

# Comradery and the Arts: Experiences of Senior Volunteers in a Festival City

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## ABSTRACT

This research is a result of the collaborative relationship between the Creative People, Products and Places (CP3) Research Centre at the University of South Australia and Festival City Adelaide (FCA). FCA manages the consortium of South Australia's eleven major arts and culture festivals. This report examines the current literature on volunteering in the arts sector and surveys the experiences of senior members of the Festival Volunteer Network, a platform managed by FCA that connects three thousand volunteers to the eleven festivals. In December of 2021 a survey was issued to the Festival Volunteer Network. Researchers received 176 responses (n=176). The survey was comprised of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The qualitative responses were coded thematically using NVivo software. Thematic coding was applied to each question separately. In order of recurrence in survey responses, the reasons why participants volunteered were for a more immersive festival experience, to connect with other volunteers, and to give back to the sector. Challenges to volunteering for senior patrons were finding the time to volunteer more, difficult patrons, and dealing with difficult festival managers. Skills learned while volunteering fell under the categories of festival management, event-related skills, customer service skills, and communication. Most senior volunteers maintained social contacts that they made while volunteering. This project builds upon existing research on volunteer labor at festivals and offers recommendations for improving volunteer management.

### Introduction

This project examines the experiences of senior volunteers in Adelaide, South Australia. The research conducted in this project has been carried out in partnership with the Creative People, Products and Places (CP3) Research Centre at the University of South Australia and Festival City Adelaide (FCA). FCA manages the consortium of South Australia's major arts and culture festivals. These festivals include the Adelaide Festival, WOMADelaide, Adelaide Fringe, South Australia's History Festival, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, DreamBIG Children's Festival, Adelaide Guitar Festival, South Australian Living Artists Festival, Illuminate Adelaide, OzAsia Festival, Adelaide Film Festival, Tarnanthi Festival, and Feast Festival. We examine the current literature on volunteering in the arts sector and survey the experiences of members of the Festival Volunteer Network, a platform managed by FCA that connects volunteers to the thirteen festivals. We are specifically interested in the experiences of senior volunteers. While the Australian Bureau of Statistics define a "working aged person" as between 15 and 65 years old, and thus "senior" as older than this, we chose to have the identity category of "senior" as being self-identifiable and opt-in.

Adelaide is renowned for its festival culture. Adelaide Fringe is the second-largest open-access arts festival globally, and the Adelaide Cabaret Festival is the world's largest festival devoted to cabaret. Adelaide also boasts one of Australia's leading arts festivals in the Adelaide Festival and one of the few WOMAD festivals in the world. Adelaide also has an abundance of community-oriented events, such as the History Festival and Feast Festival, the city's LGBTQIA+ festival. This provides a rich environment for volunteering, which in turn offers the opportunity to build interpersonal skills and friendships as well as demonstrating a commitment to the local community.<sup>1</sup> Adelaide is an ideal setting to explore the dynamics of volunteering in the festival sector. The stories provided by our survey respondents demonstrate this, whether it was helping an elderly woman find some shade on a hot day at Adelaide Writers Week or working behind the bar at WOMAD and being told by a customer that they pour a great tap beer. Camaraderie and acknowledgement are key to a fulfilling experience, even during challenging moments. We examine motivations to volunteer and how these experiences can be better managed. Further, South Australia is an old state, with 20.1 percent of the population being over 65 years of age, which is above the national average of 17.2 percent.<sup>2</sup> This positions South Australia as having the second-highest proportion of those over the age of 65. Festivals are always going to be volunteer-intensive; as such, it is imperative that we continue to better understand this demographic's experiences.

Volunteer labor is integral to Adelaide's festival culture. It is imperative that a welcoming, enjoyable, and safe environment is provided so that volunteers are willing to return and contribute to the sustainability of the arts sector. This research project explores how participants are ardent supporters of the arts and wish to support each other and further experience this festival culture. Volunteering is not just an altruistic act, however. Benefits need to be clearly considered from the outset of festival production. This project will thus also highlight areas where the volunteer experience can be improved in order to increase the likelihood of volunteers returning for future

1. Harris Research, *Volunteering in South Australia*, report commissioned by the Department of Human Services, South Australia, July 2018.

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Snapshot of Australia," June 28, 2022, ABS website.

3. Australia Council for the Arts, *Creating Our Future Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, 2020.

4. *Ibid*, 135.

5. *Ibid*, 96.

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Participation in Selected Cultural Activities," March 26, 2019, ABS website.

7. Meg Fluharty et al., "Difference in Predictors and Barriers to Arts and Cultural Engagement with Age in the United States: A Cross-Sectional Analysis Using the Health and Retirement Study," *PLOS ONE*, 16, no. 12 (2021): 1–18; Emily Keaney and Anni Oskala, "The Golden Age of the Arts? Taking Part Survey Findings on Older People and the Arts," *Cultural Trends* 16, no. 4 (2007): 323–55.

8. Australia Council of the Arts, *Creating Our Future*, 158; Karima Chacur, Roderigo Serrat, and Feliciano Villar, "Older Adults' Participation in Artistic Activities: A Scoping Review," *European Journal of Ageing* 19 (May 2022): 7.

9. Australia Council of the Arts, *Creating Our Future*, 2020, 122

10. Fluharty et al., "Difference in

Predictors," 13.

11. Fluharty et al., "Difference in Predictors," 2
12. Keaney and Oskala, "Golden Age," 323.
13. Mihaela Ghența et al., "[Factors Associated with the Participation of Older Adults in Cultural and Sports Activities](#)," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 1 (2022).
14. Daisy Fancourt, Andrew Steptoe, and Dorina Cadar, "[Cultural Engagement and Cognitive Reserve: Museum Attendance and Dementia Incidence over a 10-Year Period](#)," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 213, no. 5 (2018): 661–63.
15. Nina Trivedy Rogers and Daisy Fancourt, "[Cultural Engagement Is a Risk-Reducing Factor for Frailty Incidence and Progression](#)," *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* 75, no. 3 (2020): 571–76.
16. Daisy Fancourt and Andrew Steptoe, "[The Art of Life and Death: 14 Year Follow-up Analyses of Associations between Arts Engagement and Mortality in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing](#)," *BMJ* 367 (December 18, 2019).
17. Gene D. Cohen et al., "The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on the Physical Health, Mental Health, and Social Functioning of Older Adults," *The Gerontologist* 46, no. 6 (2006): 726–34.
18. Andrea Creech et al., "Active Music Making: A Route to Enhanced Subjective Well-Being among Older People,"

festival seasons. The following literature review explores the importance of recruitment and retention as central concerns of volunteer research. We then outline our open-ended methods strategy before discussing the results of our research. We close with recommendations for those that work in volunteer management in the festival sector.

### Significance of Topic

Research shows that cultural participation lessens as we age. In Australia, this decrease is represented in the data from the Australia Council's National Arts Participation Survey.<sup>3</sup> The survey found that the rate of people engaged in creative participation—defined as being actively involved in the creation of any artform—decreased from 66 percent in the 15–34 age bracket to 31 percent of those in the 55-plus age bracket.<sup>4</sup> The rate of those who attend live art events also decreases with age, down from 81 percent in the 15–34 age bracket to 57 percent of those aged 50-plus.<sup>5</sup> The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data on "participation rates in cultural activities" shows a similar decline, albeit with some nuance when filtered by sex.<sup>6</sup> Overall, the participation rate is lowest in the 65 and over age bracket (28.2 percent), with the 55–64 age bracket the third-lowest (29.5 percent). For women, however, the participation rate rises as they leave middle age, with the 55–64 (37 percent) and 65 and over (36 percent) age brackets higher than the 35–44 (34 percent) and 45–54 (34.1 percent) age brackets. A similar decrease in both art events attendance and creative participation is also shown in studies focusing on the UK and the US.<sup>7</sup> However, this decrease is not consistent across all artforms, with artforms such as reading and crafts rising in popularity among older-aged groups.<sup>8</sup>

Given this decrease in cultural participation, it is no surprise that much of the literature focuses on the barriers that prevent older people from engaging with the arts. The Australia Council National Arts Participation Survey found that the main barriers preventing those 55 and over from attending live art events were "the cost of tickets," "events being too far away" and "difficulty getting to events."<sup>9</sup> In their study of older people in the US, Meg Fluharty et al. similarly find that cost and transportation are the biggest barriers to arts attendance.<sup>10</sup> The same study identifies barriers to participating in creative activity, including "illness and disability, living alone, lower educational attainment, ethnic minority status, and living in areas with high levels of poverty."<sup>11</sup> Emily Keaney and Anni Oskala's survey of older people in the UK finds the main barriers to "arts engagement" to be "the impact of poor health" and "the lack of social networks and transport."<sup>12</sup> Finally, a survey of older Romanian people finds the biggest barriers to "cultural engagement" to be "health status, living arrangements, a low level of education ... economic resources available ... a lack of or high costs of transportation and inadequate transportation."<sup>13</sup>

When these barriers are overcome, seniors who participate in cultural activities gain a wide range of health and well-being benefits. Identified health and well-being benefits include lower incidence rate of dementia,<sup>14</sup> reduced risk and slower development of frailty;<sup>15</sup> lower mortality rates;<sup>16</sup> fewer doctor visits and fewer falls;<sup>17</sup> greater well-being;<sup>18</sup> and higher quality of life.<sup>19</sup> While the literature on such benefits is growing, there is comparably much less exploring older peoples' motivations for and experiences of engaging in culture. Karima Chacur, Roderigo Serrat, and Feliciano Villar write that "the voices of older people themselves are largely absent from existing research,"<sup>20</sup> and Kimberley D. Fraser et al. therefore call for "a more sensitive understanding of

19. Julene K. Johnson, Jukka Louhivuori, and Eero Siljander, "[Comparison of Well-Being of Older Adult Choir Singers and the General Population in Finland: A Case-Control Study.](#)" *Musicae Scientiae* 21, no. 2 (2017): 178–94.

