



Tūao Aotearoa

Volunteering New Zealand

2023 Volunteer Study

**Review of the 2019 Recommendations
and Update**

FOR

NEW ZEALAND

SEARCH

... — — — ... **AND**

RESCUE

Rapu Whakarauora Aotearoa

Thanks go to the following people for their help with this project:

Research Director

Johann Go

Contributing Writers

Margaret McLachlan

Michelle Kitney

Heidi Quinn

Reviewer

Evan Hughes

Designer

Bunkhouse graphic design ltd

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Introduction and purpose of this report

Search and rescue (SAR) in Aotearoa New Zealand is a resource-intensive sector which involves over 11,500 operational people as well as many hundreds of vessels, aircraft, and vehicles. The SAR sector responds to around 3,000 incidents each year.

Search and rescue (SAR) in Aotearoa New Zealand is a resource-intensive sector which involves over 11,500 operational people as well as many hundreds of vessels, aircraft, and vehicles. The SAR sector responds to around 3,000 incidents each year.

Volunteers within four SAR Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) – Land Search and Rescue New Zealand Rapa Taiwhenua (Land Search and Rescue), Surf Life Saving New Zealand (Surf Life Saving), Coastguard NZ Tautiaki Moana (Coastguard) and Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Ngā Irirangi Ohotata Tūao (AREC) – make up 91% of the volunteer workforce.

The four SAR NGOs are supported by the NZSAR Secretariat, and the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council provides strategic leadership and direction to the sector.

The NZSAR Strategic Plans 2017-2020 and 2021-2024 identify volunteerism as a key risk. The risk identified relates to the long-term sustainability of the SAR volunteer model.

In 2018, the NZSAR Secretariat commissioned a report from Volunteering New Zealand – the *Volunteer Study for NZSAR 2019 (the 2019 Report)*. The 2019 Report findings and recommendations were drawn from the Volunteer Workforce Reports which were produced for the SAR NGOs at the same time. Significant investment and activities across the SAR NGOs have taken place since then with many of these being driven by the findings and recommendations of the 2019 Report.

Volunteers who responded to the NZSAR Secretariat-commissioned *2022 Volunteer Engagement Study (2022 VES)* identified their key drivers:

- The desire to serve and give back to their communities.
- Learning new skills and sharing existing skills and knowledge with others.
- The social aspects of working alongside like-minded people and the love of helping people.

The NZSAR Secretariat has engaged Volunteering New Zealand to produce an updated report that reviews progress against the recommendations of the *2019 Report*.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Review the original recommendations from the *2019 Report* and assess the NZSAR Secretariat's progress towards implementing these.
- Present analysis of new information about the SAR volunteer workforce collected by the NZSAR Secretariat.
- Integrate updated information from Statistics NZ; and Volunteering New Zealand's latest *State of Volunteering Reports* (flagship reports about the state of the community and voluntary sector).
- Examine how COVID-19 has impacted volunteering within the SAR sector.
- Propose new recommendations for the SAR sector in light of the latest insights.

SAR guiding principles for volunteer involvement

Volunteers are the centre of the SAR sector.

Our volunteers

- bring their place, environment, culture and experience with them
- are welcomed and valued
- are celebrated for their unique contribution
- are here by choice!



Our SAR agencies

- are responsive to the volunteers
- are responsive to communities
- make it easy to volunteer
- have open and honest communication
- value professional standards

Our communities

- are all unique
- thrive through collaboration
- shape our volunteers and community engagement

Our sector

- builds an environment that enables volunteerism
- is inclusive and collaborative
- supports wellbeing
- encourages transferability between agencies

Executive summary

In 2019 Volunteering New Zealand was commissioned to review and update the existing 2010 Volunteer Study. A series of recommendations were made in the 2019 Report and organised around four key areas:

- Strategy
- Funding
- Leadership, and
- Tools and Resources

The recommendations within the report were prioritised by the NZSAR Secretariat and incorporated into its efforts to support volunteerism and address the needs of the volunteer workforce across the SAR NGOs.

Key progress since 2019 includes:

- The NZSAR Secretariat has focused resources and energy on enabling the SAR NGOs to work through the recommendations relevant to them, and to help them grow as organisations.
- A significant funding increase for the sector. In July 2020, the Government committed \$88.955 million across three years.
- Investment in promoting volunteer sustainability across the sector.
- Significant growth across the SAR organisations, for example the introduction of professional, salaried volunteer managers.
- Significant progress in gathering more demographic information which has enabled better monitoring and progress.
- The *2022 Volunteer Engagement Survey (2022 VES)* has provided better data collection and data insights than were available in 2019.
- The data from this survey shows good results in terms of volunteer satisfaction and willingness to recommend their volunteer organisation to others. 72% of respondents in the 2022 VES stated that they are 'Very likely' to continue to volunteer for their organisation.

Section two of this report is an evaluation of progress of the *2019 Report's* recommendations. Significant progress has been achieved against each of the four key areas, and most recommendations have been actioned and completed. In the evaluation of each 2019 recommendation, we identify some further actions, which are reflected in the new recommendations.

Section three analyses the state of volunteerism within the SAR sector, including progress from previous SAR sector reports; the impact of COVID-19 on SAR volunteers and the sector more widely; progress made within the SAR NGOs on developing organisational volunteer strategies; the challenges experienced by SAR NGOs and volunteers with regards to training; the trend towards spontaneous and emergent volunteering; and an outline of the recent funding investment received by the SAR sector.

Further analysis of the results of the *2022 VES* provides correlations between sets of data and has helped inform new recommendations.

Section four considers volunteering sector trends. SAR operations take place within the national and global context of volunteering, and understanding these trends is vital for effective workforce planning.



Key insights in this section include:

- The amount of time that New Zealanders spend in formal volunteering is decreasing.
- More people are doing informal volunteering, both in Aotearoa New Zealand, and overseas.
- Shifts in how people want to volunteer (including informal and emergent volunteers), wider demographics, volunteer wellbeing, and volunteer and leadership succession planning are all likely to impact on volunteer workforces, recruitment and retention.

Section five includes new recommendations for 2023. These recommendations reinforce and build upon the strong work that the NZSAR Secretariat and SAR NGOs have been carrying out.

The 2023 recommendations centre around the following themes:

- Workforce Planning and Sector Resilience
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Wrap-around Volunteer Support
- Volunteer Leadership

Since 2019, the NZSAR Secretariat has enabled investment to enable the SAR NGOs to prioritise and resource activities to better support their volunteers and enable volunteerism across the SAR sector. Volunteer management is vital to a quality volunteer experience. At the same time, there is a need to look beyond the experiences of the *current* volunteer workforce to address barriers to participation and access for those not currently involved. These present exciting opportunities for the SAR sector, given a good track record of success and resilience.

Snapshot of the 2023 Recommendations

A. Workforce Planning and Sector Resilience

1. Strategic Planning

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue its central role of providing strategic, system-level support to the SAR NGOs and to advocate for the SAR sector to Government and other stakeholders. Specific steps include:

- Continuing to advocate for sustainable funding for the SAR sector.
- Supporting the SAR NGOs to share best practice in evaluation and create shared metrics to allow cross-agency comparison of progress in their volunteering strategies.

2. Data Collection

The SAR sector should commit to regular, high-quality volunteer workforce data collection and analysis, with the aim of understanding the needs and experiences of volunteers. Specific steps could include:

- Ensuring data collection is carried out consistently and accurately, and that the data collected is pooled and analysed effectively to support a data-driven approach to improving volunteer diversity.
- Continuing regular volunteer engagement surveys and sharing the results with the wider SAR sector.

3. Retention

The NZSAR Secretariat should encourage improving interoperability across the SAR NGOs. This will improve SAR volunteer retention rates should SAR volunteers decide to relocate within Aotearoa New Zealand.

4. Training Investment

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to support the SAR NGOs to deliver high-quality, relevant and accessible training for volunteers and to explore new modes of delivery.

B. Diversity and Inclusion

5. Recruitment

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to help the SAR NGOs to implement their own volunteer workforce strategies while focussing on the recruitment, retention and engagement of effective SAR volunteers who reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's society. It should resource the SAR NGOs to address barriers to access and participation for potential new and younger volunteers.

6. Youth

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to engage with young volunteers more effectively, especially those at university and in higher education. This could begin with outreach-focused research with young people (including non-SAR volunteers) to identify motivations and strategies to engage them in SAR volunteer work. This research could take the form of focus groups and targeted surveys. It should share recommendations from this research with the SAR NGOs to encourage youth participation.

7. Online Recruitment Sites

The NZSAR Secretariat should improve online recruitment for prospective SAR volunteers by:

- Adding a clear reference to volunteers and SAR volunteering on the landing page on the NZSAR website, such as a 'Volunteer' or 'Get Involved' tab.
- Ensuring prospective volunteers can easily find how to get involved in SAR volunteering with the SAR NGOs.

8. Public Relations

The NZSAR Secretariat should provide key messages to support SAR NGOs' communications campaigns that amplify and demonstrate the value of SAR volunteer organisations and its 10,000+ volunteers. This would help to strengthen volunteer recruitment and support for SAR volunteers.

C. Wrap-around Volunteer Support

9. Whānau Support

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to ensure whānau are adequately valued and recognised for their role in supporting volunteers. In particular, it could support individual SAR NGOs with:

- Improving support and network systems for whānau of SAR volunteers, such as creating an online group for whānau/families of SAR volunteers to access information about social events and support schemes.
- Organising regular engagement and recognition events for volunteers and their whānau/families. This will further integrate the whānau of volunteers into the SAR community.

10. Reimbursement and Costs to Volunteer

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to support the SAR NGOs to reimburse volunteers for volunteering-related expenses, such as transport costs and PPE.

11. Complaints Procedures

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to develop organisation-specific, confidential and effective complaints procedures. These procedures should be acceptable to volunteers who identify with minority ethnic groups, and other volunteers from disadvantaged groups, and be based on best-practice guidelines, including having avenues for appeal which are clearly advertised, and able to be investigated impartially.

D. Volunteer Leadership

12. Volunteer Manager Training

The NZSAR Secretariat should support training programmes for volunteer leaders and managers within the SAR NGOs, based on the latest research and best practice guidelines for managing volunteers.

13. Governance Training

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs with their governance training resources and identify opportunities for joint initiatives.

14. Cultural Capability and Competency

The NZSAR Secretariat should support work within the SAR NGOs to develop and promote cultural capability and competence and provide support through funding and/or shared tools and resources.

Methodology

Desk-based research focusing on the review of activities related to the *2019 Report's* recommendations was undertaken to inform this report. Interviews with key stakeholders across the SAR NGOs were conducted to review progress against the *2019 Report's* recommendations as well as to obtain a general gauge of the state of the sector.

Quantitative data from the *2022 VES* were interrogated in greater detail, to provide additional statistical insights about the SAR sector. Pearson Chi-Square Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were performed using the IBM SPSS software across a range of variables.

The recommendations presented in this report were built from this research and the evaluation of progress against the *2019 Report's* recommendations.

Background to 2019 Volunteer Study

The NZSAR Strategic Plan 2017-2020 identified 'risks around volunteer recruitment, retention and training'. These were subject to a range of mitigation activities, including the NZSAR Secretariat's commissioning of the *2019 Report* and its subsequent responses to the recommendations of the report. The NZSAR Strategic Plan 2021-2024 plan identifies that volunteerism is a key risk that is currently subject to mitigation activities. The risk identified relates to "the long-term sustainability of the SAR volunteer model."

A number of significant mitigating activities are currently in progress, which include:

- Continued implementation of recommendations rising from the 2019 Report.
- Significant increase in funding for the SAR NGOs.
- The continued growth in maturity within the SAR NGOs. Each NGO now has some form of Volunteer Workforce Strategy and each one has national volunteer managers in paid professional roles.
- The Ministry of Transport's Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai – Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review (the Review) and work towards enabling its *Workforce Capability and Sustainability Plan*.

The Review is looking at systems-level levers and the NZSAR Secretariat's stewardship role in the wider workforce and SAR sector. In particular, the Review is looking at:

- Volunteer-to-staff ratios, to ensure the right balance of paid workers and volunteers to support the system and its delivery of outcomes.
- Training for volunteers, ensuring that the competencies required of volunteers and other workforce personnel are made clear.

The 2019 report and recommendations

In 2018, Volunteering New Zealand was engaged by the NZSAR Secretariat to complete Volunteer Workforce Reports for the SAR NGOs: Land Search and Rescue¹, Surf Life Saving², Coastguard³, and AREC⁴.

The *2019 Report* synthesised the findings and recommendations of each of the four Volunteer Workforce reports. The *2019 Report* focused on trends and issues affecting SAR sector volunteers. The *2019 Report* also included 14 recommendations for the NZSAR Secretariat to implement relating to the focus areas of Strategy, Funding, Leadership and Tools and Resources. The recommendations have informed the NZSAR Secretariat's work to support these NGOs. Significant progress has been made against each of these focus areas.

The older 2010 Volunteer Study identified that the SAR sector in Aotearoa New Zealand relied heavily on volunteers for the delivery of SAR services and that volunteerism was a key risk. It also found that the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on men, two thirds of whom are aged over 40 years. The exception to this is Surf Life Saving, which has a significant amount of younger and women volunteers as lifeguards.

The *2019 Report* also highlighted issues around diversity within the SAR volunteer workforce, and the ongoing viability of volunteerism in the context of volunteering trends and pressures on community and voluntary organisations.

