

Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)

2019-20 Survey Findings

From September 2019 to mid-February 2020, the University of Western Australia and Curtin University collaborated with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to conduct a follow-up survey to obtain information on the current state of volunteering in Western Australia (WA). The survey focused on State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers and investigated on 4 key areas; **recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity**.

Participant Information



Number of Participants: 226 (11% response rate)
Average age: 46.9 years
Gender breakdown: Males (55%), Females (43%), Prefer not to say (2%)
Ethnicity: 64.2% identified as Australians
Average SES tenure: 10.0 years
Average tenure in current unit: 10.0 years
Different roles: Unit Managers (16.4%), Non-managers (83.6%) across **52** SES units in WA

Survey Themes:

- Reasons to Stay
- Volunteer Needs
- Volunteer Role and Identity Fit
- Volunteer Wellbeing
- SES Unit Environment
- Intentions to Remain

Based on key findings, the list of key implications are presented below:

Key Areas of Strength

- Volunteers are thriving through their learning experiences,
- Volunteers overall felt valued and respected for their individual differences,
- Unit leaders are seen very positively in their behaviours towards volunteers, during and outside of call-outs,
- Volunteers had strong social support from team members who are non-leaders.

Key Opportunities to Improve

- Investigate targeted recruitment to attract members from specific groups,
- Facilitate activities to allow more volunteer autonomy,
- Improve volunteers' identification with DFES,
- Improve feelings of psychological safety, autonomy, and competence for women and volunteers who are non-leaders,
- Improve volunteer inclusivity in unit decision-making processes, and
- Increase how energetic volunteers feel about their roles.

Findings from the CAT 2019-20 survey was also compared to findings from the 2018-19 survey to assess which volunteering areas have improved, are in need of improvement, and which areas have stayed relatively the same:

Key Areas Maintained

- Volunteers across both surveys;
- Felt equally as competent and as socially connected with other volunteers,
 - Identified strongly with their role and SES unit,
 - Had high levels of role satisfaction,
 - Perceived their leaders' behaviours rather positively, and
 - Felt valued and respected for their individual differences.

Key Areas that Improved

- Volunteers indicated improvements in;
- Their motivations to continue volunteering (e.g., volunteers felt that they were learning new skills),
 - Their identification with DFES,
 - Their learning and development (although it was still high the previous year), and
 - How much they would recommend the SES to others as a place to volunteer.

Opportunities to Improve

- Volunteers across both years;
- Indicated low levels of autonomy,
 - Reported that they did not feel energetic about their roles,
 - Had relatively low levels of psychological safety (i.e., not feeling safe about speaking up), and
 - They did not feel included in unit decision-making processes.

****Note:** The complete survey report will be released on our project page (scan QR code) in August 2020.



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