20. Chacur, Serrat, and Villar, "Older Adults' Participation," 10.

21. Kimberly D. Fraser et al., "[A Scoping Review of Research on the Arts, Aging, and Quality of Life.](#)" *The Gerontologist* 55, no. 4 (2015): 724

22. Maria Manolika and Alexandros Baltzis, "[Curiosity's Pleasure? Exploring Motives for Cultural Consumption.](#)" *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 25, no. 1 (2020): 8.

23. Keaney and Oskala, "Golden Age," 323.

24. Juyoung Lee, Jane W. Davison, and Amanda E. Krause, "[Older People's Motivations for Participating in Community Singing in Australia.](#)" *International Journal of Community Music* 9, no. 2 (2016): 2

25. Dawn Joseph and Jane Southcott, "Music Participation for Older People: Five Choirs in Victoria, Australia," *Research Studies in Music Education* 40, no. 2 (2018): 176.

26. International Labour Organization, *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2011), 13.

the significance of arts-based involvement in later life, beyond needs for support and care."<sup>21</sup> The limited research that does exist in this area shows that older people are often motivated to engage with culture for reasons other than the health and well-being benefits, such as "cultural exploration,"<sup>22</sup> "enjoyment, relaxation, [and] to see a specific performer or event,"<sup>23</sup> "challenge and achievement,"<sup>24</sup> and "a sense of personal and group fulfilment."<sup>25</sup>

### Global Context of Volunteer Research

The International Labour Organization defines voluntary work as "unpaid non-compulsory work—that is time that individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others outside their household."<sup>26</sup> Likewise, Volunteering Australia define volunteering as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."<sup>27</sup> Foundational to this research is the belief that volunteering amounts to more than an altruistic act.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, volunteer workers create substantial economic value,<sup>29</sup> and they play a pivotal role in the festival ecosystem, as many festivals rely on their labor.<sup>30</sup> Their communal spirit contributes to the experiential component of a festival's branding;<sup>31</sup> happy, welcoming volunteers are part of the festive feel. Further, volunteering allows for the development of social networks built upon shared interests.<sup>32</sup> For instance, members of the LGBTQIA+ community can meet like-minded volunteers at the Feast Festival; lovers of literature can meet at Writer's Week, a popular component of the Adelaide Festival. There are many benefits afforded to volunteers. Well-being outcomes for older volunteers include better cognitive, emotional, and social function, and increased social integration, leading to reduced mortality.<sup>33</sup> Further, E. Coren et al. suggest that these well-being outcomes may be associated with simply participating in the festival itself.<sup>34</sup>

A key framework to this project will be volunteer management. Diane Zievinger and Frans Swint's research shows that the more training and assistance a volunteer receives, the more motivated they are to return to the organization.<sup>35</sup> Good management practices have a social benefit, as they strengthen the volunteer's identity as being tied to the organization.<sup>36</sup> While many frameworks for examining volunteer motivations exist, a popular one that is commonly used is from E. G. Clary et al. that lists six dimensions. These are: (1) values (i.e., altruism/selflessness); (2) understanding; (3) social; (4) career; (5) esteem; and (6) protective.<sup>37</sup> Studies that utilize this framework demonstrate that the most important dimension determining whether a volunteer returns is value<sup>38</sup> whereas the least important is career motivation.<sup>39</sup>

Research suggests that motivations to volunteer are both symbolic and economic, where the nature of volunteering is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> The accrual of cultural and social capital is key to the volunteer experience.<sup>41</sup> Beyond this, studies demonstrate volunteers' delight in their ability to engage in noncommodified social experiences.<sup>42</sup> For older volunteers, previous research shows that many volunteer to further long-standing interests or gain personal satisfaction through feeling useful.<sup>43</sup> Volunteer tourism, for instance, is seen as a more authentic experience and allows for better interactions with locals. This is predominantly based upon shared value systems and the development of one's identity, a motivating factor to engage in festival life.<sup>44</sup> Through investigating the volunteer experiences of "grey nomads" at the National Folk Festival in Canberra, Anne Campbell found that the social value included "camaraderie and security in being part of a larger, supportive group, being a valued participant rather than a spectator, insider enjoyment and pride in one's achievement."<sup>45</sup> Among Campbell's

27. Volunteering Australia, "[Volunteering Australia Project: The Review of the Definition of Volunteering](#)," 2015.
28. Maria Laura Toraldo, Alessia Contu, and Gianluigi Mangia, "[The Hybrid Nature of Volunteering: Exploring Its Voluntary Exchange Nature at Music Festivals](#)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 45, no. 6 (2016): 1130–49.
29. Eleanor Brown, "[Assessing the Value of Volunteer Activity](#)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1999): 3–17; Antonia Sajardo and Inmaculada Serra, "[The Economic Value of Volunteer Work: Methodological Analysis and Application to Spain](#)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40 (2010): 873–95.
30. Mark A. A. M. Leenders, "[The Relative Importance of the Brand of Music Festivals: A Customer Equity Perspective](#)," *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 18, no. 4 (2010): 291–301.
31. Orvar Löfgren, "[The New Economy: A Cultural History](#)," *Global Networks* 3, no. 3 (2003): 239–54.
32. Susan Eckstein, "[Community as Gift-Giving: Collectivistic Roots of Volunteerism](#)," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 829–51; Kari Jæger and Kjell Olsen, "[On Commodification: Volunteer Experiences in Festivals](#)," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 15, no. 5 (2017): 407–21; Elena Marta and Maura Pozzi, "Young People and Volunteerism: A Model of Sustained Volunteerism During the Transition to Adulthood," *Journal of Adult Development* 15, no. 1 (2008): 35–46.

findings, relevant to the present study is that "context, age, gender, and purpose affect the motivations of individual volunteers."<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, this research builds upon this existing literature on volunteer labor at festivals and offers recommendations for improving volunteer management. Here, we argue that volunteering is an integral part of the festival ecosystem. A stronger understanding of the experiences of those that volunteer will only strengthen this sector.

### Recruitment

The recruitment of volunteers is an integral process of festival management. Recruiting from within existing networks/aligned professions, and using word-of-mouth strategies, is likely to be more successful.<sup>47</sup> Further, older volunteers prefer to feel in control of, and informed in, their decision to volunteer.<sup>48</sup> As stated above, it is important to acknowledge that many volunteers contribute their time for more than altruistic reasons, and this should be reflected in the recruitment and reward process. Some volunteer for egoistic reasons as well as altruistic,<sup>49</sup> and both can be leveraged in recruitment marketing and retention strategies. Margaret Deery, Leo Jago, and Judith Mair note that "older [Australian museum] volunteers rated the motivation of helping people as the lowest of all the groups."<sup>50</sup> Regardless, "giving" is a vital aspect of the contribution made to local festivals,<sup>51</sup> as is contributing to the "sustainability" of regional, grassroots organizations, as explored by Lawrence Bendle and Ian Patterson.<sup>52</sup> Organizations require clearly defined recruitment and induction processes, determined in accordance with the target segment and the organization's value proposition, to effectively integrate volunteers into the workforce. These may include decisions around the requirement for/desirability of applications, interviews, trial periods, and the associated level of formality/informality that is appropriate/desirable.<sup>53</sup> Gesa Birnkraut finds that the needs of the institution and the volunteers must be clearly identified to improve efficiency.<sup>54</sup> Efficiency can be improved by implementing a volunteering program structure and embedding it into the organizational structure before recruitment begins.

All festivals associated with Festival City Adelaide have some form of volunteer policy. Many policies are informed by the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (NSVI), which offer a framework through which organizations can adapt their own policies. These standards are implemented through state bodies, and in South Australia and the Northern Territory they are deployed through Volunteering SA&NT. The eight standards pertain to leadership and management, volunteer involvement and their roles, recruitment, development, safety, and quality management.<sup>55</sup> The National Standards abide by these principles:

- Volunteer involvement should be a considered and planned part of an organization's strategic development, aligned with the organization's strategic aims and incorporated into its evaluation framework.
- Effective volunteer involvement requires organizational leadership and a culture and structure that supports and values the role of volunteers.
- Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.

33. Lawrence Bendle and Ian Patterson, "[Mixed Serious Leisure and Grassroots Organizational Capacity: A Study of Amateur Artist Groups in a Regional Australian City](#)," *Leisure Sciences* 31, no. 3 (2009): 272–86; Helen Bussell and Deborah Forbes, "[Understanding the Volunteer Market: The What, Where, Who and Why of Volunteering](#)," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 7, no. 3 (2002): 244–57; Margaret Deery, Leo Jago, and Judith Mair, "[Volunteering for Museums: The Variation in Motives across Volunteer Age Groups](#)," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 54 (2011): 313–25; Edith Gray, Siew-Ean Khoo, and Anna Reimondos, "[Participation in Different Types of Volunteering at Young, Middle and Older Adulthood](#)," *Journal of Population Research* 29 (2012): 373–98.

34. E. Coren et al., "[An Examination of the Impacts of Volunteering and Community Contribution at a Community Festival through the Lens of the Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)," *International Journal of Community Well-Being* 5 (2021): 1–20.

35. Diane Zievinger and Frans Swint, "[Retention of Festival Volunteers: Management Practices and Volunteer Motivation](#)," *Research in Hospitality Management* 8, no. 2 (2018): 107–14.

