

# VIO Online Accessibility Survey

Measuring the digital inclusion of  
volunteer involving organisations

August 2023



Funded by the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services.



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

*The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*



# Foreword

The volunteering landscape and wider volunteering ecosystem are rapidly changing around us, and the use of technology and engagement platforms have become increasingly important in ensuring volunteers and the organisations supporting them remain informed, connected, and can easily access the support they need.

We are aware that levels of online accessibility and digital capability vary considerably across the diverse range of organisations within the volunteering sector, and across different States and Territories. Initial investigations into online accessibility identified a few common issues and core challenges, but revealed numerous gaps in existing knowledge and great inconsistency in how data around this theme is collected across jurisdictions.

This research report was commissioned to build on those initial findings and address the knowledge gaps, establish a consistent methodology for data collection and provide a clear baseline assessment for the current state of Volunteer Involving Organisations' (VIOs) online accessibility across all States and Territories. The research was carried out independently by Survey Matters, a highly reputable company with a track record of designing and delivering high quality survey instruments and analysis. They have been an excellent partner, and we thank them for their expertise, collaboration, and creativity in delivering this project.

The Report findings serve as a clear roadmap for the volunteering sector, Government partners, and wider stakeholders to determine where future resourcing and capability building activities should be targeted and how to track their impact over time more easily. For the first time, VIOs have comprehensive information about the key online accessibility challenges and opportunities, the differing needs of organisations within their networks, comparisons across States and Territories, and a better understanding of specific jurisdictional challenges such as geography and local technological infrastructure and the role they play in online accessibility.

The Report will inform national and jurisdictional recommendations to improve online accessibility and address some of the barriers identified. We look forward to learning from the Report and implementing the changes and practical solutions our sector needs to continue to ensure that volunteering is safe, ethical, inclusive, and sustainable.

## **The State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies**

August 2023

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# Methodology

## Research Objectives

The primary objective of the **VIO Online Accessibility Survey** was to enhance the understanding of the State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies about the capacity and capability of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to access online volunteer management support services and resources.

The purpose is to ensure that online resources developed through the Volunteering Peak Bodies to support the activities of VIOs are accessible and meet the needs of all organisations, with the specific aim of preventing the exclusion of organisations unable to access online materials.

## Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire was developed by Survey Matters, in conjunction with the Volunteering Peak Bodies project working group. To meet the research objectives, the survey instrument included questions designed to specifically measure digital access along the dimensions of current digital capacity, staff and volunteer capability, barriers to digital usage and ways to improve accessibility. It also included demographic and profiling questions, designed to group VIOs into logical segments, including state, location, focus area and size.

Specifically, the questionnaire addressed:

- **Digital capacity** – questions around digital technology assets ownership, capacity and functionality, internet access and reliability, digital support and IT infrastructure and policies around data management, privacy and cybersecurity.
- **Digital capability** – questions to measure the skills and knowledge of staff and volunteers, access to digital training, attitudes to technology, current use of digital technologies to communicate and delivery services to volunteers.
- **Barriers & needs** – questions to interrogate barriers to access, satisfaction with current digital access, perceived ability to access Volunteering Peak Bodies online resources, specific cultural and language barriers and needs, specific needs of priority groups.

## Distribution

The Volunteering Peak Bodies (VPBs), and newly created lists were the primary means of disseminating the survey to VIOs. The research used an anonymous survey link, capable of being distributed across multiple channels, for example, personal email to specific recipients, contact lists, electronic direct mail (EDM) or e-newsletters, via websites or through social media posts.

As a result, this was a convenience sample where respondents self-selected by participating in the survey.

Three main distribution methods were used:

### 1. Personal invitation to VPB members

The survey link was distributed by the VPBs to their members, using a variety of methods including distribution via direct email, inclusion in newsletters and posting on social media.

### 2. Distribution by industry collaborators

The survey was also distributed to a range of other organisations working with VIOs, with requests that they forward the survey link to their stakeholder base. Potential collaborators were also provided with a communication package outlining the purpose of the research, instructions for distribution and the optimum method(s) of distribution of the link to their individual stakeholders.

### 3. Distribution to newly created lists of VIOs

Survey Matters created a mailing list from the ACNC Charity Register, as well as from other publicly available websites used by VIOs. Lists were created to assist VIO representation from key target groups as well as sectors such as sport, education, health, local government, religious and environmental groups. These lists were used to send personal invitations to publicly identified contacts at a range of VIOs.

#### Effects of Distribution Methods on Responses

Potential participants tend to respond differently depending on how the survey link (or invitation) is distributed. Typically, when an individual is directly invited to take part in a survey through a personal email, from a known organisation, response rates are higher. This may be because the 'call to action' is specifically sought, and individuals feel more obliged to respond.

Links distributed through EDMs or e-newsletters tend to have a moderate response rate, although not as high as a personal invitation. Survey links placed on websites and social media posts tend to attract the lowest response rate for anonymous surveys.

#### Timing

The survey links were sent to VIOs by the respective VPBs across Australia at various times from 6 March 2023 to 8 May 2023. Distribution times were at the discretion of VPBs to suit their communications schedules.

This meant that distribution was fragmented across the different states and territories, with some sending the survey within the first week, and others at various other times up to the beginning of May 2023.

#### Sample

A total of 448 fully completed responses were received from distribution of the anonymous survey link by the VPBs and industry collaborators, with a further 107 fully completed responses obtained from the list created for direct distribution to VIOs. A further 81 partially completed responses were added to the sample, by including data where respondents had completed at least 50% of the survey.

While the exact number of VIOs is unknown, with thousands of VIO's operating across Australia, a sample of 636 provides a +/-3.89% margin of error.

Further, as the total size and composition of all the VIOs in Australia, or any of the individual States and Territories was not known at the time of the survey, no assumptions are made as to its representativeness. Responses were highest from VIOs in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, all of whom distributed stand-alone emails to their members.

However, throughout the data collection period, the sample distribution was monitored based on the location of charities registered in the ACNC Charity Register and every effort was made to ensure that responses were received from each State and Territory, from both metropolitan and regional locations and across a wide range of VIOs of different sizes and focus areas. While it is understood that not all VIO's are registered charities, this provides a useful proxy for understanding the spread of VIOs across Australia.

Based on this, a reasonable cross-section of respondents was achieved and while individual data is not representative within each State and Territory, a number of overall population-level inferences can be drawn from the data in this report.

#### Open End Feedback

As well as 41 quantitative questions, the survey also included 10 open end questions that provided respondents with an opportunity to provide free text or verbatim feedback. These provide richness, nuance and depth to the findings, and form the foundation of many of the key findings of the report. We recommend the free text comments are read in conjunction with the quantitative results to enhance understanding of the digital capacity, capability and challenges faced by VIOs accessing online resources.

# Definitions & Acronyms

Throughout this report we refer to organisational size in revenue terms, and locations of VIOs beyond simply State or Territory. This is largely because these factors indicate the primary differences between VIOs digital capacity and capability and are significant as they provide the VPBs, and others, with clear direction where support, investment and other assistance will offer the biggest impact.

All the definitions used are from respondents who self-described their status. The following provides a guide to the definitions.

## Organisation Size

Description	Definition	Sample size
Micro	Less than \$50,000 annual revenue	116
Small	\$50,000 - \$1 million annual revenue	181
Medium	\$1 - \$5 million annual revenue	93
Large	Over \$5 million	62

## Organisation Location

Description	Definition	Sample size
Capital city / Metropolitan area	Capital of State / Territory	356
Regional city / town	Cities / towns outside capital cities	183
Rural area	Outside regional / capital cities towns	85
Remote area	Operating in remote area	12

## Other acronyms

Acronym	Definition
VPB	Volunteering Peak Bodies operating across Australian States and Territories
VIOs	Volunteer Involving Organisations, who engage and involve volunteers to provide their services

# Executive Summary

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) is a national collaboration between all volunteering peak bodies. It delivers a consistent approach to building effective volunteering practices, increasing the diversity of volunteers, and achieving volunteer management excellence. Funded by the Australian Government, it aims to increase opportunities and accessibility for people to take part in their community through volunteering and ensure VIOs have helpful online tools, information sources, and practical resources to support them.

Along with improving access to volunteering with key priority groups, one of the objectives of the VPBs is to develop online services and resources to build the capacity of VIOs. These resources will provide information around best practice recruitment and training of volunteers, volunteer management and retention, and regulatory obligations and risk management.

To ensure Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) can utilise these online resources, the VPBs sponsored the **VIO Online Capability Survey** to understand VIO's digital capacity and capability. The survey investigated the digital capacity, capability and experiences of VIOs, including access to digital systems, internet connectivity, staff and volunteer skills and the use of information technology. It also sought to identify any barriers to online access and technology use to assess potential impact on use of VPBs resources.

The survey was conducted in March and April 2023, and 636 VIOs provided feedback about their digital capacity and capability.

**Access to digital technologies is vital for VIOs in managing their operations efficiently, maintaining service delivery, and communicating with their communities of interest.**

To understand the digital capacity of VIOs, the survey first sought to understand VIOs access to digital technology tools. To do this, the survey asked several questions about the digital technology, software, systems, communication tools and social media used by VIOs.

In terms of digital hardware, most VIOs report access to basic hardware. More than four in five responding organisations use laptops and mobile phones, and these are the most used devices. Those without access to digital devices tend to say volunteers provide their own technology.

Conversely, adoption of software and systems designed for operational management and service delivery is relatively low among VIOs, except for the larger ones. About two-thirds use accounting software, but only a third use more specialised software like customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and a quarter use HR and volunteer management systems.

Specialised people management systems are predominantly used by larger, capital city-based VIOs. Interestingly, staff and volunteer management systems are more prevalent in the health or local government sector, while client/case management systems are commonly used by those providing community and aged care services.

A significant portion of surveyed organisations (30%) rely on traditional methods like telephone, face to face, and paper to manage their operations to some degree.

**Overall, while most VIOs have some access to technology, there is a clear digital divide between metropolitan organisations and their rural counterparts.**



### Connection to a reliable internet connection is also a key indicator of digital capacity.

Positively, most VIOs can access the internet in some way, although the digital divide is still very evident.

Almost half of VIOs use fixed-line connections such as WiFi or ethernet, particularly in metropolitan areas. Perhaps due to cost or a lack of fixed premises, however, only 31% of micro-organisations have access to a fixed line connection.

Many VIOs also rely on mobile connections, with a combination of fixed-line and mobile the second most common way VIOs connect to the internet. Overall, 6% of respondents rely solely on mobile-only connections, although they are the only method of internet access for 25% of VIOs in remote areas and 19% of micro-organisations.

Access to reliable internet remains a challenge for many VIOs, particularly in remote areas, where 17% of VIOs report having no internet access at all.

### When it comes to technology investment, nearly half of VIOs have recently upgraded their systems, though cost remains a barrier for many, particularly smaller organisations.

Over the past year, 49% of VIOs have invested in new technologies or digital assets, with medium and large organisations demonstrating the highest propensity to replace technology assets. The main areas of investment are in software upgrades, hardware, and website improvements.

Financial constraints, lack of perceived need, limited knowledge and expertise, reliance on personal devices, and the preferences of volunteers are the main barriers to investment. Most organisations prioritise funds to direct service provision, making it challenging to allocate resources to digital investments.

### VIOs use a variety of means to communicate with their communities and recruit volunteers, with social media use widespread.

When communicating with staff, volunteers and communities, email is used by over nine in ten organisations, making it the most common means of communication.

Social media platforms also play a key role in VIOs communication strategies. Overall, 86% of respondents indicate their organisation uses social media to connect with their staff, volunteers and community of interest. Facebook is the most popular platform across all types of VIOs, followed by Instagram. LinkedIn and Twitter are primarily used by larger, city-based organisations, while other platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest have relatively low usage rates across all types and sizes of VIOs.

Video conferencing tools like MS Teams and Zoom are used by approximately two thirds (66%) of VIOs and have become embedded in most medium and large organisations. At 25%, uptake in remote areas is significantly lower, possibly as a result of technological barriers such as reliable internet access which is imperative for effective functioning of these tools.

Perhaps a result of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, video conferencing tools are more widely used in Victoria, at 75%. This compares to only 69% of VIOs in New South Wales, 57% in Western Australia and 55% in Queensland.

Despite the proliferation of online communication, however, when it comes to recruitment, word of mouth remains the most effective way to source volunteers.

### When asked to rate their overall digital capacity, specifically in relation to its currency, effectiveness in supporting service delivery and organisational operations, three in five VIOs are positive.

More specifically, around seven in ten VIOs believe their technology is up-to-date, supports effective service delivery, and aids in running their organisation efficiently. At 67%, slightly fewer agree their digital technology supports the learning and development needs of VIOs, however 79% are committed to maintaining robust data protection and security.

Medium-sized organisations are most satisfied with their digital infrastructure, with approximately four in five agreeing their technology is current and supports service delivery and efficiency.

With more resources to invest in IT infrastructure and information systems, large VIOs are most likely to say their technology is up-to-date (79%). However, it appears a point is reached when it gets more complex, and size and scale reduce efficiencies.

Only 63% of micro and 66% of small organisations feel their technology is up-to-date, while similar proportions agree that their digital technology supports effective service delivery and enables efficient operations.

In terms of geographical location, rural and remote VIOs are less likely to have access to current technology, with only 62% of rural VIOs and 42% of remote VIOs indicating their technology supports effective service delivery. In contrast, approximately seven in ten metropolitan or regional VIOs believe their digital technology is current and supports their operations effectively, highlighting the digital divide between urban and rural/remote areas.



### The ability to access online tools and resources is dependent not just on access to technology, but staff and volunteers having the skills and knowledge to employ these tools effectively.

Assessing overall digital competency, 61% of VIOs rate their staff as good or excellent. On average, over seven in ten VIOs agree their staff are confident and they possess the skills and knowledge, to use digital technology. Once more, a higher proportion of city based, medium and large organisations agree their staff have adequate skills and knowledge to use digital technology than smaller, regionally based VIOs.

While most VIOs rely on volunteers to obtain skills from other sources, 45% provide digital skills training to their staff. Those VIOs who do not offer digital skills training cite budget constraints, lack of need, or time limitations, alongside a lack of skills or digital literacy. This is particularly evident among older volunteers.

While most VIOs use a combination of face-to-face and online methods for training, remote and rural areas, and micro-organisations, are more likely to use only face-to-face training, potentially reflecting limited internet access or a preference for a more personalised approach.

### Two thirds of all VIOs rate their ability to access and share resources, tools, and information online as good or excellent.

Despite this, there is a clear trend for metropolitan based VIOs to rate their capability highly (72%) than regional (65%), rural (55%), and remote VIOs (50%). Moreover, micro-organisations are significantly less likely (53%) than their larger counterparts to indicate their organisation has the capability to access and share resources online.

Similar patterns are evident in VIOs ability to participate in online training and support, with an overall 63% of VIOs rating their ability as good or excellent. Organisation size tends to have the most impact in this area, with small and micro-organisations (53% and 44% respectively) significantly less likely to rate their ability to participate in online training and support highly, than medium (72%) and large (81%) organisations.

In terms of managing volunteer recruitment and retention online, overall, 55% of VIOs rate their ability as good or excellent. Location tends to have more impact on online volunteer management capability than size.

### The primary barriers to online engagement among VIOs are a lack of time, resources and funding for technology investments.

Many organisations report a chronic lack of time as the main obstacle to progress. While only around a quarter of VIOs consider lack of time and resources as their top challenge, 62% rank this within their top three issues, indicating a persistent concern across organisations. As one respondent stated, "we are a small team with a big workload, so time is our biggest challenge".

The second most significant obstacle is funding for technology investment. This is the top issue for 30% of VIOs, with 55% listing it among their top three. This financial constraint impedes the ability of VIOs to adopt, maintain, and upgrade digital technologies, leading to compromised quality in tech support and services with respondents indicating "cost would be a barrier if we needed to update all our digital technologies".

Staff-related issues, such as lack of digital skills and confidence, are also prevalent. Seven percent (7%) of VIOs highlight staff skills as their top challenge, with a third including it in their top three. Further, 43% of VIOs say staff skills and knowledge restricts their ability to use online resources.

Staff resistance to digital technology is another significant hurdle. Many comments suggest they have "staff and volunteers who are either not accustomed to using technology, or whose experience using technology is significantly out of date" or their "volunteer base is in the 'aged' bracket who were not brought up with technology."

Infrastructure inadequacies also contribute to the challenges faced by VIOs in their adoption of digital technology, with between 4 and 6% of VIOs citing issues like outdated software and information systems, aging infrastructure, and reliable internet access as top challenges. These issues are included in the top three for between 16 and 23% of VIOs.

Remote areas face specific infrastructure challenges, with 42% reporting technology and internet access as an issue. Smaller and medium-sized organisations also have these limitations, implying resource constraints in these entities.

### VIOs provided many suggestions that would help them overcome these barriers to digital engagement.

Amongst other things, suggestions include support with digital training tailored to specific roles would be helpful. Respondents suggest there is value in free online courses, webinars, and training modules to foster continuous learning.

Funding is also crucial to overcome digital barriers, including financial aid for equipment, technology infrastructure, IT personnel, and staff training. VIOs suggest they would benefit from access to cost-effective technology resources, reliable internet, and robust IT support systems, including volunteer management software, access to licenses at a negotiated cost, and discounted hardware.

Many VIOs express a need for expert advice to navigate IT challenges and optimise digital systems usage, with suggestions to create a hotline for free, non-technical IT guidance.

### Nearly nine in ten VIOs indicate online volunteer management resources would be useful to their organisation.

Respondents say these resources would provide consistency and standardisation across the sector or would provide greater access to the information they need. Others suggest online resources would contribute to the skill development and education of staff and volunteers and help by bridging funding and resource constraints experienced by many VIOs.

Although fewer in number, organisations who indicate online resources would be of little value to them suggest they were not needed; either they already have this knowledge or that these types of resources are already available.

Others note users would need a base level of digital literacy to access them or that there is unlikely to be enough interest in using online resources, suggesting reluctance to change the current way they are managing their volunteers.

### Three quarters of respondents are confident their organisation would use online resources designed to assist with recruitment, retention, training and management of volunteers.

Most commonly, VIOs indicate they see potential to use online resources to improve the volunteer experience. Others highlight the potential of online resources to streamline volunteer management processes and increase efficiency. Respondents say they would use online resources that could simplify tasks such as recruitment, rostering, communication, and reporting, and suggest online resources might also save time and reduce administrative burdens. Feedback also suggests VIOs see value in using online resources to help them follow best practices in volunteer management.

In another prominent theme, VIOs would use the resources to improve their training and development within their organisation.

Respondents express a desire for online resources to provide induction training for new volunteers, upskill existing volunteers, and educate staff and volunteer managers on best practices in volunteer recruitment, retention, and management.

### Conclusion

Overall, while most VIOs have some access to technology, there is a clear digital divide between metropolitan and regional VIOs, as well as between larger and smaller entities.

This is evident in their varied access to online resources. Metropolitan and larger VIOs are typically more digitally capable due to better resources, whereas regional, rural, remote, and smaller organisations often face substantial barriers such as limited funding, lack of time and outdated technology.

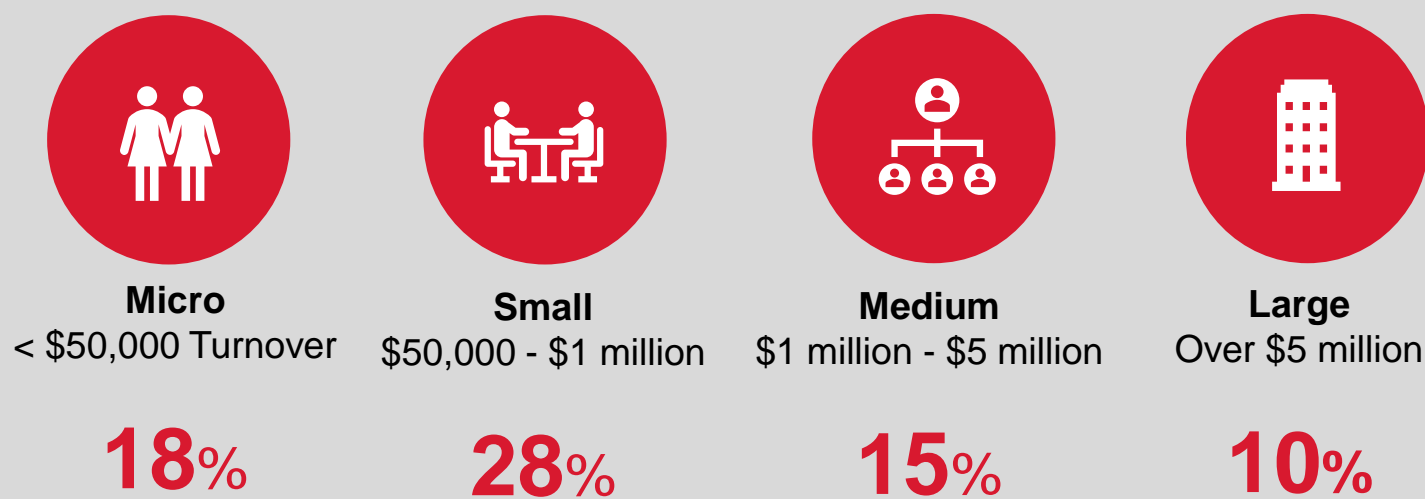
Further, results suggest the digital literacy of staff and volunteers is a barrier to online engagement. There is openness to targeted support to enhance digital competency among staff and volunteers, thus improving their overall digital capability and effectiveness.

