



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of Inspector General



# USDA OIG Firefighter Pulse Survey (IIJA)

December 2024  
OAI Report 23-099-01





## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

United States Department of Agriculture



**DATE:** December 6, 2024

**TO:** Randy Moore  
Chief  
Forest Service

**ATTN:** Robert Velasco  
Chief Financial Officer  
Forest Service

**FROM:** Peter Sima-Eichler  
Assistant Inspector General  
Office of Analytics and Innovation

**SUBJECT:** 23-099 USDA OIG Firefighter Pulse Survey (IIJA) Report

This product presents the results of the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) June – July 2024 survey of Forest Service (FS) firefighters to understand the perceived impact of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) on firefighters, including 1) authorized pay increases, 2) occupational series changes, and 3) programs relevant to firefighters.

OIG distributed the 22-question survey to 11,004 FS firefighters and had a 25.8 percent response rate. FS' written response to the draft is included in its entirety at the end of the product.

Accompanying this static report is a dynamic version that can be found online using this url: [Firefighter Pulse Survey Interactive Report](#). OIG applied Office of Analytics and Innovation quality assurance standards to ensure the information presented in both products is adequately supported.

We appreciate the courtesies and cooperation extended to us by members of your staff during the survey development and execution process. The product contains publicly available information and will be posted in its entirety to our website (<https://usdaoig.oversight.gov>).





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A firefighter looks over scorched area of a fire site checking for hot spots. Photo by U.S. Forest Service. It does not depict any specific audit, inspection, or investigation.

# Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a survey of Forest Service (FS) firefighters and related fire positions to obtain information about how they perceive the impacts of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA), including 1) authorized pay increases, 2) occupational series changes, and 3) programs relevant to firefighters.

On June 6, 2024, OIG sent the 22-question pulse survey to 11,004 FS fire personnel. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. The survey closed on July 9, 2024. This report presents the results.

Figure 1 provides a high-level overview of the survey responses.

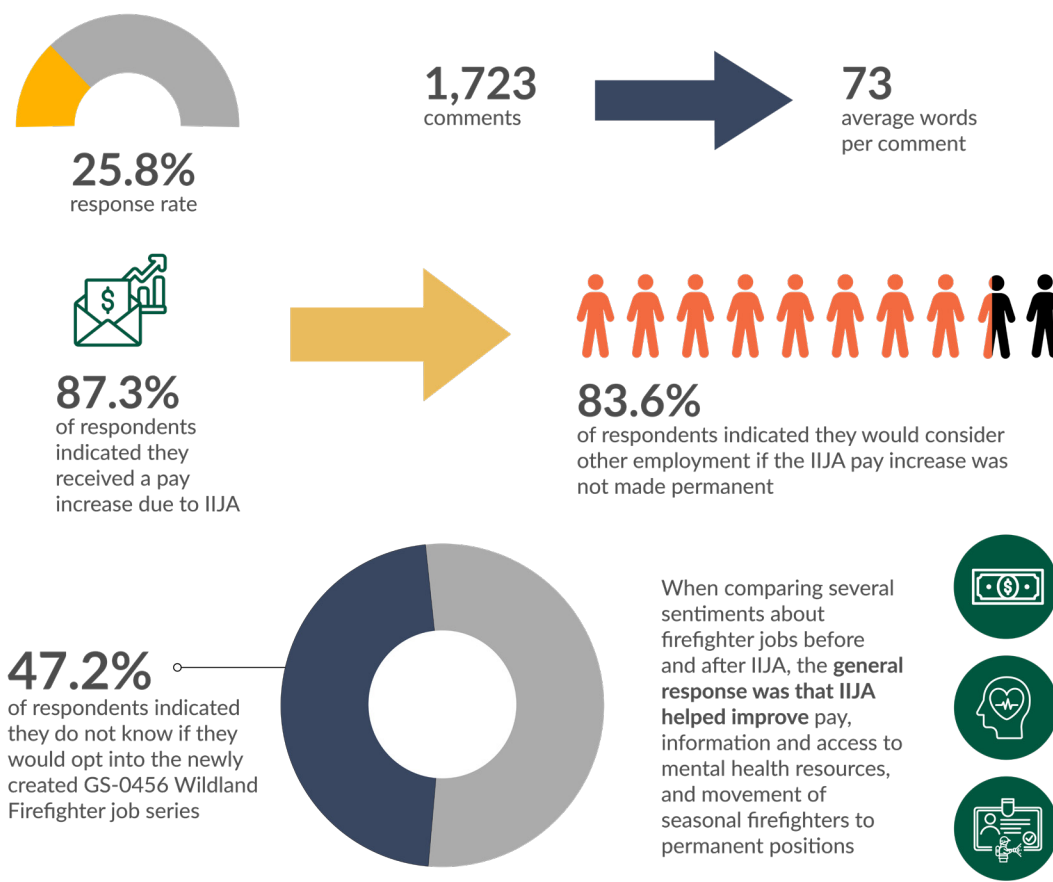


Figure 1. Summary of firefighters' survey responses.

# Background and Objectives

IIJA was enacted in November 2021. The Act provided USDA more than \$8.3 billion in funding, including more than \$5.4 billion in funding for FS. This funding includes \$480 million that is provided to FS to invest in the workforce, establish a new firefighter job series, increase firefighter salary base pay, and convert more than 1,000 seasonal firefighters to permanent positions.<sup>1</sup> USDA OIG's Office of Analytics and Innovation (OAI) conducted a pulse survey to understand the perceived impact of IIJA on firefighters, including