36. Omar al-Mutawa, "Impact of Volunteer Management Practice on Volunteer Motivation and Satisfaction to Enhance Volunteer Retention" (PhD diss., Brunel University, 2015).

- Volunteers have responsibilities, which include acting responsibly, being accountable for their actions to the organization, and respecting the organization's values and practices.<sup>56</sup>

It is ideal for festivals to have a user-friendly volunteer set of guidelines that are clearly informed by the above principles, such that volunteers have a clear behavior protocol and are promised training and the camaraderie associated with participation. Duties pertaining to each role should be clearly outlined at the outset of participation. This is an important element of volunteering, as according to Volunteering SA&NT, approximately one million active volunteers generate an overall contribution equivalent to about AUD\$5 billion annually in South Australia.<sup>57</sup> They calculate the "dollar replacement hourly rate figure" as AUD\$45.10.

### Retention

Keeping volunteers is an integral component to a thriving volunteer sector, as they are often organizational advocates. Understanding volunteering as a reciprocal relationship, in which motivations are constantly reevaluated,<sup>58</sup> and recognizing volunteer contribution, accordingly, is vital to retention.<sup>59</sup> Strategies to improve volunteering experiences include integrating volunteers into the organizational structure, with clear reporting lines—and ideally a dedicated volunteer manager—alongside an agile management plan for the organization's volunteer workforce. This is vital for the retention of volunteers.<sup>60</sup> In line with this, access to sufficient, dedicated resources for managing volunteers is vital to attract, retain, and effectively deploy volunteers.<sup>61</sup> Dedicating time to developing personal relationships with volunteers is critical.<sup>62</sup> This personal, meaningful relationship can allow a recruit to develop into an ongoing organizational advocate.<sup>63</sup> For productive volunteering experiences, tasks should be matched to the volunteer, rather than recruiting to task.<sup>64</sup> Tasks should be varied, ideally providing opportunities for volunteers to develop skills,<sup>65</sup> unless the volunteer is motivated by a specific, long-standing interest in one particular role.<sup>66</sup> Finally, communication with volunteers around roles, expectations, and their organizational value is vital, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the retention of volunteers in the festival sector. The extent of this impact is still emerging. Across the world, events that traditionally relied on volunteers were canceled due to the pandemic.<sup>67</sup> This has put "volunteering on hold in many countries as opportunities at all levels have disappeared."<sup>68</sup> Cancellations included major cultural events such as the Edinburgh Fringe, as well as "a myriad of community events and festivals, all of which also were planned to utilize volunteers to a significant degree."<sup>69</sup> In Australia, data tracking the number of people volunteering across all sectors showed a significant reduction due to the pandemic.<sup>70</sup> Cassandra M. Chapman et al. found that 17 percent of surveyed participants were volunteering less than pre-pandemic;<sup>71</sup> Nicholas Biddle and Matthew Gray found that 22.6 percent of surveyed participants had stopped volunteering altogether at some point during the pandemic;<sup>72</sup> and Volunteering Australia found that over 80 percent of surveyed nonprofit organizations had stood down volunteers during the pandemic.<sup>73</sup> The reduced number of volunteers is of considerable concern for the festival sector as this will likely impact the financial stability of the arts sector, particularly nonprofits.<sup>74</sup> While many arts organizations have used the pandemic as a chance to make operational and governance changes,<sup>75</sup> Ken Townend notes that organizations have been slow to find new ways to engage volunteers.<sup>76</sup> While digital volunteering can be a valuable opportunity for some,<sup>77</sup> the digital is not inherently accessible.<sup>78</sup>

37. E. G. Clary et al., "[Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach](#)," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 6 (1998): 1516–30.
38. Beate Elstad, "[Continuance Commitment and Reasons to Quit: A Study of Volunteers at a Jazz Festival](#)," *Event Management* 8, no. 2 (2003): 99–108; George Love IV, "Relationship among Volunteer Motivations, Festival Context Factors, and Retention of Festival Volunteers in the Southwest" (PhD diss., University of Phoenix, 2009); Selena Novcic, "Stavanger Live Festival from the Viewpoint of Volunteers" (MA thesis, University of Stavanger, 2014).
39. Lee Slaughter and Robert Home, "Motivations of Long-Term Volunteers: Human Services vs. Events," *Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, Leisure Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2004): 1–12.
40. Toraldo, Contu, and Mangia, "Hybrid Nature of Volunteering."
41. Robert Moses Peaslee et al., "[The Media Festival Volunteer: Connecting Online and On-ground Fan Labor](#)," in *Fandom and/as Labor*, ed. Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15 (2014).
42. Jæger and Olsen, "On Commodified."
43. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums."
44. Jarrett Bachmann et al., "[Examining the Role of Self-Concept Theory on Motivation, Satisfaction, and Intent to Return](#)

Worryingly, the data shows that volunteering is not returning to pre-pandemic levels despite easing restrictions across Australia.<sup>79</sup> Biddle and Gray found that over half of participants who had not volunteered between April 2021 and April 2022 were either not very likely or not likely at all to resume volunteering in the next five years.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Volunteering Australia found that over half of nonprofit organizations surveyed between December 2020 and January 2021 reported needing more volunteers.<sup>81</sup> This steep decline from pre-pandemic levels is further exacerbated by a steadier, long-term decline in volunteering numbers in Australia.<sup>82</sup>

Studies have shown that being unable to volunteer due to the pandemic has affected well-being.<sup>83</sup> Biddle and Gray found a gap in life satisfaction between those who were able to continue volunteering during the pandemic and those who were not, writing that "results strongly suggest that the interruption in volunteering has impacted on the wellbeing of potential volunteers."<sup>84</sup> Of particular concern is the well-being of older volunteers, who risk being isolated socially without the connection provided by volunteering.<sup>85</sup> Olga Lo Presti writes that "volunteer programs provide older people with an opportunity to maintain their social networks and get personal satisfaction from being active participants in culture life."<sup>86</sup> As a result of the pandemic in the United States and subsequent "layoffs of people who organize volunteer programs, most older people are now left with no places to socialize, share their expertise, and feel valued."<sup>87</sup> Jurgen Grotz, Sally Dyson, and Linda Birt describe a similar concern in the UK: "The cessation of most volunteering activities in the UK from 16 March 2020 means that around five million older people might currently not be experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits they derived from volunteering."<sup>88</sup>

The reduced number of volunteers is also of considerable concern for festivals as this will likely impact the financial stability of the arts sector, particularly nonprofits.<sup>89</sup> Kara Newby and Brittany Branyon note that US nonprofits, including arts and cultural organizations, relied on volunteers to get through the financial impact of the 2007–9 economic recession, and that "this ability to utilize free labor is a strategy that many nonprofits depend on to keep their overhead low, especially during times of economic loss."<sup>90</sup> However, the health restrictions of the pandemic meant that "moving toward a more volunteer-centric work force was not an option," and as a result "organizations had to either reduce services or hire some of this work out at increased expense."<sup>91</sup>

Given the importance of volunteering to both individual well-being and organization stability, literature has focused on ways of re-engaging the volunteering in ways that acknowledge the continuing threat of COVID-19. The Volunteering Australia survey found that the biggest priority for organizations was "re-engaging and recruiting volunteers."<sup>92</sup> Tom Baum et al. say that organizations' ability to do so will depend on their "volunteer resilience," described as "the ability of volunteer communities to absorb and recover from these shocks, whilst positively adapting and transforming their volunteering structures and means for delivering volunteering activity in the face of uncertain impacts of stresses." The most frequently discussed transformation is "virtual volunteering," in which volunteers' tasks are moved online. However, some studies have found that the satisfaction gained from volunteering is reduced when conducted virtually. Any major transformation to volunteering operations, including but not limited to a move to virtual volunteering, will put additional pressure on volunteer managers and may require additional human resources.

[of Music Festival Volunteers,”](#) *Event Management* 20, no. 1 (2016): 41–52; Jin-Soo Lee, Choong-Ki Lee, and Yooshik Yoon, “[Investigating Differences in Antecedents to Value between First-time and Repeat Festivalgoers,”](#) *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 26, no. 7 (2009): 688–702.

45. Anne Campbell, “[The Importance of Being Valued: Solo ‘Grey Nomads’ as Volunteers at the National Folk Festival,”](#) *Annals of Leisure Research* 12, no. 3–4 (2009): 281.

46. Campbell, “Importance of Being Valued,” 290.

47. Helen Bussell and Deborah Forbes, “[Volunteer Management in Arts Organizations: A Case Study and Managerial Implications,”](#) *International Journal of Arts Management* 9, no. 2 (2007): 16–28.

48. Xiaohua Chen, Claire Liu, and Jane Legget, “[Motivations of Museum Volunteers in New Zealand’s Cultural Tourism Industry,”](#) *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research* 30 (2019): 127–39.

49. Robert Stebbins, “[The Role of Leisure in Arts Administration,”](#) Occasional Paper Series no. 1 (Eugene, OR: Center for Community Arts and Public Policy, University of Oregon, 2005), accessed January 11, 2022; Stebbins, “[Unpaid Work of Love: Defining the Work–Leisure Axis of Volunteering,”](#) *Leisure Studies* 32 (2013): 339–45; Bussell and Forbes, “Volunteer Management”; Coren et al., “An Examination.”

