

The Impact of Emergency Service Work on Family Life

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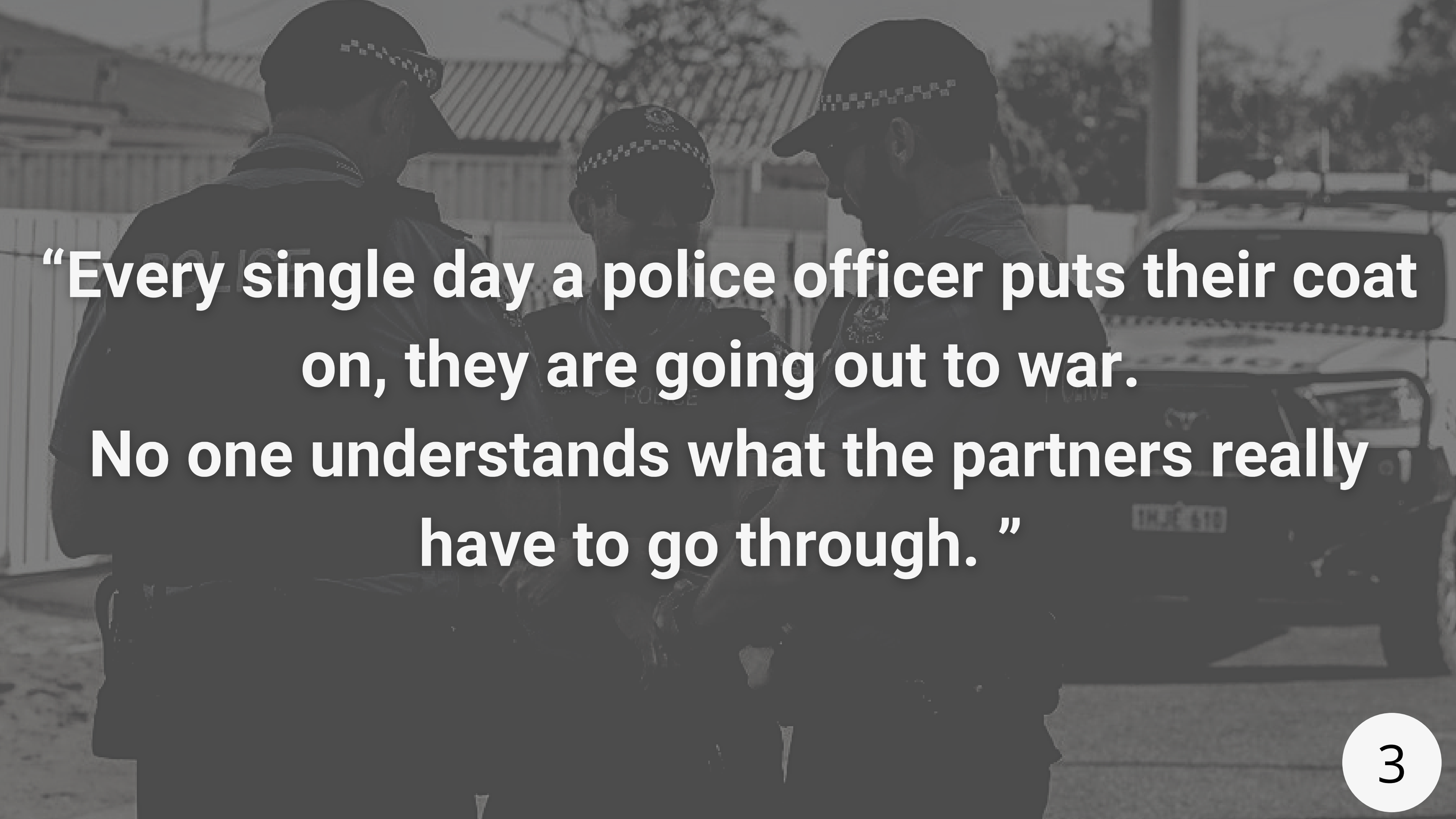
Sponsor: Emergency Services Foundation



WPI





A black and white photograph of three police officers in uniform standing outdoors. They are wearing dark jackets and caps with a checkered band. The officer on the left is seen from the back, the middle one is facing forward, and the one on the right is in profile. In the background, there is a building with a corrugated metal roof and a police car with a light bar on top. The text is overlaid in white on the image.

