

## **How do you get younger people to volunteer?**

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### **Abstract**

**Previous research into understanding the intentions of volunteers has identified both age and motivation as important variables ( Francis Jones 2012; Willems et al. 2012). While the number of volunteers is increasing in general, it is not the case in the younger age groups. Without a clear understanding of the motives of volunteers is difficult to develop appropriate marketing strategy to attract younger members. Data (n= 299) from the State Emergency Services (SES) were collected using an online questionnaire and analysed using ANOVA. The findings suggest that volunteers' motives such as Understanding and Value vary significantly between age groups. On a practical level, marketing strategy, to encourage younger people to volunteer for the SES, should focus on emphasising how volunteering can help them obtain skills that will help with their careers.**

*Key Words: Motivation, Volunteers*

## Introduction

Volunteering makes a significant social and economic contribution to the wellbeing of society (O'Dwyer, 2012). In Australia, in 2006, volunteers contributed 713 million hours volunteering in their local communities with most volunteers working for sporting industry (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). However, trends show that while more people are volunteering, they volunteer for fewer hours and are less likely to stay for a long time with one agency (<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.orgApril-2015.pdf>). Industry reports, such as Optus "Generation we not me" , have examined youth volunteering habits; the results show that young people are keen to volunteer, but more research is needed to understand the trends and factors that motivate volunteers. The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of age and motives on the intentions of volunteers in the State Emergency Service SES in order to develop marketing communication plans to attract volunteers.

People volunteer for many reasons, however there is a consensus from previous research that suggests volunteers are motivated by a combination of internal and external factors relating to altruistic and egotistic motives (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Millette & Gagné, 2008; Shye, 2010; Unger, 1991). While volunteer rates have increased in general by approximately 2.8 million people from 2001 to 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 2011) it is not increasing at the same rate for younger age groups. For organisations, where the work is often physically demanding like the SES, it is important to be able to recruit and retain a steady cadre of volunteers. Therefore, it is vital to understand the motivations of younger people and how they might differ from older groups, in order to attract these people to volunteer. The research question for this paper is to examine volunteers and the relationship between age and motivation.

Demographics have clearly been shown as important factor influencing volunteer rates. In particular, both academic research (Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, Brown, & Aisbett, 2014) and Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) have shown that age affects volunteers' intentions and behaviour.

Along with demographic variables are psychological motivations. There has been extensive research into the motivations of volunteers; exploring their initial motives and what influences their decision to be long-term volunteers (e.g. Clary et al., 1998; Francis 2011; Garner & Garner, 2011 ) and how their motives may change over time (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). There has been limited research conducted on volunteers motivations and age in the emergency service (Francis & Jones 2012), but several have focused on volunteer firefighting (McLennan and Birch, 2005; Perrott & Blenkarn 2015). In an SES industry study, Francis and Jones (2005) found significant differences in motivations between generations, in particular, Career, Power and Achievement were motivating values for the younger generation. A more general study on youth and volunteering has shown that students were motivated by Value and Understanding followed by Career and Enhancement (McCabe, White and Obst, 2007). Research in the United States has also found that the Value, Understanding, Career and Enhancement were important to college student volunteers (Burns et al., 2008). These results suggest that university students are attempting to achieve particular goals by volunteering, learning new skills for their career development. However, most of the current research that exists focuses around university students rather than a wider young adult audience (Auld, 2004; Francis, 2011; McCabe, et al, 2007).

Given the outcomes of previous motivational research, this current project targeted a well-known volunteer agency to gauge the motives of current volunteers. The research questions for

this study are (1) do the motives of volunteers vary between age groups and (2) does the importance of the motives vary between age groups?

## **Methods**

### *Measures*

To measure volunteer motivations the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) revised by Willems (2012) was used. The main variable of this scale include values, understanding internal social, external social, career, protective and esteem. Some examples of the questions include Internal Social; “Being part of the organisation is a way to make friends” and Esteem; “My commitment makes me feel needed”(Clary et al. 1998; Willems et al. 2012). A range of questions relating to demographics (e.g. age, gender and education) and volunteer activity (e.g. frequency of volunteering and intent-to-quit) were also asked.

