



Australian Government  
Australian Sport Commission

# VOLUNTEERS

MARKET

SEGMENTATION

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National Sport Research  
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# WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS, SPORT IN AUSTRALIA COULD NOT SURVIVE. HOW DO WE, THE SPORT SECTOR, DEVELOP EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO RETAIN AND ATTRACT NEW VOLUNTEERS?

In 2010, ABS data indicated that over one-third (36%) of the Australian population participated in voluntary work. Sport and physical recreation organisations had the largest number of volunteers with over 2.3 million people (14% of the adult population) claiming to volunteer in this capacity<sup>1</sup>. Despite the obvious strength and value of our sport volunteers, the sport sector's dependence on them also presents significant risk. Simply put, without volunteers, sport in Australia could not survive. In many instances sporting organisations are competing against other sporting organisations for the same volunteer workforce as well as the myriad of other opportunities for people to volunteer their time in all facets of civil society. Increasing cultural diversity and changing generational preferences mean that traditional volunteer recruitment and management practices need to be rethought.

The Australian Sport Commission (ASC) identified a need to undertake research among the Australian population in order to develop targeted and effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies.

The primary purpose of the Market Segmentation for Volunteers (the Study) was to identify the core set of attitudes, motivators, needs and barriers that underpin Australians' decisions to volunteer in sport (including at club level and other types of sports related volunteering) as compared to other voluntary activities, and to use this information to develop a needs-based market segmentation model of Australian sports volunteers.

An attitudinal segmentation is a useful means of grouping people within the broader population into segments with similar dispositions towards volunteering.



The ASC commissioned Latitude Insights to undertake this research.

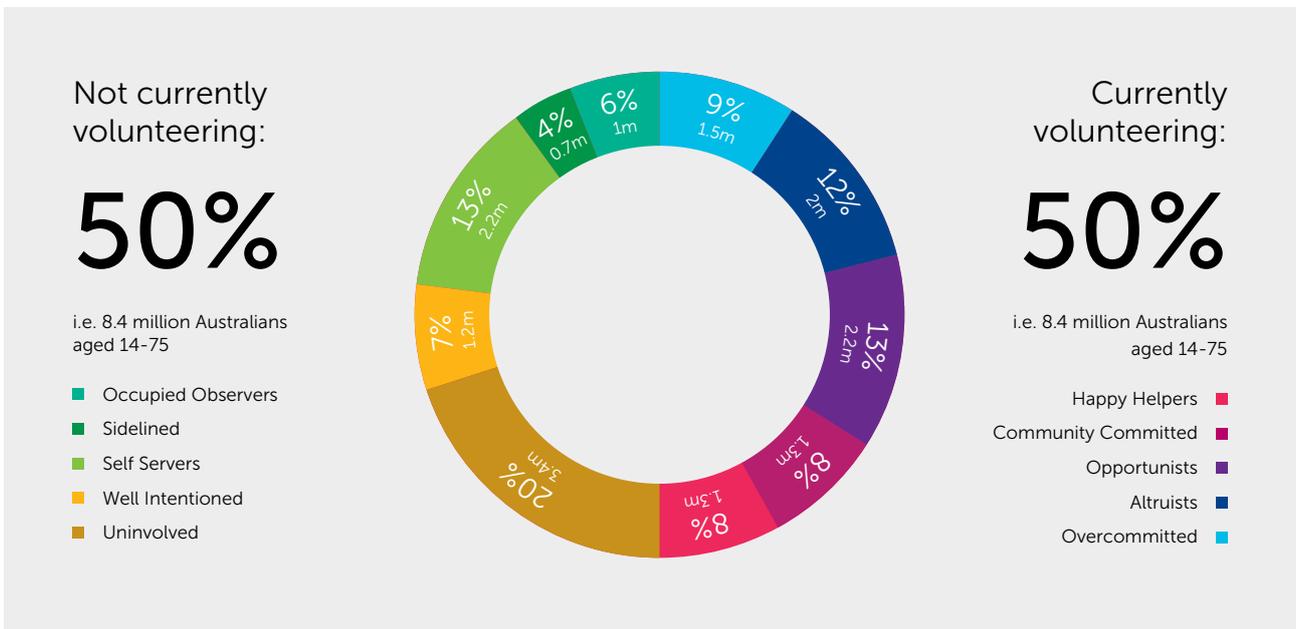
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/185E7CB7EDFE8FA3CA2579CD000CF19D?opendocument>

# HOW CAN SPORT USE THE MARKET SEGMENTATION FOR VOLUNTEERS?

The Study helped identify segments in the Australian community with the greatest potential for recruitment of new sport volunteers, and best practices and strategies for the retention of current sport volunteers.

