# Criminal Justice Committee

# 16th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday, 18 May 2022

# Supplementary Written Evidence received on (i) Policing and mental health, and (ii) Online child abuse, grooming and exploitation

# Note by the clerk

## Introduction

1. Following the roundtable evidence sessions the Committee undertook on 18 May 2022 on both the issues of policing and mental health, and online child abuse, grooming and exploitation, a number of pieces of supplementary written evidence were received following the Committee meeting.

2. This paper was published on 10 June 2022 to place that supplementary written evidence into the public domain.

## Roundtable on policing and mental health

3. The following supplementary written evidence was received from the following witnesses on policing and mental health. The evidence is included in Annex A of this paper.

- **Apex Scotland** on actions to be taken by the Scottish Government to address the issue of policing and mental health;

- **Police Scotland** on numbers of police officers who have died of suicide, work place elements and fatal accident inquiries;

- **Police Scotland** on police welfare and wellbeing during Covid-19 survey report; and

- **Scottish Police Authority** on investigation into suicide amongst police officers.

# Roundtable on online child abuse, grooming and exploitation

3. The following supplementary written evidence was received from the following witnesses on online child abuse, grooming and exploitation. It is included in Annex B of this paper.

- **NSPCC** on various issues raised on tackling online child abuse, grooming and exploitation during the round table session;

- **Police Scotland** on the scale and activities of vigilante groups whose activities relate to child sexual abuse, grooming and exploitation; and

- **Stop It Now! Scotland/Lucy Faithfull Foundation** on their 2021 annual review of work they undertake around the prevention of sexual harm in Scotland.

**Criminal Justice Committee clerks**
**Friday 10 June 2022**

## Annexe A

**Additional response to questions raised at Justice Committee round table 18/05/2022**

Thank you for a stimulating round table on mental health issues and policing.

Towards the end of the session a question was asked by a Committee member regarding what could the Government do to move the agenda along given that, as many of those giving evidence had remarked, this is a long-standing problem which has never been successfully addressed.

I would have liked to offer a potential solution, but time did not allow so I am putting my response in writing for your consideration.

The attempted solutions to the problems faced by all agencies regarding the presentation, assessment and management of mental health problems in crisis situations such as those which the police are regularly and increasingly called upon to deal with have almost always centred around operational changes or organisational tweaks. There have certainly been some areas of good practice especially the Mental health Pathways and the Medication Assisted Treatment work, but as reported these are often localised and largely based on unusually good inter-agency relationships or geographical advantages. However, as a number of people reflected these are rarely if ever mainstreamed leading to huge disparity in access from area to area, and we are left with considerable amounts of data and evidence on what works but lack the machinery to act upon it.

This is a problem we in the Third Sector see continually regarding the relationship between public sector commissioners and third sector providers, and the transient nature of funding for services as local authorities inevitably prioritise their own services and core activities over those things they do not actually have to commission. Our daily experience of this unsustainable and wasteful approach to the available resources inevitably leads us to look at the relationship between funding models and any aspiration for inter-agency collaboration. We generally see that funding models which rely on localised decision making tend to ignore Government Strategy in favour of local priorities and need. These models also operate within a very traditional funding structure which distributes resources directly to public sector departments reinforcing a silo environment and reducing any likelihood of sustained provision of any inter-agency activity.

There was a very strong message from all parties in the round table that the best improvements for both those receiving and those providing crisis response can be found in a true multi-agency operation where decisions are jointly agreed, and resources properly allocated. This is borne out by the evidence from pilot schemes and by research available from academic and clinical studies. Given the systemic problem created by traditional funding approaches as discussed above, a possible solution presents itself through the intentional and independent funding of multi-agency mental health crisis teams allowing secondment of staff from a variety of public and third sector agencies into a team which ensures that the full spectrum of effective responses is available, and protocols are in place to improve management and resource effectiveness. Inevitably there will be push back from any notion of top-slicing budgets, but decisions need to be taken regarding whether the issue is important enough to change the current funding arrangements in order to break through the problems of silo based resistance to collaborative working. I am currently a member of a number of SG funding groups, both relating to third sector and public sector, and this is increasingly becoming the elephant in the room of every working group. My personal opinion is that it remains the lack of willingness to change long entrenched public funding approaches which is the greatest barrier to innovation and improvement.

Alan Staff

CEO Apex Scotland

19/05/2022

01 June 2022

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

C/O Criminal Justice Committee Clerks
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Dear Convener,

Further to the Evidence Session on Policing and Mental Health on 18 May 2022 I write to provide some additional information as requested in relation to the numbers of *"police officers who have died of suicide and, if there is a work place element and whether there have been any fatal accident inquiries."*

As we discussed, every death in service is a tragedy for those involved, their families and colleagues and for the Police Service of Scotland. Each set of circumstances is unique and working with our union and staff association colleagues we seek to provide support to all of those who may have been affected and to promote a culture of wellbeing and mutual support.

In respect of specific numbers I can advise you that Police Scotland does not record the circumstances surrounding the death of police officers or staff members. By way of explanation, when a police officer or staff member dies it is classed as a 'death in service' but the reason is not recorded on Police Scotland's System to Co-Ordinate Personnel and Establishment (SCOPE). In addition, the 'cause of death' is not recorded as it would contravene the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 2018, where data recorded must be lawful, fair and transparent. This means that there must be legitimate grounds for recording the data, it must be limited for its purpose, as well as being adequate and necessary.

Similarly, Police Scotland does not record whether or not a work-based element was apparent. Such incidents are so few that there is a danger that disclosing such 'personal data', may lead to the identification of the officer or staff member involved thereby causing further distress or harm. Personal data is defined in Article 4 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as:

*'Information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person'*

I am afraid that I am therefore unable to provide the information you request. That said I can assure you that Police Scotland takes health, safety and wellbeing incredibly seriously and will continue to evolve its policies and practices to support all officers and members of staff.

Examples of current support arrangements include:

**24/7 HELP Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

- Officers and Staff have access to our 24/7 HELP Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- The programme offers professional support and guidance via a team of trained wellbeing and counselling practitioners who offer confidential, independent and unbiased information and guidance.
- Officers and staff can call HELP EAP and discuss in confidence any concerns they may have.
- EAP can offer support and information on a wide variety of areas including health and wellbeing matters, money worries, caring responsibilities, consumer and legal issues, family and home concerns and work/life concerns such as job stress or bullying/harassment.

**Trauma Risk Management (TRiM)**

- The Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) process is a mechanism to support officers and staff affected by potentially traumatic incidents at work.
- Understanding and processing reactions and emotions immediately following exposure to traumatic incidents can help to prevent mental health difficulties further down the line.
- TRiM can be requested through a line manager referral or officers and staff can self-refer.
- Following TRiM support sessions if it is identified that additional mental health support is required an immediate referral to the HELP Employee Assistance Programme is made.

**Your Wellbeing Assessment**

- Officers and staff have access to a 'Your Wellbeing Assessment', delivered through our occupational health and HELP EAP providers Optima Health.
- This process has been designed to spot the early signs of potential difficulties before they become problems. Each assessment is reviewed by a member of the Optima Health clinical team and can provide early identification of issues and the provision of tailored support

In addition the Police Scotland Health and Wellbeing team are currently conducting an organisational review which aims to:

- Better understand the health and wellbeing needs of officers and staff, and identify any emerging needs.

- Engage with stakeholders, both internally and externally, to gain a depth of qualitative and quantitative insight.
- Measure the impact of the overall Health and Wellbeing Programme against its objectives.

While not presented as an exhaustive list, I hope that this information will go some way to illustrating the level of organisational commitment and priority given to the health and wellbeing of our officers and staff.

Finally, in relation to your third query, there have been no Fatal Accident Inquiries in relation to the deaths by suicide of any Police Officers or Police Staff members.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

John Hawkins
Assistant Chief Constable / Iar-àrd-chonstabal
Local Policing North / Poileasachd Ionadail Tuath

# POLICE SCOTLAND WELFARE AND WELLBEING DURING COVID-19 SURVEY REPORT

**Submitted to Scottish Police Federation and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents**

**8 April 2021**

Submitted by: Sean Campeau, PhD Candidate
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## Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared on 11 March 2020, took many by surprise. People were ordered by health experts to stay at home and wear a mask when out in public to minimize the risk of catching the virus. Some did while others, ignoring health advice, went on as usual and/or demonstrated against COVID-19 lockdown measures. While many worked from home in the months that followed the start of the pandemic, police officers were expected to show up for work, support the community, and enforce the law. At home, police officers dealt with all the same challenges and frustrations as everyone else: partners losing work, working from home or working as an essential worker (exposed to COVID); concern and worry for elderly family members; and the need to provide care and perhaps schooling to their children. Family plans were put on hold. In addition to these challenges on the home front, police officers also had to contend with challenges and concerns relating to the job they performed. The government of Scotland has identified police officers to be essential workers and performance of their work typically requires contact with members of the public. Officers working in frontline positions are at risk of exposure to the virus every day they show up for work. Many also have the additional worry that they will bring the virus into their homes.

Police Scotland adapted to the crisis by following protocols included in their pandemic response plan[1]. More specifically they re-assigned officers to different work roles and locations (e.g., work from home).

To best support their members, The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS) elected to survey their members in order to gain a better understanding of how changes in work and family demands and domains brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted officer wellbeing. This report (Report One) is the first in a series of four reports that are written using data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID Survey (2020 WWCS) conducted online October to December 2020. The report provides data that speaks to the following critical question: "how are police officers faring in times of COVID-19"? We also examine how gender and parental status impact key findings regarding employee wellbeing examined in our analysis. The next report in the series (Report Two) looks more specifically at how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted officer wellbeing. This will be done by comparing the findings obtained using the 2020 WWCS (conducted when Scotland was in the midst of the pandemic) to the results from the 2019 Welfare and Wellbeing Survey (2019 WWS). The third report in the series (Report Three) will focus on how officers holding the

[1] https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/covid-19-police-scotland-response/new-police-powers/

rank of Superintendent responded to the 2020 WWCS. The fourth and final report in this series will feature the results of our qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey including responses to questions relating to CAM and Mobile working.

## Objectives of this report

The report uses data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID survey to:

- Identify the key sources of work and non-work stress facing Police Scotland officers in November 2020.
- Examine the ability of Police Scotland officers to balance competing work and family demands in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Assess the welfare and wellbeing of Police Scotland officers who were providing an essential service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Determine how police officers are "coping" with changing work and family demands in times of COVID-19.
- Articulate the costs to the employer (i.e., Police Scotland) of not providing needed support to officers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Identify factors that contribute to an increased ability to manage the challenges posed by the pandemic as well as factors that test the officers' welfare and wellbeing.
- Examine how gender and parental status impact each of the above issues.

## Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

In this report, we used data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID survey to identify the key sources of work and non-work stress facing Police Scotland officers (Chapter 4), to examine the ability of Police Scotland officers to balance competing work and family demands in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapter 5), to assess the wellbeing of Police Scotland officers who were providing an essential service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapter 6), and to determine how police officers are "coping" with changing work and family demands in times of COVID-19 (Chapter 7). Throughout the report, we have identified costs to Police Scotland of not providing needed support to officers during the COVID-19 pandemic, factors that contribute to an increased ability to manage the challenges posed by the pandemic, and factors that test the officers' welfare and wellbeing. In each chapter, we also reported findings by sub-groups to examine how gender and parental status impact each of the above issues. In the following, we summarize the key findings from this study and point out the implications of not taking action to address concerns regarding employee welfare and wellbeing moving forward. Recommendations are also provided where appropriate.

### Report Speaks to the Experience of Police Scotland's Front Line

This report is based on a generalizable sample of officers working primarily at the rank of constable and sergeant within Police Scotland and as such helps us appreciate: (1) the challenges faced by this group of officers as they performed their expected duties during a pandemic, (2) how they coped with these challenges, and (3) the impact these challenges had on their welfare and wellbeing. The size of the sample allowed us to explore the impact of gender and parental status on the above issues.

### Stressors faced by officers at work have more to do with where they work than the type of job they are doing

What makes the job of constable/sergeant stressful? There is a high degree of consensus within our sample of police officers working in frontline positions for Police Scotland that the following aspects of their work contribute to higher levels of workplace stress: (1) workplace barriers that made it hard for them to get work done, (2)

insufficient resources to do the work required, (3) a fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19, (4) being bogged down by administrative processes, and (5) the need to juggle multiple competing ever changing work priorities. The data also imply that the amount of stress these officers face because of the unpredictability and uncertainty of their work demands is exacerbated by their perception that the culture of Police Scotland is one that focuses on blame-laying (i.e., 'the hindsight brigade') and does not accept no for an answer.

Taken as a whole, our analysis indicates that the key workplace stressors experienced by front-facing officers within Police Scotland have less to do with the job itself and more to do with the organisational culture within Police Scotland and with resourcing decisions. This means that any effort to improve employee welfare and wellbeing needs to focus on changing those areas of the organisational culture that are negatively impacting officers' ability to do their job. Assuming that it is difficult for Police Scotland to make the case that they need more resources (particularly more human capital) we suggest that a fruitful place to start is to have the service work with communities, the Scottish Police Federation and the government to establish a set of agreed upon priorities with respect to where the service should be spending time and resources.

It has oft been said "When everything is a priority, nothing is." Our data suggest that pursuing this path is not sustainable over time and we therefore recommend that the service place a high priority on identifying a hierarchy of policing priorities.

**Overwork is likely to be an issue for many Police Scotland officers**

Overwork is the expression used to describe people who are working too hard, too much, too long, or beyond their strength or capacity to cope. Perceptions of overwork are positively associated with the amount of time spent in activities associated with one's job with the risk of feeling overworked increasing for those who work in excess of forty hours a week, those who are forced to work overtime (i.e. called in on their days off, work longer than the agreed upon workday) and who work for an organisation with a culture that makes it difficult to refuse overtime (i.e. those who fear that if they say no to work tasks or overtime they will face reprisals such as demotion or assignment to unattractive tasks or work shifts). Why should Police Scotland care if their employees are overworked? There is a significant body of research looking at the consequences of overwork on an employee's health and wellbeing which demonstrates a strong link between being overworked and a myriad of health problems including insomnia, depression, stress, and heart disease. Overwork can also result in higher levels of absenteeism, higher turnover, and greater insurance costs – all of which can negatively impact the organisation's bottom line without increasing output.

The following data support the idea that many of the front-facing officers working for Police Scotland work hard and are at risk of or are currently feeling overworked: (1) they report that on average they work 43.9 hours per week, (2) approximately half the officers in our sample indicated that they rarely if ever had time for an uninterrupted break at work, (3) approximately half the officers in our sample had a rest day cancelled or disrupted multiple times in the six months prior to the study being done, (4) one in four officers had leave cancelled or disrupted, and (5) one in four officers reported being called in to work when they were on a rest day or annual leave.

Which work activities consume most of these officers' time at work? Unfortunately, analysis of the data collected in this study shows that the majority of officers in our sample spend their time in activities that are indirectly related to policing the community (i.e., writing reports, reading and reviewing reports) and in dealing with tasks that might better be undertaken by other stakeholders (i.e., mental health issues in the community). Fewer than

half the officers in our sample regularly spend time in a number of activities related to traditional frontline policing operations (i.e., engaging with the community, enforcement activities, crime prevention activities, custody issues).

In summary, the data on overwork and time at work are unfortunate given the strong link between having the ability to take time off work and employee wellbeing and organisational productivity. They are, however, consistent with our data showing that many officers reported that they were stressed because they did not have the resources needed to get the work done, that they did not understand what to focus their work efforts on, and that barriers at work made it hard to get things done.

These data support the following conclusions:

- Police Scotland is under-resourced and has an organisational culture that acts as a barrier to workplace efficiency,
- Police Scotland would find it difficult to fulfil their mandate if officers did not come in to work when they are supposed to have time off, and
- Many front-facing Police Scotland officers are either overworked or at high risk of experiencing overwork in the very near future.

Our results indicate that one way to address issues associated with overwork and workplace stress would be to streamline the report writing process by either investing in technology and/or hiring civilian clerks to assist in the report writing process as is done in many Canadian services (this would allow officers to spend more time in community policing activities) and to engage with other stakeholders to best determine how to reduce the amount of time spent on mental health calls.

**Police Scotland's front-facing officers experience high levels of job stress and work-life conflict**

What impact do these workplace stressors and work demands have on the wellbeing of police officers working in front-facing roles within Police Scotland? To begin answering this question we examined a number of indicators of officer strain (difficulties that cause worry or emotional tensions) that are likely to be predicted by the stressors included in this study. More specifically, we examined the extent to which the officers in our sample experienced high levels of job stress (a harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the demands that the job imposes on the employee overcomes their ability to cope), work role overload/family role overload (the perception that one has more to do at work or at home than can be done in the time available; feeling overwhelmed and stressed for time) and work interferes with family/family interferes with work (role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role).

During the pandemic, just over half the police officers we surveyed reported high levels of job stress. Another one in three reported moderate levels of job stress. The fact that there were no substantive between-group differences in the level of job stress reported implies that the stress comes with the role itself and where the officer works rather than with the gender of the officer or whether they have children. Work interferes with family is also a problem for this group of officers, half of whom reported high levels of this form of work-life conflict.

Our data show that the typical officer in this sample reports moderate levels of work role overload, high levels of work interfere with family, and high levels of job stress. These findings contrast sharply with what we found when we look at challenges stemming from the family domain (officers are three times more likely to report high levels of work role overload and work interferes with family than they are to report high levels of family role overload and that their family is getting in the way of the amount of time they spend on the job).

Taken together these data lead us to conclude that at Police Scotland, the wellbeing of frontline officers is a function of the stressors and demands that they face at work rather than their circumstances at home. This means that any efforts to improve officer wellbeing need to focus on the reduction of work demands and the key work-environmental stressors that lead to strain (e.g., organisational culture, the bureaucracy, multiple competing priorities).

**Many of Police Scotland's frontline officers are at risk when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing**

A substantive number of the police officers in our sample can be considered to be at risk when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing:

- just over one in three (38%) report high levels of perceived stress while only 6% reported low levels of perceived stress, and
- approximately half the officers in the sample report moderate (29%) to high (16%) levels of burnout at work. This is in stark contrast to the data showing only 5% report high levels of burnout from what they have to do at home.

Burnout typically manifests itself when chronic stress is not attended to and will not go away on its own. The data from this study along with previous survey work we have done with Police Scotland leads us to conclude that many frontline officers at Police Scotland are suffering from chronic stress associated with their circumstances at work. This is worrisome given research showing that the pandemic is likely to exacerbate issues associated with chronic stress rather than alleviate them.

Officers who are suffering from chronic stress would benefit from time away from work. Unfortunately, the data from this study suggests that the culture within Police Scotland and the officers' own work ethic means this is unlikely to happen as officers who are experiencing higher levels of stress or burnout within Police Scotland are either not encouraged and/or unable to take time off work to recover from the demands they face on the job. This last assertion is supported by the fact that just over a third of the officers in our sample said they went to work when they were mentally unwell and did so, on average, a staggering 19 times over the course of the last six months. These data are also in line with our findings regarding the work demands placed on Police Scotland officers and the work environment stressors they encounter on the job.

Efforts have to be made to improve the mental health of Police Scotland officers as the stress and burnout levels exhibited by this group are not sustainable over time. We recommend that the employer and the Scottish Police Federation work together to determine how best to address many of the chronic stressors that officers experience at work and focus on both short-term and long-term solutions. We consider this issue to be urgent given that the consequences of high levels of burnout (i.e., fatigue, alcohol consumption, poorer physical health, heart problems, professional mistakes) on the officers themselves, their families, and the communities they work in are potentially profound.

**The stresses and strains of the job are negatively impacting the physical health of many officers in the sample**

One in three of the officers in this sample reported that they were in poor physical health – a surprising finding given that most of our respondents are younger men who work in jobs that require a high level of physical fitness and stamina. These findings suggest that the mental strain many are under along with the demands they face at work are taking a toll on the physical health of these young men and women. This interpretation of the data is consistent with the data showing that one in three of the officers in our sample are missing work because of health issues and because of issues associated with COVID-19 while one in ten take time off because they are physically exhausted. The impact of COVID-19 on absenteeism is particularly troubling as our data show that each officer

who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average over the past six months. The question then becomes, how can the service manage these higher levels of absenteeism without negatively impacting the wellbeing of the officers who need to work on their days off to meet service delivery expectations.

**Inattention to the wellbeing of frontline officers is negatively impacting Police Scotland's bottom line**

Although absenteeism is an individual behaviour, it is considered an employer outcome because there is a direct cost to the employer when someone does not show up to work. This connection allows us to draw a link between employee wellbeing and the employer's bottom line.

Why are officers missing work? Examination of the data collected as part of this study show that one in three officers are missing work because of health issues and issues associated with COVID-19, a finding consistent with the data showing that the vast majority of officers in this sample do not think that the service has implemented any policies or practices to protect either officers or their families from getting COVID-19. Other appreciable sources of absenteeism include childcare/family interferes with work (14%), emotional or mental fatigue (12%), physical fatigue (8%), and eldercare concerns (8%).

It would appear from these data that: (1) work demands and work stressors are contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to the physical and emotional exhaustion of Police Scotland officers, (2) that an inability to balance work and family demands is also contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to concerns with childcare and eldercare, and (3) that COVID-19 is exacerbating the above issues by contributing to a high level of absenteeism (each officer who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average) which is likely to increase the demands placed on other officers who need to work in their place.

What are the costliest forms of absenteeism at the time that the study was done (from most costly to least costly)? Our data would implicate absenteeism due to health problems, to COVID related issues, and to emotional/mental fatigue (i.e., taking a "mental health" day off work). These data reinforce our recommendation that the service take action to implement strategies and programs designed to improve police officer wellbeing. The consequences of leaving things the way they are and "hoping for the best" is likely to be ever-increasing levels of already-high absenteeism, increasing costs associated with policing communities in Scotland and reduced productivity for Police Scotland.

**Officers do not have time away from work to decompress from the chronic stressors they face on the job**

Time is a finite commodity and time spent in one set of activities must, by necessity, take away from the amount of time available for other undertakings. In our survey we asked respondents to tell us how the amount of time they spent in a variety of activities linked to their personal life, their family life or their work had changed over time (since the pandemic had begun) – had the amount of time increased, stayed the same or decreased. We found that three-quarters of the officers in our sample reported that the amount of time that they spend on recreational, or leisure activities had declined over time. One in three also reported a considerable decline over time in the amount of energy they had, the amount of time they had for themselves and the amount of sleep that they got each night. By comparison, very few officers reported that they had reduced their work hours during the pandemic or increased their use of leave days – a result that is not surprising given the data presented earlier in this report regarding the perceptions on the part of these police officers that the service is understaffed and under-resourced as well as an organisational culture that seems to discourage officers saying no to work.

The data collected for this study also implies that the officers' work and family situation has negatively impacted the career choices of an appreciable number of officers. This conclusion is supported by data showing that approximately one in five officers agreed that they have decided not to seek a promotion or transfer at this time. We also note that one in five officers reported that they had experienced reductions in their work productivity over time while 10% reported an increase in absenteeism.

These data further reinforce the conclusion presented earlier – that officers do not have enough time way from work to decompress from the chronic stressors they face on the job.

**The pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on officer wellbeing and how officers view the service**

Early research in the area shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it harder for employees to balance work and family and has negatively impacted employee wellbeing. We included a number of measures in the survey to get a better understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Police Scotland's front-facing officers. Examination of the responses to these questions leads us to conclude that the way in which Police Scotland has managed their workforce during the pandemic is likely to exacerbate issues with respect to employee wellbeing and damage their reputation as a supportive employer.

These conclusions are supported by the following data. First, an appreciable number of officers (one in ten) found themselves in a different role at work because of the pandemic. This meant that they were required to deal with the changes associated with a new work role on top of the changes associated with the pandemic itself. Second, the vast majority of officers in the sample were unaware of any initiatives taken by Police Scotland to ensure the safety and wellbeing of either the police officers who worked for the service or officers' families during the pandemic. Employees (essentially those who were required by their job to interact with the community) expect their employer to take action to protect their health. The fact that almost none of the officers in the sample felt this had happened is likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of the employer as well as employee morale. This conclusion is supported by the fact that almost all the officers in the sample agreed with the following statement: "I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health." Fourth, the pandemic has added to the officers' workloads as they face the additional pressures of work dealing with COVID-19 protocols and calls related to COVID-19 issues (the data shows that on average officers spend 6.4 hours per week dealing with COVID-19 related activities) and work extra hours to replace colleagues who are absent from work because they have been exposed to/caught COVID-19.

