

2016

State of Volunteering
in New Zealand

Acknowledgements

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This report should be cited as:

Volunteering New Zealand. (2017). *State of Volunteering in New Zealand 2015*.
Volunteering New Zealand, Wellington.

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Preface

In February 2016, Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) released the first *State of Volunteering in New Zealand* report. Based on a survey of the country's registered charities it provided some telling insights about current trends and challenges faced by volunteer-involving organisations in 2015.

Following on from this research, a second survey was conducted in August of 2016, with a focus on different areas of volunteer involvement. Through this research, VNZ aims to support the volunteering sector by identifying opportunities to maximise the potential of the volunteer workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Introduction

New Zealand is a leading nation in the contribution made by volunteers (Charities Aid Foundation, 2016), and this unpaid workforce plays a vital role in the non-profit sector. Recently released figures from Statistics New Zealand showed that volunteer labour contributed \$3.5 billion (1.7%) to New Zealand's gross domestic product for the year ended March 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2016).

In 2015, Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) carried out its first survey on the state of volunteering in New Zealand. This survey found that recruiting volunteers was challenging for a majority of respondents: 55% said they had experienced challenges in the previous 12 months. Retaining volunteers was less of an issue for volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs): 65% said they were not experiencing such challenges.

It was heartening to see that 81% of respondents in 2015 perceived volunteers as essential to achieving organisational goals, while only 31% saw them as a cost-saving measure. Overall findings from the

2015 survey suggested that volunteering in New Zealand was in good shape, with an average rating of 6 out of 10 for the state of the sector, but that there was room for improvement.

The intention of the 2016 survey was to find out where VIOs are experiencing successes around volunteer involvement and where changes need to be made. Overall, findings show that volunteering is alive and well in New Zealand, but that its nature is changing. This report provides VIOs with information to help understand these changes and to make adjustments accordingly, thus ensuring that volunteering continues to thrive in this country.

Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ)'s mission is to create an environment which supports, promotes, values and encourages effective volunteering by the people of Aotearoa New Zealand. The purpose of this research is to provide the volunteering sector with information highlighting current challenges and opportunities in order to maximise the contribution of the volunteer workforce.

The Research Questions

A link to an online survey was emailed to 13,375 registered charities in New Zealand in August 2016, and 1260 responses were received (a 9% response rate). Our aim was to investigate the following six questions:

1. For organisations which employ staff and volunteers, can staff generally explain why the organisation involves volunteers, and the benefits of this contribution?
2. Have VIOs experienced challenges in conflict management involving volunteers in the last 12 months?
3. Do volunteers have access to appropriate complaint, grievance and/or dispute resolution procedures?
4. Have organisations experienced a decline in volunteer hours and if so, what adjustments have been made?
5. Do organisations allocate adequate resources to volunteers to ensure effective volunteer involvement?
6. How do organisations rate the state of the New Zealand volunteering sector on a scale of one to 10?

We also asked respondents to provide additional comments about the challenges they believe are facing organisations that rely on volunteers.

Definitions

Volunteering: Work done of one's own free will, unpaid for the common good (Volunteering New Zealand, 2014). It can be carried out in a formal or informal setting.

Formal Volunteering: Volunteering carried out through the structure of an organisation, which is the focus of this research.

Key Findings

- Most VIOs believe paid staff are able to explain the benefits of involving volunteers and are aware of the significance of their contribution(s).
- A majority of VIOs experience challenges in conflict management involving volunteers but most have procedures in place to deal with complaints and/or disputes effectively.
- A majority of VIOs believe they allocate adequate resources to volunteers to ensure effective volunteer involvement.
- Regulation and administrative requirements are a barrier to volunteering.
- Financial pressures, longer work hours and busy lifestyles have had a large impact on volunteering.

Findings

Q1: If your organisation also employs paid staff, can these staff generally explain why the organisation involves volunteers, and the benefits of this contribution?

57% of respondents indicated they had paid staff at their organisation. Of these, 82% claimed that all or most of their staff were able to explain the benefits of involving volunteers. Only 4% said that none of their staff knew why the organisation involved volunteers or the significance of their contribution (see Figure 1).

