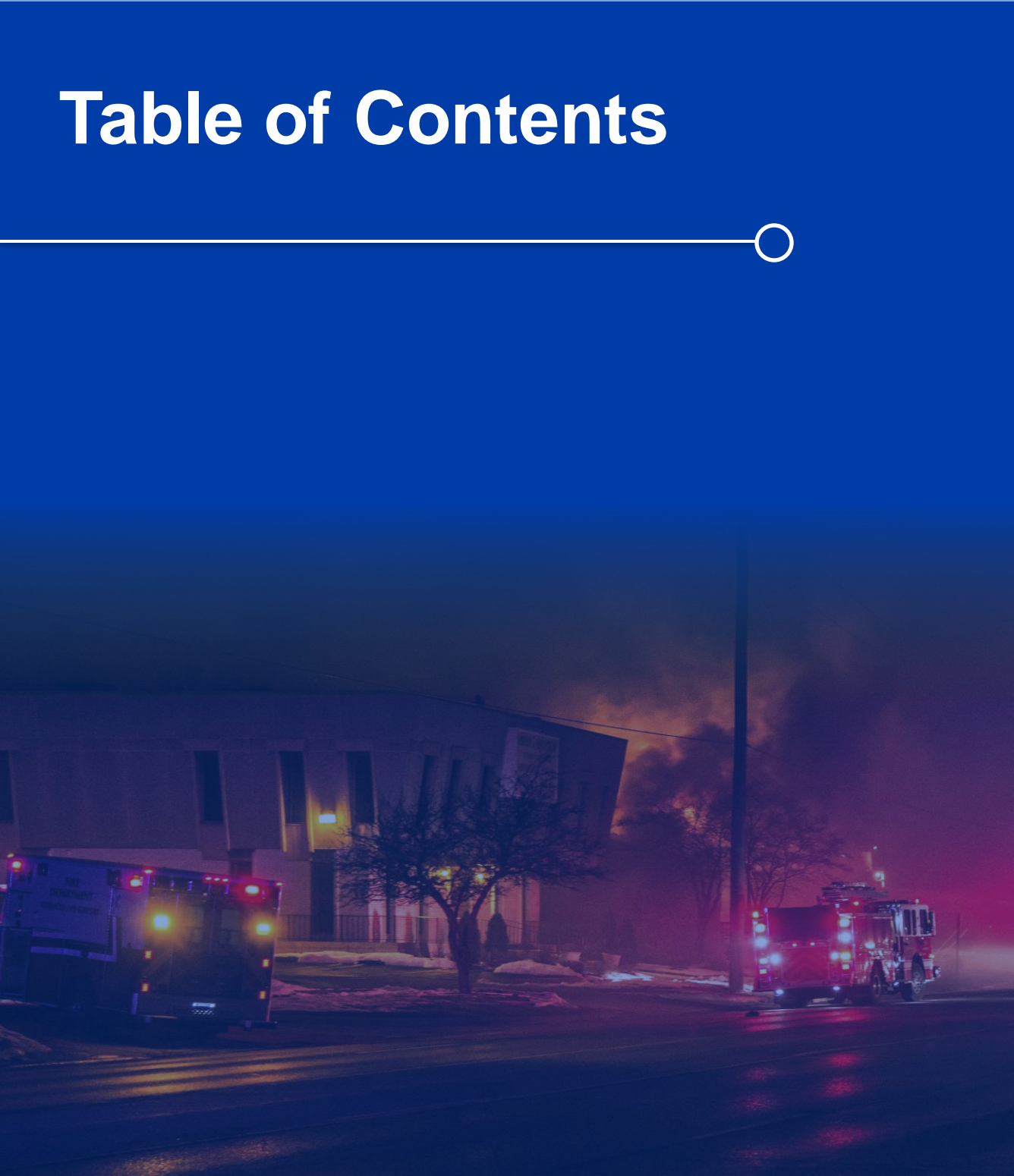


State of First Responder Preparedness: Fire & EMS



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Survey Methodology & Demographics

No two emergencies are the same – which is why those working in the fire service and EMS have to constantly evolve and adapt their knowledge, practices, and operations to remain prepared. In this study, we surveyed public safety professionals in the United States to understand their level of confidence in their ability to do their job safely, effectively and successfully based on their training, the tools available to them, and their overall well-being.

This report looks at how first responders feel about the quality of their training programs, identifies the biggest gaps, and looks at how training needs have evolved to meet the needs of a changing environment. It provides insight into how the toll of their jobs, both physical and mental, impacts their overall performance and the success of their departments. In addition, the report identifies other obstacles that impact their ability to handle emergency situations including outdated equipment, reliable technology, staffing shortages, and low morale.



