



Meals on Wheels  
Australia

# Meals on Wheels Australia Social Impact Report

The Power of Meaningful  
Customer-Volunteer  
Connection

May 2023

Prepared by



HUBER  
SOCIAL

Meals on Wheels





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# Executive Summary

Meals on Wheels® (MoW) has long been a household name across the world when it comes to meal delivery, but what is less understood is the contribution the organisation makes to building community and social connection through its volunteer-driven and connection-focused model.

Meals on Wheels® Australia (MoWA) has partnered with Huber Social to measure the social impact of the service, with a specific focus on understanding the broader benefits of the MoW model beyond nutrition. The goal for this process was twofold – obtain evidence that MoWA has real impact beyond basic meal delivery, and better understand the key drivers of success in order to ensure the service is as effective as possible and resources are focused to have the most impact. There are clear social and economic gains for the way the elderly are supported in Australia if services such as MoWA are able to assist people to live independently in their homes for longer.

Measurement was conducted with services from New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia over a month period. The results are based on analysis of 1,462 responses from customers and 1,255 from volunteers. This analysis yielded the following key findings:

## For customers:

- **Majority of MoWA customers have less than one meaningful social connection a day** – only 20% of MoWA customers report having one or more meaningful social connections a day.
- **Connection is key** – of all factors relating to MoWA service that were examined, how well customers know their volunteers had the strongest relationship with wellbeing. Specifically, knowing your volunteer better was associated with higher wellbeing.
- **Connected customers have the most improved outcomes** – of the 36 factors measured, when compared to customers who do not know their volunteer at all, customers who know their volunteers a little, somewhat, and very well were found to have significant positive improvements in 42%, 72%, and 83% of factors measured, respectively.
- **Length of visit matters, but frequency does not** – visits of two minutes or more were associated with higher wellbeing, while the number of visits per week was not found to have a significant relationship with outcomes.
- **Customers living alone know their volunteers better and receive greater benefit from the service** - those living alone saw greater improvements across key outcomes than others.

## For Volunteers:

- **MoWA volunteers have higher wellbeing than other Australians** – when compared with a sample of comparable Australians, MoWA volunteers were found to have 10% higher wellbeing. When compared to volunteers of a similar age group and volunteer time commitment in a different organisation, MoWA volunteers still report having 4% higher overall wellbeing.
- **Volunteering with MoWA builds a sense of belonging** – long term MoWA volunteers reported significantly higher scores across factors related to their sense of belonging.

## The Opportunity

In addition to demonstrating the broader social impact of the MoW model, these findings offer an area of focus for MoWA – the importance of the relationship between customers and volunteers. While this factor was found to have the strongest relationship with overall wellbeing and program outcomes, it was also an area with clear room for improvement, with 43.1% of customers reporting they didn't know their volunteers very well at all. This represents the biggest opportunity for MoWA to increase the wellbeing of their customers and maximise their impact.



# Building **Community** and Sustaining **Independence**

Life expectancy in Australia continues to increase, along with our 65 years and older population, which is projected to more than double by 2057.<sup>1</sup> Given these changes in longevity, there is a desire to ensure that these added years of life are 'good years of life', where people are enabled and supported to experience healthy, independent and dignified lives.

However, wellbeing in later life can be threatened by feelings of loneliness and social isolation. The 2021 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety found that older people place a higher value on having a sense of belonging and connection with their local community, with in-person interactions particularly valued.<sup>2</sup>

Meals on Wheels® Australia (MoWA) supports older Australians and others who may be experiencing challenges to living independently in their homes. Beyond providing nutritious meals, the Meals on Wheels service seeks to address two of the biggest threats to successful ageing – social isolation and loss of independence.

To support its existing evidence base, MoWA has partnered with Huber Social to measure its social impact for both customers and its volunteers. The aim of this measurement program is to understand the impact MoWA



has on the overall wellbeing of those delivering and receiving its services, as well as an understanding of which aspects of the MoWA service model best support the wellbeing of its customers and volunteers.

This report presents the results of measurement of MoWA's social impact across Australia, including services in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. It provides key insights into the MoWA delivery model and identifies opportunities for MoWA to improve its approach to maximise its impact.

**"[Meals on Wheels has had ] a big positive impact. I have made many new positive friends... I feel cared for by my volunteers. MoW has opened a whole new world in my Life. I have learnt a lot about ageing from my MoW Friends. I turn to MoW sometimes with my problems. "**

*- MoWA Customer*

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2014. Australian population statistics, 2014. ABS. cat. No. 3105.065.001. Canberra: ABS. online: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/demographics-of-older-australians/australia-changing-age-and-gender-profile>

2. Pagone G. & Briggs, L., Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect, Volume 1: Summary and recommendations. p.100: Online: <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf>



# Why Measure Social Impact?

Huber Social was engaged to measure the social impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia to demonstrate the impact of the MoWA program and identify any opportunities to maximise effectiveness and better allocate resources.

## 1. Measure

To measure the impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia, Huber Social measures the shift in overall wellbeing and program outcomes for people who engage with their services - in this case, both customers and volunteers.

Measurement provides a data driven approach for MoWA to articulate their social impact to internal and external stakeholders.

## 2. Maximise

Beyond a focus on target outcomes, Huber Social's approach considers the holistic needs of a person to be in the best position to fulfil their potential.

This approach identifies opportunities to refine MoWA programming (if required) and utilisation of resources to maximise the organisation's impact on customer and volunteer wellbeing.

# Why Wellbeing?

*Measures overall progress and supports the systematic solving of social issues*

Ultimately, the goal of all social impact is to put people in the best position to fulfil their potential and achieve wellbeing. It is therefore important to measure wellbeing to ensure that overall, programs are having a positive impact. To measure social impact, Huber Social therefore measures a shift in overall wellbeing and the specific program outcomes that contribute to it.\*

Taking a wellbeing approach also provides a whole-of-life understanding of a person's needs. Instead of starting with the issue at hand, which tends to focus on the crisis end of a problem and places artificial limitations on the needs of people, strengthening wellbeing supports building a person's capability and opportunity to fulfil their potential, thus working to systematically address social issues.



*\*For details of how Huber Social measures wellbeing, please refer to Appendix 1, the Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework*



**MEALS ON WHEELS AUSTRALIA  
PURPOSE**

**Uniting Meals on  
Wheels to nourish  
communities**





# Meals on Wheels Australia Program Summary

Meals on Wheels® has been supporting the health and wellbeing of older Australians for over 65 years.

The international Meals on Wheels service model seeks to strengthen communities by providing support for people to live independently while maintaining community connection. The service model comprises provision of a prepared, nutrient-dense meal, delivered to the consumer at home or in a congregate setting, predominantly by volunteers. The meal serves as a vehicle for social engagement and interaction, building relationships and enabling monitoring of the consumer's well-being. Unlike other meal delivery services, which simply deliver the meal and leave, contact with a volunteer is built into the Meals on Wheels® Australia approach. Through the services provided by its volunteer workforce, Meals on Wheels provides the conditions to live a healthy lifestyle in older age by:

- Delivering nutritional and healthy food to sustain health and wellness;
- Facilitating reliable and trusted social contact; and
- Monitoring and responding to a customer's holistic wellbeing needs as part of a 'more than just a meal' service model.

In addition to meal delivery, many services across the country offer a range of entry-level home support services that complements the meal delivery service.

This measurement project will focus specifically on the meal delivery service. This measurement seeks to measure and understand the social value which Meals on Wheels® Australia creates beyond the provision of meals. Insights and learning from measurement in multiple locations across New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland will be used to inform service delivery in these locations and across the country.





# Meals on Wheels Australia Impact Thesis

The Meals on Wheels® Australia Impact Thesis outlines the hypothesised impact it has on customer and volunteer wellbeing. Through measuring each level of impact, Meals on Wheels® Australia can use a data driven approach to demonstrate what works and what is needed to maximise impact and outcomes.

## 1. Impact

The overall impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia program is to improve people’s wellbeing by ensuring they are well-nourished and able to thrive within their communities.



## 2. Outcomes

Meals on Wheels® Australia achieves this impact by building capabilities and providing access to opportunities across the following areas for customers and volunteers:

### Customers

- Belonging and connection
- Nourishment
- Self-determination
- Holistic wellness
- Life skills
- Resilience
- Access to societal structures and services

### Volunteers

- Belonging and connection
- Purpose
- Confidence
- Enjoyment
- Leadership
- Life skills
- Resilience



## 3. Outputs

Meals on Wheels® Australia delivers the following outputs:

- Meals delivered
- Customers reached
- Volunteers engaged



## 4. Activities

The above outputs are achieved through:

- Meal production
- Meal delivery
- Wellbeing checks
- Volunteer recruitment, training and engagement



## 5. Resources

The above activities require:

- Funding
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Facilities
- Vehicles





# Measurement Approach

Huber Social and Meals on Wheels® Australia worked in collaboration to develop a measurement system that allows the organisation to measure its impact and understand ways to maximise it. The goal was to create a clear articulation of the organisation's social impact and inform program design and delivery.

## Methods

To determine the impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia, Huber Social measured the shift in the subjective wellbeing of customers and volunteers based on multiple service factors. To understand what may influence customer and volunteer wellbeing, Huber Social used a co-design approach to identify factors related to personal capabilities and access to opportunities that should be included in measurement, thus creating the Meals on Wheels® Australia Impact Thesis. Further information on the Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework is contained in Appendix 1.

## Tools

Huber Social used a combination of primary and secondary data sources; primary data was collected using self-report surveys. Surveys were developed to measure the key program outcomes identified in the MoWA Impact Thesis. Where possible, relevant secondary data from MoW databases was utilised to reduce the number of questions MoWA customers would be asked in the survey.

## Distribution

There were two key methods of distribution of surveys to customers across the multiple services that took part in the measurement. Meals on Wheels® South Australia (MoWSA), being the only service with a state-wide structure, posted surveys to a chosen sample of customers. Customers returned their survey using a reply-paid envelope provided to them. In New South Wales and Queensland, surveys were delivered directly to customers by their volunteers who also collected them upon completion.

Volunteer surveys were primarily distributed via email across all services included, with some services also offering paper surveys where they were preferred by volunteers.

## Comparison of Sample Sites

Across all sites, 1,462 responses were collected from customers, made up of 565 from New South Wales, 744 from South Australia and 153 from Queensland. 1,255 responses were collected from volunteers, made up of 413 from New South Wales, 793 from South Australia, and 49 from Queensland.

With such large variation in the size of the datasets from each site, analysis was undertaken to understand if the data could be considered as an aggregate sample or if it would need to be assessed separately by location. Comparative analysis found no statistically significant differences between responses from all sites. Therefore, despite the higher proportion of responses from South Australia, the results can still be considered as a single sample, as they are not different in a statistical sense.



# Measurement Methodology

For this pilot measurement, several hypotheses were tested to understand the impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia on both customers and volunteers.

## Customers

The following dimensions of service were considered for customers:

- **Number of visits** – defined by number of meal deliveries on average each week.
- **Location of home** – defined by geographic characteristics of customer's home (rural/ regional or urban).
- **Living arrangements** – defined by with whom the customer lives (single, couple, with family, with friends, or other).
- **Social engagement** – defined by number of meaningful social interactions a customer has on average each week, apart from MoWA delivery.
- **Length of visits** – defined by how much time on average a volunteer spends with a customer when delivering a meal. Visits ranged from no time to 10 minutes or more. It should be noted that due to COVID-19 procedures, for many customers their volunteer was required to leave the meals on the doorstep.
- **Quality of relationship with volunteers** – defined by how well a customer feels they know their volunteer, ranging from 'not at all' to 'very well'.
- **Time in program** – defined by the length of time a customer has been receiving their Meals on Wheels service. Customers were categorised into three measurement groups: (1) those who are about to or have just begun receiving meals, (2) those who have been receiving meals for three months, and (3) those who have been receiving meals for a year or more.