Positively, there is recognition among VIOs of the role digital tools and resources can play in improving their operational capacity. A majority of VIOs appear to believe online resources can equip them with best practice strategies to recruit and retain volunteers effectively, as well as more efficient ways to manage and train them, thus improving their overall service delivery.

**Positively, a majority of VIOs believe online resources would equip them with best practice strategies to recruit and retain volunteers effectively, and more efficient ways to manage and train them.**

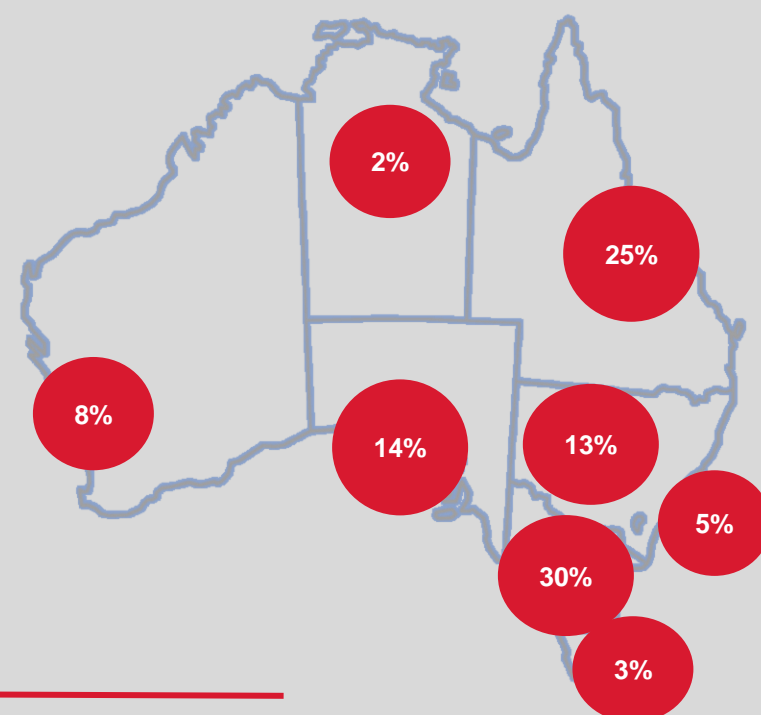
# Respondent Profile

636 VIOs responded to the survey, ranging from the smallest grass-roots organisations through to very large entities



Location	%
Capital city / metropolitan area	56%
Regional city / town	29%
Rural area	13%
Remote area	2%

VIOs operate across all States and Territories & all locations



VIOs engage over **308,000** volunteers on a regular basis

**47%**

Have less than 5 paid staff

**51%**

Have between 10 and 100 regular volunteers

**153,900**

Additional volunteers engaged on an ad-hoc or project basis

## Top Ten Focus Areas

Community Services	21%
Arts, Culture & Museums	10%
Sport / Recreation	7%
Environment & Conservation	6%
Local Government	6%
Seniors & Aged Care	6%
Health + Mental Health	6%
Family & Young People	6%
Disability Services	4%
Emergency Response / Disaster Relief	4%



# Key Findings

## 01

### Digital Capacity

- In terms of digital capacity, most VIOs report access to basic hardware. Laptops (89%) and mobile phones (85%) are the most used devices, followed by desktop computers (72%) and tablets (46%). Adoption of software and systems designed for operational management and service delivery is relatively low among VIOs, except for the larger ones.
- Most VIOs can access the internet in some way, although the digital divide does still exist. While most VIOs have a fixed line connection, mobile-only connections are the only method of internet access for some VIOs in remote areas (25%) and within micro-organisations (19%). Further, access to reliable internet remains a challenge for many VIOs, particularly in remote areas, where 17% of VIOs report having no internet access at all.
- Over the past year, 49% of VIOs have invested in new technologies or digital assets, with medium and large organisations demonstrating the highest inclination to replace technology assets. However, cost and budget remains a barrier to investment for many, particularly smaller organisations.
- Approximately nine in ten VIOs indicate their organisation uses email and social media to connect with their staff, volunteers and community of interest. Facebook is the most popular platform across all types of VIOs, followed by Instagram. Video conferencing tools like MS Teams and Zoom are used by approximately two thirds of VIOs and have become embedded in most medium and large organisations.
- Despite the proliferation of online communication, when it comes to volunteer recruitment, word of mouth remains the most popular method.
- Around seven out of ten VIOs believe that their technology is up-to-date (71%), supports effective service delivery (74%), and aids in running their organisation efficiently (75%).

## 02

### Digital Capability

- Assessing overall digital competency, 61% of VIOs rated their staff as good or excellent. On average, 74% of VIOs agree that their staff were confident and 77% agree they possess the skills and knowledge to use digital technology.
- While most VIOs rely on volunteers to obtain skills from other sources, 45% provide digital skills training to their staff. Those VIOs who do not offer digital skills training cite budget constraints, lack of need, or time limitations and lack of skills or digital literacy, particularly among older volunteers.
- Two thirds (67%) of VIOs rate their ability to access and share resources, tools, and information online as good or excellent, while 63% of VIOs rate their ability to participate in online training and support, as good or excellent.
- In terms of managing volunteer recruitment and retention online, overall, 55% of VIOs rate their ability as good or excellent.

# 03

## Barriers to Online Engagement

- Many organisations report a chronic lack of time as the main obstacle to digital progress. While only 26% of VIOs consider lack of time and resources as their top challenge, a considerable 62% ranked this within their top three,
- The second most significant obstacle is funding for technology investment. This ranks as the top issue for 30% of VIOs, with 55% listing it among their top three. Nearly a third (31%) of VIOs say that their organisation's ability to use online resources is limited by technology and access to the internet.
- Staff-related issues, such as lack of digital skills and confidence, are also prevalent. Seven percent of VIOs highlight staff skills as their top challenge, with a third including it in their top three. Further, 43% of VIOs said that staff skills and knowledge restricted their ability to use online resources.
- Infrastructural inadequacies also contribute to the challenges faced by VIOs in their adoption of digital technology, with between 4-6% of VIOs citing issues like outdated software and information systems, aging infrastructure, and reliable internet access as their number one barrier to online engagement. These issues were in the top three for between 16-23% of the organisations.

# 04

## Supporting Digital Engagement

- To overcome these barriers, VIOs indicate they need support with digital training including resources such as free online courses, webinars, and training modules to foster continuous learning.
- Funding is also crucial to overcome digital barriers, including financial aid for equipment, technology infrastructure, IT personnel, and staff training.
- Many VIOs also expressed a need for expert advice to navigate IT challenges and optimise digital systems usage, suggesting the creation of a hotline for free, non-technical IT guidance.

# 05

## Interest in Online Resources

- Nearly nine in ten VIOs indicate online volunteer management resources would be useful to their organisation.
- Three quarters of respondents are confident that their organisation would use online resources designed to assist with recruitment, retention, training and management of volunteers.
- VIOs see potential to use online resources to improve the volunteer experience, increase efficiency and save time by streamlining tasks such as recruitment, rostering, communication, and reporting.



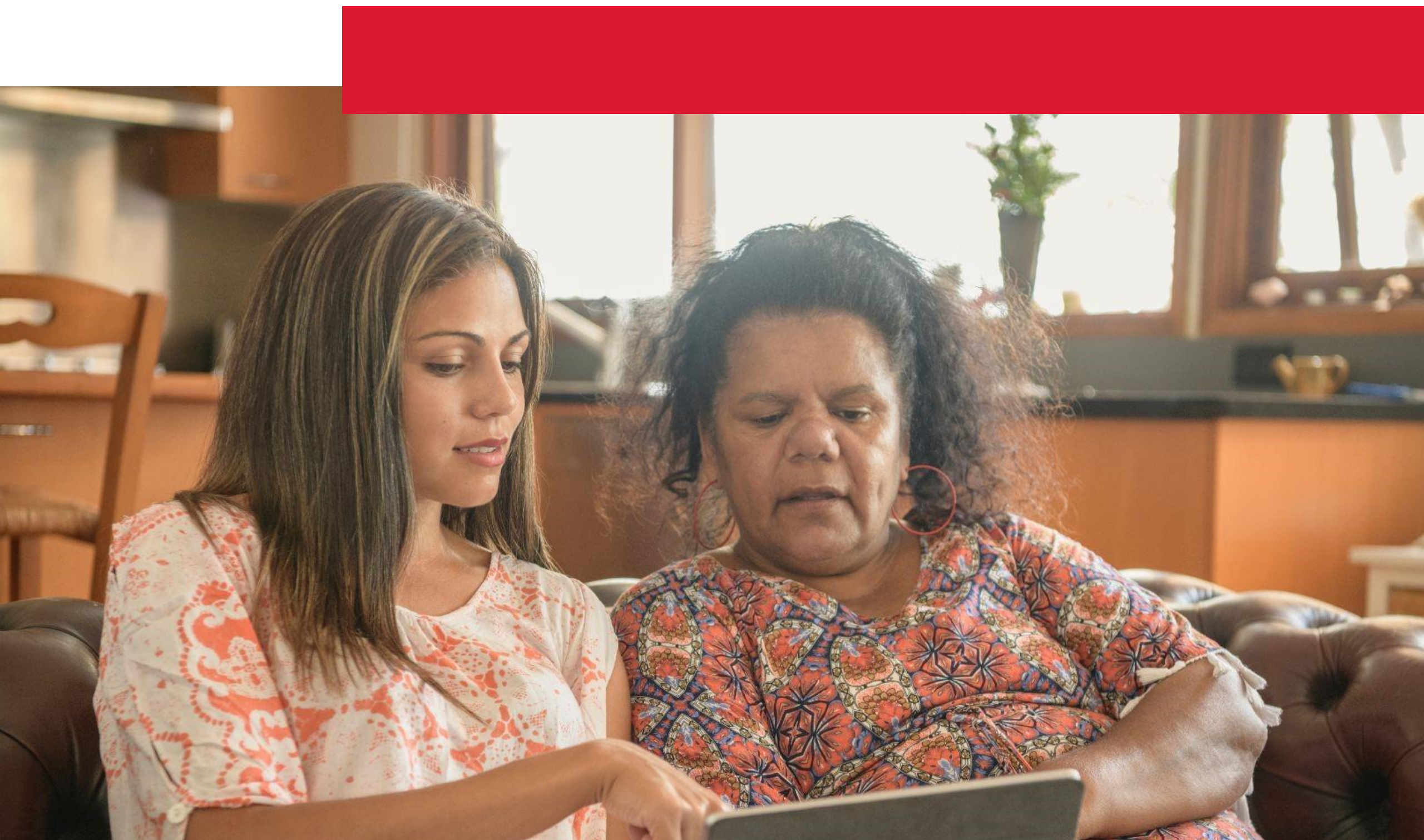


“We only have 2 volunteer staff who use technology, and both have access to technical support through family connections. On-going regular committed funds for staff, technology and support would help grow the organisation.”



Section 1:

# Sample of Volunteer Involving Organisations





# Respondent Profile

## Organisational Size and Structure

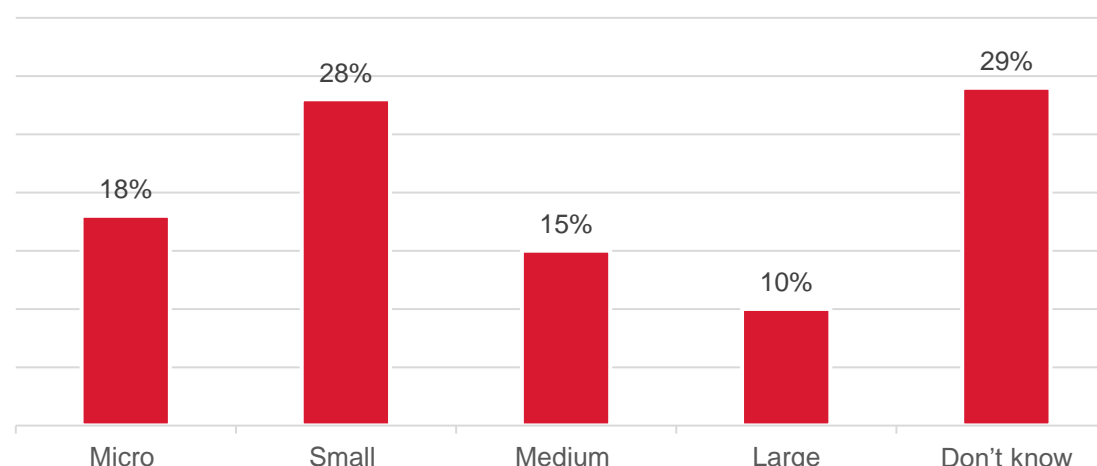
### Organisation Size

Organisations have been classified based on their annual turnover, with the survey obtaining very high participation from the target audience of micro and small organisations.

Overall, 18% of survey respondents work in micro VIOs who reported less than \$50,000 in annual revenues. A further 28% have revenues of less than \$1 million per annum, while 15% have between \$1 million and \$5 million. One in ten respondents work with organisations with turnover exceeding \$5 million.

**Q. What was your organisation's annual turnover (approximately) in your last financial year? N=636**

Size	Sample	TOTAL
	636	%
Micro (Less than \$50,000)	116	18%
Small (\$50,000 - \$1 million)	181	28%
Medium (\$1 - \$5 million)	93	15%
Large (Over \$5 million)	62	10%
Don't know	184	29%



### Focus Area

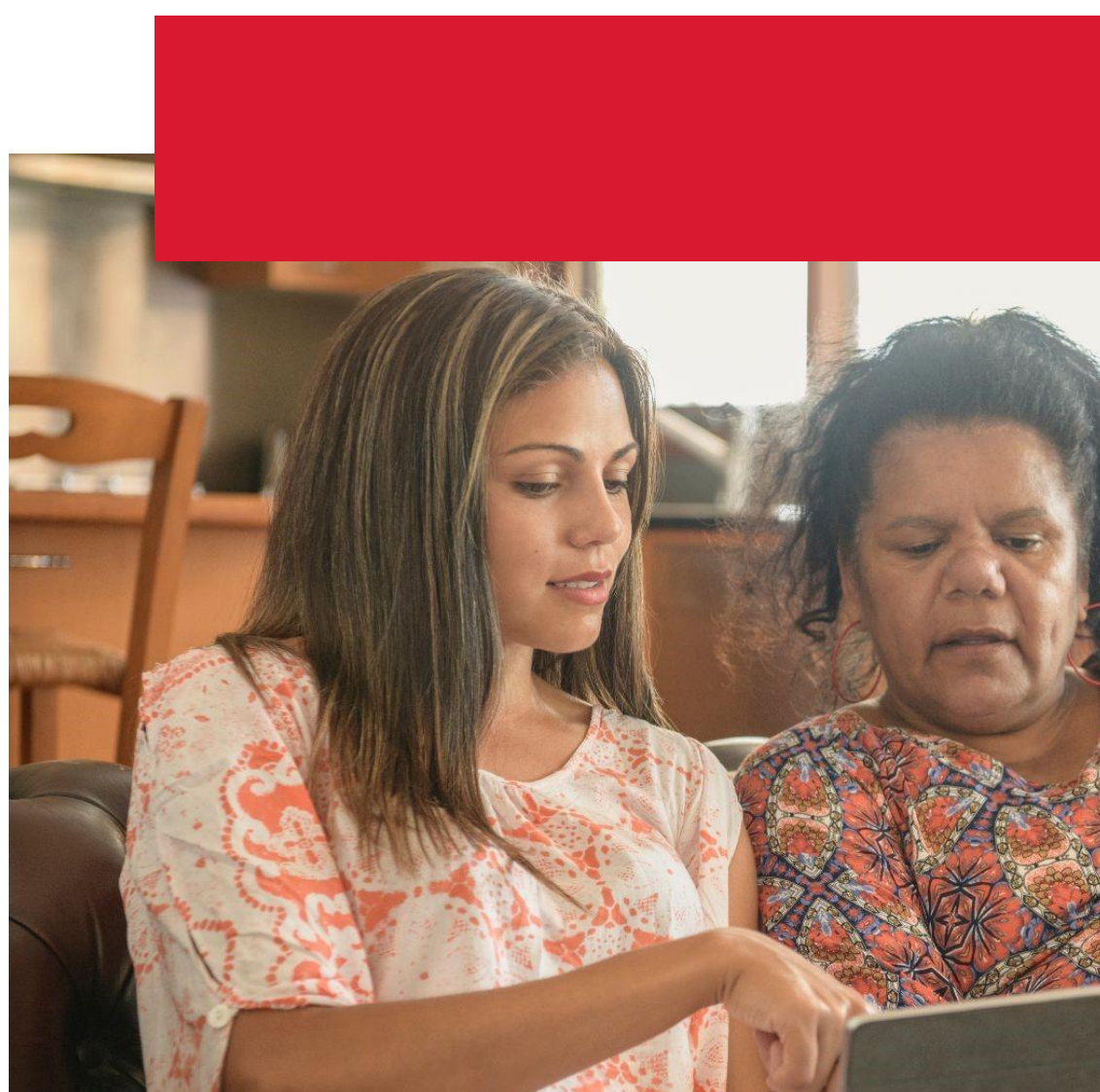
VIOs provide services across a wide range of sectors, supporting a diverse range of needs across the community.

The most common area in which respondents work is community services, with 21% of respondents selecting this as their main focus area. A further 10% work in the arts, culture, museums and heritage sector, while 7% are sporting organisations. Organisations working in the environment and conservation, family and young people, health and mental health, local government and aged care sectors each represent 6% of respondents.

**Q. Please indicate the PRIMARY focus of your organisation. N=636**

Focus Area	Sample	TOTAL
	636	%
Animal Welfare	8	1%
Arts, Culture & Museums	62	10%
Community Services	131	21%
Disability Services	27	4%
Education & Training	21	3%
Emergency Response / Disaster Relief	25	4%
Environment & Conservation	41	6%
Family & Young People	35	6%
Health + Mental Health	36	6%
Human Rights / Justice / Legal	11	2%
Indigenous Australians	4	1%
Local Government	41	6%
Mentoring & Advocacy	2	0%
Migrant Services	6	1%
Religion	11	2%
Seniors & Aged Care	38	6%
Sport / Recreation	46	7%
Veteran Services	3	0%
Volunteering Support Services	13	2%
Multiple / Other	75	12%

Significantly higher / lower than total



### State

#### Responses were received from VIOs across Australia.

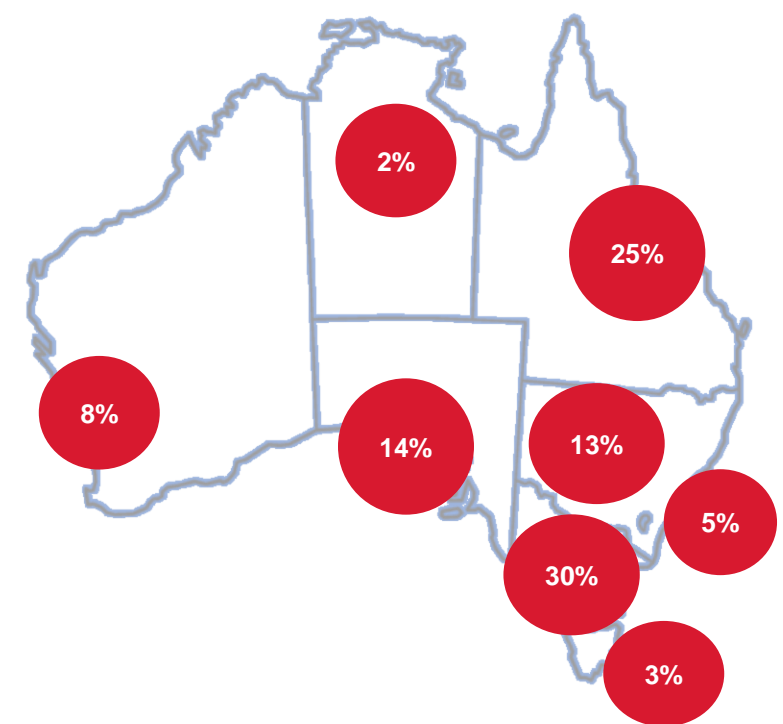
While some states achieved higher engagement than others, results have been provided for all areas – although data for states with low samples should be treated with caution.

