Prepared by
Legislative Policy and
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Firefighter Capacity Workgroup

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters in Oregon

November 2022

STAFF

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Purpose of the Research
Two key aspects determine the number of volunteer firefighters: 1) the number of newly recruited volunteers, and 2) how many volunteers are retained after making a commitment to a fire department. In 2022, the Oregon Legislative Firefighter Capacity Workgroup requested the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO) conduct research to provide the Workgroup with a statewide snapshot of recruitment and retention. Specifically, this research was designed to identify opportunities for recruitment, barriers to retention, and positive factors that may impact retention in Oregon's fire departments in response to a decrease in firefighter capacity. A survey was conducted that provides input from over 600 chiefs and volunteer firefighters reflecting their experiences and perspectives at a point in time—July 25 - August 14, 2022.

Oregon's Volunteer Firefighters
There are 289 combination and all-volunteer fire departments in Oregon.[1] Ninety-four percent (94%) of Oregon fire departments register as all-volunteer or a combination of career and volunteer firefighters. Oregon fire departments operate under a variety of circumstances that are influenced by geographic factors: population density, population demographics, social factors, and remoteness. Departments themselves may vary in type, percentage of volunteer firefighters, age of volunteers, and responsibilities to their communities, among others.

The number of volunteer firefighters has declined—both nationally and in Oregon—due to numerous, sometimes compounding, factors. Results from the survey show that *73% of Oregon's fire departments reported moderate or significant decrease* in number of volunteer firefighters over the last five years (2017-2022).

Demographics of Volunteer Firefighters.
Characteristics
- Average age = 43.4 years.
- New recruits (19% of volunteer firefighters) range from 16 to 70 years old.
- 16.5% female—higher than the national average for women firefighters.
- 17.6% veterans—higher than the percentage per population of the state (8%).

Employment and Income
- $50,000 to $74,999 (19%) is the gross annual household income most frequently reported.
- Employed full time or self-employed (69%), retired (14%), students (8%), and employed part time (8%).

Service to Departments. Recruiting and retention efforts require an understanding of not only the characteristics of volunteer firefighters, but also their motivations. Survey findings suggest volunteer firefighters are motivated primarily by the desire to serve their communities. Most (87%) report volunteering for their departments at least once

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[1] Calculated from data at U.S. Fire Administration, *National Fire Department Registry Quick Facts*, https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary,

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per week. Oregon volunteer firefighters hold certifications including National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firefighter 1 (74.2%), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) (43.9%), NFPA Firefighter 2 (FF2) (40.0%), and NFPA Fire Officer (any level) (20.8%), and more.

Recruiting: Key Takeaways

As recruitment is often essential to help fire departments manage their personnel, the recruitment practices of departments were investigated from the perspectives of both chiefs and volunteer firefighters.

Volunteer firefighters. Reported most often hearing about serving through a fire agency member (48.8%) or had previous experience firefighting (14.7%). Survey results suggest that 1) recreation centers/gyms, 2) veterans' organizations, and 3) the National Guard, among other locations, may be largely untapped resources for finding new recruits.

Chiefs. Indicated options that would most improve the ability to recruit volunteer firefighters would be: 1) more flexibility in training schedules, 2) more flexibility in training or physical requirements, 3) financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives, and 4) recognition or credit from employers.

Other opportunities for recruitment that were identified by both chiefs and volunteer firefighters included social media and online advertising, word-of-mouth campaigns, banners and digital signs, open houses, and local newsletters or media.

Retention: Key Takeaways

Overall, more than 70% of respondents (volunteers and chiefs combined) think their current department is struggling with retention. Volunteer firefighters and chiefs were asked to reflect on why volunteers may have left or might consider leaving their department. Chiefs (N=204) and volunteer firefighters (N=539) selected the following reasons for leaving service as a volunteer firefighter:

	Firefighters	Chiefs
Difficult to balance volunteering	68.0%	83.7%
Realities were different	31.1%	52.7%
Moved to career side	28.5%	38.9%
Training/schedules not flexible	28.1%	36.9%

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Volunteer firefighters and chiefs were asked what types of programs or directions could positively influence retention in their departments. Survey results indicate the top 10 options to improve retention are:

- *Financial Compensation* — may provide a way of showing that volunteer time is valued or may help to offset costs (or reduced income) directly due to volunteering activities.
- *Tax deductions, benefits, or credits — s*uggested forms included tax exemptions, tax credits, medical insurance or health service accounts, pension programs, gym memberships, or improved workers' comp insurance.
- *Fire station improvements* — are needed to house, train, and help create camaraderie for volunteer firefighters as well as would be more attractive to potential recruits.
- *More firefighters* — may spread out current responsibilities, reducing the time commitment, which volunteers and chiefs noted was too high.
- *Mentoring program* — pairing new volunteers with more experienced members may be impactful socially as well as helpful with advancing through requirements.
- *College scholarships* — may reduce the financial stress of lower incomes of students as well as be attractive to potential recruits.
- *Employer credit for service time spent at calls* — compensation or tax credits for the employer or protection from retaliation to help employees to balance their work and volunteering responsibilities.
- *Hold essential training sessions on multiple days* — provide multiple options for essential trainings to accommodate volunteer work schedules.
- *Apparatus* — small departments may not have funding for purchase of up-to-date apparatus, leaving them without the necessary tools for response.
- *Firefighting equipment* — need for up-to-date or sufficient equipment to be able to respond to calls.

Other Notable Findings

Other notable findings are meaningful to understanding volunteer firefighters based on their submitted comments. A thread through survey responses by chiefs and volunteer firefighters is that volunteer firefighters are performing balancing acts with responsibilities to family, work, and their fire departments. *With the often-difficult work of balancing responsibilities, volunteers want to feel appreciated for the extra effort they are making to their communities.*

The focus of this research was on enhancing capacity, identifying barriers, increasing retention, and needs for training. For a large portion of chiefs and volunteer firefighters, the depth of commitment, enjoyment, and hard work of volunteering is fulfilling.

Link to Full Report

The full report can be found here: https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lpro

RESEARCH GOALS

The primary goal for this research is to support the work of the 2022 Oregon Legislative Firefighter Capacity Workgroup. The workgroup seeks to better understand volunteer firefighter retention and recruitment in Oregon. Specifically, the workgroup is interested in understanding:

- how to engage potential firefighting populations to enhance capacity and improve recruiting strategies;
- identification of barriers to volunteer firefighting;
- circumstances that may affect the compatibility of volunteer firefighting with other personal responsibilities;
- drivers that may lead volunteers to leave the fire service;
- options to improve retention;
- how departments define and measure volunteer retention; and
- current preferences and needs of volunteer firefighters surrounding training schedules, locations, and requirements in Oregon.

The workgroup identified a challenge to ensuring adequate firefighting capacity in Oregon. Addressing this challenge required conducting a review of existing information regarding volunteer firefighters, developing and distributing a survey, analyzing the survey results, and reporting on the results from these efforts. The survey was designed by the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO), a nonpartisan research office within the Oregon State Legislature, with the input of the Volunteer Firefighter Legislative Workgroup as well as the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This research study included three phases: 1) the development of a survey aimed at understanding recruitment and retention, 2) the distribution of the survey, and 3) the analysis of the survey results. Limitations of this analysis are also briefly discussed.

Survey Development
The survey was designed by the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO), with the input of the Volunteer Firefighter Legislative Workgroup as well as the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). The survey design incorporates the feedback of the workgroup, OSFM, and elements of a previous survey instrument developed for the National Volunteer Fire Council.[2] Qualtrics online software was used for survey design and implementation.

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[2] Marketing for Change, *Volunteer Retention Research Report, available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20Aug-NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited October 14, 2022).

Distribution of the Survey

The survey tool was distributed to the approximately 300 fire department chiefs in Oregon by email from the OSFM. The email asked chiefs to distribute the survey link to their department's volunteer firefighters. Those in roles other than volunteer firefighter and chief were excluded from the survey to focus the analysis on the perceptions of the chiefs and current volunteers. Demographic and department information was collected from chiefs of all-paid departments, but these did not engage with questions pertaining to volunteer firefighters (except departments that normally have volunteers but do not currently have any).

The survey was fielded between July 25 and August 14, 2022. Respondents included a total of 819 members, including current chiefs (N=256) and volunteer firefighters (N=563). For a volunteer firefighter population of approximately 6,000 and a chief population of 308, minimum sample sizes at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, would be 361 (volunteers) and 169 (chiefs), respectively. These sample sizes suggest that the results are representative of volunteer firefighters and chiefs in Oregon fire departments.

Analysis of Survey Results

The analysis phases included analyzing survey results with descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis. Descriptive results are presented for most survey questions in Appendix A. Textual analysis was performed on text response questions as well as "Other (please specify)" portions of survey questions. These responses were categorized and counted, unless they fit into an existing question answer, in which case they were recoded to the appropriate existing choice. The results of analysis were related to other research findings to provide context.

Limitations of Findings

Surveys have certain limitations associated with them, particularly when they are addressing sensitive issues. A preestablished range of answers were supplied to questions to increase the response rate on questions but may not supply every possible answer of respondents. Some survey respondents communicated "other" responses to questions that may or may not represent the opinions of more respondents.

The survey was administered electronically and available only to those with cellphones or computers. This survey may not represent those who have limited access to those technologies or don't feel comfortable with online platforms. Additionally, survey respondents were current members of departments rather than those who had actually left departments, so answers regarding why volunteer firefighters may have left may not be representative.

Contents of Report

This document contains the results from the research, survey responses (see Appendix A), relevant state and national comparisons, selected quotes from respondents, and

analysis of the survey responses. In the following sections, we provide a short background on the state of volunteer firefighting (*Background: Understanding Volunteer Firefighting*); a description of Oregon volunteer firefighters and their departments (*Volunteer Firefighters in Oregon*); practices of recruitment and options for improved recruitment (*Recruitment: Practices and Options for Impact*); barriers to volunteer firefighting and potential options for increased firefighter retention (*Retention: Reasons for Leaving and Options for Impact*), and several additional findings that may inform recruitment and retention (*Other Notable Findings*).

BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING

Oregon fire departments rely on volunteer firefighters more so than 32 other states in the country. Ninety-four percent of Oregon fire departments register as all-volunteer or a combination of career and volunteer firefighters.[3] The number of volunteer firefighters in most departments across the state has decreased over the last five years,[4] while fires in Oregon have been larger and more severe in recent years.[5] U.S. Department of Agriculture predictions suggest that large and severe fires, which are associated with warm and dry conditions, will likely intensify as effects of climate change increase.[6] Concurrently, the responsibilities of fire departments have expanded far beyond firefighting. As such, departments across the country are facing a dramatically increased number of calls.[7]

The Changing Role of Volunteer Firefighters

The role of volunteer firefighters has shifted over the last 50 years as fire departments have shouldered a dramatically wider range of responsibilities that require increasingly specialized services.[8] Many fire departments have become a first line of response for emergency medical assistance, search and rescue, hazardous materials response, vehicle accidents, terrorist or shooting events, and natural disasters in addition to their responsibilities for fire response.[9] As a result of changes in responsibilities, many fire departments have also shifted away from all-volunteer to an increased number of combination (pay and volunteer) departments.[10]

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[3] U.S. Fire Administration, *National Fire Department Registry Quick Facts*, *available at* <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary> (last visited September 6, 2022).
[4] This survey finds a moderate or significant decrease in volunteer firefighters in 73.0% of departments in Oregon.
[5] U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Climate Change in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington*, *available at* <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northwest/topic/climate-change-and-wildfire-idaho-oregon-and-washington> (last visited September 7, 2022).
[6] *Id.*
[7] National Fire Protection Association, *News & Research: Fire Department Calls*, *available at* <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/Emergency-Responders/Fire-department-calls> (last visited September 6, 2022).
[8] National Volunteer Fire Council, *A Proud Tradition: 275 Years of the American Volunteer Fire Service* 16, *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf> (last visited September 6, 2022).
[9] *Id.*
[10] *Id.*

In addition to fire departments increasingly transitioning from volunteer to combined, the role of volunteer firefighters is also changing. Over the last several decades, the volunteer firefighter position has evolved into one that requires significantly increased training and time commitments to meet national standards[11]—a new volunteer firefighter may spend more than 240 hours in initial training.[12]

Declining Number of Volunteer Firefighters

The number of volunteer firefighters has declined over the last 35 years, with the national rate by population protected[13] dropping to an all-time low in 2017.[14] Two key aspects determine the number of volunteer firefighters: 1) the number of newly recruited volunteers and 2) how many volunteers are retained after making a commitment to a fire department. Factors influencing recruitment may include the available pool of potential volunteers to draw from in a community, distance to the department or calls (which may be especially relevant for rural departments),[15] training schedules, required training or shift hours, physical training requirements, and motivations and current responsibilities of the potential volunteer. Retention rates may include recruitment factors in addition to others: how volunteers interact with department leadership or members, changes in volunteers' work or home responsibilities, volunteers' health or physical fitness level, resources of the department, and changes to state or national requirements.[16] Previous research suggests that there are often multiple factors, such as increased training requirements and increased personal responsibilities of two-income families, that may compound difficulties for volunteers wanting to serve as firefighters. This research sought to contribute to an understanding of what is driving this trend by studying many of these factors.

Though a recent national or state analysis has not been conducted, the COVID-19 pandemic also may have affected recruitment and retention in many fire departments further impacting a generally declining rate of volunteer firefighters.[17] The pandemic rapidly shifted the responsibilities of many departments (more medical calls), changed

[11] Eric Seeger. *Volunteer Fire Service Today* 30, (2015), *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf> (last visited September 9, 2022).

[12] *Id.,* 31.

[13] Rate by population reflects national statistical reporting as rate per 1,000 population.

[14] Rita Fahy, Ben Evarts, and Gary P. Stein, *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2020* 2 (2022), *available at* <https://www.nfpa.org//-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osFDProfileTables.pdf> (last visited September 13, 2022).

[15] Robert Grimm, Jr., Kevin Cramer, Nathan Dietz, John Foster-Bey, LaMonica Shelton, Lillian Dote, Carla Manuel, and Shelby Jennings, *Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings* 6 (2007), *available at* <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2021_05_19_Volunteering_in_America_2007_City_Trends.pdf> (last visited September 13, 2022).

[16] Marketing for Change, *Volunteer Retention Research Report*, *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20Aug-NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited October 14, 2022).

[17] Candice McDonald, *Prepare for Impact: Possible Post-Pandemic Volunteer Separation,* Firefighter Nation (September 9, 2021), <https://www.firefighternation.com/firerescue/post-pandemic-volunteer-firefighter-separation/> (last visited September 13, 2022).

many states' requirements for firefighters (masking and/or vaccinations), and changed social patterns (such as increased family time).[18]

To understand the extent that Oregon is impacted by this trend of decreasing volunteer firefighters, department chiefs were asked how the number of volunteer firefighters in their department had changed within the last five years. Figure 1 shows 73.0% of chiefs reported a moderate or significant decrease in the number of volunteer firefighters in their departments in the last five years (see Appendix A Q95).

**Figure 1: Department Change in Number of
Volunteer Firefighters Within Last Five Years**
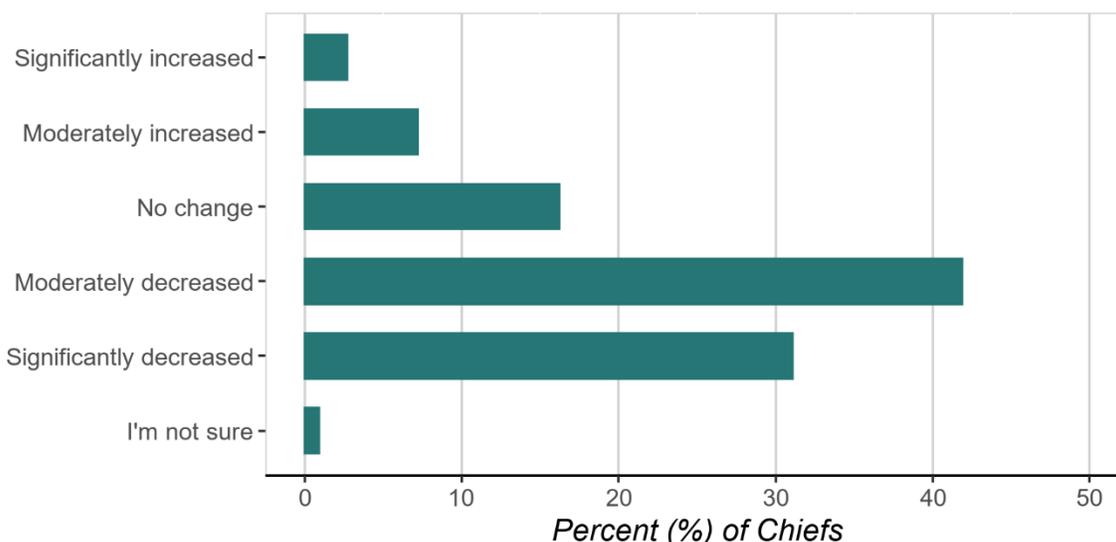
Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS IN OREGON

Oregon fire departments operate under a variety of circumstances that are influenced by geographic factors, population density, population demographics, social factors, and remoteness. Departments themselves may vary in type, percentage of volunteer firefighters, age of volunteers, and responsibilities to their communities, among others.

There are roughly 289 combination and all-volunteer fire departments in Oregon.[19] Departments have a median of 16 volunteer firefighters, though the number at any one department ranges from 0 to 70 volunteers (see Appendix A QID227).[20] This section

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[18] Allyah Wright, *Pandemic Adds Stress to Already Strained Fire Departments*, Pew: Stateline (November 9, 2021), <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/09/pandemic-adds-stress-to-already-strained-rural-fire-departments> (last visited September 13, 2022).
[19] Calculated from data at U.S. Fire Administration, *National Fire Department Registry Quick Facts*, <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary> (last visited September 6, 2022).
[20] The median is the middle value of a list of numbers.

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briefly describes reported characteristics of volunteer firefighters in Oregon's fire departments, such as motivations, age, employment, income, gender, race and ethnicity, veteran status, activity levels, and certifications. Understanding these characteristics may be informative to building capacity and representation through recruiting as well as informing potential resources that may be beneficial for volunteer firefighters.

Motivations

Oregon is ranked third among states for volunteerism with 43.2% of residents reporting volunteer activities.[21] Volunteer firefighting is an activity that requires time, emotional intensity, and resilience to stress beyond that of most volunteer activities.[22] Those who engage in activities that serve their communities, sometimes at a personal risk, have been found to be motivated by public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice.[23] High public service motivation is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational and individual performance, fit with an organization, and the performance of non-assigned actions by individuals that benefit their organizations.[24]

This study investigated Oregon volunteer firefighters to understand what motivated them to serve, which could inform recruitment and retention practices. Volunteer firefighters reported that they were most motivated by protecting and serving the community (60.8%), by plans to become career firefighters (23.8%) (which may be a combination of income motivation with public service motivation), and for social reasons (12.7%) (see Appendix A QID173). Incorporating the public service motivations of volunteer firefighters into plans for recruitment or retention has been found to be valuable.[25]

Age

The age profile of current Oregon volunteer firefighters may be informative to recruiting and retention measures. The average age of firefighters in departments tends to vary by the size of the population being protected and the type of department (e.g., all-paid, all-volunteer, or combination).[26] Most Oregon fire department chiefs reported a wide range of ages in their department (34.4%). Notably, chiefs in 13.1% of departments indicated

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[21] AmeriCorps, *Volunteering in America: Rankings*, *available at* <> (last visited September 14, 2022).
[22] L.M. Blaney, D. Wilde, and R. Hill. *Transcending Adversity: Resilience in Volunteer Firefighters,* 10 IJES 2, (167-176) (work-related resilience to intense stressors in firefighters), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJES-10-2019-0055> (last visited October 7, 2022).
[23] James L. Perry, *Antecedents of Public Service Motivation,* 7 J-PART 2, (181-197) (1997) (characteristics of public service motivation), *available at* <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1181709> (last visited October 7, 2022).
[24] Ritz, Adrian, Gene A. Brewer, and Oliver Neumann, *Public Service Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook*, 76 PAR 3, (2016) (414–426) (meta-study of public service motivation research).
[25] Jason Decremer, *Public Service Motivation for Recruiting and Retaining Volunteer Firefighters,* Firehouse (March 1, 2019), <https://www.firehouse.com/careers-education/article/21045346/public-service-motivation-for-recruiting-retaining-volunteer-firefighters> (last visited September 10,2022).
[26] Rita Fahy, Ben Evarts, and Gary P. Stein, *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2020* 2 (2022), *available at* <https://www.nfpa.org//-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osFDProfileTables.pdf> (last visited September 13, 2022).

that the typical age range of their volunteer firefighters was 55 and over (see Appendix A Q94).

Figure 2 shows ages reported by volunteer firefighters (see Appendix A QID184):
- The mean age reported by volunteer firefighters was 43.4 years with 68% of respondents falling between the ages of 27.8 and 59.0 years.[27]
- The largest portion of respondents reported being 60 years and over (max=81 years) (23%).
- Volunteer firefighters under age 30 are 16.5% of respondents.

New recruits (with two or less years of service):
- The median age of newly recruited volunteer firefighters is 27.5 years (min=16.0, max=70.0).
- New recruits comprise 19.4% of survey respondents.
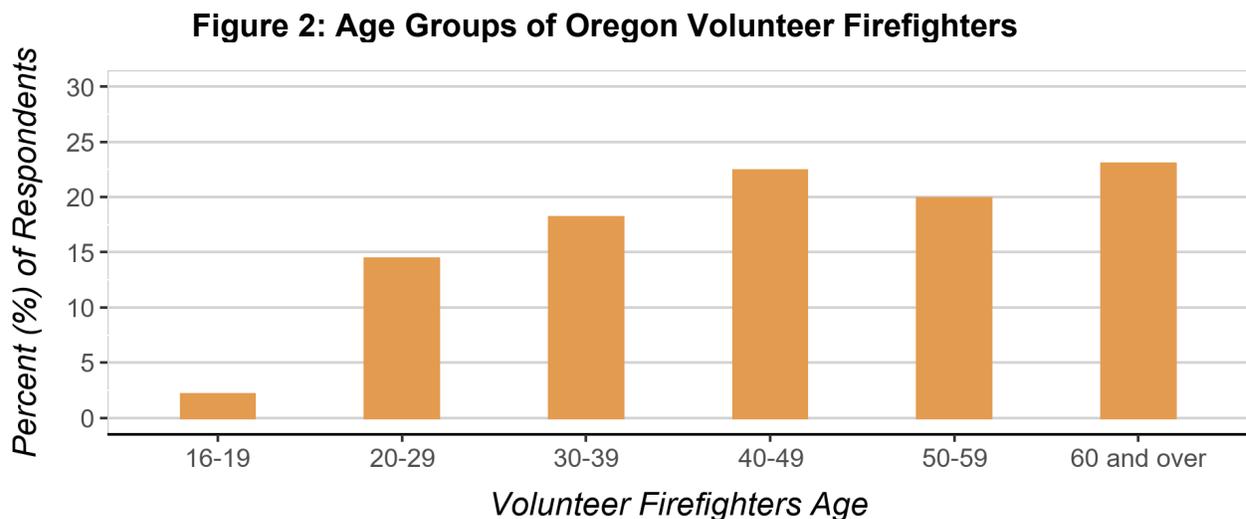
Figure 2: Age Groups of Oregon Volunteer Firefighters

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

National trends show an increasing average age of volunteer firefighters.[28] However, without prior years of age data, transition rates to career firefighting, or understanding the impacts of COVID on retention and recruitment rates, caution should be used when interpreting Oregon trends in volunteer firefighter age.

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[27] Mean (M)=43.4 years, Standard Deviation (SD)=15.6 years
[28] Rita Fahy, Ben Evarts, and Gary P. Stein, *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2020* 10 (2022), *available at* < https://www.nfpa.org//-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osFDProfileTables.pdf> (last visited September 13, 2022).

Employment and Income

Employment status and household income (see [Appendix A QID157](#) and [QID158](#)) may be relevant to structuring recruitment and retainment initiatives. Volunteer firefighters most frequently reported being employed or self-employed full time (69%), followed by being retired (14%), students (8%), and employed or self-employed part time (8%). Few respondents reported being unemployed or at-home parents (1.8% combined).

Volunteer firefighters most frequently reported a gross annual household income between $50,000 to $74,999 (19%), which is within the same range as the median income reported in Oregon.[29] Figure 3 shows the range of incomes reported by volunteer firefighters.

Figure 3: Gross Annual Household Income
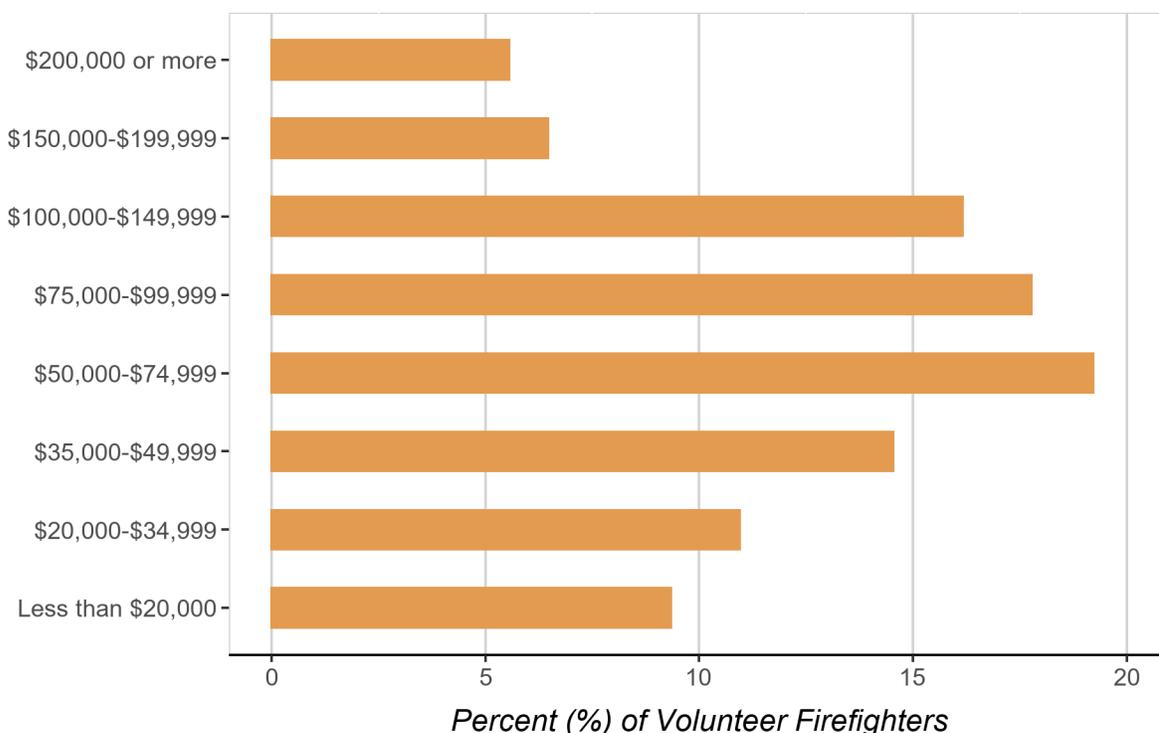
Percent (%) of Volunteer Firefighters

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Full-time employed or full-time self-employed volunteer firefighters—the largest group of respondents—reported household incomes of $50,000-$99,000 (37.9%), $100,000 or above (32.2%), and under $50,000 (11.3%).

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[29] Median Oregon household income (in 2020 dollars) reported for 2016-2020 is $65,667. U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts: Oregon*, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OR/INC110220> (last visited 9/20/2022).

Several significant relationships between income and employment may be meaningful to recruiting or retaining certain populations by employment status:[30]

- *Student incomes are below the Oregon median income.* Student volunteer firefighters, which make up 7.8% of respondents, have an average age of 22.3 years. Student volunteer firefighters have a household annual income range of less than $20,000 (50%), $20,000-$34,999 (18.2%), or above $35,000 (27.3%). In written comments, chiefs and volunteer firefighters expressed students' needs as including basic provisions such as affordable housing and food.

- *Most self-employed part time or part-time employed incomes are below the Oregon median income.* Part-time employed or self-employed part time volunteer firefighters, which make up 7.5% of respondents, have an average age of 46.5 years. Part-time employed volunteer firefighters have household incomes below $50,000 (45.2%), $50,000-$99,000 (38.1%), or over $100,000 (16.7%).

- *Retired volunteer firefighters are at or above the Oregon median income.* Retired volunteer firefighters, which make up 13.7% of respondents, have an average age of 65.4 years with a range from 49-78. Retired volunteer firefighters have household incomes between $50,000-$100,000 (42.9%), over $100,000 (26%), and less than $50,000 (22.1%).

Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Veteran Status

Understanding the gender, race and ethnicity, and veteran status of volunteer firefighters (see Appendix A QID185, QID186, and QID187) may be informative to building capacity and representation through recruiting and retention. Findings show:

- Oregon's percentage of volunteer firefighters that are female (16.5%) is higher than the national average of volunteer firefighters (11%).[31] Volunteer firefighters identified as 82.8% male and less than 1% non-binary or genderfluid.

- Volunteer firefighters in Oregon reported themselves as White alone (Hispanic or Latino included) (93.9%), Black or African American alone (0.2%), American Indian and Alaska Native alone (0.4%), Asian alone (1.1%), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (0.2%), two or more races (6.1%), Hispanic or Latino (3.4%), and White alone not Hispanic or Latino (90.8%).[32]

- Oregon's percentage of volunteer firefighters that are veterans (17.6%) is significantly higher than the estimated veteran population of approximately 8% in the state.[33] At least 90.1% of those reporting military service have served active

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[30] Correlation analysis shows these relationships above 99% significance. They are likely generalizable to other firefighters with similar employment status who didn't answer the survey.
[31] U.S. Fire Administration, *Supporting Women in Fire and EMS: The USFA Commitment*, <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/blog/ci-030321.html> (last visited October 3, 2022).
[32] Because volunteer firefighters are common in areas with relatively small populations—which are also poorly sampled in the U.S. Census—these values are not easily comparable to U.S. Census populations.
[33] Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Who Is a Veteran?*, <https://www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Who-Is-A-Veteran.aspx> (last visited October 3, 2022).

duty suggesting that they may currently receive benefits such as medical and dental support or pensions from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Of chiefs, approximately 18.4% have veteran status suggesting they may also have access to these benefits.

Volunteer Activity Levels and Certifications

Understanding the activity levels and certifications of volunteer firefighters may inform training offerings and schedules as well as identify potential barriers to retention.

Volunteer firefighter activity levels.
Figure 4 shows that most volunteer firefighters (86.8%) reported that they spent time volunteering with their fire department at least once per week. Only 2.1% reported that they volunteered less than once per month.

Figure 4: Volunteer Firefighter Activity with Departments
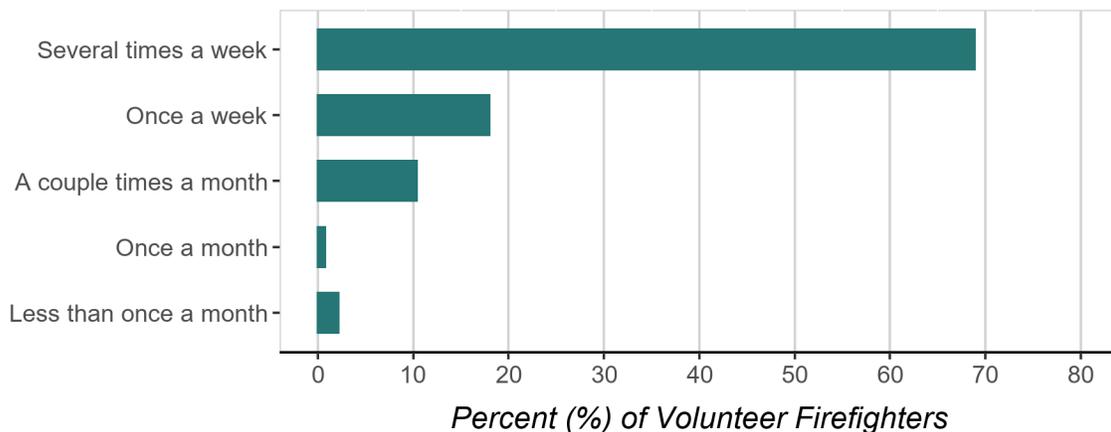
Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Almost 80% of chiefs of combined or all-volunteer departments reported that half or more than half of their volunteers actively participate (see Appendix A QID228). Chiefs were then asked about how they decide when a volunteer is no longer active (see Appendix A Q53). Although there is not an established metric for what constitutes actively participating, 84.9% of chiefs (174 of 205 who answered this question) agreed that volunteers must attend at least 40-80% of trainings to be considered active. Chiefs (40.9%) also responded that volunteers must attend at least 10-30% of calls to be considered active.

Flexibility of activity requirements within departments was a subject of written feedback from chiefs and volunteers. Several chiefs wrote that they had become less rigid with their minimum requirements for volunteer firefighters to be considered active for retention purposes, even though this was not necessarily beneficial in other ways.

> *"It's hard to admit but we have lowered our standard and expectations for our membership just trying to keep them around. For us the days of requiring a high percentage of drill attendance and alarm response are long gone. The goal for our agency is to keep our membership involved but not ask to much from them, this may result in a more consistent program but also takes away from other activities a volunteer used to do, pancake breakfasts, community events etc."*

Considering that commute time to volunteer activities may be a barrier to volunteer service,[34] this survey inquired on volunteer firefighters' commute times to their administrative fire departments. Most respondents reported their drive was less than 15 minutes (81.8%). Only 3.6% reported a commute time more than 30 minutes (see Appendix A Q86).

Only a few volunteer firefighters expressed a concern with distance in terms of response times to calls and as a factor in reducing motivation to participate.

> *"Unless it's a nearby call or a major incident, most calls are too far to respond to. Also, digital preprogramed responses have left me responding to scene, after the incident is over."*

Many written responses indicated fuel costs were a difficulty for themselves or other volunteer firefighters.

Volunteer firefighter certifications.
The first required certification for Oregon volunteer firefighters is Firefighter 1 (FF1) to fight fires. Oregon volunteer firefighters hold certifications including National Fire Protection Association Firefighter 1 (FF1) (74.2%), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) (43.9%), NFPA Firefighter 2 (FF2) (40.0%), NFPA Fire Officer (any level) (20.8%), and others including driver/operator, medical, and wildland certifications. Approximately 3% reported that they had no certifications yet (see Appendix A QID156).

RECRUITMENT: PRACTICES AND OPTIONS FOR IMPACT

As recruitment is often essential to help fire departments manage their personnel, the recruitment practices of departments were investigated from the perspectives of both chiefs and volunteer firefighters. The findings suggest that chiefs and volunteer firefighters have differences in where they would recruit. Additionally, findings suggest that interaction with department members has been the most effective route for recruitment.

