing benefits, without a specific volume requirement.

According to the formula described in Appendix A, the monetised value of a consumer's surplus associated with a 4.4-point increase in life satisfaction in Queensland is $19,600 per annum. When this value is extrapolated to the entire population of volunteers in Queensland, it translates into a wellbeing benefit of **$54.5 billion.**

IMPORTANT NOTE

Expressions of consumer surplus essentially measure satisfaction and should not be confused with a willingness on the part of volunteers to pay more. In terms of value, increasing prices would result in a real loss for current volunteers. This is because the dividends enjoyed by volunteers would be converted into producers' surplus for no net gain to them as consumers, increasing the real and opportunity costs of entry and forcing some volunteers out.

As it will be demonstrated, a more efficient gain can be realised by converting nonvolunteers into volunteers and incentivising those who are under-volunteering to volunteer more. Deliberately exploiting the currently high levels of consumer surplus – by either increasing prices or withdrawing subsidies – is likely to be counterproductive.

Non-use value

Non-use value in economics refers to the value that people assign to a good, service, or resource even if they do not use it. This concept is often used in environmental economics to explain why people might place a value on preserving natural habitats, endangered species, or cultural heritage, even if they never actually engage with these resources.

Non-use value is explained in various ways in academic literature, but largely centres around the following three ideas that are contextualised here for volunteering.

- Existence value: The value people derive from knowing that volunteering exists, even if they never use it.
- Bequest value: The value people place on preserving volunteering for future generations to enjoy.
- Option value: The value people place on preserving the option to volunteer in the future, even if they are not volunteering today.

To better understand the non-use value of volunteering, Public Survey respondents were asked the following question.

> ***Quality of life*** *is the degree to which you feel healthy, comfortable and able to participate in or enjoy life's events.*
>
> *It is determined by lots of things, including our:*
>
> - *Physical health*
> - *Psychological health*
> - *Financial wealth*

- *Level of independence*
- *Social relationships*
- *Environment*
- *Spiritual, religious or personal beliefs.*

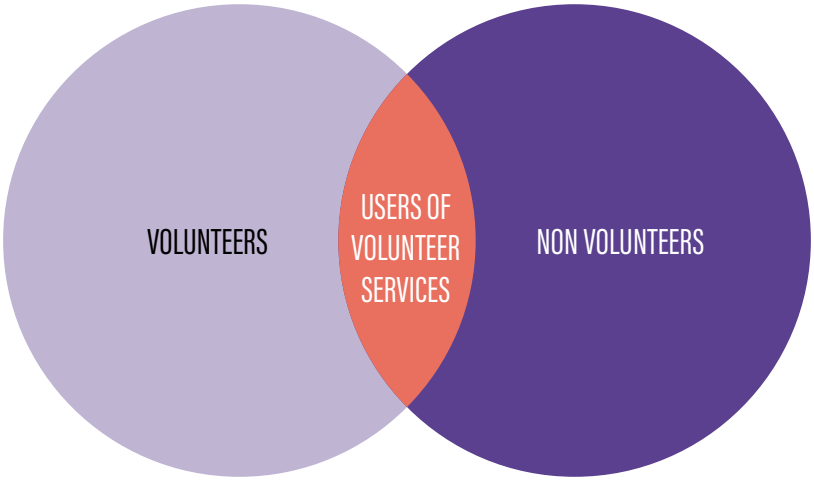
Volunteering – in all its forms – can impact many of these domains.

*As a percentage, how much do you think volunteering **in the community** impacts the quality of life of all of us?*

Given the findings already revealed in this report, it is not surprising to see a statistically significant difference in the average reported scores between volunteers and non volunteers. What does stand out, however, is that non volunteers attribute 54.2% of community wellbeing to the impact of volunteering.

This observation introduces a complex measurement challenge due to the significant overlap among volunteers, non volunteers, and users of volunteer services. To fully grasp the true value of volunteering, it is necessary to quantify the consumer surplus for each of these three groups without double-counting the benefits.

Figure 29: The relationship between volunteers, non-volunteers and users of volunteer services



Unfortunately, the limits of the method applied here do not allow us to make these fine distinctions. Acknowledging our approach therefore undervalues the full suite of volunteering benefits, this is identified as a promising direction for future research.

Optimising the investment

Given that it provides a net social benefit, the question that remains is how to optimise the community's returns on its investments in volunteering. The governing assumption, made earlier, is that volunteers will not be willing to disproportionately increase their personal expenditure of time and money to subsidise this. What is the maximum, then, that the community should be willing to pay to get more of (or maximise) the benefits of volunteering?

The value of volunteering fundamentally depends upon the rate of regular participation. In other words, the more volunteers a community has and the more hours they contribute, the greater the benefit to society. That said, there are obvious limits to how much people are willing and able to contribute.

Queensland residents have defined those limits for us with their stated intent. As reported in Section 1 of this report, 28.6% of residents intend to be volunteering more in the three years' time. But how much more do they want to volunteer? Or, more pragmatically, how much more are they likely to volunteer if they realise their intent?

Here is a detailed breakdown of what respondents said about their intent to volunteer more. In this table, the average number of hours they volunteer each month are sorted into nationally determined quintiles.

In other words, the 20% of volunteers who did the least amount of volunteering contributed an average of 1.9 hours per month. The 20% of volunteers who did the most of amount of volunteering contributed an average of 26.6 hours per month.

Table 20: Average hours volunteered each month versus stated intent to volunteer more

Average hours volunteered per month	Percentage of volunteers	Intent to volunteer *more*
0	0%	41.9%
1.9	0-20%	32.2%
4.9	20-40%	27.2%
8.9	40-60%	28.4%
15.8	60-80%	36.9%
26.6	80-100%	31.0%

Let's consider a scenario where two developments occur over the next three years:

1. Individuals who expressed an intention to volunteer less or discontinue volunteering altogether instead maintain their current rate of participation.
2. Half of those who plan to volunteer more increase their average monthly hours to the next higher quintile.

Table 21: New average hours volunteered each month versus stated intent to volunteer more

Current average hours volunteered per month	Intent to volunteer *more*	Average hours volunteered per month in 3 years' time
0	41.9%	1.9 (+1.9)
1.9	32.2%	4.9 (+3.0)
4.9	27.2%	8.9 (+4.0)
8.9	28.4%	15.8 (+6.9)
15.8	36.9%	26.6 (+10.8)
26.6	31.0%	37.4 (+10.8)

Not only would this scenario add 323,400 volunteers to the Queensland volunteer workforce, but it would also add 45.0 million hours to the pool of service.

Basic modelling indicates that if this scenario were realised—compared to an alternative case in which volunteering participation rates remained constant—the net yield would be in the order of **$6.7 billion** (+6.3%) in the third year.

How, then, can individuals be encouraged to stay committed to volunteering when they contemplate stepping back? And considering the discrepancy between what people claim they will do in surveys and their actual actions, how can those who express a willingness to volunteer more be motivated to actually follow through?

Realistically, substantial shifts in volunteer retention and commitment are most likely to occur through government intervention. Government bodies at different levels possess the financial resources and the vested interest to bring about such change.

Although a specific analysis of strategic investment options needs to be conducted before making recommendations on the effectiveness of various approaches, insight is offered into the scale of investment needed. For instance, increasing the Queensland budget for volunteer involving organisations by 6.3% would necessitate an additional $173.3 million per year.

To put it into perspective, this amount is one-fifth of one percent of the Queensland government's annual budget. This is not to suggest that the burden should fall solely on the Queensland government, but it serves as an illustrative example of the financial scope required.

In fact, should this goal be achieved with a lesser investment, a greater surplus could be enjoyed by all.

CONCLUSION

The particular benefits that individuals and the community receive from volunteering in Queensland are not unique. Viewed in isolation, they may not even be that efficient. For example, people might equally improve their quality of life by watching sport; they could also transfer their social obligations to government in the form of increased taxes.

Nonetheless, the data is compelling: an annual return of 470% on every $1 invested would set off a financial frenzy if it were tied to a commercial investment. This suggests that the scale and impact of volunteering have been historically undervalued and under-recognised in public discourse.

Notably, nearly two-thirds of Queensland residents volunteer in some form, a figure significantly higher than official government estimates. Yet it is also evident that volunteering in Queensland has room for further growth.

From an economic standpoint, this report challenges the traditional view that the value of volunteering is merely the minimum-wage replacement cost of its labour. Rather, volunteering has a much broader economic impact, affecting almost every activity in the State.

