



**2017
VICTORIAN
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT
VOLUNTEER
WELFARE AND
EFFICIENCY
SURVEY**

Sector Report

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MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN VOLUNTEER CONSULTATIVE FORUM (VCF)

AV	Ambulance Victoria
AVCG	Australian Volunteer Coast Guard
CFA	Country Fire Authority
EMC	Emergency Management Commissioner
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
LSV	Life Saving Victoria
Red Cross	Red Cross Victoria – Emergency Services
Salvos	The Salvation Army – Emergency Services
St John	St John Ambulance Victoria
VCCEM	Victorian Council of Churches – Emergencies Ministry
VFBV	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Service
VICSESVA	Victoria State Emergency Service Volunteer Association

3,893 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



Thank you to all emergency management volunteers in Victoria who took the time to participate in the 2017 Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey.

We also take this opportunity to recognise our volunteers who freely give their time to protect and support their local communities, and communities right across Victoria.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017 the Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey was offered to volunteers in the Victorian emergency management sector for the second time.

The first sector wide survey was conducted in 2016.

The results of the survey tell us that while volunteer satisfaction levels differ between the different emergency management agencies, the issues that are important to volunteers and volunteer satisfaction against these issues are consistent across the sector.

- Volunteers do not feel they are consulted or involved when it comes to corporate decisions that impact them.
- Volunteers would like to see increased access to and flexibility of training.
- The most important issues to volunteers are equality and diversity and a welcoming culture.

The Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey measures the **Gap** between what volunteers expect, and how close or far these expectations are from being met.

WHO RESPONDED?

Volunteers from members of the Victorian Volunteer Consultative Forum were invited to take part in the survey. Most had a higher number of participants to the 2017 survey than for the 2016 survey, with a total of 3,893 emergency management volunteers from across Victoria taking part.

Respondents generally matched the profile of the overall volunteer population within each of the participating agencies. The younger cohorts (i.e. under 39 years of age) had the lowest numbers of survey respondents, but this is consistent with agency age profiles overall.

The gender profiles vary in each agency, and in survey respondents, however results show there are no marked differences between the opinions of males and females.

WHAT IS BEING DONE WELL?

Overall, 81% of volunteers in the sector indicate they are satisfied with their volunteer role, and 87% indicate they intend to continue.

Volunteers' expectations are closely met within their local team. Results show that most volunteers believe that their team does well when it comes to ensuring their team is volunteer-friendly and welcoming. They accept diversity and support equality.

Most responses to the survey also indicate that bullying is not tolerated in their teams.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE?

The biggest **Gap**, identified as needing immediate attention, relates to the lack of consultation with volunteers from the state or corporate level in their agency. The statement relating to this topic shows the lowest level of satisfaction of any statement in the survey. Consultation with volunteers at a Regional / District level is also rated as being less than satisfactory.

Training is another key area identified as having a significant difference between expected and actual performance. Volunteers want improved access to and flexibility in the training which is offered.

Responses show also that volunteers across the sector would like more opportunities for leadership development, training in conflict resolution and mentoring.

WHY DO THEY VOLUNTEER?

Overwhelmingly, emergency management volunteers are motivated to volunteer for two main reasons:

- A sense of fulfilment in supporting the community in a meaningful way
- To protect or contribute to the safety and wellbeing of their local community.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is to gain feedback direct from volunteers about their expectations and satisfaction with matters they feel are a priority for their general welfare and efficiency.

This report is made available to the emergency management volunteer sector, State Government, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and other key stakeholders to contribute to the recognition and support for volunteers.

Introduced to Country Fire Authority (CFA) Volunteers by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) in 2012, the survey was designed as a broad consultative mechanism to capture, formal, evidence-based feedback directly from volunteers. Adapted to meet the needs of the wider emergency management volunteer sector across Victoria initially in 2016, the Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is an opt-in annual activity which, along with other consultative mechanisms, provides invaluable feedback to each participating agency, and more broadly to the sector.

The original VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey contains a series of statements which are identified as being critical to volunteer welfare and efficiency. These statements were adapted in language to be relevant to each participating agency, whilst maintaining the original intent of the statements. These statements form the core of the survey.

The statements are then grouped into the seven key themes listed below. The majority of reporting is in line with these themes.