## Volunteers

The following dimensions of service were considered for volunteers:

- **Time commitment** – defined by the average among of time spent volunteering with MoWA each month. Volunteers were grouped in three categories: (1) Less than five hours a month, (2) 5-15 hours a month, or (3) 15 or more hours a month.
- **Time in program** – defined by average length of time as a volunteer, in years.





# Key Findings:

## The Impact of Meals on Wheels

### 1. Majority of Meals on Wheels customers have less than one meaningful social connection a day

Only 20% of MoWA customers report having one or more meaningful social connections a day.

### 2. Connection is key

Of all factors relating to MoWA service that were examined, how well customers know their volunteers had the strongest relationship with wellbeing. Specifically, knowing your volunteer better was associated with higher wellbeing.

### 3. Stronger relationships associated with better outcomes

In addition to being associated with higher wellbeing, scores for MoWA's target outcomes also increased in line with higher quality relationships between customers and volunteers. Of the 36 factors measured, when compared to customers who do not know their volunteer at all customers who know their volunteers a little, somewhat, and very well were found to have significant positive improvements in 42%, 72%, and 83% of factors measured, respectively.

### 4. Length of visit matters; number of visits does not

Analysis found that customers who received visits of two minutes or more had 3% higher wellbeing than those whose visits were less than two minutes. Factors related to access to services and life skills also scored significantly higher among those with longer visits.

While it may seem counterintuitive, analysis found that there was no significant difference between customer wellbeing and number of volunteer visits per week. This suggests that it is the quality of connection with volunteers rather than quantity that has the biggest effect.

### 5. Customers living alone receive greater benefit from the service

Customers living alone knew their volunteers better and also saw greater positive shifts after utilising Meals on Wheels when compared to those living with others.

### 6. Meals on Wheels volunteers have higher wellbeing than other Australians - including other volunteers

When compared with a sample of Australians with comparable demographic characteristics, MoWA volunteers were found to have 10% higher wellbeing. Even when compared to non-MoWA volunteers of a similar age group and volunteer time commitment, MoWA volunteers still report having 4% higher overall wellbeing.

### 7. Meals on Wheels volunteers feel they belong

MoWA volunteers who have been volunteering for at least six years reported significantly higher scores across factors related to their sense of belonging. These results suggest that MoWA is successful at creating community connection among their volunteers.



## Meals on Wheels Customers

To understand the social impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia services, it was first necessary to determine whether MoWA services have an impact beyond meal provision and nutrition. Does the volunteer-driven service model - which provides opportunities for social connection and regular check-ins - achieve more than simply delivering nutritional meals?

Beyond this primary aim, there were also a number of aspects of the MoWA service model that were investigated to understand their effect on overall wellbeing.

This measurement project found that MoWA does offer benefits to its customers beyond access to healthy food and improved nutrition; however, this can vary widely for customers depending on the nature of the service received.

The following section explores the impact of MoWA services on customer wellbeing and identifies ways in which the service can be optimised and resources best utilised to support customer wellbeing.





# Meals on Wheels Australia

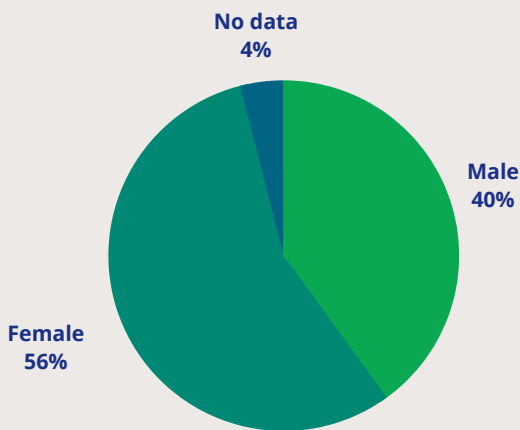
## Customer Demographics

The Meals on Wheels® Australia Wellbeing Survey received responses from 1463 customers of the service across New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland. The average age of customer participants was 80-90 years.

### Gender

The majority of respondents were female (56%).

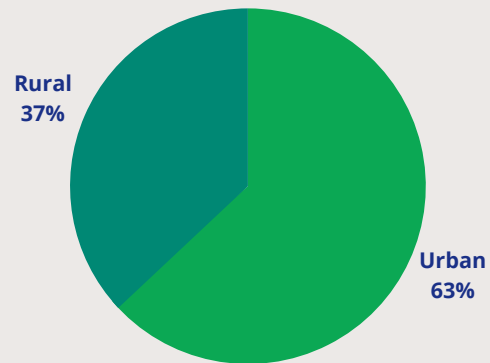
All responses, by gender



### Location

Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents live in urban areas of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.

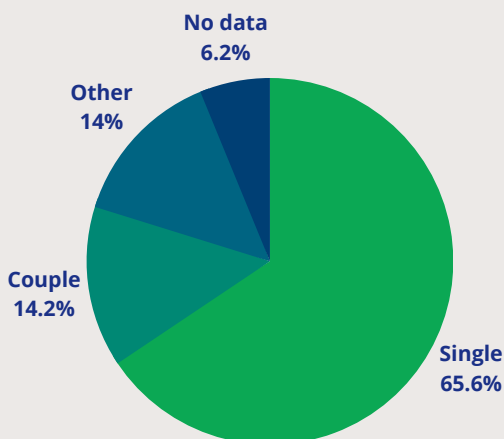
All responses, by location



### Household Composition

The majority (65.6%) of customers live on their own. Other household types include family, sole parent, and group accommodations.

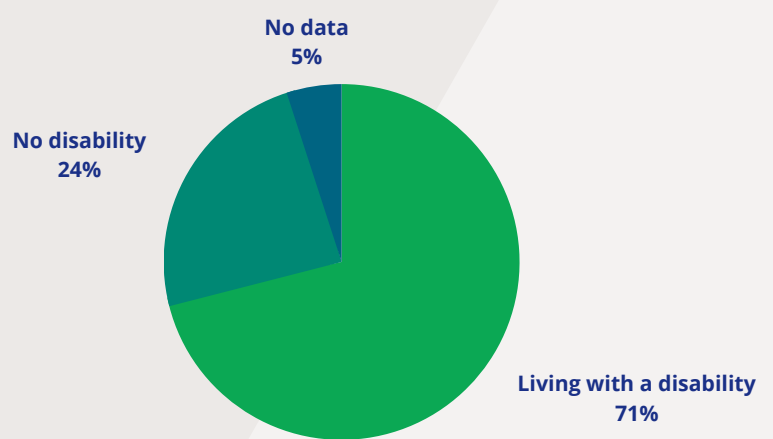
All responses, by household type



### Living with a Disability

Three quarters (71%) of all respondents live with a physical, psychiatric, or sensory disability.

All responses, by disability status





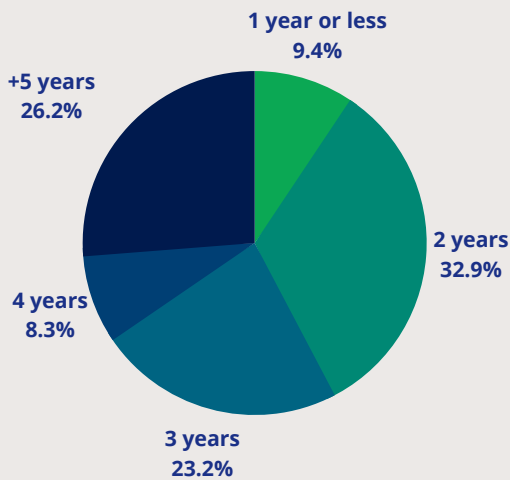
# Meals on Wheels Australia Service Dimensions

In addition to Meals on Wheels® Australia customer demographics, data was collected with respect to various dimensions of their MoWA service. Out of all respondents, 61.49% reported that they intended to receive their Meals on Wheels service for the long-term (rather than a short-term need), and 36.32% didn't respond.

## Years Receiving Meals

The largest group (32.9%) of customer respondents have been receiving MoWA services for two years.

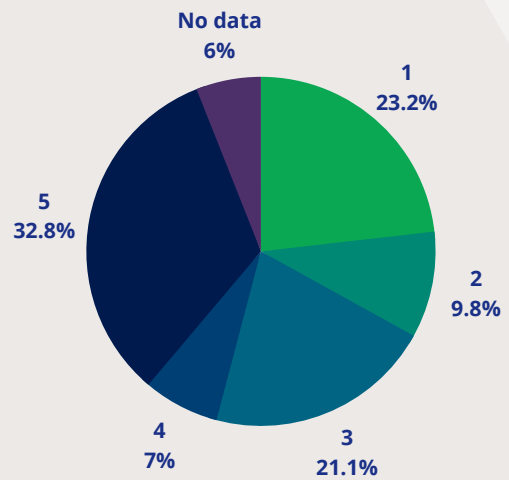
All responses, by years of service



## Number of Visits per Week

The most common frequency of delivery was five days a week (32.8%).

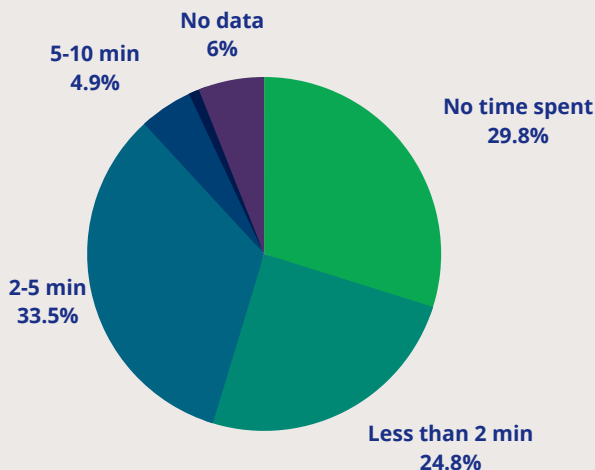
All responses, by visits per week



## Duration of Visits

More than half (53%) of customers report that their volunteer visits last for less than two minutes.

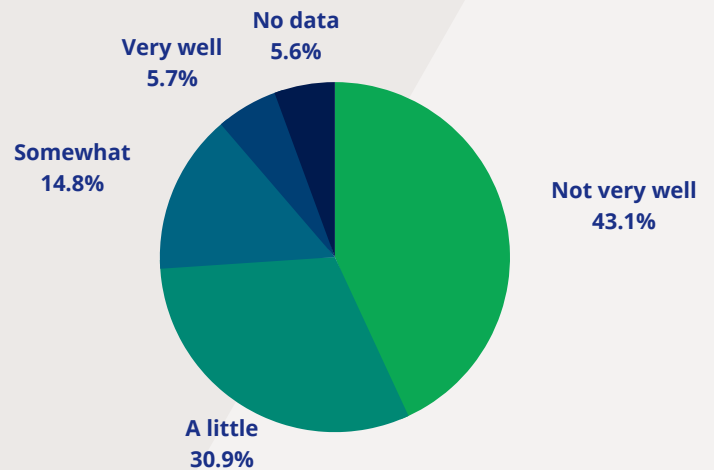
All responses, by duration of visit



## Connection with Volunteer

Less than a quarter (20.5%) of customers report knowing their volunteer somewhat or very well.

