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COUNSELLING & ADVOCACY CENTRE

Supporting Communities and Families · Strengthening People



First Responder Families Needs Assessment Results & Analysis

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent petals in shades of light blue, teal, and orange, resembling a stylized flower or leaf design.



Introduction

The First Responder coalition exists to ensure the optimum mental health and psychological health and safety of all first responder organizations and employees as well as family members of employees and retirees.

Reflects Priority #2 of this coalition: The coalition will work together to develop strategies and programs to address the continuum of mental health issues known to impact First Responders and their families

Contributes to the objective: Assess the need for mental health support services among immediate family members of First Responders and develop and/or implement evidence based strategies to meet those needs

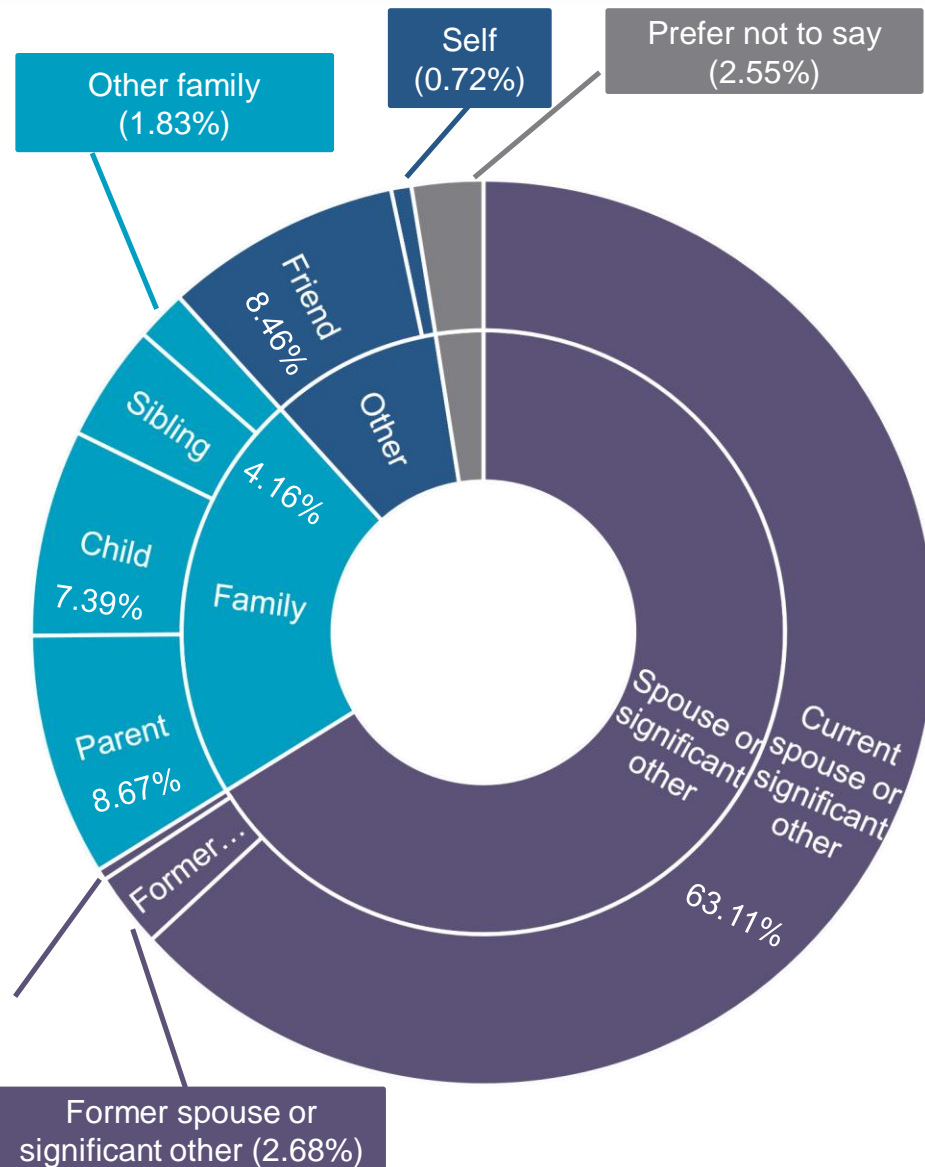
First Responder Families Needs Assessment (March 13 – May 31, 2019)

2,691 people responded to the survey

16 question survey



Relationship to First Responder, by Type (% of respondents)



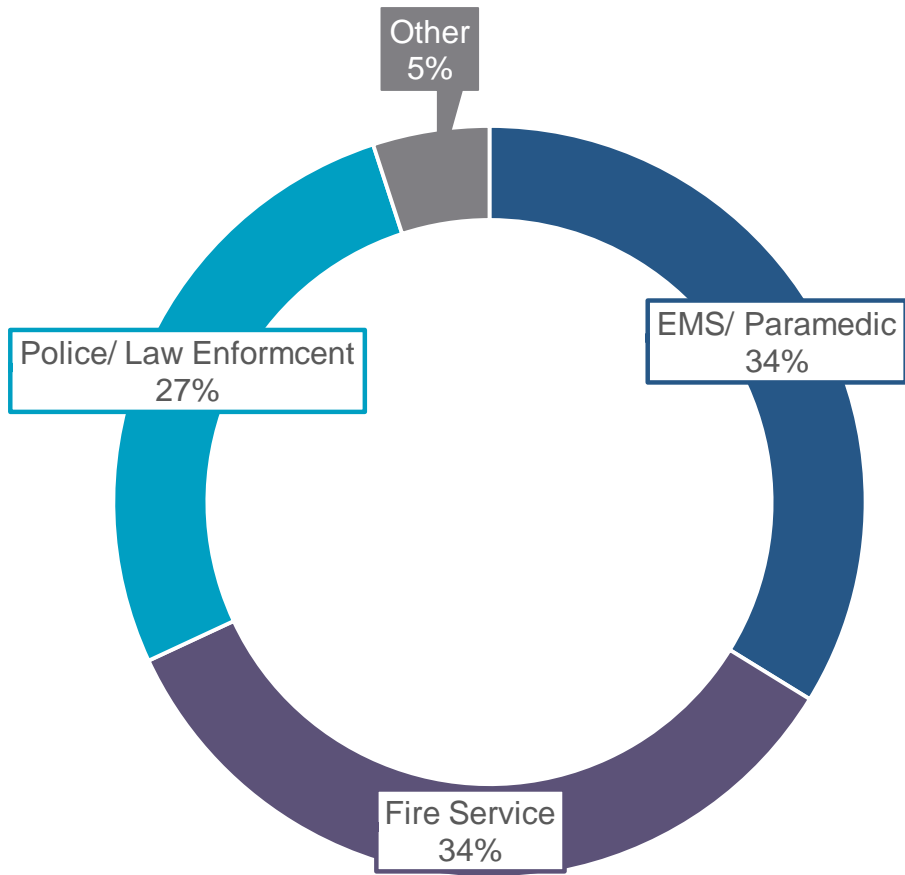
Q: The first responder in my life is my: (Note: if you are close to more than one first responder, when responding please think about the person with whom you have the closest relationship, or consider completing a separate survey for each first responder in your life.)



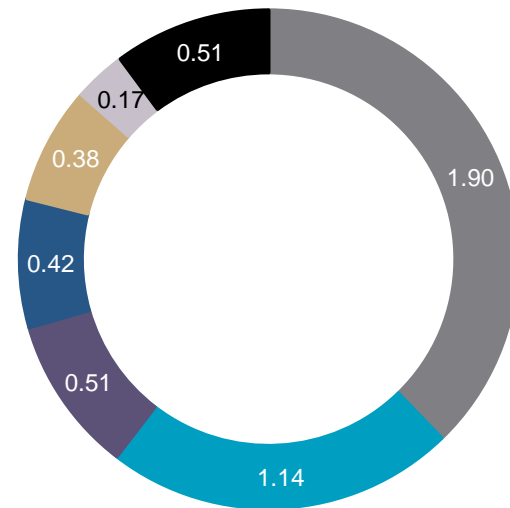


First Responder Role, by Type (% of respondents)

Q: What kind of First Responder role does the first responder in your life have?



