
Report on Government Services 2022

PART D, SECTION 9: RELEASED ON 28 JANUARY 2022

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 and 2021 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.

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.1–12), and STES (tables 9A.13–17). The scope of fire service organisations data provided by jurisdictions is presented in [table 9.3](#) in the interpretative material.

Funding

Nationally in 2020-21, the total revenue of fire service organisations was \$4.7 billion (including WA STES) and for STES (excluding WA) was \$292 million (table 9.6).

Select year(s):

Multiple values

Table 9.6 Revenue of State and Territory Emergency Services (STES) organisations (\$m) (2020-21 dollars)
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Fire service organisations	2020-21	1,510.1	1,348.7	794.3	505.3	268.9	122.0	85.6	31.4	4,666.3
	2019-20	1,824.4	2,067.5	797.2	507.4	308.0	135.6	90.1	47.7	5,778.0
	2015-16	1,137.5	1,320.3	650.9	427.4	240.2	147.5	74.7	37.6	4,036.2
STES organisations	2020-21	154.7	71.9	24.0	na	28.6	6.0	1.5	4.9	291.6
	2019-20	127.7	69.4	25.7	na	23.6	5.5	2.3	1.2	255.4
	2015-16	122.3	59.3	21.8	na	18.0	5.8	2.2	3.6	233.1

Source: tables 9A.1 & 9A.13

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 2020-21 (53.1 per cent of total funding) and levies were the largest revenue source for STES (57.4 per cent of total funding) (tables 9A.1 and 9A.13).

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 2020-21, 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 2020-21 totalled \$725.3 million (Australian Government 2021)¹. 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 2020-21 of \$442.3 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 2020-21, 22 759 full time equivalent (FTE) paid personnel were employed by fire service organisations, with the majority (76.7 per cent) firefighters. A large number of volunteer personnel (200 780 people) also participated in the delivery of services in 2020-21. 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 25 076 STES volunteers and 780 paid staff in 2020-21 (table 9A.15). The proportion of volunteer and paid personnel and the nature of their roles varied across jurisdictions (table 9A.15).

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 2020-21, fire service organisations attended a total of 371 471 emergency incidents, of which 81 394 were fire events (table 9A.8) and STES organisations attended a total of 91 342 incidents (excluding Queensland), of which 65 670 were storm and cyclone events (table 9A.16).

References

Australian Government 2021, *Final Budget Outcome 2020-21*.

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 contextual information for this service area (see Context tab and supporting interpretative material), the Report's statistical context ([Section 2](#)) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this section.

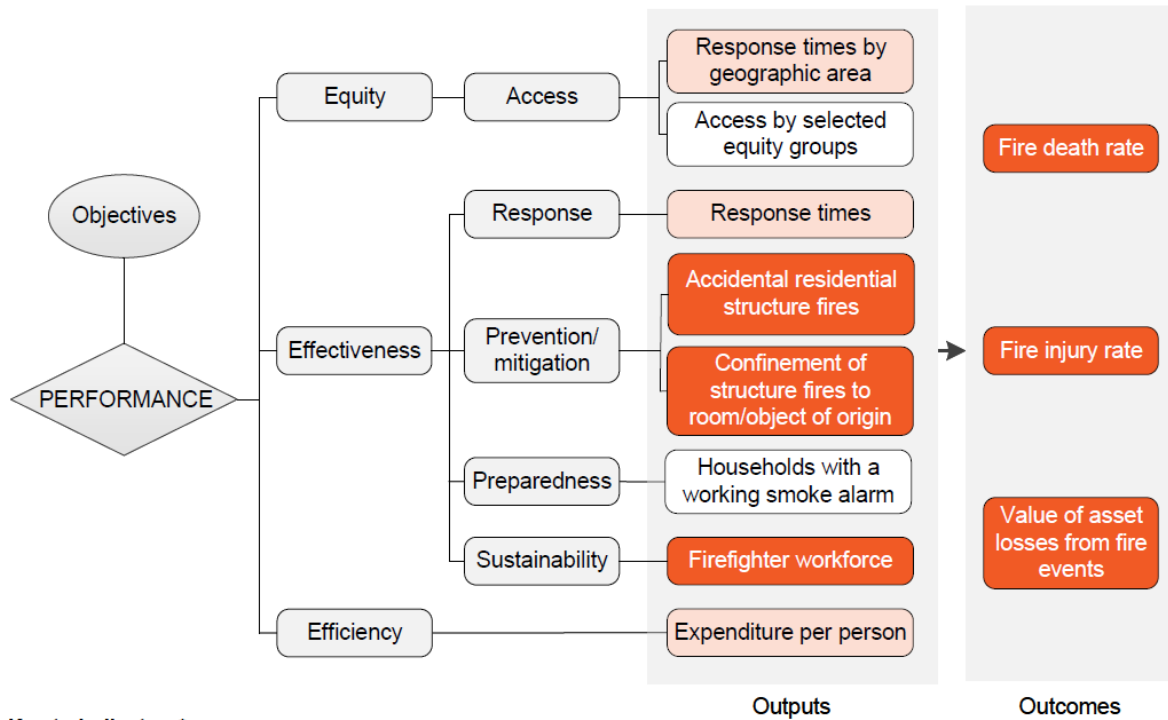
Improvements to performance reporting for emergency services for fire and other events are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

