



# Southland Volunteer Sector

Independent Research



Research Commissioned by:



**BEYOND 2025**  
**SOUTHLAND**  
Regional Long Term Plan

April 2023

## Project Contacts

### Impact Consulting

Team: Josh Bruce, Nicole Grey,  
Lindsay Dey  
Company: Impact Consulting NZ Ltd  
Web: [www.impactconsulting.co.nz](http://www.impactconsulting.co.nz)

### Great South

Organisation: Beyond 2025 Southland  
via Great South  
Project Contacts: Bobbi Brown, Becs Amundsen  
Web: [www.greatsouth.nz](http://www.greatsouth.nz)

## Acknowledgements

Impact Consulting would like to thank the Beyond 2025 Southland team and all those who have contributed to this project, supported the distribution of the survey and helped to build our understanding of community needs, the current challenges and opportunities in the Southland Volunteer Sector. We hope this report will prove to be a valuable resource for informing next steps and big picture planning for the region.

### Report Disclaimer Notes:

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# *A Massive* **THANKS**

*"Southland is an amazing place to live, and we want to keep it that way. One of the great things about this part of the world, is how connected our communities are. People genuinely care and are willing to pitch in, volunteer and help to make great things happen.*

*At present our economy is growing, we have increasing labour force demand, an aging population and limited housing. This poses some obvious questions around how key roles will be filled and the potential impact on our work / life balance. As people opt to work more and retire later in response to increasing cost of living, we believe there are some critical questions around flow-on impacts for community groups, not-for-profit organisations and the volunteers sector. This report aims to probe some of these questions to help inform long term planning for the region.*

*A massive thanks to all those who have contributed their views and perspectives."*

---

*Bobbi Brown*

**Bobbi Brown** | Beyond 2025  
Southland, Project Lead



# Report CONTENTS

## Report Structure

This report provides an overview of the impact of the Southland Volunteer Sector. The reporting mainly draws on new primary research undertaken in April 2023 as well as comparative national data where available. The report is broken into two main sections:

1. Southland Volunteering Sector Snapshot
2. Potential Volunteering Impacts

## Defining Volunteering

Within this report volunteering has been considered “the contribution of time or skills to help community groups, organisations or individuals for free or without compensation.

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*Section 7*  
**Volunteer**  
**Sector Snapshot**

## Project Overview

Southland has a rich history of volunteerism, numerous not-for-profit organisations, and strong community participation. These groups, and the volunteers that contribute to them, are a key part of what makes Southland a great place to live.

At present Southland has a growing economy, limited new housing, low unemployment, and an aging population. While this creates some amazing opportunities, it also places increasing workforce demands on existing residents. This project has been commissioned by the Beyond 2025 Southland regional planning team who are keen to understand how current and future workforce demand might impact volunteering, community groups and quality of life in Southland.

## Volunteer Sector Snapshot

This section of the report provides an overview of the current level of volunteering in Southland based on research undertaken in April 2023 for this project and includes national comparatives where possible.

Research included phone-based consultation with a range of community groups and umbrella organisations within the volunteer sector, as well as two online surveys.

- Individuals Survey (278 respondents)
- Community Groups Survey (106 groups)

<sup>1</sup> [Stats NZ Jun 22 Pop. Projections \(83,200 of 102,500\)](#)

## Southland Volunteering

### Do you currently volunteer?

Data Source: Individual Survey, 278 Respondents

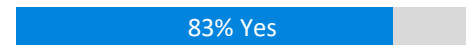


Figure 1

Volunteering includes time contributed to individuals or community groups and organisations without payment. The national data presented in the question above is for the sub-set 'all of the South Island, excluding Canterbury'. This indicates that the volunteer survey for this project had a self-selection bias towards people who volunteer. In order to extrapolate whole survey results to the wider Southland population, results must first be multiplied by 0.61 to account for those who do not volunteer ( $83\% \times 0.61 = 51\%$ ) or 0.51 when looking at a sample who have indicated that they volunteer.

### Voluntary hours per month

Data Source: Individual Survey, 229 Question Responses

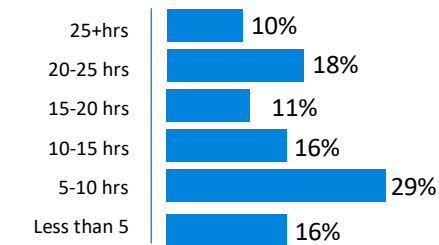


Figure 3

## NZ-wide Volunteering

### Have you volunteered in the past 4 weeks?

Data Source: Stats NZ Wellbeing Statistics 2021 ([General Social Survey](#))



Figure 2

### Voluntary hours in the past month

Data Source: Stats NZ Wellbeing Statistics 2021 ([General Social Survey](#))

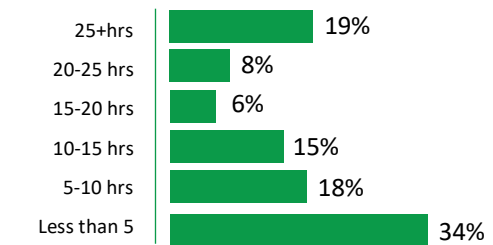


Figure 4

The 229 Southlanders who answered this question, collectively contribute a total of 3,539.5 hours to voluntary activities each month (or an average of 15.45 hours per person). Assuming this level of volunteering is reflective of others who volunteer and applying the 0.51 multiplier to account for those who do not volunteer, Southlanders over the age of 15 years<sup>1</sup> are estimated to collectively contribute more than 7.9 million hours per annum to voluntary activities.

Southlanders contribute an estimated

**7.9 million** voluntary hours per year

**\$186M**

If valued at the current NZ living wage rate of \$23.65

**30% of New Zealanders over 15yrs volunteer for a community organisation. 51% volunteer for an organisation or directly for individuals.**

Stats NZ Wellbeing Statistics 2021 ([General Social Survey](#))

If valuing Southlanders estimated voluntary time contribution, at the current NZ Living Wage rate of \$23.65 per hour, it would equate to over \$186M. If comparing this to Southland’s major industries it would have been the regions 14<sup>th</sup> biggest industry in 2019, coming in slightly behind education and training<sup>2</sup>.

Comparison of Southland survey data for this project and all of NZ data indicates a similar average level of volunteering nationally, with a slightly different distribution of time commitment.

Voluntary time from those contributing over 25 hours per month is significant. With time from this subset of volunteers in Southland averaging 51hrs per month. Based on survey data, this 10% of volunteers currently contribute 32% of the total voluntary hours. Nationally this trend, of a few doing a lot, is even more pronounced.

**How many different groups or organisations have you contributed voluntary time to in the past year?**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 230 Respondents

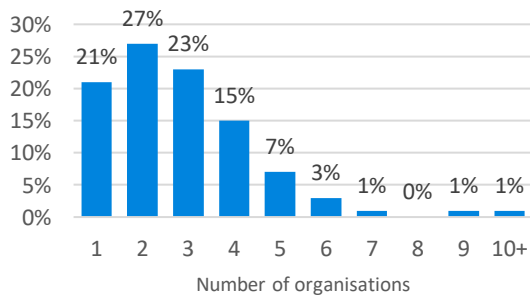


Figure 5

<sup>2</sup> MBIE Regional Economic Activity Web Tool 2019 data

**What type of organisations have you contributed your time to / volunteered for in the past year**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 230 Respondents, 601 organisation types selected

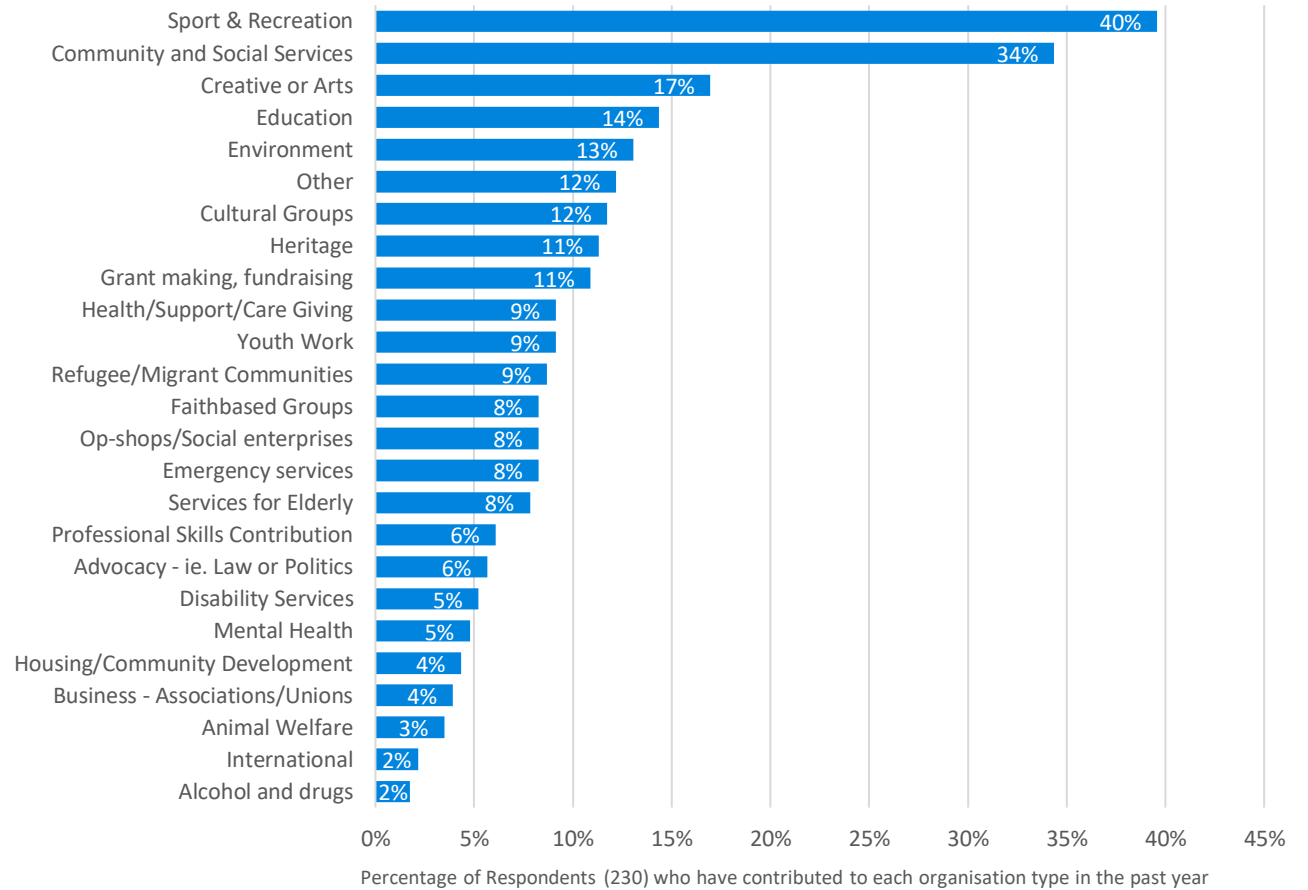
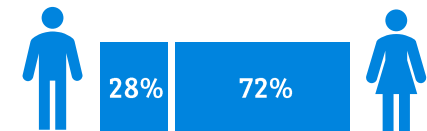


Figure 6

51%

Of Southland Volunteers contributed to x3 or more organisations in the past year



Southland Volunteers are 2.5 times more likely to be female than male.

