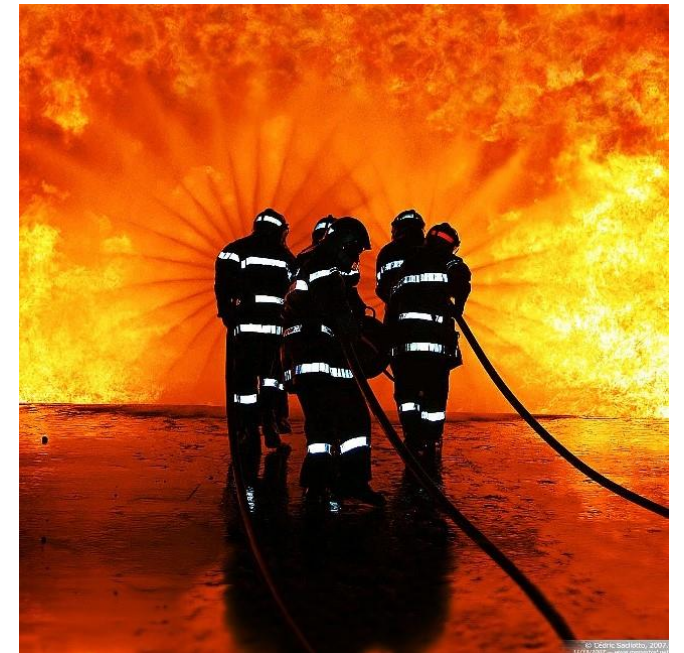


Work Group on Relief Association Conversions and Dissolutions

Fire Chief Survey

OCTOBER 3, 2018



Survey Information

- Survey Period: September 20 to October 1, 2018
- Sent to approximately 775 Fire Chiefs
- 293 Total Responses (37.8%)
 - *For comparison, a typical internal survey (i.e., a company's employees) averages a 30-40% response rate, while an external survey (i.e., surveying customers) averages a 10-15% response rate**
- 279 Complete Responses

* www.surveygizmo.com

Survey Questions

THE SURVEY CONTAINED A TOTAL OF **23** QUESTIONS.

DEPENDING ON THE ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION, A RESPONDENT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ANSWER ALL OF THE QUESTIONS.

Survey Questions

1. What is the name of the fire department you work for?
2. What is your position/title in the department?
 - Fire Chief
 - Assistant/Deputy Fire Chief
 - Other (please specify)
3. List the cities and/or townships with which the fire department is affiliated.
4. What is the size of the geographic area served by the fire department?
 - Less than 2 square miles
 - 2 to 9 square miles
 - 10 to 19 square miles
 - 20 to 29 square miles
 - 30 to 39 square miles
 - 40 to 49 square miles
 - 50 square miles or more
5. What is the approximate number of residents served by the fire department?
 - Under 100
 - 100 to 499
 - 500 to 999
 - 1,000 to 4,999
 - 5,000 to 9,999
 - 10,000 to 24,999
 - 25,000 to 49,999
 - 50,000 to 99,999
 - 100,000 to 249,999
 - 250,000 or more
6. Does the fire department have non-career firefighters? "Non-career" firefighters are sometimes referred to as "volunteer" or "paid on-call" firefighters.
 - Yes
 - No
7. Approximately how many non-career firefighters does the department have? Enter as a whole number.

Survey Questions

8. Does the fire department also have career firefighters? "Career" firefighters are sometimes referred to as "salaried" firefighters.
 Yes No
9. Approximately how many career firefighters does the department have? Enter as a whole number.
10. Do the non-career firefighters receive any compensation?
 Yes No, they receive no compensation other than reimbursement for expenses, if any
11. Are any of the non-career firefighters paid on an hourly basis?
 Yes No
12. What is the hourly rate? Round to the nearest whole dollar amount and enter a number only with no dollar sign.
13. Are any of the non-career firefighters paid on a per-call basis?
14. What is the per-call rate? Round to the nearest whole dollar amount and enter a number only with no dollar sign.
15. Retirement benefits are provided to the non-career firefighters through which retirement plan?
 an affiliated Volunteer Firefighter Relief Association Plan the PERA Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan
16. Does the department also have firefighters covered by the PERA Police and Fire Plan?
 Yes No

Survey Questions

17. Over the last year or two, has the city council or township board (or, if applicable, the board of a joint powers entity or independent nonprofit firefighting corporation) considered any of the following options? Check all that apply.
- Adding more career firefighters
 - Increasing the per-hour or per-call rate for non-career firefighters
 - I don't know
 - Reducing the reliance on non-career firefighters
 - None of the above
 - Any other changes similar to any of the above? Please describe:
18. Is the retirement plan covering non-career firefighters a defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan?
- A defined benefit plan**, also known as a lump sum or monthly service pension, where the benefit is based on years of service and the approved lump sum or monthly amount.
 - A defined contribution plan**, also known as a "split-the-pie" plan, where the benefit is based on contributions to an account and the investment earnings on that account.
19. Has the relief association board of trustees considered converting the relief association retirement plan from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
20. Please comment on the status of these discussions and the reason conversion is being considered:
21. Are you a member of the volunteer firefighter relief association with which the fire department is affiliated?
- Yes
 - No
22. From which retirement plan(s) will you receive a retirement benefit? Check all that apply.
- The PERA Police & Fire Plan
 - a Volunteer Firefighter Relief Association Plan
 - the PERA Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan
23. Please identify yourself and provide your contact information. *(optional)*
- Name
 - Email address
 - Phone number

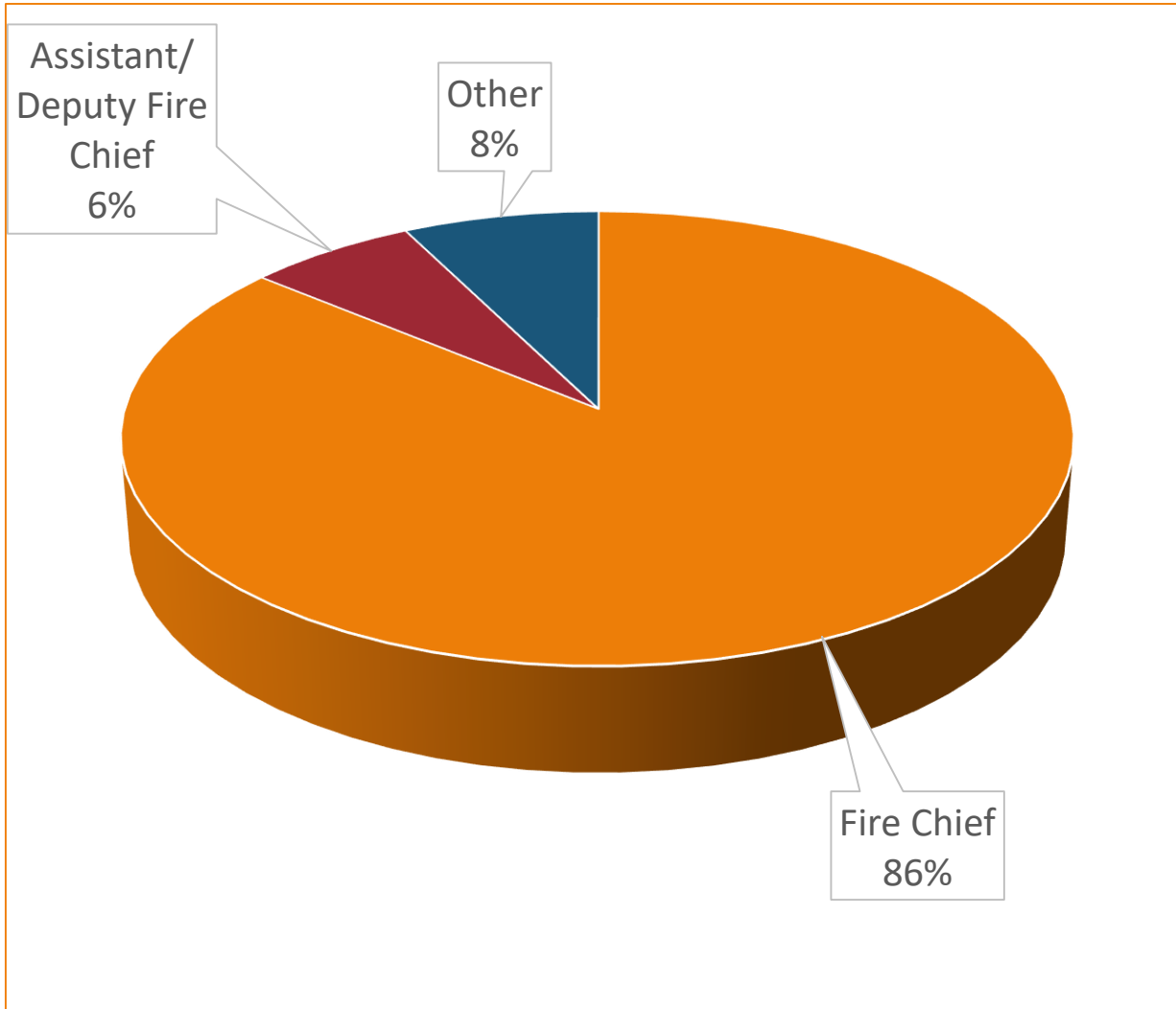
Survey Response Data

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS

Q1 What is the name of the fire department you work for?

293 responses *(a response was required for this question)*

Q2 What is your position/title in the department?

