

# Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey

National Results  
May 2009



**Fireman's Fund<sup>SM</sup>**  
Insurance Company

A company of **Allianz** 

# Background and Methodology

## BACKGROUND

- Fireman's Fund Insurance Company awards grant to fire departments through the company's employees and independent agencies across the country. The grants can be used for needed equipment, training and community education programs. Since 2004, we have awarded more than \$21 million in grants to more than 1,100 fire departments.
- As an extension to this program, and in light of the current economic climate, Fireman's Fund sponsored a survey of the American fire service to determine needs. The survey was conducted by Ipsos Research. The result is "Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey."

## METHODOLOGY

- Firefighters were invited to complete the online survey via email invitations through various state, local and national fire service organizations and entities. The survey invitation was also promoted in fire service print trade journals, electronic newsletters and fire service blogs and Web sites.
- The survey, hosted on Ipsos' secure interviewing platform, was available to respondents between February 13th and March 31st. A total of 17,475 firefighters from 9,449 fire service organizations across the country were interviewed.
- The data included in the report is based on data at the department level rather than on all respondents. In cases where multiple firefighters from the same fire service organization responded to the survey, the first individual to respond was selected on behalf of that department, providing a random sampling.

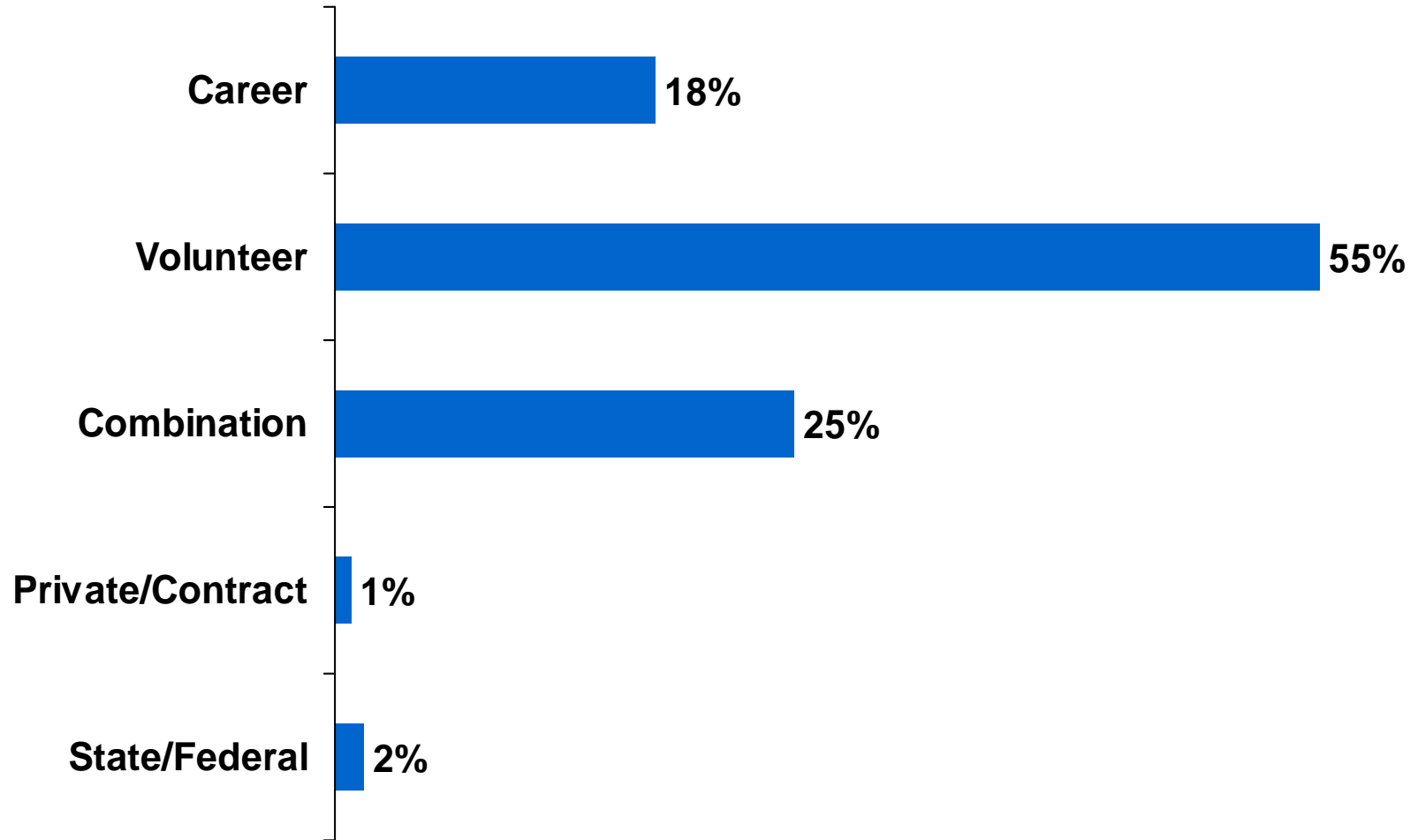
## Executive Summary

- Fire departments across the country face a variety of challenges – from budget cuts to staffing issues – and the current economic crisis is only exacerbating these problems.
- A majority of fire departments believe that if the economic crisis continues, it will negatively affect their ability to serve their communities.
- Over half already feel that their funding is insufficient, and roughly a quarter of departments say they are lacking adequate equipment and training.
- A majority of departments (56%) fear that if the economic crisis continues into next year, that it will negatively impact their ability to serve their community. Fortunately, though, only 17% of departments feel that the quality of service that they provide has declined due to the economy.