All responses, by knowledge of volunteer



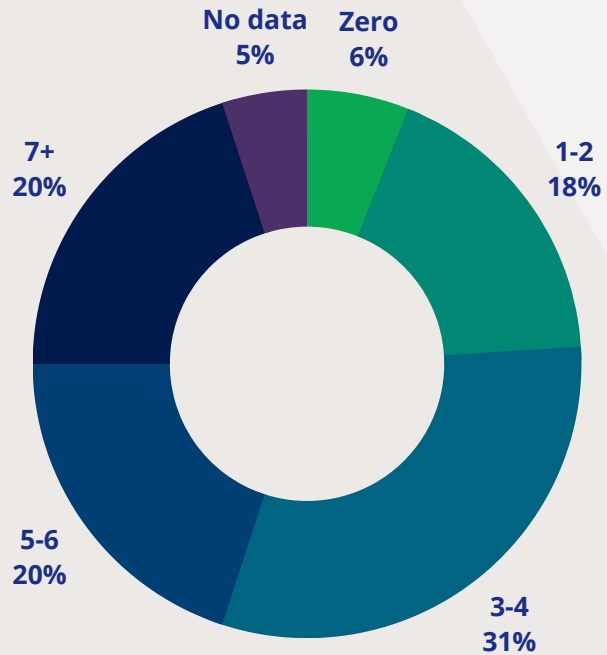


# Majority of MoWA Customers Have Less Than One Meaningful Social Connection A Day

To understand their base level of social connection, Meals on Wheels® Australia customers were asked how many meaningful social connections they had per week, (with examples given of time spent with friends, speaking with family or neighbours, at a club, volunteering, church etc.) excluding their Meals on Wheels deliveries.

Only 20% of customers responded that they had seven or more meaningful social connections a week, meaning that the vast majority of Meals on Wheels customers average less than one social connection a day, excluding their Meals on Wheels deliveries.

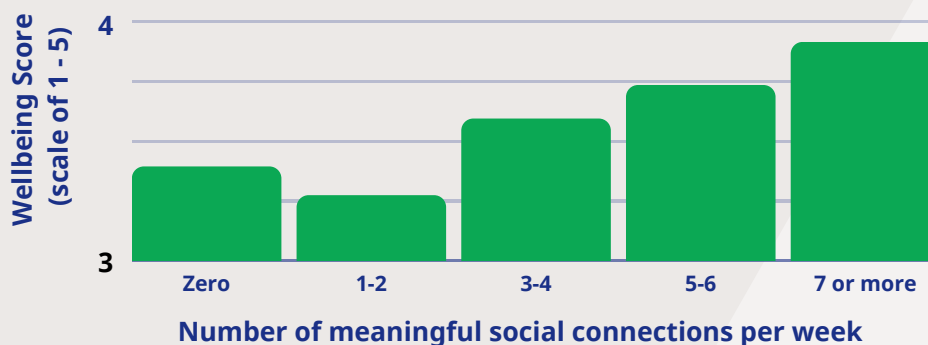
The average number of meaningful social connections (excluding Meals on Wheels visits) reported by Meals on Wheels customers is four per week.



All responses, by number of meaningful social connections per week

## Social Connection Linked to Wellbeing

Consistent with a host of research in the field that points to the importance of social connection in the wellbeing of people,<sup>1</sup> analysis found that the number of meaningful social connections in a week had a significant relationship with overall wellbeing, with a higher number of connections associated with higher wellbeing.



1. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>

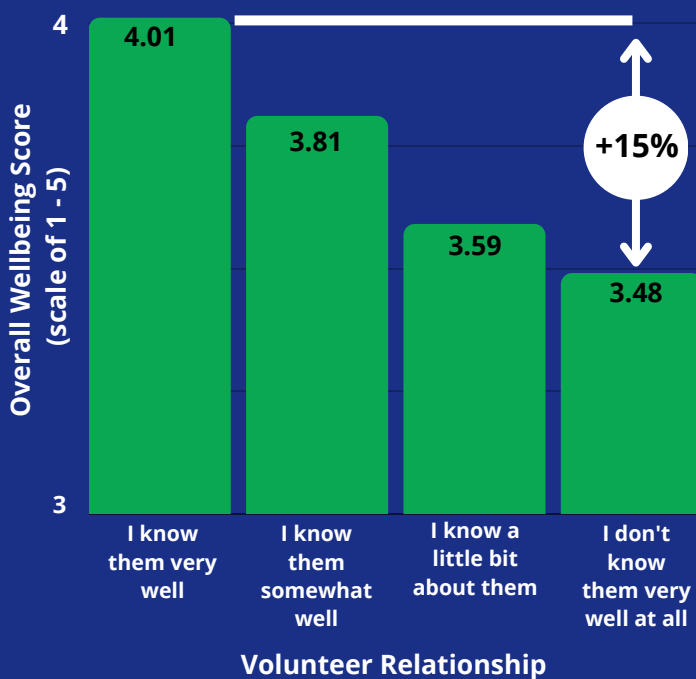


# Connection is Key

Of all factors relating to Meals on Wheels® Australia service that were examined, quality of relationship with their volunteers had the strongest relationship with customer wellbeing.

On average, the better customers know their volunteers, the higher their wellbeing.

### Customer overall wellbeing, by volunteer relationship



Relationship with wellbeing determined via one-way ANOVA test ( $F = 13.254, p < 0.01$ ). Data includes 1352 responses, with  $n = 80, 214, 444, 614$  respectively for each column.



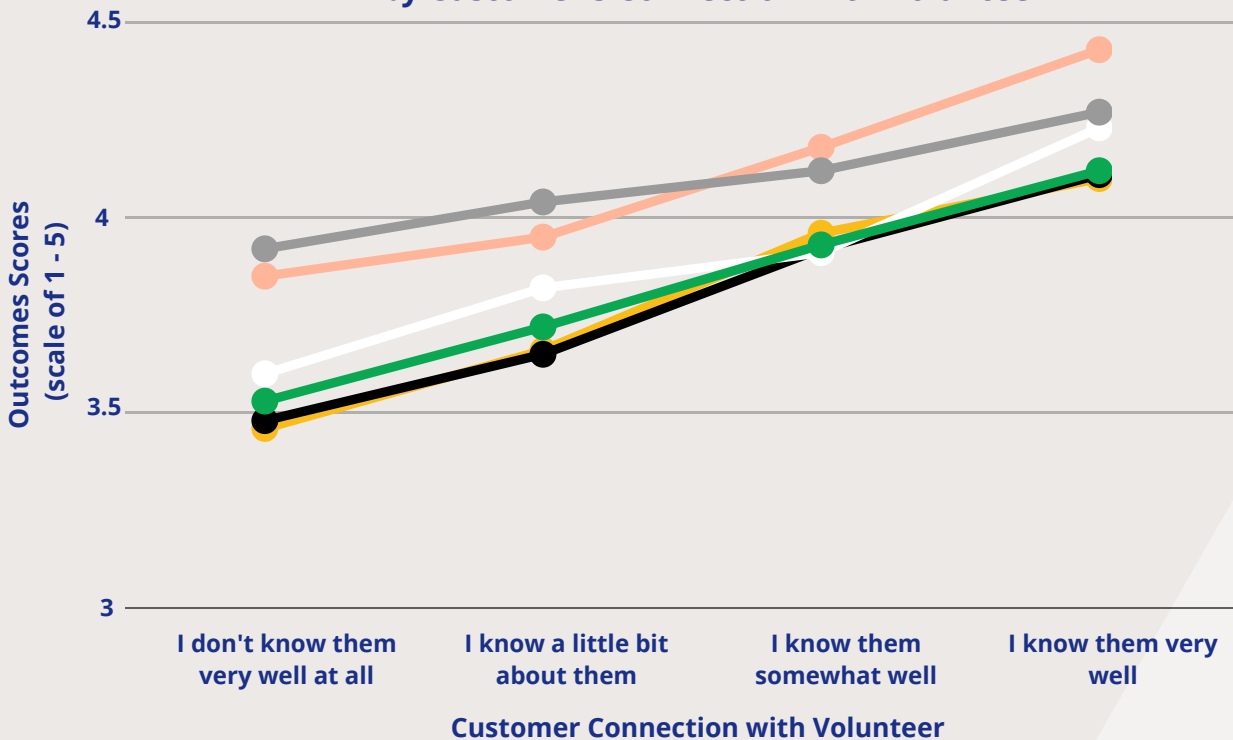


# Stronger Relationships Associated with Better Outcomes

In addition to being associated with higher wellbeing, higher quality relationships between customers and volunteers are associated with higher scores across Meals on Wheels® Australia's target outcomes. Across the 36 factors measured, customers who know their volunteers a little, somewhat, and very well were found to have significant positive improvements in 42%, 72%, and 83% of the factors measured respectively, compared to customers who do not know their volunteer at all. More information about these key program outcome improvements can be found in Appendix 5.

The following are some highlights of the significant gains achieved for Meals on Wheels® Australia customers:

### Key Program Outcomes Scores, by Customer's Connection with Volunteer



## Outcomes with Largest Improvements

- +19%** Finding it easy to share one's thoughts and feelings with other people
- +18%** Feeling connected to community\*
- +18%** Feeling one's life has purpose\*
- +17%** Enjoying life and having fun\*
- +15%** Feeling accepted by one's community\*
- +15%** Having things to hope for\*

\*Denotes a predictor of wellbeing, a factor that has a moderate to strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 24 for details.



**"It has made a great impact on my life. I have lost the ability to plan, organise and decide what to eat. You have taken away my anxiety and my health is improving. It gives me something to look forward to each day."**

*- Meals on Wheels customer*



# Service Factors and Quality of Volunteer Relationship - Visit Duration

Given that we have identified that the quality of a customer's relationship with their volunteer is the factor that has the strongest relationship with overall wellbeing, the question then becomes, what other service factors contribute to a stronger relationship.

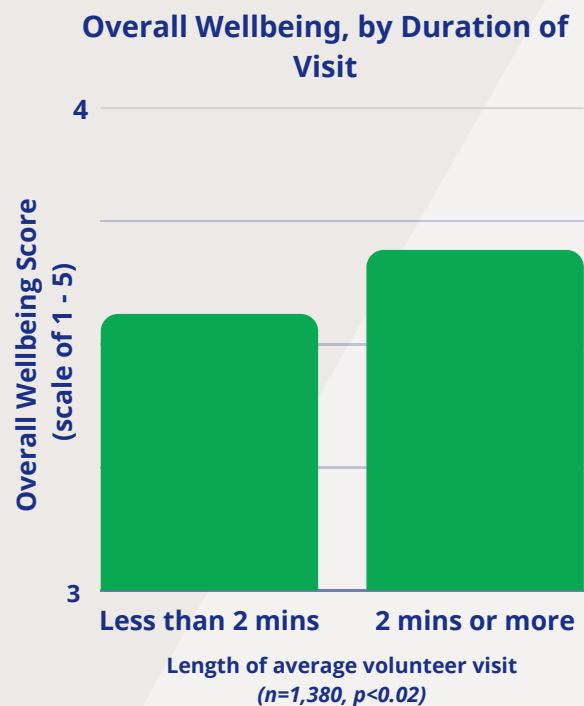
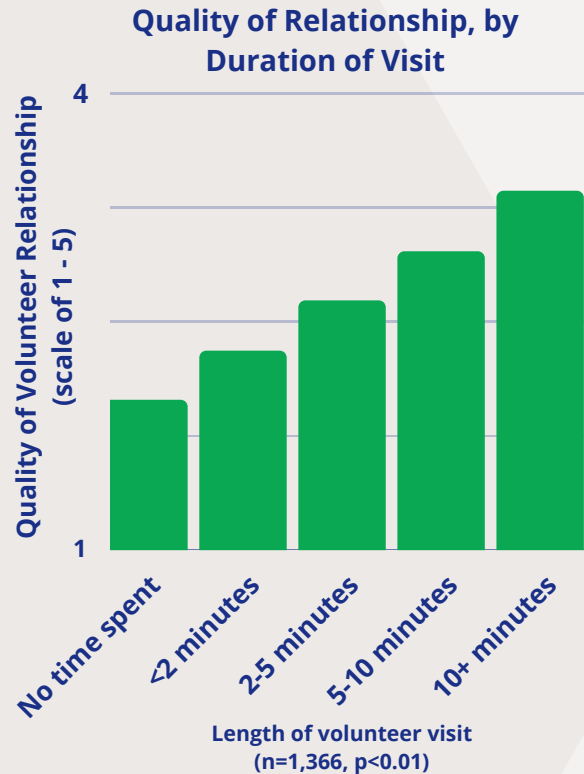
One factor which has a clear influence: the amount of time a volunteer spends with the customer when delivering the meal. Customers were asked how long their volunteer spent with them each visit on average. Responses for visit length ranged from no time at all to more than 10 minutes.

