

Report on Government Services 2020

PART D, SECTION 9: RELEASED ON 29 JANUARY 2020

9 Emergency services for fire and other events

This section is presented in a new online format. Dynamic data visualisations replace the static chapter format used in previous editions. Machine readable data are also available for download. A guide is available on [accessing information in the new format](#).

The focus of performance reporting in this section is on emergency services for fire events. Descriptive information is included on emergency services for other events, with performance reporting to be developed for future Reports.

The **Indicator Results** tab uses data from the data tables to provide information on the performance for each indicator in the **Indicator Framework**. The same data are also available in CSV format.

[Skip to downloadable Emergency services data tables and supporting material](#)

Context

Objectives for emergency services for fire and other events

Emergency services for fire and other events aim to reduce the adverse effects of events on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, economy and environment). Governments' involvement is aimed at providing emergency services that:

- contribute to the communities management of risks and its preparedness, through the promotion of risk reduction and mitigation activities
- are accessible, responsive and sustainable.

Governments aim for emergency services to meet these objectives in an equitable and efficient manner.

Service overview

An emergency event is an event that endangers or threatens to endanger life, property and/or the environment, and requires a significant and coordinated response. A fire event is an incident that is reported to a fire service organisation and requires a response. Fire events include (but are not limited to):

- structure fires (that is, fires inside a building or structure), regardless of whether there is damage to the structure
- landscape fires, including bushfires and grass fires, regardless of the size of the area burnt
- other fires, including vehicle and other mobile property fires, and outside rubbish fires

Other events that require an emergency response from fire and/or state and territory emergency services include road crash rescue, floods, storms and other natural disasters.

Roles and responsibilities

Fire service organisations and state and territory emergency services (STES) are some of the primary agencies involved in providing emergency services for fire and other events. The role of these organisations varies across jurisdictions but commonly includes prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities. Detailed activities by jurisdiction for fire service organisations and STES are available in [tables 9.1](#) and [9.2](#) respectively in the interpretative material.

Each State and Territory government operates multiple emergency service agencies, which service different populations and geographic areas according to specified governance arrangements ([table 9.4](#) in the interpretative material). Fire and STES service organisations work closely with other government departments and agencies that also have responsibilities in the case of fire and other emergency events.

This section covers the finances and activities of urban and rural fire service agencies and, for selected tables and jurisdictions, the fire event finances and activities of land management agencies (tables 9A.1–13), and STES (tables 9A.14–18). The scope of fire service organisations data provided by jurisdictions is presented in [table 9.3](#) in the interpretative material.

Funding

In 2018-19, the total revenue of fire service organisations was \$4.5 billion and for STES was \$254 million (table 9.6).

Select year(s):

Multiple values

Table 9.6 Revenue of State and Territory Emergency Services (STES) organisations (\$m) (2018-19 dollars)
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Fire service organisations	2018-19	1,336.9	1,481.0	708.0	459.7	258.6	109.7	70.8	39.4	4,464.1
	2017-18	1,186.7	1,450.7	678.5	428.1	234.8	99.2	74.3	44.1	4,196.3
	2013-14	1,179.7	1,281.0	666.1	365.3	222.5	79.4	67.2	34.9	3,896.0
STES organisations	2018-19	132.2	69.2	19.7	na	21.8	7.2	1.8	2.0	253.9
	2017-18	114.8	66.1	19.6	na	20.6	5.2	2.0	2.4	230.6
	2013-14	94.7	59.5	11.0	na	na	5.3	2.1	3.4	175.9

Source: tables 9A.1 & 9A.14

na Not available

Data tables are referenced above by a '9A' prefix and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from the supporting material below (both in Excel and CSV format).



Jurisdictions have a range of funding models to resource fire service organisations and STES organisations. For fire services and STES, levies were the largest source of revenue (54.2 per cent and 59.5 per cent respectively of total funding in 2018-19) (tables 9A.1 and 9A.14).

The Australian Government provides funding to State and Territory governments through programs including:

- The Preparing Australia Package contributed funding for key national emergency management and disaster resilience initiatives. In 2018-19, funding was \$26.1 million, with \$5.0 million provided to states and territories (table 9A.2).
- The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements provides assistance with relief and recovery efforts following an eligible natural disaster event. Cash payments to states and territories in 2018-19 totalled \$390.1 million. Allocations vary across jurisdictions and over time depending on the timing and nature of natural disaster events (table 9A.2).
- The Natural Disaster Resilience Program provided funding to strengthen community resilience to natural disasters. In 2018-19, funding was \$15.1 million (table 9A.2).

The Australian Government also provides financial support to eligible individuals affected by a disaster, with payments in 2018-19 of \$121.7 million (table 9A.2).

Size and scope

Human resources

Nationally in 2018-19, 20 692 full time equivalent (FTE) paid personnel were employed by fire service organisations, with the majority (76.4 per cent) firefighters. A large number of volunteer personnel (207 445 people) also participated in the delivery of services in 2018-19. The proportion of volunteer personnel and the nature of their role varied across jurisdictions (table 9A.3).

