

BUILDING COMMUNITY: GIFTING TIME

Community Co-Lab Pilot
Project



Building Community: Gifting Time Survey Report (Online community survey)

Introduction

Building Community: Gifting Time: A pilot project initiative undertaken in partnership by Sunshine Coast Council and University of the Sunshine Coast. This project was a collaboration supported by the Sunshine Coast Community Co-Lab Model framework and methodology, to inspire a broader representation of community demographics in volunteering. The project focused on understanding the gaps, needs, barriers and trends to volunteering attraction and retention, to support a resilient volunteering sector on the Sunshine Coast. The project communicates the benefits of volunteering for people from all walks of life.

Between 18 October and 28 January 2023, a comprehensive community engagement program was delivered both in the community and online. There were four key community engagement activities in the volunteer project, Building Community: Gifting Time:

- Community Survey (open from 18 October to 28 January 2023)
- Public Seminar (held on 27 October 2022)
- Young person focus groups (hosted between October and November 2022)
- Community Forum (held on 7 December 2022)

UniSC presents in this report a detailed outline of the online community survey data and findings.

University students had the opportunity to contribute to the survey following a UniSC information seminar series and the public were informed of the outcomes via a community forum. Research and publications will also be produced to further the knowledge gathered from the project. Ethics was approved by the University of the Sunshine Coast (#A221791).

The key activities:

- Data Collection through Community Survey (open from 18 October to 28 January 2023)
- Presentation to Community Forum (held on 7 December 2022)
- Research publications (2023)

Council have developed a complementary report which outlines the findings of the face- to-face community engagement activities.

Executive Summary

Volunteers provide important contributions to the wider community and to the places in which we live. The 2022/2023 survey- *Building Community, Gifting Time: A Survey about you and your "Sunshine Coast"*, attracted 458 resident responses with just under 90% providing completed surveys for use in the data analyses. The sample over-represented older, longer-term residents, who were more likely to be women, more highly educated and spread across twenty-five post-codes in the Sunshine Coast region. The results focused on formal volunteering characteristics, but also investigated types of informal volunteering. Volunteers showed higher levels of altruistic and humanitarian (Values) motives but also higher levels of motivation in developing one's knowledge, skills and abilities (Understanding), and lower levels of motivation in career opportunities. Questions relating to new barriers and challenges to volunteering agreed with ongoing pressures of time constraints/commitments, financial pressures, personal health and transport limitations, but added new requirements in

organisational rules and regulations, COVID-19 related risks to personal health, with some advantages to the use of new technologies. Our research found that women were more likely to develop social relationships in association with volunteering than men, as were individuals volunteering in more than one area. Formal volunteering was found to be associated with higher levels of self-reported health and happiness, although the relationship maybe a complex one of mutual interdependence (i.e. being healthy allows one to volunteer; volunteering leads to a healthier mix of physical and social interactions).

Volunteering on the Sunshine Coast: Overarching Research Questions

1. *What are the different types and (where appropriate) locations of volunteering activity and contributions made by residents?*
2. *To what extent are different types of volunteering activity explained by different volunteer motives (e.g., social, altruistic, social, growth and learning)?*
3. *Do different types (formal/informal, activity, and extent) provide different outcomes for individual volunteers' social capital and wellbeing?*

Background

Literature review

We live in changing times, and none so more than in regions of growth such as the Sunshine Coast. As residents of the Sunshine Coast, we often do more, whether informal and a little, or planned and routine, to be a part of how we participate and contribute to the place in which we live. Where do we spend our time, with whom, and for what reasons? We wish to explore how we, as everyday residents of the Sunshine Coast, initiate and maintain our activities towards improving our environment and people.

Volunteering

We can easily think of the image of volunteers as those individuals who formally give their time to sporting clubs, or to maintaining and restoring our coastal and hinterland environments through environmental groups. However, when individuals willingly provide unpaid help towards activities, in the form of time, service or skills, much of which are focused directly on helping others (who don't live in their household) they are also making volunteer contributions. Therefore, volunteers will also contribute to unpaid work for organisations such as:

- charities, education and training,
- advocacy for human rights and minority groups,
- service organisations (e.g., in disability and health)
- and affiliated religious and political groups.

Also, more broadly informally, by helping others without financial gain (e.g., domestic work, or in emergencies). Volunteering can sometimes be associated with institutional (Government) processes for supporting individuals' work access. Volunteers are typically driven by social, altruistic, learning and understanding as well as often career motivations for making contributions.

Definitions

Formal volunteering: Unpaid help that is willingly undertaken in the form of time, service, or skills, to an organisation or group within the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Informal volunteering: Time, skills or services offered outside a formal organisation or group. For example, assisting a family member outside of the household with gardening, cleaning, grocery shopping, or unpaid childcare (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Informal volunteering rates tend to be higher than formal volunteering, with this pattern being consistent across the country (Volunteering Australia, 2020).

In the context of place and space, volunteering not only contributes to the individual but also forms an important part of the social fabric of communities. Volunteering builds social capital and relationships between community members, and results in enhancing community health, as well as underpinning wellbeing through supporting healthy lifestyles in social groups and sustaining and restoring our fauna and flora.

Volunteering on the Sunshine Coast

ABS 2021 Census Indicators

- *Unpaid domestic work (Sunshine Coast, 72%)*
- *Unpaid care for child/children (Sunshine Coast, 26%) Voluntary work through an org./group (Sunshine Coast, 165)*

The broad scope of volunteering means that individuals are recognised as making important contributions across a wide range of organisations and groups. For example at Sunshine Coast Council, volunteering opportunities exist in Museums and Heritage; Festivals and Events; Library, Galleries, and Environmental Centres; and Parks and Beaches which focus on Flora, Fauna, and their ecosystems.

The work that some volunteers do on the Sunshine Coast is almost invisible (e.g., moderators of online communities), where other volunteering roles are more visible (e.g. contributing to the many sport, art, and lifestyle clubs), and there are also highly visible formal roles on the Sunshine Coast (e.g., State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service).

Across Australia, formal volunteering rates are at about 31% and the more broadly defined informal volunteering at about 52%, indicating the relatively high participation of community members in some form of volunteering activity. While, by definition, all forms of volunteering contribute to the common good, we can differentiate the formal and informal types of volunteering activity and examine the aligned attitudes, and barriers and potential benefits for individual volunteers' wellbeing.

For example, different types of community members may volunteer in general community and social groups (e.g., sport club volunteering), than in service organisations (e.g., S.E.S.) or

environmental groups which focus on distinctive space and place which makes up the Sunshine Coast region. There may be both different motives (Clary et al., 1998) and different social and individual benefits (e.g., Putnam's (2015) social capital measured through "bridging" and "bonding", see Williams (2006) and wellbeing) for the different modes of each type and extent of each volunteering activity.

Social Capital

Bonding Social Capital – Friendships with similar people "in-group" ... aka social "Superglue" (Putnam 2000:23)

Bridging Social Capital – Friendships with dissimilar people "out group" ... aka social "WD-40" (Putnam 2000:23)

Growth and Decline, Intersecting Trends

Despite the relatively high rates of volunteering, the trends over time, have shown a steady decline. From 2014 to 2019, the ABS General Social Surveys (GSS) have shown an approximate 2% decline in formal volunteering participation rates. The GSS data also reveals some interesting patterns in the demographic backgrounds of those who volunteer compared to those who do not. Volunteers were more likely to be employed full or part-time than those unemployed or out of the workforce; more likely to be educated than those with non-school qualifications, and couples with dependent children over others. These characteristics of the typical Australian volunteer are not absolute, but they also dispel the image of a volunteer as those individuals who are less likely to be busy with work or family, and potentially of an older age group. In one of Queensland's fastest growing areas, the Sunshine Coast shows a ten-year change to 2021 which features both an increase in the median age of residents towards older ages but also an increase in the percentage of residents who are couples with children. This represents somewhat of an interesting intersection between what could be demographic factors which align with both declining and growing rates of volunteering. This also raises the question of how different demographic types of individuals frame their narratives and life stories around decisions to volunteer.

Growth and Decline, Intersecting Trends Research Question

1. *How does growth relate to residents' willingness to volunteer, particularly given the push and pull characteristics of demographic change?*

Barriers to Volunteering: From COVID-19 to Resource Constraints

In addition, little research has been undertaken into how a broad response to COVID-19 and social isolation from 2020 has impacted ongoing participation in volunteering. Government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in health mandates with required periods of social isolation, which has implied dramatic effects on reducing the rates of participation in volunteering. The barriers to volunteering, more broadly interpreted, may intersect with perceptions about COVID-19, e.g., the use of public transport or risks to one's own health. Over a longer period, individuals may report more persistent and general barriers to access volunteering opportunities (e.g., time at home/work, time required to volunteer, costs of transport, difficulty in transport access).

Barriers to Volunteering: From COVID-19 to Resource Constraints Research Questions

1. *To what extent has COVID-19 impacted on individuals' choices or intentions to volunteer?*
2. *What are the primary barriers which individuals describe as impeding their intentions to volunteer into participation?*

Innovation in Volunteering: Flexibility, Informality, and Spontaneity

It is widely recognised that while individuals benefit from the routinisation of activities in organisation (i.e., roles, tasks, schedules), flexibility and variety in activities is more empowering. In this respect, formal volunteering is not exempt from the potential dissatisfaction and disincentives of bureaucratic organisations. In new forms of organising towards greater flexibility, scheduling, and sharing of activities, individuals have greater say in the form of their own contribution. New innovative forms of organising volunteers may be associated with online (virtual) technologies (e.g., volunteers decide when to contribute) or with informal scheduling practices (e.g., volunteers decide whether to contribute), or with more once-off events, sometimes associated with disasters and emergencies, termed “spontaneous volunteering” (e.g., volunteers decide what to contribute).

