

AUSTRALIAN  
COMMUNITY  
MANAGERS

# STATE OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024



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# State Of Community Management Report 2024

Produced by: Australian Community Managers  
Sponsored by: Khoros, Digital Ethnography Research Centre, Quiip  
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# FOREWORD

## The Turning Point

The 2024 State of Community Management Report paints a vivid picture of a profession grappling with shifting priorities, evolving technology, and increasing demands. AI is no longer a distant conversation - it's embedded in community workflows, for better or worse. While nearly half of community managers find AI tools useful, only a quarter feel in control of how AI interacts with their communities. At the same time, exposure to online harms is rising, with 71% of professionals encountering problematic content at least some of the time.

Our workforce is becoming more precarious. Full-time employment has dropped, with part-time, casual, and volunteer roles on the rise. Government-led communities, once a key employer of community managers across our region, are shrinking, while health, mission-driven, and service-based industries are stepping up their investment. Many professionals are earning six figures, while a growing number are working for free. This signals both an increasing recognition of community leadership at the top end, and a troubling devaluation of community work at the grassroots level.

Yet, in the face of uncertainty, there is resilience. The decline of social media as a primary community space signals a return to owned and private platforms, where trust and culture can be managed with more context and nuance.

My deep thanks to our research sponsors, **Khoros**, the **Digital Ethnography Research Centre at RMIT**, and **Quiip**. Their support makes this survey possible, and reflects their commitment to those who do the hard work of building and managing communities.

The internet is at its best when communities are strong, and the people who build and steward them deserve recognition, respect, and investment.

- *Venessa*

**Venessa Paech**  
Director, Australian Community Managers  
Wadawurrung Country



# RESEARCH BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The 2024 ACM State of Community Management report addresses:

- The demographics of Australian community managers
- Their working conditions and contexts
- Their toolsets and industry relationships
- The nature of the communities they build and oversee
- How community management is framed and integrated into Australian businesses and organisations
- Key challenges and concerns for community practitioners
- Moderation challenges and practices
- Future trends

Launched in 2015, the annual ACM State of Community Management Survey is the only benchmarking data captured about community management in Australasia. The survey is a resource for community managers (both professional and volunteer), recruiters and employers, journalists and media, policy makers, researchers and anyone looking to improve their understanding of community management as a field of work in Australia and New Zealand.

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted online from October 10 2024 until January 31 2025, and was designed to take 7-10 minutes to complete. There were 125 respondents in total. Anyone who manages a community in Australia and New Zealand, in any context, was encouraged to participate.

It was circulated via the Australian Community Managers professional organisation and online group, emailed to ACM members directly, and promoted through social media channels and individual professional networks.

The survey consisted of 55 questions, including core questions asked year-on-year throughout the life of the survey to allow benchmarking. Additional spotlight questions are added each year in relation to key issues or trends. Most questions were binary or checkbox answers, with a handful of long-form questions intended to gain insights into participants' personal views on the industry. No personal details were collected to preserve anonymity and integrity of response.

# KEY FINDINGS



**Retention and loyalty** are the leading purpose for business communities

## Health and Service

industries are thriving in the communities space



The average salary for community professionals is

**\$100,000 - \$130,000 p.a.**

**Communities of practice** dominate in Australia and New Zealand

**89%**

of community professionals are tertiary qualified

**83%**

of community professionals are **female** (an all-time high)

The industry sectors investing the most in online communities are **Education and Technology**

**61%**

of community managers are over 40

# KEY FINDINGS

## Misinformation

remains the **number one moderation issue** for community managers in Australia and New Zealand



**Social media**  
platform usage is in decline

**49%**

of community managers say their role is **understood and valued**

**96%**

of community managers work hybrid or remotely



**14%**

of communities that make money are **generating more than \$1M annually** for their organisations



**45%**

are measuring the ROI of their communities

**67%**

of community managers say community is seen as **integral** to their organisation

The number of community managers **unsure** if they'll stay in the field is rising

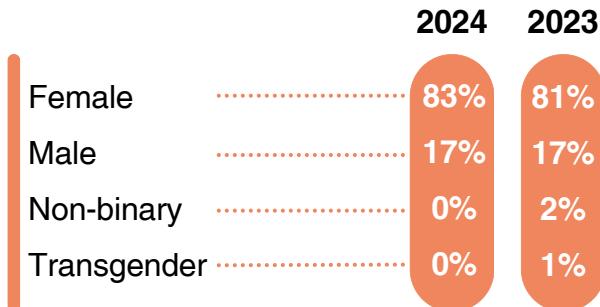
**47%**

# DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO IS MANAGING COMMUNITIES?



# GENDER

## Women Lead, Diversity Lags



The 2024 data shows the steady predominance of women in community management, with female representation slightly increasing from 81% in 2023 to 83%. Male representation remained unchanged at 17%, while the proportion of non-binary respondents declined from 2% in 2023 to 0% in 2024. Similarly, transgender representation dropped from 1% in 2023 to 0% in 2024.

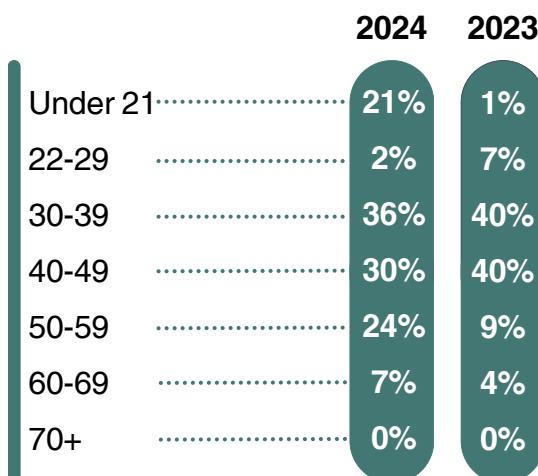
The growing dominance of women in Australian community management since this report began in 2015, underscores the profession's historical alignment with emotional labour, nurturing, communication and an ethics of care—skills and ways of working traditionally (and often stereotypically) attributed to women. This trend may also reflect the sector's values, which prioritise collaboration, empathy, and relationship-building, attributes that align with societal expectations of women.

Results from the ACM Start-Up Sector Snapshot show that more men work in community within the start-up ecosystem (though even there women are dominant - 71% female to 29% male). It is perhaps time to interrogate how we can attract more men to the work of community, and how they can contribute to the field.

The decline in non-binary and transgender representation year-on-year highlights potential barriers to broader inclusivity. It's important to recognise that individual comfort levels vary around disclosure of gender identification, and this can influence results. As threats to minority rights ramp up around the world, people belonging to these communities may also feel less safe to self-identify. There is an opportunity for community management to examine its structures and outreach to ensure it remains an inclusive and welcoming field for all, and can best represent the communities it serves.

# AGE

## Where Are the Next-Gen Community Managers?



From 2015 to 2021 this annual research showed community management in Australia dominated by practitioners aged 22-39. In 2022, this shifted, with 30-49 year olds becoming the leading players.

The age profile of community managers in 2024 reflects a further shift towards older demographics. 30-39 and 40-49 age groups, while still comprising significant portions of the workforce, both experienced declines - from 40% each in 2023 to 36% and 30% respectively in 2024. Meanwhile, the 50-59 age group grew sharply from 9% to 24%, and the 60-69 bracket increased from 4% to 7%.

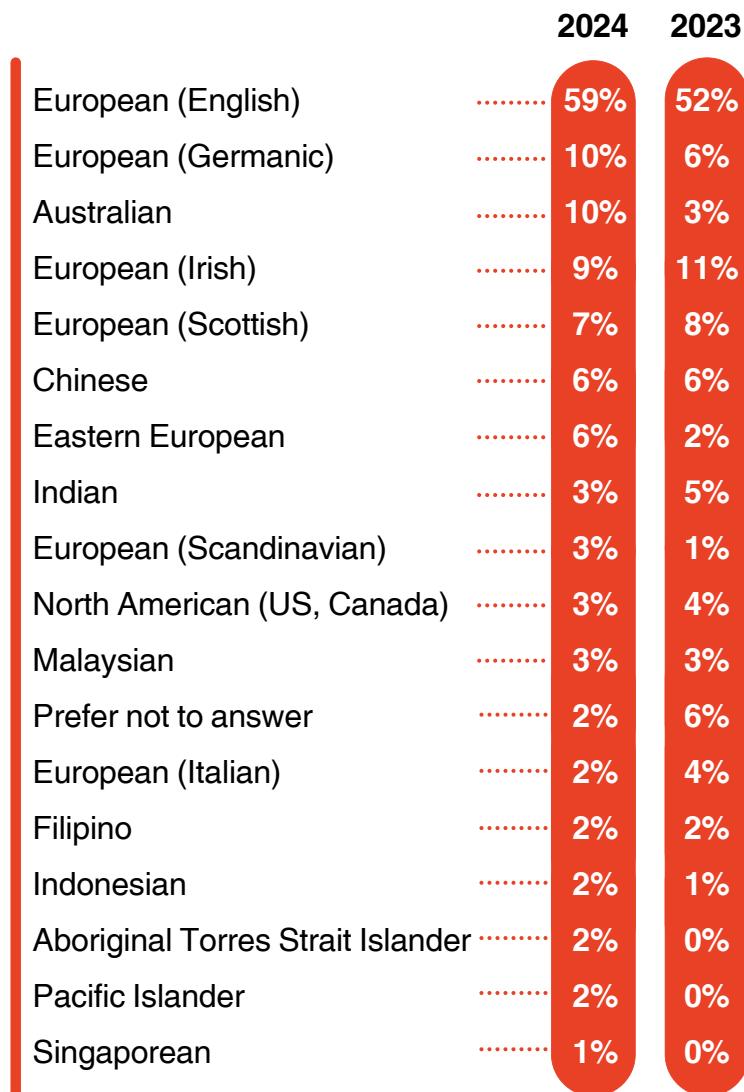
Representation of those under 21 dropped to 0% year-on-year, while the 22-29 group also saw a marked decline, from 7% to 3%. These trends suggest that the profession may be maturing, with fewer younger individuals entering the field. This could indicate barriers to entry for younger professionals or a growing reliance on experienced practitioners, raising questions about long-term sustainability and talent pipeline development. There are now 61% of community managers who are over 40 years of age.

In recent years, community managers have raised concerns about the application of AI removing opportunities for entry-level community talent, who would often cut their teeth performing tasks that are increasingly likely to be machine outsourced (such as simple moderation, content creation or basic reporting). These results may reflect that concern in action.

# ANCESTRY

## Cultural Homogeneity

Respondents were given a list of detailed geographic and cultural groupings and had the freedom to add their own or augment to best reflect how they identify.



Community management is still relatively homogenous in its cultural background. The largest group, European (English), has increased from 52% to 59%, while other European backgrounds, such as Germanic and Scandinavian, have seen significant growth. Those identifying as Australian have also climbed from 3% to 10%. Notably, the proportion of respondents identifying as Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander has increased to 2%, signalling progress towards more inclusive representation of Indigenous and Pacific communities across our region.

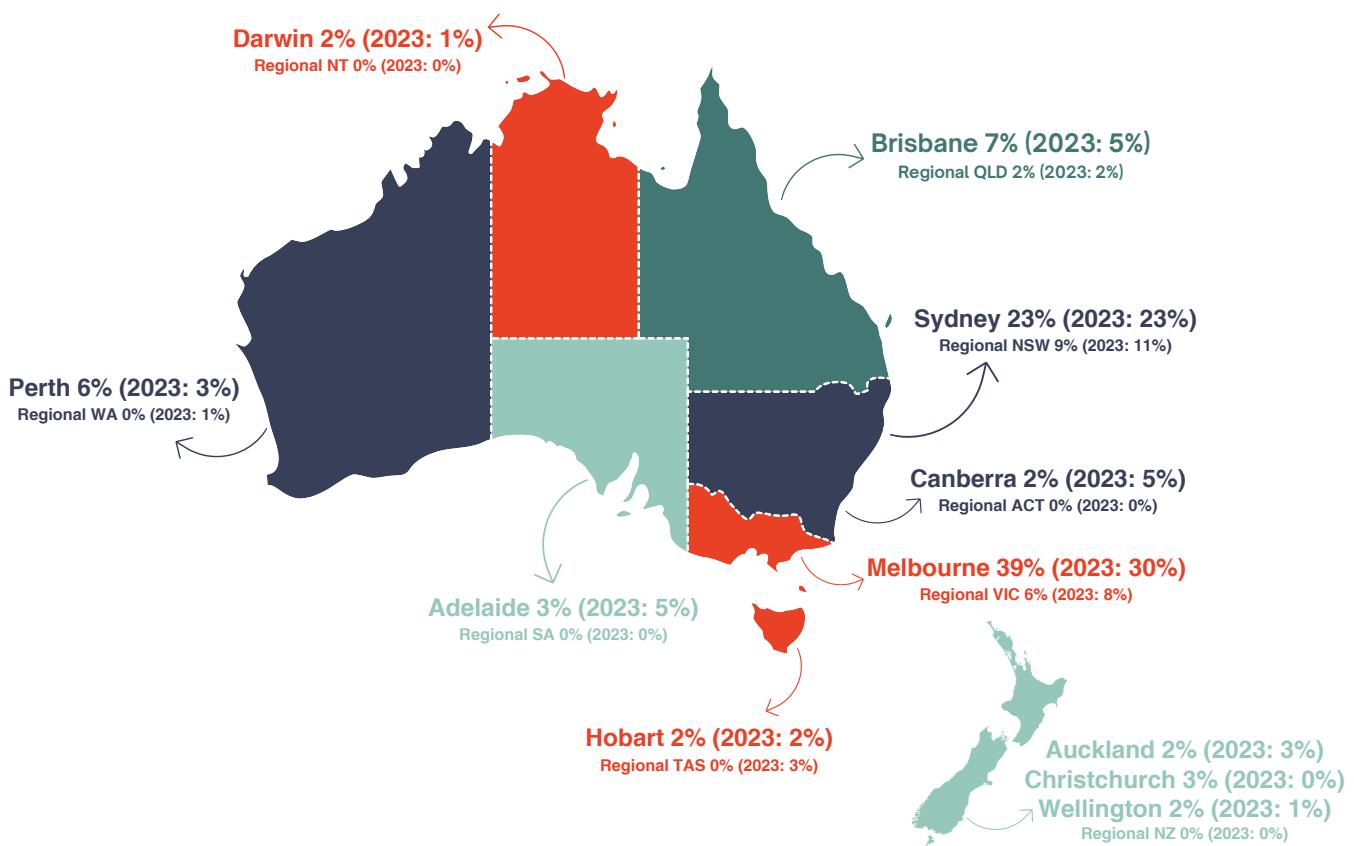
The ethnic or cultural background of a community practitioner may be irrelevant at times, but equally, it can influence many factors of this work - from how community is conceptualised to how it is moderated. Community managers can risk becoming entrenched in a narrow worldview, which could limit their ability to connect with diverse global communities. Cultural homogeneity can also hinder innovation, as diverse teams often bring fresh ideas, problem-solving approaches, and insights critical for adapting to the needs of a globalised and culturally rich audience.

# LOCATION

## An Urban-centric Divide

Melbourne remains the heart of community management across Australia and New Zealand. The city has seen a significant rise in representation, increasing from 30% in 2023 to 39%, while Sydney's share has remained steady at 23%.

Other cities such as Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide have all seen modest increases or declines, with Perth seeing a marked rise from 3% to 6%. Smaller cities and regional areas, however, show more pronounced fluctuations, with Regional NSW and Regional VIC seeing declines, while regions like Regional WA, Regional TAS, and Regional SA have disappeared from the data entirely. The growth in cities like Christchurch and Wellington suggests a broader regional spread across Australia and New Zealand, though the profession remains heavily concentrated in urban centres.



Despite the prevalence of remote work in community management, the concentration of community managers in major metropolitan areas signals a centralisation of the industry in urban hubs, where networking opportunities, professional development, and resources are often more readily available. While this makes sense, it can exacerbate challenges for professionals in regional areas, where representation and support are more limited. It's important to remember that online communities often provide a critical third space for people hampered by geographic barriers. They need stewards who understand and can cater to this.

Which country is your organisation based in?



Australia: 98%

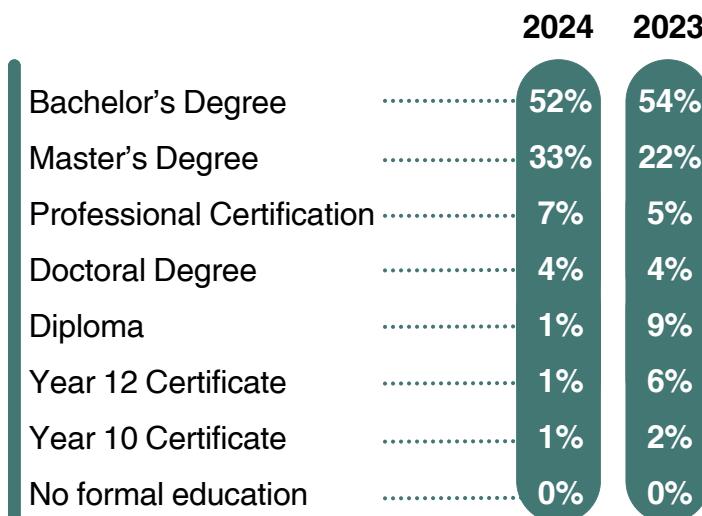


New Zealand: 2%

# EDUCATION & TRAINING

89% of Community Professionals are Tertiary Qualified

## What is your highest level of formal education?



The educational background of Australian and New Zealand community professionals has remained largely consistent over the years, with a noticeable rise in those holding tertiary qualifications - 80% in 2023, up from 73% in 2022 and 63% in 2021. Community management is a multifaceted field, drawing on skills from communication, media, technology, data analysis, and beyond. It is increasingly uncommon for professionals in this space to lack university-level education in at least one of these areas.

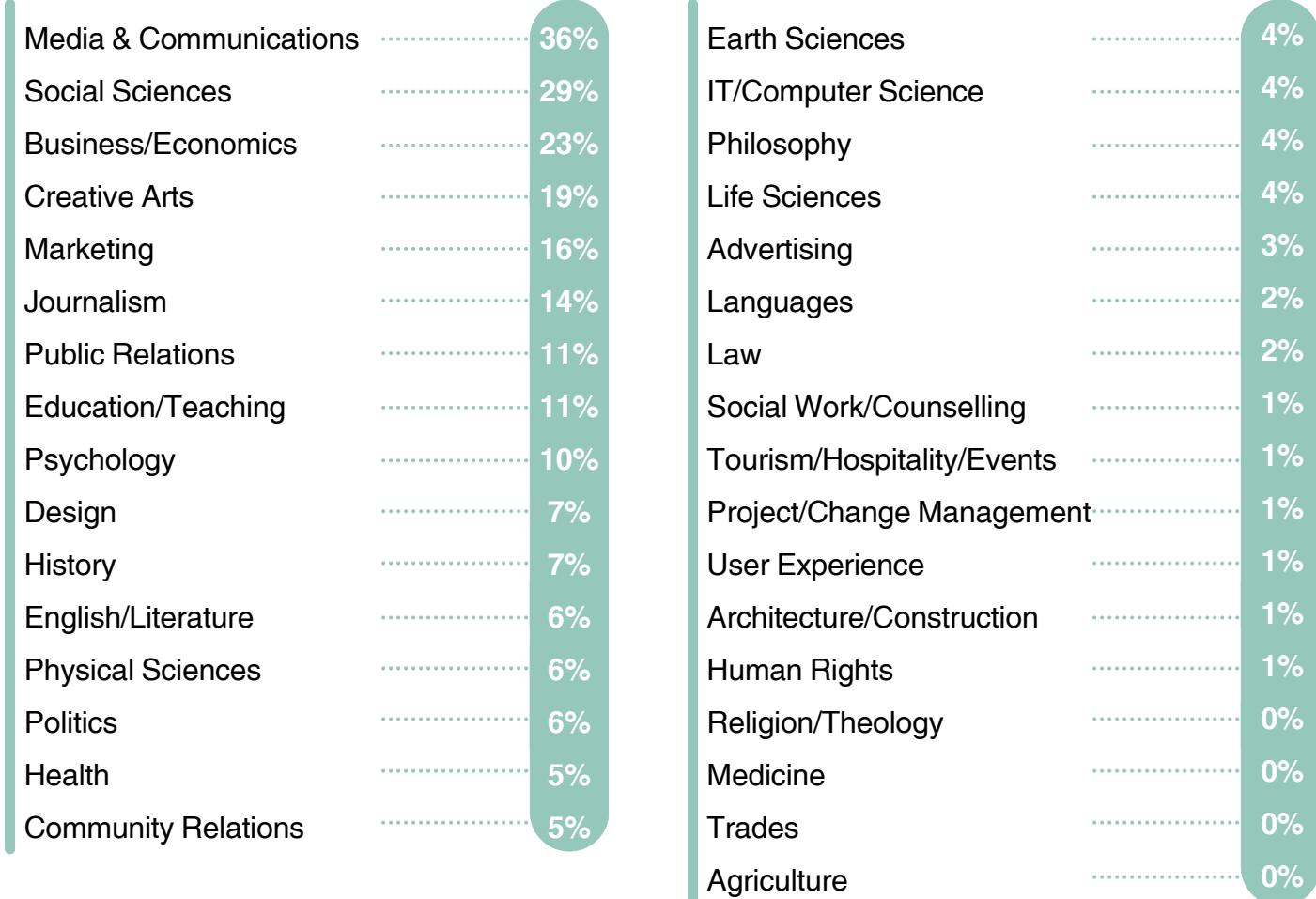


# SUBJECTS STUDIED

**Media and Communications** are the most common study background for those working in community management in Australia and New Zealand. These fields have dominated the community management graduate pipeline since we began tracking this data in 2015. The second and third most popular subjects studied were Social Sciences and Business/Economics.