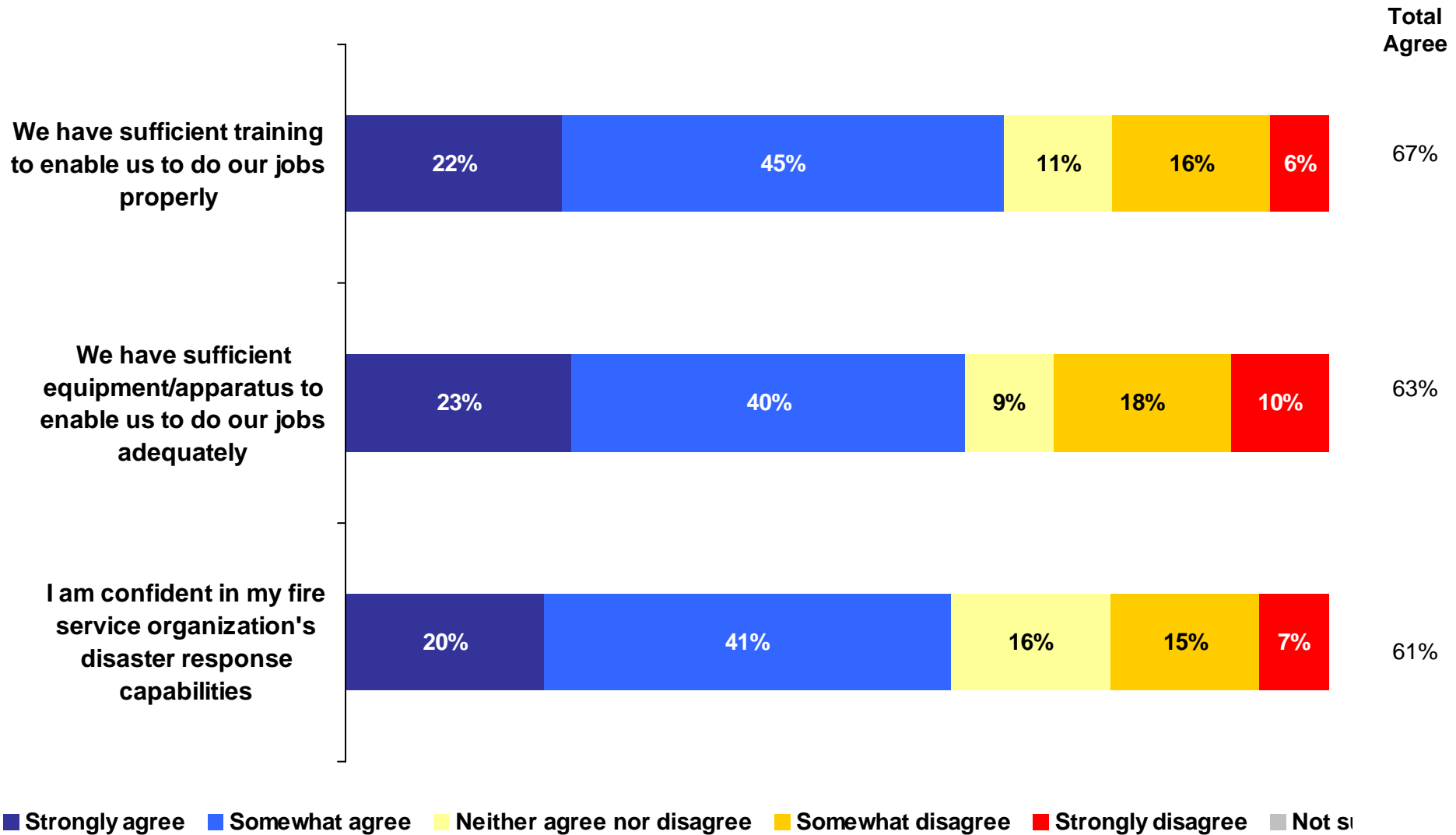
## Key Findings

- The top three challenges facing fire departments today are 1) lack of budget, 2) old or outdated equipment, gear and apparatus, and 3) staffing, recruiting and retaining qualified firefighters
- More than half of all fire departments said the poor economy meant they had to increase fundraising efforts or grant writing due to budget cutbacks.
- 55% strongly agree or agree with the statement, “If the economic situation continues for another 12 months, it will negatively affect our ability to serve our community.”
- One out of four fire departments do not have adequate extrication equipment needed to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.
- 57% of all volunteer departments are losing volunteers who need to look for other jobs.
- 52% of departments do not feel they are adequately trained to handle hazardous material incidents. One-third of departments don't have and need protective equipment for all fire personnel to respond to hazardous materials incidents.
