




# State of Volunteering Report

2020

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Volunteering New Zealand



# Mā tini, mā mano, ka rapa te whai

## Volunteers are the heart of our community

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# State of Volunteering Report

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|                         |  |          |
|-------------------------|--|----------|
| <b>Contents</b>         | <b>Foreword</b>                                | <b>4</b> |
|                         | <b>Executive summary</b>                       | <b>6</b> |
|                         | <b>Introduction: State of volunteering</b>     | <b>8</b> |
|                         | <b>Background and purpose</b>                  | <b>9</b> |
|                         | <b>Theme one</b>                               |          |
|                         | Community, diversity and inclusion             | 10       |
|                         | <b>Theme two</b>                               |          |
|                         | Engagement and recognition of volunteers       | 12       |
|                         | <b>Theme three</b>                             |          |
|                         | Funding, administration, regulatory compliance | 14       |
|                         | <b>Theme four</b>                              |          |
| Management and strategy | 16   |          |
| <b>Conclusion</b>       | <b>18</b>                                      |          |

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# Foreword

## Kaitiaki of mahi aroha

As the peak body for volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand, Volunteering New Zealand's purpose is to be the kaitiaki of mahi aroha. Mahi aroha is deeply rooted in Māori culture. It is often about working within a group for the mutual benefit of members of the group. Mahi aroha is performed out of love, sympathy or care and through a sense of duty for whānau, hapū, iwi and other Māori organisations and individuals<sup>1</sup>. As such, mahi aroha is central to Māori sense of identity and for maintaining Māori culture and traditions as well as fulfilling their cultural obligations to the wider collective.

This can explain the high rate of Māori engagement in unpaid work—despite the fact that the Western concept of “volunteering” does not accurately reflect the Māori worldview, experiences of, and motivations for carrying out unpaid work for whānau, hapū, iwi and other Māori organisations and individuals. For Māori, volunteering is based on the notion of whanaungatanga (kinship) and the benefits, both for individuals and the wider community, derived from contributing to the common good. Māori culture relies on collectivist cultural traditions in which the individual is intrinsically linked to whānau. Personal wellbeing depends, both immediately and ultimately, on the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

For Pacific people, the Western concept of volunteering is best equated to the idea of a mutual and reciprocal way of being. In this context, the unpaid work is fulfilled out of a sense of alofa—compassion, empathy, love—and a belief in reciprocal belonging and wellbeing<sup>2</sup>.

Volunteering New Zealand aspires to craft strong partnerships with iwi/hapū and Pacific people in order to transform volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our focus at Volunteering New Zealand

is to ensure that the goodwill of individuals and their contribution are valued and recognised by all; by individuals, by organisations, and by the Government.

## Whatever we call it, it is important

Within Aotearoa there are multiple lenses that we can use to view the contribution of individuals to communities: mahi aroha, alofa-inspired reciprocity, or the Western concept of volunteering. Volunteering is broadly defined by the United Nations Volunteers as an action that is undertaken freely and without coercion, for reasons other than financial gain, to benefit the community as well as the volunteer<sup>3</sup>.

It has been inspiring to see the generosity of New Zealanders over the last few months as individuals and communities worked together to navigate the Covid-19 pandemic. Our team of five million strived to work together to keep each other, and our communities safe. Every day we witness the potential of volunteering in making a difference, and how volunteers contribute positively to their communities. By caring for others and contributing to change, volunteers improve the lives of other people while at the same time enhancing their own lives. The impact and outcome of this contribution has been highlighted in recent months, and so has its power. Volunteers come from all walks of life, representing all ages, demographics and cultures, volunteering for many different reasons. Volunteering builds strong, sustainable and connected communities. It builds social capital; it is the glue that binds our communities, our culture, and our identity. Whatever we call it, be it unpaid work within our communities, volunteering, mahi aroha, or social action, it is a taonga we must all treasure, nurture, and recognise as integral to Aotearoa New Zealand as a nation.

<sup>1</sup> Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (2007). Mahi aroha: Māori perspectives on volunteering and cultural obligations.

<sup>2</sup> Tamasese, T., Parsons, T., Sullivan, G., & Waldegrave, C. (2010). *A qualitative study into Pacific perspectives on cultural obligations and volunteering*. Wellington: Pacific Section and the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2011). *State of the World's Volunteerism Report, 2011: Universal Values for Global Well-being*. United Nations Volunteers.

## Valuing volunteering requires better data and support

Not only do we need to examine volunteering from multiple viewpoints, we also need to embrace new frameworks for measuring and demonstrating its impact. Each year, more than one million New Zealanders participate in volunteering, making a critical contribution to the non-profit sector. According to Statistics New Zealand, formal volunteering within the 115,000 voluntary and community sector organisations contributed \$4 billion to New Zealand's economy in 2018, which is on par with the construction sector<sup>4</sup>.

