

This bulletin contains information on the characteristics of people who performed voluntary work through an organisation or group in the 12 months prior to the 2006 Census. It covers demographic characteristics and factors associated with various rates of volunteering. Unless otherwise stated, the data are sourced from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Census data in this bulletin are for the population aged 15 years and over and are on a place of usual residence basis. 'Not stated' responses have been included in totals when calculating percentages. See the technical note on the reasons for differences between census and survey results relating to voluntary work at the end of this bulletin.

Key points

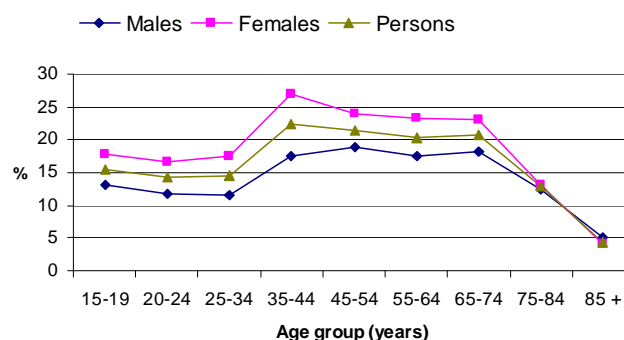
- According to the 2006 Census, 18.3% (568,000) of Queensland's population aged 15 years and over performed voluntary work in the 12 months before the census.
- Considerably more females (21.1%) than males (15.5%) volunteered.
- The highest voluntary work participation rate by age was 22.4% for those aged 35-44 years.
- People born in Australia were more likely to undertake voluntary work than those born elsewhere, with rates of 20.3% and 16.5% respectively.
- Those born in the main English speaking countries had a higher rate of volunteering (18.3%) than those born in other countries (14.3%).
- People who were unemployed had a higher volunteer rate (22.9%) than those who were employed (19.8%) or not in the labour force (18.9%).
- Unemployed people looking for part-time work were more likely to volunteer than those in any other employment status category, with females aged 55 years and over having the highest volunteer rate at 40.0%.
- Among females working part-time, 27.2% performed volunteer work compared with 19.8% in full-time employment.
- The voluntary work participation rate for the Indigenous population was 14.4%. The gap between the rates for males and females was less than that for the population as a whole, with rates of 12.4% for males and 16.3% for females.
- People who needed assistance from others with core activities had a volunteer rate of about half that of people not requiring assistance, with 10.2% compared with 19.9%.
- Central West Statistical Division had the highest volunteer participation rates of 38.0% for females and 28.9% for males. Lowest rates were in Gold Coast Statistical Division with 16.1% and 11.6% respectively.
- Volunteering was more common among persons living in parts of the state outside the major urban areas, performed by 21.0% of these people compared with 16.9% for urban areas.

Age and sex

Volunteer rates varied across different groups of the population. Females volunteered more commonly than males (21.1% compared with 15.5%) and, with few exceptions, this was the case regardless of birthplace, labour force status or the area in which they lived.

The pattern of volunteering varied with life stage. People aged 35-44 years were in the age group most likely to volunteer (22.4%). Female volunteering rates peaked at 26.9% for this age group, while for males the highest rate was 18.8% for the slightly older 45-54 years age group (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Volunteer rates by age and sex, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Birthplace

The 2006 Census found that volunteer rates vary by place of birth. Rates of volunteering were lowest for people from non-English speaking countries (14.3%) compared with those born overseas in English speaking countries (18.3%) and those born in Australia (20.3%) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Volunteers by birthplace, Queensland, 2006

Birthplace	Volunteers	Volunteer rate
Australian born	450,435	20.3
Born outside Australia	107,363	16.5
Main English speaking countries (a)	66,107	18.3
Other countries	41,256	14.3
Total (b)	568,230	18.3

(a) Refers to the main countries from which Australia receives, or has received, significant numbers of overseas migrants who are likely to speak English.

