



Research Report: R081/2016

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# PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey 2016 Essex Police January 2017

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# 1. FOREWORD

## INTRODUCTION

In recent times policing in England and Wales has experienced unprecedented budgetary cuts amounting to an 18% real-term reduction since 2010.<sup>i</sup> The impact on police officer numbers has been considerable, with a 14% fall in officer numbers over a seven year period from a high of 143,734 in 2009<sup>ii</sup> to 124,066 in March 2016.<sup>iii</sup> Evidence from a focus group study conducted by the PFEW<sup>iv</sup> highlighted that these reduction's may be having a negative effect on officers individual wellbeing. It was within this context that the 2016 PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey took place.

This report provides a summary of responses to key questions from the 2016 PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey from respondents in **Essex Police**.

Where appropriate, details of average responses for the police service as a whole are also presented. However, differences between the national and local responses have not been tested statistically and therefore any differences reported are for guidance only and must be treated with caution.

Force rankings have not been included due to the vast range of response rates across forces (2.1% - 34.2%), making comparisons inappropriate without the application of inferential statistics to address the extreme variations in sample sizes (range: 34 -3909). In addition, forces with less than 100 respondents were not provided with a force level report as their sample size was too small to be representative of the force as a whole and may have enabled identification of individuals based on their demographics.

Please be aware that the total number of responses for each item may vary slightly as not all items were answered by all respondents, and all percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. In addition, the actual differences between any and all groups may be quite small and these details should be considered when interpreting the data.

## RESPONSE RATES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey responses were gathered over a four-week period in February 2016. All officers of the federated ranks in England and Wales were eligible to participate. Analyses were conducted on a sample of 16,841 responses drawn from all 43 forces across England and Wales.<sup>1</sup> The national response rate for the 2016 survey was 14%.

989 responses were received from Essex Police, representing a response rate of around 34%.<sup>2</sup> The margin of error for this report has been calculated using the size of the sample and the population. At a 95% confidence level, this force report has a 3% margin of error. If the margin of error is less than 5%, it can be considered to be within the normal bounds of academic rigor.<sup>3</sup> If this threshold has not been met, the results from this report must be interpreted with caution.

Overall 1% of respondents ( $N=237$ ) to the survey declined to state which force they belonged to. These responses have been included within the national data but are excluded from force-level analyses.

73% of responses from Essex Police were received from male officers and 27% of responses were from female officers. In regards to rank, 76% of respondents from Essex Police were Constables, 17% were Sergeants and 8% were Inspectors or Chief Inspectors. 2% of responses from Essex Police were received from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) officers.

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<sup>1</sup> Data were removed where the respondent indicated they were not currently a police officer or they gave implausible answers – for full exclusion criteria, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Based on March 2016 Home Office figures of officer headcount.

<sup>3</sup> The generally accepted academic standards is a 95% confidence level with a 5% (or less) margin of error.

## 2. DEMAND

### 2.1. WORKLOAD

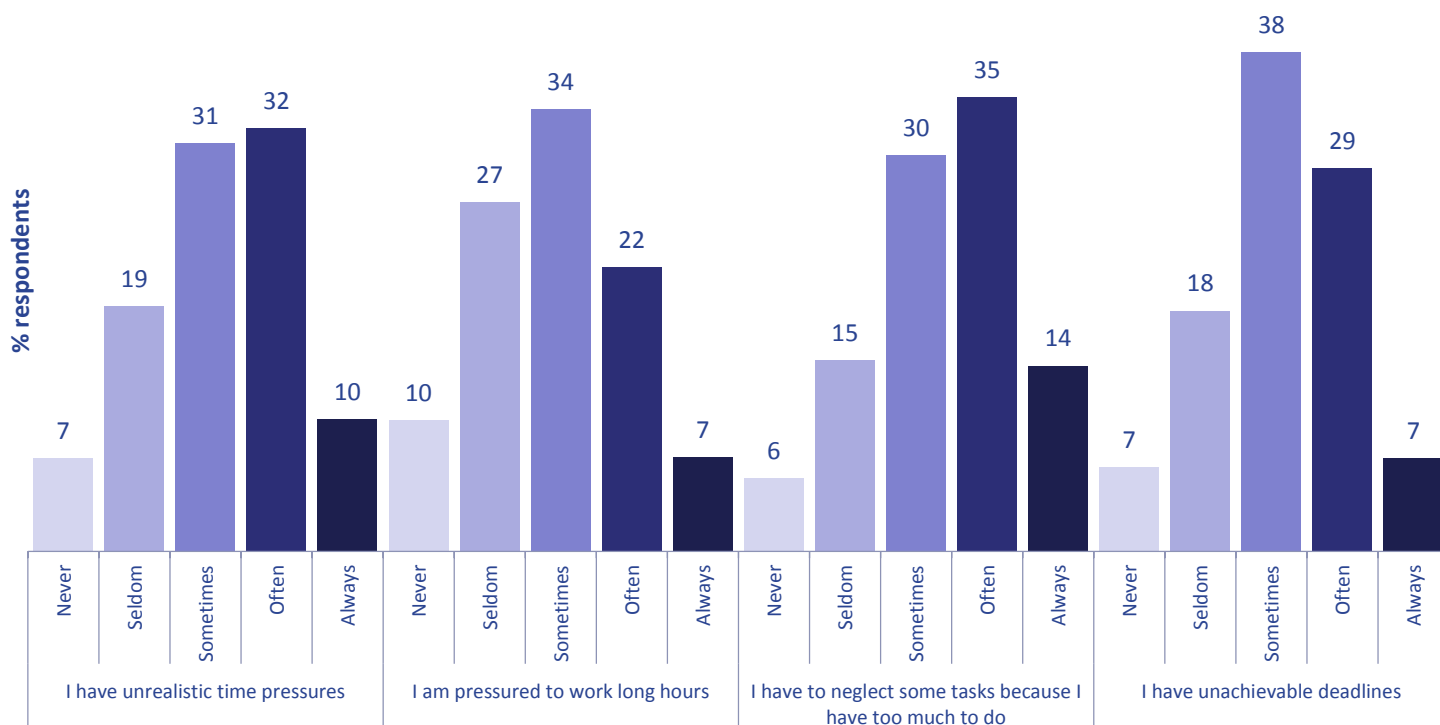
69% of respondents from Essex Police told us that their workload is currently too high. This was higher than the proportion of national respondents who reported their workload was too high (66%).