There has been a jump in those reporting studying Social Sciences (up from 19% to 29% year-on-year), and small year-on-year declines in those studying Marketing (from 24% down to 13%) and Journalism (from 17% to 14%).

Community management is a complex communicative and relational practice, with a non-linear career path. This can be seen as a positive (allowing the field to attract and absorb talent with diverse expertise and lived experience), however, it can also contribute to the vocational ambiguity of community management - which may create issues with professional respect and recognition.

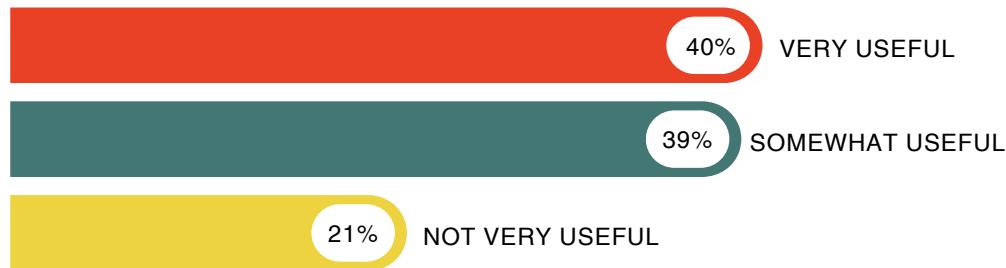


# USEFULNESS OF EDUCATION

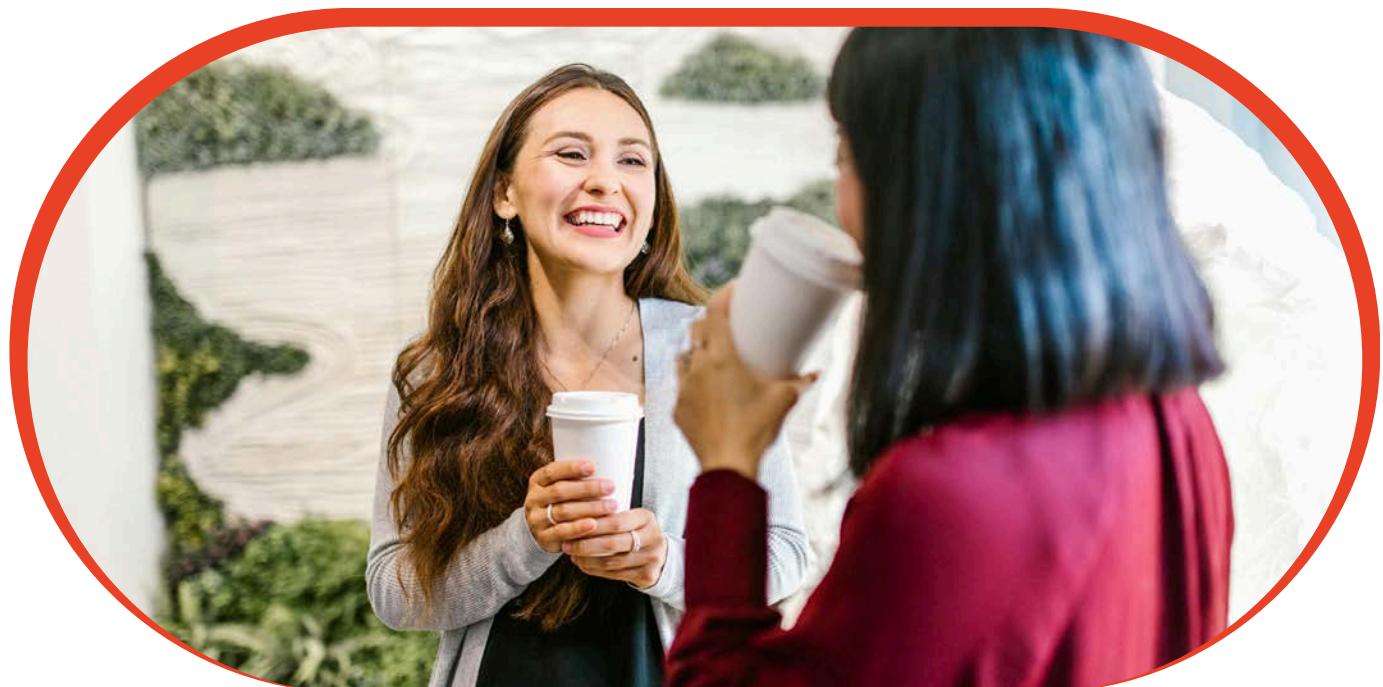
For the first time since this report commenced in 2015, a **majority of respondents say their formal education has been “Very Useful”** in their community management practice - 40%. A strong minority say it has been “Somewhat Useful” (39%).

The rising recognition of formal education’s utility may reflect the growing complexity and professionalism of the field, as it evolves beyond grassroots or ad-hoc approaches. It also suggests that educational institutions may play a larger role in preparing future community managers, and there may be a greater demand for formal training and qualifications in the years to come.

The top three fields studied by those who said their formal education was “Very Useful” were: **Social Sciences, Communications and Creative Arts**. These areas provide transferable skills in social systems, engagement, behavioural analysis, and multi-modal strategic communication.



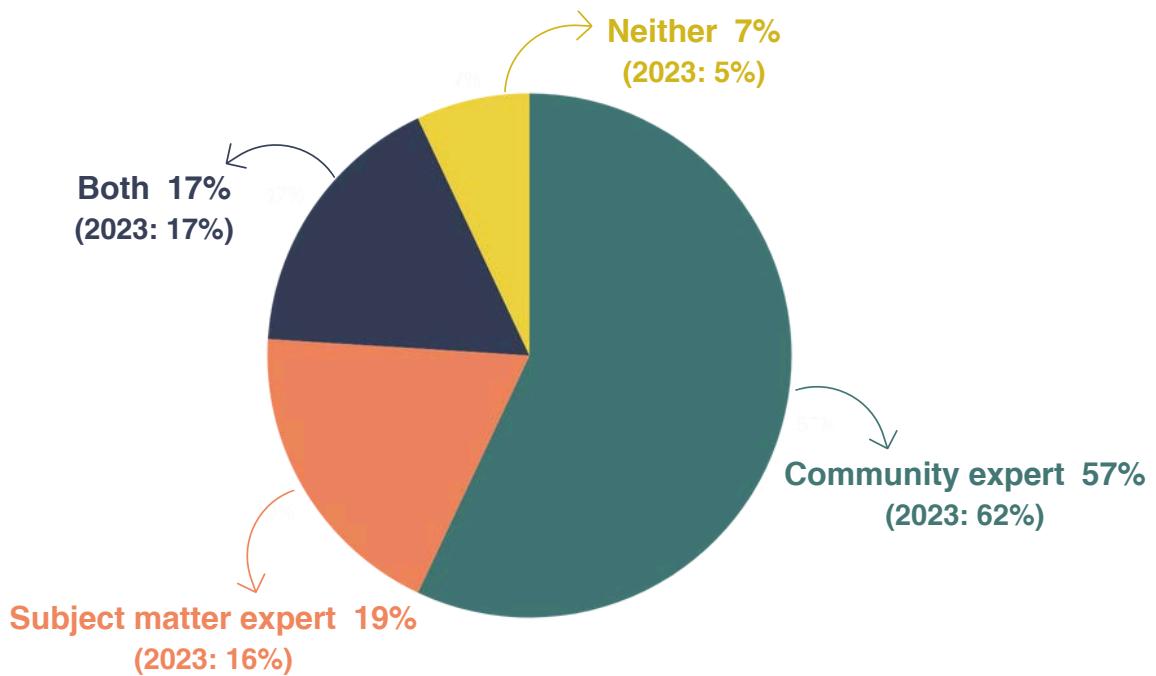
Of those who had engaged in tertiary education, Bachelor's graduates were the most likely to find their studies very useful (47%). 48% of Masters holders said their education was "Somewhat Useful", while 39% found it "Very Useful".



# NATURE OF EXPERTISE

Community managers can be hired as an expert in community first and foremost, an expert in the subject matter of the specific organisational community, or both. Understanding which of these approaches is more prevalent can reveal how community management practice is understood by both community managers themselves and, those hiring community professionals across Australia and New Zealand.

**Do you describe yourself as a subject matter expert in the topic of your community primarily - or as a community expert first?**



Since 2022 the number of practitioners identifying as a community expert first has risen year-on-year. This year it has experienced a slight drop, but a clear majority of respondents still fall into this category - self-identifying as an expert in communities, versus an expert in the topic of their communities.

Subject matter specific knowledge can provide social capital and useful insights around relationships and information management within a specific setting. Community expertise, on the other hand, may allow a faster route to results, as that person will spend less time learning community management best practices.

Either can work well - there is no single 'correct' approach.

# ONGOING LEARNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Learning Trends on the Move

92% of community managers responding to our survey engaged in some form of ongoing learning or professional development during the past year.



The 2024 data indicates a decline in the popularity of certain professional development methods compared to 2023. Webinars, for example, dropped from 67% in 2023 to 60%, and community management conferences saw a notable decrease from 71% to 53%. On-demand digital courses also experienced a sharp drop, from 62% to 39%, suggesting a possible shift away from self-paced learning.

In contrast, interest in conferences for specific industry sectors rose from 29% to 40%, indicating that professionals are seeking more specialised, targeted learning opportunities within the industry their community operates.

Meetups and in-person short courses both saw slight increases, with participation rising from 28% to 30% and from 22% to 27%, respectively. Coaching or mentoring, while still valuable, declined from 31% to 24%, while cohort training programs and tertiary level courses remained relatively stable.

Notably, the percentage of respondents opting for "None" as a development method has increased from 4% to 8%, which may signal a shift towards more independent or informal learning methods, or possibly a lack of engagement with formal professional development options.

# TENURE

## A Growing Field with Retention Challenges

**Community management as a profession in Australia and New Zealand is stabilising at the mid-to-senior level**, with 5-10 years of experience remaining the dominant tenure bracket (30%) for the third consecutive year.

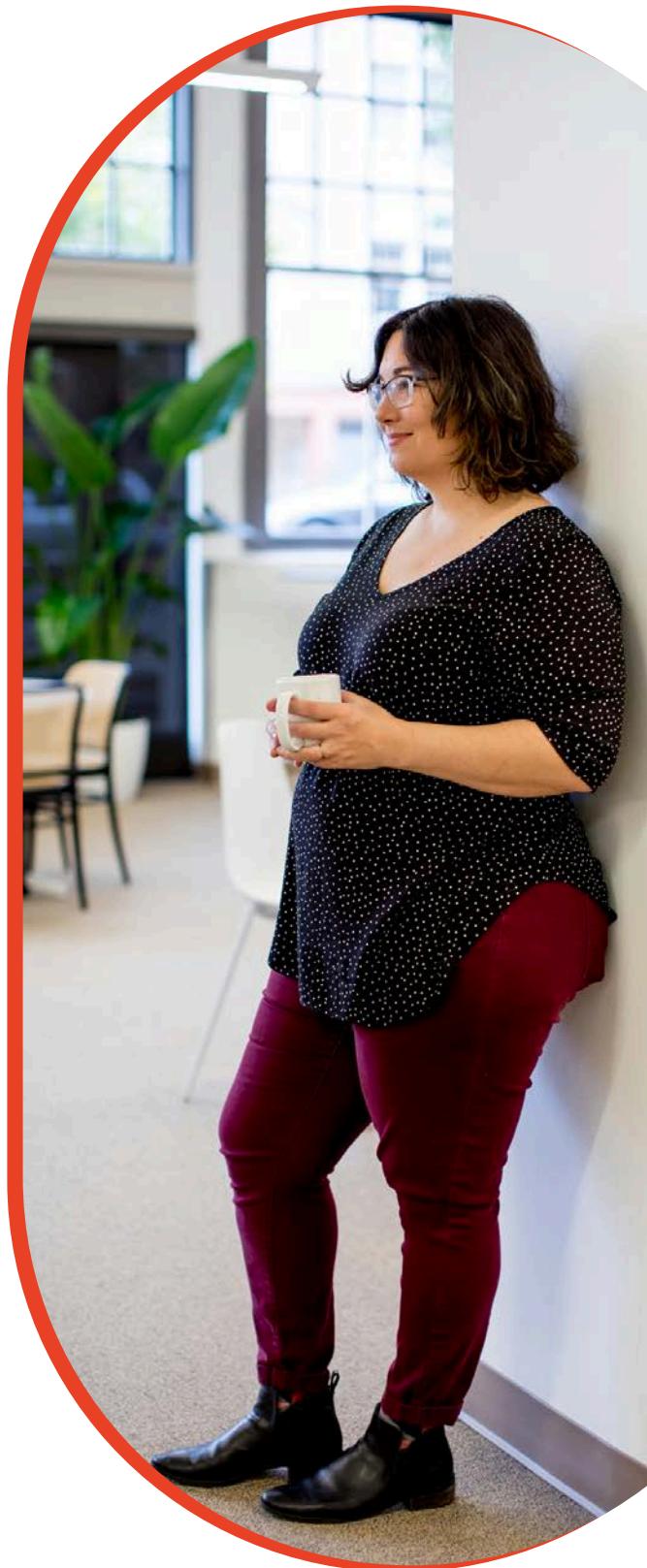
Senior professionals with 10-15 years of experience are holding steady at 18%, suggesting a strong cohort of experienced leaders staying in the field.

However, there are signs of both growth and volatility in early-career roles.

The proportion of under-1-year professionals surged in 2023 (7% to 18%) and remains high at 17% in 2024. But at the same time, the 1-3 year (13%) and 3-4 year (11%) brackets have declined, raising concerns about retention and career progression beyond the initial years.

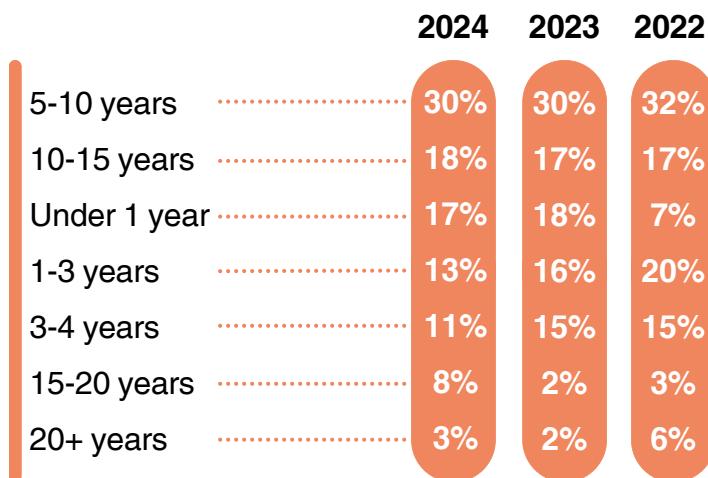
**Long-term veterans (15-20 years) have quadrupled since 2022 (3% to 8%),** and 20+ year professionals remain a small but consistent presence (3%).

This suggests that for some, community management is still a viable long-term career path, though the drop-off in mid-career professionals hints at potential burnout, lack of career advancement, or salary stagnation driving some out of the field.



# TENURE

**When you were hired or engaged for your current role, how many years of community related experience did you have?**



Of those new to community management (under 1 year experience):

- 25% made a career change from something else (down from 62% in 2023);
- 33% took up community management in addition to other roles/work (up from 20% year-on-year);
- 1% are new graduates entering the professional marketplace (down from 4%).

In 2022, 5% of those who said they were new to community management reported taking it on in addition to other roles or work - in 2023 this jumped to 20%. In 2024 this number has risen again - to 33%. While this could reflect a recognition of the value of community management across various roles, it might also point to a pattern of community management being increasingly viewed as an additional responsibility rather than a standalone role. This may be due to budget tightening, or a lack of understanding around community management as a distinct and strategic function that requires dedicated expertise to thrive.

If this trend continues, this would signal a reversal of hard-won progress made across the last 20 years in the community management space, and could lead to challenges as multitasking employees will struggle to give community management the focus it needs, in turn impacting the quality and sustainability of their efforts.

# WORKING LIFE



# SALARY

## The Wage Gap is Growing

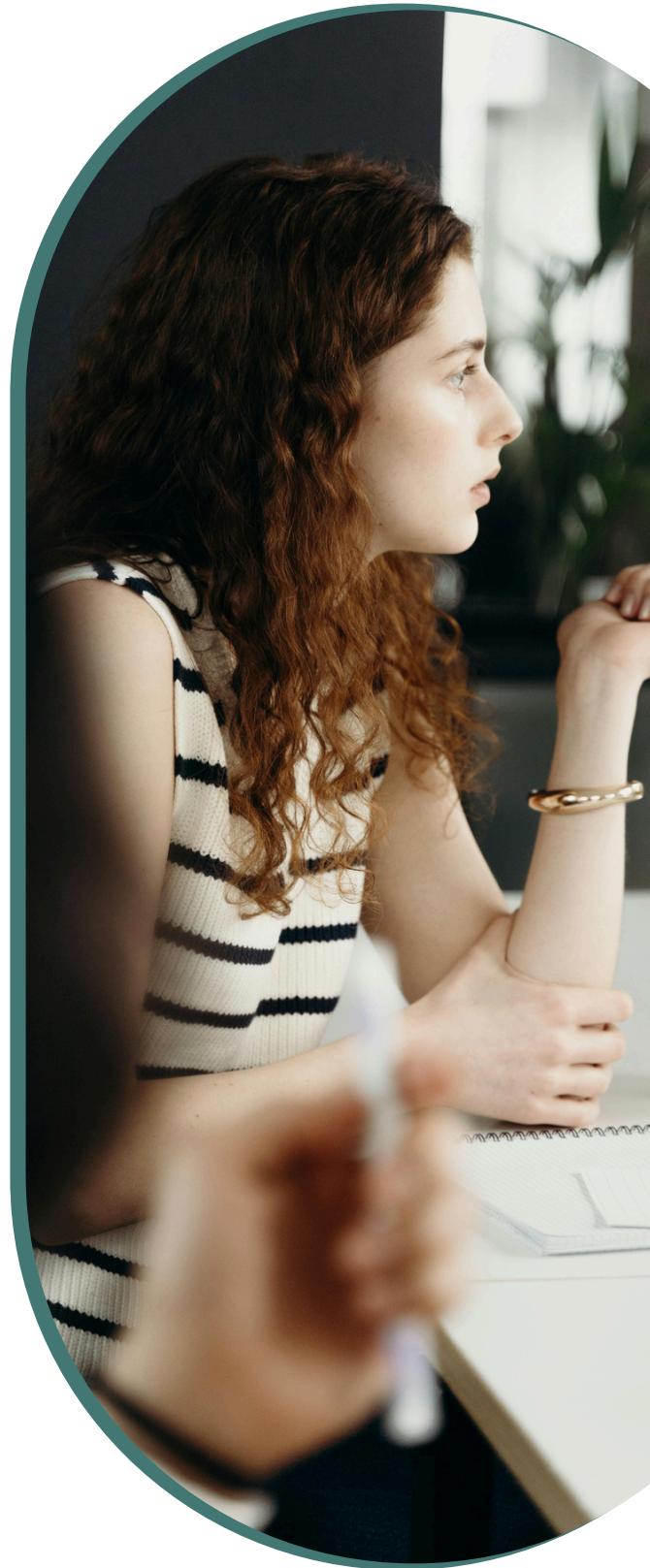
Community manager salaries have continued to show divergence, reinforcing a wage gap within the field. While the most common salary bracket remains \$101,000–\$130,000 p.a. (26% in 2024, holding steady from 27% in 2023), the distribution of earnings has shifted at both the lower and higher ends.

