

*The first edition of an annual report, created by NRMA Insurance with research and analysis by PwC Australia.*

*Research and analysis conducted by:*



# THE WEIRD ECONOMY THE HELP ECONOMY

*Australians are, by nature, a nation of helpers. It's part of our culture and something we are proud of. But help is mostly unpaid, unseen and unrecognised. It's this collective help that forms the backbone of what we call the help economy.*



# Why Help?

Help has been synonymous with NRMA Insurance for decades. It's why we exist. We are here to help prepare our communities for the unexpected and, when the unexpected happens, help our customers rebuild and repair. Against the backdrop of fire, flood, storm and a pandemic – helping others has become an important resource. Until now, we didn't know just how important. While we typically measure Australia's success in economic terms, we never contemplate the true value of the millions of amazing moments of help, which are gifted every minute of every day right across the country. From the thousands of volunteers who help in their local communities, to the friendly neighbours dotted around the country who lend a helping hand, we have never stopped to consider a true value on these acts of help. Until now. So, we embarked on a project to understand the value of help, an act which galvanises us as a nation and is deeply entrenched in values of mateship. We are calling it the help economy – and judging by the figures it is booming. NRMA Insurance, using research and analysis by PwC Australia, is proud to launch and release the help economy's inaugural report. An annual blue paper which tracks help and then values it. Incredibly – 2020 shows that the simple, often unspoken selfless act of help, is collectively valued at \$30 billion dollars. Each year we will deep dive into how much help is worth, where the help is coming from, what the help looks like and the immense benefit it has on Australians. The aim of this report is to champion a culture of help. Something so many people need in so many ways, right now.

*Julie Batch  
Group Executive  
Direct  
Insurance*

# The true value of

Australians are, by nature, a nation of helpers. It's part of our culture and something we are proud of. But help is mostly unpaid, unseen and unrecognised. It's this collective help that forms the backbone of what we call the help economy. This report aims to identify, quantify and value these acts of help by providing a granular understanding of it across gender, age and state. We are doing this report, because:

Help plays an increasingly pivotal role in society and is not given the same prominence as other work.

A granular view of what this help looks like will provide an important lens to help us truly understand it.

We want the help economy to celebrate every act of help and provide the recognition it deserves.

# This is the first time that value has been placed on the entire economy of help.

The help economy is the total value of the unpaid work Australians do outside their homes for friends, family and community.

Using multiple studies from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and a sample of 2074 Australians, the help economy provides a complete overview of two categories of formal and informal help, as well as help received.

This report sought a granular understanding to compare help across gender, age and by state.

## Formal Help

*Volunteering for an organised group. Formal help is relatively easy to quantify with a simple calculation of head hours. It's regulated by the government. Formal help is organised and outside the household such as charity work or volunteering.*

Estimated dollar value of  
**\$16B**  
a year

## Informal Help

*Helping outside the household. Informal help is more difficult to accurately value as it consists of millions of different individual acts. But this kind of help is often perceived as higher value by those receiving it. This is the first survey of its kind to attempt to quantify informal help that happens outside the household, such as minding a friend's child.*

Estimated dollar value of  
**\$14B**  
a year

+

# \$30B

The help economy is valued at \$30B. \$16B in formal help or structured volunteering. \$14B in informal or unstructured help.

# The COVID-19 pandemic & natural disasters impacted the ability of Australians to help in 2020.

Despite Australians spending 394 million hours formally helping in 2020, this was a 34% reduction in formal help from 2019.

*Natural disasters and a pandemic have seen help outside the household shift to*

## health & welfare + emotional support

**74%** *of Australians felt now more than ever was the best time to help but 42% felt unable to because of COVID-19.*

**63%** *of Australians helped outside of their household in 2020 in a formal or informal capacity.*

# \$13.5B

COVID-19 impacted Australia's ability to help with a \$13.5B reduction in value in 2020.

# The first ever holistic view of help

In the past, only formal help such as volunteering has been measured.

This report goes beyond that, as it measures informal help, such as minding a neighbour's child or cleaning their gutter. The challenge is that informal help is perceived as part of the social fabric which makes it difficult to value, but inherently more valuable.

*This is the first time in Australia that both types of help have received equal attention and measurement.*

Using multiple studies from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and a sample of 2,074 Australians - we have for the first time built a complete overview of help that happens outside the home.

*Please note:  
Unpaid help that occurs in the household such as doing the dishes is not quantified as part of this report. Much to the irritation of those who do them.*