The measures in this report indicate it is Queensland's largest industry by labour force. Consequently, there is a strong case for better resource allocation to and knowledge sharing within the volunteering sector to leverage its full potential.

Ultimately, the cost-benefit analysis reveals that the external benefits of volunteering far outweigh the social costs, making the activity economically efficient. Moreover, it indicates that increased investment in volunteering could produce exponential returns.

For while the study has limitations that warrant further research, it offers a foundational framework that decision-makers in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors can use for ongoing improvements in how volunteering is promoted, managed and supported.

Directions for future research

Data collection

Future research is recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the volunteer manager population in Australia. A more robust survey methodology, including offline outreach through paper-based surveys, could be employed to capture a broader range of demographics, potentially including those who may have been inadvertently overlooked in this study. Such under-represented demographic groups include:

- Young volunteer managers
- Culturally and linguistically diverse volunteer managers
- Volunteers and their managers in the public and private sectors

While continuously reinventing the survey instruments could hinder the ability to track trends over time, several minor adjustments to the instruments are proposed based on feedback from the sector. These minor changes aim to improve the survey's relevance and accuracy without significantly compromising its longitudinal comparability.

Longitudinal research

The body of knowledge that has been accumulated in this and complementary State of Volunteering Reports in Australia provides valuable cross-sectional insights into the volunteering sector. However, a key limitation of cross-sectional research is that it captures a snapshot at a single point in time, making it difficult to infer cause-and-effect relationships or track changes over time. This is where longitudinal studies can add significant value to our understanding of the volunteering sector.

Longitudinal studies involve collecting data from the same subjects repeatedly over a period of time. By doing so, trends and changes in volunteering attitudes, behaviours, and management practices can be observed. This approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of causal relationships between variables. For instance, the current research highlighted certain demographic and organisational factors correlated with managerial optimism for the future of their organisation. A longitudinal study could show whether changes in these factors directly lead to changes in optimism and, if so, under what conditions.

Moreover, the volunteering landscape is influenced by numerous external factors such as economic conditions, changes in government policy, or shifts in community needs and interests. Longitudinal data would enable researchers to control for these variables, offering a clearer understanding of intrinsic factors that drive or hinder volunteer participation. This would enrich the current body of knowledge by contextualising it within a broader temporal framework, making the findings more robust and actionable.

Longitudinal studies can also validate the sustainability of successful volunteer management practices. If a certain approach to volunteer management is shown to consistently produce high levels of engagement over several years, this adds credibility to its efficacy. Conversely, practices that seem promising in the short-term but lose effectiveness over time could be flagged for reconsideration.

Finally, longitudinal research can offer insights into the lifecycle of volunteers and volunteer managers. This could include understanding points of entry and exit from volunteer roles, the long-term impacts of volunteering on personal and professional development, and generational shifts in attitudes toward volunteering. Such insights are crucial for strategic planning and for developing targeted interventions that encourage long-term volunteer engagement.

Even though the existing body of research has laid a solid foundation, revisiting it at regular intervals will enrich our understanding of the complex dynamics affecting the volunteering sector. This multi-dimensional approach will allow for a more nuanced, comprehensive, and actionable body of knowledge that can inform both policy and practice in meaningful ways.

Mixed methods

The analyses of this report modelled a range of demographic and organisational attributes as predictor variables. While these attributes did reveal some level of correlation, it's crucial to acknowledge the limitations of our modelling, particularly their relatively low predictive influence.

Our research indicates that a large percentage of the variance in the dependent variables analysed could not be fully explained by the demographic factors modelled. Essentially, while the statistical significance of some relationships affirms that they contribute to understanding the phenomenon, the extent to which they do is limited. This raises questions about what other factors could be at play, highlighting a research gap that requires further exploration.

Future research could benefit substantially from incorporating qualitative methods to complement our quantitative method. Qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could offer nuanced insights into the specific contexts, attitudes, and experiences that contribute to changes in volunteer behaviour. This could encompass both personal factors (like individual motivations or emotional resilience) and external factors (such as organisational culture, community engagement, or the policy landscape), which the models employed in this study

cannot adequately address.

Moreover, ethnographic studies that immerse researchers within organisations for an extended period could provide a more holistic understanding of the day-to-day challenges and opportunities in volunteer management. Through this method, researchers can witness firsthand the complexity and diversity of experiences that cannot easily be reduced to ones and zeros. By integrating the richness of qualitative data with existing quantitative findings, a multi-faceted understanding of what drives the volunteering sector can be achieved.

For while this analysis has advanced a foundational understanding of how demographic and organisational attributes relate to volunteering, the unexplained variance signals a need for more comprehensive research. Utilising qualitative methodologies could unearth hidden dimensions to these complex issues, thus enriching our understanding and potentially leading to more effective strategies for bolstering the volunteering sector in the future.

Inclusive volunteering

The importance of mixed-method research becomes particularly evident when studying demographic groups that do not align with the mainstream, able-bodied, and Anglo-centric perspectives on volunteering. For such communities – including First Nations Australians and people living with disabilities – the definitions and experiences of volunteering differ significantly from those of the general population.

This makes it challenging to directly compare metrics related to participation and inclusion. At a minimum, any relevant survey questions and the presentation of findings should be contextualised appropriately.

The unique perspectives of these communities should not be left out of discussions about volunteering. Their differences make their inclusion in the broader body of research on volunteering all the more critical. This is not just because volunteering can have a profound impact on these communities, but also because their experiences can offer valuable insights that may be applicable in other settings.

Therefore, additional research in these spaces is highly recommended to create a more comprehensive understanding of volunteering in Queensland.

The social cost of volunteering

There is a growing need for comprehensive research aimed at quantifying the social costs associated with volunteering. While the positive impacts of volunteering are often highlighted, understanding its hidden costs – such as the displacement of paid workers, inequities in participation, volunteer burnout, potential compromises in service quality, and volunteer-enabled extremism – is essential for a 'warts-and-all' view of its societal implications.

These social costs are often complex, interconnected, and elusive, making them difficult to measure through conventional means. Nonetheless, developing methodologies to assess these impacts can provide a more balanced perspective that could inform public policy and organisational decision-making.

The goal should be to formulate a framework that not only quantifies but also contextualises the social costs, thus enabling more sustainable and equitable practices in the realm of volunteering. This research direction has the potential to substantially enrich the discourse on social welfare, the intersections between volunteering and paid labour, and the role of government in civil society.

Unmeasured and under-measured benefits

Other areas inviting further investigation are the unquantified and under-quantified benefits of volunteering. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following.

- The transfer effects of inbound and outbound volunteer tourism.
- Employers' perspective on the productivity multiplier.
- The true replacement cost of volunteer labour.
- The wellbeing benefits enjoyed by consumers of volunteer services.

Another key challenge to tackle is the issue of measurement complexity arising from the considerable overlap among volunteers, non volunteers, and users of volunteer services. Fully understanding the true societal value of volunteering requires a comprehensive framework that can reliably quantify the consumer surplus for each of these distinct groups.

This would involve crafting methodological approaches that can segregate and measure these benefits without double-counting or overlapping, thereby providing a more nuanced and accurate view of volunteering's impact on community wellbeing.

The demand side of volunteering

The current study has made a substantial contribution to the field by examining the supply side of volunteering, focusing on volunteer participation and various motivational factors behind it. However, one of the significant gaps in this research domain is the lack of focus on the demand side of volunteering.

The demand side refers to the necessity or requirement for volunteer efforts within the community. The question asks, how many volunteers does our community actually need? For this, a whole range of sub-questions might emerge. For example, are market methods of pricing the replacement cost of volunteers appropriate given the different competitive pressures in the scramble to secure reliable volunteer labour? Which services can and should be reasonably supplied by volunteers versus paid workers?

To fill this gap in the research, various methodological approaches can be considered. These might include community surveys among volunteer involving organisations and governmental bodies, data analytics using machine learning algorithms, gap analysis, economic modelling, and in-depth case studies. Each of these methods offers a unique angle from which to understand and quantify volunteer demand, providing a more balanced and comprehensive view of community needs and opportunities for volunteer engagement.

By complementing the existing research on the supply side with a rigorous examination of the demand side, a more holistic understanding of the volunteering ecosystem is enabled. This balanced view is crucial for everyone involved, from volunteers and community organisations to policy-makers, ensuring that community needs are met effectively, efficiently and equitably.

