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Hypotheses & Research Question

Quantitative Hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Collaborative capacity has a negative association with perception of burnout.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Perceived collaboration effectiveness has a negative association with perception of burnout.

Qualitative Research Question:

- What do emergency managers perceive causes burnout?

Methods

- Quantitative and qualitative data collected via a web-based Qualtrics survey, deployed on May 15, 2025 and closed on August 20, 2025.
- Quantitative responses: 937 valid results.
- 699 respondents (74.6% of the sample) completed at least one open-ended question.
- Qualitative data was inductively coded in NVivo. In total, there were 34,038 words of qualitative content reviewed.
- Multiple linear regressions were run to understand the influence of collaborative capacity on perceived burnout and the influence of perceived burnout on perceived effectiveness of collaboration.

High Job Demands

“Burnout is real. [...] Emergency Managers are passionate about what they do but many are 1 person shops for a whole city or organization with no real back up. This means you are always on and monitoring the weather and what's happening in your area... Emergency managers are seen as other in the first responder area and treated as such. We do not get the same level of resources across the board and it shows. This is why people burnout and leave the profession, [it's] never because a lack of passion.”

Low Job Resources

“We're meeting the bare minimum and, honestly, the public probably doesn't even know the difference. However, we're qualified and motivated to do more but simply don't have enough staff and so we're burning the candles at both ends trying to address what we feel to be the greatest priorities. The mental defeat of wanting to do more and not being able to is the primary contributor to burnout.”

Workplace Culture & Mental Health

“Other fields, like first responders (fire, police, EMS) and the military, have established support methods (chaplains, nonprofits, dedicated [Employee Assistance Programs], years of research and study and writing on these topics, etc). Emergency management has nothing. We have no support and no one who understands what we're going through. It's GRIM.”