Impressive though this may sound, it is but a small part of the full picture. This only captures the efforts of people who are formally volunteering through organisations. Much more happens within communities and between people, and none of it is measured in this way. There are many non-monetary benefits when people and communities work to support each other. Contributing to the community is associated with positive social outcomes for both individuals and communities. Many aspects of the non-profit sector are only possible thanks to the contribution of volunteers.

In order to better estimate the contribution—or the value—of volunteering, both monetary and non-monetary benefits need to be considered. Direct monetary benefits of volunteering would be the cost saving resulting from using volunteers instead of paid employees. In order to estimate the non-monetary benefits of volunteering, the concept of “opportunity cost” may be used. In other words, the cost of generating the same benefits without using volunteers can be used as a rough estimation.

However, volunteering is often taken for granted. It is not appropriately recognised or celebrated, and more importantly, it has not been accurately measured on a national level. There is a significant opportunity for the sector to better record and report on the volunteer contribution. This, in turn necessitates collecting robust and accurate data on volunteering. Data is critical to guide organisations in attracting, supporting, recognising, and rewarding volunteers. Equally important, data is also required to inform policy making and the Government's support for the community and voluntary sector.

Volunteering New Zealand is actively involved in conducting research and disseminating material to promote, support, encourage, and represent volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand. Volunteering New Zealand's *State of Volunteering Survey* explores the volunteering landscape in New Zealand, providing an annual and useful snapshot that can be used to develop effective short and long term strategies.

In this research, Volunteering New Zealand identifies current trends, issues and challenges. We will use the findings to support the community and voluntary sector in removing barriers, addressing issues, and leveraging opportunities to maximise the potential of the volunteer workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### Michelle Kitney

Chief Executive  
Volunteering New Zealand

<sup>4</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2018). *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account*. (Wellington: Statistics New Zealand)

# Executive summary

Volunteering New Zealand recently surveyed more than 3,000 people across the community and voluntary sector. They include community leaders, researchers and thought leaders, managers of voluntary organisations, and frontline volunteers. Their stories form the backbone of this report.

This report presents a snapshot of the state of volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand at a critical point in the nation's history—just prior to the Level 4 lockdown being imposed as the Covid-19 pandemic hit our shores. The report is supported by quantitative data from official sources, as well as responses received from the State of Volunteering online survey. For the first time, the Volunteering New Zealand State of Volunteering report is underpinned by the voices and opinions of volunteers *and* volunteer involving organisations. Volunteering New Zealand hopes that this report can further assist the sector in promoting inclusive, impactful and meaningful volunteering which fosters community connections.

It is clear from the data and the responses that the landscape of volunteering is changing. And since the data was collected, the landscape has been yet further altered—in some cases exacerbating the changes we were already seeing, in others creating another shift entirely. Change presents different challenges across the sector, but also highlights unique opportunities for reshaping and improving the practice of volunteering. To do so, Volunteering New Zealand continues to develop its expertise in acting as the champion of mahi aroha. Recognition of mahi aroha is still lacking in Aotearoa New Zealand and building this is one of Volunteering New Zealand's strategic priorities.

Four key themes are evident from the results of our survey and from Volunteering New Zealand's broader work, which can be grouped into the following themes.

## Theme 1: Community, diversity, and inclusion

The workforce of many volunteer organisations does not currently reflect fully the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand, with Pākehā and European comprising the majority of volunteers. An ageing volunteer workforce is noted as a concern by 35.8% of respondents, with a lack of younger volunteers also cited by many. Over 60% of organisations report having a diversity and inclusion strategy of some sort in place.

## Theme 2: Engaging and recognising volunteers

Recruiting and retaining volunteers continues to pose a challenge to many organisations. A lack of volunteers is reported by 36.6% of organisations as their single biggest challenge. Recognition of volunteer commitment remains inconsistent, with some organisations acknowledging their volunteers in novel and meaningful ways, while many do not have formal avenues of doing so. Reimbursing volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses is variable, with only 32.6% of organisations doing so consistently.

Volunteers report increasing preference for episodic, project-based volunteering. Competing vocational, social, educational and caring commitments were cited as the biggest barriers to volunteering. Developing skills, connecting with, and helping the community are cited as the biggest motivations for volunteering. A notable 82.3% of respondents intend to continue with their current volunteering role long term.

Despite the increasing reliance on technology, word of mouth remains the most popular way for volunteers to hear about volunteering opportunities across all age cohorts. This is how 46.6% of volunteers heard about their current volunteering role.

### **Theme 3: Funding, administration, regulatory compliance**

Both volunteers and organisations cite the increasing burden of administrative and regulatory compliance, especially those related to children, vulnerable people, and health and safety legislation.

Organisations report the challenge of raising funding, as well as competition for the same funding pool. Smaller organisations in particular note the increasing burden and time required for writing grant applications, as well as going up against larger, more established organisations.

### **Theme 4: Management and strategy**

The importance of sector leadership, strategy advice, and reliable statistics is frequently highlighted.

Conflicting information about the impact and nature of the volunteering climate in Aotearoa New Zealand is mentioned by several respondents.