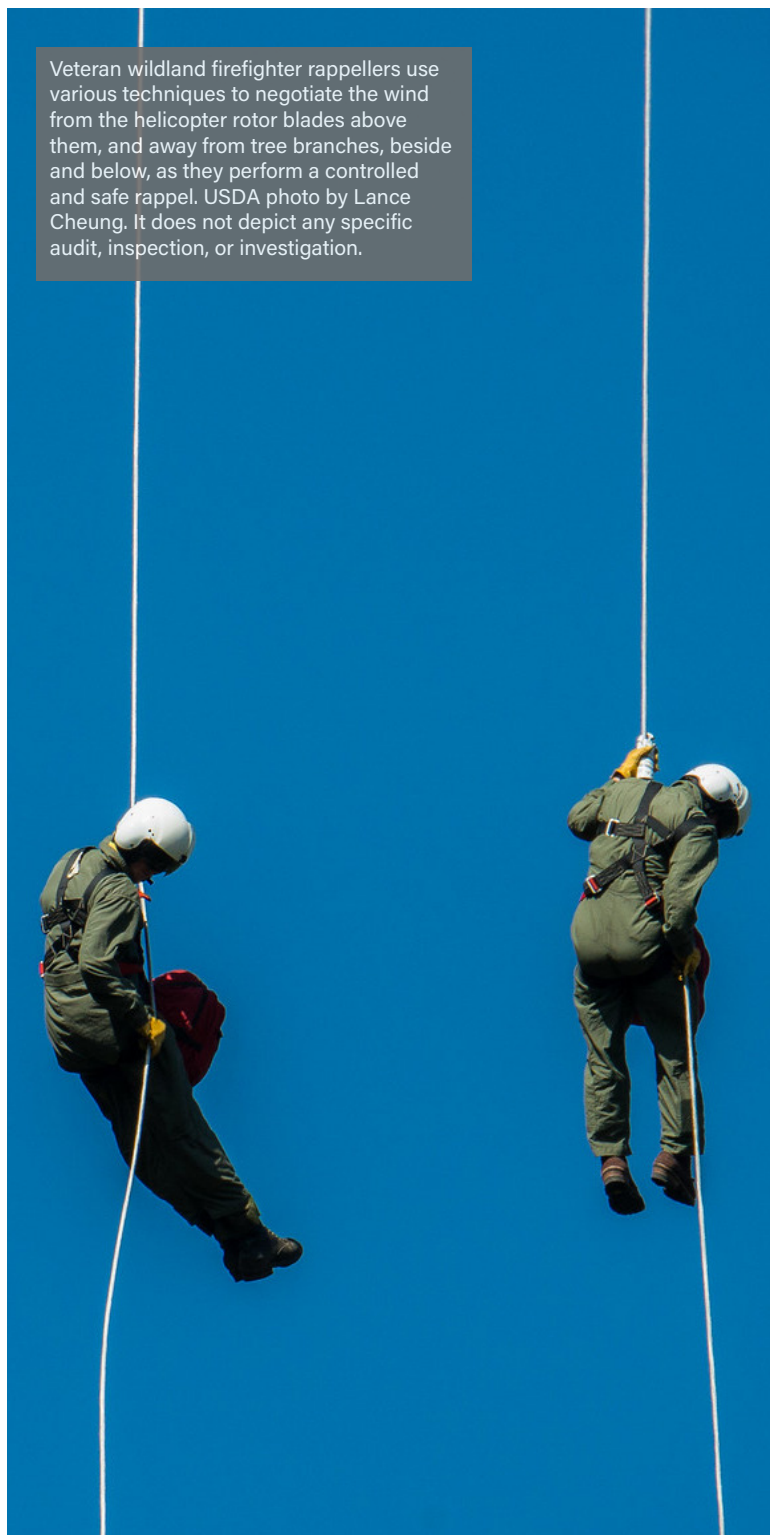
- 1) authorized pay increases,
- 2) occupational series changes, and
- 3) programs relevant to firefighters.

## Forest Service Wildland Firefighters

While many Federal, State, and local firefighter territories may overlap, FS firefighters respond to many wildfires, either because the fires are burning on National Forest System land or because the firefighters aid other Federal, tribal, State, or local partners. FS has more than 11,000 firefighters nationwide. Appointments range from temporary, seasonal positions to permanent, full-time year-round positions.

<sup>1</sup> Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, § 40803(c)(2), 135 Stat. 1098 (2021).

Veteran wildland firefighter rappellers use various techniques to negotiate the wind from the helicopter rotor blades above them, and away from tree branches, beside and below, as they perform a controlled and safe rappel. USDA photo by Lance Cheung. It does not depict any specific audit, inspection, or investigation.



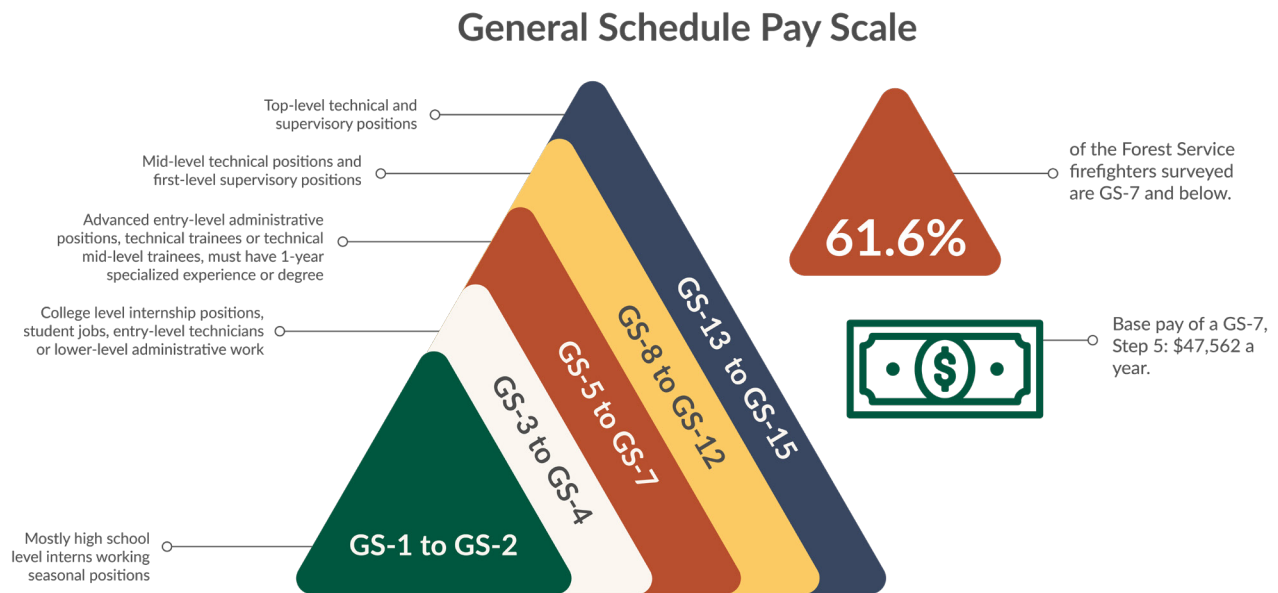
Federal wildland firefighters engage in fire suppression, fire management, and fire control. The types of job positions and the work they do are shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Description of wildland firefighters' positions. Job titles and descriptions are from the FS website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/fire>.**

FS generally uses the General Schedule (GS) pay scale for employees in professional, technical, administrative, or clerical positions. Of the survey recipients, more than 97 percent are under the GS pay scale.<sup>2</sup> The GS pay scale has 15 levels, called “grades” (see Figure 3), beginning at GS-1 and moving up to GS-15, with 10 steps within each grade.

<sup>2</sup> The remaining survey recipients are under the [Federal Wage System](#), a pay plan for people who are usually paid by the hour.



**Figure 3. GS pay scale and level descriptions are from the FS website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/competitive-pay>.**

Of the FS firefighters surveyed, 61.6 percent are GS-7 or lower, with most individuals falling in the GS-4 scale. The base salary for GS-7, Step 5 is \$47,562 per year. In addition to the base salary, there may be locality pay adjustments, which are designed to accommodate the cost of living in more expensive geographical locations. In higher cost-of-living areas, locality pay can be 10-25 percent higher than other locations.

