

Volunteer Managers and Leaders report

February 2023

Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand

Executive summary

Improving how we manage and support volunteers is more important than ever with growing demand for services from a sector that is asked to do more with less. To support volunteer managers and organisations the Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteer-Involving Organisations are being updated.

A survey was undertaken in late 2022 to obtain information to help update the guidelines and to focus them on useful evidence-based practices that support volunteer managers and leaders in their work. The Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) mailing list was used to solicit responses. 177 responses were received, providing a useful snapshot of volunteers and their needs.

The survey provides information on the experience of those involved in managing and supporting volunteers.¹ The greatest current challenges reported relate to the recruitment of volunteers, followed by funding and technology issues.

92% of respondents agreed that the evidence² based ten best practices identified in volunteer management provide a comprehensive list of practices required. The practices are clearly defined roles, job design, recruitment strategies, screening and matching, orientation and training, supervision and communication, recognition, satisfying motivations, reflection and peer support.

Research³ shows that volunteer managers need to have resources, time and support from management to manage their volunteers, yet the survey results showed 37% of respondents get no support (graph 2) and 37% received no training in managing volunteers over the last year (graph 3). This is concerning as respondents come from predominantly better resourced Volunteer-Involving Organisations. More support and development for those managing volunteers is clearly needed.

¹ Demographics of respondents are shown in the appendix.

² Evidence-based volunteer management: a review of the literature, Christopher Einolf, *Voluntary Sector Review Journal*, July 2018

³ Kappelides Pam & Johnson Tob; *A Heavy Load: Challenges and Current Practices for Volunteer Managers in the USA, Australia, and Canada*, Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2019.1668329>

The Volunteer Manager Experience

This section of the survey provides information to build an understanding of the challenges and experience of those in volunteer-involving organisations.

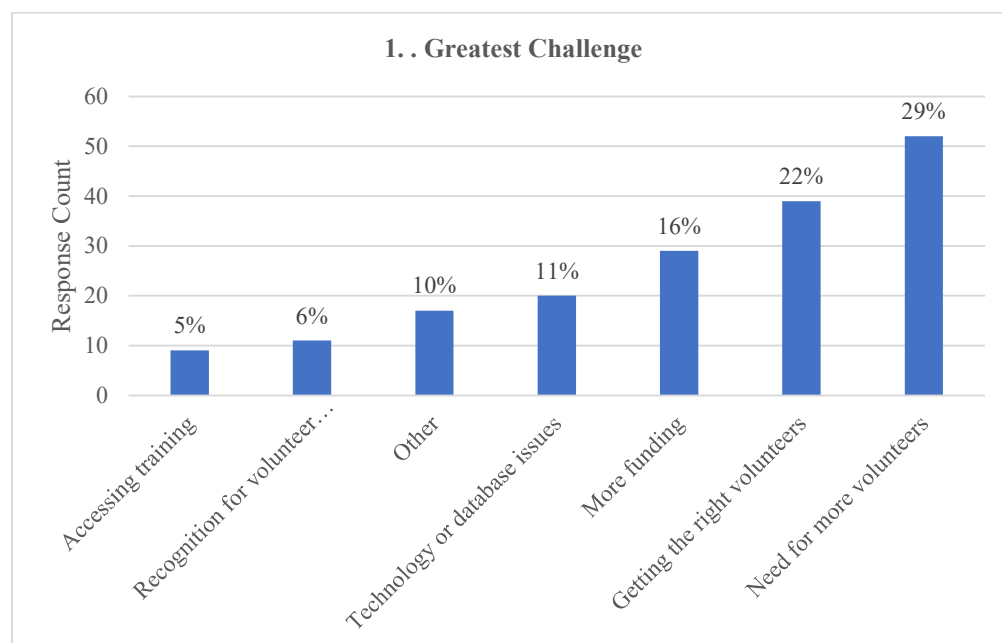
Respondents were asked about their confidence in applying the ten evidence-based best practices in volunteer management.

- Most were confident or very confident in the areas of attracting, selecting, inducting, training, supporting and appreciating volunteers.
- There was a moderate level of confidence in managing health and safety and governance.
- Confidence in managing performance concerns was low, and very low in exiting volunteers.