Notably, the number of unpaid or volunteer community managers without benefits has surged from 4% to 14%, marking a significant increase in uncompensated labour. This aligns with anecdotal reports of growing casualisation and expectations of unpaid community work. The percentage of community professionals earning less than \$30,000 annually has also risen (from 1% to 4%), alongside a modest presence of part-time and casual roles (11%, down slightly from 12% in 2023).

At the same time, the highest salary brackets continue to expand. While the percentage of community managers earning \$131,000–\$150,000 p.a. has declined (from 14% to 9%), the proportion earning over \$150,000 p.a. has risen again - from 11% in 2023 to 13% in 2024. This steady growth at the top signals increasing recognition of senior and strategic community roles.

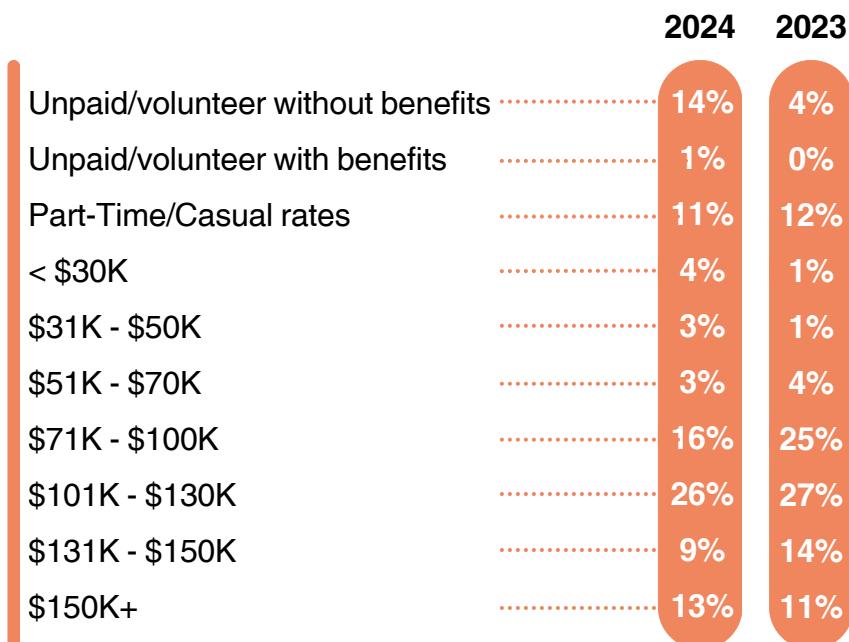
Meanwhile, mid-range salaries have contracted, with fewer professionals reporting earnings between \$71,000 and \$100,000 p.a. (16% in 2024, down from 25% in 2023). This could indicate a hollowing out of mid-level roles, with more community professionals either being under-compensated or progressing into higher salary bands. It may also reflect a decrease in the local community job market.

These trends suggest a polarisation of community salaries, with growing numbers of underpaid or unpaid professionals, while those in senior roles continue to see salary increases.



# SALARY

## Community manager compensation



The highest paying sectors for community professionals are: **Health, Technology and Finance**. In these sectors, a notable proportion of community managers report salaries in the upper ranges - often above \$150,000 p.a. or in the \$131,000–\$150,000 p.a. bracket - compared to other industries. This is relatively consistent with the past eight years of reporting, with the exception of Government, which commonly ranks in the top three, however this year appears to have fallen to mid-range compensation.

Health communities have more intensive and complex regulatory and moderation demands, which typically leads to higher salaries in that arena.



# TITLE

## Specialisation - or Ambiguity?

We asked people to name their job title - **69 different titles** were shared (compared to 78 in 2023). 52% of titles shared had the word 'community' in them, down from 68% in 2023 and 56% in 2022.

The most common titles were:

1. Community Manager (appears 18 times)
2. Online Community Manager (appears 4 times)
3. Vice President (appears 3 times)

Here are some of the unique titles shared:



While diversity in titles can signal a growing recognition of community roles, it can also have some downsides. The proliferation of varied titles may indicate a lack of standardisation within the industry, which can lead to role ambiguity, and inconsistent expectations around compensation and career progression. Overlapping responsibilities (common in community management across the last decade), can dilute focus and potentially hinder the development of a coherent community strategy.

# WORKING STATUS

## More Flexible, Less Secure?

Community management can be conducted by in-house professionals, agencies, consultants, freelancers, or volunteers.

**A majority of community professionals in Australia work in-house for a single business or organisation** - 60%. This is a sharp drop from 80% in 2023. However the most notable, and arguably concerning, data-set is the acceleration of volunteer community managers - from 0% in 2023 to 16% in 2024 (this pattern is also reflected in employment status figures). If this steep spike is a result of de-professionalisation in community management, and the decoupling of community from internal organisational function, this could be cause for concern.

The number of people working on community management within agencies has rebounded once again year-on-year: from 10% to 14% (after several prior years of decline). The distribution of those consulting and freelancing remains relatively stable.

	2024	2023
In-house working for single business/org	60%	80%
Volunteer	16%	0%
Agency working on multiple clients	14%	10%
Consulting/Consultancy for multiple clients	8%	7%
Agency working on single client	0%	2%
Consulting/Consultancy for single client	0%	1%
Freelance working for multiple clients	2%	1%
Freelance working for single client	0%	0%



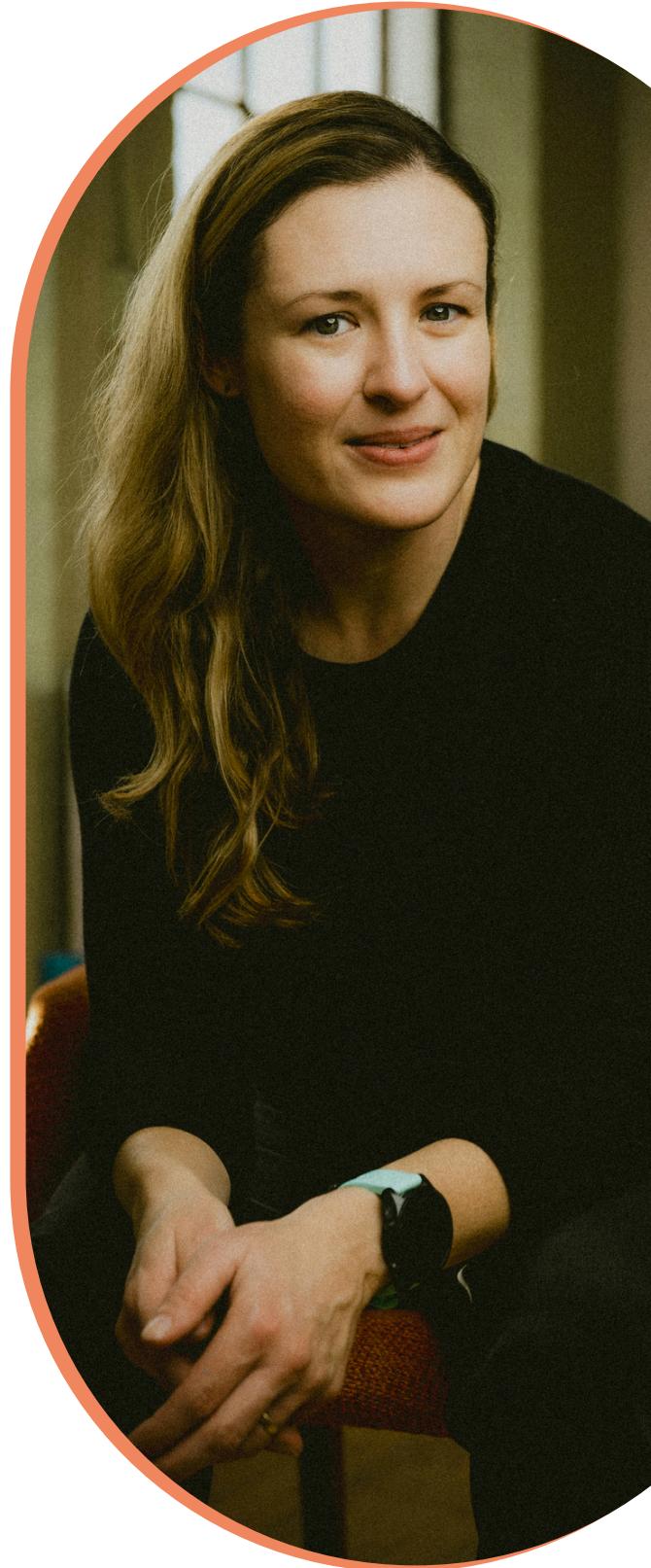
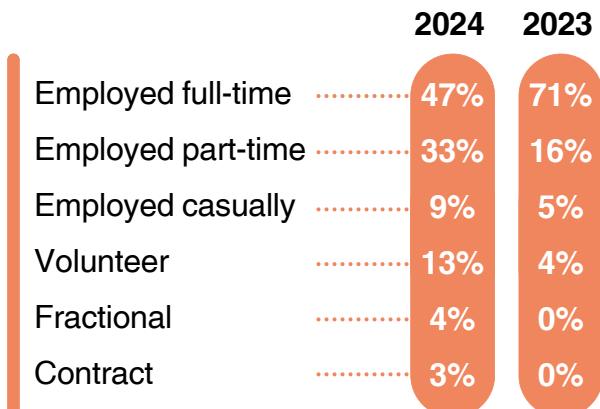
# WORKING STATUS

The decline in full-time employment (47%, down from 71%) signals a major shift in how community professionals are working, with part-time roles doubling (33%) and casual, volunteer, and fractional work rising. This aligns with team structure trends, where fewer full-time professionals and more volunteer-driven teams suggest that organisations are relying more on flexible, lower-commitment staffing models.

The rise in contract and fractional roles (now at 3-4%) indicates that community work could be becoming more project-based, possibly reflecting budget constraints or a preference for specialised, short-term expertise.

A surge in volunteers (13%, up from 4%) reinforces the growth of grassroots, mission-driven communities, but also raises concerns about whether community professionals are being undervalued or struggling to secure stable work.

## Which best describes your current Community role?



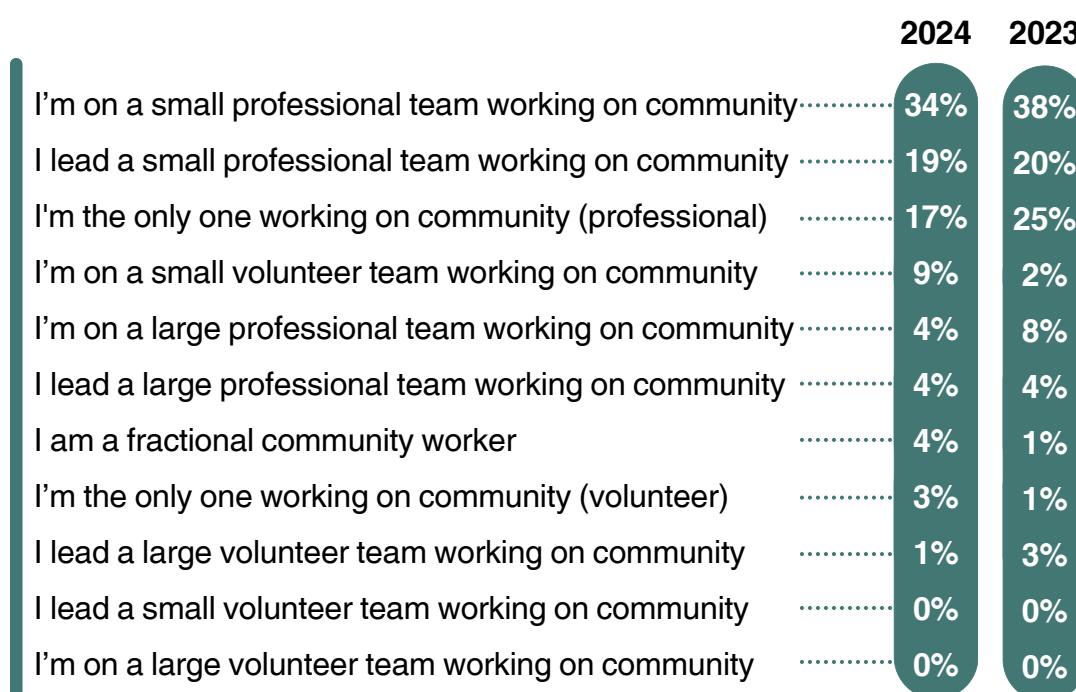
# TEAM MAKE-UP

## Small Teams Are Our Backbone

Community team structures in Australia and New Zealand are shifting, with fewer solo professionals (17%, down from 25%) and a growing presence of volunteer teams. Small volunteer teams have increased significantly (9%, up from 2%), suggesting that more grassroots or mission-driven communities are emerging, or that community work may be experiencing some deprofessionalisation.

Meanwhile, small professional teams remain the backbone of the industry (34%), though they've seen a slight dip year-on-year - possibly due to resource constraints or shifting team structures. Large professional teams have also declined (4%, down from 8%), suggesting that most organisations are looking to keep community management lean.

A rise in fractional community workers (4%, up from 1%) points to a more flexible, gig-based approach to community roles. These trends highlight an evolving workforce where hybrid, volunteer, and part-time community roles are increasing, while traditional full-time professional positions face constraints.



## Where are teams located?

The geographic distribution of community teams is evenly split - 35% are spread nationally, 35% are in the same location. Those reporting a global distribution of their team continues to climb (from 18% in 2022, to 23% in 2023, and now 30% in 2024).



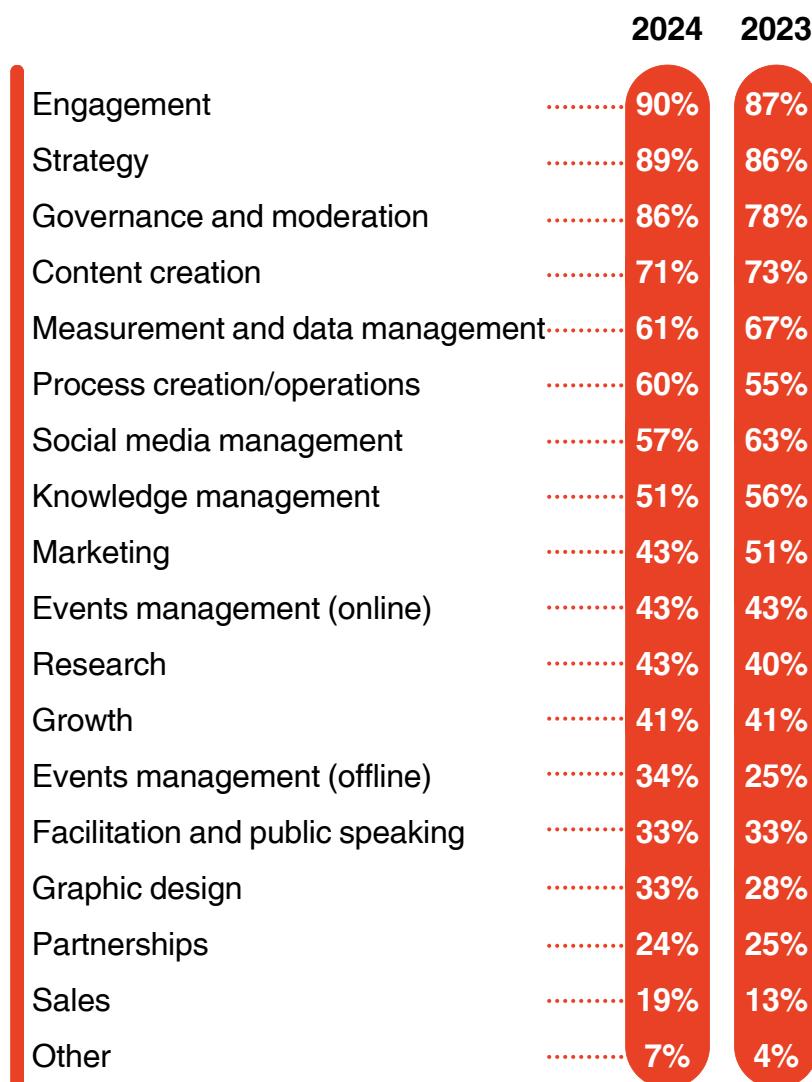
# TASKS PERFORMED

## Steering Purpose with Care

No one community management role looks exactly alike, though there are common priorities and tasks that have emerged over decades of the field's professionalisation. To shed light on these, respondents were asked to select the specific tasks they perform (as many as apply), and name any others we didn't include.

**Engagement, strategy and moderation/governance** are the leading tasks performed by community managers in Australia and New Zealand (in line with 2023 SOCM results).

### Which tasks do you perform in your Community role?

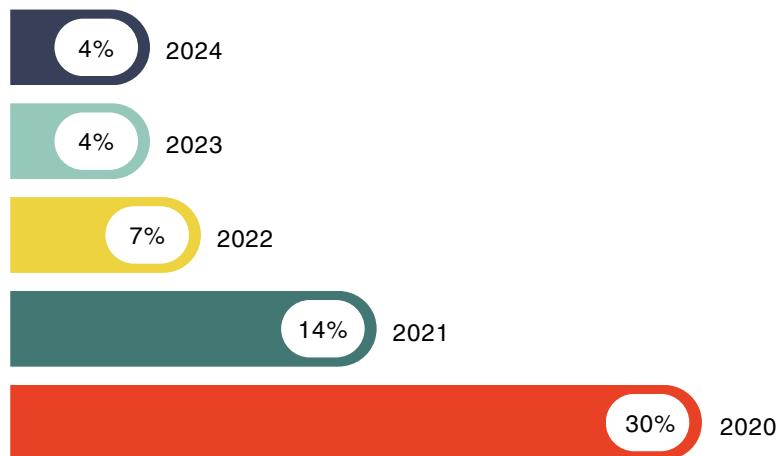


**Other** tasks respondents mentioned included fundraising and talent management.

# ENVIRONMENT

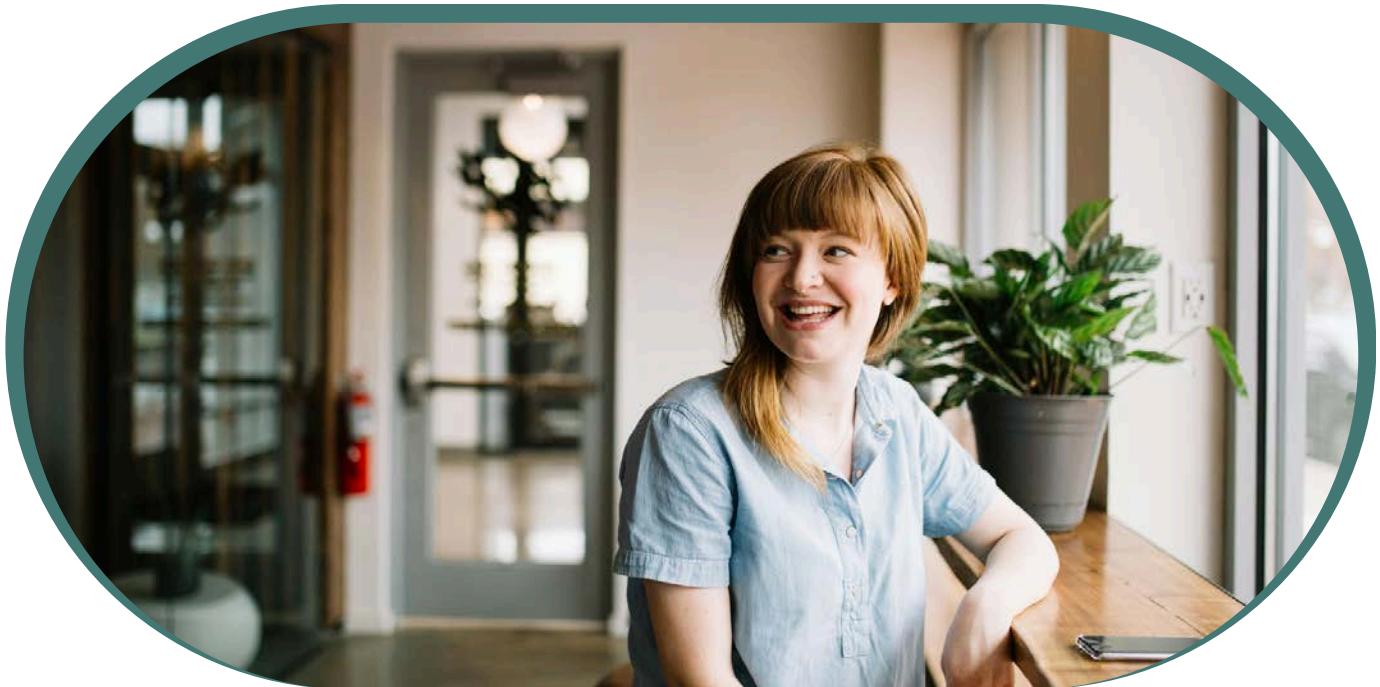
**96% of Community Managers Work Fully or Partly Remote**

**Community professionals working fully in-person in a company office**

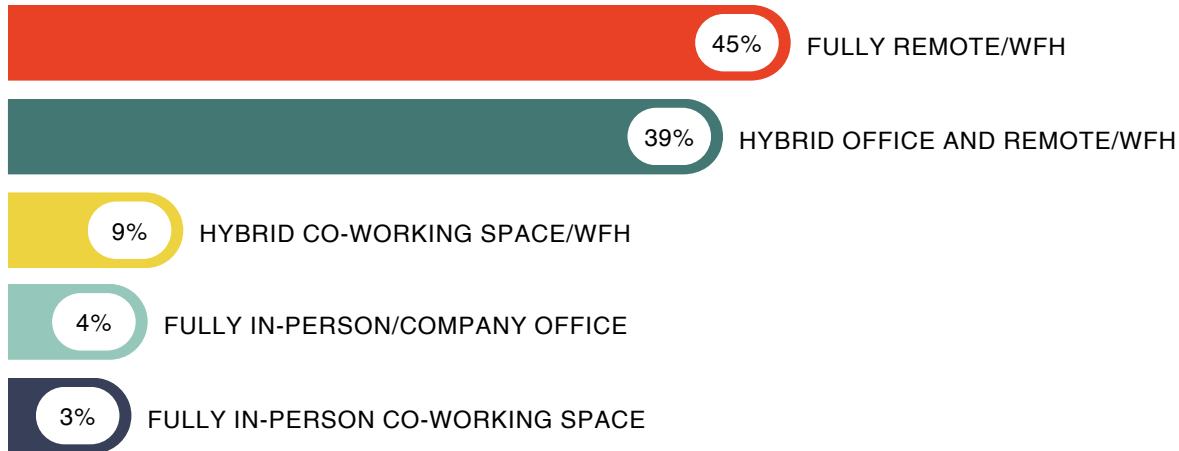


Working remotely, whether at home, while travelling or in a hybrid context (mixing office time with remote time), remains the norm for community professionals.

