

Workforce of ACT community services



Findings from the 2025 State of the ACT Community Sector Survey

In March 2025 ACTCOSS received feedback from 129 respondents from ACT community organisations through the 2025 State of the ACT Community Sector Survey. This fact sheet highlights the key findings about the ACT Community Sector workforce and their wellbeing.

Dedication under strain: the workforce carrying the ACT community

The ACT community sector workforce delivers essential services to the ACT community, yet faces increasing internal pressures. In 2025:

- 76% of respondents reported staff exhaustion and burnout in their main program or service, increasing from 53% in 2022
- 59% of respondents indicated that they felt emotionally drained from their work
- burnout was the most commonly reported challenge across the sector.

One respondent noted: ***“We have struggled to meet demand while maintaining healthy workloads and staff wellbeing.”***

Another shared: ***“I am exhausted and don’t know how much longer I can keep doing this work.”***

This is not just a workforce issue—it threatens service continuity and quality for vulnerable Canberrans. The pressures are clear: high demand, limited resources, and the emotional toll of supporting people in crisis.

Despite rising burnout and challenges, commitment to the sector remains strong. Many respondents described their work as deeply meaningful:

“Working in the community sector has been both deeply rewarding and challenging.”

Others spoke of loyalty and passion:

“I absolutely L.O.V.E. the organisation I work for and the clients I service.”

The ACT community sector is highly educated, adaptable, and values driven. **But rising burnout signals a critical risk: if the people who care for our community are burning out, the entire system is at risk.** Sustaining this workforce is essential to ensure quality services for those who need them most.

Passion isn't enough: burnout and pay gaps threaten the future of the ACT community sector

ACT community sector workers average 33 paid hours a week—but also contribute six unpaid hours to keep services running. These unpaid hours often cover critical tasks like client support, compliance, planning, and even governance work such as grant writing and policy development. Despite their commitment, inconsistent flex-time arrangements mean much of this extra effort goes uncompensated due to funding constraints.

Persistent workforce shortages are placing significant strain on community organisations, increasing workloads, pressure and staff wellbeing.

- 61% reported difficulties keeping their services adequately staffed, suggesting persistent workforce shortages.
- 64% of respondents agreed they felt under pressure due to understaffing, compounding stress and increasing workloads.

Workforce pressures in the ACT community sector are driven by persistent pay gaps that undermine attraction and retention.

- In 2024, ACT community sector workers earned an average of \$1,686 per week (\$87,678 annually). Among ACT public sector worker, the average salary for 2024 was \$109,716
- For ACT community sector workers, this is over \$22,000 less annually, or over \$400 less per week than their ACT Government counterparts.

One respondent summed up the frustration with pay and conditions:

“The satisfaction from working in the sector should be a bonus, not a supplement to ‘top up’ poor salary expectations”

Aligning community sector wages more closely with the public sector is essential for workforce sustainability and maintaining a skilled workforce, as current disparities reduce the number of people entering and remaining in the sector.

- Community sector workers worked on average 6 unpaid hours per week.
- Approximately three in five (61%) reported difficulties in keeping their services adequately staffed.
- 64% felt under pressure due to understaffing.
- Community sector workers earned approximately \$395 less per week (or \$20,541 less annually) than their public sector counterparts.



A skilled and diverse workforce: The reality for ACT community sector in 2025

The ACT community sector is a highly educated workforce. In 2025:

- more than 4 in 5 (81%) of all respondents had a bachelor degree or post graduate degree; and
- 13% had a diploma.

While these figures reflect the sample only, they indicate strong professional capability across the sector. The ACT community sector workforce is dedicated to the work they do:

- nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) were permanent staff, either full-time or part-time; and
- 43% had been in the sector for more than 10 years.

This suggests the ACT community sector can offer relatively stable employment conditions, supporting workforce retention and service continuity; however, reliance on short-term or uncertain funding streams may pose risks to job security over time.

The ACT Community sector organisations focus on a diverse range of services.

This diversity highlights the sector's capacity for adaptability and the need for collaboration to address complex and interrelated community needs.

For more information

The survey responses offer a snapshot of the ACT community sector, reflecting a diverse mix of organisation sizes, funding levels, and service types. This broad representation means the findings provide strong and reliable insights into the current state of the sector. The comparison data has been taken from [At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis](#) by ACOSS (April 2023).

The full State of the ACT Community Sector 2025 Report will be available on [our website](#) later in December 2025. For more information contact us at actcoss@actcoss.org.au

For more detail on rising demand, see our companion factsheet: [Demand for ACT Community Services: Findings from the 2025 State of the Community Sector Survey](#).

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Top 5 service focus areas in 2025:

1.  Mental health services and supports (36%)
2.  Child and youth services (33%)
3.  Domestic and family violence services (29%)
4.  Housing and homelessness (26%)
5.  Community development services (25%)