The primary indicators in the data closely follow the focus of the research questions, which comprise:

- Volunteering Functional Index (Motives for Volunteering): (Clary et al., 1998)
- Attitudes, Peer Referents, and Perceived Behavioural Control: (Ajzen, 1991)
- Social Relationship Types (i.e., Bonding and Bridging): (Putnam, 2015)
 - Measuring Social Capital (Williams, 2006)
- Health and Wellbeing (General Social Survey, NORDC): (Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2002)

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Aims and Outcomes

This research aims to inform on a sustainable and resilient volunteer ecosystem on the Sunshine Coast. The survey helps to understand a broad participant base who are interested and invested in a varied range of volunteering opportunities. The research also intends to contribute to a wider understanding through knowledge and peer-reviewed outputs about volunteering in a regional community.

There will be two distinct outcomes which will help disseminate the research findings -

- The research data informed a community forum organised by the Sunshine Coast Council to disseminate the research findings to the public.
- Papers for peer reviewed publications will be produced to further disseminate the academic knowledge gathered from the project.

Methodology

An online survey was prepared by the academic team which included measures of; volunteering types, areas of, and extent to which, volunteering took place, attitudes and motivation for volunteering; social capital, COVID-19-related influences; and general health, happiness and demographic questions.

In all, 458 responses were received over the late 2022 and early 2023 period. Of these, just under 90% completed all of the initial general questions, with an analysis of missing data revealing the 52 respondents with moderate to high levels of initial missing data also did not complete the final demographic questions and were therefore removed leaving a final usable sample size of 406 respondents.

Ethics approval for this research study was provided by the University of the Sunshine Coast (Ethics #A221791).

Participants and Sample

The youngest and oldest respondent was 21 and 86 years old respectively with the average age of respondents 59 with a median age of 61, with the middle 50% of respondents aged

between 50 and 67. About 80% of respondents identified as “Woman” with only 17% “Man” with four respondents identifying as “Non-binary” and four “Prefer not to say” and one “Prefer to self-describe”. While women were over-represented in the sample, this did not systematically vary across age groups. Only 23 respondents indicated identifying as a person with a disability (6%). Most respondents indicated being “Retired” (48%) but large numbers also indicated being employed full-time, casual, or part-time (21%, 5%, 10% respectively). A large majority of respondents (77%) also indicated having tertiary educational qualifications with smaller percentages of respondents indicating high school education (16%) or a trade qualification (8%). Respondents resided in a wide range of twenty-five postcodes across the Sunshine Coast region, with some larger proportions of respondents coming from postcodes: 4551 (22%); 4560 (12%); 4556 (11%); 4575 (8%); 4552 (7%); 4558 (7%). About 40% of the sample were employed (60% of these full time) and 53% retired or on a pension; with 6% other (student, unemployed).

General adult population of the Sunshine Coast via online survey

The primary population of response was adult Sunshine Coast residents (aged 21 to 83), although adult visitors with a significant interest in contributing to the community may also be included (but indicated). Online surveys do not provide the basis for random or systematic sampling; however, the collection of demographic information allows for comparison to known (ABS) population characteristics in order to address questions of representativeness.

Summary of Findings

Purpose and Scope of the Survey

The independent survey of just over four hundred residents of the Sunshine Coast focused on the types, motives, barriers and social and personal outcomes of volunteering participation.

The key findings from the survey are as follows:

Representativeness of the Survey Sample

- The survey sample was more likely to identify as a woman and older than ABS population statistics show residents of the Sunshine Coast.
- As expected with the focus of the survey, volunteers were over-represented, being three times more likely to respond than non-volunteers in the population.

Who Formally Volunteers?

- The findings showed that older (average 60 years), more established residents (60% 10+ years), and those retired were more likely to contribute to formal volunteering.

Where and How Often?

- We measured formal volunteering in organisations showing a spread of participation across twelve different areas, with a majority of volunteers undertaking weekly contributions into one or more areas.

Growth in Future Volunteering

- We asked respondents about their future volunteering aspirations, which shows areas of volunteering interest and comparisons with existing volunteer areas.
- with COVID-19, and the positive and negative aspects of new technologies introduced through recent times.

The Different Motivations for Volunteering

- Measuring six different volunteer motives revealed higher levels of altruism and humanitarian values, and additionally a motive to build one's understanding through increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Barriers to Volunteering

- The major barriers to volunteering revolved around time, and concerns about onerous regulations and requirements, personal health and transport.

Volunteering and Social Investments

- Among volunteers, social relationships were measured in two ways, as an inward bonding (similar to me), and the outward community bridging (different to me) types.
- Women volunteer respondents tended to have higher levels of both inward bonding and outward community bridging. Some decline in social relationships occurred in older aged groups, however, those who had a greater diversity of volunteering (across multiple areas) had significantly higher bridging-type social relationships.

Volunteering and Individual Health and Happiness

- Formal volunteering was associated with higher levels of health and happiness, although it is unclear whether the former (health) facilitates or impedes individuals from volunteering, or is, as might be considered for happiness, a positive outcome for those who volunteer.

The above findings are explored in more detail in the next section of the report.

Community Survey Findings

Types, Demographic Differences, Areas, and Extent of Participation in Volunteering on the Sunshine Coast

In this section we highlight the basic two types of volunteering, examine each for different demographic influences, before detailing the prevalence of volunteering across different areas and looking at the extent and routineness of volunteering participation among our survey respondents.

We measured the two major types of volunteering, as “Formal” and “Informal”.

Formal Volunteering

Formal volunteering is defined as “volunteering activities conducted by individuals with legally organised entities” (Volunteering Australia), such as: hospitals and health care; non-profit organisations (e.g. sporting clubs, choirs, environmental groups); churches; community groups (e.g. Rotary). The survey asked: “Do you formally volunteer or have done so in the past 12 months?”

Survey Insights - Formal Volunteering

- About three-quarters of the survey respondents indicated formal volunteering activity.
- For every increase of two years of an individual's age, formal volunteering increases by about 1%, or about 6% for every 10 years of increase in age.
- Respondents who were “Retired” were 14% more likely to indicate formal volunteering (85%) than those who were in employment (71%).
- The longer a respondent lived on the Sunshine Coast, the greater the reported levels of formal volunteering from a low of 60% among those with up to 2 years of residency, increasing to a high of 84% for those with ten or more years of residency.
- The spread of participation in “Areas” of formal participation varied from a low of under 5% in International Aid/Development to a high of 30% in Arts/Heritage.
- 84% of formal volunteers contributed weekly; 72% devoting between 2 and over 4 hours per week.
- Almost equal percentages of formal volunteers undertook single (29%) or a double (26%) contribution, with 19% in three more different “Areas” of volunteering.

Percentage of each Age-group

We found a majority of respondents (74%, $n = 302$) indicated formal volunteering in the previous 12 months. Additionally, as presented at the right of Figure 1, the percentage of each age-group undertaking formal volunteering increases with age. There was no statistically significant variation in formal volunteering by gender. Respondents who were “Retired” were 14% more likely to indicate formal volunteering (85%) than those who were in employment (71%).

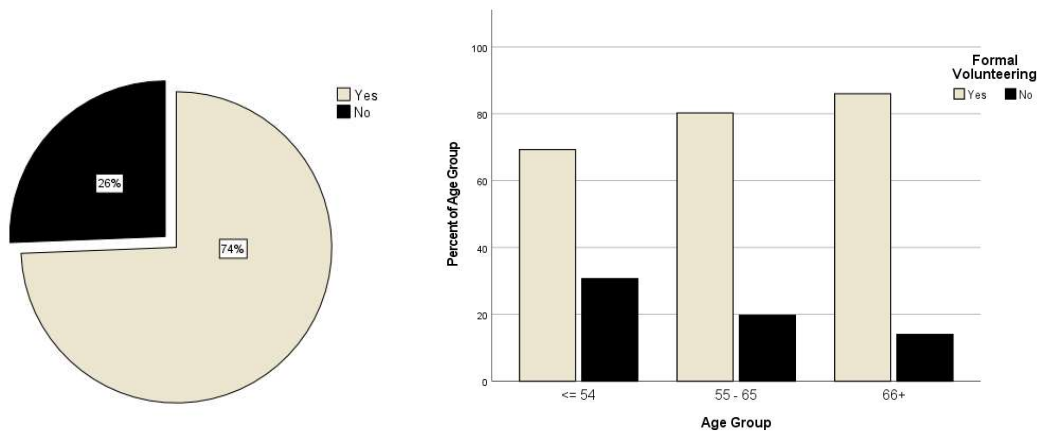


Figure 1: The proportion of respondents who indicated “Formal Volunteering”; Percentage of each Age-group indicating Volunteering

Length of Residency (Tenure)

For formal volunteering, how long a respondent had lived in the Sunshine Coast region was an important factor. The longer a respondent lived on the Sunshine Coast, the greater the reported levels of formal volunteering from a low of 60% among those with up to 2 years of residency, increasing to a high of 84% for those with ten or more years of residency. Figure 2, shows this upward trend of increasing formal volunteering as years of residency increase. While there is some relationship between age and how long respondents have resided on the Sunshine Coast, the analysis suggests both (increasing) age and (increasing) tenure independently result in an increased likelihood of formal volunteering, such that even among younger age groups, having a longer (10+ years) of residency can result in similarly higher formal volunteering outcomes. Arguably, this kind of result represents both the advantages of greater devotion of time to volunteering among those older aged groups as well as the benefits of being embedded in local community networks, including more easily accessing knowledge and relationships about and within formal volunteering organisations. One of the implications of this result could be in better understanding how to engage with newer Sunshine Coast residents, who are less likely to know or be integrated into existing resident networks which facilitate formal volunteering opportunities. In later sections of this report, social capital is introduced, investigated and analysed by its sub-types and associations with formal volunteering.