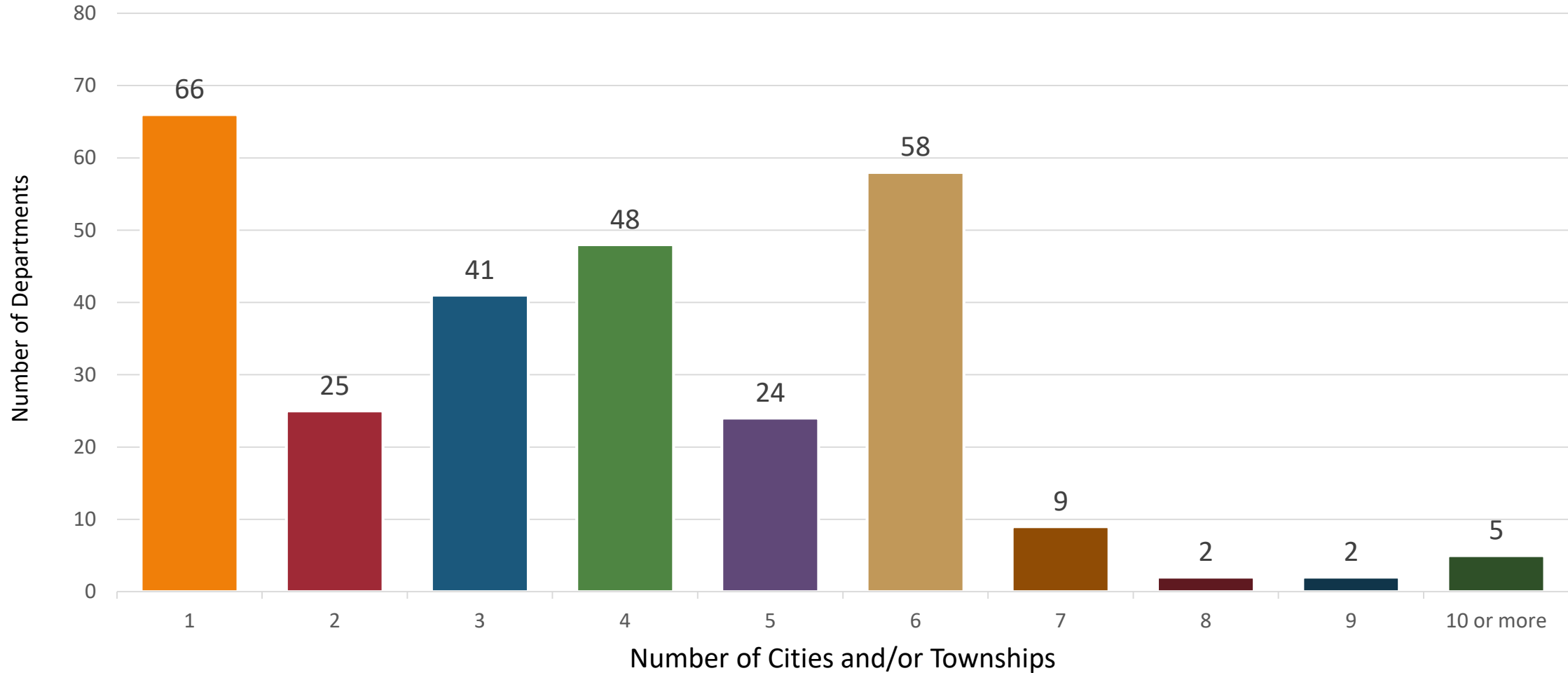


Respondents' text entries for "Other"

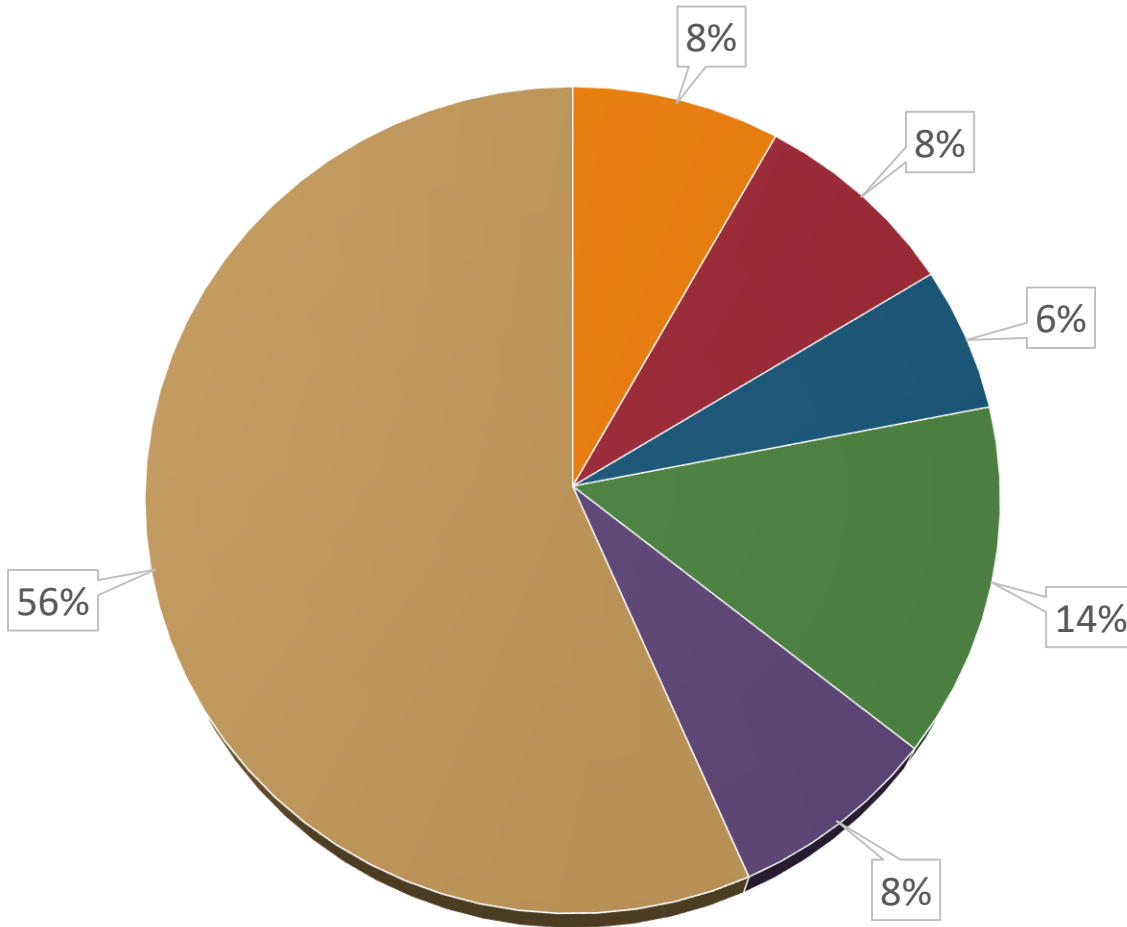
- *Secretary (4)*
- *Training Officer (3)*
- *Treasurer (3)*
- *Firefighter (2)*
- *Retired (2)*
- *Acting Fire Chief*
- *Admin*
- *Board chair, training officer*
- *Captain*
- *Deputy Director of Public Safety Fire Division*
- *Firefighter, relief president*
- *Officer*
- *Trustee, Former Fire Chief*

Q3 List the cities and/or townships with which the fire department is affiliated.

Number of Cities and/or Townships per Department

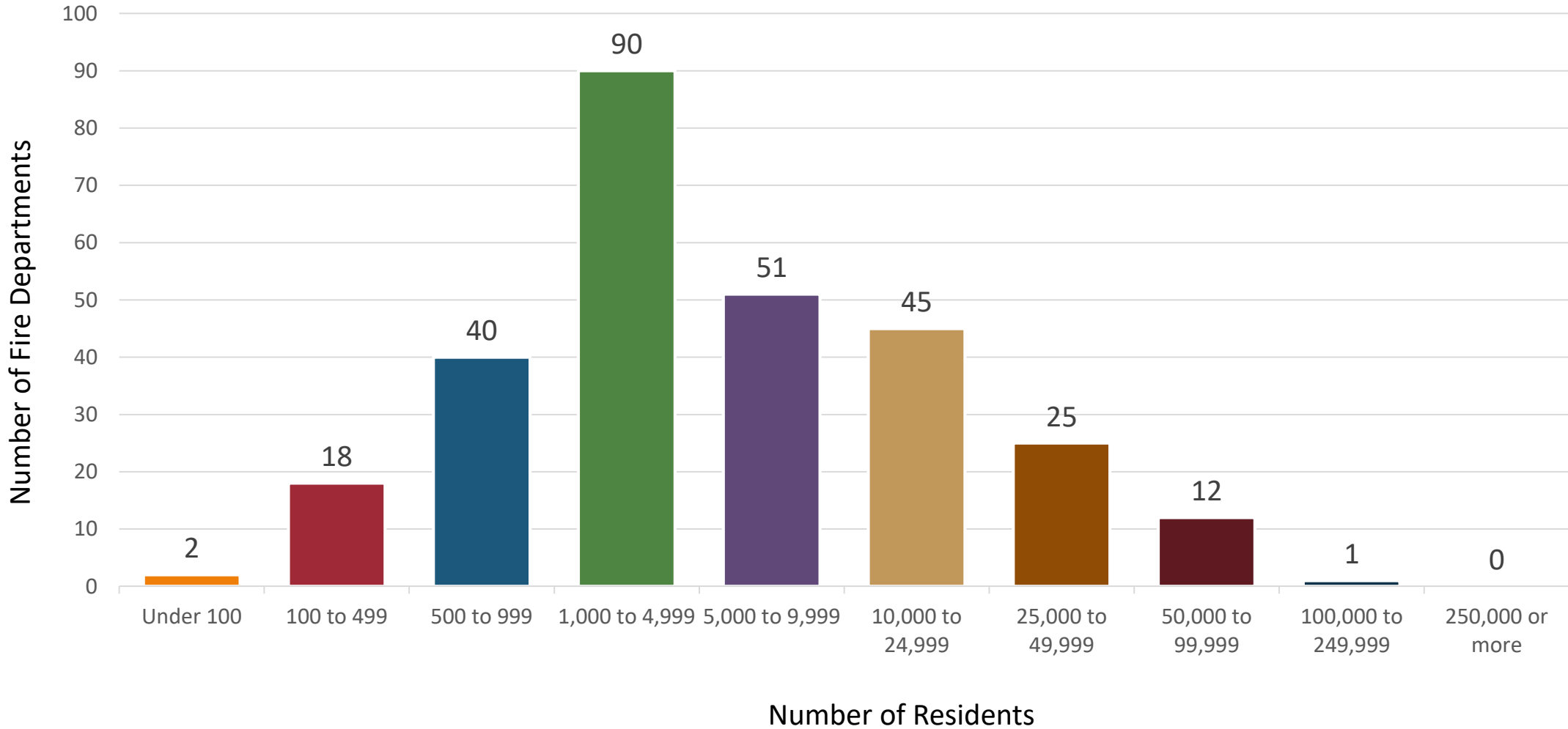


Q4 What is the size of the geographic area served by the fire department?



