

# STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND | 2021



## SUMMARY REPORT



volunteering  
queensland

INSTITUTE OF  
PROJECT  
MANAGEMENT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 3.0 million (or 75.7% of) Queenslanders over 18 years of age volunteered in 2020. This includes people who volunteered formally with organisations, as well as those who do not have an affiliation with an organisation but contributed informally to their communities. Volunteers contributed over 900 million hours in 2020 and individuals volunteered for an average of 5.7 hours every week.

The data for this report was collected across November 2020-January 2021 when the impact of COVID-19 had altered the work, travel and daily pattern of life across the entire state. This allowed us to examine both the current pattern of volunteering during 2020 and the previous pattern of volunteering during 2019.

Across the twelve months of 2020, the value of volunteering to Queensland was almost \$84 billion. This is the sum of commercial benefits worth \$41.8 billion and civic benefits valued at \$42.2 billion. These figures include the \$37.1 billion it would cost to replace the labour that volunteers contribute to Queensland as well as \$6.3 billion in contributions to Queensland's Gross State Product.

This represents a return of approximately \$4.10 on every dollar invested.

To demonstrate the scale of the volunteering sector, we compared the cost to replace voluntary work in Queensland with the total compensation of employees in the government and private

## “ Over 3.0 million (or 75.7% of) Queenslanders over 18 years of age volunteered in 2020

sectors. The volunteering sector is over three-times larger than the Queensland Government sector and approximately the same size as the private sector.

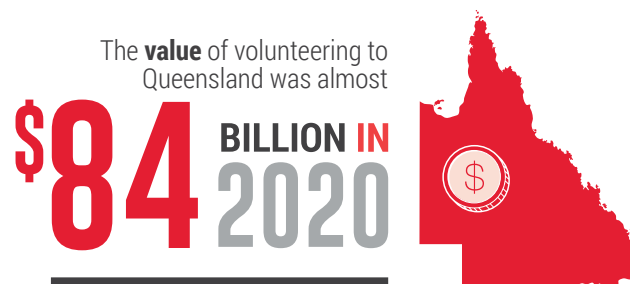
As phenomenal as this contribution is, it is also costing Queensland volunteers on average over \$1,600 a year to volunteer. On average, volunteer-involving organisations are reimbursing only 11.4%, or \$182, to volunteers. This means on top of their valuable time and skills, volunteers themselves are donating nearly \$4.76 per hour to volunteer. It is noted that this 'hidden' cost has the potential to exclude many who cannot afford the act of volunteering.

Volunteers are a frontline workforce, delivering services to communities in a wide variety of contexts in not-for-profit organisations (1.6 million volunteers in 2020), in private sector organisations (0.5 million volunteers

in 2020), and for governments (0.5 million volunteers in 2020) as well as undertaking informal volunteering.

The act of volunteering is significantly more than donated time. For instance, this report shows leaders of volunteers actively develop the skills and careers of Queenslanders through volunteering. There is further potential through volunteering to contribute even more to Queensland's productivity and community wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted volunteer patterns in Queensland. For instance, volunteers noted an increase of 15.2% in online/at home volunteering from 2019 to 2020. At the same time, volunteer-involving organisations described a lot of adaptation and transition to new models for service delivery and engaging volunteers.



# INTRODUCTION

## This report was commissioned by Volunteering Queensland to quantify the economic, social and cultural value of volunteering to the state

In this report, we consider the characteristics of volunteers, volunteering and volunteer-involving organisations, and we apply the cost-benefit methodology to quantify the value of volunteering in Queensland. We finally relate the findings of this report to previous work on volunteering undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Appendix B) and recommend directions for future research.

The period of data collection also means that we are uniquely able to compare volunteering before and during the statewide COVID-19 restrictions (2019 and 2020, respectively).

This report's findings are numerous and have the potential to significantly influence the strategic direction of Queensland's volunteering sector by providing:

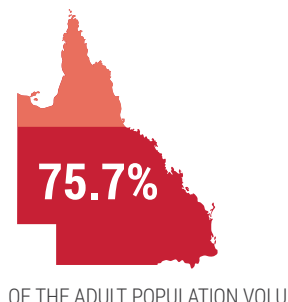
- Quantification of the social, economic and cultural contribution that volunteering makes to Queensland volunteers, businesses, all levels of government and the broader community.
- Robust social and economic information and advice to assist stakeholders in making strategic decisions about future resource allocation.
- Benchmarking of the outcomes of volunteering in Queensland against which to measure future performance and the impact of any strategic changes.
- Comparative data on the outcomes of volunteering in Queensland, the impact of a crisis and the barriers to participation.
- Evidence-based data for informed decision-making by Volunteering Queensland, government, volunteer-involving organisations and other key stakeholders.

