



Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey Descriptive Statistics Summary Report MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING 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.ⁱ 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,ⁱⁱ to 124,066 in 2016.ⁱⁱⁱ Evidence from a focus group study conducted by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW)^{iv} highlighted that these reductions 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 document is derived from the initial descriptive report^v and provides a national summary of responses to key questions regarding **mental health and wellbeing** from the 2016 PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey. Where additional data are available and appropriate, the national results are benchmarked against other comparator populations such as the Armed Forces.*

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

RESPONSE RATES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey responses were gathered on-line, over a four-week period in February 2016. All officers of 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.**

14% of eligible officers completed the survey. The respondent sample was broadly representative of the overall federated officer population.*** Although this is lower than the response rate attained by the annual PFEW workforce survey in 2016, this may be due to the sensitive and specific nature of the survey topic.

*Please note that question wording and sample sizes between populations may differ – for full details, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

**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).

*** Although some significant differences were observed between the survey sample and the federated ranks population, in percentage terms these differences were small, allowing for the conclusion that the respondent sample was broadly representative of the national federated officer population in terms of its socio-demographic composition – for full details, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

2. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

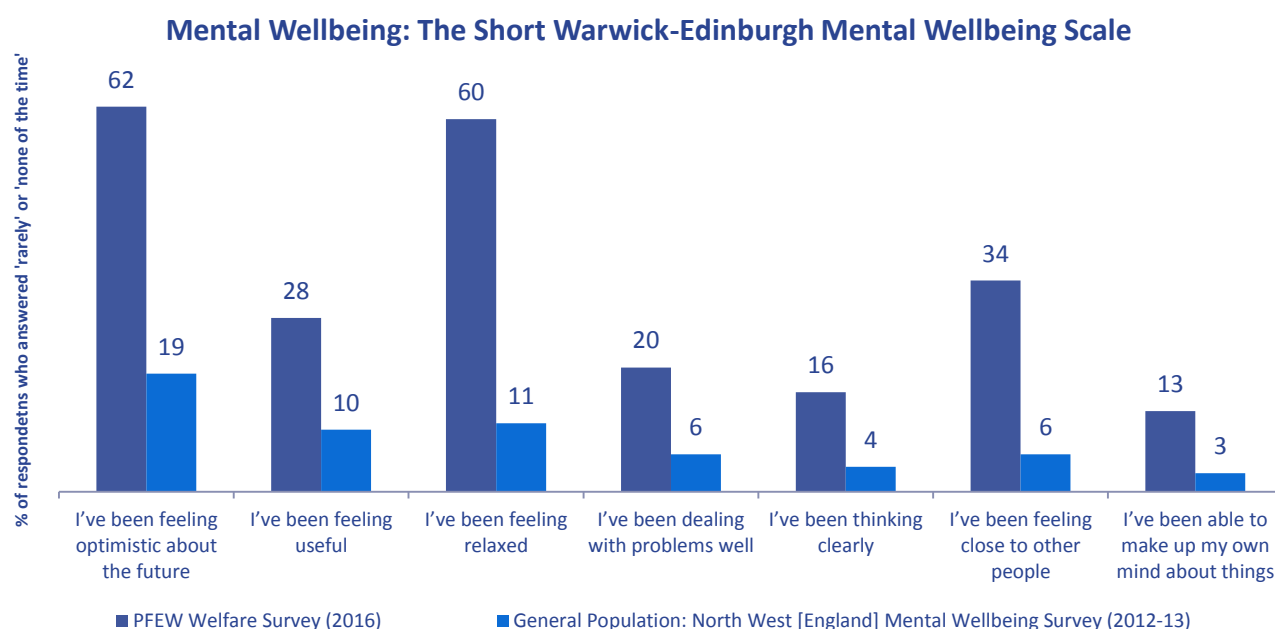
2.1. SINGLE ITEM INDICATOR

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. **80%** of respondents acknowledged having experienced these feelings and **nine out of ten (92%)** of these respondents indicated that their psychological difficulties had been **caused or made worse by work**.

Over three thousand respondents ($N=3,774$) also gave textual feedback regarding *how* work had impacted upon their mental health and wellbeing, highlighting a range of challenges that were organisational, occupational, and psychosocial in nature.*

2.2. MENTAL WELLBEING

The mental wellbeing of police officers was measured using the short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale^{vi} and was found to be considerably poorer than amongst the general adult population. The graph below shows the proportion of respondents indicating they experienced each aspect of wellbeing *rarely or none of the time* within the previous two weeks, compared with the results from a large-scale survey of the general adult population.