### 2.2. HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

The UK Health and Safety Executive published the Management Standards Indicator Tool (MSIT) to assist organisations in the assessment of workers exposure to dimensions of the psychosocial work environment that, if not properly managed, can lead to harm to health.<sup>v</sup> The 25-item version of the MSIT<sup>vi</sup> contains four items that measure job demands.

37% of respondents from Essex Police told us that they often or always have unachievable deadlines, and 49% that they have to neglect some tasks because they have too much to do. Findings for the MSIT job demand items for Essex Police are presented in Figure 1 below.

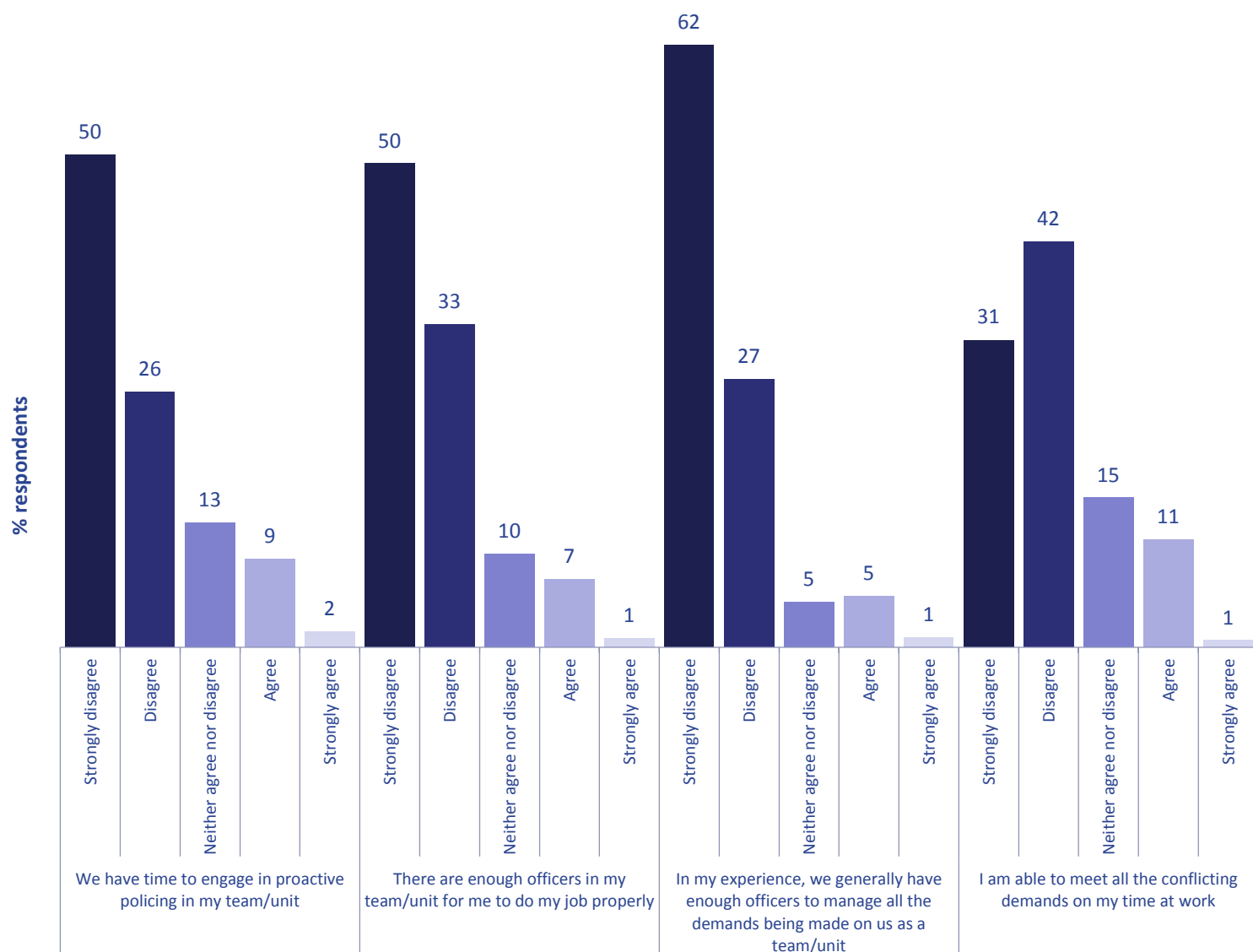
Figure 1. Essex Police: HSE MSIT Job Demands