## IIJA Provisions

IIJA included provisions related to the Federal wildland firefighter workforce. The February 2024 [USDA OIG Informational report](#) summarizes these specific provisions, which directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to:

- develop, in coordination with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), a distinct “wildland firefighter” occupational series;
- seek to convert not fewer than 1,000 seasonal wildland firefighters to wildland firefighters who (1) are full-time, permanent, year-round employees, and (2) reduce hazardous fuels on Federal land not fewer than 800 hours per year;
- increase the base salary of a Federal wildland firefighter by either \$20,000 per year or 50 percent of the base salary in geographic areas in which it is difficult to recruit or retain a firefighter;
- develop and adhere to recommendations for mitigation strategies for wildland firefighters to minimize exposure to line-of-duty environmental hazards; and
- establish programs for permanent, temporary, seasonal, and year-round wildland firefighters to recognize and address mental health needs, including post-traumatic stress disorder care.



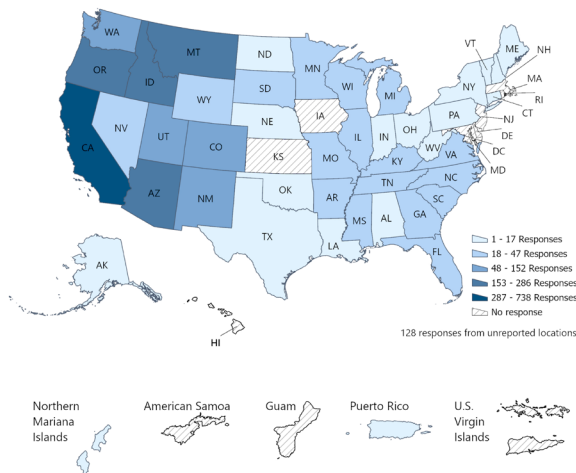
# Pulse Survey Results

On June 6, 2024, OIG emailed an invitation to participate in the online USDA-OIG Firefighter Pulse Survey (IIJA) to identified FS Wildland Firefighters. The 22-question survey closed on July 9, 2024. Of the 11,004 employees invited to participate in the survey, 2,840 (25.8 percent) responded. Of the respondents, 59.3 percent answered that they were aware of IIJA prior to the survey.

**91.3%**

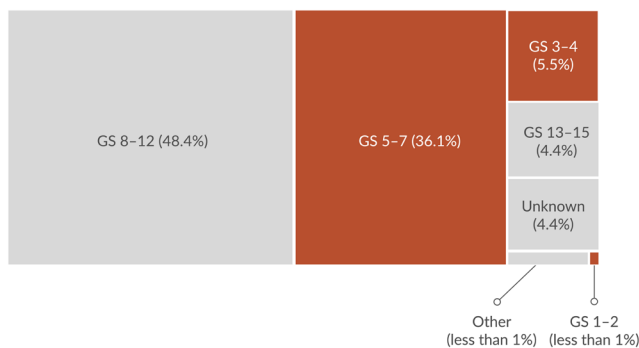
of respondents were currently employed by the Forest Service as permanent firefighters

## Respondents by State and Territory



**41.7%**

of respondents were GS-7 and below



## Top 3 Job Series Respondents



**74.9%**

0462  
Forestry Technician Series



**12.9%**

0301  
Misc. Administration and Program Series



**4.2%**

0401  
General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Series

## Respondents' Position Tenures

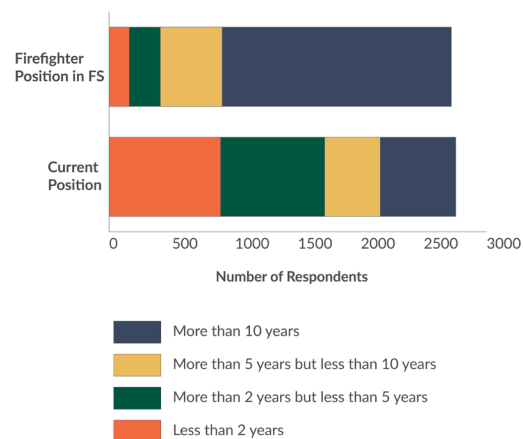


Figure 4. Summary of survey respondents' demographics.



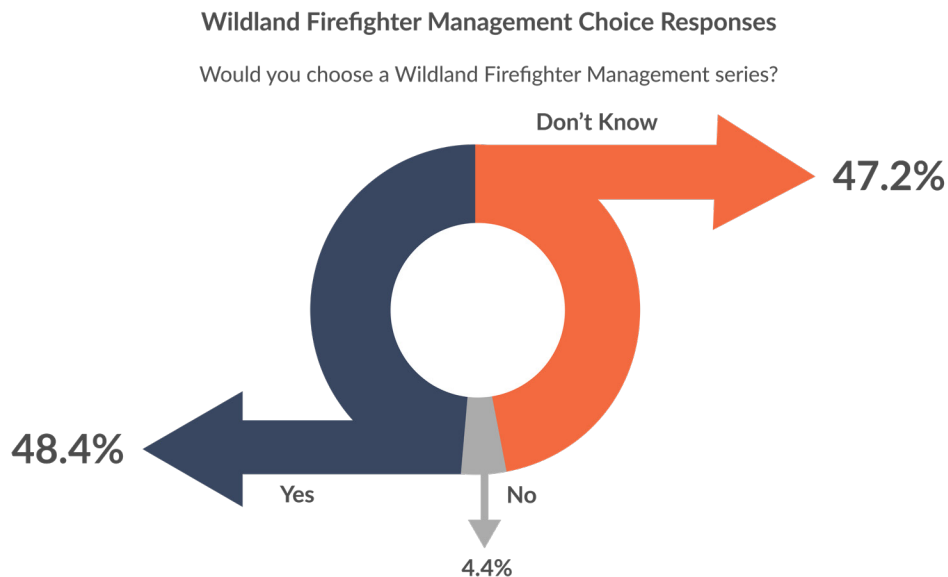
## Respondents' Demographics

The survey included questions designed to gather the respondents' basic demographic data. Figure 4 presents a high-level summary of the respondent demographics.

Most respondents reported that they currently work with FS as permanent firefighters and have been employed by FS for more than 10 years. Almost half of the respondents were GS-7 and below: 41.7 percent were GS-7 or lower, with the median GS level being 8.

## Occupational Series Change

IIJA stipulated that a new occupational series be created that covered positions in which the primary duties involved the prevention, control, suppression, or management of wildland fires. OPM, in collaboration with FS, created the permanent GS-0456 Wildland Firefighter Management series. The new series, together with the associated interim temporary pay increases and focused efforts on long-term solutions, was aimed at lowering attrition rates and significantly improving retention of Federal wildland firefighters.



