



2021 Report



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Flower Mound Police
Dept.
Flower Mound, TX

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ESCC/911
Rapid City, SD

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Prineville, OR

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APCO International
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Hildale/Colorado City
Communications Center
Colorado, AZ

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Intern
Human Resource
Administrator
Metro Nashville Depart. Of
Emergency
Communications
Nashville, TN

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Montgomery County
Hospital District EMS
Montgomery County, TX

Eva Dewalt
Telecommunicator
Kissimmee Police Dept.
Kissimmee, FL

Dale Digiambattista
Support Services Manger
City of Hemet
Hemet, CA

Dee DiTeodoro
Supervising Public Safety
Telecommunicator
Salem County Sherriff
Woodstown, NJ

Exzabia Dukes
Metro Nashville Dept. Of
Emergency
Communications
Nashville, TN

Ron Dun
Public Safety
Communications Manager
Santa Barbara Police Dept.
Santa Barbara, CA

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RPL – Chair
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The Woodlands, TX

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San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Dept.
San Bernardino, CA

Rick Gisolf, ENP, RPL
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Public Safety
Manatee County, FL

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Statewide Emergency
Communications
Meridian, ID

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Morgan County, IN

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Montgomery County 911
Montgomery County, TN

Barry Laise
Delaware

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Southampton Village
Police Dept.
Southampton, NY

Kristy Larkin
Onondaga County, NY

Robert Little, ENP, RPL
911 Emergency
Communications Specialist
Columbus Police Dept.
Columbus, OH

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Fulton County, GA

Kory Oman
Portland, OR

Amber Plomatos, RPL
St. Petersburg, FL

Mark Reddish
Senior Counsel and
Manager of Government
Relations
APCO International
Alexandria, VA

Charkotte Rook
Fulton County, GA

Rhonda Shedd, RPL Intern
Supervisor
Metro Nashville Dept. of
Emergency
Communications
Nashville, TN

Jason Stewart
Radford, VA

Erica Stolhand, RPL
Hood River County Sheriff
Hood River County, OR

Rashel Torrez, RPL Intern
Senior Supervisor
Aurora Dept. of Public
Safety Communications
Aurora, CO

Dwayne Vance, RPL Intern
Finance Manager
Metro Nashville Dept. of
Emergency
Communications
Nashville, TN

Kellie Vancleave
Springdale Police Dept.
Springdale, AR

Koren Weer
Operations
Communications
Supervisor
Chester County Dept. of
Emergency Services
West Chester, PA

**Judith Weshinskey-Price
ENP, RPL**
Director, Regional 911
Division
Pinellas County Safety and
Emergency Services
Largo, FL

Stephen Willoughby
Richmond, VA

Jimeah Woodyard
E911 Supervisor
Fulton County Emergency
Services
Atlanta, GA

Zachary Worth
Morgan County, IN

ProCHRT 2021

In 2009, APCO formed the Professional Communications Human Resources Taskforce (ProCHRT) Committee to provide information related to human resources issues in public safety communications. Some issues that were initially addressed included certification requirements and retirement eligibility. In an effort to properly address these issues, continuous studies and legislative action needs to occur. To accomplish this, ProCHRT transitioned to a standing committee in 2021.

Most of the activity of the committee is done at the workgroup level, although technology often receives much of the attention (and funding) in public safety communications. Many of these technological developments increase the already significant human resource challenges we face: recruitment, training and retention. ProCHRT is tasked with addressing many of these issues in addition to labor laws, employee recognition, pension benefits, training standards, and protocol requirements; most of these issues fall within state and local control. To aid members and chapters, a central site is maintained to allow quick and easy access to resources to address these topics.

The mission of ProCHRT is to collect information regarding telecommunicator demographics, current practices and challenges, and make this information available for future studies. ProCHRT maintains legislative resources to examine laws related to public safety communications and also advocates for legislation on the state and local levels which is vital to our profession. ProCHRT supports state efforts to recognize public safety telecommunicators as first responders and to establish minimum training standards and licensing similar to other first responders. ProCHRT is also proactive in maintaining health and wellness resources, including the challenges of shift work of our professionals. ProCHRT maintains the Emergency Communications Center Crisis Response Taskforce report which is a living document.

