



Volunteers at the ASRC

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Volunteer Program Research Team



About the report

Aim

The ASRC is a fast-growing, dynamic, cross-cultural and intergenerational workplace. 2016 marks the ASRC's fifteenth anniversary and provides an opportunity to take stock of the organisation.

Volunteers make up the bulk of the ASRC's workforce, numbering over 1200 and undertaking a variety of roles in 30 different programs—from casework through to legal advice to English language teaching to cooking lunch daily for over 200 people.

A survey of volunteers was carried out to allow the ASRC Volunteer Program to capture volunteer voices. The main purpose was to receive feedback from all volunteers on their experiences at the ASRC, as well as to gauge volunteer views relating to Australian society and issues facing people seeking asylum.

Based on the survey findings, an internal report with recommendations was delivered to the ASRC in October 2016, with a focus on internal processes such as recruitment, induction, training and program evaluation.

The report presented here draws on the survey findings to speak to four areas of wider public interest:

1. ASRC volunteer demographics and motivations, including comparison with the Australian population
2. Volunteer views on Australian society and issues facing people seeking asylum
3. Benefits of and potential barriers to volunteering at the ASRC
4. How volunteers are valued at the ASRC, focusing on recognition, wellbeing, retention, and satisfaction.

How the study was conducted

Volunteer survey

Volunteers were asked 81 questions through an online survey, which included a mixture of multiple choice, likert scale and open-ended questions. Responses came from 590 people out of a potential 1200 (at April 2016), including 40 member volunteers out of a potential 90.¹ This represented 50% of the volunteer population and nearly 50% of the member volunteer population at that time.

Staff survey

A separate staff survey on volunteers was also conducted and selected responses have been included in this report for comparative purposes. Staff survey responses came from 41 staff out of a potential 85. This represented 50% of the staff population at the ASRC at the time of the survey (May 2016).

All percentages quoted are based on respondents, not the ASRC volunteer and staff base as a whole.

Limitations of the study

- The survey was computer-based and required an internet connection. Computers were made available at the ASRC but respondents with computer skills may have self-selected.
- A question asking people to specify whether they were a member or general volunteer may have been misinterpreted by some respondents and hence the member volunteer data required some cleaning.
- The survey was aimed at the general volunteer population. There is scope for a survey tailored to the specificities of the member volunteer program in future.
- The timing of the survey coincided with adverse press about the ASRC, which may have influenced some responses.

¹ People seeking asylum who access the ASRC's services are called members; member volunteers are ASRC volunteers who are also seeking asylum and accessing the ASRC's services

About the authors

The Volunteer Program Research Team are pro-bono consultants Tess Altman (Lead Researcher) and Fran Demetriou (Researcher). Tess and Fran reported to Lindsay Haines, Namrata Mundkur and Naomi Fennell of the ASRC Volunteer Program for the duration of the consultancy and gratefully acknowledge their input.

In addition to authoring this report, Tess and Fran:

- Designed, implemented and analysed the volunteer and staff surveys
- Produced an infographic and two presentations to deliver findings internally
- Authored an internal report with recommendations presented to the ASRC in October 2016.

Tess is a PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology at University College London, researching how volunteers and NGOs deliver services to people seeking asylum in Australia in a restrictive policy climate. She has previously produced a report on volunteers for peak body Volunteering ACT and conducted research on volunteers in New Zealand, Europe and Australia. She has also worked in multicultural policy and volunteer and social program management.

Fran works for a research consultancy in Melbourne, and is completing her Masters in Evaluation at the University of Melbourne. She has worked as a researcher with not-for-profits and charities in the UK and Australia including the Charity Retail Association, International Detention Coalition and Good Shepherd Microfinance.



Volunteer Survey 2016

What we've found so far...

93% felt satisfied with their overall experience at the ASRC

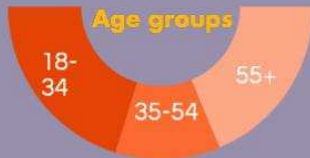
Who are the ASRC's volunteers?

Gender



42% speak a second language

Age groups

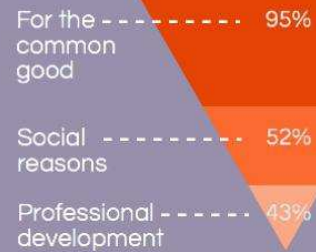


30% have been with the ASRC for over 2 years

Volunteers say they contribute on average **6.5 hours** per week

That's an estimated 350,000 hours per year!

Volunteer motivations



Social reasons increase in importance as a motivation to keep volunteering

39% plan to volunteer indefinitely

Skills

89% said they have gained or developed skills at the ASRC.

Top skill gained **Cross-cultural communication**

78% are politically engaged

and 84% feel that volunteering gives them the ability to create social and political change

80% feel the ASRC keeps them well informed on issues around people seeking asylum

Top concerns



Emerging suggestions

Wellbeing

88% feel appropriately supported to perform their role

84% feel appropriately recognised for their commitment

Top 3 external factors affecting capacity to volunteer are

Work Family Study

Recruitment

#Faster, streamlined
#Targeted, frequent

Induction

#Punchier, interactive
#Who's who, what we do

Recognition

Everyday appreciation

Training

#Cultural awareness
#Trauma, counselling
#On-the-job + manuals

Workplace culture

Develop "One Team"



More info

Legal cases/decisions
Policy changes
News updates

Skills development

Advocacy & campaigning

Cross-cultural communication

Informed conversations

Industry-related

Executive Summary

1 Volunteer characteristics and motivations

ASRC volunteers are active citizens. 37% volunteer for, 68% donate financially or in-kind to, and 41% are members of other organisations. 56% have friends and family who volunteer.

Volunteers are loyal, with a third having been at the ASRC for over 2 years, and nearly half planning to volunteer indefinitely.

Volunteers at the ASRC are **mostly female** (74%), at **opposite ends of the age spectrum** (18-34 and 55+) and **highly educated** (86% with a tertiary qualification). They are also **culturally diverse** (51% have one or more parents born overseas, 42% speak a second language).

Volunteers are **progressive**, with strong **political engagement** (77%) and a high proportion of **Greens supporters** (46%). A majority are **non-aligned with a religion or belief** (58%).

Compared with volunteers, a higher proportion of **staff respondents are younger** (under 35 years), have **higher levels of political engagement** (87%) and **support Greens** (63%). A higher proportion are also **female, diverse, and non-aligned with a religion or belief**.

A higher percentage of ASRC volunteers are highly educated, female and at opposite ends of the age spectrum than in the **general Australian volunteer population**.

ASRC volunteers are **more culturally diverse** than the **overall Australian population**, with 81% born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas (compared to 47% of the Australian population).

58% of ASRC volunteers do not identify with a religion, spirituality or belief, **far higher than that of the general Australian population** (22% reporting 'No religion' in 2011).

Volunteers are motivated to volunteer for the common good, with the top motivation being cause-specific: 'To help address the issues facing people seeking asylum'. Over time, social motivations become an important factor in continuing to volunteer.

Factors such as **age, gender and background have an impact on motivations**, with older volunteers favouring **cause-specific motivations** and social motivations differing with age. **Professional development motivations decrease significantly with age. Volunteers under 35** are interested in gaining **advocacy and campaigning skills** (50%) and **professional skills** (47%), while **volunteers over 55** are interested in developing **cross-cultural communication skills** and **informed conversation skills** (both 33%).²

While **'common good' factors are highest for both genders**, women are more likely to select these than men. In particular, **more women choose cause-related motivations** for volunteering than men. **Women** are more likely than men to volunteer to **increase their opportunities for paid employment** (28%, compared to 20% of men). **Men** are more interested in developing **cross-cultural communication skills**, and **women in advocacy and campaigning skills**.

The **top motivation for member volunteers** is 'to give back to the community' at 78%. Most member volunteer motivations emphasise **reciprocity and feeling socially connected**. Member volunteers are most interested in developing professional, computer, community development, project management, and leadership skills. The top skills both general and member volunteers gained are cross-cultural communication skills, but member volunteers rank language skills (41%) and general computer skills (31%) more highly than general volunteers. This suggests that the **member volunteer program provides a pathway to integration in Australian society and workplace culture**.

² Informed conversation skills refer to the ability to hold an informed conversation about issues facing people seeking asylum

2 Volunteer views

Volunteers' **top concerns in Australia** are: **poor treatment of people seeking asylum** (98%), **domestic violence** (97%), and **Indigenous issues** (94%).³

Volunteers associate **the Australian way of life** with **freedom, values, equity, and opportunities**. Some are disillusioned with the current Australian climate.

