



Resilient Minds: Building the Psychological Strength of Fire Fighters

Evaluation Results for Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

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October 2018

This project was made possible through funding from Work Safe BC.



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'Resilient Minds': Executive Summary

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) support the City of Vancouver through 20 fire halls and 800 employees. In 2017, they responded to 67,000 emergency calls, making them one of the busiest fire services in North America. Based on a 2018 report that examined several dimensions of VFRS, it was found that, compared to other large urban fire services, VFRS:¹

- Has the highest rate of incidents per residents (by almost double)
- Deals with a high volume of medical-related calls for a fire-only service
- Has busier operational staff and
- Has a smaller non-operational staff team

Given the high levels of stress and exposure to traumatic events, it was deemed imperative to bolster health prevention and promotion efforts to support VFRS staff to grow their knowledge and skills in the areas of mental health and positive coping, with the goal of enhancing resilience. To this end, the 'Resilient Minds' course was developed in 2016.

'Resilient Minds- Building the Psychological Strength of Fire Fighters' is a four-module mental health and resiliency program developed in partnership by VFRS and the Canadian Mental Health Association - Vancouver Fraser Branch. Modules are delivered in a face-to-face format with trained facilitators. The overarching goals of the program are to:

- Decrease the risk of developing a stress disorder or other mental illnesses due to workplace incidents and/or unhealthy stress
- Mitigate the negative impacts of mental illness and trauma through early recognition and early intervention
- Support the public while on the frontline
- Improve the psychological health of fire staff while cultivating resilience and enhancing quality of life.

Evaluation of 'Resilient Minds' included soliciting data at four timepoints.

1. Pre-'Resilient Minds' course (and prior to change in VFRS leadership)
2. Post Modules One and Two
3. Post Modules Three and Four
4. Three to six months post course completion

¹ Dark Horse Analytics (June 2018). Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services Needs Assessment Study.

PROJECT TIMELINE



2016

'Resilient Minds' course is developed by CMHA in partnership with VFRS



Late 2016

12 'Resilient Minds' trainers participate in a three-day training program



Fall 2016 to Spring 2017

VFRS staff invited to participate in a baseline survey to understand current stressors, perceptions of mental health and education needs



May 2017

New Fire Chief is hired and VFRS begins significant changes in management team and approach



Spring 2017 to June 2018

Resilient Minds is implemented throughout VFRS, reaching 350 individuals. Feedback is gathered after sessions



January 2018 to June 2018

Follow-up survey is implemented to examine lasting impacts and ongoing training and support for mental well-being needs

Baseline Survey Key Findings

Based on 428 respondents, the top three stressors identified by VFRS staff were disruption of sleep, seeing the negative effects of stress on co-workers, and being exposed to anxious and overly demanding co-workers or administrators. Significant issues related to poor relationships between frontline staff and management were identified. Further to this:

- 34% of respondents indicated having ‘no knowledge’ or ‘limited knowledge’ about psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges.
- Only 30% reported having some type of training-related psychological trauma.
- 97.5% of respondents indicated that learning about mental health challenges could be helpful for them in their work.

Baseline survey results clearly highlighted the need for more training to support VFRS staff as they cope with the stress of the job and are put in a position to support the public.

Modules One and Two Feedback

111 respondents provided feedback after completing Modules One and Two. Findings revealed:

- 85% of course participants indicated high enjoyment as to the way the material was presented in the workshop, and 82% found the materials ‘*very helpful*’.
- 99% of course participants reported learning new knowledge about psychological trauma and/or mental health, with 81% of these individuals reporting learning ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot’.
- 94% intended to use the new knowledge and skills in their work and personal life.
- 100% of course participants derived benefit from the first two ‘Resilient Minds’ modules, with 88% of these individuals indicating high benefit.
- 92% of course participants were ‘quite likely’ or ‘very likely’ to recommend the course to other firefighters.

Modules Three and Four Feedback

58 respondents provided feedback after completing Modules Three and Four. Findings revealed:

- 83% of course participants indicated high enjoyment as to the way in which the material was presented in the workshop and 83% also found the materials ‘*very helpful*’.
- 100% of course participants reported learning new knowledge about psychological trauma and/or mental health, with 79% of these individuals reporting learning ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot’.
- 100% of course participants reported learning new knowledge about resilience and stress management, with 77% of these individuals reporting learning ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot’.
- 83% intended to use the new knowledge and skills in their work and 88% in their personal life.
- 100% of course participants derived benefit from the last two ‘Resilient Minds’ modules, with 84% of these individuals indicating high benefit.
- 88% of course participants were ‘quite likely’ or ‘very likely’ to recommend the course to other firefighters.

Further to the above findings gathered after the training sessions, VFRS staff strongly pointed to the need to have ongoing training to reinforce the knowledge and skills presented in ‘Resilient Minds’ as well as have further training to build upon their knowledge and skills in the area of mental health.

Follow-Up Findings

67 respondents completed a follow-up survey after completing all four modules. Findings revealed:

- Compared to the average ratings of 17 stressors reported at the baseline survey timepoint (early 2017), ratings at follow-up indicated a decrease in the perceived level of stress for all 17 stressors.
- 95% of survey respondents reported learning ways to better deal with stress as a result of the 'Resilient Minds' course.
- Course recall varied, with 22% of respondents reporting strong recall of material, 51% reporting 'some' recall, and 27% reporting 'a little' or 'not much' recall. These findings support the many comments made by VFRS staff about the need for refresher courses, other learning opportunities, and the visibility of a variety of materials related to psychological health and resilience in the fire halls.
- 70% reported using 'Resilient Minds' information and skills in their work and 69% reporting using the materials in their personal life.
- 100% reported feeling more prepared to respond to a member of the public who may be struggling with mental health issues, with 59% reporting feeling 'much' more prepared.
- 100% reported feeling more prepared to respond to a colleague who may be struggling with mental health issues, with 64% reporting feeling 'much' more prepared.
- 65% of respondents reported that they have felt a positive change in the level of support at their fire hall and 62.5% reported that they have felt a change of support in management levels (note that this shift would reflect the introduction of a new Fire Chief and new chief officers).

Project Successes

1. **Baseline Survey Participation:** 54% of VFRS participated in the baseline survey, which provided a clear snapshot of experiences and challenges related to stressors as well as mental health and resilience training and education needs prior to the change in leadership.
2. **Project Reach:** Despite a very small budget, approximately 300 individuals received the complete 'Resilient Minds' training and an additional 50 individuals received half of the training.
3. **Increased recognition of the importance of mental health:** Based on feedback, it was clear that members view a focus on mental health in the VFRS as important. They voiced wanting longer and more sustained training.
4. **High Acceptance of the 'Resilient Minds' course:** Course participants gave the course high ratings both with respect to enjoying the format and being likely to recommend it to others.
5. **High learning and benefit from the 'Resilient Minds' course:** Course participants reported learning a great deal about mental health and resilience, both how they can use the knowledge and skills in their own lives and also to support others.

Conclusions

This initiative came in the midst of a change in leadership which has had a positive impact on members as the importance of mental health is felt to be openly supported by the new leadership. Based on the data gathered over the course of implementation of 'Resilient Minds', results demonstrate a high acceptance of the training by firefighters and a recognition of the importance of focusing efforts in this area. Firefighters welcomed this initiative and strongly voiced a willingness and need for mental health training and ongoing support in the VFRS. The project gained substantial traction despite limited resources and at the time of this report, approximately 350 individuals have received some or all of the training. Based on feedback, it will be critical for the VFRS to continue to bolster their efforts to support their 800 members as they continue to work in an intense and fast-paced environment in which they must cope with significant stress daily.

Recommendations

1. **'Resilient Minds' as part of new hire training:** Embed 'Resilient Minds' into new firefighter training.
2. **'Resilient Minds' full implementation:** Ensure that all existing VFRS complete the four-module training and moving forward, schedule refresher courses each year.
3. **Ongoing monitoring plan:** Implement a monitoring plan throughout VFRS to make informed decisions about prevention and promotion supports and educational needs that would benefit members, and families. Part of data gathering efforts for this plan could include brief check-ins with members as to topics and supports that they see as promoting mental health.
4. **Mental Health Prevention Resources:** Dedicate resources to address mental health prevention in the VFRS. Resources would support the delivery of 'Resilient Minds', introduction of new mental health workshops and resources, and ongoing monitoring of the needs of members in relation to mental health.
5. **Making the case for mental health prevention programs and supports:** Consider doing a financial analysis of the cost of having a comprehensive mental health prevention and promotion program versus the cost of having short- and long-term employee absences due to mental health. This analysis may assist in making decisions about future resource dedication to mental health prevention and promotion programs and services

Mental Health Concerns Among First Responders

Concern about the mental health of first responders is receiving increasing attention, given the stressful and often traumatic events that they are exposed to in their work, and the negative impact that this exposure has on their well-being. 46 first responders died by suicide in Canada in 2017.² While this is an alarming statistic, it does not include those first responders who are retired or no longer on the job who may have died by suicide as a result of unresolved trauma, nor does it shed light on the precise number of first responders who are struggling with significant mental health issues. Data indicates that first responders experience PTSD at two times the rate of the general population.³

In 2018, results from the first Canadian national survey undertaken with first responders found elevated rates of risk in relation to the development of mental health disorders when compared to the general population. 5,813 first responders (i.e., police, paramedics, firefighters and 911 operators) participated in this first survey from September 2016 to January 2017 and among them, 44.5% “screened positive for clinically significant symptom clusters consistent with one or more mental disorders.”⁴

In 2018, there have been signs that indicate that the impact of unaddressed mental health issues among first responders is slowly receiving more attention from federal and provincial governing bodies. In 2018, the Government of Canada launched a grant program to assist the families of first responders who have died in the line of duty. This program includes those who have died by suicide. Specific to British Columbia, some alterations to workers’ compensation coverage have been made to include an increased consideration of mental health.⁵ Legislation was introduced in 2018 in BC to add PTSD and other mental health disorders to a recognized list of presumptive conditions associated with specific job types (i.e., first responders). Although this is a positive change in BC, there continues to be great variation in coverage for first responders and this lack of consistency has been noted as an area in need of attention.⁶

While downstream efforts, such as the new grant program, counselling and other treatment programs, are absolutely imperative to support first responders and their families, these efforts are not sufficient as the only avenue of support. There is a need to develop upstream programs that can assist first responders in developing knowledge and skills that they can use to better cope with the demands of their work. Through programs that build positive coping skills and through creating a work culture where it is acceptable to ask for help related to mental health struggles, departments can lower the risk of firefighters developing serious mental health problems or in extreme cases, suicide.

² <https://www.tema.ca/canada>

³ <https://www.tema.ca/canada>

⁴ Carleton, R. N., et al. (2018). Mental disorder symptoms among public safety personnel in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry / La Revue canadienne de psychiatrie*, 63(1), 54-64.

⁵ <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness/types-of-claims/mental-health-disorders>

⁶ Research Division, Public Safety Canada (2017). Compensation for Public Safety Officers in Canada: A Brief Overview. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2017-s011/2017-s011-en.pdf>

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services: Project Context

In 2016, when the ‘Resilient Minds’ project first came into being, the VFRS faced considerable challenges with respect to low morale and lack of confidence in leadership. In 2014, a report outlining results from a comprehensive Vancouver City employee survey found that only 6% of respondents had confidence in the Fire Chief and his management team that were in the leadership position at that time. According to the then president of Local 18 of the International Association of Fire Fighters, *“What our members are wanting is somebody we can believe in, and who has the ability to provide clear and concise instructions to the men and women of the department.”*⁷ Data from the baseline survey, included as part of this evaluation, took place in late 2016 to spring 2017 and mirrored findings with respect to management that were uncovered in the 2013 survey (report released in 2014). VFRS ratings of management support and comments related to ongoing conflicts and the feeling that management did not care about the well-being of staff were a dominant theme in the baseline survey findings.

In May 2017, the VFRS underwent a large transition with the hiring of a new Fire Chief from Ontario, Chief Darrell Reid, along with nine new chief officers. This transition of new leadership appears to have dramatically shifted morale and has led to a significant change in how VFRS personnel view levels of support and concern for their well-being. This transition and the implementation of the project in the fire halls coincided, and as such, results from this initiative must be understood in this context.



***“MORALE HAS
CHANGED
SIGNIFICANTLY
UNDER OUR NEW
MANAGEMENT
TEAM.”***

**-VANCOUGER
FIREFIGHTER**

Overview of Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) support the City of Vancouver through 20 fire halls and 800 employees. In 2017, they responded to 67,000 emergency calls. Over the past ten years, incident call volume has increased by 56%. Along with attending to fires, accidents, and other incidents, VFRS is in the midst of battling an exploding opioid crisis in Vancouver. In 2017 alone, there were 6,225 overdoses (up from 2,512 in 2015 and 4,709 in 2016).

Based on a 2018 report that examined several dimensions of VFRS, it was found that, compared to other large urban fire services, VFRS:⁸

- Has the highest rate of incidents per residents (by almost double)
- Deals with a high volume of medical-related calls for a fire-only service
- Has the busiest fire halls compared to other fire-only services in large urban areas

⁷ From The Vancouver Sun

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/morale+runs+rampant+City+Vancouver+employees+survey/9392422/story.html>

⁸ Dark Horse Analytics (June 2018). Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services Needs Assessment Study.

- Has operational staff who are busier compared to other fire-only services
- Has a smaller non-operational staff team

Given the high level of stress that VFRS staff face during their work and understanding the risk that first responders face with respect to mental health, creating a formal prevention program that teaches knowledge and skills to enhance resilience, with the goal of decreasing the incidence of mental health disorders, is a critical need. To this end, the 'Resilient Minds' four-part course was developed in 2016.