## 2.3. AMOUNT AND PACE OF WORK

A set of statements were developed for the current study to assess aspects of job demands in regards to the amount and pace of work. Findings for Essex Police are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Essex Police: Amount and pace of work



73% of respondents from Essex Police *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that they were able to meet all of the conflicting demands on their time and 89% of respondents from Essex Police *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that there are enough officers to manage all the demands made on their team/unit.

### 3. CAPACITY

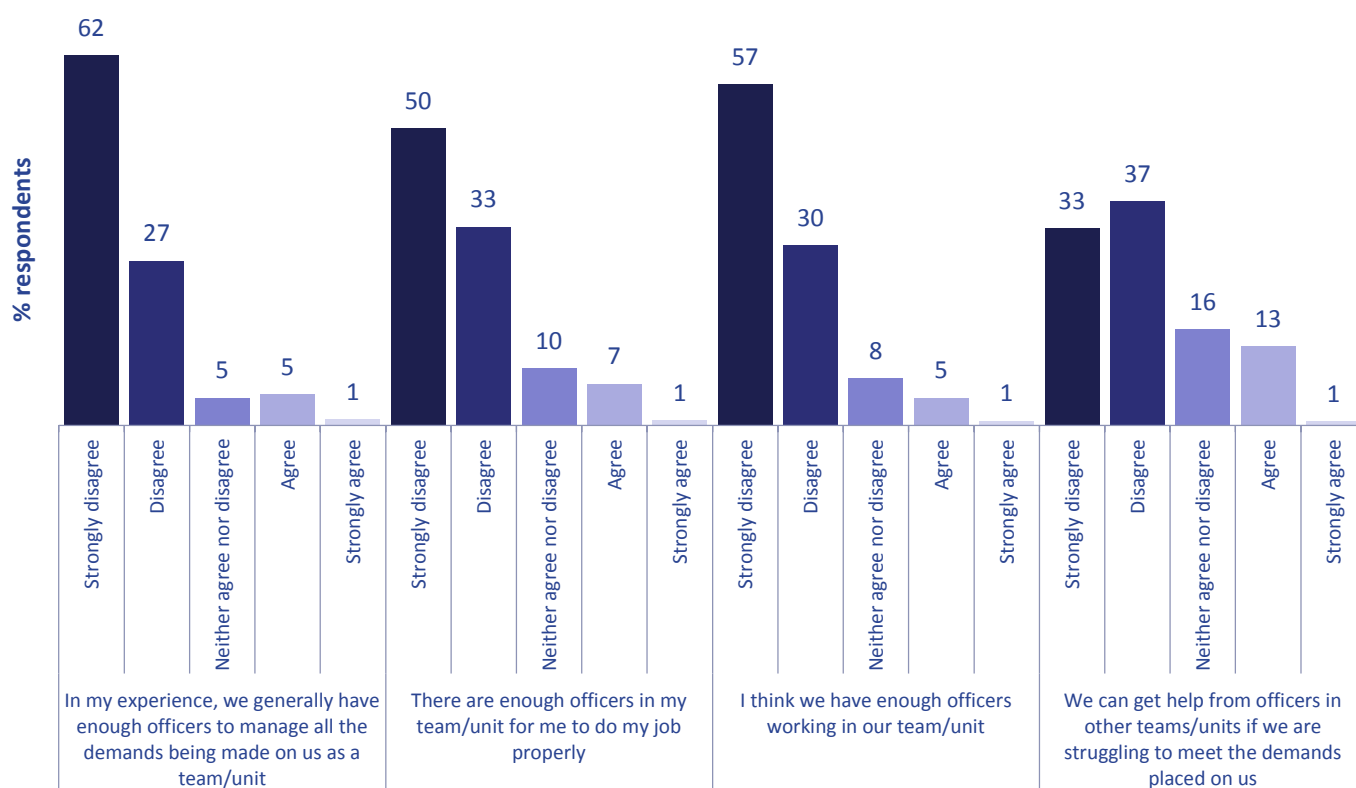
#### 3.1. MINIMUM OFFICER STAFFING

We asked respondents whether or not their team or unit has a minimum officer staffing level and 83% of respondents from Essex Police indicated that their team or unit had a minimum officer staffing level. Among respondents whose team or unit had a minimum officer staffing level, 35% indicated that this level was achieved *never or rarely*.