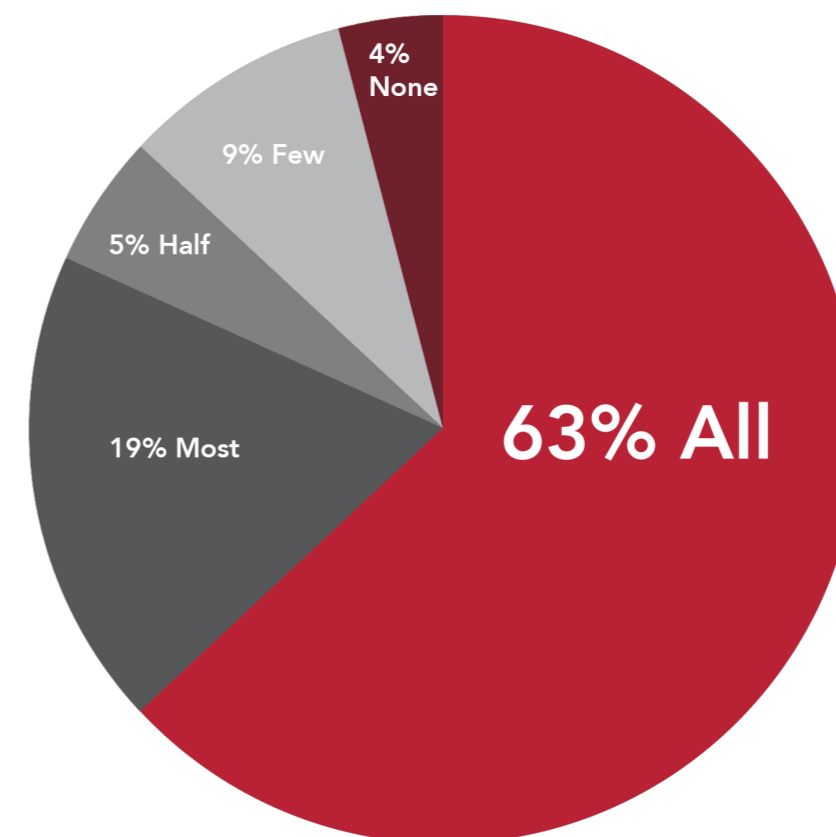
Discussion

Volunteers play a vital role in the operation of non-profit institutions all around New Zealand. In fact, 90% of non-profits rely on volunteers and do not employ staff (Statistics New Zealand, 2016). It is therefore of great importance that paid staff understand the significance of this contribution and support and acknowledge volunteers accordingly. This result suggests the majority of organisations who involve volunteers are operating within VNZ's *Best Practice Guidelines* (Volunteering New Zealand, 2015) which recommend

that staff recognise the contribution of volunteers as being an essential part of achieving organisational goals. Similarly, the Australian *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* provide VIOs with a framework to ensure that the role of volunteers is considered and their impact is acknowledged (Volunteering Australia, 2016, p. 23).

Having an organisational culture that welcomes, values and respects volunteers and emphasises the cultural and social rewards of volunteering, plays an important role in retaining volunteers (Smith & Cordery, 2010). One of the crucial elements of good volunteer management practice is providing recognition of volunteers.

Figure 1. How many staff can explain the benefits of engaging volunteers?



Q2: Has your organisation experienced challenges in conflict management involving volunteers in the last 12 months?

79%

of respondents had experienced challenges in conflict management involving volunteers, highlighting the importance of having procedures in place to deal with such situations.

Table 1 illustrates the types of conflict experienced by those who provided details. Comments revealed that the majority of these conflicts occurred between volunteers but also often between volunteers and staff members.

Some examples given were:
"Competing agendas/opinions, handled in-house and everyone treated respectfully."

"Volunteer and staff - usually arising from miscommunication or misunderstanding. Sometimes wilful refusal to listen."

"We had a volunteer versus volunteer conflict between a unit President and one of the long-term volunteers. The regional office provided coaching and mentoring to the unit to try and help resolve this situation. We need to do more work on providing guidance on this kind of thing and review our current 'rules' which are constitutionally based and not suited for the modern situation."