As the graph on the right shows, and as would be intuitively expected, longer visits from volunteers lead to customers knowing their volunteer better. Overall, customers who receive visits of two minutes or more reported knowing their volunteer 50% better than customers with shorter visits.

## Longer Visits also Affect Customer Wellbeing

As expected, given that we know quality of volunteer relationship has such an impact on volunteer wellbeing, it was also found that longer visits are associated with higher customer wellbeing. Customers whose volunteers spent just two minutes or more socialising with them during a meal delivery have 3% higher overall wellbeing compared to customers with volunteer visits under two minutes.

This information suggests that it's worth making time to connect with customers as it seems to have a positive impact on their overall wellbeing and program outcomes. This is a clear opportunity for Meals on Wheels to improve outcomes through focusing on a core element of their service.





# Longer Visits Associated with Increased Access to Services and Life Skills

In addition to leading to higher quality relationships between customers and volunteers as well as higher overall wellbeing, customers with volunteer visits of two minutes or longer also scored higher across all program factors measured when compared to those whose volunteer visits are an average of two minutes or less. The biggest differences were seen in factors under the outcomes of access to services and life skills. Most importantly, customers with longer visits felt more confident that community services providers could help them in their current situation, indicating a higher level of trust in Meals on Wheels® Australia's ability to support their customers.

Below are some of factors that scored significantly higher among those who received longer visits compared with those of two minutes or less:

## Access to Services



### Belief in Community Services

**+5%**

Belief in community services to support one in need



### Knowledge of Local Services

**+4%**

Knowledge of how to access local support services



### Access to Financial Services

**+3%**

Access to local financial support services

## Life Skills



### Communication Skills

**+6%**

Finding it easy to share thoughts and feelings with others



### Self-Respect

**+4%**

Feeling one's opinions are heard and respected\*



### Relationship Skills

**+4%**

Ability to maintain positive relationships\*

*Analysis compared MoWA customers with volunteer visits of two minutes or less (n=363) to MoWA customers with volunteer visits of two minutes or more (n=574). All shifts reported are statistically significant to level p<0.001, meaning there is a 99% confidence level that the results are not due to chance or error.*

*\*Denotes a predictor of wellbeing, a factor that has a moderate to strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 24 for details.*



# Service Factors and Quality of Volunteer Relationship - Frequency of Visits

One of the service factors that intuitively seems likely to affect the quality of volunteer is the number of visits a customer receives within a week. However, analysis found that frequency of visits does not have a meaningful relationship with how well customers know their volunteers.

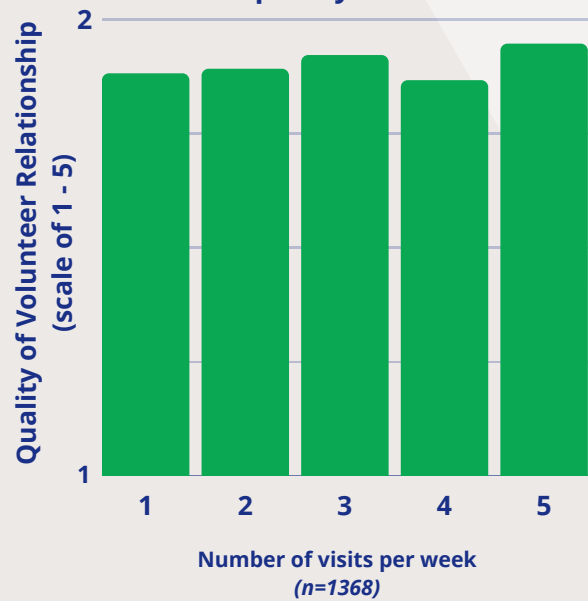
Equally, analysis found that there was no statistically significant difference in customer wellbeing based on the number of volunteer visits they received per week.

### Quality Over Quantity

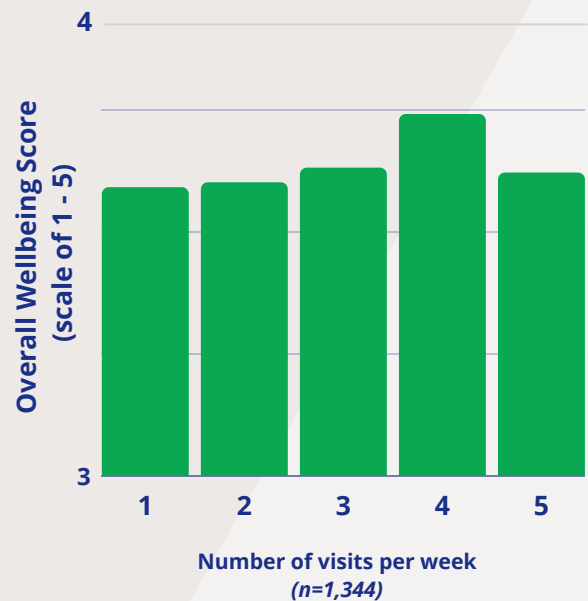
Combined, these findings suggest that it is the quality, rather than quantity, of interactions between customers and volunteers that contributes the most to how well customers know their volunteers relationship and in turn wellbeing.

With a broad range of services across the country included in the measurement, there were multiple different service models, ranging from delivering one to five times a week. Some delivered hot meals daily, others delivered multiple frozen meals fewer times a week. It is important to note that this analysis does not directly compare different service models, but rather considers whether the number of delivery days is a meaningful factor within the data collected.

Quality of Relationship, by Frequency of Visit



Overall Wellbeing, by Frequency of Visit





# Demographic Factors and Quality of Volunteer Relationship - Living Alone

Analysis was also undertaken to understand if there are any underlying demographic factors that are likely to affect how well a customer knows their volunteer. A broad range of demographic factors were considered, including age, cultural background, disability status, and others. Only two were found to have any meaningful connection with quality of volunteer relationship across the sample.

Household composition had a significant relationship, with customers who live alone knowing their volunteers better than those in multiperson households. While a small difference, of 2%, it is a statistically significant difference, meaning we can be confident it is not due to chance or accident.

The finding stands out, not only because the vast majority (65%) of MoWA customers live alone, but also because analysis also showed that there were more statistically significant positive shifts in program outcomes between customers who live alone who had just begun their service and those who had been receiving meals for a year or more than for customers than for those who live with family or other people. This suggests that the service has a greater impact on those who live alone than those who live with others.

One of MoWA's stated aims is to support elderly Australians to be able to live independently and stay in their homes for longer. This finding confirms they are making a solid contribution in this area.

On the right are key factors that saw significant shifts in MoWA customers living alone.



## Physical Health

**+16%**

**Customers living alone**  
Increase in feeling one's physical health is good overall



## Feelings of Anger

**-15%**

**Customers living alone**  
Reduction in feeling angry or frustrated in the past month



## Purpose

**+12%**

**Customers living alone**  
Increase in feeling one's life has purpose.\*



## Independent Living

**+7%**

**Customers living alone**  
Increase in confidence to live an independent life.\*

**"Because I live alone, the friendship and service is much appreciated."**

- Meals on Wheels customer

*Outcomes analysis compared MoWA customers living alone (n=55) and multiperson households (n=39) who began receiving MoWA services no more than three months earlier to customer living alone (n=753) and multiperson (n=298) households with at least one year of services. All shifts reported are statistically significant to level p<0.1.*

*\*Denotes a predictor of wellbeing, a factor that has a strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 24 for details.*



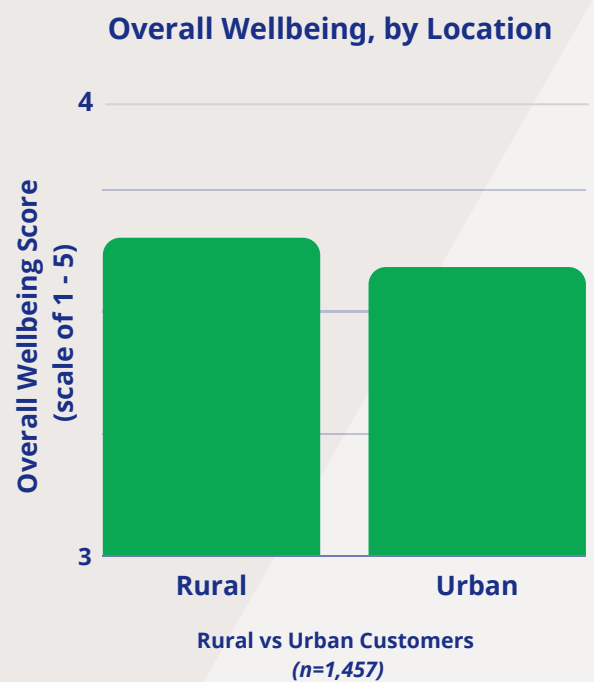
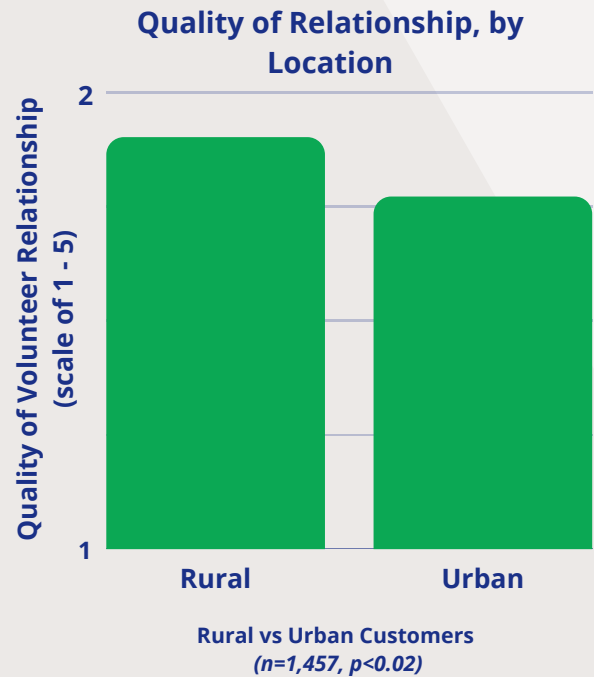
# Demographic Factors and Quality of Volunteer Relationship - Location

In addition to household composition, location was another demographic factor that had a correlative relationship with a customers quality of relationship with their volunteer.

One of the hypotheses that MoWA wanted to test was whether the outcomes for customers in rural locations differed from those in the city. Analysis found that customers in rural locations knew their volunteers better than those in urban areas, and this finding is statistically significant\*. The scores for quality of relationship were on average 7% higher among rural customers.

However, when looking at wellbeing, while rural customers have higher wellbeing, this difference was not found to be statistically significant, meaning we do not consider them to be meaningfully different.

These contrary findings suggest that while rural customers generally know their volunteers a little better than their city-based counterparts, this may be due to the demographic nature of regional communities, rather than due to a meaningful difference in the MoWA service. The following page explores the areas of difference in program outcomes this also affects.





# Customers in Rural Areas Have Greater Trust in Services and Community

While overall wellbeing was found to be the same among Meals on Wheels® Australia customers living in rural and urban areas as discussed, there were a range of factors that MoWA customers in rural areas on average reported higher scores than their metro-based peers, particularly in relation to trust in services and community.