### Age of Survey Respondents Over 24yrs Who Volunteer compared to Southland Demographics

Data Source: Individual Survey, 222 Respondents;  
Southland Estimated Population Demographics 2022 [Stats NZ](#)

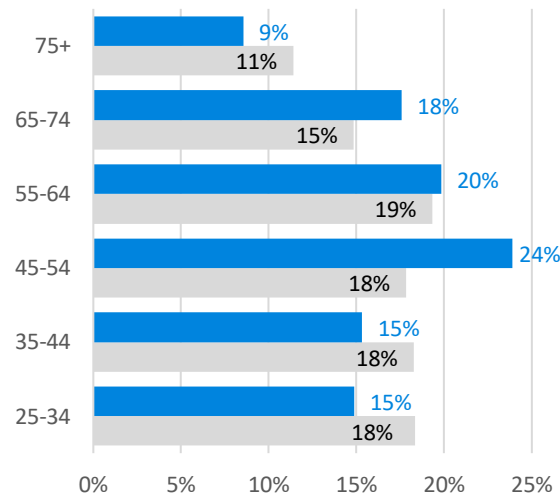


Figure 7

■ Percentage of survey respondents who volunteer and are over 24 years of age.  
■ Percentage of Southland 2022 population over 24 years of age, who fit into each age bracket.

The graph above indicates that survey responses can be considered representative of the overall regional population in term of age distribution and that Southlanders are proportionally more likely to volunteer within the 45-54 and 65-74 age brackets.

**26%** Of Southland adult volunteers are over 65 years of age.  
Nationally 34% of adult<sup>3</sup> volunteers are over 65 years.

<sup>3</sup> Stats NZ Wellbeing Statistics 2021 (General Social Survey)

Based on the survey responses it seems that younger adults (over 24) are involved in volunteering and may simply be volunteering in different ways or sectors to organisations who are struggling to attract younger people.

### Regional Representation - Survey Responses compared to Southland Demographics

Data Source: Individual Survey, 278 Respondents;  
Southland Estimated Population Demographics 2022 [Stats NZ](#)

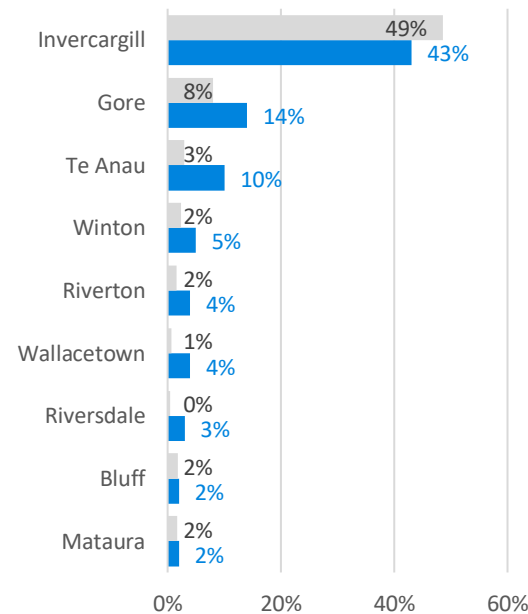


Figure 8 – Top 9 respondent locations (30 respondents selected 14 other locations)

The graph above shows good regional distribution of results, with high representation of respondents from Te Anau and Gore.

### Has the amount of time that you volunteer increased or decreased over the past 5 years?

Data Source: Individual Survey, 255 Respondents

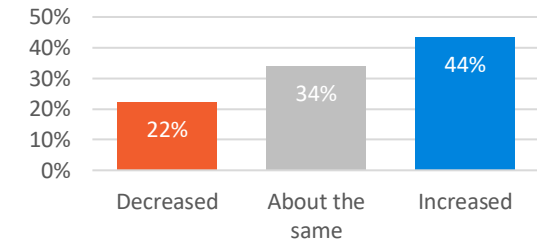


Figure 9

### Volunteering time increase / decrease by age bracket over the past 5 years

Data Source: Individual Survey, 253 Respondents;

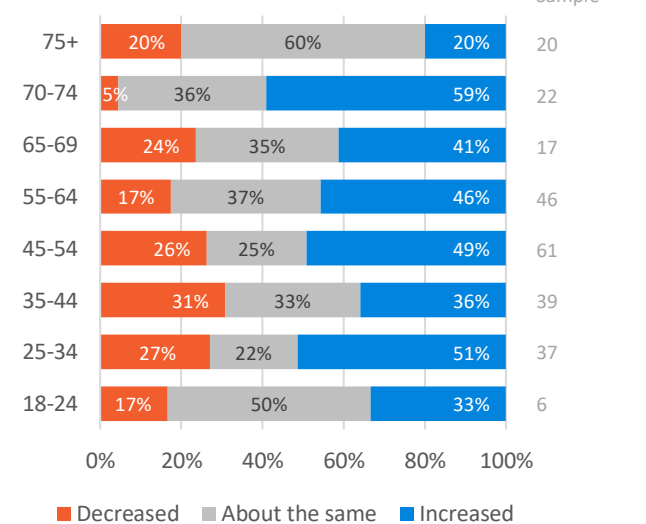


Figure 10

Across all age brackets, survey respondents who currently volunteer are more likely to have increased their amount of volunteering than decreased it in the past five years.



### Reasons for Change in Volunteering over the previous Five Years (those who currently volunteer)

Data Source: Individual Survey, 179 Respondents

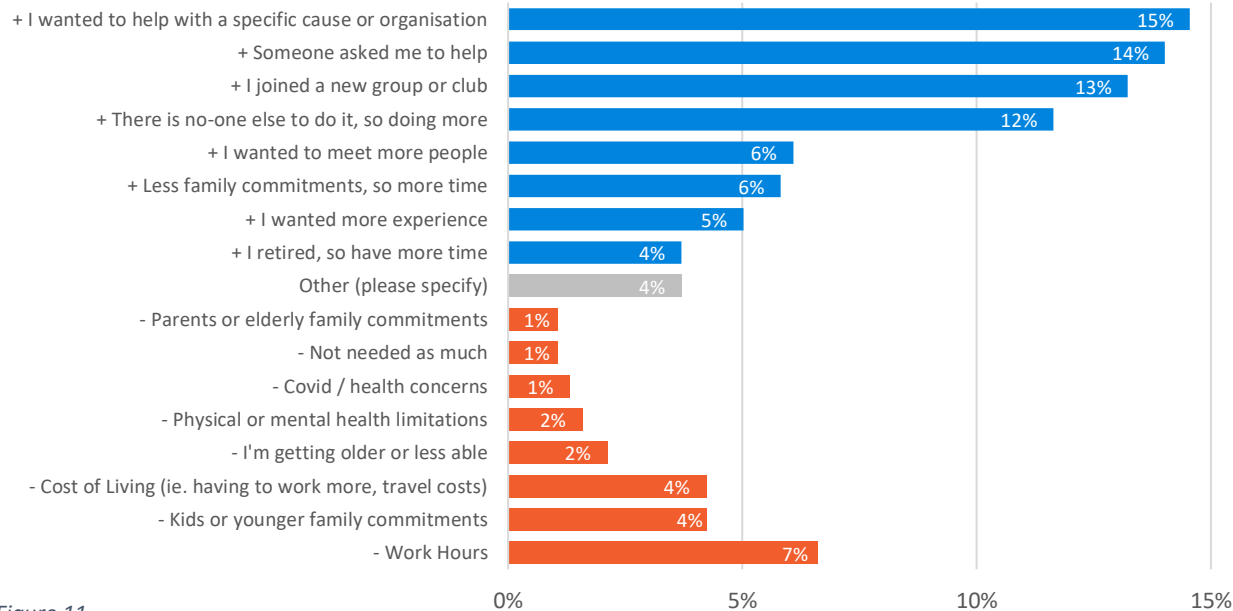


Figure 11

### Main Barriers to Volunteering (For those who have volunteered in the past but don't currently)

Data Source: Individual Survey, 34 Respondents

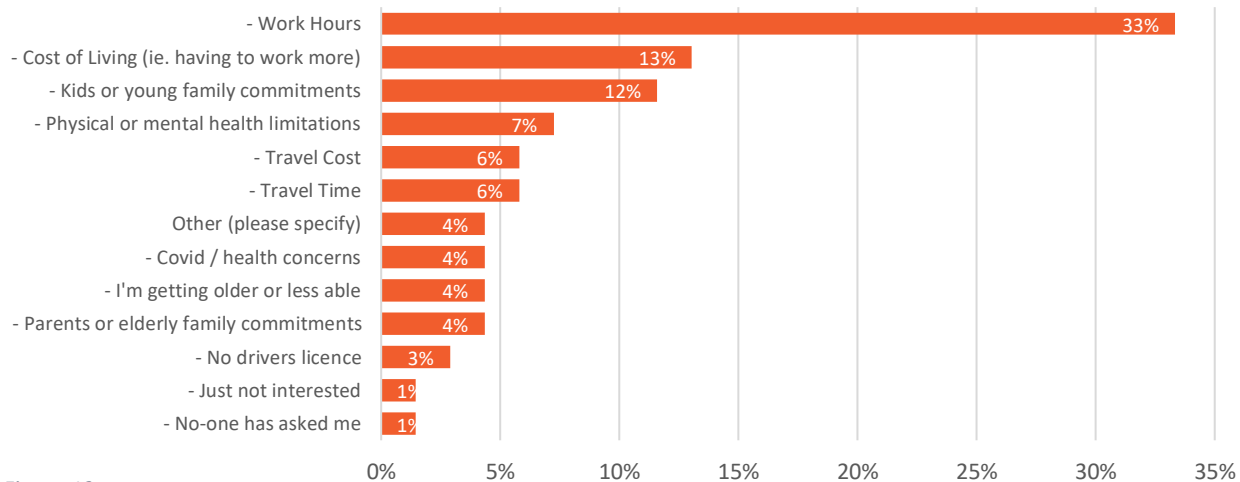


Figure 12

### Increases in Volunteering

The top proactive reasons for increases in volunteering are 'wanting to help as specific organisation' and 'joining a new group'. The top reactive reasons are 'being asked to help' and 'there being no-one else to do it'.

The fact that 12% of volunteers have increased their time due to having no-one else to do it is a concern and potentially requires a shift towards recruitment for some organisations. Respondents in the 45-54 age range were most likely to be taking on more, there was no strong theme in terms of type of organisations.

### Decreases in Volunteering

'Work hours' is the biggest factor by far for decreases in volunteering for both those who currently volunteer (7% influenced by this barrier) and those who have volunteered in the past but don't currently (33% influenced by this barrier).

**The 'work hours' barrier to volunteering, is around twice as prevalent, as 'the cost of living' or 'family commitment' barriers.**

Barriers for those who "don't currently volunteer but would like to" are similar in proportion to those who have volunteered in the past. However, 13% indicated that simply haven't been asked.