A key recommendation was to provide additional investment to support the SAR organisations. With Aotearoa New Zealand having one of the highest rates of volunteer SAR involvement in the world, the *2019 Report* highlighted the importance of recognising the level of investment needed to better support the SAR volunteer workforce.

This recommendation concerning investment was a cornerstone and enabler of all the other recommendations and has been clearly actioned, alongside most of the other specific recommendations.

1 Volunteer New Zealand, *Volunteer Report for Land Search and Rescue New Zealand* (VNZ: 2019).

2 Volunteer New Zealand, *Volunteer Report for Surf Life Saving New Zealand* (VNZ: 2019).
Available online: <https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/media/987950/vnz-report-design-slsnz-final-low-res.pdf>

3 Volunteer New Zealand, *Volunteer Report for Coastguard New Zealand* (VNZ: 2019)

4 Volunteer New Zealand, *Volunteer Report for Amateur Radio Emergency Communications* (VNZ: 2019)

Building on strong foundations

The *2010 Volunteer Study* identified a wellspring of effective, passionate, committed, and sustained volunteerism. It found that volunteers in Aotearoa New Zealand's SAR sector were primarily motivated by altruistic behaviour and the public good.

The *2019 Report* identified a range of sector strengths and many effective volunteer support practices including:

- A significant, committed, trained and professional volunteer workforce across Aotearoa New Zealand, contributing to the safety, resilience, and wellbeing of our communities.
- A SAR sector that is strategically supported at a national and local level.
- A network of local organisations embedded in their local communities and completing significant governance, and systems- and membership-related management.
- An ethos of voluntary service that is highly visible throughout, and where motivations to volunteer are primarily based on wanting to do the right thing.
- Paid staff who are professional, talented, and committed.
- Effective relationships exist throughout the sector. This includes practices such as involving representatives from other SAR organisations on committees (for example, Coastguard representatives on Land Search and Rescue Wanaka's management committee).
- National SAR organisations who are engaged and who consult with volunteers on policy changes and requirements affecting them.
- Strong partnerships between organisations across the sector with increasing numbers of joint initiatives

The *2019 Report* also identified specific and implementable solutions for the NZSAR Secretariat to strengthen the sector's volunteer workforce capability and sustainability.

Progress against recommendations in the 2019 report

Significant progress has been made across all of the key areas identified in the *2019 Report*, which demonstrates the commitment and skill of the NZSAR Secretariat, the SAR NGOs, and the wider SAR sector.

Recommendations in the 2019 Report were organised around four key areas:

- Strategy
- Funding
- Leadership
- Tools and Resources

The recommendations within the report were taken seriously and prioritised by the NZSAR Secretariat and incorporated into the existing focus on volunteerism and the needs of the volunteer workforce of the SAR NGOs. Significant progress has been achieved against each of the four areas, and most of the recommendations have been actioned and completed.

2019 Report Recommendations

It is recommended that NZSAR:

STRATEGY

- Fund, and include in NZSAR service level agreements, the requirement that SAR volunteer organisations develop a volunteer workforce strategy and plan.
- Include in the SAR service level agreements that organisations' workforce strategies address diversity.
- Work with the SAR volunteer organisations to develop and implement a sector-level set of Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement within the sector.

FUNDING

- Make explicit the need for investment to raise volunteer management practice in the sector and funding to better deliver support for volunteers, families and employers.
- Support applications from LandSAR, Coastguard NZ and SLSNZ for funding to develop blended and eLearning delivery of theory and assessment. This will increase training accessibility and reduce time to becoming operational and for recertification.
- Provide additional funding for active operational volunteers' equipment.
- Provide advice to the Government on a legislative framework that compensates employers for volunteers' absence.

LEADERSHIP

- Fund cross-SAR sector leadership development programmes to equip volunteer leaders to address the distinctive needs of volunteers.
- Explore options for providing SAR sector leadership programmes for volunteers between the ages of 18 and 30.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- Establish a standard set of workforce data to be collected across SAR organisations.
- Share research with SAR organisations on ideas, strategies and tools to enhance their capacity for effective engagement with young volunteers and other target groups.
- Commission resources that SAR organisations can use to develop cultural awareness and inclusive volunteer management practices.
- Commission the development of a sector wide online volunteer health and safety module to be customised by SAR organisations.
- Commission the development of core governance training resources to be customised and branded by each SAR organisation.

2019 Report Recommendations

A. Strategy

The three recommendations below were identified as actions that the NZSAR Secretariat could achieve through its sector leadership role. System-level levers were identified and evaluated for the impact they could have on the experiences of volunteers within the four SAR organisations. Two of the three recommendations have been actioned.

<p>RECOMMENDATION 1:</p> <p>Fund, and include in the NZSAR Secretariat Service Level Agreements (SLA), the requirement that SAR organisations develop a volunteer workforce strategy and plan.</p>	
<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic volunteer workforce planning was identified as an enabler of future SAR services. • Volunteer involvement requires planning, resourcing, and organisational prioritisation. • With increased competition for volunteers, organisations are recruiting from a smaller pool of volunteers.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>Through SLAs with each of the four SAR NGOs, the NZSAR Secretariat required each NGO to develop a volunteer workforce strategy and plan, and made funding available to produce these documents.</p> <p>Each of the SAR NGOs has started to develop a Volunteer Strategy, in consultation with members, stakeholders and staff. Some have had one in place for some years while others are still completing theirs.</p> <p>The four SAR NGOs organisations also have action plans to implement the strategies and they report that many of the actions are underway.</p> <p>An independent evaluation by the Ministry of Transport identified that “organisations within the system are highly capable and understand the needs of their workforce. They are working within resource and organisational limitations to provide improvements.”</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has been actioned. Successful implementation of volunteer strategies and plans may require continued or additional resourcing.</p> <p>Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the SAR NGOs to share best practice in evaluation and create shared metrics to allow cross-agency comparison of progress in their volunteering strategies. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 1.</i></p>

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Include in the SAR Service Level Agreements that organisations' workforce strategies address diversity.

Rationale for recommendation

- Strategic volunteer workforce planning was identified as an enabler of future SAR services and a promoter of sector resilience.
- With increased competition for volunteers, organisations are recruiting from a smaller pool of volunteers.
- Historically, the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on males, two-thirds of whom are aged over 40 and predominantly European.

What's happened

Although this recommendation has not been actioned as it was articulated, Volunteering New Zealand considers that the formulation of this recommendation was unduly restrictive.

One of the NZSAR Secretariat's risk mitigation strategies for the volunteerism risk (lack of volunteer diversity) is to work with and support the SAR NGOs to diversify their volunteer workforce and to support sector-wide cultural understanding and engagement.

The NZSAR Volunteer Data Standard has been agreed and implemented, which is a great method for assessing whether volunteer workforce strategies are effecting change in the diversity of volunteer participation. Information collected from the SAR NGOs includes age, gender, and ethnicity (where available).

Analysis of the results of the 2022 VES shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between ethnicity and willingness to recommend volunteering within the SAR NGOs.

It is also important to address barriers to access and participation for people who do not currently volunteer for the SAR NGOs.

Evaluation

Although this recommendation has not been actioned as it was articulated, Volunteering New Zealand considers that the formulation of this recommendation was unduly restrictive. We therefore do not take this recommendation forward as articulated.

Volunteering accessibility and inclusion are best addressed within each of the SAR NGOs, through action plans sitting under the NGOs' volunteer strategies.

Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:

- Continuing with regular Volunteer Engagement Surveys.
- Supporting resourcing gaps identified by the SAR NGOs to address barriers to access and participation for potential new and younger volunteers.

This is covered by 2023 recommendations 2 and 5.



RECOMMENDATION 3:

Work with the SAR volunteer organisations to develop and implement a sector-level set of Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement within the sector.

Rationale for recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteers and communities are at the heart of what voluntary organisations do, including the SAR NGOs.• Working collaboratively requires a framework and a roadmap for success.
What's happened	<p>A set of guiding principles for volunteer involvement across the SAR sector was developed. These principles were developed in 2019 in draft form with the SAR NGOs and other key stakeholders (including NZ Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, and the Department of Conservation). The draft principles were then shared back with the SAR NGOs, their volunteers, and other stakeholders for additional review and input before being finalised.</p> <p>These are a shared set of principles that can be adapted within each of the SAR NGOs to suit their unique communities and volunteers. These principles are centred around SAR volunteers and their communities: SAR Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement.⁵</p> <p>Evidence of the principles in action includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The establishment of volunteer strategies and professional salaried volunteer managers.• Prioritising of resourcing for, and investment in, the SAR NGOs.• The SAR NGOs' commitment to volunteerism and supporting volunteers.
Evaluation	This recommendation has been successfully actioned.

⁵ NZSAR, *SAR Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement* (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://nzsar.govt.nz/assets/Downloadable-Files/SAR-Guiding-Principles-for-Volunteer-Involvement.pdf>

B. Funding

The four recommendations below were identified as actions that the NZSAR Secretariat could achieve through its sector leadership role and its funding mechanisms. The recommendations were identified for the impact they could have on the experiences of volunteers within the SAR NGOs, and for the step-change they would create for these organisations in terms of ensuring that their volunteer workforce was future-proofed against the changing volunteer landscape. Three of the four recommendations have been actioned.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Make explicit the need for investment to raise volunteer management practice in the sector and funding to better deliver support for volunteers, families, and employers.

<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining and growing the potential pool of available volunteers requires structural support. • There is an opportunity to identify, promote and advocate for ways of recognising and encouraging employers to support their employees to be SAR volunteers. • Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is not only good practice, but it is also vital in a sector that provides critical life-saving services.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>The NZSAR Secretariat has provided significant support to enable more funding to flow to the SAR NGOs to support the activities which they have prioritised to support their volunteers.</p> <p>There is evidence of system and organisational-level changes around investment in volunteer management. Each of the SAR NGOs now has a paid professional volunteer management role.</p> <p>In terms of funding to better deliver support to volunteers, families and employers, there is evidence of significant progress within the SAR NGOs. Examples include new programmes to recognise and develop volunteers and recognise support provided by whānau and employers, a discount schemes for volunteers, and a pilot programme to recognise the employers of SAR volunteers.</p> <p>The Ministry of Transport's <i>Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai – Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review</i> aims to assess the wider health and performance of Aotearoa New Zealand's recreational safety and search and rescue systems, ensuring that they are fit-for-purpose and able to meet current and future needs and responsibilities.</p> <p>This review should provide a roadmap for targeted further investment into the SAR NGOs to raise volunteer management practice in the sector and also increase funding to better deliver support for volunteers, families, and employers.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has been actioned. There has been significant additional funding for the SAR NGOs directed at the volunteer experience and volunteer management.</p> <p>Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is scope for continued focus in this area with innovative support schemes and recognition events. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 9.</i></p>

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Support applications from Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard and Surf Life Saving for funding to develop blended and eLearning delivery of theory and assessment. This will increase training accessibility and thereby reduce the time it takes for volunteers to (re)certify and to become operationally ready.

Rationale for recommendation

- Difficulties accessing training were identified as barriers to participation and satisfaction.
- More accessible training will reduce the time required for volunteers to become operationally ready, or recertified.
- Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is not only good practice, but also vital in a sector that provides critical life-saving services.

What's happened

This was a targeted and specific recommendation.

Additional funding was sourced over three years:

- \$420,000 for Coastguard
- \$300,000 for Surf Life Saving
- \$128,000 for AREC
- This information was not available for Land Search and Rescue.

Training and development are evident across the SAR NGOs, with some notable examples:

- Coastguard: Qualifications re-design – developing, implementing, and embedding a new online competency-based and learning training framework. Information management and business management improvement – implementation of a Learning Management System; integrating Coastguard's Incident Management System with the SARdonyx database; and enhancing organisational technology.
- Surf Life Saving: Volunteer training including developing, commissioning, and delivering an online volunteer learning programme.
- AREC: Volunteer training material update – developing, commissioning, and delivering e-based/online videos for AREC volunteer and other land-based volunteer learning programmes, volunteer induction training, training for leaders managing volunteers, including delivery of same plus development and issue of AREC awards and recognition programme.

A SAR Training Framework has been developed to provide strategic guidance for SAR training and promote alignment of learning to meet the needs of SAR agencies. Two of the recommendations from this framework will be implemented in 2023. These are:

- Key performance indicators to validate the effectiveness of SAR training; and
- Mapping SAR multiagency training against the SAR NGOs' learning pathways.

Evaluation

The recommendation has been actioned.

Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:

- Support the SAR NGOs to deliver high quality, relevant and accessible training for volunteers and to explore new modes of delivery.

This is 2023 recommendation 4.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Provide additional funding for active operational volunteers' equipment.

Rationale for recommendation

- Reducing costs to volunteering increases the appeal and accessibility of volunteering.
- The costs of volunteering can be a barrier to participation in volunteering.
- Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is not only good practice but also vital in a sector that provides critical life-saving services.

What's happened

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other volunteer equipment has received priority in FED funding over the past three years:

- \$48,000 for AREC
- \$450,000 for Land Search and Rescue
- \$900,000 for Coastguard
- This information was not available for Surf Life Saving.

The SAR NGOs also access other sources of income to provide PPE and volunteer equipment.

The *2010* and *2019 Reports* and the *2022 NZSAR Environmental Scan* and *2022 VES* identified concerns from volunteers about costs associated with volunteering.

