

US FIRE DEPARTMENT PROFILE 2012

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October 2013



**National Fire Protection Association
Fire Analysis and Research Division**

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Abstract

NFPA estimates that there were approximately 1,129,250 firefighters in the U.S. in 2012. Of the total number of firefighters 345,950 or 31% were career firefighters and 783,300 (69%) were volunteer firefighters. Most of the career firefighters (72%) are in communities that protect 25,000 or more people. Most of the volunteer firefighters (95%) were in departments that protect fewer than 25,000 people. There are an estimated 30,100 fire departments in the U.S. Of these, 2,610 departments are all career, 1,995 mostly career, 5,445 are mostly volunteer and 20,050 are all volunteer. In the U.S., 13,600 or 45% of departments provide EMS service, 4,550 departments or 15% provide EMS service and advance life support, while 11,950 departments or 40% provide no EMS support.

Keywords: fire departments, firefighters, career, volunteer, EMS, fire stations, pumpers, aerial apparatus.

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
List of Tables	ii
List of Figures	ii
Fact Sheet	iii
Firefighters	1
Fire Departments	17
Fire Department Apparatus and Stations	21
Emergency Medical Services	27
U.S. Expenditures on Local Fire Protection	27

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1.	Career and Volunteer Firefighters in the U.S., by Population Protected	2
Table 2.	Number of Firefighters in the U.S. by Year	3
Figure 1.	Number of Career Firefighters and Rate per 1000 People by Year	4
Figure 2.	Number of Volunteer Firefighters and Rate per 1000 People by Year	6
Table 3.	Career Firefighter Rates by Population Protected	7
Table 4.	Volunteer Firefighter Rates by Population Protected	9
Table 5.	Career Firefighters per 1,000 People for All Career Departments by Work Week and Population Protected	10
Table 6.	Median Rates of Career Firefighters per 1,000 People By Region and Population Protected	11
Table 7.	Median Rates of Volunteer Firefighters per 1,000 People by Region and Population Protected	12
Table 8.	Number of Firefighters in the U.S., by Age Group	13
Figure 3.	Number of Firefighters in the U.S., by Age Group by Year	14
Table 9.	Age Profile of Firefighters by Size of Community	15
Figure 4.	Percent of Firefighters in the U.S., by Age Group by Year	16
Table 10.	Number of Departments and Percent of U.S. Population Protected by Type of Department	18
Table 11.	Number of Fire Departments in the U.S. by Population Protected	19
Table 12.	Department Type by Population Protected	20
Table 13.	Average Apparatus and Station Rates per 1,000 People by Community Size	22
Table 14.	Pumpers (750 gpm or greater) by Community Size	23
Table 15.	Other Suppression Vehicles by Community Size	24
Table 16.	Aerial Apparatus by Community Size	25
Table 17.	Fire Stations by Community Size	26
Table 18.	Departments Providing Emergency Medical Service by Community Size	28
Table 19.	Direct Expenditures on Local Fire Protection	29

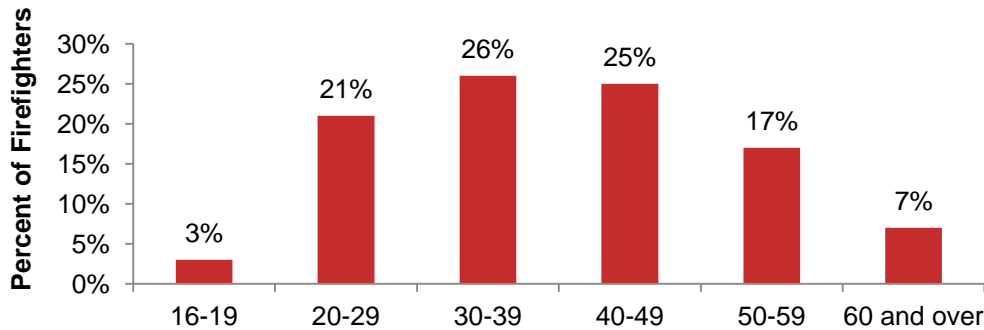


The U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2012 Fact Sheet

There are **1,129,250** firefighters in the United States

- **31%** (345,950) are career firefighters.
- **69%** (783,300) are volunteer firefighters.
- Firefighters in smaller (less than 10,000 people) communities are more likely to be volunteers.
- Departments protecting larger communities tend to have a higher proportion of firefighters in the age groups 30-39 and 40-49 than smaller communities.

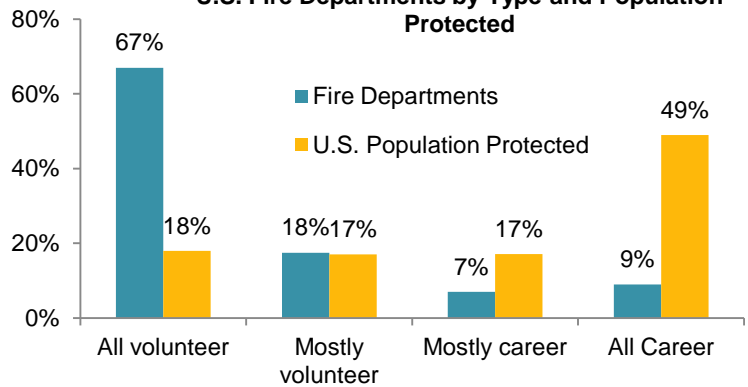
Firefighters in the U.S. by Age Group, 2012



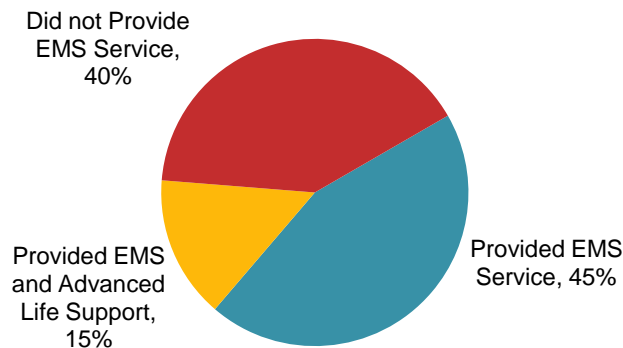
30,100 fire departments protected the United States in 2012

- All career 2,610
- Mostly career 1,995
- Mostly volunteer 5,445
- All volunteer 20,050

U.S. Fire Departments by Type and Population Protected



Fire Department Provision of Emergency Medical Service 2010-2012 Annual Averages



Firefighters

There were approximately 1,129,250 firefighters in the U.S. in 2012, according to estimates based on NFPA's 2012 National Fire Experience Survey (see [Table 1](#)). This is an increase of 2.6% from a year ago.