- Less than 10 square miles
- 10 to 19 square miles
- 20 to 29 square miles
- 30 to 39 square miles
- 40 to 49 square miles
- 50 square miles or more

Q5 What is the approximate number of residents served by the fire department?

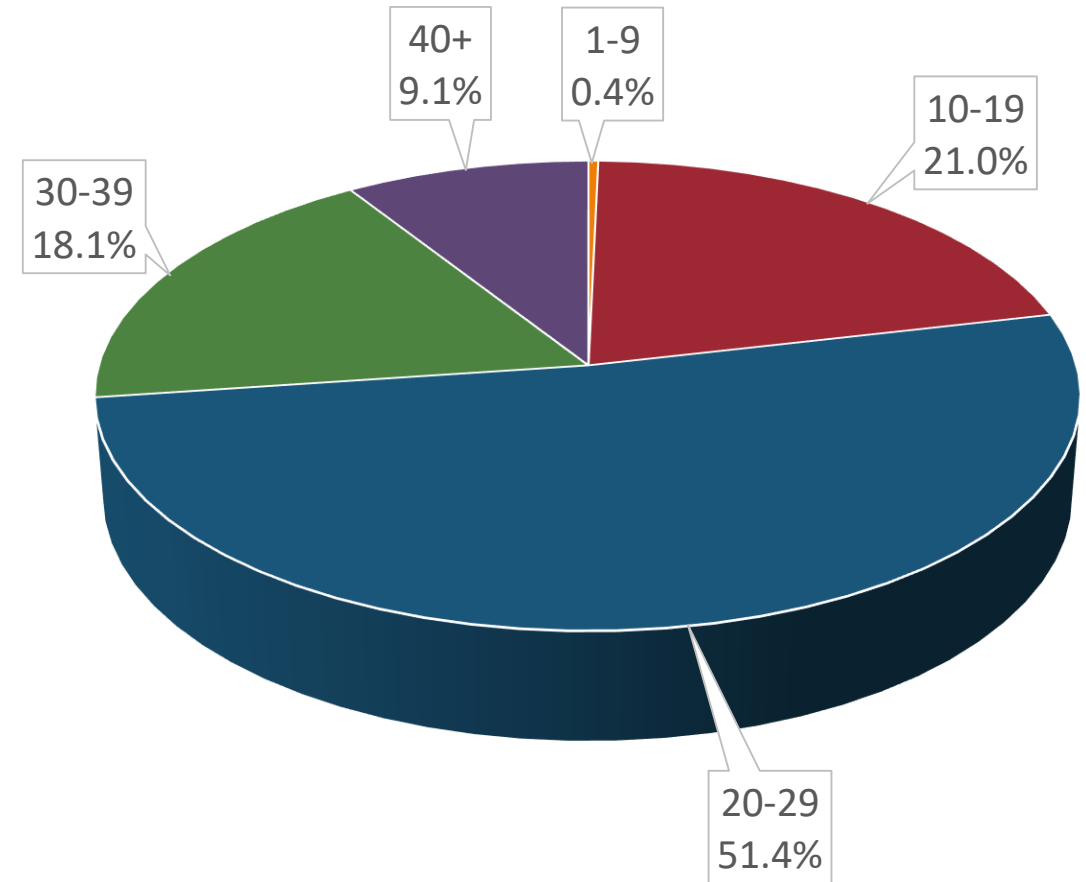
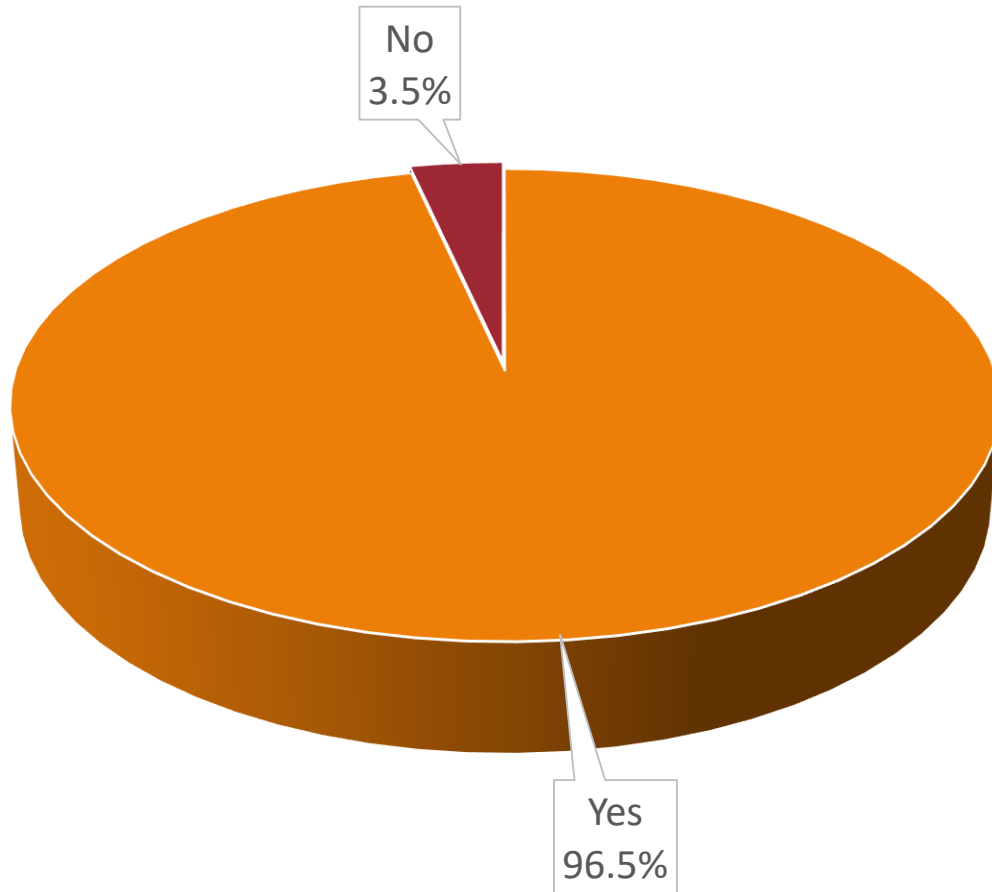


Career and/or Non-Career Firefighters and Compensation

IF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT HAVE ANY NON-CAREER
FIREFIGHTERS, THEY SKIPPED TO THE END OF THE SURVEY

Q6 Does the fire department have non-career firefighters?