The SAR NGOs say that volunteers are still expected to use a lot of their own gear, which is not a sustainable practice.

The results of the *2022 VES* survey show that most volunteers believe that branded safety gear (including PPE), high-vis clothing, and other specialist equipment should be provided at no cost.

In addition, many volunteers think that they should be compensated if their equipment is damaged during an operation.

Cost incurred through volunteering are becoming an issue for some volunteers (for example, fuel costs for training or callouts).

These are issues that should be examined through a volunteer inclusion and accessibility lens.

Evaluation

This recommendation has been achieved. However, there needs to be continued focus on this area to remove barriers to volunteer participation, including financial barriers or other obstacles that may prevent people from volunteering.

Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:

- Continue to support the SAR NGOs to reimburse volunteers for volunteering-related expenses, such as transport costs and PPE.

This is 2023 recommendation 10.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Provide advice to the Government on a legislative framework that compensates employers for volunteers' absence.

Rationale for recommendation

- Growing the potential pool of available volunteers requires structural support.
- There is an opportunity to identify, promote and advocate for ways of recognising and encouraging employers to support their employees to be SAR volunteers.

What's happened

Employer recognition schemes are being piloted by Fire and Emergency New Zealand and Land Search and Rescue.

The aim of these schemes is to increase the sense among employers that their contribution is recognised, improve negative perceptions that employers may have about hiring SAR volunteers, and increase these employers' ability to release volunteers for SAR operations, as well as helping the public to support businesses that employ SAR volunteers.

In June 2022, the Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua (DIA) released a report called *Strengthening our Approach to Volunteering*⁶ which included eight opportunities for the Government to strengthen support for volunteering infrastructure by taking a strategic approach across government agencies.

While there is no specific mention of legislation to compensate employers for volunteers' absence in the report, there is scope for the NZSAR Secretariat to address this issue.

A key mechanism for achieving this outcome is the DIA's Cross-agency Steering Group on Volunteering. The NZSAR Secretariat is represented on this group which provides a good forum for discussing and identifying strategic changes that could impact on the wider volunteering system (including the SAR NGOs).

Evaluation

This recommendation was formulated based on stakeholder input into the *2019 Report*. VNZ believes that this recommendation should now be looked at more globally and may have been unduly prescriptive.

Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:

- Continue to represent the SAR sector relating to employer recognition, especially when cross-agency work is involved.

6 <https://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/strengthening-our-approach-to-volunteering/>

C. Leadership

The two recommendations below were identified as actions that the NZSAR Secretariat could achieve through its sector leadership role. The recommendations were identified for the impact they could have on the experiences of volunteers within the SAR NGOs, and to diversify the volunteer base. Leadership development is a long-term investment. One of the two recommendations has been partially achieved and they have both been carried forward to the 2023 recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Fund cross-SAR sector leadership development programmes to equip volunteer leaders to address the distinctive needs of volunteers.

<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is not only good practice, but also vital in a sector that provides critical life-saving services. Volunteer leaders and managers are critical to the success of volunteer programmes.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>No cross-SAR sector leadership development programmes for volunteer leaders have been developed.</p> <p>However, the SAR NGOs are providing leadership development programmes for their volunteer leaders. Additionally, they each have a staff member responsible for volunteer management, and volunteer workforce strategies and plans to address the needs of their volunteers.</p> <p>Volunteer leadership development is important to volunteer wellbeing. The SAR NGOs would like further investment in training for their volunteer leaders and managers.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support training programmes for volunteer leaders and managers within the SAR NGOs, based on the latest research and best practice guidelines for managing volunteers. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 12.</i></p>



RECOMMENDATION 9:

Explore options for providing SAR sector leadership programmes for volunteers aged 18-30.

<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historically, the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on males, two-thirds of whom are aged over 40 and are predominantly European.• Removing barriers to volunteer participation is important.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>The SAR Leadership course is now a two-day course to make it more accessible to volunteers.</p> <p>Surf Life Saving has a substantial youth development programme in place that is central to recruitment and is a driver of workforce development pathways.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has not been achieved.</p> <p>Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the SAR NGOs to engage with young volunteers more effectively. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 6.</i></p>

D. Tools and Resources

The five recommendations below were identified as actions that the NZSAR Secretariat could achieve through its sector leadership role. The recommendations were identified for the impact they could have on the experiences of volunteers within the SAR NGOs, and to support a diverse and well-trained volunteer workforce. Four of the five recommendations have been actioned, with the fifth partially achieved.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Establish a standard set of workforce data to be collected across the SAR NGOs.

<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic workforce planning was identified as a key requirement for ensuring effective and consistent future SAR services. • Historically, the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on males, two-thirds of whom are aged over 40 and are predominantly European. • Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is not only good practice, but also vital in a sector that provides critical life-saving services.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>In 2022, the NZSAR Secretariat began collecting a standard set of volunteer workforce data from the SAR NGOs, annually. This data includes age, gender, and ethnicity (where available) and is collected in accordance with the NZSAR Volunteer Data Standard, developed in 2018.</p> <p>This data, along with the information collected in the <i>2022 Volunteer Engagement Survey (2022 VES)</i>, underpinned the demographic information about the SAR volunteer workforce included in the <i>New Zealand Search and Rescue Council's Annual Report 2021/22</i>.⁷</p> <p>The <i>2022 VES</i> took place in March and April 2022 and included demographic questions, core questions common to all the respondents from the SAR NGOs, and organisation-specific questions relevant to each of individual NGO. There were 3258 respondents across the SAR NGOs (as well as the volunteers from the National Emergency Management Agency's New Zealand Response Teams).</p> <p>The volunteer workforce data collected in 2022, and the responses to the <i>2022 VES</i>, provide a good baseline for future data collection and analysis. In particular, the <i>2022 VES</i>'s organisation-specific results have allowed the SAR NGOs to identify and resolve issues identified within their individual volunteer workforces.</p> <p>There was some commonality between the questions in the <i>2022 VES</i> and Volunteering New Zealand's survey of the SAR NGOs which took place to inform the <i>2019 Report</i>. The NZSAR Secretariat plans to run another volunteer engagement survey in 2024.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has been actioned.</p> <p>Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring data collection is carried out consistently and accurately, and that the data collected is pooled and analysed effectively to support a data-driven approach to improving volunteer diversity. • Continuing regular volunteer engagement surveys and sharing the results with the wider SAR sector. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 2.</i></p>

⁷ New Zealand Search and Rescue Council, *Annual Report 2021-22*. (NZSAR: 2021). Retrieved from <https://nzsar.govt.nz/assets/Downloadable-Files/NZSAR-2022-annual-report-for-website.pdf>



RECOMMENDATION 11:

Share research with the SAR NGOs on ideas, strategies, and tools to enhance their capacity for effective engagement with young volunteers and other target groups.

<p>Rationale for recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no volunteering without leadership. Volunteer management and good practice is vital, and this requires investment.• Historically, the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on males, two-thirds of whom are aged over 40 and predominantly European.• Promoting diversity and inclusion requires investment and resourcing.
<p>What's happened</p>	<p>Each of the four SAR NGOs maintains membership with Volunteering New Zealand. Volunteer managers regularly access support on research and resources through their membership which allows them to learn from peers, and to share their knowledge with the volunteering sector as a whole. The NGOs' membership with Volunteering New Zealand is supported by the NZSAR Secretariat.</p> <p>The NZSAR Secretariat organises and chairs monthly meetings with the SAR NGOs' volunteer managers. These meetings provide a forum for sharing issues, ideas, and relevant research about attracting and retaining volunteers.</p> <p>In addition, the NZSAR Secretariat attends regular cross-agency meetings where it represents the SAR sector (and the interests of the SAR NGOs). Relevant information from these meetings is fed back to these NGOs' volunteer managers on regular basis.</p> <p>The NZASR Secretariat also coordinates annual volunteer managers' workshops which allow the volunteer managers to share experiences around volunteer management best practice.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>This recommendation has been actioned.</p> <p>Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help the SAR NGOs to implement their own volunteer strategies and plans focusing on the recruitment, retention, and engagement of SAR volunteers who reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse population.• Resource the SAR NGOs to address barriers to access and participation for potential new and younger volunteers. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 5.</i></p>



RECOMMENDATION 12:

Commission resources that the SAR NGOs can use to develop cultural awareness and inclusive volunteer management practices.

Rationale for recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Historically, the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector is heavily reliant on males, two-thirds of whom are aged over 40 and predominantly European.Investment in infrastructure and support for volunteer-involving organisations is vital.
What's happened	<p>This work needs to be led by the SAR NGOs themselves, as they are generally better placed to carry out this work in a way that is relevant to their volunteer workforces and operating environments.</p> <p>No centralised resources have been developed by the NZSAR Secretariat. However, a range of activities have taken place within the SAR NGOs.</p> <p>Providing training on cultural competence can help volunteers and staff better understand and support the needs of diverse volunteers. This can include providing training on issues such as unconscious bias, cultural capability, and working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.</p>
Evaluation	<p>This recommendation has been actioned.</p> <p>Next step for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Support work within the SAR NGOs to develop and promote cultural capability and competence and provide support through funding and/or shared tools and resources. <p><i>This is 2023 recommendation 14.</i></p>



RECOMMENDATION 13:

Commission the development of a sector-wide online volunteer health and safety module, to be customised by the SAR NGOs

Rationale for recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties in accessing training were identified as a barrier to volunteer participation and also negatively affect volunteers' satisfaction levels• More accessible training will reduce the time required for volunteers to become operationally ready, or recertified.
What's happened	<p>No bespoke resources have been developed by the NZSAR Secretariat.</p> <p>The responses from the 2022 VES indicate that Health and Safety (H&S) is not a key issue for SAR volunteers. Instead, there is evidence from this survey that SAR volunteers know what to do to keep themselves and others safe.</p> <p>The SAR NGOs report that they are interested in sector-wide training which is tailored to their organisations.</p> <p>The NGOs also report a range of H&S resources being developed within their organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H&S policies and processes, H&S training materials, incident reporting and management documents, fatigue management guides and trauma management guides.• H&S warning signage and PPE for volunteers.• Land Search and Rescue: psychological wellbeing support and education for volunteers who have been involved in traumatic incidents.• Surf Life Saving: a volunteer H&S application developed specifically to avoid underreporting of H&S incidents and to accurately record ongoing operational costs.
Evaluation	<p>Although this recommendation has not been actioned as it was articulated, Volunteering New Zealand considers that the formulation of this recommendation was unduly restrictive.</p> <p>Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the SAR NGOs to develop additional workforce health and safety training specific to their organisations as required.• Investigate opportunities to support any joint initiatives to create shared platforms or training developed by the SAR NGOs. <p>These initiatives could increase training accessibility and reduce the time required for volunteers to become operationally ready, or recertified.</p>

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Commission the development of core governance training resources, to be customised and branded by each SAR organisation.

Rationale for recommendation

- The federated structure of the SAR NGOs (where each unit, group or club is a separate entity required to meet its own governance and reporting requirements) multiplies the resources required for each NGO and creates challenges in ensuring consistent practice.
- Governance, reporting, and other administrative tasks can be time-consuming and of little interest to volunteers.

What's happened

There is now an excellent range of inhouse governance resources within the SAR NGOs. Other examples of further progress in this area are:

- Since the 2019 Report, Coastguard has restructured itself to reduce its governance requirements.
- In 2022 and 2023, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving and Land Search and Rescue worked together to develop governance documents to support individual units, clubs, or groups to meet the requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and create common resources for all.
- In 2021, governance training was delivered to 60 people in leadership roles within AREC.

Additional investment in developing additional tools (e.g., online tools) would be helpful for the NGOs. However, since the *2019 Report*, there is now a huge range of good, high-quality and free governance training resources available which could be collated and shared.

Evaluation

This recommendation has been actioned.

Next steps for the NZSAR Secretariat:

- Support the SAR NGOs to develop governance training resources and identify opportunities for joint initiatives.

This is 2023 recommendation 13.

Overview

Search and rescue (SAR) in Aotearoa New Zealand is a resource-intensive sector which involves over 11,500 operational people as well as many hundreds of vessels, aircraft, and vehicles. The SAR sector responds to around 3,000 incidents each year.

Search and rescue services depend on the availability of suitably skilled and experienced people, and aircraft, boats, and other specialist equipment and technologies.

Non-paid volunteer professionals make up around 90 percent of the SAR sector – with one of the highest rates of volunteer involvement in the world. Of 13 countries surveyed for benchmarking purposes in the *Volunteer Study 2010*, Aotearoa New Zealand had the highest level of volunteer involvement in SAR.

The *New Zealand Search and Rescue Strategic Plan 2021-2024*⁸ identifies that a key risk for the sector relates to volunteerism and the long-term sustainability of the SAR volunteer model. Significant work has gone into mitigating this risk, including actioning the recommendations of the 2019 Report.

This section focuses on the state of volunteerism in the SAR sector, specifically addressing the following:

- Previous SAR sector reports and their key findings.
- The impact of COVID-19 on SAR volunteers and the SAR sector more widely.
- Progress made within the SAR NGOs on developing organisational volunteer strategies.
- Challenges experienced by SAR NGOs and volunteers with regards to training.
- The trend towards spontaneous and emergent volunteering.
- A summary of the recent funding investment received by the SAR sector.
- A summary of the Ministry of Transport's landmark *Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai – Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review*.
- A summary of the 2022 VES findings alongside more detailed statistical analysis of the findings.