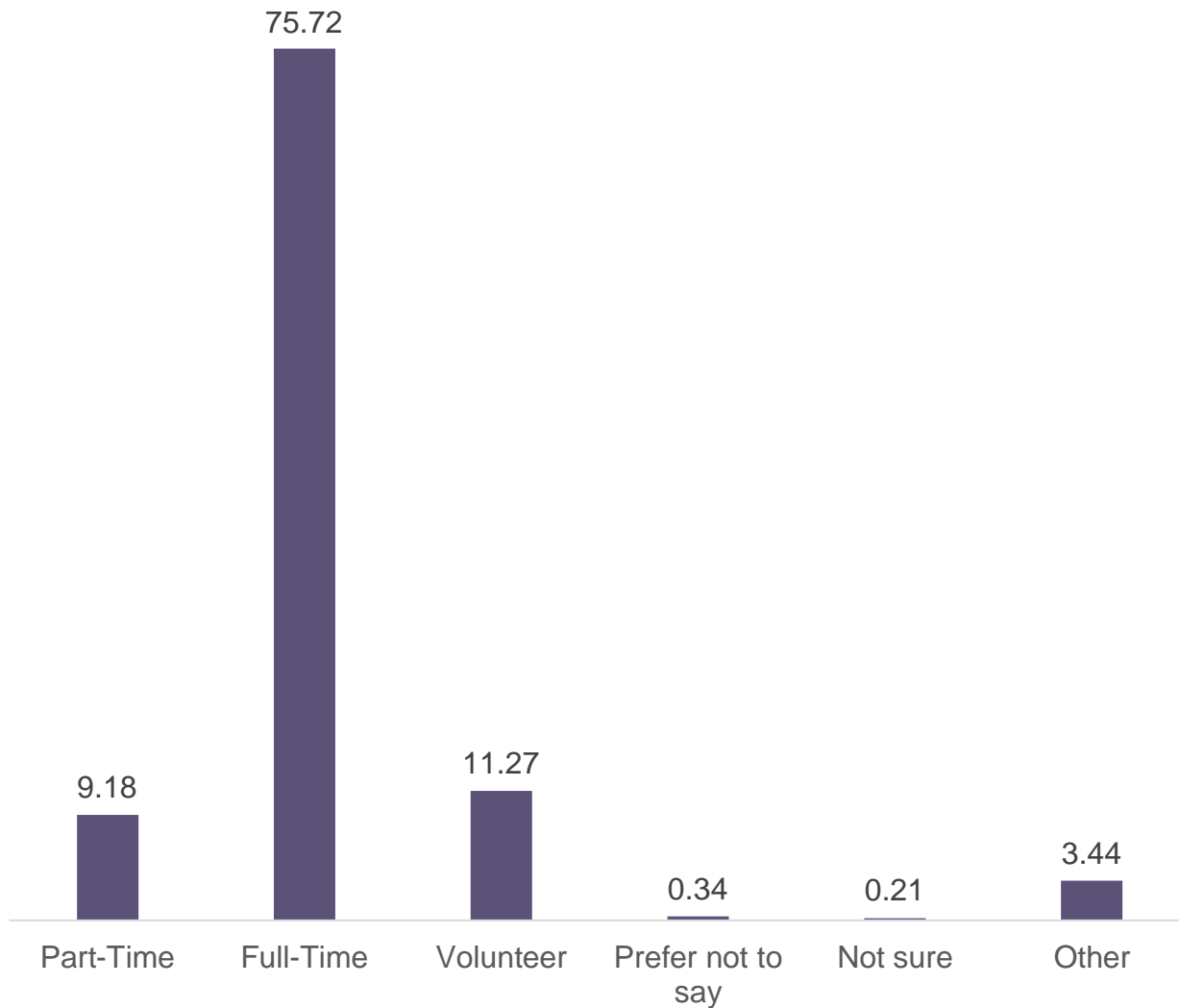
Other (% of total)



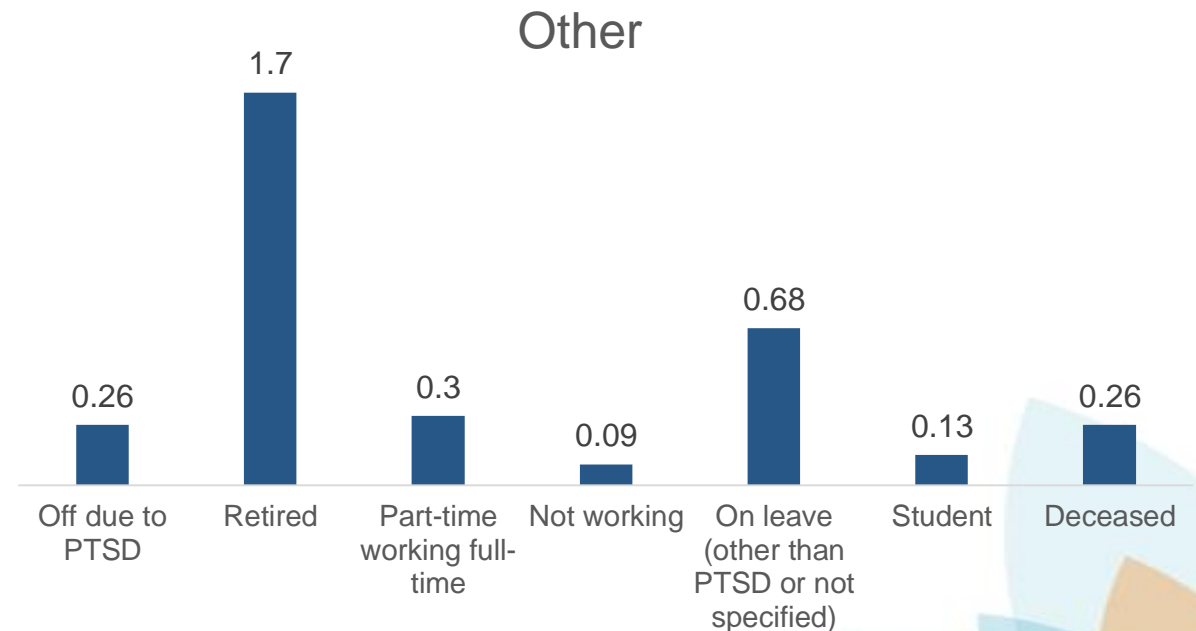
- Communications/ Dispatch
- Corrections
- Nurse
- Other community (Mental health, social work, Children's Aid, etc.)
- Other emergency (Coast Guard, Search and Rescue, Fire medic, etc.)
- Tow truck operator
- Prefer not to say



Hours Worked (% of respondents)