**The principal finding is that, because the external benefits of volunteering exceed the social costs, the outcome is not inefficient, and that the volunteering of many yields a substantial social, cultural and economic 'profit' that is enjoyed by all.**

# KEY FINDINGS

## Characteristics of volunteering in Queensland in 2020

3 MILLION PEOPLE



OF THE ADULT POPULATION VOLUNTEERED IN 2020

900.4  
MILLION  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

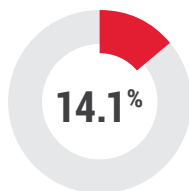


HOURS/MONTH

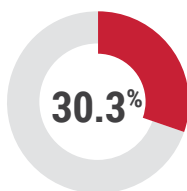
5.7

HOURS/WEEK

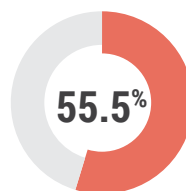
AMONG QUEENSLAND VOLUNTEERS, IT WAS FOUND THAT:



Volunteered exclusively in formal settings with volunteer-involving organisations (not-for-profit, government and private sectors)



Of volunteers donated their time exclusively in informal contexts



Volunteered both formally and informally

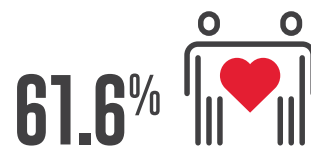
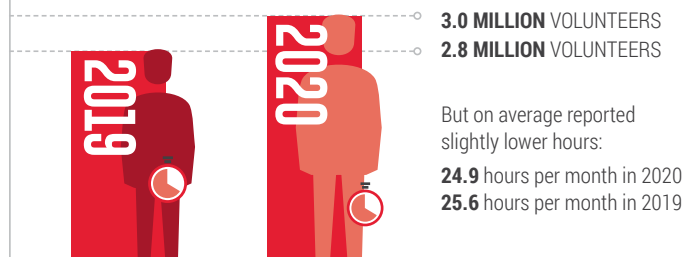


Almost half volunteer in their local community



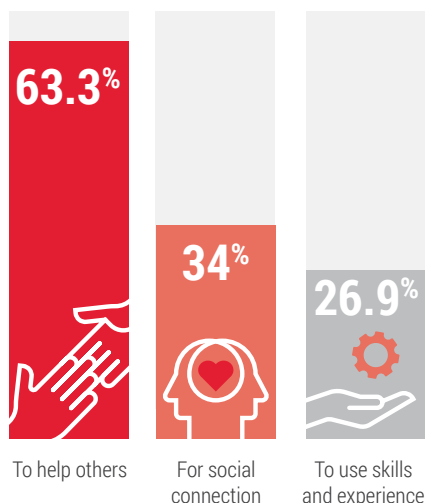
Over one quarter volunteer from home/online

MORE PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019:



Of people directly helped an individual (e.g. a neighbour or client of a charity)

QUEENSLANDERS WERE MOTIVATED TO VOLUNTEER IN 2020:



BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING IN 2020 INCLUDED:



No time (family/work commitments)



Health reasons

Volunteer-involving organisations were supported by a wide variety of volunteers

74.9%

WORKED WITH VOLUNTEERS OVER 65 YEARS OLD

70.3%

WORKED WITH VOLUNTEERS WHO EITHER ARE NOT WORKING OR ARE NOT WORKING FULL-TIME

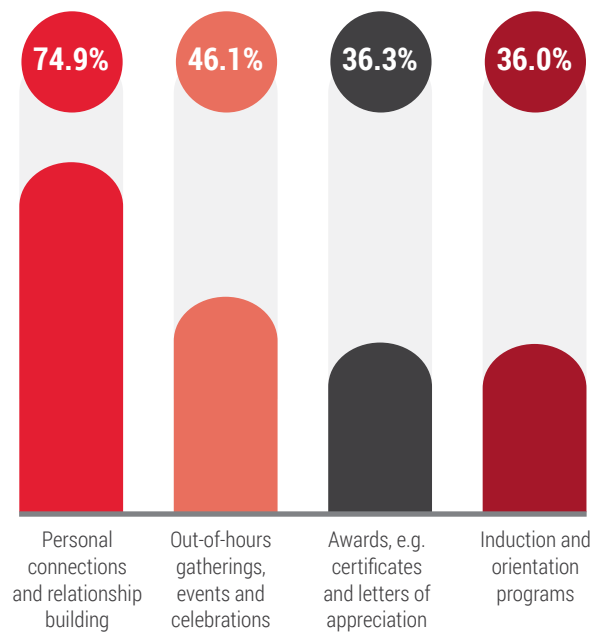
69.6%

WORKED WITH VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE WORKING FULL-TIME

The most frequently cited strategies organisations used to **recruit volunteers** was to personally approach participants, members and their networks.



