

# **Hispanics Nearly Universally Acknowledge the Importance of Firefighters Regarding the Safety of their Communities**

*Yet they Tend to Underestimate How Many of these Firefighters Serve on a Volunteer Basis*



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## **Hispanics Nearly Universally Acknowledge the Importance of Firefighters Regarding the Safety of their Communities**

### ***Yet they Tend to Underestimate How Many of these Firefighters Serve on a Volunteer Basis***

**New York, NY** – Following the recent announcement of Duracell's battery program in partnership with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), *Power Those Who Protect Us*, Ipsos conducted a poll among Hispanic consumers as well as consumers from the general public on its behalf, to assess how they perceive volunteer firefighters and the important role they play in community safety.

According to the study, nearly all U.S. Hispanics (98 percent) feel that firefighters are important to the safety of their community, including 89 percent who feel that they are *very* important. Likewise, 99 percent of adults in the general population believe that firefighters are important to the safety of their community.

Four in 10 Hispanics (40 percent) do not believe that their local fire department has sufficient funds to sustain all the areas in which it operates, even taking into account all funding sources (federal funds, donations, fundraising, etc.), with 49 percent who perceive that their local fire department is adequately funded, and the remaining 11 percent are unsure. Specifically:

- Hispanic women are more likely than men to feel that their fire department is underfunded (45 percent vs. 34 percent).
- Hispanics aged 35 and older are also more likely than those under 35 to believe that their local fire department does not have the funding it needs (45 percent vs. 33 percent).
- Among the general population, a majority of adults (53 percent) believe that their local fire department has sufficient funds to sustain all the areas in which it operates, while 37 percent do not feel that this funding is adequate to sustain their operations.

In contrast, a recent Ipsos study conducted among 533 volunteer firefighters from the National Volunteer Fire Council shows that two-thirds (64 percent) of them say that their department does not have sufficient funds to sustain all areas in which it operates. In fact, four in five (86 percent) volunteer firefighters report they use their own money to purchase supplies and/or equipment for their department.

When asked what they believed volunteer firefighters are most in need of, Hispanic adults report equipment and tools (62 percent), more so than vehicles and fire trucks (21 percent) or uniforms (12 percent). Very few (two percent) feel that volunteer firefighters are not in need of any of these supplies, while the same proportion (two percent) is unsure.

- The general population of adults holds a similar view, with 65 percent selecting equipment and tools, 22 percent selecting vehicles and fire trucks, and seven percent selecting uniforms as the things that volunteer fire fighters are most in need of.

In order to support volunteer firefighters in their community, Hispanics are most likely to say that they would like to motivate their family and friends to make personal donations (34 percent). Over a quarter say that they would most like to support local volunteer firefighters by organizing a fundraiser (29 percent) or by joining an organization or program that supports volunteer



firefighters (26 percent). Just seven percent say that they would not opt to take any of these actions.

- The general population shares similar preferences, with 32 percent opting to encourage personal donations from friends and family, 25 percent organizing fundraisers, and 23 percent joining organizations or programs that support these volunteers. However, they are more likely than are Hispanics to say that they wouldn't want to take any of these steps to help their local volunteer firefighters (14 percent).

Less than a third of Hispanics (31 percent) personally know someone who is a firefighter, though this is much more common among the general population (53 percent).

- Among Hispanics, adults with a household income of at least \$75,000 (61 percent), those who prefer speaking English to Spanish (52 percent), college graduates (51 percent), those aged 55 and older (39 percent), and men (37 percent) tend to be most likely to personally know a firefighter.

While six in 10 Hispanics (58 percent) know that people can volunteer as a firefighter, 42 percent report that they did not know this.

- Those least likely to know that people can volunteer to be a firefighter include Hispanics under 35 (50 percent) and those who prefer speaking in Spanish rather than English (50 percent).
- In contrast, the general population of adults is much more likely to understand that some firefighters are volunteers (81 percent).

Nearly half of Hispanics (47 percent) believe that volunteers comprise 25 percent or less of all U.S. firefighter, including three percent who indicated that no firefighters are volunteers. Just 16 percent believe that volunteers make up over half of all firefighters, while 28 percent believe that between 26 percent and 50 percent of all U.S. firefighters are volunteers. One in 10 (nine percent) were unsure.

- The general public tends to think that volunteers make up a greater proportion of all firefighters. Though 35 percent believe that just a quarter or fewer of all firefighters are volunteers, 21 percent believe that over half of firefighters are volunteers. Like Hispanics, nine percent were unsure.

One in five Hispanics (22 percent) thinks that in addition to the time they spend working on their paid profession; volunteer firefighters spend on average five hours or less serving their community each week. Similar proportions believe that these volunteers spend between six and 10 hours (21 percent) or 11 and 20 hours (24 percent) volunteering for their fire department in a typical week. Fewer think that they spend between 21 and 40 hours (16 percent) or over 40 hours (11 percent) per week as a volunteer firefighter. Six percent report that they were unsure.

- The general population of adults has similar views when it comes to how much time volunteer firefighters dedicate to serving their communities in an average week.

Their dedication may be one of the reasons why firefighters are admired by many. Among Hispanic respondents, firefighters fall only behind paramedics when asked which profession they admire most (28 percent and 32 percent, respectively). Firefighters are more likely to be admired than the other professions tested, including police officers (22 percent) and U.S. Postal workers (six percent). One in 12 (eight percent) reported that they admire all of these professions equally, while three percent said none.



- The general population of adults shows similar results, with paramedics ranking first (30 percent), though police officers (27 percent) fall very slightly ahead of firefighters (26 percent).

When asked which of these professions relies most on volunteer members to serve the community, firefighters came in first, selected by 44 percent of Hispanic respondents. Roughly one in five selected each of paramedics (23 percent) and police (22 percent), while just four percent chose postal workers.

- Firefighters were the top choice across demographic groups, though Hispanics with a household income of at least \$75,000 (59 percent) were particularly likely to select this profession.
- Adults in the general population are even more likely than are Hispanics to select firefighters as the profession that relies most on volunteers (60 percent), while fewer chose paramedics (16 percent), police (16 percent) or postal workers (three percent)

*These are some of the findings of two parallel Ipsos Public Affairs polls. The findings among Hispanics are based on an Ipsos Public Affairs poll conducted from January 27 – March 1, 2011 with a nationally representative sample of 501 Hispanics aged 18 and older, interviewed by telephone via Ipsos' U.S. Hispanic Omnibus. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Hispanics in the U.S. been polled. The findings among the U.S. population at large are based on an Ipsos poll conducted January 27 – February 8, 2011 with a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of 1,144 adults aged 18 and older across the United States interviewed via Ipsos' U.S. Express Telephone Omnibus. With a sample of that size, the results are considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in the U.S. been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to U.S. Census figures. In both polls, respondents had the option to be interviewed in English or Spanish.*

*Firefighters' results are based on an online Ipsos poll conducted January 4 - 11, 2011. For the survey, a national sample of 533 volunteer firefighters from the National Volunteer Fire Council was interviewed online. A probability sample of 533 respondents, with a 100 percent response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/-4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire population of volunteer firefighters in the United States been polled.*

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