

# Volunteer Motivations and Barriers

This quick guide describes motivations and barriers to people volunteering. It also outlines how you can strengthen volunteer engagement by understanding these motivations and barriers.

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## Why understand volunteer motivations and barriers?

People volunteer for a range of reasons including personal and professional development, building skills or a passion for your organisation.

Motivations and barriers are impacted by a range of factors such as age, income, employment, family status, or location amongst many others.

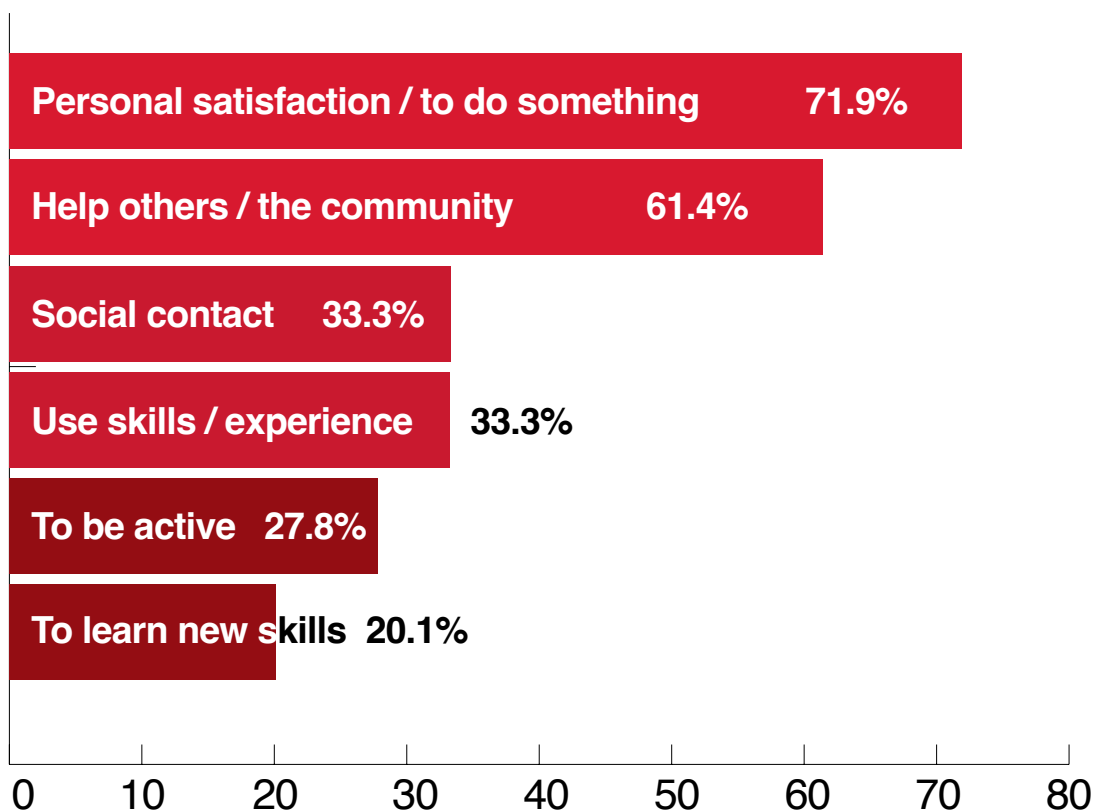
Understanding why volunteers do or don't donate their time and skills to your organisation can support you to:

- design volunteer roles with both your and the volunteer's needs in mind
- use language which helps overcome the barriers
- tailor recognition strategies to ensure that you are meeting your volunteers' needs, and lead to improved retention.