The difficulty in accessing reliable and up-to-date statistics and reputable strategy resources is raised several times by both volunteers and organisations.

Many volunteers note difficulties resulting from management structures and styles—a difficulty exacerbated by a volunteering operating environment that is often resource and time poor.

“Volunteering keeps me connected to people and gives me personal satisfaction. It gives me a sense of connection and purpose in the community.”

*Volunteer, Kerikeri*

# Introduction:

## State of volunteering

Since 2015, Volunteering New Zealand has published an annual State of Volunteering report, highlighting the challenges facing the community and voluntary sector. Previous reports have focussed exclusively on feedback received from volunteering-involving organisations (VIOs). This report is the first Volunteering New Zealand *State of Volunteering report* where different voices from across the entire sector feature equally.

More than 3,000 respondents took part in the two surveys, over two and a half months from mid-December 2019 to the end of February 2020. The first survey primarily targeted VIOs, with questions around organisational strategy, workforce recruitment and retention, funding, diversity, inclusion, and general challenges from the changing landscape of volunteering. The second survey targeted frontline volunteers, with a focus on their background/demographics, volunteering experiences, and motivations for volunteering. Both surveys offered significant opportunity for free-text answers.

The analysis of the two surveys, supported by Volunteering New Zealand's existing work and official statistics, highlighted four key themes, grouped broadly as follows:

- *Community, Diversity, and Inclusion*
- *Engagement and Recognition of Volunteers*
- *Funding, Administration, and Regulatory Compliance*
- *Management and Strategy*

While respondents highlighted various challenges facing the sector, they also shared many positive stories about the impact of volunteering on their communities, in fostering connections with each other, and in the pursuit of social justice.

“The people we engage with on the streets make it all worthwhile. There are lots of lonely and homeless people out there and it's great to be able to connect with them and hopefully make them feel good.”

*Volunteer Manager,  
Tauranga*



# Background and purpose

The main purpose of this report is to present new data obtained from the surveys, highlight key concerns, and identify emerging trends. The report does not intend to provide specific recommendations.

Data from Statistics New Zealand's recently released *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account*<sup>5</sup> report and their latest quarterly Labour Market Statistics<sup>6</sup> provides a useful macro-level snapshot of the state of volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- Approximately 21.5% of New Zealanders undertake formal volunteer work.
- Together, New Zealanders contribute a total of around 159 million hours of volunteer labour each year.
- The financial value of volunteering is estimated at \$4 billion per year.
- In 2018, non-profit institutions contributed \$8.1 billion towards New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), comprising 2.8% of GDP.
- People from European and Māori ethnic groups are the two ethnic groups most likely to volunteer, while MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African) and Asian are the least likely by volunteer percentage rate. This shows the ongoing challenge of making the volunteering landscape more diverse and inclusive.
- Those in professional occupations are more likely to volunteer than those in non-professional occupations—23% of professionals and managers, versus 16% of labourers and machine operators undertake formal volunteer work.

Recently, Statistics New Zealand has tried to capture volunteering under the wellbeing indicators by analysing previous data from the *2016 General Social Survey*<sup>7</sup>. While they acknowledge

that this metric is still being developed, their preliminary analysis captures some vital data around informal volunteering, defined as volunteering done outside formal organisations:

- When the measure of volunteering is expanded to include formal and informal volunteering, and long term and short term volunteering, rates of participation are significantly higher. Of those aged 15 years of age or older, 49.8% reported having performed formal and/or informal volunteer work in the last four weeks.
- From people who had volunteered, 28.2% volunteered through an organisation and 36.5% volunteered directly<sup>8</sup>.

5 Statistics New Zealand (2018). *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account* (Wellington: Statistics New Zealand)

6 Statistics New Zealand (2019). *Quarterly Labour Market Statistics March, 2018 Quarter*. (Wellington: Statistics New Zealand)

7 Wellbeing Data for New Zealanders: Volunteering (2017). Statistics New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://wellbeingindicators.stats.govt.nz/en/volunteering/> on 29 May 2020

8 The formal volunteering rate appears to have dropped off from 2016, to 21.5% of the population, in the latest Statistics New Zealand Quarterly Labour Market Statistics (2018/2019).

# Theme one

## Community, diversity and inclusion

### Key insights

- *Ageing workforce:* An ageing volunteer workforce was identified by 35.8% of survey respondents identified ageing volunteers as a primary area of concern in the current state of volunteering, while simultaneously acknowledging their appreciation for the efforts of volunteers, both young and old.
- *Engaging with youth:* Many organisations report challenges attracting young volunteers.
- *General lack of diversity:* More than 85% of volunteer respondents identify as Pākehā or European. People over the age of 45 made up 70.8% of all survey respondents, with 31.2% over 65.
- *Discrimination and bias:* Several volunteers report experiencing discrimination, bullying and biased treatment.
- *Diversity/inclusion strategy:* A diversity and inclusion strategy is in place in 61.5% of responding organisations.