For STES, the majority of personnel were volunteers, with 23 796 state and territory emergency services volunteers and 737 paid staff in 2018-19 (table 9A.16). The proportion of volunteer and paid personnel and the nature of their roles varied across jurisdictions (table 9A.16).

Demand for emergency services

Fire service organisations and STES provide emergency response and rescue services for a range of fire and other emergency events. Nationally in 2018-19, fire service organisations attended a total of 391 382 emergency incidents, of which 96 343 were fire events (table 9A.8) and STES organisations attended a total of 68 118 incidents (excluding Queensland), of which 57 922 were storm and cyclone events (table 9A.17).

Indicator Framework

The performance indicator framework provides information on equity, efficiency and effectiveness, and distinguishes the outputs and outcomes of emergency services for fire events.

The performance indicator framework shows which data are complete and comparable in this Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. [Section 1](#) discusses data comparability and completeness from a Report-wide perspective. In addition to the service area's Profile information, the Report's statistical context ([Section 2](#)) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this section.

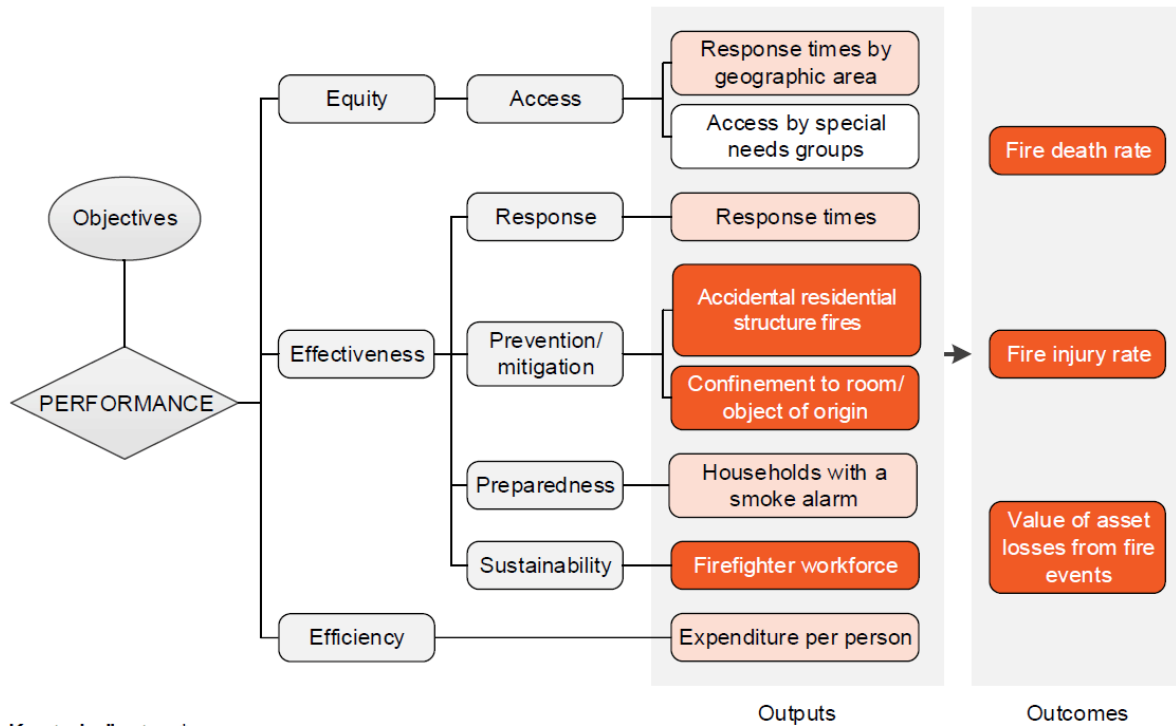
Improvements to performance reporting for emergency services for fire and other events are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

Outputs

Outputs are the services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see section 1). Output information is also critical for equitable, efficient and effective management of government services.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (see section 1).



Key to indicators*

- Text Most recent data for all measures are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for at least one measure are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for all measures are either not comparable and/or not complete
- Text No data reported and/or no measures yet developed

* A description of the comparability and completeness of each measure is provided in indicator interpretation boxes within this section

Indicator Results

An overview of the Emergency services for fire and other events indicator results is presented. Different delivery contexts, locations and types of clients can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of emergency services.

Information to assist the interpretation of these data can be found in the Emergency services interpretative material and data tables. Data tables are identified by a '9A' prefix (for example, table 9A.1).

All data are available for download as an excel spreadsheet and as a CSV dataset — refer to [Download supporting material](#). Specific data used in figures can be downloaded by clicking in the figure area, navigating to the bottom of the visualisation to the grey toolbar, clicking on the 'Download' icon and selecting 'Data' from the menu. Selecting 'PDF' or 'Powerpoint' from the 'Download' menu will download a static view of the performance indicator results.