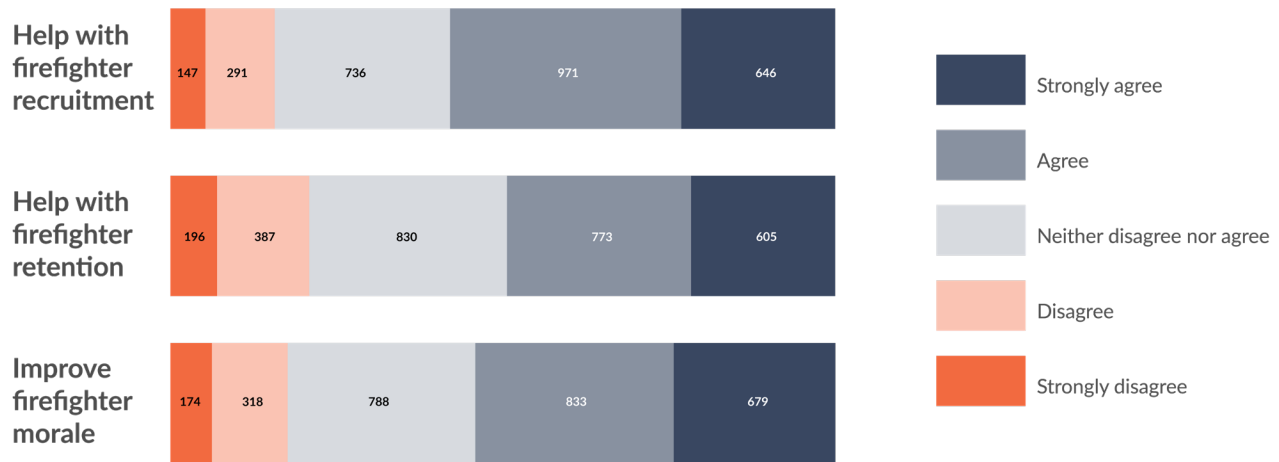
**Figure 5. A plurality of respondents indicated they would opt for a job series solely dedicated to firefighters.**

Four survey questions asked respondents about the development of this job series solely dedicated to firefighters. While respondents represented more than 18 different occupational series (see Appendix A for breakdown of series), 48.4 percent said that, if given the opportunity, they would choose the Wildland Firefighter Management series, 4.4 percent would not, and 47.2 percent were unsure. Figure 5 illustrates these responses.

In the open-ended questions, some respondents mentioned a lack of clarity and communication about the new occupational series and how to move into it. Though many respondents

## Job Series Responses

A job series solely dedicated to firefighters would:



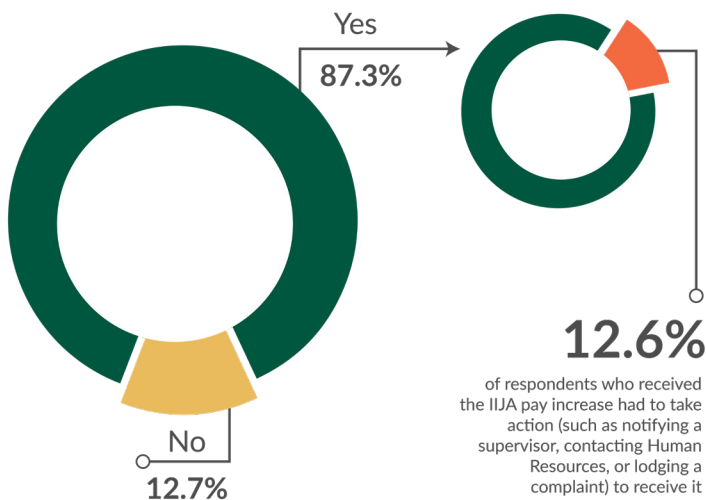
**Figure 6. Diagram of respondents' perceptions of the job series.**

indicated they were unsure they would choose the series, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a dedicated firefighter series would help with firefighter recruitment. Most respondents also agreed or strongly agreed a dedicated firefighter series would improve morale. Additionally, approximately half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a new series would help with retention. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of respondents' perceptions of the new series' impact.

## Temporary Pay Increase

### Pay Increase Responses

Did you receive an increase in pay effective October 2021 due to IJJA?



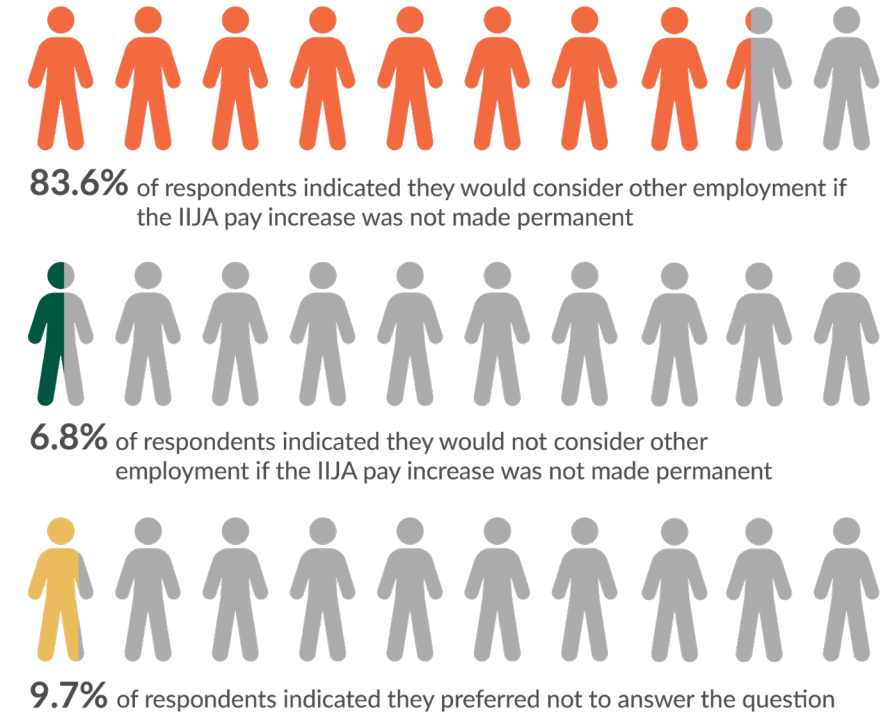
**Figure 7. Most respondents got the pay increase, but a small number had to take action to receive it.**

Respondents were also asked about IJJA's temporary pay increase. The salary supplement was based on an annual salary amount: either a \$20,000 annual amount or 50 percent of the firefighter's annual base salary, whichever was less.

Six questions provide insight into how many respondents received the pay increase, how they obtained it, and the impact of that increase, as shown in Figure 7. Most respondents—87.3 percent—received a pay increase due to IJJA. However, 12.6 percent had to take some kind of action to receive their pay increase, such as contacting their Human Resources (HR) office.

In an additional question, 82.7 percent of respondents indicated they received the payment amount they were entitled to, 2.8 percent did not, and another 14.4 percent were unsure. The majority of respondents who answered this question also reported they were expecting a pay increase, while 39.9 percent were not.

As stated, the pay increase provided through IIJA is temporary. When asked if respondents would consider employment opportunities elsewhere if the pay increase was not made permanent, 83.6 percent stated they would pursue other opportunities.