A theme heard from various VIOs is the issue of an ageing volunteer workforce, identified by 35.8% of respondents as the primary concern facing their particular organisation. The trend of an ageing volunteer workforce is coupled with a perceived lack of engagement from younger volunteers. At the same time, however, VIOs generally express gratitude for the hard work and efforts of all volunteers, both young and old.

Various respondents raised concerns about the sector's general lack of diversity across ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity, and age. Of particular concern is the lack of diversity in ethnicity, reflected in both *Statistics New Zealand's* latest data and in our survey respondents (over 85% identified as Pākehā or European). While survey participants took part voluntarily rather than being randomly sampled, it nonetheless provides a rudimentary snapshot into the state of diversity in our volunteering workforce.

Issues of inclusion have also translated into some concerning responses, with experiences of discrimination, prejudice and bias mentioned by a few respondents. These include difficulties 'fitting in' with the workforce and some instances of bullying or discrimination. The most common example of bullying reported was discrimination based on English speaking ability. This was reported by more than a dozen volunteers. This confirms Volunteering New Zealand's previous work around the unique challenges faced by migrant volunteers and those for whom English is not a first language<sup>9</sup>.

However, there is a growing recognition in the sector of the importance of diversity and inclusion with 61.5% of VIOs report having a diversity and inclusion strategy actively in place, and another 26.6% having concrete plans to create one in the next 12 months.

It is abundantly clear that the concept of community is the cornerstone of the sector. The overwhelming majority of respondents (94.6%) reported that they volunteered for community-based reasons—making friends, forming connections, and helping others.

<sup>9</sup> Volunteering New Zealand (2019). *Te Rautaki mo Whanaungatanga: A Strategy to Support Recent Migrant Volunteers* (Wellington: VNZ).

“I am always amazed at the number of people willing to volunteer and their level of engagement. The important work we do would not happen were it not for our volunteers. Thank you to the volunteers.”

*Chief Executive,  
Volunteering organisation, Nelson*

## Why did you choose to volunteer for the organisation?



# Theme two

## Engagement and recognition of volunteers

### Key insights

- *Difficulty recruiting:* Lack of volunteers is reported as the primary concern by 36.6% of VIOs.
- *Good retention rates:* Turnover rates are generally quite low across the VIOs who responded. A notable 82.3% of volunteers reported that they intended to continue volunteering with their current organisation long term (>18 months).
- *Word of mouth:* Almost half of volunteers, 46.4%, heard about their current volunteering role through word of mouth, making it the most popular method of recruitment.
- *Episodic volunteering:* Volunteers are increasingly preferring episodic or project-based volunteering compared to more regular hours.
- *Reimbursement:* Only 32.6% of VIOs fully reimburse their volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while volunteering.
- *Motivations for volunteering:* Included amongst the most cited reasons for volunteering are helping people, developing skills, and forming connections with fellow volunteers.

The classic challenge of recruiting, retaining and recognising volunteers is a theme identified by almost all VIO respondents and many volunteers. Retention is generally good, with 82.3% of volunteers reporting that they intend to volunteer long term (for at least 18 months) with their current organisation. This is reflected somewhat in the turnover rates reported by VIOs. A small 18% report that no volunteer has left in the past 12 months, with another 47.2% reporting that 5-10% have left their organisation in the past 12 months. While volunteers remain long-term committed to their chosen organisation, their preference within that organisation is for more episodic or project-based work.

Recruiting volunteers, on the other hand, poses a bigger challenge with 68.4% of VIOs reporting that they need more volunteers, while 31.6% report that they have a complete volunteer workforce for their operations. The most effective way to recruit volunteers appears to be through word of mouth, such as an existing volunteer recommending the organisation to a friend. Word of mouth is the way 46.4% of volunteers heard about their current volunteering role, a figure which is fairly uniform across different age cohorts.

The overall trend, which has been reported for several years, is a move from long term, regular volunteering towards episodic and project-based volunteering. Instead of undertaking a weekly shift at a VIO, for example, many volunteers are choosing to engage on an ad hoc basis when a particular project of interest comes up. This trend aligns with the most frequent barrier to volunteering identified by respondents in the free-text responses; namely, the difficulty in balancing competing vocational, educational, social, and caring commitments.

Recognising volunteers is something that is practised inconsistently across the sector. Many volunteers do not expect any formal recognition while others state that acknowledgement in some form is vital to show respect to them. VIOs, similarly, have differing attitudes towards recognising volunteers. Several have no formal means of recognising volunteers, while many generally more established VIOs have official awards, such as long service medals and 'Volunteer of the Year'. At the same time, recognition should not be seen as just being about the formal aspects but also about informal recognition, such as acknowledging and expressing gratitude to volunteers.

Reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses incurred while volunteering is inconsistent across the sector. Some 26.3% of VIOs do not reimburse their volunteers for any out-of-pocket expenses, while 32.6% reimburse their volunteers for all out-of-pocket expenses. The remainder (41.1%) reimburse some of their volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses. Similar to differing attitudes about recognition, many volunteers explicitly state that they would not want to be reimbursed, as they see volunteering and its associated burdens as a contribution they willingly make. Other volunteers, however, express the view that reimbursement for at least some out-of-pocket expenses would be appreciated.