Discussion

Personal differences and miscommunication were common sources of conflict described by respondents. Evidence gathered by Volunteering Western Australia in their *State of Volunteering in Western Australia* survey lines up with VNZ's findings around conflict management. They found that bullying within VIOs often occurs between volunteers rather than between paid-staff and volunteers (as cited in Bertilone,

2012). Misunderstandings between volunteers and paid employees were another source of conflict, along with lack of recognition for volunteer contribution, little respect for volunteers, and paid employees and volunteers having different priorities and goals (Bertilone, 2012).

Marla Benson, an expert in volunteer relations, has designed "Five Strategies to Shut Down Volunteer Conflict" (2016). They are:

1. Understand your organisation's view of volunteers.
2. Understand your personal response to conflict.
3. Create your conflict management process.
4. Document your conflict management process.
5. Train your conflict management process to all members of the organisation.

Benson recommends building a strong infrastructure to prevent and shut down

conflict. It is important to be specific when creating a conflict management process and present procedures directly to volunteers during training (Benson, 2016).

Table 1. Challenges in Conflict Management

Type of conflict	Details	Number
Volunteer vs volunteer		79
Volunteer vs staff		58
Volunteer vs client		13
General people management issues	Lack of communication/personality clashes/ mismanagement of volunteers	11
Volunteer vs board		10
Volunteer roles	Lack of understanding about roles/ difficulty changing roles/ volunteers not carrying out roles required/blurred boundaries between volunteers and staff	8
Volunteer vs members/ committee		7
Different ideas on how the organisation should be managed		6
Staff vs Staff/conflict within board about volunteering		5
Disputes over health and safety procedures		4

Q3: Do volunteers in your organisation have access to complaints, grievance and/or dispute resolution procedures?

70%

of respondents indicated that volunteers in their organisation have access to complaints, grievance and/or dispute resolution procedures, and 30% indicated they do not. Details of procedures are listed in Table 2.

Comments from respondents indicated that in most cases these situations are dealt with quickly and efficiently, without escalating into a major problem. Many organisations have a volunteer manager or other designated person for volunteers to approach with such issues. Open communication is promoted at numerous organisations.

Discussion

Although most volunteers generally enjoy positive experiences in their volunteering roles, it is important to deal with conflict

in a productive manner when issues arise (Bertilone, 2012). The *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* in Australia seek to establish precedents for VIOs to provide appropriate complaints and grievance procedures. These are put in place in order to “protect the wellbeing of volunteers in the workplace, and further encourage volunteer contribution” (Volunteering Australia, 2015, p.25).

In 2011, Volunteering WA surveyed 1200 volunteers on a variety of issues relating to their volunteering and found that 10% of volunteers had been involved in a conflict with an organisation where they had volunteered (Bertilone, 2012). Findings showed that the nature of conflict often revolved around not having adequate policies and procedures in place and the cause of conflict could often be avoided or at least be managed in a constructive manner if appropriate policies exist (Bertilone, 2012).

Table 2. Complaints, grievances and/or dispute resolution procedures

Key themes from participants	Details	Number
Written policies and procedures in place		149
Report to volunteer manager, HR or other designated person		54
Open door policy/open communication		49
Opportunities for discussion at committee meetings		36
Dealt with through office staff/committee/board		24
Opportunities given to provide feedback		15
The same as paid employees		14
No formal procedures		11
Never had an issue		9
Complaints delivered in writing/via email		8
Other	Grievance panel in place, informal processes followed	5

Q4: Statistics NZ recently released data showing that the number of hours contributed by volunteers in non-profit organisations dropped by 42% between 2004 and 2013. Has your organisation experienced a decline in volunteer hours?

68%

Said no.

Only 32% of respondents had noticed a decline in volunteering hours, while 68% said they had not experienced a decline in the number of hours volunteered.

Discussion

Figures released by Statistics New Zealand in March 2016 from the *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account: 2013* (NPISA), showed that while the number of people volunteering for non-profit institutions increased from 1 million to 1.2 million from 2004 to 2013, the hours contributed decreased in 2013.