The largest response was received from VIOs operating in Victoria, with 193 responses from this state. Queensland VIOs are also well represented, with 159 responses. South Australia makes up 14% of the sample, with 89 responses. New South Wales comprises 13%, Western Australia 8%, ACT 5%, Tasmania 3% and the Northern Territory 2% of the overall sample.

Q. In which state or territory is the organisation or branch where you work located?

N=636

State	%	636
ACT	5%	31
NSW	13%	83
NT	2%	10
QLD	25%	159
SA	16%	89
TAS	3%	18
VIC	30%	193
WA	8%	51
Outside Australia	0%	2



Significantly higher / lower than total

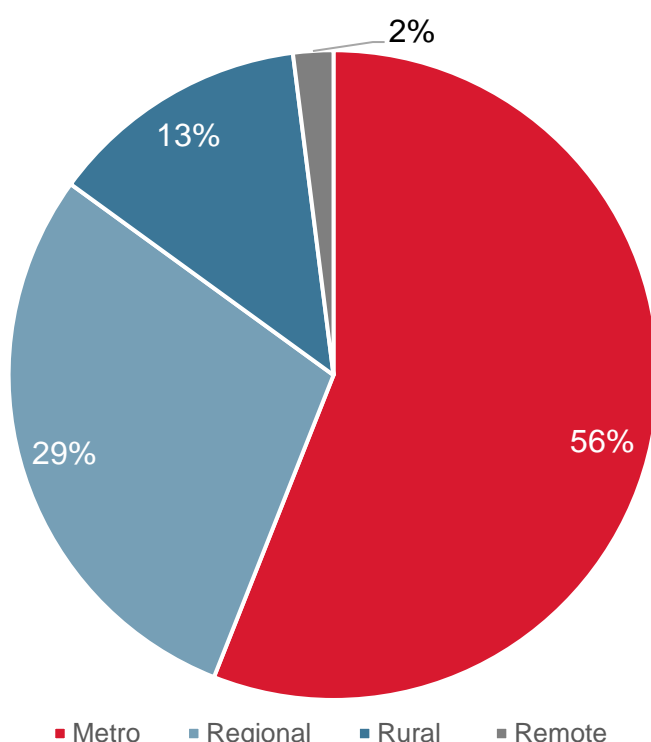
### Location

#### While most respondents operate in capital cities or metropolitan areas, over two in five provide services and work with volunteers in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia.

Overall, 56% of respondents operate from capital city or metropolitan areas, with these VIOs tending to be medium and large organisations. Over seven in ten of the largest VIOs operate from a capital city or metropolitan area.

At the other end of the spectrum, 15% of respondents operate from a rural or remote area. This group are more likely to be small VIOs - 23% of micro-organisations operate from a rural area, while 5% of this group are in remote areas.

Organisations of a variety of sizes operate in regional towns across Australia. Overall, nearly a third of responding VIOs operate from a regional town, including 37% of micro, 30% of small and approximately a quarter of medium and large VIOs.



Q. Which best describes where the organisation or branch where you work is located? N=636

Location			MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
	636	%	116	181	93	62
Capital city / metropolitan	356	56%	34%	52%	68%	71%
Regional city / town	183	29%	37%	30%	23%	26%
Rural area	85	13%	23%	17%	9%	3%
Remote area	12	2%	5%	2%	1%	0%

Significantly higher / lower than total



## Volunteers

Respondents engage over 300,000 volunteers on a regular basis, with a further 153,000 engaged on a project or ad-hoc basis.

Respondents were asked the number of volunteers they engage on a regular basis, as well as the numbers they engage on a project or ad-hoc basis.

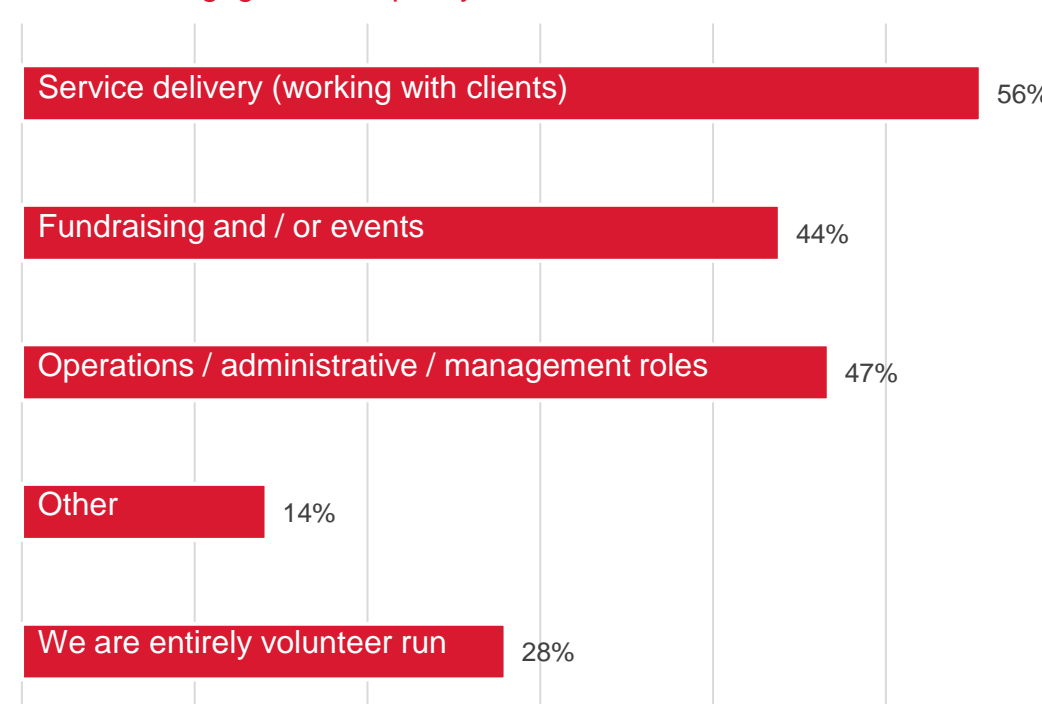
On average, the VIOs who participated in the survey engage 484 volunteers, although this figure is skewed by the very large VIOs included in the sample. More than half of the participating organisations engage less than 50 volunteers on a regular basis, with 20% of the sample having fewer than 10 regular volunteers. Overall, survey participants engage over 300,000 volunteers on a regular basis.

Some organisations also recruit volunteers on a project or ad hoc basis. On average, respondents engage 57.9 volunteers on a project basis, although 37% do not involve project volunteers at all, and 19% engage between 1 and 5 volunteers on a project basis. Further, respondents have an average of 184 volunteers they engage on an ad-hoc basis, with three quarters having less than 20 ad hoc or casual volunteers. Overall, respondents have over 153,000 project or casual volunteers.

**Q. Approximately how many volunteers were there in your organisation as at 1 January 2023, on a regular, ongoing basis, on a project basis and on an ad-hoc or informal basis?**  
N=636

Number of Volunteers	Regular Volunteers	Project Volunteers	Ad-hoc Volunteers
0	3%	37%	30%
1 -5	8%	19%	19%
6-10	12%	14%	12%
11-20	18%	11%	14%
21-50	21%	10%	11%
51-100	12%	2%	5%
101-200	10%	3%	3%
201-500	6%	2%	1%
501-1000	3%	0%	2%
Over 1000	5%	1%	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>484.8</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>184.1</b>
<b>Sum</b>	<b>308,333</b>	<b>36,803</b>	<b>117,104</b>

Volunteer Engagement Capacity



Overall, 56% of respondents engage volunteers to assist with service delivery, working with clients. A further 44% involve volunteers for fundraising or event purposes, and 47% rely on volunteers for operations or administrative roles.

Most micro-organisations are entirely volunteer run (83%), as are 34% of small VIOs. Few of the larger VIOs are entirely volunteer run, although approximately four in five medium and large organisations involve volunteers in service delivery roles. Approximately seven in ten medium and large VIOs engage volunteers in a management, operational or administrative capacity.

Organisations in regional, rural and remote areas are also more likely to be entirely volunteer run, at 39%, 46% and 50% respectively.

**Q. How does your organisation involve volunteers in its operations? N=636**

	TOTAL	METRO	REGIONAL	RURAL	REMOTE	MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	636	356	183	85	12	116	181	93	62
Not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Service delivery (working with clients)	56%	65%	46%	39%	33%	9%	48%	78%	85%
Fundraising and / or events	44%	49%	37%	39%	42%	10%	48%	62%	68%
Operations / administrative / management	47%	54%	39%	38%	25%	9%	54%	71%	68%
Other	14%	14%	14%	16%	17%	6%	14%	16%	13%
We are entirely volunteer run	28%	17%	39%	46%	50%	83%	34%	0%	2%

Section 2:

# The digital capacity of volunteer involving organisations





## Digital Technology Access

Access to digital technologies is crucial for VIOs in managing their operations, delivering services, accessing online tools and resources and communicating effectively with staff, volunteers, and their community of interest.

To understand the digital capacity of VIOs, the survey first sought to understand their access to digital technology tools. To do this, we asked several questions about the digital technology, software, systems, communication tools and social media used by VIOs.

### Digital Device Usage

The survey reveals that laptops are the most used digital device. Nearly nine in ten (89%) VIOs use laptops, closely followed by mobile phones at 85%.

Desktop computers, while not as prevalent as laptops and mobiles, still have a significant usage rate at 72%. Tablets lag notably behind the other devices, with less than half (46%) of the VIOs who contributed to the survey using them.

**Organisations in capital cities and metropolitan areas generally report higher access to all types of digital devices than VIOs in rural and remote areas.**

Larger organisations also consistently show higher use of all technology devices than smaller organisations.

Organisations in metropolitan areas report the highest access to laptops, at 93%, followed by remote areas at 92%. VIOs in regional areas are significantly less likely to use laptops, at

83%. Laptops are commonly used across organisations of all sizes, with usage rates ranging from 84% of small VIOs to 98% of medium sized organisations.

Mobile phone use is also widespread, with rates consistent across different locations, ranging from 80% in rural areas to 92% in remote areas. Micro organisations are significantly less likely to use mobile phones, at 74%. This compares to the high use reported by medium and large organisations of 94% and 98% respectively.

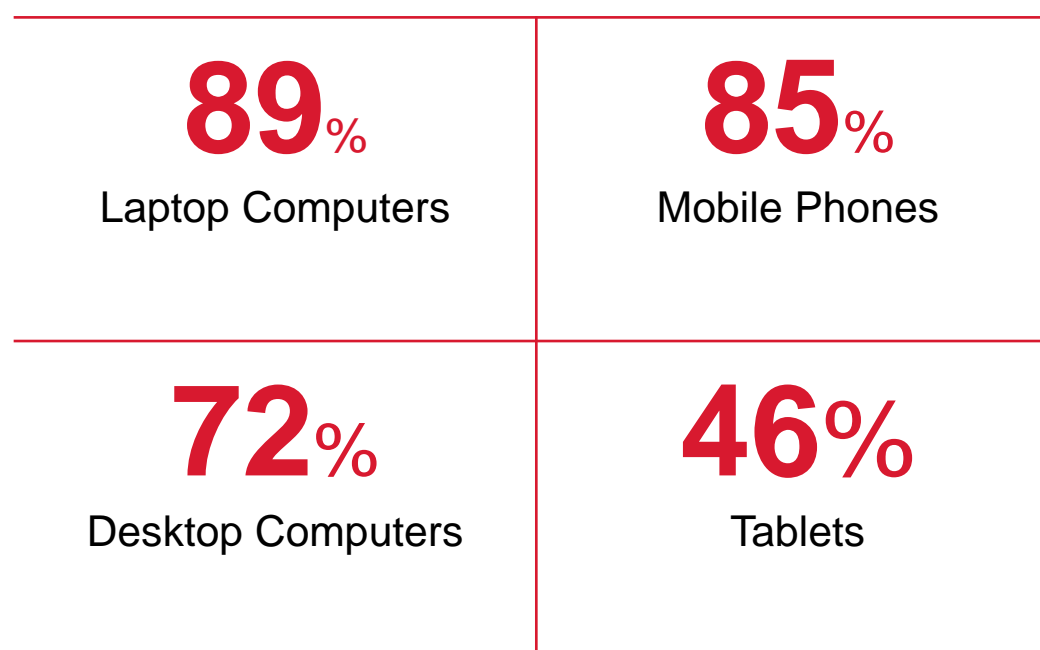
Desktop computers are widely used, with VIOs in metropolitan areas reporting the highest access at 74%, followed closely by those in regional cities and towns at 72%. At around two thirds, organisations in rural and remote areas are slightly less likely to use desktop computers. As expected, larger organisations report higher reliance on desktop computers, with use of these at 77%.

Access to tablets is less common, with varying adoption rates among organisations. Those in capital cities and metropolitan areas have the highest access to tablets, at 48%, while VIOs in rural areas have the lowest access at 31%. Notably, remote areas have a higher usage rate of 67%. Larger organisations tend to use tablets more frequently, with adoption rates of 65%.

There are no differences in the propensity to use different digital devices, across the various states of Australia.



### Digital Technology Use Among Volunteer Involving Organisations





While some large VIOs have access to specialised systems, a majority of micro and small organisations rely on spreadsheets to run their operations.

**Q. Which of the following software does your organisation use to manage your operations and deliver services? N=636**

	TOTAL	MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	636	116	181	93	62
Accounting Software	62%	43%	80%	76%	68%
Membership Spreadsheet	37%	53%	50%	30%	19%
CRM Software	33%	8%	23%	58%	52%
Client Management Software	27%	5%	24%	33%	50%
HR Software	26%	1%	10%	29%	71%
Volunteer Management Software	25%	9%	12%	20%	48%
Fundraising Platforms	17%	8%	20%	27%	31%
Team Management Software	17%	6%	13%	23%	35%
None of the above	9%	24%	6%	2%	5%

Significantly higher / lower than total

## Software Adoption Rates

Use of specialised software tools and platforms to manage operations and service delivery is relatively low among all but the largest VIOs.

While nearly two thirds of VIOs use accounting software, more specialised software systems such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, client management solutions, HR and volunteer management systems are used by fewer than a third of survey respondents.

Larger organisations tend to rely more on software solutions for their operations and services, with very few micro and small organisations using software other than accounting software and membership spreadsheets.

While accounting software has relatively deep penetration within small and medium sized VIOs, at 80% and 76% respectively, it is only used by 62% of respondents overall. Driving this result, only 43% of micro-organisations use accounting software - suggesting very few of the smallest organisations have moved beyond simple record keeping processes. In addition, only 68% of large VIOs say the make use of accounting software. However, this may be due to the qualifying examples of accounting software in the question, which listed MYOB, QuickBooks and Xero as examples. Large VIOs may be using more sophisticated accounting software.

Medium and large organisations are also more likely to have access to CRM software than their smaller counterparts. CRM software is also used by 42% of capital city based VIOs.

Further suggesting reliance on manual processes amongst small VIOs, approximately half of micro and small organisations rely on membership spreadsheets to manage their operations.

Specialised people management systems, with client/case management, HR and people management and volunteer management software are each used by approximately a quarter of responding organisations. However, adoption of these systems is again only evident amongst large, capital city-based organisations. For example, 48% of large organisations have access to volunteer management software. Conversely, few micro (9%), small (12%) or regionally based (9%) VIOs have volunteer management systems to help them manage their clients and people.

### Software usage also varies by sector.

Of interest, staff and volunteer management systems are widely used by those operating in the health or local government sector, while VIOs providing community and aged care services are more likely to rely on client / case management systems than those in other sectors.

Volunteer management software also appears to have more traction in Victoria than other states, with 32% of VIOs in the state using specific software like Rosterfy or Volgistics to help them manage their volunteer workforce.

A quarter of survey organisations also rely on traditional methods, such as telephone, face to face and paper to manage their organisation to some extent. Thirty percent (30%) say they rely on traditional methods “to a moderate amount” or ‘a lot’, while 14% rely on traditional systems ‘extensively’.



“Some of our programs for managing volunteers are very out of date and don't work efficiently.”



## VIOs use a variety of communication tools to connect with their staff, volunteers, and community of interest.

### Email and social media are commonly used across all VIOs for connecting with staff, volunteers and their community.

Unsurprisingly, email is the most universally used communication tool across all VIOs, irrespective of location and size. It is used by over nine in ten organisations, making it the most common means of communication.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, are the second most widely used online communication tools. They are more frequently used in regional cities/towns (90%) and by medium and large organisations (92%), than in rural areas (75%) and micro-organisations (79%). This suggests that larger organisations in urban areas might be more adept at leveraging social media.

### The use of other online communication tools varies depending on the location and size of the organisation.

Larger, metropolitan based organisations typically employ a wider range of these digital tools, while smaller, rural, and remote organisations predominantly rely on email and social media.

Video conferencing tools like MS Teams and Zoom are used by two thirds (66%) of VIOs although their usage varies more significantly across different types of organisations.

These tools have become embedded in most medium (87%) and large organisations (84%), as well as those in capital cities (74%).

However, the uptake in remote areas (25%) is significantly lower, possibly as a result of technological barriers such as unreliable internet access, which is imperative for effective functioning of these tools.

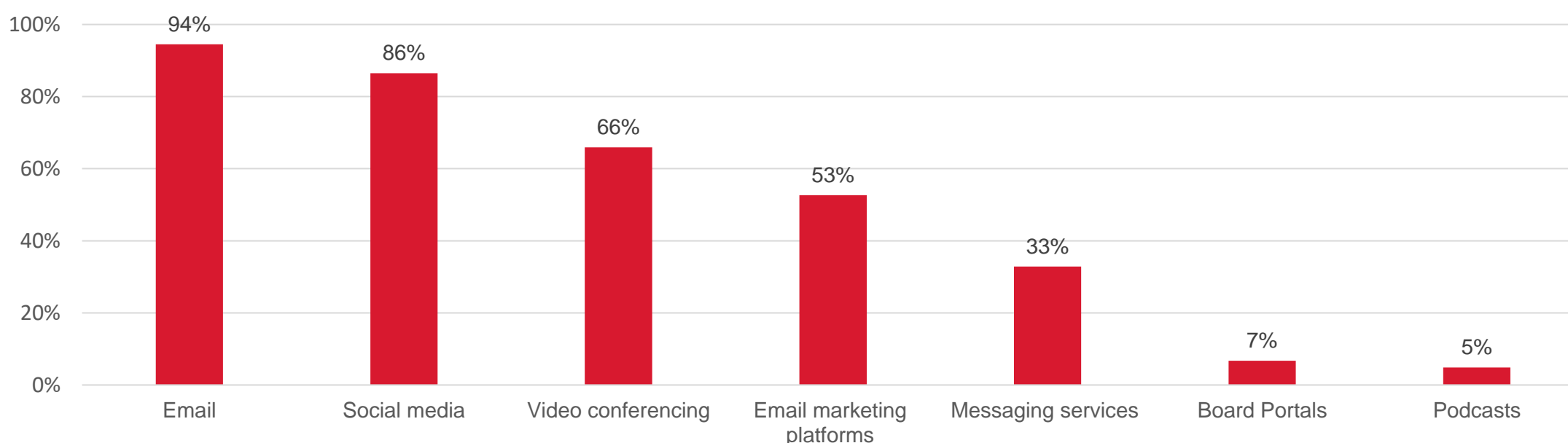
Interestingly, video conferencing tools are also more widely used in Victoria, at 75%. This compares to only 69% of VIOs in New South Wales, 57% in Western Australia and 55% in Queensland.

Email marketing platforms, like Mailchimp and Campaign Monitor, and messaging services such as WhatsApp and Messenger, are used to lesser extent. Of interest, small VIOs are significantly more likely to use messaging services than larger organisations.

### Communication methods also vary by sector.

VIOs operating in the disability services sector are more likely to use podcasts to communicate with their community (19%), while those working in sports and recreation are heavier users of messaging services like WhatsApp (70%). Nearly all VIOs operating in the health sector use video conferencing tools to communicate (96%).