The segmentation across the whole Australian population aged 14-75 resulted in 10 segments based on differences in attitudes to volunteering and current volunteering behaviour:

- > Five volunteer (including but not limited to sport volunteers) segments: *Happy Helpers, Community Committed, Opportunists, Altruists and Overcommitted*; and
- > Five non-volunteer segments: *Occupied Observers, Sidelined, Self Servers, Well Intentioned, Uninvolved*.



When club sport volunteers are looked at in isolation, 'Happy Helpers' and 'Community Committed' are the dominant segments. 'Community Committed' make up one third (34%) of club sport volunteers, with a further one third (33%) being 'Happy Helpers'. 'Opportunists' are the smallest proportion, making up only 9% of club sport volunteers.

## SEGMENTS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Each segment has its own set of challenges and opportunities:

- ① Within the volunteer segments of the *'Happy Helpers'* and the *'Overcommitted'*, the challenge is to maintain those volunteering in club sport throughout the life stage where they are participating in the sport or have a child participating in the sport. Similarly, acquisition within these two segments requires an overt effort on behalf of clubs to clearly ask and demonstrate the need for roles that do not require significant skill and commitment: the 'every little bit helps' principle. Providing a sense of recognition of having used their time productively is also essential. One of the challenges for the *'Community Committed'* segment who are already volunteering within clubs is to ensure their loyalty and commitment to the clubs does not intimidate newcomers, and that they identify that while not everyone can make the same commitment they do, there are ways that less committed, less knowledgeable volunteers may still be able to help.
- ② The current volunteer segments *'Opportunists'* and *'Altruists'* have very different motivations for volunteering, with the result being that volunteering in club sport is incidental to their motivations for volunteering. These different motivations mean acquisition of these volunteer segments is not likely.
- ③ The *'Self Servers'*, *'Sidelined'* and *'Occupied Observers'* are the key segments for acquisition outside of existing volunteers. *'Self Servers'* may be encouraged to volunteer in sport if they gain a tangible personal benefit of some kind, such as skills and work experience. The *'Sidelined'* like sport and may be encouraged to volunteer in club sport if they can identify a role that fits in with their physical capability and other commitments. The *'Occupied Observer'* will be encouraged to be involved in club sport through their child's participation.

	Segment		Retention	Acquisition
Volunteers	Happy Helpers	Volunteers to support their family in their activities, with volunteering in club sport only one of the multiple activities they are likely to help out with.	✓	✓
	Community Committed	Volunteers for the social interaction and enjoyment that volunteering offers, along with feeling a of identity and commitment to a community organisation and its future.	✓	✓
	Opportunists	Volunteers to gain a personal benefit, such as practical skills or work experience, being part of the buzz or atmosphere, or having the chance to meet someone famous or elite.	✓	✗
	Altruists	Volunteers through a desire to help other, to give back to the community and to help the disadvantaged.	✓	✗
	Overcommitted	Volunteers because they feel is expected of them. A risk of attrition due to feeling like could use their time better elsewhere.	✓	✓
Non-Volunteers	Occupied Observers	Not averse to volunteering for club sport. That is, they are not disinterested or against it, they simply have other priorities at the moment. Likely to volunteer if the child participates.	✗	✓
	Sidelined	Open to volunteer for a club sport as have relatively high participation levels. Injury and lack of time due to family or work commitments are the main barriers.	✗	✓
	Self Servers	Yet to find a cause they are passionate about. May be motivated if they were to receive a personal benefit, e.g. work experience, a financial benefit or to meet someone famous.	✗	✓
	Well Intentioned	Have no real reason to volunteer within sport, with low to none current or future participation in sport and any motivations to volunteer grounded in the altruistic.	✗	✗
	Uninvolved	Little interest in both volunteering or in club sport. Volunteering is seen as very low priority and there is very low segment participation in sport.	✗	✗



## MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

The research also provides key insights on the catalysts and main motivations for volunteering as well as sport and club sport volunteering in Australia, including how:

- ① While not always aspirational, the concept of volunteering holds many positive connotations for many members of the community.
- ② Motivations for volunteering fall into three broad categories: emotional, experiential and tangible.
  - > Emotional motivators were as often about self-interest, such as self-validation or obligation and guilt, as well as being founded in altruistic emotions such as offering hope and giving something back.
  - > Experiential motivators are based on creating an experience from a volunteering activity, for example, gaining a social experience, being involved in a community or with a family member, or for the atmosphere, fun or enjoyment.
  - > Many volunteers received a direct benefit from their volunteering activity, such as the ability to participate in a hobby, a social experience, networking or gaining skills and experience that directly benefit professional goals or education. The Study found that among the more tangible motivations for volunteering, the social benefits offered are key motivators for many who currently volunteer.
- ③ Most people need a direct catalyst to volunteer, with a direct relationship to the club seen as necessary for club sport volunteering. This direct relationship either involves the current or past participation of the individual or the current participation of a family member.
- ④ Self-interested emotional motivations are the most prevalent for the sport club volunteer:
  - > volunteering to support / be a role model for child, family or friends;
  - > because they have to be at the venue anyway (playing or watching family play); and
  - > to feel part of the sport association or organisation.