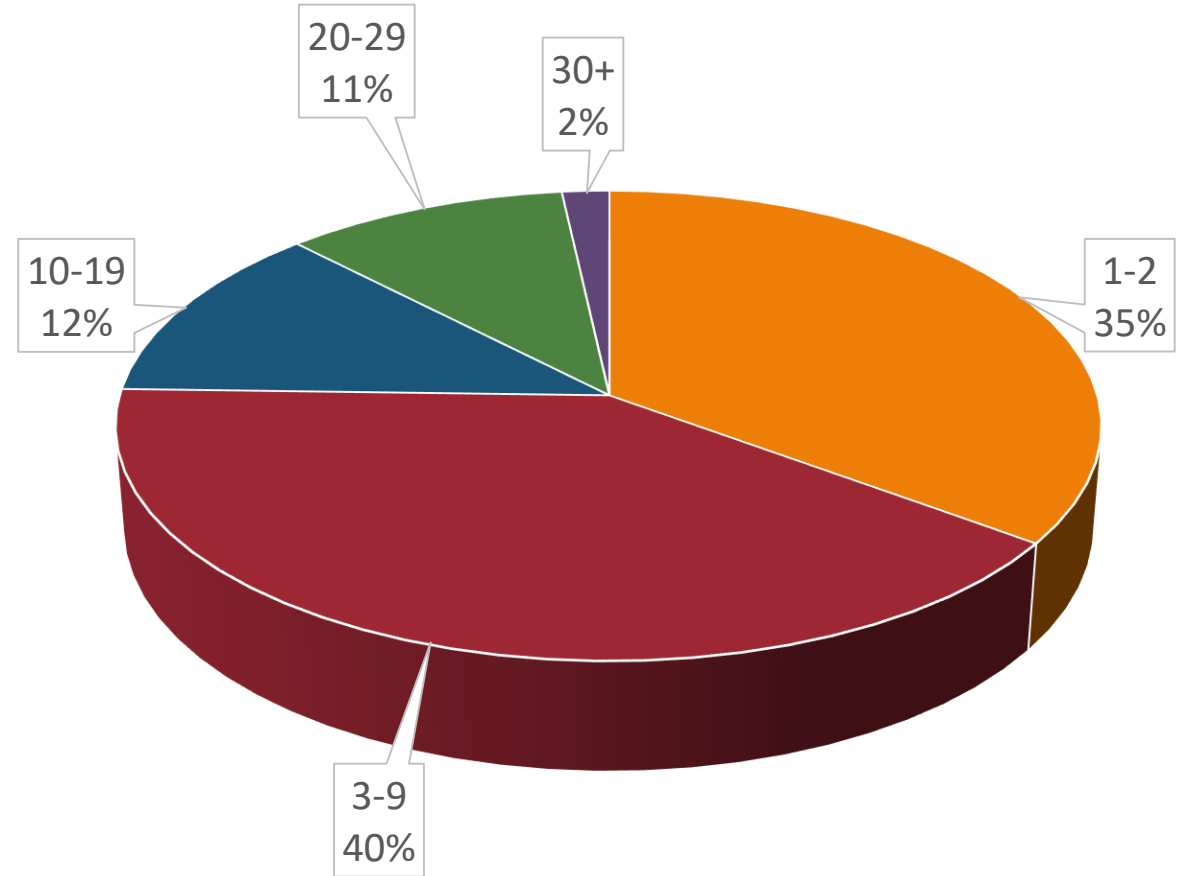
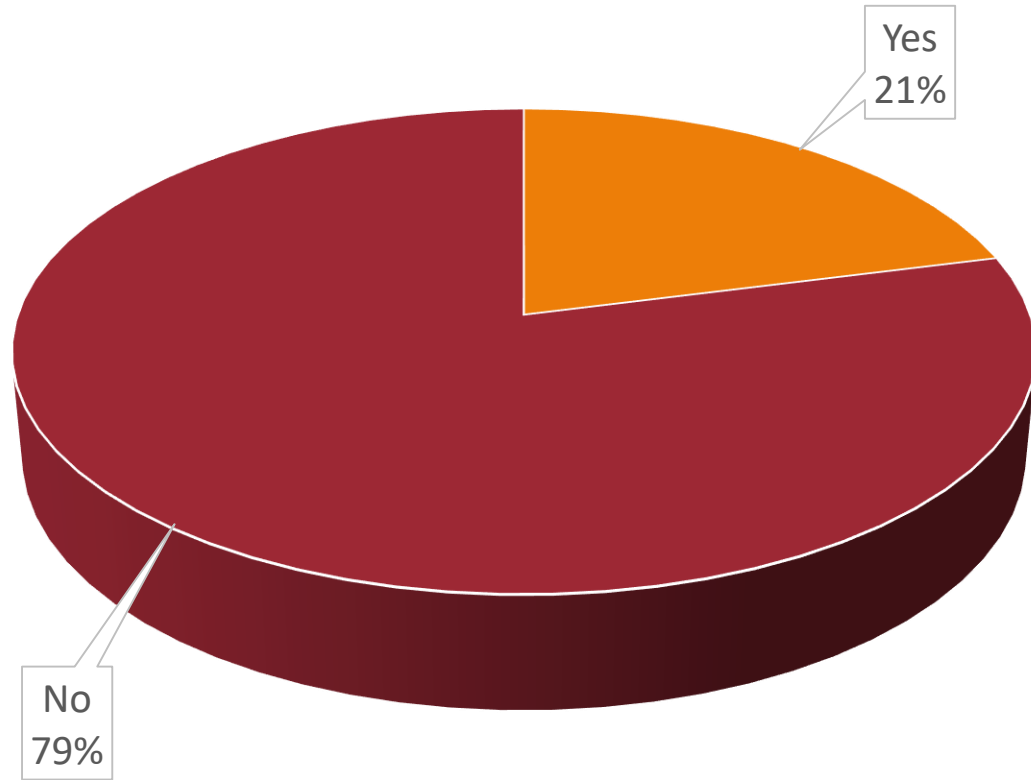
Q7 Approximately how many?



- "Non-career" firefighters are sometimes referred to as "volunteer" or "paid on-call" firefighters.
- All respondents answering "No" skipped to Question 21 at the end of the survey

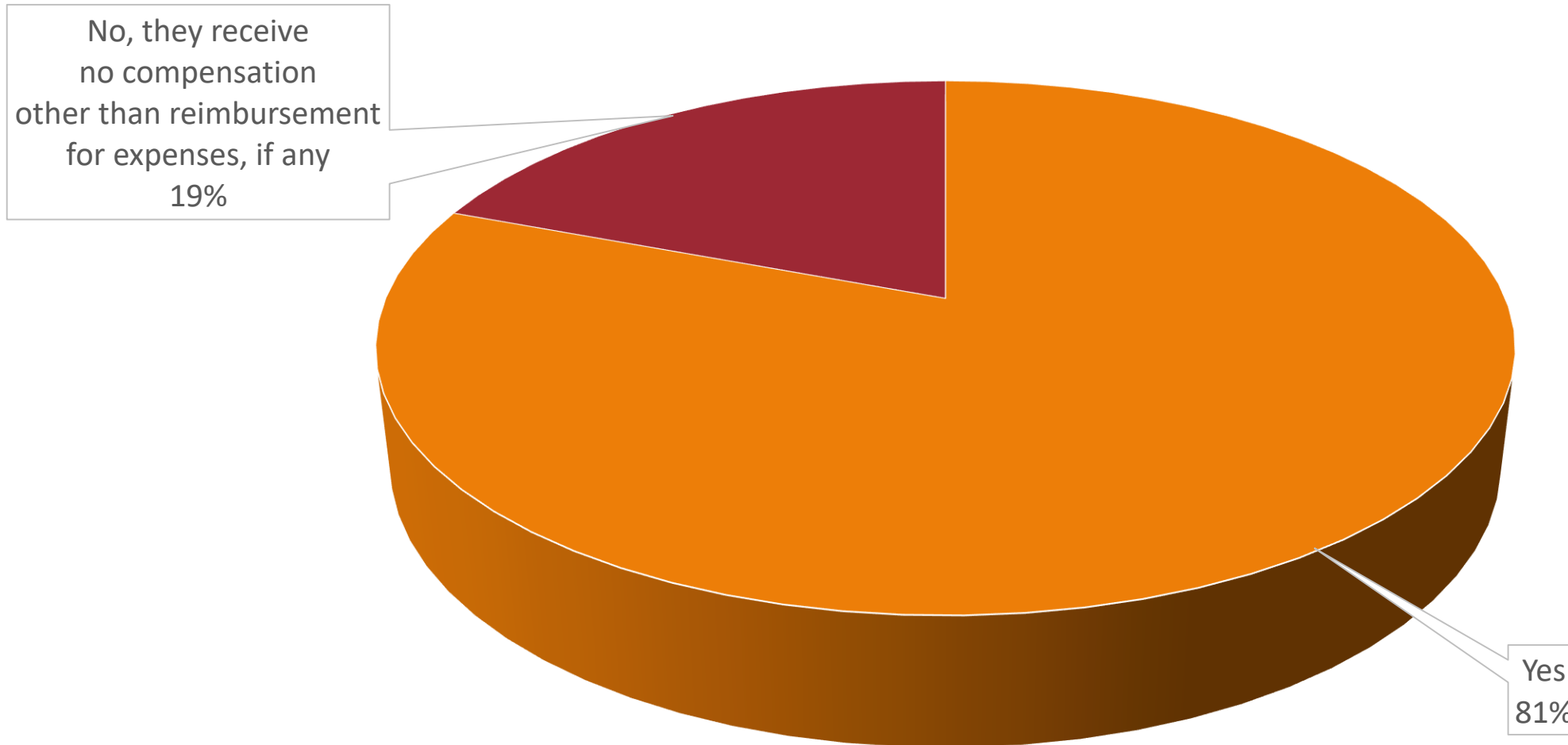
Q8 Does the fire department also have career firefighters?

Q9 Approximately how many?

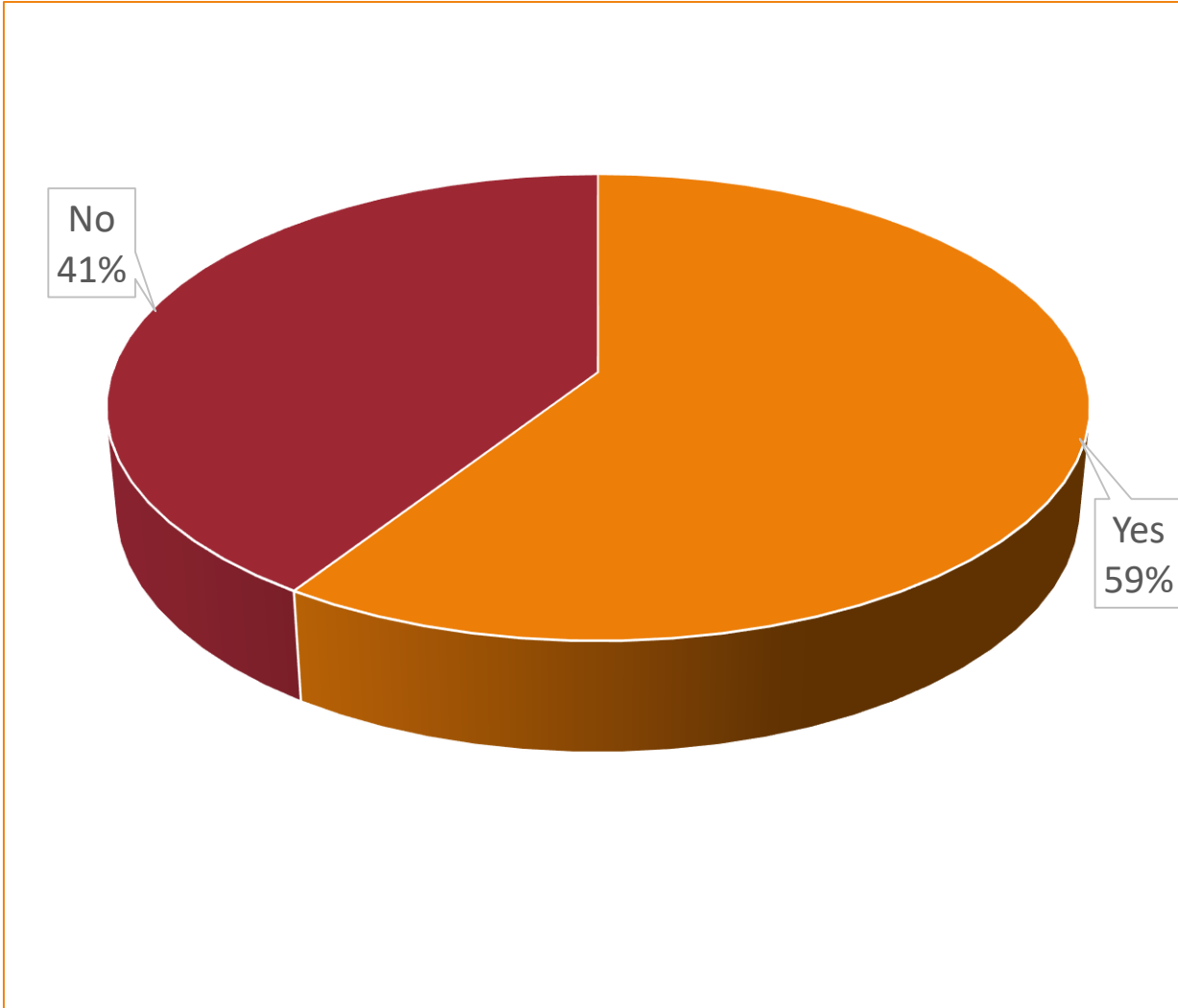


- "Career" firefighters are sometimes referred to as "salaried" firefighters.