“Every single day a police officer puts their coat on, they are going out to war. No one understands what the partners really have to go through.”

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not only the workers, but also
the families**

Workers

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Workers

Families



Project Goal

Raise awareness of the impacts emergency service work has on emergency service workers' families and recommend effective strategies and support systems.

Objectives

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3. To develop a photo-story video that **illustrates the families' perspectives and experiences.**
4. To **develop** and get **feedback** on possible support strategies.

Preliminary Research & Literature Review

Little research has been conducted on the families

Similar parallels such as military families do exist

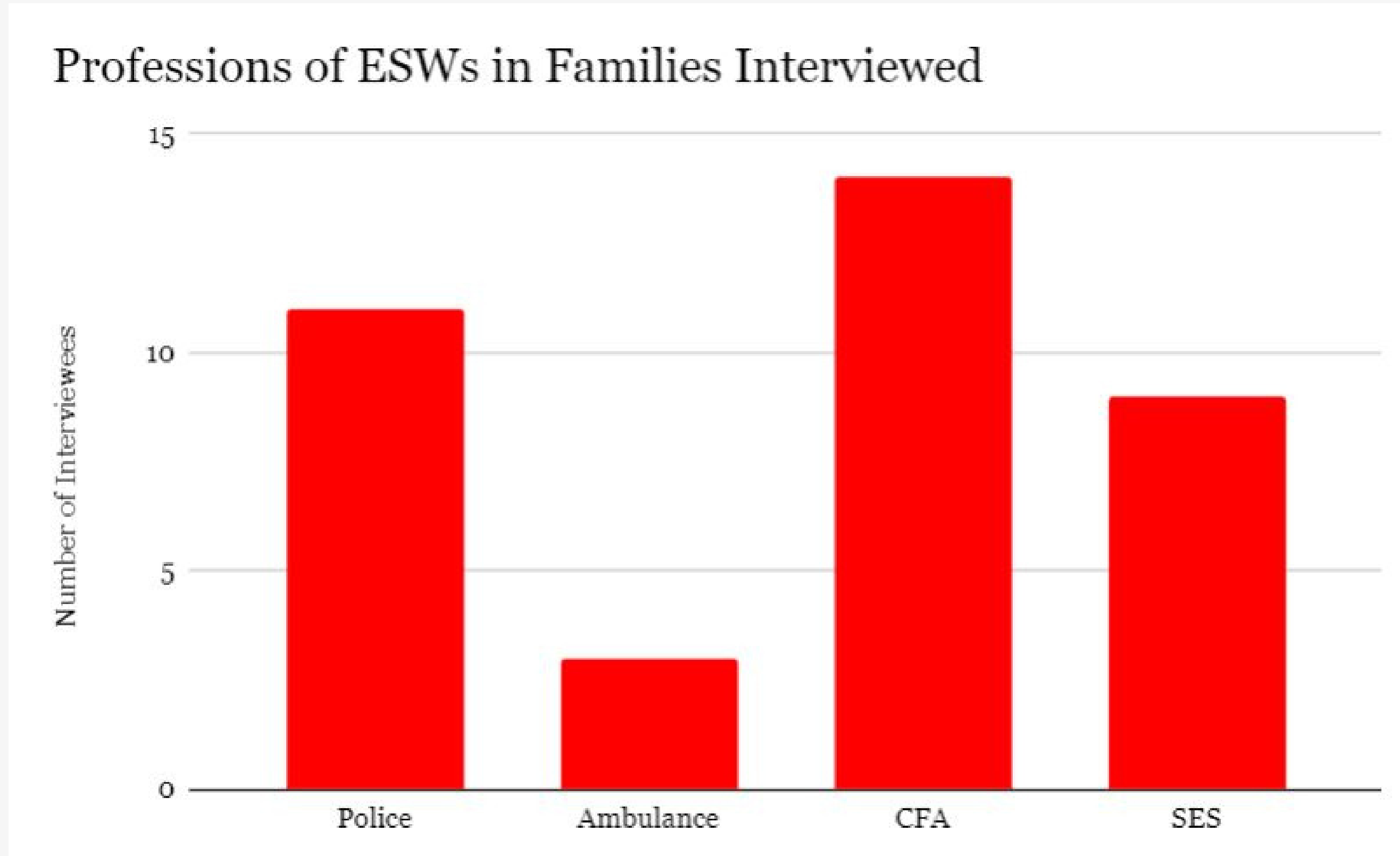
Interviewing Families




25
Family
Members

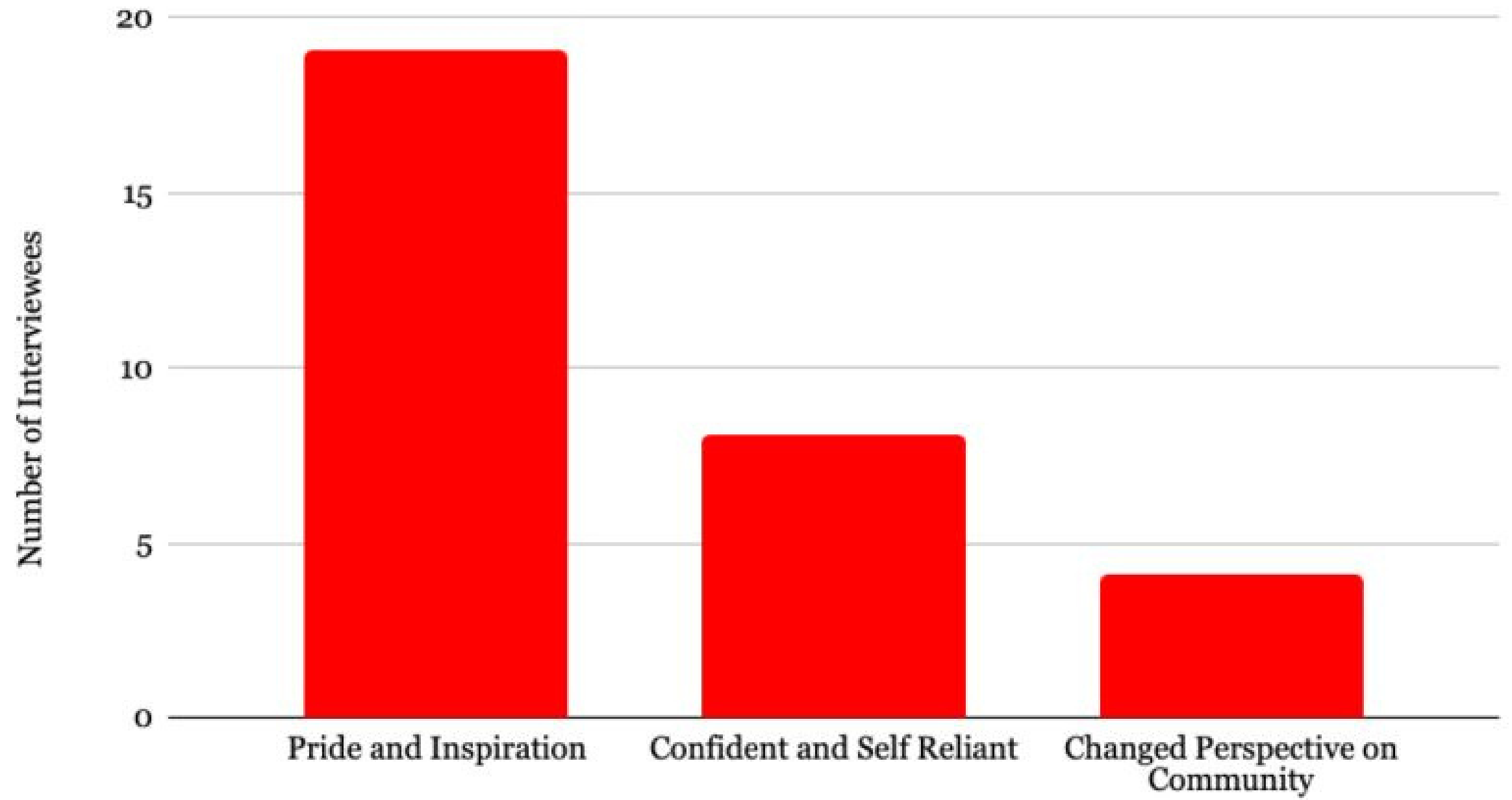
- Health
- Positives
- Negatives
- How they feel
- Support