**Q. What systems does your organisation use to help you connect to staff, volunteers, and your community of interest? N=636**



	MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	116	181	93	62
Email (Gmail, Outlook etc.)	94%	95%	96%	98%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)	79%	90%	92%	92%
Video conferencing (MS Teams, Zoom, etc.)	43%	57%	87%	84%
Email marketing platforms (e.g. Mailchimp, Campaign Monitor etc)	34%	51%	67%	71%
Messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.)	34%	45%	30%	42%

Significantly higher / lower than total



**Social media is a key tool of VIOs, with Facebook and Instagram the most used platforms.**

Overall, 86% of respondents indicated their organisation uses social media to connect with their staff, volunteers and community of interest. Facebook is by far the most widely used, with Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter also used by VIOs to engage with their community of interest.

Facebook is the most popular platform across all categories with near-universal usage. Its usage is 98% in both metropolitan and regional areas. Its usage in rural and remote areas reaches 100%.

Instagram is the second most popular platform and used by three in five VIOs. Its usage is significantly higher in metropolitan areas (70%) and among medium (78%) organisations.

(39%), and remote areas (20%). Instagram usage is significantly lower among micro-organisations, at 32%.

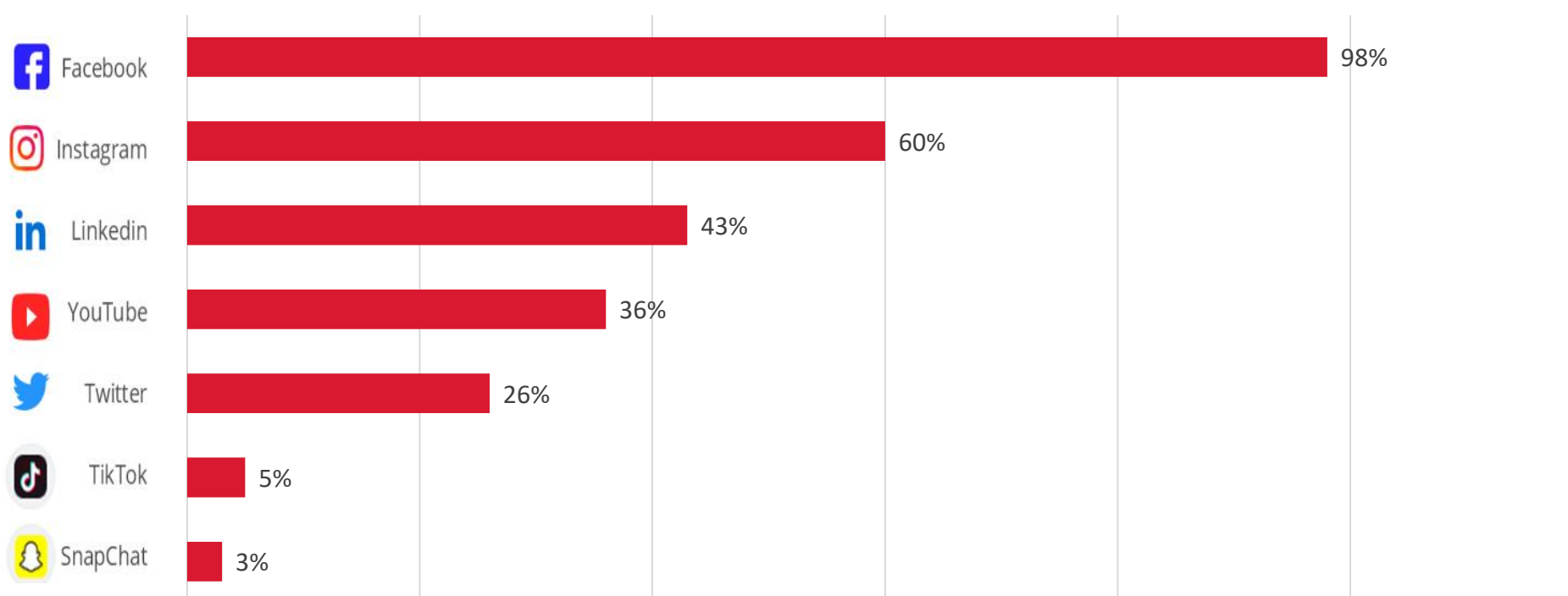
**Reflecting their more specialised audience, LinkedIn and Twitter are mainly used by larger, city-based VIOs.**

LinkedIn usage varies widely. Used by 43% of VIOs overall, it is more popular in metropolitan areas (57%) and among medium (65%) and large organisations (75%). Only 30% of regional and 9% of rural based organisations use LinkedIn, and it is not used at all in remote areas. Among micro-organisations, LinkedIn's usage is just 16%.

YouTube (36%) and Twitter (26%) usage patterns are similar to LinkedIn, with higher adoption in metropolitan areas and larger organisations. Micro organisations have significantly lower usage rates of YouTube (16%) and Twitter (12%). Of interest, Twitter is significantly more likely to be used by VIOs operating in Victoria than other states, at 34%.

In contrast, Instagram usage falls in regional (51%), rural

**Q. 'Which social media platforms does your organisation use? N=550**



**Q. Do you have a website? N=636**

Website, % VIOs

**92%**

of volunteer involving organisations have a website

Survey data indicates a significant majority of VIOs have a website, although the proportion varies by location and organisation size.

In capital city/metropolitan areas, 97% of VIOs have a website, compared to 91% in regional cities/towns, 81% in rural areas, and 67% in remote areas. By organisation size, all medium and large VIOs have a website, while the proportion falls to 93% for small and 75% for micro-organisations.



### Volunteer Recruitment Methods

To gain insight into how VIOs are using digital technology to manage volunteer related activities, the survey asked about the methods organisations use to recruit volunteers.

**While word of mouth remains the most popular method of volunteer recruitment, websites and social media are also widely used to attract volunteers.**

Despite the proliferation of online volunteer recruitment tools, four in five VIOs continue to rely on word of mouth to attract new volunteers. It is consistently used across all locations, and regardless of organisation size.

Website and social media channels are also important tools for volunteer recruitment, adopted by 72% and 68% of VIOs, respectively. These platforms are particularly popular in metropolitan areas, among medium-sized and large organisations, with use diminishing significantly in rural and remote areas, and among micro-organisations.

**Among the online volunteer recruitment platforms, Seek Volunteer has the highest usage.**

While Seek volunteer, Go volunteer and VIKTOR all share the same backend system, respondents report different use of these.

Just over two in five (42%) VIOs report using Seek volunteer. Like many other digital tools, it is most popular in metropolitan areas (56%) and among large organisations (71%) - its usage drops significantly in rural (16%) and remote areas (25%), and among micro (25%) and small organisations (34%).

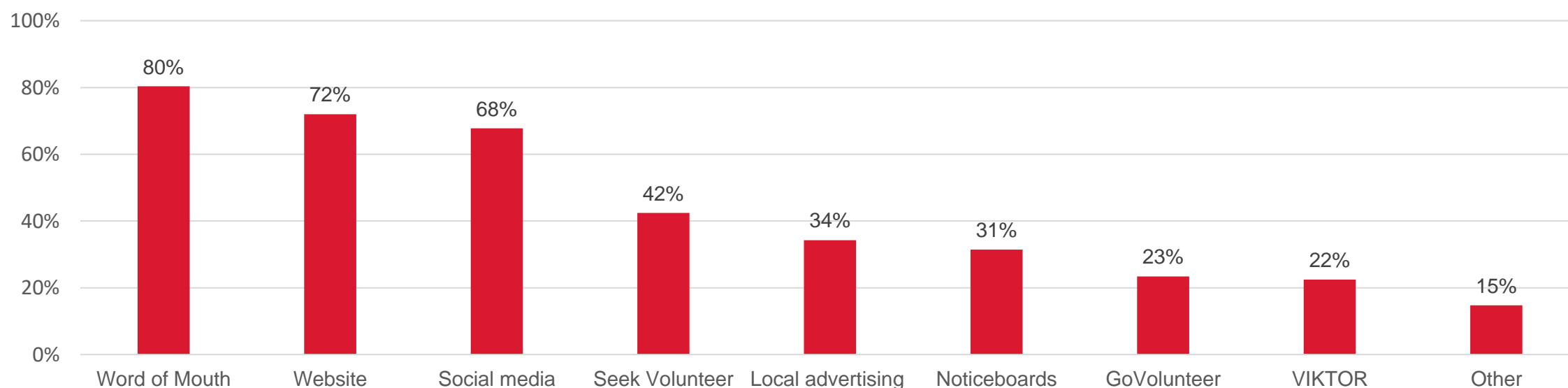
GoVolunteer and VIKTOR platforms are less utilised overall but see increased usage among medium to large organisations, particularly in metropolitan areas. VIKTOR is significantly more widely used among VIOs in South Australia (40%) and in Western Australia (41%). Organisations working in disability services are also more likely to use VIKTOR to look for volunteers (44%), while those in the aged care sector are more inclined to use GoVolunteer.

**Traditional methods like local advertising and noticeboards are also still in use, particularly outside metropolitan areas.**

Regional, rural, and remote areas are more likely to rely on local advertising and noticeboards than metropolitan areas. Interestingly, large organisations also avail themselves of local advertising and noticeboards more than their smaller counterparts.

A range of other methods of recruitment are also used, with 15% of organisations across all geographical locations relying on different recruitment practices such as newsletters and outreach at events.

**Q. Which, if any, of the following methods do you use to recruit volunteers? N=636**



	METRO	REGIONAL	RURAL	REMOTE	MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	356	183	85	12	116	181	93	62
Word of Mouth	80%	82%	78%	83%	78%	78%	84%	89%
Website	80%	68%	52%	25%	48%	65%	90%	92%
Social media	71%	67%	56%	50%	50%	72%	82%	84%
Seek Volunteer	56%	30%	16%	25%	25%	34%	51%	71%
Local advertising	28%	43%	41%	42%	27%	33%	35%	61%
Noticeboards	30%	32%	33%	50%	24%	31%	27%	47%
GoVolunteer	34%	13%	5%	0%	10%	18%	24%	58%
VIKTOR	32%	15%	4%	0%	9%	18%	24%	44%
Other	15%	15%	15%	0%	14%	17%	11%	13%

Significantly higher / lower than total





“We use a variety of ways - FreddyMatch, Gold Coast Volunteering, noticeboard at Shopping Centre, information fliers at Centrelink.”



## Internet Access and Reliability

Access to secure, reliable and affordable internet is foundational to digital inclusion and imperative for the widespread adoption of online tools and resources among VIOs.

### Internet Connection

Online accessibility is often a function of the availability and quality of the internet connection. To understand the adequacy of internet access across VIOs, the survey asked questions about the type of internet connections used and the reliability of those connections.

VIOs connect to the internet in a variety of ways, with reliability generally dependent on location.

Overall, the majority of VIOs (47%) use fixed line connections only (WiFi or ethernet), with this being most common in metropolitan areas (50%) and within small to medium-sized organisations (55% and 53% respectively). Perhaps due to cost or a lack of fixed premises, however, few micro-organisations (31%) have access to a fixed line connection.

Organisations also rely on mobile connections to access the internet, with a combination of fixed line and mobile connections the second most common method, used by 31% of VIOs. This method is slightly more prevalent in regional towns (33%), and among medium and large organisations (37% and 40% respectively).

Mobile-only connections are less common overall (6%) although they are often the only method of internet access in remote areas (25%) and within micro-organisations (19%).

Satellite and mobile connections are used by 3% of organisations, with a notable increase in rural areas (11%).

Highlighting the digital divide, nearly one in five organisations in remote areas do not have access to the internet.

While only a small percentage of VIOs overall (4%) report having no internet access at all, this increases significantly to 17% of VIOs in remote areas. It is also the reality for 9% for micro-organisations. Sport and recreation VIOs are also more likely to say they don't have access to the internet (15%).

### Internet Reliability

Fixed line connections are the most reliable, with the reliability of mobile devices dependent on location.

When asked to rate the reliability of the various internet access methods used, 87% of VIOs rate fixed line connections as somewhat or extremely reliable. Mobile connections are seen as reliable by 81% of VIOs, with significant variation across different locations.


Interestingly, organisations in remote areas are most likely to say that their fixed line connection is reliable, with 100% saying it is somewhat or extremely reliable. This may be based on a comparison with the available mobile connections in remote areas, where only 67% rate mobile as somewhat or extremely reliable.

Over four in five VIOs in both capital cities and regional towns say their fixed line and mobile connection is reliable. Similarly, large organisations are also highly likely to say both connection methods are reliable.

In what is likely a reflection of the affordability of the fastest and most reliable internet plans, fixed line connections are less likely to be rated as somewhat or extremely reliable by micro-organisations (79%). This compares to 91% of large organisations.

Satellite connections, although used by a small percentage of VIOs, are perceived as reliable when they are used, at 83%.

Again, there were no significant differences by state, although respondents in New South Wales were less likely to rate their fixed line connection as good or excellent (78%).



“The internet connection is often not great, as we are in a regional area.”

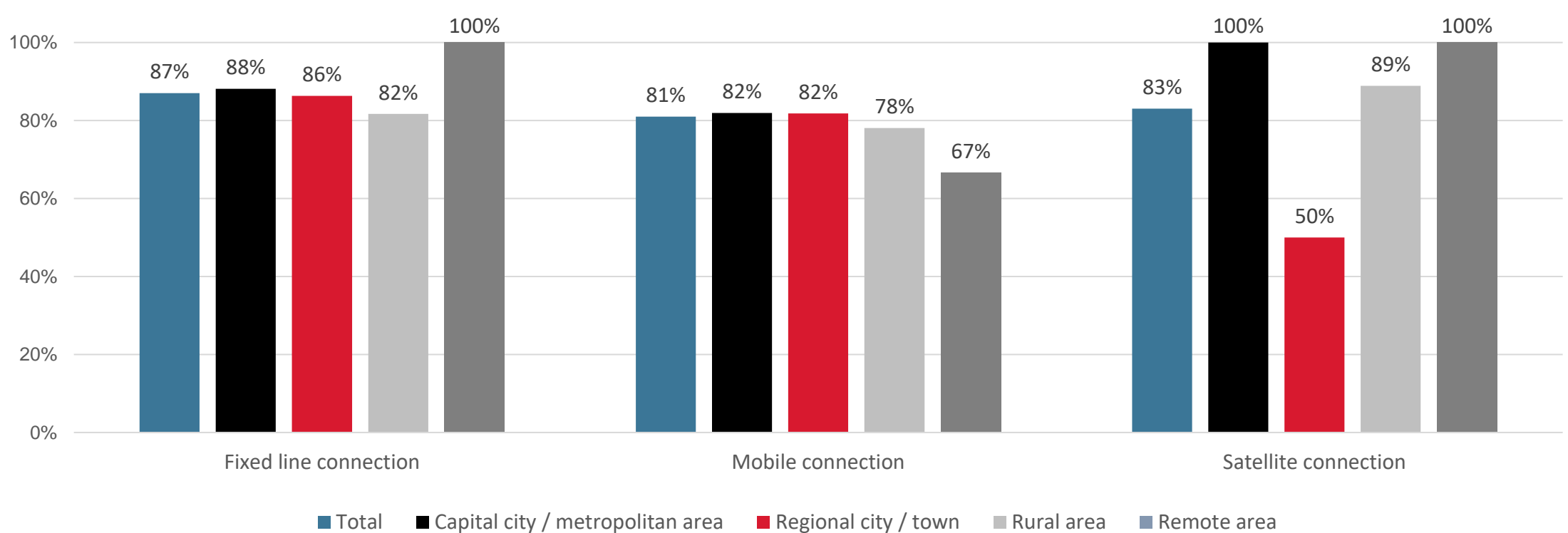




While internet access is widespread in most areas, nearly one in five VIOs in remote areas do not have access to the internet.

How does your organisation primarily access the internet? N=636

Top 2 = % Somewhat Reliable or Extremely Reliable	TOTAL	METRO	REGIONAL	RURAL	REMOTE		MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	636	356	183	85	12		116	181	93	62
Fixed line connection(s) only	47%	50%	46%	39%	25%		31%	55%	53%	52%
Fixed line and mobile connection(s)	31%	30%	33%	32%	17%		34%	28%	37%	40%
Mobile connection(s) only	6%	4%	7%	6%	25%		19%	3%	3%	2%
Satellite connection(s) only	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0%	0%	0%	0%
Satellite and mobile connection(s)	3%	1%	2%	11%	8%		4%	4%	3%	2%
We do not have internet access	4%	3%	4%	5%	17%		9%	6%	0%	0%
Don't know	10%	12%	7%	8%	8%		2%	4%	4%	5%



Q. 'How does your organisation primarily access the internet?' N=636 / Q. Please rate the reliability of your organisation's internet connection? N=636

Significantly higher / lower than total

## Investment in Digital Technology

With technology advancing at a rapid pace, investment in digital technology and systems is vital for VIOs to effectively engage with online resources.

### Frequency of Technology Investments

Over the last 12 months, 49% of VIOs have made investments in new technologies or digital assets, with a further 11% planning to do so over the next 12 months.

Medium and large organisations demonstrate the highest inclination to replace technology assets, with large organisations showing a significant commitment to regular investment in new devices and systems to remain up to date.

Micro and small organisations are less likely to upgrade their technology assets. A substantial percentage rarely invest in new technology, with access to funds a major barrier for this group. When asked, nearly all small VIOs say “cost and experience” and “budget restrictions” prevent them from investing in technology.

Of interest, many small organisations also suggest they don’t have any budget for technology upgrades, and as a result they “use our own personal computers if required”.

VIOs working in the local government and health sectors are significantly more likely than others to regularly upgrade their technology at 54% and 48% respectively.

### Focus of Technology Investments

When looking at the type of investments made, software upgrades, including cloud computing, Office 365 and other licenses or subscriptions, are the most common. These are particularly prevalent among medium and large (83%) organisations, with just 44% of micro-organisations making investments in software.

Investments are also commonly directed to hardware purchases, such as laptops, computers, and tablets, with similar rates across different locations and sizes of organisations. Further highlighting the digital divide, basic hardware is the most common investment for micro-organisations.

Website improvements are another common area of investment, particularly for metropolitan areas (69%) and among medium and large organisations (74% and 81%, respectively). As with software investment, website upgrades are less common in rural areas (47%) and among micro-organisations (40%).

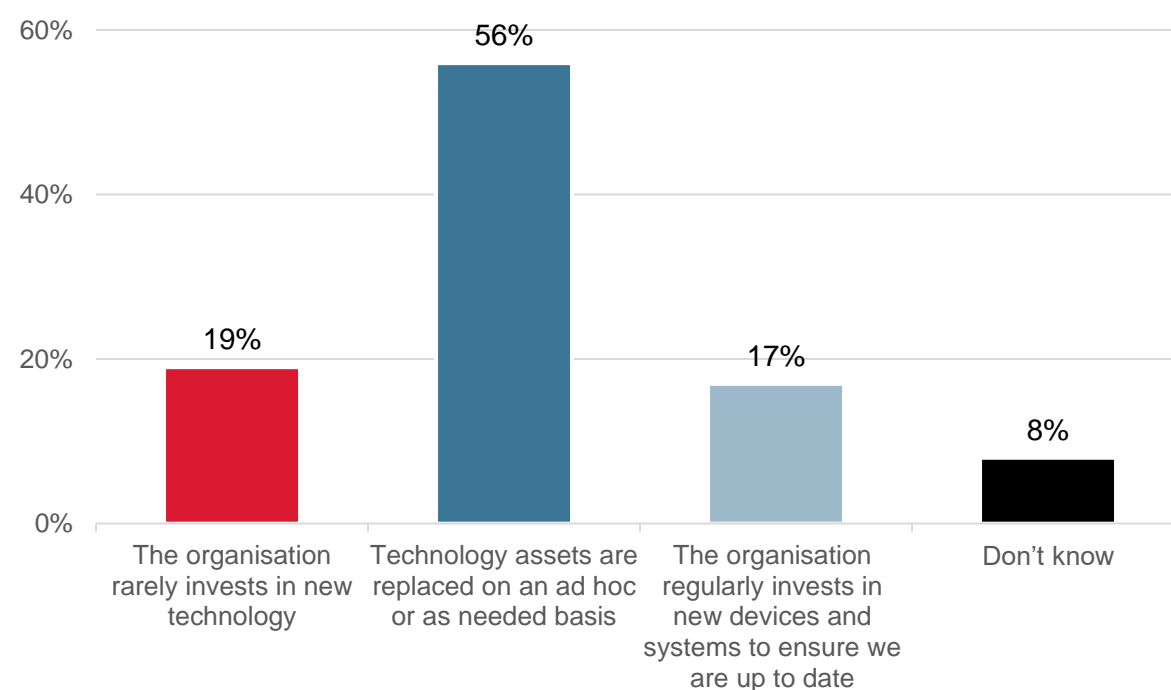
Investing in training staff and volunteers on how to use relevant technology is less common, but again more prevalent among medium and large organisations at 59% and 64%, respectively.

