

Expectations & Realities of International Development Volunteering

Cosmopolitan Development:

The Impacts of International Volunteering Project Findings Part 1

December 2016

Acknowledgements

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Australian Research Council, Scope Global, or the Universities involved.

EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEERING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research sought to capture the distinctive contributions of international development volunteerism (IDV) to development assistance and people-to-people links. It asked:

1. How does IDV enable the building of development partnerships?
2. To what extent does IDV produce or consolidate cosmopolitan orientations in volunteers and host organisations?

NEED FOR THE RESEARCH

IDV has been a part of bilateral aid programmes since the 1960s but there has been relatively limited research on its impacts. The existing literature suggests that IDV has mainly beneficial capacity development and public diplomacy impacts but that these are difficult to measure through commonly used development indicators. In Australia, a commissioned review of the government funded volunteer program came to a similar conclusion but identified a tension between capacity development and public diplomacy objectives. This research project set out to find ways of evaluating the impacts of IDV programs, including the more intangible relational impacts that are increasingly recognised as being important to achieving transformational change. It focuses on the case of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, specifically the part of the program managed by Scope Global, the industry partner in this project.

CONTEXT OF THIS REPORT

This report presents a preliminary analysis of data collected in two surveys of volunteers – one conducted a week or so before the volunteers' departure from Australia, and the other conducted within 6 months of their return to Australia. The response rate for the Pre-Placement Survey was 66 percent while the response rate for the Returned Volunteer Survey was an estimated 20%. Comparisons between the surveys should therefore be drawn with caution.

How do volunteers perceive volunteering?

The surveys indicate that volunteers are primarily motivated by the desire to help others and share their skills, and are overall confident of making a positive contribution to host organisations. Capacity building is an important aspect of how volunteers understand their role, but they see it more as a mutual sharing and learning experience rather than as bestowing their knowledge and skills on host organisations. Particularly returned interviews emphasise the partnership approach. Volunteers are conscious of the ways they themselves benefit from volunteering, by learning about the host country, its language, and more generally about conducting themselves in a different cultural environment. Returned volunteers report enhanced knowledge in all these areas, suggesting that volunteering benefits not only host organisations but also the sending country.

Do volunteers exhibit cosmopolitan orientations?

Volunteers hold more cosmopolitan attitudes than the average Australian. They are strongly in favour of immigration and see Australia's cultural diversity very positively. They are also open to moving overseas for work or personal reasons and perceive globalisation as providing such opportunities. Other aspects of globalisation are viewed more critically, including the tendency to widen the gap between the rich and the poor and to concentrate wealth, but volunteers appear to see themselves as benefiting overall from globalisation, and thus do not reject it. While a significant minority of volunteers see themselves primarily as global citizens, the majority hold more traditional primary identifications with the country of their birth or the country where they live. Local places are significant sources of secondary belonging, indicating that volunteers see themselves as belonging to various groups, depending on the context and the issue.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

International volunteering has seen significant growth in the 21st century. Much of this is due to the rising demand for international experience among young people from the Global North (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011; Jones, 2011; McBride & Sherraden, 2007; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). At the other end of the working lifespan, older adults with “a lifetime of experience” seek opportunities for productive aging (Lough & Xiang, 2014). Many volunteers who work in developing countries are motivated by the desire for a fairer and more equal world. They are encouraged by global development goals that propose the end of poverty and other injustices as something that is achievable within their lifetime, and to which they can directly contribute (Roy, 2010). Studies suggest that international volunteers contribute to the development of host communities in variety of ways that include technology and skills transfers, building local capacity and social capital, and enhancing community relations (Devereux, 2008; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008). International volunteering also provides opportunities for participants to gain the skills and sensibilities required for global citizenship and for promoting intercultural understanding. In the often technical process of development, volunteering has the potential of offering ‘a far wider view of development as a new, and morally informed, vision of global responsibility’ (Lewis, 2006: 661).

This study focuses on international development volunteerism (IDV) which forms part of bilateral aid. Such IDV programs have their beginnings in the 1950s development era but have only recently attracted the interest of academic researchers. They are supported through government aid budgets and typically involve longer term placements of four or more months for volunteers with professional skills and experiences that match the needs of host organisations working towards social change in developing countries. Australia’s IDV program is one of the oldest, with its roots in the Volunteer Graduate Scheme that began sending skilled graduates to Indonesia in the early 1950s. It was a by-product of the Colombo plan which aimed to strengthen economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region through human resource development (Brown, 2011: 35). In 2011, the Australian government combined several existing programs under the umbrella of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID). The management of the program is tendered out and for the duration of this research project, Scope Global, the industry partner in this ARC Linkage research project, was responsible for managing around 70 per cent of the AVID volunteer placements (Office for Development Effectiveness, 2014).

IDV programs are under growing pressure at both the global and the national level. At the global level, a greater emphasis on making development assistance more accountable and more effective has led to a managerial approach to development that focuses on measurable, outcomes-based development indicators (Elbers, 2012). This carries the risk of devaluing the more intangible relational impacts of IDV programs and reshaping their meanings and outcomes (Georgeou & Engel, 2011; Lough & Allum, 2013). At the same time, the shift from donor-recipient relationships to partnerships in global development policy (OECD, 1996) provides a space for IDV programs to establish more equitable and mutually accountable relationships with organisations in a rapidly changing Global South (Schech, Mundkur, Skelton, & Kothari, 2015).

At the national level, governments in Australia and elsewhere have cut their aid budgets in recent years in response to changing global and domestic financial fortunes. The impact has been felt in terms of reduced resources available to support IDV programs and increased competition between organisations that manage IDV programs (Georgeou, 2012; Lough & Allum, 2013). This research was conducted in 2013-2014, a period marked by an Australian federal election and change of government which resulted in the disestablishment of the Australian Agency for International Development, the government agency responsible for the AVID program. Development assistance was incorporated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade amidst significant policy adjustments and cuts to the aid budget (Ware, 2015). Part of the 2014 aid policy is to make development assistance responsive to national economic interests and foreign

policy goals. In this context, IDV programs are seen as a means of public diplomacy, which is to improve foreign relations and foster trade and investment. Defining IDV more broadly as part of people-to-people linkages in the context of a global civil society (Castells, 2008) may better grasp its potential to contribute to cosmopolitan citizenship and international solidarity by practicing intercultural communication and collaboration.

Research aims and ethics approval

The ARC Linkage Project “Cosmopolitan development: the impacts of international volunteering” sought to evaluate the impacts of international development volunteering on host organisations and volunteers. The project sought to contribute to research on the impacts of IDV in two ways:

1. By placing IDV within the conceptual framework of global development partnership, represented in the Millennium Development Goal 8 and the Sustainable Development Goal 17. This offered a new perspective on volunteerism as a relationship between volunteers and host organisations/communities.
2. By conceiving volunteers and their host organisations as cosmopolitans, rather than locals or nationals. This opened up new ways of exploring the impact of IDV on the participants' orientation towards other cultures and their own place in the world.

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee in June 2013 (Project Number 6044).

Research method

Two surveys were developed to gather data from volunteers: a Pre-Placement Survey (PPV Survey) and a Returned Volunteer survey (RV Survey). The surveys were administered to one year's intake and one year's return of AYAD and AVID volunteers, respectively. The surveys are similar in structure and content and consist of four sections:

1. the volunteers' volunteering (eg. motivations, expectations, knowledge of host country and host organisation);
2. their broader views on development and volunteering;
3. their views of Australia and the world; and
4. their personal background (e.g. education, language skills, and year and country of birth; the purpose of this information to contextualise the survey within benchmark statistics).

The surveys used a combination of questions including multiple choice, ranking (from most to least important), Likert scale (to measure attitudes and behaviours), simple information giving (date and country of birth) and open-ended text-based questions, and took about 30 minutes to complete.

The surveys were anonymous but participants in the RV were invited to nominate for a follow-up interview. Participants in both surveys were invited to enter a draw for a total of seven vouchers valued at AUD \$100 each.

This report discusses the findings of the surveys and draws some comparisons between the responses in the PPV Survey and RV Survey. However, such comparisons should be treated with some caution, for two reasons:

1. Due to the time constraint of the Project and the iterative nature of volunteer recruitment, the surveys captured different cohorts, with only a limited overlap (i.e. the last tranche of the RV Survey may have captured some volunteers from the first two tranches of the PPV Survey). We are therefore not comparing the same groups but rather the broad trends in volunteer responses to similar questions in both surveys.
2. The response rate in the RV Survey was much lower than in the PPV Survey (Table 3). It is likely that a more selective group of volunteers participated in the RV Survey which may affect the trend in responses (for example, those more interested in research, or those who were more strongly affected by their volunteering experience).

All data referenced in this report is available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5072/86/57C4D0206DE5C>

Research participants

Volunteers were recruited to participate in the PPV Survey through a presentation by the research team at five pre-departure briefings (PDB) between August 2013 and May 2014 held across Australia (Table 1).

Participants in the RV Survey were recruited through an email prepared by the research team and sent out to returned volunteers by the industry partner, Scope Global, accompanied by information about the study.

The level of participation in the PPV Survey was high, with 66% of the AYAD and AVID volunteers attending the briefings completing the survey.

Table 1: Volunteer participation in the PPV Survey 2013/14

Pre-departure briefing No.	Place	Date	Attending AVID volunteers (N)	Responses (N)	Response rate (%)
PDB103	Adelaide	21/08/2013	60	59	98
PDB104	Melbourne	10/10/2013	84	38	45
PDB105	Sydney	13/01/2014	109	50	46
PDB106	Canberra	02/03/2014	114	74	65
PDB107	Melbourne	11/05/2014	107	91	85
Overall			474	312	66

Participation in the RV Survey is estimated to be just over 20% (below the 30% average for online surveys). The survey link and research information was sent out by Scope Global volunteer unit staff, who also sent out a reminder. This survey was sent out in three tranches (Table 2). The number of respondents in the graphs and tables that follow do not always include all survey respondents as some have skipped questions or options within questions. Ten volunteers encountered during fieldwork who had completed their placements also participated in the RV Survey.

Table 2: Volunteer participation in the RV Survey 2014

Tranche	Volunteers returning:	Survey Date	Number of Responses
1	1 November 2013 - 31 March 2014	29/05/2014	54
2	1 April - 31 July 2014	14/08/2014	19
3	1 August - 31 October 2014	14/11/2014	22
	Other post-placement volunteers	Various	10
Number of respondents			105

Gender, age & educational background of volunteers

Two thirds of the 312 volunteers who participated in the PPV Survey were AYADs and one third were AVIDs. This compares with a participation in the (smaller) RV Survey of 53% AYADs and 47% AVIDs (Table 3). The gender distribution for the PPV Survey was 33.5% male and 66.5% female, and for the RV Survey 23% male and 77% female (Table 4).