Volunteers **strongly agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia**, and **feel a sense of belonging to Australia and their local area/community**. There is moderate agreement with Australian values, pride in the Australian way of life/culture, and Australia as a socially cohesive and giving society. There is **weak agreement that Australia is a welcoming and equal country**.

39% of volunteers think people seeking asylum came to Australia because of a combination of **push and pull factors**. The most common push responses relating to people fleeing persecution or seeking safety, and pull responses related to looking for a better life and opportunities.

Volunteers' **greatest concerns relating to Australia's current approach to people seeking asylum** are **poor treatment of people seeking asylum** (n201) and **detention** (n139).

Volunteers strongly agree that Australia should **increase its humanitarian intake** and **support to UNHCR**, explore **alternative approaches for people arriving by sea**, **end mandatory detention** and **support regional resettlement**. There is little to no support (5%) for the government's current approach.

Volunteers think that **responsibility** for ensuring the needs of people seeking asylum in the Australian community are met rests with **federal government** (92%), state government (88%), NGOs/organisations funded by government (e.g. Red Cross, Life Without Barriers) (85%), the Australian community (82%), and local councils plus NGOs/charitable institutions independent from government such as the ASRC (both 79%).

Volunteers rank **programs that educate the community** (82%), volunteering (75%) and conversations with friends and family (71%) as the **most effective ways to create social and political change**.

Comparing ASRC volunteers to the Australian population using the Scanlon Foundation's most recent *Mapping social cohesion national survey* (2015), **four issues are significantly of more importance to ASRC volunteers: poor treatment of people seeking asylum, Indigenous issues, racism and climate change**.

ASRC volunteers also:

- More strongly **favour multiculturalism** (97% compared with 86% of general population)
- Feel **less of a sense of belonging** to Australia (79% compared with 93%)
- Take **less pride** in the Australian way of life (50% compared with 89%) and
- Are more greatly **concerned about inequity**.

The *Mapping social cohesion 2015 survey* noted that there were some **differences in responses between generations**. Older Australians (40-69 years) were more likely to take pride in the Australian way of life and place importance on maintaining it. For comparison, ASRC volunteer responses were grouped into younger volunteers (18-34 years) and older volunteers (45 years and over), and broadly **mirrored the generational difference** found in the general Australian population. Older ASRC volunteers were more likely to agree with all positive statements relating to Australia.

All ASRC volunteers regardless of age are in agreement that **multiculturalism has been good for Australia** and **feel a sense of belonging to Australia**, as well as noting that Australia has greatest **need for improvement in the areas of equity and welcome**.

³ Data on views was collected from general volunteers only

3 Benefits and barriers to volunteering

Volunteers benefit from their experience at the ASRC through gaining **cross-cultural communication skills** (61%), a sense of being able to **effect change for the better** (84%), **information and awareness** about issues facing people seeking asylum (80% felt the ASRC kept them well informed), and **belonging and connection** through volunteers (87%), the ASRC (79%), and shared meal times (83%).

89% of volunteers said they had **gained or developed skills** at the ASRC.

The ASRC benefits from volunteers through **time contributed** (350,000 hours worth over \$11 million annually), the **skills they bring** (e.g. the ability to collectively speak over 55 languages), their **networks and connections**, their **institutional loyalty and know-how**, and their **political engagement and passion for the cause**.

85% of volunteers have other commitments such as work, family and study, which may present potential barriers to volunteering. Most volunteers are part-time workers (25%), retired (22%) or students (20%).

4 Valuing volunteers

84% of volunteers feel appropriately recognised at the ASRC. 60% think events are the best way to recognise volunteers, while 33% prefer alternative forms of recognition such as everyday appreciation.

The majority of volunteers feel their wellbeing is a priority at the ASRC. Factors that contribute to wellbeing include feeling supported, valued, building strong relationships, and a sense of belonging and purpose. The most common wellbeing issues relate to feeling disconnected, lack of communication and transparency, and working offsite.

88% of volunteers feel **supported**. 95% feel that the ASRC provides **a safe environment**. 27% of volunteers **work more** than the standard agreed-upon seven hours per week.

Satisfaction stayed the same or increased for 86% of volunteers, with 15% reporting their satisfaction has decreased. Reasons for increased satisfaction include support, connection and involvement, confidence or change in role, utilising skills, a sense of purpose and responsibility, understanding the ASRC more, and feeling valued. Reasons for decreased satisfaction include turnover and growth, pressure and commitment, lack of contact, transparency and involvement in decisions, feeling undervalued, loss of hope and vicarious trauma.

Newer volunteers (less than a year) are less likely to be planning on staying long-term compared to long-serving volunteers (over 3 years). The longer a volunteer has been with the ASRC, the more likely they plan to stay for another year or more. Newer volunteers also tend to be younger, with 80% between 18-24 years.

The **top skill** volunteers want to develop further is **advocacy and campaigning (41%)**.

83% of volunteers indicated interest in **further involvement** with the ASRC.

93% of volunteers are satisfied with their experience at the ASRC and 9/10 recommend it as a place to volunteer.

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1 Volunteer characteristics and motivations

Snapshot

The majority of volunteers who responded were:

Table 1. Volunteer snapshot

Characteristic	Percentage
<i>Female</i>	74%, 25% male, 1% other
<i>Highly educated</i>	86% tertiary qualification, of that 48% postgraduate qualification
<i>Diverse</i>	51% one or more parents born overseas; 30% born overseas. 42% speaking a second language, 13% having English as their second language
<i>Younger and older</i>	18-34 years (42%) and 55+ years (36%), with a drop off in working and parent-age volunteers
<i>Working part-time</i>	25%, followed by retirees (22%) students (20%)
<i>Greens supporters</i>	46% planning to vote for the Greens, 11% for Labor and 3% for the Liberal Party ⁴
<i>Non-aligned with religion or a belief</i>	58% did not identify with religion, faith or spirituality. Of those who did (27% religion, 18% spirituality, and 11% faith), most common affiliations were Catholic, Christian, Islam, and Buddhism
<i>Not local to the offices</i>	Average estimated distance travelled to Footscray/Dandenong offices= 17 km. 5% lived within a 30-minute walk of either offices (2.5km) ⁵

Staff comparison

A comparison between staff and volunteer demographics showed that staff tended to be younger (under 35 years), whilst volunteers were at both ends of the age spectrum. Additionally staff had higher levels of political engagement and tended to vote Greens. A higher proportion of staff were also female, diverse, and non-aligned with a religion or belief than volunteers.

⁴ 25% were not sure yet, and 10% preferred not to say

⁵ Offsite volunteers were excluded from this analysis

Table 2. Comparison of volunteer and staff demographics

Demographic	Volunteers	Staff
<i>Gender</i>	74% female	83% female
<i>Age</i>	18-34 years (42%) and 55+ years (36%)	51% under 35
<i>Background</i>	51% one or more parents born overseas; 30% born overseas	68% one or more parent overseas; 37% born overseas
<i>Employment</i>	25% part-time, 22% retired, 20% students	50% part time
<i>Political affiliation</i>	46% Greens supporters; 77% political engagement	63% Greens; 87% political engagement
<i>Religious affiliation</i>	58% non-aligned with religion/belief	73% non-aligned with religion/belief

Comparison with Australian volunteers

The ASRC has a higher proportion of younger volunteers (under 35), lower proportions of 35-54, and higher proportions of over 65's than the general Australian volunteer population. These demographic trends also hold when comparing against the Victorian volunteer population.⁶

Compared with the rest of the Australian volunteering population, the ASRC has a much higher proportion of females volunteering (at 74%), compared to 54% across Australia. Volunteers at the ASRC also have much higher levels of education (86% with a tertiary qualification) than the overall volunteering population across Australia (32% with a Bachelor's degree).

In summary, a higher percentage of ASRC volunteers are highly educated, female and at the opposite ends of the age spectrum than in the general Australian volunteer population.