Resilient Minds Overview

'Resilient Minds - Building the Psychological Strength of Fire Fighters' is a mental health and resiliency program developed in partnership by VFRS and the Canadian Mental Health Association - Vancouver Fraser Branch. The overarching goals of the program are to:

- Decrease the risk of developing a stress disorder or other mental illnesses due to workplace incidents and/or unhealthy stress
- Mitigate the negative impacts of mental illness and trauma through early recognition and early intervention
- Support the public while on the frontline
- Improve the psychological health of fire staff while cultivating resilience and enhancing quality of life.

Through participation in four modules, individuals learn specific knowledge, skills, and resources to support the above program goals. Greater details on module goals are included on the following page.

Resilient Minds Modules

‘Resilient Minds’ consists of four comprehensive, skill-building learning modules that focus on psychological trauma, mental health problems, resiliency and workplace stress. Each module is designed to be delivered over a 2 to 2.5-hour period. The time between module delivery varies based on the schedules and competing demands of fire hall personnel. For example, in some cases one module is delivered at a time, and in other cases, two modules are delivered in one day. Participants receive a manual that they work through with one to two trained facilitators. ‘Resilient Minds’ is an opportunity to increase mental health literacy and decrease the risk of developing stress disorders or a mental illness due to workplace incidents and stress. Module objectives are outlined in the table below.

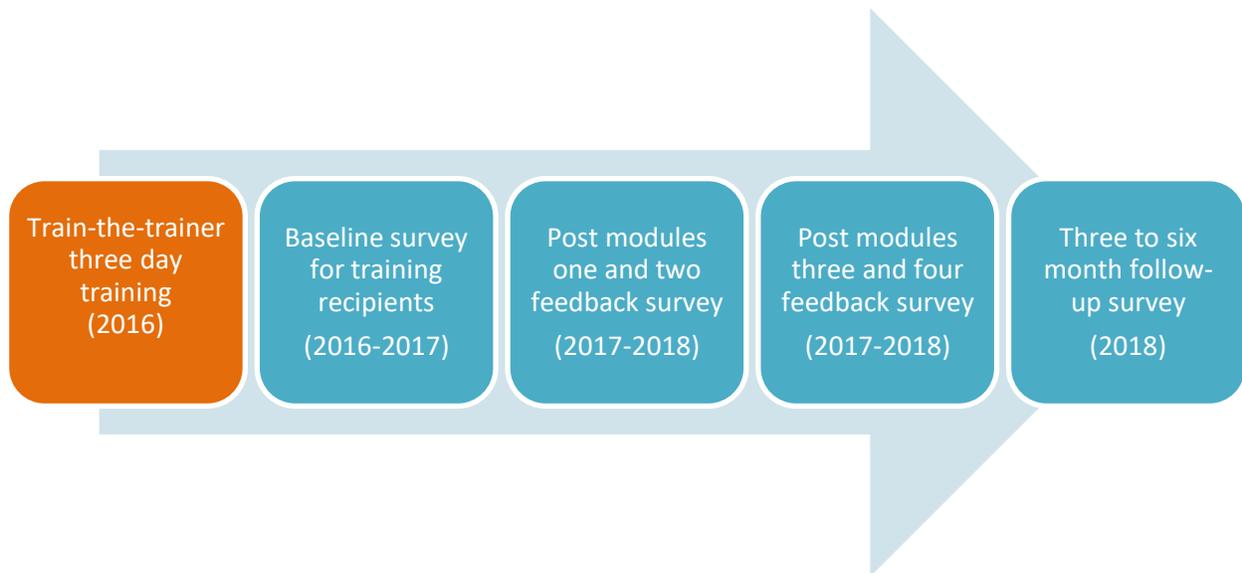
Module	Module Objectives
Module One: Psychological Trauma: Awareness and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build an understanding of psychological trauma and the impacts on personnel ✓ Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma ✓ Discuss Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Acute Stress Disorder, and Cumulative Stress ✓ Encourage early response to psychological trauma ✓ Recovery after trauma
Module Two: Psychological Trauma: Potential Risks and Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide an overview of assessment and intervention: The 4R Action Toolkit ✓ Understand the impacts of unresolved trauma ✓ Explore Cognitive Behavioural Therapy ✓ Discuss and review crisis intervention
Module Three: Responding with Respect: Psychological Distress & Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase understanding and recognize signs of psychological distress & disorder ✓ Develop effective communication skills to respond and support individuals ✓ Discuss appropriate and safe responses to challenging/violent situations ✓ Gain an understanding of resources
Module Four: Managing Workplace Stress & Building Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recognize negative impacts of workplace and work-life stress ✓ Discuss components of compassion fatigue ✓ Develop action toolkits to limit work-stress ✓ Build resilience & strengthen psychological health

Resilient Minds Course Trainers

Twelve individuals, who have had prior education in trauma-related content, were trained to be 'Resilient Minds' facilitators in late 2016. Of the twelve who were trained, six became regular trainers in VFRS. With the support of a trainer manual and access to a CMHA support and senior firefighter staff, these trainers worked to deliver the program throughout Vancouver fire halls in 2017 and 2018.

Evaluation Overview

Several steps were taken to evaluate the 'Resilient Minds' program to better understand how the course was experienced by firefighters, the impact on their perceived ability to cope more effectively with stress and whether the initiative influenced the culture to be more open to learning and talking about mental health. After the train-the-trainer sessions and prior to the start of the delivery of the 'Resilient Minds' program, all VFRS personnel were invited to participate in an online or paper-based survey. Then, after Modules One and Two and again after Modules Three and Four, workshop participants were invited to provide feedback via paper-based surveys. Finally, between three and six months after the completion of the four modules, participants were invited to provide final input via an online or paper-based survey.



Measurement Tools Overview

Evaluation Tool	Tool Purpose
Pre-training online survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gather basic demographic information (e.g., gender, years of service, time at current fire hall etc.) To assess factors that contribute to work stress To assess perceived level of knowledge related to psychological trauma and mental health challenges To assess the degree to which participants believe a training course on mental health challenges and psychological trauma could be helpful in their work
Post-module paper-based training surveys (2 surveys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess participant engagement and overall perceived course benefit To assess perceived helpfulness of workshop materials To assess the degree of learning about psychological trauma, mental health, and resilience To assess the degree to which learners believe the module content will be helpful in their work and personal life To uncover any challenges to using the workshop material in one's work or personal life
Three-month online follow-up survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reassess factors that contribute to work stress To reassess perceived level of knowledge of issues related to psychological trauma To assess overall retention of 'Resilient Minds' material To assess the degree to which learners have used the material in their work and personal life To assess early impacts of 'Resilient Minds' on fire hall culture To examine ways that future learning can be supported in the areas focused on in 'Resilient Minds'

Resilient Minds Course and Evaluation Participants

Between early 2017 and spring 2018, 350 firefighters participated in 'Resilient Minds'. Approximately 300 individuals have completed all four modules and an additional 50 individuals have completed Modules One and Two. Note that training will continue in the fall of 2018 and it is estimated that 75% of all staff will have completed the full 'Resilient Minds' course by the end of 2018.

Evaluation Participants

Evaluation Dimension	Number of 'Resilient Minds' evaluation participants	Approximate % of participants who contributed to the evaluation
Baseline survey	428	54%
Modules One and Two feedback	111	32%
Modules Three and Four feedback	58	19%
Follow-up feedback	67	22%

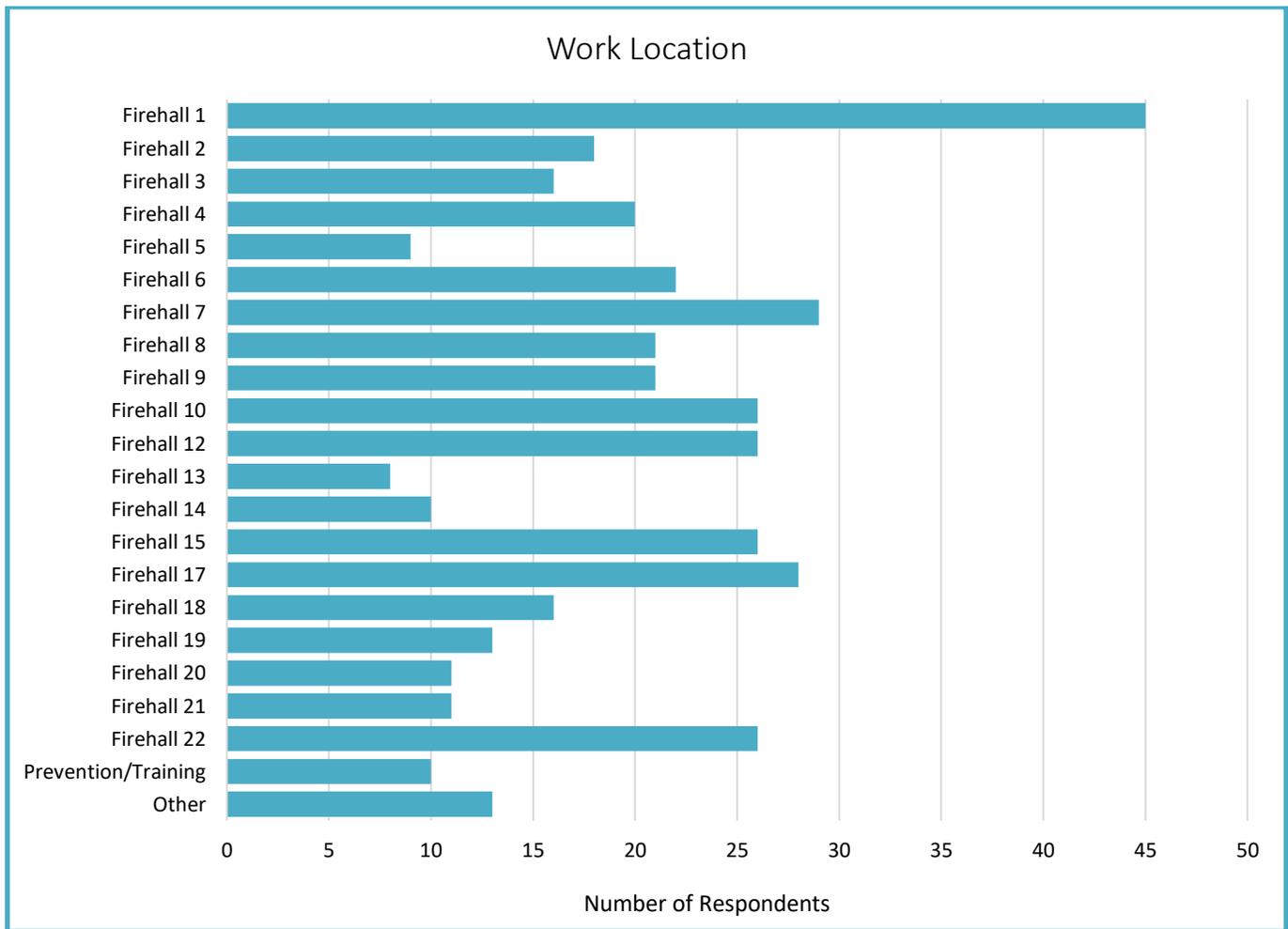


Baseline Survey Results

Vancouver Fire Department Baseline Findings

Overview: In late 2016 to spring 2017, *prior to a major management transition* and prior to participating in the ‘Resilient Minds’ course, all VFRS staff were invited to complete an online or paper-based survey to better understand current stressors impacting their work, past learning opportunities related to psychological trauma and mental health, and perceived usefulness, both in one’s work and personal life, of learning more about these topics.

Participants: 428 (95.5% male; 4% female; and .5% did not identify gender) completed an online or paper-based survey between October 2016 and May 2017. All fire halls were represented in the results.



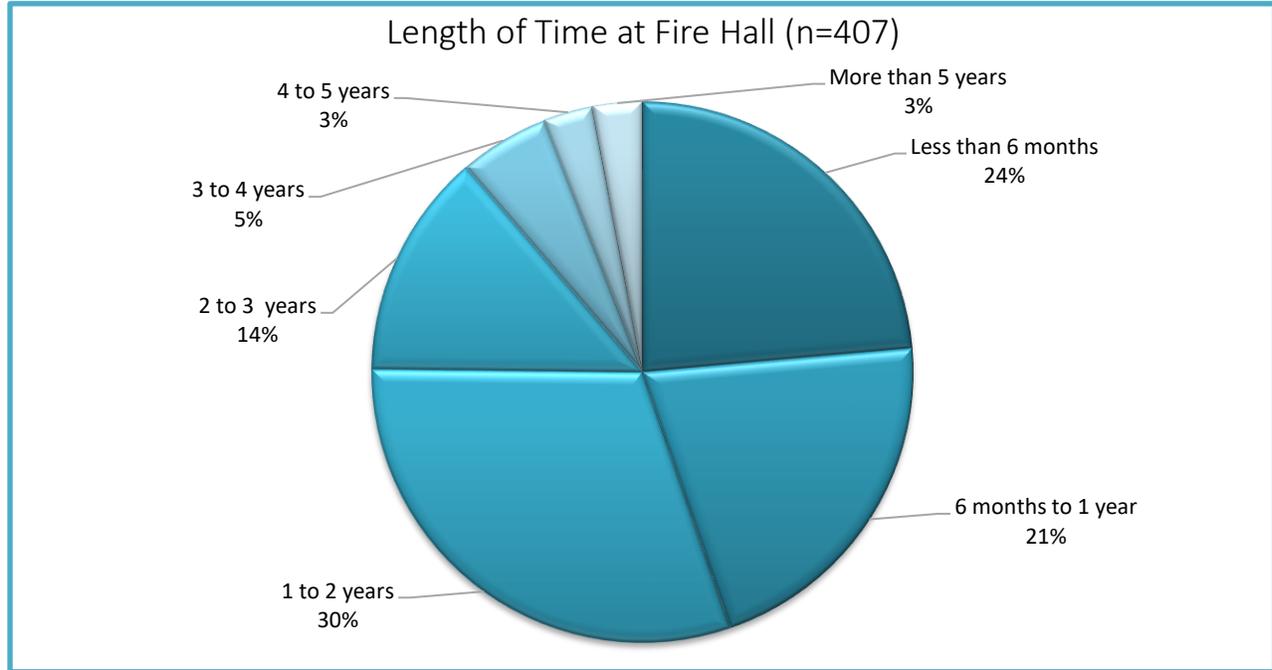
'Other' includes Group 2 employees, pool, Trapline recruitment and Fire Hall 23.