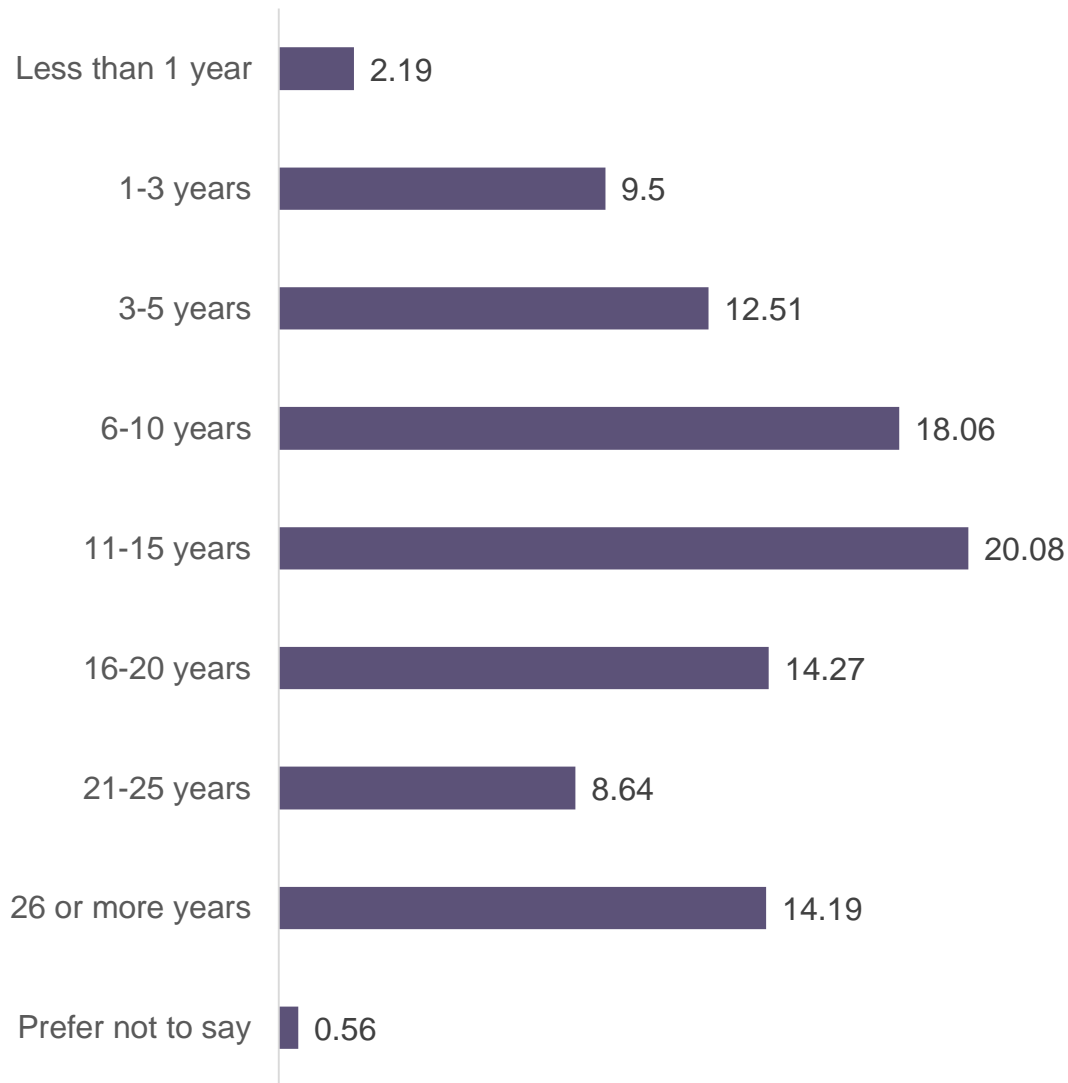
Q: Does the first responder in your life work part-time or full time in this occupation?



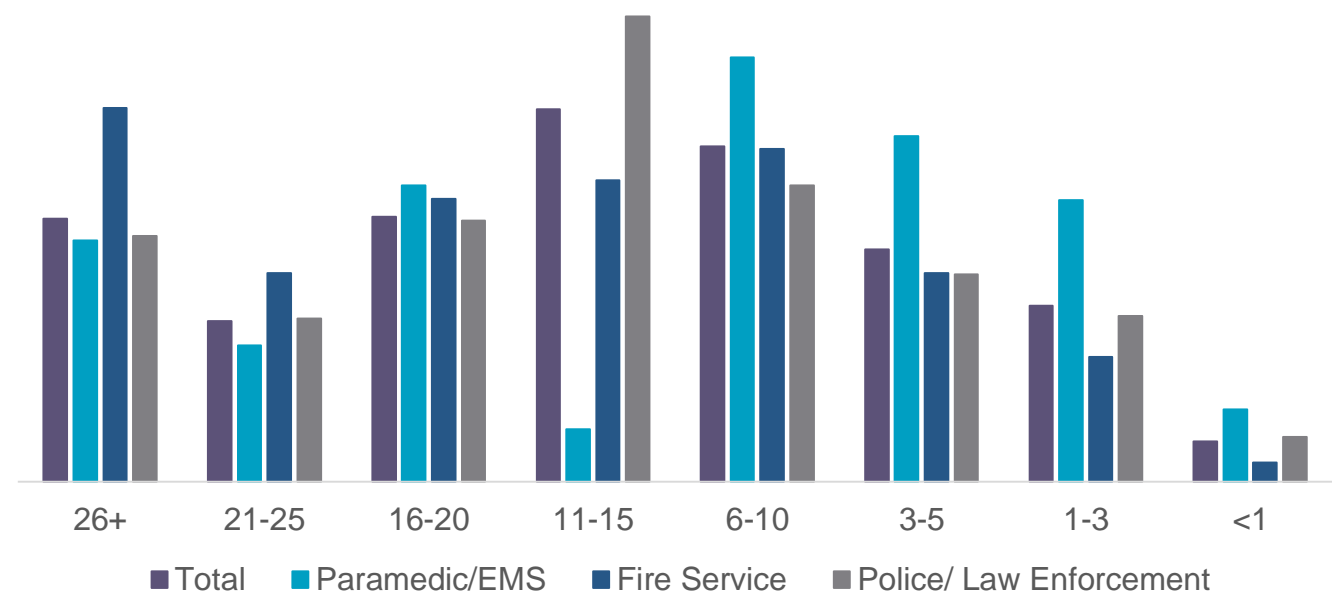


Years Worked (% of respondents)

Q: For approximately how many years has the first responder in your life been working in a First Responder occupation?



