

# Report on Government Services 2021

PART D, SECTION 9: RELEASED ON 22 JANUARY 2021

## 9 Emergency services for fire and other events

### **Impact of COVID-19 on data for the Emergency services for fire and other events section**

COVID-19 may affect data in this Report in a number of ways. This includes in respect of actual performance (that is, the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery in 2020 which is reflected in the data results), and the collection and processing of data (that is, the ability of data providers to undertake data collection and process results for inclusion in the Report).

For the Emergency services for fire and other events section, there are no significant changes to the data as a result of COVID-19.

### **Impact of the 2019-20 Australian bushfires for the Emergency services for fire and other events section**

For this section, there has been some impact on data that is attributable to the bushfires, but this has not affected either the comparability or completeness of any indicators. Impacts may potentially flow through to indicators on expenditure per person, fire death rate and value of fire asset losses from fire events. Some specific footnoting identifies some additional technical matters in the data which may be applicable to particular jurisdictions (such as NSW and Victoria).

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.

## 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 community's 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

Nationally in 2019-20, the total revenue of fire service organisations was \$5.7 billion (including WA STES) and for STES (excluding WA) was \$252 million (table 9.6).

**Select year(s):**

Multiple values

**Table 9.6 Revenue of State and Territory Emergency Services (STES) organisations (\$m) (2019-20 dollars)**  
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Fire service organisations	2019-20	1,797.1	2,036.5	785.2	499.8	303.3	133.6	88.8	47.0	5,691.3
	2018-19	1,358.6	1,505.0	719.6	467.2	262.8	111.5	71.9	40.1	4,536.7
	2014-15	1,098.0	1,226.9	670.3	393.5	228.5	79.6	73.5	41.7	3,812.1
STES organisations	2019-20	125.8	68.4	25.3	na	23.3	5.4	2.3	1.2	251.6
	2018-19	134.4	70.4	20.0	na	22.1	7.3	1.8	2.0	258.1
	2014-15	112.1	59.0	10.0	na	17.1	5.9	2.3	na	206.3

Source: tables 9A.1 &amp; 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, government grants were the largest source of revenue in 2019-20 (47.3 per cent of total funding) and levies were the largest revenue source for STES (57.5 per cent of total funding) (tables 9A.1 and 9A.14).

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

- The Disaster Risk Reduction Package supports initiatives to reduce the risk and limit the impact of disasters in line with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. In 2019-20, funding was \$20.9 million (table 9A.2).
- The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements and Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements provide assistance with relief and recovery efforts following an eligible natural disaster event. Cash payments to states and territories in 2019-20 totalled \$1.4 billion (Australian Government 2020)<sup>1</sup>. Allocations vary across jurisdictions and over time depending on the timing and nature of natural disaster events.

The Australian Government also provides financial support to eligible individuals affected by a disaster, with payments in 2019-20 of \$250.4 million (table 9A.2).

1. This figure differs from the estimate in the table 9A.2 which reflects payments to states and territories on an accruals basis.

## Size and scope

### Human resources

Nationally in 2019-20, 22 492 full time equivalent (FTE) paid personnel were employed by fire service organisations, with the majority (77.8 per cent) firefighters. A large number of volunteer personnel (201 662 people) also participated in the delivery of services in 2019-20. 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 24 948 state and territory emergency services volunteers and 717 paid staff in 2019-20 (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 2019-20, fire service organisations attended a total of 390 861 emergency incidents, of which 93 403 were fire events (table 9A.8) and STES organisations attended a total of 93 419 incidents (excluding Queensland), of which 69 201 were storm and cyclone events (table 9A.17).

## References

Australian Government 2020, *Final Budget Outcome 2019-20*.

