

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**



## Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service RDS Survey 2010

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Final Graphical Report of Study Findings  
26<sup>th</sup> May 2010





**Opinion Research Services** The Strand, Swansea SA1 1AF  
Anna Shakeshaft · Ciara McNulty · Hannah Champion  
Enquiries · **01792 704772** · [info@ors.org.uk](mailto:info@ors.org.uk) · [www.ors.org.uk](http://www.ors.org.uk)

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# The ORS Project Team

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## **Project Design and Management**

Dale Hall  
Anna Shakeshaft  
Ciara McNulty

## **Fieldwork Management**

Kirsty Millbank  
Joanne McCarley

## **Data Services**

Lindsey Carter

## **Data Analysis**

Michael Davies  
Richard Harris  
Joseph Marchant

## **Report Author**

Vicki James

# Executive Summary

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## The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services was commissioned by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) to undertake a survey of retained firefighters and the Retained Duty System. An accompanying survey of their partners was also undertaken.
- 1.2 The questionnaires were distributed to all retained firefighters at Royal Berkshire FRS and their partners. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 12 April 2010.
- 1.3 106 questionnaires were sent out to firefighters, of which 35 were returned, yielding a response rate of 33%. 28 completed questionnaires were returned by their partners.
- 1.4 Given the low number of responses to this survey, caution is advised when interpreting the results.

## Results - Firefighters

### Your Job

- 1.5 Just under a half the respondents (47%) reported that they are *satisfied* with their current job as an RDS firefighter, whilst just over two fifths (41%) are *dissatisfied*.
- 1.6 When asked whether as a member of the RDS crew they feel that they are a valued member of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue staff, almost three fifths (59%) reportedly *disagreed*, whilst 32% *agreed*.

### Recruitment

- 1.7 The three most popular methods for improving the recruitment of more RDS firefighters (each with a response of over 50%) were reported as:
  - *Relaxing the three minute get-to-the station rule* (71%)
  - *Improved publicity and recognition within the community for the RDS role* (63%)
  - *Improved structure for RDS recruitment* (54%)

### RBFRS and Your Primary Employer

- 1.8 Whilst a third of respondents agreed that they would have liked RBFRS to liaise more closely with their primary employer during the recruitment process, two thirds disagreed, implying that they were happy with the amount of liaison that took place.
- 1.9 Just under a half of respondents (45%) reported that they would like RBFRS to build better relations with their primary employers, whereas 55% do not think this is necessary.
- 1.10 When asked *how* they would like RBFRS to build better relations with their primary employer, more than three quarters of respondents reported that they would like RBFRS *to send an annual thank you letter* (89%) and *to publicise employers contributing to the FRS* (78%).

## Working Time and its Rewards

### Hours of Cover

- 1.11 Over a third of respondents (36%) reported that they provide on average between 21 and 30 daytime hours cover per week and 39% provide over this amount. The remaining 24% stated that on average they work 20 or fewer hours.
- 1.12 Just over two fifths of respondents (42%) stated that they provide up to 40 hours cover at night. Almost three fifths (57%) of respondents reported that they provide more than this, with over a quarter of these (27%) providing 71+ hours cover on average.
- 1.13 When asked to say how many hours daytime cover per week they would ideally like to provide as an RDS firefighter, a third of respondents reported that they would like to provide cover for 21-30 daytime hours; just over a quarter (27%) of respondents stated that they ideally would like to provide cover for between 41 and 50 daytime hours.
- 1.14 When asked to say how many hours night-time cover per week they would ideally like to provide as an RDS firefighter, the response was equally split between those who would like to provide cover for up to 40 hours and those who would like to provide cover for over 40 hours. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) stated that they would like to provide 21-30 night-time hours cover and a fifth or less opted for 41-50 (20%) and 71+ hours cover (17%).
- 1.15 A quarter of respondents stated that they would like to be on call for fewer hours than they are currently.

### Payment

- 1.16 More than half of respondents (57%) reported that they consider the 'pay as you go' system of separate payments of a retaining fee and activity pay to be *fair*; a fifth stated that they think it is *unfair* and about a quarter (23%) reported that they consider it to be *neither fair nor unfair*.
- 1.17 Nearly three fifths (58%) of respondents reported that they would prefer to be paid a *regular salary*, whilst 18% stated that they would prefer to operate the '*pay as you go*' system. About a quarter (24%) of respondents stated that they have *no preference* for either system.
- 1.18 Just over three fifths (61%) of respondents stated that they believe that if paid a regular salary, this should *be the same for every RDS firefighter at every station within RBFRS*. On the other hand, nearly two fifths (39%) reportedly believe that salaries should *be the same for all RDS firefighters at the station, but different for each station*.

### Contract

- 1.19 Nearly three quarters of respondents (73%) reported that they *agree* that RBFRS should offer the option of a 50% contract; of these, 43% *strongly agree*. Over a quarter (27%) of respondents stated that they *neither agree nor disagree* and none of the respondents *disagree* with the option of a 50% contract.
- 1.20 When respondents were asked which options would do most to encourage cover during periods when their station experiences most difficulty maintaining fire cover, the most popular option, with a third (33%) of respondents stating it was the *50% contract*. In addition, almost a quarter of

respondents reported that an *additional financial reward* (23%) and *increased payment for cover at problem periods* (23%) would do most to encourage cover.

