

The different ways in which australians volunteer and the factors that influence ...

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The purpose of this report is to broadly examine the different ways in which Australians volunteer and the factors that influence them to do so.

To understand the myriad types of volunteering and factors that influence people to volunteer, we must first understand what volunteering is.

Volunteering varies according to context, place and culture and can be called various names: while hospital Pink Ladies 'volunteer', lawyers do 'pro bono' work, sports coaches 'give their time', political activists 'agitate' or 'lobby' and still others 'help out' or 'donate'. Volunteering tasks mirror those undertaken in paid work, such as: administration, management, budgeting, providing medical treatment, healthcare and childcare, conducting mail-outs and letter-box drops, fundraising, selling, making phone calls and sending emails, website development and social-media management, clerical tasks, report writing, cooking, coaching and teaching, driving, gardening, and building. There are almost no areas of human activity in which volunteers are not involved; they are the heart and soul of communities in cities, suburbs, and particularly, remote areas. Volunteering plays an important part in cultural, social, political and economic lives the world over. Many service organizations could not function without the help of volunteers; hundreds of thousands of volunteer organizations exist in Australia with over 30, 000 that employ paid and voluntary staff. Concepts of volunteering depend on several factors, including where people engage in volunteering activities, whether it's formal, informal or via employment programs, and whether it's undertaken locally or long-distance. Because of these variations and the multi-cultural nature of Australia, Volunteering Australia's current definition of "volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and

without financial gain” (2015) is the one which will be used throughout this report to encompass all the variations in meaning.

Different ways of volunteering

Research in Australia into volunteering is relatively recent. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) only published its first full-length national report on volunteering in 1996 and their data continues to be confined to formal volunteering only. Their figures indicated that in that year, twenty-four percent of Australians volunteered, rising to thirty-two percent in 2000, and thirty-four percent in 2007. The most recent figures from the 2014 ABS Census identified that thirty-one percent or 5.8 million Australians aged over fifteen years participated in voluntary work in that year, contributing 743 million hours.

Volunteering is a complex and layered concept with many definitions globally and numerous theories around identifying and labeling types of volunteering. This report will work through four levels of classification, from broad to specific, to identify different ways of volunteering.

First, this report looks at how Volunteering Australia breaks volunteering into three main types – informal, formal and employee volunteering programs – and the areas of growth they have identified beyond these types. Second, volunteering activities can be viewed as fitting into four broad areas: philanthropy, campaigning and advocacy, mutual aid and self-help, and participation. Third and fourth, this report identifies the Australian Bureau of

Statistics' more detailed and specific categories of volunteering and types of volunteering tasks.

Types of volunteering

With Volunteering Australia's current definition of volunteering including informal volunteering for the first time, survey respondents were asked to categorize their volunteering activities according to formality.

Informal volunteering

In 2016, Volunteering Australia defined informal volunteering, the more common form of volunteering in collectivist cultures found in Asia, Southern Europe and Africa, as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organization". Informal volunteering includes assisting community members by, for example, looking after pets or children, giving advice or providing home or personal assistance.

Volunteering Australia found that this type of volunteering is common with forty-six percent of respondents having participated in informal volunteering in 2015. The ABS found that 2.17 million Australians provided informal care in 2015, predominantly by taking care of someone in the community.

Highlighting the importance of informal volunteering, informal carers provide an estimated seventy-four% of all the care that enables the disabled and elderly to remain at home. In Volunteering Australia's 2016 State of Volunteering report, they identified five main activity categories in which Australians provide informal volunteering:

- Taking care of someone else in the community (excluding family members)
- Mentoring or teaching
- Informally assisting sports clubs or teams
- Providing settlement and welcoming activities to new members of the community
- Other - this activity category included:
 - Providing professional services including assistance with job applications
 - Driving those without a car who could not drive to appointments
 - Taking care of friend's or neighbor's property or animals
 - Running a private soup kitchen or providing food for the homeless.