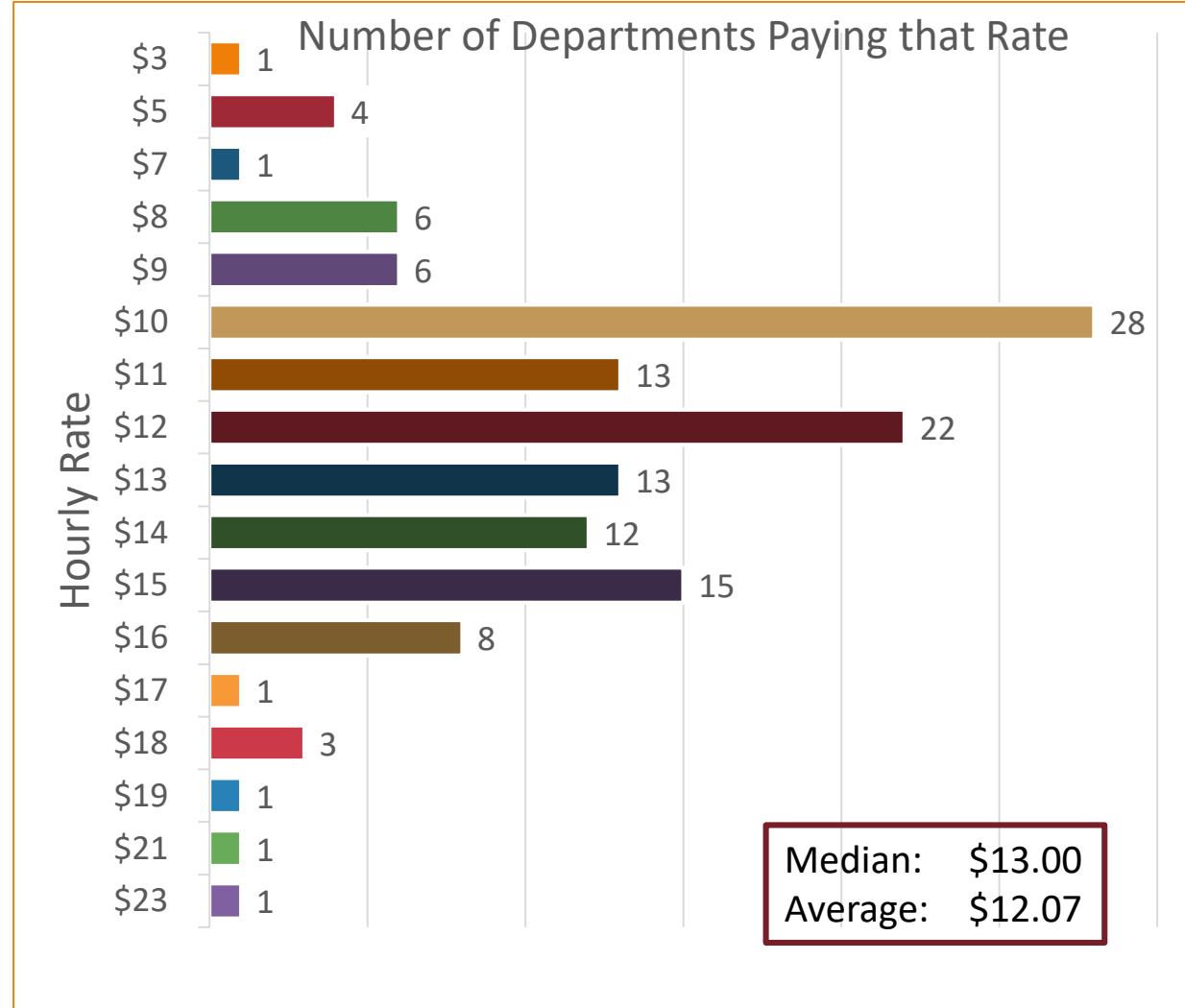
Q10 Do the non-career firefighters receive any compensation?



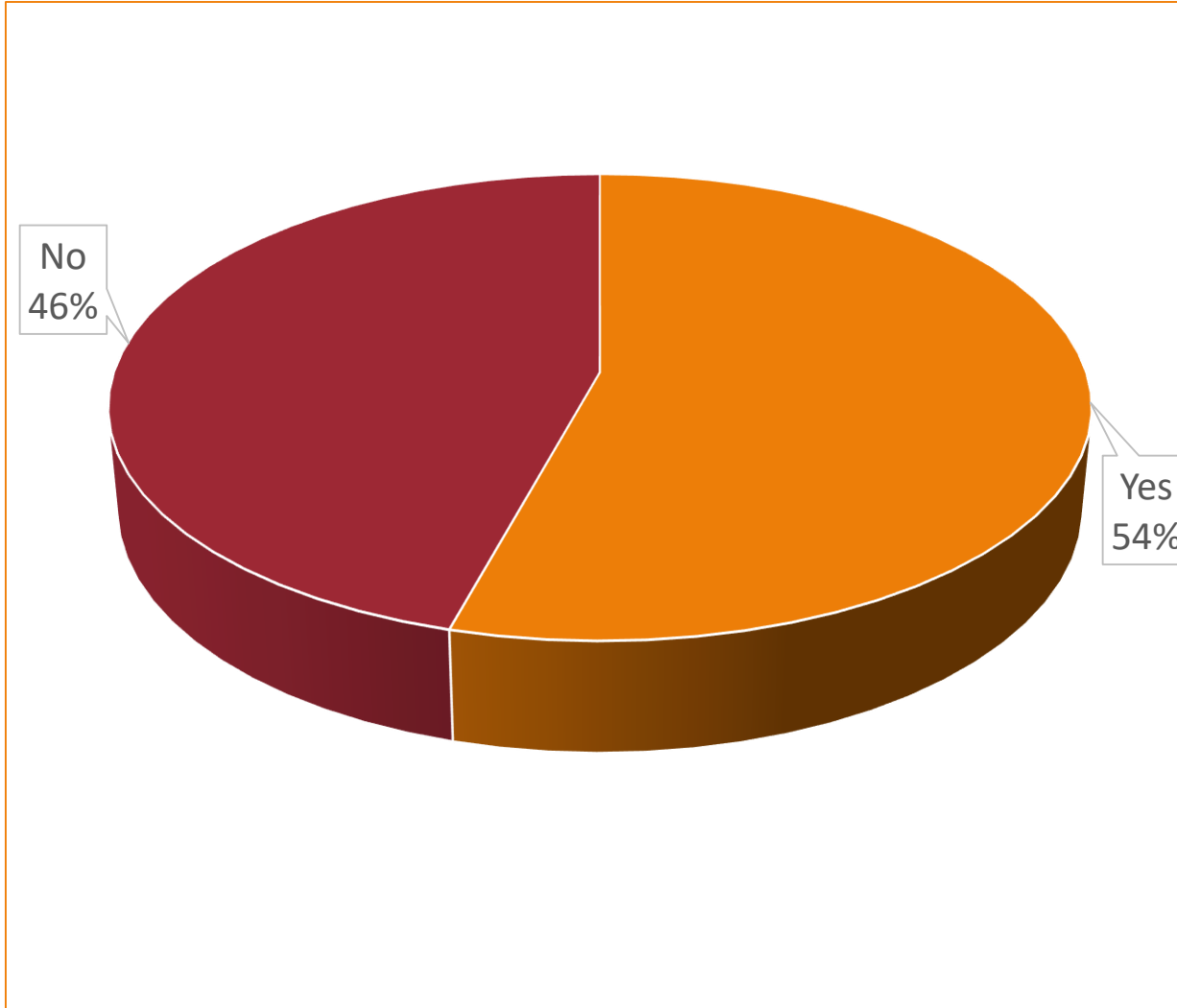
Q11 Are any of the non-career firefighters paid on an hourly basis?