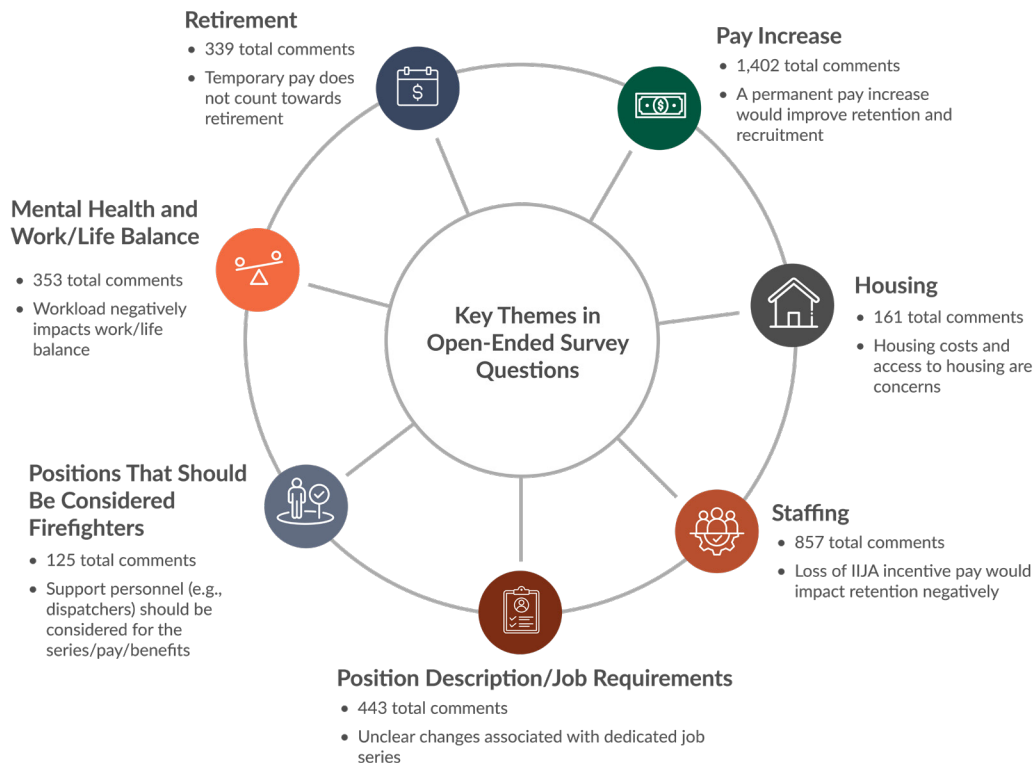


**Figure 8. Most respondents would consider employment opportunities elsewhere if the IIJA pay increase is not made permanent.**

# Open-Ended Responses

The survey had one open-ended question to capture any additional information respondents wanted to share. We received 1,723 comments, with an average word count of 73.

Analysts read each comment, identified key themes, and categorized each response. The seven themes include: pay increase, staffing, position description/job requirements, mental health and work/life balance, retirement, housing, and positions that should be considered firefighters. Figure 9 shows the total number of responses touching upon each theme and a common sentiment underlying each theme.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 9. Diagram of the themes and associated phrases.**

## Perceived Impact of IIJA

The survey included two multi-part statements regarding firefighter pay, awareness of mental health resources, and accessibility to mental health resources. We also included one statement about moving seasonal firefighters to permanent positions. The respondents were asked about the views they held pre- and post-IIJA in this post-IIJA survey.

The responses show that prior to IIJA, the respondents disagreed with the statements that pay for firefighters was appropriate, that FS clearly described mental health resources available to them, and that they were able to use those resources for mental health needs.

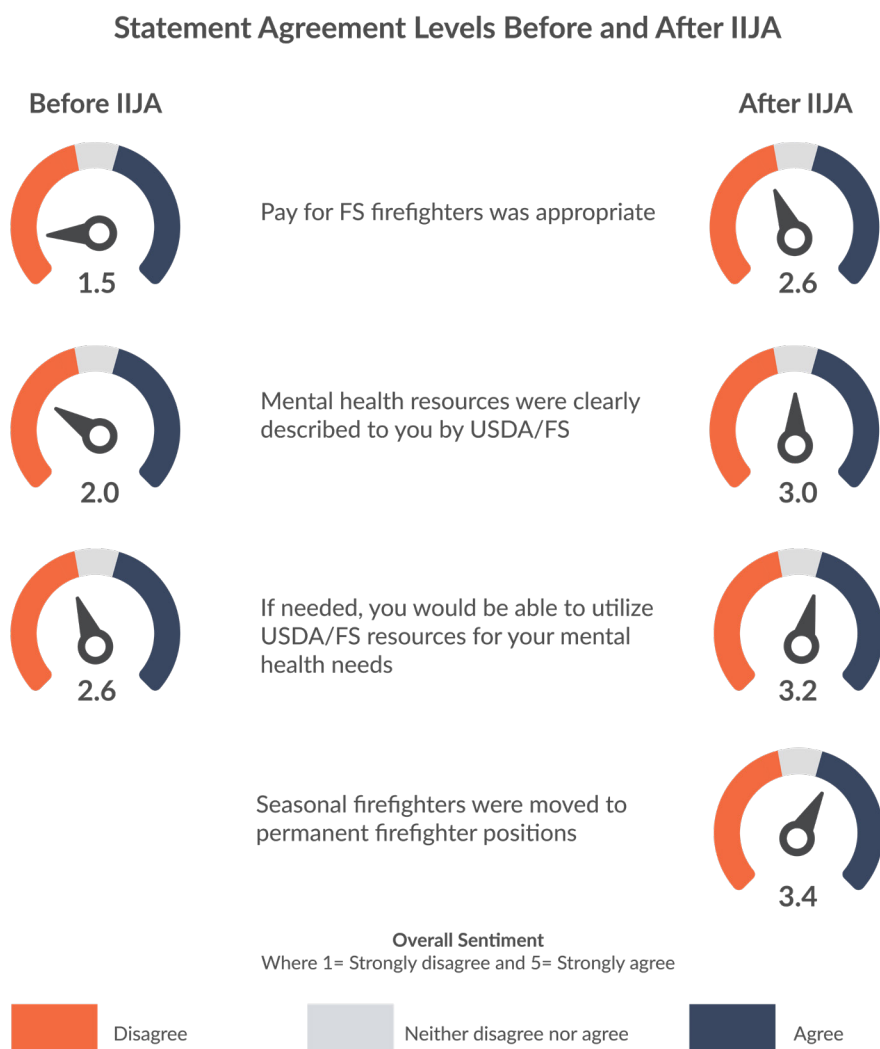
<sup>3</sup> Individual responses often included more than one theme.



After IIJA was enacted, the respondents indicated that they still disagreed that the pay was appropriate, but fewer respondents disagreed. Both questions about mental health resources also showed that fewer respondents disagreed—though the respondents did not overall agree with the statements related to mental health, fewer disagreed than before IIJA.

The final question was about the movement of seasonal firefighters to permanent positions. We did not make a “before IIJA” statement, but the “after IIJA” respondents generally agreed with the statement.

Figure 10 captures the specifics of these multi-part questions and the results.



**Figure 9. Diagram of the themes and associated phrases.**



# Scope and Methodology

The intended recipients of the USDA-OIG Firefighter Pulse Survey (IIJA) were 11,004 wildland firefighters identified via a roster provided by FS.<sup>4</sup> OIG emailed the invitation to the survey on June 6, 2024. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary, and responses were anonymous.