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 the 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 supporting 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.

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

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

Select measure:

- including call taking time
 excluding call taking time

Select percentile:

- 50th percentile
 90th percentile

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Table 9.7 Response times to structure fires, 50th percentile, including call taking time (minutes)
by jurisdiction, by remoteness, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Major cities	2020-21	7.1	6.5	8.1	9.0	7.2	..	6.9	..
	2019-20	7.0	6.5	7.9	8.8	7.5	..	7.5	..
	2011-12	7.5	6.4	7.2	8.0	na	..	7.6	..
Inner regional	2020-21	10.5	8.7	8.1	13.8	13.6	7.4
	2019-20	10.0	8.6	8.1	14.7	12.8	7.9
	2011-12	10.6	8.6	7.6	12.9	na	7.5
Outer regional	2020-21	10.2	9.2	8.3	9.5	12.6	12.1	..	7.9
	2019-20	10.8	9.1	8.7	9.3	12.1	12.0	..	4.7
	2011-12	11.0	9.4	8.2	9.9	na	10.6	..	7.2
Remote	2020-21	9.3	6.4	7.4	15.8	13.7	12.7	..	9.1
	2019-20	10.0	19.0	7.7	17.5	14.7	13.0	..	4.6
	2011-12	11.0	np	7.6	14.3	na	10.9	..	6.5
Very remote	2020-21	8.3	..	8.9	20.8	20.1	12.4	..	11.5
	2019-20	9.1	..	9.2	18.0	21.4	14.6	..	15.3
	2011-12	na	..	8.5	13.6	na	na	..	10.8

Source: table 9A.10 & 9A.11

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

In 2020-21, 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 9.0 minutes; increasing to between 9.3 and 13.0 minutes for 90 per cent to respond (including call taking time)
- from 5.4 to 7.7 minutes; increasing to between 8.0 and 11.6 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 selected equity groups is an indicator of governments' objective to provide emergency services in an equitable manner.

Measure: The performance of agencies providing emergency services to identified special needs groups. In the context of emergency services for fire events, selected equity groups are identified by fire service organisations as 'at risk'. Refer to the supporting interpretative material below.

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.

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

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

Measure:

- including call taking time
 excluding call taking time

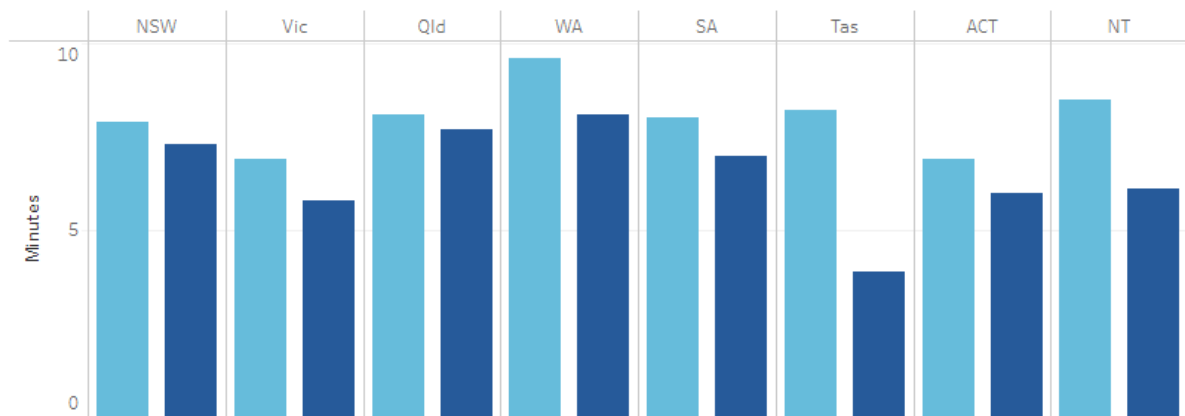
Select percentile:

- 50th percentile
 90th percentile

Select year:

2020-21 ▼

Figure 9.1 Response times to structure fires, statewide, 50th percentile (minutes), 2020-21 by call taking time, by jurisdiction (a)



Source: tables 9A.10 & 9A.11

(a) Data including call waiting time are not available for SA prior to 2014-15.

Nationally in 2020-21, 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 9.6 minutes, increasing to between 10.8 and 20.3 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 rate of accidental residential structure fires per 100 000 households.

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

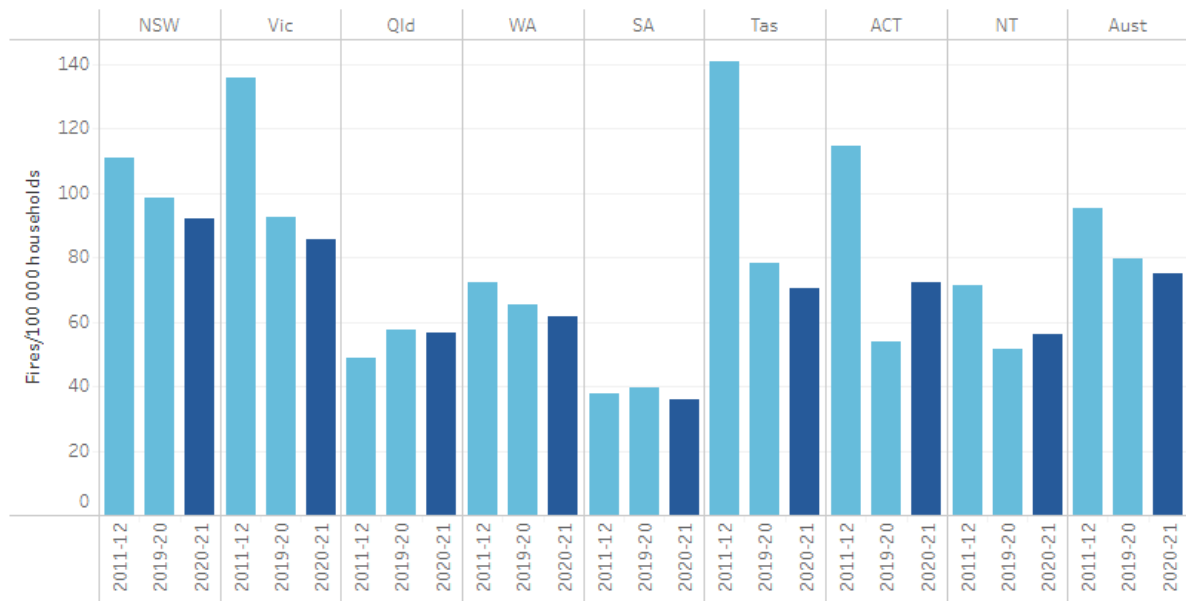
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ 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 75.1 per 100 000 households in 2020-21, a decrease from 79.5 per cent in 2019-20 and the lowest rate for the 10 years of data in this Report.

Confinement of structure fires 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 proportion of structure fires confined to the room, part room or object of origin, by ignition type. Refer to the supporting interpretative material below.

Guidance: A high or increasing proportion of structure fires confined to the room, part room or object 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.