#### 3.2. OFFICER STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Respondents were asked whether they had been told how officer staffing levels in their team/unit were determined and whether they felt it was effective. 66% of respondents from Essex Police indicated that they had not been told how officer staffing levels are determined, whilst 77% *disagreed or strongly disagreed* that the way officer staffing levels are determined seems to be effective. An additional set of statements were developed for this survey to assess aspects of capacity to meet job demands. Results for Essex Police are below.

Figure 3. Essex Police: Capacity to deal with workload



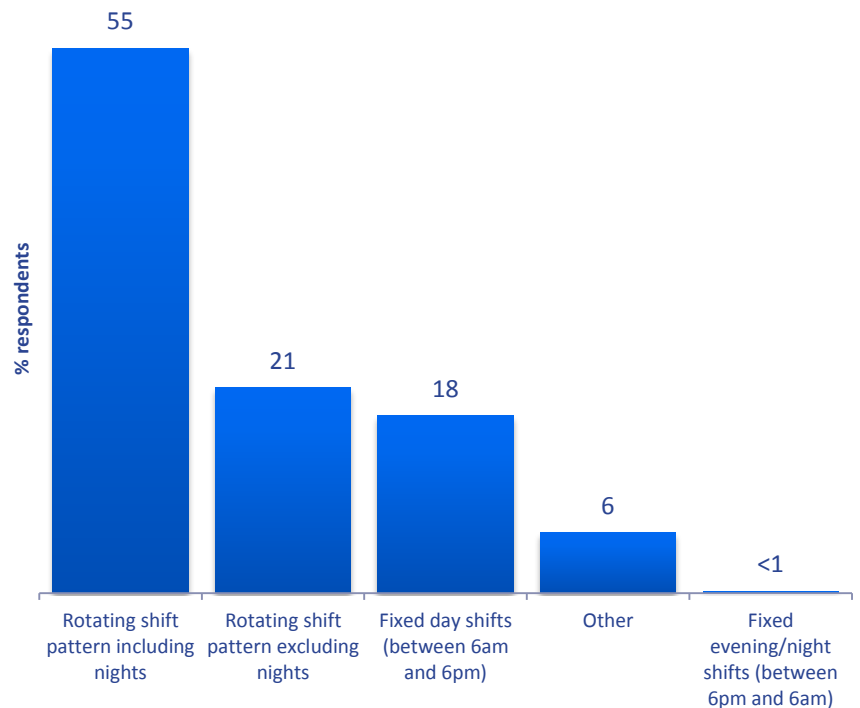
## 4. WORK PATTERNS

### 4.1. SHIFTS

Respondents were invited to indicate which of broad shift patterns they typically worked (indicated in Figure 4) and, to the nearest hour, how long their shifts are supposed to last.

0% of respondents from Essex Police reported their formal shift duration was more than the 8-10 hours advised by the Health and Safety Executive<sup>vii</sup> and the Police Negotiating Board.<sup>viii</sup>

Figure 4. Essex Police: Shift rotation



### 4.2. SINGLE CREWING

Among respondents from Essex Police, for whom this item was applicable ( $N=848$ ), 58% reported being single crewed either *often* or *always* over the previous 12 month period, this can be compared with 73% of respondents from the national sample.

### 4.3. BREAKS, REST DAYS AND ANNUAL LEAVE

64% of respondents from Essex Police were *never* or *rarely* able to take their full rest break entitlement, and 71% reported having had two or more rest days cancelled in the previous 12 month period.

44% of respondents from Essex Police told us that they have not been able to take their full annual leave entitlement in the previous 12 month period.

## 5. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### 5.1. SINGLE ITEM INDICATOR

A top-level broad overview of mental wellbeing was established using an item that asked respondents to indicate whether they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the last 12 months.

84% of respondents from Essex Police indicated that they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the last 12 months. 95% also indicated that these feelings were caused, or made worse by work.

### 5.2. MENTAL WELLBEING

Mental wellbeing can be broadly conceptualized as having two dimensions. The first concerns positive affect (i.e. pleasurable aspects of wellbeing such as feelings of optimism, cheerfulness, and relaxation). The second concerns psychological functioning (i.e. such as clear thinking, self-acceptance, personal development, competence, and autonomy).

To investigate mental wellbeing in more detail the two-dimensional structure of mental wellbeing described above was assessed using the short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.<sup>ix</sup> The use of this scale, which has been widely used in a number of settings, helps us to measure the incidence of wellbeing in the police in a reliable way, allowing credible comparisons. The scale asks individuals to rate their experience during the last two weeks for seven positively framed statements.

Findings for the items for the short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale for Essex Police are presented in Figure 5 alongside those for the general public.