## Methods

In December of 2021 a survey was issued to the Festival Volunteer Network (FVN). Researchers received 176 total responses (n=176). While the survey was conducted, there were 2,850 members signed up to the FVN. Although our sample size is small, we were only targeting senior volunteers, and the FVN encompasses a broader cross-section of the South Australian community. The survey was comprised of both qualitative and quantitative questions. Participants were asked for text-based responses to the following: Why do you volunteer? What are the most challenging things about volunteering? What have you learned while volunteering? Do you maintain friendships/contacts with those you have met while volunteering? Participants were offered a 1–100 scale (Never/Sometimes/Always) as an indication to the following prompts:

- “I feel more socially connected when I’m volunteering”;
- “My overall sense of well-being improves when I’m volunteering”;
- “Free access to festivals is a major reason why I volunteer”;
- “I feel adequately compensated for my volunteering”;
- “I feel adequately prepared and supported to conduct my volunteering duties”;
- “I think the FVN should provide free training and skills-building relevant to volunteering”;
- “The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted my decision to volunteer at a festival.”

In January of 2022 the survey was closed, and the qualitative responses were coded thematically using NVivo software. Thematic coding was applied to each question separately. Each qualitative question is discussed in the following sections below.

The survey targeted senior volunteers who were registered with the FVN. Older individuals comprise the majority of volunteers in the US and UK.<sup>97</sup> According to other global research in this area, they are more likely to be over 50 and retired, or younger people; female; and part-time workers. The respondents in this survey (that is, those in the FVN) mostly conform to these global trends. Seventy-eight percent of volunteers identified as female (fig. 1; the survey offered a textbox for this response for participants to write in, rather than a check-box or drop-down option). The average age of respondents was 56. Interestingly, as figure 2 shows, while more participants were retired (32 percent) the second-largest proportion of respondents were full-time employed (28 percent). The proportions of participants who were part-time or casually employed were significantly lower (11 percent and 6 percent respectively).



50. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums," 321.

51. Coren et al., "An Examination."

52. Bendle and Patterson, "Mixed Serious Leisure."

53. Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Chen, Liu, and Legget, "Motivations of Museum Volunteers."

54. Gesa Birnkraut, "[Volunteering in Cultural Institutions: A Comparison between the United States and Germany](#)," *Volunteer Administration* 22, no. 4 (2004): 4–9.

55. Volunteering Australia, "[The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#)," 2015, 5.

56. Volunteering Australia, "National Standards," 4.

57. Volunteering SA & NT, "[About](#)," 2022.

58. Stephanie Denning, "[To Retain Volunteers, Voluntary Groups Need to Understand Volunteers' Motivations and Volunteering Experiences](#)," policy brief, University of Bristol/Coventry University, 2017.

59. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Chen, Liu, and Legget, "Motivations of Museum Volunteers"; Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums"; Denning, "To Retain Volunteers"; Kelly LeRoux and Anna Bernadska, "[Impact of the Arts on Individual Contributions to US Civil Society](#)," *Journal of Civil Society* 10 (2014): 144–64; Marc Musick, A. Regula Herzog, and

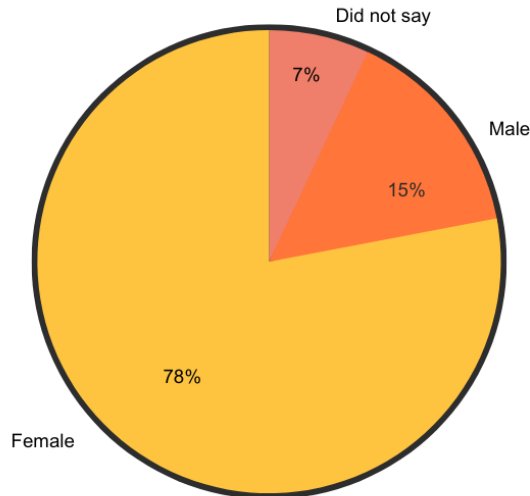


Figure 1. Gender identity demographics in respondents.

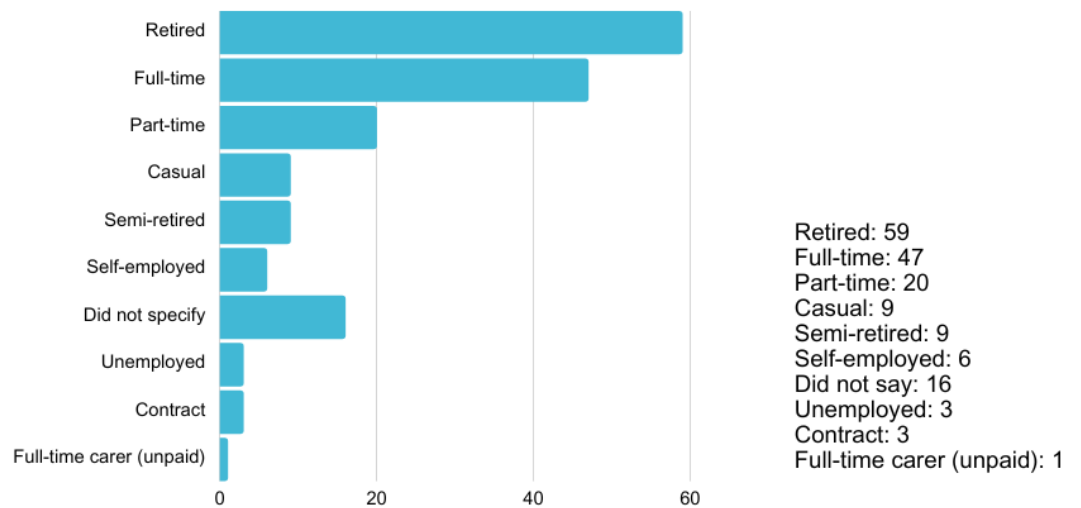


Figure 2. Employment status in respondents.

James S. House, "[Volunteering and Mortality among Older Adults: Findings from a National Study](#)," *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 54 (1999): S173–S180.

60. Birnkraut, "Volunteering in Cultural Institutions"; Francesca Boronovi, "[Doing Well by Doing Good: The Relationship between Formal Volunteering and Self-Reported Health and Happiness](#)," *Social Science & Medicine*, 66, no. 11 (June 2008): 2321–34; Stebbins, "Role of Leisure"; Bendle and Patterson, "Mixed Serious Leisure"; Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market."

61. Lester Salamon and Wojciech Sokolowski, "[Institutional Roots of Volunteering: Toward a Macro-Structural Theory of Individual Voluntary Action](#)," in *The Values of Volunteering: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Paul Dekker and Loek Halman (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 71–90.

62. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Denning, "To Retain Volunteers."

63. Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management."

64. Birnkraut, "Volunteering in Cultural Institutions"; Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums."

65. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Chen, Liu, and Legget, "Motivations of Museum Volunteers"; Stebbins, "Role of Leisure."



## Results

### *Motivations to Volunteer*

In our study, we asked volunteers why they choose to volunteer as an open-ended question. The results provided here are the percentages of references to each theme that arose in the responses. While **altruistic** reasons remain a popular motivation to volunteer, several other reasons became evident in our research. This finding corresponds with existing literature, which states that motivations to volunteer include more than just selflessness and are a multidimensional phenomenon.<sup>98</sup> Still, altruistic reasons remained a key reason why senior volunteers chose to volunteer at an FCA member event. This was the third-most popular reason as to why participants chose to volunteer, with 14 percent of participants highlighting this reason. Some responses included:

- "As a musician I'm a proud supporter of the arts! It's a great way to contribute and feel part of the community!"
- "I volunteer because I want to give something back to the community, provide some structure in my retirement life and meet people with similar interests, and because I enjoy the work I volunteer for—it makes me feel valued."
- "Supporting the community; giving back to others who have helped me over time; using skills and experience to assist and mentor others; personal gain and feeling of well-being and usefulness; helping a wide range of ages and abilities; feeling worthwhile; following family traditions and experiences of giving back to others."
- "Because I realize that I'm privileged—I'm an educated, white, English-speaking female living in a first world country. I like to give back to my community and support and encourage those not so fortunate as me. It's a great way to connect with, and learn about, my community. I've made some lovely friends, met through volunteering."

As Kari Jæger and Kjell Olsen have identified, volunteering allows participants to engage in a noncommodified experience and be involved in what many deemed as a **deeper experience** of festival and arts culture.<sup>99</sup> This was the most popular reason as to why participants chose to volunteer, with 36 percent of participants highlighting this reason in their response:

- "Because I love the arts, yet my 9–5 job is not in any way to do with the arts. This way I get to be part of an industry I love with people who also share the same passion as me."
- "Love being 'part' of the festival, the atmosphere, the shows, the installations, the whole experience."
- "I value the arts and artists; I want to be involved and immersed in festival experiences and behind the scenes; I am considering a career in arts festival management."

Anne Campbell found that camaraderie and feeling valued are key to a positive experience for

66. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums."

67. Tom Baum et al., "[The Future of Volunteering and Work](#)," in *The Routledge Handbook of Volunteering in Events, Sport and Tourism*, ed. Kirsten Holmes et al. (London: Routledge, 2022), 500–510; Mirae Kim and Dyana Mason, "[Are You Ready: Financial Management, Operating Reserves, and the Immediate Impact of COVID-19 on Nonprofits](#)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 49, no. 6 (2020): 1191–209; Erik L. Lachance, "[COVID-19 and Its Impact on Volunteering: Moving towards Virtual Volunteering](#)," *Leisure Sciences* 43, no. 1–2 (2021), 104–10.

68. Baum et al., "Future of Volunteering," 504.

69. Ibid.

70. Nicholas Biddle and Matthew Gray, "[The Experience of Volunteers during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," *ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods Open Access Collection*, May 2020; Cassandra Chapman et al., *Generosity in Times of Crisis: Australian Helping Behaviours during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Brisbane, AU: Global Generosity Research, 2021).

71. Chapman et al., *Generosity in Times of Crisis*, 10

72. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering," 6.