## 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.

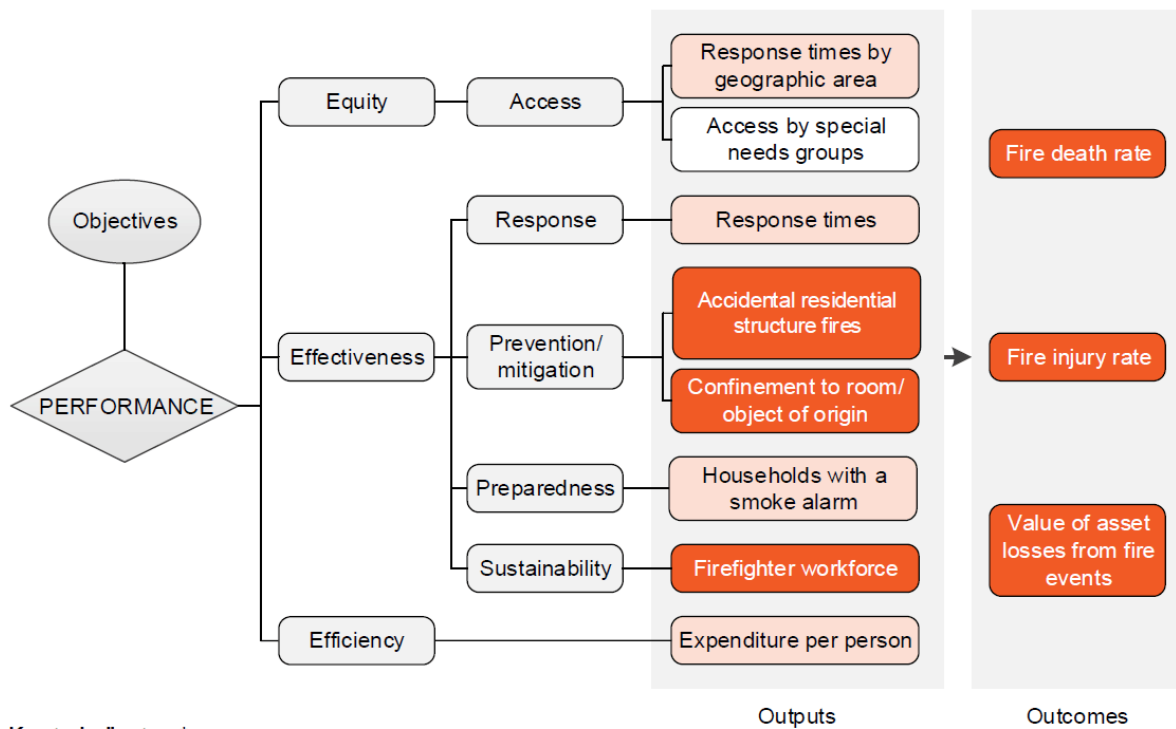
Improvements to performance reporting for emergency services for fire and other events are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

## 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	2019-20	11.5	9.3	12.0	12.6	11.3	..	10.5	..
	2018-19	11.1	9.0	11.9	12.8	11.0	..	10.5	..
	2010-11	11.5	9.0	12.1	11.3	na	..	10.7	..
Inner regional	2019-20	19.0	15.0	13.6	22.0	32.1	12.8	..	..
	2018-19	19.7	15.1	14.3	22.3	33.1	13.1	..	..
	2010-11	19.0	15.2	11.9	24.3	na	13.0	..	..
Outer regional	2019-20	21.0	19.2	13.5	25.2	29.3	23.2	..	10.6
	2018-19	24.0	17.9	13.1	27.0	32.4	19.7	..	13.9
	2010-11	22.0	20.7	12.3	22.4	na	22.7	..	10.3
Remote	2019-20	23.2	68.0	18.7	27.9	46.8	17.5	..	9.8
	2018-19	22.0	38.1	15.8	32.8	46.7	27.4	..	17.5
	2010-11	21.2	np	11.9	23.4	na	22.7	..	16.8
Very remote	2019-20	13.7	..	20.0	37.2	40.8	14.6	..	34.4
	2018-19	12.0	..	20.9	47.3	61.2	30.8	..	21.6
	2010-11	18.0	..	na	94.8	na	17.1	..	36.1

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

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

In 2019-20, 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 6.5 to 8.8 minutes; increasing to between 9.3 and 12.6 minutes for 90 per cent to respond (including call taking time)
- from 5.6 to 7.4 minutes; increasing to between 8.2 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. In the context of emergency services for fire events, special needs groups are identified by fire service organisations as 'at risk' communities. Refer to the supporting interpretative material below.

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.