**Do you anticipate your volunteering increasing or decreasing over the next 5-years?**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 262 Respondents

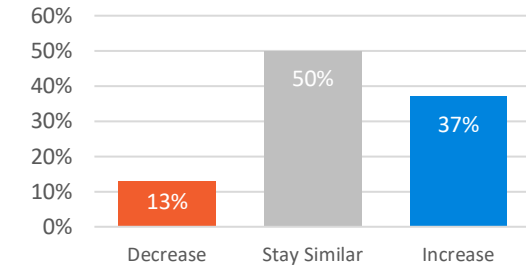


Figure 13

**Anticipated future volunteering over the next 5 years, by age bracket**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 261 Respondents

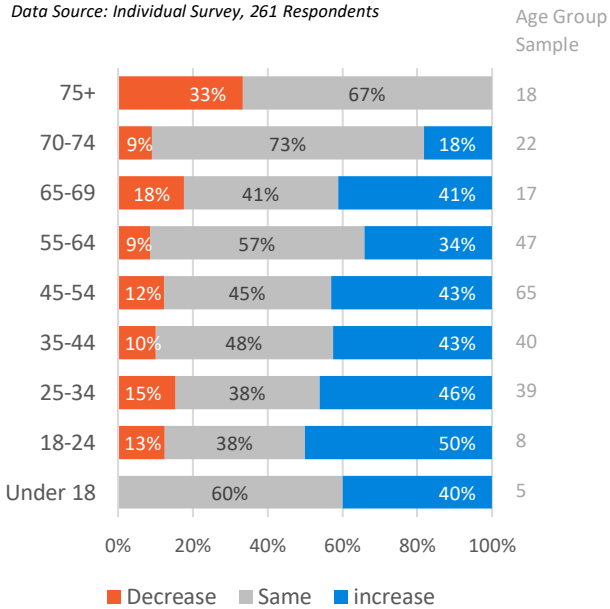


Figure 14

**Across all ages there is a strong intention to maintain or increase volunteering over the next 5 years.**

**Work / Study Status of Survey Respondents**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 265 Respondents

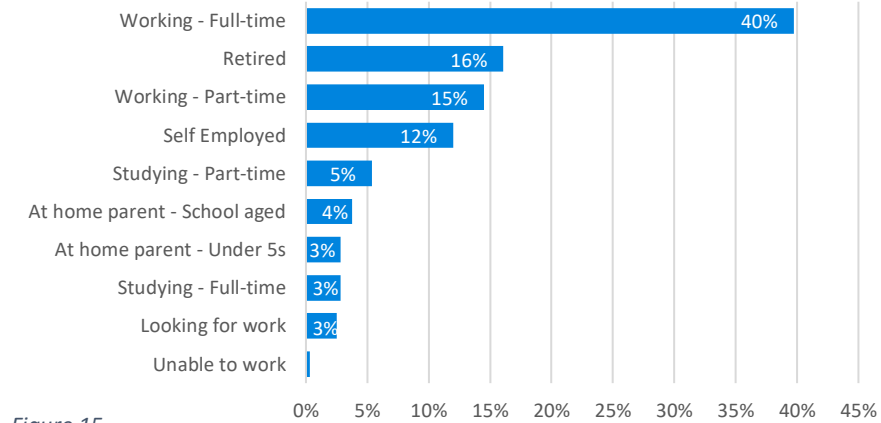


Figure 15

**General Position in Relation to Volunteering – Which of the following statements is true for you?**

Data Source: Individual Survey, 262 Respondents

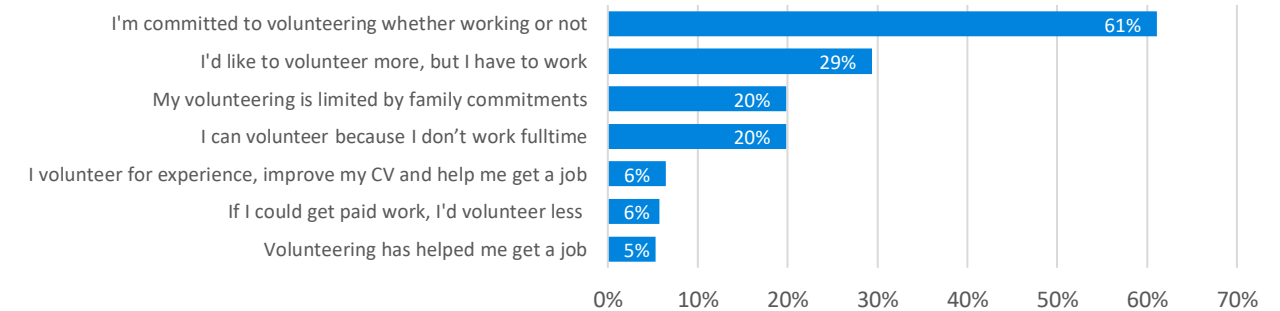


Figure 16

*"[I volunteer] as part of my beliefs and way of life, it is not necessarily looked upon as volunteering in the community." "I do it because there is no-one else and the outcomes are important to me." "I would like others to volunteer more so I can step back." "Volunteering has given me amazing skills and is great for my mental and social self."*



## Southland Community Group Volunteering Perspectives

### Community Group Sample

There were 106 Southland community groups and organisations who responded to the survey for this project.

As of April 2023, there are 245 registered charitable entities with 'Southland' in their name. However, we know this is only a small sample of the huge number organisations, given that not all not-for-profit groups are registered entities and previous research in the impact of Covid on Fiordland at the end of 2021 resulted in 88 unique community group nominations from 407 survey respondents for Fiordland alone.

Fiordland make up around 3.95% of Southland's overall population. If the number of not-for-profit community entities identified in 2021 is considered representative for Southland, then there would be an estimated 2,230 community organisations across the Southland region. This means the survey sample represent approximately 4.75% of all Southland community groups.

### Number of Paid Staff (located in Southland)

Data Source: Groups Survey, 106 Respondents

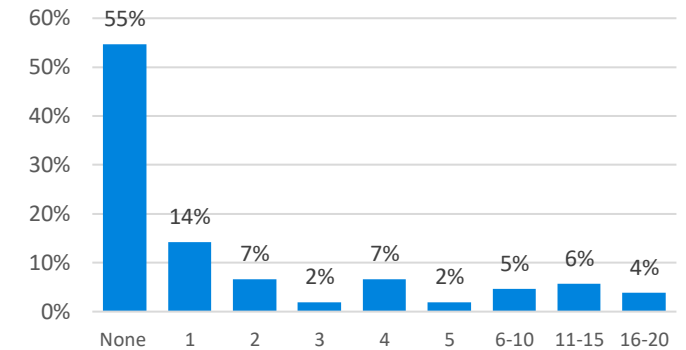


Figure 17

### Number of Volunteers (located in Southland)

Data Source: Groups Survey, 106 Respondents

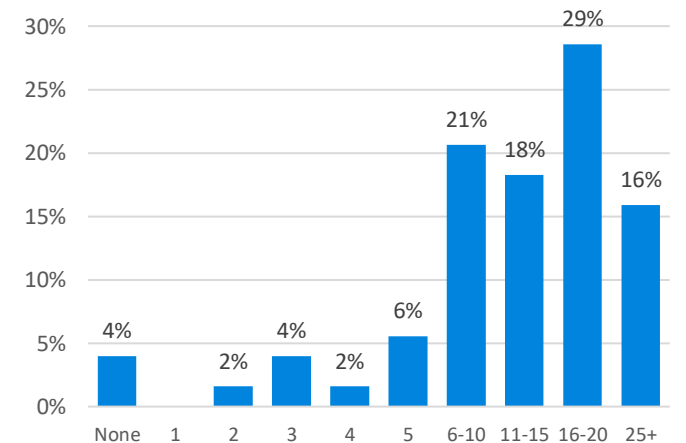


Figure 18

For the 20 community group survey respondents with over 25 volunteers, the average number of volunteers was 89. This was largely reflective of the fact that community events may have a small organising committee but require 50-100+ volunteers to facilitate.

### Community Group Regional Coverage

Data Source: Groups Survey, 106 Respondents

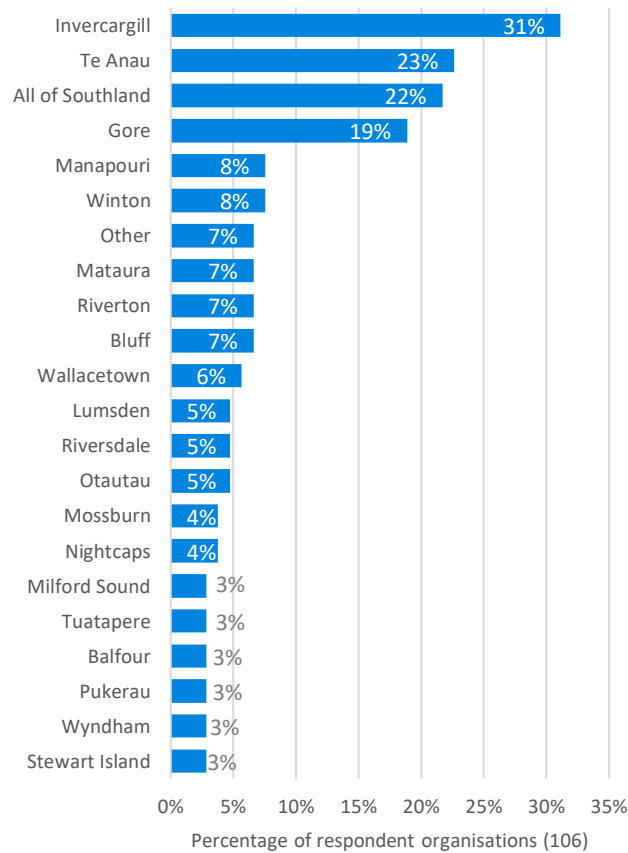


Figure 19

Southland community group survey, respondents cover a wide range of areas, with 22% having a Southland-wide catchment. Representation from organisations which cover Te Anau is high, due to the availability of a community directory to support survey distribution.

### Organisations by Sector

Data Source: Groups Survey, 104 Respondents

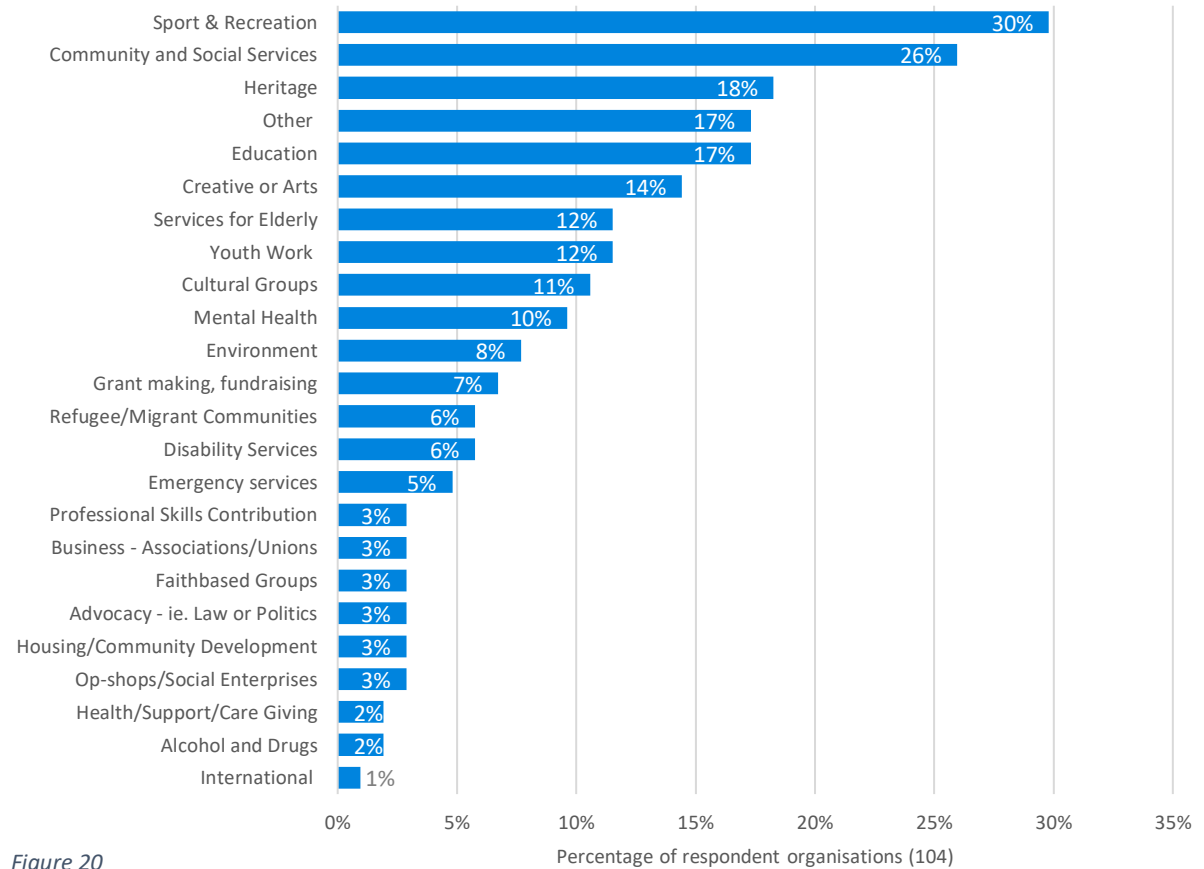


Figure 20

Comparative to the individual survey, the most notable differences in the group respondents are:

- Higher representation of heritage organisations (18% of group responses compared to 11% of individual volunteer responses) and mental health organisations (10% compared to 5%).
- Lower representation of sport & recreation organisations (30% compared to 40%) and community and social services (26% compared to 34%) – most likely due to fewer organisations having larger volunteer bases in these sectors. Health, Support and Caregiving also had lower representation (2% compared to 9%) presumably due to much of this volunteering being for individuals rather than organisations.

