



## Portland Fire & Rescue: Insight Report

Overview of interviews, focus groups, and online survey

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# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	5
1   INSIGHTS: MISSION.....	7
2   INSIGHTS: RESOURCES .....	13
3   INSIGHTS: PEOPLE & CULTURE .....	19
4   SURVEY RESULTS .....	25



## Introduction

Over the past several months, Coraggio Group has worked steadily to capture the ideas, perceptions, biases, and critical thinking of a number of Portland Fire & Rescue (PF&R) stakeholder groups. We believe what we heard in the conversations we held will have a profound effect on the direction of PF&R's strategic planning process.

We used a multi-faceted outreach approach to creating the conversations for this project. We held a number of one-on-one interviews with key bureau stakeholders in city and county government; focus group discussions with several different groups of people internal to the bureau, as well as group discussions with external audiences and partners; held several community meetings; and deployed a survey to a wide cross section of PF&R's customers: Citizens of the city of Portland. In all, we received input from well over 1,200 people.

From the input we received, several clear themes emerged, which we have collected under three primary areas of focus:

- Mission
- Resources
- People & Culture

Inside each of these areas, we have identified several sub-themes that delve into finer detail. The descriptions of these sub-themes, along with the implication for each to PF&R and the proof points from our conversations to support them, are on the pages that follow.



# 1 | Insights: Mission

## Everyone loves PF&R, even if they don't know everything we do.

When it comes to civic recognition and appreciation, no single group receives as much respect, admiration, and thanks as firefighters. They are the acknowledged heroes of contemporary America, the people to whom we turn in an emergency. "I've never had cause to call them," said one survey respondent, "but I sleep better knowing they are there." However, as fire prevention, education, and technology have decreased the incidence of fires, PF&R has assumed an increasing number of additional public safety duties. Today the bureau continues to receive almost universal praise, though a significant percentage of the population does not recognize the variety of civic duties it carries out.

### **Implication for PF&R: Continue to stress awareness and education of the bureau's key public services.**

- › "You responded to an oven fire at our house in 2011. The kids and I did everything right, but I could not stop shaking. The men and women on that crew stayed at the house and basically talked me down from an anxiety attack. They were probably there for an hour. I am forever grateful to them. Thank you."
- › "Unlike the police, the firefighters have an almost universally loved reputation. They're known as heroes, not people who make mistakes. Not many government workers are known as heroes."
- › "Every encounter I've ever had with PF&R has been positive. The staff is helpful, compassionate, and responsive. Keep up the great work!"
- › "I think the public understands [what they do]. It's pretty straightforward: If you call, they come. They're reliable, professional, and highly skilled."
- › "We provide peace of mind. You know you have this safety net. If you have ever been in a place where you don't have that, you recognize that lack."
- › "They do see the practical aspects of firefighting and medical response: If you're in a car crash, the fire department shows up. I don't think the public knows how often they get called to pick up old ladies off the floor of nursing homes."
- › "We call ourselves fire and rescue. But ...we're responsible for everything but civil disturbance. I'd like us to manage our brand better, send a message to citizens that we do so much more."
- › "Do they understand the value and efficiency we provide cost-wise, because of all the hats we wear? [It's] probably not readily apparent."

## There is not alignment about whether PF&R deploys the right people, at the right place, and at the right time.

Throughout our conversations, and in the results of the survey, we heard a persistent theme about the effectiveness of the bureau's deployment decisions. In particular, respondents and interviewees referred to the bureau's response to medical calls. There was widespread head-scratching about everything from the number of personnel per rig to the identification of additional, impactful tasks that they bureau could staff instead. Some felt it was an outright waste of resources. The one group who is clear on the reasoning behind this strategy? The firefighters themselves.

**Implication for PF&R: Proactively defend the strategy behind routine deployment decisions, innovate new strategies, or risk further pressure to decrease PF&R's resource allocation.**

- › "Why does PF&R respond to medical calls? Can we reallocate resources so they've not responding to every medical call, so they can do more community outreach?"
- › "Taking care of patients, fires, and emergency preparedness — our core services. The city is asking us to [work in] non-core areas. For example, they want existing staff to do home inspections, and other non-core services, because they think they are just sitting around. Call volume is so much higher than in the past, and there is not extra time. Don't take from core areas to do these extra things. People are stressed."
- › "Experiment with rapid response for medical calls, not the 'send the Cavalry' response."
- › "Nobody wants to be called an 'emergency response technician.'"
- › "Why the over-response philosophy? The public doesn't understand that."
- › "The trick is getting the crews and leadership aligned."
- › "That's a dilemma to me. You have a highly trained, expensive system designed to immediately respond to a life-threatening situation, a fire, that happens infrequently. What do you do with that resource the rest of the time? We haven't solved that problem yet."
- › "I question the need to dispatch a fire truck each time a medical emergency is called in. It seems like overkill and that we could find a way to deliver the service less expensively. Do we really need the entire staff of an engine to respond to a call for a medical emergency?"

## PF&R could take full advantage of its social capital by being a more active community partner.

Given the position of respect that PF&R enjoys in the community, and the overwhelmingly favorable ratings they receive from citizens, there was a surprising groundswell of calls for further community involvement. In a few instances this was a request to take a more active role in their immediate communities, the neighborhoods where stations are located. But more often it was a request to form alliances throughout different parts of the city and county systems where PF&R overlaps, in order to further the bureau's safety mission or to avoid an overlap in services.

**Implication for PF&R: Maintaining the bureau's long-time "strong, silent type" persona may impact future relationships in a new era that emphasizes community and communication.**

- › "I would hope – from a citizen's point of view – that the stations and personnel are more open and integrated into the community. [They should be] more of a presence at non-emergency [functions]."
- › "English may not be the first language of all residents, making communication about what's happening difficult, if not impossible, during stressful situations."
- › "One area where they can continue to grow is... their relationship to schools. They have a captive audience to have a big impact about individual kid preparedness, as well as at the school level."
- › "Get into neighborhoods and meet people, be accessible. Stop into mom and pop businesses rather than Starbucks. [Firefighters] will be there in response, but they're not very approachable outside of that."
- › "They have the opportunity to work, even with really young kids, with the general population in the schools."
- › "[There are] really different cultures between police and fire. There's lots of overlap in emergency response, training, and competence. Part of me wonders what could happen with better collaboration with the police."
- › "They are one of the last areas of government that people are not willing to contract out. They serve as ambassadors. Through partnerships they can probably enhance other aspects of prevention, resilience, and safety."
- › "In 10 years there will be a community servicing model for multi-family dwellings for a higher level of customer service. TVF&R and Gresham do great work with multi-family, helping managers look for ways to make the community more fire-safe. That is not the case in Portland."
- › They could strengthen their connection to the community... Because they are trusted, they can help us get into people's homes and do inspections, which they could do more of.

## We have the opportunity to take a leadership role in EMS.

The issue that appeared more frequently than any other during this research phase is the bureau's increasing activity in emergency medical services. The oft-cited statistic that 70% of calls PF&R responds to are EMS dispatches caused different reactions throughout the bureau's stakeholder groups. For some there was disbelief that the figure was so high; others felt it was an overreach that cuts into the available time the bureau has to address its key service areas. Many felt that PF&R's activity was a symptom of the larger healthcare crisis, and that its current response was more reactive than anything else.

**Implication for PF&R: The bureau would be well advised to take the opportunity to frame its role in EMS on its own terms.**

- › “We need to work to establish what our relevance really is. Where do we land on ‘this is our new mission’ and not respond to external pressure?”
- › “Lots of long-standing tradition. Needs to shift. Get engaged. Different deployment models, etc. There is a national push for fire departments to own EMS and drive it. If Portland and its surrounding areas came together on this, Portland could drive BIG change. It could design the appropriate structure for the modern needs of today and tomorrow.”
- › “EMS, we all think it is a huge challenge. Instead of pushing back, I think we would be better suited to flip it and make it an opportunity. Strengthen our capabilities. Don't cut, but add to our ranks. Look at other models around the country — determine our own path instead. We have been given the mandate, but don't have the resources and support to do so.”
- › “I don't think the public is aware firefighters spend so much time on minor medical problems. And I don't think the firefighters understand how often they spend with mental health issues. Their reports don't show this. We need them to better understand that they're dealing with people with mental illness, firefighters need to be more aware that mental illness is a medical illness too, and be able to respond to that crisis.”
- › “The EMS arena is a monster. I don't know where it's going, but we're on the tip of the spear. Such a can of worms. Responding to the healthcare crisis, we're just starting to be proactive and define what our role is. We should be proactive in shaping what our response is. We're reactive, and now we're figuring how to deal with it.”

## We may not be prepared for the challenges that changing demographics and the built environment will continue to bring.

Fire education, smoke alarms, and other preventative measures have decreased the incidence of fires, but the nature of fires continues to evolve. A number of bureau respondents commented on how a modern building fire is different in nature than an older building fire, and the techniques needed to stop it are different as well. Add to this the plain fact that much of the landscape continues to change with modern urban development, with the arrival of more multi-story buildings, narrower streets, denser real estate development, scarcity of natural resources, and so on. These developments will greatly impact the ability of PF&R to reach their emergency destination, regardless of whether it is a fire or medical call — not to mention the inevitable Cascadia subduction zone earthquake.