Table 3: Volunteer response by survey and program

	PPV Survey		RV Survey	
	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD)	66.5%	206	52.9%	54
Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID)	33.5%	104	41.1%	48
Number of Respondents		310		102

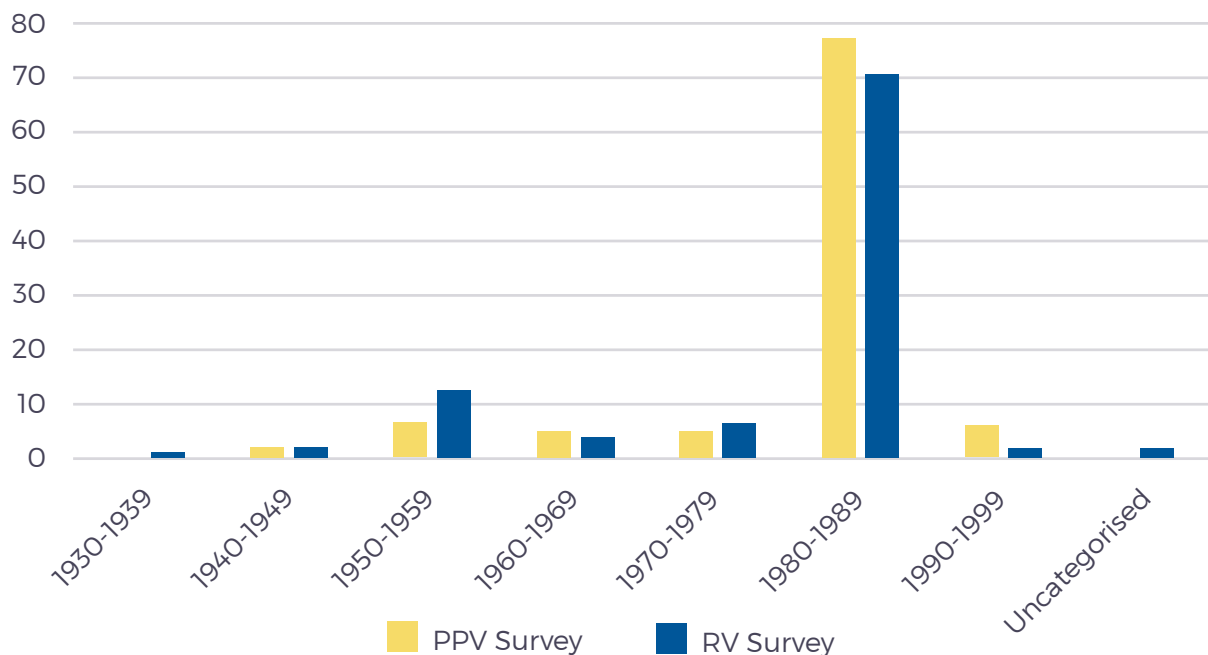
* Recent changes to the volunteer program have stopped differentiating between AYADs and AVIDs.

Table 4: Volunteer response by survey and gender of volunteer

Question: How would you describe your gender identity?	PPV Survey		RV Survey	
	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Answer Options				
Male	33.5%	104	22.8%	23
Female	66.5%	206	77.2%	78
Other		2		0
Number of Respondents		310		101

The overwhelming majority of respondents was born in the 1980s, and thus was in 25-34 age groups at the time of the survey (variously called 'Millennial generation' or 'generation Y'). The second largest group, by a long way, were those born in the 1950s ('baby boomers') (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Volunteer age groups, pre-departure and returned volunteers (%)

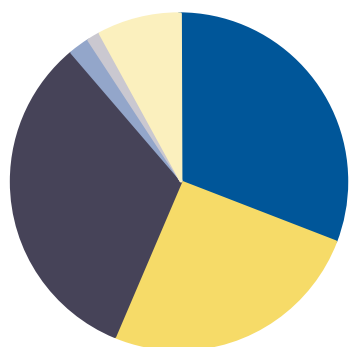


Over 80% of RV Survey respondents and 86% of PPV Survey respondents stated Australia or New Zealand as their country of birth. 9% RV Survey respondents and 5% of the PPV Survey respondents were born in a European country; around 5% in Asia and 2% in the Americas. Only 1% PPV Survey respondents and no RV Survey respondents gave the Pacific Islands as their country of birth.

The overwhelming majority of volunteers (97-98%) are tertiary educated. In the RV Survey a higher proportion stated Masters Degrees and higher research degrees as their highest qualification (Graph 2).

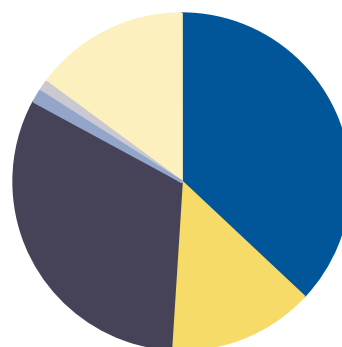
Graph 2: Educational background, pre-departure and returned volunteers

PPV Survey (N=312)



- Research degree 8%
- Masters (coursework) 31%
- Honours or equivalent 25%
- Bachelor degree 33%
- Post secondary certificate or diploma 2%
- Other 1%

RV Survey (N=102)



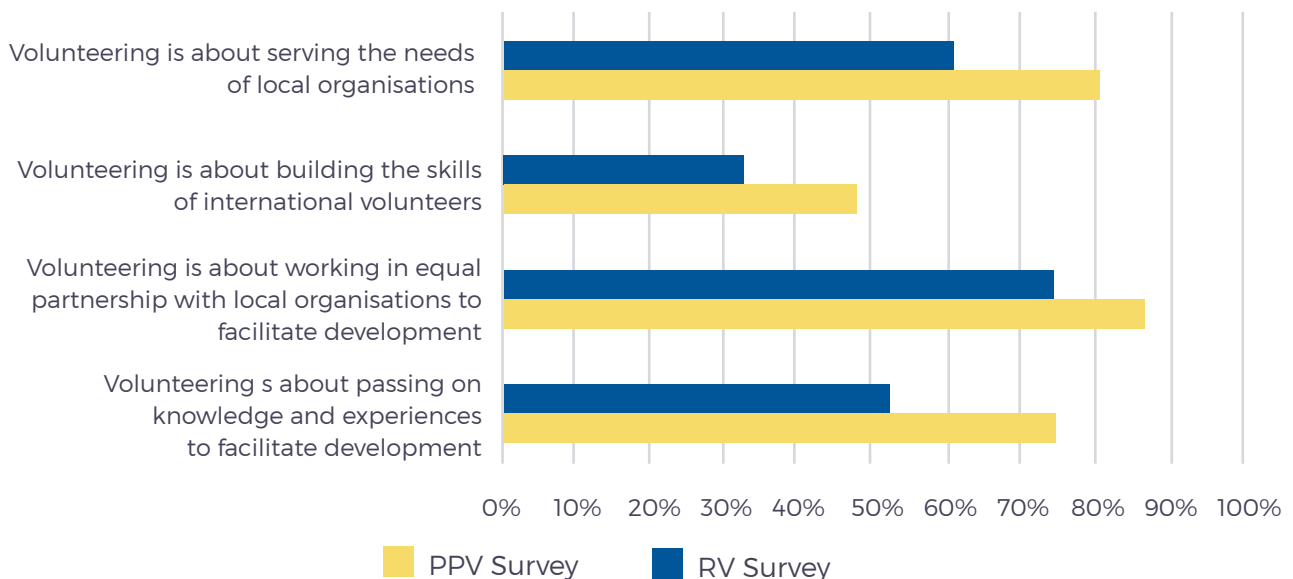
- Research degree 15%
- Masters (coursework) 37%
- Honours or equivalent 14%
- Bachelor degree 32%
- Post secondary certificate or diploma 1%
- Other 1%

VIEWS ON VOLUNTEERING

The survey explores the volunteers' views on volunteering by asking them to rate four statements on a scale from 'very close' to 'very far' from the respondent's opinion (see Graph 3). The majority of respondents rated the view that volunteering is about working with local organisations to facilitate development as being closest to their own view. Passing on knowledge and experiences (which closely relates to the idea of capacity building) was 'close or very close' to the views over two thirds of the pre-placement respondents but only half of the post-placement respondents favoured this view. This view represents the mainstreaming definition of capacity building. A minority of volunteers (around 40%) also agreed with the statement that volunteering is about building their own skills. At the same time, this statement also attracted the highest rate of disagreement, with 35% of RV Survey respondents and over 20% PPV Survey respondents disagreeing ('far or very far') (Graph 4). Overall, post-placement respondents were more skeptical about all four statements, reflecting the more complex reality which they had experienced.

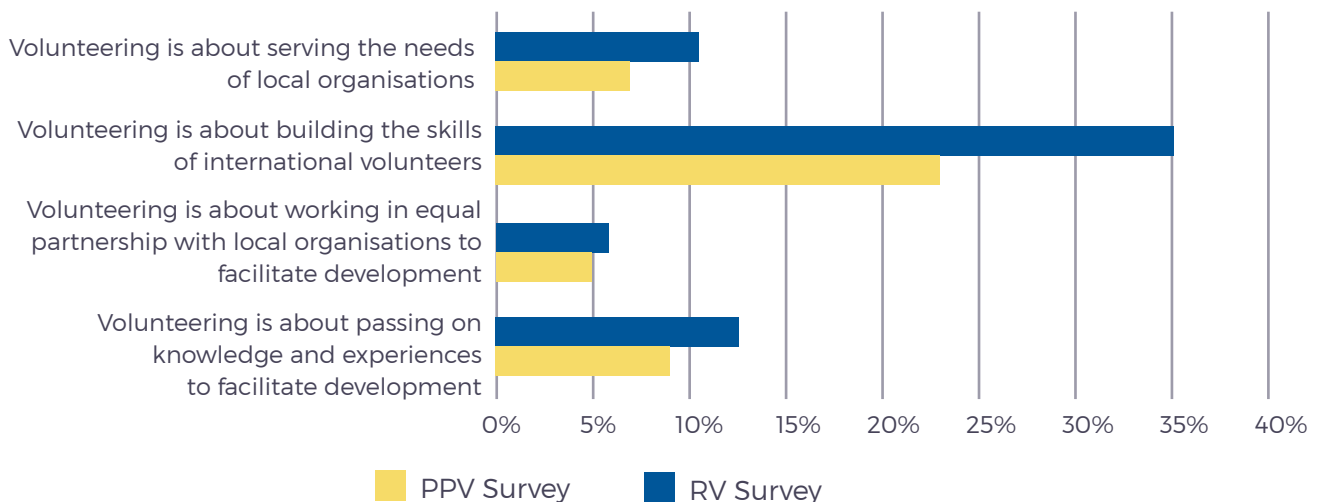
Graph 3: Volunteer views on volunteering, pre-departure and returned volunteers

Close or very close to volunteer's opinion



Graph 4: Volunteer views on what volunteering is not pre-departure and returned volunteers

Far or very far from volunteer's opinion



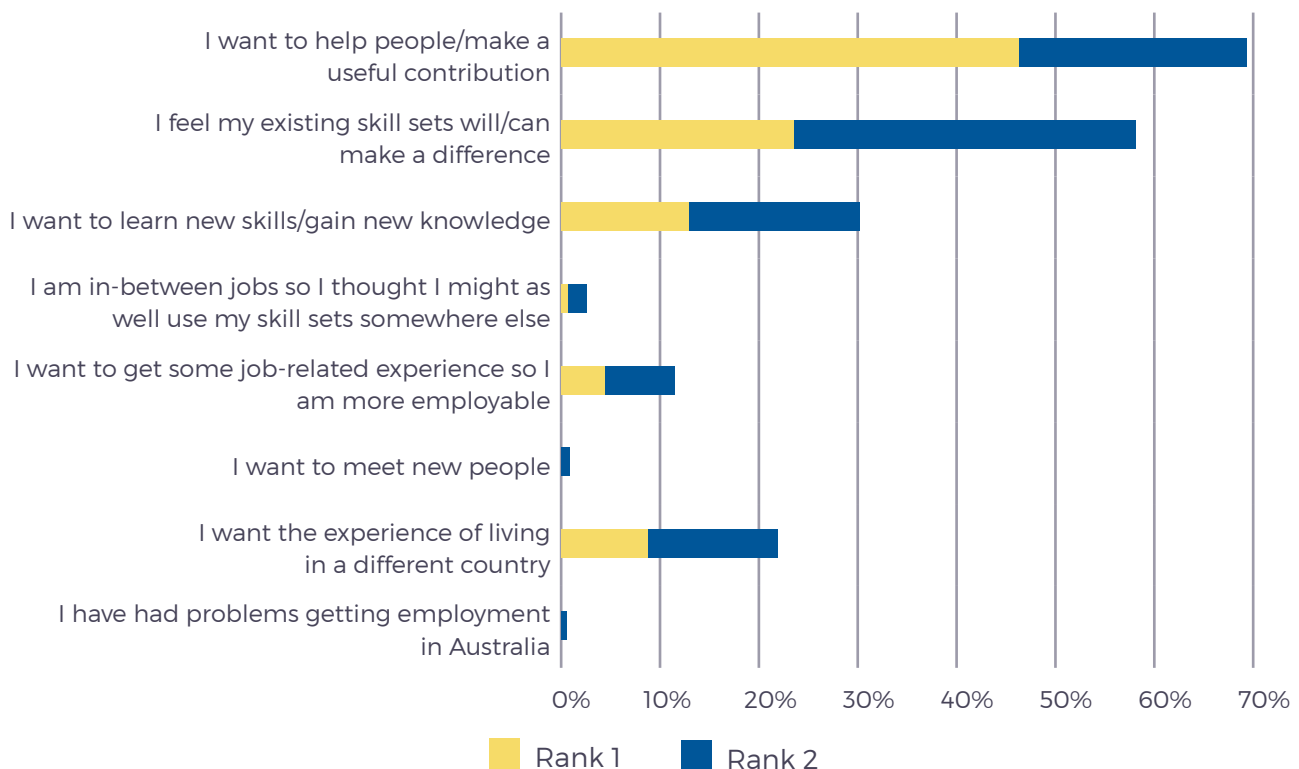
VIEWS ON VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers in both surveys were asked to rank ten reasons why they decided to volunteer (including 'No Reason' and 'Other Reason', which few respondents selected). Helping and making a contribution were found to be the two primary motivators for volunteers. Gaining skills and experience were also important motivators, while employment related reasons were less significant.