**Most officers are reacting emotionally to the changes at work and at home imposed by COVID-19**

A disruptive change like the COVID-19 pandemic can also be expected to cause a variety of emotional reactions (i.e., strong feelings deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others) in people. Data collected in this study show that most of the officers we consulted are reacting emotionally to the changes at work and at home imposed by COVID-19. The most common reactions expressed by the officers in the sample were active negative feelings of frustration (81.1%) and uncertainty (61.6%). More than one third of officers also expressed negative feelings of anger, a lack of motivation, restlessness, boredom, sadness, and outrage. One in four indicated that they felt thankful. More disruptive change is to be expected when society and work life "return to normal" and we do not foresee improvements in these indicators of wellbeing at that time without some form of intervention.

**Officers report high levels of resilience**

The survey collected information about a number of important moderators that are likely to influence the relationships between stressors, strain outcomes, and wellbeing of officers. We determined that most police officers have high levels of personal resilience but worry that these levels of resilience will diminish over time if officers do not cope more effectively with the stress they are experiencing at work.

**Many officers are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job**

Our data show that the vast majority of police officers in the sample are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job/stress associated with the pandemic. In fact, a worrisome number are coping in maladaptive (negative) ways that may make things worse over time (i.e., working harder, trying to do it all, cutting back on sleep, having a drink or two, eating). These conclusions are supported by the following findings from this study. First, very few officers in the sample use either adaptive problem-focused coping strategies such as *set limits and compartmentalize* or emotion-focused coping strategies such as *seek social support from friends* to cope with the stress they are experiencing. Nor do they cope by making an effort to separate work from family or making sure that they take the time off from work (have lunch, take their breaks). Almost none of the officers in the sample *seek professional help* to cope with the high levels of job stress, stress and burnout they are experiencing at this point in time. These findings are very unfortunate given the proven utility of using such approaches to cope effectively with stress.

While the use of emotion-focused strategies is likely to temporarily reduce the emotional distress on the officers caused by heavy work demands and work-related strain, these strategies are unlikely to help over time as they do little to address the source of the stress (i.e., the stressor). The most common forms of adaptive emotion-focused coping used by officers included watching TV and getting exercise. Deeper analysis of the data showed, however, that officers who watch TV to cope with stress often also cope by eating "comfort food" which again can contribute to negative outcomes in the long term by contributing to weight gain if abused.

Somewhat positive are the data showing that one in five officers regularly cope by exercising and reading – a highly effective way to cope for police officers as an officer who is physically fit is more likely to be at a healthy weight, have a strong body, and more able to engage in the bursts of speed and power officers need while on the job. More concerning are the data showing that just over one in three officers rarely if ever cope in this manner.

Finally, on the good news/bad news front, almost all the maladaptive (negative) coping mechanisms included in the survey were used relatively infrequently by the majority of officers. The fact that the maladaptive coping strategies did not group together is also positive in that it provides support for the idea that the officers were likely to use only one maladaptive strategy at a time. This good news is offset by the bad news that an appreciable number of the officers in the sample do engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms that could lead to serious negative outcomes: more than half of officers are likely to get by on less sleep and a third say they have at least a moderate likelihood of drinking alcohol to cope.

**Front-facing police officers within Police Scotland work in high strain jobs**

The data from this survey provide strong support for the idea that Police Scotland officers have high strain jobs (high work demands and low control over work). This is an important finding as research has unequivocally determined that individuals in high strain jobs are more likely to experience negative physical and mental health outcomes. Findings from this study, which determined that many of the officers in this sample report high strain,

stress, and burnout at work, are what we would expect given the nature of the job (i.e., high demands, low control) They are also consistent with our data showing that the officers in the sample make very low use of healthy adaptive coping strategies. The fact that most officers perceive that they have little control over their work can also explain why officers do not access more adaptive coping strategies as the high demands of their work reduce their energy and ability to access healthy coping resources (working on weekends and holidays keeps officers away from family activities, shifts that run overtime, and supplemental work from home consume time and energy needed to go out and exercise, etc.).

We conclude from these findings that individual officers will not be able to make the changes needed in their work or work environment on their own. Change to the work culture and the introduction of more adaptive problem-focused coping resources will need to come from collective action and a partnership between the Scottish Police Federation, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, and Police Scotland.

**It is all about work**

On a positive note, the officers in our sample reported high levels of control over their family domain – a finding that is consistent with the data showing that most officers in the sample report lower levels of family role overload, family interference with work and burnout at home. The data also support our earlier conclusion – that the high levels of stress and burnout observed within our sample of frontline police officers working for Police Scotland is mostly due to factors associated with their job and their work environment rather than their gender or family circumstances.

**Very few differences in officer wellbeing were associated with either gender or parental status on their own**

We noted relatively few differences in the different measures of wellbeing considered in this study that could be attributed to either gender or parental status on their own. With two exceptions (the female officers in the sample were two times more likely than their male counterparts to have a partner who was also a police officer, and male police officers were more likely than female officers to have children) the male and female officers had very similar demographics and work profiles.

**While two gender differences were identified in our analysis – it is the lack of differences that is noteworthy**

While the male officers in the sample reported higher levels of work interferes with family than their female counterparts, we found no substantive differences in wellbeing outcomes that could be attributed to gender alone. This said, men are more likely than women to under-report their wellbeing in surveys and so we should be cautious in interpreting these findings, particularly in light of the fact that we identified a number of important gender differences in strain and wellbeing outcomes when parental status was taken into account.

We also noted only one substantive gender difference in how officers cope with stress (women were more likely than men to read and exercise) and no substantive differences in their personal resilience. The lack of gender differences in how officers cope is surprising as research in the area has shown that women are typically more likely than men to cope by seeking social support from others. Instead, we found that very few officers of either gender cope using by seeking support from others. These results support two conclusions: (1) the organisational culture deters people from seeking help from others, and (2) female police officers who wish to be accepted by their male counterparts often choose to “do police” rather than “do gender”.

**Officers without children are more likely to be exposed to stressors due to their role as a response officer**

Compared to officers without children, those with children are older, more likely to be married/partnered, have more years of service as a police officer, hold positions that are higher in rank, and are less likely to work in response policing. These differences are consistent with life-cycle research showing that people typically get a job before they get married and get married before they have children.

Exposure to several work-environment stressors also varies with the parental status of the officer. Compared to officers without children, those with children were more likely to report high levels of stress because "workplace barriers make it hard to get work done" but less likely to experience stress due to "not having enough resources to do their work". It is also important to note that officers without children were more likely to be abstracted for court and to spend time dealing with custody issues and mental health issues in the community and report high levels of work-role overload. Follow-up analysis shows that these differences can be linked, at least in part, to the fact that parents are higher in rank and less likely to work in response policing than are officers without children.

**Parents report higher levels of work-life conflict than do officers without children**

Male and female officers with children were more likely than their counterparts without children to report high levels of family role overload and family interferes with work, and to report that they used some of their personal leave days to take care of personal or family issues. Non-parents, on the other hand, were more likely to agree that making arrangements for elderly relatives while they work involves a lot of effort.

**Officers who are parents reacted differently to the pandemic than officers without children**

The data from this study show that COVID-19 has had important impacts on how officers with children spend their time. More specifically, we note that officers with children were more likely than those without to say that since the start of the pandemic they have seen a considerable decline in the amount of personal time they have as well as time they have for themselves. Similar findings have been observed in other work sectors that we have studied and can be attributed to the fact that children are now at home and to the requirement for home schooling. We also note that the officers in our sample with children are more likely than their childless counterparts to say that in the last six months they have needed: (1) to change their work schedules to accommodate both work and family, (2) to spend time working at home in the evening and on weekends, (3) to take considerably more leave days to cope with family demands, and (4) to miss considerably more work due to COVID-19 related issues.

Finally, we observed only one difference of note in how parents cope with stress compared to officers without children. More specifically, we found that officers with children are less likely to cope by eating and watching TV – a finding that likely has more to do with the fact that they do not have time for such activities than anything else.

**Female officers with children and male officers without children anchor two ends of the work-family continuum**

The data from this study reveal a number of differences in officer wellbeing associated with both gender and parental status. Virtually all these significant differences (which are listed in Table 1) are between male officers without children and female officers with children. Consider the following:

- Female parents were more likely than other groups of officers in the sample to be married to another police officer and to indicate that they worked in an office-based role (21.5%) or in Command and Control (9%).

- Male officers without children in the sample were more likely than any other group to work in response policing.
- In all cases where we noted between-group differences in the extent to which officers found any of the 37 work stressors included in our analysis burdensome (12 stressors), we observed that female parents reported significantly lower scores and male non-parents significantly higher scores with respect to the stressor being considered.
- Male officers without children were the most likely and female officers with children were the least likely to spend time in all seven work activities where differences were observed (i.e., crime prevention and enforcement, custody, mental health calls, abstracted for court).
- Male officers without children were substantively more likely and female officers with children were substantively less likely than any of the other groups of officers in the sample to have a rest day cancelled.
- Female police officers with children at home spent fewer hours per week in work (41.5) than either their female counterparts without children (45.0) or male officers with (44.4) or without (44.0) children.
- Female officers with children were substantially more likely than any other group in the sample
    - to experience higher levels of family role overload.
    - to say that their family life kept them from spending time in career-enhancing activities.
    - to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of sleep they get, the amount of energy they have, and the amount of time they have for themselves.
    - to report higher levels of family burnout.
    - to perceive that they were in better physical health.
- Male officers without children were more likely than were officers in the other three groups to state that the pandemic had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of time they spent on recreational and leisure activities.
- Male officers without children in the sample are less likely to cope by setting priorities and planning their time.
- We suspect that these gender by parental status differences are due in whole or in part to the fact that female officers with children are more likely to work in an office environment or in Command and Control while male and female officers without children are more likely to work in Response policing.

**Final Words**

Regardless of their gender or whether they have children, Police Scotland officers holding the rank of constable and sergeant work in high strain jobs (i.e., they report high work demands and high levels of job stress and low levels of control over their work). Despite the fact that the police officers in this sample report high levels of individual resilience, a number of factors relating to the organisational culture of the service make us worried about the wellbeing of these officers once the pandemic runs its course. Levels of work role overload, perceived stress, and work-related burnout are not, in our opinion, sustainable over time – particularly when one considers that Police Scotland officers lack the appropriate coping resources to deal with this strain in healthy ways. From the organisation's perspective, this will amount to rising costs and lower productivity due to rising absenteeism and presenteeism, rising costs of benefits, and possibly lower retention.

Male police officers without children face a greater number of challenges with respect to the work environment stressors included in our analysis – a finding that we attributed to the fact that half the officers in this group work in a response role. Female officers with children do not seem to be exposed to the same types of stressors or demands as the other officers in the sample – a finding we suspect is due to these women being more likely to work in office roles and command and control and are not engaging in the same set of work activities as officers who are working in response roles. These demographic differences should be considered in any interventions that are planned to address stress during the pandemic.

Finally, we also found that while parents appear to be resilient to the stresses of COVID-19, their resources are finite. They do not have additional coping resources to deal with the work and family stress imposed by COVID-19. In time, despite high control over their family situation, officers with children may find their situation unsustainable which could create a crisis of burnout both at work and at home post-pandemic.

**TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF HOW GENDER AND PARENTAL STATUS IMPACT KEY FINDINGS**

| | Male Officers Without Children | Female Officers With Children |
|---|---|---|
| Demographics | | More likely to be married to another police officer |
| Work Profile | Less likely to be in CID; More likely to work in response policing (51.5%) | More likely to work in an office-based role (21.5%) or in Command and Control (9%) |
| Work Environment Stressors | Reported significantly higher stress scores for 12 of the stressors considered in this analysis (the extent to which the other stressors were problematic did not vary by group) | Reported significantly lower stress scores for 12 of the stressors considered in this analysis (the extent to which the other stressors were problematic did not vary by group) |
| Work Demands | Most likely to spend time in 7 out of 10 of the activities examined in this study – See Table 9 (e.g., crime prevention and enforcement activities, dealing with mental health issues)<br>Most likely to have a rest day cancelled or disrupted<br>Most likely to have had leave cancelled or disrupted | Least likely to spend time in 7 out of 10 of the activities examined in this study (e.g., crime prevention and enforcement activities, dealing with mental health issues, custody, abstracted for court)<br>Spend fewer hours in work per week<br>Least likely to have a rest day cancelled or disrupted<br>Least likely to have been called into work when they were on rest day/annual leave |
| Work-life Conflict | | Most likely to report that their family keeps them from spending the amount of time they would like on their job/career (FIW) |
| Burnout - Family | | Highest levels of burnout from demands in family domain |
| Physical Health | | Perceive themselves to be in better physical health |
| Employer/Employee Change Index | Most likely to say that the amount of time that they have for recreational/leisure activities has decreased considerably since the pandemic began | Most likely to say that the amount of time that they have for themselves, the amount of sleep they get, the amount of energy they have and the amount of time for themselves had decreased considerably since the pandemic began<br>Most likely to say that the number of times that they have had to use their leave days to cope with family demands has increased considerably since the pandemic began |
| Absenteeism | | Most likely to report going to work when they are mentally unwell |
| Coping strategies | Less likely to say that they cope by setting priorities and planning their time. | |

Note: Male officers with children have lowest levels of control over family

# POLICE SCOTLAND WELFARE AND WELLBEING SURVEY REPORT

Submitted to Scottish Police Federation and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Putting this study into context

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared on 11 March 2020, took many by surprise. People were ordered by health experts to stay at home and wear a mask when out in public to minimise the risk of catching the virus. Some did while others, ignoring health advice, went on as usual and/or demonstrated against COVID-19 lockdown measures. While many worked from home in the months that followed the start of the pandemic, police officers were expected to show up for work, support the community, and enforce the law. At home, police officers dealt with all the same challenges and frustrations as everyone else: partners losing work, working from home, or working as an essential worker (exposed to COVID-19); concern and worry for elderly family members; and the need to provide care and perhaps schooling to their children. Family plans were put on hold. In addition to these challenges on the home front, police officers also had to contend with challenges and concerns relating to the job they performed. The government of Scotland has identified police officers to be essential workers and performance of their work typically requires contact with members of the public. Officers working in frontline positions are at risk of exposure to the virus every day they show up for work. Many also have the additional worry that they will bring the virus into their homes.

Police Scotland adapted to the crisis by following protocols included in their pandemic response plan. More specifically they re-assigned officers to different work roles and locations (e.g. work from home).

To best support their members, The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS) elected to survey their members in order to gain a better understanding of how changes in work and family demands and domains brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted officer wellbeing. This report (Report One) is the first in a series of four reports that are written using data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID Survey (2020 WWCS) conducted online October to December 2020. The report provides data that speaks to the following critical question: “how are police officers faring in times of COVID-19”? We also examine how gender and parental status impact key findings regarding employee wellbeing examined in our analysis. The next report in the series (Report Two) looks more specifically at how the COVID-19 pandemic response has impacted officer wellbeing. This will be done by comparing the findings obtained using the 2020 WWCS (conducted when Scotland was in the midst of the pandemic) to the results from the 2019 Welfare and Wellbeing Survey (2019 WWS). The third report in the series (Report Three) will focus on how officers holding the rank of Superintendent responded to the 2020 WWCS. The fourth and final report in this series will feature the results of our qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey including responses to questions relating to CAM and Mobile working.

## 1.2 Objectives of this report

This report uses data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID survey to:

- Identify the key sources of work and non-work stress facing Police Scotland officers in November 2020.
- Examine the ability of Police Scotland officers to balance competing work and family demands in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Assess the welfare and wellbeing of Police Scotland officers who were providing an essential service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Determine how police officers are "coping" with changing work and family demands in times of COVID-19.
- Articulate the costs to the employer (i.e. Police Scotland) of not providing needed support to officers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Identify factors that contribute to an increased ability to manage the challenges posed by the pandemic as well as factors that test the officers' welfare and wellbeing.
- Examine how gender and parental status impact each of the above issues.

## 1.3 Theoretical framework

To ensure comparability over time, we used essentially the same theoretical framework to frame the 2020 WWCS as we used to design the 2019 WWS. This framework is described in Figure 1 and described in more detail in the section below. This model is based on the role conflict and role ambiguity research of Robert L. Kahn and colleagues (1964) and the research of Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) into the relationship between stress and coping. It is also informed by our research in Canada on the health and wellbeing of Canadian police officers.

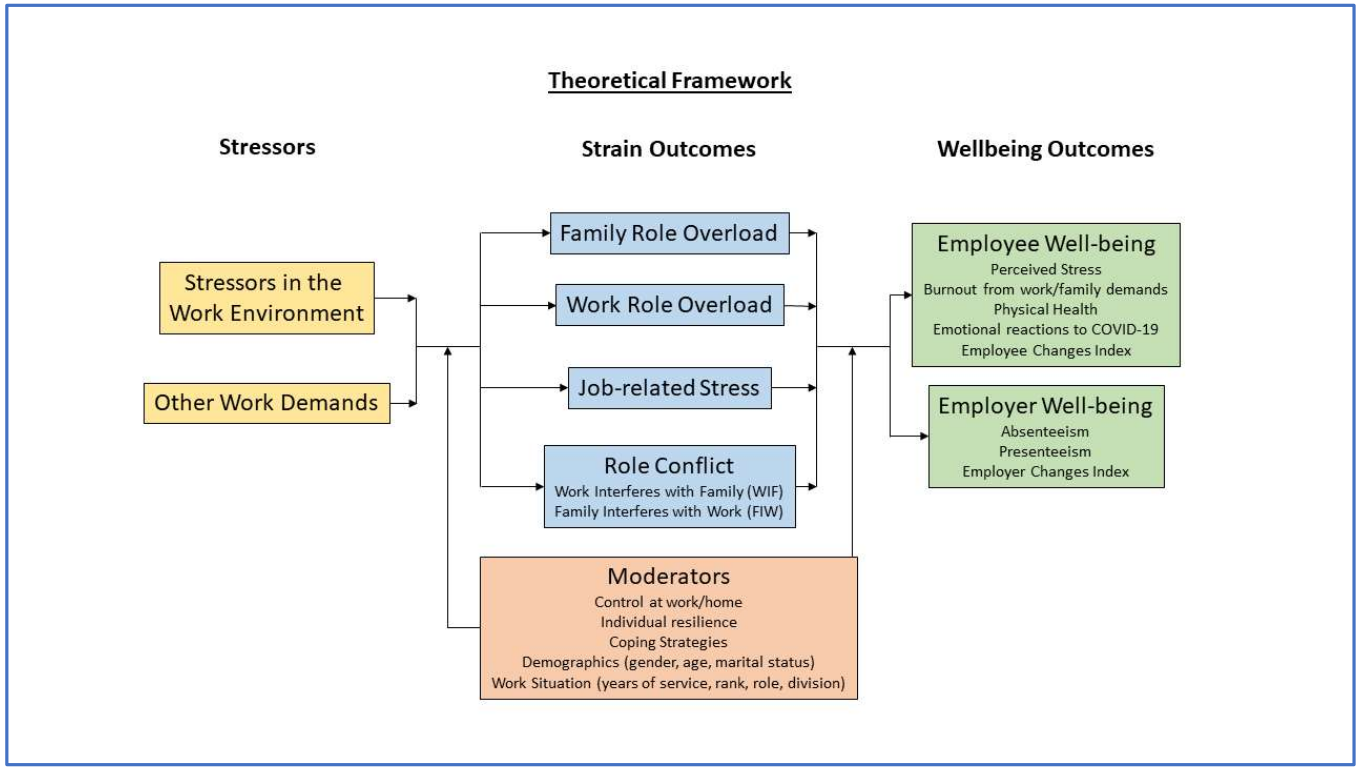


FIGURE 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF WELLBEING

The model in Figure 1 shows the relationship between four types of constructs:

- **Stressors** (something that contributes to a state of strain or tension);
- **Strain outcomes** (difficulties that cause worry or emotional tension);
- **Wellbeing outcomes** which are indicators of stress (psychological perception of pressure and the body's response to it that occurs when the demands from external situations, i.e., stressors and strain, are beyond the individual's capacity to cope); and
- **Moderators** (a construct or variable that affects the strength of the relation between predictor and outcome variables).

The following stressors are included in the model:

- **Stressors in the work environment**: Research has implicated many features of the police work environment that can contribute to officer stress and strain by placing undue stress on an officer. Many of these work stressors are associated with the internal workings of a police department: issues with equipment, problems with other officers or civilian staff, quality of supervision, shift work, court, serving the public, enforcing the law, threats to officers' health and safety, and the fragmented nature of police work.

- **Objective Work Demands**: In this study we operationalised objective work demands as the number of hours an employee spends in work per week. Time at work is the single largest block of time which most people owe to others outside their family. Consequently, it is often the cornerstone around which the other daily activities must be made to fit. As a fixed commodity, time allocated to employment is necessarily unavailable for other activities, including time with the family, time for leisure and time for oneself. Thus, time spent at work offers an important and concrete measure of one dimension of employment that affects employees and their families.

These different stressors are hypothesised to result in strain of various types. The following strain outcomes are included in the model:

- **Role overload** – operationalised as **work role overload** and **family role overload**. Role overload is defined as a "a type of role conflict that results from excessive demands on the time and energy supply of an individual such that satisfactory performance is improbable" (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Two types of overload are examined in this study: work role overload (defined as feeling rushed, time crunched and physically and emotionally exhausted and drained by all the demands one faces at work) and family role overload (defined as feeling rushed, time crunched and physically and emotionally exhausted and drained by all the demands one faces at home). High levels of both of these forms of role overload are problematic for organisations and employees alike as overload is strongly linked to increased absenteeism, poorer physical and mental health, greater intent to turnover and increased benefits costs. Employees who are overloaded are also less likely to agree to a promotion, to attend career relevant training, and often cut corners at work.

- **Job-related stress**: defined as the collection of harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.

- **Work-life Conflict --** operationalised as **Work interferes with family (WIF**) and **Family interferes with work (FIW):** Work-life conflict occurs when the pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. This incompatibility results in the work domain interfering with the family domain and vice versa. Work interferes with family occurs when participation in the family role is made more difficult by virtue

of participation in the work role. Family interferes with work occurs when participation in the work role is made more difficult by virtue of the family role.

As shown in Figure 1, the stressors and strains presented above are expected to impact employee and organisational wellbeing. In this study we operationalise wellbeing as follows:

- **Perceived stress**: the extent to which a person perceives (appraises) that their demands exceed their ability to cope. Individuals who report high levels of perceived stress are generally manifesting the symptoms we associate with "*dis*tress", including nervousness, frustration, irritability, and generalised anxiety.

- **Burnout**: a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when one feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. We include two measures of burnout as officers can experience burnout differently at home and at work.

- **Physical health**: stress symptoms can affect your body, your thoughts and feelings, and your behaviour. Being able to recognise common stress symptoms can help you manage them. Stress that's left unchecked can contribute to many health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

- **Emotional reactions to COVID-19:** Oxford Dictionary defines emotion as "A strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others." **Emotions** are responses to significant internal and external events such as COVID-19 which may trigger a wide range of emotions including anger, frustration and grief in the police officers in the sample.

- **Employee/Employer Changes Index:** work-life conflict can have negative consequences for the employee as well as the employer. Increases in work-life conflict brought about by the pandemic may be observed in changes at the individual level including reduced sleep, reduced energy, and less time spend on self-care. Changes may also be observed at work in the form of increased absenteeism, increased use of benefits like the EAP, and decisions not to seek advancement in the form of transfers or promotion.

- **Absenteeism**: Many organisations use absence from work as a measure of productivity (if workers are not on the job, the work is certainly not being done). While companies expect a certain amount of absenteeism and recognise that some absenteeism is even beneficial to the employee, too much absenteeism can be costly in terms of productivity and is often symptomatic of problems within the workplace.