73. Volunteering Australia, "[Re-engaging Volunteers and COVID-19](#)," 2021, 3.

74. Biddle and Gray, "Experience of Volunteers"; Guillaume

senior volunteers.<sup>100</sup> As appendix 1 shows, most respondents feel more socially connected while volunteering (an average of 81.35 percent). This sense of **connectivity** was also evident in our research, with this theme being highlighted in 27 percent of responses.

- "I meet lots of new people, make new friends, and learn new skills. I can choose organizations that interest me and would benefit others. It is an experience that expands my world."
- "I enjoy the good spirits of being with fellow volunteers and being able to assist patrons with experiences. It's also great to be able to get a closer look at some of the installations."
- "I love the camaraderie. I love the feeling of being part of something so special. I am privileged and it's my way of saying thank you."

Other reasons as to why participants chose to volunteer were a sense of **fulfillment** ("To continue in my retirement to use my hard-earned skills from my career in a constructive way, which achieves much fulfilment for me") and *labor*-related reasons ("Volunteering allowed me to find ongoing seasonal paid work in the arts"). Free access to festival culture was a minor reason for volunteering. When asked if free access to festivals was a major reason to volunteer, responses were notably spread out, with the average being 63.6 percent (see appendix 3). Thirty more respondents answered within each of the 40–50 percent and 90–100 percent categories.

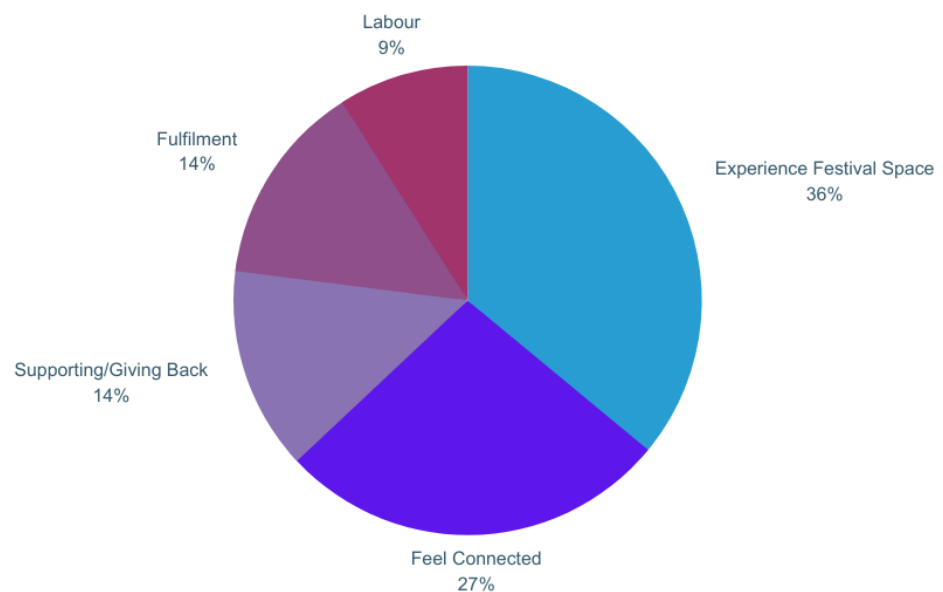


Figure 3. Motivations to volunteer. Respondents: 175.

Plaisance, "[Resilience in Arts and Cultural Nonprofit Organizations: An Analysis of the Covid-19 Crisis in France](#)," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* (2022): 1–20.

75. Plaisance, "Resilience in Arts"; Anna Wilson, Claire Carswell, and Helen Noble, "[Developing Guidance on Implementing Volunteer-Led Intradialytic Arts Activities in Haemodialysis Units](#)," *Healthcare* 9, no. 11 (2021): 1506.

76. Ken Townend, "Volunteer Engagement" (MA thesis, California State University, Monterey Bay, 2020).

77. Wilson, Carswell, and Noble, "Developing Guidance"; U. Harikrishnan and Grace Sailo, "Mizo Youth and the COVID Lockdown Life: A Gender Comparison," *International Journal of Research and Review* 7 (2020): 221–25.

78. Austin J. Triana et al., "[Technology Literacy as a Barrier to Telehealth during COVID-19](#)," *Telemedicine and e-Health* 26, no. 9 (September 2020): 1118–19.

79. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering"; Volunteering Australia, "Re-engaging Volunteers."

80. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering," 10.

81. Volunteering Australia, "Re-engaging Volunteers," 2.

82. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering," 4; Volunteering Australia, "Re-engaging Volunteers," 3.

## Challenges to Volunteering

Addressing challenges to volunteering is key to high retention rates. The primary difficulty faced by participants is time management, with 32 percent of respondents highlighting this theme after being asked an open-ended question about the challenges that they face in volunteering. This involves balancing volunteer hours around paid work and their desire to see other events during the festival.

- "Having enough time to volunteer and then go to a performance that I have booked for in that festival."
- "It was easier to contribute when I was part-time, but now that I work full-time, it can be hard to accommodate—especially when shifts are snapped up so quickly."

The second-highest challenge for volunteers (around 20 percent) revolved around the general theme of **festival conditions**. This involved extreme weather and mundane tasks:

- "Working outdoors when the weather is very hot, and when shade and seating is unavailable (e.g., when there is a popular speaker ... drawing a large audience that exhausts all possible seating and shade—leaving the volunteer standing in the hot sun)."

Pertaining to this second subcategory, existing research into festivals supports this finding, where varied tasks that allow for volunteers to develop skills are ideal.<sup>101</sup>

Third, **difficult patrons** were a notable challenge, with 19 percent of respondents citing this theme. For a small number of respondents, dealing with crowds is a particular challenge, with one respondent saying that "people" were the key challenge, as they are "not an extrovert, and large crowds make [them] a little anxious." Many participants that fell into this category identified rude and difficult patrons as a challenge:

- "Keeping 'cool' with rude people."
- "People who decide that it is easier to air their grievances to a volunteer rather than go to the trouble of contacting the right area. They prefer us to 'pass it along.'"
- "I have usually had a good experience, although sometimes dealing with upset patrons can be challenging, I manage OK, as I have a background in customer service, but have seen others struggle without much support."

Another notable challenge identified by participants was feeling mistreated by paid **festival staff and management** (14 percent). As research shows, taking care to develop personal relationships with volunteers is critical.<sup>102</sup>

- "Sometimes the staff managing an exhibition/location are not that friendly. They often ask you to do tasks that they themselves are not doing or while they are standing around chatting.... I would say my biggest hesitation with volunteering is the staff."

83. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering"; Gareth Power and Olesya Nedvetskaya, "An Empirical Exploration of Volunteer Management Theory and Practice: Considerations for Sports Events in a 'Post-COVID-19' World," *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 4 (2022): 1–14.

84. Biddle and Gray, "Volunteers and Volunteering," 7.

85. Olga Lo Presti, "Covid-19 and the Cultural Life of Older People," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 37, no. 4 (2021): 342–52; Julie S. Son et al., "Promoting Older Adults' Physical Activity and Social Well-Being during COVID-19," *Leisure Sciences* 43, no. 1–2 (2021): 287–94.

86. Presti, "Covid-19," 3.

87. Ibid.

88. Jurgen Grotz, Sally Dyson, and Linda Birt, "Pandemic Policy Making: The Health and Wellbeing Effects of the Cessation of Volunteering on Older Adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults* 21, no. 4 (2020): 261–69, quotation on 265–66.

89. Biddle and Gray, "Experience of Volunteers"; Kara Newby and Brittany Branyon, "Pivoting Services: Resilience in the Face of Disruptions in Nonprofit Organizations Caused by COVID-19," *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2021): 443–60.

90. Newby and Branyon, "Pivoting Services," 455.

91. Newby and Branyon, "Pivoting Services," 453, 455.

Some respondents indicated that they feel underutilized by venue coordinators:

- "Lack of direction from festival management. Sometimes they are unsure what to do with volunteers. They feel they need volunteers but don't know why. Staff that use volunteers to do the 'donkey work' that they don't want to do or feel it is below them to do. Sometimes feeling that volunteers are unappreciated regardless of the lip service by some festival directors."

An interesting contradiction developed in our research, however. While 14 percent identified festival management and staff as a challenge to deal with, appendix 5 shows that 82 percent of respondents feel adequately prepared and supported to conduct their volunteer duties. Final themes in responses related to practical matters. Twelve percent of responses identified matters related to **transport**, particularly around public transport, and parking. Three percent of responses identified **police checks** as being time consuming and costly.

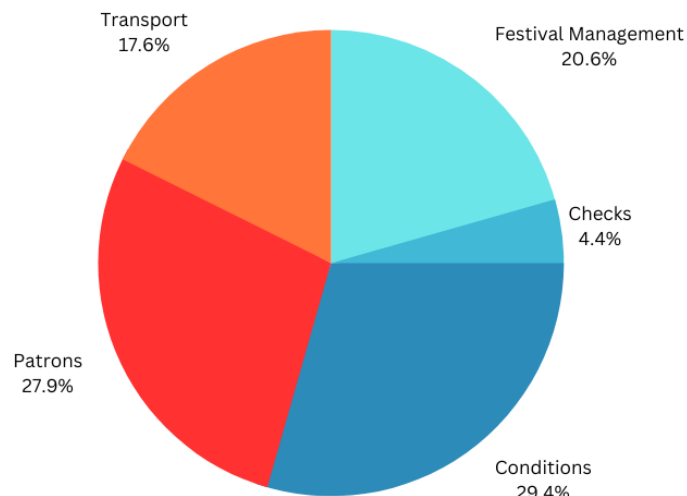


Figure 4. Challenges of volunteering. Respondents: 170.

