Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey

Los Angeles (LA) Metropolitan Area
and California State
May 2009

Fireman's Fund Insurance Company
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Background and Methodology

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BACKGROUND

- Fireman's Fund Insurance Company awards grant to fire departments through the company's employees and independent agencies across the country. The grants can be used for needed equipment, training and community education programs. Since 2004, we have awarded more than $21 million in grants to more than 1,100 fire departments.
- As an extension to this program, and in light of the current economic climate, Fireman's Fund sponsored a survey of the American fire service to determine needs. The survey was conducted by Ipsos Research. The result is "Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey."

METHODOLOGY

- Firefighters were invited to complete the online survey via email invitations through various state, local and national fire service organizations and entities. The survey invitation was also promoted in fire service print trade journals, electronic newsletters and fire service blogs and Web sites.
- The survey, hosted on Ipsos' secure interviewing platform, was available to respondents between February 13th and March 31st. A total of 17,475 firefighters from 9,449 fire service organizations across the country were interviewed.
- The data included in the report is based on data at the department level rather than on all respondents. In cases where multiple firefighters from the same fire service organization responded to the survey, the first individual to respond was selected on behalf of that department, providing a random sampling.

National Executive Summary

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- Fire departments across the country face a variety of challenges – from budget cuts to staffing issues – and the current economic crisis is only exacerbating these problems.
- A majority of fire departments believe that if the economic crisis continues, it will negatively affect their ability to serve their communities.
- Over half already feel that their funding is insufficient, and roughly a quarter of departments say they are lacking adequate equipment and training.
- A majority of departments (56%) fear that if the economic crisis continues into next year, that it will negatively impact their ability to serve their community. Fortunately, though, only 17% of departments feel that the quality of service that they provide has declined due to the economy.

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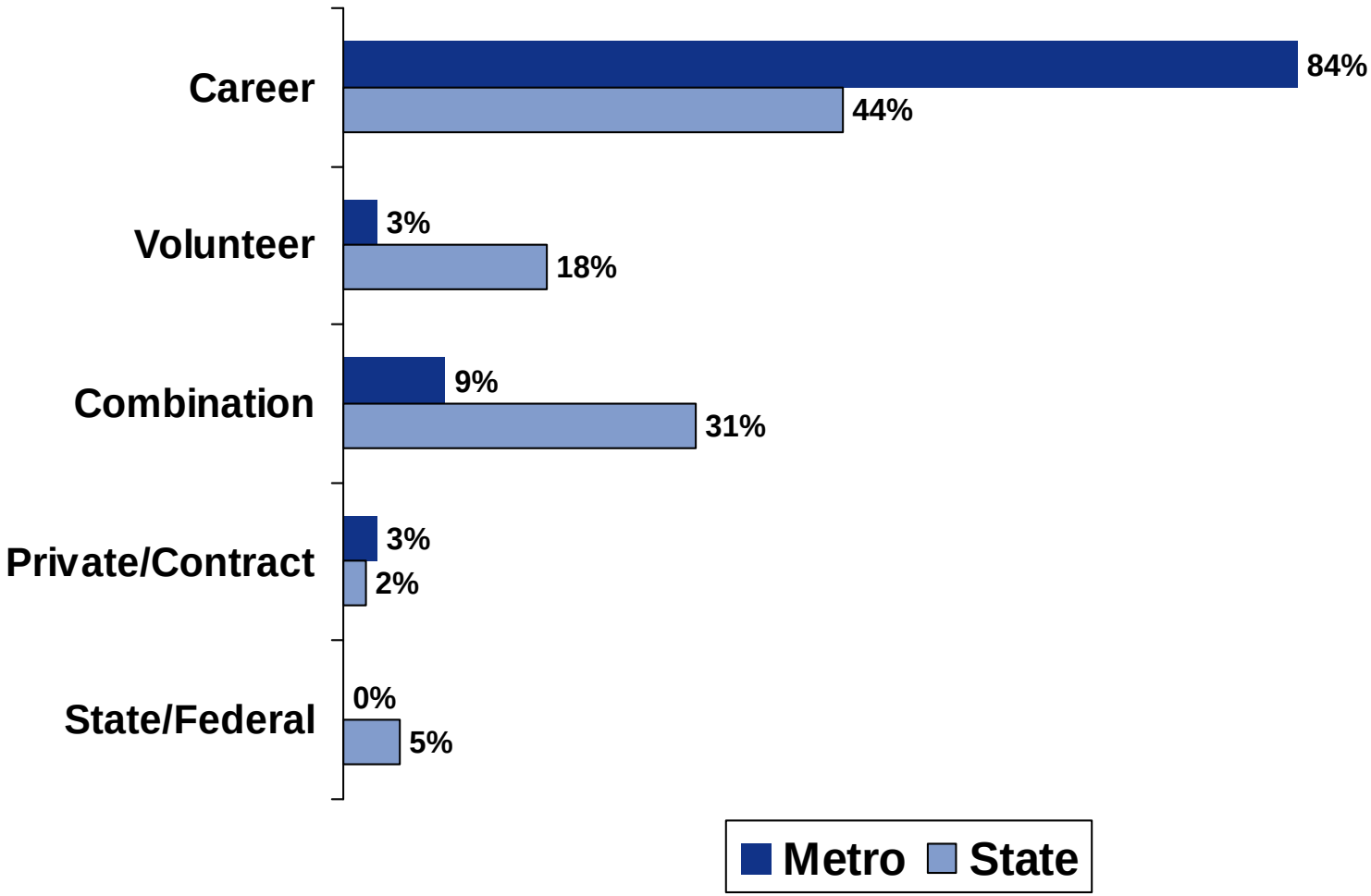
Key Findings for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area and the State of California

The LA Metropolitan Area is represented by 32 responding departments and California is represented by 412 responding departments. All findings listed here are for the state of California unless otherwise stated.

- Seventy-four percent of departments find staffing, recruitment and employee retention is at least somewhat challenging.
- Twenty-eight percent of departments have started charging for the services that they provide.
- Thirty-six percent of departments are planning or have had to cut back on staffing.
- Fifty-four percent have had to increase fundraising and/or grant writing efforts because of the budget cutbacks.
- Seventy percent of departments agree with the statement: If the economic situation continues for another 12 months, it will negatively affect our ability to serve our community.
- Ninety percent of the departments in the survey have the needed equipment for all their personnel to respond to wildland fires.
- Eighty-seven percent are adequately trained to respond to wildfires.
- In the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 97% of the departments have a thermal imaging camera while in the state this number is only 81%.

