Volunteer Managers & Leaders Survey
2024

1 Meeting the needs of volunteer managers and leaders

In 2022, Volunteering New Zealand surveyed volunteer managers and leaders, to find out their needs for training and development. This helped inform our new Best Practice Guidelines (issued in June 2023). We also began Mentoring and Peer support programmes for volunteer managers.

The survey of Volunteer Managers & Leaders (VM&L survey) was repeated in June 2024, as part of a broader evaluation of the Mentoring and Peer support programmes.

We received 88 responses. This report is a section of the Allen & Clarke report, Evaluation of Peer and Mentoring Support Programmes (October 2024). A minority of respondents to the VM&L survey participated in the peer and mentoring support programmes.

1.1 The demand for learning and development support remained high

Programme participants [in the Peer and Mentoring support programmes] reflected on the high expectations in their roles and corresponding lack of learning and development opportunities. In addition to the absence of formal training pathways, some participants reported getting little support from their management or boards and the difficulty in talking openly to funders about development needs. They talked about having to 'hit the ground running and see what happens', and 'muddle your way through'. The access to peer support and mentoring provided through the programmes, and the dedicated time for learning and development were highly valued in this context. Volunteering NZ described the programmes as plugging a gap, but the gaps were increasing. They estimated a 10-fold or even 100-fold demand for these types of programme beyond what was currently provided.

The data in the figures in this section is from the VM&L survey.

1.1.1 There was significant variation in time spent managing volunteers

Overall, the amount of time respondents to the VM&L survey spent managing volunteers varied considerably (Figure 5). Over half (57%) of volunteer managers and leaders reported spending 41 hours or more per month managing volunteers, compared with one-quarter (25%) of organisational managers or leaders.

Figure 5. Hours per month spent managing volunteers, n=85
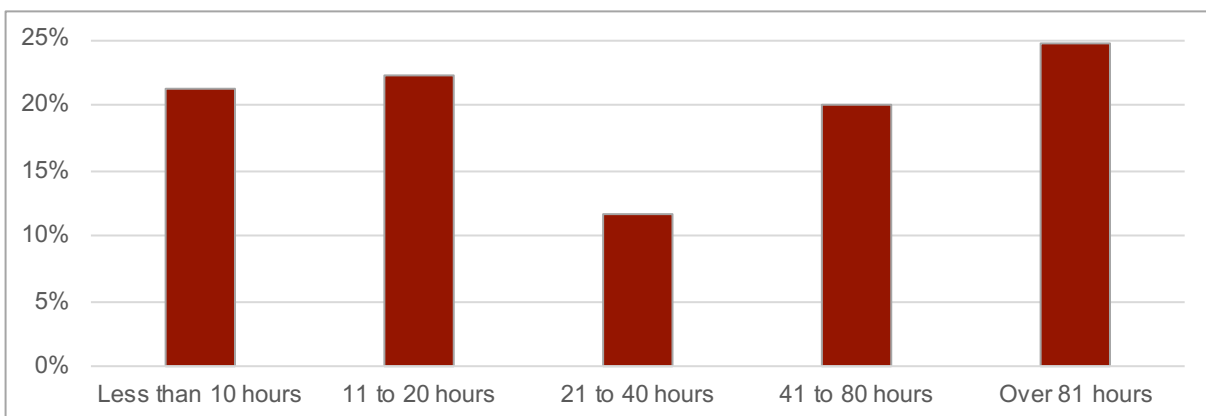
The amount of time that volunteer managers and leaders reported managing volunteers has increased. In the survey undertaken in 2022, one-third (33%) of respondents reported spending 41 hours or more per month managing volunteers, compared with almost one-half (45%) in 2024.

1.1.2   People received a diverse range of support for managing volunteers

As with the 2022 VM&L survey, there remains a high reliance on personal networks as a source of support for managing volunteers (Figure 6). Compared to 2022, a significantly higher number of respondents to the survey in 2024 reported receiving support from volunteer managers in other organisations (45% compared with 25%), the Volunteering NZ website (39% compared with 29%), online tools (30% compared with 22%), and internet search (29% compared with 15%).

