



Photo Credit: Jerry McBride Durango Herald 2019

## 2022-2023 Surveys of Wildland Fire Dispatcher Environmental Health: Preliminary Results

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Report prepared by: R. Verble, Ph.D.

PDF available at [www.wildlandfiresurvey.com](http://www.wildlandfiresurvey.com)

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# Major Takeaway Points (To Date)

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Wildland fire dispatchers' working environments include many of the same stressors that operational wildland firefighter working environments contain.

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Wildland fire dispatchers are experiencing concerning high rates of mental health issues, exacerbated by working conditions.

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Long hours, high demands, and expectations of off-the-clock availability create work-life balance mismatches and exacerbate stress.

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Wildland firefighters and wildland fire dispatchers strongly support including wildland fire dispatchers in the new OPM job series.

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Failure to include wildland fire dispatchers in the new job series could result in catastrophic levels of attrition and historic job vacancy rates.



To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concern about Interagency Wildland Fire Dispatchers being excluded from the Wildland Firefighter Series, 0456. Dispatchers have historically been categorized as 0462 Forestry Technicians, require 90 days of arduous duty fire experience, and are classified as secondary covered fire positions. The rationale that was shared throughout the fire community for dispatchers not being included in the new series was that no specialized fire management knowledge is required for the job and the 2151 series already exists. The 2151 series is an automotive dispatch series utilized for dispatching motor vehicles, equipment and occasionally aircraft. This series is for routine dispatching, not emergency incidents. This series is not at all representative of what a wildland fire dispatcher's roles and responsibilities are. Within the PD for a 2151 series dispatch position, it states:

*"The primary purpose of this position is to provide a wide range of logistical and administrative support functions. This position does not perform initial attack fire dispatch."*

# Figgins 2022

9 November – 10 December 2022

785 respondents

Respondents also were given the ability to provide comments.

Anonymous survey

Eligible participants: all wildland firefighters

Distributed to colleagues through social channels

Wrote a letter to Wildland Fire Series Task Group sharing results

No response to date.



# MISSOURI S&T

**Scan the code and take the survey.**

[https://mst.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eeKiEH1dJEur0q](https://mst.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eeKiEH1dJEur0q)

## Verble et al. 2023

**Survey is still open until 3/1/2023.**

All quantitative data here contains responses from 250 respondents who are current dispatchers, an estimated 12 – 33% of the workforce.

Qualitative responses from former or retired dispatchers are denoted as such.

University of Missouri System IRB Ref. No. 2094192

Anonymous survey

Eligible participants: current and former wildland fire dispatchers who have worked in federal settings, including AD

Distributed to dispatchers through Reddit, social media, e-mail and social distribution

# Brief Statistical Notes

## **Word clouds:**

Word clouds were generated using all unedited responses to the question above the the word cloud. Size indicates frequency of occurrence and clouds were limited to the 50 most frequently occurring words.

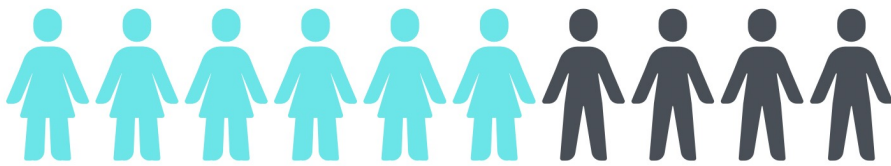
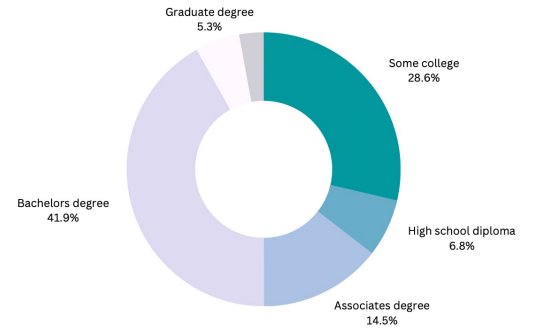
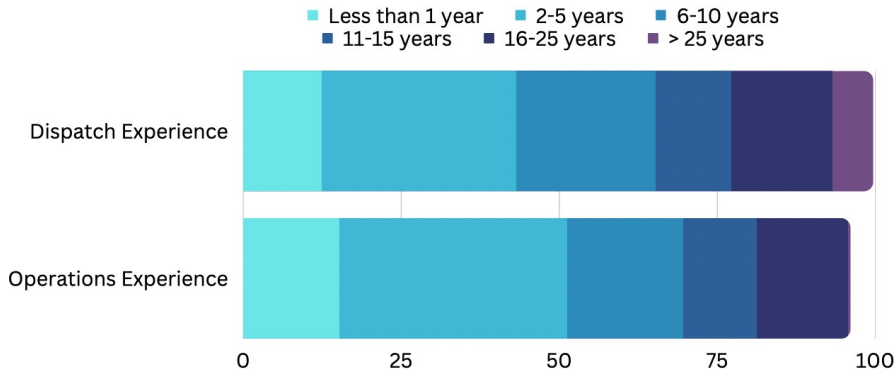
## **Likert scores and analysis:**

Likert scores were on a 5-point scale with 1 = strong disagreement, 2 = disagreement, 3 = neutral, 4 = agreement, and 5 = strong agreement. Error bars on figures with Likert scores represent standard deviation.

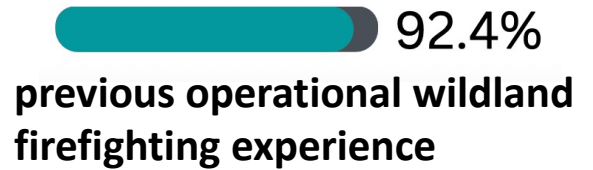
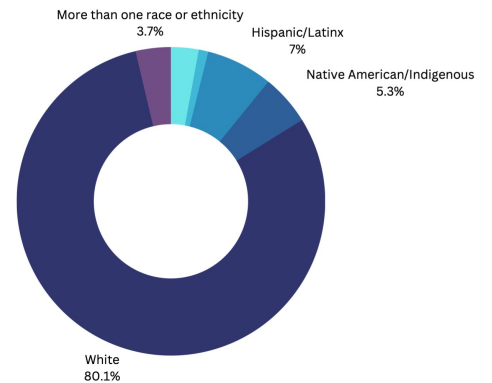
Unless indicated, other responses have been standardized as a percent of total to allow for comparison among questions. Our average number of respondents per question was 245 with a range of 234 – 250 on questions where all respondents were eligible.



for every 10 dispatchers, currently 2 have primary fire retirement, 4 have secondary, and 3 have another or none.

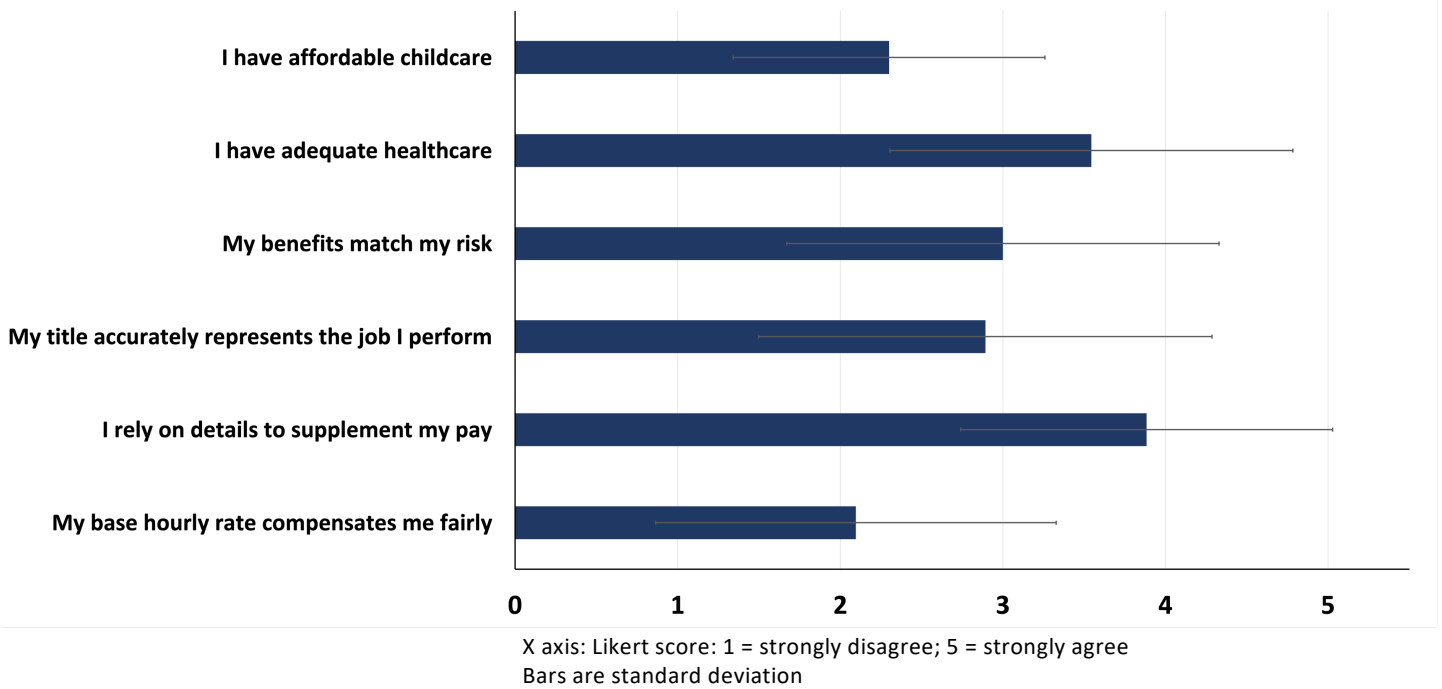


approximately 60% female, 40% male

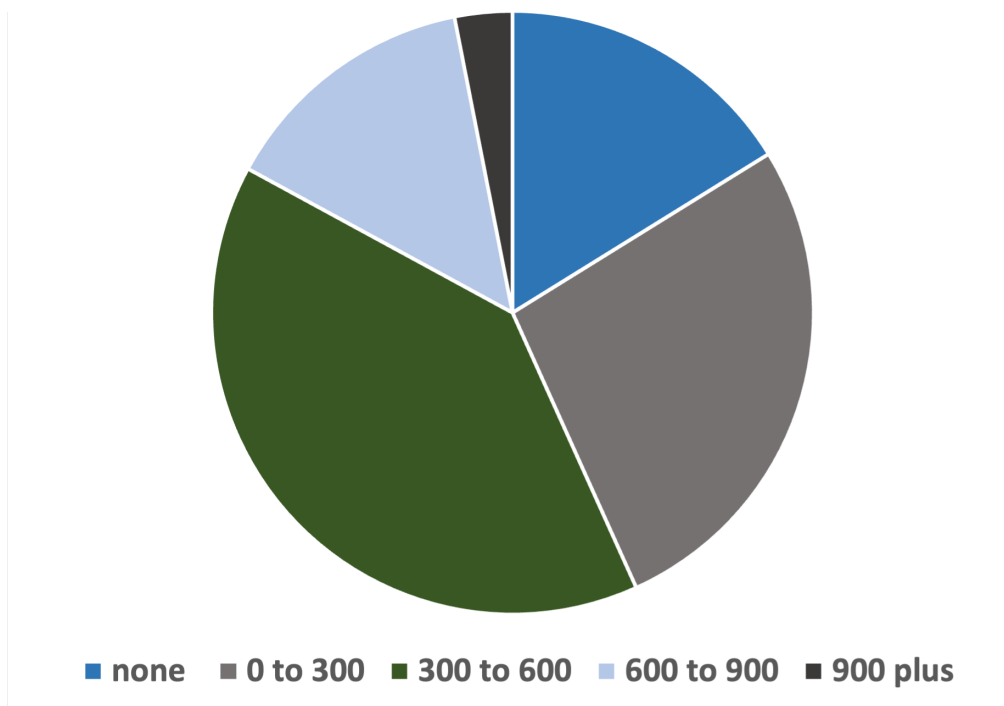


Who are wildland fire dispatchers?

