 

**Diversity Culture in the Volunteer and Combination Fire Service**

**REPORT OF RESULTS**

Prepared for

EXAMPLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

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# **Demographics**

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the firefighters and employees who responded to the survey based on employment status (career full-time or volunteer), rank, gender, and ethnicity. In total, 28 firefighters responded to the survey for a response rate of 88%.

Table : Demographic Characteristics of Firefighters Responding to the Survey

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Employment Status** | Career Full-timeCareer Part-timeVolunteer | 15112 |
| **Current Rank** | Probationary FirefighterFirefighterLieutenantCaptainFire ChiefAdministrative MemberOther | 11244116 |
| **Gender** | MaleFemalePrefer not to Answer | 2031 |
| **Ethnicity** | HispanicWhiteBlack or African-AmericanAmerican Indian or Alaskan  NativeAsianOther | 2220120 |

# **Diversity in the Department**

## Individual Perception that Diversity is Important to the Department

The survey included three questions to help get a baseline understanding of individual perceptions of the importance of diversity in the department. These questions were included early in the survey in order to better understand individual perceptions of the importance of diversity within the organization before asking about their perceptions of the actual culture within the department.

First, the survey asked respondents to identify, “How important is a diverse team to the operation of your fire department?”. The responses to this question are included in Figure 1 below.

Figure : Individual Perception that Diversity is Important to the Department Operations

The average response for this question across the department is 2.964. The majority of respondents, believe that diversity in the department is at least “moderately important” with a combined 19 respondents (n=28 respondents) answering that diversity is either “moderately important”, “very important”, or “extremely important” to the fire department’s operations. Five respondents suggested that diversity was “not important” to the fire department’s operations. This is initial evidence that firefighters department-wide understand the importance of diversity to the organization.

## *Investment in Diversity*

The previous question established that there is individual understanding of the importance of diversity for department operations. The survey also measured individual beliefs that the department should expend resources to recruit a diverse team. Respondents were asked, “There has been a lot of discussion lately about increasing diversity in the fire service. Do you think your department should invest more resources in recruiting a diverse team?” The responses to this question are presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure : Should the department invest more resources in recruiting a diverse team?

A majority of respondents (n=18, 64%) believes that the department should invest more resources in recruiting a diverse team. Most firefighters understand that resources are scarce in the public sector, and this may be especially true for combination and volunteer fire departments. When asked if the department should expend those scarce resources, the majority of firefighters in the department again showed their support for a more diverse organization.

## Group Representation in the Department

Finally, firefighters in the department were asked to identify which groups should be better represented in the department based on a number of factors including ethnicity, sex, orientation, etc. The mean responses to each category are listed in Figure 3 below.

Figure : Group Representation

\*Mean responses on a scale from 1-5 with 1= “not very helpful” and 5= “very helpful”.

The highest mean response was a desire for more individuals who speak a language or languages in addition to English. The most commonly requested additional language was Spanish, with 14 individuals indicating it would be helpful to have individuals speaking the language. Russian was the second most common language with 4 responses. Two additional individuals suggested that “Indian” would be a helpful language in the department.

The median response category for this question is 3. Half of the groups were rated at or near the median response category by respondents, suggesting that, on average, respondents believe greater representation of these groups would be more helpful to the department. The addition of Black or African-American firefighters was rated highest at 3.11. Respondents also marked Women and Asian individuals (3.07), as well as American Indian or Alaska Native (3) as potentially being helpful to the department. Younger adults (2.92), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders (2.84), LGBTQ+ individuals (2.84), older adults (2.69), and white individuals (2.46) were ranked below 3, suggesting that the firefighters in the department, on average, do not see greater representation of these groups as helpful to the department.