Figure 1. Age groups of Australian volunteers and ASRC volunteers

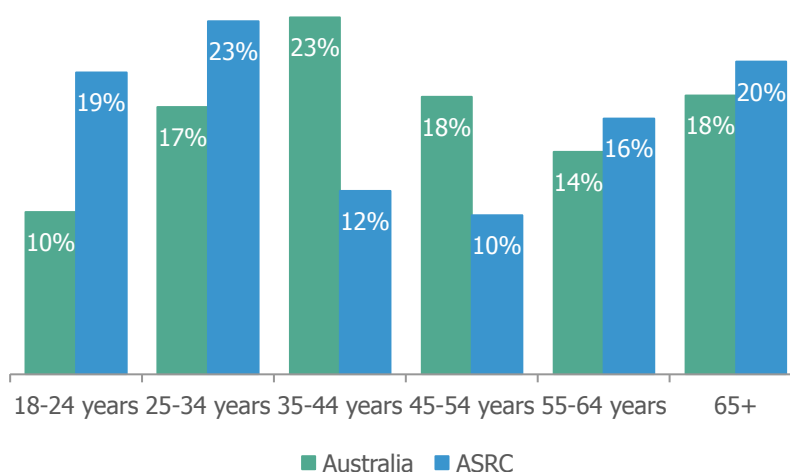
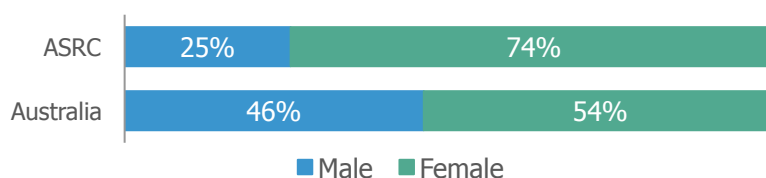


Figure 2. Gender of Australian vs ASRC volunteers



⁶ Comparative data cited is taken from the *ABS General Social Survey 2014, Summary Results, Australia, 2014, Table 22.1 Persons who volunteered in the last 12 months, Selected personal characteristics—By state/territory*

ASRC 'Words that Work' messaging project

The volunteer demographics correspond with the 'Words that Work' messaging research commissioned by the ASRC in 2016. This research found that there were three distinct groupings in terms of attitudes toward people seeking asylum. Supporters of people seeking asylum fit in the 'Base' group, and are more likely to be female and highly educated.

***The Base group** believe the current policy is "too harsh" and favour "being more welcoming"; agree we have a "duty to protect people"; become slightly more favorable toward politicians with welcoming stand; have a strong interest in current events; and are more likely female, tertiary educated, residing in Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory, born here with parent(s) born abroad.*

***The Persuadables** believe in sustaining current policy; are of mixed minds on having duty to protect and only helping Australians; move to wanting more welcoming policies and become less likely to support politicians with harsh stand; are inconsistent in their interest in current events; and mirror the demographics of the voting population.*

***The Opposition** want government to "take a harsher stance"; believe turning back boats "sends a strong signal"; remain entrenched in their positions; have a strong interest in current events; and are more likely to be older, male, without tertiary education, living in regional areas in Queensland or Western Australia.*

(Words in italics from ASRC Community Engagement Team, 2016).

Comparison with Australian population

ASRC volunteers were more culturally diverse than the overall Australian population. According to the most recent Scanlon Foundation *Mapping social cohesion national survey* (2015), in 2011 (latest available Census data), 47% of the population were born overseas (27%) or born in Australia with at least one overseas-born parent (20%).⁷ In comparison, 81% of ASRC volunteers were born overseas (30%) or have a parent born overseas (51%).

However, as the ASRC volunteer base is mostly urban, a higher rate of diversity can be expected. The *Mapping social cohesion survey* notes that a relatively high proportion of the overseas-born in Australia live in the capital cities: 82% in 2011, compared to 66% of the total population.⁸

The countries of birth of overseas-born ASRC volunteers varied slightly from that of the overall Australian population. Top countries of birth for overseas-born ASRC volunteers were: United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States of America, India, Iran, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This compares to the top countries of birth for overseas-born Australian residents, which were: United Kingdom, New Zealand, China, India, Vietnam and Italy.

The religions reported in the ASRC survey reflected the top religious affiliations in Australia, which are Christianity (61%), Buddhism (2.5%), Islam (2.2%), and Hinduism (1.3%).

However the number of ASRC volunteers who did not identify with a religion, spirituality or belief (58%) was far higher than that of the general Australian population (22% of Australians reporting 'No religion' in 2011).

⁷ The estimated 27% overseas-born ranks Australia first within the OECD among nations with populations over ten million. It compares with 20% overseas-born in Canada, 13% in Germany, 13% in the United States, 11% in the United Kingdom, and 12% in France. The average for the OECD is 12% (Scanlon Foundation *Mapping social cohesion national survey*, 2015)

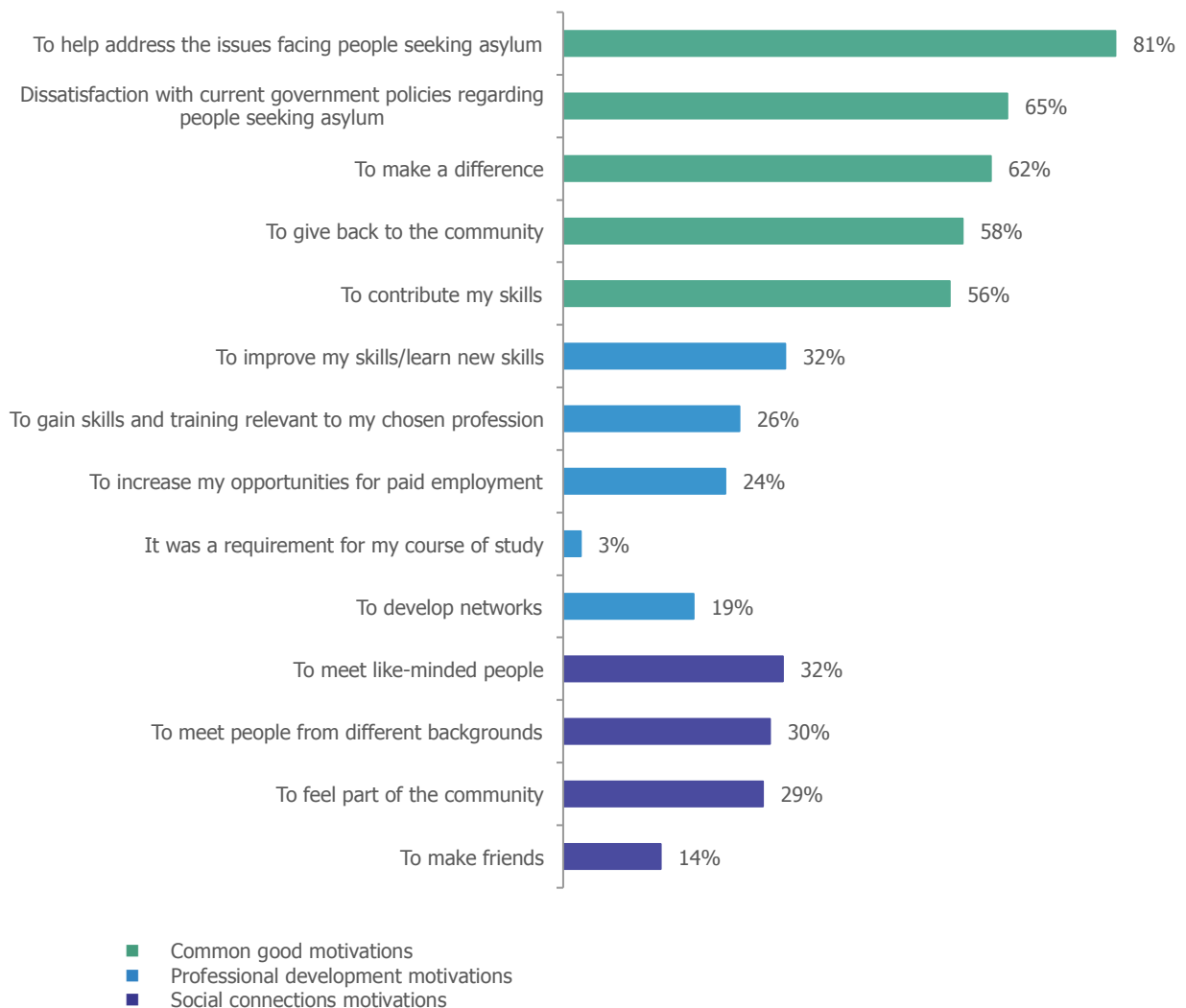
⁸ In 2011, the overseas-born comprised an estimated 37% of the population of Perth, 36% of Sydney, 33% of Melbourne, 26% of Adelaide and Brisbane, and 14% of Hobart (*Mapping social cohesion 2015 survey*)

Motivations to volunteer

The top five motivations overall for volunteers to start and to continue volunteering were:

1. To help address the issues facing people seeking asylum (81%)
2. Dissatisfaction with current government policies (65%)
3. To make a difference (62%)
4. To give back to the community (58%)
5. To contribute skills (56%).

