

# Djinanginy Kaartdijin Project

## Statistician's Report

### Executive Summary

This research surveyed 29 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people between the ages of 18 and 30 to understand their experiences with volunteering. The study uncovered several demographic, educational, and employment-related factors that influenced the participants' engagement with volunteering.

Most respondents were studying full-time (86.2%) and working (82.8%), with part-time and casual jobs being the most common. The majority of respondents (93.1%) had prior volunteering experience, primarily in educational organisations, charities, and sporting clubs. Volunteering started at varied ages, primarily due to being asked to participate or knowing someone involved. However, less than a quarter volunteered due to passion for a cause.

Qualitative analysis of the text fields revealed that respondents derived enjoyment from their roles through positively impacting young lives, community interactions, personal satisfaction and growth, helping underprivileged communities, and the nature of the work itself. Yet, they also highlighted areas for potential improvement, including scheduling flexibility, organisational practices, interpersonal relations management, and cultural awareness and inclusivity.

Respondents volunteered with one to four organisations in the past year, primarily to help their community. The experience was largely in-person and rated positively, with meeting new people, enjoyment, and feeling impactful as top responses. However, improvement in mental health and wellbeing was less often noted.

In terms of improving the volunteer experience, respondents emphasised scheduling flexibility, recruitment and management of volunteers, cultural competency, and increasing the range of activities.

Despite the overall positive experiences, some respondents (11.1%) reported negative effects, primarily related to the organisational culture, and a third of the respondents had reservations about recommending their volunteering organisation to a friend.

Limited free time was the most significant impediment to volunteering, followed by limited access to transport and financial constraints.

When considering volunteering with an organisation, cultural inclusivity, a positive culture, flexible volunteering roles, and coverage of financial costs were top considerations. From an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective, cultural awareness training, having a designated Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander volunteer coordinator, and the presence of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers were of utmost importance.

The study also revealed correlations between factors like gender, study load, workload, and number of commitments with the volunteering load. For instance, females and part-time students spent more time volunteering than their counterparts. Full-time workers and those with more commitments also volunteered more.

Individual motivations also seemed to influence the volunteering experience. For instance, those seeking enjoyment or professional development from volunteering reported successful achievement of these goals.

For promoting volunteering opportunities among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, a multifaceted approach—combining digital communication, institutional partnerships, community engagement, and respectful direct contact—was suggested by the respondents.

In terms of fostering a positive volunteering experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, organisations were advised to prioritise cultural awareness, create a comfortable and respectful environment, offer meaningful and inclusive roles, provide strong support systems, and consider practical incentives.

## Individual Analyses

### Demographic Information

- We collected 29 responses from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people between the ages of 18 and 30.
- 27 described themselves as “Aboriginal”, 1 as “Torres Strait Islander” and 1 as both “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander”.
- The youngest age was 18 (n=8), and the oldest was 29 (n=1). The mean age was 20.38. Overall, there was a strong positive skew in the age dimension, with 22 (~75%) of respondents being 21 or younger, and only 3 older than 23, indicating that the data captured may better reflect the views of university-age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- A clear majority of respondents (n=20,69.0%) identified as “female”. 8 (27.6%) identified as “male”. One respondent (3.4%) identified as “non-binary”.
- Of the types of locations lived in by survey respondents (for more than 2 years), 19 of the respondents (65.5%) had lived in a metropolitan area, 14 (48.3%) in a rural town, 8 (27.6%) in a regional centre, and just 1 (3.4%) in a remote community.

### Education and Employment Status

- Only 1 survey respondent wasn’t studying. Of the remaining 28, 25/29 (86.2% of all) respondents were studying full-time, while 3/29 (10.3% of all) were part-time.

- The vast majority of respondents (24/29 or 82.8%) are working. Drilling down into this, we find that 12/29 (41.4%) are working casually, 9/29 (31.0%) part-time, and 3/29 (10.3%) full-time. Everyone not currently working (5 respondents) noted they were seeking work.

## Previous Volunteering

- 27 of the 29 respondents (93.1%) had previously participated in volunteering, with two (6.9%) having never volunteered.
- Of the 27 who had volunteered, the most common types of organisations volunteered with were “education organisation, school or preschool” (n=20, 74.1%), “charity organisation or cause” (n=16, 59.3%), and “sporting club / team” (n=13, 48.1%).
- Two categories of charitable causes stood out amongst the others as far as being the most commonly volunteered in by survey respondents. 16 (55.2%) had volunteered with an “Education / Training” organisation and 15 (51.7%) with an “Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations” organisation.

## Becoming a Volunteer

- While there was a broad range of ages at which respondents first volunteered, the data seemed to be distributed normally from 6 to 21 with a slight negative skew. The mean was 14.22 with a standard deviation of 2.99.
- In terms of what led the 27 respondents to first become involved in volunteering, the most common answer was “[I] was asked to be involved” (n=14, 51.9%). Equal on 11 out of 27, or 40.7%, were “knew someone who was involved” and “found out about it through high school”. Interestingly, less than a quarter, and only 5 respondents (21.7%) were interested in volunteering because they were passionate about a specific cause.

