



STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND | 2024

SUMMARY REPORT



volunteering
queensland

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 respondents¹.

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.

¹These 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.



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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.

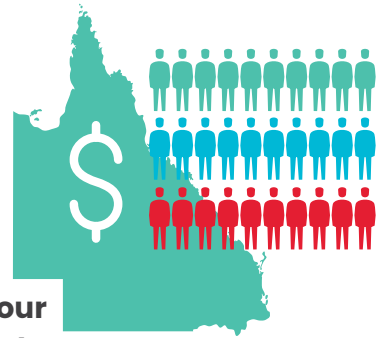
Positively, volunteers have reported an increase in the amount that they are reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses. In 2020, volunteers on average were reimbursed only 11.4% of their out-of-pocket expenses. This has increased to 21.0% in the 2022-23 financial year. This is a significant and important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



of Queenslanders
volunteered in 2023



MILLION PEOPLE

People spent
an average of



OR



MILLION HOURS
volunteering in 2023

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

\$117.8 BILLION



\$4.70 is returned

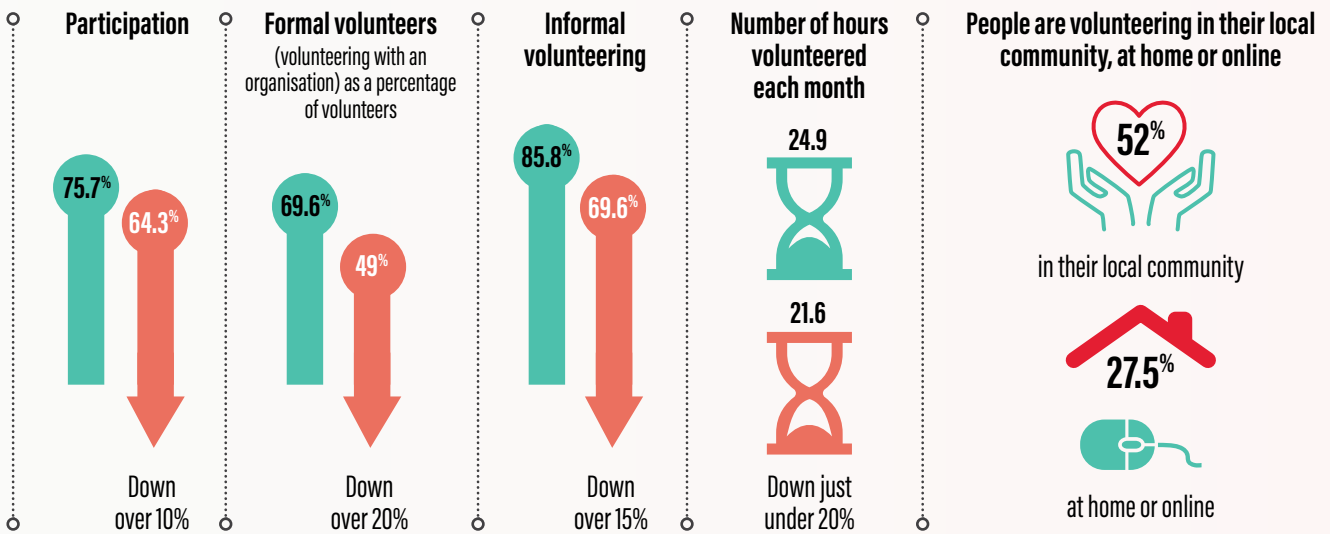
For every **\$1**
invested in
volunteering ...





KEY FINDINGS FROM VOLUNTEERS

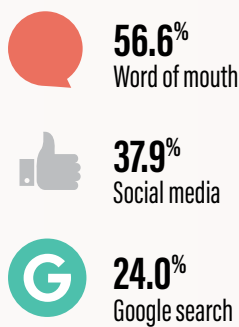
Participation ● 2020 (Queenslanders aged 18+ surveyed in 2020) ● 2023 (Queenslanders aged 15+ surveyed in 2023)