The number of community managers who work exclusively in a traditional office environment took a nosedive post-2020, and is holding relatively steady at 3%.



# ENVIRONMENT



The number of community practitioners working hybrid (some office time and some remote/work from home) has dipped this year - from 50% to 39%. However, those working fully remote/work from home have taken up some of the slack, up from 41% to 45% year-on-year. The number of respondents working a hybrid of co-working and remote has also ticked up, from 3% to 9%.

In Australia, community professionals remain far more likely to work fully at home or travel while working, than spend any days in the office, compared to other workers. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows nationally 36% of employed people usually work from home<sup>1</sup> - versus 96% of community managers.

This suggests that Australia and New Zealand, despite sharing back-to-the-office pressures with other nations, may be resisting these, at least where digital front-line<sup>2</sup> workers are concerned. Meanwhile, New Zealand is fashioning itself as a hotspot<sup>3</sup> for digital nomads.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/will-australians-be-forced-back-to-the-office-in-2025-or-will-they-return-of-their-own-accord/hw3gww7sr>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.news.com.au/travel/destinations/major-move-to-make-nation-wfh-haven>

# VALUE & UNDERSTANDING

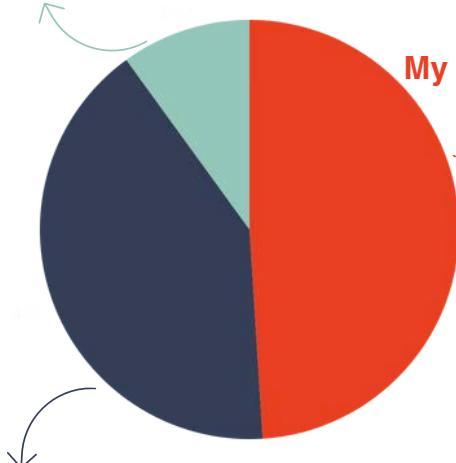
## Modest Growth in Understanding

My role is not well understood and not valued 10%

(2023: 17%)

My role is understood and valued 49%

(2023: 48%)



My role is partly understood and somewhat valued 41%

(2023: 35%)

This year's data indicates a modest but positive shift in the perceived understanding and value of community management roles. While the percentage of professionals who feel fully understood and valued remains relatively stable (49% in 2024 vs. 48% in 2023), there has been a rise in those who feel **partly understood and somewhat valued** (41% in 2024 vs. 35% in 2023). Encouragingly, the percentage of those who feel their role is **not well understood or valued** has dropped from 17% to 10%, pointing to improved organisational awareness and advocacy efforts.

The number of community practitioners who don't feel fully recognised underscores the need for continued education and strategic alignment to elevate the profession's standing.

### Understanding of community management role

**2019**.....2%

**2020**.....24%

**2021**.....34%

**2022**.....46%

**2023**.....48%

**2024**.....49%

# KEY CHALLENGES

## Lack of Advancement a Key Risk

The leading challenges for community managers are consistent with previous State of Community Management Reports: **understanding** from leaders and key stakeholders, **budget squeezing**, **measuring** the value of their communities, and negative impacts on personal **mental health and wellbeing**. However the prevalence of these has dipped slightly - which is welcome news.

**Lack of career advancement** also remains a significant concern - and the dip in the other leading issues now places this as the second most reported challenge. This is reflected in the testimonials and self-reporting from community managers who took this survey, and continues to remain a serious risk to the viability of the practice in our region.

There has also been a notable increase in the challenges of **online harms**, and **adequate moderation tools** or support to manage these.

	2024	2023	2022
Lack of understanding about your work	51%	56%	24%
Training and career development	44%	48%	14%
Measuring ROI	41%	51%	23%
Budgetary constraints	40%	54%	20%
Mental health and wellbeing	40%	50%	23%
Online harms	35%	30%	16%
Lack of leadership support and/or buy-in	34%	38%	24%
Sustaining engagement	34%	43%	19%
Moderation support	29%	30%	10%
Inadequate measurement tools	28%	30%	17%
Growth/Acquisition pressures	26%	25%	14%
Generating engagement	23%	25%	16%
Content support	23%	24%	14%
Technology support	23%	15%	10%
Inadequate compensation	21%	18%	16%
Access to the right data to inform your work	21%	18%	N/A
Inadequate moderation tools	21%	N/A	N/A
Inadequate engagement tools	19%	17%	14%
Risk management	18%	19%	17%
Strategic support	14%	25%	17%
Lack of peer support	13%	11%	N/A
Lack of support from employer for your mental health	12%	15%	N/A

# BENEFITS OF WORKING IN COMMUNITY

*"I made the community I wanted to be part of"*

We asked community practitioners to tell us what they most like about their work. Their responses fell into the **four key themes** (generally in line with previous reports):

Social Impact

Service to Others

Safety

Variety

**Community managers are deeply motivated by purpose.** Their work goes far beyond moderation or engagement - they see themselves as architects of belonging, protectors of digital spaces, and facilitators of real-world change. They view community as a force for good, and many see their work as a calling, not just a job.



# BENEFITS OF WORKING IN COMMUNITY

## SOCIAL IMPACT

Community managers are driven by the tangible, positive changes their work creates. They find fulfilment in facilitating positive transformation - within their community and beyond. Many see their role as building safe, supportive spaces where people can find belonging, peer support, and solutions in difficult times.

Ultimately, they share a common goal: **making the internet a better place.**



*"I love helping people and community provides instant acknowledgement of any advice or information I give or enable. I used to be a nurse - working in community allows me to facilitate health information in a similar way, just without the face to face - and I can reach a much larger audience."*

*"Educating people about what community can accomplish."*

*"The ability to make a difference. Helping people in the darkest times find answers and connection."*

*"Seeing it improve member lives meaningfully."*

*"Helping people to solve problems, empower them with information, help them parent better, improve children's wellbeing."*

*"Making the internet a better place."*

*"Filling the ever widening gaps in services, at no cost to the participant, building better relationships and stronger communities."*

*"Social impact it has and the meaningful relationships young people create in a safe place."*

*"Building knowledge and networks for greater transparency and understanding of local issues."*

*"Connecting people and offering real value to improve their lives. Feeling like I'm making a difference!"*

# BENEFITS OF WORKING IN COMMUNITY

## SERVICE TO OTHERS

For community managers, one of the greatest rewards is **helping people connect, belong, and thrive**. They take pride in creating welcoming spaces, ensuring everyone - no matter their circumstances - has a voice.

Whether it's supporting personal growth, fostering collaboration, or mobilising communities for meaningful change, their work is about facilitating human connection and making a real difference in people's lives.

**"I love helping people and community provides instant acknowledgement of any advice or information I give or enable. I used to be a nurse - working in community allows me to facilitate health information in a similar way, just without the face to face - and I can reach a much larger audience."**

**"Educating people about what community can accomplish."**

**"The ability to make a difference. Helping people in the darkest times find answers and connection."**

**"Seeing it improve member lives meaningfully."**

**"Helping people to solve problems, empower them with information, help them parent better, improve children's wellbeing."**

**"Making the internet a better place."**

**"Filling the ever widening gaps in services, at no cost to the participant, building better relationships and stronger communities."**

**"Social impact it has and the meaningful relationships young people create in a safe place."**

**"Building knowledge and networks for greater transparency and understanding of local issues."**

**"Connecting people and offering real value to improve their lives. Feeling like I'm making a difference!"**



# BENEFITS OF WORKING IN COMMUNITY

## SAFETY

An **ethics of care** has long been a core driver for community managers. Many see their work as a pushback against online toxicity, shaping safe, inclusive, and meaningful spaces in a chaotic digital world.

They take pride in protecting vulnerable people, fostering positive online culture, and reclaiming virtual spaces for the greater good.

For many, this work is not just about moderation - it's about building a better internet, one community at a time.



*"The march for progress that we are making toward creating a better virtual world."*

*"Despite the obvious global conditions that have created a sense of hollowing contempt, I see the work we are doing in our virtual worlds as a slow and steady progress that is helping us arrest control of these co-opted systems for the greater good. Our industry is a fight against dystopian life and I am happy to be on those lines."*

*"Creating and safeguarding a safe space for vulnerable people."*

*"Creating positive and useful spaces on a toxic, polluted internet."*

*"Providing safe and inclusive spaces for people to find connection and understanding."*

*"Creating positive online culture for people. Pushing back against the negative experiences."*

*"Keeping communities safe for people."*

# BENEFITS OF WORKING IN COMMUNITY

## VARIETY

Community management is a dynamic, evolving role that blends creativity, strategy, and people work. The interdisciplinary nature keeps things fresh, allowing professionals to apply diverse skills.

While it can be hard to keep up, community managers consistently report that the variety of their practice is one of the things they love about it.

*"The variety, creativity and people."*

*"There's so much range and scope - the industry continues to evolve."*

*"I like the interdisciplinary aspect. It's never boring and I'm able to use my skillset and experience to the fullest across multiple industries."*

*"I like all the different things I can do (e.g., supporting young people, creating content, reporting on data, looking at the tech side of things)"*

*"The cross-functional nature of the role, acting as an interface between customers and business, and between different business functions."*

*"Great variation as well as integration across the business, connected with Support, Marketing and Product."*



# ABOUT OUR COMMUNITIES



# TYPE OF COMMUNITY

There are five core types of community:

Interest

Location

Circumstance

Practice

Action

- Interest (e.g. brand, fan or product community)
- Location (e.g. a geographic community)
- Circumstance (e.g. peer support group with shared condition or life experience)
- Practice (e.g. learning community); and
- Action (e.g. activist community or social movement)

Some communities sit across these, though there is usually a dominant type.



Our 2024 results reveal a decline in **communities of practice** (from 37% in 2023 to 25% in 2024), though they are still the dominant type of community reported across Australian and New Zealand practitioners. Communities of interest have remained relatively stable, with only a slight decline.

Significantly, **communities of action have more than doubled** (from 4% to 10%), indicating a growing focus on collective activism or goal-oriented engagement. Communities of circumstance and location have also seen modest increases, which may reflect greater emphasis on shared life experiences or geographic connections. Communities of circumstance have continued to climb year-on-year: from 11% in 2022, to 17% in 2023, now 20% in 2024.

4% of respondents were uncertain which primary type of community they were managing (on par with 2023 data). Ambiguity around what a community is can create challenges for community professionals, as this knowledge informs strategy, goals, measurement and more.

# STRATEGY

## Strategic Focus with Room to Improve

The percentage of community managers working with a documented strategy has remained high in 2024, with **36% working to a strategy** that spans less than 12 months ahead and 23% working to a strategy with a horizon greater than one year. This marks a shift from 2023, when 47% worked to a strategy under 12 months, and 20% to a strategy over a year.

The number of community managers working with undocumented strategies has risen to 29% in 2024, compared to 20% in 2023. This may indicate that while many are adopting strategic planning, some still lack formalised frameworks.

The proportion of community managers reporting no strategy at all has remained steady at 13%, showing that while most have some form of strategy, there's still room to improve. Community managers with documented strategies are more likely to report higher compensation and positive community outcomes, including ROI.

	2024	2023	2022	2021
I work to a documented strategy (less than 12 months ahead).....	36%	47%	24%	20%
I work to a documented strategy with >1 yr horizon .....	23%	20%	9%	12%
I work to an undocumented strategy .....	29%	20%	14%	13%
There is no strategy that I'm aware of .....	13%	13%	11%	11%



# RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY

To understand how organisations conceptualise and orientate Community, we asked participants which statements best described their organisation's relationship to Community. They could select any options that applied to their scenario.



There appears to be a shift towards recognising Community as a more integral and strategic asset within organisations. The percentage of community managers reporting that "community is integral to the organisation" rose from 54% to 67%.

There is a notable decline in organisational perception of community as a direct driver of growth (38% to 17% year-on-year), along with decreases in the perception of community as a marketing or sales tool (39% to 26%, and 20% to 6% respectively).

These shifts may signal a welcome move away from seeing community management solely in terms of immediate business outcomes, reflecting a deeper understanding of community's broader, long-term value in fostering organisational engagement, innovation, and impact.

# SIZE

## Scaling Smart: a Shift to Mid-sizing

There has been a rise in the number of mid-sized communities (1,000 - 5,000 members), which grew from 12% in 2023 to 20% in 2024.

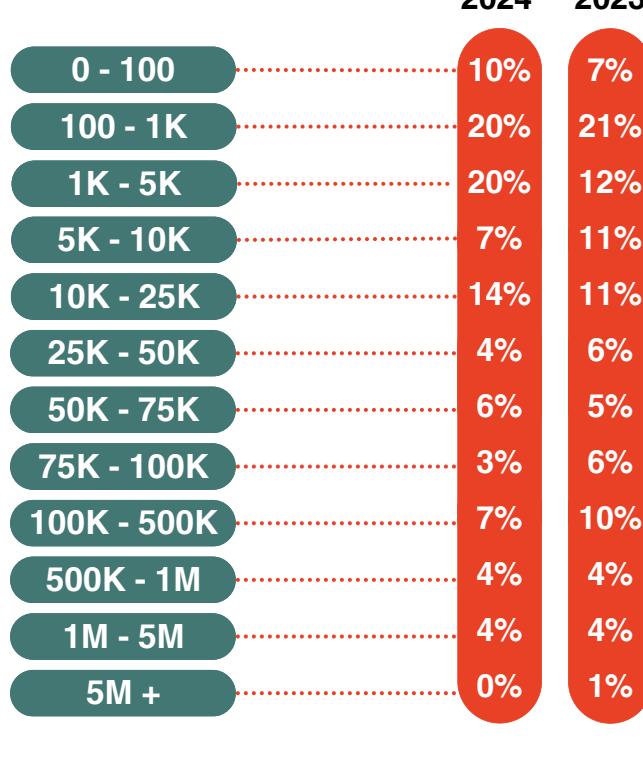
Smaller communities (0-100 members) also saw a slight increase, suggesting continued interest in more intimate, niche spaces.

Meanwhile, very large communities (500,000+) remained stable or declined, possibly reflecting the increasing challenges of managing large-scale engagement and moderation.

The smallest communities (0 - 100 members) were in Education, and Social Impact/Mission-Driven and Technology sectors. Education and Social Impact communities may start small due to targeted engagement, while Business/Entrepreneurial communities, such as those in the startup space, are often in early growth phases.

The largest online communities were in the Media, Government and Agnostic sectors. Media and Government often need to engage or gather large constituencies online, which is a likely factor.

### Approximately how many members or users are in your community?



The larger a community is, the more challenging it is for Sense of Community<sup>4</sup> factors to form and sustain<sup>5</sup> (though this is not always a priority for organisational owners). It's also important to note that 'big' is not always a goal - many communities don't have a purpose aligned with growth and scale.

<sup>4</sup> McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6–23. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629\(198601\)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I)

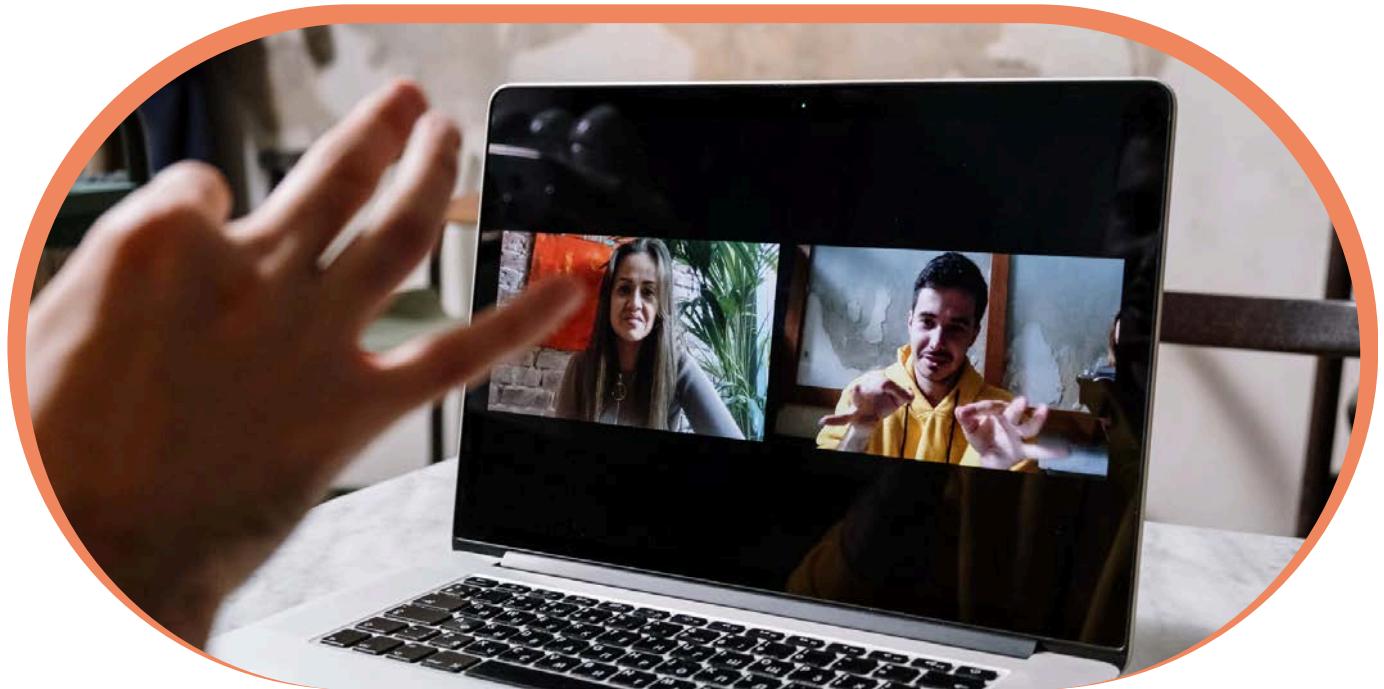
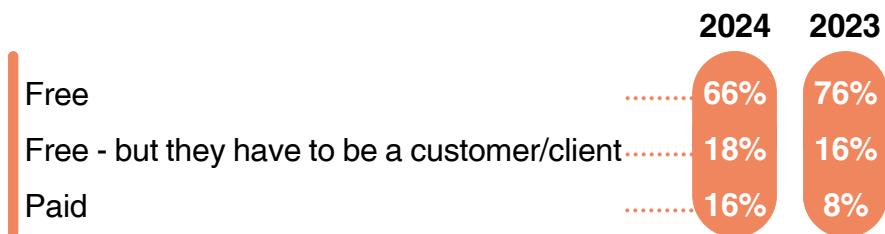
<sup>5</sup> Panek, E., Hollenbach, C., Yang, J., & Rhodes, T. (2018). The Effects of Group Size and Time on the Formation of Online Communities: Evidence From Reddit. *Social Media + Society*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118815908>

# FREE OR PAID?

Communities typically have some boundaries around access, which may include payment for membership, or an existing relationship.