**Implication for PF&R: The bureau should consider addressing the need to alter its approach to emergency response soon, or it will be forced to react under increasingly unpredictable circumstances.**

- › “There is a question about jurisdictional boundaries – especially as other jurisdictions are experiencing [financial] crunches. Who does PF&R serve? Should we consider expanding?”
- › “It’s a proud, highly effective organization with a lot of history, but it has to step up and embrace change like everybody else, wherever that leads.”
- › “[One challenge we face is] changes in fire dynamics, and how that places us at risk. Keeping us ahead of those changes is important. What is the necessary technology, and the awareness that makes it happen?”
- › “We can be nimble. But we have to want to be.”
- › “Everyone is moving to Portland – it’s an enormous growth in population. Multi-unit, multi-story buildings will require a different type of response.”
- › “PF&R should be right-sized to the clearly defined mission of a 21<sup>st</sup> century fire bureau. The city is going to keep growing.”
- › “Another thing we haven’t talked about is density of development, which means that our streets are going to be full, and maintaining response time is going to be a challenge.”
- › “Traffic. Traffic, traffic, traffic, traffic, traffic.”

## 2 | Insights: Resources

## If we are leaders in EMS, we are a significant part of the healthcare system and should be reimbursed accordingly.

Respondents had a lot to say about the evolution of PF&R and EMS. There is also broad consensus that EMS and PF&R passed the “tipping point” of an assumed role a long time ago. However, the strongest message heard in all of the outreach is that PF&R needs to be acknowledged for its role in healthcare and compensated accordingly, although there is variance of feelings on whether this should be the primary function of PF&R.

**Implication for PF&R: Everybody understands that healthcare has changed for everyone that touches the system. Acknowledging, supporting and compensating PF&R’s role in that system would allow PF&R to develop its leadership capabilities further.**

- › “70% of Portland Fire and Rescue's businesses is responding to medical care calls, yet we're the only uncompensated part of the system.”
- › “Our focus used to be fire, now it's more emergency medical services. It's an 80/20 split. Firefighters still see themselves as firefighters.”
- › “City leadership and the fire bureau needs to work through the medical issues with the healthcare system, public and private hospitals, and Multnomah County, the lead agency for the healthcare issues at a local level.”
- › “We need to drive and control our place in the EMS system. We need to design and implement a system that makes us a key player.”
- › “If they're ever going to figure out our role in health care, they need to work with people who pay bills in the system - insurance companies and hospitals. We really need to figure out if there's a role for them to play here.”
- › “Portland Fire and Rescue should be an organization that gets reimbursed for medical care services.”
- › “Portland Fire and Rescue mostly responds to medical calls... Maybe too many. They don't get paid for it.”
- › “They need to develop some type of reimbursement charge for services—a fee for services.”
- › “In the future the bureau can be even more into EMS and mental healthcare with appropriate resources. The EMS division will need many more people working for it - 8 to 10 versus the current four. Today, we are part of an emergency medical system, and aren't given the tools to do it well. Doing more with less can only get us so far with too few boots on the ground.”

## Our information and communication technology needs to match the realities of the world we operate in.

The current conditions and the future of IT are major concerns for PF&R. There are many barriers (logistic, funding, policy), but everyone agrees that the issues associated with “last century” solutions to current and future requirements are hindering efficiency, reducing effectiveness, stifling innovation, and possibly putting people at risk.

**Implication for PF&R: Matching the most basic levels of current information and communication technology is a minimum requirement for public health and safety, as well as operating the most effective and efficient organization possible. With proper investment, there are significant gains to be made on many levels.**

- › “In the future, our IT and communication systems will be up-to-date and we will command them ourselves or with our own contractors. The city’s IT group today sets up too many roadblocks. We could be moving at a much faster pace, but the whole city is limited when it’s so far behind on IT. The situation is unbelievable for an agency of this size.”
- › “We have a long way to go with our IT, whether we want to break away and do things on our own (best option) or make the relationship better.”
- › “We are very behind, and the game is changing at high speed.”
- › “We must support innovation to meet customers’ expectations. For example, people can’t go online and make payments for inspections, permits, etc. This ties it into our equipment as well... put tablets in inspectors’ hands. [The] base level of acceptable/normal customer service is not our normal.”
- › “It’s frustrating for people to have the level of technology at home that they don’t have at work.”
- › “There’s a whole mobile perspective to take into account. We could be much more untethered. Nothing is electronic. Everything is on paper. Everything from the field has to be data entered manually. We need tablets.”
- › “The immediacy of social media paints us with a broad brush.”
- › “The use of data driven decision-making is a must.”
- › “60% of employees don’t have email because it costs \$800 per year per person for each account. It’s tied to the city’s IT. Portland Fire and Rescue us unable to find IT solutions independently. That makes it even harder to share information.”
- › “The public needs an education on the definitions of what is an emergency and what number should be dialed for which events: medical, fire, non-emergency, homeless services, elderly care, etc. The city is a black-box/rabbit-hole of phone numbers and departments. Not all community members have fast Internet access to the web or are largely left out of data anyway. Portland is too big of a city to continue to function with a town or village mentality about service availability, access technology, and community resources.”

## Dispatch response limitations do not match the response to the need.

There is no denying that the role of Dispatch is a tough job. However, it is also clear that there is a significant discrepancy in who gets sent where, when. Given their capabilities, “we can handle any situation” reputation and reordering of health resources, PF&R is most often the default responder.

**Implication for PF&R: Recognizing that providing the most capable resource in a given situation is good insurance, the cost and impact to the system is significant. Improving the capabilities as far upstream as possible would have a very positive effect for dispatch, PF&R and the community.**

- › “Call volume will continue to go up or likely won't decline. Dealing with behavioral issues, people with no insurance or no regular care, drug issues... we often go on what would be police calls because there's more trust with the fire department.”
- › “Restructure the organization to master strategic priorities.”
- › “We get a lot of false alarms, such as lonely people calling emergency services when there's no emergency.”
- › “We need to say we're not going to send an engine and the ambulance and the police if you sprained your ankle.”
- › “We need to partner with dispatch. That's difficult to change. We've tried. Bridges need to be rebuilt or something. It's not working well.”
- › “One thing I'm not going to tolerate is to have a 4 person fire truck, AMR, and a two-person person police cruiser all show up for mental health episode at Third and Taylor.

## PF&R resources are being reduced when greater demands have been placed on it.

Without question, the future of funding is a major concern for PF&R. There are many unknowns around the future of government funding. Every election brings new points of view and competing City needs will always be issue.

**Implication for PF&R: The next five years can be a dramatic positive inflection point by aligning the mission of PF&R with appropriate levels of funding, rethinking funding sources (such as healthcare), and getting people on the same page around innovative and progressive ways of working.**

- › “Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding. Funding.”
- › “If we close stations, the public will voice their opinion.”
- › “It would really help if City Council would clarify what the community will look like in 10 years and then aligned the bureaus to that. Where’s the city strategic plan?”
- › “I don’t think people realize the resources needed for comprehensive emergency services.”
- › “Alignment is difficult under our form of government. Council is not always aligned with the chief, and labor is often out of alignment with what Council wants. Having our own independent Fire Board would help alignment dramatically.”
- › “Of course there’s the funding issue. One of the ongoing questions over the years is the minimum crew number for a ‘rig’. Many departments have three on a crew vs. four. They’ve traditionally said four here because of medical cases. With more and more technology, perhaps this is something to look at again.”
- › “City Council... they like to give our tax dollars to fund homeless programs instead of paying for basic city services that taxpayers want paid for. They keep cutting budgets on basic services - Police, Fire, streets, etc. - and funnel that money to programs that really don’t serve the greater good. They expect Police and Fire to do more with less. Not a good theory.”
- › “We need to maintain four-person staffing. There are 600,000 more people coming. We need to prepare for that influx. We’re going to be lean if we don’t match the increase. Need to be staffed appropriately to meet the needs of growing population.”
- › “We need to maintain what we have at the current budget environment. There’s is no more money coming.”
- › “We struggled to maintain staffing when staffing actually needs to be increased. Service demand is increasing. We need to regain lost ground.”
- › “We need to look at all of our financial resources—reimbursement from the city or state, revamping the tax systems, etc.”

## PF&R is but one bureau among many, all competing for City funds.

Although popular as a bureau, Portland Fire & Rescue must compete with all of Portland's other priorities for funding. Many stakeholders indicated challenges related to funding—some pointing to a lack of understanding on the Council's part of PF&R's mission and deployment; others pointing to the general constraint of City funds.