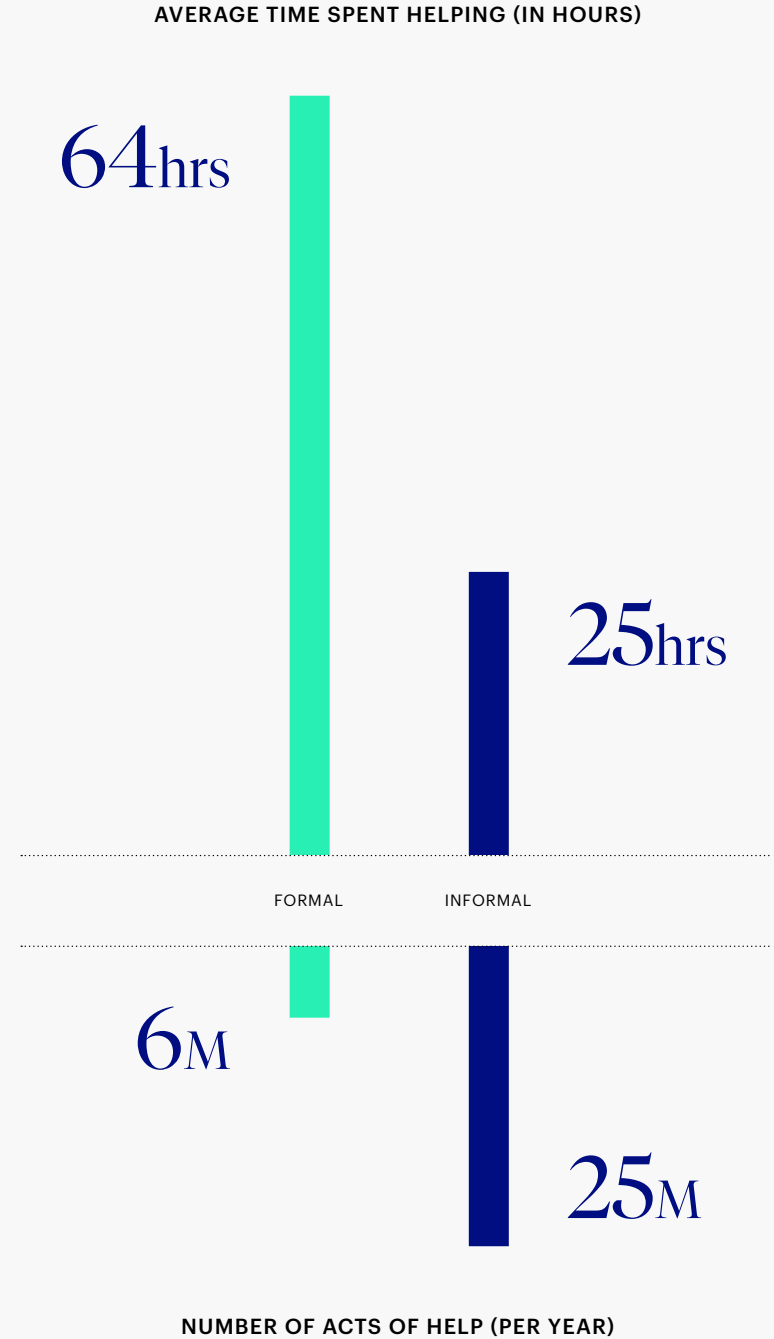
# The difference between formal & informal help

**Formal and informal help are fundamentally different.**

The value of informal help is driven by the number of acts. The value of formal help by the number of hours.

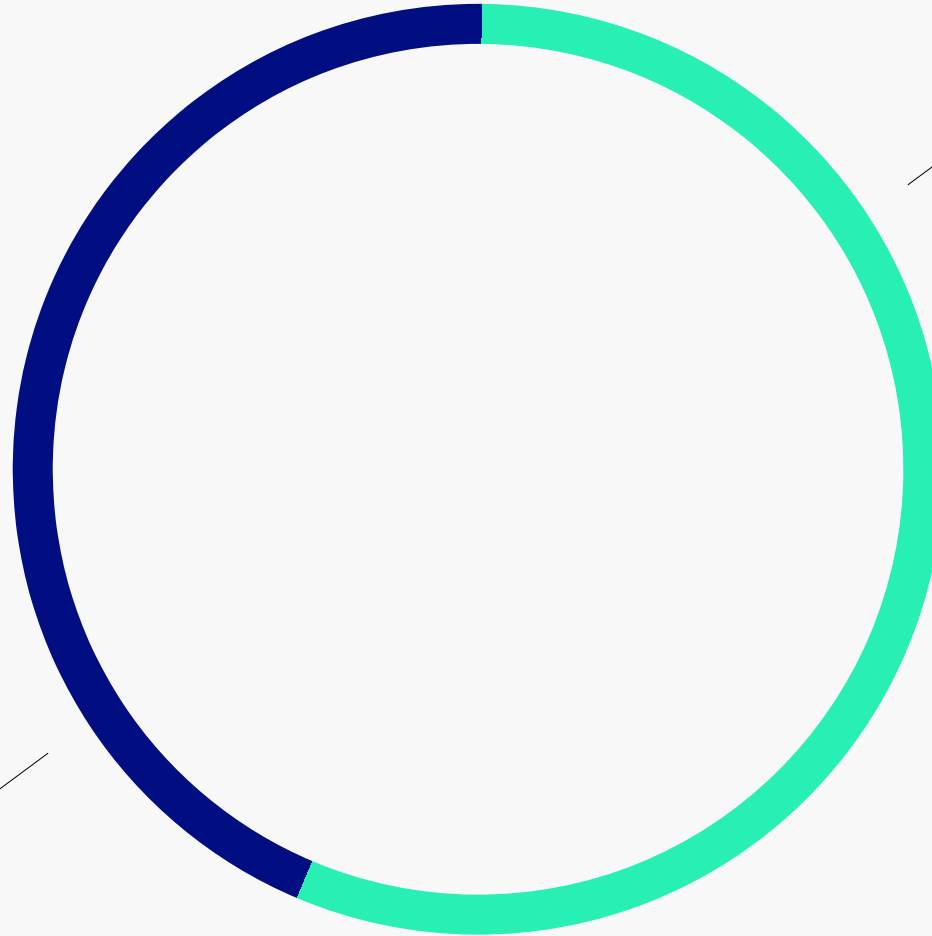
**92%** *of those who formally help also provide some informal help, too.*

Additionally, twice the number of Australians help informally over formally.



# Informal help— invisible until now

Formal  
Help  
43.8%



56.2%  
Informal  
Help

To date, informal help has been invisible. Other research has only measured unpaid work and formal volunteering.

This is only a part of help.

Most research does not measure help received, or how we value acts of help.

**By valuing informal help we increase its visibility.** The help economy reveals that 56% of people received informal help in 2020.