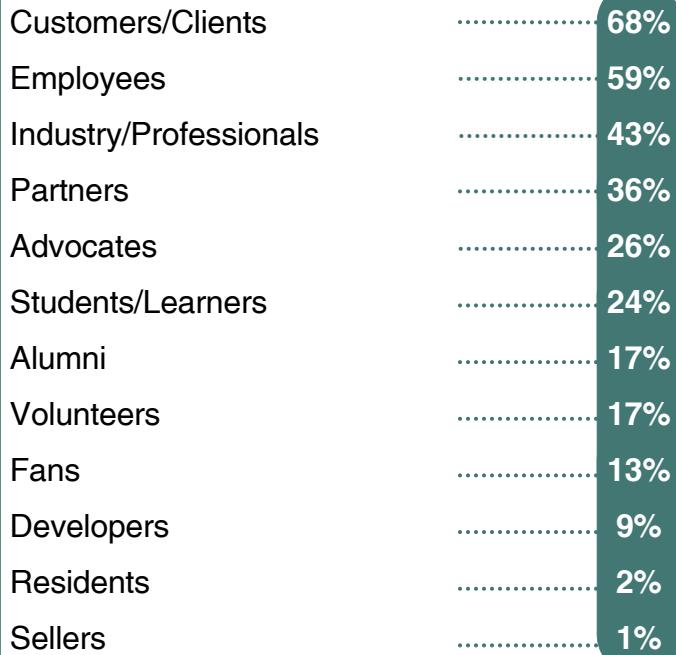
Though a majority of communities in our region are still Free to join, the **number of Paid communities year-on-year has doubled** (from 8 to 16%).

This shift suggests a growing recognition of the value that communities can offer, both in terms of exclusive content and tailored experiences, prompting organisations to monetise their communities.



# WHO PARTICIPATES

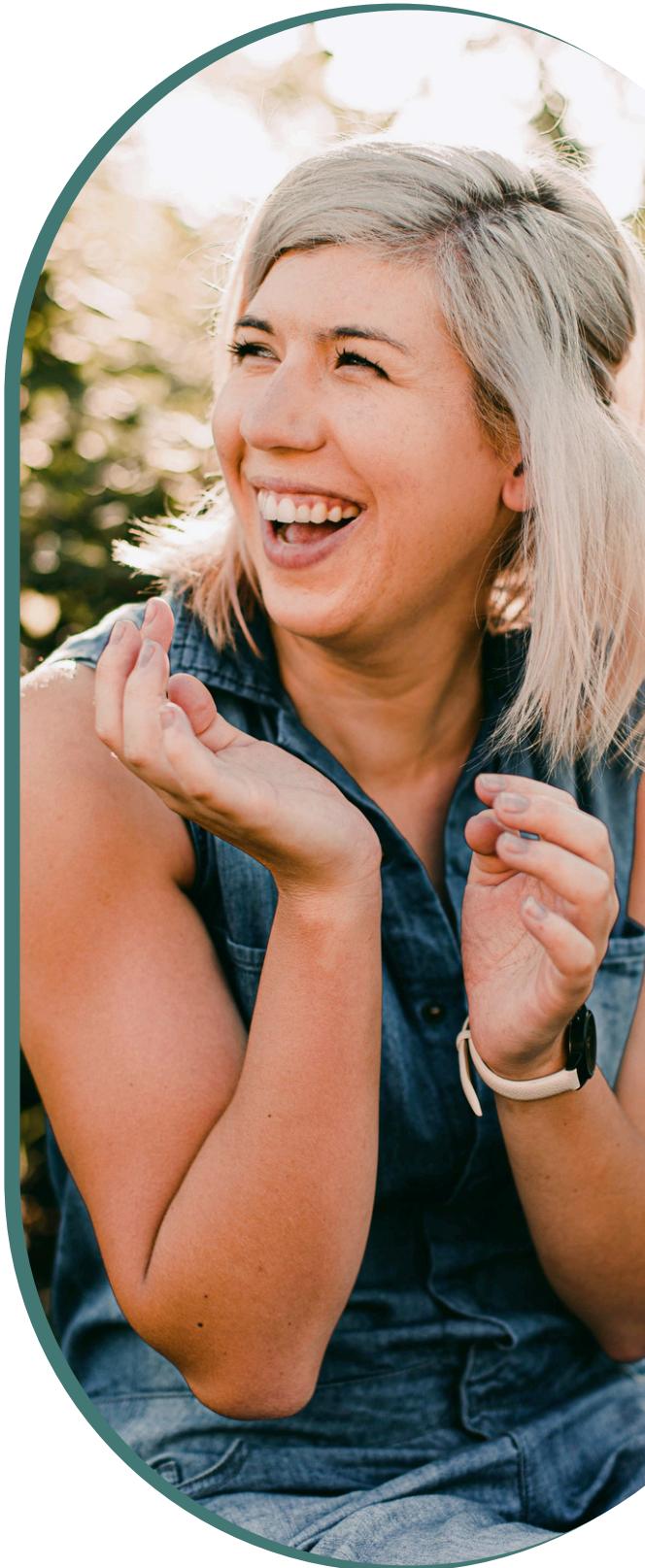
## Who participates in your community?



Community participation in Australia and New Zealand is primarily customer/client driven (68%), with employees (59%) also playing a significant role. Remember that the word 'client' is sometimes also applied to organisationally run support communities (such as SANE or Beyond Blue).

Industry professionals (43%) and partners (36%) show strong representation, reinforcing the value of communities in professional networking and collaboration.

Regardless of their purpose, communities need diverse types of people and social roles to succeed.



# PURPOSE

## From Brand to Impact

The top three organisational purposes for online communities in Australia are: **knowledge building/sharing, social impact and brand loyalty/retention.**

The biggest shift in organisational community purpose year-on-year is the decline of brand-driven objectives - brand awareness (30%) has dropped sharply from 54%, and support cost reduction (7%) and customer success (21%) have also declined. This suggests that fewer organisations are viewing community primarily as a marketing or cost-saving tool.

Instead, the focus has shifted towards knowledge-sharing (50%, up from 43%) and social impact (47%, up from 35%). Brand loyalty and retention (33%) remain steady, reinforcing the idea that community is still valuable for long-term engagement, even if immediate sales and conversions (6%) are deprioritised. The number of communities in Australia and New Zealand leveraging communities for research, ideation, innovation and product testing remains minimal (this is unchanged since this research began in 2015).

### What is the purpose of your community for your business or organisation?



# PURPOSE

The top reason people participate in communities is peer and social support (53%), which has grown from 47%, reinforcing the ongoing demand for connection and shared experiences. While networking remains a key driver (46%), learning and mastery have surged (36%, up from 25%), indicating a stronger focus on skill-building or expertise development.

Brand driven motivations are declining - access to products/services (20%, down from 39%) and product support (20%, down from 31%) have both dropped significantly.

On the rise is creativity and expression (11%, up from 5%), as well as knowledge-sharing (11%, up from 7%), pointing to a more participatory, co-creative community culture.

## What is the purpose of your community for your members/users?



# PLATFORMS

## Social Media Platforms in Decline

We provide respondents with a list of popular tools used across the market, and allow them to add any others not listed. We group these tools under three broad categories:

- #1 Community Platforms** ..... Software exclusively or primarily designed for the building and running of a community. Commonly stand alone and licensable, these are also sometimes referred to as 'owned' platforms, as they're not usually part of a wider social network or ecosystem.
- #2 Social Media Platforms** ..... Major social media platforms that community builders use to conduct community tasks (e.g. market their community), and in some cases, engage and manage aspects of their communities (e.g. Facebook Groups). These tools are not strictly, or even primarily, for community building, but may offer useful affordances. Owners usually have less control and agency, within the confines of a larger platform ecosystem.
- #3 Operational Tools** ..... Software and toolsets that are often used as part of community operations, such as newsletters, content creation, events, video conferencing and automation. They are usually not exclusively built for communities, though there is a growing number of these tools focused on enabling community-style experiences.



# PLATFORMS

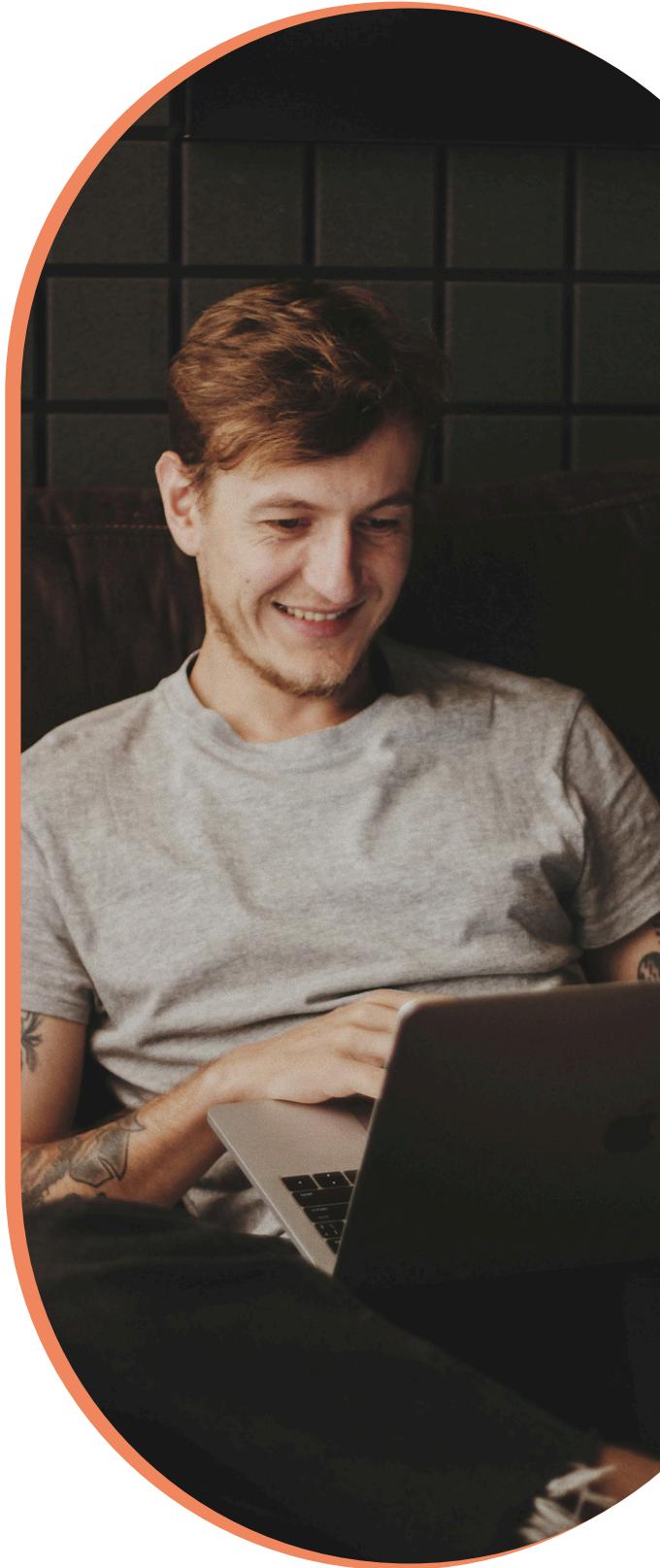
The biggest shift in community platform usage is the **gradual decrease in major social media platform usage** by community managers, and an increasing reliance on real-time, collaborative, and customisable tools. Older or less flexible owned platforms are continuing their year-on-year decline.

## What's gaining traction?

- **Slack** (22%, up from 9%) and **Microsoft Teams** (20%, up from 10%) are on the rise, reflecting a growing preference for professional, workplace-friendly community spaces.
- **Discord** usage has more than tripled year-on-year (17%, up from 5%), signaling increasing adoption in non-gaming community settings. Again, this platform is highly customisable and has excellent moderation toolsets, both important for community managers (and a growing rarity within larger social media spaces).
- **TikTok** (24%, up from 21%) and **WeChat** (13%, up from 8%) are gaining ground, possibly due to short-form video and regional engagement strategies.
- **Mighty Networks** (4%, up from 2%) and **Circle** (7%, up from 0%) have made gains in the owned platform space, suggesting a rise in interest for independent, owned community platforms.
- **Email** is going nowhere as a key community communication and engagement tool.

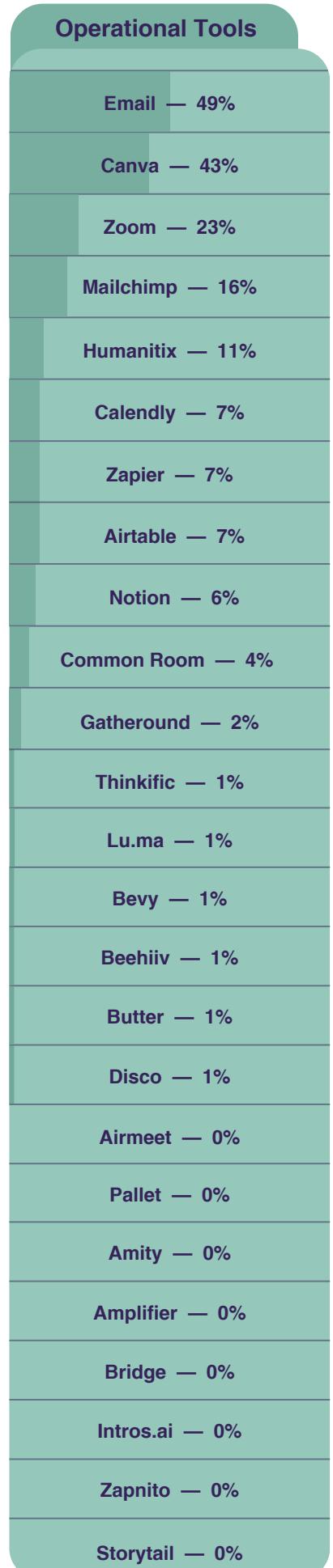
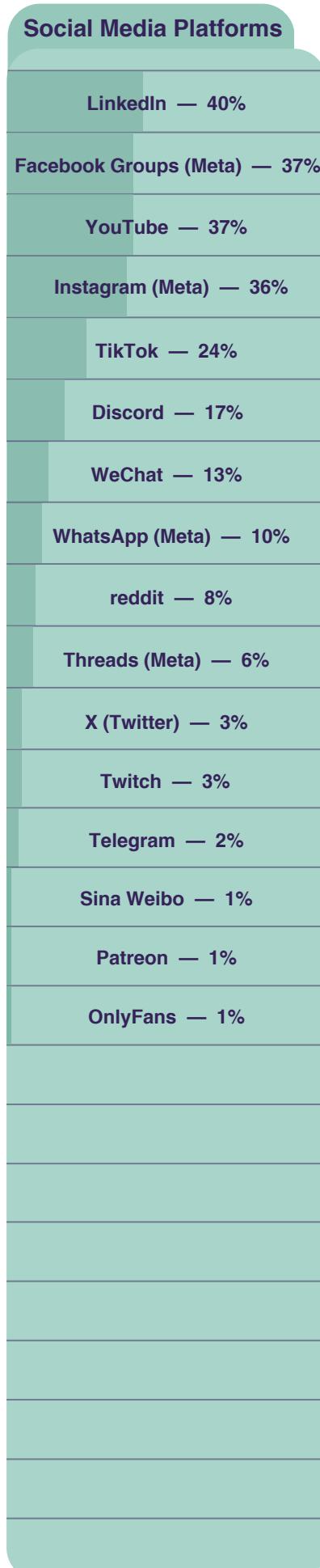
## What's fading?

- In the social media platform set, **Threads** (6%, down from 17%) and **X/Twitter** (3%, down from 8%) continue to see significant declines, likely due to ongoing instability and volatility.
- **Higher Logic** (now at 2%, down from 7%) has fallen well out of favour as an owned platform, further underscoring the global trend away from rigid and dated software.
- Usage of **Facebook Groups** (37%, down from 41%) and **YouTube** (37%, down from 40%) reveals that while still used, legacy social media-based communities are seeing a gradual decline, possibly due to moderation issues and the algorithmic whims of their owner-operators.



# PLATFORMS

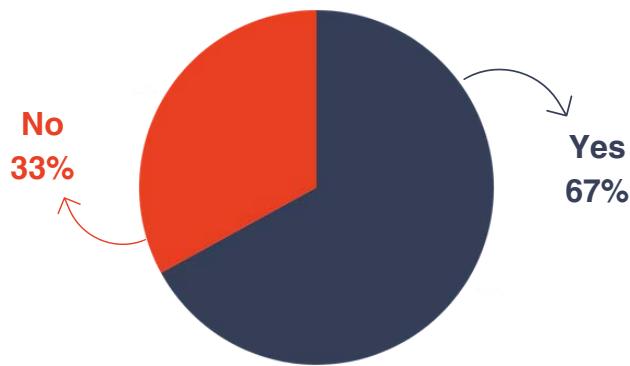
Which platforms does your community use?



# PLATFORMS

We asked whether community managers were using a separate customer relationship management (CRM) tool for their communities. A majority (67%) use a CRM - up from 56% in 2023.

**Do you use a CRM for your community?**



**How many platforms do you use (approximately) to manage your community?**

	2024	2023
5+ platforms	30%	39%
4 platforms	19%	10%
1 platform	19%	18%
3 platforms	16%	20%
2 platforms	17%	13%

**82% of community managers use more than one platform** to manage their community.

Community managers use multiple platforms to meet diverse member needs, mitigate risks, and ensure accessibility, as no single platform serves all contexts or styles equally.

This approach enhances discoverability, supports varied content and moderation strategies, and safeguards community continuity amid platform shifts.

# REGULATORY AWARENESS

Community management (especially online components) demands awareness of key legislation and regulation.

Since 2021, this report has explored the state of community manager regulatory awareness, to help identify gaps between knowledge and compliance responsibilities and to track the regulatory considerations of the role. This year we have expanded the list of regulations included (and stipulated the area of community management they impact) to improve insights.



Community professionals are **more aware than ever of key online safety and content laws**, with 73% now familiar with Copyright/IP regulations and 63% aware of the 2021 Australian Online Safety Act (up from 55% in 2023). Awareness of the e-Safety Commissioner's role in Australia (70%) also increased, highlighting growing engagement with official guidance and reporting mechanisms.

However, knowledge gaps persist in key areas - **only 39% are familiar with hate speech laws, despite the rise in online abuse**, and disinformation regulation awareness has dropped (from 28% to 23%), even as misinformation remains one of the biggest moderation and community challenges. Notably, awareness of the Voller ruling (37%) has dropped from 50%, suggesting waning attention to legal liability for user-generated content.

The decline in those selecting "None of the above" (from 25% to 10% year-on-year) suggests an improvement in regulatory literacy overall, but with AI-driven misinformation and a roll back of platform safeguards, ongoing education will be essential.

*ACM offers training and resources to improve regulatory literacy amongst community managers and moderators in our region.*

# MODERATING COMMUNITIES

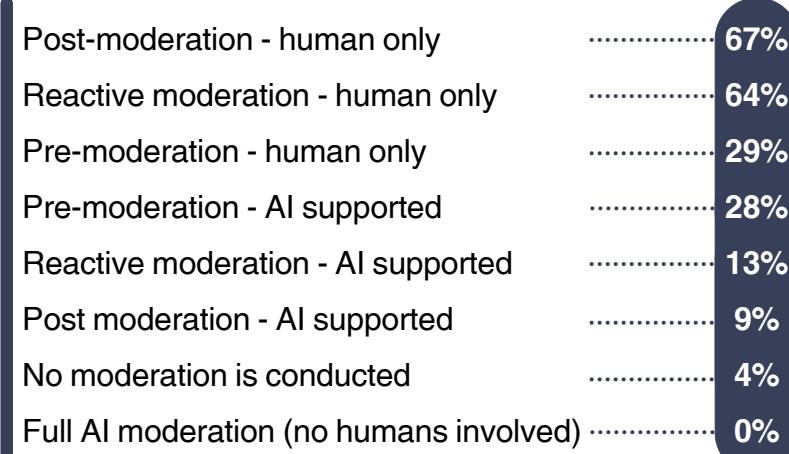
Moderation is a crucial part of online community management, necessary to both guard against risk, establish and codify culture, and incentivise constructive participant behaviours. In Australia it is also a regulatory necessity, as community owners (including non-professionals) can incur liability for the actions of their users.

## Glossary:

**Pre-moderation:** Reviewing content before it is live, assessing it against guidelines or standards and taking any relevant action.

**Reactive moderation:** Responding to reports/flags/issues raised, then assessing content or behaviour against guidelines or standards and taking any relevant action.

**Post-moderation:** Systematically reviewing content or behaviour after it is online, then assessing it against guidelines or standards and taking any relevant action.