## Training and Development

- 1.21 Almost three fifths (57%) of respondents stated that they *disagree* that sufficient time is allocated for them to carry out the on-station training required for their work with RBFERS, with 23% *strongly disagreeing*. Only 23% of respondents reported that they *agree* that sufficient time is allocated for them to carry out the on-station training required for their work.
- 1.22 Respondents who *disagreed* that sufficient time is allocated for training, were asked to identify the amount of additional time they would need to spend undertaking on-station training. Two fifths (39%) of respondents reported that they need an additional *three* hours per week, whilst under a fifth reportedly need *two* hours (17%) and *four* hours (17%) extra training per week.
- 1.23 All respondents who *disagreed* that sufficient time is allocated for training acknowledged that they are able to provide additional time and commitment.
- 1.24 When all retained firefighter respondents were asked to identify how training should be organised if extra training was an option, over half of them (56%) chose the option for an *extra three hours per month at weekends*; 22% stated that they think there should be an *extra 1 hour per week on drill nights*.
- 1.25 When asked to identify when they would prefer to carry out their on-station training, there was a clear preference for *weekday evenings* (71%), followed by a *flexible local arrangement* (43%) and *weekend daytime* (34%).
- 1.26 Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) reported that they think that their station makes proper use of its full training time of three hours. On the other hand, over three quarters (77%) disagree, with 63% reporting that their station *only uses about two hours* and 14% stating that their station *only uses about 1.5 hours* of its training time.
- 1.27 When respondents who do not think that their station makes proper use of its training time were asked what needs to be done to maximise proper use of training time, the most popular option reported was the *better use of current available training time* (67%), followed by *RDS support teams* (41%) and *re-skill RDS to reduce training need* (26%).
- 1.28 Just under half of all respondents (48%) stated that they *disagree* that the range of skills, knowledge, equipment and procedures required to be maintained by them within the training time available is realistic. Almost two fifths of respondents (37%) reported that they *agree* that it is realistic.
- 1.29 Of the respondents who *disagree* that the requirement is realistic, over half (59%) reported that they believe that *some equipment should be removed* and a quarter stated that *attendance at some incident types* should be stopped.
- 1.30 When respondents were asked when they would generally prefer training/development modules to be delivered, opinion was relatively evenly divided between the following options: *weekday* (43%); *weekend* (40%); *weekday evening* (37%).
- 1.31 When asked if the new line manager system on station (with a whole-time station manager) has been effective, under half of respondents (45%) *agreed* that it has and just over a fifth (22%)

*disagreed*. A high proportion of respondents (32%) chose the *neither agree nor disagree* option to this question.

### **Main Issue for Improvement**

<sup>1.32</sup> Respondents were asked to consider the issues discussed in the questionnaire and to indicate the one issue that they think should be the priority for improvements. *Recruitment* is considered to be the main priority (39%), followed by *pay* (19%) and *integration of whole-time and RDS working arrangements* (13%).



## Results – Partners

- 1.33 Over half of partner respondents (57%) reported that they *agree* that in the last 12 months their own lives have been restricted because of their partner’s work as a retained firefighter.
- 1.34 Of the respondents who agree that their lives have been restricted in the last 12 months, all of them stated that they *cannot plan activities on the spur of the moment* and nearly a third each (31%) reported that the following restrictions apply to them:
- *Partner brings work home*
  - *Difficulty in planning holidays*
  - *Partner cannot reliably provide childcare*
- 1.35 Only 24% stated that they *agree* that the money their partners earn as retained firefighters means that any inconvenience to them and their family is worthwhile. Over two thirds of partner respondents (68%) reported that they *disagree* that this is the case, with 52% stating that they *strongly disagree*.
- 1.36 However, taking everything into account, a majority of partner respondents (65%) reported that they *agree* that they are content with their partners being retained firefighters, with 27% reporting that they *strongly agree*.

## Survey Contents

- 2.1 The survey contained questions to firefighters on the following topics:
- Your Job
  - Recruitment
  - RBFRS and Your Primary Employer
  - Working Time and its Rewards
  - Training and Development
  - Priority Issue for Improvements
- 2.2 The Partners' survey contained questions on the impact on their life and family life because of their partner's working conditions and pay.

## Survey Response

- 2.3 Questionnaires were distributed to all retained firefighters at Royal Berkshire FRS. Separate questionnaires were also distributed to their partners. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 12th April 2010.
- 2.4 106 questionnaires were sent out, of which 35 were returned, yielding a response rate of 33%.
- 2.5 28 completed questionnaires were returned from the partners of firefighters.

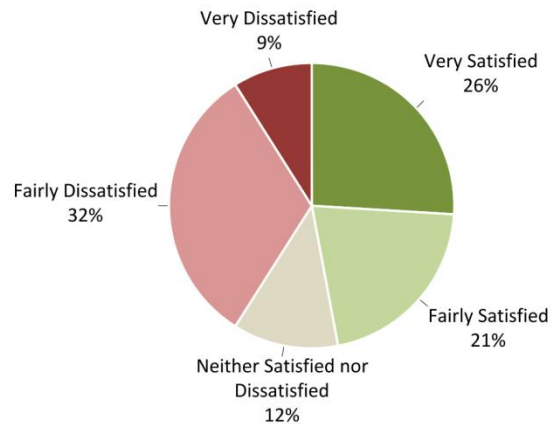
## Interpretation of the Data

- 2.6 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers.

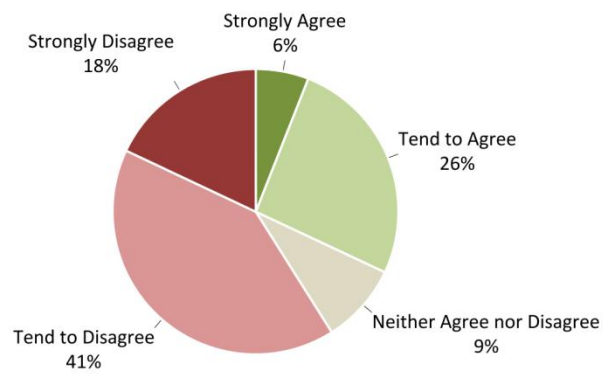
## Graphics

- 2.7 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of employees making relevant responses. Where possible the colours of the charts have been standardised with a 'traffic light' system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
  - Beige and blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
  - Red shades represent negative responses
  - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the 'extremes', for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

**Figure 1:** How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current job as an RDS Firefighter?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (34)