SEVEN KEY THEMES

1

Respect &
Professionalism

2

My Role as
a Volunteer

3

Cooperation
across *My Agency*

4

Support from
My Agency

5

Training by
My Agency

6

Recruitment
& Retention

7

People Management –
My Team

SURVEY PROMOTION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey was open to participants during September/October (October/November for LSV) in 2017. The methods used to communicate, distribute, promote and engage volunteers to participate in the survey was determined by each agency.

Some of the agencies had email distribution lists, allowing the survey to be sent directly to each volunteer where they could opt to complete it via a securely encrypted electronic record system. Others relied on newsletters and other communication distribution channels to promote the survey, including providing access to a link which allowed the survey to be completed via the securely encrypted electronic record system.

Processes were employed to block/limit the opportunity for an individual to complete multiple responses, and measures taken to de-duplicate respondents and verify respondent's eligibility. A review of survey controls confirmed that additional measures to further control survey respondent identification were not warranted and would be "detrimental to the stated goals of inclusion and providing an independent voice to the volunteers".¹

SURVEY REPRESENTATION

Respondents could be anonymous or potentially identifiable at the respondents discretion. Potentially identifiable being those respondents who left contact details, enabling their volunteer status to be verified.

Potential methods to verify results include ensuring the responding demographic is aligned to the overall volunteer demographic and/or comparing the results from anonymous respondents with those who could be verified and determining if any there were any anomalies in the data which could suggest intention to manipulate the survey results.

It is considered that any 'falsified' records would be in the minority and there is no suggestion of bias in any of the surveys.

DATA RELIABILITY

A large number of respondents provide a measure of confidence that the results are likely to be near that of the overall population. Across the sector, each participating agency had varying levels of participation, often determined by the total volunteer numbers in the overall target population.

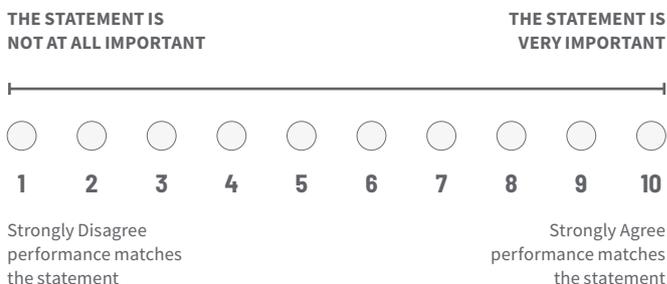
For the purpose of this report, the total results for each agency contributed to the average – a method used to avoid those with more responses having a greater influence in the overall results. The results indicate similar views, regardless of the agency the volunteer is a member with, indicating a high level of reliability in the outcome of the survey.

1. In 2017, VFBV engaged independent data analyst specialists, Symbolix, to undertake an audit of the survey instrument, access controls, representation and integrity of the findings.

THE VOLUNTEER WELFARE AND EFFICIENCY LEVEL (VoIWEL)

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey instrument (Survey Monkey) uses a Likert scale (a scale used to represent people’s attitudes to a topic) of 1 to 10 for the **Importance** that a particular factor represents for the respondent, and then the respondent’s view of **Performance** of that particular factor.

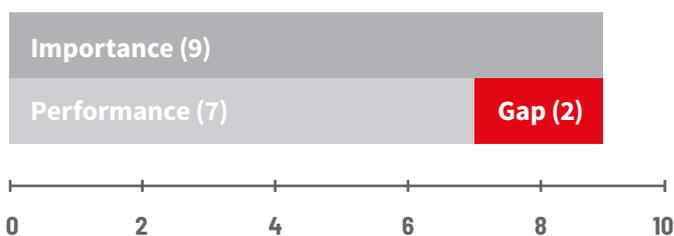


DETERMINING THE GAP AND VoIWEL OUTCOME

The relative measure of how closely performance meets the expectation of importance, is referred to as the **Gap**. The **Gap** is then identified on a scale of ‘meeting expectations’ through to a ‘critical need for urgent attention’.

The illustration (right) demonstrates the calculation of the **Gap** derived for each statement, which is then averaged to provide the **Gap** for each theme.