* Please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016) for more details of qualitative (textual) data.

62% of respondents reported feeling optimistic *rarely* or *none of the time* in the previous two weeks, which is more than **3 times higher** than the figure reported by the general public (19%). Moreover, **60%** reported feeling relaxed *rarely* or *none of the time*, more than **5 times higher** than the figure reported by the general public (11%).

2.3. STRESS

Work-related stress was assessed with the question: In general, how do you find your job?

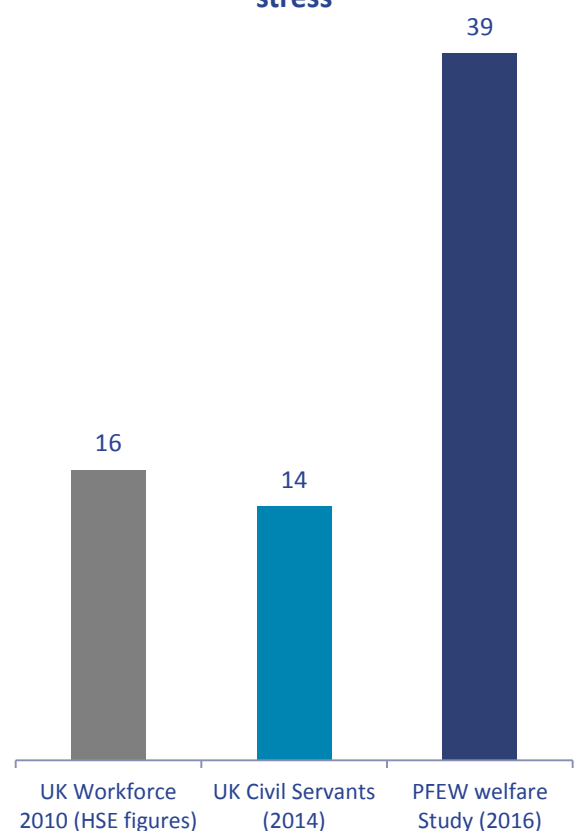
39% of respondents reported a non-diagnostic* case of work-related stress (on the basis that they viewed their job as *very* or *extremely* stressful). This is similar to previous English and Welsh policing studies, and **more than double** that found in large-scale surveys of UK civil servants and the general UK workforce.^{vii}

Criticism is sometimes directed at this single-item measure, as it cannot identify individuals whose work-related stress may merely be a consequence of acute stress in their personal lives.

However, the PFEW survey also asked respondents about stress outside of work; with **10%** of respondents reporting a case of **non-work stress**.

After removing these individuals from the analysis, the prevalence of respondents reporting a case of **work-related stress only fell 3 percentage points to 36%**.

% of respondents reporting a non-diagnostic case of work-related stress



* Please note; these questions are not clinical tools and thus cannot be used to *diagnose* psychological conditions.

2.4. HELP SEEKING

Respondents were asked if they had ever sought help for feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or any other difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing.

39% of respondents indicated that they had sought help for mental health and wellbeing difficulties at some point in their life, with **half** having sought help **within the last year**.

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 and the organisational response to disclosure. For more details, please see *Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey Descriptive Statistics Summary Report: Organisational Support: Mental health & Wellbeing (R064/2016)* or Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

3. References

- ⁱ 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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- ^{iv} Elliott-Davies, M., Donnelly, J., Boag-Munroe, F., & Van Mechelen, D. (2016). 'Getting a battering' The perceived impact of demand and capacity imbalance within the Police Service of England and Wales: A qualitative review. *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*, 89, 2, 93-116.
- ^v Houdmont, J. & Elliott-Davies, M. (2016). *Police Federation of England and Wales 2016 Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey: Initial Report - Descriptive Results*.
- ^{vi} Stewart-Brown, S., Tennant, A., Tennant, R., Platt, S., Parkinson, J., & Weich, S. (2009). Internal construct validity of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): A Rasch analysis using data from the Scottish Health Education Population Survey. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 7: 15.
- ^{vii} As cited in Houdmont, J. & Elliott-Davies, M. (2016). *Police Federation of England and Wales 2016 Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey: Initial Report - Descriptive Results*.