# Wages are inadequate.

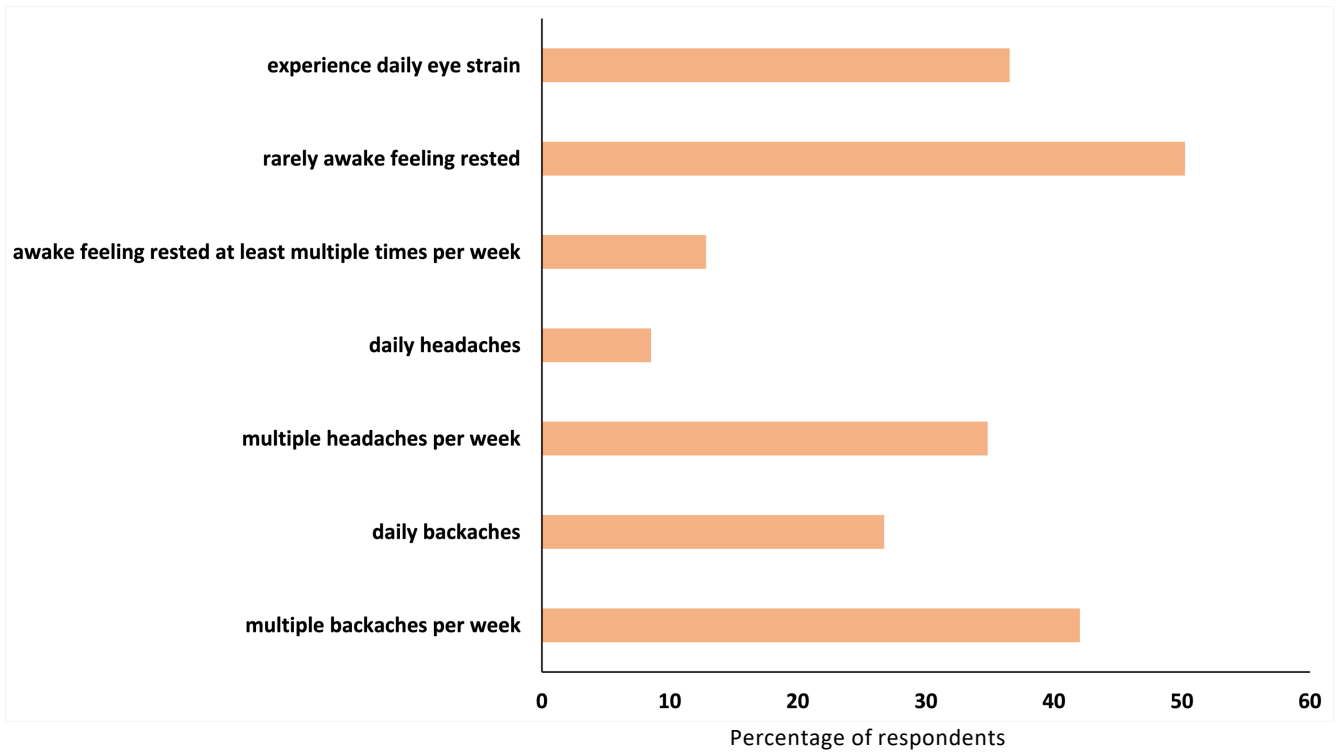


## Annual Hours of Overtime Required to Pay Bills

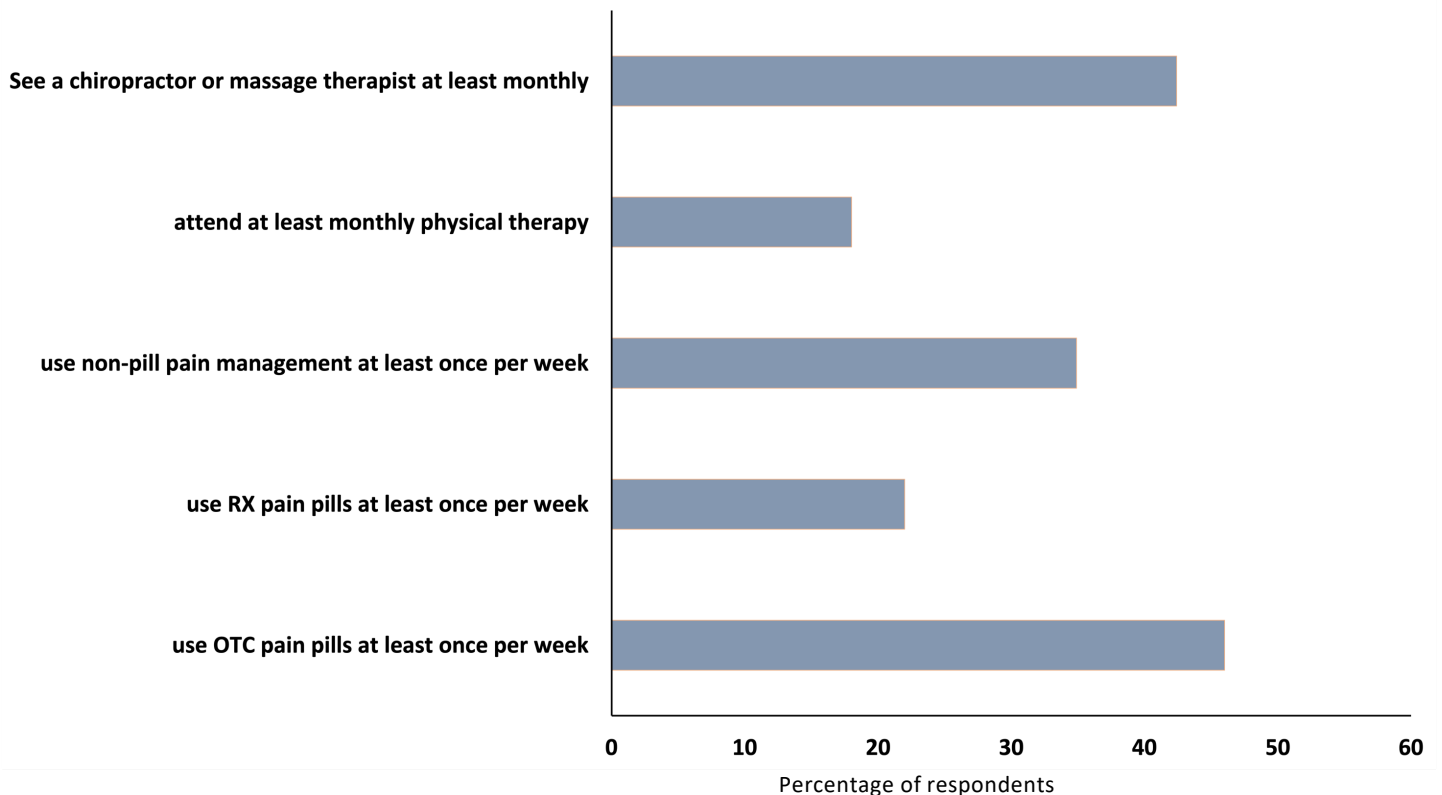




# Physical Health



**Wildland fire dispatching takes a physical toll on health– Prolonged and erratic hours disrupt sleep cycles and place workers in confined quarters where ergonomically appropriate equipment may be limited.**



# How has your physical health been impacted by your career?



Back pain is daily and getting sufficient physical fitness is nearly impossible.

It has caused me to have had extremely high blood pressure, and it has caused major anxiety. My doctor said it was from high stress and no sleep.

During season I have zero time to exercise or really take care of myself.

I have chronic headaches related to neck and upper back tension from long hours in front of a computer. I have lower back pain from an injury that I had on a fire while working as a wildland firefighter, but did not report because I was the only female on the crew and knew that it would give my supervisor more cause to find fault with me.

sitting at a desk, office lighting and not enough natural light, exposed to older building that has lead based paint in the building. Dusty air ducts, poor heating system, lack of movement due to demand at the computer and lack of breaks during busy times

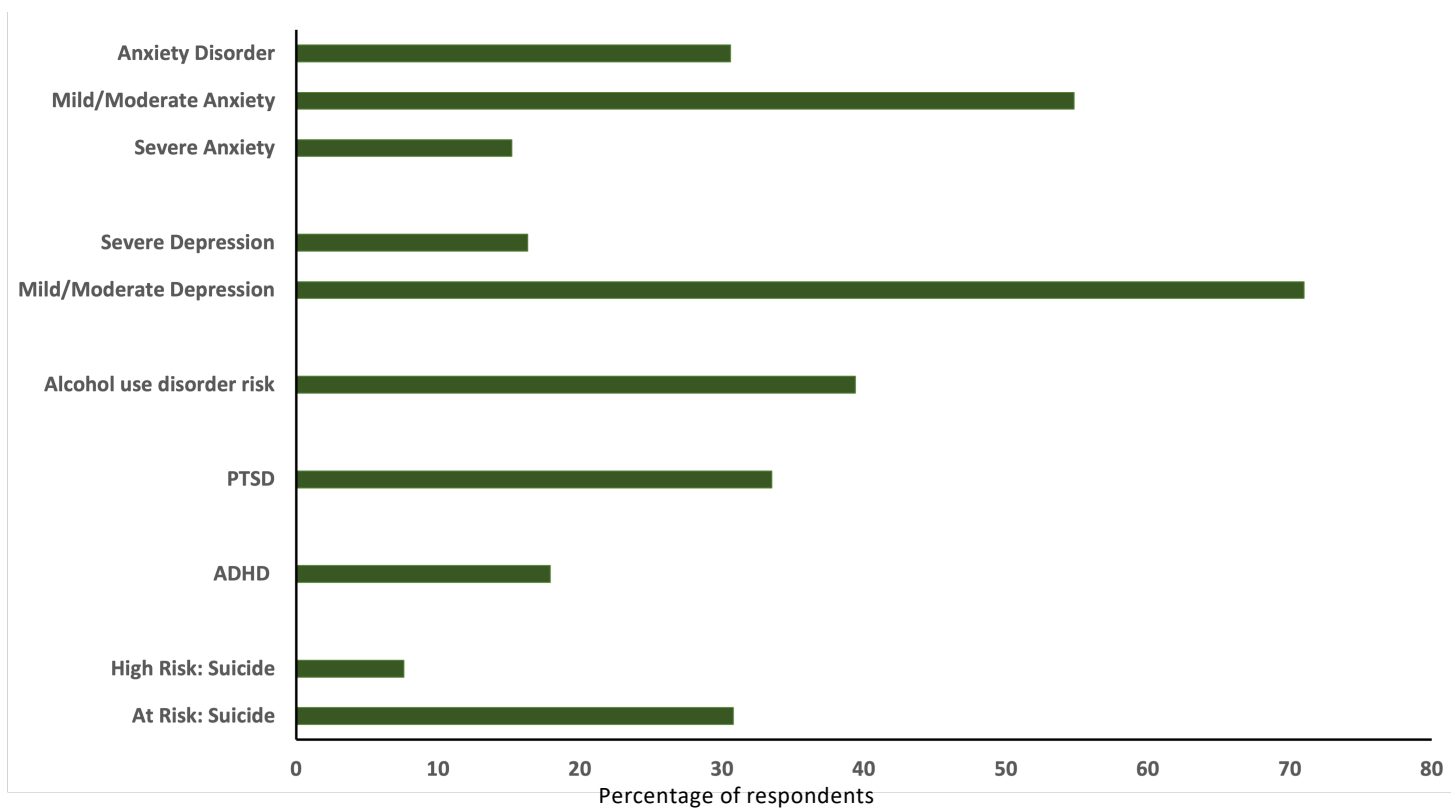
As a dispatcher, my mental health deteriorated over the years as I was asked to perform collateral duties which lead to more stress and anxiety. My stress levels were horrible and it began to effect my physical health. My husband could see it and begged me to get a different job as he could see what dispatch was doing to my health. I recently took a position out of dispatch to maintain my sanity and be able to have a life with my family and not to be tied to a duty phone 24/7/365. Not sustainable to ask anyone to do that and shame on fire staffs for not listening to their people and trying to help them when we asked.

Chronic stress has affected my mental health. I have a chronic stomach disorder due to stress.

# We Need to Talk About Mental Health

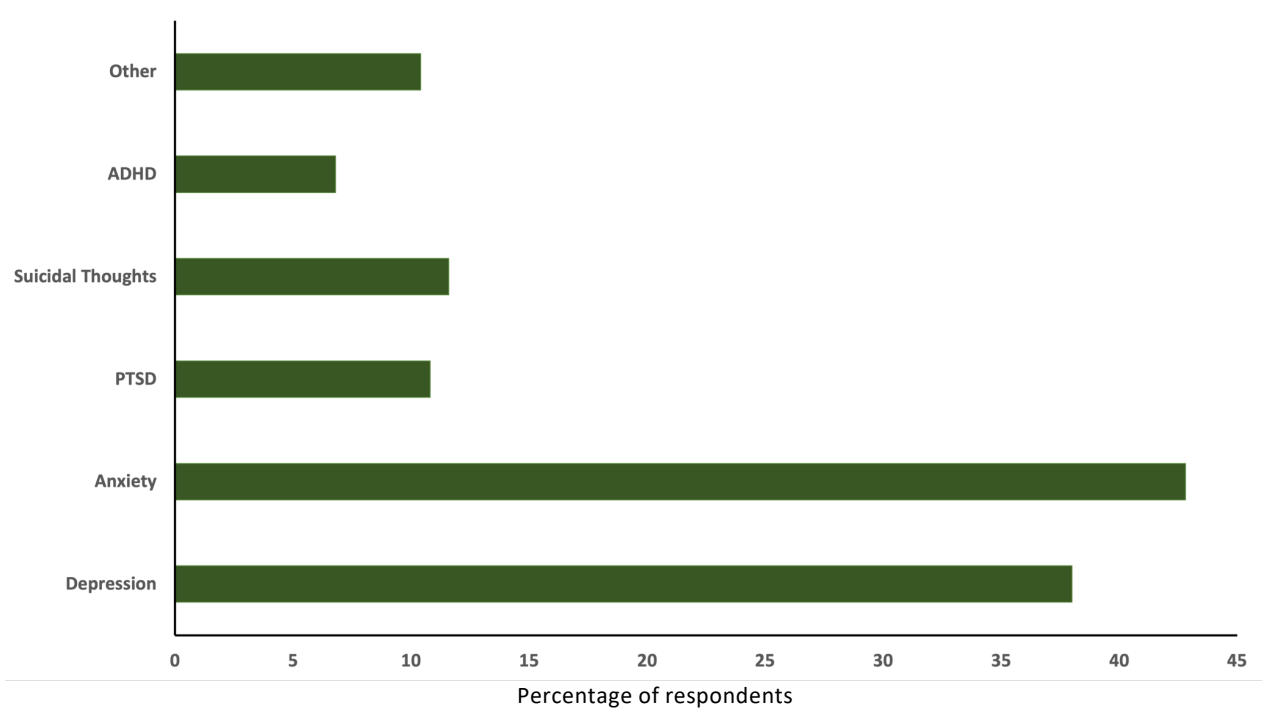
Screening questions indicated that the following percentages of wildland fire dispatchers screen positive for the following mental health disorders.