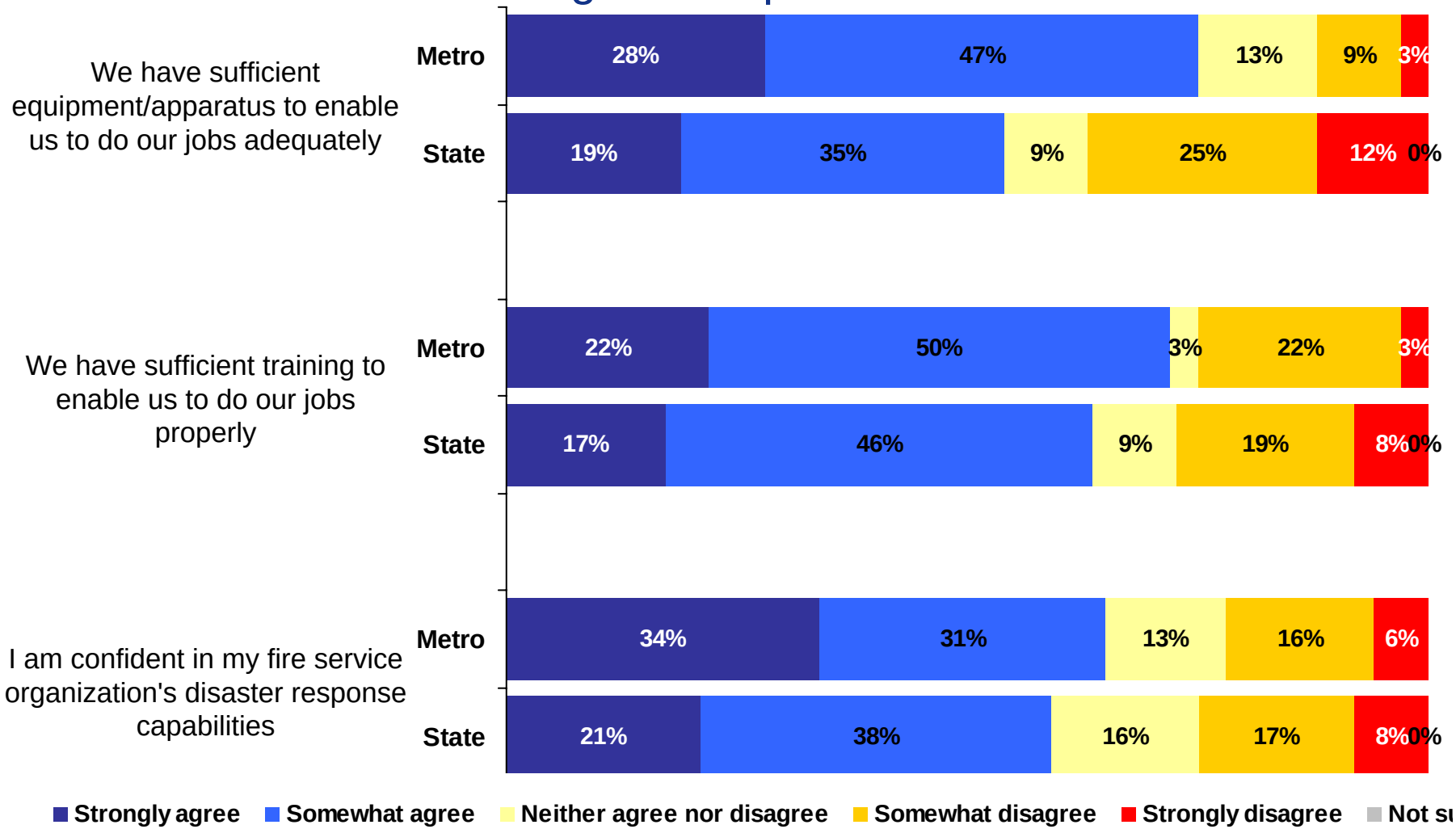
LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Type of Organization



6. Which best describes your fire service organization?

Base: All departments

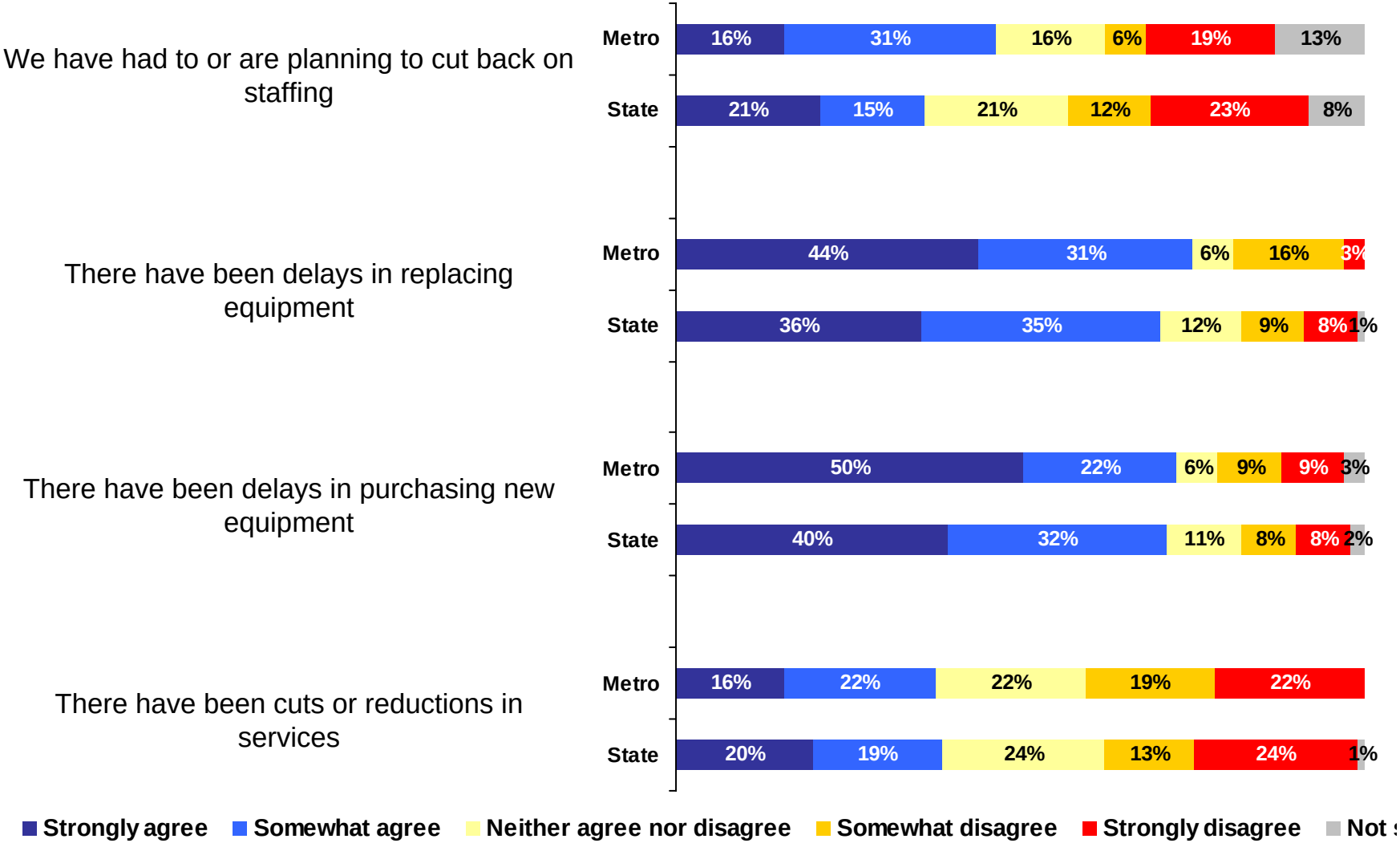
LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Attitudes toward Funding and Capabilities



9. Thinking about your fire service organization in general, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Base: All departments