Below are the top four factors that Meals on Wheels® Australia customers in rural locations reported stronger scores when compared with urban customers:



### Belief in Community Services

**+6%**

Belief in community services to support one in need



### Knowledge of Local Services

**+6%**

Knowledge of how to access local support services



### Community Safety\*

**+5%**

Feeling safe in one's community\*



### Community Acceptance\*

**+4%**

Feeling accepted by one's community

**"It has been essential to my husband and me... We all know the people who deliver the meals so we can chat; country people are the best."**

*- Meals on Wheels customer, rural location*

*The difference in average overall wellbeing of MoWA customers in rural (3.65) and urban (3.6) was found to be statistically insignificant (p>0.1). Outcomes analysis compared MoWA customers in rural locations (n=224) to urban locations (n=516). All shifts reported are statistically significant to level p<0.01 meaning there is a 99% confidence level that the results are not due to chance or error.*

*\*Denotes a predictor of wellbeing, a factor that has a moderate to strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 24 for details.*





# Overall Wellbeing Stays Consistent Over Time Receiving Services

Regardless of whether someone has just begun receiving services or whether they have been receiving them for several years, overall wellbeing was found to be consistent among MoWA customers with respect to time receiving services. It should be noted that for this measurement, baseline data consisted of responses from customers who had already been receiving MoWA services for at least one month, so the wellbeing of these customers may have already begun to improve thanks to the initial benefits of MoWA service enrolment. Future measurement with baseline data from customers before they begin receiving services may alter these initial findings.

Despite this, there were significant shifts for long term MoWA customers across two key outcome areas - holistic wellness and nourishment. Below are the top six factors that had the largest shifts as reported by MoWA customers of over a year:



### Physical Health\*

**+14%**

Having good health overall\*



### Feelings of Anger

**-10%**

Reduction in feeling angry or frustrated in the past month



### Purpose\*

**+7%**

Having a sense of purpose in life\*



### Independent Lifestyle\*

**+6%**

Belief in one's ability to live an independent life\*



### Meal Enjoyment

**+5%**

Looking forward to enjoying one's meals each day



### Nutrition

**+5%**

Consumes healthy and nutritious food.

**"It saves time and saves worry about what to eat. It is also good to have someone say "hello" to each week day. Thank you for all you do :)."**

- Meals on Wheels Customer

Average overall wellbeing of new MoWA customers (3.57) and those who have been receiving services for a year or more (3.62) was found to be statistically insignificant ( $p>0.1$ ). Outcomes analysis compared new MoWA customers ( $n=104$ ) to long term customers ( $n=1074$ ). All shifts reported are statistically significant to level  $p<0.05$ , meaning there is a 95% confidence level that the results are not due to chance or error. 25

\*Denotes a predictor of wellbeing, a factor that has a moderate to strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 24 for details.



# Predictors of Wellbeing for Meals on Wheels Customers

In order to assist Meals on Wheels® Australia in having the greatest impact upon the wellbeing of its customers, Huber Social has analysed the wellbeing data of all customer respondents to determine which needs have the strongest positive association with high overall wellbeing. These are called predictors of wellbeing. A positive change in these needs is statistically more likely to accompany an increase in overall wellbeing, as compared to needs which do not have a strong association with wellbeing.

36 factors were measured as part of this pilot, including 27 target outcomes for MoWA and 9 factors outside of the MoWA Impact Thesis that were identified as potentially being important to customer wellbeing. Of the 27 factors measured that related to MoWA's target outcomes for customers, all were found to have a meaningful relationship with overall wellbeing and 16 of these factors had a moderate or strong relationship. This suggests that MoWA's service is well-aligned to the needs of their customers.

The following are the top five factors which all had a strong association with wellbeing:



### Holistic Wellness - Enjoyment

Enjoy life and having fun



### Holistic Wellness - Purpose

Feeling one's life has purpose



### Holistic Wellness - Self-Acceptance

Liking oneself



### Access to Relationships - Personal Community

Having a strong community of friends and family around oneself



### Sense of Connection - Community Belonging

Feeling part of a community

The full list of predictors of wellbeing can be found in Appendix 4.

When a factor mentioned in the report is a predictor of wellbeing, it will be marked with an asterisk (\*). These factors are noteworthy, as they have been identified as having the strongest correlation with the overall wellbeing of MoWA customers and areas to focus on for maximum impact.

*^This factor was not part of the MoWA Impact Thesis but was measured to understand if there are any factors outside of MoWA's scope that may also be important to customer wellbeing.*



# Demographic Factors and Wellbeing

## - Gender

In addition to looking at program factors that are linked to wellbeing, analysis was performed to identify if there are any demographic factors which have an effect on the wellbeing of MoWA customers. Two factors stood out in the results, the first being gender.

### Gender

Gender was found to have a meaningful impact on the wellbeing of MoWA customers, with female customers having 3% higher wellbeing on average.

Looking further into the data, there were no program factors where males scored statistically significantly higher than females. The largest differences were in factors related to belonging and connection, with males scoring 9% lower in having people in their life who encourage and praise them, 8% lower in the confidence to maintain positive relationships in one's life and 8% lower in having people one spends quality time with.

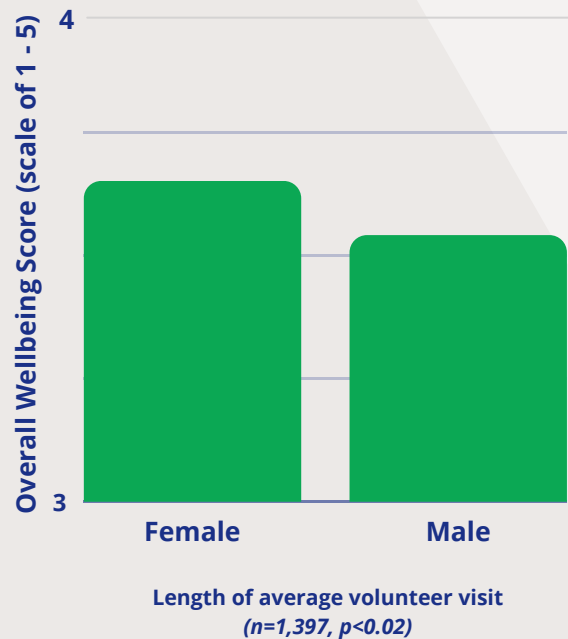
This finding is consistent with broader literature which has consistently shown that men face greater mental health challenges in old age than women, with the suicide rate among older men the highest age-adjusted suicide rate of any group both in Australia and internationally.<sup>1</sup>

While MoWA aims to provide a quality service to all, it may be useful to understand that male customers are more likely to feel more isolated and the connection provided through MoWA may be particularly important.

Please note: customers were also given the option to respond with other options for gender, however among the 1,403 responses, only six participants chose an option other than male or female, and have been excluded from this analysis due to the small sample size.

1. Cations, M., Lang, C., Draper, B., Caughey, G., Evans, K., Wesselingh, S., . . . Inacio, M. (2023). Death by suicide among aged care recipients in Australia 2008–2017. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 1-12.

Overall Wellbeing, by Gender





# Demographic Factors and Wellbeing - Disability

Disability status was also found to have a meaningful impact on the wellbeing of MoWA customers, with customers with a disability scoring 4% lower than those who do not.

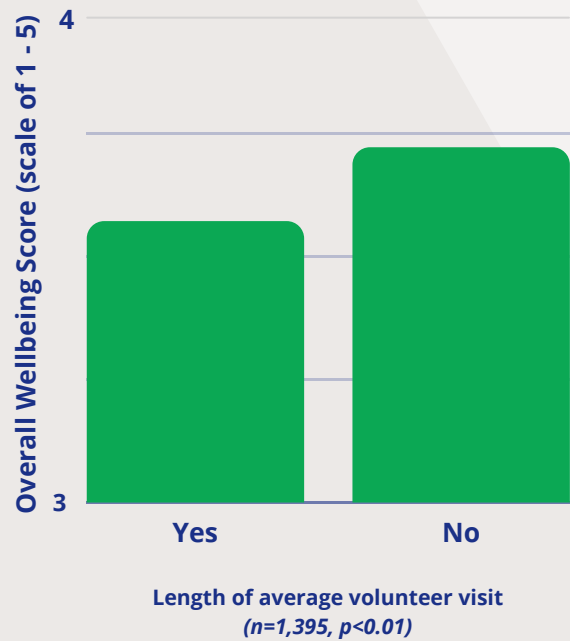
However, unlike gender, where the majority of program factors scored higher for women than men, there were only three factors measured that had a significantly lower score among those with a disability.

Customers with a disability scored 6% lower on how regularly they felt angry or frustrated, 6% lower on feeling their physical health is good and 5% lower on feeling lonely and/or isolated.

Customers with a disability are by far the majority of MoWA customers, making up 75% of the sample. These results reinforce the importance of the service that MoWA provides, attempting to combat social isolation in this population.

Please note: disability status was not collected in a uniform way across the services included in this measurement. While the majority of services were able to provide data on disability status from their intake process, while others were not and therefore the information was collected directly from customers are past of the survey.

Overall Wellbeing, by Disability Status





## Qualitative Analysis Shows Customers Appreciate and Value Meals on Wheels

As well as responding to questions about specific factors relating to the organisation's key outcomes, customers also had the chance to describe in their own words how MoWA had impacted their lives.

Qualitative analysis found these responses were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate that the people MoWA serve truly appreciate the physical and social benefits offered by the MoWA approach. Key themes showed that customers most appreciate the provision of nutritious meals, the reduced burden of shopping and cooking - both activities that can be challenging due to disability or injuries in older people, and the interaction with volunteers. Highlights include:

**"I have extremely bad rheumatism in my hands and feet, so I can now avoid burns and dropped cutlery and crockery. I am very grateful to MoW and the wonderful thoughtful people who work for them"**

**"By supplying the meals it has help me in my daily living knowing I do not always have to prepare a meal. The people delivering the meals always greet you with a smile, ask how you are and have a chat. They I believe would often fill a void in many peoples lives"**

**"Very good indeed. Food is very good. They respect me and I respect them. A beautiful organisation! Thank you very much. Glad it is still going!!"**

**"Confidence in their regularity is great. These days I look forward to their visit"**

**"MoW has had a huge impact on my life. As the carer of my 92 year old husband who has many health issues and is very frail needing much help especially in the mornings, MoW has been a life saver for us"**



## Building Connection Between Customers and Volunteers Should Be the Priority

The findings paint a clear picture of the needs and opportunities of Meals on Wheels® Australia customers. It is clear that social connection is an area of need for Meals on Wheels® Australia customers, with the data finding a meaningful relationship between the strength of the connection customers have with their volunteers and their wellbeing.

However, it was also found that while many customers are benefiting from their connection with a volunteer, there are still many who feel they don't know their volunteers very well at all. This presents a real opportunity to increase social impact through creating stronger connection.

This provides a clear area of focus for Meals on Wheels® Australia to systematically make the service as effective as possible. Are there choices that can be made in volunteer recruitment to encourage volunteers who want to connect to join the service? Can additional training be offered to volunteers in how to build relationships with customers? Are services prioritising time for interaction between customers and volunteers into their service model?

From a customer perspective, are there ways to proactively identify customers who are at risk of social isolation? Once these customers are identified, are there ways to build the amount of meaningful social contact in their lives?

Understanding what customers and volunteers value in a relationship and why connection is made in some instances, but not others are also potential areas for further research and data collection.





## Meals on Wheels Volunteers

Volunteers make up the core of Meals on Wheels® Australia's workforce. In addition to Meals on Wheels® Australia's impact on customer wellbeing, the organisation wanted to understand the impact on volunteer wellbeing.

The following section explores the wellbeing of Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers and how volunteer service length and time commitment may relate to it.





