

Baseline Workplace Gender Audit Analysis

Volunteer



Safer Communities - Together

Introduction

Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) submitted our Gender Equality Action Plan to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public sector on 31st March 2022. To create the Action Plan, a gender audit of employees within the organisation was also required to be submitted.

However, VICSES are choosing to extend our obligations and additionally complete a gender audit of our volunteer workforce. This is in recognition of the importance of our volunteers and their vital contribution to the organisation.

The following analysis was conducted with volunteer data access in May 2022. Due to some limitations in data collection, the following analysis may not be 100% accurate at times, and this will be noted in more detail below. One action VICSES is already taking, is to improve the quality of our volunteer data to ensure accurate and ongoing diversity metrics are available.

Where possible, the below analysis is mapped against volunteer-relevant gender equality indicator as described in the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. Additional VICSES specific indicators have also been added.

The key gender equality indicators are:

1. Gender composition of the volunteering force
2. Sexual harassment
3. Recruitment, promotion, and exit
4. Incident attendance

Indicator 1 – Gender composition of the volunteering force

The overall gender composition of VICSES’s 4146 employees on 10th May 2022 was:

- 1,372 Women (33.1%)
- 2,767 Men (66.7%)
- 7 Self-described gender (0.2%)

Currently, new members to VICSES have the option on new starter documentation to select Male, Female or Other, and our Human Resources Information System (HRIS) does allow for gender to be recorded as Male, Female or Non-specific. However, this is a recent addition and volunteers with extended tenure may not have had the option, meaning that VICSES may not currently have an accurate representation of all volunteers with a self-described gender.

As of this stage, VICSES does not have access to additional intersectional data, such as the percentage of members identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or a breakdown of different diverse gender identities (such as trans or non-binary).

The overall gender composition of the VICSES volunteer force, by volunteering rank is as follows:

	Women	Men	Self-described
Controller	31 (20.66%)	119 (79.33%)	0 (0%)
Deputy Controller	123 (31.70%)	263 (67.78%)	2 (0.52%)
Member Operational	854 (30.76%)	1920 (69.16%)	2 (0.07%)
Member Associate	131 (59.82%)	88 (40.18%)	0 (0%)
Member Probationary	223 (36.86%)	377 (62.31%)	5 (0.83%)
Member Junior	29 (35.80%)	52 (64.20%)	0 (0%)

*Note: this data is estimated to include up to 80 points of duplication, due to volunteers being counted as holding multiple roles concurrently. This is estimated to represent a duplication of two extra women, 124 extra men, and two extra individuals with a self-described gender.

As an overview, men hold the majority of volunteering ranks across all levels of seniority, with the exception of Member Associate. The Member Associate rank is assigned to adult volunteers who have passed their probation but may not be currently endorsed to perform hazardous tasks or respond to certain requests for assistance.

For most volunteering ranks, women make up approximately 34% of the individuals at that specific rank level. The Controller rank offers another exception however, with approximately 20% women and 80% men holding this rank currently. People with self-identified genders make up a small percentage of members across all ranks. Promisingly, the greatest percentage of gender-diverse individuals falls within the volunteers in probation, which could indicate an increase in the number of gender-diverse volunteers joining the service.

Additional gender analysis can be provided by the age of the volunteer force:

Employee Level	Member Operational			Member Associate			Member Probationary			Member Junior			Non-Active		
	W	M	S	W	M	S	W	M	S	W	M	S	W	M	S
15-24 years	88	156	0	2	0	0	33	77	1	29	52	0	50	71	1
25-34 years	201	413	0	6	5	0	70	86	3	0	0	0	73	93	0
35-44 years	197	387	0	15	7	0	50	81	1	0	0	0	38	85	0
45-54 years	203	436	0	31	14	0	43	65	0	0	0	0	33	96	0
55-64 years	169	417	0	29	12	0	20	42	0	0	0	0	43	71	0
65-74 years	91	291	0	31	23	0	2	15	0	0	0	0	19	37	0
75-84 years	17	87	0	15	23	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	8	16	0
85+ years	0	6	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	0

*Note: Numbers are not 100% accurate due to challenge with data gathering. Numbers are estimates to be a minimum of 80% accurate and provide an overall guide of gender breakdown by age group. Additionally, Member Operational includes those in leadership roles.

Member associate is the only rank that sees women participating at higher volumes than men, with men holding greater numbers in all other ranks across all other age ranges. This could be due to more women seeking roles outside of unit operations or could be representative of reduced training and certification opportunities for women. Further investigation will need to be conducted in this space.

Additionally, the greatest participation by people with a self-identified gender is within the younger people recently joining the service (people 15-44 years within the probationary period).

Gender composition by length of service can also be assessed:

	W	M	S
0-6 months	193	310	5
7-12 months	147	185	1
1-2 years	222	388	0
2-5 years	423	702	0
6-10 years	256	579	0
11-20 years	212	542	0
21-30 years	78	210	0
31+ years	62	244	0

*Note: these figures are representative of a larger volunteer force than accurate, as data includes volunteers who are currently non-active and on leave, as well as including volunteers who have joined and left during the analysis period. Data to be used to provide an estimate of gender trends in tenure.