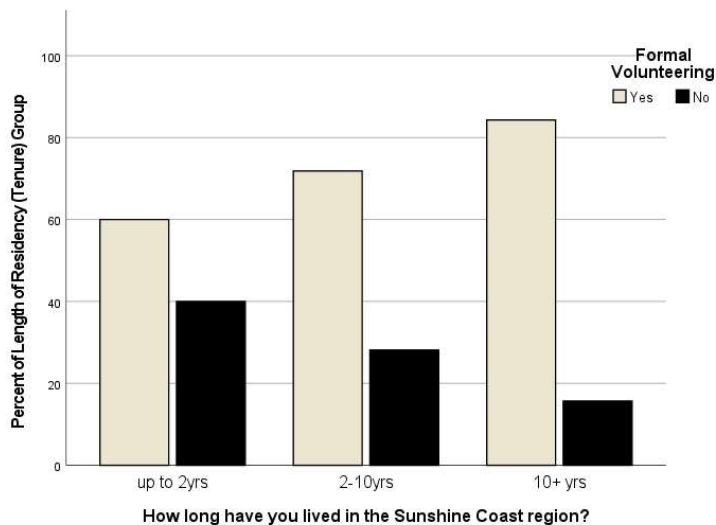


Figure 2: Percentage of Grouped Length of Residency (Tenure) and Formal Volunteering

Volunteering areas

The existing areas in which respondents contributed to formal volunteering is presented in Figure 3. The areas with the highest responses are Arts/Heritage and Sport and physical recreation. “Other” areas included Charity, Opportunity shops, Homelessness support, Transport and delivery, and Disability support. Responses to the different areas of formal volunteering also allowed us to investigate the diversity of volunteering activities, whether individuals tended to contribute in just one area, or across several. We found that while a majority of respondents who indicated formal volunteering did so in just one area in Figure 3 (29%), a close 26% ($n = 106$) volunteered in two areas; 11% in three and about 8% in four to seven areas. It is also possible that respondents may have indicated multiple areas based on volunteering within one organisation, such as contributing to training in sport with children.

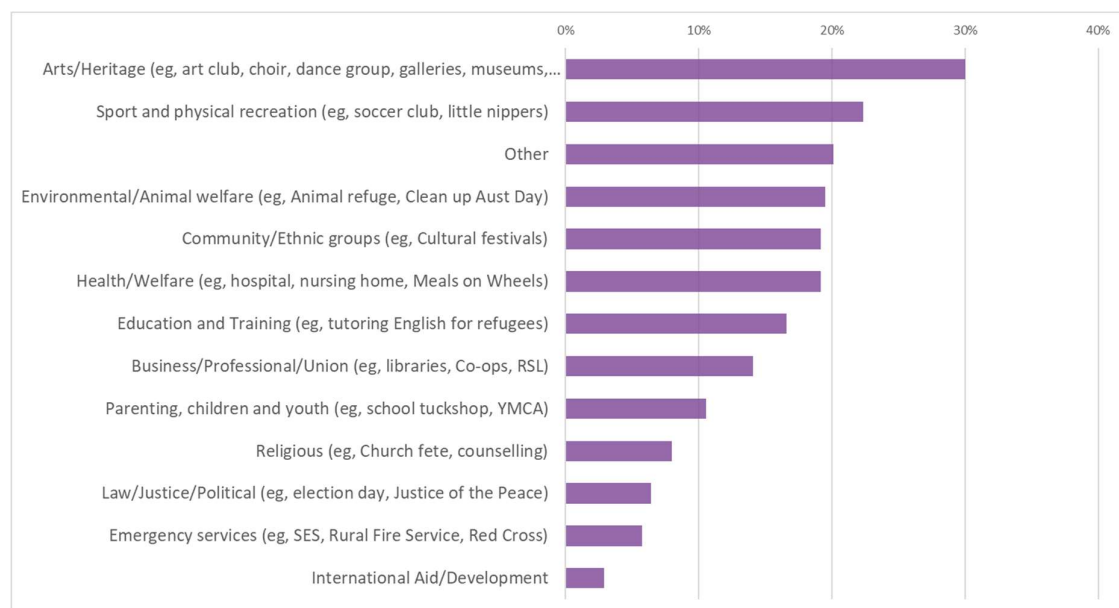


Figure 3: Ranked areas across respondents' existing “Formal Volunteering”

Weekly Hours and Routines

The Community Survey produced a surprisingly more intensive amount of volunteering than was anticipated. The great majority of those formally volunteering indicated that it was routinely undertaken each week (84%) in comparison to seasonal (11%) or once-off (5%). Similarly, the question about hours devoted to formal volunteering showed that a majority undertook 4 or more hours per week (41%) compared to 31% contributing 2 to 4 hours; 23% with 1 to 2 hours; and just under 5% with less than 1 hour a week. Those volunteering in more areas potentially “accumulated” more time each week than those formally volunteering in a single area. Figure 4, below, shows that moving from one (left) to two and then three (centre-right) areas of volunteering reveals increasing percentages of respondents with 4+ hours of volunteering per week (i.e. 35% with a single area of volunteering, $n = 41$; 39% with two areas, $n = 40$; to 53% with three, $n = 24$).

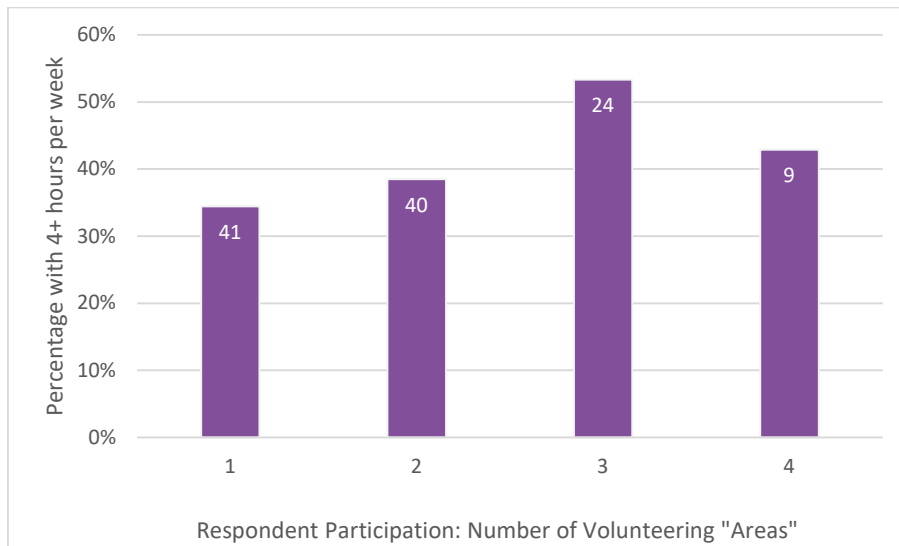


Figure 4: Percentage indicating 4+ Hours per week of volunteering within Respondent's Number of Areas of Formal Volunteering (inset numbers represent sample size).

Informal Volunteering

Survey Insights - Informal Volunteering

Informal volunteering features individuals providing unpaid care or support to others outside their own household not in an organisational context.

- About two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated making informal volunteering contributions.
- The range of prevalence of the ways in which respondents provided informal volunteering varies from a low of about 5% in disaster prevention or recovery, to over 50% in Helping/supporting friends or neighbours in their community.

The definition of informal volunteering used in this survey was: “unpaid care or support provided to people outside your household and not within the context of a formal service organisation” (Volunteering Australia). Participants were asked if they had “participated in any “informal” volunteering within the last year?” Several domain responses were offered as possible response options, including, “helping/supporting neighbours in your community;

providing emotional support; undertaking domestic work (for others); participating in disaster prevention or recovery in environmental emergencies (e.g. flood or fire); participating in environmental causes; running errands or providing transportation; supporting online groups/forums; assisting sports, recreation and art/performance groups; supporting self-help group meetings.”

Proportion of respondents who indicated “Informal Volunteering”

While not quite as high as formal volunteering, it was found that a similar majority of respondents indicated providing informal volunteering, however, there were no changes in the level of informal volunteering across age-group, gender, employment/retirement status, or length of residency (tenure) group.

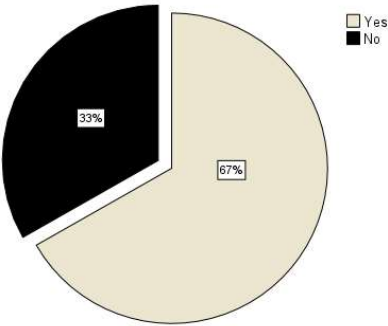


Figure 5: The proportion of respondents who indicated “Informal Volunteering”

In contrast to formal volunteering, informal volunteering measures focus on more local domains in which individuals make unpaid contributions to people or places around them. Figure 6 shows that “Helping and supporting friends or neighbours” attracts the most prevalent indications (51%) of informal volunteering, followed by “Providing emotional support” (37%), “Running errands or providing transportation” (24%), “undertaking domestic work (for others)” (14%) among more the frequently cited areas.