Hybrid approaches to moderation (i.e. incorporating reactive and post-moderation) remain the most common amongst Australian and New Zealand community managers. However, both post-moderation (67%) and reactive moderation (64%) have slightly declined year-on-year, suggesting a **slow but noticeable shift towards AI-assisted moderation**.

Pre-moderation with AI support (28%, up from 17%) has seen the biggest increase, indicating that more community managers are leveraging AI to filter content before it reaches their users.

There is a welcome drop in communities undertaking no moderation (4%, down from 6%) suggests that more organisations may be taking safety seriously. While AI can be useful, human judgment remains the gold standard for safety and governance.

# MODERATION ISSUES

Respondents were asked to identify the most common moderation issues they deal with in their communities.

	2024	2023	2022
Misinformation	58%	61%	25%
General social conflict	57%	58%	29%
Spam (including AI)	47%	48%	18%
Hate speech	40%	35%	10%
Incivility	39%	40%	10%
Microaggressions	38%	48%	21%
Threats of self-harm	29%	30%	6%
Misleading advertising or advice	29%	28%	12%
Trolling	26%	51%	15%
Defamation	25%	35%	11%
Breaching of PII* or sensitive information	27%	26%	10%
Bullying	16%	20%	7%
Harassment	14%	19%	8%
Copyright	11%	15%	8%
Threats of harm to others	10%	16%	4%
Doxing	1%	5%	N/A
No common issues yet	3%	2%	N/A
CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material)	0%	1%	N/A

\*Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

# MODERATION ISSUES

## Misinformation Reigns Supreme

The biggest issues facing those moderating online communities across Australia and New Zealand remain **misinformation** (58%) and **social conflict** (57%), though both have stabilised slightly since 2023 after a dramatic rise in 2022. **Spam** (47%) continues to climb, likely fueled by AI-generated content.

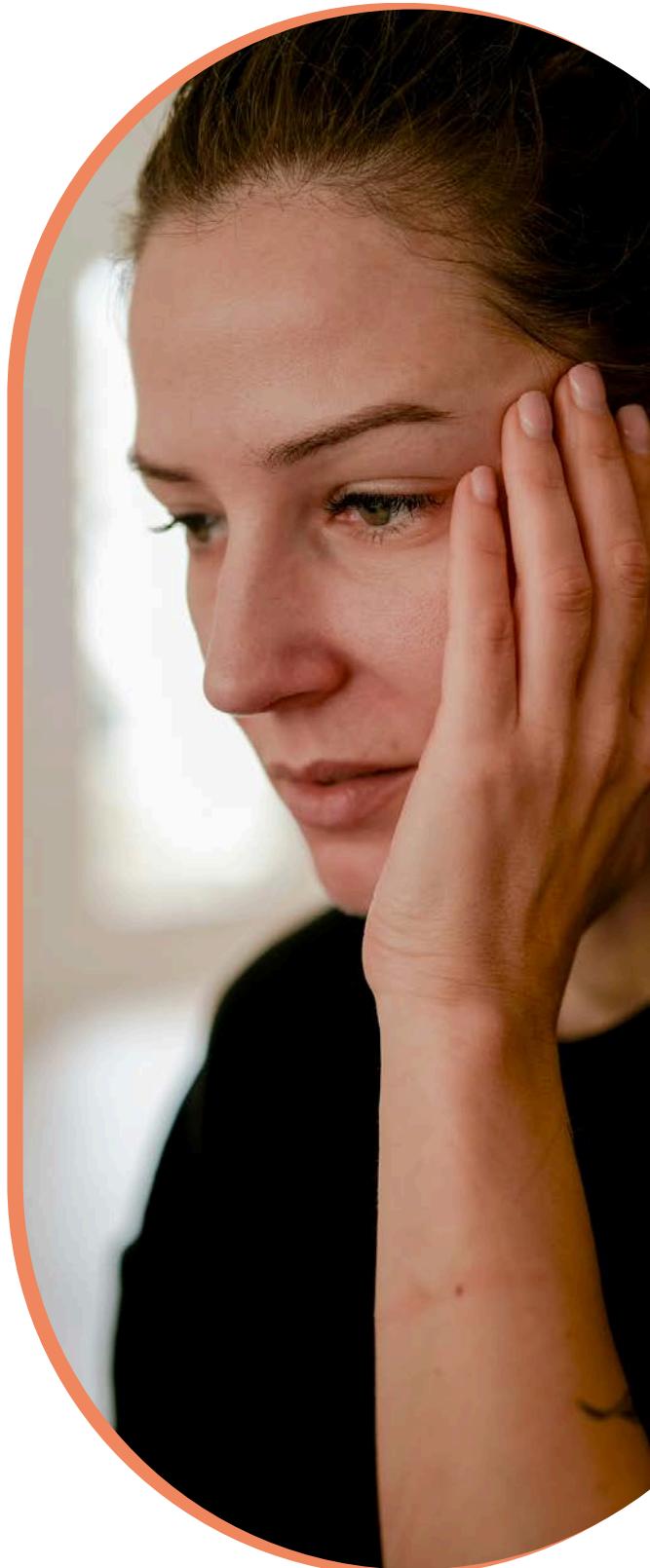
**Reports of dealing with hate speech have quadrupled since 2022** (10% to 40%), reflecting the growing challenge of managing extremist rhetoric and polarised discussions. These are likely to accelerate as many social media platforms are moving to reduce or outright remove trust and safety provisions.

Incivility (39%) also remains persistent, while privacy concerns are on the rise, with breaches of PII\* (27%) slightly increasing.

Meanwhile, the most severe online harms, such as threats of harm (10%) and doxxing (1%), are less common but still require vigilance. CSAM reports dropped to 0%, though underreporting and platform-specific trends could play a role here.

Threats of self-harm by participants have dipped negligibly year-on-year, and still remain a serious issue (after a significant spike in 2023) for those moderating online communities, and community members impacted (which may include other members who share community managers' vicarious trauma).

\*Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

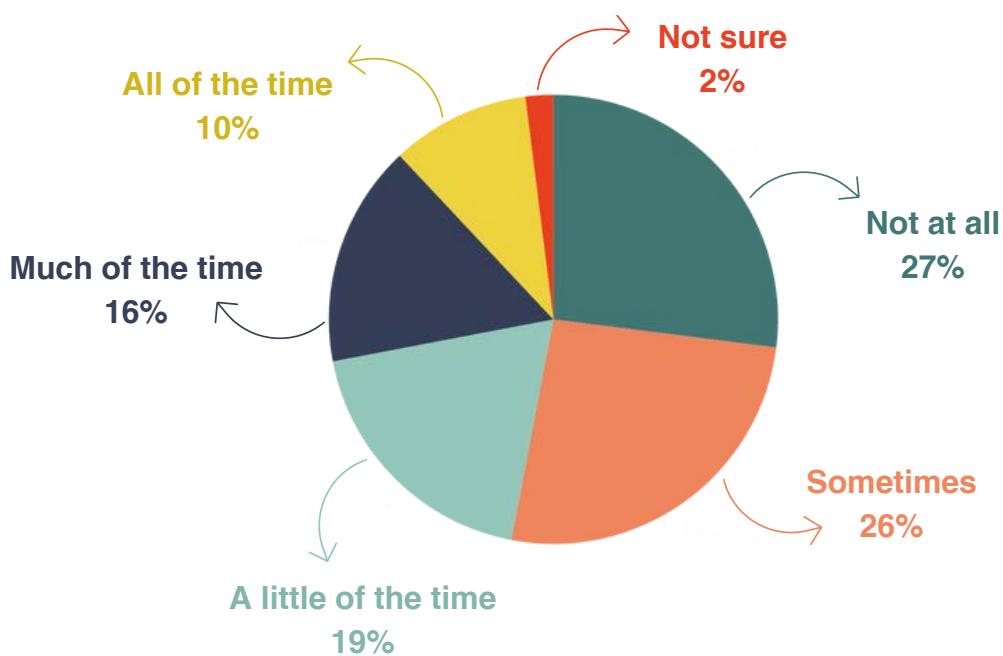


# MODERATION SPOTLIGHT

This year we have included several additional questions in association with our research partner, the **Digital Ethnographic Research Centre (RMIT)**, to better understand the moderation challenges and impacts of those managing online communities in Australia and New Zealand. These questions were mandatory and all respondents completed them.

## Exposure to Harms

**Do you feel that your role over-exposes you to online abuse, harassment, trolling, disinformation and other problematic content?**



**71% per cent of respondents reported over exposure to harms at least some of the time** in their work. 10% reported exposure all of the time.

The nature of exposure and specific harms is impacted by many factors, including core tasks of the community role (e.g. online moderator versus offline community events manager, the industry it sits within (e.g. public broadcaster covering news, versus circumstantial peer support communities), and the platforms community is managed upon (e.g. social media versus private, owned platforms with onboarding boundaries and robust moderation toolsets).

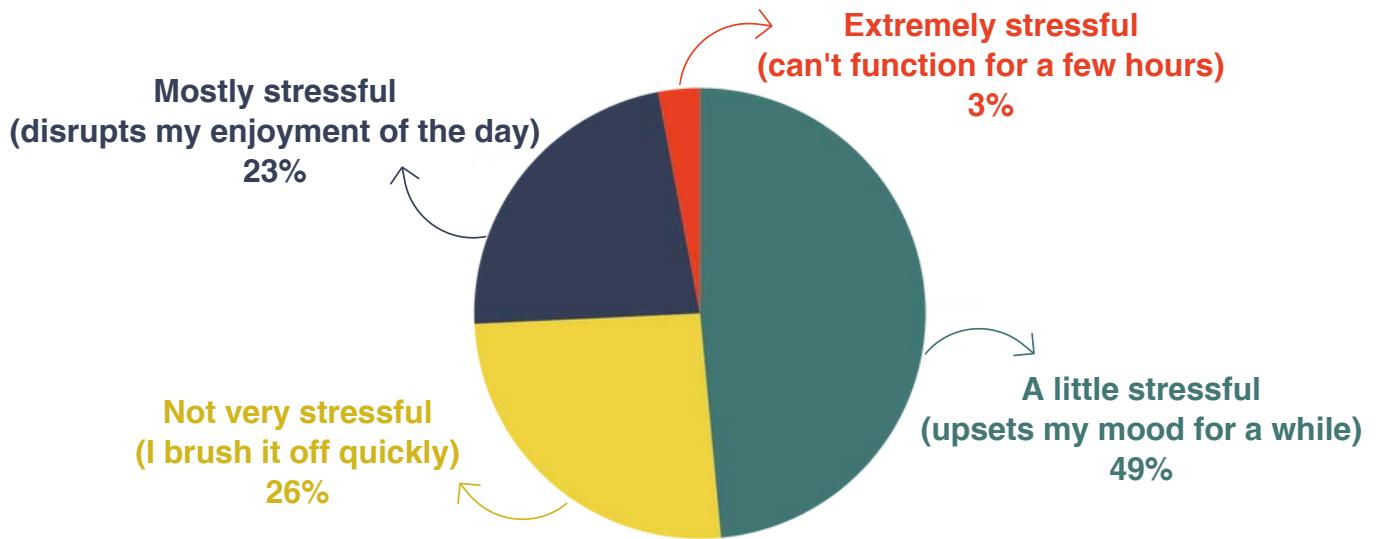
Analysis of full results revealed the following additional takeaways:

- Those using social media platforms such as Meta (Facebook, Instagram) generally reported higher exposure to harms than those using private or owned community platforms.
- Education, Technology, and Social Impact industries may carry higher risks of online harm exposure. These industries often deal with sensitive discussions, activism, or public-facing work.
- Burnout is a common issue among those reporting exposure to online harms.

# MODERATION SPOTLIGHT

## Level of Stress and Disruption

I find that encountering instances of online abuse, harassment, disinformation and other problematic content to be:



Encountering online abuse, harassment, and disinformation impacts most community professionals to some degree, with 49% experiencing mild but noticeable stress and 23% reporting significant disruption to their day.

While 26% claim to brush it off quickly, a small but concerning 3% find it debilitating for hours.

Community managers in the Social Impact/Mission-driven sector reported moderate to high stress responses. These sectors often involve advocacy, public discourse, and contentious issues, increasing the risk of targeted abuse.

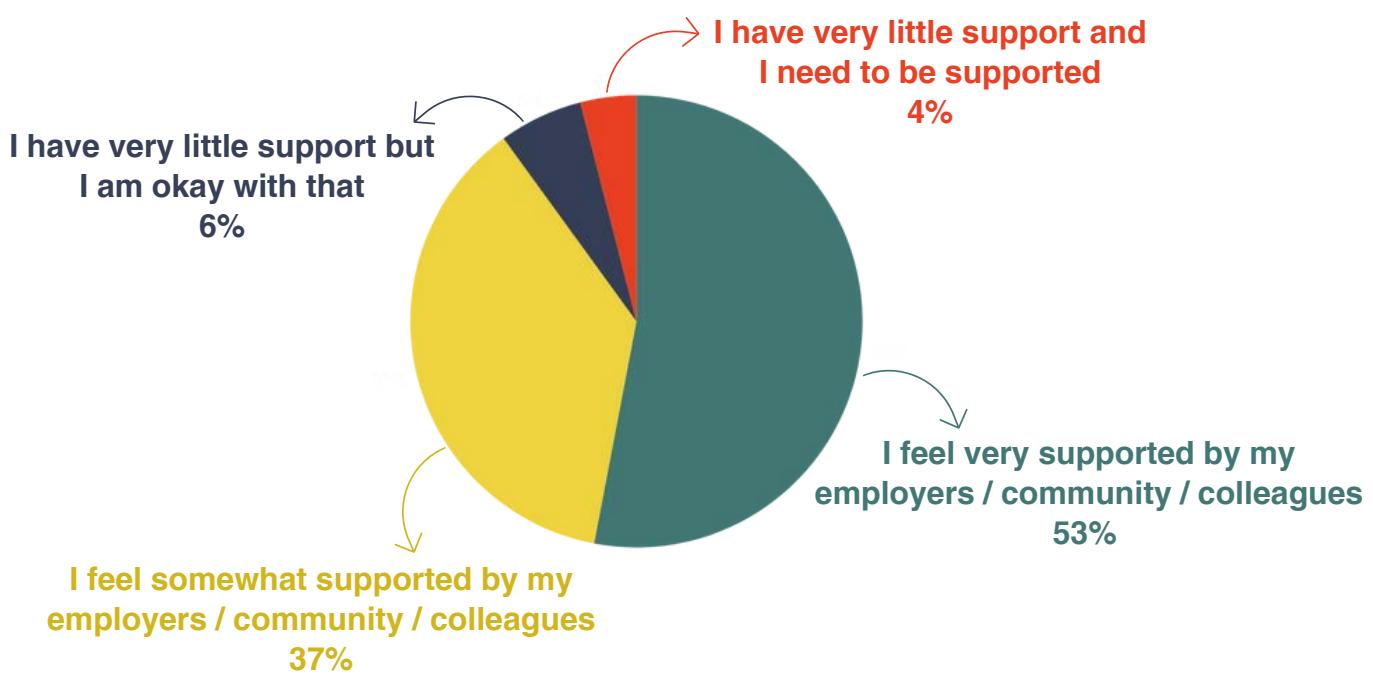
Those working in Education and Technology reported mild to moderate disruption. One respondent from an agnostic (multi-industry) role also reported moderate exposure and mild stress, reminding us that generalist roles are not immune to online harms.

# MODERATION SPOTLIGHT

## Level of Support

We polled respondents around their levels of institutional, peer and community support. Encouragingly, a **majority feel very supported**, and a large minority feel at least somewhat supported.

**How supported do you feel by your employers, community and workplace peers when encountering or dealing with stressful problematic content such as online abuse, harassment, disinformation?**



Those reporting higher exposure to online harms were more likely to answer with feeling only "somewhat supported" rather than "very supported."

The data also reveals that mission-driven and social impact sectors seem to provide more structured support, even in high-exposure environments.

Meanwhile, **hybrid workers reported better support than fully remote workers**, suggesting room for improvement around these concerns when community managers are working at a distance.

# AGE OF COMMUNITY

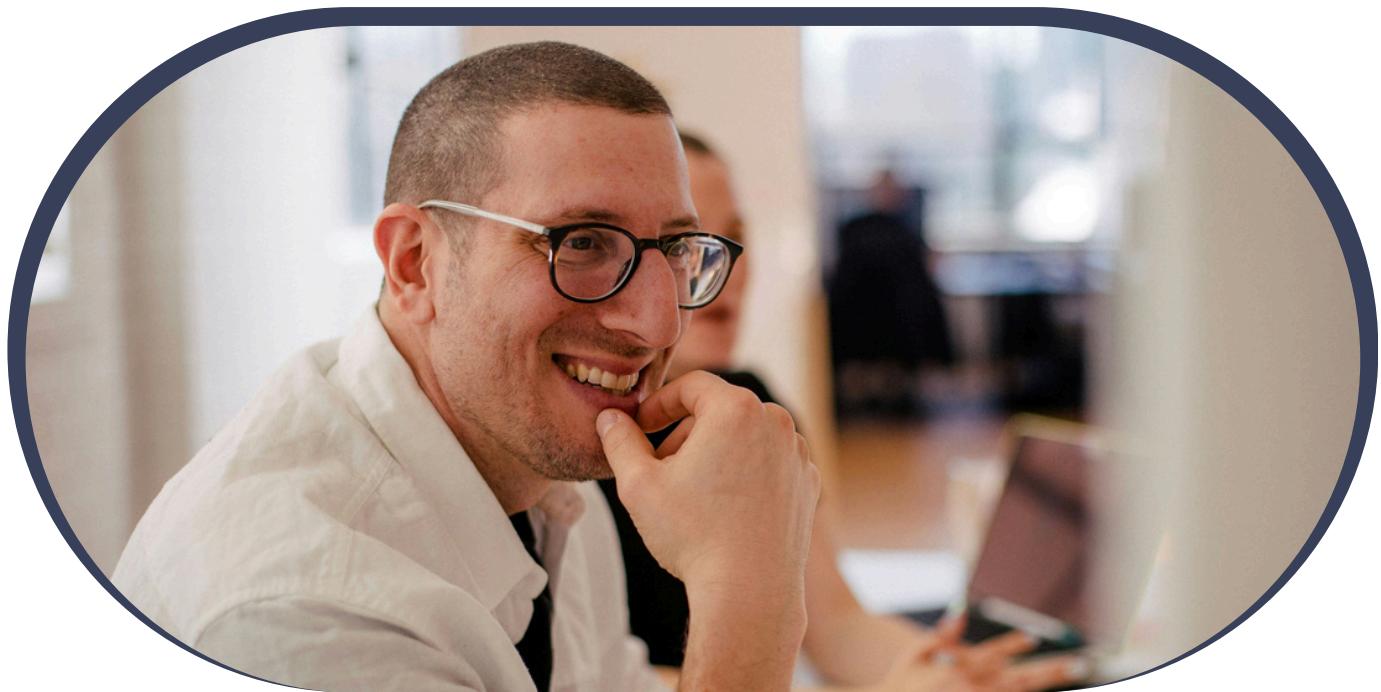
## Communities are Sustaining, Despite Challenges

In line with results from the past four years, the majority of Australian and New Zealand communities (57%) have been active for five years or more (though this gap has shrunk slightly - from 60% to 57% year-on-year).

Community life-cycle<sup>6</sup> research shows that most communities require at least 2-3 years before maturity, and need skilled, consistent community management to sustain over time.

There was a **small increase in the number of new communities started in 2024** (from 9% to 10% year-on-year).