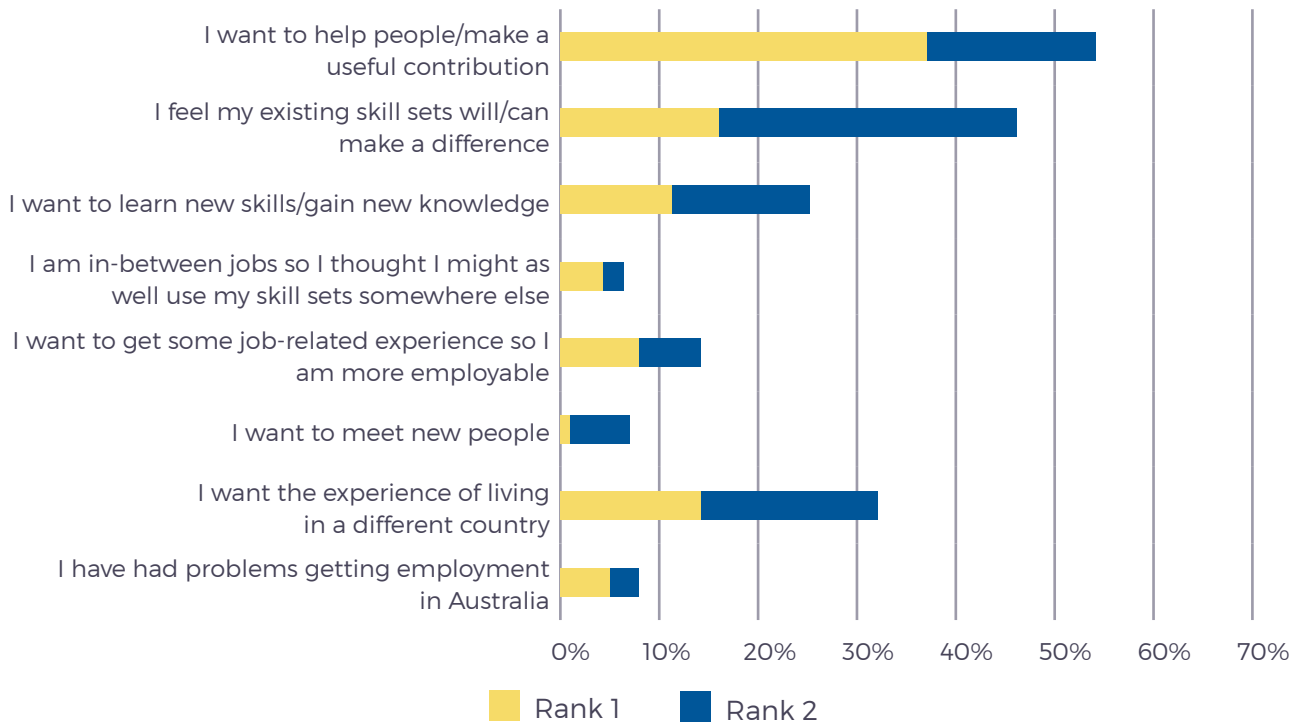
'I want to help people/make a useful contribution' received the highest proportion of First and Second Ranks in the PPV Survey (46% of respondents ranked this reason first, 23% ranked it second) (Graph 5). The response that received the next highest First and Second Ranks was 'I feel my existing skill sets will/can make a difference' (24% ranked it first, 35% ranked it second), followed by 'I want to learn new skills/gain new knowledge' (13% First Ranks, 17% Second Ranks). Reasons that focused more on volunteer benefits, such as 'wanting to learn new skills' and wanting the 'experience of living in a different country' were most frequently ranked 3rd and 4th. 'Meeting new people' and 'getting job-related experience' were most often ranked 5th and 6th. 'Difficulty in finding employment' was the lowest ranked reason in the PPV Survey.

The RV Survey shows a similar pattern though the responses are more muted (Graph 6). Compared to the PPV Survey where almost 70% ranked 'I want to help people' first or second, only 54% did so in the RV Survey. 46% of RV Survey respondents ranked 'I feel my skill sets can make a difference' as the first or second ranked reason compared with almost 60% of PPV Survey respondents. RV Survey respondents were slightly more likely to give first or second ranking to more self-focused reasons like wanting the experience of living in a different country (34% compared to 22% in the Pre-Survey), and more returned volunteers admit to having had problems in getting employment (8% compared to 0.3% in the PPV Survey).

Graph 5: Most important reasons for volunteering (Ranks 1 & 2) - pre-departure volunteers



Graph 6: Most important reasons for volunteering (Ranks 1 & 2) - returned volunteers

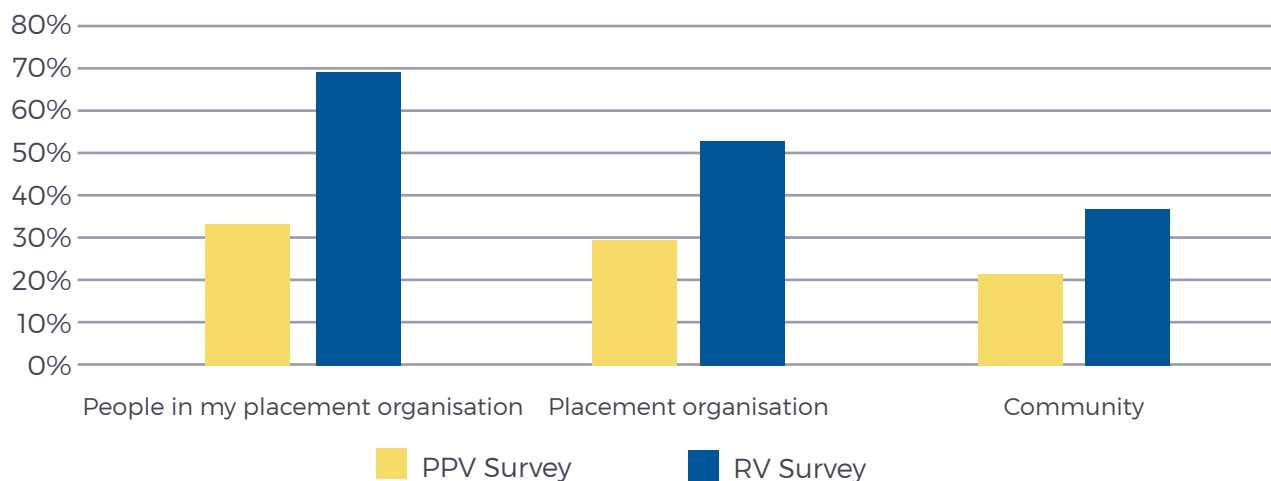


PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF VOLUNTEERING

The two surveys asked respondents the same question about how certain they are about having a positive impact as volunteers on (i) people they worked with; (ii) the organisation they worked with, and (iii) the community more broadly. The PPV and RV Surveys show a very similar pattern of responses, with volunteers most confident about making a positive impact on their co-workers, followed by the host organisation, and least confident about their impact on the host community (Graph 7). However, RV Survey respondents demonstrated a significantly higher level of certainty that they had made a positive contribution. The responses about levels of uncertainty remain the same among PPV and RV Survey respondents, indicating that volunteers have a good sense of their limitations, particularly in relation to any impact on the host community (Graph 8).

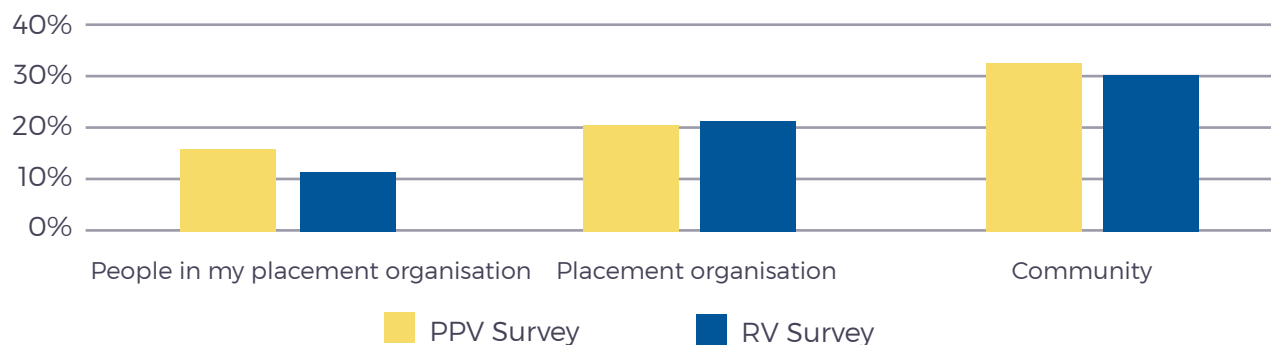
Graph 7: Feeling certain about having a positive impact, pre-departure and returned volunteers

Feeling (very) certain about positive impacts on...



Graph 8: Feeling uncertain about having a positive impact, pre-departure and returned volunteers

Feeling (very) uncertain about positive impacts on...



The PPV Survey asked open-ended questions about how volunteers envisaged their impact on their host organisation. The word cloud analysis in SurveyMonkey identified 27 most frequently used words or phrases in their responses, most prominent among them 'capacity building', 'knowledge', and 'sharing'. The respondents aim to 'develop', 'improve' and 'increase'. When asked about how they thought the host organisation will impact on them in return, the keywords are 'new ways', 'skills', 'understanding', and 'Cross-cultural', and volunteers envisage themselves as "learning" these. While more refined analysis will be required in conjunction with other qualitative data, it seems that PPV Survey respondents embrace a view of capacity building that is based on mutual learning and exchange. Their main expectation is to gain a better understanding about the context of development, new perspectives on development, and cross-cultural skills.

When asked what would be the 'best thing' to happen to them as a result of their volunteering, PPV Survey respondents gave a higher preference to gaining life experience than to a positive impact on their host organisation or their co-workers (Table 5). This might reflect the greater difficulty of anticipating one's impact on others compared to anticipating one's own experience. Alternatively, it could indicate that volunteers value their overseas experience more highly than their developmental impact, notwithstanding their stated motivations (Graph 5). Or else, they confidently anticipate that they will have a positive impact on the host organisation and its staff and regard this as a 'normal' outcome. Indeed, only 7% selected 'having a positive impact on the people you will be working with' but 13% selected 'having a positive impact on the community' as their most referred result, even though the latter had previously been identified as a less likely outcome (Tables 5 and 6).

The 'worst thing' that can happen, according to PPV Survey respondents, however, is to have no or negative impact on host organisation (23%), the host community (20%) and the people they would work with (15%). In fourth place is 'feeling overwhelmed or disillusioned about the scale of global development issues' (Table 6). The fear of getting sick or dying dominated among the 'Other' response option which was used by 8% of the respondents. The 'best thing' and 'worst thing' questions were not included in the Post-Survey.