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[34] AmeriCorps, *Volunteering in America: Rankings*, available at <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Volunteering_in_America_States_508.pdf> (last visited September 20,2022).

Volunteer firefighters reported that they heard about volunteer firefighting through a fire agency member (48.8%), previous firefighting experience (14.7%), a friend who is not a fire agency member (9.0%), or had a personal experience related to fire (4.6%) (see Appendix A QID172).

Figure 5 shows the locations where volunteer firefighters suggested recruiting should take place and where chiefs actively recruit (see Appendix A QID174 and Q66).

Figure 5: Suggested (Volunteer Firefighters) and Actual (Chiefs) Recruiting Locations
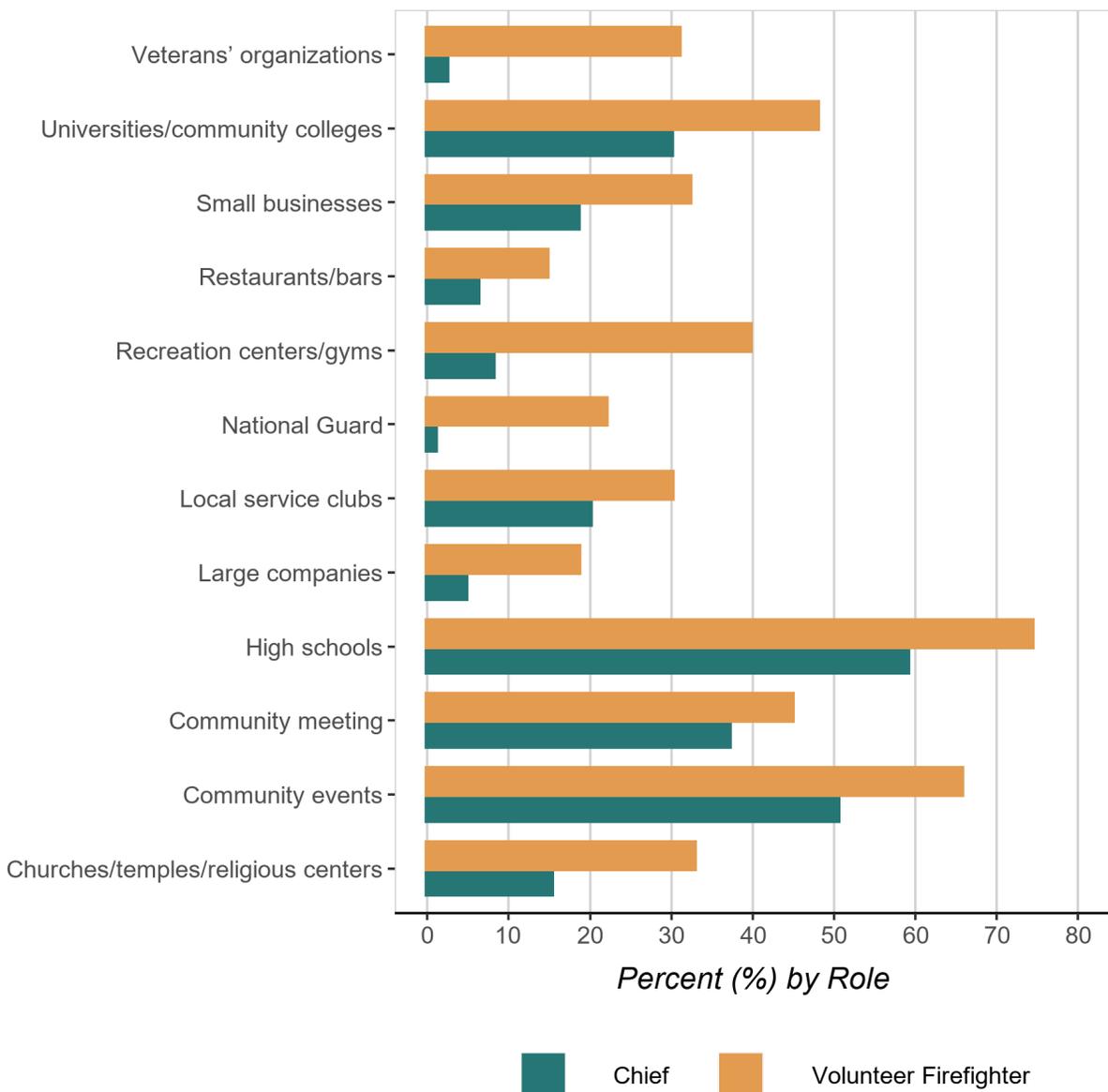
Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

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Both chiefs and volunteer firefighters identified one recruitment location at a statistically similar rate: community meetings.[35] All other recruiting locations differed widely[36] showing a difference in perspective on the best recruiting locations.[37] The largest differences in Figure 5 suggest recruiting locations that are currently not used by many chiefs but that volunteer firefighters believe are promising: recreation centers/gyms, veterans' organizations, and the National Guard.

Other opportunities for recruitment that were identified by both chiefs and volunteer firefighters included social media and online advertising, word-of-mouth campaigns, banners and digital signs, open houses, and local newsletters or media (see Appendix A Q66 and QID174).

Almost one-third of chiefs (30.8%) reported that they had a standardized recruiting process that is closely followed. While it is difficult to ascertain whether a standardized process is more effective than having a general set of talking points for recruiting interested parties, such a process may create increased consistency of expectations of recruits—potentially addressing an identified reason for volunteer firefighters departing from departments (see *Reasons for Leaving*). In addition to the information recruiters may give potential recruits, asking targeted questions to gain an understanding of the level of public service motivation of potential recruits may be one strategy to ensure that recruits are appropriately matched to work circumstances they are likely to confront.[38]

When considering people who show interest in volunteer firefighting but do not join, chiefs rated the effectiveness of options that might have increased the likelihood that they join (Table 1). More flexibility in training schedules was rated as having the highest potential for effectiveness (138 of 256 chiefs [54%] rated this as medium or high effectiveness). Other options rated by over 40% of chiefs as having medium or high effectiveness were more flexibility in training or physical requirements (47%), financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives (47%), and recognition or credit from employers (43%).

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[35] Based on chi-squared tests at 95% confidence level.
[36] Based on chi-squared tests at 95% confidence level.
[37] Beyond perception, there may be logistic reasons for the differences including the availability of those locations in a local area.
[38] Jason Decremer, *Public Service Motivation for Recruiting and Retaining Volunteer Firefighters,* Firehouse (March 1, 2019), <https://www.firehouse.com/careers-education/article/21045346/public-service-motivation-for-recruiting-retaining-volunteer-firefighters> (last visited September 13, 2022).

Table 1: Rated Effectiveness of Volunteer Recruiting Options

Options to Improve Volunteer Recruiting	Number of Chiefs				
	Not Effective	Low	Medium	High	Medium + High
More flexibility in training schedules	23	44	93	45	138
More flexibility in training or physical requirements	22	61	89	32	121
Financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives	18	62	63	58	121
Recognition or credit from employers	19	70	59	52	111
College credit	34	62	60	41	101
More networking/career building opportunities	28	71	75	22	97
More opportunities to socialize in addition to volunteer duties	25	92	64	15	79
Other	12	1	3	2	5

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

When combining ratings of medium and high effectiveness, more flexibility in training schedules, more flexibility in training or physical requirements, and financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives were the highest ranked options (see Appendix A Q71). Notably, these highly ranked options also appear to address the most reported reason for why volunteer firefighters leave a fire agency: "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities" (see *Reasons for Leaving*; also see Appendix A QID177). These high-ranked options are discussed in more detail in the following section on retention.

RETENTION: REASONS FOR LEAVING AND OPTIONS FOR IMPACT

While recruitment practices may impact the inflow of volunteer firefighters, retention practices help to maintain capacity of volunteer and combination fire departments.[39] The findings suggest that most chiefs and volunteers feel their departments struggle with retention. The most cited reasons for volunteer firefighters leaving departments related to balancing volunteering with other responsibilities, expectations, and needing increased flexibility for required training. Options to address these and other reasons for leaving were ranked and analyzed by firefighters and chiefs.

Overall, more than 70% of respondents (volunteers and chiefs combined) think their current department is struggling with retention (Table 2) (see Appendix A QID176).

Table 2: Department Struggles with Retention

	In your opinion, does your department struggle with retaining volunteer firefighters?	
	Volunteer Firefighters	**Chiefs**
Sample Size	539	204
Yes	79.6%	69.1%
No	20.4%	30.9%

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Reasons for Leaving

Volunteer firefighters and chiefs were asked to reflect on why volunteers may have left or might consider leaving their department. Respondents were asked to select up to three responses out of 11 options provided, including an open-ended "other" prompt. Chiefs and volunteer firefighters most often selected the following reasons:
- "Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities";
- "The realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up";
- "Training requirements and/or schedules weren't flexible enough"; and
- "Moved to career side - volunteering was a stepping-stone to career."

Table 3 shows how often respondents selected the options provided. The response options in the table have been ordered in decreasing order of selection as ranked by volunteer firefighters.

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[39] Kimberly Quiros. *Volunteer Fire Service Today* 25, (2015), *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf> (last visited September 9, 2022).

Table 3: Reasons Volunteers May Have Left or Considered Leaving Fire Departments

	Firefighters	Chief
Sample size	537	203
Answer choices		
Difficult to balance volunteering	68.0%	83.7%
Realities were different	31.1%	52.7% *
Moved to career side	28.5%	38.9%
Training/schedules not flexible	28.1%	36.9%
Didn't feel supported by leadership	23.5% *	4.4%
Not enough new member support	17.5% *	4.4%
Department culture not fit	17.1% *	6.9%
Lack of equipment/personnel	8.2%	6.9%
Physical requirements too rigorous	6.0%	13.8%
Not enough professional support	5.8%	5.9%
Something else	22.7	15.8

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey
Note: Respondents were asked to select up to three options and the response category names in the table have been shortened. Asterisk (*) denotes statistically significant differences between percentage response by volunteer firefighter and chiefs.

Chiefs and volunteer firefighters similarly reported reasons for leaving for most survey selection options:[40]

- "Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities";
- "Moved to career side - volunteering was a stepping stone to career";
- "Training requirements and/or schedules weren't flexible enough";
- "Lack of proper equipment or personnel to comfortably perform during training or calls";
- "Physical requirements too rigorous"; and
- "Wanted to move to career side but wasn't getting enough professional development support."

Chiefs and volunteer firefighters have significantly different perspectives on why volunteers may leave for four of the selections (see Table 3 marked with asterisk):[41]

- "Didn't feel supported by department leadership";
- "Not enough support for and/or communication with new members";
- "The realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up ";
and
- "The department culture wasn't a good fit."

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[40] Using Pearson's chi-squared test, rejected as different at a confidence level of 95%.
[41] Using Pearson's chi-squared test at a confidence level of 95%. Listed by decreasing statistical significance.

The open-text category for this question, "Something else (please specify)", received numerous contributions from respondents. Topics addressed in respondents' comments included volunteers moving away, leaving due to a need for benefits or pay, incompatibility of skills of the volunteers, and prohibitive housing expenses in the department's community (see Appendix A QID177).

Options for Impacting Retention

Volunteer firefighters and chiefs were asked what types of programs or directions departments could take to positively influence retention in their departments (see Appendix A QID179). The choices were broad options to address the reasons volunteer firefighters might leave a department in the previous question. Out of 11 options including an open-ended "other" prompt, the choices cited by the highest number of respondents (over 25%, including chiefs and volunteer firefighters [n=728]) were:

- "Provide financial or scholarship compensation";
- "Improved resources for department (e.g., equipment, building, people)";
- "More flexibility in training or requirements"; and
- "More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers."

Figure 6 shows these choices by percentage per group in the order provided on the survey. "Other" answers provided by respondents included wanting to adjust the volunteer firefighter position for call type and/or volume of a department, removing COVID-19 restrictions, and changing International Association of Fire Fighters policy to allow career firefighters to volunteer in other fire districts (see Appendix A QID179 for complete list).

Figure 6: Options to Improve Retention
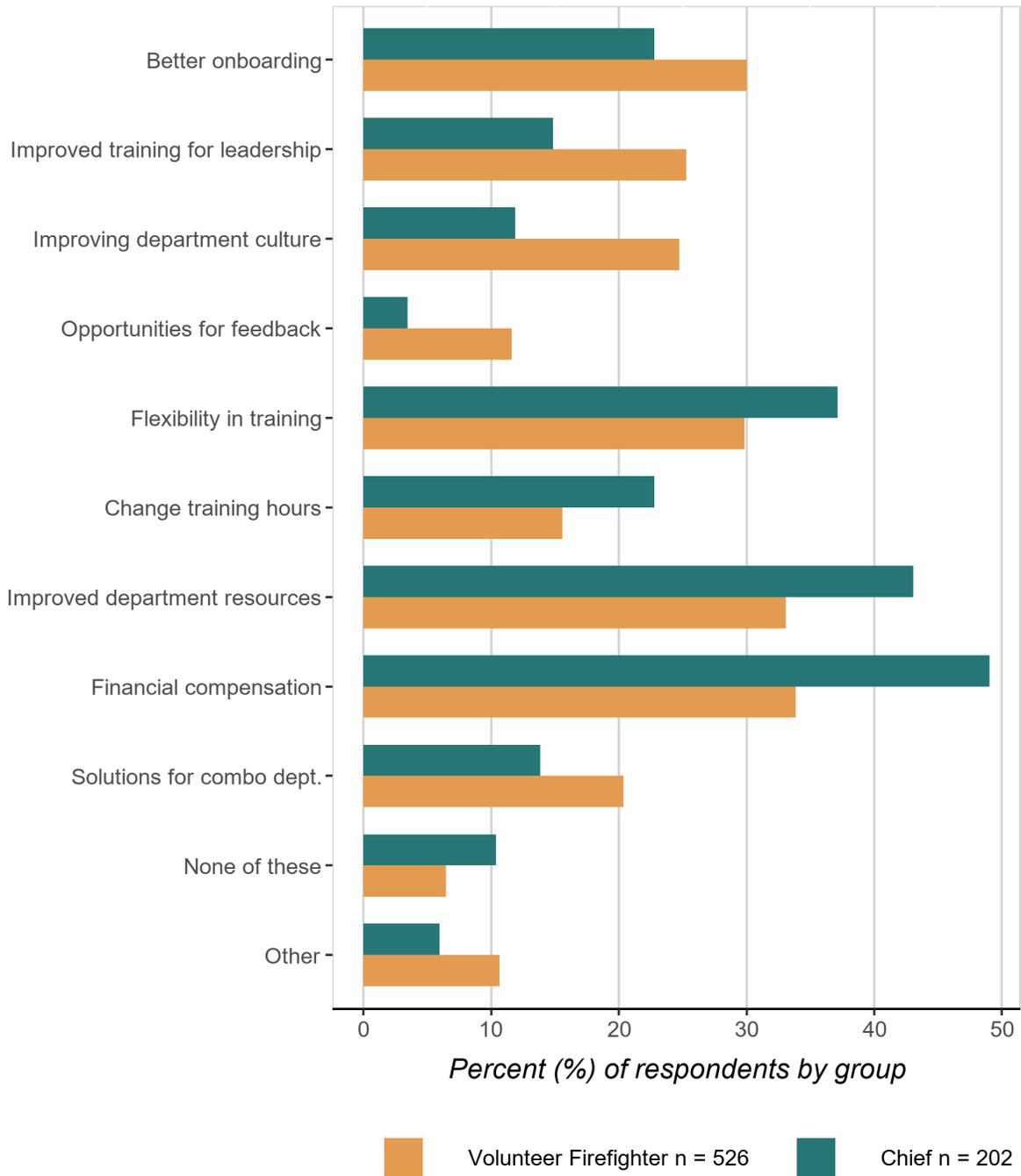
Percent (%) of respondents by group

Volunteer Firefighter n = 526   Chief n = 202

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Respondents were then given specific options to accomplish the broader retention objectives shown in Figure 6 and asked to rate how impactful those options would be

(see Appendix B for rank-ordered table).[42] These specific options are discussed in the following sections, which are grouped and ordered by their broader category ranking.[43]

Provide financial or scholarship compensation.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (33.8%) and chiefs (49.0%) most frequently chose this retention option category (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the highest-rated statement was "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities". Financial options may partially address this retention barrier by reducing the impact of other financial responsibilities. Departments have reported that they currently offer some compensation, scholarships, and benefits but this varies by department.

Financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives were also rated by chiefs as having high effectiveness for increasing the number of recruits (see Appendix A Q71).

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:
- *Compensation.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 28% (1st).

  Analysis notes: Statistical analysis shows this is a less relevant retention measure for the portion of volunteer firefighters who make between $150,000 and $199,000.

- *Tax deductions, benefits, or credits.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 27% (2nd).

- *College scholarships.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 17% (6th).

- *Employer credit for service time spent at calls.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 17% (7th).

  Analysis notes: Statistical analysis shows this is particularly relevant for retaining those with household incomes in the $20,000 to $34,999 range.

- *Disability insurance.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 8% (27th).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1%.

  Analysis notes: Responses included pension program, health insurance, gym membership, and paid trainings.

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[42] An example of the flow of these questions is provided by Appendix A QID179, QID205, and QID180.
[43] "Option Category" in Table B-1, Appendix B.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the highest-rated statement was "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities". Survey results indicate financial options may partially address this retention barrier by reducing the impact of other financial responsibilities.

Departments have indicated that they do offer some of the financial and scholarship compensation discussed above but this varies by department. Figure 7 shows chief responses, representing 211 all-volunteer or combined departments.[44] The most offered compensation/benefit is pay per call (48%), followed by the Resident Volunteer Program[45] (41%), Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)[46] (38%), disability insurance (36%), uniform stipend (34%), and college scholarships (30%).

Figure 7: Department Benefits Currently Offered
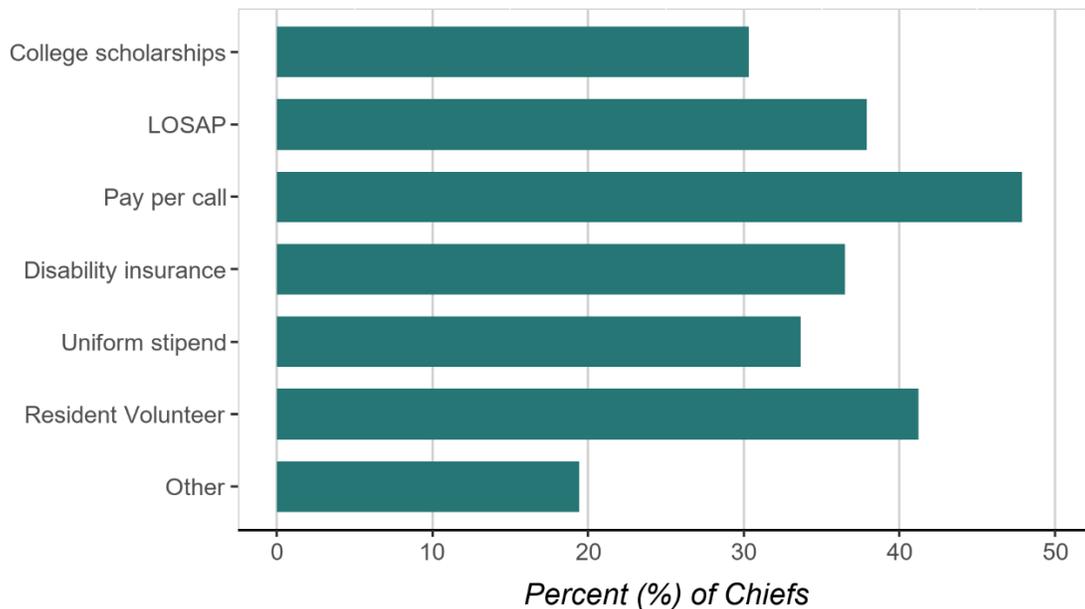
Percent (%) of Chiefs

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Other reported department offerings include shift stipends, reimbursements, training tuition, ambulance insurance, life insurance, and access to seasonal or short-term pay opportunities (see Appendix A QID167).

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[44] There are a total of 308 registered fire departments in Oregon at U.S. Fire Administration, *National Fire Department Registry Quick Facts*, <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary> (last visited September 6, 2022).
[45] Free residence in fire department dorms for students, EMS and fire training, uniforms and gear, and tuition reimbursement.
[46] Typically includes lump sum benefit at entitlement, death benefit as funds to beneficiary, or disability benefit as distribution of accumulated funds.

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The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

Compensation. Volunteer Firefighters considered compensation to be the most important potential option for retention while chiefs rated it the second highest to having more firefighters. This highly ranked choice was emphasized by comments submitted in other parts of the survey and the "Other (please specify)" textbox:

> *"I have found that most volunteers want one thing, value for their time. This can be financial or emotional, or a combination of the two. They want to feel that they are supported, valued, integrated, and integral to the organization's operations. Secondly, money helps by relieving the financial burden of volunteering while giving them a tangible token of their value."*

> *"Compensation. If they take time off work to help the community, they don't get paid by their employer. In this present political environment fuel is stupid expensive that the kids on $15 per hour cannot afford to respond. The state should compensate them for calls."*

Several comments suggest compensation could be provided as hourly pay or stipends that apply to time spent at events, standbys, and trainings. Others suggested reimbursement of service-related expenses (e.g., cellphones, fuel) would also make a difference.

The responses were statistically analyzed to understand whether age, income level, or employment status were related to compensation—potentially indicating the needs of a specific group. Analysis shows that compensation is much less likely to be considered an option for respondents with incomes in the range of $150,000-$199,000.[47]

State tax deductions, benefits, or credits. The option that was chosen most often by chiefs (40%) and rated as having the second-highest impact rank was state tax deductions, benefits, or credits.

Respondents submitted comments that suggested reasoning behind and directions for this option. Some wanted exemption or partial exemption from paying tax on reimbursements or on call stipends:

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[47] Holding all other predictor variables constant, the odds of selection of compensation as a policy solution decreased by 83.3% (95% CI [0.02, 0.72]) for those with incomes in the range of $150,000-$199,000.

> *"There are tax implications (federal) that limit how much can be reimbursed for college books/tuition and things like fuel reimbursement that hinder the ability to reward those interested in becoming firefighters. These are benefits as per IRS and those with student programs would see much more ability to recruit and retain if we could pick up these costs without tax implications."*

Others were interested in state income tax credits or removing limitations on tax credits that currently exist:

> *"While there is a $250 tax credit thought the Office of Rural Health to EMS providers, it eliminated those close to a population of 50,000 so all the small agencies outside of Salem for example can't apply."*

Some mentioned specific programs that they felt could be beneficial in Oregon:

> *"In Washington they are working on an HSA-VEBA for volunteers that might be doable in Oregon. That would be a HUGE help as many have none or limited medical insurance benefits."*

There were a range of benefit types mentioned in comments including:
- medical insurance at a low or no cost,
- pension program,
- gym membership, and
- better workers' compensation insurance.

College scholarships. Respondents rated the option of college scholarships as the sixth most impactful option for retention. One chief suggested that providing scholarships linked them back to being able to recruit students as volunteer firefighters:

> *"We could have a group [of potential volunteers] to pull from if more incentives for tuition and stipends were available but that is outside of our budget reach."*

One volunteer firefighter who chose this option commented that being a student and volunteering led to financial strain:

> *"It's difficult to balance work, school and volunteering. I've had to decrease my work hours and financial stress has led me to needing to apply for SNAP benefits to make it through the month."*

Employer credit for service time spent at calls. As rated by respondents, the seventh-most impactful option for retention is employer credit for service time

spent at calls. Comments suggest that this may make employers more amenable to allowing employees to volunteer:

> *"It is difficult on leaving full-time job for emergency then taking vacation or putting strain on full-time employer for workload. Compensation to the full-time employer or admin leave for the employee to work emergent event where needed due to lack of assistance in remote area would be helpful."*

Respondents submitted comments about the form that a policy might take:

> *"…and by incentivizing employers who recognize employees that are volunteer firefighters and allow them to be active volunteers without fear of losing their jobs."*

> *"Obtaining tax credits for employers who allow their employees to be volunteer FF's would be a huge benefit."*

> *"Folks need protection from retaliation from employers, for being late or missing work due to a call or incident."*

The responses were statistically analyzed to understand whether age, income level, or employment status were related to compensation—potentially indicating the needs of a specific group. Analysis shows that employer credit for time used on calls is much more likely to be a considered option for respondents with incomes in the range of $20,000-$34,999.[48] This bracket accounts for approximately 12% of volunteer firefighters.

Disability insurance. Disability insurance was rated by 8% of respondents as impactful to retention. Comments reflected that current offerings were inadequate or not offered by the respondent's department:

> *"We have workers compensation insurance that is useless and leaves the volunteer with major out of pocket expenses. The insurance is only taken hundreds of miles away and they won't reimburse for ER visits."*

> *"Nothing covers my primary income if I get injured or get covid. It happened to me and I was out of work for 2 weeks no pay."*

Other. Responses included pension program, health insurance, gym membership, and paid trainings (see Appendix A QID211).

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[48] Holding all other predictor variables constant, the odds of selection of employer credit for time attending calls as a policy solution increased by 296% (95% CI [1.31, 13.93]) for those with incomes in the range of $20,000-$34,999.

Improved resources for department.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (33.1%) and chiefs (43.1%) chose "_Improved department resources (e.g., equipment, building, people)_" second most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Feedback from respondents suggests that resources for the departments may address the retention barrier, "_lack of proper equipment or personnel to comfortably perform during training or calls_", chosen by volunteer firefighters (8.2%) and chiefs (6.9%)._

Some chiefs suggested that nicer facilities and equipment may attract potential recruits as well.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:

- _Fire station improvements._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 25% (3rd).

- _More firefighters._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 21% (4th).

  Analysis notes: Analysis and written feedback suggests that providing an increased number of firefighters may address the barrier of "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities".

- _Apparatus._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 16% (9th).

- _Firefighting equipment_. Moderate or Major impact ranking 16% (10th).

- _Personal protective equipment._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 15% (11th).

- _Radios._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 10% (20th).

- _iPads._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 4% (38th).

- _Other._ Moderate or Major impact ranking 1%.

  Analysis notes: Responses included training facilities, on-site gym, self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs), improved shower rooms, culture consultation support, and full-time coordinator.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteer firefighters have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement "_Lack of proper equipment or personnel to comfortably perform during training or calls_" was chosen by volunteer firefighters (8.2%) and chiefs (6.9%). Feedback from respondents suggests that resources for the departments may address this retention barrier.

The responses were statistically analyzed to understand whether preferences for resources were related to other factors, such as department type. Analyses showed no relationship between the type of department (combination or all-volunteer)[49] and any of the resource types requested. Additionally, there was no relationship between the selection of resource options with region. These findings suggest that the retention option of improved resources for fire departments is not restricted to certain areas or department types.

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

> Fire station improvements. Improvements to fire stations was an option ranked as the third most impactful to retaining volunteer firefighters. The reasoning why fire station improvements might be viewed as a potential option to improve retention was stated by several respondents:
>
> > *"An old, dilapidated station without character, space, or recreation, is not a place people look forward to spending extra time at."*
> >
> > *"I believe, if we had that, we could get more people to come up and hangout. Comradery being at the station to run calls and drill when they have time, I think is crucial."*
> >
> > *"It has been stated to me time and again, that a newer and more moderate fire station, at the very least a residence area with dorms would have helped retained most of our out-of-district volunteers that come into our district to pull shifts, and eventually quit."*
>
> Some respondents consider improvements to be a factor for attracting and having capacity for recruits:
>
> > *"I've also heard from some volunteers at other agencies that when they have options, they will typically volunteer at an agency that has the better facility and equipment. We currently only have a training room and apparatus bay, so we are fairly limited on our recruitment range for bringing in volunteers or staff from the outside the local area."*
> >
> > *"Unable to have residents or students due to lack of facility size, which is desperately needed."*

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[49] All-paid department chiefs were not routed through these questions.

Some of the improvements that were specifically mentioned included:
- dedicated de-con area,
- more or improved bathrooms and showering stalls,
- day room or area to socialize,
- kitchen,
- living quarters, and
- training facilities.

<u>More firefighters for your agency.</u> The need for more firefighters was expressed as the fourth most impactful to retaining volunteer firefighters with 25% of respondents saying that this would be moderately or majorly impactful. The reasoning an increased number of firefighters may be a factor impactful to retention is expressed by the following comments:

> *"Not enough career staff to support operations, adding more responsibilities to the volunteers in addition to incident response and training."*

> *"I love being a volunteer, but there are too few of us to shoulder the workload. Those few end up responding to everything because there is no one else. The time commitment wouldn't be so bad if there were even a few more available to spread out the workload."*

Written comments suggest that an increased number of firefighters may help to address the most cited reason for leaving of "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities". These comments may be reflective of understandings of other volunteer firefighters and chiefs. Of respondents that chose "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities", 19.2% of volunteer firefighters and 25.9% chiefs chose "more firefighters for your agency" as one of their preferred options to improve retention at their departments.

<u>Apparatus.</u> The need for apparatus was selected as the ninth most impactful option for retention with 16% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. The variety of apparatus needed by a department is dependent on the types of emergencies that the department handles.[50] Respondent comments suggest that small departments may not have the funding for the substantial purchase of updated apparatus:

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[50] Clackamas Fire District #1, *Apparatus Showcase*, <https://clackamasfire.com/apparatus-showcase/> (last viewed October 15, 2022).

"Also, not having the up-to-date apparatus and equipment to use. Our small department just doesn't have the funding for these types of large transactions."

The reason apparatus was related to recruitment of more volunteer firefighters was expressed by one respondent:

"We have a handful of good apparatus, but some additional apparatus would help our response and give our Dept a better face for others to want to come volunteer."

Firefighting equipment and personal protective equipment. The need for firefighting equipment and PPE were ranked by moderate or major impact as 10th and 11th respectively. In addition to comments about the need for up-to-date or sufficient equipment to respond to calls, one respondent remarked that getting equipment and PPE to hold trainings was a problem:

"There is a real struggle and long delays in getting PPE or equipment to hold a training academy."

Radios and iPads. The need for radios and iPads were rated by moderate or major impact as 20th and 38th, respectively, as options to retention. There were no comments directly related to these items.

Other. Responses included training facilities, on-site gym, self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs), improved shower rooms, culture consultation support, and the need for a full-time coordinator (see Appendix A QID210).

More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (30.0%) and chiefs (22.8%) chose "*More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers*" fourth most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Not enough new member support"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (17.5%) and chiefs (4.4%). Feedback suggests that more attention and better onboarding for new volunteers may address this retention barrier by creating personal connections in a department, increasing understanding of expectations, and increasing communication.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:

- *A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 17% (5th).

- *Having department leadership hold more regular and personal check-ins with new volunteers.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 13% (12th).

- *Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 12% (14th).

  Analysis notes: Option may also address the retention barrier of "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities".

- *Leadership providing a clearer understanding to new volunteers of the monthly time commitment, goals, and responsibilities that are expected so they're on the same page.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 12% (17th).

- *Leadership making it clear up front the minimum length of service they expect of new recruits.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 3% (41st).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1%.

  Analysis notes: Responses included creating detailed plans tailored to the individual, more training to increase comfort and performance, and quicker route to certification.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Not enough new member support"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (17.5%) and chiefs (4.4%).

Some written responses suggest other ways to include volunteers in activities or communication:
- fund volunteer seats on conflagrations,
- support tighter integration with career staff,
- offer seats on apparatus to new recruits to get "on scene" experience and maintain interest while getting certified, and
- provide help with task books.

The responses were statistically analyzed to investigate whether this set of options was preferred by newer volunteers (less than two years). Analyses showed no relationship between the selection of "*more attention and better onboarding for new volunteers*" with status as a new volunteer. Additionally, there was no relationship between the selection of the options in this category with age. These findings show that *the preference for options in this category is not restricted by time served in the department or age of respondent.*

This category of options may address concerns about needing more or better communication which was reported as desired by some volunteer firefighters (see Appendix A QID181, QID206, and QID207).

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

> Mentorship program. Volunteer firefighters rated a mentoring program of coupling new members with more experienced members as fifth in terms of moderate to major impact. Comments suggest that a mentoring program may be considered impactful socially as well as helpful with completing requirements:
>
> > *"I think the volunteer program could be amazing if the departments are willing to work with what people can offer (so they don't feel guilty b/c they can't fulfill everything that is currently required), a change in how people are welcomed, mentored and made to feel like they are part of a team. It would make a difference in what people are willing to give and if they want to keep coming. I have appreciated all those who have been willing to help me or even made an effort to say Hi."*
>
> > *"Having served in 2 combination volunteer/paid departments there is a need for improved mentoring of volunteers, including direct assistance with navigating and completing certifications."*

> *"When you are new you expect that someone will show you what to do. There has been one person who has been kind enough to do that for me."*

Previous research has shown that volunteers are more likely to stay engaged when they form special relationships within an organization, such as with mentors.[51] Additionally, leveraging mentoring relationships allows for more experienced members to show volunteer firefighters that their efforts are valued and acknowledged, which has been shown to decrease turnover intent.[52]

<u>More personal check-ins.</u> This option was selected as the 12th most impactful option for retention with 13% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Providing advice on balance.</u> This option was selected as the 14th most impactful option for retention with 12% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

This option may also relate to the retention barrier of "too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities" by providing experiential knowledge from senior members.

<u>Clearer understanding of goals and expectations.</u> This option was selected as the 17th most impactful option to retention with 12% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. Comments addressing expectations suggest this option could provide more positive outcomes for the volunteers and the department including:
- relating the training and certifications to expectations,
- matching volunteer capabilities with expectations,
- clarifying what trainings need to be done and how to get them checked off, and
- communicating to volunteers what they are signed off to do.

The option to provide a clearer understanding of goals and expectations may also address the retention barrier of "the realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up" by grounding expectations in the realities of volunteer duties.

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[51] Hahrie C. Han, *Moved to Action: Motivation, Participation, and Inequality in American Politics* (2009) (1-208), Stanford CA: Stanford University Press (investigating factors that motivate people who are typically less likely to participate).

[52] R.S. Davis, E.C. Stazyk, and Z.T. Dickman. *Advantages of Feeling Appreciated: An Examination of How Receipt of Gratitude Influences the Linkages Between PSM and Behaviour*, 99 PubAdmin 4 (723– 739) (2021) (empirical evidence of gratitude as a link to turnover reduction and employee satisfaction), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12707> (last visited October 7, 2022).

<u>Upfront clarity on minimum length of service.</u> This option was selected as the 41st most impactful option for retention with 3% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Other.</u> Other suggestions in this category included creating a plan specifically tailored to an individual, more training, and easier to qualify (the last two options are covered in other sections) (see Appendix A QID180).

