

# WHAT DO AUSTRALIANS THINK ABOUT INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING?

## Introduction

The Australian Volunteers Program needs a large and diverse number of skilled Australians to know about the opportunities of volunteering, and also aims to generate public support for volunteering and Australian aid.

A baseline study was carried out in 2018 to understand what proportion of Australians know about the program and generally how they think about international volunteering. This study directly links to the third outcome of the program: "the public in Australia better appreciates the value of volunteering".

The aims of the research were to:

1. Provide a segmentation of the Australian population in order to identify "target markets" that might be open to the message of volunteering.
2. Develop baseline levels of awareness of the Australian Volunteers Program, and the degree to which international volunteering is valued.
3. Develop a set of persuasive arguments or strategies from opinion leaders that could be deployed to key segments to promote volunteering and shift opinion in a positive direction.

The primary focus of this overview is on the second of these three aims. The full report provides more information on the segmentation, and the findings of the opinion leader research were limited.

## Methodology

Using attitudinal and behavioural questions relating to foreign policy, volunteering and donating, a segmentation scheme was devised and refined to generate 12 groups with differing propensities to be supportive or aware of the program. These segments were grouped based on priority (two key targets, three primary growth targets, three secondary growth targets, and four low priority or non-targets), which were determined by the likelihood for that group to increase its support for the program.

An online survey of more than 1,300 people representing the 12 segments was conducted to measure a variety of key elements, e.g., baseline awareness of the program, benefits of volunteering, trusted media channels and trusted opinion leaders, and support for Australia's volunteering programs.

In addition, from a target of 40 key influencers' (public figures widely respected by our target audiences), 12 were interviewed by the researchers.

## Key Findings

### Program awareness

Just over a third (36%) of Australians surveyed were aware of the program when prompted by the name.



### Importance of international volunteering

Nearly two in three considered Australia's efforts to support international volunteering to be important.



### Sources of information

- Word of mouth is the main channel for learning about the program
- Television, radio and internet searches are the main channel for learning about social issues.

### Barriers to supporting volunteering

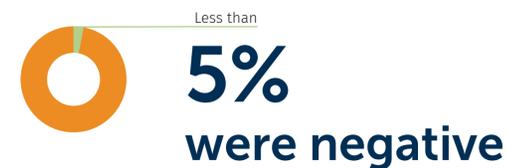
The main barriers for supporting international volunteer are:

- Charity begins at home mindset
- Lack of knowledge about volunteering
- Scepticism about how much volunteering accomplishes
- Concerns about corruption

### Perceptions of international volunteering

Respondents reported that international volunteering is about:

- Volunteers helping others 17%
- Volunteering overseas, using a range of professions and skills 17%
- Less than 5% of responses were negative.



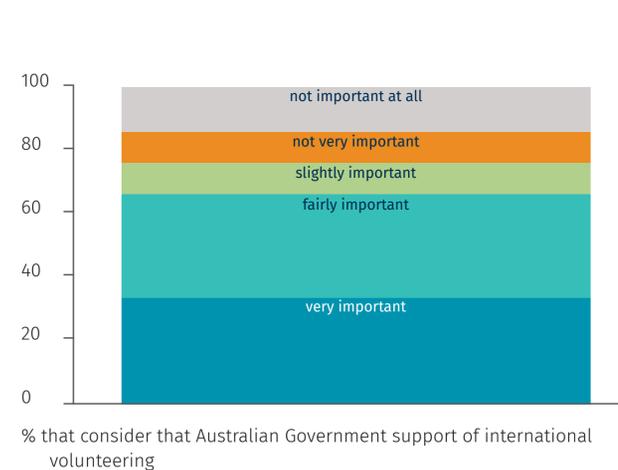
### Benefits of international volunteering

When prompted about possible benefits, 60% agreed that international volunteering was about "connecting Australia and Australians to people and countries in the region" with 44% agreeing that "Volunteers gain professional skills which can be used when returning to the workplace."



### The importance of Australian Government support

Just over one quarter of Australians consider that Australian Government support of international volunteering is very important (27%), with two thirds (66%) considering it to be fairly important or very important.



### Reasons for valuing international volunteering

"Helping the disadvantaged and less fortunate" was the main reason for international volunteering being valued (61%), whereas "Charity begins at home, so fix Australia's problems first" was the main reason for not valuing international volunteering (45%).



### Interest in volunteering opportunities

Few respondents were very interested in receiving information, advocating for, supporting, or participating in international volunteering.



## What's next?

Some core themes emerged around ways to improve Australian's awareness of and attitudes towards international volunteering. These included the importance of mixing the emotional and the rational, the telling of compelling personal stories, and the reduction of bureaucracy to participate in volunteering overseas. The Public Diplomacy team is using the detailed findings to target key messages to different audiences through different formats.

The survey of Australian public opinion will be repeated at the end of the program, to measure changes over time. This will add to the media and social media monitoring data that is collected on an on-going basis.

## Acknowledgements

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