Table 5: Best things that could happen - pre-departure volunteers

What do you think will be the best thing that will happen to you as a result of this volunteering experience? (Please select only ONE)		
Answer Options	Percent	Count
Being immersed in another culture	4.6	14
Gaining invaluable work experience	8.2	25
Gaining invaluable life experiences	25.9	79
Having a positive impact on the people I will be working with	6.6	20
Having a positive impact on the organisation I will be working with	9.2	28
Having a positive impact on the community I will be working with	12.5	38
Building life-long friendships	2.0	6
Building partnerships with my host organisation that continues beyond the volunteer placement	5.2	16
Opening my mind to new ways of looking at the world	7.2	22
Helping me better understand complex global development issues	7.2	22
Learning how to live and work in cultures different from my own in mutually respectful ways	6.9	21
Other (please specify)	4.6	14
Number of respondents		305

Table 6: Worst things that could happen - pre-departure volunteers

What do you think will be the worst thing that can happen to you as a result of this volunteering experience? (Please select only ONE)		
Answer Options	Percent	Count
Having no or a negative impact on my host organisation	23.3	71
Having no or a negative impact on my host community	20.3	62
Having no or a negative impact on the people I will be working with	15.1	46
Gaining no valuable work experience	1.0	3
Having negative personal experience/s while at work	7.2	22
Having negative personal experience/s outside work	9.5	29
Having significant difficulty adjusting to a new environment	5.2	16
Feeling overwhelmed and/or disillusioned by the scale of global development issues	10.8	33
Other (please specify)	7.5	23
Number of respondents		305

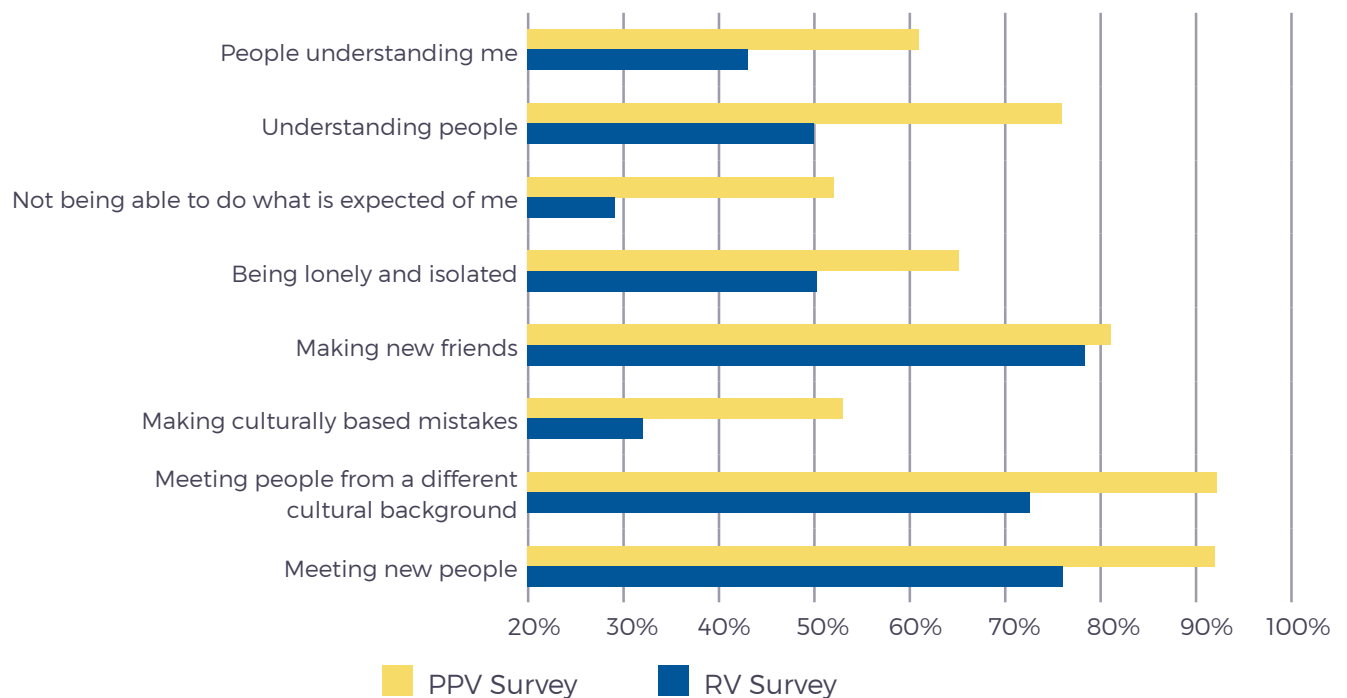
IMPACTS ON VOLUNTEERS' CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS

The expectation that volunteers would grow more confident about functioning effectively in a cross-cultural context as a result of their overseas experience is largely fulfilled. This is evident from a question in the PPV and RV Surveys asking respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how nervous they are about meeting new people, making culturally based mistakes, and establishing a mutual understanding with other people. International volunteers are a self-selected group with relatively high levels of cross-cultural skills, with less than 5% of PPV Survey respondents indicating that they were nervous about meeting new people, meeting people from a different cultural context, and making new friends. The greatest concerns revolved around not being able to do what is expected of them in their placement (23% were 'nervous' or 'very nervous'), followed by a number of practical concerns such as 'becoming ill' (16%) and not knowing where they would live (14%).

The RV Survey omitted some of the practical issues and offered only those options that can be transferred to the post-placement context. Over 50% of the RV Survey respondents were confident about being able to do what is expected of them, compared to fewer than 30% of the PPV Survey respondents, indicating a higher level of confidence in their professional capabilities. Overall, RV Survey respondents indicated a very high level of confidence in their cross-cultural skills (measured as 'not, or not at all nervous' (Graph 9). However, a significant percentage retained an awareness ('somewhat nervous') about making culturally based mistakes and people failing to understand them.

Graph 9: Volunteers' self-rated cross-cultural skills (%) - pre-departure and returned volunteers

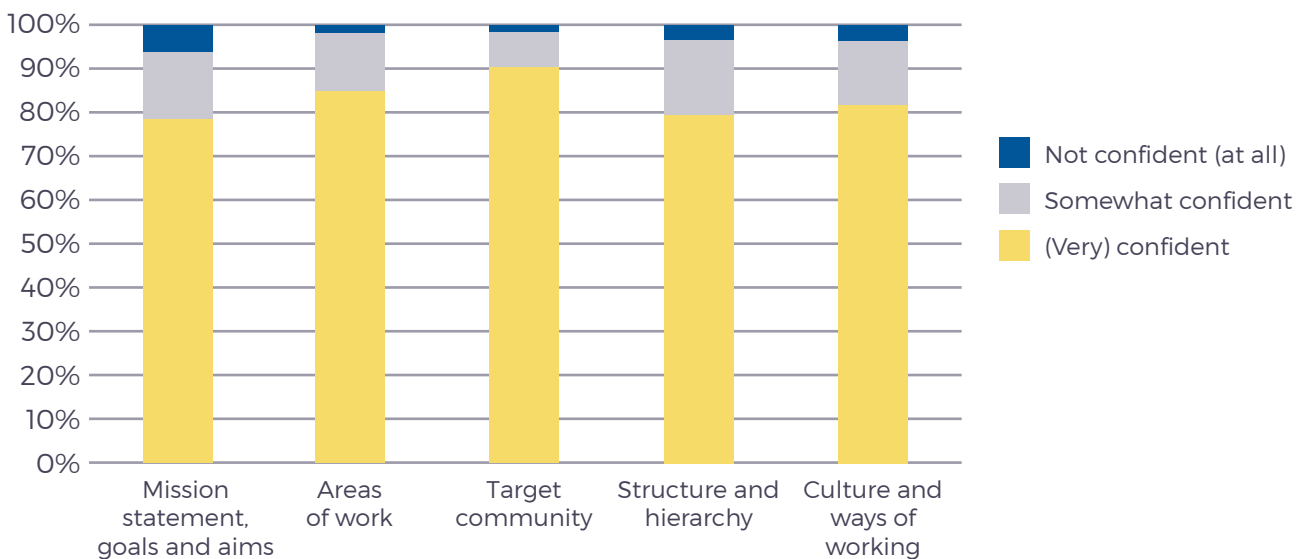
I don't feel nervous about...



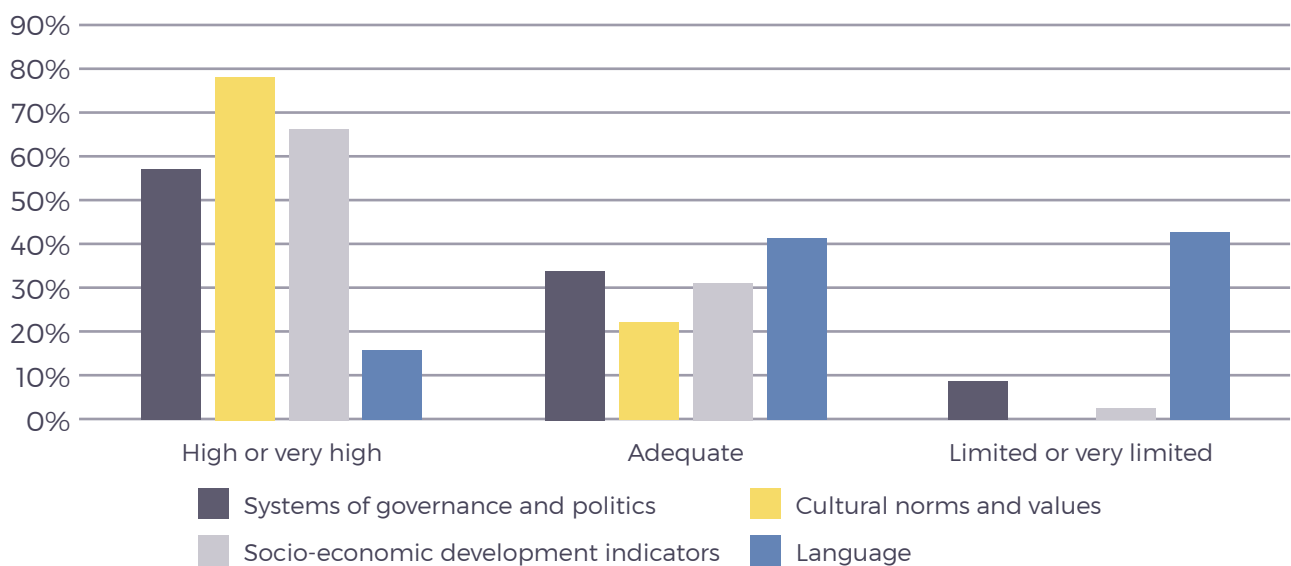
Knowledge of host country and host organisation

A stronger understanding of the host country is a key outcome for international volunteers. As discussed earlier, volunteers value the opportunity to gain practical work experience in a developing country. The literature on volunteering argues that international volunteer programs fulfill an important training purpose (Georgeou, 2012; Fee & Gray, 2011; Jones, 2011). Over 70% of RV Survey respondents indicated that they are confident or very confident about their knowledge of their host organisation and its work (Graph 10). Knowledge of the host country is also high, however, responses are more varied. Upon return to Australia, volunteers rated their knowledge of cultural norms and values in the host country the highest, followed by their knowledge of development indicators and systems of governance. They rated lowest their knowledge of the host country language, but 55% of RV Survey respondents still rate their language knowledge as 'high' or 'adequate'.