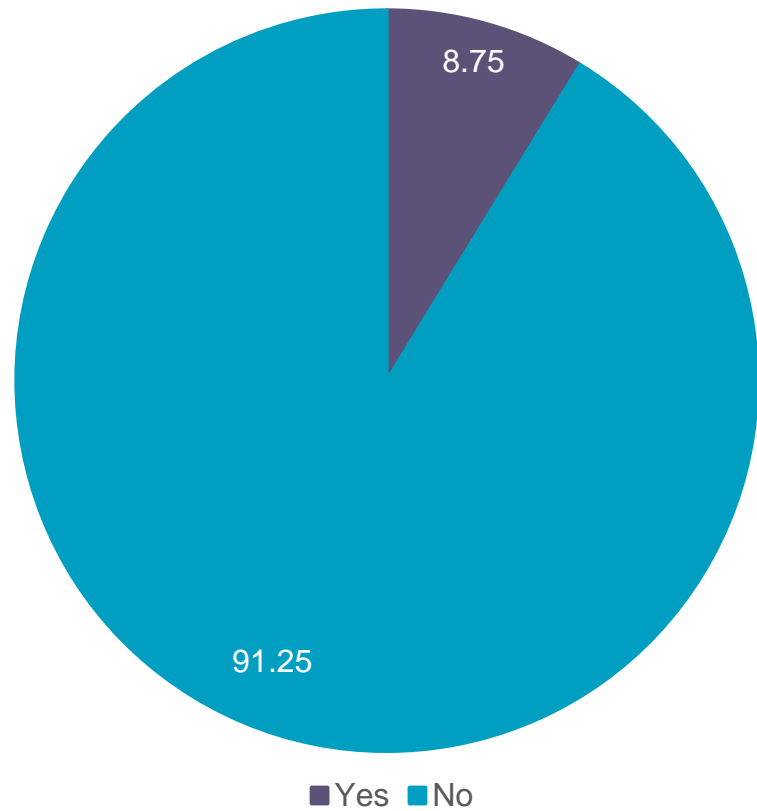
Years Worked, by First Responder Role



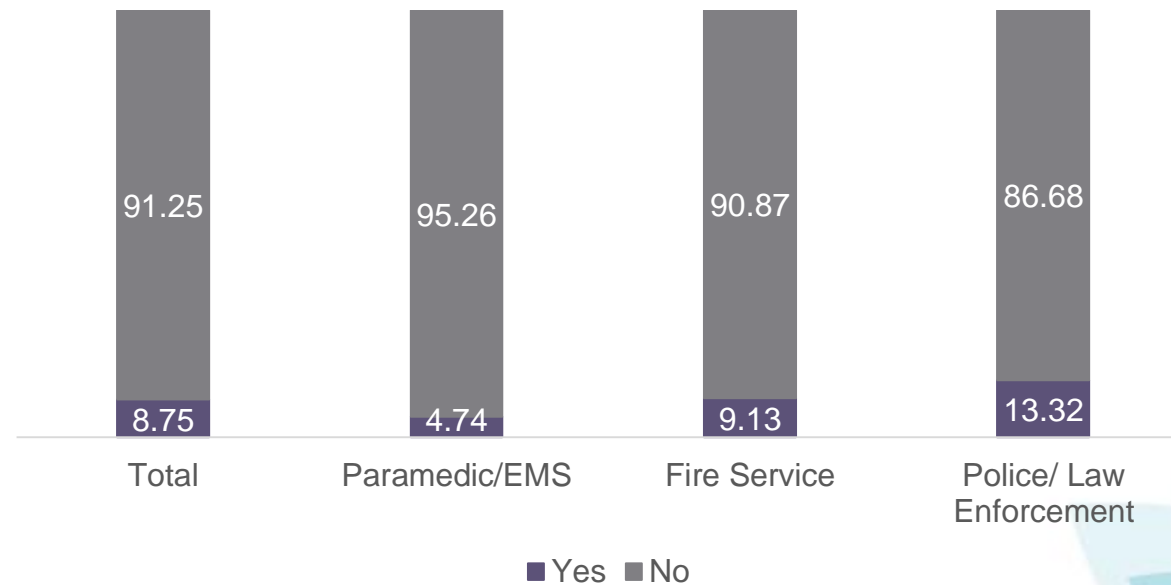


Military Service (% of respondents)

Q: Has the first responder in your life ever served in the military?



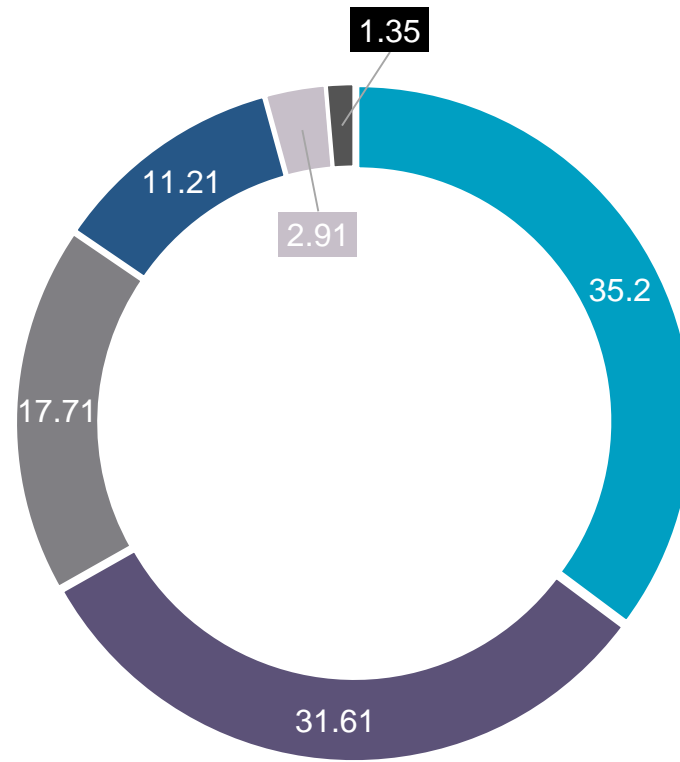
Military Service, by First Responder Role





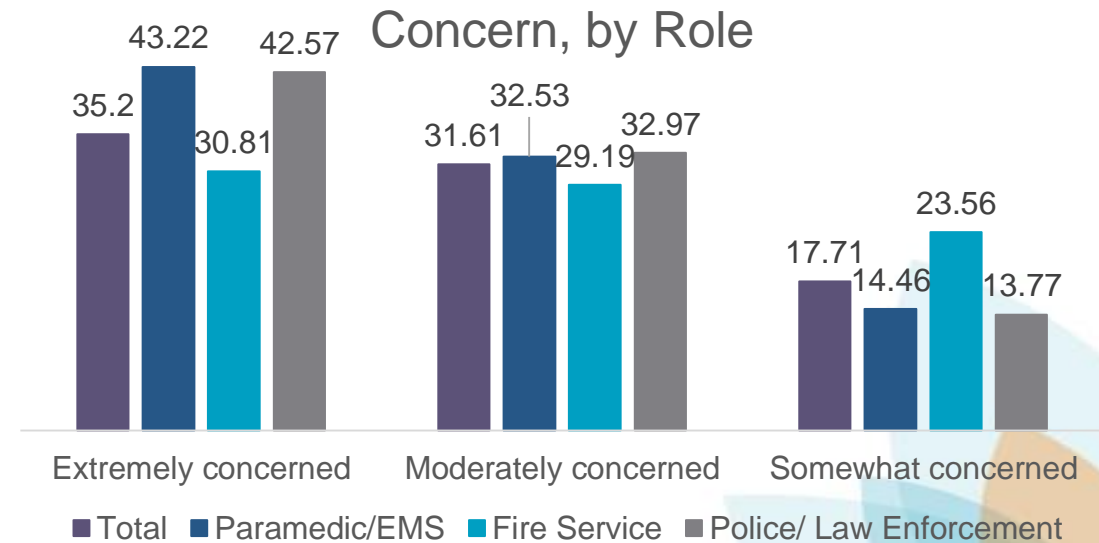
Concern About Impact of First Responder Role on Mental Health (% of respondents)

- Extremely concerned
- Moderately concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Slightly concerned
- Not at all concerned
- Prefer not to say



Less than 3% were not at all concerned. Nearly 85% were somewhat, moderately, or extremely concerned.

Q: Are you concerned about the impact of the first responder role on the mental health of the first responder in your life?

