



Submission to Statistics New Zealand on the proposal to not collect information on unpaid activities.

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Contact Details

This submission is by a group.

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this submission is to provide Volunteering New Zealand's ("VNZ") unequivocal view that volunteering should remain a Census question, for the various compelling reasons outlined in this submission and summarised here:

- Inclusion of volunteering in the Census gives effect to the New Zealand Government Policy on Volunteering to recognise and increase understanding of volunteering;
- Volunteering is a discrete and significant activity making a national and regional contribution to New Zealand's social and economic life;
- Volunteering data is used by a wider range of decision makers, including central and local government, and the voluntary sector itself;
- Census remains the most important information source of data on volunteering in New Zealand.

2 Background

2.1 Context

Statistics New Zealand has published their 'Preliminary view of 2018 Census content: For public engagement and consultation' ("the preliminary view"). In the preliminary view, there are various recommendations made across a variety of different Census related topics.

Volunteering New Zealand is primarily concerned with the topic "Work" and the recommendation to remove "Unpaid activities" (question 46 of the Census). Question 46 currently asks:

"Mark as many spaces as you need to answer this question, in the last 4 weeks, which one of these have you done, without pay?

- household work, cooking, repairs, gardening, etc, for my own household
- looked after a child who is a member of my household
- looked after a member of my household who is ill or has a disability
- looked after a child (who does not live in my household)
- helped someone who is ill or has a disability (who does NOT live in my household)
- other help or voluntary work for or through any organization, group or marae, or
- none of these"

Volunteering New Zealand submits that the value of volunteering within Question 46 is immediately obscured by the spectrum of 7 choices offered across two independent dimensions of unpaid activities: volunteering and household activities (refer section 2.4 below).

2.2 Volunteering New Zealand

Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) is the "voice of volunteering" in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our vision is for a New Zealand that promotes, values and supports effective volunteering for the benefit of individuals and communities – and our mission is to promote, support and advocate for volunteering.

We are the only national organisation in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering. We hold the 'big picture' and are in a position to liaise, work closely with, and advise volunteers, government and business sectors on volunteer-involving concerns. This helps ensure that volunteering occurs within a positive environment where it is encouraged and fostered.

Over the past 13 years, VNZ has raised the profile of volunteer groups, activities, and management. We have promoted volunteering and its value to New Zealand society through advocacy, and producing tools like the Best Practice Guidelines and Competencies for Managers of Volunteers.

Volunteering New Zealand has a membership of 60 national and regional member organisations that involve volunteers in their work programmes. We advocate on behalf of these organisations and other groups that are not members, but are aligned to our mission and values.

2.3 New Zealand's Voluntary Sector

New Zealand has more than 97,000 non-profit organisations, contributing 2.6% to GDP. This increases to 4.9% of GDP when taking into account the volunteer labour contribution and is comparative to the total contribution of the New Zealand construction industry¹. In 2008, 67% of the Community and Voluntary Sector workforce was made up of volunteers; 90% of New Zealand non-profit organisations employ no staff, and rely solely on volunteers².

2.4 Volunteering Definitions

Definitions are important to this submission, as Volunteering New Zealand posits that the preliminary view of unpaid activities currently incorporates both volunteering and non-volunteering activities ("household activities") within Census Question 46 (Unpaid Activities).

Volunteering

Volunteering New Zealand defines volunteering as: "**work done of one's own free will, unpaid, for the common good**"³. Consistent with the literature on volunteering (e.g. Wilson, 2000; International Labour Office, 2011), this submission includes both "formal" and "informal" volunteering. Formal volunteering is volunteering done for or through non-profit institutions or other types of organisations. Informal volunteering is volunteer activities engaged in directly for other's households.

Household activities

For the purposes of this submission, Volunteering New Zealand refers to **work done without pay for members of the person's own household** as household activities. Most experts⁴ on volunteering agree that work done for family members, especially "immediate" family members, does not qualify as volunteer work⁵.

¹ Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account, 2004

² From the *The New Zealand Non-profit Sector in Comparative Perspective*, 2008

³ http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014-11-Constitution-of-Volunteering-New-Zealand-Incorporated-FINAL_signed.pdf

⁴ Wilson, J. Volunteering, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000; International Labour Office, 2011

⁵ VNZ acknowledge that the term "family" is contested, especially in the context of cultural traditions of tangata whenua o Aotearoa.

2.5 New Zealand Government Policy on Volunteering

The New Zealand Government's Policy on Volunteering commits government to valuing and celebrating volunteering and supporting volunteering initiatives (Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2008). Volunteering New Zealand restates an abridged *Commitments* section of the 2002 policy⁶ for the purposes of contextualising our submission within this existing Government Policy on Volunteering:

To support this vision, government is committed to:

- Valuing and celebrating the contributions of volunteers
- Recognising the contribution that tangata whenua, Pacific and ethnic peoples make to their communities through fulfilment of cultural obligations
- Reducing barriers associated with volunteering in legislation, policy and practice
- Supporting initiatives to increase understanding of, and disseminate information about, volunteering

VNZ urges the Statistics New Zealand to honour this Policy by considering it, alongside with the following submission during their Assessment of formal submissions.