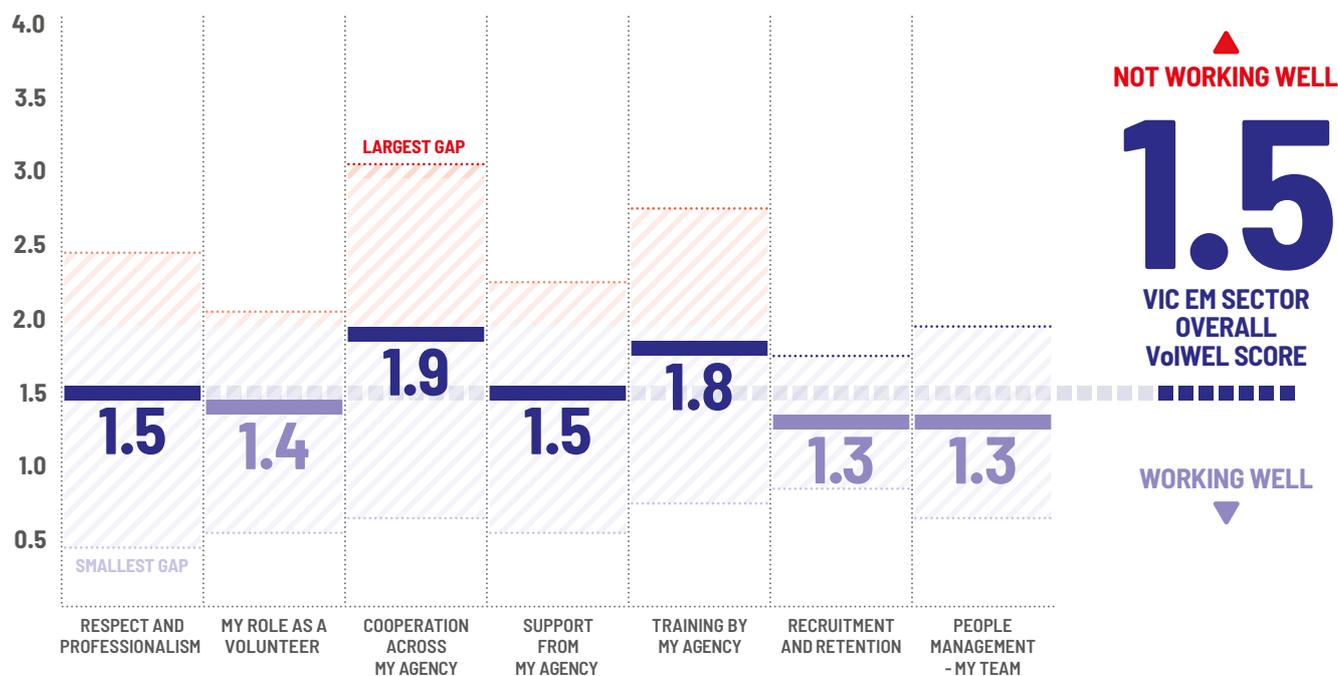
This **Gap** then determines the Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Level (VoIWEL) in a way that is easy to interpret and understand. A high VoIWEL outcome is a sign things are not working well and that volunteer expectations are furthest from being met. A low VoIWEL outcome is a good sign that things are working well and indicates volunteer expectations are being met or closer to being met.



VOLUNTEER WELFARE AND EFFICIENCY LEVEL – DESCRIPTORS

>3.0	Critical need for priority attention	A Gap of 3.0 or more indicates that there is a critical gap between volunteer expectations and performance and volunteers are highly dissatisfied. Priority attention is needed.
2.5 – 2.9	Significant Gap – immediate attention required	A Gap between 2.5 and 2.9 indicates that there are significant issues that need to be addressed. Immediate action should be put in place to rectify areas of concern.
2.0 – 2.4	Large Gap – remedial action to be taken	A Gap between 2.0 and 2.4 indicates these issues are impacting volunteer welfare and efficiency and will be causing dissatisfaction with the volunteering experience. Action to address volunteer concerns should be implemented.
1.5 – 1.9	Mid-range Gap – need for improvement	A Gap between 1.5 and 1.9 indicates that volunteer expectations are not being met and should be addressed in both action and strategic plans, in the shorter term. Volunteers are indicating lower levels of satisfaction.
1.0 – 1.4	Small Gap – potential for improvement	A Gap between 1.0 and 1.4 indicates that longer term planning should include addressing volunteer concerns. Volunteers are reasonably satisfied.
<0.9	Meeting Expectations	A Gap of less than 1.0 indicates that on the whole, volunteer expectations are being met. This would be evidence of a high level of satisfaction throughout the volunteer population.

VoIWEL OUTCOME - VICTORIAN VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR



Note: Range depicted on illustration is indicative of the results for each individual agency.