- Only 50% of departments have protective equipment for all personnel to respond to wildland fires.
- 41% of responding engine companies don't have at least one thermal imaging camera, considered a critical tool to identify hot spots and locate injured or sleeping persons in a burning building.
- Despite the current economic crisis, only 17% of fire departments felt the quality of service they provide has declined.
- 76% of departments do not believe their organization is adequately trained to deal with terrorism or weapons of mass destruction.
- 90% of fire departments believe they have adequate training for structural fires.
- 62% are confident in their fire service organizations' disaster response capabilities.

# Type of Organization



# Attitudes toward Funding and Capabilities

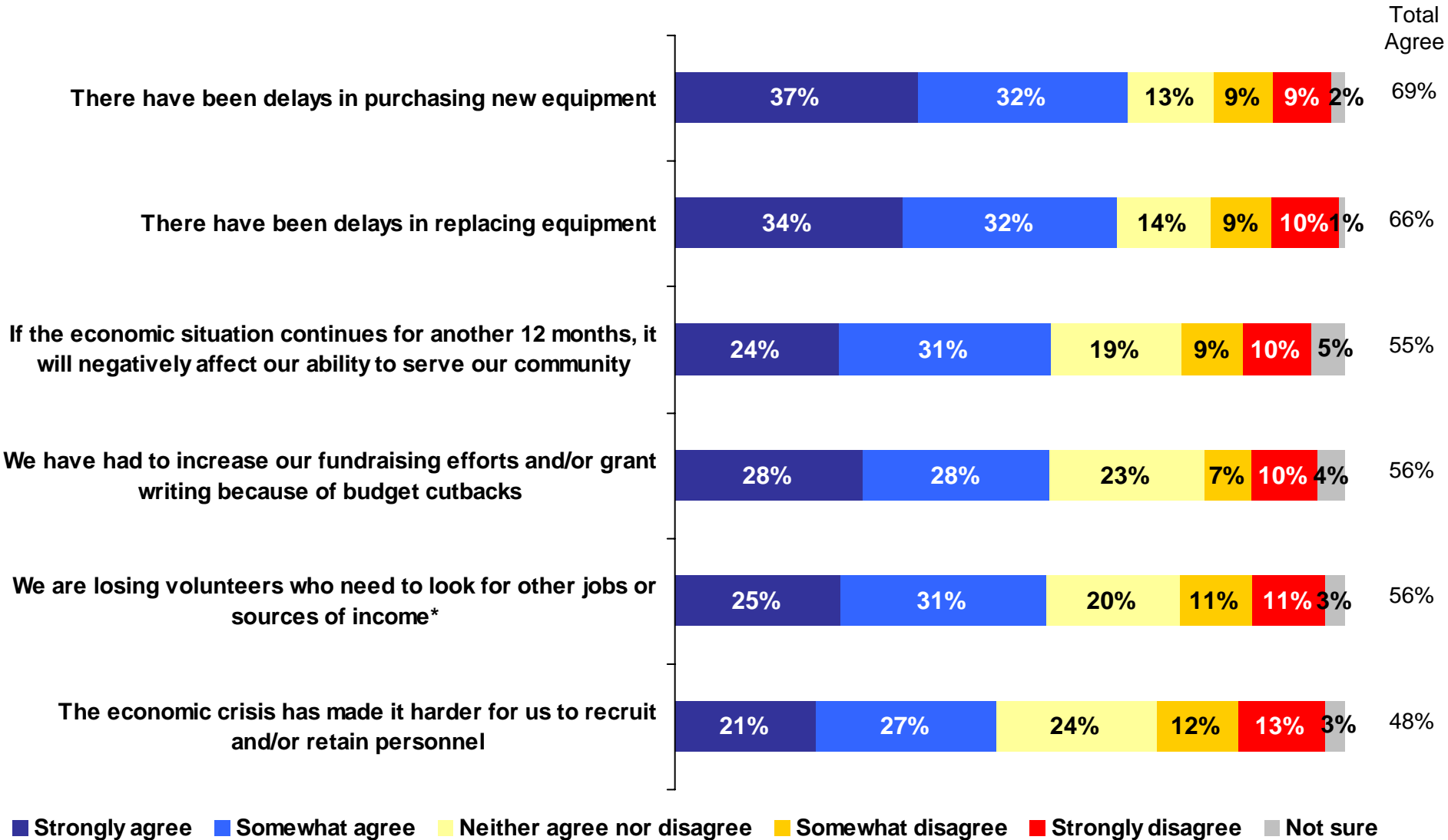


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9. Thinking about your fire service organization in general, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*Base: All departments*