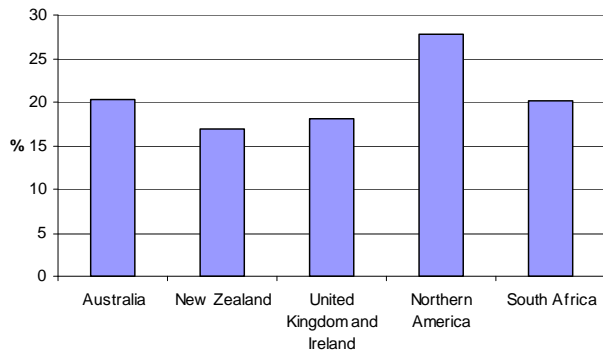
These countries or regions consist of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Northern America and South Africa.

(b) Includes not stated and inadequately described.

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Of the main English speaking overseas countries, the highest proportion of volunteers (27.8%) was born in North America and the lowest (16.9%) was New Zealand born (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Volunteer rates by main English speaking country or region of birth, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Labour force and employment status

Unemployed people had a higher volunteer rate (22.9%) than those who were employed (19.8%) or not in the labour force (18.9%). Those employed part-time (24.8%) and unemployed looking for part-time work (28.0%) had higher volunteer rates than their full-time counterparts (17.9% and 19.5% respectively). Regardless of labour force status, employment status or age, males were less likely to volunteer than females. With few exceptions, a larger proportion of those aged 55 years and over had higher volunteer rates than those aged 15-54 years (see Table 2).

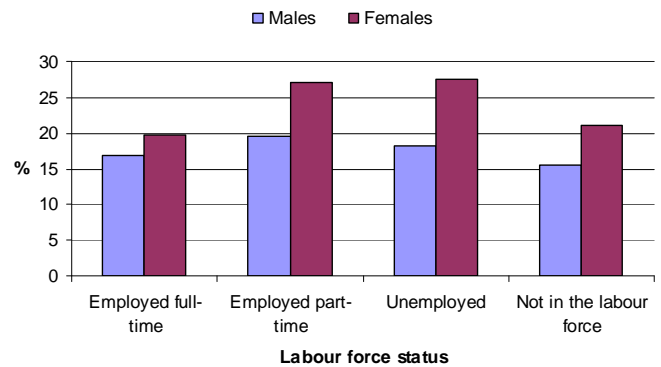
Table 2: Volunteer rates by labour force and employment status by age and sex, Queensland, 2006

Labour force and employment status	Volunteers		
	15-54 years	55 years and over	15 years and over
Males (%)			
Employed (a)	16.7	18.6	17.0
Full-time (b)	16.7	17.5	16.8
Part-time	18.5	23.5	19.5
Unemployed	16.8	27.7	18.2
Looking for full-time work	15.2	25.5	16.5
Looking for part-time work	21.2	32.5	22.9
Not in the labour force	13.0	17.0	15.5
Total (c)	15.2	16.4	15.5
Females (%)			
Employed (a)	22.9	23.4	23.0
Full-time (b)	19.7	20.5	19.8
Part-time	27.3	26.7	27.2
Unemployed	26.8	36.0	27.5
Looking for full-time work	23.5	31.7	24.1
Looking for part-time work	29.9	40.0	30.7
Not in the labour force	21.6	20.5	21.0
Total (c)	21.6	19.7	21.1
Persons (%)			
Employed (a)	19.7	20.5	19.8
Full-time (b)	17.8	18.4	17.9
Part-time	24.7	25.4	24.8
Unemployed	22.0	30.8	22.9
Looking for full-time work	18.6	27.3	19.5
Looking for part-time work	27.0	36.2	28.0
Not in the labour force	18.6	19.0	18.9
Total (c)	18.4	18.1	18.3