**To ensure stable funding over the long run, PF&R would do well to clearly articulate their value, and to tie that value to the priorities of the City Council, such as sustainability and equity.**

- › “We are at the mercy of Council for how much we get each year and we have to accept this fact. We struggled to see that they don't consider us special (there are many departments/bureaus). The expectation exists because Council does value our mission, and although we believe should get more, that isn't the way it works. Don't expect it to be any different in the future. Ideally, there would be fewer system constraints. The bureau is a fairly forward-thinking organization, but internal constraints can make it difficult to accomplish things. We should be able to do what needs to be done—be progressive and innovate.”
- › “[We should be] staying focused on mission statement and not getting too spread out. The lack of support by the administration and Council makes it difficult to fulfill the mission statement.”
- › “City Council controls the budget and it is a limiting factor.”
- › “We are always compared with TVF&R or Clackamas but their boards understand their business. We don't have this luxury with the City Council. We're told by Council to think outside the box, but they put the confines of a box on us.”
- › “We made some cuts during the recession, and have only brought half of them back. They won a federal grant to fund these positions, but 26 of the staff are at risk. They mayor's budget brings back only 13 of those. Another 13 will cost \$1.5M. [It's] fully funded [by] the grant through June '16; after that 13 people will lose their jobs.”

# 3 | Insights: People & Culture

## There are pockets of resistance to EMS changes and realities

There appeared in our conversations a definite awareness of, or practice of, resistance to the changes asked of PF&R's people and culture in response to the increasing load of medical calls they receive. This showed up in different ways to different stakeholders. Some labeled it as resistance to change in general, and others felt it was just a modern reality that the bureau needs to address.

**Implication for PF&R: Without alignment between the several ranks of PF&R, the bureau puts at risk its relationships with other City and County stakeholders.**

- › “Compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard.”
- › “I sat in many meetings where I heard past fire chiefs saying they thought it was awful they were responding to so many medical calls. Erin is the first I've heard talking about what the size and scale of the force would be if they *weren't* responding to those calls. What else do they need all of those people for? She's the first I've heard that gets it.”
- › “If PF&R continues to focus on their historic [service] delivery vs. the change in EMS, it will be very difficult to advance.”
- › “Hard to say what perception is (high approval ratings, yes), but here it is a dinosaur agency and we need to innovate. The Chief has been working hard to combat the perception that we are resistant to change.”
- › “PF&R, like all big paramilitary organizations, does not dance towards change. This medical issue is change. This role I described as critical in earthquakes is change.”
- › “Management may be very aligned on getting into preventative medicine, but it will be a labor management issue with firefighters. [Note: Prevention efforts would reduce the overall number of 911 calls for medical help.]”
- › “[PF&R] is unrealistic — they expect the city to pay a lot and they're not aware that the budget is still tight and that other services are important too. 'Arrogant' is what I would call the union.”
- › “[PF&R is] responsive, committed, effective, [but there are] big questions for the future about what kind of agency they might become.... 'Resistant to change' could be a perception. That's both a plus and a negative side of their tradition.”

## We have amazing personnel, but we fail to offer them continuing professional and leadership development.

Another key point that arose during this phase was what many people called the “broken” system of training at PF&R. To many, it is a paradox: After spending such important time training firefighters on the front end of their service, why not continue their development as they rise to new positions in the bureau? This was a perception raised frequently from internal stakeholders within PF&R, but was aired by external audiences as well.

**Implication for PF&R: The organization’s future success depends on the ability of leadership to respond to an increasingly complex world. Without development, new leaders may not be able to rise to that challenge.**

- › “Advancement is a moving target right now. It’s a guess as to what you need to do, given so few skills and tools. We want to do good work, but we’re just winging it. We’re doing a good job on technical [training], but it’s the people development that missing.”
- › “We just interviewed hundreds of people, and every single person said, ‘I want to help people. I want to give back to the community.’ To me, that’s a really great value.”
- › “Self-reliance is so strong that we don’t plan. So that is why we don’t have succession planning — ‘we know we can deal with it.’ It’s a paradox.”
- › “I think it’s going to be challenging with all the institutional experience going out the door with retirements. We have a great training academy, but a lot of the experience that is leaving will be hard to replace. It will take years for the new people to know what a seasoned firefighter knows how to do.
- › “Hate to say it over and over, but workforce [is a challenge]. The fire department is one of those organizations where everyone had to prove themselves as a firefighter, and then got to be a budget director or whatever. They need to challenge themselves to think of what skills they need if they’re going to evolve as an organization, and bring legitimacy to the bureau.”
- › “[Our] training academy is one of the best in the nation. But after the Academy, the amount of training for updating skills is vanishing. People are doing it on their own dime. Citizens don’t see this, so there is no outcry.”
- › “Personnel development: Invest in people, in officer development. It starts with the leader to set the standards. Help people learn how to run a \$100M company.”
- › “We spend a whole year training new firefighters. That’s unique for an organization our size. But we need to be more organized. More consistency, coordination, alignment. To do that, we need a curriculum coordinator to tie it all together. Police has two employees where that’s all they do.”
- › “The expectation on us is greater than 20 years ago. The need to train our members continually on modern skills. There’s so much we need to know. The model of our training has been broken for years. There’s no investment in our training campus. It doesn’t match with the city expects of us.”
- › “There is zero training for leadership. Promoted battalion chiefs are not provided training, just given the keys to their new district.”
- › “There isn’t any succession planning, which is problematic.”

## Create broader access to PF&R employment and ensure the pipeline of great personnel.

There is a convergence of opportunities that are not new, but highlighted here: Increase the diversity of the bureau to better match the community it serves and make sure that the pipeline of people exiting (retiring) the organization is being replaced well and knowledge is being properly transferred.”

**Implication for PF&R: The pipeline of talent is always in play with people leaving and the need to re-staff. Given the stated desire for a better “matched” department to the community, the need to attract a more diverse pool of talent and the benefit of keeping the wisdom of those retiring, there is a significant opportunity to align these needs into a better integrated system.**

- › “Portland Fire and Rescue can be part of the solution in preventing displacement by hiring people for good paying jobs so they can afford to stay in Portland.”
- › “[Create] a more diverse bureau... get more people interested in the career.”
- › “Another thing is still true - Portland Fire and Rescue is predominantly a white male bureau. It’s much better now, but still quite unrepresentative. This is in part because the city has become more diverse in 20 years, while PF&R has only made modest progress.”
- › “The more we are going out with diverse firefighters, the more positive feedback [we get]—women, people of color. People are feeling more represented and give great input.”
- › “Where’s the pipeline of talent? I would be working really hard to ensure that I had a good pipeline. Who is going to retire, and who do I have coming up [to fill those jobs]?”
- › “I don’t know what their retirement wave looks like; ours is surging. I was thinking when you have a natural exodus, it’s easier from an organizational development perspective to look at downsizing. There’s probably no incentive to talk about downsizing, but it’s a legit question - big retirement within the force, a shift in demand for services, and huge expense to recruit and train new firefighters.”
- › “Diversity is also about understanding the newer generation. They have different values and priorities. There is a wide gap in understanding that the Internet is as much a part of their ‘experience Rolodex’ as real experiences are.”
- › “There’s a younger workforce now - eager for training, adept at social media, etc. They can bring new things on into the organization from outside. They’re willing, and want to do something.”
- › I think if we are more open to the community, our equity and diversity goals will be furthered, and we will have better luck when we ask for tax dollars.”

## There are three distinct cultures at Portland Fire & Rescue: leadership, sworn, and non-sworn.

Most organizations have two distinct cultures: the leadership culture and the employee culture. This is normal and necessary—the trick is to keep your eye on the gap between them and never let it get too wide. At PF&R, there seem to be at least three distinct cultures, which adds significantly to the complexity of minding the gaps. At the same time, the leadership comes from the ranks, so there is a blurring of those lines as personnel ascend the career ladder at PF&R.

**Implication for PF&R: These cultural gaps can hamper progress and can prevent innovation. Find ways to narrow the gaps between these cultures, while being careful that each remains clearly defined.**

- › “They tend to close ranks. There isn’t a clearly-defined line between management and labor.”
- › “Just like a real family—good and bad.”
- › “[We] have two different cultures between sworn and unsworn.”
- › “Pretty much everybody. I don’t see them as being particularly collaborative. Back to the union—the firefighters are for the firefighters. I appreciate the level of bonding and collegiality within their units, and yet that can seem a bit intimidating to others who are not part of that peer group.”
- › “The union is the one vulnerability. When the union seems unreasonable to the general public, that’s a vulnerability. Certainly it’s their vulnerability with the City Council.”