These results provide a clear picture of where volunteer management training and supporting resources are required.

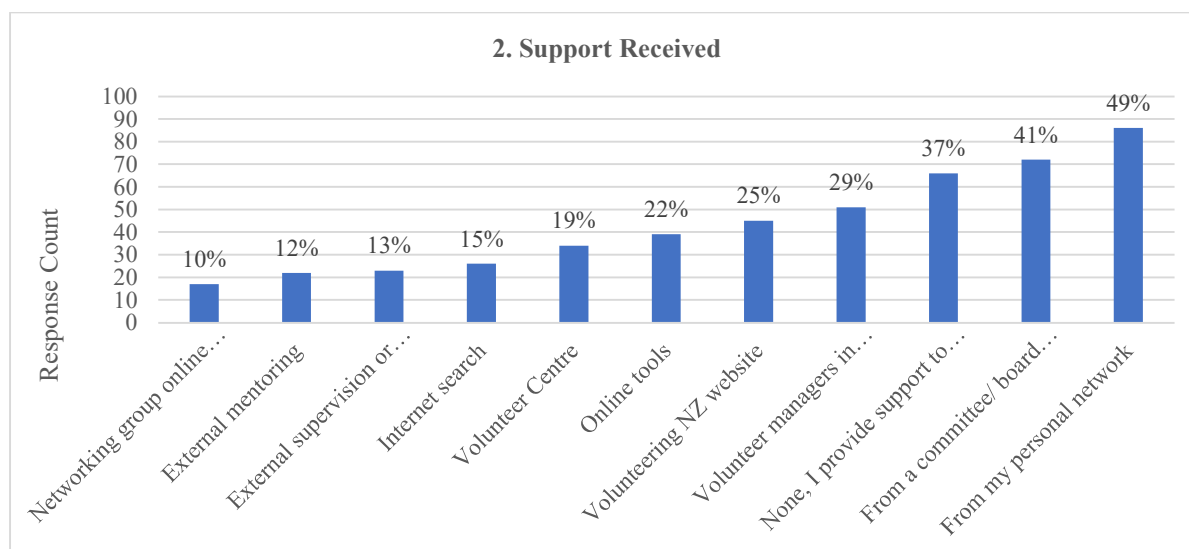
Area of greatest challenge right now

The need for more volunteers and getting the right volunteers stand out as the greatest challenges.



Support for managing volunteers

There is a high reliance on personal networks, board members and other volunteer managers. Concerning is that 37% get no support, especially as overall respondents come from organisations that are better resourced⁴ than most other not-for-profits.



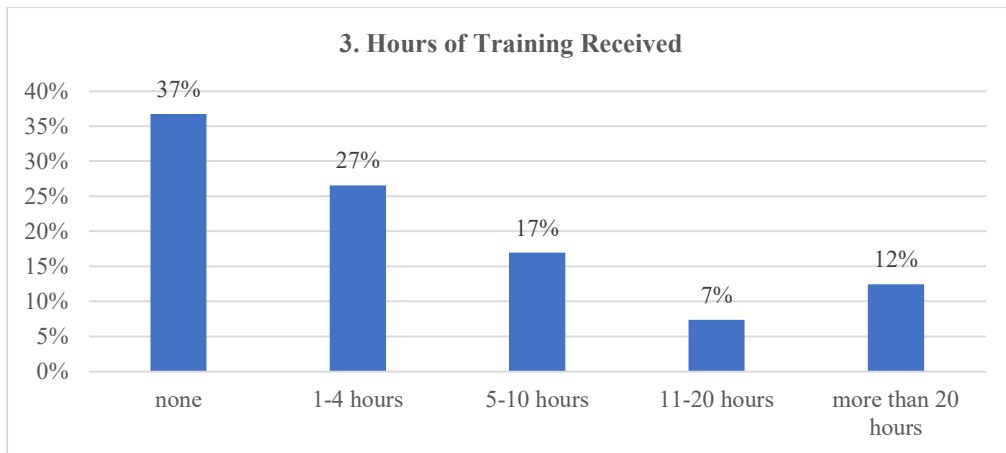
Note: figures add up to more than 100% as multiple answers were available

Training received for managing volunteers

Thirty-seven percent of respondents received no training for managing volunteers over the last year with a further 27 % receiving minimal training. This is surprising given that Volunteering New Zealand and other organisations offered many free webinars in 2022, making volunteer management training more accessible than ever. Given the demands of managing volunteers⁵ and leading not-for-profit organisations this is concerning.