(a) Including employed persons who did not work any hours in the week prior to census night and hours of work not stated.
 (b) 'Employed, worked full-time' is defined as having worked 35 hours or more in all jobs during the week prior to census night.
 (c) Including labour force status not stated.
 Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Nearly half of employed females (43.8%) worked part-time. Of these women, 27.2% were doing voluntary work, indicating that many of them may have more time to do voluntary work compared with those who work full-time (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Volunteer rates by labour force status and sex, Queensland, 2006

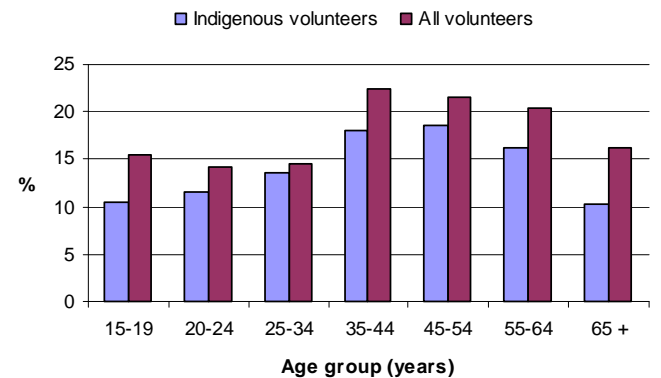


Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Indigenous status

Although volunteer rates for Indigenous people were lower than those for the population as a whole, the patterns of volunteering in relation to age and sex were similar (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Volunteer rates by Indigenous and total population by age, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Indigenous females (16.3%) were more likely to volunteer than indigenous males (12.4%). The age group with the highest volunteer rate was slightly older for Indigenous people (45-54 years, compared with 35-44 years for the total population). The age groups with the highest volunteer rates for males and females were the same as for the total population, that is, 45-54 years for males (17.0%) and 35-44 years for females (20.6%) (see Table 3).

The volunteer rate for those aged 65 years and over was significantly lower for the Indigenous population than for the total population. This may be related to the health status of the Indigenous population. ABS surveys on volunteering have found that excellent/very good health was a factor associated with above average rates of volunteering.

Table 3: Volunteer rates by Indigenous and total population by age and sex, Queensland, 2006

Age group	Volunteer rate	
	Indigenous volunteers	All volunteers
	Males (%)	
15-19	9.1	13.2
20-24	10.1	11.8
25-34	11.3	11.5
35-44	14.9	17.6
45-54	17.0	18.8
55-64	14.3	17.6
65 +	8.9	15.2
Total	12.4	15.5
	Females (%)	
15-19	11.9	17.8
20-24	13.2	16.7
25-34	15.6	17.6
35-44	20.6	26.9
45-54	19.8	24.1
55-64	17.7	23.2
65 +	11.1	16.8
Total	16.3	21.1
	Persons (%)	
15-19	10.5	15.4
20-24	11.7	14.2
25-34	13.5	14.6
35-44	18.0	22.4
45-54	18.5	21.5
55-64	16.1	20.4
65 +	10.2	16.1
Total	14.4	18.3

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Disability status

Not surprisingly, the volunteer rate among people with a disability, as measured by their need for assistance with one or more core activities like self-care or mobility, was about half (10.2%) that of people without a disability (19.9%) (see Table 4).

Table 4: Volunteers by disability status (a), Queensland, 2006

Disability status	Volunteers	
	Number	Rate
Has need for assistance with core activities	14,333	10.2
Does not have need for assistance with core activities	549,265	19.9
Total (b)	568,232	18.3

(a) A measure of the number of people with a profound or severe disability using the variable 'Core activity need for assistance'. Applies to those people needing help or assistance with one or more of the core activity areas of self-care: mobility and communication, a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more), and old age.

(b) Total includes disability status not stated responses.

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Geographical comparisons

Table 5 shows the number of volunteers and rates for males and females for each Queensland statistical division. Central West had the highest volunteer rates, with 38.0% for females and 28.9% for males. Gold Coast had the lowest rates, with 16.1% and 11.6% respectively. In general, volunteer rates were higher outside the south-eastern and northern statistical divisions.