Career firefighters include full-time (career) uniformed firefighters regardless of assignments, e.g., suppression, prevention/inspection, administrative. Career firefighters included here work for a public fire department that protects people in the community in their residences and in public buildings; they do not include career firefighters who work in private fire brigades.

Volunteer firefighters include any active part-time (call or volunteer) firefighters. Active volunteers are defined as being involved in fire fighting. Of the total number of firefighters, 345,950 or 31% were career firefighters, while 783,300 or 69% were volunteers.¹

Most of the career firefighters (72%) are in communities that protect 25,000 or more people. Most of the volunteers (95%) are in departments that protect fewer than 25,000 people and almost half are located in the small, rural departments that protect fewer than 2,500 people (see [Table 1](#)).

Since 1986, the number of career firefighters in the U.S. has gone up quite steadily from 237,750 in 1986 to 345,950 in 2012 for an overall increase of 45% ([Table 2](#), [Figure 1](#)). However when the rates of career firefighters per 1,000 people protected for mostly or all career departments are examined, the rates do not increase but stay in a range of 1.52 to 1.77 career firefighters per 1,000 people protected ([Table 2](#), [Figure 1](#)). Essentially what this means is that even though the number of career firefighters has gone up, the number of people protected by career firefighters has also gone up as the population in the U.S. has increased.

¹ Note that these results are based on a sample survey, and as a result there is a confidence interval associated with each estimate. Based on data reported by fire departments responding to the 2012 National Fire Experience Survey, the NFPA is confident that the actual number of career firefighters falls within the range of 334,950 to 356,950 and the actual number of volunteer firefighters falls within the range of 769,300 to 802,300.

Table 1.
Career and Volunteer Firefighters
in the U.S., by Population Protected, 2012

Population Protected	Career	Volunteer	Total
1,000,000 or more	40,850	300	41,150
500,000 to 999,999	35,900	6,400	42,300
250,000 to 499,999	25,850	2,100	27,950
100,000 to 249,999	52,950	2,550	55,500
50,000 to 99,999	43,900	7,350	50,650
25,000 to 49,999	49,050	23,200	72,250
10,000 to 24,999	56,500	71,550	128,050
5,000 to 9,999	21,600	104,000	125,600
2,500 to 4,999	10,050	174,450	184,500
Under 2,500	9,900	345,950	401,300
Total	345,950	783,300	1,129,250

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012

Note the number of volunteer firefighters for communities of 25,000 or more and the number of career firefighters for communities of less than 10,000 may change considerably from year to year because of their small size and sample variability.

Table 2.
Number of Firefighters in the U.S., 1986-2012

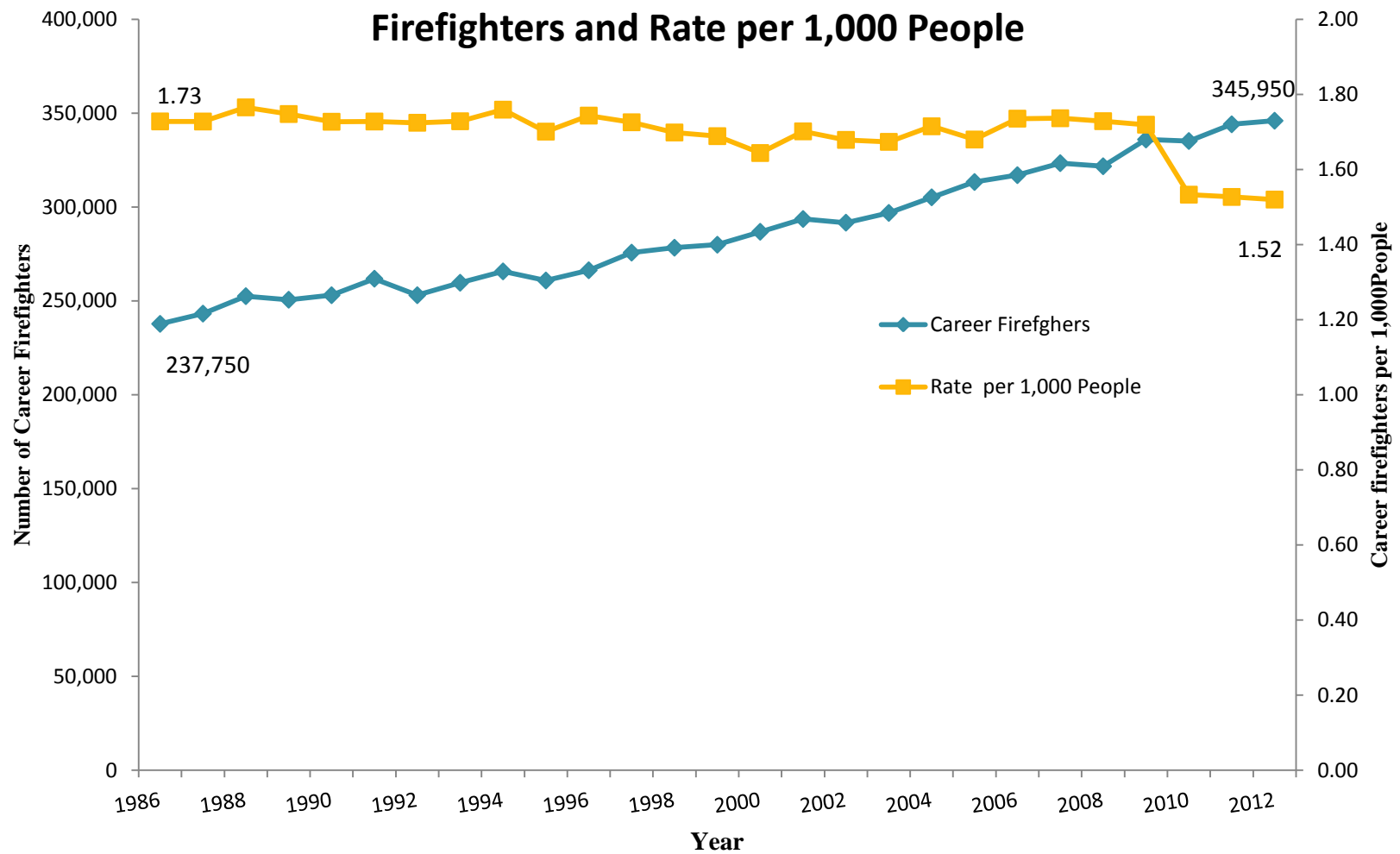
Year	Total		Career		Volunteer	
	Number	Rate per 1,000 People	Number	Rate per 1,000 People	Number	Rate per 1,000 People
1986	1,045,950	4.35	237,750	1.73	808,200	7.88
1987	1,060,000	4.36	243,200	1.73	816,800	8.05
1988	1,040,750	4.25	252,500	1.77	788,250	7.77
1989	1,020,700	4.12	250,600	1.75	770,100	7.45
1990	1,025,650	4.11	253,000	1.73	772,650	7.56
1991	1,033,600	4.09	261,800	1.73	771,800	7.61
1992	1,058,300	4.14	253,000	1.72	805,300	7.34
1993	1,055,050	4.09	259,650	1.73	795,400	7.25
1994	1,073,600	4.12	265,700	1.76	807,900	7.19
1995	1,098,850	4.18	260,850	1.70	838,000	7.42
1996	1,081,800	4.07	266,300	1.74	815,500	6.98
1997	1,079,050	4.03	275,700	1.73	803,350	7.12
1998	1,082,500	4.00	278,300	1.70	804,200	7.18
1999	1,065,150	3.90	279,900	1.69	785,250	6.93
2000	1,064,150	3.86	286,800	1.64	777,350	7.25
2001	1,078,300	3.85	293,600	1.70	784,700	7.04
2002	1,108,250	3.89	291,650	1.68	816,600	7.12
2003	1,096,900	3.77	296,850	1.67	800,050	7.05
2004	1,100,750	3.76	305,150	1.71	795,600	6.88
2005	1,136,650	3.82	313,300	1.68	823,350	7.30
2006	1,140,900	3.81	316,950	1.74	823,950	7.26
2007	1,148,800	3.81	323,350	1.74	825,450	7.29
2008	1,148,850	3.81	321,700	1.73	827,150	7.01
2009	1,148,100	3.81	335,900	1.72	812,150	7.27
2010	1,103,300	3.57	335,150	1.66	768,150	6.59
2011	1,100,450	3.54	344,050	1.69	756,400	6.37
2012	1,129,250	3.60	345,950	1.67	783,300	6.60

