

Report

Pay and Morale Report 2026

This report outlines the findings from the 2026 Pay and Morale survey, which asked the federated ranks of the Police Federation of England and Wales (constables, sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors) about their pay and allowances, morale, wellbeing, workload, rest days and professional development.

Police Federation of England and Wales · October 2026



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01 Foreword

Police officers have always gone above and beyond. A willingness to stay when the job is not finished, to step forward when the public needs them, and to put duty before themselves is woven into the traditions of policing.

But there is a fundamental difference between valuing that dedication and building a police service which cannot function without it.

This report provides compelling evidence that we have crossed that line.

Nearly three quarters of officers say their force relies heavily on their goodwill simply to meet routine operational demand. 42% say their team has been fully staffed on very few or no shifts in the previous three months. Almost two thirds describe their workload as too high. Unpaid overtime is increasing. Staffing issues remain widespread, leaving fewer colleagues available to share the increasing burden.

The consequences do not stop when an officer finishes their shift. Three quarters say fatigue has interfered with their family or social life. Nearly four in five have experienced stress, low mood or anxiety in the last year, and almost all of those say work caused or made those problems worse.

For officers trying to balance policing with family life, the pressures are particularly stark, and they are not experienced equally. 71% of mothers in policing told us they had needed to change role or team to meet their responsibilities as a parent, compared with 49% of fathers. That is an extraordinary difference. A modern police service cannot afford working practices that force officers to choose between their career and their family.

These findings should concern everyone with responsibility for the future of policing.

Earlier this year, the independent Police Remuneration Review Body reached an unusually stark conclusion. It said that short-notice rostering, cancelled rest days and disrupted leave were being routinely treated as normal rather than exceptional, describing the situation plainly: *"This exploitation of officers is out of step with a modern, sustainable workforce model."*

Our members' experiences bear that out.

93% do not believe they are fairly paid for the stresses and strains of their job. 58% have had a rest day cancelled in the past year and 62% have had annual leave refused. More than half have felt unsafe on duty because of demand or understaffing, while 44% have been physically attacked in the course of their duties.

Yet officers continue to turn up. They continue to protect the public, investigate crime, safeguard vulnerable people and support their colleagues. There is enormous pride and professionalism in that. But goodwill is not a workforce strategy, and dedication cannot be treated as an unlimited resource.

Perhaps most troubling is how early some pressures emerge. Happiness falls and anxiety rises sharply after an officer's first year, reaching their worst point among those with only three to five years' service. Policing is negatively impacting the lives of officers, with their happiness levels and mental health considerably worse than the general public.

The country is asking difficult and important questions about the future of policing. Reform will be necessary. But reform cannot succeed if the people expected to deliver it are exhausted, undervalued and routinely required to sacrifice their own time and wellbeing simply to keep the service functioning.

This report should therefore be read as more than a survey of pay and morale. It is a warning about the sustainability of policing itself.

Paul Williams

Acting Deputy National Chair

Police Federation of England and Wales

02 Introduction

The 2026 Pay and Morale Survey, completed by more than 18,000 officers across England and Wales, points to a single underlying problem: policing heavily relies on officers' unpaid time, disrupted rest and time with their family to remain operational. Three quarters of officers (74%) say their force relies heavily on their goodwill simply to meet routine demand. Morale remains low, dissatisfaction with pay is high, and many officers feel undervalued by the service, the Government and the public alike. These findings are closely linked: heavy workloads, cancelled rest days and staffing shortfalls leave officers stretched, and that strain carries through into their wellbeing, their home lives, and how they view their careers.

The functionality of the police force is dependent on officer goodwill. Officers who work overtime report an average of around seven hours of unpaid overtime every four weeks, equivalent to roughly 90 hours a year, and 88% have had a rest day cancelled, a request for annual leave refused or their roster changed in the last 12 months. Almost three quarters have gone to work when they felt they should have taken sick leave. Only 1% say their force is adequately resourced without relying on officer goodwill; in officers' own assessment, routine policing would not be completed without it.

These pressures are not felt equally across the workforce. Officers early in their careers, particularly those with three to five years' service, report the lowest wellbeing, and constables are generally more negative than more senior ranks. Personal characteristics matter too: even once age and seniority are considered, officers with a disability report worse outcomes across most wellbeing measures, and officers from ethnic minority backgrounds report lower life satisfaction, happiness and sense of worth than their white colleagues.

This year's report includes new data on what it means to be a parent in the force, and it shows that the pressures facing parents, and mothers in particular, are especially intense. Almost two thirds of officers (63%) are parents, and for them the disruption described in this report rarely stays at work. Most parents have had annual leave refused (59%) or a rest day cancelled (56%) in the last year, at rates not far below those of officers without children, yet for a parent each refusal or cancellation can mean rearranging childcare, missing time with children during school holidays or a partner changing their own plans at short notice. Little contingency appears to be made for this: only a quarter of parents (25%) have a flexible working arrangement. Many instead adjust their careers. Over half of parents (55%) have had to change role or team to meet their obligations as a parent, and 40% of those who did not apply for promotion say they have too many family commitments, compared with 13% of officers without children. Among mothers, these figures rise to 71% and 51% respectively, and 81% of mothers have experienced stress, low mood or anxiety in the last 12 months.

The key findings from each chapter are:

I. Morale

Morale remains low. Only 42% of officers are satisfied with their life, and at 5.4 out of 10 their average life satisfaction is around 28% below the general public's and lower than every other public service group compared, including the armed forces, teachers and adult social care staff. Officers find their jobs far more stressful than life outside work: 43% find their work very or extremely stressful, up from 33% in 2020, against just 10% who say the same of life outside work, and stress is highest in response (58%) and custody (54%).

Wellbeing is at its lowest among officers with three to five years' service, when happiness is lowest and fatigue and anxiety highest. Fatigue reaches well beyond work, with 76% saying it has interfered with their family or social life, and 78% have experienced stress, low mood or anxiety in the last 12 months, almost all (94%) saying work caused or worsened it.

II. Pay and Rewards

Officers do not feel their pay reflects the demands of the job: 93% disagree that they are fairly paid for the stresses and strains, 85% for the hazards they face and 70% compared with other key workers. Allowances are widely seen as falling short, with 75% dissatisfied with the London and South East allowance and around two thirds with the unsocial hours (65%) and on-call (65%) allowances. Where Targeted Variable Payments have changed, they have more often been reduced or removed (21%) than increased (4%), most often for budget reasons. This sits alongside a wider sense of being undervalued: 93% disagree that the police are respected by the Government.

Career progression offers little compensation. Fewer than two in five officers covered by the Pay Progression Standard (38%) have been made aware of it, and 87% did not apply for promotion in the last year, most often because it would not be worth it for the responsibilities (57%) or the salary (51%).

III. Working Conditions

63% say their workload is too high, including 21% who say it is much too high, and 43% often or always face unrealistic time pressures. Staffing is stretched: 42% say their team has been fully staffed on very few or no shifts in the last three months, and 74% say their force relies heavily on officers' goodwill to get routine work done.

Overtime is routine, with nearly nine in ten constables and sergeants working it, and average unpaid overtime has risen in each year of research, from five hours per four-week period in 2023 to seven in 2026. Work also regularly spills into time off: 30% often or always take work home, 62% have had annual leave refused and 71% have had their roster changed at least once, 17% more than ten times. Rest day

cancellations remain common, with 58% having had at least one cancelled, although this is down 8% points on 2024.

IV. Safety, Health, and Wellbeing

44% of officers have been physically attacked in the last 12 months, and a majority have felt unsafe on duty because of staffing levels, with 29% saying this happens often or very often, rising to 42% among officers under 35. 75% do not have access to double crewing at all times, and three in five (60%) say they have personally become more cautious in their dealings with the public.

Half of officers (51%) have used leave because of their physical or mental health, and 49% have sought help for their mental health. Access to reactive wellbeing services has improved, but 32% felt poorly supported after raising their mental health with a line manager, and many of those who did not tell their manager feared being treated differently (45%) or damaging their career (33%). Overall, 72% rate their force's support for officer wellbeing as inadequate or requiring improvement.

V. Skills and Training

Officers are split on whether their training prepared them for the reality of the job: 36% say it prepared them well, but 34% say it prepared them poorly. Newer officers are the least positive, and even among the most experienced, fewer than half say their training prepared them well. Workload also gets in the way of development, with nearly a quarter (24%) having missed a mandatory training session because of workload in the last year. At the same time, the role is becoming more technical: 78% say the digital skills it requires have increased, yet more than a third (37%) say their job description does not reflect this.

56% have used AI for work, rising from 50% of constables to 84% of chief inspectors, mostly for drafting emails and documents (61%) and report writing (51%). Yet only 22% of AI users have been trained by their force, a figure that ranges from 59% in the South East to 12% elsewhere, and fewer than half (42%) are aware of any formal guidance. Officers see clear benefits, with 75% agreeing AI could reduce administrative workload, but are also alert to the risks: 80% agree staff may become over-reliant on it and 73% that the public may not trust its use.

VI. Equality

Disability is the characteristic most strongly associated with worse outcomes: even after accounting for age and rank, officers with a disability are much more likely to report mental health difficulties, anxiety and fatigue. Officers from ethnic minority backgrounds report lower life satisfaction, happiness and sense of worth, and are less likely to feel fairly paid.

Support for officers with protected characteristics is uneven. 77% of LGBTQ+ officers say their force has been proactive in supporting them, compared with only 44% of officers with a disability, although 70% of

disabled officers have been able to access a reasonable adjustment. Parenthood also weighs more heavily on women: 71% of mothers in the force have had to change job roles or teams to meet their obligations as a parent, compared with 49% of fathers.

VII. Reputation

Officers feel undervalued, with 82% disagreeing that the police are respected by the public, 93% that they are respected by the Government, and 77% saying they would not recommend joining the police. Pride in the job persists, but narrowly: 41% are proud to be in the police, against 35% who are not.

Officers are critical of their own forces, with 63% rating theirs as inadequate or requiring improvement, and they expect the public to be harsher still, particularly on visible presence and dealing with antisocial behaviour. Yet the public are more positive than officers assume: 38% say the police are doing an excellent or good job, against 23% who say poor or very poor, although this is below the ratings given to the fire and rescue service (61%) and NHS 999 services (51%).

03 Methodology

Pay and Morale Survey 2026

The Pay and Morale Survey is PFEW's annual survey of its members, covering pay and allowances, morale, wellbeing, workload, rest days and professional development. The survey was fielded online by the PFEW to Federation members in the federated ranks (constables, sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors) between 13 July and 8 August 2026, and the analysis was carried out by PF Global. In total, 18,537 members responded.

Results have been weighted by force size to provide nationally representative proportions.

Some respondents did not complete the full questionnaire, so the number answering each question falls gradually through the survey. The base (n) for each question is shown beneath every chart and table. Figures for earlier years are taken from previous PFEW Pay and Morale reports, including the Pay and Morale Survey 2024 report (R001/2025).

PF Global polling (supplementary data)

PF Global was also commissioned by the Police Federation of England and Wales to conduct polling of both officers and the general public.

- **PF Global poll of PFEW members:** An online poll of 4,158 PFEW members, conducted by PF Global on behalf of the Police Federation of England and Wales between 23 June and 6 July 2026. Results have been weighted by force size to provide nationally representative proportions.
- **PF Global poll of the general public:** A nationally representative online poll of 4,030 adults in England and Wales, conducted by PF Global on behalf of the Police Federation of England and Wales between 3 July and 20 July 2026. Results have been weighted by SEG, region, gender, age, ethnicity and 2024 vote to provide nationally representative proportions.

PF Global is a member of the British Polling Council and the Market Research Society and abides by their rules. For more information, please contact the PF Global polling team at polling@pf.global.

04 Morale

Officers' wellbeing sits well below that of the public and other public service workers and is at its lowest a few years into their careers. However, the experience of poor morale is complex and uneven across different segments of the force. While around a quarter report low life satisfaction (27%) or low happiness (23%), large majorities report moderate to extreme job stress (82%) and say fatigue has made it difficult to carry out their duties (66%). Even so, key variables break apart the attitudes of officers – most notably, seniority and length of service.

Life satisfaction

Police officers tend to report higher life satisfaction the more senior they are.

Overall, 42% of officers are satisfied with their life and 27% are unsatisfied, with a mean score of 5.4 on a 0 to 10 scale, slightly above the midpoint.

Satisfaction rises with rank: constables score 5.3, slightly below the average, while chief inspectors score 6.1, 0.7 points above it.

'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?'

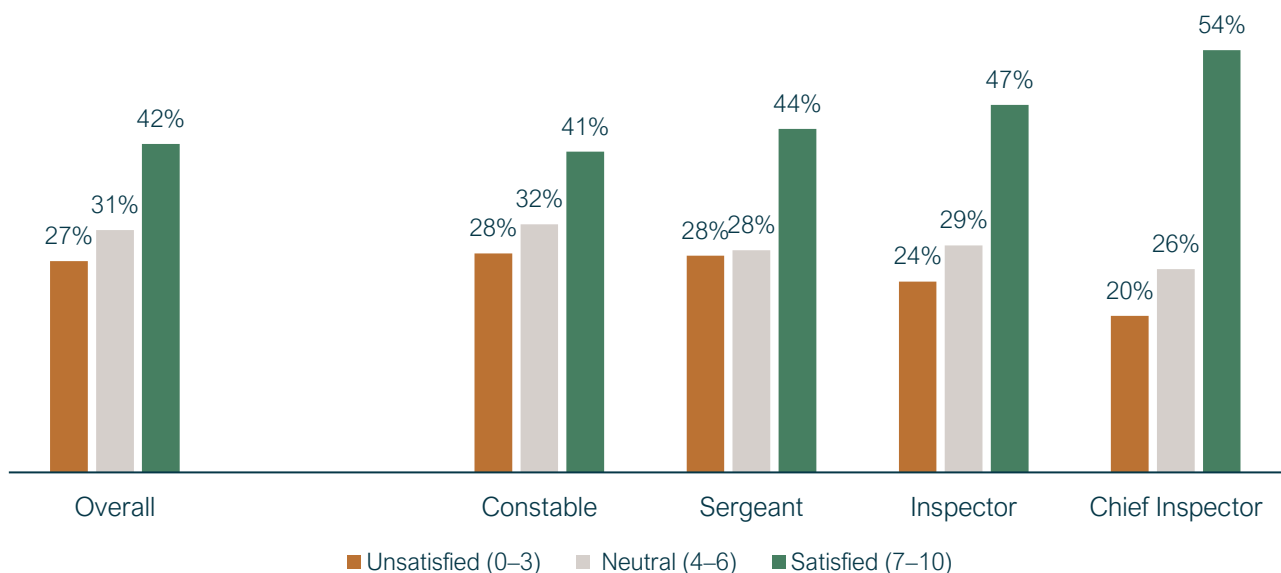


Chart 1, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,356)

Life satisfaction is higher among more senior officers. Because the survey captures different officers at a single point in time, it cannot show whether officers become more satisfied as they progress, or whether more satisfied officers are more likely to reach senior ranks. Since the percentage of officers reporting

neutral satisfaction with their life remains relatively consistent across ranks, the rise in life satisfaction may reflect a shrinking dissatisfied group, rather than neutrals converting.

Life satisfaction is measured using this same question for several other groups among the British public. This data can be found in other ONS surveys and covers the following groups: the wider British public¹, including the armed forces², teachers and leaders³, education staff⁴, and those working in adult social care⁶.

'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?'

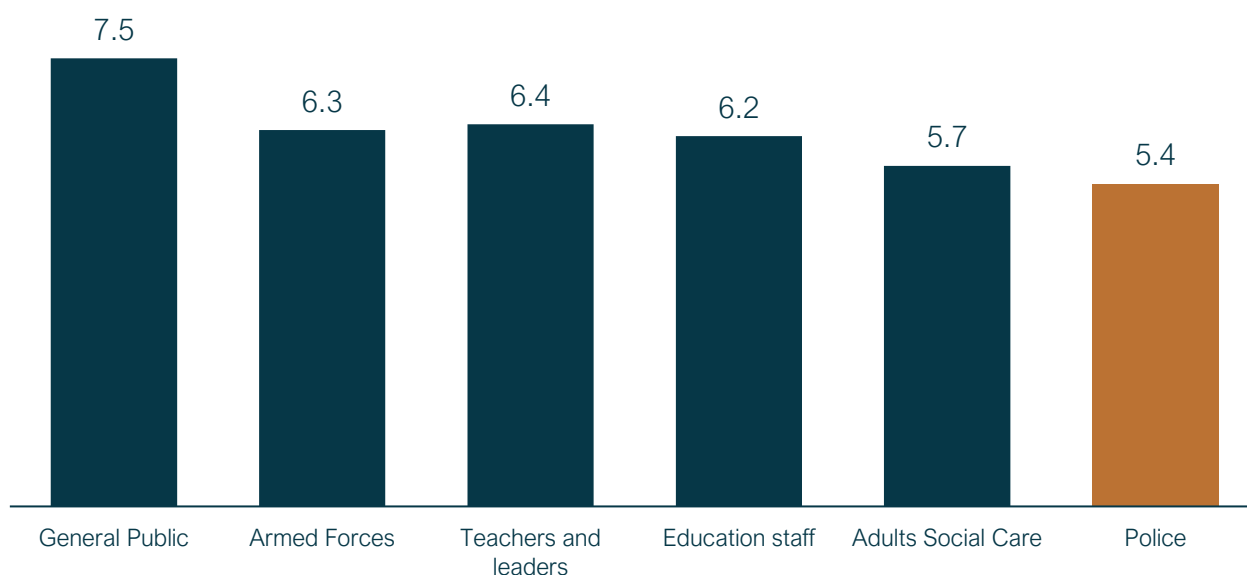


Chart 2, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,356); comparator figures from published sources

While police officers report a moderate degree of life satisfaction overall, their outlook appears significantly more negative when compared to other key groups in public life. On average, the general public score 7.5 out of 10 for life satisfaction, compared with 6.2 to 6.4 among the armed forces, teachers and leaders, and education staff. Police officers score 5.4, around 28% lower than the general public and below every other group shown, suggesting pressures specific to policing that are not felt to the same degree by other public sector workers.

¹ Office for National Statistics, Quarterly personal well-being estimates – non-seasonally adjusted, Table 2 (life satisfaction in the UK, quarterly). Source: Annual Population Survey. Released 28 August 2026, covering April 2011 to March 2026; figures quoted are Quarter 1 2026 (January to March 2026). Accessed 18 September 2026.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/quarterlypersonalwellbeingestimatesnonseasonallyadjusted>

² Ministry of Defence, UK Regular Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey Results 2026, published 28 May 2026. Figures derived from Annex B Reference Tables, Table B16.5, tri-service total (unweighted n=6,601). Accessed 18 September 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2026>

³ Department for Education, Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders: Wave 3, research report. Fieldwork 29 January to 7 May 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-3>

⁴ Education Support, Teacher Wellbeing Index 2025, published 2025. Online survey of 3,082 education staff drawn from the YouGov panel, weighted to the education workforce. <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/3qeajx41/teacher-wellbeing-index-2025.pdf>

⁵ The 'teachers and leaders' sample covers only teachers and education leaders, while 'education staff' label covers anybody working in education, including non-classroom support such as technicians, librarian, IT admin, and exams officers.

⁶ Ipsos for the Department of Health and Social Care, Adult Social Care Workforce Survey: Wave 1 – main findings report, February 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-workforce-survey>

The same pattern repeats when asking officers how worthwhile they find the things they do in their life. Officers report an average of 6.0, above the mid-point of the scale. However, this is still the lowest of the public sector groups shown, and around 23% lower than the general public (7.8).

'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?'

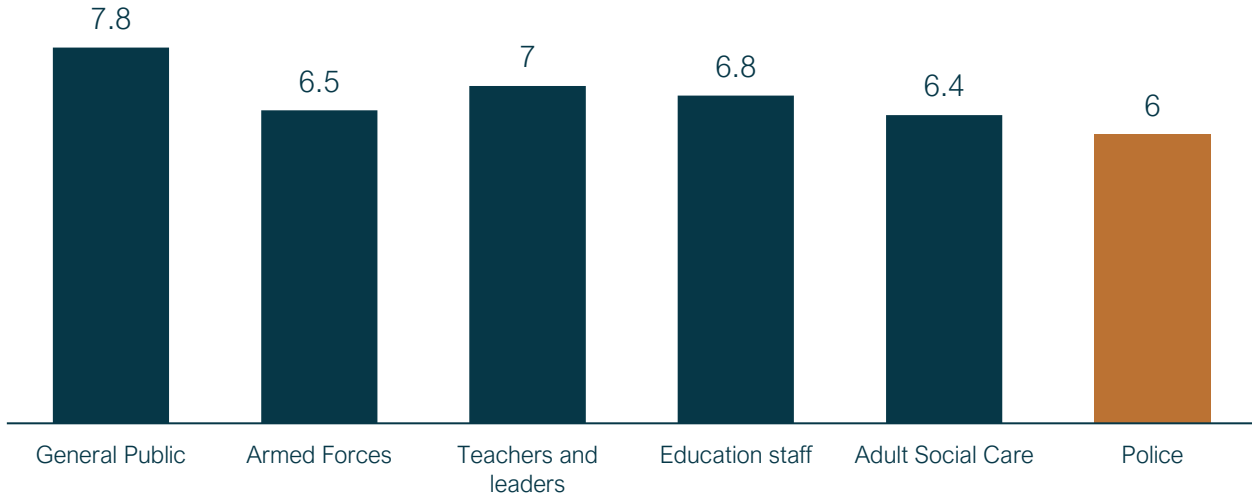


Chart 3, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,853); comparator figures from published sources

Within the police force, as with satisfaction, how worthwhile officers find the things they do in their life is significantly affected by rank. The more senior an officer is in the force, the more likely they are to report finding what they do worthwhile.

'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?'

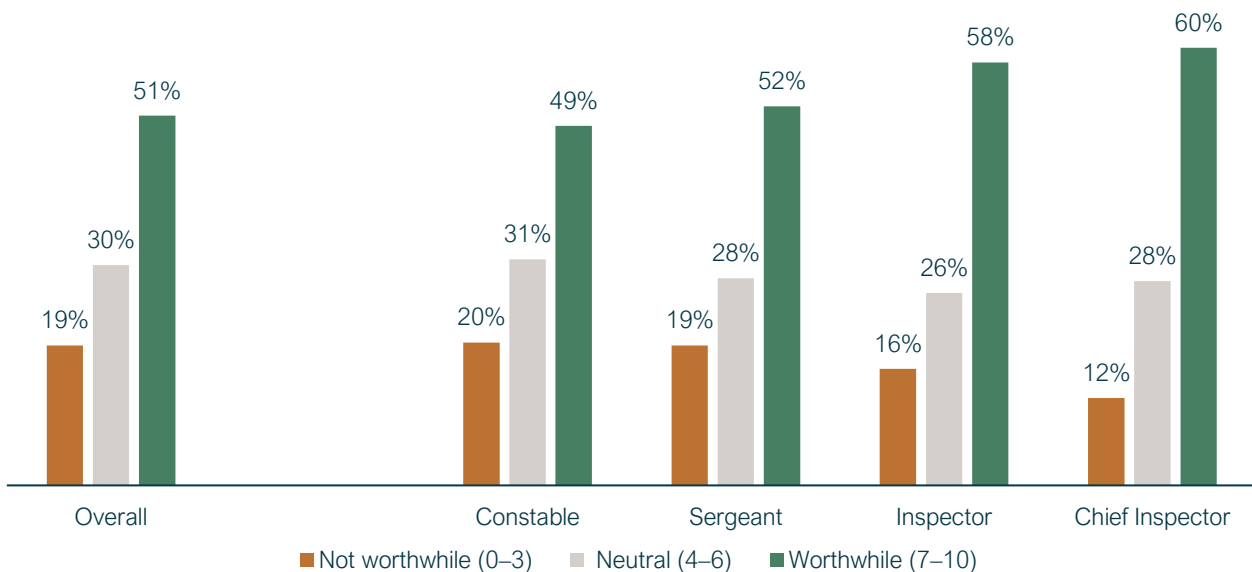


Chart 4, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,853)

While around half of constables (49%) report what they are doing in their life as being 'worthwhile', this figure rises to 58% among inspectors and 60% among chief inspectors. As with officers' reported life satisfaction, increases in how worthwhile actions are felt to be reflect not changes in the proportion who are neutral, but a shrinking number of those who say 'not worthwhile'.

**'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?' and
'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your
life are worthwhile?'**

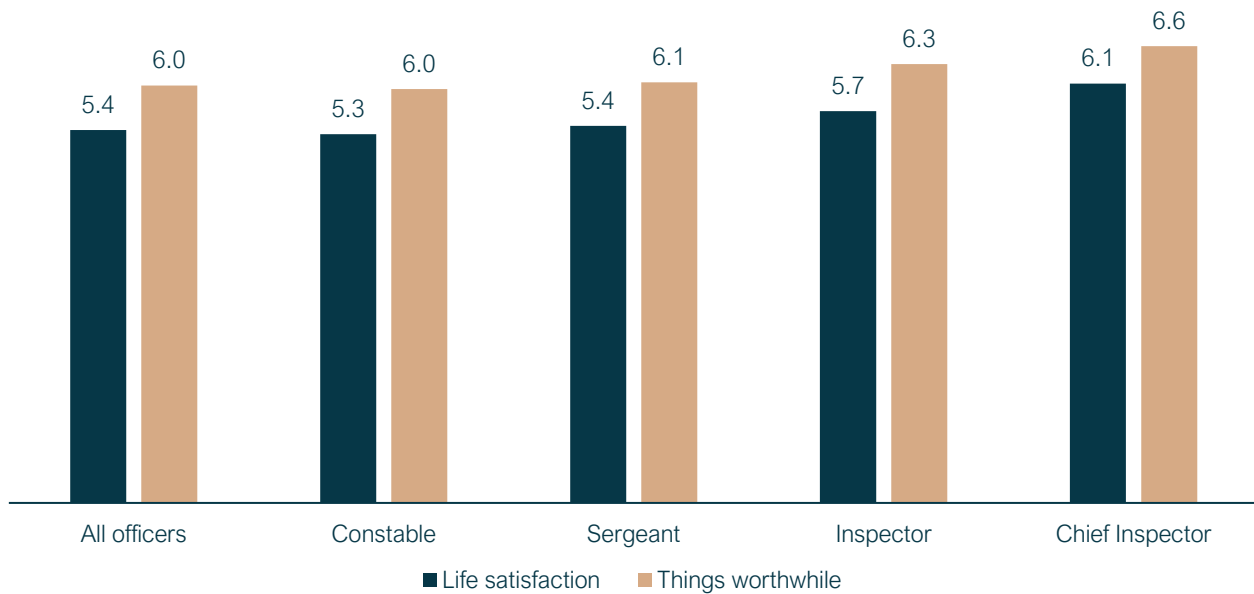


Chart 5, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,853–17,356)

Across every rank, the proportion of officers who report what they do in their life as worthwhile is consistently more than the proportion who report feeling satisfied with their life. Taken together these could indicate a degree of healthy engagement and satisfaction with the day-to-day, alongside other pressures on overall satisfaction, such as pay and working conditions, which are explored later in this report.

“

Morale is currently at rock bottom. I have been a serving officer for 21 years and I have never known it so bad.

In the 26 years of service this is the worst [morale] it has ever been... It is so sad to see the job I love so much is failing... In my department alone 14 officers are leaving in the next month for other jobs, other countries or transferring to other forces.

Happiness and anxiety

Length of service is closely linked to whether officers report being happy or anxious. As with life satisfaction, seniority is associated with higher happiness and, to a lesser extent, lower anxiety.