2.6 How VNZ collated this submission

VNZ's submission is based on responses from our members and networks based on the proposed priority ratings for each output stream provided by Statistics New Zealand.

VNZ received 29 responses from members. Members were asked six questions in regards to Statistics New Zealand's intention to remove volunteering (as a subset of Unpaid Activities) from the 2018 Census. Members' responses are very strongly reflected in this submission, particularly in the areas of:

- ▶ Volunteering remains included in the 2018 Census (100% strongly agree)
- ▶ Census data is important to the community sector (100% strongly agree)
- ▶ Unpaid activities are important to New Zealand from a socio-economic perspective (97% strongly agree)

⁶ [http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering/\\$file/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering/$file/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering.pdf)

3. Submission Preamble

Question 46 of the Census (Unpaid Activities) currently asks respondents to mark as many spaces as required to account for their unpaid activities in the last four weeks.

Volunteering New Zealand recommends Statistics New Zealand consider the value of volunteering independently of household activities when making its recommendation to remove volunteering from the 2018 Census.

4. Statistics NZ criteria to determine content of the 2018 Census

4.1 Does the proposed change add value to New Zealand's society and economy?

The New Zealand Government Policy for Volunteering (2002) confirms that "volunteers make a vital contribution to social development, the economy and the environment". Further, the United Nations General Assembly identified volunteering as "an important component of any strategy aimed at... poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management, and ... overcoming social exclusion and discrimination"⁷.

The preliminary view of Statistics NZ acknowledges the value that unpaid activities contributes to economic statistics, particularly it estimated the extent to which unpaid work underpins total economic activity (gross domestic product). The preliminary view also acknowledges the value of social indicators such as social and cultural capital.

Volunteering data is used by a wide range of decision makers

Central government: The preliminary view acknowledges key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Social Development on the increasing importance of data on unpaid activities. Volunteering New Zealand submits that policy-advisors (and policy-makers) across central government (e.g. Department of Internal Affairs, the Ministry for Women and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Department of Conservation etc.) all benefit from level of data provided by the Census. In particular, determining what regions and population groups are most likely to volunteer (and therefore recruit), engage (and therefore retain) and other similar issues that might affect the ability to maximise the contributions that volunteers make, is vital to evidence-based policy affecting volunteers.

Local government: Volunteering New Zealand also submits that volunteering data is of considerable use outside of central government. In particular, New Zealand's 67 territorial local authorities ("TLAs") would be able to recognise the contributions that volunteer work makes to both the volunteers themselves, and to the beneficiaries of their generosity. This is of

⁷ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/119520443_UN%20Volunteers%20POST-2015%20Brief%20-%20Social%20Inclusion%20and%20Volunteerism%20WEB.pdf

increasing value to TLAs given volunteers support their outputs and outcomes across various economic, social and environmental domains.

The sector itself: Volunteering New Zealand, other umbrella organisations (e.g. Hui EI, Community Networks Aotearoa and Community Research) all demand better data for the sector, so that the sector can know itself better. Without being able to advocate on behalf of its national, regional and community based constituents, we remain naïve to the considerable amount of volunteering done within and across our regional and local communities.

4.2 Is the census the most appropriate information source?

Volunteering New Zealand submits that the Census remains the most important information source of data on cross-tabulating data volunteering in New Zealand.

Volunteering New Zealand notes that the alternative collections of volunteering and unpaid activities to the 2018 Census include the General Social Survey (GSS), Time Use Survey and a module planned to be incorporated into the Household Labour Force Survey. However, VNZ submits that none of the aforementioned surveys provide the cross-tabulated detail of information or geographic representation that the Census provides.

VNZ members also submitted their concerns that populations are at risk of not being adequately represented in smaller, non-census surveys such as the GSS. For example, older people, new migrants and other peoples are likely to not have the same statistical representation as larger groups of people.

4.3 Does the proposed change reflect an enduring information need?

Volunteering New Zealand contends that volunteering, consistent with the Government Policy on Volunteering, is an essential element of civil society. It is therefore imperative that national measurements are retained to reflect the enduring contribution volunteering makes to New Zealand's economic and social wellbeing.

One member also expressed an opinion that as internships and unemployment benefits become closer associated with volunteering as society changes, Census 2018 remains able to provide information that provides for the degree of detail to make meaningful findings.

4.4 Will the proposed change produce quality information?

Volunteering New Zealand strongly disagrees that the proposed change outlined in the preliminary view will produce quality information. As argued above, the proposed paucity of volunteering data would produce inferior information to support the mobilisation of resources that the New Zealand voluntary sector contributes to support our pressing social, environmental and economic issues.

The International Labour Office (2011) points out that “not only does the lack of adequate information about the scope, extent and forms of volunteer work complicate the task of making effective use of volunteers, but by obscuring the real value of volunteer work it undervalues volunteering and thereby fails to encourage volunteer effort” (p7).

As the women’s movement demonstrated, what is not counted is not valued, and not counting volunteering will lead to serious shortcomings in policy formulation. Not counting volunteering would increase the risk that government will inadvertently create policies and legislation that undercuts this source of resilience in our communities.