



TOTE THAT BARGE, LIFT THAT BALE!

A survey of employers about employing people who volunteer with NSW RFS

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Reason for the Survey

- Most volunteers have jobs;
- Reports that some employers:
 - Won't release volunteers;
 - Have dismissed employees for volunteering;
- Need to understand impact on employers



Methodology

- Survey of employers
- Sample of communities across NSW
- 384 returns
- 12% response rate



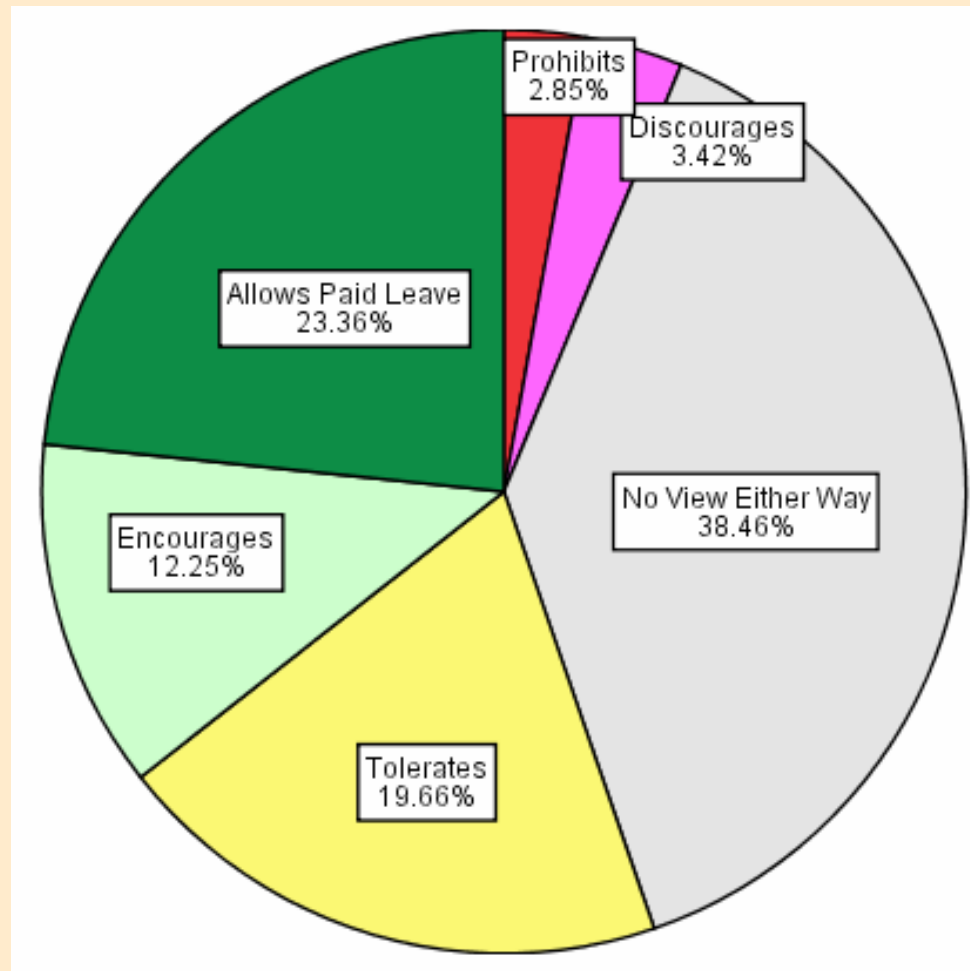
Job Applicants

- 8% ask job applicants if they ES volunteer
- 3% have policy about employing RFS volunteers

Suggests most employers are neither *concerned* nor *enthusiastic*.

