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Older and wealthier people volunteer more

As the 25th National Volunteer Week draws to a close, a report by the Committee for Perth has found that older and wealthier people volunteer more than those in lower socio-economic areas. Women also volunteer more than men and the number of people volunteering across the Perth & Peel regions has increased, with the second highest growth rate in the country.

“The amount of time people give up to volunteer, whether it’s for a sporting club, the P&C, a community club or special interest group, is a good indication of a society’s compassion and caring. It’s also a win-win situation because volunteering not only helps those in need of support but it also plays a role in improving the self-worth and wellbeing of those actually doing the volunteering,” said Committee for Perth CEO, Marion Fulker.

“While Perth has the second lowest rate of volunteering in Australia this is because of our smaller population base as compared to the larger east coast cities. It’s heartening to note that voluntary work by people aged over 15, increased from 185,000 in 2006 to almost 220,000 in 2011, a jump of 18.5%.

“It’s probably not too surprising that older residents volunteer more because they have the spare time, especially if they have retired. Volunteering, also keeps them mentally and physically active and they’re making a positive contribution to their local communities.”

The FACTBase report found that when you break volunteering rates down across the metropolitan area, the highest rates, at more than over 25.1%, are residents living in Cambridge, Cottesloe, Claremont, Mosman Park, Nedlands, Peppermint Grove and Subiaco.

On the other hand, areas in the north and south-east and south-west metropolitan areas have lower rates of volunteering, at below 15%.

“These different rates of volunteering can come down to a number of factors including a person’s age, their level of education and socio-economic status. It could also be that there are a greater number of opportunities and more volunteer organisations in Perth’s central metropolitan areas,” added Mrs Fulker.

“More females than males in the Perth and Peel regions carry out voluntary work, however this is consistent with the Australian figures.”

The report also found that in recent years the number of young people aged between 15 and 19 years who worked as volunteers rose from 15.4% to 19.8%.

“For people who worry about young West Australians, this is good news because volunteer rates in this age group are above the national average. We know that if they’re carrying out voluntary work and helping others or playing sport, we see a drop in problem behaviours such as truancy and drug abuse,” Mrs Fulker said.

“While this report highlighted Perth’s volunteering rates and offered a snapshot of the level of compassion and caring in the community, the Committee believes that more research needs to be done so that local governments can better harness the economic and social benefits of people helping other people.”

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