### *Skills Learned While Volunteering*

The development of skills was often perceived as its own reward when volunteering. When asked whether Festival City Adelaide should offer skills development workshops, responses were mixed (see appendix 6). Robert Stebbins defines this as a form of self-actualization.<sup>103</sup> When asked an open-ended question about the skills acquired while volunteering, the most popular thematic response that arose in the coding was **festival management**. Forty-seven percent of responses included examples such as queue management (in food and beverage areas, site entry needs), flows of foot traffic, site layout, waste management protocols and best practice, legal policies, and leadership skills. This is an outcome that coincides with Bendle and Patterson's research on volunteers in amateur arts organizations.<sup>104</sup> Clary et al. also identified this as a key motivator for

92. Volunteering Australia, "Re-engaging Volunteers," 6.

93. Baum et al., "Future of Volunteering," 506.

94. Baum et al., "The Future of Volunteering"; Chapman et al., *Generosity in Times of Crisis*; Liat Kulik, "Multifaceted Volunteering: The Volunteering Experience in the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Light of Volunteering Styles," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 21, no. 1 (2021): 1222–42; Lachance, "COVID-19 and Its Impact"; Aleksandea Luksyte et al., "The Challenges of Volunteering during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 14, no. 1–2 (2021): 286–89; Peter C. Sun et al., "Older Adults' Attitudes toward Virtual Volunteering During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 40, no. 9 (2021): 953–57.

95. Kulik, "Multifaceted Volunteering"; Sun et al., "Older Adults' Attitudes."

96. Grotz, Dyson, and Birt, "Pandemic Policy Making"; Power and Nedvetskaya, "An Empirical Exploration"; Sun et al., "Older Adults' Attitudes."

97. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums"; Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Chen, Liu, and Legget, "Motivations of Museum Volunteers"; Coren et al., "An Examination."

98. Toraldo, Contu, and Mangia, "Hybrid Nature of Volunteering."

99. Jæger and Olsen, "On Commodification."

volunteering.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, given the often intense time-pressure nature of festival management, being able to "get things done" and broad problem-solving capacity were also seen as important (and acquired) skills for volunteers in terms of festival management.

- "I have learnt about legal matters; about how policies work and how to embed them into general workplace; have learnt management and leadership skills."
- "You learn a lot about temporary installation and safety procedures."
- "Have learnt about the behind-the-scenes component of major arts events (e.g., the organization, the planning, the resources, the team commitment)."
- "I learnt more about what goes on behind the scenes at a festival or a big production and that helped me prepare better for when I need to organize my own productions."

Several participants, 14 percent of responses, also commented on the range of **customer service/social skills** that had been acquired as part of their volunteering experiences and the wide array of roles in which these skills were deployed within the festival environment. These included answering questions at information booths, answering phones, assisting attendees with ticketing queries, and assisting artists/performers during rehearsals with check-ins.

- "People skills or soft skills, like active listening, managing awkward situations, resolving conflict, supporting team members"
- "I have learned how to interact with complete strangers better!"

Eleven percent of the participants in this study commented upon improvement more broadly in **communication skills**:

- "I credit volunteering to having developed my communication skills, which is a critical skill to learn when you're an adult!"
- "How to work with a variety of people. Talking to members of the public."
- "Sound problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, the art of giving constructive feedback."
- "To maintain my people skills because my positions in employment have mainly been focused in that area."

**Point-of-service (event/employment related) skills** were cited by 28 percent of respondents. This is distinct from festival management skills because there are fewer macro-organizational skills required:

- "My roles have mostly been serving alcohol to customers, which has led to employment in that field. I have also chosen to work selling merchandise, which gave me experience to work for some events and musicians. Occasionally I choose roles in the family zones because I

100. Campbell, "Importance of Being Valued," 281.

101. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Chen, Liu, and Legget, "Motivations of Museum Volunteers"; Stebbins, "Role of Leisure."

102. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Denning, "To Retain Volunteers."

103. Stebbins, "Role of Leisure."

104. Bendle and Patterson, "Mixed Serious Leisure."

105. Clary et al., "Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers."

106. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums," 322.

107. Bendle and Patterson, "Mixed Serious Leisure."

108. Musick, Herzog, and House, "Volunteering and Mortality," 273.

109. Coren et al., "An Examination," 1.

110. Gray, Khoo, and Reimondos, "Participation in Different Types of Volunteering."

111. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market."

112. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management"; Gray, Khoo, and Reimondos, "Participation in Different Types of Volunteering."



enjoy working with children."

- "Pouring a tap beer, using a cash register, memorizing useful locations in Rundle Mall for tourists and locals and gaining knowledge of local and SA tourist venues and activities."
- "I have learned a wide range of skills such as problem-solving, customer service, radio use, and performing as a volunteer, which have helped me in my paid work in many industries."
- "I have developed great bartending skills while volunteering and this has led to occasional paid work at festivals."

It is important to note that the learning of new skills is not an aspiration that is confined to younger demographics. In a study on museum volunteers, Deery, Jago, and Mair found that with those that have a long-standing interest in a particular subject matter, learning new skills is a key motivator. They also note that "this group may prove to be the more difficult of the older volunteer groups to manage. This is because they are motivated by what the museum has to offer regarding exhibitions."<sup>106</sup> Thus, it is important to take care when providing these volunteers with duties to complete. An awareness of the required skills to complete required roles is also important. This will allow for a more fulfilling experience.

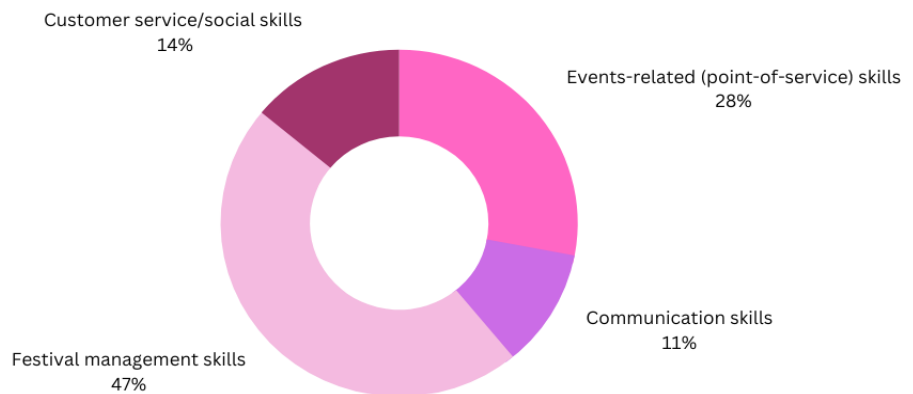


Figure Five: Skills Learned from Volunteering. Respondents: 166

Figure 5. Skills learned from volunteering. Respondents: 166.

### Social connectedness

The relationship between volunteering, well-being, and social connectedness cannot be understated. This is especially the case for older volunteers, for whom the benefits of volunteering include better cognitive, emotional, and physical effects as well as increased social integration.<sup>107</sup> Increased social integration has been shown to have wider implications, such as reducing the mortality risk of older volunteers.<sup>108</sup> While volunteering increases a sense of well-being, Coren et al. note that volunteers often possess a higher sense of "subjective wellbeing" than those in a similar demographic and that this only increases through the experience of volunteering at a festival.<sup>109</sup> While volunteering has tangible social benefits for older volunteers, the literature also suggests that those drawn to volunteering are also more socially connected

113. Coren et al., "An Examination"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management."

114. LeRoux and Bernadka, "Impact of the Arts"; Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Bussell and Forbes, "Volunteer Management."

115. Bussell and Forbes, "Understanding the Volunteer Market"; Coren et al., "An Examination"; Musick, Herzog, and House, "Volunteering and Mortality."

116. Deery, Jago, and Mair, "Volunteering for Museums."

117. Volunteering Australia, "National Standards," 8.

and from higher occupational classes.<sup>110</sup> Having said that, while there are several factors which motivate someone to volunteer, meeting people and making friends is one of them.<sup>111</sup>

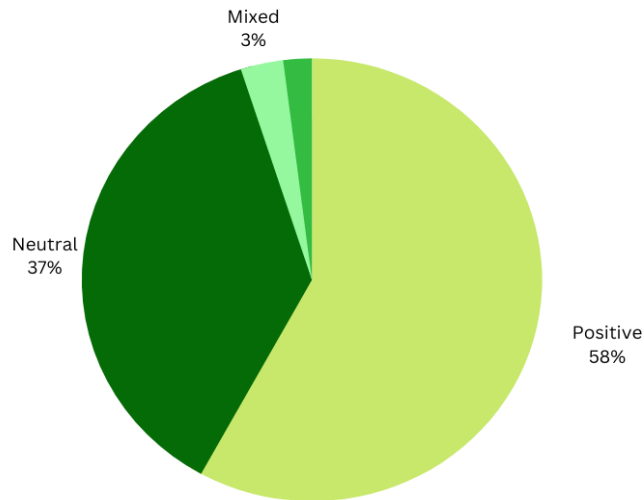


Figure 6. Social connectiveness of volunteers. Respondents: 173. In our study, we asked whether the volunteers maintained the friendships and social connections with people they had met while volunteering. Once again, this was an open-ended question. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed replied positively and 32 percent were neutral, with qualitative responses indicating that for some volunteers the connections extended beyond their volunteer roles, while for others, they were limited to the time spent volunteering.