*Reminder: these are not diagnostic tools and are only used to indicate that discussions with mental health care providers should be initiated.*

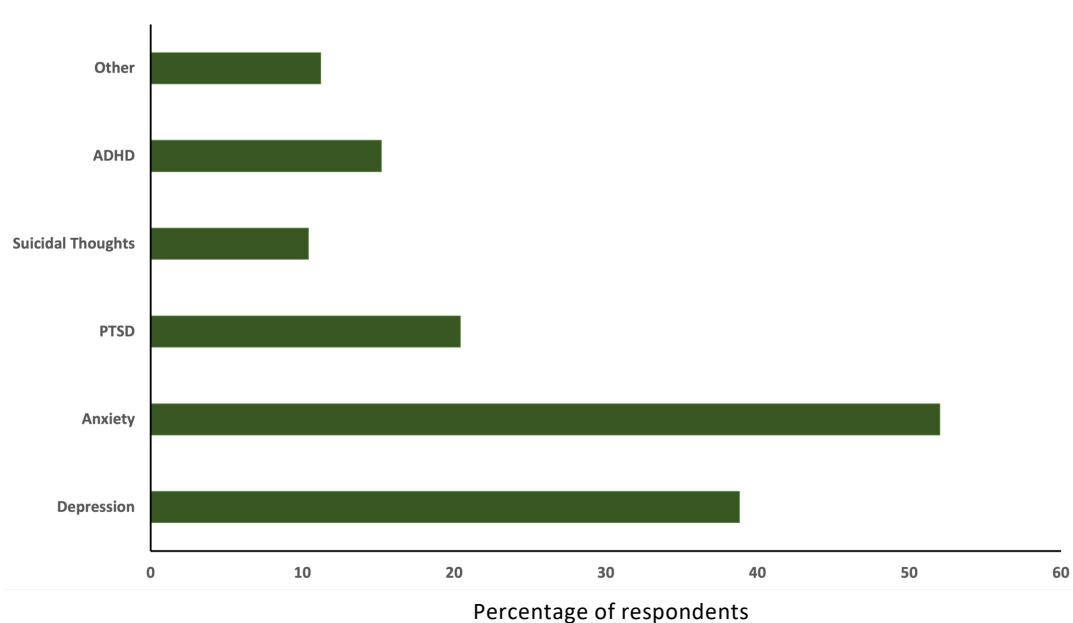


*Screeners utilized: GAD-7 (anxiety), AUDIT-C (alcohol use disorder), PHQ (depression), C-SSR (suicide), PC-PTSD-5 (PTSD), ASRS- DSM5 (ADHD)*

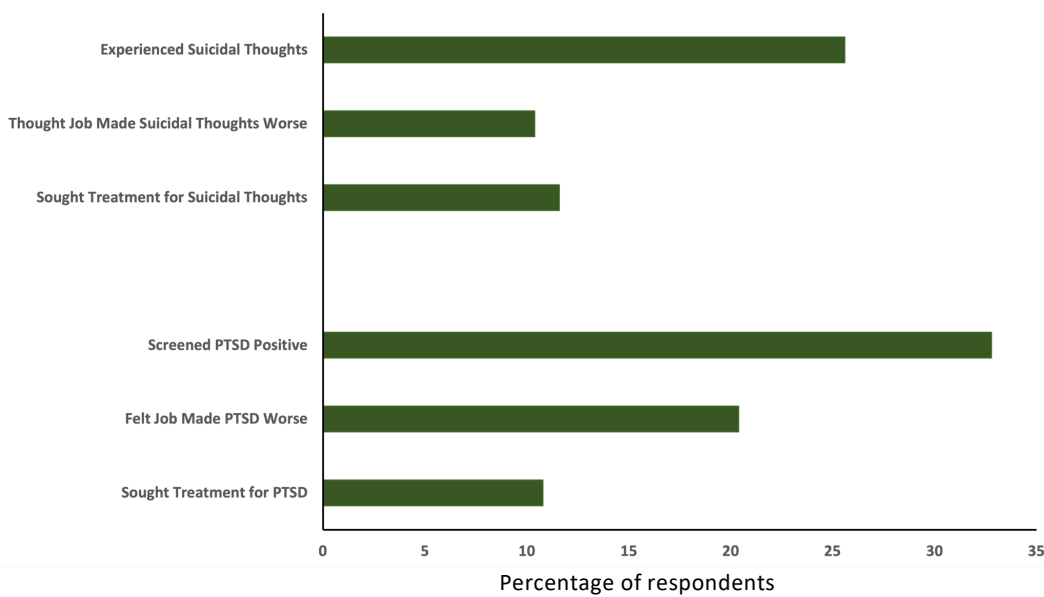
Have you sought treatment for any of the following mental health issues in the last 12 months?



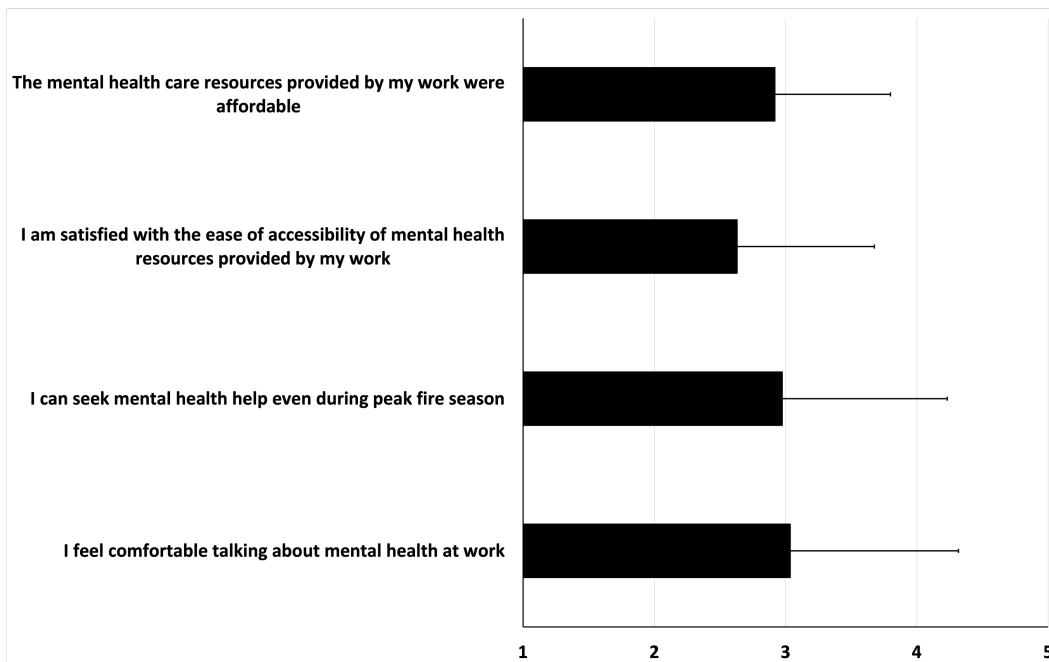
Have the stresses of your job exacerbated or worsened any of the following mental health conditions?



Wildland fire dispatchers may be conditioned to underestimate the impacts of their work on their mental health or be hesitant to seek treatment.

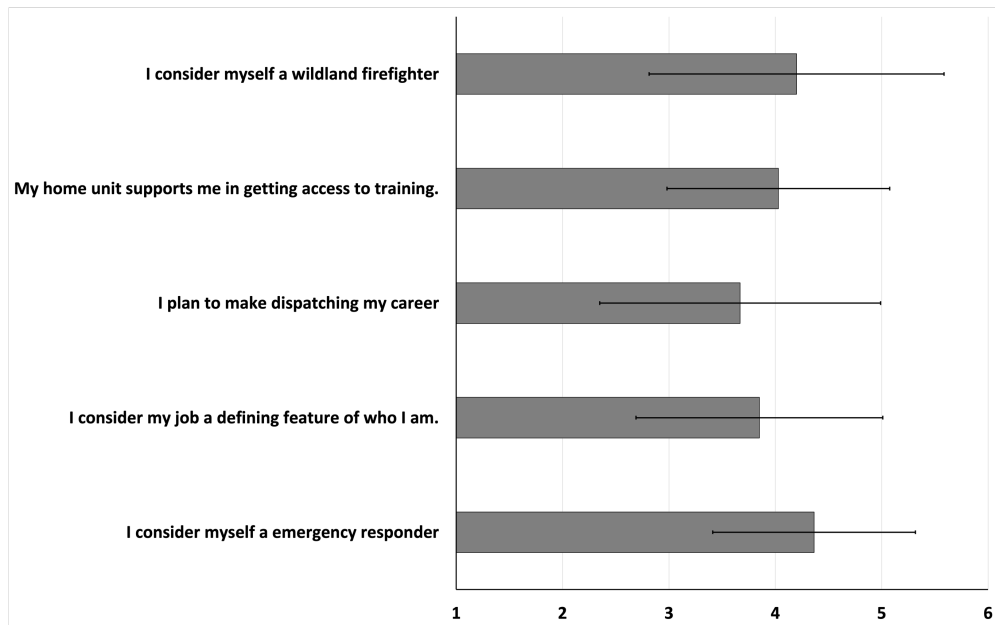


When asked about the quality of resources provided by their employers and their ability to access those resources, most report low levels of satisfaction or inability to seek resources.

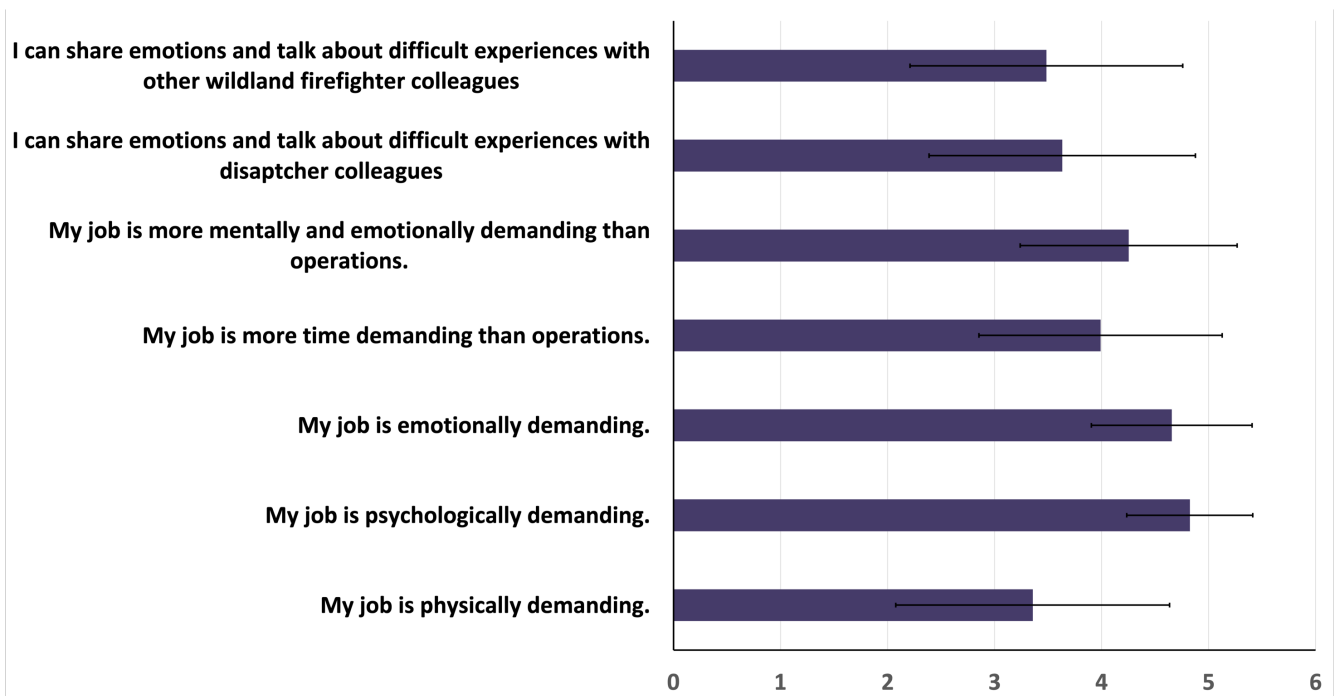


X axis: Likert score: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree  
 Bars are standard deviation

Wildland fire dispatchers are proud of their careers and the work they do. They identify as wildland firefighters and emergency responders and feel at least partially defined by their careers.



But they recognize that the work they do comes with a significant psychological, mental, and emotional burden. Approximately 91% of dispatchers have operational experience, and they believe the demands of dispatch can sometimes outweigh those of operational wildfire.



X axis: Likert score: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree  
 Bars are standard deviation

How has a career  
in wildland fire  
dispatching  
impacted your  
mental health?

A word cloud of terms related to wildland fire dispatching and mental health. The words are arranged in a roughly circular shape, with larger words being more prominent. The colors range from light green to dark green.

time dispatcher every need care  
depression thoughts feel away  
support working go find always  
fire career stress one taking  
lack work people family second  
dealing dispatch just day job health  
dispatchers position years help anxiety last  
mental felt life even situations almost  
season wildland talk times fatalities  
things center everything



## You listen to enough people dead or dying it will never go away

When dealing with emergency situations there are many times we don't get to know the outcome and it can be taxing on oneself. Not being able to get breaks during the day, having to eat at your desk, not being able to leave to use the bathroom because we are understaffed and the phone won't stop ringing and the radio keeps going off. Hearing horrible outcomes and being apart of it with no support for what to do after that. Always being expected to do more work and get more done because they think its dispatch job or dispatch will do it for them.

I had an employee commit suicide that I have had to initiate the search response for with Law Enforcement and communication to their family of the events that I was taking to locate the employee. I have guilt still that I did not do more to help them.

This job/career has put me in numerous positions that were extremely high stress environments and created me to develop a dullness in my brain - I feel detached from life itself and wish I never had to deal with the 5 separate fatality incidents (in-person totaling 8 individuals) - That was not what I thought I would be dealing with - Additionally I have dealt with other fatality fires from the dispatch side and those have taken a toll on my mental capacity to further my detachment from reality and my family creating more barriers

I often times have issues shutting my brain off during fire season. It is not uncommon for me to take several hours to fall asleep, or to actually dream/dispatch in my sleep so I end up waking up more exhausted.

During fire season I have no time or ability to unwind. I'm constantly immersed in work and due to my position I can't detach. When I'm off I can only think about work. I feel guilty when medical incidents or fires happen when I'm off because I'm not there to pitch in (especially medicals). Thank god I'm a career seasonal because I can't do this year round.

This job can take everything from a person. Just treat us like humans. We are dealing with just as much shit, if not more, than the folks on the line. Take care of us. That is all we ask.

