



2024 WI Fire and EMS Mental Health Survey - Analysis
 Prepared for Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin Charitable Foundation

OVERVIEW

In consultation with Rogers Behavioral Health, the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin Charitable Foundation developed a mental health survey made accessible to all professional and volunteer Fire and EMS professionals across the state of Wisconsin from October 18, 2024, to January 01, 2025. Full-time, part-time, volunteer, and retired firefighters and EMS responders completed the 50-item survey designed to provide insights on job-related critical stress and associated behavioral health needs. The survey included limited demographic information (race, ethnicity, sex*, years of service, county served) and inquired about critical incidents or traumatic events on the job, thoughts of self-harm, sleep issues, substance use, engagement with department or municipal support services, and perception of mental health stigma in the field. A brief psychological screening tool for depression, anxiety, and general psychological distress— the PHQ-4—was also included.

This was the fifth year distributing the survey, and the second year the survey included an optional, validated self-reported, measure of professional quality of life, the Pro-QoL. This instrument was utilized to gather insight into work satisfaction, secondary trauma, and burnout in “helping” professionals.

In 2024, 1712 individuals responded to the survey, and 826 completed the optional Pro-QoL assessment. Further respondent delineation follows:

Responses:

	Years				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Responses	777	1022	1513	1640	1712
Pro-QoL responses	N/A	N/A	775	854	826

Employment Status:

	All (%)	Males	Females
Full-time	817 (47.7)	659 (53.8)	158 (32.4)
Part-time	155 (9.0)	86 (7.0)	69 (14.2)
Retired	232 (13.5)	198 (16.2)	34 (7.0)
Volunteer	508 (29.7)	282 (23.0)	226 (46.4)

Primary Department Type:

	All (%)	Males	Females
Municipal	1471	1105 (90.2)	366 (75.1)
Private	241	120 (9.8)	121 (24.9)

Services Provided:

	All (%)	Males	Females
EMS	504 (29.4)	202 (16.5)	302 (62.0)
Fire	50 (2.9)	41 (3.3)	9 (1.8)
Fire and EMS	1158 (67.6)	982 (80.2)	176 (36.1)

*Only sex at birth was recorded for this survey

Fire Rank:

	All (%)	Males	Females
Chief officer	172 (14.2)	157 (15.3)	15 (8.1)
Driver	188 (15.6)	165 (16.1)	23 (12.4)
Firefighter	545 (45.1)	418 (40.9)	127 (68.6)
Line officer	303 (25.1)	283 (27.7)	20 (10.8)

* Out of 1208 who responded to this question

EMS Level:

	All (%)	Males	Females
Critical care paramedic	144	112 (9.5)	32 (6.7)
EMT advanced	207	111 (9.4)	96 (20.1)
EMT basic	552	382 (32.3)	170 (35.6)
First responder	234	157 (13.3)	77 (16.1)
Paramedic	525	422 (35.6)	103 (21.5)

* Out of 1662 who responded to this question

Years of Service:

	All (%)	Males	Females
2 years or less	132 (7.7)	73 (6.0)	59 (12.1)
2-5 years	213 (12.4)	110 (9.0)	103 (21.1)
5-10 years	269 (15.7)	170 (13.9)	99 (20.3)
10-15 years	223 (13.0)	157 (12.8)	66 (13.5)
15-20 years	223 (13.0)	170 (13.9)	53 (10.9)
20-25 years	216 (12.6)	170 (13.9)	46 (9.4)
More than 25 years	436 (25.5)	375 (30.6)	61 (12.5)

Race and Ethnicity: (%)

American Indian or Alaskan Native	10 (0.6)
Asian	5 (0.3)
Black or African American	12 (0.7)
Hispanic, LatinX, or Spanish	33 (1.9)
Multiracial	44 (2.6)
White	1603 (93.6)
Other	33 (1.9)
Unknown	5 (0.3)

Responses by county with 20 responses or more: (%)

Brown	56 (3.7)	La Crosse	24 (1.4)	Rock	57 (3.3)
Dane	143 (8.3)	Manitowoc	42 (2.4)	Sheboygan	28 (1.6)
Dodge	20 (1.2)	Marathon	30 (1.7)	Washington	45 (2.6)
Douglas	22 (1.3)	Milwaukee	169 (9.9)	Waukesha	84 (4.9)
Eau Claire	34 (2.0)	Outagamie	53 (3.1)	Winnebago	93 (5.4)
Fond du Lac	32 (1.9)	Ozaukee	22 (1.3)	Wood	28 (1.6)
Grant	23 (1.3)	Portage	25 (1.5)		
Kenosha	105 (6.1)	Racine	77 (4.5)		

County Type:

	All	Males	Females
Urban	1188 (69.4%)	931 (78.4)	257 (21.6)
Rural	524 (30.6)	294 (56.1)	230 (43.9)

Job-Related Critical Stress:

When asked “Have you experienced a critical incident or a traumatic event on the job?”, of the 1712 respondents, 1530 (89.4%) indicated they had experienced a job-related critical incident or traumatic event. In previous years, 726 out of 777 (93.4%), 935 out of 1022 (91.5%), 1412 out of 1513 (93.3%), and 1477 out of 1640 (90.1%) respondents answered ‘yes’ to this question in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Of the 1530 respondents in 2024 who indicated they had experienced job-related critical stress, 249 (16.3%) reported having nightmares about the events or unwanted thoughts about the events within the last *month*- 179 (71.9%) of whom reported trying to not think about the event(s) or going out of their way to avoid situations that reminded them of the event(s). Likewise, 609 respondents (39.8%) reported having nightmares or unwanted thoughts of the events within the last *year*, and of those, 368 (60.4%) reported trying to not think about the event(s) or going out of their way to avoid situations that reminded them of the event(s).

When comparing the employment status of those who indicated they have experienced job-related critical stress, those who worked full time had higher rates than those with part-time or volunteer status regarding change in view of job or future (45.6% vs. 34.3%), sleep problems (63.3% vs. 41.0%), family or relationship problems (38.7% vs. 26.9%), thoughts of suicide or self-harm (13.6% vs. 11.9%), substance abuse (16.7% vs. 6.7%), and being easily angered or withdrawn (59.0% vs. 34.3%).

Furthermore, the respondents working in both Fire AND EMS reported the highest rates of sleep problems (54.7%), family or relationship problems (34.6%), substance abuse (14.9%) and being easily angered or withdrawn (48.5%) compared to employees working either EMS OR Fire.

Of the 1530 respondents who indicated they had experienced a traumatic or critical event, 174 (11.4%) reported thoughts of suicide or self-harm as a result from the critical or traumatic event. This year, respondents were asked, “Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by thoughts that you would be better off dead, or thoughts of hurting yourself in some way?” regardless of whether they had experienced a critical or traumatic event. A total of 225 (13.2%) respondents reported having suicidal thoughts “several days,” “more than half the days,” or “nearly every day.” More than half (53.8%) of these respondents were employed full-time. Of the 225 respondents, 184 (81.8%) worked for a municipal department, and 157 (69.8%) worked in an urban county. Nearly 10% (24) of the 225, reported suicidal ideations nearly every day.

In 2024, 195 (12.7%) respondents reported substance abuse following experiencing a critical or traumatic event. Substance abuse was similar between municipal and private departments (12.9% and 11.6%). However, full-time and retired respondents reported higher levels of substance abuse (16.7% and 17.2%). The following tables and graphs further delineate the complications experienced associated with job-related critical stress:

By Year

	Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Respondents	777 (%)	1022	1513	1640	1712
Experienced critical incident or traumatic event	726 (93.4)	935 (91.5)	1412 (93.3)	1477 (90.1)	1530 (89.4)

By Employment Status

	All	Full-time	Part-time	Retired	Volunteer
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	817	155	232	508
Respondents that experienced a critical or traumatic event	1530 (89.4%)	747 (91.4%)	134 (86.4%)	215 (92.7%)	434 (85.4%)
Change in view of job or future	559 (36.5)	341 (45.6)	46 (34.3)	59 (27.4)	113 (26.0)
Sleep problems	817 (53.4)	473 (63.3)	55 (41.0)	110 (51.2)	179 (41.2)
Family or relationship problems	476 (31.1)	289 (38.7)	36 (26.9)	73 (33.9)	78 (18.0)
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm	174 (11.4)	102 (13.6)	16 (11.9)	32 (14.9)	24 (5.5)
Substance abuse	195 (12.7)	125 (16.7)	9 (6.7)	37 (17.2)	24 (5.5)
Easily angered or withdrawn	697 (45.6)	441 (59.0)	46 (34.3)	86 (40.0)	124 (28.6)
None of the above	380 (24.8)	115 (15.4)	41 (30.6)	65 (30.2)	159 (36.6)

Shaded cells include all responses; white cells include only the respondents who indicated they had experienced a job-related critical event.