'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?'

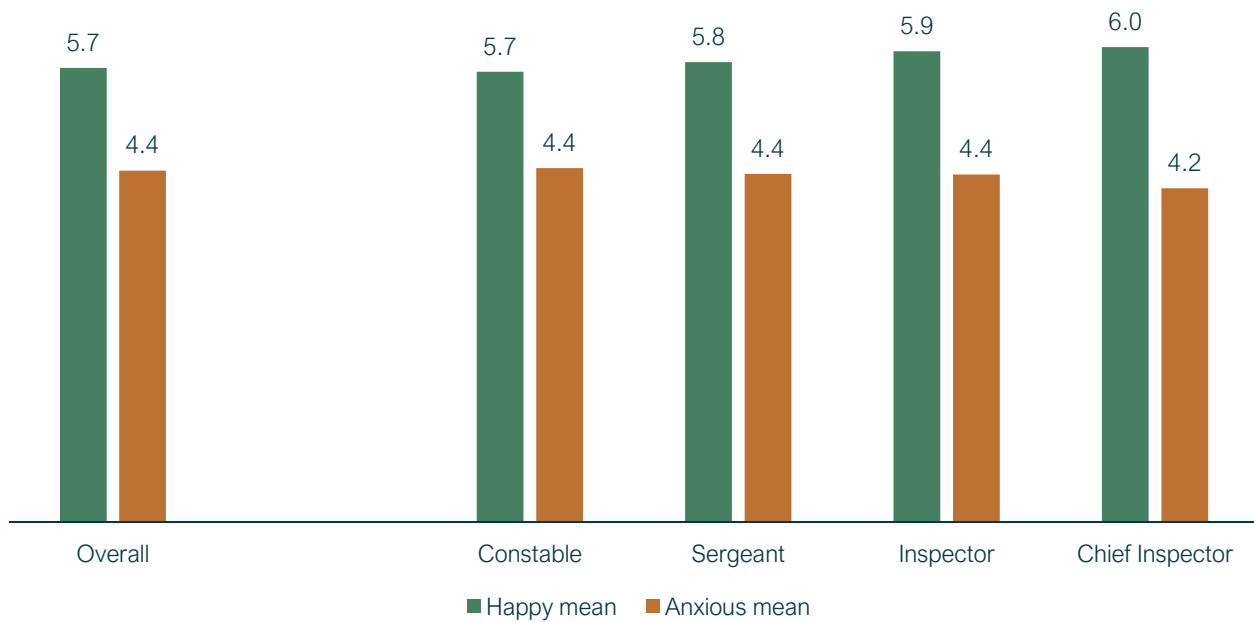


Chart 6, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,574–16,875)

For instance, when asked how happy or anxious respondents felt yesterday (on a 0–10 scale), happiness responses increase slightly through ranks, rising from a mean of 5.7 among constables to 6.0 among chief inspectors. However, anxiety remains considerably more consistent across ranks, with the proportion of constables reporting high anxiety (7–10) being 29% compared to 28% for sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors.

While there is significant overlap between an officer's rank and their time of service, analysing responses only by length of service shows more precisely where happiness and anxiety peak in an officer's career.

Those in the first year of their service report the highest levels of happiness and the lowest levels of anxiety, followed by those approaching the end of their career. After the first year of service, happiness drops and anxiety rises sharply until an officer reaches 3–5 years of service. After this point, both broadly improve over an officer's next 20+ years. However, levels of both anxiety and happiness never recover fully from their trough at 3–5 years: the point that is toughest on morale for officers.



The stress and anxiety levels are extreme and because we are not paid anywhere near what we should be, people either want to quit (or do quit), or they go long term sick.

'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?'

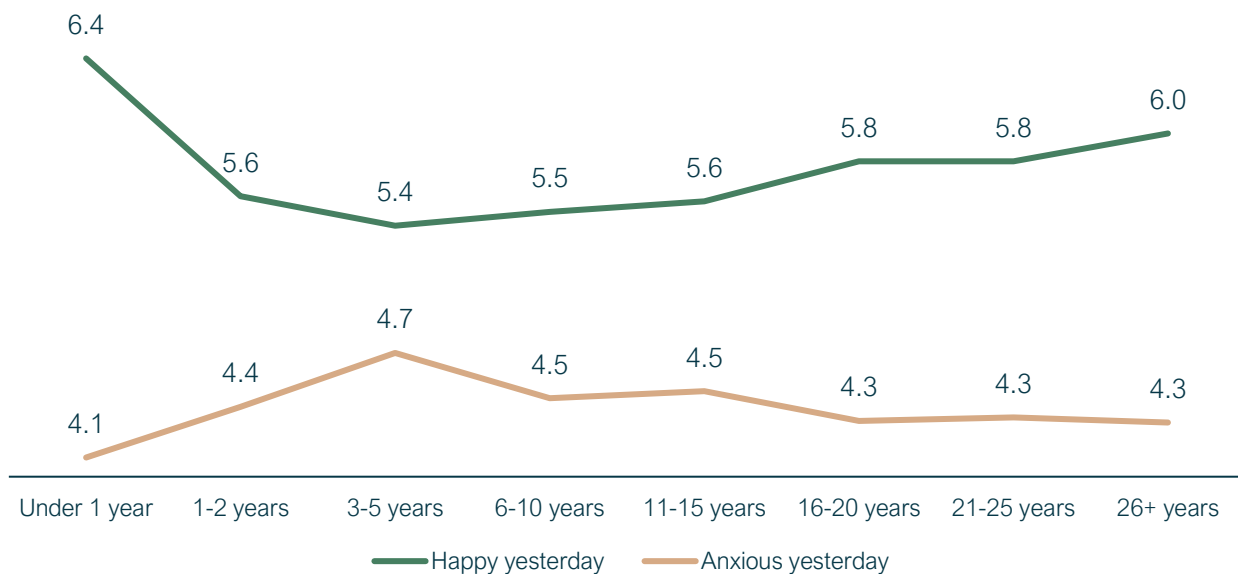


Chart 7, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,574–16,875)

Morale is therefore markedly lower among officers a few years into their careers than among those just starting out, and higher among those with longer service.

Stress

Overall, a significant proportion of officers (43%) report that their jobs are 'very' or 'extremely' stressful, versus just 10% that say the same of life outside of work. Only 2% consider their job to have no stress at all – a figure which rises to 22% when asked about their lives outside of work.

'In general, how do you find your job?' and 'In general, how do you find your life outside of work?'

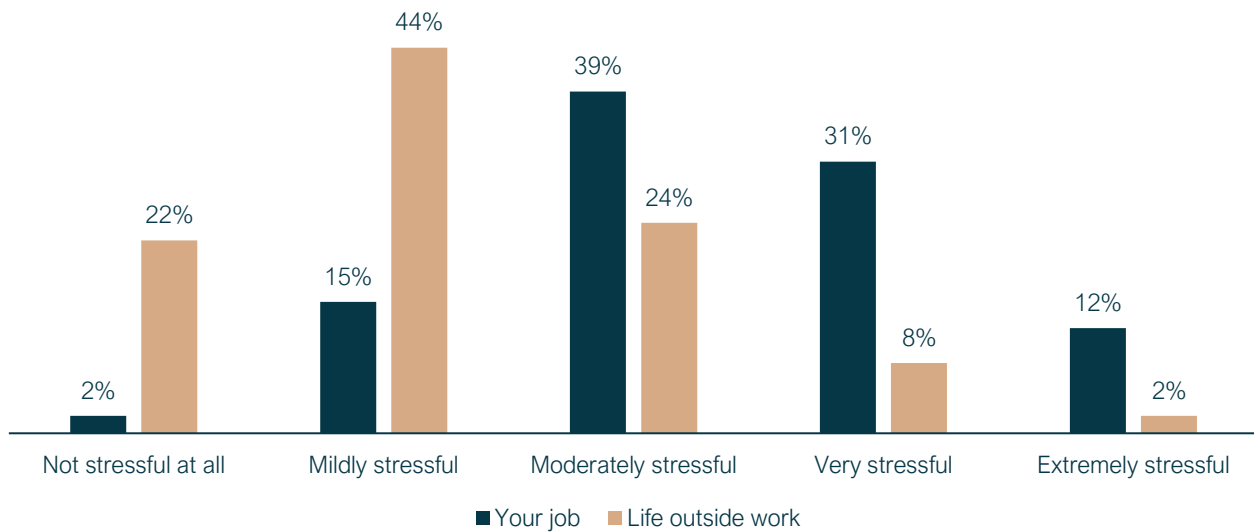


Chart 8, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,023–18,033)

This disparity shows that officers find their jobs far more stressful than their lives outside work, and the proportion of those who report finding their job very or extremely stressful has risen by 10% points since 2020, when 33% said the same.

'In general, how do you find your job?' % saying their job is 'very' or 'extremely' stressful...

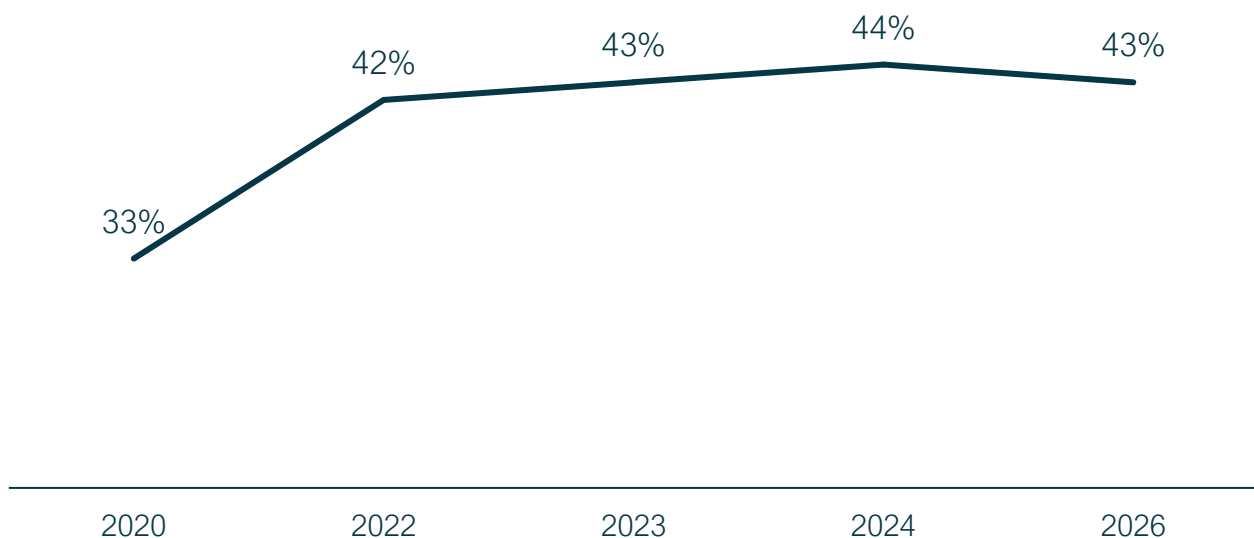


Chart 9, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,033); earlier waves from previous Pay and Morale surveys

Reported stress rose sharply between 2020 and 2022, a period that coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it brought to officers' duties. However, stress has not fallen back since, remaining at a similar level in every wave from 2022 onwards. This suggests that the causes of stress are structural rather than a temporary effect of the pandemic.

Stress is, however, not experienced evenly across different roles. Overall, 43% of officers describe their job as very or extremely stressful. It is felt much more acutely among those working in response, custody, and investigations. Among officers in these roles, half or more say their job is very or extremely stressful (58% in response, 54% in custody and 50% in investigations).

'In general, how do you find your job?'
% saying their job is 'very' or 'extremely' stressful...

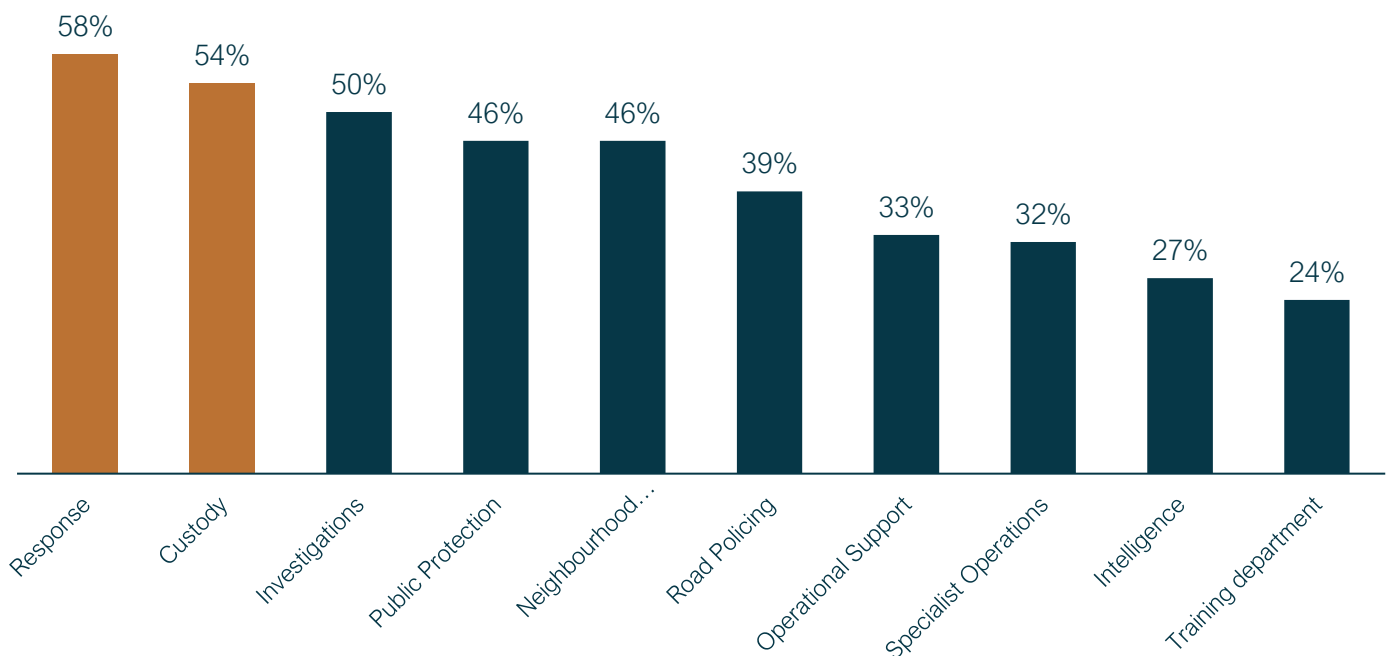


Chart 10, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,008)

The number saying that their job is stressful drops to around a quarter among those working in intelligence or in the training department. This is less than half the rate among those working in response (58%) and custody (54%), and around three in four officers in these two roles do not describe their job as very or extremely stressful (73% in intelligence and 76% in the training department). Even so, around a quarter of officers in the least stressful roles still describe their job as very or extremely stressful.

Fatigue

Fatigue is getting worse. Two thirds of officers (66%) say it has made it difficult to carry out their duties, up from 61% in 2024, and 76% say it has interfered with their family or social life, up from 73%. In a job where

44% of officers have been attacked in the last year, fatigue at this level is a safety concern as well as a wellbeing one.

Both measures peak among officers with 3 to 5 years' service before steadily declining. At this stage, 84% say fatigue has affected their family life, compared with 68% of those with 26 or more years' service.

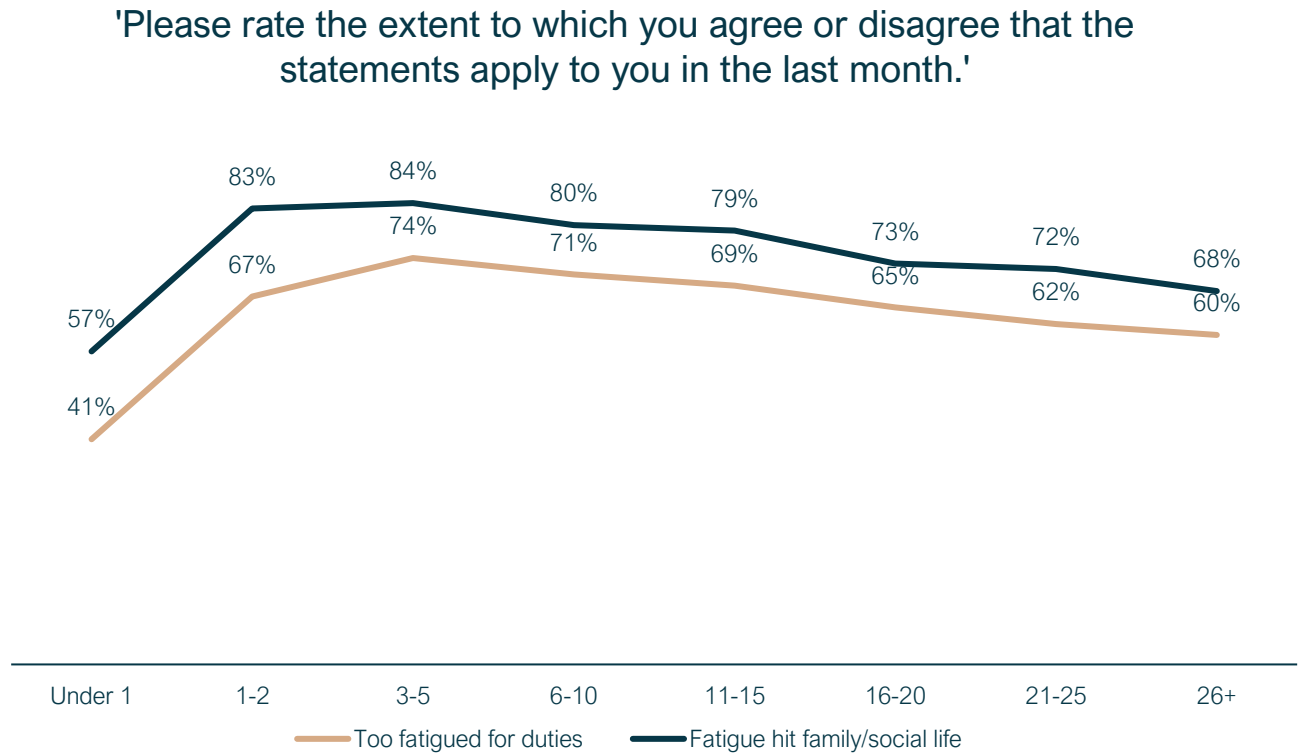


Chart 11, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,966–18,020)

Fatigue has a greater impact on officers' family/social life than on their ability to carry out their duties. While a majority in every service band except the first year say they have been too fatigued to fulfil their duties, a consistently higher proportion say fatigue is hitting their family and social life. This gap ranges from 8% points among those with 16–20 years' service, to 16% points among those in the first year of the job.



I often come home exhausted and struggle to do anything after work due to feeling so tired. There are days when I end up working an extra 8/9 hours on top of what I have already worked.

My social life has absolutely died because of this job and I have lost relationships too... We're basically ALWAYS ON CALL too and that's not reflected in our pay.

Mental health

The majority of officers report experiencing negative mental health and attribute the cause primarily to their workload. 78% say they have experienced stress, low mood, or anxiety in the last 12 months and 94% of this group say this has been caused or worsened by their work. The proportion reporting negative mental health indicators is also relatively consistent between ranks: 77% of constables and 75% of chief inspectors report that they have experienced stress, low mood, or anxiety in the last 12 months.

The top-ranking causes of stress and anxiety are primarily centred around resourcing. High workload (59%) and poor work/life balance (47%) are consistently selected as the key drivers behind stress, low mood and anxiety. On the other hand, working shifts (35%), uncertainty over future role (34%), internal change (34%), being unable to take leave when needed (33%), and traumatising incidents (28%) are all secondary, though still important drivers.

Causes of negative mental health for chief inspectors in the workplace vary significantly compared to other groups. Workload and poor work/life balance are particularly pronounced for this group, with over three in four (76%) chief inspectors including workload in their responses, and 56% including work/life balance. Working shifts (13%), internal change (25%) and not being able to take leave when needed (15%) are far less impactful on this group.

Pressures outside work also play a part for some officers. 13% care for someone with a long-term care need, and 42% of these carers say the demands of caring have led them to develop a physical or mental health condition. For parents, pressures at home sit alongside the demands of the job. Parents whose youngest child is under 12 are more than twice as likely as officers without children to find life outside work very or extremely stressful (15% compared with 6%), rising to 18% among mothers of young children. The strain is greatest for the one in twenty officers (5%) who care for a child with long-term care needs. A third of this group (34%) find life outside work very or extremely stressful, more than half (55%) have used leave because of their mental health in the last year, compared with 40% of all officers, and 54% say the demands of caring have led them to develop a physical or mental health condition.

Despite nearly four in five officers (78%) reporting experiencing stress, low mood or anxiety, only around half (49%) say they have sought help, indicating a gap between experience of poor mental health and ability or willingness to seek support.



The pay isn't great for the secondary trauma we take on. Especially as a child protection detective. It has changed me for the worst and I have a lack of trust on anyone due to this role.

At any given time in CID there is more than one officer off sick as a result of unmanageable workloads, stress and anxiety. I know of one employee that suffered a full mental health breakdown explicitly as a result of workloads and workplace stress.

'You previously mentioned that your stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with mental health and wellbeing were caused by, or made worse by work. What were the main reasons for this?'

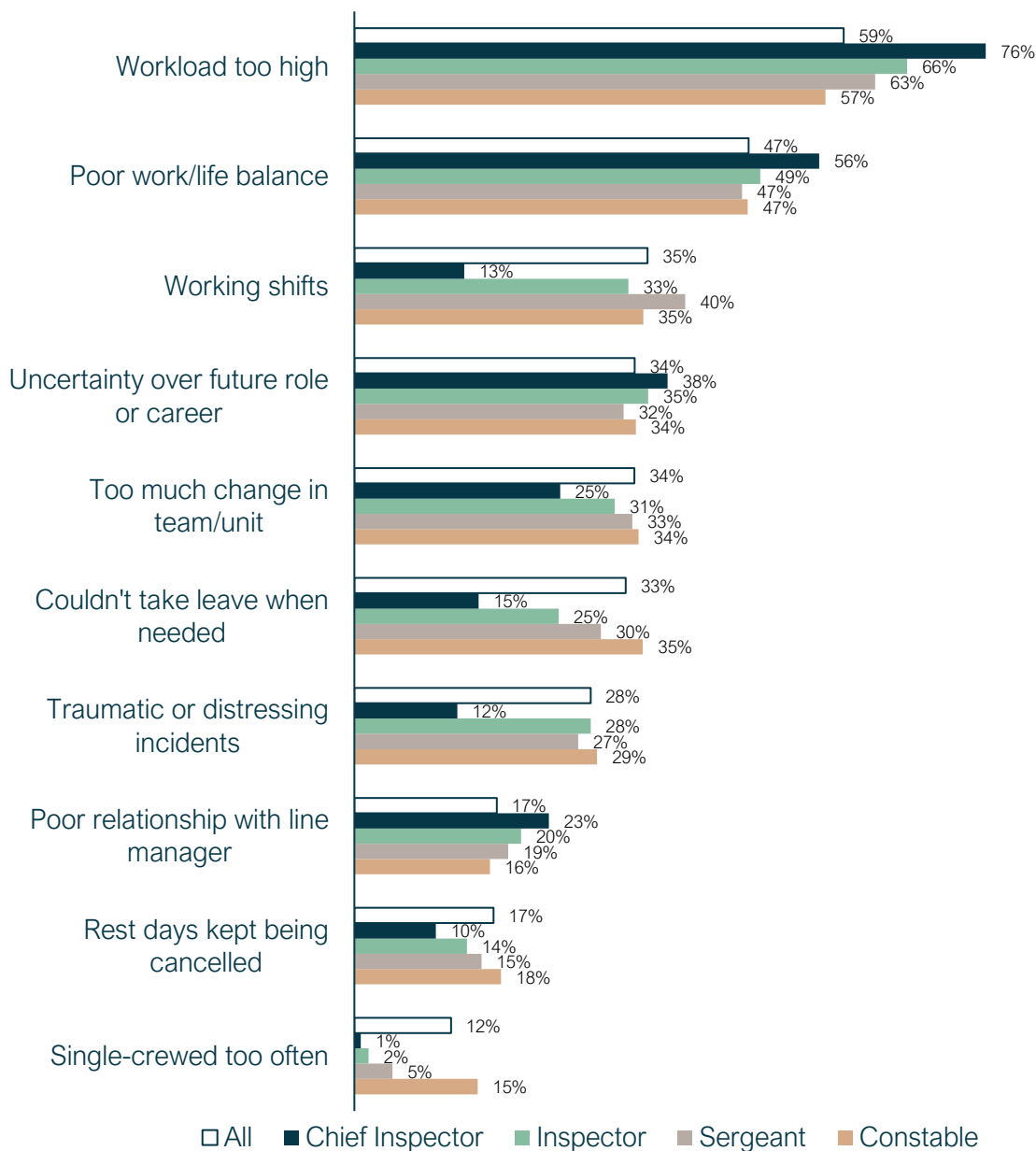


Chart 12, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers citing at least one cause (n=12,637)

Sick days

Officers report taking an average of 2.8 days' sick leave in the last 12 months, excluding those who reported more than 20 days.

There is significant variation in the number of days taken by rank. While constables took 3.1 days on average (with 37% taking none), this figure falls to 2.3 among sergeants, 1.6 among inspectors and 1.2 among chief inspectors. For those on lower ranks, not being able to take leave when needed is reported to a much greater degree than among senior colleagues.

These figures are likely to understate the extent of ill health among officers. As set out in the Safety, Health and Wellbeing chapter, almost three quarters of officers have gone to work in the last 12 months when they felt they should have taken sick leave, suggesting that many are working through illness rather than recording it as absence.

'In total, how many days sick leave have you taken in the last 12 months?'

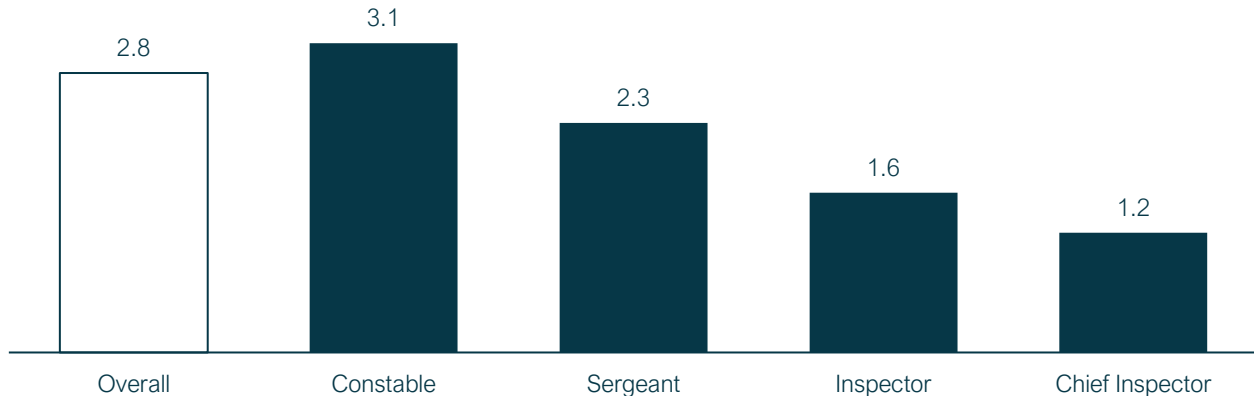


Chart 13, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers reporting 20 or fewer sick days (n=14,968)



Officers are burnt out then penalised for going sick – being placed on sickness warnings has had impacts on my care for the job... We are treated like robots and not humans.