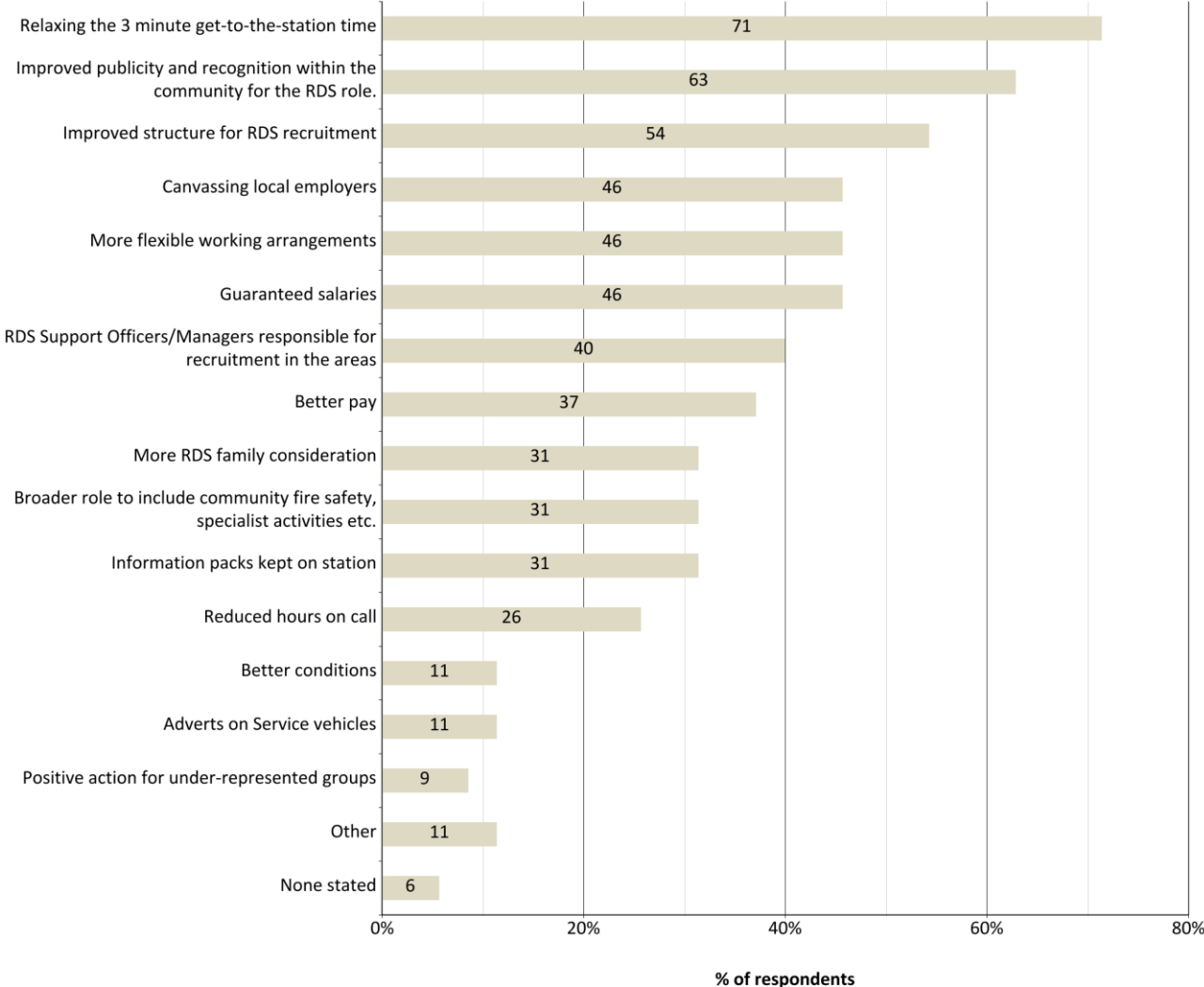


**Figure 2:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that as an RDS crew member, you are a valued member of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) staff?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (34)



# Recruitment

Figure 3: Which of the following methods, if any, do you think would help improve the recruitment of more RDS Firefighters?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)



# RBFRS and Your Primary Employer

Figure 4: Would you have liked RBFRS to liaise more closely with your primary employer during the recruitment process?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (15)

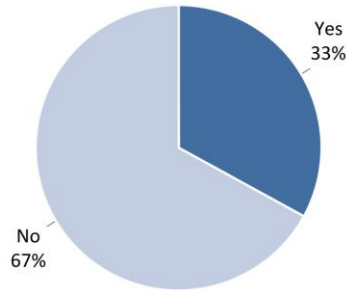


Figure 5: Would you like RBFRS to build better relations with your primary employer?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (20)

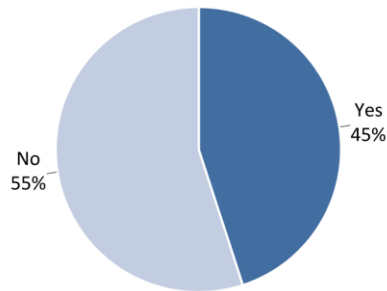
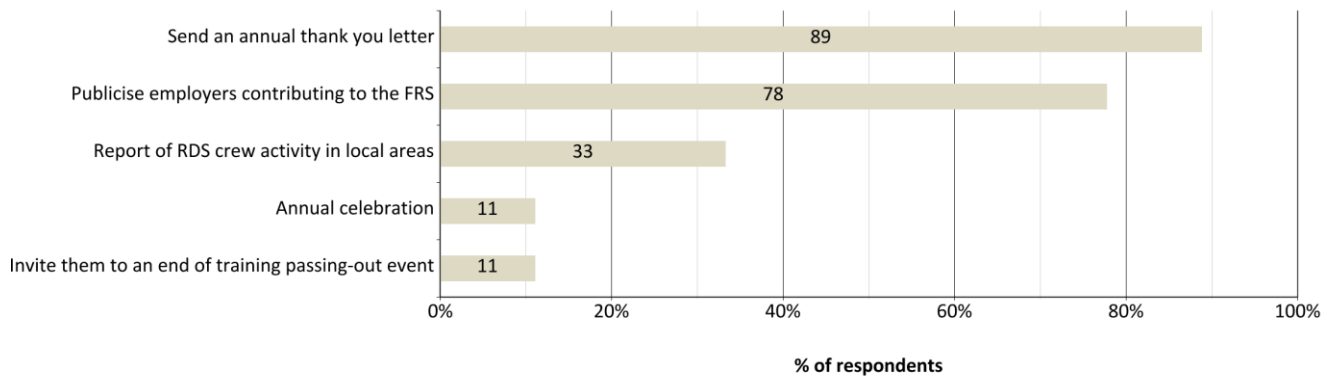
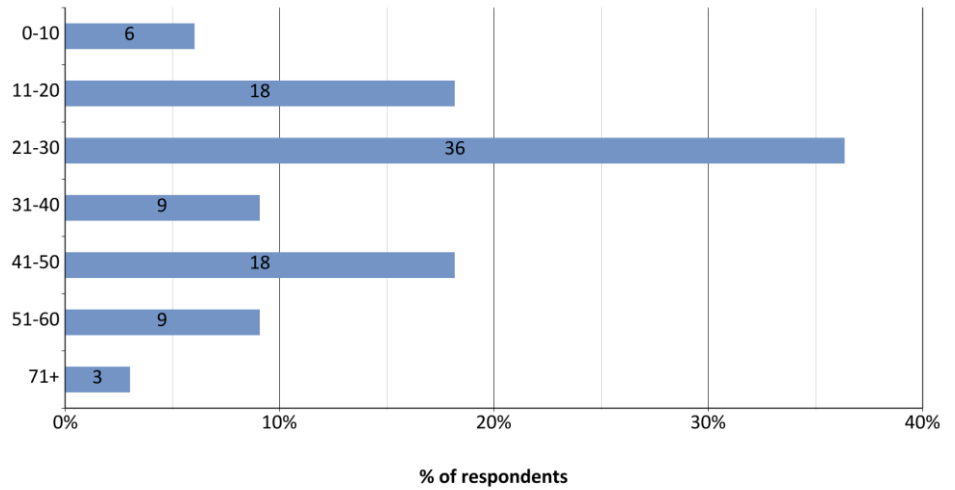