## Current Volunteering

- Of those who had volunteered in the last 12 months (n=23, 79.3%), almost half (n=10/23, 43.5%) had only volunteered with one organisation. 7 out of 23 (30.4%) had volunteered with two, 3 out of 23 (13.0%) with three, and 1 respondent of the 23 (4.3%) had volunteered with four organisations.
- By far the single biggest motivator for volunteering amongst the 27 who had previously volunteered was “to help the community” (n=18, 66.7%). Impressively, every respondent (n=27, 100.0%) identified at least one altruistic motivation. 14 (51.9%) identified at least one growth/learning/professional development motivation. Only 3 (11.1%) identified any social motivation.
- 24 respondents had volunteered in the last 12 months in person, 1 online and two via a mix of the two.

## Volunteering Evaluation

- In terms of evaluating their experience volunteering on a likert scale from 1 to 5, the 27 volunteering respondents were typically positive. By mean, the statement “I have met new people” received the highest rating ( $\mu=4.33$ ). “I enjoy volunteering” and “I feel I am making a difference” followed next ( $\mu=4.22$ ). Next was “I have learned new skills or improved my skills” ( $\mu=4.15$ ) and “I feel appreciated for my work” ( $\mu=4.11$ ). On the other end of the spectrum, the statement “my mental health and wellbeing has improved”, while still on average positive, received the most negative response ( $\mu=3.59$ ). No one strongly disagreed with the statement, but 4 of the 27 respondents (14.8%) who had volunteered disagreed.
- When those who had previously volunteered were asked whether volunteering had had any negative effects on them, 3 said yes (11.1%). Most of the additional comments provided pointed to issues with the people and culture within the organisation, such as shaming, not showing appreciation.
- When asked whether they would recommend their current volunteering organisation to a friend, 2 out of every 3, or 18/27 said they would. 1 in 3 had reservations.

## Volunteering Impediments

- “Limited free time” was the greatest impediment to volunteering, identified by 21 out of the 27 (77.8%) respondents who had previously volunteered. The next closest were “limited access to transport” and “financial reasons”, both with 11/27 (40.7%).
- Both of the two respondents who hadn’t volunteered before stated that “yes”, they were considering volunteering in the future. Amongst the barriers identified were “financial reasons”, “no roles that suit my interests”, “not sure how to find volunteer roles”, “limited free time” and “limitations due to a disability”. They identified motivations of “doing something worthwhile”, “for my religious beliefs/obligations”, “personal connection to the purpose or cause”, “to make friends” and “to gain work experience”.

## Relevant Factors When Considering Volunteering

- Each of the 29 total respondents was asked to select from a list the three most important factors to them as a young person when considering volunteering with an organisation. The two biggest factors were culturally-related, with 21 (72.4%) choosing “is inclusive of people from different backgrounds”, and 16 (55.2%) choosing “has a positive culture”. Next were two logistical factors, “offers flexible volunteering roles that fit my schedule” ( $n=12$ , 41.4%) and “covers financial costs” ( $n=10$ , 34.5%). On the other end of things, only four respondents (13.8%) selected “has other volunteers of a similar age to me” and both “prevents discrimination/bullying” and “has an easy application and training process” both received 5 (17.2%) of responses.
- By far the most important factor to the respondents in considering an organisation to volunteer with as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person was “provides cultural awareness training”, with 23 respondents (79.3%) selecting that option. Also among the three popular choices that stood out were “has a designated Aboriginal/Torres Strait

Islander volunteer coordinator" (n=19, 65.5%) and "has other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers" (n=16, 55.2%). After that, the next highest was "has an acknowledgement of the country on the website", selected by 9 respondents (31.0%). Each of the remaining options received 6 (20.7%) of responses. Interestingly, the three options that demonstrated concrete action and existing results clearly outperformed the rest, which could be seen as more performative acts.

## Correlations

- Gender vs Volunteering Load: On average, females spent more time per month volunteering ( $\mu=4.4$  excluding two outliers, 9.3 including), than males ( $\mu=1.2$  excluding two outliers, 2.7 including).
- Study Load vs Volunteering Load: On average, full-time students spent less time per month volunteering ( $\mu=2.6$  excluding two outliers, 5.3 including), than part-time students ( $\mu=7.3$ ).
- Workload vs Volunteering Load: On average, full-time workers spent more time per month volunteering ( $\mu=24.3$ , n=3), than part-time workers ( $\mu=5.3$ , n=8) and casual workers ( $\mu=2.1$  excluding one outlier, 2.8 including, n=10).
- Number of Commitments vs Volunteering Load: As expected, volunteers who have a higher number of commitments seem to also spend a higher average number of hours volunteering per month. Those who volunteered with three organisations ( $\mu=26.0$ , n=3) volunteered more than those with two ( $\mu=4.9$ , n=7) and those with just one ( $\mu=3.7$  including outliers, 1.6 excluding, n=10).
- Seeking vs Experienced Enjoyment: Those who selected enjoyment as a motivating factor in their choice to volunteer, had an average rating for "I enjoy volunteering" of 4.38, compared to those who didn't who had an average of 4.16. This suggests that those using volunteering as a source of enjoyment were successful in doing so,
- Seeking vs Experienced Impact: Every respondent mentioned at least one altruistic reason, so there was no one who wasn't seeking impact.
- Seeking vs Experienced Meeting People: Only one person was seeking to meet people, and only two selected any social motivator so analysis on this correlation is impossible.
- Seeking vs Experienced Professional Development: Of those who selected at least one personal/professional growth motivator, the average score on the question "I have learnt new skills or improved my skills" was 4.44 (excluding 1 outlier of "disagree", otherwise mean is 4.2). This compares to those who didn't select a growth-related motivator who rated the same statement at an average score of 3.44. This demonstrates that those seeking professional development from volunteering were able to find it.