Again, this table indicates that men have a greater representation at all points of tenure, while individuals with a self-identified gender are shown as having shorter tenures. This reduced tenure could be representative of updated reporting, which is allowing newer members to identify more appropriately. However, there is still a risk that diverse people may be more likely to leave the service sooner if not feeling supported, and increasing the tenure of diverse volunteers is a core goal for VICSES.

Indicator 2 – Sexual harassment

There have been five (5) formal complaints made by volunteers relating to gendered discrimination and/or sexual harassment over the past 12 months at the time of this report being published (approximately financial year 2021-2022).

In addition to this informal reports of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination have been provided to VICSES staff and representatives. As these are not able to be recorded formally, the true number of complaints is likely to be higher than what is formally known.

Importantly, while these results are confronting, VICSES takes this information very seriously and actions have already been taken to try and address issues of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment at VICSES. In 2021 VICSES engaged Beyond Frontiers Consulting, a third-party provider, to undertake a review into employee and volunteer experiences relating to sexual harassment and discrimination. A desktop review, meetings with key stakeholders, and confidential staff and volunteer interviews were conducted. Several areas of improvement were identified, including:

- Leadership and staff development and awareness raising
- Improved accessibility and visibility of relevant policies and procedures
- Improved risk assessment and reporting processes
- Review and simplification of conflict management and grievance handling processes.

From this, a program called 'Be Heard' was launched in 2021 and consists of an online resource hub for all staff and volunteers, staff and volunteer training, leadership training, confidential reporting options, and access to confidential specialist support and mental health support services.

Additionally, a Diversity and Inclusion page has been set up on the online member Hub to celebrate and communicate all D&I initiatives within the service. This allows our members to discover and support any number of gendered initiatives, and the page is regularly used to celebrate the LGBTIQ community.

Indicator 3 – Recruitment, promotion and exit

The following tables provide details about recruitment, promotion, and exit statistics by gender for volunteers across the Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES), for approximately the past financial year (from 1/07/2021 to 24/05/2022).

	Women	Men	Self-described	Total Volunteers
Recruited	126 (38.4%)	197 (60.1%)	5 (1.5%)	328
Promotions	35 (26.5%)	97 (73.5%)	0 (0%)	132
Exits	335 (36.3%)	587 (63.5%)	2 (0.2%)	924

Since 1st July 2021 we have seen more volunteers leave the service than join, although it is possible that many had been practically absent for some time but formally updated to 'non-active' or 'cancelled'. On a positive note, more volunteers with a self-described gender have joined the service that left, which is great to see.

Across all of the above metrics, men are numbered more highly than women, including leaving in greater numbers than women. Interestingly however, we are seeing a similar rate of women joining the service (38%) as leaving the service (36%). While this indicates that VICSES still has some way to go in achieving gender equality across the volunteer force, it does indicate that women are not leaving the service at a proportionally greater rate than men.

The tables below provide a more detailed breakdown.

The following table shows all new recruits to the service, who are still currently active as of 24/05/22, by gender, rank, and region.

		W	M	S	Total Volunteers
Central	Member Probationary	68	103	5	176
	Member Junior	0	1	0	1
East	Member Probationary	17	31	0	48
	Member Junior	1	2	0	3
Mid West	Member Probationary	1	10	0	11
	Member Junior	2	0	0	2
North East	Member Probationary	12	17	0	29
	Member Junior	4	4	0	8
North West	Member Probationary	7	18	0	25
	Member Junior	1	0	0	1
South West	Member Probationary	13	11	0	24
	Member Junior	0	0	0	0

The analysis shows that of adult members joining into a probationary rank, consistently more men are joining than women (38% women in comparison to 62% men). This is consistent with the current overall gender composition of the VICSES volunteer force.

What is notable is the high percentage of female junior members joining the service in comparison to male junior members (53% girls vs 47% boys). While further investigation is required to understand this increase in female membership at the junior level, it does indicate a positive perception of the service among young women. This is something VICSES will be aiming to cement and grow in future years.

In addition to the above, 25 members have returned to the service during the analysis period, after having left or registering a non-active status (20% were women, 80% were men).

The below table shows a breakdown of exit type, by gender and region.