My kids constantly remind me that I do not make time for them to take them on vacations

Dispatchers are trained to prepare for the worst every day. This inevitably bleeds into our personal life causing anxiety and strain.

Sometimes I dream about work all night long so I don't feel rested & feel as though I worked all night. Twice I've had to walk off the floor & cry because I was overwhelmed & stressed out.

When in the dispatch center, my drinking was up, my relationship with my wife was not good and I missed out [very personal family events] because of lack of staffing.

Many of us are total train wrecks. We depend on each other to act as mental health counselors and talk us off the ledge. As long as all of us aren't n the ledge at the same time we do ok. My assistants and I have spent many hours with my office door shut taking turns venting, crying and consoling each other. Realistic, timely access to mental health resources are non-existent. and they don't understand us anyway.

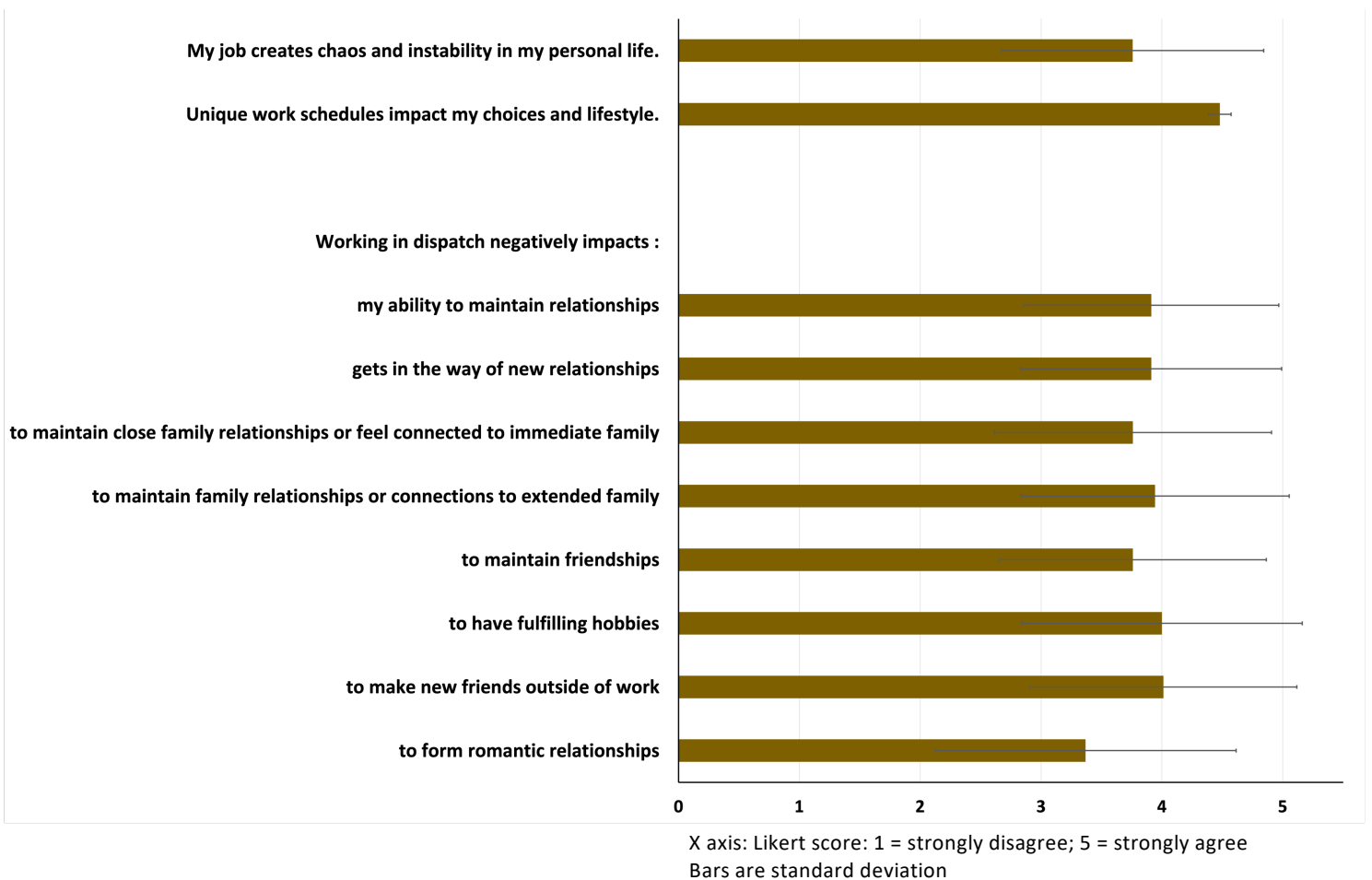
I have been through multiple fatality situations and many emergency situations in both the field and dispatch. So many that I just can't do one more in my career. I don't talk about them and most don't realize I've lost friends to fatalities. I feel like we are seeing more and more situations because of our lack of knowledge depth in all fire fields. We have a shortage of people and we are pushing quals and putting people into situations without the background to adequately respond to them. I can't stay in a career where I will most likely have to go through another traumatic situation.

I have been close to three different fatalities in different situations, one suicide, multiple conflicts with people over the years. That's the work stuff, my current work place doesn't care about my mental health and continuously forces me to produce with no concern about what I feel. They continue to retaliate against me and make it a toxic workplace.

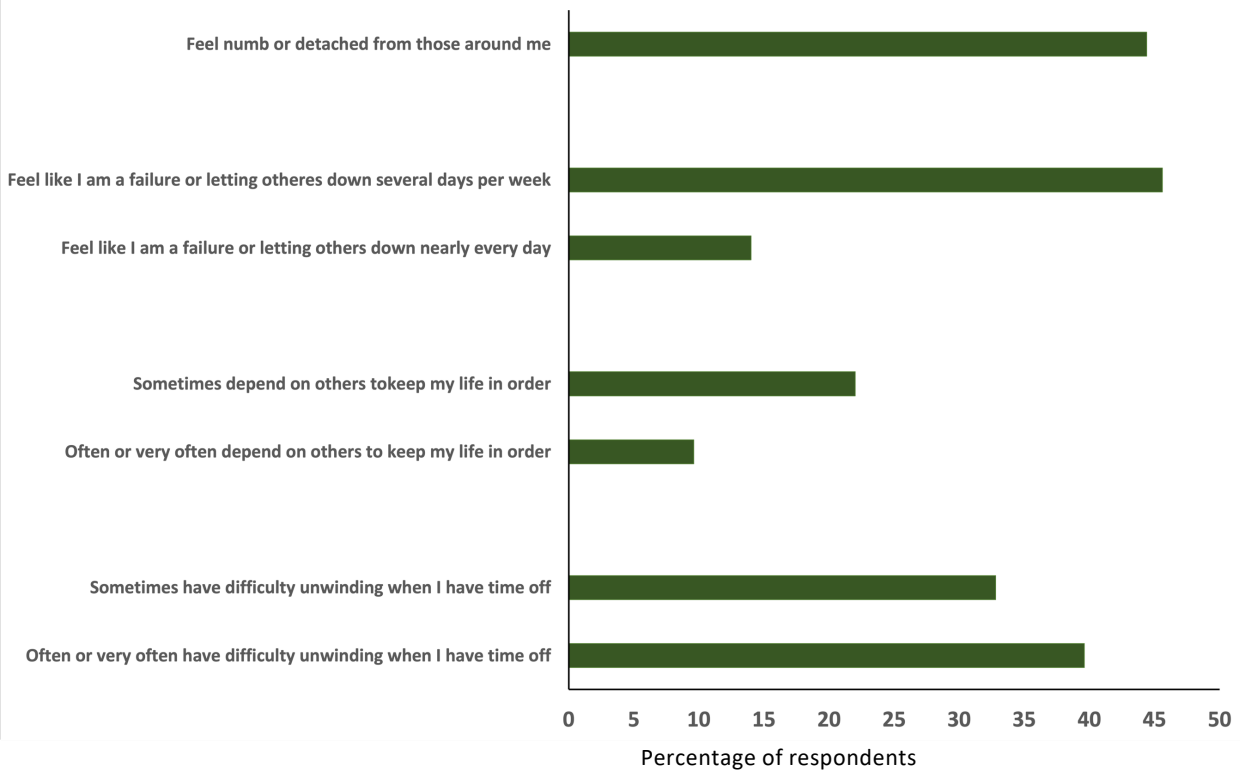
Throughout my career I have been through 5 documented Critical stress debriefings. 2 burn overs 1 car wreck & 2 fatalities. That really doesn't include everything. Fatalities over the radio. Transporting injured firefighter on a wildfire. Finding deceased human on the fire line. The impacts of these things sometimes affect me mentally to where I feel angry or uneasy.

# Work Life Balance

The mental health impacts of a wildland fire dispatch career cascade into the personal life of the dispatcher, impacting family relationships, friendships, marriages, and interpersonal interactions.

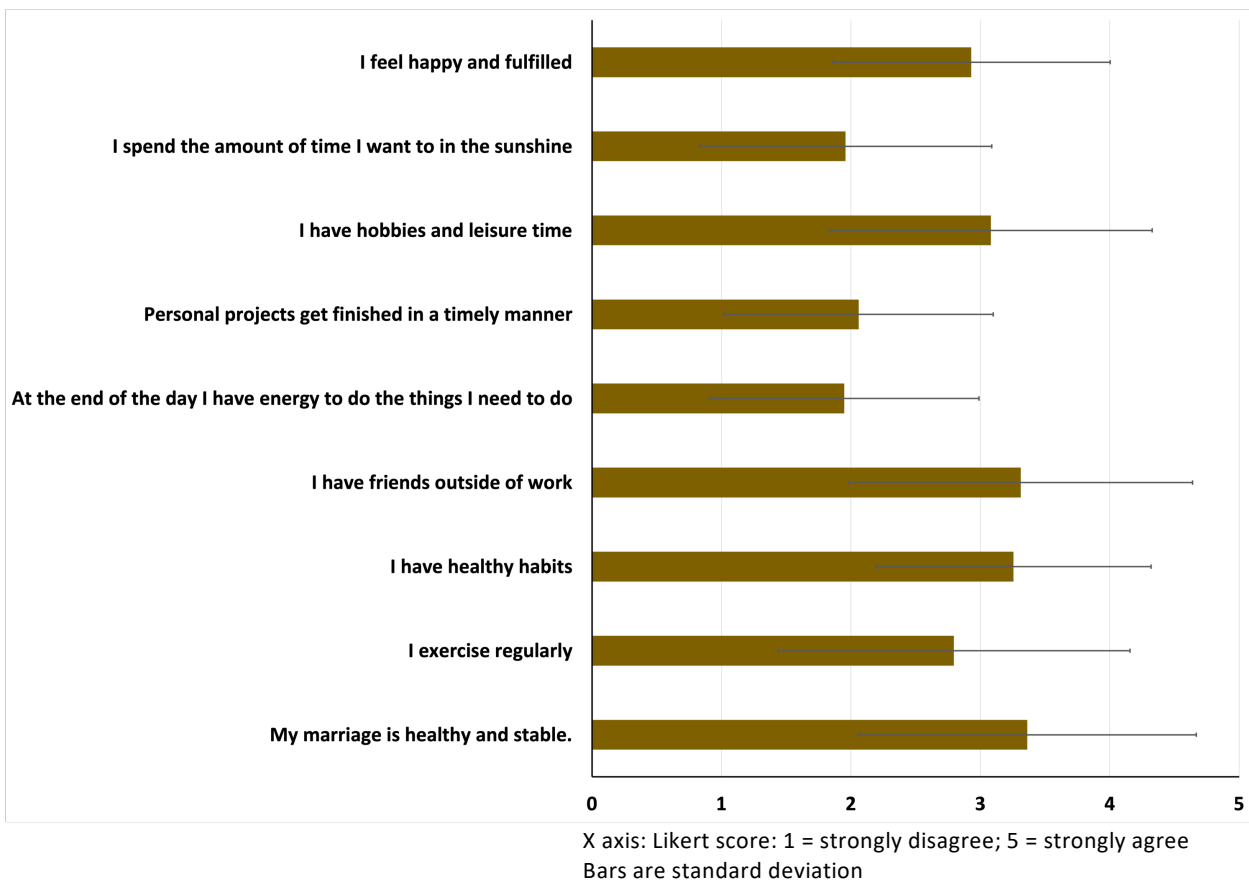


Wildland fire dispatcher divorce rates are higher than the national average. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that, among ever-married adults, the number that have been divorced is 33%. In our respondent population, 54% had been divorced at least once.



**Above:** Wildland fire dispatchers were asked about whether they experienced these feelings. Respondents that said "yes" are recorded.

**Below:** Indicators of well-being, concerning rarely suggest that wildland fire dispatchers view their lives positively or feel good.



# How has your personal life been impacted by your career?



After 22 years of marriage, this dispatch career has put an enormous strain on our marriage and children.

The constant need to be "on call" due to lack of staffing, is no different than the hypervigilance which causes emotional, mental fatigue in firefighters. The fundamental requirement, or "expectation" that we work extended hours, and be in the office as much as possible during fire season, and therefore missing out on family events, children's dance recitals, etc., is the same as being in the middle of the wilderness staffing a fire and missing it. This can be especially wearing when your main coworker has chosen not to have children, and believes that your desire to be an involved parent is somehow "selfish" and that you should be working all your days off, because they do.

Because of extended fire seasons I have no time. My divorce was because of the stress and lack of time for family.

I am either at work or on call almost all the time. I do not have time to meet anyone or to date anyone if I did meet someone.

Having a family was my original draw to dispatch and the its myth of a work life balance or the ability to create a more predictable schedule. Since moving into dispatch I feel my relationships are just as strained if not more.

I have missed out on my kids growing up. My partner did most of the parenting.

I worked a lot of nights and days off, so we couldn't make a lot of plans. Missed out on a lot of family events and vacations. Husband had to do most of the cooking and putting the kids to bed. Missed out on a lot of normal life events and fun.