Figure 3. Motivations to start volunteering (grouped by themes)

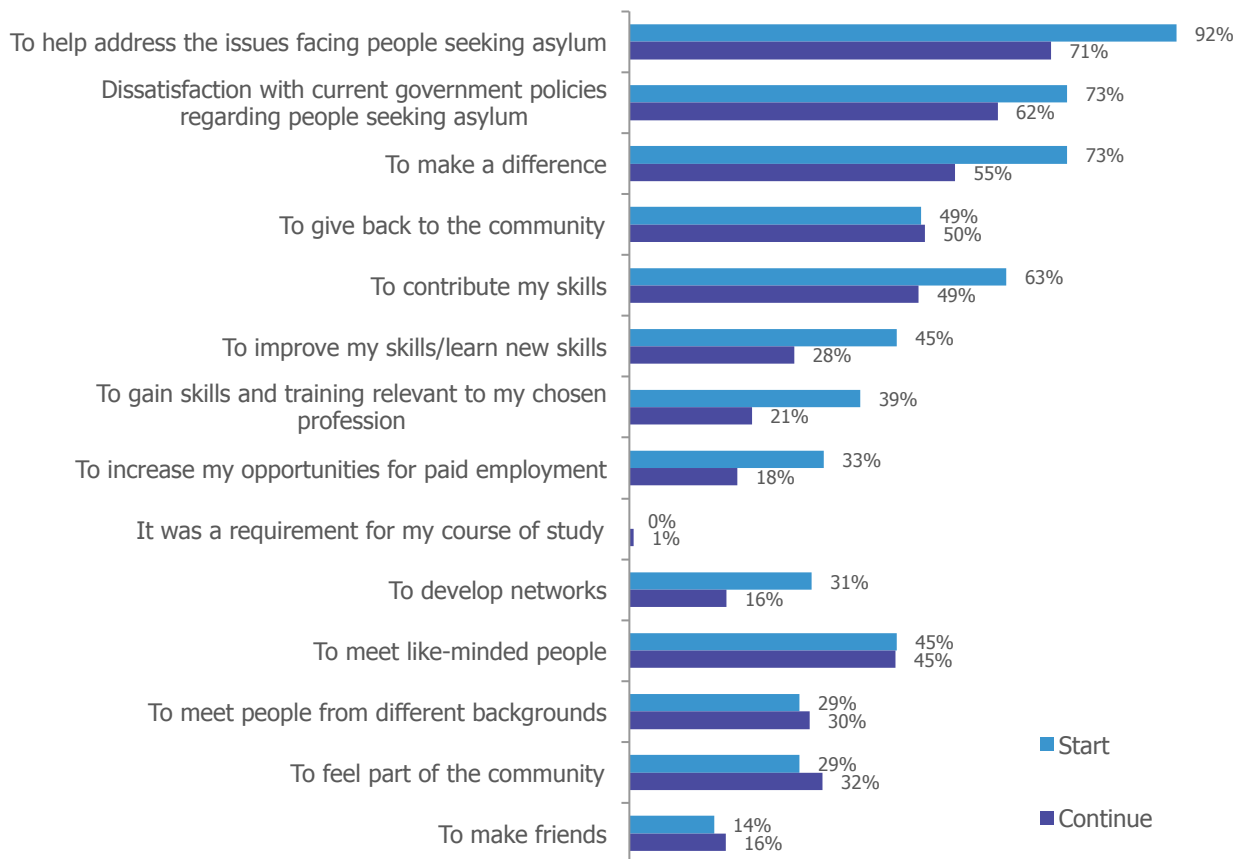


Motivations over time

Motivations for starting and continuing volunteering showed similarities. As people continued to volunteer, 'common good' motivations were still the most important. Whilst the 'common good' and 'professional development' motivations waned over time, **the 'social' motivations increased in importance.**

Other motivations for continuing to volunteer were:

Figure 4. Motivations to start compared with motivations to continue



- To support the organisation's efforts (52%)
- For a sense of achievement in the work (48%)
- To maintain connections made with other volunteers, members and staff (36%).

"Because of the calibre/cleverness/passion of the people working/volunteering at ASRC"

"[I'm] friends with other volunteers. I'm more passionate about 'the plight of asylum seekers' after working here around members and other volunteers"

"To continue to assist and maintain the relationships I have with my clients"

Other considerations: Age, gender and member volunteers

Age

'Common good' motivations were highest for all volunteers, but for older age groups these were cause-specific, whereas younger age groups had more general 'common good' motivations such as 'to make a difference'. For the social motivations, younger volunteers preferred 'feeling part of the community' and 'making friends', while older volunteers selected 'meeting like-minded people' and 'people from different backgrounds'. Professional development motivations were more popular amongst younger volunteers and decreased significantly with age, though 'improving skills and learning new skills' was common across all age groups, signalling that personal development was an important motivation to all respondents.

Volunteers under 35 were more interested in gaining advocacy and campaigning skills (50%) and professional skills (47%), while volunteers aged 55 and over were more interested in developing cross-cultural communication skills and informed conversation skills (both 33%).

Gender

While 'common good' factors were the most highly selected motivations for both genders, women were more likely to select these than men. In particular, more women chose cause-related motivations for volunteering than men, such as 'dissatisfaction with current government policies' (67%, compared to 59% of men), and 'to help address the issues faced by people seeking asylum' (82%, compared to 76% of men).

When comparing professional motivations, women were more likely than men to volunteer to gain skills (25%, compared to 21% of men) and increase their opportunities for paid employment (28%, compared to 20% of men). The only professional motivation that men were more likely to select was networking (25%, compared to 17% of women).

Social motivations were similar for men and women, with the only notable difference being the motivation to start volunteering to 'feel part of the community', which was more common for women (31% of women, compared to 25% of men).

A final difference was noted in the motivation for starting to volunteer: 'I heard good things about the organisation', which 42% of women selected compared to 30% of men.

Men were more interested in developing cross-cultural communication skills, and women in advocacy and campaigning skills.

Member volunteers

Member volunteer motivations and skills interests differed from overall responses. The top motivation for member volunteers was 'to give back to the community' at 78%, followed by 'to meet like-minded people', 'to be part of the community', 'to make a difference' and 'to contribute skills', all 72%. Most motivations fell into the 'common good' theme, but with an emphasis on reciprocity and feeling socially connected.

Member volunteers were most interested in developing professional, computer, community development, project management, and leadership skills. Similarly to general volunteers, member volunteers reported cross-cultural communication (59%), teamwork (44%) and inter-personal communication (44%) as the top skills they had gained or developed. Member volunteers rated their development of language skills (41%) and general computer skills (31%) higher than general volunteers, who preferred profession-related or specialised computer skills. This suggests that the member volunteer program acts as a pathway to integration in Australian society and workplace culture.

Member volunteers showed less interest in developing advocacy and informed conversation skills than general volunteers.

2 Volunteer views

Top concerns

Volunteers were asked to rate their level of concern about issues in an Australian context.⁹ Their top concerns were:¹⁰

1. Poor treatment of people seeking asylum (98%)
2. Domestic violence (97%)
3. Indigenous issues (94%)
4. Quality of government/politicians (92%)
5. Racism, climate change, unemployment/poverty (all 91%).

If the top issues are analysed by the percentage of respondents who were 'very concerned', the top three concerns were poor treatment of people seeking asylum, Indigenous issues, and climate change.

Views on Australian society and culture

Respondents were also asked to rate their agreement with general statements about mainstream Australian society and culture. Responses are below:

Table 3. Statements on Australian society and culture

Level of agreement	Statement
Strong	'Multiculturalism has been good for this country' (97% agree, 73% strongly agree)
	'I feel a sense of belonging in Australia' (79% agree)
	'I feel a sense of belonging to my local area/community' (75% agree)
Moderate	'I identify with Australian values' (51% agree)
	'I take pride in the Australian way of life and culture' (50% agree)
	'Australia is a socially cohesive society' (50% agree)
	'Australia has a strong culture of giving' (43% agree)
Weak	'Australia is a welcoming country' (30% agree)
	'People are treated equally in this country regardless of their background, gender, income or other factor' (13% agree)

⁹ Data in this section was collected from general volunteers only

¹⁰ These were followed by the quality of education/schools (78%), marriage equality (77%), quality of health services (75%), crime/law and order (36%), prevalence of terrorism (32%), too little immigration/population growth (26%), lack of border control (13%) and too much immigration/population growth (10%). Some respondents reported that the conflation of immigration with population growth (taken from the *Mapping social cohesion 2015 survey*) confused two separate issues

Respondents strongly agreed that multiculturalism had been good for Australia, and felt a sense of belonging to Australia and their local area/community. There was moderate agreement with Australian values, pride in the Australian way of life/culture, and Australia as a socially cohesive and giving society. There was weak agreement that Australia was a welcoming and equal country.