The survey questionnaire included 22 questions in 5 sections:

- Demographics (7 questions)
- Awareness of IIJA (2 questions)
- Perceptions about a new occupational series code (4 questions)
- Perceptions about compensation (6 questions)
- Perceptions about the impact of IIJA (3 questions)

The survey closed on July 9, 2024.<sup>5</sup> Of the 11,004 individuals invited to participate in the survey, 2,840 (25.8 percent) responded, including 1,723 who provided comments in response to an open-ended question. See Appendix A for additional details about the survey results. OIG used geographic information system mapping software to produce the map of respondents shown in Figure 4 based on respondents' submission to survey question 19, "In what State or U.S. territory do you currently work?"

USDA OIG applied the established OAI quality assurance standards to ensure the information presented in this product is adequately supported.

## Survey Approach

The survey questionnaire itself contained skip logic, meaning respondents received only those questions relevant to them based on their responses to earlier questions. For example, survey respondents who self-reported they were not currently employed as an FS wildland firefighter were not shown questions that asked about their perceptions regarding certain items impacting FS firefighters.<sup>6</sup> Some questions were asked on a Likert scale.<sup>7</sup> Others gave respondents the

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<sup>4</sup> The roster, as of pay period 09, 2024, included 12,816 firefighters, but only 11,003 had FS email addresses. One survey invitation was sent to a specified private email address upon request. OIG confirmed that the individual is in the roster of wildland firefighters based on the name and did not have an associated email contact as provided by FS.

<sup>5</sup> An error in the survey collection software caused a delay in the survey closing. It was originally planned for July 3, but additional responses came in between July 3 and July 9.

<sup>6</sup> Participants who indicated they "Never held a firefighter position" were not asked survey questions 15 and 16.

<sup>7</sup> For example, respondents were asked about their level of agreement with the statement that "[before IIJA] pay to FS firefighters was appropriate." Respondents were presented with a scale of possible answers as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

option to provide a custom submission with an “Other” response. Additionally, respondents were offered a “Prefer not to answer” option on some questions.

## Treatment of the Question Responses

Except for the responses to the open-ended questions, OIG presents the responses to the survey without drawing any inferences or interpreting the results. To calculate the percentages, OIG compared the number of responses to a particular survey question and the total number that responded to that question. For more information, see Appendix A.

For the open-ended survey question, OIG reviewed the 1,723 responses to summarize key ideas into themes.<sup>8</sup> The responses were then labeled according to any of the themes that were mentioned in the comment.<sup>9</sup> In total, the seven themes are: pay increase; retirement; position description/job requirements; mental health and work/life balance; staffing; positions that should be considered firefighters (e.g., dispatch); and housing. A similar process was applied to other survey questions that permitted open-ended responses with unique themes identified for each question.

We performed statistical tests of independence to assess non-response bias and determine whether there are statistically significant associations between respondent status (a respondent vs. a non-respondent) and the available demographic data, one of which was grade level. Non-response bias occurs when the characteristics of respondents differ systematically from those who did not respond, potentially leading to biased conclusions. OAI found the strongest statistically significant association between the respondent status and grade level (Appendix B). Hence, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results as they may be biased towards higher grade level firefighters. Further, the survey was distributed to the entire validated email roster of FS firefighters as of pay period 09, 2024, without sampling. Due to a survey participation rate of 25.8 percent and the potential for non-response bias, the survey findings may not fully represent the perspectives or experiences of the entire FS firefighter population.

Views expressed in response to any individual question, including open-ended questions, may not be representative of all FS firefighters who were invited to participate in the survey. We did not assess the merits of the individual comments or suggestions provided in response to any survey question.

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<sup>8</sup> The survey included one question that solely collected open-ended responses (See Q17 in Appendix A). There are other questions that collect open-ended responses to the question with the answer choice “Other (please specify).”

<sup>9</sup> There were 64 comments containing language such as “No comments,” “N/A,” and “no,” and variations on those responses; there remained 1,659 responses for review that were categorized into an identified theme.

# Appendix A: Survey Questions and Summary Responses

The following provides questions that were asked through the survey and the accompanying tables show answer choices and summary responses. In addition, the results tables below provide the percent of respondents who selected each answer choice, as well as the number of respondents who left the survey prior to answering the question, were not asked the question due to skip logic, or did not answer the question.

Q1. Were you aware of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) prior to this survey?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	1,685	59.33
No	1,155	40.67
Answered	2,840	
Left Survey Prior to Question	0	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q2. You indicated you were aware of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which impacts firefighters. Please provide insight on how you were made aware:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Media/news	853	50.74
Work (supervisor, colleague, email announcement, etc.)	1,172	69.72
Word of mouth	791	47.06
Other (please specify)	136	8.09
Answered	1,681	
Left Survey Prior to Question	6	
Not Asked	1,152	
Skipped	1	

NOTE: The sum of Response Percent exceeds 100 percent because some respondents selected more than one answer.



Q3. Are you aware of the development of a Wildland Fire Management 0456 job series solely dedicated to firefighters? (A job series includes a definition, job title instructions, and grading criteria for positions in the series.)

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	2,596	92.09
No	223	7.91
Answered	2,819	
Left Survey Prior to Question	21	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q4. If given the opportunity to choose a Wildland Fire Management 0456 job series solely dedicated to firefighters, would you do so?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	1,253	48.38
No	114	4.40
I don't know	1,223	47.22
Answered	2,590	
Left Survey Prior to Question	28	
Not Asked	222	
Skipped	0	

Q5. You indicated you would not choose a new job series solely dedicated to firefighters. Please explain why you would not do so. (Choose all that apply)

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Job duties/responsibilities associated with a new wildland firefighter job series	14	12.39
Equity (rehire eligibility for temporary positions, all functions included for firefighter-related positions)	11	9.73
Other (please specify)	100	88.50
Answered	113	

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Left Survey Prior to Question	29	
Not Asked	2,698	
Skipped	0	

NOTE: The sum of Response Percent exceeds 100 percent because some respondents selected more than one answer.

Q6. How much do you agree with the following statements: A job series solely dedicated to firefighters would:

a. Help with firefighter recruitment

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	646	23.15
Agree	971	34.79
Neither Disagree nor Agree	736	26.37
Disagree	291	10.43
Strongly Disagree	147	5.27
Answered	2,791	
Left Survey Prior to Question	45	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	4	

b. Help with firefighter retention

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	605	21.68
Agree	773	27.70
Neither Disagree nor Agree	830	29.74
Disagree	387	13.87
Strongly Disagree	196	7.02
Answered	2,791	
Left Survey Prior to Question	45	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	4	

c. Improve firefighter morale

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	679	24.32
Agree	833	29.84
Neither Disagree nor Agree	788	28.22
Disagree	318	11.39
Strongly Disagree	174	6.23
Answered	2,792	
Left Survey Prior to Question	45	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	3	

Q7. Did you receive an increase in pay effective October 2021 due to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	2,428	87.28
No	354	12.72
Answered	2,782	
Left Survey Prior to Question	58	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q8. Did you need to take action (such as notifying your supervisor, contacting Human Resources (HR), or lodging a complaint) to obtain your pay increase?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	307	12.66
No	2,118	87.34
Answered	2,425	
Left Survey Prior to Question	65	
Not Asked	348	
Skipped	2	

Q9. What actions did you take? (Choose all that apply)

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Notified supervisor to request increase	155	50.99
Contacted HR to request increase	263	86.51
Lodged a formal complaint	46	15.13
Other (please specify)	39	12.83
Answered	304	
Left Survey Prior to Question	66	
Not Asked	2,465	
Skipped	5	

NOTE: The sum of Response Percent exceeds 100 percent because some respondents selected more than one answer.