Investments in social media are significantly more common in large organisations (66%). Conversely, investments in internet bandwidth/capacity is particularly high in remote areas (43%).

While nearly half of VIOs report having recently invested in technology upgrades, cost remains a significant barrier for many.



Q. How often does your organisation upgrade / replace your technology assets (approximately)? N=636



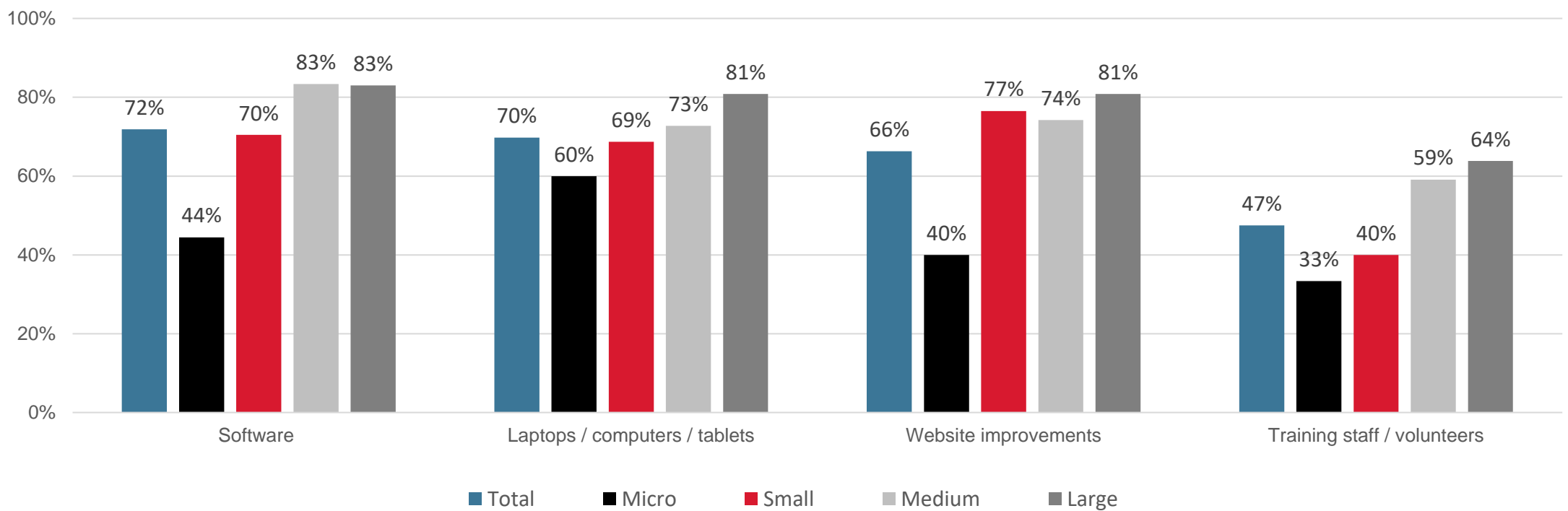
Q. What digital technology has / will your organisation invest in? n = 377

	Sample	Percentage
	377	
Software		72%
Laptops / computers / tablets		70%
Website improvements		66%
Training staff / volunteers in how to use relevant technology		47%
Social media		44%
Smart phones		35%
Internet bandwidth / capacity		26%



## Technology Investment Planned

Q. What digital technology has / will your organisation invest in? n = 377



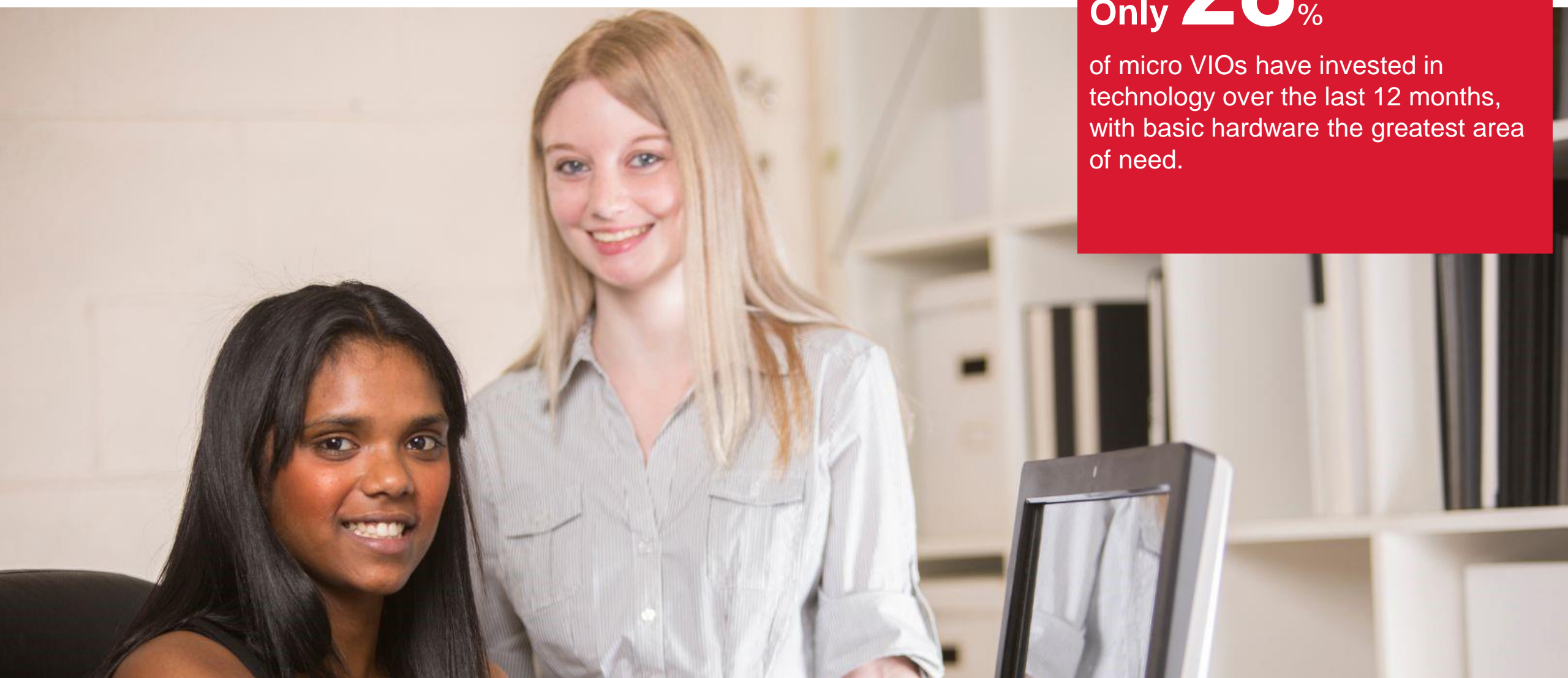
Q. Has your organisation invested in new digital technologies in the past 12 months? N = 636

	TOTAL	METRO	REGIONAL	RURAL	REMOTE	MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Sample	636	356	183	85	12	116	181	93	62
Yes	49%	54%	43%	36%	50%	28%	50%	58%	73%
No, but we intend to in the next 12 months	11%	10%	10%	16%	8%	10%	14%	13%	3%

Significantly higher / lower than total

Only **28%**

of micro VIOs have invested in technology over the last 12 months, with basic hardware the greatest area of need.





## What prevents your organisation from investing in digital technologies?

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Survey data highlights several barriers that prevent volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) from investing in new digital technologies.

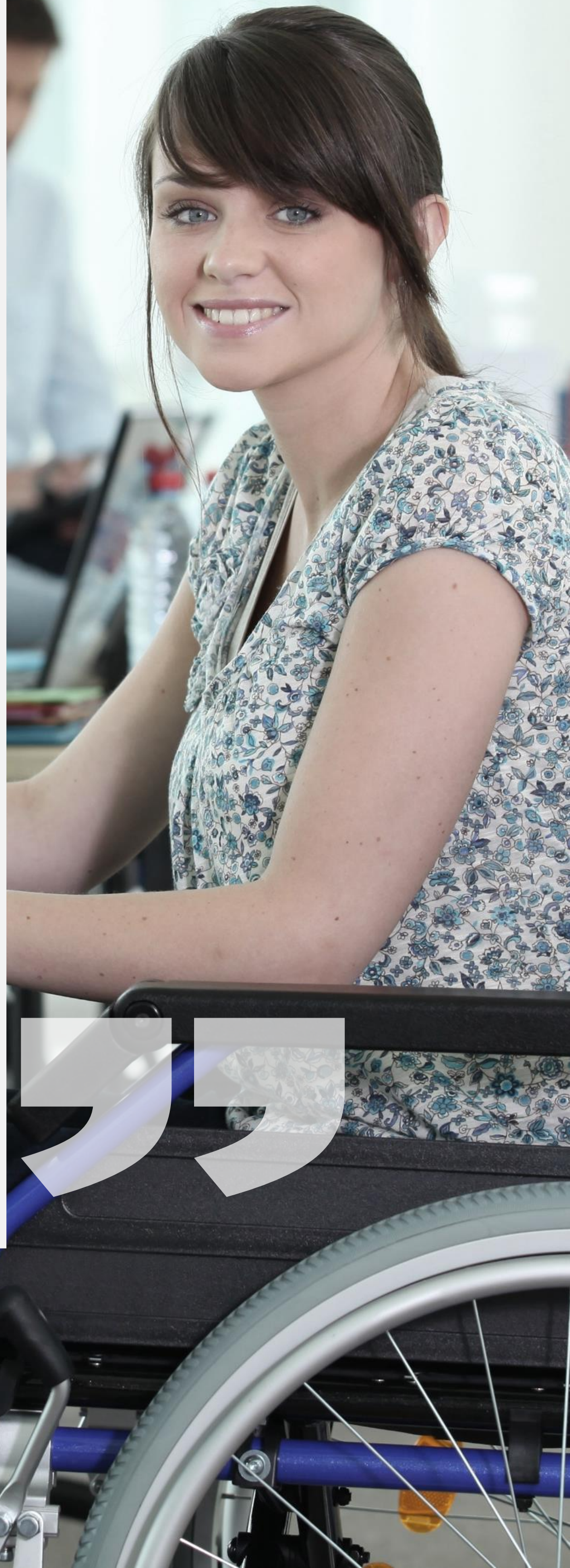
Overall, the main barriers to digital investment in VIOs are financial constraints, lack of perceived need, limited knowledge and expertise, reliance on personal devices and the age and preferences of volunteers.

Financial constraints are the most frequently mentioned barrier to investment. VIOs often operate on limited budgets and rely on donations or grants for funding. The cost of digital technology, including software, equipment, and training, is high, making it a barrier that prevents investment. Most organisations prioritise allocating funds to direct service provision, making it challenging to allocate resources to digital investments.

Lack of perceived need or necessity is another barrier. Some respondents suggested that their current technology is sufficient for their needs or that digital technology is not essential or a priority for their operations. Limited knowledge and experience in working with digital technology, as well as a lack of training and expertise, further contribute to the hesitancy in investing.

Several survey respondents also highlighted the reliance on personal devices and the lack of ownership of digital devices by the organisation itself. In many cases, volunteers use their own technology, and the organisation does not provide or own digital devices, which may impact their need or ability to invest in additional technologies.

A few respondents also noted the age of their volunteers and members, as many of them are older individuals who are not willing or interested in adopting new technologies or undergoing change.







## Top 6 Barriers to Investment in Digital Technology

### Financial Constraints (110 mentions)

The limited availability of funds is a significant barrier to digital investment. Organisations often operate on tight budgets and have to prioritise spending on more urgent needs, such as service delivery or essential operational costs. As a result, there is limited room for investing in new technology or upgrading existing systems.

“We have very limited funding and its not classed as a priority by upper management even though it is needed.”

“Lack of funding”

“Funds are a restraining factor.”

“Invest in new technology on a need's basis. If there are the finances available and in budget, we invest!”

### Lack of interest or perceived need for technology (20 mentions)

Some organisations say they had no clear need for investing in new technology, as their existing systems and processes seem to be working well. This appears to lead to a lack of interest in exploring new technological solutions. A lack of perceived need may also stem from a focus on face-to-face interactions with clients or the community, making digital solutions seem less relevant or necessary.

“Without knowing specifically, I'd guess that what we have now works fine and suits our purposes well.”

“No need at present, updated our computer systems 2 years ago”

### Lack of Expertise & Knowledge (20 mentions)

A lack of expertise or knowledge about technology also appears to be a major barrier to digital investment. Many organisations indicate they do not have staff or volunteers who are well-versed in technology or who can effectively manage and implement new digital solutions. This makes it challenging for organisations to identify the best technologies to invest in.

“Finances, staff knowledge and training”

“Staff and volunteers that have the training in this area”

“Our volunteers are often reluctant to engage with IT. We don't have any employees who are highly capable with resolving IT challenges.”

### Volunteers Use Their Own Devices (13 mentions)

In some organisations, volunteers use their personal technology devices, such as laptops, tablets, and mobile phones, for their work. This is often due to a lack of funds to invest in technology. However, it also has the opposite effect as it makes it unnecessary for organisations to justify investing in additional digital resources when volunteers are already using their own equipment.

“All our volunteers use their own technology/ devices, the organisation does not own any digital devices”

“Volunteers use our own personal devices”

“As we are all volunteers, we provide our own technologies as required.”

### Organisational Priorities (10 mentions)

In some cases, the decision to invest in digital technology may be influenced by organisational priorities and decision-making processes. These include corporate policies, board or management decisions, or prioritising other departments and initiatives over digital investment. As a result, the needs for digital solutions in certain areas of the organisation may be overlooked or deprioritised.

“We have very limited funding, and it's not classed as a priority by upper management even though it's needed.”

“We have no budget for this, and we don't have an office. We are a fully volunteer-run organisation, so we use our own personal computers if required.”

### Ageing or Reluctant Volunteer Base (9 mentions)

Many organisations have an aging volunteer base who are less familiar with or less interested in new technologies. This leads to a resistance to change and an unwillingness to invest in or adopt digital solutions. Additionally, some volunteers may have a different mindset, underestimating the potential benefits of technology, and hindering the organisation's ability to take advantage of technological advancements and improve efficiency.

“Age of Volunteers, lack of willingness to use new technologies or change”

“Old school mindset. Perception that older people aren't able to use technology very well”





“We are so underfunded. Most of our money goes into service delivery, which is our priority. As needs continue to increase, so do costs. Our funding remains static or decreases, and funding only covers a part of the real cost of service delivery, so equipment & technology is way down the list. Unless we get a grant, which is also not so easy, technology suffers.”



## Digital Technology Assessment

Overall, three in five respondents say the technology used at their organisation is up to date and supports effective service delivery and operational efficiency.

VIOs were asked to rate their digital capacity, specifically in relation to its currency, effectiveness in supporting service delivery and organisational operations, support for learning and development and focus on effective data security and protection.

### Satisfaction with Digital Access

At an overall level, approximately seven in ten VIOs agree their technology is current (69%), supports effective service delivery (72%) and enables them to run their organisation efficiently (72%).

While fewer agree that their organisation’s digital technology supports the learning and development needs of VIOs (65%), almost four in five believe their organisation is focussed on maintaining robust data protection and security.

Medium sized VIOs are the most likely to say their digital infrastructure supports their productivity and efficiency.

Overall, medium-sized organisations are most satisfied with their digital access and capacity, with 75% agreeing their technology is up-to-date and 82% that it supports effective service delivery. Nearly four in five (78%) also say it helps them run their organisation efficiently.

Only 63% of micro and 66% of small organisations feel their technology is up-to-date, while similar proportions agree that their digital technology supports effective service delivery and enables efficient operations (both 66% and 69% respectively).

Respondents working at large VIOs are most likely to say their technology is up to date (79%), and a further 76% and 74% agree that their organisation’s technology supports effective service delivery and efficient operations, respectively.

Positively, over four in five medium and large organisations display strong focus on data security and protection. Of concern, this falls to just 66% and 69% of micro and small VIOs respectively.

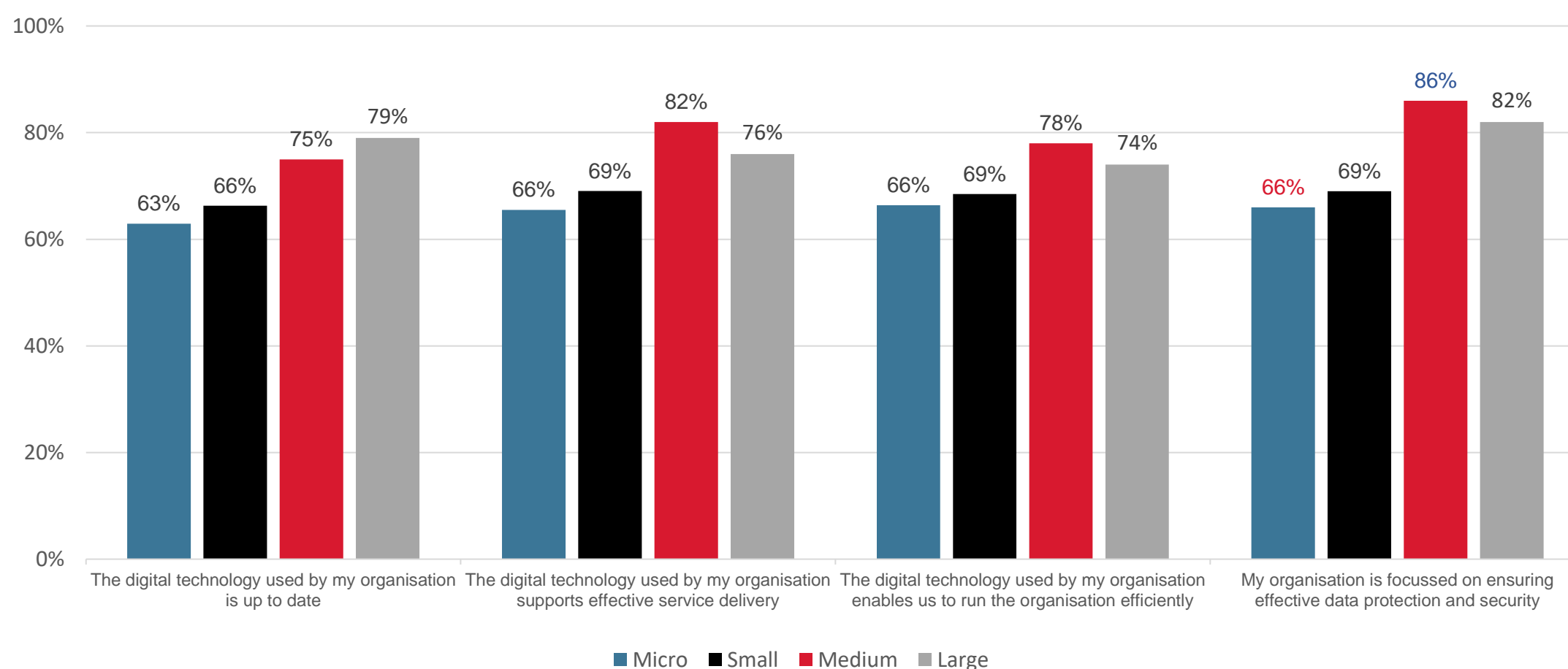
Rural and remote VIOs are less likely to have access to current technology to support service delivery.

Only 54% of rural VIOs agree their digital technology is up-to-date. This compares to more than seven in ten organisations operating in metropolitan or regional areas.

Similarly, metropolitan VIOs are more likely to assert their digital technology supports effective service delivery and efficient operations, at 76% and 75% respectively.

Amongst VIOs operation in remote parts of Australia, only 42% agree their technology supports effective service delivery, while 58% say it helps their organisation run efficiently.

Q. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.: N=636



Significantly higher / lower than total



**60%**

of VIOs rate the effectiveness of their IT infrastructure, information systems, access and management in helping to provide services and connect with staff, volunteers and clients / service users as good or excellent

**Q. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of your IT infrastructure, information systems, access and management in helping you to provide your services and connect with staff, volunteers and clients / service users? N=636**

	Sample	% Good/Excellent
<b>Location</b>	636	
Capital City / Metropolitan	356	63%
Regional Town	183	63%
Rural Area	85	47%
Remote Area	12	25%
<b>Organisation Size</b>		
Micro	116	45%
Small	181	56%
Medium	93	71%
Large	62	69%
<b>State</b>		
ACT	31	58%
NSW	83	61%
NT	10	60%
QLD	159	60%
SA	89	64%
TAS	18	56%
VIC	183	60%
WA	51	61%

### Effectiveness of Digital Systems

Overall, 60% of VIOs indicate the effectiveness of their IT infrastructure, information systems, access, and management in delivering their services and connecting with their staff, volunteers, and clients or service users is good or excellent.