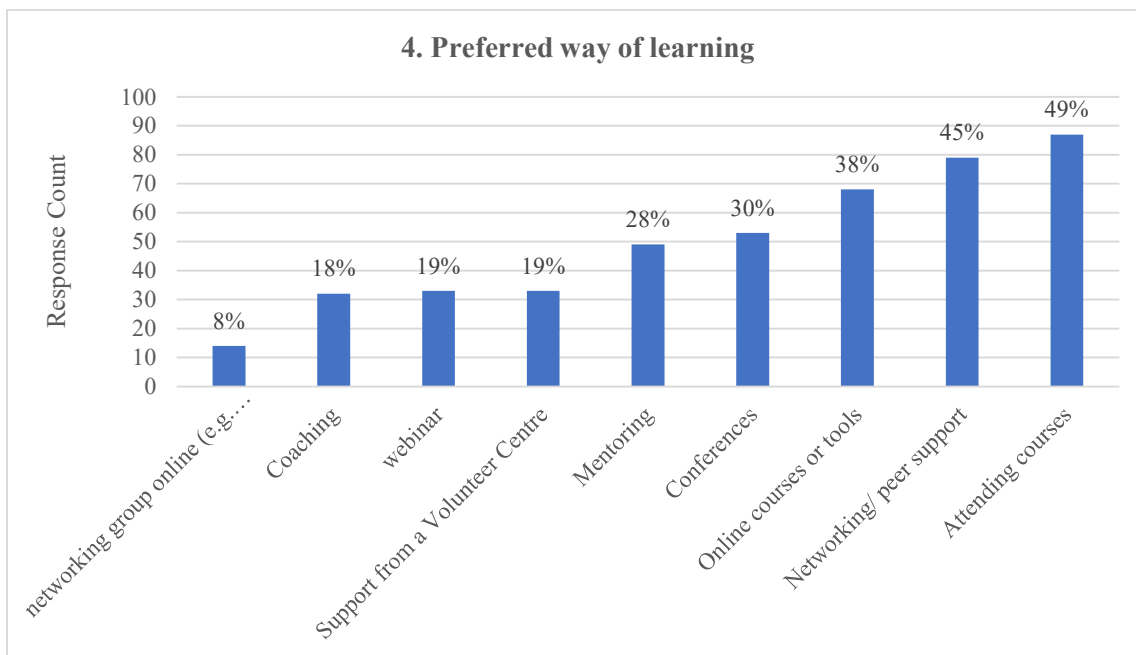
⁴ See sections on organisational budget and number of paid staff in the appendix.