Job Classification: Members were asked to identify their job classification.

- 66% (n=278) frontline firefighter
- 28% (n=118) fire hall officer
- 5% (n=22) Group 2 employee
- 1% (n=6) senior management

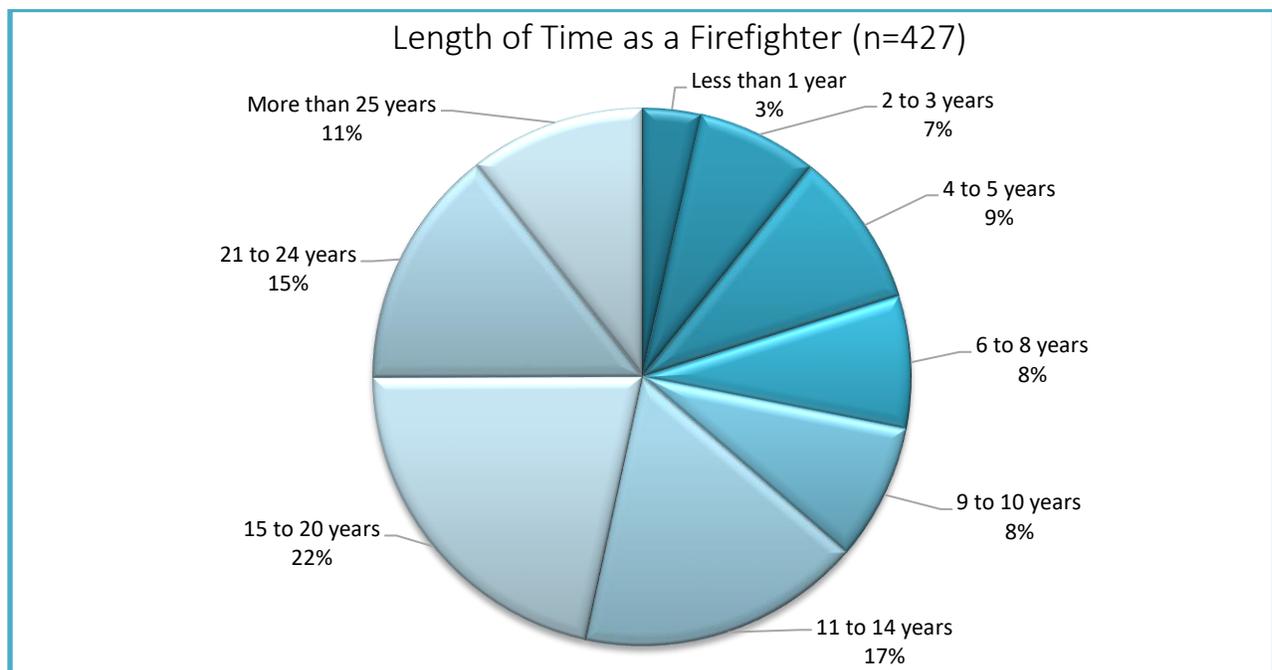
Length of Time at Fire Hall

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they have been at their current fire hall. Note that a small number of respondents indicated that they are not located at only one fire hall (e.g., in the pool or have a position in which they go between various locations); therefore, those respondents were excluded from the following chart.



Length of Time as a Firefighter

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years that they have worked as a firefighter.



Work-related Stressors

Based on a five-point Likert scale (1= 'not at all' to 5 = 'a lot'), respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which a variety of stressors contribute to their work stress. This list of stressors was derived from previous research focused on firefighters.⁹ Three additional questions, focused on specific aspects of sleep-related stressors and long commutes, were added for more specific data, after initial data indicated that both specific aspects of sleep were major stressors, as were long commutes. The table below presents visual depiction of the average group rating for each stressor (ranked from highest to lowest stressor among Vancouver firefighters). On the following page, the table outlines the detailed average ratings for each stressor, along with group averages for each stressor.

Potential Sources of Stress	1	2	3	4	5
Disruption of sleep (general)				●	
Disruption of sleep due to work issues (e.g., shift work, staying awake at night thinking about a run etc.)				●	
Seeing the negative effects of stress on co-workers (e.g., illness, alcohol misuse, and burnout)			●		
Being exposed to anxious or overly demanding co-workers or administrators			●		
Disruption of sleep due to personal issues (e.g., family issues, relationship issues)			●		
Thoughts about past runs that have been particularly upsetting/disturbing			●		
Not eating a healthy diet			●		
Long commute			●		
Working with a substandard co-employee on emergency incidents or situations			●		
Feelings of isolation from family due to work demands and stress			●		
Financial worries due to inadequate pay			●		
Concerns about serious personal injury/disablement/death due to work			●		
Being concerned about not knowing enough about the latest technology			●		
Being bothered by not being able to control or predict events		●			
Dislike of routine paper work		●			
Conflicts with co-workers and team members		●			
Experiencing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity or age		●			

⁹ Kimbrel, N.A., Steffan, L.E., Meyer, E.C., Kruse, M.I., Knight, J.A., Zimering, R.T., Gulliver, S.B. (2011). A revised measure of occupational stress for firefighters: Psychometric properties and relationship to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse. *Psychological Services, 8*, 294-306.

Stressors	Not at all		A little bit		Somewhat		Quite a bit		A lot		Total	Weighted Average
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count		
Disruption of sleep (general)	6.75%	28	10.36%	43	18.31%	76	34.46%	143	30.12%	125	415	3.71
Disruption of sleep due to work issues (e.g., shift work, staying awake at night thinking about a run etc.)*	5.85%	11	12.77%	24	22.87%	43	31.91%	60	26.60%	50	188	3.61
Seeing the negative effects of stress on co-workers (e.g., illness, alcohol misuse, and burnout)	5.98%	25	23.21%	97	31.82%	133	25.60%	107	13.40%	56	418	3.17
Being exposed to anxious or overly demanding co-workers or administrators	13.64%	57	23.68%	99	28.47%	119	21.29%	89	12.92%	54	418	2.96
Disruption of sleep due to personal issues (e.g., family issues, relationship issues)*	14.67%	27	26.09%	48	24.46%	45	20.11%	37	14.67%	27	184	2.94
Thoughts about past runs that have been particularly upsetting/disturbing	11.22%	47	27.45%	115	30.55%	128	20.29%	85	10.50%	44	419	2.91
Not eating a healthy diet	18.10%	76	18.57%	78	28.81%	121	25.71%	108	8.81%	37	420	2.89
Long commute*	21.39%	40	20.32%	38	22.46%	42	20.86%	39	14.97%	28	187	2.88
Working with a substandard co-employee on emergency incidents or situations	20.96%	87	27.47%	114	20.72%	86	19.76%	82	11.08%	46	415	2.73
Feelings of isolation from family due to work demands and stress	18.99%	79	25.72%	107	25.96%	108	22.36%	93	6.97%	29	416	2.73
Financial worries due to inadequate pay	21.63%	90	25.48%	106	25.72%	107	18.03%	75	9.13%	38	416	2.68
Concerns about serious personal injury/disablement/death due to work	25.72%	107	26.20%	109	29.81%	124	11.78%	49	6.49%	27	416	2.47
Being concerned about not knowing enough about the latest technology	24.70%	103	34.77%	145	26.62%	111	10.31%	43	3.60%	15	417	2.33
Being bothered by not being able to control or predict events	29.81%	124	29.57%	123	24.52%	102	14.42%	60	1.68%	7	416	2.29
Dislike of routine paper work	27.51%	115	35.41%	148	23.68%	99	10.05%	42	3.35%	14	418	2.26
Conflicts with co-workers and team members	32.93%	137	31.97%	133	15.87%	66	15.14%	63	4.09%	17	416	2.25
Experiencing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity or age	52.43%	216	15.05%	62	13.83%	57	11.65%	48	7.04%	29	412	2.06

*These items were added after reviewing initial findings.

Additional Stressors

Respondents were asked to indicate other factors, not listed, that contribute to their work stress. 99 respondents noted additional stressors. Those stressors that were not included in the pre-populated list were content analyzed for themes.

Poor relationship between frontline staff and management (41 comments)

“Being at odds with our management due to a poor professional relationship where management is constantly minimizing their support of us as their employees.”

“Constant conflict between management and firefighters is the # 1 cause of stress on our job.”

“The feeling that the upper management team has a very different perception of our working conditions than what we actually experience is highly stressful, as they make policy decisions that are often completely out of line with my actual experiences, nor do they consult with me and my coworkers AT ALL.”

“The consistent battle with management for nearly everything.”

“Tendency to overlook the amount of stress we actually face.”

“Poor support from an incompetent management team.”

Inadequate training (14 comments)

“Inadequate frequency and intensity of training and dissemination of important equipment/protocol changes.”

“I wish we would see more proper courses that are real in a classroom about drug lab information and different drug classifications to better be equipped upon entering a house or drug lab, as future officers this is very important to learn about because unfortunately there are very dangerous substances out there.”

Coping with personal stress (10 comments)

“Personal tragedies at home.”

“My personal relationships can affect my stress level while working at the fire hall. If I am experiencing trouble at home, if a family member is ill, if things aren't squared away, I feel that it's hard to be at work.”

“Looking after aging parents and raising little kids.”

Coping with high call volume and staff shortages (7 comments)

“Responding to more calls with less man power.”

Coping with personal challenges, personal expectations, and perceived expectations of others (6 comments)

“Not meeting expectations of coworkers.”

“My own health concerns, deteriorating physical abilities.”

“Pressure to fix what is wrong with me and get tools to deal with future events.”

Ongoing exposure to stressful and/or traumatic situations (5 comments)

“Seeing the poor quality of life everyday that others live. Seeing nothing but the bad side of society, people trying to rip people off or hurt them for their own selfish gains can make you fairly down on the future of this planet and city.”

“Seeing my kids’ faces in calls involving children.”

“Repeated exposure at medium risk calls (i.e. overdose).”

A small number of respondents added the following additional stressors.

- High volume of data entry at some fire halls

“At Hall #2, FDM data entry after a 50-run night, needing to be completed prior to end of shift.”

- Unreliable equipment

“Stress due to new apparatus that had no input from frontline firefighters. The new apparatus has been unreliable, and instill a distinct lack of confidence that the complex systems will operate when lives are on the line.”

“Our equipment is a source of stress. Specifically, my employer ignores requests to fix broken equipment.”

- Lack of focus on employee physical and mental health/safety

“No physical health assessment/program, resulting in physically incapable staff.”

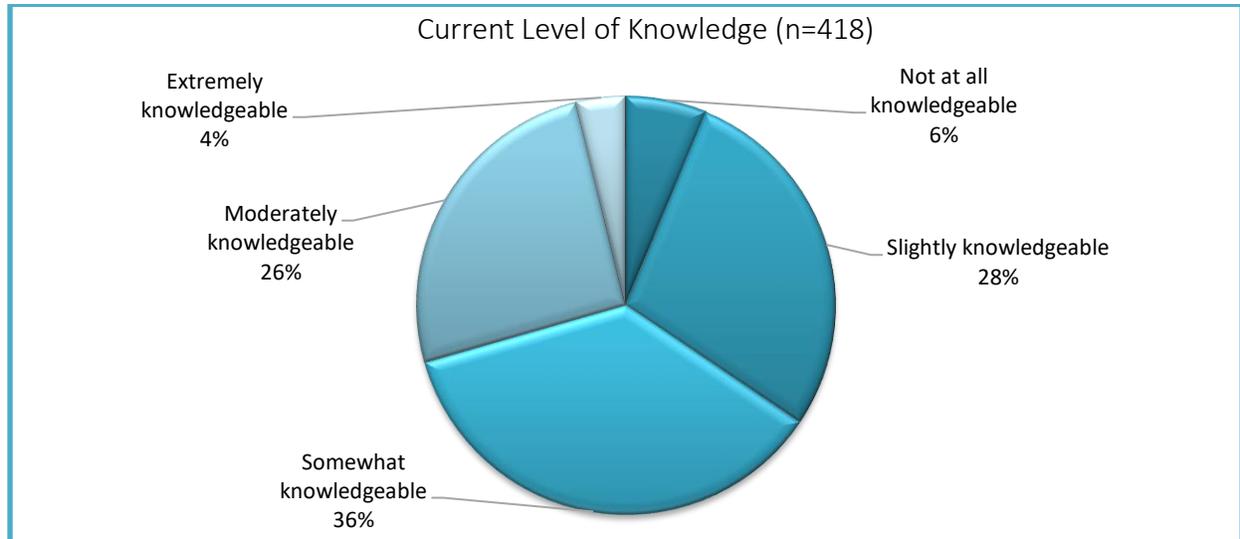
- Stress of working on the Downtown Eastside

“Treating the same people over and over again for the same drug/alcohol issues. And knowing that there is almost zero chance of them ever stopping their drug abuse cycle. It's almost enough to make me stop having any empathy for them.”