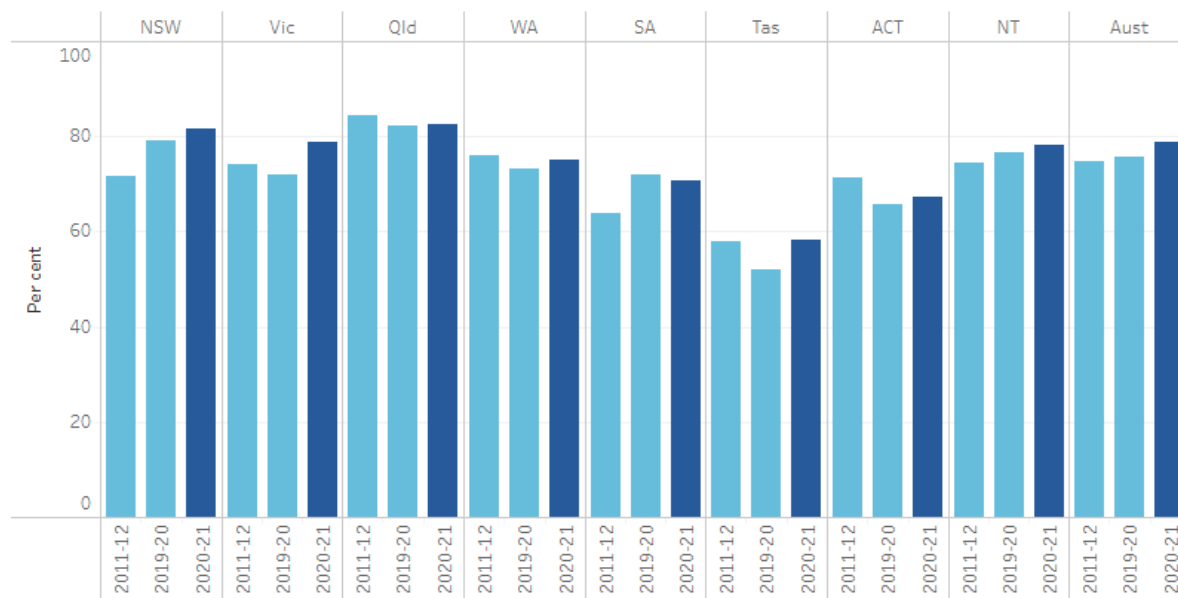
Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▾

Select ignition type:

- All
- Accidental
- Incendiary and suspicious
- Other

Figure 9.3 Proportion of structure fires that were confined to the room/object of origin by ignition type, by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.6

The proportion of structure fires confined to the room/object of origin varies across jurisdictions, and within jurisdictions over time. The 2020-21 national figure for all structure fires is the highest proportion for the 10 years of reported data.

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

It is defined by the proportion of all households with a smoke alarm that is operational/has been tested (manually in the last 12 months).

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

Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator.

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.

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

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

Select year (for both figure and table):

2020-21



Figure 9.4 Measure 1: Firefighter workforce by age group, 2020-21
by jurisdiction



Source: table 9A.3

Nationally in 2020-21, 63.6 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 9.8 Measure 2: Firefighter workforce attrition, 2020-21
by jurisdiction

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
%	4.4	9.9	6.5	3.6	3.1	2.9	5.1	3.3	6.1

Source: table 9A.3
na Not available.

Nationally in 2020-21, the attrition rate was 6.1 per cent, up from 3.5 per cent in 2019-20 (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.

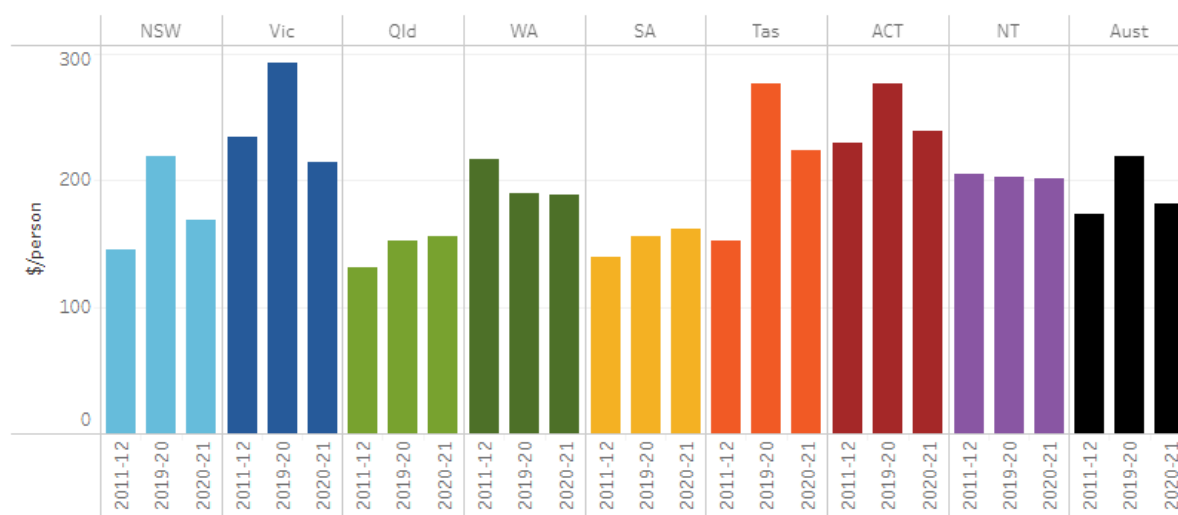
Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▾