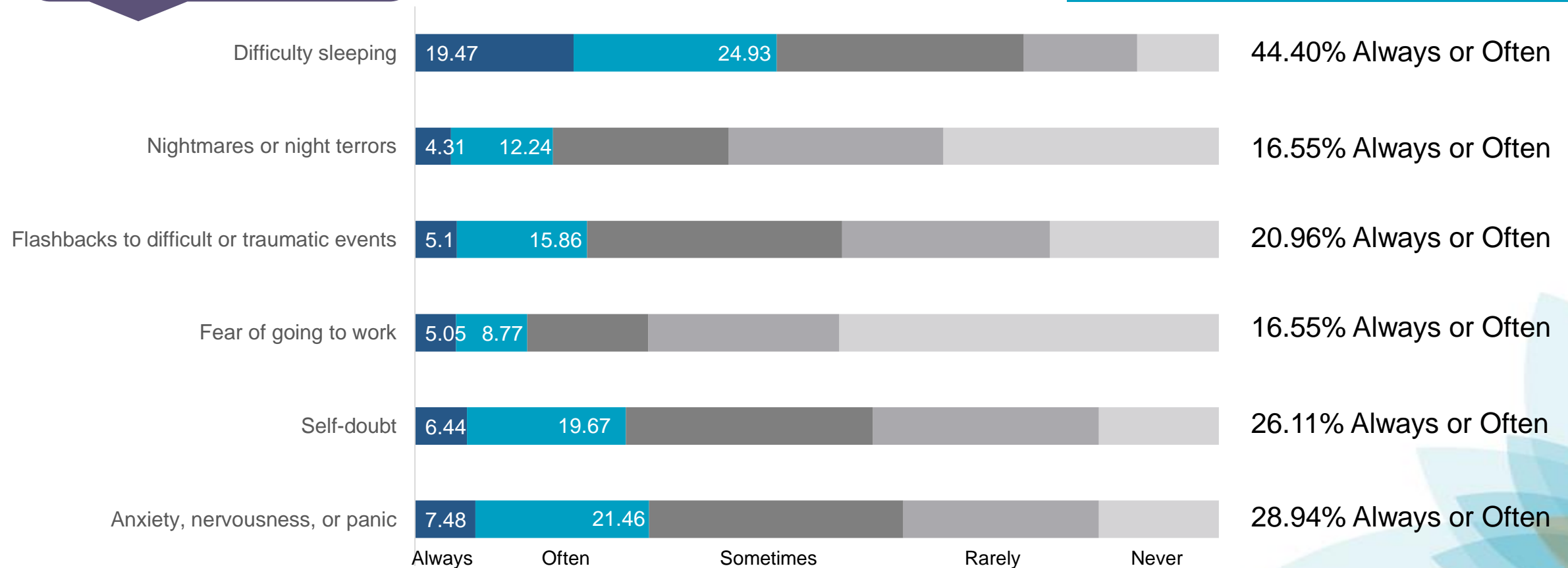




Frequency of Symptoms (% of respondents)

“He says he’s fine. He is NOT fine but with the current stigma, he’ll never admit it.”

Q: How often are you observing the following behaviours or symptoms in the first responder in your life?

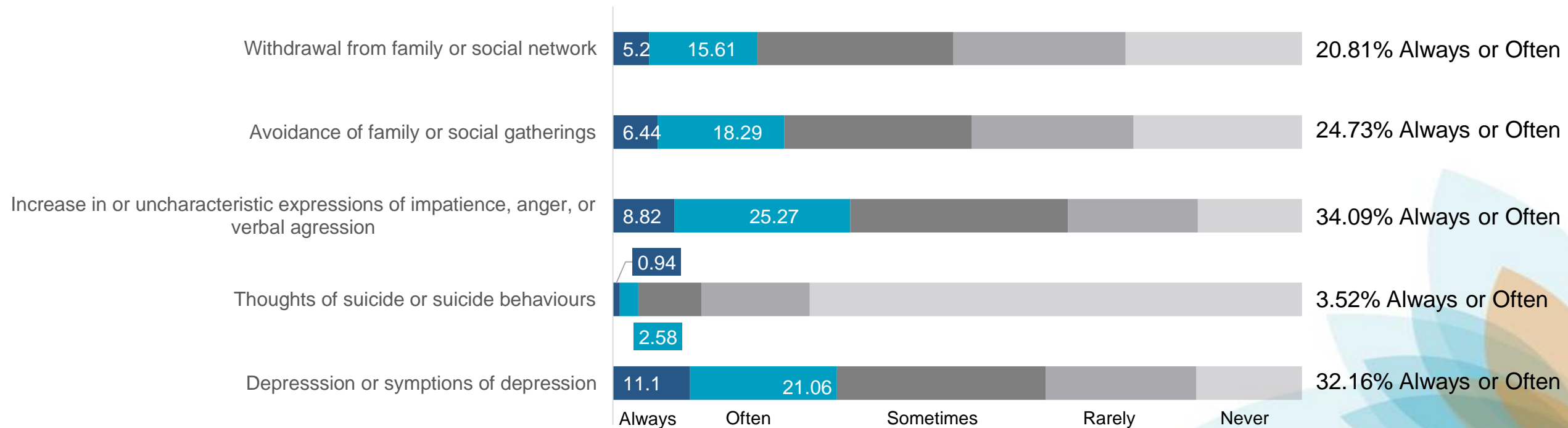




Frequency of Symptoms (% of respondents)

Other: Mental wellbeing;
physical health; sexual
issues; compassion fatigue;
substance use

Q: How often are you observing the following behaviours or symptoms in the first responder in your life?

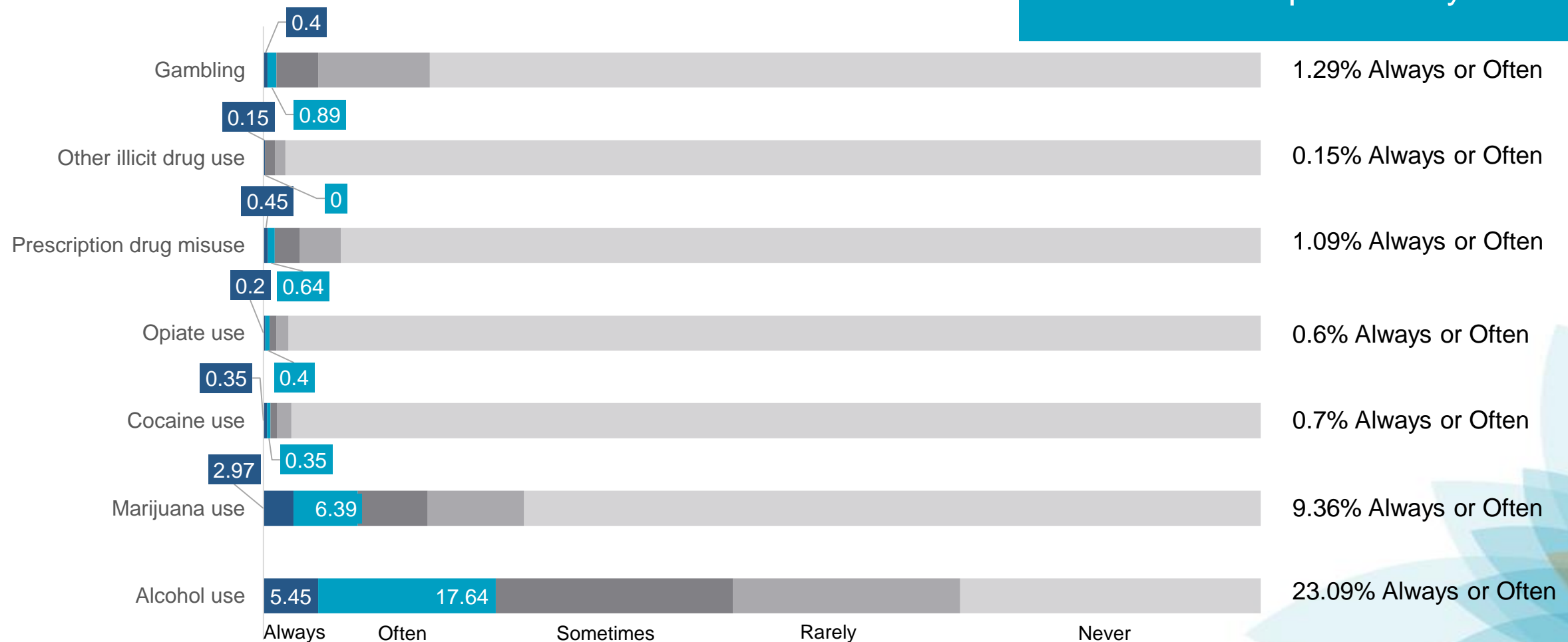




Frequency of Addictions (% of respondents)

Other addictions: Sexual addiction;
challenges with food/ healthy eating;
Spending; Smoking

Q: How often are you observing
substance use or addictive behaviours in
the first responder in your life?