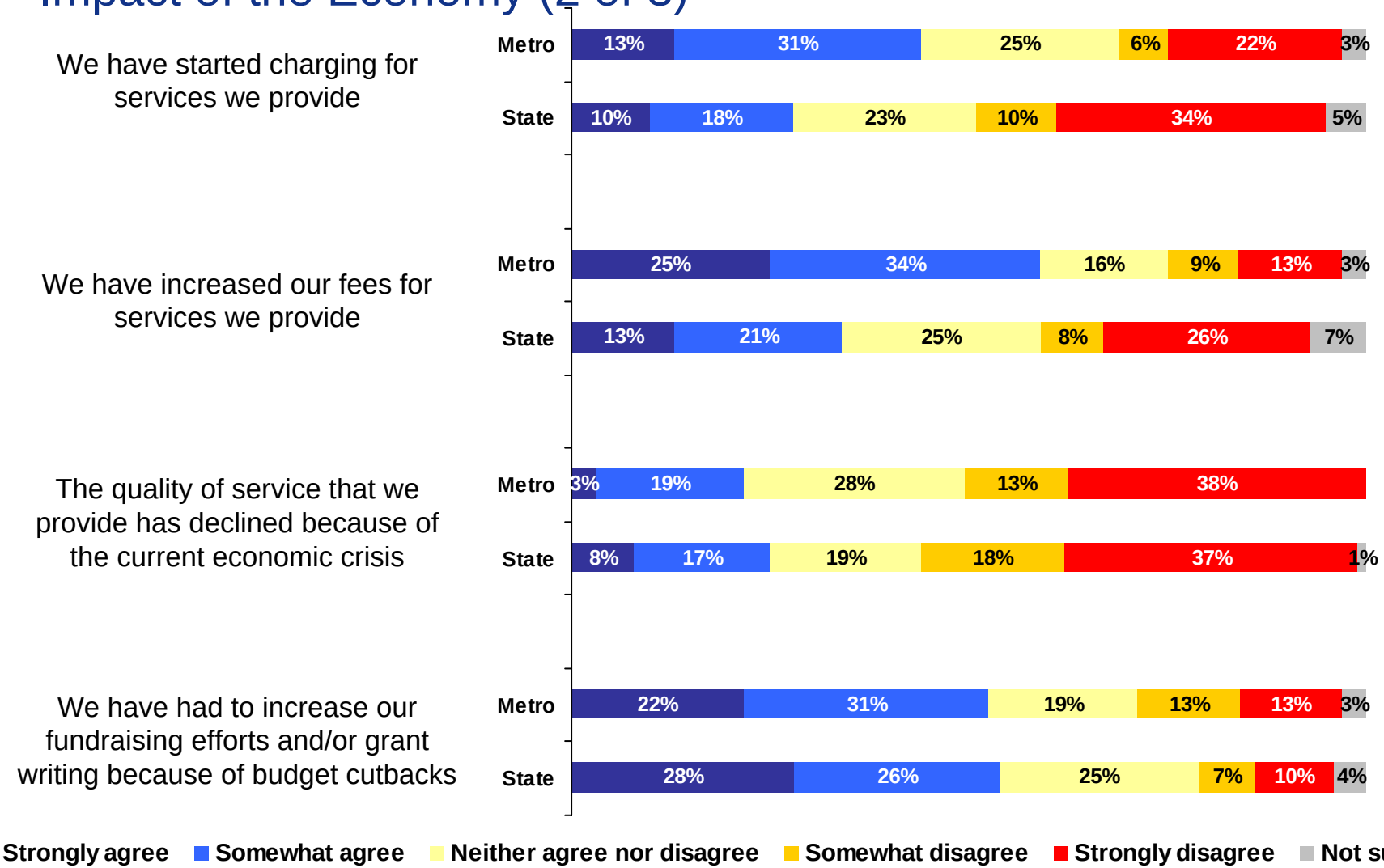
LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Impact of the Economy (1 of 3)



10. Thinking about the impact of the current economic crisis on your fire service organization, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Base: All departments

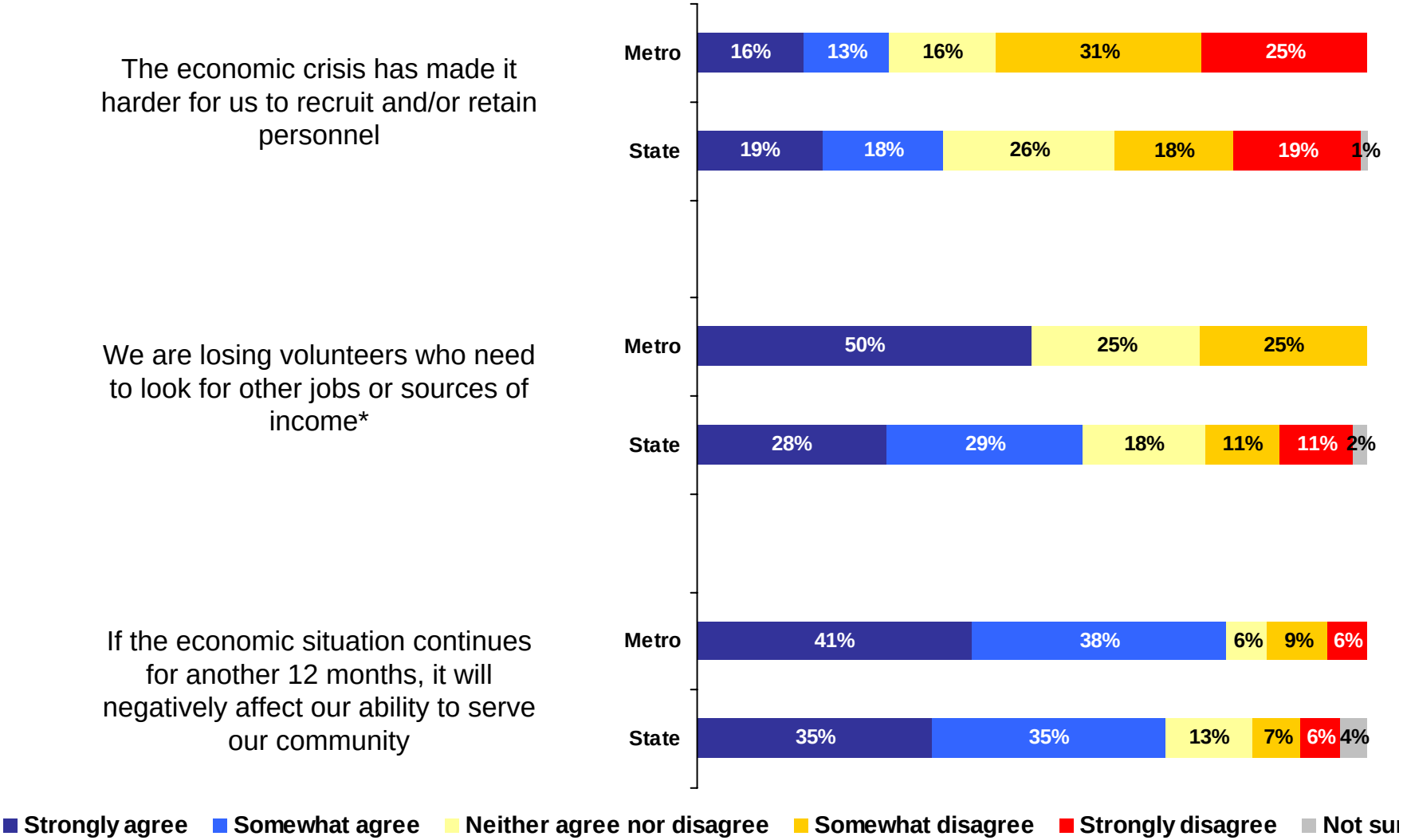
LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Impact of the Economy (2 of 3)



10. Thinking about the impact of the current economic crisis on your fire service organization, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Base: All departments