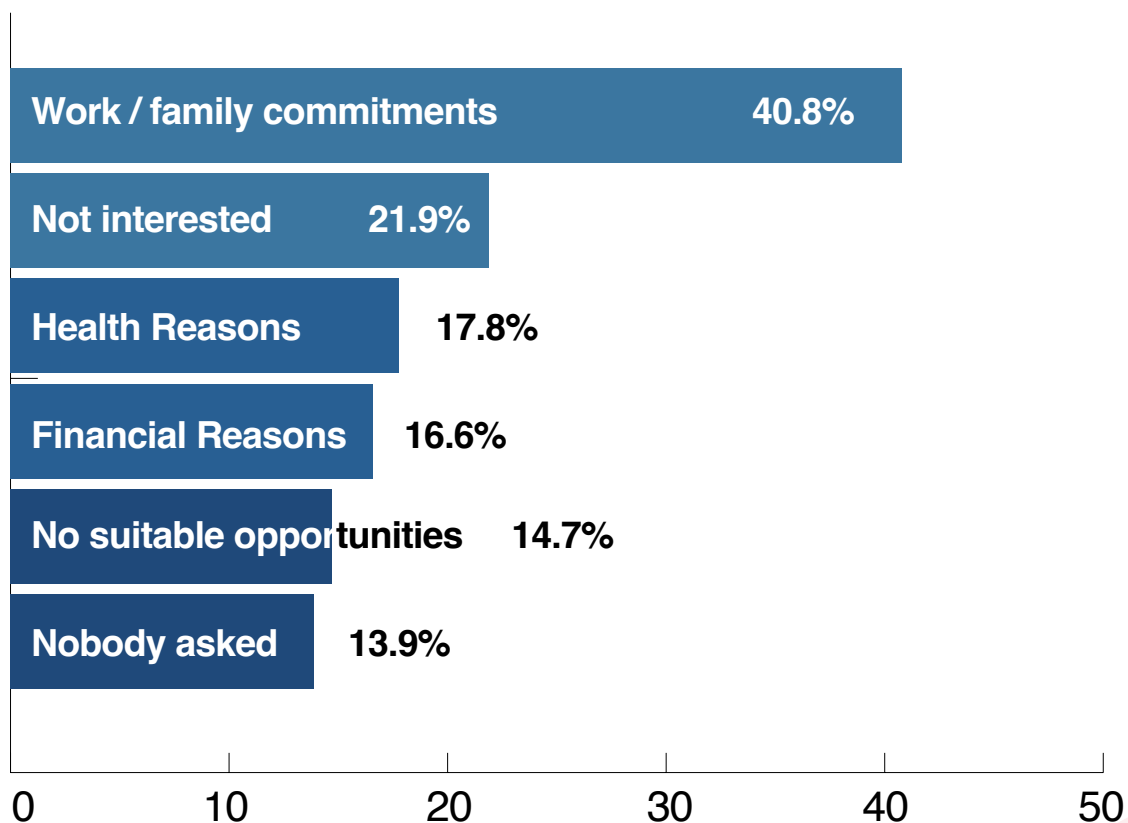
It is also important to recognise that motivations and barriers may change over time so regular check ins with volunteers will allow you to address any needs as they arise.

## Existing Research

### *Reasons for Volunteering (Motivations)*



### *Reasons for Not Volunteering (Barriers)*



## **Volunteer motivations and barriers within your organisation and community**

There may be more specific reasons within your organisation and community. You can find these out by:

### **Asking your existing volunteers**

Asking your volunteer teams what they enjoy about volunteering with you and if there is anything that prevents them from volunteering more. You could conduct feedback surveys with your teams and use the information to identify common motivations or barriers.

### **Collecting information in your application forms**

Include a question on the application form asking why they want to volunteer with you. This information can be used to build understanding of why people volunteer with you and how you can recognise their work in a meaningful way.

### **Reaching out to your community**

Ask members of your community why they don't volunteer with your organisation and if there is anything that might encourage them to do so.

### **Go to potential volunteers**

Is there a particular demographic or type of volunteer that are trying to reach? Could you find a space where they meet and have a conversation to discover what might interest them about volunteering with your organisation?

## Using motivations and barriers

Understanding volunteer motivations and barriers can assist you in both volunteer recruitment and retention. Here are some ways you can apply motivations and barriers in different ways to meet volunteer needs.

Motivation	Application
<b>Personal satisfaction / to do something</b>	Showcase stories of volunteer team achievements
<b>Help others / the community</b>	Demonstrate the impact that volunteering with your organisation has in your community
<b>Social contact</b>	Arrange social events, provide social time before, during and after shifts
<b>Use skills / experience</b>	Highlight skills used in the roles you offer.  Provide opportunities for volunteers to share their skills and knowledge with others
<b>To be active</b>	Share images of volunteers in action, showing the range of activities potential volunteers would undertake
<b>To learn new skills</b>	Provide training and development opportunities  Link volunteer skills and knowledge gained to future career opportunities

Barrier	Application
<p><b>Work / family commitments</b></p>	<p>Offer role flexibility to fit around other commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remote volunteering</li> <li>• on-line volunteering</li> <li>• on demand volunteering</li> </ul> <p>Offer roles that friends and family can complete together</p> <p>Recruit for short term projects that may be completed over a week or month. These can achieve outcomes for your organisation without requiring a long term commitment</p>
<p><b>Not interested / no suitable roles</b></p>	<p>Create clear volunteer roles that communicate what the role will achieve.</p> <p>Offer a variety of roles that suit different interests, whilst recognising that you're not going to appeal to everyone.</p> <p>Consider co-design roles where you can work with a volunteer to create a suitable role for them.</p>
<p><b>Health Reasons</b></p>	<p>Clearly state health and safety procedures</p> <p>Offer role flexibility to fit around health concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remote volunteering</li> <li>• on-line volunteering</li> <li>• on demand volunteering</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial reasons</b></p>	<p>Anticipate any additional costs that volunteers may incur, such as lunches, travel, child care, uniforms or protective equipment</p> <p>Provide reimbursements for costs</p>
<p><b>Nobody asked</b></p>	<p>Reach out to your communities (members, service recipients, local community) with a direct ask for help for a specific task or project</p> <p>Host bring a friend day for volunteers to bring a friend or family member</p>

## References:

Biddle, N., Boyer, C., Gray, M., & Jahromi, M. (2022) Volunteering in Australia: The Volunteer Perspective. Volunteering Australia, <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>



*The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*

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