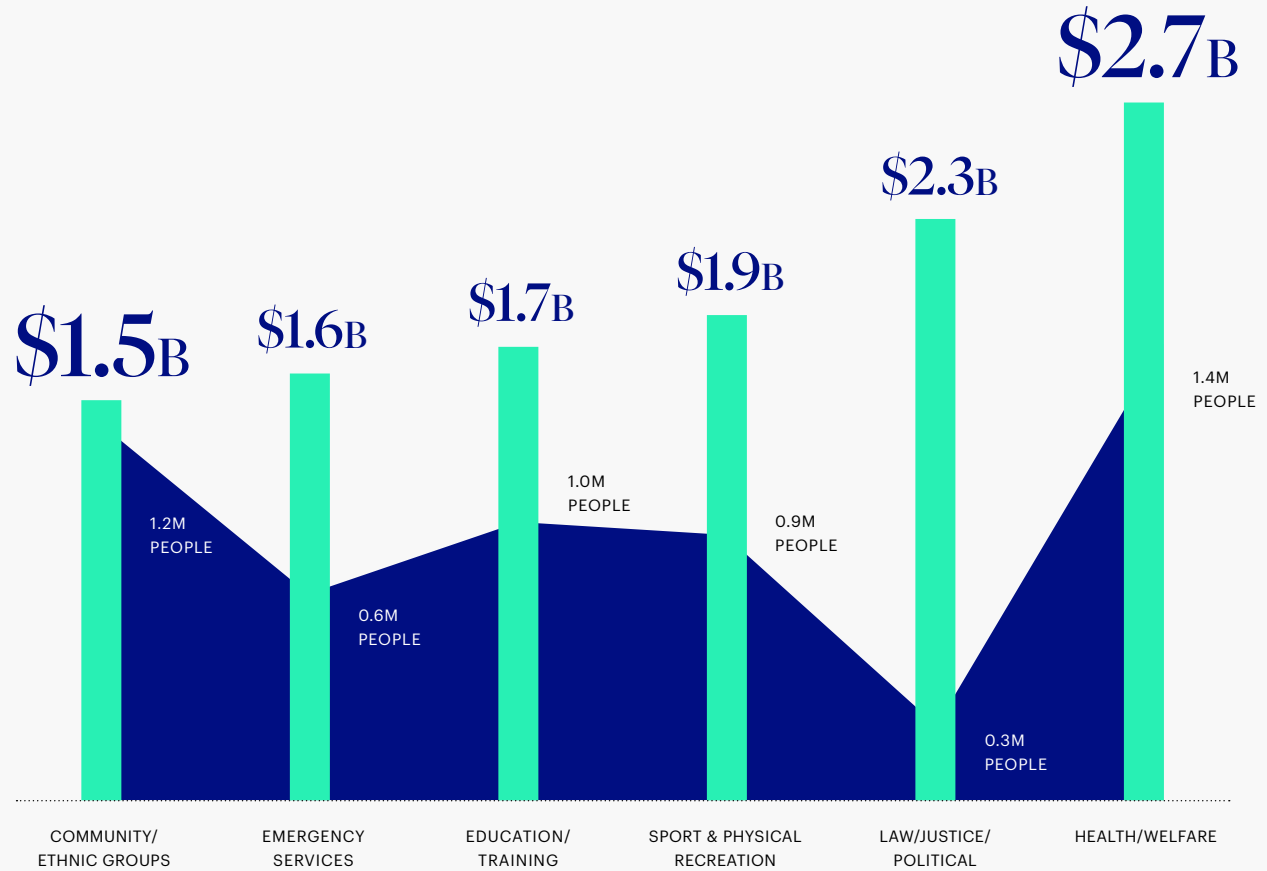
FORMAL VS. INFORMAL HELP RECEIVED



# The value of formal help is driven by hours

Health and welfare, community groups plus education and training are the most common forms of how people give formal help, with 1.4 million, 1.2 million and 1.0 million people in each respective category. The number of people helping doesn't equate to the dollar value of each category with Law/Justice/Political being the highest valued with the fewest number of people.

*The value of the formal help economy is driven by fewer people dedicating longer in hours to helping.*



DOLLAR VALUE OF FORMAL HELP PROVIDED

Graph overlays the value of the top six formal help categories by value and the number of acts of help provided in each category.

# Formal help is declining but still important

Even though it has been consistently declining, Australians still spent 394 million hours formally helping in 2020.

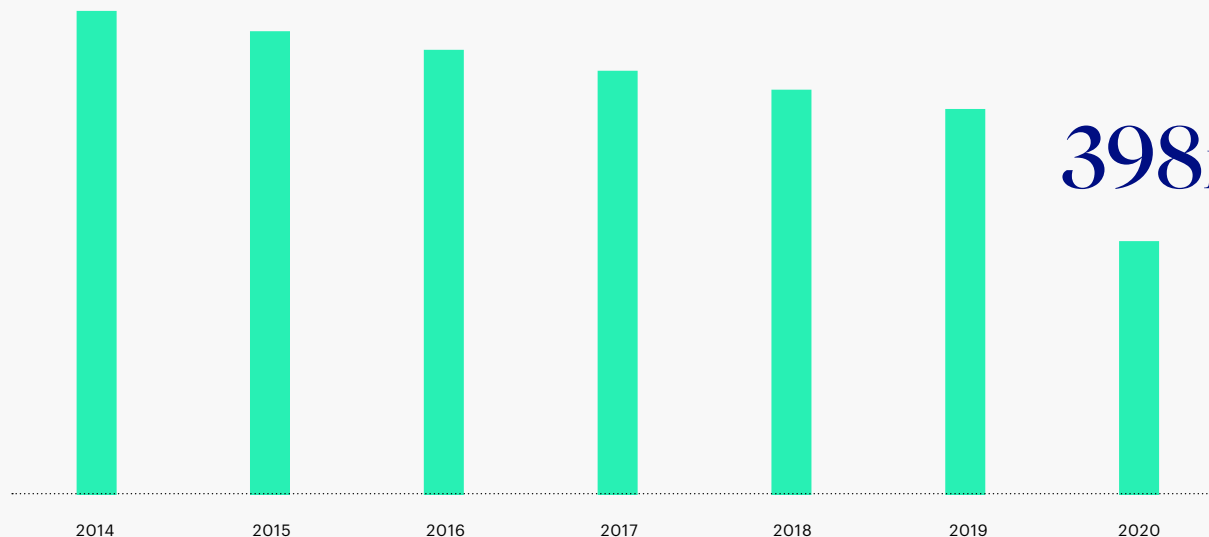
Australians spent just over an hour a week on average formally helping, more than double the time of informal help.