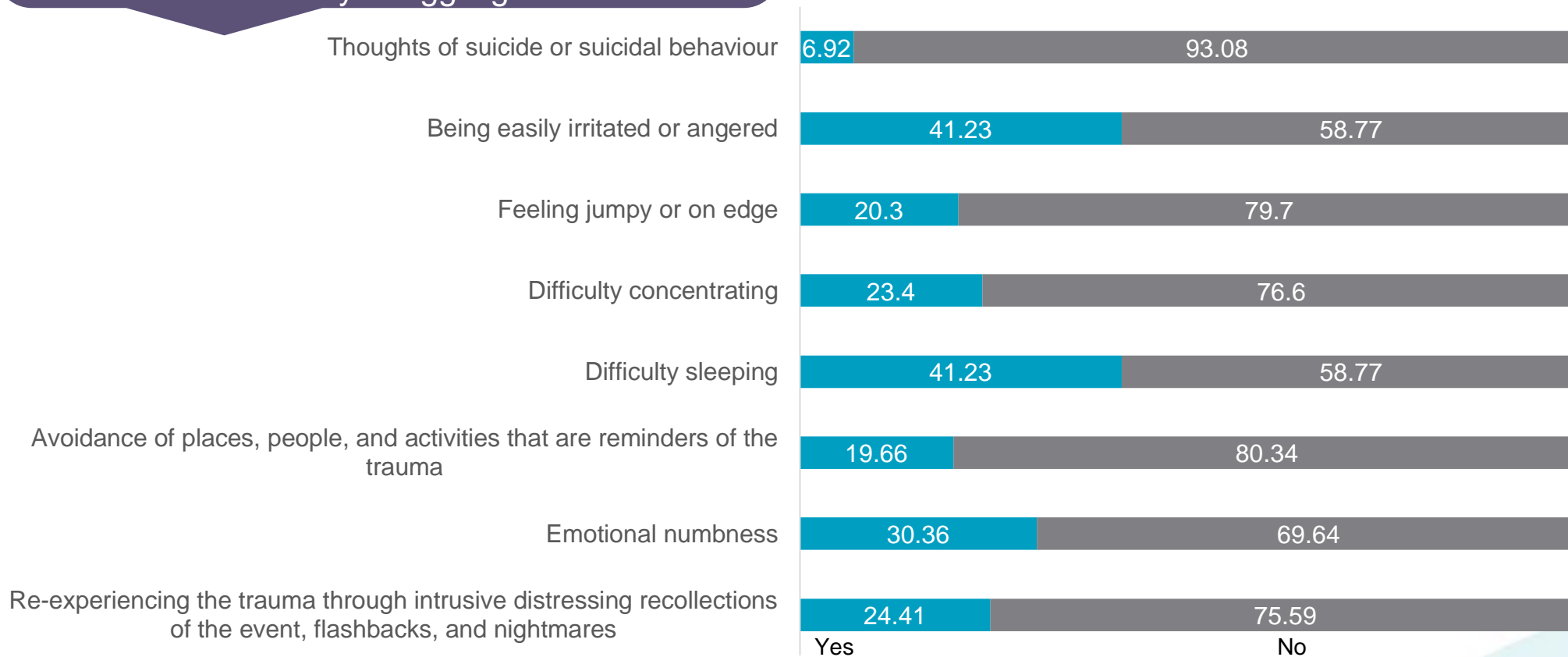


Frequency of Symptoms (% of respondents)

“...most of these first responders fear coming forward or taking a leave as they believe it will be career suicide. They will end their lives or quit their relationships before they seek help. The stigma is too much for someone to handle who is already struggling.”

Q: Has the first responder in your life experienced any symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress for at least one month following a traumatic call/event?

These symptoms can occur in the short term or several years after a traumatic event.

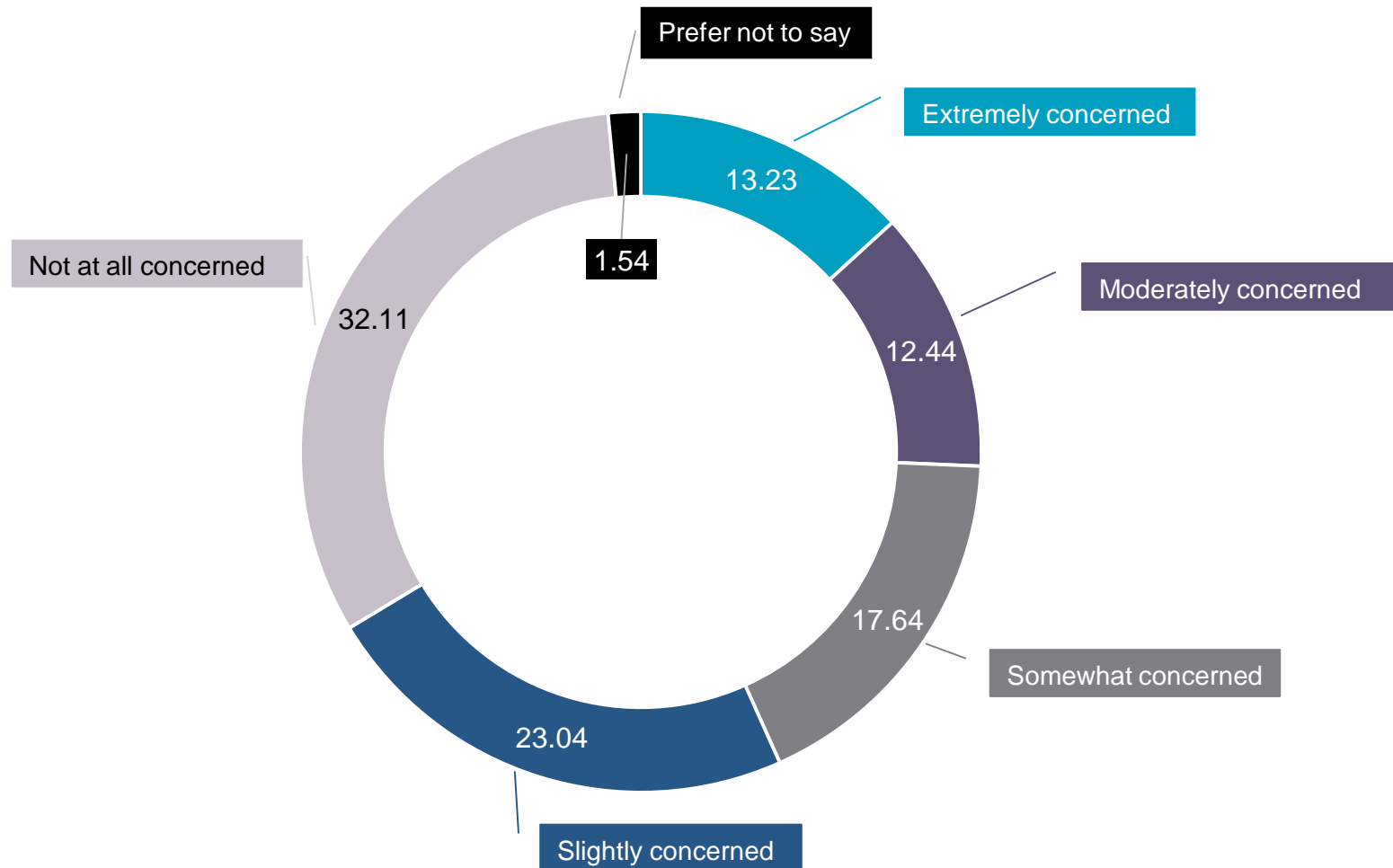


Yes

No



Concern about Impact of First Responder Role on Relationship (% of respondents)



Q: Are you concerned that the first responder role is having a negative effect on your relationship?