Figure 6. Source of support received for managing volunteers, n=87
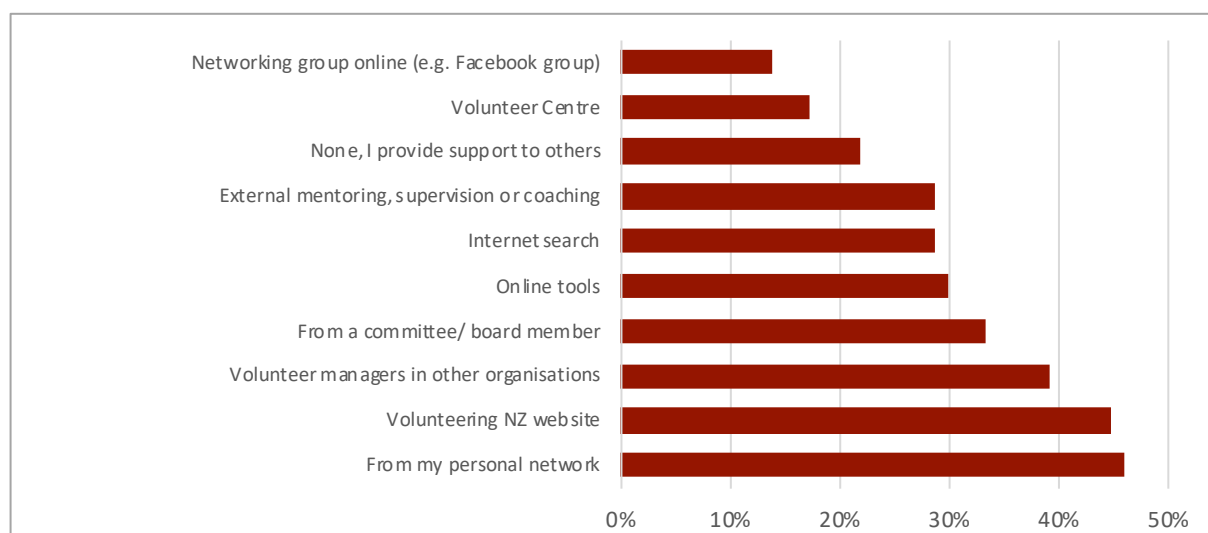

Almost one-third of respondents (29%) received support from external mentoring, supervision or coaching. Of these 25 people, 18 received the mentoring, supervision or coaching as part of a formal support programme, 10 of which were through Volunteering NZ.

Of the 396 respondents to the State of Volunteering Community Organisation Survey (2024), 64% provided VM&Cs with support and training within their organisation, 20% left it to VM&Cs to find their own support (e.g., online), while just 7% funded external training for their VM&Cs.

1.1.3 Almost one-quarter of people received no training or development for managing volunteers

Almost half (46%) of respondents to the VM&L survey reported receiving no (24%) or one to four hours (22%) of training or development for volunteer management in the previous year (Figure 7). Encouragingly, this is down from 64% in the 2022 VM&L survey. Moreover, over one-third (35%) of respondents reported receiving 11 hours or more of training or development over the last year, compared with only 19% of respondents in 2022.

Figure 7. Training or development received for volunteer management role in the last year, n=86
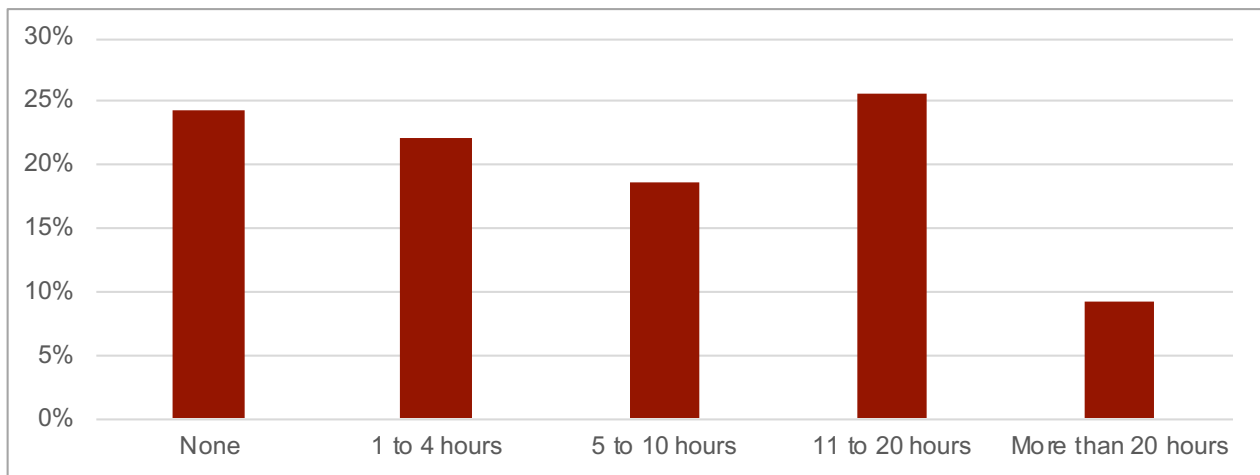
1.1.4   There is high demand for training or support across many areas

As shown in Figure 8, over half of the respondents to the VM&L survey reported that they would like training or support for supporting volunteers (60%), giving appreciation and recognition (60%) and attracting volunteers (55%). The percentage of survey respondents indicating they would like training or support in each of the seven areas has increased from the 2022 survey.

