

Volunteering and donations by New Zealanders in 2016



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Volunteering and donations by New Zealanders in 2016

Volunteer work and donations keep many organisations, such as sports clubs, nursing homes, religious organisations, play centres, cultural groups, and youth groups functioning and providing services to the communities they operate in.

Purpose

Volunteering and donations by New Zealanders in 2016 highlights findings about these activities from the General social survey 2016 (GSS). It provides useful information for policy makers and organisations on the demographics of the volunteer workforce, plus the number of hours volunteered and who for. It also explores the types of people who donate and who they donate to.

Key findings

- New Zealanders showed a strong commitment to volunteering – 1 in 2 New Zealanders volunteered either for an organisation or by helping a person from another household.
- Women were more likely to be volunteers than men and they contributed more hours.
- A small number of volunteers (14.1 percent) do over half the total volunteer work hours.
- Over half of all New Zealanders (60 percent) made a donation in the previous four weeks.

Data source

The GSS collected information about how many people engaged in volunteer work in the four weeks before their interview. We also asked who they volunteered for, the amount of time they spent volunteering, and for non-volunteers, the most-common reasons not to volunteer. The survey also collected information on how many people donated and the types of causes or organisations they donated to.

This report explores the frequency of volunteering and the hours different groups of people spent as volunteers. For people who did not volunteer, we look at some of the reported barriers to volunteering. We also look at the types of organisations people donate to, and how many and what kind of people donate

Different ways of volunteering

The GSS asked about two different ways of volunteering.

- The more formal type of volunteering is where a person does volunteer work for an organisation.
- A more informal type of volunteering is where a person volunteers directly to help other people who don't live with them.

The informal more-direct type is a harder concept to measure, as people may not always think what they do is volunteering. While the attached tables show the statistics for both types of volunteering, we focus mainly on volunteering for organisations.

Around half of all New Zealanders engage in volunteer work

For New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, 28.2 percent volunteered for an organisation and 36.4 percent volunteered directly to help another person in 2016.

Half of all adults (49.8 percent) did volunteer work, either through an organisation or directly, with 14.7 percent volunteering for both. Table 1 shows the proportions.

Table 1

Proportion of population that volunteered, 2016		
Who volunteered for:	Proportion	Relative sample error
	Percent	
Organisation total	28.2	4.0
Direct (informal) total	36.4	4.1
Either an organisation or directly	49.8	2.9
Did not volunteer at all	50.2	2.9
Both an organisation and directly	14.7	6.3
Organisation only	13.4	6.8
Direct only	21.6	5.8
Source: Stats NZ		

Volunteers help many organisations with significant contributions of time

Volunteers contributed over 13.5 million hours working for organisations over the previous four weeks. At the current minimum adult hourly wage rate of \$15.75 an hour, this would equate to just over \$213 million every four weeks.

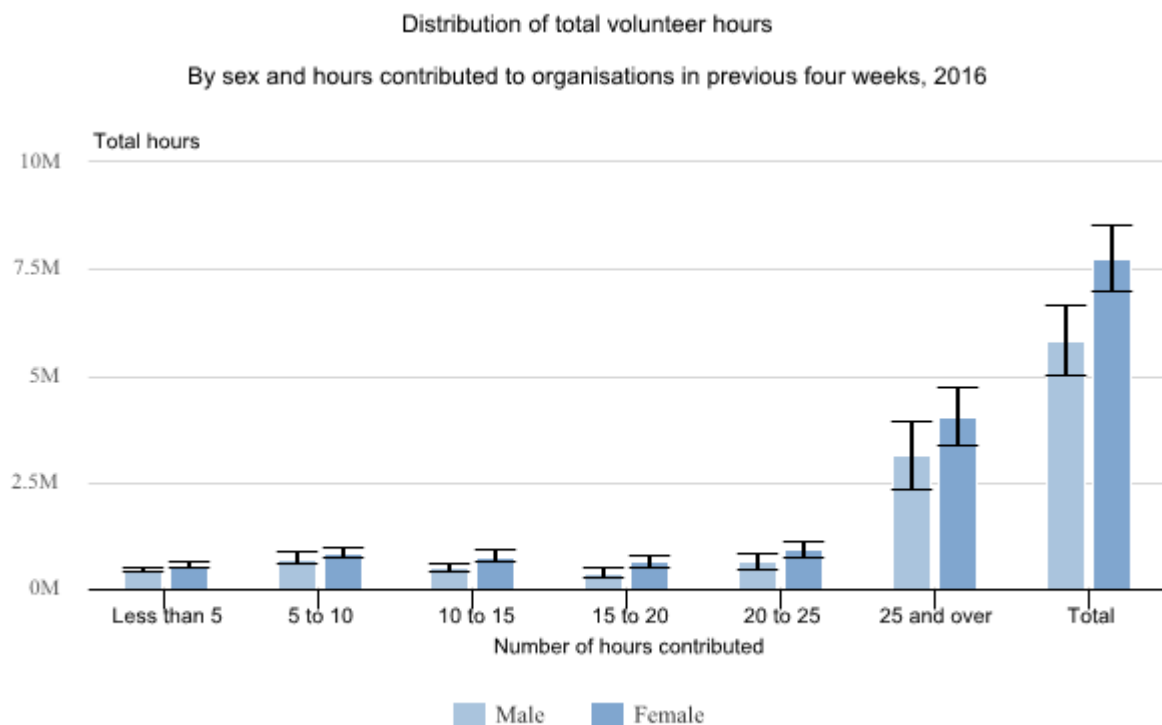
Some groups of people were more likely to be involved in volunteering than others. The biggest differences were the sex, age, household tenure, household income, and qualifications of the volunteers.