Graph 10: Returned volunteers' self-rated knowledge of host organisation

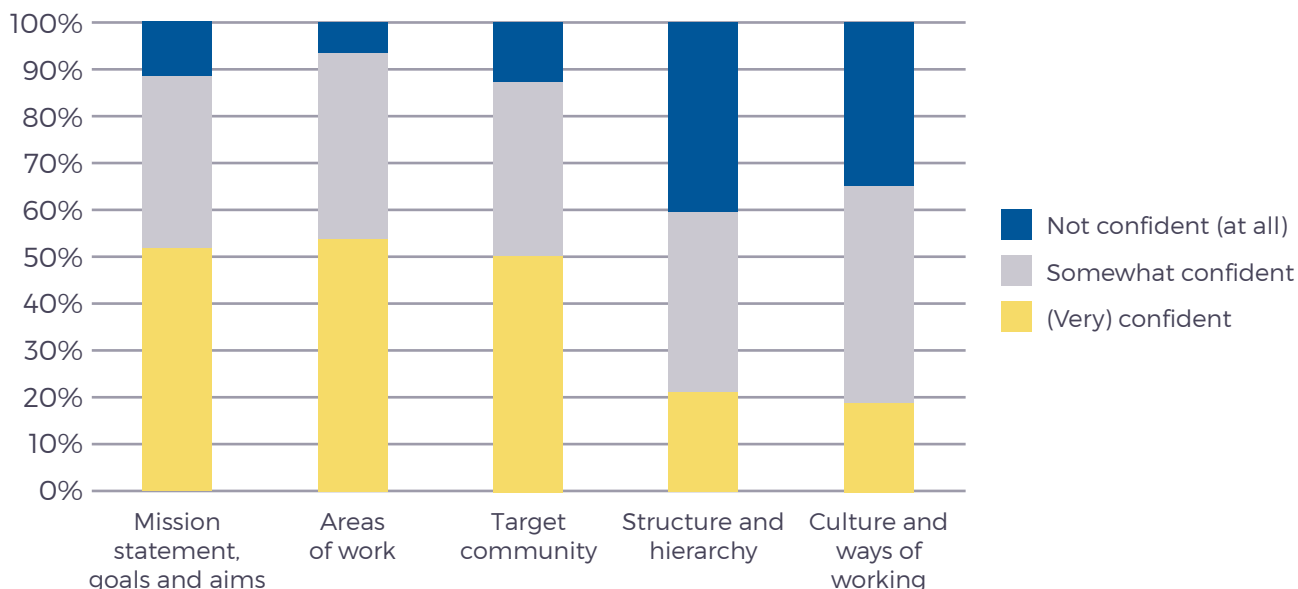


Graph 11: Returned volunteers' self-rated knowledge of host country



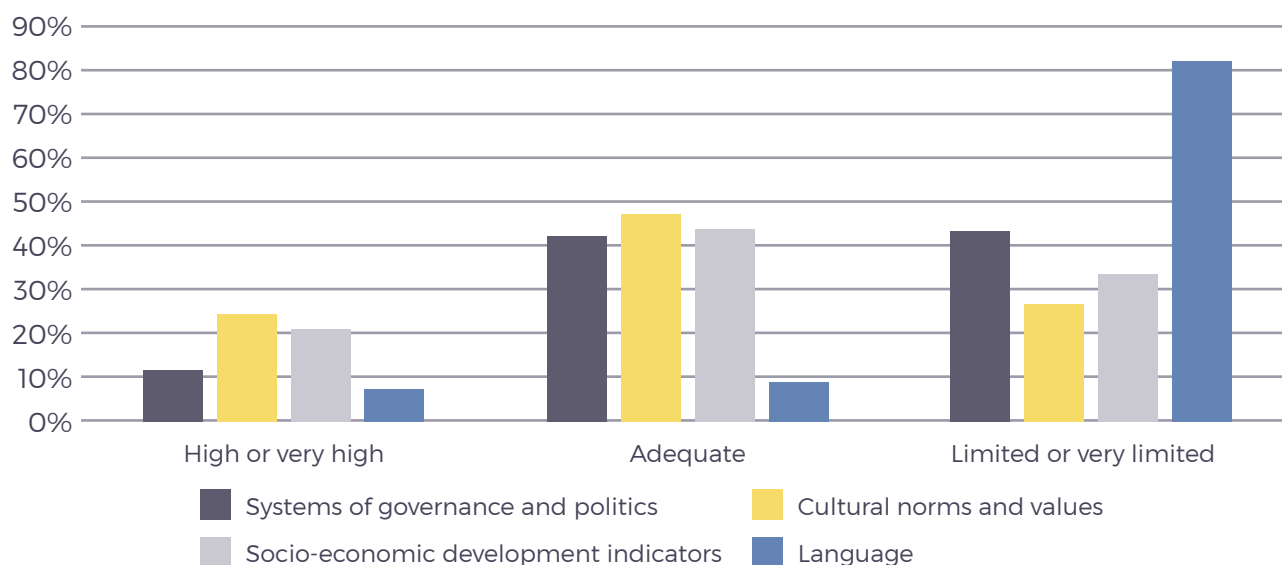
By comparison, only half of the respondents (53%) in the PPV Survey felt confident or very confident before embarking on their placement that they had adequate knowledge of their host organisation's country's areas of work (Graph 12). Around 50% were confident or very confident about their knowledge of the host organisation's goals and aims, and about the host organisation's target community. Only a minority felt they know enough about the host organisation's structure and hierarchy (20%) and its culture and ways of working (18%).

Graph 12: Pre-departure volunteers' self-rated knowledge of host organisations



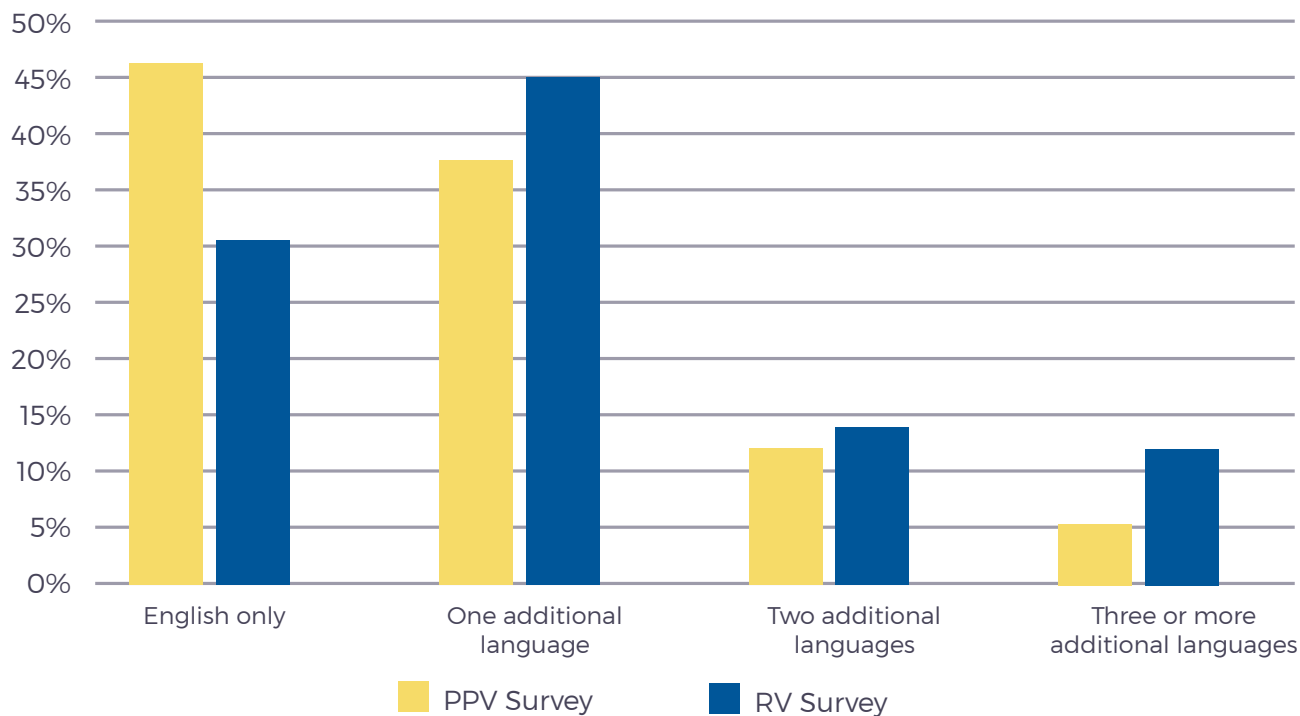
PPV Survey respondents also professed a more limited understanding of their host country compared to those who had completed their placement (Graph 13). They felt most confident about their knowledge of cultural norms and values, which one quarter rated high or very high, and only 28% as low or very low. But only 13% of the respondents rated their knowledge of governance and politics 'high' or 'very high', and 44% thought it was 'limited' or 'very limited'. Volunteers were least confident about their knowledge of the host country language, with only 8% saying it was 'high' or 'very high', and 81% saying it was 'limited' or 'very limited'.

Graph 13: Pre-departure volunteers' self-rated knowledge of host country



One important impact of volunteering is the acquisition of language skills. Living in the host country and being immersed in its culture enables volunteers to learn the host-country's language more easily. The surveys show that 60% RV Survey respondents reported having skills in one or more languages other than English, compared to 45% of the pre-departure volunteers (Graph 14). The surveys did not seek to assess the depth of these language skills.

Graph 14: Language skills of volunteers, pre-departure and returned volunteers (%)



These findings demonstrate that volunteers experience a measurable increase in their self-assessed understanding of the developing countries in which they are placed. They confirm other research findings that volunteers enhance their own capacity through gaining 'soft skills', such as enhanced self-confidence, self-sufficiency, cross-cultural communication & language skills, global awareness and strategic thinking, which make them more competitive in the global skilled labour market (Fee & Gray, 2011; Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011). This is an important impact of the volunteer program in Australia, which stands to benefit economically, socially and politically from the increase in cross-cultural experience among its population and its workforce. The ability to communicate across cultures can also be expected to enhance cosmopolitan orientations.

COSMOPOLITAN ORIENTATIONS

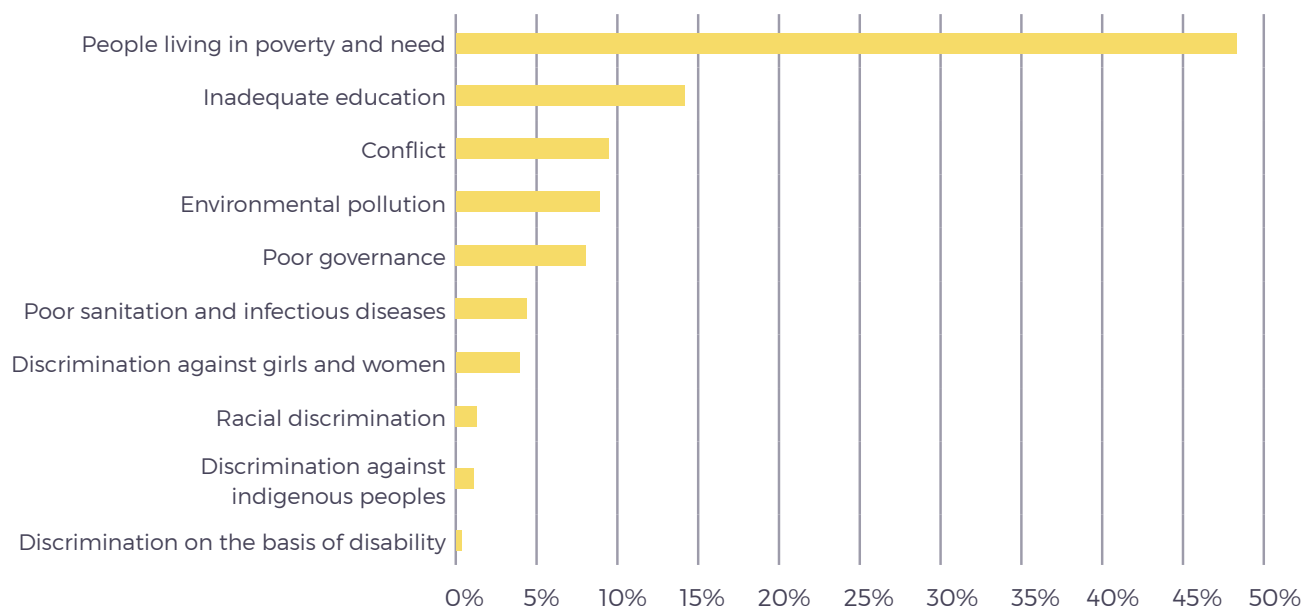
In this research we seek to analyse the cosmopolitan orientations among people involved in international volunteering, following Hannerz's characterisation of cosmopolitanism as first and foremost an orientation, a willingness to engage with cultural others (Hannerz, 1990). The volunteer surveys include several questions, informed by relevant academic research (Appiah, 2006; Mau, Mewes & Zimmermann, 2008), that aim to explore volunteers' openness to difference, their views on globalisation, and the extent to which they desire social equality and justice, and recognise common goals and aspirations among people.