⁵ Kappelides Pam & Johnson Toby, 2020



Preferred way of learning

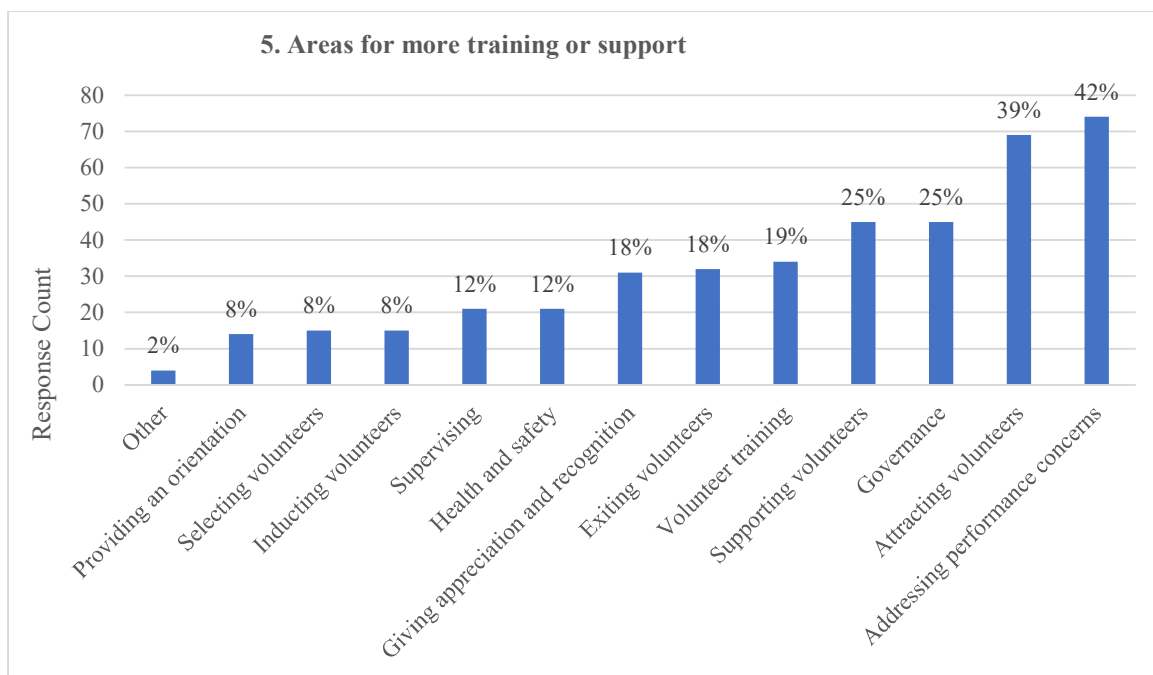
Development that involved interacting with others is preferred.



Note: figures add up to more than 100% as multiple answers were available

Areas for training or support

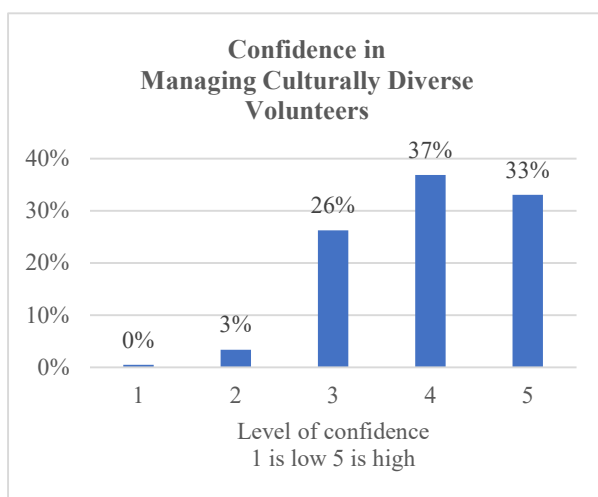
Addressing performance issues is the area most frequently reported. Confidence is low in this area as identified in a previous section. The desire for training and or support in attracting volunteers aligns with this being currently the area of greatest challenge.



Note: figures add up to more than 100% as multiple answers were available

Managing culturally diverse volunteers

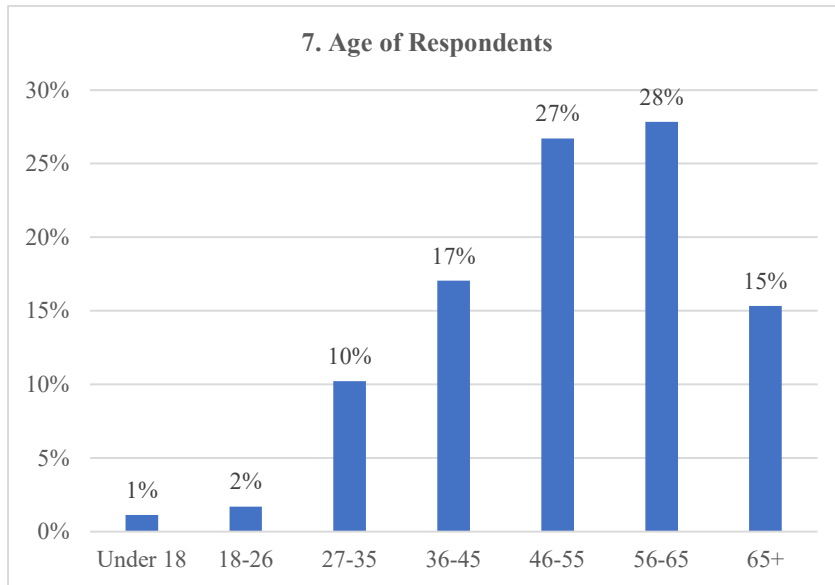
Most respondents reported that they were confident or very confident in managing culturally diverse volunteers. This is puzzling given the mismatch between the ethnicity of respondents and that of the New Zealand population. This may reflect a narrow understanding of what is required when working with people of different ethnicities and cultures.