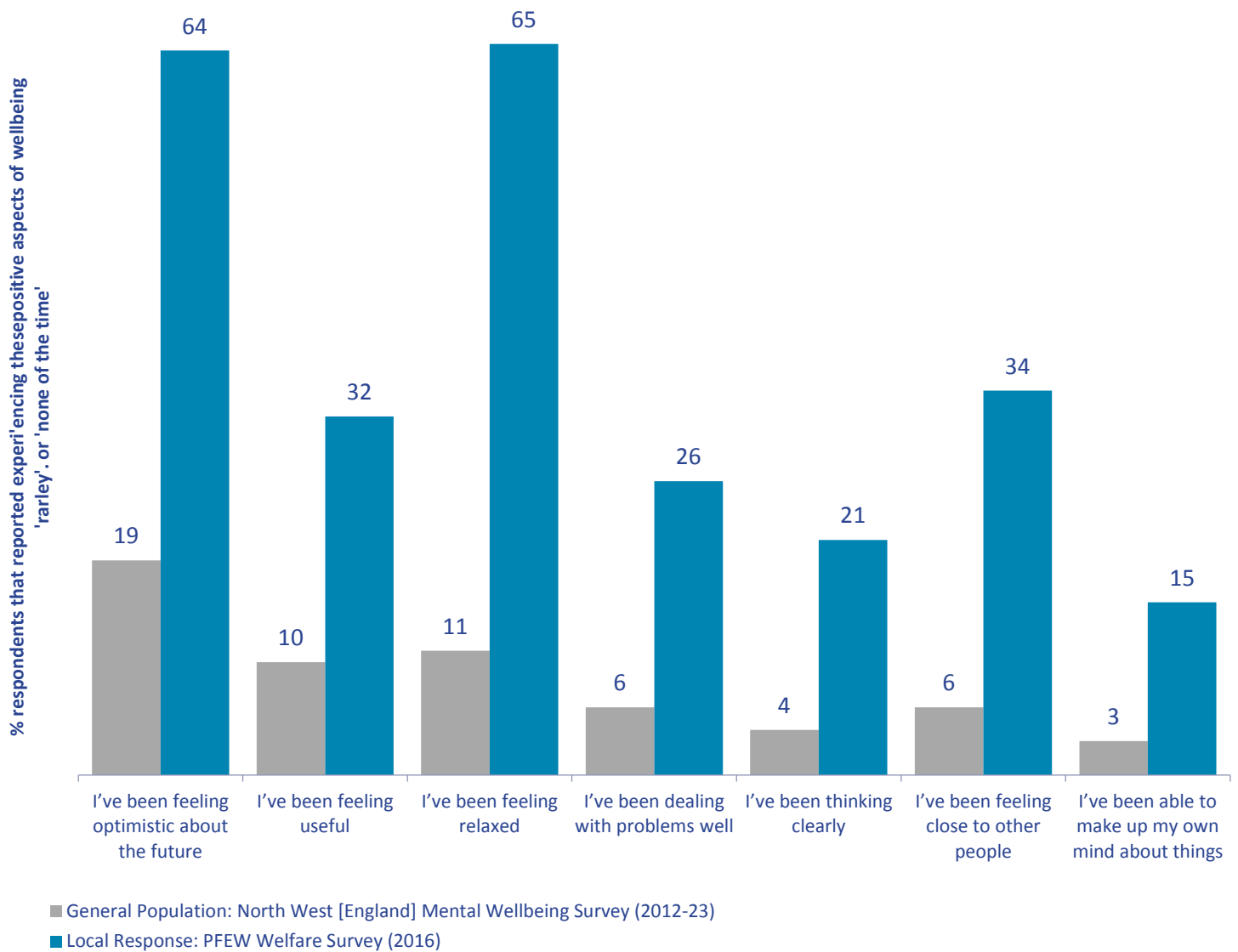
### 5.3. HELP SEEKING

A question was applied to identify those who had ever **sought help** for feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or any other difficulties with mental health and wellbeing. Examples of sources of help were provided including GP, occupational health department, psychologist, therapist, and counsellor.

43% of Essex Police respondents had previously sought help for feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or other difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing, of which 49% had done so within the last 12 months.



Figure 5. Essex Police: The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.



## 5.4. STRESS

Work related stress was measured using a single-item measure. 46% of respondents from Essex Police presented with a non-diagnostic case of work-related stress.<sup>x</sup> Stress outside of work was assessed using an adaptation of the work-related stress measure. 8% of respondents from Essex Police presented with a non-diagnostic case of stress outside of work.

## 6. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT: MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Participants who indicated that they had sought help for difficulties with mental health and wellbeing were presented with additional questions concerning disclosure to a line manager.