# Overall Climate in the Department toward Other Groups

**The preceding section of the report examined how individual firefighters view the importance of diversity in the fire service and the department. This section measures the perception of respondents regarding the climate and culture within the department toward others, as well as individual experiences within the department with regards to inclusiveness, discrimination, bullying, and hazing.**

**First, the survey measured individual perception of the overall climate in the department toward individuals based on their sex, race and religion, age, and illness or disabilities.**

Table : Mean Responses to Overall Department Climate Toward Others

**\*Mean responses on a scale from 1-5 with 1= “to a very small extent”, 2= “to a small extent”, 3= “Somewhat”, 4= “To a large extent”, and 5= “To a very large extent”**

**Overall, the respondents rate the climate for individuals of different sexes, race and religions, and age positively. The response categories ranged from 1-5, and mean responses for these three questions were above the median response category of 3. The question, “Is there space for employees of different race and religions?”, had the highest mean response at 3.92, meaning that, on average, firefighters answered that “to a large extent” or “to a very large extent” there is space for individuals with different races and religions in the department. “Are men and women treated equally at your department?” similarly averaged higher scores (3.57). Lower mean responses were recorded with regards to space for elderly employees (3.18). When respondents were asked about space for employees with various illnesses or disabilities, the mean responses fell below the median response category (2.55). This could be an indication that firefighters have a less positive view of the culture toward these individuals in the organization, or it could be measuring their individual perceptions about these groups. As reported above, when asked about how helpful additional groups would be to the fire department, the mean response for older adults was the lowest reported response.**

## **Support for Diversity among the Leadership, Supervisors, Department, and Firefighters**

**Additionally, individuals in the department were asked to respond to a series of statements meant to measure individual perception of the department’s support for diversity. Table 3 shows the mean responses to the statements.**

Table : Organizational Support for Diversity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Support for Diversity in the Organization**  | **Mean Responses** |
| **Department leadership communicates consistent messages with regard to diversity.** | **4.29** |
| **Department leadership encourages diversity.** | **5** |
| **Department leadership shows that diversity is important through its actions.** | **4.44** |
| **This department is committed to diversity.** | **4.40** |
| **This department respects individuals and values their differences.** | **5.11** |
| **This department is making progress with diversity initiatives.** | **4.11** |
| **Team members of different ages are valued equally by this department.** | **5.03** |
| **Education about diversity will enhance the department’s ability to fulfill its mission.** | **4.55** |
| **This department has done a good job providing training programs that promote multicultural understanding.** | **3.74** |
| **My supervisor is committed to, and supports, diversity.** | **5.25** |
| **My supervisor handles diversity matters satisfactorily.** | **5.40** |
| **Firefighters in this department appreciate others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own.** | **5** |
| **Firefighters in this department appreciate others of the opposite sex.** | **5** |

**\*Mean responses on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “strongly disagree”, 4= “Neither agree or disagree”, and 7= “strongly agree”.**

**\*\*Statements about leadership in red, overall department in blue, supervisor in black, and firefighters in green.**

**Table 1 includes statements about support for diversity from department leadership, supervisors, the overall organization, and other firefighters. The responses to the statements were recorded on a 7-point scale with 1= “strongly disagree”, 4= “neither agree or disagree”, which is largely considered a neutral statement, and “7= “strongly agree”. When responses fall below 4.00, respondents, on average disagree with the statement. Responses falling above 4.00, indicate an average agreement with the statement among respondents.**

**The mean responses to the statements show that the respondents, on average, rate department support for diversity mostly positively. The lowest mean ratings are given on the statements specifically pointing to department leadership (in red). Three statements measure leadership’s support for diversity through “consistent communication with regards to diversity” (4.29), “leadership encourages diversity” (5), and “leadership shows diversity is important through its actions” (4.44). The mean responses to these statements barely break into positive ratings of department leadership’s support for diversity.**

**Mean responses start to trend upward slightly when the statements are focused on supervisors (in black), which suggests that the respondents see supervisors somewhat separately from leadership in diversity matters. This may be an indication that leadership sets the tone or messaging about leadership, while supervisors actually enforce issues surrounding leadership. When faced with the direct statements that “supervisor is committed to, and supports, diversity” and “supervisors handle diversity matters satisfactorily”, the mean responses are 5.25 and 5.40 respectively, which is up slightly from mean responses about leadership.**

**When given statements about the department as a whole (in blue) or firefighters in the department (in green), mean responses remain above average, but still in the somewhat low range of “agree” on a scale from 1-7. Again, this signals that individuals in the department perceive that leadership supports diversity, while seeing less support department wide.**