### Estimate of Total Voluntary Time Per Week

Data Source: Groups Survey, 98 Respondents

This was an open-ended question and respondents gave a specific number of hours per week for all volunteer time, covering all activities, from meetings and admin to service delivery and events.

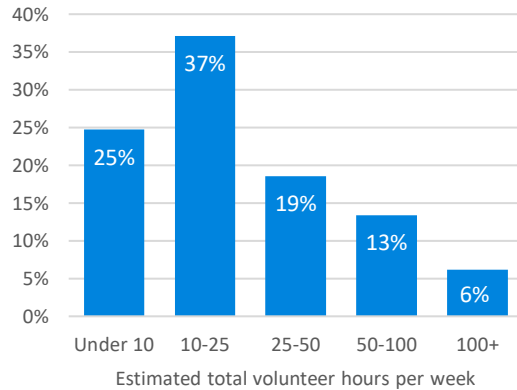


Figure 21

Based on the estimate given, Southland volunteers contribute over 185,744 hours per year to the sample group of 97 community organisations. An average of 1,895 collective volunteer hours per group per annum.

Assuming a total of 2,230 community groups across Southland, this would equate to approximately 4.23 million voluntary hours per year across all community groups.

This is 53% of the total voluntary time estimated for Southland individual volunteers (9.7 million).

The 2021 volunteering statistics from the General Social Survey<sup>4</sup>, for in the South Island (excluding Christchurch), indicated that 45% of the total volunteered time over the previous four weeks, was for organisations and 55% directly for individuals. This places our estimates within 8% of similar proportions.

Southlanders contribute an estimated

**4.23 million** voluntary hours per year to community organisations

**\$100M** If valued at the current NZ living wage rate of \$23.65

### Our current volunteers are mostly:

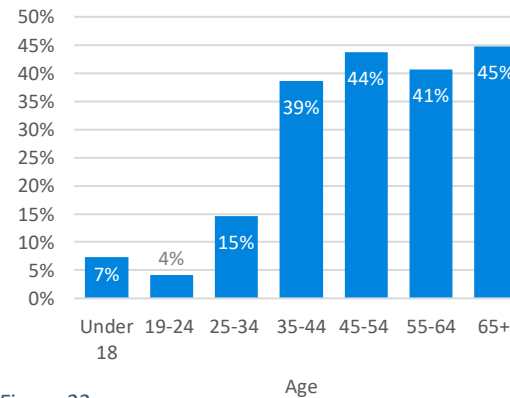


Figure 22

### Our current volunteers are people who are also:

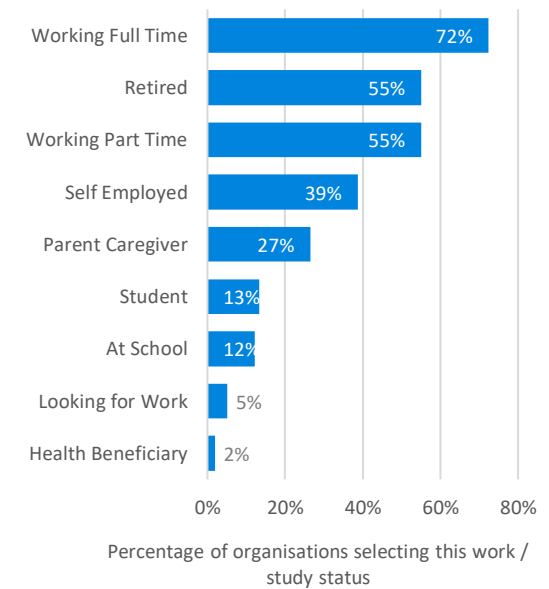


Figure 23

### Our current volunteers are:

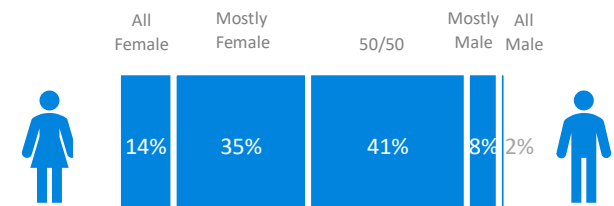


Figure 24

<sup>4</sup> Stats NZ Wellbeing Statistics 2021 ([General Social Survey](#))

### Importance of Volunteers - How important are volunteers to the survival and/or operation of your organisation or community group?

Data Source: Groups Survey, 100 Respondents

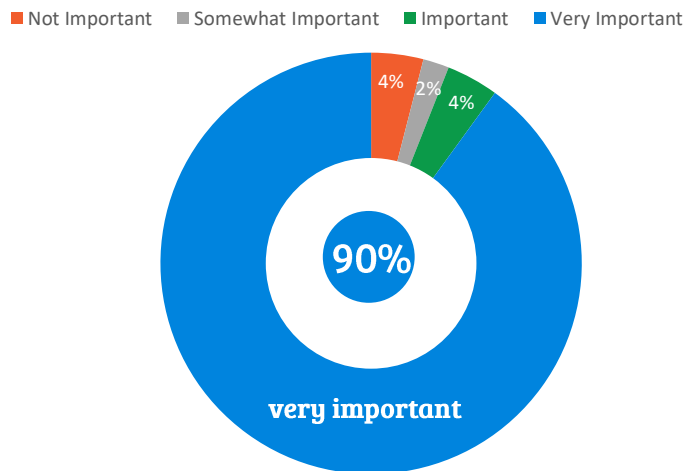


Figure 25

### How big of a challenge is getting sufficient volunteers for your group or organisation?

Data Source: Groups Survey, 97 Respondents

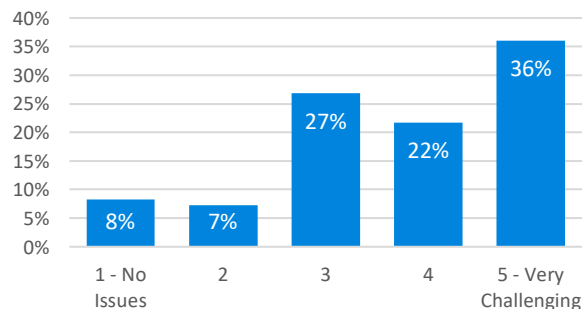


Figure 26

**58%** of Southland community groups rank the task of getting sufficient volunteers as challenging or very challenging.

### We asked: 'If half your volunteers left next week what would be the implications for your organisation?'

Data Source: Groups Survey, 67 Respondents

This question was to loosely test the potential impact of a volunteer decline. Of the community group respondents, 67 answered this open-ended question. Responses were sorted into the following themes.

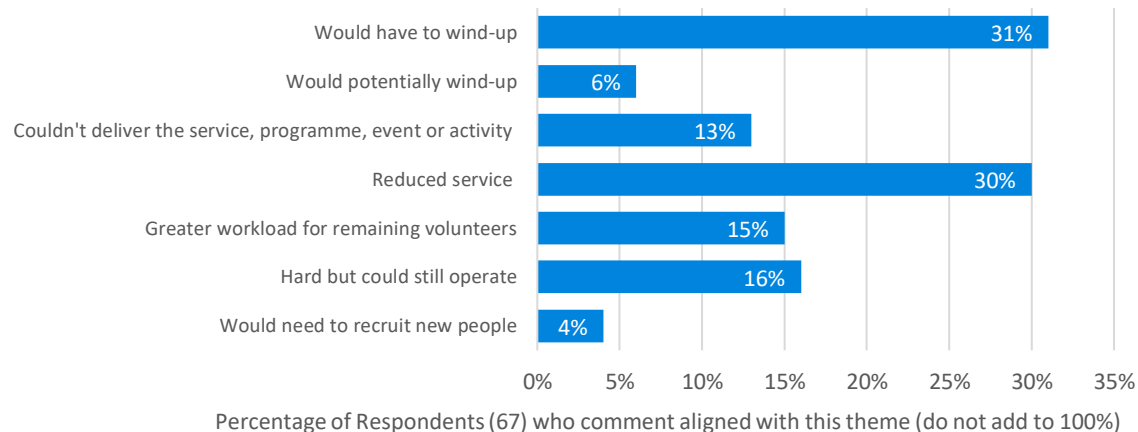


Figure 27

Loss of half Southland's volunteers would result in over 30% of community groups folding and 6% potentially folding. The impact would be significant and widespread, both geographically across the region and across sectors. The type of organisations which indicated that they would potentially fold included a school PTA, a marching club, a choir, a Lions Club, a squash club, heritage clubs, museums, a preschool group, a cultural group, sporting events, arts organisations, a netball club, a pool and an environmental group.

*"Unable to form a committee/ quorum to make decisions for the club. Organization and hands on work for our tournaments, weekly events. Effectively the club would shut down." "The pool would close indefinitely" "Devastating" "We'd be stuffed" "...we would no longer qualify as a legal entity."*

While ability to have a legally viable entity might not be the main issue, if volunteer decline was over a longer period, responses highlight the potential vulnerability of a significant number of groups. Or looking at it conversely the significant benefit of current dedicated volunteers who are keeping organisations going.