Response times by geographic area is a proxy indicator of governments' objective to provide fire services in an equitable manner.

Measure 1: The time taken between the arrival of the first fire crew appliance at the scene of a structure fire and initial receipt of the call at the communications centre (including call taking time), by geographic area.

Measure 2: The time taken between the arrival of the first fire crew appliance at the scene of a structure fire and dispatch of the responding fire crew (excluding call taking time), by geographic area.

Guidance: Similar response times across different geography suggest equitable access by area.

■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select measure:

- including call taking time
 excluding call taking time

Select percentile:

- 90th percentile
 50th percentile

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Table 9.7 Response times to structure fires, 90th percentile, including call taking time (minutes)
by jurisdiction, by remoteness, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Major cities	2018-19	11.1	9.0	11.9	12.8	11.0	..	10.5	..
	2017-18	9.5	9.2	11.7	11.2	11.1	..	11.3	..
	2009-10	11.2	9.2	11.6	11.6	na	..	11.3	..
Inner regional	2018-19	19.7	15.1	14.3	22.3	33.1	13.2
	2017-18	16.5	14.8	13.2	20.9	31.3	14.5
	2009-10	18.9	14.2	13.5	24.7	na	11.5
Outer regional	2018-19	24.0	17.9	13.1	27.0	32.4	19.8	..	13.9
	2017-18	21.0	18.7	13.4	21.6	22.9	24.4	..	15.2
	2009-10	21.0	18.3	14.2	27.2	na	22.2	..	10.4
Remote	2018-19	22.0	38.1	15.8	32.8	46.7	27.4	..	17.5
	2017-18	19.6	np	16.9	28.0	19.7	19.7	..	16.7
	2009-10	20.3	np	17.5	27.2	na	22.8	..	11.3
Very remote	2018-19	12.0	..	20.9	47.3	61.2	30.8	..	21.6
	2017-18	23.2	..	17.2	33.4	60.3	29.2	..	60.8
	2009-10	22.0	..	14.9	59.2	na	na	..	18.0

Source: tables 9A.11 & 9A.12

na Not available. np Not published. .. Not applicable

In 2018-19, the time within which 50 per cent of the first responding fire crew appliances arrived at the scene of a structure fire within major cities ranged across jurisdictions:

- from 6.3 to 9.0 minutes; increasing to between 9.0 and 12.8 minutes for 90 per cent to respond (including call taking time)

- from 5.5 to 7.7 minutes; increasing to between 8.0 and 11.3 minutes for 90 per cent to respond (excluding call taking time).

Response times are generally longer for all jurisdictions in regional and remote areas, compared to major cities.

Access by special needs group is an indicator of governments' objective to provide emergency services in an equitable manner.

Measure: The performance of agencies providing emergency services for identified special needs groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator.

Response times is an indicator of governments' objective to provide emergency services that are accessible and responsive.

Measure 1: The time taken between the arrival of the first fire crew appliance at the scene of a structure fire and initial receipt of the call at the communications centre (including call taking time).

Measure 2: The time taken between the arrival of the first fire crew appliance at the scene of a structure fire and dispatch of the responding fire crew (excluding call taking time).

Guidance: Shorter response times suggest that services are more accessible and responsive.

■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

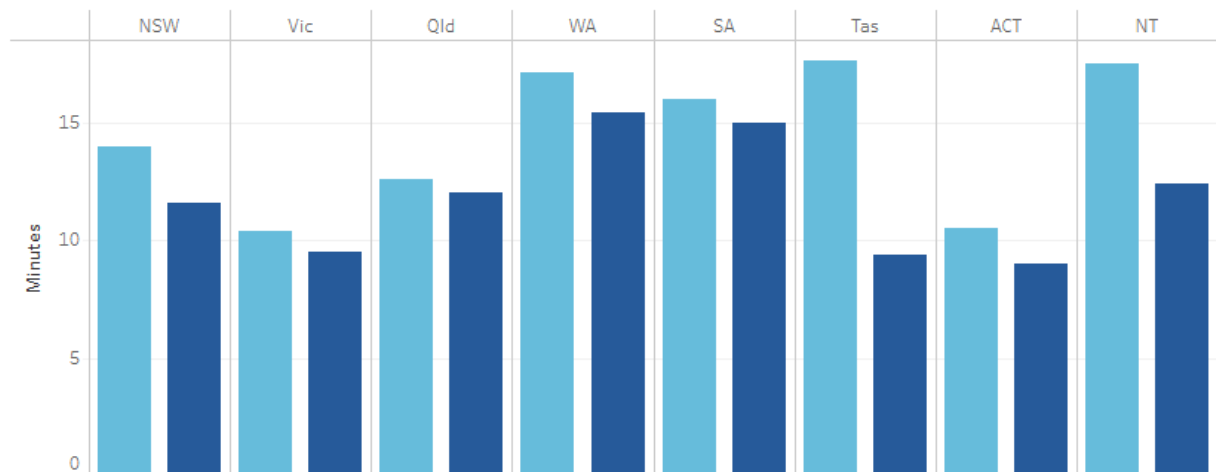
■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Measure:
 including call taking time
 excluding call taking time

Select percentile:
 90th percentile
 50th percentile

Select year:
 2018-19

Figure 9.1 Response times to structure fires, statewide, 90th percentile (minutes) by call taking time, by jurisdiction, by year



Source: tables 9A.11 & 9A.12

Nationally in 2018-19, the time within which 50 per cent of the first responding fire crew appliances arrived at the scene of a structure fire (including call taking time) varied across jurisdictions from 6.6 to 9.7 minutes, increasing to between 10.4 and 17.6 minutes for 90 per cent to respond.