**Finally, respondents slightly agree (on average) with the statement, “Education about diversity will enhance the department’s ability to fulfill its mission” (mean rating 4.55 out of 7). The follow up statement, “This department has done a good job providing training programs that promote multicultural understanding”, has the lowest mean response of all of the statements at 3.74. On average, individuals in the department slightly disagree with this statement. These two statements taken together suggest that, much like individual support for investing in the recruitment of more diverse firefighters detailed above, the department should also invest in training targeted specifically at promoting understanding of different cultures. It is important to note here that while respondents, on average, believe training on diversity is lacking, there is also slim support for devoting resources to additional training, as described in the previous section of this report.**

## **Inclusiveness in the Department**

**The survey provided firefighters in the department with a series of question meant to measure inclusiveness in the department with regards to processes, decisions, and opportunities. Respondents were asked to respond to the question on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “strongly disagree”, 4= “neither agree nor disagree”, which is a largely neutral response, and 7= “strongly agree”. The mean responses to the statements are presented in Table 4 below.**

Table : Mean Responses to Statements About Inclusiveness in Department Processes and Decision

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Inclusiveness** | **Mean Response** |
| **Coworkers are treated as valued members of the team without losing their unique identity.** | **4.60** |
| **I feel excluded from my coworkers, because I am different.** | **3.17** |
| **Within my group, I am encouraged to share ideas on processes and improve the department.** | **5.25** |
| **I feel like my shift mates and I are empowered to make decisions as it relates to internal issues that need resolution.** | **4.35** |
| **Training opportunities, awards, and recognition are fairly distributed among the members of the department.** | **4.17** |
| **The decision-making process that impacts my job is fair.** | **4.5** |
| **Promotions are made on what you know, rather than who you know.** | **4.35** |
| **All employees have an equal opportunity for promotion.** | **4.67** |
| **I experience resistance when I suggest new ideas for improving our organization.** | **4.07** |

**\*Mean responses on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “strongly disagree” and 7= “strongly agree”.**

**The mean responses to statements regarding department inclusiveness with regards to processes, decision, and opportunities are largely positive. The first two statements measure how included individuals feel, even when taking into account their differences. When presented the statement, “Coworkers are treated as valued members of the team without losing their unique identity”, the average response falls just below “somewhat agree” (4.60). Respondents were additionally presented the negative statement, “I feel excluded from my coworkers, because I am different.” The response to this statement again falls into the “somewhat disagree” territory (3.17). While these are positive indicators that firefighters in the department feel included in the “team”, the department has a lot of room to improve.**

**Average responses to statements about inclusion in decision-making and other processes are slightly better, but still have a lot of room to improve. No statements regarding decision-making or processes reaches a level higher than “somewhat agree”, suggesting that individuals believe they are somewhat included in department processes.**

**The statement that received the lowest level of agreement (4.07) regards individual perception that they “experience resistance when they suggest new ideas for improving the organization”. Individuals in the department, on average, slightly agree with this statement. This suggests that the department should do a better job providing firefighters the opportunity to provide input about processes and improvements in the department.**

## *Discrimination, Bullying, and Hazing*

The survey asked individuals to respond to three identical statements regarding discrimination, bullying, and hazing on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “strongly disagree”, 4= “neither agree or disagree”, and 7= “strongly agree”. The mean responses to each question are listed in Table 5 below.

Table : Experience with Discrimination, Bullying, and Hazing

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Discrimination** |  | **Bullying** |  | **Hazing** |
| Personally Witnessed Discrimination | 3.92 |  | Personally Witnessed Bullying | 3.42 |  | Personally Witnessed Hazing | 2.37 |
| Discrimination Victim  | 2.77 |  | Victim of Bullying | 2.85 |  | Victim of Hazing | 1.77 |
| Department takes Discrimination Claims Seriously | 5.40 |  | Department takes Claims of Bullying Seriously | 5.25 |  | Department takes Claims of Hazing Seriously | 5.40 |

On average the respondents have a slightly positive experience with discrimination, bullying, and hazing in the department. When asked if individuals had personally witnessed these activities, the respondents disagreed [witnessed discrimination mean=3.92; witnessed bullying mean 3.42; and witnessed hazing mean 2.37]. With regards to the statements about personally witnessing these activities, the closer the response is to 1, the less likely individuals have witnessed the activity.