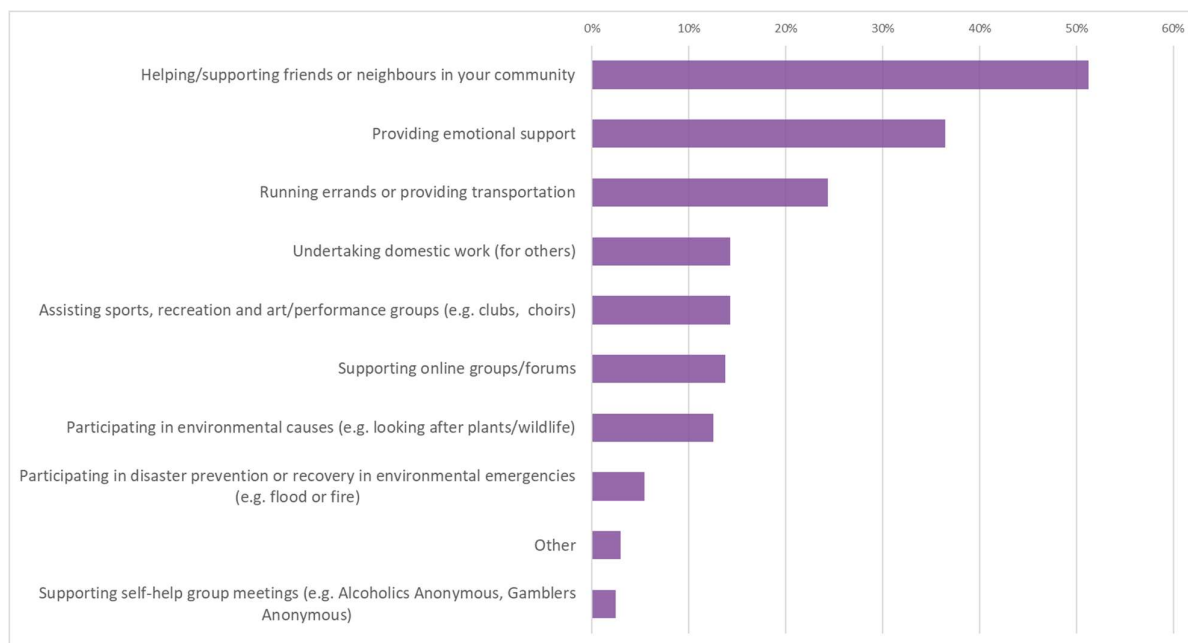


Figure 6: Ranked areas across respondents' "Informal Volunteering"

Looking to Volunteer in the Future

Survey Insights - Future Volunteering Interest

- Over 30% of respondents indicated an interest in formally volunteering in the area of Environment/Animal welfare, with additionally high levels of interest in Arts/Heritage (just under 30%); Health/Welfare (>20%) and Education/Training (>20%) and Community/Ethnic groups (just under 20%).

The survey also asked respondents if there were areas they would "like to volunteer in the future?". It was interesting to note that while a generous 67% of those currently volunteering in formal contexts were keen to indicate new future areas for volunteering, it was more pleasing to note that 86% of those who did not formally volunteer were also keen to volunteer in specific areas. This is a somewhat logical result, given the existing energy and contributions formal volunteers already provide. However, this pattern was reversed for informally volunteering, with a greater percentage of those currently contributing informally (76%) keen to volunteer in new areas compared to 61% of those who do not informally volunteer. Most respondents who indicated an interest in future volunteering selected one area (20%) with 17% selecting two areas and 13% selecting three and 9% selecting four.

Ranked order of interest in areas of "future volunteering"

The areas of volunteering which attracted the greatest interest for future (new) volunteering, is shown below in Figure 7, indicating that the greatest interest was in the areas of Environmental/Animal Welfare, Arts/Heritage, followed by Health/Welfare, and Education and Training.

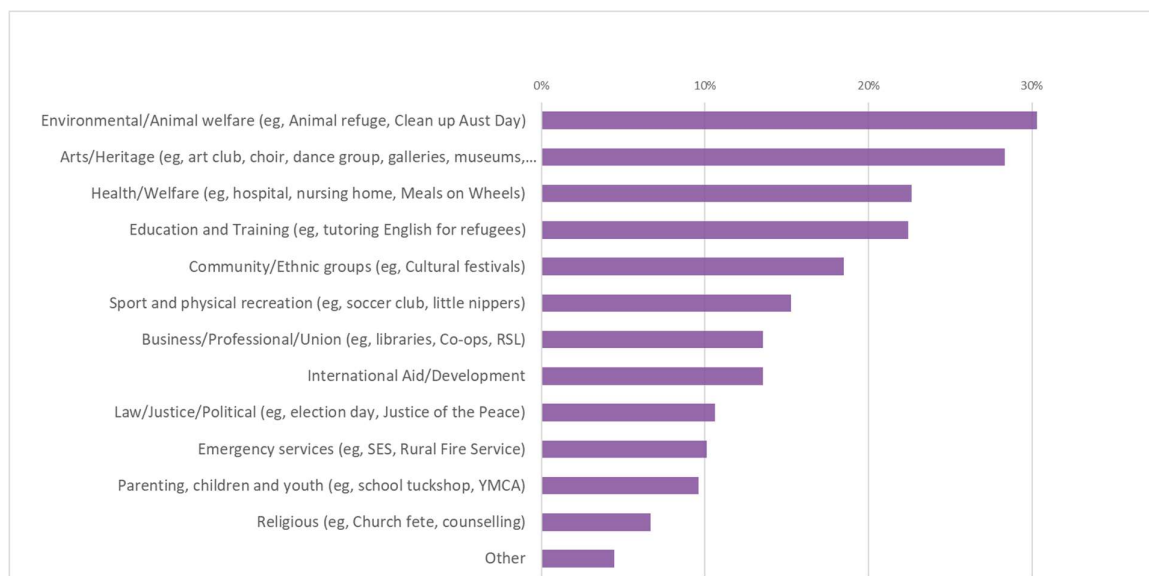


Figure 7: Ranked order of interest in areas of “future volunteering”

Gap between interest in/future volunteering and current/existing volunteering

While acknowledging that those responding to earlier questions about current or existing formal volunteering may not be identical to those who indicate a future interest in volunteering (i.e. those who do formally volunteer can also answer questions about future volunteering), it is possible to subtract the current or existing levels of volunteering (previously Figure 3) from the levels of interest in future volunteering provided in Figure 7, above. Such an analysis provides a moving “baseline” by current formal volunteering prevalence in each area noted previously and examines “higher” or “lower” interest in future volunteering. Figure 8, below, shows this “gap” analysis. To be cautious, the gap analysis about the “future demand” relates only to the survey respondents, who are not representative of either all volunteers or of the general population of Sunshine Coast residents. However, this “gap” analysis shows, beyond what is popular among current volunteer respondents, that there is greater demand than currently provided for in areas of: Environment/Animal Welfare; International Aid/Development; Education and Training; Emergency Services; Law/justice/Political; and Health and Welfare. It should be noted that some of these areas are also generally high prevalence previously (in Figure 3), such as Environmental/Animal Welfare; Health/Welfare; and Education and Training. This is potentially good news for these latter areas, as well as potentially strategic (good) news for the other “net positive” in-demand areas, which are not currently highly prevalent.

Similarly, the “gap” analysis suggests some areas attract less demand than currently provided for by existing volunteers. Those areas on the bottom of Figure 8, show a negative demand. Excluding consideration of “Other” which may vary between different questions, Sport and physical recreation, a highly prevalent current area of formal volunteering does not appear to attract greater levels of interest in future volunteers, with almost negligible changes in all other negative results noted below. One interpretation of this latter result could be that sport and physical recreation is, to a degree more highly network-embedded, in that individuals are drawn in by members or other family members (e.g. children), or through long-term relationships over time. The implication of this possible explanation could be that despite new members (e.g. of sporting clubs) such organisations struggle to draw in new volunteers, independent of those members they already have. This can be somewhat problematic in balancing existing member burn-out with new member recruitment. This concern is not

completely exclusive of sporting clubs but often experienced in many volunteering organisations, with a two-edged sword of recruitment and retention recurring on many committee agendas. Part of a solution, not entirely solvable in this analysis and report, is understanding motives, barriers, and shifts in social and regional socioeconomic make-up, discussed in later sections. However, falling short of a fine-grained analysis of each area of volunteering, and nuanced by each organisation's own history, it is clear that volunteer organisations' leadership and management will continue struggling to answer such questions in order to make the positive contributions they do.

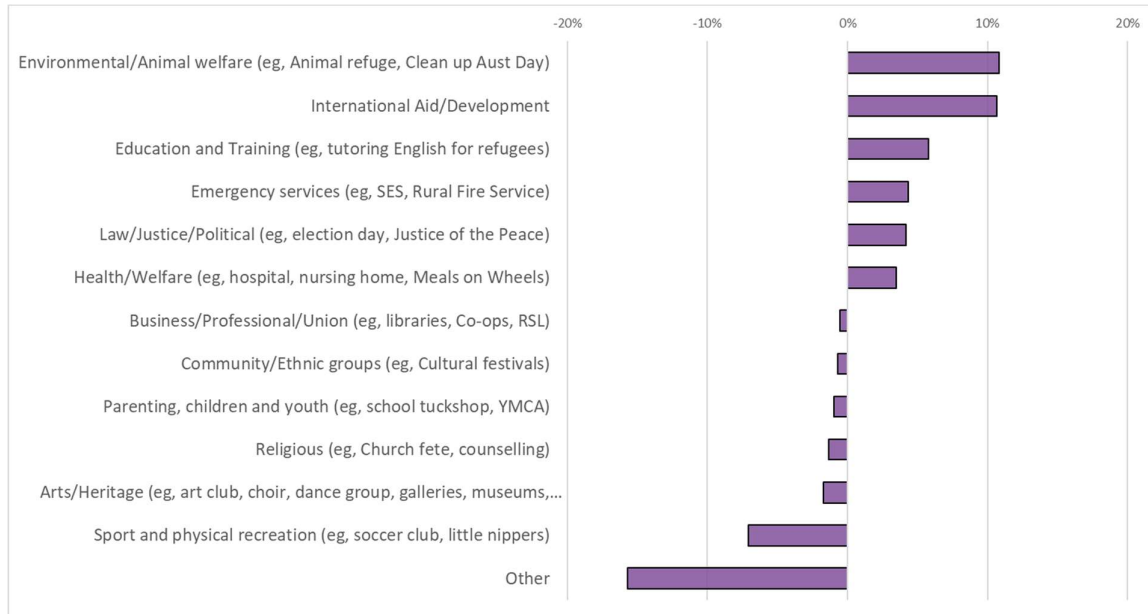


Figure 8: Ranked order of the “gap” between interest in/future volunteering and (minus) current/existing volunteering prevalence across the areas measured.