“Through volunteering, I am always learning. I can attend trainings and upskill if I want to. I enjoy having the choice to improve myself and to do the right thing for my community.”<sup>10</sup>

*Volunteer, Christchurch*

## What is your volunteer role in the organisation?

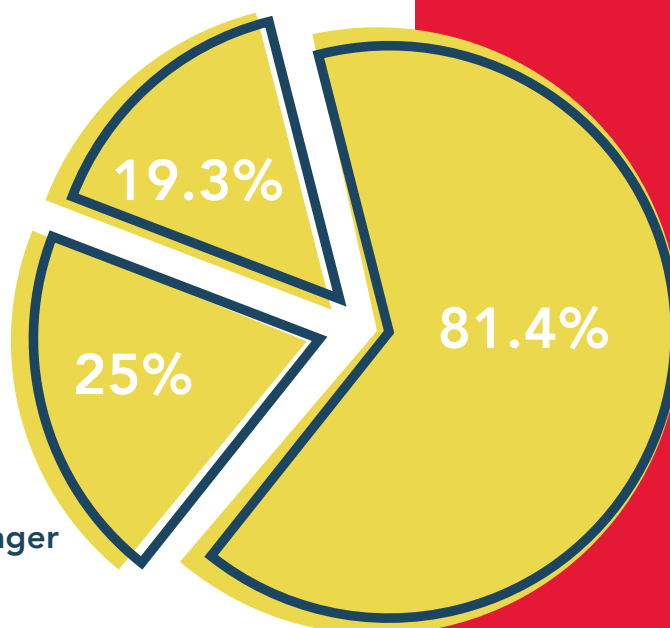
1388 out of 1388 people answered this question (with multiple choice)

### Board member

268 responses

### Volunteer manager or leader

347 responses



### Operational volunteer

(e.g. frontline volunteer)

1130 responses

# Theme three

## Funding, administration, regulatory compliance

### Key insights

- *Competition between VIOs:* Smaller VIOs struggle to compete against larger, more established VIOs for funding opportunities.
- *Administrative burden:* Various respondents report increasing difficulty in performing administrative tasks, given time and resource constraints.
- *Regulatory compliance:* The burden of compliance with legislation around children, and health and safety is cited as a major barrier to volunteering.

Fundraising is identified by most VIOs as a major challenge, with the potential to affect their long term viability. Smaller VIOs disproportionately cite funding as a major source of worry for the sustainability of the organisation. Of those VIOs with fewer than 30 volunteers, 54.6% mention funding availability as their primary 'existential' challenge, with this figure dropping to 12.8% for VIOs with more than 100 volunteers. Only a small minority of respondents (1.4%) report having full confidence in the sustainability of their funding arrangements.

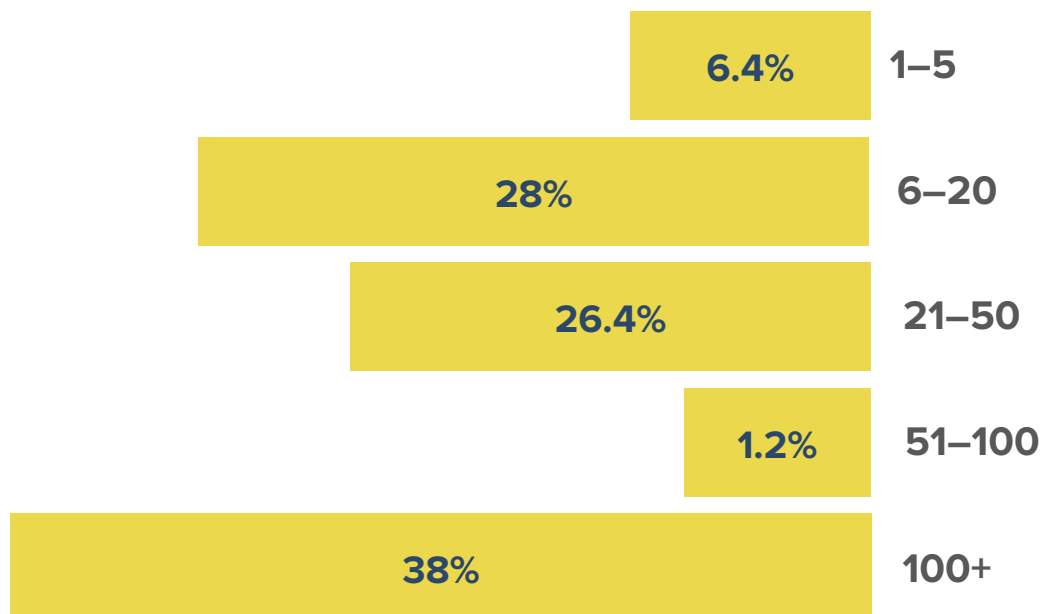
These differences also reflect the competition between smaller and larger VIOs for similar funding streams. Several VIOs note the challenge of competing against larger, more established VIOs when applying for grants. Smaller VIOs often do not have capacity or capability to undertake the research, writing and subsequent evaluation needed to submit successful grants. Larger VIOs also tend to have greater name recognition, which may put them on a stronger footing. The increasingly complex mechanisms to apply for grants and funding streams is especially felt by smaller VIOs. Therefore, many smaller VIOs simply do not apply for this funding.