## Our strong sense of tradition stifles innovation today.

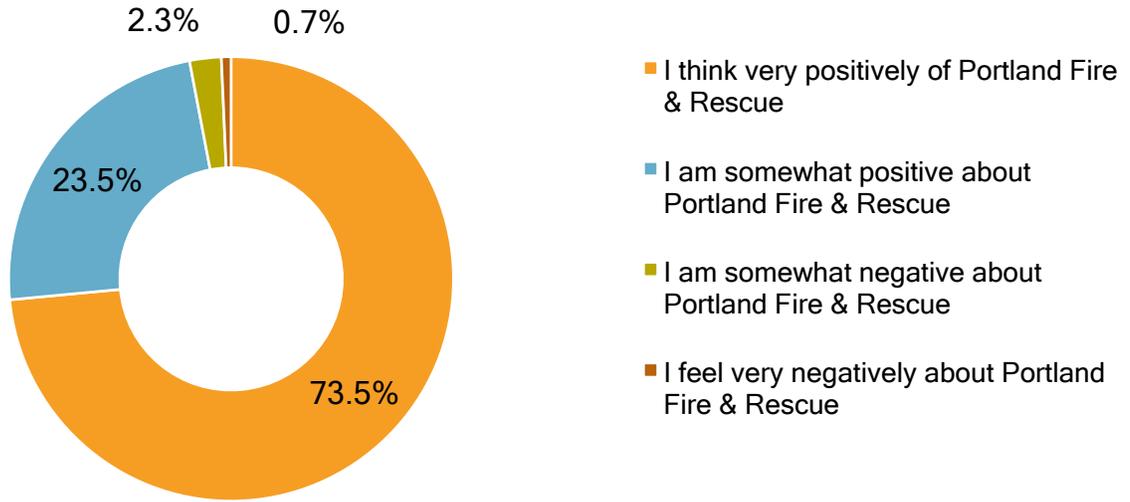
We heard from many stakeholders about the wonderful traditions of Portland Fire and Rescue, but we also heard that the traditional culture of the organization can have a dark side: that it can get in the way of thinking about things in new ways. This is not unusual in older organizations—oftentimes, there are many things that are done in a certain way because they “have always been done that way”. Another manifestation of this phenomenon is the belief that, if something was tried once and didn’t work, that it will *never* work. This thinking can prevent an innovative idea from being applied when the conditions are right.

**Implication for PF&R: When we are planning our strategic imperatives and initiatives, be conscious of where we are reliant on tradition, and where there may be opportunities to try new things.**

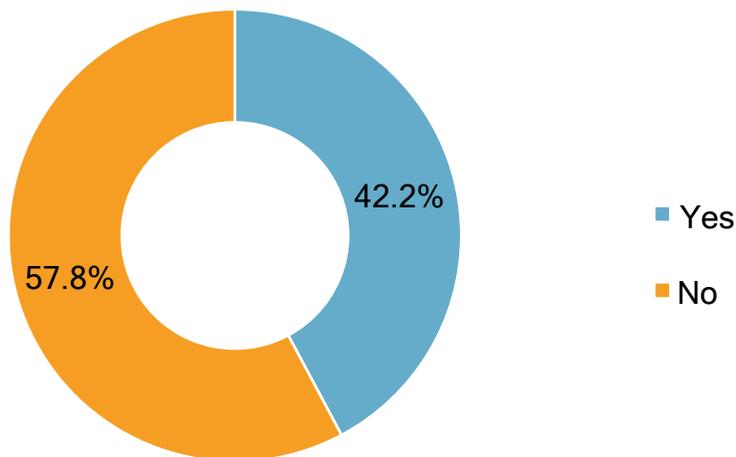
- › “[There is] extreme reluctance to think about doing things differently. Except for the leadership—they’re very aware [that] times are changing and they need to be responsive to budget constraints and the possibility of doing different things.”
- › “Tradition: doing the right thing on calls. Keeping equipment in good working order—regular rig checks; things are tended to immediately.”
- › “Modern fire behavior. [Our] staffing is based on a model that was set in the 1950s. The way fire reacts in buildings today is way more aggressive. Buildings are different, too... lightweight, dangerous.”
- › “Yeah—sort of last-century, if you want the truth. Very hierarchical, command and control, male-dominated, believe they’re the top of the totem pole. All of that doesn’t fit with modern organizational culture.”

# 4 | Survey Results

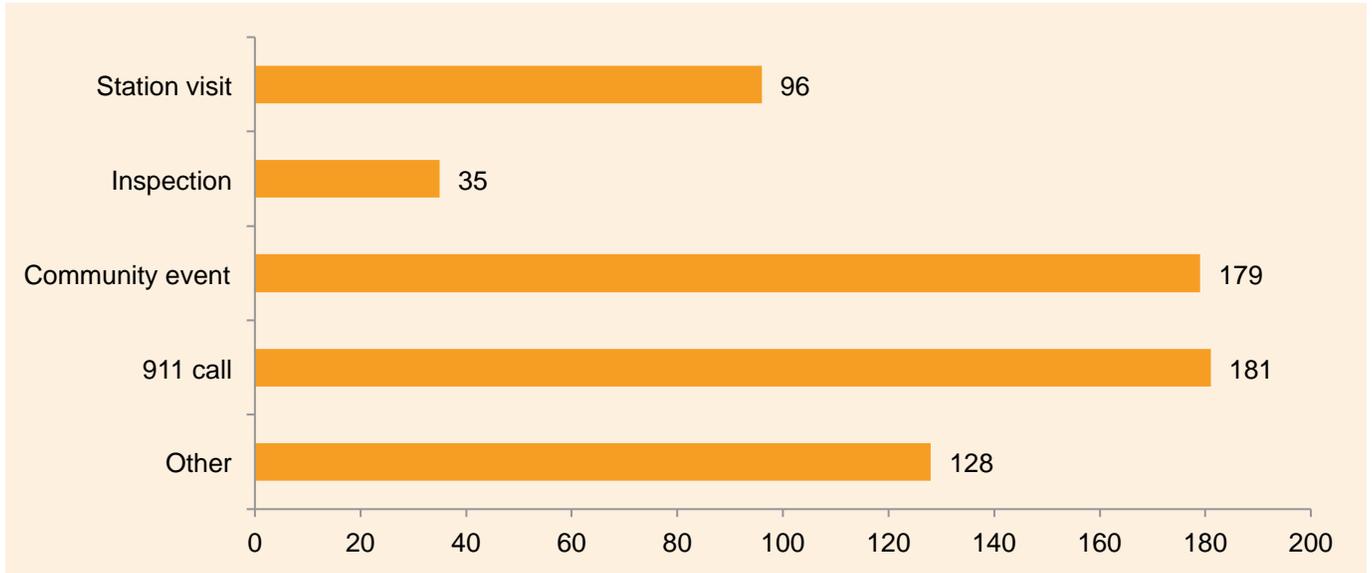
## What is your overall impression of Portland Fire & Rescue?



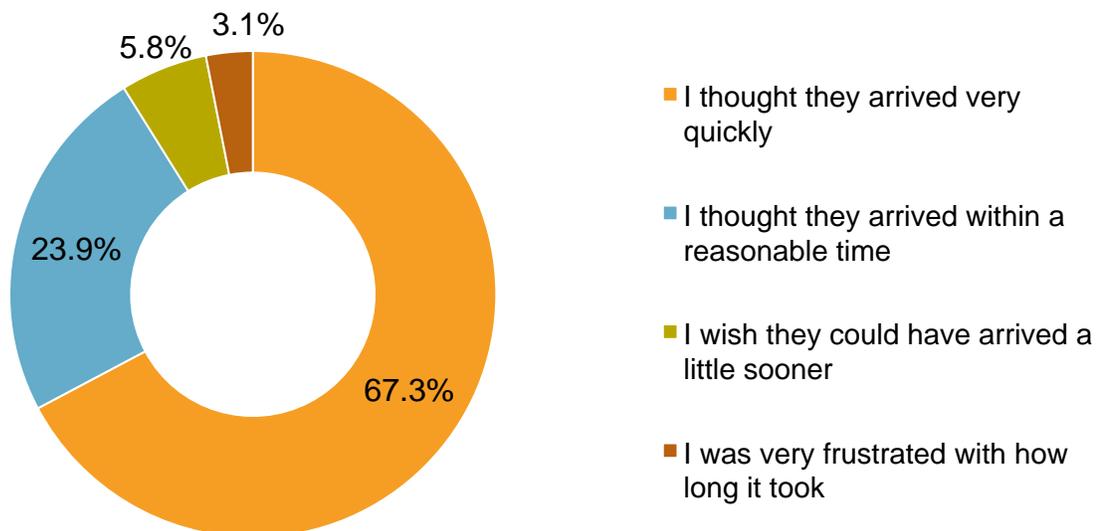
## Have you interacted with Portland Fire & Rescue personnel within the last two years?



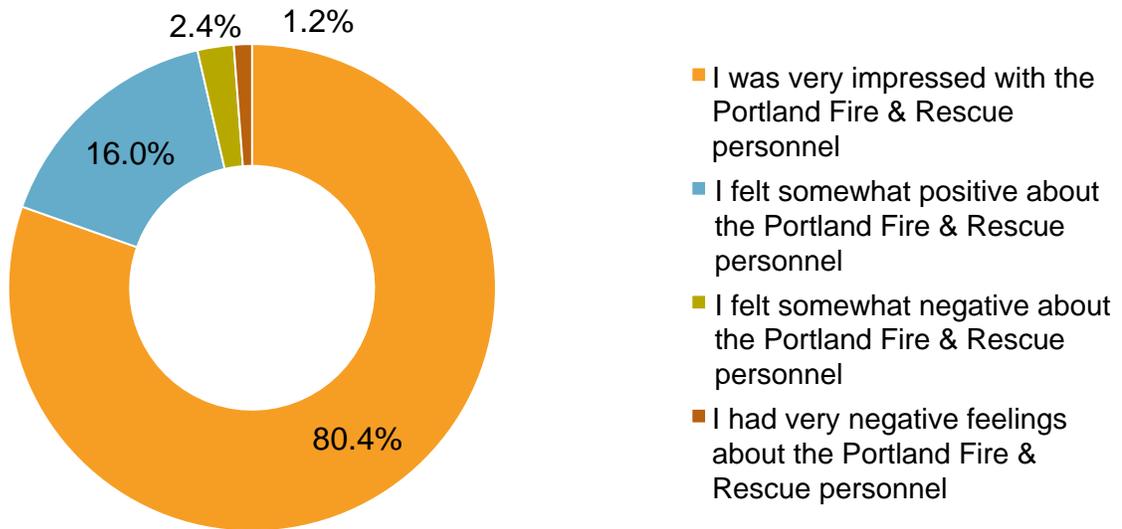
## What was the nature of your most recent interaction?