Relationships with family members have been significantly impacted. Long durations of time away, unordinary work hours, travel, etc. have all contributed to challenges and put additional work and stress on caregivers. Have missed out on numerous significant events of family and friends, including weddings, celebrations, graduations. Stress, long work hours, lack of exercise, and opportunities to manage healthy diet have all contributed to slow decline of overall optimal health.

Marriage gets tested every year during fire season due to long hours and inability to be present for my spouse and family

My wife worries about me less now that I am in a Dispatch center and thinks I am safer now that I am in a non-operational roll. She doesn't understand how mentally draining dispatching can be, and really doesn't understand the legal weight that our decisions carry.

With a baby on the way, I know I have to be very careful to balance my time. There is such a high demand placed on dispatchers that it is very hard not to overwork or be overworked. At the same time, it is hard to turn down overtime, because it truly is the way we come out ahead.

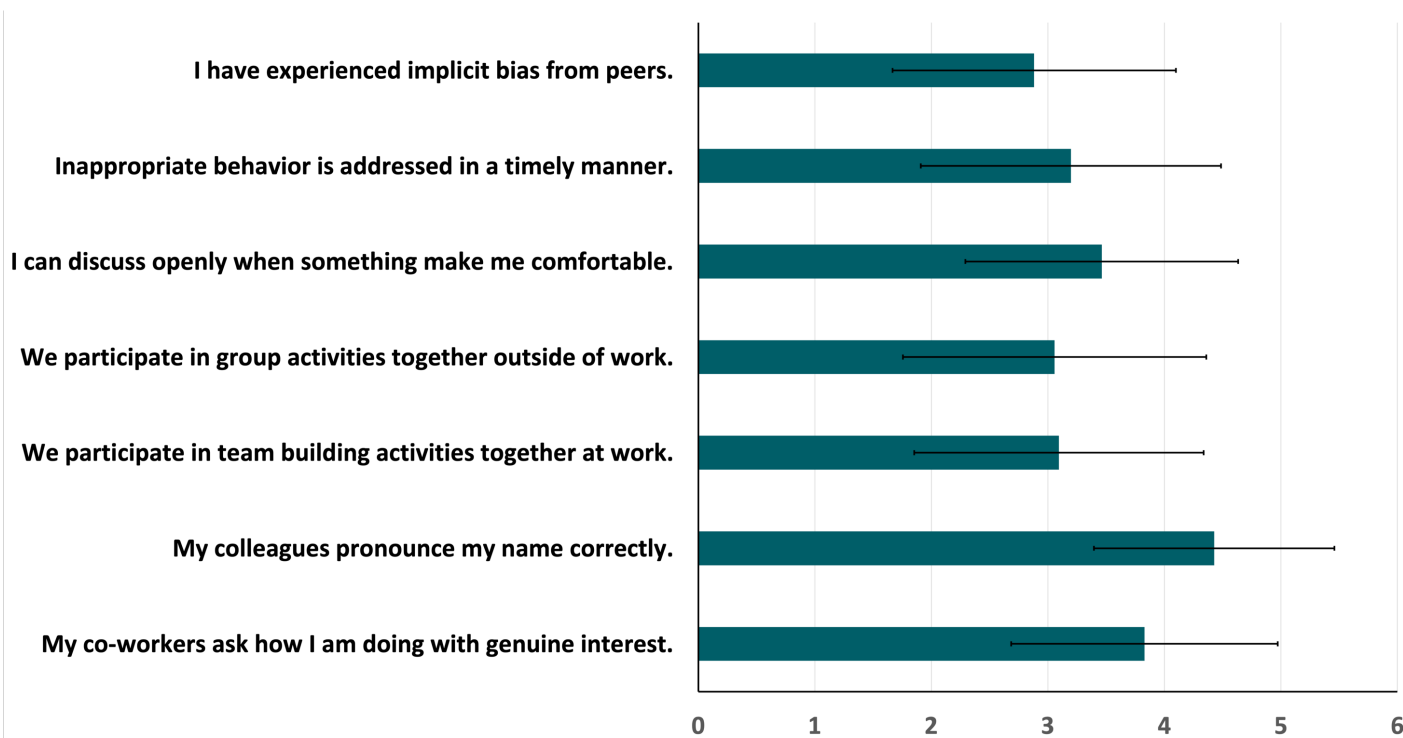
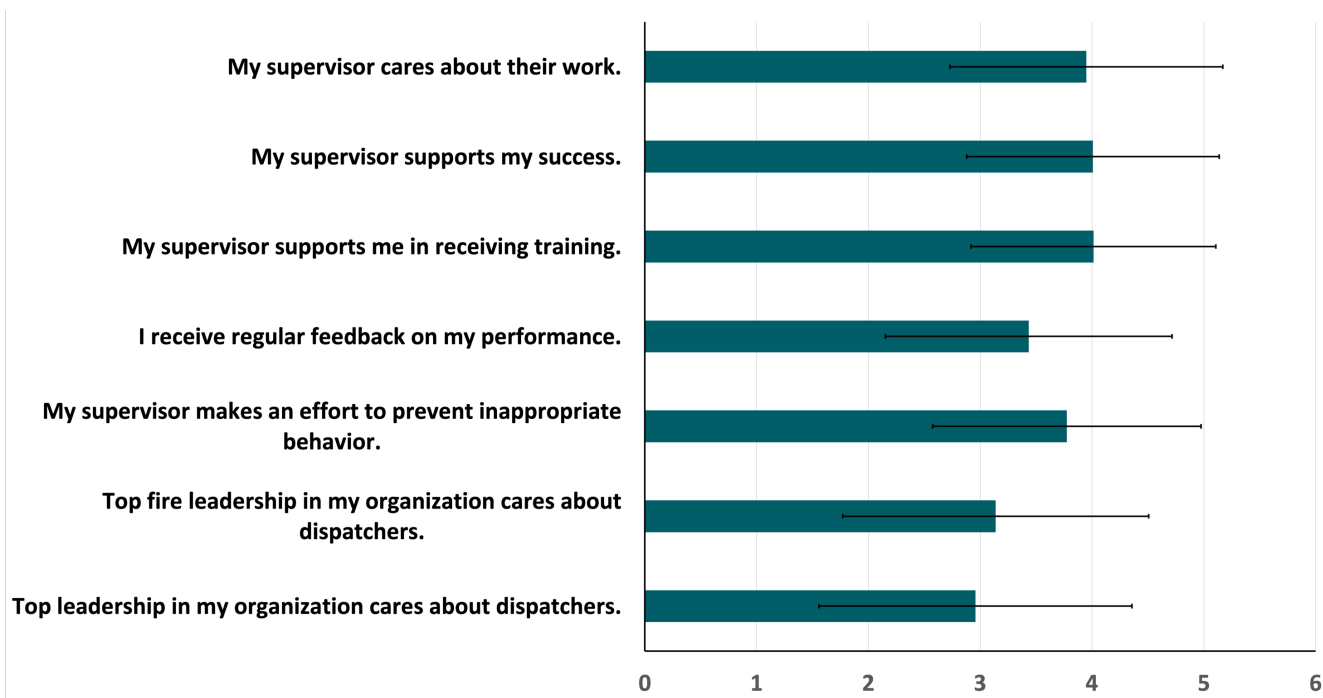


My marriage has been impacted by Dispatch in many positive ways. It has allowed me to be home more than when I was an Engine Capt. On the other hand it suffers due to the long hours and multiple days in a row working. In most instances the OT hours I work are longer than when I was on the Engine. It also is affected by having to carry a on call phone as that limits what I can do during that week that I have it as I have to be available to respond to smoke reports and fires.

During my marriage, my dispatch career has caused consternation for vacations during summer, family events out of my dispatch zone, and even local. Even going to a restaurant or movie locally sometimes means taking a different vehicle. We had a strained relationship during the fire season. My spouse always asked me, "Why can't someone else do that" (so I could do X or Y with her). Invariably the answer was that there was nobody else. This would be after orders were UTF'ed. Now more than 15 years later, she has adapted by planning family events for the summer without me. During the falls, I would be recovering from a long and stressful fire season and didn't want to do much. Depending on the fire season, this would take weeks or months to get over. During the busiest fire season, it can even last into the next fire season to a degree.

I am a former dispatcher... [leaving the job] my mental emotional and physical health has drastically improved. I felt like a zombie. My relationship with my spouse was deteriorating. My therapist was earning every cent I paid her. I desperately needed time off work, but felt guilty taking annual during busy season, so I tried to schedule that before and after, which never felt like a break. I was also turning down personal time spent with family and friends because I knew I just didn't have the energy to maintain those outings/relationships and that I had to turn around and wake up for another 14/16 hour day, to include my commute. I worked an extra day for OT per pay period to make it make financial sense for me, but it was killing me. The morale/stress at work carried over into my personal life. My fuse was short, I couldn't stand to have lights, and sounds going as they had been all day. I was over-sensitized and all of it, every aspect of it was way more than I could have anticipated when I accepted the job as IADP.

# Occupational Health



X axis: Likert score: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree  
 Bars are standard deviation

Similar to operational wildland firefighters, we observe high levels of local crew support and investment. Dispatchers believe that their local organization cares about them and that their colleagues and supervisors are invested in their work and well-being. Unlike operational wildland firefighters, dispatchers appear to be able to access training resources with more ease, likely due to their lower overall numbers.



I have had several good supervisors who also mentored me well.

I met them while working with them in the past. I can always lean on them for growth and advice.

I work with good folks to help them and I have had good supervisor's that filled this role.

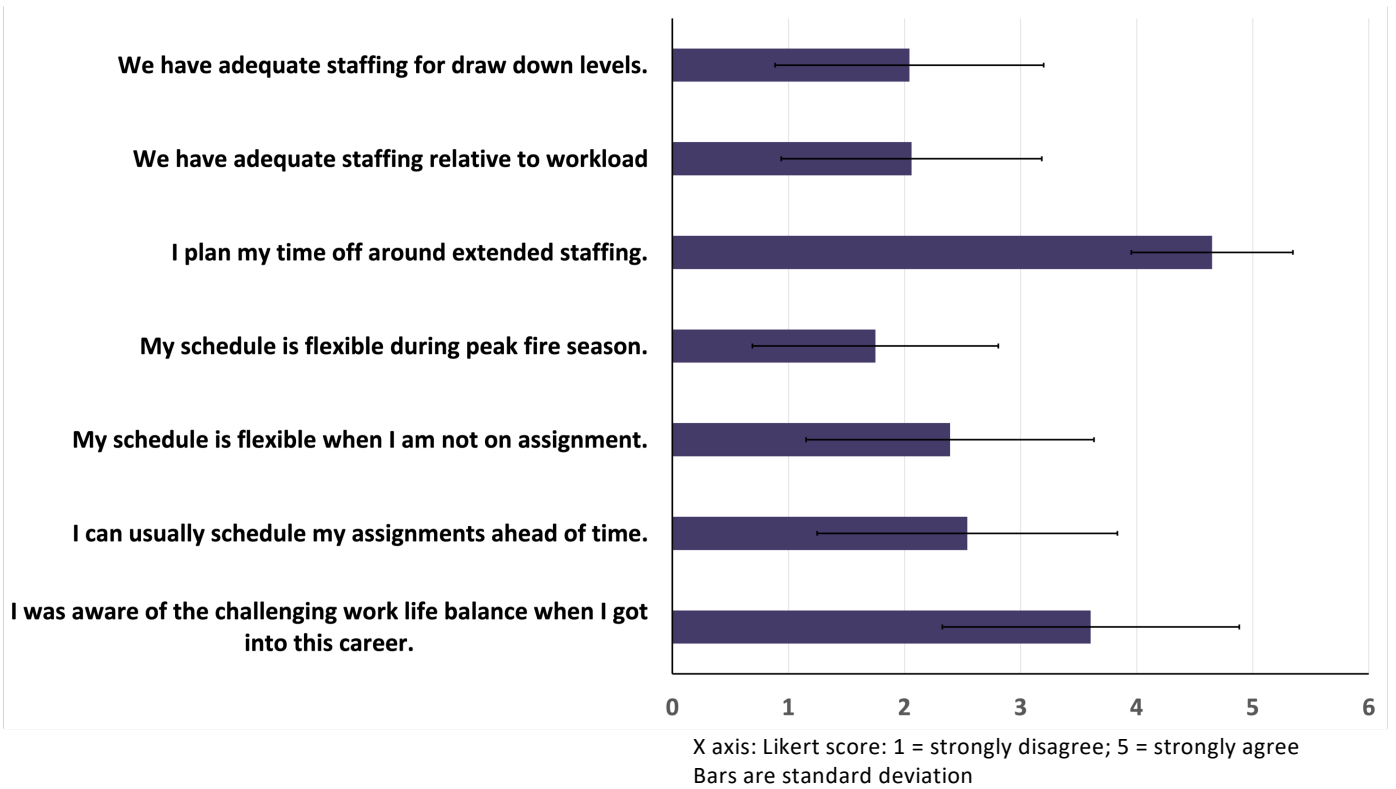
Previous supervisors have mentored me by sharing knowledge, experience & skills. They always encouraged training & becoming qualified in any position I desired. They supported my moves for promotions & helped me obtain my goals.