Several volunteers and VIOs cite the increasing administrative and regulatory burden as a major barrier to more effective volunteering. At the same time, most acknowledge the necessity of regulatory safeguards in protecting volunteers. The most cited administrative burdens include funding applications, onboarding new volunteers, and responding to email correspondence. The most cited regulatory burdens are legislation around working with children, and health and safety regulations.

“The volunteer work is interesting, and I feel like I am making a big difference in the life of a refugee family.”

*Volunteer, English Language Partners, Wellington*

### How many volunteers does your organisation engage annually?



# Theme four

## Management and strategy

### Key insights

- *Volunteer relationships:* Several volunteers commented on difficulties resulting from management structures and styles. These difficulties are exacerbated by an often time/resource-poor management context.
- *Importance of statistics:* Several respondents commented on a general lack of access to up-to-date statistical information related to volunteering. Most VIOs do not currently collect detailed information about their volunteers (including demographics or hours of volunteering work done).
- *National strategy:* Several VIOs voiced their desire for a national platform and repository to facilitate better sharing of best-practice tools, and to ensure the sector's guiding philosophy is ethical, inclusive, and impactful.

While the majority of VIOs (60.6%) conduct performance reviews of some sort for their programmes and volunteers, the remaining (39.4%) do not conduct any kind of performance reviews or evaluations for either their volunteers or their programmes.

Several volunteer respondents commented on work environment challenges resulting from management structures and styles, including some reports of bullying or discrimination.

One aspect of the community and voluntary sector is that it is inherently de-centralised, dispersed, and diverse in the work it performs. This can create a challenge for volunteers and VIOs, with many respondents expressing difficulty in finding

reliable, up-to-date statistical information relevant to their region and field of work. This is especially important for VIOs when submitting grant applications, preparing media releases, and writing policy submissions<sup>11</sup>.

Several VIOs also suggest the need for a national volunteering strategy, led by Volunteering New Zealand, in order to highlight sector-wide best practice. This is stated as being something particularly useful for sharing best practice and principles around diversity and inclusion; recruiting, retaining and recognising volunteers; mobilising more young volunteers; and the role of technology in volunteering.

**“I love volunteering with Youthline so much. It has not only allowed me to connect with my community and give back to a resource I needed so badly when I was a youth, but it’s also ignited a passion in me to follow my passion of working alongside adolescents with mental illnesses.”**

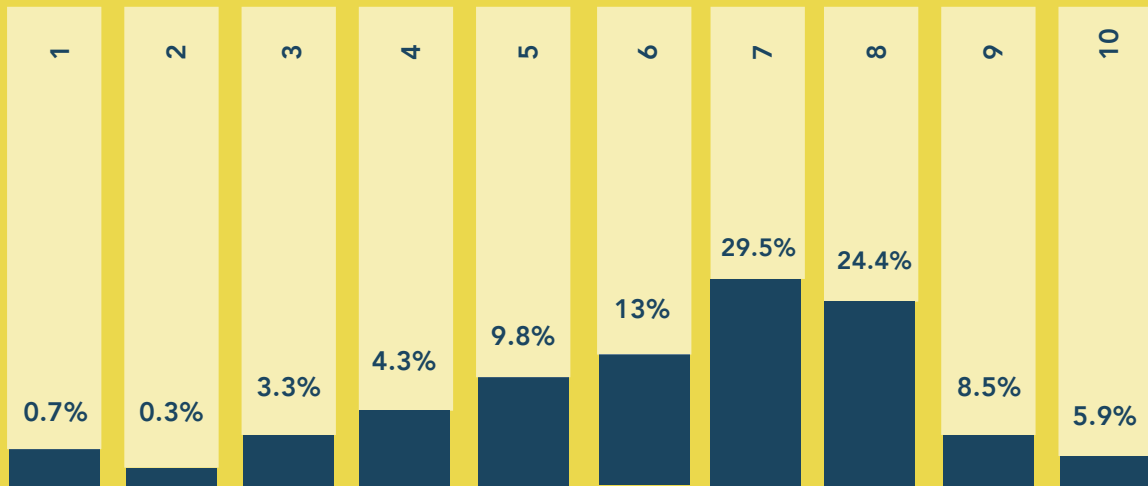
*Volunteer, Youthline, Auckland*

<sup>11</sup> Quotation was shortened for brevity. rt, Volunteering New Zealand published a summary of the latest volunteering statistics in New Zealand. Data from the State of Volunteering Report will also feed into this collection of data. More work on producing detailed statistics may happen in future. <https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/research/volunteering-statistics-nz/>

