

# VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION RESEARCH KEY FINDINGS

*In 2024, the National Volunteer Fire Council conducted a survey with prospective volunteer firefighters as well as a survey and focus groups with current and former volunteer firefighters. Here are the key findings to help departments optimize their recruitment and retention efforts.*

## RECRUITMENT FINDINGS: MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING



### Community-driven (pages 9/16)

People interested in becoming volunteer firefighters saw themselves as passionate about helping their community.



### Seeking clear expectations (pages 13-15)

Prospective volunteers sought clarity on the time commitment and day-to-day responsibilities to help determine if volunteering fits their lives.



### Concerned about the physical and emotional toll (pages 11-12)

Many were concerned about the emotional and physical demands of volunteer firefighting and what support systems are in place.



### Unaware of local department's needs (page 10)

More than half of people didn't know a person could volunteer as a firefighter in their community and almost two-thirds were unsure if their local department was seeking volunteers.



### Untapped audiences (page 7)

Both women and Black adults showed a strong interest in becoming volunteers but did not pursue opportunities as much as other demographics. Adjusting recruitment messaging could increase the recruitment of these audiences.

# MESSAGING THAT RESONATED

(page 31)



**Highlight the skills — both professional and lifelong — that a person can gain.**

“You will gain valuable skills that you can use in many parts of your life to keep you and your family safe.”



**Appeal to the desire to help the community.**

“Being a volunteer firefighter is a way to give back and make a difference in your community.”



**Be transparent on the level and type of time investment required.**

“You need to commit X hours/month to train, with flexible online training opportunities available when needed.”

## RETENTION FINDINGS: HOW TO RETAIN YOUR VOLUNTEERS

### Why volunteers leave

(page 21)



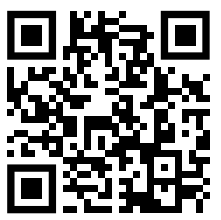
- Lack of inclusion or camaraderie
- Limited growth
- Difficulty with work-life-volunteer balance
- Gaps in leadership support and team culture

### Overcome these obstacles

(page 26)



- Create strong relationships and an inclusive, family-friendly culture that fosters a sense of “found family.”
- Provide clear growth and recognition through mentorship, leadership, and milestone celebrations.
- Offer flexible, adaptable scheduling.
- Promote supportive leadership fostering trust and camaraderie among volunteers.



Read the full report at:  
[www.nvfc.org/RR-Research](http://www.nvfc.org/RR-Research)