Women more likely to volunteer and to contribute more hours

Women had a higher participation rate in volunteering than men – 54.4 percent of all women volunteered for either an organisation or directly, compared with 45.0 percent of men.

For organisations, women contributed just over 1.9 million hours more than men did over the four-week period. At the minimum hourly wage rate of \$15.75 an hour, this sex difference equates to a \$30.5 million greater contribution by women.

For volunteering directly this difference was even greater – women contributed just over 5.5 million hours more than men over the four-week period.

Figure 1

Source: Stats NZ

For people who volunteered for an organisation, the average hours volunteered by men and women was not significantly different. The difference in the total hours was mainly the result of more women volunteering. For women 30.9 percent volunteered, compared with 25.3 percent for men.

Most of this sex difference in the total number of hours occurs in the group of people who are not in the labour force. Women make up a higher proportion of this group (60.5 percent), and they also have a higher rate of volunteering in this group – 29.6 percent compared with 22.4 percent for men.

The total volunteer hours contributed for organisations by women who weren't in the labour force was 1.8 million hours more than for men.

The median age of the female volunteers in this group was 65 years, and for men it was 67 years. For volunteers who were in the labour force, the median ages were 45 years for women and 46 years for men.

For people who were employed in the workforce the number of volunteer hours contributed for organisations by each sex was almost the same. However, for women, part-time workers contributed more hours than full-time workers; for men it was the opposite.

Other groups with higher rates of volunteering

Older people

People aged 45+ were more likely to volunteer for an organisation than younger people were.

Home ownership

People living in owner-occupied dwellings were more likely to volunteer for organisations than people who rented (30.5 percent compared with 23.7 percent). This difference may be partly because the older age groups have a higher rate of volunteering, and on average owner-occupiers tend to be older than renters.

Income level

People earning over \$70,000 were more likely to volunteer than those who earn less. Also, people who considered they had enough or more than enough money for everyday needs were more likely to volunteer than those who did not.

Highest qualification

People with a level 5 diploma or above were more likely to volunteer for an organisation than those without (34.4 percent compared with 24.5 percent)

Life satisfaction

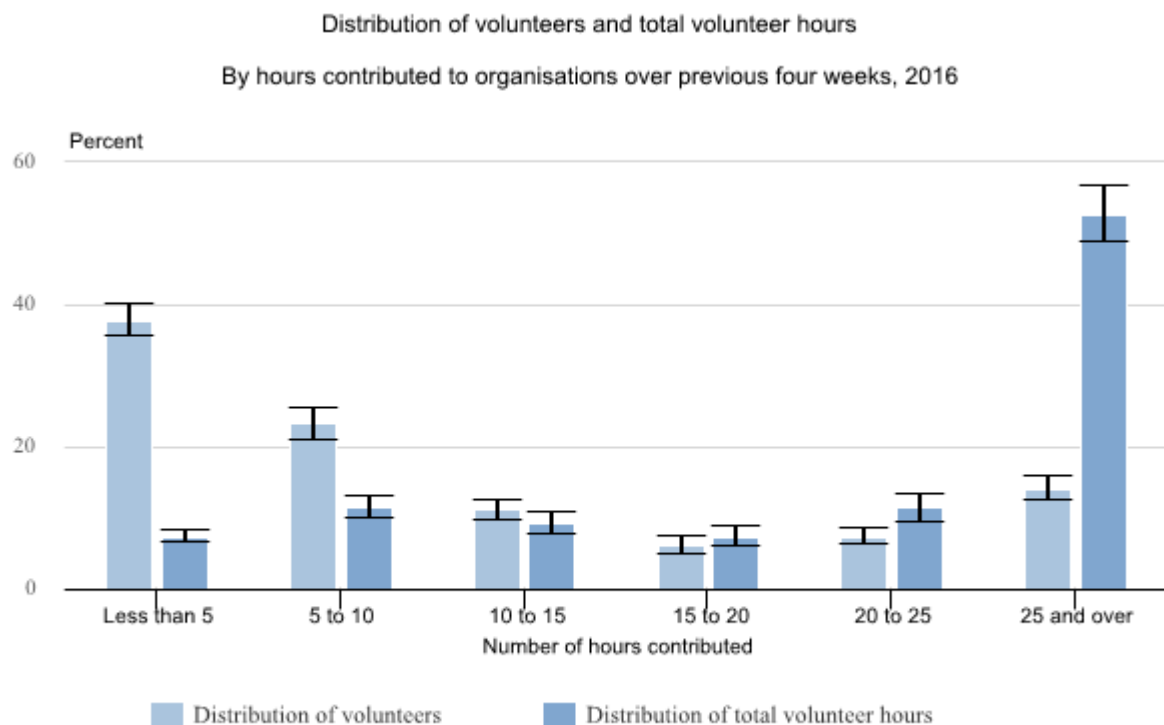
Volunteering rates also tended to increase with higher levels of both life satisfaction and feeling that life is worthwhile. We also acknowledge that it's widely recognised that volunteering can have a positive effect on life satisfaction, by helping build social connections and giving a sense of purpose and belonging within the community.