Figure 6: How would you like RBFRS to build better relations with your primary employer?  
Base: All firefighter respondents who said that they would like RBFRS to build better relations with their primary employers (9)

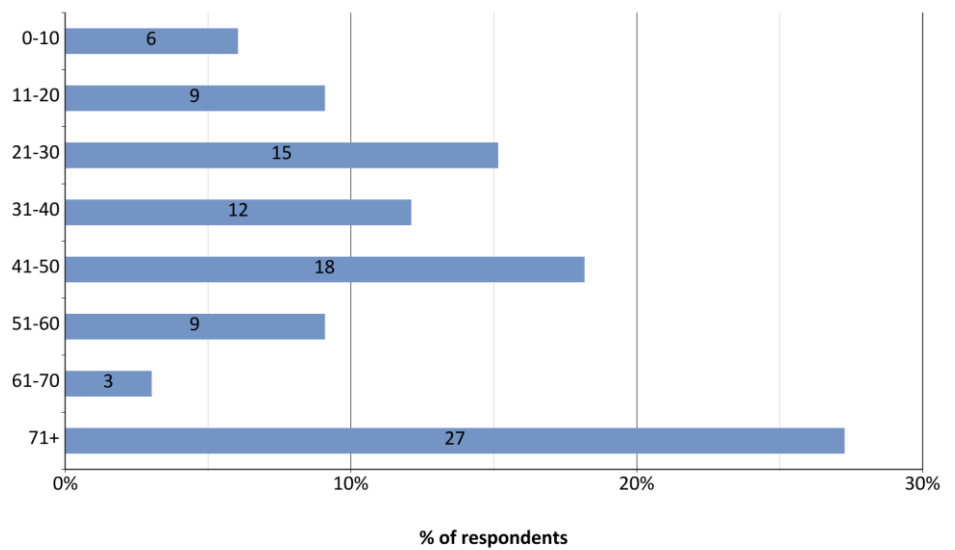


# Working Time and its Rewards

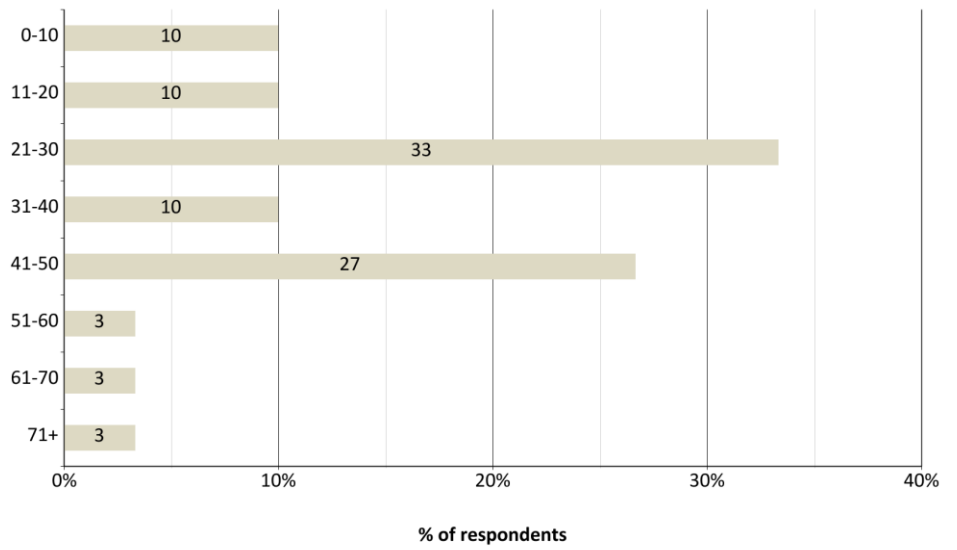
**Figure 7:** On average, how many hours cover per week do you currently provide as an RDS Firefighter? Number of daytime hours between 0800-1800  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (33)



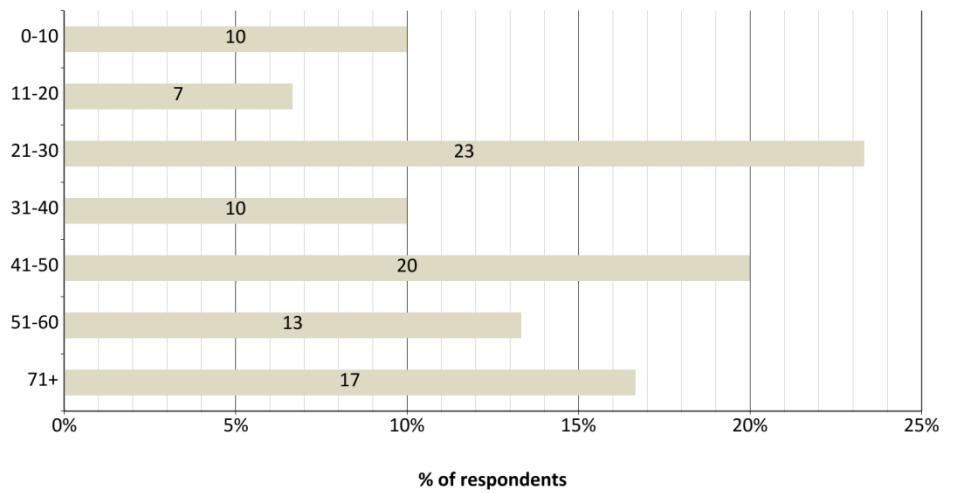
**Figure 8:** On average, how many hours cover per week do you currently provide as an RDS Firefighter? Number of night-time hours between 1800-0800  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (33)