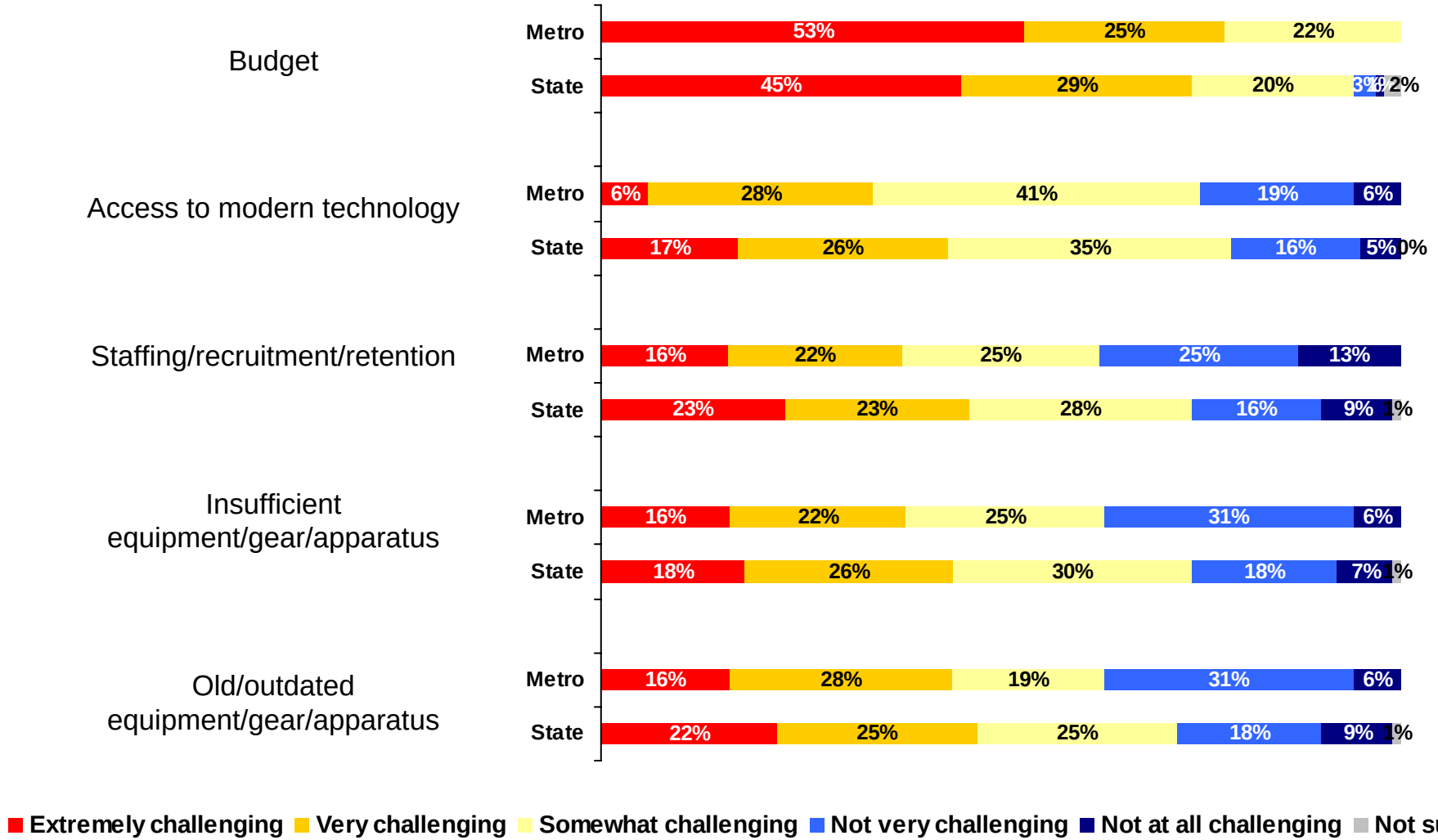
LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Impact of the Economy (3 of 3)



10. Thinking about the impact of the current economic crisis on your fire service organization, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *asked only of volunteer and combo depts.

Base: All departments

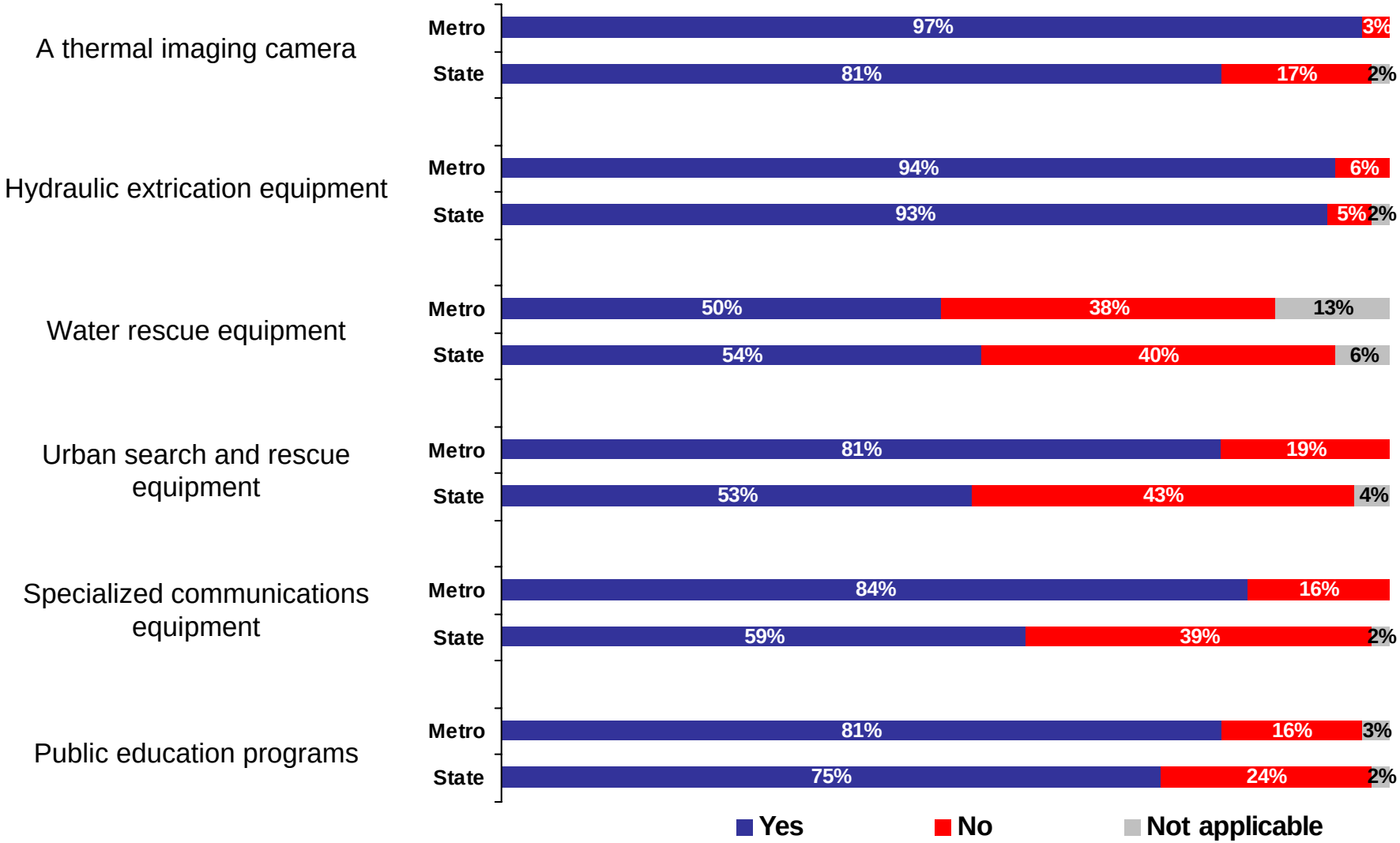
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Department Challenges



11. Thinking about various issues that your fire service organization may face, how challenging are each of the following?