The main resource area provided by ProCHRT is *Toolbox*, since the vast majority of questions posed on forums, such as PSConnect, have already been asked numerous times by others. Most of the needs of emergency communications centers (ECCs) across the country are similar for agencies of comparable size. Toolbox is designed to be the first place for research on issues affecting ECCs and their staff. Toolbox is divided into six categories:

- Health and Wellness Resources
- Training, Certification, and Standards
- Legislative Resources
- Personnel and Recognition
- Public Education and Media Relations
- Public Safety Communications

ProCHRT Toolbox was designed as a set of resources available on the APCO International website for the benefit of all public safety personnel. It is an easily accessible resource for the benefit of all ECC staff from front-line telecommunicators to upper-level management, in addition to industry partners, and even members of the public or related fields.

A workgroup is selected every committee year with each member assigned to a topic. The members review documents within their area for current relevance and any needs for updated reference material. In addition, the members review PSConnect posts to guide those adding submissions to applicable resources already available on Toolbox. If a trending topic becomes apparent, ProCHRT members may obtain resources and place them in Toolbox to streamline research into the subject matter.

The social media group mostly focuses on Facebook to share stories that shed favorable light on those serving in public safety communications. This has worked over the last year to generate individual followers as well as other agencies' Facebook pages. The group members seek out mainstream news stories to share and have been extraordinarily successful in spreading positive information. As anyone who even causally peruses the news will quickly recognize, a negative to positive ratio of news in our field is 50:1, at best.

The social media team also has the responsibility of selecting and vetting nominations for the *Teammates in Action* program. The program started in 2018 and started as an exceedingly popular avenue to nominate our coworkers, for the great things they do on a daily basis. Nominations slowed, not surprisingly, during the pandemic, but hopefully, 2021 will be a rebound year for the greatly needed recognition program.

The chapter resources group also had challenges for most of 2020 going into 2021. With most in-person events canceled and the majority of ECCs in abnormal operations mode, even organizing virtual meetings proved to be a daunting task. However, on May 4, 2021, Chapter Resources conducted a virtual meeting with fifteen chapters participating, and an in-person event is scheduled for Sunday, August 15, 2021, at 15:00 at the Conference and Expo in San Antonio. The two main topics discussed at the virtual meeting were staffing analysis conducted by agencies and legislative affairs activities on the state level. This was the basis for the 2021 ProCHRT survey and will be further examined by Chapter Resources in August. Each chapter will also discuss their states' legislative activity, and then share that information in Toolbox. A pre-conference survey of the practice of career paths within centers, will be published. The survey will explore established pay grades that include experience, time in position, and more importantly, educational and training certifications obtained by telecommunicators. This is a vital aspect to increasing the pool of applicants and improving retention and morale with the center.

The newest ProCHRT group is the ECC Crisis Response Taskforce; this group evaluates the report originally produced in July 2019 and adds revisions, as needed, to reflect new events within public safety communications. The document was designed to prepare centers for the inevitable tragic events that effect our profession. It was designed as a living document to be updated as events show unforeseen impacts on our centers and staff to allow them to have some preparations in place to mitigate the acute and chronic emotional trauma following major

events. The report is designed to cover every aspect of a crisis, prepare centers for these events and provide a template to follow during a period where emotions are high, all while the centers are expected to continue to serve the public non-stop, as they do during any other major event or incident with an impact on the community.

ProCHRT will continue to evaluate and adjust their workgroups to better serve the individual chapters. Since most of our challenges are best addressed locally, ProCHRT will focus more on coordinating and working with chapters to create and maintain strong local ProCHRT committees.