- **Presenteeism** refers to workers coming in to work while sick, overly fatigued, or otherwise unproductive. It is an important workforce management issue that has been linked to diminished performance and worsening health and general wellbeing.

In statistics, moderation occurs when the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable which is typically referred to as a moderator variable or more simply - a moderator. We include several possible moderators of the relationships shown in our model:

- **Demographic variables**: We expect that the employees' gender, rank, years working for Police Scotland, and division may moderate the relationships in our model.

- **Coping mechanisms:** Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing". Coping

mechanisms are ways in which external or internal stress is managed, adapted to, or acted upon. Coping mechanisms can be categorised as adaptive or constructive (positive), or maladaptive (negative).

- **Resilience:** Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as those imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are high in individual resilience may be more able to adapt to the circumstances imposed by COVID-19 than those who are less able to adapt to stress.

- **Control over work and Control over family:** One of the most well-known and influential models of occupational stress is that proposed by Karasek in 1979. This theory, which is referred to as the "job strain" model states that the greatest risk to physical and mental health from stress occurs when workers face high psychological workload demands or pressures combined with low control in meeting those demands. In this study we look at two forms of control as possible moderators of the relationship between the demands employees face at work and at home and employee wellbeing: control over work (i.e. an employee's ability to influence what happens in his or her work environment) and control over family (i.e. an individual's ability to control the use of their time at home).

## 1.4 Organisation of this report

The report is divided into eight chapters. The second chapter provides a description of the methodology used in this study. This is followed by the presentation of the key results obtained from this study. Results are provided over five chapters: demographics and work profile (Chapter 3), stressors (i.e. predictors of stress) (Chapter 4), indicators of strain (Chapter 5), employee and organisational wellbeing (Chapter 6), and moderators (Chapter 7). The final chapter of the report presents a summary and discussion of the key findings.

The results chapters are all structured in a similar manner. Key findings for the total sample are presented first followed by analysis of between-group differences by gender and parental status: male parents, male non-parents, female parents, and female non-parents. The decision to focus our analysis on these four groups is supported by early research showing that the effects of the pandemic have been most felt by women and parents.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

As a first step we developed a survey instrument (2020 WWCS) that included measures for each of the constructs in our Theoretical Framework (Figure 1). To ensure comparability, wherever possible we used the same measures to operationalise the different constructs included in the 2020 WWCS as we used in the 2019 WWS. The survey questionnaire consisted primarily of multiple-choice or fill-in-the-response closed-ended questions, but also included several open-ended questions. A detailed description of the methodology followed in the design of the web survey and the approach to data analysis used in this report are included at the end of the report in Appendix A. The final questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

The 2020 survey was programmed into a web-based survey tool (Qualtrics). A link to the survey along with a letter from the Scottish Police Federation encouraging participation was sent to all members of the SPF and ASPS officers in six of the service's divisions (D, G, J, K, L, P). These same six divisions also participated in the 2019 WWS. The web survey was opened on 4 October 2020 and closed on 27 November 2020 (approximately 2 months). Links to the survey were also made available on SPF and ASPS social media and web pages.

Who answered the survey? The answer to this question can be found in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. SAMPLE SIZE AND STATISTICS**

| | N | % of sample | Population[1] | Response rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Total sample*** | 2286 | | | |
| ***Also responded to the 2019 WWS*** | 1396 | 61.1% | | |
| ***Volunteered to participate in future research*** | 717 | 31.4% | | |
| ***By Division*** | | | | |
| D | 336 | 10.3% | 957 | 35.1% |
| G | 480 | 21.0% | 2594 | 18.5% |
| J | 318 | 13.9% | 919 | 34.6% |
| K | 116 | 5.1% | 628 | 18.4% |
| L | 106 | 4.6% | 566 | 18.7% |
| P | 218 | 9.5% | 802 | 27.2% |
| Other | 801 | 35.0% | | |
| Prefer not to say | 11 | 0.5% | | |
| ***By Gender and Parental Status*** | | | | |
| Male parents | 938 | 41.0% | | |
| Male non-parents | 584 | 25.5% | | |
| Female parents | 359 | 15.7% | | |
| Female non-parents | 405 | 17.7% | | |

The response rates across the divisions range from 18.4% in K division up to 35.1% in D division. Approximately two thirds of the officers in our sample are male (66.5%) and more than half are parents (56.7%).

[1] Population sizes of each geographic division were provided by the SPF.

Several things are worthy of note about the sample. First, more than half of those who responded to the 2020 WWCS also responded to the 2019 WWS (61%). Second, approximately one in three of those who participated in the 2020 WWCS volunteered to participate in future research and provided us with their email contact information. Third, almost one of three of the responses to the 2020 WWCS came from officers working in Other divisions. Finally, the male officers in the sample are 2.5 times more likely than their female counterparts to have children.

## How is the report structured?

Results of our analysis of the data are presented in Tables that are included in each section of the report. Each table includes a column describing the construct that is being measured, a column which presents the findings for the total sample, and four additional columns which include the results when the sample was divided into four subsamples on the basis of the officer's gender and parental status.

We begin each section of this report by discussing the results obtained for the total sample. This is followed by a comparison of the results obtained when the sample is divided into four groups based on the respondent's gender and whether they had children at home. In all cases, we focus our discussion of gender and parental status on key (significant and substantive) between-group differences in the data. If a finding is not highlighted in this comparison section, the reader can assume that the findings with respect to this particular construct reported for the total sample do not vary depending on the gender of the officer of whether they have children at home.

# Chapter 3: Who responded to the 2020 WWCS?

Research in the area of employee stress and wellbeing has shown that an individual's wellbeing can be influenced by factors such as their marital status, their gender, and their age as well as a number of features of their work. The 2020 WWCS survey included a number of questions that allowed us to develop demographic and work profiles describing our respondents. These profiles, which are provided in the sections below, provide key information to help us interpret the results from the rest of the survey.

## 3.1 Demographic Profile: The total sample

Demographic data on the sample are shown in Table 2. These data support the following observations with respect to who is in our sample: (1) the age distribution of the sample is fairly evenly distributed with approximately one in three officers reporting they are under 35 years of age, 35 to 45 years of age, or 45 years of age or older, (2) the mean age of an officer in the survey sample is 39.6 years, (3) the sample is male dominated as two thirds of the respondents are male (66.6%), (4) the vast majority of the respondents (81.6%) are married or living with a partner, (5) more than half (56.7%) are parents, and (6) one in six officers (15.4%) have other (typically elderly) dependents.

**TABLE 2. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Age (mean)*** | 39.6 | 41.9 | 36.5 | 41.5 | 37.2 |
| ***Age*** | | | | | |
| Under 35 | 29.8% | 16.0% | 51.8% | 13.5% | 44.6% |
| 35 to 45 | 38.0% | 46.7% | 22.1% | 52.4% | 27.6% |
| 45 and over | 32.2% | 37.2% | 26.1% | 34.1% | 27.8% |
| Married/Living with a partner | 81.9% | 96.8% | 67.5% | 86.9% | 63.7% |
| Has other dependents | 15.4% | 14.2% | 14.2% | 19.5% | 16.5% |

**TABLE 3. PARTNER DEMOGRAPHICS**

| | Total sample (N=1868) | Male parents (N=907) | Male non-parents (N=393) | Female parents (N=312) | Female non-parents (N=256) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Partner had paid employment prior to COVID-19 pandemic*** | 96.1% | 96.1% | 96.7% | 95.2% | 96.1% |
| ***Partner is still employed*** | | | | | |
| Yes – Working from home | 26.6% | 30.5% | 28.1% | 16.8% | 22.4% |
| Yes – Working outside the home | 66.0% | 61.7% | 64.3% | 76.5% | 71.3% |
| No | 7.4% | 7.9% | 7.7% | 6.8% | 6.3% |
| ***Partner is a police officer*** | 23.3% | 16.3% | 18.1% | 42.1% | 33.5% |

To help us better understand the demands officers faced at home, we included a number of questions in the survey for officers who were married/ living with a partner regarding their partner's work situation. Responses to these questions are shown in Table 3. Please note that these questions were only answered by the subset of

respondents who said that they were married or living with a partner (n = 1868). The following observations can be drawn from these data. First, virtually all the married/partnered officers in the sample (96.1%) indicated that their partners had paid employment prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. These officers can be considered to live in dual-income families. Second, the vast majority (92.6%) also said that their partner was still working during the pandemic. Third, most officers indicated that their partners (66.0%) did not work at home during the pandemic and as such may be essential workers. Finally, approximately one in four officers (23.3%) indicated that their partners were also police officers.

**Demographics: Between-group differences of note**

The four groups vary in a number of important ways:

- The parents in the sample are approximately 5 years older on average than the non-parents.
- The parents in the sample are more likely to be married/ living with a partner than the non-parents.
- The male officers (61.6%) in the sample were more likely to be parents than the female officers (47.0%).
- Female officers were approximately twice as likely to have a partner who is a police officer than were their male counterparts.
- Female officers with children (42.1%) were more likely than female officers without children (33.5%) to be married to a police officer.

These findings are important as we expect stress to be particularly high in dual-police couples with children.

## 3.2 Work profile: The Total Sample

In the survey we also asked respondents for information that could be used to develop work profiles for those in our sample. In all cases, we focused on collecting information (rank, years of service) that is likely to be linked to officer wellbeing. Responses to the questions that were used to create the work profile for the officers in our sample are included in Table 4.

The typical officer in the sample has, on average, 13.4 years of service. More than two thirds (70.1%) of the officers in the sample hold the rank of constable. One in five are sergeants while the rest (8.4%) hold the rank of inspector or above. The distribution by rank is consistent with the pyramidal structure of police services. A substantive percent of the sample work in Response policing (41.6%). Only a relatively small number of officers (14.7%) indicated that they have an office-based job. The majority of respondents work in frontline roles where they are required to interact with the public (and are, therefore, at greater risk with respect to contracting COVID). Approximately one in four officers (28.4%) in the sample work for a national division.

**Work Profile: Between-group differences of note**

The parents in the sample differed in a number of important ways from those without children, regardless of their gender. More specifically, the parents in the sample:

- have more years of service on average than non-parents,
- were two times more likely than non-parents to hold the rank of Sergeant or Inspector +, and
- were less likely to work in Response policing

Finally we note that: (1) female parents were more likely than officers in the other three groups to indicate that they worked in an office-based role (21.5%) and in Command and Control (9%), (2) officers without children were,

regardless of their gender, more likely to work as a Response officer, (3) female officers with children were less likely to work in Road Policing, and (4) male officers without children were less likely to work in CID.

**TABLE 4. WORK PROFILE**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Mean years of service*** | 13.4 | 15.3 | 10.7 | 15.4 | 11.2 |
| ***Years of Service Groupings*** | | | | | |
| Under 10 years | 34.7% | 22.6% | 53.9% | 17.3% | 50.5% |
| 10 to 20 years | 40.7% | 47.9% | 26.7% | 55.6% | 30.8% |
| Over 20 years | 24.6% | 29.5% | 19.3% | 27.1% | 18.7% |
| ***Rank*** | | | | | |
| Prefer not to say | 1.5% | 1.2% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 3.5% |
| Constable | 70.7% | 62.2% | 82.2% | 67.4% | 76.8% |
| Sergeant | 19.4% | 26.0% | 11.5% | 21.4% | 13.8% |
| Inspector+ (includes n = 30 Superintendents) | 8.4% | 10.7% | 5.3% | 10.3% | 5.9% |
| ***Division*** | | | | | |
| D Division | 10.4% | 10.1% | 8.2% | 12.4% | 12.5% |
| G Division | 21.1% | 22.2% | 22.9% | 19.9% | 17.0% |
| J Division | 14.0% | 11.7% | 14.9% | 14.6% | 17.5% |
| K Division | 5.1% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 5.1% | 5.2% |
| L Division | 4.7% | 4.4% | 6.3% | 3.9% | 3.5% |
| P Division | 9.6% | 11.0% | 8.2% | 8.7% | 9.0% |
| Other | 35.2% | 35.5% | 34.4% | 35.4% | 35.4% |
| ***Work for a National division*** | 28.4% | 31.5% | 26.0% | 28.3% | 24.6% |
| ***Work Role*** | | | | | |
| Response policing | 41.6% | 36.2% | 51.5% | 31.8% | 48.5% |
| Office-based | 14.7% | 14.4% | 11.5% | 21.2% | 14.4% |
| CID | 13.0% | 14.5% | 8.1% | 16.5% | 13.6% |
| Community policing | 10.8% | 13.4% | 9.4% | 10.3% | 7.4% |
| Road policing | 5.7% | 7.1% | 7.4% | 1.7% | 4.0% |
| Command & control | 5.3% | 4.3% | 4.5% | 9.2% | 5.4% |
| Specialist Ops | 4.3% | 5.8% | 4.1% | 2.5% | 3.0% |
| Custody | 2.9% | 3.1% | 2.6% | 2.8% | 3.0% |
| Other/Prefer not to say | 1.5% | 1.3% | 1.0% | 3.9% | 0.7% |

## 3.3 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on officer deployment

Based on discussions with the SPF and ASPS, we included several questions in the survey to help us understand how Police Scotland has supported officers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to these questions are provided in Table 5.. Do the officers who answer our survey think that the service has implemented any policies

to ensure the health and wellbeing of their employees? The following observations regarding this issue can be made from these data. First, approximately one in ten of the officers who completed the survey (11.8%) indicated that they had experienced a change in their role at the start of the pandemic. These officers are likely to have to cope with the stress of a new job on top of the changes introduced by COVID-19. Second, and perhaps more importantly given the focus of this study, only one in four officers (24.8%) in the sample said that Police Scotland had introduced any initiatives in response to the pandemic to ensure the safety and wellbeing of police officers. This number dropped substantially (16.4%) when officers were asked if they were aware of any initiatives taken by Police Scotland in response to the pandemic to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their families. Given the data showing that many of the officers in the sample work in roles where they are expected to interact on a regular basis with the public, the fact that most officers do not perceive that the service has taken action to protect either their health or the health of their family is likely to be a source of stress for many.

**TABLE 5. IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Did you role change because of the pandemic?*** | 11.8% | 12.4% | 10.8% | 12.0% | 11.6% |
| ***Has Police Scotland implemented any initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing*** | | | | | |
| Of police officers? | 24.8% | 22.9% | 22.2% | 29.5% | 28.7% |
| Of the families of police officers? | 16.4% | 18.5% | 12.8% | 20.7% | 13.1% |

There were no substantive between-group differences.

## 3.3 Summary: Who responded to the survey

The typical officer in our sample is a male police officer in his late thirties to early forties who lives in a dual-income household and more than likely has children. One in three officers is female and one in six have other dependents. The typical respondent is an experienced constable with more than a decade of experience as a police officer. Approximately one third of respondents hold the rank of sergeant or higher. Most officers in the sample are in frontline roles where they are required to interact with the public. Most officers who responded to this survey were not aware of initiatives taken by Police Scotland during the course of the pandemic to protect the safety and wellbeing of either the police officers in their employ or the families of these officers who are also at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 because of the work done by their mother/father/partner.

Analysis of the work and demographic characteristics of those who responded to the 2020 WWCS revealed a number of between-group differences associated with gender, parental status, or both gender and parental status. Parents differed from non-parents in a number of important ways. More specifically, the parents in the sample are older, more likely to be married/partnered, have more years of service as a police officer, hold positions that are higher in rank, and are less likely to work in response policing than are non-parents, regardless of their gender.

We observed only one gender difference of note that did not depend on the officer's parental status. More specifically, we note that the female officers in the sample were approximately twice as likely to have a partner who is a police officer than were their male counterparts, regardless of their parental status. We also identified

a number of gender differences that can only be observed if we take parental status into account. More specifically, we note that: (1) the male officers in the sample were more likely to be parents than the female officers, and (2) female officers with children were more likely than female officers without children to be married to a police officer. Finally, the data support the idea that the job the officer holds is likely to depend on both gender and parental status as female parents were more likely than officers in the other three groups to indicate that they worked in an office-based role (21.5%) and in Command and Control (9%) and less likely to work in Road Policing while officers without children were, regardless of their gender, more likely to work as a Response officer.

# Chapter 4: Stressors

This chapter summarises the key findings of our analysis of the data related to the stressors faced by the police officers in our sample (stressors in the police work environment and other work demands). Data on the work-related stressors are presented and discussed first. This is followed by analysis related to work demands. In all cases we start by presenting our findings for the total sample. We then highlight any statistically significant and substantive differences associated with gender and parental status.

## 4.1 Stressors in the work environment

In the survey we presented our respondents with a list of 37 possible work stressors and asked them to rate how often each of these issues were sources of stress for them at work. The scale used to measure stressors in the work environment was originally developed and tested by Dr. Duxbury in a variety of Canadian police services and was included in the 2019 WWS. To ensure that each of the items included in this measure were relevant to this study, which focused on stressors facing officers working for Police Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic, each item in the scale was reviewed carefully during the 2020 WWCS survey design process. Based on this review, we removed several items from the original measure and added several new items (e.g. Negative images of the police in the news, I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health). We began our analysis by calculating the means and standard deviations for each of the items in the measure for the total sample. We present our findings for this step of the analysis in Table 6. For ease of reference the items are listed in descending order (i.e. from most stressful to least stressful). The reader should consider any item with a mean score of 3.5 or greater (shaded in red in Table 6) to be a substantive source of work stress for Police Scotland officers who are working during the pandemic. Items with scores of > 2.5 but < 3.5 (shaded yellow in Table 6) are also worthy of note as they are also key sources of stress for a subset of officers (i.e. those working in Response policing).

Examination of the data in Table 6 support a number of important observations. First, approximately one third of the stressors we examined (12 out of 37) can be considered a significant source of stress for the officers in the sample. Second, there was a high degree of consensus within the sample on the top three stressors (i.e. all had a mean score of 4 or more on a five-point scale) in the work environment: "Fear of the hindsight brigade" (4.1), "not enough officers or staff to do the work required" (4.1) and "being bogged down by process" (4.0). Of note, none of these stressors are related to the job itself but instead have more to do with the organisational culture within Police Scotland and resourcing decisions. This interpretation of the data is reinforced when one considers that five of the remaining key workplace stressors encountered by the officers in the sample relate to resourcing and staffing issues while three speak to the organisational culture of Police Scotland. Finally, we note that the remaining stressor with a score in the "high" range, "I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health" speaks to the perception held by most of the officers in the sample that Police Scotland has not implemented any policies or practices to protect the wellbeing of their families during these times of pandemic.

### Work Environment Stressors: Between-group differences of note

Among these 37 items, we identified 20 items where the amount of stress caused by a particular stressor varied according to the gender/parental status of the officer (mean differences of at least 0.3). Table 7 lists all the items with substantive between-group differences sorted in descending order by the mean score of male non-parents. Examination of these data show that in all 20 instances female parents had the lowest mean score on all the stressors included in our measure and male non-parents had the highest. This is consistent with the fact that the female officers with children in the sample are most likely to have an office job while male officers without children hold jobs that require more contact with the public (i.e. Response policing).

### TABLE 6. WORK ENVIRONMENT STRESSORS

| Stressors | Mean |
|---|---|
| Fear of the "hindsight brigade" | 4.1 |
| Not enough officers and/or staff to do the work required | 4.1 |
| Police Scotland is bogged down by process (e.g. IVPD) | 4.0 |
| The amount of time spent in administrative work (forms, telephone calls, e-mail, typing, rekeying) | 3.8 |
| Not having the resources to respond to calls (e.g. cars, people) | 3.8 |
| Dealing with multiple competing demands simultaneously | 3.7 |
| Lack of resources (equipment/supplies) to do the work | 3.6 |
| Not enough officers on duty to allow people to take breaks during work hours | 3.6 |
| I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health | 3.6 |
| The culture makes it unacceptable to say no to more work | 3.6 |
| The sheer volume of the work (call volume, reports, e-mails) | 3.6 |
| Too many competing ever-changing number one priorities | 3.5 |
| Managing the expectations of the public | 3.4 |
| Poor communication between different areas of the organisation – the answer you get depends on who you ask. | 3.4 |
| The IT infrastructure (computers, devices, or networks are not working or inadequate) | 3.4 |
| Managing other people's sense of urgency | 3.3 |
| Negative images of the police in the news | 3.3 |
| I cannot deliver the level of service that I believe is required by the community | 3.3 |
| Pressures to do a high-quality job while meeting an unrealistic deadline | 3.2 |
| The shortage of experienced staff in my area | 3.2 |
| The cases I deal with are more complex than in the past and require greater effort | 3.2 |
| Jobs that are passed on from the previous shift | 3.2 |
| The backlog of calls / cases | 3.1 |
| I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my physical health | 3.1 |
| The condition of the estate negatively impacts my experience at work | 3.1 |
| Ineffective communication makes it harder for me to do my job (lack of timely feedback, unclear expectations) | 3.1 |
| I am responsible for too many different things/roles | 3.1 |
| Constant changes in policy/legislation without adequate support/training | 2.9 |
| Lack of control over my work | 2.8 |
| I can't get everything done and I worry about cases falling through the cracks | 2.8 |
| The culture makes it difficult to seek help from others when you are overloaded | 2.8 |
| Verbal assault from a member of the public | 2.5 |
| Insufficient time allowed for training | 2.5 |
| Taking on work that is outside my core role (e.g. custody duties) | 2.4 |
| Lack of appropriate training for my job | 2.2 |
| Managing relationships with the media/public (social media, being "on camera") | 2.1 |
| Physical assault from a member of the public | 1.7 |

**TABLE 7. STRESSORS ITEMS WITH BETWEEN-GROUP DIFFERENCES SORTED BY HIGH MALE NON-PARENTS**

| Stressor Item | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Police Scotland is bogged down by process (e.g. IVPD) | 4.1 | 4.3 | 3.6 | 3.9 |
| Fear of the "hindsight brigade" | 4.1 | 4.3 | 3.8 | 4.0 |
| Not enough officers and/or staff to do the work required | 4.0 | 4.2 | 3.9 | 4.1 |
| Lack of resources (equipment/supplies) to do the work | 3.6 | 3.8 | 3.3 | 3.6 |
| Not enough officers on duty to allow people to take breaks during work hours | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 3.7 |
| The sheer volume of the work (call volume, reports, e-mails) | 3.5 | 3.7 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| The IT infrastructure (computers, devices, or networks are not working or inadequate) | 3.4 | 3.6 | 3.2 | 3.3 |
| Negative images of the police in the news | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Poor communication between different areas of the organisation – the answer you get depends on who you ask. | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| I cannot deliver the level of service that I believe is required by the community | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 3.2 |
| The shortage of experienced staff in my area | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Pressures to do a high-quality job while meeting an unrealistic deadline | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| The condition of the estate negatively impacts my experience at work | 3.1 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 2.9 |
| The backlog of calls / cases | 3.1 | 3.3 | 2.9 | 3.1 |
| I am responsible for too many different things/roles | 3.1 | 3.1 | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Verbal assault from a member of the public | 2.3 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 2.7 |
| Taking on work that is outside my core role (e.g. custody duties) | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 2.4 |
| Insufficient time allowed for training | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Managing relationships with the media/public (social media, being "on camera") | 1.9 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 2.2 |
| Physical assault from a member of the public | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.8 |

## Grouping of the stressors

We used a statistical method called principal component analysis (see Appendix A) to identify how the work environment stressors grouped together. This analysis identified six groups of work-environment stressors or factors as shown in Table 8. Each group of stressors was reviewed and given a name that reflects the items clustered within it. The groups of work environment stressors identified through this analysis along with the stressors that were included in each of the six groups are as follows:

- Workplace barriers (processes, culture of blame laying, infrastructure) make it harder to get work done
    - Fear of the "hindsight brigade"
    - Police Scotland is bogged down by process (e.g. IVPD)
    - The IT infrastructure (computers, devices, or networks are not working or inadequate)
    - The condition of the estate negatively impacts my experience at work
- Not enough resources (people, equipment, supplies) to do the work required
    - Not enough officers and/or staff to do the work required
    - Not having the resources to respond to calls (e.g. cars, people)
    - Not enough officers on duty to allow people to take breaks during work hours.
    - Jobs that are passed on from the previous shift
    - The backlog of calls / cases
- Fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19
    - I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health
    - I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my physical health
- Multiple competing every changing number one priorities teamed with culture that makes it hard to seek help
    - Dealing with multiple competing demands simultaneously
    - The culture makes it unacceptable to say no to more work
    - Managing other people's sense of urgency
    - Pressures to do a high-quality job while meeting an unrealistic deadline
    - The cases I deal with are more complex than in the past and require greater effort
    - I am responsible for too many different things/roles
    - Ineffective communication makes it harder for me to do my job (lack of timely feedback, unclear expectations)
    - The culture makes it difficult to seek help from others when you are overloaded
    - Lack of control over my work
    - I can't get everything done and I worry about cases falling through the cracks
- Training is not a priority for the service
    - Constant changes in policy/legislation without adequate support/training
    - Insufficient time allowed for training
    - Lack of appropriate training for my job
- The negative public image of police officers
    - Negative images of the police in the news
    - Verbal assault from a member of the public
    - Managing relationships with the media/public (social media, being "on camera")
    - Physical assault from a member of the public

We then created what is called a factor score for each group of stressors – calculated as the summed average of the scores of the various items that were in each group. These scores were then used to identify the extent to which each of these work-environment stress factors were problematic (i.e. resulted in high levels of stress) for the different groups of police officers in the sample. Results for this analysis are as shown in Table 8.