Global problems and responses

To gauge their views on global development challenges, the PPV Survey respondents were asked to rank 10 problems from the most important to the least important. Just under 50% selected poverty as the world's most important problem, which is not surprising, given the publicity that Millennium Development Goal 1 'Reduce poverty and hunger' has received (Graph 15). Inadequate education received the second highest number of nominations as the world's most important problem (14%), followed by conflict and environmental pollution (9% each) and poor governance (8%).

Graph 15: First-ranked global problems, pre-departure volunteers

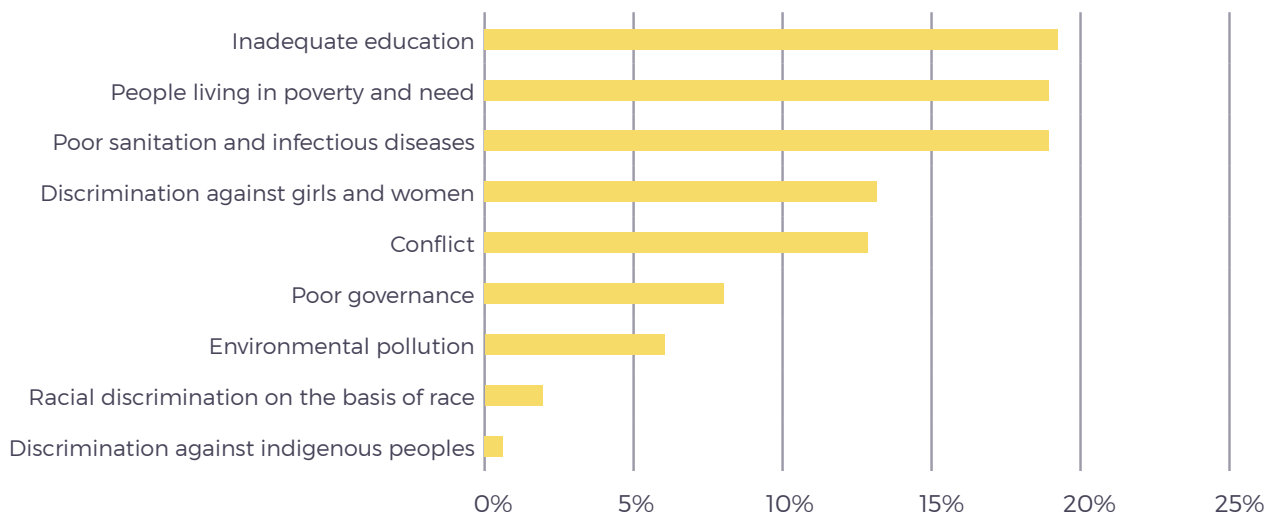
The most important problem the world faces today...



When it came to the second ranked problems, responses were more diverse, with poverty, inadequate education and poor sanitation receiving 19% of nominations each, and gender discrimination and conflict around 13% each (Graph 16).

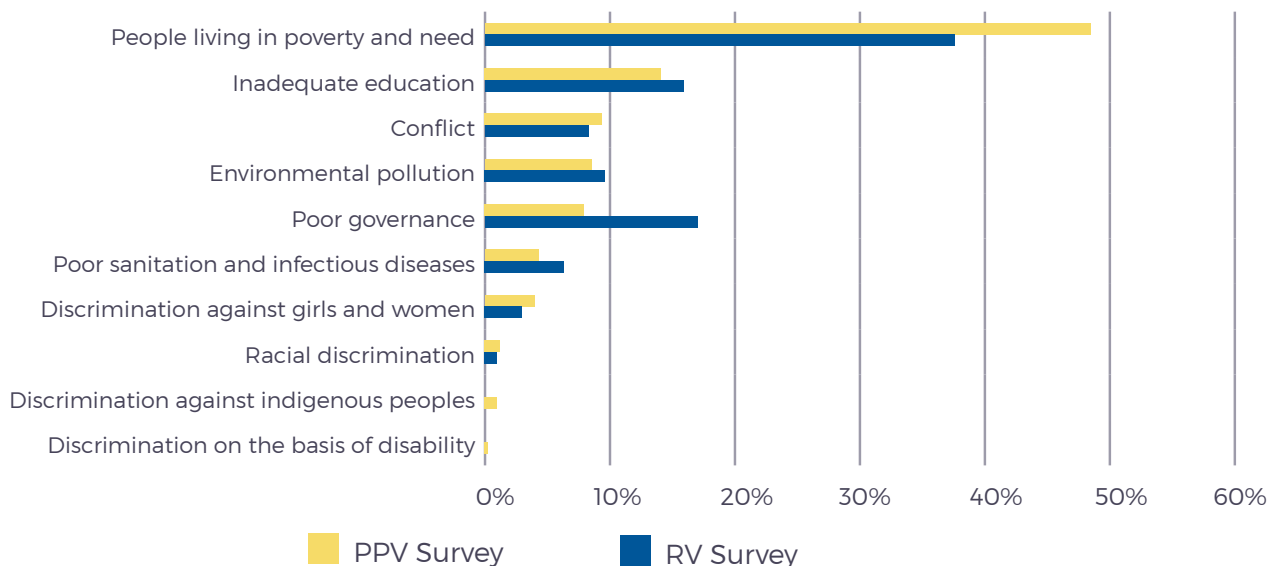
Graph 16: Second-ranked global problems, pre-departure volunteers

The second most important problem the world faces today...



The RV Survey asked respondents the same question. The comparison of the two surveys shows that poverty remains the most nominated global problem number one, but only by 38% of respondents in the RV Survey (N=93).¹ While we must be cautious in comparing the two surveys, these findings show a remarkably similar pattern of responses, with one exception: a higher proportion of RV Survey respondents consider poor governance as the most important global problem compared to pre-departure volunteers (Graph 17).

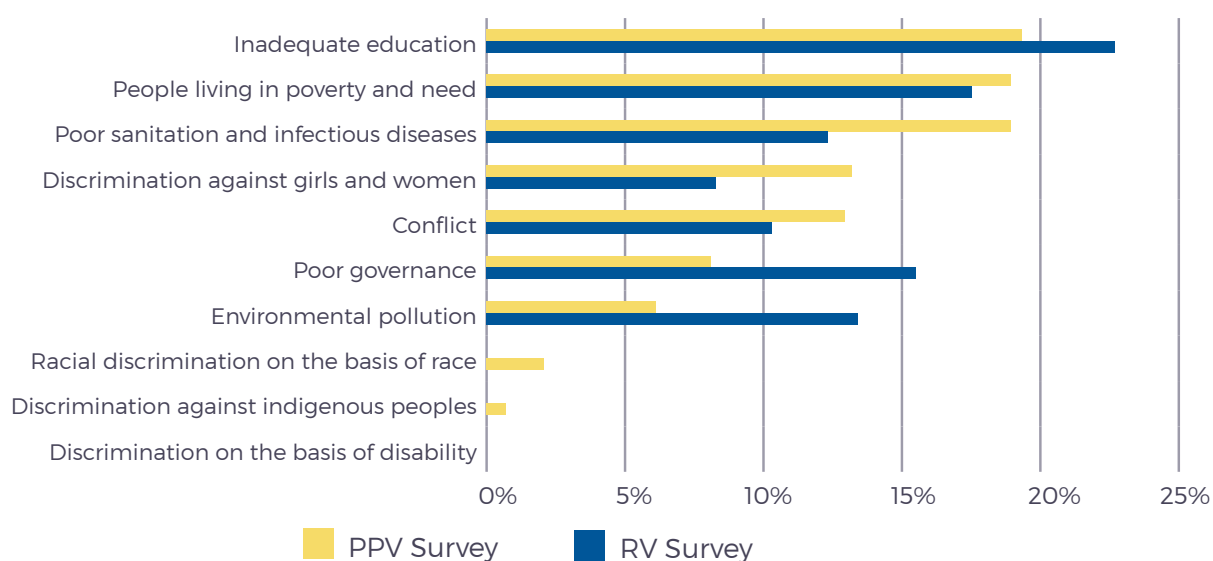
Graph 17: First-ranked global problems, pre-departure and returned volunteers



Compared to PPV Survey respondents, the RV Survey respondents were more likely to rank as the second most important global problem poor governance and environmental pollution (including climate change issues), which can be argued to be also a product of poor governance. They nominated poor sanitation, gender discrimination and conflict slightly less frequently as second most important problem than respondents in the PPV Survey (Graph 18).

¹ In both surveys a minority of respondents evaded this question with the argument that there was not one single most important problem, and that the listed problems were in fact interconnected. Some respondents volunteered other problems that they considered most important, including climate change.

Graph 18: Second-ranked global problems, pre-departure and returned volunteers



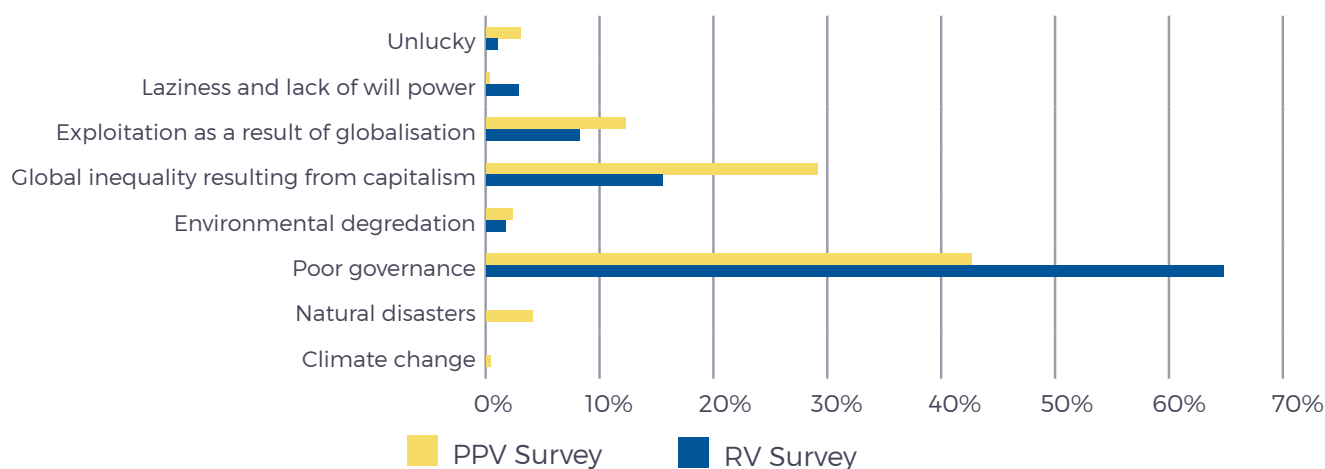
When asked to identify the actors who would be best placed to address the global problem they ranked first, the most frequently mentioned actor was national government, followed by local communities and international institutions, in both surveys (Table 7). RV Survey respondents were more likely to nominate local NGOs and civil society organisations and ordinary individuals as actors best placed to address the most significant problem they nominated. International actors like aid donors, development experts or volunteers were not seen as capable of addressing the problem, and the main responsibility for doing so was seen to lie in the institutions and people of the countries facing the problem. In both surveys volunteers commented that a combination of development actors would be required to work together on solving the most significant development problems.

Table 7: Development actors that are best placed to address problems, pre-departure and returned volunteers

Who is best placed to solve this (first ranked) problem?	PPV Survey (%)	RV Survey (%)
International institutions (United Nations, World Bank, etc.)	17	18
National governments	32	33
International aid donors	1	0
Local communities	18	21
Non-government and civil society organisations	5	11
Ordinary individuals	7	10
Development experts	2	2
International volunteers	0	1
Global civil society organisations	1	0
International non-government organisations	4	4
Other	13	-
Respondents (N=)	300	92

Problems of governance reappeared in a further question which was asked in both surveys to gauge volunteers' views on the main cause of poverty. Asked why people lived in poverty in their host country, PPV Survey respondents identified poor governance (45%), global inequality resulting from capitalism (31%) and exploitation as a result of globalisation (13%). In the RV Survey, respondents had a much stronger view that poor governance was the principal cause of poverty (69%) (Graph 19). The reasoning behind these responses is not evident in the surveys and we may find some further insights in the qualitative data conducted for this research project. Poor governance may refer to the host country government but also to other institutions including NGOs and international development institutions. Human actions and decisions are perceived by volunteers to be more able to explain the persistence of poverty than globalisation, capitalism or natural disasters.

