

In 2020, the percentage of Australians who volunteered for an organisation or group was the lowest rate ever recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

To ensure the future sustainability of the Surf Life Saving (SLS) movement, we need to provide a positive volunteering experience, where members are happy and want to stay.

But what does this look like in SLS?

SLS is working towards a strategy to boost volunteer retention and satisfaction. We want to better understand the volunteering experience at SLS and investigate factors that impact the satisfaction of our volunteers, and their decisions to stay or leave the organisation.

The SLS Member Feedback Survey is an evidence-based tool which measures and monitors volunteer satisfaction and experience at our organisation.

What was measured?



Member Satisfaction

Overall, different roles, leadership, climate and culture, support from paid staff, communication, learning and development



Climate & Culture

Social climate, inclusion, wellbeing, induction, L&D opportunities, role clarity, red tape



Turnover Intention

Intention to leave the movement



Leadership

Interpersonal style of SLS leaders, leadership culture

Survey Development

The 2023 survey had 90 questions (105 for leaders) and built on the findings from a preliminary survey conducted in SLSNSW in 2021. The results will be used to further refine the next survey which will be conducted in 2025. In future years, the survey will be shorter and more focused.

Ethics

The research was reviewed and approved by the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics committee (Protocol 2021/234) and carried out in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Confidentiality

Survey data remains confidential and secured by the researchers (who are independent from SLS). SLS does not have access to raw data or individual responses of members.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE



6,304

Volunteers across 5 states



232

Surf Life Saving Clubs



Gender

63% male, 36% female and 0.2% non-binary



11%

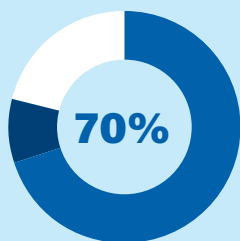
Culturally diverse backgrounds



75%

Patrolling members

MEMBER SATISFACTION



70% of members are satisfied with their volunteering experience

- 70% satisfied
- 9% dissatisfied
- 21% neutral



76% satisfied

Patrol Captains and those supporting Nippers reported the highest role satisfaction.



12% dissatisfied

Members in roles responsible for delivering Education (e.g. trainer, assessor, mentor) reported the greatest dissatisfaction.

Top 4 Drivers of Volunteer Satisfaction

Top 4 Drivers of Turnover

Autonomy



Members feeling free to be themselves, make decisions and have choices in how they carry out their role.

Induction into the Surf Club



Extent to which new members were welcomed, introduced, oriented and inducted at the club.

Satisfaction Levels



Dissatisfaction with the overall volunteer experience.

Lack of Autonomy



Excessive rules and control. Lack of freedom and opportunities to make decisions and have input.

Inclusive Climate



Volunteers' diverse backgrounds and opinions are valued and utilised to adapt and improve the club.

Motivational Leadership



Positive interpersonal leadership behaviours that are supportive, satisfy volunteer needs and provide an optimally motivating climate.

Lack of Inclusive Environment



Members feeling that they can't be their true selves and that people's differences (e.g. cultural, age, gender) are not respected or valued in their club.

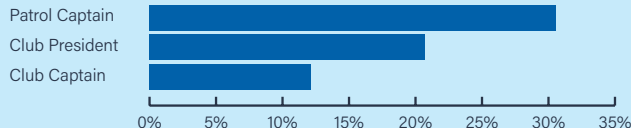
Controlling Leadership



Adverse and controlling interpersonal behaviours from SLS leaders.

HIGH IMPACT LEADERS

Patrol Captains, Club Presidents and Club Captains have the greatest impact on the Surf Life Saving volunteer experience.



TURNOVER INTENTION

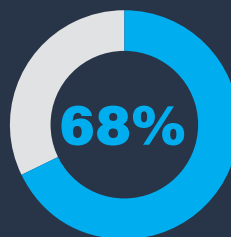
27%
of members frequently think about leaving Surf Life Saving.



21%
of members said they are leaving next season.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

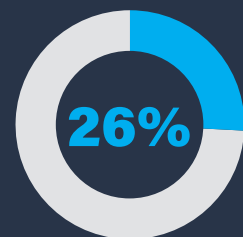
"Surf Life Saving leaders who practice motivational leadership have volunteer teams who are happier, more engaged and intend to continue actively volunteering"



Motivational Leadership

Positive interpersonal leadership behaviours that are supportive, satisfy volunteer needs and provide an optimally motivating climate.

68% of members experience supportive leadership behaviors from their leader.



Incivility

Behaviours such as addressing others in an unprofessional manner, putting others down, or making demeaning or rude remarks about others.

26% of members observed incivility at SLS sometimes or frequently.