GLOSSARY

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
GSP	Gross State Product
GSS	General Social Survey of households conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
GVA	Gross Value Added
Net favourability score	A measurement that shows whether a group has a positive or negative view of something, taking into account both favourable and unfavourable opinions.
NSW	New South Wales, Australia
Percentage point	A "percentage point" is a unit of measure used to describe the absolute difference between two percentages. It's not the same as "percent change," which is a relative measure. For example, let's say the percentage of people who are volunteering increased from 40% to 50%. The difference is 10 percentage points, because you subtract the starting percentage (40%) from the ending percentage (50%). However, if you were to describe this as a "percent change," you would say that the percentage of people volunteering increased by 25%. This is calculated by taking the change (10%) and dividing it by the starting value (40%), then multiplying by 100 to get it in percentage terms.
Public Survey	Survey of Queensland and Australian residents.
Quintile	In statistics, a quintile is one of four points that divide a data set into five equal parts, or one of the five groups created by these points. Each quintile contains 20% of the total observations, allowing for easier comparison and analysis of data distribution.
Statistical significance	A less than one-in-twenty chance that the result is random. It is safe to assume that a statistically significant finding can be generalised for the population the sample is drawn from.
TURF analysis	Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency analysis is a statistical technique used to determine how to include the most diverse options or items within a limited selection.
Vols	Volunteers
Volunteer	Someone who willingly gives time for the common good and without financial gain.
Volunteer manager	Someone who manages, supervises, organises or coordinates volunteers. They can be paid in this role or a volunteer themselves.
Volunteer Manager Survey	Survey of Queensland and Australian volunteer managers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Methodology detail

Data cleaning

Data cleaning is the process of preparing a sample for analysis by removing or excluding incorrect, incomplete, duplicated, or irrelevant data. This standard practice in the statistical sciences is necessary to improve the quality of the data so that the results of the analysis can be trusted.

The Public Survey and Volunteer Manager Survey had in-built integrity checks to ensure the data was of a high quality. The surveys employed condition logic to ensure only relevant questions were shown to respondents, answer options were randomised to reduce position bias, and where appropriate, numeric entry fields were capped with logical limits to prevent the inadvertent overstatement of value.

The following individual survey responses were further excluded from the analysis:

- Responses commenced before the survey officially opened (pilot and test responses)
- Incomplete responses (Public Survey only)
- Responses that took less than three minutes to complete (Volunteer Manager Survey only)

As respondents to the Public Survey were being paid for their participation, very strict qualification criteria were applied to their responses. Cleaning criteria for the Public Survey included:

- Year of birth could not be before 1923 – answers that met this criterion voided the whole response.
- If a person has 16 waking hours a day in a 30-day month, that is 480 hours. Therefore, the sum of hours and paid work and hours volunteered could not be greater than 450 per month – answers that met this criterion voided the whole response.
- A person was reclassified as a non volunteer if the sum of their reported volunteer hours was zero.
- If a person stated they volunteered for one or more organisations but reported zero hours, they were not considered to be a formal volunteer.
- A logical cap of 50 was applied to the sum of organisations a person volunteered for in one year.
- A logical cap of ±50% was applied to the productivity premium a person could nominate.
- Free-text responses to "Other" questions that were given in bad faith (for example, giving "Attack helicopter" as gender) – answers that met this criterion voided the whole response.

Careless responses to the expenditure questions in both surveys were also encountered. A response to the expenditure question was considered to be "careless" if it met any of the following criteria: entering the same number for each category of expenditure (for example, $2,000 for all), inputting a number that appeared to be randomly typed (for example, $5643685), or providing a sequence of numbers that is highly improbable (for example, $1, $2, $3, $4, $5).

Careless responses to the expenditure question in the Public Survey voided the entire response. The assumption here was that if a respondent was careless on one question, there is a reasonable likelihood that they may not have been attentive or truthful in their other answers as well. This is a known risk when people are paid to complete surveys.

In the Volunteer Manager Survey, however, it was known that respondents were more earnest by electing to participate without payment, and that many respondents would be (and were) challenged by this question. For that reason, the expenditure question was placed as late in the survey as possible, and only careless answers to the expenditure question were voided, without voiding the other questions that the respondent answered.

New variables

To facilitate analysis, several new variables were created from the sample data in its raw form. The following new variables for each respondent were derived from their original responses. The validity of the new variables was assured through confirmation of the new sample sizes and rigorous spot checks to assess data integrity.

- Continuous variables
  - Age this year (from Year of Birth)
  - Total volunteer hours (the sum of formal and informal volunteer hours)
  - Total expenditure (the sum of the individual expenditure categories in both surveys)
- Ordinal variables
  - Age by cohort (from Age this Year)
  - Location (from Postcode)
  - Organisational optimism and intent to manage or volunteer (excluding "Don't know" responses)
- Categorical variables
  - Volunteer (yes/ no from the volunteering participation question)
  - Volunteer retention (from the Volunteer Manager Survey question, "How do you recognise, engage and retain volunteers?")

Location

Responses to the postcode question were reclassified by location as Major City, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote, in line with the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure.

This involved joining three datasets sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics: Mesh Block codes mapped to postcodes, Mesh Block codes mapped to Statistical Areas Level 1 codes, and Statistical Areas Level 1 codes mapped to Remoteness Areas. When a conflict arose with a postcode covering multiple Remoteness Areas, it was designated as belonging to the smaller Remoteness Area.

Location was treated as an ordinal variable to the extent that each category from Major City to Very Remote was considered to be more increasingly distant from a major city, if not in terms of geography, but in terms of access to services. This is how Remoteness Areas are defined in the ASGS.

Volunteer retention

The Volunteer Manager Survey asked the following question.

How do you recognise, engage and retain volunteers?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ *Reimbursement of expenses*
- ☐ *Paid honorariums*
- ☐ *Internal awards (for example: certificates/ letters of appreciation)*
- ☐ *External awards (for example: State Volunteer of the Year Awards, Australia Day Honours)*
- ☐ *Rewards (for example: movie tickets, tokens of appreciation)*
- ☐ *Out of hours gatherings, events or celebrations*
- ☐ *Public ceremonies and events*
- ☐ *Status (for example: titles, rank, privileges)*
- ☐ *Accredited training (for example: Certificate II, Diploma)*
- ☐ *Other training (for example: short courses, workshops)*
- ☐ *Mentoring programs*
- ☐ *Media mentions (for example: website, socials, newsletters, press releases)*
- ☐ *Pre-agreed penalties or sanctions for non-participation (for example: loss of privileges or competition points)*
- ☐ *Formal performance reviews or references*
- ☐ *Personal connections and relationship building*
- ☐ *Flexible work arrangements*
- ☐ *Diverse and rewarding volunteer opportunities*
- ☐ *Dedicated volunteer management training and/ or resources*
- ☐ *Induction and orientation programs*
- ☐ *Discounted or free meals, uniforms, insurance, accommodation and the like*
- ☐ *Another way*
- ☐ *We don't do anything to recognise, engage or retain volunteers*

To better understand the data, these 20 options were consolidated into 10 categories and the "Do nothing" alternative. Free text "Another way" responses, which accounted for less than five percent of the data, were also recoded to fit within the new category list.

Here is the updated list of strategies related to the recognition, engagement, and retention of volunteers. It is presented in alphabetical order. This revised approach is recommended for future data collection.

- Awards and formal recognition
  - Internal awards (for example: certificates/ letters of appreciation)
  - External awards (for example: State Volunteer of the Year Awards, Australia Day Honours)
  - Honour boards
- Employment and career pathways
  - Formal performance reviews
  - LinkedIn endorsements or letters of reference
  - Status (for example: titles, rank, privileges)
  - Progressive autonomy and empowerment

- Honorariums, gifts, discounts, and perks
  - Paid honorariums
  - Discounted or free resources (for example: meals, uniforms, insurance, accommodation)
  - Free merchandise or gifts (for example: t-shirts, gift cards, movie tickets)
  - Rewards (for example: movie tickets, tokens of appreciation)
- Personal relationship building
  - Birthday, Christmas and anniversary acknowledgement
  - Group chats, team meetings
  - Regular communication and thanks
  - Opportunities for feedback
- Pre-agreed penalties and sanctions
  - Loss of privileges or access to privileges
  - Loss of competition points
  - Severance (for example: ethical breaches, persistent no-shows)
- Public praise and acknowledgement
  - Media mentions (for example: website, socials, newsletters, press releases)
  - Public ceremonies and events
- Reimbursement of expenses
- Role flexibility and accessibility support
  - Diverse and rewarding volunteering opportunities
  - Flexible work arrangements
  - Inclusive workplace or role modifications
  - Volunteer accessible services (for example: childcare, transport, mental health)
- Social opportunities and events
  - Out of hours gatherings, events, or celebrations
  - Peer-enabled safe spaces
  - Cultural and inter-organisational exchanges
- Volunteer training and development
  - Accredited training (for example: Certificate II, Diploma)
  - Other training (for example: short courses, workshops)
  - Dedicated volunteer management training and/ or resources
  - Induction and orientation programs
  - Mentoring programs
- We don't do anything to recognise, engage or retain volunteers

It is acknowledged that by not presenting this new list to respondents, the intent of some respondents may be incompletely represented. It also means the findings are not directly comparable to previous State of Volunteering Reports. This issue will resolve in future studies should the new taxonomy be continued.