They were great. They cared about their people and we had some other connections with friends and family. They just taught me some valuable lessons and knowledge that I carry and use today

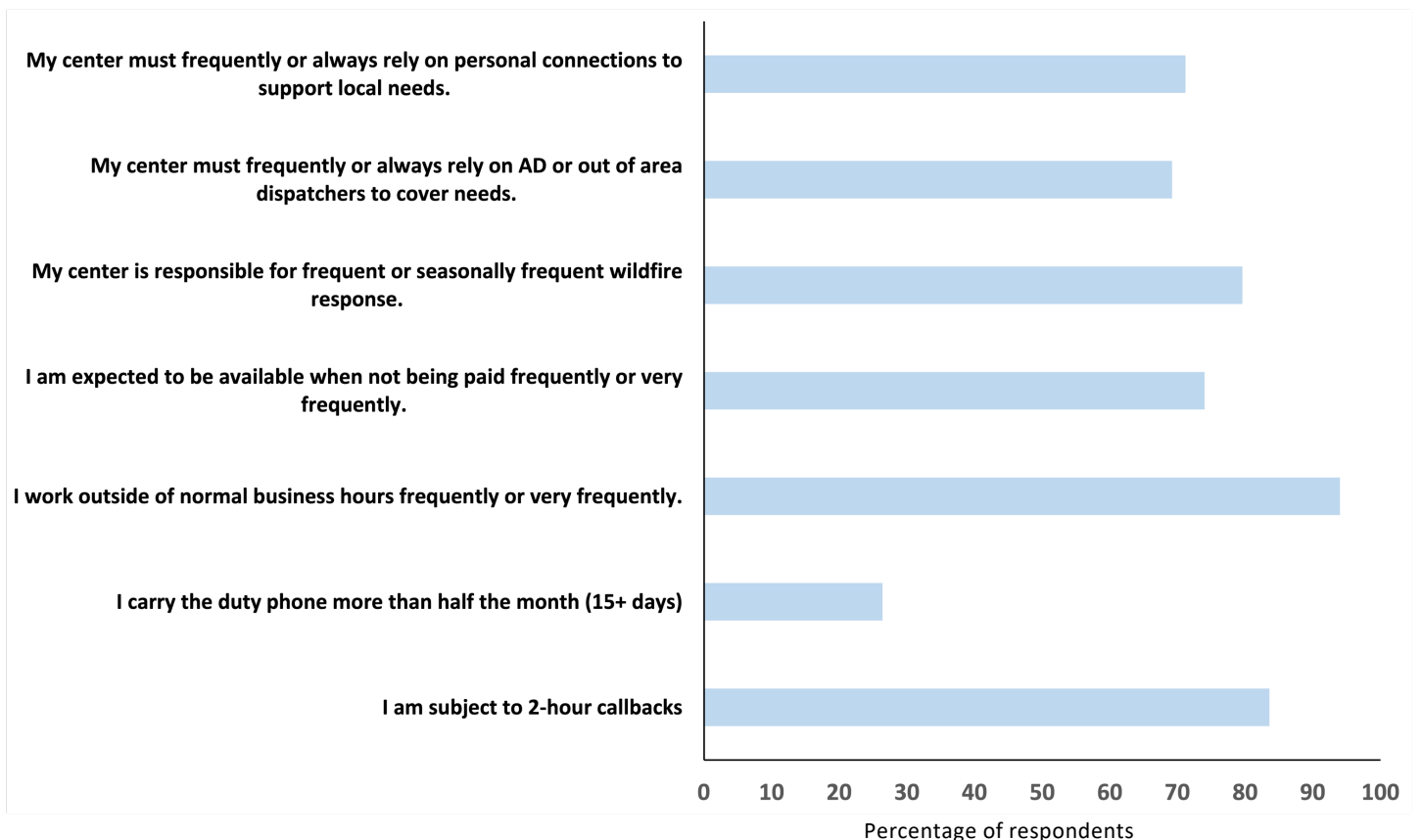
Yes I have been apart of leadership programs and I have found some wonderful mentors who have helped advance my career and get me involved in things I was interested in.

Yes, the center manager that hired me took me under her wing and taught me.

Yes I have. I connected with them by working at their center often and making a connection with them. They will help me by looking at my resume and giving me feedback on it, they will run me through a mock interview. I also can call them about any issue or problem I maybe experiencing at my center and give me advice on what to do.



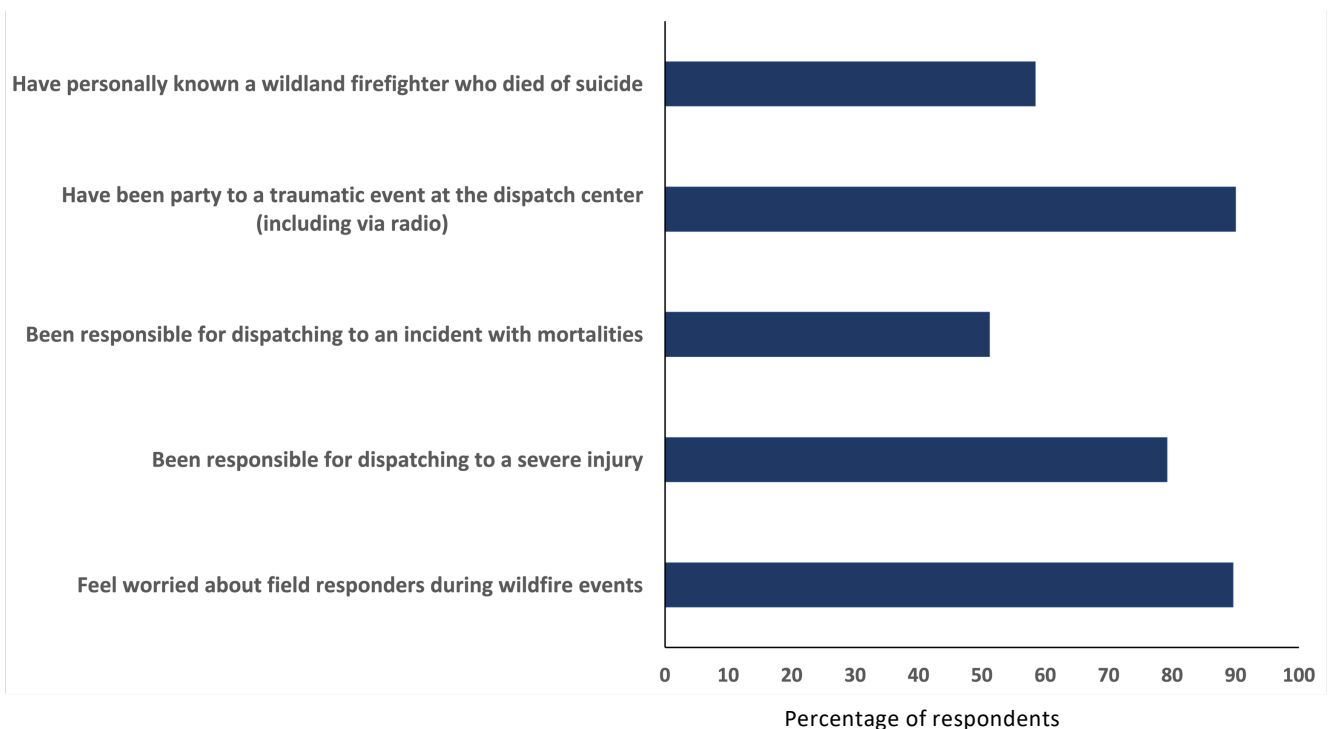
Staffing shortages and scheduling inflexibility are likely intertwined, but also likely to continue under currently proposed policy.



# Trauma & Safety

Wildland fire dispatchers serve as the nexus of communication for wildland fire suppression and management. As such, they interact with the entire fire management operation and have a keystone role in maintaining smooth flow and function.

In short, if you work in wildland fire, you have almost certainly interacted with a wildland fire dispatcher.



This high-contact position means dispatchers experience one of the highest trauma loads of any position in wildland fire. All severe incidents are received and resourced by dispatchers. Dispatchers are familiar with and form working relationships and friendships with many wildland firefighters, and they are disproportionately likely to know an individual firefighter relative to another member of the team, because of the interactive nature of their work and the relatively small number of dispatchers to firefighters per capita in the wildland environment

How do you  
deal with life  
threatening  
emergencies?

A word cloud of terms related to emergency response. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with 'situation' and 'emergency' being the largest. Other prominent words include 'work', 'talk', 'best', 'follow', 'time', 'calm', 'try', 'response', 'personally', 'go', 'staff', 'help', 'know', 'head', 'job', 'deal', 'later', 'event', 'experience', 'think', 'alcohol', 'really', 'incident', 'calmly', 'protocols', 'stress', 'usually', 'focus', 'one', 'break', 'sure', 'breathe', 'good', 'keep', 'dispatch', 'just', 'fire', 'needs', 'next', 'deep', 'enough', 'best', 'remember', 'emotions', 'moment', 'stay', 'back', 'follow', 'nothing', 'provide'.

response go personally  
staff emergency help know  
time calm try head job  
situation think deal later  
alcohol really incident calmly  
protocols stress usually focus work talk  
breathe good keep dispatch one break sure  
just fire needs next deep  
enough best remember emotions moment  
stay back follow nothing provide

For me personally I have had to deal with many life-threatening events throughout my career. The first serious one I dealt with was a horrible experience all around. There was zero support from fire staff before, during or after the event. I was in so much shock I didn't even know it until days later. I remember the incident like it was yesterday, but do not remember a single thing from the next day. I completely shut down and received no help from anyone. I learned from this and make it my goal to make sure no one I know ever has an experience like that.

drinking

I don't, hence my health issues

I tend to stay very calm and dialed in the situation/moment, but then have a break down or struggle afterwards.

I shut down all emotion and focus on what needs doing.

I am very good at being in the moment and focusing on what needs to be done. After the situation if there is time I try and take some time for myself but depending on how busy we are I usually go home sleep and come back to another busy day. Having time to cope comes in the off season and months later.

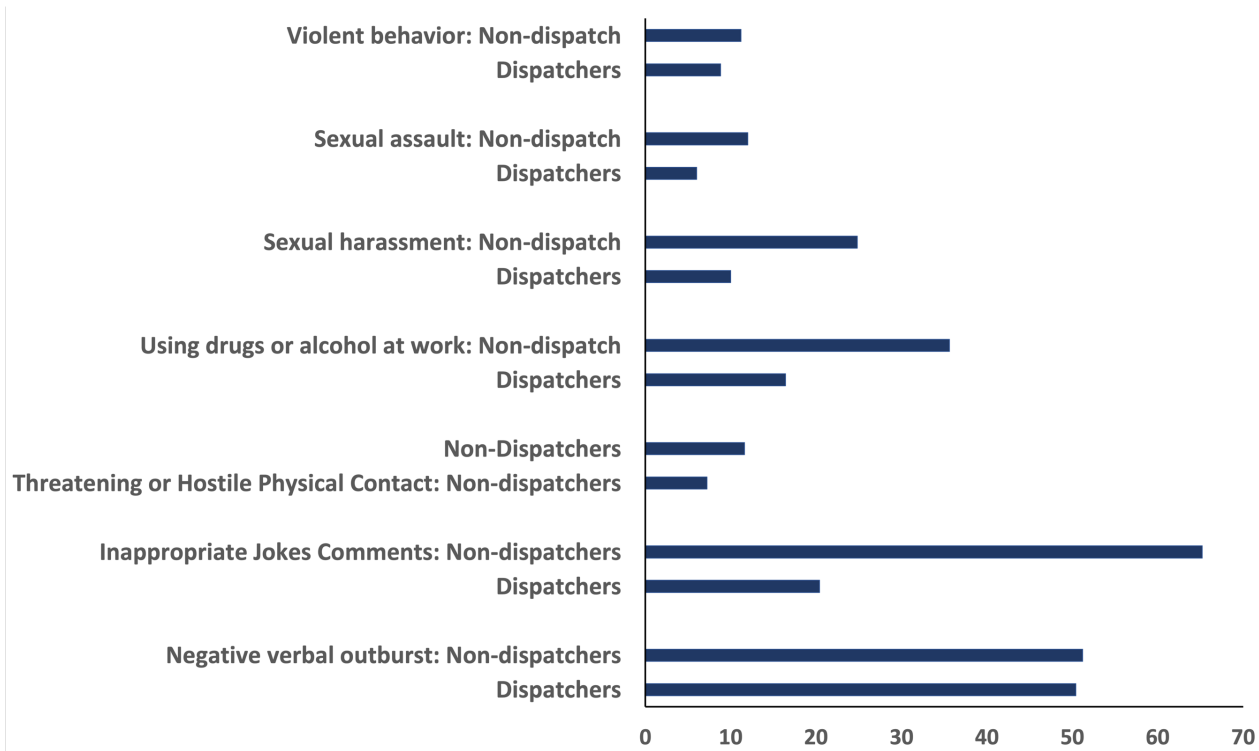
Hysterical crying, alcohol, not eating/sleeping....you only have a few hours to deal with it before you have to be back at work, producing again.

Initially I go into action and deal with the situation. After that I crash and then think about it for a long time.

Remain calm during the situation break down privately later

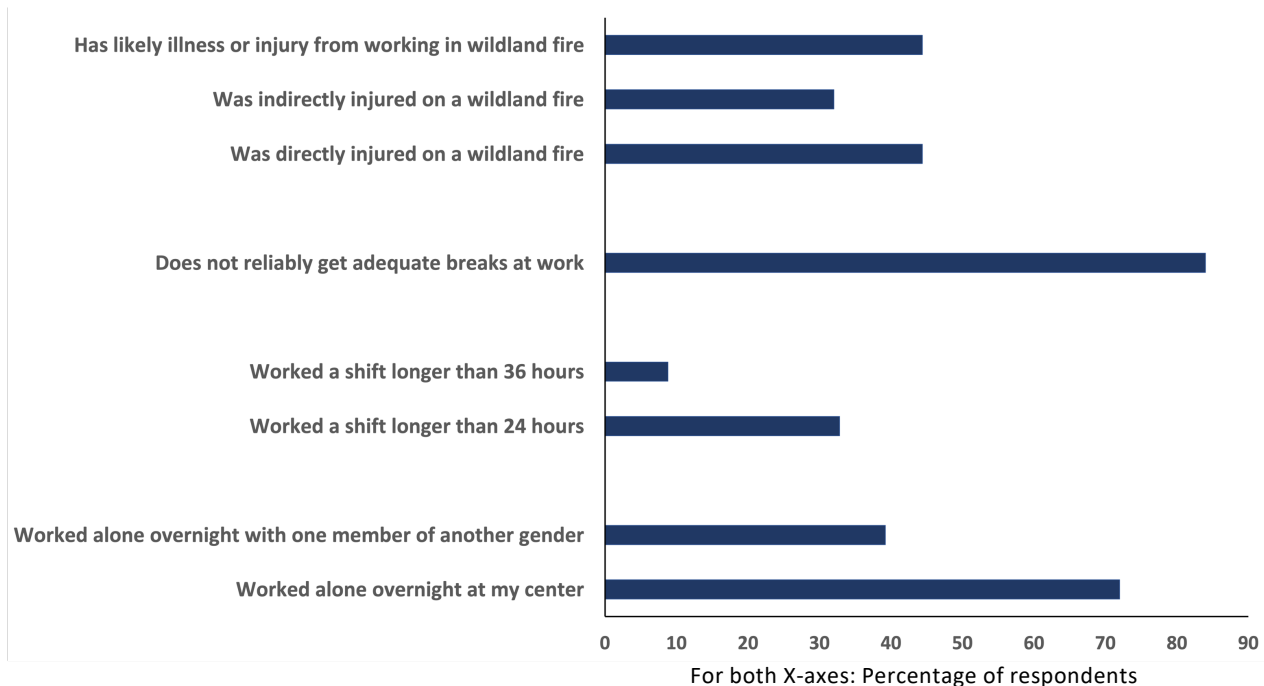


## Wildland fire dispatchers are more likely to experience assault, violence behavior, or verbal abuse from non-dispatcher colleagues than from dispatcher colleagues.