### Trends in Volunteering over the past 5-10 years

Data Source: Groups Survey, 80 Respondents (open-ended question)

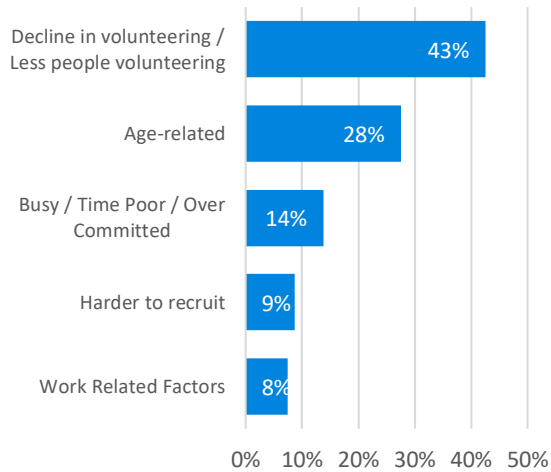


Figure 28

### Southland Wide Volunteering Challenges

Data Source: Groups Survey, 66 Respondents (open-ended question)

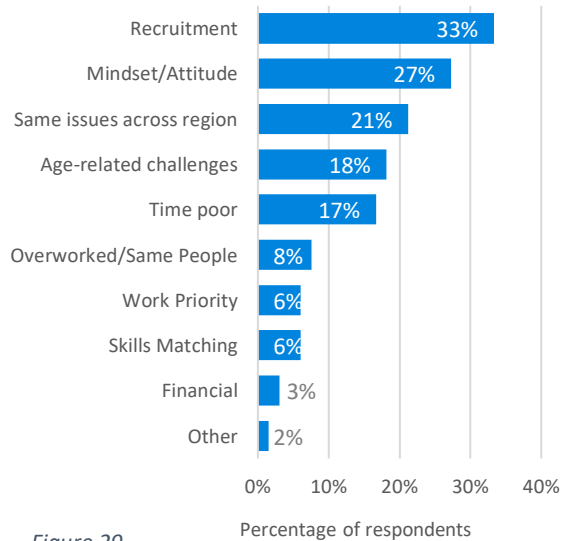


Figure 29

### Sample Comments:

*"Volunteers are all getting tired."*

*"Rise of spontaneous volunteering, more task focussed, commit to a programme/cause and less organisation loyal."*

*"Greatly reducing people are not giving as much. People work longer hours Mum and Dad's work. More single parent families."*

*"Less people volunteering partly through changes in lifestyle and shift working. Increased abilities with digital, computer and internet now required..."*

*"Yes. Greater reluctance to commit. In rural communities the change from sheep to dairy farming and now the move to trees is removing the families who have traditionally been volunteers."*

*"Getting harder to get volunteers."*

*"Student volunteer numbers are high. Parental volunteer numbers are generally declining."*

*"Downwards trend, often are older retired people who then get stretched too thinly, young people aren't interested as there's not a volunteering value within homes."*

*"Less people doing more. Volunteers are more relied on, assumed they'll be there to fill gaps."*

*"The young ones don't have the same work ethic."*

*"People are really happy to be available on a spontaneous basis but don't tend to want to be rostered on and therefore tied down."*

### Which of the following are the main challenges for your group or organisation in terms of volunteers?

Data Source: Groups Survey, 96 Respondents

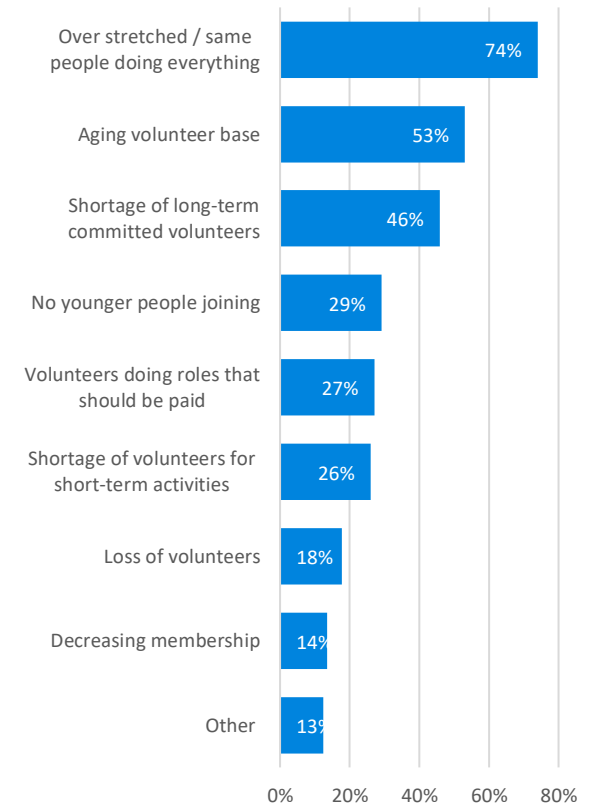


Figure 30

*"Filling our "Officer" roles is our biggest challenge. No-one wants to be President, Secretary or Treasurer or perhaps there is a lack of skills in today's environment e.g. Charity Commission Reporting Standards." "Staff shortages means that people working longer hours to keep businesses open."*

### Additional Volunteers

43%

**43% of community group survey respondents indicated that they need additional volunteers** (31 of 72 question respondents).

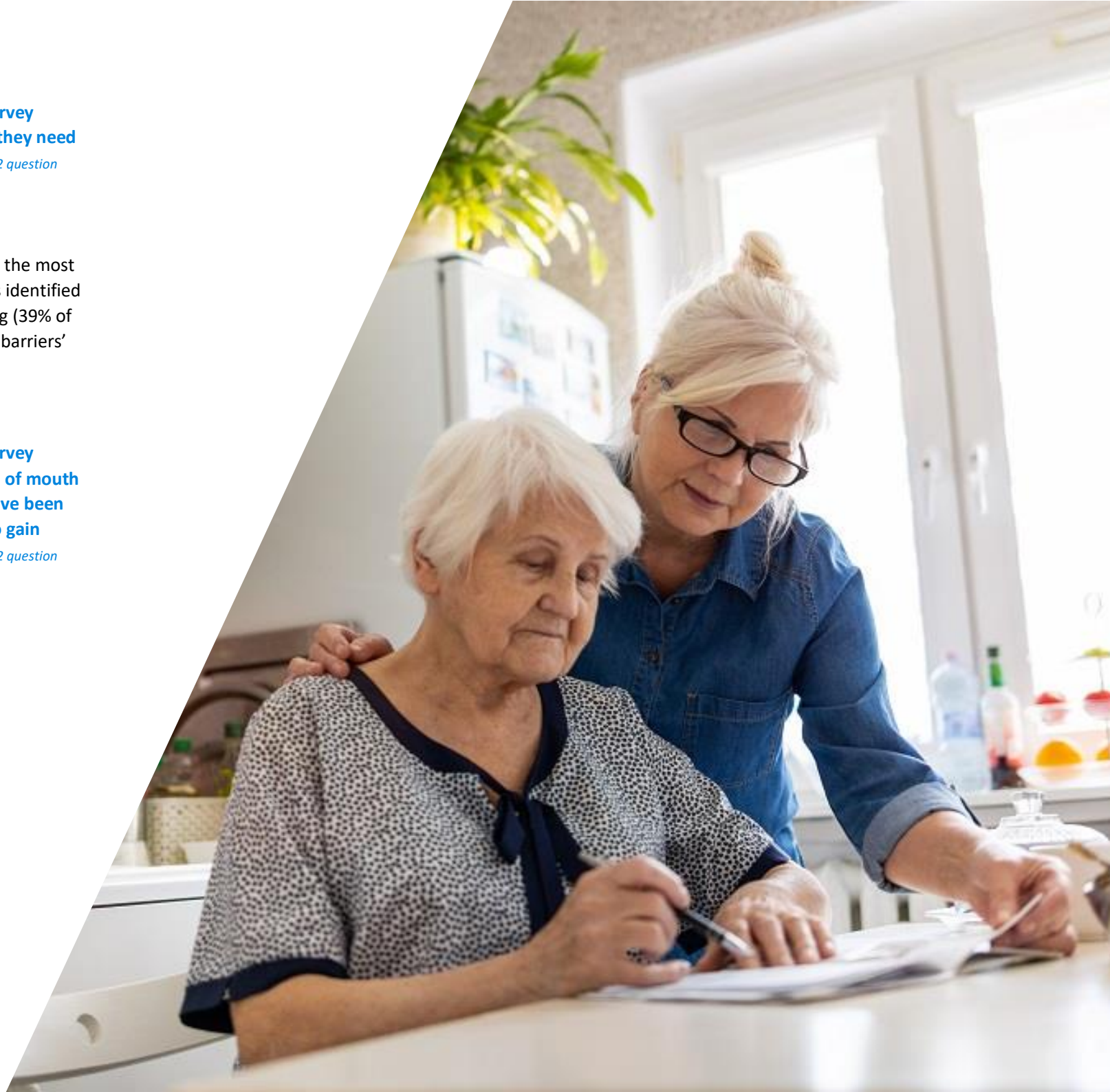
### Barriers to Volunteering

People being 'time poor and busy' was the most commonly stated barrier organisations identified as preventing people from volunteering (39% of comments), followed by 'work related barriers' (29% of comments).

### Volunteer Recruitment

59%

**59% of community group survey respondents indicated word of mouth and personal approaches have been their most successful way to gain additional volunteers** (54 of 92 question respondents).





## Phone Discussions Summary

Phone discussions with a wide range of Southland Community groups were used to inform the survey question development. Overall, these discussions and key themes were strongly aligned with survey responses. This section provides an overview summary of responses.

### Organisational Structure

*What does volunteering look like for your organisation / sector? What is the mix of paid and voluntary roles?*

- There was no set structure or any common themes around types of volunteering and staffing mix from these interviews. As we covered a range of organisations including funders with virtually no volunteers, some entirely volunteer driven organisations and everything in between.

### Demographics

*What age group / gender are your volunteers?*

- Some orgs had very diverse volunteer bases and couldn't really articulate any demographics of note.
- Many had more females than males (although not always a large difference).
- Many organisations had primarily retired/ 60+ volunteers, often exclusively. The feedback on 'aging volunteer base' was mixed. Some

organisations had no concerns. Other organisations were very aware of the aging volunteer base and also concerned about lack of skills & knowledge for things like meeting etiquette and committee roles. Many didn't have a plan for how to address these challenges or ideas to try.

*"The main challenges are people having their own time and resources to volunteer – even youth are keen but not sure where or how and there's probably a bit of a preconception of what a volunteer looks like.*

*Volunteers are vital, we couldn't do it without them. And yet a local award winner didn't even class what he does as volunteerism in his speech. People have different capacities, and nobody should be discounted. It all helps." Eastern Southland Community Networking Trust*

### Challenges

*What would you say are the main challenges for volunteering in Southland at present?*

- The challenges raised were consistent with the 2010 community needs research and those reflected in the survey responses.
- Some of the significant challenges mentioned were 'volunteers being time poor', 'overcommitted or overworked', and 'not having a skillset matching the roles available'.

- There was not a significant theme of struggling to recruit for the organisations spoken to and a couple of organisations mentioned no trouble with volunteers.
- It was clear that a coordinator (either paid or highly functional) is important to effectively coordinate and match volunteers with roles within the organisations.
- Other challenges raised included 'Aptitude decline', 'Health and Safety Factors', 'Skill Set Challenges' including basic knowledge of the role, 'Housing' and 'A lack of volunteer opportunity promotion'.

*"We've got a very strong and smooth branch, it's ticked over really well, we get great info and training. Society would look a lot bleaker without volunteers." CAB Volunteer*

### Trends

*Have you seen any changes in your volunteer base over the past 10 years?*

- Many people answered this from a five-year perspective, with most indicating that there has been very little change.
- Two organisations mentioned people's lack of willingness or ability to commit and take on responsibility or liability.
- One organisation working with young families noted cycles within volunteering and community demographics.

*“Getting people to actually take positions like chair, treasurer and secretary is a challenge for many groups. Being trained in meeting procedure was something you learnt as you grew up, especially in rural communities, it was just what you did. Now, if you get a lot of funding then you’re obliged to tick a lot of boxes and that’s a lot of liability for a small group.” SERN*

## **Covid**

*Has Covid had any impact?*

- Short term, yes. It interrupted and affected everyone operationally with lockdown and restrictions. There were a wide range of experiences from huge increases in demand and activity, through to nothing happening for three years.
- Longer term activity levels and volunteering bases were back to pre-covid levels for most organisations, some had longer term increased demand.
- A couple of organisations flagged the dynamics around limited funding and changes in funding. For example, extra funding during Covid-19 response now dropping off.
- One organisation talked about volunteers having less capacity after Covid-19. Individual survey responses indicated that some have less physical capacity, some have increased work demands and many are more protective of family time.