Accidental residential structure fires is an indicator of governments' objective to contribute to the community's management of risks through the promotion of risk reduction and mitigation activities.

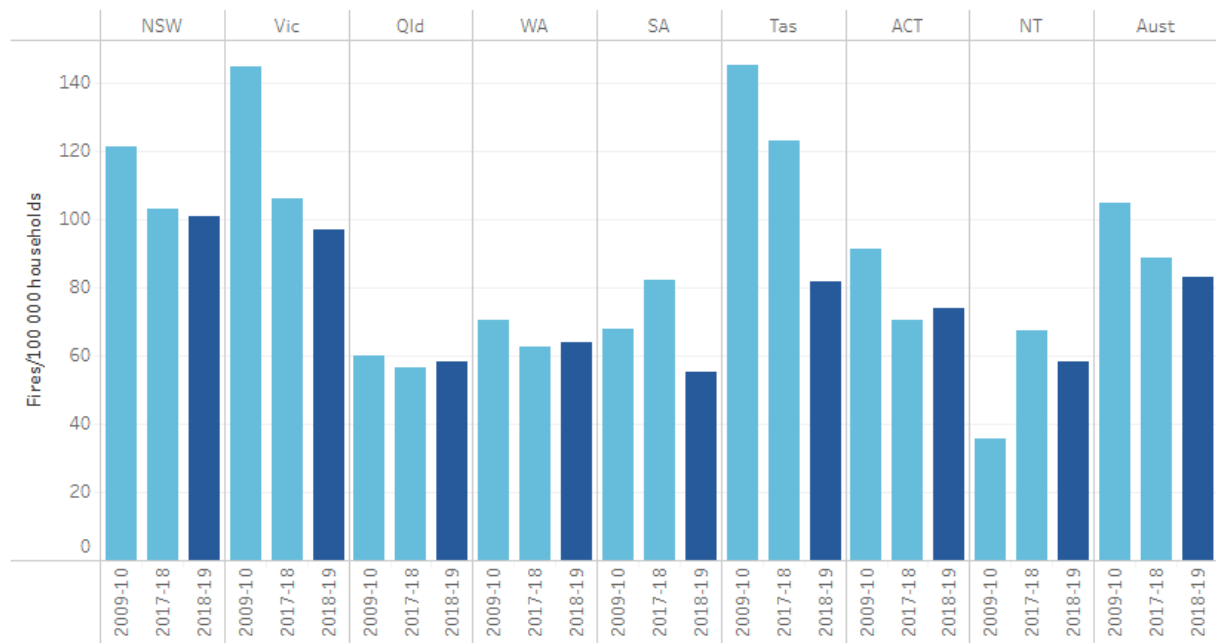
Measure: The number of accidental residential structure fire incidents divided by the total number of households (multiplied by 100 000), where accidental residential structure fires are defined as fires that are not deliberately lit and could have been reduced or prevented with effective educational programs.

Guidance: A low or decreasing incidence of accidental residential structural fire indicates greater community preparedness.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s):

Figure 9.2 Accidental residential structure fires per 100 000 households by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.9

The national rate of accidental residential structure fires was 82.8 per 100 000 households in 2018-19.

Confinement to room/object of origin is an indicator of governments' objective to contribute to the community's management of risks through the promotion of risk reduction and mitigation activities.

Measure: The number of building fires confined to the object, part room and room of origin, divided by the number of building fires attributed to confinement. A building fire is a fire that has caused some damage to a building structure (such as a house).