Note that specific to the stress of commuting, a small number of respondents commented that having the option of 24-hour shifts would contribute to a reduction of stress.

Psychological Trauma and/or Mental Health Challenges

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their current knowledge, past training and perceived benefits of learning more about psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges.



Past Training: 30% (n=124) of respondents indicated that they had some past training related to psychological trauma. Specifically, respondents indicated having undertaken the following types of training:

- Critical Incident Stress Management training (30 respondents)
- Military training focused on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (4 respondents)
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Training (2 respondents)
- Healthy Minds Training (1 respondent)

Further to this, 20 respondents indicated having taken psychology courses related to mental health, doing personal reading, attending seminars etc. that have been helpful with respect to mental health issues. An additional 18 respondents indicated being a participant in a critical incident stress debrief session or having attended a talk about the approach, which they experienced as helpful.

Future Training Opportunities: 97.5% (n=406) of respondents indicated that learning about mental health challenges could be helpful for them in their work. 77 respondents provided additional comments to their response. Several respondents noted that learning more about mental health challenges can decrease stigma, increase compassion and confidence in being able to deal with existing challenges and help them be more proactive in addressing mental health challenges. Note that there were several comments cautioning against a one-time training initiative.

"The "flavor" changes very fast within the City of Vancouver, more so the VFRS. Last year it was all about Respectful Work Place. This year it is Mental Health/Awareness. I hope it is ongoing and not the flavor of the day. We lost a member this last week to mental illness. More can be done to support our employees and their families."

“This program is appreciated. Unfortunately, it likely will not help anyone. As soon as the city fulfills its basic obligations and proves they “care”, this program will more than likely fade away to obscurity and disappear like most city provided benefits. The real help and support will come from where it always has, our brotherhood of firefighters.”

“All knowledge is helpful. There is no substitute for being informed. Please, please, please, include in any education materials that you provide to our membership at large that the knowledge, theories, and practices surrounding the profession of psychology and mental health work are constantly changing as we become aware of new facts drawn from scientific studies. Our profession, firefighting, is especially anachronistic and if you tell a 2-year firefighter that the brain reacts in a certain way to certain stimuli, that firefighter will most likely believe that is gospel until he retires 30 years later, even if the causal link between stimuli and reaction has been disproven in several studies. Why I mention this? Our industry has a way of fighting progress and change, and that resistance to change is part of why we as an organization have been slow to adapt over the past 20 years, despite the massive amount of research done in the fields of PTSD and mental trauma.”

“It seems that the department (management) doesn't place enough time/resources/money into developing a proper mental health program. We don't even have one full-time CISM position (or similar position). Our Vancouver Police Dept has such resources and paid members on staff.”

Several respondents provided comments on how the training could be useful for them, the Fire Department as a whole, and the public.

- Understanding signs of mental health challenges in self and others

“It would open the conversation, make people aware of the signs and symptoms, and provide clear steps for those identified or self-identified.”

- Learning tools to help self and others learn to cope more effectively with mental health challenges

“Those hired are potentially going to be exposed to mental health challenges, so those people should absolutely have some idea of how to recognize this and know how to deal with it as well as be aware of the various avenues to receive information or assistance to get help.”

“We all need help to work out what's in our heads. We need the skills necessary to work through this challenging career and all it brings.”

“I would love to see more education on this. Giving us better coping skills, and the ability to notice signs of PTSD.”

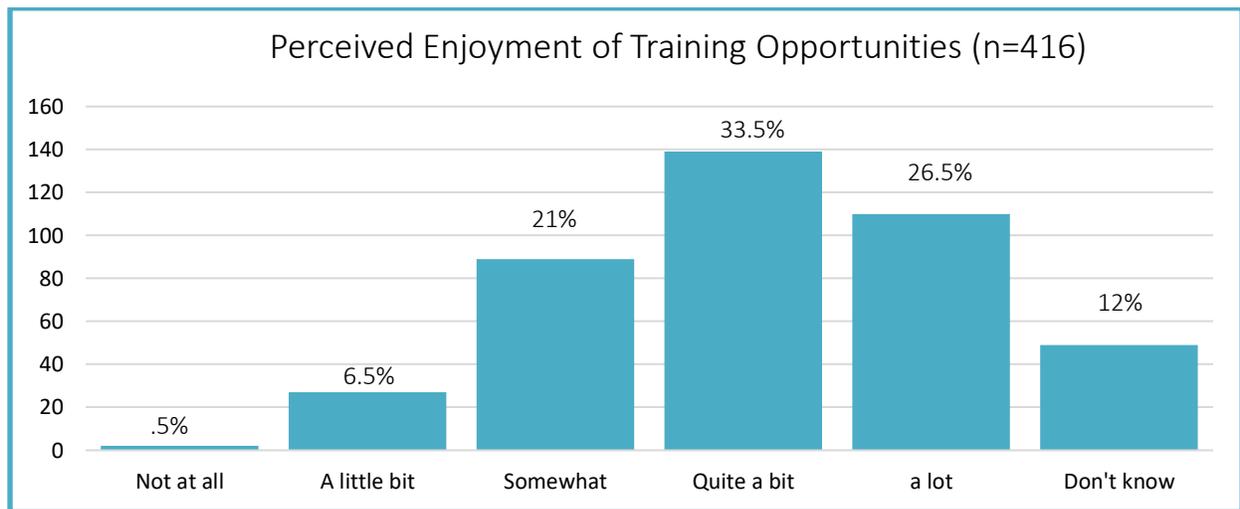
“If first responders are given the tools to deal with traumatic events, they will lead a healthier life and continue better relationships with their friends and family.”

- Ensuring that trainers have the education, skills and understand the job of being a firefighter

‘While we have many exemplary training staff on our job, I don't feel that most of them are well-suited to delivering information about mental health issues in a way that will resonate strongly with our members. While our training staff excels at delivering information about firefighting tactics, I don't believe many of them will have the necessary education to back up any of the subject matter they will be teaching.’

Enjoyment of Training Opportunities

Respondents were asked how much they enjoy training opportunities related to topics that aim to enhance personal well-being.



Final Comments

“As a new firefighter, the more training and knowledge I can get, the more successful I feel I would be throughout my career.”

“Fire service workers need Resilient Minds as they should be capable of getting thru the varied situations without lasting or lingering side affects - both mental and physical.”

“I believe a program that is specific to our spouses would be instrumental to the stress of firefighters. I believe a lot of stress can be relieved by having partners that understand what we go through on a daily basis. Info coming from a professional is better than us.”

“Our benefits package needs to be more clear in the counseling, psychologist and psychiatrist options available to us and need to be covered 100% so there is absolutely no deterrent in the use of the programs as well as the quality of the program needs to meet a standard suitable to our demands.”



Modules One and Two Results

Modules One and Two Feedback

Measurement Tool Timing: After completing Modules One and Two, participants were asked to provide feedback.

Participants: 111 individuals provided feedback through completion of a paper-based survey.

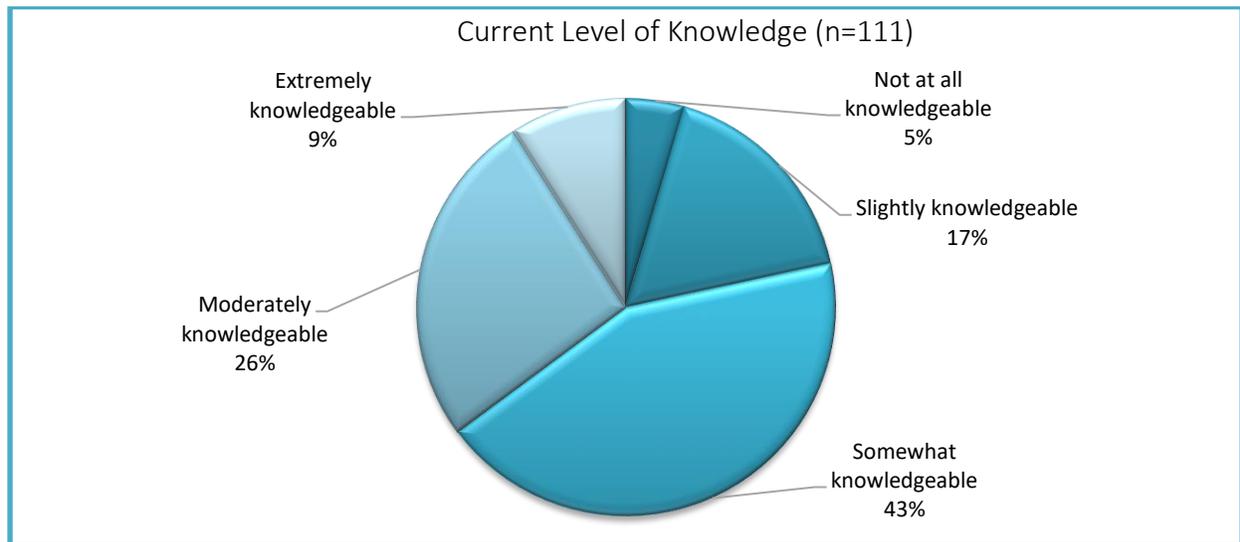
Trainer Rating: Individuals were asked to rate the trainers of the session. 94% of individuals gave the trainers the rating of 'excellent' or 'very good'. The remaining individuals gave the trainers a rating of 'good'.

Overall Enjoyment: Participants were asked to rate how much they enjoyed the way in which the information was presented. 85% indicated that they enjoyed the format 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'. A further 13.5% indicated 'somewhat'. 1.5% indicated 'a little' or 'not at all'.

Helpfulness of 'Resilient Minds' Materials: Participants were asked how helpful they found the materials. 82% rated the materials as very helpful. A further 14% rated them as 'somewhat' helpful. 3.5% found them 'a little' and .5% 'not at all' helpful.

Current Level of Knowledge

Respondents were asked to rate their current level of knowledge of issues related to psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges.



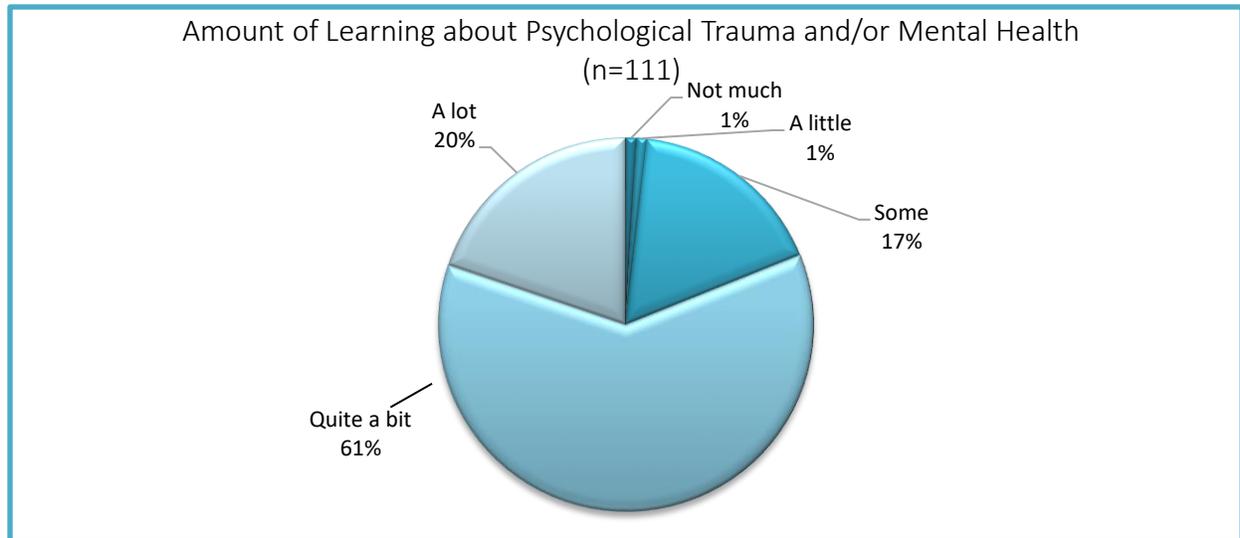
Comparing the above ratings of self-assessed knowledge after the first two modules to the baseline results, results show an increase in those who rate themselves as 'somewhat knowledgeable' and a decrease in those who rate themselves as 'slightly knowledgeable.'

85% OF FIREFIGHTERS INDICATED THAT THEY ENJOYED THE WAY IN WHICH THE MATERIAL WAS PRESENTED IN THE WORKSHOP.

82% FOUND THE MATERIALS VERY HELPFUL.

Learning about Psychological Trauma and/or Mental Health

Respondents were asked to rate how much they learned about psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges as a result of participating in 'Resilient Minds'.



Interestingly, all participants who indicated that they were 'extremely knowledgeable' indicated that they had learned 'a lot' or 'quite a bit' in the training.

Intention to Use Information and Skills

94% of participants indicated that they intended to use the material in their work and personal life in the future. A further 5% indicated that they 'may' use the material.