On average, respondents disagreed when given the statement, “I have been a victim of [discrimination/bullying/hazing]”. This is another statement where an average response closer to 1 indicates a stronger disagreement with this phrase.

When given the statement, “This department takes claims of [discrimination/bullying/hazing] seriously”, the average responses lean toward agreement [means of 5.40, 5.25, 5.40 respectively]. This suggests that respondents, on average, have a positive view of how the department handles claims regarding these three behaviors; however, there is room for improvement, as these responses are closer to the low-end of agreement on the 7-point scale.

Finally, firefighters in the department were presented with an additional statement that is not included in the table above. Firefighters responded to the statement, “Racial, ethnic, and gender-based jokes are not tolerated at this department.” On a scale of 1-7, with 1= “strongly disagree”, 4= “neither agree or disagree”, and 7= “strongly agree”, the mean response was a 5.74. This is the highest average response from the firefighters. It suggests that the department is doing well in this area, but may need to focus some additional education on appropriate joking within the station.

## *Discrimination on the Basis of Ethnicity, Sex, Orientation, Beliefs, and Other Factors*

Firefighters in the department were asked to respond to the following question about their personal experience with discrimination based on a number of attributes. “Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced discriminatory events at your department because of your…”

Table : Respondents' Experience with Discrimination in the Department Over the Last 12 Months

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | 1-2 times | 3-4 times | 5 or more times |
| Racial or ethnic identity | 26 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Sex | 24 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Sexual orientation | 25 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Gender identity or gender expression | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Veteran status | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Marital status | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| National origin | 26 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Age | 22 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Religion | 23 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Height or Weight | 24 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Political orientation | 26 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Social class | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ability or disability status | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The majority of respondents in the department have not experienced incidents of discrimination, bullying, and hazing individually. The factors most likely to be the center of these incidents over the last 12 months were age (5 responses), sex, religion, and height or weight (3 responses each). At least three individuals responded that they experienced incidents with regard to their age or sex five or more times over the last 12 months. Often training and discussions regarding inclusion and diversity within a department focus primarily on sex, ethnicity, and orientation. It is important to keep in mind that other factors can be the target of discrimination, bullying, and hazing, including age, physical abilities, religious or political beliefs, social status, etc. These factors should also be included in training session regarding inclusion and diversity.

Firefighters were asked if they reported the discriminatory incidents and given the opportunity to comment on that process. Most of the responses that were included indicated that they did not report the incidents. A few of the firefighters indicated that they handled the incidents by talking to the individual rather than reporting it. Two individuals believed that reporting incidents, “put a target on your back.” It is important for department leadership to create a culture when individuals feel safe taking their concerns and incidents directly to individuals they believe support inclusion and diversity in the department.

## *Impact of Department on Individual Beliefs*

Finally, the survey measured the impact that working in this department has had on individual beliefs in diversity. Working with individuals from a different backgrounds may help people better understand other cultures, as well as better understand the strengths of diversity. Respondents were given three statements and asked to indicate their agreement with the statement on a scale from 1-5 with 1= “completely disagree” and 5= “completely agree”. The mean responses to the statements are provided in Table 7 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Statements Regarding the Effect of Working in the Department on Individual Beliefs About Diversity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Effect of Department on Individual Diversity Beliefs** | **Mean Responses** |
| My experiences since coming to this department have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences. | 3 |
| The fact that the department is made up of people of many different races and ethnicities has a positive impact on the department’s culture. | 3 |
| Getting to know people with racial/ethnic backgrounds different from my own has been easy at this department. | 3.42 |
| \* Mean response on a scale of 1-5 with 1= “completely disagree” and 5= “completely agree” |

On average, the responses to the three statements were scored at or slightly above the median option for response. For this scale, a score of three would be largely considered as neither agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. The first statement focuses on changes in individual perception (*My experiences since coming to this department have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences.).* Mean responses to this statement fell in the “neither agree or disagree” category (mean=3.0). A belief that many different races and ethnicities represented in the department has a positive impact on the department’s culture also scores in the mean response category of “neither agree or disagree” (mean response = 3.0). Individuals were also asked about how easy it is to get to know people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the department, and this statement received the highest average response (3.41). This is slightly above the neutral response category. The low mean responses to these statements are likely due to the small percentage of individuals in the department from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds. It is possible that the responses would have been higher if there was more diversity in the department.