05 Pay and Rewards

Officers' views on pay are overwhelmingly negative and largely unchanged since 2024. More than nine in ten (93%) say they are not fairly paid for the stresses and strains of the job. Allowances fare little better. No allowance is rated satisfactory by more than a quarter of those who receive it, and one in five (21%) of those receiving a targeted payment have seen it reduced or withdrawn in the last 12 months. Awareness of pay progression is also low, with fewer than two in five of those covered by the Pay Progression Standard saying they have been made aware of it.

Fairness

Officers consistently report feeling underpaid given the nature of their work. When officers are asked whether they feel they are fairly paid considering the stresses and strains of their job, as many as 93% disagree, while only 3% agree. This finding is consistent since tracking began in 2021, with the proportion saying they are not fairly paid for the stresses of their jobs remaining above 90%. Similarly stagnant are officers' perceptions of fair pay relative to the hazards that they face on the job, with at least 85% responding that they feel they are unfairly paid relative to hazards in every wave. This frustration reflects officers' day-to-day reality. With 44% physically attacked in the last 12 months, the hazards of the job are not occasional risks but a regular part of working life, and officers do not feel their pay recognises this.

'In relation to police officer pay, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.'

% disagreeing that they are fairly paid considering...

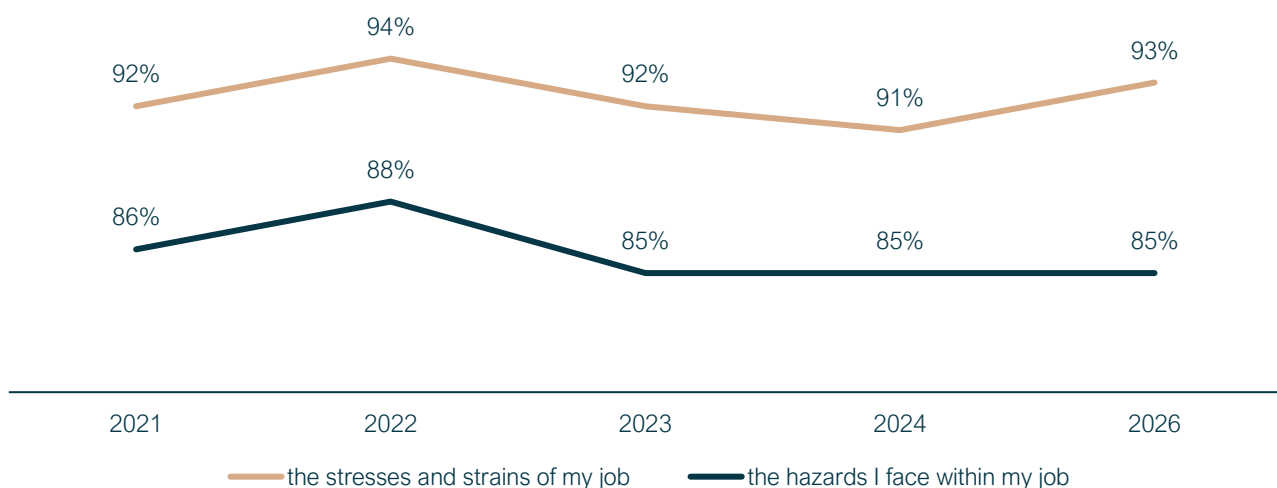


Chart 14, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,498–18,509); earlier waves from previous Pay and Morale surveys

The two most recent waves of research on Pay and Morale measured pay relative to experience and training (84% saying unfairly paid) and pay relative to other key workers (70% unfairly paid). The high proportion reporting unfairness relative to all four of these metrics indicates blanket frustrations relating to fairness and

pay, rather than issue-specific grievances. However, as many as 21% are neutral on the question of whether they are unfairly paid relative to other key workers, indicating that a not insignificant proportion do not feel they have enough information or feel strongly enough about how their pay stacks up relative to other professions to take a clear view.

Taken together, these results point to a long-standing belief among officers that they are unfairly paid, one that successive annual pay awards have done little to shift. Nor is the issue only the rate of pay. As the following section shows, officers are also giving more of their own time for free, with average unpaid overtime rising from five hours per four-week period in 2023 to seven in 2026⁷. Over a year, this is equivalent to around 90 hours, or more than two working weeks, of unpaid work.

While frustration with pay has remained consistent across waves of PFEW research, it varies with length of service. Dissatisfaction with pay relative to experience and training rises sharply in the first few years, from 53% among those in their first year to 84% among those with 3–5 years' service and continues to climb more gradually to 87% among those with 21–25 years. Dissatisfaction with pay relative to the hazards of the job follows a different pattern: it peaks early, at 95% among those with 1–5 years' service, before falling to 78% among those with 26 or more years. This may reflect the greater exposure to frontline risk early in officers' careers, while concerns about recognition for experience grow over time.

'In relation to police officer pay, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.'
% disagreeing they are fairly paid considering...



Chart 15, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,498–18,537)

⁷ Data shown in Table 1



I have always wanted to work for the Police and I am proud to represent my Constabulary. However... I still do not take home enough to cover my house bills. I rely on my wife's wage.

There are too many officers using food banks – there is even one set up in our police station.

We have long shifts away from family. Miss events and some travel far to do a job we all love and want to do. Just because we love it doesn't mean we should be forgotten about when it comes to pay.

I work 24 hours extra a month on average and still struggle to pay my mortgage, bills and do nice things once a month.

Allowances

No allowances provided to officers to compensate for specific challenges are seen as sufficient overall. Among all allowances tested, only two, away from home overnight (23%) and hardship (22%), were seen as satisfactory by more than one in five of those who had received them.

The London and South East allowance records the highest dissatisfaction among all tested, with three in four (75%) reporting dissatisfaction, and just 9% reporting satisfaction. This allowance has the highest base, asked of all officers serving in each of these regions.

Officers elsewhere in England and Wales are instead asked about the unsocial hours allowance. The London and South East allowance shows a level of dissatisfaction 10% points higher than that of unsocial hours around the rest of the country.



As a Temporary Sergeant who works in a collaborated unit where some officers get the South East allowance and others who do not, it means that I am managing officers who get paid more than me because we are in different forces. That isn't fair and it is demoralising.

Morale fell dramatically when the South East Allowance was reduced... Whilst it was only £250 it is in a time of financial hardship for many people.

'How satisfied are you with the current amount that you are paid for...'

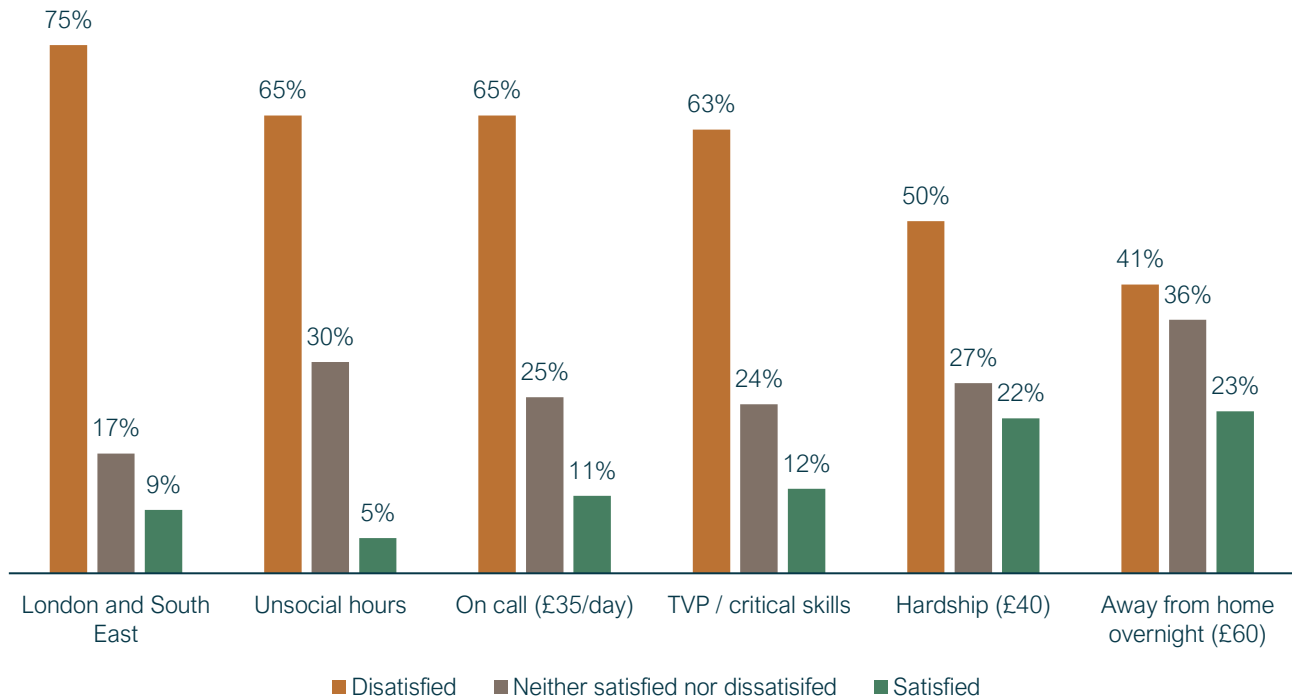


Chart 16, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers receiving each allowance (unsocial hours n=3,959; London and South East n=5,252; on call n=2,272; TVP n=658; away from home n=466; hardship n=57)

The on-call and TVP/critical skills allowances attract similar levels of dissatisfaction, with just under two in three recipients unhappy with the amount. The on-call allowance, paid at £35 a day, is received by 24% of officers answering the allowances questions, 65% of whom are dissatisfied. The TVP/critical skills allowance, paid in roles where forces struggle to recruit or retain officers, is received by 7%, with 63% dissatisfied.



When on call, we receive £35 but often spend hours at work as a result which we are not financially compensated for... this often leads to us not getting the 11 hours compensatory rest that we should be entitled to.

The overnight allowance, paid at £60 a night, is the best received, but only relatively. It has the lowest dissatisfaction (41%) and the highest satisfaction (23%) of any allowance, yet dissatisfied recipients still outnumber satisfied ones by almost two to one.

Taken together, the results show a set of payments that officers do not believe reflect the circumstances they are meant to compensate for. For every allowance, dissatisfaction outweighs satisfaction.

Pay progression

While dissatisfaction with rates of pay is consistent throughout the survey, a stronger finding in this wave is the low awareness shown about the system in which officers can progress their pay within the force. Nearly all officers have a performance and development review (PDR), though fewer than two in five of those it applies to have had the pay progression criteria explained to them.

91% of officers say their force operates a PDR process. Among officers to whom the Pay Progression Standard applies, 90% have had a PDR in the last 12 months, yet only 38% say they have been made aware of the standard.

PDR completion, process and attitudes

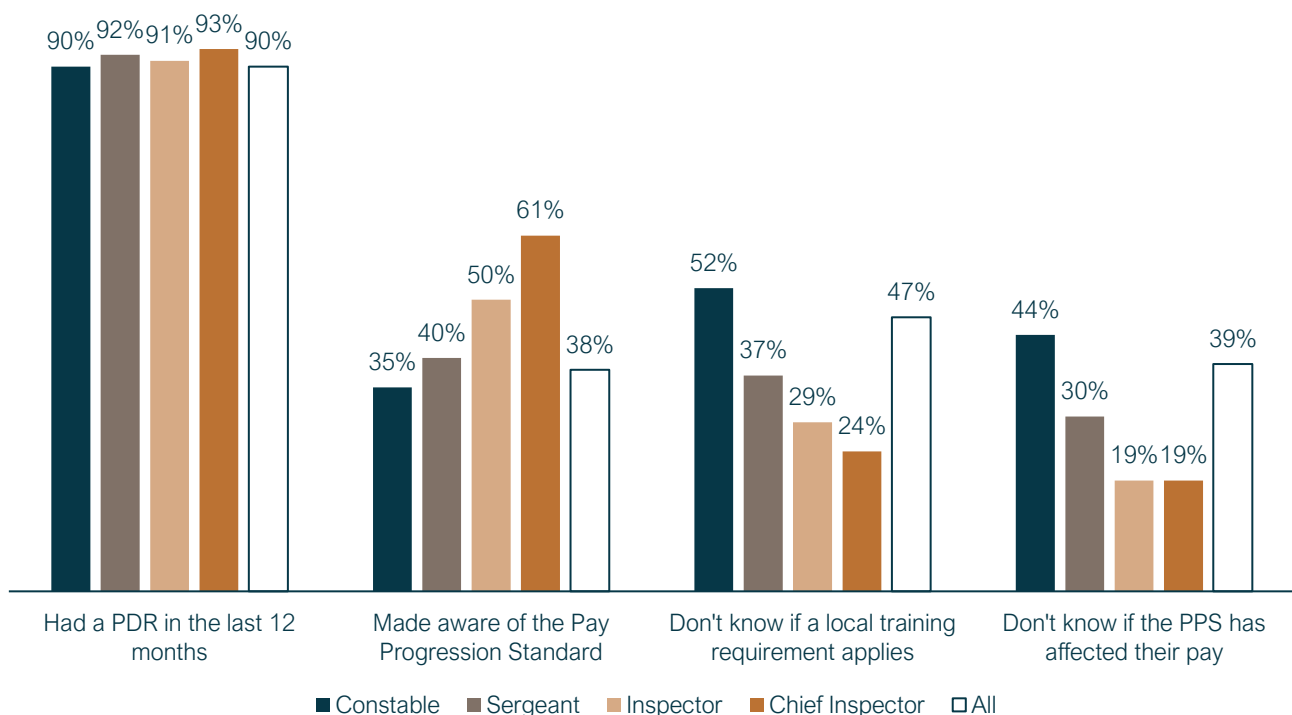


Chart 17, Pay and Morale Survey, base (all measures): officers covered by the Pay Progression Standard, i.e. excluding probationers and those at the top of their pay scale, whose force has a PDR process (n=10,562–10,602)

The proportions of officers who do not know if a local training requirement applies are significant. 47% do not know whether a local training requirement applied to them as part of the standard, with around two in five (39%) not knowing whether it has had an effect on their pay. Both figures are highest among constables, with this number improving through the ranks. This would suggest that the officers with the least influence over their own progression are also the least likely to understand how it works.

The gap appears to lie in communication rather than process. 90% of officers who line manage other officers say they complete a PDR for everyone they manage, but only 65% say they have made all their direct reports

aware of the Pay Progression Standard. Even that figure sits well above the fewer than two in five officers who say they have been made aware of it.

This lack of communication leaves many officers with little basis for judging what pay progression they can expect, at a time when frustration with pay is already high. It also echoes earlier findings on career uncertainty, with around a third of officers (34%) citing uncertainty about their future role as a cause of stress, low mood or anxiety⁸. Many officers are unsure where their careers are heading, and a substantial proportion have not been told how their pay will progress either.

“

My pay increments have also been delayed by a month every year because I took ‘too much’ maternity leave, despite being told I could take that time.

Targeted payments and promotion

Alongside allowances, some officers also receive targeted payments such as Targeted Variable Payments or Service Critical Skills Payments, where awards are given to address recruitment and retention problems in particular roles. Among officers receiving one of these payments, responses show these have been largely stagnant, with respondents 13% points more likely to say they have been decreased rather than increased.

'In the last 12 months, have there been any changes to your TVP?'

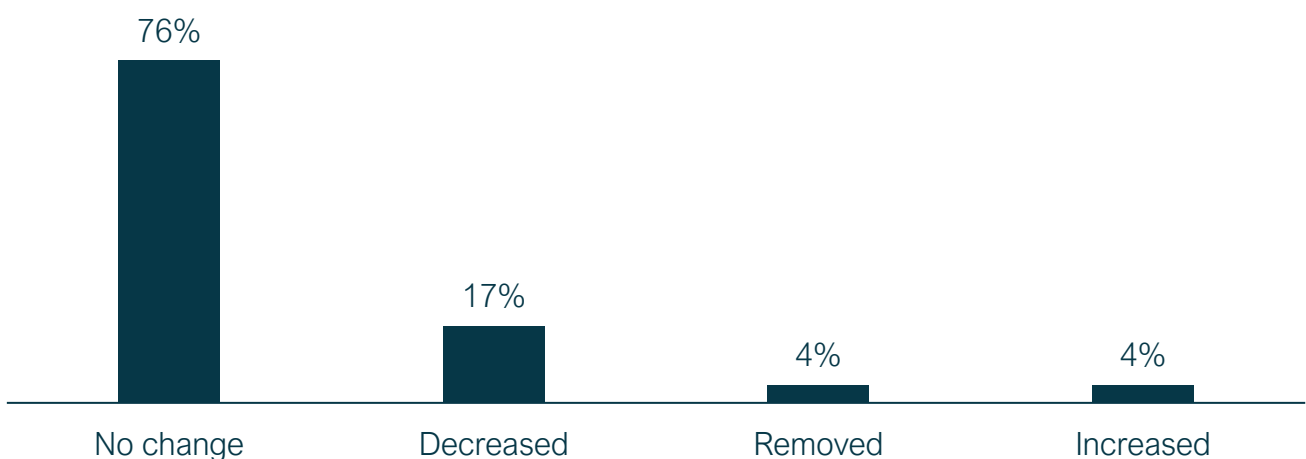


Chart 18, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers receiving a TVP (n=660)

⁸ Shown in Chart 11

21% of officers receiving a targeted payment have seen it decreased or removed entirely in the last 12 months, against only 4% that have seen it increase. Among those whose TVP changed, 45% said this was due to a budget or affordability issue, with a further 34% saying they did not know why the change had been made. Similarly, among officers who have acted up in a higher rank for 47 days or more, over half (55%) say they remained acting up beyond the 46-day threshold without being temporarily promoted.

What the findings show is that officers feel money is being withdrawn or limited from their packages without an explanation attached to it. Parts of the reward structure are being reduced or withheld, with the reason given most often being financial constraints, or in some cases, without any reason at all.

A similar picture emerges in how officers view promotion. 87% did not apply for promotion in the last year. Among those who did not apply, the two most commonly cited reasons are not about capability or readiness, but rather about whether the promotion is worth it at all.

'What are your main reasons for not applying for promotion? Tick all that apply.'

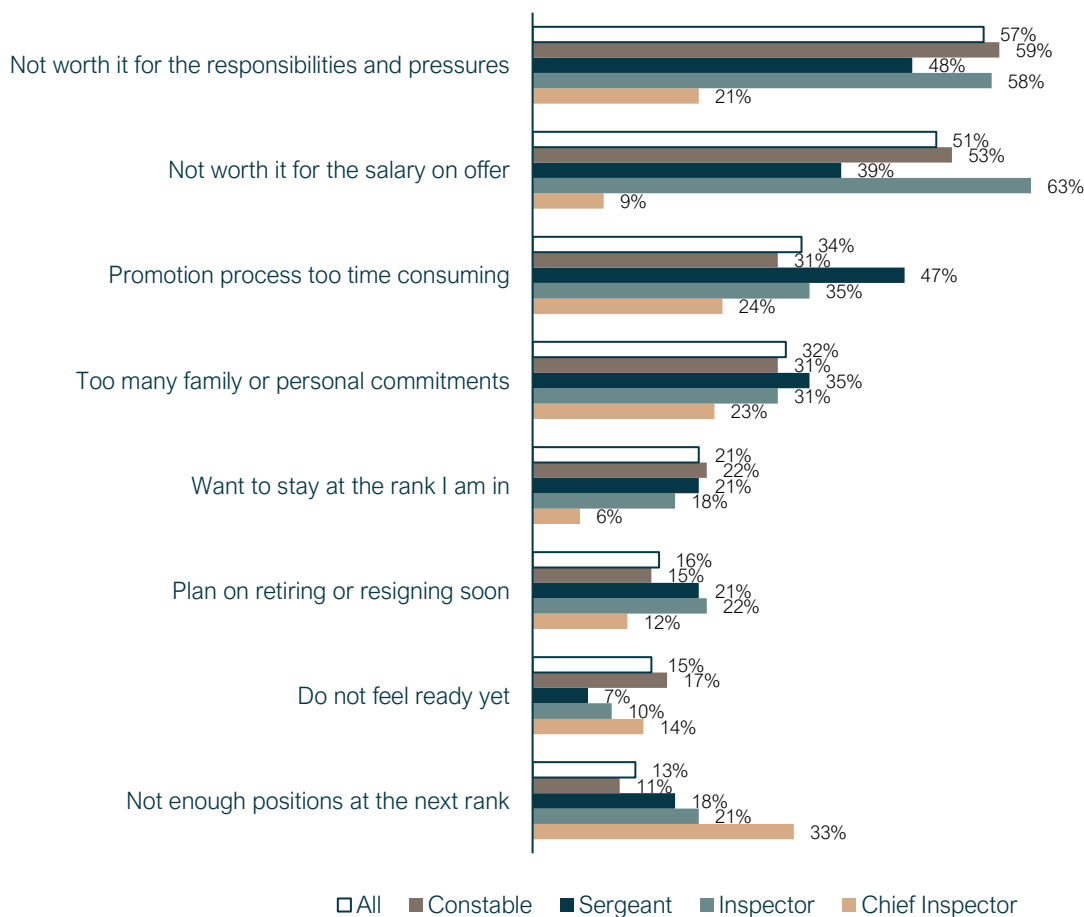


Chart 19, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers citing at least one reason (n=15,085)

57% say promotion is not worth it for the responsibilities and pressures involved, and 51% say it is not worth it for the salary on offer. Around half of the officers who did not seek promotion say this is because, in their

assessment, the additional money does not justify the additional work. In contrast, only 15% say they do not feel ready, and only 13% cite a shortage of positions at the next rank (although this is, of course, more acutely felt by those more senior in the force).

The barrier that officers describe is therefore less about opportunity, which is rarely cited as a blocker (especially for those of lower rank) or about confidence in their own ability. Instead, a judgement is being made that applying for more senior roles is simply not worth the responsibilities that come with it, and that the salary on offer does not match the stress brought by promotion. This is consistent with earlier findings on officers' frustration with current levels of pay. Officers overwhelmingly feel unfairly paid relative to the stress and responsibility of their jobs, and by their own account, the salary on offer at the next rank is one of the main reasons they choose not to seek promotion.

When broken down by length of service, the reasons for not applying for promotion tend to follow a curve. Applications for promotions peak among officers with 11–15 years of experience, at 19%, while the proportion citing the salary on offer peaks slightly earlier, at 60% among those with 6–10 years of experience. These are officers most actively weighing the decision, sitting at the point in a career where promotion is realistically available and retirement is still far off. They are the group most likely to conclude that the money they are being paid does not make it worthwhile.

Family commitments are a further factor for parents. Among parents who did not apply for promotion, 40% say they have too many commitments in their family or personal life, compared with 13% of officers without children, and the gap remains similar when comparing parents and non-parents of the same age. This rises to 49% among parents whose youngest child is under 12 and 51% among mothers. For a substantial proportion of parents, the decision not to seek promotion therefore reflects whether a more senior role can be combined with family life, as well as whether the pay justifies the responsibility.

“

I am moving on promotion to Inspector which means I will take a £10k a year pay cut due to not having the ability to work overtime.

I applied and was promoted... I was not supported... I handed the stripes back. The stress was not worth the 'extra money'.

It [being promoted] would mean going back to front line shifts... which I can't do with childcare.

'What are your main reasons for not applying for promotion?

Tick all that apply.'

% saying... by length of service



Chart 20, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers citing at least one reason (n=15,085)

06 Working Conditions

Officers describe a job in which the volume of work is consistently beyond what they judge to be reasonable, and in which the mechanisms intended to protect their time – rest days, annual leave, rostering and flexible working – are frequently unavailable to them. Almost two in three say their workload is too high, four in five work overtime, seven in ten have had their roster changed due to exigencies of duty, and fewer than one in five have a flexible working arrangement in place. The gap between demand and capacity is largely being filled by the goodwill of officers themselves. Only 1% of officers say their force is adequately resourced to meet routine demand without relying on that goodwill, and for the almost two thirds who are parents, the time given up is often family time as well as their own.

Officer goodwill KPIs

Measure	2026	Commentary
% who say their force relies heavily on officer goodwill to meet routine demand	74%	Work would not be completed without goodwill; rises to 77% at times of peak demand or crisis
% who say their force is adequately resourced without relying on goodwill	1%	Almost no officers believe routine work could be done without it
Average unpaid overtime over a year	c.90 hrs	Around seven hours every four weeks, up from five in 2023
% who had a rest day cancelled, leave refused or roster changed in the last 12 months	88%	Time off is disrupted for almost every officer
% who have worked on annual leave to catch up with work	37%	17% do so often or always
% who went to work when they should have taken sick leave for their mental health	73%	72% for physical health; 32% more than five times for mental health

Table 1, source: PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: all respondents (n=4,158) for goodwill, resourcing and sick leave; Pay and Morale Survey 2026 for unpaid overtime (officers who work overtime, n=14,113), disrupted time off (n=15,460) and working on annual leave (n=17,511). Annual unpaid overtime calculated from the four-week average.

Working conditions KPIs

Measure	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26	Commentary
% who rate their workload as too high	64%	63%	63%	0% points	There has been no change in how officers rate their workload
Average unpaid overtime per four-week period	5 hrs	6 hrs	7 hrs	+1 hr	Unpaid overtime is edging up year-on-year
% who worked more than four night shifts in a row	38%	41%	32%	-9% points	Peaked in 2024, now below the 2023 level (among officers who work night shifts)
% who had at least one rest day cancelled in the year	63%	66%	58%	-8% points	Rose in 2024, then fell back below the 2023 level

Table 2, source: PFEW Pay and Morale Survey 2024 (R001/2025), Table 7, p48. 2026 figures from the 2026 Pay and Morale Survey.

The year-on-year comparison shows a mixed picture. On one hand, the proportion working more than four consecutive night shifts and the proportion having at least one rest day cancelled have fallen by 9 and 8% points respectively. However, the bigger picture is that officers are still consistently rating their workload as too high, and the reported average unpaid overtime has increased from 5 hours per four-week period in 2023 to 7 hours in 2026.

Workload

Workload pressures are broadly unchanged from 2024. Asked about the last 12 months, 63% of officers say their workload has been too high, including 21% who say it has been much too high, while just over a third (36%) describe it as manageable.

'How would you rate your workload over the last 12 months?'

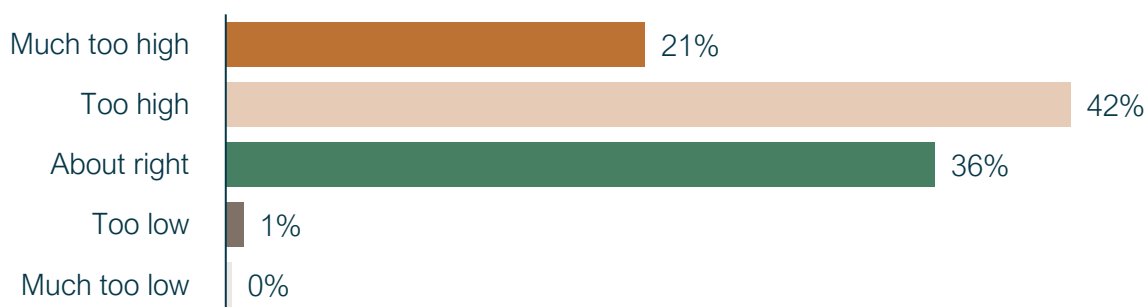


Chart 21, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,028)

Reported workload increases with rank. Three in five constables (60%) say their workload is too high, compared with 72% of sergeants and 78% of chief inspectors. This differs from several measures in the Morale section, including life satisfaction and happiness, where results tend to become more positive with seniority.