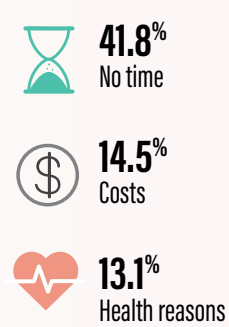
People are motivated to volunteer



Top 3 ways people find volunteer roles



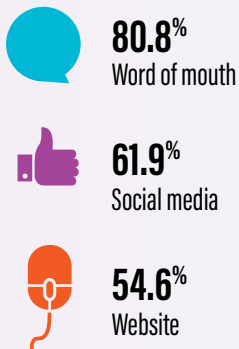
Top 3 barriers to volunteering more





KEY FINDINGS FROM VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

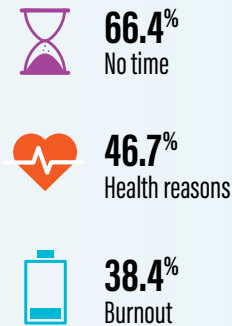
Top 3 recruitment channels



Top 3 recognition, engagement and retention strategies



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



Top 3 issues in volunteering

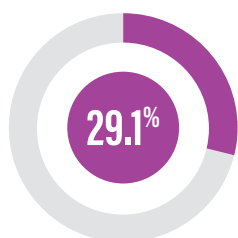


Top 3 challenges of the last three years

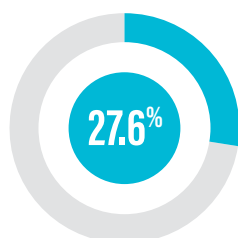




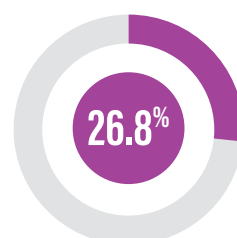
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



of volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years



of non volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years



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



THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

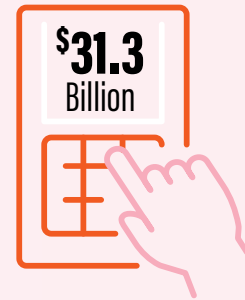


\$4.70 is returned

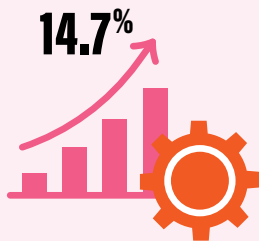
The value of volunteering to the Queensland community is



The labour replacement cost to replace all volunteers is

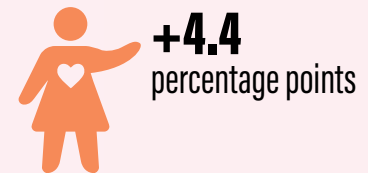


Volunteering improves workplace productivity by



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

The increase in individual wellbeing attributable to volunteering is



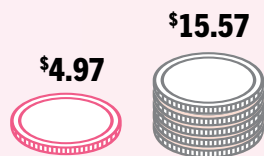
Volunteer involving organisations spend an average of



\$5.09 per volunteer hour

Cost for volunteers

Average volunteer expenses per hour



Up by over 300%

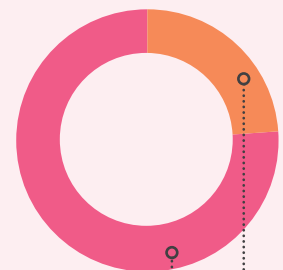
Reimbursement rate to volunteers from organisations

Reimbursement rate to volunteers from organisations



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)			
<i>Direct costs</i>		<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Volunteer expenses	\$8,849.9		
Volunteer involving organisation expenses	\$2,769.8	\$11,619.7	
<i>Opportunity costs</i>			
Volunteers' time	\$12,863.7		
Volunteering investments	\$489.2	\$13,352.9	\$24,972.6
Benefits (\$ million)			
<i>Commercial benefits</i>			
Producers' surplus	\$2,155.1		
Productivity premium	\$20,640.9	\$22,786.0	
<i>Civic benefits</i>			
Employment	\$6,556.5		
Taxes	\$2,608.6		
Volunteers' labour	\$31,337.8	\$40,502.9	
<i>Individual benefits</i>			
Volunteers' dividend		\$54,455.7	\$117,754.6
<i>Social return on investment</i>			
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.

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.

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



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VOLUNTEERING QUEENSLAND

reception@volunteeringqld.org.au

PH 07 3002 7600

Level 12, 127 Creek St,
Brisbane QLD 4000



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