By Department Type

	All	Municipal	Private
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	1471 (85.9)	241 (14.1)
Respondents that experienced a critical or traumatic event	1530 (89.4)	1323 (89.9)	207 (85.9)
Change in view of job or future	559 (36.5)	486 (36.7)	73 (35.3)
Sleep problems	817 (53.4)	708 (53.3)	109 (52.7)
Family or relationship problems	476 (31.1)	423 (32.0)	53 (25.6)
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm	174 (11.4)	146 (11.0)	28 (13.5)
Substance abuse	195 (12.7)	171 (12.9)	24 (11.6)
Easily angered or withdrawn	697 (45.6)	606 (45.8)	91 (44.0)
None of the above	380 (24.8)	331 (25.0)	49 (23.7)

By Sex

	All	Male	Female
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	1225 (71.5)	487 (28.4)
Respondents that experienced a critical or traumatic event	1530 (89.4)	1124 (91.7)	406 (83.4)
Change in view of job or future	559 (36.5)	422 (37.5)	137 (33.7)
Sleep problems	817 (53.4)	596 (53.0)	221 (54.4)
Family or relationship problems	476 (31.1)	373 (33.2)	103 (25.4)
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm	174 (11.4)	135 (12.0)	39 (9.6)
Substance abuse	195 (12.7)	165 (14.7)	30 (7.4)
Easily angered or withdrawn	697 (45.6)	544 (48.4)	153 (37.7)
None of the above	380 (24.8)	276 (24.6)	104 (25.6)

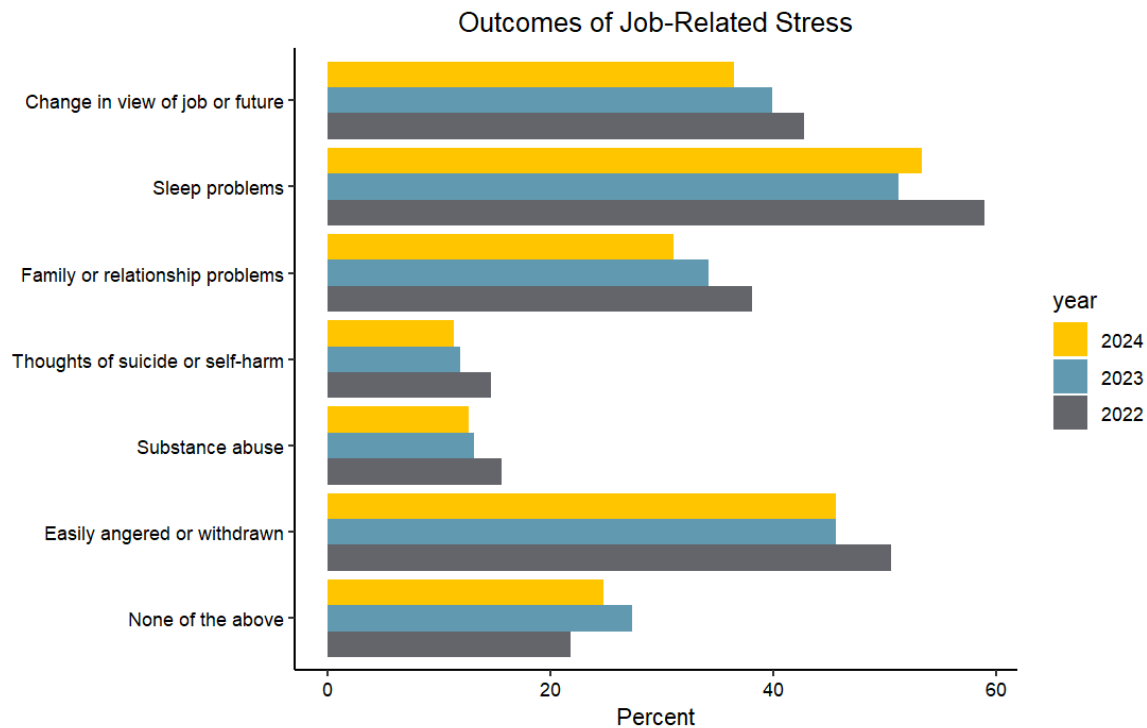
By Services Provided

	All	EMS	Fire	Fire and EMS
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	504 (29.4)	50 (2.9)	1158 (67.6)
Respondents that experienced a critical or traumatic event	1530 (89.4)	425 (84.3)	42 (84.0)	1063 (91.8)
Change in view of job or future	559 (36.5)	140 (32.9)	11 (26.2)	408 (38.4)
Sleep problems	817 (53.4)	213 (50.1)	22 (52.4)	582 (54.7)
Family or relationship problems	476 (31.1)	96 (22.6)	12 (28.6)	368 (34.6)
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm	174 (11.4)	46 (10.8)	4 (9.5)	124 (11.7)
Substance abuse	195 (12.7)	35 (8.2)	1 (2.4)	159 (15.0)
Easily angered or withdrawn	697 (45.6)	168 (39.5)	13 (30.9)	516 (48.5)
None of the above	380 (24.8)	124 (29.2)	12 (28.6)	244 (22.9)