79 respondents added further comments. These were mainly dissatisfaction with the decline of Australian values such as welcome, 'a fair go' and egalitarianism due to current government policies (n45), and comments that the questions were too general for such a diverse society (n19).

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to define what the Australian way of life meant to them. The most common themes were freedom, values, equity, and opportunities.

Some respondents were disillusioned with the current Australian climate and contrasted the 'ideal' with the reality (n34), with particular concern for unfairness and inequity (e.g. poor treatment of people seeking asylum and First Peoples), a 'selfish' culture of entitlement/individualism/privilege (n13), and racism (n5). Other respondents (n29) stated the question was too broad as there is no one Australian way of life.

Views on issues facing people seeking asylum

Volunteers were asked why they thought people seeking asylum came to Australia. Responses emphasised push and/or pull factors, with the most common push responses relating to people fleeing persecution or seeking safety (n264), and pull responses related to looking for a better life and opportunities (n143):

- 39% of respondents referred to a combination of push and pull factors (n171)¹¹
- 35% cited push factors alone, for example escaping conflict (n150)
- 23% cited pull factors alone, for example Australia's reputation, living standards, or values (n99).

"They are looking for an opportunity away from persecution (war, discrimination, poverty, no opportunities, chaos, etc.) and they see Australia a good place to start a new life, a place where they can make a contribution"

Volunteers were asked to specify their greatest concern relating to Australia's current approach to people seeking asylum.

The two most common concerns raised related to poor treatment of people seeking asylum (n201) and detention (n139).

Respondents thought that the Australian government's treatment of people seeking asylum was inhumane, cruel, dehumanising, and damaging to their physical and mental health. Respondents also felt that the treatment of people seeking asylum did not fit with their values such as fairness, humanity and respect (n52). Two respondents did not have any concerns.

Concerns were raised about:¹²

- Length of time that people were waiting for their claims to be processed
- Politicisation of the approach from a humanitarian issue into a political one
- Fear mongering, misinformation and secrecy
- Feelings of shame
- That Australia was shirking its responsibilities
- Harm to Australia's reputation.

¹¹ Out of a total of 435 responses (174 skipped)

¹² Number of responses in listed order: n44, 25, 21, 7, 7, 3

"It is inhumane! Doesn't seem to change with any of the major political parties"

"Detention centres, ridiculously slow processing, temporary as opposed to permanent visas, unable to work, lack of adequate resources to support asylum seekers living in the community"

"Politics rather than human rights directing policy"

"Turning back boats doesn't stop people drowning—just not in our waters! There needs to be more dialogue at an International level as the issue is very much an International problem"

"The government's secrecy surrounding Manus and Nauru; treatment of refugees in detention centres; children in detention"

"Turning already traumatised people into severely psychologically damaged people. Australia will be apologising for this behaviour in years to come but the damage will have been done"

Current and future policies

Volunteers were asked to rate their agreement with statements regarding current and potential future policies for people seeking asylum in Australia. Responses are below:

Table 4. Policies for people seeking asylum in Australia

Level of agreement	Statement	Preferred outcome
Strong	'Australia should increase its humanitarian intake for people seeking asylum' (96% agree)	Increase humanitarian intake
	'Australia should offer more support to UNHCR in the Asia-Pacific region' (94% agree)	Increase support to UNHCR
	'The government should look at alternative approaches for people seeking asylum who arrive by boat (e.g. community detention, permanent protection)' (94% agree)	Explore alternative approaches
	'Australia should remove its mandatory detention policy' (93% agree, 78% strongly agree)	End mandatory detention
	'Australia should provide practical and financial support to countries in the Asia-Pacific region to develop better systems for resettling people seeking asylum there' (79% agree)	Support regional resettlement
Weak	'The government's current approach to people seeking asylum who arrive by boat is reasonable and justified (e.g. boat turnbacks, offshore processing, temporary protection)' (95% disagree)	Current approach needs changing

Respondents strongly agreed that Australia should increase its humanitarian intake and support to UNHCR, explore alternative approaches for people arriving by sea, end mandatory detention and support regional resettlement. There was little to no support (5%) for the government's current approach.

Locus of responsibility and change

Volunteers were asked who they thought should be responsible for ensuring the needs of people seeking asylum in the Australian community are met while they wait for their claims to be processed. The top responses were:

1. Federal government (92%)
2. State government (88%)
3. NGOs/organisations funded by government (e.g. Red Cross, Life Without Barriers) (85%)
4. The Australian community (82%)
5. Local councils, NGOs/charitable institutions independent from government such as the ASRC (both 79%).

Other responses were ethnic/cultural organisations run by former refugees/migrants (74%), advocacy groups (72%), Australian citizens (71%), and churches or religious groups (62%).

In the open-ended responses, respondents indicated that a coordinated and collaborative approach to providing support was needed in which all levels of government (federal, state and local), NGOs, community groups, and churches all worked together (n31). Other suggestions included involving sporting clubs, trade unions, hospitals, cinemas, theatres, schools, friends and family of people seeking asylum, and people seeking asylum themselves.

When asked about ways to create social and political change for the better for people seeking asylum, respondents ranked the following as most effective:

1. Programs that educate the community (82%)
2. Volunteering (75%)
3. Conversations with friends and family (71%)
4. Specific campaigns such as *Let Them Stay* (68%)
5. Voting, grassroots groups (both 66%)
6. Engaging politicians as a community member (64%)
7. Public rallies (58%)
8. Publishing articles in the media (54%).

Comparison with Australian population

The Scanlon Foundation's *Mapping social cohesion 2015 survey* was used to compare the views of the ASRC volunteer base with the general Australian population. In the *Mapping social cohesion survey*, each year respondents are asked to nominate their top concerns in Australia. In 2015, the top concerns were as follows:

1. Economic issues at 33%. This has consistently been the top concern since the surveys began in 2011
2. Social issues at 11% (up from 8% in 2014)
3. National security issues at 10% (up from 1% in 2014)
4. Quality of government and politicians at 9% (down from 15% in 2014)
5. Environment at 7% (down from 18% in 2011)
6. Asylum seekers at 5% (down from peak of 12% in 2012/13).

Of the 5% who listed asylum seekers as a concern in the *Mapping social cohesion survey*, only 2% were concerned about poor treatment, while the other 2.5% were concerned that there were too many arrivals.

ASRC volunteer responses about Australian society and culture broadly mirrored those of the general Australian population. However, there were four issues that were significantly of more importance to ASRC volunteers:

1. The poor treatment of people seeking asylum
2. Indigenous issues
3. Racism
4. Climate change.¹³

¹³ Quality of government, education, health and crime were also of greater importance to ASRC volunteers, while economic issues and national security issues were of lesser importance to ASRC volunteers than the general population. We cannot compare domestic violence or marriage equality, as these questions were not asked in the *Mapping social cohesion survey*

ASRC volunteers also:

- More strongly favoured multiculturalism (97% compared with 86% of general population)
- Felt less of a sense of belonging to Australia (79% compared with 93%)
- Took far less pride in the Australian way of life (50% compared with 89%) and
- Were more greatly concerned about inequity.¹⁴

Generational difference?

The *Mapping social cohesion survey* noted that there were some differences in responses between generations. Older Australians (40-69 years) were more likely to take pride in the Australian way of life (64%) and place importance on maintaining it (64-67%), compared with 35% and 39% respectively of younger Australians (18-29 years).

