



Volunteering in Australia

Key Facts

Australia has a long history when it comes to volunteering. A community that gives freely of its time and financial resources is one with strong cohesion and social capital. Some key facts about volunteering in Australia are below.

In 2014, 31% of the Australian population volunteered. That is 5.8 million people aged 15 years and over. They gave 743 million hours of time across a range of activities.

In 2014, volunteering rates declined for the first time since the ABS began national voluntary work surveys in 1995. Between 1995 and 2010, volunteering rates increased, reaching a peak of 36% in 2010, but in 2014, the proportion of people aged 18 years and over who were volunteering fell to 31%.

Demographics

Gender

In 2014, women were more likely to volunteer than men: 34% of women and 29% of men participated in voluntary work.

Geographic region

Volunteering was more common among those living outside of a capital city. In 2014, the volunteer rate was 33% in inner regional areas and 39% in other areas compared with 30% for capital cities.

Age

People in the youngest age group (15-17 years) were more likely to volunteer (42%), followed by the middle age group (35-44 years) and the older age group (65-74 years), than other age groups.

Employment status

Even with the pressures of balancing work and family life, people who were employed were more likely to be volunteers: 38% of those in part-time work and 30% in full-time work, compared to those not in the labour force (retired 27% and other 30%).

Family status

Couples with children (38%) were more likely to be involved in voluntary work than lone persons (25%) or couples with no children (29%).

Volunteering runs in the family: 70% of volunteers reported that at least one of their parents had undertaken voluntary work.

Migrants

In 2014, recent migrants (arrived in Australia in the past 10 years) were less likely than people born in Australia to have done voluntary work in the past 12 months (22% compared with 34%).

Migrants who had been in Australia for longer than 10 years were more likely than recent migrants to have volunteered in the past 12 months (28%).

What volunteers do

In 2014, volunteers spent most of their time on fundraising and sales (23%), teaching/providing information (15%), coaching or refereeing (14%) and food preparation/serving (14%).

Volunteer expenses

In 2014, just over half of volunteers (53%) incurred some expenses related to their volunteering. The most common expense was for travel costs (42%) and phone calls (30%).

Informal volunteering

As well as volunteering through organisations, 46% of volunteers had also provided informal assistance to people outside of their household, such as relatives, friends and neighbours with activities including home maintenance jobs, gardening, running errands and unpaid child care.

International comparisons

International comparisons of volunteering can be difficult given cultural differences in the way volunteering is defined and collected.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation's *World Giving Index 2014*, it is likely that rates of volunteering by Australians over 18 years of age (37%) are higher than those in the United Kingdom (29%) and the Netherlands (34%) but behind the United States (44%), Canada (44%), New Zealand (44%) and Ireland (41%).

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014), General Social Survey, Summary Results, Australia 2014 (cat. no. 4159.0), available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4159.0Main%20Features12014?open=document&tabname=Summary&prodno=4159.0&issue=2014&num=&view=>

Charities Aid Foundation (2014) *World Giving Index 2014*, published November 2014; available at <https://www.cafonline.org/publications/2014-publications/world-giving-index-2014.aspx>