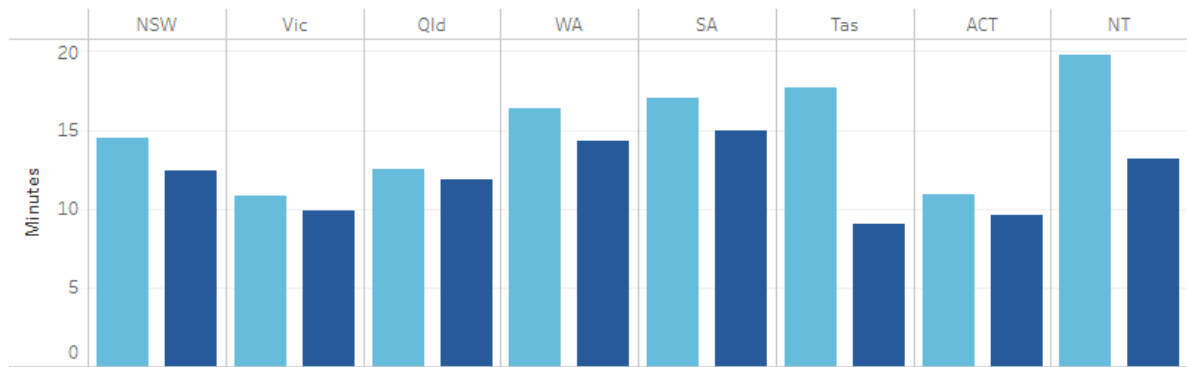
■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

**Measure:**  
 including call taking time  
 excluding call taking time

**Select percentile:**  
 90th percentile  
 50th percentile

**Select year:**  
 2019-20

Figure 9.1 Response times to structure fires, statewide, 90th percentile (minutes), 2019-20 by call taking time, by jurisdiction (a)



Source: tables 9A.11 & 9A.12  
 (a) Data are not available for SA prior to 2014-15.

Nationally in 2019-20, 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 6.9 to 9.3 minutes, increasing to between 10.8 and 19.8 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.

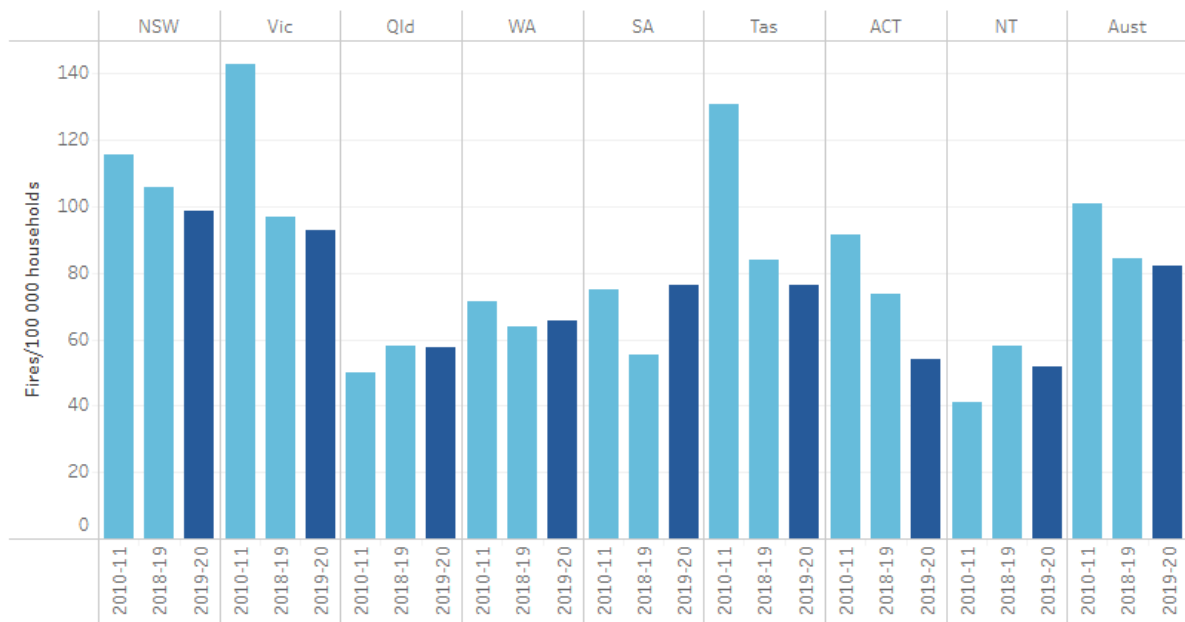
**Guidance:** A low or decreasing incidence of accidental residential structural fire indicates greater community preparedness.