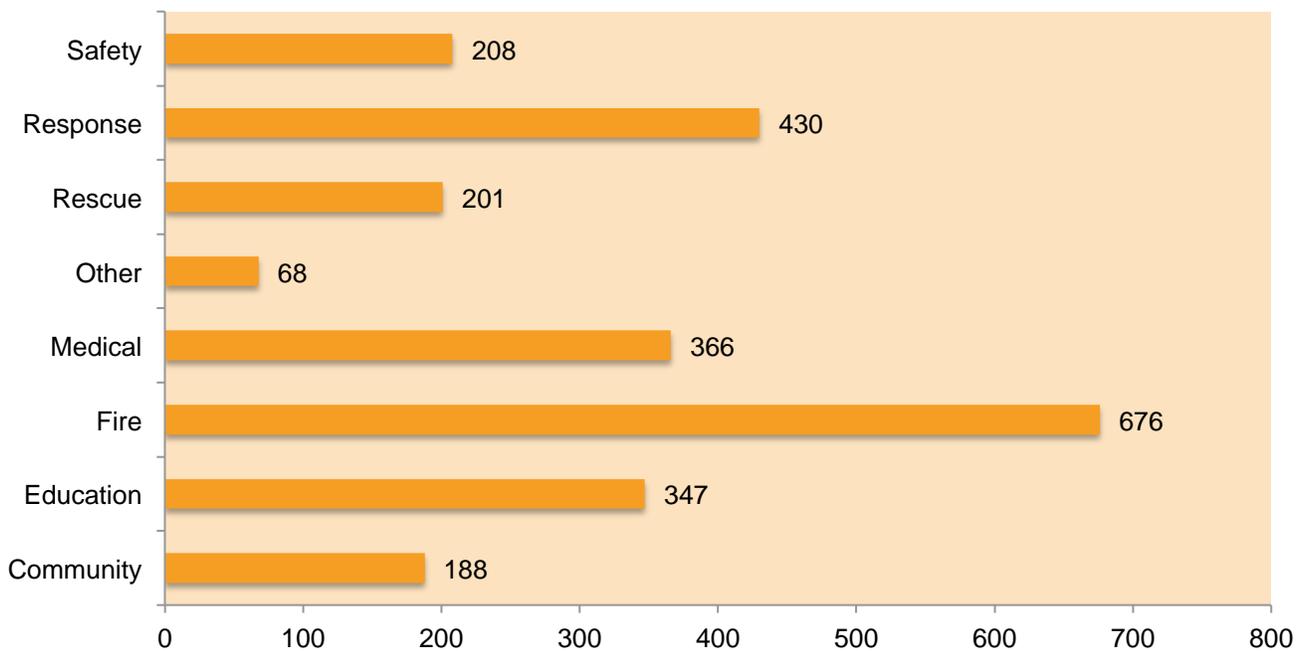
## What was your impression of the response time from the moment you called until Portland Fire & Rescue personnel arrived?



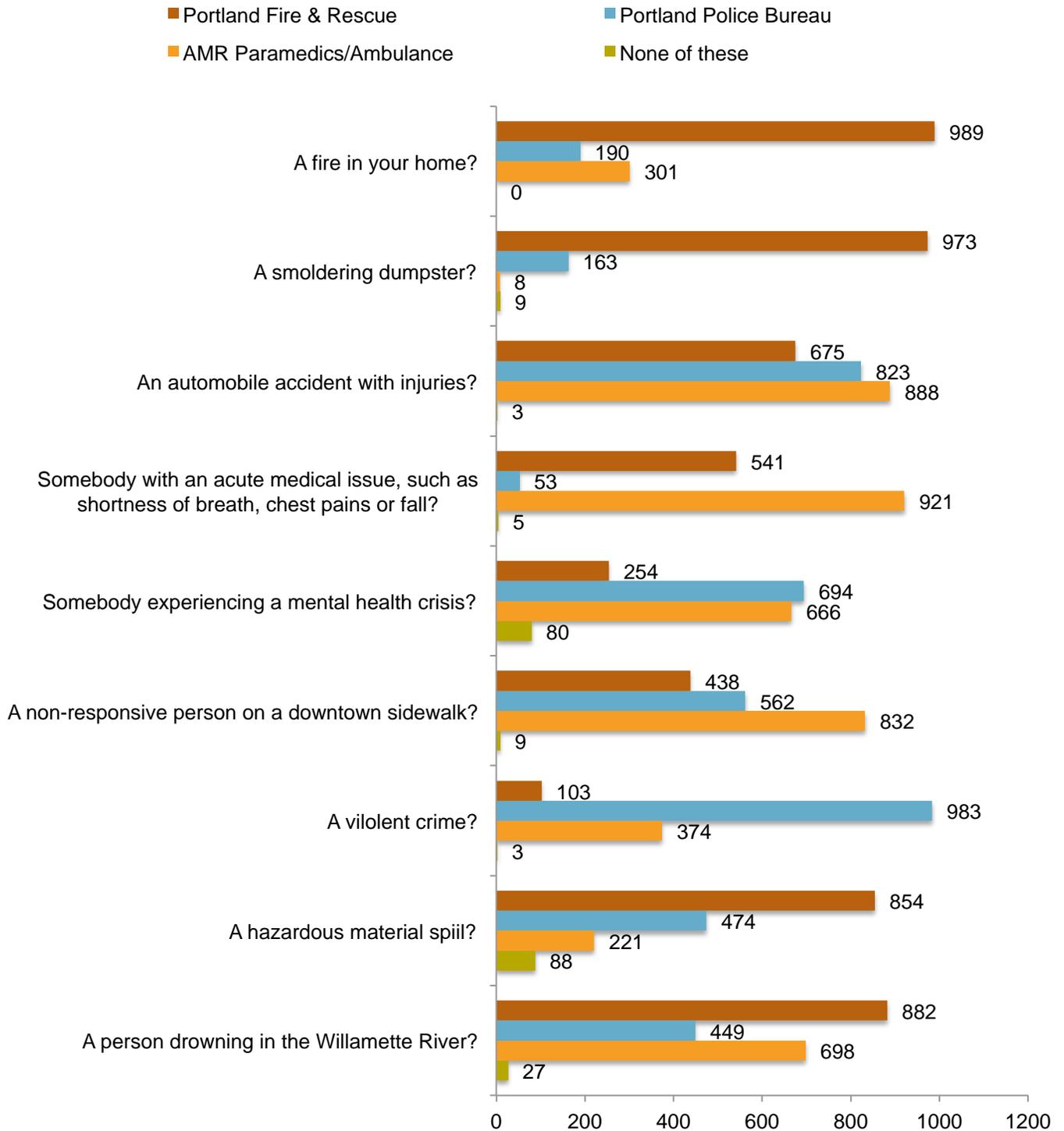
## What was your overall impression of the personnel you interacted with?