### How long has your community been running?



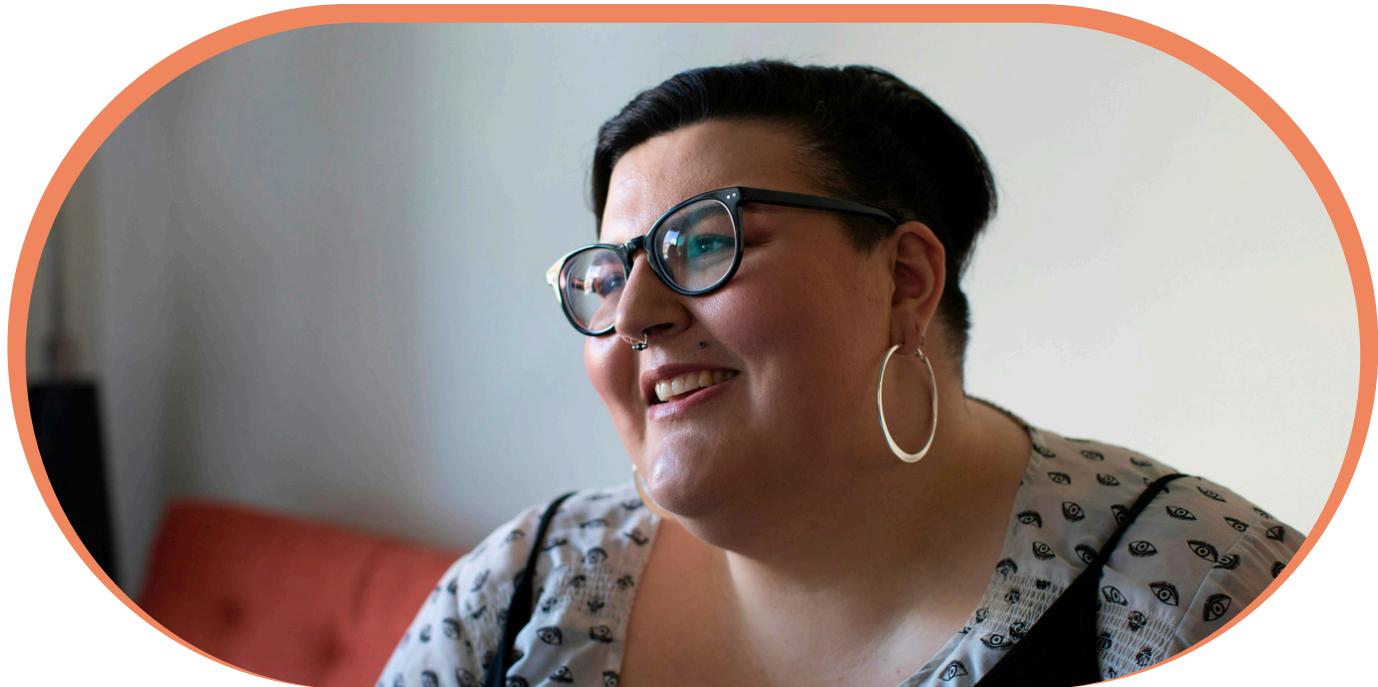
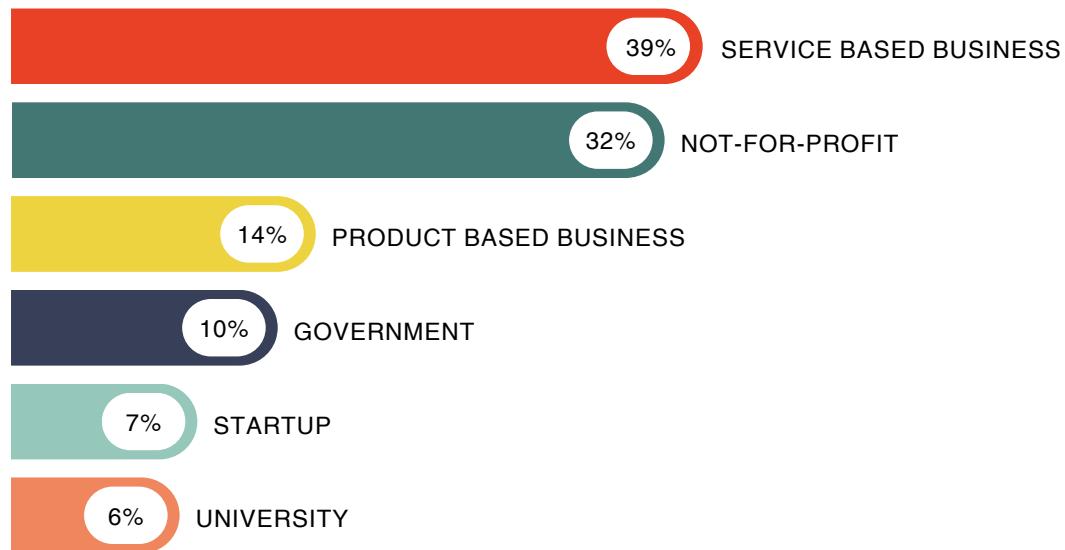
# INDUSTRY SECTOR

## Service Based Communities on the Rise

We have seen strong year-on-year growth in community management within service-based businesses (39%, up from 12%), suggesting that more companies are investing in community as a key customer engagement and support strategy.

Not-for-profits (32%, up from 26%) also saw an increase, reinforcing the continued importance of community in social impact and mission-driven work around Australia and New Zealand.

Government facilitated communities have seen the biggest decline, which is also reflected in other data points through this survey. This potentially reflects shifts in funding, priorities, or resource allocation.



# INDUSTRY SECTOR

## Wellbeing Focus on the Rise

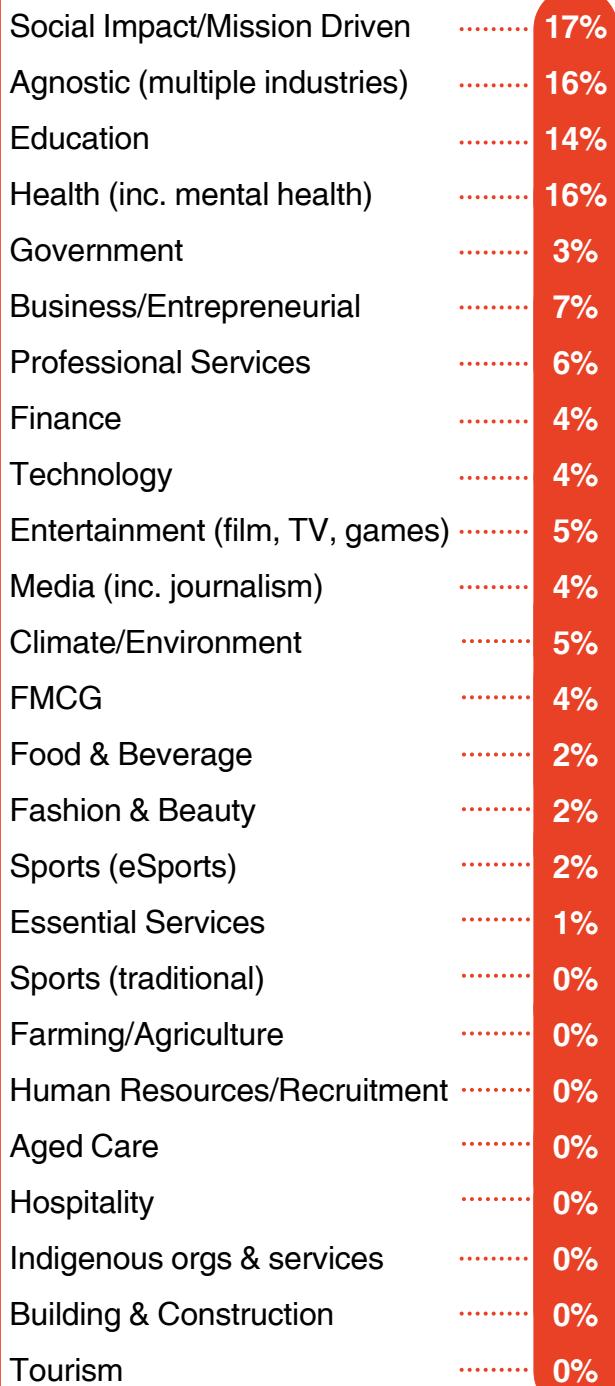
We asked respondents more detail about their industry sector.

The biggest shift in industry representation this year is the rise of Health and Mental Health (16%, up from 11%), signaling a **growing focus on support-driven, well-being-oriented communities**.

Meanwhile, government-run communities have sharply declined (3%, down from 10%), possibly reflecting budget cuts, shifting priorities, or reduced public sector investment in digital engagement.

Education (14%) and mission-driven communities (17%) remain strong, reinforcing their longstanding role in community-based initiatives.

While technology, finance, and media have stayed relatively stable, industries like climate/environment (5%) are emerging as small but growing community spaces.



# BUDGETS

## More Community Teams Operating on Less

More community teams are working with tiny budgets. A huge 33% now operate with less than \$10K annually, up from 23% last year. Mid-range budgets (\$26K - \$250K) dropped across the board, while \$1M+ budgets plummeted from 5% to just 1% - a sign that large-scale investment in community programs may be drying up.

At the top end, there's some silver lining: More teams now have \$500K - \$1M to work with (rising from 2% to 4%). But overall, the trend is clear: **community budgets are getting squeezed, and teams are being asked to do more with less.**

**The top industries investing in communities are: Education and Technology.** This is somewhat consistent with the past four annual State of Community Management Report, however Government has fallen off this list.

**What is the annual budget for community operations in your organisation (exc. staff)?**



# MEASURING COMMUNITIES

## Measures Most Commonly Used by Community Managers

Measures used to track the progress or success of a community always vary according to community type (e.g. customer service communities may not measure social impact but may measure questions answered). Some measures are used more widely across community settings and contexts (such as Active Members or Community Health Checks).

The most valued community metrics in Australia and New Zealand focus on engagement and long-term value, with retention/loyalty, active members, and conversion to active membership ranking high.

Quality of interactions, social sentiment, and community health indicate that measuring the emotional and relational impact of communities is just as important as participation numbers.

*Ranked most used to least (1 is most used)*

- #1 Retention/Loyalty
- #2 Active Members
- #3 Conversion to active member
- #4 Questions asked & answered
- #5 Quality of interactions
- #6 Social impact/outcomes
- #7 Community health
- #8 Social sentiment
- #9 Cases/Issues resolved
- #10 Event attendance



# MEASURING COMMUNITIES

## What Benefits are Communities Generating?

Starting in 2022 we have polled community managers to specify the types of benefits their communities were creating, in order to learn more about the way practitioners frame and articulate value in their work. The 2024 results show **impact growing across the board**.



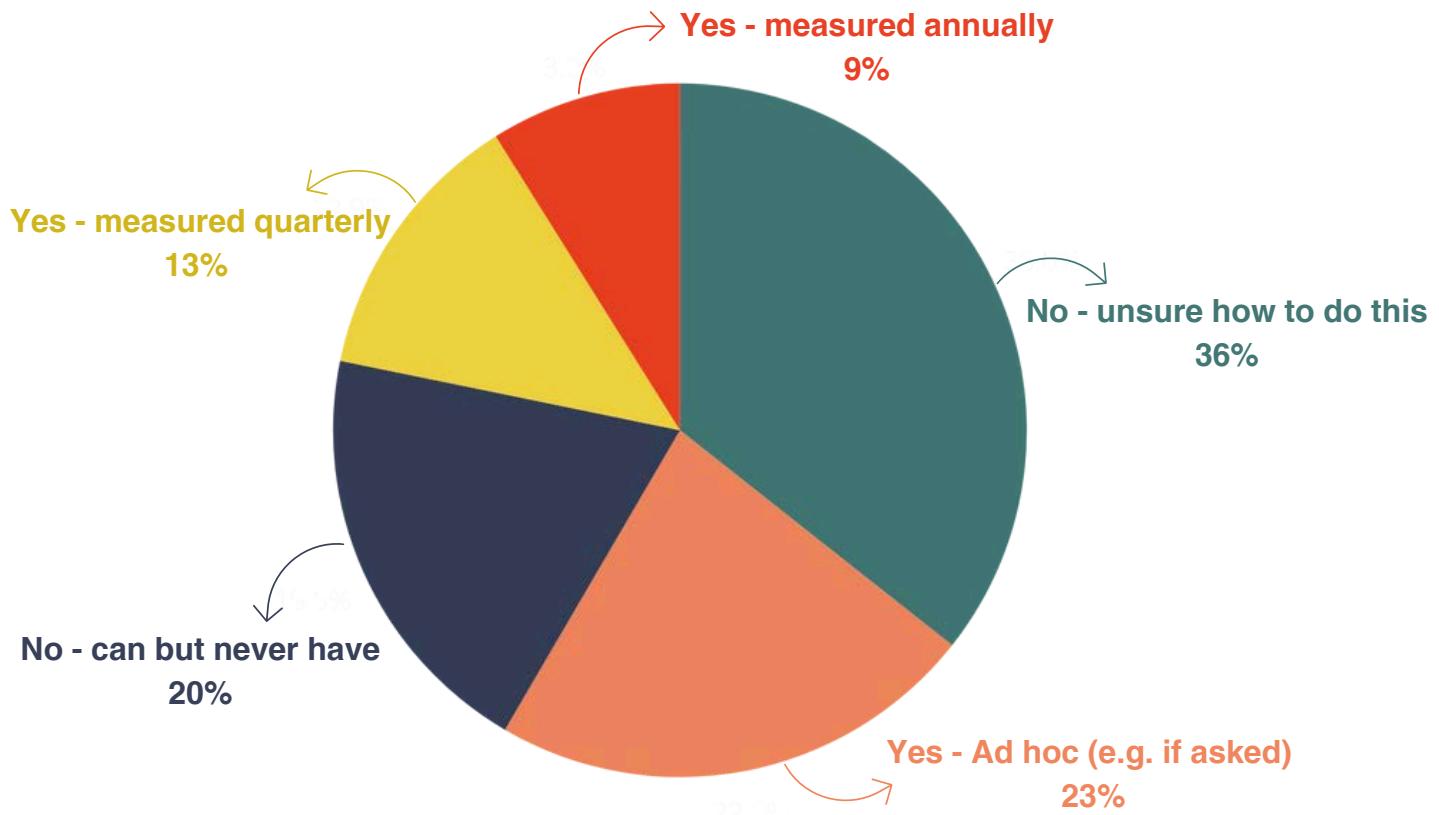
Compared to 2023 there have been notable increases in belonging (up 7%), knowledge-building (up 6%), and skill development (up 5%)—suggesting a growing focus on community as a learning and support hub. Peer support (up 11%) and safe spaces (up 12%) saw major jumps, indicating a heightened emphasis on trust and psychological safety.

Social impact (up 12%) and wellbeing (up 13%) surged year-on-year suggesting a **growing commitment to mission-driven and member-centric outcomes**. Business benefits like referrals (down 16%), visibility (down 10%), and efficiency (down 2%) slide backwards year-on-year. This suggests we might be seeing a shift towards deeper engagement, personal growth, and emotional wellbeing as primary community outcomes - which will likely create friction within financially driven organisations who may not value these as a priority over more traditionalist ROI benefits.

# ROI & ECONOMIC VALUE

## Measurement Still a Struggle

**Do you currently measure ROI (Return on Investment) for your community?**



**45% of community managers report that they are measuring Return On Investment (ROI), at least in some manner. Only 21% are measuring this with regularity (annually or quarterly).**

There has been an increase in the number of community managers reporting that they do not know how to measure ROI (up from 31% to 36% year-on-year), and those that know how but never have for their current community (up from 11% to 20%).

Measuring and communicating ROI to a hosting organisation is an important way to validate community management work, and argue effectively for resources, training or other needs.

# ROI & ECONOMIC VALUE

## A Polarising Financial Impact

If you are measuring ROI in dollar terms, how valuable is your community to your organisation (annually)?

	2024	2023
<\$10K	27%	9%
\$10-50K	8%	9%
\$50-100K	20%	18%
\$100-250K	7%	14%
\$250-500K	7%	9%
\$500-1M	20%	9%
\$1M-5M	7%	8%
>\$5M	7%	5%

The financial value of online communities is polarising in 2024.

While more organisations now value their community at less than \$10K annually (up to 27% from 9% year-on-year), there's also a big jump in high-value communities (\$500K - \$1M), rising from 9% to 20%. This suggests that while some companies struggle to justify ROI, others are seeing significant financial impact.

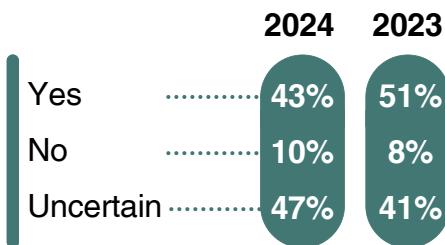
Meanwhile, mid-range valuations (\$100K - \$250K) dropped sharply from 14% to 7%, indicating that **most communities are either becoming high-value drivers or struggling to prove their worth.**

THE  
FUTURE



# FIVE YEARS TIME – 2029

**Do you think you'll still be working in Community in 5 years time?**



Nearly half of respondents reported that they were Uncertain whether they'll remain in the field (47% - up from 41% last year). There are also fewer community managers convinced they will remain in the practice (only 43% versus 51% a year prior).

Among those who said they don't expect to work in Community in five years, the most common reasons cited were:

- The rise of AI
- Burnout and fatigue
- Lack of senior roles
- Toxicity of online spaces

**"The internet is rapidly changing and I don't foresee human led CMs invested in long term."**

**"Not enough senior gigs in the Australian market for community, and I don't want to move overseas."**

**"Too difficult to keep up with trends and pace of change in a small under-resourced organisation."**

**"Community has come to mean almost nothing for most organisations. This never changes."**

The likelihood of leaving or staying in community management varies by tenure and age group:

- Younger (20-29) and less experienced professionals (less than 5 years in the field) report a greater likelihood of leaving - 14% of those saying "No" are in this age group, compared to just 3% who say they expect to stay.
- Mid-career professionals (30-39) with tenures from 5 to 10 years have mixed feelings, based on individualised career experiences.
- Older practitioners (40-49) with tenures from 5-10 years are the most committed - with 40% of those answering Yes to staying.
- Older professionals (50-59) with tenures spanning 10+ years are the most Uncertain—39% of those Uncertain about staying are in this group, suggesting either career shifts or retirement.

# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

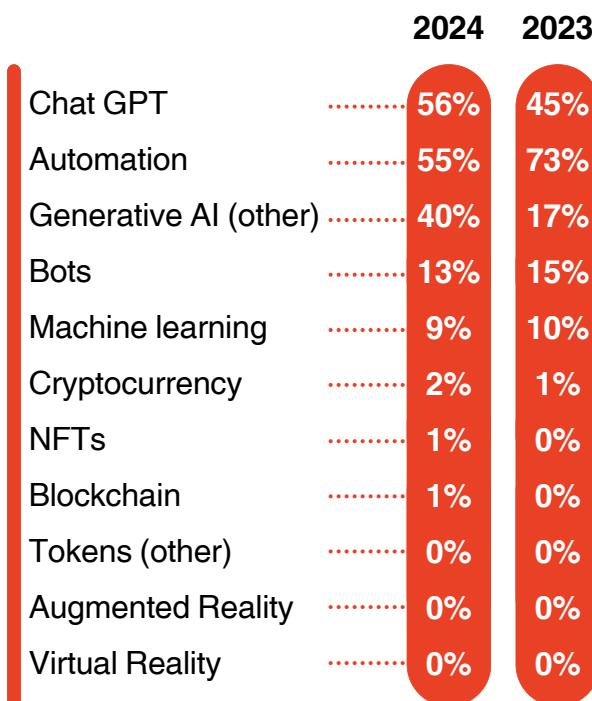
## The Evolving Toolset

There has been a significant pivot toward AI as a core enabler of efficiency in community management.

The data highlights the growing adoption of generative AI tools like ChatGPT by community practitioners, with usage rising from 45% in 2023 to 56% in 2024. The notable rise in the use of other generative AI tools (from 17% to 40%) suggests that **professionals are experimenting with a broader range of technologies to enhance their work.**

The decline in the use of automation (73% to 55%) might indicate a shift from traditional automated processes to more sophisticated, AI-driven automated processes. It could also point to the fact that community managers have learned that simple automated responses aren't sufficient to build authentic, meaningful connections in most settings.

Technologies like blockchain, cryptocurrency, NFTs, AR, and VR remain low and stagnant, likely due to unclear use cases, high costs or limited accessibility. Bot usage and machine learning are stable year-on-year.