Survey Details

- Survey conducted at 95% confidence, +/- 7% margin of error
- Survey conducted from August 3, 2023 – September 1, 2023



Respondent Qualifiers

- Live in the US
- 18+ years of age
- Work full-time as a public safety professional (EMS, fire, 911 ECC)



395 Total Respondents

- Male: 47% | Female: 52%
- Average age: 36 years old
- Representation: 45 of 50 states (excluding HI, MT, NH, SD, VT)

Key Findings

FIRST RESPONDER

For Most First Responders Initial Training Covers All the Bases...but Opportunity to Get Even Better Exists

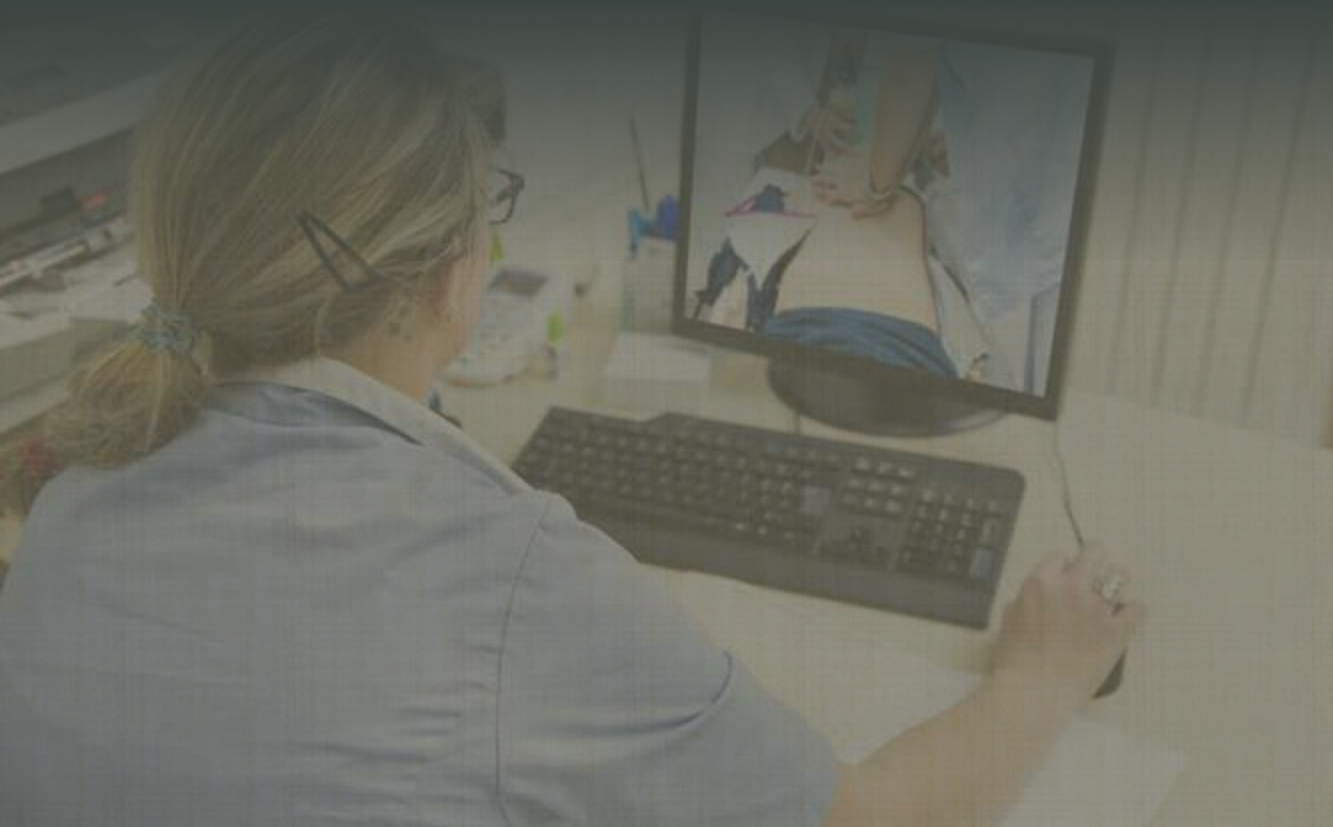
96%

Of first responders
rate the quality of
their initial training
as satisfactory

53%

However, of those who
weren't satisfied, **53%** cited
shallow course scope as
the reason why

But Once They Leave the Classroom, the Field Presents New Needs



1 in 6

Approximately one in six (**17%**)
first responders remain
unconvinced that their initial
training sufficiently readied
them for the challenges of their
job in the field

Issues with Communication and Decision Making Arise

59%

59% of the 17% who didn't feel prepared say that, following their initial training, they felt underprepared to handle situations that require effective communication with people – and **24%** still feel this way, even after spending time in the field

63%

63% say they felt underprepared to handle quick, dynamic situations that require immediate decision making – and **1/4** still feel this way, even after spending time in the field

Data Shows a Testament to the Value of High-Quality Training Programs



81%

Of first responders felt compelled to revisit their training after encountering an incident, and members of the fire service were **15% more likely** than average to say this

Most First Responders Feel Positive about the Training They Receive, but Some Have Concerns



First Responders

Dedicate Significant Time to Training



Annual training requirements vary state-to-state and industry-to-industry.