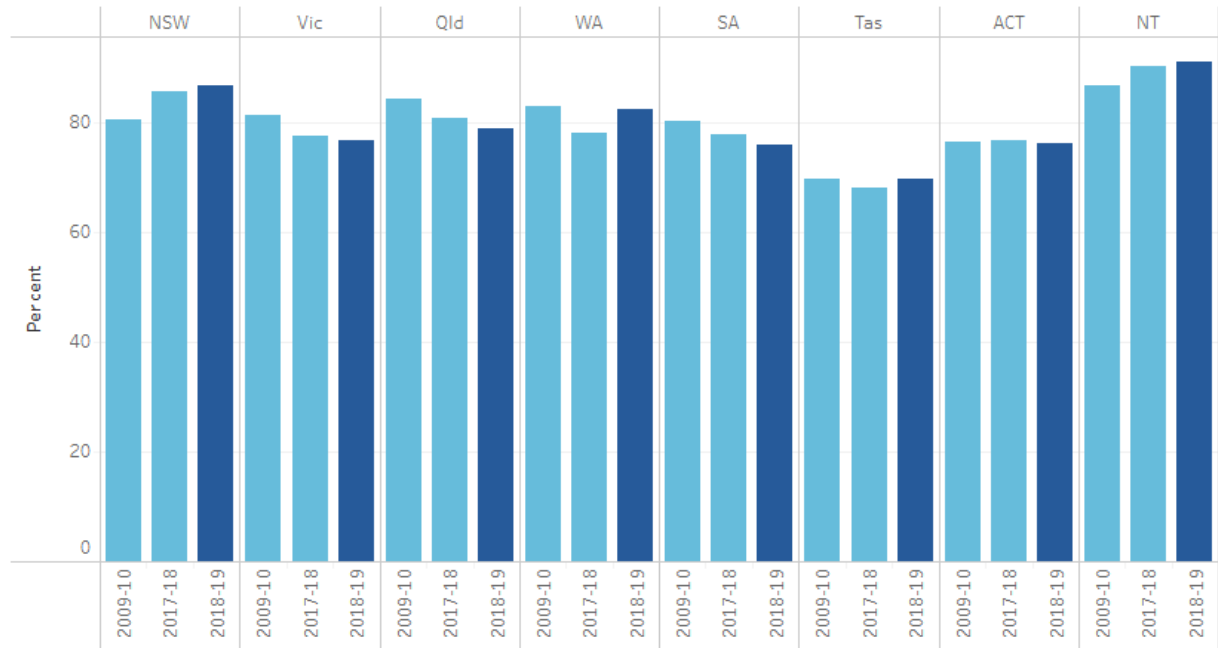
Guidance: A high or increasing proportion of structure fires confined to the object or room of origin is desirable.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s): Select ignition type:

Accidental structure fires
 Incendiary and suspicious structure fires
 Other ignition types

Figure 9.3 Proportion of building fires confined to room of origin by ignition type, by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.6

The proportion of building fires confined to room of origin varies across jurisdictions, and within jurisdictions over time.

Households with a smoke alarm is an indicator of governments' objective to contribute to the communities' management of risks and its preparedness.

Measure 1: The number of households with a smoke alarm installed, divided by the total number of households

Measure 2: The number of households with a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested (manually in the last 12 months), divided by the total number of households.

Guidance: A high or increasing proportion of households with a smoke alarm that is installed and operational indicates greater community preparedness.

- Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.
- Data are incomplete for the current reporting period.

Select measure:

- Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector installed
- Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Table 9.8 Households with a smoke alarm or smoke detector
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector installed	2018-19	na	97.2	97.4	90.0	na	na	na	na	na
	2017-18	95.6	97.2	97.1	na	na	na	na	na	na
	2009-10	93.7	97.2	96.4	89.0	na	na	na	na	na
Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested	2018-19	na	na	83.6	61.0	na	na	na	na	na
	2017-18	na	na	79.9	na	na	na	na	na	na
	2009-10	na	na	89.2	na	na	na	na	na	na

Source: table 9A.10
na Not available.

One key fire risk preparedness strategy across all jurisdictions is the mandated installation of smoke detectors in residential structures. Nationally consistent data for all jurisdictions are not available. However, recent jurisdictional surveys estimate that 97.2 per cent, 97.4 per cent and 90.0 per cent of households in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia respectively, had an installed smoke alarm/detector in 2018-19.

In 2018-19, the estimated percentage of households in Queensland and Western Australia with a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested was 83.6 per cent and 61.0 per cent respectively – data were not available for other jurisdictions. A smoke alarm is not considered operational, unless the owner has taken action to test or maintain it in the last 12 months.

Firefighter workforce is an indicator of governments' objective to provide emergency services that are sustainable.

Measure 1: 'Workforce by age group' – the age profile of the workforce, measured by the proportion of the operational workforce (excludes support workforce) in 10 year age groups (under 30, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59 and 60 and over).

Guidance: a low or decreasing proportion of the workforce who are in the younger age groups and/or a high or increasing proportion who are closer to retirement, suggests sustainability problems may arise in the coming decade as the older age group starts to retire.

Measure 2: 'Workforce attrition' – the level of attrition in the operational workforce, calculated as the number of firefighting employees (headcount) who exit the organisation as a proportion of the total number of firefighting employees.

Guidance: low or decreasing levels of staff attrition are desirable.

