

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC OPINION ON INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

Australian Volunteers

Introduction

This research compared 2021 baseline indicators about the Australian Volunteers Program and international volunteering to 2018 data.

It explored Australian perceptions about international aid and volunteering, and how recent external factors have impacted these views. It also measured the program's brand recognition and recommends how it can increase awareness of international volunteering.

Methodology

The research employed quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative research was conducted using an online survey with 1,300 respondents aged 18 years and over. The 1,300 respondents who completed the 2018 survey were excluded from the sample, as they were likely to have preconceptions of the program. Focus groups were conducted to test strategies that could grow awareness or change attitudes about international volunteering and the program.

Recommendations

The Australian Volunteers Program should provide more details about its initiatives to its target audience, promoting its benefits, the skills needed and volunteer assignments on offer. This should include:

- addressing misconceptions about international volunteering
- sharing stories about supported communities, volunteers and the people they work with

The program should actively seek volunteers to undertake remote volunteering assignments and increase the pool of remote volunteers. It should also use marketing approaches that are tailored to different audiences.

Acknowledgements

The Australian Volunteers Program is an initiative of the Australian Government. This mid-term research into Public Perception of International Volunteering was carried out by Roy Morgan. It was completed in June 2021.

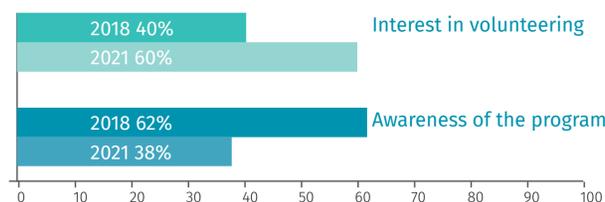
Key Findings

Program awareness

Awareness of the Australian Volunteers Program has significantly declined from 36% in 2018 to 22% in 2021. Only 36% of respondents were able to describe what the program does in 2021, compared with 48% in 2018.

However, interest in specific volunteering activities increased from 21% in 2018 to 31% in 2021, as respondents wanted to receive more information about international volunteering programs. Focus groups were mostly unaware that the program was an Australian Government initiative. Focus group discussions suggested that overseas aid was important, but not at the expense of addressing Australian issues (including COVID-19). They thought providing aid may not necessarily help countries to overcome poverty in the long run.

Interest in volunteering and awareness of the program



Importance of international volunteering

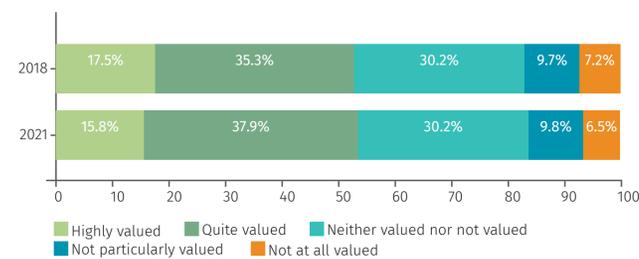
Forty one per cent of survey respondents were interested in at least one of the three international volunteering initiatives presented. This included receiving information about these initiatives, supporting them and participating in volunteering. This was significantly higher than 2018 (28%), indicating a sizeable demand for information about international volunteering. Respondents suggested using video testimonials to help generate interest. Those interested in international volunteering initiatives wanted information about:

- communities supported by Australian volunteers (72%)
- volunteers and the people they work with (63%)
- fact and figures about international volunteering (60%)

Respondents also were interested in considering online or remote volunteer work to support communities overseas (23%).

Seventy per cent of respondents had previously undertaken volunteer work, and 43% had done so in the last year. Ten per cent of respondents had volunteered overseas and 23% were likely to consider volunteering online to support overseas communities. This demonstrates there is a large supply of potential volunteers available. Furthermore, 71% of respondents considered international volunteering to be important and 54% personally valued the role international volunteering.

Personal value of the role of international volunteering



Benefits of international volunteering

Respondents thought that international volunteering connected Australia and Australians to people and countries in the region. Fewer respondents thought Australian volunteers gained personal and professional skills from their assignments, decreasing from 56% in 2018 to 53% in 2021.

Sources of information

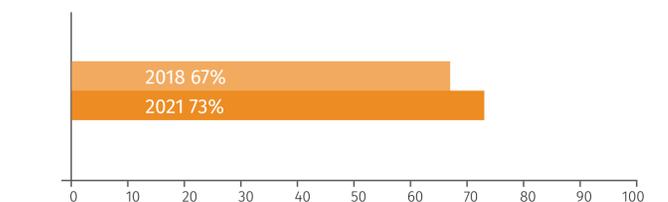
Print media has declined as a major source of awareness for the program since 2018, while online media has remained stable. Social media was the most popular medium for promoting the Australian Volunteers Program, making use of Facebook and YouTube for the widest reach, and Instagram for a younger audience. Survey respondents confirmed these perceptions, with Facebook being the most used application (66%), followed by YouTube (45%) and Instagram (35%).

Perception of international volunteering

The target market for recruiting or advocating the program has increased significantly. This indicates that the segment of people who are likely to participate, advocate and support international volunteering has grown since 2018.

Respondents thought that Australians have a responsibility to do what they can when it comes to the world's poorest people (increase from 48% in 2018 to 56% in 2021). They also considered that the Australian Government should increase overseas aid to help reduce global poverty (increase from 46% in 2018 to 63% in 2021). The importance of the Australian Government supporting international volunteering has increased from 66% in 2018 to 71% in 2021.

Target market for promoting the program



Importance of Australia's foreign aid

Focus groups showed little interest in or knowledge of Australia's foreign aid efforts. Respondents were in favour of helping others, but were not sure how much should be spent, or how it should be distributed. They thought that aid should be distributed within Australia's general region (mainly neighbouring island nations), or as part of an emergency or disaster relief effort.

At least half of respondents could name at least one benefit to people receiving foreign aid (51.0%). Almost half could name benefits to Australians from offering aid (45.4%). Common benefits of countries receiving Australian foreign aid included:

- it is the right thing to do, Australians have a duty of care and it is important to help (20%)
- it is good for international relations and being a good global citizen (18%)
- it improves health and access to medical care (17%)

Benefits to Australians included:

- it is good for international relations and being a good global citizen (31%)
- it is the right thing to do, Australians have a duty of care, it is important to help and we have a moral responsibility (14%)