A combination of changes in our work and lifestyles, increased awareness of social issues and the use of technology that make helping easier have all contributed to the changing landscape of how individuals and communities contribute to formal help, and its decline over the years.

*The formal help economy is driven by commitment.*

746Mhrs

398Mhrs



TOTAL HOURS OF FORMAL HELP PROVIDED (IN HOURS)

Graph overviews the value of the top six formal help categories by value and the number of acts of help provided in each category.

# Informal help where help is needed

Emotional support, domestic work and running errands were the most common forms of informal help in COVID-affected 2020. This suggests that Australians help where the help is needed most.

The value of the informal help economy is driven by more acts of help that are provided for a shorter period of time.

The number of acts of help does not equate to the dollar value contributed by each category to the overall informal help economy.

*It only takes a little over 30 mins a day, a week, or over the weekend to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others, and consequently the help economy.*

AVERAGE TIME SPENT HELPING (PER YEAR)



# The lifecycle of The Help Economy

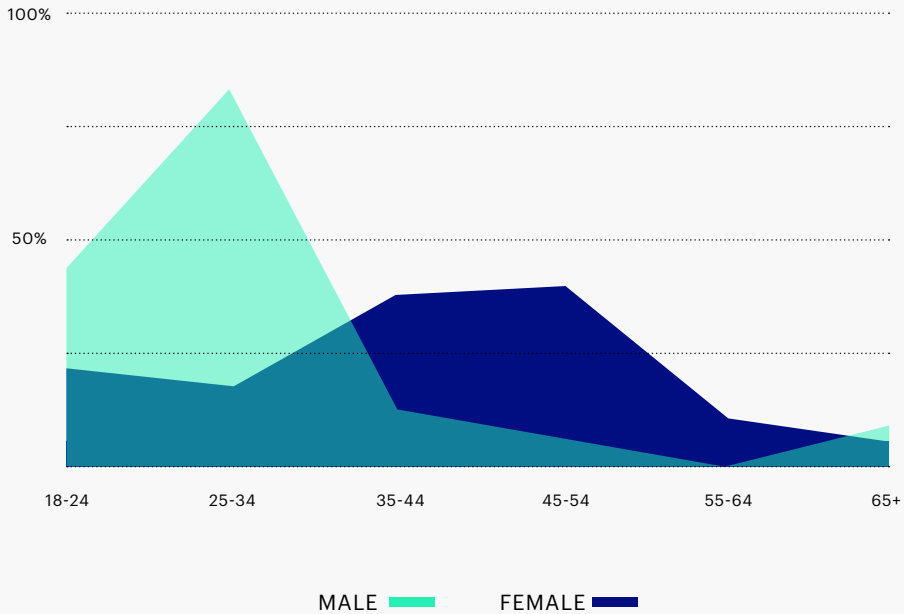
Middle-aged Australians with younger families typically have limited time to provide formal or informal help.

18-24 year-olds are typically free from such commitments and have more time.

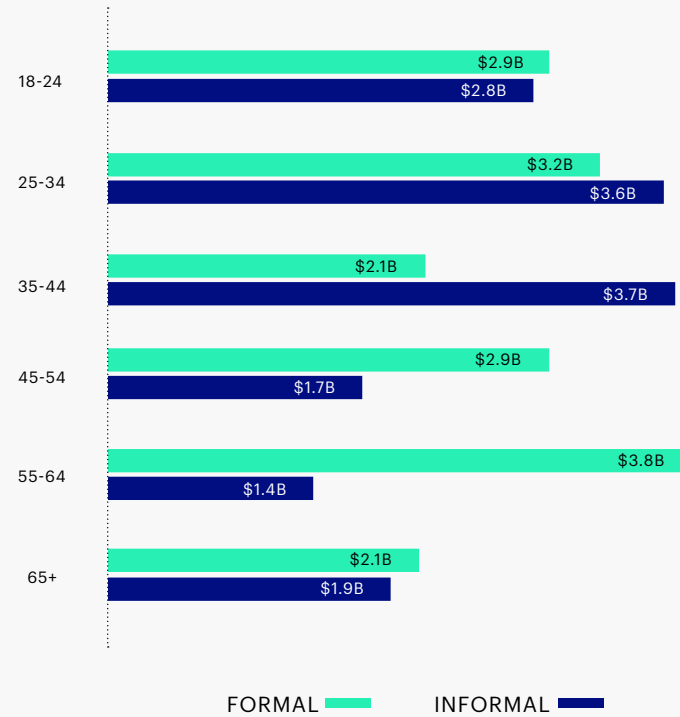
The over 55s tend to have independent children and can contribute more to the help economy formally or informally.

Receiving help is at an all-time low when 65+. Arguably, **this is the time in life when people need help most.**

LIKELIHOOD OF RECEIVING HELP



VALUE OF HELP PROVIDED BY AGE



Quality vs.