The Individual Motives among Formal Volunteers

Survey Insights - Volunteering Motivation

- Of six different types of volunteering motives surveyed, two stood out as highly indicated by respondents: *Values* (altruistic and humanitarian values) and *Understanding* (gaining knowledge, skills, and abilities).

The academic literature on motivation has a strong focus on looking into the various psychological motives that individuals have in engaging in volunteering behaviour. The motives model, measured with the Volunteer Functional Inventory (VFI), features thirty questions divided into 6 key motives. Each focus on a different aspect of why individuals might be driven to undertake volunteering. Some are easily recognisable, such as motives which are social and altruistic in nature, or as helping to develop one's own capacities and career skills, others are less obvious. These 6 motives include, with short descriptions from Clary, Synder et.al (1998):

- **Protective:** Avoiding the difficulties in life;
- **Values:** Altruistic and humanitarian values;
- **Career:** Develop career prospects;

- **Social:** Develop and strengthen social ties;
- **Understanding:** Gain knowledge, skills and abilities; and
- **Enhancement:** Helps the ego grow and develop.

Average levels of each of 6 VFI Motives

After combining five survey items per VFI motive, the average for each motive is calculated and presented below in Figure 9. Summed motive scores may range from 5 to 30 with a midpoint of 15, as indicated in Figure 9. The results show that, among all formal volunteering respondents, which were a majority of the survey respondents, the “Values” and the “Understanding” motives were the highest overall, with “Career” motives, perhaps logical for a sample somewhat more representative of an older, female, educated cohort. It is also remarkable that “Social” motives were not particularly as high as might be expected in such a sample. With a more fine-grained analysis, not provided here, we could investigate which areas of volunteering, and what characteristics of volunteers, are more or less connected to each type of motive.

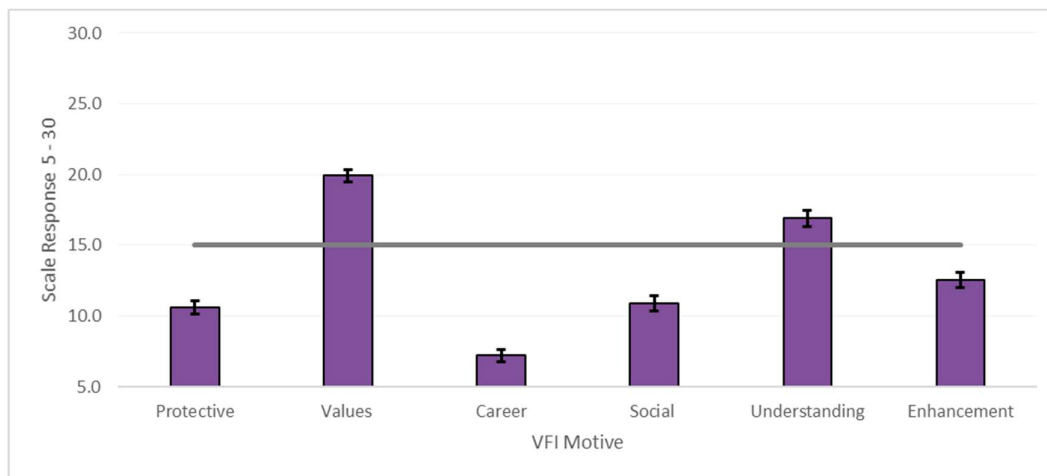


Figure 9: Average levels of each of 6 VFI Motives for all Formal Volunteers (n = 310 - 319)

Changes and Barriers to Volunteering: From COVID-19 influences to “How the meaning of Volunteering has changed”

As well as questions about the recent experience of COVID-19 related factors and the broader changes to volunteering over time, we asked existing volunteers, and those who do not volunteer, about any barriers experienced and reasons preventing them from volunteering.

Survey Insight - Recent Barriers and Long-Term Changes to Volunteering

- “Time constraints” were highly mentioned in the voices of respondents, followed by sometimes COVID-19-inspired formal rules/regulations and both positive and negative aspects of digitalisation/technologies.

General Change in Volunteering over Time

First, respondents were asked more broadly an open-ended question “How has volunteering changed over time”? The thematic results, provided below in Figure 10, show the primary summarised categories of text provided by respondents.

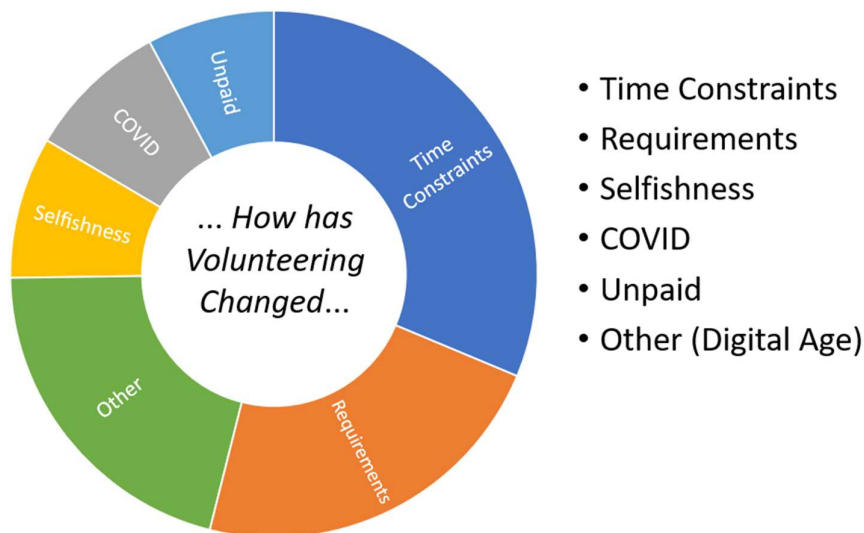


Figure 10: Themes summarised from a general open-ended question about “What has changed in volunteering over time?”

Respondents spoke about **Time Constraints**. This was a commonly recurring theme across both fixed-choice quantitative data and the qualitative data summarised in this section. Respondents were “Time Poor”, with several respondents noting the pressures of work flowing into less time to spend with family and subsequently squeezing discretionary time for volunteering.

“People’s income and working hours are so precarious it makes long term regular commitment hard”

“Typically both parents work so less time to volunteer during the week, weekend time is more precious for families”

“It's so much harder to find time to volunteer now, people are busy surviving”

As a general observation, respondents noted that in contemporary times, individuals had become increasingly characterised by **Selfishness**.

“I think people have become less community focussed and more selfish - that is, they tend to pursue individual pursuits and interests instead of joining community organisations”

The rise of technologies was also an important part of the sea change for volunteers, as a **Digital Age**, in both positive and negative lights. Perhaps observed by traditional volunteers (i.e. face-to-face or “in-person”), a trend towards interaction online was seen as a negative influence on volunteering.

“All round commitments to clubs, church groups, volunteering steadily decreasing as social media networks increasing”

However, the **Digital Age** has its positive aspects as well, with others seeing online as a new place to move their contributions, where people now interact.

“It has become more diverse. E.g. you can now volunteer online”

However, whether accelerated by COVID-19, respondents saw changes, usually as a burden, in the **Requirements** now facing volunteers when engaging with formal organisations. Such requirements might include: Paperwork, Blue Cards, Police Checks, and Insurance.

“The need to regulate volunteer organisations such as complete inductions, police checks etc. there are more barriers for people looking to volunteer”

“Sometimes the administrative loopholes to become a volunteer can seem daunting - especially the whole blue card, disability services card thing”

Finally, volunteers were more aware of the comparisons between employees and volunteering positions, with the latter **Unpaid**. The sense of change over time in the access to financial support or compensation was evident in the following quotes.

“Volunteers are increasingly not compensated for costs related to their time e.g. parking, transport costs and in some cases are being used rather than paid staff”

“More volunteers requested for large events which used to be paid”

Barriers to Existing Volunteering

Second, in terms of barriers experienced by existing volunteers, Figure 11, below, shows the rank order of most to least cited reasons, with “Time commitments” by far out-ranking other barriers. “Other” reasons included “Children”, “Bureaucracy”, “Own travel commitments”, and “Personal conflict”. It is also noticeable that the higher-ranked factors are socioeconomic, with the exception of “Health-related” reasons, rather than personal and interactional, which may generally imply positive experiences within volunteering organisational and contexts but one whose background constraints are far-reaching and structural.