The 2013 NPISA showed that the time volunteers spent working for non-profits dropped 42 %, from 270 million hours in 2004 to 157 million hours in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2016). However, only 32% of VIOS who responded to the *State of Volunteering in New Zealand 2016* survey indicated that they had experienced a decline in volunteer hours. This figure is lower than expected when taking the NPISA findings into consideration.

VNZ Chief Executive Scott Miller attributes the reduction in hours to increasingly effective volunteer management. This means that the time people spend volunteering is now more productive so that more can be achieved in less time. "Since the last NPISA findings were last recorded in 2004, the profession of volunteer managers has developed considerably to meet the needs of volunteers in our community organisations" (Miller, 2016). Of the 32% of respondents who had

experienced a decline in volunteer hours, many commented that there are fewer volunteers available and that current volunteers are over-worked. Some organisations are finding they cannot achieve their goals as a result.

Those who had noticed a decline were asked to give details about any adjustments they had made as a result. Key themes are listed in Table 3. A number of VIOs stated they have had to discontinue some services due to a lack of volunteers. A common response was to increase recruitment efforts. Many participants indicated that they have experienced a need to employ contractors or paid staff to get work completed. This is in line with the NPISA results, which show that paid staff numbers in non-profit institutions rose 30 % between 2004 and 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2016).

A number of organisations had made changes in the way they operate. Some examples are streamlining services, increasing efficiency, and being more selective in the areas where volunteers are engaged.

Table 3: Adjustments made as a result of fewer hours being volunteered

Key themes from participants	Details	Number
Make do with fewer volunteers	Fewer people do more/willing volunteers are over-worked	69
Less being done/some services discontinued		65
Attempts made at recruitment		43
Need to employ contractors or more staff/get paid staff to do the work		42
Make changes in the way the organisation operates		14
Provide more flexibility, opportunity, recognition and support for volunteers		14
Try to be more efficient/streamlined services		14
Focus on areas of greatest importance/more selective in the areas of help	Only use volunteers in their areas of expertise	8
Fewer hours because members have decreased/less need for the service so fewer volunteer hours required		7
Looking to recruit younger volunteers as current volunteers are ageing		6
Other	Learn to cope with fewer resources/seek more funds and support	7
Engage volunteers for shorter time periods		5

Q5: Does your organisation currently allocate adequate resources to its volunteers to ensure effective volunteer involvement?

69%

of respondents indicated that adequate resources were allocated by their organisation to ensure effective volunteer involvement, and the remaining 31% answered no.

Respondents were asked to give details of resources assigned to volunteers in the organisation (see Table 4). These were mostly in the form of training, reimbursements, supervision and equipment. However, other respondents wrote of the struggle to support volunteers involved in their organisation. "Our reality is we require a lot from our volunteers and often don't have the resources or capacity to support them as fully as we'd like."

Discussion

In a review of literature on encouragement and support of volunteering, Smith and

Cordery (2010) discuss what works for volunteering infrastructure and good volunteer-management practices in organisations. Important factors are: investing the necessary resources (time and money) in volunteering infrastructure, including reimbursing expenses and appointing a manager of volunteers (Smith & Cordery, 2010, p.27).