Base: All departments

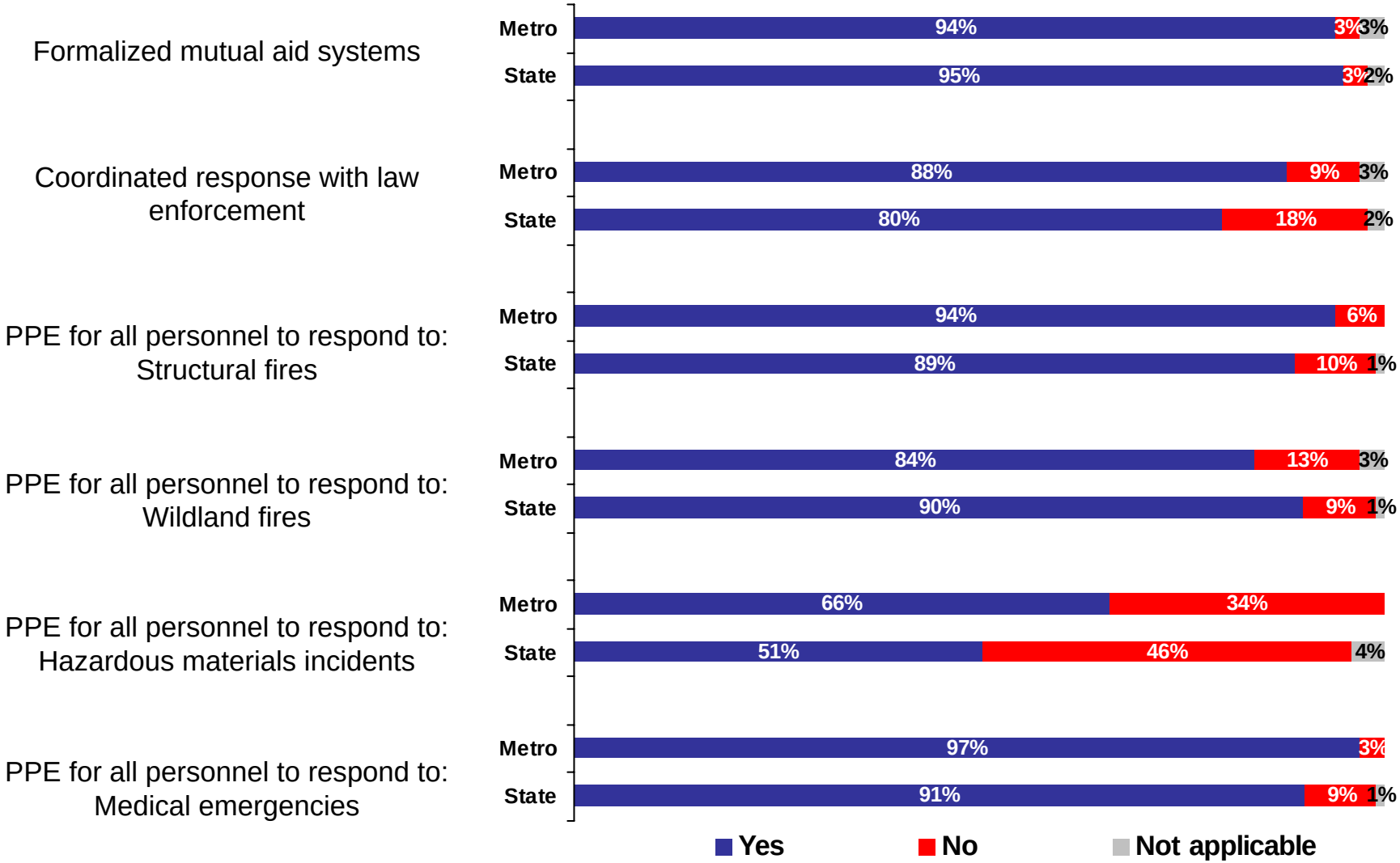
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Equipment/Resources (1 of 2)



12. Does your fire service organization have the following types of equipment/resources?

Base: All departments

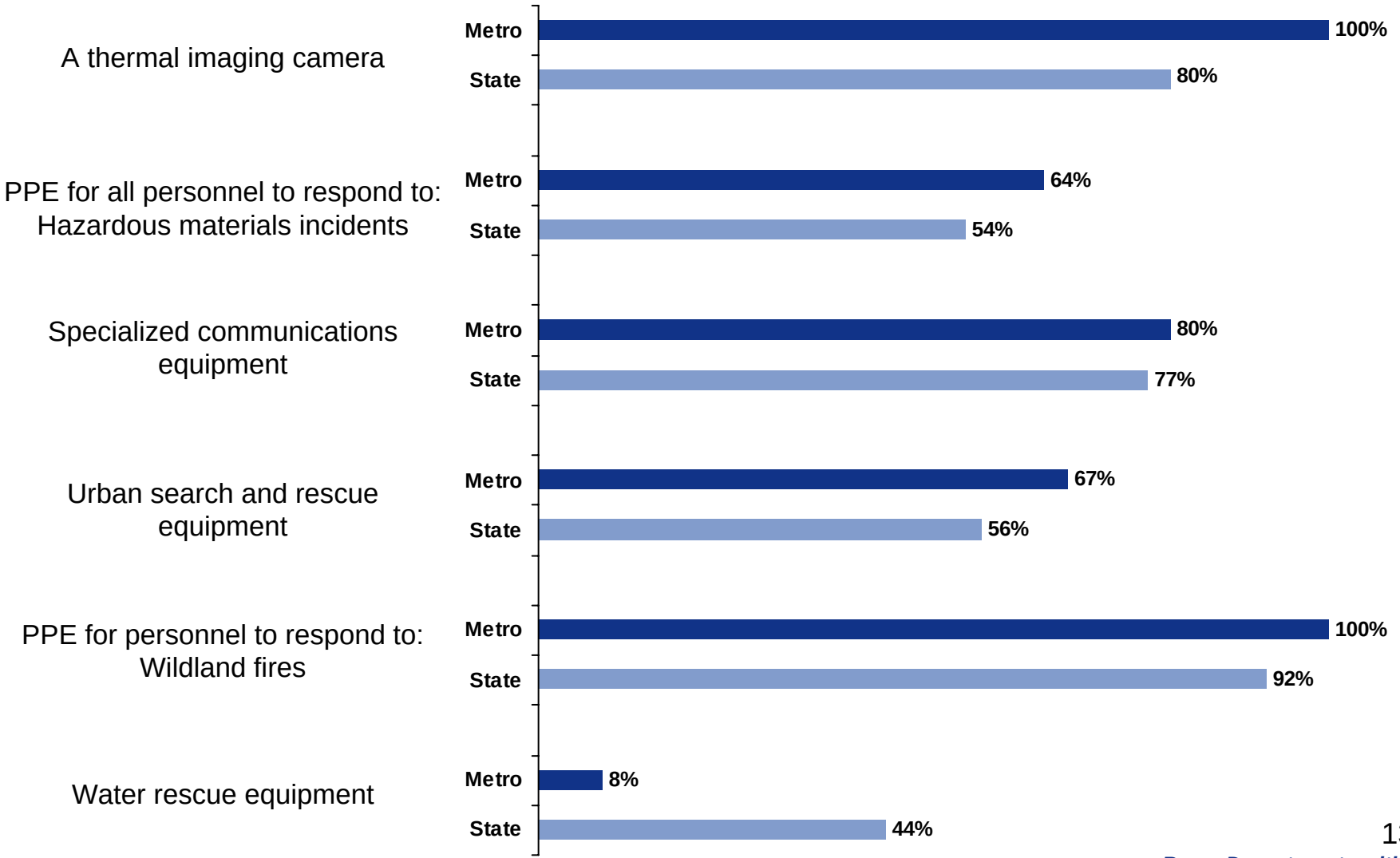
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Equipment/Resources (2 of 2)