80
Hours

On average, first responders spend **80 hours** per year on training

... But Some First Responders Don't Feel Frequency of Training Is Adequate

27%

Of first responders find the current frequency of ongoing training inadequate, underscoring potential vulnerabilities in their preparedness for critical situations – interestingly, those working in suburban areas were **37% more likely** than average to feel unsatisfied with the frequency of their training

Too Little or Too Much Training?

First Responders Are Torn

of the 13% who feel that they spend too little time:

69%

Say the training at their agency is only done as a formality

73%

Feel that their training is rushed

of the 8% who feel that they spend too much time:

63%

Say that training at their agency is not effective

7 in 10

Say that ongoing training takes away from other priorities

But What if the Problem Isn't the Time Spent, but Rather the Content It's Spent On?

38%

Of first responders say that there are unmet needs in the training programs at their agency (however those that completed their initial training online were **13% less likely** than average to say this)

and of those
64%

Would like to see mental health training

47%

Would like to see communication training

43%

Would like to see leadership training

To Prepare for the Job, First Responders Prefer Practical Training



74%

First responders favor hands-on training, with **74%** emphasizing its importance, while **46%** express a preference for scenario-based training

First Responders Are Confident in Themselves and Their Colleagues



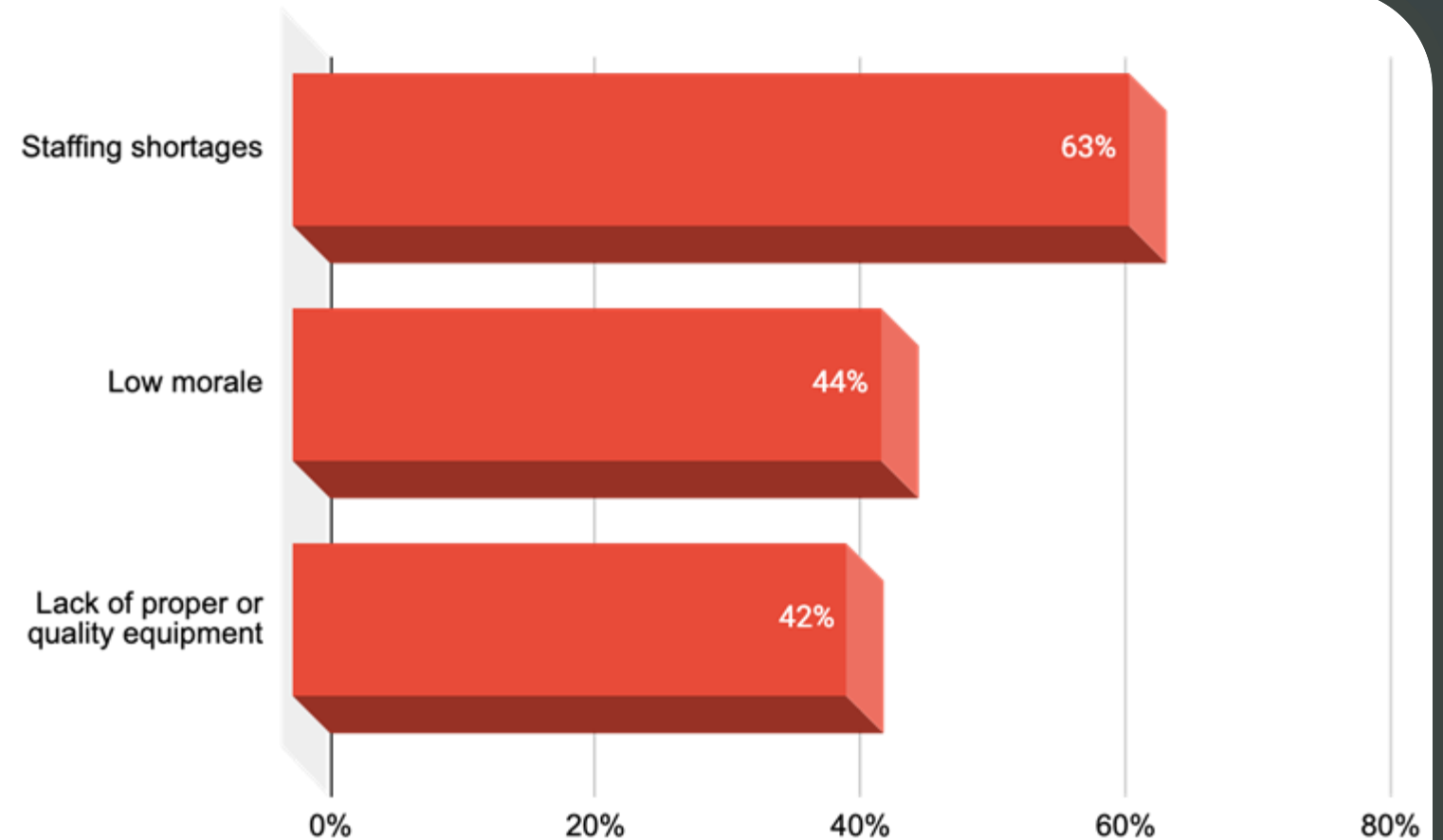
98%

91%

First responders overwhelmingly trust in their own abilities to handle emergencies, with **98%** expressing confidence. In comparison, **91%** expressed confidence in their colleague's ability to do the same.

But Even the Most Confident Face Obstacles

- First responders encounter various obstacles in job preparedness, with staffing shortages (**63%**), low morale (**44%**), and equipment concerns (**42%**) being the most prevalent challenges
- Those working in the fire department were **41% less likely** than average to face staffing shortages.



First Responders Value Mental Health, but Lack Essential Support within Their Agencies

26%

Despite the recognition of the critical importance of mental health in their field (**93%**), a concerning **26%** of first responders report that their agencies do not provide them with essential mental health training and support – those working in EMS were **27% more likely** than average to say that their agency does not offer mental health training

In Fact, Mental Health Outranks Physical Health in Terms of Concern



55%

66%

While **55%** worry about how their job impacts their physical health, even more (**66%**) worry about how it impacts their mental health

*Those who have been in the field for 10+ years were **42% more likely** than average to have concerns about their physical health

Which Is Amplified by Nationwide Staffing Challenges and Limited Resources

57%

First responders have witnessed an incident in the past 12 months that impacted their mental health, and of those, **33%** say their agency did not follow up and offer resources to support them after the incident

44%

Say that staffing shortages have negatively impacted their mental health, and those who have been in the field for at least 10 years were **43% more likely** than average to say this, while those working in EMS were **30% more likely** than average to say this

57%

Say that staffing shortages have negatively impacted their team's morale, and those working in EMS were **28% more likely** than average to say this

Agencies That Don't Address These Issues Will Only See Them Increase

33%

Of first responders have considered leaving their job due to lack of well-being support, and those working in EMS were **33% more likely** than average to say this

The Impact of Mental Health Training Is Clear



94%

Of those who have access to
mental health training say it's
beneficial

What Else Do First Responders Want?

According to Our Panel:

91%

Would support their agency investing more money into early intervention programs

83%

Would like to see newer equipment

86%

Would like to see their agency invest in more technology – those in the field for less than 4 years were **14% more likely** than those with 10+ years of experience to say this

How Do First Responders Feel about Their Workplaces?

While a significant portion of first responders express positive sentiments about their workplace, a notable minority still grapple with challenges at work, including issues related to culture, belonging, and recognition



First Responders

Spend Significant Time on Admin Work

14
Hours

An average of **14 hours per week** is spent on administrative work, and **26%** of first responders say their agency doesn't have the right technology to assist with these tasks