The following observations can be made about the prevalence of the various work stressors by looking at the data in this table. First, the majority of the officers in the sample experience higher levels of workplace stress that can be attributed to workplace barriers that make it hard for them to get work done, insufficient resources to do the work required, and a fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19. Second, a plurality of officers experienced

higher levels of work stress because of the multiple competing ever-changing priorities that they had to juggle at work. The amount of stress these officers faced because of the unpredictability and uncertainty of their work demands was exacerbated by their perception that the culture of Police Scotland made it hard from them to seek help. Finally, we note that one in four officers experience work stress that can be linked to the perception that Police Scotland does not make officer training a priority while one in five are stressed by the negative public image the public has of police officers.

**TABLE 8. WORK ENVIRONMENT STRESSOR FACTORS (% HIGH)**

| % reporting that this aspect of their work environment "often" caused them stress | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Workplace barriers (processes, culture of blame laying, infrastructure) make it harder to get work done | 63.5% | 64.6% | 71.3% | 51.4% | 60.4% |
| Not enough resources (people, equipment, supplies) to do the work required | 56.6% | 56.0% | 60.6% | 49.9% | 58.2% |
| Fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 | 51.3% | 51.7% | 50.0% | 51.8% | 51.9% |
| Multiple competing ever-changing number one priorities teamed with culture that makes it hard to seek help | 41.2% | 42.7% | 41.5% | 38.1% | 40.0% |
| Training is not a priority for the service | 23.4% | 23.4% | 25.4% | 20.1% | 23.4% |
| The negative public image of police officers | 20.2% | 17.2% | 25.4% | 17.0% | 22.2% |

## Work Stressors: Between-group differences of note

The extent to which the officers in the sample attribute high levels of work stress to "multiple competing ever-changing number one work priorities teamed with a culture that makes it hard to seek help" and "fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19" is neither associated with gender nor parental status. This finding teamed with the high percent of the sample that find these issues stressful suggests that both of these stressors are systemic within Police Scotland. The finding with respect to "Multiple Competing Priorities" reinforces our assertion that the organisational culture within Police Scotland contributes to officers' levels of work stress. The fact that we did not, however, observe any differences associated with either gender or parental status in the extent to which our officers reported stress associated with their "fear of contacting and transmitting COVID-19" was unexpected. We undertook follow-up analysis to help us better understand this finding, the results of which are as shown in Figure 2. Examination of these data show that while almost one third of all officers (29%) scored this factor at its maximum value (i.e. score of 5), one in six (15%) scored it at its minimum value (i.e. a 1) or at the midpoint of the range (i.e. a 3). This distribution is highly unusual (most survey data for large samples is normally distributed), but not easy to explain as follow-up analysis undertaken by the authors did not identify any significant correlation between how respondents answered the questions included in this factor and any of the demographic or work profile variables included in our analysis.

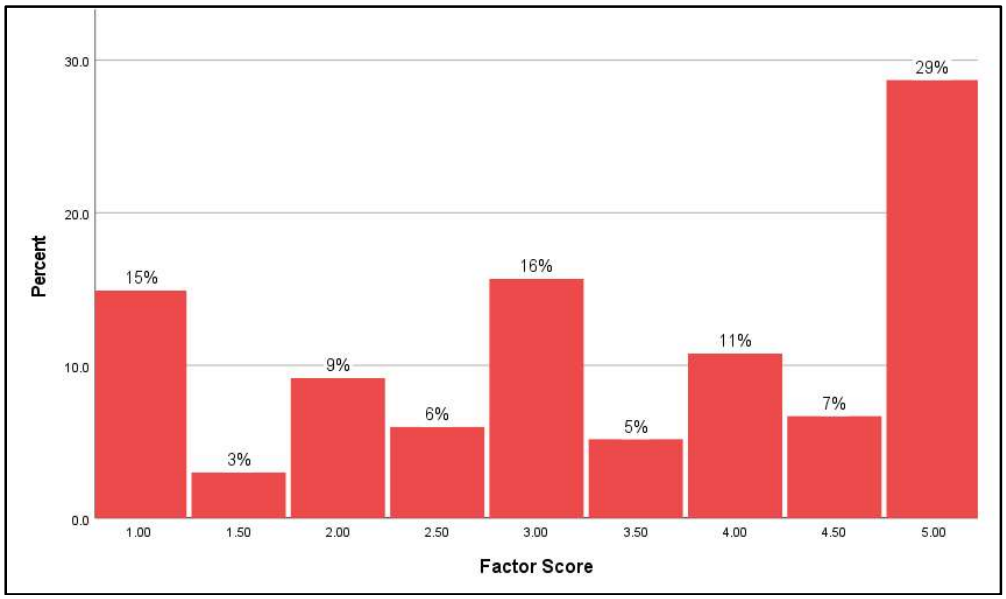


**FIGURE 2. FEAR OF CONTRACTING AND TRANSMITTING COVID-19**

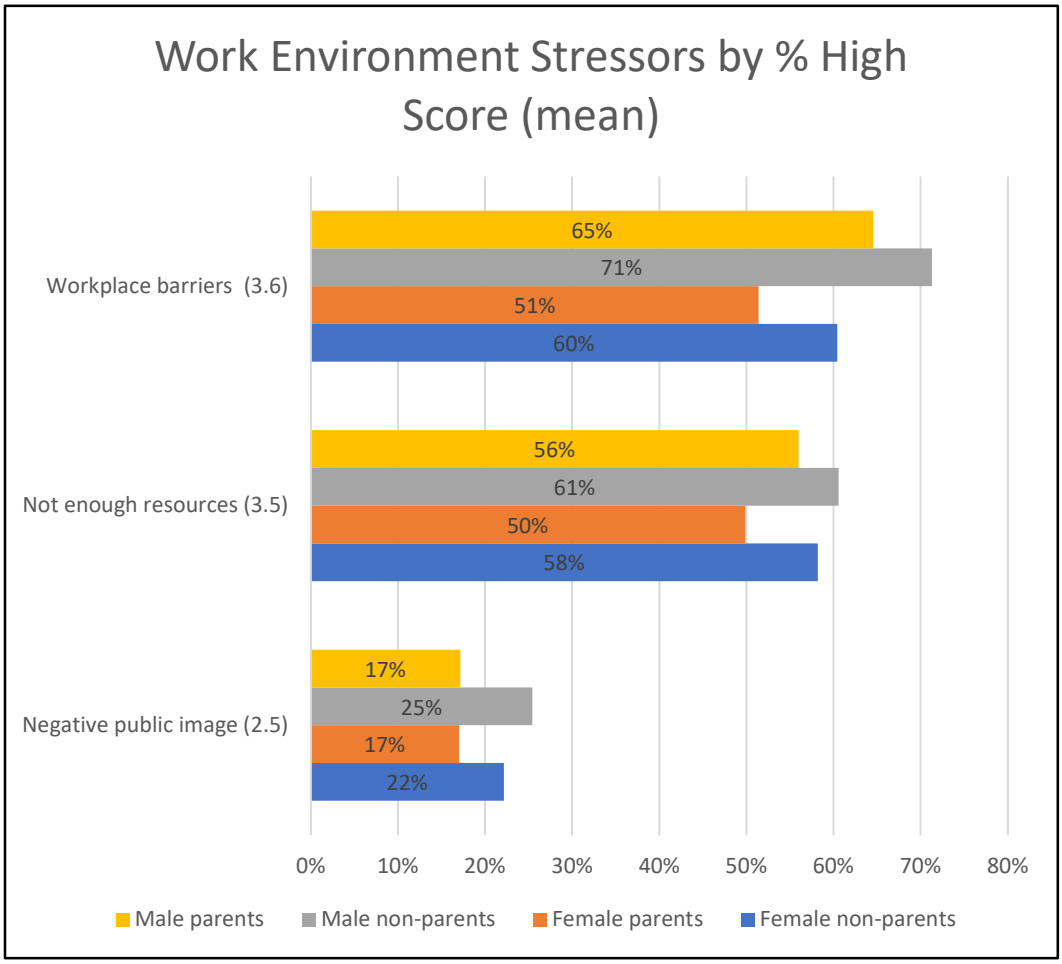


**FIGURE 3. WORK ENVIRONMENT STRESSOR FACTORS**

There were three significant between-group differences in the number of respondents who indicated that they found a particular work environment factor stressful. To help us better understand the impact of gender and parental status on the findings, we plotted the percent of officers in the four different groups who reported high levels of stress due to this work environment factor in Figure 3. The following observations can be made from these data:

- Parents (male: 71% and female: 60%) were more likely than non-parents of the same gender (male: 65% and female: 51%) to experience high levels of stress because "workplace barriers make it hard to get work done."
- Officers without children (male: 61% and female: 58%) were more likely than officers of the same gender with children to experience high levels of stress due to their "not having enough resources to do their work" (male: 56% and female: 50%).
- Male officers (parents: 65% and non-parents: 71%) were more likely than female officers (parents: 51% and non-parents: 60%) to experience high levels of stress due to their "not having enough resources to do their work" regardless of whether they had children.
- Officers without children (male: 25% and female: 22%) were more likely than officers with children (male: 17% and female: 17%) to experience high levels of work stress arising from their perception that the public had a negative image of police officers.

These differences are likely due to the fact that female officers with children are more likely to work in an office while male and female officers without children are more likely to work in Response policing.

## 4.2 Time spent in activities at work

One way to measure the demands placed on the police officer at work is to measure the amount of time spent in the most common and most important work activities. Discussions with the SPF and ASPS resulted in the identification of ten different activities that can be used to examine how officers within Police Scotland spend their time. This list was included in the 2020 WWCS and officers were asked to indicate how many hours they had spent in each of these tasks. We analysed these data in two ways. We began by calculating the percent of officers engaged in each of these 10 activities (see Figure 4). We then calculated the average number of hours spent in each activity by those officers who engage in each of these undertakings as shown in Figure 5.

Results from these two sets of analyses help us understand which activities our sample of police officers (and by extrapolation, the service) spend the most time in and are the most demanding. Although the list of activities is not exhaustive of all activities performed by police officers, viewing the list of activities in this way sheds light on the shared experience of police officers.

Where do Police Scotland officers spend their time? Examination of the data in Figure 4 show that most officers spend time writing reports (71%), reading and reviewing reports (55%) and dealing with mental health in the community (52%). Activities related to traditional frontline policing operations (i.e. engaging with the community, enforcement activities, crime prevention activities, custody issues) were reported by between 40% and 50% of the sample. Finally, we note that almost half of the officers in the sample spend time each week dealing with COVID-19 related matters.

Which activities consume the most of the officers' time? Examination of the data in Figure 5 implicate the following activities: enforcement activities (13.2 hours/week), dealing with mental health in the community (12.4), frontline policing in crime prevention activities (11.2), and activities when abstracted from your home station (9.4). During the pandemic, officers are also spending 6.4 hours on average per week dealing with COVID-19 related activities.

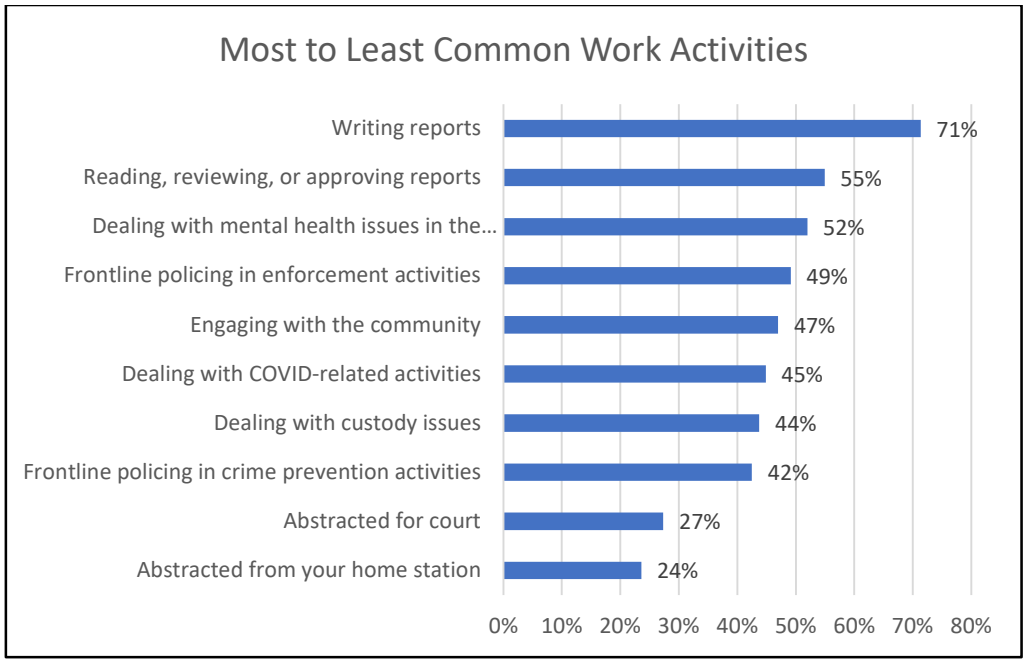


**FIGURE 4. WORK ACTIVITIES BY PERCENTAGE OF OFFICERS**

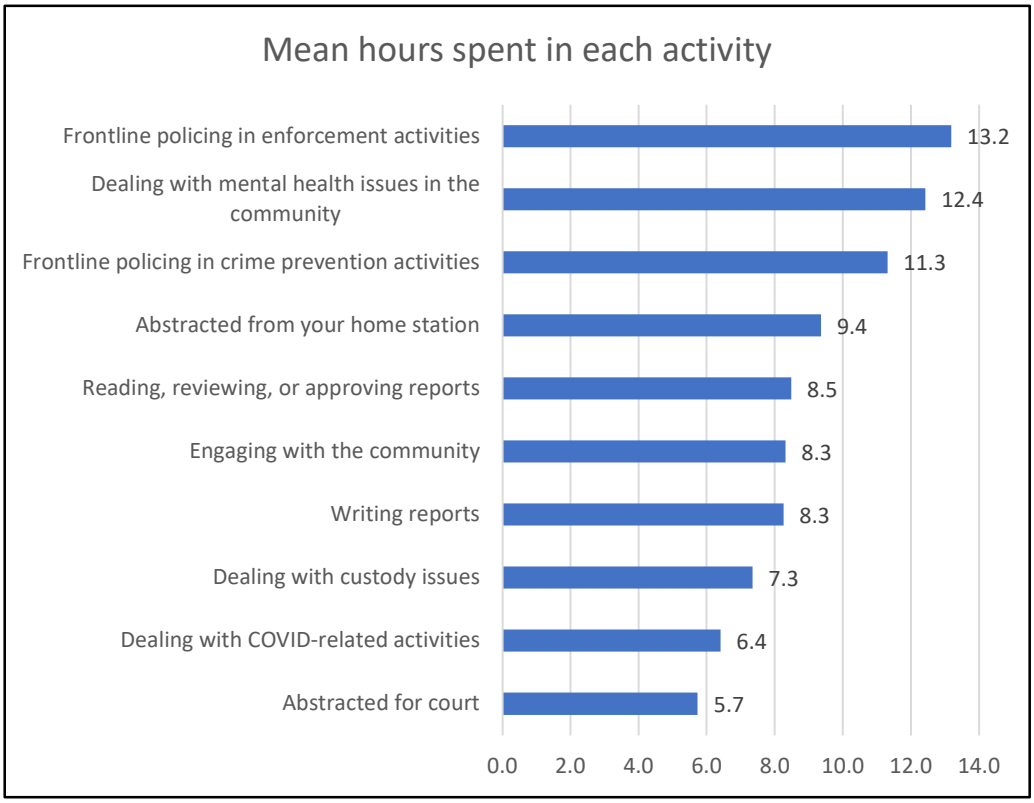


**FIGURE 5. MEAN HOURS SPENT IN EACH ACTIVITY**

**Work Activities: Between-group differences of note**

Follow-up analysis determined that the likelihood that an officer would engage in 70% of activities examined in this study depends on gender and/or job type. These activities are shown in Table 9. No such differences were observed with respect to the other three activities: reviewing reports, dealing with COVID-19 related issues and engaging with the community. Examination of the data in Table 9 support the following observations:

- Male officers without children were the most likely to spend time in all seven work activities where differences were observed.
- Female officers with children were the least likely to spend time in all seven work activities where differences were observed.
- Officers without children, regardless of their gender, were more likely to be abstracted for court, spend time dealing with custody issues, dealing with mental health issues in the community.
- Male officers were more likely than female officers to spend time in crime prevention activities and enforcement activities when childcare status is taken into account (i.e. male parents compared to female parents).

Again, we suspect that these differences are due in whole or in part to the fact that female officers with children are more likely to work in an office while officers without children are, regardless of gender, more likely to work in Response policing.

**TABLE 9. WORK ACTIVITIES WITH BETWEEN-GROUP DIFFERENCES**

| Work activity | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abstracted from your home station | 23.5% | 26.9% | 17.3% | 24.7% |
| Abstracted for court | 23.8% | 36.1% | 17.0% | 32.1% |
| Frontline policing in crime prevention activities | 42.8% | 51.0% | 32.0% | 38.8% |
| Dealing with custody issues | 39.3% | 52.9% | 34.8% | 48.6% |
| Frontline policing in enforcement activities | 50.9% | 57.2% | 35.9% | 45.2% |
| Dealing with mental health issues in the community | 48.5% | 59.4% | 45.7% | 54.8% |
| Writing reports | 71.3% | 75.5% | 63.8% | 72.1% |

## 4.3 Other indicators of officers' work demands

Time off work is critically important to employee wellbeing as well as organisational productivity. Research has consistently shown that employees do a better job when they are able to take time off from their work. Not only do they report lower stress and better health, time off work is also associated with higher productivity. Taking time away from work allows employees to spend time doing things they enjoy and to reconnect with their family and friends.

We included a number of questions in the survey to help tap into this issue. More specifically we asked officers how many hours they spent in work per week in total, how much time they spent working at home outside of regular work hours, and how much time they spent traveling to and from work. We also asked officers how often

they had time to take an uninterrupted break for a meal or a rest during their shift. Responses to these questions are shown in Table 10.

**TABLE 10. TOTAL HOURS SPENT AT WORK AND OUTSIDE OF WORK**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total work hours per week | 43.9 | 44.4 | 44.0 | 41.5 | 45.0 |
| Hours spent working at home outside of regular work hours (only among officers who reported working at home) | 4.9 | 5.6 | 3.5 | 5.0 | 4.4 |
| **How often does officer have time for uninterrupted break during their shift** | | | | | |
| Never/Rarely (i.e. once or twice per week) | 49.6% | 49.5% | 50.3% | 47.5% | 51.0% |
| About half the time | 22.4% | 20.6% | 23.7% | 24.6% | 23.0% |
| Always/Most of the time (i.e. four or five times per week) | 27.9% | 30.0% | 25.9% | 27.9% | 26.0% |

The data shown in Table 10 support the following observations. First, Police Scotland officers work hard – an average of 43.9 hours per week. Second, we note that just over one in ten of the officers in our sample (12.1%) reported doing work at home outside their regular work hours. These officers spend an additional 5 hours in work per week. Third, approximately half of the officers in our sample indicated that they rarely if ever had time for an uninterrupted break at work – a finding that is completely consistent with the fact that many reported that they were stressed because they did not have the resourced needed to get the work done, that they did not understand what to focus their work efforts on, and that barriers at work made it hard to get things done.

Finally, we assessed officer workload by asking our respondents to tell us how many times in the past six months they used time off to take care of personal/family issues, had a rest day cancelled or disrupted, a leave cancelled or disrupted, and/or been called into work when they were on a rest day or an annual leave. For each of these questions (see Table 11) we calculate and report: (1) the mean number of times on average officers had their leave/rest day cancelled (total sample), (2) the percentage of officers who reported a value greater than 0 (i.e. had leave or rest day cancelled), and (3) the mean number of times people had their leave/rest day cancelled amongst the subsample of officers who reported a value greater than 0 (i.e. it was cancelled).

We found that officers in the sample used time off to take care of personal or family issues twice on average in the past six months. Approximately half of officers (51.1%) had a rest day cancelled or disrupted. Among these officers, this occurred 5.5 times on average. Approximately one in four officers (28.2%) had leave cancelled or disrupted and one in four officers (26.9%) reported being called in to work when they were on a rest day or annual leave.

The following observations are supported by the data in Table 11:

- A substantive number of the officers in the sample had a rest day cancelled or disrupted (51.1%) and had to take time off work to take care of personal/family issues (42.6%). The fact that officers reported that both of these drains on their personal time had happened approximately 5 times in the past six months supports the idea that Police Scotland would find it difficult to get the work done if officers did not come in on the time off.
- Police Scotland often calls (an average of three times in a six-month period) officers into work on their day off or when there are on leave -- 28.2% of the officers in the sample reported that they had had their leave cancelled or disrupted and 26.9% stated that they had been called into work of their day off/when they were on annual leave.

These findings are unfortunate given the strong link between having the ability to take time off work and employee wellbeing. They are, however, consistent with the data reported earlier in terms of work stress and work demands and support the idea that Police Scotland is under-resourced and has an organisational culture that acts as a barrier to workplace efficiency.

**TABLE 11. OTHER WORK DEMANDS**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Used time off to take care of personal/family issues?** | | | | | |
| Mean times | 2.1 | 2.4 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 1.6 |
| % Greater than 0 | 42.6% | 49.5% | 35.8% | 48.2% | 31.6% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 4.3 | 5.1 | 5.1 |
| **Had a rest day cancelled or disrupted?** | | | | | |
| Mean times | 2.8 | 2.9 | 3.7 | 1.5 | 2.5 |
| % Greater than 0 | 51.1% | 52.7% | 61.1% | 35.9% | 46.4% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 6.1 | 4.1 | 5.4 |
| **Had leave cancelled or disrupted?** | | | | | |
| Mean times | 0.9 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| % Greater than 0 | 28.2% | 27.7% | 34.6% | 20.3% | 27.2% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.5 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| **Been called in to work when you were on a rest day or annual leave?** | | | | | |
| Mean times | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| % Greater than 0 | 26.9% | 30.8% | 31.3% | 15.9% | 21.5% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 2.6 | 3.0 |

## Other Indicators of Officers' Work Demands: Between-group differences of note

Neither gender nor parental status were associated with the likelihood that an officer would have time for an uninterrupted break. We did, however, note a number of other differences in our measures of work demands and time off work that are associated with either gender and/or parental status. The following differences of note were observed in the data from the 2020 WWCS:

- Female police officers with children at home spent fewer hours per week in work (41.5) than either their female counterparts without children (45.0) or male officers with (44.4) or without (44.0) children.
- Parents (male: 49.5% and female: 48.2%) were more likely to use time off to take care of personal or family issues than non-parents (male: 35.8% and female: 31.6%) regardless of their gender.
- Male officers without children (61.1%) were substantively more likely than any of the other groups of officers in the sample to have a rest day cancelled.
- Female officers with children (35.9%) were substantively less likely than any of the other group of officers in the sample to have a rest day cancelled.
- Male officers (parents: 30.8% and non-parents: 31.3%) were more likely to be called in to work when they were on a rest day than female officers (parents: 15.9% and non-parents: 21.5%).