Collecting Family Stories





Emergency service work can impact families in many positive ways.



Pride and Inspiration



- Appreciation & respect
- Several generations of emergency service workers in their families

"Although at times it seems like they are putting their life on the line, people do appreciate it, you should take pride that someone in your family is strong and brave enough to put their family life on hold to save people they don't know."

Confident in Situations



- Gained knowledge and confidence
- Crisis management skills
- Better perspective on the world
- Self-dependent

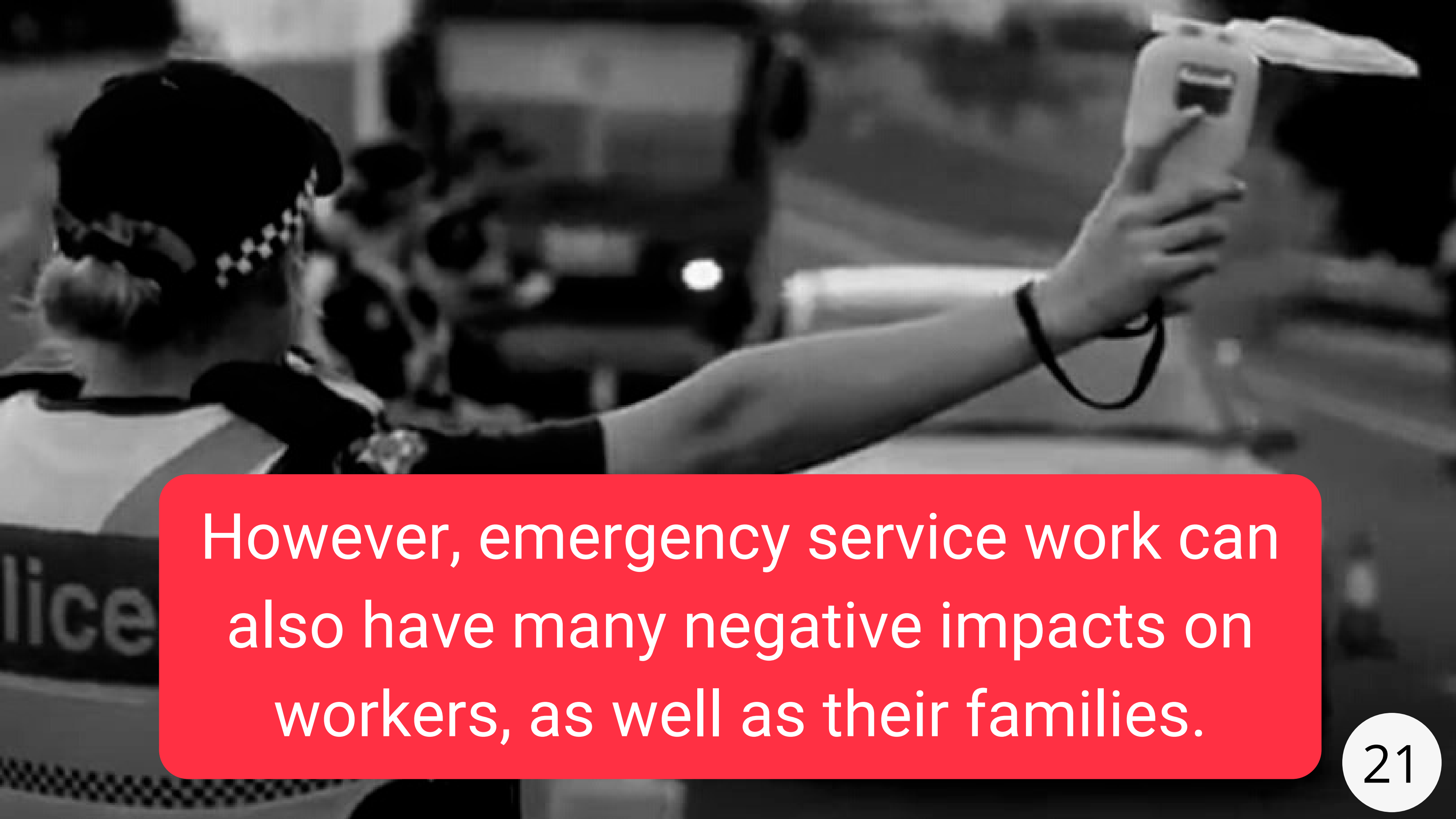
Perspectives on Community



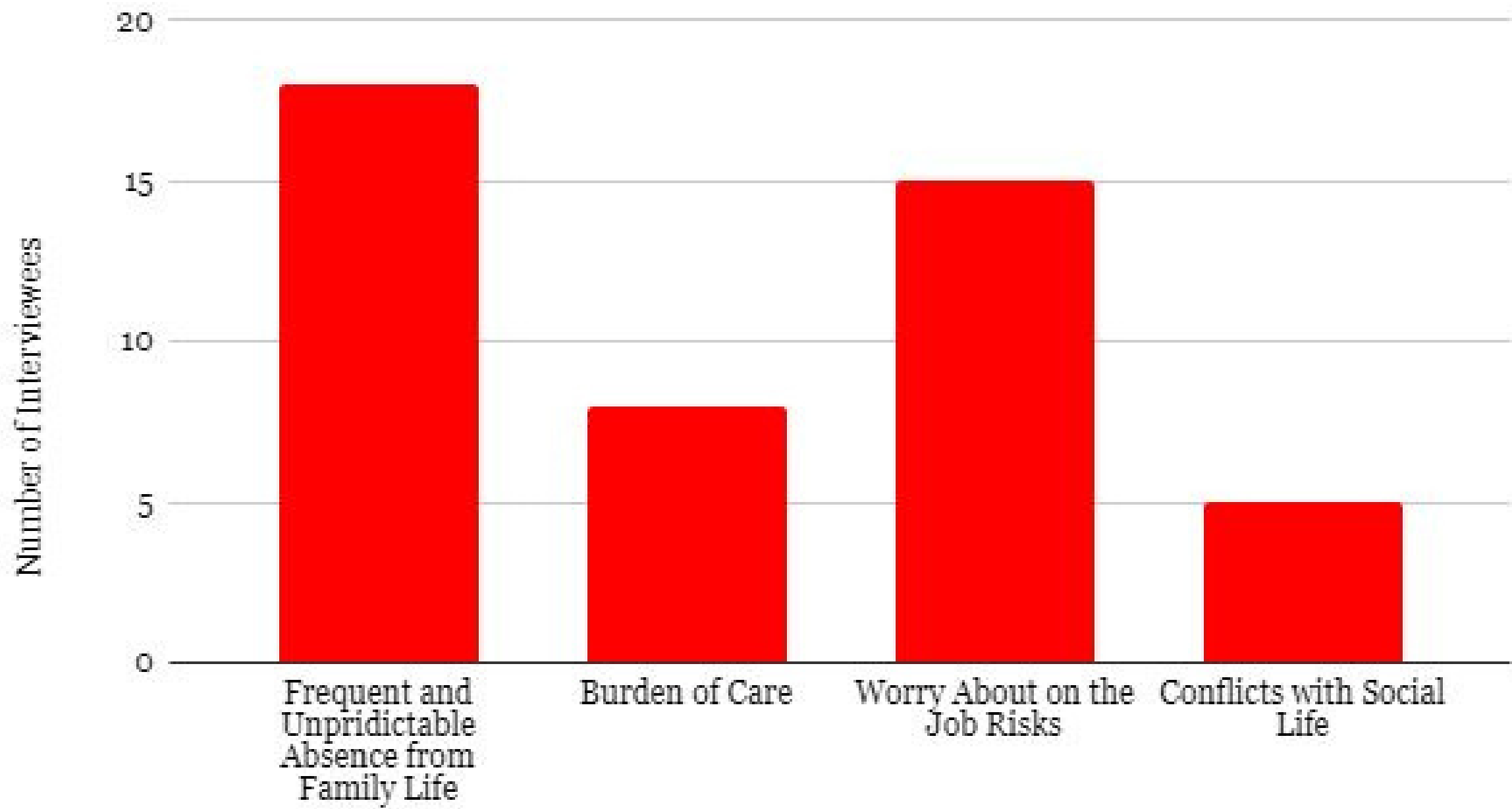
- Developed social network
- Engaged with their community more often
- Changed perspective on the world