Graph 19: Most important reasons why people live in poverty in the host country, pre-departure and returned volunteers

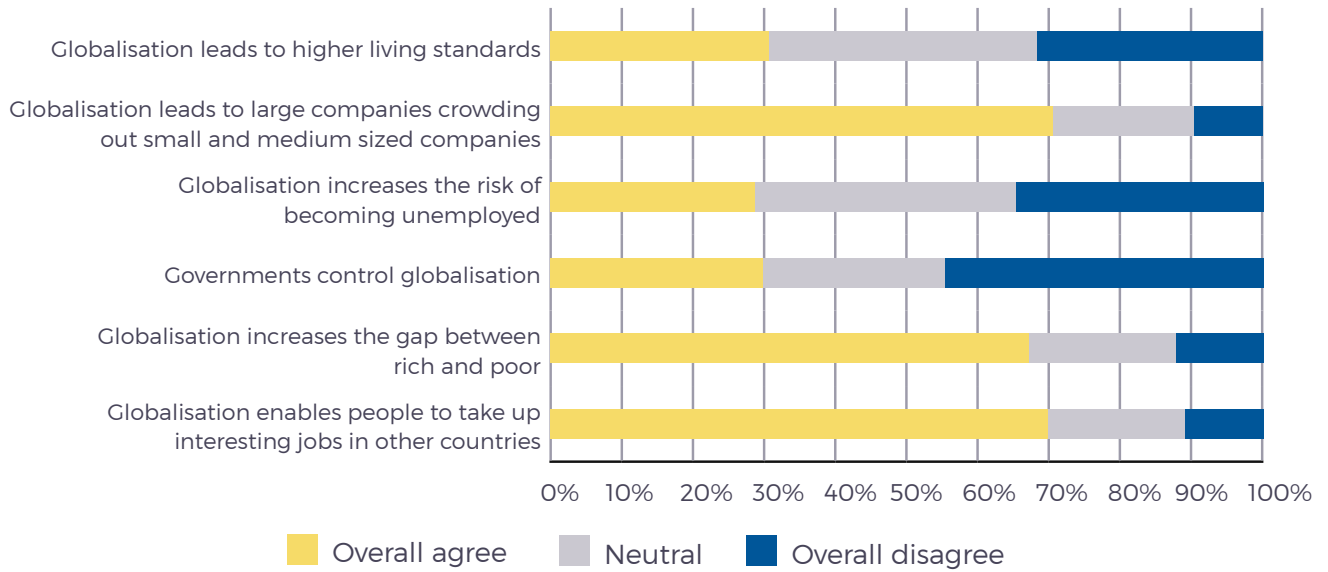


Globalisation

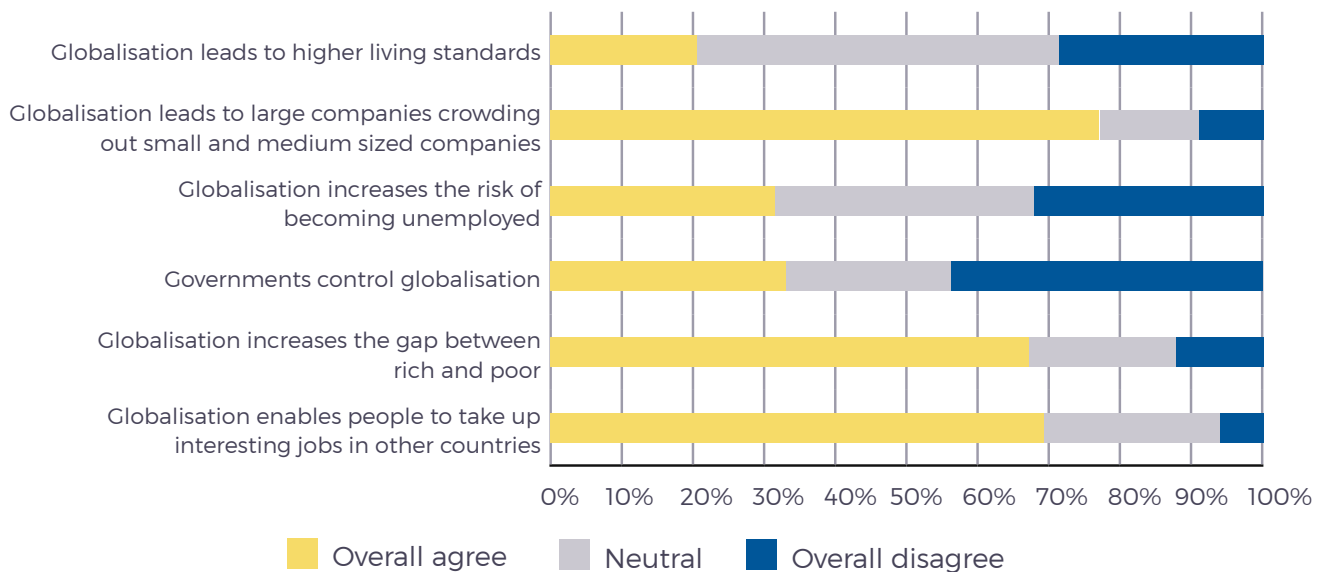
A cosmopolitan orientation implies the recognition that political communities are increasingly interconnected through transnational social, economic and environmental processes (in short, globalisation); and that the resulting overlapping of collective fortunes requires collective solutions locally, regionally and globally (Mau, Mewes & Zimmermann, 2008, 8).

One can surmise that volunteers, by choosing to go to another country to contribute to development projects, have complex views about globalisation as both causing problems and also contributing to their solution. Volunteers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a number of statements about globalisation. PPV Survey respondents were divided about whether globalisation led to higher standards of living but agreed that globalisation led to greater inequality on the one hand, and greater employment opportunities and choices on the other (Graph 20). They tended to disagree with statements that globalisation led to unemployment, and that government could control globalisation. In the RV Survey, a similar pattern of responses was recorded but there was more uncertainty about globalisation leading to higher living standards (Graph 21).

Graph 20: Perspectives on globalisation, pre-departure volunteers



Graph 21: Perspectives on globalisation, returned volunteers



Individual freedom or social equality?

Recent decades have seen a spread of neoliberal values which highlight the importance of personal freedom and choice. This may have led to social equality being deemed less important. However, volunteers working in international development could be expected to have a higher level of awareness of global inequalities than average citizens. To explore this issue, volunteers were asked to rate how close their own opinion is in regard to two statements about individual freedom and social equality. PPV Survey respondents were more strongly in favour of social equality (rating average of 2.4 on a scale of 5, whereby 1 is very close and 5 is very far) than personal freedom (rating average of 2.9). About a third of the respondents also strongly supported the statement about personal freedom being more important than equality, and a similar proportion opposed the statement (Table 8). A significant proportion of respondents were 'neutral' about the statements. The average ratings in the RV Survey almost exactly replicate the PPV Survey ratings (Table 9). This finding cautiously supports the hypothesis that volunteers are more inclined towards equality than freedom. The findings also confirm arguments in the literature that global inequality is becoming less acceptable (Beck & Gernsheim-Beck, 2009). At the same time, the high number of respondents choosing neutral positions or supporting the priority of freedom suggests that young people are looking for individual rather than collective solutions to global inequality, and a significant portion of both cohorts is apolitical at heart.

Table 8: Freedom or equality rating, PPV Survey (number of respondents)

Answer Options	(Very) close	Neutral	(Very) far	Rating Average (out of 5)	N=303
Personal freedom more important than equality. That is, that everyone can live in freedom and development without hindrance.	109	103	91	2.90	303
Equality more important than personal freedom. That is, that nobody is underprivileged and that social class differences are not so strong.	174	86	41	2.40	301

Rating range: 1 (very close) and 2 (close) were combined, and 4 (far) and 5 (very far)

Table 9: Freedom or equality rating, RV Survey (number of respondents)

Answer Options	(Very) close	Neutral	(Very) far	Rating Average (out of 5)	N=103
Personal freedom more important than equality. That is, it is more important that everyone can live in freedom and develop without hindrance	31	44	28	2.91	103
Equality is more important than personal freedom. That is, it is more important that nobody is underprivileged and that social class differences are not so strong.	57	30	16	2.48	103

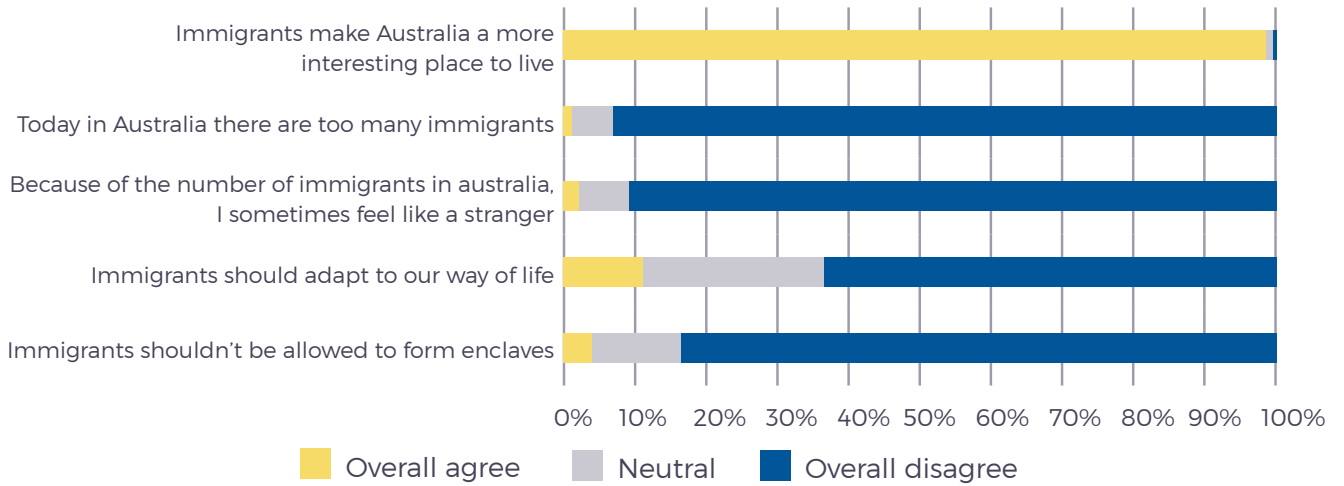
Rating range: 1 (very close) and 2 (close) were combined, and 4 (far) and 5 (very far)

Cultural diversity and migration

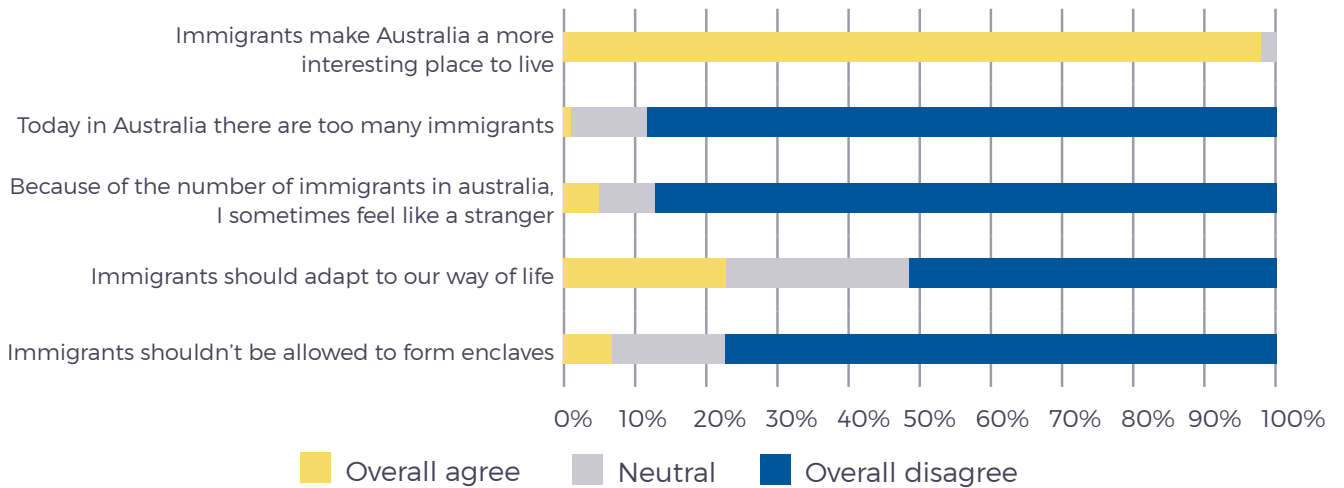
Cosmopolitan attitudes are associated with an open and tolerant world view that sees the world as increasingly interconnected economically, politically and culturally, and regards this as enriching rather than threatening (Mau, Mewes & Zimmermann, 2008, 5). More positive views about migration, strangers and globalisation can also be associated with cosmopolitan attitudes. International volunteers can be assumed to hold cosmopolitan attitudes because they are willing to live in a different social and cultural environment and contribute their labour to causes that primarily benefit distant strangers.