'How would you rate your workload over the last 12 months?'

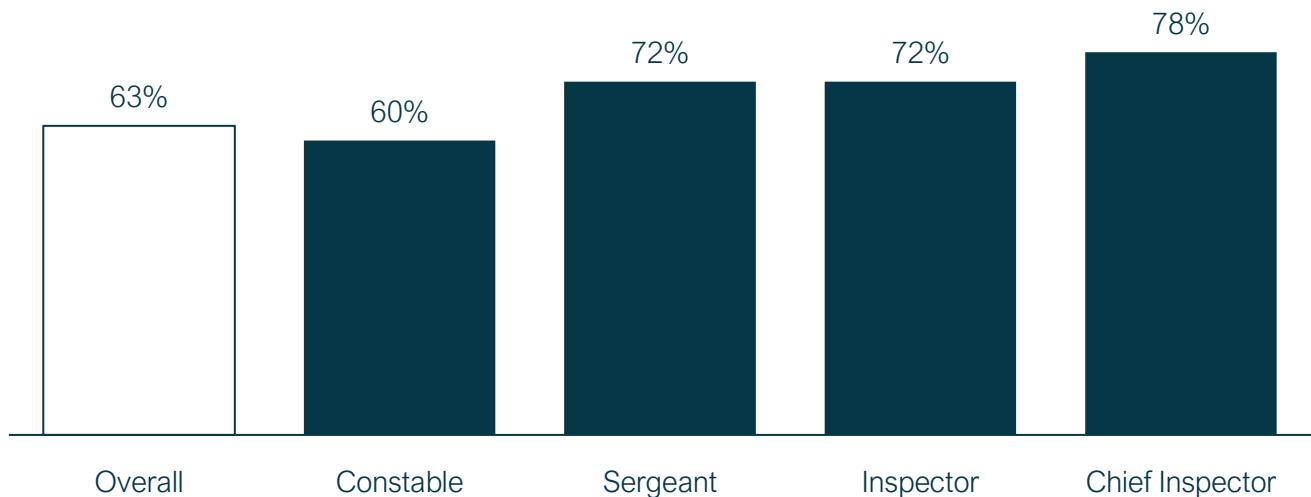


Chart 22, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,028)

Officers were also asked how frequently they experienced specific workload pressures. Unrealistic time pressures are the most commonly reported: 43% say they experience these often or always, while 8% say they never do. Around three in ten say they are often or always pressured to work longer hours (31%) or take work home to complete (30%). Working during annual leave is less common, although 17% say this happens often or always and 37% say it happens at least sometimes.

'Please rate how frequently the below statements apply to you
and your work in the last 12 months'

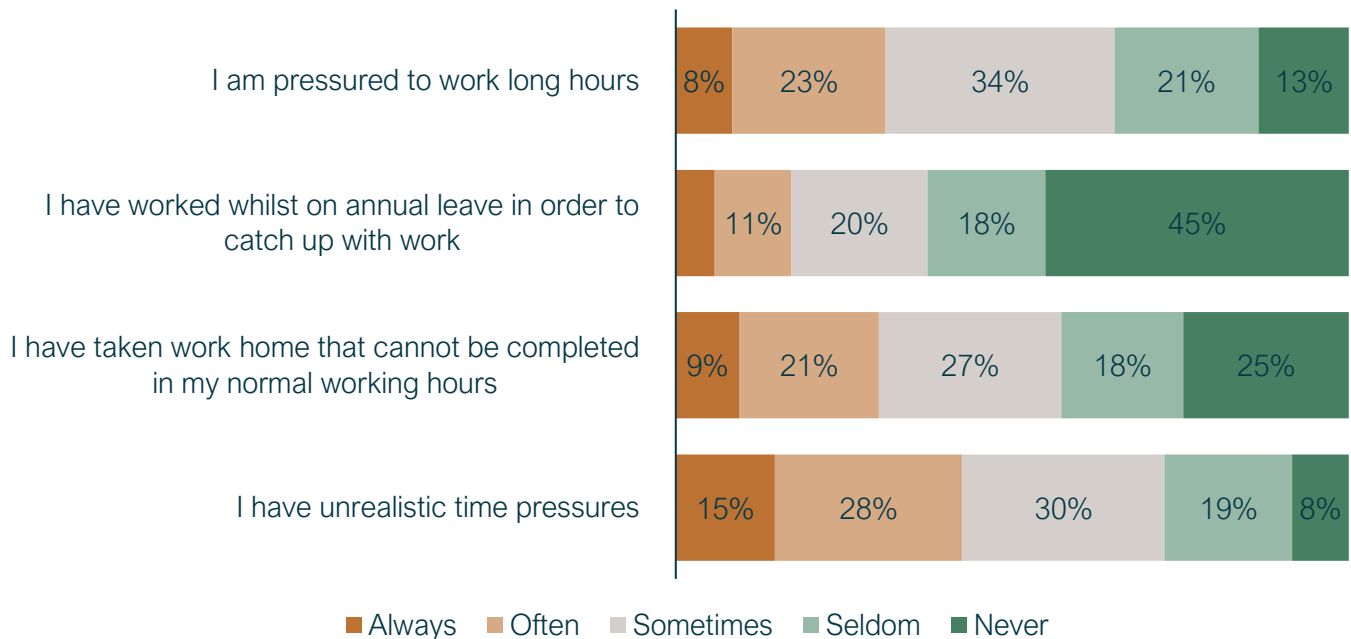


Chart 23, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,500–17,513)

These findings indicate that workload pressures extend beyond formally scheduled hours. While 31% report frequently being pressured to work longer hours, similar proportions frequently take work home, and more than a third work during annual leave at least sometimes.

Findings from the 2026 PF Global poll of PFEW members provide further context. Among officers with at least ten years' service, 80% say internal administration has increased much more over the past decade, with the sharpest rises in safeguarding (86%) and in dealing with vulnerable individuals (82%).

'Over the past 10 years, how has demand changed in the following areas?'

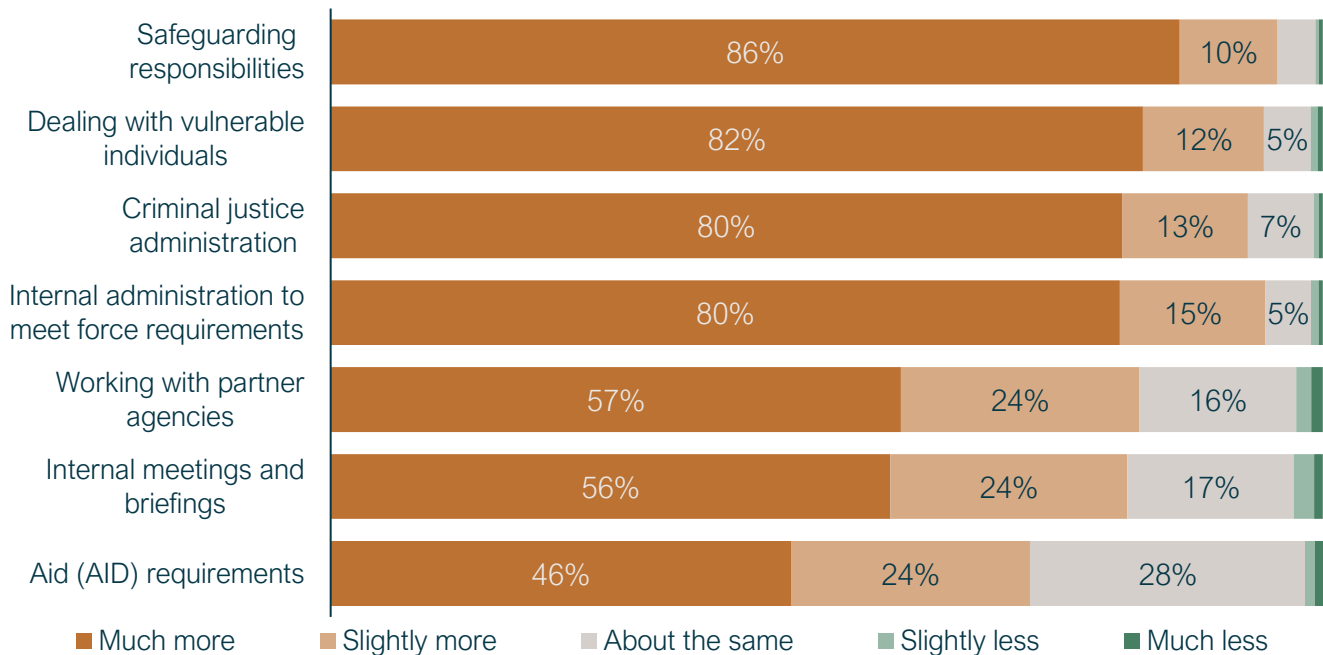


Chart 24, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: officers with 10+ years' service (n=2,229-2,921)

Against that rising demand, shifts are frequently under-staffed. Only a quarter of officers say that more than half of their shifts in the last three months ran at planned staffing levels, while 42% say very few or none did. The gap between demand and resource is met by discretionary effort: 74% say their force relies heavily on officer goodwill to meet routine operational demands, rising to 77% at times of peak demand or crisis. Staffing shortfalls are not only a workload issue: more than half of officers have felt unsafe on duty because of staffing levels.

'In the last 3 months, how often has your team/ unit been fully staffed?'

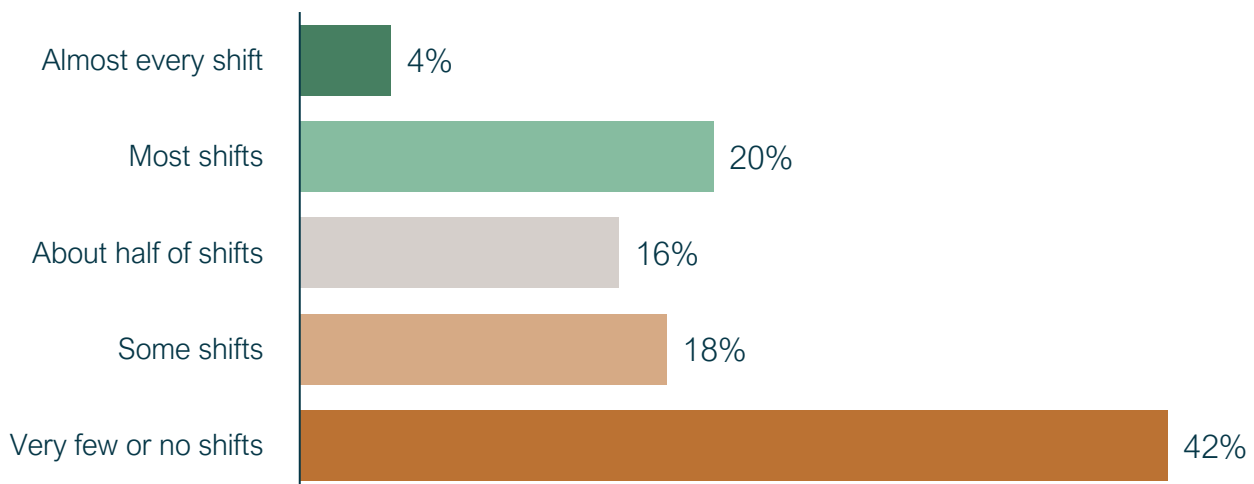


Chart 25, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Even with that additional effort, the job is not being done to the standard officers would want. Two in three officers are currently working on at least one case, and around a third (32%) are working on more than ten at a time. 38% say they rarely or never have the time and capacity to investigate a situation fully. Nearly two thirds (63%) are not confident in their force's ability to resource day-to-day operational demands. Taken together, the findings indicate that high workload is not solely a matter of individual working pressure. Officers report using additional time and discretionary effort to manage demand, but a substantial proportion still lack the capacity to investigate cases as fully as they would like. In officers' own assessment, the gap between demand and resources is also limiting how thoroughly they can investigate.

“

Workloads are beyond the capability of Officer and Staff numbers and we now operate in eternal crisis throughout the country.

The Met relies on the goodwill of officers and the concept of the job being a vocation. Unfortunately this is waning because the demands of policing are too high

The demands are relentless with a new 'must be done' priority every week. It's impossible to perform all the tasks required in a working day and so we spend our days off just trying to catch up.

Overtime and hours worked

Most officers work overtime, and the amount of unpaid overtime is growing. Nearly nine in ten constables (87%) and sergeants (88%) say they work planned or casual overtime, while only 10% and 8% respectively say they do not. The similarity between constables and sergeants shows that overtime is not concentrated at one rank. Instead, it is a routine feature of working patterns across both frontline and supervisory roles, suggesting that the need for additional hours is widespread across day-to-day operational policing.

Among officers who work overtime, the median amount recorded over a four-week period is ten hours of paid overtime and four hours of unpaid overtime. Across all officers, the mean amount of unpaid overtime has increased across successive waves, from five hours per four-week period in 2023 to six hours in 2024 and seven hours in 2026.

Median hours of overtime worked during a four-week period



Chart 26 (median hours), Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who work planned or casual overtime (paid n=12,990; unpaid n=14,113)

The difference between the mean and median suggests that a smaller group of officers work substantially higher levels of unpaid overtime, pulling the average up to around seven hours despite a median of four. Unpaid overtime is therefore particularly significant. A median of four hours per four-week period means that at least half of officers who work overtime complete four or more additional hours without pay. In effect, part of the gap between demand and available capacity is being absorbed through officers' own time rather than force resources.

This provides further context for the finding that 93% do not feel fairly paid for the stresses and strains of the job. Officers' dissatisfaction is not only about their rate of pay, but also the amount of work they undertake without compensation. With average unpaid overtime increasing across successive waves of the Pay and Morale Survey, this pressure appears to be growing.

Unpaid overtime is the most measurable form of the goodwill policing relies on. Among officers who work overtime, the median is four hours unpaid per four-week period, and across all officers the average has risen every wave of research since 2023.

Shift patterns and rostering

Officers' hours are unpredictable as well as long, both in when they fall and in how much warning officers are given. Just over half of officers (53%) work night shifts. Among that group, 21% have worked more than four consecutive night shifts on more than one occasion in the last 12 months, and 6% have done so more than five times. Two thirds (68%) of those working nights say this has never happened to them. This is an improvement on 2024, when a higher proportion reported runs of more than four consecutive nights. Even so, extended runs of night shifts remain a fatigue risk for those affected, at a time when two thirds of officers say fatigue has made it difficult to carry out their duties.

'Over the past 12 months, how often have you worked more than 4 consecutive night shifts?'

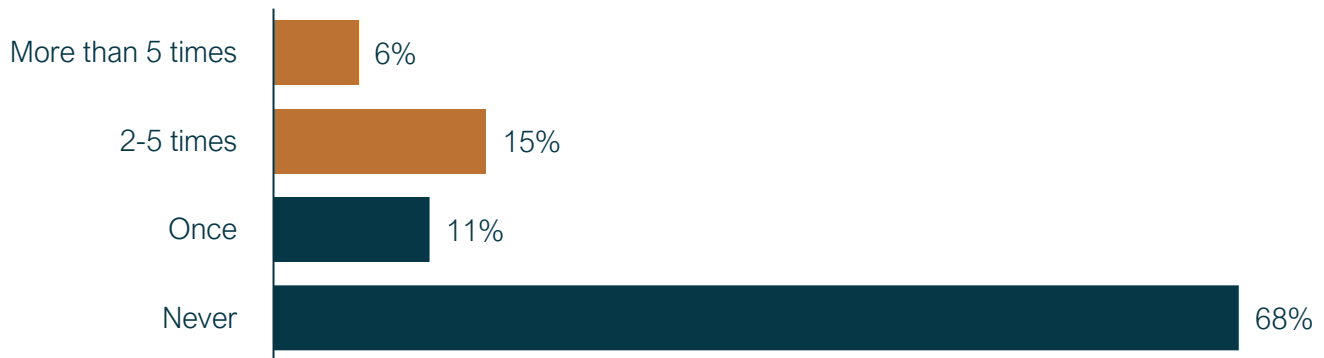


Chart 27, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who work night shifts (n=9,242)

Rostering is more widely disrupted still. 71% of officers have had their roster changed due to exigencies of duty at least once in the last 12 months, a third (33%) have had it changed between two and five times, and 29% have had it changed six or more times. 17%, around one in six of the entire workforce, report more than ten changes in a single year.

'Over the past 12 months, how many times has your roster been changed due to exigencies of duty?'

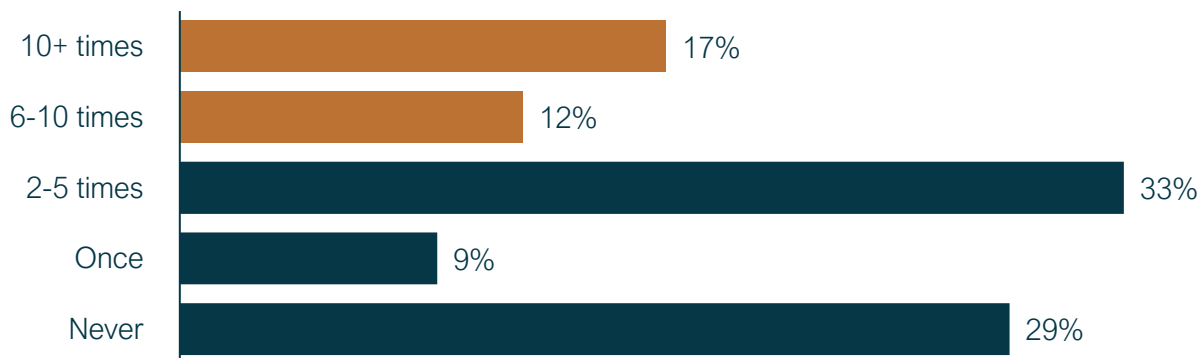


Chart 28, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,634)

For a substantial minority, repeated changes mean that the published roster provides limited certainty about when they will be working. Officers experiencing more than ten changes a year have their working arrangements altered almost monthly, reducing their ability to plan caring responsibilities, social commitments and periods of rest. The frequency of these changes provides important context for the finding in the Morale section that 76% say fatigue has interfered with their family or social life. The pressure on officers' time is therefore not only about how many hours they work, but also about how little control many have over when those hours fall.

This lack of control is felt particularly by parents. 68% of parents have had their roster changed at least once in the last year, and for them a change at short notice also means rearranging childcare. Three in ten parents (30%) rely mainly on formal childcare such as nurseries and school clubs, which offer little flexibility around a changed shift, and a further 41% rely on a partner, whose own work then has to adjust.

“

A large operation within the force moved me from a job and team I loved and enjoyed doing... and placed me on a team that worked a shift pattern that caused issues at home in relation to childcare and husband's working hours and there was no option provided to change this. There was an appeals process however not listened to and nothing changed.

Cancelled rest days constantly. Constant change of tour of duty. Contacted to change shifts on rest days. Regularly retained on duty. No support and keep being told the same things over that it's 'extenuating circumstances'.

Rest days and annual leave

Requests for annual leave are frequently refused, and rest days frequently cancelled; 62% have had a request for annual leave refused in the last 12 months. For most of that group this was not a one-off, as 34% of all officers have had leave refused three or more times, and 6% have had it refused ten or more times. Put differently, of those who have had any leave request refused, around 55% have had it happen on three or more separate occasions.

'Approximately how many times in the last 12 months have you had a request of annual leave refused?'

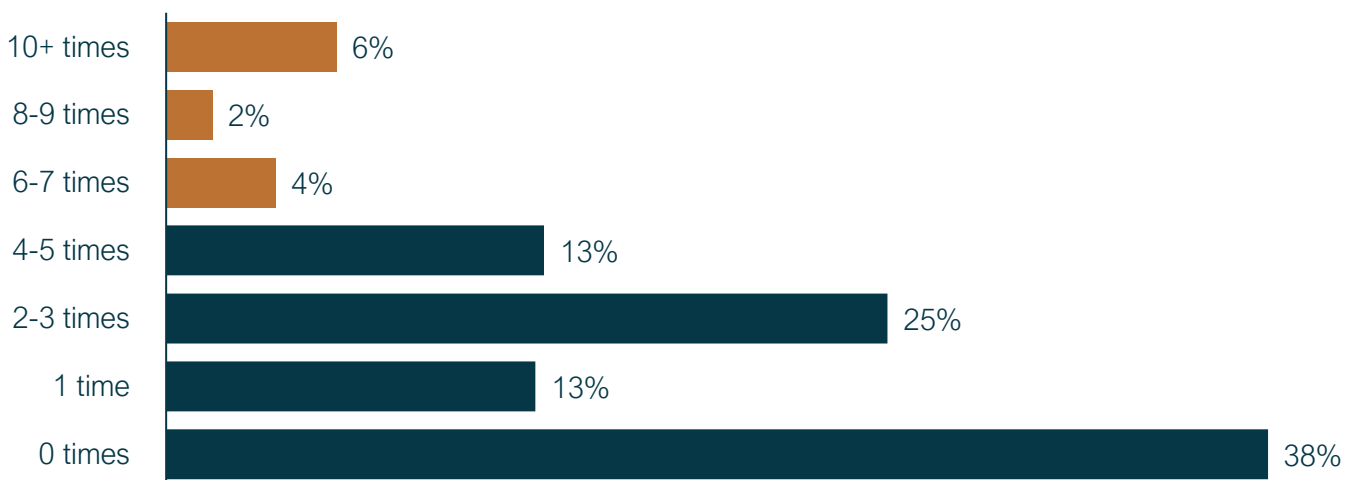


Chart 29, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,222)

Rest day cancellations follow the same pattern. 58% of officers have had at least one rest day cancelled in the last 12 months, 38% have had three or more cancelled, and 9% have had ten or more cancelled over the year. This 58% is down on 2024, making rest day cancellation, alongside consecutive night shifts, one of the few measures in this section to have moved in officers' favour.

'Approximately how many of your rest days have been cancelled over the last 12 months?'

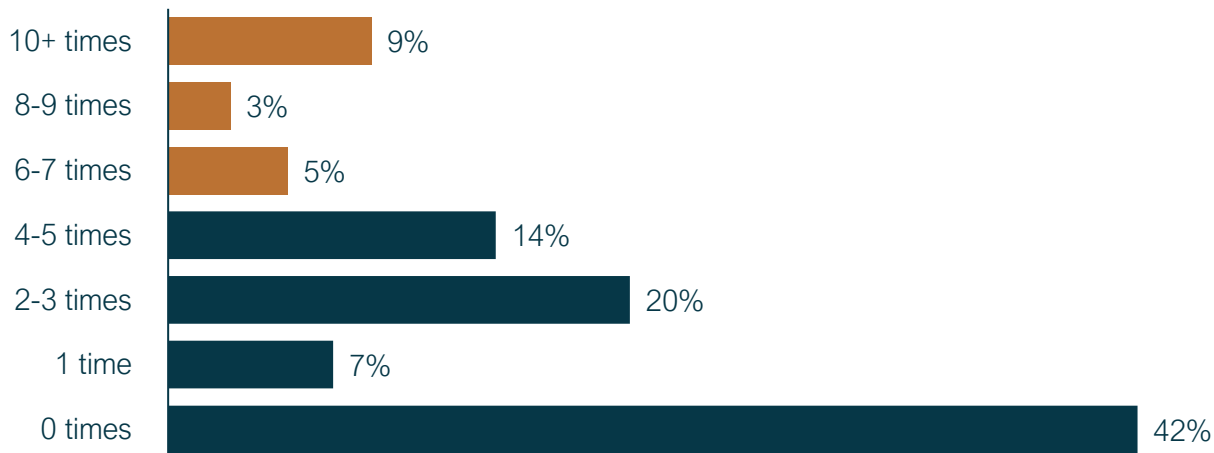


Chart 30, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,164)

Notice is a further issue. Officers who had a rest day cancelled were asked how many of those cancellations came with 15 or more days' notice. 61% report between one and five, 11% report six to ten, and 8% report more than ten.

'Of the rest days cancelled, approximately how many were you given 15 or more days' notice for?'

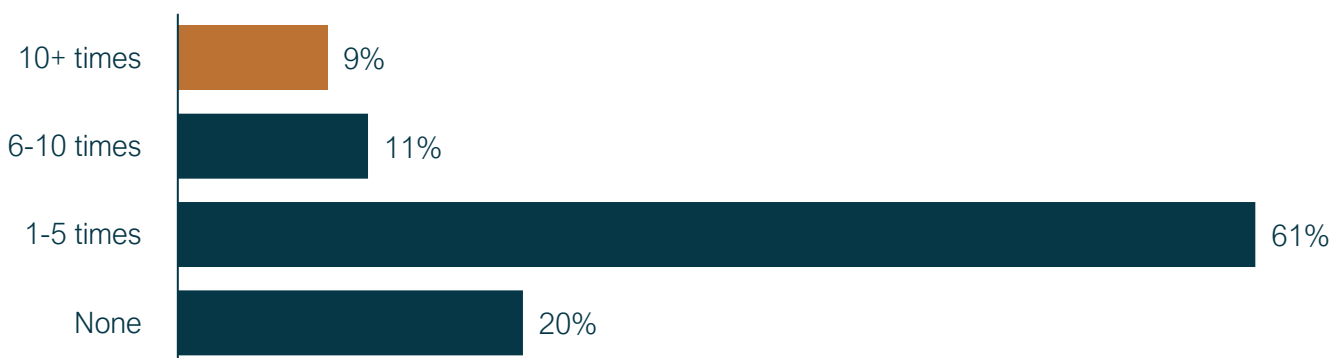


Chart 31, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who have had a rest day cancelled (n=9,754). 'None' refers to officers who did not answer the follow-up question

Taken together, these findings show that officers have limited control not only over when they work, but also over time already allocated for rest. Roster changes, cancelled rest days and refused leave are experienced repeatedly by a substantial proportion of the workforce, making planned time away from work less certain.

This reflects a reliance on personal sacrifice and goodwill from officers for forces to be able to meet staffing requirements. Although rest day cancellations have fallen since 2024, they still affect a majority of officers. The improvement should therefore not obscure the wider finding that operational demands continue to take precedence over officers' ability to plan, rest and recover.

Being a parent does not appear to bring much protection from these pressures. Most parents have had annual leave refused (59%) or a rest day cancelled (56%) in the last 12 months, rates not far below those of officers without children, which suggests family commitments are rarely taken into account. The impact on parents is, however, considerably greater. A refused leave request or a cancelled rest day can mean arranging emergency childcare, losing time with children during school holidays, or a partner having to change their own plans at short notice. Flexible working, which could give parents some of this contingency, remains uncommon: fewer than one in five officers (18%) have an arrangement in place, including a quarter of parents (25%), half of mothers (50%) and 16% of fathers.

“

Last weekend I had two days off and a night duty shift was placed right in the middle of it, re-roster rest day refused due to leave lockdown.

We still have all our AL leave requests refused and we still rarely meet staffing levels. This last year I had 200 hours of AL to take before April as all of my requests for leave were denied throughout the year.

07 Safety, Health, and Wellbeing

Officers' health, safety and wellbeing are shaped both by the immediate risks they face on duty and by the support available when those risks take a toll. More than two in five (44%) have been physically attacked in the last 12 months, while a majority have felt unsafe on duty because of staffing levels. At the same time, 72% rate their force's support for officer health and wellbeing as inadequate or requiring improvement, and fewer than half of those who disclose a mental health difficulty say they receive the right support. Taken together, the findings show that exposure to harm is common, while the support provided afterwards is inconsistent. They also underline that officer wellbeing cannot be separated from operational conditions, particularly staffing and access to effective support. As with workload, much of this strain is absorbed by officers themselves, with many continuing to work through ill health rather than taking time off.