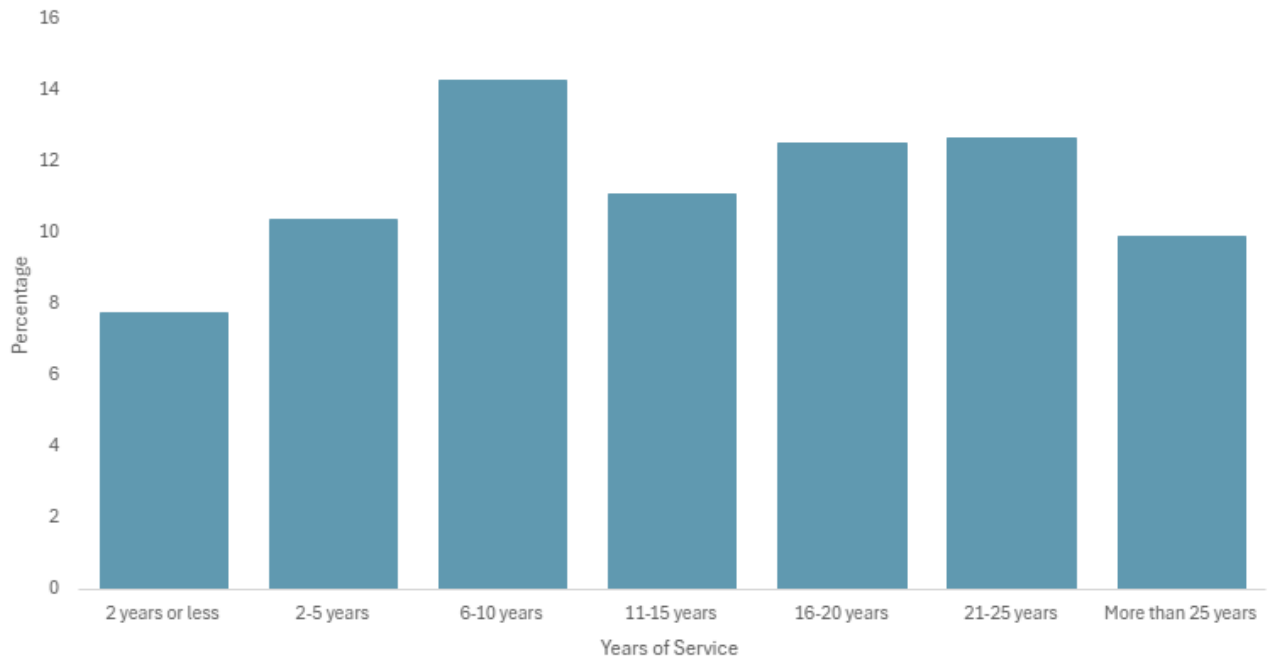
By Years of Service

	All	2 years or less	2-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20-25 years	More than 25 years
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	132 (7.7)	213 (12.4)	269 (15.7)	223 (13.0)	223 (13.0)	216 (12.6)	436 (25.5)
Respondents that experienced a critical or traumatic event	1530 (89.4)	103	173	238	198	199	205	414
Change in view of job or future	559 (36.5)	18 (17.5)	56 (32.4)	87 (36.5)	91 (46.0)	92 (46.2)	83 (40.5)	132 (31.9)
Sleep problems	817 (53.4)	48 (46.6)	86 (49.7)	135 (56.7)	109 (55.0)	121 (60.8)	110 (53.7)	208 (50.2)
Family or relationship problems	476 (31.1)	21 (20.4)	42 (24.3)	73 (30.7)	69 (34.8)	76 (38.2)	70 (34.1)	125 (30.2)
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm	174 (11.4)	8 (7.8)	18 (10.4)	34 (14.3)	22 (11.1)	25 (12.6)	26 (12.7)	41 (9.9)
Substance abuse	195 (12.7)	8 (7.8)	11 (6.4)	30 (12.6)	30 (15.1)	28 (14.1)	33 (16.1)	55 (13.3)
Easily angered or withdrawn	697 (45.6)	28 (27.2)	63 (36.4)	125 (52.5)	99 (50.0)	117 (58.8)	104 (50.7)	161 (38.9)
None of the above	380 (24.8)	30 (29.1)	46 (26.6)	49 (20.6)	38 (19.2)	39 (19.6)	51 (24.9)	127 (30.7)

By Survey Year



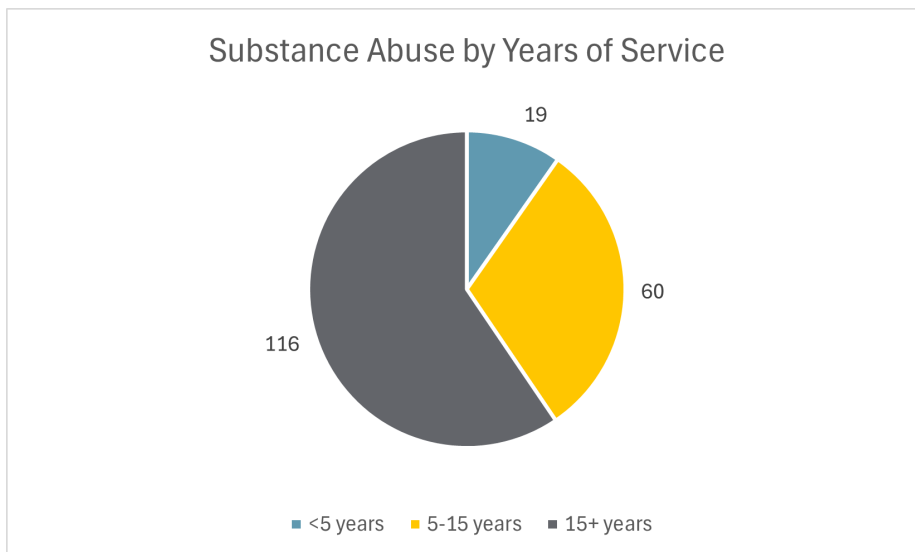
Thoughts of Suicide or Self-harm: By Years of Service



By County Type

		County Type	
		Rural	Urban
Total Respondents		524 (30.6%)	1188 (69.4%)
Thoughts of Suicide or Self-harm	Yes	68 (13.0)	157 (13.2)
	No	456 (87.0)	1031 (86.8)

Substance Abuse: by Years of Service



Based on only the respondents who indicated they had experienced job-related critical stress and have experienced substance abuse.

Sleep Problems

Respondents were asked to describe any sleep problems as a result of their work. In 2024, 1349(78.8%) respondents reported at least one sleep problem. Compared to 2023, 2024 respondents reported similar values for each sleep problem. However, full-time employed respondents reported statistically significant higher rates for difficulty falling asleep (51.4%), not feeling fully rested (73.6%), waking up frequently at night (52.5%), use substances to stay awake (13.9%), use of over-the-counter medications or energy drinks to stay awake (18.5%), and multiple sleep problems (70.5%) when compared to the total respondents. Compared to last year, the percentage of full-time respondents with multiple sleep disorders has increased in the last two years from 62.5% in 2022 and 58.5% in 2023 to 70.5% in 2024. Details are provided in the charts that follow:

By the Years of Service

	Years of Service							
	All	2 years or less	2-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20-25 years	More than 25 years
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	132 (7.7)	213 (12.4)	269 (15.7)	223 (13.0)	223 (13.0)	216 (12.6)	436 (25.5)
Sleep Problem	1259 (73.5)	100 (75.7)	169 (79.3)	218 (81.0)	187 (83.9)	179 (80.3)	174 (80.6)	322 (73.8)