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1986-2012).

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

Note that the rates per 1,000 people protected for career firefighters are based on population protected for departments that are comprised of all or mostly career firefighters, while the rates per 1,000 people protected for volunteer firefighters are based on population protected for departments that are comprised of all or mostly volunteer firefighters.

Figure 1. Number of Career Firefighters and Rate per 1,000 People



Source: NFPA Annual Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1986-2012)

Since 1986, the number of volunteer firefighters declined in the late 1980s and in early 2000s, each time returning to the same level soon after. In 2005-2009, the number of volunteer firefighters has been stable at a level slightly higher than any previously recorded. (Table 2, Figure 2). However in 2010-2012, the number of volunteers fluctuated and was in the range of 756,400 to 783,300. When the rates of volunteer firefighters per 1,000 people protected for mostly or all volunteer departments are examined, the rates show a downward trend and range from a high of 8.05 in 1987 to a low of 6.37 in 2011 per 1,000 people protected.

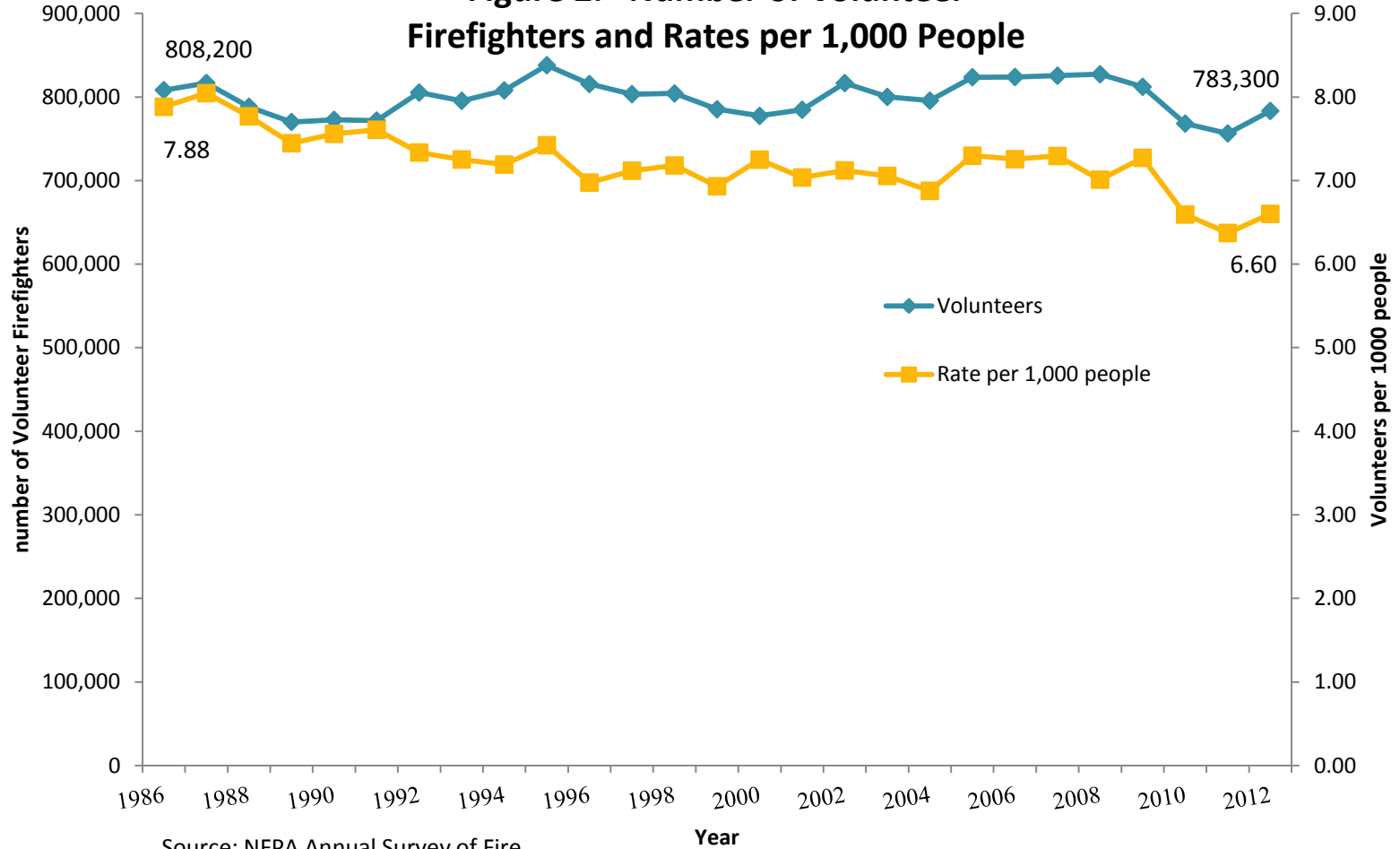
According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics for the 2008-2012 periods, there were on average 21,400 African-American career firefighters or 7% of the total and 11,100 female career firefighters, or 4% of the total.²