# **Overall Department Culture**

The survey also included a number of questions designed to measure overall department culture apart from questions of diversity and inclusion.

## *Perceptions About and Trust in Leadership*

This first section focuses primarily on perceptions about leadership in the department and trust in department leadership. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with nine statements based on a 5-point scale with 1= “completely disagree” and 5= “completely agree”. Mean responses are recorded in Table 8 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Statements Measuring Leadership and Trust in Leadership

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Leadership and Trust in Leadership** | **Mean Response** |
| There are processes in place to facilitate the sharing of information throughout the department. | 3.48 |
| My supervisor/the chief has clearly explained what is expected of me in my work. | 3.44 |
| I feel comfortable sharing my issues/negative feedback with my immediate supervisor/leadership. | 3.59 |
| My immediate supervisor treats me fairly. | 4.25 |
| My supervisor acts in the organization’s best interest. | 4.22 |
| I feel the chief/leadership follows through on promises/commitments they make. | 3.59 |
| My Chief listens to the concerns of the department’s members. | 3.14 |
| My Chief has communicated a clear vision for the future of the department. | 3.18 |
| My superior makes me feel like a valued member of the team. | 3.85 |

Overall, the mean responses to statements about leadership were positive. In general, the closer the average response gets to 5, the average response for fighters is closer to “strongly agree. The highest mean responses were reserved for immediate supervisors. Mean responses to the phrases, “My immediate supervisor treats me fairly” and “My supervisor acts in the organization’s best interests”, received mean scores of 4.25 and 4.22 respectively. Statements regarding the Chief received lower mean responses, indicating less agreement with the statements. This is especially true when statements focus on communication from the Chief. Mean responses to the statements “My Chief has communicated a clear vision for the future of the department” and “My supervisor/the chief has clearly explained what is expected of me in my work” had mean responses of 3.18 and 3.44 respectively. This suggests a breakdown of communication between higher and lower levels in the department.

Similarly to topics analyzed earlier, the data indicate that firefighters in the department are hesitant to share information with superiors. The mean responses for the statements, “I feel comfortable sharing my issues/negative feedback with my immediate supervisor/leadership” and “My Chief listens to the concerns of the department’s members” have lower mean responses of 3.59 and 3.14 respectively. While the immediate supervisor still has a slightly higher mean response for agreement, these low average responses suggest that the department has room to grow with regard to communication from lower levels to superiors.

## *Individual Influence in Department Affairs*

The survey asks four questions about individual belief that respondents are included in department affairs and decision-making. The responses to the questions were recorded on a 5-point scale with 1= “never”, 2= “seldom”, 3= “sometimes”, 4= “often”, and 5= “always”. The mean responses are shown below in Figure 4 below.

Figure : Mean Responses to Questions of Individual Influence within the Department

For these four questions, the closer the mean response gets to 5, the more often respondents indicated they believe they have influence in the department with regards to the question topic. On average, firefighters in the department do not feel they have influence in the areas of individual work (3.03), choosing who they work with (1.96), influence in work assigned to them (2.53), and influence in what they do at work (2.64) at least some of the time. The highest mean responses are for influence on what they do at work, but these average responses barely rise into the “sometimes” category. Employees from all types of organizations have a higher level of commitment when they believe they have influence over the organization. In this fire department, the firefighters, on average, do not believe that they have influence. The department leadership may want to focus on processes and policies that allow more input from their firefighters.