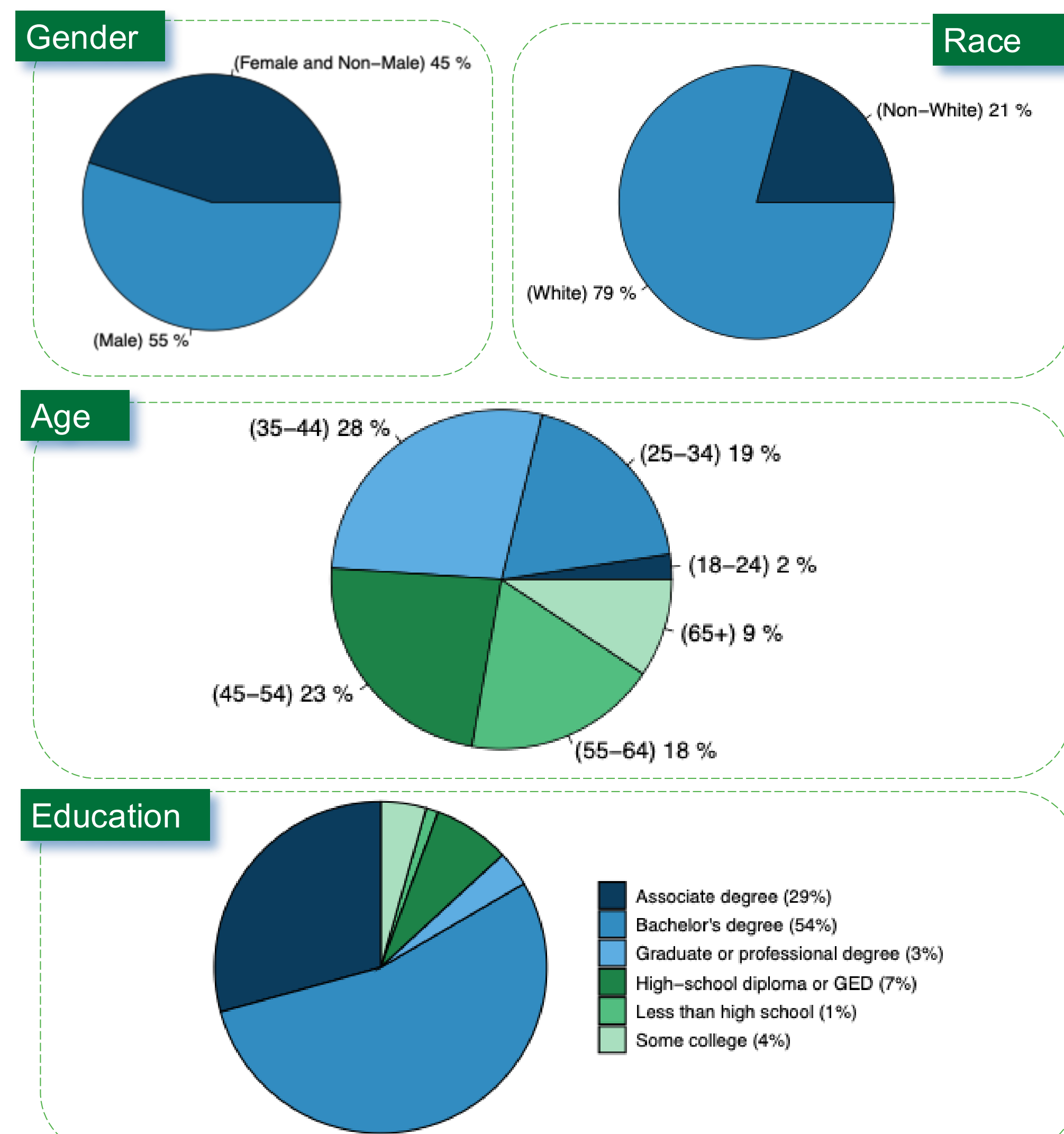
Leadership Issues

“Unfortunately, EM is saddled with a few leaders and administrators like this, who are corrosive to the efforts and morale of the majority of us who try every day to deliver this mission of protecting our communities.”

Contextual Factors: Politics & Disasters

“The enormity of the current disaster I'm responding to [...] feeling like the resources are harder and harder to come by but disasters are happening more and more frequently. And the defunding of FEMA adds to the overwhelm and emotional strain, knowing that these families in these already marginalized communities are going to experience an even slower recovery than they would otherwise.”