Figure 8. Areas most like training or support with, n=83
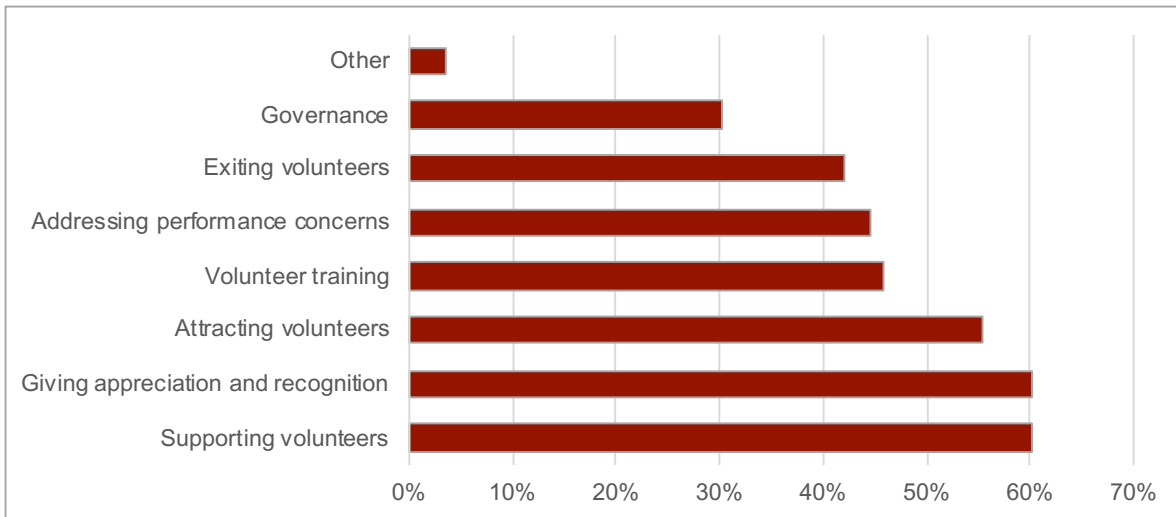
Note: Respondents could select multiple responses.

The 'other' areas that respondents would like training or support with included efficacy, impact measurement (return on investment, specifically), working with diverse ethnic groups and understanding culture around volunteering and engagement, and bringing business on board (particularly within small- or medium-sized enterprises).

The areas respondents would like training or support in aligned with areas where they faced the biggest challenges (Figure 9). Getting the right volunteers and a need for more volunteers were the top two ranked challenges. These align with the top three areas in Figure 8 – support, recognising and attracting volunteers.

Figure 9. Average ranking of biggest challenges, lower rank = more challenging
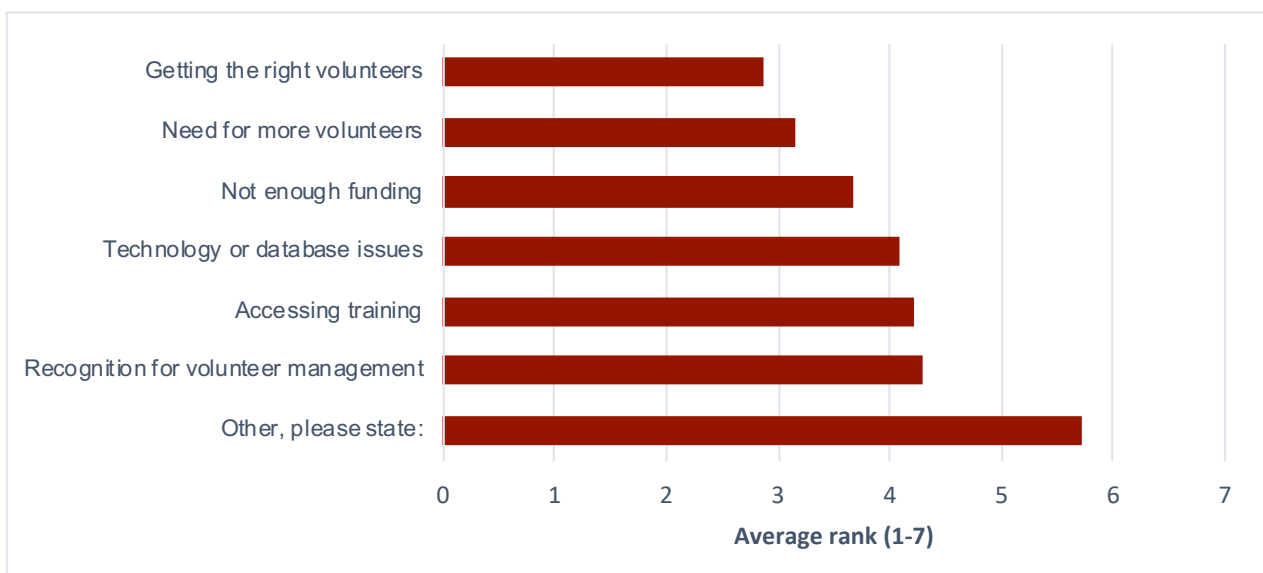
1.1.5 Peer support and mentoring featured strongly as preferred ways of learning