More flexibility in training or requirements.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (29.8%) and chiefs (37.1%) chose "*More flexibility in training or requirements*" third most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Training requirements and/or schedules weren't flexible enough"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (28.1%) and chiefs (36.9%)*.* Feedback and analysis suggests that options in this category may address the retention barrier of *"too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities".* Analyses show training location is important to volunteer firefighters in the Eastern regional response mobilization district and that employment status is not a reliable predictor of training frequency preference. Volunteer firefighters also prefer more opportunities for maintenance training significantly more than they prefer training for increased hours in fewer days.

More flexibility in training schedules was also rated by chiefs as having the highest effectiveness for increasing the number of recruits (see Appendix A Q71).

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:
- *Hold essential training sessions on multiple days.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 16% (8th).

- *Offer online training for non-essential training.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 13% (13th).

- *Micro-opportunities (1 day or 1 week a month for those who are unable to commit to traditional volunteer time commitments).* Moderate or Major impact ranking 12% (16th).

- *Build the essential training calendar around members with less flexibility in their schedule.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 9% (22nd).

- *Offer virtual reality training models.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 7% (29th).

- *Training content needs to be updated.* Moderate of Major impact ranking 4% (39th).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 3%.

  Analysis notes: Responses included creating focused positions and trainings, streamlining certification check-off process, holding joint trainings, requiring no homework, and reducing the overall time commitment.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the option *"Training requirements and/or schedules weren't flexible enough"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (28.1%) and chiefs (36.9%).

Statistical analyses showed how preferences regarding training schedules and FF1 training location convenience were related to volunteer firefighters' regional response mobilization districts and employment status:

- The FF1 training location is inconvenient for volunteer firefighters serving in the Eastern regional response mobilization district.[53]
- Students do not prefer twice monthly training.[54]
- Volunteer firefighters in the Eastern regional response mobilization district prefer maintenance training with other fire agencies through a regional training.[55]

Comments suggest that departments that don't have enough trainers or trainees may prefer to join with nearby departments for trainings to create more flexibility:

> *"Work with multiple departments to set up training times that can be flexible."*

> *"Local trainers in short supply; maybe join & co-train with other nearby dept."*

Lastly, volunteer firefighters prefer more opportunities for maintenance training significantly more than they prefer training for increased hours in fewer days. Figure XD shows the training frequency preferences of volunteer firefighters. The most preferred training frequency—once or twice per week (48.6%)—is also the frequency that most volunteer firefighters already interact with their departments (86.8%) (see Appendix A QID155).

Comments and analyses suggest that offering increased opportunities to train in person and online may address the retention barrier of *"too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities"* by increasing flexibility of options.

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[53] Using logistic regression analysis, it was found that the odds of responding that training location was "very inconvenient" or "somewhat inconvenient" increased by 238% (95% CI [1.44,8.52] for respondents from the Eastern regional response mobilization district.

[54] Using logistic regression analysis, it was found that the odds a preferred frequency of once or twice per month decreased by 71.7% (95% CI [0.02, 0.72]) for students.

[55] Using logistic regression analysis, it was found that the odds of preferring "With other Fire Agencies through a regional training association" increased by 164% (95% CI [0.96,5.61] for respondents from the Eastern regional response mobilization district.

Figure 8: Preferred Training Frequency
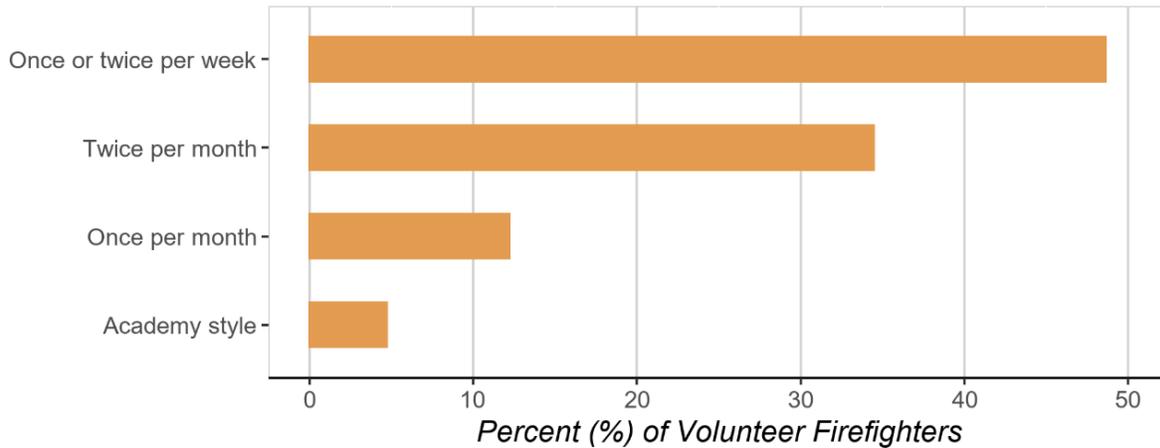
Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

Essential training on multiple days. This option was selected as the 8th most impactful option for retention. More training opportunities were desired that accommodated work schedules of volunteers:

> *"I never got to go through an academy because of COVID. Almost a year and a half later, an academy was offered but it was scheduled unlike others in the past. It wasn't structured to take into account the average work schedule, but rather scheduled to push through new hires who didn't have work responsibilities."*

> *"Once-a-year essential trainings are crazy to wait for. What if you get sick? Can't make it for another reason? Wait another year? Plus, I started right after a few yearly trains. Now I have to wait nearly a year for something I'm volunteering to do."*

> *"Mostly people cannot give up weeks of their time for academy or 8 weekends in a row. Completely unreasonable to ask of a person with a job, family, obligations etc."*

These comments suggest that employment status matters to training preferences. Volunteer firefighters, who are most often employed full time (69%), may have low flexibility to meet rigid training schedules. However, volunteer firefighters' employment status has no associated preferred training frequency (one exception is that students do not prefer a twice-monthly frequency).

Comments and analysis suggest that offering more options for training frequency (rather than restricting essential training to one of the types in Figure 8) may be an option to increase flexibility across employment types.

<u>Offer online for nonessential.</u> This option was selected as the 13th most impactful option for retention with 13% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Comments suggest that online training may increase flexibility for small departments and volunteer firefighters:

> *"We often do not have enough recruits to hold a full-on academy, so we do online and book training and throw them full on into the company training each week."*

> *"Offer online training as much as possible."*

While online training may provide increased flexibility, some respondents feel that the online training offered is difficult to use or redundant to their previous training:

> *"Main issue I have is the online training and documentation. I abhor spending time on the department website and Target solutions. It is difficult to navigate and tedious and there is very little instruction on this subject. Yes, training material is available on site to help navigate the system, but that does not take into account the different styles of learning. I personally feel that it was just kind of expected that we know how to make our way through the online training platforms."*

> *"The online training that the county and departments have moved to is completely ridiculous in my personal opinion. Not having a classroom environment to learn from is not lucrative to the needs of the student at all."*

> *"As a former career fireman, I have no interest in spending hours online retaking courses I completed many times during my career, simply to meet DPSST requirements."*

The impact score and comments suggest that offering increased optional online nonessential training may increase flexibility.

<u>Offer micro-volunteer opportunities.</u> This option was selected as the 16th most impactful option for retention with 12% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Some respondents suggest that opportunities to engage with departments may be offered to allow people to be involved with fire departments:

> *"Some folks want to contribute (at least in the beginning) in ways that might not require certification but can still be valuable to the department. Not everyone wants to be a firefighter, but is content to roll up hoses, etc."*

> *"Micro-opportunities that allow a volunteer to learn one thing well are way better than 2-hour drills of 'Death by PowerPoint'."*

Training schedule for least flexible. This option was selected as the 22nd most impactful option for retention with 9% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. By employment status, the least flexible groups may be volunteer firefighters who are employed or self-employed full time and stay-at-home parents (depending on the ages of children and availability of childcare)[56]. Neither of these groups is significantly associated with a preferred time according to this analysis suggesting that the option of tailoring training schedules for the least flexible may not be a statewide option. However, this may be feasible in individual departments that are able to offer trainings.

Offer virtual reality training. This option was selected as the 29th most impactful option for retention with 7% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Update training content. This option was selected as the 39th most impactful option for retention with 4% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Other. Other responses included creating focused positions and trainings, streamlining certification check-off process, holding joint trainings, requiring no homework, and reducing the overall time commitment (see Appendix A Table QID209).

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[56] 9.0% of volunteer firefighters reported that a personal difficulty they encountered while serving as a volunteer firefighter was finding or affording childcare (see Appendix A QID181).

Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (24.7%) and chiefs (11.9%) chose "*Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders*" fifth most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Didn't feel supported by leadership"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (23.5%) and chiefs (4.4%). Feedback from respondents suggests that options in this category may partially address this retention barrier as well as *"the department culture wasn't a good fit"*.

Selection of this group of options is related to age—as age increases, respondents are less likely to choose this category.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:

- *Actively participate in training to lead by example.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 12% (15th).

- *Enroll rising volunteers in an officer candidate course to gain leadership skills and training.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 11% (18th).

- *Training leadership at your agency.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 11% (19th).

- *Replacing leaders at your agency.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 10% (21st).

- *Following a set of national leadership standards and core competencies.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 6% (31st).

- *Training leadership at your Fire Defense board.* Moderate of Major impact ranking 2% (43rd).

- *Replacing leadership at your Fire Defense board.* Moderate of Major impact ranking 2% (46th).

- *Provide department leadership with sales and marketing training.* Moderate of Major impact ranking 1% (50th).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 2%.

  Analysis notes. Responses include to increase soft skills or communication skills and to increase personal contact with volunteers.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the option *"Didn't feel supported by department leadership"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (23.5%) and chiefs (4.4%).

Previous research on employer-leader relationships suggests that volunteer firefighters will be increasingly committed to public service when they have a positive relationship with their leadership.[57]

Statistical analysis shows the selection of this group of options *is not related to*:
- department type, signifying that this issue is not exclusive to combination or all-volunteer departments; or
- length served in department, signifying that this issue is not exclusive to newer recruits or long-serving volunteers.

Statistical analysis shows the selection of this group of options *is related to* decreasing age,[58] which suggests that this leadership concern may relate to generational differences cited as a finding in previous research.[59]

Comments stated that leadership:[60]
- wasn't supportive or able to adjust for needed flexibility,
- didn't step in to correct problems in the department,
- wasn't making good financial decisions,
- needed to improve communication skills,
- wasn't managing combination departments well, or
- contributed to a difficult department culture.

Some comments suggest that options in this category may partially address *"the department culture wasn't a good fit"*. The tension in some comments suggests that a volunteer's difficulties with leadership could create significant distress due to the influence over others in the department.[61] Additionally, negative feelings about leadership appear to be related to feelings of not being appreciated (see *Other Notable Findings*). When reporting successes, leadership appeared to have postive impacts when they:

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[57] Ritz, Adrian, Gene A. Brewer, and Oliver Neumann, *Public Service Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook*, 76 PAR 3, (2016) (414–426) (meta-study of public service motivation research), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12505> (last visited October 5, 2022).
[58] Using logistic regression analysis, it was found that the odds of responding "Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders" decreased by 1.5% (95% CI [0.97,1.00] with every one-year increase in age of respondent. for respondents from the Eastern regional response mobilization district.
[59] Marketing for Change, *Volunteer Retention Research Report*, *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20Aug-NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited October 14, 2022).
[60] This analysis identified "leadership" as chiefs, Captains, administrators, senior officers, or training officers.
[61] These comments are not included here to avoid possible identification of respondents or leaders as well as the potential for comments not to be representative of all leadership.

- make efforts to positively influence department culture,
- live locally,
- are friendly and personable,
- provide flexibility to fit volunteer schedules,
- have teaching skills, and
- came from previously successful departments.

Several comments regarding Fire Defense Boards suggest that respondents were concerned that they:
- were too involved in department activity,
- weren't providing enough financial and other support,
- were detached from department ongoings, and
- lacked fire experience.

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

Lead by example. This option was selected as the 15th most impactful option for retention with 12% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Officer candidate course. This option was selected as the 18th most impactful option for retention with 11% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Training agency leadership. This option was selected as the 19th most impactful option for retention with 11% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Written comments suggest training of leadership could include:
- standardizing training for agency leadership,
- recruitment and retention tips,
- management skills,
- financial skills, and
- communication training.

Replacing agency leadership. This option was selected as the 21st most impactful option for retention with 10% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

National leadership standards. This option was selected as the 31st most impactful option for retention with 6% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Training Fire Defense Board. This option was selected as the 43rd most impactful option for retention with 2% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Replacing Fire Defense Board. This option was selected as the 46th most impactful option for retention with 2% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Sales and marketing training. This option was selected as the 50th most impactful option for retention with 1% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Other. Other responses include increase soft skills or communication skills, increase personal contact with volunteers, provide a more motivated Training Officer, remove the union, require increased state certification and qualification for officers, accountability for leaders, and restructure from top to bottom (see Appendix A QID206).

Options tailored to address combination department issues

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (20.3%) and chiefs (13.9%) chose "*Solutions tailored to address combination department issues*" eighth most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Combination departments are becoming more common and may struggle with issues of transition, so may need tailored solutions. Responses suggest that chiefs and volunteer firefighters feel conflicted by their department's merger.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:
- *Providing department leadership with training focused on managing combination departments.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 9% (23rd).

- *Mentorships with career members for volunteers who are career-bound*. Moderate or Major impact ranking 8% (25th).

- *Holding joint trainings with career and volunteer staff.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 7% (30th).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 2%.

    Analysis notes: Responses included management skills for leadership and increasing mentoring or engagement opportunities.

Overall analysis. Combination career and volunteer fire departments are becoming more common. They may be struggling with issues of transition, including tension between career and volunteer members.[62] Previous survey research had similar findings as this survey which finds that volunteers may feel[63]:

- that career members are entitled,
- displaced by career members,
- that they are no longer needed, and
- unappreciated for the sacrifices they are making.

Volunteer firefighters may feel unnecessary in combination departments which may lead to lower participation:

> *"When our station was an all-volunteer department, we all banded together to cover calls. But now that we are a combination department, I know there are staff there that can take the calls so my motivation to drive in and miss the engine leaving for a call is low. So, unless it's a major call, I don't come into the station unless I schedule myself to spend time at the station. It's just too costly for me to keep driving to the station every time we are paged out."*

Volunteer firefighters suggest that they are still interested in being included:

> *"Paid/career staff need to find better ways to incorporate and leverage volunteers, not sideline them because they don't know as much or aren't as proficient."*

Chiefs of combination departments reported feeling conflicted about keeping volunteers was a large investment that wasn't necessarily associated with long-term payoff:

> *"Using volunteers in a combination department is a challenge due to collective bargaining issues. The overall expense to train and outfit volunteer firefighters is a challenge. The Dept. spends a significant amount of time and money getting them trained up and it is a serious challenge to keep them at a high level and a loss of time and money when they leave."*

> *"As a result of being completely honest with ourselves and identifying the metrics (many mentioned in this survey), we decided to eliminate the*

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[62] National Volunteer Fire Council, *A Proud Tradition: 275 Years of the American Volunteer Fire Service* 16, *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf> (last visited September 6, 2022). Marketing for Change, *Volunteer Retention Research Report, available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20Aug-NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited October 14, 2022).
[63] *Id.*

volunteer program based on activity related to call response from our volunteers."

Some successes were reported as transitions progress:

"I work with a group of great people. One of the negative things that hasn't been an issue for a while is career guys not seeing volunteers as equals."

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

Focused training for combination. This option was selected as the 23rd most impactful option for retention with 9% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Mentorships for career-bound volunteers. This option was selected as the 25th most impactful option for retention with 8% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Comments suggest an interest in getting help from the career people because of their experience:

"Career people do not have time to help fill out task books. Our training officer does not sign off our task books, so we are dependent on senior volunteers who do not go to drills anymore because they do not learn or practice anything new."

Joint trainings. This option was selected as the 30th most impactful option for retention with 7% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Comments suggest that training together may be increasing department difficulties:

"Drilling separately, I think, is aiding in department segregation (career/volunteer)."

Comments from chiefs and volunteer firefighters suggested joint trainings may create clearer communication:

"Have joint trainings but pay the "off duty" paid staff to be at specific trainings so we all hear the same thing at the same time."

Other. Other responses included management skills for leadership, increasing mentoring or engagement opportunities, focused jobs for volunteers, support for

volunteers, career staff involvement with training, better communication, more support from paid staff, clear expectations, wanting to feel more valued, and paying off-duty career members to be at joint trainings (see Appendix A Table QID209).

Improving department culture.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (24.7%) and chiefs (11.9%) chose *"Improving department culture"* seventh most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Department culture was not a fit"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (17.1%) and chiefs (6.9%).

Analysis shows a significant relationship with age—this group of options for improving retention are less likely to be selected as age increases.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:
- *Allow and encourage new and younger members to own specific projects and tasks.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 9% (24th).

- *Break up cliques and groups by assigning members to workgroups they wouldn't normally choose.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 8% (26th).

- *Holding cross-generational training to help members and leaders of different ages better understand each other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 6% (32nd).

- *Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 4% (36th).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 3%.

   Analysis notes: Responses included valuing volunteers, morale building or social opportunities, more investment by volunteers, improve soft skills, more intensive training, cultural and diversity training, and applying rules consistently.

Overall Analysis. Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement *"Department culture was not a fit"* was chosen by volunteer firefighters (17.1%) and chiefs (6.9%). Respondents reported factors that impacted this perception as cliques or exclusion, lack of camaraderie, lack of trust, and lack of social life (see Appendix A Q92).

Survey responses suggest that department culture issues overlap with leadership issues—there are expectations that leadership be consistent, fair, flexible, and address issues that arise for volunteers. Though previous research pointed to more cultural issues in combination departments, concerns with improving department culture showed no relationship to department type.

However, the choice of this category **is related to increasing age**,[64] which suggests that the concern for department cultural issues may relate to generational differences cited as a finding in previous research.[65]

Previous research has found that individuals with high levels of public service motivation, like firefighters, may be more likely to express negative emotions when they encounter difficulties or conflict in the workplace.[66] The potential for considerable amounts of time and intensity spent together suggests that it may be important to address department culture difficulties.

Several respondents suggested that more family events would be beneficial socially and had potential for recruiting new volunteers.

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

> Encourage young member ownership. This option was selected as the 24th most impactful option for retention with 9% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

> Assign to workgroups. This option was selected as the 26th most impactful option for retention with 9% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

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[64] Using logistic regression analysis, it was found that the odds of responding "Improving department culture" decreased by 29.1% (95% CI [0.71,0.98] with every one-year increase in age of respondent.

[65] Marketing for Change, *Volunteer Retention Research Report*, *available at* <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20Aug-NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited October 14, 2022).

[66] D. Giauque, S. Anderfuhren-Biget, and F. Varone, *Stress perception in public organisations: Expanding the job demands–job resources model by including public service motivation*, 33 RPPA 1 (58-83) (2013) (investigating the relationship of stress and public service motivation), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X12443264> (last visited October 7, 2022).

R.S. Davis, E.C. Stazyk, and C. Klingeman, *Accounting for personal disposition and organizational context: Connecting role ambiguity, public service motivation, and whistle blowing in federal agencies*, 31 IJ-HRM 10 (1313-1332) (2020) (the relationship between clear expectations and pro-social behavior), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1402360> (last visited October 7, 2022).

R.S. Davis, E.C. Stazyk, A. Kochenour, E. and Neuhoff, *Coping with conflict: Examining the influence of PSM on perceptions of workplace stressors*, 40 RPPA 3 (405-425) (2020) (public sector human resource management research), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X18820096> (last visited October 7, 2022).

Cross-generational training. This option was selected as the 32nd most impactful option for retention with 6% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Giving out awards. This option was selected as the 36th most impactful option for retention with 4% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Many comments discussed the need for appreciating volunteers in general (*see Other Notable Findings*), though few comments gave specifics on how to do so. One respondent suggested that awards would be a meaningful way to show this appreciation:

> *"Awards! Depts that show their appreciation of the volunteers and gives them something to work towards."*

Other. Other responses included ideas about:
- valuing volunteers,
- providing morale building and social opportunities,
- getting more investment from volunteers,
- improving soft skills such as communication,
- providing more intensive training,
- culture and diversity training for leaders, and
- consistent application of the rules.

Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (15.6%) and chiefs (22.8%) chose "*Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements*" sixth most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement "*Physical requirements too rigorous*" was chosen by volunteer firefighters (6.0%) and chiefs (13.8%). Approximately 15% of volunteer firefighters have indicated that would have chosen a less rigourous certification program, while 29% were unsure. Analysis suggests that options in this category may also address the retention barrier of "*Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities*".

More flexibility in training or physical requirements was also rated by chiefs as having the second highest effectiveness for increasing the number of recruits (see Appendix A Q71).

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:
- *Fewer required training hours.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 8% (28th).

- *Fewer hours required per month.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 5% (34th).

- *More training (please specify).* Moderate or Major impact ranking 5% (35th).

   Analysis notes: Responses include more opportunities.

- *Fewer days required for conflagration response.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 2% (48th).

- *Fewer physical requirements.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1% (51st).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1%.

   Analysis notes: Responses include more online options, local control of requirements, less regulation, emergency waivers for training, accelerated training options, more physical training, options for training in blocks, and clear expectations about requirements.

Overall Analysis. Volunteer firefighters (15.6%) and chiefs (22.8%) chose "*Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements*" sixth most often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Responding to why volunteers have left or would consider leaving the department, the statement "*Physical requirements too rigorous*" was chosen by volunteer firefighters (6.0%) and chiefs

(13.8%). Options in this category may also address the barrier *"Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities"* by reducing responsibilities for training. When asked if they would have preferred a less demanding certification than Firefighter1, a portion of volunteer firefighters (14.9%) said they would have pursued that path (Figure 9), while 29.1% were unsure (see Appendix A QID256).

Figure 9: If Respondent Would Have Pursued Less Demanding Certification than Firefighter 1
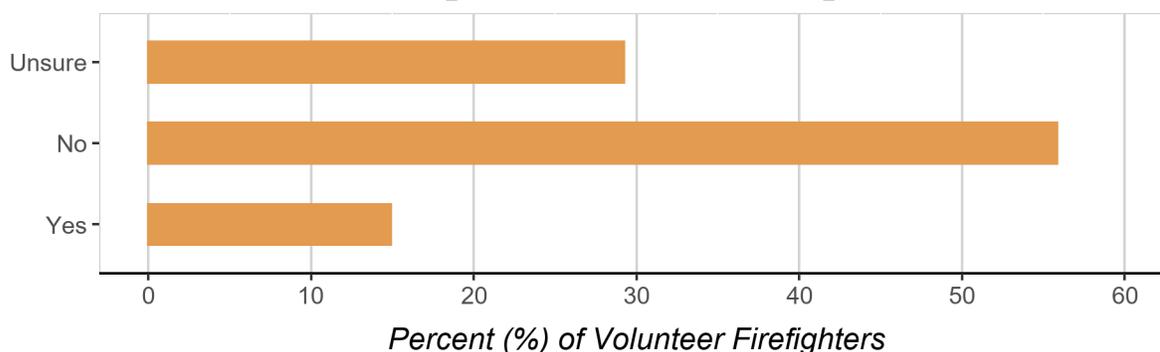
Percent (%) of Volunteer Firefighters

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office
Data: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

These findings suggest that for a portion of the volunteers, the path of a reduced certification may be an option. Based on feedback regarding the difficulty of balancing volunteering with other responsibilities, reduced physical and/or time requirements may feel more manageable for some volunteers potentially leading to higher retention or recruitment.

Analysis shows that there was no relationship between the choice of this group and age, suggesting that the selection of this option was not necessarily related to age-related abilities.

Chiefs rated flexibility in training or physical requirements as having the second highest effectiveness for increasing the number of recruits (see Appendix A Q71). One chief states:

> *"A high percentage that show interest are not physically able to perform the duties."*

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

> Fewer required training hours. This option was selected as the 28th most impactful option for retention with 8% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

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Many comments suggest that training requirements are both difficult to accomplish as a volunteer, but are important to safety:

> *"The training requirements are always increasing. The amount of time that volunteers are required to give is no longer reasonable for people that work and are raising families. However, training is crucial for everyone's safety."*

Some respondents expressed the desire for greater flexibility with regard to active-duty requirements to allow them to better balance their volunteer and non-volunteer responsibilities.

> *"The fire service needs make it possible for a volunteer to ebb and flow the amount of time they have available to volunteer. As the demands of life change, the fire service should provide reduced time requirements so that experienced people can still be available during a major event."*

Analysis showed that the selection of "fewer required training hours" significantly increased for members from all-volunteer departments,[67] suggesting that this option is more meaningful to all-volunteer departments than it is for combination departments.

Fewer hours required per month. This option was selected as the 34th most impactful option for retention with 5% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Some respondents expressed that lowering required attendance would be helpful for keeping certifications when life gets busy.

More training (please specify). This option was selected as the 35th most impactful option for retention with 5% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

There were a portion of respondents that showed interest in either more training or more intensity of training:

> *"The people that actually show up, care and want to help their community but don't train enough so some [expletive] firefighting and EMS skills have been shown on scenes for community members that deserve a higher level of care."*

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[67] Using logistic regression, it was found that the odds of selection of "fewer required training hours" increased by 127% (95% CI[1.07, 4.74]) for members from all-volunteer departments compared to those from combination departments.

> *"Not enough training, volunteers want to do the job and want to know the job, competence builds confidence. The fear of not knowing what to do or how to handle a situation can be intimidating especially for new volunteers."*

> *"This is not a hobby. More than 100 firefighters die in the nation every year and approximately 70% are volunteers. Training helps prevent what is predictable."*

Other responses to this prompt for specificity on what "more training" means included wanting more opportunities for specific types of training. Respondents are interested in more:
- burn-to-learn opportunities,
- training that is tailored to the individual's goals or duties,
- medical training, and
- physical fitness or health focus.

A number of responses stated the need for better training:

> *"Not necessarily more training, but well-organized trainings that are a good use of time. I have been to trainings where I'm not really sure what is expected, meetings/trainings start late so it can feel like I'm wasting time, and not a lot of mentoring happening."*

Other suggestions on better training included clarifying the training calendar, reducing time-consuming aspect of task books, consistency of training, allowing experienced volunteers to lead trainings, and wanting training to be provided by someone not on duty (i.e., they may get interrupted by a call) (see Appendix A Table QT63a).

Fewer days required for conflagration response. This option was selected as the 48th most impactful option for retention with 2% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Fewer physical requirements. This option was selected as the 51st most impactful option for retention with 1% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

Other. Other responses included more online options, local control of requirements, less regulation, emergency waivers for training, accelerated training options, more physical training, options for training in blocks, and clear expectations about requirements (see Appendix A Table QT63b).

Provide more feedback opportunities.

Analysis Highlights. Volunteer firefighters (11.6%) and chiefs (3.5%) chose "*Provide more feedback opportunities*" least often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Analysis suggests this group of options may address the retention barriers of *"Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities"*, *"The realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up"*, or *"Didn't feel supported by department leadership"*.

The options with their impact ranking and relevant analyses are as following:

- *Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 5% (33rd).

- *Conduct "stay" interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 4% (37th).

- *Set up a comment box for anonymous feedback and/or create dedicated "office hours" to provide members a clear opportunity to express their opinions.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 2% (45th).

- *Create a Chief People Officer at the department who constantly takes the temperature of members' happiness and satisfaction.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 2% (49th).

- *Make it easier to compare your department's retention rate and efforts with other departments.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1% (52nd).

- *Create a database of former volunteers to stay in touch with them and try and reengage on future opportunities.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1% (53rd).

- *Other.* Moderate or Major impact ranking 1%.

  Analysis notes: Responses included having Lieutenants focus on building strong relationships with crews, after-action reviews, clarifying expectations, and more general feedback opportunities for current volunteers.

Overall Analysis. Volunteer firefighters (11.6%) and chiefs (3.5%) chose "*Provide more feedback opportunities*" least often of the broad retention categories provided (see Appendix A QID179). Of retention barriers, respondents who selected this group of options most often chose the retention barriers of *"Too difficult to balance volunteering*

with other responsibilities" (63.2%), *"The realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up"* (36.8%), or *"Didn't feel supported by department leadership"* (30.9%). This group of options may be viewed by respondents as potential solutions to address these retention barriers by creating an avenue for providing advice, managing expectations, and feelings of being supported.

The following detailed list includes comments and analyses that relate to each selected option by ranked impact order:

<u>Conduct exit interviews.</u> This option was selected as the 33rd most impactful option for retention with 5% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Conduct "stay" interviews.</u> This option was selected as the 37th most impactful option for retention with 4% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Structured hours or method to give opinions.</u> This option was selected as the 45th most impactful option for retention with 2% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Create a Chief People Officer</u>. This option was selected as the 49th most impactful option for retention with 1% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score.

Several comments suggested that a person in this type of role be available for guidance and to advocate for members.

<u>Reengage former volunteers.</u> This option was selected as the 52nd most impactful option for retention with 1% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Compare retention rates.</u> This option was selected as the 53rd most impactful option for retention with 1% of respondents giving it a moderate or major impact score. There were no comments directly related to this option.

<u>Other.</u> Other responses included having Lieutenants focus on building strong relationships with crews, after-action reviews, clarifying expectations, and more general feedback opportunities for current volunteers (see Appendix Table QID208).

A Note on Defining and Measuring Retention

Chiefs reported that they defined and tracked retention in various ways (see Appendix A QID231, QID232, and QID233). Most departments (68.3%) did not have a clear

definition or measure of retention. The definitions that were provided most often were based on minimum attendance, years of service, or Department of Public Safety Standards and Training standards (see Appendix A QID232). Several departments use formalized, written rules to articulate their policy based on that minimum. Departments track retention with various measures such as training attendance, call logs, automated software, or using spreadsheets.

OTHER NOTABLE FINDINGS

Other findings in written respondent comments are worth noting because they appeared in different forms as themes throughout the survey.

Volunteer Firefighters Want to Know the Value of Their Efforts

A thread through survey responses by chiefs and volunteer firefighters is that volunteer firefighters are performing balancing acts with responsibilities to family, work, and their fire departments. With this often-difficult work of balancing responsibilities, volunteers want to feel appreciated for the extra effort they are making to their communities.

One chief suggests that when volunteers know the importance of their efforts to the community, they may keep it as a high priority:

> *"Volunteers need to know that they are important to the large picture of the department. If they can't see this, they soon lose interest and can't see that they are making a difference. They also begin to see it as a waste of time away from what is important... their own families. They start to see it as a part-time job without compensation or no provisions for their family."*

Chiefs stated something that academic research has also shown: Volunteers need to believe that their work is appreciated to stay at their organization.[68]

Chiefs also reported success with appreciation in their comments:

> *"As a captain and training officer for an all-volunteer department, I have taught myself to be grateful for the time our volunteers do put in. To be positive with their presence and patient in their absence and encouraging with their growth has made the only difference in retention."*

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[68] R.S. Davis, E.C. Stazyk, and Z.T. Dickman. *Advantages of Feeling Appreciated: An Examination of How Receipt of Gratitude Influences the Linkages Between PSM and Behaviour*, 99 PubAdmin 4 (723– 739) (2021) (empirical evidence of gratitude as a link to turnover reduction and employee satisfaction), *available at* <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12707> (last visited October 7, 2022).

According to comments, appreciation may take different forms including financial or benefits compensation, but most suggested a noncompensatory form is meaningful (e.g., saying "thank you", being treated as equals, and not being taken for granted).

Volunteer Firefighters Enjoy their Service

The focus of this research was on enhancing capacity, identifying barriers, increasing retention, and needs for training. However, it is important to highlight the high number of respondents that have positive experiences don't see retention as a problem in their departments and have enjoyed serving their departments for many years. Examples of positive comments received about volunteer firefighting are:

"This is one of the best parts of my life!"

"Though physically it is demanding, I love a challenge."

"Love the comradery, reminds me of my time in the Marine Corps."

"It means a lot to me to help better my community."

"I love serving as a Vol. Firefighter. It's a privilege to serve others and alongside these men and women. I am proud to be a member of our department."

"I greatly enjoy and value the Fire Service culture and mission."

"High quality training and friendships are the biggest reason I enjoy volunteering."

"As being a volunteer for 5 years, the job has taught me a lot about myself, all of the duties being a firefighter. Has taught me to fully commit, learn to be more efficient, respectful, classy, hard-working, being professional. Has taught me to be all in all a better person physically and mentally."

These responses suggest the depth of commitment, enjoyment, and hard work is fulfilling for a large portion of volunteer firefighters and chiefs.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE DATA

This appendix provides the content and survey response data (or summaries of textual data) for a 2022 survey of Oregon fire department Chiefs and Volunteer Firefighters. The primary focus of the survey was recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Respondents were also asked to provide certain demographic information.

Reading Survey Results

The following explanation of survey elements will assist readers in understanding this appendix:

- Question ID numbers (denoted by QID, Q, and QT) are specific to individual questions and can be used to track questions through the survey.
- The survey results are presented here in the order they were included in the survey. However, some question ID numbers are not sequential.
- Survey section headings (shown with a larger, bolded title) precede questions that were included in that section. Each question provides the exact language used in the survey in non-italicized font.
- The survey directions and logic ("if") statements are included in this document so readers can understand what group received each question and how certain responses to some questions result in being directed through follow-up questions. For example, logic statements are used to partition questions by respondents' departmental roles (volunteer firefighter or Chief) or based on a respondent's response to a certain question. The symbols used are "=" (equal) and "≠" (not equal).
- "⊗" indicates a choice that cannot be combined with other answers.
- Response data, notes, and analysis, where available, are *italicized*. Charts and tables are also used to communicate the totaled response data for selected questions.
- Questions that ask for free-form responses and "Other (please specify)" answers are shown in categories in tables. The responses were categorized by the response meaning.
- In free-form response and "Other" tables, the frequency may not equal the Frequency, depending on the type of question. If the respondent answered a free-form question with a longer answer that fell into several categories, it would be counted in each category. The Frequency is indicated on each of these tables.

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE DATA

This section shows survey questions and selected response data.

Introduction

QID150. Oregon is currently facing a challenge to ensure adequate firefighting capacity. The Oregon State Fire Marshal and the Oregon Legislative Firefighter Capacity Workgroup are acting to address firefighter retention and recruitment issues. The first step is to understand the issues of recruitment and retention in Oregon's fire departments. The results of this survey will be shared with the Volunteer Firefighter Legislative Workgroup that is meeting this summer to develop policy options for the 2023 Legislative Session in Oregon.

Your honest and reflective feedback is helpful for understanding some of the motivations, rewards, and challenges of being in a volunteer role. **No department members or leadership will see your individual answers, rather they will see combined results with no department information attached.**

We want to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Role

QID151. Which of the following best describes your primary role at your current fire department(s)? If you don't see your role here, we appreciate your time and interest, but we are currently surveying only a limited portion of the fire community.