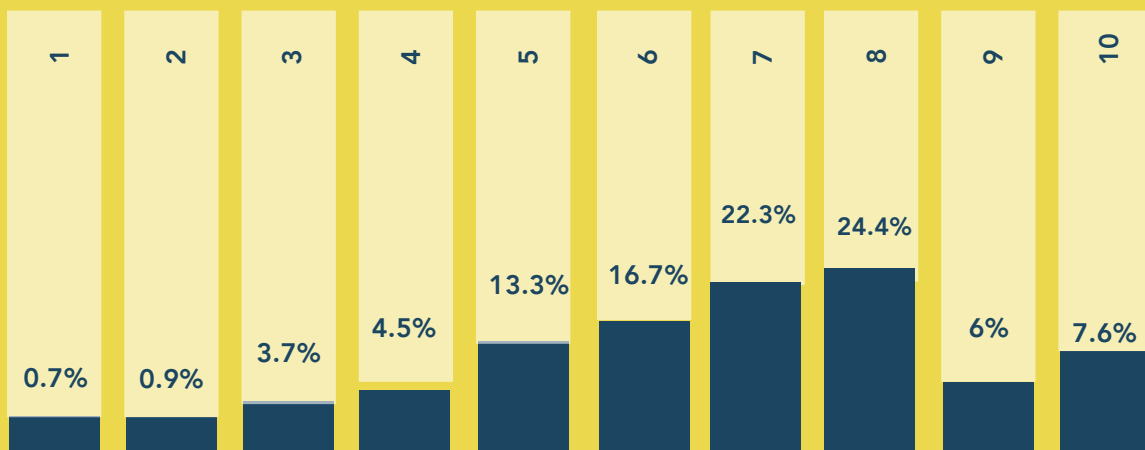


## Organisations' (VIOs') ranking for the 'State of Volunteering' = 6.9/10

Please rate the state of New Zealand Volunteering Sector on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is 'weak' and 10 is 'extremely positive')



## Volunteers' ranking for the 'State of Volunteering' = 6.8/10



# Conclusion

As the kaitiaki of mahi aroha, Volunteering New Zealand strives to empower volunteers to enrich Aotearoa New Zealand. To do so, and alongside other endeavours, Volunteering New Zealand conducts regular research and surveys of the volunteering sector. The findings of the State of Volunteering Survey 2020 are promising. Going into COVID-19, more than 3,000 participants rated the state of volunteering in New Zealand as being 6.8 out of 10 and 6.9 out of 10, by volunteers and VIOs, respectively. This is the first time the rating has been separately measured for volunteers and VIOs. The rate is higher than the *State of Volunteering 2017* report where the score was 6.0.

The findings of the *State of Volunteering Report 2020* indicate that the landscape of volunteering in New Zealand is changing. These changes bring about challenges as well as opportunities. These opportunities are especially present across the themes of community, diversity and inclusion, engaging and recognising volunteers, funding, administration, and regulatory compliance, and in the practical considerations of resources, data, and strategy. While 82.3% of volunteers intend to continue their current volunteering role in the long term, 36.6% of VIOs report a lack of volunteers as their biggest challenge. There is some indication that people are becoming increasingly time poor, with a smaller percentage of volunteers performing most of the work. However, it is heartening that the majority of those currently engaged in volunteering are committed to doing so for the long term.

A number of organisations voiced their concerns around funding. This was in a pre-pandemic environment and funding issues, especially for smaller organisations, are likely to become more severe due to Covid-19 impacts. Both

volunteers and VIOs agreed that volunteering is not appropriately recognised and valued. They all wanted the significant contribution of volunteering to be recognised and appreciated by communities, society, and the Government. In addition, volunteers' expectations have changed. While they maintain a long term commitment to a particular organisation, they prefer short term and episodic volunteering commitments that are flexible.

The real value of this report is that the research draws on survey data and data available from Statistics New Zealand immediately before the Covid-19 pandemic impacted New Zealand. Surveys closed in late-February and the most recent census data was used. The survey findings can therefore be used as a benchmark for the state of volunteering sector just before the country was moved into the Level 4 Covid-19 lockdown. As a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the volunteering landscape looks immensely different, and it is hard to know exactly what it will look like in the longer term. Using the *State of Volunteering Report 2020* as a benchmark for the pre-Covid-19 volunteering environment will assist future research to explore the impacts of the Covid-19 on the volunteering sector.


Covid-19 disrupted the community and volunteer sector and resulted in significant challenges, restrictions, and changes. But we have witnessed people's generosity and increased awareness of the power and value of our team of five million in helping one another to come out of this journey stronger.

