state of **volunteering** in VICTORIA

Snapshot: **Youth**



volunteering VICTORIA

STATE OF VOLUNTEERING REPORT 2025

Youth (Ages 15-24)

At a glance

This data describes volunteering as it occurred in Victoria in the 12 months prior to August 2024, as reported in the survey of Victorian residents.



Above statewide average (58.9%)

Key motivations:

- Helping others **(57.6%)**
- Because they can **(45.7%)**
- To use their skills & expertise **(40.8%)**
- No one else is doing it **(21.6%)**

Key barriers:

- Work or study commitments **(69.0%)**
- Income, costs or expenses **(42.0%)**
- Family responsibilities **(29.0%)**
- Other social interests **(28.2%)**
- Lack of transport **(24.5%)**

271 **hours contributed per year**



211 *hours across all age groups (average)*

Highest average hours across all age groups



Highest rate across all age groups



44%
prefer to volunteer with others



25.1%
volunteer online or from home

Among the highest of all age groups

Young volunteers are leading the way in Victoria

Whether it's contributing to causes they care about, gaining industry experience, or responding to unmet needs in their community, young people are actively carving out space to make a difference.

In 2024, young Victorians aged 15-24 recorded the **highest engagement rate** of any age group.

Nearly seven in ten (**69.4%**) reported volunteering in the past year – a finding that challenges assumptions that young people are disengaged or reluctant to volunteer.

They also contribute significant time: on average **271 hours** annually, compared with 211 hours across other age groups.

"There's this idea that young people don't care. But I do care – I just don't know where I'm supposed to go."

"You learn about injustice in the world, and it makes you want to do something. Volunteering helps you feel like you're making an impact."

Motivations and benefits

Many young people are motivated by a desire to give back:

- Helping others (**57.6%**)
- Contributing because they can (**45.7%**)
- Using their skills and experience (**40.8%**)

Others volunteer to support or learn more about a cause (**28.2%**), or because they feel 'no one else was doing it' (**21.6%**, compared with 12.1% across all other age groups).

Career development is also a clear driver. With secure work harder to find, volunteering provides a pathway to explore industries, build networks, and gain skills and experience relevant to future employment.

For this age group, volunteering isn't just about service – it's about connection. For many young people, volunteering helps expand social circles disrupted by COVID-19, offering a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Many young people also describe volunteering as a meaningful way to manage uncertainty and take positive action.

"For me, a big reason for volunteering was trying to get into a particular industry I may see myself working in."

"All the volunteers, we're like a group now. It's really like a community."

"It's good for your mental health, to get out of the house, do some activity with people you can get along with."

How young people volunteer

Young people volunteer in diverse ways, often seeking roles that balance flexibility and social interaction.

Nearly half (**44%**) prefer to volunteer with others, and a further **32.5%** enjoy both individual and group settings.

Interestingly, this preference for connection sits alongside a relatively high rate of digital volunteering. Around a quarter (**25.1%**) of their volunteering hours are completed online or from home – one of the highest rates across age groups. For many young people, digital roles meet practical needs while still offering ways to connect with others.

However, finding suitable roles can be a challenge in itself. Some shared that a lack of awareness and visibility of opportunities made it hard to get involved, particularly when online platforms don't reflect where young people actually spend time.

"People say their volunteering program is digital... What they mean is they have a Facebook page... Ask any young person, Facebook is NOT social media."

"If I have to spend three to four hours travelling, I prefer online."

Barriers and costs

Despite their high engagement, young volunteers face more barriers than older age groups – including demanding study and work schedules (**69.0%**), financial pressures (**42.0%**), and transport limitations (**24.5%**).

Out-of-pocket costs are another challenge. Many young volunteers absorb higher expenses but are least likely to be reimbursed – only **7.7%** receive full reimbursement and **18.3%** partial. Over a third (**36.1%**) don't apply for reimbursement, even when it is available. This may reflect a lack of awareness, confidence, or willingness to ask for support.

Focus group participants described how the financial costs of volunteering – alongside rigid scheduling or poor communication – can lead to burnout and reduced participation.

"I'm out for a third of the day and I don't have money to buy food. That adds up."

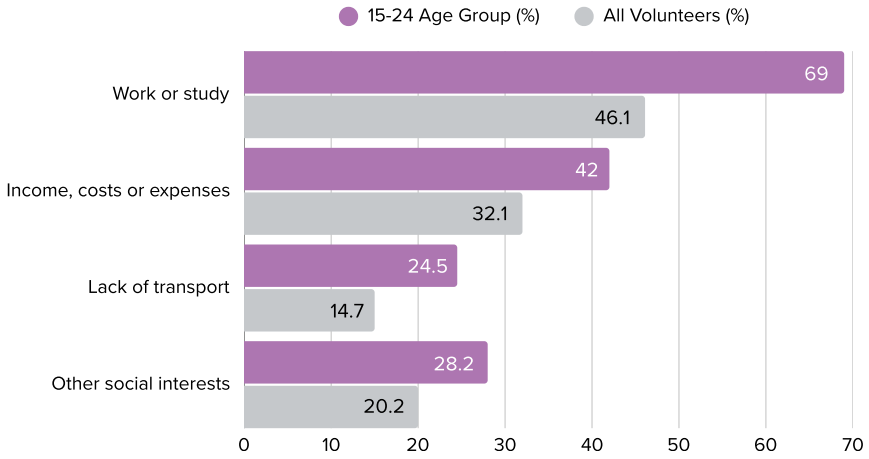


Figure 1: Barriers for Young Volunteers Compared to All Volunteers

Summary

While some Leaders of Volunteers are eager to engage young people, others still question their commitment. Yet the evidence tells a clear story:

Young volunteers demonstrate strong motivations, high participation rates, and an apparent willingness to contribute when given the right opportunity.

Despite facing more external barriers than older age groups, when roles are accessible, flexible, and meaningful – young people show up.

To support and retain young volunteers, volunteering needs to adapt by:

- Increasing role flexibility and supporting digital participation
- Providing visibility and clarity on how to get involved
- Offsetting or reimbursing expenses where possible
- Fostering inclusive and respectful environments free from stigma or gatekeeping
- Listening to young people and co-designing volunteering opportunities that reflect their reality

More insights:

Monash Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice (CYPEP) (2024), *Anxiety, wellbeing and engaging young people in volunteering*

https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Anxiety-Wellbeing-and-Engaging-Young-People-in-Volunteering-CYPEP-report.pdf

Volunteering Australia (2023), *Youth Volunteering Factsheet*

https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Youth-Volunteering-Factsheet-2023.pdf

"Youth volunteering is increasing, but [organisations] need to adapt culturally to engage them effectively."