## *Fairness in the Department*

The survey included eight statements regarding fairness in the department. Firefighters were asked to indicate their agreement with each question based on a 5-point scale with 1= “completely disagree” and 5= “completely agree”. Mean responses are provided in Table 9 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Statements Measuring Fairness in the Department

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Fairness in the Department** | **Mean Response** |
| People are promoted fairly in this department. | 3.14 |
| My work is recognized and appreciated by the leaders. | 3.73 |
| I am treated fairly at my workplace. | 3.92 |
| Conflicts are resolved in a fair way. | 3.29 |
| The work is distributed fairly. | 3 |
| Standards and rules are applied equally. | 3.03 |
| Promotional opportunities are provided fairly. | 3.37 |
| New opportunities are provided fairly. | 3.62 |

Respondents generally agreed, on average, with statements about fairness in the department. As mean responses trend closer to five, it indicates a higher level of agreement. The firefighters in the department had mean responses in the range of 3 to 3.92. Respondents had the highest level of agreement with the statement, “I am treated fairly at the workplace” (3.92). This is a statement that measures a general view of fairness at the department. The mean responses to the statements trend downward slightly as individuals are asked to respond to fairness in more specific ways. The lowest level of agreement was measured on the statement, “The work is distributed fairly” (mean = 3).

# **Team Culture**

In order to measure the department’s culture with regards to teamwork, the survey included three questions to measure team cohesion. Firefighters were asked to respond to each question on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1= “never”, 2= “seldom”, 3= “sometimes”, 4= “often”, and 5= “always”. Mean responses to each question are included in Figure 5 below.

Figure : Mean Responses to Questions Measuring Team Cohesion

Firefighters in the department consistently rated all three questions about team cohesion an average of 3 or more (“sometimes”). There is very little difference between the mean responses for each question; good atmosphere (3.88), good cooperation (3.96), work is community (3.74). For these mean responses, scores closer to 5 mean that individuals believe there is better team cohesion. This is an area where the department has room for improvement.

## *Trust Among Team Members*

In addition to team cohesion, the survey asked seven questions measuring trust among team members. Firefighters were asked to respond to the questions on a 5-point scale with 1= “to a very small extent” and 5= “to a very large extent”. Mean responses are included in Table 10 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Questions Measuring Trust Among Team Members

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions About Trust Among Team Members** | **Mean Responses** |
| Do the firefighters withhold information from each other? | 2.42 |
| Do the firefighters withhold information from the management? | 2.76 |
| Do the employees in general trust each other? | 3.55 |
| Does the management trust the employees to do their work well? | 3.11 |
| Can you trust the information that comes from the management? | 3.59 |
| Does the management withhold important information from the employees? | 2.57 |
| Are the employees able to express their views and feelings? | 3.11 |

Three of the included questions [Do the firefighters withhold information from each other?; Do the firefighters withhold information from the management?; and, Does the management withhold information from the employees?], are generally negative questions, which means that a positive mean response should be lower than the median response, indicating that these things happen to a lesser extent. The mean responses to these three questions are all below the median response. The firefighters’ mean responses suggest that they do not think management withholds information from firefighters to a great extent (mean=2.57); however, the mean responses to whether firefighters withhold information from management inches closer to the median response category at 2.76. This sentiment is somewhat supported by mean responses to the question, “Are the employees able to express their views and feelings?” (3.11), which indicates agreement on average with the question, but to a smaller degree. These two responses together suggest that firefighters do not always feel comfortable sharing with management, which has been discussed in previous analysis in this report.

The final three statements all focus on trust and have slightly higher mean response categories; employees trust each other (3.55), management trusts employees (3.11), and employees trust information from management (3.59). These questions all receive positive, but still low, average responses from the firefighters.

## *Conflict Within the Team*

The survey included six questions measuring conflict within the team. Firefighters were asked to respond to the questions on a 5-point scale with 1= “none” and 5= “a great deal”. Responses to each question are provided in Table 11 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Questions Measuring Conflict within the Team

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions Regarding Conflict within the Team** | **Mean Responses** |
| How much anger is there among the members of the department? | 2.73 |
| How much personal friction is there in the department during decisions? | 3.26 |
| How much tension is there in the department during decisions? | 3.57 |
| How many disagreements over different ideas are there? | 3.4 |
| How many differences about the content of decisions does the department have to work through? | 3.13 |
| How many differences of opinions are there within the department? | 3.84 |
|  |  |

**\***On a scale from 1-5 with 1= “none” and 5= “a great deal”

Questions regarding conflict within the team are generally negative in context, so lower mean responses mean that there is less conflict in the department. Only one of the six questions has a mean response below the median category of 3. “How much anger is there among the members of the department?” has a mean response of 2.73, indicating lower levels of anger. The highest mean response is to the question, “How many differences of opinions are there within the department?” (3.84). Differences of opinion can actually make a department stronger, as long as there are processes in place to make sure discussions are open and civil. Additional questions about decision making processes, “How much personal friction is there in the department during decisions” (3.26), “How much tension is there in the department during decisions?” (3.57), and “How many disagreements over different ideas are there?” 3.4) maintain average responses higher than the median response category of 3. This suggests that there is a perception that decision making in the department can get contentious.