# Quantity

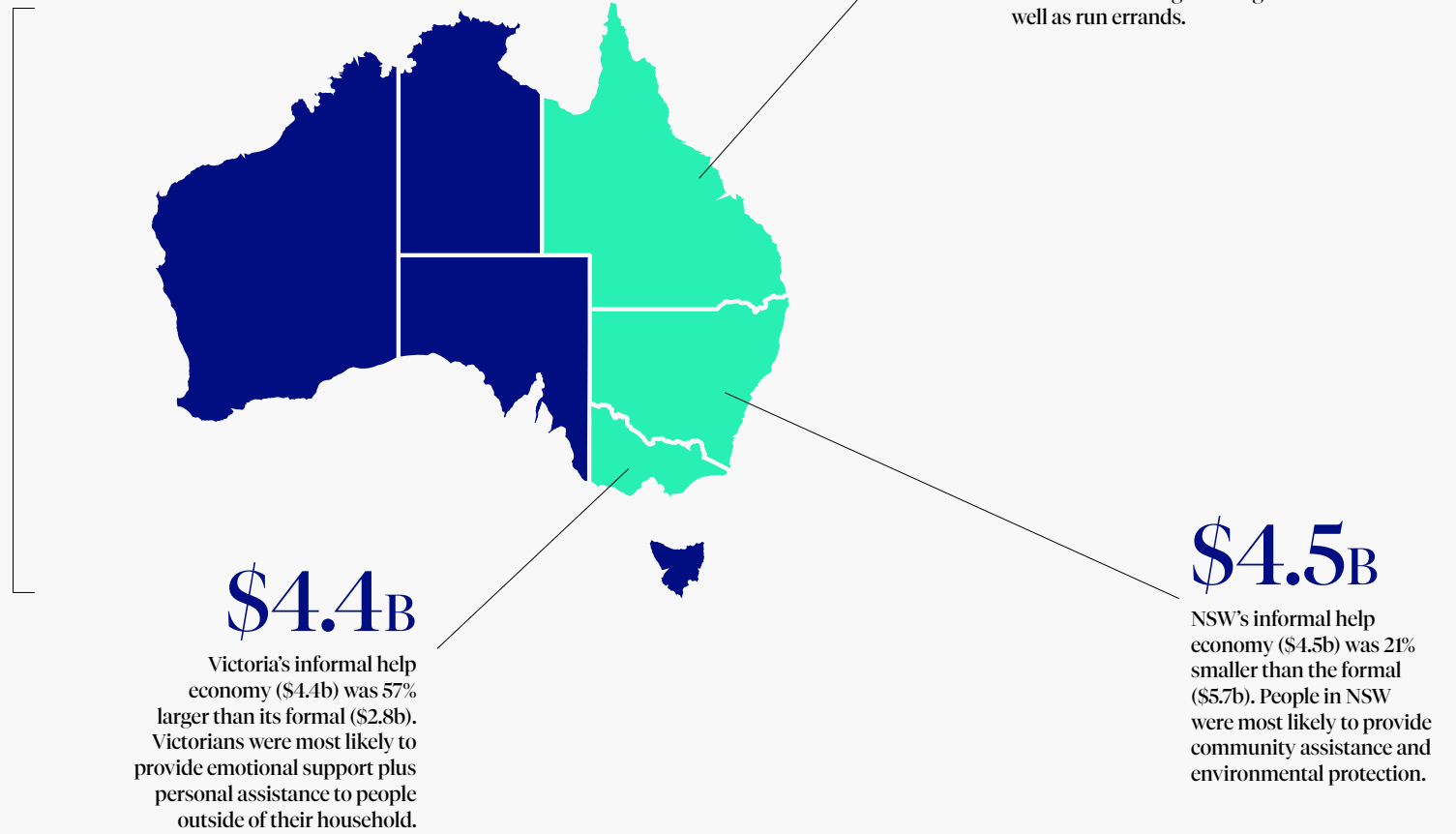
*In 2020, one of the most challenging years faced by the nation, 1.2 million Australians received emotional support.*



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# The state of help

*Australia wide,  
the formal help economy is*  
**14% larger**  
*than the informal.*



# Help affected by a year of disaster

Having experienced a pandemic, fire and severe storms, Australians knew that they needed to help in 2020. But COVID-19 meant they struggled with how best to do it.