		W	M	S	Total Volunteers
Central	Non-Active	3	18	0	21
	Cancelled	40	77	0	117
	Resigned	76	135	0	211
	Retired	0	1	0	1
East	Non-Active	5	28	0	33
	Cancelled	32	51	0	83
	Resigned	27	49	2	78
	Retired	0	0	0	0
Mid West	Non-Active	1	2	0	3
	Cancelled	17	21	0	38
	Resigned	10	13	0	23
	Retired	0	0	0	0
North East	Non-Active	1	0	0	1
	Cancelled	13	29	0	42
	Resigned	46	76	0	122
	Retired	0	1	0	1
North West	Non-Active	0	1	0	1
	Cancelled	4	3	0	7
	Resigned	18	23	0	41
	Retired	0	0	0	0
South West	Non-Active	0	1	0	1
	Cancelled	10	13	0	23
	Resigned	32	45	0	77
	Retired	0	0	0	0

The majority of volunteers leave due to resigning from the service, and as seen in the above table, men are more likely to leave than women. This trend is consistent with the overall differences in gender composition across the VICSES volunteers, with men accounting for approximately 2 thirds of all volunteers. Additionally, there are currently 1,003 volunteers taking a leave of absence from the service, of which 372 are women, 630 are men, and 1 person with a self-described gender.

*Note: This table should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of volunteers may have unofficially left the service for some time before their status was updated to 'non-active' or 'cancelled'. It is recommended that the number of volunteers who retired from the service is primarily considered as this is likely to be a more accurate reflection of true exit numbers.

The following table provides a breakdown of formal promotion numbers, by gender and region.

		W	M	S	Total Volunteers
Central	Controller	0	6	0	6
	Deputy Controller	9	12	0	21
East	Controller	1	5	0	6
	Deputy Controller	5	14	0	19
Mid West	Controller	0	0	0	0
	Deputy Controller	1	7	0	8
North East	Controller	3	6	0	9
	Deputy Controller	7	12	0	19
North West	Controller	0	3	0	3
	Deputy Controller	5	14	0	19
South West	Controller	1	7	0	8
	Deputy Controller	3	11	0	14

Since 1st July 2021 more men have been promoted to Unit management positions than women, with no volunteers identifying as gender diverse being promoted during this time. While noting that there are 3-5x more Deputy Controller positions within each region, women were still proportionally more likely to be promoted to a Deputy Controller role (30%), than a Controller role (16%). That women were almost half as likely to be promoted into vacant Controller ranks is an indication that improving gender equality at the volunteer leader level is a key priority for VICSES, and this is especially so for gender diverse volunteers.

In addition to the above, 402 volunteers graduated from probationary members to fully active members (either Member Operational or Member Associate), with 157 of these being women and 245 being men.

Indicator 4 – Incident Attendance

VICSES volunteers respond to a range of incidents from flooding to road crash rescue, to supporting other agencies. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of members, only active Operational Members with the appropriate training (including unit management ranks) are sent out to incidents.

Within this specific volunteer cohort, the following tables provide an overview of our incident response data from 1st July 2021 until 24th May 2022.

	Women	Men	Self-described	Total Volunteers
Incident Attendance	896 (28.7%)	2,220 (71.2%)	3 (0.1%)	3,119

In total, 3,119 volunteers have responded to incidents over the past 11 months. This shows that, in comparison to the overall proportion of female volunteers, a smaller overall percentage of women are responding to incidents than men. Encouragingly, while a small number of gender-diverse volunteers are recorded overall, there is a proportionally high number of these volunteers regularly attending incidents.

It is noted that most volunteers respond to multiple incidents. The table below shows how gender is broken down by the number of incidents a volunteer attended over the reporting period.

	Women	Men	Self-described	Total Volunteers
1-5 incidents	247 – 49%	496	1	738
6-10 incidents	114 – 32%	242	0	356
11-20 incidents	140 – 27%	369	0	509
21-50 incidents	219 – 27%	568	2	789
51-100 incidents	93 – 20%	361	0	454
101-200 incidents	46 – 23%	152	0	198
201-300 incidents	10 – 28%	25	0	35
301 + incidents	0	7	0	7

Men are more likely to attend a higher number of incidents than women. Furthermore, the proportion of women attending an increasing number of incidents does decrease; with women making up 49% of volunteers attending 1-5 incidents, to women making up 24% of volunteers attending 200 plus incidents. There are a number of factors that could be preventing women from attending a higher number of incidents on average, and this will need to be explored further. However, it is possible to conclude that child care responsibilities may play a significant role, as many incidents may occur on evenings or weekends, or require multiple day absences from home.

In addition to this, gender was not recorded for 13 volunteers, who responded to a combined 29 incidents.

The following table shows a breakdown of incident attendance by gender and region.

	W	M	S	Total Volunteers
Central & VQ	335 - 26	969	3	1,307
East	104 - 31	228	0	332
Mid West	68 - 30	154	0	222
North East	147 - 31	322	0	469
North West	123 - 32	251	0	375
South West	99 - 25	296	0	395

For most regions the proportion of women to men attending incidents is an average of 31% which is in line with the total ratio of female to male volunteers (33% of all volunteers at VICSES identify as women). However, Central & VQ regions and the South West region have a slightly lower ratio; with female volunteers making up an average of 25% of volunteers attending incidents.

*Note: there is likely to be some duplication in the current volunteer data on incident attendance. This is due to volunteers with dual memberships being recorded against each unit they are a member of (which may double incident numbers for these members). As such data should be considered representative of general trends only.