Almost three-quarters of VM&L survey respondents (74%) indicated that networking/peer support was a preferred way of learning, while around half (48%) indicated a preference for mentoring (Figure 10). Two-thirds indicated a preference for online course or tools (66%) and attending courses (64%).

Figure 10. Preferred type of training and learning, n=86

Note: Respondents could select multiple responses.

The three most frequently reported preferences match those for the VM&L survey undertaken in 2022. In 2024, webinars ranked as the fifth most frequently preferred way of learning; compared with seventh in 2022. Conversely, conferences declined from fourth most frequently reported way of learning in 2022 to sixth in 2024.

1.1.6 Cost and time were the main barriers to accessing training and development

Cost (58%) and time (56%) were the most frequently reported barriers to accessing learning and development by VM&L survey respondents (Figure 11). Not knowing about training and development opportunities (38%) and finding opportunities relevant to needs (38%) were also frequently reported barriers.

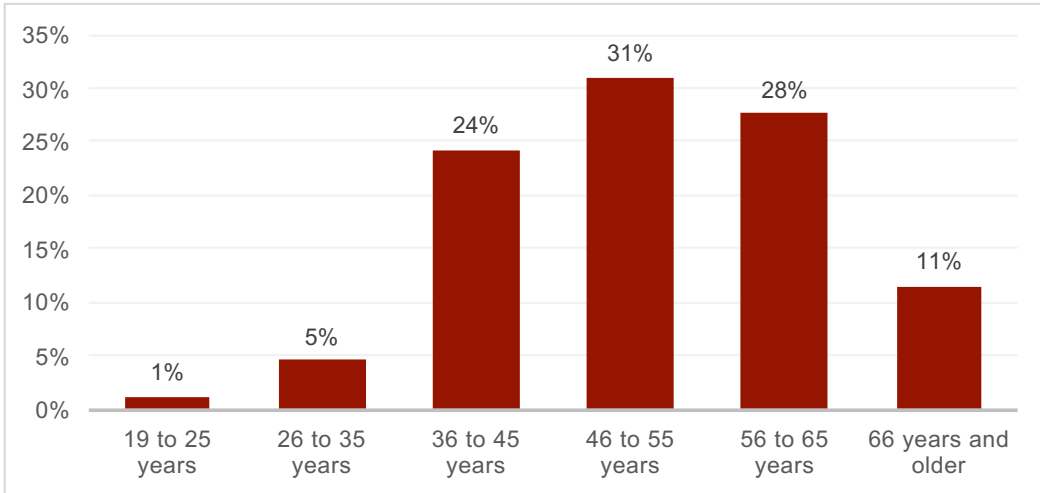**Figure 11. Barriers to accessing training and development, n=80**
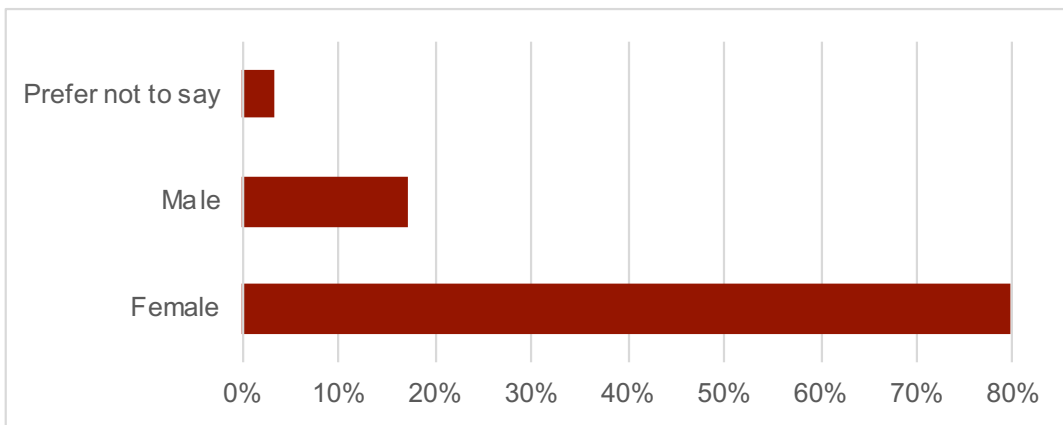