Previous reports and findings

The New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Council provides strategic governance and leadership to the sector and advice to ministers. This Council is supported by the NZSAR Secretariat.

The *Volunteer Study 2010* identified that the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector was heavily reliant on men, two-thirds of whom were aged over 40 years. The exception to this is Surf Life Saving, which has a significant number of younger volunteers and women volunteers as lifeguards. However, Surf Life Saving's volunteer demographic makeup does not flow through to the wider SAR workforce.

Key findings of this study noted that:

- Volunteers provided 549,785 hours of their time during the 2009/2010 financial year. Only 5% of this time was spent in direct support of Category 1 and 2 SAR operations.⁹
- Volunteers in the Aotearoa New Zealand SAR sector were primarily motivated by considerations of the public good and altruistic behaviour.
- There were concerns about the use of the volunteers' time in training and non-SAR activities.



The *2019 Report* highlighted that, in addition to understanding the broader trends in volunteering, the demographics of volunteers were an important consideration. The 2019 Report focused on identifying strategic opportunities for improvement on this front.

An ongoing issue identified in the *Volunteer Study 2010* and the *2019 Report*, in NZSAR environmental scans, and anecdotally across the sector, is the potential decline in the number of future SAR volunteers which will impact on response capacity and capability. Therefore, the SAR sector operational model of long-term, committed, and skilled volunteers could be at risk.

The *2022 NZSAR Environmental Scan* noted that:

“The search and rescue workforce is under increasing strain. Three key trends that affect the search and rescue workforce are the decrease in volunteering, the ageing of search and rescue personnel, and changes in where people choose to live.”¹⁰

COVID-19 and the SAR Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected both the demand and supply of search and rescue services. Significant changes in people’s activities and behaviours, and the availability of resources were observed during the pandemic. The search and rescue sector will need to monitor the resulting supply and demand pressures as the longer-term effects of the pandemic unfold.

The pandemic may have impacted the recruitment and training of search and rescue personnel which could affect search and rescue capacity in the short-term.¹¹

Volunteer managers from the SAR NGOs report that they managed the impact of COVID-19 well, with minimal impact compared to other sectors and agencies. Volunteer numbers overall were not significantly affected initially, although they declined with prolonged lockdowns. Managing the COVID-19 traffic light system and vaccine mandates was resource-intensive.

8 <https://nzsar.govt.nz/assets/Downloadable-Files/NZSAR-Strategic-Plan-2021-2024.pdf>

9. Category 1 operations refer to SAR operations that are locally coordinated (such as a local land search). The New Zealand Police coordinates these categories of SAR operations. Category 2 operations are SAR operations that are nationally coordinated (such as missing aircraft or offshore maritime searches). The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand coordinates all Category 2 operations.

10 *New Zealand Search and Rescue Environmental Scan* (NZSAR: 2022), p. 17

11 *New Zealand Search and Rescue Environmental Scan* (NZSAR: 2022), p. 4

Organisational volunteer strategies

A key recommendation of the *2019 Report* was that each of the four SAR NGOs develop a volunteer strategy and plan, in consultation with members, stakeholders and staff. This recommendation has been actioned, with varying degrees of implementation across each organisation:

Surf Life Saving: Surf Life Saving is in the process of developing a volunteer strategy. The development of this strategy is led by a volunteer strategy working group. Surf Life Saving has engaged in extensive consultation and input, including surveying its members. Its work is guided by a Volunteer Strategy Framework. Surf Life Saving aims to finalise this strategy by June 2023.

AREC: In 2020, AREC began working on a volunteer strategy. This involved consultation and workshops with key AREC personnel, and external support. AREC has since adopted its draft 'Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan 2021-23' and reports that:

"Good progress has been achieved with the agreement of the AREC Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2023 and new funding to allow us to employ additional staff to better support our members from 1 July 2023."

Land Search and Rescue: Land Search and Rescue has a Volunteer Strategy that has been in place for two years. This strategy is scheduled to be reviewed in 2023.

Coastguard: Coastguard reports that they are using the 2019 Report to develop their volunteering strategy. This strategy is being implemented in stages over the next five years. A key challenge is the organisational capacity to engage in and embed change along with funding to enable development and delivery of initiatives.

Training volunteers

The 2019 Report identified several issues relating to training for volunteers:

- The time for a new volunteer to train and become operational was a significant issue.
- Training is the largest demand on SAR volunteers' time.
- Non-SAR workloads and training demands were cumbersome and could impact on the motivation and retention of volunteers.

Training for volunteers is an ongoing theme identified in the results of the *2022 VES*. Volunteers would like to see more clarity and communication around how to access training and are concerned about recognition of prior experience and qualifications.

The Ministry of Transport's *Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai – Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review* (the Review) identifies a systemic issue with funding for training, and also that funding streams are not equitable.

The *2022 NZSAR Environmental Scan* also identified training as a key issue for volunteers:

"Improved strategies are required to attract, retain, and train SAR personnel so that they are better prepared for the adoption of new technologies and the evolving SAR operational environment."¹²

A consistent, systematic approach to delivering training is needed in order to grow and maintain appropriate levels of SAR services which are expected by the Aotearoa New Zealand public.

¹² *New Zealand Search and Rescue Environmental Scan 2022 (NZSAR: 2022)*, p. 3

Spontaneous and emergent volunteering

Spontaneous or emergent responders can represent both a response asset and a management problem, but should not be overlooked as a recruitment method.

Although spontaneous and emergent volunteering does not feature strongly within the SAR sector, when it does happen, a volunteer will typically become involved where immediate action is required or where a missing person is young or otherwise vulnerable.

The NZSAR Secretariat has conducted a comprehensive and collaborative review of spontaneous and emergent volunteers within the SAR sector.¹³ The review included several recommendations:

1. The NZSAR Secretariat should develop a consistent and easily understood process for managing the convergence, registration, and demobilisation of spontaneous volunteers.
2. The NZSAR Secretariat should review its existing tasking and safety documents to confirm they are adequate for deploying spontaneous volunteers.
3. The NZSAR Secretariat should consider whether the management of spontaneous volunteers can be made more efficient in the future using web-based applications for information sharing, registration, and volunteer management.

The wider context for the SAR NGOs and NZSAR is that people give more time to informal volunteering (globally and in Aotearoa). Currently, in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1 million people volunteer within organisations. This dropped by approximately 10 percent in the last four years (from 1.2 million in 2013), but overall volunteer participation went up to over 50% of the adult population.¹⁴ This shows that people are moving towards informal activities outside of organisations.

Established organisations will be drawing from a smaller pool of volunteers, and this pool could shrink further. Organisations (like the SAR NGOs) that rely on a volunteer workforce that requires long training trajectories and significant investment of time, personal monies and with greater opportunity costs, may struggle to recruit volunteers.

Fortunately, there are evidence-based solutions: organisations with good internal volunteer management systems including processes for emergent volunteers are more likely to successfully retain those who come to an organisation through an emergent and spontaneous process.

¹³ Malcolm Burgess, *Independent Review: Management of Spontaneous Volunteers* (NZSAR: 2021)

¹⁴ General Social Survey 2021, Statistics New Zealand

Funding to enable volunteerism

Funding to support volunteerism within the SAR sector was a significant issue identified in the *2019 Report*. SAR organisations require considerable financial resources.

Funding comes from government, corporate sponsorships and contracts, and donations from trusts and the public.

The sector is directly and indirectly supported by funding from a wide range of sources including Fuel Excise Duty (FED). The Ministry of Transport (with input from Treasury) led a triennial review in 2020 of FED funding for the SAR sector that resulted in a significant increase in sector investment over three years. Further details are available in the table below. The NZSAR Secretariat manages this investment through its Service-level Agreements (SLA) with the SAR NGOs.

Government investment in the SAR sector and water safety services

	2019/20 (\$m)	2020/21 (\$m)	2021/22 (\$m)	2022/23 (\$m)	3 Year (\$m)
Amateur Radio Emergency Communications	0.065	0.654	0.492	0.486	1.632
Coastguard New Zealand	1.874	9.995	10.282	11.467	31.744
LandSAR	0.905	3.051	2.661	2.661	8.373
Surf Life Saving New Zealand	0.200	10.261	11.826	10.863	32.950
NZSAR Secretariat	2.301	3.675	4.718	5.863	14.256
TOTAL	5.345	27.636	29.979	31.340	88.955

Additional SAR Funding over three years was \$73.467 million plus out-year funding of \$20.338 million.

This investment through the SLAs has enabled the SAR NGOs to create salaried professional volunteer manager roles, alongside a range of other actions supporting volunteering workforce strategies and plans.

As our economic climate evolves and affects these funding streams, SAR organisations will have to continue to adapt accordingly. The pandemic has put increasing pressure on government finances. SAR organisations and operations are likely to come under increasing financial pressures due to rising costs and a more constrained and competitive funding environment.

Funding for volunteer infrastructure needs (such as volunteer managers, training, volunteer costs, and recognition) will require continuous advocacy to obtain. This needs to remain a strategic priority and focus of the NZSAR Secretariat.

Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai | Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review

The Ministry of Transport's *Haumarū Tangata ki Uta ki Tai – Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review* (the Review) aims to review and assess the health and performance of Aotearoa New Zealand's recreational safety and search and rescue systems, ensuring that they are fit-for-purpose and able to meet current and future needs and responsibilities.

Its focus is the governance and leadership of the systems, collaboration, assets, funding, and the workforce capability (namely, volunteers) and capacity that underpins the systems.

One of the Review's focus areas is workforce capability and sustainability which examines:

- the balance of unpaid, partially paid and fully paid people to support the systems and delivery of outcomes.
- Barriers affecting volunteer participation, retention, continual upskilling, and diversity, and how these could be addressed.
- The drivers of, and opportunities for volunteer participation and greater diversity, and how these can be harnessed.
- The competencies required of volunteers and other workforce personnel.
- The ongoing training of volunteers and other workforce personnel to support those competencies and volunteer retention.

The Review will develop a workforce capability and sustainability plan to support a purposeful, structured, and integrated approach to achieving a professional recreational safety and search and rescue workforce (which includes SAR volunteers).



Insights from experiences of SAR volunteers in 2022

Data from sector-wide research, including Volunteering New Zealand's *State of Volunteering 2022 Report*, highlight the important link between demographic information (such as gender, sexuality, and ethnicity) and volunteers' experience of the volunteering process. Anecdotally, volunteer managers from the SAR NGOs and beyond frequently share the observation that people from minority groups are under-represented in their organisations and are more likely to report poor experiences in volunteering. Some of these patterns were observed in the *2019 Report*, with the SAR workforce being identified as reflecting a predominantly European male population.

More detailed statistical analyses have been undertaken to test for correlations between demographic data and various features of the volunteering experience.

Background and demographics

In March and April 2022, the volunteer workforces of five SAR organisations were asked to take part in the *2022 Volunteer Engagement Survey (2022 VES)*. The five organisations were the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Surf Life Saving, Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard, and AREC.

- The overall response rate was **14 percent**.
- A total of **3,258** completed responses were received:
 - **1,191** from Surf Life Saving
 - **999** from Coastguard
 - **739** from Land Search and Rescue
 - **188** from AREC
 - **141** from NEMA's New Zealand Response Teams.

The response rate provides us with sufficient data to analyse any relationships and general findings.

Analysis of the results of the 2022 Volunteer Engagement Survey

Comparison of SAR volunteers between 2022 and 2019

The results of the 2022 VES provide a snapshot of the SAR NGOs' demographics:

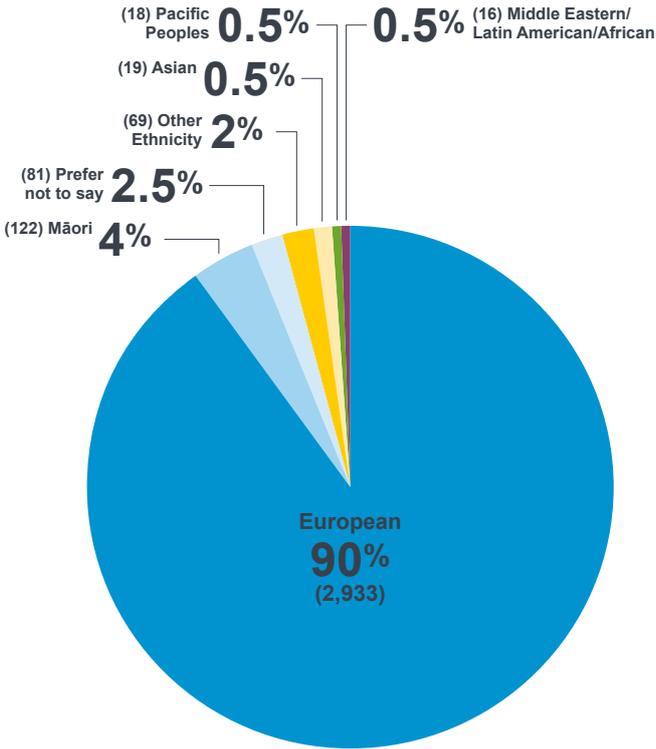
Main ethnicity 2022

Māori volunteers

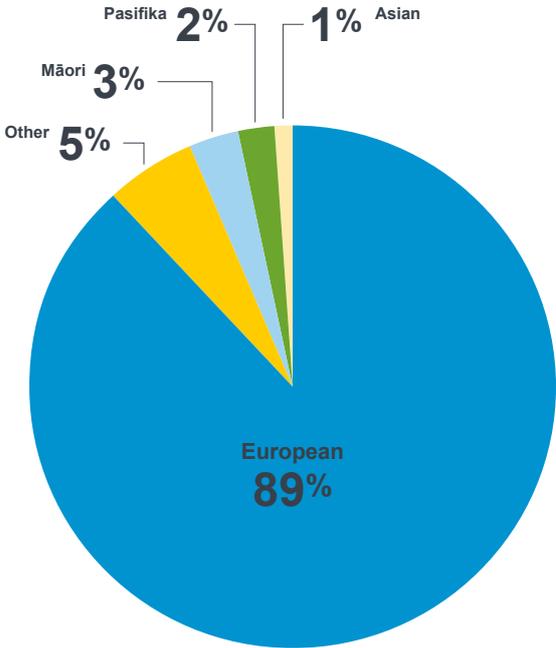
- 122 volunteers (4%) told us that the ethnicity that they most identify with is Māori.
- 303 volunteers (9.5%) told us that their main or additional ethnicity is Māori.
- 16.5% of New Zealanders identified as Māori in the 2018 Census.