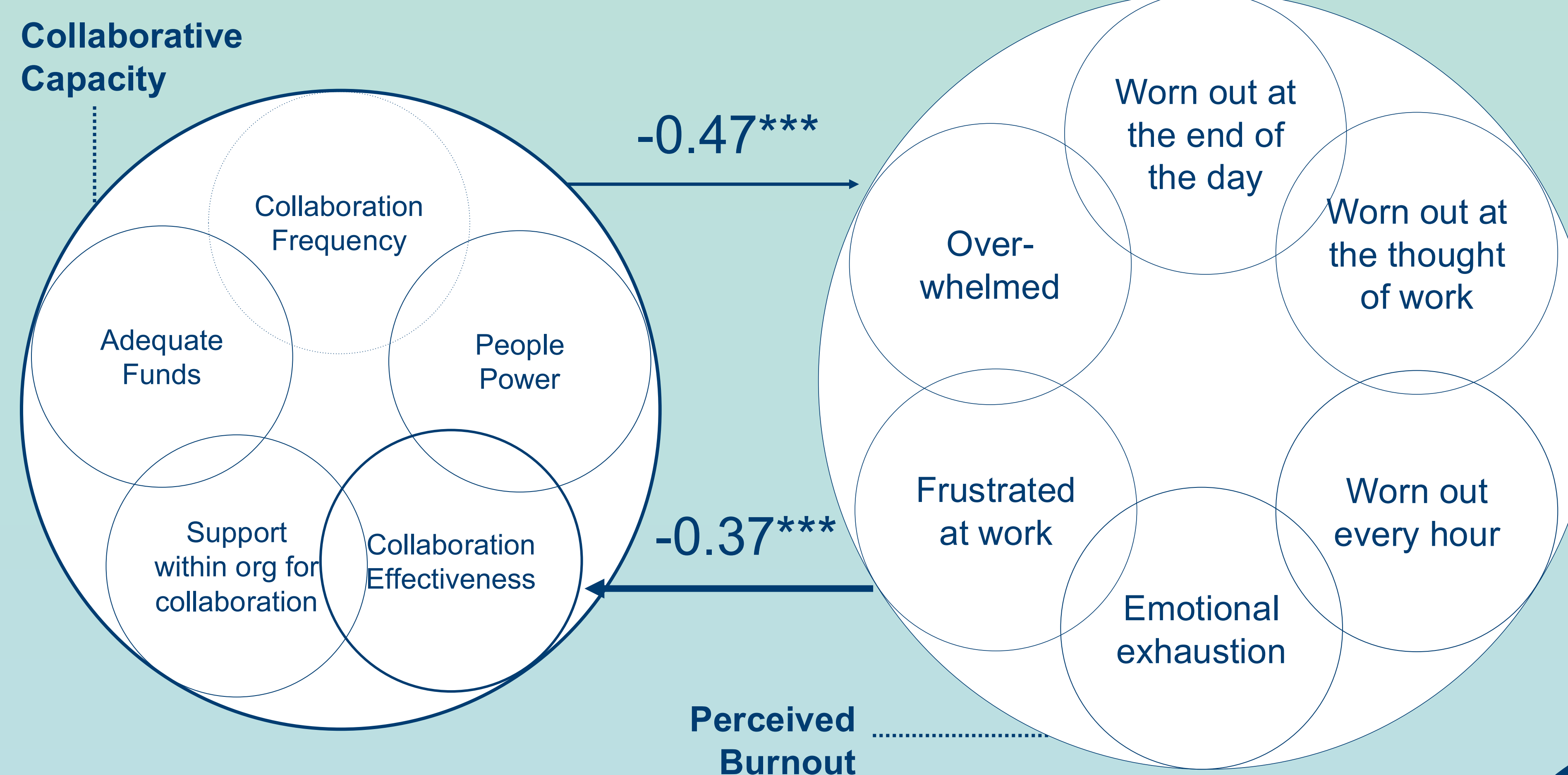
Sample Characteristics



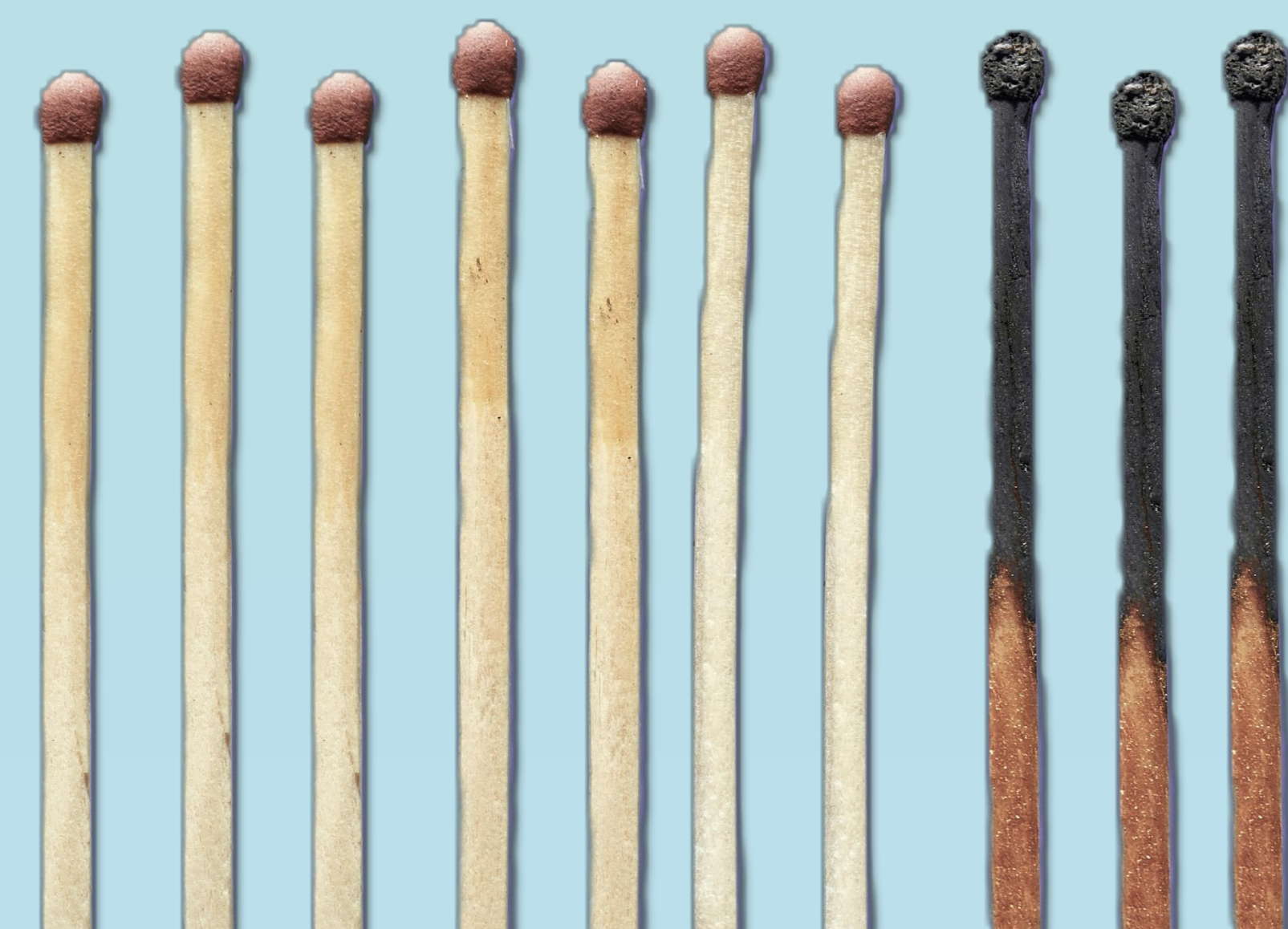
Job Titles	Count	Percentage
Emergency Managers	655	70%
First Responders/Response-Focused Roles	77	8.2%
Business Continuity Professionals	38	4.1%
Nonprofit Professionals	55	5.9%
Public Health Professionals	4	0.4%
Volunteers	30	3.2%
Other Roles (e.g., Resilience Officer, Cybersecurity Specialist...)	76	8.1%

Agency Classification	Count	Percentage
Federal	158	16.9%
State	165	17.6%
Regional	20	2.1%
Local	334	35.7%
Private Company	105	11.2%
Nonprofit Agency	93	9.9%
Other (Tribal, Education, Healthcare, etc.)	60	6.4%

Results



Over 3 out of 10 respondents (35.2%) indicated they were burnt out *often* or *always*



Applications

- More attention – and thereby money, staffing, and leadership support – should be given to emergency management outside of active disaster events.
- Administrators and those who supervise emergency management functions need to seek understanding of emergency management in order to recognize emergency manager efforts and create an organization culture that supports the health and wellbeing of emergency managers.
- Emergency management needs to be conceptually separated from first responder professions, with recognition of emergency management's unique challenges and demands.