Formal volunteering

Volunteering Australia defines formal volunteering, which is more common in Anglo cultures and Northern Europe, as “ time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place within organizations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way”. Volunteer organizations reflect the structures and preoccupations of their times but have always tended to be philanthropic and well-intentioned, aiming to improve the quality of life of individuals, groups or communities. They vary in size and intention and range from pressure groups, campaign organizations to groups delivering a service. In Australia over a third of Australians over the age of eighteen formally volunteer on a regular basis. Individuals who volunteer formally through an organization are more likely to also volunteer informally.

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Employee volunteering programs

Employee volunteering programs are those “ where paid employees are given work time and/or payment by their employer to volunteer with another organization such as a charity”. This can be in a skilled capacity where experienced or qualified individuals volunteer in organizations to “ implement particular projects to enhance community capacity”, or through short-term volunteering “ where groups of employees volunteer together on a task to assist volunteer involving organizations; usually these tasks are physical in nature and short term”. An Australian 2011 survey found that 24% of volunteers worked for an employer that had an employee volunteer program.

Types of volunteering growth

There are numerous recent types of volunteering growth identified by Volunteering Australia that they do not currently differentiate in their research, but which needs to be included in the contemporary definition of volunteering. These types, which will not be examined in any detail in this report, include:

- Skilled volunteering
- Group volunteering
- Corporate volunteering
- Youth volunteering to gain hand's-on experience
- Volunteering through places of learning
- Spontaneous volunteering - such as in response to natural disasters

- Virtual volunteering – tasks which can be completed online, such as managing social media
- Episodic and micro volunteering
- International and cross-national volunteering – such as voluntourism, where volunteering activities which become a primary reason for travelling.

Volunteering areas

The areas of volunteering identified by Justin Davis Smith fall into four broad types of volunteering: philanthropy, campaigning and advocacy, mutual aid and self-help, and participation.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy occurs largely through service-providing volunteer organizations with structures and supports that have developed because community members have identified needs or issues around social welfare, the environment, or change-oriented areas. This broad area can include anything from providing support and assistance in nursing homes or respite care centers, working with refugees, working on environmental issues or animal shelters.

Campaigning and advocacy

Campaigning and advocacy involve volunteers attempting to achieve local or international change in particular areas, such as saving local environmental area like the Franklin River in the early 1980s, through to global human-rights organizations like Amnesty International.

Mutual aid and self-help

People coming together around a specific need or interest or for mutual gain is what the mutual aid and self-help area is about. This includes people forming support groups around a specific medical or social issue, such as cancer-related organizations; and community-based sports, health or recreation organizations, such as a local children's soccer group.

Participation

Participation is the unpaid laboring or volunteering undertaken because the 'job' - whatever that might encompass - needs to be done.

Volunteering categories

Smith's broad volunteer areas of philanthropy, campaigning and advocacy, mutual gain and self-help, and participation encompass more specific volunteering categories. The Australian Bureau of Statistics identifies eleven categories of formal volunteering:

1. Sport and Physical Recreation
2. Welfare/Community
3. Religious
4. Education and Training
5. Health
6. Parenting
7. Children and Youth
8. Emergency Services
9. Arts/Heritage

10. Environment
11. Business/Professional/union.

Types of activities

Within these formal categories, the ABS identifies fifteen types of activity:

1. Administration/recruitment/information management
2. Coaching/refereeing/judging
3. Performing/media production
4. Befriending/supportive listening/counseling/mentoring
5. Fundraising/sales
6. Food preparation/serving
7. Transporting people/goods
8. Repairing/maintenance/gardening
9. Management/committee work/coordination (includes day to day organizing/supervision)
10. Personal care/assistance
11. Teaching/instruction/providing information
12. Lobbying/advocacy/policy research
13. Search and rescue/first aid/firefighting/community safety
14. Environmental protection
15. Other.