# Impact of the Economy (1 of 2)

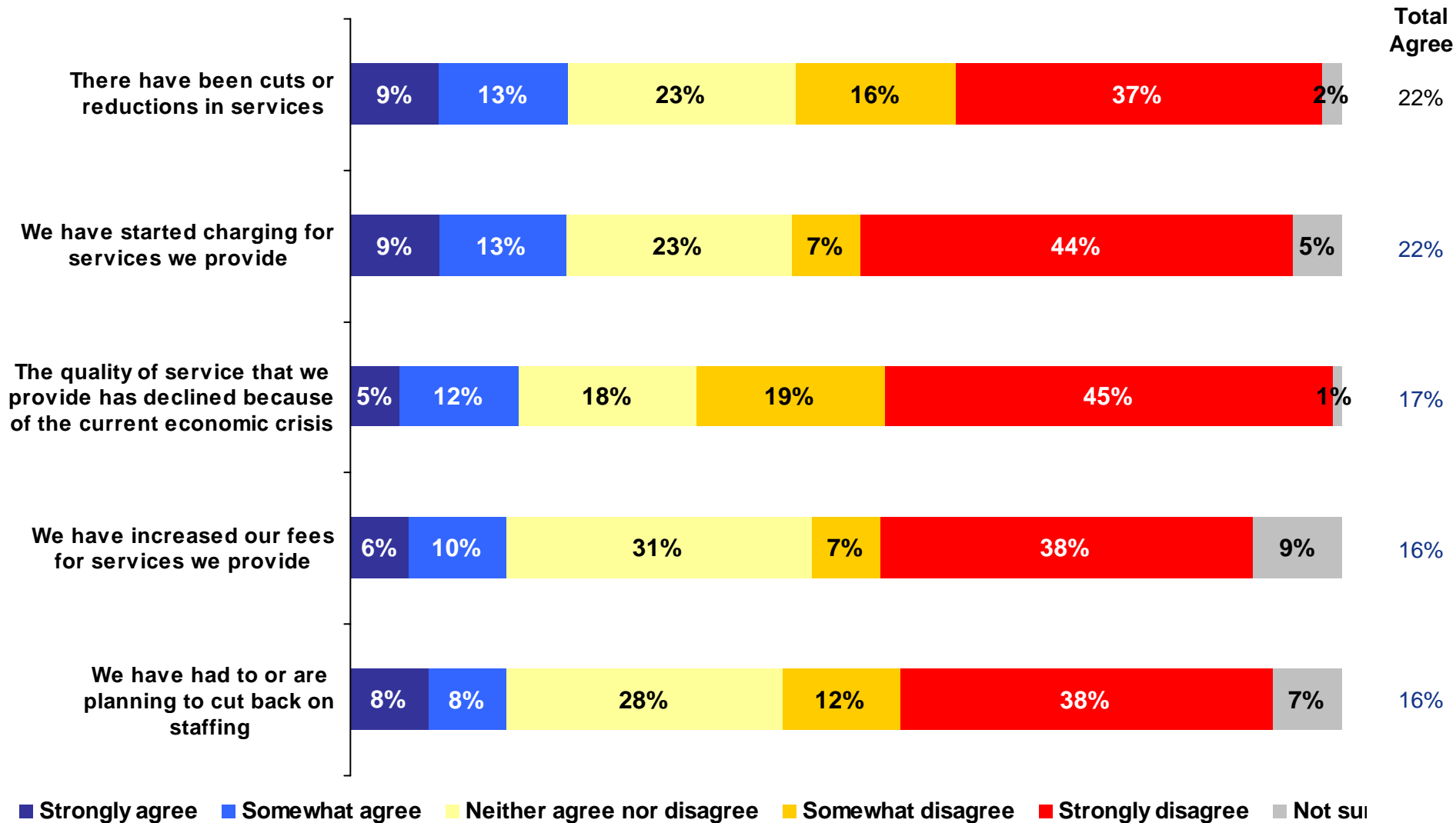


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10. Thinking about the impact of the current economic crisis on your fire service organization, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. \*asked only of volunteer and combo depts.