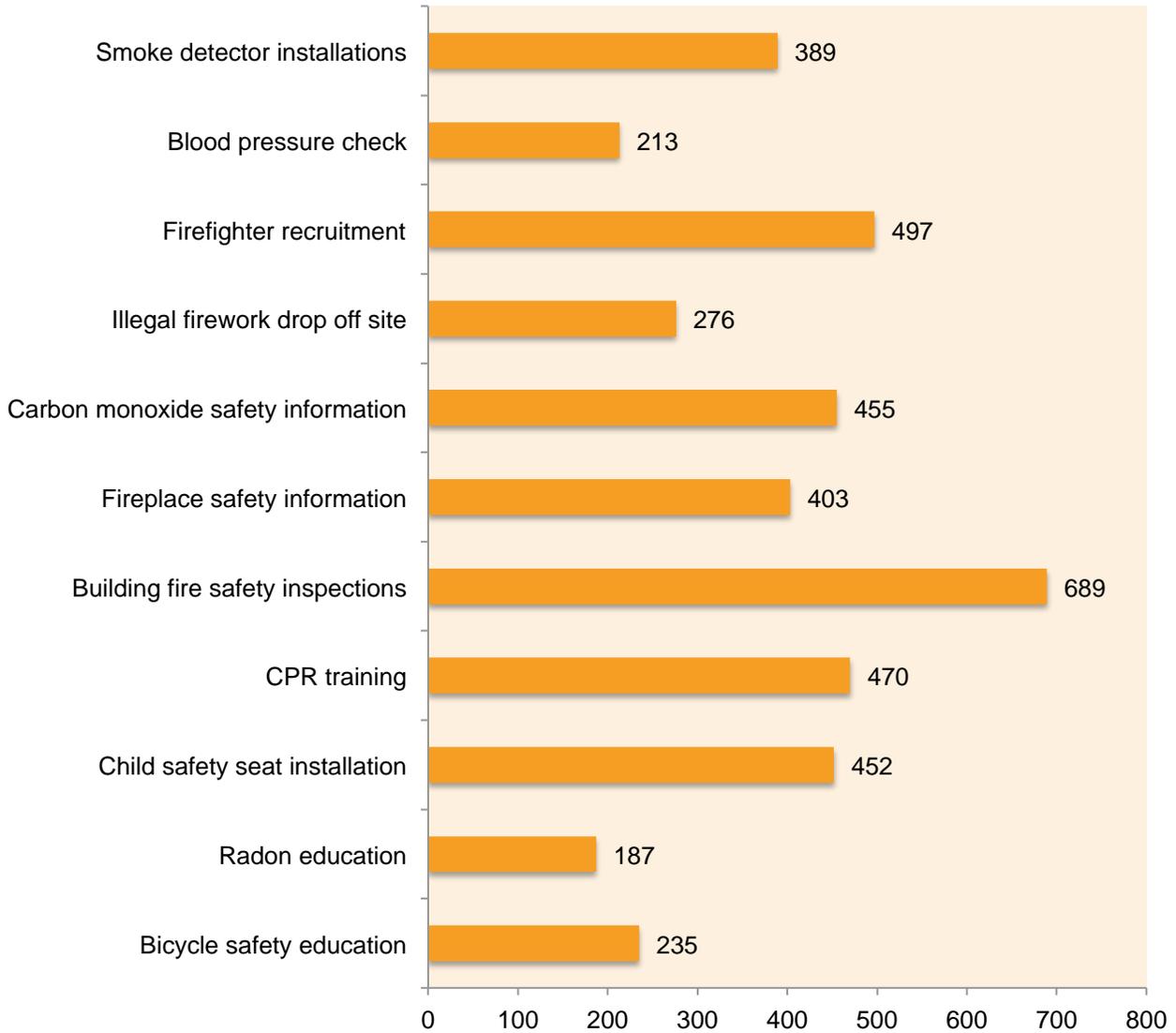
What are the three most valuable services you think Portland Fire & Rescue should provide to Portland residents?



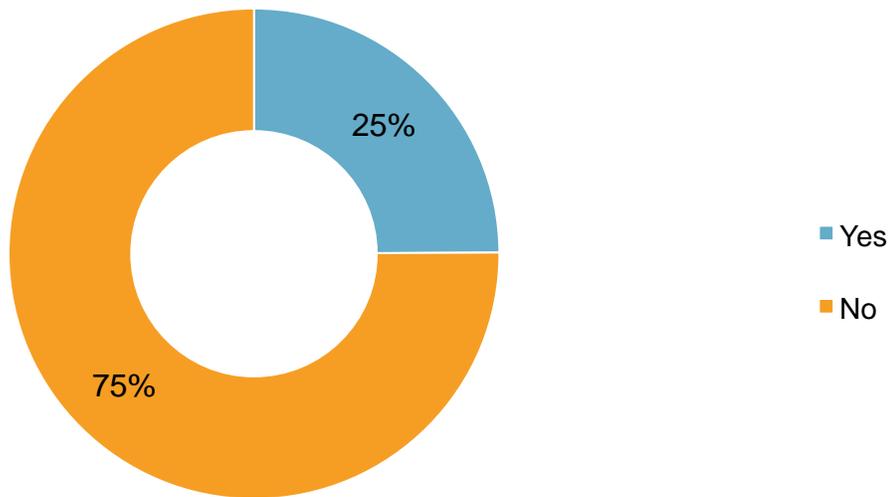
## When you have an emergency and dial 911, which emergency services would you expect to respond when there is:



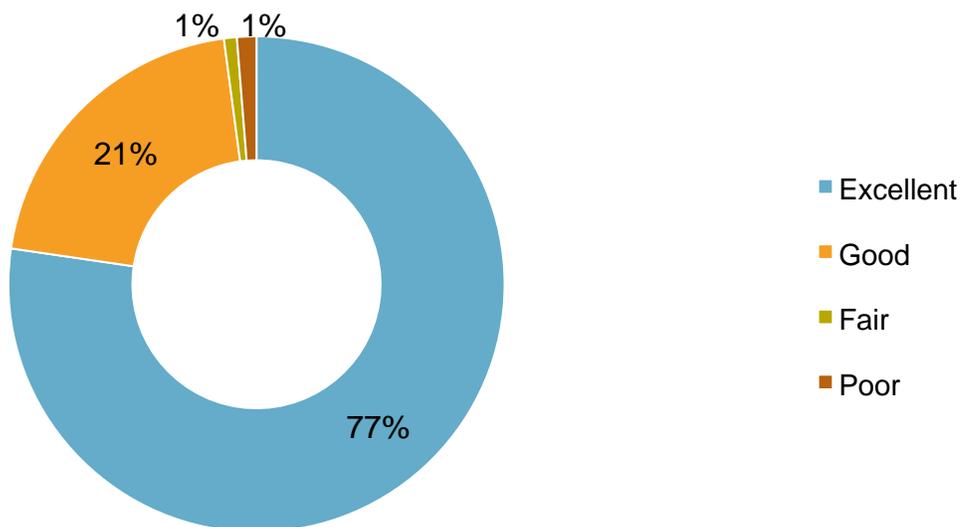
## Are you aware of any of the following non-emergency services provided by Portland Fire & Rescue?



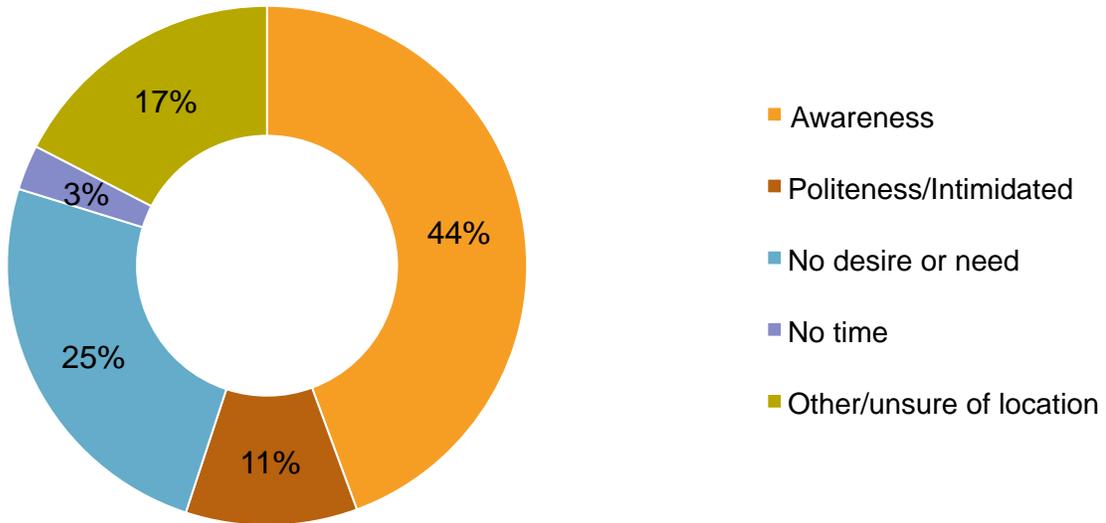
Portland Fire & Rescue encourages Portlanders to visit their neighborhood station to get their blood pressure checked, learn about safety (including smoke & carbon monoxide alarms), and find out about the fire & rescue resources that protect their communities. Have you ever visited your neighborhood Fire & Rescue station?



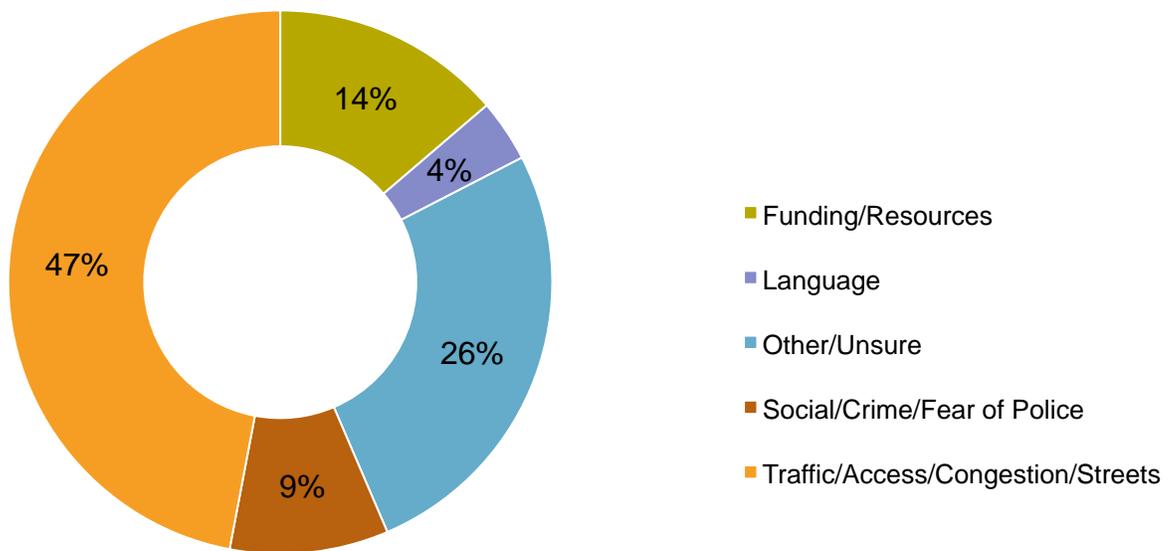
How would you rate your experience?