Note: Respondents could select multiple responses.

Appendix: Survey results

This appendix includes charts that show the profile of the respondents to the 2024 VM&L survey.

Figure 21. Age of respondents, n=87

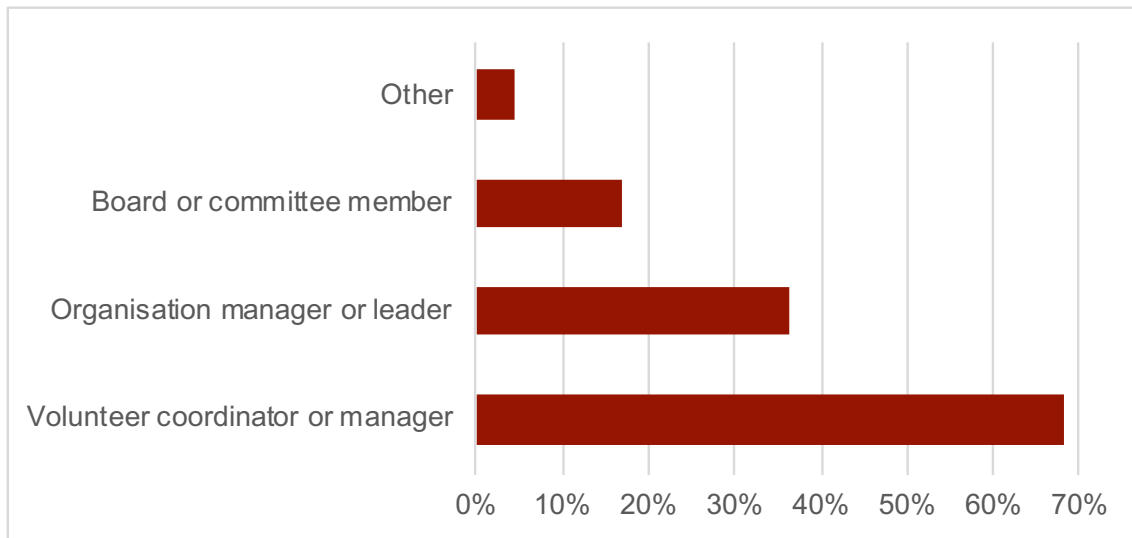**Figure 22. Gender of respondents, n=88**