## 4.4 Summary: Stressors

In this chapter, we reported survey results for two categories of stressors: those found in the work environment and those linked to demands faced at work. The data covered in this section support a number of conclusions with respect to the stressors Police Scotland officers typically face at work. First, the majority of the officers in the sample are frustrated and stressed by workplace barriers that make it hard for them to get work done, insufficient resources to do the work required, and a fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19. Second, a plurality of officers experienced higher levels of work stress because of the multiple competing ever-changing priorities that they juggle at work. The amount of stress these officers face because of the unpredictability and uncertainty of their work demands is exacerbated by their perception that the culture of Police Scotland makes it hard for them to seek help. Third, none of the key workplace stressors experienced by the officers in this sample are related to the job itself but instead have more to do with the organisational culture within Police Scotland and with resourcing decisions. Fourth, many officers report that they are very worried and stressed about the impact of COVID-19 on their own health and the health of their family. These findings are not surprising given the data showing that most of the officers in the sample feel that Police Scotland has not implemented any policies or practices to protect either officer health or the health of officers' families during the pandemic.

We can also draw a number of conclusions with respect to the work demands handled by the officers in this sample. First, Police Scotland officers work hard – an average of 43.9 hours per week. Second, the majority of officers in our sample spend their time in activities that are indirectly related to policing the community (i.e. writing reports, reading and reviewing reports, and dealing with mental health in the community. Just under half of the sample of officers spend time in various activities related to traditional frontline policing operations (i.e. engaging with the community, enforcement activities, crime prevention activities, custody issues). Third, we also note that the pandemic has impacted how officers spend their time with just under half of our informants reporting that they spend approximately 10% of their time each week dealing with COVID-19 related matters. Fourth, approximately half of the officers in our sample indicated that they rarely if ever had time for an uninterrupted break at work – a finding that is completely consistent with that data presented earlier regarding the work-related stressors faced by Police Scotland officers.

Finally, the data presented in this chapter imply that Police Scotland would find it difficult to fulfil their mandate if officers did not come in to work when they are supposed to have time off. More specifically we note that approximately half of the officers in our sample had a rest day cancelled or disrupted in the six months prior to the study being done, one in four officers had leave cancelled or disrupted and one in four officers reported being called in to work when they were on a rest day or annual leave. These findings are unfortunate given the strong link between having the ability to take time off work and employee wellbeing. They are, however, consistent with

the data reported earlier in terms of work stressor and work demands and support the idea that Police Scotland is under-resourced and has an organisational culture that acts as a barrier to workplace efficiency.

Analysis of the data on work environment stressors and work demands revealed a number of between-group differences associated with gender, parental status, or both gender and parental status.

We observed three gender differences of note when the officer's parental status was taken into consideration: (1) male officers were more likely than female officers to experience high levels of stress due to their "not having enough resources to do their work" ; (2) male officers were more likely than female officers to spend time in crime prevention activities and enforcement activities; and (3) male officers were more likely to be called in to work when they were on a rest day than female officers. These three gender differences were observed for both the parents and non-parents in the sample.

Parents also differed from non-parents in a number of important ways. Regardless of their gender parents were more likely than those without children to: (1) experience high levels of stress because "workplace barriers make it hard to get work done," and (2) to use time off to take care of personal or family issues than non-parents. On the other hand, officers without children were more likely than officers of the same gender with children to: (1) experience high levels of stress due to their "not having enough resources to do their work" and because they perceived that the public had a negative image of police officers, (2) be abstracted for court, spend time dealing with custody issues, and spend time dealing with mental health issues in the community.

Finally, we also identified a number of gender differences in stressors/demands that also depended on the parental status of the respondent. More specifically we note that: (1) in all cases where we noted between-group differences in the extent to which officers found any of the work stressors included in our analysis burdensome (12 stressors), we observed that female parents reported significantly lower scores and male non-parents significantly higher scores with respect to the stressor being considered, (2) in cases (7 activities) where we observed a between-group difference with respect to engagement with the various policing activities included in this analysis, we found that male officers without children were most likely and female officers with children were the least likely to spend time in any of these activities, (3) female police officers with children at home spent fewer hours per week in work (41.5) than either their female counterparts without children (45.0) or male officers with (44.4) or without (44.0) children, (4) male officers without children (61.1%) were substantively more likely and female officers with children (35.9%) were substantively less likely to have a rest day cancelled.

We suspect that these gender by parental status differences are due in whole or in part to the fact that female officers with children are more likely to work in an office while male and female officers without children are more likely to work in Response policing.

# Chapter 5: Strain outcomes

Strain outcomes are in the middle of our theoretical framework (see Figure 1) -- predicted by the workplace stressors discussed in Chapter 4 and predictors of the wellbeing outcomes featured in Chapter 6. In the sections below we review our findings with respect to the incidence of the following forms of strain in our sample of Police Scotland officers: work-life conflict and job stress.

## 5.1 Work-life conflict

Work-life conflict occurs when the pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. We included four different measures in the 2020 WWCS to help us better understand the levels of work-family conflict in our sample of police officers: work role overload, family role overload, work interferes with family, and family interferes with work. Details on each are given below.

### 5.1.1 Work role overload and family role overload

Role overload is defined as a "a type of role conflict that results from excessive demands on the time and energy supply of an individual such that satisfactory performance is improbable." (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Two types of overload are examined in this study: work role overload (defined as feeling rushed, time crunched and physically and emotionally exhausted and drained by all the demands one faces at work) and family role overload (defined as feeling rushed, time crunched and physically and emotionally exhausted and drained by all the demands one faces at home). High levels of each form of role overload are problematic for organisations and employees alike as research has found that overload is strongly linked to increased absenteeism, poorer physical and mental health, greater intent to turnover and increased benefits costs. Employees who are overloaded are also less likely to agree to a promotion, to attend career relevant training, and often cut corners at work. Work and family role overload data are shown in Table 12.

**TABLE 12. WORK AND FAMILY ROLE OVERLOAD**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Work Role Overload** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Low | 31.2% | 34.6% | 28.3% | 31.0% | 27.5% |
| Moderate | 43.0% | 42.0% | 41.2% | 46.4% | 44.7% |
| High | 25.8% | 23.3% | 30.5% | 22.6% | 27.8% |
| **Family Role Overload** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 2.1 |
| Low | 64.2% | 59.4% | 76.7% | 48.0% | 72.0% |
| Moderate | 25.7% | 30.8% | 17.3% | 29.8% | 22.5% |
| High | 10.1% | 9.9% | 5.9% | 22.2% | 5.6% |

The following observations can be drawn from the data in this table. First, by examining the mean role overload scores calculated using the total sample we note that, on average, Police Scotland officers are experiencing moderate levels (2.9) of work role overload and low levels (2.3) of family overload. Second, overload at work is

significantly higher than overload at home. Third, officers are twice as likely to report high levels of work role overload (25.8%) than they are to report high levels of family role overload (10.1%). Taken together these data, imply that for the officers in the sample, role overload is more likely to be a function of all they have to do at work rather than the demands associated with their roles at home.

### 5.2.1 Work interferes with family and family interferes with work

Two additional indicators of work-life conflict were included in this study - Work interferes with family (WIF) and Family interferes with work (FIW). Work interferes with family occurs when participation in the family role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the work role (e.g. when an officer misses a child's school play because they have to work late). Family interferes with work occurs when participation in the work role is made more difficult by virtue of the family role (e.g. when an officer has to turn down a promotion which requires relocation because their family does not want to move). FIW can come from caring for children and/or caring for elderly dependents or spending time and energy in the family domain. Each of these sources of interference was measured by a single item in the survey. Data on the WIF and FIW of the officers in the sample are provided in Table 13 and Table 14. When examining the data in these two tables the reader needs to keep in mind that while all officers who completed the survey could complete the survey items regarding WIF, only the subset of officers with children and/or elderly dependents could respond to the three FIW items. To help the reader we include the number of people who responded to each of the items in the measure in the first column of Table 14.

**TABLE 13. WORK INTERFERES WITH FAMILY**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Work Interferes with Family** | | | | | |
| Mean | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.3 |
| Low | 17.8% | 16.9% | 16.6% | 18.3% | 21.2% |
| Moderate | 31.5% | 28.8% | 32.2% | 35.8% | 33.2% |
| High | 50.7% | 54.3% | 51.1% | 45.9% | 45.6% |

**TABLE 14. FAMILY INTERFERES WITH WORK**

| | Sub-group size (N) | Mean | % Low | % Moderate | % High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Making arrangements for children while I work involves a lot of effort | 1324 | 3.9 | 11.8% | 15.2% | 73.0% |
| Making arrangements for elderly relatives while I work involves a lot of effort | 1049 | 3.2 | 26.2% | 29.3% | 44.5% |
| My family life often keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like on my job/career. | 2136 | 2.2 | 70.4% | 14.7% | 14.9% |

The following conclusions regarding work-life conflict of Police Scotland officers can be supported from the data in these two tables. First, work interferes with family is a problem for many of the officers who responded to this survey. Half (50.7%) of our respondents report high levels of family interferes with work (the average WIF score for the total sample is 3.5 which is considered high). Second, work schedule and the amount of time spent working are the most problematic aspects of the police officer job when it comes to WIF This conclusion is supported by the average mean scores on the following three items included the FIW scale: (1) My work schedule often conflicts

with my personal/family life (3.9), (2) My work takes time I would like to spend with family or friends (3.7), and (3) My work makes it hard to be the kind of parent I would like to be (3.5). Third, FIW is problematic for police officers with children at home as evidenced by the high mean score (3.9) officers gave to this FIW item and the fact that three-quarters (73.0%) of the officers with children in the sample agreed that making arrangements for children while they work involves a lot of effort. While fewer officers report that work makes it hard for them to make arrangements for their elderly relatives (mean score of 3.2 indicates moderate levels of FIW) the fact that half of the officers with elderly dependents (44.5%) experience high family interference with work because of eldercare is cause for concern. Finally, it is interesting to note that the majority of police officers in our sample do not perceive that their family is getting in the way of time spent on the job and in career development (only 15% of the sample report this type of FIW). Between-group differences in FIW are illustrated in Figure 6.

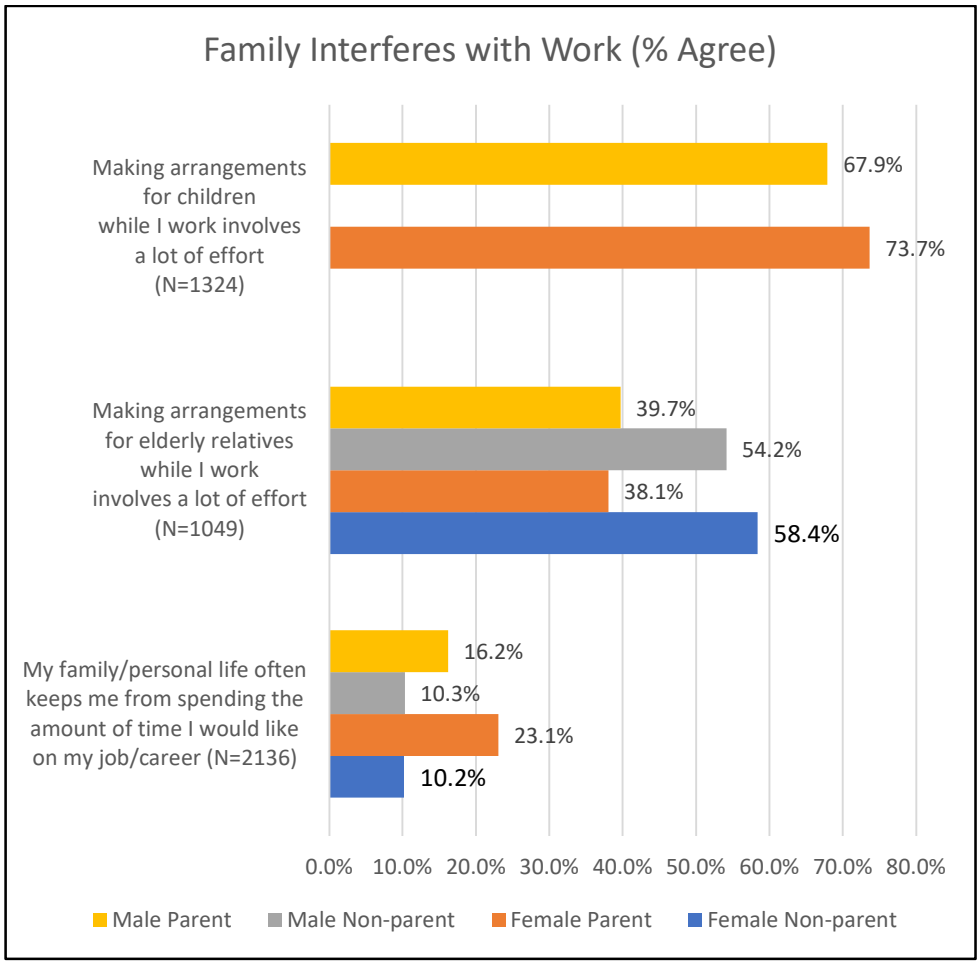


**FIGURE 6. FAMILY INTERFERES WITH WORK (% AGREE)**

## 5.3 Job-related stress

Job-related stress is defined as the collection of harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job-related stress is operationalised in this study as the average score of 6 items in the survey questionnaire. This scale has been used in academic research for several decades and validated multiple times across many organisational contexts (see Appendix A, Table 27, for reference).

During the pandemic just over half (51.9%) of the police officers who responded to the 2020 WWCS reported high levels of job stress. Another one in three (31.3%) reported moderate levels of job stress (see Table 15). There were no substantive between-group differences in the level of job stress reported, suggesting that the stress comes with the role itself and where the officer works rather than the gender of the officer or whether they have children.

**TABLE 15. JOB-RELATED STRESS**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Job-related Stress** | | | | | |
| Mean | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| Low | 16.8% | 16.7% | 15.9% | 17.9% | 17.6% |
| Moderate | 31.3% | 30.9% | 32.4% | 31.0% | 30.8% |
| High | 51.9% | 52.3% | 51.7% | 51.1% | 51.6% |

## Work-life Conflict: Between-group differences of note

We noted a number of between-group differences with respect to the likelihood that an officer would experience higher levels of work life conflict. In the first case the difference was associated with the officer's gender:

- Male officers were more likely to experience higher levels of work interferes with family (male parent: 54.3% and male non-parents: 51.1%) than their female counterparts (female parent: 45.9% and female non-parent: 45.6%)

In three cases, the difference could be attributed to whether the officer had children:

- Officers without children were more likely to experience high levels of work role overload (male: 30.5% and female 28.8%) than officers with children (male parent: 23.3% and female parent: 22.6%) regardless of the gender of the officer.
- Officers without children (male: 54.2% and female: 58.4%) were more likely than officers with children (male: 39.7% and female: 38.1%) to agree that making arrangements for elderly relatives while they work involves a lot of effort.
- Officers with children (male: 16% and female: 23%) were more likely than officers without children (male and female officers: 10%) to agree that their family life often kept them from spending the amount of time they would like on their job/career.

The last differences depended on both the gender of the officer and parental status as female officers with children were substantially more likely (22.2%) to experience higher family role overload than any other group in the sample (male parents: 9.9%, male non-parent: 5.9% and female non-parent: 5.6%). We also note that female officers with children were more likely than male officers with children to say that their family life kept them from spending time in career-enhancing activities.

## 5.4 Summary: Strain outcomes

The 2020 WWCS included the following indicators of employee strain: work-life conflict (operationalised as work role overload, family role overload, work interference with family, and family interference with work) and job stress. The results show that the typical officer in this sample reports moderate levels of work role overload, lower levels of family role overload, and high levels of work interferes and job stress. The extent to which FIW is a problem for officers depends on the circumstances at home.

The strain experienced by the officer depends to a great extent on whether the officer has children and to some extent on the officer's gender. More specifically, we note that while officers with children (particularly mothers) report higher levels of family role overload than those without children, the reverse is observed when we look at work role overload -- officers without children report higher levels of work role overload than do their counterparts with children. Male officers report higher levels of work interferes with family than their female counterparts while officers of both genders who have children at home report higher levels of family interferes with work. There were no substantive between-group differences in the level of job stress reported, suggesting that the stress comes with the role itself and where the officer works rather than the gender of the officer or whether they have children.

# Chapter 6: Wellbeing outcomes

As shown in the theoretical framework of Figure 1, in this study we consider the impact of the stressors and strains on two sets of wellbeing outcomes: employee wellbeing outcomes and employer wellbeing outcomes. Employee wellbeing outcomes are operationalised using measures of perceived stress, burnout at work, burnout at home, and physical health. We also included measures to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual officers as well as recognised indicators of employer wellbeing such as absenteeism and presenteeism. While we distinguish between employer and employee wellbeing in our framework the reader should be aware that this distinction is somewhat artificial in nature as all the indicators of employee wellbeing outcomes considered in this study are also likely to negatively impact the employer (e.g. an employee who is suffering from high levels of stress and burnout is unlikely to be as productive as one who has a low burnout score).

## 6.1 Employee wellbeing

### 6.1.1 Stress outcomes

Perceived stress is defined as the extent to which a person perceives (appraises) that the demands they face exceed their ability to cope. Individuals who report high levels of perceived stress are generally manifesting the symptoms we associate with "*dis*tress", including nervousness, frustration, irritability, and generalised anxiety. Burnout refers to a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged (chronic) stress. It occurs when one feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. Burnout affects health, leading to physical and mental health problems. Work-related outcomes of higher levels of burnout include job dissatisfaction, professional mistakes, absenteeism, intention to give up the profession, and neglect. We measured burnout in the context of work and in the context of home and family life as early research has shown that many people are feeling increased stress at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We asked officers to rate their own physical health by comparing themselves to others their age on a scale of 1=Poor to 5=Excellent. Table 16 shows the results of the survey for the measure of perceived stress, burnout at work and at home, and physical health.

Analysis of these data support the idea that the "typical" police officer in our sample reports moderate levels of perceived stress (mean stress score of 2.6), is in moderately good health (mean physical health score of 3.0), moderate levels of burnout at work (mean burnout at work score of 2.5) and low levels of burnout at home (mean burnout at home score of 1.4). More information can be obtained by looking at the frequency data which provides a more nuanced view of the wellbeing of the police officers in the sample.

Examination of these data support the following conclusions. First, moderate to high levels of officer stress seem to be systemic within Police Scotland at this time. Just over half of the officers in our sample (57.6%) reported moderate levels of perceived stress while approximately one in three (38%) reported high levels of stress. Only 6% of the officers in our sample reported low levels of perceived stress. Second, we were surprised to note that one third of the officers in the sample reported that they were in poor/fair physical health. This is surprising given the age (younger) and gender (mostly male) make-up of the sample and the type of job they perform. We would expect a higher proportion of officers to report that they are in good to excellent physical health than is in fact the case. Third, it is concerning that 16% of our sample report high levels of burnout at work while another 29% report moderate levels of burnout. Our concern stems from two factors. First, burnout typically manifests itself when chronic stress is not attended to (i.e. it takes time to manifest itself). The high number of officers with moderate levels of stress within Police Scotland at this time are at increased risk of exhibiting higher levels of

burnout if the work environment stressors identified in this report are not attended to. Second, our concern stems from research on the consequences of burnout (e.g. fatigue, alcohol consumption, poorer physical health, heart problems, professional mistakes) which demonstrates the consequences to the officers, their families, and the communities they police of having potentially one in five of your police officers with high levels of burnout.

**TABLE 16. STRESS OUTCOMES**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived stress[2]** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| Low (1 < Score < 1.6) | 6.0% | 6.7% | 6.0% | 3.9% | 6.5% |
| Moderate (1.6 < Score < 2.8) | 55.8% | 57.3% | 56.0% | 54.3% | 53.5% |
| High (2.8 < Score < 5) | 38.1% | 36.1% | 37.9% | 41.7% | 40.0% |
| **Burnout at Work** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Low (1.0 < Score < 2.5) | 55.5% | 57.1% | 51.3% | 59.3% | 54.6% |
| Moderate (2.5 < Score < 3.5) | 28.8% | 27.4% | 31.4% | 28.1% | 29.2% |
| High (3.5 < Score < 5.0) | 15.6% | 15.5% | 17.3% | 12.6% | 16.2% |
| **Burnout at Home** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 1.4 |
| Low (1.0 < Score < 2.5) | 86.5% | 84.4% | 91.7% | 79.2% | 90.3% |
| Moderate (2.5 < Score < 3.5) | 8.6% | 9.9% | 4.3% | 13.5% | 7.5% |
| High (3.5 < Score < 5.0) | 4.9% | 5.7% | 4.0% | 7.3% | 2.3% |
| **Physical Health** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 |
| Poor/Fair | 37.2% | 41.3% | 38.9% | 29.6% | 31.9% |
| Good | 35.3% | 35.7% | 33.6% | 37.4% | 34.7% |
| Very good/Excellent | 27.6% | 23.0% | 27.5% | 33.0% | 33.4% |

### 6.1.2 Impacts of COVID-19 on wellbeing

Early research in the area shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it harder for employees to balance work and family. These increased levels of work-life conflict have, in turn, negatively impacted employee wellbeing. To get a better understanding of how changes in their work and personal situations since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted Police Scotland officers we asked respondents to tell us the extent to which they had experienced a number of changes related to individual and organisational wellbeing since the beginning of the pandemic. We divided these impacts into employee outcomes and employer outcomes.

Changes to the following individual wellness indicators were considered in this study: (1) reductions in the amount of time they spend on recreational activities, the amount of energy they have, the amount of time they have for

[2] The cut-offs for the ranges of low, moderate, and high perceived stress are different than those used with other measures in this study to accommodate for the fact that respondents typically understate their feelings of stress (see Table 27 for references to past research).

themselves, the amount of sleep they get, and (2) increases in their use of leave days to cope with family demands and in the number of hours they work in the evening and on weekends. Responses to these questions are shown in Table 17.

**TABLE 17. EMPLOYMENT CHANGE INDEX – EMPLOYEE**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reduce the amount of time you spend on recreational or leisure activities** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 26.9% | 26.4% | 25.7% | 26.2% | 30.3% |
| Somewhat reduced | 17.9% | 19.2% | 13.8% | 20.5% | 18.3% |
| Considerably reduced | 55.3% | 54.5% | 60.5% | 53.3% | 51.4% |
| **Reduce the amount of energy you have** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 63.9% | 63.2% | 67.9% | 55.8% | 67.1% |
| Somewhat reduced | 20.2% | 20.8% | 18.1% | 23.4% | 18.9% |
| Considerably reduced | 15.9% | 16.0% | 14.0% | 20.8% | 14.0% |
| **Reduce the amount of time you have for yourself** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 68.9% | 64.5% | 78.1% | 51.0% | 82.1% |
| Somewhat reduced | 16.2% | 17.2% | 13.6% | 21.4% | 12.8% |
| Considerably reduced | 14.9% | 18.3% | 8.2% | 27.6% | 5.1% |
| **Reduce the amount of sleep you get** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 70.9% | 68.5% | 75.7% | 61.7% | 77.9% |
| Somewhat reduced | 17.6% | 19.9% | 13.8% | 21.4% | 14.2% |
| Considerably reduced | 11.5% | 11.5% | 10.4% | 16.9% | 7.9% |
| **Use your leave days to cope with family demands** | | | | | |
| No increase | 80.0% | 75.7% | 87.8% | 70.0% | 87.8% |
| Somewhat increased | 10.4% | 12.8% | 6.8% | 13.4% | 7.1% |
| Considerably increased | 9.6% | 11.4% | 5.4% | 16.6% | 5.1% |
| **Adjusted your work hours – now work more in evenings and on the weekend** | | | | | |
| No increase | 90.7% | 87.5% | 95.9% | 84.0% | 96.9% |
| Somewhat increased | 3.7% | 4.6% | 2.3% | 6.3% | 1.5% |
| Considerably increased | 5.5% | 7.9% | 1.8% | 9.7% | 1.5% |

The picture changes slightly if one considers the data showing any change over time (i.e. we combined somewhat and considerable change responses) in the indicators of interest. This analysis is provided in Figure 7 and shows that almost three-quarters (73%) of the sample reported that the amount of time that officers spend on recreational, or leisure activities had declined over time as had the amount of energy the officer had (36%), the amount of time they have for themselves (31%), and the amount of sleep that they get (29%).