By location, 63% of organisations based in metropolitan and regional cities report their digital capacity supports them to meet the needs of their community.

However, in rural areas only 47% of VIOs say their IT infrastructure and systems are effective. This percentage decreases dramatically to 25% for VIOs located in remote areas, reflecting the challenges these organisations face in terms of accessibility, connectivity, and availability of technical support and infrastructure.

In terms of organisation size, medium sized organisations rate their digital capacity more positively than others, with 71% reporting their IT infrastructure is effective. This drops slightly to 69% of large organisations, while small and micro-organisations trail behind, with positive ratings of just 56% and 45% respectively.

While there are no significant differences reported by state, organisations in Tasmania provide slightly lower ratings of the effectiveness of their digital capacity than those in other parts of the country.



Overall, survey feedback suggests that both size and geographical location play significant roles in VIOs IT capacity.

While larger, metropolitan-based organisations tend to be satisfied with their digital capacity, smaller organisations and those in rural or remote areas face challenges that hinder their digital performance.

This underscores the importance of targeted support and investment to help these organisations improve their digital capacity and, in turn, their service delivery, ability to connect with their community and access online resources and support.

Section 3:

# The digital capability of volunteer involving organisations





## Digital Capability Assessment

The ability to access online tools and resources is dependent not just on access to technology, but staff and volunteers having the skills and knowledge to employ these tools effectively.

### Online Activity Capability Assessment

To assess digital capability, the survey measured VIOs' ability to participate in four key digital activities: accessing and sharing online resources, participating in online training, managing online volunteer recruitment and retention, and networking online.

**Larger, metropolitan-based VIOs clearly have greater capability to access digital resources and participate in online activities.**

Two thirds (67%) of all VIOs rate their ability to access and share resources, tools, and information online as good or excellent. However, at 72%, metropolitan organisations rate their capability higher than regional (65%), rural (55%), or remote VIOs (50%).

Similar patterns are evident in VIOs ability to participate in online training and support, with an overall 63% of VIOs rating their ability as good or excellent. Organisation size tends to have the most impact in this area, with small (53%) and micro (44%) significantly less likely to say their ability to participate in online training and support is good or excellent than medium (72%) and large (81%) organisations.

In terms of managing volunteer recruitment and retention online, overall, 55% of VIOs rate their ability as good or excellent.

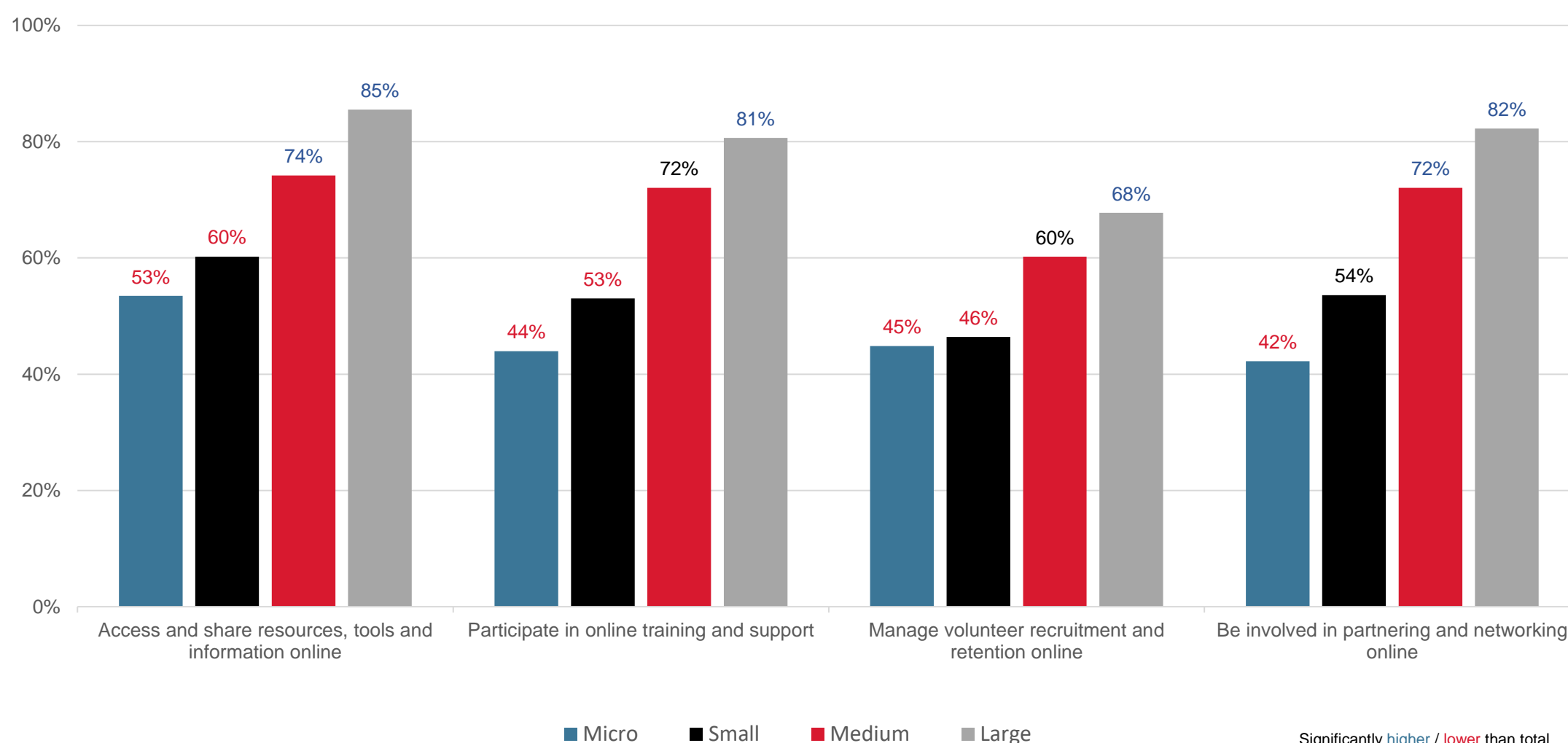
Location tends to have more impact on online volunteer management capability than size, with those in metropolitan areas (64%) significantly more likely to rate their ability highly than regional (44%), rural (42%), and particularly remote organisations (17%).

Finally, 60% all VIOs rate their capability to partner and network online, as good or excellent. Large (82%), medium (72%) and metropolitan organisations (65%) are again significantly more likely to rate their capability higher than smaller organisations or those in regional, rural or remote regions.

There are no significant differences in the capabilities of VIOs in different states across all functions, although it is notable that only 39% of Tasmanian and 48% of Queensland VIOs rate their capability to manage volunteer recruitment and retention online highly.

**Overall, the survey highlights a clear trend that VIOs in metro areas and larger organisations have greater capability to engage with various online activities than smaller or remote organisations.**

**Q. Overall, how would you describe your organisation's ability to:** N=636





**74%** of VIOs agree their staff have the confidence to use digital technology



**77%** of VIOs agree their staff have the skills to use digital technology



**61%** of VIOs rate the competency of their staff using digital technology as good or excellent

The research also sought to understand the capability of staff working within VIOs, asking respondents to assess the confidence, skills and overall competency of their staff.

### Digital Confidence

Positively, on average 74% of VIOs agree their staff have the confidence to use digital technology. Metropolitan and regional VIOs show similar confidence levels (76% and 74% respectively), which are notably (although not significantly) higher than rural VIOs at 64%.

When examined by organisation size, medium and large organisations are more likely to say their staff are confident dealing with digital technology (85% and 81% respectively), than micro (61%) and small organisations (71%).

### Digital Skills

Overall, 77% of VIOs overall agree or strongly agree staff have the skills and knowledge to use digital technology. Metropolitan and regional VIOs again show similar responses (79% for both), higher than rural (67%) and remote areas (58%). Again, medium and large organisations are more likely to agree that their staff have adequate skills and knowledge (88% and 90% respectively) compared to their micro (65%) and small counterparts (74%).

### Overall Digital Competency

When assessed at an overall level, 61% of VIOs rate their staff's digital competency as good or excellent. Staff are more likely to have their competency rated highly in metropolitan areas than in rural areas and remote areas.

When comparing by organisation size, a pattern of disparity also emerges. Micro organisations, with fewer resources and less likely to provide digital skills training, have a lower propensity to rate their staff's digital competency as good or excellent. This is significantly less than the overall average and underscores the impact of organisational size on the perceived digital competency of staff.

**Q. Please indicate how much you agree that the staff at my organisation have the confidence / skills to adopt and use digital technology: n=636**

**Q. Overall, how would you rate the competency of staff in using digital technologies? N=636**

	Sample	Confidence	Skills	Competency
<b>Total</b>	636	74%	77%	61%
<b>Location</b>				
Metropolitan	356	76%	79%	64%
Regional Town	183	74%	79%	60%
Rural Area	85	64%	67%	53%
Remote Area	12	75%	58%	33%
<b>Organisation Size</b>				
Micro	116	61%	65%	49%
Small	181	71%	74%	55%
Medium	93	85%	88%	72%
Large	62	81%	90%	73%
<b>State</b>				
ACT	31	81%	81%	52%
NSW	83	78%	73%	59%
NT	10	70%	80%	80%
QLD	159	70%	74%	57%
SA	89	80%	87%	60%
TAS	18	56%	67%	67%
VIC	193	74%	77%	63%
WA	51	75%	80%	67%

Significantly higher / lower than total



# Digital Skills Training

Few VIOs provide digital skills training to their staff, with most relying on volunteers to obtain skills from other sources.

## Digital Skills Training

Overall, only 45% of VIOs offer digital skills training to their staff, however, there are significant differences based on organisational size.

At 79%, large organisations are much more likely to provide digital skills training than medium (54%), small (40%), and particularly micro-organisations (22%).

Those who provide digital skills training use a range of methods, with online training less common in rural areas and amongst smaller VIOs.

In terms of delivery methods, a majority of VIOs (69%) use a combination of face-to-face and online methods to provide digital skills training to their staff. This is particularly the case for VIOs in regional towns (73%), metropolitan areas (70%), and among medium (70%) and large organisations (75%).

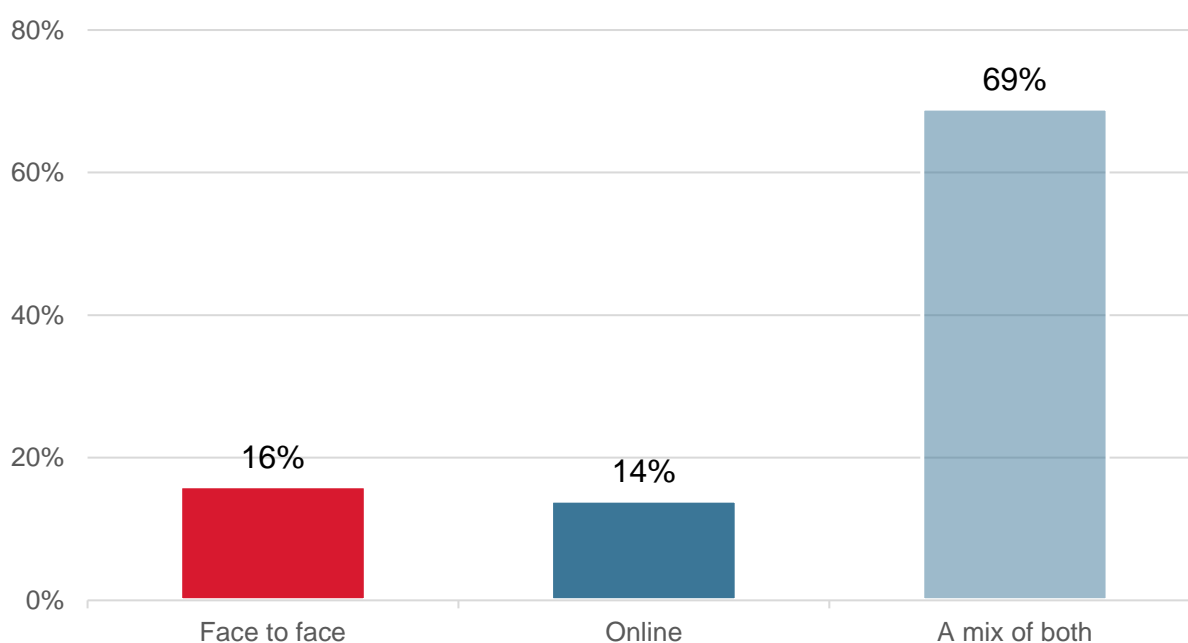
In contrast, face-to-face only training is more common in remote (50%) and rural areas (30%), and notably so in micro-organisations (46%). This may reflect limited access to reliable internet in these areas or suggest that the smaller scale of these organisations promotes a more personalised approach to training activities.

Purely online training is less common overall (14%). Interestingly, online training is not used at all in remote areas and only minimally in micro-organisations (4%), possibly due to the same limitations with internet access or infrastructure.

A lack of resources to either develop or fund access to online content is another limiting factor mentioned by many small, regional based VIOs.



**Q. How does your organisation provide digital training for staff? N = 290**



**Q. Does your organisation provide digital skills training to staff? N = 638**

	Sample	% VIOs that provide digital skills training
<b>Total</b>	636	45%
<b>Location</b>		
Metropolitan	356	49%
Regional Town	183	43%
Rural Area	85	35%
Remote Area	12	50%
<b>Organisation Size</b>		
Micro	116	22%
Small	181	40%
Medium	93	54%
Large	62	79%
<b>State</b>		
ACT	31	52%
NSW	83	48%
NT	10	50%
QLD	159	47%
SA	89	43%
TAS	18	33%
VIC	193	42%
WA	51	47%

Significantly higher / lower than total

# Training and Support for Digital Technology

With fewer VIOs providing digital skills training, it is not surprising that only half agree that they receive adequate training in how to use the technology that is available in their organisation.

## Technology training

Adequate training in the use of the technology that is available in VIOs is vital to productivity and effective delivery of services. The survey canvassed opinions about the amount of training offered by VIOs to staff and volunteers, as well as the support for making good use of the technology that is available.

**Larger VIOs appear to have both the capacity and capability to offer training to their staff in the technologies they use in their organisations.**

While staff in almost seven in ten large VIOs agree they are offered adequate training in the technologies used by their organisations, only 35% of micro and 42% of small organisations feel they receive adequate training.

Interestingly, there are no significant differences in the opinions of respondents across either state or location, suggesting it is largely an issue of size that impacts VIOs ability to train staff appropriately in the technologies in use in their organisation.

However, there are differences in perceptions between paid employees and volunteers. Over three in five paid employees agree they have access to adequate training in the use of technology, while only 34% of volunteers say they are trained in the technology available at the VIO they volunteer for.

## Support for using technology

Almost two thirds of participants agree there is sufficient support within the organisation for using technology.

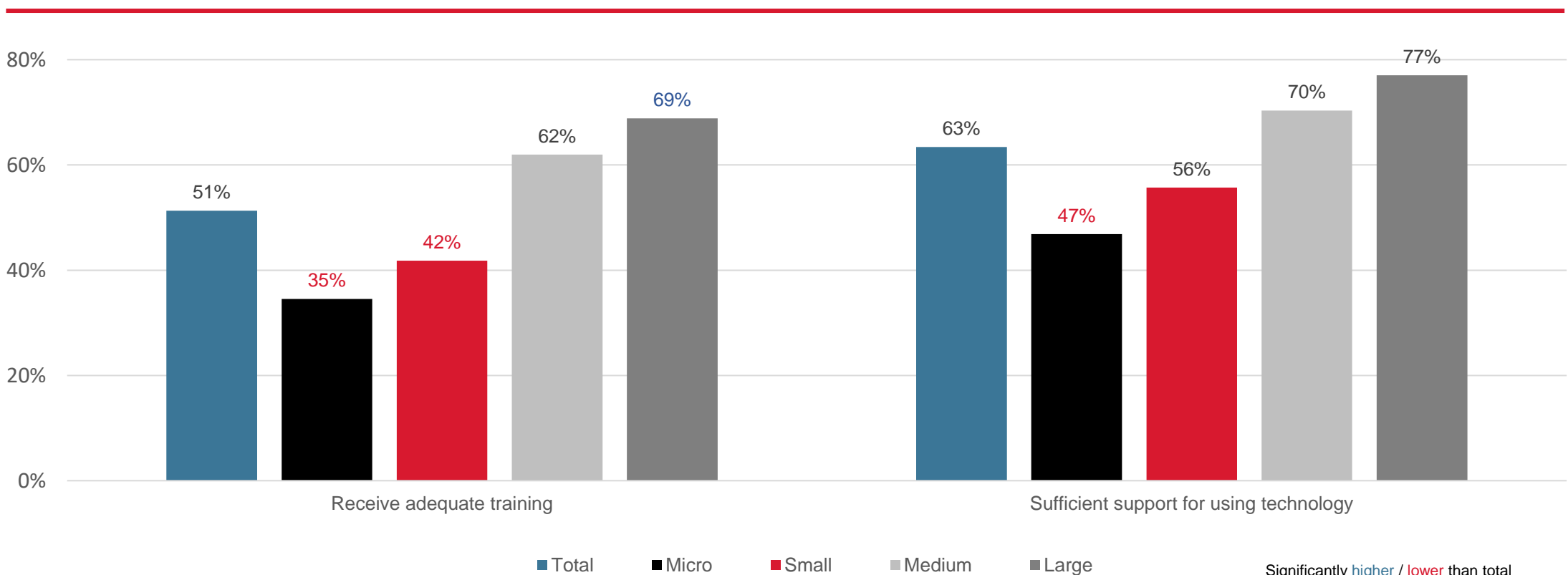
**Once again, organisation size impacts perceptions of the support available within the organisation to utilise digital technology.**

Support for using digital technology is strongest among large (77%) and medium-sized organisations (70%). This then drops markedly to 56% of small organisations, and is significantly lower again in micro-organisations, where just 47% of survey respondents agree there is sufficient support for using digital technology in their organisation.

While there are no differences across state or location, there are significant differences in the perceptions of the support offered based on paid staff and volunteers. Over seven in ten paid staff in VIOs agree they receive support for using technology in their organisation, compared to half (50%) of those working in an unpaid capacity.

**Only 34%** of volunteers agree they are adequately trained in the digital technology available in the organisation.

**Q. Please indicate how much you agree with the following:: N=627**  
**Top 2 = % Agree or Strongly Agree**







## What prevents your organisation from providing digital skills training to staff?

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Providing online training to staff and volunteers in VIOs is hindered by several barriers.

Financial constraints pose a significant challenge, as training requires both time and money that may not be available within the organisation's current funding structure. Many respondents highlighted that "budget and time constraints" are the biggest barrier, as "training takes time and money that we just don't have." Limited resources and budget constraints further exacerbate the issue, making it difficult to allocate funds for training initiatives.

Perceived lack of need or interest among staff and volunteers is another obstacle. Some respondents suggested that the current skills of staff are sufficient, with many indicating that it is "not necessary because the volunteers obtain skills training and knowledge from elsewhere" or that "it's an expectation that people understand the types of tools we use, we are a remote workforce in 2023". Others suggested that there is simply "not enough demand" or that "it just never seemed necessary".

Lack of time also emerges as a barrier to providing online training. Many staff members and volunteers already have multiple commitments and find it challenging to prioritise training amidst their busy schedules. As one volunteer noted, "we are volunteers, time is always a problem because very few of us are just in one organisation" Additionally, the dispersed nature of volunteers across different locations and the need to find mutually available times further complicate training efforts.

A lack of skills and knowledge, as well as the age of volunteers, also presents a barrier to online training. Older volunteers, in particular, may be hesitant to embrace technology or have limited digital literacy skills, with respondents noting that their organisation is "slow to move into the technological age through fear, lack of knowledge, and an aged cohort of volunteers."





## Top 5 Barriers to Providing Digital Skills Training to Staff and Volunteers

### Budget Constraints (96 mentions)

Many respondents mention a lack of funding, insufficient budget, or the costs associated with training as significant barriers to providing digital skills training. Others express a desire to provide such training but are limited by financial constraints.

"Training takes time and money that we just don't have under our current funding structure."

"Cost of training, relevance of training."

"Funding, time, and equipment."

"Lack of funds to allocate to non-primary assets"

"Cost. Time. Small team with varying skill levels so training would have to be more tailored to individual needs and role requirements. This brings up the cost of training."

### Perceived Lack of Need or Interest (69 mentions)

A perceived lack of need for digital skills training was evident in feedback. This could be because their staff or volunteers already possess the necessary digital skills, or because their operations do not require advanced digital skills. In some cases, there's a lack of interest from the staff or volunteers in acquiring these skills.

"At this stage there does not seem a need for it other than cyber security."