Table 5: Volunteers by statistical division by sex, Queensland, 2006

Statistical division	Volunteers		Volunteer rate	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Brisbane	101,768	145,539	14.9	20.2
Gold Coast	22,164	32,454	11.6	16.1
Sunshine Coast	18,617	26,599	17.4	23.0
West Moreton	4,791	6,825	18.0	25.4
Wide Bay-Burnett	17,645	24,874	17.8	24.2
Darling Downs	16,597	22,729	20.5	26.6
South West	2,196	2,936	22.8	31.6
Fitzroy	13,059	17,243	17.7	24.2
Central West	1,246	1,597	28.9	38.0
Mackay	8,748	12,268	14.4	21.8
Northern	12,250	16,457	15.9	21.4
Far North	14,642	19,267	16.3	21.6
North West	1,960	2,383	16.1	22.3
Off-shore areas & migratory	5	—	5.7	0.0
No usual address	672	698	10.2	14.0
Queensland	236,351	331,879	15.5	21.1

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

In common with the majority of the other states, the rate of volunteering in Queensland was greatest in rural areas and lowest in major urban areas. The volunteer rate was 22.7% in 'rural balance' areas, i.e. places with a population of less than 200 people, falling to 16.9% in major urban areas, i.e. areas with a population greater than 100,000 people (see Table 6).

Table 6: Volunteers by section of state (a), Queensland, 2006

Section of state	Volunteers	
	number	rate
Major urban	336,795	16.9
Other urban	130,546	20.0
Bounded locality	17,334	22.3
Rural balance	82,184	22.7
No usual address	1,364	11.8
Total (b)	568,228	18.3

(a) Sections of state categories comprise major urban (population clusters of 100,000 or more), other urban (population clusters of 1,000 to 99,999), bounded locality (200 to 999), rural balance (remainder of state/territory) and migratory, and in aggregate cover the whole of Australia.

(b) Includes migratory.

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

During the 12 months prior to 2006 census night, 2.9 million Australians out of a total population aged 15 years and over of 15.9 million (see Table 7) spent time doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group. Almost 1 in 5 Queenslanders volunteered.

Table 7: Participation in voluntary work by state and territory, 2006

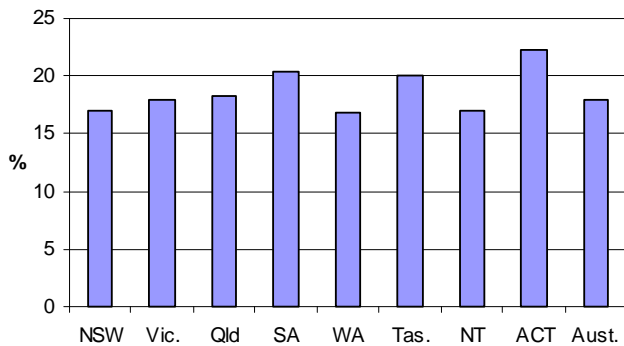
State	Volunteer	Not a volunteer	Not stated	Total	Volunteer rate
		— '000 —			%
NSW	896.0	3,831.4	522.9	5,250.3	17.1
Vic.	712.2	2,896.2	373.6	3,982.0	17.9
Qld	568.2	2,233.2	296.6	3,098.0	18.3
SA	251.4	884.7	97.4	1,233.5	20.4
WA	262.7	1,144.2	155.8	1,562.7	16.8
Tas.	76.9	272.8	32.8	382.5	20.1
NT	24.7	100.2	20.4	145.3	17.0
ACT	58.5	186.1	17.6	262.1	22.3
Aust.	2,851.0	11,549.9	1,517.2	15,918.1	17.9

(a) Data for Other Territories are not detailed specifically, but are included in the Australian totals.

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Patterns of volunteering differ by state. The proportion of the Queensland population who performed voluntary work was 18.3%, which was higher than the Australian average of 17.9%. However, in comparison with the other states, Queensland ranked fourth (see Figure 5).