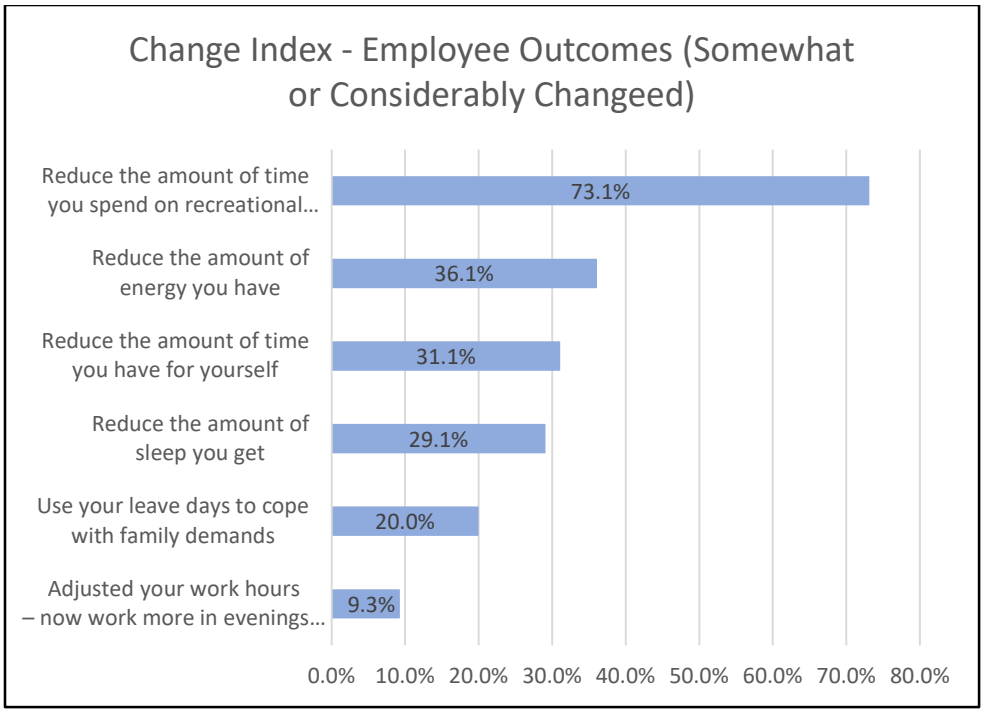


**FIGURE 7. EMPLOYEE CHANGE INDEX - EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES SOMEWHAT OR CONSIDERABLY REDUCED**

Changes to the following employer wellness indicators were considered in this study: (1) reductions in work productivity, personal income, and work hours, and (2) increases in the likelihood that an officer will apply for a transfer or promotion and in absenteeism. Data on the indicators of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the wellbeing of the employer (i.e. Police Scotland) are shown in Table 18 and Figure 8.

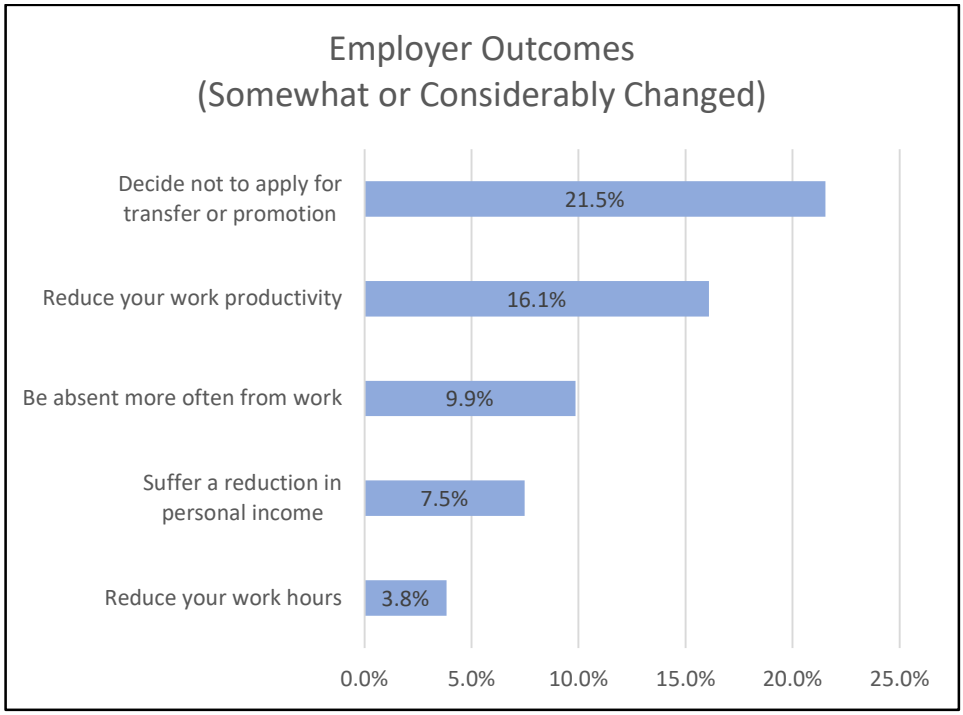


**FIGURE 8. EMPLOYMENT CHANGE INDEX - EMPLOYER OUTCOMES SOMEWHAT OR CONSIDERABLY CHANGED**

TABLE 18. EMPLOYMENT CHANGE INDEX – EMPLOYER

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Decide not to apply for transfer or promotion** | | | | | |
| No increase | 78.5% | 74.7% | 79.2% | 77.7% | 87.0% |
| Somewhat increased | 7.5% | 9.8% | 6.3% | 6.0% | 5.4% |
| Considerably increased | 14.0% | 15.5% | 14.5% | 16.3% | 7.7% |
| **Be absent more often from work** | | | | | |
| No increase | 90.1% | 90.4% | 90.0% | 89.1% | 90.6% |
| Somewhat increased | 4.2% | 4.6% | 4.3% | 4.0% | 3.3% |
| Considerably increased | 5.7% | 5.0% | 5.7% | 6.9% | 6.1% |
| **Reduce your work productivity** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 83.9% | 81.7% | 81.6% | 89.5% | 87.5% |
| Somewhat reduced | 10.9% | 13.0% | 11.9% | 8.0% | 7.4% |
| Considerably reduced | 5.2% | 5.3% | 6.5% | 2.6% | 5.1% |
| **Suffer a reduction in personal income** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 92.5% | 91.9% | 92.3% | 91.4% | 95.2% |
| Somewhat reduced | 4.3% | 4.4% | 4.8% | 5.1% | 2.5% |
| Considerably reduced | 3.2% | 3.7% | 2.9% | 3.4% | 2.3% |
| **Reduce your work hours** | | | | | |
| No reduction | 96.2% | 96.0% | 97.3% | 94.3% | 96.7% |
| Somewhat reduced | 2.4% | 2.7% | 1.6% | 3.4% | 1.8% |
| Considerably reduced | 1.4% | 1.3% | 1.1% | 2.3% | 1.5% |

Examination of the data in Table 18 and Figure 8 support the following conclusions. First, very few officers reported that they had reduced their work hours during the pandemic – a result that is not surprising given the data presented earlier in this report regarding the perceptions on the part of these police officers that the service is understaffed and under-resourced. We do, however, note that approximately one in five officers (21.5%) decided not to seek promotion or transfer during the pandemic while one in six officers (16.5%) reported that they had experienced reductions in their work productivity and 10% reported an increase in absenteeism at this time.

## 6.2 Emotional reactions to COVID-19

A disruptive change like the COVID-19 pandemic can be expected to cause a variety of emotional reactions. For the purpose of this research, we can define “emotions” as strong feelings deriving from one’s circumstances, mood or relationships with others. Emotions are human responses to internal events (e.g. thoughts, dreams, etc.) and external events that can emerge suddenly or slowly and change over time. Research has identified common emotions that are felt by most people. We asked respondents about which emotions they have felt since the start of the pandemic. The emotions in the list from the survey can be categorised as passive or active, and as positive or negative.

Table 19 shows the percentage of officers in the total sample that said they had felt each emotion. The most common reactions of the officers in the sample were the negative feelings of frustration (81.1%) and uncertainty (61.6%). More than one third of officers also expressed negative feelings of anger, being unmotivated, restlessness, boredom, and sadness. The most common positive emotion was feeling thankful (26.4%).

**TABLE 19. EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO COVID-19**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frustration | 81.1% | 84.3% | 81.2% | 79.9% | 74.3% |
| Uncertainty | 61.6% | 61.6% | 55.3% | 71.0% | 62.2% |
| Anger | 40.5% | 44.3% | 40.1% | 35.9% | 36.3% |
| Unmotivated | 38.4% | 36.6% | 43.0% | 31.5% | 42.2% |
| Restless | 37.2% | 37.4% | 38.2% | 38.2% | 34.6% |
| Boredom | 35.5% | 32.7% | 43.3% | 27.0% | 38.0% |
| Sadness | 34.3% | 31.7% | 27.1% | 42.1% | 44.0% |
| Thankful | 26.4% | 25.5% | 18.3% | 34.3% | 33.3% |
| Resentment | 25.7% | 28.8% | 21.2% | 29.5% | 21.5% |
| Loneliness | 22.0% | 15.7% | 24.7% | 25.1% | 30.4% |
| Happiness | 19.4% | 20.4% | 17.3% | 17.8% | 21.7% |
| Outrage | 17.1% | 18.9% | 17.3% | 15.0% | 14.8% |
| Guilt | 15.3% | 13.9% | 10.6% | 24.5% | 17.0% |
| Hope | 14.8% | 13.4% | 13.9% | 16.4% | 17.8% |
| Apathy | 12.8% | 15.9% | 13.5% | 6.7% | 10.1% |
| Grief | 11.7% | 11.2% | 8.7% | 15.0% | 14.1% |
| Calm | 10.0% | 10.3% | 10.6% | 7.5% | 10.6% |
| Disoriented/Dazed | 7.6% | 8.4% | 8.9% | 4.2% | 6.9% |

This kind of data is often best visualised in a word cloud (see Figure 9).

Theoreticians and counselling professionals typically categorise emotions along two continuous dimensions: (1) active vs passive emotion, and (2) positive vs negative emotion. This categorization (referred to as the circumplex model of emotions) allows us to describe four groups of emotions: active negative, active positive, passive negative and passive positive categories. The officer emotion data reported in Table 19 was used to determine the frequency with which the officers in the sample reported each category of emotion as shown in Figure 10. Almost half of the officers in the sample reported that the pandemic had generated active negative (43.9%) emotions such as frustration, resentment, outrage, anger and uncertainty. Approximately one in five reported that they had experienced active positive (22.9%) emotions (i.e. happy, thankful), and passive negative (22.2%) emotions such as sadness, guilt, loneliness, apathy, grief, and boredom. A very small group reported feeling passive positive (12.4%) emotions (i.e. calm, hope). Active responses (66.8%) outweighed passive responses (33.6%). Negative responses (66.1%) outweighed positive responses (35.3%). Finally, we note that while there are a few between-group differences with respect to the specific emotions that officers report, there are no differences when we look at groupings (i.e. all groups are most likely to report active negative emotions and least likely to report passive positive emotions).


FIGURE 9. COVID-19 EMOTIONS

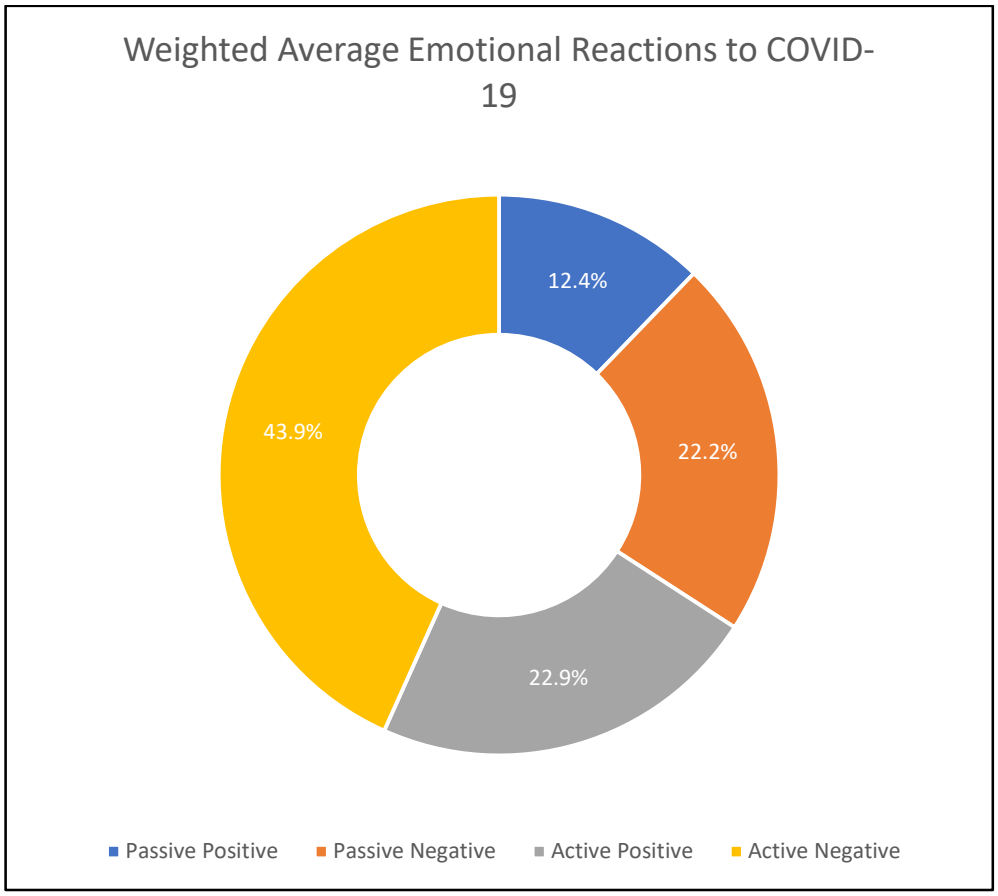


FIGURE 10. WEIGHTED AVERAGE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO COVID-19

**Employee and Employer Wellbeing: Between-group differences of note**

Statistical analysis of the mean scores on the wellbeing indicators included in this study support the following conclusions regarding the relationship between employee wellbeing, gender, and parental status:

- There were no substantive between-group differences in perceived stress or burnout at work. This is an interesting finding given that research shows that men typically under-report how stressed they are.
- There are no appreciable differences with respect to the type of emotions triggered by the pandemic.
- Burnout at home depends on both gender and parental status. More specifically we note that parents report higher levels of burnout from their home situation than non-parents and that female police officers with children report higher levels of burnout at home than do male officers with children
- Female police officers with children were more likely than male officers with children to perceive that they were in better physical health. This gender difference was not observed in the sample of officers without children.

Differences in how the pandemic had impacted the amount of time the officer spent in a number of activities associated with wellbeing were, on the other hand, associated with gender, parental status or both gender and parental status as follows:

- Regardless of gender, parents were more likely than non-parents to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable increase in the number of hours they work in the evening and on weekends, a considerable increase in their use of leave days to cope with family demands, and a considerable decrease in the amount of time they have for themselves.
- Female officers with children were more likely than any other group of officers to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of sleep they get (17%), the amount of energy they have (21%), and the amount of time they have for themselves (i.e. mothers were more likely to report considerable reduction than fathers – 28% versus 18%).
- Male officers without children were more likely to state that the pandemic had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of time they spend on recreational and leisure activities (61%).

Finally, we note that there were no between-group differences in terms of the indicators of employer wellbeing included in our analysis.

## 6.2 Employer wellbeing

Many organisations use absence from work as a measure of productivity (if workers are not on the job, the work is certainly not being done). While companies expect a certain amount of absenteeism and recognise that some absenteeism is even beneficial to the employee, too much absenteeism can be costly in terms of productivity and is often symptomatic of problems within the workplace.

### 6.2.1 Absenteeism

Although absenteeism is an individual behaviour, it is considered an employer outcome because it is the employer that pays its cost. In this study, we quantified absenteeism by asking respondents to tell us how many days of work they had missed over the last 6 months because of health issues, because of childcare issues, because of emotional and physical fatigue, because of eldercare issues, because they wanted to avoid issues at work or because a leave day was not granted. For each of these questions we calculate and report: (1) the mean number

of times people were absent for this reason (total sample), (2) the percentage of officers who reported a value greater than 0 (i.e. were absent from work for this reason), and (3) the mean number of times people were absent from work for this reason amongst the subsample of officers who reported a value greater than 0 (i.e. were away for this reason). All the results associated with the absenteeism data are presented in Table 20.

Table 20 is sorted by the mean number of times people were away as calculated using the total sample as this allows the reader to immediately identify the most "costly" forms of absenteeism from the organisation's perspective (i.e. highest number of days off work in six month period).

Why are officers missing work? Examination of the data in Table 20 show that one in three are missing work because of health issues and issues associated with COVID-19. Other appreciable sources of absenteeism include childcare/family interferes with work (14%), emotional or mental fatigue (12%), physical fatigue (8%), and eldercare concerns (8%). These data support the following conclusions: (1) work demands and work stressors are contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to the physical and emotional exhaustion of Police Scotland officers, (2) family interferes with work is also contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to concerns with childcare and eldercare, and (3) COVID-19 is exacerbating the above issues by contributing to a high level of absenteeism (each officer who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average) which is likely to increase the demands placed on other officers who need to work in their place.

What are the costliest forms of absenteeism at the time that the study was done (from most costly to least costly)? Our data would implicate absenteeism due to health problems, to COVID related issues, and to emotional/mental fatigue (i.e. taking a mental health day off work).

**TABLE 20. ABSENTEEISM MEANS AND RATES FOR TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 2286)**

| | Mean number of times people were absent (1) | Percentage who reported a value greater than 0 (2) | Mean amongst officers who reported greater than 0 (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of health problems | 7.3 | 30.4% | 21.4 |
| Not gone to work because of self-isolation/other COVID related issues | 4.5 | 34.1% | 12.0 |
| Taken a day off work because you were emotionally or mentally fatigued | 2.3 | 12.2% | 17.0 |
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of children-related problems | 1.0 | 14.4% | 6.3 |
| Taken a day off work because you were physically fatigued | 1.0 | 8.3% | 10.8 |
| Taken a day off work to avoid issues at work (abusive colleagues, difficult boss, difficult work environment) | 0.7 | 4.3% | 14.2 |
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of problems concerning elderly relatives | 0.6 | 7.5% | 7.3 |
| Taken a sick day off work because a leave day was not granted | 0.1 | 1.5% | 3.5 |

### 6.2.2 Presenteeism

Presenteeism refers to workers coming in to work while sick, overly fatigued, or otherwise unproductive. It is an important workforce management issue that has been linked to diminished performance and worsening health and general wellbeing. The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States has also shown that presenteeism costs organisations more than absenteeism.

Several questions were included in this survey to give us an idea of the prevalence of presenteeism in Police Scotland in the midst of a pandemic. More specifically, we asked respondents how many times in the last six months they had gone to work when they were physically unwell and mentally unwell. We treated these data in a similar manner to that described in conjunction with absenteeism and calculated: (1) the mean number of times officers exhibited each of these forms of presenteeism (total sample), (2) the percentage of officers who reported a value greater than 0 on either of these two forms of presenteeism (i.e. went to work when they were physically/mentally unwell) and, (3) the mean number of times people exhibited either of these two types of presenteeism amongst the subsample of officers who reported a value greater than 0 (i.e. went to work when they were physically/mentally unwell). Results are shown in Table 21.

The data present very strong support for the idea that the pressures to attend work when physically or mentally unwell (i.e. presenteeism) are very high at Police Scotland. The following data support this conclusion. First, we note that over the past six months more than half of the sample (53.5%) reported going to work when they were physically unwell. We also note that this is not a rare occurrence with those officers who report to work when physically sick did so on average 8 times over the course of the last six months. Second (and in some ways more problematically) we note that just over a third (34.9%) of the officers in our sample said they went to work when they were mentally unwell. This, along with the fact that the subgroup of officers who reported to work when mentally or emotionally fatigued did so on average a staggering 19 times over the course of the last year is consistent with our data on the wellbeing of Police Scotland officers particularly the data on burnout at work.

**TABLE 21. PRESENTEEISM**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gone to work when you were physically unwell?** | | | | | |
| Mean times (total sample) | 4.3 | 4.9 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 3.7 |
| % Greater than 0 | 53.5% | 54.5% | 49.3% | 56.3% | 54.8% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 8.0 | 9.1 | 8.2 | 6.5 | 6.8 |
| **Gone to work when you were mentally unwell?** | | | | | |
| Mean times (total sample) | 6.7 | 6.6 | 7.2 | 6.3 | 6.8 |
| % Greater than 0 | 34.9% | 31.7% | 34.9% | 40.1% | 37.8% |
| Mean times if greater than 0 | 19.3 | 20.9 | 20.5 | 15.7 | 18.0 |

### Absenteeism and Presenteeism: Between-group differences of note

There were relatively few between-group differences in either the absenteeism or presentism data. In fact, we note only two differences of note:

- Parents (male: 37.7% and female: 39.8%) were more likely than non-parents (male: 28.8% and female: 28.4%) to report not going to work at least once because of COVID related issues.

- Female parents (40.1%) were more likely than male parents (31.7%) to report going to work when they were mentally unwell. No such gender difference was observed in the sample of officers without children.

## 6.4 Summary: Wellbeing outcomes

We examine two different sets of indicators of wellbeing in this study: indicators of employee wellbeing (i.e. mental and physical health) and indicators of employer wellbeing (i.e. presenteeism and absenteeism). The data support a number of important conclusions regarding the mental health and physical health of the officers in this sample and the implications for the employer.

First, we would argue that a substantive number of the police officers in our sample can be considered to be at risk when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing. This conclusion is supported by a number of pieces of data from this study. First, we note that just over half of the officers in our sample (57.6%) reported moderate levels of perceived stress while approximately one in three (38%) reported high levels of perceived stress. Only 6% of the officers in our sample reported low levels of perceived stress. Second, almost one in five (16%) of our respondents report high levels of burnout at work while another 29% report moderate levels of burnout. These findings are consistent with the fact reported earlier in this report that half of the officers in the sample reported high levels of job stress.

Several issues make the findings with respect to officer burnout within Police Scotland particularly concerning. First, burnout typically manifests itself when chronic stress is not attended to and will not go away on its own. The pandemic is likely to exacerbate issues associated with chronic stress rather than alleviate them. Second, police officer burnout is a function of their experiences at work not at home (only 5% of the officers in this sample report high burnout from what they face at home). This means that the employer has to take actions to address many of the chronic stressors that officers experience at work. Third, the consequences of high levels of burnout (i.e. fatigue, alcohol consumption, poorer physical health, heart problems, professional mistakes) on the officers themselves, their families, and the communities they work in are potentially profound. Finally, it would appear that the officers who are experiencing higher levels of stress or burnout within Police Scotland are either not encouraged and/or unable to take time off work to recover from the demands they face on the job. This last assertion is supported by the fact just over a third (34.9%) of the officers in our sample said they went to work when they were mentally unwell and did so on average a staggering 19 times over the course of the last six months. These data are also in line with our findings regarding the work demands placed on Police Scotland officers and the work environment stressors they encounter on the job. Efforts have to be made to improve the mental health of Police Scotland officers as the stress and burnout levels exhibited by this group are not sustainable over time.

Second, we note that many officers are reacting emotionally to the changes at work and at home imposed by COVID-19. The most common reactions of the officers in the sample were the active negative feelings of frustration (81.1%) and uncertainty (61.6%). More than one third of officers also expressed negative feelings of anger, being unmotivated, restlessness, boredom, and sadness. The most common positive emotion was feeling thankful (26.4%).