Choices (select one): "Chief", "Volunteer Firefighter"

Chief responses = 256
Volunteer Firefighter responses = 563

Basic Information

QID152. The first section of the survey is about you, your department, and your experience. If you currently serve at two departments, answer the questions about the one you have served the longest.

QID153. How long have you served your current department?

Text box: "Years", "Months"

Median years served in current department:
- *Chief = 14.3 years*
- *Volunteer Firefighter = 4.5 years*

Figure QID153: Years Served in Current Department
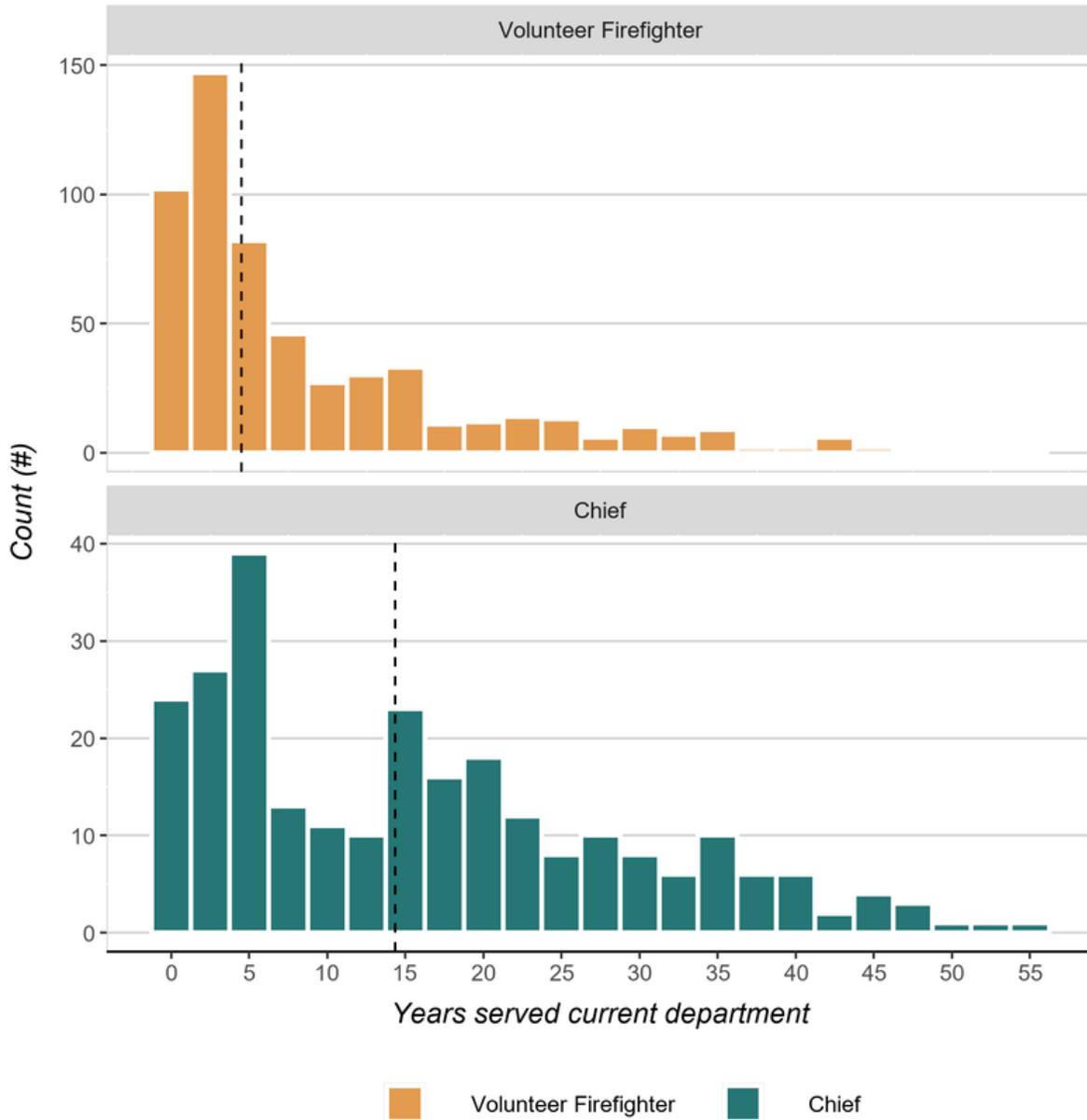
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QID154. How long have you served in fire department(s) overall?

Text box: "Years", "Months"

Median years served at fire departments:
- *Chief = 29.1 years*
- *Volunteer firefighter = 7.5 years*

Figure QID154: Overall Length of Fire Service
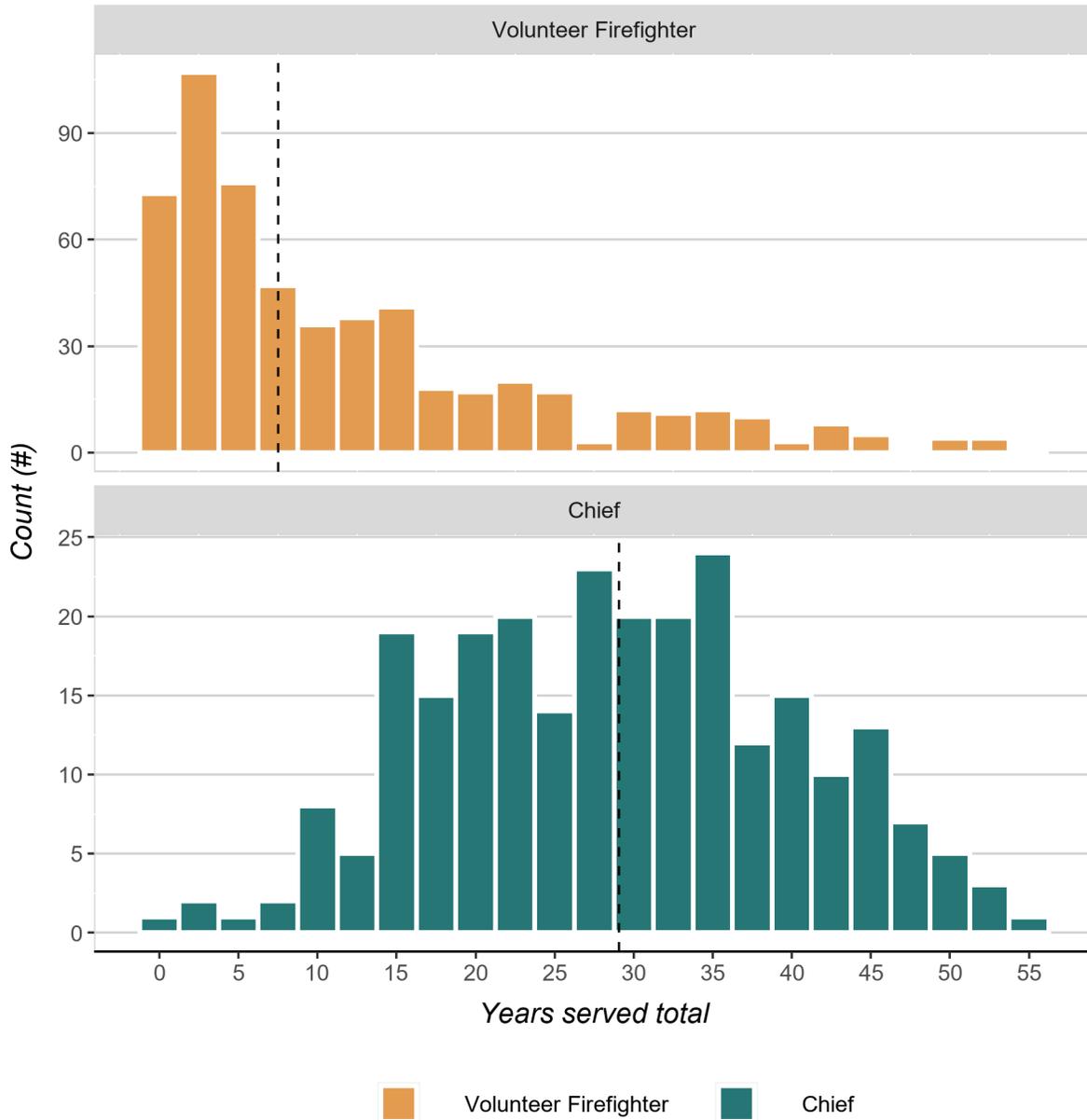
Report on Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey | November 2022

QID155 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). How often do you spend time volunteering with your current fire department? Please add any time spent at trainings, meetings, or other department-related activities into your estimate.

Choices (select one): "Several times a week", "Once a week", "A couple times a month", "Once a month", "Less than once a month"

Figure QID 155: How Often Volunteer Firefighters Spend Time Volunteering with Current Department
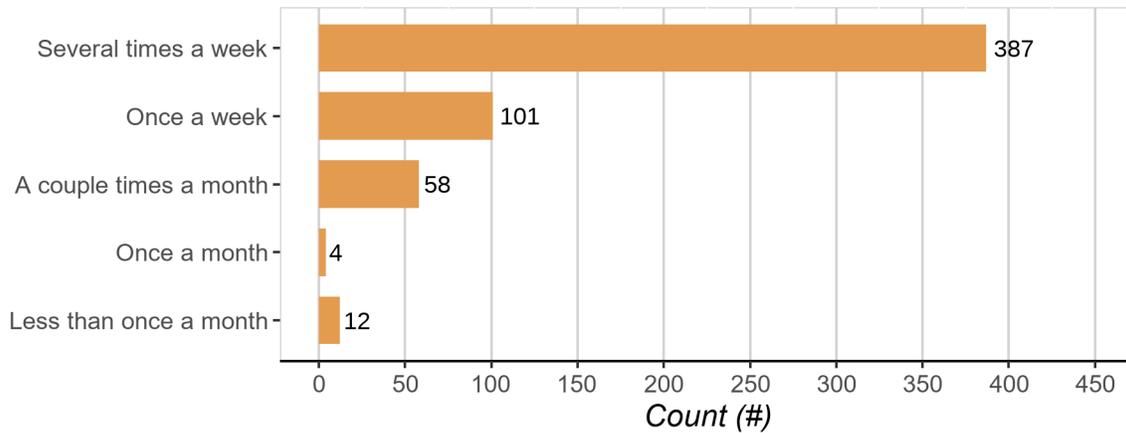
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of how often volunteer firefighters report spending time volunteering with their current department.

QID156 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). Do you have any certifications? (check all that apply)

Choices (select all that apply): NFPA FF1", "NPFA FF2", "EMT", "NFPA Fire Officer (any level)", "Other _____"

Figure QID156: Certifications Held by Volunteer Firefighters
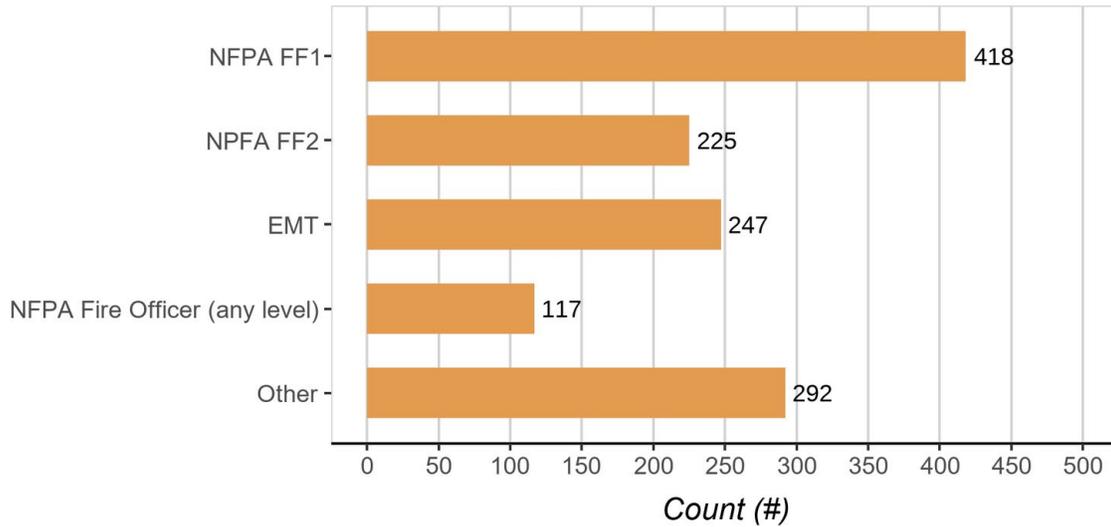
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing certifications held by volunteer firefighters. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Firefighter-1 (FF1), Firefighter-2 (FF2), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Table QID156: "Other" Responses

"Other" Responses	Frequency
Driver/Operator	95
Medical	80
Wildland /FFT1 /FFT2	57
Instructor	39
Technical Rescue	24
Hazardous Materials	18
Engine Boss	16
No Certs	16
In Progress	8
Other	7
Fire Investigator	6
Public Information Officer	3
Chaplain	2
Officer	2
Task Force Leader	2
Fire Marshal	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID156 certifications held by volunteer firefighters sorted by frequency.

QID157 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). Which of the following best describes your employment status over the last three months (other than your work as a volunteer firefighter or Chief)?

Volunteer firefighter n=562

Choices (select one): "Full time employment/self-employment", "Part time employment/self-employment", "Student", "Out of work and looking for work", "Stay-at-home parent or homemaker", "Retired"

Figure QID157: Employment Status of Volunteer Firefighter over Last Three Months
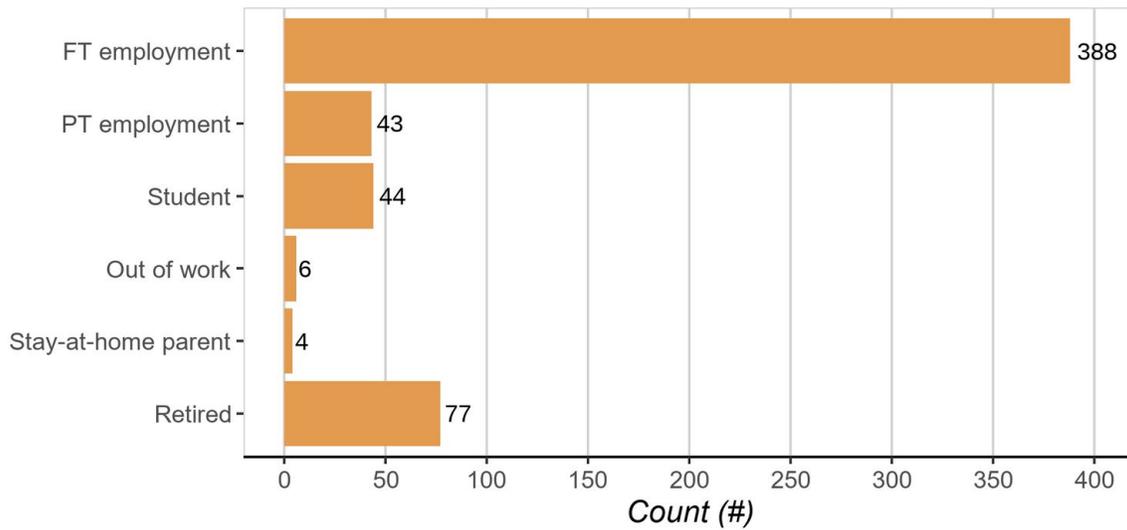
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of volunteer employment status over last three months.

QID158 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). Please indicate the range that best describes your annual household income (before taxes):

Choices (select one): "Less than $20,000", "$20,000-$34,999", "$35,000-$49,999", "$50,000-$74,999", "$75,000-$99,999", "$100,000-$149,999", "$150,000-$199,999", "$200,000 or more"

Figure QID158: Volunteer Annual Household Income
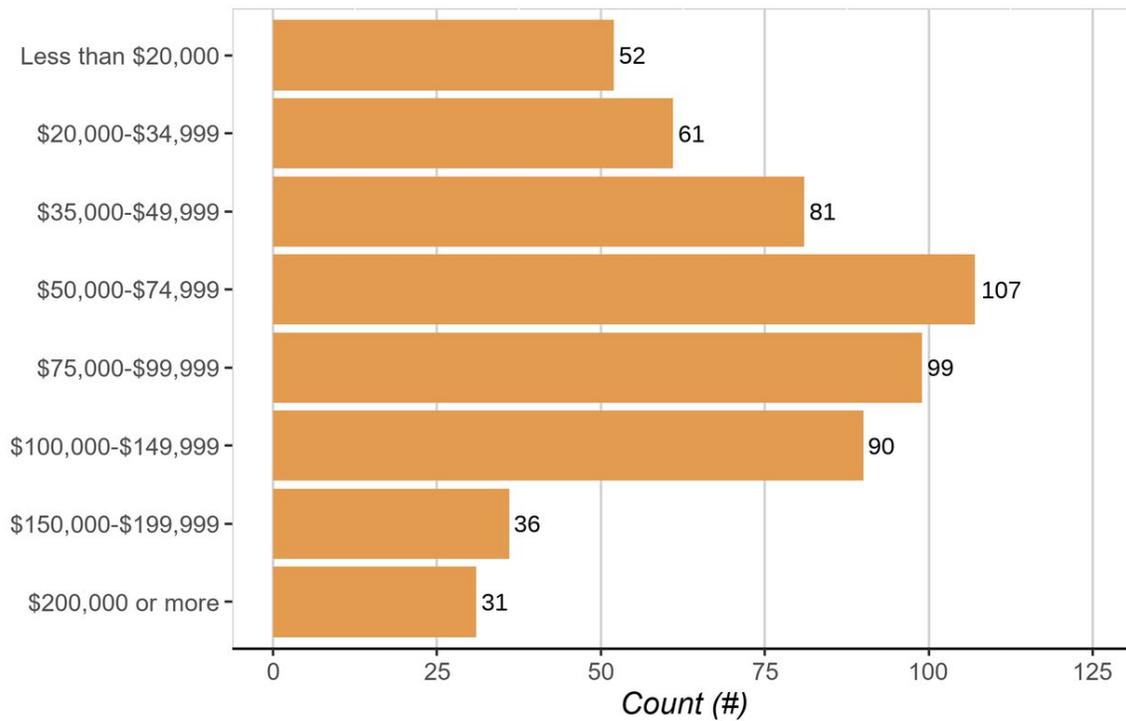
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of volunteer annual household income.

Department Information

QID159. The following questions are about your department so that the Workgroup can identify if certain types of departments are impacted by retention issues.

QID160. Is your current department all volunteer, a combination of volunteers and paid, or all paid?

Choices (select one): "All volunteer", "Combination department", "All paid"

Figure QID160: Department Type
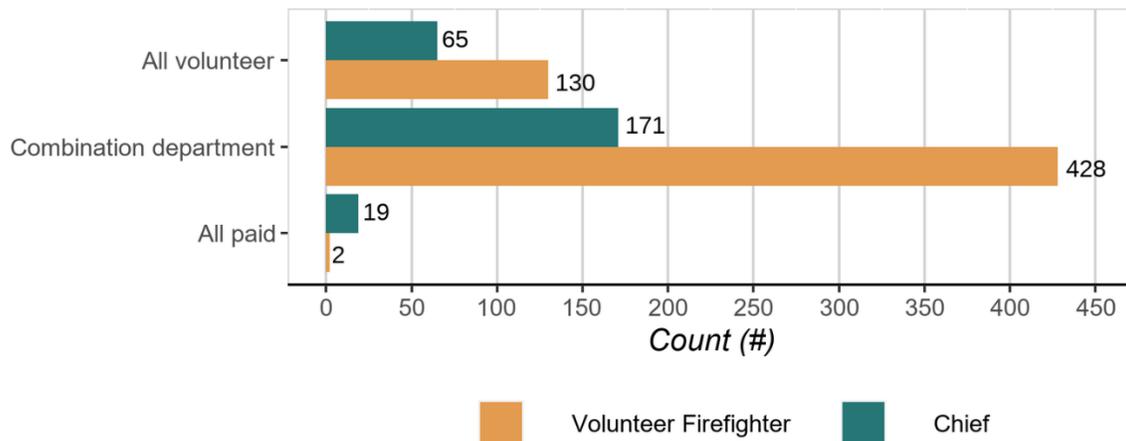
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of employment status of fire department staff distinguished by chief or volunteer.

QID162 (If QID151 = Chief). Has your current department merged or consolidated with another department, either volunteer or career in the last five years?

Choices (select one): "Yes, with another volunteer department", "Yes, with a career department", "No", "I don't know"

Figure QID162: Department Merger in Last Five Years
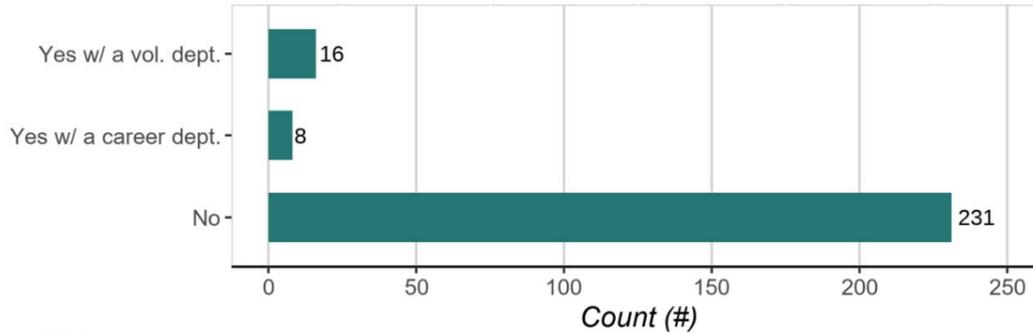
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing chief department merger or consolidation with another department in last five years.

Q86 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). What is your average drive time to your administrative fire department?

Choices (select one): "under 15 minutes", "15 - 30 minutes", "more than 30 minutes"

Figure 86: Average Volunteer Commute Time
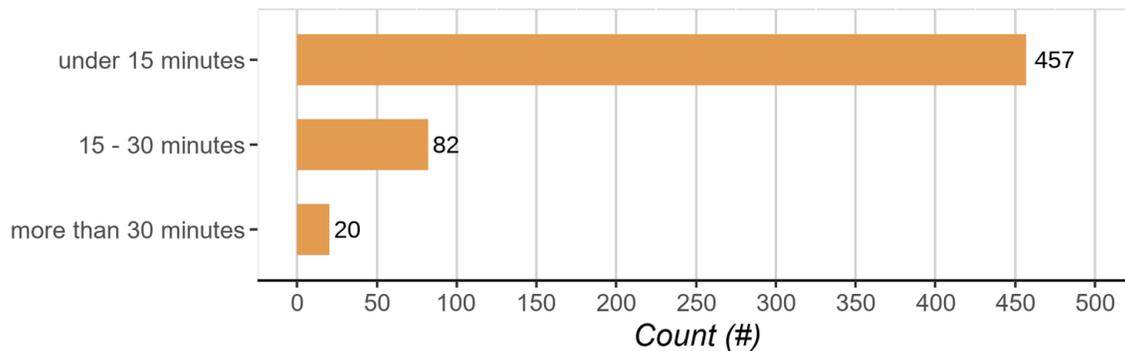
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of volunteer average commute time to administrative fire department.

QID167. Does your agency offer any of the following in exchange for volunteer service? Check all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "College scholarships", "Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)", "Pay per call", "Short- or long-term disability Insurance", "Uniform stipend", "Resident Volunteer Program", "Other _____", "⊗None of the above"
Display This Choice If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter: "⊗I do not know what they offer"

Figure QID167: Department Benefits for Volunteers
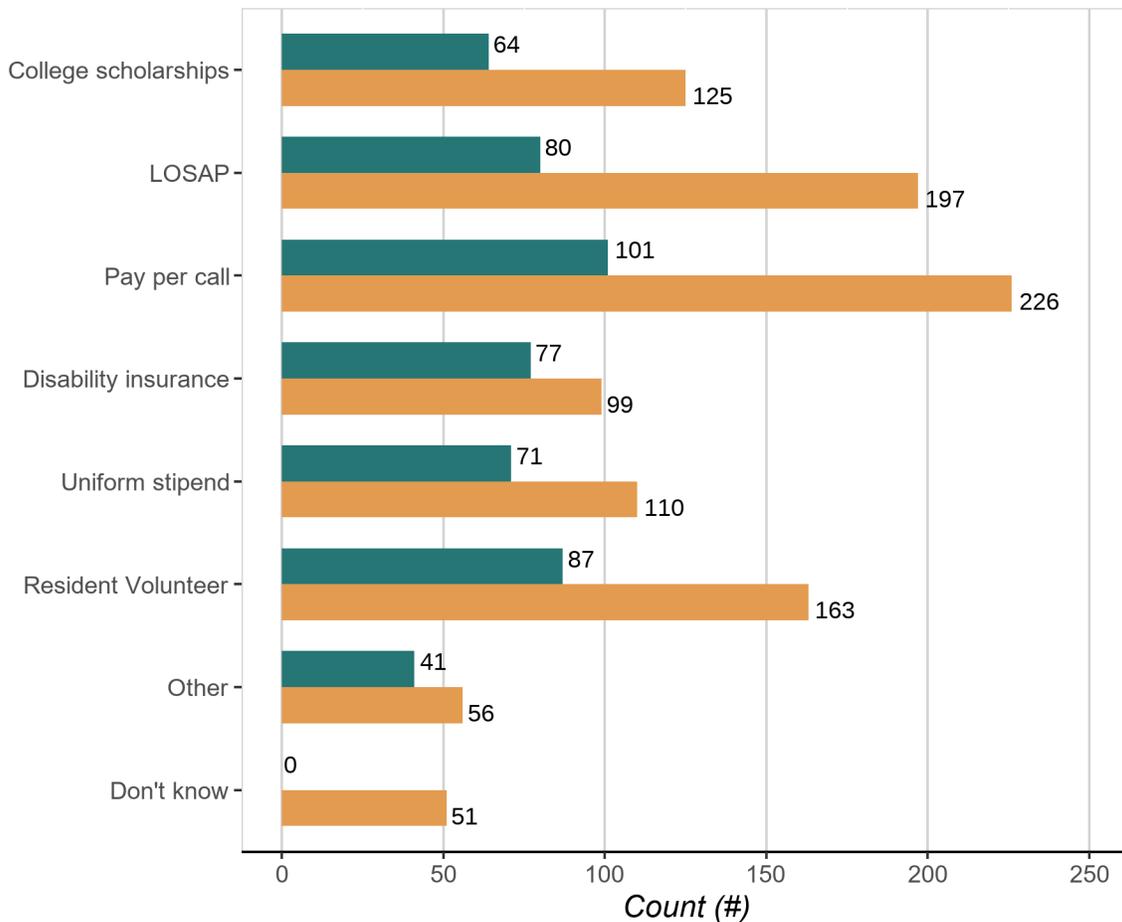
Table QID167: "Other" Responses

"Other" Responses	Frequency
Shift stipend/reimbursement	27
Training tuition	11
Life insurance	6
LifeFlight/ambulance insurance	5
Internship	5
Point system	4
Pay/minimum wage	3
Seasonal Firefighter	3
Pay per training	2
Short opportunities	2
Small Items (e.g., flashlights)	2
Student Firefighter Program	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID167 department benefits for volunteers sorted by frequency.

Department Information: Chiefs
For all questions in this section: If QID151 = Chief

QID165. Approximately how many calls does your department handle **yearly**? _____

Table QID165: Fire Departments by Annual Number of Calls Handled

Approximate Number of Calls	Number of Departments
0-1000	148
1001-2000	30
2001-3000	13
3001-4000	15
4001-5000	6
5001-6000	3
6001-7000	6
7001-8000	3
8001-9000	4
9001-10000	3
10,001-50,000	7
50,001-100,000	2

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing fire departments distributed by annual number of calls handled.

Q93. How many career firefighters does your department currently have? _____

Table Q93: Fire Departments by Number of Career Firefighters Employed

Number of Career Firefighters Employed	Number of Departments
0 to 10	113
11 to 20	25
21 to 30	13
31 to 40	10
41 to 50	6
51 to 60	4
61 to 70	3
71 to 80	1
81 to 90	2
91 to 100	1
101 to 500	4
501 to 1,000	2
1,000+	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing fire departments distributed by number of career firefighters currently employed.

Q96 (If QID160 = All paid). You've indicated that your department is an all-paid department. Why are there no volunteers? Please select the answer that best applies.

Choices (select one): "Our department does not need/allow volunteer firefighters.", "We have not been able to recruit any volunteer firefighters in the past five years.", "We have had volunteer firefighters in the past five years, but do not currently have any."

Figure Q96: Reason for All Paid Staff at Department
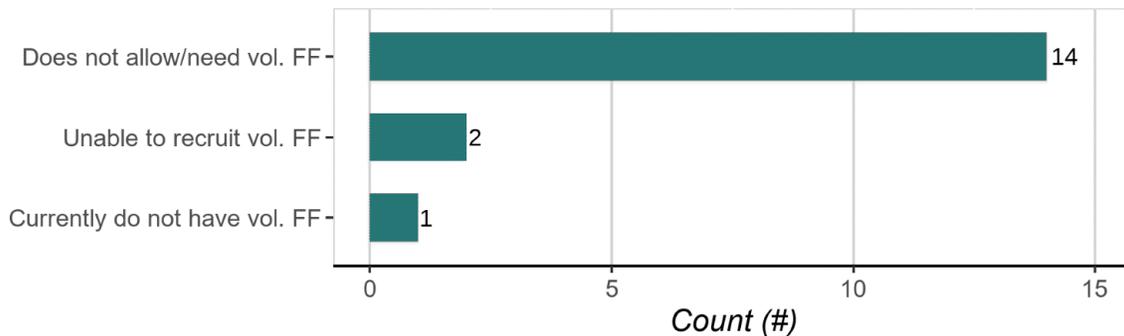
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing most applicable reason department does not use volunteer staff.

QID227 (If QID160 ≠ All paid). How many total volunteer firefighters does your department currently have? Here we are asking for a count of *those who directly engage in firefighting activities* not including support services. A rough approximation is fine. _____

Median = 16 Volunteers
Range =0-70 Volunteers

Table QID227: Fire Departments by Number of Volunteers

Number of Volunteers	Number of Departments
0 to 5	15
6 to 10	52
11 to 15	38
16 to 20	49
21 to 25	31
25 to 30	11
31 to 40	11
40 to 50	9
50+	4

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing fire departments distributed by number of volunteers.

Q95 (If QID160 ≠ All paid). How has the number of volunteer firefighters in your department changed within the last five years? Select the statement that best applies.

Choices (select one): "Significantly increased - The number is at least 2 times as large", "Moderately increased - More have joined than have left", "No change - It has stayed approximately the same", "Moderately decreased - More have left than have joined", "Significantly decreased - The number is 1/2 as large as it was", "I'm not sure"

Figure Q95: Department Change in Number of Volunteer Firefighters Within Last 5 Years
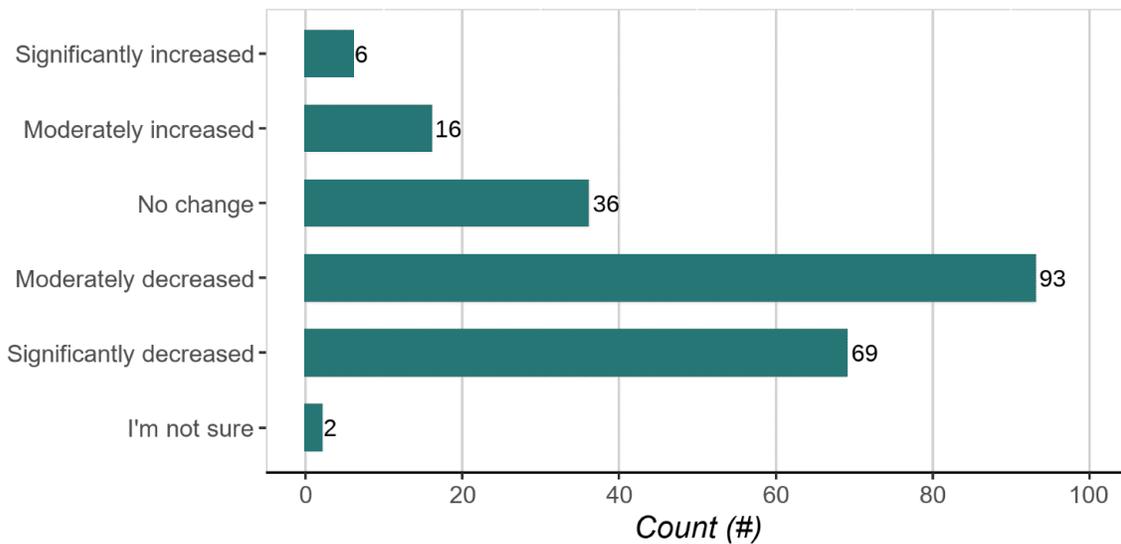
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar charts showing fire departments distributed by change in number of volunteer firefighters within last five years.

Q94 (If QID160 ≠ All paid). What is the age range of your average volunteer firefighter?

Choices (select one): "18-24", "25-34", "35-44", "55-64", "65 and over", "We have a wide age range of volunteer firefighters so it's hard to say"

Figure Q94: Age Range of Department Volunteers
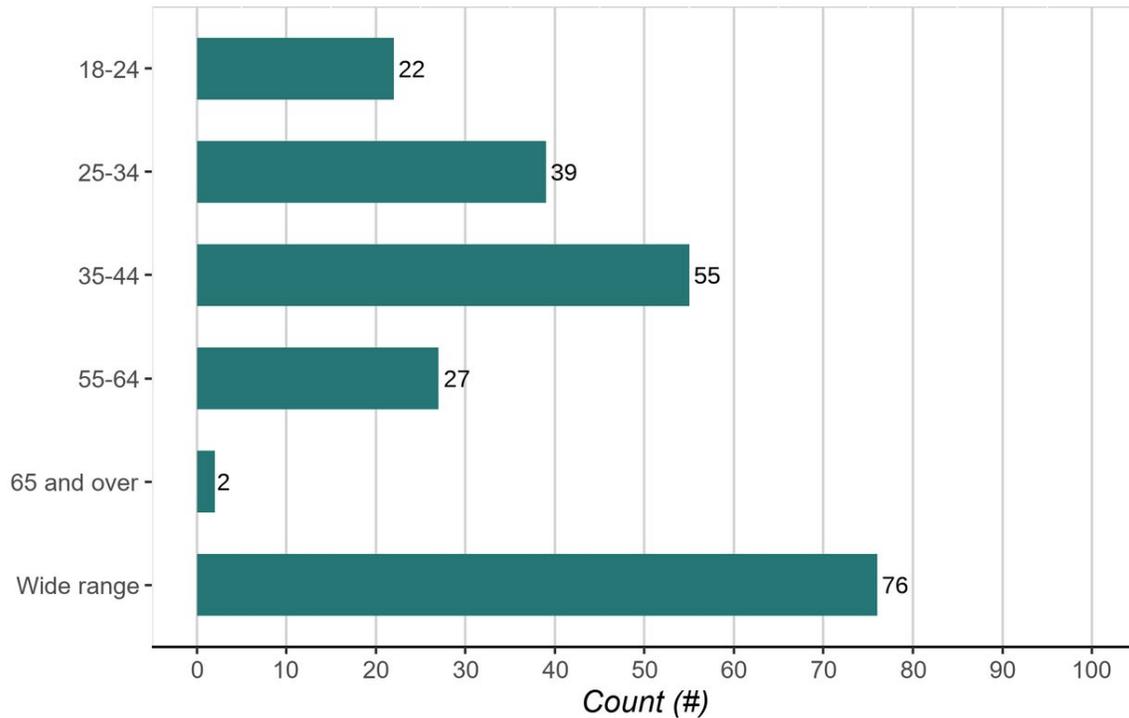
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing fire departments distributed by average age range of volunteer firefighters.