For completeness, a comparison of the top five retention strategies using the 'old' method is presented below.

Table 22: Comparison of the top 5 retention strategies used by volunteer managers

	Queensland 2020	Queensland 2023	Australia 2023
Top 5 retention strategies *(old measure)*	1. Personal connections and relationship building 2. Out of hours gatherings, events and celebrations 3. Awards (certificates, letters of appreciation) 4. Induction and orientation programs 5. Engagement through media	**1. Personal connections and relationship building** **2. Induction and orientation programs** **3. Awards (certificates, letters of appreciation)** **4. Out of hours gatherings, events and celebrations** **5. Other training (short courses, workshops)**	1. Personal connections and relationship building 2. Out of hours gatherings, events and celebrations 3. Induction and orientation programs 4. Awards (certificates, letters of appreciation) 5. Other training (short courses, workshops)

Data weighting

Data weighting is a statistical technique used to adjust the contribution of individual data points in a dataset. The method is widely applied in survey analysis and research to ensure that the sample accurately represents the target population. By assigning different weights to specific responses, biases or imbalances in the sample data can be corrected. This ensures that groups underrepresented in the sample have a proportional influence on the overall results, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Public Survey

In the Public Survey, responses were drawn from an online panel of Queensland residents aged 15 years and over. Respondents were paid for their participation. Quotas were used to ensure a representative cross-section of Queensland residents across gender, age, and location. As a result, these variables were sufficiently representative of the Queensland population for the purposes of analysis.

Further analysis revealed household income as the most unrepresentative variable in the sample, prompting the need for data weighting. The initial distribution of responses was skewed towards the lowest income quintile, while just under ten percent of respondents reported being in the highest. Given the unbalanced representation, a weighting scheme was applied to specifically address these discrepancies and mitigate potential income-based biases. The aim was to bring the proportion of responses in each income quintile closer to an equitable 20% representation.

To do this, weighting coefficients were calculated by dividing the target proportion of 20% by the actual proportion observed in each income quintile. These weights were then applied to all cases within each income group before conducting statistical analyses. This weighting strategy allowed to representation across income levels to normalise, thereby minimising the potential for biased results due to the initially skewed income distribution.

Volunteer Manager Survey

The Volunteer Manager Survey used a convenience sampling method, meaning the survey was distributed and promoted to the Volunteering Queensland's first- and second-degree networks of volunteer managers and the organisations that engage them. It is acknowledged that these networks are extensive but not a complete reckoning of every paid and unpaid volunteer manager in the State.

Given the vast and diverse landscape of volunteering in Queensland, the true demographic makeup of the State's population of volunteer managers remains unknown. Anecdotal evidence – supported by the survey returns – suggests a tendency for this group to skew older, female, and lower income, meaning it cannot be assumed that the population of volunteer managers mirrors the demographic makeup of the State. Yet, without a population baseline of volunteer managers to compare the sample to, there is also no reference point to weight the data against.

The large sample size somewhat reduces the risk of the sample being unrepresentative. While a large sample size does not completely eliminate the limitations inherent in the sampling method, it does provide a more robust dataset that is less susceptible to extreme variances. In the absence more reliable data, this sample is a useful starting point for analysing the experiences and perspectives of volunteer managers in Queensland.

Sample demographics

The Public Survey of Queensland residents received 1,516 valid responses. The post-weighted demographic characteristics of the sample were as follows.

Table 23: Self-reported identity of responding Queensland residents

Age	Under 30	30-49 years	50 and over		
	31.9%	35.9%	32.2%		
Gender identity	Male	Female	Non-binary/ other/ declined		
	48.2%	49.3%	2.5%		
Location	Major city	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very Remote
	61.3%	20.9%	10.0%	5.3%	2.6%
Weekly hours of work for pay	0	1-20	21-40	40+	
	29.6%	13.5%	45.1%	11.8%	
Household income versus national average	Lowest 20%	Low	Median	High	Highest 20%
	21.5%	19.0%	20.1%	18.3%	21.1%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual			
	84.0%	16.0%			
Ethnic identity	First Nations	Anglo-Australian	Another or multiple cultures		
	10.8%	65.3%	23.9%		
English as a first language	Yes	No			
	93.3%	6.7%			
Born in Australia	80.6%	19.4%			
Living with disability	17.8%	82.2%			
Caring duties at home	44.1%	55.9%			

This is a good cross-section of responses and several population-relevant observations have been drawn from the data and presented in this report.

The Volunteer Manager Survey in Queensland received 833 valid responses. The unweighted demographic characteristics of the sample were as follows.

Table 24: Self-reported identity of responding volunteer managers in Queensland

Age	Under 30	30-49 years	50 and over		
	5.3%	35.2%	59.5%		
Gender identity	Male	Female	Non-binary/ other/ declined		
	38.6%	58.6%	2.8%		
Location	Major city	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very Remote
	49.6%	20.8%	16.8%	7.4%	5.4%
Weekly hours of work for pay	0	1-20	21-40	40+	
	25.5%	9.6%	51.9%	13.1%	
Household income versus national average	Lowest 20%	Low	Median	High	Highest 20%
	28.5%	20.0%	22.8%	20.2%	8.5%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual			
	79.9%	20.1%			
Ethnic identity	First Nations	Anglo-Australian	Another or multiple cultures		
	1.8%	81.6%	16.6%		
English as a first language	Yes	No			
	93.7%	6.3%			
Born in Australia	83.4%	16.6%			
Living with disability	8.6%	91.4%			
Caring duties at home	42.1%	57.9%			

Statistical methods

The selection of the statistical tools used in this research depended on the nature of the data and the question being considered or the hypothesis being tested. Descriptive statistics provided an initial understanding of the data's distribution and central tendencies, cross-tabulations explored categorical data associations, linear and binary logistic regressions addressed relationships and predictions, and TURF analysis optimised choice options. These tools were chosen and strategically applied to extract meaningful insights that might support of evidence-based decision-making.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies and means, were used to provide a summary overview of the data. Frequencies gave insight into the distribution of categorical variables, indicating the count of observations within each category. Means, on the other hand, were calculated for continuous variables, offering a measure of central tendency.

Cross-tabulations were used to explore relationships between two categorical variables. This tool allowed us to create contingency tables to visualise the distribution and association between variables. Pearson's chi-square test of significance was used to assess whether the differences between variables correlated.

Linear regression was employed to examine the relationship between a continuous or ordinal dependent variable and one or more independent variables, with the assumption that the relationship was linear in nature. Independent variables that failed to meet the assumption of collinearity were rejected from each model.

Binary logistic regression was applied when the dependent variable was binary and categorical. It was used to model the probability of an event occurring, such as whether or not someone was a volunteer (yes/ no). For the outcome of either regression to be reported in this study, the model itself had to meet our threshold of statistical significance ($p < 0.05$).

TURF (Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency) analysis was employed in situations where it was desirable to determine the optimal combination of options or features to maximise reach while minimising duplication. TURF analysis helped identify the most effective combinations that would reach the widest audience without unnecessary overlap.

Statistical significance

Descriptive statistics are numbers that summarise and describe the main features of a dataset. The three sections of this report that follow use descriptive statistics to report on things like the percentage of the population who volunteer, the issues volunteer managers prioritise and the amount both groups spend on their volunteering/ volunteers.

When comparisons are made across groups – for example, comparing the behaviours of volunteers and non volunteers, or the experiences of paid versus unpaid volunteer managers – inferential tests of **statistical significance** are routinely applied.