MELAA volunteers

Volunteers identifying as MELAA (Middle Eastern/Latin American/African) have registered for the first time in the 2022 report, indicating an improvement on this front.

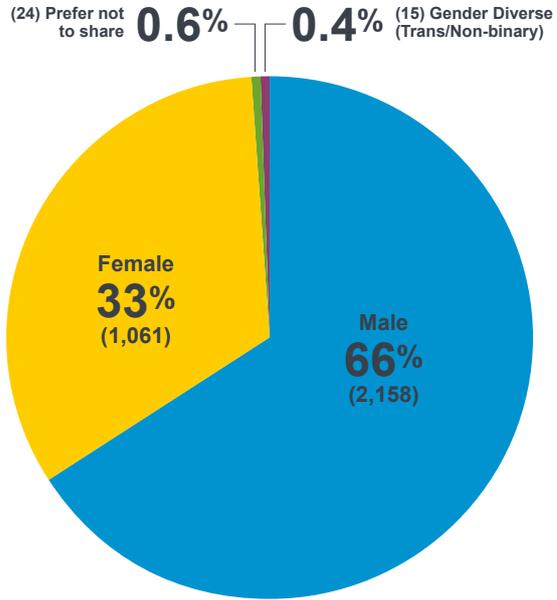


Main ethnicity 2019

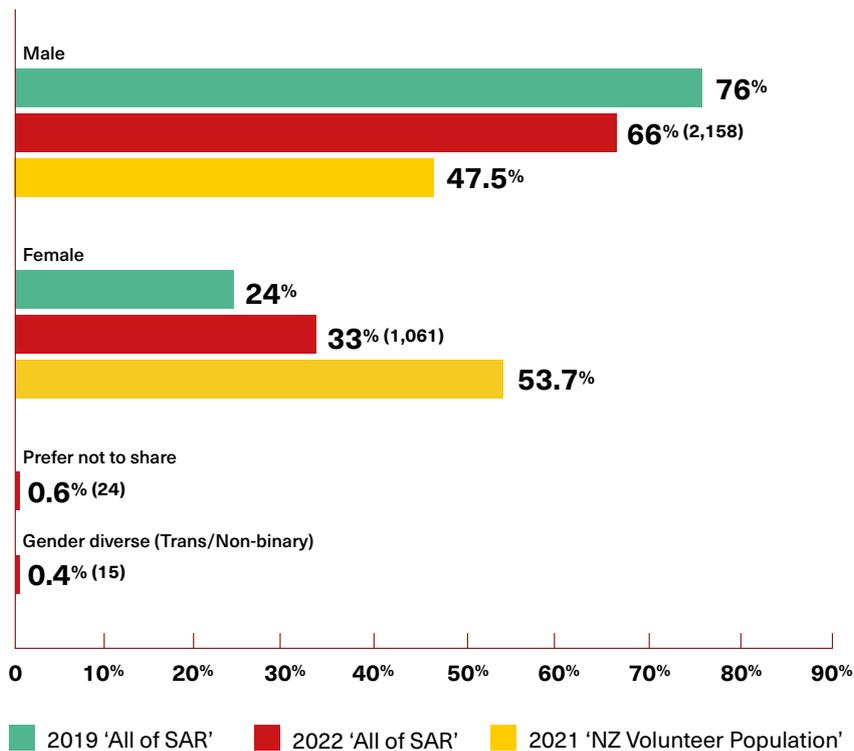


The results of the 2022 VES provide a snapshot of the SAR NGOs' demographics:

Gender

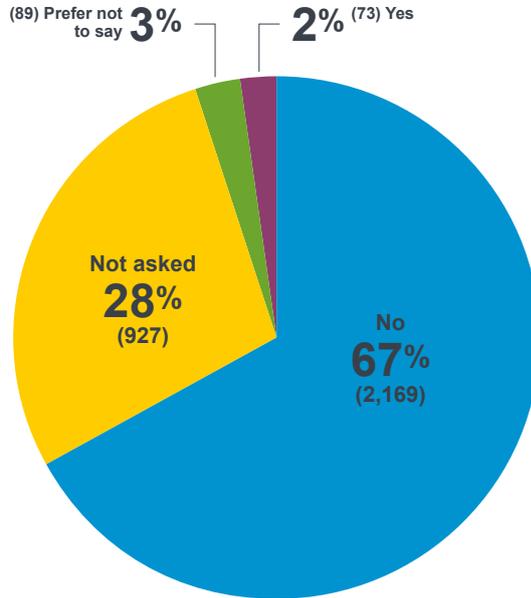


Comparison of gender for 'New Zealand Volunteer Population 2021' and 'All of SAR' from 2019 and 2022

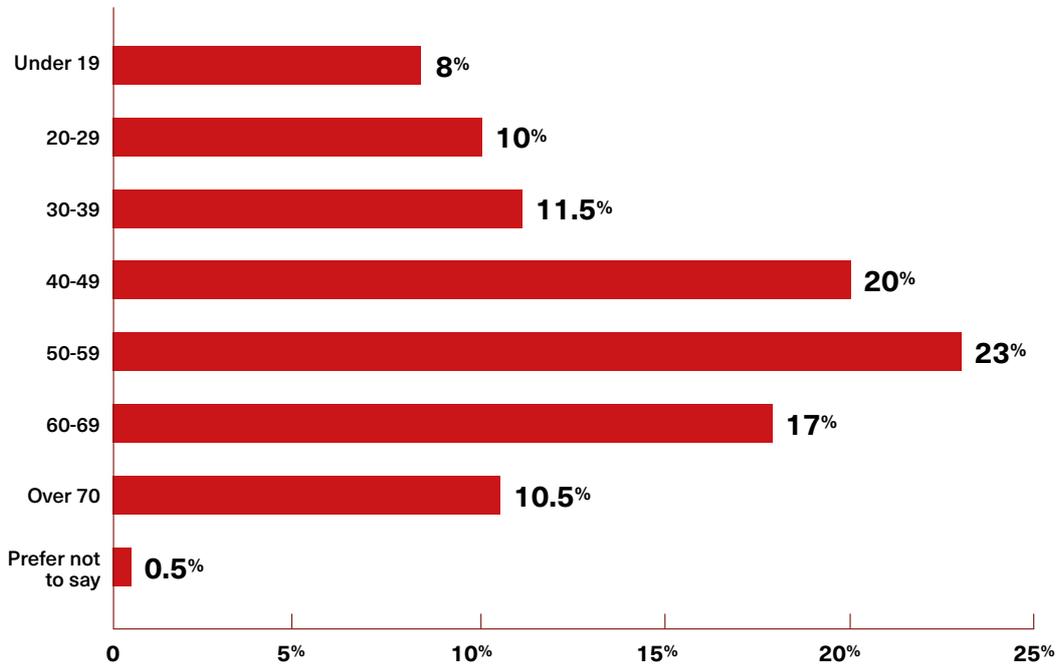


The results of the 2022 VES provide a snapshot of the SAR NGOs' demographics:

Are you part of the LGBTQIA+ / Takatāpui community



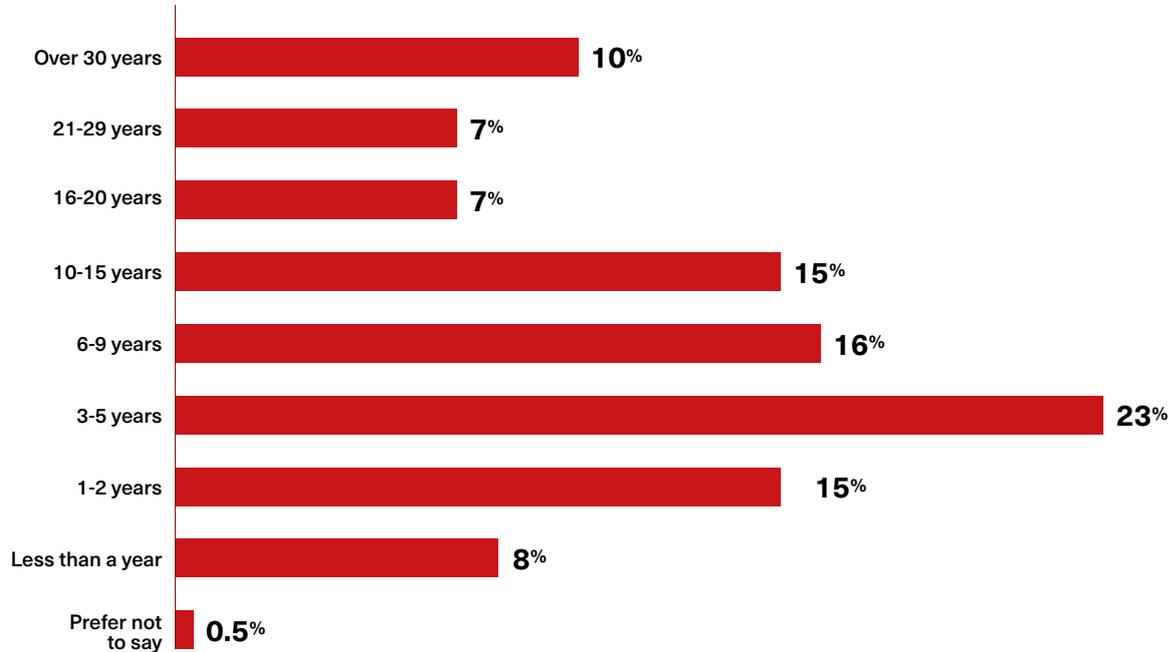
Age



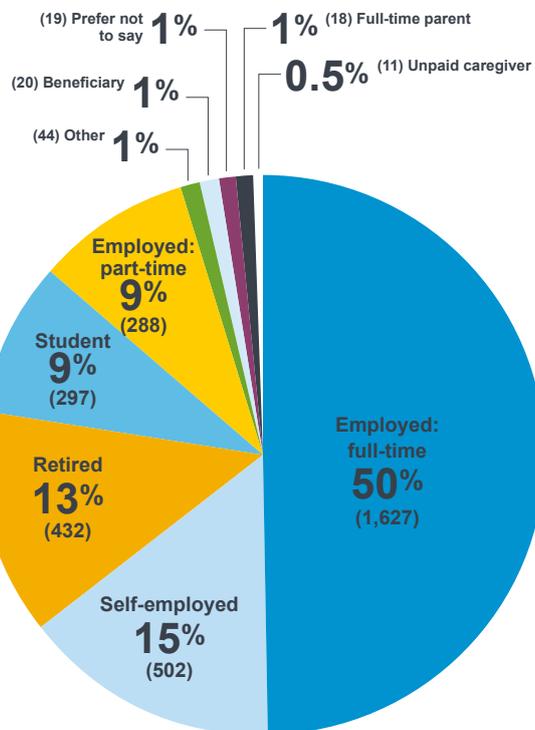
Most respondents under 19 years of age were from Surf Life Saving New Zealand

The results of the 2022 VES provide a snapshot of the SAR NGOs' demographics:

Length of volunteering



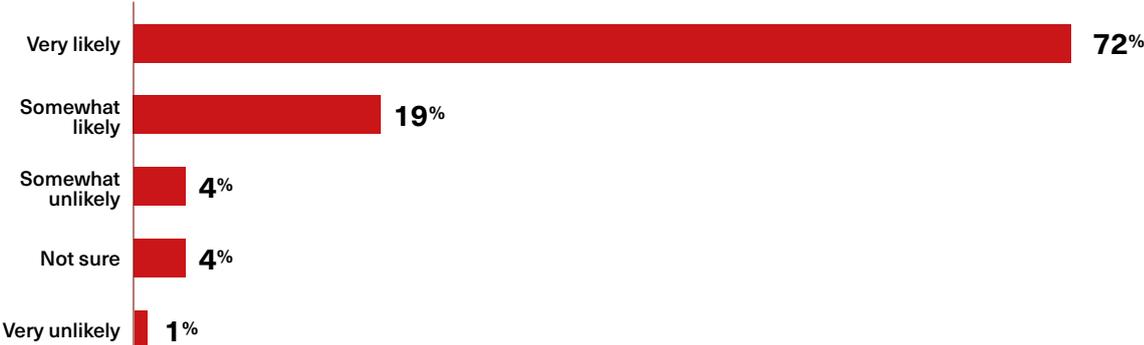
Employment status



Further analysis of the results of the 2022 volunteer engagement survey:

Overall volunteer satisfaction (at 73%) is high. It is clear that the volunteer respondents from the SAR NGOs (as well as NEMA) derive great satisfaction and enjoyment from their volunteering activities. Most volunteer respondents also consider themselves very likely to recommend their organisation to other potential volunteers.