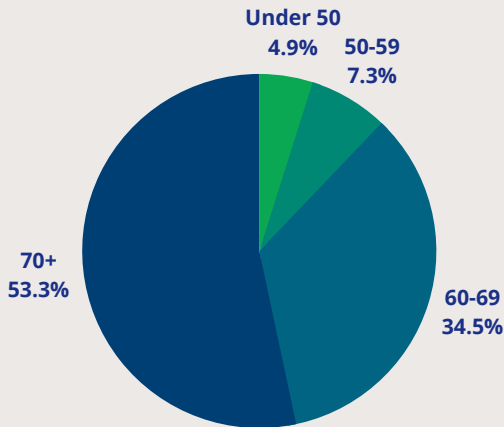
# Meals on Wheels Volunteer Demographics

Across all measurement sites, 1255 responses were collected from volunteers. About two-thirds (68%) of volunteer respondents are female, and the majority (79%) are retired. Just under a quarter (2.3%) of volunteer respondents report at least some cultural ancestry from outside of Australia.

## Age

The average age of MoWA volunteer respondents is 68 years old. Respondent ages ranged from 22 years old to 96 years old.

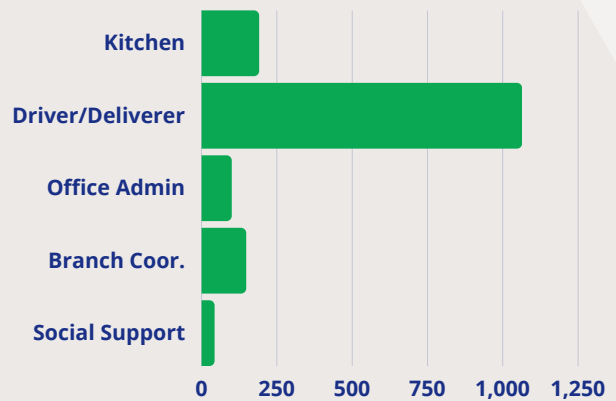
All responses, by age



## Volunteer Role

The majority (85%) of respondents are drivers or deliverers.

All responses, by role

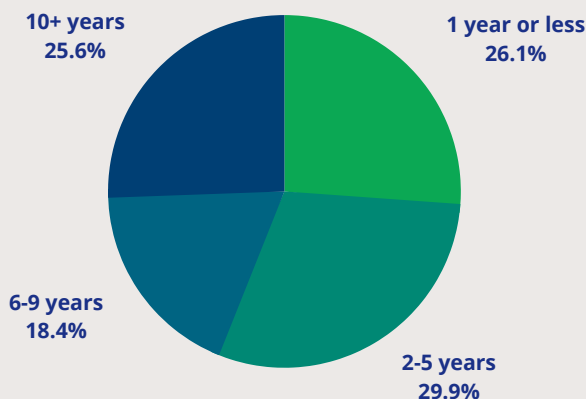


Note: Some volunteers reported having more than one role so there is overlap.

## Years of Volunteering

On average, respondents have been volunteering with MoWA for 7.5 years, with the longest being 48 years.

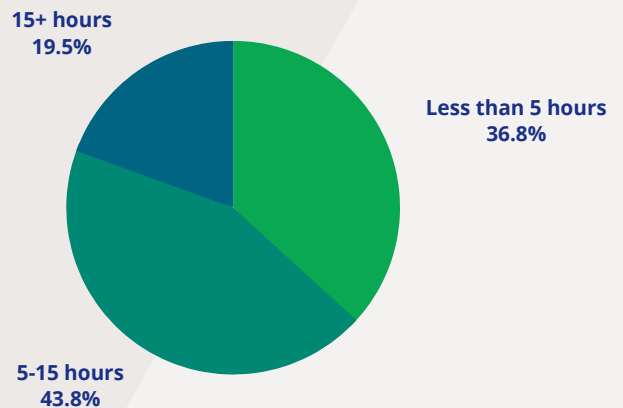
All responses, by years of volunteer service



## Time Commitment

The largest group of respondents (43.8%) spend 5-15 hours per month volunteering with MoWA.

All responses, by time volunteering per month







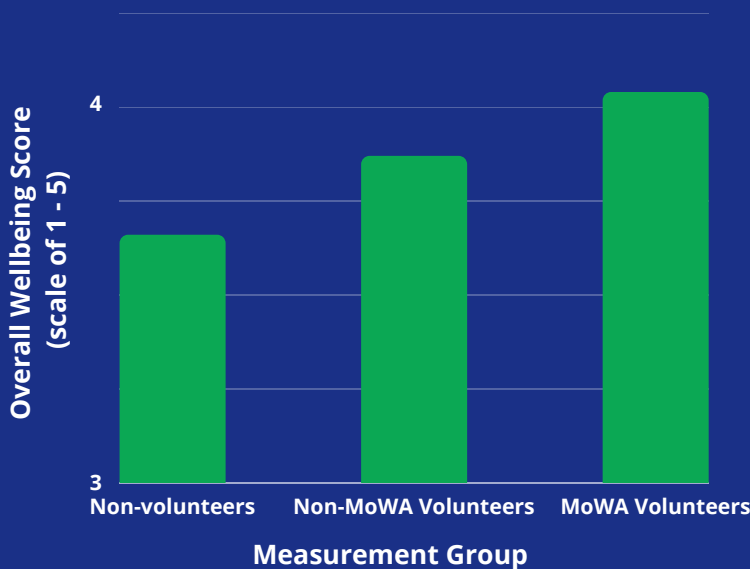
# Meals on Wheels Volunteers Have Higher Wellbeing than other Australians

Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers have consistently provided anecdotal evidence of the benefits they find from working with Meals on Wheels. There is now quantitative data to support this qualitative finding.

When compared with a sample of Australians with comparable demographic characteristics, Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers were found to have 10% higher wellbeing. Even when compared to people of a similar age group who volunteered with a different organisation, Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers still report having 4% higher overall wellbeing.

These findings speak not just to the powerful benefits of volunteering in older age, but to the quality of the experience that Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers have during their time with the organisation.

Overall Wellbeing Score, by Volunteer Type



Wellbeing analysis compared MoWA volunteers (n=1,253), volunteers with another organisation (n=260), and non-volunteers (n=41). Data sampled from Huber Social Wellbeing Database can be considered comparable with respect to age only (all responses included >51 years old); excludes location and other key demographics. All shifts reported are statistically significant to level  $p < 0.001$ , meaning there is a 99% confidence level that the results are not due to chance or error.

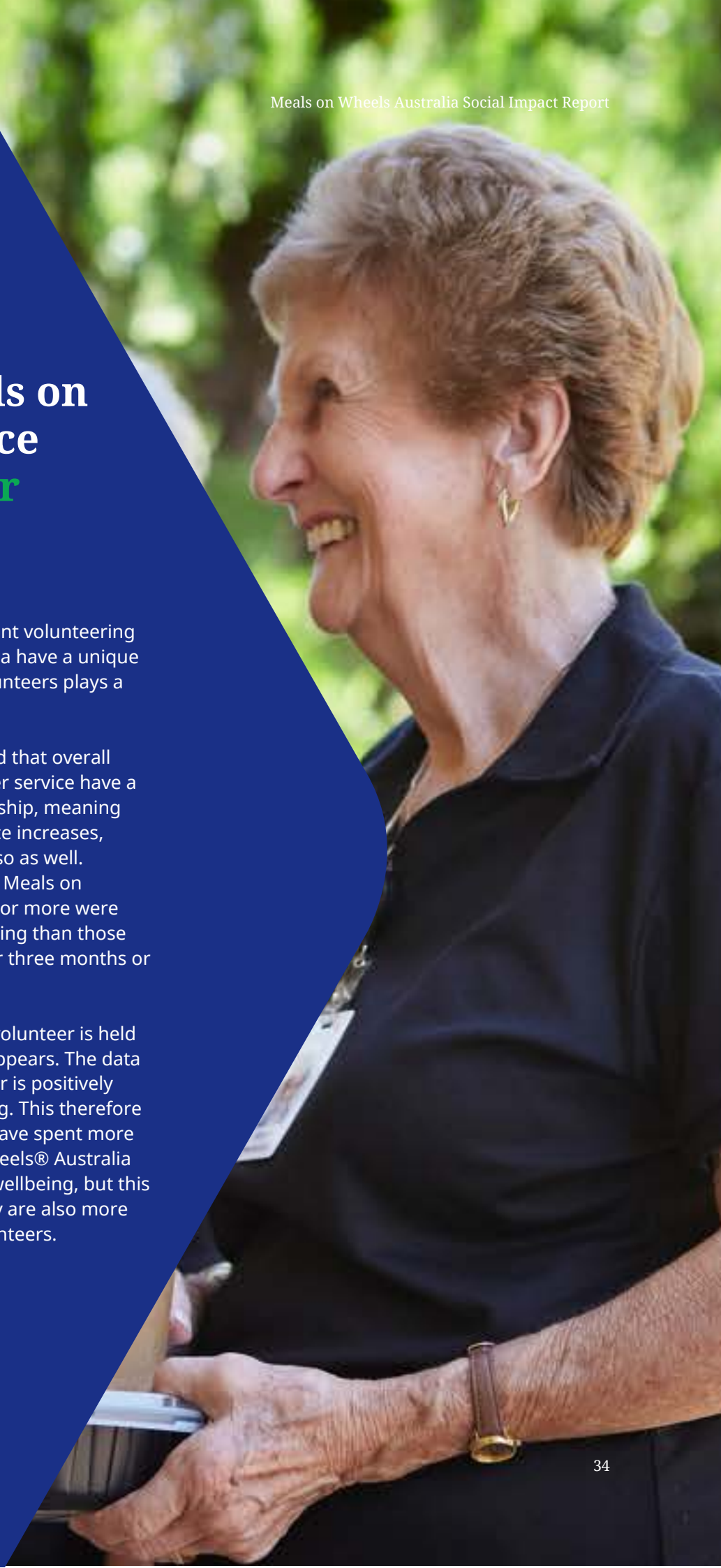


## Years of Meals on Wheels Service and **Volunteer Wellbeing**

Overall wellbeing and years spent volunteering with Meals on Wheels® Australia have a unique relationship, but the age of volunteers plays a key role.

The measurement project found that overall wellbeing and years of volunteer service have a significant and positive relationship, meaning that as years of volunteer service increases, overall wellbeing is likely to do so as well. Volunteers who have been with Meals on Wheels® Australia for six years or more were found to have 3% higher wellbeing than those who have been volunteering for three months or less.

However, when the age of the volunteer is held constant, that relationship disappears. The data also shows that age of volunteer is positively correlated with overall wellbeing. This therefore suggests that volunteers who have spent more time working with Meals on Wheels® Australia are more likely to have higher wellbeing, but this may be due to the fact that they are also more likely to be older than new volunteers.





# Volunteering with Meals on Wheels Builds a Sense of Belonging

Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers who have been volunteering for at least six years reported significantly higher scores across factors related to their sense of belonging and connection. These results suggest that Meals on Wheels® Australia is successful at creating a community amongst their volunteers.