**Figure 9:** Ideally, how many hours cover per week would you like to provide as an RDS Firefighter? Number of daytime hours between 0800-1800  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (30)



**Figure 10:** Ideally, how many hours cover per week would you like to provide as an RDS Firefighter? Number of night-time hours between 1800-0800  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (30)



**Figure 11:** Would you rather provide fewer hours on call than you do currently?  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (32)

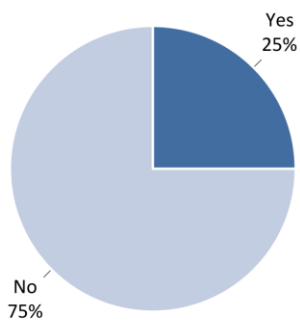


Figure 12: Is the 'pay as you go' system of separate payments of a retaining fee and activity pay fair or unfair?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)

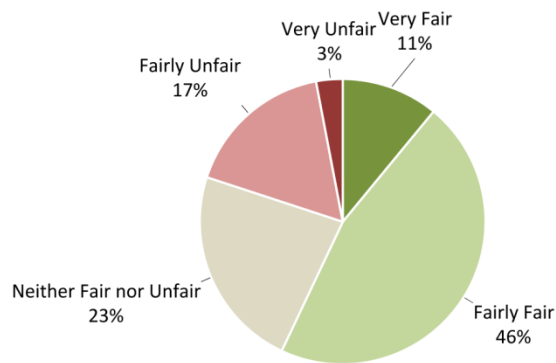


Figure 13: Would you prefer to be paid a regular salary or operate the 'pay as you go' system?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (33)

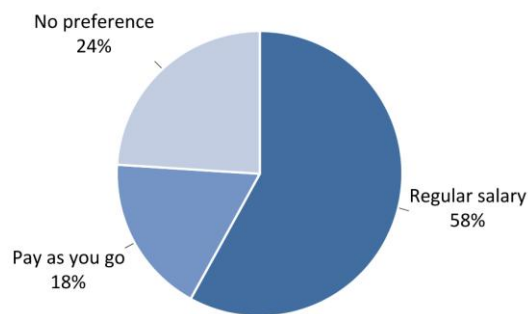


Figure 14: Regardless of your preference in question D5, if you were paid a regular salary, should it be...?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (33)

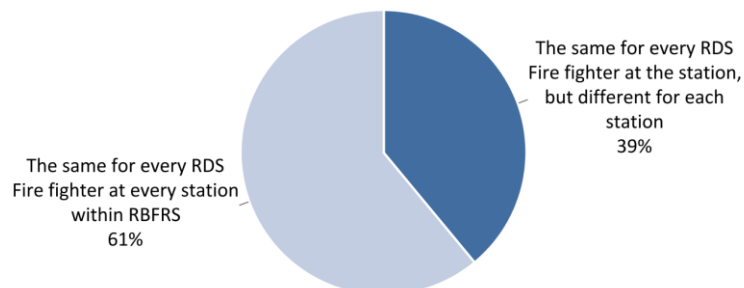




Figure 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that RBFRS should offer the option of a 50% contract?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (30)

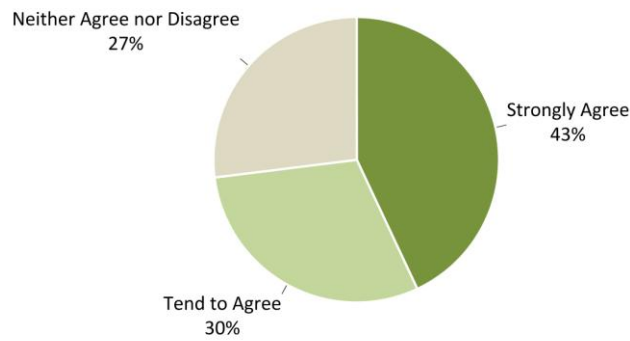
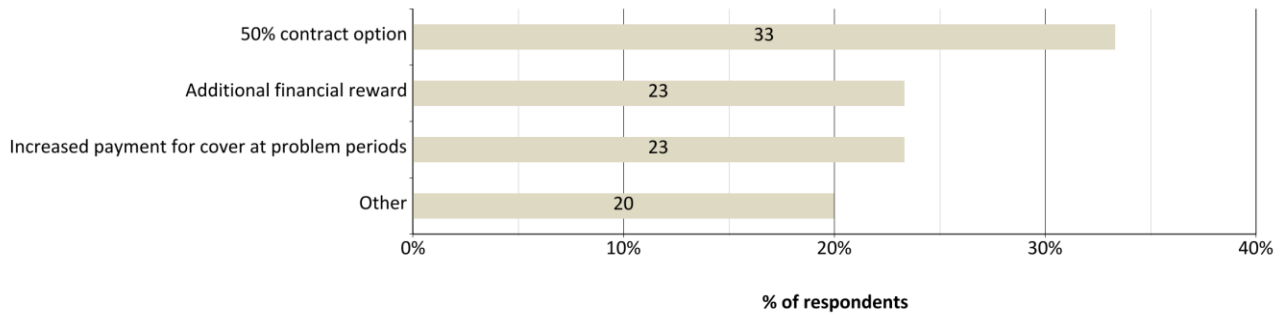


Figure 16: Which of the following options would do most to encourage cover during periods when your station experiences most difficulty maintaining fire cover?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (30)



# Training and Development

Figure 17: Do you agree or disagree that sufficient time is allocated for you to carry out the on-station training required for your work with RBFRS?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)