*“We had a huge increase. Ten-fold increase in workload from the announcement of lockdown. We’ve noticed our community needs a lot more support, it hasn’t really slowed down.” Eastern Southland Community Networking Trust*

## **Rural Communities**

There were a number of comments on the dynamics of rural living in Southland and how key these organisations and services are.

*“We have to match the willingness, with the workload and location, its ad hoc and unpredictable. With people in the rural sector, they tend to put off asking, so when they need help, they need it now. We have to reduce the timeframe of support and we’re proud to say we are providing a good service.” Rural Support Trust*

*“We do about 115 shuttle trips a year for very isolated people to get to things like hospital, WINZ and Court appointments. It’s not funded through a contract; some people don’t have vehicles. There’s a huge impact of this service not existing.” Fiordland Community House*

## Summary of Other Reports

### CONA (2010)<sup>5</sup>

A Southland-wide Community Organisations Needs Assessment (CONA) was commissioned by Venture Southland in 2010. This research looked at a wide range of challenges facing community groups throughout the region and included questions around membership and volunteers.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Most Significant Issue:** Membership and volunteers were identified as the second most significant challenge for Southland community organisations after funding.
- **Challenges Still Similar but More Pronounced:** The key challenges identified included overstretched volunteers with the same people doing everything, people not committing for the long term and an aging volunteer base. The main changes since 2010 are that an aging volunteer base has become more prominent as an issue and the same people doing everything is now even more pronounced.

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<sup>5</sup> Southland Community Organisations Needs Assessment, 2010, Impact Consulting.

### Time to Shine - Southland Report (2020)<sup>6</sup>

This report was a national initiative to assess the impact of Covid-19 on community and volunteer sector organisations in mid-2020. The survey included responses from 185 organisations who operate in Southland. These responses made up the Southland report. Note: The sample included a number of national organisations and included 26 organisations with no volunteers.

- **Number of volunteers:** Only 38% of the Time to Shine respondents had more than 10 volunteers vs. 63% for the survey sample from our recent research for this report.
- **Challenges:** 19% of organisations reported a loss of volunteers, as a result of Covid-19, 8% reported an increase. 26% of Time to Shine respondents indicated that they needed more volunteers, this is much lower than the 43% of Southland organisations who need additional volunteers from in our recent research for this report.

<sup>6</sup> Time to shine, time to take stock, time to shape our future - A survey of Aotearoa New Zealand's community sector on the impacts of COVID-19. Hui E! - 2020 - Southland Subset Report

### Southland Workforce Strategy (2020)<sup>7</sup>

While not directly volunteering related, this report highlights some of the key demographic challenges facing the region and highlights the high workforce participation rates.

- *“Achieving additional labour supply from those not in the labour force is also likely to be limited, as the majority not participating were aged 15-19 years, or disproportionately females at key parental and caring ages, or 65+ years, indicating other life-stage considerations”* (Page 9)
- *“The projected decline in numbers at prime working age (labour supply) ... must also be seen in relation to the fact that the Southland Region already has the second-highest workforce participation rate among New Zealand's regions... Southland's employment rates have also almost consistently led the country, while its unemployment rates are well below the national average, being equal third lowest in 2018.”* (Page 24)
- *“Only five of the 18 largest industries employed more aged 15-29 years than 55+ years, while four had very low ratios.”* (Page 37)

<sup>7</sup> [Southland Workforce Strategy](#)

### State of Volunteering Report (2022)<sup>8</sup>

Some key points within the 2022 report were:

- **Impact:** “New Zealand has a high volunteering participation rate, with over 50 percent of the population volunteering with an organisation or directly in their communities. Volunteering has a statistically discernible positive impact on wellbeing and social cohesion and the economic value of volunteering is estimated at \$4 billion a year.” (page 6)
- **Motivations:** People volunteer for values aligned organisations.
- **Aging Volunteers:** 47.5% of organisations indicated that ‘ageing volunteers’ was their single biggest challenge.
- **Young People:** Many organisations say there is a lack of young people volunteering, however youth volunteers challenged these groups to think about how they could engage younger people.
- **Recruitment:** The large majority of volunteers found their role via word of mouth EXCEPT for people under 35 who found their roles via social media posts or internet searches.

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<sup>8</sup> [Volunteering NZ – State of Volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand Report 2022](#)

- **Systems:** Organisations with electronic systems for managing volunteers fared better during Covid-19 than those without.
- **Barriers:** The most common reason people do not volunteer is a lack of time 45.3%.
- **Benefits:** Many organisations focus on the public and community benefits of volunteering in order to attract volunteers. However, almost all focus group participants talked about the personal benefits of volunteering.
- **Statistics Note:** The sector-wide statistics and graphs presented in the State of Volunteering report are sourced from the same Statistics NZ data that we have used as a comparative within our report. However, we have used the ‘all of the South Island, excluding Canterbury’ data subset.

<sup>9</sup> [Strengthening Our Approach to Volunteering, Department of Internal Affairs, June 2022](#)

### Strengthening Our Approach to Volunteering (2022)<sup>9</sup>

Some key point from this report include:

- **Value:** The economic value of volunteering is estimated to be \$4 billion per year.
- **Connections:** Social connections inform why people volunteer. The top motivations are ‘a desire to give back to the community’, ‘to make friends’, ‘because a friend asked me’, and ‘gaining work experience’.
- **Barriers:** The three top reasons people did not volunteer were: ‘did not have enough time’ followed by ‘no-one asked me’ and ‘health problems/physically unable to volunteer’.
- **Gender:** Women volunteer more than men, in terms of percentage of population and hours spent.
- **Employment:** More part-time employed people volunteer, but employed people volunteer the most hours, followed by people not in the labour force.
- **Education:** More people with degrees volunteer, but those with certificates volunteer the most hours.

- **80/20:** A small proportion of volunteers (14.1%) contribute well over half of total volunteer time.
- **Income:** More people on high incomes volunteer, but those on low incomes volunteer more hours.
- **Ethnicity:** Māori and Europeans volunteer more than other ethnicities, with Europeans reported as spending more hours. Recent migrants volunteer less than others in terms of percentage of population and hours.
- **Age:** More older people volunteer than other age groups, but middle-aged people volunteer the most hours.

While younger volunteers have stepped up during Covid-19, the volunteer workforce is shrinking and aging.

- **Strategy:** Government lacks and overall strategic approach to volunteering.
- **Funding:** Government funding and grants tend to focus on delivering programmes or outcomes and often excludes costs of volunteer infrastructure.

Funding in general has not kept up with demand. Is too short-term and

competitive, creating pressure on volunteer wellbeing.

DIA is establishing a new Community and Volunteering Capability (CVC) Fund which replaces:

- *The Community Leadership Fund*
- *The Support for Volunteering Fund*
- *The Organisational Capability Programme*
- *The Youth Worker Training Scheme*

- **Recruitment:** Attracting volunteers is one of the biggest challenges the sector faces.
- **Other Countries:** Ireland, Scotland, the UK, Australia, and Canada all support the volunteer workforce, with many of them reimbursing expenses or acknowledging volunteer work through credentialing.
- **Volunteer Management:** Investing in ongoing support to practical volunteer management initiatives across the country at grass-roots level would strengthen volunteering infrastructure.



*Section 2*  
**POTENTIAL  
VOLUNTEERING  
IMPACTS**

## Age Themes

An aging population and volunteer base was a strong theme within the research. This presents both a short-term opportunity (as more people retire and have time to contribute) and a challenge (as volunteers age and are unable to contribute as much).

### Retirement

- 26% of adult volunteers (over 24 years) in Southland are over 65 years of age.
- Volunteering levels only seem to taper off after 75 years of age.
- 59% of volunteers in the 70-74 age bracket have increased their volunteering in the past 5 years.
- Retirement gave more volunteering time for around 30% of respondents in the 65-75 age group in the past five years.
- 91% of 22 respondents aged 70-75 years were retired.
- 53% of 17 respondents aged 65-70 were retired.
- 6% of 49 respondents aged 55-64 were retired.
- There is a proportion of volunteers in 'Services for Elderly', 'Faith Based Groups', 'Disability Services' and 'International Organisations'.

Proportion of individual survey respondents over 65 years of age by sector

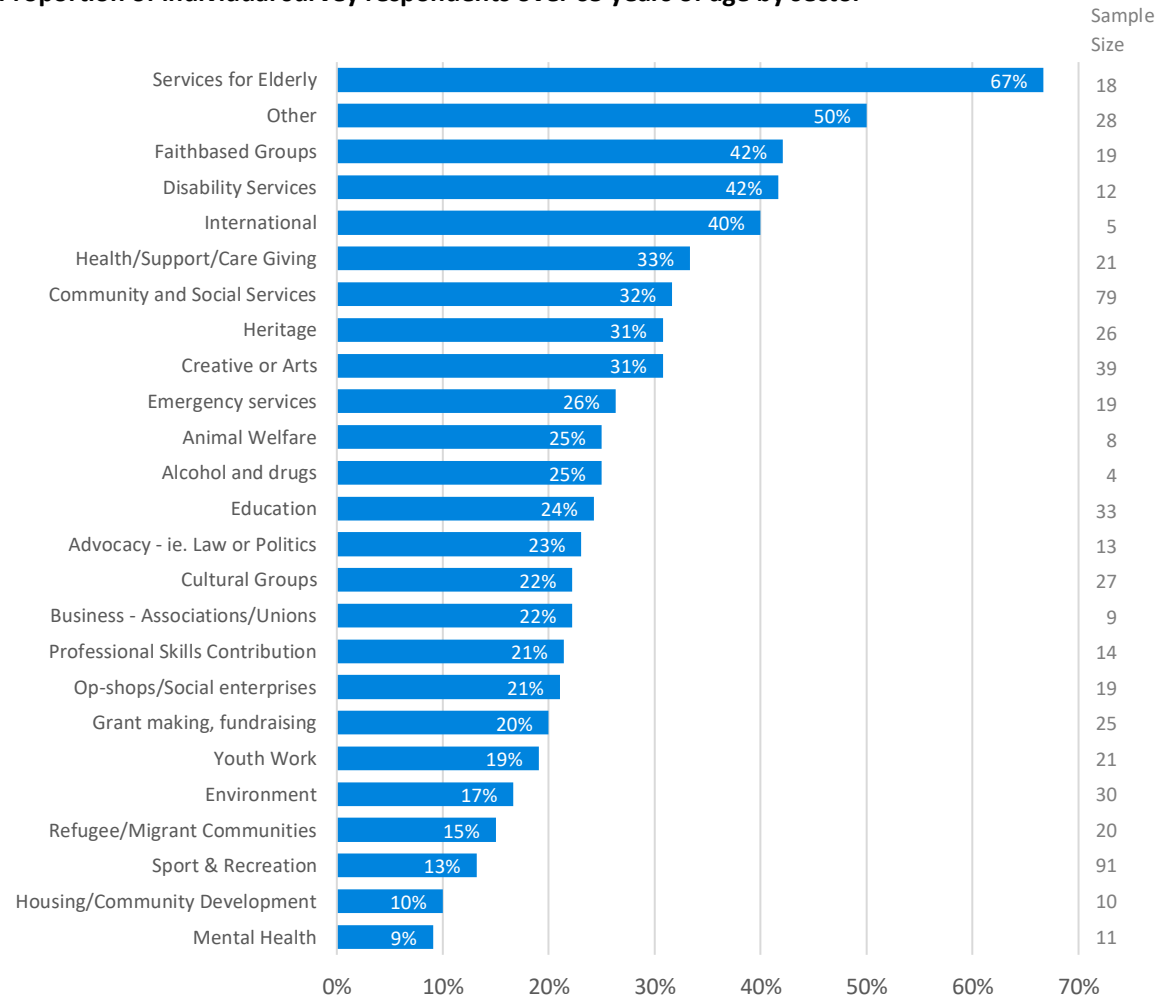


Figure 31

**People are working past 65: Only 53% of Southland survey respondents aged 65-70 are currently retired.**

## Younger Volunteers

Our survey sample was relatively reflective of the age range of the general population over 24 years of age in terms of age distribution.