Tests of statistical significance are used to find out if there is a significant relationship between two variables. In simpler terms, it helps us understand if changes in one variable are related to changes in another.

For example, in this report it is important to know if whether or not a person volunteers is related to their age. To learn this, an appropriate test of statistical significance is applied to see if the distribution of volunteers and non volunteers significantly differs according to respondents' self-reported year of birth.

If the test shows a significant result, it means that the variables in the sample are related, and this is unlikely to be due to random chance. If it is not significant, then any difference observed is probably just random and not indicative of a real relationship between the variables.

In this report, the threshold for statistical significance is set at less than five percent ($p < 0.05$). In simpler terms, this means that any relationship labelled as "significant" has less than a one-in-twenty chance of occurring randomly.

Another way to understand this is to imagine surveying a different group of 1,000 people from the same population 20 times. If a result is "significant," you would expect to see the same result at least 19 out of those 20 times. While it can't be known for sure if this particular sample is the one-in-twenty exception without running the survey 20 times, it is scientifically reasonable to conclude that the significant findings from this sample are likely to be true for the entire population of Queensland.

Tests of statistical significance therefore help researchers decide if what is observed in the data is likely to hold true for the wider population, or if it is probably just a coincidence.

Keep in mind though that a non-significant finding may have meaning, especially if it rebuts an assumption. For example, one could jump to the conclusion that because the Volunteer Manager Survey responses show significantly more female-identifying volunteer managers than males, this means that women volunteer more than men.

The raw data in the Public Survey might support this assumption by revealing that one percent more women volunteer than men. However, as this result fails the test of statistical significance, it is not safe to draw the general conclusion that women volunteer more than men.

In the interests of making this report as accessible to as many readers as possible, the technical detail of each test run is not written up – the place for that will be in future academic publications.

Importantly, though, the significant results discussed in this report cannot fully explain all the factors that might impact a finding. For example, even though a person's age did significantly impact whether or not a person reported being a volunteer, a whole range of other factors not measured could also be important, including their health, religious and political beliefs, education, social status, and environment.

Please do not take from the findings that the factors reported on are the only variables of significant (or insignificant) influence.

Cost-benefit methodology

Volunteering makes significant contributions to society beyond the hours spent in service. It is a source of social, cultural, and even economic capital that enriches Australian communities. Traditional methods of quantifying the value of volunteering often fall short because they primarily focus on how much it would cost to replace volunteers with minimum-wage staff. But this replacement cost method is limited; it fails to capture the wider societal impacts of volunteering, such as enhanced community cohesion or individual wellbeing.

Cost-benefit analysis, which has become the international standard for evaluating policy choices, offers a more comprehensive approach. Originating from private sector practices, cost-benefit analysis evaluates the overall advantages and disadvantages of an action, including its wider economic and social impacts.

For example, if a company is considering investing in new machinery, they would normally only look at the cost of the equipment versus the expected financial

return. Cost-benefit analysis goes further by also considering the broader, social implications, like job creation or environmental impacts, which could affect the community. These considerations are important if the company expects community support or government subsidy for their investment.

In the context of volunteering, cost-benefit analysis considers more than just the price of a volunteer's time; it also evaluates the positive and negative impacts on the organisations they volunteer for and the communities they serve. This involves looking at the value of skills transferred, boosts in economic output, and even the social bonds formed, which are all benefits. On the flip side, it also considers the direct and opportunity costs incurred by volunteers – what they could otherwise have achieved with their time and money spent volunteering.

In Section 3 of this report, which aims to estimate the value of volunteering in Queensland, cost-benefit analysis measures volunteering's overall contribution to the State over a one-year period. This does not mean it compares the value of volunteering to something else directly; rather, it aims to provide a thorough understanding of its net impact in market terms.

For accuracy, this analysis must be rigorous. To that end, it integrates several well-established methodologies to determine the unique input costs and outcomes of volunteering – financial analysis to gauge the scale of volunteering, revealed and stated preferences to evaluate direct and opportunity costs, input-output analysis for economic impacts, econometric methods to quantify costs avoided by the community through volunteering, and hedonic pricing to estimate the wellbeing benefits returned to individual volunteers.

Importantly, a conservative position is adopted by tending in the presence of uncertainty to overestimate costs and underestimate benefits. The ultimate objective is to provide a comprehensive, reliable, and defensible estimate of the value created by volunteering in Queensland, establishing an evidence base for investment and laying a platform for future research in this regard.

What follows is a theoretical explanation of the different the costs and benefits measured in this report. A much simpler explanation of how these values were derived can be found in Appendix C.

Costs

Direct costs to volunteers

While volunteers are not paid, volunteering is not 'free', as volunteers incur costs to contribute and participate as volunteers. These costs can include transportation to and from the volunteering site, the purchase of special clothing or equipment, and even meals during their service hours.

If volunteers have to take time off work or access childcare to be able to volunteer, this represents a monetary cost. In some instances, volunteers may need to independently undergo specific training or certification, which may also come with associated fees.

Even if they are individually modest, these purchases can add up and create a financial burden on the volunteer. As noted in Section 1, one-in-seven volunteers in Queensland reported these costs to be a barrier to volunteering more.

Direct costs to organisations

Organisations that rely on the efforts of volunteers have a similar cost burden. Administrative costs include the salaries of staff who manage volunteer programs that demand recruitment, retention, and supervision.[12] Organisations may also need to spend money on background checks, insurance, and safe work practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of volunteers.

Resources like office space, utilities, and supplies may also be necessary, as well as less visible costs such as system management software or tools that help keep track of volunteers, their schedules, and their contributions.

Each of these elements, and many more, represents a financial commitment from the organisation to facilitate volunteering.

Opportunity cost of volunteers' time

When volunteers dedicate their time to a cause, they forego other activities they could engage in. This is known as the opportunity cost of their time. This could include missing wages from paid employment, time that could be spent on educational advancement, or even leisure time with family and friends that contributes to their wellbeing.

The opportunity cost is real and should be acknowledged. For some, that cost may be minimal, but for others, particularly those who are already time-poor or financially constrained, the opportunity cost can be substantial.

When the 41.8% of all volunteers in Section 1 said they had no more time to give, what they meant in economic terms was that they had reached the point where their other work and leisure activities were now more valuable to them than their volunteering.

Opportunity costs of diverted resources

Resources, whether financial or material, are finite. When organisations allocate resources to manage and facilitate volunteer programs, those resources are diverted from other potential uses. For example, an organisation may choose to invest in a volunteer program aimed at environmental clean-up, but the same funds could be used to support other social initiatives, like education or healthcare. Each choice comes with trade-offs, and the opportunity cost of the expenditure on volunteering prices the benefits that could have been gained from the next best alternative that was not chosen.

However, when it is said that money is "diverted" to volunteering, it is important to remember that this is often a positive form of economic redistribution. While this

[12] These were all top-five issues reported by volunteer managers (Section 2).

money could indeed have been used for other welfare-improving projects, it is also true that volunteering often supports causes and fills gaps that are not otherwise funded or sufficiently addressed by other means.

Understanding these trade-offs is essential for organisations to make informed decisions that align with their mission and the greater social good.

Benefits

Commercial benefits relate to the tangible financial gains and economic value that arise directly and indirectly from volunteer activities. One of these benefits is the producers' surplus, which refers to the extra profit that local businesses earn from the sale of products and services that facilitate volunteering. This added income has a ripple effect on the local economy, promoting its growth and long-term sustainability.

There is also what is termed the productivity premium. This concept captures how volunteering benefits the workforce. The experience and skills gained by volunteers often translate into increased efficiency and value in their professional lives. The spillover of these skills enhances organisational productivity, creating a mutually beneficial situation for both employers and employees. Together, these commercial benefits amplify the overall positive economic impact of volunteering within the community.

Equation 1: Productivity premium formula

$$\textbf{Productivity Premium} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} (C_{L_i} \times P_{M_i} \times V_{N_i} \times H_{W_i})$$

Where:

- *Productivity Premium* is the total productivity premium for the population summed over all 10-year age cohorts.
- $\sum_{i=1}^{n}$ indicates the sum over n different 10-year age cohorts.
- C_{L_i} is the replacement cost of labour for the i^{th} age cohort.
- P_{M_i} is the productivity multiplier of labour for the i^{th} age cohort.
- V_{N_i} is the number of volunteers also in paid employment of labour for the i^{th} age cohort.
- H_{W_i} is the average hours worked per week for the i^{th} age cohort.