How likely are you to continue to volunteer for our organisation?



Satisfaction



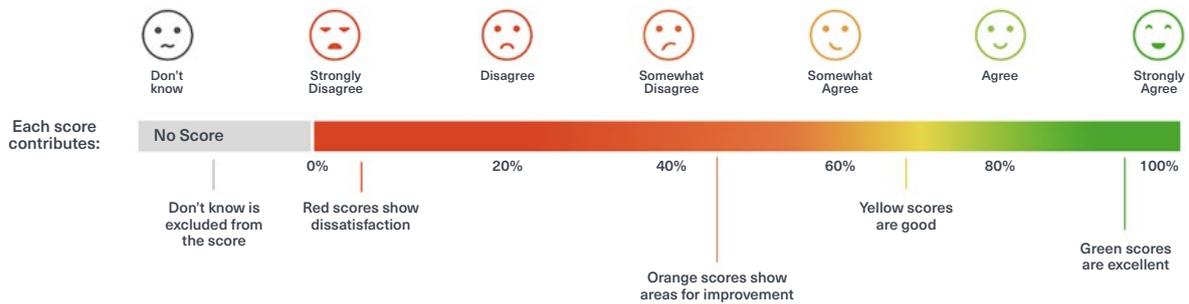
Culture



Wellbeing



Understanding the scores



These responses provide a positive snapshot of the SAR sector, though more detailed analysis can reveal further information. Volunteering New Zealand has undertaken further statistical analyses of the responses in the 2022 VES. Pearson Chi-Square Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were carried out using IBM SPSS software to produce further insights from the survey data. Several continuous variable data sets were converted into categorical variable data sets, to simplify our test for statistical independence. Respondents who provided incomplete responses concerning the question at hand were excluded from the analyses.

There is **no statistically significant correlation between main ethnicity and a respondents' likelihood of recommending their volunteer organisation to potential volunteers**. There also does not appear to be a correlation between other demographics (such as gender) and respondents' likelihood of recommending their volunteer organisation to potential volunteers.

This likelihood may serve as a useful measure of volunteer satisfaction, and it is encouraging that we do not see this measure aligned with any particular demographic group.

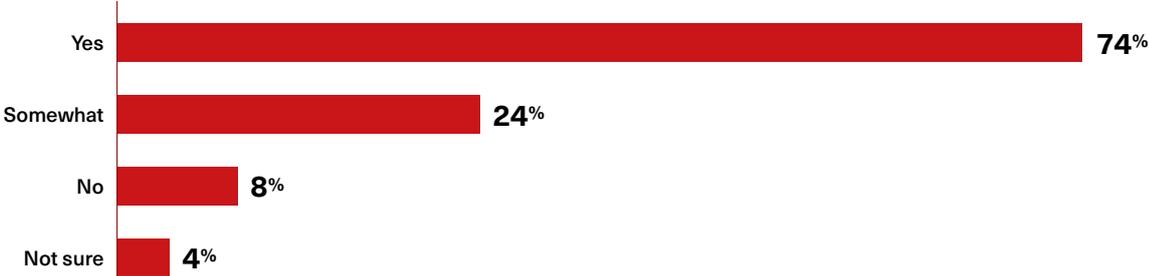
There are differences across ethnic groups in terms of how long respondents have volunteered for their volunteer organisations. On average, **identifying with a minority ethnicity (i.e., one's main ethnicity being non-European) is correlated with lower service lengths than the majority European main ethnicity**. This finding, however, cannot be interpreted as suggesting that particular ethnicities are more likely than others to commit to long-term volunteering. It is possible that the European ethnic group's longer average length of volunteering is because this group has enjoyed more opportunities to volunteer over a longer period of time.

Respondents who are part of the LGBTQIA+/Takatāpui community are marginally less likely to agree that their volunteering hours are sustainable, but this finding did not rise to a formal level of statistical significance. While clear data on LGBTQIA+/Takatāpui volunteers are currently lacking, anecdotal evidence suggests that the social disadvantage and barriers experienced by this community may impact on LGBTQIA+/Takatāpui volunteers' willingness to continue volunteering in the long-term or committing to greater responsibilities.

The majority of volunteer respondents agree that they feel safe to raise a complaint (at 74%), though this feeling is not distributed equally across demographic groups. On average, **respondents who identify with a minority ethnicity (i.e., non-European) are more likely to disagree that they feel safe to raise a complaint compared to respondents who identify with the majority European ethnicity. Volunteers who do not identify with an ethnic minority are more likely to agree that they feel safe to raise a complaint.**¹⁵

The survey asked respondents whether they felt that their current volunteer hours were sustainable. This question can serve as a general proxy for capturing volunteers at risk of leaving their organisation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people who feel that their hours are not sustainable are at high risk of resigning from their volunteering role.

Do you feel that the hours you volunteer at our organisation are sustainable?



Recent data from Statistics New Zealand shows that not having enough time is one of the biggest reasons people stop volunteering or fail to volunteer in the first place.¹⁶ Evidence from surveys of volunteers' behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic also highlights this issue.

¹⁵ These findings about feeling safe to complain are reflected in other recent research, most notably the latest Public Services Commission Report on Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) and its workplace culture: Belinda Clark, *Independent Review of FENZ's Workplace Culture and Complaint Handling Practices* (Public Service Commission: 2022).

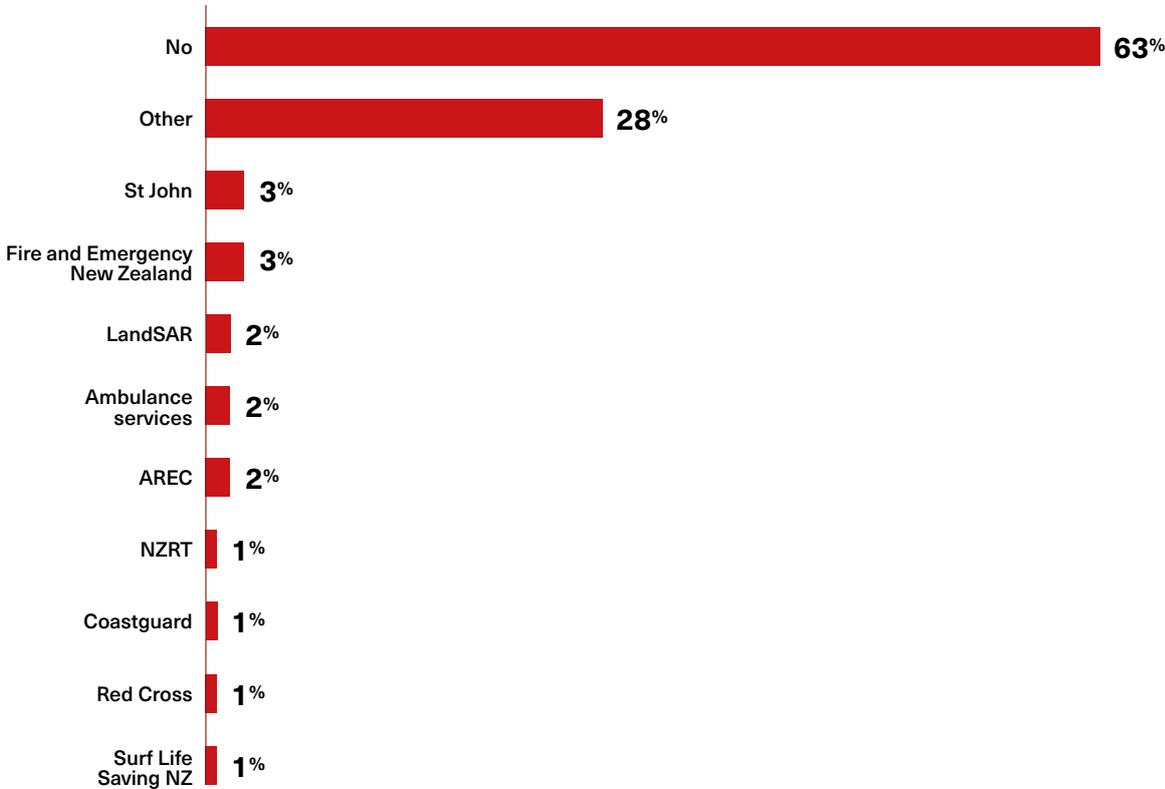
¹⁶ Stats NZ, *Wellbeing Statistics: 2021 – Volunteering*. Summary data available online: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-2021-supplementary/>

Previously committed volunteers who felt that they could not sustain their volunteering hours – for example, as a result of additional caring duties or other personal factors – had high rates of departure.¹⁷ Understanding whether volunteers consider their hours sustainable, and if this corresponds to any particular demographic group or pattern, is therefore valuable for future volunteer workforce planning.

As a baseline, 64% of survey respondents felt that their current hours of volunteering were sustainable.

The majority of survey respondents (63%) also did not volunteer for any other organisations.

Do you volunteer for any other organisation? Please select all that apply



One pattern that VNZ has observed over several years is the increasing prevalence of a minority of volunteers in an organisation performing the majority of volunteering.¹⁸

It may be hypothesised, using similar reasoning, that people who volunteer the most hours may be the most committed volunteers (and therefore the respondents most likely to feel that their volunteering hours are sustainable). To test this hypothesis, VNZ analysed the link between the number of hours volunteered over the past 12 months and volunteers’ responses about if they felt that their volunteer hours are sustainable.

¹⁷ Volunteering New Zealand, *State of Volunteering Report 2022*. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_State-of-Volunteering-Report_2022.pdf

¹⁸ Volunteering New Zealand, *State of Volunteering Report 2018*. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/V01_DRAFT_1106_StateOfVolunteeringReport.pdf; Volunteering New Zealand, *State of Volunteering Report 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/F_SOV-Report2020_Single-Pages_1July.pdf



The results are more complicated than expected and not as straightforward as they may initially appear.

Among those who volunteered over 200 hours over the past 12 months, there was a significantly higher than expected number of respondents who did not feel that their volunteering hours were sustainable.

For respondents who volunteered between 20 and 50 hours over the past 12 months and for respondents who volunteered between 50 and 100 hours, there is a significantly higher than expected number of respondents who felt that their volunteering hours are sustainable and a significantly lower than expected number of respondents who do not feel that their volunteer hours are sustainable. This appears to be the 'Goldilocks' zone, where volunteers provide enough hours to feel that they are making a worthwhile contribution and being involved, but not so many hours that they start to burn out.

Perhaps counterintuitively, **among those who volunteered fewer than 20 hours over the past 12 months, there is a higher-than-expected number of respondents who did not feel that their volunteer hours are sustainable** and a lower-than-expected number who felt that their volunteer hours are sustainable. This result is somewhat puzzling at first glance, since it appears that those who volunteer the fewest hours are more likely than expected to declare that their hours are not sustainable.

Two important considerations should be noted when interpreting the result that there is a higher-than-expected number of respondents who did not feel that their volunteer hours are sustainable in the group that volunteered fewer than 20 hours over the past 12 months. First, those who volunteer the fewest hours are likely to be volunteers who are the most time poor, and who are likely to find even their limited volunteering hours taxing. Second, it is possible that those in the group who volunteered fewer than 20 hours over the past 12 months joined recently and have been volunteering for fewer than 12 months. If so, the hours they are basing their responses on (e.g. 10 hours in the one month they have been a volunteer) may be unsustainable if it were to be generalised over a full 12-month period.

There is **no statistically significant correlation between gender and how respondents felt about the sustainability of their volunteering hours.**

Main ethnicity is partially correlated with how respondents felt about the sustainability of their volunteering hours, though this relationship is somewhat complex. Compared to other ethnic groups, **European respondents are more likely to have felt that their volunteering hours are sustainable** compared with other ethnic groups.

Māori and Pacific Peoples respondents are less likely to have felt that their hours of volunteering are sustainable compared to European respondents.

However, **there is no discernible link between identifying as Asian or Middle Eastern/Latin American/African and how respondents feel about the sustainability of their volunteer hours.**

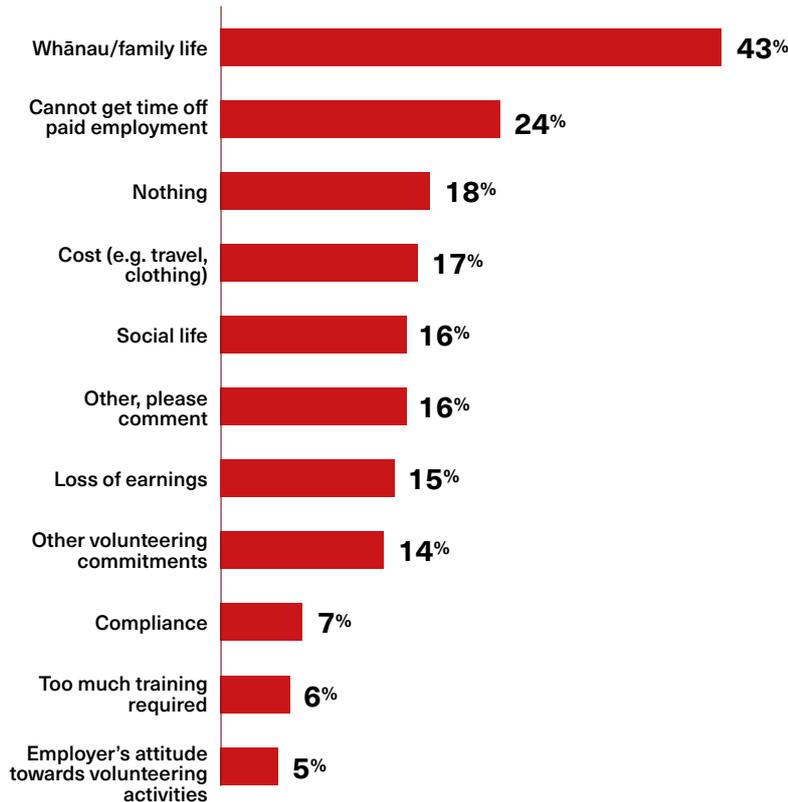
Respondents had mixed feelings about whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that whānau/families who support volunteers are adequately recognised and valued, with an average score of 61%.