Factors that influence people to volunteer

At face value, reasons for volunteering may seem as simple as individuals wanting to work for a cause or help other people, but it is far more complex and nuanced than that; our choices around participating in volunteering

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revolve around an interconnected network of motivators. The formal research undertaken examines these reasons through a variety of lenses and currently there is no single model which adequately explains volunteering behavior across contexts and populations. This is further complicated when examining volunteering globally and is beyond the scope of this report.

This report condenses several approaches to this research into firstly, psychological drives and theories; secondly, life-course stages; thirdly, socio-economic variables; fourthly work experience motivation; and fifth, social factors.

Psychological drive and theories

Volunteering work in two ways psychologically: people who feel good about themselves and/or who are happy, that is, those who have good psychological resources, tend to volunteer more than those do not or are not, and volunteering increases self-esteem and happiness. There two main psychological theories to explain the motivations behind volunteering: role identity theory and functional motivation theory. Broadly, these can be categorized as intrinsic motivations, i. e. engaging in volunteering behaviors for the satisfaction inherent in performing the activity, or extrinsic motivations, that is performing the volunteering to obtain rewards such as career advancement.

Role identity theory

Role identity theory posits that an individual has multiple identities that have been formed through their interactions and expectations. When a volunteer

identifies with and internalizes the role of 'volunteer' that role becomes incorporated into their self-concept - their identity. The higher the degree to which volunteering becomes part of an individual's self-concept, the more likely they are to continue to volunteer.

Functional motivation theory

Simply put, this theory states that individuals engage in volunteering because it satisfies six psychological functions which vary across age groups, genders and volunteering opportunities:

- **Values:** the values function is intrinsic and enables volunteers to express deeply-held values such as altruism and humanitarianism; they are motivated by a desire to help others less fortunate than themselves. This function is considered to be the most prominent motivating factor. While all age groups are motivated by altruism, younger volunteers often rank the other values more highly than older volunteers.
- **Understanding:** this intrinsic function involves the desire to learn new skills and use knowledge and abilities that would otherwise go unused. Volunteers motivated by the understanding function seek to explore their own strengths and expand their understanding of the cause, the organization and other volunteers.
- **Social:** volunteers motivated by this extrinsic function engage in volunteering to increase social interactions, strengthen existing relationships and to meet expectations and obtain approval of those important to them.

- Career: this extrinsic function relates to fostering career advantages through experience and increasing job prospects.
- Protective: this intrinsic function serves to protect the ego by lessening the negative effect of guilt for being more fortunate than others or reducing loneliness.
- Enhancement: the extrinsic enhancement function provides a means to enhance self-esteem, self-development and personal growth; volunteers seek to make themselves feel more important and needed.

Numerous studies revealed that values, understanding and enhancement are the three most important motivators and other findings indicate that there may be three additional functions religiosity, enjoyment and team building.

Life course stages

In addition to age as an obvious definer of life course stages, other events or experiences are used to describe life stages, including:

- Relationship status: married or co-habiting, or single
- Presence of children in a household: school-aged or pre-school-aged or none
- Employment: full-time, part-time, not employed
- Caring for others.

Young

Young adulthood describes those in their late teens who are transitioning to adulthood through to those in their late-twenties or early-thirties. These are demographically-dense years when multiple transitions are being made;

leaving education and home, starting work, and starting relationships and families.

Middle

Middle life is from around the early-thirties to mid-fifties and is characterized as more stable; many people have paid work and children, many of whom are school-aged. During this life-course stage, women are more likely to be in part-time work because they are also more likely to have primary responsibility for child-rearing activities.

During the middle life-course, people have less time to volunteer because of work and family responsibilities, but they also have more social ties and opportunities for volunteering. Having children can be a constraint but many people become involved in volunteering because of the activities their children are involved with, such as sports and education. Part-time work is associated with higher participation in volunteering as is having a partner who also volunteers.

Older

The older life course describes people aged from around the mid-fifties. Important life-course changes are the transition from paid work to retirement, and changes in health and widowhood. While older people don't volunteer in increased numbers than their middle-life-course counterparts, they do contribute more hours per volunteer. Older volunteers are also more likely to report better health and come from higher occupational classes.