Third, given the age (younger) and gender (mostly male) make-up of the sample and the type of job performed (police officer) we were surprised to find that one third of the officers in the sample reported that they were in poor physical health. These findings suggest that the mental strain many are under along with the demands they face at work are taking their toll. This interpretation of the data is consistent with the data showing that one in three of the officers in our sample are missing work because of health issues and because of issues associated

with COVID-19 while one in ten take time off because they are physically exhausted. The impact of COVID-19 on absenteeism is particularly troubling as our data show that each officer who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average over the past six months. The question then becomes, given issues with respect to understaffing at Police Scotland, how can the service manage these higher levels of absenteeism without negatively impacting the wellbeing of the officers who need to work on their days off to meet service delivery expectations.

Fourth, we note that the pandemic has had little impact on how the officers in our sample spend their time at work or at home. Very few report changes in when they work, the hours they work, their use of leave days, the amount of sleep they get, the amount of time they have for themselves or the amount of energy that they have. The data collected for this study does, however, imply that the pandemic has negatively impacted the career choices of the approximately one in five officers who said that they have decided not to seek promotion or transfer during the pandemic. We also note that one in five officers reported that they had experienced reductions in their work productivity because of the pandemic while 10% reported an increase in absenteeism at this time.

Finally, while we did note several areas where wellbeing varies according to the gender and/or parental status of the employee, we also feel it is important to highlight those areas where no such differences occurred. We note, for example, that the extent to which officers reported that they suffered from perceived stress and burnout at work depended on neither their gender nor whether they had children at home. We also found no appreciable gender or parental status differences with respect to the type of emotions triggered by the Pandemic (most officers expressed negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and guilt). There were also relatively few between between-group differences in the absenteeism and presenteeism data.

Regardless of their gender, the officers in the sample with children were more likely than non-parents to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable increase in the number of hours engaged in work-related activities in the evening and on weekends, a considerable increase in their use of leave days to cope with family demands, and a considerable decrease in the amount of time they have for themselves. Parents were more likely than non-parents to report that they had missed work because of COVID-19 related issues.

While gender does not, on its own, predict employee wellbeing, there were a number of gender differences in wellbeing associated with some combination of gender and parental status. For example:

- Police officers with children report higher levels of burnout from their home situation than non-parents.
- Female police officers with children report higher levels of burnout at home than do male police officers with children
- Female police officers with children were more likely than male officers with children to perceive that they were in better physical health. This gender difference was not observed in the sample of officers without children.
- Female officers with children were more likely than any other group of officers to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of sleep they get, the amount of energy they have, and the amount of time they have for themselves.
- Female police offices with children were more likely than male police officers with children to report going to work when they were mentally unwell. No such gender difference was observed in the sample of officers without children.
- Male officers without children were more likely than were officers in the other three groups to state that the pandemic had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of time they spend on recreational and leisure activities.

# Chapter 7: Moderators

Based on theory and previous research in the area we expect that the stressors officers experience at work will predict officer strain (i.e. work-life conflict) and that strain will, in turn, predict employee and employer wellbeing (see our theoretical framework shown in Figure 1). We also expect that these relationships will be moderated by factors such as how the officers cope with stress, the amount of control they have over their work and family domains, their level of resilience, their gender, age and parental status and their situation at work (e.g. rank, years of service, role) as shown in Figure 1. The term moderating variable refers to a variable that can strengthen, diminish, negate, or otherwise alter the association between stressor and strain or between strain and wellbeing.

Findings with respect to sample demographics and the officer's work profile were reported in Chapter 3 as this information provides the reader with important contextual information to help with the interpretation of the other survey results. Results relating to the other moderators included in our analysis (e.g. coping strategies, resilience, control over work and control over family) are reported in the following sections of this chapter.

## 7.1 Coping strategies

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing". Coping mechanisms are ways in which external or internal stress is managed, adapted to, or acted upon. Researchers have classified coping mechanisms in a myriad of different ways. In this study we follow the lead of Lazarus, Folkman and Pearlin by dividing coping strategies into two broad categories:

- **Adaptive Coping Strategies**: Strategies that contribute to the resolution of the stress response (problem solving and emotional focused coping), and
- **Maladaptive Coping Strategies**: Strategies that that are designed to push the stressor out of awareness and that often result in an increase in the number of challenges faced over time.

Adaptive coping strategies can be further classified into two groups: (1) problem-focused, and (2) emotion-focused).

**Problem-Focused Coping Strategies**: Individuals who use problem-focused coping actively seek to resolve the situation that is causing them stress; they try to figure out what the problem is and deal with it (i.e. to apply situational control). Problem-focused coping strategies are directed at taking care of the problem and thereby overcoming the stress. Adaptive problem-focused coping strategies included in the measure of coping used in this study are colour-coded "Green" in Figure 11 and include:

- Prioritise and do what is important first,
- Try and be very organised so that I can be on top of things,
- Make a conscious effort to separate my work life from my family life,
- Schedule, organise and plan my time more carefully,
- Recognise that I cannot do it all and set limits (say no),
- Request help from people who have the power to help me,
- Make sure that I take time off from work (breaks, lunch),
- Delegate work to others,
- Seek help from family and friends,
- Seek help from colleagues at work, and
- Seek counselling from a mental health professional

**Emotion-Focused Strategies** are designed to reduce the emotional distress that accompanies the problem and are designed to give someone "peace of mind" by reducing their sense of arousal. Emotion-focused strategies emphasise emotion regulation, cognitive restructuring, and reappraisal of the stressful situation. Seeking social support from others is a common adaptive form of emotion-focused coping. Adaptive forms of emotion-focused coping included in the measure used in this study are colour-coded yellow in Figure 11 and include:

- Watch TV,
- Read,
- Get some exercise,
- Talk to family and friends, and
- Talk to a colleague at work.

**Maladaptive Coping Strategies** are used by people who wish to push the stressor out of their awareness. Maladaptive coping strategies include avoidance, withdrawal, rumination, resignation, substance abuse and isolation from friends and support groups. The use of maladaptive strategies can, over time, negatively impact the individual who uses such tactics and often exacerbates their mental health issues. Maladaptive forms of coping included in the measure used in this study are colour-coded red in Figure 11 and include:

- Work harder and try and do it all,
- Get by on less sleep than I would like,
- Eat,
- Drink alcohol,
- Reduce the quality of the work I do,
- Smoke,
- Take medication to calm myself down, and
- Spend time alone.

In the survey we asked the officers about how often they use each of these 24 strategies to cope with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses ranged from never (1), to sometimes/occasionally (3) to frequently/all the time (5). We began our analysis of these data by calculating the average use (i.e. means) of each of these 24 strategies. Results from this analysis are shown in Figure 11. When examining this figure, we want to see our officers making high use of adaptive problem and emotion focused coping strategies (i.e. strategies shown in yellow and green) and low use of maladaptive coping methods (i.e. strategies shown in red). We do not want to see high use of maladaptive strategies and low use of problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies.

What did we find? On the good news/bad news front, we observed that none of the coping strategies are used regularly (score greater than 3.5) by the officers in the total sample to cope with stress. We did, however, find that the officers in the sample make moderate use (score of 2.5 to 3.5) of the following seven coping mechanisms: prioritizing what is important (3.0), trying to be organised (3.0), watching TV (3.0), getting by on less sleep (2.9), separating work life from home life (2.8), getting exercise (2.7), and eating (2.6). Three of the strategies that are more commonly used (i.e. prioritizing, trying to be organised, separating work from life) fall into the adaptive problem-focused grouping, two (getting exercise and watching TV) and are considered adaptive emotion-focused strategies while two (getting by on less sleep, eating to cope with stress) are maladaptive and likely to contribute to increased stress over the long term.

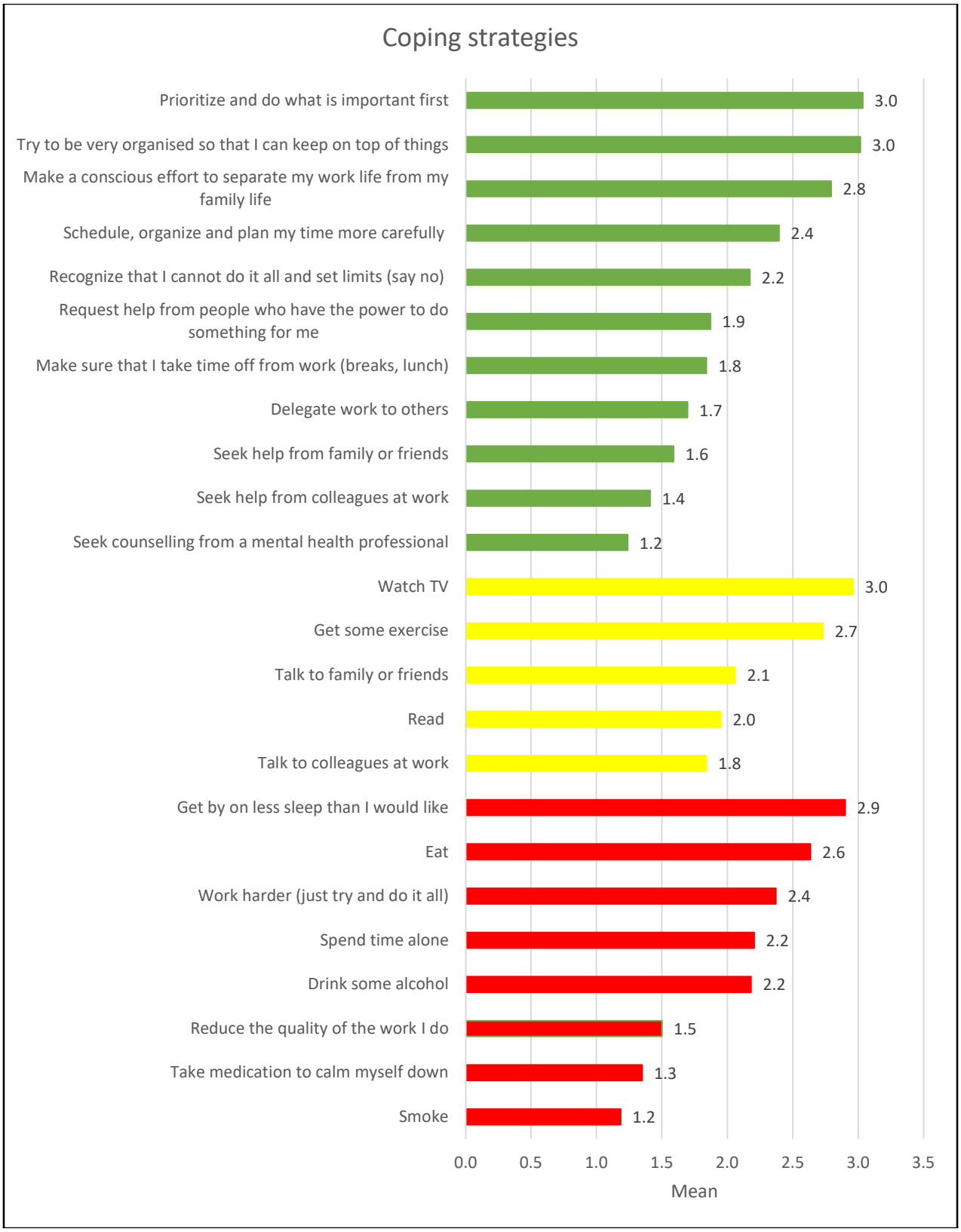


**FIGURE 11. COPING STRATEGIES**

The second step in our analysis of the coping strategies involved using the same principal component analysis method that we used to analyse the work environment stressors in Chapter 4 to group our 24 coping strategies to reflect how the officers in our sample cope with stress. Using this method, we found that the officers in the sample use six different approaches to cope with stress. The six groups of coping strategies along with the items that are included in each group and the type of coping they represent are listed below:

- Eat and watch TV (Maladaptive in the long term)
    - Eat
    - Watch TV
- Set priorities (Adaptive, problem-focused)
    - Prioritise and do what is important first
    - Try to be very organised so that I can keep on top of things
    - Schedule, organise and plan my time more carefully
    - Delegate work to others
- Read and Exercise (Adaptive, emotion-focused)
    - Read
    - Get some exercise
- Set limits and compartmentalise (Adaptive, problem-focused)
    - Make a conscious effort to separate my work life from my family life
    - Recognise that I cannot do it all and set limits (say no)
    - Make sure that I take time off from work (breaks, lunch)
- Seek social support (Adaptive, combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused)
    - Talk to family or friends
    - Talk to colleagues at work
    - Seek help from family or friends
    - Seek help from colleagues at work
- Seek professional help (Adaptive, problem-focused)
    - Take medication to calm myself down
    - Seek counselling from a mental health professional

Of note, many of the maladaptive strategies included in our measure (e.g. smoke, drink, cut back on sleep) are not included in any of the above factor groupings suggesting that officers may use only one of these strategies at a time. The items that are not included in any of these groupings are discussed below.

Results obtained from our analysis of the coping factors are shown in Table 22. The most frequently used coping strategy among these components was to eat and watch TV which was used with moderate frequency on average (2.8). The only other component used with moderate frequency was to set priorities (2.5). Included with setting priorities are the related strategies of trying to be organised, planning and delegating when possible.

How do the police officers in our sample cope? Examination of the factor scores in Table 22 support the following observations.

The most commonly used strategy to cope involves *eating and watching* TV (30% make high use of this strategy). Both activities take the officer's mind off what is bothering them (i.e. the stressors) but it is unlikely to do anything towards reducing the source of stress over the long term. Overeating can also contribute to weight gain and a decline in physical health over time – as such we feel that this strategy can be maladaptive in the long run. On a positive note, 30% of the officers in the sample say they rarely use this maladaptive strategy to cope with stress.

**TABLE 22. HOW DO THE POLICE OFFICERS IN OUR SAMPLE COPE WITH STRESS? FACTOR SCORES**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Eat and watch TV** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.9 |
| Low | 30.6% | 32.5% | 25.7% | 38.3% | 26.5% |
| Moderate | 39.8% | 41.3% | 42.0% | 36.0% | 36.3% |
| High | 29.6% | 26.3% | 32.3% | 25.7% | 37.1% |
| **Set priorities** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| Low | 45.4% | 45.1% | 51.2% | 41.5% | 41.4% |
| Moderate | 39.0% | 39.2% | 36.0% | 39.5% | 42.4% |
| High | 15.6% | 15.7% | 12.9% | 18.9% | 16.1% |
| **Read and Exercise** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Low | 51.0% | 57.9% | 51.7% | 47.6% | 37.0% |
| Moderate | 35.5% | 32.1% | 35.4% | 35.2% | 44.2% |
| High | 13.4% | 10.0% | 12.9% | 17.2% | 18.9% |
| **Set limits and compartmentalise** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| Low | 64.6% | 64.1% | 64.3% | 63.0% | 67.9% |
| Moderate | 26.0% | 24.7% | 28.3% | 28.9% | 23.2% |
| High | 9.3% | 11.2% | 7.3% | 8.0% | 8.9% |
| **Seek social support** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.9 |
| Low | 84.7% | 88.6% | 84.8% | 82.2% | 77.5% |
| Moderate | 12.7% | 10.0% | 12.5% | 15.5% | 16.7% |
| High | 2.6% | 1.3% | 2.7% | 2.3% | 5.7% |
| **Seek professional help** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Low | 90.3% | 92.1% | 90.2% | 85.6% | 90.4% |
| Moderate | 12.7% | 10.0% | 12.5% | 15.5% | 16.7% |
| High | 2.6% | 1.3% | 2.7% | 2.3% | 5.7% |

*Set priorities* (which includes prioritizing, being organised, planning their time and delegating work to others) is the second most commonly used set of coping strategies – but only used on a regular basis by 16% of the sample. This grouping includes a number of adaptive problem-focused strategies which have been proven to be highly effective ways to deal with stressors that are contributing to mental health issues. Unfortunately, almost half the sample (45%) say they rarely cope with stress by setting priorities and getting organised. Examination of the means describing the use of the various items included in this factor (see Figure 11) suggests that the low use of this approach might be due in whole or in part to the officer's reluctance to delegate work to others.

*Read and exercise* can be considered to be an adaptive emotion-focused strategy as engaging in these types of activities provides individuals with an opportunity for emotion regulation (exercise) and/or a pleasurable distraction from the stressors that can preoccupy one's thoughts. Just over 10% of the sample regularly cope in this manner – a score that may be due to the higher use of exercise as a way to cope in this sample. Unfortunately, approximately half (51%) of the officers in the sample rarely cope by exercising and/or reading.

One in ten officers make high use of one other key adaptive problem-focused coping strategy included in this analysis: *set limits and compartmentalise*. Individuals who use this strategy set limits, make an effort to separate work from family, and make sure that they take the time off from work (have lunch, take their breaks). Unfortunately, 65% of officers do not use what has been found to be an effective set of strategies to cope with stress – probably because the demands on their time make it hard to use this strategy at work. This interpretation is consistent with the data reported earlier regarding how often officers take an uninterrupted break at work.

The police officers in the sample do not seek *social support* – from friend, family or colleagues at work. Nor do they seek *professional help* to cope with stressors they are exposed to (only 3% of our respondents make high use of these two strategies). In fact, we note that 85% of the sample rarely cope by seeking social support while 95% rarely cope by seeking professional help. This is unfortunate given the proven utility of using such approaches to cope effectively with stress.

Statistically speaking not all the coping items included in the survey fell into any of the coping groupings identified in Table 22Table 22. All but one of the unique coping strategies (i.e. Request help from people who have the power to do something for me) represented maladaptive ways to cope. In Table 23, we present our analysis of the percent of the sample that make high, moderate and low use of the one adaptive problem-focused and the six maladaptive coping strategies (i.e. get by on less sleep, work harder and try and do it all, spend time alone, drink some alcohol, reduce the quality of the work I do and smoke) that did not group with any other strategy. When looking at these data the reader should keep in mind that the higher the percent of the sample who rarely use the six maladaptive strategies the better in terms of mental and physical wellbeing. Alternatively, the higher the percent who make moderate to high use of each of these six maladaptive strategies, the greater the cause for concern.

On a positive note, we observe that very few officers cope by smoking cigarettes (95% rarely) or by reducing the quality of the work they do (91%). More concerning are the data showing that

- 28% of the officers in the sample cope several times a week or more by cutting back on their sleep (approximately half – 44% - state that they rarely if ever cope in this manner),
- 20% of the officers in the sample cope several times a week or more by just trying to do it all and working harder (two-thirds of the officers rarely cope in this manner), and
- 15% of the officers in the sample drink alcohol several times a week or more as a way of coping with stress (70% of the officers rarely cope in this manner).

Also of note are the data showing that 15% of the officers in the sample cope by seeking to spend time alone several times a week or more (72% rarely cope in this manner). Most research in the area suggests that too much social isolation can take a serious toll on an individual's physical and mental health. That being said, research has also found that spending time on one's own can be beneficial as long as the individual balances time alone with time spent maintaining strong and supportive social connections. The fact that the officers in this sample rarely cope by seeking social support suggests that time alone may be maladaptive over the long run for the officers who pursue this approach.

**TABLE 23. OTHER WAYS THAT POLICE OFFICERS COPE WITH STRESS**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spend time alone** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.6 | 1.8 | 2.6 |
| Low | 72.2% | 83.5% | 55.3% | 85.6% | 57.9% |
| Moderate | 12.9% | 9.4% | 18.8% | 6.9% | 17.9% |
| High | 14.9% | 7.1% | 25.9% | 7.5% | 24.2% |
| **Smoke** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Low | 94.8% | 95.1% | 94.1% | 94.5% | 95.3% |
| Moderate | 2.2% | 1.8% | 2.3% | 2.6% | 2.9% |
| High | 3.0% | 3.1% | 3.6% | 2.9% | 1.8% |
| **Drink some alcohol** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
| Low | 70.0% | 68.1% | 69.4% | 71.6% | 74.1% |
| Moderate | 15.3% | 15.8% | 14.7% | 16.0% | 14.2% |
| High | 14.7% | 16.2% | 15.9% | 12.3% | 11.7% |
| **Work harder (just try and do it all)** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| Low | 63.5% | 66.8% | 63.0% | 58.2% | 61.5% |
| Moderate | 16.3% | 15.8% | 15.6% | 15.8% | 18.8% |
| High | 20.2% | 17.4% | 21.5% | 26.1% | 19.6% |
| **Reduce the quality of the work I do** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| Low | 90.5% | 90.7% | 87.4% | 94.3% | 90.8% |
| Moderate | 6.1% | 5.8% | 7.6% | 3.4% | 7.1% |
| High | 3.5% | 3.5% | 5.0% | 2.3% | 2.1% |
| **Get by on less sleep than I would like** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 2.7 |
| Low | 44.7% | 43.6% | 44.7% | 42.7% | 49.1% |
| Moderate | 17.1% | 16.1% | 19.0% | 16.3% | 17.5% |
| High | 38.2% | 40.3% | 36.3% | 41.0% | 33.4% |
| **Request help from people who have the power to do something for me** | | | | | |
| Mean | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Low | 79.2% | 81.2% | 77.2% | 79.6% | 77.3% |
| Moderate | 12.6% | 11.3% | 14.6% | 12.1% | 13.5% |
| High | 8.2% | 7.6% | 8.3% | 8.3% | 9.2% |

The last "orphan" coping strategy shown in Table 23, request help from people who have the power to do something for me, can be considered an example of an adaptive problem-focused strategy. Unfortunately, the data shows that the vast majority (79%) of the officers in the sample rarely use this approach – a finding that is consistent with what was observed with respect to seeking social support. That being said, almost one in ten (8%) of the officers in the sample make high use of this effective coping strategy.

In summary, the above data support the following conclusions: (1) the vast majority of police officers in the sample are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job, at home and associated with the pandemic, and (2) between 10% and 30% (frequency varies depending on the strategy being considered) of the officers in the sample are coping in a maladaptive manner that may in fact make things worse over time.

## 7.2 Resilience

**RESILIENCE HAS BEEN DEFINED AS AN INDIVIDUAL'S CAPACITY FOR "POSITIVE ADAPTATION IN THE FACE OF STRESS OR TRAUMA"[3] SUCH AS HEALTH PROBLEMS, WORK STRESSORS, AND FAMILY PROBLEMS. WE MEASURED OFFICERS' RESILIENCE USING A WELL-ESTABLISHED 10-ITEM SCALE. TABLE 24**

Table 24 shows the average scale rating for the total sample as well as the percent of the sample with low, moderate, and high levels of resilience. Not surprisingly, given their choice of profession, the vast majority (68%) of the officers rated high on the resilience scale and only 2.2% rated low.

**TABLE 24. RESILIENCE**

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resilience** | | | | | |
| Mean | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 |
| Low | 2.2% | 1.3% | 2.6% | 3.7% | 2.5% |
| Moderate | 30.3% | 30.2% | 28.5% | 30.4% | 32.9% |
| High | 67.5% | 68.5% | 68.9% | 65.9% | 64.6% |

## 7.3 Control over work and over family

Research in the area has shown that the more control that a person perceives that they have over a stressful situation, the greater their capacity to cope with it. In the work environment, this relationship between control and demands and its prediction of stress is known as Karasek's Job Strain Model[4] (Figure 12). Karasek`s demand-control model of job strain theorises that workplace stress is a function of how demanding a person's job is and how much control the person has over their responsibilities at work. According to the model, employees with higher levels of control are better able to cope with demands than those with lower levels of control and thus report lower levels of job strain. There is a large body of empirical work which is supportive of Karasek's model

[3] Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. Child Development, 71, 543–562.

[4] Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job Demands, Job Decision Latitude, and Mental Strain: Implications for Job Redesign. Administrative Science Quarterly, 24(2), 285-308.

and the idea that higher levels of control are associated with lower levels of strain. Karasek's model of demands and control has also been shown to apply in family life.