Largely Due to the Hassle of Tracking and Reporting Training

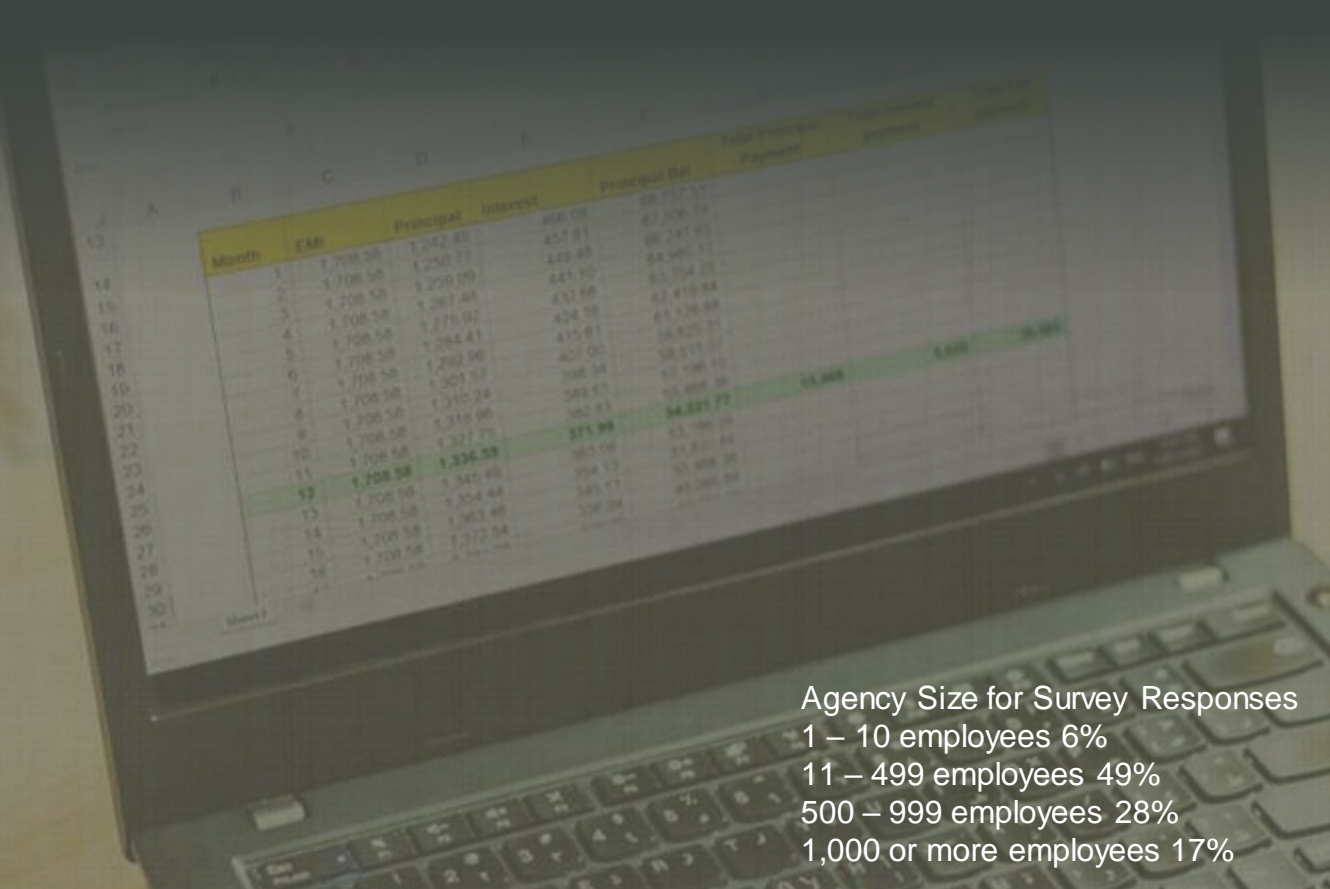
34%

Say that tracking the completion of training is a hassle

34%

Say that reporting training completion to state agencies is a hassle

And the Way Scheduling Is Handled



37%

Of first responders do not use
scheduling software