■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

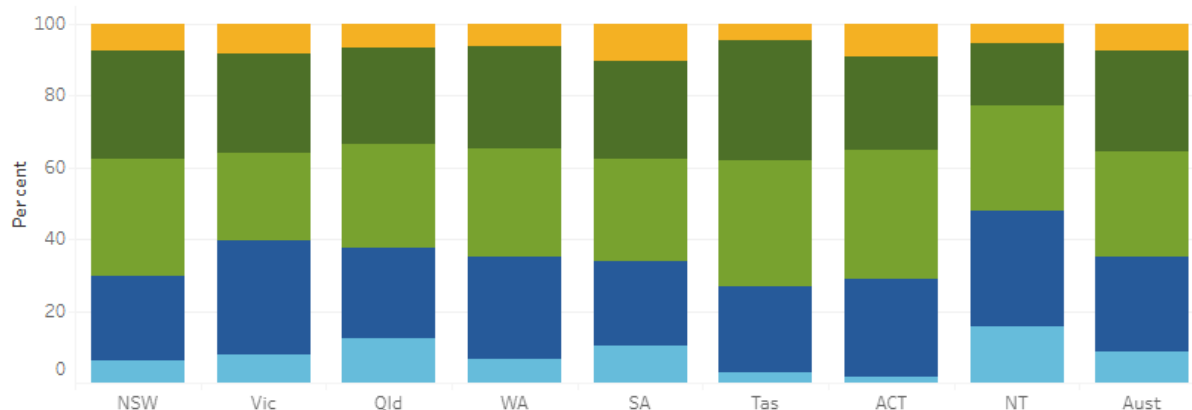
■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year (for both figure and table):

2018-19



Figure 9.4 Firefighter workforce, 2018-19
by age group, by jurisdiction



Source: table 9A.3

Nationally in 2018-19, 64.6 per cent of the firefighter workforce were aged under 50 years, similar to the proportion for the previous four years for which data are available.

Table 9.9 Firefighter workforce attrition, 2018-19
by jurisdiction

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
%	1.6	3.4	7.0	3.7	1.7	1.3	4.3	2.7	3.8

Source: table 9A.3

The attrition rate was 3.8 per cent, similar to 3.7 per cent in 2017-18 and a decrease from 4.4 per cent in 2014-15 (table 9A.2).

Expenditure per person is a proxy indicator of governments' objective of providing emergency services in an efficient manner.

Measure: Total fire service organisation expenditure per person in the population.

Guidance: All else being equal, low or declining expenditure per person may reflect improving efficiency. Alternatively, it may reflect lower quality responses or less challenging fires.

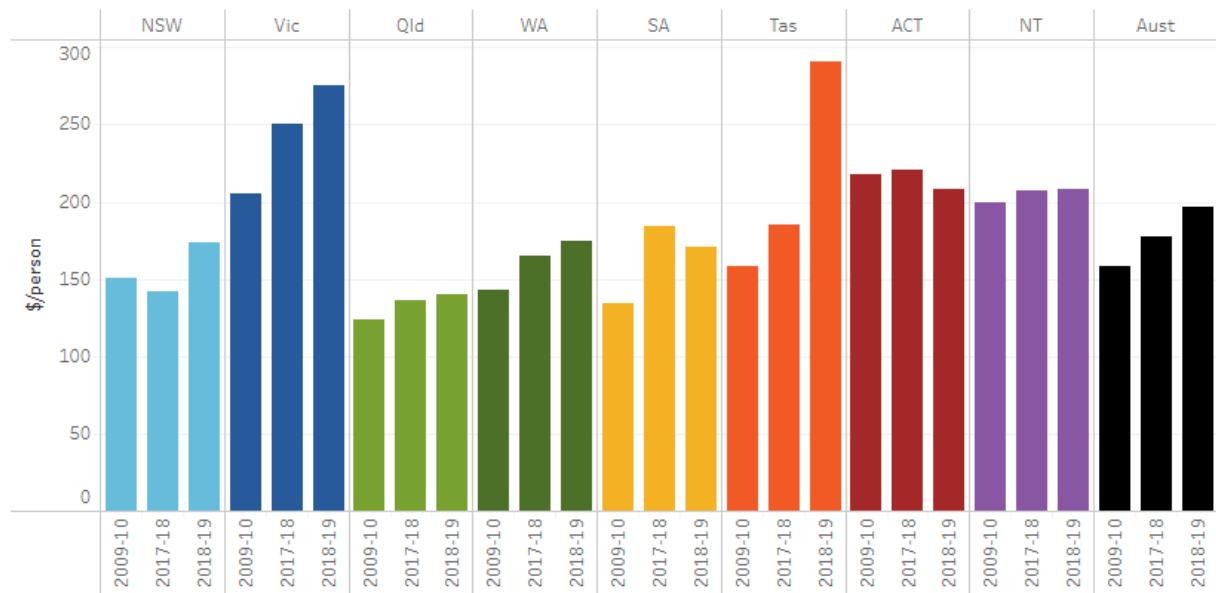
■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Figure 9.5 Expenditure per person (2018-19 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.13

Nationally in 2018-19, the total expenditure of fire service organisations was \$196.55 per person in the population. Expenditure data disaggregated by labour, capital and other costs are available in table 9A.13.