Base: All departments

## Impact of the Economy (2 of 2)



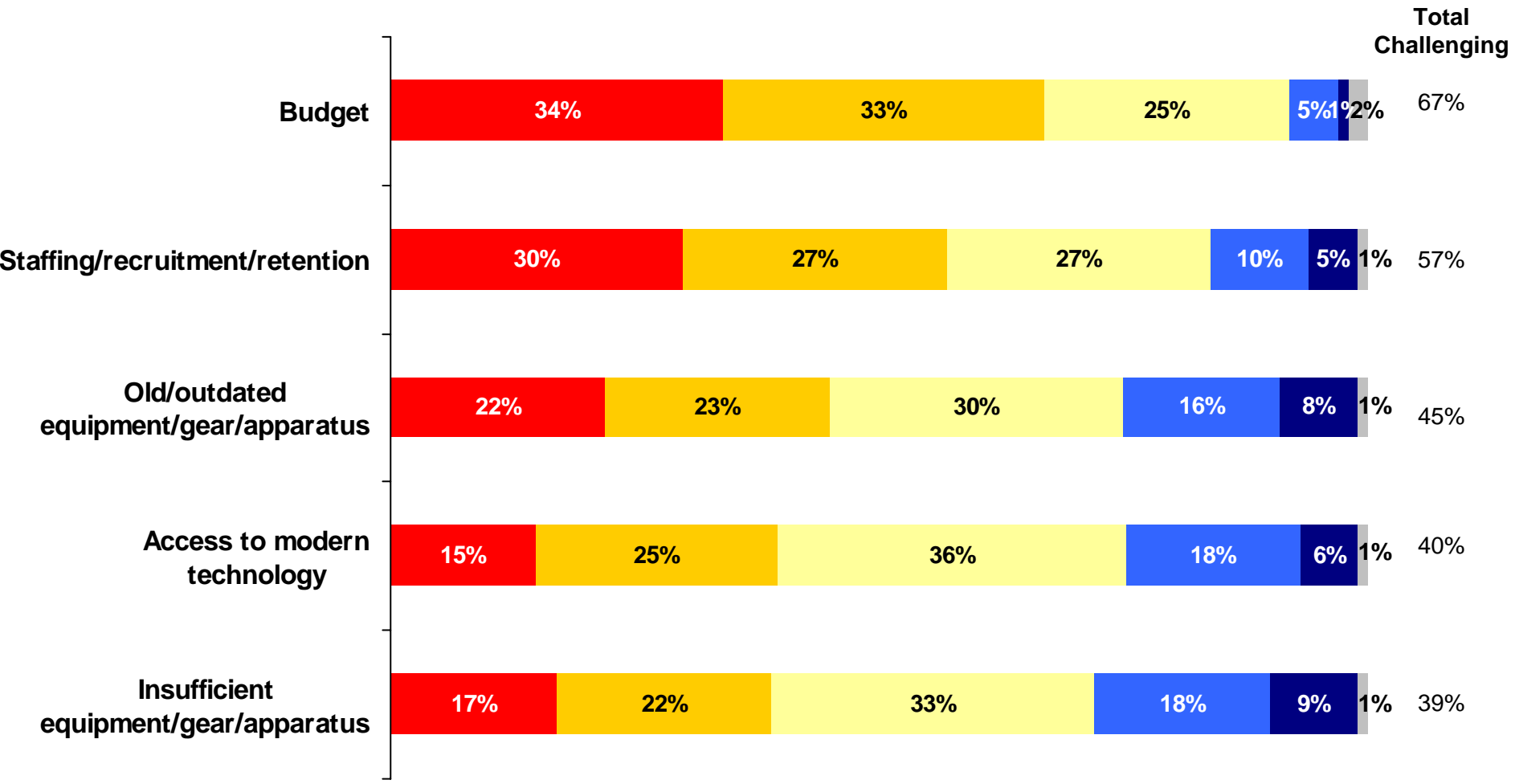
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10. Thinking about the impact of the current economic crisis on your fire service organization, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Base: All departments