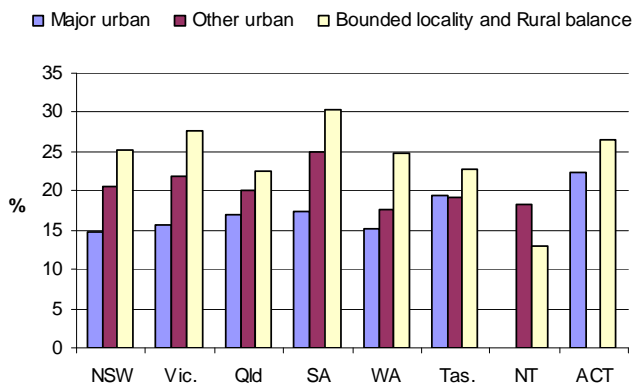
Figure 5: Proportion of the population who performed voluntary work by state and territory, 2006



Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

In addition to differing by state, patterns of volunteering also differ by part of state. With the exception of the Northern Territory, volunteering was more common among those living in non-urban areas. Differences in Queensland between major urban, other urban, and bounded locality and rural balance were not as great as in other mainland states (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Volunteer rates by section of state (a), states and territories, 2006



(a) Sections of state categories comprise major urban (population clusters of 100,000 or more), other urban (population clusters of 1,000 to 99,999), bounded locality (200 to 999), rural balance (remainder of state/territory) and migratory, and in aggregate cover the whole of Australia. Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Technical note

The 2006 Census was the first census to include a question about time spent doing unpaid voluntary work for an organisation or group in the 12 months prior to census night.

The variable ‘Voluntary work for an organisation or group’ is applicable to persons aged 15 years and over and excludes work done:

- as part of paid employment
- if the main reason is to qualify for a government benefit or
- in a family business.

In the past, the ABS has conducted surveys on voluntary work. The most recent was the national Voluntary Work Survey conducted as part of the General Social Survey (GSS) from March to July 2006.

There are differences in the results from the survey and the census. These differences are most likely to stem from the different methodology used for the survey and the census. The survey was conducted by personal interview while the census was conducted using a self-completed questionnaire.

During a survey interview, interviewers are able to use indirect and neutral prompts where a given response is inappropriate to the question asked or lacks sufficient detail for classification and coding.

Responses to self-completed questionnaires are dependent on the respondent’s interpretation of the questions. Some people do not answer all the questions which apply to them or do not answer fully. If a respondent feels that they understand a question, they are unlikely to refer to instructions or guides for clarification.

For the Voluntary Work module in the GSS, the interviewer began by giving a definition of volunteering. The interviewer then presented the respondent with a prompt card showing examples of different kinds of groups for which people might volunteer, before asking whether the respondent had volunteered for any of these types of organisations or groups.

For the 2006 Census, a guide was produced for respondents on how to complete the census form. This guide accompanied the census form and contained the same definition of voluntary work and examples as used for the Voluntary Work Survey.

The rates of volunteering derived from the survey were higher than those from the census. In some cases the survey figures were almost double those for the census.

An important contributing factor to the difference in the volunteering rates is that in the survey an individual was asked about his/her own volunteering. Previous survey experience has demonstrated that a person cannot accurately respond about another person’s volunteering, particularly when a long recall period is involved. With the census, a family or group of people in a household is free to arrange its own method of completing the form, and one person may be responding on behalf of others, without always knowing about voluntary work they may have done.

There were a high number of ‘Not stated’ responses in the census. This may have resulted from respondents not recognising that the work they had performed for organisations was defined as voluntary work or from their lack of recall. This is more likely to be the case for those respondents who did not refer to the census guide for assistance.

The survey information is more comprehensive than the census information. It includes hours contributed, more detailed characteristics of volunteers, the types of organisations they worked for and the activities they undertook. The advantage of census data is its availability at finer geographical levels.

While the rates from the census and the survey differ, the patterns and characteristics of volunteers revealed by the data are similar for comparable data items.

Queensland Treasury

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