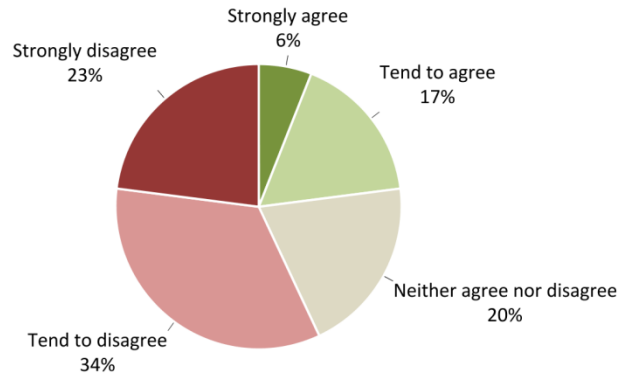


Figure 18: If you disagree, how much additional time would you need to spend undertaking on-station training (hours per week)?  
Base: All firefighter respondents who disagree that sufficient time is allocated for them to carry out on-station training required for their work with RBFRS (18)

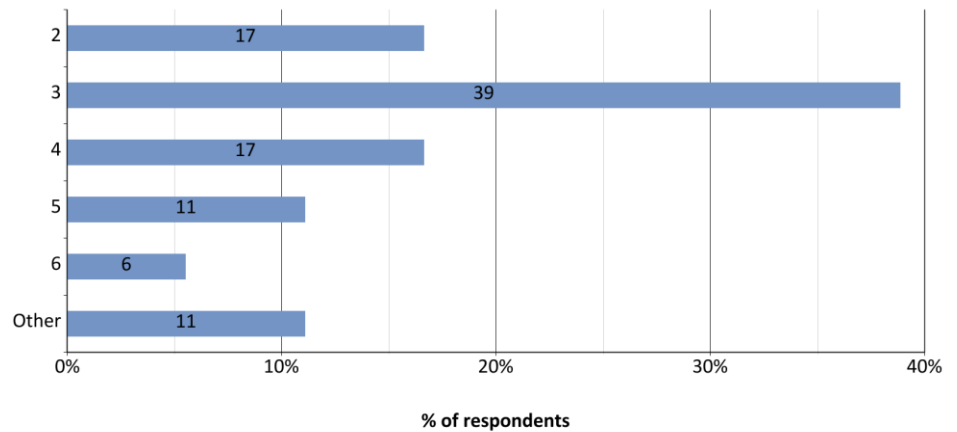


Figure 19: If you feel you require additional on-station training, are you able to provide additional time and commitment?  
Base: All firefighter respondents who disagree that sufficient time is allocated for them to carry out on-station training required for their work with RBFRS (18)

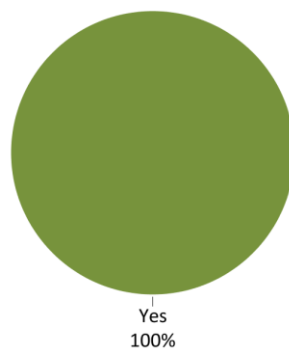


Figure 20: If extra training was an option, how do you think this should be organised?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (32)

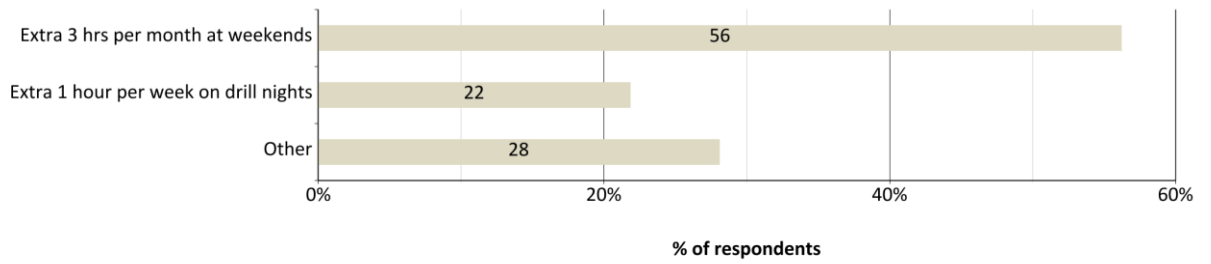


Figure 21: When would you prefer to carry out your on-station training?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)

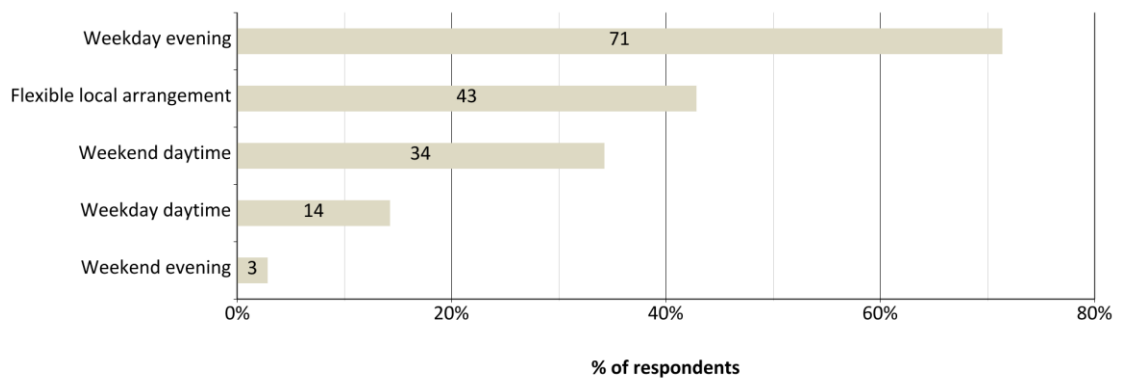
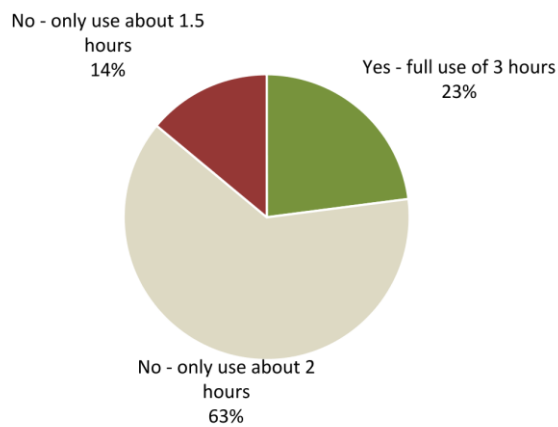
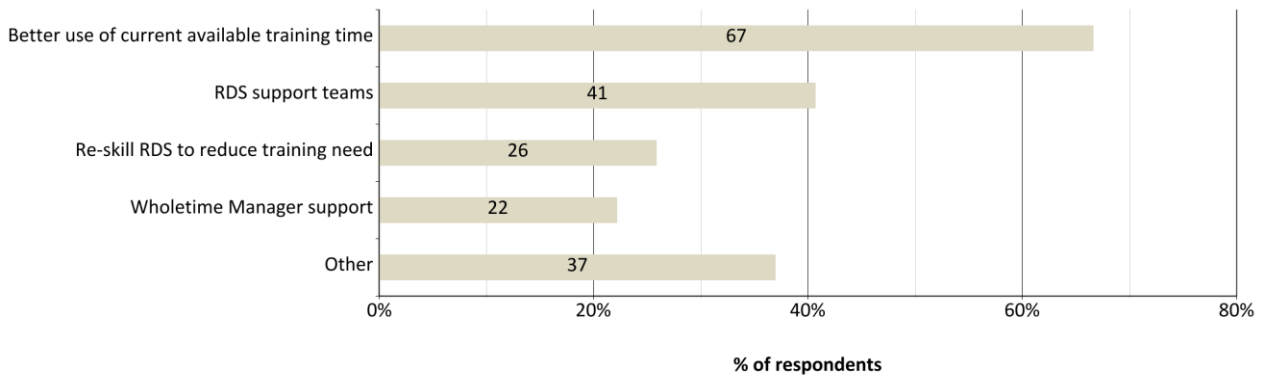