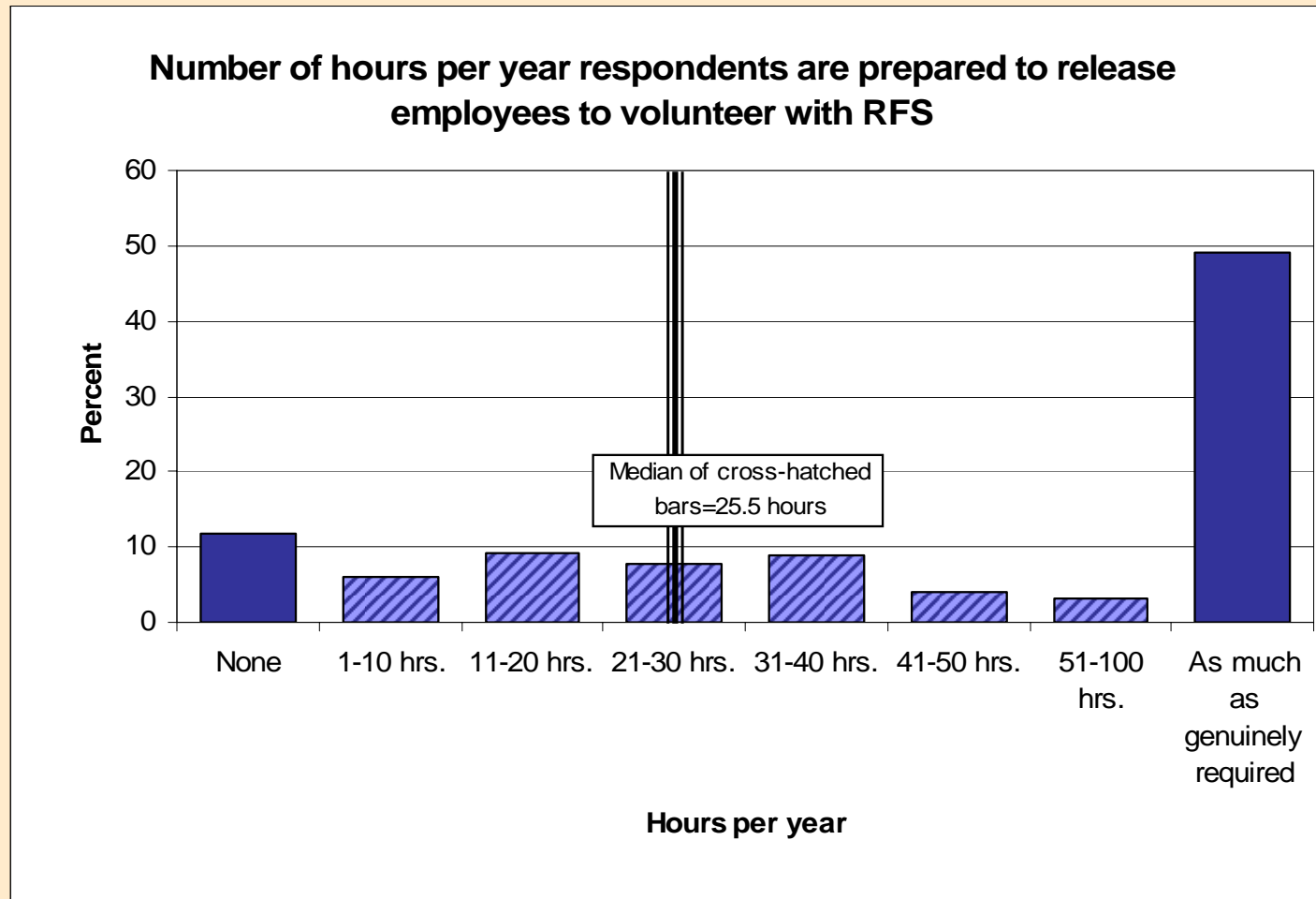


Attitude toward employees volunteering with RFS during working hours





Time-off allowed for RFS volunteering



→ Implications of 25 hours time-off per year

- Useful for routine turnouts for a quiet brigade
- Equivalent to one 3-day strike team deployment
 - Limits capacity of agency during campaign fires
 - Limits opportunities for volunteers to gain experience



Negative experiences

5% of employers reported negative experiences

Mostly involved disruption due to leaving work:

- Unexpectedly;
- Too often; or
- For too long.