Jurisdiction:

- NSW
- Vic
- Qld
- WA
- SA
- Tas
- ACT
- NT
- Aust

Figure 9.5 Expenditure per person (2020-21 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.12

Nationally in 2020-21, the total expenditure of fire service organisations was \$182 per person in the population, a decrease from \$220 per person in 2019-20. Expenditure data disaggregated by labour, capital and other costs are available in table 9A.12.

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, as confirmed by a coroner or inquest or provisionally by the incident controller or by media reports.

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.

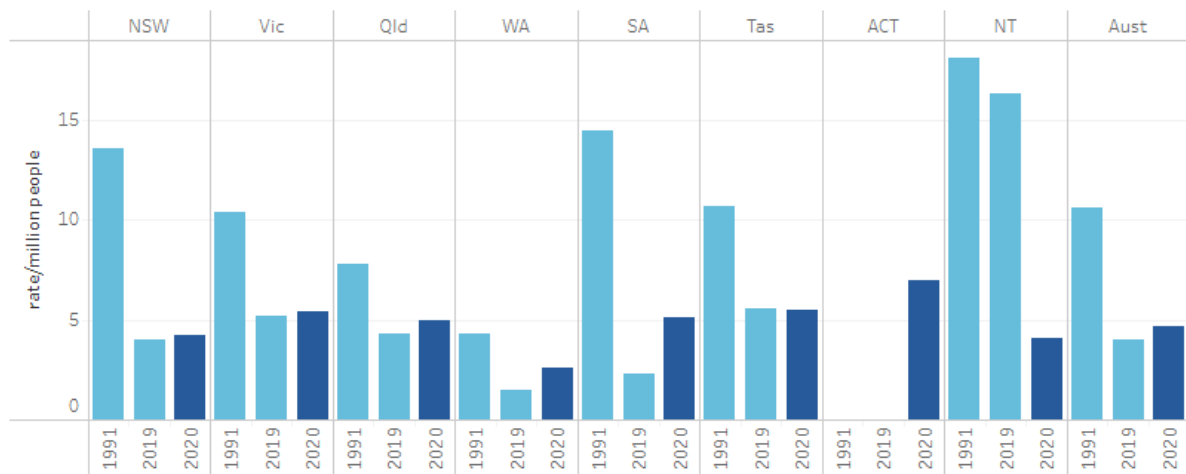
■ (all measures) Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

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

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

(Multiple values) ▼

Figure 9.6 Measure 1: Annual fire death rate by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.4

Nationally, the annual fire death rate was 4.7 deaths per million people in 2020 (122 fire deaths).

Select year (applies to table 9.9):

2020-21 ▼

Table 9.9 Measure 2: Landscape fire death rate, Deaths per million people, 2020-21 by jurisdiction

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

Source: table 9A.4

- Nil or rounded to zero.

Nationally in 2020-21, there was 1 death related to landscape fires (table 9A.4). This resulted in a rate of zero.

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 rate of hospitalised fire injury cases per 100 000 people.

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

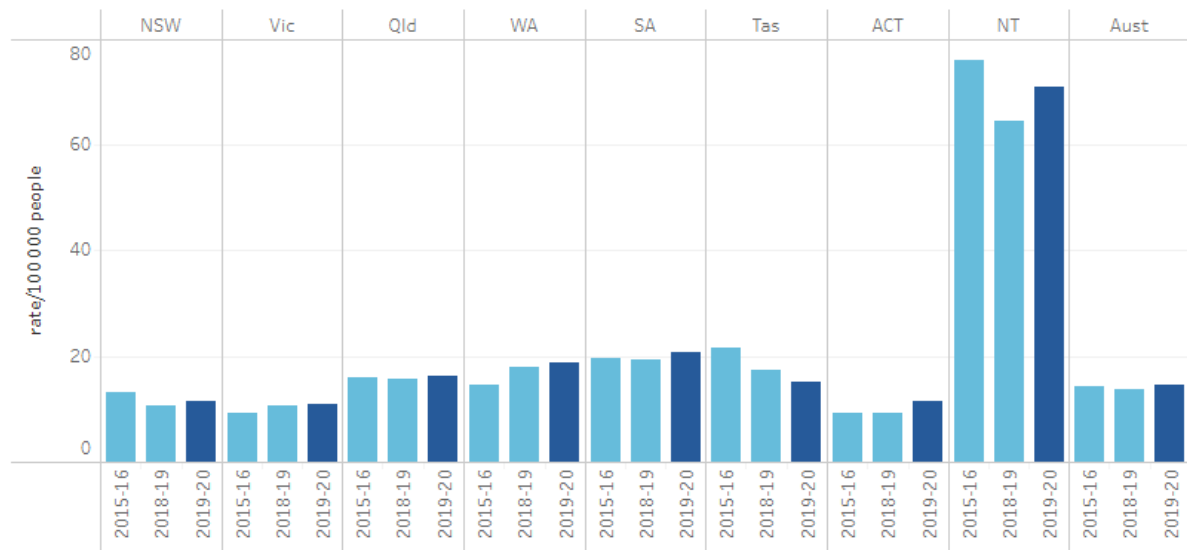
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