Q10. Did you receive the amount that you are entitled to by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Lesser of \$20,000 or 50 percent increase of pay)?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	1,995	82.71
No	68	2.82
I don't know	349	14.47
Answered	2,412	
Left Survey Prior to Question	69	
Not Asked	353	
Skipped	6	

Q11. Were you expecting a pay increase due to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	238	60.10
No	158	39.90
Answered	396	
Left Survey Prior to Question	67	



Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Not Asked	2,377	
Skipped	0	

Q12. If the pay increase made available by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is not made permanent, would you consider employment opportunities elsewhere?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	2,307	83.56
No	187	6.77
Prefer not to answer	267	9.67
Answered	2,761	
Left Survey Prior to Question	79	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q13. How long have you been in your current position?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
0 to 2 years	886	32.16
More than 2 years to 5 years	827	30.02
More than 5 years to 10 years	442	16.04
Over 10 years	600	21.78
Answered	2,755	
Left Survey Prior to Question	85	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q14. How long have you been in a firefighter position with the Forest Service (FS)?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Less than 2 years	161	5.86
More than 2 years but less than 5 years	246	8.96
More than 5 years but less than 10 years	491	17.87
More than 10 years	1,822	66.33

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Never held a firefighter position	27	0.98
Answered	2,747	
Left Survey Prior to Question	85	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	8	

Q15. Considering the timeframe before November 2021 (before the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was enacted/signed into law), how much do you agree with the following statements:

a. Pay for FS firefighters was appropriate:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	68	2.65
Agree	85	3.32
Neither Disagree nor Agree	116	4.53
Disagree	549	21.43
Strongly Disagree	1,744	68.07
Answered	2,562	
Left Survey Prior to Question	91	
Not Asked	186	
Skipped	1	

b. Mental health resources were clearly described to you by USDA/FS:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	45	1.76
Agree	280	10.93
Neither Disagree nor Agree	440	17.17
Disagree	786	30.68
Strongly Disagree	1,011	39.46
Answered	2,562	
Left Survey Prior to Question	91	
Not Asked	186	

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Skipped	1	

c. If needed, you would be able to utilize USDA/FS resources for mental health needs:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	98	3.83
Agree	577	22.52
Neither Disagree nor Agree	762	29.74
Disagree	532	20.77
Strongly Disagree	593	23.15
Answered	2,562	
Left Survey Prior to Question	91	
Not Asked	186	
Skipped	1	

Q16. Considering the timeframe after November 2021 (after the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was enacted/signed into law), how much do you agree with the following statements:

a. Pay for FS firefighters was appropriate:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	152	5.61
Agree	674	24.87
Neither Disagree nor Agree	479	17.68
Disagree	831	30.66
Strongly Disagree	574	21.18
Answered	2,710	
Left Survey Prior to Question	103	
Not Asked	25	
Skipped	2	

b. Mental health resources were clearly described to you by USDA/FS:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	105	3.88

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Agree	886	32.72
Neither Disagree nor Agree	886	32.72
Disagree	555	20.49
Strongly Disagree	276	10.19
Answered	2,708	
Left Survey Prior to Question	103	
Not Asked	25	
Skipped	4	

c. If needed, you would be able to utilize USDA/FS resources for mental health needs:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	146	5.39
Agree	1,143	42.22
Neither Disagree nor Agree	834	30.81
Disagree	384	14.19
Strongly Disagree	200	7.39
Answered	2,707	
Left Survey Prior to Question	103	
Not Asked	25	
Skipped	5	

d. Seasonal firefighters were moved to permanent firefighter positions:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	256	9.44
Agree	1,247	45.98
Neither Disagree nor Agree	760	28.02
Disagree	298	10.99
Strongly Disagree	151	5.57
Answered	2,712	
Left Survey Prior to Question	103	
Not Asked	25	



Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Skipped	0	

Q17. If there is anything additional you would like to share concerning the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and its impact on firefighters such as pay, job series, permanent position, etc., please enter your comments below:

Answered	1,723
Left Survey Prior to Question	116
Not Asked	0
Skipped	1,001

Q18. What is your GS grade?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
GS 1	4	0.15
GS 2	0	0.00
GS 3	16	0.59
GS 4	140	5.15
GS 5	260	9.56
GS 6	272	10.00
GS 7	493	18.13
GS 8	468	17.21
GS 9	405	14.90
GS 10	15	0.55
GS 11	328	12.06
GS 12	158	5.81
GS 13	112	4.12
GS 14	13	0.48
GS 15	7	0.26
Other (please specify)	28	1.03
Answered	2,719	
Left Survey Prior to Question	121	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q19. In what State or U.S. territory do you currently work?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Alabama	15	0.55
Alaska	15	0.55
Arizona	178	6.56
Arkansas	24	0.88
California	738	27.21
Colorado	152	5.60
Connecticut	1	0.04
Delaware	0	0.00
District of Columbia	1	0.04
Florida	35	1.29
Georgia	26	0.96
Hawaii	0	0.00
Idaho	231	8.52
Illinois	21	0.77
Indiana	6	0.22
Iowa	0	0.00
Kansas	0	0.00
Kentucky	24	0.88
Louisiana	9	0.33
Maine	1	0.04
Maryland	0	0.00
Massachusetts	0	0.00
Michigan	30	1.11
Minnesota	35	1.29
Mississippi	26	0.96
Missouri	38	1.40
Montana	213	7.85
Nebraska	8	0.29
Nevada	30	1.11
New Hampshire	8	0.29
New Jersey	0	0.00
New Mexico	104	3.83
New York	1	0.04

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
North Carolina	31	1.14
North Dakota	2	0.07
Ohio	9	0.33
Oklahoma	4	0.15
Oregon	286	10.55
Pennsylvania	7	0.26
Rhode Island	0	0.00
South Carolina	32	1.18
South Dakota	34	1.25
Tennessee	21	0.77
Texas	17	0.63
Utah	91	3.36
Vermont	2	0.07
Virginia	19	0.70
Washington	106	3.91
West Virginia	9	0.33
Wisconsin	19	0.70
Wyoming	47	1.73
American Samoa	0	0.00
Guam	0	0.00
Northern Mariana Islands	1	0.04
Puerto Rico	5	0.18
U.S. Virgin Islands	0	0.00
Answered	2,712	
Left Survey Prior to Question	128	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q20. Are you currently employed by FS as a:

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Temporary firefighter	9	0.33
Seasonal firefighter	54	1.99
Permanent firefighter	2,483	91.62

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Not in a firefighter position	93	3.43
Prefer not to answer	71	2.62
Answered	2,710	
Left Survey Prior to Question	130	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

Q21. Have you recently become a permanent firefighter as a result of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act since November 2021?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
Yes	265	10.66
No	2,221	89.34
Answered	2,486	
Left Survey Prior to Question	131	
Not Asked	223	
Skipped	0	