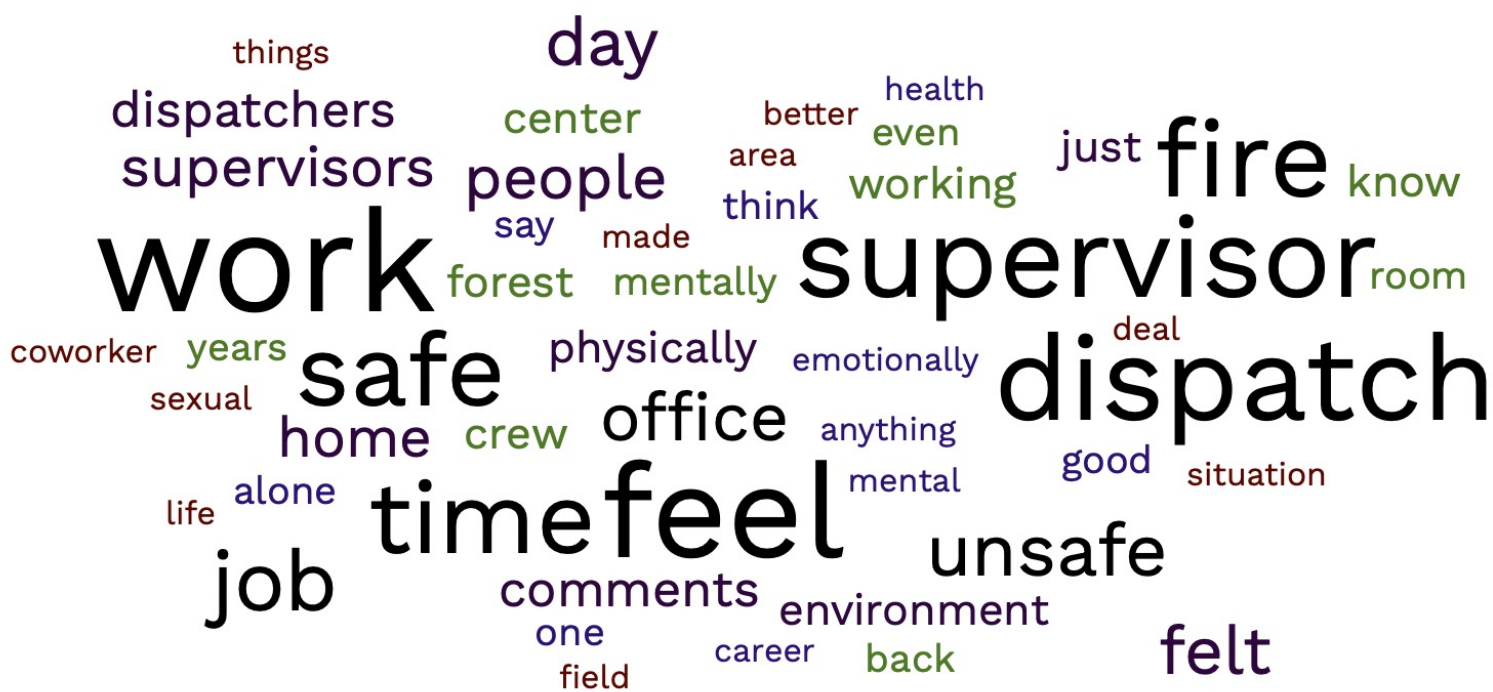


Note: sexual harassment, assault, and physical contact were personal experiences. Use of drugs and inappropriate comments were observations of others. Verbal outbursts and violent behavior could have been observed or directed at the respondent (did not distinguish in the survey).

## They also work in conditions that pose significant risk and have often sustained previous injury.



Describe times that you felt unsafe working in dispatch (if any).



Safe is when I have excellent, professional leaders to depend on and support me. Unsafe is all the rest and has outweighed in my career.

The job is challenging enough. The workplace should be a supportive environment free of discrimination, harassment, and disproportionate opportunities. Invest in qualified leadership.

I feel relatively safe, but I am a large male and have been in fire for over 20 years. We need to make it safe for everybody.

I don't like arriving or leaving the dispatch office all alone when it is dark outside.

I don't believe my agency has my best interest or safety in mind as a priority. The agency has not protected me when I reported unwanted sexual advances from my supervisor.

Our building location is in a very bad area, and it's not always safe or comfortable when outside or when driving through the area. Our office has not been well taken care of so there is mold, water leaks, bugs, etc. Feel safe with the people at work, but feel like building conditions and where we are located are very unsafe.

Previous supervisor was threatening violence after a disciplinary action.

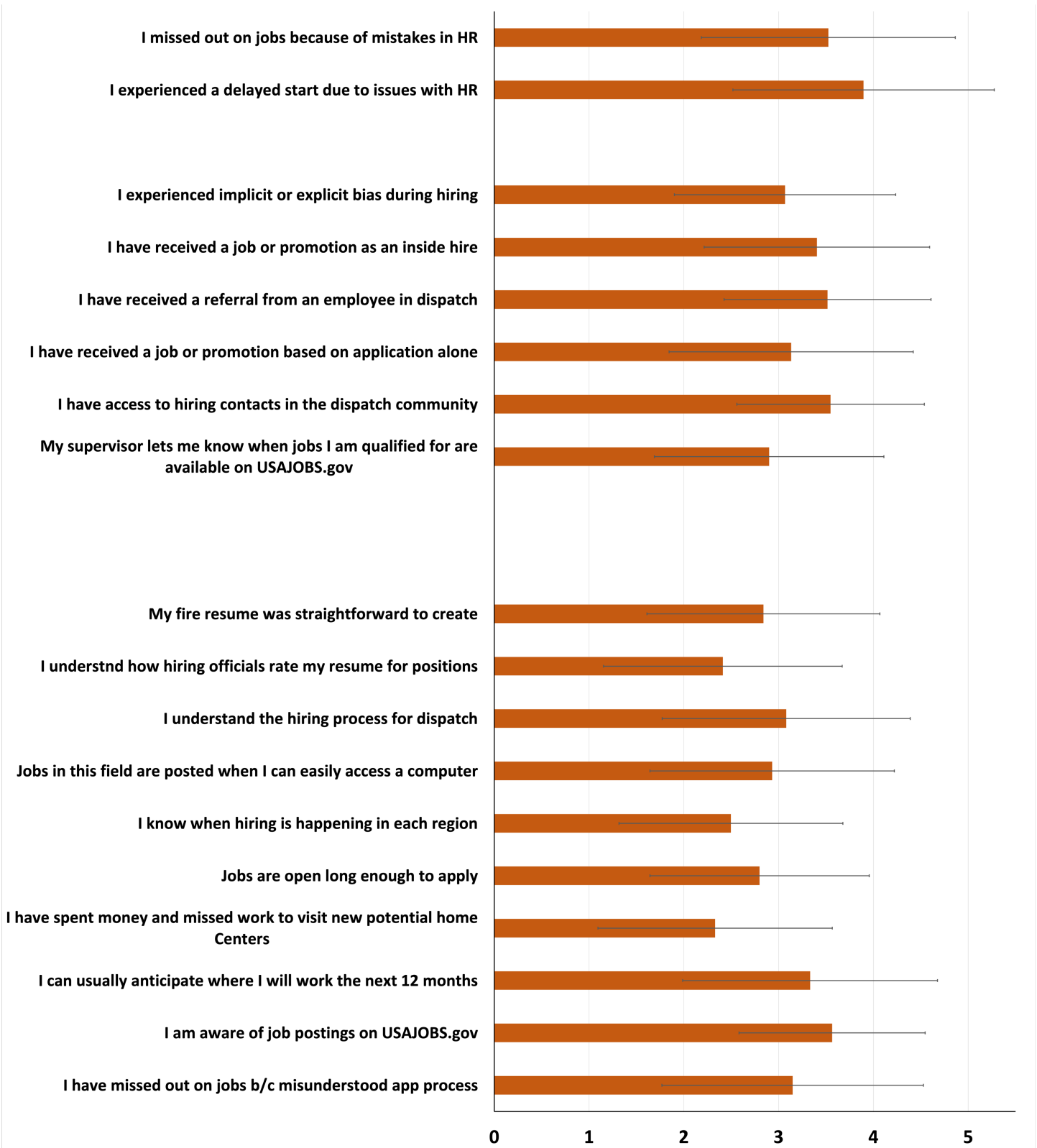
I have been trapped in my dispatch center, alone when a mentally unstable employee aggressively attacked me verbally. They had access to my work area without restriction. I hate working alone in dispatch and don't think anyone should ever have to do so.

There is a good deal of intimidation/toxic masculinity that occurs throughout the community. There has been a great deal of improvement to the environment too.

I do not feel we have the tools to support our mental health for the incidents we deal with and impact us.

# Recruitment is the same old story.

As we see in operational wildland firefighters, recruitment is limited by issues with HR, the online hiring process, and circulation and distribution of job advertisements.



X axis: Likert score: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree  
 Bars are standard deviation

What are the biggest challenges and lessons you have learned in the wildland fire dispatch hiring process?



The biggest challenge in the hiring process by far is the expectations of what needs to be on a resume.

Having to meet "key words" is absolutely baffling to me. I could have years more of experience and qualifications than someone else but if I don't add specific key words then I most likely won't even make the list? That is crazy. I understand that HR is understaffed, but people making these decisions should at least have some background knowledge or information on the positions they are expected to help hire for, even if that means bringing in Subject Matter Experts. The only real help we have is when our peers who have had issues or not made lists/gotten jobs before share their experiences on how to literally jump through the hoops.

the biggest challenge is being qualified and then not getting referred because of a mistake on HR's part.

As a hiring official, HR is one of the biggest issues, 2nd is the officials at NIFC when they certify applicants, they have removed fully qualified candidates for simple things or mistakes on their part, also biggest is lack of applicants

Challenges have been the Firehire process. There are a lot of changes that take place each phase and it's very difficult to know the progression of the application process.

As a hiring manager, it has been difficult to hire new dispatchers since HR disqualifies candidates at the GS-5 level due to no specialized experience at the next lower grade.

HR was the biggest challenge - applications and documents lost, poor communication, months-long delays of start dates.

Forest Service HR is broken. People are not getting referred for jobs they are clearly qualified for, including one friend who was not referred for a lateral in the SAME POSITION at a different center.

Creating a resume that will make it through the AI system. People with years of wildland fire experience will not make lowest level dispatch certs because they do not have enough key words, negating the experience. Connecting with somebody who knows how the system works is the only reason I made it through my first hiring. I now help people with their resumes.

The biggest challenges are the timing of the application period and the complexity of the resumes required.

Biggest challenges have been HR not understanding what wildland fire dispatchers truly do and how to understand our resumes.

Delays, unclear expectations.