# Department Challenges



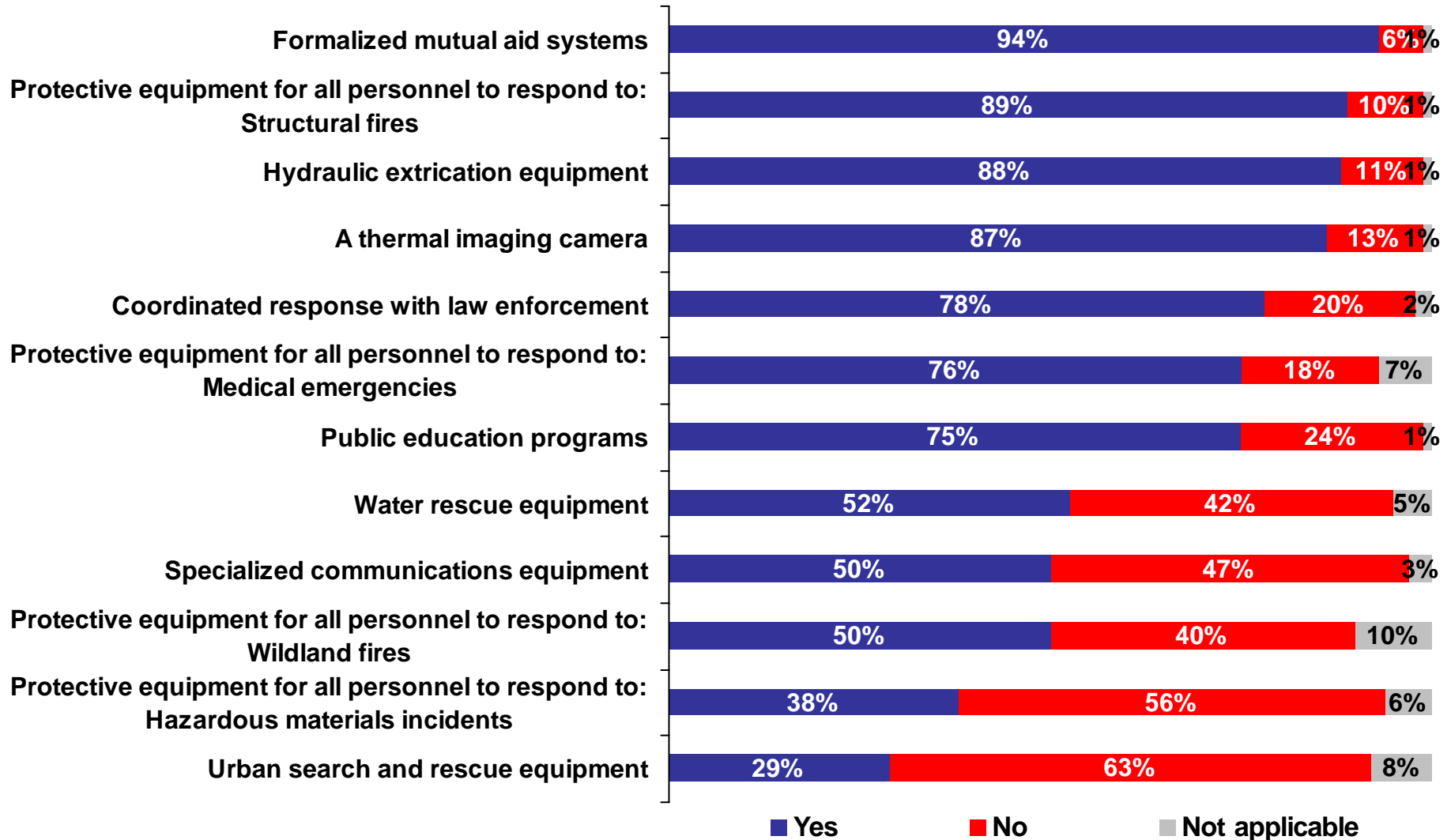
■ Extremely challenging ■ Very challenging ■ Somewhat challenging ■ Not very challenging ■ Not at all challenging ■ Not su