- 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):

(Multiple values) ▼

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 82.2 per 100 000 households in 2019-20, a decrease from 84.4 per cent in 2018-19 and the lowest rate for the 10 years of data in this Report.

**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).

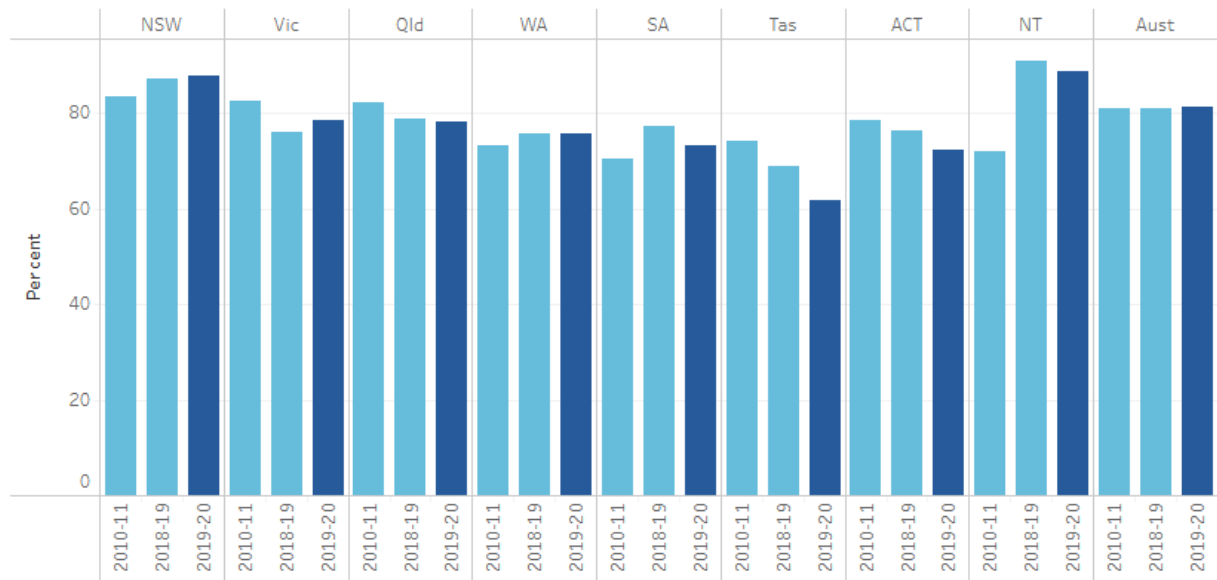
**Guidance:** A high or increasing proportion of structure fires confined to the object or room of origin is desirable.

- 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. All required 2019-20 data are not available for all jurisdictions except Queensland.

**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
Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector installed	2019-20	na	na	97.8	na	na	na	na	na
	2018-19	na	na	97.4	90.0	na	na	na	na
	2010-11	94.2	na	95.0	90.0	na	na	na	na
Estimated percentage of households with a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested	2019-20	na	na	83.4	na	na	na	na	na
	2018-19	na	na	83.6	61.0	na	na	na	na
	2010-11	na	na	86.6	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. A survey estimates that 97.8 per cent of households in Queensland had an installed smoke alarm/detector in 2019-20 and an estimated 83.4 per cent of households had a smoke alarm/detector that is operational/has been tested. 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.