**74%**  
*believe now more than ever there is a need to help others*

*However,*

**42%**

*felt they were unable to help because of COVID*

*This drove a loss of*

**\$13.5B**

*to the help economy*

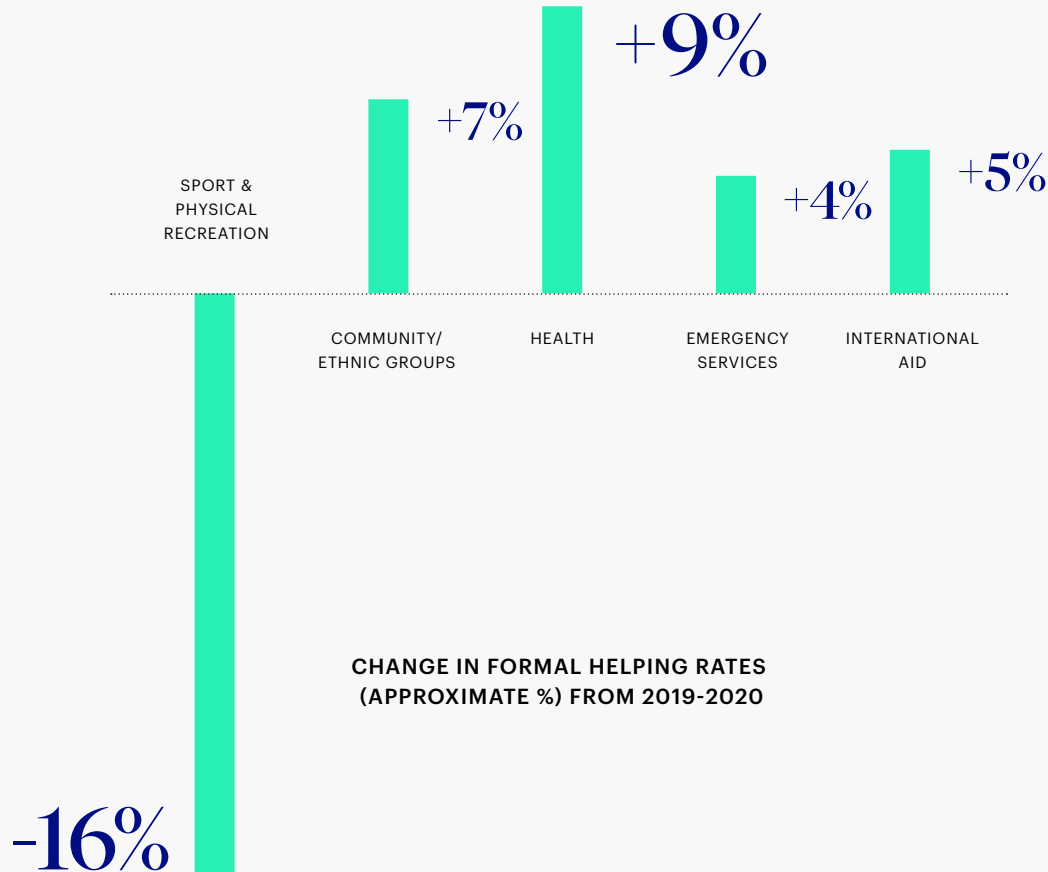
# A year of dramatic change for formal help

From 2019 to 2020 Australians faced challenges like never before.

Fires, severe storms and the beginning of a global pandemic. It was of no surprise to see a shift in formal help.

Sport and physical recreation saw the largest decline of 16% in formal help, with lockdown restrictions forcing people inside and away from helping with community sport.

Interestingly, COVID-19 also drove an 8% increase in health-related formal help - where those who had some expertise in these areas did what they could to help in the community.



formal help

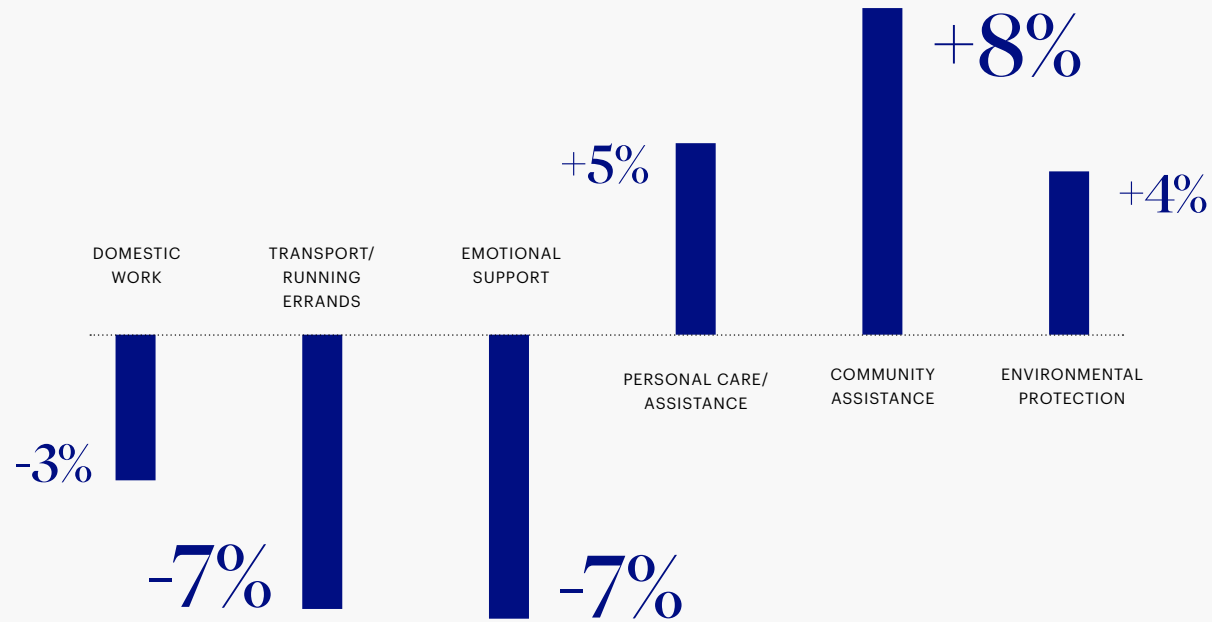


# A year of dramatic change for informal help

## Informal help was also impacted in 2020.

Restrictions in movement saw a 7% reduction in running errands and emotional support. However, community assistance saw the largest increase of 8% followed by a 5% increase in the personal care of others.

The category of environmental protection, which includes tree-planting, also saw a large increase with help going out to bushfire-impacted regions.



CHANGE IN INFORMAL HELPING RATES (APPROXIMATE %) FROM 2019-2020

informal help

# 3 types of Helpers

Australians help in different ways. Using the research of anthropologist Tsachi Ein-Dor, we identified three different overarching categories of helpers - also known as archetypes.

## The Worrier

*Worriers* are no handbrake on fun. Rather they prime us for action and have an innate ability to perceive threats more quickly than others.



29% of helpers

## The Connector

*Connectors* rally people using their strong relationships, social instincts and community connections. This group is more likely to be involved in multiple groups based on their social networks.



33% of helpers

## The Warrior

*Warriors* are on the frontline — helping with fire, flood and pandemic. The rewards may not come in dollars and cents, but rather in a sense of purpose, camaraderie and adrenalin.