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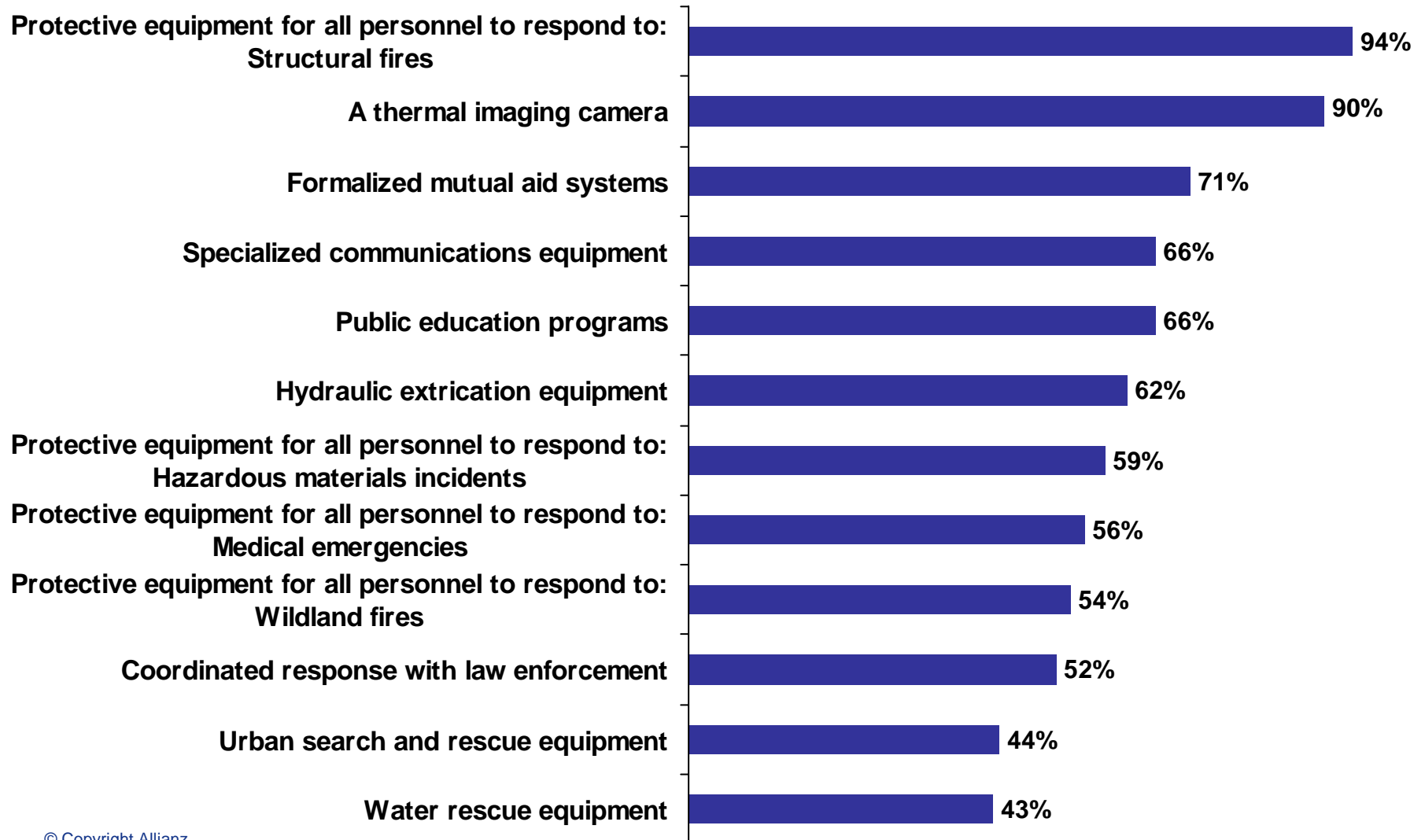
11. Thinking about various issues that your fire service organization may face, how challenging are each of the following?