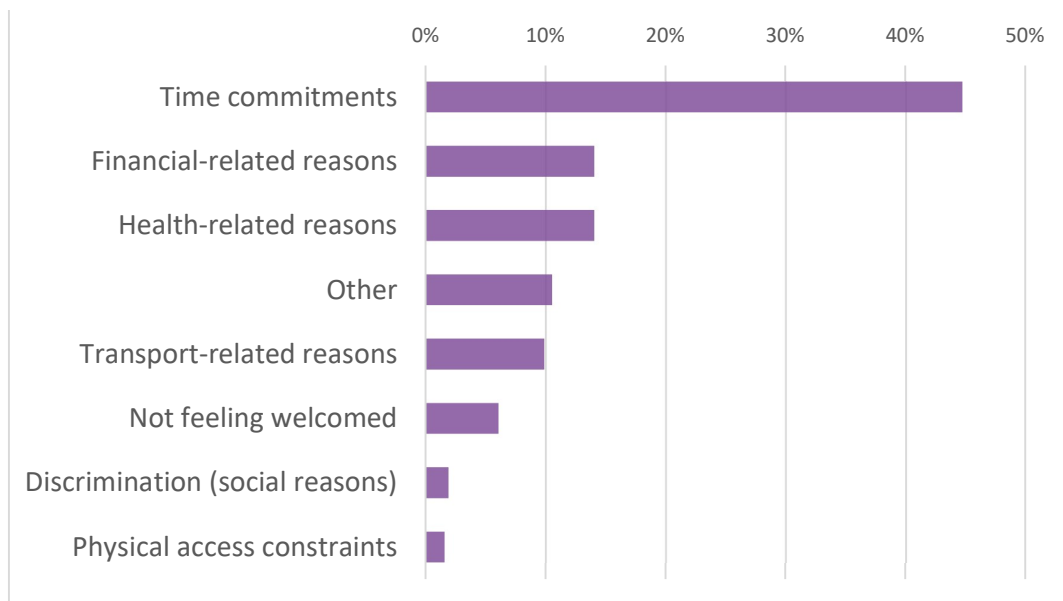


Figure 11: Ranked order of barriers to existing volunteering

Reasons which prevent respondents from volunteering

Third, turning to those who do not currently volunteer, the ranked profiling of reasons are not very different, with “Time commitments” once again dominating the list. However, the “Other” category, featuring as the second most-cited in the rankings in Figure 12, comprises: “Parenting”, “Work”, “New to area”, and “Committing to structured time”.

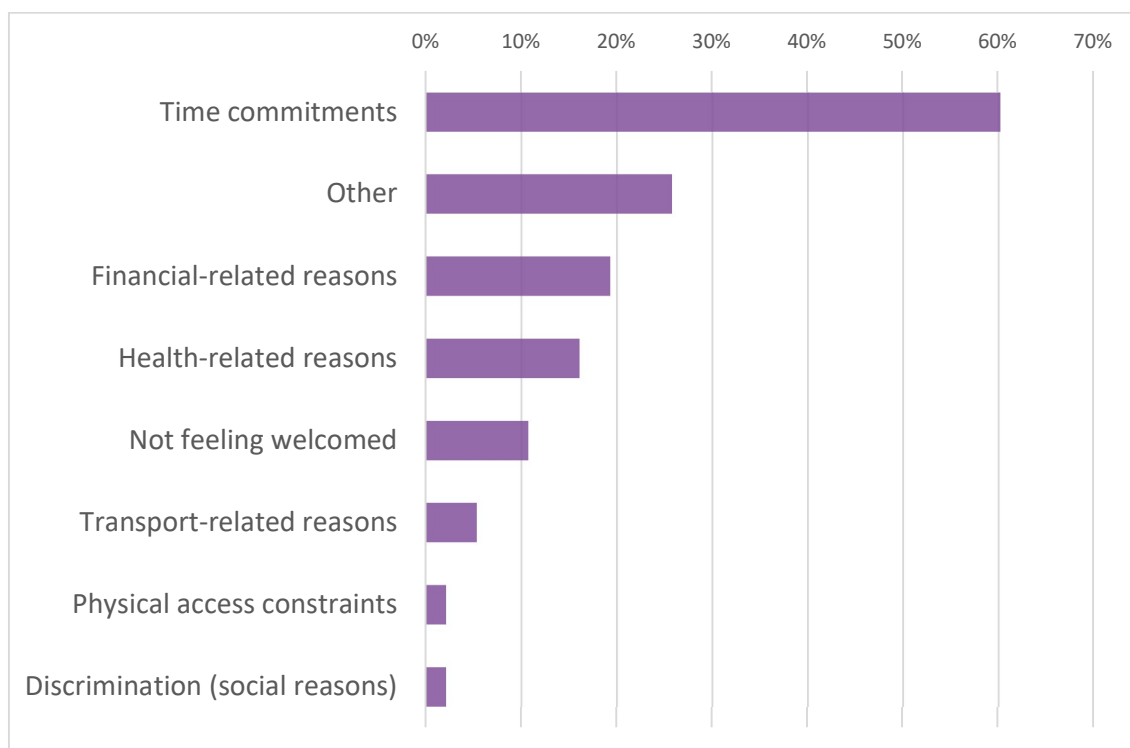


Figure 12: Ranked order of reasons which prevent respondents from volunteering

COVID-19 related themes arising from qualitative analyses

Finally, and because most recently, the resulting, and wide-spread, COVID-19 institutional responses, ranging from enforced staying-at-home, to new processes around social distancing, and a wider concern for the risks of harm due to virus transmission, we asked an opened-ended question about respondents' experiences with COVID-19 and its impacts on their volunteering over the last three years. Our thematic analyses involved summarising common responses across the data, with the following Figure 13 showing the final important codes across over one-hundred and fifty different references.

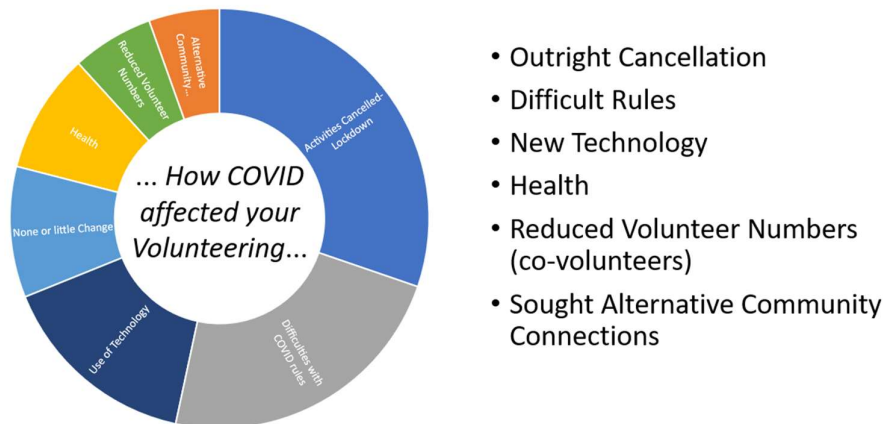


Figure 13: COVID-19 related themes arising from qualitative analyses about the influence of COVID-19 on respondent's volunteering experiences over the last three years.

Some of the direct quotations from survey respondents' experiences are provided below for key themes in Figure 13.

Difficult Rules refer to "red tape", these comprise descriptions of new requirements for volunteers in formal organisations, specifically: RAT tests, Vaccine Certificates, Social Distancing, Masks, Cleaning, Management Plans.

"No fun wearing a mask when singing and telling jokes etc so at times I didn't go"

"Had to adjust to cleaning protocols, consideration of other's health needs, purchase of PPE and cleaning equipment"

When respondents talked about **Health** they referred to both risks to "Others" and "Themselves"

"Less volunteers have returned, some because of COVID risk to family members"

New Technology was cited in a generally positive light, with "Online Meetings" (e.g. Zoom); which included new training.

"Had to stop meeting regularly face-to-face so we began to meet via ZOOM"

However, **New Technologies** also brought their "Difficulties" in that older clients might be unable to use new technologies introduced through volunteering in a COVID-19 affected period. Additionally, some formal volunteering offices went online, further restricting volunteers' interactions.

“I encountered several single older people who could not shop online and could not get to / or were too scared to physically go to the supermarket”

Alternative Community Connections provided an intriguing sense of the willpower of community members facing restrictions in their formal volunteering participation. Seeking alternative ways to contribute, some respondents noted new ways to make contributions, outside of formal volunteering.

“Started sowing gardening with immediate neighbours to stay engaged and active”

Formal Volunteering Areas and Social Capital

Survey Insight - Volunteering and Social Relationships (Social Capital)

“Bonding” (aka social supaglu) and “Bridging” (aka social WD-40 or lubricant) social capital were investigated as measures of the close relationships between similar types of people and integrating relationships between different types of people in the community, respectively.

- Social Capital did not vary much by demographic factors, except gender where women had higher measured levels of both Bonding and Bridging social capital.
- Interestingly, Age was steady with social capital, except for those older than 65, which showed a decrease in both Bonding and Bridging social capital types.
- Volunteers contributing across multiple areas (diverse) had increasingly higher levels of Bridging social capital.

Average Volunteer Bonding and Bridging social capital

The concept of “Social Capital” is a broad, and somewhat contested, notion that relationships between people are important for their social functioning. Putnam’s types of social capital are divided broadly into two types, **Bonding** and **Bridging** Social Capital. Social capital was measured among formal volunteers, asking them about their social relationships within their formal volunteering organisations.

Bonding social capital is marked by friendships with similar people “in-group” ... aka social “Superglue” (Putnam 2000:23). Bonding social capital is indicated in survey questions as focusing on: *trusting people to help solve problems; Advice for making decisions; Talking to others; and relationships with people who would financially help in times of need.*

Bridging social capital, in contrast, is about friendships with dissimilar people “out group” ... aka social “WD-40” (Putnam 2000:23). Bridging social capital is indicated in survey questions about: *an interest in things outside of my town; Trying new things; relationships with people unlike me; and a connection to the wider world.*

In comparing Bonding with Bridging social capital, using a simple scale summarising lower (1 to below 3) and higher (above 3 to 5), several demographic factors were examined. The levels of either Bonding or Bridging social capital did not vary by:

- Work status (Employed, Retired, or Unemployed/Student)
- Extent of Volunteering (Hours per week)

However, women were significantly higher than men in both Bonding and Bridging social capital, as noted in Figure 14.