And When Every Moment Is Critical, Communicating Scheduling Needs Is Key

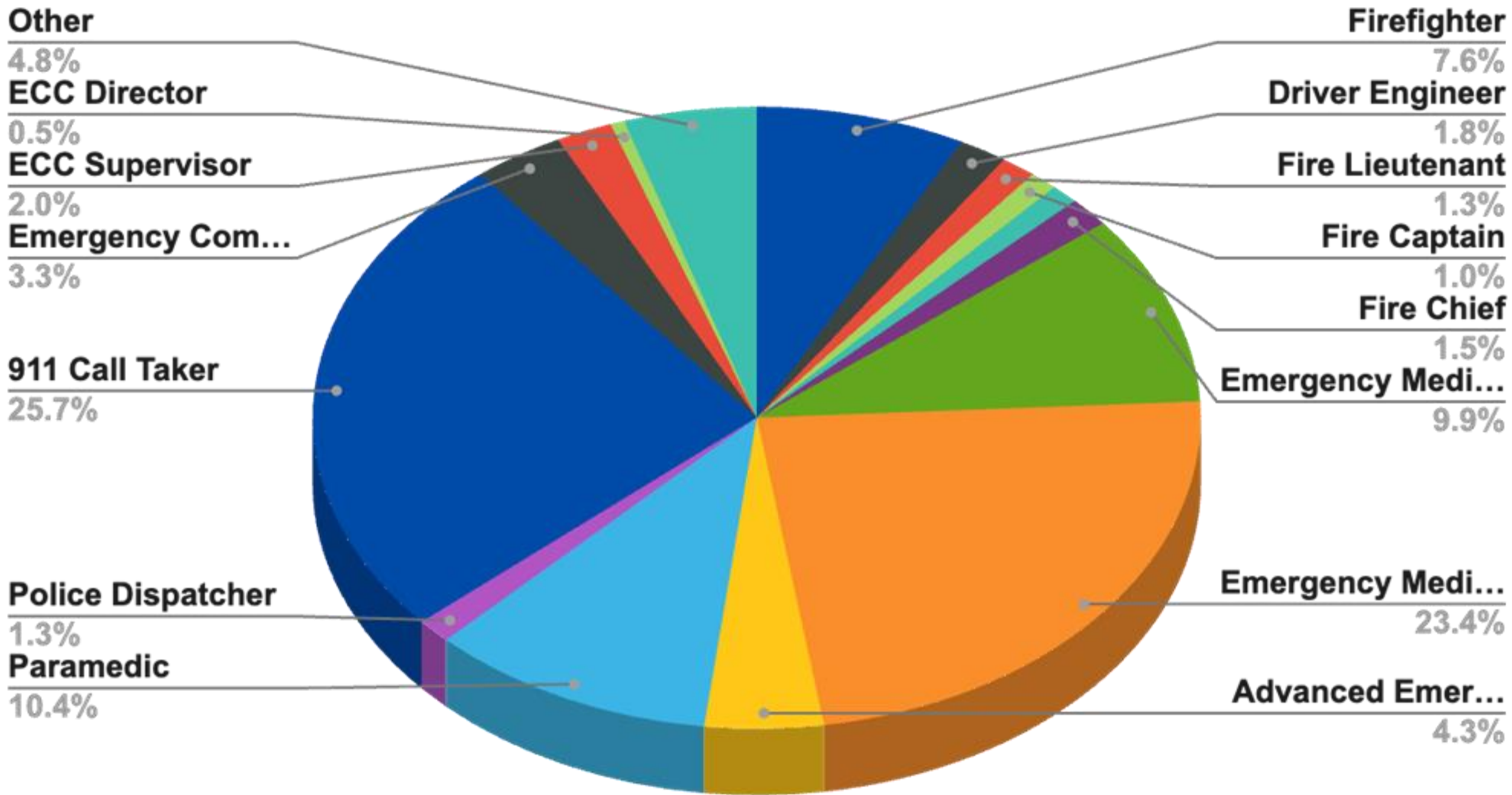
22%

Of first responders report that their agencies are ill-prepared to handle large-scale critical incidents necessitating callbacks, highlighting a significant and concerning issue – and **19%** say that critical scheduling concerns are not being communicated effectively