QID228 (If QID160 ≠ All paid). How many of the volunteer firefighters you accounted for would you consider to be actively participating?

Choices (select one): "All", "More than half", "About half", "Less than half", "None"

Figure QID228: Portion of Department Volunteers Actively Participating
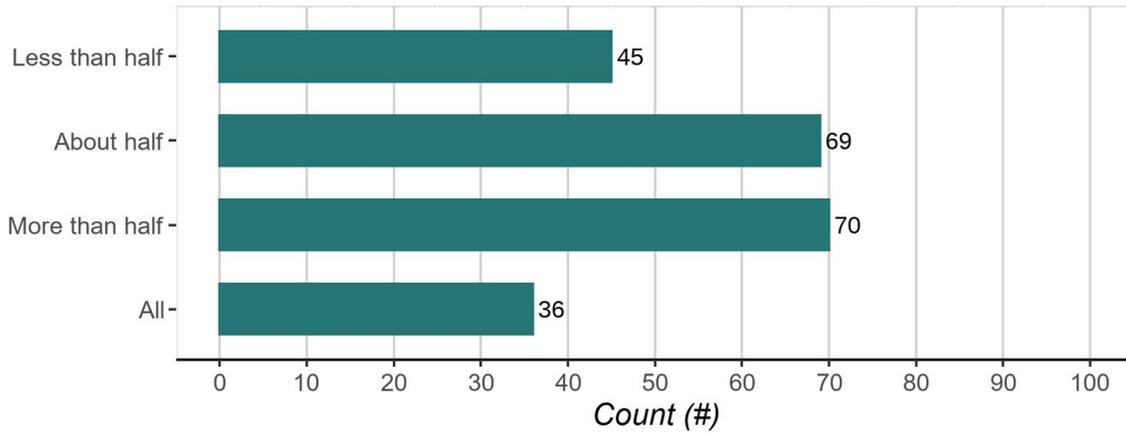
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing fire departments distributed by portion of volunteers in department chief considers to be actively participating.

Q53 (If QID160 ≠ All paid). How do you decide when a volunteer is no longer active? Provide the **minimum percentage** that a firefighter must attend to be considered an active volunteer.

Adjust slider for each (0-100 scale): "Attends a certain percentage of calls", "Attends a certain percentage of trainings", "Attends a certain percentage of department meetings", "Reports for their assigned shifts or finds coverage if has to miss a shift"

Figure Q53: Minimum Attendance for Volunteer to be Considered Active
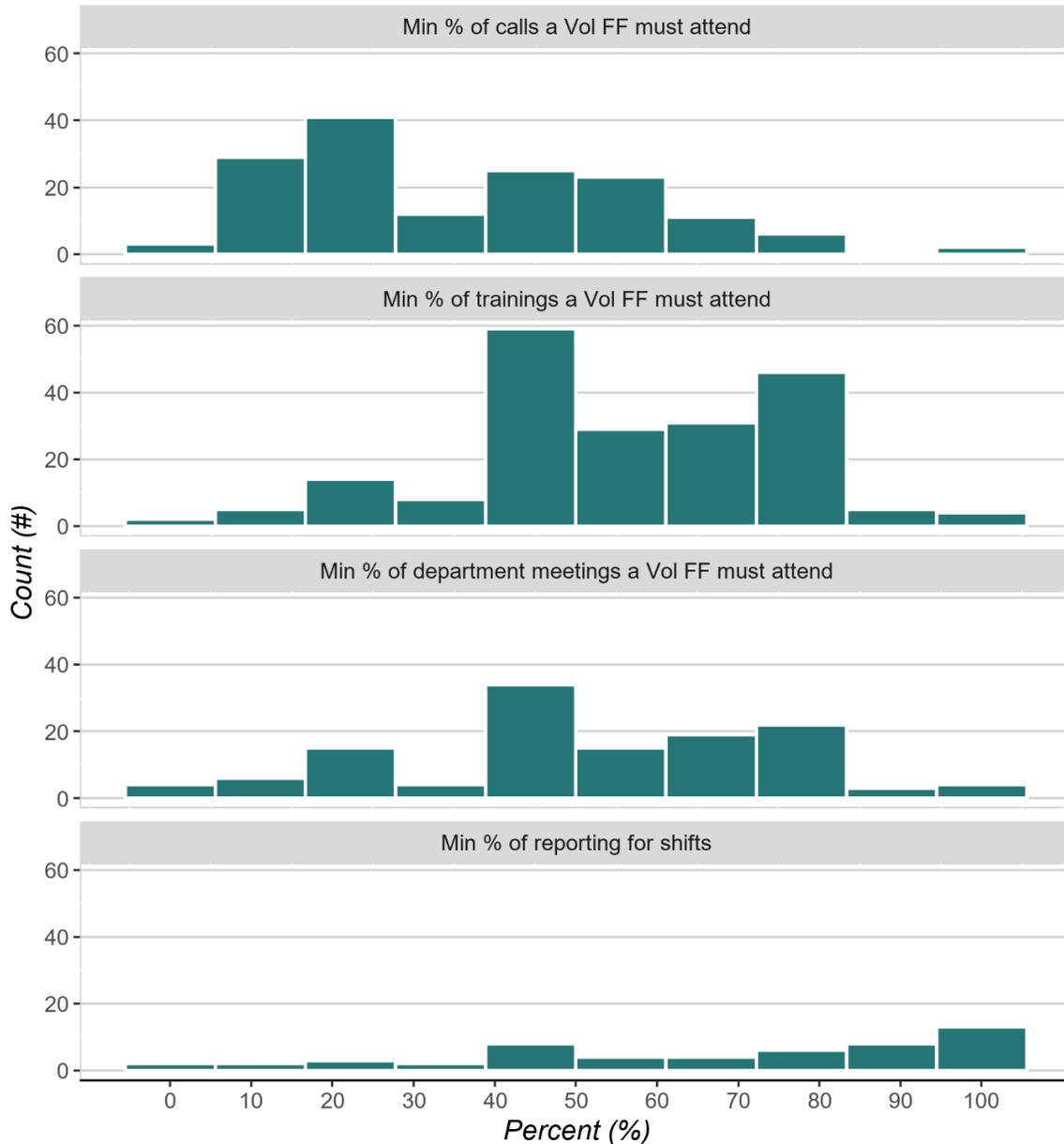
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Column charts showing fire departments distributed by minimum percentage of calls, trainings, meetings, and shifts a volunteer firefighter must attend for chief to consider that firefighter an active volunteer.

Recruitment: Volunteer Firefighters

Q87. This section of the survey is about the issue of recruitment of volunteer firefighters.

QID172. How did you hear about becoming a volunteer firefighter?

Choices (select one): "A fire Agency employee/volunteer", "I have previous firefighting experience", "Friend or family member that is not a firefighter", "Employer", "Community meeting", "Community event", "Flyer", "Social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Instagram)", "Read/heard a news story that inspired me to serve", "Personal experience or loss related to fire", "Internet search", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID172: How Volunteers Heard about Volunteer Firefighting
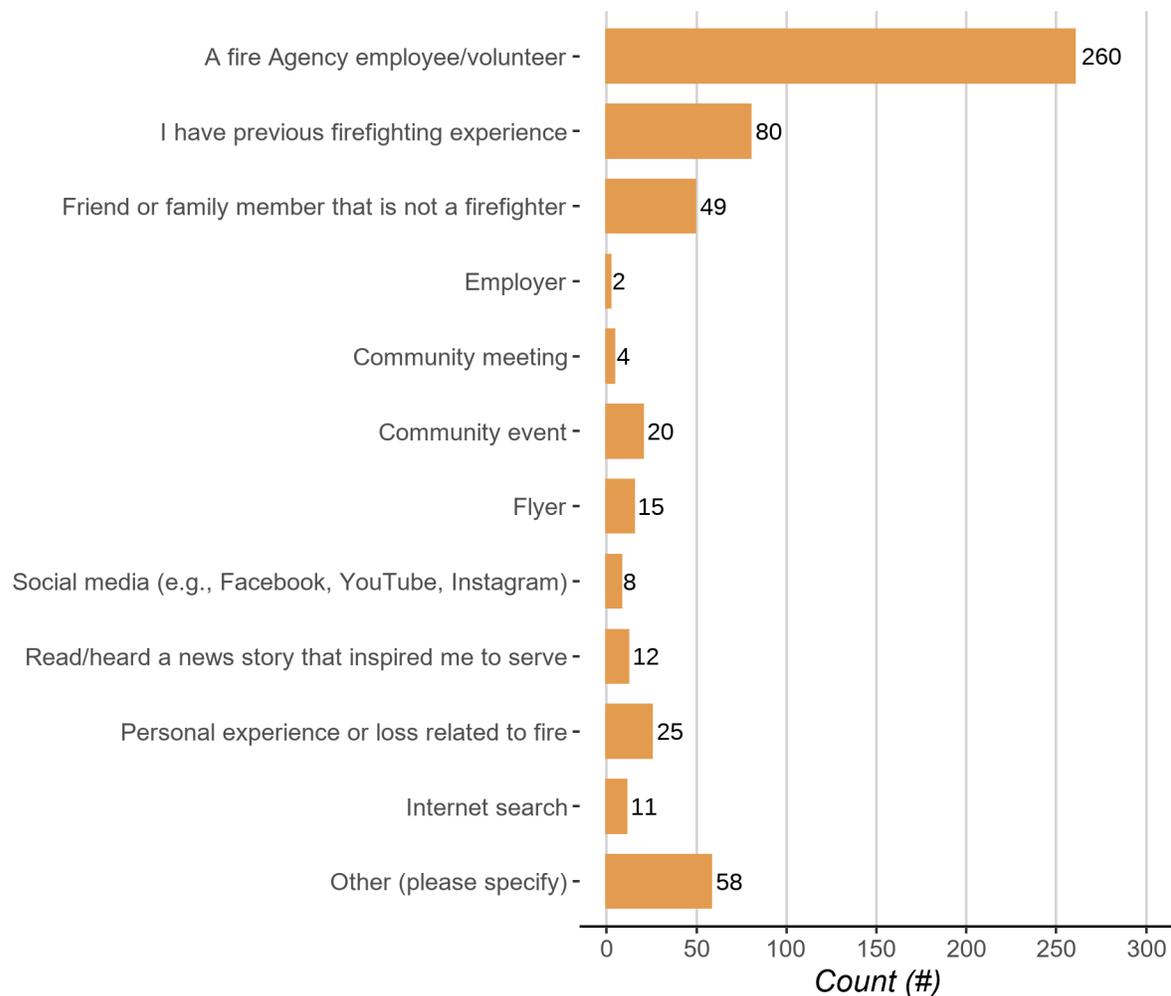
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar charts showing volunteers distributed by how they heard about volunteer firefighting.

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Table QID172: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Internal desire	12
Sign	12
High school	6
Wanted to help people/protect community	5
College	4
Other training	4
Was a paid firefighter/paramedic	4
Other advertisement	3
Desire since childhood	2
Neighbor	1
Employer	1
Wanted to enhance resume	1
Not sure	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID172 how volunteers heard about firefighting sorted by frequency.

QID173. What is the **main reason** you decided to become a volunteer firefighter?

Choices (select one): "Pathway to become a career firefighter or EMT", "Form connections in the community", "Protect the community", "Improve or maintain physical fitness", "Be part of a social group outside of work", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID173: Main Reason Volunteers became Firefighters
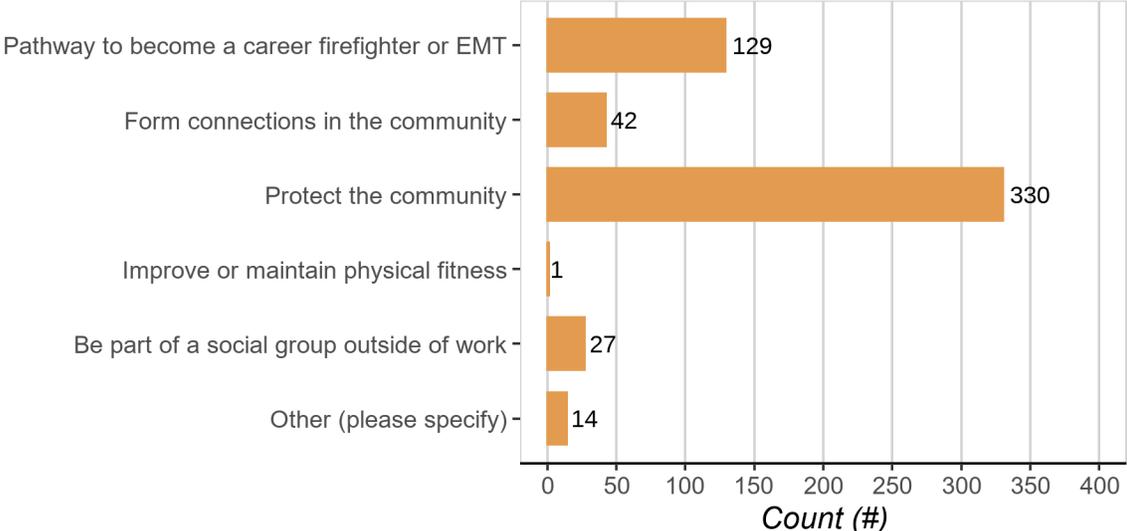
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing volunteers distributed by main reason they became volunteer firefighters.

Table QID173: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Internal desire	5
Gain training/skills	4
Career	3
Tradition	2
All of the above	1
Someone asked	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID173 main reasons volunteers became firefighters sorted by frequency.

QID174. Think about the characteristics of the volunteer firefighters you know. If you were a recruiter, where would you advertise or recruit to find dedicated, service-oriented people **in your community**? Check all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Churches/temples/religious centers", "Universities/community colleges", "High schools", "Local service clubs", "National Guard", "Veterans' organizations", "Recreation centers/gyms", "Community events (e.g. Farmer's markets, music events)", "Community meeting", "Restaurants/bars", "Large companies", "Small businesses", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID174: Where to Recruit Volunteers
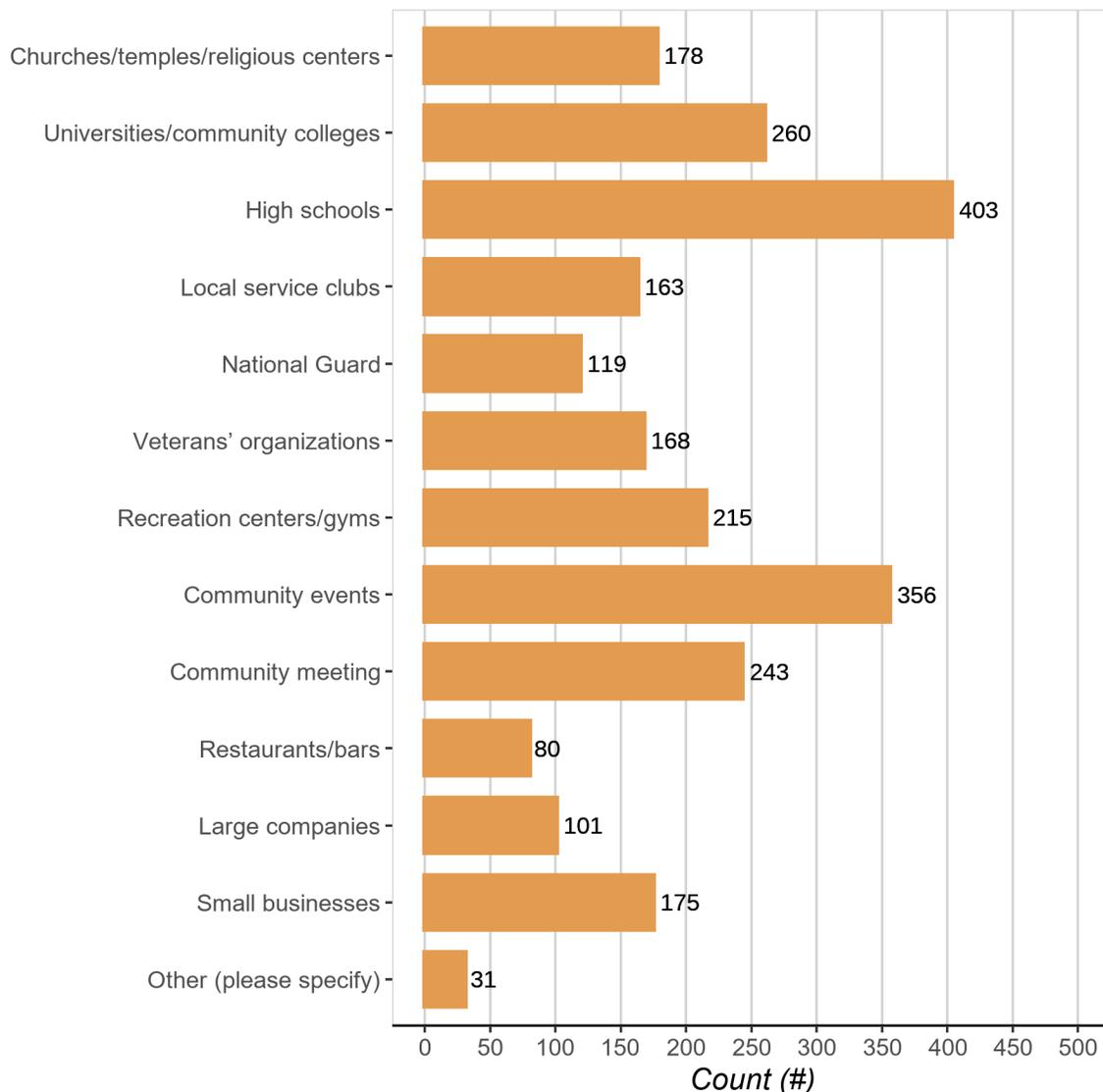
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of where respondents would advertise or recruit to find dedicated, service-oriented people in their community.

Table QID174: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Social media	9
More recruiting, regardless of location	5
Open house/In-person opportunities	2
School/PTA	2
Use Support Team	1
Don't know	1
Local advertising	1
Real estate agents	1
News media	1
Athletic events	1
Email	1
Gathering places	1
Homeless shelters/ Employment agencies	1
Farmers	1
Focus on retention instead	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID174 where respondents would advertise or recruit to find dedicated, service-oriented people in their community sorted by frequency.

Recruitment: Chiefs

Q88. This section of the survey is about recruitment practices of volunteer firefighters at your department.

Q66. Which of the following are recruiting locations for your department? Check all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Churches/temples/religious centers", "Universities/community colleges", "High schools", "Local service clubs", "National Guard", "Veterans' organizations", "Recreation centers/gyms", "Community events (e.g., Farmer's markets, music events)", "Community meeting", "Restaurants/bars", "Large companies", "Small businesses", "Other (please specify) _____", "⊗We do not do outreach activities"

Figure Q66: Recruiting Locations of Chiefs

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO

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Table Q66: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Social media/ online advertising	17
Word of mouth	11
Sign/ banner	6
Open house/ in-person opportunities	5
Local outreach	4
Flyers	4
Local news media	4
Movie theatre	2
Fire prevention events	2
Newspaper	2
Want more recruiting, regardless of location	2
Target community-oriented people	1
Gathering places	1
Employment agency/ job fair	1
National student scholarship	1
Don't know	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to Q66 where chiefs currently recruit for volunteer firefighters sorted by frequency.

Q69 (If Q96 ≠ *We have not been able to recruit any volunteer firefighters in the past five years).* What is the employment status of your typical new recruit? Select up to three answers.

Choices (select all that apply): "Small business owner", "Professional", "Physical laborer/ construction", "Student", "Unemployed at the time of recruitment", "Stay-at-home parent or homemaker", "Retired", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure Q69: Employment Status of Typical New Recruit
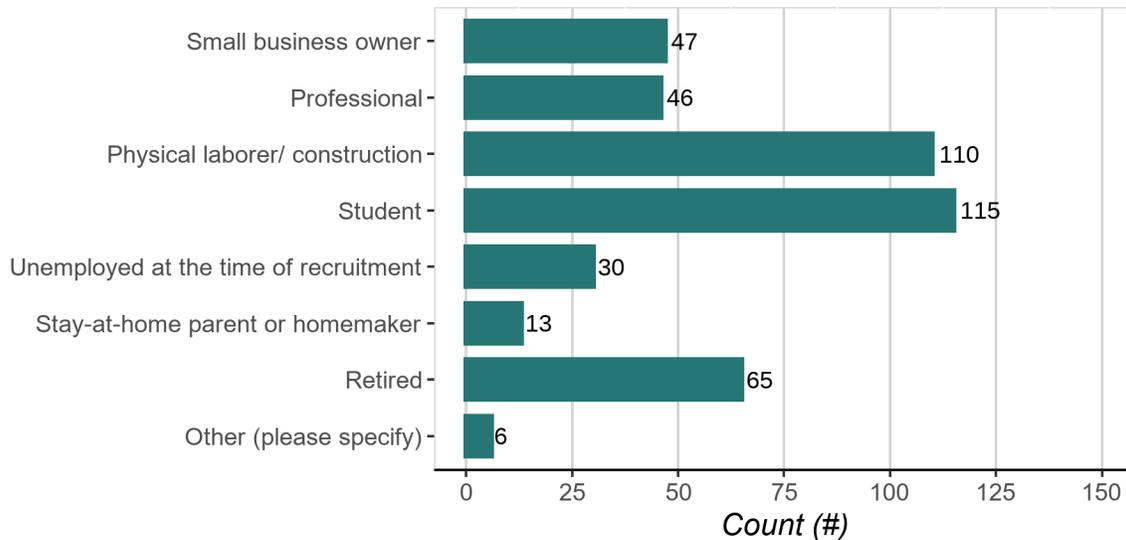
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of employment status of typical new recruit volunteer firefighter.

Table Q69: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Retail or customer service	3
No new recruits	2
Other fire agency employees	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to Q69 employment status of typical new recruit volunteer firefighters sorted by frequency.

Q70. Does your department have a standardized recruiting process to communicate role expectations to prospective volunteer firefighters?

Choices (select one): "No", "We have a general set of talking points we try to hit", "We have a standardized process that recruiters closely follow", "I don't know"

**Figure Q70: Whether Department has Standardized Process
to Communicate Role Expectations to Prospective Volunteers**
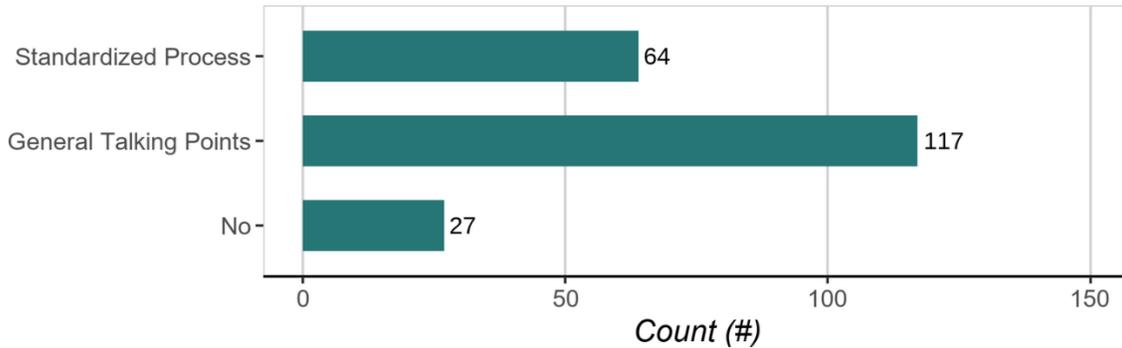
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of departments based on whether the department has a standardized process to communicate role expectations to prospective volunteers.

Q71. Thinking about the characteristics of people who show interest in firefighting but do not join, which of the following would increase the likelihood that they joined? Please rate the effectiveness of each option.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Not effective", "Low", "Medium", "High"

Table Q71: Rated Effectiveness of Volunteer Recruiting Options

Options to Improve Volunteer Recruiting	Number of Chiefs				
	Not Effective	Low	Medium	High	Medium + High
More flexibility in training schedules	23	44	93	45	138
More flexibility in training or physical requirements	22	61	89	32	121
Financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives	18	62	63	58	121
Recognition or credit from employers	19	70	59	52	111
College credit	34	62	60	41	101
More networking/career building opportunities	28	71	75	22	97
More opportunities to socialize in addition to volunteer duties	25	92	64	15	79
Other	12	1	3	2	5

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of volunteer recruiting options.

Q97. **Optional:** Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about the recruitment of volunteer firefighters for your department? _____

Due to the length and variety of answers to this question, this data is available upon request.

Retention

QID175. This section of the survey is about the issue of retention at volunteer fire departments.

QID231 (If QID151 = Chief). Which of the following best describes how your department defines and measures volunteer retention, if at all?

Choices (select one): "We have a clear definition with specific measurable inputs we use that we track", "We have a definition that we use, but the measures involved are not exactly clear or not easy to track", "We have a general sense of our retention but no specific way of measuring it", "We don't really have a clear definition of retention or any way of measuring it"

Figure QID231: How Department Defines and Measures Volunteer Retention
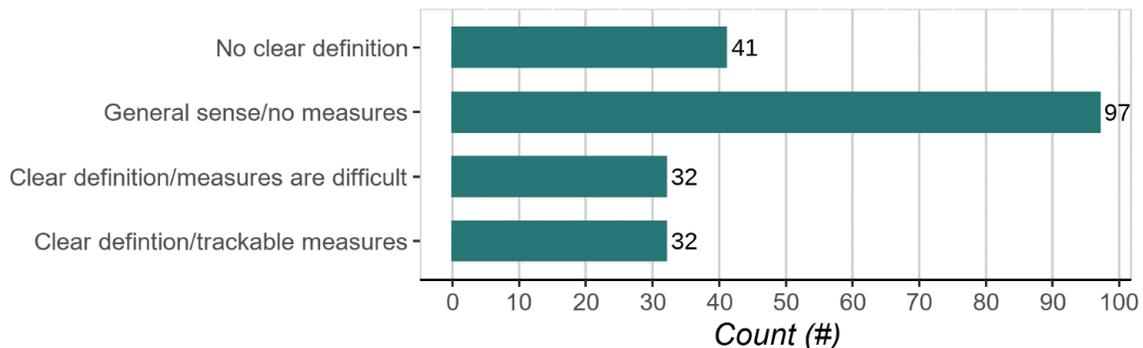
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of volunteers based on best definition of how department defines and measures volunteer retention.

QID232 (If QID231 = We have a clear definition with specific measurable inputs we use that we track AND QID151 = Chief). Please share the specific definition you use to define retention.

Chief n=22

QID232: Retention Definitions

Definition of Retention	Frequency
Attendance Minimum	9
Tracked by Point System	2
Tracked by Percentage	2
Unspecified	5
Number of Years of Service Minimum	7
0 to 1 years	2
1 to 2 years	0
2 to 3 years	3
Over 3 years	2
Minimum DPSST Standards	2
Use Formalized, Written Rules	2
Sense of Motivation	1
Certification Status	1
Tracking Numbers Using Exit Interview as Departure Process	1
Online Training Log	1
Tracking Call Responses	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the retention definitions of Chiefs by decreasing frequency.

QID233 (If QID231 = We have a clear definition with specific measurable inputs we use that we track AND QID151 = Chief). How exactly do you measure it? Please be as specific as possible.

Chief n=21

QID232: How Retention is Measured	Frequency
Attendance	
Training Attendance	3
Drill Attendance	1
Call Logs	2
Combination Attendance	5
Using Automated Software (e.g., Vector Solutions)	3
Using Spreadsheet	2
Monthly	2
Track Status (Vested or Senior) Based on Time and Meeting Requirement	1
Score Attrition as Positive (e.g., moved to career) or Negative (e.g., disciplinary)	1
District Time and Money Input vs. Volunteer Time Output	1
Start and End dates	1
Point System	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing how Chiefs measure retention sorted by decreasing frequency.

QID176. In your opinion, does your department struggle with retaining volunteer firefighters?

Choices (select one): "Yes", "No"

Chief n = 204
Volunteer Firefighters n = 539

Figure QID176: Respondent Opinions on Whether Department Struggles with Retaining Volunteer Firefighters
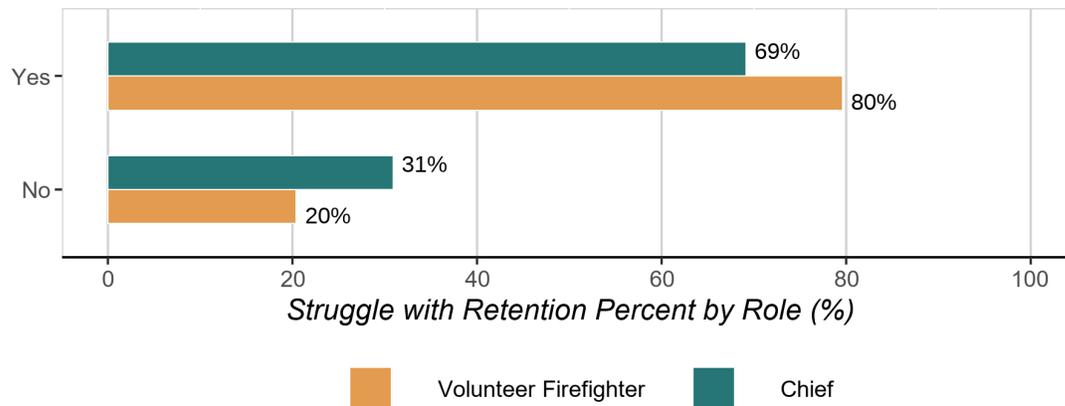
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on whether department struggles with retaining volunteer firefighters distinguished by chief or volunteer.

QID177. What do you think are the three biggest reasons that volunteers have left or would consider leaving your department? **Please select up to three answers.**

Choices (select up to three): "Not enough support for and/or communication with new members", "The realities of volunteering were different than expected before signing up", "Wanted to move to career side but wasn't getting enough professional development support", "Too difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities", "Physical requirements too rigorous", "The department culture wasn't a good fit", "Lack of proper equipment or personnel to comfortably perform during training or calls", "Didn't feel supported by department leadership", "Training requirements and/or schedules weren't flexible enough", "Moved to career side - volunteering was a stepping stone to career", "Something else (please specify) _____"

QID177: Three Biggest Reasons Volunteers May Have Left or Would Consider Leaving Deparment

Percent(%) of respondents by group

Volunteer Firefighter   Chief

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Table QID177: "Something Else" Responses

"Something Else" Reponses	Frequency
Moved away/career change	24
Need pay/costly/benefits	13
Incompatible volunteer attitude/skills	10
Housing expense	10
COVID and/or vaccination requirements	9
Retired from service	9
Lack of community support	5
Lack of population	4
No reasons	3
Employer not supportive	1
Long commute	1
Injury	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "something else" responses to QID177 three biggest reasons volunteers have left or would consider leaving department sorted by frequency.

Q92 (If QID177 = The department culture wasn't a good fit). One of your choices indicates that department culture or social factors may be a reason that volunteers have left or would consider leaving your department. Which of the factors could be impacting culture? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others", "Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along", "Department culture that isolates new members", "Department atmosphere that is too serious and not fun enough", "Lack of social life within the department, where members train and go on calls, but don't spend time together otherwise", "Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department", "Lack of trust and cooperation between volunteer and career sides of the department", "Something else (please specify) _____"

Figure Q92: Factors Impacting Department Culture
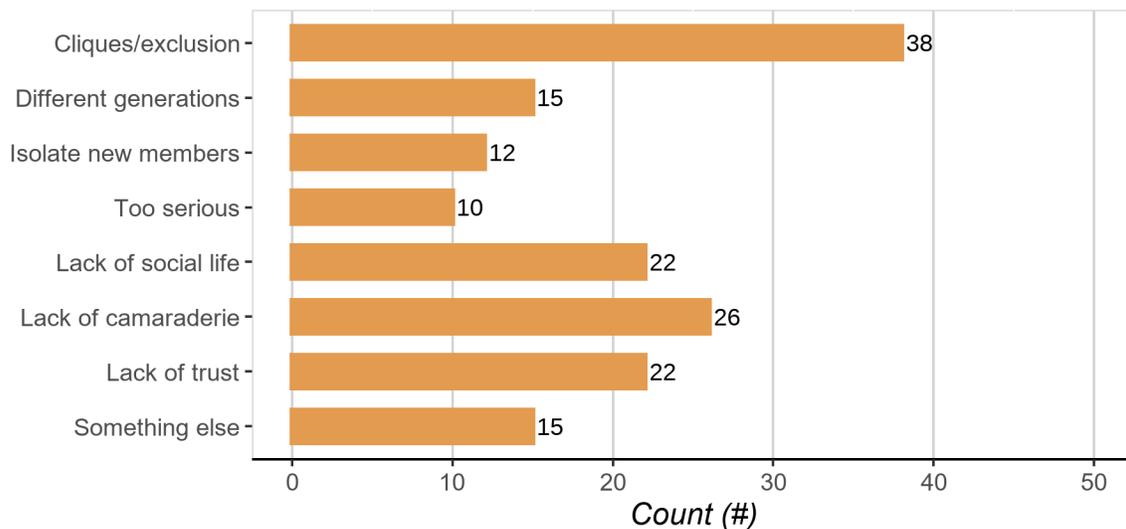
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of factors impacting department culture.

Table Q92: "Something Else" Responses

"Something Else" Reponses	Frequency
General culture issue	4
Leadership	3
Volunteer problem	3
Age related	3
Training related	1
Department policy	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "something else" responses to Q92 factors impacting department culture sorted by frequency.