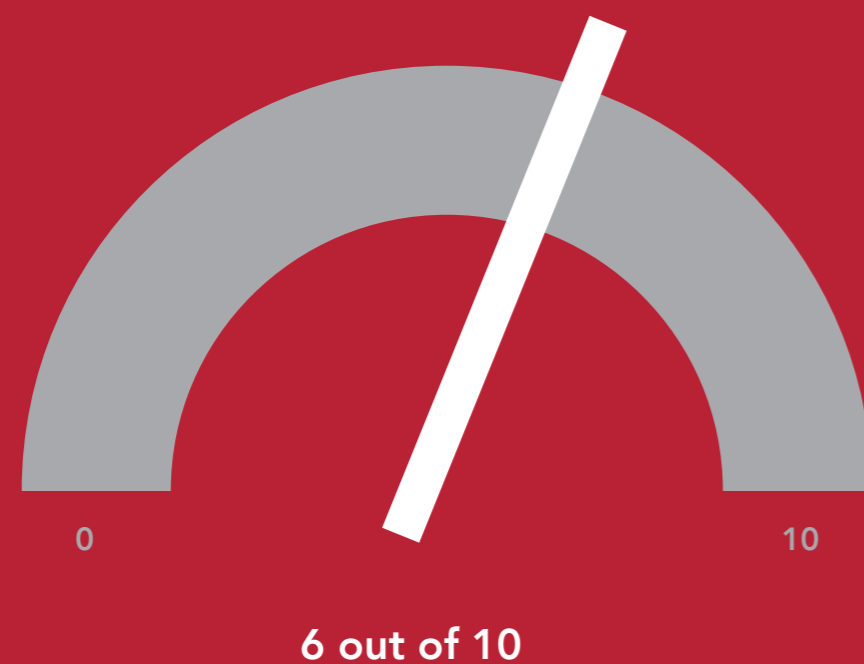
Volunteering Australia's *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* also establish the need for sufficient resources to be allocated to volunteer involvement (Volunteering Australia, 2016, p. 23). Results from the 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia* survey (Volunteering Australia, 2016) showed that only half of responding VIOs felt their organisation allocated sufficient resources for volunteer involvement (p. 25). A key finding in this report was that some VIOs lack both human and financial resources, which may reduce their ability to recognise volunteers appropriately (Volunteering Australia, p.30).

Table 4. Resources allocated to volunteers

Resource	Details	Number
Training/education		140
Provide reimbursements/cover expenses		102
Supervision/mentoring		69
Equipment/clothing/materials provided		60
Function/appreciation event		45
Provide acknowledgement/incentives	e.g. discounts, free tickets	45
Financial resources available	designated budget in place/funds are raised to meet requirements	35
Volunteer Manager		29
Adequate support		25
Volunteers are given what they need		23
Policies and procedures		22
Provide food/Meal allowance		21
Not much required	Volunteers give their time freely	17

Q6: Please rate the state of the New Zealand Volunteering Sector on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is 'weak' and 10 is 'extremely positive')

Respondents gave the same average rating as in 2015.



Average rating for the State of the NZ Volunteering Sector.

Further comments on the state of volunteering in New Zealand

Some clear themes emerged from the "further comments" section of the survey, as listed in Table 5.

A common response was that there is a general shortage of volunteers, with not enough young people volunteering. This was also a theme from the 2015 survey. Commenters observed that financial pressures are a large factor in the current climate, resulting in more parents joining the workforce and leaving people busier than ever with less time to volunteer. One respondent stated:

"Over the last 40 years the greatly increased number of married women in paid employment, 7-day-a-week working hours, especially in retail and the need for people to work to a greater has had a major impact on volunteering."

Many respondents commented that legislative requirements, particularly health and safety, are a deterrent to volunteering, slowing down the recruitment process and costing precious time and resources. The following quotes illustrate this theme:

"The time and cost of compliance and regulation is killing the volunteer sector in

NZ. Red tape and paperwork doesn't save lives, it crushes dreams and aspirations."

"Possibly the compliance requirements for NFP's means that some volunteers end up mostly doing admin work rather than the things they are passionate about which is often why they volunteer in the first place. This soon drains the enthusiasm to volunteer."

Another theme was that the sector needs more support and acknowledgement from the government, as is illustrated by this respondent:

"There is often incredibly vital and important work being done by the volunteer sector in NZ, some of it by people who should not have to volunteer their time and skills but should be being paid. Many projects and services are not simply 'nice to have' but are vital to healthy, functioning, cohesive communities. There is far too little funding available to support a healthy volunteering sector."

In contrast, a large number of respondents indicated that the sector is in good shape and that a strong volunteering ethos prevails in New Zealand. Certainly, there was agreement that volunteers play a vital role in New Zealand society.