12. Does your fire service organization have the following types of equipment/resources?

Base: All departments

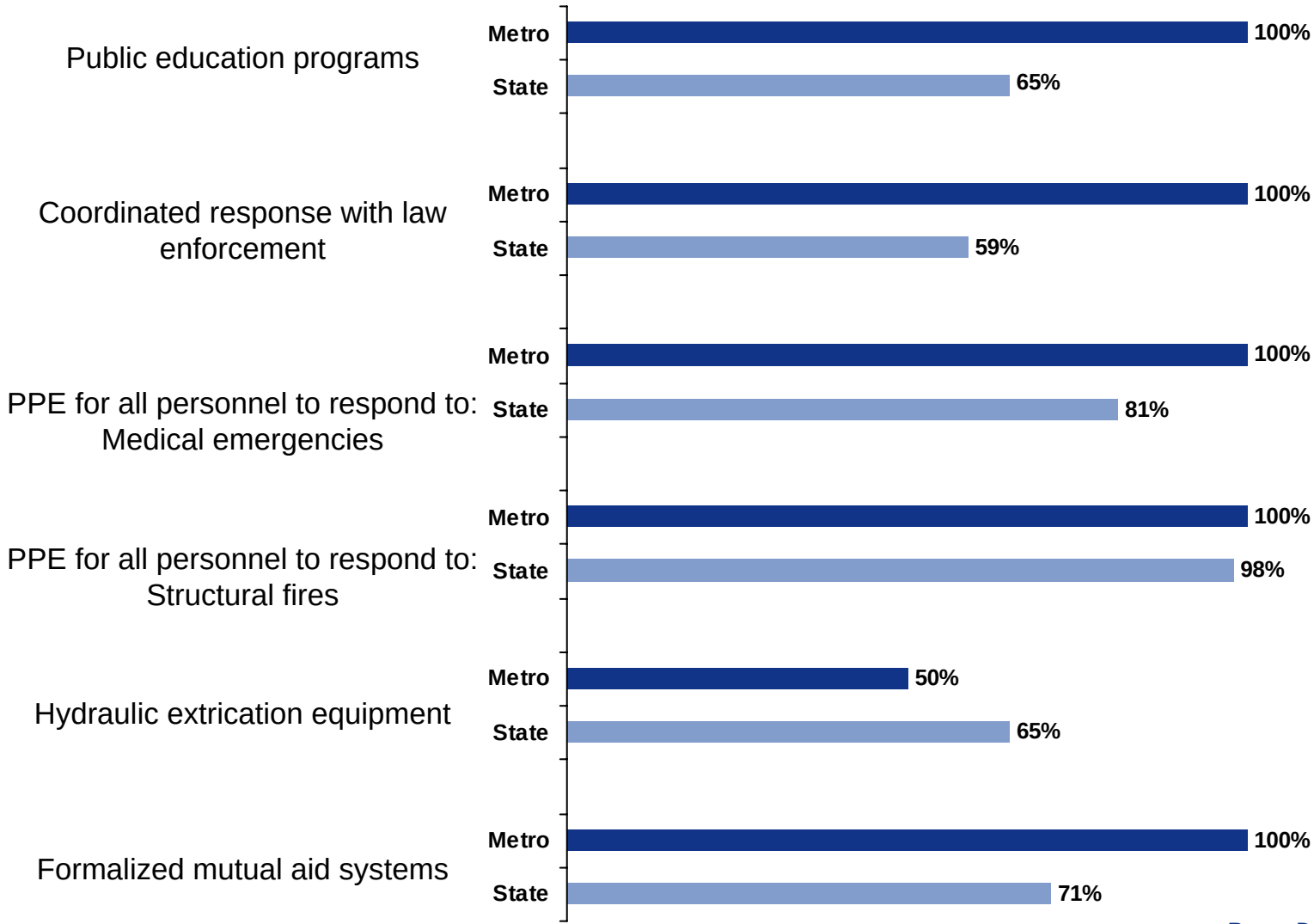
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Equipment/Resources Needed (1 of 2) – Based on those that responded NO in slides 11 & 12



12a. And which of the following would you say your fire service organization is in need of?

Base: Departments without each type of equipment in Q12

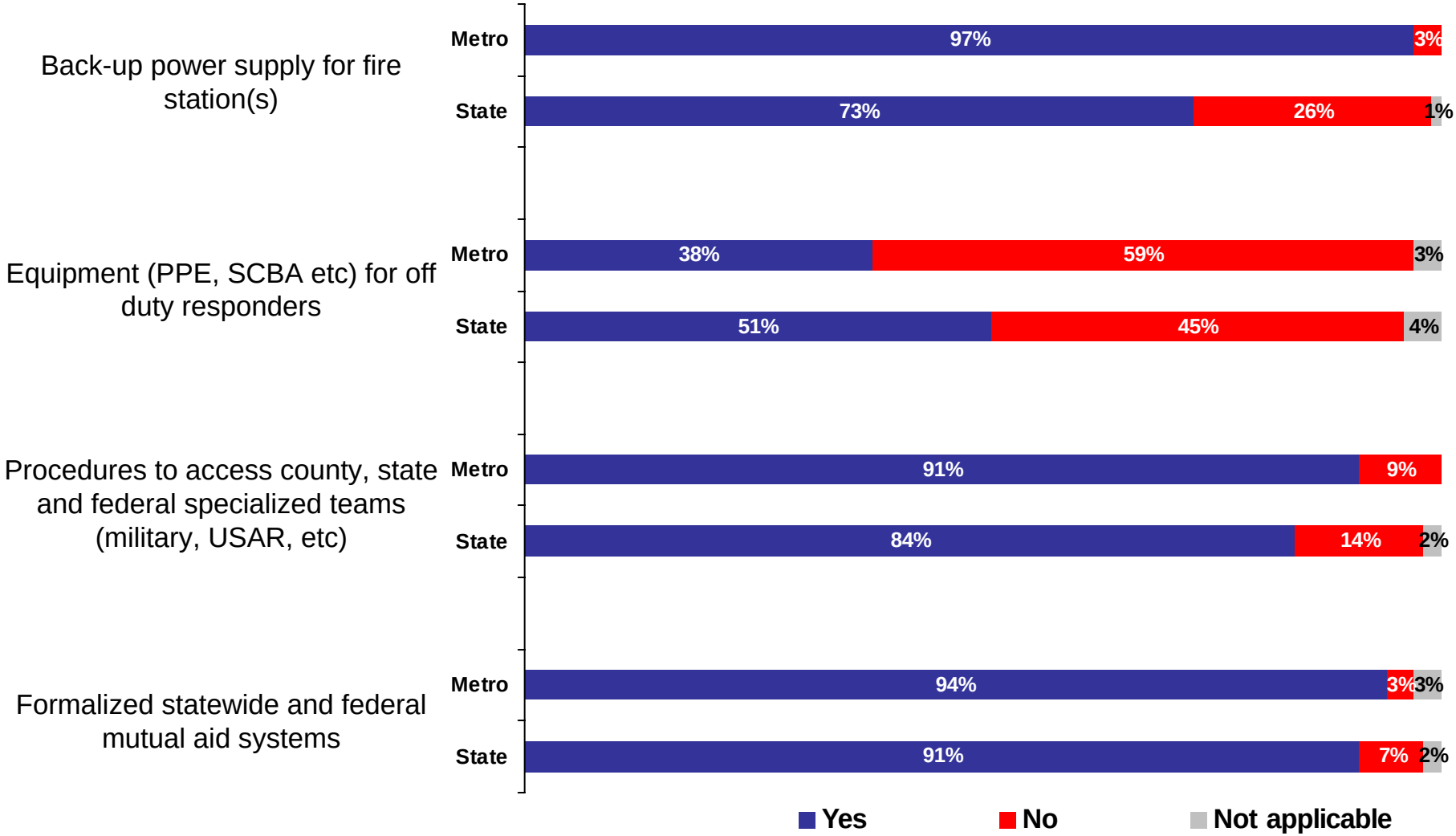
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Equipment/Resources Needed (2 of 2) – Based on those that responded NO in slides 11 & 12



12a. And which of the following would you say your fire service organization is in need of?