The VFI has been widely used and validated (McCabe et al, 2005; Holmes, 2009; Willems et al. 2012; Perrott & Blenkarn, 2015). The scales measure items using a seven point likert scale; motives are measures from 1 not at all applicable, to 7 totally applicable. Principal component factor analysis and varimax rotations were used and Cronbach Alpha were examined to determine the internal reliability of the factors. All the motives had good reliability, the lowest was Value (.761) and the highest was Career (.878).

### *Data collection process*

The questionnaire was pretested with a focus group of eight SES volunteers (five male, age range 19- 56). The pre-test focus group examined the VFI questions. The primary survey was distributed online. The online survey was used for ease of accessibility and to reduce costs (Beins & McCarthy, 2012). The surveys were completed using Survey Monkey. A link to an online questionnaire was distributed by the organisation to their volunteers through the New South Wales SES newsletter.

The respondents in the survey were active volunteers from the State Emergency Services (SES) volunteer organisations in NSW. The average survey participant was male (61.5%), aged 55-64 (22.6%). There were more males in most age groups, except 18-24, which had more females (55.6%). Many of the volunteers had previously volunteered for other organisations (70.4%), and half (52.1%) were only volunteering for one organisation. Half the volunteers worked full-time (33.8%) or were retired (20.1%).

### *Analysis*

The data was analysed using the SPSS 20 program. Data analysis employed two quantitative techniques; ranked order and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify whether statistically significant differences existed between age groups and motivations. The motives were then ranked in terms of importance for each age group.

## **Results**

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the difference between age and motivations. There were statistically significant differences between the groups for five of the dependent variables: Understanding ( $F(6, 302) = 4.42, p = .00$ ) Esteem ( $F(6, 302) = 4.41, p = .00$ ), Protective ( $F(6, 311) = 5.31, p = .00$ ), Internal ( $F(6, 302) = 6.48, p = .00$ ), Career ( $F(6, 302) = 16.25, p = .00$ ) and Value ( $F(6, 302) = 2.64, p = 0.16$ ). The variable External Social was not significantly different across age groups ( $F(6, 302) = 1.57, p = .156$ ).

Table 2 shows the significant differences between the age groups. The comparison demonstrates that many of the motives were significantly different between age groups, with the exception of External Social motive. Of particular notice is the significant difference between motives for the younger age group 18-24 with the older age groups 55-64 and 65+. The Career motive displayed the most significant differences between age groups, compared with all other motives.