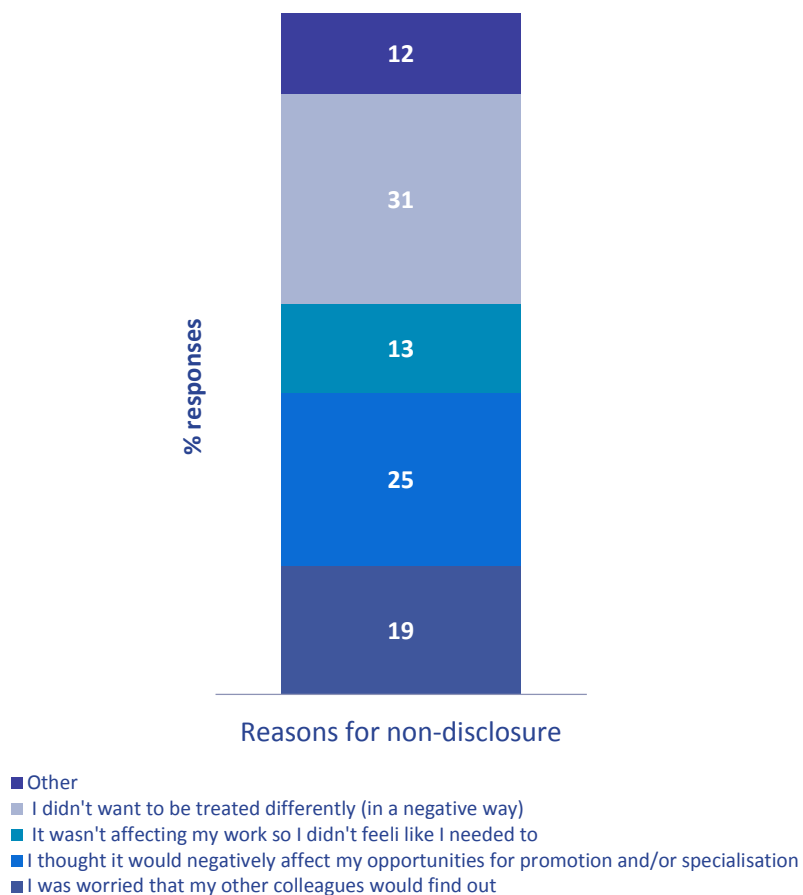
### 6.1. DISCLOSURE

69% of respondents reported that they had disclosed seeking mental health and wellbeing support to their line managers.

### 6.2. REASONS FOR NON-DISCLOSURE

Respondents who did not disclose that they were seeking mental health and wellbeing support were asked to indicate why. Findings are presented in Figure 6 below. Respondents were able to cite as many reasons as applicable.

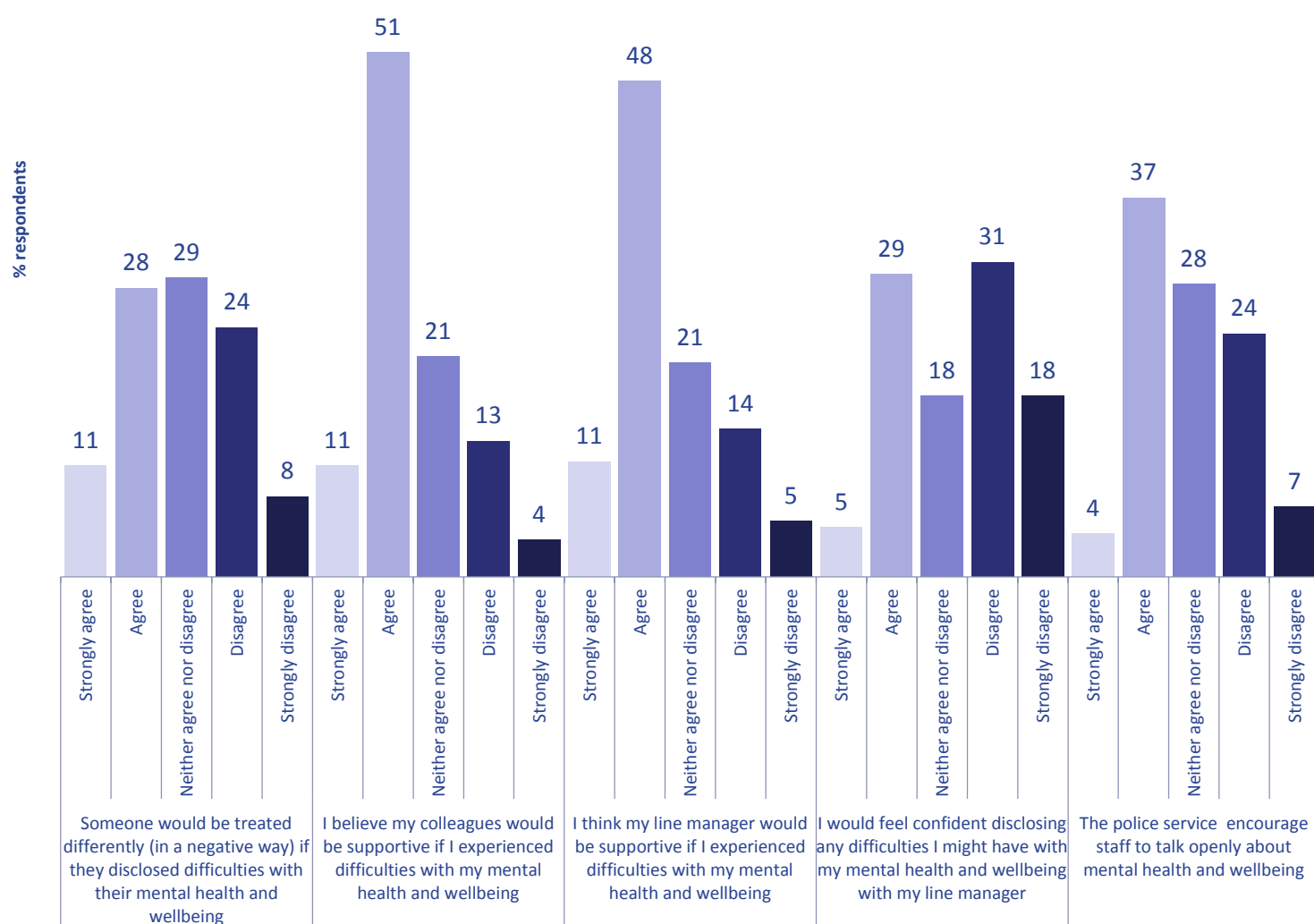
Figure 6. Essex Police: Reasons for non-disclosure