Fire death rate is an indicator of governments' objective to reduce the adverse effects of emergency events on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, economy and environment).

Measure 1: 'Annual fire death rate' – all deaths, per million people, whose underlying cause of death is fire related to smoke, fire and flames, and including all (structure and landscape) fires.

Measure 2: 'Landscape fire death rate' – deaths resulting from landscape fires only, per million people. Landscape fire deaths include those that result from the fire, but whose primary cause may be related to other factors (except for self-harm deaths).

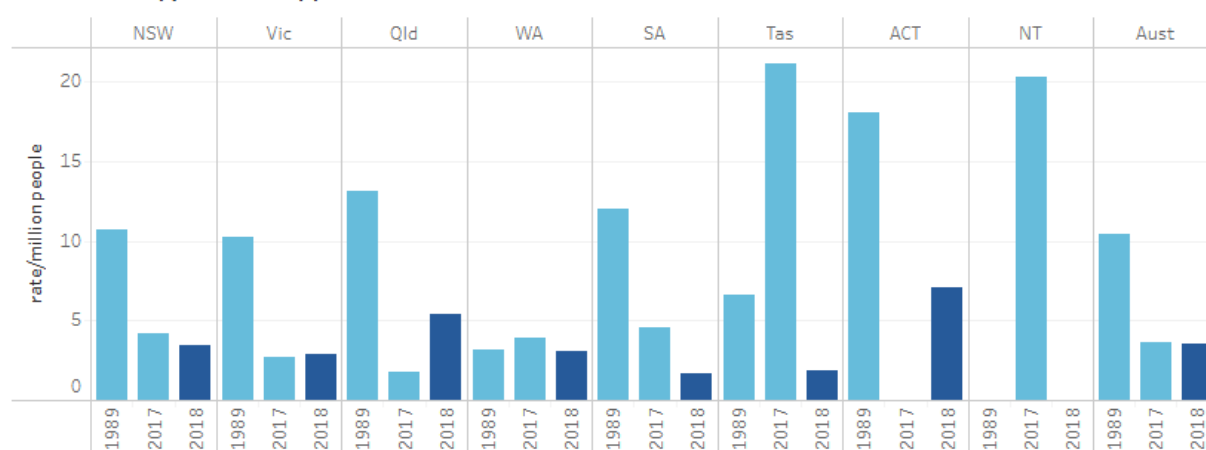
Guidance: No deaths or a decreasing rate of fire deaths is desirable. Annual fire death rates can be particularly volatile because of the small number of fire deaths and the influence of large irregular fire events.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s) (applies to figure 9.6):

(Multiple values) ▼

Figure 9.6 Annual fire death rate
by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.4

Nationally, the annual fire death rate was 3.5 deaths per million people in 2018 (87 fire deaths).

Select year (applies to table 9.10):

2018-19 ▼

Table 9.10 Landscape fire death rate, Deaths per million people, 2018-19
by jurisdiction

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
rate	-	-	0.4	-	1.7	-	-	-	0.2

Source: table 9A.4

- Nil or rounded to zero.

Comparatively few deaths are related to landscape fires annually (5 deaths in 2018-19), although the landscape fire death rate is punctuated by large, irregular events.

Fire injury rate is an indicator of governments' objective to reduce the adverse effects of events on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, economy and environment).

Measure: The number of hospitalised fire injury cases per 100 000 people.

Guidance: No fire injuries or a decreasing number and rate of fire injuries is desirable.

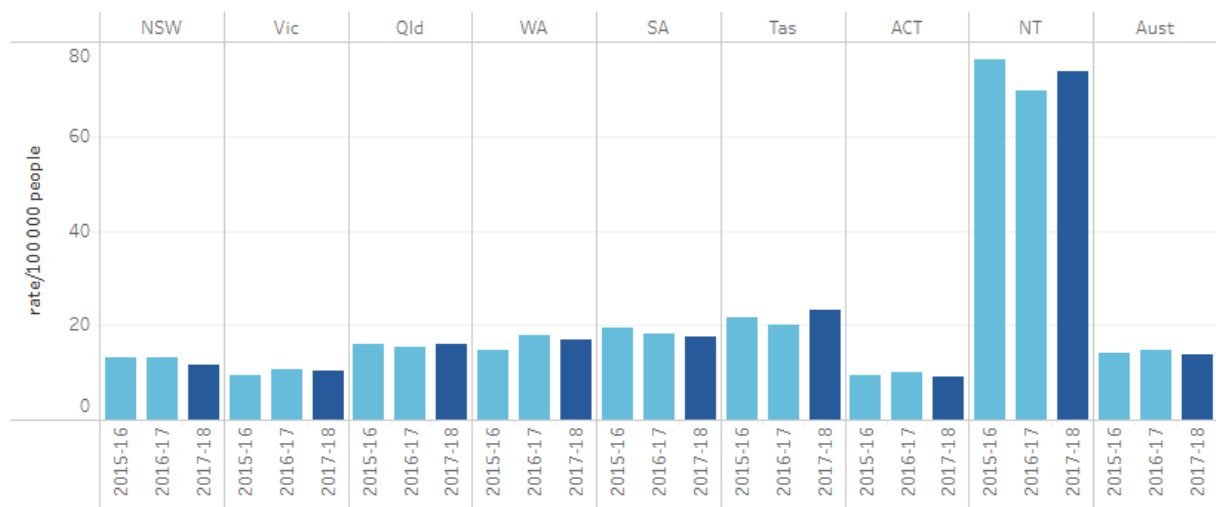
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s):