**Table 2:** Post hoc tests showing sign and size of differences in age groups and motivations

		<b>Value</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Career</b>	<b>Esteem</b>	<b>Internal social</b>	<b>Protective</b>
		<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>	<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>	<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>	<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>	<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>	<i><math>\bar{x}</math> diff.</i>
18-24	25-34	0.416	0.123	0.840	0.096	-0.182	0.225
	35-44	.880*	.657*	1.282*	.893*	0.469	0.467
	45-54	0.464	.657*	1.655*	1.007*	0.415	0.605
	55-64	.802*	.828*	2.434*	.838*	.941*	1.182*
	65+	0.577	.924*	2.961*	1.154*	1.106*	1.318*
25-34	18-24	-0.416	-0.123	-0.840	-0.096	0.182	-0.225
	35-44	0.465	0.534	0.443	0.797	0.651	0.242
	45-54	0.049	0.534	.815*	.911*	0.597	0.380
	55-64	0.386	.705*	1.594*	0.742	1.123*	.957*
	65+	0.162	.802*	2.121*	1.058*	1.288*	1.093*
35-44	18-24	-0.88*	-.657*	-1.282*	-.893*	-0.469	-0.467
	25-34	-0.465	-0.534	-0.443	-0.797	-0.651	-0.242
	45-54	-0.416	0.000	0.373	0.114	-0.054	0.138
	55-64	-0.079	0.171	1.152*	-0.055	0.471	0.715
	65+	-0.303	0.267	1.679*	0.261	0.636	.852*
45-54	18-24	-0.464	-.657*	-1.656*	-1.007*	-0.415	-0.605
	25-34	-0.049	-0.534	-.816*	-.911*	-0.597	-0.380
	35-44	0.416	0.000	-0.373	-0.114	0.054	-0.138
	55-64	0.337	0.171	.779*	-0.169	0.526	0.577
	65+	0.113	0.267	1.306*	0.147	.691*	0.713
55-64	18-24	-.802*	-.828*	-2.435*	-.838*	-.941*	-1.18192*
	25-34	-0.386	-.705*	-1.595*	-0.742	-1.122*	-.95705*
	35-44	0.079	-0.171	-1.152*	0.055	-0.471	-0.715
	45-54	-0.337	-0.171	-.779*	0.169	-0.526	-0.577
	65+	-0.224	0.096	0.526	0.316	0.165	0.136
65+	18-24	-0.577	-.924*	-2.961*	-1.154*	-1.106*	-1.318*
	25-34	-0.162	-.801*	-2.121*	-1.058*	-1.288*	-1.093*
	35-44	0.303	-0.267	-1.679*	-0.261	-0.636	-.852*
	45-54	-0.113	-0.267	-1.306*	-0.147	-.691*	-0.713
	55-64	0.224	-0.096	-0.526	-0.316	-0.165	-0.136

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The motives were then ranked. Table 3 shows the importance of the different motives for the age groups. While all age groups ranked understanding (learning new skills etc) highly, it is clear that younger volunteers are more interested in developing new skills and knowledge to help their careers than the older volunteers.

**Table 3:** Ranking of volunteer motives by age groups

<i>Age</i>	<i>Functional Motive</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>Age</i>	<i>Functional Motive</i>	$\bar{x}$
<b>18-24</b>	Understanding	5.694	<b>25-34</b>	Understanding	5.571
	External social	5.500		External social	5.482
	Career	5.411		Esteem	5.286
	Esteem	5.382		Internal social	5.103
	Value	5.052		Value	4.636
	Internal social	4.921		Career	4.571
	Protective	4.074		Protective	3.849
<b>35-44</b>	External social	5.283	<b>45-54</b>	External social	5.472
	Understanding	5.037		Understanding	5.037
	Esteem	4.489		Value	4.587
	Internal social	4.452		Internal social	4.506
	Value	4.171		Esteem	4.375
	Career	4.129		Career	3.756
	Protective	3.607		Protective	3.469
<b>55-64</b>	External social	5.059	<b>65+</b>	External social	5.036
	Understanding	4.866		Understanding	4.770
	Esteem	4.544		Value	4.474
	Value	4.250		Esteem	4.228
	Internal social	3.980		Internal social	3.815
	Career	2.976		Protective	2.756
	Protective	2.892		Career	2.450

### Conclusions and Practical Implications

Previous research has identified age and motivation as important variables in understanding the intentions of volunteers. This paper has focused on exploring the relationship between age and motivational factors in order to profile volunteers for state emergency services. Similar to research by Francis and Jones (2012), Deery et al., (2011) and McCabe (2007) results of this study clearly shown older and younger volunteers have different motivations, but that External Social motives are not different. This suggests that the opinion of reference groups is important to all age groups.

The importance of Career motive decreases with age as volunteers from the 25-34 age group onwards, which is similar to findings from Stukas et al. (2014), Francis and Jones (2012) and Deery et al. (2011). The data from this research shows that Understanding and External Social motive are ranked similarly among all age groups. This suggests that these motives can be used for general recruiting purposes. However, for more specific campaigns, targeting 18-24 year olds, the emphasis could be on professional development with the marketing strategy outlining how the skills and knowledge, acquired as part of the SES training, can enhance their careers. For older volunteers, Value (altruism and caring the community) is a motivating factor and thus, messages to attract volunteers in this age range could emphasise how the SES helps others.

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