

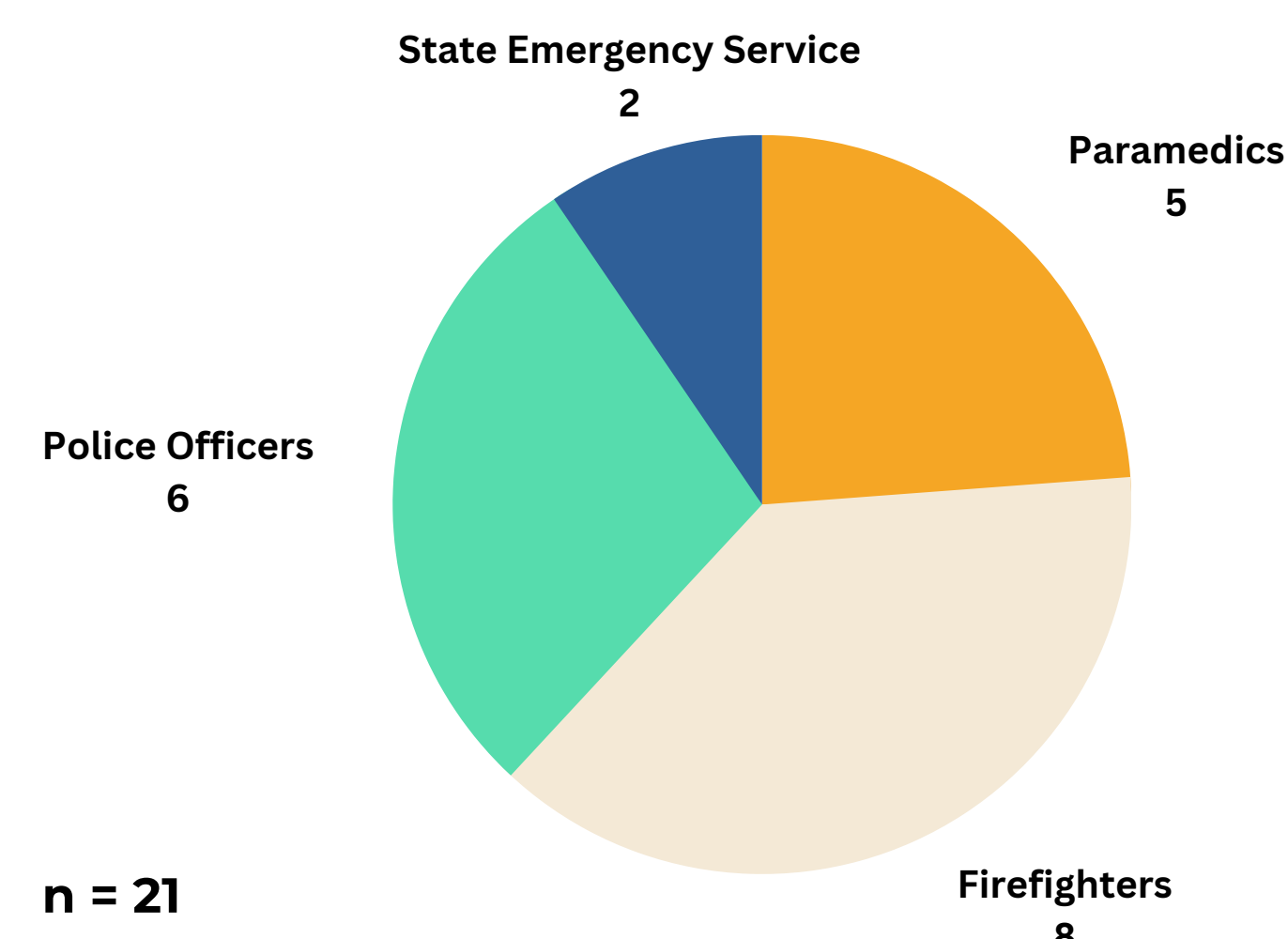
Project Goal and Context

- Emergency service workers face stressful working conditions, including trauma, interpersonal conflict, and personal danger
- Studies show these factors can negatively affect workers' well-being (1) and can have adverse effects on home life (2)
- The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) has conducted research on this problem and has led efforts across the emergency management sector to create support programs for workers and their families
- The ESF is currently exploring the effect of emergency service work on the children of first responders

The goal of this project was to work with the ESF to identify how the nature of emergency service work in the Victorian emergency management sector inadvertently impacts children of ESWs, and to suggest effective support options for these children to improve their well-being.

Focus Groups Provided Children's Stories and Perspectives

In total, we conducted 3 focus groups with a total of 13 participants ranging in age from 15 to 22. Their parents were police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and state emergency service workers. Some participants had more than one parent occupied in emergency service work.



Ethical Considerations

Conducting interviews with minors on sensitive topics poses a number of ethical challenges. Special consideration was given regarding informed consent and confidentiality. We obtained informed consent and assent from both parents and children as appropriate, ensuring that all parties understood the nature of the questions we would ask and how the data would be used. Video recordings were not taken, and voice recordings containing names or other identifying information were not used in the media we created. A detailed risk protocol was followed. We also had a mental health expert attend each focus group to watch for potential signs of distress in participants and to offer support and resources if needed.

For More Information,
scan the QR code



Hidden Voices

Exploring the Unseen Impact of Emergency Service Work on the Children of Victoria's First Responders

By Megan Caten, Aiden Deady, George Love, & Elizabeth Minor

Objectives

- Learn the types of experiences children of emergency service workers have had regarding their parents' occupation
- Identify what children would find useful in terms of support
- Bring attention to these experiences and the need for action through persuasive media
- Provide recommendations for support options

Key Findings

The job demands, and parents desire to protect their children, makes children feel isolated from their parents

Children do not understand the mental health issues their parents face

Both children and adults prefer to talk with someone who understands their experiences

Stigma exists around reaching out for professional help

Many children express feelings of pride in relation to their parents service

Organizations are keen to better support children of emergency service workers

Improving the parents mental health can have a beneficial impact on children

Exposure to their parents' job experiences can lead children to become more hypervigilant

Some children are bullied as a result of their parents' occupation

Recommendations

Raise awareness of the lived experience of children of emergency service workers

Consider bringing children from the sector together to connect and learn

Consider how the mental health literacy of children can be improved

Introduce interactive "bring your child to work days"

Introduce age-appropriate ways for children to connect with their peers i.e., social media chat groups

Consider how to help parents talk with their children about what goes on at work



Recommended chat sessions where children can share their experiences (Kookaburra Kids, n.d.)

Media Assets