Concerns

78% of respondents had no concerns

22% had some concerns and described them...

Analysed into four themes:

1. The amount of impact volunteering has on work;
2. The type of impact it has on the employer;
3. The characteristics of the employer that make it hard to support time off for volunteering;
4. Other concerns.



Concerns

1. The amount of impact it has on work

- a) Must not interfere too much (46%)
- b) Must not interfere at certain times (14%)
- c) Must not interfere at all (25%)
- d) Leaving work suddenly is a problem (13%)



Concerns

2. The type of impact on the employer

- a) Financial burden (17%)
- b) Hard to find replacement staff (15%)
- c) Extra burden on management (14%)
- d) Reduced quality of service (13%)
- e) Extra burden on remaining staff (12%)
- f) Reduced productivity (7%)
- g) Inconvenience to customers, patients etc. (6%)
- h) Compromises schedules and deadlines (5%)
- i) Compromises safety of patients or students (5%)



Concerns

3. Characteristics of the employer that make it hard

- a) No spare capacity in workforce (46%)
- b) Employer has deadlines, schedules or sees clients by appointment (24%)
- c) Employees are specialists in a team, can't spare individual specialists (19%)
- d) Employees have duty of care to elderly, ill, disabled people or children (11%)



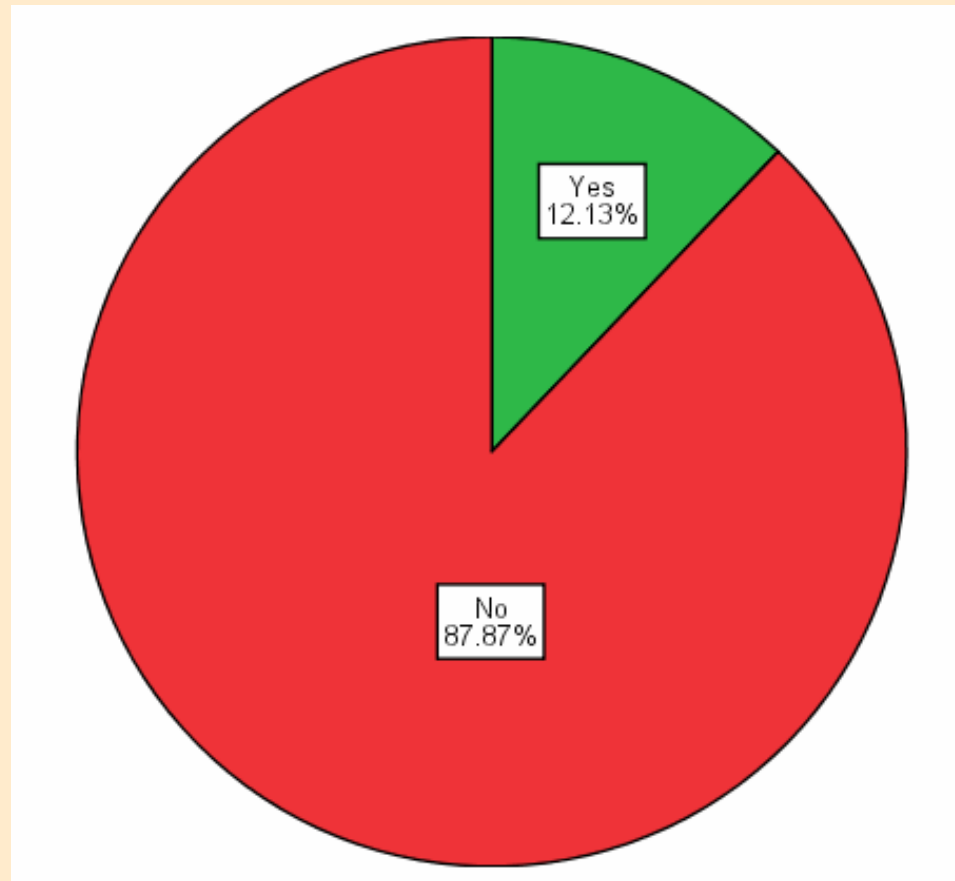
Concerns

4. Other Concerns (small counts)

- a) Employees might abuse RFS volunteer leave
- b) Want formal leave procedures in place
- c) Want to be able to verify leave with RFS
- d) Want to be able to verify that employees are really RFS volunteers
- e) Risk of injury to employees
- f) Concern WorkCover might not adequately compensate injured employees
- g) Fitness for work after firefighting