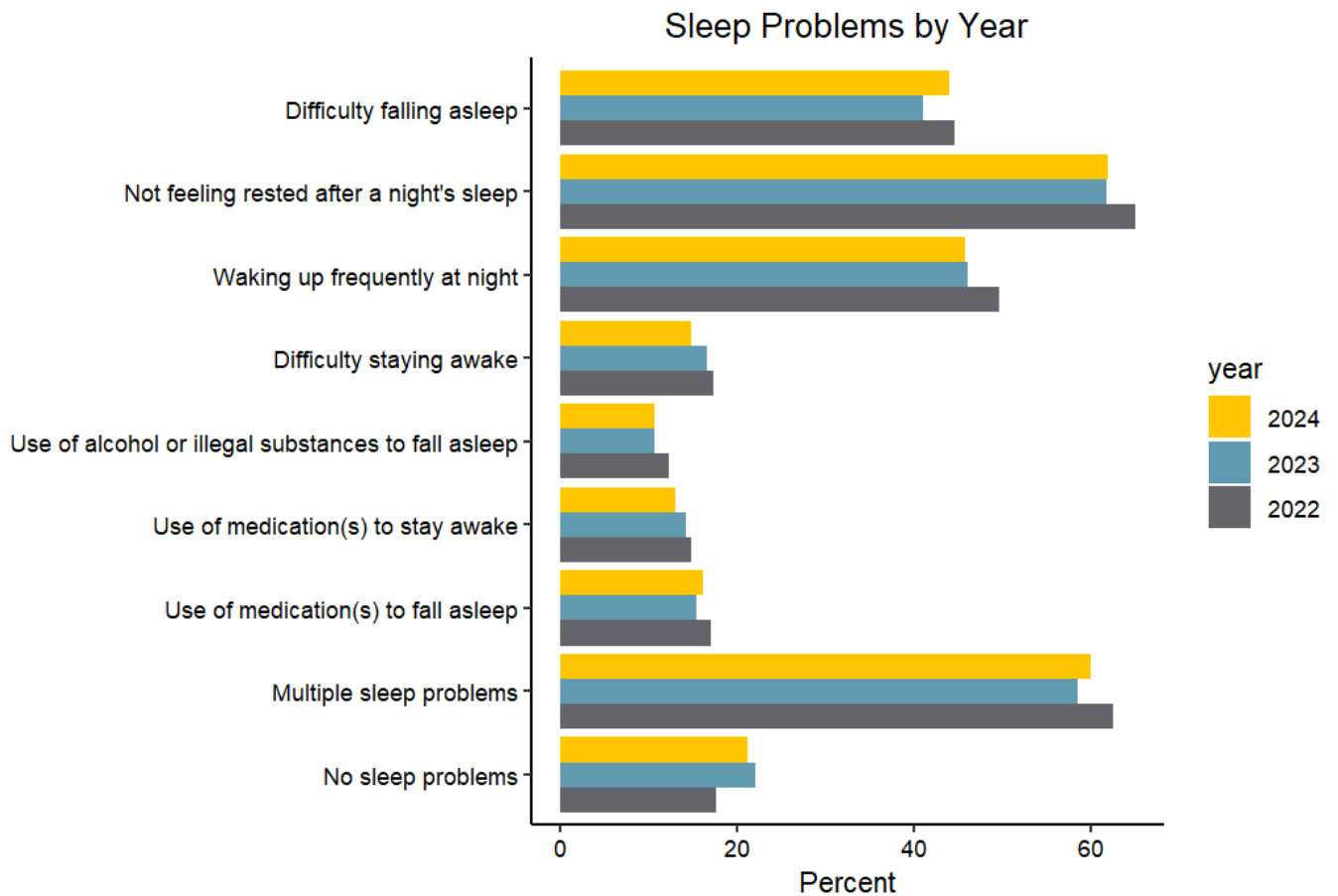
By Employment Status

	All (%)	Full-time	Part-time	Retired	Volunteer
Total Respondents	1712	817	155	232	508
Difficulty falling asleep	754 (44.0)	420 (51.4)	65 (41.9)	80 (34.5)	189 (37.2)
Not feeling rested	1062 (62.0)	601 (73.6)	89 (57.4)	108 (46.5)	264 (52.0)
Waking up frequently at night	785 (45.8)	429 (52.5)	59 (38.1)	102 (44.0)	195 (38.4)
Difficulty staying awake	255 (14.9)	156 (19.1)	21 (13.5)	22 (9.5)	56 (11.0)
Use of substances to stay awake	184 (10.7)	114 (13.9)	10 (6.4)	28 (12.1)	32 (6.3)
Use of medication to stay awake	223 (13.0)	151 (18.5)	20 (12.9)	15 (6.5)	37 (7.3)
Use of medication to fall asleep	277 (16.2)	143 (17.5)	26 (16.8)	41 (17.7)	67 (13.2)
Multiple sleep problems	1027 (60.0)	576 (70.5)	84 (54.2)	113 (48.7)	254 (50.0)
No sleep problems	363 (21.2)	117 (14.3)	36 (23.2)	72 (31.0)	138 (27.2)

By Service

	Total (%)	EMS	Fire	Fire and EMS
Total Respondents	1712	504	50	1158
Difficulty falling asleep	754 (44.0)	231 (45.8)	19 (38.0)	504 (43.5)
Not feeling rested	1062 (62.0)	301 (59.7)	35 (70.0)	726 (62.7)
Waking up frequently at night	785 (45.8)	216 (42.9)	27 (54.0)	542 (46.8)
Difficulty staying awake	255 (14.9)	70 (13.9)	8 (16.0)	177 (15.3)
Use of substances to fall asleep	184 (10.7)	39 (7.7)	4 (8.0)	141 (12.2)
Use of medication to stay awake	223 (13.0)	72 (14.3)	5 (10.0)	146 (12.6)
Use of medication to fall asleep	277 (16.2)	103 (20.4)	3 (6.0)	171 (14.8)
Multiple sleep problems	1027 (60.0)	296 (58.7)	32 (64.0)	699 (60.4)
No sleep problems	363 (21.2)	115 (22.8)	8 (16.0)	240 (20.7)

By the Year



Numbers reported are based on total respondents for each year the survey was conducted. Total number of respondents in 2021, 2022, and 2023 were 1022, 1513, 1640, respectively.

By Type of Schedule

In addition to analyzing the data by participant demographics, respondents were also asked to describe their work schedule. Scheduling options were broken down as follows:

California: 24 hours on, 24 hours for 2 cycles, then 24 hours on, 96 hours off

Chicago: 24 hours on, 48 hours off

48/96: 48 hours on, 96 hours off

**Modified California and Chicago schedules were included in "Other" category.*

	40 hours per week	48/96	California	Chicago	Other
Total Respondents	85 (10.4%)	122 (14.9)	345 (42.2)	172 (21.0)	93 (11.4)
Difficulty falling asleep	36 (42.3)	72 (59.0)	174 (50.4)	93 (54.1)	45 (48.4)
Not feeling rested	60 (70.6)	88 (72.1)	260 (75.4)	123 (71.5)	70 (75.3)
Waking up frequently at night	32 (37.6)	65 (53.3)	179 (51.9)	89 (51.7)	64 (68.8)
Difficulty staying awake	8 (9.4)	17 (13.9)	72 (20.9)	40 (23.3)	19 (20.4)
Use of medication, or energy drinks to stay awake	23 (27.0)	37 (30.3)	105 (30.4)	59 (34.3)	41 (44.1)
Use of medication to fall asleep	17 (20.0)	21 (17.2)	55 (15.9)	30 (17.4)	20 (21.5)
Multiple sleep problems	57 (67.1)	83 (68.0)	245 (71.0)	117 (68.0)	74 (79.6)
No sleep problems	11 (12.9)	19 (15.6)	52 (15.1)	26 (15.1)	9 (9.7)

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Eating and Exercising Habits

This was the first year that we asked respondents if they believed their job-related critical stress impacted their eating and/or exercising habits.

Of the 1712 respondents, 359 (21.0%) reported eating more than usual, and 157 (9.2%) reported eating less than their normal. 374 (21.8%) respondents reported exercising less than normal, and 43 (2.5%) reported exercising more. The following tables and graphs further delineate the changes in exercising and eating habits:

By Sex

	All	Male	Female
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	1225 (71.5)	487 (28.4)
Eating Less	157 (9.2)	94 (7.7)	63 (12.9)
Eating More	359 (21.0)	262 (21.4)	97 (19.9)
Exercising Less	374 (21.8)	268 (21.9)	106 (21.8)
Exercising More	43 (2.5)	30 (2.4)	13 (2.7)

By Employment Type

	All	Full-Time	Part-Time	Retired	Volunteer
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	817 (47.7)	155 (9.0)	232 (13.5)	508 (29.7)
Eating Less	157 (9.2)	96 (11.7)	20 (12.9)	13 (5.6)	28 (5.5)
Eating More	359 (21.0)	223 (27.3)	26 (16.8)	41 (17.7)	69 (13.6)
Exercising Less	374 (21.8)	235 (28.8)	31 (20.0)	44 (19.0)	64 (12.6)
Exercising More	43 (2.5)	32 (3.9)	3 (1.9)	4 (1.7)	4 (0.8)

By Primary Department

	All	Municipal	Private
Total Respondents	1712 (%)	1471 (85.9)	241 (14.1)
Eating Less	157 (9.2)	114 (7.7)	43 (17.8)
Eating More	359 (21.0)	310 (21.1)	49 (20.3)
Exercising Less	374 (21.8)	324 (22.0)	50 (20.7)
Exercising More	43 (2.5)	36 (2.4)	7 (2.9)

Anxiety, Depression and Psychological Stress Screening (PHQ-4)

The PHQ-4 is a 4-item questionnaire that screens respondents for anxiety and depression symptoms as well as approximate degree of psychological stress.