Base: All departments

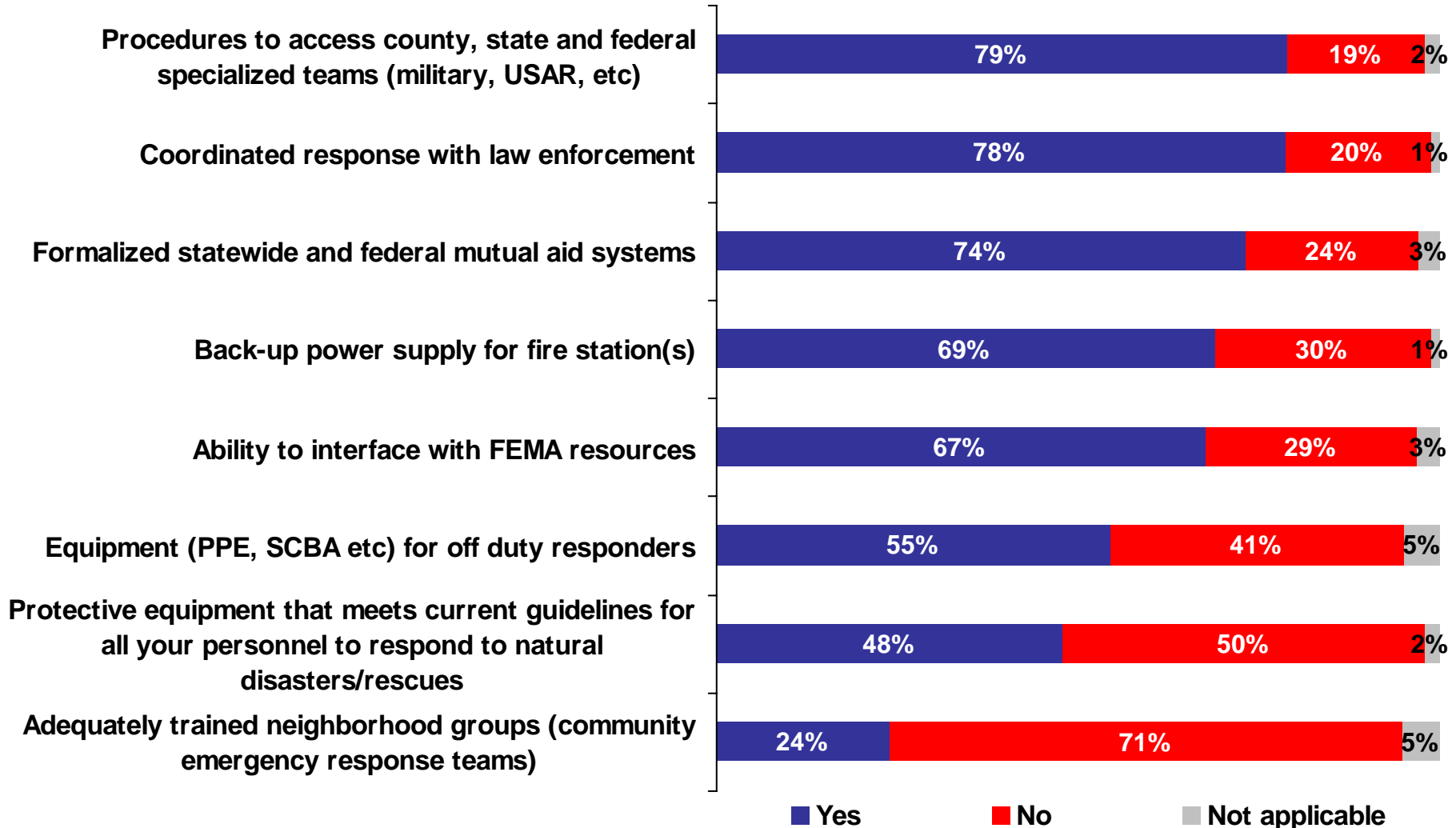
## Equipment/Resources



## Equipment/Resources Needed – Based on those that responded NO in previous slide



## Disaster Response Equipment/Resources

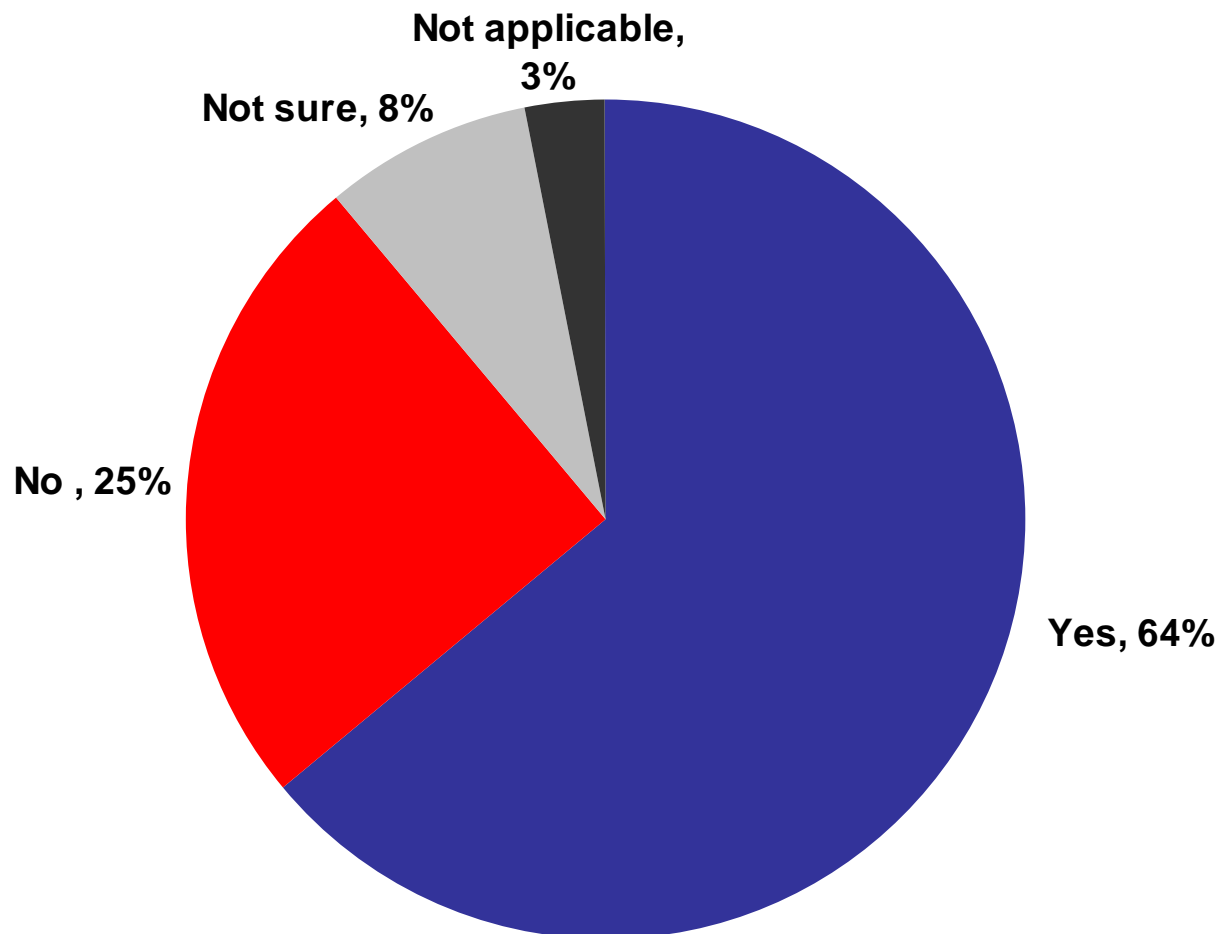


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14. And when it comes to disaster response, does your fire service organization have the following types of equipment/resources?

Base: All departments

## Adequate Extrication Equipment



## Adequate Training