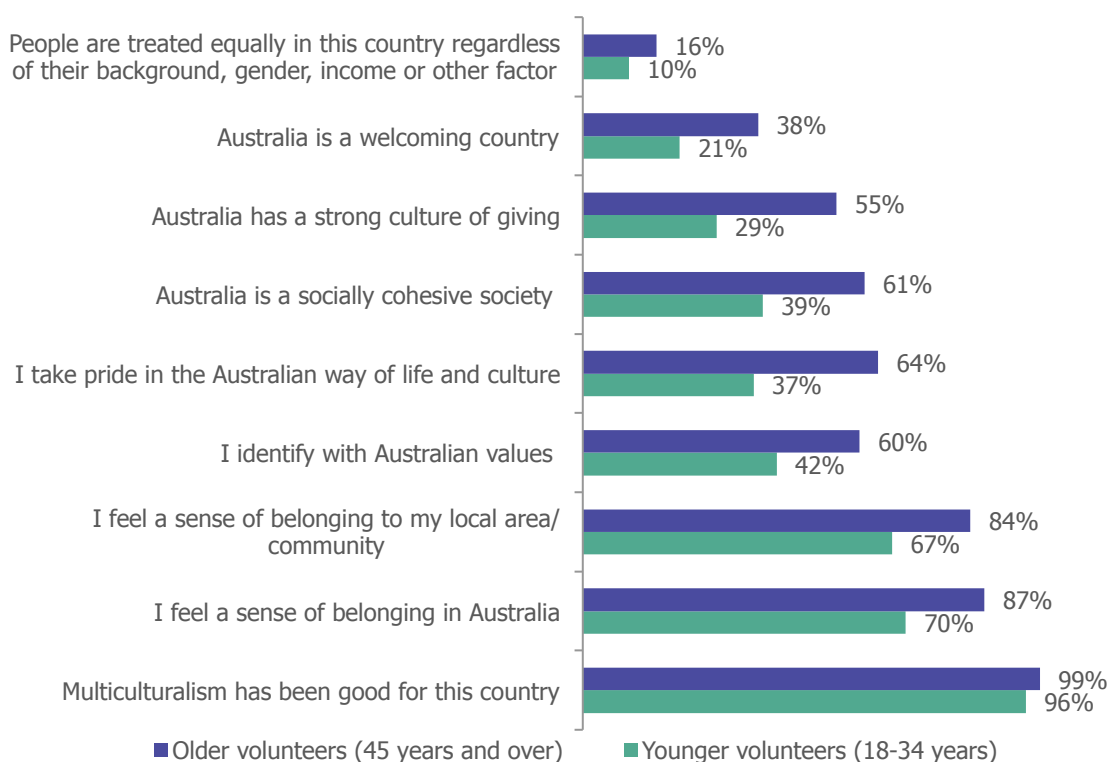
For comparison, ASRC volunteer responses were grouped into younger (18-34) and older volunteers (45 and up). This ASRC age comparison broadly mirrored the generational difference found in the Australian population. Responses are in the table over the page. All percentages are based on level of agreement:

Older ASRC volunteers were more likely to agree with all positive statements relating to Australia. The biggest points of age-related difference for ASRC volunteers were:

- 'Taking pride in the Australian way of life and culture' (64% older volunteers compared with 37% younger volunteers)
- 'Australia has a strong culture of giving' (55% compared with 29%), and
- 'Australia is a socially cohesive society' (61% compared with 39%).

All volunteers regardless of age were in agreement that multiculturalism has been good for Australia and felt a sense of belonging to Australia, as well as noting that Australia has greatest need for improvement in the areas of equity and welcome.

Figure 5. Generational comparison of views on Australian society and culture



3 Benefits and barriers to volunteering

Benefits to ASRC volunteers

Purpose

Volunteers gained a sense of purpose from volunteering, with 84% of volunteers feeling that they, as a volunteer, could effect political and social change for the better. 96% of volunteers felt that the ASRC has the ability to create social and political change for the better. 48% reported that the sense of achievement they gained from their input at the ASRC contributed to their reasons for continuing to volunteer.

"I feel a certain amount of hopelessness and powerlessness. Volunteering at ASRC makes me feel I am doing something concrete to effect small-scale change in the lives of some asylum seekers, by showing 'hey some people care, some people want you here' I am making a small difference as well as saying to the government 'I disagree with your policies'"

Information and awareness

Over 80% of volunteers felt the ASRC kept them well informed about current issues facing people seeking asylum.

Involvement with the ASRC was the top factor in influencing volunteers' attitudes towards people seeking asylum (65%), followed by cultural background and upbringing (47%), personal connection with people seeking asylum (45%), and attitudes of family and friends (45%).

Belonging and connection

Volunteers gained a sense of belonging and connection from volunteering, through camaraderie and support from other volunteers (87% mostly or completely) and from feeling socially connected at the ASRC (79% mostly or completely). Volunteers found that the shared meal times provided an opportunity to connect with others (83% mostly or completely).

Table 5. Social environment at the ASRC

Do you...	No, not at all	No, not really	Neutral	Yes, mostly	Yes, completely
Feel socially connected at the ASRC?	2%	7%	12%	41%	38%
Have a sense of camaraderie with other volunteers in your Program?	2%	3%	7%	31%	56%
Feel supported by other volunteers?	2%	2%	8%	32%	56%
Find that shared meal times (e.g. lunch, dinner) provide a good opportunity to connect with others?	3%	2%	12%	52%	31%

“I love the shared meal times, I think they provide a great opportunity to connect with other volunteers and also the wider ASRC community”

Skills

89% of volunteers reported they had gained or developed skills at the ASRC. Top skills developed were:

1. Cross-cultural communication (61%)
2. Informed conversation skills (49%)
3. Teamwork (44%)
4. Interpersonal communication (42%).

Just under a third of volunteers reported gaining profession-related skills and specialised computer skills.

Some volunteers stated that working with staff they admired gave them a feeling of satisfaction.

“The manager & staff are very supportive and very knowledgeable. They take into account even small problems we volunteers face. This has increased the overall satisfaction for all the volunteers”



ASRC volunteer information evening.

Benefits to the ASRC

Time and skills

Volunteers estimated they contributed 350,000 hours. Based on an hourly rate of \$32.78, which is an average of the most relevant recent ABS projections valuing volunteer time (\$33.07/hour for social services and \$32.48/hour for advocacy work, both core activities of the ASRC), this equates to an annual contribution worth over \$11 million to the ASRC.¹⁵

From one viewpoint this is a conservative estimate as many of the ASRC's volunteer roles (such as lawyers, doctors) are highly skilled and in reality would have a higher hourly rate. However, the self-reported amount of hours is a generous estimate when compared to previous internal ASRC valuations of volunteer time, so in this case the approximation may represent a balanced estimate.

Volunteers reported the average hours they volunteered at the ASRC per week, and these varied from as little as 30 minutes to as much as 35 hours.

The majority reported volunteering between five and seven hours per week though a significant proportion (27%) reported contributing more than the standard agreed-upon 7-hour day.

Volunteers brought important and relevant skills in cross-cultural communication, with the collective ability to speak over 55 languages. 42% of volunteers spoke a second language.

The top ten languages spoken by volunteers were:

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. French (22%) | 4. German (7%) | 7. Chinese (Mandarin) (3%) | 10. Urdu (2%). |
| 2. Spanish (11%) | 5. Persian (Farsi) (3%) | 8. Japanese (3%) | |
| 3. Italian (10%) | 6. Arabic (3%) | 9. Hindi (2%) | |

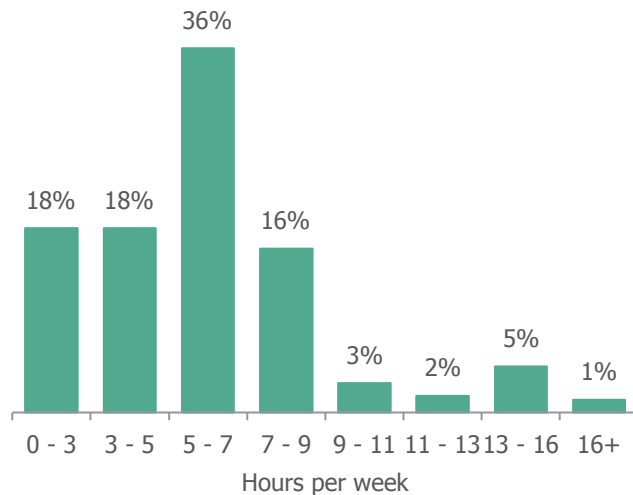
The majority of volunteers (56%) donated their time at the ASRC in order to contribute their existing skill-set to the organisation.

Civic engagement and networks

Volunteers brought connections to other organisations, sectors and potential volunteers:

- 37% volunteered for another organisation themselves
- 68% donated financially or in-kind to other organisations
- 41% were members of organisations or clubs
- 56% of volunteers said they have friends and family who volunteer.

Figure 6. Average hours volunteered per week



¹⁵ The most recent ABS volunteering rates come from the *Australian National Accounts: Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account, 2012-13*. The figures already account for gender bias (majority female) in volunteer time. It should be noted in relation to the figure of 350,000 hours that self-reporting of hours is not the most reliable measuring instrument

The most common other organisations to volunteer for were in the **environmental, legal, health, refugee, religious** and **education** sectors. Many volunteers were also members of professional networks and associations, such as medical associations and legal centres.

Institutional loyalty and know-how

Over 21% of volunteers had been with the ASRC for over 3 years, and 3% for over 10 years. These long-serving volunteers had a wealth of experience and knowledge about the ASRC and its history.

There was also an ethos and history of volunteering at the ASRC, with 21% of volunteers having previously volunteered for another role, 48% of current staff having been a volunteer at the ASRC in the past, and 7% of staff currently volunteering at the ASRC.