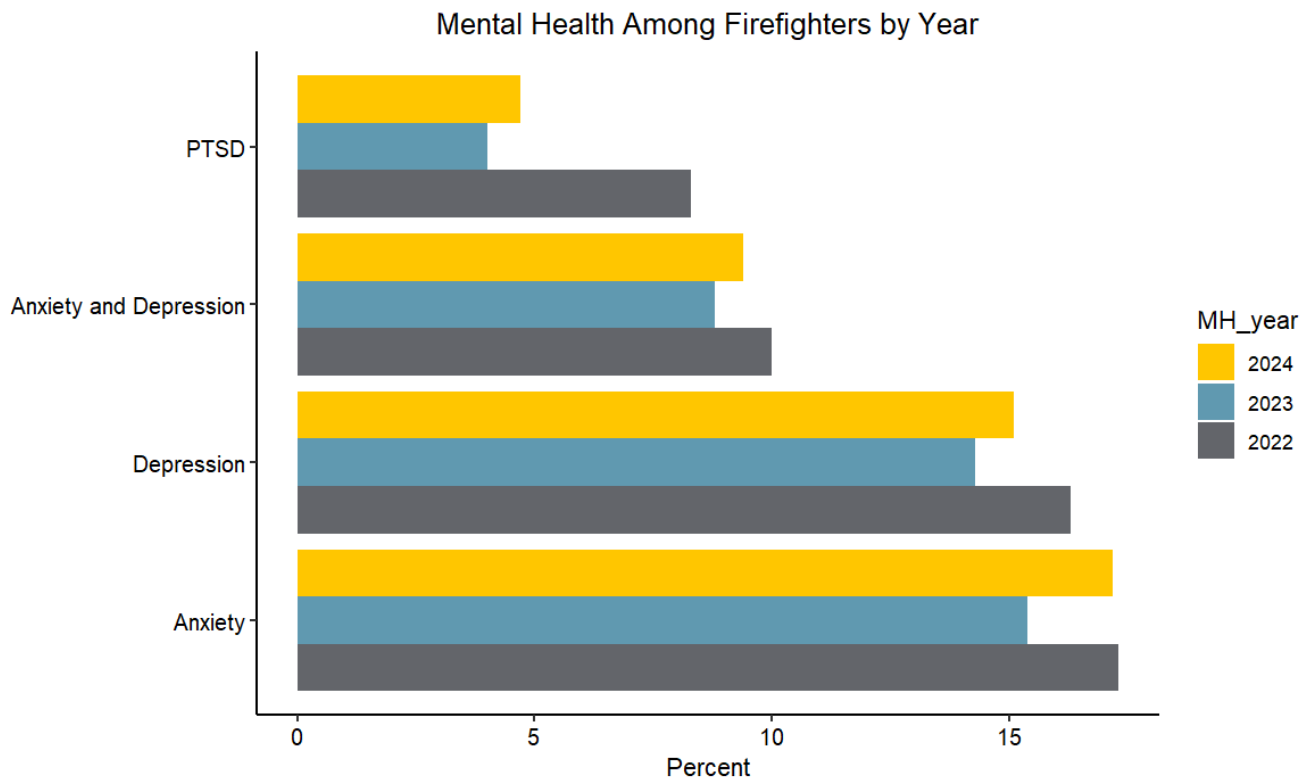
Of the total 1712 respondents, 295 (17.2%) screened positive for anxiety symptoms, and 258 (15.1%) screened positive for depression symptoms. Of the 817 full-time firefighters, 172 (21.0%) screened positive for anxiety symptoms, and 153 (18.7%) screened positive for depression symptoms. In addition, 95 (11.6%) of full-time firefighters screened positive for both anxiety and depression. The rates were notably higher for female respondents (see table). Between private and municipal departments, a higher percentage of respondents who worked for private companies reported screening positive for anxiety and/or depression.

	Total Respondents	Anxiety	Depression	Anxiety and Depression
All	1712 (%)	295 (17.2)	258 (15.1)	161 (9.4)
Employment Type				
Full-time	817	172 (21.0)	153 (18.7)	95 (11.6)
Part-time	155	24 (15.5)	22 (14.2)	13 (8.4)
Retired	232	33 (14.2)	28 (12.1)	20 (8.6)
Volunteer	508	66 (13.0)	55 (10.8)	33 (6.5)
Primary Department				
Municipal	1471	239 (16.2)	215 (14.6)	133 (9.0)
Private	241	56 (23.2)	43 (17.8)	28 (11.6)
Services Provided				
EMS	504	100 (19.8)	79 (15.7)	54 (10.7)
Fire	50	7 (14.0)	5 (10.0)	2 (4.0)
Fire and EMS	1158	188 (16.2)	174 (15.0)	105 (9.1)
Fire Rank				
Chief officer	172	17 (9.9)	21 (12.2)	10 (5.8)
Driver	188	22 (11.7)	29 (15.4)	16 (8.5)
Firefighter	545	99 (18.2)	78 (14.3)	52 (9.5)
Line officer	303	57 (18.8)	51 (16.8)	29 (9.6)
EMS Level				
Critical care paramedic	144	39 (27.1)	33 (22.9)	24 (16.7)
EMT advanced	207	38 (18.4)	33 (15.9)	21 (10.1)
EMT basic	552	80 (14.5)	77 (13.9)	50 (9.1)
First responder	234	22 (9.4)	17 (7.3)	8 (3.4)
Paramedic	525	109 (20.8)	93 (17.7)	56 (10.7)
Sex				
Male	1225	189 (15.4)	181 (14.8)	107 (8.7)
Female	487	106 (21.8)	77 (15.8)	54 (11.1)

	Total Respondents	Anxiety	Depression	Anxiety and Depression
All (includes EMS)	1712 (%)	295 (17.2)	258 (15.1)	161 (9.4)
Full-time firefighters	817	172 (21.0)	153 (18.7)	95 (11.6)
Men	659 (80.7)	127 (19.3)	116 (17.6)	68 (10.3)
Women	158 (19.3)	45 (28.5)	37 (23.4)	27 (17.1)

*The Anxiety and Depression Association of America estimates 18.1% of adults in the U.S. have anxiety and 6.7% of adults in the U.S. have depression at some point every year. Consistently, research shows that women exhibit depression at a rate 2-3 times higher than men through age 45.

Mental Health over the last 3 survey years



Overall psychological stress is measured by the PHQ-4 with levels of distress: “None” (0-2), “Mild” (3-5), “Moderate” (6-8), and “Severe” (9-12), where a higher score denotes a greater degree of psychological stress.

	Total Respondents	Degree of Psychological Distress			
		None (0-2)	Mild (3-5)	Moderate (6-8)	Severe (9-12)
All (includes EMS)	1712	1021 (59.6)	443 (25.9)	159 (9.3)	89 (5.2)
Full-time firefighters	817	428 (52.4)	241 (29.5)	97 (11.9)	51 (6.2)
Men	659	358 (54.3)	194 (29.4)	76 (11.5)	31 (4.7)
Women	158	70 (44.3)	47 (29.7)	21 (13.3)	20 (12.7)

Trauma Screening (PC-PTSD-5)

The Primary Care PTSD Screen for DSM-5 (PC-PTSD-5) is a 5-item assessment designed to identify individuals with probable PTSD. Those who screen positive are recommended for further, formal assessment. The screener is validated for use only for a recent timeframe of the past month, but has also been added in the context of the past year.

Of the total 1712 responses, 282 (16.5%) screened positive for probable PTSD within the last year, and 81 (4.7%) screened positive in the last month prior to completing the survey. Rates are similar 2023. Full-time firefighters were more likely to screen positive for probable PTSD within the last year and within the last month when compared to all respondents. In addition, men were more likely to show signs of PTSD within the last month (5.22%), whereas both sexes were similar in probability of PTSD within the last year (16.5% for men, 16.4% for women).

Of the 817 full-time firefighters, 161 (19.7%) screened positive within the last year, and 51 (6.2%) screened positive within the last month. Further delineation by sex and co-occurring anxiety and depression is below. To be noted, there is a correlation between screening positive for anxiety and depression and for post-traumatic stress.

	Possible PTSD within last year ** (%)	Probable PTSD within the last month
All respondents	282 (16.5)	81 (4.7)
Full-time firefighters	161 (19.7)	51 (6.2)
Men	202 (16.5)	64 (5.2)
Women	80 (16.4)	17 (3.5)

	Co-occurring anxiety and probable PTSD symptoms within the last Month (%)	Co-occurring depression and probable PTSD symptoms within the last month
All respondents	47 (2.7)	43 (2.5)
Full-time firefighters	29 (3.5)	28 (3.4)
Men	24 (3.6)	23 (3.5)
Women	5 (3.2)	5 (3.2)

**Based on total population (n=1712), total full-time firefighter population (n=817), men (n=1225) and women (n=487), respectively.*

Stigma

Respondents were asked to respond to questions about potential stigma associated with seeking treatment or support for behavioral health needs. Consistent with reports from previous years, about 98% of respondents would encourage their peers to seek support- a rate much higher than they would seek support for themselves (66%). In 2024, the rate of those agreeing with the statement: “I would feel comfortable asking for my own behavioral health support” was 65.9%, which was slightly higher than the rate in 2023(64.8%).