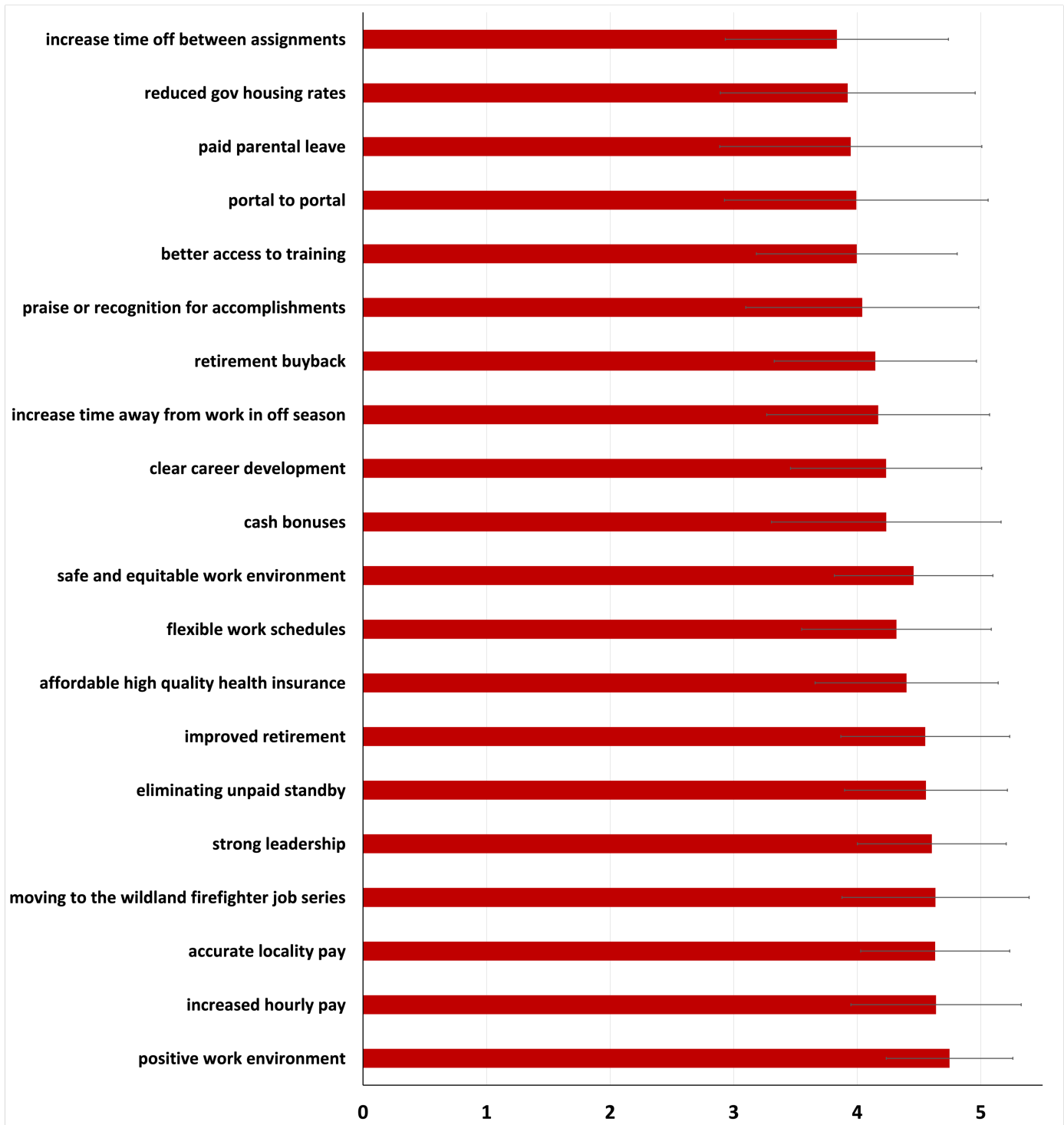
HR is a nightmare.

Lack of promotional opportunities in the community I live in.

Application period too short; success depended on co-workers providing position information; co-worker guidance helped me the most

# Retention

When asked which of the below options were important for retaining the respondent in wildland fire dispatching, the option that yielded the highest agreement was a “positive work environment”, suggesting they place a high value on work and effecting a change for the better.

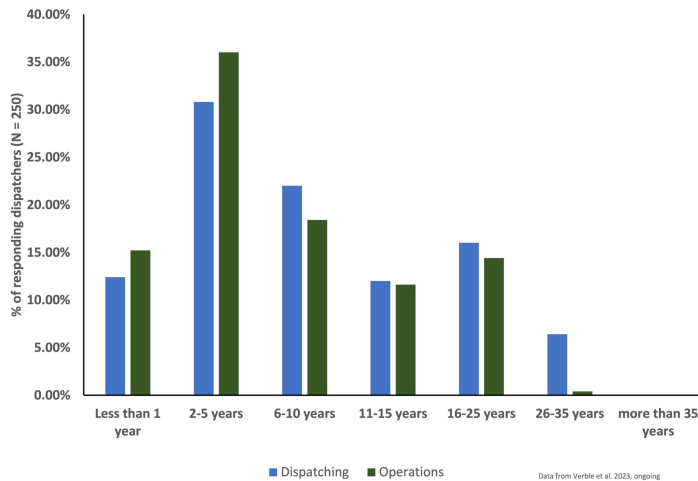


X axis: Likert score: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree  
Bars are standard deviation

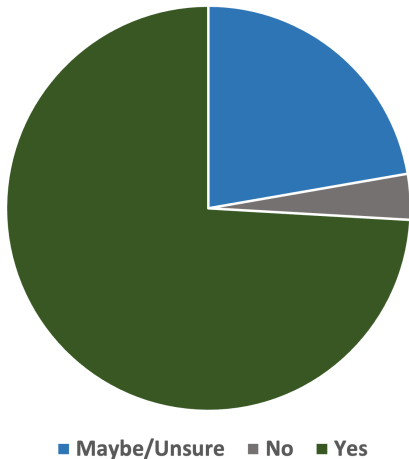


# Dispatchers Want a Change

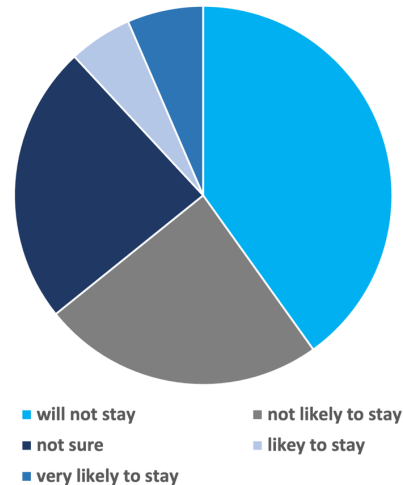
Current Wildland Fire Dispatchers' Work Experience



Do you want to be moved to the Wildland Firefighter job series in OPM?



If dispatchers aren't moved to the wildland firefighter job series, how likely are you to stay in dispatch?



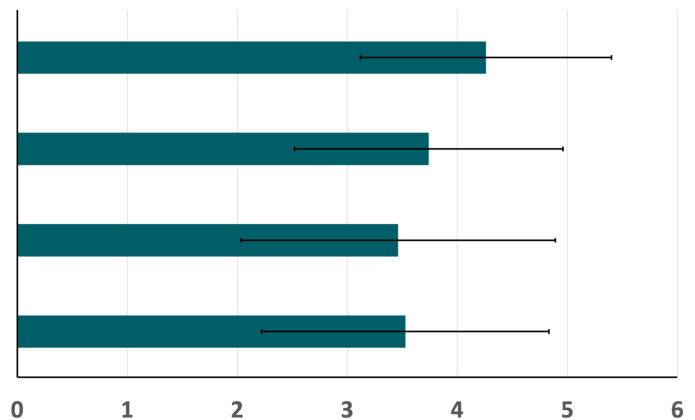
Two surveys, same results. Left: Verble et al. 2023. Right: Figgins 2022.

I feel like my knowledge as a previous wildland firefighter is key to being able to be a wff dispatcher

I feel like wildland firefighters that work outside dispatch respect me more because of my previous exp in wildland fire

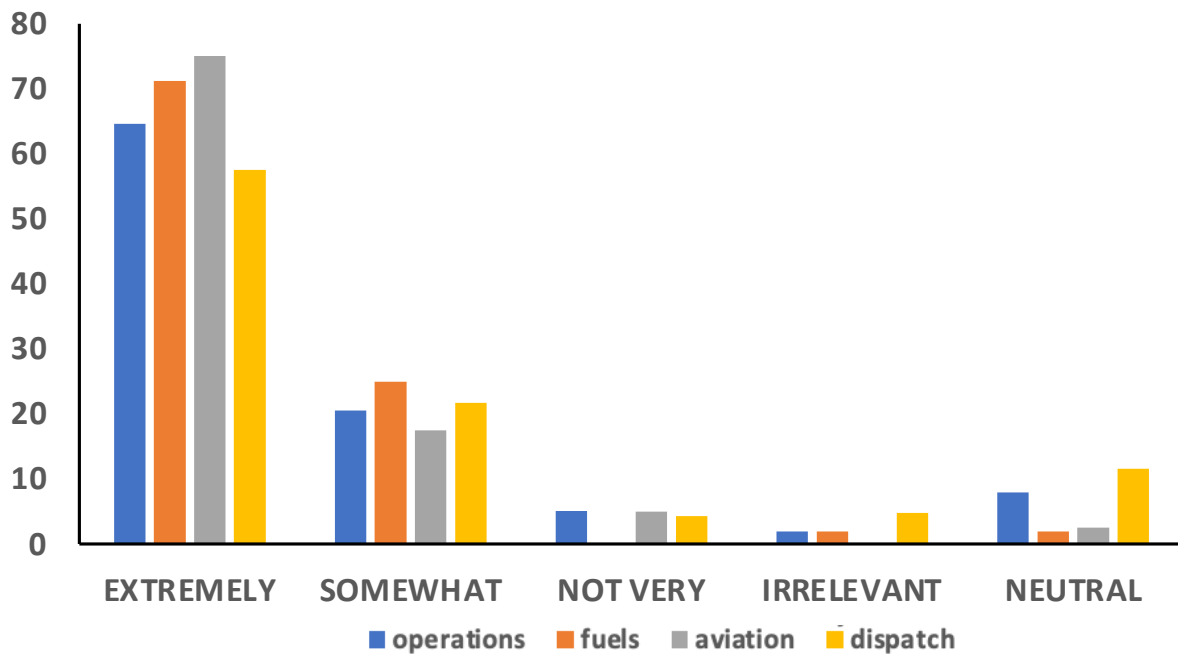
i feel like the forest FMO or leadership sees me as a member of the wildland firefighter team

I feel respected by wildland firefighters outside dispatch



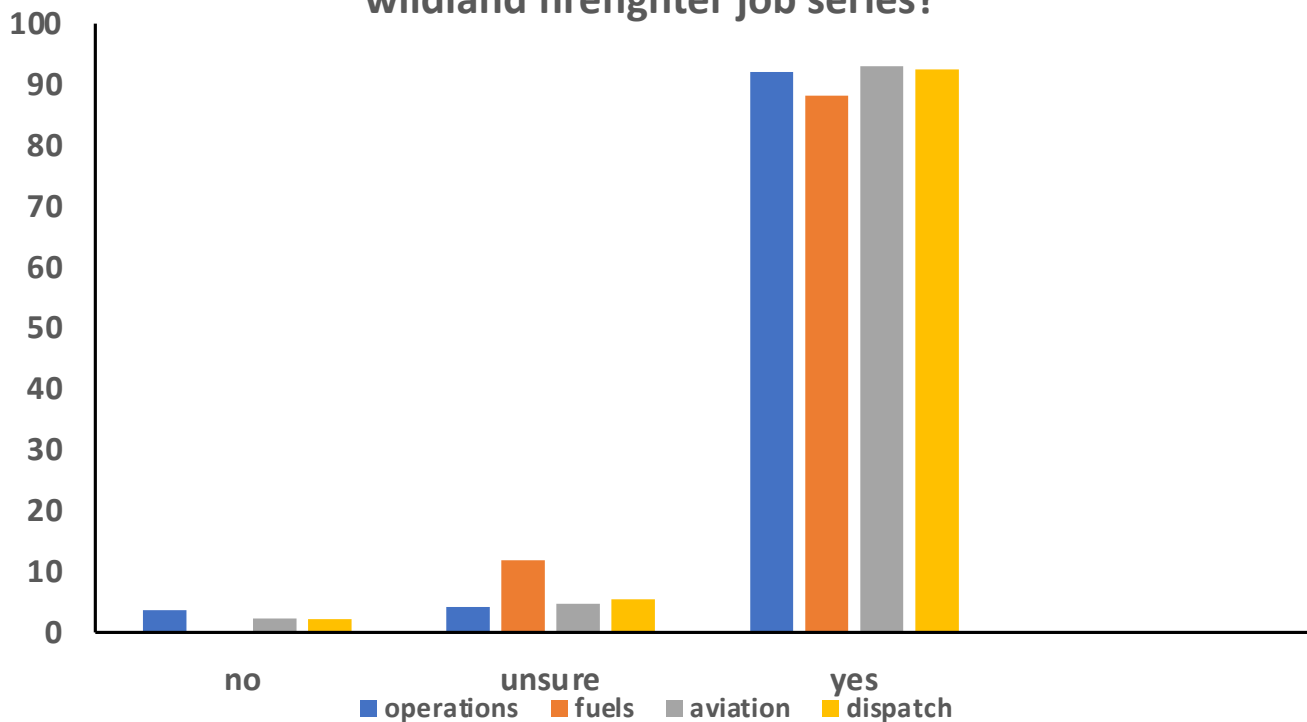
The levels of attrition that could be seen as a result of not moving wildland fire dispatchers to the new wildland firefighter job series could cripple an already depleted work force.

## How important is it that wildland fire dispatchers have wildland fire experience?



**Wildland firefighters across operations, aviation, fuels management, and dispatch have similar opinions about the roles of dispatch and importance of their integration into wildland firefighting.**

## Should wildland fire dispatchers be included in the wildland firefighter job series?



# Why are you a wildland fire dispatcher?



Because I am passionate about supporting the field and enjoy the work but lately with the lack of dispatchers available for the jobs we are pushing our employees to the BRINK --Burn out is real, no work life balance. Centers are not adequately staffed and fire season's are longer and busier than ever.

Because I had a baby and that was the only option at the time.

Health and personal reasons stepping away from primary fire. Ended up enjoying fire dispatch.

Dispatching - Communications is a primary source of preventing fatality. It is an important part of fire fighting and primarily is my secondary plan to supporting the cause. I also want to pursue it is due to the potential for earning overtime on assignment... We are all here for a paycheck.

Because I love my job, I love providing service to the public and helping the field get their needs met. I wanted to start a family and without having a secondary fire job that I could go into, there is no way I could have stayed in fire.

Because I couldn't be a wildland firefighter any longer due to my type 1 diabetes. I chose dispatch because its a necessary function to the response and management of wildland fire operations. I am a dispatcher for my love of this industry and my love for serving the public in response to fires.

At this point it's hard to know what other opportunities are available. I do enjoy helping other firefighters.

Ankle surgery cause of injury made it so I could not be in primary fire anymore

I became a mother, had a child and the District FMO stated he needs an Engine Boss and not a mother, make a choice.

I feel it is important work. Mostly, I like the people I meet.

If you or someone you know is suffering, please visit **Everyone Goes Home® in the Wildland** for a list of resources.

<https://www.everyonegoeshome.com/resources/wildland/>

Also, take a moment to check on your buddies and your co-workers, and ask twice. The international **Ask Twice** campaign is a movement to get people talking more openly about mental health. By asking twice, you help support a person who might want to talk and take the first step in challenging the mental health stigma.



### Questions and comments can be directed to:

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