"Happy partner, happy life."





However, emergency service work can also have many negative impacts on workers, as well as their families.



Frequent Unpredictable Absences from Family Life



- Big time commitment
- Unpredictable rostering system
- Pagers frequently going off

Worry About Risks on the Job



- Concern for their workers' safety
- Loss of sleep
- Worry over the workers' mental health
- Gone for multiple days with no contact

Burden of Care



- Guilt not knowing what to do to help
- Did not know how to recognize the signs of mental health disorders
- Children in the presence of emergency service workers with mental health disorders

Social Life



- Community stigmas
- Don't get invited
- Harder to make friends

Struggle finding adequate help



Families, Stress, and Communication



"I remember being frustrated as hell at family functions, Christmas, birthdays, any special time that I had driven over an hour to see my mum and she would rush out the door when that pager went off leaving us all there without her. I hated it, I felt like it was more important than we were."



Family Stories

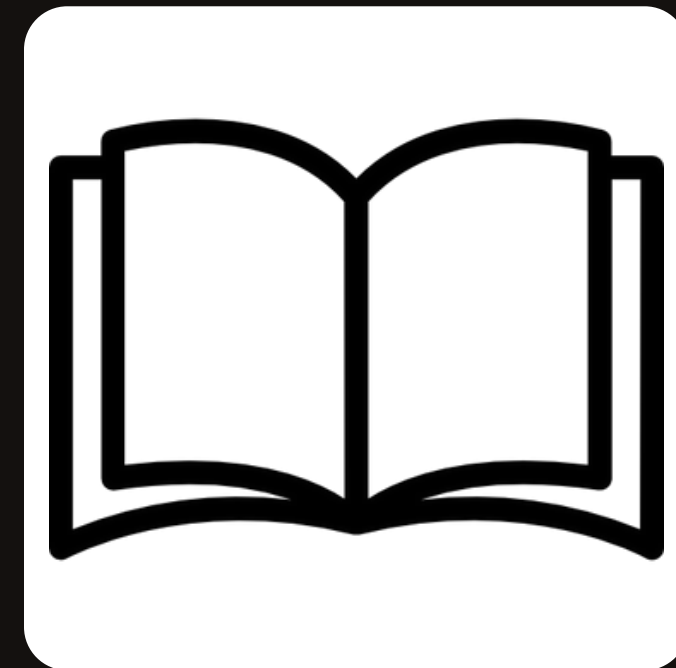


Recommendations

- Provide more **resource references** directed towards families

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- **Educate** families on the topics needed to take care of an emergency service worker



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- Improve the **visibility** of the successes and struggles that families face



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- **Educate** families on the topics needed to take care of an emergency service worker
- Improve the **visibility** of the successes and struggles that families face
- Consider the needs of **children**



Thank you for listening

Conclusion

Questions?