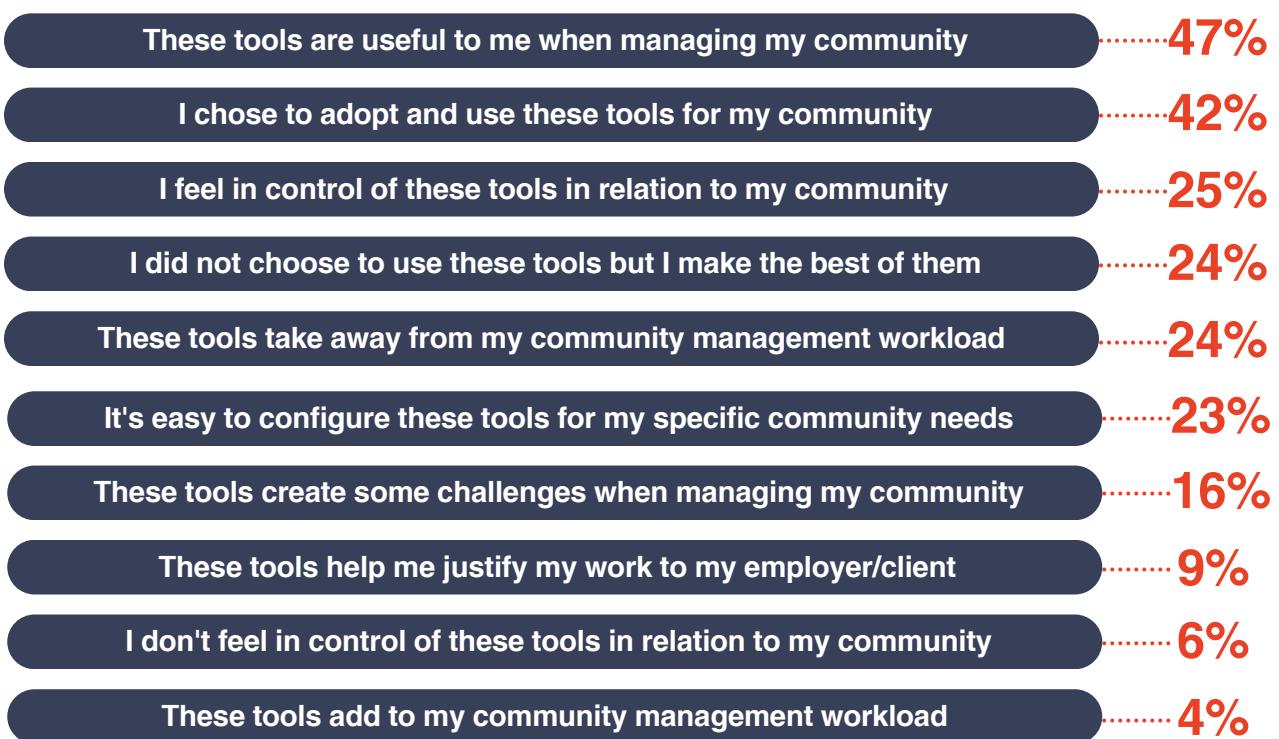


# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

## AI Spotlight

To better understand the rise of AI in community management practice, this year we asked two spotlight questions around its use and application, and the relationship of community managers to these tools.

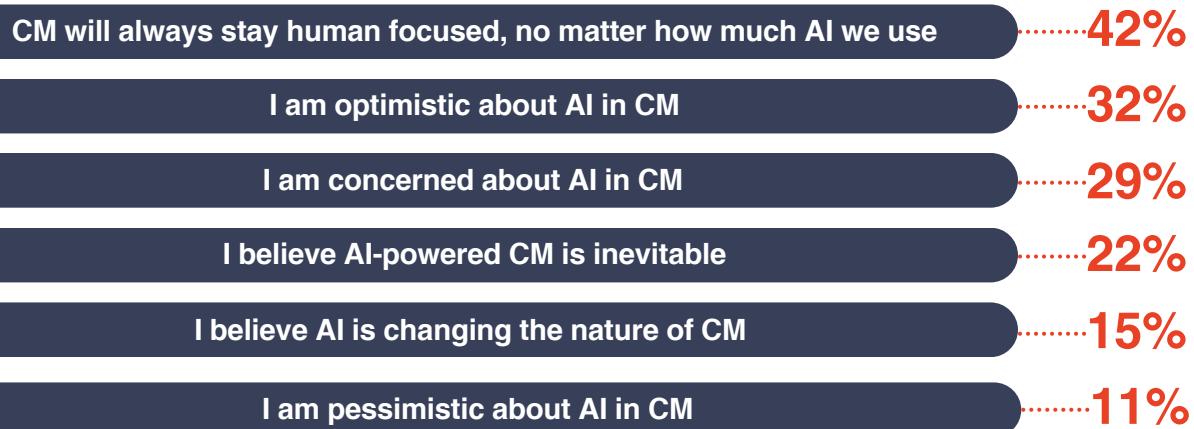
**If you use any kind of AI in your work (bots, algorithms, generative AI, automation, machine learning), which of the following statements is the most accurate:**



# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

## AI Spotlight

Which of the following is most true for you about AI and community management?



AI tools are increasingly embedded in community management workflows, with 47% of professionals finding them useful and 42% actively choosing to adopt them. However, **only 25% feel fully in control of AI in their communities**, and just 23% find these tools easy to configure for their specific needs - highlighting ongoing challenges with customisation and governance.

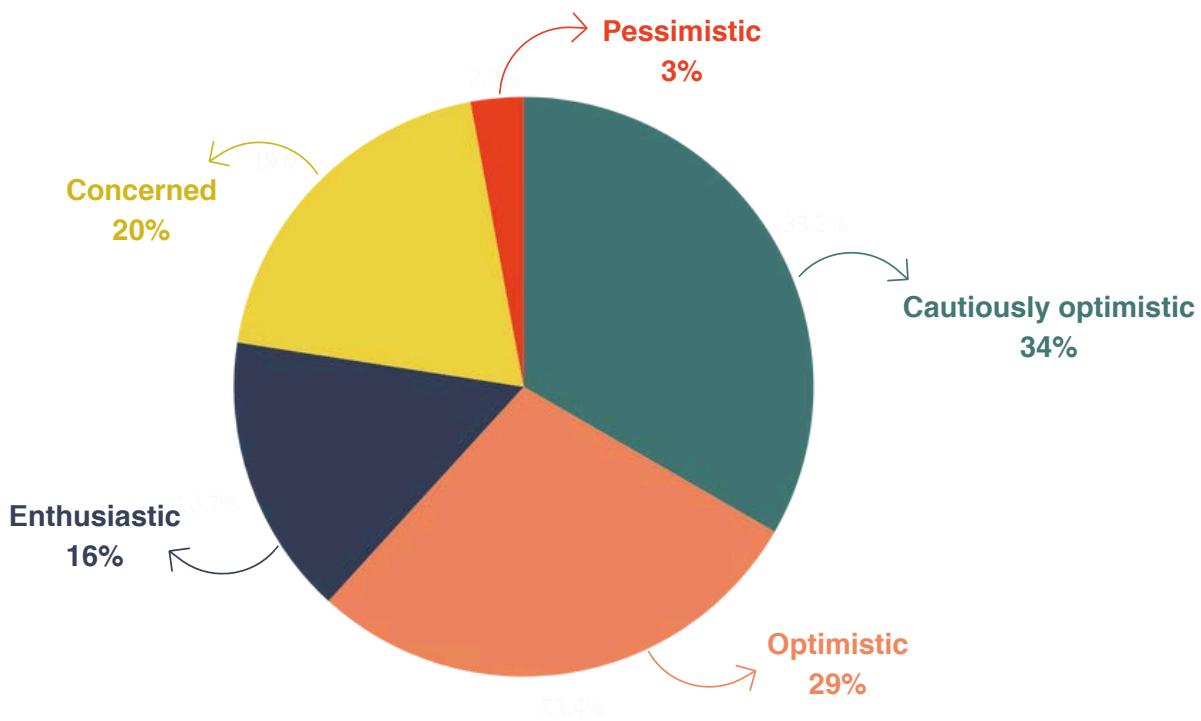
While AI does reduce workload for some (24%), an equal number feel forced to use these tools, and 16% report that AI creates new challenges rather than solving problems. Despite its presence, AI is not yet widely seen as a tool to help practitioners make their work more explainable and interpretable for leadership (9%).

**Optimism (32%) outweighs pessimism (11%), but concerns remain high (29%),** with a noteworthy 22% believing AI-powered community management is inevitable.

These findings suggest that AI is seen as an evolving, imperfect tool rather than a revolutionary shift, with managers recognising both its efficiency gains and the risks of losing human nuance in online spaces.

# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

## Tempered Confidence



Community managers in 2024 were more optimistic than 2023 (29%, up from 21%), but **fewer are enthusiastically embracing the future** (16%, down from 20%) - suggesting a tempered confidence.

At the same time, concern (20%) and pessimism (3%) have slightly increased, showing that not everyone is convinced community management is on the right trajectory. This could reflect ongoing uncertainties around AI, job security, or shifting platform dynamics.

Respondents offered the following insights around their choices in this section:

1. Worry around the (mis)application of AI in community management
2. Frustration around the lack of career advancement opportunities
3. Worry about systemic undervaluing of community management
4. Enthusiasm from newer community managers discovering and championing the value of community.

The sustainability of community management as a career requires stronger advocacy, organisational investment, and recognition of its strategic importance to businesses and society alike. Without this, the profession risks being overshadowed by AI and deprioritised during economic turbulence, to the detriment of both communities and organisations.

# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Enthusiastic



**"There will always be a need for human connection - community management helps humanise brands and create real connections."**

**"Standalone CM roles are becoming more common."**

**"There are plenty of opportunities and increasingly sophisticated integration in orgs and business strategy."**

**"Community is so important and more companies are realising it."**

# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Optimistic



**"As society becomes more and more connected, and yet disconnected from an authenticity perspective at the same time, community is an amazing opportunity for genuine connection between people."**

**"I think people will tune away from social media in years to come and small communities off major platforms (as well as offline communities) are the future. Community management has a big role to play there. Maybe our best days are ahead."**

**"For our business, I see community as the future of support, to engage our customers and reduce costs. There is massive untapped potential if we can move from community being an afterthought to being front and centre for our customers."**

# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

## Cautiously Optimistic

**"Honestly I'm not that optimistic but I feel that we have to be, or we've already lost the battle. I think businesses will look to eliminate the human from community management, which will be a huge mistake."**

**"It's hard to stay positive given the developments in this space around the world, but I'm trying! I think it's important for us to hang in there as community management is more important than ever."**

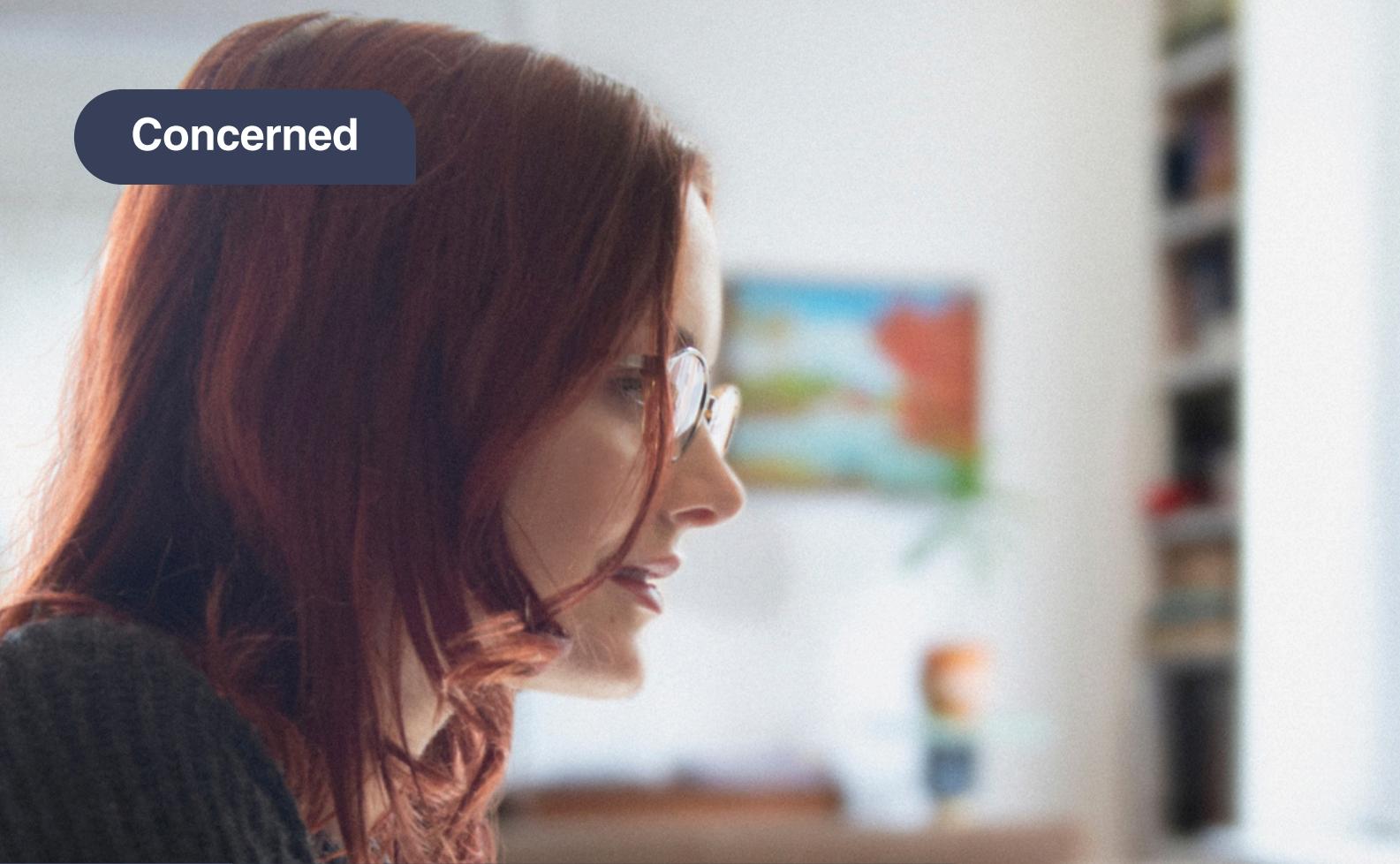
**"The world is in a scary place. We need to work together more than ever in the future so community managers are needed to make sure we can do it better."**

**"I'd love to continue to work in the space for another 5 years but currently, I'm looking at transitioning into Product Management. I think PM is more valued in the tech and startup industry, where I often work. I wish I could say the same allure is as strong for a future community role."**



# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Concerned



**"I'm concerned about the future of Community Management as a career specifically in Australia - there are so few senior community roles, and the junior roles are rarely supported in a way that could grow that function within an organisation."**

**"Very few businesses seem to be investing in community."**

**"I've long believed that community is an essential pillar for both business, and our society as a whole. It's critical in my NFP space. But it looks like people are heading further in the wrong direction, optimising for imagined efficiency, overusing AI and not being willing to invest the time in building sustainable communities. So I'm worried."**

**"In the era of Trump, Musk and Zuckerberg being in cahoots to make the world a worse place, it's becoming harder and harder."**

# FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Pessimistic



**"I think online community management is in a vulnerable state. When times are tough, business reflex is to cut the human 'stuff' (which is the worst mistake, as we know). I think opportunities are becoming more scarce, misunderstanding about the work is rife and the Internet is on fire. I also think AI is going to take over, in not good ways."**

**"I feel too old for this role - keeping up with the trends is tiring, and I am actively looking for opportunities to be offline in real life."**

**"Community management on social media cannot control their work, with Meta and others changing rules and algorithms to suit themselves."**

# AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

*"The industry is simply too focused on the business aspects of the industry and entirely focused on the tokenisation of community interaction. A lot of the reason for this is because we have to prove our Business ROI to the executives that fund our communities but that is simply not enough. A great majority of the harm that a community can cause as it scales, comes from the remunerative pressures."*

*"The list grows each year! The dependence on social media. The insanely toxic environment on that social media. The takeover of the internet by monopolies and oligarchs. Becoming harder and harder to create safe space and make a difference. It's exhausting."*

Each year survey participants are asked what would most like to change about community management practice, in order to identify areas that need attention and improvement.

Responses fell clearly into **four key themes**:

Respect and Understanding

Social Media Monopolisation

Workload and Precarity

Online Toxicity



# AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

Community managers are still struggling with a lack of recognition and understanding of their work. Many feel their role is undervalued, with organisations failing to invest or resource them adequately. Misconceptions persist, with community management frequently confused with social media management or forced into ill-fitting productivity metrics.

Despite growing awareness of community's value, professionals in the field continue to battle systemic devaluation and a reluctance from leadership to acknowledge both the challenges and the solutions they propose.

**"I'd like for what I do to be taken seriously. At times, I feel like I'm expected to jump into other lanes but rarely do others travel in mine."**

**"Building community seems to always be an after-thought making it difficult to achieve meaningful co-collaboration and effective community led initiatives."**

**"Lack of recognition, constant turnover, low salary. A lack of commitment to the community from the business."**

**"Upper management doesn't understand the need for investment (financially or staffing/time needed) for success. They don't seem to want to hear our problems and possible solutions."**

**"I dislike the misconceptions about the field. I think more people are aware of community now but there are a lot of myths to continue to bust."**

**"Understanding and devaluing the importance of resourcing community."**

**"The systematic devaluing of community management - certainly since I started in this industry."**

**"Confusion about what the work entails. Confusion with social media management. Trying to make social and cultural measures fit into productivity measures - it doesn't work!"**

**"Pervasive, relentless misunderstanding of the work - selling it short."**

**"The lack of understanding about how vital safe places online are."**

# AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND BIG TECH MONOPOLISATION

Many community managers expressed frustration about the limitations and challenges of working with major platforms like Meta. They speak to a sense of powerlessness in being at the mercy of tech giants who prioritise their own goals over those of their users, forcing community managers to constantly adapt to shifting platform changes rather than focusing on the needs of their communities.

This ongoing struggle to balance platform requirements with community context is a common pain point in community management.

*"I hate that we're at the mercy of the huge companies like Meta who don't really listen to what their users want. The admin features could be so much better and easier to use but that's not a priority for them."*

*"It's incredibly frustrating navigating the whims of tech-bros."  
"I have to build our community on Meta (Facebook Groups), and everyday I curse it. I wish I could choose where to build as this place is a hellscape for community management."*

*"Always playing catch up with platforms and having to constantly adapt and change for their needs, instead of my community's."*

''

# AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## ONLINE TOXICITY

The challenges of managing online communities have intensified, with misinformation, hate speech, and AI-generated disinformation spreading faster than ever. Trolling, political hostility, and discriminatory behaviour are on the rise, increasing the burden on community managers who moderate.

The volume of these risks and harms can feel like a constant uphill battle, leading to burnout and fatigue. Many community managers feel trapped in a cycle of reactive work, exposed to harmful content while struggling to create a more positive and engaged environment.

“

**“The rapid spread of misinformation, hate speech and use of gen AI to spread this.”**

**“Trolling and misinformation. The increase in sexism and other types of discrimination.”**

**“The volume of trolling and negative online behaviours that have now come to the fore.”**

**“The high percentage of ad hominem comments made against other members, simply because of political disagreements. This is a little disheartening. But the main problem is that it uses up precious time because such comments are rejected.”**

**“Needing to read the shitty anti-science things that people say on the internet.”**

**“Misinformation, conflict, offensive speech, spam, 24/7, knee-jerk reactions, and the volume of everything.”**

**“How incessant and pervasive it is, and the fatigue from negativity and outrage. How no matter what we do, it never feels good enough (for some members of the community).”**

# AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## WORKLOAD AND PRECARITY

Community managers can face a daunting workload, juggling operational demands, legal compliance, and evolving technologies with limited resources. The role requires deep emotional investment, yet organisations often fail to prioritise community efforts, leading to extra stresses, and over-reliance on reactive work.

Many report feeling isolated in their work, and their advocacy for community members, struggling to demonstrate value and impact while battling misconceptions and uncertainty.

**"Being new to the role, and being responsible for both the community and operations, makes the role big and challenging to achieve what I want to. Also, being pulled into other workload means I cannot give it the time it deserves. Building a community is a timely process and needs lots of love and attention."**

**"The complexity of multiple platforms, the legal compliance, changing constantly. It's a lot."**

**"The varying spinning plates of operational management and community experience becomes a 2 person job for 1 person."**

**"The challenges in keeping up with tech, understanding law and governance, the ability to prove the positive impact and outcomes, and caring too much sometimes."**

**"It's hard to keep people engaged when there isn't certainty of funding year to year. If my organisation doesn't prioritise our community then why should they?"**

**"An over-reliance on reactive work, preventing us from working on more strategic projects. Community is often relied upon to deal with the aftermath of changes that affect our members, instead of helping to design better changes that would have less negative impact."**

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# ABOUT AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY MANAGERS

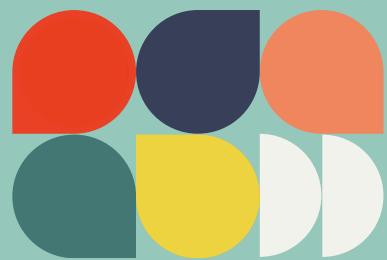


Australian Community Managers is the home of best practice community management training, resources and career development. Our mission is to grow and enhance community management in our region through training, resources, mentoring and meaning-rich connection.

Launched in 2009, ACM was formed by community managers for community managers. Our members plan, build and manage online communities across industries. As the leading voice of community management industry in Australasia, ACM consults and collaborates with government, researchers and peak bodies around community management (including moderation and governance, digital engagement and social media platforms).

From 2011-2021 ACM hosted the annual conference for community professionals, Swarm, and in 2023 ACM launched the world's first dedicated global moderation conference, All Things in Moderation, which now runs annually.

Learn more about ACM's training, certifications, resources and support at  
[www.australiancommunitymanagers.com.au](http://www.australiancommunitymanagers.com.au)



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