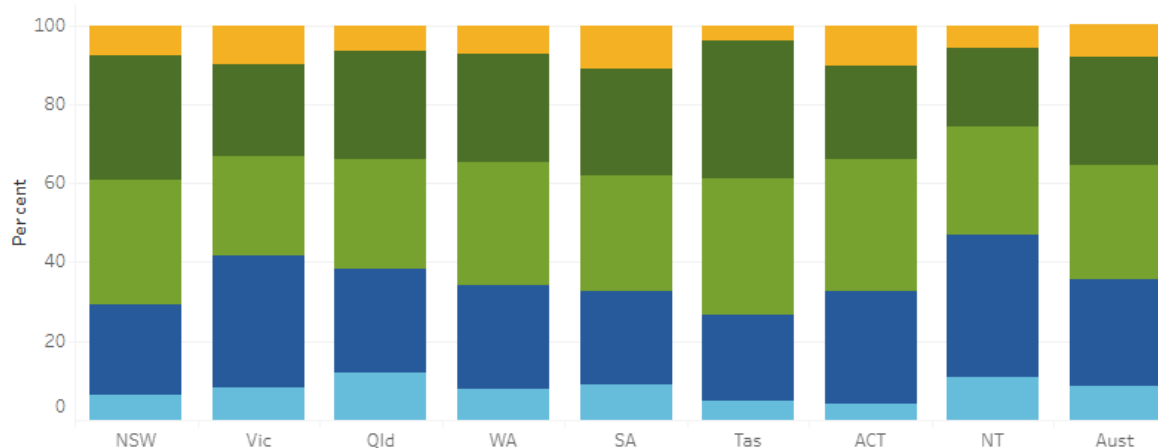
■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year (for both figure and table):

2019-20

- 60+ years old
- 50-59 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 30-39 years old
- <30 years old

Figure 9.4 Firefighter workforce, 2019-20  
by age group, by jurisdiction



Source: table 9A.3

Nationally in 2019-20, 64.5 per cent of the firefighter workforce were aged under 50 years, similar to the proportion for the previous five years for which data are available.

Table 9.9 Firefighter workforce attrition, 2019-20  
by jurisdiction

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
%	1.6	2.3	6.9	3.6	2.3	2.2	3.4	2.8	3.5

Source: table 9A.3

The attrition rate was 3.5 per cent, down from 3.9 per cent in 2018-19 (table 9A.3).

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.

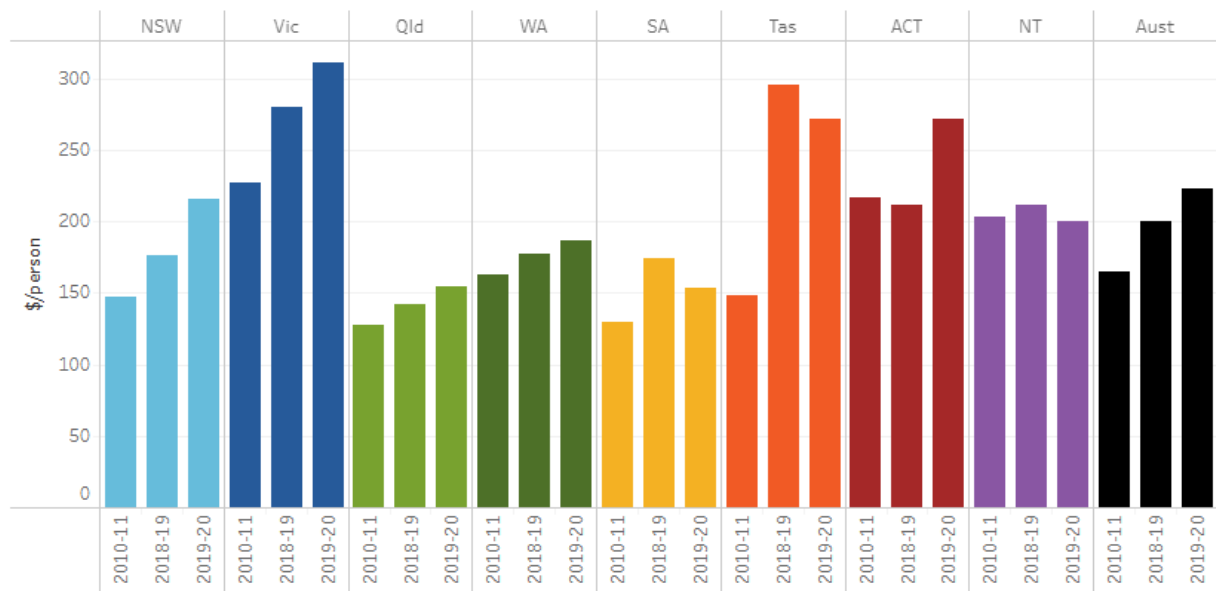
■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

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

Select year(s):

Jurisdiction:  
 ■ NSW ■ Vic ■ Qld ■ WA ■ SA ■ Tas ■ ACT ■ NT ■ Aust

Figure 9.5 Expenditure per person (2019-20 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.13

Nationally in 2019-20, the total expenditure of fire service organisations was \$223 per person in the population, continuing the annual increase from 2016-17. 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).

