



FINDINGS

Managing expectations and satisfying psychological needs are critical to the recruitment and retention of emergency services volunteers.

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Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering

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This project investigated the **recruitment**, **wellbeing**, **diversity**, and **retention** practices of State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers in Western Australia (WA). We conducted 70 volunteer interviews and two state-wide surveys with over 600 volunteers. This is a snapshot of the current and critical findings that will inform stakeholders and emergency services organisations on the practices that will help improve the recruitment and retention of emergency services volunteers.

RECRUITMENT: How do you recruit SES volunteers effectively?

- ❑ A key finding from the 70 volunteer interviews conducted was that managing expectations is critical to the effective recruitment and retention of emergency services volunteers.
- ❑ 109 quotes and 40 pictures representing SES volunteers in various roles were tested as potential recruitment messages that map into accurate and attractive expectations.
- ❑ The recruitment messages were tested with **112 current SES volunteers** and **453 community members** (i.e., potential volunteers).
- ❑ Overall, **61 quotes** and **28 pictures** were rated as being:
 - ❑ Most attractive by both current and potential volunteers, and
 - ❑ Most accurate in representing SES volunteering experiences by current volunteers.



Other volunteers are my family now!

Access the Recruitment Messaging Toolkit here:



- ❑ A **Recruitment Messaging Toolkit** was then created and launched at the 2019 Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services (WAFES) conference to help volunteer leaders find recruitment messages that are able to **set realistic expectations**, using tailored messages, **based on what the individual units can offer**.

WELLBEING: What makes SES volunteers happy?

Between September 2019 and February 2020, a Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) survey was conducted to obtain information on the current state of volunteering in WA. The survey sample of 226 volunteers (43% women, Mean age = 46.9 years) were asked questions on different aspects of volunteering (e.g., volunteer needs, wellbeing, unit culture, leader support).

Based on the survey findings, the key areas of strength are listed below:

Volunteers are thriving through their learning experiences.	Volunteers feel valued and respected for their individual differences.	Unit leaders' behaviours are regarded very positively during and outside of call-outs.	Volunteers have strong social support from their team members who are non-leaders.
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However, some key opportunities to improve include:

Improving how energetic volunteers feel about their roles through social connectedness.	Giving volunteers more task autonomy.	Improving psychological safety, and feelings of competence and autonomy for women and volunteers who are non-leaders.	Including volunteers in the units' decision-making processes.
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For recommendations, strategies for improvement, and a comparison of the findings between the CAT 2018-19 and 2019-20 surveys, access the full report from the link below or from the QR code given here:

bit.ly/ESEV2020



DIVERSITY: Do volunteers of different nationalities thrive differently?

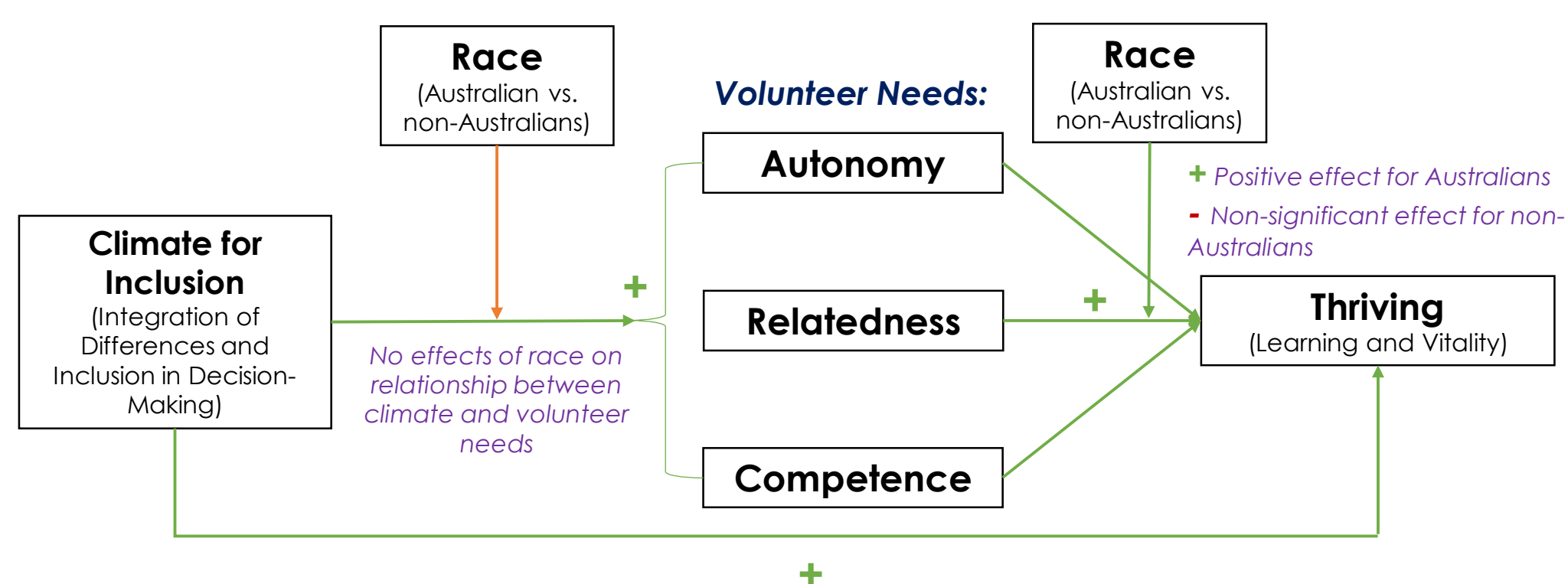


Figure 1: The interacting effects of an inclusive climate, psychological needs, and race on volunteers' thriving.