A good way to develop a sense of the size of departments relative to the population they protect is to examine the rate of firefighters per 1,000 people. Tables 3 and 4 provide the range of rates for career firefighters in departments protecting at least 10,000 people and for volunteer firefighters in departments protecting fewer than 25,000 people. **It is important to note that the rates are based on data reported to the NFPA and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.**

Fire departments protecting communities of 10,000 people or more had median rates of career firefighters per 1,000 people of 1.00 to 1.34 (Table 3). However, ranges for departments varied considerably within community size and particularly for communities of 100,000 to 249,999, 50,000 to 99,999, and 25,000 to 49,999. Note that the rates for a particular

² Figures are from the *Annual Averages Tables Employment and Earnings*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. These numbers can change considerably from year to year because of their small size and sample variability.

Figure 2. Number of Volunteer Firefighters and Rates per 1,000 People



Source: NFPA Annual Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1986-2012)

**Table 3.
Career Firefighter Rates
By Population Protected, 2012**

Population Protected	Low	Median	Career Firefighters Per 1,000 People High
1,000,000 or more	0.58	1.14	1.61
500,000 to 999,999	0.38	1.30	3.16
250,000 to 499,999	0.57	1.18	2.44
100,000 to 249,999	0.18	1.34	3.25
50,000 to 99,999	0.03	1.28	3.46
25,000 to 49,999	0.00	1.20	6.60
10,000 to 24,999	0.00	1.00	7.69

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including length of work week, unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographical dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities with populations of 25,000 or more, where departments are comprised of all career or mostly career firefighters. Also some of these departments have some volunteers, who are not reflected in these figures.

The low and high values are the lowest and highest values by size of community. The median value is chosen so that half the departments had higher values, and half had lower.

size of community varied considerably, because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies, including length of work week, unusual hazards, geographical dispersion of the community, and scope of services provided (e.g., whether the department handles emergency medical calls).

Fire departments protecting less than 25,000 people had median rates of volunteer firefighters per 1,000 persons in the range of 1.14 to 20.00 (Table 4). This wide range in median rates for smaller communities reflects the fact that it takes a minimum number of firefighters to staff a department regardless of community size. Also volunteer firefighters are usually available on a part-time basis only, so it takes more of them to ensure an adequate response to each alarm.

Length of work week and its effect on rate of career firefighters per 1,000 population by size of community can be seen in Table 5. Tables 6 and 7 provide median rates for career and volunteer firefighters by region and size of community.

Of the 1,129,250 firefighters, the age group accounting for the largest share of firefighters was the 30-39 group, which accounted for 296,500 or 26.3% of all firefighters (Table 8 and Figure 3). Many firefighters fell in the 40-49 age group (25.3%) and the 20-29 age group. Firefighters age 50-59 accounted for a smaller share (17.3%), but still more than one-sixth of all firefighters. Few firefighters fell outside this combined range of 20 to 59 years old. Only 3.3% of firefighters were age 16 to 19, and another 6.7% were age 60 and over.

Age group patterns did vary somewhat by population of community protected (Table 9, Figure 3). Departments that protect less than 25,000 people, and are comprised mostly of volunteers, tended to have higher proportions of firefighters in the under 30 age group, while departments that protect 25,000 people or more, and are comprised mostly of career firefighters, had higher proportions of firefighters in the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups.

When age group patterns by year are examined for the 1998-2012 period, there were slight changes over time (Figure 4). The 30-39 and the 40-49 age groups showed slight decreases over the period, while the 50-59 and 60 and over groups showed moderate increases over the period.

Table 4.
Volunteer Firefighter Rates
By Population Protected, 2012

Population Protected	Low	Median	High
10,000 to 24,999	0.00	1.14	19.33
5,000 to 9,999	0.00	3.60	13.00
2,500 to 4,999	0.53	7.20	18.00
Under 2,500	2.50	20.00	*

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Volunteer rates are shown only for communities under 25,000, where departments are comprised of all volunteer or mostly volunteers. Also, some of these departments, particularly those with population protected of 5,000 or more, have some career firefighters, who are not reflected in these figures.

The low and high values are the lowest and the highest values by size of community. The median value is chosen so that half of the departments had higher values, and half had lower.

*Because there are a minimum number of firefighters to form even a single company, smaller communities of under 100 people can have very high rates.

Table 5.
Career Firefighters per 1,000 People For All Career Departments
By Work Week and Population Protected, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Career Firefighters Per 1,000 People		
	40-45 Hour	46-51 Hour	52-60 Hour
1,000,000 or more	*	1.51	1.00
500,000 to 999,999	2.37	1.34	1.23
250,000 to 499,999	1.87	1.85	1.22
100,000 to 249,999	1.93	1.56	1.30
50,000 to 99,999	2.05	1.61	1.40
25,000 to 49,999	2.05	1.58	1.62

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2010-2012.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, type of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised mostly of career firefighters.

*Insufficient data.