Civic benefits primarily accrue, in the economic sense, to the public purse. By extension, they continue through to society as a whole. First among these is the role volunteering plays in employment. The money spent on volunteer-related activities stimulates job creation in various sectors. This does more than just add value to the economy; it also helps the government save on welfare costs, reducing the financial burden it would otherwise have to shoulder.

Another source of civic benefit comes from the taxes levied on volunteer-motivated expenditure. The significant revenues government collects in this regard is returned to the community as essential public services like hospitals, schools, and road infrastructure, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

A further civic benefit enjoyed is the contribution of volunteers' labour. If this labour were to be replaced with paid employees, the resulting economic cost would be substantial. Since volunteers often fulfill roles that are not commercially viable, they save the government from incurring these expenses while maintaining current standards of living.

Individual benefits stand apart from commercial and civic benefits, in that they are directly enjoyed by the volunteers themselves. The concept of 'wellbeing' serves as an umbrella term to capture the range of emotional, psychological, and even physical advantages that come from volunteering.

When individuals engage in altruistic activities, they often report higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose. This enhanced wellbeing is not just a nebulous feeling; it can have real-world implications. For instance, increased happiness and lower stress levels can lead to better physical health, which in turn could result in fewer medical expenses and a longer, more fulfilling life.

Additionally, volunteering often provides opportunities for social interaction and skill-building, contributing to an individual's personal development and social connectivity. These benefits to the individual, while perhaps less tangible than commercial or civic gains, are nonetheless real and quantifiable.

The approach to pricing the surplus life satisfaction attributable to volunteering is based on the recent work of Daniel Fujiwara of the London School of Economics. Fujiwara's method centres on the relationship between the natural logarithm of income (ln [income]) and life satisfaction. In his 2021 research, Fujiwara found that the coefficient for ln (income) is 1.25 when life satisfaction is measured on a 1-7 scale.

Equation 2: Consumers' surplus of volunteering

$$\textbf{Consumers' Surplus} = \left[\frac{f'(\ln(M))}{M}\right]^{-1} = \frac{M}{\beta_y}$$

To translate that coefficient for ln (income) to the 1-100 scale of the Public Survey, the original value of 1.25 is multiplied by 100/ 7, yielding a converted coefficient, denoted as β_Y, of 17.86.

$$\beta_Y = \frac{100}{7} \text{ x } 1.25 = 17.86$$

Using this to calculate a consumer's surplus for 1-point of life satisfaction on the 1-100 scale, reference is made to the average (mean) annual total cash earnings data for Queensland residents,[13] which was most recently $1,338.60 per week (M).

Input-output modelling

The value of expenditure associated with volunteering in Queensland can be understood in two contexts. First, the amounts spent by individuals, businesses and government on volunteering reveal a value that the community perceives in the activity. Second, expenditure on volunteering creates a change in final demand that has an economic impact on employment, output and gross state product. The economic impact includes the impact on intermediate goods and the compensation of employees.

Analysis of the total impact, including indirect effects, is based on an understanding that industries, and individual companies within these industries, do not exist in a vacuum, but use each other's products to produce their own. Thus, an increase in demand for one industry's products leads to increases in the demand for the products of other 'linked' industries.

An input–output representation of the economy comprises a set of industries that are linked by these input–output or intermediate relationships and by the final demand for each industry's output. The model used in this report is the Queensland Regional Input–Output Matrix (RIOM) model.

Broadly speaking, input–output modelling examines how different industries interact to produce final demand. For example, a dairy farmer (as part of the Agriculture industry) may sell some of their milk to a cheesemaker (part of the Manufacturing industry), who uses it as an ingredient. This company in turn sells some of its output to a retail wholesaler (part of the Wholesale Trade industry), who sells some of it to a volunteer involving organisation, who passes it on in a meal to a homeless person.

The same milk has been sold several times, but only the last transaction represents final demand. Thus, the inputs required by one industry form part of the demand for the products of another.

There are two major types of input–output model: open and closed models. In open models, the labour and wages of employees and the gross operating surplus of companies are treated as primary inputs in the production of goods and services; if you want to produce more widgets, you must employ more widget makers. This type of model captures the direct and indirect effects of changes in demand in one industry on the other industries in the economy.

[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia May 2021

By contrast, RIOM is a closed model that includes the household sector as a separate industry. This enables the consideration of induced effects of changes in demand. Induced effects reflect the changes in consumer spending resulting from changes in economic activity and therefore in employment. The household sector is considered as an 'industry' whose outputs are labour, and whose inputs consist of consumer spending; if you create more employment, you also create an increase in demand from the household sector for consumer goods like food, accommodation, entertainment and so on.

RIOM applies the ABS 2020-21 transaction tables in conjunction with demand and employment information for each Australian State and Territory to model the impact of changes in demand on these regional economies, estimating changes in their output, employment and gross state product (GSP).

The transaction tables used in the model identify 60 industries across 19 industry sectors. For expenditure allocated to each industry sector, a unique multiplier effect is calculated estimating the impact on gross supply, output, GSP (following the value-added method), employment, wages, imports, and taxation.

Equation 3: Leontief multiplier

$$(1\text{-}\boldsymbol{X}\text{-}\boldsymbol{C})^{-1} \times \mathbf{LV}_{\mathbf{E}} = \Delta \mathbf{O}$$

LVE = vector of volunteering expenditure
ΔO = change in total output
X = transaction table of intermediate demand
C = table of induced consumption demand

As previously noted, the producers of volunteering (the volunteers and the organisations that involve them) in Queensland spent a combined amount of $10.4 billion (direct costs) on volunteering-related expenditure in 2023. This figure represents final demand in four main industry categories:

- Community Services
- Road Transport
- Retail Trade, and
- Accommodation and Food Services.

The expenditure on volunteering in Queensland has an economic impact that includes a combination of increased output by industries directly subject to increased volunteering-related demand, increased output by suppliers to those industries and their suppliers, as well as increased output by all industries that have a role in supplying the demand of increased expenditure by households, generated by increased wages.

Changes in employment and GSP are proportional to changes in output following the constant return to scale assumption inherent in input–output models. A number of the assumptions that underpin the analysis are disclosed here:

- The motivating expenditure for the analysis is the estimated expenditure in 2023. Unless explicitly stated and adjusted for, all data is sourced from that period.
- Financial multipliers are calculated using the Queensland RIOM model. This model is derived from the ABS 2020-21 Queensland Input–Output Table. Financial multipliers are assumed to be consistent between 2023 and 2020-21.
- Volunteering activities were fully realised within Queensland in 2023. Investment expenditure is limited to items included in the survey responses, which are assumed to represent typical annual expenditure.

- Impacts are calculated based on direct, indirect (intermediate inputs), and household consumption effects. Increases in gross operating surplus or taxation revenue are not assumed to directly result in increased expenditure in the Queensland economy (the government sector is not closed).
- Where demand results in importation of goods or services from outside Queensland (interstate or overseas), no further impact is assumed on the economy.

Impacts across alpha-coded industry sectors and by outputs, GSP and employment are shown in the tables below.

Table 25: Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification of industries by division

Sector	Code	Sector	Code
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	A	Financial and Insurance Services	K
Mining	B	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	L
Manufacturing	C	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	M
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	D	Administrative and Support Services	N
Construction	E	Public Administration and Safety	O
Wholesale Trade	F	Education and Training	P
Retail Trade	G	Health Care and Social Assistance	Q
Accommodation and Food Services	H	Arts and Recreation Services	R
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	I	Other Services	S
Information Media and Telecommunications	J		

Figure 30: Indirect and induced impacts of volunteering expenditure on output and GSP by sector (QLD)