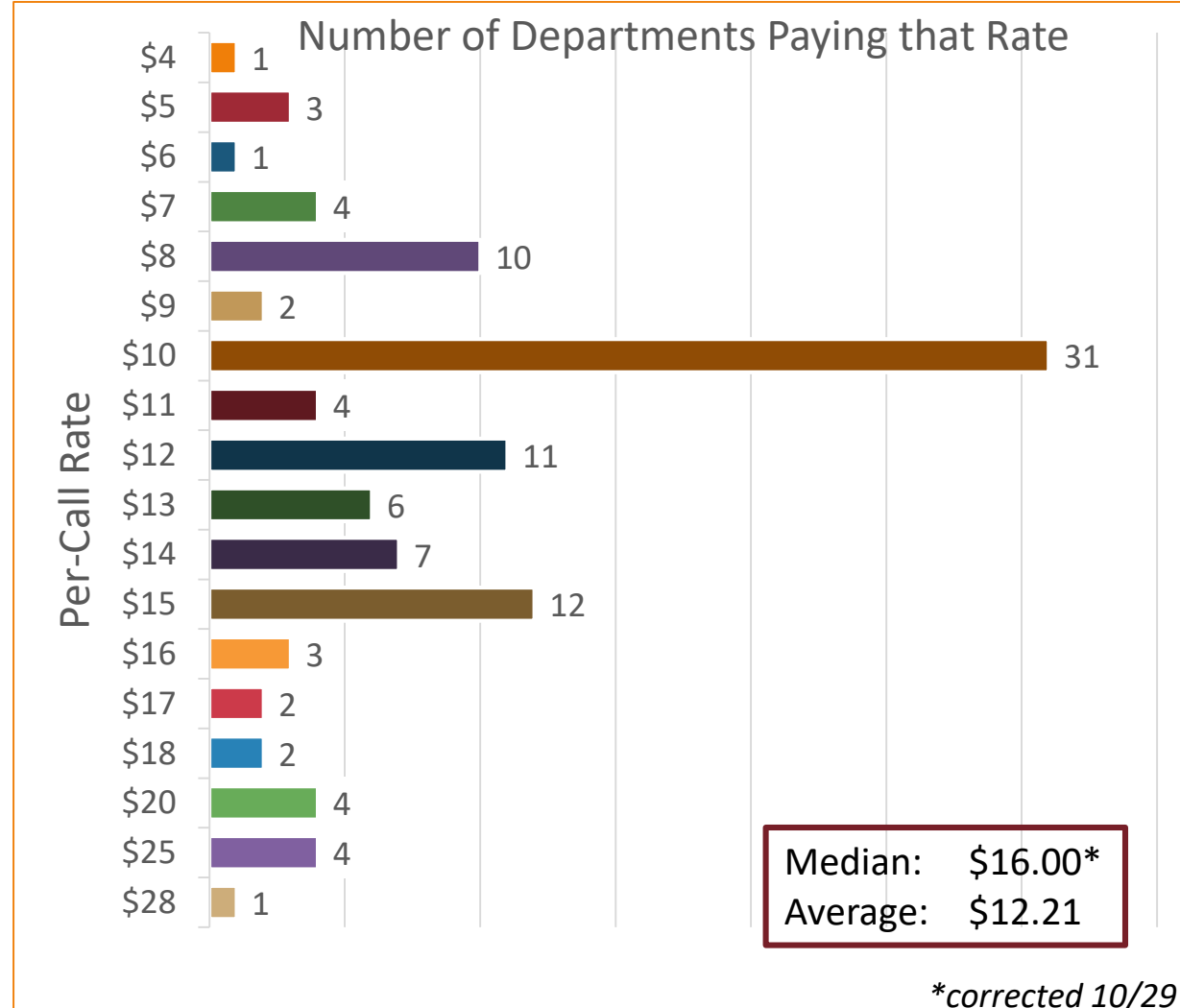
Q12 What is the hourly rate? Round to the nearest whole dollar amount.



Q11 Are any of the non-career fire-fighters paid on a per-call basis?



Q12 What is the per-call rate? Round to the nearest whole dollar amount.

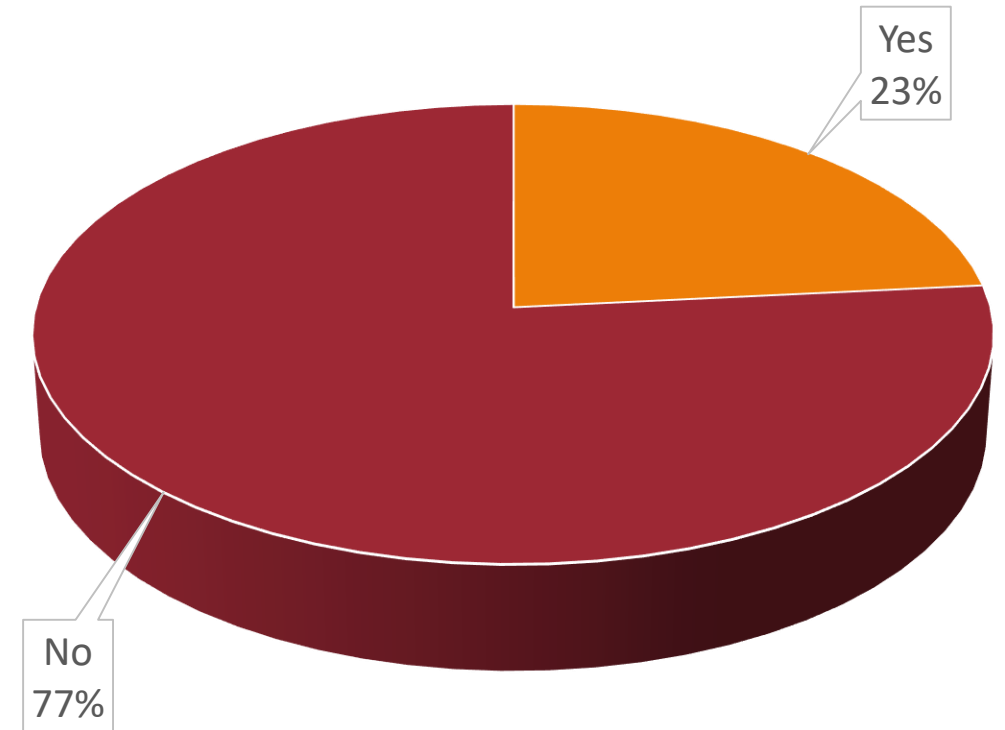
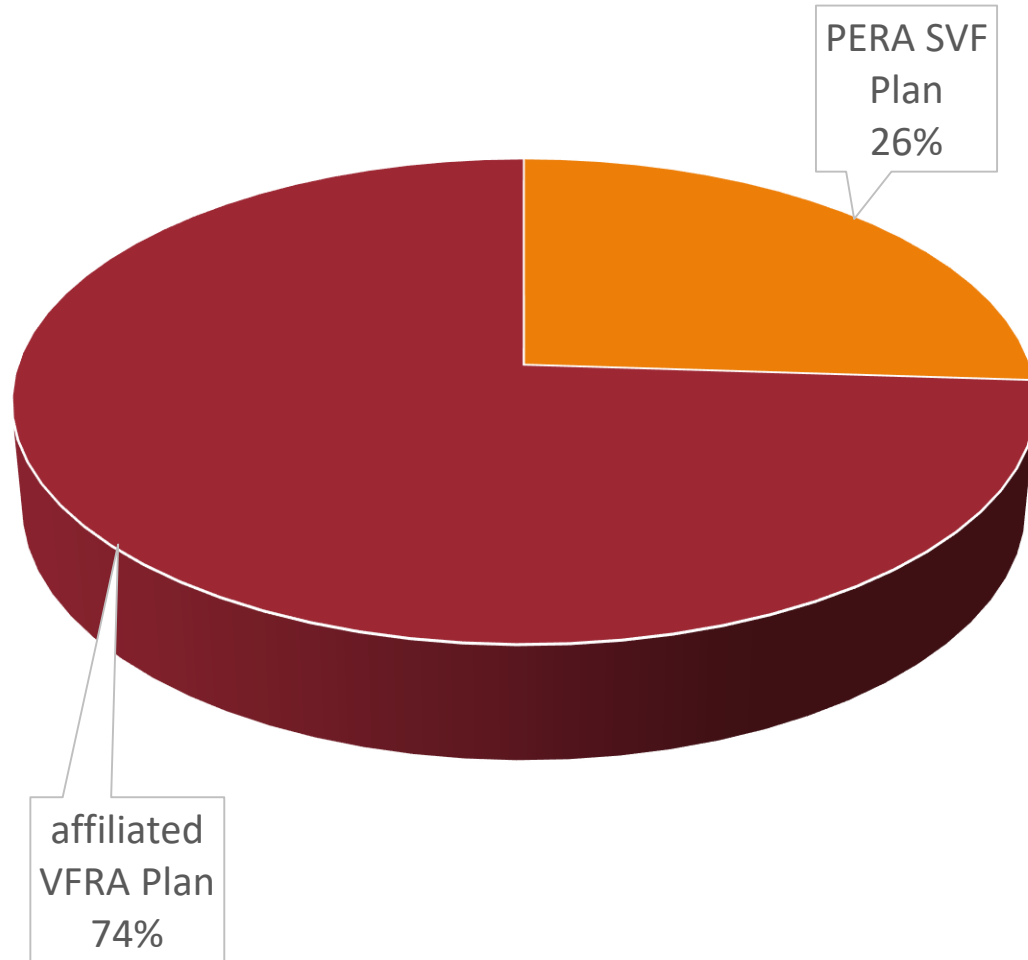


Q12-14 Respondents' text responses

- *\$14 fire, \$23 to \$45 ambulance [per call rate]*
- *We do not pay by the hour. Our firefighters and officers earn points and at the end of a quarter the points transfer to a dollar amount. The dollar amount changes every quarter depending how busy we are.*
- *[Compensation is] Based on points over a 12 month period*
- *\$8 answered and \$10 per hour worked*