Appendix: Survey demographics

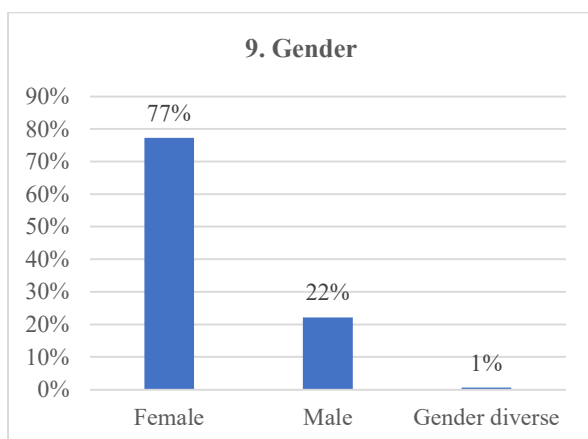
Age of respondents

Those who responded to the survey have a similar age distribution⁶ to the New Zealand adult population.



Gender

Females were overrepresented at 77% compared to just over 50% in the New Zealand population. This is consistent with other surveys on gender representation amongst volunteers. Males and gender diverse⁷ are underrepresented.

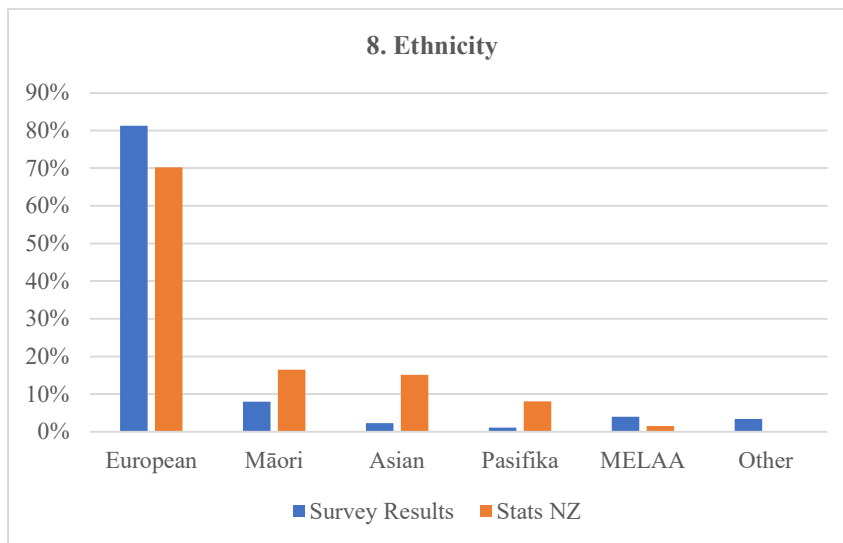


⁶ Source - <https://www.globaldata.com/data-insights/macroeconomic/new-zealand-population-distribution-in-by-age/>

⁷ Currently there are no accurate figures on those who are gender diverse. The estimate is 1- 2% upwards. The 2023 Census will be seeking this information.

Ethnicity

Those identifying as European⁸ and MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African) are overrepresented with Māori, Pasifika and Asian significantly under-represented. This is consistent with the 2020 VNZ State of the Volunteering survey where over 85 percent identified as Pākehā or European.