Table 5. Further comments on the state of volunteering

Key Themes	Details	Number
Mostly older people volunteering/not enough young people	Young people expect some form of reward	74
It's getting harder to find volunteers/too few volunteers	Retiring baby boomers are leaving a gap	70
Volunteering is in good shape	Plenty of volunteers available/ strong volunteer ethic in New Zealand	69
More women in the workforce/financial pressures force people to work longer hours	With both partners in paid employment grandparents are spending more time looking after grandchildren	63
Regulation/legislation is a barrier to volunteering	Slows down the recruitment process, deters volunteers and costs time and resources, especially health and safety	43
People are too busy to volunteer		43
Sector needs more support	More acknowledgement from the government needed/government relies on volunteers to enable budget cuts/volunteers are taken for granted	34
Volunteers are essential to NZ society	Many organisations would not be able to be run without volunteers	32
Volunteering is not part of today's culture	People are more selfish today and not willing to give up their time	30
Finding funding is increasingly difficult	More resources required	21

Key Themes Continued	Details	Number
The same people volunteer repeatedly		20
Current model of volunteering is not sustainable	The future of volunteering is in jeopardy	19
Volunteers are looking for short-term commitment/ hard to find long-term volunteers	The busy nature of people's lives causes them to prioritize when and where they will volunteer	19
Personal reward, satisfaction, appreciation, support and flexibility must play a role in volunteering		17
The benefits of volunteering need to be better publicised	People want to help but don't know how	13
Better leadership and support with volunteer management is required		10
Too much work is falling on volunteers	Too much dependency on volunteers	10
Reimbursements should be offered/people can't afford to volunteer		8

General Discussion

While survey findings indicate there are many positive aspects to the current state of volunteering in New Zealand, there are also complex challenges faced by the voluntary sector. As was the case in the 2015 report, the most common theme was that the majority of volunteers are older and there aren't enough young people stepping up.

Financial pressures and lack of time

Rising financial pressures and busy lifestyles clearly have a significant impact on organisations which rely on volunteers. While volunteering continues to be a part of the culture in New Zealand, with more women working and increasing financial pressure on families, lack of time is a major barrier for many potential volunteers. One respondent commented: "there is still quite a strong volunteer ethic in New Zealand, but people are becoming more selective about what they will volunteer for, and on what terms". Many alluded to the fact that the busy nature of people's lives causes them to prioritise where and when they will volunteer.

Reimbursements

A key finding from the 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia* report

(Volunteering Australia, 2016) was that "Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements" (p. 29). Many respondents from VNZ's 2016 survey recognised the importance of offering reimbursements to volunteers as the costs involved with volunteering provide a barrier for some.

Regulation

Another theme from the 2015 survey had an even stronger presence among results from 2016: that regulation and bureaucracy is an obstruction to volunteering. Many participants complained that the need to comply with regulations slows down the recruitment process, deters volunteers and costs time and resources. Health and safety regulations were the most frequently mentioned, for example in the following comment:

"We have noticed that changing legislation (especially around such things as Health and Safety) has caused a shift in the role of

managers of volunteers becoming more administration-orientated and less person-orientated. Given that a large percentage of volunteer managers perform the role because it provides them with a meaningful thing to do and maintains a wide range of social contact this increasing administration focus seems to be risk for the profession of Managers of Volunteers."

Another recurring idea was that the sector needs more support from the government. Many participants stated there is too much reliance on volunteers and they should receive more acknowledgement. It is evident that many VIOs suffer from a lack of funding and have inadequate resources.

Episodic volunteering

Many VIOs observed that volunteers are looking for short-term commitment and some organisations have moved towards project-based volunteering with much success. Scholars in the field of volunteering (Handy, Haski-Leventhal & Hustinx) have identified several factors which influence the growing trend in shorter-term episodic volunteering, including women joining the labour force,

more frequent change of jobs, changes in employer-employee relations, and globalisation with the rapid access of information through the internet (2008, p.50). These factors result in more and more people seeking short-term experiences that will fulfil their "immediate and timely needs" (Handy, Haski-Leventhal & Hustinx, 2008, p. 50). Common among survey responses was the idea that for volunteering to flourish, personal reward, satisfaction, support and flexibility must play a role. The 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia* report (Volunteering Australia, 2016) showed that "there is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering" (p. 27). There are indications this may also be the case in New Zealand.

Marketing the impact of volunteering

Results from VNZ's 2016 survey also suggest that the benefits of volunteering need to be better publicised, as is illustrated in this quote from a respondent: "With a focus on individualism in our society we have lost that sense of community which is essential to

maintaining strong voluntary networks I believe that should be a huge emphasis/ marketing campaign on the value of having volunteers and being a volunteer and the rewards that go with that.”