The **Gap** provides the true indication of how well volunteer expectations are being met. Translated as the VoIWEL, the outcome shows clearly where agencies are meeting the expectations of volunteers, and where there are areas which should be prioritised to address volunteer concerns.

The Victorian Emergency Management Sector overall VoIWEL of **1.5** represents a need to address volunteer concerns through both action and strategic plans. Beyond the overall Sector VoIWEL outcome, within each agency's results there may be poorer or better VoIWEL outcomes.

Agencies tended to have better results for Recruitment and Retention and People Management at a local level, and poorer results in the areas of Training and Cooperation.

RESULTS BY THEME

Below are the results for each of the survey themes showing a comparison between the results for 2016 and 2017.

A smaller **Gap** (better VolWEL outcome) indicates a positive result. A larger **Gap** (poorer VolWEL outcome) is indicative of worse results when comparing the results between the two years.

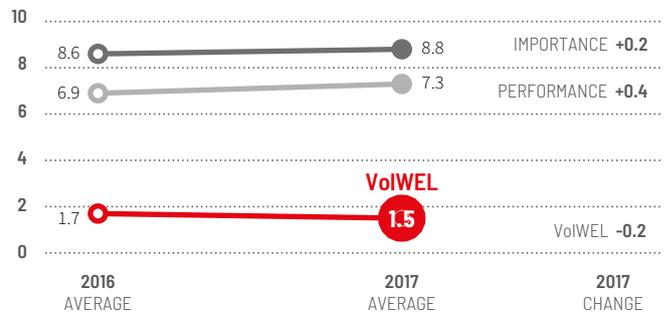
RESPECT AND PROFESSIONALISM

Q: I respect and appreciate the effort made by *my agency* to support me as a volunteer.

Q: The respect and value of the contribution of volunteers is evident in *my agency's* actions and culture.

Q: In general, paid staff accept and recognise the professionalism of volunteers.

Q: *My agency* consistently and proactively promotes public understanding of community confidence in the role and professionalism of its volunteers and their *teams*.



More effort needs to be invested in appreciating and thanking volunteers for their time and effort.

Male, Rural Volunteer

The recognition of volunteers has improved in the last year.

Female, Rural Volunteer

MY ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER

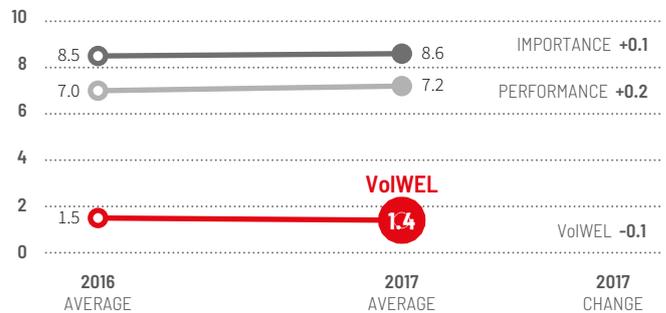
Q: I feel the time I devote to *my agency* is productive and worthwhile.

Q: *My agency* is doing everything it can to facilitate a good balance between my service and time commitment as a volunteer and other parts of my life.

Q: Volunteers who no longer wish to perform operational roles are supported to continue their volunteer service in other non-operational/operational support roles in a positive and supportive way.

Q: *My agency* recognises and utilises the skills and experience that I bring to *my agency*.

Q: *My agency* proactively provides opportunities for me to progress and develop my skills to more senior/diverse roles as part of an individual volunteer career pathway.



Volunteering continues to be one of the most meaningful aspects of my life. Great learning, action and support for me and team. Great for my community. Everyone wins!

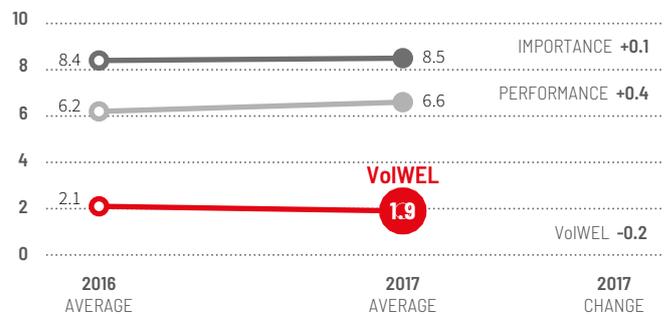
Female, Rural Volunteer

One of the greatest downfalls of [*my agency*] is their failure to recognise external skills.