### 6.3. LOCAL ATTITUDES TO MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

All respondents were asked about the attitude of the police service towards mental health and wellbeing. Nationally, these were found to be fairly negative. Figure 7 below shows the perception reported by respondents from Essex Police.

Figure 7. Essex Police: Attitudes to mental health and wellbeing



# 7. ABSENCE BEHAVIOUR

## 7.1. ABSENCE

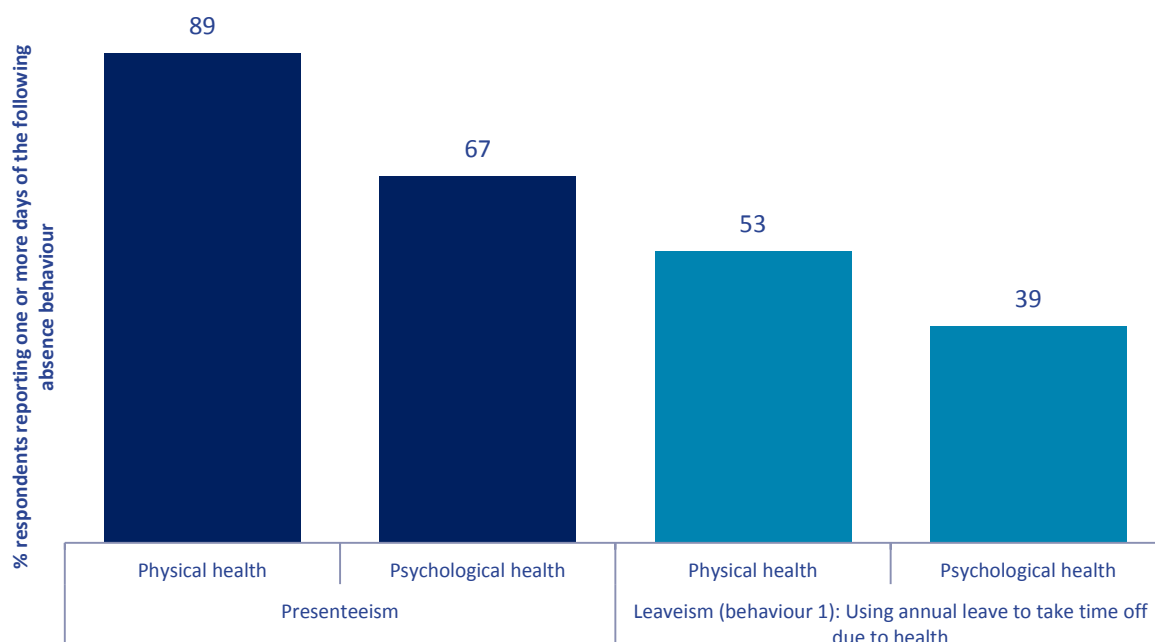
64% of respondents from Essex Police reported one or more days of sickness absence and 30% of respondents indicated that at least one day of their sickness absence was attributable to stress, depression, or anxiety.

## 7.2. PRESENTEEISM AND LEAVEISM

Presenteeism is the act of attending work while ill. This has been shown to be associated with subsequent health decline, particularly in relation to burnout,<sup>xi</sup> and can lead to elevated absenteeism.<sup>xii</sup> Moreover, evidence suggests that presenteeism can compound the effects of the initial illness and negatively influence job satisfaction, resulting in negative job attitudes and withdrawal from work.<sup>xiii</sup>

Leaveism is a recently coined term to describe hidden sickness absence and work undertaken during rest periods including using allocated time off such as annual leave entitlements to take time off when they are in fact unwell. Findings for Essex Police are presented in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Essex Police: Absence behaviours