**Table 6.
Median Rates of Career Firefighters per 1,000 People
By Region and Population Protected, 2012**

Population Protected	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
250,000 or more	1.71	1.43	1.28	0.75
100,000 to 249,999	1.99	1.35	1.43	0.85
50,000 to 99,999	2.03	1.18	1.58	0.90
25,000 to 49,999	1.67	1.04	1.53	0.97

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised mostly of career firefighters.

As defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the four regions are:

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Table 7.
Median Rates of Volunteer Firefighters per 1,000 People
By Region and Population Protected, 2012

Population Protected	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
10,000 to 24,999	1.87	1.33	0.80	1.14
5,000 to 9,999	4.78	3.80	2.57	3.60
2,500 to 4,999	8.79	7.71	6.13	7.20
Under 2,500	17.71	22.19	14.54	20.00

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community department may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Volunteer rates are shown only for communities under 25,000, where departments are comprised of mostly volunteers.

As defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the four regions are:

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

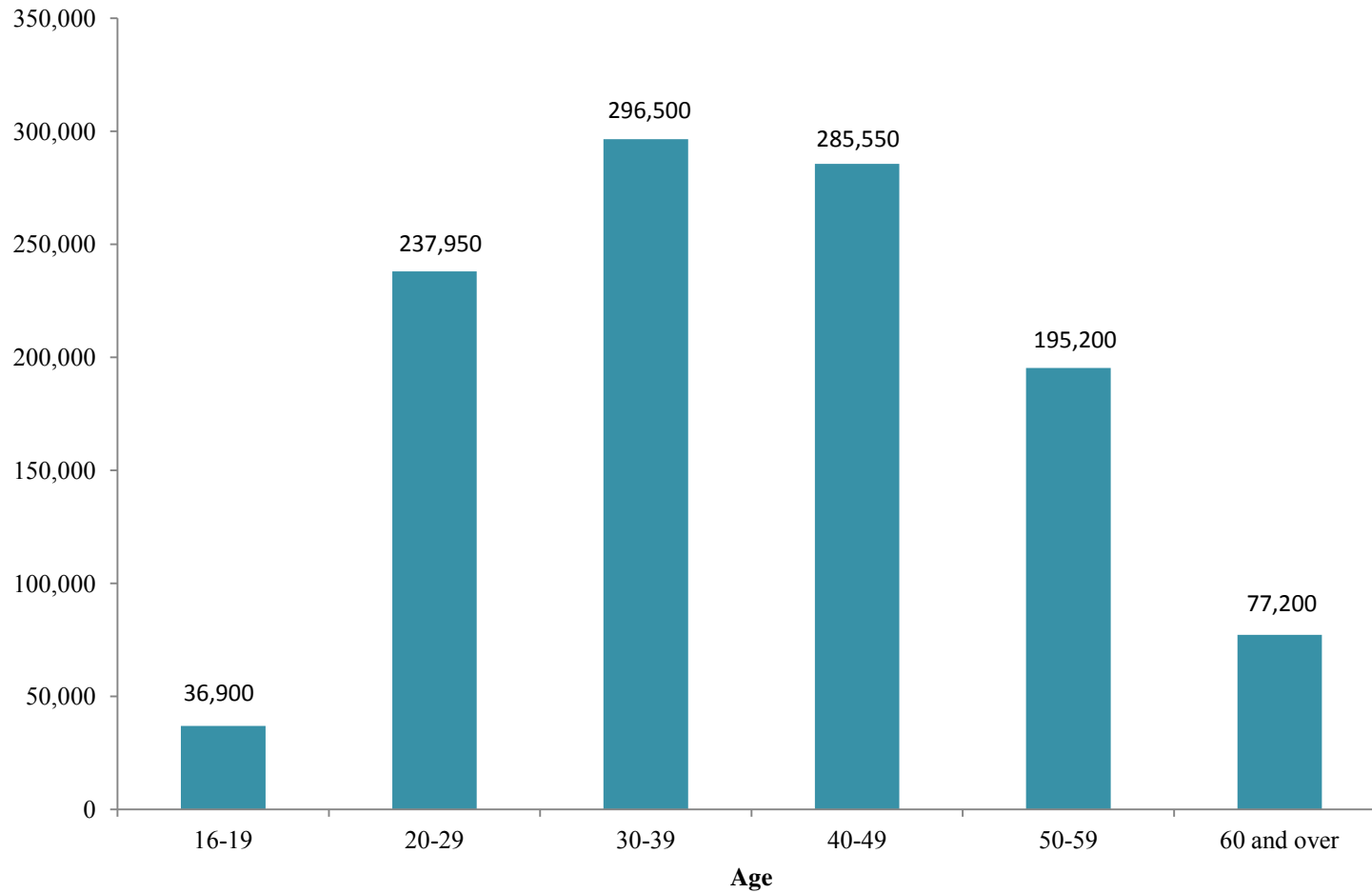
West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Table 8.
Number of Firefighters in the U.S., by Age Group, 2012

Age	Firefighters	
	Number	Percent
16-19	36,900	3.3
20-29	237,950	21.1
30-39	296,500	26.3
40-49	285,550	25.3
50-59	195,200	17.3
60 and over	77,200	6.7
Total	1,129,250	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012.