(All) ▼

Figure 9.7 Hospital admissions due to fire injury by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.5

Nationally in 2017-18, there were an estimated 3436 hospitalisations due to fire injury, equating to a rate of 13.9 per 100 000 people.

Value of asset losses from fire events is an indicator of governments' objective to reduce the adverse effects of events on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, economy and environment).

Measure: The estimated monetary value of the damage to domestic property and contents caused by the fire and firefighting operations based on insurance claims. It does not include land value.

Guidance: Lower or decreasing asset losses from fire events is desirable.

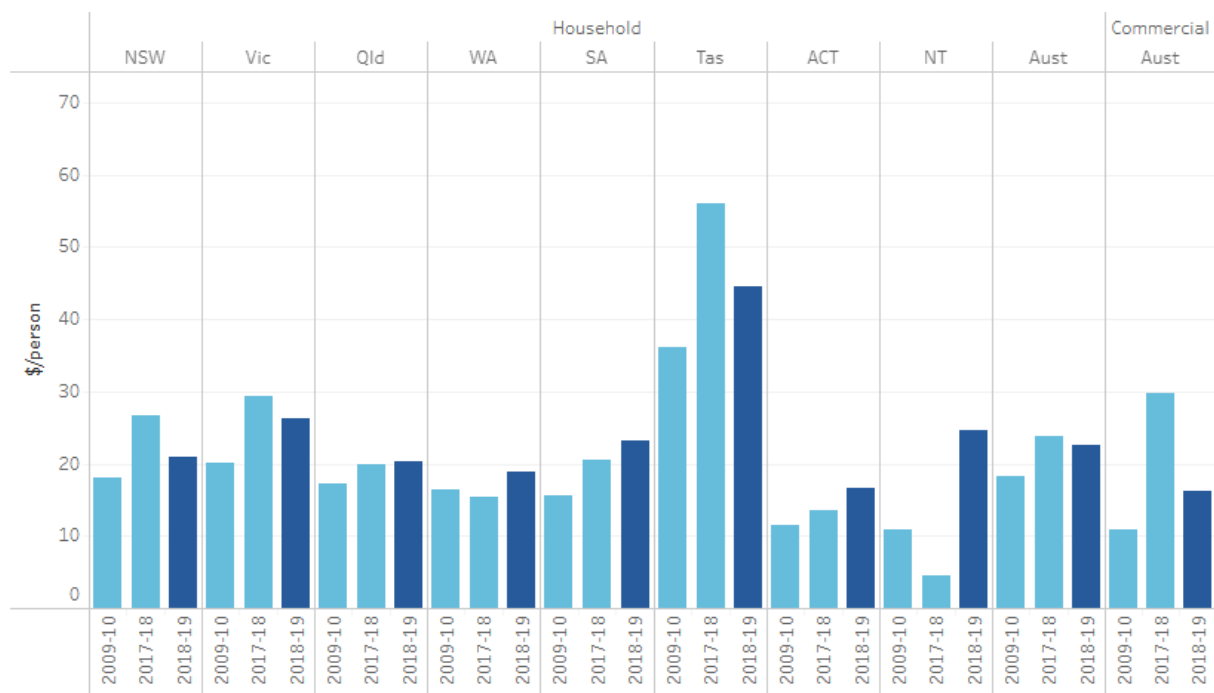
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Figure 9.8 Total value of household Fire event insurance claims (2018-19 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.7

Household (domestic) insurance fire event claims increased for:

- average value of claims — 101.3 per cent increase in real terms from \$36 154 in 2009-10 to \$72 768 in 2018-19 (table 9A.7)
- total value of claims per person in the population — a 23.7 per cent increase in real terms from \$18.28 per person in 2009-10 to \$22.62 per person in 2018-19, though the lowest figure since 2014-15.

There were 6860 commercial insurance claims from fire events in 2018-19, equating to \$16.24 per person in the population which is the lowest figure since 2012-13.

[Refer to the interpretative material for detailed indicator interpretation, definitions and caveats. www.pc.gov.au/rogs](http://www.pc.gov.au/rogs)

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Download supporting material

[9 Emergency services interpretative material \(PDF - 394 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services interpretative material \(Word - 137 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services data tables \(XLSX - 279 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services dataset \(CSV - 488 Kb\)](#)

See the interpretative material and corresponding table number in the data tables for detailed definitions, caveats, footnotes and data source(s).