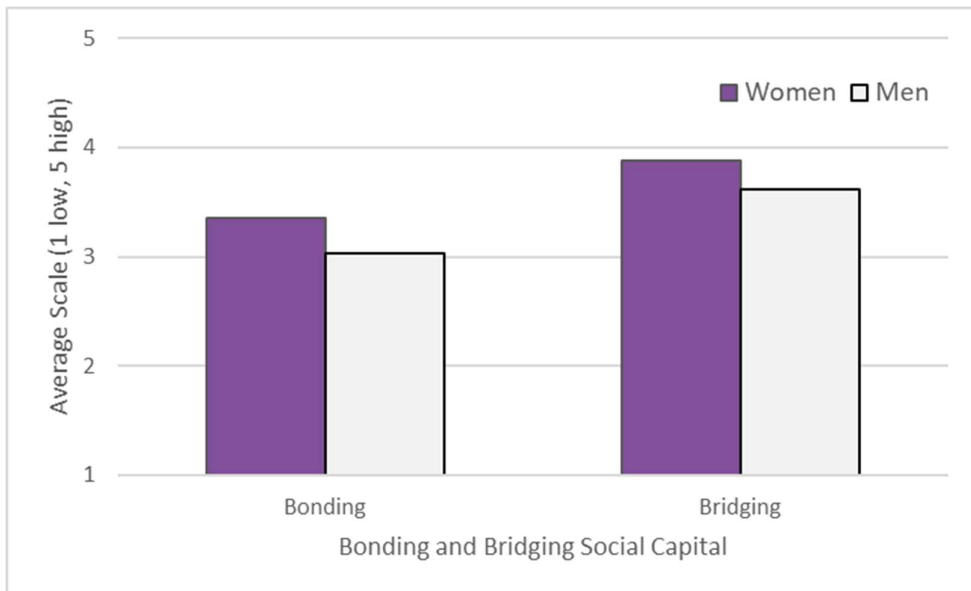


Figure 14: Average Volunteer Bonding and Bridging social capital (1 lower, 3 average, to 5 higher) by Respondent Gender.

Average Volunteer Bonding and Bridging social capital by Respondent Age Group

By age group, both Bonding and Bridging social capital measures were steady among younger age groups (up to 65 years) but significantly dropping in the 66 years + age group.

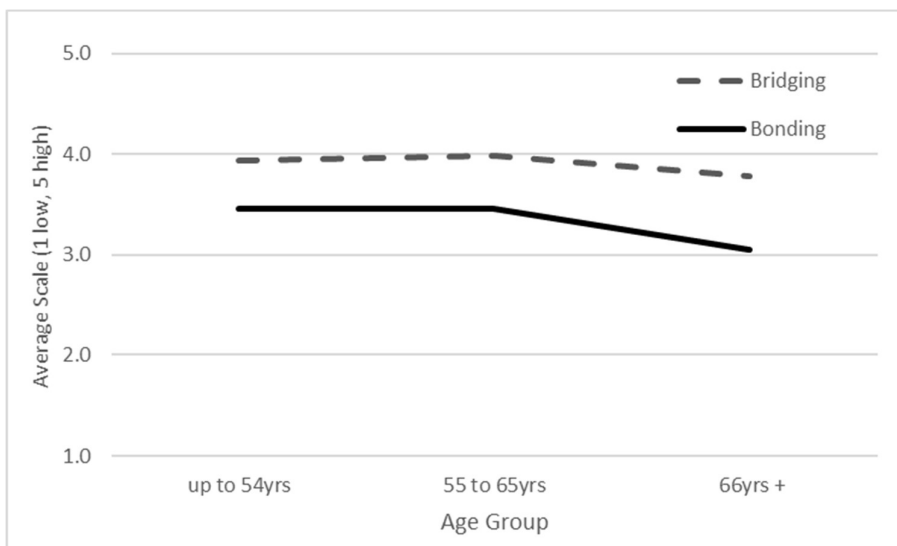


Figure 15: Average Volunteer Bonding and Bridging social capital (1 lower, 3 average, to 5 higher) by Respondent Age Group.

Average Volunteer Bridging social capital (1 lower, 3 average, to 5 higher) by Respondent Number of Areas of Formal Volunteering

Bridging social capital was more likely to increase with the more areas of formal volunteering. That is, as depicted in Figure 16, as respondents indicated more areas of volunteering, from one, to two, to three or more, the levels of Bridging social capital, marginally, but significantly, increased. It is interesting to note that volunteer Bonding social capital did not change across different levels of respondents' numbers of areas of volunteering.

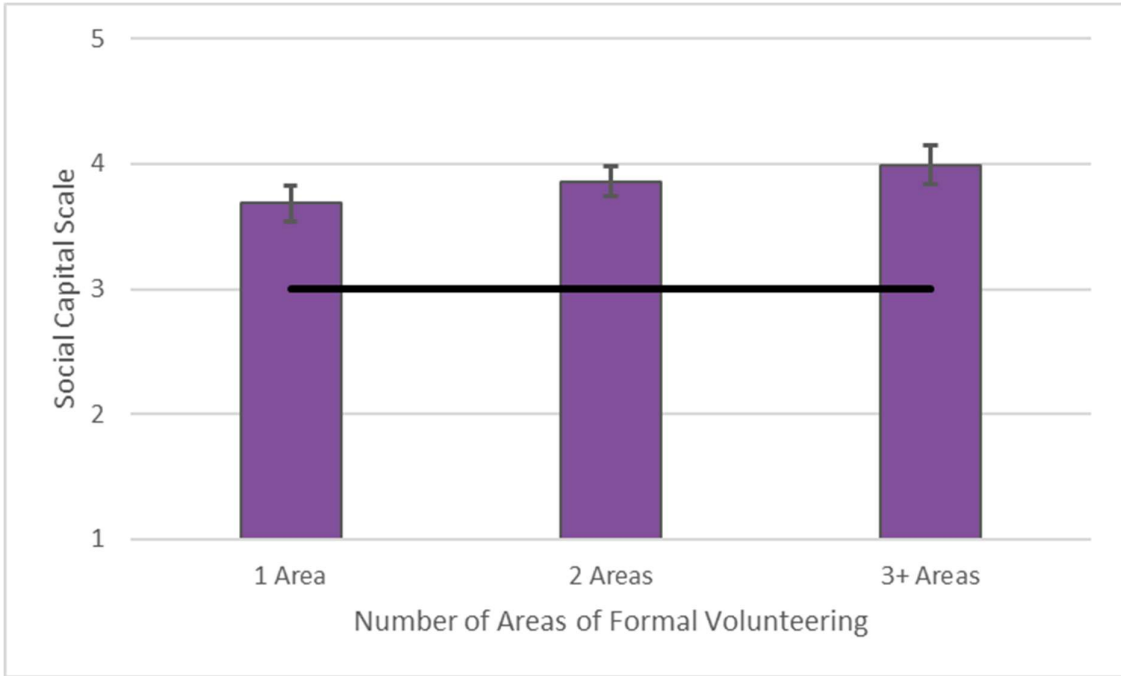


Figure 16: Average Volunteer Bridging social capital (1 lower, 3 average, to 5 higher) by Respondent Number of Areas of Formal Volunteering.

Volunteering and Individual Health and Happiness

Survey Insight - Volunteering Health and Happiness

- The majority of survey respondents indicated higher levels of health and moderate to higher levels of happiness.
- Health and Happiness could potentially be both a cause and effect of volunteering participation.
- Formal volunteers were more likely to show higher levels of health and happiness than non-volunteers.
- Informal volunteers were significantly more likely to be of a “middle level” of happiness (Pretty Happy) than those that did not informally volunteer, suggesting a more complex relationship between why respondents help others locally or episodically and their own (moderate) happiness.

Health and Happiness response levels

In our survey, two general questions were measured of health and happiness typical of major social surveys, asking “*Would you say that, in general, your health is:*” on five levels from Poor through Fair-Average to Excellent; and “*Taken all together, how would you say things are these days - would you say that you are:*”, measuring three levels of happiness from Not too

happy, Pretty happy to Very happy. However, general questions cannot be easily used to show the impact *of* volunteering activity, because such questions can also impact *on* volunteering. In short, it is a *cause* and *effect* of volunteering. In the following analyses, it is used to show differences in those who volunteer and do not, types of volunteering, without specifically addressing whether it is only a cause or effect. Having said this, one might be more inclined to consider respondent's health as impacting on their ability to undertaking active volunteering, while regarding their happiness as a result of their lifestyle choices and activities, among which volunteering is one.

An initial summary of health and happiness (Figure 17) shows the relatively higher levels of health, and moderate to higher levels of happiness experienced by all of those surveyed. There were no gender or age group differences in the extent of health or happiness levels in the overall sample.

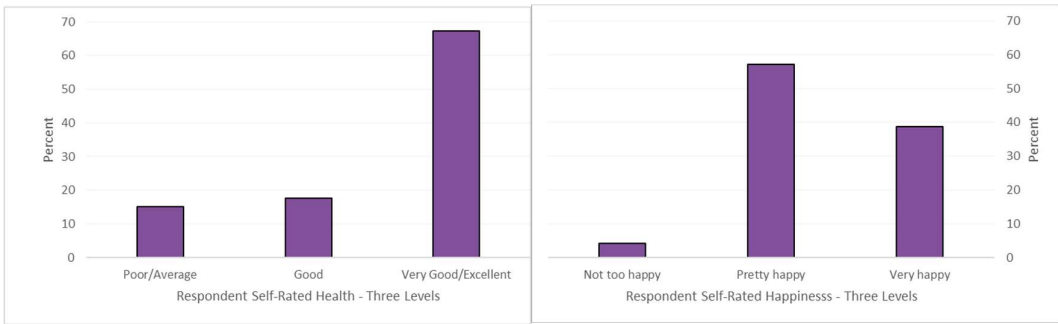


Figure 17: Percentage of Health and Happiness response levels – All Sampled Respondents

Formal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Health

Focusing on the differences that might be related to those who do and do not formally volunteer, Figure 18 shows the percentages of each group spread into each health and happiness level. For health, formal volunteers were more likely to indicate “Very Good/Excellent” (70%) than those who did not volunteer (56%). Again, while acknowledging the reciprocal nature of health on accessibility of volunteering, it would be amiss to rule out that it has benefits to individual's health as well.