The following factors\* related to belonging are those with the largest shifts between Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers who have just started and those who have volunteered for six years or more:



**Community Connection**  
**+13%**

Feeling part of a community



**Acceptance**  
**+9%**

Feeling accepted by your community



**Personal Community**  
**+8%**

Having a strong community of family and friends\*



**Words of Affirmation**  
**+7%**

Having someone that encourages and praises you

**"It has been a wonderful way to connect with other people, both [with] the lady I volunteer with and the people we deliver to."**

- Meals on Wheels Volunteer, Driver/Deliverer

*Analysis compared MoWA volunteers who began no more than three months earlier (n= 71) to MoWSA volunteers who had been volunteering for five years or more (n=538). All shifts reported are statistically significant to level p<0.05, meaning there is a 95% confidence level that the results are not due to chance or error.*

*\*All factors on this page are predictors of wellbeing, and has a moderate to strong correlation with overall wellbeing. See page 34 for details.*



"I get a **sense of wellbeing** and enjoyment by helping others and feel that I am giving a little back to the **community** while making new **friends**"

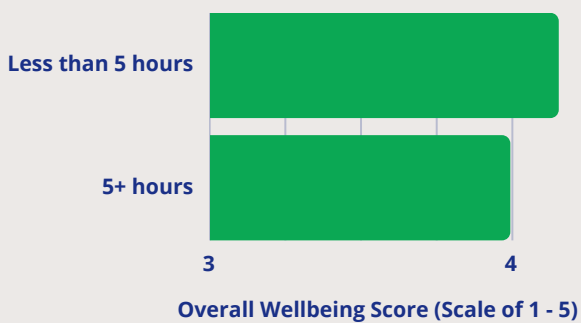
- Meals on Wheels Volunteer,  
Driver/Deliverer



# Lower Time Commitment Associated with Higher Wellbeing

For MoWA volunteers, the amount of time spent volunteering each month was found to be an indicator of overall wellbeing status. Volunteers who spend less than five hours a month working with MoWA are more likely to have higher overall wellbeing. However it should be noted that at 3.99 out of five, the scores for people who volunteer more than five hours a month are not especially low.

Overall Wellbeing, by Volunteer Hours per Month



MoWA may wish to investigate further if there are specific factors that are influencing this result. One consideration is that this group consists overwhelmingly of drivers who, as is shown below, tend to have slightly higher wellbeing.

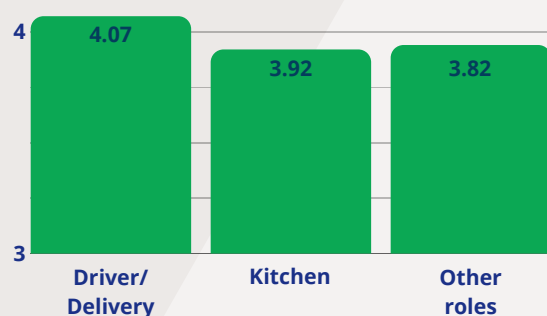
*Analysis compared MoWA volunteers who volunteer five hours or less (n= 458) and more than 15 hours per month (n=788). This finding is statistically significant to level p<0.01, meaning there is a 99% confidence level that the result is not due to chance or error.*

# Wellbeing is Highest Among Drivers and Deliverers

Across the volunteer roles, MoWA Drivers and Deliverers were found to have higher wellbeing (+4%) compared to other roles. Kitchen staff were found to have slightly lower wellbeing (-4%) while the lowest scores were from those who indicated they volunteer in a social support capacity (-7%) through various programs such as My W.I.S.E Choice in South Australia. However, with only 27 responses, this was a very small group within the sample and requires further investigation. All these findings were statistically significant to a 90% confidence level. Office administrators and branch coordinators were not found to have different overall wellbeing from other groups.

While again it is worth noting that even the 'lower' scores are not particularly low, this may be an area Meals on Wheels would like to investigate further to understand what is driving this correlation. Given the finding for customers that knowing their volunteer(s) better is associated with higher wellbeing, it is possible that positive contact with customers contributes to this result among drivers. This is an area that future measurement could focus.

Overall Wellbeing, by Volunteer Role





# Predictors of Wellbeing for Meals on Wheels Volunteers

In addition to predictors of wellbeing for Meals on Wheels® Australia customers, Huber Social performed statistical analysis to identify which factors measured have a significant relationship with overall wellbeing of Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers. A positive change in these factors is statistically more likely to accompany an increase in overall wellbeing, as compared to factors which do not have a strong association with wellbeing.

The following are the top five factors which have the strongest association with wellbeing:



### Holistic Wellness - Enjoyment

Enjoy life and having fun



### Holistic Wellness - Meaning

Feeling one's life has meaning



### Life Skills - Job Skills

Having the right skills to secure the job you want<sup>^</sup>



### Holistic Wellness - Loneliness

Feelings of loneliness or isolation



### Holistic Wellness - Self-Love

Liking oneself

Therefore, a volunteer's overall wellbeing is likely to be higher if they have fun, like themselves, don't feel lonely and have meaning in their life.

When a factor mentioned in the report is a predictor of wellbeing, it will be marked with an asterisk (\*). These factors are noteworthy, as they have been identified as having the strongest correlation with the overall wellbeing of Meals on Wheels® Australia volunteers and are areas to focus on for maximum impact.

The full list of predictors of wellbeing can be found in Appendix 4 on page 44.

<sup>^</sup> This factor was only measured with people who indicated they were still working.

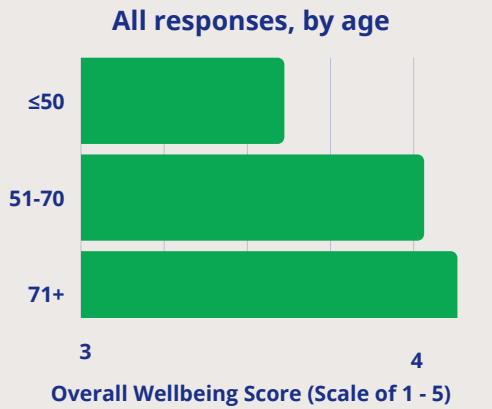


# Wellbeing Varies Across Key Volunteer Characteristics

Across certain demographic factors for volunteers, key differences in wellbeing were also detected.\* This reinforces the range of wellbeing amongst MoWA volunteers, and highlights the fact that not all MoWA volunteers have begun their wellbeing journey from the same starting point.

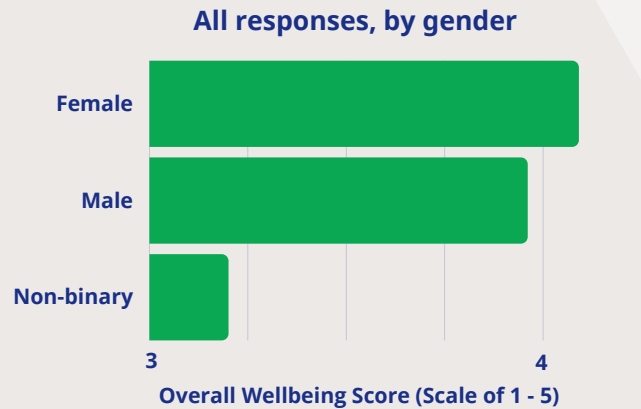
## Age

Similar to MoWA customers, the project found that overall wellbeing of volunteers has a positive correlation with age of volunteers.



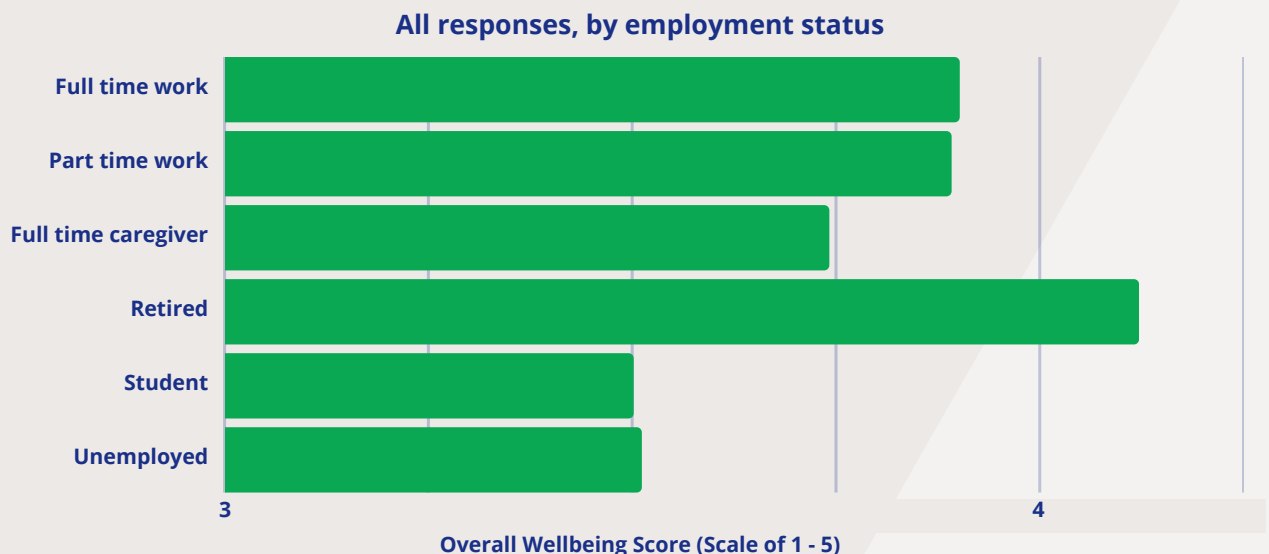
## Gender

Female volunteers were found to have (3%) higher overall wellbeing than male volunteers. One volunteer who identifies as non-binary has the lowest wellbeing score of 3.20.



## Employment Status

As compared to all other volunteers, retired volunteers were found to have significantly higher wellbeing; students and unemployed were found to have significantly lower wellbeing.



\*Differences in all wellbeing scores reported are statistically significant (p<0.01), meaning there is a 99% confidence level that the result is not due to chance or error.



## Qualitative Analysis Finds Meals on Wheels has a **Positive Impact** on Volunteers

As well as responding to questions about specific factors relating to the organisation's target outcomes, volunteers also had the chance to respond in their own words about how Meals on Wheels® Australia has had an impact on their wellbeing. These responses were explored through qualitative analysis which found that responses from volunteers overwhelmingly described MoWA as having a positive impact on their lives. Thematic analysis found that volunteers most appreciated the chance to give back to and connect with their local community. Volunteers also spoke simply about enjoying their time with MoWA, and that it brought as much joy to them as it did support to their customers. Below is a sample of the responses.

**"MoW has introduced me to new people, new cultures and has given me some hope for improving my situation through gaining some self-esteem."**

**"It's important to give back to the community and volunteering for MoW is so rewarding. My branch is amazing and our volunteers have a strong commitment to our customers."**

**"As a driver/deliverer for Meals on Wheels, my life has improved. I really enjoy helping and seeing all the elderly folk. Their faces light up, and they all enjoy a chat. Bringing even a small moment of joy to their lives brings joy to ours."**

**"It is an absolute delight and privilege to be able to visit lovely people in my community - to bring a little joy to both them and myself. The meals provided are lovely and so warmly appreciated. I really care for those I deliver meals to and they have become good friends and I love the opportunity to be part of their lives."**





# Opportunities for Further Investigation: The Relationship Between Customers and Volunteers

This measurement found that the quality of the relationship between customers and their volunteers is key to the social impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia. Understanding what customers and volunteers value in a relationship and why connection is made in some instances, but not others are therefore opportunities for further research and data collection.

It is likely to yield insights not only into how to improve the wellbeing of customers but also that of volunteers. It is possible that volunteers who build strong relationships with customers have higher wellbeing, which could be the reason driver/deliverers have stronger wellbeing than other roles. The goal could be to create a virtuous cycle where volunteers improve customer wellbeing which in turn improves their own wellbeing.

Based on the predictors of wellbeing, it appears this may well be possible, with significant overlap in the key factors that are associated with high wellbeing for customers and volunteers. Two strong predictors are directly shared with others mirroring similar priorities.

### Shared Predictors of Wellbeing



**Holistic Wellness -  
Enjoyment**  
Enjoy life and having fun



**Holistic Wellness -  
Self-Love**  
Liking oneself

### Mirrored Predictors of Wellbeing

#### Customers



**Holistic Wellness -  
Purpose**  
Feeling one's life has purpose



**Sense of Connection -  
Community Belonging**  
Feeling part of a community

#### Volunteers



**Holistic Wellness -  
Meaning**  
Feeling one's life has meaning



**Holistic Wellness -  
Loneliness**  
Feelings of loneliness or isolation

Finding the areas of service where the needs of customers and volunteers overlap could unlock even greater benefit for all those who are part of Meals on Wheels. Inclusion of research into these aspects into the measurement program in the future could therefore help identify enhancements across the whole service delivery model - from staff selection, recruitment, development and management, to scheduling and planning, to customer connection and volunteer matching, to relationships with other complementary in-home service providers, and so on.