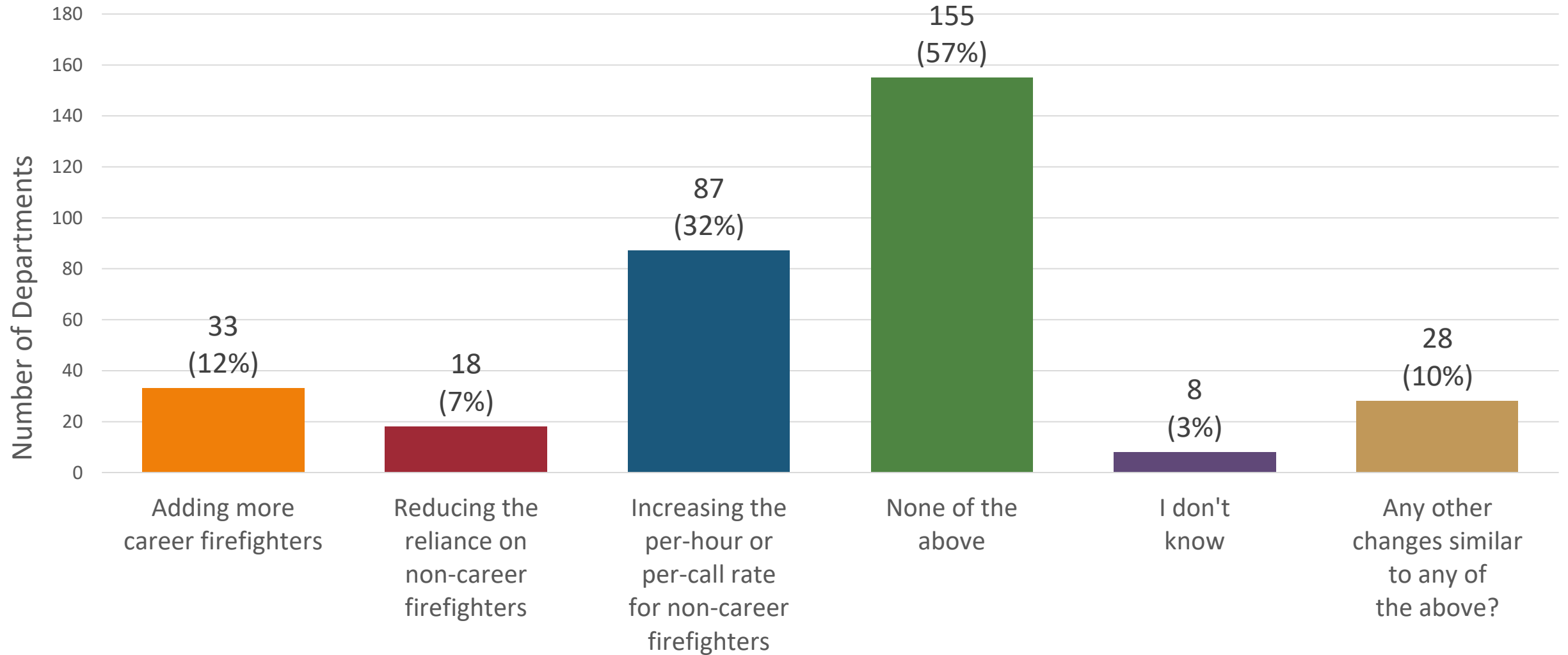
Q15 Retirement benefits are provided to the non-career firefighters through which retirement plan?

Q16 Does the department also have firefighters covered by the PERA Police & Fire Plan?



Governing Entity Consideration of Fire Department Options

Q17 Over the last year or two, has the city council or township board (or, if applicable, the board of a joint powers entity or independent nonprofit firefighting corporation) considered any of the following options? Check all that apply.



Q17 Respondents' text entries for "Any other changes similar to any of the above? Please describe:"

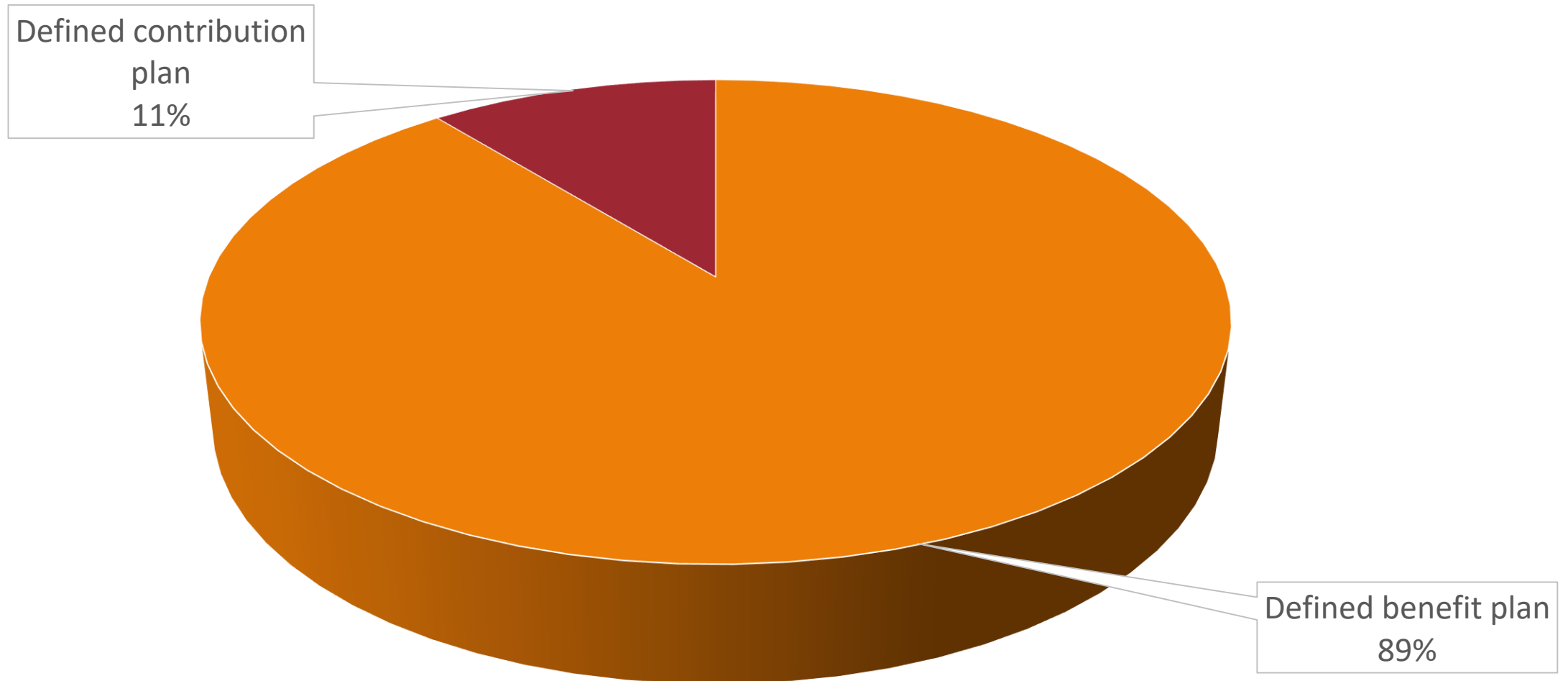
- *We are an Independent fire department, contracted by our township. We have tried several things to get new members to join but the younger generation is not as willing to join and donate time to volunteering as they were in the past. More families are involved in their children's sports, which is great for the family unit, but not so much for volunteer programs. We do not receive pay or compensation of any kind we are truly Volunteer. We are only guaranteed our retirement.*
- *Our department which is a non-profit fire corporation just within the last 3 years signed up for the PERA program. We would like to be able to offer our members more reimbursement, whether it be for mileage, or meeting and training time, however our budget is so minuscule that its not anymore of a wish at this time. We need our township contracts to keep up with the increased costs of firefighting and the training demands to be relaxed!*
- *Increased Statewide Volunteer Firefighter (SVF) Retirement Plan benefit to \$3000 / year of service from \$2500 / year of service*
- *Raising the annual relief association amount that is paid out per year of service*
- *Raised PERA pension*
- *Looked at adding 2-4 more volunteer firefighter personnel. We are also getting to be a big enough city that it would be beneficial with a full time Fire Chief.*
- *We Get Yearly Raises s*
- *Recently increased the start pay from 9.25 to 12 per hour.*
- *Joint duty crew with some of the surrounding fire departments for day time calls during the week.*
- *Switched to a different staffing model which puts non-career on shifts.*
- *We are proposing adding more career staff, however it has not reached the council as of yet for discussion.*
- *Cost of Living Increase*
- *Two years ago the [City] approved to add a \$10/call and \$10/training payout for firefighters. Prior to 2016 firefighters only received a pension.*
- *Joined two fire departments to make one.*

Q17 Respondents' text entries for "Any other changes similar to any of the above? Please describe:"

- *We would like to increase the number of duty crew positions but need the city to increase our contract amount for this.*
- *Hoping to get a relief association or PERA benefit established??*
- *Asked us to look at options to increase retention and recruitment. Paid on Call, Shared Services, Fire District.*
- *We are reviewing the need for staff to cover Monday through Friday 07:00 until 17:00. This is the time period the majority of our firefighting force is out of the community working.*
- *Increasing benefits to non-career firefighters to aid in recruitment and retainment.*
- *No more career firefighters to be added. Paid-on-call firefighters receive annual raises based on non union full time employees. i.e. non union gets a 2 percent pay increase, paid-on-call firefighters get a 2 percent raise. This annual increase includes a same percentage increase in the fire relief pension association.*
- *This has been discussed in order to meet the needs of the community. However at this time we still maintain a paid-on-call organization. However as the availability of firefighters continues to dwindle this will need to be revisited.*
- *Also increased city contribution to the firefighters pension. The City contributes \$1000 per Firefighter.*
- *Typically the city council will raise the hourly pay rate for the firefighters by the same percentage that they give to full time city staff as a COLA adjustment. This averages around 3% per year.*
- *Pay raise for Officer's whom receive a check every 6 months Pay raise for the fire fighters whom receive a yearly check of approx. \$250.00 per year, not based on hourly or calls made*
- *Started a Monday through Friday, 9 to 5, voluntary duty crew program.*
- *Restrict hiring of non-career firefighters due to budget constraints and pension obligation impacts*
- *Added part time chief. Up to 24 hours per week*
- *There is talk of joining [two] Departments at some time.*