Male, Rural Volunteer

COOPERATION

- Q:** Volunteers and paid staff work cooperatively at all levels to achieve shared goals and service the community.
- Q:** Workforce arrangements allow the paid staff and volunteers to work cooperatively as an integrated team.
- Q:** Volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making at a District/Region level.
- Q:** Volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making at a Corporate level.



Volunteer engagement is critical.

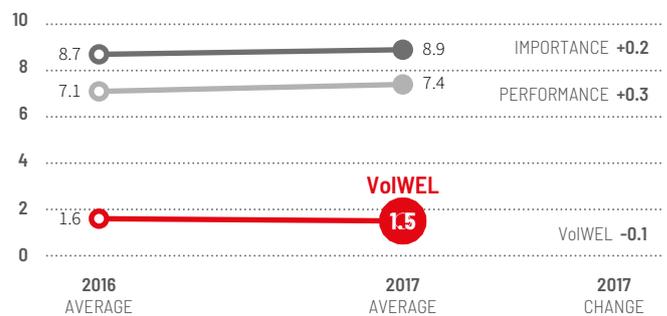
Male, Metropolitan Volunteer

I feel there is a disconnect between paid staff and volunteers.

Male, Metropolitan Volunteer

SUPPORT

- Q:** Corporate policies and leadership support an effective volunteer based and fully integrated organisation.
- Q:** My agency works actively to discourage workplace bullying.
- Q:** My employer is effectively recognised and supported to release me to undertake my volunteer commitments.
- Q:** Paid personnel in my local team/district area are committed to supporting and empowering volunteers.
- Q:** Volunteer leaders in my team are effectively supported and empowered to manage my team and undertake their roles.



Our work is invaluable and must continue to be supported at every level.

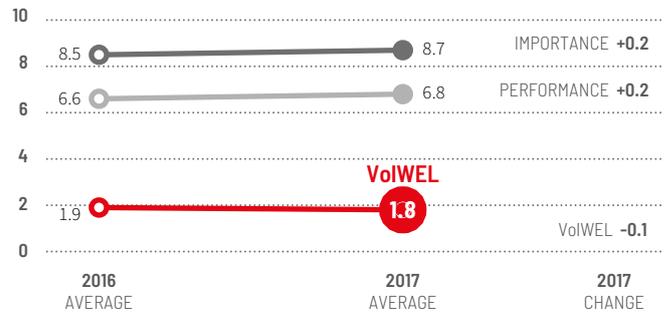
Female, Rural Volunteer

Better support for employers to release volunteers needed. Include incentive to employers.

Male, Urban Volunteer

TRAINING

- Q:** *My agency provides good leadership training for volunteers in people management, team management, conflict resolution and mentoring.*
- Q:** *Most training is available and provided within a reasonable distance from my team location.*
- Q:** *My agency provides enough training opportunities in formats, at times and at locations that make it easy for me to participate.*

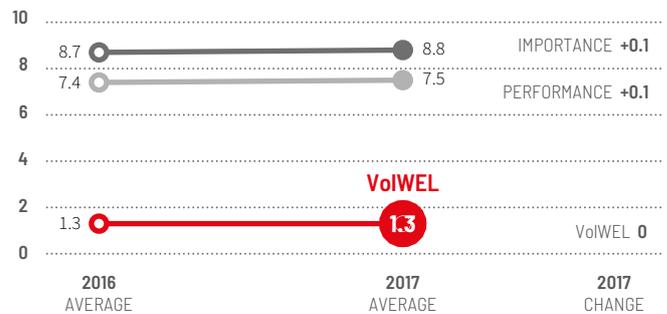


There has been an issue with updating of skills. Training either too far away or day length.
Female, Rural Volunteer

Professional development for managers, trainers and potential officers has improved dramatically this year.
Female, Metropolitan Volunteer

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Q:** *My team is successful in 'recruiting' younger people as volunteers.*
- Q:** *My team is successful in 'retaining' younger people as volunteers.*
- Q:** *People from all cultural backgrounds, different religious, political and personal beliefs are all made welcome in my team.*
- Q:** *There are no barriers to the roles women can occupy in my team.*
- Q:** *New volunteers are actively supported to allow them to turn out to incidents within a reasonable time of joining my team.*
- Q:** *The environment across the wider organisation is volunteer-friendly and welcoming to new members.*
- Q:** *New volunteers in non-response/non-operational roles are actively supported to allow them to contribute within a reasonable time of joining.*