Key Findings:

Irrespective of race, integrating individual differences and inclusion in decision-making is critical for satisfying the needs of all volunteers, which results in better thriving (i.e., volunteers feeling like they are energised and continuously learning).

For Australian volunteers, an inclusive climate was particularly important for thriving due to an increased sense of relatedness with other volunteers.

QUITTING: Why have volunteers considered leaving the SES?

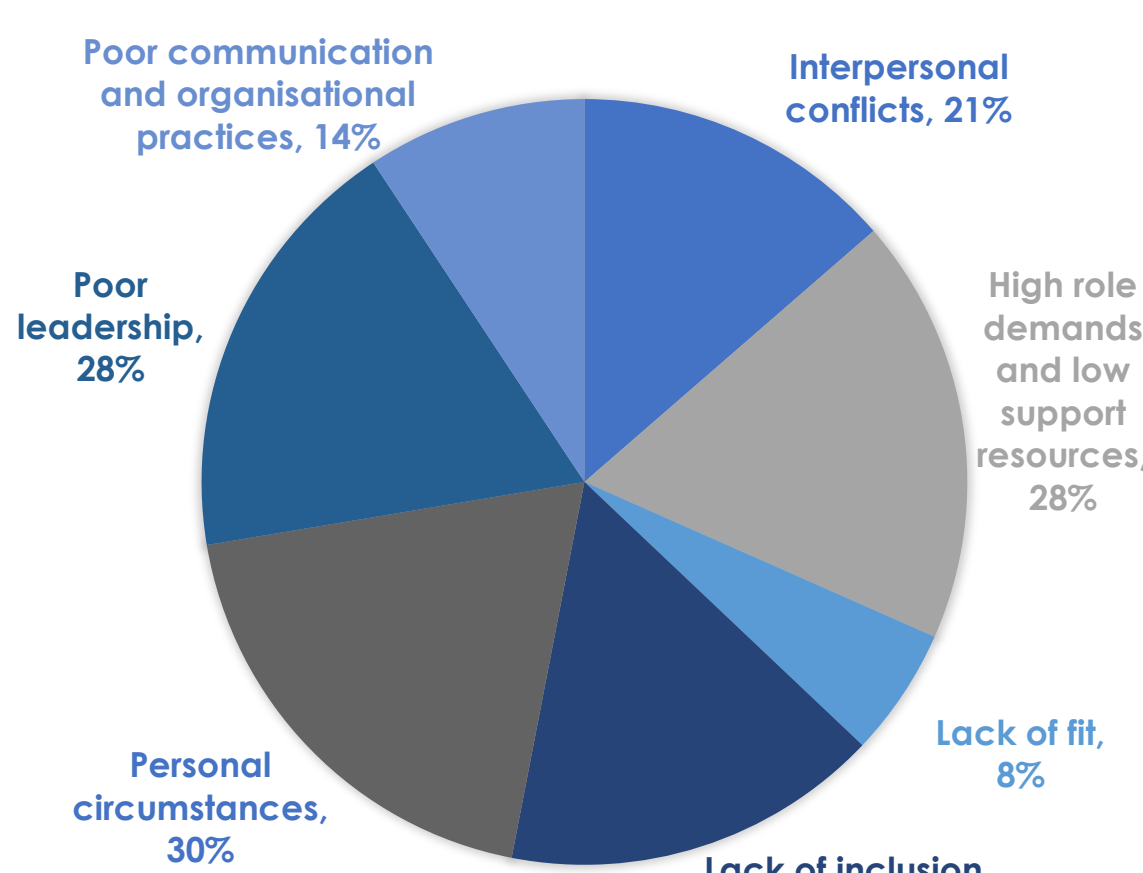


Figure 2: Reasons why SES volunteers have considered leaving the service.

- ❑ This study investigated the responses of 254 volunteers (38.9% female, Mean age = 47.1 years) on the **reasons why they have considered leaving SES in the past**.
- ❑ These reasons are summarised in Figure 2.
- ❑ It is important to note that the reasons were provided by volunteers who were still serving as a volunteer.
- ❑ Several practices can be implemented in order to address these reasons. These include:
 - Providing flexible work arrangements that assist volunteers with their work commitments,
 - Giving volunteers more autonomy in their roles,
 - Encouraging volunteers for feedback on what organisational practices are unnecessary, and
 - Motivating leaders to be supportive in addressing volunteers' lack of fit and inclusion within their groups.