Further analysis shows that there is a correlation between how volunteers felt about the sustainability of their volunteer hours and whether they agreed or disagreed that their whānau are adequately recognised and valued by their organisation. **This correlation highlights an important link between the volunteer and their whānau and the importance of supporting both of them.** This is reflected in the wider sector research, which has highlighted the importance of whānau and support networks in volunteering.¹⁹

Respondents who agreed that their whānau is adequately recognised and valued were more likely to agree that their volunteering hours are sustainable, compared to those who disagreed that their whānau is adequately recognised and valued. Among those volunteers who disagreed that their whānau is adequately recognised and valued, the majority did not feel that their volunteering hours are sustainable.

Formally showing a statistical link between whānau and volunteering in this way is especially valuable, given that 43% of respondents identify whānau/family as one of the factors that most compete with their ability to volunteer for their organisation.

What factors most compete with your ability to volunteer for our organisation? Please select all that apply



Māori is the ethnic group (51%) most likely to identify whānau/family life as a barrier to volunteering, followed by Pacific Peoples (50%). The average across all ethnic groups is 43%.

¹⁹ Volunteering New Zealand, *State of Volunteering Report 2022*. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_State-of-Volunteering-Report_2022.pdf

Introduction

SAR operations take place within the national and global context of volunteering, and understanding these trends is vital for effective volunteer workforce planning.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, we are seeing several key trends impacting on volunteering. These trends are vital to understand in a SAR sector that is almost entirely volunteer-run and that relies on long-term skilled volunteers.

Key highlights in this section include:

- The amount of time that New Zealanders spend in formal volunteering is decreasing.
- More people are doing informal volunteering, both in Aotearoa New Zealand, and overseas.
- Shifts in how people want to volunteer (including informal and emergent volunteers), wider demographics, volunteer wellbeing, and volunteer and leadership succession planning are all likely to impact on volunteer workforces, recruitment and retention.

Aotearoa New Zealand population-level volunteer data

National population-level data on volunteering is collated in the General Social Survey and the Non-Profit Institution Satellite Account (NPISA). These data have both recently been updated and show that in Aotearoa New Zealand more people volunteer directly (outside of an organisation) rather than within established organisations, and that within organisations, volunteers are doing more.²⁰

The number of volunteer hours has remained fairly stable (after falling by 42% between 2004 and 2013 – from 270 million to 157 million).²¹ The number of volunteer hours worked at NPIs in 2018 was 159 million (1,008,000 volunteers) compared with 157 million hours (1,229,054 volunteers) in 2013.²³ This indicates that there are fewer people volunteering but those who are volunteering are doing more hours by taking up the slack.

Those who volunteered for an organisation contributed an average of **15.9 hours** over a four-week period, an increase of 2.4 hours from 2016.²³ With fewer people involved in formal volunteering and an increase in hours, there are risks related to wellbeing, burnout and succession planning.

89% of volunteer-involving organisations are entirely volunteer run, with these organisations facing increased strains and challenges in relation to managing volunteers. However, there has been a 10% increase in paid staff working in the non-for-profit sector.²⁴

20 Stats NZ, *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account: 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/non-profit-institutions-satellite-account-2018>

21 Stats NZ, *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account: 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/non-profit-institutions-satellite-account-2018>

22 Stats NZ, *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account: 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/non-profit-institutions-satellite-account-2018>

23 Stats NZ, *Wellbeing Statistics: 2021 – Volunteering*. Summary data available online: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-2021-supplementary/>

24 Stats NZ, *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account: 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/non-profit-institutions-satellite-account-2018>

Framing, describing and talking about volunteering

Within Aotearoa New Zealand more people do direct informal volunteering than volunteering through organisations, and a large amount of our informal participation is not recognised in volunteering statistics captured by government agencies.

Findings in the *Pacific Economy Research Report on Unpaid Work and Volunteering in Aotearoa*²⁵ revealed that 97 percent of Pacific Peoples spend around 66,035 hours per week on unpaid work and volunteering, equating to an average of 33 hours per week per person.

The *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies*²⁶ explores a shift in the definition of volunteering and how volunteering is a complex concept that means different things to different people. Cultural and community-based values influence how volunteering is practised and the spread of new technology has diversified the ways in which volunteers contribute to their communities.

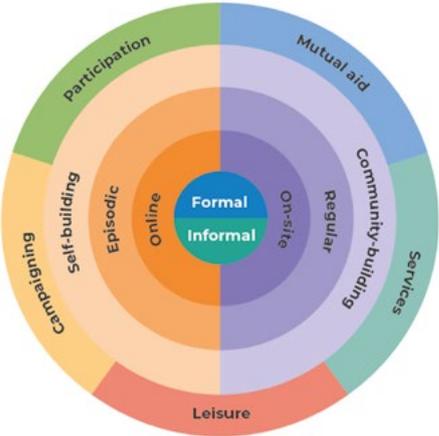
Informal, community-based, episodic and spontaneous volunteering are also increasingly recognised. These forms of volunteering challenge the popular view that volunteering only happens within an organisation.

The components of volunteer action are identified as:

- structure (formal and/or informal)
- site (online and/or offline)
- intensity (episodic and/ or regular)
- aspiration (self-building and/or community-building)
- category (service, mutual aid, participation, campaigning, and leisure).



These components manifest in different configurations and intensity depending on how and why volunteer work is done



This new model of volunteering takes a broad view of volunteering. Previously, the characteristics of volunteering were precisely defined. However, in the new model, volunteering is defined according to five components, each representing a dimension of volunteer action. These components are not mutually exclusive.

This model provides a framework for discussions around more inclusive ways of viewing and talking about volunteering.

Spontaneous or emergent volunteers

With a global shift towards greater numbers of spontaneous or emergent volunteers, coupled with the increasing number of emergencies, there is likely to be increased pressure to recognise spontaneous and emergent volunteers as a resource available to assist in emergency and disaster situations, including search and rescue operations.

The challenge is how best to use this resource safely and effectively for the benefit of the SAR sector without impacting on the efforts of trained staff and volunteers within the SAR NGOs.

Emergent, spontaneous and informal volunteering can pose a challenge for organisations that rely on long-term skilled volunteers. However, evidence-based research shows that there are volunteer management practices associated with greater retention of spontaneous and episodic volunteers including the effective recognition of volunteers, offering training and professional development opportunities, and instituting screening procedures to assess prospective volunteers' suitability for the role.²⁷ Conversely, retention of spontaneous and episodic volunteers tends to be lower for organisations without the resources to adequately support volunteers. Quality of supervision and communication by management were important predictors of whether episodic volunteers return, or not.²⁸

There are a range of evidence-based approaches to better utilise spontaneous and episodic volunteers in complex, operational contexts including in SAR operations and disaster management.

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- 25 Halahingano Rohorua et al. *Pacific Economy Research Report on Unpaid Work and Volunteering in Aotearoa*. (Ministry for Pacific Peoples: 2021) Retrieved from <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Pacific-Economy-Research-Report-on-Unpaid-Work-and-Volunteering-in-Aotearoa.pdf>
- 26 UN Volunteers, *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies*. Retrieved from https://swvr2022.unv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/UNV_SWVR_2022.pdf
- 27 Melanie Randle and Samantha Reis, *Episodic Volunteering: A Rapid Literature Review* (NSW Family and Community Services: 2021). Retrieved from https://www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/662629/Episodic-volunteering-A-rapid-literature-review.pdf
- 28 Kyle E. Paret, Maria E. Mayorga, and Emmett J. Lodree, "Assigning Spontaneous Volunteers to Relief Efforts Under Uncertainty in Task Demand and Volunteer Availability," *Omega* (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305048319300611>; Maria E. Mayorga, Justin Wolczynski, and Emmett J. Lodree, "The Optimal Assignment of Spontaneous Volunteers," *Journal of the Operational Research Society* (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1057/s41274-017-0219-2>; Andrea Grant, Mary Hart, and E. R. Langer, "Integrating Volunteering Cultures in New Zealand's Multi-hazard Environment," Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2020. Retrieved from <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/7009/ajem-201902-23-dr-andrea-grant-et-al.pdf>

COVID and volunteering

State of Volunteering Report 2022: Insights

This research by Volunteering New Zealand was conducted in March and April 2022 and involved surveys for organisations and volunteers as well as focus groups with target groups. Several insights were obtained concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the wider voluntary sector.

COVID-19 generally had a negative impact on volunteering organisations' impact and ability to deliver services, though there are important exceptions. Around 84.3% of volunteering organisations²⁹ noted that COVID-19 and the associated regulations negatively impacted their services to a significant or very significant degree. The two most common negative impacts identified were having to suspend volunteering programmes during the height of the lockdowns and having to adhere to COVID-19 regulations.

It is interesting to note that organisations that reported using an electronic system for managing their volunteers and volunteering activities were much less likely to report COVID-19 having had a very significant negative impact on their services compared to those organisations that did not have an electronic system for managing volunteers and volunteering activities.

COVID-19 and the associated regulations also had a disruptive influence on the volunteering experience and volunteering practice more generally.

Negative impacts of COVID-19 on volunteers include not being able to go out and volunteer due to restrictions or isolation requirements, having their volunteering workloads increased because of COVID-19, and general anxiety about being in contact with people and contracting COVID-19. Respondents over 65 years of age (the modal group for age in the volunteer survey), were twice as likely to report that concerns about COVID-19 had stopped them from volunteering in the previous four weeks compared to those under 65 years of age.

Many participants, despite supporting the general approach of mandating vaccines, nevertheless noted that they have resulted in much polarisation and angst among different factions of their organisation. This has introduced an aspect of negativity to the volunteering experience, with a usually social place turned into a more prescriptive environment with stricter rules.

²⁹ Volunteering New Zealand, *State of Volunteering Report 2022*. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/SOV_2022_WEB_feb.pdf

Wellbeing of volunteers

The relationship between volunteering and wellbeing is a complex and interconnected issue. A recent research report³⁰ found that volunteer leadership can have a positive impact on the subjective wellbeing of volunteers. Specifically, the report found that leadership roles can enhance the personal growth and development of volunteers, increase their sense of purpose and meaning, and provide opportunities for social connections and networks.

One of the key findings was that volunteer leadership roles can provide opportunities for personal growth and development. For example, volunteers in leadership roles may have the opportunity to develop new skills, gain experience in managing projects and people, and build confidence in their abilities.

The report also found that volunteer leadership can increase the volunteer's sense of purpose and meaning. By taking on a leadership role, volunteers may feel that they are making a meaningful contribution to the organisation or community and that their efforts are having a positive impact.

Organisations can support volunteer leadership by providing training and development opportunities, recognising and celebrating the contributions of volunteers in leadership roles, and creating a supportive and collaborative environment for volunteers.

Organisations can support volunteer wellbeing by providing a supportive and inclusive environment. The report emphasises the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for volunteers, including opportunities for skill development, recognition and appreciation, and meaningful roles and responsibilities.

Changing demographics and its impact on volunteering

Understanding volunteering trends and changing demographics is vital for future-proofing volunteer-involving organisations.

We have an ageing population structure. Our older population (aged 65+) is expected to increase rapidly from 819,500 to 1,875,000 in the next 50 years.³¹ More and more older people are part of our workforce. Currently, we have 194,700 older people in the workforce, and this is expected to double by 2071. The 65–69 age band continues to account for the majority of our older workforce.

This will significantly impact who and where people will be available to volunteer in the future. These trends, coupled with changes in demographics, mean that all organisations need to adjust how they recruit, retain, train and recognise their volunteers.

30 Joanna Stuart et al., "The Impacts of Volunteering on the Subjective Wellbeing of Volunteers: A Rapid Evidence Assessment." (What Works Wellbeing: 2020). Retrieved from http://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/107672017/Volunteer_wellbeing_technical_report_Oct2020_.pdf

31 Office for Seniors, "Business of Ageing 2021." Retrieved from <https://officeforseniors.govt.nz/our-work/ageing-research/business-of-ageing-2021-html/>

Youth engagement a key strategic issue

Youth engagement and participation are widely identified across the sector as key strategic issues for many volunteer-involving organisations. Succession planning, recruitment and diversity are better enabled through youth participation.