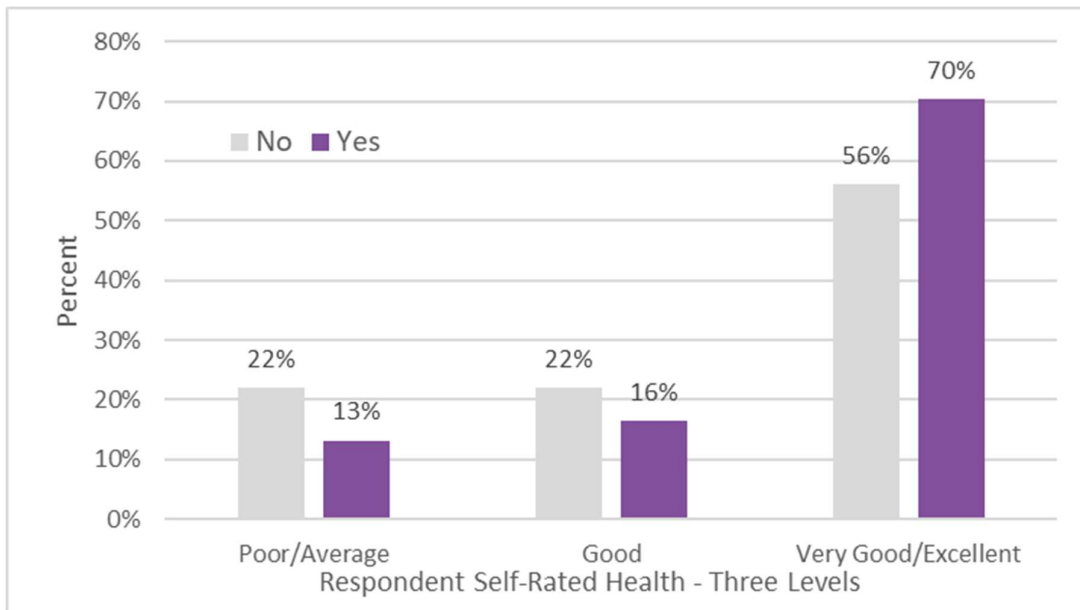


Figure 18: Percentage of Yes/No Formal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Health.

Formal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Happiness

The relationship between formal volunteering and happiness was also statistically significant (see Figure 19, below) with volunteers more likely to be “Very Happy” and less likely to be “Not too Happy” than non-volunteers.

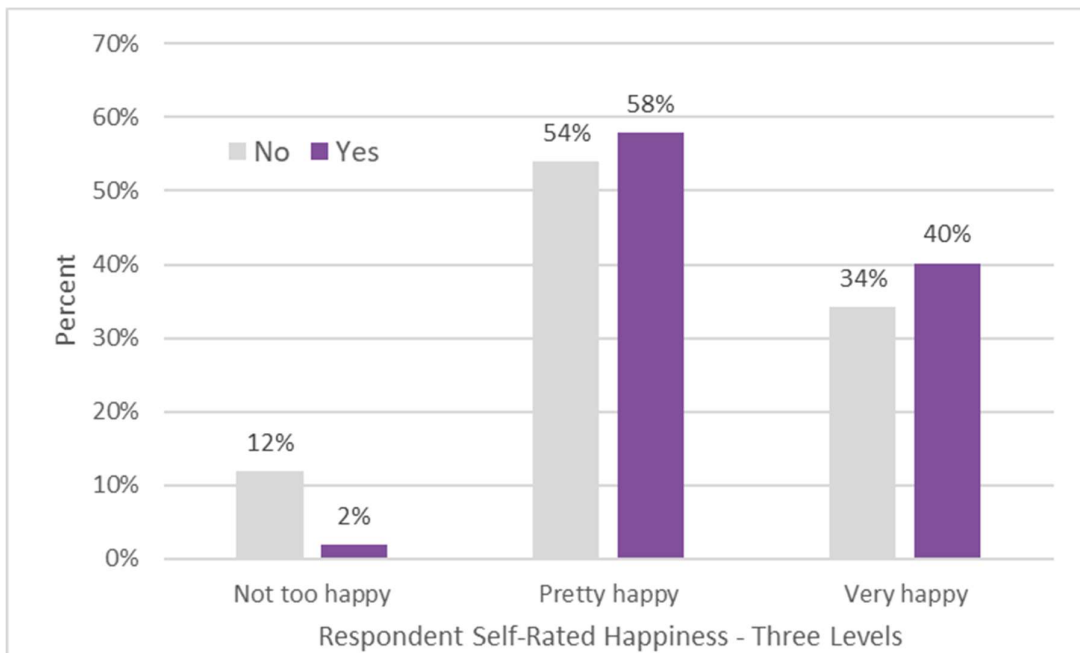


Figure 19: Percentage of Yes/No Formal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Happiness.

Informal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Happiness.

In comparison, and somewhat as an unusual result, Figure 20, below, shows that the relationship between informal volunteering (or not) and happiness is a complicated one: Individuals who do not informally volunteer were more likely to be in the highest happiness group (51%) compared to those who did informally volunteer (34%). The corollary of this result is that informal volunteers are more likely (61%) than non-informal volunteers (47%) to be in the middle happiness level “Pretty Happy”. One interpretation of this is that informal volunteers do not seek any form of confirmation for their contributions and this, subsequently, brings a degree of moderation to one’s happiness. An alternative interpretation might be, that for some people a focus on the self, without contributing to community, maximises happiness.

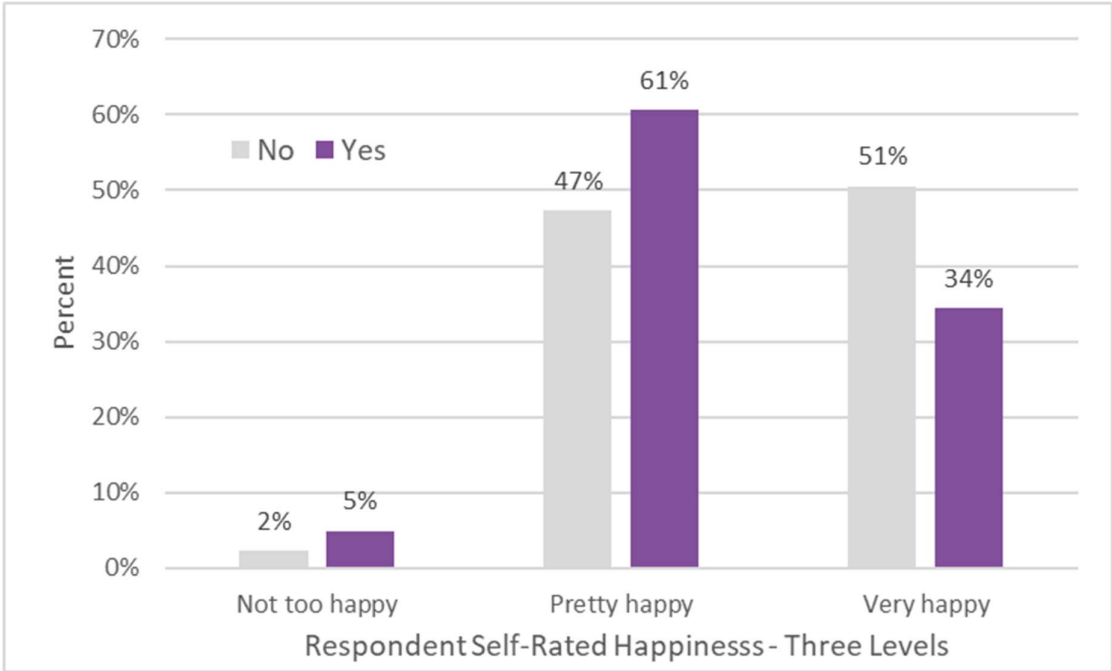


Figure 20: Percentage of Yes/No Informal Volunteer Groups by Three Levels of Self-Reported Respondent Happiness.

Implications

Research Implications

Representativeness of the Survey Sample

- Respondents who were younger, and male, were less likely to feature in this research and so less likely to influence the results (patterns). The use of this research, and future volunteering research in the region, should be sensitive to such under-represented groups.

Who Formally Volunteers?

- Existing formal volunteers appear to be drawn from older more established (and retired) residents.
- Groups more under-engaged in formal volunteering are younger and newer residents.
- Understanding how residents, new to the Sunshine Coast, initiate engagement with volunteering opportunities, and therefore how volunteering opportunities are best communicated to residents.

Where and How Often?

- Formal volunteers tend towards weekly routine contributions.

Growth in Future Volunteering

- Volunteering organisations could utilise the survey's findings around respondents' future volunteering interests, presented in this report as demand above current volunteering activity, across each of twelve areas.

The Different Motivations for Volunteering

- Respondents tended to show stronger motives in the area of altruism and humanitarian values, and less so towards career motives.

Barriers to Volunteering

- Formal volunteers most cite time constraints as barriers implicating more time-efficient organisation of volunteers.
- Formal volunteers may need greater assistance in navigating and overcoming bureaucratic, technology, and regulatory requirements.
- In periods of greater turbulence (e.g. pandemics), organisations should consider how to continue to engage and maintain volunteer commitment.

Volunteering and Social Investments

- While women volunteers appear to have strong social capital, the challenge is to understand how to increase social capital in men through volunteering.