Challenges to Using Workshop Learning

42% of participants noted foreseeing some challenges in trying to use the information in their work or personal life. The most noted challenges to using the workshop learning included:

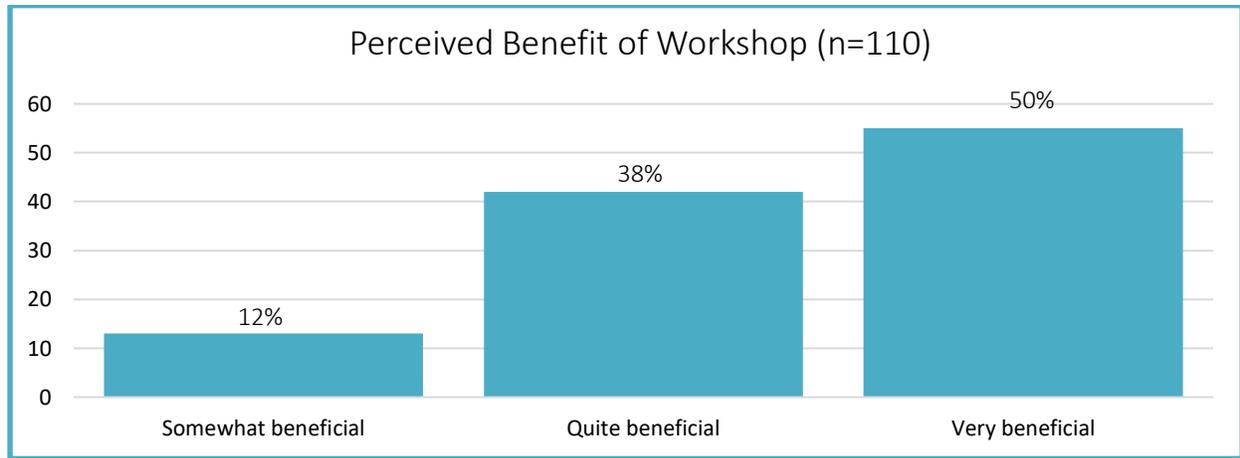
- Remembering to use it when needed
"Keeping all the tools in times of stress/crisis."
- Transferring knowledge and skills to real life situations
*"Communicating with someone properly. I can follow the steps laid out from the course but still fail in the delivery. Both in helping myself or someone else."
"Learning to apply it practically to diverse situations but applying it will become easier with time."*
- Feeling comfortable enough to have conversations with others
*"Having the courage to ask for a CISM when everyone else doesn't want one."
"Gaining the confidence to ask the hard questions."*

94% OF PARTICIPANTS INDICATED THAT THEY PLANNED TO USE THE WORKSHOP LEARNING IN THEIR WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE.

- Challenges getting others to see mental health in a new light.
"It's a topic some people don't want to address."
"Acceptance by friends and family members of information that may be unknown to them."
"Buy-in from senior guys."
"Cultural and mental shift will take time."

Overall Perceived Workshop Benefits

Participants were asked to rate their overall perceived benefit of participating in the workshop.



Most Useful Parts of the Course

Participants were asked to comment on the parts of the course that they found the most useful. They noted several aspects of the course.

Useful Knowledge

- Learning the signs and symptoms of stress in self and others (both mental and physical) to understand normal reactions to stress vs. signs/symptoms that indicate help should be sought
- Resources for more information and support, including within VFRS

Useful Skills

- The 4R framework that included learning how to address situations that involve mental health (e.g., dos and don'ts when having conversations with others who may be experiencing mental health challenges; how to listen; how to make people feel comfortable)
- Learning coping mechanisms to better manage stress

Useful Workshop Processes

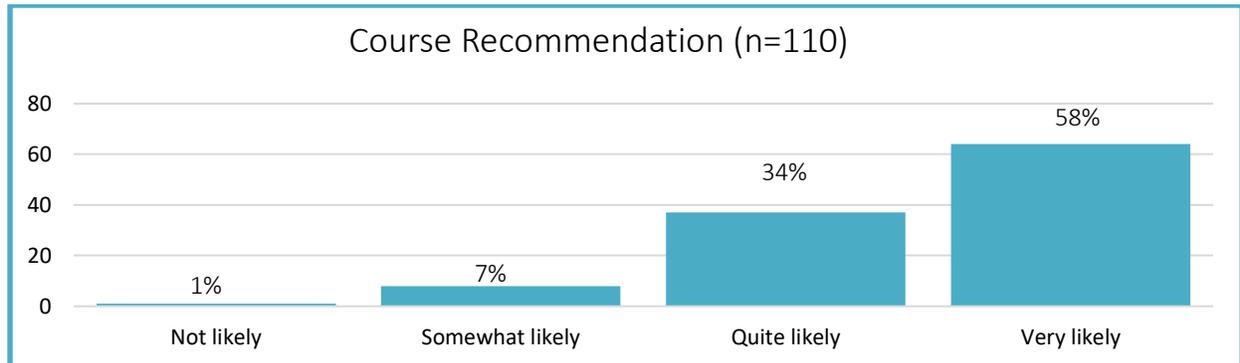
- Having an opportunity to have discussions in the workshop to hear the experience of others
- Videos in the workshop

"THE MOST USEFUL PART IS KNOWING THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE TO TALK TO. IT'S COMFORTING TO KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO BOTTLE THINGS UP."

-FIREFIGHTER

Recommending the Course

Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to recommend the course to other firefighters.



Suggestions for Course Improvement

Participants were asked to provide any suggestions and/or comments about the course. A small number of participants suggested that the course should be longer in duration and several participants suggested additional content, which would necessitate longer sessions. With respect to other content that participants would like to be included, the following was noted:

- More information on ways to de-stress, substance use issues, and treatment options
- More examples and scenarios to reinforce ideas
- More in-depth discussions to go through how to work with people who are in a stressed state
- Healthy lifestyle guidelines, such as food and exercise

“I would recommend that this information should be spread out over 4 days. Even though I understand that is impossible now, due to instructors and time constraints. Having more time to digest information and use it in role play situations, would be beneficial. There is a lot of information shared in the course, important information and it was shared very well in the time provided.”

“Maybe should be revisited every few months/year so as we learn/practice, or new skills and get better practice, we can learn more.”

“This course leads you to want more. By the end you want more information, so you can help.”

“Very interesting course. The instructors were easily approachable and gave fantastic instruction and information. This course will drastically help me in helping others.”

Two individuals suggested that a session should be held for family members so that they can learn this information and better understand the experience of firefighters.



Modules Three and Four Results

Modules Three and Four Feedback

Measurement Tool Timing: After completing Modules Three and Four, participants were once again asked to provide feedback.

Participants: 58 individuals provided feedback through completion of a paper-based survey.

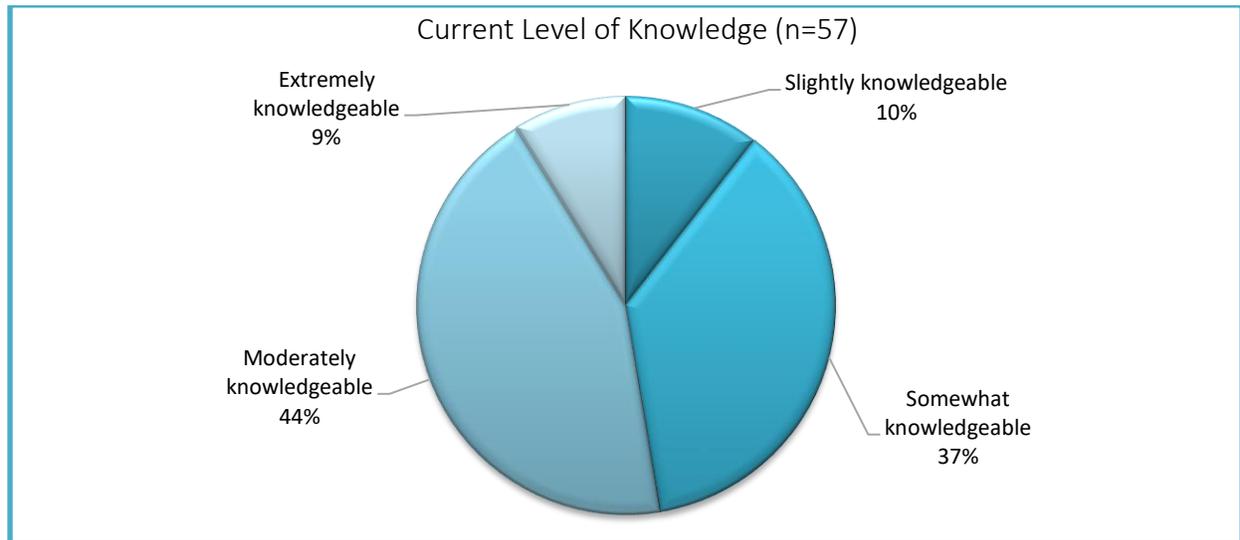
Trainer Rating: Individuals were asked to rate the trainers of the session. 91% of individuals gave the trainers the rating of 'excellent' or 'very good'. The remaining individuals gave the trainers a rating of 'good'.

Overall Enjoyment: Participants were asked to rate how much they enjoyed the way in which the information was presented. 83% indicated that they enjoyed the format 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'. A further 17% indicated enjoying the format 'somewhat'.

Helpfulness of 'Resilient Minds' Materials: Participants were asked how helpful they found the materials. 83% rated the materials as very helpful. A further 17% rated them as 'somewhat' helpful.

Current Level of Knowledge

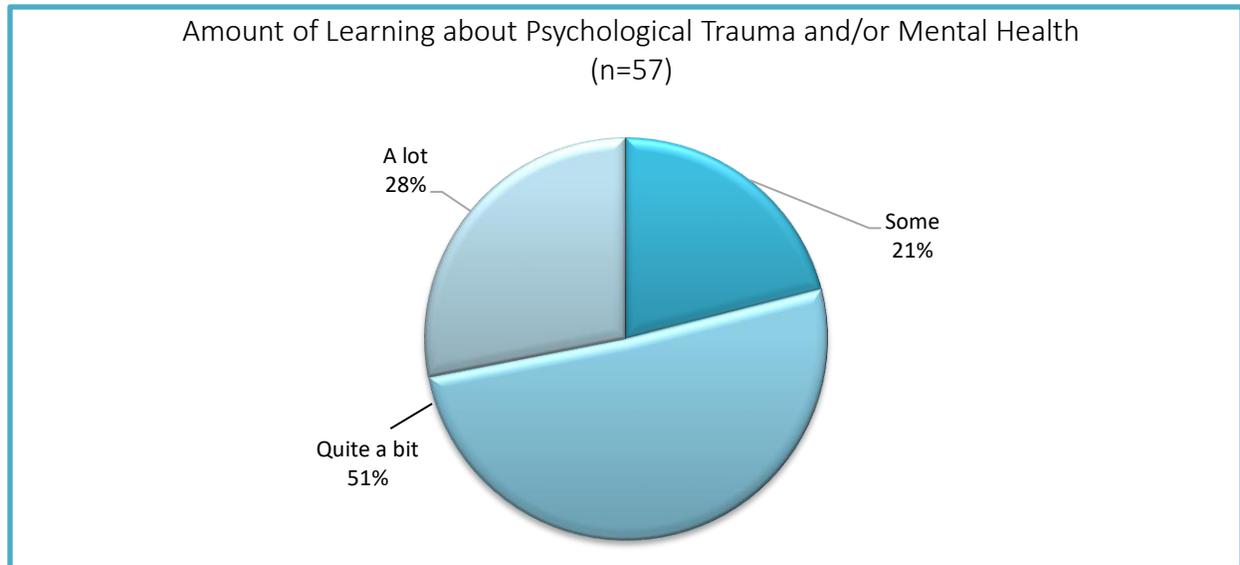
Respondents were asked to rate their current level of knowledge of issues related to psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges.



A comparison of the above ratings of self-assessed knowledge after Modules Three and Four to the results of Modules One and Two shows a continued decrease in individuals who rate themselves as 'slightly knowledgeable'. Overall, there is a trend that indicates a growth in self-assessed knowledge.

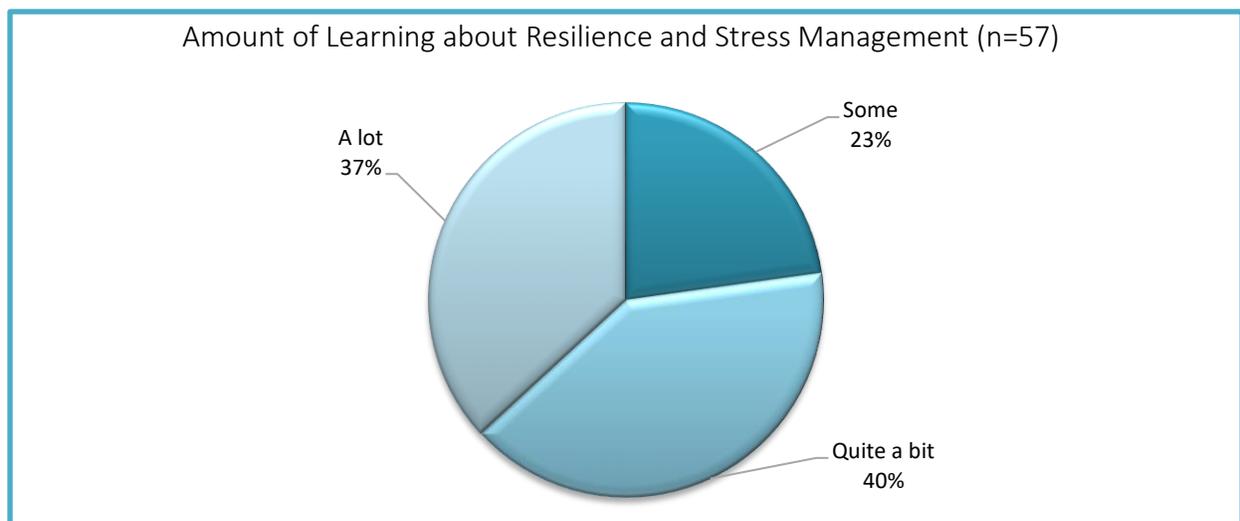
Learning about Psychological Trauma and/or Mental Health

Respondents were asked to rate how much they learned about psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges as a result of completing 'Resilient Minds'.