Base: Departments without each type of equipment in Q12

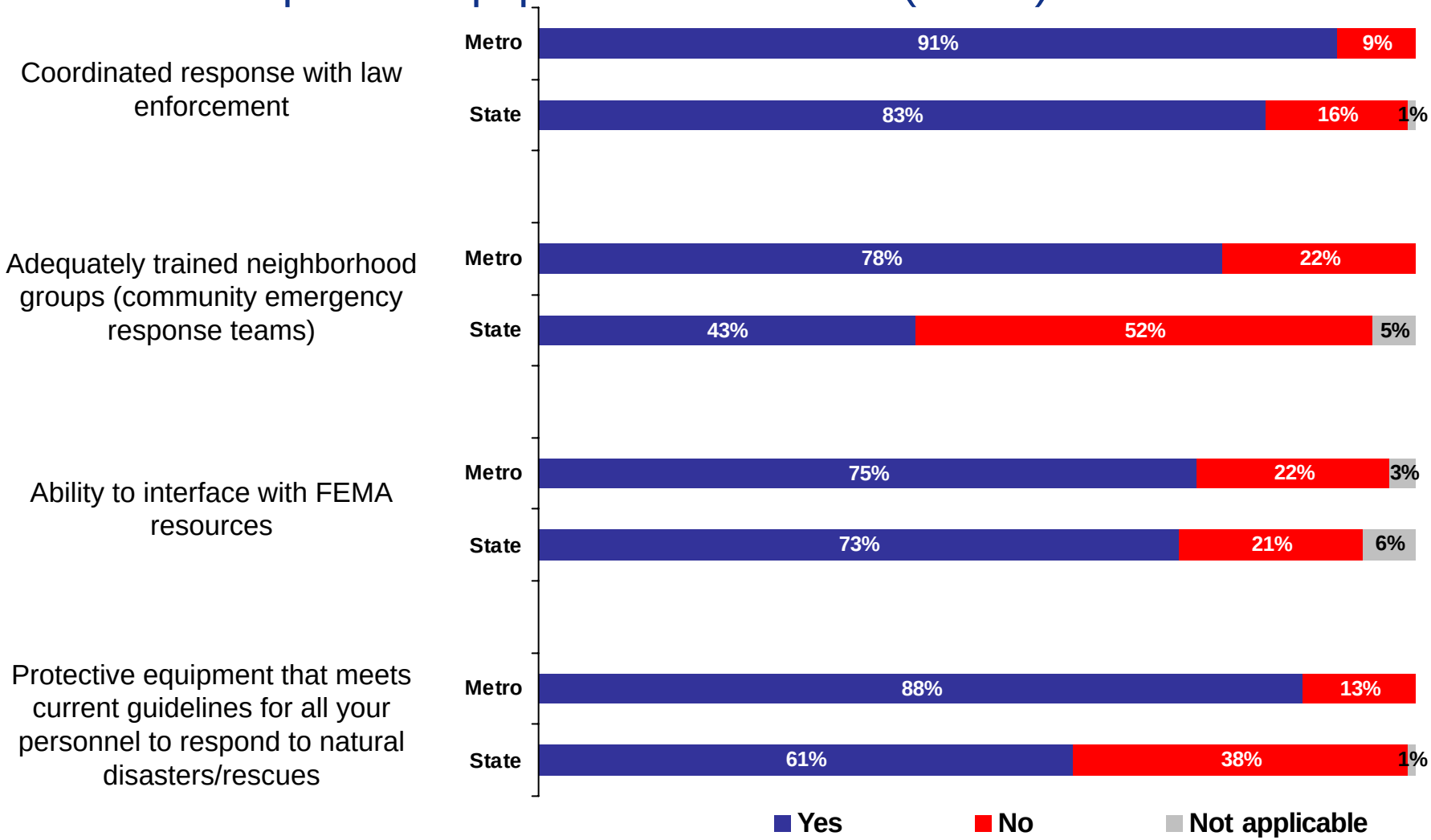
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Disaster Response Equipment/Resources (1 of 2)



14. And when it comes to disaster response, does your fire service organization have the following types of equipment/resources?

Base: All departments

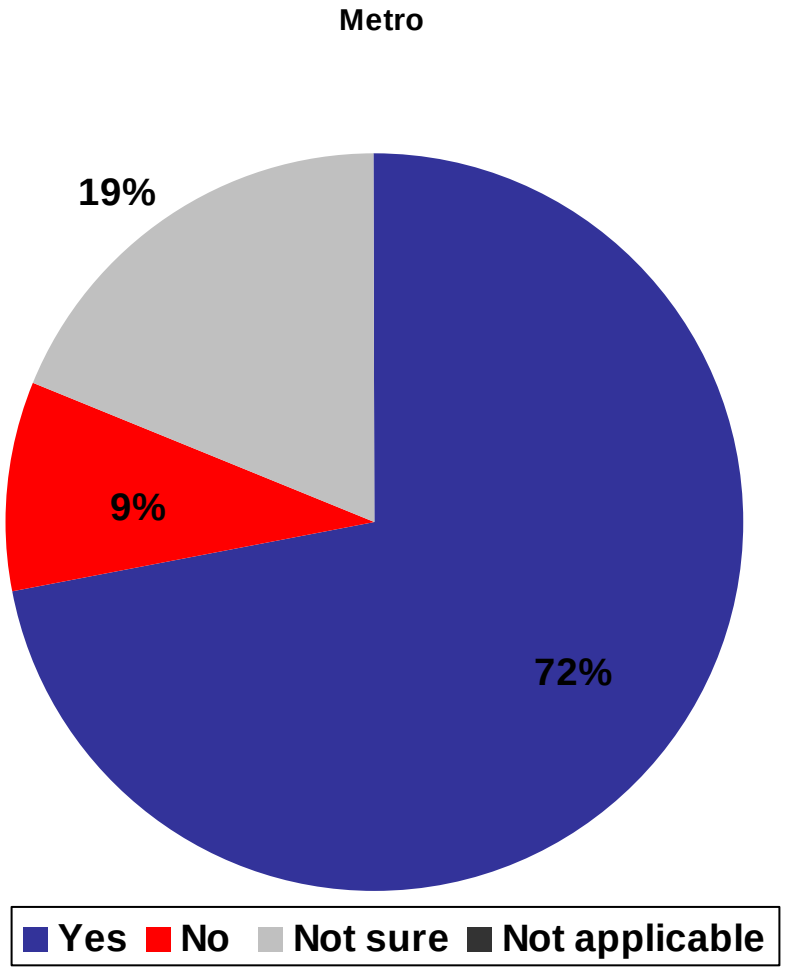
LA Metropolitan Area – California State Disaster Response Equipment/Resources (2 of 2)

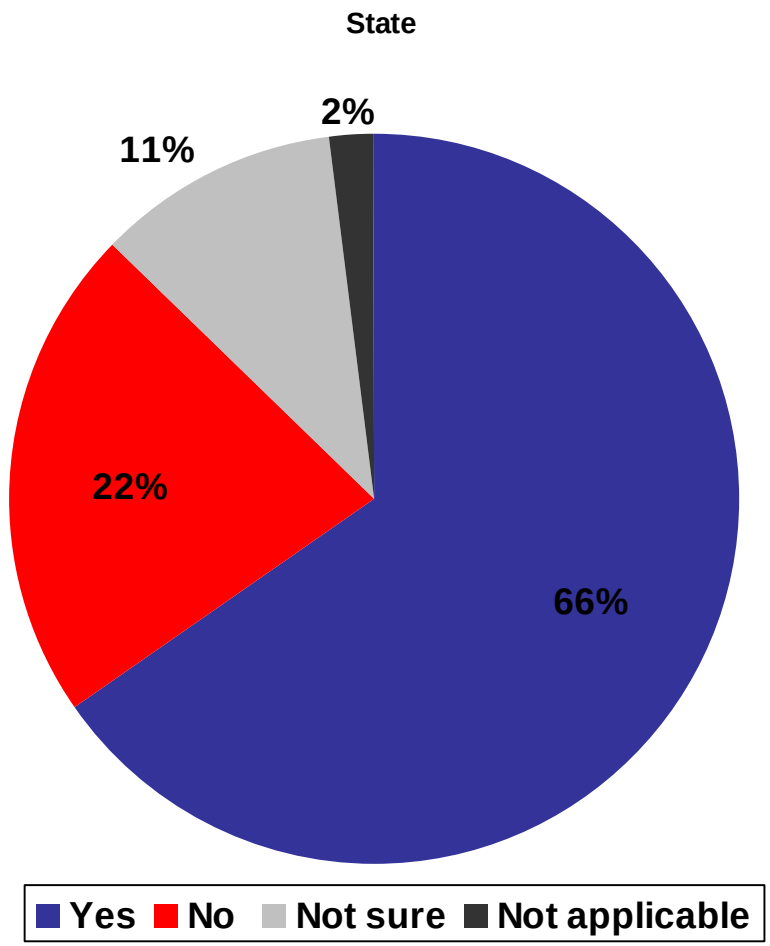


14. And when it comes to disaster response, does your fire service organization have the following types of equipment/resources?