However, these volunteers are also more likely to have some experiential or tangible motivations over other volunteers:

  - > fun / enjoyment, social reasons; and
  - > shaping how the club / organisation operates and ensuring it continues.
- ⑤ Lack of a cause that people are interested in or passionate about is one of the key reasons for not volunteering in any activity (followed by lack of time and fear of commitment).
- ⑥ The greatest barrier to sport volunteering is not having a direct involvement or interest in the sport, and this highlights that participation is key (either their own or their child's).

## BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES FOR VOLUNTEERS' RETENTION

As participation is linked to life stage, this then becomes a key driver of sport volunteering behaviour (due to participation). The challenge becomes one of ensuring engagement for the duration of the life stage for which they are involved within the sport. This highlights that retention of existing volunteers is paramount, and the Study provides key insights on best practices for the management of sport volunteers:

- ① The greatest threat to retention of sport volunteers is the perception that their time is not being used productively and that they are not valued and needed (recognition).
- ② Another area for consideration for retention is in how people are recruited and their preparation for the role they take on. Retention strategies need to start with allowing volunteers to do their role to the best of their ability. This means ensuring clarity of role with adequate training and support, followed by appropriate recognitions.

## LEARNINGS FOR CLUBS FROM EVENTS VOLUNTEERING

While there are fundamentally different motivations to volunteer in events compared to club sport, some of the positive experiences and attractions of events can provide some learnings for clubs to attract and retain volunteers:

- ① Good events were seen to be extremely well organised and structured, providing volunteers with a more satisfying and more enjoyable volunteering experience.
- ② Understanding the characteristics of a well organised and structured event can provide learnings for clubs who may need assistance in this area.
- ③ Many volunteers are looking for a 'work' like environment in terms of the organisation of their volunteering. They want to be clear what the role is and how it will contribute, to be provided with the resources to do the role they have signed up for, and given a structure within which to do that role. This structure and organisation allows the volunteer to feel like they are making a difference, which is their reward and remuneration in most cases. To do less is seen to be disrespectful of the volunteer as it wastes what they are giving, namely, their time.

## STRATEGIES FOR ACQUISITION OF VOLUNTEERS

- ① Acquisition of those involved and participating in sport (themselves or their child) is possible. Make use of strategies such as:
  - > buddy systems; and
  - > clearly defined roles or short lived roles that do not require considerable commitment will assist in getting some involved.Capitalise on the social motivations to volunteer amongst sport volunteers, many just need to be asked and invited in to the club.
- ② Acquisition from outside of sport involvement is much more difficult as without an interest or connection to the sport, people are highly unlikely to want to volunteer their time.



## OTHER KEY INSIGHTS FROM THIS RESEARCH:

- Unlike volunteering generally, sport volunteering and particularly club sport volunteering, is strongly skewed to families. Some 77% of club sport volunteers are aged between 35-54 years, compared to 49% of volunteers in sport outside of clubs and 30% of volunteers outside of sport;
- The research found that 55% of club sport volunteers filled 'general support' roles. This was followed by fundraising (45%), being a scorer or timekeeper (37%), canteen/ bar duties (35%), being a committee member or administrator (31%), being a coach, instructor or teacher (28%) or being a referee (22%);
- Seasonal club sport volunteering was the most common (58%). That said, nearly one in four (24%) reported volunteering in club sport all year round;
- Regardless of whether volunteering was seasonal or year round, most club sport volunteers (64-67%) volunteered at least weekly. This research also indicated that club sport volunteers spend some significant time volunteering with half (52%) of weekly club sport volunteers giving more than 10 hours a week;
- The research indicated that nearly all club sport volunteers were satisfied with their experience (89% extremely or somewhat satisfied);
- Nearly all (92%) of current club sport volunteers are likely to continue volunteering in club sport in the next 12 months;
- Those current club sport volunteers who are likely to continue volunteering in club sport will do so for the enjoyment of having a role to play in the sport club and organisation (51%), and / or because of their child's continued involvement (50%);
- The research found that 23% of Australians aged 14-75 years stated they were likely or extremely likely to volunteer in club sport in the next 12 months;
- With three in four (73%) of those likely to volunteer in club sport in the next 12 months coming from those not currently volunteering in club sport, there is also clear potential for acquisition;
- Future volunteering in club sport is strongly linked to life stage. Overall, families are the most likely to volunteer in club sport in the next 12 months, with half (51%) of those likely to volunteer in club sport in the next 12 months having children at home under 21 years.

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?



A detailed profile for each volunteer segment can be found at [researchinsport.com.au](https://researchinsport.com.au)



For our sport sector partners, a copy of the full Market Segmentation Report for Volunteers can be obtained by contacting [asc\\_research@ausport.gov.au](mailto:asc_research@ausport.gov.au).