



Young volunteers- 6 myths busted

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Myth 1: Young Tasmanians aren't volunteering

In Tasmania young people are active volunteers. Young Tasmanians aged 15-24 years volunteer on average 12.5 hours per month. This means they volunteer at the same rate as other age groups. The only demographic giving more time are 65-74 year olds who donate on average 22.8 hours per month.ⁱ

Myth 2: Volunteering is declining nationally – especially for young people

It is important to remember that statistics only show part of the picture. Our current data often can underestimate the contribution of young people – many of who are volunteering in new and innovative ways. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for example, does not include virtual/online volunteering in their definition. Yet this type of giving has a high take up with young people and accounts for 14% of Tasmanian volunteers. There is very little evidence to suggest that volunteering amongst young people is declining.

According to the ABS 31% of all Australians volunteer in an organisation. This has declined by 5% since 2010. Despite this, formal volunteering for young people has grown and 41% of young people aged 15-17 years choose to volunteer in this way.ⁱⁱ

Myth 3: Young volunteers don't have anything to offer

There may be stigma around young people and a perception that they will require a lot of work and support in their volunteer role. This is likely to vary depending on the role and the organisation itself. Current evidence suggests that young volunteers have a lot to bring to an organisation – particularly new energy and enthusiasm for the cause.

Myth 4: Young volunteers won't stay in my organisation

Changing commitments (school, employment, family life) affect young people. As such their commitments *may* change over time. Flexible, short term positions can be more appealing to millennials – particularly roles that fit around school holidays, semester breaks or 'gap years'. Long term volunteering may be challenging, but there is little research to suggest that young volunteers aren't committed and dedicated once they find a volunteering role suitable for them.

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Myth 5: Young volunteers are only interested if there is something in it for them

Young people seek volunteering for different reasons. Evidence suggests that gaining work skills and networks are highly valued by millennials looking to gain an 'edge' as they enter the workforce or look for new work opportunities. Overall, however, the primary reason young people volunteer is altruism - to give back to a cause or a community that they care about. Young people are looking for volunteering opportunities that they identify with; causes, values and priorities they believe in and opportunities where they can make a difference.

Myth 6: Young volunteers are hard to contact

Millennials are likely to have grown up with digital technologies. They are part of how they learn and communicate. As such young volunteers may need different methods of communication. Traditional communication channels like a landline phone or post may not be as appealing. Recruiting and communicating with young people online (web, email, social media) is more likely to be successful. Most importantly, young people are looking for organisations to respond to their interest. Using the right communication channels, responding quickly to enquiries and getting young people started quickly are recommended for organisations looking to grow their engagement with young people.

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ⁱ Volunteering Tasmania, *State of Volunteering Report 2014: The Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering* (Hobart, 2014).

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia 2014*. Cat no. 4159.0 (Australian Government: Canberra, 2014).