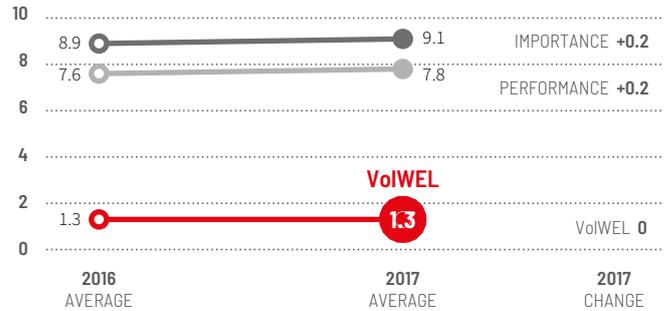


Overall [*my agency*] is doing a good job at recruiting a diverse range of volunteers, but some obstacles to volunteers from different cultural backgrounds still exist.
Male, Metropolitan Volunteer

Recruitment of younger volunteers is extremely difficult.
Male, Rural Volunteer

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

- Q:** My *team* leaders are able to deal effectively with human resource, conflict resolution and morale issues at a *team* level.
- Q:** Workplace bullying is not tolerated in *teams* of which I have been a member.
- Q:** People Management issues, conflict resolution and volunteer morale are generally well managed within my *team*.
- Q:** The environment in my *team* is volunteer-friendly, welcoming to new members and creates good morale.
- Q:** Volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making in my *team*.



Some concern that our leadership is not all embracing of personnel and does not work as a team.

Female, Rural Volunteer

I have been a volunteer for over 20 years and have enjoyed a wonderful comradery with my fellow members.

Female, Rural Volunteer

KEY OBSERVATIONS

PARTICIPATION

- Nearly all agencies had increased participation in 2017 when compared with 2016.
- The lowest number of respondents came from the younger age cohorts (under 25 and 25–39 years of age) compared with other age groups.

OVERALL RESULTS

- Results are largely consistent with the 2016 survey – indicating the results are a valid representation of volunteer views.
- Most themes are in the ‘mid-range’ VolWEL, which from a sector perspective, indicates that strategic plans should take into consideration initiatives towards continuing to improve volunteer satisfaction.
- The areas that had the biggest gaps in 2016 (poorer VolWEL outcomes) continue to be the areas identified as being where volunteer expectations are furthest from being met in 2017.
 - Volunteers indicated they are less satisfied with activities which are the responsibility of the corporate level of their agency. Across the sector, results varied between agencies, but more commonly, there was a slight improvement in results.
- The areas where volunteer expectations were closest to being met in 2016 (better VolWEL outcomes) remain the same in 2017.
 - Volunteers indicated they are more satisfied with activities at their local/team level. Whilst this is where satisfaction appears to be at its highest, there was evidence of a worsening of results in the theme of People Management at a local team level, but not for all participating agencies.

The VolWEL outcome has improved for:

- Respect and Professionalism
- My Role as a Volunteer
- Cooperation
- Support

The VolWEL outcome remains unchanged for:

- Training
- Recruitment and Retention
- People Management

Recruitment and Retention continues as one of the better performing areas, but results indicate the recruitment and retention of younger volunteers is an ongoing concern for volunteers.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Gender

- Gender profiles of the respondents varied widely between each agency, however gender representation was broadly similar to that of each agency.
- Gender category options in the survey included: female, male, transgender, prefer not to say and other.
- There were no common themes identified across the sector when comparing responses from the different gender categories.

Age

- Most age groups were well represented, with the exception of the younger cohorts.
- This is also reflected in the survey results which indicate that the recruitment and retention of younger volunteers is an area which needs to improve.

Length of service

- It was a common result that scoring for performance decreased with increasing years of service, especially after one year of service, although this was less marked than was witnessed in the results in 2016.

WHERE ARE EXPECTATIONS CLOSEST TO BEING MET?

- ▶ There are no barriers to roles women can occupy
- ▶ Diversity is accepted and welcomed
- ▶ Volunteers feel the time they devote to their volunteering is productive and worthwhile
- ▶ There is a lack of tolerance for bullying within teams
- ▶ There is a friendly environment within teams, where new members are welcomed and there is good morale



**Better VolWEL outcomes
across the survey**

WHERE DOES PRIORITY ACTION NEED TO BE TAKEN?