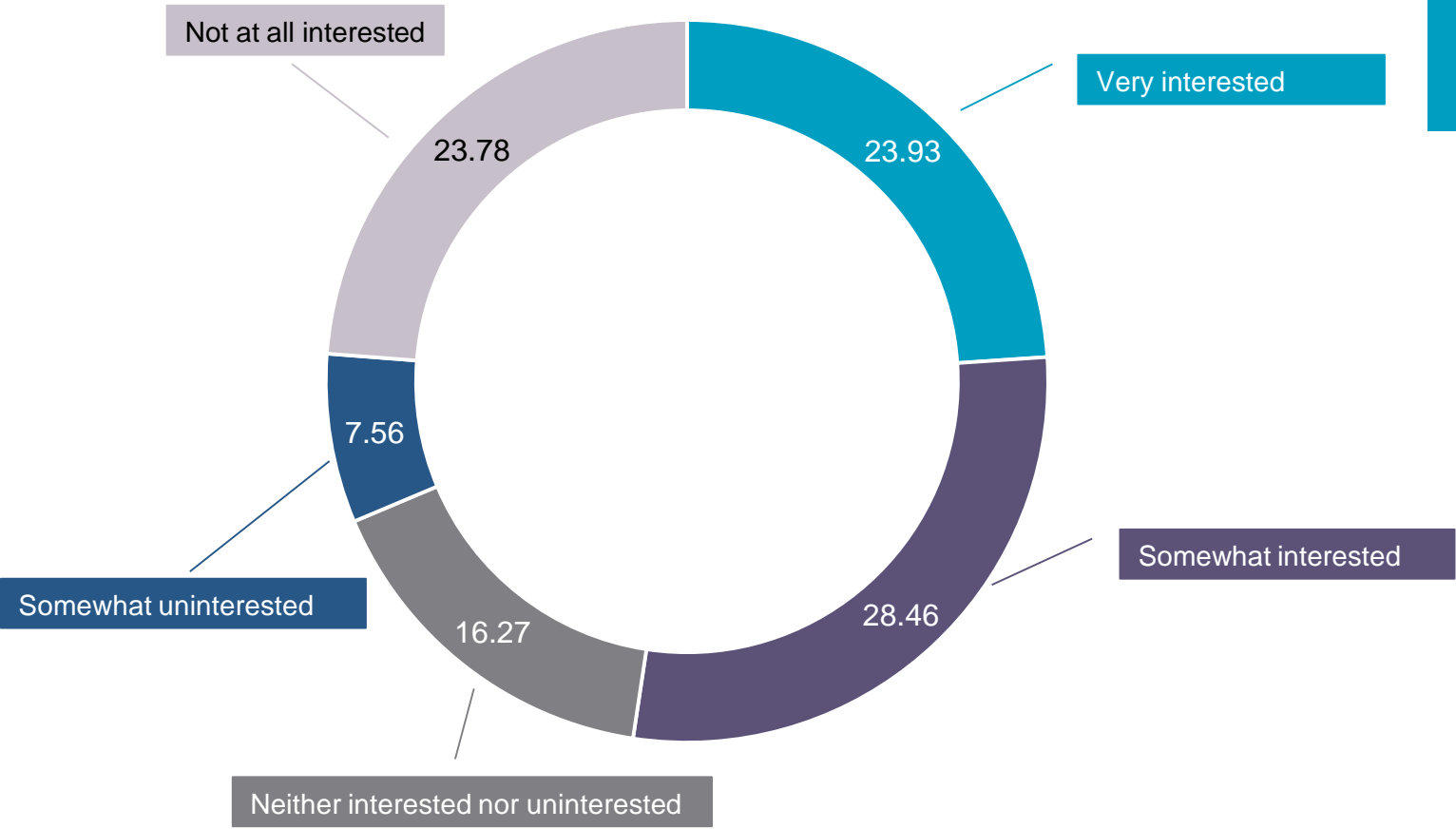
“My husband is currently receiving mental health and wellbeing treatment, and we have participated in a variety of programs aimed at rebuilding our family and relationship.”

Over 43% were somewhat, moderately, or extremely concerned.



Interest in Receiving Support for Own Resilience and Mental Wellbeing (% of respondents)

Q: Would you be interested in receiving support for your own resilience and mental wellbeing as someone who is close to a First Responder?

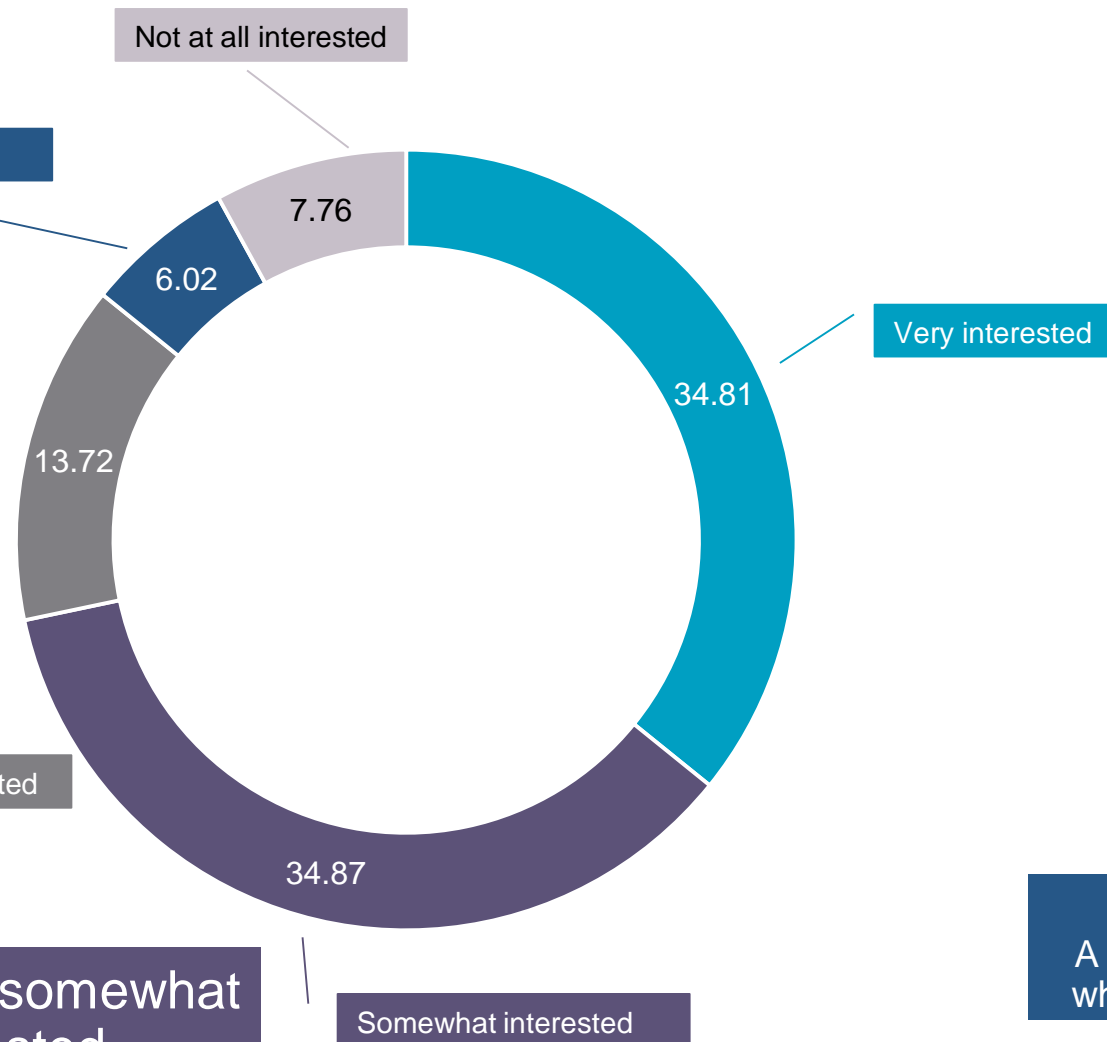


Over 50% were somewhat or very interested.