Managing volunteers as a profession

Many VIOs commented that better leadership and support with volunteer management is required. A number of respondents wrote about having to make do with fewer volunteers. It is therefore vital that VIOs make efficient use of the time volunteers make available to them by ensuring effective volunteer management. Many respondents were of the opinion that the volunteering sector is in good shape and that a strong volunteering ethic in New Zealand prevails, however others commented that the current model of volunteering is not sustainable and the future of volunteering is in jeopardy.

Conclusion

Respondents gave the state of the New Zealand volunteering sector an average rating of six out of 10, indicating there is much to celebrate in terms of volunteering in this country, but also more progress to be made. Many organisations reported a shortage of volunteers and it is important to look at the reasons behind this. Evidence shows that with today’s busy lifestyle, volunteers are looking for more flexibility and are often only willing to commit for the short-term. VIOs should focus on providing effective volunteer management and maximising the volunteer effort through well-designed volunteer roles carried out in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Recommendations for VIOs

- Create meaningful opportunities for people where they can make a difference.
- Meet the needs of those who are time-poor by providing volunteers with flexibility as to when they volunteer and for how long.
- Listen and be creative when developing roles. Aim to suit individual skills and experience, and consider designing project-based roles.

- Provide effective volunteer management which includes offering support, communication, training, written policies and procedures and recognition.
- Provide volunteers with reimbursements for expenses.
- For those organisations that employ staff, ensure they are aware of the importance of the volunteer contribution, and encourage them to get to know and involve volunteers in respectful relationships.

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Appendix 1: Survey Respondents

The survey attracted respondents from organisations with volunteer programmes that ranged from very small to large. As shown in Figure 2, 41% of respondents indicated that their organisation involved 6 to 20 volunteers. The next largest group of 31% was organisations with 21 to 100 volunteers, 15% involved 1 to 5 volunteers, and the smallest group of 13% involved more than 100 volunteers.

half located in four regions: Auckland (17%), Waikato/Bay of Plenty (15%), Greater Wellington/Wairarapa (13%), and Canterbury (12%) (see Figure 3). Only 7% of the organisations that responded engaged volunteers nationwide.

Geographically, volunteers were based throughout New Zealand, with more than

Figure 1. No of Volunteers Engaged

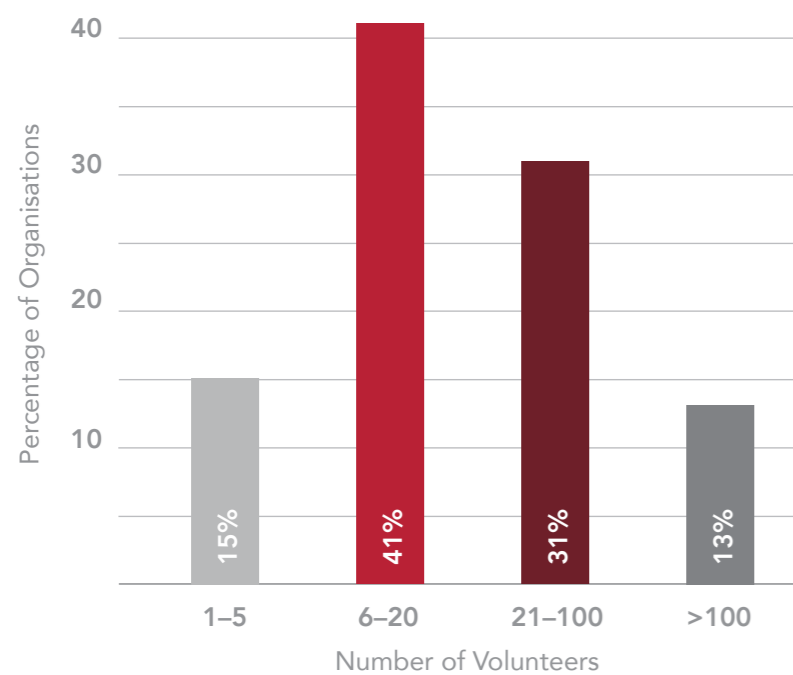


Figure 2. Region in which organisations mostly engage volunteers