Figure 3.
Number of Firefighters in the U.S.
By Age Group, 2012



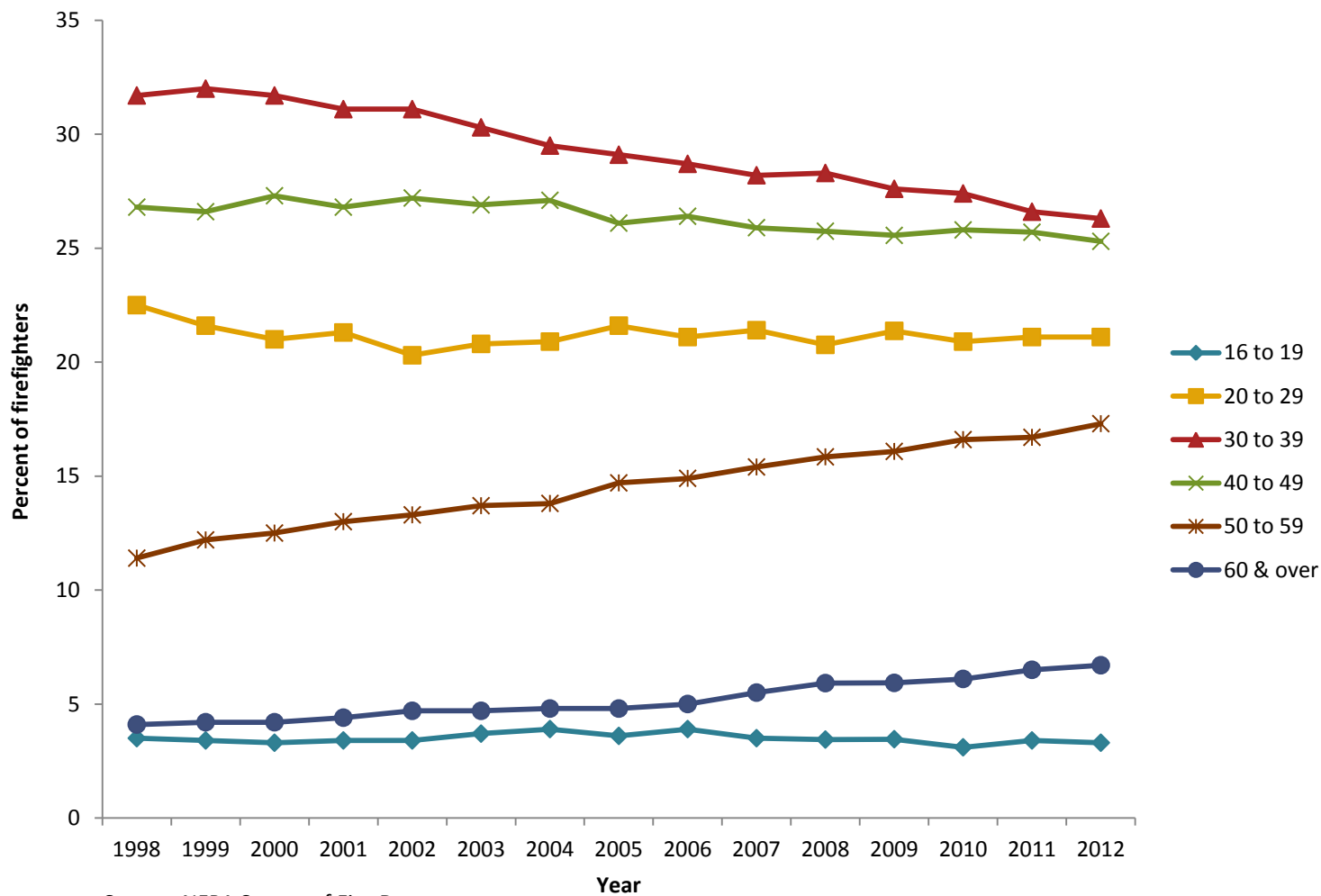
Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments
for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012

Table 9.
Age Profile of Firefighters
By Size of Community, 2012

Size of Community	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Total
Mostly Career	Firefighters	Firefighters	Firefighters	Firefighters	
Firefighters	under Age 30	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50 and up	
1,000,000 or more	9.0%	36.1%	33.1%	21.8%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	13.6	33.3	32.7	20.3	100.0
250,000 to 499,999	12.8	39.6	30.9	16.8	100.0
100,000 to 249,999	16.1	18.5	40.4	25.0	100.0
50,000 to 99,999	17.4	32.3	31.8	18.4	100.0
25,000 to 49,999	25.0	24.7	31.4	18.8	100.0
Mostly Volunteer Firefighters					
10,000 to 24,999	31.3%	19.0%	28.6%	21.1%	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	30.8	27.7	21.1	20.4	100.0
2,500 to 4,999	30.9	18.8	24.6	25.7	100.0
Under 2,500	28.1	12.9	25.1	33.9	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012.

**Figure 4. Percent of Firefighters in the U.S.
by Age Group by Year**



Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments

Fire Departments

There are an estimated 30,100 fire departments³ in the United States. Of these, 2,610 departments or 8.7% are all career⁴; that is, they are comprised solely of career firefighters. An estimated 1,995 departments (6.6%) are mostly career, while 5,445 (18.1%) are mostly volunteer. An estimated 20,050 departments (66.6%) are all volunteer (Table 10).

Another way to put this is that 15% of all departments are all career or mostly career but protect 66% of the U.S. population, while 85% of the departments are mostly volunteer or all volunteer and protect 35% of the population (Table 10).

When the number of departments by type is examined for the 1986-2012 period, the number of career or mostly career firefighters increased from 3,043 in 1986 to 4,605 in 2012 for an overall increase of 51%, while the number of volunteer or mostly volunteer firefighters decreased from 26,787 in 1986 to 25,495 in 2012 for an overall decrease of 5%.

The number of fire departments by size of community is displayed in Table 11. Department type did vary considerably by population protected. For community sizes 25,000 and above, the percentage of departments classified as all career or mostly career ranged from 71 to 100%, while for community sizes less than 25,000, the percentage of departments classified as all volunteer or mostly volunteer ranged from 50 to 98% (Table 12).

³ A fire department is a public organization that provides fire prevention, fire suppression and associated emergency and non-emergency services to a jurisdiction such as a county, municipality, or organized fire district.

⁴ Department type is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised 100% of career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised 100% of volunteer firefighters.

Table 10.
Number of Departments and Percent of U.S. Population Protected
By Type of Department, 2012

Type of Department	Number	Percent	Percent of U.S. Population Protected
All Career	2,610	8.7%	48.8%
Mostly Career	1,995	6.6%	16.9%
Mostly Volunteer	5,445	18.1%	16.5%
All Volunteer	20,050	66.6%	17.8%
Total	30,100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NFPA Fire Service Inventory, and 2012 NFPA Survey of Fire Departments.

Type of department is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised of 100% career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters.