- Around 80%+ of respondents in all age ranges over 24 years currently volunteer.
- A higher proportion of survey respondents in the 25-54 age ranges 'don't currently volunteer but have in the past'. 'Working hours' and 'cost of living' were the main barriers for 46% of those who have volunteered in the past but don't currently. Followed by 'family commitments at 7%'.
- The sample of those under 24 years was not large enough to make any assessments of volunteering levels. However, we can tell that young people are volunteering, based on feedback from some community organisations stating high levels of school student involvement and the fact that 21% of 25–34-year-olds respondents, who aren't currently volunteering, have volunteered in the past.

## Do you currently volunteer? Responses by Age Group

Data Source: Individual Survey, 245 Question Responses

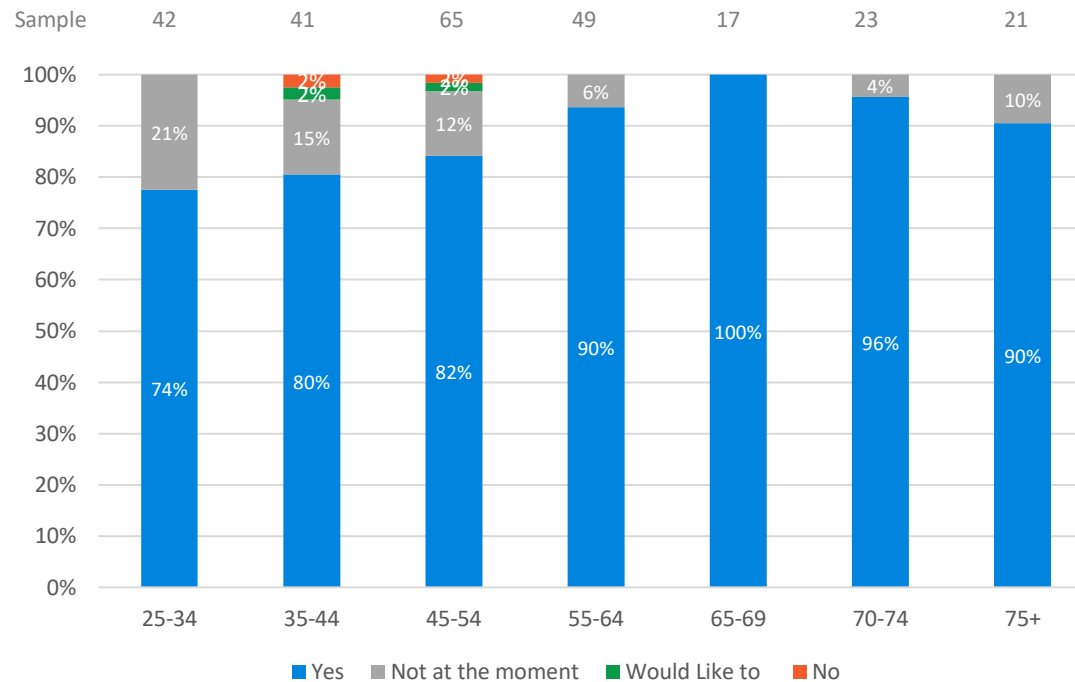


Figure 32

**It is a myth that 'young people are not volunteering'. They are. For those who aren't currently, most have volunteered in the past. 'Work hours' and 'cost of living' are the main barriers.**



## Workforce Demands

### Will increasing workforce demands have an impact on the volunteer sector?

The answer to this question is a clear and logical yes. We are not a different person when we go to work, or when we come home, or when we help out our local communities. All choices have an opportunity cost or trade off. Post Covid lock downs and with increasing cost of living, people are more aware of these trade-offs.

The fact that people are juggling volunteer, family and work commitments is nothing new. However, in some cases people are now having to choose. For those 25-54 age, 15% aren't currently volunteering but have in the past. Around half this drop off is due to work commitments.

In many cases this is a small shift but leaves a little bit more for others to do and is reflected in the trend towards increased volunteer time over the past five years, across all age ranges.

### Will people still volunteer if working?

The answer to this question is also a yes. In a lot of cases, they already are.

- 59% of all volunteers are already working full-time, self-employed or the primary caregiver for children under five years of age and 70% are committed to volunteering whether they are working or not.
- However, 18% of current volunteers work part-time and a similar amount (21%) indicated, that they 'can volunteer because they don't currently work full-time'. It is

this group who are most at risk of becoming less available.

### Work Status of Current Volunteers

Data Source: Individual Survey, 220 Respondents (Multiple Selection Possible)

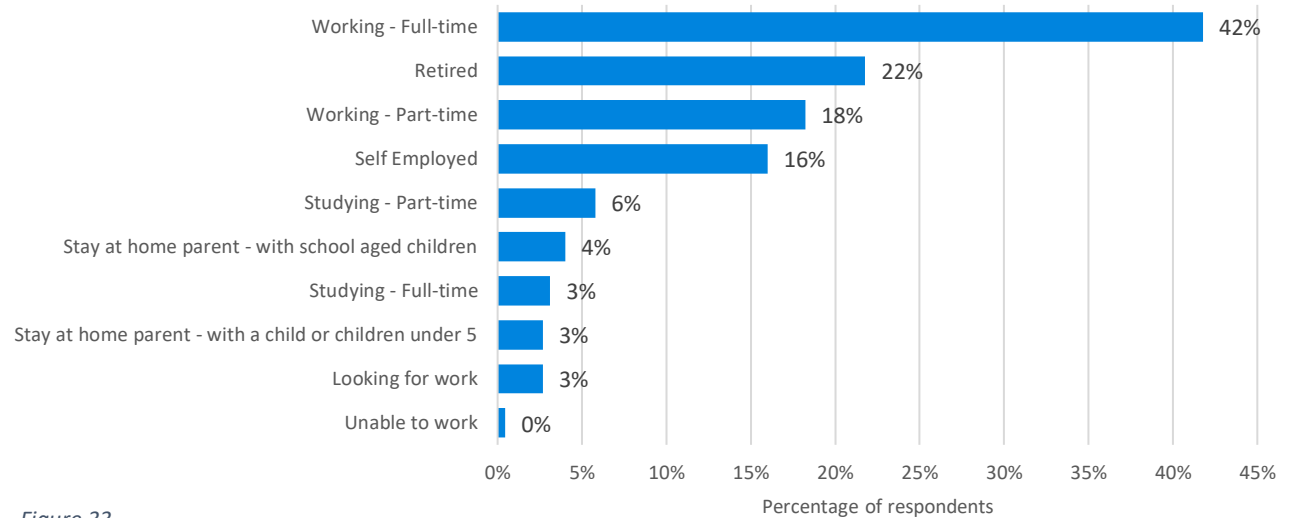


Figure 33

### Volunteering vs. Work Perspectives

Data Source: Individual Survey, 212 Respondents (Multiple Selection Possible)

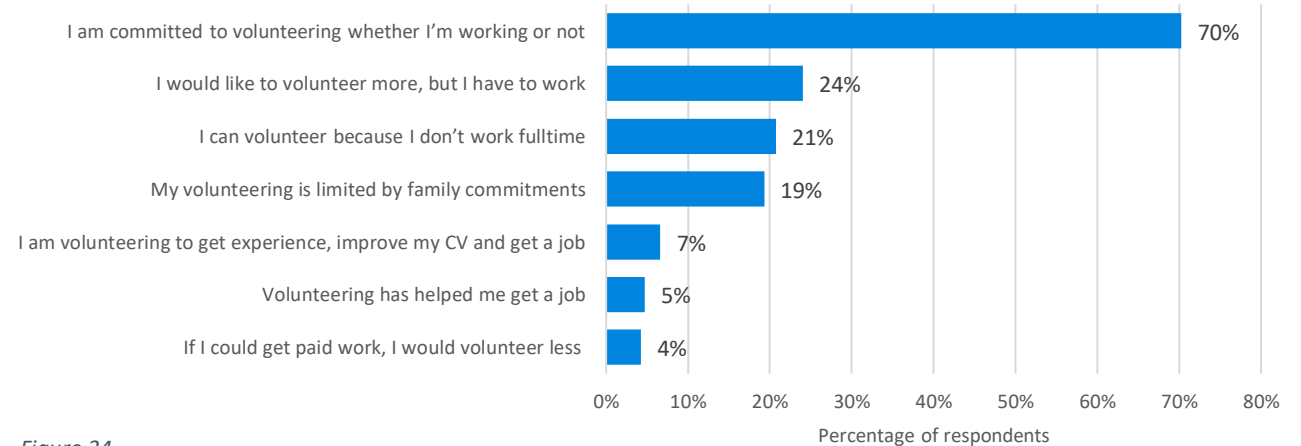


Figure 34

### **What would happen if we lost the 21% of volunteers who can contribute because they don't work full time?**

The individual survey had 48 people (21% of all volunteers) who 'can volunteer because they don't work full-time'. Of these 18 are committed to volunteering regardless of their work status and two are committed to volunteering but would volunteer less if they got paid work. On this basis there would be an approximate 60% drop off in volunteering from this group if more of them work working.

Of these 48 survey respondents, 42 answered questions in relation to amount of volunteering and each contribute an average of 17.75 hours per month to a combined total of 123 community groups.

When applied to the region as a whole, Southland would lose an estimated 1.14 million hours of voluntary time per year if 60% of this group of people who can volunteer because they don't work fulltime were unavailable. This equate to a 14% overall decline in volunteering.

On the other side, community group survey responses indicated that loss of 50% of volunteers would result in 50% of organisations winding-up, potentially winding-up or being unable to deliver their service. Plus, a further 30% which would have reduced service levels.

Based on these very broad proportions, a loss of 14% of volunteer hours, could be assumed to result in the potential loss of 14% of community

organisations and reduced service level from an additional 8.4%.

Ultimately it would mean that over time communities would need to make some hard decisions around which entities to prioritise and support with their time and/or funds.

### **Does volunteering lead to working?**

- 5% of volunteers indicated that their volunteering has helped them get a job.
- 16% of community groups indicated that volunteering definitely helped people get a job, 20% said sometimes and 8.5% said it did indirectly.
- However, as one community organisation pointed out:

*"The skills required and barriers present, to working or volunteering, are largely the same. The main difference is people are more likely to be given a chance to gain experience when volunteering."*

**Loss of 60% of those who volunteer because they don't work full-time, would likely result in a reduction of...  
1.14 million voluntary hours per year across Southland and the potential loss of 14% of community groups.**





*Section 3*  
**Building  
Momentum**

Identified opportunities.