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

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

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



Source: table 9A.5

Nationally in 2019-20, there were an estimated 3697 hospitalisations due to fire injury (table 9A.5), equating to a rate of 14.5 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. Refer to the supporting interpretative material below.

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

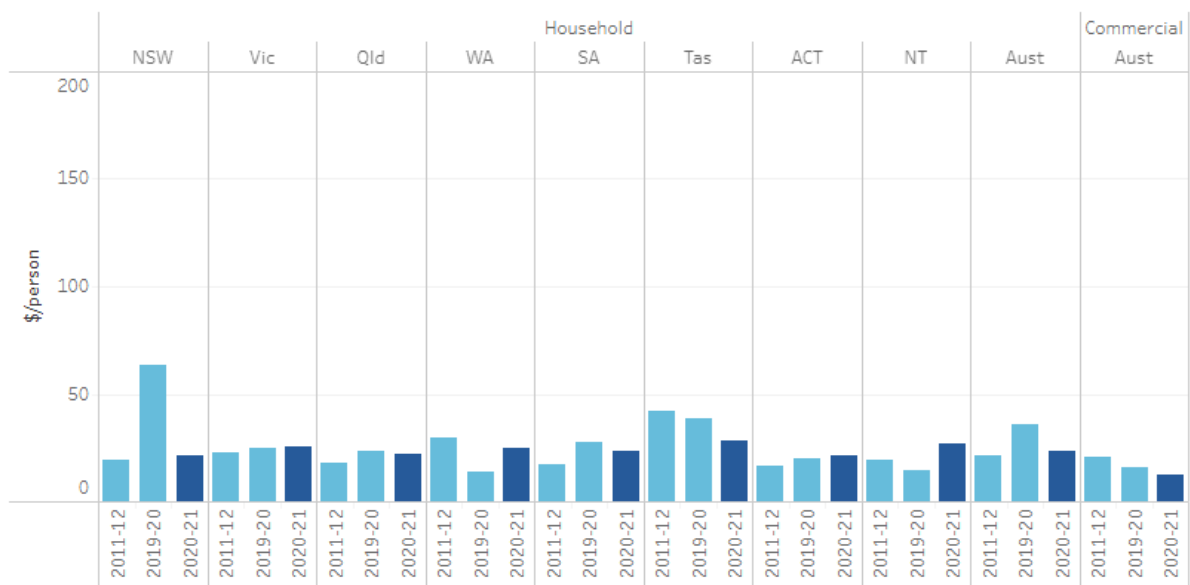
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ 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 (2020-21 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 9A.7

The total value of household (domestic) insurance fire event claims per person in the population was \$23.11 in 2020-21. This figure varies from year to year, and over the 10 years of reported data has ranged from \$21.39 in 2011-12 to \$42.90 in 2013-14.

The average value of household (domestic) insurance fire event claims was \$84 032 in 2020-21, and while these values vary from year to year, the result for 2020-21 is the highest for the 10 years of reported data (table 9A.7).

There were 4430 commercial insurance claims from fire events in 2020-21 (table 9A.7), equating to \$12.67 per person in the population.

Refer to the interpretative material for detailed indicator interpretation, definitions and caveats. 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 \(PDF - 360 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services interpretative material \(Word - 156 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services data tables \(XLSX - 242 Kb\)](#)

[9 Emergency services dataset \(CSV - 532 Kb\)](#)

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