“I was 'lucky' enough to start with and manage reception for many years which meant I built my knowledge with and as the organisation expanded. While I no longer 'manage' the program there is great satisfaction still being there and being able to assist just because I have this 'history'!”

Passion and political engagement

The top motivations for starting and continuing volunteering were cause-specific, with 81% saying they wanted to ‘help address the issues facing people seeking asylum’.

Volunteers reported a high level of political engagement, with 77% saying that they were politically or very politically engaged.

“Was so distressed at treatment of asylum seekers and had such a strong sense of disempowerment to effect political and cultural change I thought I had to do something directly to help people seeking asylum”



ASRC legal triage.
Photo credit: Zen Photography.

Potential barriers to volunteering

85% of respondents had external factors affecting their capacity to volunteer. The top factors reported were work, family and study.

Table 6. External factors affecting capacity to volunteer

External factors	%
Work	46%
Family	34%
Study	32%
Health	21%
Location/Transport	20%
Finances	17%
None of the above	16%
Other (please specify)	8%
Disability	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Other factors specified by 8% of volunteers were:

- Holidays
- Other volunteering
- Personal/social commitments
- General time pressures
- Mental health and stress.

Of those volunteers who reported external factors, 38% said that these factors had prevented them from attending more than three volunteer shifts over the last six months.

Staff perspectives

Staff ranked volunteer commitments differently, with 97% viewing study as the biggest external factor affecting volunteer capacity.

46% of volunteers were working either part-time, full-time or through self-employment. A fifth were full-time students.

“While I do understand that it creates an added challenge, it would be wonderful to have more opportunities for people with young children to volunteer”

“As a full-time worker it is very difficult to consider becoming involved in other programs because of the incredibly high expectations about level of commitment to the various programs”

“Burn out because of the nature of the work and the difficulty of doing this work after spending a whole day at my paid job”

4 Valuing volunteers

Recognition

84% of volunteers reported feeling adequately recognised.

The majority (60%) chose volunteer recognition/celebration events as the most appropriate way to recognise volunteers. A third of respondents gave other suggestions for how to appropriately recognise volunteers.

The top suggestion was **everyday appreciation**.¹⁶ Volunteers found direct acknowledgement, appreciation and thanks on the day from their immediate team and supervisors to be the most important, either verbally, through emails or newsletters or announced in briefings.

Many volunteers said they did not want any formal recognition, as for them contributing their support to members was satisfying enough and they did not want a non-profit spending time and resources on them.

Volunteers also valued ongoing feedback and communication from staff and members.¹⁷

“I despise being in the limelight as a volunteer, just want to celebrate members as much as possible!!”

“Not appropriate and not expected—I think we need to focus more on our role as service providers”

“Genuine feedback and respect from supervisors”

Other suggestions were:¹⁸

- Events
- Involvement and inclusion through information and opportunities
- References from staff
- The appropriate use of volunteer time and skills
- Acknowledgement of authorship
- Other staff and volunteers taking care of shared spaces.

Wellbeing

The majority of volunteers felt their wellbeing was a priority at the ASRC. They felt more strongly that their wellbeing was a priority within their current Program (73% mostly or completely) than for the ASRC as a whole (66% mostly or completely).

¹⁶ This suggestion occurred in 47 responses

¹⁷ 35 and 19 responses respectively (formal recognition and ongoing feedback)

¹⁸ Number of responses in listed order: 13, 11, 7, 3, 2 and 2

Table 7. Priority of wellbeing at the ASRC

My wellbeing is a priority...	No, not at all	No, not really	Neutral	Yes, mostly	Yes, completely
For the ASRC as a whole	2%	8%	25%	41%	25%
Within my current Program	1%	7%	20%	40%	33%

118 volunteers provided further comments about their wellbeing at the ASRC. Of these, 46% raised issues while 30% were positive.¹⁹

The most common wellbeing issue raised related to **feeling disconnected**,²⁰ which occurred for a range of reasons including divisions and silos, working offsite, and lack of communication/transparency.²¹

Volunteers also wanted more contact with and emphasis on members, and guidelines on relationships and boundaries.²²

Positive responses emphasised feeling supported, valued, building strong relationships, and a sense of belonging and purpose.²³

Support and safety

88% of volunteers said that they felt supported or very supported to perform their role.

“I think we all understand that it is the wellbeing of our members that is our priority. But we are supported to support them”

4% did not feel supported to perform their role, and 8% were neutral.

“There should be more support for volunteers at the ASRC. All the emphasis is on clients and paid staff and it just feels like volunteers are there to work and that's it...”

95% of volunteers reported that the ASRC completely (56%) or mostly (39%) provided a safe volunteering environment, though some volunteers were not aware of safety procedures.

Staff perspectives

“We need to value them as peers. We would not exist without them”

Staff were asked about their previous experience and confidence in managing volunteers. 47% of staff respondents said they had not managed volunteers in previous roles. While 87% felt confident managing volunteers, only 27% were satisfied with the amount of training they received.

60% of staff felt that the ASRC prioritised volunteer safety and wellbeing. 21% did not think volunteer safety and wellbeing was prioritised, and 18% were neutral.

¹⁹ 54 and 36 responses respectively

²⁰ 34 responses

²¹ Number of responses in listed order: n9, 7 and 6

²² 7 responses

²³ 36 responses

Retention

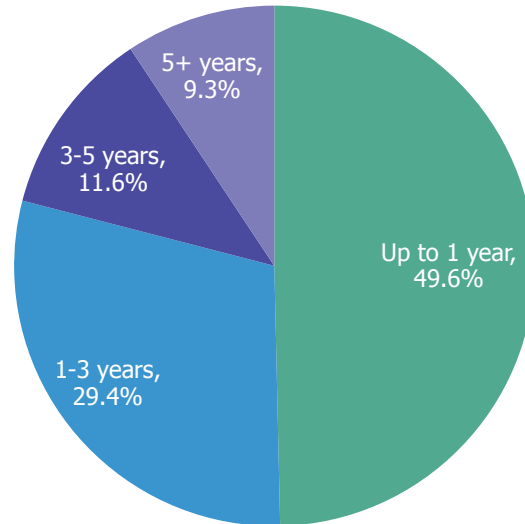
The majority of volunteers (50%) had been with the ASRC for less than a year. The remaining 50% were broken down as follows: 1-3 years at 29%, 3-5 years at 12% and 5+ years at 9%.

Newer volunteers (up to a year) were more likely to be younger, whilst long-serving volunteers (3+ years) were typically older. Volunteers at the ASRC for 1-3 years were more mixed across age groups.

Newer volunteers were less likely to be planning on staying long-term compared to long-serving volunteers. The trend showed that the longer a volunteer had been at the ASRC, the more likely they planned to stay for another year or more.

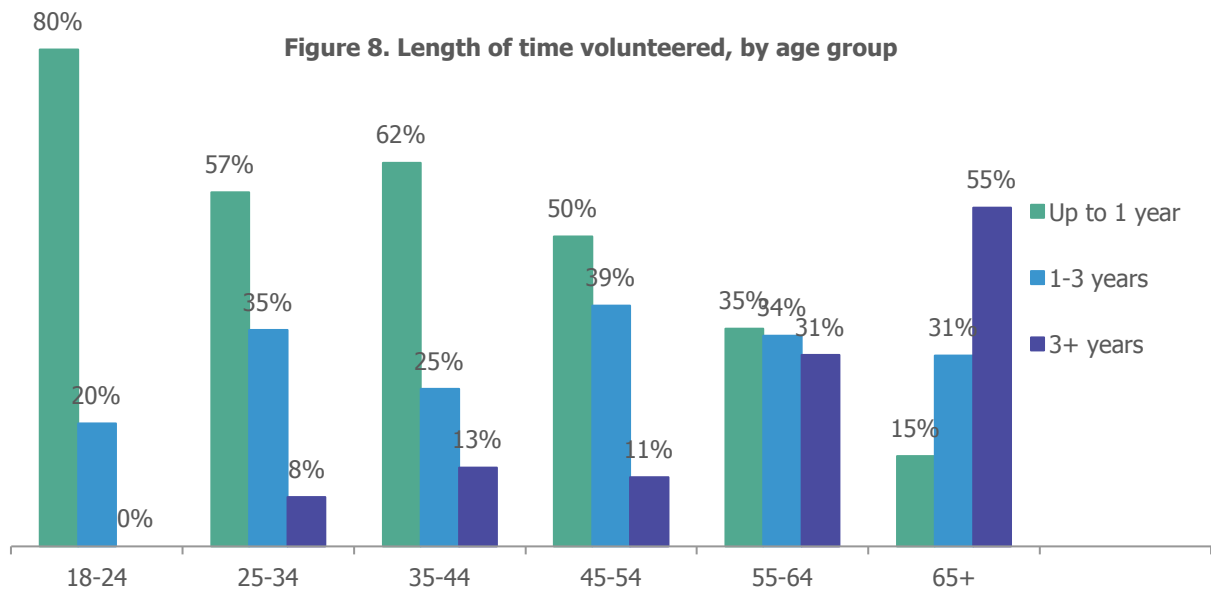
As newer volunteers tended to be younger, the likelihood of younger volunteers planning to continue volunteering beyond a year is also less than older volunteers.