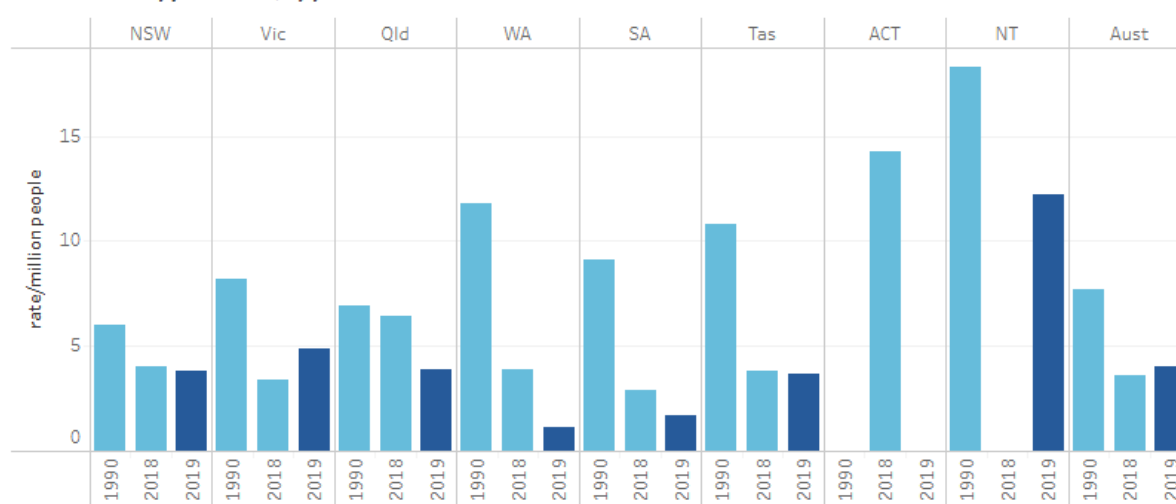
**Guidance:** No deaths or a decreasing rate of fire deaths is desirable. Annual fire death rates can be particularly volatile because of the small number of fire deaths and the influence of large irregular fire events.

- 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 4.0 deaths per million people in 2019 (101 fire deaths).

Select year (applies to table 9.10):

2019-20 ▼

Table 9.10 Landscape fire death rate, Deaths per million people, 2019-20  
by jurisdiction

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
rate	3.2	0.8	-	-	1.7	-	-	-	1.3

Source: table 9A.4

- Nil or rounded to zero.

There were 34 deaths related to landscape fires (table 9A.4), equating to a rate of 1.3 deaths per million people in 2019-20.



**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.

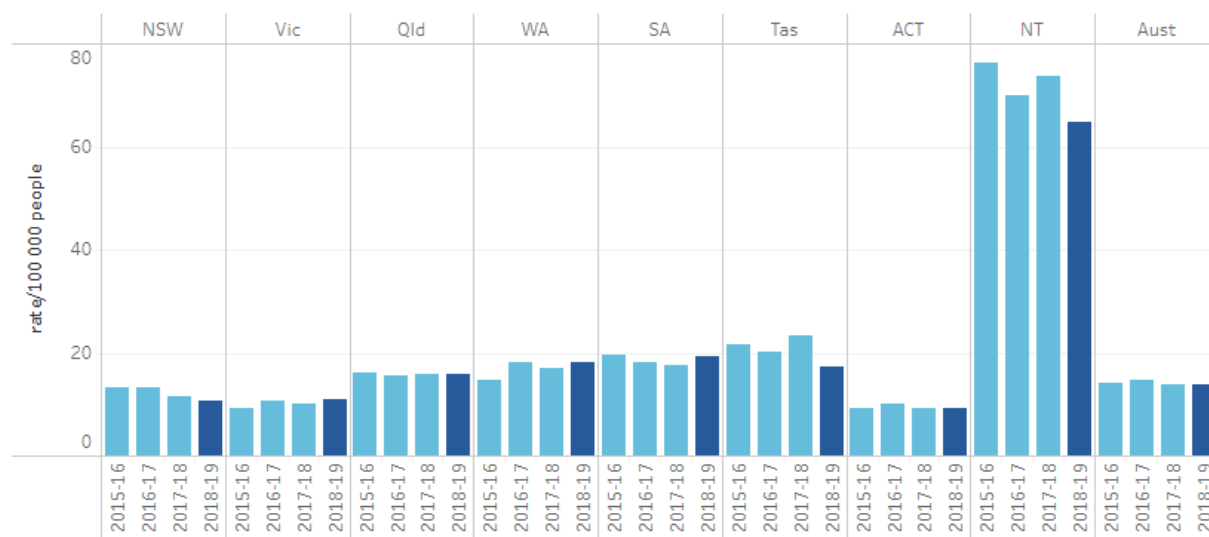
**Guidance:** No fire injuries or a decreasing number and rate of fire injuries is desirable.