All Respondents (includes EMS)				
	Firefighters think treatment for behavioral health is a sign of personal weakness (%)	I would encourage a firefighter coworker to get behavioral health treatment	I would ask for my own behavioral health treatment	I would know where to go for my own behavioral health treatment
Strongly agree	154 (9.0)	1282 (74.9)	453 (26.5)	493 (28.8)
Agree	601 (35.1)	400 (23.4)	676 (39.5)	828 (48.4)
Neither agree/disagree	450 (26.3)	21 (1.2)	304 (17.8)	212 (12.4)
Disagree	320 (18.7)	5 (0.3)	230 (13.4)	156 (9.1)
Strongly disagree	187 (10.9)	4 (0.2)	49 (2.9)	23 (1.3)

Full-time Firefighters				
	Firefighters think treatment for behavioral health is a sign of personal weakness (%)	I would encourage a firefighter coworker to get behavioral health treatment	If I needed help with my own behavioral health, I would be comfortable asking for it	I would know where to go for my own behavioral health treatment
Strongly agree	74 (9.1)	602 (73.7)	192 (23.5)	237 (29.0)
Agree	278 (34.0)	199 (24.4)	319 (39.0)	407 (49.8)
Neither agree/disagree	215 (26.3)	12 (1.5)	158 (19.3)	90 (11.0)
Disagree	169 (20.7)	2 (0.2)	124 (15.2)	74 (9.1)
Strongly disagree	81 (9.9)	2 (0.2)	24 (2.9)	9 (1.1)

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Resources

When asked which people or entities they would be comfortable asking for behavioral health assistance, respondents were most likely to turn to a treatment provider (54.8%), a family member or friend (52.4%), or peer/co-worker (44.6%). 7.9% indicated they would not be comfortable seeking support in comparison to the 6.8% reported last year.

For full-time firefighters, the rates were similar- treatment provider (50.7%), family/friend (55.7%), or peer/coworker (50.7%). 6.6% indicated they would not be comfortable seeking support from any of the listed resources.

All Respondents (includes EMS)		
	I would ask the following for behavioral health assistance (%)	I have previously received help from the following resources
City/county/district employee assistance program	449 (26.2)	139 (8.1)
Treatment provider	939 (54.8)	402 (23.5)
Family member or friend	898 (52.4)	289 (16.9)
Peer or co-worker	763 (44.6)	262 (15.3)
Department employee assistance program	586 (34.2)	189 (11.0)
PFFW member assistance program	255 (15.5)	22 (1.3)
Other	112 (6.5)	77 (4.5)
None of the above	128 (7.5)	942 (55.0)

Full-time Firefighters		
	I would ask the following for behavioral health assistance (%)	I have previously received help from the following resources
City/county/district employee assistance program	234 (28.6)	86 (10.5)
Treatment provider	414 (50.7)	205 (25.1)
Family member or friend	455 (55.7)	166 (20.3)
Peer or co-worker	414 (50.7)	154 (18.8)
Department employee assistance program	349 (42.7)	123 (15.1)
PFFW member assistance program	183 (22.4)	9 (1.1)
Other	49 (6.0)	39 (4.8)
None of the above	54 (6.6)	403 (49.3)

Satisfaction with Resources

Of the 1712 total responses, 189 people (11.0%) reported utilizing their department Employee Assistance Program- 57.1% of whom found satisfaction in the services. Of the 139 (8.5%) who indicated that they sought help from an EAP provided by their city, county, or district, 54.7% found satisfaction in the services (up from 48.2% in 2023). The respondents who reported seeking help from the PFFW member assistance program, 63.7% were satisfied with the services (down from 79%) in 2023.

All Respondents (%)			
	City/County/District EAP	Department EAP	PFFW MAP
Total	139 (8.1%)	189 (11.0)	22 (1.3)
Strongly agree	19 (13.7)	34 (18.0)	8 (36.4)
Agree	57 (41.0)	74 (39.1)	6 (27.3)
Neither agree / disagree	23 (16.5)	29 (15.3)	5 (22.7)
Disagree	24 (17.3)	33 (17.5)	1 (4.5)
Strongly disagree	16 (11.5)	19 (10.0)	2 (9.1)

Full-time Firefighters (%)			
	City/County/District EAP	Department EAP	PFFW MAP
Total	86 (10.5%)	123 (15.1)	9 (1.1)
Strongly agree	10 (11.6)	22 (17.9)	3 (33.3)
Agree	34 (39.5)	46 (37.4)	3 (33.3)
Neither agree / disagree	15 (17.4)	20 (16.3)	1 (11.1)
Disagree	15 (17.4)	21 (17.1)	0 (0.0)
Strongly disagree	12 (14.0)	14 (11.4)	2 (22.2)

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Professional Quality of Life

The Professional Quality of Life (Pro-QoL) instrument was introduced to the survey in 2022 as an optional, 30-item self-report questionnaire to assess work satisfaction, secondary trauma, and potential burnout in “helping” professionals. The validated tool was developed as a measure of both the negative and positive effects of working with those who have experienced traumatic stress. Of the 1712 participants who completed the survey, 826 (51%) participants opted to take the additional Professional Quality of Life survey. Of the 826 respondents, 107 were retirees and were included in the analysis.

Scoring for the Pro-QoL is categorical, and scores are assigned a level based on these ranges:

High: 42-50

Moderate: 23-41

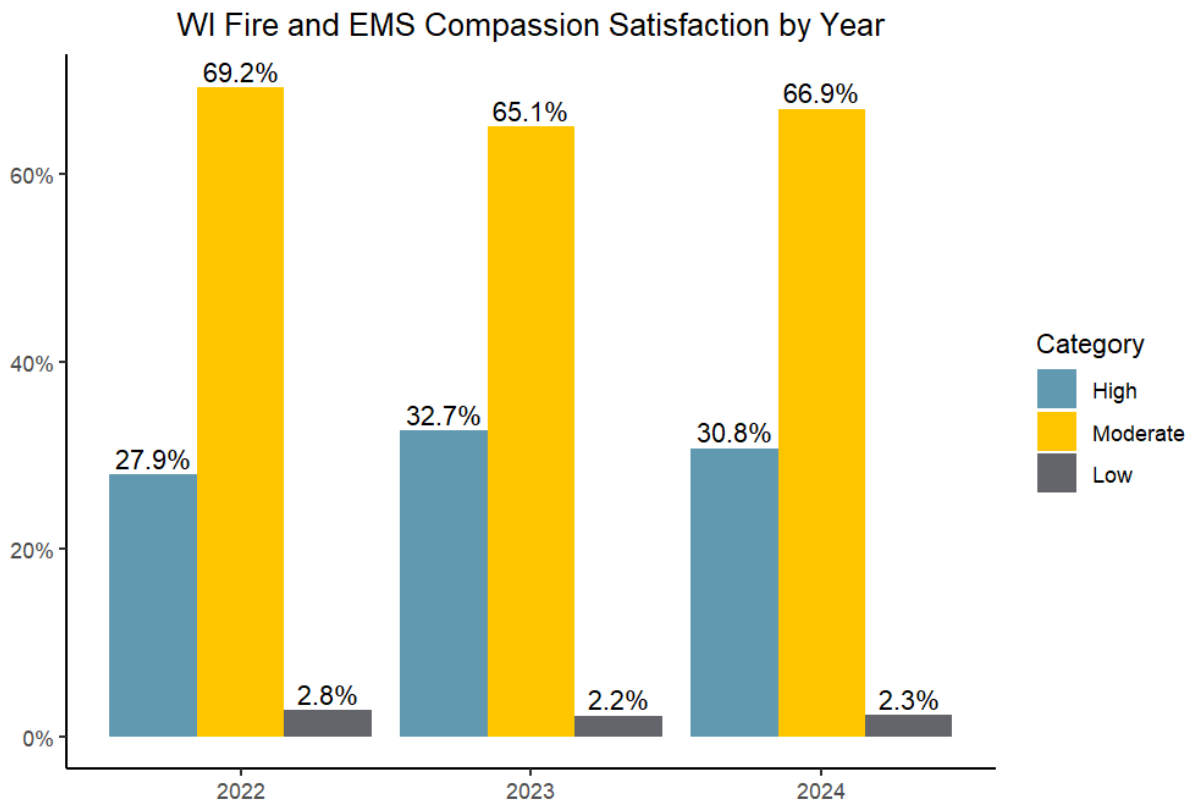
Low: 0-22

Pro-QoL Category	Mean (sd)	n (%)
Compassion Satisfaction	37.7 (7.0)	
High		254 (30.7)
Moderate		553 (66.9)
Low		19 (2.3)
Burnout	24.6 (6.7)	
High		4 (0.5)
Moderate		485 (58.7)
Low		337 (40.8)
Secondary Traumatic Stress	23.9 (6.9)	
High		13 (1.6)
Moderate		429 (51.9)
Low		384 (46.5)

After determining the degree of each category within the Pro-QoL assessment for each respondent, we analyzed the changes between the 2024, 2023, and 2022 survey responses for each category and separated by sex. The total number of respondents for the Pro-QoL assessment in 2022 was 775 and 854 in 2023.