Evidence of long-lasting friendships can be seen in the following response from volunteers that were surveyed:

- "I have developed and maintained several friendships with other volunteers, and some local and international artists. One in particular where my wife and I have developed a close friendship with both him and his wife that has resulted in travelling within Australia and internationally over the past six years."

Other responses indicated that the opportunity for meeting like-minded people was one of the key benefits of volunteering:

- "This has been one of the highlights of volunteering! For example, I met a lady at the [festival] volunteer induction who had only just moved to Adelaide and it turned out we live in the same suburb. We have similar interests and continue to catch up—we've gone to shows together, caught up for dinner, etc."
- "Some people are still my close friends, whereas others are lovely to see whenever we bump into each other. It's lovely getting to know people in the performing arts industry on a personal and professional level."



The data in the survey also suggests that repeated occurrences of volunteering increase the likelihood of deeper connections. For others, however, as festival volunteering is an annual event, and involves busy schedules, it is harder to maintain connections:

- “As an annual event it’s not so easy to develop and maintain friendships. In comparison I have a group of eight people from the RAH [Royal Adelaide Hospital] with whom I have connected and formed a strong friendship group. This is different as we see each other every week.”
- “Unfortunately, I haven’t done so far as you don’t always have overlapping shifts with people. I would love to have that, though!”
- “Usually, it is a roster of random opportunities, so volunteers appear/disappear without introduction. Schedules can be intense and free time is limited.”

However, multiple opportunities for volunteering across festivals further strengthened the ability to maintain connections:

- “Because I have volunteered for multiple festivals, I have got to know several regulars, which increases the sense of community.”

Events hosted by the volunteer network were seen as beneficial in helping to foster ongoing connections, as reported by one volunteer:

- “This is one of the reasons social events sponsored by the volunteer organization [are] so valuable. It enables us to meet others and to share stories and experiences.”

Many of the survey respondents who answered neutrally, and were less likely to form friendships beyond their volunteering roles at the festivals, still enjoyed connecting with familiar faces in the following years. In response to the question of maintaining friendships, respondents answered:

- “Seeing the same people over the years and at different festivals has made me feel like they are friends.”
- “Not really but it is always nice to see them again at the next season.”

Although the survey showed a wide range of responses to the question of maintaining friendships and connections with fellow volunteers, responses did indicate positive attitudes toward volunteering as a vehicle for social connectiveness.

### Conclusion

We offer several recommendations in consideration of the above data. Organizations can host volunteer-appreciation events that enable volunteers to bring guests; such events can assist in recruiting more supporters<sup>112</sup> and provide additional opportunities for volunteers to socialize together.<sup>113</sup> Again, if aggregated, this may be facilitated as a cross-festival recruitment tool.

Rewarding volunteers with access to public events and exclusive activities is likely to be welcomed.<sup>114</sup> as is the provision of identifiable collateral visibly associating volunteers with each festival.<sup>115</sup> For older volunteers, personal recognition, such as service awards, is key. Festival City Adelaide could facilitate aggregated/state-wide volunteer awards to recognize and celebrate regular volunteers. Since many volunteers contribute their time for more than altruistic reasons, tangible benefits should be clarified in the recruitment process.

Feedback is integral to improving the experiences of future volunteers. Anonymous surveys are one method to elicit this feedback. This would allow for festivals to engage in a form of self-assessment and to meet the National Standards for Volunteering, wherein “volunteer involvement is regularly reviewed in line with the organization’s evaluation and quality management frameworks” and “opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on the organization’s volunteer involvement and relevant areas of the organization’s work.”<sup>117</sup> This would allow for regular feedback on volunteer experiences, such as those contained in these results.

Festivals are heavily reliant on volunteer labor. As such, respecting this labor is integral to the sustainability of the arts industry. As is evident in this research, senior volunteers are passionate about the arts and the festival environment of the festival and arts sector. Notably, in our research, as is evident in appendix 7, respondents’ attitudes were quite mixed toward volunteering despite COVID-19. When asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 100 regarding the degree to which COVID-19 impacted their willingness to volunteer, the average response was 43.5 percent. While this is not negligible, it is evident that there is still a willingness to support the sector in the form of volunteering. It is important, then, that the needs of the volunteer cohort are met. Their experience while volunteering is key here, as most respondents already feel adequately compensated for volunteering their time (see appendix 4). As this research demonstrates, this experience is the strongest reason for volunteering. For many of the respondents, volunteering improves their sense of well-being (see appendix 2). Even though many responded that they get nervous when dealing with strangers or putting themselves out there, they nevertheless do so for several reasons, such as supporting cultural events, having deeper experiences of the arts, or meeting like-minded others. Continued skills development of both the volunteers and those that manage them works to strengthen retention in this sector.

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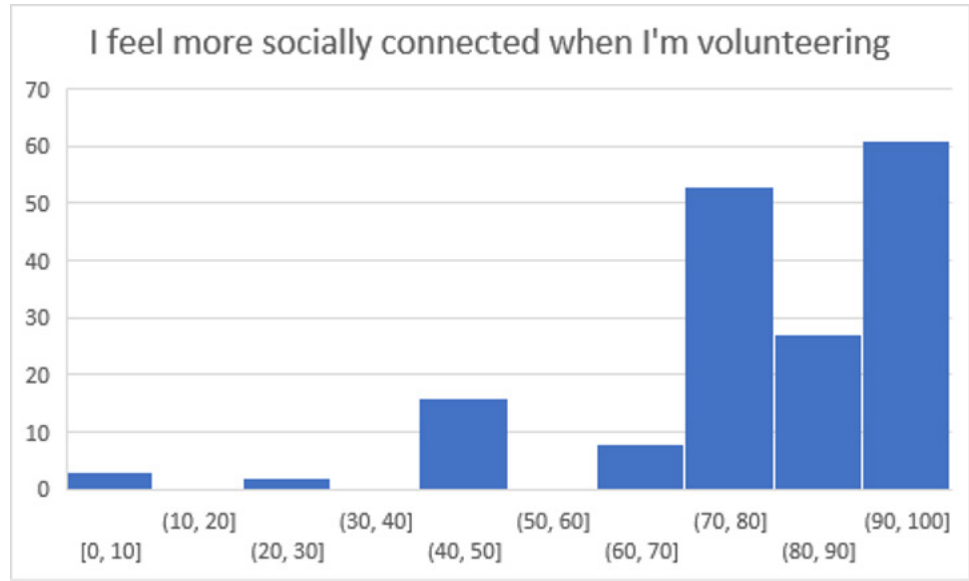
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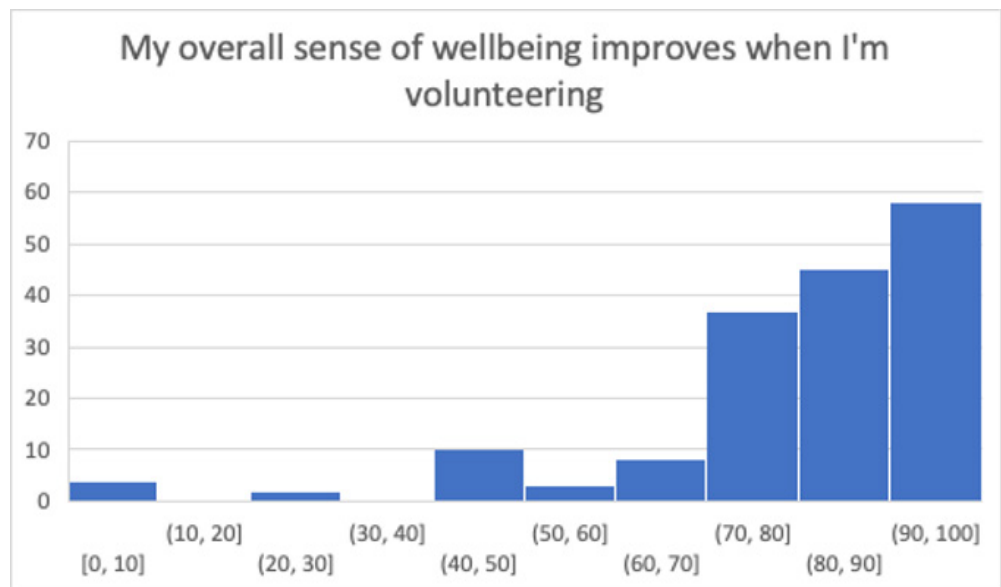
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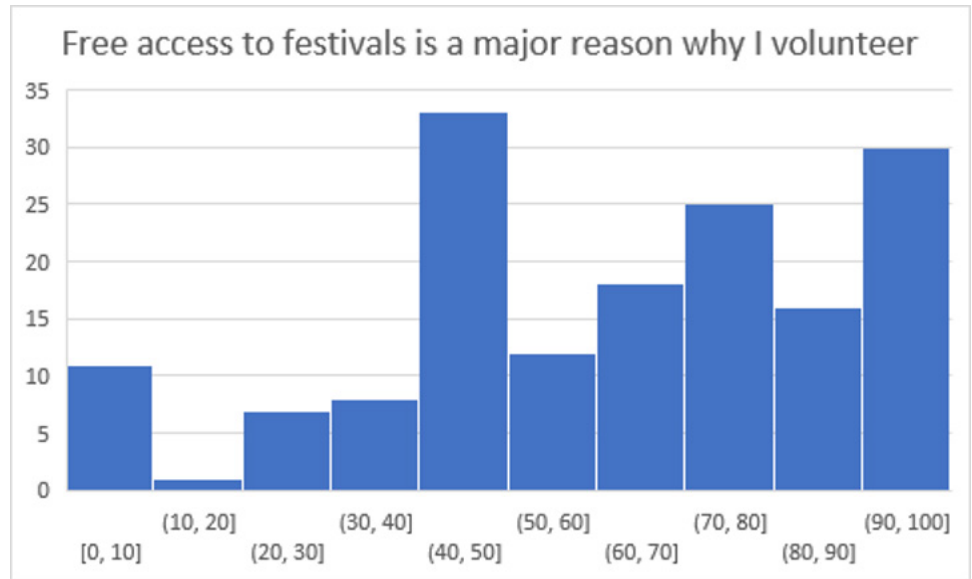
## Appendix 1: Social Connection and Volunteering