Figure 23. Ethnicity of respondents, n=88
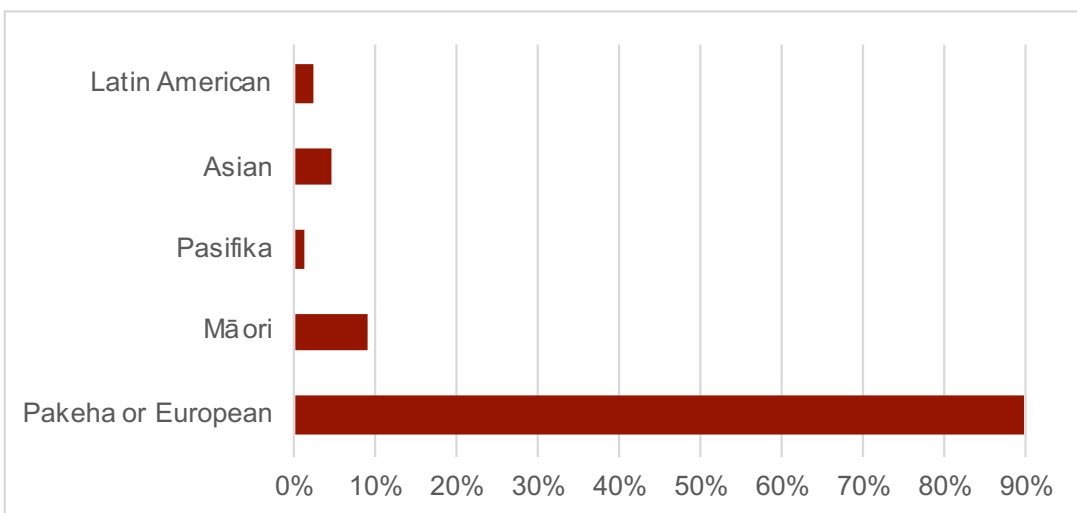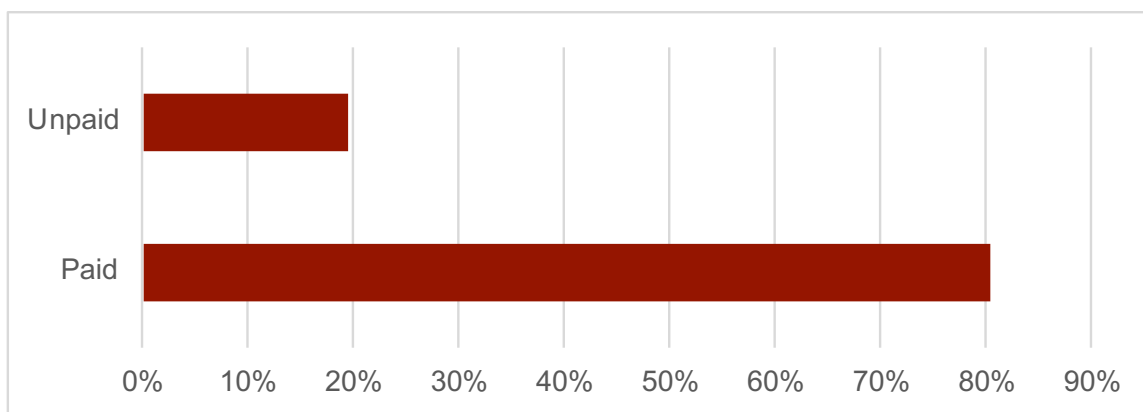

Respondents could select multiple responses.