- 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 2018-19, there were an estimated 3466 hospitalisations due to fire injury (table 9A.5), equating to a rate of 13.8 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.

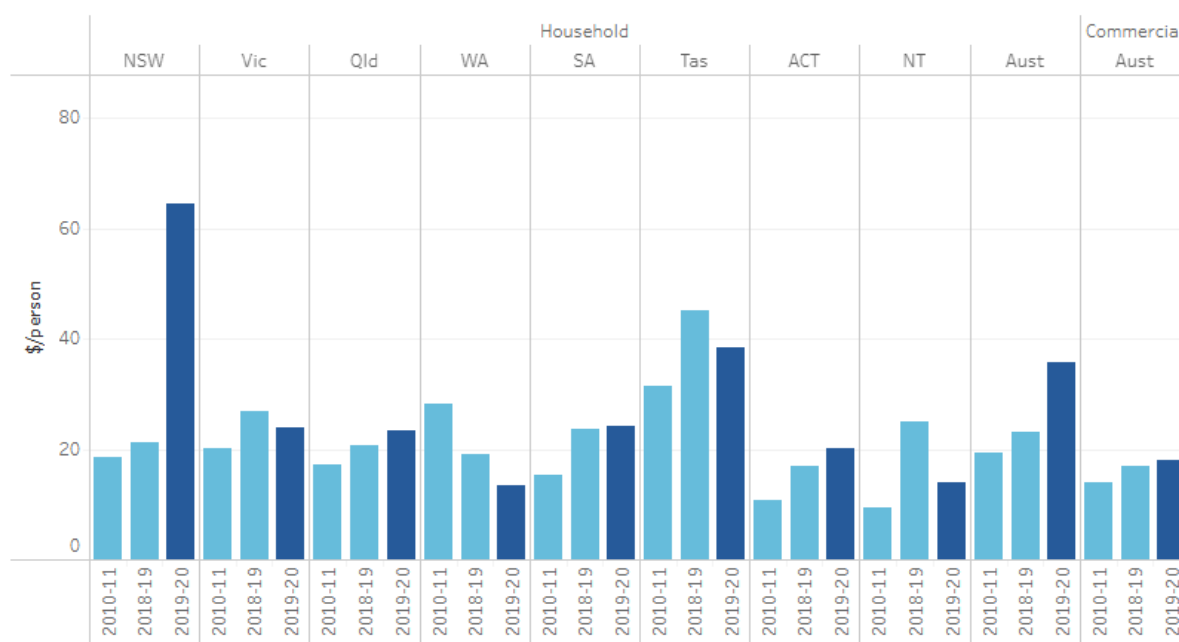
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ 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 (2019-20 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.7

Household (domestic) insurance fire event claims increased for:

- average value of claims — 70.2 per cent increase in real terms from \$39 884 in 2010-11 to \$67 889 in 2019-20 (table 9A.7)
- total value of claims per person in the population — a 83.7 per cent increase in real terms from \$19.49 per person in 2010-11 to \$35.80 per person in 2019-20.

There were 6056 commercial insurance claims from fire events in 2019-20 (table 9A.7), equating to \$17.96 per person in the population.

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

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).

## Download supporting material

[9 Emergency services interpretative material \(PDF - 625 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services interpretative material \(Word - 142 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services data tables \(XLSX - 386 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services dataset \(CSV - 507 Kb\)](#)

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