“Spouses should be aware how to care for the first responders at time of event and not just sit here waiting and watching symptoms. I wanted to learn how to avoid the PTS before it started.”



Interest in Attending Training Seminar (% of respondents)



Q: Would you or your family members be interested in attending a training seminar (approximately 1-2 hours) to learn about topics like:

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress and the Brain
- Post Traumatic Growth & Resilience
- Self-Care
- Mental Wellness

Other idea:
A group for children with parents who have PTSD (3 respondents)

Nearly 70% were somewhat or very interested.

Best Times for Training, Based on % of Respondents who Selected Each Time



“Please help! We are desperate!”

Q: If you are interested in attending a training seminar, based on your schedule, what days and times would be best for you to attend a training activity?

Day	Before working hours	During working hours	Over lunch	Evening
Monday	Low (<10%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High (>30%)
Tuesday	Low (<10%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Highest (39.2%)
Wednesday	Low (<10%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High (>30%)
Thursday	Low (<10%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High (>30%)
Friday	Low (<10%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High (>30%)
Saturday	High-moderate (20-30%)	High-moderate (20-30%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High-moderate (20-30%)
Sunday	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High-moderate (20-30%)	Low-moderate (10-20%)	High-moderate (20-30%)

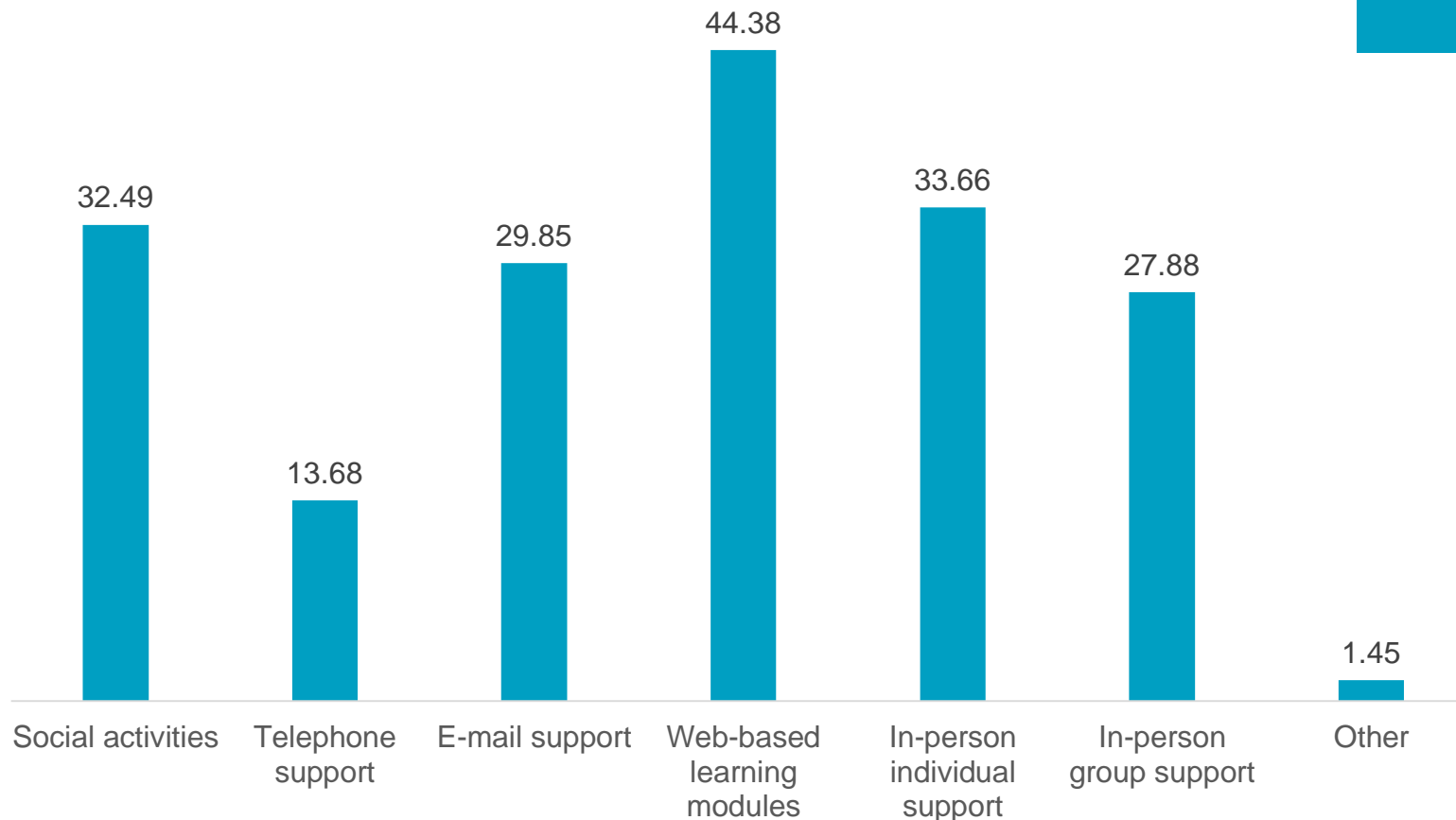




Preferred Types of Support (% of respondents)

“Giving us info on what to look for and when we need to get them help would be helpful. Also we hear every detail of every call and I have been crying also, as we are their sounding boards.”

Q: If you would like to receive other kinds of support as a family member or loved one of a First Responder, what kind of support would you be most interested in receiving?



Other supports include: support for First Responder; text-based; support for children; resource recommendations; social support



What have we learned?

Many family members are concerned about the impact of the First Responder role on mental health (>85%)

Family members often cite lack of support for the mental health of the First Responder as a key concern; regular, mandatory/ embedded support could be beneficial and could begin with curriculum

The primary symptoms family members observed were difficulty sleeping, increase in or uncharacteristic expressions of impatience, anger, or verbal aggression, and depression or symptoms of depression

Family members are concerned about the impact of the First Responder role on their relationship (43%)

Over 50% of family members are interested in receiving support

Web-based learning may be an effective way to provide support to family members



Next Steps



Develop and deliver training seminar to family members

Look into opportunities for other types of supports, such as web-based

Look at how support for family members can be incorporated into curriculum and workplaces





Analysis by Years of Service

The proportion of people who completed the survey where the first responder was a parent increased consistently and dramatically with years of service (<3% under 10 years, 28% 26+ years)

Respondents for all roles were likely to have family members early in their career, with EMS/ Paramedics the most likely. Family members of firefighters were slightly more likely to have longer years of service than the other two roles

The proportion of people who completed the survey where the first responder was a parent increased consistently and dramatically with years of service (<3% under 10 years, 28% 26+ years)

First Responders were most likely to be part-time when they were early in their careers. Volunteers were fairly evenly distributed, with a small peak at 21-25 years of service.

The amount of concern about the impact of the first responder role on the mental health of the first responder increased steadily through early and mid career. It peaked at 16-20 years of service (91% somewhat, moderately, or extremely concerned), and declined slightly in later years.

Concerns about behaviours and symptoms were generally greatest at 16-20 years of service. The level of concern increased at 11-15 years leading up to the peak. Family members of those with 26 or more years of service were more concerned than those with family members of those with 21-25 years. This pattern is replicated in the substance use category and post-traumatic stress symptoms.



Analysis by Hours Worked

Part-time first responders were most likely to be EMS/ Paramedics, while firefighters were most likely to be volunteers.

Part-time roles were most likely to be filled by first responders with <5 years of service.

Family members of full-time first responders were most likely to be concerned about all behaviours and symptoms listed in the survey, including post-traumatic stress symptoms.

Alcohol and marijuana use was most concerning to family members of full-time first responders.

Concern about the impact of the first responder role on relationships was greater for family members of full-time first responders (47.21% versus 28.98% and 27.80% for part-time and volunteer, respectively).



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