QID179. Which, if any, of these do you think could have a positive impact on retention at your department? **Select up to three.**

Choices (select up to three): "More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers", "Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders", "Improving department culture", "Provide more opportunities for feedback", "More flexibility in training or requirements", "Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements", "Improved resources for department (e.g., equipment, building, people)", "Provide financial or scholarship compensation", "⊗None of these", "Other (please specify) _____", Display This Choice If QID160 = Combination department: "Solutions tailored to address combination department issues"

QID179: Preferred Options to Improve Retention at Department
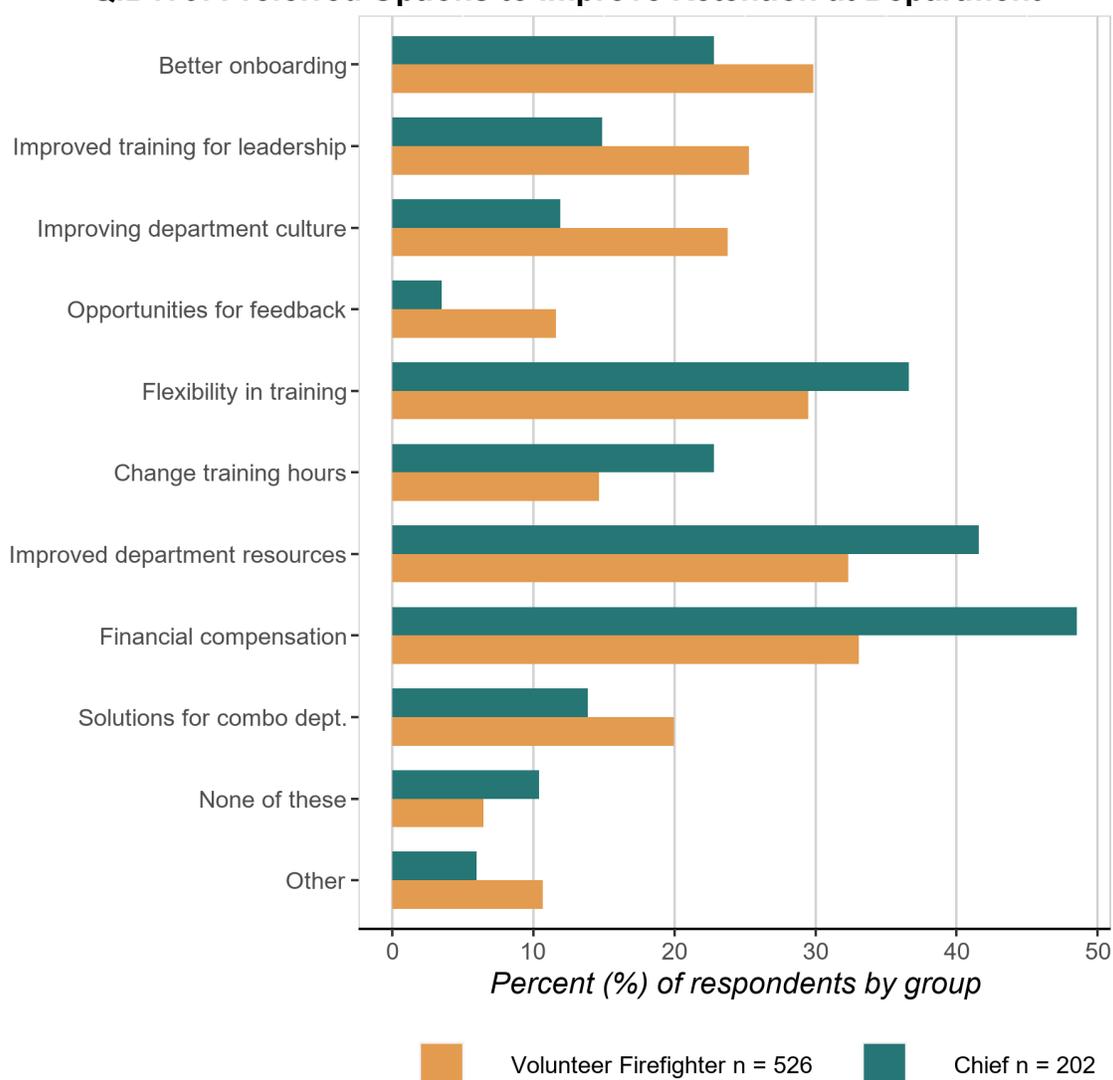
Percent (%) of respondents by group

Volunteer Firefighter n = 526   Chief n = 202

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve retention at department distinguished by chief or volunteer.

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Table QID179: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Adjust for call type volume	3
Remove COVID restrictions	3
Don't know	2
IAFF policy change	2
Clearly communicate expectations	2
Just EMS designation	1
Volunteer problem	1
Changes to marketing	1
Community involvement	1
Lower housing costs	1
Employer partnerships	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID179 respondent opinions on ways to improve retention at department sorted by frequency.

QID205 (If QID179 = More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers).
You've suggested that there should be more attention to and better onboarding for new volunteers. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Leadership providing a clearer understanding to new volunteers of the monthly time commitment, goals, and responsibilities that are expected so they're on the same page", "Leadership making it clear up front the minimum length of service they expect of new recruits", "Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life", "A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members", "Having department leadership hold more regular and personal check-ins with new volunteers", "Other (please specify)"

Figure QID205: Preferred Options to Improve Attention and Onboarding
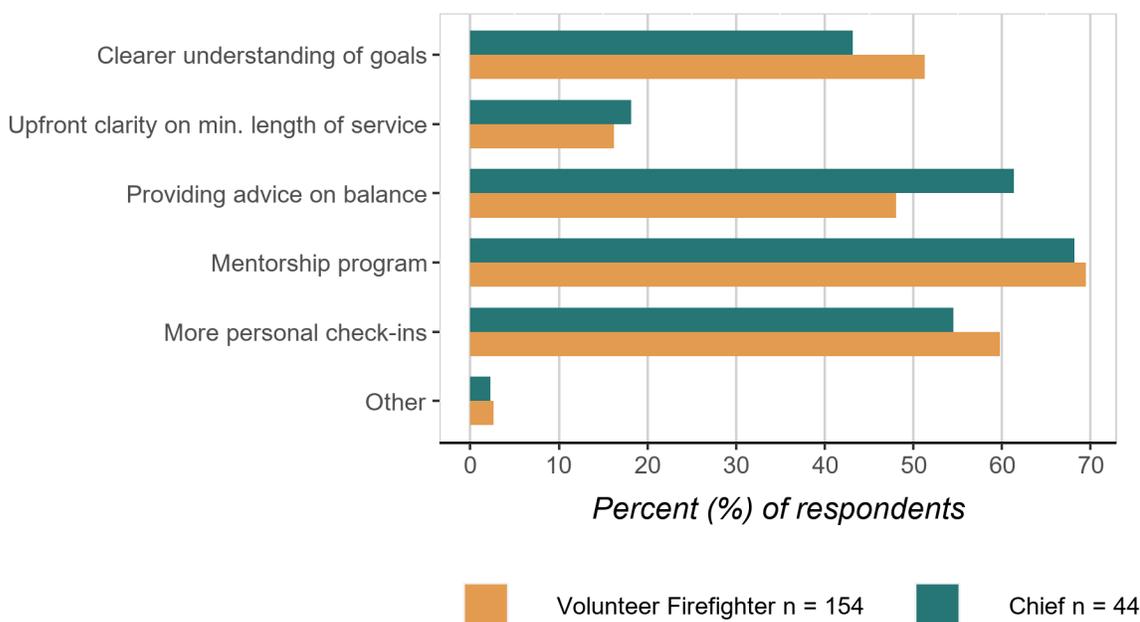
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve attention and onboarding at departments distinguished by chief or volunteer

Table QID205: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Create detailed plan to individual	3
More training to increase comfort and performance	2
Quicker route to certification	2

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID205 respondent opinions on ways to improve attention and onboarding sorted by frequency.

QID180 (If QID179 = More attention and better onboarding for new volunteers). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

Table QID180: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options to Improve Onboarding

Options to Improve Onboarding	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Clearer understanding of goals	10	42	38	80
Upfront clarity on min. length of service	6	9	14	23
Providing advice on balance	9	49	38	87
Mentorship program	4	43	81	124
More personal check-ins	13	42	53	95
Other	0	2	12	14

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to improve onboarding.

QID206 (If QID179 = *Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders*). You've suggested that there should be improved training for leadership or replacement of leaders. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Enrolling rising volunteers in an officer candidate course to gain leadership skills and training", "Following a set of national leadership standards and core competencies", "Providing department leadership with sales and marketing training", "Having department leadership actively participate in training to lead by example", "Training leadership at your agency", "Replacing leaders at your agency", "Training leadership at your Fire Defense Board", "Replacing leaders at your Fire Defense Board", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID206: Preferred Options to Improve Training for Leadership or Replacement of Leaders
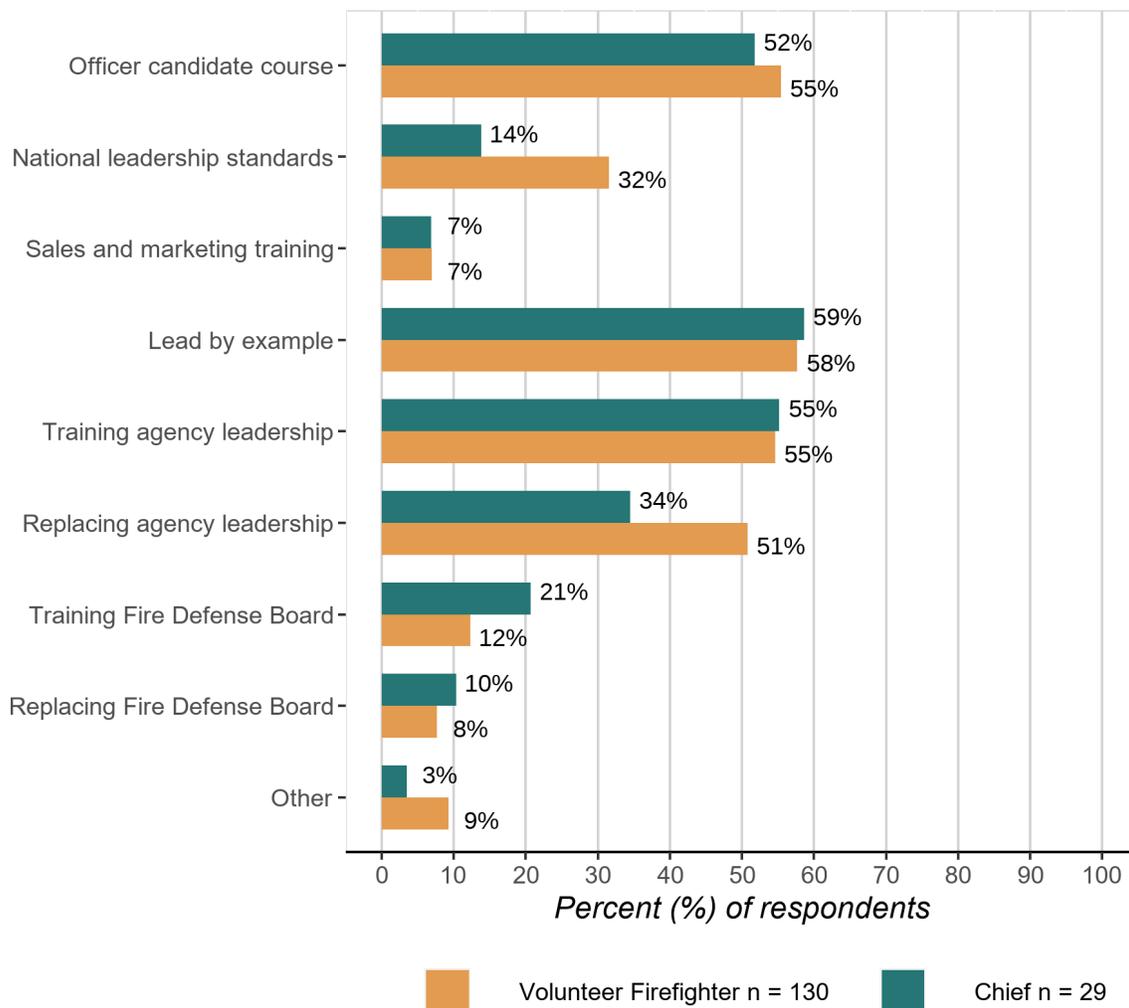
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve training for leadership or replacement of leaders distinguished by chief or volunteer.

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Table QID206: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Increase soft skills or communication skills	5
Increase personal contact	2
Better Training Officer	1
Remove the Union	1
Increased certification requirement for officers	1
Accountability for leaders	1
Restructure from top to bottom	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID206 respondent opinions on ways to improve training for leadership or replacement of leaders sorted by frequency.

Q54 (If QID179 = *Improving training for leadership or replacing leaders*). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

Table Q54: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options to Improve Training for Leadership or Replacing Leaders

Options to Improve Training for Leadership or Replacing Leaders	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Officer candidate course	4	44	38	82
National leadership standards	1	26	16	42
Sales and marketing training	1	6	4	10
Lead by example	3	17	70	87
Training agency leadership	7	25	52	77
Replacing agency leadership	5	16	55	71
Training Fire Defense Board	4	5	12	17
Replacing Fire Defense Board	0	6	7	13
Other	0	2	11	13

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to improve training for leadership or replacing leaders.

QID207 (If QID179 = *Improving department culture*) You've suggested that there should be improved department culture. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Holding cross-generational training to help members and leaders of different ages better understand each other", "Allow and encourage new and younger members to own specific projects and tasks", "Break up cliques and groups by assigning members to workgroups they wouldn't normally choose", "Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year", "Other (please specify)_____"

Figure QID207: Preferred Options to Improve Department Culture
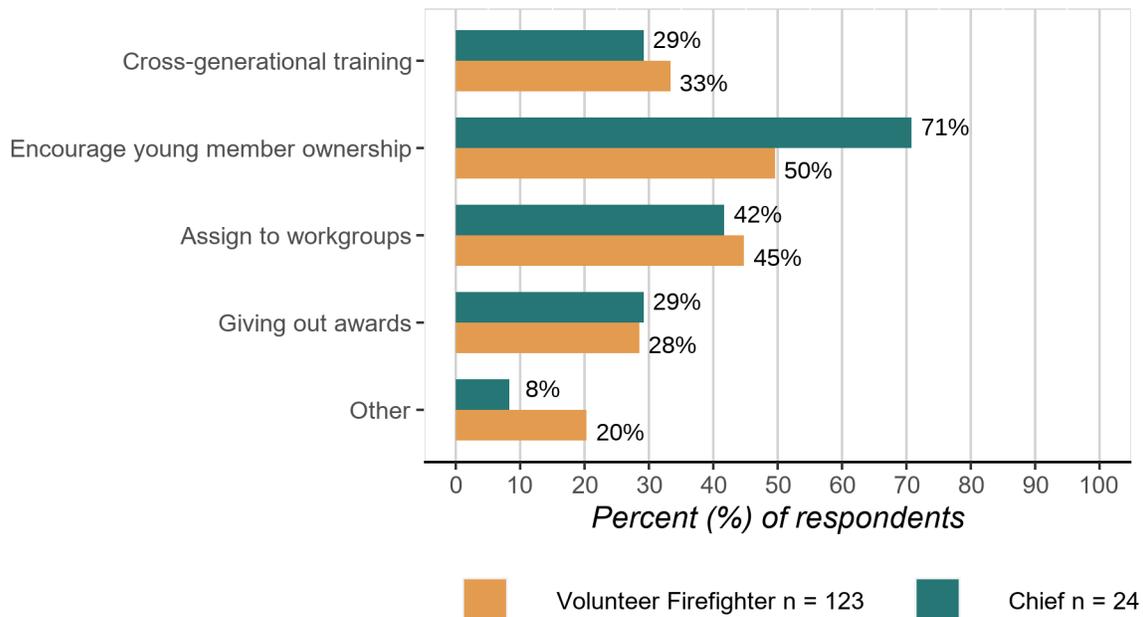
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve department culture distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID207: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Value volunteers	7
More morale building/social opportunities	4
More investment from volunteers	3
Improve soft skills (e.g., communication)	3
More intensive training	2
None	2
Cultural and diversity training for leaders	2
Consistency in rules	2
Less fire board involvement	1
More external training	1
Focused jobs	1
Clear expectations	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID207 respondent opinions on ways to improve department culture sorted by frequency.

Q55 (If QID179 = Improving department culture). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

Table Q55: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options to Improve Department Culture

Options to Improve Department Culture	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Cross-generational training	5	24	18	42
Encourage young member ownership	11	34	30	64
Assign to workgroups	6	24	33	57
Giving out awards	7	17	15	32
Other	1	7	18	25

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to improve department culture.

QID208 (If QID179 = Provide more opportunities for feedback). You've suggested that there should be more opportunities for feedback. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department", "Conduct "stay" interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department", "Create a database of former volunteers to stay in touch with them and try and re-engage on future opportunities", "Set up a comment box for anonymous feedback and/or create dedicated "office hours" to provide members a clear opportunity to express their opinions", "Make it easier to compare your department's retention rate and efforts with other departments'", "Create a Chief People Officer at the department who constantly takes the temperature of members' happiness and satisfaction", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID208: Preferred Options to Improve Opportunities for Feedback
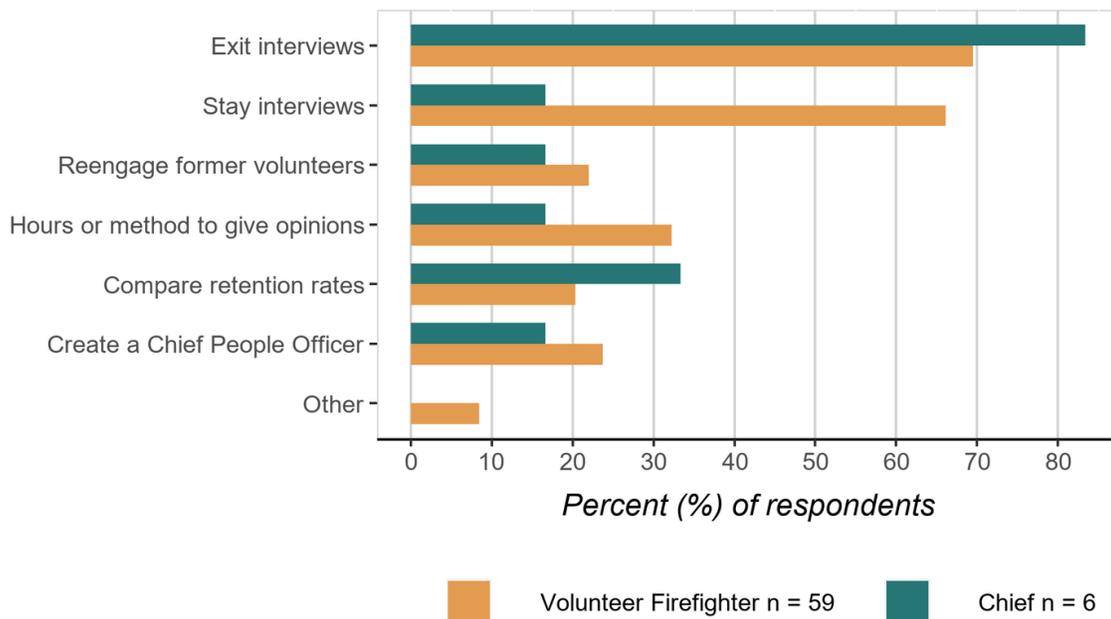
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve opportunities for feedback distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID208: "Other" Reponses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Member advocate/guide	2
Build strong relationship with crews	1
After-action reviews	1
Clear expectations	1
More feedback opportunities for everyone	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID208 respondent opinions on ways to improve opportunities for feedback sorted by frequency.

Q56 (If QID179 = Provide more opportunities for feedback). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

**Table Q56: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options
to Provide More Opportunities for Feedback**

Options to Provide More Opportunities for Feedback	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate +Major
Exit interviews	5	22	18	40
Stay interviews	6	16	16	32
Reengage former volunteers	4	7	2	9
Hours or method to give opinions	4	9	6	15
Compare retention rates	5	6	3	9
Create a Chief People Officer	1	7	5	12
Other	0	3	2	5

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to provide more opportunities for feedback.

QID209 (If QID179 = More flexibility in training or requirements). You've suggested that there should be provided more flexibility in training or changes to requirements. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Offer 'micro-volunteer' opportunities (1 day or 1 week a month) for those that are unable to commit to traditional volunteer time commitments", "Build the essential training calendar around members with less flexibility in their schedule", "Hold essential training sessions on multiple days", "Offer online training for nonessential training", "Offer virtual reality training modules", "Training content needs to be updated", "Other (please specify)_____"

**Figure QID209: Preferred Options to Improve
Flexibility in Training or Change to Requirements**
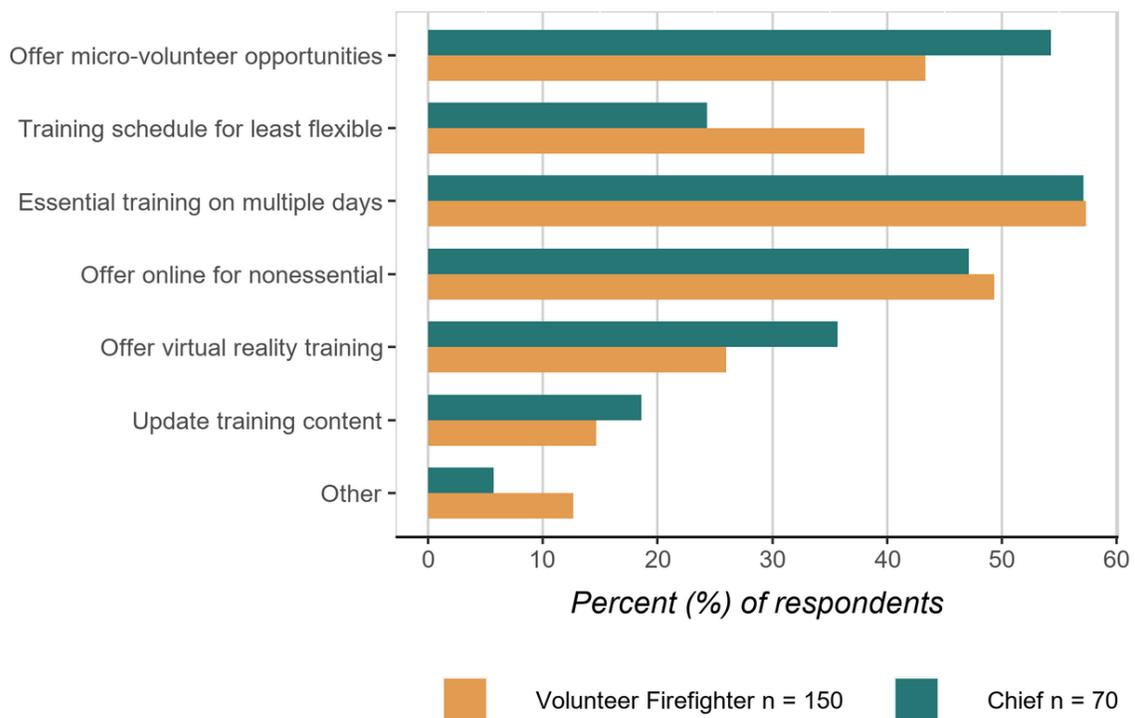
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve flexibility in training or change to requirements distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID209: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Focused positions/trainings	5
More planning of trainings/streamline check-off process	3
Joint or open training opportunities across departments	2
No homework	2
Reduce overall time commitment	2
No retaking online courses for retired career firefighters	1
Fewer maintenance certifications	1
More essential training opportunities	1
Less or no online training	1
Training on drill nights only	1
Paid trainers other than on-duty staff	1
More drill offerings	1
Better training facilities/grounds	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID209 respondent opinions on ways to improve flexibility in training or change to requirements sorted by frequency.

Q57 (If QID179 = More flexibility in training or requirements). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

Table Q57: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options
for More Flexibility in Training or Requirements

Options for Flexibility in Training or Requirements	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Offer micro-volunteer opportunities	13	62	25	87
Training schedule for least flexible	5	35	33	68
Essential training on multiple days	7	67	50	117
Offer online for nonessential	13	53	40	93
Offer virtual reality training	9	28	26	54
Update training content	5	13	16	29
Other	3	4	15	19

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options for more flexibility in training or requirements.

QID210 (If QID179 = Improved resources for department). You've suggested that there should improved resources for the department. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Personal protective equipment (including clothing, jackets, boots, hats and gloves)", "Firefighting equipment", "Radios", "iPads", "Apparatus", "Fire Station improvements", "More firefighters for your agency", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID210: Preferred Options to Improve Department Resources
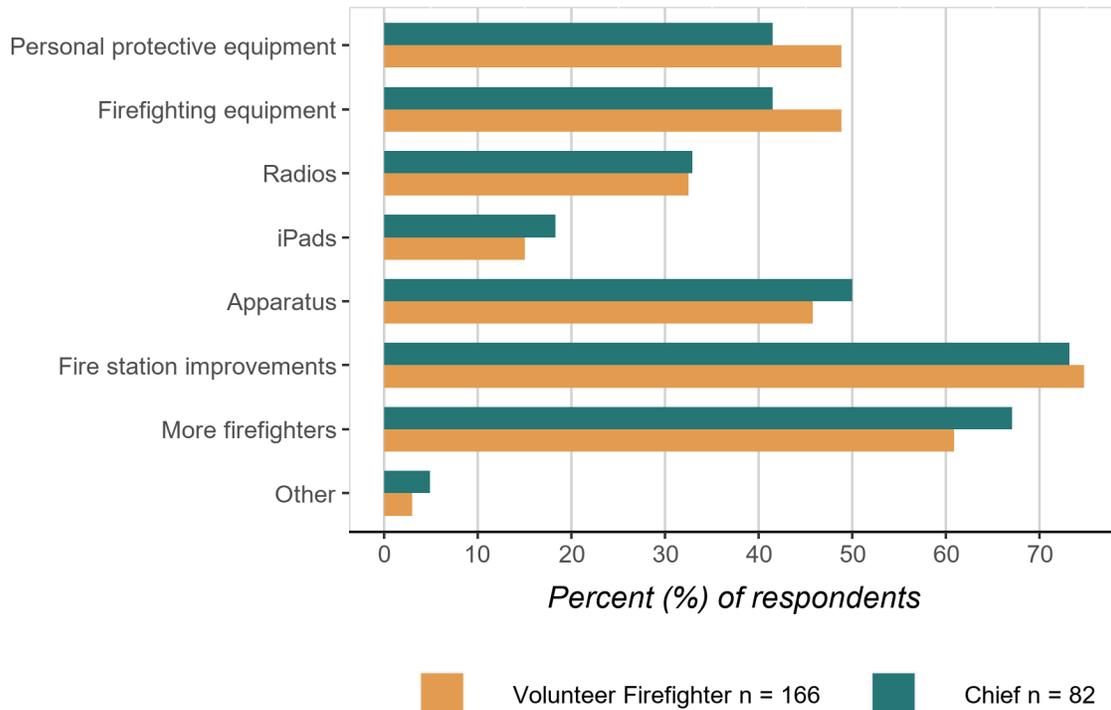
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve department resources distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID210: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Training facilities	2
On-site gym	1
SCBAs	1
Improved showers/rooms	1
Culture consultation support	1
Full-time coordinator	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID210 respondent opinions on ways to improve department resources sorted by frequency.

Q58 (If QID179 = Improved resources for department). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

**Table Q58: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options
to Improve Department Resources**

Options to Improve Department Resources	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Personal protective equipment	8	46	61	107
Firefighting equipment	2	53	60	113
Radios	9	25	47	72
iPads	8	21	11	32
Apparatus	1	35	81	116
Fire station improvements	5	48	131	179
More firefighters	3	21	132	153
Other	0	5	4	9

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to improve department resources.

QID211 (If QID179 = Provide financial or scholarship compensation). You've suggested that there should be financial or scholarship compensation. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

QID211 You've suggested that there should be financial or scholarship compensation. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.
"Compensation", "State tax deductions, benefits, or credits", "College scholarships", "Employer credit for service time spent at calls", "Disability insurance", "Other (please specify) _____"

Figure QID211: Preferred Options to Improve Financial or Scholarship Compensation
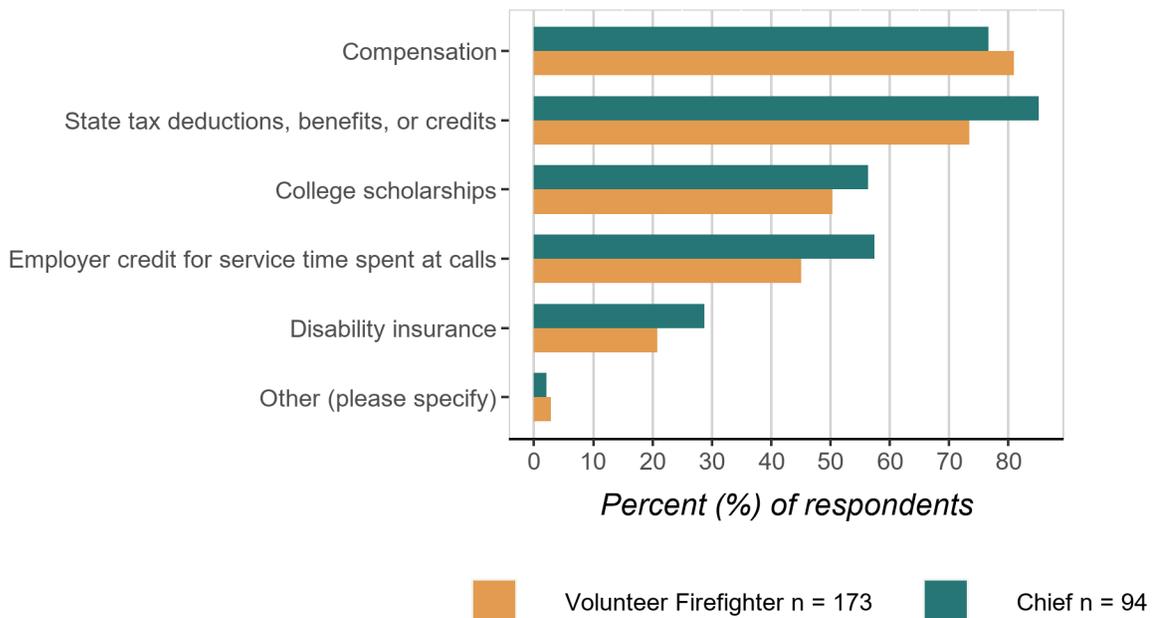
Percent (%) of respondents

Volunteer Firefighter n = 173   Chief n = 94

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to improve financial or scholarship compensation distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID211: "Other" Responses to Preferred Options

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Pension program	2
Health insurance	2
Gym membership	1
Paid trainings	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID211 respondent opinions on ways to improve financial or scholarship compensation sorted by frequency.

Q59 (If QID179 = Provide financial or scholarship compensation). For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

**Table Q59: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options
to Provide Financial or Scholarship Compensation**

Options to Provide Financial or Scholarship Compensation	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Compensation	5	54	150	204
State tax deductions, benefits, or credits	5	65	135	200
College scholarships	12	60	67	127
Employer credit for service time spent at calls	6	54	71	125
Disability insurance	7	32	23	55
Other	0	2	5	7

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to provide financial or scholarship compensation.

QT63 (If QID179 = Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements).
You've suggested that there should be reduced training, time, or physical requirements. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Fewer hours required per month", "Fewer days required for conflagration response", "Fewer physical requirements", "Fewer required training hours", "More training (please specify)", "Other (please specify) _____"

**Figure QT63: Preferred Options to Reduce
Training, Time, or Physical Requirements**
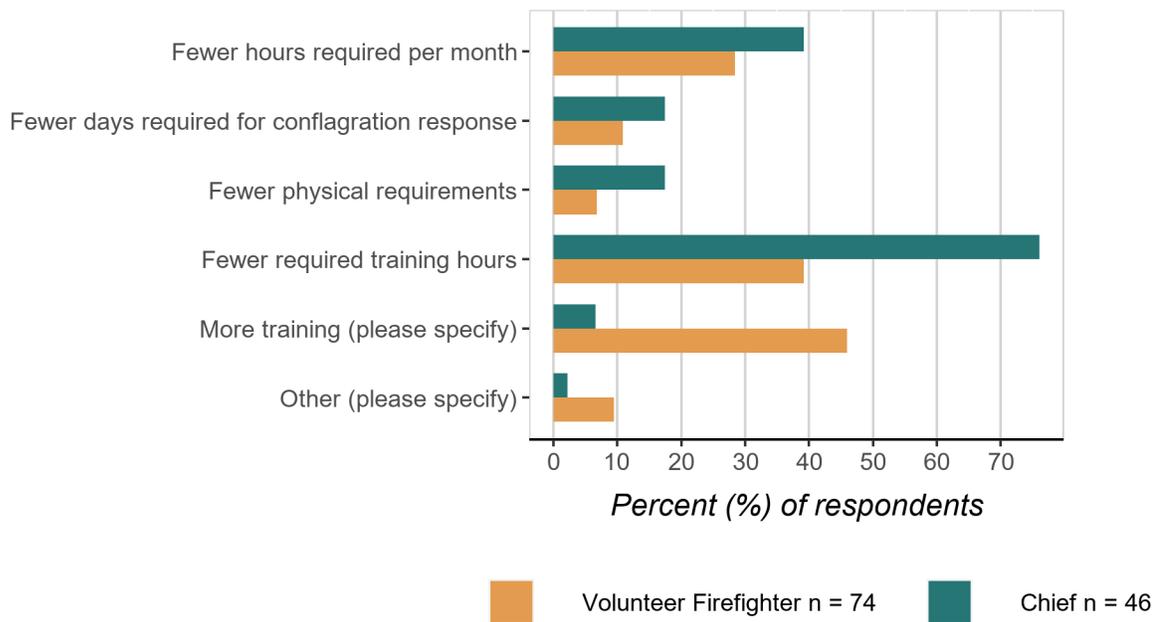
Source: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to reduce training, time, or physical requirements distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QT63a: "More Training" Responses

"More training" Responses	Frequency
Increase training	8
Offer more days and times	4
More focus on physical fitness/health or increased requirements	3
More opportunities for focused trainings	3
More burn to learn opportunities	3
Better training	2
More medical training	1
More time spent on signing off task books	1
Allow experienced volunteers to lead during training	1
Condense intro topics	1
Lower required attendance to be able to keep certifications	1
Task books too time consuming	1
More mentoring	1
Training by someone who is not on duty	1
Training segmented by experience level	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "more training" responses to QT63 respondent opinions on ways to change training, time, or physical requirements.

Table QT63b: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
More online	1
Local control of requirements	1
Less regulation	1
Emergency waivers for training	1
Accelerated training	1
More physical training	1
Training in blocks	1
Clear expectations	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QT63 respondent opinions on ways to change training, time, or physical requirements.

Q64 (If QID179 = Reduce/increase the training hours or physical requirements).
For each item you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

**Table Q64: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options
to Change Training Hours or Physical Requirements**

Options to Change Training Hours or Physical Requirements	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Fewer hours required per month	3	25	10	35
Fewer days required for conflagration response	2	6	7	13
Fewer physical requirements	2	6	4	10
Fewer required training hours	7	35	20	55
More training (please specify)	3	11	23	34
Other (please specify)	0	2	6	8

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options to change training hours or physical requirements.