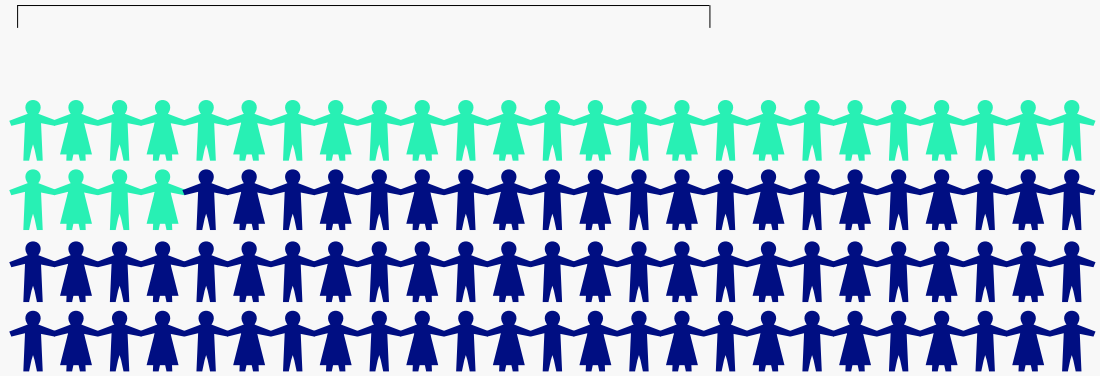
38% of helpers

TYPES OF HELPERS

Worriers provide mostly informal help.

Worriers provide informal help like personal care, emotional support and environmental protection. They generally help those close to them, such as relatives and friends.

64% of worriers are under 45



Only 16% of worriers receive formal help

29%

Worrier

TYPES OF HELPERS

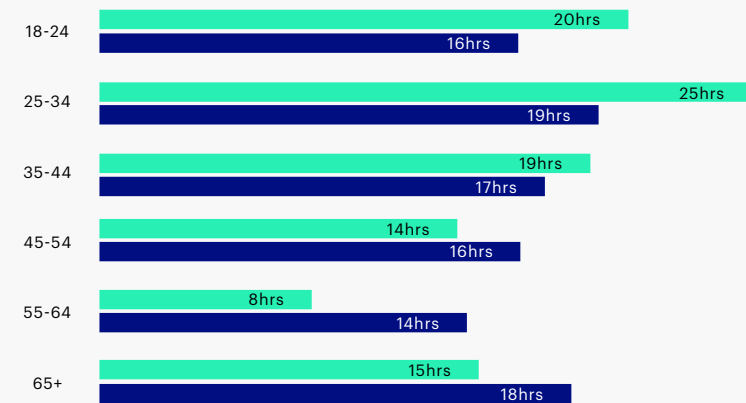
Worriers are slightly younger than the general population, and the one group that have a gender skew. This group predominantly spend their time on informal volunteering.

**This group is highly skewed towards women** — 62%, with 64% aged under 45. Out of the three groups, worriers are the least likely to be married — 43%, and most likely to be divorced — 7%. Compared to all respondents, they're more likely to live in Victoria.



In the second half of 2020, worriers have spent:

- 9 hours in average unpaid formal volunteering hours (3<sup>rd</sup>)
- 26 hours in average unpaid informal volunteering hours (2<sup>nd</sup>)
- 16% have received formal help (3<sup>rd</sup>)
- 28% have received informal help (2<sup>nd</sup>)
- 49% have experienced a natural disaster (3<sup>rd</sup>)



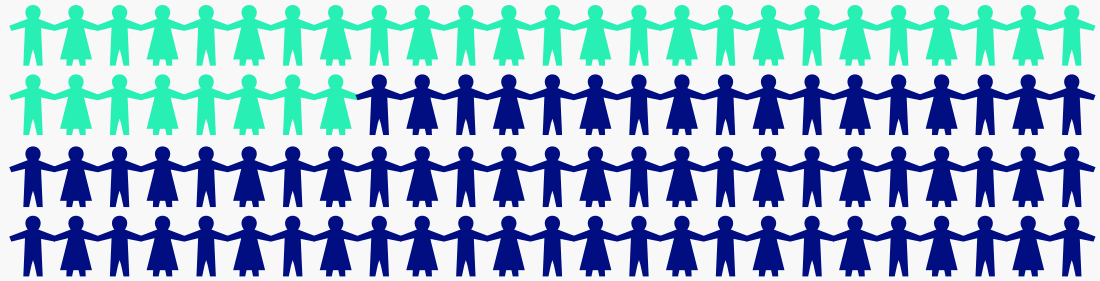
Worrier

TYPES OF HELPERS

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*Connectors* help in the community, providing transport, running errands, and unpaid child care to neighbours, work colleagues and their extended network.

*Connectors* split their time evenly across informal and formal help.



*Most connectors are 35 and older*

33%

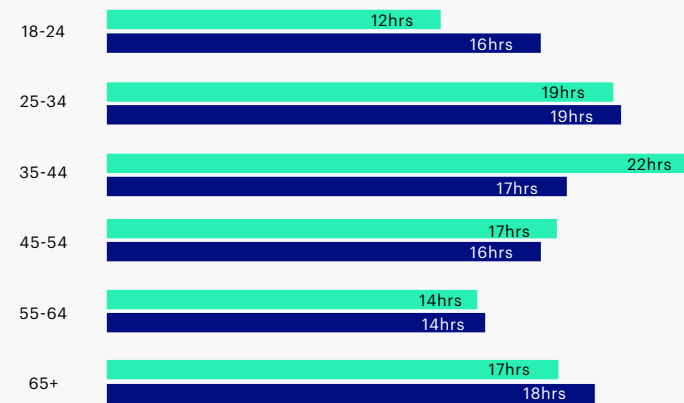
Connector

TYPES OF HELPERS

*Connectors* are slightly older than the other groups, and **split their time evenly between formal and informal volunteering**. This group is divided relatively evenly — **53% Men, 47% Women**, with most aged 35 or above. Most likely as a result of their age, this group has the highest proportion of married respondents — **54%**.