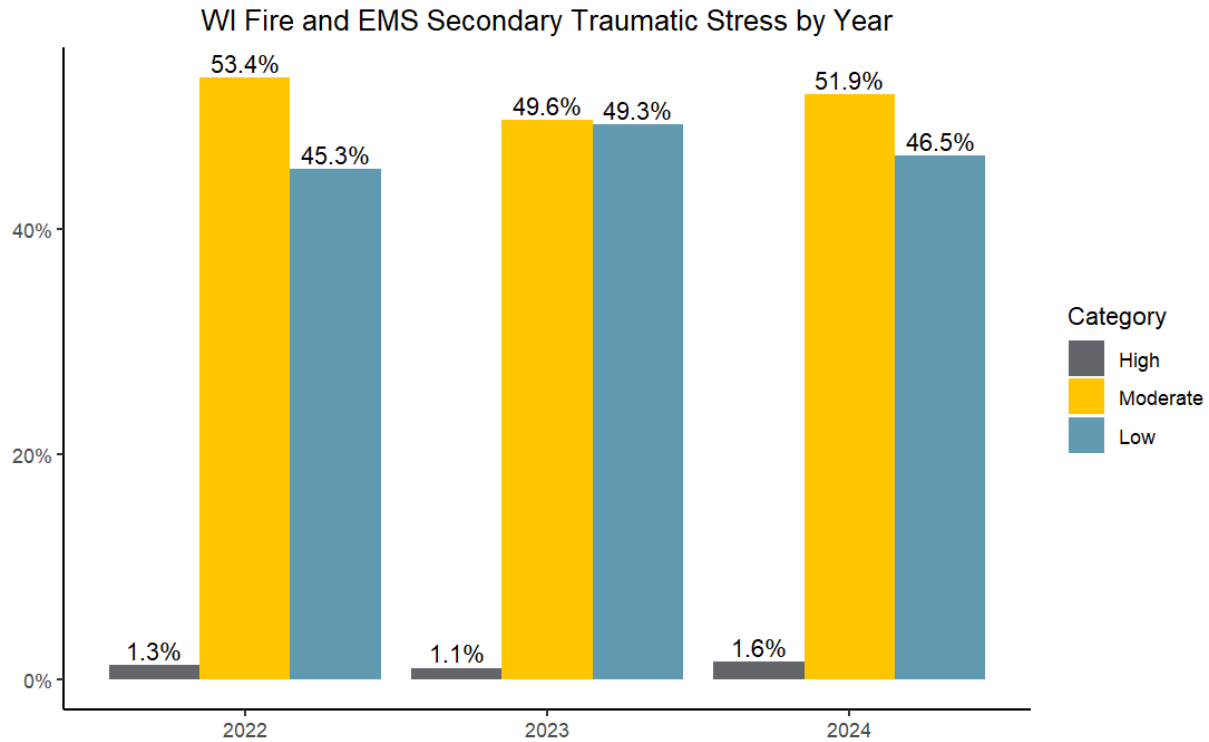
Pro-QOL Category	2022 (775)		2023 (854)		2024 (826)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total Respondents	603 (%)	172	590	264	591	235
Compassion Satisfaction						
High	169 (28.0)	48 (27.9)	180 (30.5)	99 (37.5)	165 (27.9)	89 (37.9)
Moderate	412 (68.3)	124 (72.1)	395 (66.9)	161 (61.0)	408 (69.0)	145 (61.7)
Low	22 (3.6)	0 (0.0)	15 (2.5)	4 (1.5)	18 (3.0)	1 (0.4)
Burnout						
High	2 (0.33)	1 (0.6)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.4)	4 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
Moderate	390 (64.7)	112 (65.1)	350 (59.3)	143 (54.2)	361 (61.1)	124 (52.8)
Low	211 (35.0)	59 (34.3)	239 (40.5)	120 (45.5)	226 (38.2)	111 (47.2)
Secondary Traumatic Stress						
High	8 (1.3)	1 (0.6)	5 (0.8)	4 (1.5)	9 (1.5)	4 (1.7)
Moderate	307 (50.9)	107 (62.2)	286 (48.5)	138 (52.3)	309 (52.3)	120 (51.1)
Low	288 (47.8)	64 (37.2)	299 (50.7)	122 (46.2)	273 (46.2)	111 (47.2)

Compassion Satisfaction by Year



Based on the 854 respondents that completed the Pro-QoL assessment

Secondary Traumatic Stress by Year



Based on the 854 respondents that completed the Pro-QoL assessment

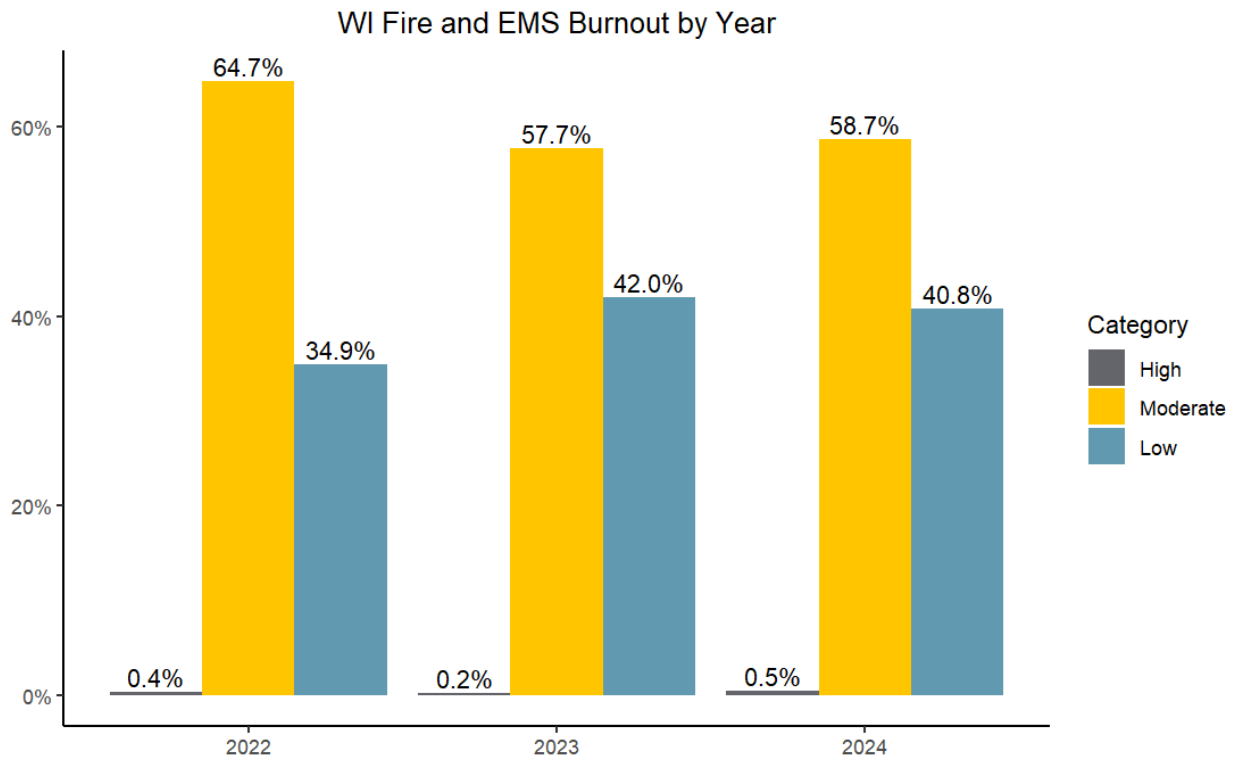
Burnout

After determining the degree of each category within the Pro-QoL assessment for each respondent, we analyzed the degree of burnout and secondary traumatic stress by years of service and by work schedule. Low levels of burnout were observed at the beginning and end of respondents' careers with more respondents reporting moderate burnout after 10 years of service. Work schedules did not appear to impact burnout level.