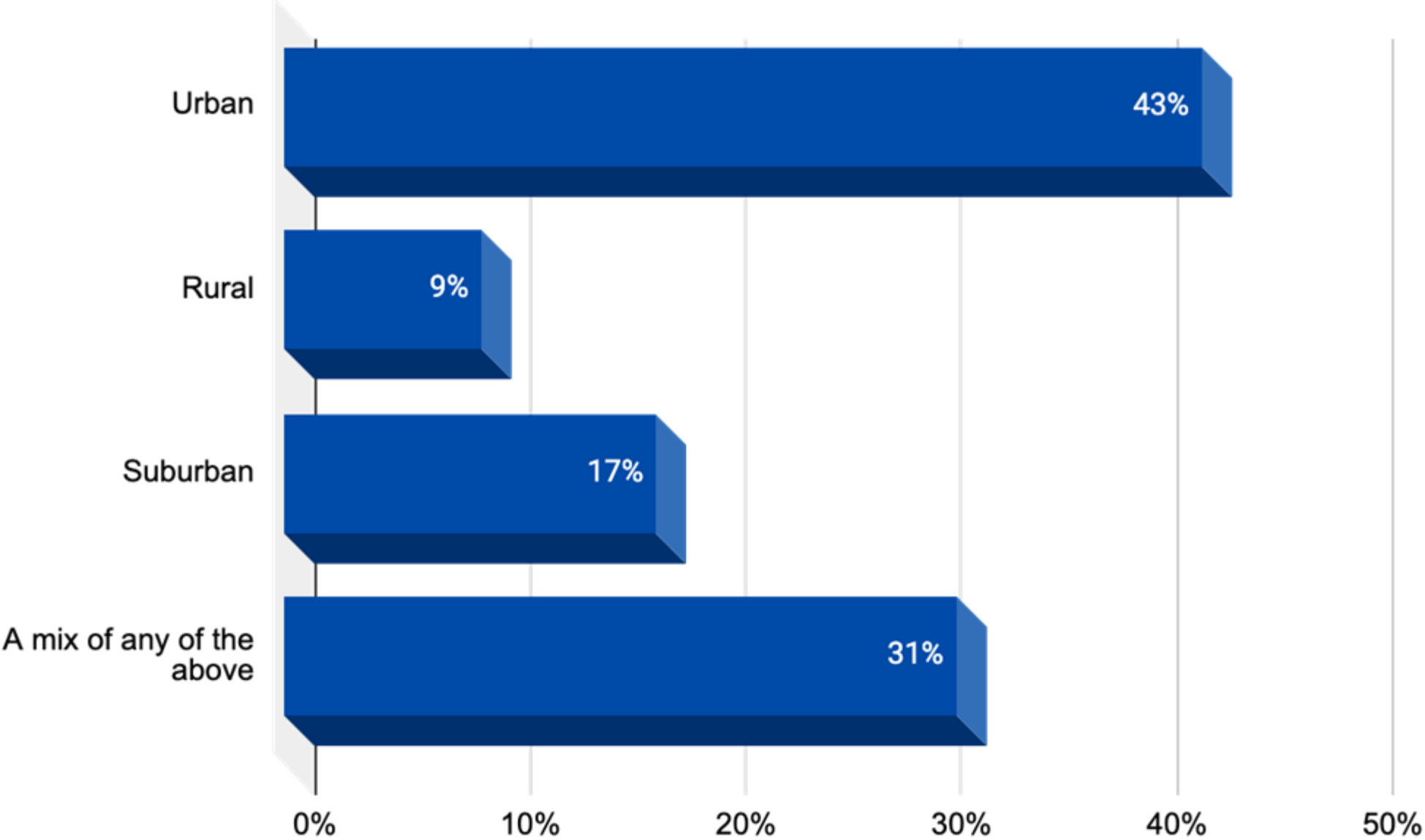
Demographics

A firefighter in full protective gear, including a helmet and reflective stripes, stands next to the rear of a fire truck. The truck's emergency lights are flashing, and the scene is dimly lit, suggesting a nighttime or low-light environment. The firefighter is positioned between the truck's rear compartment and the cab area. The word "Demographics" is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image.