Letter from the Chair

The ProCHRT Committee had a successful rebound despite of and through the worst of the pandemic. Even communications centers not hugely impacted by COVID-19, or with affected staff, braced for the unexpected in March of 2020. Most emergency communications centers (ECC) have become accustomed to the daily crises that impact our centers externally, such as civil unrest, major weather events, mass casualty incidents, etc. Moreover, many ECCs have become jaded with the internal aspects of our profession, such as recruitment challenges, retention issues and the troubling impact our jobs have on our personal lives. The pandemic made me face the prospect of an unending event without any hope of a reprieve. I metaphorically treated it as a disturbance coming off the coast of Africa that would probably turn into a category five hurricane aimed directly for the Gulf Coast of Texas. The months of uncertainty took its toll on me and my family.

We will hopefully learn lessons and find more ways to care for the emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of our ECC staff. Things are in motion to redefine the nature of our work through the 911 Saves Act. While mostly symbolic, it is a step to demonstrate to our local elected officials, and our human resources professionals, that our needs are unique to administrative staff and even among first responders.

ProCHRT will focus on rebuilding the Teammates in Action program to get it where it was prior to the pandemic. This program is designed to demonstrate what our invaluable people do on a daily basis, not just during the major events that impact a community or become newsworthy. It is almost a cliché to note only the bad things that happen during a 9-1-1 call become worthy of reporting by the mainstream media. Teammates in Action is a tool to overcome that problem and provide the needed exposure in social media and other forms of publicity.

Chapter Resources made an important step in reaching out to chapter leadership to participate in expressing their local concerns, their needs and suggestions for improvement. We hope to have a successful meeting in San Antonio and keep the momentum going into the 2021-2022 committee year. We plan on building on the legislative resources section of Toolbox to share what our states are doing and how they may impact us, either as opportunities or threats.

I would like to thank all of those who volunteered and actively participated over the last few years. I encourage all APCO members to participate, even if just for one year, on either the national ProCHRT or your chapter's local committee. As I conclude my third, and final, year as chair. I look forward to preparing the returning members for active leadership roles within the group. I also look forward to building a strong committee within my chapter in 2022.

Sincerely,

Richard Erickson, MLA, ENP, RPL

Chair, ProCHRT 2019-2022

2021 Survey Results

1. When was the last time your agency conducted a staffing analysis?

Value	Percent
Within the last 12 months	21.6%
Within the last 24 months	12.2%
36 months or more	66.2

2. Do you plan on conducting a staffing analysis?

Value	Percent
Within the next 18 months	25.7%
Within the next 3 years	5.4%
None planned at this time	68.9%

3. Does your agency utilize overstaffing budgeted positions (*aka* over hires / vapor positions) to deal with attrition during training periods?

Value	Percent
Yes	21.6%
No	78.4%

4. When conducting a staffing analysis, you have or would examine which aspects of PSAP/ECCs operations?

Value	Percent
Call-takers	2.7%
Radio operators	2.7%
Both	97.3%

5. Would you include support staff needs in the analysis?

Value	Percent
Yes	56.8%
No	18.9%
Unknown	24.3%

6. Does your APCO Chapter have an active Legislative Affairs Committee?

Value	Percent
Yes	33.8%
No	24.3%
Unknown	41.9%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Impact of local 911 Public Safety Classification

As the pursuit continues to see federally enacted legislation that would reclassify emergency communication officers (ECO) from that of a clerical nature as found within the Office and Administrative Support occupational grouping, and to that of the Protective Service occupational grouping. There has been some action taken on the local level to allow call-takers and dispatchers to participate in a pension plan that was traditionally established for sworn police and firefighters. The major benefit to this distinction, is the ability to retire from the profession at an earlier age than that of the more “civilian” pension plans.

In the absence of any federally enacted legislation, there is evidence that there has been some local action that at least acknowledges that the work done by call-takers and dispatchers are commiserate with that of first responder public safety response. In an effort to more clearly understand what level of local action has already taken place, the APCO ProCHRT Report Group developed a survey to gain more insight on this issue. Specifically, the survey sought to find out the following: Has there been any local action taken? Had that action led to being able to utilize a less traditional work week structure normally reserved for Police or Firefighters? Had that action made ECO’s eligible to participate in a “public safety pension plan”? Are there any demographic or public safety answering point (PSAP) staffing size correlations? It is important to point out that the survey results should not be viewed as an all-inclusive view of how the nations local PSAP municipalities’ have chosen to respond while waiting on federal legislation that address emergency communication officer classification realignment.