QID212 (If QID179 = Solutions tailored to address combination department issues). You've suggested that there should be solutions tailored to address combination department issues. Which of the following would impact retention? Select all that apply.

"Providing department leadership with training focused on managing combination departments", "Holding joint trainings with career and volunteer staff", "Mentorships with career members for volunteers who are career-bound", "Other (please specify)"

Figure QID212: Preferred Options to Tailor Solutions to Address Combination Department Issues
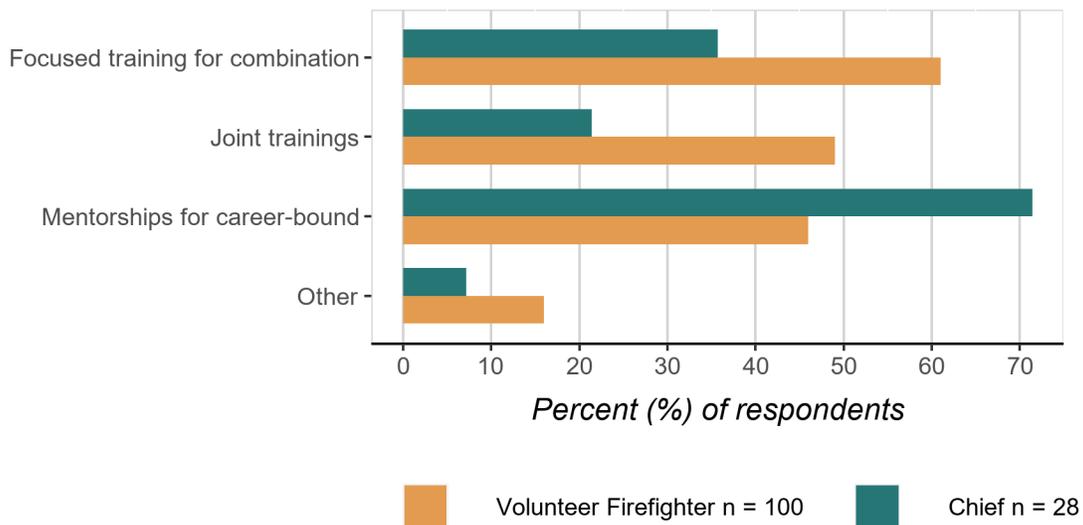
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent opinions on ways to tailor solutions to address combination department issues distinguished by chief or volunteer.

Table QID212: "Other" Responses

"Other" Reponses	Frequency
Leadership management skills	5
Mentoring/engagement opportunities	3
Focused jobs for volunteers	1
Shifts for volunteers	1
Support for volunteers	1
Career staff involvement with training	1
Better communication	1
More support from paid staff	1
Clear expectations	1
Feel more valued	1
Pay off-duty staff to be at joint trainings	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID212 respondent opinions on ways to tailor solutions to address combination department issues sorted by frequency.

Q60 (If QID179 = Solutions tailored to address combination department issues).
For each thing you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention.

Choices for each statement (select one): "Slight Impact", "Moderate Impact", "Major Impact"

Table Q60: Rated Effectiveness of Preferred Options for Solutions Tailored to Address Combination Department Issues

Solutions for Combination Departments	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Focused training for combination	3	33	35	68
Joint trainings	2	28	25	53
Mentorships for career-bound	5	36	23	59
Other	1	3	14	17

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing the rated effectiveness of preferred options for solutions tailored to address combination department issues.

QID181 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). What are some personal difficulties you've encountered while serving as a volunteer firefighter? Check as many as apply.

Choices (select all that apply): "Physical demands are strenuous", "Training requirements are time-consuming", "Too many Emergency Medical responses", "Too few calls needing fire-related response", "Inadequate equipment", "Required monthly time commitment", "Increased financial demands", "Distance to meeting location", "Finding or cost of childcare", "Language barrier", "Balancing home/work responsibilities with volunteering", "Other (please explain) _____", "⊗No difficulties with volunteering"

Figure QID181: Personal Difficulties Encountered While Serving as a Volunteer Firefighter
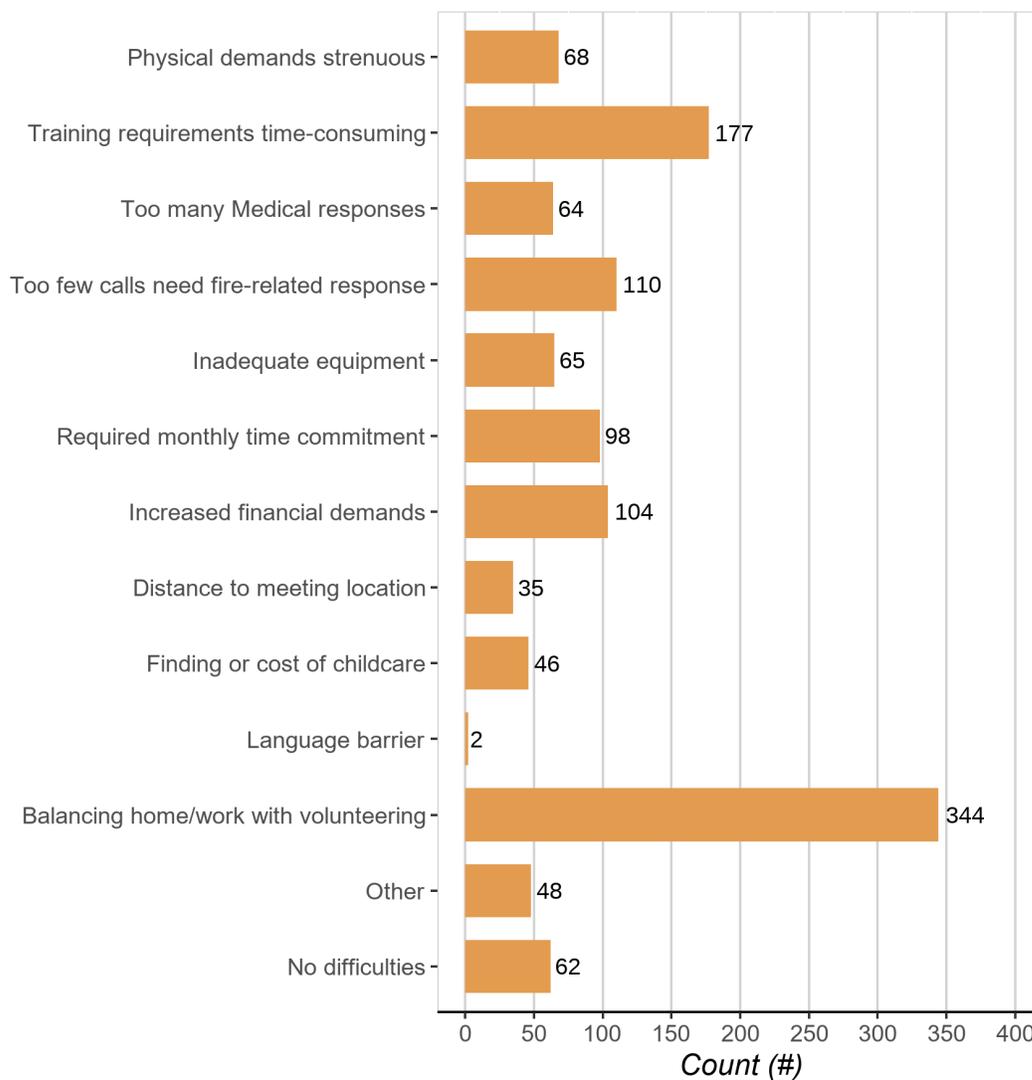
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing the distribution of personal difficulties encountered while serving as a volunteer firefighter.

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Table QID181: "Other" Responses

"Other" Responses	Frequency
Issues with leadership	10
General culture	7
More or better training/ attendance	4
Flexibility of training times	3
Inadequate staff equipment	3
Combination department	2
Injury/ no insurance	2
Expectations	2
Sexual discrimination/ harassment	2
Pay	2
Vaccination requirements	1
Culture and diversity issues	1
Onboarding was poor	1
Individual attention	1
Can't use personally-owned vehicle (POV)	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to QID181 personal difficulties encountered while serving as a volunteer firefighter sorted by frequency.

QID182 (If QID151 = Volunteer Firefighter). Optional: Please describe any other positive or negative aspects of serving as a volunteer firefighter that would help us understand your experience. _____

Positive or Negative Aspects of Volunteer Firefighting	Frequency
Positive Experience Overall	42
Don't Feel Valued by or Compared to Career Firefighters	26
Balancing Responsibilities	17
Success Strategies	16
Financial	16
Difficulty with Leadership	15
Training	11
Better Resources	11
Recruitment	9
Focus on New Volunteers	6
Resources for Department	6
Training Aspects	5
Community	5
Leadership	4
Culture	3
Want More Activity/Engagement	3
State/Regional	2
COVID Vaccination Status of Self or Department Members	2
Age Impacting Ability to Serve	2
Worried About Losing Volunteers to Corrective Feedback	1
Distance of Calls	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to where respondents received Firefighter 1 training sorted by frequency.

Q72 (If QID151 = Chief). Lastly, are there any aspects of retention that we have not addressed that you think would be helpful to your department? _____

*Due to the length and variety of answers to this question, this data is available upon request.*

Training: Volunteer Firefighters

QID252. The Volunteer Firefighter Workgroup has recognized that training schedules and locations may be important to some firefighters so are asking for your input about training.

QID253. Where did you receive your initial Firefighter 1 training?

Choices (select one): "With my Fire Agency", "With other Fire Agencies through a regional training association", "Department of Public Safety Standards and Training", "Community College", "Other (write in)"

Figure QID253: Where Respondents Received Firefighter 1 Training
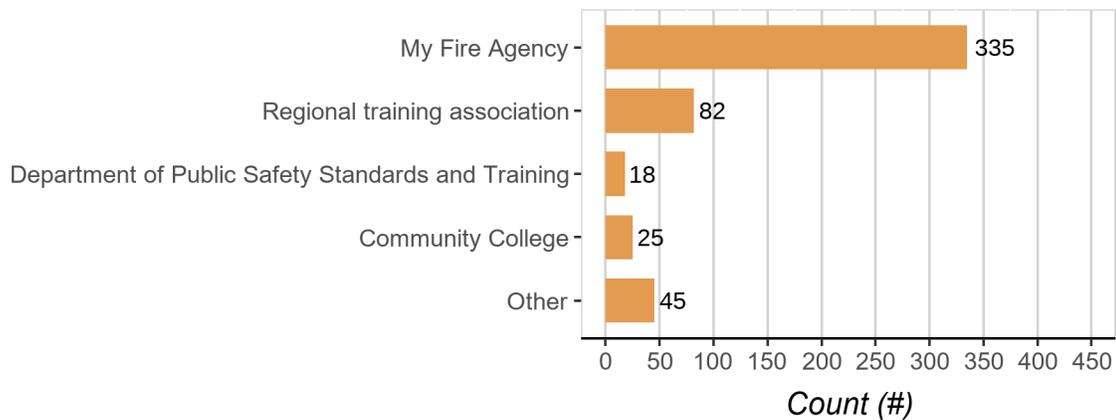
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of where respondents received Firefighter 1 training.

Table QID253: "Other" Responses

"Other" Responses	Frequency
Other or previous agency	20
No FF1 or certified wildland	15
Inter-agency training	5
Some online	3

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to where respondents received Firefighter 1 training sorted by frequency.

Q85. Was getting to the initial Firefighter 1 training location convenient for you?

Choices (select one): "Yes, very convenient", "Somewhat convenient", "Somewhat inconvenient", "Very inconvenient"

Figure Q85: Ranked Convenience of Firefighter 1 Training Location
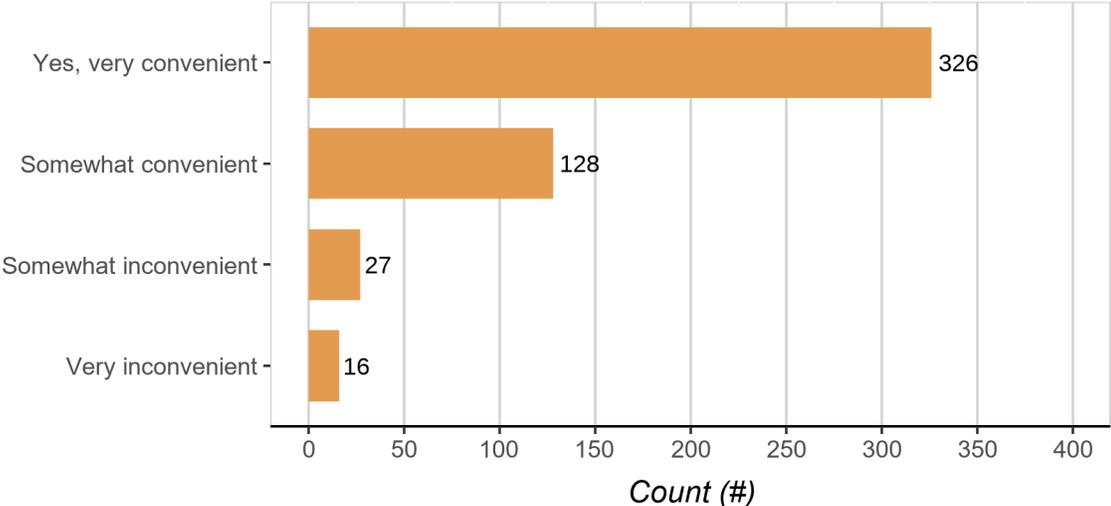
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing the ranked convenience of respondents' Firefighter 1 training location.

QID256. If a certification level was available that was less physically demanding/time intensive than Firefighter 1, would you have pursued that certification instead of Firefighter 1?

Choices (select one): "Yes", "No", "Unsure"

**Figure QID256: If Respondent Would Have Pursued
Less Demanding Certification than Firefighter 1**
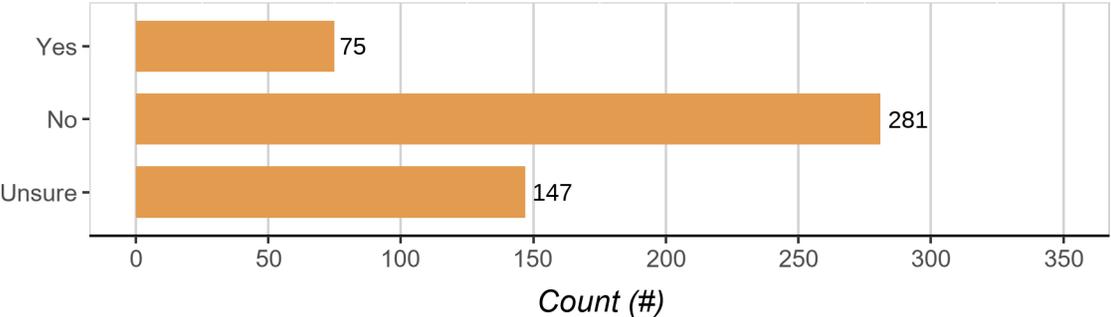
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of whether respondents would have pursued a less demanding certification than Firefighter 1.

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QID254. What is your preferred provider for maintenance training?

Choices (select one): "Fire Agency", "With other Fire Agencies through a regional training association", "Department of Public Safety Standards and Training", "Community College", "Other (write in) _____"

Figure QID254: Preferred Provider for Maintenance Training
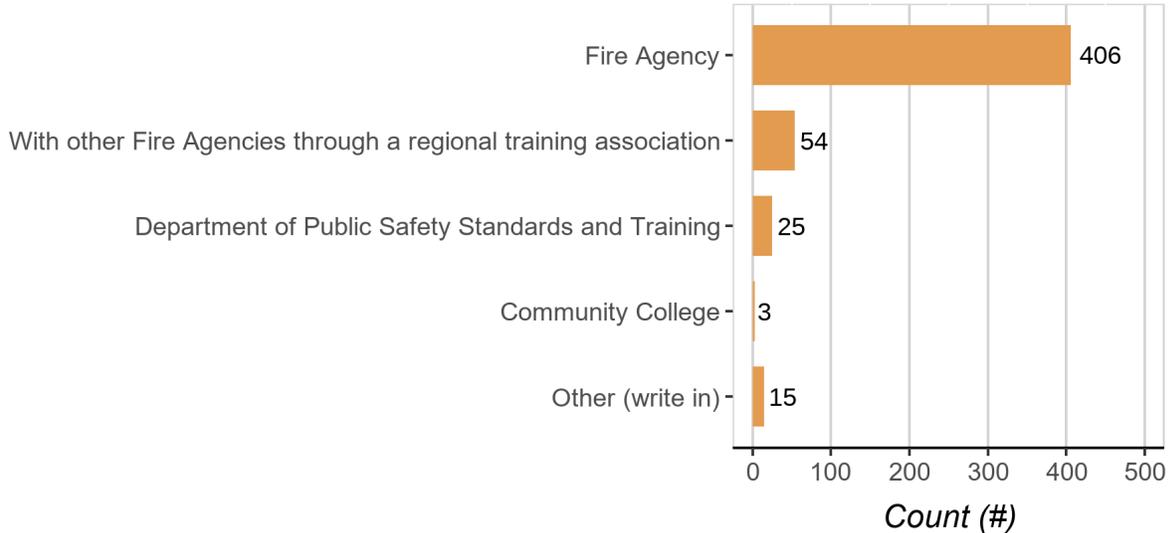
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondents' preferred provider for maintenance training.

Table QID254: "Other" Responses

"Other" Responses	Frequency
No preference	6
Online preference	2
Like multiple options	2
Combination agency and regional	1
Within department but insufficient advanced knowledge	1
With other departments	1
Do own physical training	1

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing "other" responses to respondent's preferred provider for maintenance training sorted by frequency.

QID255. What is your preference for maintenance training if the number of training hours remains the same?

Choices (select one): "Once per month", "Twice per month", "Academy style (example: onsite two-month training at DPSST)", "Once or twice per week"

Figure QID255: Preferred Maintenance Training Schedule if the Number of Training Hours Remains the Same
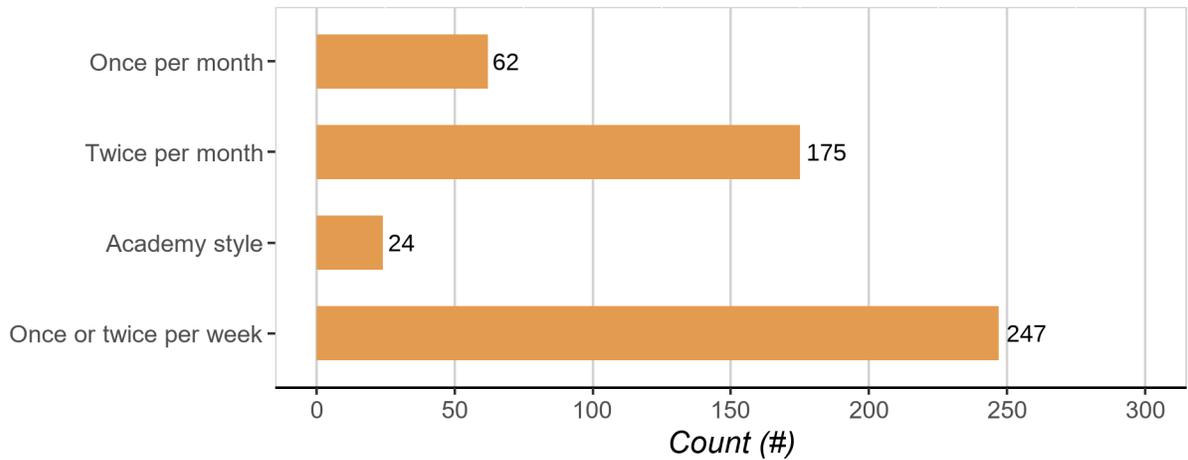
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondent's preferred maintenance training schedule if the number of training hours remains the same.

Demographics

QID183. This last section of the survey is on demographics. These responses will provide insight into how representative Oregon's fire service is of the state's population. No department members will see survey responses. This link is routed directly to the Legislative Policy and Research Office. We will not report or publish individual or department survey responses. All reporting will be regional or combined in such a way to protect respondents' anonymity.

QID163. Please enter the zip code where your current department is located. _____

Chief n=207
Volunteer Firefighter n=496

Figure QID163: Respondents by Department County

Volunteer Firefighter Respondents by County

Sum of responses

- >45
- 35
- 25
- 10
- 1
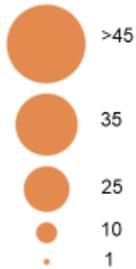
No Respondents

Notes: County derived by calculating intersection of ZIP code centroid with 2020 Census counties.

Not all respondents provided ZIP code. Of 650 firefighter responses 496 were able to be mapped.
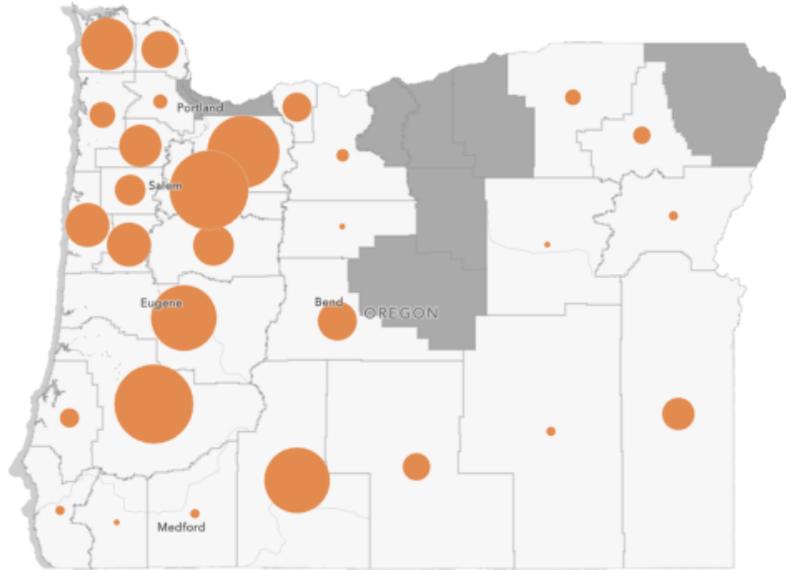
Chief Respondents by County
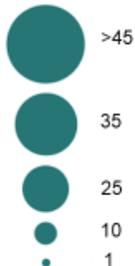
Sum of responses

- >45
- 35
- 25
- 10
- 1

Notes: County derived by calculating intersection of ZIP code centroid with 2020 Census counties.

Not all respondents provided ZIP code. Of 285 chief responses 207 were able to be mapped.
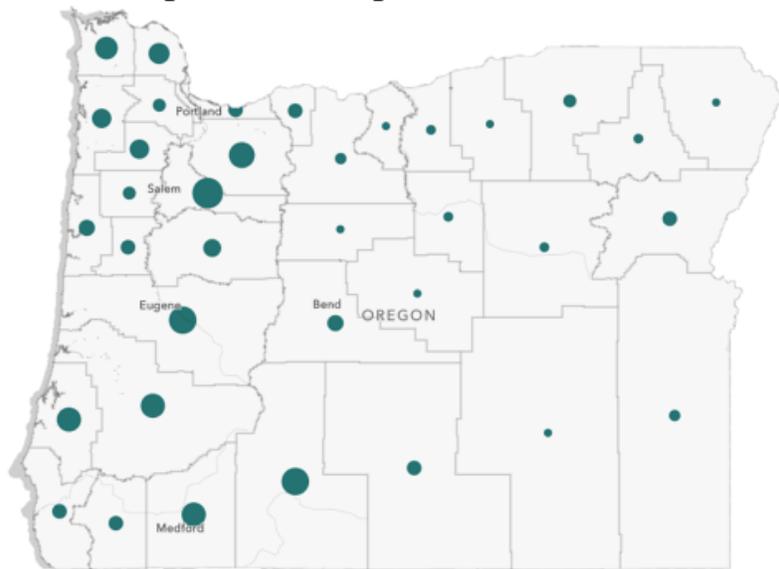
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: County population distribution maps showing the county where respondents report their department is located based on zip code and distinguished by chief or volunteer.

QID184. How old are you? _____

Chief mean age = 53.0 years, min=25 years, max=81 years, n=206
Volunteer Firefighter mean age = 43.4 years, min=16 years, max=78 years, n =494

Figure QID184: Age of Respondents
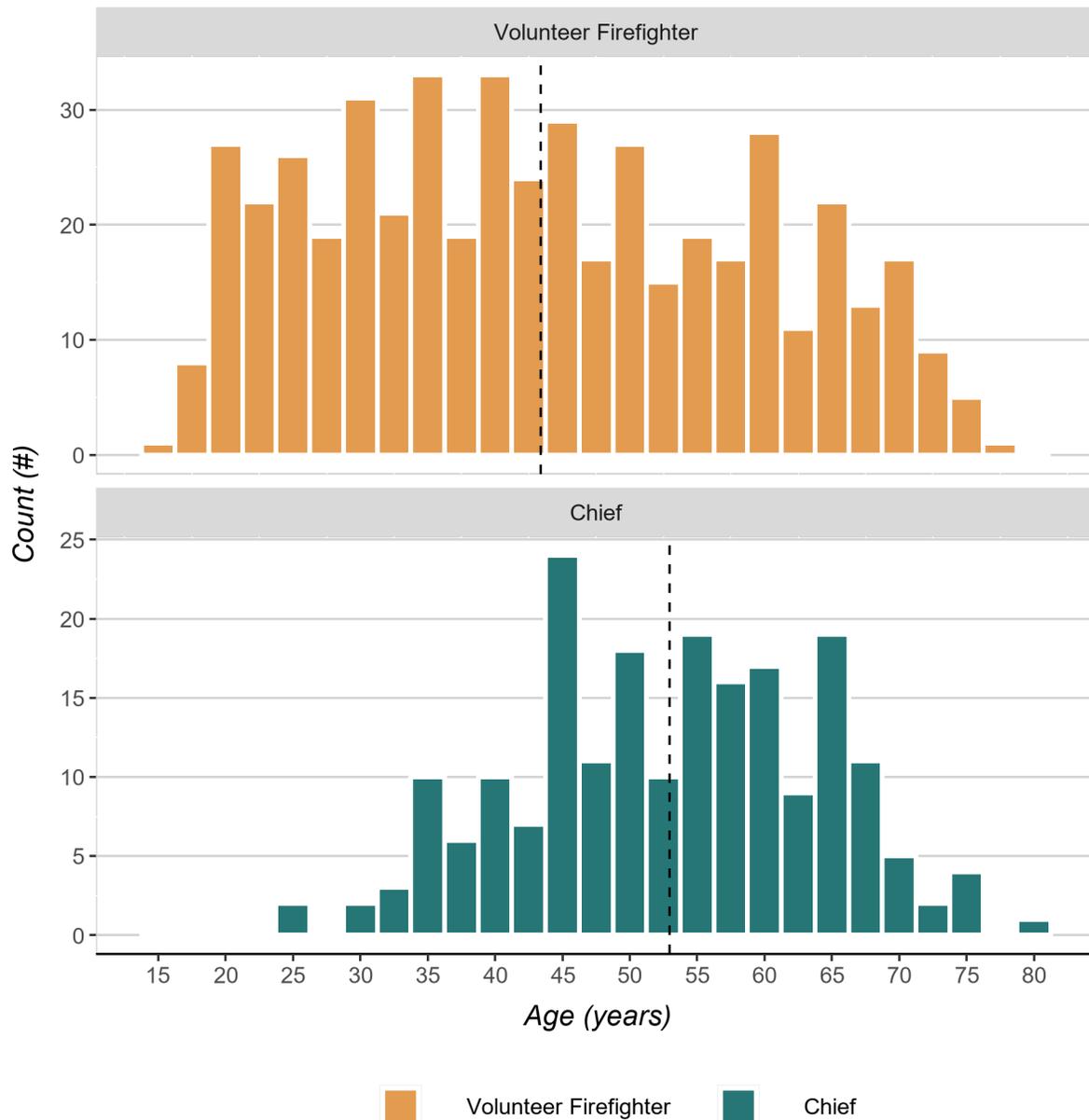
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Column charts showing distribution of respondents age in years distinguished by chief or volunteer.

QID185. How do you describe your gender identity?

Choices (select one): "Male", "Female", "Non-binary", "Prefer to self-describe"

Chief n=206
Volunteer Firefighter n=496

Table QID185: Respondent Description of Gender Identity

Gender Identification	Volunteer Firefighters	Chiefs
Female	82	6
Male	411	199
Non-binary	2	1
Prefer to self-describe	1	0
Did not identify	149	44

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing respondent's self-described gender identify distinguished by chief or volunteer.

QID186. Which categories do you identify with? (check all that apply)

Choices (select all that apply): "White", "Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin", "Black or African American", "Asian", "American Indian or Alaska Native", "Middle Eastern or North African", "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander", "Some other race, ethnicity or origin", "⊗Unknown", "⊗Prefer not to say"

Chief n = 206
Volunteer Firefighters n = 500

Table QID186: Respondent Self-Identification by Race, Ethnicity, or National Origin

Race, Ethnicity, or Origin	Frequency
White	637
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin	35
Black or African American	3
Asian	11
American Indian or Alaska Native	21
Middle Eastern or North African	2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	8
Some other race, ethnicity, or origin	8
Unknown	6
Prefer not to say	29

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing respondent's self-identification by race, ethnicity, or national origin.

QID187. Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces, National Guard, or military reserves?

Choices (select all that apply): "Yes, I have served on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard.", "Yes, I have served on active duty in the National Guard or military reserves.", "Yes, I have served in the National Guard or military reserves but was not called to active duty.", "Yes, I am currently in the National Guard or military reserves.", "⊗No."

Chief n = 206
Volunteer Firefighters n = 504

**Table QID187: Respondent Service in the U.S. Armed Forces,
National Guard, or Military Reserves**

Veteran Service Status	Frequency	
	Volunteer Firefighters	**Chiefs**
Yes, I have served on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard.	72	35
Yes, I have served on active duty in the National Guard or military reserves.	15	3
Yes, I have served in the National Guard or military reserves but was not called to active duty.	9	2
Yes, I am currently in the National Guard or military reserves.	5	0
Unique "Yes" respondents	88	38
No.	411	168

Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Table showing respondent's veteran service status.

QID188. What is your highest level of education?

Choices (select one): "Some high school", "High school graduate, GED, or equivalent", "Some college", "Trade/technical/vocational training", "Associate degree", "Bachelor's degree", "Master's degree", "Professional degree (i.e., law, medical, dental, etc.)", "Doctorate degree"

Figure QID188: Respondents' Highest Level of Education
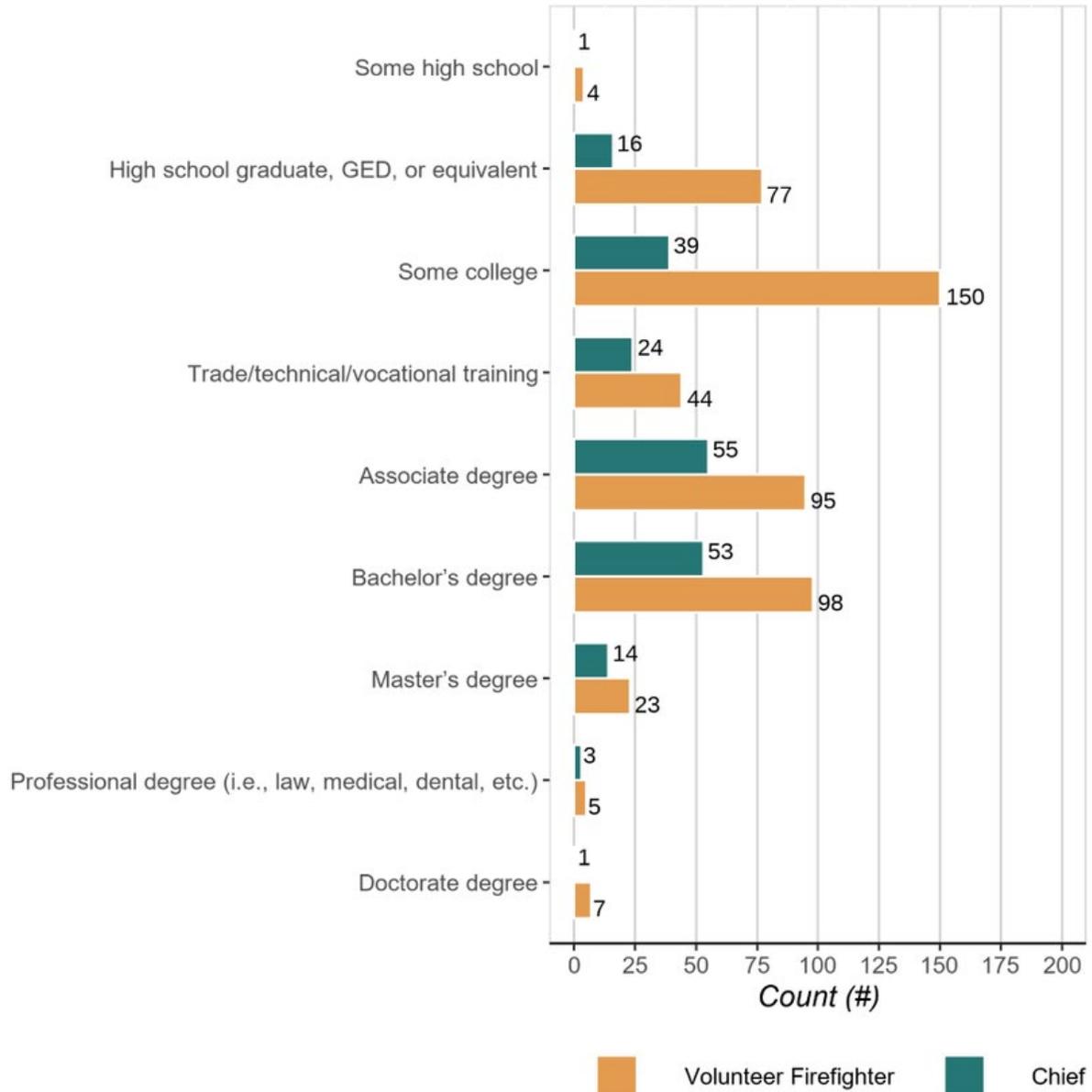
Source: LPRO
Data: LPRO
Notes: Bar chart showing distribution of respondents' highest level of education distinguished by chief or volunteer.