Table 11.
Number of Fire Departments in the U.S.,
By Population Protected, 2012

Population Protected	Number of Fire Departments
1,000,000 or more	16
500,000 to 999,999	42
250,000 to 499,999	62
100,000 to 249,999	265
50,000 to 99,999	525
25,000 to 49,999	1,307
10,000 to 24,999	3,585
5,000 to 9,999	4,387
2,500 to 4,999	5,791
under 2,500	14,118
Total	30,100

Source: NFPA Fire Service Inventory

**Table 12.
Department Type by Population Protected, 2012**

Type of Department (Percent)

Population Protected	All Career	Mostly Career	Mostly Volunteer	All Volunteer	Total
1,000,000 or more	81.8%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	71.4	21.4	7.1	0.0	100.0
250,000 to 499,999	85.3	11.8	2.9	0.0	100.0
100,000 to 249,999	81.8	18.2	0.0	0.0	100.0
50,000 to 99,999	70.3	18.9	10.8	0.0	100.0
25,000 to 49,999	47.1	24.2	24.5	4.2	100.0
10,000 to 24,999	23.2	26.3	37.4	13.0	100.0
5,000 to 9,999	5.9	6.7	41.6	45.7	100.0
2,500 to 4,999	1.3	2.6	21.1	75.0	100.0
Under 2,500	1.0	0.9	4.8	93.3	100.0
All Departments	8.7	6.6	18.1	66.6	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012

Type of department is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised of 100% career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters.

Fire Department Apparatus and Stations

Estimates of the number of apparatus and stations in the United States for the 2010-2012 period indicate that there were 66,900 pumpers, 6,900 aerial apparatus, 74,000 other suppression vehicles (which includes pumpers less than 1,000 gpm, hose usage, brush vehicles, tanker, etc.) and 51,650 stations. [Table 13](#) provides a breakdown of the average apparatus and station rates by community size.

It is worth emphasizing what the rates in [Table 13](#) really mean. The numbers reflect averages of apparatus and station rates per 1,000 people by population protected reported to the NFPA. They do *not* represent recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates are higher for departments protecting smaller communities (under 25,000). This is because it takes a minimum number of apparatus and stations to operate a fire department regardless of the number of people protected. For instance, for a department protecting 1,000 people, you would expect according to [Table 13](#) on the average 1.173 pumpers, 1.886 other suppression vehicles, .033 aerial apparatus, and .952 stations. The .952 stations per 1,000 people is the highest rate shown in [Table 13](#), but for this community size it is equivalent to one station per department. Another way to put this is that for every 100 departments reporting 1,000 people, you would expect approximately 117 pumpers, 189 other suppression vehicles, 3 aerial apparatus, and 95 stations. For communities of 25,000 to 999,999, the rates tend to be quite similar: .055-.108 pumpers per 1,000 people; and .032-.067 other suppression vehicles; .014-.022 aerial apparatus per 1,000 people, and .063-.096 stations per 1,000 people.

[Tables 14, 15, 16, and 17](#) display the frequency of occurrence of the number of pumpers, other suppression vehicles, aerial apparatus, and stations by size of community.

Table 13.
Average Apparatus and Station Rates per 1,000 People
By Community Size, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Pumpers per 1,000 People	Other ¹ Vehicles per 1,000 People	Aerial Apparatus per 1,000 People	Stations per 1,000 People
1,000,000 or more	.035	.012	.013	.035
500,000 to 999,999	.055	.032	.014	.063
250,000 to 499,999	.059	.026	.013	.058
100,000 to 249,999	.067	.032	.014	.069
50,000 to 99,999	.082	.041	.015	.081
25,000 to 49,999	.108	.067	.022	.095
10,000 to 24,999	.184	.138	.033	.128
5,000 to 9,999	.319	.294	.037	.197
2,500 to 4,999	.541	.629	.029	.346
Under 2,500	1.173	1.886	.033	.952
National Average	.213	.236	.022	.164

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2010-2012.

These results reflect average apparatus and station rates per 1,000 people by population protected reported to the NFPA. They do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

¹ Other suppression vehicles include apparatus with pumps less than 1,000 gpm, hose wagons, brush fire vehicles, tankers, etc.

Table 14.
Pumpers (750 gpm or greater) by Community Size, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	1-5 Pumpers	6-9 Pumpers	10-19 Pumpers	20-39 Pumpers	40 or More Pumpers	
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.8%	81.2%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	2.5	5.0	60.0	32.5	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	0.0	1.6	51.6	41.9	4.8	100.0%
100,000 to 249,999	18.8	40.0	34.2	6.2	0.8	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With				Total	
	No Pumpers	1 Pumper	2 Pumpers	3-4 Pumpers		5 or More Pumpers
50,000 to 99,999	1.3%	1.9%	6.8%	32.3%	57.7%	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	1.3	4.3	21.7	47.5	25.2	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	0.9	8.3	32.2	48.4	10.2	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	1.5	14.3	45.1	35.7	3.4	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	2.4	23.2	49.8	23.6	1.1	100.0%
Under 2,500	11.7	42.4	37.6	8.0	0.3	100.0%

Source: 2010-2012 NFPA Fire Service Survey

Note that pumpers reported above had a capability of 1,000 gpm or greater. Note that many departments reported other fire suppression vehicles including apparatus with pumps less than 1,000 gpm, hose wagons, brush fire vehicles, tankers, etc.

Table 15.
Other Suppression Vehicles by Community Size, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With Other Suppression Vehicles						Total
	1-3	4-5	6-9	10-19	20- 29	30 or More	
1,000,000 or more	12.5%	0.0%	6.2%	18.8%	25.0%	37.5%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	18.9	13.5	10.8	27.0	16.2	13.5	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	17.6	15.7	23.5	31.4	7.8	3.9	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With Other Suppression Vehicles					Total
	None	1	2	3-4	5 or More	
100,000 to 249,999	20.6%	15.6%	11.5%	18.5%	33.7%	100.0%
50,000 to 999,999	30.4	18.3	15.9	16.8	18.7	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	30.6	22.2	17.1	16.7	13.3	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	25.0	22.9	19.5	20.9	11.8	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	17.4	22.6	25.1	25.3	9.6	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	11.9	20.8	28.5	29.4	9.3	100.0%
Under 2,500	10.7	22.7	28.5	29.5	8.5	100.0%

Source: 2010-2012 NFPA Fire Service Survey

Other suppression vehicles include apparatus with pumps less than 1,000 gpm, hose wagons, brush fire vehicles, tankers, etc.