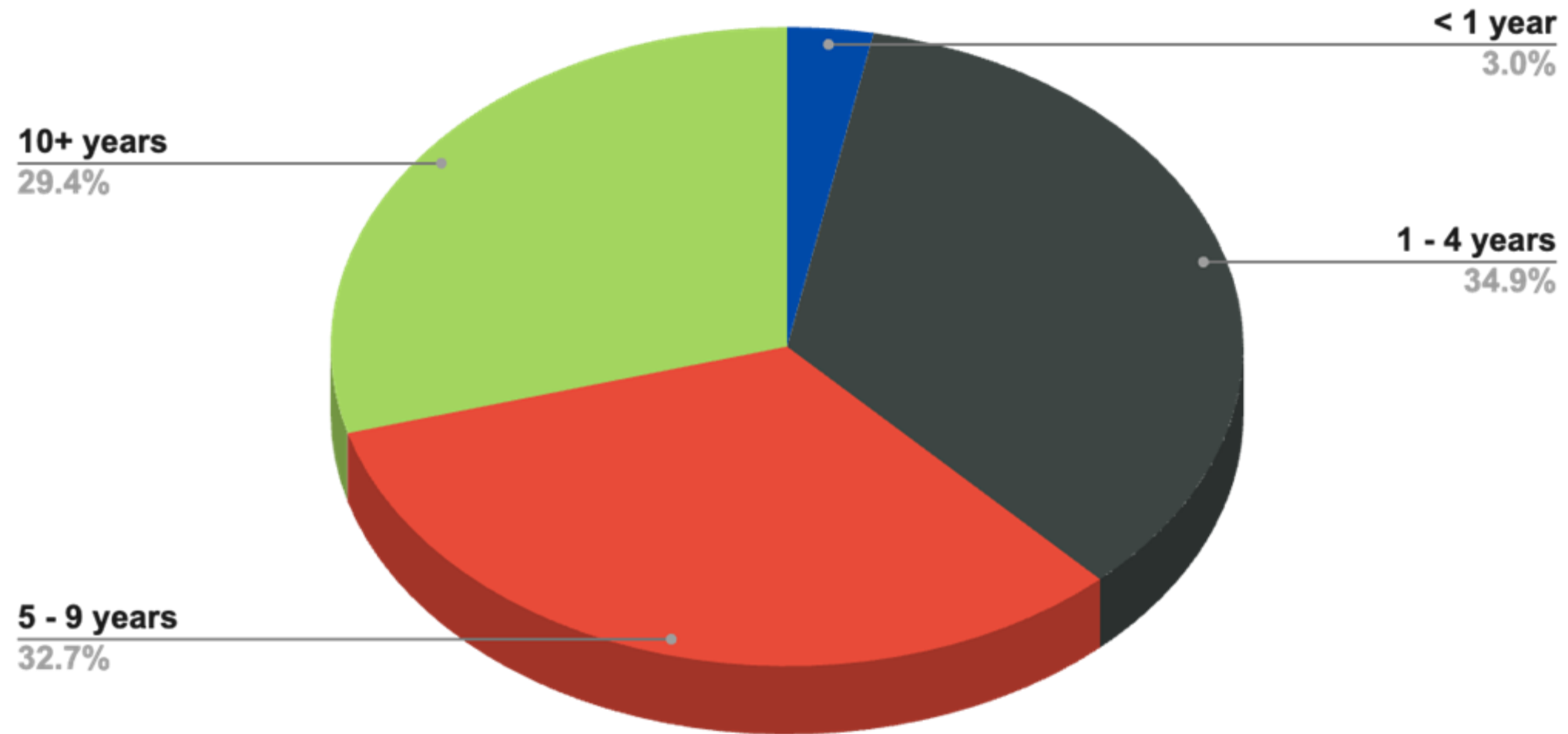
Job Title



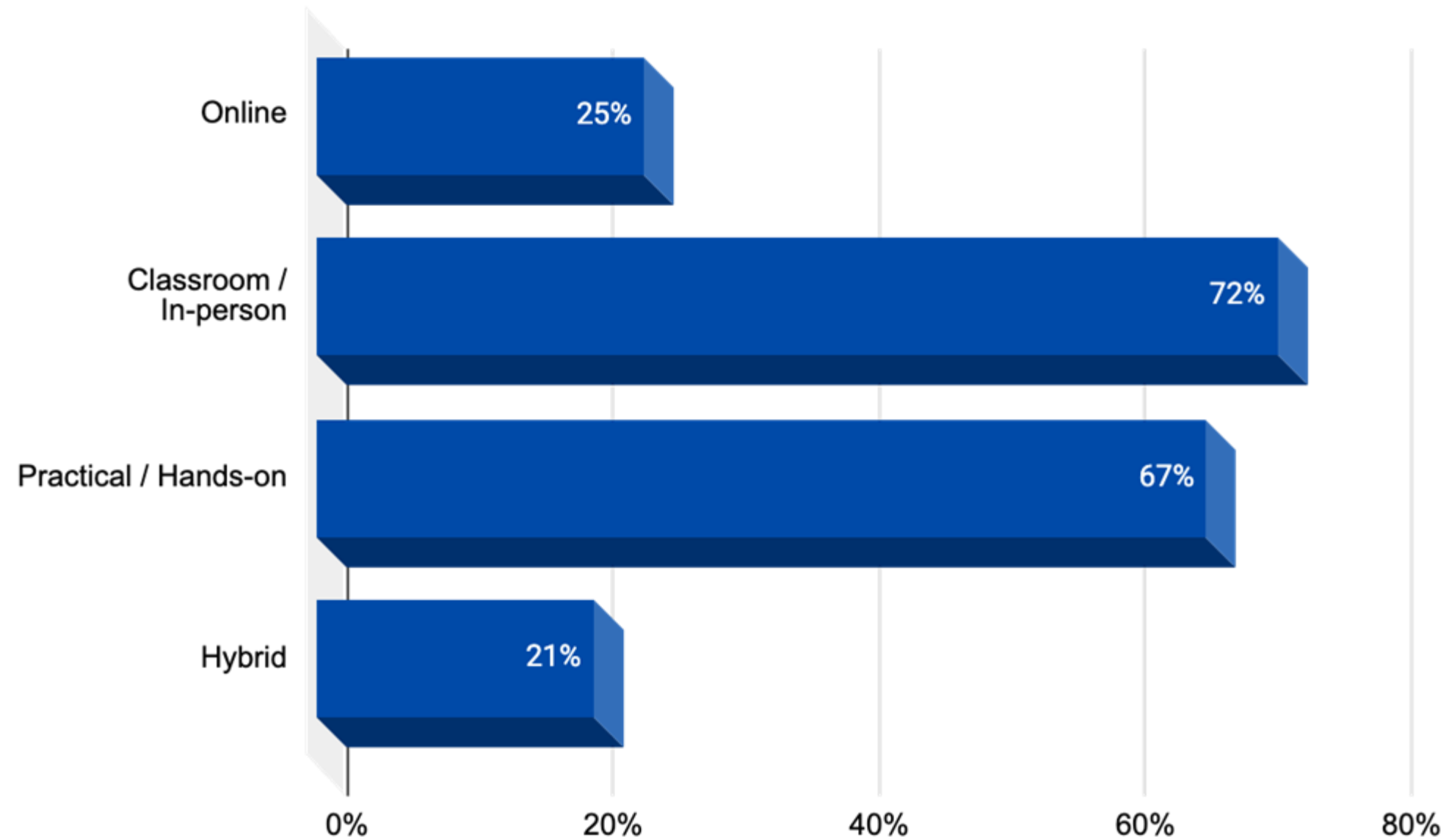
Area Served



Tenure



Training Format





About Vector Solutions

About Vector Solutions for Fire & EMS

Vector Solutions for Fire & EMS is the industry leader in training and workforce management technology that enables Fire and Rescue Departments to meet their demanding training, compliance, and preparedness objectives. The Vector Solutions public safety suite of products includes software for training management, policy distribution, personnel scheduling, critical incident and exposure tracking, and promoting a positive department culture. Its online course library includes more than 450 hours of fire department training with 250+ hours of CAPCE-approved EMS recertification courses. Trusted by 10,000 public safety agencies and 2 million first responders, Vector's purpose-built technology streamlines the full lifecycle of personnel management because readiness saves lives.

For more information about Vector Solutions for Fire & EMS, visit <https://www.vectorsolutions.com/fire> or <https://www.vectorsolutions.com/ems>.



A night scene featuring several emergency vehicles, including a fire truck on the left and police cars in the background, with their red and blue lights flashing. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light sources being the vehicles' emergency lights.

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