Key motivational factors associated to **volunteer retention**



**30.3%**

Of organisations indicated they used reimbursement of volunteers' expenses to **motivate or retain volunteers**

**27.4%**

Saw a drop in the level of **volunteers claiming expenses** across the last three years

**\$84 BILLION**

The **cost benefit ratio** for volunteering in Queensland in 2020 was 4.1:1. For every dollar invested approximately \$4.10 is returned.



Individual volunteers report spending approximately **\$1,600 on their volunteering** in 2020...



... with only **11.4% reimbursed** an average of **\$182.16**.

**\$37.1 BILLION IN 2020**

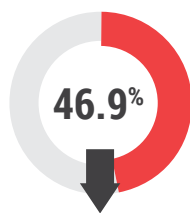
The cost to replace the labour of **Queensland's volunteers** in 2020 would have been approximately **\$37.1 billion**



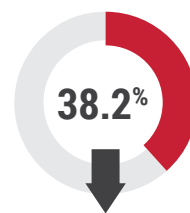
Of organisations have seen an **increase** in the need for **volunteer training** across the last three years



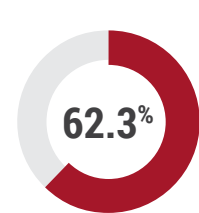
Organisations have seen an **increase** in the **desire of people to volunteer** occasional, as opposed to regular, hours across the last three years



Of organisations have seen a **decrease** in companies wanting to **volunteer employees' time and skill** across the last three years



Of organisations have seen a **decrease** in the number of **people who want to volunteer**



Of organisations predicted they would have the **same or more volunteers** in three years' time

# THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING TO QUEENSLAND IN 2020

**The value of volunteering to Queensland across the entire community is the sum of the benefits enabled. This analysis estimates these benefits to be worth almost \$84 billion in 2020 (Table 23).**

This figure is significantly greater than previous estimates based only on price or economic impact; yet it is likely to be an underestimate given the limitations of the available data and forensic techniques.

For that reason, this study contrasts the net value of volunteering in Queensland with the cost of inputs. It can be seen that for every dollar invested by the community, approximately \$4.10 is returned. Therefore, because the external benefits of volunteering exceed the social costs, the outcome is not inefficient, and there is a substantial

social, cultural and economic 'profit' in volunteering. Indeed, the net (or social) return on investment – the difference between benefits and costs – is estimated here to be \$63.5 billion.

Ultimately, this analysis has examined whether those who donate their time, skills and money to volunteering are supporting the common good. This report demonstrates the economically real and significant value of volunteering to Queensland. Although there are some limitations to the analysis that would benefit from future research, the potential now exists for decision-makers in both industry and government to leverage this framework for continual improvement in the marketing and delivery of their services.



Costs and benefits of volunteering to Queensland, 2020

<b>Costs (\$ million)</b>			
Direct costs			
<b>Volunteer expenses</b>	4,281.6		
<b>Volunteer-involving organisation expenses</b>	2,235.0	6,516.5	
Opportunity costs			
<b>Volunteers' time</b>	13,858.2		
<b>Volunteering investments</b>	58.6	13,916.9	20,433.4
<b>Benefits (\$ million)</b>			
Commercial benefits			
<b>Producers' surplus</b>	1,202.9		
<b>Productivity premium</b>	40,563.7	41,766.6	
Civic benefits			
<b>Employment</b>	3,647.2		
<b>Taxes</b>	1,426.4		
<b>Volunteers' labour</b>	37,082.7	42,156.3	83,922.9
			63,489.5
<b>Benefit: cost ratio</b>	<b>4.1 : 1</b>		

*Explanatory note: Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between totals and the sums of the component items. Proportions, ratios and other calculated figures shown in this report have been calculated using unrounded estimates and may be different from, but are more accurate than, calculations based on the rounded estimates.*



**Ultimately, this analysis has examined whether those who donate their time, skills and money to volunteering are supporting the common good**

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## VOLUNTEERING QUEENSLAND

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