Q1. Has your state/local government passed legislation that identifies PSAP call takers/dispatchers as public safety?

Nearly a quarter or 24% of the respondents have passed local legislation that identifies emergency communication officers as public safety. It is acknowledged that this is not a large number. However, statistically it is important to view this as a significant action taken by state and local governments. This action paves the way for being able to utilize non-traditional work weeks. It also provides a path to allow ECO’s to be eligible for participation in pension programs that have traditional been established for sworn police and firefighters. It is not clear if this action is required as a prerequisite for the non-traditional work weeks or for the “public safety pension plan”.

Q2. If yes, have you been able to utilize Police or Fire pay week rules (i.e. something other than 40 hour work week before triggering overtime)?

6% of respondents were able to utilize a non-traditional work week. 23% of respondents were not able to utilize a non-traditional work week. There were 70% of respondents that indicated that this action did not apply to their local PSAP.

Q3. Are your local PSAP call takers/dispatchers allowed to participate in a "Public Safety Pension Plan"? For this purpose, a "public safety pension Police and Fire.

Nearly 14% of respondents indicated that their emergency communication officer have been allowed to participate in "public safety pension plan." 67% have not been allowed to participate and nearly 19% indicated that the question did not apply to their local PSAP.

Q4. How would you describe your local PSAP demographics?

Demographic response showed to be fairly even. Nearly 27% identified as rural; nearly 34% identified as city; with 25% as suburban and nearly 15% as urban. It is unclear if those PSAP respondents that associated as suburban are also aligned with the nearly 24% that responded as having state/local government legislation that has ECO's identified as public safety.

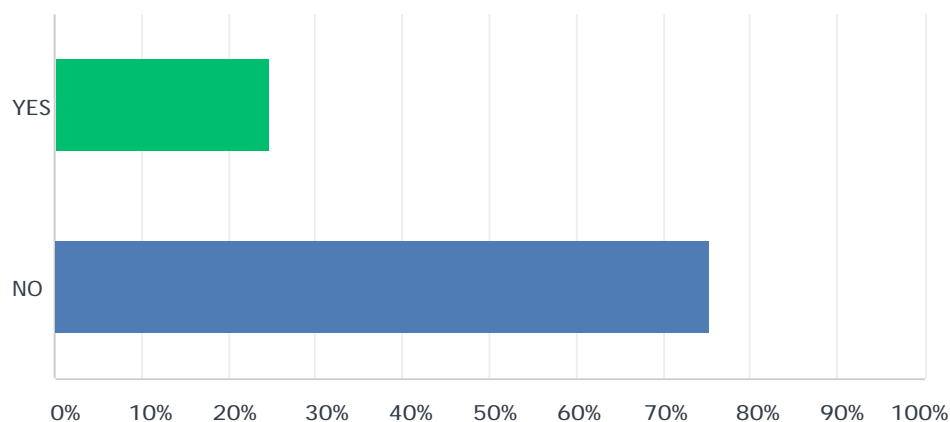
Q5. How many budgeted positions does your local PSAP have?

A majority, 52% of PSAP respondents show to have less than 20 budgeted positions. Nearly 38% have between 21 and 100 positions. 9% show to have between 101 and 200 positions. Only 1 response, less than 1% as having 201 or more budgeted positions. This response suggest that the larger PSAP's with more than 101 positions are the exception, and not the rule.

Impact of Local 9-1-1 Public Safety Classification (via SurveyMonkey)

Q1. Has your state/local government passed legislation that identifiesPSAP call takers/dispatchers as public safety?