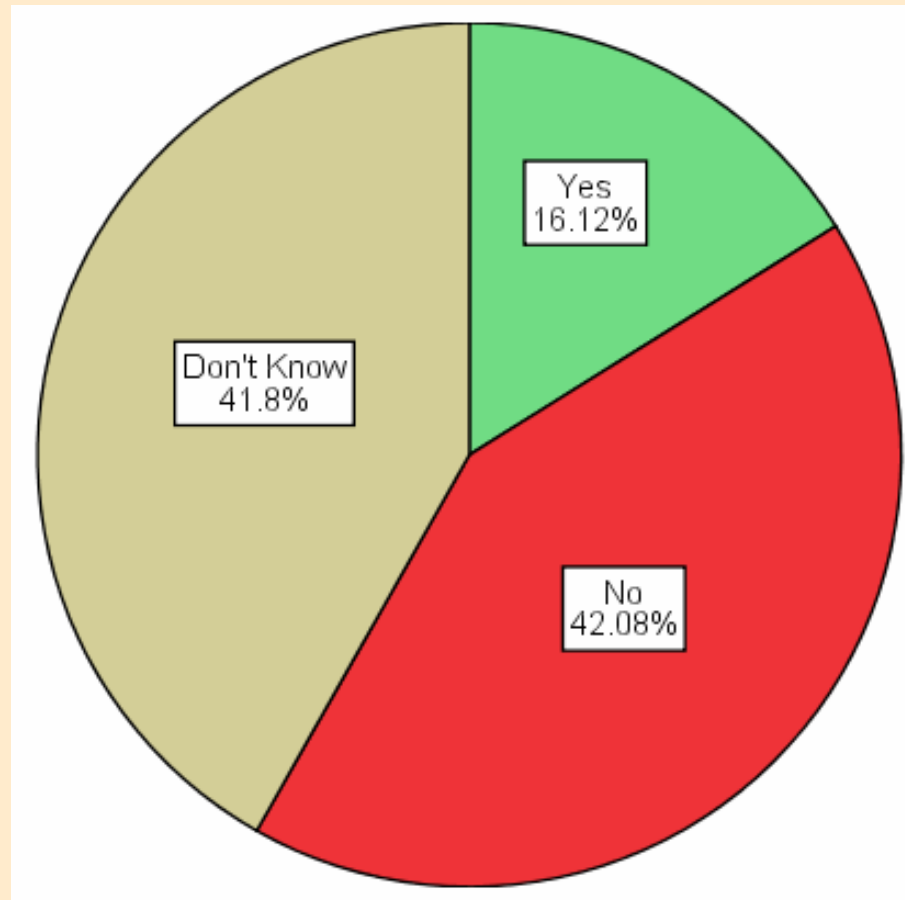


12% of employers report having leave provisions for RFS volunteers?





Would you like assistance drafting leave provisions for RFS volunteers?





Benefits

Looked at four types of benefit:

1. Workplace skills acquired from RFS
2. Employee well-being & morale
3. Recognition for supporting RFS volunteers
4. The good will of third parties



Benefits

Looked at four types of benefit:

1. Workplace skills acquired from RFS (~80%)
2. Employee well-being & morale (~60%)
3. Recognition for supporting RFS volunteers (~60%)
4. The good will of third parties (~40%)

% scored Very Important or Important



Conclusion

- Employer support is limited by operational constraints
- Expect a complex variety of constraints on employers
- Keep employers informed
- Build on mutual benefits like teamwork skills



Questions