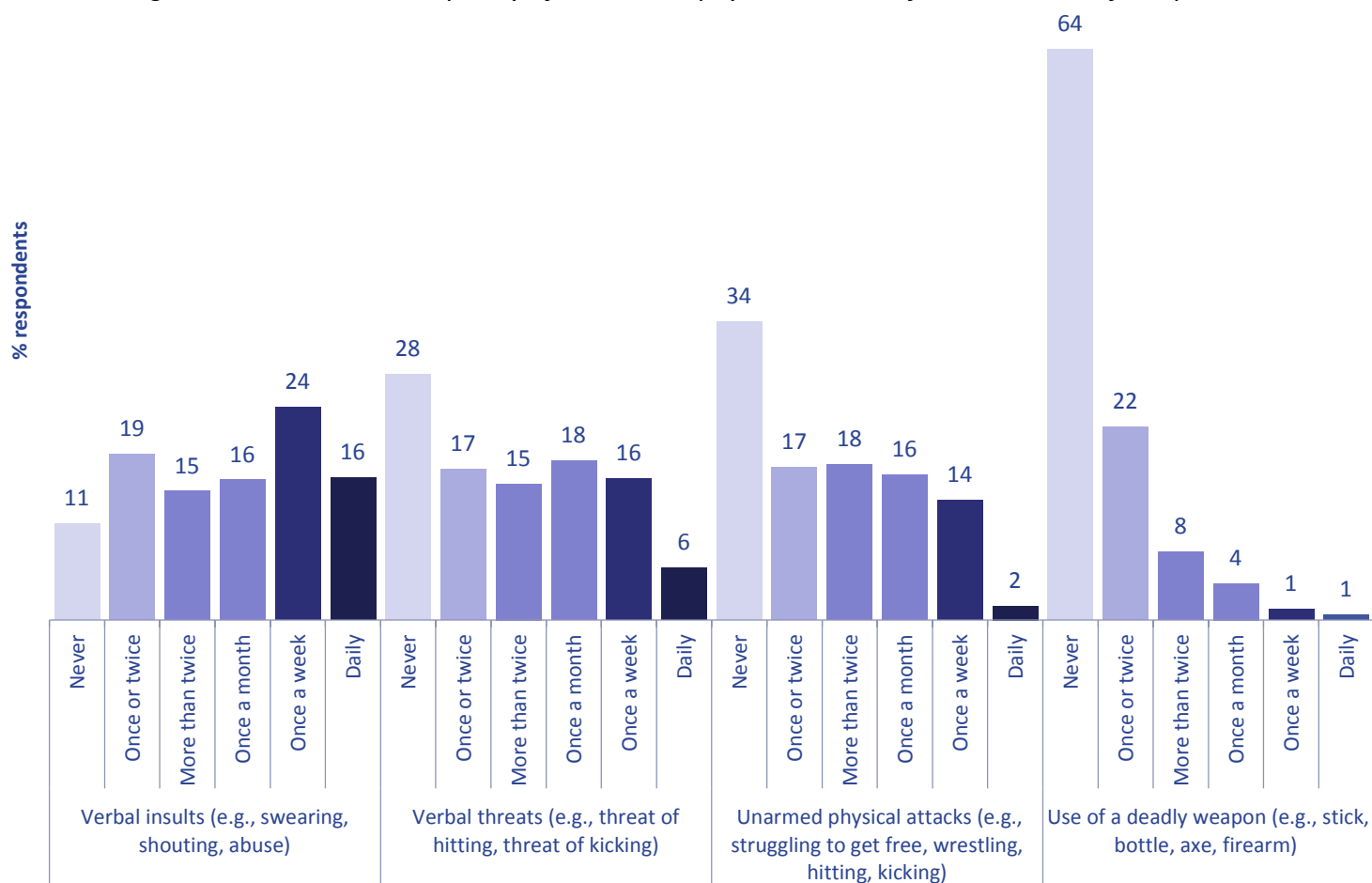


# 8. ACCIDENTS, VIOLENCE AND INJURIES

## 8.1. VIOLENCE

Verbal and physical violence was assessed using four questions regarding how often officers received verbal insults, verbal threats, unarmed physical attacks, and attacks with a weapon from members of the public over the previous 12 months. Findings are presented in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. Essex Police: Frequency of verbal and physical violence from members of the public



## 8.2. INJURIES DUE TO ACCIDENTS AND VIOLENCE

19% of Essex Police respondents reported that they had suffered one or more injuries that required medical attention as a result of **work-related violence** in the last year – losing more than 375 days in sickness absence. Whilst 27% of Essex Police respondents also reported that they had suffered one or more injuries that required medical attention as a result of **work-related accidents** in the last year – losing more than 1031 days in sickness absence.

## 9. Notes for JBBs

Additional findings from the 2016 welfare survey are available on request from the Research and Policy department.

The findings of the survey can also be broken down in more detail in terms of different demographic groups, such as rank, role or length of service. However please be aware that we can only go into a certain level of detail with this demographic data in order to preserve respondents' confidentiality.

JBBs wishing to obtain further information can contact Mary Elliott-Davies ([mary.elliott-davies@polfed.org](mailto:mary.elliott-davies@polfed.org)) to discuss their requirements. The Research and Policy Department only has one member of staff responsible for these data requests therefore please bear this in mind when contacting the team.

All other interested parties should speak to their local JBB in the first instance.

## 10. REFERENCES

- <sup>i</sup> National Audit Office (2015). Financial Sustainability of Police Forces in England and Wales. Retrieved September 12, 2016, from <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Financial-sustainability-of-police-forces.pdf>
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<sup>xiii</sup> Lu, L., Lin, H. Y., & Cooper, C. L. (2013). Unhealthy and present: Motives and consequences of the act of presenteeism among Taiwanese employees. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 18, 406–416.