Health, safety, and wellbeing KPIs

Measure	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26
Life satisfaction (out of 10)	5.2	5.5	5.4	-0.1
% who find work very or extremely stressful	43%	44%	43%	-1% points
% poorly supported after raising mental health with a manager	33%	32%	32%	0% points
% taking annual leave because of mental health	42%	36%	40%	+4% points
% receiving verbal insults once or more a week	34%	34%	22%	-12% points
% without access to double crewing at all times	73%	73%	75%	+2% points

Table 3, source: PFEW Pay and Morale Survey 2024 (R001/2025), Table 12, p57. 2026 figures from the 2026 Pay and Morale Survey, except verbal insults, which comes from the 2026 polling by PF Global

The overall picture is one of limited progress that has not yet translated into better health and wellbeing outcomes for officers. Measures of how officers feel remain broadly unchanged: average life satisfaction has slipped from 5.5 in 2024 to 5.4 in 2026, while the proportion finding their work very or extremely stressful has fallen by only 1% point, from 44% to 43%. Stability at these levels is concerning, particularly when half of officers (51%) have used leave because of their physical or mental health in the last 12 months.

There has been modest progress in how forces respond. The proportion who feel poorly supported after raising a mental health difficulty with a manager is unchanged at 32%, but reported access to most reactive

wellbeing services has increased. Officers' direct experiences present a more mixed picture: weekly verbal abuse appears to have fallen, from 34% to 22% (although the 2026 figure comes from a different survey), but the proportion taking leave because of their mental health has risen from 36% to 40%. At the same time, 75% do not have access to double crewing at all times (excluding those for whom it is not applicable to their role), the highest proportion recorded across the last three waves.

Taken together, the findings show that improvements in some support and safety measures have not been accompanied by a wider recovery in officer wellbeing. What forces provide has improved slightly; what officers experience overall has not.

Officer safety

Officer safety faces pressure on two fronts: how thinly forces are stretched, and the level of violence officers face. The cost of staffing gaps is not only paid in officers' free time, but in their safety. More than half (55%) have felt unsafe because of high demand or understaffing, and 29% say this happens often or very often. Among officers under 35, the figure rises to 42%, meaning the youngest officers, who may have the least experience to draw on, are the most exposed.

'During the last 3 months, have staffing levels ever made you feel unsafe whilst carrying out your duties?'

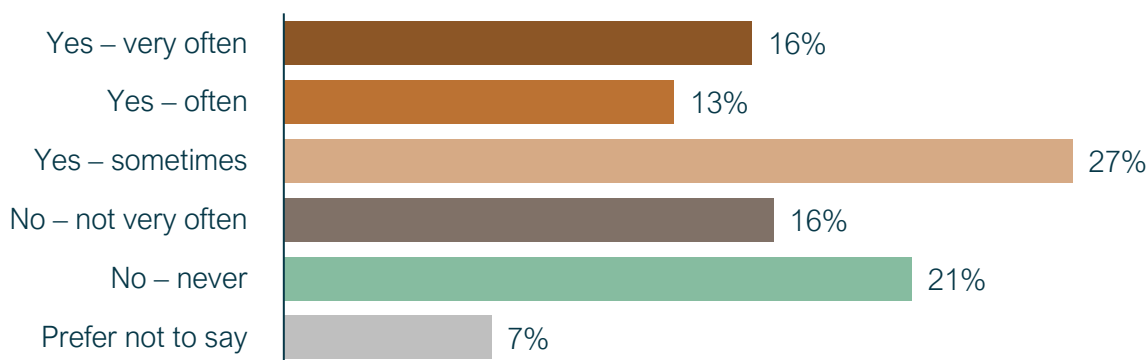


Chart 32, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

This affects the work itself. More than half of officers who have felt unsafe because of staffing levels say it reduced how effectively they carried out their duties, either somewhat or a great deal; shortcomings in staffing provisions are directly putting officers in more unsafe conditions, requiring increased officer sacrifice for the force to be able to operate even at a baseline level. Meanwhile, access to double crewing is declining: 75% say it is always unavailable to them, up from 73% in both 2023 and 2024.

'If yes, did this affect how effectively you carried out your duties?'

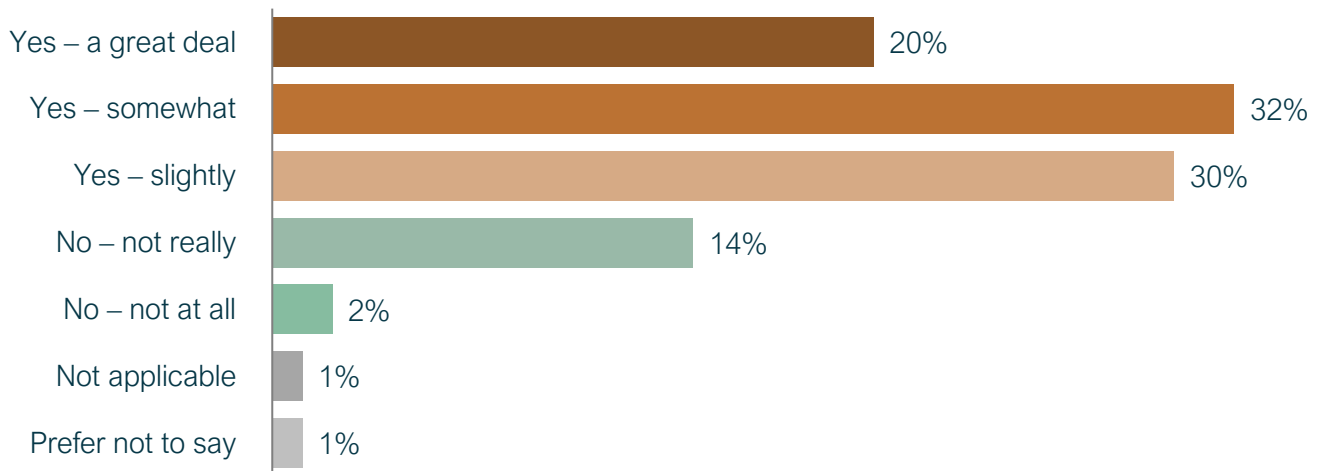


Chart 33, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: officers who have felt unsafe because of staffing levels (n=2,313)

Physical violence is common and, for a substantial minority, recurrent. Overall, 44% of officers have been physically attacked in the last 12 months, including 16% for whom it has happened at least once a month. A quarter have been spat at, and 17% have been threatened or attacked with a deadly weapon. Verbal abuse is routine, with 9% insulted daily and 22% at least weekly. This is lower than the 34% recorded in the 2024 Pay and Morale Survey, although the two figures come from different surveys and are not directly comparable.

For officers attacked monthly or more, violence is a regular feature of working life rather than an isolated event. Threats or attacks involving weapons are less frequent, but serious enough that even a single incident is significant.

'How often have citizens directed the following towards you in the last 12 months?'

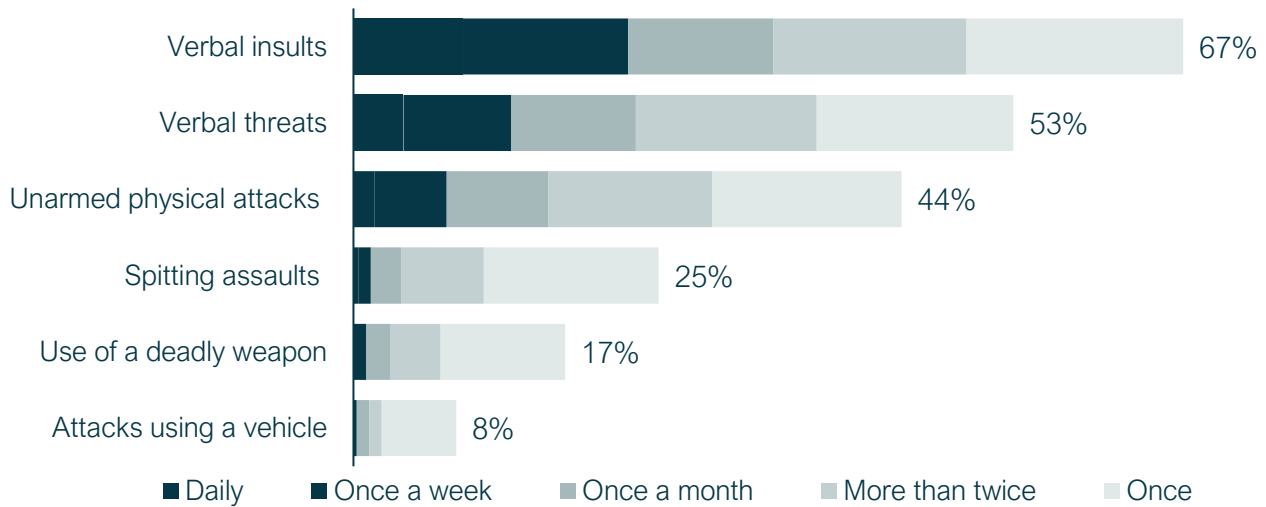


Chart 34, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)



I was assaulted a few weeks ago. I was checked on the day it happened. Following that there has been zero follow-up from my supervisor.

Officers' cases are often NFA'd by secondary investigation teams that seem to brush off assault and abuse of police officers as 'part of the job'.

Officers also report being poorly supported during periods of public unrest. Among the 73% who have experienced these conditions, only 19% felt safe and supported while on duty.

'Thinking about the last time there were periods of unrest in your area, how safe and supported did you feel whilst on duty?'

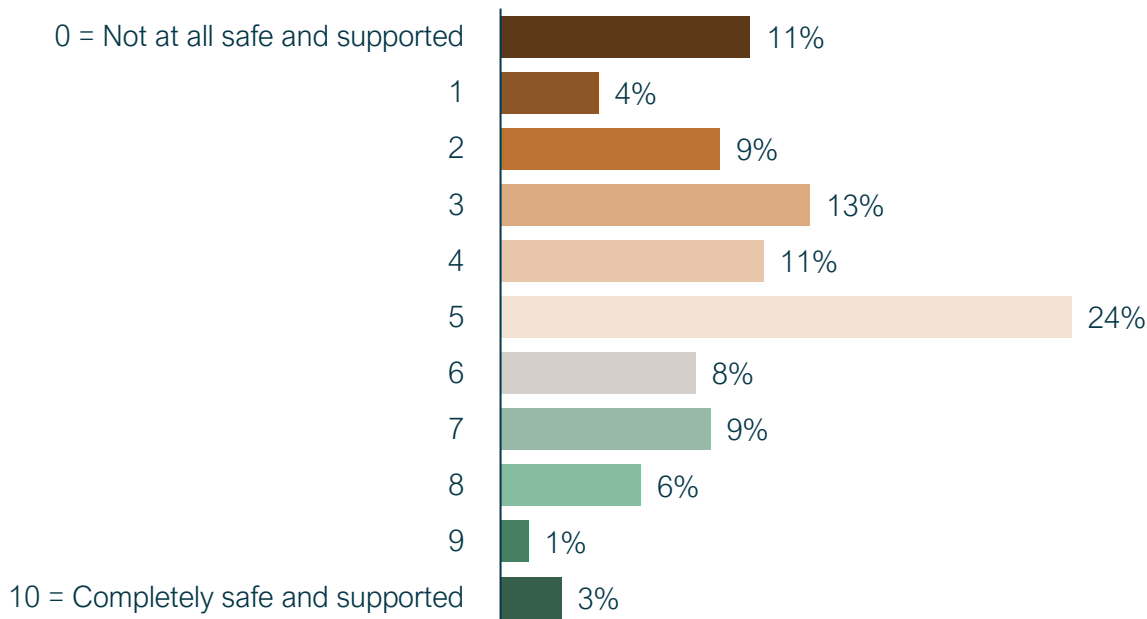


Chart 35, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: respondents who have experienced unrest in their local area (n=3,035)

As a result of this, officers are reporting changes in how they police. Three in five (60%) say they have personally become more cautious in situations involving interaction with the public, such as stop and search, arrests or public-order incidents, while 73% say their force as a whole has become more cautious. These findings suggest that concerns about safety are affecting operational behaviour at both an individual and organisational level. Officer safety is therefore not only a workforce welfare issue; it also shapes how policing is delivered to the public.



Response in my area are regularly parading on duty with 3 or less officers which is not safe... Assaults on officers are rising due to dangerous staffing levels. Whilst I have not required medical treatment for being assaulted, I have been assaulted on multiple occasions in the last 12 months which has led to bruising and other minor injuries.

Health and taking time off

The impact of poor health is also evident in officers' use of leave. In the last 12 months, 39% have used their leave entitlement because of their physical health and 40% because of their mental health, showing that both

contribute to absence at similar levels.

'In the last 12 months have you used any of your leave entitlement to take time off due to...'

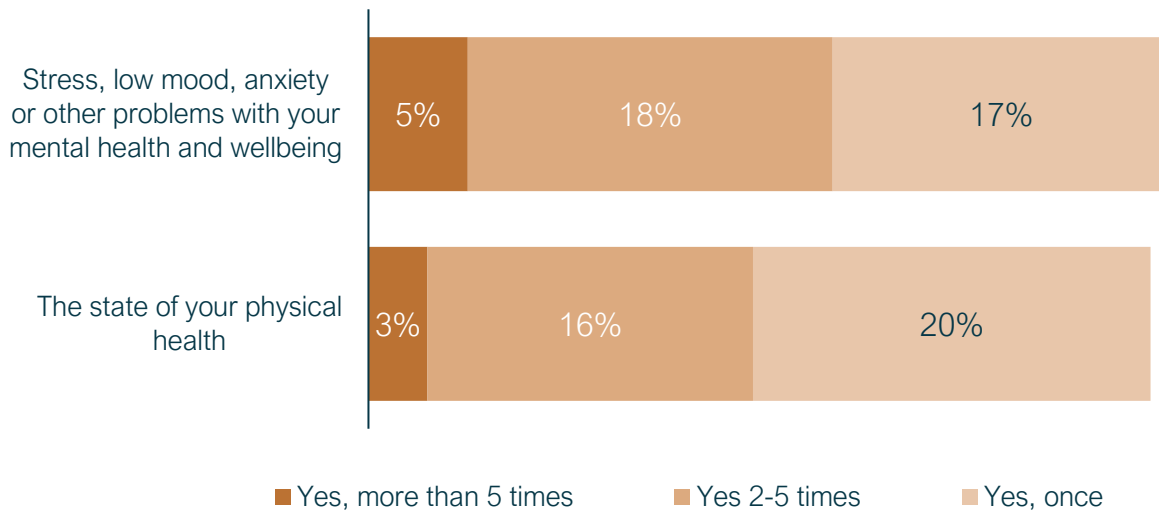


Chart 36, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,950–18,129)

Officers' first response to ill health is simply to absorb it. Almost three quarters have gone to work in the last 12 months despite feeling they should have taken sick leave, whether because of their physical condition (72%) or their mental health (73%)⁹. For a third (32%), working through poor mental health has happened more than five times in the last year. This is the same goodwill policing relies on to meet demand, extended to officers' own health. The reality of policing is that officers are managing their health around the job rather than the job accommodating their health.

“

Policing has fed and clothed me and my family, but I have earned it to my own physical detriment.

23 years, I now suffer with Hyper Vigilance. The job has changed me. I hope to one day get back to being who I was. The Hyper Vigilance is causing physical issue for which I am now attending my GP.

The impact this job has on our health and wellbeing is significant and shift work reduces our life span and decreases our immune system and we miss important family and friend events because we are working or recovering from work and often carrying an invisible trauma load often without realising.

⁹72% and 73% figures come from the PF Global poll of PFEW members

It is a particularly difficult time at present with low numbers of staffing and many staff having to go off sick. I am emotionally exhausted by the time I get home and often do not want or have the energy to even speak to my family... Emotionally I feel exhausted and have no empathy left for those I love.

Seeking help and disclosure

Alongside these safety pressures, many officers reach the point where they seek help. The data shows that around half of officers have sought help, and most of those told their line manager, but the support that followed was frequently inadequate.

49% of officers have sought help for feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or other difficulties with their mental health, and 46% have not. Of those who did, 71% told their line manager.

'Have you ever sought help for feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or other difficulties?'



Chart 37, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=17,943)

'Did you tell your line manager that you had sought help in regards to your mental health?'

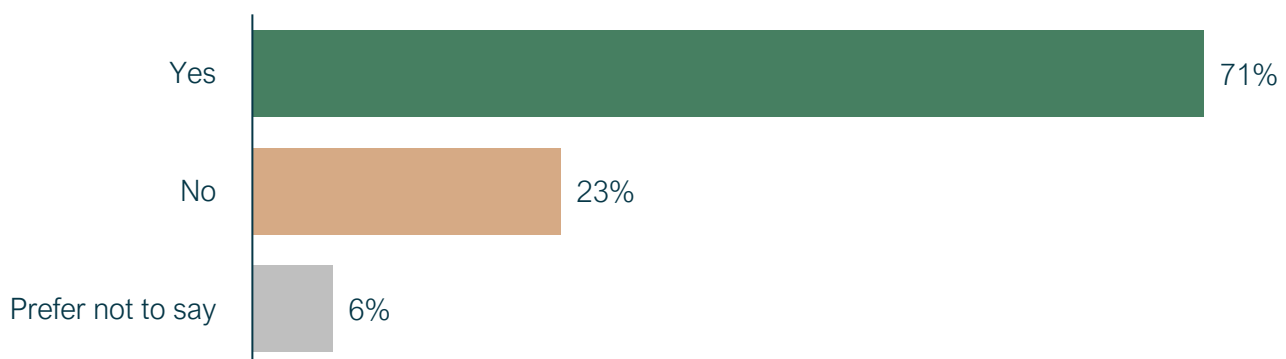


Chart 38, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who have sought help (n=8,705)

Among those who disclosed, 37% say they were supported very or fairly well and 31% adequately, while 32% say they were supported poorly or very poorly. Roughly a third of officers who raised their mental health with the service came away feeling let down by the response.

'In your experience, how well were you supported by the police service after you discussed your mental health?'

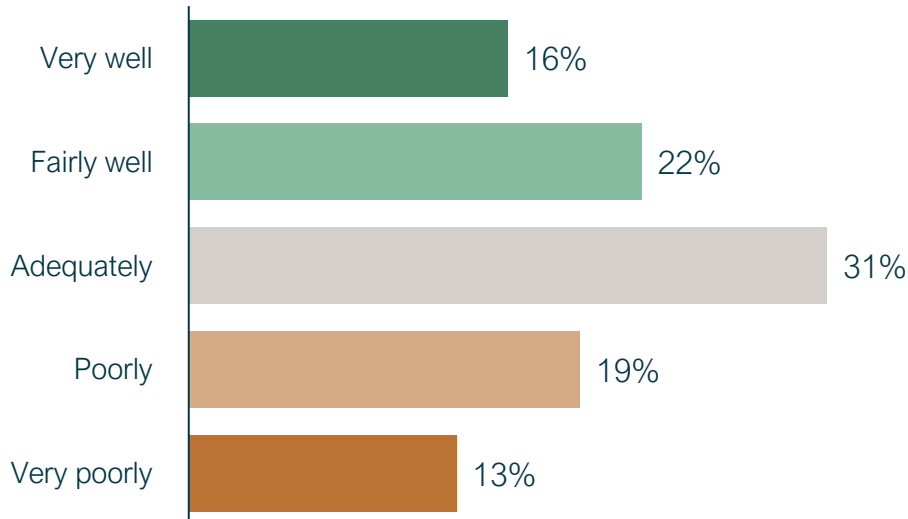


Chart 39, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who told their line manager (n=6,183)

Breaking that down shows where the shortfall lies. Officers are largely positive about how they were treated: 67% agree they were treated with dignity and respect, 71% that the discussion was kept confidential and 62% that they were treated with empathy. Only 16% say they were treated differently in a negative way afterwards. On whether the response helped, however, agreement drops sharply: 49% say they were given enough support and 44% the right support.

Line managers are, on the whole, handling disclosure decently. It is what follows the conversation where officers say the service falls short: they rate the conversation itself far more positively than the support that came after it.

After discussing your mental health, to what extent do you agree with the following?

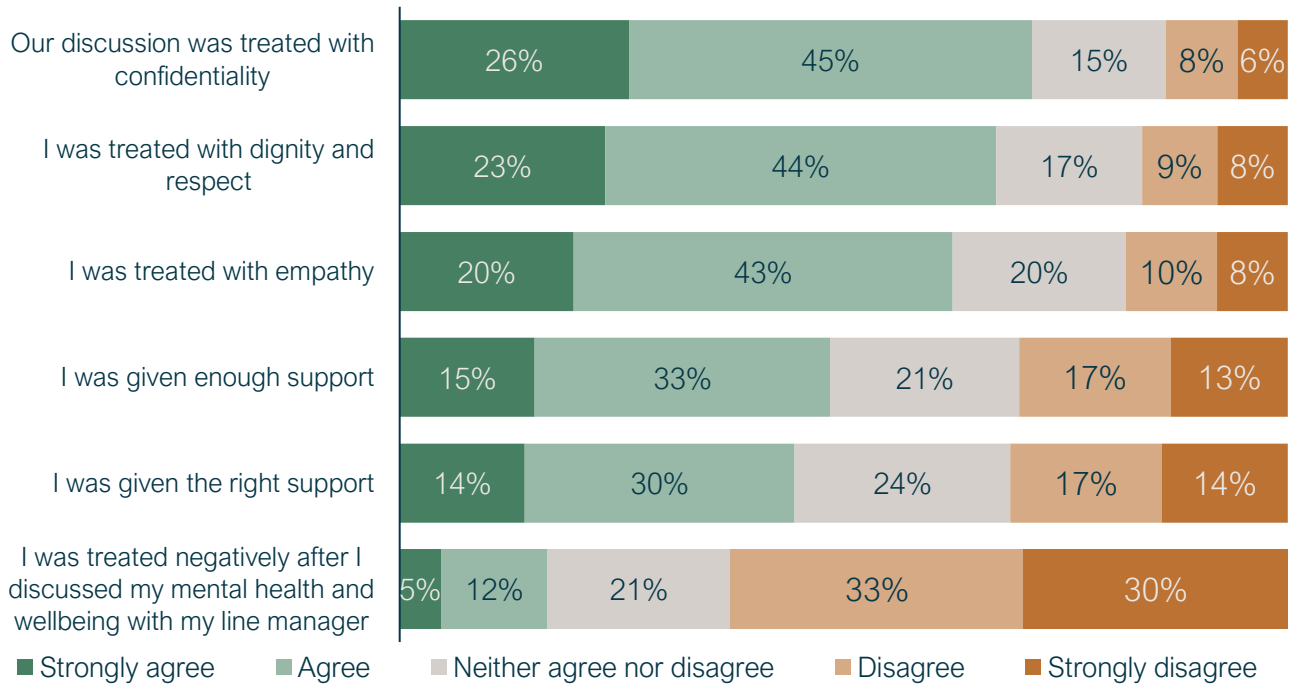


Chart 40, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who told their line manager (n=6,162–6,178)

Among officers who did not tell their line manager, the most common reason is that they felt it was a personal matter (69%). Beyond that, the reasons given are about consequence rather than privacy: 45% did not want to be treated differently, 33% point to a negative attitude towards mental health within the police service, 33% feared a negative impact on their career and 32% that it would affect their opportunities for promotion. 23% had had a negative experience of disclosing in the past.

“

My direct line manager at the time was fantastic... It's just a shame there is no money or hunger to put more preventative measures in place.

My line manager was excellent – the problem was the neurodiversity support team. I made multiple requests to try and get some support, but they rejected almost everything I'd asked for.

The best thing I ever did was get past my anxiety about disclosing it to the force and disclose it at the beginning of my career.

Why did you decide not to talk to your line manager about seeking help in regards to mental health and wellbeing?

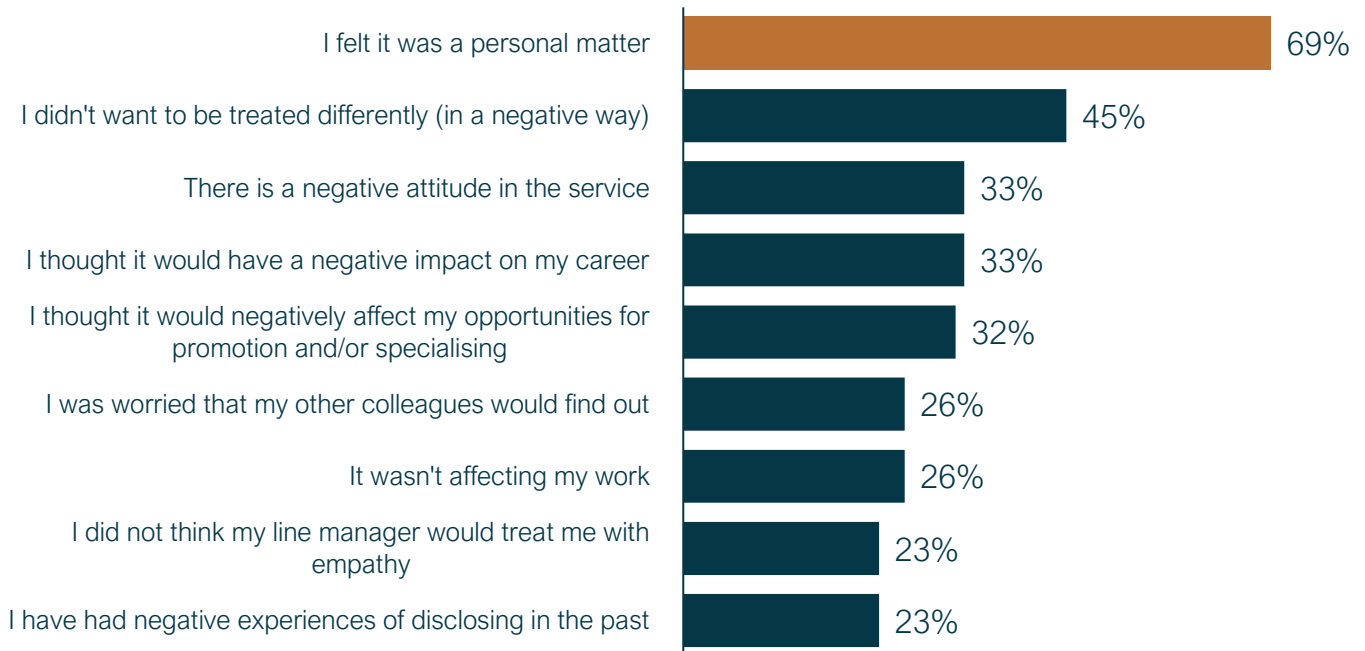


Chart 41, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who did not tell their line manager (n=1,887)

Taken together these point to two separate problems. For officers who do speak up, the difficulty is what the service is able to offer them afterwards. For those who do not, it is what they expect disclosure will cost them.

Access to wellbeing support

Access to wellbeing services has improved slightly since the last wave, but access has not translated into officers feeling supported. Proactive services are largely unchanged. The clearest movement is in access to a gym, up 3% points to 63%. Mental health and wellbeing champions or single points of contact remain the most widely available provision at 65%, access to wellbeing rooms or quiet spaces is broadly flat at 55%, and regular classes aimed at resilience and wellbeing (29%) and additional support for specialist roles (27%) remain the least common.

Support type	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26
Mental health/wellbeing champions or SPOCs	67%	65%	65%	0% points
Access to a gym	59%	60%	63%	+3% points

Support type	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26
Access to wellbeing rooms or quiet spaces	54%	56%	55%	-1% points
Access to a free mental health and wellbeing app	47%	48%	50%	+2% points
One-off sessions/CPD events	45%	41%	42%	+1% points
Regular classes for resilience/wellbeing	26%	29%	29%	0% points
Additional support for specialist roles	33%	26%	27%	+1% points
Other	2%	2%	3%	+1% points

Table 4, source: PFEW Pay and Morale Survey 2024 (R001/2025), Figure 23, p64. 2026 figures from the 2026 Pay and Morale Survey.