"No interest from the membership. Most just want to make stuff out of wood and metal."

"Not needed and not interested in improvement."

"Lack of interest, most of us are too old to get a handle on modern IT"

### Lack of Time (68 mentions)

Respondents also mention the lack of time to organise, conduct, or participate in training sessions. Time constraints could be due to staff's availability, other pressing priorities, or the lack of personnel to carry out the training.

"Lack of time and people onsite with the knowledge to provide the training."

"Time and money."

"Time and ability to manage and train volunteers from varying backgrounds and abilities."

"Lack of time and identifying what needs to be met; lack of money"

### Lack of Resources (44 mentions)

This theme revolves around the lack of necessary resources, other than financial ones, such as training materials, equipment, or skilled personnel to conduct the training. It also includes the lack of infrastructure to accommodate online or digital training.

"Infrastructure to attend online training in the organisation (eg Need to invest in large screen etc to run online training modules as a group)."

"Lack of equipment ie: Computers and Internet access."

"Resources and capacity constraints."

"Resources, time and space. We do not have the support of those around us, to enable us to reach for the goals we are trying to reach."

### Skills, Knowledge, Age of Volunteers (40 mentions)

Many comments refer to the reality that VIO organisations primarily rely on volunteers, who might have varied levels of digital skills or interest in acquiring them. The age of volunteers is also often mentioned, implying older volunteers may be less familiar with or resistant to digital technology.

"All volunteers, so available times."

"Lack of skill sets, lack of uptake or interest in learning, lack of funds, older retired workforce without further interest in using technology."

"The age of volunteers and their familiarity with any technology."

**"Outdated systems mean we're in a cycle of always preferring not to train staff in inefficient systems, with the hope that 'soon' we'll be transitioning away from what we're currently doing/using/thinking. There are gaps in knowledge fuelled by the hope something better is just around the corner."**





“Barriers include cost, time, capacity of colleagues, no internal IT worker. Barriers specific to volunteers include their roster (availability), different skill levels when starting, sharing networked computers, keeping up to date with organisational procedures, new software, logins etc.”

Section 4:

# Supporting digital accessibility among volunteer involving organisations





## Barriers to the use of online resources

Ensuring online accessibility requires an understanding of the barriers to digital engagement faced by VIOs.

To understand the challenges that hinder the use of digital technologies and online resources at VIOs, respondents were asked to provide this information in two ways. Firstly, they were asked to identify their biggest challenges in their own words, to obtain verbatim “top of mind” feedback. They were then asked to rank a list of challenges from a list.

### Barriers to Online Engagement

Two primary hurdles dominate VIO online engagement: a lack of time and / or resources, and funding for investment in technology.

Interestingly, while only 26% of VIOs consider lack of time and resources as their top challenge, a substantial 62% include this issue in their top three challenges. This suggests that while it may not be the primary obstacle, it is a persistent concern across the board.

Many organisations report a chronic lack of time as the main barrier to progress. As one respondent said, “the majority of worked hours is used to provide services and it can be difficult to set time aside for digital communications and learning.” Another conveyed a similar sentiment, saying “we are a small team with a big workload, so time is our biggest challenge.”

The second most significant issue is funding for technology investment. Notably, this is the top challenge for 30% of VIOs, with 55% ranking it within their top three. Scarcity of resources impacts the ability of VIOs to adopt, maintain, and upgrade digital technologies, often leading to compromises in the quality of tech support and services. One respondent explicitly said, “we have no budget or funding for IT support, so all the work is done by management/admin staff...” .

This financial constraint becomes especially salient when it comes to investing in essential hardware or complex systems, with respondents saying “the costs for digital technology are increasing, the funding we are provided with is decreasing... we are being squeezed in the middle” .

A lack of digital skills and confidence among staff and volunteers is also an issue for many VIOs.

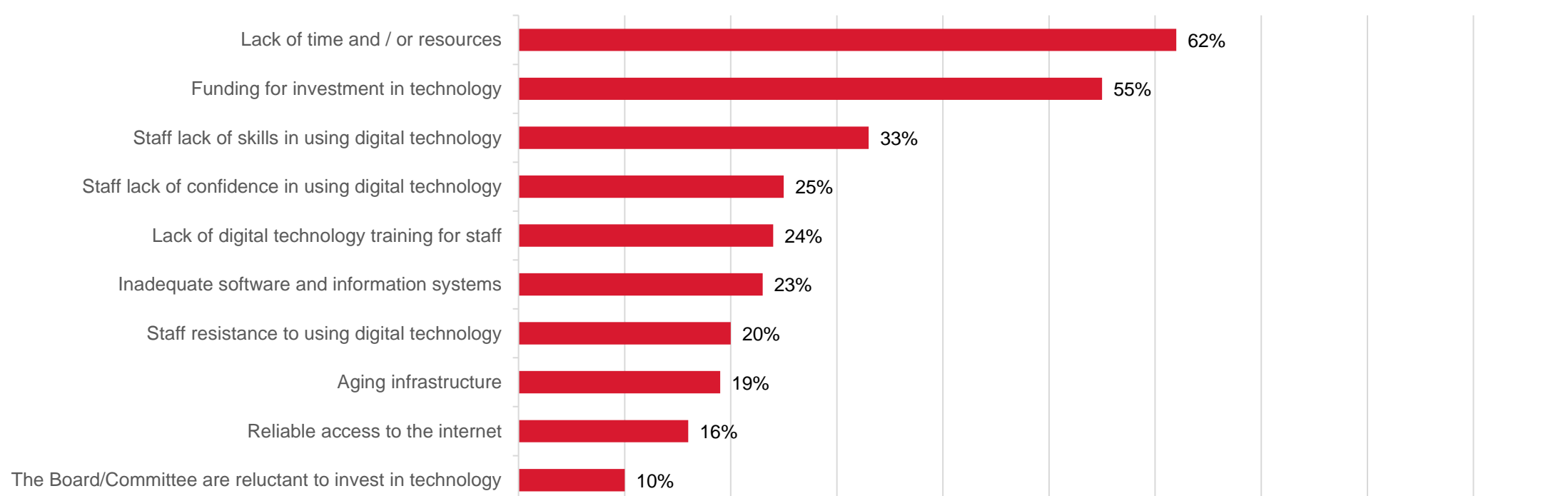
Issues related to staff competencies and attitudes towards digital technology are also prevalent. A third of respondents cite lack of skills in their top three issues.

Similarly, a lack of confidence in using digital technology among staff is a problem, with 25% citing it among their top three challenges. Staff resistance to using digital technology is another related challenge, with one in five saying this is one of their top 3 issues.


An issue frequently cited is the expectation for volunteers to participate in online training or Teams meetings, despite many having differing levels of digital skills and/or access to computers. Some volunteers, particularly those in the older demographic, have never had to use technology.

Alongside this, issues relating to infrastructure, such as inadequate software and information systems, aging infrastructure, and reliable access to the internet, are the top challenge by between 4 and 6% of VIOs, but feature in the top three for between 16 and 23% of them.

**Q. From the list below, please indicate the biggest barriers to the use of digital technologies and online resources at your organisation. Please rank these in order of priority, where 1 is the biggest barrier n=479**







“This is the digital divide, where community volunteers become excluded from participation or access to information because of their relatively low digital skills and access.”





## Top 5 Barriers to Use of Online Tools and Resources Among VIOs

### Budget & financial constraints (165 mentions)

Many VIOs say the main barriers to adopting new technologies is cost constraints. Financial limitations often lead to prioritising other activities. This results in outdated systems, limited resources, and suboptimal utilisation of technology. An inability to afford the latest technology, coupled with the cost of training staff to use it, further exacerbates the issue.

“Limited funding for technology adoption and implementation.”

“Insufficient budget for technology implementation.”

“Budget for training, software and hardware”

“Costs associated with technologies; understanding which resources are the most useful for what we need to do; time and access to training.”

### Limited access to technologies (115 mentions)

Some VIOs comment they do not have access to the necessary digital technology, or their operational systems are out of date and don't work efficiently. Poor internet or unreliable internet access are other barriers that hinder the adoption of digital technologies.

“Some of our programs for managing volunteers are very out of date and don't work efficiently.”

“Access to workstations can be an issue. Volunteers who carry administrative duties need to share workstations.”

“Not everyone has the resources, such as computer or internet, all the time”.

“Do not have adequate internet access in office spaces”

### Lack of skills & knowledge (108 mentions)

Many volunteers and staff have limited skills and knowledge of technology, making it difficult for them to use digital tools and resources effectively. Some volunteers have minimal or no technology skills, and many are uncomfortable with new technology. Lack of information about available technology and training on how to use it efficiently is prevalent. Age is another common factor affecting adoption of digital technologies.

“It is sometimes difficult for some employees to grasp digital technologies”

“Familiarity with computer skills by some volunteers”

“One barrier is the advanced age of many of our volunteers and their resistance to learning to use technology.”

### Time constraints (106 mentions)

VIOs are time-poor. Heavy workloads, compounded by the need to provide services and maintain operations, mean the struggle to find the time to learn, train staff, or implement new technologies effectively. A shortage of volunteers and the difficulty of balancing volunteering with work and family life further exacerbate the problem.

“Time and resources.”

“The majority of worked hours is used to provide services and it can be difficult to set time aside for digital communications and learning”

“Time to learn/teach staff how to use; differing ways of operating and old habits”

### Training & support challenges (83 mentions)

Barriers related to training and support were also frequently mentioned, specifically limited access to training materials, challenges related to staff and volunteer turnover or many casual staff, plus age-related digital confidence and literacy issues. Budget constraints in relation to training and support, like the cost and time required to develop online training among other operational issues, were also mentioned.

“Cost and time to develop the training materials to be used online”

“Adequately training everyone when there is a large number of casual staff and staff turnover.”

“Knowledge or available online resources, accessing training.”

“Costs associated with technologies; understanding which resources are the most useful for what we need to do; time and access to training”

**VIOs are more likely to say that the skills and knowledge of their staff and volunteers limits their ability to use online tools and resources than lack of technology or internet access.**

Overall, the data highlights that, while access to technology and the internet is a significant issue for many VIOs, there is a more widespread concern regarding the digital literacy of staff or volunteers. This is true for VIOs across all organisation sizes and geographical locations.

The lack of skills and knowledge among staff hinders the ability of 43% of VIOs to use online resources. This problem seems to be relatively evenly distributed across states and locations, from capital cities and metropolitan areas to remote areas, and irrespective of the organisation's size.

Just over three in ten (31%) VIOs also say their capacity to use online resources is impacted by technology and internet access.

Reflecting earlier feedback, remote areas face specific infrastructure obstacles, with 42% reporting this as an issue. When we examine the data by organisation size, it is small and medium-sized organisations (35% and 37% respectively) that are most affected by these limitations, indicating resource constraints in these smaller entities.

Q. Is your organisation's ability to use online resources limited by? N=620



**31** % of VIOs

say their organisation's ability to use online resources is limited by technology and access to the internet.



**43** % of VIOs

say their organisation's ability to use online resources is limited by the skills and knowledge of their staff.





# Supporting VIO Online Resource Use

Funding, including investment in appropriately skilled personnel, and training are the main supports needed to improve access to and usage of online resources amongst VIOs.

## VIO Support Needs

To understand how VIOs can be supported to improve their access to online resources, the survey asked respondents to rank the usefulness from a list of potential support options, and to describe in their own words what would be of most use to them.

VIOs have a diverse range of needs when it comes to improving their use of, and competency in, digital technology, with funding and training the primary requirements.

Across all organisations, the top requirement is funding for investment in devices, internet access, and software.

About 28% of VIOs across both metropolitan and regional areas express this need, with organisations saying they need “more funding for technology” to be able to “purchase appropriate software”. Micro-organisations (37%) say this is their primary need more frequently than their larger counterparts.

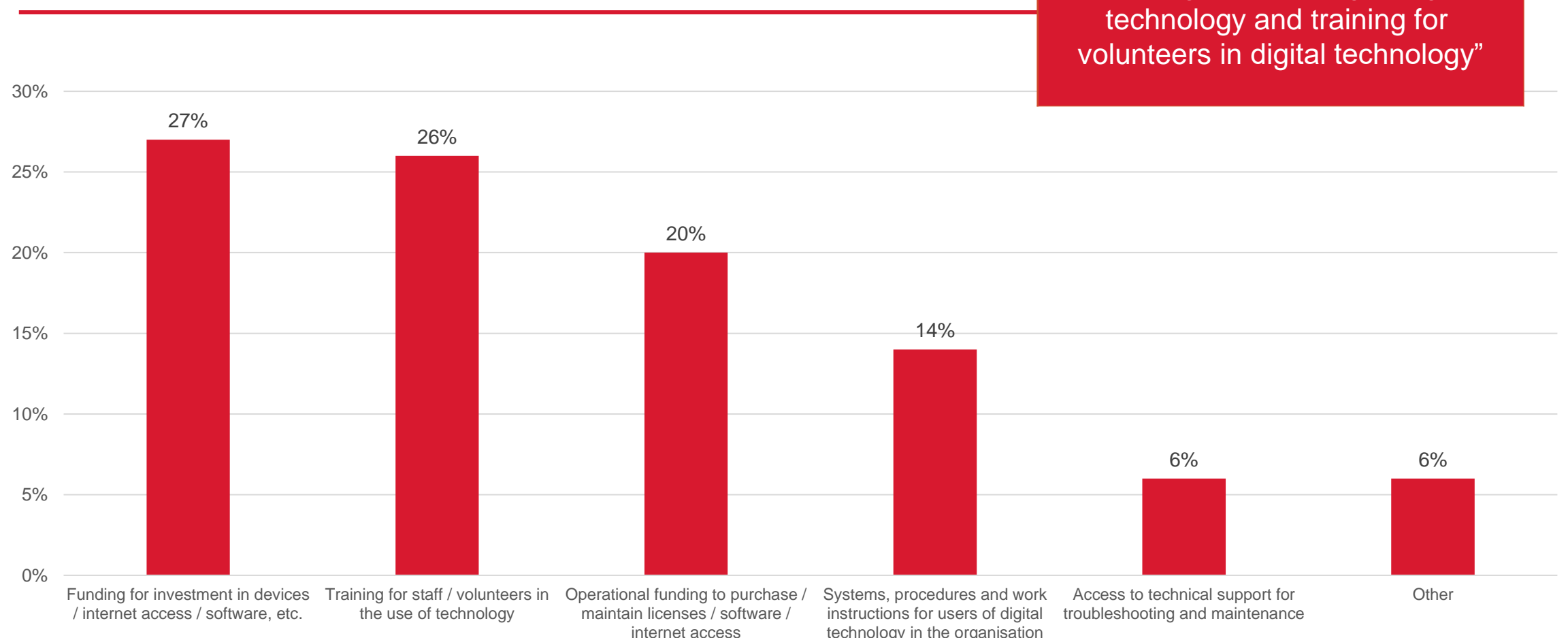
Secondly, 26% of VIOs cite training for staff and volunteers as their main requirement. Free text feedback commonly note a need for “more training for staff “ or “more willingness in staff to learn - perhaps through change management”. This need for training is also more prevalent in remote locations than in the city.

The need for operational funding to maintain licenses, software, and internet access emerges as a significant factor, especially among small (26%) and micro (37%) organisations.

**Q. What ONE thing does your organisation need most to improve its use of, and competency in, digital technology? N=574**


Primary Need %VIOs	Sample	Funding	Training
<b>Location</b>			
Capital City / Metro	322	28%	26%
Regional Town	166	28%	20%
Rural Area	75	25%	33%
Remote Area	11	27%	64%
<b>Organisation Size</b>			
Micro	104	37%	23%
Small	165	26%	21%
Medium	90	30%	26%
Large	57	19%	26%
<b>State</b>			
ACT	29	31%	34%
NSW	73	34%	26%
NT	10	10%	10%
QLD	139	26%	27%
SA	79	30%	28%
TAS	17	29%	29%
VIC	180	25%	23%
WA	45	24%	27%

**Q. What ONE thing does your organisation need most to improve its use of, and competency in, digital technology? N=574**



“Funding for investing in digital technology and training for volunteers in digital technology”





## What support does your organisation need to improve the access and use of online resources by your staff?

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VIOs require support in improving their access to and use of online tools and resources.

One key area that would assist VIOs is digital training. VIOs emphasised the importance of tailored, role-specific training to ensure staff members have the necessary skills to effectively utilise technology. The availability of free online courses, webinars, and training modules would also support continuous learning and development.

Funding plays a significant role in enabling VIOs to overcome barriers and enhance their use of online tools and resources. Financial support is needed for purchasing necessary equipment, investing in technology infrastructure, develop and implement new technology solutions, employing dedicated IT support and staff members and providing training opportunities for staff and volunteers.

Access to better technology resources and support systems is another critical area of need. Reliable internet, adequate hardware, and IT support are essential for effective utilisation of online resources. VIOs indicated they would benefit from access to cost effective tools, resources and solutions, such as volunteer management software, negotiated licenses, and discounted software and hardware.

Finally, there were many VIOs who suggested that the availability of knowledgeable experts who can provide free or cost-effective advice and assistance, is crucial to help VIOs navigate IT challenges. Many VIOs expressed a desire to review and update their existing digital systems and usage in order to optimise their use of online tools. This includes providing a hotline that offers free advice on handling IT issues without technical jargon.





## Main Areas of Support Needed by VIOs to Increase Use of Online Resources

### Training (162 mentions)

The need for more training for both staff and volunteers is evident, with many noting there are gaps in skills and understanding when it comes to using digital technology. This is especially the case for older volunteers or those who may not have grown up with technology.

“Training in the use of new systems”

“Some face-to-face training of older volunteers”

“Access to digital training and improving the motivation of key staff members to use online resources and use them efficiently.”

“Availability of free training or funding to send staff on courses”

### Funding (155 mentions)

A recurring theme is the need for funding to invest in better digital systems, hardware, training, and personnel. Many organisations struggle with the cost of new technology, software and maintenance. There is also a desire for more grants and subsidies to support digital transition.

“Capital funding for improving systems and employing IT specialist (internal or external). Funding for transition from spreadsheets to CMS (e.g., data entry, costs associated with customisation of platforms for essential government reporting, staff training and support, etc)”

“Funding to invest in up-to-date IT resources and to train staff in new IT systems.”

“Access to funding to support IT initiatives”

### Better technology & resources (104 mentions)

Many respondents feel improved technology and resources would enhance their ability to use online resources effectively. This includes the need for updated software, high-speed internet, and high-quality hardware.

“Systems for volunteer management, booking of services and communication with clients“

“Another computer that can be networked to the laptop so that secure access can be available without having to always take the laptop.“

“We need IT equipment such as laptops, and more people so we have time to attend training and learn new systems”

### Technical support & expertise (66 mentions)

Organisations are also looking for more support, both in terms of IT support and general guidance on how best to leverage digital resources. This includes requests for advice on choosing the right software, digital strategies, and on-site expertise.

“Identification of appropriate software and updating of hardware to suit. Training may be necessary.”

“More tech savvy people to help with training”

“Knowledge of systems that could facilitate our work and the relative benefits and costs of alternatives”

### Time (61 mentions)

Many respondents say they simply need more time to improve their use of online tools and resources. Specific support requests include allocating dedicated time for training and workshops, providing easy-to-understand guides and resources, offering free online training courses that can be completed while working, and allowing staff and volunteers to invest time in self-education and training.