- ▶ Volunteers do not feel they are effectively consulted in decision making at Corporate/State level or regional level
- ▶ There are not enough training opportunities in formats, at times and at locations that make it easy to participate
- ▶ Recruitment and retention, particularly retention, of younger volunteers continues to be a challenge
- ▶ Volunteers feel there is not enough leadership training in people management, team management, conflict resolution and mentoring



**Poorest VolWEL outcomes
across the survey**

SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION

Overall, satisfaction levels have improved, however, the results did vary between agencies.

- Approximately half of participating agencies experienced an increase in volunteers indicating they are satisfied in their volunteer role, others had slight declines, usually of 1–2%.
- Almost all agencies saw an improvement in the number of volunteers satisfied with the way they are treated by their agency, in one agency, this jumped from 64% indicating they were satisfied in 2016 to 88% in 2017.

Volunteers are motivated primarily by two key factors:

- A sense of fulfilment in supporting the community in a meaningful way
- To support the community they live in.

SATISFACTION

OBSERVATIONS

- ▶ In 2017, the overall results show slightly more volunteers have indicated they are satisfied with their volunteer role, when compared with those who participated in 2016.

However, five agencies experienced a decline in their results for volunteer satisfaction in their role.

- ▶ The biggest change between 2016 and 2017 is a significant increase in the percentage of volunteers who are satisfied with the way they are treated by their agency.

Four agencies show increases in satisfaction in this area, one agency had an increase of 24%, going from 64% in 2016 to 88% in 2017.

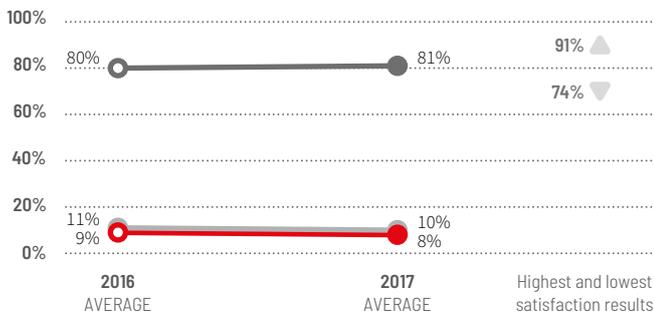
- ▶ Nearly all agencies saw improvement in the percentage of volunteers indicating their intention to continue in their volunteering role, and recommendation of volunteering to others.

RESULTS

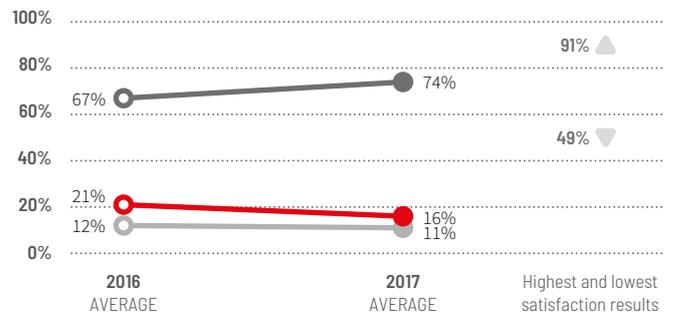
Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a 10 point scale: from 1 “dissatisfied” to 10 “satisfied” (with 5 indicating unsure)

7-10 SATISFIED **5-6** UNSURE **1-4** DISSATISFIED

Overall, how satisfied are you with your role as an emergency management volunteer?



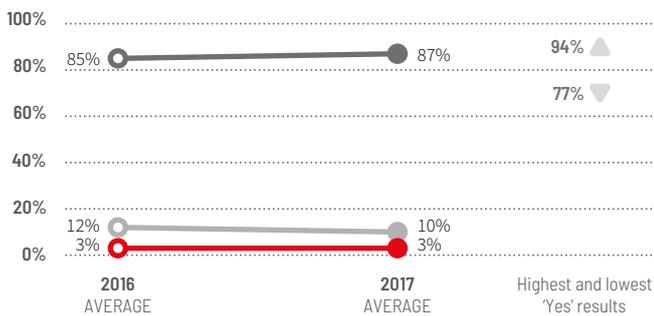
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way volunteers are treated by your agency?