Small number of volunteers contribute over half the volunteer hours

The number of hours volunteered varied greatly by person. For organisations, 37.7 percent of people volunteered for less than five hours over the four weeks; 14.1 percent volunteered for 25 or more hours.

However, when we compare the total hours contributed with the number of people contributing, we find that over half the total hours contributed (52.8 percent) was by the 14.1 percent of people who worked 25 or more hours over the four-week period. This shows that many organisations rely on a relatively small number of people to fulfil most of the volunteering work load.

Figure 2 shows the distribution in five-hour intervals.

Figure 2

Source: Stats NZ

Men and women engage in different voluntary activities

Men were most likely to volunteer for sport and recreation organisations (38.7 percent), while women were most likely to volunteer for religious or spiritual organisations (29.0 percent).

Women were more likely than men to volunteer for health, social services, and education or research type organisations; men were more likely than women to volunteer for sports and business or professional associations, or unions.

Lack of time gets in way of volunteering

We asked people who didn't volunteer if there were any reasons that prevented them from doing so. The most-common reason people gave for not volunteering for organisations was "did not have the time" (44.6 percent), followed by "no one asked me to volunteer" (16.9 percent).

Table 2 shows the reasons and proportions for why people did not have the time to volunteer.

Table 2

Barriers to volunteering for an organisation, 2016						
Reasons for 'don't have time'	Proportions (percent)			Relative sample error (percent of estimate)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Family commitments	49.6	59.5	54.7	7.1	5.1	4.4
Work commitments	78.2	64.4	71.2	3.5	4.8	3.1
Study/school commitments	10.4	13.9	12.1	22.2	20.5	14.6
Busy with other activities	17.7	15.3	16.5	15.6	15.4	12.0
Source: Stats NZ						

Lack of time was the most common reason for not volunteering for all age groups except people in the 65+ age group – their main reason was health problems (30.2 percent) and then not enough time (19.2 percent).

The reasons for not volunteering for an organisation were similar to not volunteering directly for an individual – where 37.4 percent said that they didn't have enough time.

Over half of all New Zealanders donated in the last four weeks

We asked people if they'd made a donation of either money or goods in the four weeks before the GSS interview and if so, the type of organisation they'd made the donation to.

Of the total population aged 15+ years, 45.7 percent had donated money and 34.9 percent had donated goods. Overall, 60 percent donated either money or goods and 20.6 percent donated both.

The pattern of donating by different groups of people was similar to that for volunteering time. Overall, women were more likely to donate than men (67.3 percent compared with 52.4 percent).

See table 14 of the Excel tables at [Volunteering and donations by New Zealanders in 2016](#) for further details.

The most-frequent recipients of monetary donations were health organisations (41.2 percent), followed by religious or spiritual organisations (28.6 percent). For donations of goods the most-frequent recipients were social services (52.3 percent), followed by health organisations (18.8 percent).

Relationship between volunteering and making donations

People who volunteered in the four weeks before their GSS interview were also more likely to report making a donation than those who didn't volunteer. Of the people who had volunteered, 70.3 percent of them also made a donation. This compares with 49.9 percent of people who did not volunteer.

Of all people who made a donation, 58.4 percent of them also volunteered, compared with 37.1 percent of people who didn't donate.

Conclusion

The profiles of people who are more likely to volunteer and donate are similar. These people are more likely to be older, have greater life satisfaction, feel life is more worthwhile, have higher incomes, and live in their own dwelling. It is also more likely that they are female.

A higher proportion of women volunteer and so women put in more hours than men.

While a good proportion of the population do some volunteer work, a relatively small number of people contribute most of the volunteer hours.

Volunteers make a significant contribution to New Zealand society. Without these volunteers many organisations would find it difficult to exist in their current form.

Download data files

See [Volunteering and donations by New Zealanders in 2016](#) for more detailed data in the Excel tables.