Reactive services show small increases across most services. Access to occupational health sessions has risen from 66% to 69%, to a 24/7 helpline service from 53% to 58%, and to peer support groups from 32% to 36%. Face to face counselling is up 3% points to 50%, and other talking therapies up 3% points to 26%.

Support type	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26
Occupational health sessions	60%	66%	69%	+3% points
TRiM	68%	60%	61%	+1% points
Telephone counselling	59%	57%	58%	+1% points
24/7 helpline service	56%	53%	58%	+5% points
Face to face counselling	49%	47%	50%	+3% points
Peer support groups	34%	32%	36%	+4% points
Critical incident support	32%	29%	29%	0% points

Support type	2023	2024	2026	Δ 2024–26
Other talking therapies	24%	23%	26%	+3% points
Web based support services	20%	19%	22%	+3% points
Business hours only helpline service	10%	9%	8%	-1% points
Other	2%	2%	2%	0% points

Table 5, source: PFEW Pay and Morale Survey 2024 (R001/2025), Figure 24, p65. 2026 figures from the 2026 Pay and Morale Survey.

The two tables above describe a service that is markedly better at responding than at preventing. Almost every reactive service is more widely available than in 2024 (only the business hours helpline has fallen, and critical incident support is unchanged), and the most clinical of them, occupational health at 69%, is the single most available form of support in either table. Proactive provision has barely moved, and what growth there has been is at its least resource-intensive end: a gym and an app. The forms of proactive support that require sustained capacity are the least available proactive services, with regular classes on resilience at 29% and additional support for specialist roles at 27%, the latter down 6% points on 2023.

More broadly, our 2026 PF Global poll of PFEW members found that nearly three quarters (72%) rate their force as inadequate or requiring improvement at supporting officers and their wellbeing, including 46% who rate it inadequate outright. Just 9% describe their force as good or outstanding in this area. These findings indicate that dissatisfaction is not limited to specific gaps in provision, but reflects a broader lack of confidence in the support forces provide.

08 Skills and Training

Training

From the PF Global poll of PFEW members, we know that officers are split on the efficacy of the training they have received; 36% say that it has prepared them quite well or very well but 34% say quite poorly or very poorly. This also varies by experience with officers being more likely to say “well” if they have some years under their belt.

'How well or poorly would you say the training you received has prepared you for the reality of the job?'

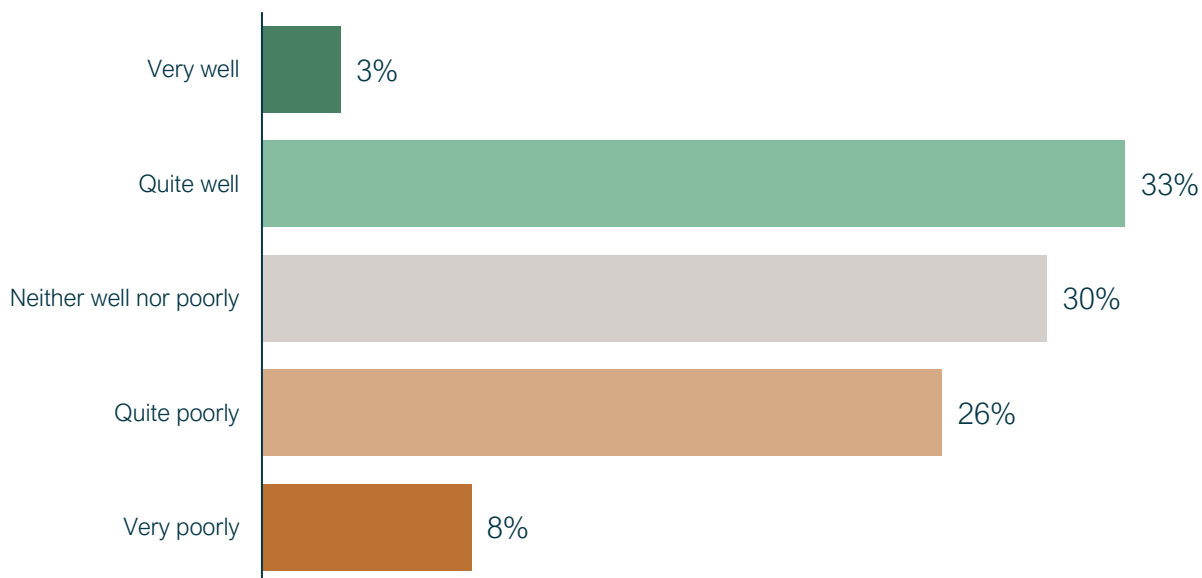


Chart 42, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

The proportion saying their training prepared them well rises by 16% points between those with 0–5 years' experience and those with 21–25 years. Even so, at no length of service does a majority say their training prepared them well: even at its peak, fewer than half say it prepared them for the realities of the job.

'How well or poorly would you say the training you received has prepared you for the reality of the job?'

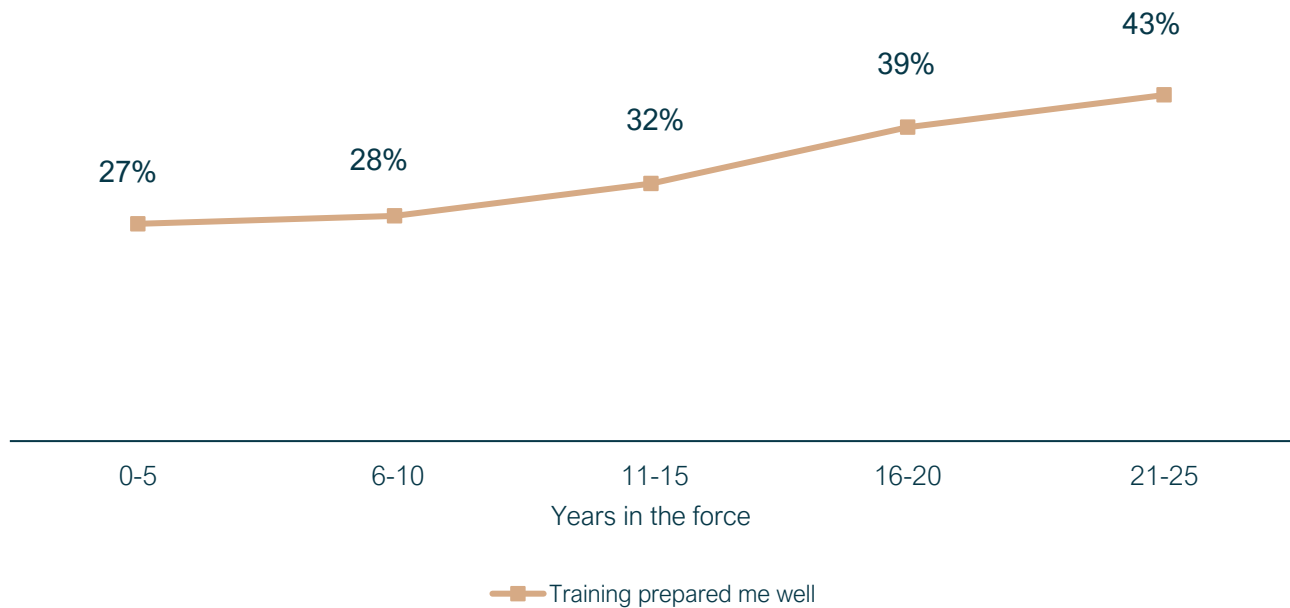


Chart 43, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Digital skills and AI

The increasing digitisation of everyday life is also changing the skills police officers need. Almost eight in ten say that the digital and technical skills required for their role have increased, with 41% strongly agreeing, and more than a third saying that their job description does not accurately reflect this. These findings are relatively flat across seniority, force size and role.

The main changes officers cite, when choosing from a wider list, are having to use multiple digital systems and applications, reviewing digital evidence including social media, messaging, and emails, as well as data interpretation and protection. The shift towards multiple digital systems is the largest change felt by the force, recognised by almost nine in ten officers, with around two in three citing reviewing digital evidence, data analysis, understanding data protection and more advanced workplace software.

'Over the last five years, how have the digital and technical skills required for your role changed?'

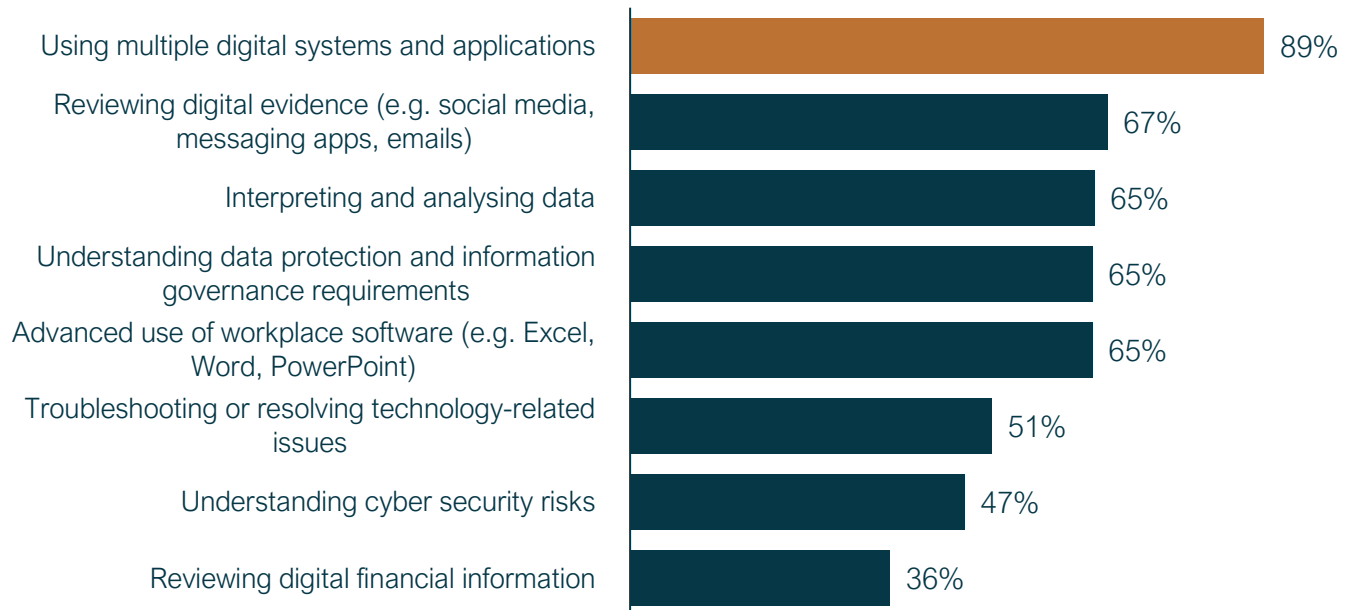


Chart 44, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,053)

Here, there is some more variation by rank and role. Data protection and workplace software are more common among inspectors and above while reviewing digital evidence is not as much of an increase for chief inspectors. Broken down by role, officers in response were less likely to mention data interpretation and analysis (58% vs. 78% of those in investigations) but patterns were otherwise very similar.

The growing use of AI brings both opportunities and risks for policing. More than half of officers (56%) say that they have used AI-enabled tools for their work, 37% saying occasionally and 19% regularly.

'In the last 12 months, have you used any AI-enabled tools for work-related purposes?'

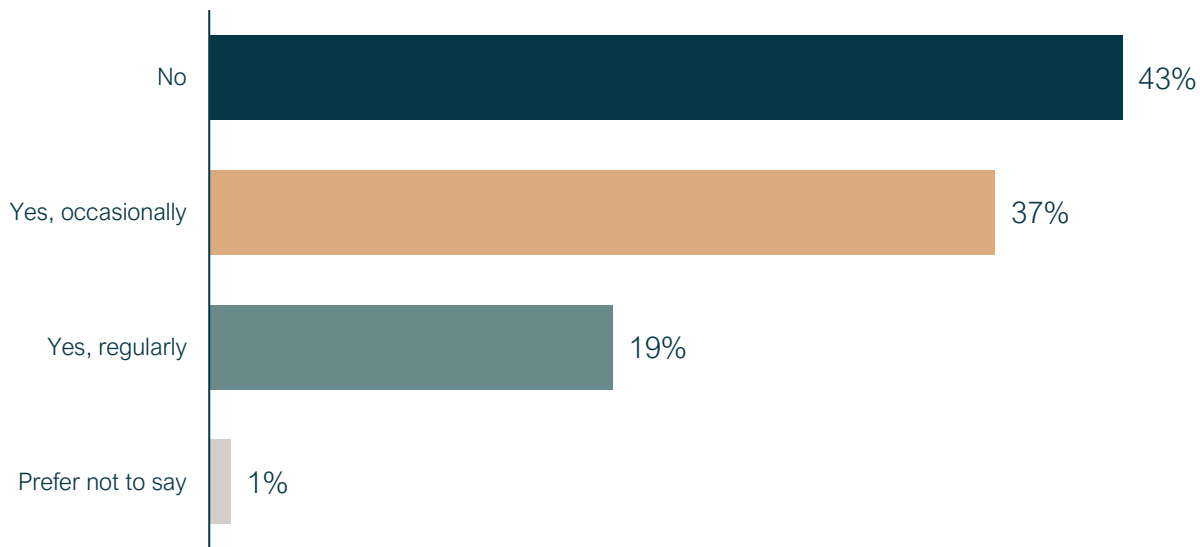


Chart 45, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,451)

'Has the force provided you with any training on the use of AI?'

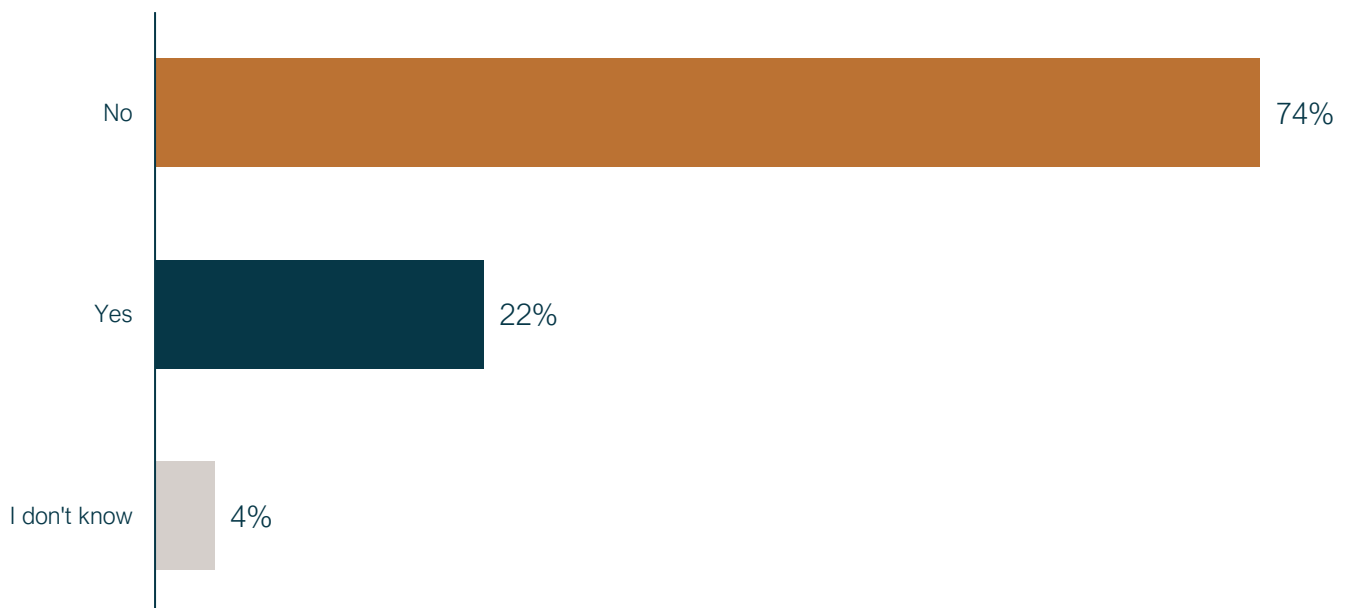


Chart 46, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who use AI (n=9,266)

Despite a majority of officers saying that they use AI tools for their work, only 22% of those say that their force has provided them with any training on the use of AI, a figure that masks a huge regional disparity as 59% of officers from forces in the South East say “yes” compared to an average of 12% in other forces. Within the South East, this stark disparity largely reflects very high proportions of AI-using officers who have

been trained in Thames Valley (82%), Essex (79%), Hampshire (74%) and Kent (70%). Under half (42%) of AI-using officers said they were aware of any formal guidance on the use of AI.

The South East's high levels of AI training stand in sharp contrast with other forces. Because so few officers elsewhere who already use these tools have been trained, this would suggest that, as uptake of AI-enabled tools increases across other forces, there is a risk of certain forces going 'in blind'.

Use of AI does vary significantly by seniority: 50% of constables have used it compared to 66% of sergeants, 78% of inspectors, and 84% of chief inspectors. This makes intuitive sense when we see what officers are using it for. Those who have used AI for their work are mainly using it for writing, information retrieval, and learning.

'For what specific purpose did you use AI?'

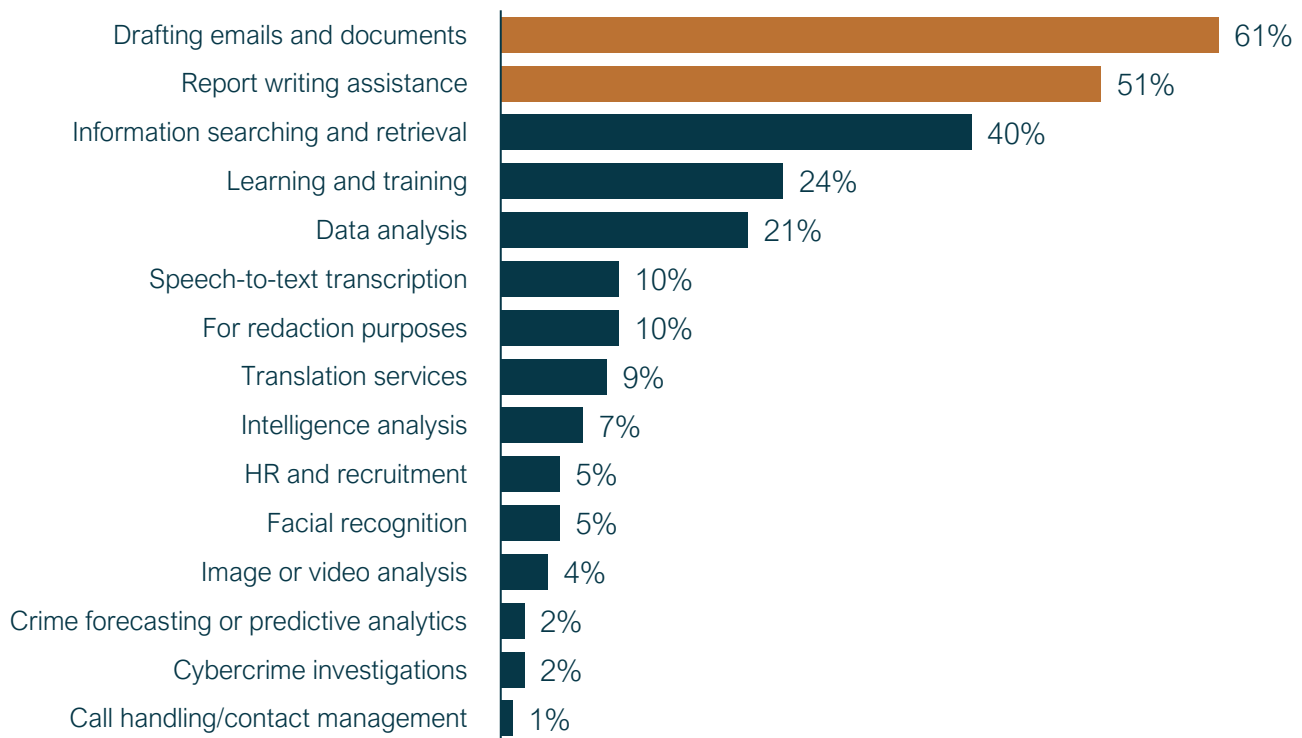


Chart 47, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers who have used AI (n=8,847)

The training and guidance that officers did receive appear to produce mostly satisfactory outcomes, but there is a worrying gap for “evaluating the accuracy of AI outputs” with a third of those aware of formal guidance saying that they disagree that it adequately covered this topic. For the other areas, a majority agree that the training has adequately covered them, although sizeable proportions are neutral about its effectiveness. While the proportion appears small in the chart, the data shows that there are still parts of the force that feel the current level of training is inadequate. With a sample size of around 3,800, over 1,100 officers consider the training on misconduct in AI use and on evaluating output accuracy to be poor. This

figure is lower for other areas of AI training, but the smaller proportions remain significant, especially when considering the practical impacts of poor AI use.

'To what extent do you agree that the training and guidance you have received adequately covers the following areas?'

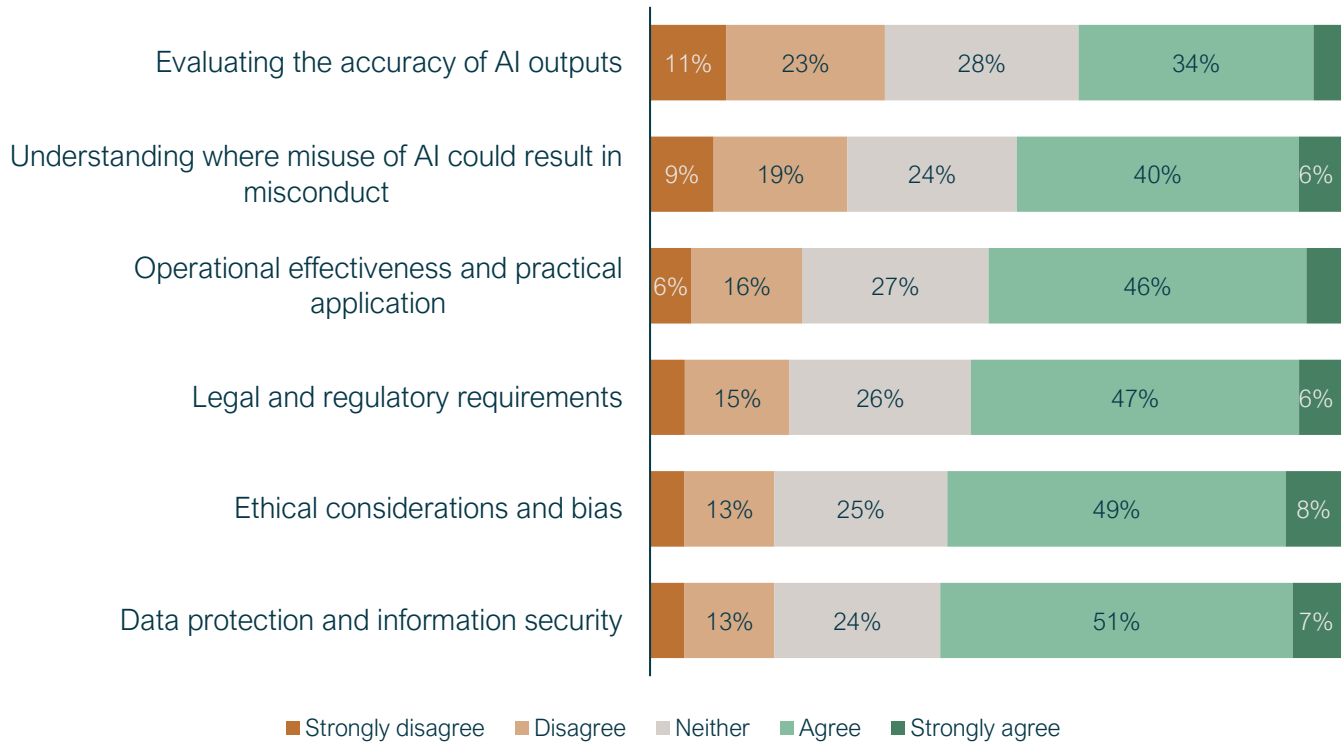


Chart 48, Pay and Morale Survey, base: officers aware of formal guidance on AI use (n=3,844–3,855)

This is not to say that officers do not see value in what AI can offer to their working experience. Officers generally see some promise for the ability of AI to reduce their administrative burden and make their force more efficient. But at the same time officers are worried about many of its potential drawbacks such as accuracy, dependency, transparency, and public trust.