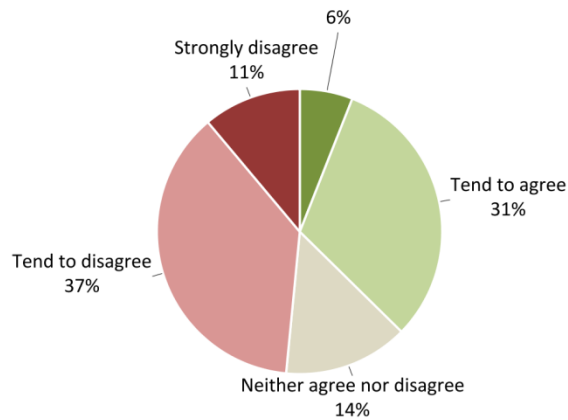
Figure 22: Being honest, do you feel that your station makes proper use of its training time?  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)



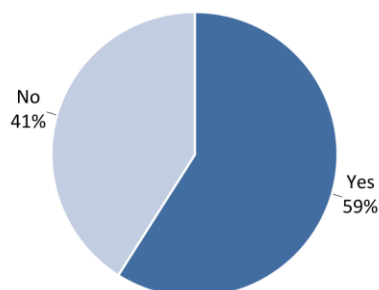
**Figure 23: What do you think needs to be done to maximise proper use of training time?**  
 Base: All firefighter respondents who think that their station does not make proper use of its training time (27)



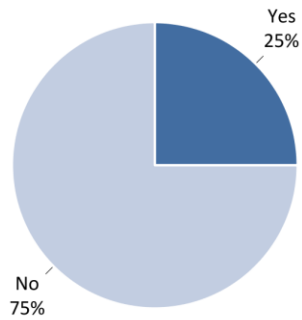
**Figure 24: Thinking about your on-station training, do you agree or disagree that the range of skills, knowledge, equipment and procedures required to be maintained by you within the training time available is realistic?**  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)



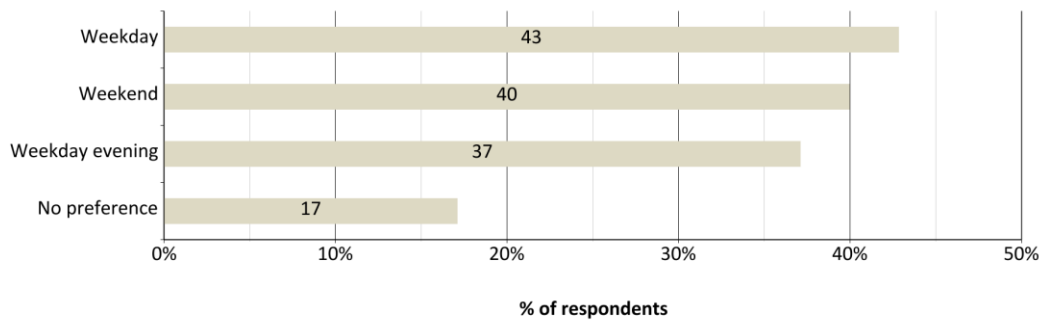
**Figure 25: If you disagree that the requirement is realistic, do you feel that any of the following should be done? Remove some equipment**  
 Base: Firefighter Respondents who disagree that training time is realistic (17)



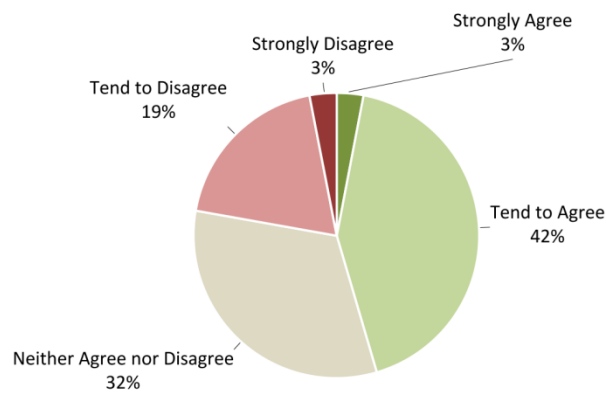
**Figure 26:** If you disagree that the requirement is realistic, do you feel that any of the following should be done? Stop attendance to some incident types  
 Base: Firefighter Respondents who disagree that training time is realistic (12)



**Figure 27:** When required to attend 'development modules' and other training courses for your role, when would you generally prefer the training to be delivered?  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (35)