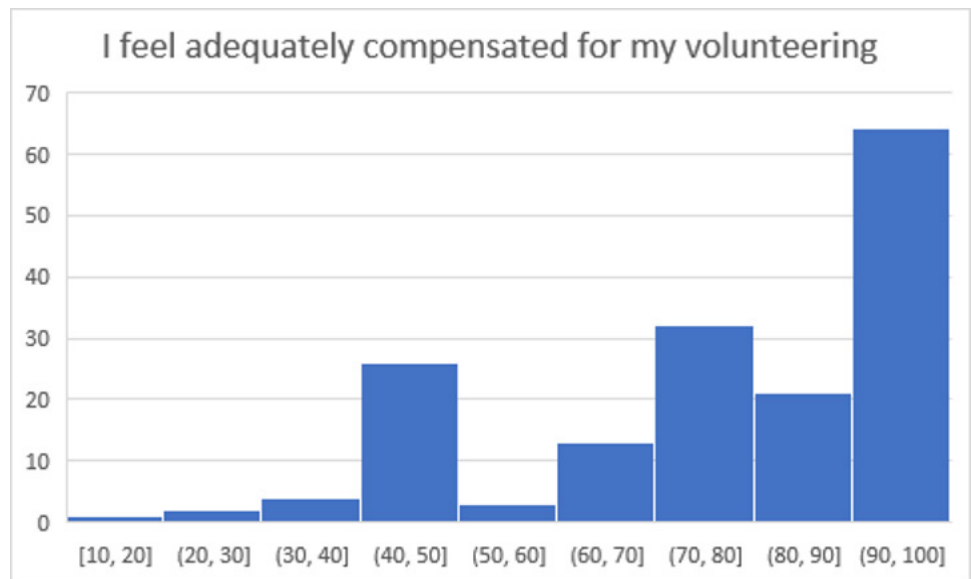
## Appendix 2: Well-being and Volunteering



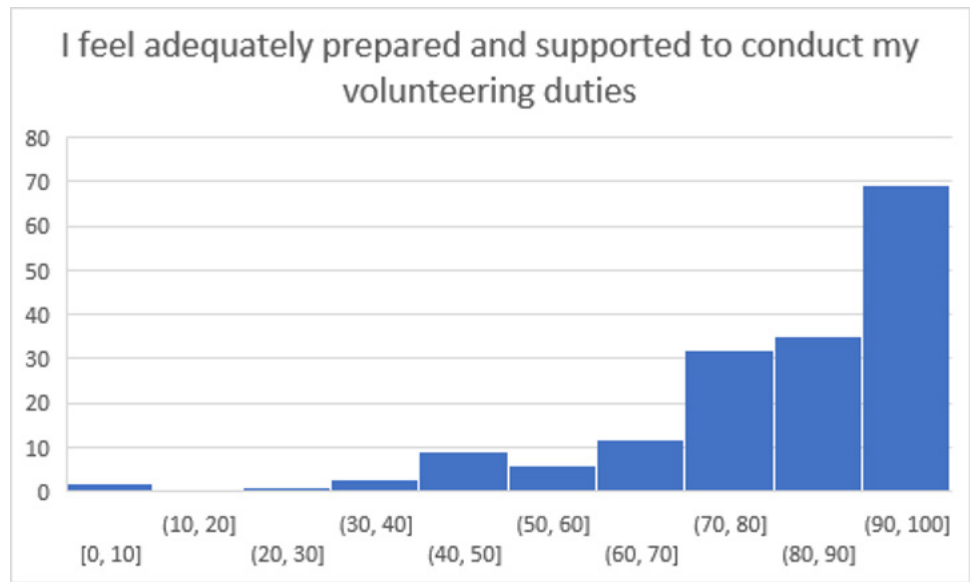
### Appendix 3: Festival Access and Motivations to Volunteer



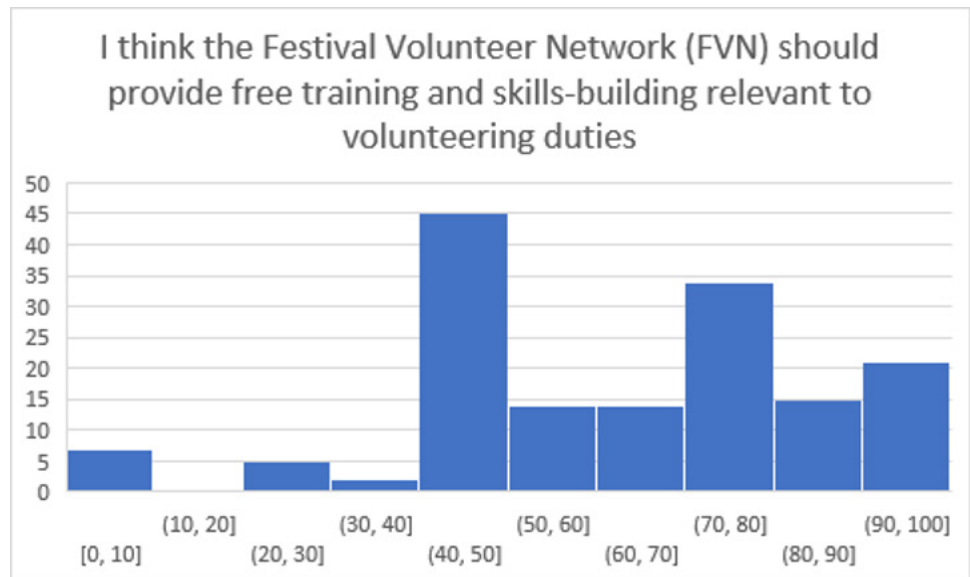
### Appendix 4: Compensation and Volunteering



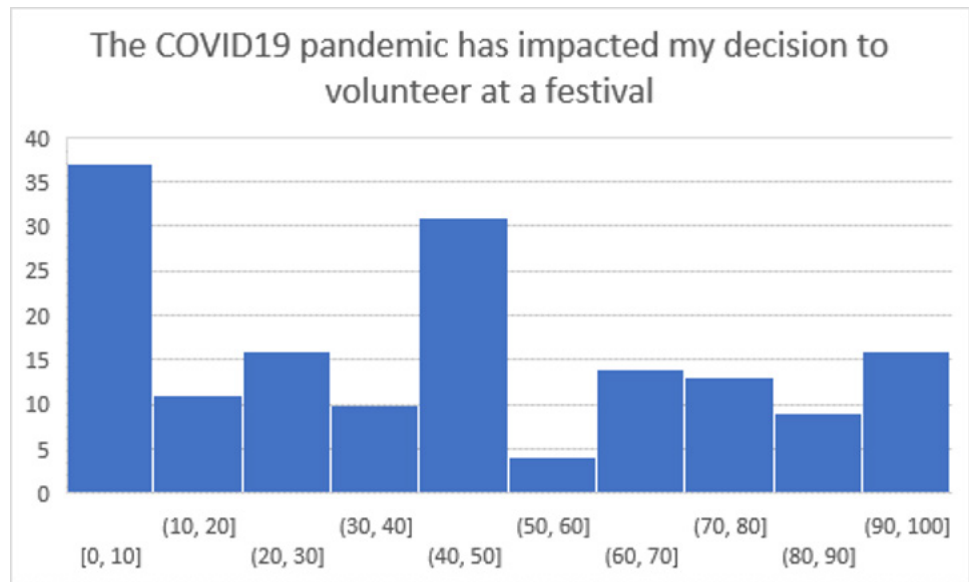
### Appendix 5: Festival Volunteering and Support



### Appendix 6: The Festival Volunteer Network and Training



## Appendix 7: Festival Volunteering and COVID-19



## AUTHOR BIOS

**Stuart Richards'** research focuses on screen-based creative industries and queer screen media. His first monograph, *The Queer Film Festival: Popcorn & Politics* (2017), was published as part of Palgrave Macmillan's Framing Film Festivals series, which looks at the queer film festival as a social enterprise and its growth in the creative industries. He has also published in journals such as *Senses of Cinema*, *New Review of Film & Television*, *Media International Australia*, and *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, and in emerging publications such as *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture*.

**Jessica Pacella** is currently a lecturer in creative industries and has been teaching across cultural studies and creative industries. She is currently collaborating on a research project on film festivals and contemporary employment for creative and cultural workers in Australia. She completed a postdoctoral appointment in 2020 with the CP3 Research Centre, which assessed various Australian (state and federal) and global policy responses to COVID-19 for arts and cultural workers, and the creative industries sector. Her broader research interests include festivals and creative industry ecologies, the intersection of technology, work and leisure, and the affectivity of material and digital objects.

**Kim Munro** is a documentary researcher and practitioner with an interest in the intersection between immersive and interactive technology and social and environmental issues. Kim's work has been screened by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation as well as at local and international galleries and festivals. Kim was the conference programmer for the 2020 and 2021 Australian International Documentary Conferences, Australia's premiere event for nonfiction content. In the last ten years, Kim has taught a variety of documentary and media courses at RMIT University and Swinburne and Deakin Universities in Melbourne. She has also organized documentary events and symposia and run filmmaking workshops around climate change with UN Habitat.

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