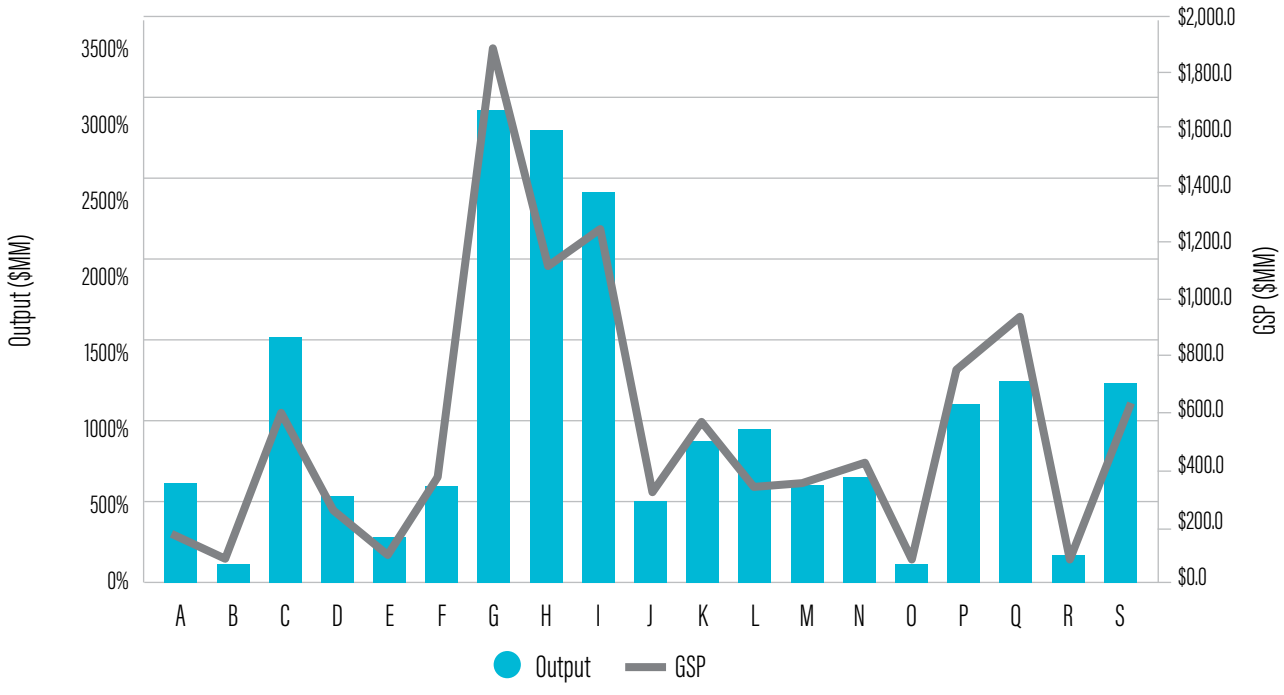
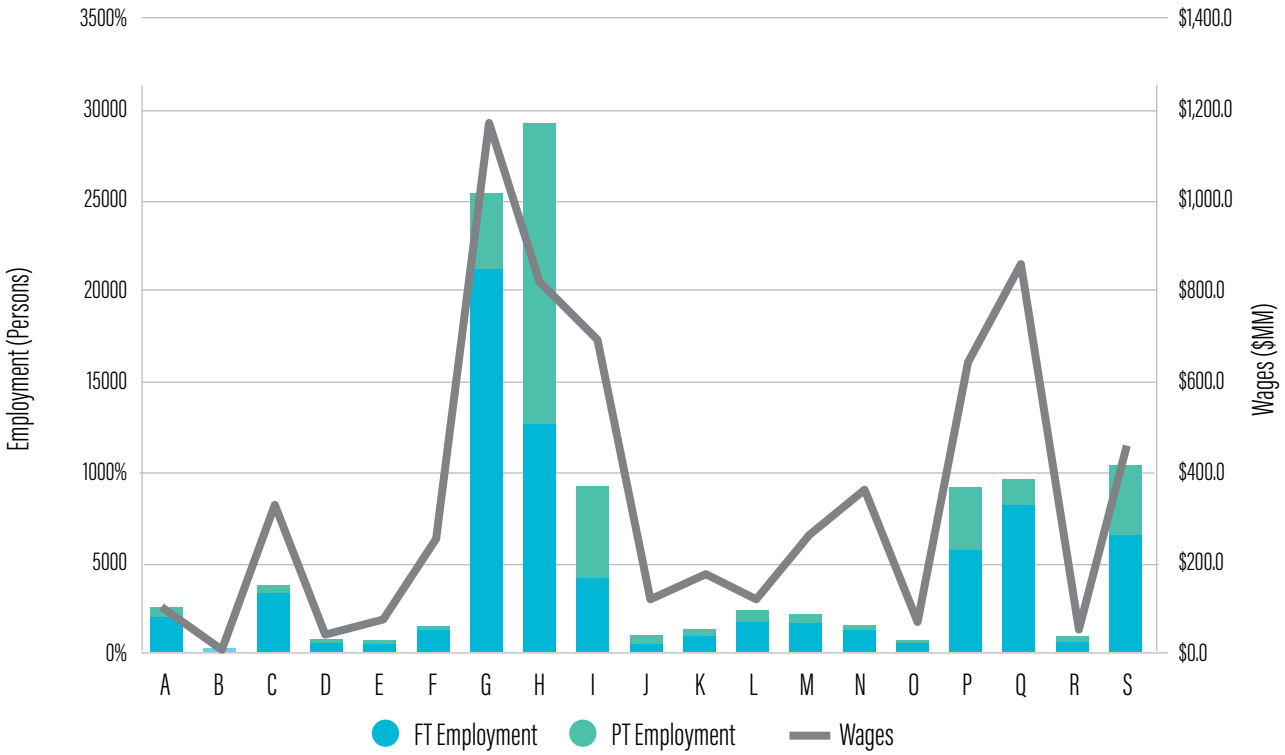


Figure 31: Indirect and induced impacts of volunteering expenditure on wages and employment by sector (QLD)



Appendix B: ABS comparison

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measures volunteering in Australia in two ways.

The Census of Population and Housing (2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021) recorded people who spent time doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group in the 12-months prior to census night, excluding work done:

- as part of paid employment
- if the main reason is to qualify for government benefit; obtain an educational qualification; or due to a community work order, or
- for a family business.

The examples given were voluntary work for sporting teams, youth groups, schools or religious organisations.

This is broadly aligned with the definition of formal volunteering used in the Public Survey, but excludes workplace volunteering (facilitated by employers) and volunteering aligned to an educational outcome, categories allowed for by the Volunteering Australia definition.

The 2021 Census results found that 14.1% of residents of Queensland volunteered, a large drop from the 2016 Census (18.8%). That said, the 2021 Census was conducted during the Covid pandemic, when many parts of Australia were in lockdown and movements within, into and out of Australia were tightly controlled.

Regardless of the timing, the ABS recognises that this figure significantly underestimates the absolute rate of volunteering in Australia. To better understand the quantum of volunteering in the community, the ABS began including questions on volunteering in their General Social Survey (GSS) in 2002. The GSS captures data on the social characteristics, wellbeing, and social experiences of people in Australia in greater detail than the Census.

Following extensive community consultation, the ABS updated its definition of volunteering in the 2019 GSS from, *'The provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas,'* to better align with Volunteering Australia's 2015 definition, *'Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.'* With this in mind, the ABS also redesigned the GSS to distinguish informal volunteering, while maintaining the longitudinal integrity of the extant questions on formal volunteering.

Also conducted during the covid pandemic, the most recent iteration of the GSS in 2020 collected data from approximately 5,304 Australian households but excluded people who live in very remote parts of Australia.

The 2020 GSS found the following for Queensland residents:

- 25.4% of residents of Queensland aged 15 years and over, participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in 2020 (formal volunteering).
- 32.6% of Queensland residents aged 15 years and over participated in informal volunteering in the four weeks prior to the survey.[14]

These findings are notably higher than the Census results, but still well short of the 31.5% of formal volunteers, 44.4% of informal volunteers, and 64.3% of Queensland residents aged 15 aged years and over total volunteers revealed in this report.

[14] Informal volunteering is defined by the ABS as the provision of unpaid work/ support to non-household members, excluding that provided only to family members living outside the household.

The ABS is careful to clarify that their GSS figures are not summable, as no effort has been made to allow for double-counting (people who reported volunteering both informally and informally). The ABS also notes that it is unknown if the volunteering figures can be safely extrapolated to estimate an annual rate of informal volunteering or if the data can be reliably compared to previous periods.

So how might the differences in findings between the Census, GSS and Public Survey used in this report be explained?

The State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report was used to test the quality of the Public Survey methodology. In that study, the same group of respondents were randomly presented one of two distinct questions about whether or not they volunteered.

Half the survey respondents were asked the GSS questions on volunteering participation exactly as they appeared in the GSS. The second group were presented with a detailed definition of volunteering and a series of volunteering options to choose from, as per the question presented at the top of Section 1 in this report.

A detailed discussion of the method and findings can be read in the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2021 Report. However, as with this report, the research revealed significantly higher rates of volunteering participation using the Public Survey questions over the GSS questions.