Table 16.
Aerial Apparatus by Community Size, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Aerial Apparatus	1-5 Aerial Apparatus	6-9 Aerial Apparatus	10-19 Aerial Apparatus	20 or More Aerial Apparatus	
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	37.5%	50.0%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	10.0	20.0	25.0	37.5	7.5	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	7.9	60.3	25.4	6.3	0.0	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Aerial Apparatus	1 Aerial Apparatus	2 Aerial Apparatus	3-4 Aerial Apparatus	5 or More Aerial Apparatus	
100,000 to 249,999	19.3%	23.0%	27.9%	19.7%	10.2%	100.0%
50,000 to 99,999	30.1	40.6	22.1	7.2	0.0	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	37.3	49.4	12.4	0.8	0.1	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	49.8	46.7	3.4	0.2	0.0	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	73.3	25.9	0.7	0.1	0.0	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	89.5	10.1	0.4	0.0	0.0	100.0%
Under 2,500	96.3	3.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	100.0%

Source: 2010-2012 NFPA Fire Service Survey.

Table 17.
Fire Stations by Community Size, 2010-2012

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	1-5 Stations	6-9 Stations	10-19 Stations	20-29 Stations	30 or More Stations	
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	0.0	5.0	17.5	77.5	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	0.0	0.0	54.0	34.9	11.1	100.0%
100,000 to 249,999	9.8	44.3	40.2	4.5	1.2	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Stations	1 Station	2 Stations	3 Stations	4 or More Stations	
50,000 to 99,999	0.0%	1.1%	3.6%	14.8%	80.5%	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	0.0	14.0	23.6	27.1	35.3	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	0.0	45.8	30.5	13.0	10.7	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	0.0	69.8	20.2	6.3	3.6	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	0.1	78.5	15.8	3.9	1.6	100.0%
Under 2,500	0.4	86.4	10.7	1.6	0.9	100.0%

Source: 2010-2012 NFPA Fire Service Survey

Emergency Medical Services

The level of emergency medical service (EMS) provided by fire departments by size of community for the 2010-2012 period can be seen in [Table 18](#). The larger the community, the more likely EMS service was provided. Overall for the country, 13,600 or 45.2% of departments provided EMS service, without advanced life support 4,550 departments or 15.1% provided EMS service and advanced life support, while 11,950 departments or 39.7% provided no EMS service.

U.S. Expenditures on Local Fire Protection

[Table 19](#) shows expenditures on local fire protection by governments, with and without adjustment for inflation. Note that these expenditures adjusted for inflation, have risen 172% from 1980 to 2011. Other municipal service costs like police protection have risen in a similar manner.

Fire protection costs rose 115% from 1986 to 2011 after adjusting for inflation, while the number of career firefighters was increasing 46%. Since chiefs of fire departments serving larger communities report problems with shrinking budgets or with level budgets combined with increasing responsibilities, this clear pattern of increasing fire department resources nationwide is difficult to interpret. Some of the factors possibly contributing to this increase in costs are (1) shrinkage of the work week⁵ for some departments, which results in a need to increase staffing and apparatus or to pay firefighters at overtime rates; (2) increased EMS responsibilities requiring increased staffing and, in some communities, a more frequent replacement of apparatus; and (3) costs of retirement and health benefits continuing to rise as they do for the general population.

⁵ This is the result at least to some extent of the Fair Labor Standards Act being applied to municipal fire departments.

Table 18.
Departments Providing Emergency Medical Service
By Community Size (Percent), 2010-2012

Population Protected	No EMS	BLS	ALS	Total
1,000,000 or more	0%	0%	100%	100%
500,000 to 999,999	0	30	70	100%
250,000 to 499,999	0	27	73	100%
100,000 to 249,999	3	35	62	100%
50,000 to 99,999	7	38	55	100%
25,000 to 49,999	18	37	45	100%
10,000 to 24,999	28	42	31	100%
5,000 to 9,999	40	42	18	100%
2,500 to 4,999	42	46	12	100%
under 2,500	46	48	6	100%
Nationwide	40	45	15	100%

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2010-2012

BLS refers to basic life support and ALS refers to fire departments providing advanced life support.

Table 19.
Direct Expenditures on Local Fire Protection

Year	Expenditures (in Billions)	Expenditures (in Billions) Adjusted for Inflation*
1980	\$5.7	\$5.7
1981	\$6.3	\$5.7
1982	\$7.0	\$6.0
1983	\$7.6	\$6.3
1984	\$8.2	\$6.5
1985	\$8.5	\$6.5
1986	\$9.6	\$7.2
1987	\$10.5	\$7.9
1988	\$11.8	\$8.2
1989	\$11.9	\$7.9
1990	\$13.2	\$8.3
1991	\$13.8	\$8.3
1992	\$14.4	\$8.5
1993	\$15.4	\$9.0
1994	\$16.1	\$9.0
1995	\$17.0	\$9.2
1996	\$17.7	\$9.3
1997	\$19.4	\$10.0
1998	\$20.3	\$10.3
1999	\$21.3	\$10.5
2000	\$23.1	\$11.1
2001	\$25.0	\$11.6
2002	\$26.0	\$11.9
2003	\$27.9	\$12.5
2004	\$28.4	\$12.4
2005	\$30.7	\$13.0
2006	\$34.2	\$14.0
2007	\$36.8	\$14.6
2008	\$39.7	\$15.2
2009	\$40.3	\$15.5
2010	\$42.6	\$16.1
2011	\$42.3	\$15.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Governments Division*

*Adjustments were made to 1980 dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

Data Sources

The report is based on two data sources: the annual NFPA Survey for U.S. Fire Experience, 2012, and the NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2010-2012.

The annual fire experience survey is a sample survey of fire departments in the United States, which serves as the basis for making national estimates of the fire problem. The sample is stratified by the size of the community protected by the fire department. All U.S. fire departments that protect communities of 50,000 or more are included in the sample, because they constitute a small number of departments with a large share of the total population protected. For departments that protect less than 50,000 population, a sample was selected stratified by size of community protected. Survey returns in recent years have ranged from 2,500 to 3,500 departments annually. The survey also includes questions on the number of career and volunteer firefighters. The national projections are made by weighing sample results according to the proportion of total U.S. population accounted for by communities of each size.

The NFPA Fire Service Survey is a three year cycle survey which attempts to survey about one third of the states in the country each year. The survey includes questions on the number of career firefighters, the number of volunteer firefighters, length of work week, number of apparatus and stations, etc. In recent years the survey has had a response rate of about 18% from departments.