Learning about Resiliency and Stress Management

Respondents were asked to rate how much they learned about resiliency and stress management as a result of completing 'Resilient Minds'.



Intention to Use Information and Skills

83% of participants indicated that they intended to use the material in their work life in the future. A further 16% indicated that they 'may' use the material. With respect to using the material in one's personal life, 88% indicated that they intended to use the material in their personal life and a further 12% indicated that they 'may' use the material.

Challenges to Using Workshop Learning

32% of participants noted foreseeing some challenges in trying to use the information in their work or personal life. The most noted challenges to using the workshop learning included:

- Personal challenges
 - “Breaking through personal barriers.”*
 - “Being aware enough to know when you are affected by their problems.”*
 - “Finding the courage to speak up when/if I need help.”*
 - “It’s sometimes difficult to break old habits.”*
- Transferring knowledge and skills to real life situations
 - “Using the communication skills in certain situations.”*
 - “Recognizing to use the appropriate terminology.”*
- Feeling comfortable enough to have conversations with others
 - “Being the junior guy on shift, it might be a little intimidating to start up and say you have a problem.”*
- Challenges communicating with others
 - “May not be acceptable to share with family and friends.”*

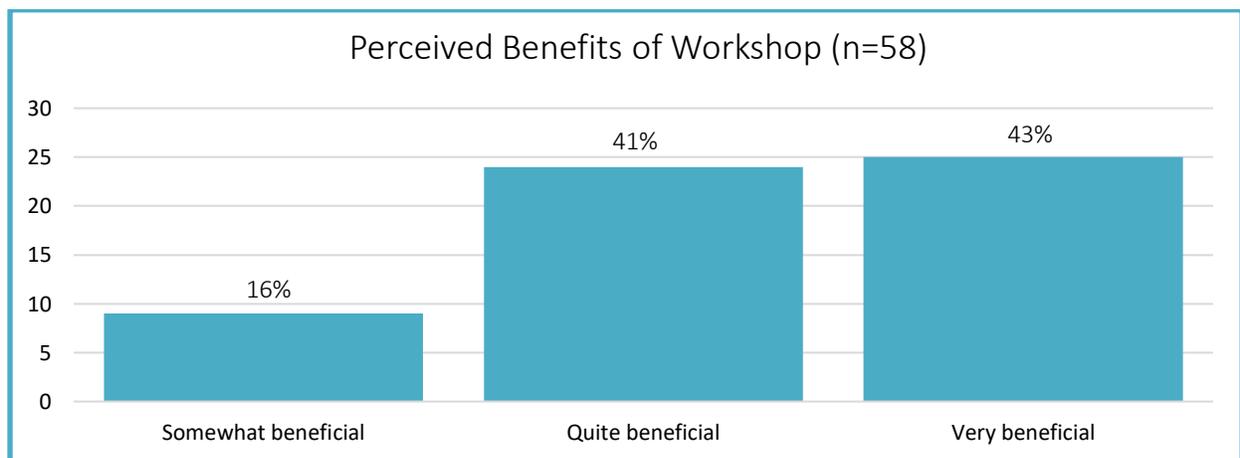


“RELIVING UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS AND PAINFUL MEMORIES IS HARD BUT JOURNALING SOUNDS LIKE IT CAN REALLY HELP.”

-FIREFIGHTER

Overall Perceived Workshop Benefits

Participants were asked to rate their overall perceived benefit of participating in the workshop.



Most Useful Parts of the Course

Participants were asked to comment on the parts of the course that they found the most useful. They noted several aspects of the course.

Useful Knowledge

- Stress conditions checklist
- Resources for more information and support
- Meditation and mindfulness techniques
- The message that listening is better than talking
- Importance of self-care
- How the brain works and stores information



*“BEING ABLE TO
CALM YOUR MIND
AND THE ABILITY TO
DEAL WITH ONGOING
ISSUES IN
LIFE/CAREER.”*

-FIREFIGHTER

Useful Skills

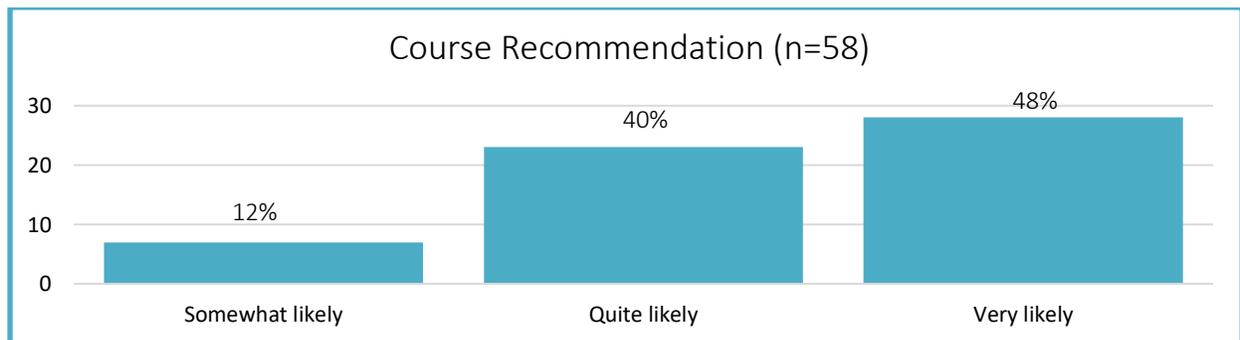
- The 4R framework
- DBT skills
- Strategies to cope with stress
- Strategies to de-escalate intense situations

Useful Workshop Processes

- Stories /examples that were related to working as a firefighter

Recommending the Course

Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to recommend the course to other firefighters.



Comments and Suggestions for Course Improvement

Participants were asked to provide any suggestions and/or comments about the course. As with Modules One and Two, a small number of participants suggested that the course should be longer in duration. Overall, comments reflected high satisfaction with the course and material that was relevant to firefighters.

“Great instructors and very personable makes the course relevant and interesting.”

“Keep offering the course. Make it a common, comfortable practice. More people will find it a normal routine



Follow-Up Survey Results

Follow-Up Survey Results

Measurement Tool Timing: Participants who completed all four modules were invited to complete a follow-up survey between three and six months after completing the 'Resilient Minds' modules.

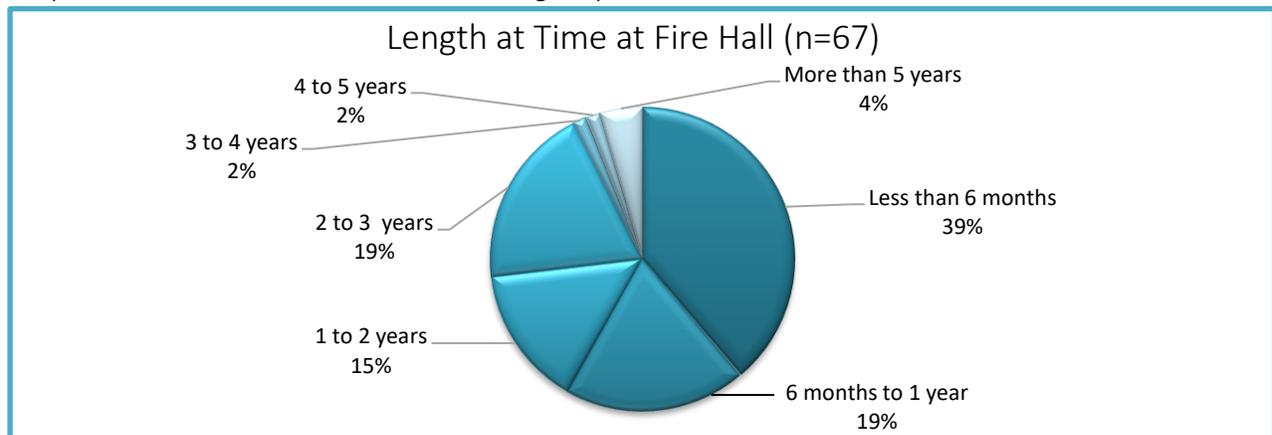
Participants: 67 individuals (88% males; 12% female) provided feedback through completion of a paper-based survey. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 34 (44% of respondents) and 45 to 54 years of age (35% of respondents).

Job Classification: Members were asked to identify their job classification.

- 72% (n=48) frontline firefighter
- 17.5% (n=12) fire hall officer
- 9% (n=6) Group 2 employee
- 1.5% (n=1) senior management

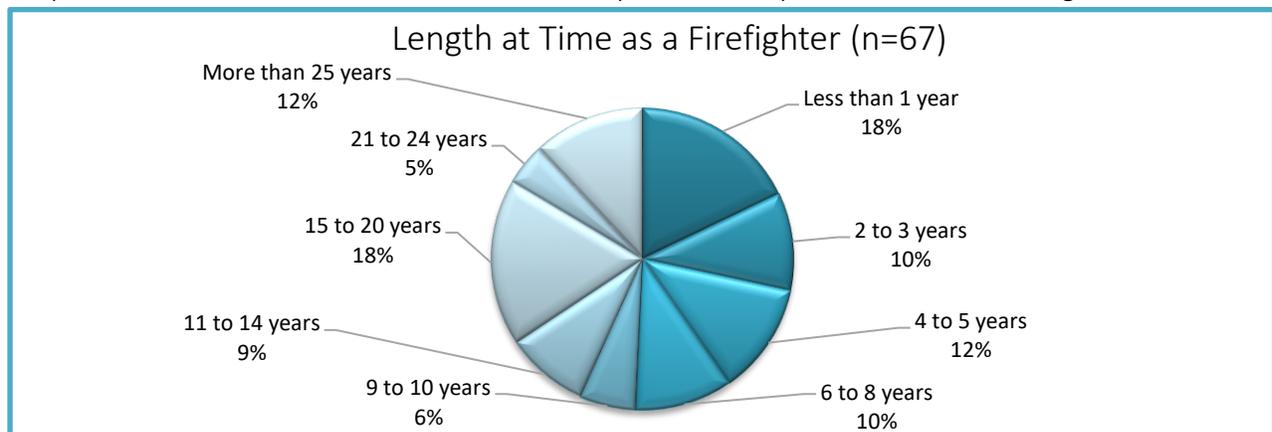
Length of Time at Fire Hall

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they have been at their current fire hall.



Length of Time as a Firefighter

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years that they have worked as a firefighter.



Work-related Stressors

Based on a five-point Likert scale (1= 'not at all' to 5 = 'a lot'), respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which a variety of stressors contributes to their work stress. This list of stressors was derived from previous research focused on firefighters.¹⁰ Three additional questions, focused on specific aspects of sleep-related stressors and long commutes, were added after initial data analysis. The table below presents the average rating at baseline and post-'Resilient Minds'. The final column denotes the trend between these two time-points based on available data. Higher scores = higher levels of perceived stress. As can be seen, perceived degree of stress was lower post-course compared to baseline ratings.¹¹

Stressors	Baseline	Post-Resilient Minds	Trend
Disruption of sleep (general)	3.71	3.25	Decrease in stressor
Disruption of sleep due to work issues (e.g., shift work, staying awake at night thinking about a run etc.)*	3.61	3.06	Decrease in stressor
Seeing the negative effects of stress on co-workers (e.g., illness, alcohol misuse, and burnout)	3.17	2.41	Decrease in stressor
Being exposed to anxious or overly demanding co-workers or administrators	2.96	2.56	Decrease in stressor
Disruption of sleep due to personal issues (e.g., family issues, relationship issues)*	2.94	2.59	Decrease in stressor
Thoughts about past runs that have been particularly upsetting/disturbing	2.91	2.18	Decrease in stressor
Not eating a healthy diet	2.89	2.67	Decrease in stressor
Long commute*	2.88	2.11	Decrease in stressor
Working with a substandard co-employee on emergency incidents or situations	2.73	2.49	Decrease in stressor
Feelings of isolation from family due to work demands and stress	2.73	2.00	Decrease in stressor
Financial worries due to inadequate pay	2.68	2.30	Decrease in stressor
Concerns about serious personal injury/disablement/death due to work	2.47	1.92	Decrease in stressor
Being concerned about not knowing enough about the latest technology	2.33	2.21	Decrease in stressor
Being bothered by not being able to control or predict events	2.29	1.97	Decrease in stressor
Dislike of routine paper work	2.26	1.95	Decrease in stressor
Conflicts with co-workers and team members	2.25	2.03	Decrease in stressor
Experiencing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity or age	2.06	1.88	Decrease in stressor

¹⁰ Kimbrel, N.A., Steffan, L.E., Meyer, E.C., Kruse, M.I., Knight, J.A., Zimering, R.T., Gulliver, S.B. (2011). A revised measure of occupational stress for firefighters: Psychometric properties and relationship to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse. *Psychological Services, 8*, 294-306.

¹¹ Note that these data should be seen as trends, as more examination among individual 'Resilient Minds' participants is required to ensure that this trend holds true for all or the majority of participants.