APPENDIX B: RATING OF OPTIONS TO IMPROVE RETENTION

Table B-1: Options to Improve Retention Rated by Impact

Option Category	Specific Option	Volunteer Firefighter (n=526)	Chief (n=202)	Percentage Assigning Moderate or Major Impact
Financial or Scholarship	Compensation	27%	36%	28%
Financial or Scholarship	State tax deductions, benefits, or credits	24%	40%	27%
Department Resources	Fire Station improvements	24%	30%	25%
Department Resources	More firefighters for your agency	19%	27%	21%
Better Onboarding	A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members	20%	15%	17%
Financial or Scholarship	College scholarships	17%	26%	17%
Financial or Scholarship	Employer credit for service time spent at calls	15%	27%	17%
Flexibility in Training	Hold essential training sessions on multiple days	16%	20%	16%
Department Resources	Apparatus	14%	20%	16%
Department Resources	Firefighting equipment	15%	17%	16%
Department Resources	Personal protective equipment (including clothing, jackets, boots, hats, and gloves)	15%	17%	15%
Better Onboarding	Having department leadership hold more regular and personal check-ins with new volunteers	17%	12%	13%

Appendix B: Table of Rated Impact of Retention Options

Option Category	Specific Option	Volunteer Firefighter (n=526)	Chief (n=202)	Percentage Assigning Moderate or Major Impact
Flexibility in Training	Offer online training for nonessential training	14%	16%	13%
Better Onboarding	Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life	14%	13%	12%
Training of Leadership	Having department leadership actively participate in training to lead by example	14%	8%	12%
Flexibility in Training	Offer "micro-volunteer" opportunities (1 day or 1 week a month) for those that are unable to commit to traditional volunteer time commitments	12%	19%	12%
Better Onboarding	Leadership providing a clearer understanding to new volunteers of the monthly time commitment, goals, and responsibilities that are expected so they're on the same page	15%	9%	12%
Training of Leadership	Enrolling rising volunteers in an officer candidate course to gain leadership skills and training	14%	7%	11%
Training of Leadership	Training leadership at your agency	13%	8%	11%
Department Resources	Radios	10%	13%	10%
Training of Leadership	Replacing leaders at your agency	13%	5%	10%
Flexibility in Training	Build the essential training calendar around members with less flexibility in their schedule	11%	8%	9%

Appendix B: Table of Rated Impact of Retention Options

Option Category	Specific Option	Volunteer Firefighter (n=526)	Chief (n=202)	Percentage Assigning Moderate or Major Impact
Combination Departments	Providing department leadership with training focused on managing combination departments	12%	5%	9%
Department Culture	Allow and encourage new and younger members to own specific projects and tasks	12%	8%	9%
Combination Departments	Mentorships with career members for volunteers who are career-bound	9%	10%	8%
Department Culture	Break up cliques and groups by assigning members to workgroups they wouldn't normally choose	10%	5%	8%
Financial or Scholarship	Disability insurance	7%	13%	8%
Reduce Training or Physical Requirements	Fewer required training hours	6%	17%	8%
Flexibility in Training	Offer virtual reality training modules	7%	12%	7%
Combination Departments	Holding joint trainings with career and volunteer staff	9%	3%	7%
Training of Leadership	Following a set of national leadership standards and core competencies	8%	2%	6%
Department Culture	Holding cross-generational training to help members and leaders of different ages better understand each other	8%	3%	6%
Improve Feedback	Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department	8%	2%	5%

Appendix B: Table of Rated Impact of Retention Options

Option Category	Specific Option	Volunteer Firefighter (n=526)	Chief (n=202)	Percentage Assigning Moderate or Major Impact
Reduce Training or Physical Requirements	Fewer hours required per month	4%	9%	5%
Reduce Training or Physical Requirements	More training (please specify)	6%	1%	5%
Department Culture	Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year	7%	3%	4%
Improve Feedback	Conduct "stay" interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department	7%	0%	4%
Department Resources	iPads	5%	7%	4%
Flexibility in Training	Training content needs to be updated	4%	6%	4%
Department Culture	Other (please specify)	5%	1%	3%
Better Onboarding	Leadership making it clear up front the minimum length of service they expect of new recruits	5%	4%	3%
Flexibility in Training	Other (please specify)	3%	2%	3%
Training of Leadership	Training leadership at your Fire Defense Board	3%	3%	2%

Appendix B: Table of Rated Impact of Retention Options

Option Category	Specific Option	Volunteer Firefighter (n=526)	Chief (n=202)	Percentage Assigning Moderate or Major Impact
Combination Departments	Other (please specify)	3%	1%	2%
Improve Feedback	Set up a comment box for anonymous feedback and/or create dedicated "office hours" to provide members a clear opportunity to express their opinions	4%	0%	2%
Training of Leadership	Replacing leaders at your Fire Defense Board	2%	1%	2%
Reduce Training or Physical Requirements	Fewer days required for conflagration response	2%	4%	2%
Improve Feedback	Create a Chief People Officer at the department who constantly takes the temperature of members' happiness and satisfaction	3%	0%	2%
Training of Leadership	Providing department leadership with sales and marketing training	2%	1%	1%
Reduce Training or Physical Requirements	Fewer physical requirements	1%	4%	1%
Improve Feedback	Create a database of former volunteers to stay in touch with them and try and re-engage on future opportunities	2%	0%	1%
Improve Feedback	Make it easier to compare your department's retention rate and efforts with other departments	2%	1%	1%

APPENDIX C: PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION

The following slides were presented to the Oregon Legislative Firefighter Capacity Workgroup on August 25, 2022.

Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Survey

Laura Wolton, Research Analyst

Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO)

Outline

- Provide an overview of the survey
- Recruitment of volunteer firefighters
- Retainment of volunteer firefighters

Survey Overview

- Oregon State Fire Marshal and Oregon Legislative Firefighter Capacity Workgroup

- Distributed to ~300 Chiefs

- Answered by 285 Chiefs(!) and 650 Volunteer Firefighters

- Most answers were requested but only some were required

Recruitment Summary

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ARE MOTIVATED BY:

- Pathway to become firefighters or EMTs
- Protect the community
- Smaller group wants to form social connections

RECRUITING IN PRACTICE

- Vol FFs suggest more Veterans' organizations, National Guard, and rec centers
- Only 1/3 have standardized recruitment process

TYPICAL NEW RECRUIT

- Laborer/construction, student, or retired

## WHAT MIGHT WIN AN INTERESTED PERSON OVER?

- More flexibility in training schedules   138 medium to high impact
- More flexibility in training or physical requirements   120
- Financial, scholarship, or insurance incentives   119
- Recognition or credit from employers   110
- College credit   101

Retention Questions

Why people might have left?
- We ask about others but also reasons they may have considered it

What remedial steps would impact retention most?
- 3 detailed lists with "Other" option

Actions/Impact
- What are the actions that would help? Rate their potential impact.

Reasons Leave Volunteer
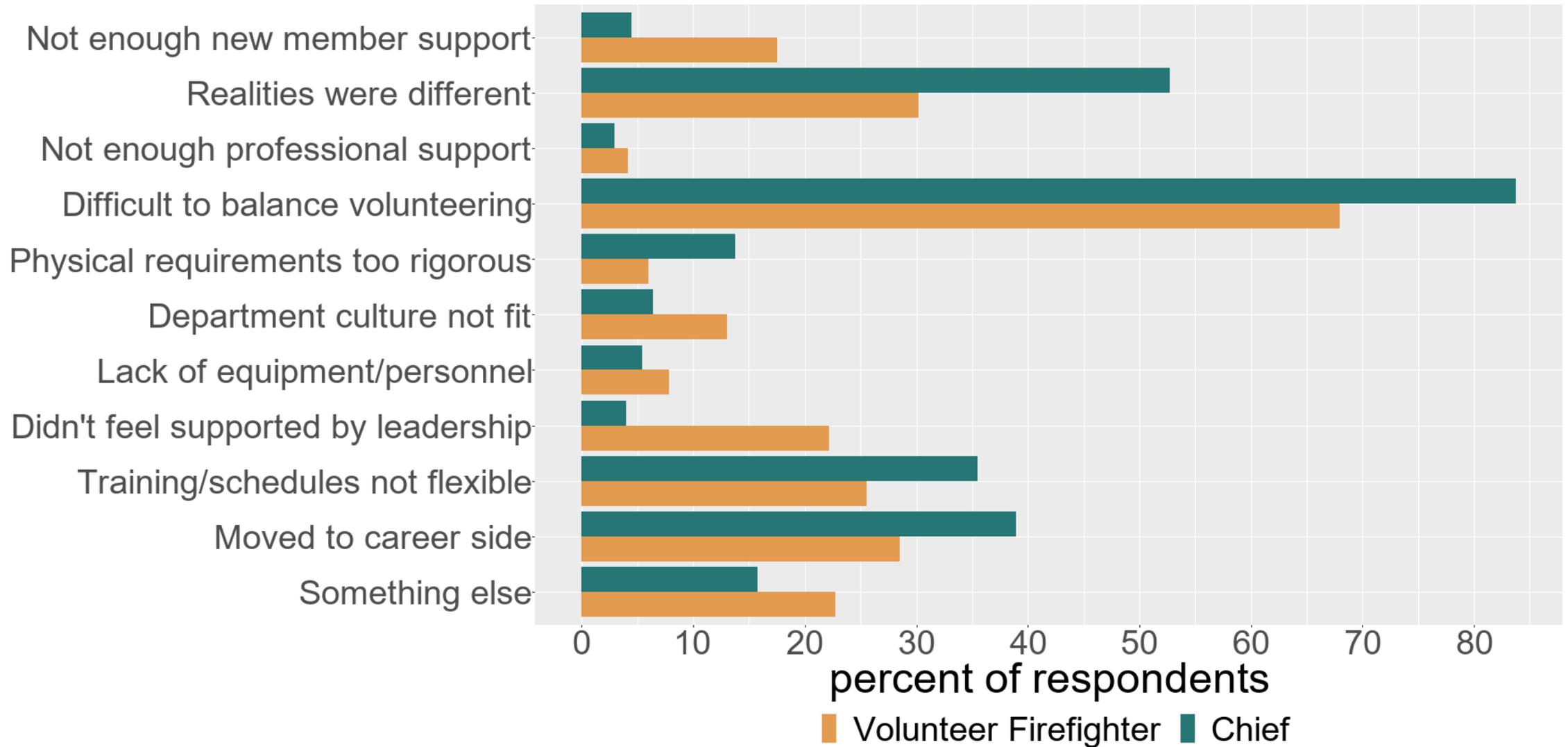
Retention Difficulties

- Difficult to balance volunteering with other responsibilities
- Realities were different
- Training/schedules not flexible
- Not enough new member support
- Didn't feel supported by leadership
- Department culture not a fit
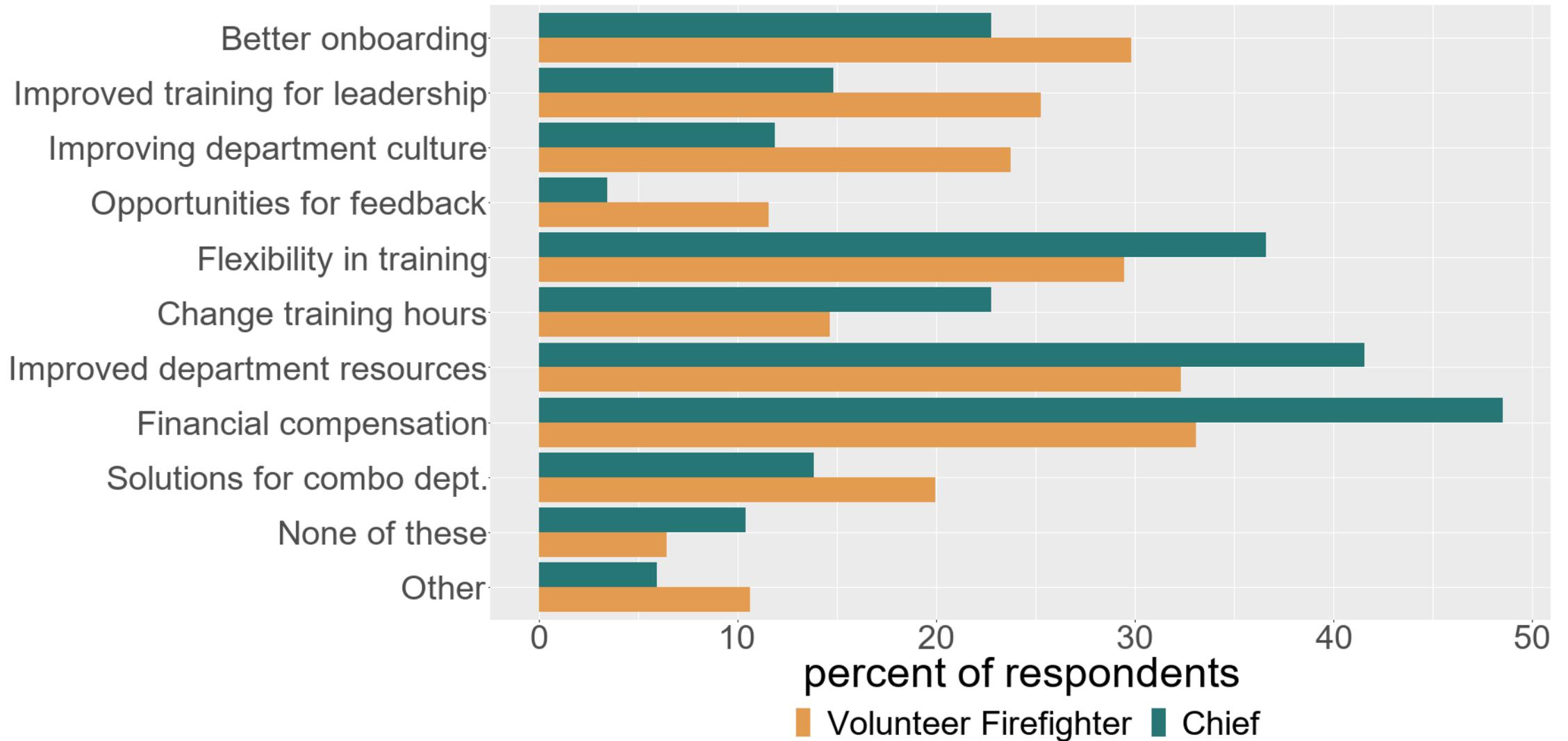
Retention Solution Categories

- Financial compensation or scholarships
- Improved department resources
- Flexibility in training and physical requirements
- Better onboarding
- Improved training or replacement of leadership
- Improving department culture
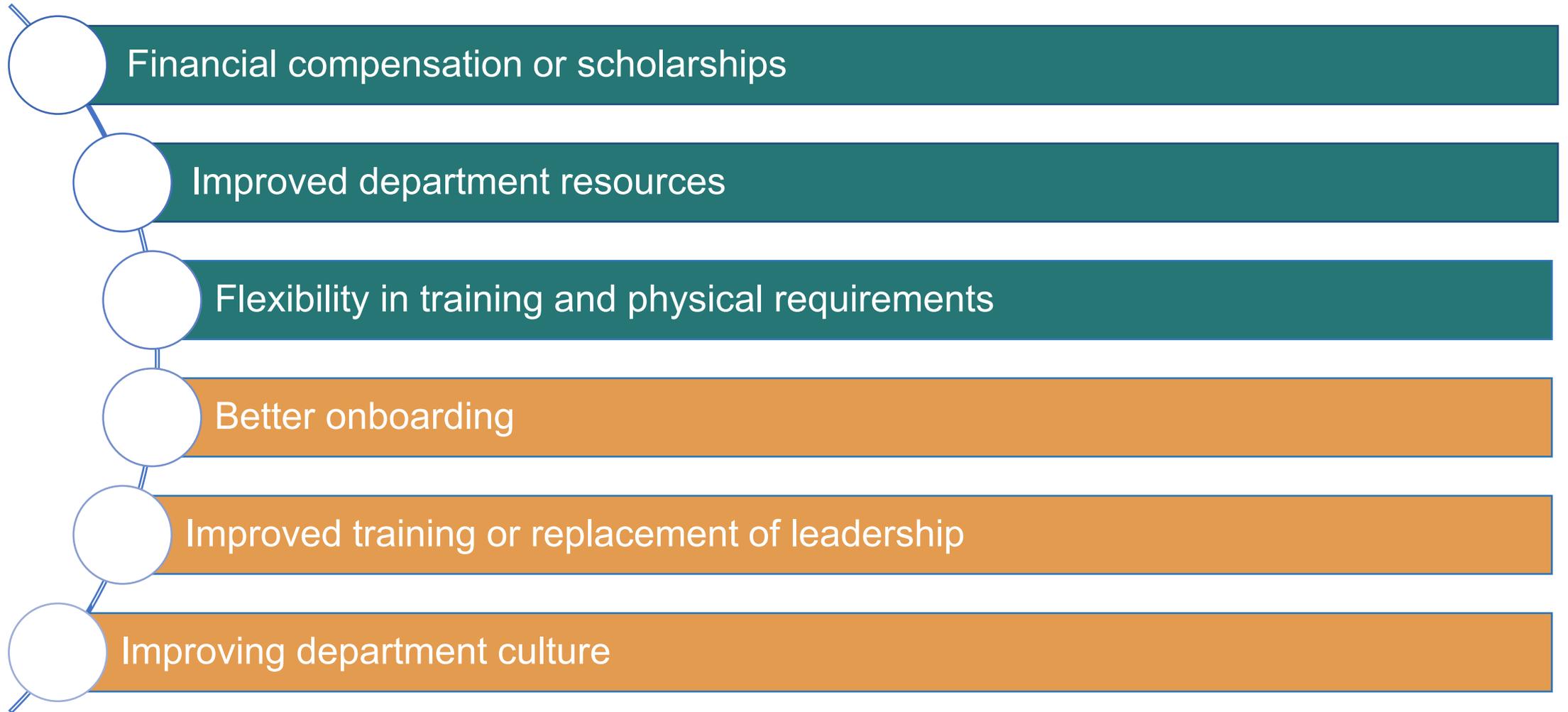
Difficult to Balance Volunteering with Other Responsibilities

From Chief Recruitment

From Better Onboarding

Flexibility in training schedules
Recognition of employers
College credit
Providing advice on balance

Potential to increase balance with other responsibilities

Realities of Volunteering were Different Than Expected

From Chief Recruitment

From Better Onboarding

Recruiting process
Better onboarding

Potential to ground expectations and get buy-in on goals

10

Retention Solution: Financial Compensation

Financial or Scholarship Compensation	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Compensation	5	54	148	202
State tax deductions, benefits, or credits	5	65	134	199
College scholarships	12	60	67	127
Employer credit for service time spent at calls	6	54	71	125
Disability insurance	7	32	23	55
Other	0	2	11	13

Retention Solution: Improved Department Resources

Improved Dept. Resources

Resource	
Personal protective equipment	
Firefighting equipment	
Radios	
iPads	
Apparatus	
Fire station improvements	
More firefighters	
Other	

percent of respondents

■ Volunteer Firefighter   ■ Chief
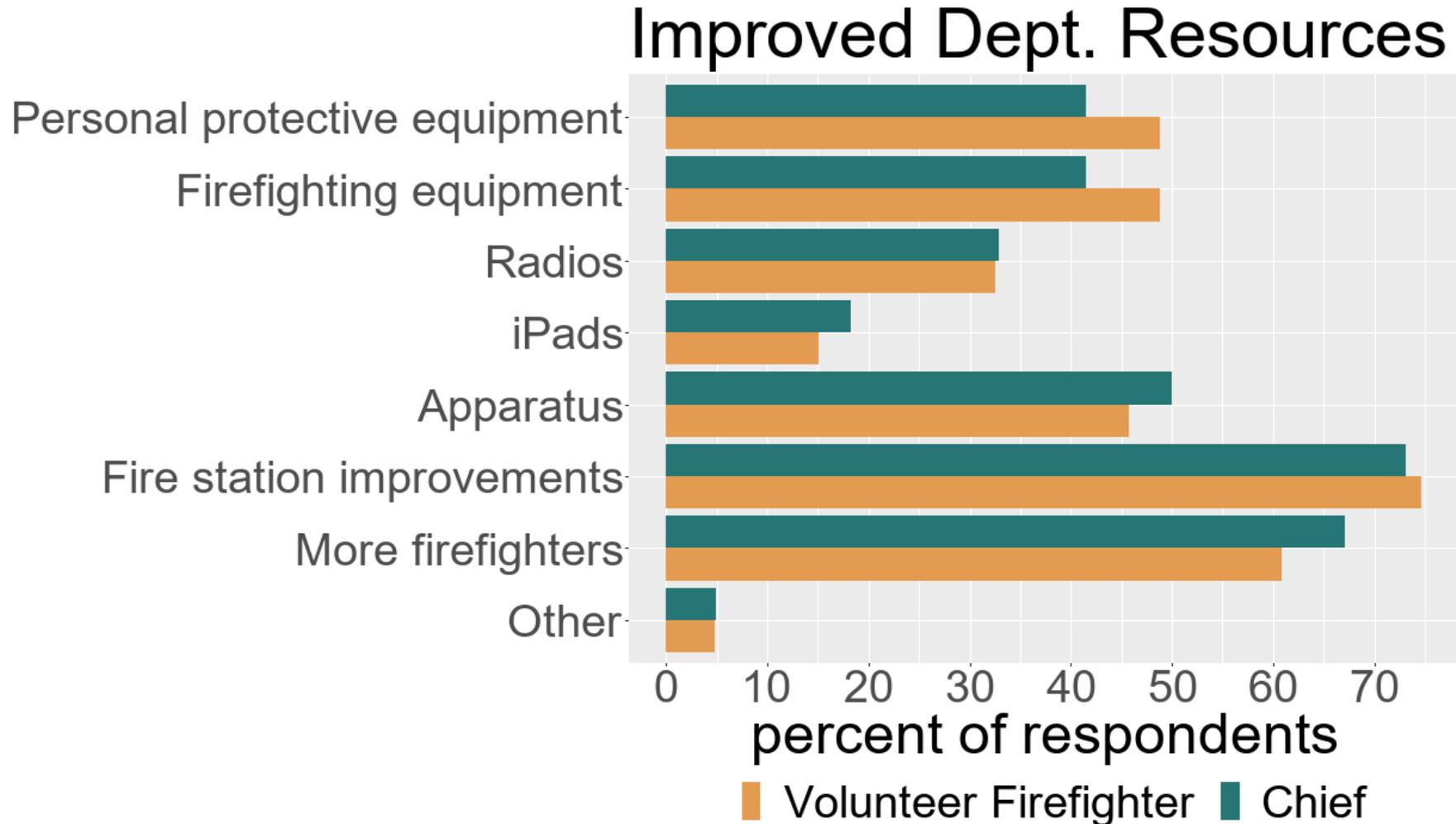
Training/Schedules Not Flexible:
Flexibility in Training or Requirements

Maintenance training preferences:

Hours: 2x/month or 1 to 2x/week, Require fewer

Provider: Fire Agency

FF1 Alternative: 15% "Yes", 29% "Unsure"

FF1 Training Location: Very or somewhat convenient


Flexibility in Training
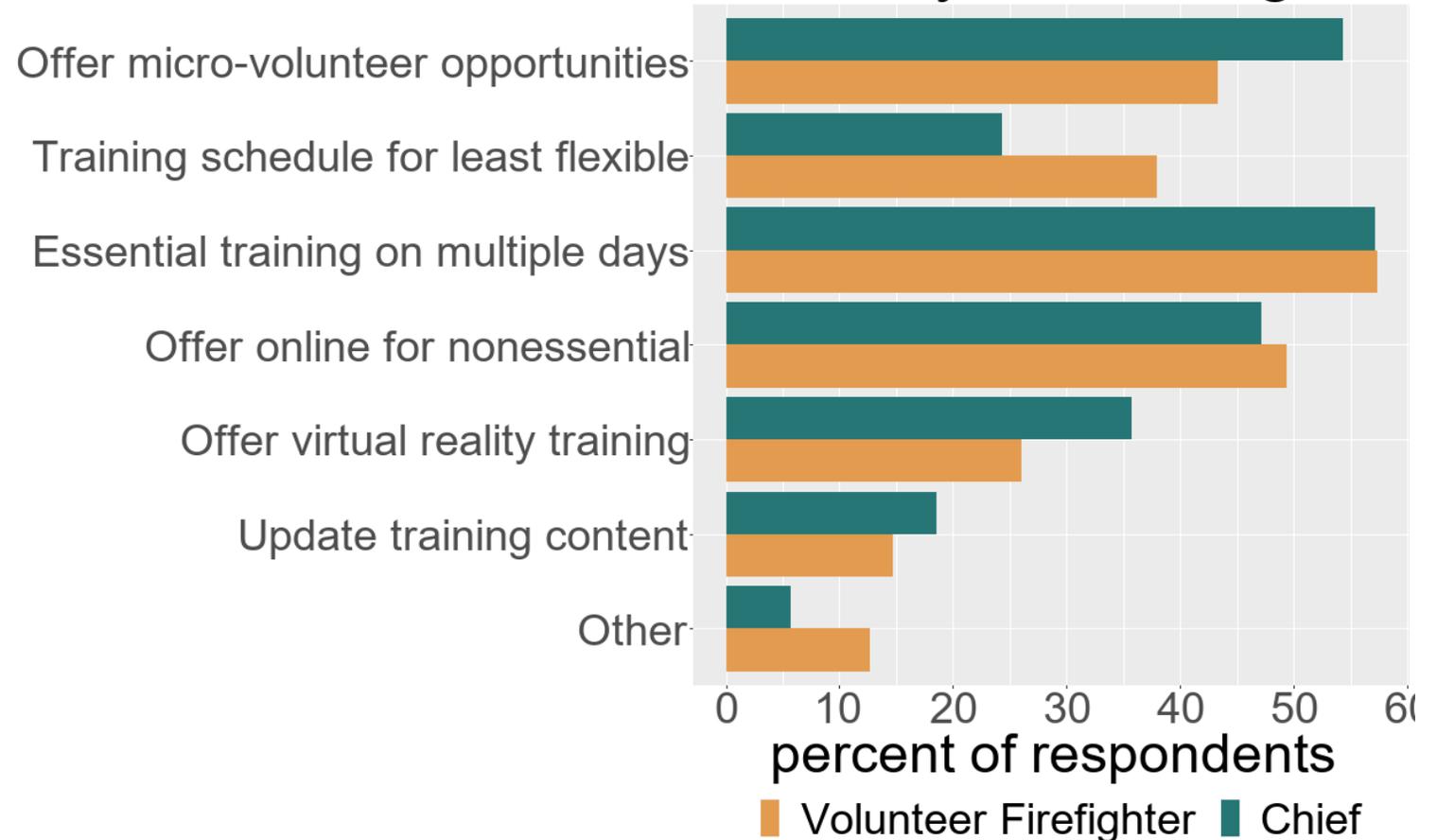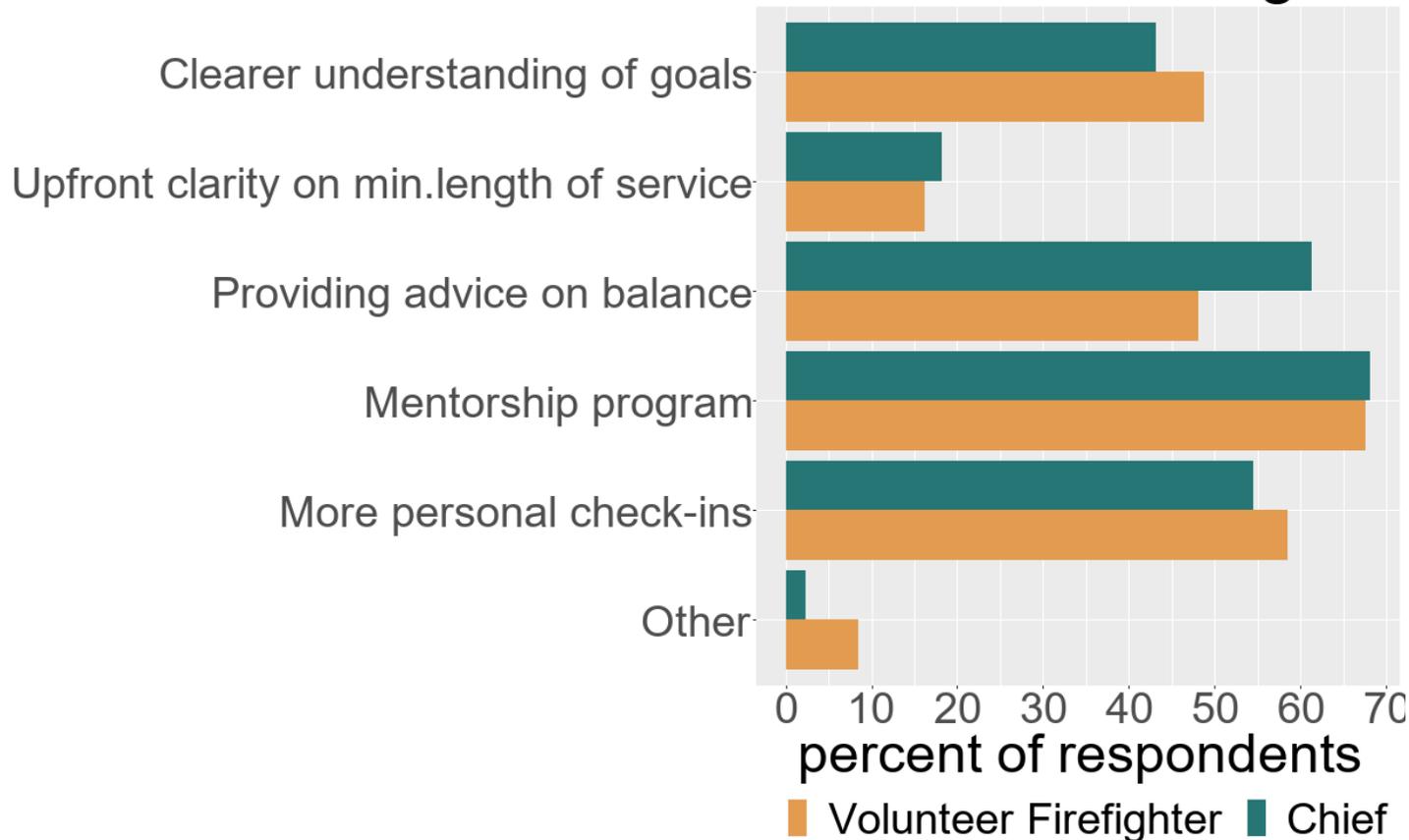
Didn't Feel Supported:
Improved Training for or Replacement of Leadership

Improved Training for Leadership Options	Slight Effect	Moderate Effect	Major	Moderate +Major
Officer candidate course	4	44	38	82
National leadership standards	1	26	16	42
Sales and marketing training	1	6	4	10
Lead by example	3	17	70	87
Training agency leadership	7	25	52	77
Replacing agency leadership	5	16	55	71
Training Fire Defense Board	4	5	12	17
Replacing Fire Defense Board	0	6	7	13
Other	0	2	11	13

Department Culture Not a Fit:
Improve Culture

Other	#
Expectations don't match	7
Social activities	4
Leadership	7
Combination solutions	5
Improve communication	2
Bullies	1

Improve Culture

Cross-generational training
Encourage young member ownership
Assign to workgroups
Giving out awards
Other

percent of respondents

Volunteer Firefighter   Chief
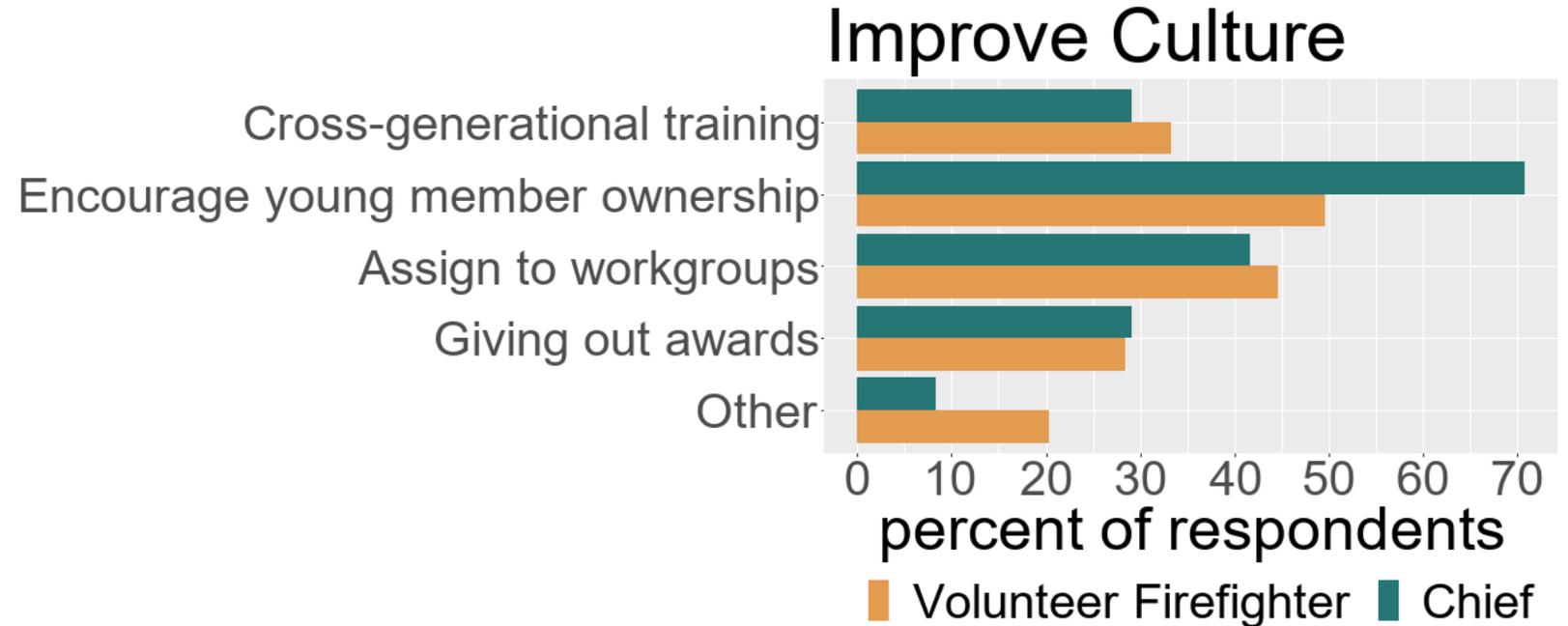
Combination Department

Solutions for Combination Departments	Slight Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Moderate + Major
Focused training for combination	3	33	35	68
Joint trainings	2	28	25	53
Mentorships for career-bound	5	36	23	59
Other	1	3	14	17

Themes in Survey

RECRUITMENT

- Goal alignment
- Ground expectations

NEW RECRUITS MAY NEED:

- Credit from employer/college to balance responsibilities
- Mentoring program (for combination pair career with volunteer)

TRAINING

- More flexibility means more options (multiple days offered, online offered for non-essential)
- Leadership training

Summary

- Skim the full draft

- Final report will include analysis

- Need input on potential regions to use that are larger than county

Chief Respondents by County

Chief

> 47

35

25

12

< 1

Notes: County derived by calculating intersection of ZIP code centroid with 2020 Census counties. Not all respondents provided ZIP code.