Volunteers were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about immigrants in Australia. Almost all respondents in both surveys agreed with the statement that 'immigrants make Australia a more interesting place'. They disagreed equally strongly with statements that Australia had too many immigrants; that they felt like strangers in their own country; and that immigrants should not be allowed to live in enclaves (Graphs 22 & 23). This indicates that international volunteers as a group are probably more open than Australians generally to people from different backgrounds coming to live in Australia and maintaining their distinctive cultures. There was, however, a slight shift between PPV and RV Surveys in the strength of opposition to the statement that immigrants should adapt to Australian ways of life, with 64% of PPV Survey respondents disagreeing and 11% agreeing with this statement, compared to 51% of disagreement and 23% of agreement in the RV Survey (Graph 24). It is possible that having lived in a culturally different society, some volunteers believe that adaptation and fitting in are responsibilities of the migrant. Transnational social practices, such as working or studying abroad, does not necessarily translate into more cosmopolitan attitudes but can instead lead to hardening stereotypes (Mau, Mewes & Zimmermann, 2008; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). This point needs further exploration through qualitative research.

Graph 22: Agreement/disagreement with statements about immigrants, pre-departure volunteers

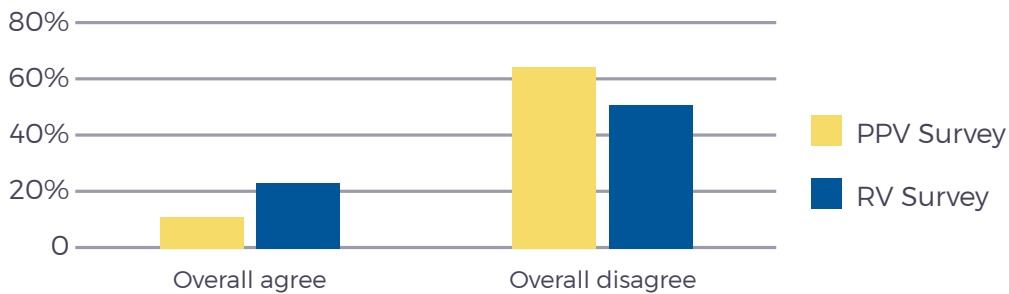


Graph 23: Agreement/disagreement with statements about immigrants, returned volunteers



Graph 24: Agreement/disagreement with adaptation statement , pre-departure and returned volunteers

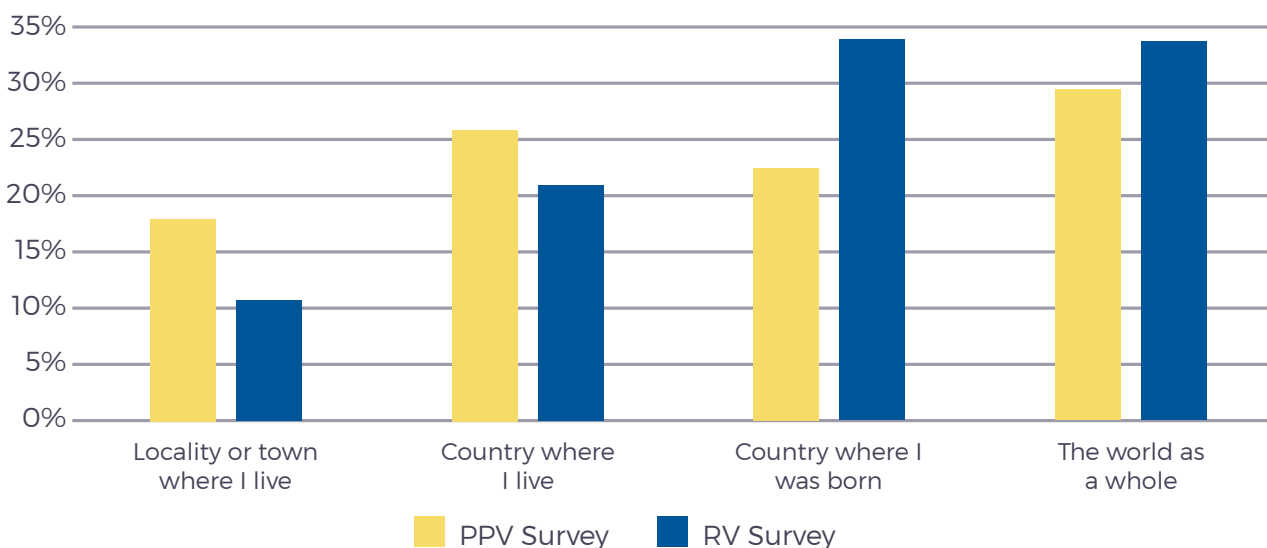
Immigrants should adapt to our way of life



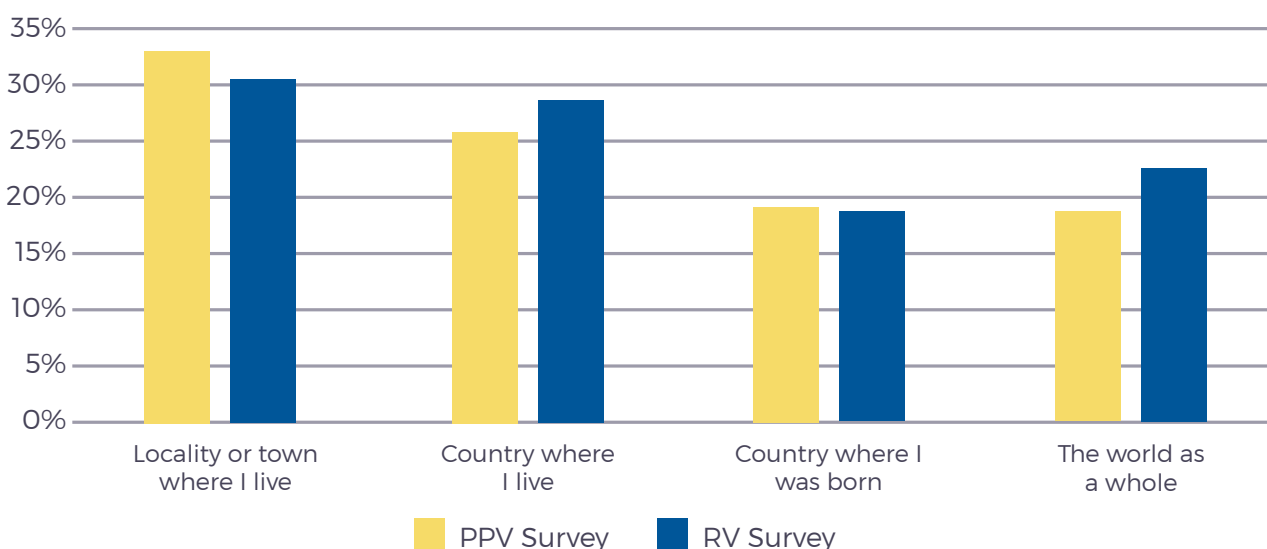
Cosmopolitan orientations are associated with identifying with the humanity as a whole rather than as a citizen of a nation-state or as a member of an ethnic group. Also, people with such an orientation tend to see their life not as bound by national borders but as being lived in the world. However, research has shown that many people map their sense of belonging to a variety of groups ranging from family to the global, depending on the context (Calhoun, 2003). The surveys show that about one third of volunteers identified first and foremost as a global citizen, but national identity still plays an important role. 23% of PPV Survey respondents and 34% of returned volunteers identified as belonging to the country where they were born (either Australia or overseas), and 26% of PPV Survey respondents and 21% of RV Survey respondents identified as belonging in the country where they live (i.e., Australia).

Belonging to a local place was chosen as primary belonging by just under 20% of PPV Survey respondents and just over 10% of RV Survey respondents (Graph 25). However, when asked about their secondary belonging, almost a third of respondents in both surveys chose the local place or the country where they live (Graph 26). These findings appear to support the argument that cosmopolitan orientations can co-exist with other, national or local, belongings, rather than being mutually exclusive.

Graph 25: Primary belonging, pre-departure and returned volunteers



Graph 26: Secondary belonging, pre-departure and returned volunteers



With regard to moving to another country to conduct their lives, international volunteers can be expected to respond in the affirmative as they have already taken steps to work outside their own country. The surveys reveal that over 90% were willing to move to another country, but there was greater enthusiasm for migrating for work than for personal reasons (Table 10). RV Survey respondents were a little less keen to move for either reason than PPV Survey respondents, perhaps as a result of having lived overseas and experienced some of the challenges involved.

Table 10: Willingness to move to another country, pre-departure and returned volunteers

	PPV Survey		RV Survey	
	For work	For personal reasons	For work	For personal reasons
Very willing	78%	59%	72%	52%
Quite willing	19%	36%	25%	39%
Not very willing	1%	4%	2%	5%
Not willing at all	0%	0%	1%	1%
Not sure	1%	1%	0%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Responses (N)	310	310	102	102

2. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Two similarly structured surveys were administered to two largely separate cohorts of volunteers: pre-departure volunteers in 2013-14 and returned volunteers in 2014. The intention was to generate a set of benchmark data that can be compared with a similar survey administered to a sub-set of host organisations, and be used in combination with qualitative data derived from interviews and workshop focus groups.

The surveys provide some valuable insights into AVID volunteers' motivations and views about volunteering, their perceptions of its impacts, and their opinions about a range of broader social issues, both global and Australian, which give us information about how they position themselves in the world. The majority of volunteers are primarily motivated by the desire to help and share their skills with others. Gaining overseas experience that would promote their own careers are also important motivations, but the overwhelming majority claims that having difficulty in finding employment in Australia is not the reason why they volunteer. While capacity building is an important aspect of how volunteers understand their role, they see it more as a mutual sharing and learning experience rather than as bestowing their knowledge and skills on host organisations. Volunteers return with an even stronger sense of this mutuality and of volunteering being about building a partnership between the volunteer and the host organisation. The majority of volunteers are confident about making a positive contribution to their host organisations and the people with whom they work, but less so about their contribution on host communities. They are conscious of the ways they themselves benefit from volunteering, by learning about the host country, its language, and more generally about conducting themselves in a different cultural environment.

The survey respondents hold more cosmopolitan attitudes than can be found in the Australian population overall. They are strongly in favour of immigration and see Australia's cultural diversity very positively. They are also open to moving overseas for work or personal reasons and perceive globalisation as providing such opportunities. Other aspects of globalisation are viewed more critically, including the tendency to widen the gap between the rich and the poor and to concentrate wealth, but volunteers appear to see themselves as benefiting overall from globalisation, and thus do not reject it. Poverty is considered to be the most important global problem, but volunteers also recognise a range of other problems as significant global challenges, including inadequate education and poor governance, and tend to see these problems as interconnected. Returned volunteers have a stronger view that poor governance is an important development challenge, and that it can be blamed more for the persistence of poverty than globalisation or capitalism. While a significant minority of volunteers see themselves primarily as global citizens, the majority hold more traditional primary identifications with the country of their birth or the country where they live. Local places are significant sources of secondary belonging, indicating that volunteers see themselves as belonging to various groups, depending on the context and the issue.

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