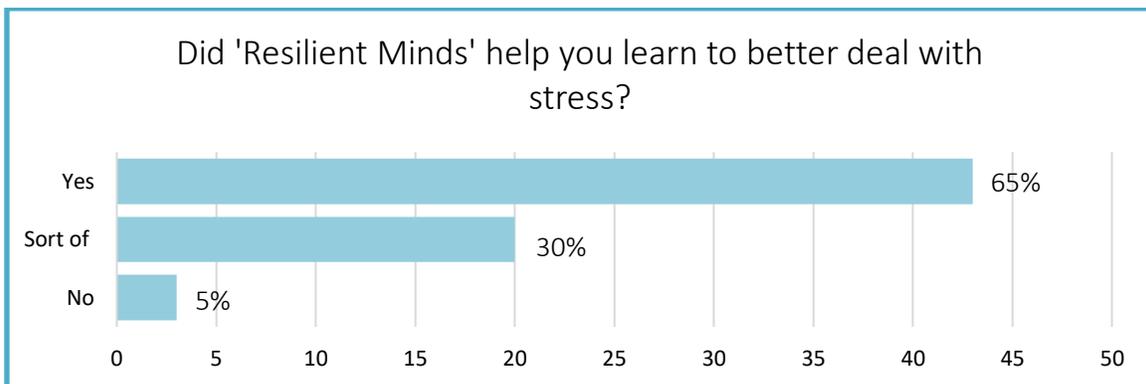
Additional Stressors

Respondents were asked to indicate other factors, not listed, that contribute to their work stress. 15 respondents noted additional stressors. These additional stressors included:

- Personal feelings of inadequacy and low confidence
- Being responsible for the safety of others
- Concerns about management support
- Working with frontline firefighters not physically fit for the work
- Inadequate training and perceived over-reliance on e-learning rather than face-to-face training
- Dealing with technology that does not work
- Stress of seeing the tragedy when working in the Downtown Eastside

Impact of 'Resilient Minds' Participation

Respondents were asked if taking the 'Resilient Minds' course helped them learn ways to better deal with stress. Interestingly, all among the 5% who indicated that the course did not help them learn to better deal with stress, reported feeling better equipped to deal *with others* who required support. This group also commented on the need for policies around mental health and refresher courses in order to reinforce messages.



Key comments related to this question highlighted the need for further education in this area and the need for all stakeholders to be 100% supportive of the focus on mental health.

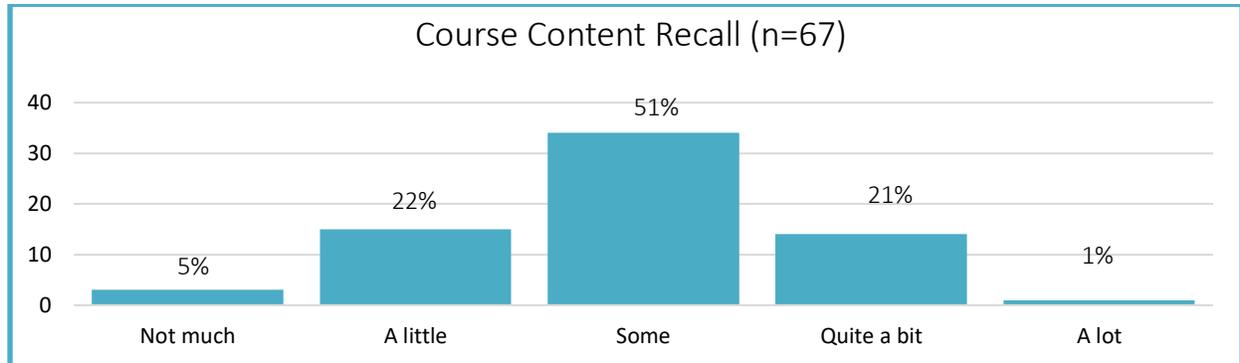
"Great program. Needs 100% support of all stakeholders, COV, VFRS, Health Care WSBC."

"Keeping Resilient Minds in our training not just one big push to give the training without follow-up, plus continued support to improve our skills."

"Talking about things is the most important starting place."

Course Content Recall

Participants were asked to rate how much of the course content they were able to recall now that time has passed since completing the course.



Comments reflected a need for reminders/reinforcers to keep content top of mind.

“This information should be presented regularly, i.e., bulletins, new TV monitor in Halls, Crew Talks.”

“During the training, it’s a lot of new information to remember and keep fresh.”

The information about how the body and mind react to stress was found to be particularly helpful among participants, even if specific details could not be recalled.

Course Content Recall Suggestions

Respondents were asked to comment about supports that could be put in place to help firefighters better remember the information. 49 individuals provided comments. Overwhelmingly, their comments reflected the need for an ongoing focus in the area of mental health/mental wellness. Specific suggestions included:

- Initial longer sessions of ‘Resilient Minds’ that include more hands-on/interactions
- Yearly review sessions of the content
- Notices in the bathrooms and on the Tyler TV monitors with information and support numbers
- Reminders in the bulletins and newsletters
- Materials that are visible in the halls
- Summary sheets of the four modules

Using the Material

70% of respondents reported using the ‘Resilient Minds’ information and skills in their work life and 69% reported having used the material in their personal life. In work settings, they noted using the breathing techniques, being more aware of the mental health of others, and actively working to better manage stressful situations. In their personal life, they noted

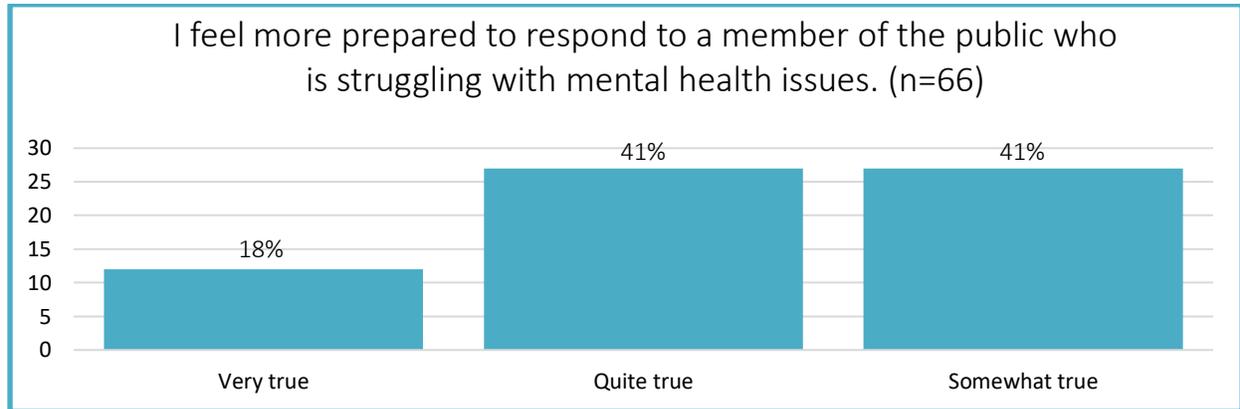


70% OF FIREFIGHTERS REPORTED USING THE ‘RESILIENT MINDS’ INFORMATION AND SKILLS IN THEIR WORK LIFE AND 69% HAD USED IT IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE.

taking more time to do relaxing activities, practicing mindfulness, being more aware of personal triggers, and reaching out for help.

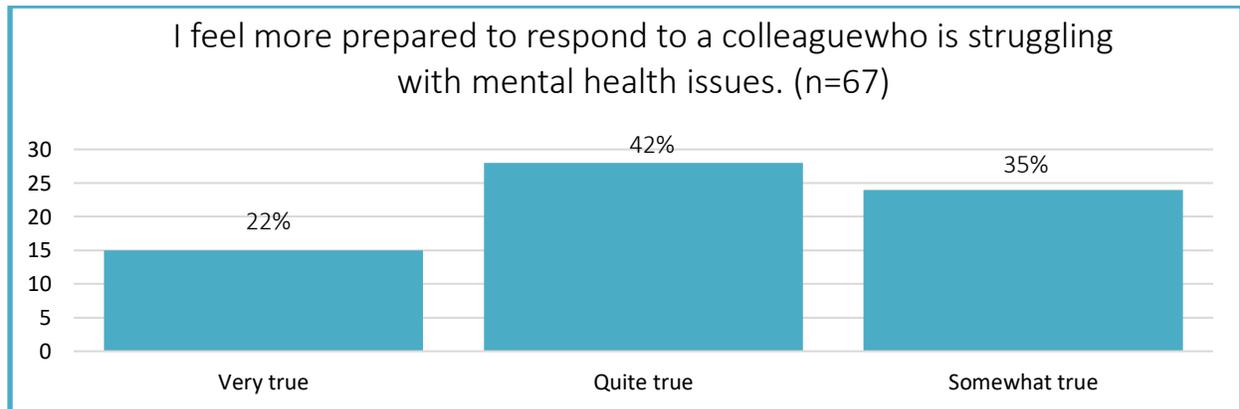
Responding to Others Struggling with Mental Health Challenges

Given the high incidence of events involving mental health in which VFRS are involved during the course of their work, one of the key areas of learning in the 'Resilient Minds' course is how to better respond to others who may be having challenges with mental health issues. Respondents were asked the degree to which they agree with the statement *"I feel better prepared to effectively recognize and respond to someone (in the public) who is struggling with mental health issues."*



Responding to Colleagues with Mental Health Challenges

Next, respondents were asked to rate the same statement in relation to a colleague.



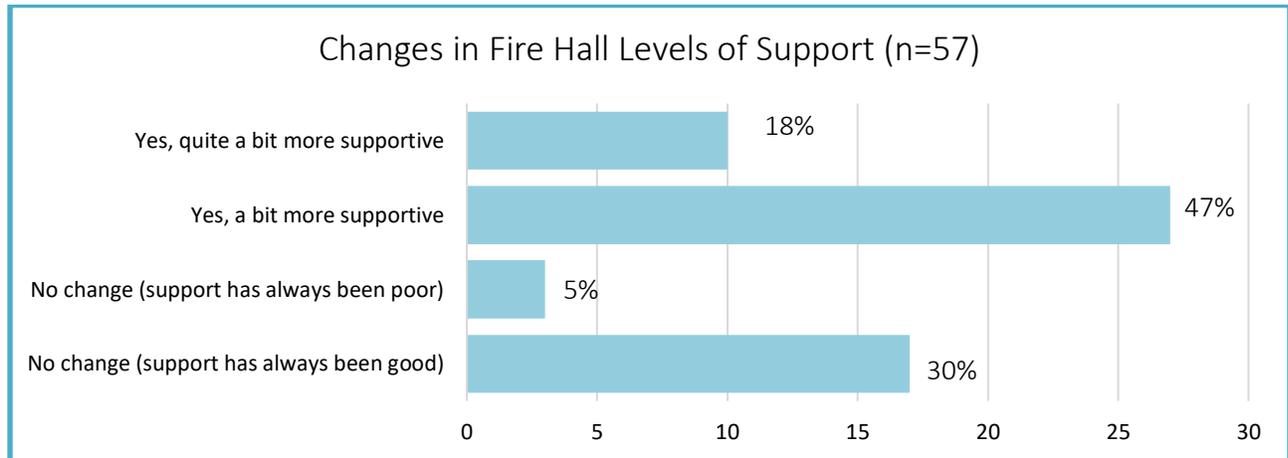
Comments related to these statements again highlighted the need to further training and practice in to build confidence, knowledge and familiarity with tools that can be used in times of need.

"Great program. Needs to be continued and supported. More use will hopefully break down barriers of openly talking or asking for help."

"Just need more experience/confidence in recognition of symptoms."

Fire Hall Support

One of the long-term goals of opening up a dialogue about mental health is shifting the culture in fire halls so that firefighters feel more supported in their work. Feeling supported by others, during stressful situations, helps individuals to be more resilient. To this end, respondents were asked if they have noticed any changes in the fire hall since taking the 'Resilient Minds' course.



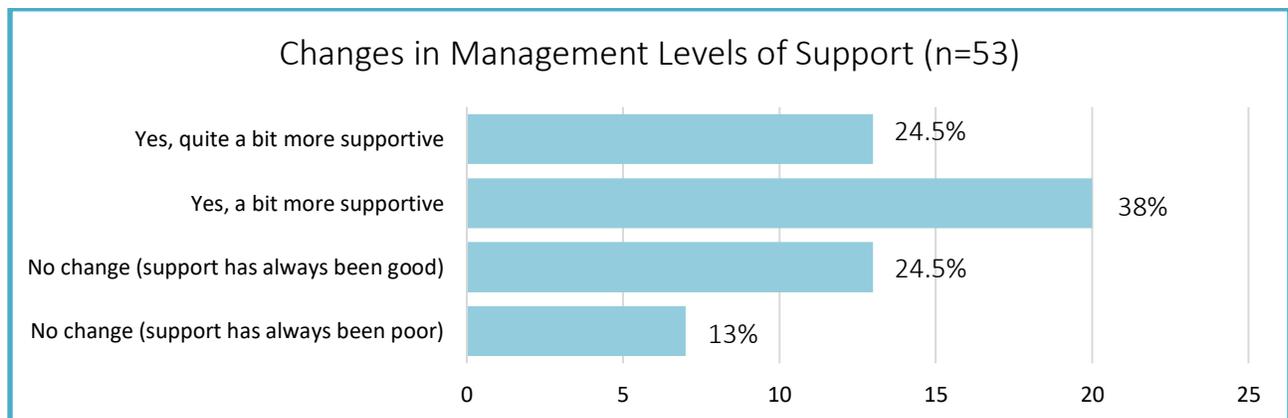
Note that a small number of respondents were not able to answer this question as they had recently moved fire halls. Comments included:

"People are talking/not afraid to discuss this issue. Fire hall officers ensure that crews are working out/allowed rehab time."