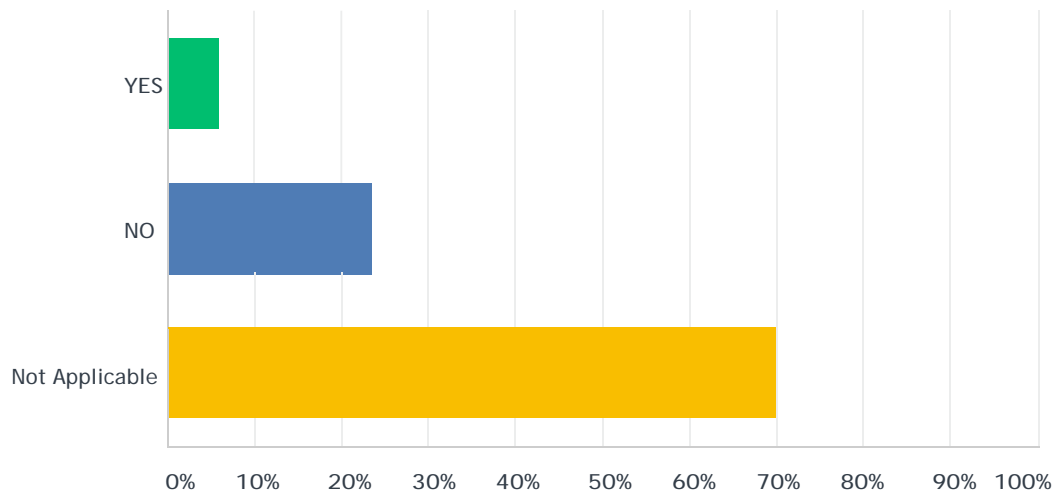
Answered: 117 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
YES	24.79%	29
NO	75.21%	88
Total	-	117

Q2. If yes, have you been able to utilize Police or Fire pay week rules (i.e.something other than 40 hour work week before triggering overtime)?

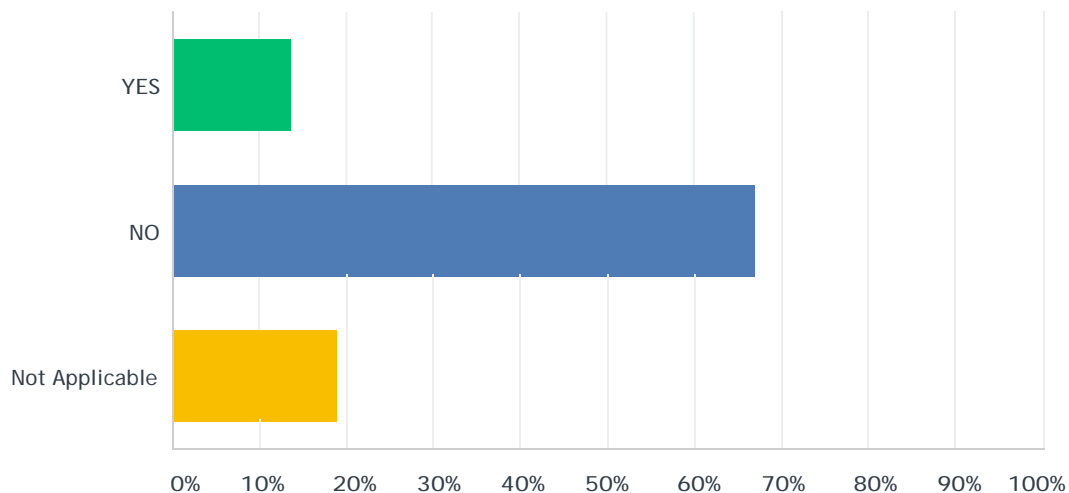
Answered: 114 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
YES	6.14%	7
NO	23.68%	27
Not Applicable	70.18%	80
Total	-	114

Q3. Are your local PSAP call takers/dispatchers allowed to participate in a "Public Safety Pension Plan"? For this purpose, a "public safety pension plan" are those pension plans that were traditionally established for sworn Police and Fire.