## Key Observations

The nature of volunteering is changing. There is a broad societal shift which seems to be incrementally moving towards short term focussed volunteering rather than longer term commitments. The factors driving this overarching trend seem to be diverse and include:

- **Work Hours** - There seem to be more people working in weekends, longer hours and retiring later. This is potentially a reflection of hire cost of living and a shrinking / aging overall workforce. In Southland sectors like dairy farming and shift workers also have different schedules to others and timing of voluntary activities can limit availability.
- **Families** - For many, changes in family structures (split families, two working parents, grandparents looking after grandchildren etc.) also impact availability.
- **Time Poor** - People are busy and are likely perceive themselves and others to be time poor.
- **Cause Driven** - Young people seem to be increasingly cause-driven rather than loyal to a particular organisation. This is potentially due to an increasing range of organisations and options available and broader awareness issues via social media.
- **Less Committed** - While social media has increased awareness of opportunities and causes in some spaces, it has also resulted in more tokenistic commitment. Saying you will attend on social media is far different from saying you will come to an actual person and then actually turning up to keep your word. For similar reasons younger people are increasingly likely to want to keep their options open.
- **Self-protective but Disconnected** - People are increasingly protective of their time and wary of roles where they might feel trapped or long term committed. This trend seems to have been increased by Covid-19, which

in many cases was like a 'snow day' or reason to cancel everything and have a break.

While creating 'me time' may seem beneficial in the short-term and in many cases is needed, as a society we seem to be becoming more likely to consume media, than connect with others. A number of survey respondents commented on the personal and mental health benefits of volunteering. Regular roles connect them with others and the commitment provides structure which can help to hold them on their bad days.

- **Roles are Too Big** - For a wide range of organisations there are a smaller number of people doing more. Initially this is not an issue, but lack of succession planning or recruitment early on can kill an organisation in the long term. The risk is that the roles held by the few committed people eventually become too big for others to even want to consider taking it on. By the time the overcommitted volunteer steps aside they are much more likely to be burnt out, resentful or leave without training or mentoring anyone else to pass on their organisational knowledge.
- **Formal Roles** - There seems to be a decreasing awareness of what formal roles entail and standard meeting procedure. Again, there is a risk that people stay in these roles too long and don't mentor others into them, making it more daunting for others to take on the positions. Added to this are increasing compliance and liability considerations.
- **Shrinking Funding Pool** - In many sectors community needs are growing and costs increasing but the relative funding pool is shrinking. While the value of grants made might be relatively consistent, relative to inflation the available funds are shrinking, this is especially notable in relation to construction and capital expenditure. General consumer price index (CPI) inflation over the past 20 years is 63%, for housing it is 315%<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> [Reserve Bank of NZ Inflation Calculator](#)

## Identified Opportunities

The following identified opportunities have been collated from our phone research, survey respondent suggestions and other reports. They are intended as a starting point for additional discussion and longer-term planning.

### Supporting Volunteer Engagement



#### **Promote the Benefits not just the Role**

Many organisations focus on the public and community benefits of volunteering in order to attract volunteers. However, when asked volunteers will often talk about the personal benefits of volunteering.

There is a need to better promote these personal benefits, as volunteering is “Good for us” both personally and collectively. Our instinct is that we ‘hate being locked into things’ and therefore avoid commitment, but the truth is most people do better with routine and thrive when they know what to expect. It can be exhausting to be constantly weighing up options and then end up doing nothing. Familiar faces, spaces of service, structure and routine are extremely beneficial for mental health and general wellbeing. Volunteering ticks many of the [‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’](#) boxes.

*“I believe that there needs to be better promotion of the personal benefits / growth / knowledge sharing that can be gained through volunteering and the importance to our communities of having volunteers.”*

*“Marketing the benefits of volunteering, to mental and physical health, self-esteem, belonging all things that make people’s lives more meaningful widely advertised.”*

*“Volunteering is a crucial part of Southland, as it provides people with opportunities to develop good work ethics and be*

*respectful of others. I work for Work and Income and have seen a lot of clients who have changed their lives entirely by just doing some volunteer work. This is a very exciting prospect for our community down here.”*

*“Volunteer opportunities that also contribute to reducing the cost of living are a massive opportunity, eg. not-for-profit food co-ops (like at Riverton Environment Centre where volunteers are eligible for a food discount), community gardens, school gardens etc. where food can be taken home and valuable skills learned. Volunteering in ‘natural’ places also provides massive wellbeing benefits.”*

*“There is a huge opportunity out there in the community for us to tap into. We need to help people become aware of the benefits that they will receive themselves from taking part in voluntary work. Not only will they be helping others but, inadvertently, they will be providing a huge boost to their own morale and self-esteem. Their satisfaction and appreciation of life will improve, and they will learn many valuable new skills and make heaps of new friends with the people that they will be connecting with. So often, doing something a little different helps you to realise talents and interests that you were previously unaware of. Volunteering is a win-win situation and grows the heart of a nation.”*



### Change the Pitch

We potentially need to change the pitch from “come do this good thing to help the community” to “we need some help with xyz, it will be hard but fun, and you’ll be stoked you did”.

Volunteer requests need to:

- Be personal (where possible).
- Be specific.
- Have a clear timeframe and end point.
- Offer bit size starting points to build relationship.
- Acknowledge the challenges and be honest about the commitment (easy is sometimes boring). Clear expectations help everyone.
- Communicate the mission and underlying values, as well as the personal growth benefits and opportunities.



### Get the Best Out of People

*“Many organisations that have volunteers don't understand that the face of volunteering has changed. To encourage younger people to volunteer for example, they don't want to spend that volunteer time going to meetings and they get a little sick of being put in charge of looking after the social media for example or if you're an accountant, being expected to do the financials or be treasurer! This is a challenge!*

*The biggest opportunity I see is to look at how things can be done differently and how to best utilise the time available by volunteers.*

*Another opportunity is to look at a shared model where maybe a group of organisations share some of the same volunteers and utilise their skills and time available more efficiently and effectively.*

*Let's tell more stories about our volunteers... and celebrate their contributions more publicly.”*



### Succession

Some organisations were noted as having had the same people on the board for the past 20 years and have found it challenging to find anyone else to put their hand up. In some cases, there is a need to breakdown larger roles and/or provide opportunities for role sharing and mentoring. Succession planning can't mean dumping all the responsibility on the new person. Where people want to see their work (and organisations) continue beyond themselves, they need to be prepared to step back prior to feeling like they need to. So that they still have capacity to mentor and support the next generation of volunteers. This needs to be well in advance of burnout or getting frustrated that others don't seem to see the value of their activity.

There may also need to be a mindset shift around what ‘commitment’ is or can look like for some roles or organisations.

*“A leader has two essential roles. To set a compelling vision and direction and to find their replacement.” Anon.*

*“It's the same people that tend to volunteer and that is a limited resource. We need to get more youth involved as we have an ageing population and that also puts us at risk of loss of knowledge on how events and volunteering services may run.”*

*“The fear of being overburdened as a volunteer because of the general lack of volunteers available, prevents people from starting.”*

*“A challenge is that there is always a small group of the same people volunteering, meaning that the load doesn't get split well enough which leads to burnout and people ceasing to volunteer.”*



### Resource Volunteer Infrastructure

For volunteers to be valuable they need co-ordination. Organisations with limited challenges around volunteering often had a clear focus on coordinating, training, and supporting volunteers. Not all organisations have capacity or resources to have people in these types of co-ordination roles.

There were a lot of suggestions around collaboration, shared services. Examples include combined committees for multiple organisations, financials, HR or health and safety, marketing, social media, call centre, meeting minute templates, fund management (like [The Gift Collective](#)), grant writing, police vetting, job boards, volunteer recruitment and opportunity promotion (such as [Volunteer South](#), [Do good jobs](#), or local social media pages). Many of these could be sector aligned under existing umbrella organisations or geographically.

*“Nobody is resourced to manage the volunteers. It takes structuring things so volunteers can actually be useful.*

*You have to be conscious with succession planning and more proactive. People are keen at the outset but unable to deliver with all of the personal stuff going on. People are doing so much for other places, stretched and stretched. We use to have some younger stay at home mum volunteers doing a little bit, but there hasn't been any of those for a while, things are not back to normal, at all.”* Heritage South & Gore Museum

*“Good quality training and support for volunteers is required so they can contribute effectively - this may include support with transport, food, clothing/tools, access to technology, interpreters, depending on the volunteers' circumstances and particular needs.”*

*“Collaboration, shared learnings, spontaneous volunteers, mobilising in times of need regardless of organisation.”*

*“In the rural sector I see the opportunity for one governance committee being set up to take on that role for several clubs/groups.”*

*“More inter group connection - volunteers coming together to support larger initiatives/ time trades.”*

*“There needs to be some consolidation within the relevant sectors eg. in sport there are common elements that could be provided across a number of organisations - such as HR, Finance that regardless of the specific sport, the functions provided are the same - can we create efficiencies with consolidating some of the key administration tasks?”*

*“Someone to develop a system to make it easier to run club organizations.”*

*“Would be great to know what is available for committee's ie. helping with funding application forms, legalities involved”*

*“Support networks - better funding/ grants for organisations so that they are not always fundraising.”*

*“Some community volunteer groups work incredibly hard providing services that really should be better supported monetarily wise by councils to ensure they're around for future generations. Whether that be by way of a token wage for a coordinator, support for digital bookings systems etc, or support for sessions around managing community venues etc.*

*The biggest opportunities are for people to help each other out, grow / share knowledge etc. What is needed to maintain volunteering in Southland despite increasing workforce needs is shared services that would enable teams to spend more time on the needs of each individual group, as opposed to many people replicating the same jobs across many groups.”*

*“We need a volunteer promotion service.”*

*“Volunteer South is a huge asset for our region - people can be matched to the roles that fit them well and are more likely to be satisfied with giving their time.”*



### **Make it Simple**

Navigating and managing compliance requirements was raised by a number of people. In some cases, this might fall under shared services and volunteer infrastructure. However, there is also a broader opportunity to identify potential barriers which create additional work and become deterrents for community organisations running events or activities and make it harder to recruit volunteers. Examples include road safety management and police vetting, among others. There is potential scope to advocate for better solutions, simpler processes or ensure support is available.

*“There are also over the top policies being introduced into or inflicted on some volunteer organisations that prevent the organisation from doing anything. Develop policies that are fit for purpose or 'common sense' for volunteer organisations.”*

*“Ideally would be great if an external agency managed the Police Vetting process and recruited and directed new volunteers to organisations seeking volunteer support.”*



### **Say Thanks Often and Recognise Volunteers**

People need to be thanked. This doesn't have to be big but building a culture of appreciation within an organisations is extremely valuable to volunteer retention and attraction.

*“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”*

Winston Churchill.

*“Any small amount of remuneration makes a big difference for young mums compared to older people. But in some spaces where the motivation is to serve, paying them would be wrong. A little thank you goes a long way.” Te Tau Hoka*

*“There can be a [negative] attitude toward 'volunteer run' as opposed to paid by those outside of the organisation, ie.*

*automatic assumption that volunteer is lesser skilled.*

*Recognising and celebrating volunteers is an opportunity.”*

*“Funding to meet volunteer costs ie petrol. Cost of living is high and having to fork out money to get somewhere on top of giving up your time is a double blow.”*



### **Engaging Businesses**

A number of survey respondents mentioned the potential to engage with businesses to support volunteering. This might include offering flexible working hours for volunteers or including hour per week of work time to be used for volunteering within employment packages or encouraging businesses to partner with values aligned charities and have a whole of team approach.

*“Marketing [for volunteers] is a difficult space. Possibly workplaces could promote volunteering. It may even be an attractive part of a job package saying that xx hour/s week or month could be spent supporting a local charity. It would be great to have people in the 'middle years' having some capacity to support the community directly.”*



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