

Young people's evolving perception of volunteering and the barriers they face in participation

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A new [discussion paper](#) from the Monash Center for Youth Policy and Education Practice (CYPEP) explores positive opportunities to engage

young people in volunteering.

As Australia faces a shortage of volunteers, and volunteering organizations find it difficult to attract and engage [young people](#), this discussion paper examines how and why young people participate in volunteering to provide organizations with valuable insights on how to best engage with them.

To inform the discussion and the opportunities, the paper draws heavily on data from the Australian Youth Barometers, which has been conducted by CYPEP each year since 2021.

Key findings showed that:

- Young people see volunteering as part of a broader understanding of social participation, which includes many forms of unpaid community, social or [political engagement](#) across a variety of forms and mediums.
- Young people who experience higher political anxiety may be more motivated to volunteer. Constant exposure to political events can bring about negative emotional reactions associated with worsening well-being, but greater motivation to take [political action](#) (e.g., volunteer, protest) to change the causes of these negative emotions.
- Political anxiety is associated negatively with mental health. Whereas volunteering is positively associated with [mental health](#) and higher life satisfaction.
- Young people understand volunteering as having many benefits, but face a range of potential barriers to their participation including: [lack of support](#), lack of time or money, bureaucratic obstacles and feeling that young people were not taken seriously.

When speaking of his experiences volunteering, a 24-year-old male

participant said, "I volunteer quite a bit, and I think that's one way I can also contribute to changes like when you do things like run events, or help younger students, help them with things that you can actually help the next generation grow."

A 24-year-old male participant from Victoria said, "I would say get involved in elections, local and state, federal, and, you know, be an activist for the things you care about. Getting involved on [social media](#) is definitely a way you can make your voice heard."

Lead author, Dr. Thuc Bao Huynh said, "Formal political participation may not appeal to young people, but they are finding new ways to be involved and make [positive changes](#) in their communities. These need to be recognized and supported.

"Young Australians want to get involved, but many face barriers to their participation. Rather than viewing young people as disengaged, these barriers must be understood and mitigated."

Professor Walsh, Director of the Monash Center for Youth Policy and Education Practice and co-author said the report highlights deep political anxieties that young people are experiencing in the present and the future.

"Young people continue to be painted in stereotypes that depict them as disengaged or self-absorbed. Our research on their attitudes to volunteering and civic participation shows that these are untrue. Instead, we identify how engagement in shaping a young person's world through volunteering is good for their well-being and society in general," said Professor Walsh.

The report highlights how young Australians have a wider understanding of what volunteering entails than is generally accepted. These findings

can provide insights for volunteering organizations as to how to best engage young people in volunteering in the ways that are most appealing and appropriate to them.

More information: Paper: [Anxiety, wellbeing and engaging young people in volunteering](#)

Provided by Monash University

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