“Paid staff time for training and change management“

“Time to learn how to use new tools/resources and change plans to allow uptake”

### More staffing & resources (56 mentions)

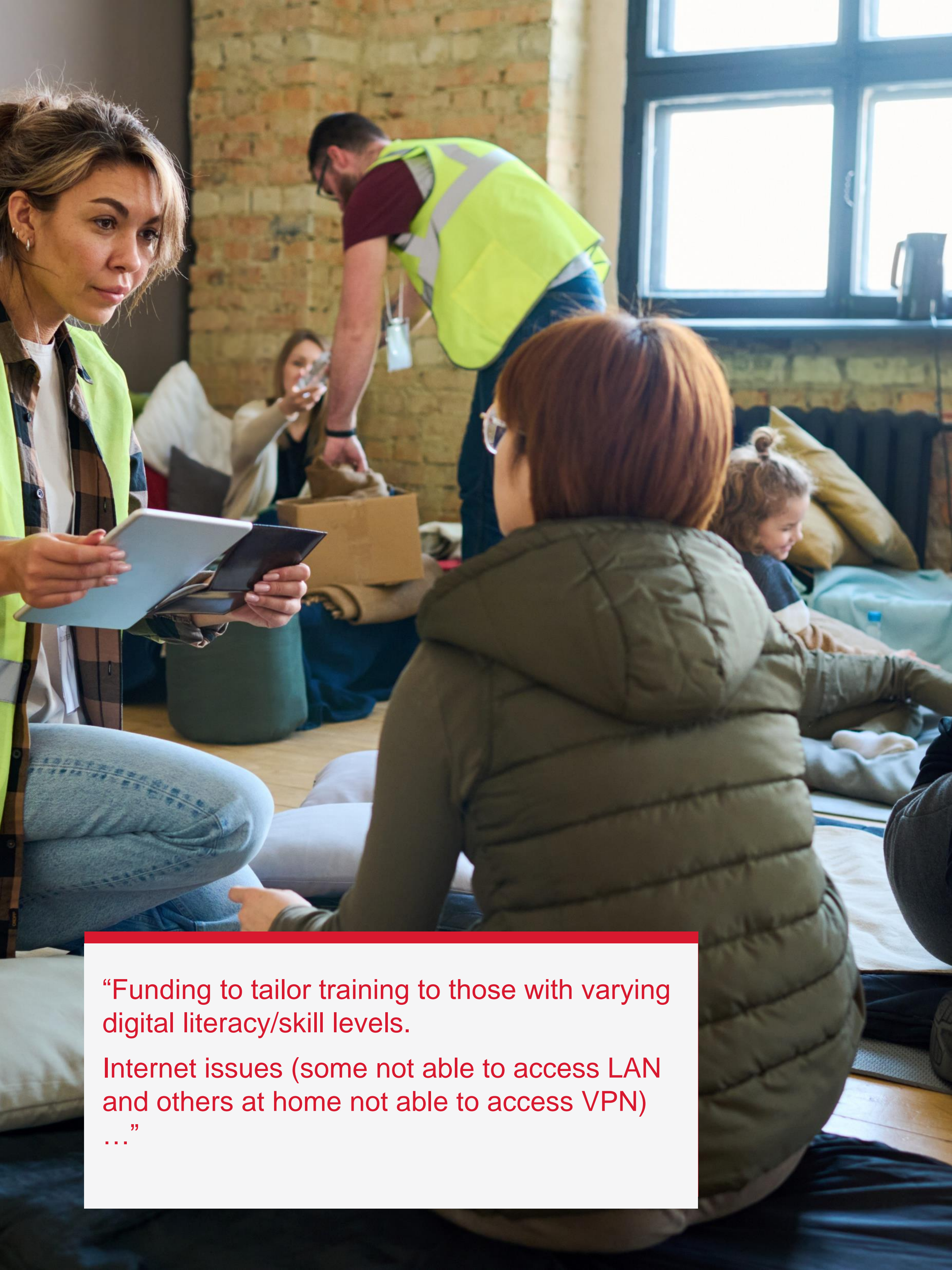
Several responses also indicated a desire for more personnel or volunteers skilled in IT to support the use of digital technology within the organisation.

“People with the skills to improve assist us in keeping our systems up to date”

“More funding for the organisation to employ paid staff to assist”

“More money to afford a permanent staff member who can be on site every day.”





“Funding to tailor training to those with varying digital literacy/skill levels.

Internet issues (some not able to access LAN and others at home not able to access VPN)

...”



## The value of online resources

A majority of VIOs say online resources that provide best practice information about volunteer recruitment, training, management and retention, would be useful to their organisation.

The VPBs across Australia want to increase opportunities for people to participate in the social and economic life of their community through volunteering. One of the ways they plan to do this is through the development of online resources to help to build the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations.

Some of the ways contemplated to provide support include:

- Best practice recruitment and training of volunteers
- Best practice strategies for supporting and retaining volunteers
- Best practice volunteer management
- Information, tools, training and resources including regulatory obligations.

VIOs in metropolitan areas (91%) are more likely to indicate the resources would be useful than those in regional cities/towns (83%), rural (87%) and remote (82%) areas. They are also more likely to be useful to larger VIOs, with 94% and 95% of medium and large organisations respectively saying the resources would be of use to them.

When asked why the online resources would be useful respondents say they would provide consistency and standardisation across the sector, or that online resources could contribute to the skill development and education of staff and volunteers and help by bridging funding and resource constraints experienced by many VIOs.

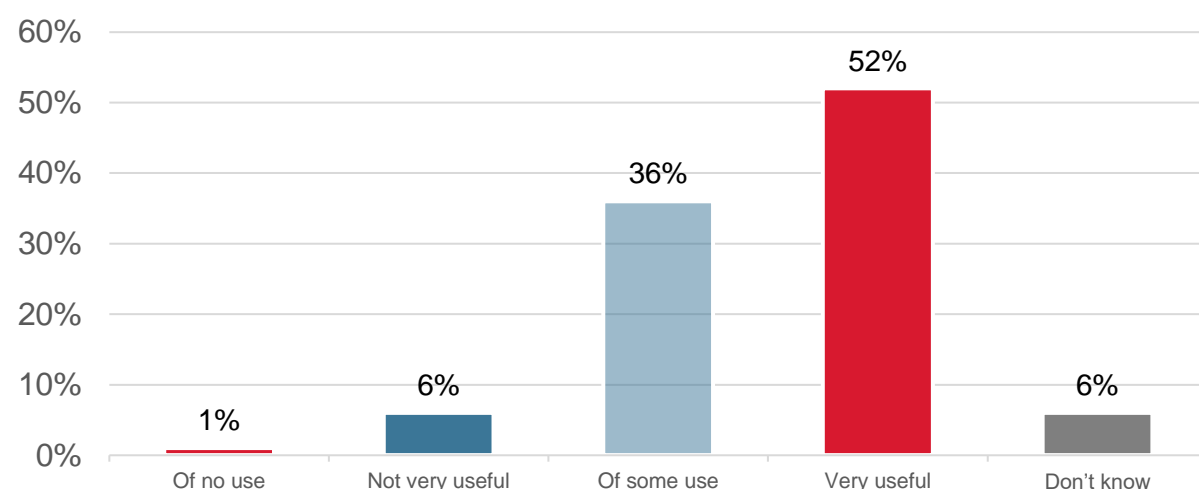
The few organisations who say online resources will be of little value suggest they are not needed, as they already have this knowledge, or these resources are already available.

Others note users would need a base level of digital literacy to access them, something that challenges many VIOs already.



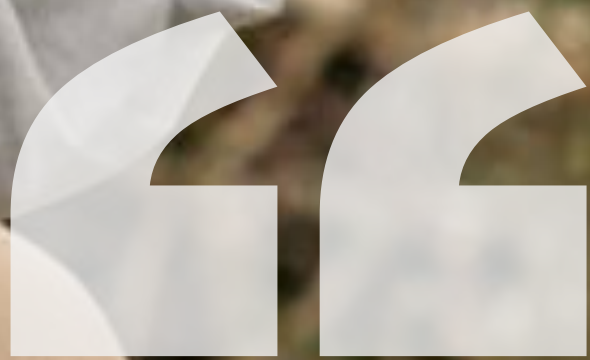
**88%** of VIOs believe online resources providing information about best practice volunteer management would be useful to the organisation

**Q. How useful do you think these online resources would be in the management, training, recruitment and retention of your volunteers? N-573**



	Sample	% Of Some Use / Very Useful
<b>Total</b>	573	
<b>Location</b>		
Metropolitan	319	91%
Regional Town	166	83%
Rural Area	75	87%
Remote Area	11	82%
<b>Organisation Size</b>		
Micro	103	80%
Small	165	84%
Medium	89	94%
Large	56	95%
<b>State</b>		
ACT	29	90%
NSW	73	88%
NT	10	100%
QLD	136	85%
SA	89	89%
TAS	17	94%
VIC	180	90%
WA	45	80%





## Why do you think the online resources would be useful?

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Respondents provided many reasons why online resources would be useful for their organisation. Many indicated that they would offer value by providing centralisation and consistency, ensuring standardised practices across the sector. Others suggested the access and availability of online resources provides broad reach and appeal and guarantees equitable access to information and training. The contribution of online resource to the skill development and education of staff and volunteers was also mentioned, with a number of respondents indicating they could also play a role in improving digital literacy among volunteers and staff.

There were also many suggestions that online resources would be particularly valuable for VIOs with limited funding, time and resources, as they provide cost-effective or free training, information, and tools that organisations may not be able to develop on their own. May simply said that any help would be good, and that “any best practice support that is available would be of benefit.”

Organisations who indicated they would be of little value to them suggested they were not needed or that these types of resources were already available.





## Why Online Resources Would Be Useful

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### Centralisation & Consistency (76 mentions)

Online resources provide a centralised approach to volunteer management, ensuring consistency across the sector and addressing individual organisational deficits.

"A centralised approach could provide great consistency across the sector compared to individual organisational training/resource/skill deficits,"

"Consistency of messaging and some organisations are not as advanced as others."

"Standardised, streamlined information which promotes best practice and consistent messaging will be extremely useful for leaders of volunteers across VIOs, big and small, so as to avoid re-inventing these resources at the organisation level."

### Skill Development & Education (70 mentions)

Online resources help advance the education of volunteers and staff, improving their ability to work effectively in recruitment, operations, and other fields. Some respondents particularly mentioned online resources would contribute to digital literacy and improve technology skills.

"Advance the education of the volunteers to improve their ability to work outside of our organisation in operations and recruitment fields,"

"It will develop technology skills in volunteers,"

"A lot of people that volunteer are new and learning the different skills so any extra help along the way to make life easier would be great."

### Access & Availability (48 mentions)

Online resources offer easy access to information, training, and knowledge, enabling VIOs to adhere to best practices and support volunteers effectively.

"Accessible when I want them."

"Capacity building is always needed and online resources are the most accessible way to train."

"Easily accessible if online."

"Online resources can provide information to people who may not be able to attend face to face training due to distance, disability, cost etc."

### Productivity & Efficiency (44 mentions)

Online resources streamline volunteer management processes, save time, and increase efficiency in managing and engaging volunteers.

"Help organisations set up programs which follow National Volunteering Standards"

"It would allow us to provide a more efficient and streamlined process for volunteers and prospective volunteers who need information about their role"

"It would enable our volunteers to be more efficient and productive."

"Streamline processes. A lot less manual work. Automatic systems would allow us to spend time doing other things."

### Cost & Resource Constraints (37 mentions)

Online resources help organisations with limited funding, time, and resources by providing free or cost-effective training, information, and tools.

"Funding is always an issue for organisations such as ours,"

"For smaller organisations, having time to develop these resources is very time-consuming,"

"it will increase awareness, save training cost, save time and it will help to close the gaps from the point of benchmarking"

"Any resources that will enhance our recruitment and retention of volunteers will be useful. In small country towns word of mouth is the favoured contact strategy but some background training to enable volunteer managers to carry out their work is always useful."

### Support & Assistance (26 mentions)

Online resources provide assistance and support for volunteer management, recruitment, retention, regulatory compliance, and overall improvement of organisational practices.

"Additional input on how to improve the way we manage and deliver our services and support,"

"Advice on regulatory requirements would be useful especially when things change,"

"Provide support to those managing volunteers."

**Three quarters of respondents are confident their organisation would use online resources designed to assist with recruitment, retention, training and management of volunteers.**

The survey also asked respondents how confident they are that they would utilise online resources providing guidance on volunteer recruitment, training, management and retention.

**Likelihood to Use Resources**

Overall, three quarters (75%) of VIOs are somewhat or very confident their organisation would use online resources to assist with recruitment, retention, training, and management of their volunteers. Nearly a third are very confident.

Confidence levels vary across different VIOs, with higher confidence levels observed in metropolitan areas (79%), medium-sized organisations (83%), and in the Australian Capital Territory (93%). In contrast, confidence levels are lower in rural areas (62%), remote areas (60%), micro-organisations (63%), and in Tasmania (59%).

**Respondents say they would use online volunteer management resources in their organisation in several ways.**

While many respondents were reluctant to say how they might be used without having a better understanding of the exact nature of the resources, some recognise these type of resources could support the effectiveness and efficiency of their volunteer programs.

Most commonly VIOs indicate they would be used to improve

the volunteer recruitment, engagement and retention practices. Respondents also suggest they might be used for training and development, streamlining internal processes and procedures, and ensuring their organisation is following best practice volunteer management processes.

Further, online resources are broadly seen as a cost-effective way to gain knowledge, skills, and support to improve volunteer management without additional financial or time burdens.

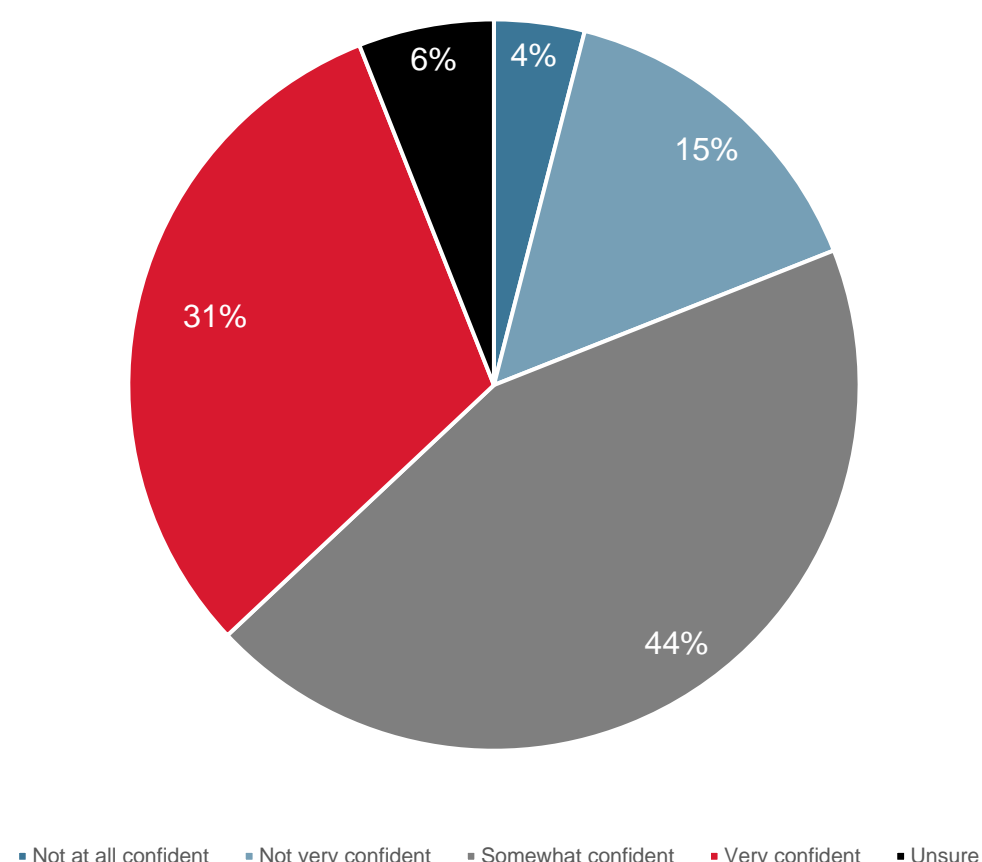
**For a variety of reasons, a quarter of respondents say they are unsure, or not confident, the resources would be used.**

Some suggest a lack of interest, or aging volunteers who may not be IT literate or motivated would impact use. Others cite reluctance to change or resistance to new technology, or limited time and resources among the reasons for their hesitancy or lack of confidence.

Some organisations, albeit a much smaller proportion, say online resources often do not meet their specific needs, are outdated, or they prefer to rely on existing strategies, internal policies, or specialised tools.

	Sample	% Somewhat / Very Confident
<b>Total</b>	587	75%
<b>Location</b>		
Capital City / Metropolitan	319	79%
Regional Town	165	75%
Rural Area	73	62%
Remote Area	10	60%
<b>Organisation Size</b>		
Micro	100	63%
Small	165	70%
Medium	110	83%
Large	35	84%
<b>State</b>		
ACT	29	93%
NSW	73	74%
NT	9	100%
QLD	135	70%
SA	78	8%
TAS	17	59%
VIC	179	75%
WA	45	69%

**Q: How confident are you that your organisation will use these resources? N=567**







## How could you see these resources being used within your organisation?

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Respondents say they would use online volunteer management resources in their organisation in several ways.

Most commonly, VIOs indicate they see potential to use online resources to improve the volunteer experience. Many respondents believe the resources could provide a means to improve volunteer recruitment and retention, as well as overall volunteer satisfaction.

Comments also highlight the potential of online resources to streamline volunteer management processes and increase efficiency. Respondents indicate online resources could simplify tasks such as recruitment, rostering, communication, and reporting, and suggested that online resources might save time and reduce administrative workload.

Another prominent theme is VIOs would use the resources to improve their training and development within their organisation. Respondents expressed a desire for online resources to provide induction training for new volunteers, upskill existing volunteers, and educate staff and volunteer managers on best practices in volunteer recruitment, retention, and management.

Feedback also suggests VIOs would use online resources to ensure they are following best practices in volunteer management. Respondents indicated a need for training, guidance, and resources to enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing volunteers effectively.

Some comments reflect the challenges faced by organisations with limited resources, such as staffing and funding constraints. Respondents also say the resources could be used to fill the gaps in their current practices, as they may not have the capacity to create new processes and systems, develop extensive training materials or access professional development opportunities.





## Potential Uses of Online Volunteer Management Tools and Resources

### Enhancing Volunteer Recruitment, Retention & Experience (148 mentions)

A recurring theme is the desire to use online resources to improve the volunteer experience. Many see the potential for online resources to provide valuable tools, templates, and guidelines that can be easily accessed and implemented, leading to improved recruitment, training, retention, and overall volunteer satisfaction.

“Contacting, training and recruiting volunteers”

“In improving our volunteer management, recruitment, engagement and satisfaction.”

“They would improve the efficiency of our recruitment efforts in both time and cost and hopefully, increase the success of recruiting volunteers and retaining them.”

### Streamlining Volunteer Management Processes (104 mentions)

Many VIOs highlight the potential of online resources to streamline volunteer management processes and increase efficiency. Respondents say online resources could simplify tasks such as recruitment, rostering, communication, and reporting, and suggested they might also save time and reduce administrative workload.

“Will provide information on how to improve processes and practises”

“To update our existing framework and provide a more streamlined approach as the organisation grows”

“To evaluate processes we already have in place, and to improve existing processes.”

### Training (89 mentions)

Some VIOs indicated they would use online resources for training purposes. Suggestions included resources could assist in creating induction training, as well as supporting the ongoing development of volunteers. Online training would also save time and resources by avoiding the need to create training content from scratch.

“To support the volunteer coordinator to recruit and retain volunteers. To provide a learning platform for volunteers.”

“Training of staff in understanding volunteer recruitment and management and as reference documents for trouble shooting and training of volunteers”

“For training and support of our volunteers”

### Best Practice Guidelines (51 mentions)

Some VIOs indicated they would use online resources to ensure they are following best practices in volunteer management. Respondents have a need for training, guidance, and resources to enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing volunteers effectively.

“Guidance about how to manage volunteer info, rostering and reporting”

“To save time creating procedures and keep up with best practice”

“Utilising these resources as the foundation/ being informed by research and evidence undertaken by peak bodies and tailoring this information as needed at the organisation/ program level.”

### Knowledge Sharing & Collaboration (42 mentions)

There were some comments suggesting resources would be used to enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration among their organisation and other stakeholders.

“Optional use by key executive staff who can learn and pass on skills and knowledge to others informally on a needs basis”

“Disseminate the information across the network and develop all personnel”

“To provide benchmarking of current procedures; to share with community organisations we support.”

“I have recently researched and developed some resources that can be used to recruit, train and educate volunteers of our association. I am keen to access further online resources that will assist me further in this area.”





“As the volunteer manager, it would be helpful to have better strategies around recruiting, training and retaining volunteers.

They could be implemented as part of the induction process when recruiting.”

# About

## Volunteering Peak Bodies

Volunteering Peak Bodies represent and respond to the needs of volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers, ensure they are kept informed with all the latest news and developments in the wider volunteering landscape, undertake policy/advocacy work on their behalf, and provide ongoing training and sector development activities to build capability and promote best practice.

Every State and Territory across Australia has peak representation and can be contacted directly.

Contact:

### **ACT**

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### **NSW**

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## Survey Matters

Survey Matters specialises in providing research services to membership and not-for-profit organisations and have worked with a wide range of organisations to help understand their value proposition – who their key audience(s) are, what is important to key stakeholders, how satisfied they are with performance in key areas and the products or services that they value and use.

We also work with the sector to generate and build industry data and knowledge to support advocacy, promotion, industry development and marketing activities. Our deep knowledge of stakeholder engagement is coupled with our experience using evidence-based approaches to research and strategic planning,

With a focus on membership-based, oversight and community organisations, Survey Matters is proud to have worked with a large and diverse number of customers from these sectors over the past twelve years.

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