Figure 7. Length of time volunteered at the ASRC



Long-serving volunteer recognition event. Photo credit: Kim Landy.

A majority of all age groups planned to stay more than a year, with 63% of all volunteers planning to stay for at least another year. 39% planned to volunteer indefinitely.



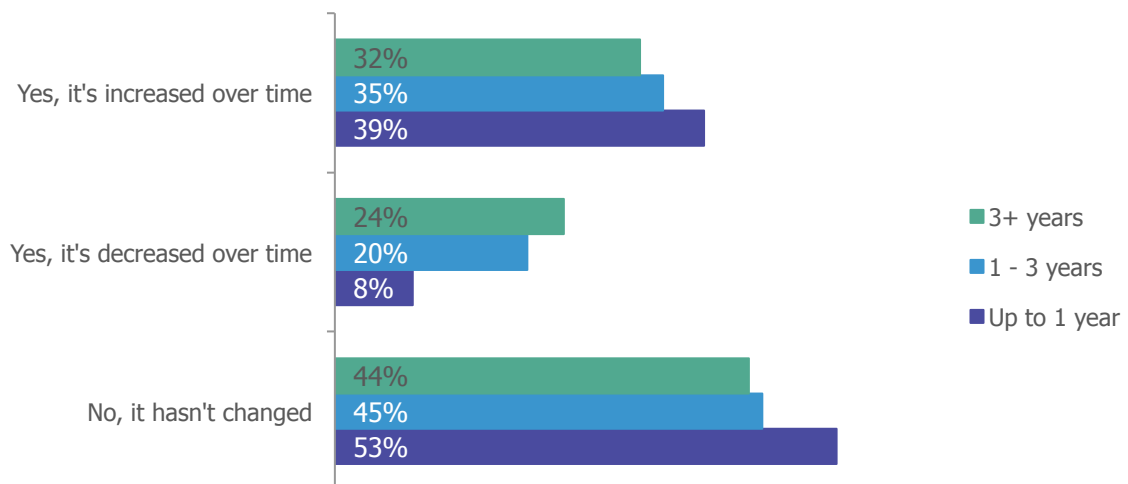
Satisfaction over time

Volunteer satisfaction over time was analysed to determine what factors contributed to increased and decreased satisfaction.

Overall, satisfaction stayed the same or increased for 86% of volunteers, with the remaining 15% saying their satisfaction had decreased over their time at the ASRC.

Length of service was a factor in satisfaction level. Volunteers who had been at the ASRC for up to a year had the highest level of increased satisfaction over time (39%), while decreased satisfaction was only 8%. For long-serving volunteers, decreased satisfaction was significantly higher (24%), while increased satisfaction was slightly lower (32%).

Figure 9. Satisfaction over time, by length of service



187 volunteers gave reasons for their increased and decreased satisfaction. Of these, 62% had increased satisfaction, and 32% had decreased satisfaction.²⁴

Reasons for decreased satisfaction included:²⁵

- Feeling unsettled by staff changes
- Growth of the ASRC
- Too much pressure, stress and commitment expected in their role
- Not enough contact with staff
- A lack of transparency and involvement in decisions
- Feeling like they weren't needed or valued, or that the behaviour of others was disrespectful
- Loss of hope and experiencing vicarious trauma.

Reasons for increased satisfaction focused on:²⁶

- Better immediate support
- Connections, involvement and relationships with staff, volunteers and members
- Increased confidence in their role
- Increased skills development, familiarity and experience
- A change in program or role
- Understanding the ASRC more and what it contributes
- Being given responsibility
- Feeling valued and like they were helping by being there.

Training

While 79% of volunteers were satisfied with the level of training and support offered, the top five skills volunteers wanted to develop further were:

1. Advocacy and campaigning skills (41%)
2. Cross-cultural communication skills (40%)
3. Informed conversation skills (37%)
4. Professional skills (33%)
5. Community development skills (28%).

Staff perspectives

While 76% of staff said volunteers already came with suitable skill-sets for the tasks they were expected to undertake, the top skills staff would like to see volunteer development in were general and specialised computer skills (both 63%), cross-cultural communication (57%), and administration (51%).

²⁴ The remainder of responses were neutral

²⁵ Number of responses in listed order: n11; 9, 7, 3, 5, 6 and 4

²⁶ Number of responses in listed order: n11; 6, 6 and 4; 9; 6, 4 and 2; 8; 8; 6; 5 and 3

Further involvement at the ASRC

83% of volunteers indicated interest in further involvement with the ASRC. 17% said they did not wish to be involved further and 19% were not sure. The top areas that volunteers were interested in were:

Women's empowerment (22%)

Youth empowerment (11%)

Social and community development (17%)

Education (11%)

Campaigns (12%)

Community engagement (10%)

One-off advocacy e.g. ring-ins, actions or rallies (12%)

Human Rights Law (9%).

Volunteer satisfaction

93% of volunteers were satisfied with their volunteer experience. Volunteers rated their likelihood of recommending the ASRC as a place to volunteer as 9/10.

"Many, many thanks for all the incredible work that you do!"

"I am so grateful to have had the chance to volunteer at the ASRC and to work with our courageous members and paid staff"

"I love what the ASRC stands for and I am very proud to volunteer"

"ASRC really is an amazing community and resource. To create such a positive culture and dynamic network of teams, buzzing around like a beehive. It is so professional and well run if you have a question there is always someone who knows the answer"



ASRC Foodbank. Photo credit: Tim Turner.

Conclusion

The ASRC has a diverse, progressive and loyal volunteer base. Volunteers bring a wealth of skills and experience, and are the lifeblood of the organisation. Though their diversity in age, gender and background shapes their reasons for contributing and their experience of volunteering, there are nonetheless strong, shared views and values that have emerged and with which we conclude this report.

The diversity of the ASRC appeals to volunteers, with many wanting to meet people from different backgrounds and develop their cross-cultural communication skills. Continued personal and professional development is also an important factor. This extends into a desire for shared cultural learning and being kept aware and informed about issues facing people seeking asylum.

The social environment at the ASRC contributes to volunteers' motivations for continuing to donate their time, and they find value in the support and camaraderie they receive from other volunteers, staff and members. There is also a strong community ethos, with volunteers wanting to contribute to, and connect with their local communities.

Volunteers at the ASRC are highly motivated and passionate about the issues facing people seeking asylum. They are committed to a vision of Australia as multicultural, fair and welcoming.

They hold strong collective views on Australia's current approach to people seeking asylum. There is practically no support for the government's current approach, with demand for alternatives and a desire for a more humane approach.

Volunteers back up their views and values through active citizenship and political engagement. Many donate their time to other organisations outside of the ASRC, and many more donate financially or in-kind to causes they care about. They demonstrate high levels of commitment to the ASRC, with many contributing time beyond the standard volunteer hours, and the majority travelling across Melbourne to volunteer at the ASRC offices.

Volunteers feel that the responsibility for meeting the needs of people seeking asylum lies primarily with the federal and state governments. NGO's and government-funded organisations, the Australian community, and independent organisations (such as the ASRC) all have a strong supporting role to play. Ultimately, they suggest that government, civil society and community should work together in a coordinated and collaborative approach to ensure that the needs of people seeking asylum are met.

Volunteers are active in trying to be the change they want to see. They feel a sense of purpose and empowerment through volunteering, a sense of achievement from their contribution, and many volunteer 'to make a difference'. They see volunteering as a concrete way to effect change for the better, and rate programs that educate the community, volunteering and conversations with friends and family as the top ways to effect social and political change. They want to have opportunities to further develop their advocacy and campaigning skills and informed conversation skills.

The ASRC offers volunteers a place where they can share their views with like-minded people and be part of a community that is progressive and diverse. Nearly all volunteers are satisfied with their experience at the ASRC, with most reporting an increase in satisfaction over time and planning to stay on for at least another year or indefinitely. Most volunteers want to be involved further with the ASRC, with initiatives such as women's empowerment, social and community development, campaigns, advocacy, youth empowerment, education, and human rights law proving the most popular. This suggests a strong desire for continued engagement with the ASRC and a wider commitment to social justice for people seeking asylum.



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