Those results were consistent with the findings of the 2019 State of Volunteering Report in Tasmania, in which a representative online panel was used to survey 403 respondents over a two-week period in April 2019; followed by a second set of 315 telephone interviews undertaken in May 2019. In that study, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses between the two cohorts when comparing participation rates in volunteering or the number of hours volunteered per month.

Four other State of Volunteering Reports using the Public Survey method were conducted in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania between 2013 and 2021. All returned consistently higher rates of volunteering participation than the Census and GSS collections over the same period.

Besides the differences in the questions asked and context provided to survey respondents, there are other material differences between the Census, GSS and the Public Survey that may further explain the differences in the reported rates of volunteering participation.

- The length of the survey instruments.
  - o According to the ABS, the Census takes an average of 30 minutes to complete, and the GSS takes 90 minutes to complete. The average time to complete the Public Survey in 2023 was under eight minutes (nationally).
  - o Respondents may become disinterested or fatigued when faced with a lengthy survey. This can lead to lower response rates and less accurate or thoughtful responses as participants rush through questions to complete the survey quickly.
- The framing of the survey instruments.
  - o The Census and GSS are broad surveys covering a wide range of topics, whereas the Public Survey is specific to volunteering.
  - o When a survey covers a wide range of unrelated topics or frequently switches from one theme to another, respondents can experience cognitive overload. They may find it challenging to stay focused and provide well-thought-out responses. This can result in more errors and less reliable data.

- The relative positioning of volunteering questions in the Census and GSS survey instruments.
  - o Census question 51 of 66 and GSS section 7.9 of 16 are about volunteering.
  - o The later a question is asked in the Census and GSS, the more likely it is that the risk factors mentioned above will impact the quality of response data.

It is hypothesised that these factors are as significant as the differences in the questions themselves in explaining why the Public Survey methodology reveals a rate of volunteering participation that is much higher than what has been reported by the ABS.

This study's relative focus, coupled with its established test-retest reliability, instils a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the findings presented in this report, complementing the existing work of the ABS.

Appendix C: Economic analysis in plain English

The costs and benefits of volunteering to Queensland, 2023

Costs ($ million)			
Direct costs		*Sub-totals*	*Totals*
Volunteer expenses	$8,849.9		
Volunteer involving organisation expenses	$2,769.8	$11,619.7	
Opportunity costs			
Volunteers' time	$12,863.7		
Volunteering investments	$489.2	$13,352.9	**$24,972.6**
Benefits ($ million)			
Commercial benefits			
Producers' surplus	$2,155.1		
Productivity premium	$20,640.9	$22,796.0	
Civic benefits			
Employment	$6,556.5		
Taxes	$2,608.6		
Volunteers' labour	$31,337.8	$40,502.9	
Individual benefits			
Volunteers' dividend		$54,455.7	
Social return on investment			**$92,782.0**
Benefit: cost ratio	**4.7 : 1**		**$117,754.6**

Direct costs

Cash investments in volunteering.

Volunteer expenses

Cash investments made by volunteers in their volunteering activity.

For example: Sara is a volunteer wildlife carer. Above and beyond the time she donates, she purchases specialty training as well as foods, medicines and habitats for her injured charges. In 2023, she built a semi-permanent Stage 2 refuge in her backyard for animals on the path to release.

Volunteer involving organisation expenses

Cash investments made by volunteer involving organisations in support of their volunteers.

For example: The Care Club is a medium-sized volunteer involving organisation supporting 250 volunteers. In addition to purchasing uniforms, tools and equipment for their volunteers, they employ and resource dedicated personnel to recruit, roster and professionally develop their volunteer team.

Note: *This figure includes investments made by government in volunteering as either volunteer involving organisations themselves, or as donors to community-based volunteer involving organisations.*

Opportunity costs

In choosing to invest time or money in volunteering, an individual or volunteer involving organisation misses out on the opportunity to spend that money on something else.

The benefit that they would have received from the 'next best' use of their money is – in economic terms – an opportunity cost.

Volunteers' time

It is assumed that the next best use of a volunteer's time is paid work. The benefit they forgo by volunteering for one hour is the money they would receive in their hand for one hour of paid work.

For example: Suraiya volunteers two hours per week for an adult literacy program at her local library. As she is otherwise employed part-time, the opportunity cost of her volunteering would be her equivalent take-home pay for two hours of paid work per week.

Note: *If Suraiya was unemployed, there would be no opportunity cost to her time using our method.*

Volunteering investments

It is assumed that the next best – and safest – use of the money spent by volunteers and volunteer involving organisations on volunteering (direct costs) would be to invest in Australian government-backed 10-year bonds.

For example: Callum spends $500 of his own money each year doing small jobs for his elderly neighbours. If he chose instead to invest that money in 10-year bonds, he would make $4.50 profit. The opportunity to make $4.50 has therefore been lost to him by his choice to volunteer.

Note: *We can assume from this that Callum receives personal benefit from his volunteering that is at least equal to $4.50.*

Commercial benefits

Benefits to employers and industry as a result of volunteering and its investments.

Producers' surplus

The money invested in volunteering (direct costs) is spent with producers and suppliers all around the State. The profit made on these transactions by the producers and suppliers is known as the producers' surplus.

For example: Jabiri purchases a uniform to referee junior football games on the weekend. The profit made by the uniform retailer is a direct benefit to the State, as the producer will now re-spend it in the economy.

Note: *The intermediate profits made within the supply chain, and those that occur outside the State, are not counted here as benefits.*

Productivity premium

The productivity premium is the self-reported extent to which a person's volunteering impacts (positively or negatively) their 'day job'.

Revealed here as a net benefit, it is enjoyed by employers, as they do not have to pay for the knowledge, skills and experience their employees gain through volunteering.

For example: Amy volunteers as an assistant director with a community theatre group. In that role she acquires and hones a range of professional, personal, organisational and leadership skills that are relevant and transferable to her paid employment as a project coordinator with a construction company.

Note: *The productivity premium enjoyed by the beneficial recipients of acts of volunteering (for example, Amy's theatre troupe) are not counted in this study. As such, our productivity premium is likely to be a significant underestimate.*

Civic benefits

Benefits enjoyed by the community as a result of volunteering and its investments.

Employment

Producers that supply goods and services to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations necessarily employ people to fulfil this demand. Employment here refers to the jobs created by the investments in volunteering.

For example: The retailer that sells Jabiri his uniform to referee weekend football matches allocates a percentage of each sale to her labour costs. As she and others sell more and more uniforms, this adds up to real part- and full-time equivalent jobs in the economy.

Note: *Another way to look at this employment is as an equivalent welfare cost avoided by government.*

Taxes

Producers that supply goods and services to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations necessarily pay taxes on those sales. Taxes here refer to the sum of local, state and federal taxes they incur.

For example: The retailer that sells Jabiri his uniform to referee weekend football matches pays a direct and indirect percentage of each sale to the applicable government in the form of taxes.

Note: *The applicable government redistributes these taxes to deliver benefits to the whole community through, for example, hospitals, roads and schools.*

Volunteer labour

This is what it would take to replace the labour of all of Queensland's volunteers at a fair market rate. As a saving enjoyed by volunteer involving organisations, government and the community, it is expressed here as a benefit.

For example: Taylor normally earns a gross wage of $40/ hour. With superannuation and other payroll expenses, this actually costs their employer an equivalent of $46/ hour.

When Taylor donates their time as a volunteer to a volunteer involving organisation, this is what their time should truly be valued at (noting that this is not the only benefit realised).

Note: *The variable effect of age on labour cost is allowed for in this study.*

Individual benefits

The benefits returned to individual volunteers.

Volunteers' dividend

The sum of less tangible benefits enjoyed by volunteers above and beyond (in direct and opportunity costs) what they paid to participate.

For example: It costs Sam five hours and $15 in transport costs to volunteer each week at a local hospice. It's worth so much more to him than that – three times as more, in fact!

Note: *This figure does not include an estimate of the value gained by the hospice patients Sam volunteered for, nor the value placed on Sam's time by the patients' families or others in the community.*

Value of volunteering

Benefits. The value created by volunteering in Queensland in 2023 is estimated to be $117.8 billion.

Social return on investment

Benefits less costs. The social return of volunteering is estimated here to be $92.8 billion.

Benefit cost ratio

Benefits divided by costs. Using this method, we can see what each dollar of investment (cost) enables in the community; in this case, $4.70 in benefits.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