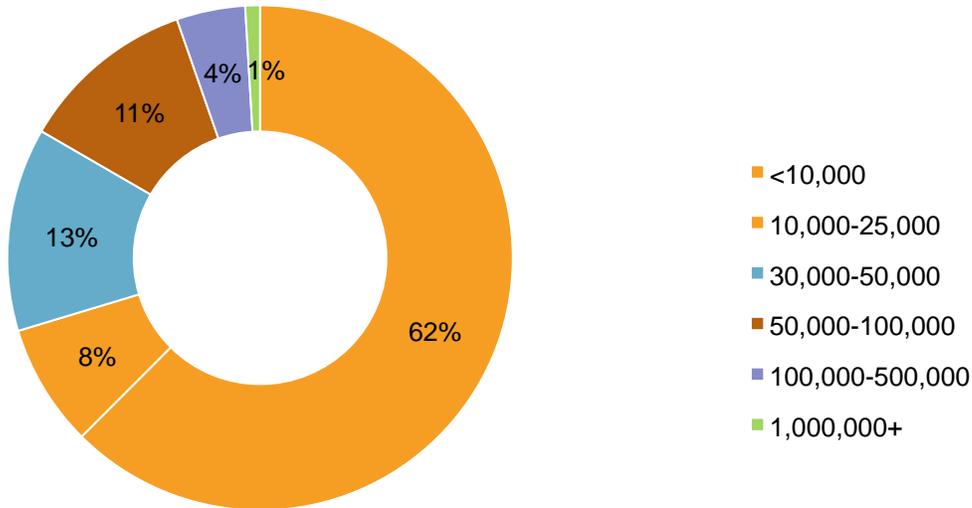
## Why have you never visited your neighborhood Fire & Rescue station?



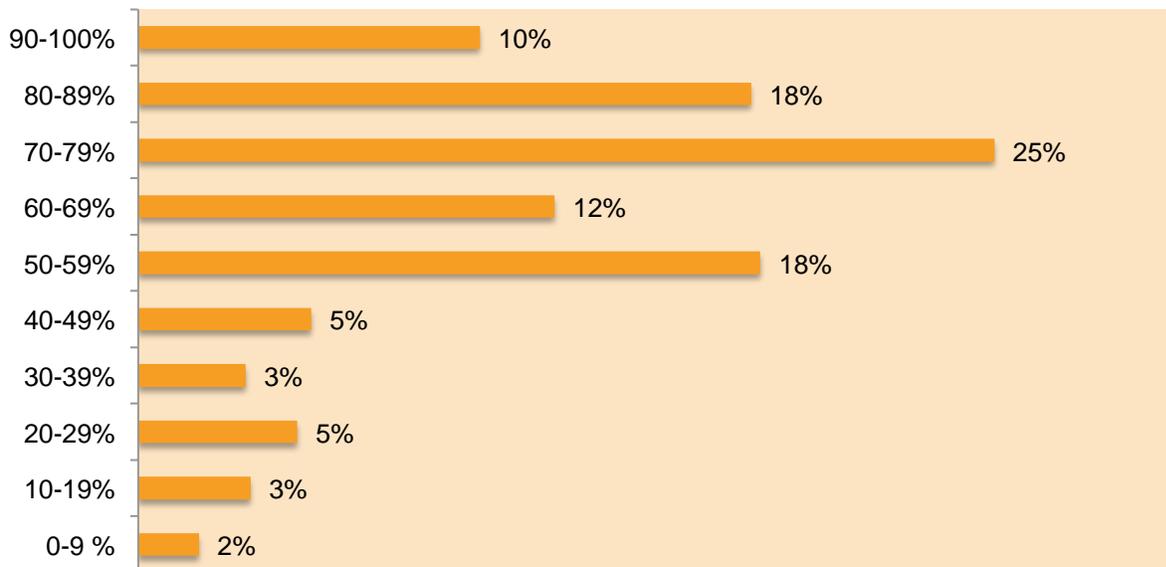
## In your community, what is one barrier that could interfere with Portland Fire & Rescue personnel doing their jobs?



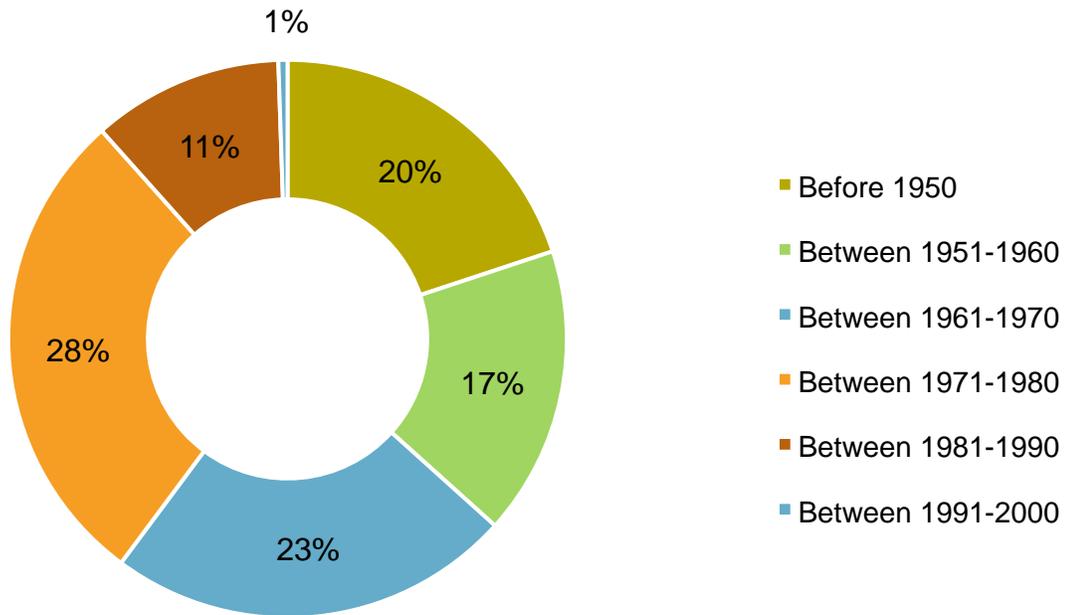
## How many emergency service calls would you estimate Portland Fire & Rescue responds to each year?



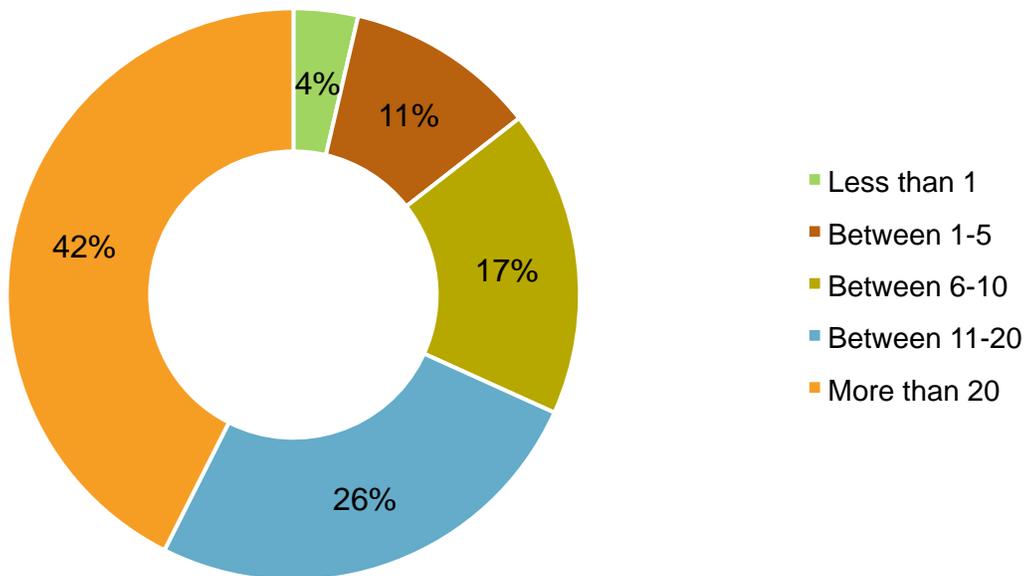
## What percentage of those calls do you think are emergency medical calls?