"More people (members) are aware of mental health issues. More conversations around the kitchen table."

Management Support

Respondents were asked if they have experienced any changes in the way in which management supports staff.



Note that a small number of respondents were not able to answer this question as they were new to VRFS.

Comments reflecting experiencing greater support by management included:

“They are quick to bring up the CISM team and clear the schedule should the crew need to have a debriefing.”

“I have been asked by senior workers and officers how I felt on and after certain calls and that if anything comes up, that I need to say something.”

Four comments related to experiencing greater support as a result of the new ‘*Chief’s direction and leadership*’. This new leadership appears to have shifted the experience of support among several firefighters who participated in the follow-up survey. This shift is exemplified in the comment, “*Chief Reid listens to what our membership is saying in regards to mental health.*”

Ongoing Support for Learning about Mental Health and Resilience

Respondents were asked for suggestions as to ways that the organization can continue to support learning about mental health and resilience. The most noted suggestion was to have refresher courses and other ongoing training to build knowledge and skills. Other suggestions included:

- Ongoing debriefings
- Access to a variety of mental health professionals and therapies
- More staff trained in CISM
- Ongoing offering of resources to staff and their families to support mental health



Project Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations

Project Successes

1. **Baseline survey participation:** 54% of VFRS participated in the baseline survey, which provided a clear snapshot of current experiences and challenges related to stressors as well as mental health and resilience training and education needs.
2. **Project reach:** Despite a very small budget, approximately 300 individuals received the complete 'Resilient Minds' training and an additional 50 individuals received half of the training.
3. **Increased recognition of the importance of mental health:** Based on feedback, it was clear that members view a focus on mental health in the VFRS as important. They voiced wanting longer and more sustained training in the area of mental health.
4. **High acceptance of the 'Resilient Minds' course:** Course participants gave the course high ratings both with respect to enjoying the format and being likely to recommend it to others.
5. **High learning and benefit from the 'Resilient Minds' course:** Course participants reported learning a great deal about mental health and resilience, both how they can use the knowledge and skills in their own lives and also to support others.

Project Challenges

The following project challenges emerged during the pilot of 'Resilient Minds'.

1. **Train-the-training:** Because of the logistics involved in pulling 12 VFRS members from their regular shifts, it was challenging to book the date for the 3-day training.
2. **Online baseline surveys:** A firewall issue prevented Fire & Rescue workers from accessing the initial survey that was meant to establish a baseline of knowledge and awareness. The internal technological team was able to successfully address this issue.
3. **Training time:** Given the busy and unpredictable schedule of firefighters, having enough time to work in the fire halls to complete the training was challenging.
4. **Evaluation data collection:** VFRS are asked to do many surveys on different topics. Fatigue related to survey completion may have contributed to lower post-module and follow-up survey participation rates.

Conclusions

This initiative came in the midst of a change in leadership which has had a positive impact on members, as the importance of mental health is felt to be openly supported by the new leadership. Based on the data gathered over the course of implementation of 'Resilient Minds', results demonstrate a high acceptance of the training by firefighters and a recognition of the importance of focusing efforts in this area. Firefighters welcomed this initiative and strongly voiced a willingness and need for ongoing mental health training and support in the VFRS. The project gained substantial traction despite limited resources and at the time of this report, approximately 350 individuals have received some or all of the training. Based on feedback, it will be critical for the VFRS to continue to bolster their efforts to support their 800 members as they continue to work in an intense and fast-paced environment in which they must cope with significant stress daily.

Recommendations

1. **'Resilient Minds' as part of new hire training:** Embed 'Resilient Minds' into new firefighter training.
2. **'Resilient Minds' full implementation:** Ensure that all existing VFRS complete the four-module training and moving forward, schedule refresher courses each year.
3. **Ongoing monitoring plan:** Implement a monitoring plan throughout VFRS to make informed decisions about prevention and promotion supports and educational needs that would benefit members, and families. This could include brief check-ins with members as to topics and supports that they see as promoting mental health.
4. **Mental health prevention resources:** Dedicate resources to address mental health prevention in the VFRS. Resources would support the delivery of 'Resilient Minds', introduction of new mental health workshops and resources, and ongoing monitoring of the needs of members in relation to mental health.
5. **Making the case for mental health prevention programs and supports:** Consider doing a financial analysis of the cost of having a comprehensive mental health prevention and promotion program versus the cost of having short- and long-term employee absences due to mental health issues. This analysis may assist in making decisions about future resource dedication to mental health prevention and promotion programs and services.



Appendices

Appendix A: Resilient Minds Baseline Survey

1. How would you describe your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Neither. I describe my gender as _____

2. In which Fire Hall do you work? Please note Fire Hall number _____
If you do not work in a Fire Hall, in which department do you work? _____

3. How would you describe your job classification?
 - Senior management
 - Fire Hall officer
 - Frontline firefighter
 - Group 2 employee
 - Administration
 - Other. Please describe. _____

4. How long have you been at this Fire Hall?
 - Less than 6 months
 - 6 months to one year
 - One to two years
 - Two to three years
 - Three to four years
 - Four to five years
 - Other: _____

5. For how many years have you been a Firefighter?
 - Less than one year
 - 2 to 3 years
 - 4 to 5 years
 - 6 to 8 years
 - 9 to 10 years
 - 11 to 14 years
 - 15 to 20 years
 - 21 to 24 years
 - More than 25 years

6. Thinking about Firefighters in Vancouver in general, how much do you think each of the following contribute to their work stress?

Potential Sources of Stress	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A lot
Not eating a healthy diet					
Experiencing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity or age					
Being exposed to anxious or overly demanding coworkers or administrators					
Financial worries due to inadequate pay					
Being bothered by not being able to control or predict events					
Being concerned about not knowing enough about the latest technology					
Thoughts about past runs that have been particularly upsetting/disturbing.					
Seeing negative effects of stress on co-workers (e.g., illness, alcohol misuse, burnout etc.)					
Dislike of routine paper work					
Working with a substandard co-employee on emergency incidents or situations					
Conflicts with coworkers and team members					
Disruption of sleep (general)					
Disruption of sleep due to work issues (e.g., shift work, staying awake at thinking about a run etc.)					
Disruption of sleep due to personal issues (e.g., family issues, relationships issues etc.)					
Long commute					
Feelings of isolation from family due to work demands and stress					
Concerns about serious personal injury/disablement/death due to work					

7. Are there any other sources of stress not listed above that make the work difficult?

- Yes
- No

If YES, please describe

8. How would rate your current level of knowledge of issues related to psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges?

- Not at all knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable
- Extremely knowledgeable

9. Do you think learning about mental health challenges could be helpful for you in your work?

- Yes
- No

Please comment

10. Have you ever received training on psychological trauma?

- Yes
- No

If YES, please describe.

11. Do you think learning more about psychological trauma could be helpful for you in your work?

- Yes
- No

Please comment

12. Overall, how much do you enjoy different training opportunities related to personal well-being?

- Not at all
- A little bit
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A lot
- Don't know as I have never had any training related to personal well-being

Appendix B: Modules 1 and 2 Survey



Date:

Instructor 1:

Instructor 2:

1. What rating would you give trainer 1 of this course?

- Excellent Very Good Good Okay Poor

2. What rating would you give trainer 2 of this course?

- Excellent Very Good Good Okay Poor

3. Thinking about the modules, how much did you enjoy the way the information was presented?

- Not at all A little Somewhat Quite a bit A lot

4. Are the materials that you received helpful?

- Not at all A little Somewhat Quite a bit A lot

5. How would rate your current level of knowledge of issues related to psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges?

- Not at all knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable
- Extremely knowledgeable

6. How much did you learn about psychological trauma and/or mental health challenges through taking this training?

Not much A little Some Quite a bit A lot

7. Do you plan to use the information and skills you learned in your work life in the future?

No Maybe Yes

8. Do you plan to use the information and skills in your personal life in the future?

No Maybe Yes

9. Do you see any challenges in trying to use the information in your work or personal life?

No Yes

If **YES**, what challenges do you see?

10. Overall, how beneficial was this course for you?

Not at all beneficial Somewhat beneficial Quite beneficial Very beneficial

11. Overall, what were the most useful parts of this course?

12. How likely are you to recommend this course to other firefighters?

Not likely Somewhat likely Quite likely Very likely

13. Please feel free to provide any suggestions or comments about this course.

Appendix C: Modules 3 and 4 Survey



Date:

Instructor 1:

Instructor 2:

1. What rating would you give trainer 1 of this course?

- Excellent Very Good Good Okay Poor

2. What rating would you give trainer 2 of this course?

- Excellent Very Good Good Okay Poor

3. Thinking about the modules, how much did you enjoy the way the information was presented?

- Not at all A little Somewhat Quite a bit A lot

4. Are the materials that you received helpful?

- Not at all A little Somewhat Quite a bit A lot

5. How would rate your current level of knowledge of issues related mental health challenges?

- Not at all knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable
- Extremely knowledgeable

6. How much did you learn about mental health challenges through taking this training?

- Not much A little Some Quite a bit A lot

7. How much did you learn about resiliency and stress management through taking this training?

Not much A little Some Quite a bit A lot

8. Do you plan to use the information and skills you learned in your work life in the future?

No Maybe Yes

9. Do you plan to use the information and skills in your personal life in the future?

No Maybe Yes

10. Do you see any challenges in trying to use the information in your work or personal life?

No Yes

If **YES**, what challenges do you see?

11. Overall, how beneficial was this course for you?

Not at all beneficial Somewhat beneficial Quite beneficial Very beneficial

12. Overall, what were the most useful parts of this course?

13. How likely are you to recommend this course to other firefighters?

Not likely Somewhat likely Quite likely Very likely

14. Please feel free to provide any suggestions or comments about this course.



Appendix D: Follow-Up Survey

1. How would you describe your gender?

- Male Female Neither. I describe my gender as _____

2. What is your age?

- 18 to 24 25 to 34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74

3. In which Fire Hall do you work? Please note Fire Hall number _____

If you do not work in a Fire Hall, in which department do you work? _____

4. How would you describe your job classification?

- Senior management
 Fire Hall officer
 Frontline firefighter
 Group 2 employee
 Administration
 Other. Please describe. _____

5. How long have you been at this Fire Hall?

- Less than 6 months
 6 months to one year
 One to two years
 Two to three years
 Three to four years
 Four to five years
 Other: _____

6. For how many years have you been a Firefighter?

- Less than one year
 2 to 3 years
 4 to 5 years
 6 to 8 years
 9 to 10 years
 11 to 14 years
 15 to 20 years
 21 to 24 years
 More than 25 years

7. How much do you think each of the following contribute to your work stress?

Potential Sources of Stress	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A lot
Not eating a healthy diet					
Experiencing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity or age					
Being exposed to anxious or overly demanding coworkers or administrators					
Financial worries due to inadequate pay					
Being bothered by not being able to control or predict events					
Being concerned about not knowing enough about the latest technology					
Thoughts about past runs that have been particularly upsetting/disturbing.					
Seeing negative effects of stress on co-workers (e.g., illness, alcohol misuse, burnout etc.)					
Dislike of routine paper work					
Working with a substandard co-employee on emergency incidents or situations					
Conflicts with coworkers and team members					
Disruption of sleep (general)					
Disruption of sleep due to work issues (e.g., shift work, staying awake at thinking about a run etc.)					
Disruption of sleep due to personal issues (e.g., family issues, relationships issues etc.)					
Long commute					
Feelings of isolation from family due to work demands and stress					
Concerns about serious personal injury/disablement/death due to work					

8. Are there any other sources of stress not listed above that make the work difficult? Yes No
 If YES, please describe

9. Do you think taking the Resilient Minds course has helped you learn ways to better deal with stress?
 Yes Sort of No

Please feel free to comment on your response.

10. Thinking about the four modules of the Resilient Minds course, how much of the information do you remember?

- Not much A little Some Quite a bit A lot

Please feel free to comment on your response.

11. What would help you remember more of the information?

12. Have you had chances to use the information and/or skills you learned in your work life?

- No Yes

Please feel free to comment on your response.

13. How much do you agree with the following statement?

As a result of the Resilient Minds training and resources, I feel better prepared to effectively recognize and respond to someone (member of the public) struggling with mental health problems.

- Very true Quite true Somewhat true Not true

Please feel free to comment on your response.

14. How much do you agree with the following statement?

As a result of the Resilient Minds training and resources, I feel better prepared to effectively recognize and respond to a **colleague** struggling with mental health problems.

- Very true Quite true Somewhat true Not true

Please feel free to comment on your response.

15. Have you had chances to use the information and/or skills you learned in your personal life?

- Yes No

Please feel free to comment on your response.

16. Since taking this course, have you noticed any positive changes in your Fire Hall in the way that your work **colleagues** support one another?

- No, it seems less supportive
- No, there is no change in the level of support (support has always been good)
- No, there is no change in the level of support (support has always been poor)
- Yes, it seems a bit more supportive
- Yes, it seems quite a bit more supportive
- Other – please comment below

Please comment on your response.

17. Since taking this course, have you noticed any positive changes in your Fire Hall in the way that **management** supports staff?

- No, it seems less supportive
- No, there is no change in the level of support (support has always been good)
- No, there is no change in the level of support (support has always been poor)
- Yes, it seems a bit more supportive
- Yes, it seems quite a bit more supportive
- Other – please comment below

Please comment on your response.

18. How can your organization continue to support your learning in this area (i.e., psychological trauma and resilience)?

19. Please feel free to make any final comments.