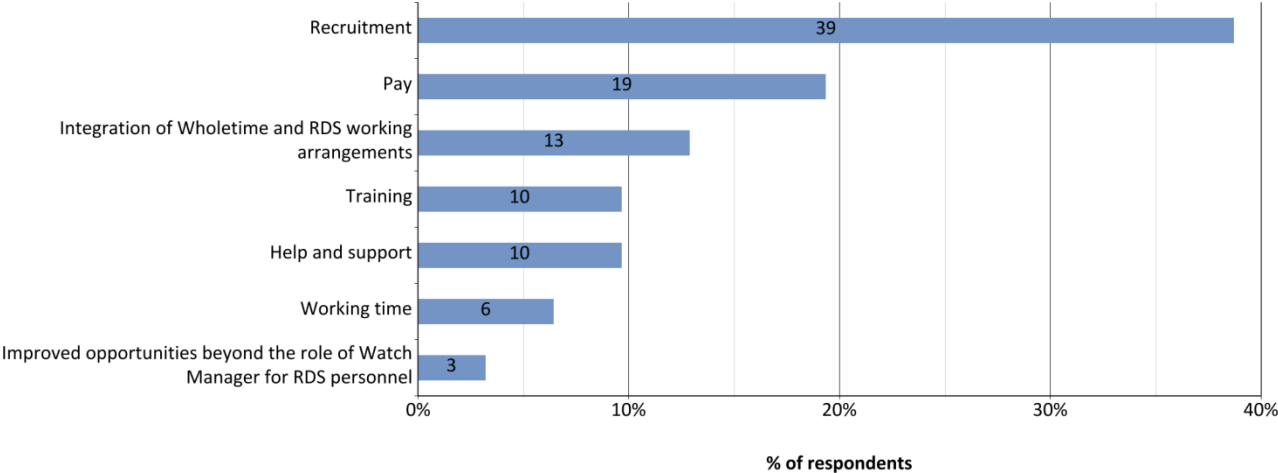


**Figure 28:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the new line manager system on station (with a wholetime station manager) has been effective?  
 Base: All Firefighter Respondents (31)



# Main Issue for Improvements

Figure 29: When considering the issues discussed within this questionnaire, please indicate the ONE issue that you think should be the priority for improvements.  
Base: All Firefighter Respondents (31)



# Partners' Opinions

Figure 30: In the last 12 months, do you feel that your own life has been restricted because of your partner's work as a retained firefighter?  
Base: All Partner Respondents (28)

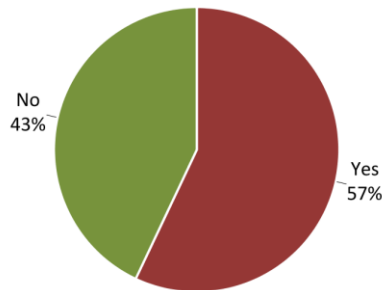


Figure 31: How has your life been restricted?  
Base: Partner Respondents who feel that their own lives have been restricted (16)

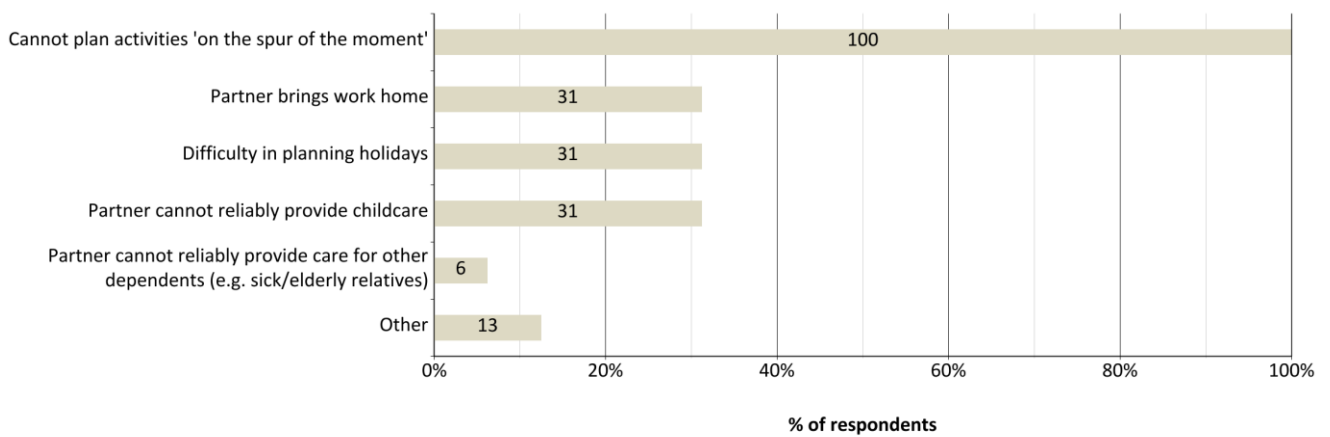


Figure 32: Do you agree or disagree that the money your partner earns as a retained firefighter means that any inconvenience caused to you and your family is worthwhile?  
Base: All Partner Respondents (25)

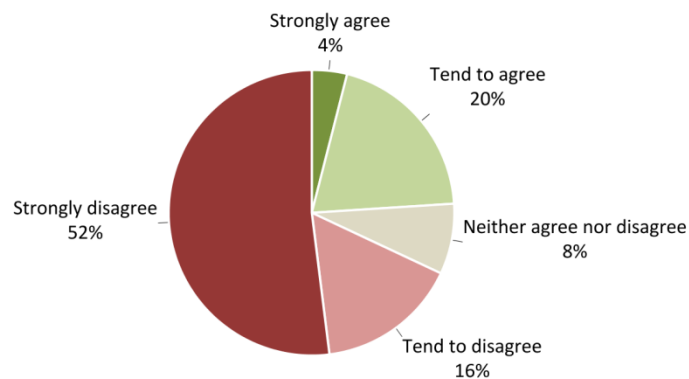
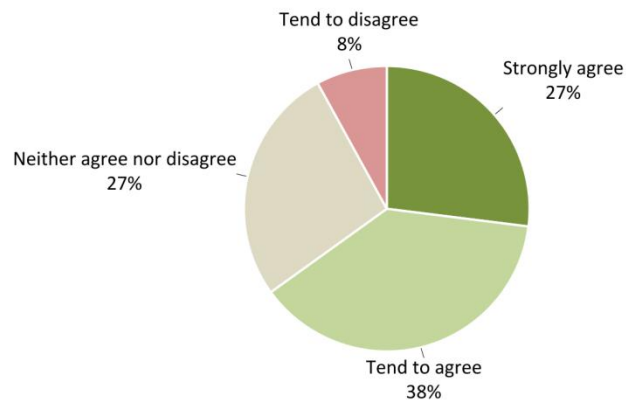


Figure 33: Taking everything into account, do you agree or disagree that you are content with your partner being a retained firefighter?  
Base: All Partner Respondents (26)





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