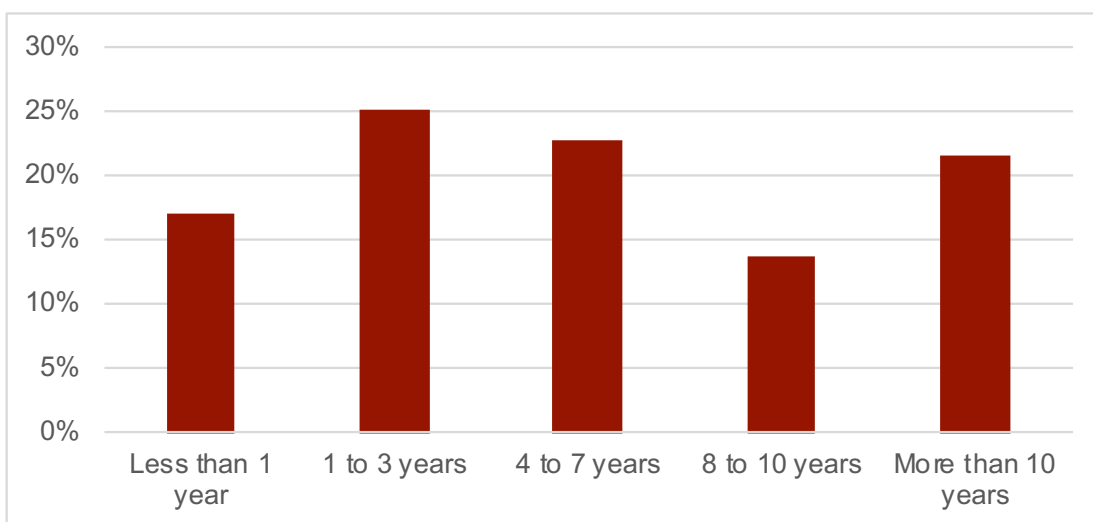**Figure 24. Role of respondents, n=88**

Respondents could select multiple responses. Other: advisor (2), founder, relationships and community lead.
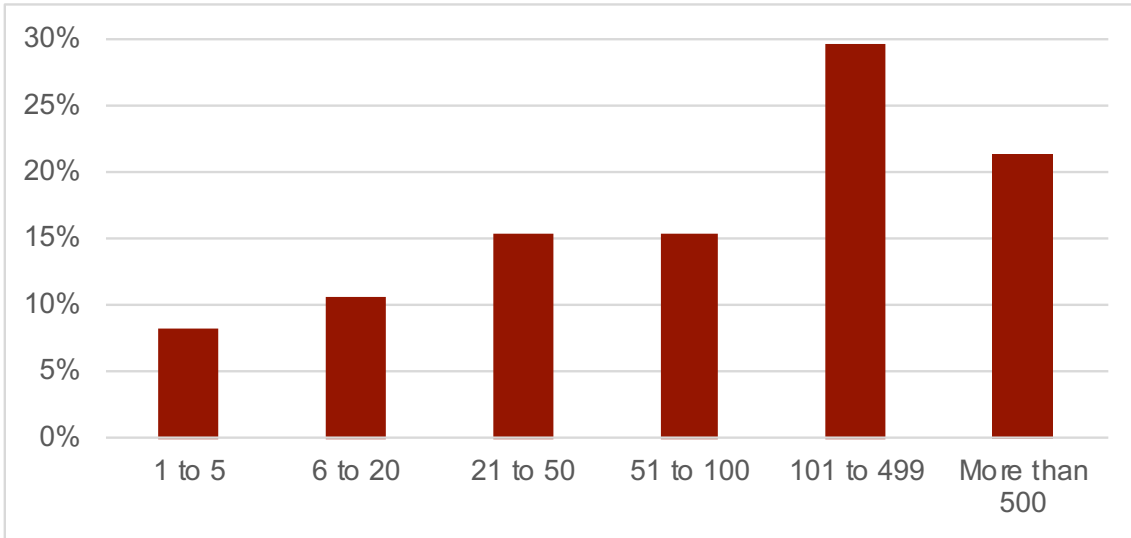
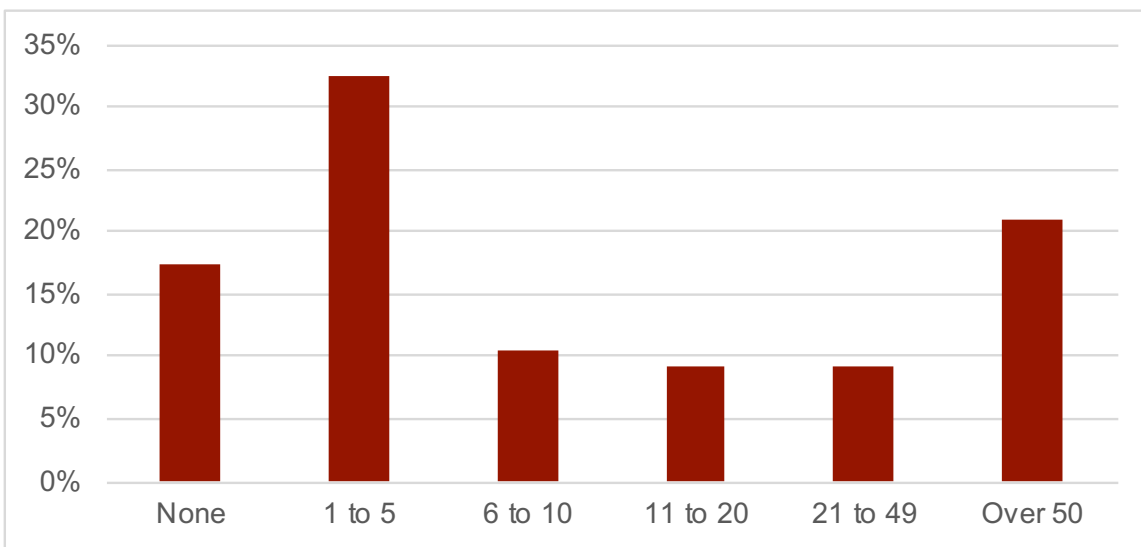**Figure 25. Role paid/unpaid, n=87**