'In relation to the potential benefits of AI, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements'

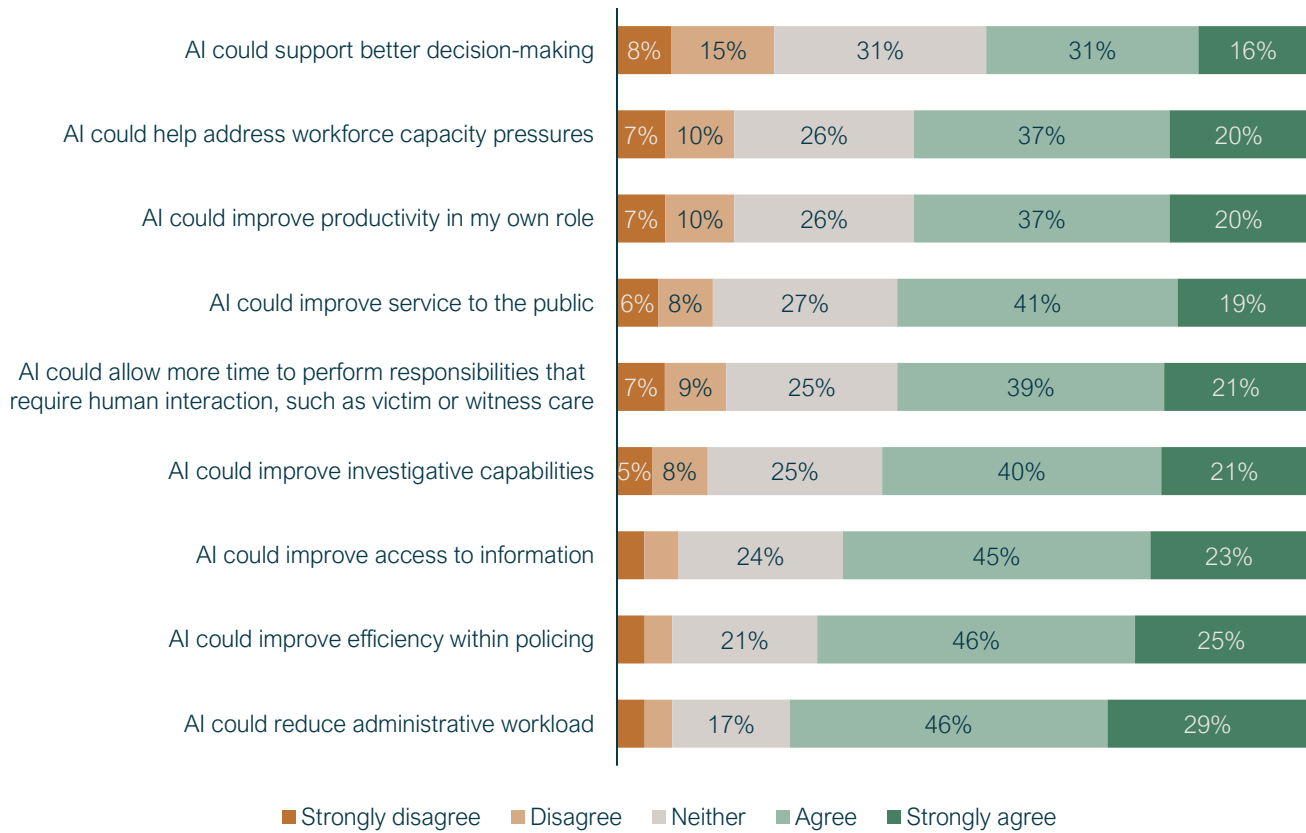


Chart 49, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,930–15,996)

'In relation to the potential challenges/risks of AI, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements'

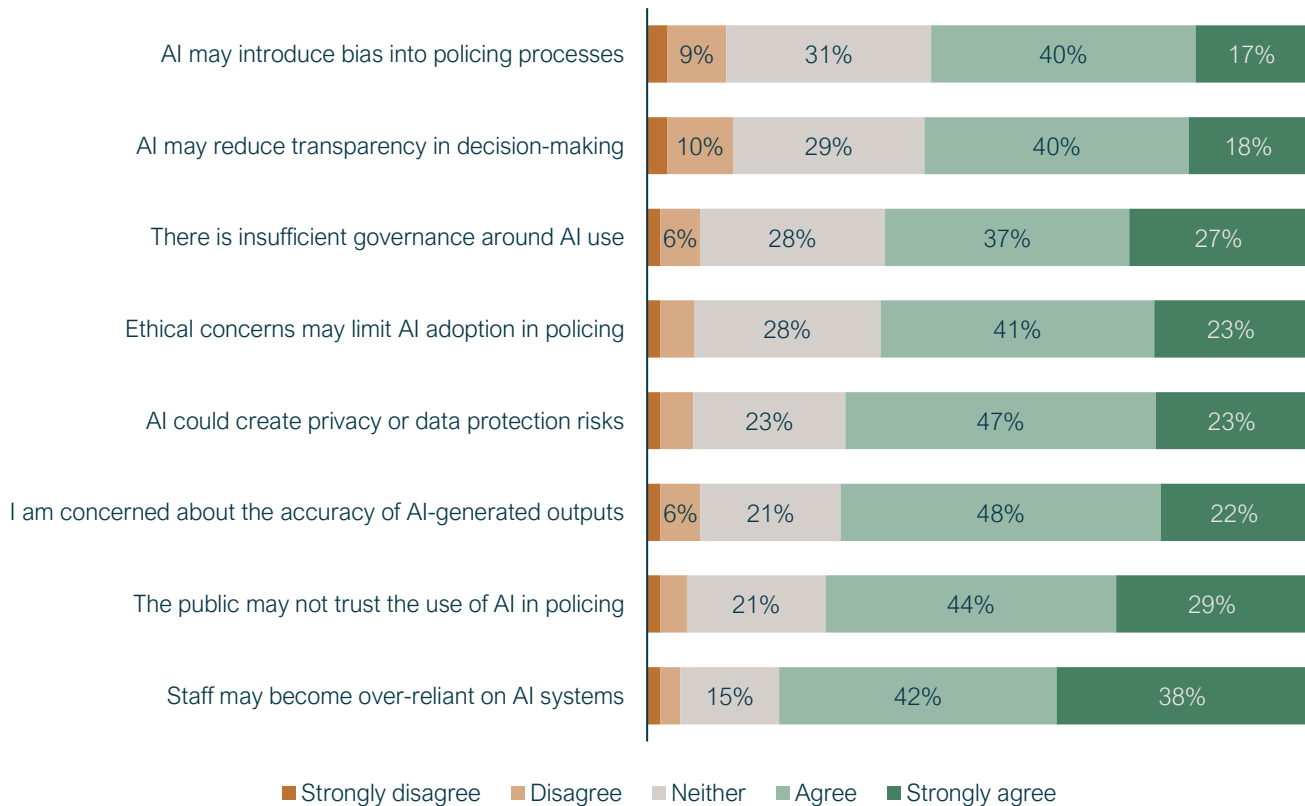


Chart 50, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,761–15,821)

So while technical and digital demands are rising for officers, the appropriate training is not yet in place to enable them to meet the challenge. A majority are now using AI tools at work, but only around one in five of those users have had any training on their use, and training is concentrated in just a handful of forces. Concerns about over-reliance, accuracy and the risk to public trust are strong among officers, indicating a high degree of awareness as to the risks that digital transformation poses to the force overall. This points to the need for a national approach: consistent training, guidance and governance on AI would mean officers in every force, not only a handful, can use these tools safely, accurately and with public confidence.



Policing cannot bury its head and get behind on AI engagement, this would have more dangers than any actual use of technology.

09 Equality

The Pay and Morale Survey gathers anonymous information on officers' gender, ethnicity, disability status and sexuality. These break down as follows:

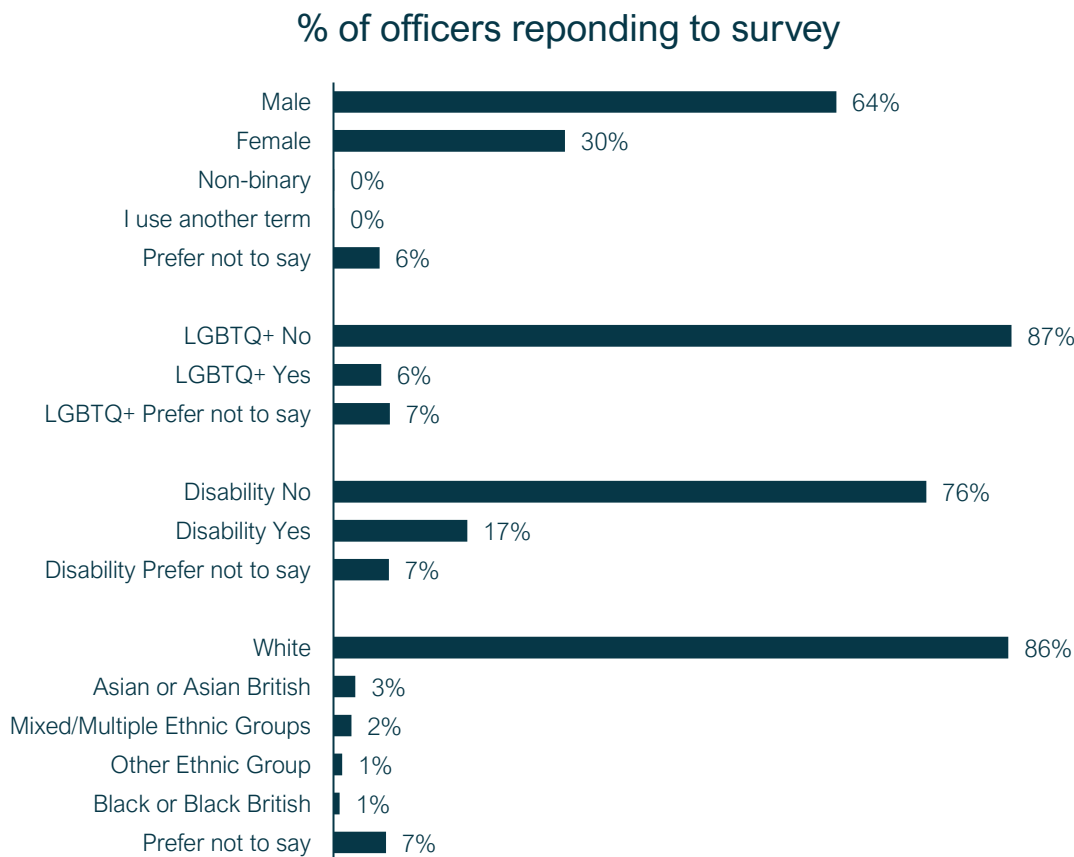


Chart 51, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=18,468–18,516)

This means that while 45% of officers in the survey are heterosexual white males without a disability, we have an analysable base of female officers, LGBTQ+ officers, officers with disabilities, and officers from each ethnic minority group. To understand the impact of each characteristic on officers' experiences, we have focused on the following outcome questions:

- ONS: Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (0–10)
- ONS: Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (0–10)
- ONS: Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? (0–10)
- ONS: Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? (0–10, reverse-scored)
- In general, how do you find your job? (5-point stress)
- In general, how do you find your life outside of work? (5-point stress)
- In relation to police officer pay, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following: (4 statements, 5-point agreement)

- In the last 12 months have you used any of your leave entitlement to take time off due to... (2 reasons, 4-point frequency)
- Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the statements apply to you in the last month: (2 statements, 7-point agreement)
- Have you experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with your mental health and wellbeing within the last 12 months? (yes/no)
- How would you rate your workload over the last 12 months? (5-point)
- Please rate how frequently the below statements apply to you and your work in the last 12 months: (4 statements, 5-point frequency)

Comparing like with like

Many of the demographic characteristics measured in this section go together. Older officers tend to be more senior, parents tend to be older than non-parents, and disabled officers are slightly older on average. This means that when one group reports worse wellbeing than other, it is not always clear which characteristic is behind the difference.

To untangle this, we used a statistical technique called regression. In simple terms, it compares officers who are alike in every other respect we measured (their age, rank, length of service, sex, ethnicity, disability and whether they identify as LGBTQ+) and differ in only one. If a difference holds for like-for-like comparisons, we can be more confident that it is linked to that characteristic itself, rather than being to something else about that group.

The table below summarises what this comparison shows. Each cell says whether officers in that group have a better or worse experience than otherwise similar colleagues, or whether there is no clear difference, and how large that difference is. Disability, for example, stands out; disabled officers fare worse on almost every measure compared colleagues who are not.

Outcome	Each extra decade of age	Women (vs men)	Ethnic minority (vs White)	Disabled (vs not)	LGBTQ+ (vs not)
Satisfied with life	No clear difference	Better (moderate)	Worse (moderate)	Worse (large)	No clear difference
Feel what they do is worthwhile	No clear difference	Better (large)	Worse (moderate)	Worse (large)	No clear difference
Felt happy yesterday	No clear difference	Better (moderate)	Worse (moderate)	Worse (large)	No clear difference
Did not feel anxious yesterday	Better (small)	Worse (moderate)	No clear difference	Worse (large)	No clear difference
No mental health difficulty in last 12 months	Better (small)	Worse (moderate)	No clear difference	Worse (large)	No clear difference
Job not stressful	Better (small)	No clear difference	Worse (small)	Worse (moderate)	No clear difference
Life outside work not stressful	Better (small)	No clear difference	Worse (moderate)	Worse (moderate)	Better (small)
Not fatigued	Better (small)	No clear difference	No clear difference	Worse (large)	No clear difference
Does not overwork	Better (moderate)	No clear difference	No clear difference	No clear difference	No clear difference
Workload not too high	Better (small)	No clear difference	No clear difference	No clear difference	No clear difference
Feels fairly paid	Better (small)	Better (moderate)	Worse (small)	No clear difference	No clear difference
Has not needed health-related leave	Better (small)	Worse (small)	Worse (moderate)	Worse (large)	Worse (moderate)

Table 6, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,252–18,146), Linear and logistic regression

On the four wellbeing questions, which are scored out of 10, the difference can be read directly. Compared with otherwise similar colleagues, for example, disabled officers score around one point lower on life satisfaction, happiness and sense of worth, and around one point higher on anxiety. The gap for ethnic minority officers is about half the size.

	Disabled (vs not)	Ethnic minority (vs White)	Women (vs men)	LGBTQ+ (vs not)
Life satisfaction	-1.1	-0.5	+0.6	0.0
Sense that life is worthwhile	-1.1	-0.5	+0.7	0.0
Happiness yesterday	-1.1	-0.4	+0.5	0.0
Anxiety yesterday (higher = more anxious)	+1.1	0.0	+0.4	0.0

Table 7, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,252–17,007), Linear regression coefficients

Age

Younger officers report more pressure than older colleagues. Among 25 to 34 year olds, 51% find their job very or extremely stressful and 42% are often or always pressured to work long hours, compared with 34% and 18% of those aged 55 and over. Fatigue follows the same pattern (73% compared with 56%).

Satisfaction Question by Age

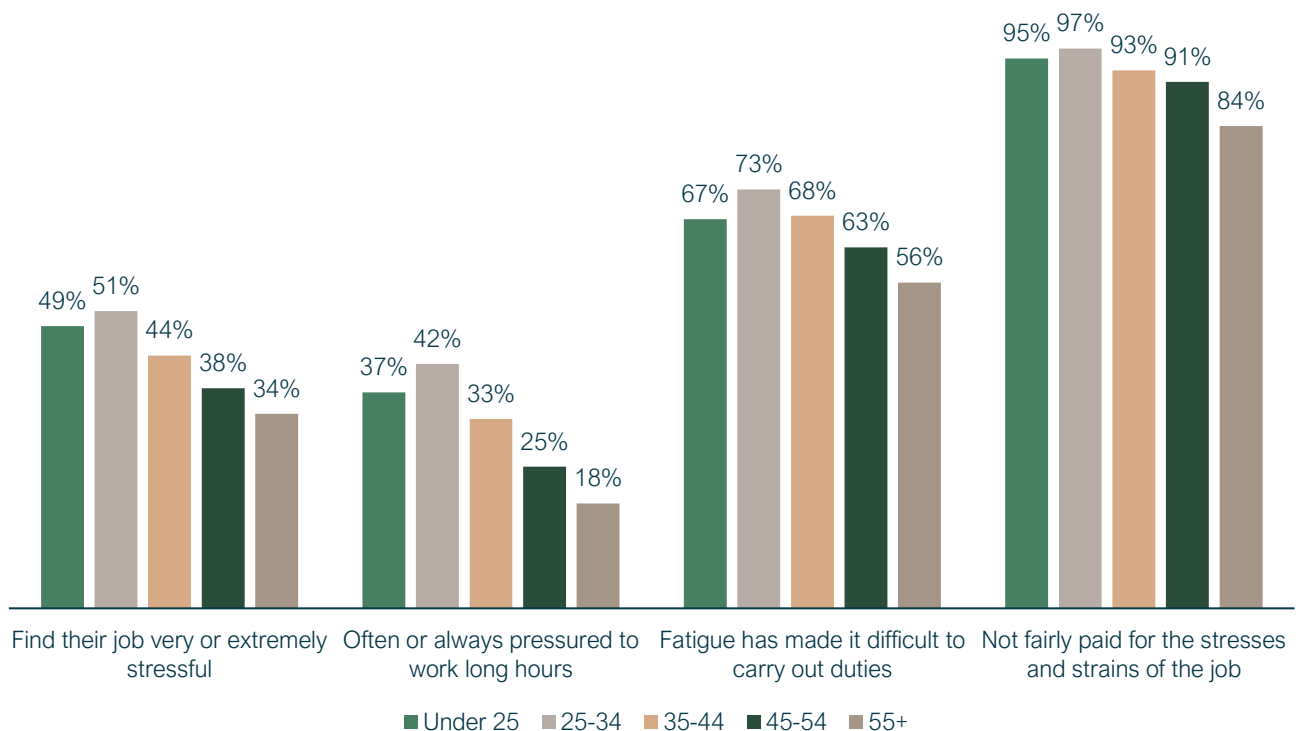


Chart 52, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents giving their age (n=17,279–17,788)

Older officers' higher life satisfaction and happiness is explained by their longer service and higher rank, not their age. But on stress, anxiety, fatigue, mental health and pay, older officers still do slightly better than

similar younger colleagues. These effects are, however, small. Rank matters more for workload; sergeants and above are around 20% points more likely than similar constables to say their workload is too high.

With each decade increase in age, officers are:

- Significantly less likely to report any mental health difficulty
- Slightly less likely to report being anxious or fatigued yesterday
- Less likely to report being overworked or stressed, and more likely to report being fairly paid

The rest of the analysis therefore controls for these age effects to isolate results that are primarily associated with each characteristic.

LGBTQ+ officers

On the main direct question asked of officers identifying as LGBTQ+, 77% say that their force has been proactive and willing to support officers who belong to this community, while 23% say it has not. This is noticeably better than the equivalent figure for officers with a disability (44%).

“

Nothing ever proactive, they just put on job adverts they are inclusive.

The removal of lanyards and badges has been really regressive.

[They're] basically just making noise.

Homophobia still too common amongst colleagues over the years.

In the regression model though, the only key effects of being LGBTQ+ are:

- LGBTQ+ officers are less likely to say that life outside of work was stressful
- LGBTQ+ officers are more likely to have taken health-related leave. Half (50%) have done so for their mental health, compared with 38% of other officers.

Health-related leave and stress outside work, LGBTQ+ vs other officers

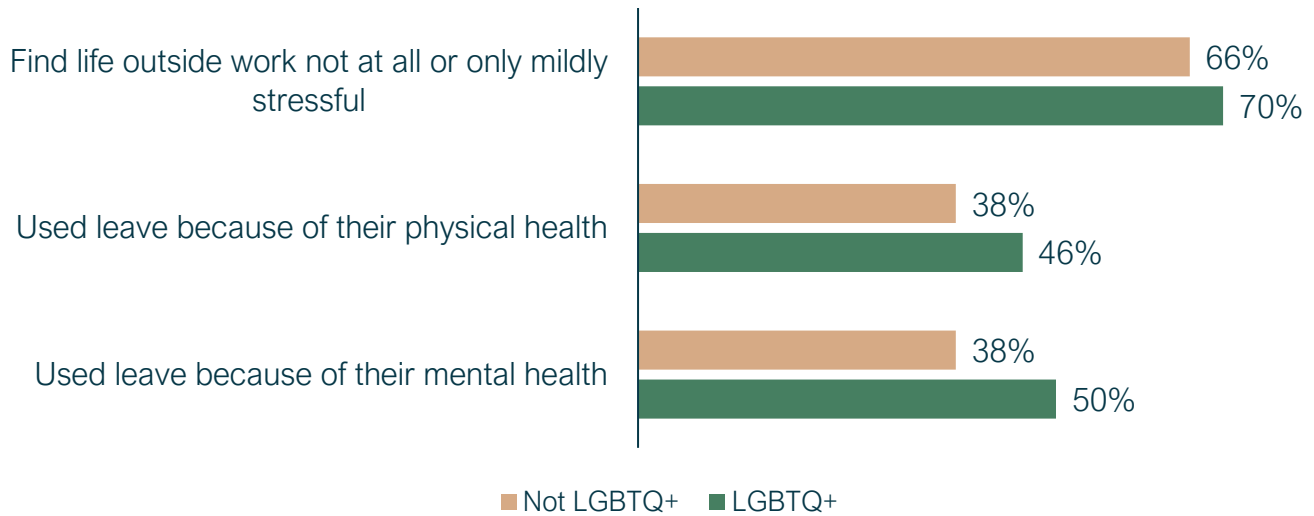


Chart 53, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n= 1,097 for LGBTQ+ Officers)

Ethnicity effects

Comparing the results of officers from ethnic minorities with those from white backgrounds, we can see several significant effects.

Wellbeing and health-related leave, ethnic minority vs White officers

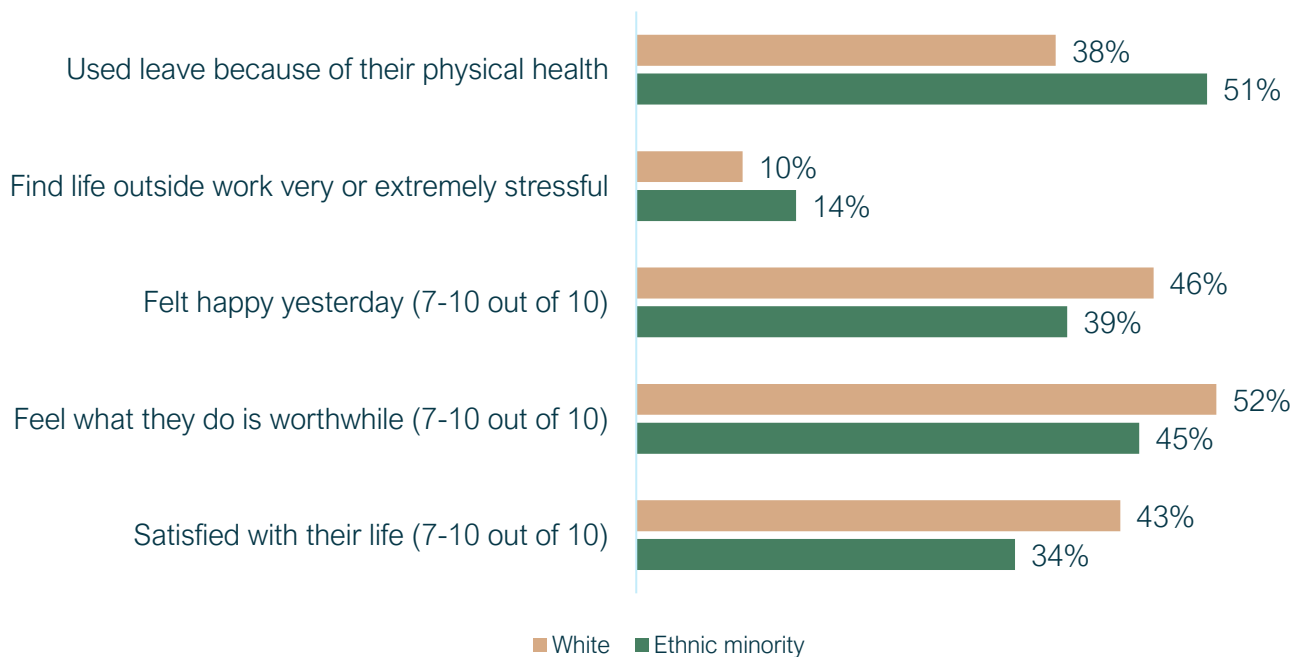


Chart 54, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,521–18,146)

Ethnic minority officers report lower wellbeing: 34% are satisfied with their life, compared to 43% of White officers.

Taken together, for an officer from an ethnic minority, results show belonging to this group is associated with lower life satisfaction, lower feelings of worth, lower feelings of happiness, greater likelihood of health-related leave, stress outside work and feeling less like you are paid fairly. Almost half of ethnic minority officers serve in London, but this fails to explain the gap (the same size in London as elsewhere).

Disability among officers

Views on the force's accommodation of disability are mixed. Most (70%) of those who say they have a disability report that they have been able to access a reasonable adjustment for their condition. The main variation here is by length of service, where "no" responses are higher for those with fewer than 15 years' service (27% for those with under 5 years, 25% for those with 5–9 and 26% for those with 10–14 years). Wales also has a higher "no" figure than other regions (37%, although this is based on a small number of respondents).

However, only 44% say yes to the equivalent question about whether their force has been proactive and willing to support officers who develop physical or mental impairment/disability, while as many as 47% say no. This 'no' figure is highest in London (61%) and Wales (54%) and lowest in the South East (34%) and South West (35%), but varies little by rank or sex.

Disabled officers are far more likely to report a mental health difficulty (88% vs 75%) and far less likely to be satisfied with their life (31% vs 45%).

Comparing disabled and non-disabled officers, data shows large differences. Disabled officers score around 1 point lower out of 10 on wellbeing than similar colleagues and are 12% points more likely to report a mental health difficulty. They are also more likely to report fatigue, stress, and taking health-related leave.

Wellbeing, fatigue and health-related leave, disabled vs non-disabled officers

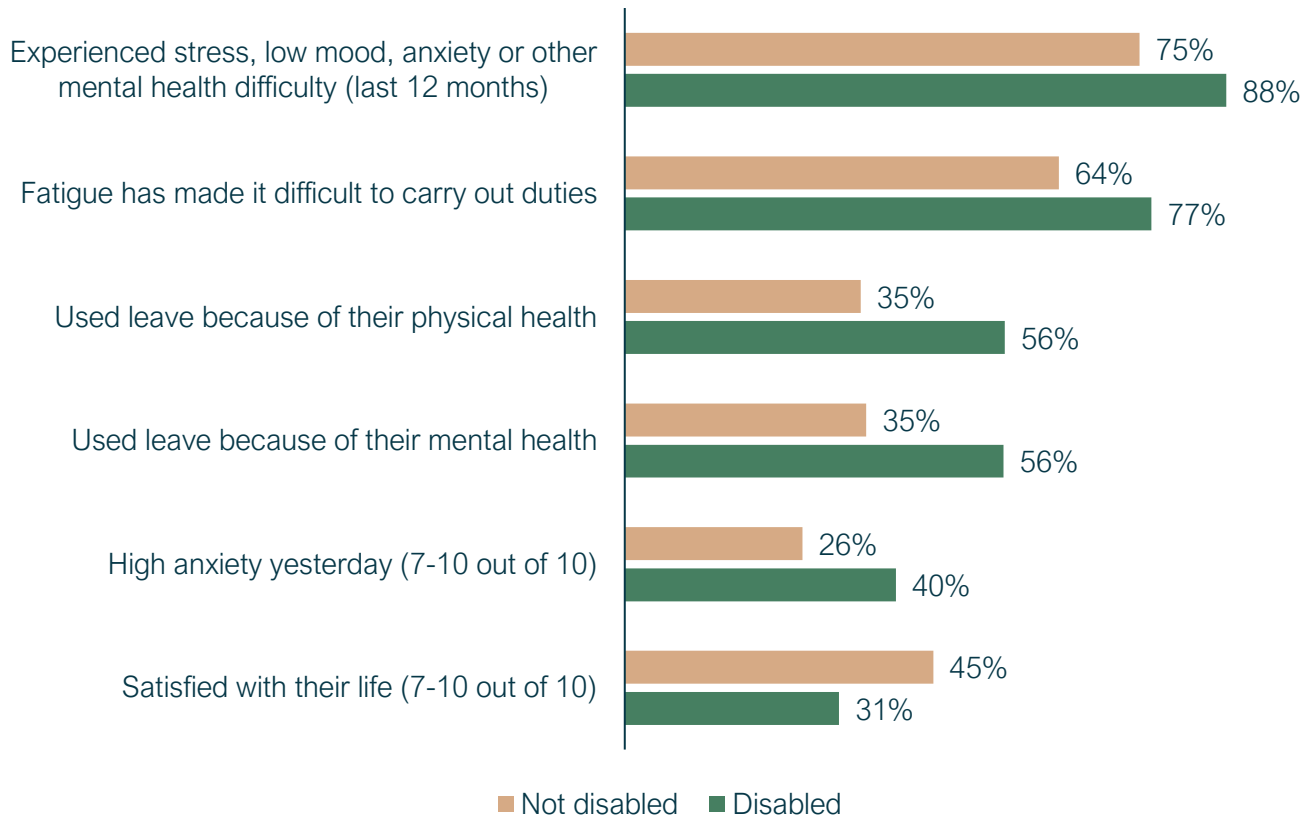


Chart 55, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,252–17,932)

Disabled officers are much more likely to report mental health difficulties, greater anxiety, lower feelings of worth, happiness and satisfaction. They are more likely to report fatigue, to have taken health-related leave and to say that their life inside and outside of work is stressful.



Having recently applied for promotion, I... felt the need to withdraw... There were no considerations put in place for officers who have a long term disability... my disability was as a result of an injury on frontline duties.

Policing as a parent

Parenthood is mainly associated with higher work and non-work-related stress, alongside higher feelings of worth, happiness and life satisfaction. While parents, on the raw results, appear to have better results than average for workload, fatigue and anxiety, these are largely the age effects, since parents tend to be older than non-parents on average.

As with age, the selection effect here is likely to be strong. Among officers without children, men outnumber women 57% to 43%, but among parents the gap is far wider: fathers in the force significantly outnumber mothers (25% of parents are female vs. 75% who are male).