Base: All departments

LA Metropolitan Area – California State
Adequate Extrication Equipment

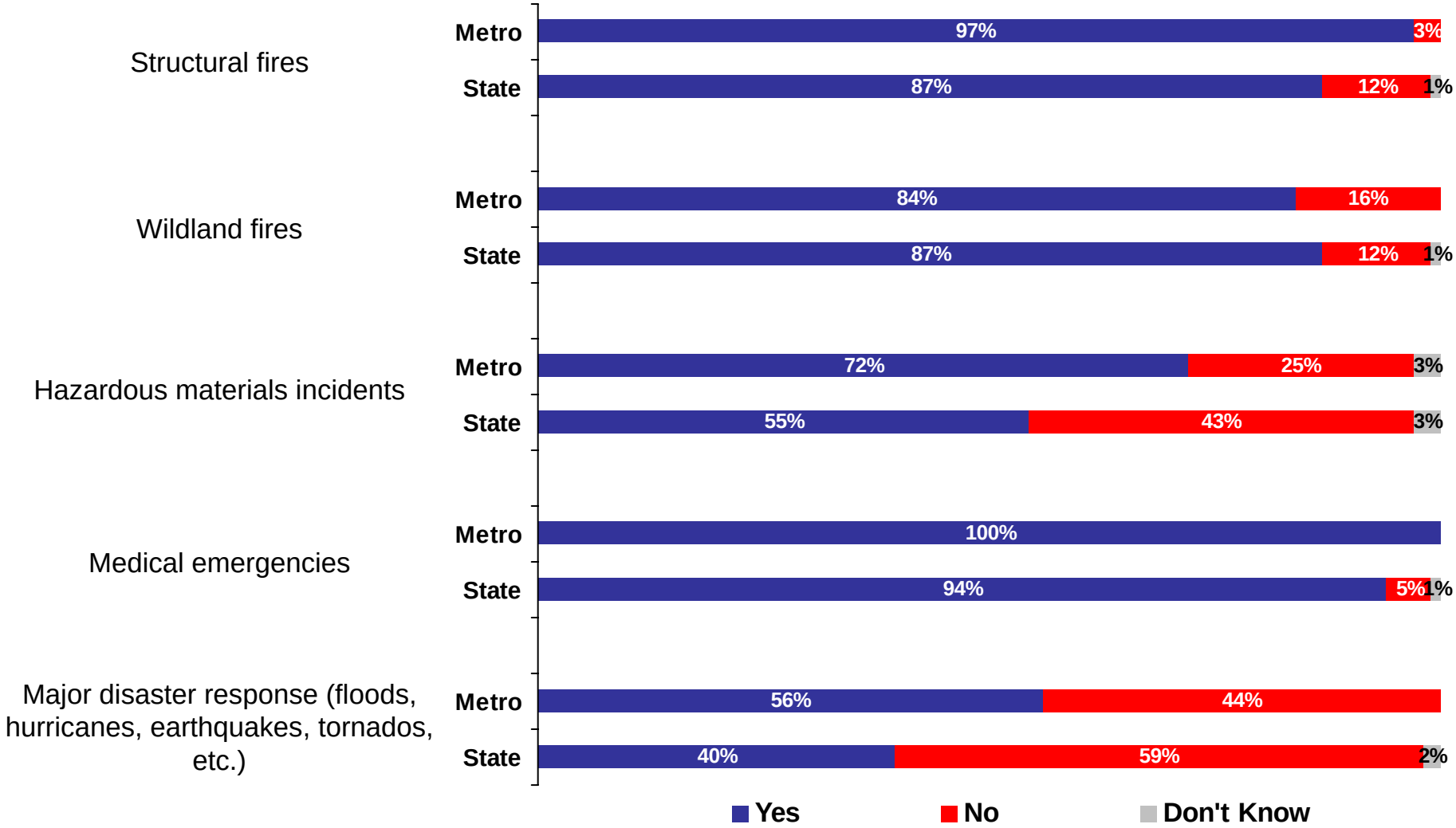




15. Given developments in motor vehicle construction, are you confident that your fire service organization has the extrication equipment to extract accident victims in a timely manner?

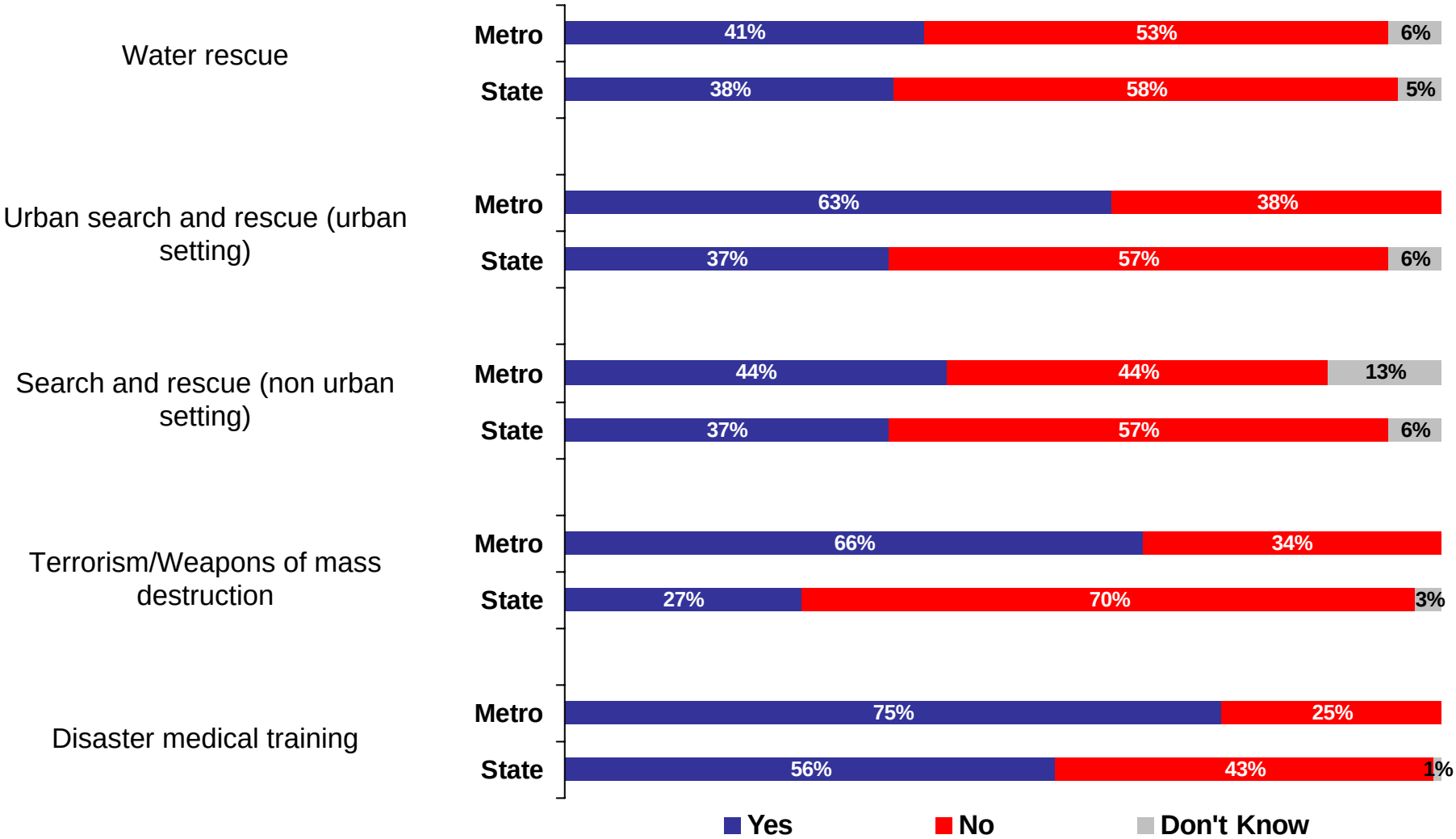
Base: All departments

LA Metropolitan Area – California State Adequate Training (1 of 2)



17. Do you believe your fire service organization is adequately trained when it comes to each of the following? ***Base: All departments***

LA Metropolitan Area – California State Adequate Training (2 of 2)



17. Do you believe your fire service organization is adequately trained when it comes to each of the following? ***Base: All departments***