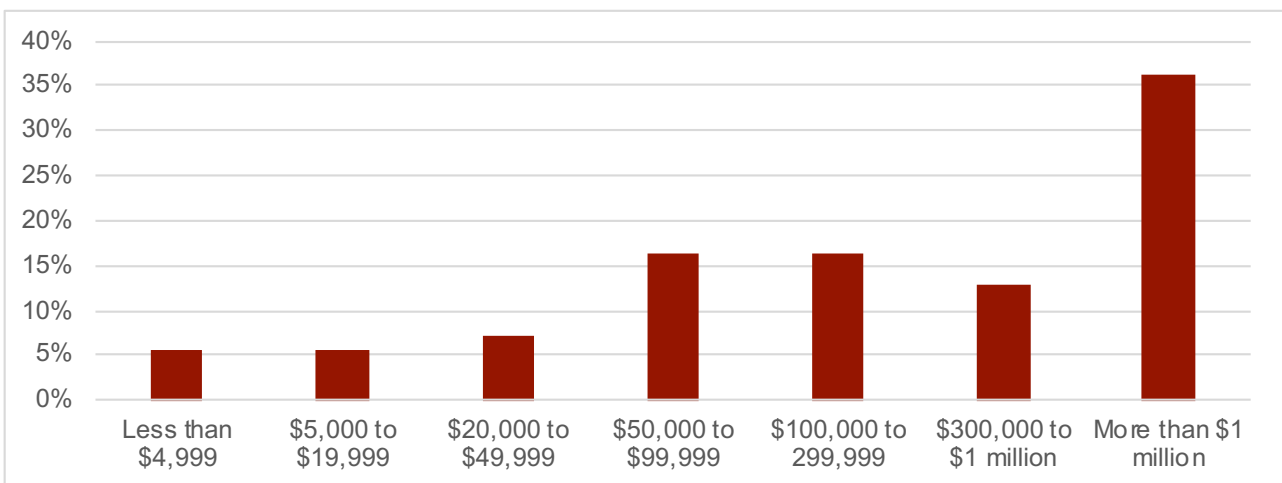**Figure 26. Length of time in organisation, n=88**

Figure 27. Number of volunteers organisation engages annually, n=85

Figure 28. Number of paid staff (FTE) in organisation, n=86
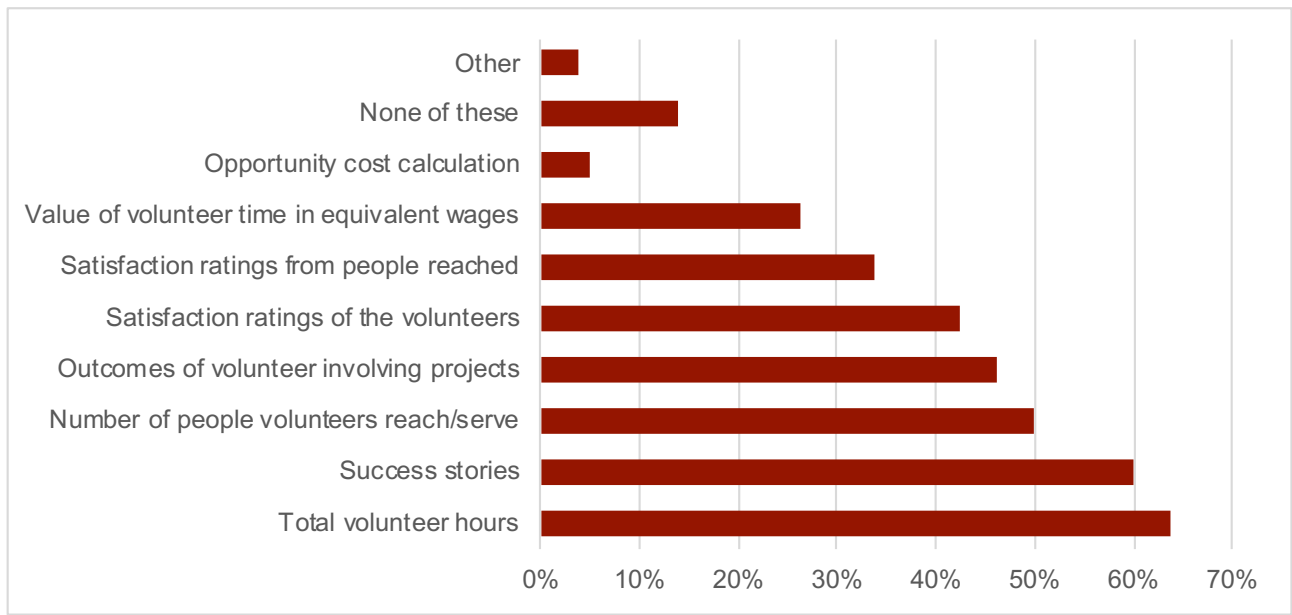

Figure 29. Annual income of organisation, n=55

An additional 29 respondents did not know the organisation's annual income.

Figure 30. Ways track and report volunteer impacts, n=80

Other: database for volunteers to log their time and jobs; social impact value; this it totally absent.