*In the second half of 2020*, connectors have spent:

- **27 hours** in average unpaid formal volunteering hours (2<sup>nd</sup>)
- **28 hours** in average unpaid informal volunteering hours (1<sup>st</sup>)
- **21%** have received formal help (2<sup>nd</sup>)
- **28%** have received informal help (3<sup>rd</sup>)
- **55%** have experienced a natural disaster (2<sup>nd</sup>)



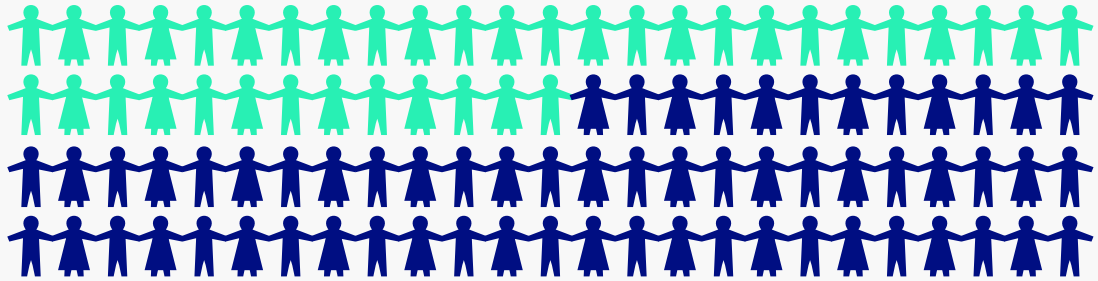
# Connector

TYPES OF HELPERS

Warriors provide formal help the most and are most likely to have received help

Warriors provide informal help like teaching, coaching, domestic work and home maintenance. They generally help those outside of their social circle in their wider community.

50% of Warriors are under 35



38%

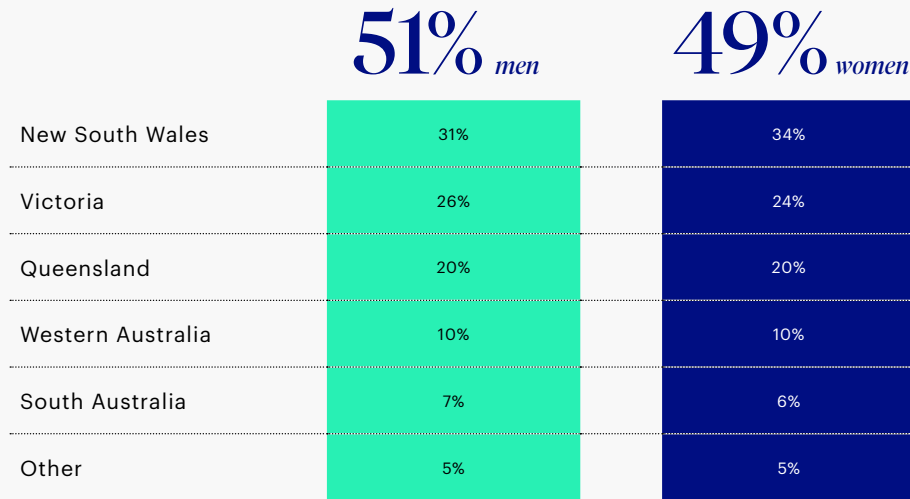
59% of Warriors have experienced a natural disaster

Warrior

TYPES OF HELPERS

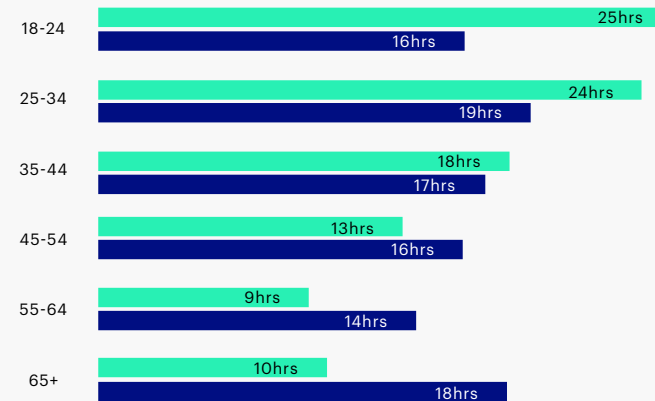
Warriors are younger with an even gender mix who, in addition to providing a substantial amount of hours of help, are also the most likely group to receive help.

This group is split evenly —**51% men, 49% women**, they skew younger with **half of them aged under 35**. Most likely as a result of their age, members of this group are most likely to be single. They're slightly more likely than average to **be from New South Wales**.



In the second half of 2020, warriors have spent:

- **50 hours** in average unpaid formal volunteering hours (1<sup>st</sup>)
- **25 hours** in average unpaid informal volunteering hours (3<sup>rd</sup>)
- **29%** have received formal help (1<sup>st</sup>)
- **33%** have received informal help (1<sup>st</sup>)
- **59%** have experienced a natural disaster (1<sup>st</sup>)



Warrior



2020 was a year of enormous challenges - a global pandemic and an increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters as a result of climate change.

The inaugural help economy report proves that, now more than ever, help is a vital resource and will become increasingly valuable as a commodity.

# Help

Where there's

# is no down

There's

Help is becoming our most valuable resource. We believe that when the help economy flourishes, so does the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society. This will be at the heart of our resilience as a country and preparedness for the future.

Now that we understand the value of help in this first year, we're making a commitment to continuing to monitor the help economy every year.

*For all our futures.*

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*Research  
and analysis  
conducted by:*