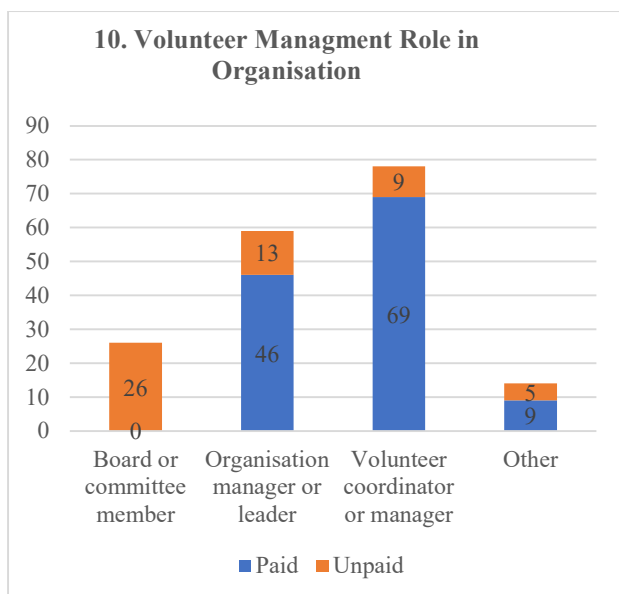
Volunteer Management Roles

Just under half of respondents (44%) were volunteer managers. Organisation leaders comprised 38% and 15% were Board members. The other 7% were a mix of roles such as administrator and advisor.

Seventy percent of respondents were paid. This is a high as 89% of New Zealand's not-for-profits do not employ any staff⁹. None of those in Board roles were paid.

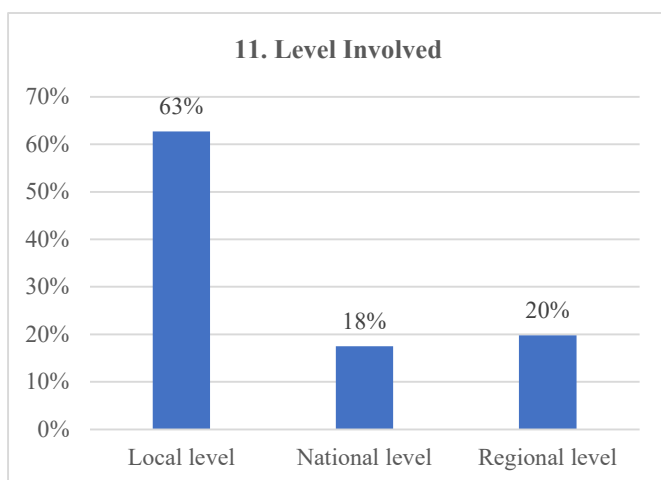
⁸ To align with Statistics NZ information, the European category combined those reporting as Pākehā, British, Australian and other European

⁹ Statistics New Zealand Non-profit institutions satellite account 2018



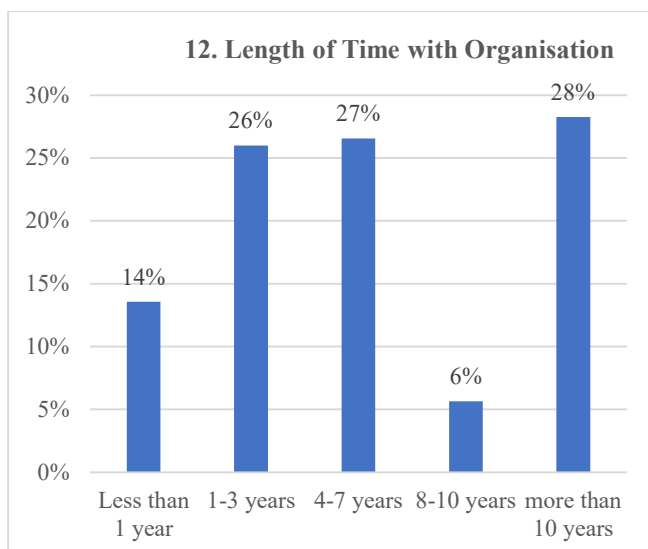
Level of involvement

Most respondents were involved at a local level.