Rangatahi/youth are hungry to give back to the community and contribute in meaningful ways but do not always feel like they have the power to. Some rangatahi/youth find that the conditions imposed are too burdensome and do not align with their own goals and aspirations. These aspirations are often about their views on social justice, and about their vision for their communities and future generations.³²

A recent study with 25 young volunteers (aged 18-30) found that it can be challenging for young people to volunteer within established organisations. Interviews with young volunteers suggest that, in general, their aspirations and expectations may not align with those of established organisations.³³ Focus groups conducted with numerous youth volunteers as part of VNZ's *State of Volunteering Report 2022* also reinforce these findings.

The ladder of youth participation³⁴ provides a simple framework for organisations to examine what level of youth involvement and participation it is offering, and where it might aspire to get to.



32 Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation, "Taiohi Insights 2022." Retrieved from <https://www.datanavigator.nz/taiohi-insights-2022/>

33 Sally Carlton et al. "The Ability to Change Stuff Up: Volunteering as a Young Person Within Established Organisations," *Journal of Youth Studies* (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2022.2033188>

34 Hart, R., 1992. *Children's participation*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Based on the array of sources and voices engaged with, this report makes these recommendations:

A. Workforce Planning and Sector Resilience

1. Strategic Planning

Context

Significant advances have been made by all of the SAR NGOs in strategic planning. All have volunteer workforce strategies in place and initiatives to recruit, train and lead volunteers. Since 2020, extra government funding has helped the SAR NGOs to better plan and meet their volunteer workforce needs. However, the SAR NGOs are likely to come under increasing financial pressures due to rising operational costs and more constrained or competitive funding environments. The NZSAR Secretariat has a strategic role in continuing to advocate for sustainable funding for the sector.

Recommendation 1

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue its central role of providing strategic, system-level support to the SAR NGOs and to advocate for the SAR sector to Government and other stakeholders. Specific steps include:

- Continuing to advocate for sustainable funding for the SAR sector.
- Supporting the SAR NGOs to share best practice in evaluation and create shared metrics to allow cross-agency comparison of progress in their volunteering strategies.

2. Data Collection

Context

Volunteer workforce data is being collected by the NZSAR Secretariat from the SAR NGOs in accordance with the NZSAR Volunteer Data Standard. It is vital to know the demographics of volunteers because this information can be used to set goals to improve diversity and also to track progress over time. The SAR sector has also begun improving the collection and use of post-incident data within SARdonyx. There is potential scope for further development of data collection and reporting which will improve future preparedness and planning.

Recommendation 2

The SAR sector should commit to regular, high-quality volunteer workforce data collection and analysis, with the aim of understanding the needs and experiences of volunteers. Specific steps could include:

- Ensuring data collection is carried out consistently and accurately, and that the data collected is pooled and analysed effectively to support a data-driven approach to improving volunteer diversity.
- Continuing regular volunteer engagement surveys and sharing the results with the wider SAR sector.

3. Retention

Context

The results of the 2022 VES showed that 64% of volunteers felt that their volunteer hours are sustainable. However, respondents who volunteered over 200 hours in the last year and respondents who volunteered fewer than 20 hours in the last year were less likely to have felt that their volunteering hours are sustainable. There appears to be a 'Goldilocks' zone of volunteer hours between 20 and 100 over the last year.

Existing volunteers have already been recruited and trained. There is an opportunity for the SAR NGOs to explore engagement and retention strategies for existing volunteer cohorts that did not feel that their volunteer hours are sustainable (36% of the survey respondents).

Recommendation 3

The NZSAR Secretariat should encourage improving interoperability across the SAR NGOs. This will improve SAR volunteer retention rates should SAR volunteers decide to relocate within Aotearoa New Zealand.

4. Training Investment

Context

The results of the 2022 VES show that training for volunteers is an ongoing issue. Volunteers would like to see more clarity and communication about how to access training. Some volunteers are concerned about recognition of prior experience and qualifications.

Extensive training, and retraining requirements can be a barrier to volunteer participation. The way training is delivered and prior experience recognised can be improved.

A consistent, systematic approach to delivering training is needed to grow and maintain appropriate levels of SAR services expected by Aotearoa New Zealand's public.

Recommendation 4

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to support the SAR NGOs to deliver high-quality, relevant and accessible training for volunteers and to explore new modes of delivery.

B. Diversity and Inclusion

5. Recruitment

Context

The demographic makeup of the SAR NGOs' volunteer workforce – which has diversified since 2019 – still exhibits low representation of diversity in terms ethnicity, age, and gender. Innovative strategies are required to attract a more diverse volunteer workforce, and to adapt to volunteers' needs and availability. For example, there is an opportunity to capitalise on the trend for more episodic volunteering by identifying work that can be undertaken in small chunks.

By engaging diverse demographic groups and reducing barriers to volunteer participation, the SAR NGOs will increase their talent pool, enable the recruitment of people with different skills and life experiences.

Recommendation 5

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to help the SAR NGOs to implement their own volunteer workforce strategies while focussing on the recruitment, retention and engagement of effective SAR volunteers who reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's society. It should resource the SAR NGOs to address barriers to access and participation for potential new and younger volunteers.

6. Youth

Context

According to the results of the *2022 VES*, 8% of volunteers are under 19 and 10% are aged between 20 and 29. There is currently no overall youth engagement strategy. Surf Life Saving is a leader in its youth development programme.

Evidence from the *State of Volunteering in Aotearoa Report 2022* shows that almost 50% of volunteer-involving organisations state that ageing volunteers are their biggest challenge. Research carried out for the report showed that volunteer organisations need to reflect on why young people are not attracted to their organisation, rather than conclude that young people are not interested in volunteering at all.

The State of Volunteering research about young volunteers suggests that, in general, their aspirations and expectations may not align with those of established organisations. The SARNGOs will need to be aware of, and responsive to, these aspirations and expectations if they want to attract young volunteers.

The average age of SAR personnel is increasing. This means that more effort needs to be invested in recruiting and training younger personnel to ensure long-term viability of SAR services. Attracting younger and more diverse volunteers into the SAR NGOs (and other search and rescue organisations) is a critical long-term strategy.

Recommendation 6

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to engage with young volunteers more effectively, especially those at university and in higher education. This could begin with outreach-focused research with young people (including non-SAR volunteers) to identify motivations and strategies to engage them in SAR volunteer work. This research could take the form of focus groups and targeted surveys. It should share recommendations from this research with the SAR NGOs to encourage youth participation.

7. Online Recruitment Sites

Context

Potential volunteers who visit the NZSAR website would not find information about volunteering. The website does not include information about how potential volunteers might engage with the SAR NGOs. Other SAR NGO websites (except for AREC) include quality, accessible information targeted at potential volunteers.

The *State of Volunteering in Aotearoa Report 2022* found that people under the age of 35 report that they find their volunteer opportunities online via internet search (42%) or social media (58.5%). Word of mouth is still important – 52.5% of all volunteers heard about their volunteer role through a friend.

Tracking where new volunteers find out about volunteer roles is helpful. Using different online platforms (including social media) will help to reach and recruit diverse groups of new volunteers.

Recommendation 7

The NZSAR Secretariat should improve online recruitment for prospective SAR volunteers by:

- Adding a clear reference to volunteers and SAR volunteering on the landing page on the NZSAR website, such as a 'Volunteer' or 'Get Involved' tab.
- Ensuring prospective volunteers can easily find how to get involved in SAR volunteering with the SAR NGOs.

8. Public Relations

Context

In the latest *NZSAR Annual Report*³⁶, the NZSAR Secretariat's research into knowledge, perceptions and expectations of SAR in Aotearoa New Zealand showed that 44% of New Zealanders had at least some knowledge of SAR services. Over 80% of people thought that NZ Police, Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard and rescue helicopters are involved in search and rescue operations. The research demonstrated that New Zealanders find out about SAR services from the news media (59%), friends and family (32%), social media (24%) advertising (22%) and websites (21%).³⁷

91% of the people in the SAR sector are volunteers – one of the highest rates of volunteer SAR involvement in the world. Greater public awareness of the number of volunteers involved would help strengthen volunteer recruitment and other support.

Recommendation 8

The NZSAR Secretariat should provide key messages to support SAR NGOs' communications campaigns that amplify and demonstrate the value of SAR volunteer organisations and its 10,000+ volunteers. This would help to strengthen volunteer recruitment and support for SAR volunteers.

³⁶ New Zealand Search and Rescue Annual Report 2021-2022 (NZSAR: 2022). Retrieved from <https://nzsar.govt.nz/assets/Downloadable-Files/NZSAR-2022-annual-report-for-website.pdf>

³⁷ New Zealand Search and Rescue Annual Report 2021-2022 (NZSAR: 2022), p. 26.

C. Wrap-around Volunteer Support

9. Whānau Support

Context

The results of the 2022 VES demonstrate that volunteers who feel that their whānau is valued and recognised are more likely to feel that their volunteering hours are sustainable. 43% of respondents in the VES identified whānau/family as one of the factors that most compete with their ability to volunteer. SAR volunteering affects volunteers' whole family in a far greater way than many other volunteer roles because of the time commitment and unpredictability when the volunteer is called up for searches. Whānau/family support and recognition by the SAR NGOs of this will help retain volunteers.

While the earlier recommendation from the 2019 Report around better support for volunteers, families and employers has been achieved, there is scope for continued focus in this area with innovative support schemes and recognition events.

Recommendation 9

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to ensure whānau are adequately valued and recognised for their role in supporting volunteers. In particular, it could support individual SAR NGOs with:

- Improving support and network systems for whānau of SAR volunteers, such as creating an online group for whānau/families of SAR volunteers to access information about social events and support schemes.
- Organising regular engagement and recognition events for volunteers and their whānau/families. This will further integrate the whānau of volunteers into the SAR community.

10. Reimbursement and costs to Volunteers

Context

Costs to volunteer can be a barrier to volunteer participation.

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to remove barriers to participation, including financial barriers or other obstacles that may prevent new, diverse and even existing volunteers from participating in volunteering opportunities.

Extra funding since 2019 has helped provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and gear for volunteers. The SAR NGOs say more is needed (and more PPE and gear) which could reduce barriers for recruiting and retaining volunteers. The *State of Volunteering in Aotearoa Report 2022* found that most organisations reimburse volunteers for expenses.

The SAR NGOs say while basic PPE and gear is provided, volunteers use much of their own gear. They would like PPE and gear to be extended to a broader range of items given the challenging operating environments of the SAR volunteers.

Recommendation 10

The NZSAR Secretariat should continue to support the SAR NGOs to reimburse volunteers for volunteering-related expenses, such as transport costs and PPE.

11. Complaints Procedures

Context

According to the results of the *2022 VES*, most SAR volunteers agreed that they feel safe to raise a complaint, though this feeling was not distributed equally across demographic groups. Volunteers who identified with an ethnic minority group were over 5% less likely to agree that they feel safe to complain, compared to volunteers who identified as European.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand recently commissioned a report into its complaints process and culture of bullying, showing the potential for clear and robust processes to improve volunteers' ability to complain safely.

Recommendation 11

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs to develop organisation-specific, confidential and effective complaints procedures. These procedures should be acceptable to volunteers who identify with minority ethnic groups, and other volunteers from disadvantaged groups, and be based on best-practice guidelines, including having avenues for appeal which are clearly advertised, and able to be investigated impartially.

D. Volunteer Leadership

12. Volunteer Training

Context

The SAR NGOs are providing leadership development programmes for their volunteer leaders. However, volunteer managers from the SAR NGOs say they would like more leadership development themselves.

Volunteering New Zealand is currently reviewing its Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteer Management. These guidelines will be a useful resource for volunteer leaders within the SAR sector, and emergency sector response experts are contributing to them.

Recommendation 12

The NZSAR Secretariat should support training programmes for volunteer leaders and managers within the SAR NGOs, based on the latest research and best practice guidelines for managing volunteers.

13. Governance Training

Context

In 2019, the federated structure of some of the SAR NGOs created additional resourcing needs for governance support. Looking ahead, the planned amendments to the Charities Act 2005 and the new Incorporated Societies Act will create additional work and complexity. Coastguard is developing committee support tools with Surf Life Saving and Land Search and Rescue. The SAR NGOs say they would like help to develop training programmes for governance.

There are a range of good, high-quality, and free governance training resources available which could be collated and shared.

Recommendation 13

The NZSAR Secretariat should support the SAR NGOs with their governance training resources and identify opportunities for joint initiatives.

14. Cultural Capacity and Competency

Context

Providing training on cultural capability and competence can help SAR volunteers and SAR NGO staff better understand and support the needs of diverse volunteers. This can include providing training on issues such as unconscious bias, cultural capability, and working with diverse populations.

The SAR NGOs are introducing te reo Māori and tikanga into their organisations.

Investment in cultural capability is important to reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's super-diverse society. Many not-for-profit organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand are striving to honour the te Tiriti/the Treaty of Waitangi and improve knowledge of te ao Māori; and their relationships with iwi.

Recommendation 14

The NZSAR Secretariat should support work within the SAR NGOs to develop and promote cultural capability and competence and provide support through funding and/or shared tools and resources.



Conclusion

The SAR sector is full of dedicated, committed, and skilled volunteers who provide critical, life-saving services to their communities. These volunteers are supported by leaders within their respective SAR NGOs and by the NZSAR Secretariat more widely.

This report paints a picture of a sector that has many successes to celebrate, together with exciting opportunities to improve even further against the backdrop of national challenges facing volunteer-involving organisations and volunteerism more broadly.

The individual and collective strengths of the SAR NGOs and broader SAR sector can and should be harnessed to face these challenges successfully.