Level of Burnout by Years of Service

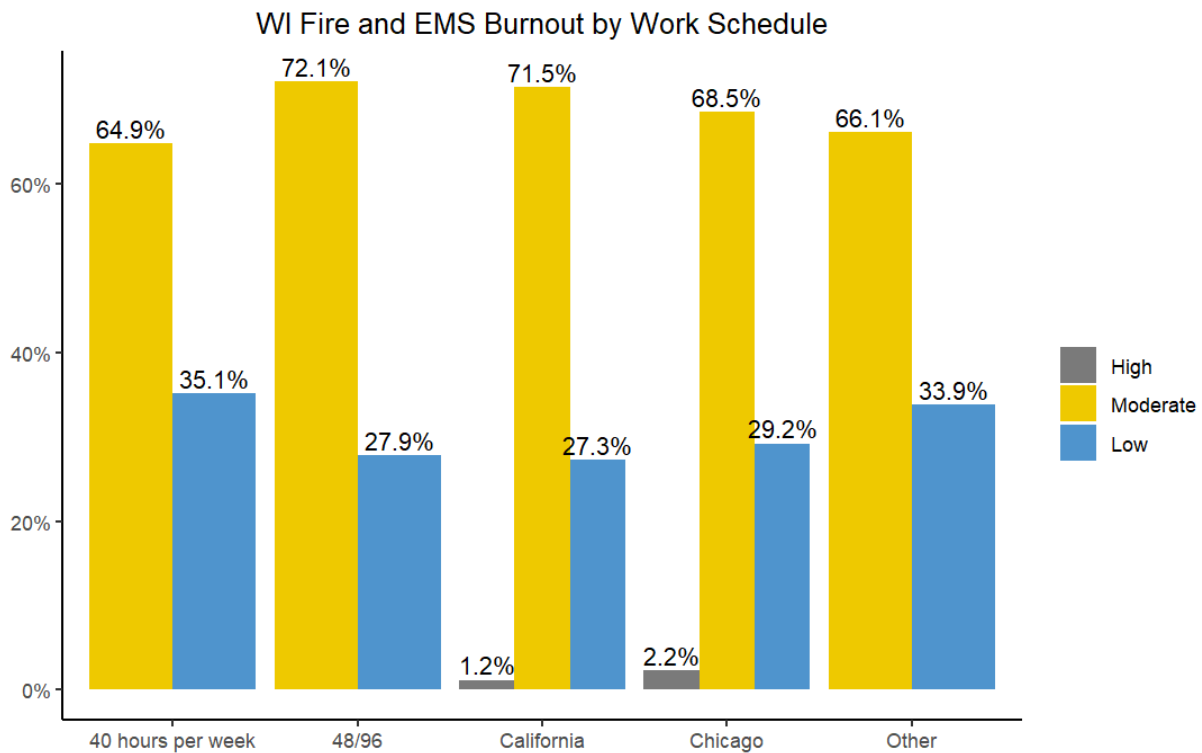
	Low (%)	Moderate	High
2 years or less	33 (54.1)	28 (45.9)	0 (0.0)
2-5 years	43 (50.0)	43 (50.0)	0 (0.0)
5-10 years	49 (38.9)	77 (61.1)	0 (0.0)
10-15 years	39 (33.9)	75 (65.2)	1 (0.9)
15-20 years	38 (32.8)	77 (66.4)	1 (0.9)
20-25 years	42 (36.5)	71 (61.7)	2 (1.7)
25 years or more	93 (44.9)	114 (55.1)	0 (0.0)

Burnout by Year



Based on the 854 respondents that completed the Pro-QoL assessment.

Level of Burnout by Schedule



Based on the 854 respondents that completed the Pro-QoL assessment.

Summary

From October 18th, 2024, to January 01, 2025, 1712 Fire and EMS professionals and volunteers across the state of Wisconsin voluntarily completed an anonymous, 50-question electronic survey designed to evaluate behavioral health needs and supportive opportunities. Questions were selected to inquire about critical/traumatic incidents, thoughts related to anxiety and depression, psychological distress, mental health stigma and engagement with support services.

Of the 1712 respondents, 1530 (89.4%) indicated they had experienced a job-related critical incident or traumatic event. Of those respondents, 249 (16.3%) reported having nightmares or unwanted thoughts about the events within the last month, and 609 (39.8%) reported having nightmares or unwanted thoughts of an event within the last year. Of all respondents reporting nightmares or unwanted thoughts, 235 (30.9%) reported they tried hard not to think about the event or avoided situations that would remind them of the event within the last month.

When asked about sleep, nearly 80% reported at least one sleep problem (78.8%). 1027 respondents (60.0%) reported multiple sleep problems. Only 14.3% (117) of full-time firefighters reported no sleep problems. The most common sleep problem reported was “Not feeling fully rested” after a night’s sleep (62.0%).

This year was the first year that we asked respondents if they believed their job impacted any eating or exercising habits. Between male and female respondents, approximately 21% of each group reported exercising less (21.9% and 21.77%, respectively) and about 20% of each reported eating more (males 21.4% and females 19.9%). Full time firefighters were more likely to report exercising and eating habit changes than any other employment type. Approximately 11.7% of full-time firefighters reported eating less, and 27.3% reported eating more. On the other hand, 28.8% reported exercising less, and 3.9% reported exercising more.

295 (17.2%) screened positive for anxiety symptoms, and 258 (15.1%) screened positive for depression symptoms. Of 817 full-time firefighters, 172 (21.0%) screened positive for anxiety symptoms, and 153 (18.7%) screened positive for depression symptoms. 225 (13.2%) respondents reported thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Of the 225 of respondents who reported thoughts of suicide or self-harm, 47 (20.9%) reported being bothered by thoughts more than half the days or nearly every day within the last 2 weeks. In addition, suicidal ideations peak for respondents with 5-10 years of experience.

Regarding stigma and seeking support, 65.9% of all respondents agreed with the statement “I would feel comfortable asking for my own behavioral health support,” only 40.4% of the respondents who reported thoughts of suicide or self-harm agreed (down from 45.4% in 2023). In addition, 52 respondents (23.1%) replied “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the statement “If I needed behavioral health assistance, I would know where to go for it.”

However, 98% of respondents said they would encourage their peers to seek support. For both full-time firefighters and the total respondents, respondents would be most comfortable asking treatment providers or family/friends for behavioral health support or assistance, staying consistent with the 2023 respondents. In 2024, 189 participants reported using their department EAP program. Out of these 189 participants, 57.1% found satisfaction in these

services. Of the participants that used the PFFW MAP services, 63.6% reported satisfaction with their services.

Of the 1712 respondents, just under half (48.2%) opted to respond to the optional Professional Quality of Life questionnaire. Results from the Pro-QoL revealed that 97.7% of the respondents reported a moderate-to-high degree of compassion satisfaction toward their job (similar to 2023 at 97.8%). 59.2% experienced a moderate-to-high degree of burnout, and 53.5% experienced a moderate-to-high degree of secondary traumatic stress. Both moderate-to-high degrees of burnout and secondary traumatic stress are up from 57.9% and 50.7% in 2023, respectively. When looking at burnout specifically, respondents are most likely to experience moderate levels of burnout between 10 and 20 years. Burnout did not appear to be influenced significantly by work schedule.