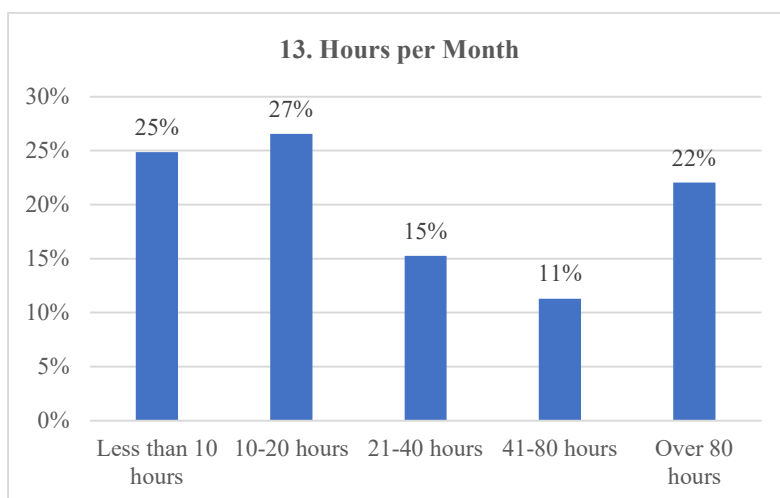
Length of involvement with the organisation

A third of respondents had a long-term commitment to their organisation with involvement of eight years or more. Conversely 40% of respondents had less than three years' experience. This highlights a need for more training in volunteer management.



Hours per month spent managing volunteers

These range for between 10 hours or less to over 80 hours. This indicates that the majority of those managing volunteers do so on a part time basis.



Annual budget of organisations

Those responding to the survey come from the better resourced organisations of New Zealand's 115,000 not-for-profits and charities. Of these around 20,000 have incomes below \$1000.¹⁰

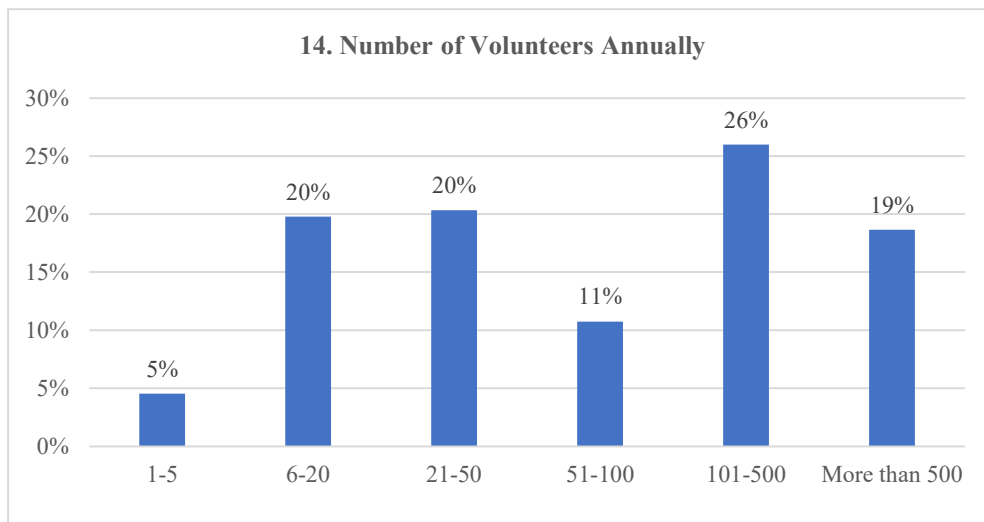
¹⁰ Not-for-Profits and Charities Landscape., IRD July 2020.

Thirteen percent reported an annual income of \$20,000 or less. Eighteen percent reported an income of one million dollars or more.

A third of respondents did not know the annual income of their organisation.

Number of volunteers in the organisation

Over half the organisations have 51 or more volunteers.



Paid staff

The number of paid staff indicate that respondents come from organisations that are well resourced in relation to other not-for-profits. In 2018 only 3.5 % of not-for-profits had six or more staff¹¹.

¹¹ Statistics New Zealand Non-profit institutions satellite account 2018