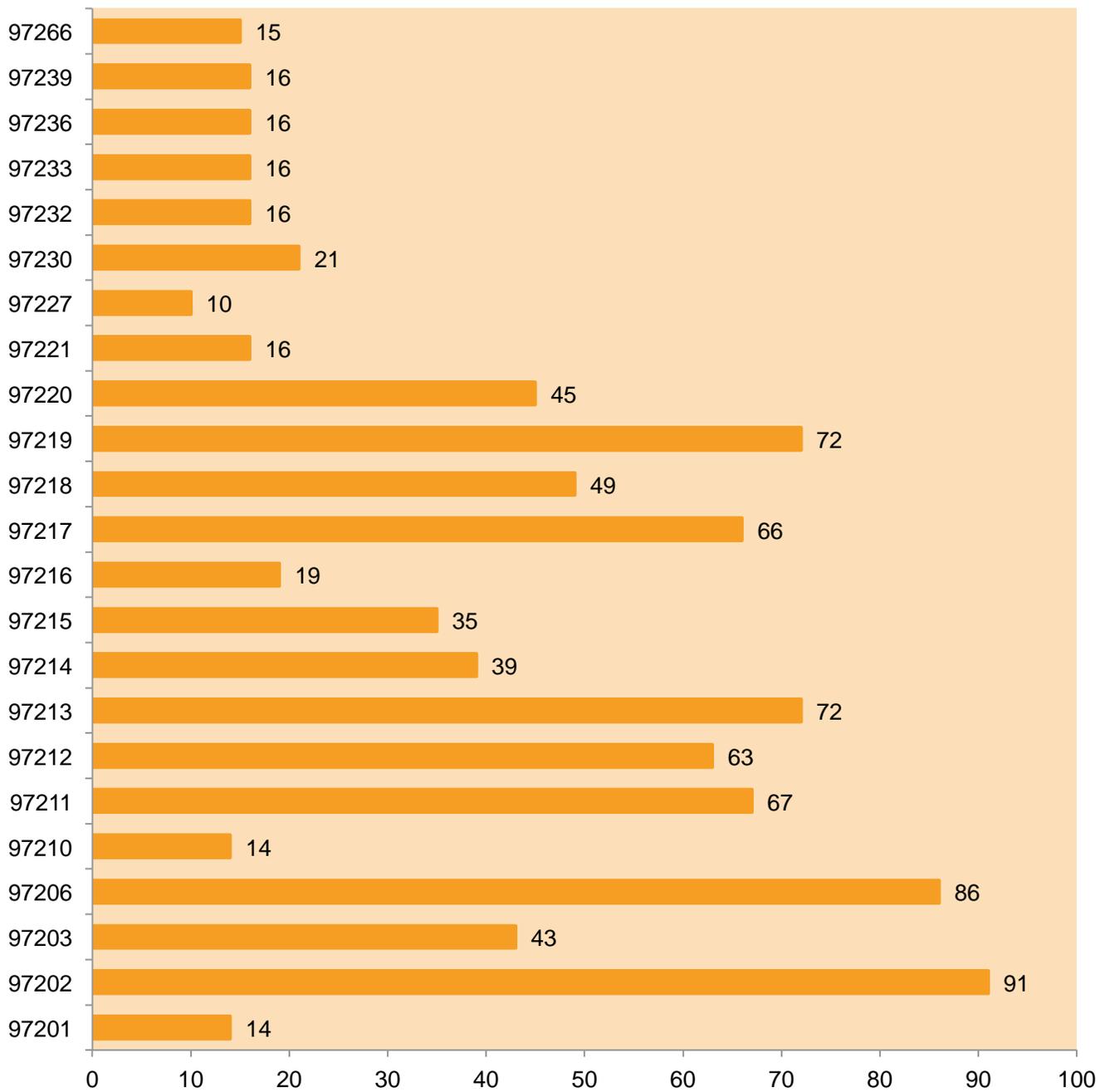
## In what year were you born?



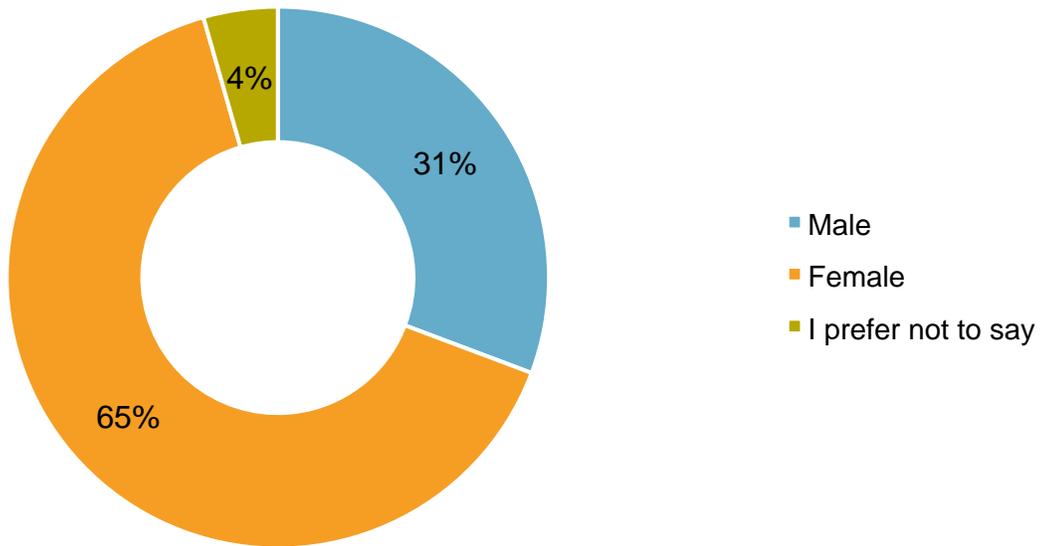
## How many years have you lived in Portland?



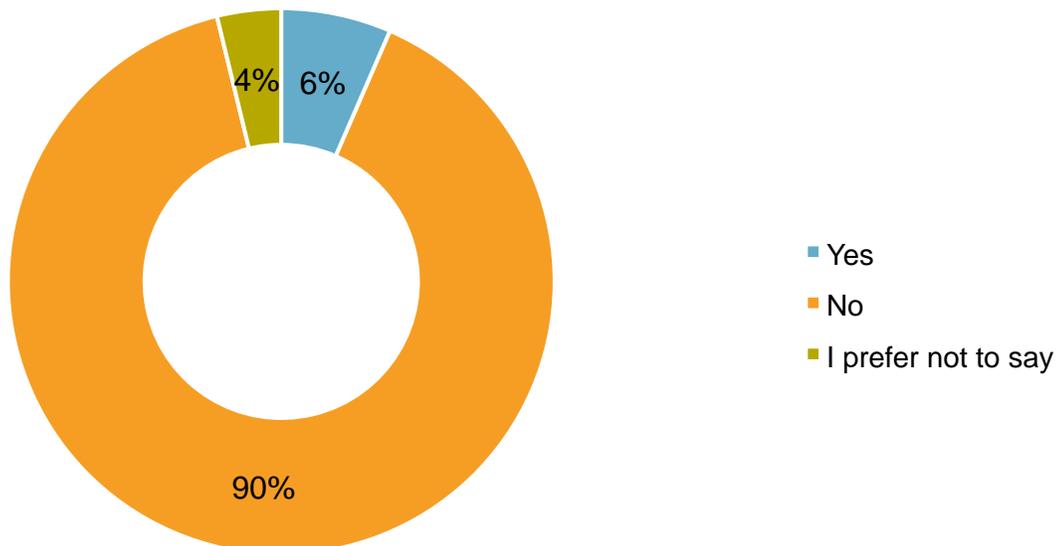
## What is your 5-digit zip code?



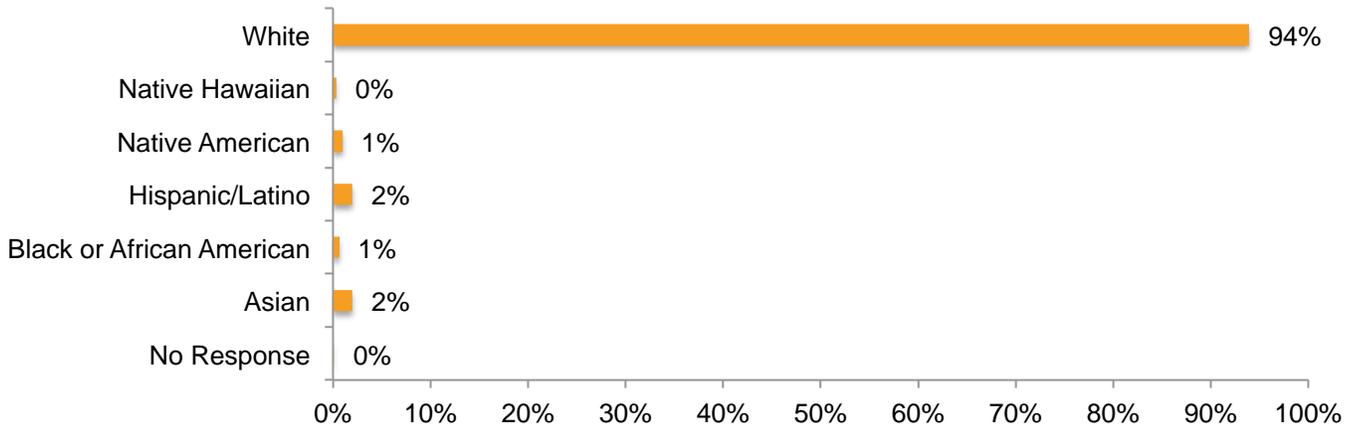
## What is your gender?



## Do you have a disability?



## How do you describe yourself?



## What language does your family speak at home?