Stress and wellbeing, parents vs non-parents

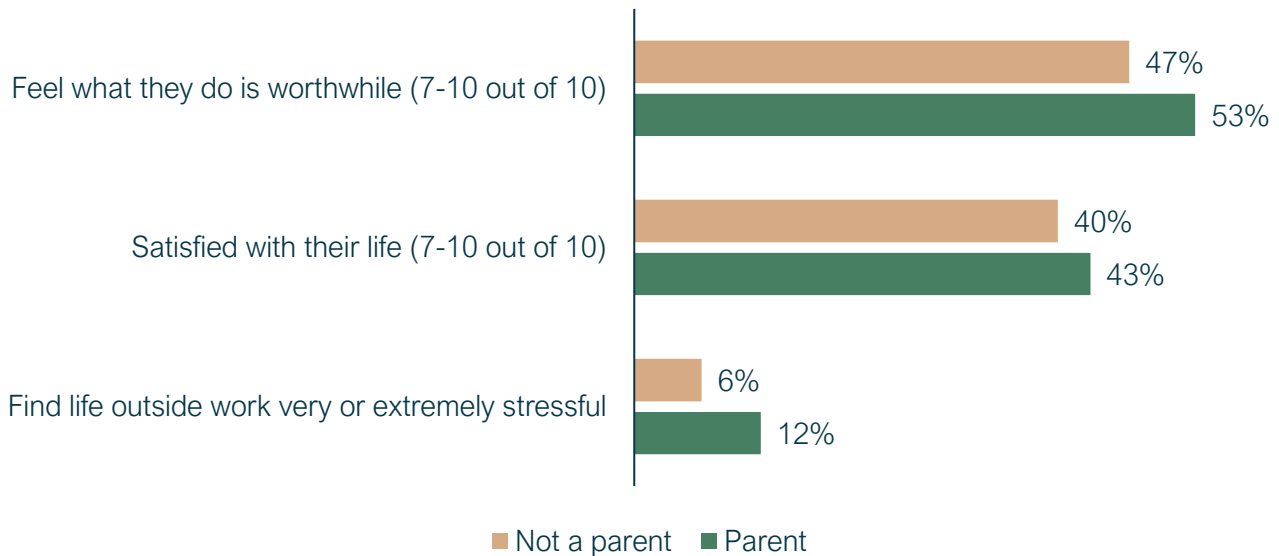


Chart 56, Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,506–17,634)

Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to find life outside of work very or extremely stressful (12% vs 6%), although they are found to be slightly more satisfied with their lives. Parents also show a stronger sense of feeling that what they do is 'worthwhile' (53% vs 47% of non-parents).

The chart below shows the proportion of male and female officers in each age band who are parents, and the gap widens with age.

Proportion of male and female officers in each age band who are parents

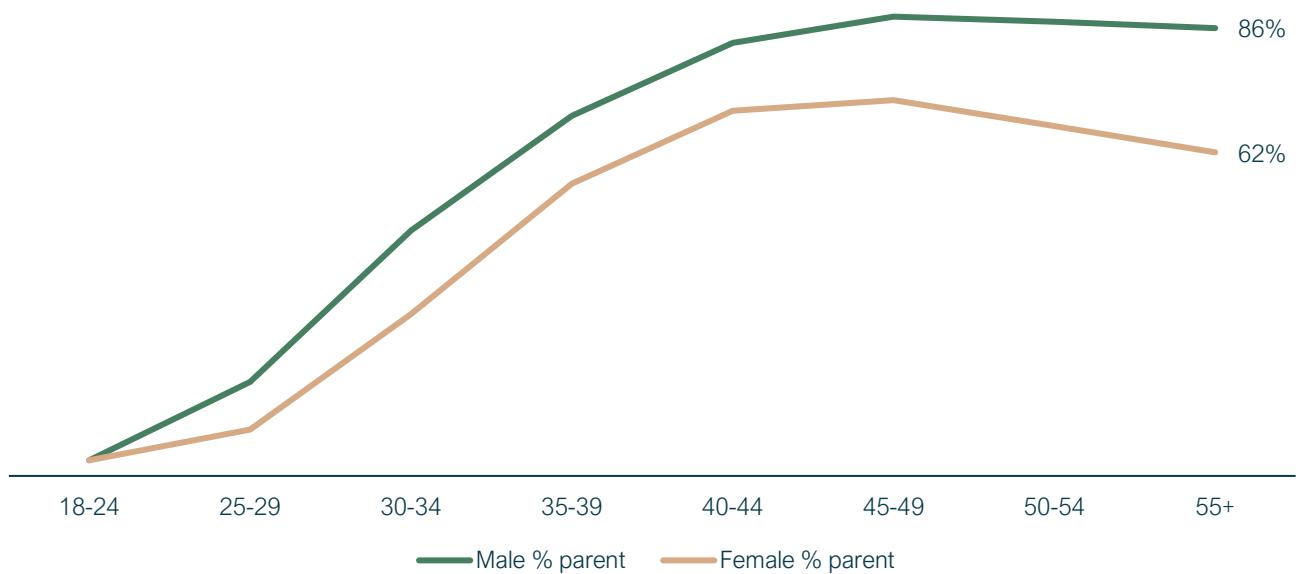


Chart 57, Pay and Morale Survey, base: male and female officers answering the parent question (n=17,190)

The burden also shows in officers' careers. For parents, much of what officers give up is family time. 71% of mothers in the force have had to change job roles or teams to meet their obligations as a parent, compared with 49% of fathers. One possibility is that it is more difficult for women than men to balance the needs of police work with parental responsibilities, which may have implications for the retention of female officers.

This is most common among parents of school-age children: 61% of parents whose youngest child is aged 5 to 11 have changed role or team, compared with 51% of those whose youngest is under five.

“

I pay a small fortune in childcare before and after school to enable me to work full time, there is not enough annual leave compared to school holidays, so I spend even more money for childcare during those periods, I can't afford to go part time. Furthermore, my current partner and I were hoping to start a family in the near future, but have absolutely no idea how to support another child whilst working full time, so we are postponing having a family purely because of work.

My partner has had to go part time because we can't afford child care fees. We'd love to have a second child but feel we can't and never will be able to afford to.

Leave is near on impossible to get when you have a family and need to take time off when the kids are off, mostly only one parent can get time off to cover the holiday periods, this has an effect on relationships. I was once told by a line manager that it was my decision to have children and it is therefore not the responsibility of the force to sort my childcare or leave for childcare.

When I come to start a family, I will have to reconsider if it's worth staying in the police.

10 Reputation

From data in the PF Global poll of PFEW members, we can see that police officers rate the performance of their force poorly and believe the public see it as even worse:

'Using the scale below, how would you rate the force you are a part of?' and 'How do you think the public in your area would rate your force on this scale?'

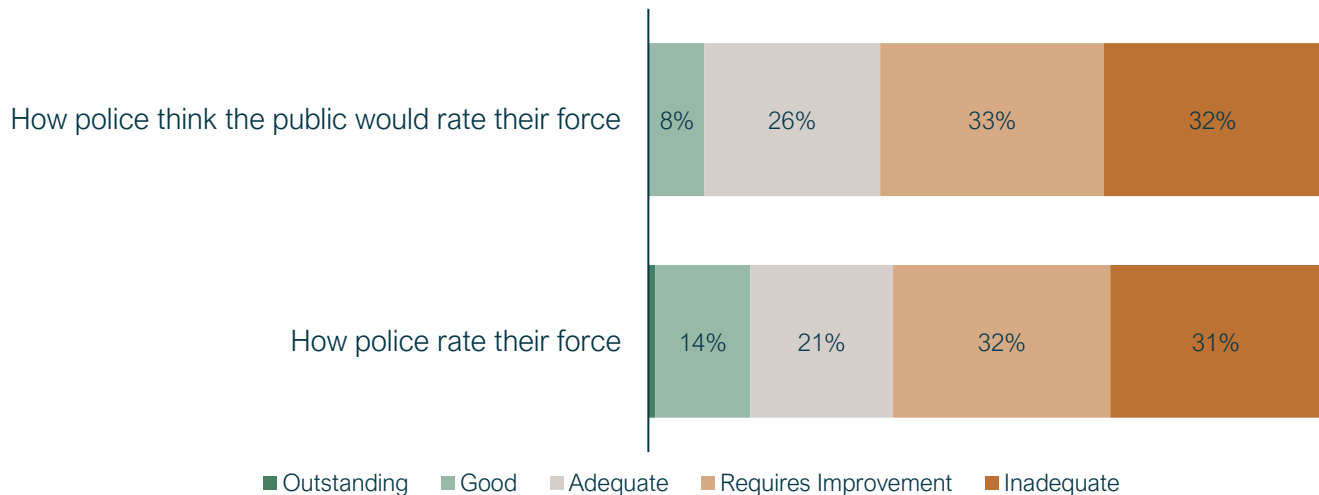


Chart 58, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

This does vary slightly by substantive rank with constables and sergeants being the most negative (63% and 66% respectively saying “requires improvement” or “inadequate”) while those at inspector rank or above were more positive, albeit still negative overall. This also may partly be down to a selection effect, where those more senior in forces are less likely to say their own forces are doing badly.

'Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following'

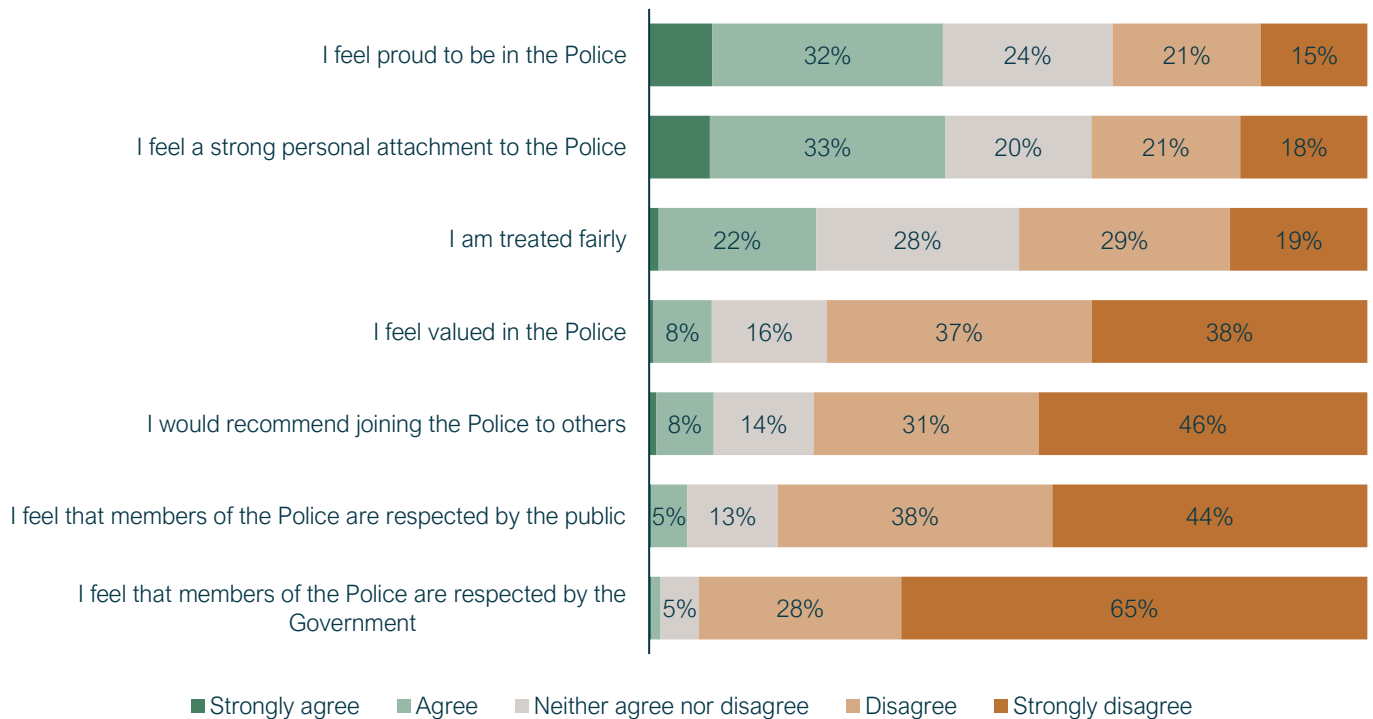


Chart 59, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Officers have a persistent feeling that they are not respected by the public with 82% disagreeing with this statement. The relatively positive results are that a narrow plurality still feel proud to be in the police (41% vs. 35% disagreeing) and feel a strong personal attachment to the police (41% vs. 38% disagreeing) but the narrowness of these gaps shows how precarious the situation is.

Results show a misalignment in how officers perceive the respect given to them by the public and by government. While, in the majority, both the public and government are seen as not respecting the police, this sentiment of undervalue is held more strongly for government. Previous results about morale and pay both point towards an overall sentiment of undervalue within the force, with data shown below adding to this feeling; that officers feel undervalued both internally (in terms of how they interact with their force's administrative structure on a day-to-day level) and externally (in how they perceive both government and the public as undervaluing the work that they do).

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?'

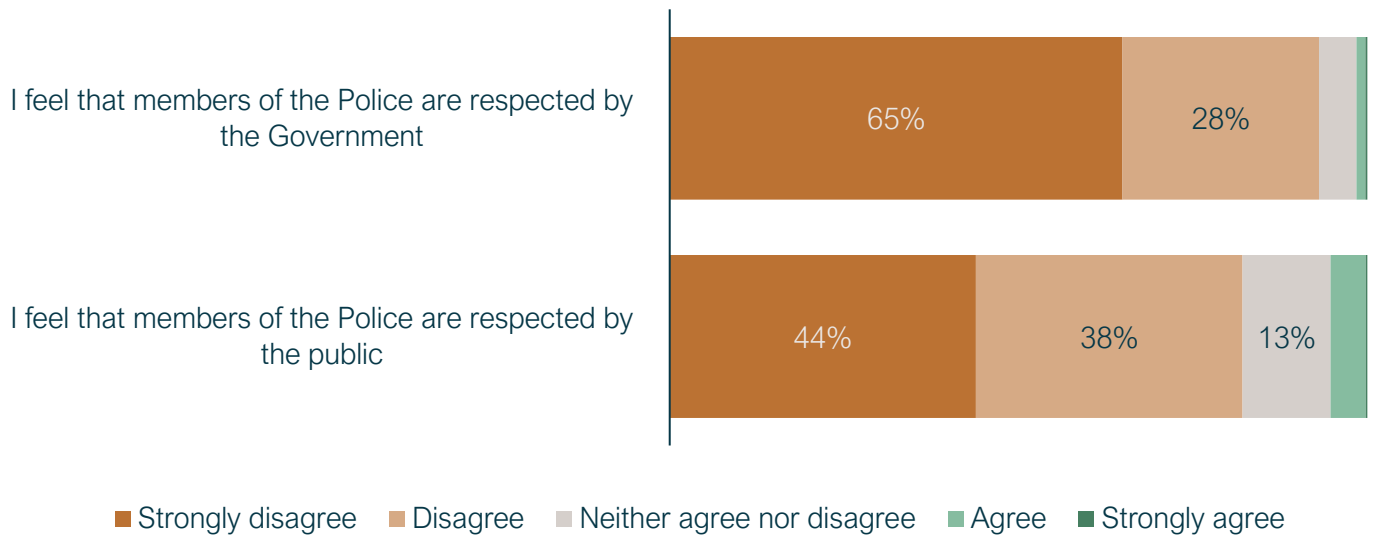


Chart 60, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

While the public were not asked to use the exact same scale, there is the potential that officers are overcorrecting here. The public believe that the police in their area are doing a fair-to-good job, with 38% saying “excellent” or “good”, 32% “fair” and 23% saying “poor” or “very poor”.

This compares unfavourably with other emergency services such as the fire and rescue service or NHS 999, but is a more positive picture than officers might expect.

'Taking everything into account, how good or poor a job do you think each of the following is doing in your local area?'

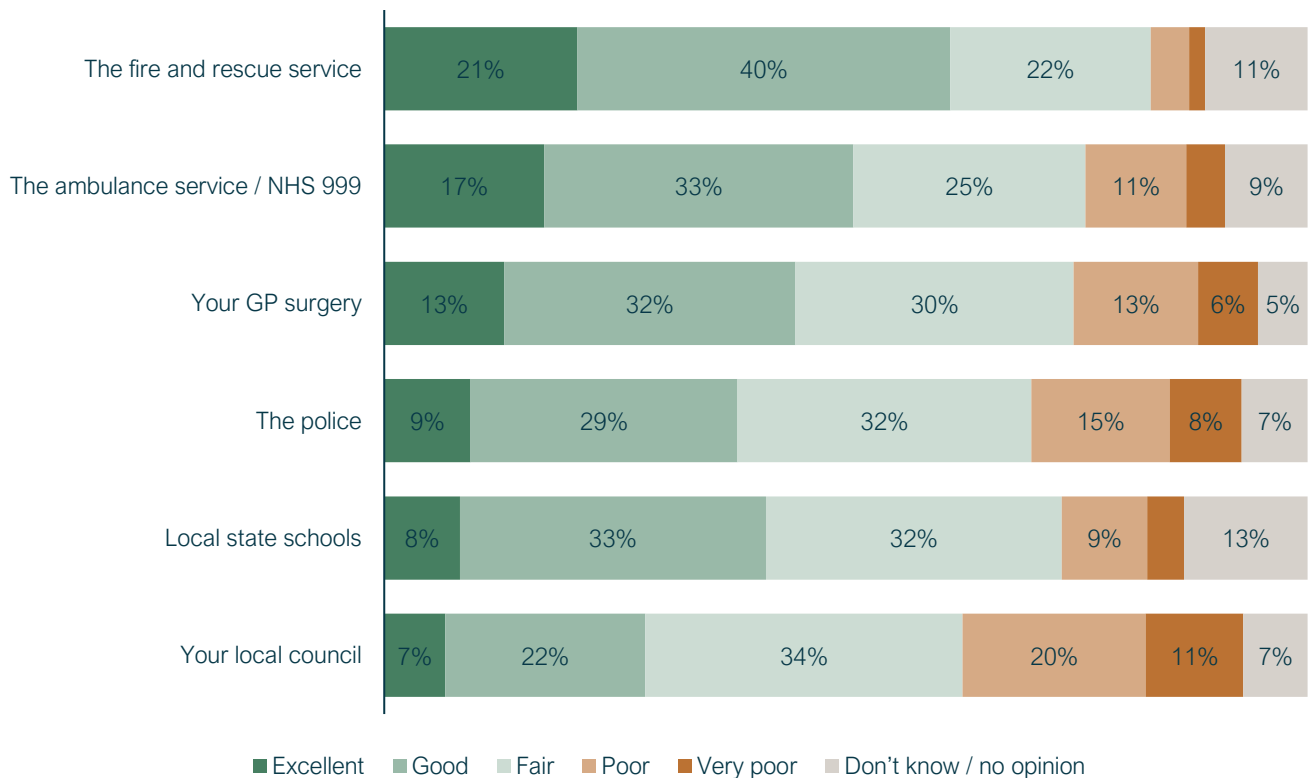


Chart 61, PF Global poll of the general public, base: All respondents (n=4,030)

There is a similar pattern when officers were asked to rate their force's performance on a range of measures and how they think the public would rate them on those same measures. The perception within the force is remarkably low for how they feel the public consider their service. This would track with previous questions where officers are asked about where they feel the public's sentiment lies in terms of their work, with the view overwhelmingly being that they feel the public undervalue the work they do.

'And how do you think the public in your area would rate your force for each of the following?'

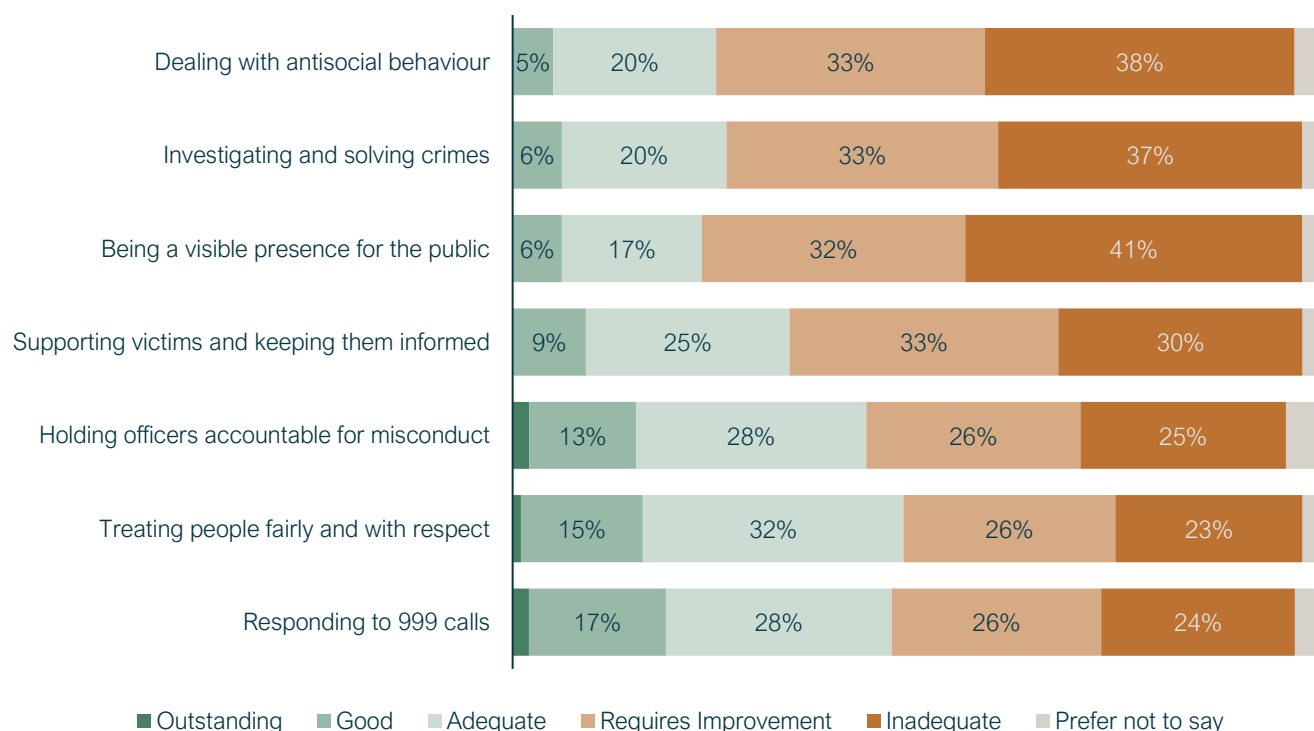


Chart 62, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

When asked about specific areas of police performance, officers expect the public to rate their force more negatively than positively on every measure, particularly visible presence and dealing with antisocial behaviour. These scores are consistently lower than how officers would grade their own performance, however.

	How officers rate the performance of their force (net scores)	How officers would expect the public to rate their force (net scores)
Responding to 999 calls	11%	-31%
Treating people fairly and with respect	1%	-33%
Holding officers accountable for misconduct	5%	-36%
Supporting victims and keeping them informed	-26%	-54%
Being a visible presence for the public	-42%	-66%

Investigating and solving crimes	-37%	-64%
Dealing with antisocial behaviour	-35%	-66%

Table 8, PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

There is a consistent pattern of officers underestimating how the public regards them, and these beliefs sit alongside very low levels of feeling respected and valued, with fewer than one in ten feeling respected by the public or valued in the police. And while some do feel pride and attachment towards the force, these positive views are marginal in an otherwise negative picture on reputation. The narrowness of these marginal differences is important. The goodwill that policing relies on depends on this pride and attachment. Notably, officers are most negative about their visibility to the public, both in how they rate their own force and (alongside antisocial behaviour) in how they expect the public to rate it, underscoring the area where they believe most could be done.

11 Conclusion

This year's Pay and Morale Survey describes a police force having to draw on its officers' own time, rest and families' time to meet routine demand. Three quarters of officers say their force relies heavily on their goodwill, whilst 42% say their team has been fully staffed on very few or no shifts in the last three months. Aligning with this, unpaid overtime, cancelled rest days and refused leave have all risen in each wave since 2023. Goodwill is no longer something policing draws on in exceptional circumstances; it has become part of the day-to-day life of the majority of officers.

These pressures are felt sharpest early on in officers' careers. Wellbeing is at its lowest among officers with three to five years' service, when happiness is lowest and anxiety and fatigue are highest. 84% of this group say fatigue has interfered with their family or social life. These pressures are not distributed evenly: officers with a disability report worse outcomes on most wellbeing measures, and fewer than half feel their force has been proactive in supporting them.

Fatigue is getting worse as two thirds of officers say it has made it difficult to carry out their duties (up from 61% in 2024). These consequences have reached far beyond work as three quarters say it has interfered with their family or social life. Shift uncertainty is also an increasing issue as 71% of officers have had their roster changed in the last year and one in six more than ten times. Almost four in five have experienced stress, low mood or anxiety in the last year, and almost all of them (94%) say work caused or worsened it. For officers who are parents, these pressures are exacerbated. 71% of mothers in the force have had to change role or team to meet their responsibilities as a parent, compared to 49% of fathers. In officers' own words, refused leave, unpredictable rosters and the cost of childcare mean that family life is often shaped around the job, rather than the job making room for family life.

These issues go further than just wellbeing. More than half of officers have felt unsafe on duty because of high demand or understaffing, and 44% have been physically attacked in the last year. Some risk is inherent in policing, but officers link much of their sense of being unsafe to staffing levels. At the same time, two thirds say fatigue has made it difficult to carry out their duties. Where stretched staffing and fatigue sit alongside this level of risk, the issue is one of health and safety as much as morale, and officers also report becoming more cautious when interacting with the public. Officers do not feel any of this is recognised. 93% say they are not fairly paid for the stresses of the job, and 85% for the hazards they face, figures that have barely moved since 2021. The pay package, designed to recognise these additional demands, also falls short. No allowance is rated satisfactory by more than a quarter of those who receive it, and targeted payments have been reduced or removed rather than increased. 93% of officers also disagree that the police are respected by the Government, 82% disagree that they are respected by the public, and 77% of officers would not recommend joining the police. Public sentiment is not as negative as officers assume: 38% say the police are

doing a good or excellent job against 23% who say poor or very poor. This leaves the Government as the clearest source of officers' sense of disrespect.

On the other hand, rest day cancellations have fallen since 2024, and access to reactive wellbeing services has improved. These changes have not been accompanied by a wider recovery in officer wellbeing, and wellbeing support appears to be stronger at responding to harm than at preventing it. Alongside this, many officers believe the force is significantly behind the curve in AI integration especially when more than half already use AI for work and most of these do so without any official training or guidance to support them. It is evident that the pressures described in this report are persistent rather than temporary. A service that depends on officers absorbing the gap between demand and capacity, at the expense of their rest, health and family lives, is not one that can be sustained.

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Chart 54: Wellbeing and health-related leave, ethnic minority vs White officers. Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,521–18,146)

Chart 55: Wellbeing, fatigue and health-related leave, disabled vs non-disabled officers. Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=15,252–17,932)

Chart 56: Stress and wellbeing, parents vs non-parents. Pay and Morale Survey, base: All respondents (n=16,506–17,634)

Chart 57: Proportion of male and female officers in each age band who are parents. Pay and Morale Survey, base: male and female officers answering the parent question (n=17,190)

Chart 58: How officers rate their force, and how they think the public would rate it. PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Chart 59: Officers' views on respect, value, fairness and attachment to the police. PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Chart 60: Respect for police from the public and the Government. PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

Chart 61: How good a job are local public services doing? (general public). PF Global poll of the general public, base: All respondents (n=4,030)

Chart 62: How officers think the public would rate their force on specific measures. PF Global poll of PFEW members, base: All respondents (n=4,158)

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