## Get in Touch



### Meals on Wheels® Australia

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[www.mealsonwheels.org.au](http://www.mealsonwheels.org.au)



### Huber Social

[info@hubersocial.com.au](mailto:info@hubersocial.com.au)  
[www.hubersocial.com.au](http://www.hubersocial.com.au)





## Appendix

1. The Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework
2. Data Transparency Page
3. Measurement Considerations
4. Predictors of Wellbeing
5. Quality of relationship shifts



# 1. Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework

To be able to fulfil their potential and achieve wellbeing, each individual needs to have the capability and the opportunity to do so. Everyone has different needs within these categories depending on their context.

When it comes to measuring the social impact of a service, Huber Social measures the 'shift' the service creates in terms of wellbeing and the specific program outcomes achieved to create this. Results are then consolidated at a sector, community and global level.

Longitudinal measurement monitors effectiveness of programs to meet these needs; ensuring resources are directed to have the greatest impact. The vision is a wellbeing measurement system that delivers us the whole picture, to put each of us in the best position to achieve wellbeing and leave no one behind.

**The goal for each of us is the same; wellbeing. The part that differs are our individual needs.**

## The Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework

IMPACT

### Wellbeing

To be in the best position to fulfil your potential and live a life of value. The overall goal for all services working with people.

OUTCOMES

#### Through building Capability

- Resilience
- Life skills
- Wellness - mental, physical and spiritual

OUTCOMES

#### and providing Opportunity

- Resources
- Self-development
- Societal structures
- Relationships



## 2. Data Transparency Page

To support understanding of the findings and informed decision-making, Huber Social includes a data transparency page for every measurement project. This makes clear the rigour of evidence and analysis across every stage of the data lifecycle for the project.



Phase	Questions on the Treatment of the Data	Points allocated	Yes or No	
<b>Design</b>	Everyone in the intervention included in the measurement	2	N	
	OR Survey sample population designed to be representative of group	1	Y	
	<b>SAMPLE</b> Sample description: 1462 survey responses were collected from MoWA clients made up of 744 from South Australia, 513 from Queensland and 563 from New South Wales. All services included except SA. All clients were included in the measurement. In South Australia, who had a much larger client population, a sample of 3207 clients mailed the survey. They were selected based on one of the core measurement categories 'Time in Program.' This included 824w clients (receiving meals for less than three months), and 2382 long stay clients (receiving meals for one year or more). Demographic factors were consistent to broader MoWA population.	N/A	N/A	
	<b>BASELINE</b> 1255 survey responses were collected from volunteers made up of 792 from South Australia, 49 from Queensland and 414 from New South Wales. All MoWA volunteers at the services included with email addresses were sent the survey via email. Some services also provided paper options where it was preferred.			
	Control group (independent of the intervention)	3	N	
	Group baseline measured (pre-intervention)	2	N	
	Baseline inferred from time in intervention (e.g. 1 vs. 3 years)	1	Y	
	<b>EXCLUSIONS</b> Details of people specifically excluded from the measurement: N/A	N/A	N/A	
	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>DISTRIBUTION</b> Online surveys		Y
		OR hardcopy surveys		Y
Data collection supervised by Huber Social consultant		1	N	
Translation or guidance provided		N/A	N/A	
<b>DATA SOURCES</b> Data mining of other sources		1	Y	
Data included from previous years/measurements		1	Y	
<b>Cleaning</b>	<b>CLEANING</b> Details of additional data sources: To compare overall wellbeing scores of MoWA volunteers, data was sampled from two different measurement groups from the Huber Social Wellbeing Database.			
	Partial responses removed or no partial responses	1	Y	
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>SHIFT MEASUREMENT</b> Details of any responses removed: Partial responses removed if missing >50% Satisfaction with Life Scale data and/or >50% of outcomes data.	N/A	N/A	
	Calculated on time in intervention		Y	
	Calculated on group average	1	Y	
	Calculated based on individual scores	2	N	
	<b>TEST APPLIED</b> Basic analysis		Y	
<b>Reporting</b>	Statistical Correlation Test	2	Y	
	Multiple Regression or Lasso Regression Test	3	Y	
	<b>REPORTING</b> Client published Outcomes Report (prove)	1	N	
	Client received Social Performance Report (improve)	2	N	
	Client published full Social Impact Report	3	Y	
<b>RIGOUR SCORE</b> : LOW: 19; MED 10.4; HIGH 15.9		<b>MED</b>	<b>14</b>	



## 3. Measurement Considerations

To show the social impact of Meals on Wheels® Australia services, the project used an experimental design based on assessing self-reported changes in customers and volunteers with respect to key service outcomes, comparing data from when a customer or volunteer begins their time with Meals on Wheels Australia and after they have been exposed to the program for a specific period of time.

In the future, customers and volunteers will ideally complete their baseline survey before enrolment with the service, and then complete regular wellbeing check ins for the years that follow. This will enable MoWA to track individual customer and volunteer progress to better understand any fluctuations in their overall wellbeing.

For this initial measurement however, rather than waiting multiple years for customers and volunteers to progress through MoWA involvement, measurement has been undertaken based on a 'length of time exposed' analysis to give an initial indication of the organisation's impact. Customers and volunteers who have been with MoWA for three months or less were considered as the baseline measurement; results from the baseline groups were compared to customers and volunteers who have been with MoWA for longer periods of time to determine impact.

While offering important insights into the impact of the organisation, there are some limitations to this approach.

### **Indicative baseline**

In order to see the full impact of an organisation's work, ideally a pre-service baseline should be captured in measurement, that is, the 'before' surveys should ideally be completed before customers and volunteers begin with MoWA. In this case, as some customers and volunteers in the baseline group have already been engaged with MoWA services for up to three months, it's possible that key outcomes for have already been affected beyond their pre-program' baseline. Huber Social recognises this limitation in its approach and will be able to capture a more accurate baseline in future measurements.

### **SA Sampling**

In South Australia, sampling of MoWA customers was targeted to customers who have been receiving three months or less (baseline) and one year or more (shift). Exclusion of customers' data who have been receiving meals between three months and a year may have an effect on the project's findings; future measurements will include a representative sample of customer data across all key dimensions of service including years of services received.



# 4. Predictors of Wellbeing

In order to inform how to best support Meals on Wheels® Australia customers and volunteers, regression and correlation analyses were performed to identify which of all outcomes measured have a significant relationship with overall wellbeing; these are known as predictors of wellbeing.

The predictors of wellbeing for both Meals on Wheels® Australia customers and volunteers can be found listed in the following tables in order of statistical strength. The stronger the relationship between an outcome and overall wellbeing, the more confidence there is that a change in the outcome will correspond with a change in wellbeing.

Relationship strength is based on both the statistical significance (p-value) and beta coefficient value (r<sup>2</sup>). All predictors listed are statistically significant to p<0.001 (unless otherwise noted), meaning there is 99% confidence that the relationship identified between the predictive outcome and wellbeing is true, rather than produced due to sampling error or chance. The beta coefficient describes how closely each outcome and wellbeing are likely to move together related to each other.

For the purposes of this project, a strong relationship between an outcome and overall wellbeing is defined as any outcome with a beta coefficient value greater than 0.5; a moderate relationship is between 0.499 and 0.4.

The following pages present all predictors of wellbeing that have a strong or moderate significant relationship with overall wellbeing, for both Meals on Wheels® Australia customers and volunteers.

**Table 1. Predictors of Wellbeing for Meals on Wheels Customers**

Indicator	R	P-value	Direction and Strength
I enjoy life and have fun	0.601	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
My life has purpose	0.531	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I like who I am	0.523	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I have a strong community of family and friends around me	0.516	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I feel part of a community	0.504	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I have people I spend quality time with	0.502	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I have a sense of control over my own life	0.493	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I feel accepted by my community	0.491	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
In the past month, how often have you felt happy?	0.483	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
In general, my physical health is good	0.474	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
My opinions are heard and respected	0.446	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I can maintain positive relationships in my life	0.442	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I feel safe in my community	0.436	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I feel confident in my ability to live an independent life	0.43	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I have things to hope for	0.414	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
I have people in my life who encourage and praise me	0.408	P<.01	Positive, Moderate
My belief in myself gets me through the hard times	0.403	P<.01	Positive, Moderate



# 4. Predictors of Wellbeing

**Table 2. Predictors of Wellbeing for Meals on Wheels Volunteers**

Indicator	R	P-value	Direction and Strength
I enjoy life and have fun	0.611	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
My life has meaning	0.561	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have the right skill set to secure a job that I want (if you are retired, please leave this question blank)	0.526	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel lonely and/or isolated	0.521	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I like who I am	0.518	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have a strong community of family and friends around me	0.498	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I am able to build and maintain positive relationships that have different	0.485	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have people I spend quality time with	0.475	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
My opinions are heard and respected	0.474	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel free to be myself around others	0.47	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have things to hope for	0.466	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel accepted by my community	0.458	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel financially secure	0.448	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have people in my life who encourage and praise me	0.447	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I find it easy to share my thoughts and feelings with other people	0.43	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
In general, my physical health is good	0.43	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel part of a community.	0.429	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have people in my life who do things for me and show me they care	0.422	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I have things to do each day	0.421	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
I feel safe in my community	0.419	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find a good solution	0.414	$P < .01$	Positive, Moderate







## 5. Quality of Relationship Shifts

**Table 1. Full list of statistically significant shifts for customers who know their volunteer very well when compared to those who do not know their volunteer at all**

Outcome	Shift % when clients know volunteer very well	P-value
I find it easy to share my thoughts and feelings with other people	19%	<i>P</i> <.01
My life has purpose	18%	<i>P</i> <.01
I feel part of a community.	18%	<i>P</i> <.01
I enjoy life and have fun	17%	<i>P</i> <.01
I feel accepted by my community	15%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have things to hope for	15%	<i>P</i> <.01
I can maintain positive relationships in my life	13%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have a strong community of family and friends around me	13%	<i>P</i> <.01
I usually look forward to enjoying my meals each day	12%	<i>P</i> <.01
I believe that community service providers can help me with my current situation	12%	<i>P</i> <.01
My opinions are heard and respected	12%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have people in my life who encourage and praise me	12%	<i>P</i> <.01
I like who I am	11%	<i>P</i> <.01
I feel confident in my ability to live an independent life	11%	<i>P</i> <.01
In general, my physical health is good	11%	<i>P</i> <.05
I adjust my lifestyle, including sleep, hygiene, food and exercise to improve my health	10%	<i>P</i> <.01
In the past month, how often have you felt happy?	10%	<i>P</i> <.01
I know how to access the local support services I need to help me in my current situation	10%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have a sense of control over my own life	9%	<i>P</i> <.01
My belief in myself gets me through the hard times	9%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have things I am passionate about	9%	<i>P</i> <.01
In the past month, how often have you felt angry or frustrated?	9%	<i>P</i> <.05
If needed, I know how to access financial support services	9%	<i>P</i> <.05
The food I eat is healthy and nutritious	8%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have people in my life who do things for me and show me they care	7%	<i>P</i> <.01
I feel safe in my community	7%	<i>P</i> <.05
I can remain calm when facing difficult situations	7%	<i>P</i> <.05
I feel safe in my home	6%	<i>P</i> <.01
I have access to transport that gets me where I need to go	6%	<i>P</i> <.05
I have enough food to eat each week	4%	<i>P</i> <.01