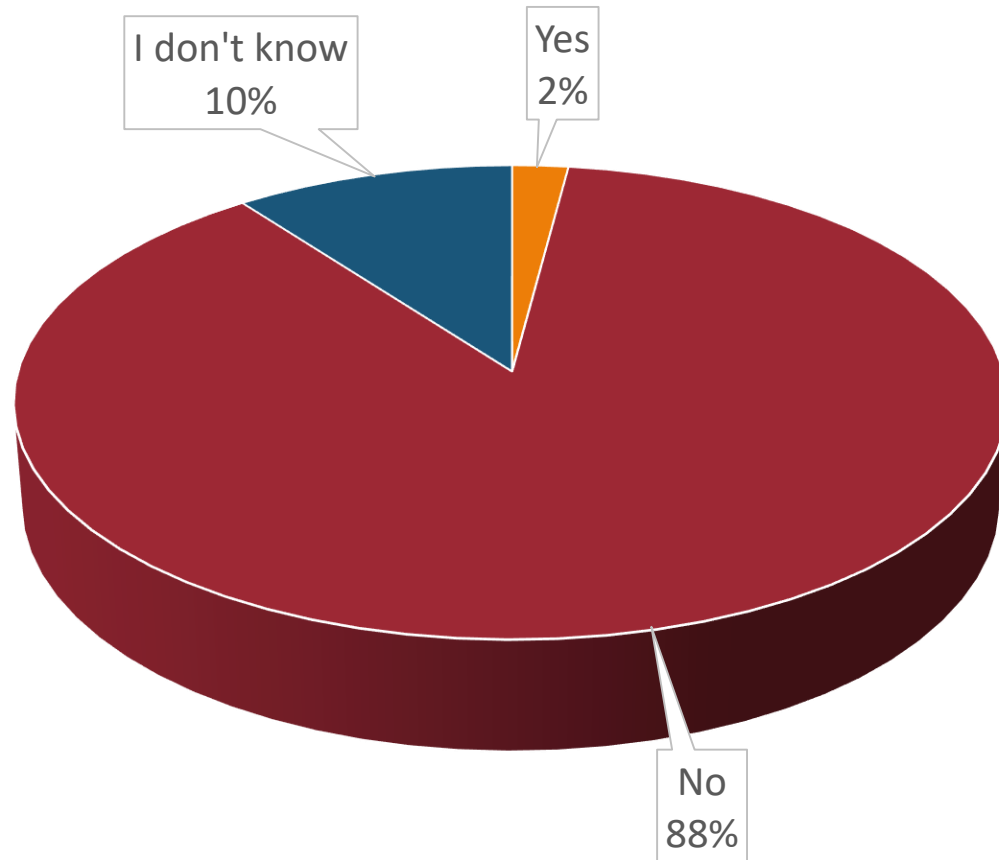
Defined Benefit or Defined Contribution and Conversion Discussions?

Q18 Is the retirement plan covering non-career firefighters a defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan?



- Respondents answering “Defined contribution plan” were not asked Question 19

Q19 Has the relief association board of trustees considered converting the relief association retirement plan from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan?



Q20 Please comment on the status of these discussions and the reason conversion is being considered:

- *Already converted to PERA*
- *Last we checked we were locked in the current plan and were not allowed to change.*
- *To my knowledge I believe it is being considered to eliminate the need to request support from the city council for pension increases.*
- *Topic of discussion, not looking to convert at this time. Brainstorming.*

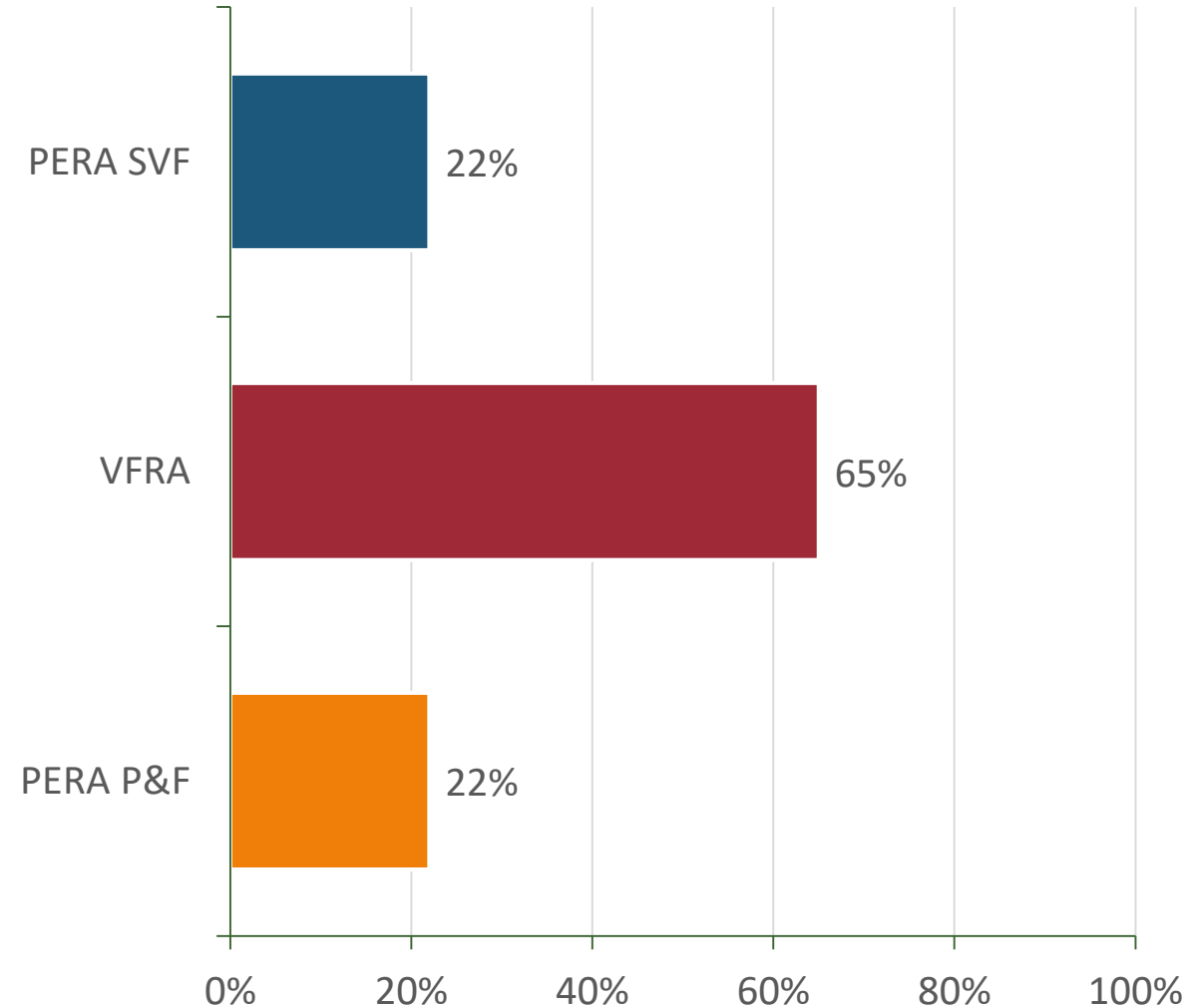
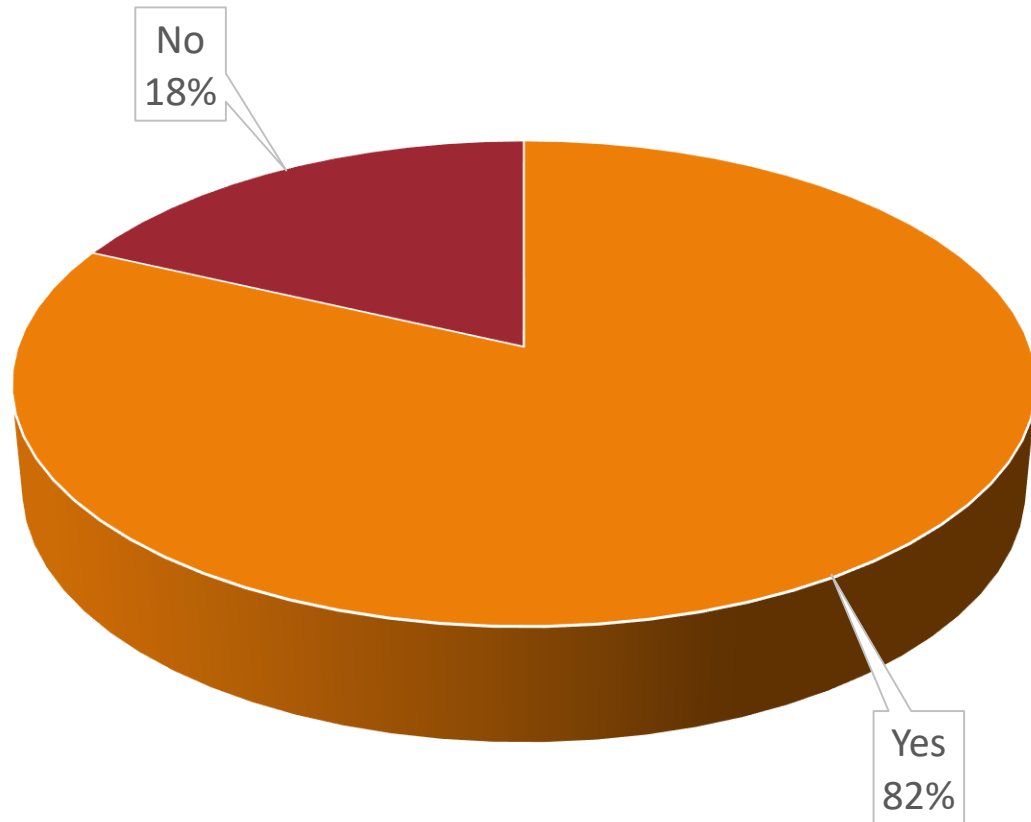
■ **This question was asked only of those respondents answering “Defined benefit plan” to Question 18**

Demographic Information

ALL RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED THESE QUESTIONS

Q21 Are you a member of the volunteer firefighter relief association with which the fire department is affiliated?

Q22 From which retirement plan(s) will you receive a retirement benefit? Check all that apply.



Q23 Please identify yourself and provide your contact information.

- 270 respondents provided their **name**
- 267 respondents provided their **email address**
- 264 respondents provided their **phone number**
- **Only 23** respondents provided no contact information