Socio-economic variables

There are numerous socio-economic variables that indicate an increased motivation for an individual to volunteer.

Age

- People aged thirty-five to forty-four tend to volunteer more than their younger and older counterparts.
- Volunteers aged between sixty-five and eighty years contribute more hours per week.

Gender

- Volunteers are more likely to be female at just over fifty-four percent of volunteers.

Marital status

- Married people tend to volunteer more than single people

Family

- Volunteerism tends to run in families, people tend to be more inclined to volunteer if their partner does and parents who volunteer often have children who also volunteer,
- People with school-aged children volunteer more than those without children.
- People tend to volunteer more if they come from larger families.
- People who have very young children or elderly parents at home volunteer formally less often.

Education

- This is one of the strongest indicators for volunteering: Higher education levels are associated with higher rates of volunteering due likely to increased self-confidence, awareness of social problems and more extensive social networks.

Employment

- Part-time employed individuals volunteer more than those who work full-time, who in turn volunteer more than those who are unemployed or homemakers.
- Those with short average commutes to work are more likely to participate in volunteering.

Income

- Those receiving higher incomes volunteer more frequently than those with lower ones.
- Poverty negatively correlates with volunteering (the reasons for this are complex and multi-factored).

Religion

- Volunteers tend to be more religious irrespective of denomination or religion i. e. how individuals rate the importance of religion in their lives.

Country of origin

- In Australia, individuals who have been born in Australia tend to volunteer more than those who haven't.

- Immigrants from English-speaking countries of origin tend to volunteer more than those from non-English-speaking countries. (Possibly due to fewer social ties and language barriers.)

Community ties

- Those who have strong ties to their communities and extensive social networks are more likely to volunteer.
- Communities with high levels of homeownership tend to have higher rates of volunteering
- Individuals living in high-population-density areas or multi-unit housing, which are more likely to attract a more transient population, are less likely to volunteer than those who have lived in an area for several years.

Childhood experiences

- Parents have undertaken voluntary work
- Participated in organized team sport
- Participated in arts/culture-related activities
- Participate in youth group
- Did some type of volunteer work
- Raised money door-to-door in public places for a cause of organization
- Active in student government
- Active in a religious organization

Work experience motivators

Volunteers seeking to develop their curriculum vitae or gain work experience are more likely to engage in volunteering. There is also valuable experience

to be gained from serving on a board or management committee that might otherwise take years to obtain through paid work.

Social factors

Many people volunteer to engage in social activity; who else goes or whether it is fun may be the most simplistic reasons, but they are just as valid as motivators as the life-course stages and socio-economic factors.

In addition to the fun factor, volunteering provides an outlet for those who want to spend part of their lives in an ideology of public service, raising their self-esteem and public esteem. As communities become less neighborly, as Australian families decrease in size and with numbers of women in the workforce ever increasing, volunteering can provide a sense of extend family and community by contributing social interaction, and a sense of connection and wellbeing.

Each wave of immigrants has established a range of ethnocultural organizations to help them preserve their homeland culture, tradition and language. Volunteering in such organizations helps provide mutual support and a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The research undertaken for this report has revealed volunteering to be complex, multi-factored and nuanced.

The report indicates that Australians volunteer in a multitude of ways by performing a wide range of tasks in a range of volunteering categories that

sit within several volunteering areas and at various levels of formality.

Australians volunteer most in a formal manner, in the sport and physical recreation, education and training, and welfare/community categories by performing fundraising/sales, teaching/instruction/providing information, or food preparation/serving tasks.

It has also been shown that the factors that influence people to volunteer are also complex, with psychological, social, demographic and other motivating factors. Drawing from to ABS and Volunteering Australia data, Australian volunteers are more likely to be female, have higher levels of education and income, are employed full- or part-time, are more religious, reside in metropolitan areas, have dependent children, and were born in Australia. Additionally, more volunteers are aged in their thirties and forties but volunteers over the age of fifty-five are more committed and volunteer more hours.