Q22. What is the job series for your current position?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
0018 - Safety and Occupational Health Management Series	2	0.07
0089 - Emergency Management Series	1	0.04
0101 - Social Science Series	1	0.04
0188 - Recreation Specialist Series	0	0.00
0260 - Equal Employment Opportunity Series	1	0.04
0301 - Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series	340	12.59
0303 - Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series	2	0.07

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
0304 - Information Receptionist Series	0	0.00
0340 - Program Management Series	4	0.15
0342 - Support Services Administration Series	0	0.00
0343 - Management and Program Analysis Series	0	0.00
0401 - General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Series	114	4.22
0404 - Biological Science Technician Series	0	0.00
0454 - Rangeland Management Series	0	0.00
0460 - Forestry Series	19	0.70
0462 - Forestry Technician Series	2,023	74.90
0486 - Wildlife Biology Series	0	0.00
0560 - Budget Analysis Series	0	0.00
0610 - Nursing Series	0	0.00
0802 - Engineering Technical Series	1	0.04
0830 - Mechanical Engineering Series	0	0.00
0856 - Electronics Technical Series	0	0.00
1035 - Public Affairs Series	1	0.04
1101 - General Business and Industry Series	0	0.00
1102 - Contracting Series	0	0.00
1105 - Purchasing Series	0	0.00
1109 - Grants Management Series	0	0.00
1170 - Realty Series	0	0.00
1316 - Hydrologic Technician Series	0	0.00



Answer Choices	Number of Responses	Response Percent
1670 - Equipment Services Series	5	0.19
1702 - Education and Training Technician Series	0	0.00
1712 - Training Instruction Series	4	0.15
2101 - Transportation Specialist Series	67	2.48
2102 - Transportation Clear [sic] and Assistant Series	0	0.00
2150 - Transportation Operations Series	0	0.00
2151 - Dispatching Series	6	0.22
2181 - Aircraft Operation Series	11	0.41
4749 - Maintenance Mechanic	0	0.00
5716 - Engineering Equipment Operating	55	2.04
5823 - Automotive Mechanic	0	0.00
I don't know	23	0.85
Other	21	0.78
Other (please specify)	202	7.48
Answered	2,701	
Left Survey Prior to Question	139	
Not Asked	0	
Skipped	0	

NOTE: The sum of Response Percent exceeds 100 percent because some respondents selected more than one answer.

## Appendix B: Grade Level Comparison

The following table shows the count of firefighters, and the percentage of firefighters identified by grade level. This is displayed by those who responded to the survey, those who did not respond to the survey, those who were invited to participate in the survey, and those identified as a firefighter in the pay period 9, 2024, roster provided by FS.

	Respondents		Non-Respondents		Survey Email Invitations		Roster Provided by FS	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
GS 01	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
GS 02	0	0.00	2	0.02	2	0.02	11	0.09
GS 03	26	0.92	393	4.81	419	3.81	708	5.81
GS 04	171	6.02	1,720	21.07	1,891	17.18	2,630	21.58
GS 05	269	9.47	1,324	16.22	1,593	14.48	1,732	14.21
GS 06	303	10.67	900	11.02	1,203	10.93	1,209	9.92
GS 07	485	17.08	1,186	14.53	1,671	15.19	1,671	13.71
GS 08	452	15.92	931	11.40	1,383	12.57	1,383	11.35
GS 09	391	13.77	646	7.91	1,037	9.42	1,037	8.51
GS 10	12	0.42	19	0.23	31	0.28	31	0.25
GS 11	338	11.90	440	5.39	778	7.07	778	6.38
GS 12	166	5.85	282	3.45	448	4.07	448	3.68
GS 13	119	4.19	145	1.78	264	2.40	264	2.17
GS 14	20	0.70	19	0.23	39	0.35	39	0.32
GS 15	5	0.18	7	0.09	12	0.11	12	0.10
Other/ Blank	83	2.92	150	1.84	233	2.12	233	1.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,840</b>		<b>8,164</b>		<b>11,004</b>		<b>12,186</b>	



# Appendix C: Relevant Government Publications

While the publications listed are related to this topic, our survey focused specifically on FS firefighters and their perceptions of IIJA.

- GAO-23-105517, [Wildland Fire: Barriers to Recruitment and Retention of Federal Wildland Firefighters](#), November 2022.

The Government Accountability Office identified seven barriers to recruitment and retention of Federal wildland firefighters through analysis of interviews with agency officials and 16 non-Federal stakeholders and a review of documents. The seven barriers the Government Accountability Office identified were: 1) low pay, 2) career advancement challenges, 3) poor work/life balance, 4) mental health challenges, 5) remote or expensive duty stations, 6) limited workforce diversity, and 7) hiring process challenges.

- [Full Committee Hearing to Examine the Federal Response to Escalating Wildfires and to Evaluate Reforms to Land Management and Wildland Firefighter Recruitment and Retention](#), June 2023.

The purpose of this hearing was to examine the Federal response to escalating wildfires and to evaluate reforms to land management and wildland firefighter recruitment and retention.



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

FS.....	Forest Service
GS.....	General Schedule
HR.....	Human Resources
IIJA.....	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
OAI.....	Office of Analytics and Innovation
OIG.....	Office of Inspector General
OPM.....	Office of Personnel Management
USDA.....	U.S. Department of Agriculture

# Agency Response



Forest Service

Washington Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

**File Code:** 1430  
**Route To:**

**Date:** November 22, 2024

**Subject:** OIG Report on IJJA - Firefighter Pulse Survey (OAI 23-099-01)

**To:** Craig M. Goscha, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Analytics and Innovation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the USDA Office of Inspector General Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Firefighter Pulse Survey. Your dedication to gathering insights from our firefighters and facilitating their feedback is appreciated. We also want to extend our sincere appreciation to the firefighters for taking the time to participate in this important survey. While the results may provide meaningful insights, the survey was conducted prior to final agency communications about the new wildland firefighter occupational series.

Extensive work with OPM, stakeholder engagements and legislative compliance have been key to the success in developing and establishing the series. To date more than 350 eligible employees have transitioned to the new wildland firefighter series and we continue to finalize the remaining position descriptions. In addition, the Agency continues to work on reforms to increase federal firefighters' pay, and to date the Forest Service has invested \$506 million in supplemental pay to over 16,000 firefighters.

The experiences and perspectives shared by our frontline personnel provides vital information to shape agency policies and practices. Identifying challenges faced by our firefighters and opportunities to strengthen our support and resources is critical to ensuring their safety, well-being, and effectiveness.

The agency will continue to evaluate the feedback obtained through the survey to better understand firefighter perspectives and carefully consider how it may be used to implement changes that refine agency support services to meet firefighter needs.

Once again, I appreciate the Office of Inspector General conducting this survey and enabling us to gain valuable insights. Please contact Robert Velasco, Forest Service Chief Financial Officer, at (703) 605-4726 or [robert.velasco@usda.gov](mailto:robert.velasco@usda.gov), with any questions.

RANDY MOORE  
Chief



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