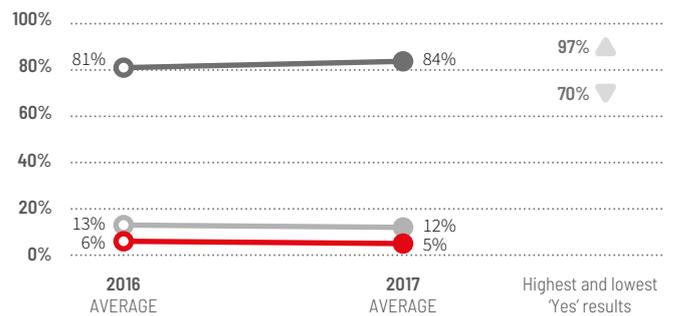
Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a 10 point scale: from 1 “not at all” to 10 “definitely” (with 5 indicating unsure)

7-10 YES **5-6** UNSURE **1-4** NO

I intend to continue in my volunteer role.



I would recommend being a volunteer with my agency to people I know.



MOTIVATION

THE SURVEY

Respondents were asked to select one of six potential main reasons they volunteer – as shown on the right.

Overwhelmingly, emergency management volunteers are motivated to volunteer for two main reasons 'A sense of fulfilment in supporting the community in a meaningful way' and 'To protect or contribute to the safety and wellbeing of their local community'.

-  To help protect the community I live in.
-  A sense of fulfilment in supporting my community in a meaningful way.
-  To learn new skills.
-  To meet new people.
-  To enjoy social contact with other volunteers.
-  Other (please specify).



45%

To help protect the community I live in.



42%

For a sense of fulfilment in supporting my community in a meaningful way.

4%

To enjoy social contact

3%

To learn new skills

1%

To meet new people

6%

Selected 'other' as their reason

SURVEY OVERVIEW

- ▶ Emergency management organisations in Victoria rely on trained and committed volunteers to deliver services across the state on a daily basis. Volunteers – who are in and of the community – are fundamental to a community-centred approach to safe and resilient communities.
- ▶ It follows that the welfare of volunteers and the efficiency of the service they provide must be key concerns for emergency management planners and decision makers.

The Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey for Victorian Emergency Management Volunteers plays a vital part in the information flow across and between the Minister for Emergency Services, the Victorian Government, Emergency Management Victoria, emergency management agencies, the Volunteer Consultative Forum and volunteers. By identifying common themes within the emergency management sector, the survey can be used as a collaborative tool to provide frank responses, share effective strategies, facilitate the development of reforms, target investment and build capacity and capability.

The survey covers topics such as professionalism, cooperation, support and training, as well as reasons for volunteering and satisfaction with the volunteer experience. Individual agency results are not identified in this report, they are provided directly to each agency to contribute to planning and overall decision making, informed directly by volunteers. The survey is designed to complement, rather than replace, other surveys and feedback mechanisms within the emergency management volunteer sector in Victoria.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria are responsible for the design, development, administration and management of the survey.

BACKGROUND

The Volunteer Fire Brigade Victoria's (VFBV) Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency was established in 2012 for CFA volunteers. It has included VICSES volunteers since 2015. The survey was endorsed by the Victorian Consultative Forum (VCF) in 2015 as a resource which could be offered to all emergency management volunteers in Victoria. The survey was viewed as aligning with the strategic objectives of the VCF, which was established in 2013 to facilitate the commitment of the Victorian Government to engage and consult with emergency management volunteers on matters that affect them.

In 2016, this survey was adopted by Victorian emergency management volunteer agencies.

In 2017, the survey has been offered to Victorian emergency management volunteer agencies for the second time, allowing for a comparison in views between 2016 and 2017.

PARTICIPANTS

This report summarises feedback from 3,893 emergency management volunteers in 2017. The report presents sector-wide view of the opinions of volunteers and provides sector-wide data, capturing and presenting cross sector discussions.

Volunteers from the following Agencies took part in the survey:

- Ambulance Victoria
- Country Fire Authority, including Coast Guard Brigades from Australian Volunteer Coast Guard
- Life Saving Victoria
- Red Cross – Emergency Services
- The Salvation Army – Emergency Services
- St John Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria State Emergency Service
- Victorian Council of Churches – Emergencies Ministry

▶ VFBV would like to acknowledge the engagement, support and input from the members of the Volunteer Consultative Forum and the support of Emergency Management Victoria.

The 2017 Victorian Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey was funded by the Victorian Government through the Valuing Volunteers Program.



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