## *Team Inclusiveness*

The survey measured individual perception of how well they are included in the department and team. Firefighters were asked to respond to ten questions that directly measure ostracism (i.e. negative statements) on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “Never” and 7= “Always”. Mean responses are provided in Figure 6 below.

Figure : Mean Responses to Statements Measuring Individual Ostracism

For the statements regarding ostracism, mean responses that are lower generally signal that ostracism happen less often. Firefighters in the department rated every statement about ostracism very low on the overall scale from 1-7. Only one of the statements, “Others ignored you at work” reach the average response of 2.0 (once in a while). This is a good sign that firefighters in the department have group inclusiveness.

# **Commitment to the Department**

Finally, the department’s overall culture may impact the firefighters’ willingness to stay at the department. Given the importance of retention to continuity, budgets, safety, etc…, the survey measured commitment to the department with two questions.

## Overall Commitment to the Department

First, the survey provided firefighters eight statements regarding their overall commitment to the department. Respondents were asked their level of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1-7 with 1= “strongly disagree” and 7= “strongly agree”. Mean responses to the statements are included in Table 12 below.

Table : Mean Responses to Statements Measuring Overall Commitment to the Department

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statements Regarding Commitment to the Department** | **Mean Responses** |
| I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this department. | 5.68 |
| I enjoy discussing my department with people outside it. | 5.44 |
| I really feel as if this department’s problems are my own. | 4.24 |
| I think that I could easily become as attached to another department as I am to this one. | 4.48 |
| I do not feel like ‘part of the family’ at my department. | 3.51 |
| I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this department.  | 3 |
| This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me. | 4.72 |
| I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my department. | 3.27 |

\*1= “Strongly disagree” and 7= “Strongly agree”

The mean responses to statements measuring overall commitment to the department, generally show that the firefighters in the department have a medium to high level of commitment. The statements, “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with the department” and “I enjoying discussing my department with people outside it”, have average responses over 5.0, which suggest a higher commitment to the department. “I think that I could easily become as attached to another department as I am to this one” has a lower mean response that the other statements, but it still falls in the “agree” side of the response spectrum.

The question included several statements that are negatively worded. Responses to these statements that show more commitment to the department, should fall below the median response for 4. Mean response to the statements, “I do not feel like ‘part of the family’” (3.51), “I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this department” (3), and “I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my department” (3.27) all fall below the median response category, but only show slight disagreement with the phrases. The organization has room for improvement as far as helping firefighters develop more committed attitudes toward the organization and their position within it.

## *Intention to Leave*

Firefighters were asked directly about their intention to leave the department with two statements and one question. All three were measured on a 7-point scale. The mean responses are reported in Figure 7.

Figure : Mean Responses to Statements and Question Measuring Intention to Leave the Department

\*Statement 1 and 2 mean responses measured on a 7-point scale with 1= “strongly disagree” and 7 = strongly agree”.

\*Mean response for the question measured on a 7-point scale with 1= “not at all likely”, 3= “somewhat likely”, 5= “quite likely”, and 7= “extremely likely”.

As with the statements above regarding commitment to the department, these statements and question show that firefighters in the department are generally committed to their position. Mean response to the first two statements suggest that there is little intention to look for another department in the next year (mean 2.75). Likewise, the mean response to whether the respondents often think about quitting is low (2.82). The mean responses to these two statements remain low, despite the fact, that mean responses to the question “How likely is it that you could find a job in another department with about the same pay and/or benefits…?” falls above the response category “quite likely” (mean = 5.39). This suggests that firefighters intend to stay in the position despite the average belief that they have other options.