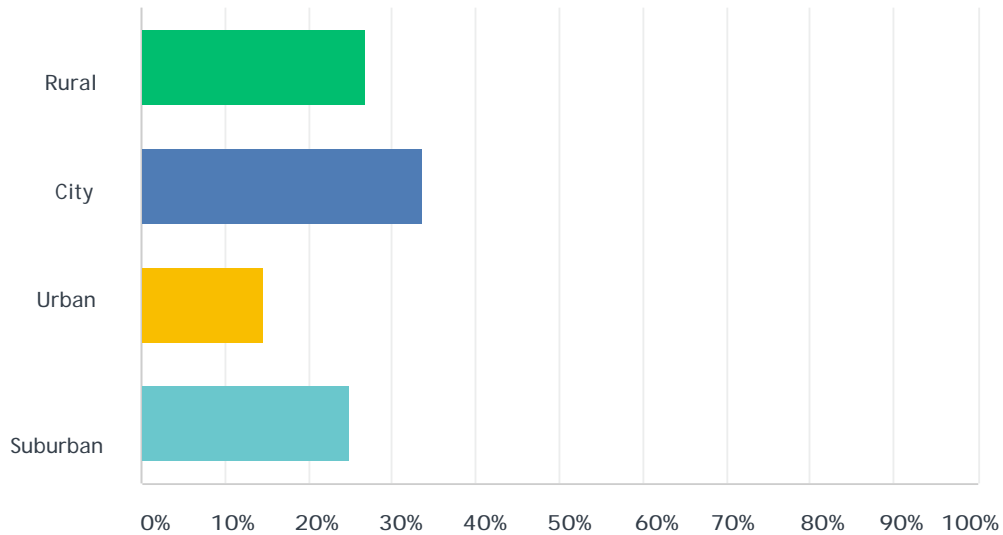
Answered: 116 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
YES	13.79%	16
NO	67.24%	78
Not Applicable	18.79%	22
Total	-	116

Q4. How would you describe your local PSAP demographics?

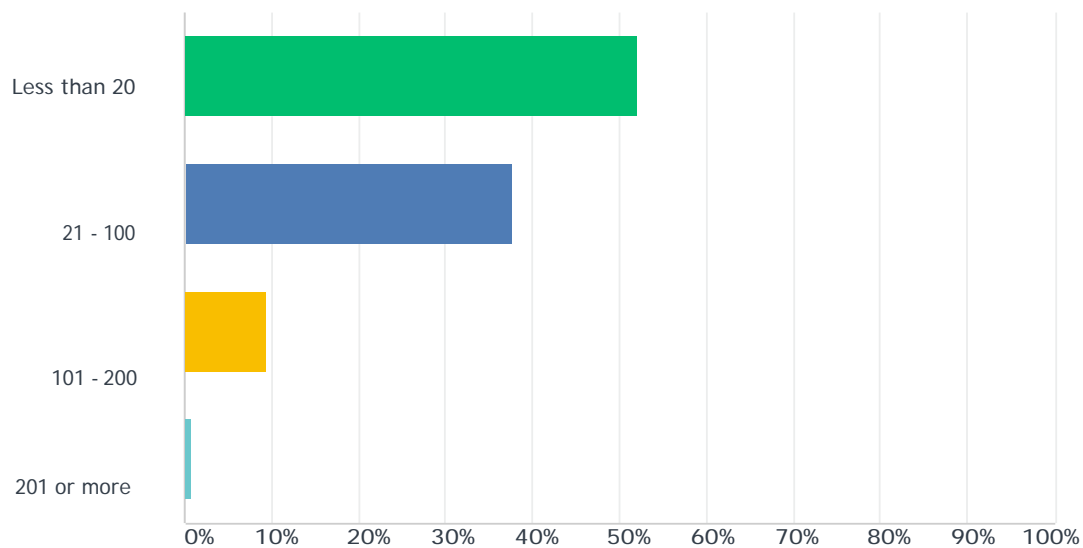
Answered: 116 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
Rural	26.72%	31
City	33.62%	39
Urban	14.66%	17
Suburban	25.00%	29
Total	-	116

Q5. How many budgeted positions does your local PSAP have?

Answered: 117 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
Less than 20	52.14%	61
21-100	37.61%	44
101-200	9.40%	11
201 or more	0.85%	1
Total	-	117