Moving forward, better recognition is needed by Government and the wider public about the diverse ways that people contribute to their communities, as well as ensuring that we are evaluating this contribution in innovative and appropriate ways. A more consistent approach is needed to get a sense of the changing picture of volunteering as it relates to progress in wellbeing outcomes. Other data about unpaid work, non-profit institutions, wellbeing and Māori wellbeing frameworks, and formal and informal volunteering need to be collected and incorporated into evaluations.

In particular, we need to prioritise recognising and measuring mahi aroha in ways that appropriately and accurately reflect the extensive contribution of Māori to Aotearoa's cultural identity and social capital. In doing so, mahi aroha needs to be incorporated into the Government's provisions, policies, and procedures for volunteering. More attention should be paid to research related to mahi aroha and its contribution to the development of Māori communities and to Aotearoa New Zealand more widely.

Volunteering New Zealand will continue to support communities and the voluntary sector in their volunteering activities through our research and advocacy, as well as through a range of resources, guidelines, and learning and development opportunities.

**He waka eke noa. We are all in this together.**



“My goal with each group is to get their voices on the page. I don’t want to give the impression I’m in any way selfless in running these classes. I get at least as much from it as the men do. That moment when a story or poem that didn’t exist is now in the world – there’s no better feeling. And, as every teacher knows, it’s such a blast when someone ‘gets it’: when they realise they’ve put something on a page that captures their thoughts, or their heart, or their story.”

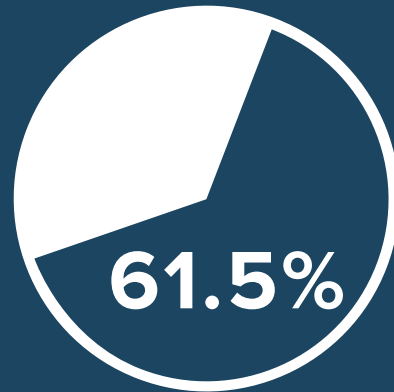
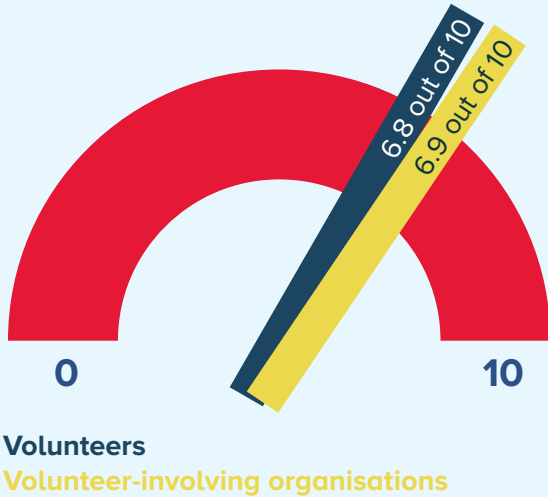
– *Volunteer, Hawkes Bay Regional Prison, Hawkes Bay*

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“Being a companion is a varied role, and a meaningful one. Sometimes it’s just making a cup of tea for family members, or going for a walk with a patient who hasn’t been outside for a while, or offering up a bit of distraction, like watching the cricket with a patient. It’s a very rewarding role.”

– *Volunteer, Otago Hospice, Otago*

### 'State of Volunteering' Rating



of volunteer-involving organisations have a diversity and inclusion strategy in place.

**\$4 billion**  
Value of volunteering to New Zealand's 2018 GDP.

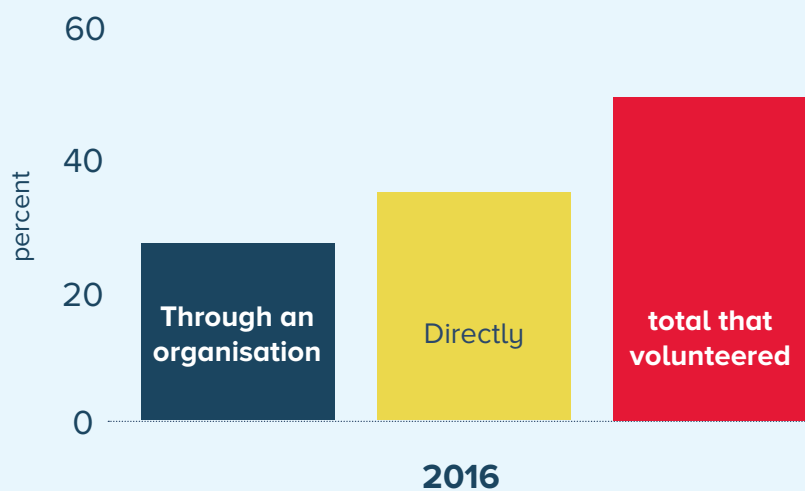
**82.3%**

of volunteers intend to continue volunteering long-term with their present organisation

**49.8%**

of people aged 15 years and over reported having done voluntary work in the last four weeks in 2016.

Proportion of people aged 15 years and over who reported having done voluntary work for an organisation or directly for a person from another household in the previous four weeks, 2016



**1 in 2**

New Zealanders volunteer for an organisation or help a person from another household



**Volunteering**  
NEW ZEALAND

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