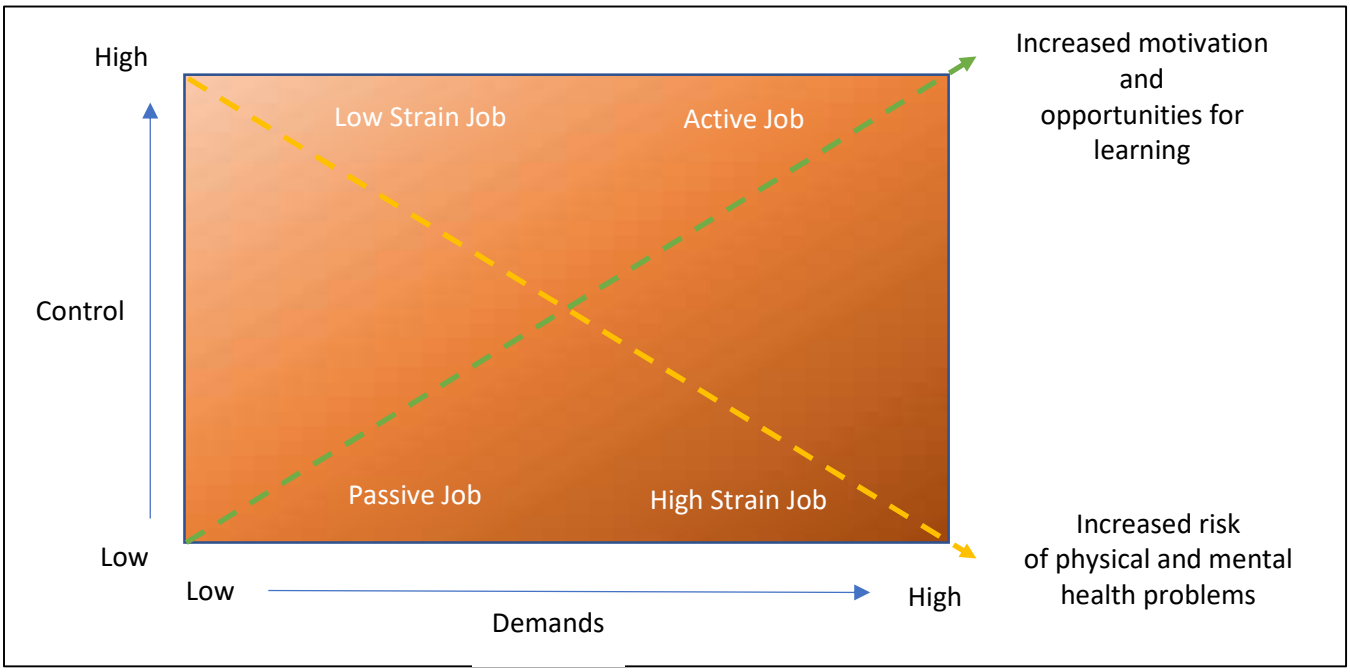


FIGURE 12. JOB STRAIN MODEL

In this study we included two measures that allowed us to classify the job of police officer using Karasek's model: one to quantify the individual's level of perceived control over their work situation, the other to quantify their level of perceived control over their family domain.

Results of our analysis of the data collected using these two measures are shown in Table 25 and Figure 13. Examination of these data support the following conclusions:

- Officers report very different levels of control over their work lives than their family lives.
- Officers in the sample have, on average, low control over work (2.3). Almost two-thirds of the officers in the sample (61%) report low levels of control over work. Only one in ten perceive that they have high levels of control over work. Paired with the high demands faced by the police officers in this sample, this puts police officers squarely in the high strain quadrant of the job strain model. Employees in high strain jobs (i.e. high work demands, low control over work) are at increased risk of physical and mental health issues – a prediction that is borne out by the data in this report.
- Officers in the sample have, on average, high control over family (3.9). Almost two-thirds of the officers in the sample (65%) report high levels of control over family. Approximately one in ten (7%) perceive that they low levels of control over family. This would suggest that with respect to their family lives many officers with children are in the active quadrant of Karasek's model while non-parents are in the passive quadrant. In either case, the fact that officers perceive higher control at home suggests that they may adapt better to increased demands at home (e.g. children staying home from school, working from home, etc.) that seem to be part and parcel of COVID-19.

TABLE 25. CONTROL OVER WORK AND CONTROL OVER FAMILY

| | Total sample (N=2286) | Male parents (N=938) | Male non-parents (N=584) | Female parents (N=359) | Female non-parents (N=405) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Control over work** | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.2 |
| Low (1.0 < Score < 2.5) | 61.0% | 57.6% | 66.8% | 55.9% | 64.9% |
| Moderate | 29.4% | 31.2% | 25.6% | 32.4% | 28.1% |
| High (3.5 < Score < 5.0) | 9.6% | 11.2% | 7.6% | 11.7% | 7.0% |
| **Control over family** | | | | | |
| Mean | 3.9 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.2 |
| Low (1.0 < Score < 2.5) | 7.4% | 10.1% | 7.1% | 6.4% | 2.5% |
| Moderate | 27.5% | 36.5% | 19.2% | 31.4% | 14.8% |
| High (3.5 < Score < 5.0) | 65.1% | 53.4% | 73.7% | 62.2% | 82.7% |

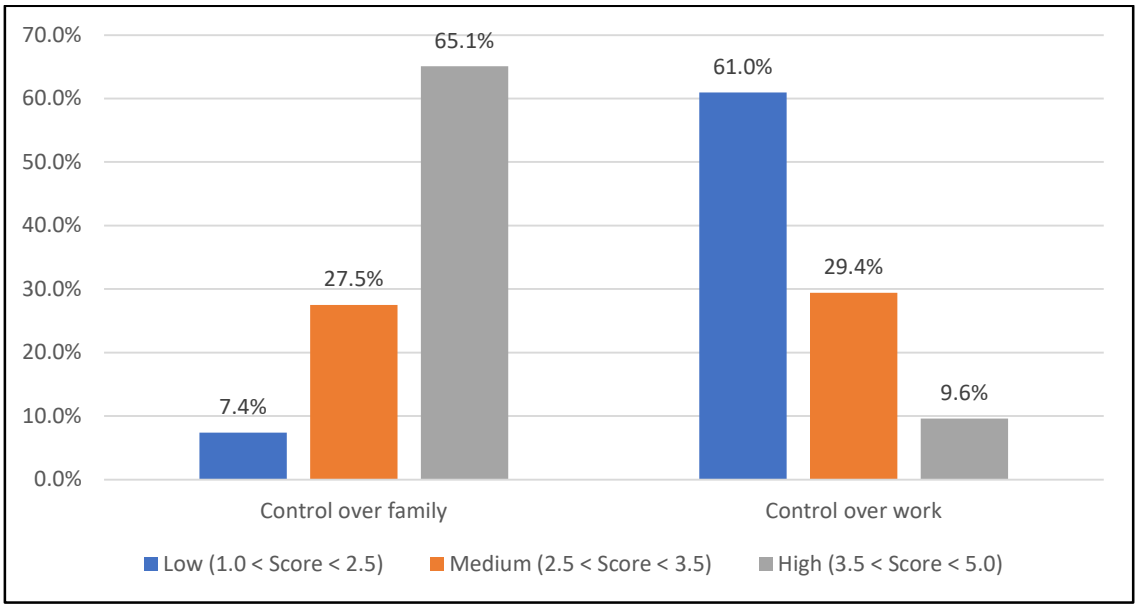


FIGURE 13. CONTROL OVER WORK AND CONTROL OVER FAMILY

**Use of Coping Strategies, Perceived Control and Resilience: Between-group differences of note**

While there are a number of between-group differences in how the officers in the sample cope with stress, most officers regardless of gender or parental status cope with stress in a very similar manner. For example, very few officers in the sample, regardless of their gender or parental status, use the following adaptive problem-focused coping strategies: (1) set limits and compartmentalise, (2) request help from people who have power to do something for me, and (3) seek professional help. Nor do police officers seek social support – from friends, family or colleagues at work. The lack of a gender difference in the use of social support is very interesting as typically women are more likely to talk about their problems with others and ask for help than are men. We speculate that the use of any of these strategies goes against the cultural norms of Police Scotland (and in fact police services in general) which is why their use is low regardless of the demographic group being considered. This is also consistent

with research with police services that shows that women police officers tend to "do police" rather than "do gender."

Also interesting are the data showing that neither gender nor parental status are associated with the use of many of the maladaptive coping strategies considered in this study. While very few people cope by smoking or reducing the quality of the work they do, the number who maladaptively cope by regularly drinking alcohol (15% high), just trying to do it all and working harder (20% high) and getting by on less sleep than they need (28% high) is approximately the same for the four different demographic groups included in our analysis.

There is one gender difference of note in how people cope with stress. More specifically we note that women regardless of whether they have children are more likely to make higher use of one of the adaptive forms of emotion focused coping included in this study, read and exercise, than are the men in the sample. Male officers with children were the least likely to use this strategy to cope.

There is one difference of note in how people cope with stress that is associated with parental status. More specifically we note that men and women without children are more likely to make high use of one of the maladaptive strategies included in this study: to cope by eating and watching TV. Men and women with children rarely use this strategy – perhaps because they just do not have the time.

Finally, we note two differences that depend on both the gender of the officer and whether the officer also has children. More specifically we find that the male officers without children in the sample are less likely to cope by setting priorities and planning their time, an unfortunate finding given the value of using this form of adaptive, problem-focused coping. We speculate that male officers without children may have just stopped trying to set priorities and manage their time as they have learnt the futility of such an approach within Police Scotland. In a similar vein we find that male and female officers without children are both more likely to cope by spending time alone. While these findings might be due to the fact that COVID-19 might have made it more difficult for these officers to socialise with others, they could be problematic if officers use this time on their own to ruminate and dwell on what is bothering them rather than determine how best to deal with the stressors they face on the job and elsewhere.

In terms of the other moderators included in this study we note the following. First, there are no substantive between-group differences in officer resilience. Second, control over family depends on the gender of the officer being asked as well as their parental status. Not surprisingly, non-parents are more likely than those with children to report high levels of control over their family domain regardless of their gender. More of a surprise, the data shows that women report higher levels of control over their family domain than their male counterparts regardless of parental status. Looking at the impact of both gender and parental status together we note that male officers with children report the lowest levels of control over their family domain (mean score of 3.6) while female non-parents reported the highest levels of control over family (mean score of 4.2). Female parents (mean score of 3.8) and male non-parents (4.0) reported levels of control over family that fell in between these two extremes. Finally, in terms of control over work, we note that while scores are relatively low across the board male and female officers without children (average control over work score of 2.2) are more likely to report low levels of control over work than are their counterparts in the sample with children (average control over work score of 2.4). Neither group, however, can be considered to perceive that they have high control over their work situation.

## 7.5 Summary: Moderators

In Figure 1 we identified moderators of the relationships between stressors and strains and between strains and wellbeing included in our analysis. In Chapter 3, we described the officers in our sample in terms of key demographics and aspects of their work profiles. The variables we focused on in Chapter 3 were selected as they can all act as important moderators of the relationships included in our theoretical framework. In this chapter, we report on our findings with respect to the other four moderators of employee wellbeing included in this study: coping mechanisms, resilience, control over work and control over family. The data support several important conclusions about how officers deal with strains and stress in their work and family lives.

First, we would argue that the vast majority of police officers in the sample are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job, at home and associated with the pandemic. Moreover, the data also provide support for the idea that many officers are coping in maladaptive (negative) ways that may make things worse over time (i.e. just working harder, trying to do it all, cutting back on sleep). This conclusion is supported by following findings from this study: (1) very few officers in the sample use either adaptive problem-focused coping strategies such as *set limits and compartmentalise* or emotion-focused coping strategies such as *seek social support from friends* , (2) very few officers set limits, make an effort to separate work from family, or make sure that they take the time off from work (have lunch, take their breaks), (3) almost none of the officers seek *professional help* to cope with the high levels of job stress, stress and burnout they are experiencing at this point in time. These findings are very unfortunate given the proven utility of using such approaches to cope effectively with stress.

Second, our data show that the officers in the sample were more likely to use emotion-focused rather than problem-focused adaptive strategies to cope with stress. While the use of emotion-focused strategies is likely to temporarily reduce the emotional distress on the officers caused by heavy work demands and work-related strain, these strategies are unlikely to help over time as they do little to address the source of the stress (i.e. the stressor). The most common forms of adaptive emotion-focused coping (used regularly by almost 40% of the officers in the sample) included watching TV and getting exercise. Deeper analysis of the data showed, however, that officers who watch TV to cope with stress often also cope by eating “comfort food” which again can contribute to negative outcomes in the long term by contributing to weight gain if abused. Somewhat positive are the data showing that one in five officers regularly cope by exercising and reading – a highly effective way to cope for police officers as an officer who is physically fit is more likely to be at a healthy weight, have a strong body, and more able to engage in the bursts of speed and power officers need while on the job. More concerning are the data showing that just over one in three (37%) of the officers rarely if ever cope in this manner.

Third, individuals who use problem-focused coping strategies are actively engaging with the problems that are causing their stress and seeking to resolve them. With one exception (*setting priorities*) the data from this study revealed that the police officers in the sample make low use of adaptive problem-focused strategies.

Fourth, on the good news/bad news front, almost all the maladaptive (negative) coping mechanisms included in the survey were used relatively infrequently by the majority of officers. The fact that the maladaptive coping strategies did not group together is also positive in that it provides support for the idea that the officers were likely to only use one maladaptive strategy at a time. This good news is offset by the bad news that many officers in the sample do engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms that could lead to serious negative outcomes: more than half of officers are likely to get by on less sleep and a third say they have at least a moderate likelihood of drinking alcohol to cope.

Fifth, and again on a more positive note, the officers in the sample reported high levels of personal resilience in the face of all the challenges they face at work and at home. These findings imply that officers have the capacity to recover quickly from the challenges they are currently facing at work and at home during the pandemic. High resilience as a personal characteristic has been found to be common among police officers across cultures. High resilience is a resource for officers to draw on from within themselves to withstand the strain and stress of policing. All resources, however, are finite. While high resilience will provide resistance to shocks through personal hardiness, it can only delay the onset of bad physical and mental health outcomes (e.g. burnout, illness) in the face of persistent strain and stress. It will not prevent them. This leads us to ask – "is the pandemic the one bridge too far" when it comes to officer wellbeing.

Sixth, the data from this study indicate that Police Scotland officers have little control over their work but have high control over their family situation. According to Karasek's Job Strain Model, the level of control that a person has over their work and family domains predicts how able they are to cope with the demands they face in this domain. Application of the basic tenants of Karasek's model to the data collected in this research provide strong support for the idea that Police Scotland officers have high strain jobs (high work demands and low control over work). This is an important finding as research using this framework has unequivocally determined that individuals in high strain jobs are more likely to experience negative physical and mental health outcomes. Findings from this study, which determined that many of the officers in this sample report high strain, stress, and burnout at work are what we would expect given the nature of the job (i.e. high demands, low control) They are also consistent with our data showing that the officers in the sample make very low use of healthy adaptive coping strategies. Low control over work can also explain why officers do not access more adaptive coping strategies as the high demands of their work reduce their energy and access to coping resources (e.g. working on weekends and holidays keeps officers away from family activities, shifts that run overtime and supplemental work from home consume time and energy needed to go out and exercise, etc.).

High control over family is common among police officers universally, a finding that can be explained by the fact that many officers enter into police service at a young age, often before starting a family, and tend to have partners who understand the demands of the job. On a positive note, officers in our sample reported high control over family. These high levels of control over the family domain help to explain why many officers in the sample report lower levels of family role overload, family interference with work and burnout at home. The high control over family reported by the officers in our sample might also help explain why most of these individuals are not experiencing the same spike in stress and burnout at home that are being observed among workers in other professions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The high levels of control at home, when considered in juxtaposition with the data showing low levels of control at work support our conclusion that high stress and burnout observed within the officer cadre of Police Scotland is mostly due to their job.

While we noted several between-group differences in how officers in the sample cope with stress, most officers cope with stress in a very similar manner. More specifically, we note that regardless of their gender or parental status, police officers make low use of the following problem-focused coping strategies: (1) set limits and compartmentalise, (2) request help from people who have power to do something for me, (3) seek professional help, and (4) seek social support. The lack of a gender difference in the use of social support is very interesting as typically women are more likely than men to talk about their problems and ask for help. We speculate that the use of such strategies goes against the cultural norms of Police Scotland (and in fact police services in general) which is why their use is low regardless of the demographic group being considered. Our interpretation of these findings is also consistent with research with police services that show that women police officers tend to "do police" rather than "do gender" (i.e. cope like their male colleagues, not like women who are not in policing). That being said, we did note that women were more likely than men to cope by reading and exercising.

In terms of parental status, we found that officers without children were more likely to cope by eating and watching TV and by spending time alone. We speculate that these findings may have more to do with the fact that parents are less likely to have much free time at home than to reflect personal preferences. We also speculate that families can be an important coping resource for officers during COVID-19 as the data suggests that those with families are less likely to use maladaptive coping strategies (e.g. dwelling on issues after leaving work, sedentary lifestyle) to cope. Officers without children were also more likely than their counterparts with children to report low control over work.

We note two differences that depend on both gender and whether the officer has children. First, we note that the male officers without children in the sample are less likely to cope by setting priorities and planning their time – a finding that we suspect might be due to the fact that the officers in this group are at the bottom of the police hierarchy and may have learnt the futility of such an approach within Police Scotland. Second, we observed that, officers without children are, not surprisingly, more likely than those with children to report high levels of control over their family domain regardless of their gender. More surprising were the data showing that women report higher levels of control over their family domain than men regardless of parental status.

Finally, we found no substantive between-group differences in resilience. This finding is not surprising as resilience is a personal characteristic or trait that should not vary with gender or change substantially when someone starts a family.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this report, we used data from the 2020 Welfare and Wellbeing in Times of COVID survey to identify the key sources of work and non-work stress facing Police Scotland officers (Chapter 4), to examine the ability of Police Scotland officers to balance competing work and family demands in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapter 5), to assess the wellbeing of Police Scotland officers who were providing an essential service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapter 6), and to determine how police officers are "coping" with changing work and family demands in times of COVID-19 (Chapter 7). Throughout the report, we have identified costs to Police Scotland of not providing needed support to officers during the COVID-19 pandemic, factors that contribute to an increased ability to manage the challenges posed by the pandemic, and factors that test the officers' welfare and wellbeing. In each chapter, we also reported findings by sub-groups to examine how gender and parental status impact each of the above issues. In the following, we summarise the key findings from this study and point out the implications of not taking action to address concerns regarding employee welfare and wellbeing moving forward. Recommendations are also provided where appropriate.

**Report Speaks to the Experience of Police Scotland's Front Line**

This report is based on a generalizable sample of officers working primarily at the rank of constable and sergeant within Police Scotland and as such helps us appreciate: (1) the challenges faced by this group of officers as they performed their expected duties during a pandemic, (2) how they coped with these challenges, and (3) the impact these challenges had on their welfare and wellbeing. The size of the sample allowed us to explore the impact of gender and parental status on the above issues.

**Stressors faced by officers at work have more to do with where they work than the type of job they are doing**

What makes the job of constable/sergeant stressful? There is a high degree of consensus within our sample of police officers working in frontline positions for Police Scotland that the following aspects of their work contribute to higher levels of workplace stress: (1) workplace barriers that made it hard for them to get work done, (2) insufficient resources to do the work required, (3) a fear of contracting and transmitting COVID-19, (4) being bogged down by administrative processes, and (5) the need to juggle multiple competing ever changing work priorities. The data also imply that the amount of stress these officers face because of the unpredictability and uncertainty of their work demands is exacerbated by their perception that the culture of Police Scotland is one that focuses on blame-laying (i.e. 'the hindsight brigade') and does not accept no for an answer.

Taken as a whole, our analysis indicates that the key workplace stressors experienced by front-facing officers within Police Scotland have less to do with the job itself and more to do with the organisational culture within Police Scotland and with resourcing decisions. This means that any effort to improve employee welfare and wellbeing needs to focus on changing those areas of the organisational culture that are negatively impacting officers' ability to do their job. Assuming that it is difficult for Police Scotland to make the case that they need more resources (particularly more human capital) we suggest that a fruitful place to start is to have the service work with communities, the Scottish Police Federation and the government to establish a set of agreed upon priorities with respect to where the service should be spending time and resources.

It has oft been said "When everything is a priority, nothing is." Our data suggest that pursuing this path is not sustainable over time and we therefore recommend that the service place a high priority on identifying a hierarchy of policing priorities.

**Overwork is likely to be an issue for many Police Scotland officers**

Overwork is the expression used to describe people who are working too hard, too much, too long, or beyond their strength or capacity to cope. Perceptions of overwork are positively associated with the amount of time spent in activities associated with one's job with the risk of feeling overworked increasing for those who work in excess of forty hours a week, those who are forced to work overtime (i.e. called in on their days off, work longer than the agreed upon workday) and who work for an organisation with a culture that makes it difficult to refuse overtime (i.e. those who fear that if they say no to work tasks or overtime they will face reprisals such as demotion or assignment to unattractive tasks or work shifts). Why should Police Scotland care if their employees are overworked? There is a significant body of research looking at the consequences of overwork on an employee's health and wellbeing which demonstrates a strong link between being overworked and a myriad of health problems including insomnia, depression, stress, and heart disease. Overwork can also result in higher levels of absenteeism, higher turnover, and greater insurance costs – all of which can negatively impact the organisation's bottom line without increasing output.

The following data support the idea that many of the front-facing officers working for Police Scotland work hard and are at risk of or are currently feeling overworked: (1) they report that on average they work 43.9 hours per week, (2) approximately half of the officers in our sample indicated that they rarely if ever had time for an uninterrupted break at work, (3) approximately half of the officers in our sample had a rest day cancelled or disrupted multiple times in the six months prior to the study being done, (4) one in four officers had leave cancelled or disrupted, and (5) one in four officers reported being called in to work when they were on a rest day or annual leave.

Which work activities consume most of these officers' time at work? Unfortunately, analysis of the data collected in this study shows that the majority of officers in our sample spend their time in activities that are indirectly related to policing the community (i.e. writing reports, reading and reviewing reports) and in dealing with tasks that might better be undertaken by other stakeholders (i.e. mental health issues in the community). Fewer than half of the officers in our sample regularly spend time in a number of activities related to traditional frontline policing operations (i.e. engaging with the community, enforcement activities, crime prevention activities, custody issues).

In summary, the data on overwork and time at work are unfortunate given the strong link between having the ability to take time off work and employee wellbeing and organisational productivity. They are, however, consistent with our data showing that many officers reported that they were stressed because they did not have the resources needed to get the work done, that they did not understand what to focus their work efforts on, and that barriers at work made it hard to get things done.

These data support the following conclusions:

- Police Scotland is under-resourced and has an organisational culture that acts as a barrier to workplace efficiency,
- Police Scotland would find it difficult to fulfil their mandate if officers did not come in to work when they are supposed to have time off, and
- Many front-facing Police Scotland officers are either overworked or at high risk of experiencing overwork in the very near future.

Our results indicate that one way to address issues associated with overwork and workplace stress would be to streamline the report writing process by either investing in technology and/or hiring civilian clerks to assist in the report writing process as is done in many Canadian services (this would allow officers to spend more time in

community policing activities) and to engage with other stakeholders to best determine how to reduce the amount of time spent on mental health calls.

**Police Scotland's front-facing officers experience high levels of job stress and work-life conflict**

What impact do these workplace stressors and work demands have on the wellbeing of police officers working in front-facing roles within Police Scotland? To begin answering this question we examined a number of indicators of officer strain (difficulties that cause worry or emotional tensions) that are likely to be predicted by the stressors included in this study. More specifically, we examined the extent to which the officers in our sample experienced high levels of job stress (a harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the demands that the job imposes on the employee overcomes their ability to cope), work role overload/family role overload (the perception that one has more to do at work or at home than can be done in the time available; feeling overwhelmed and stressed for time) and work interferes with family/family interferes with work (role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role).

During the pandemic, just over half of the police officers we surveyed reported high levels of job stress. Another one in three reported moderate levels of job stress. The fact that there were no substantive between-group differences in the level of job stress reported implies that the stress comes with the role itself and where the officer works rather than with the gender of the officer or whether they have children. Work interferes with family is also a problem for this group of officers, half of whom reported high levels of this form of work-life conflict.

Our data show that the typical officer in this sample reports moderate levels of work role overload, high levels of work interfere with family, and high levels of job stress. These findings contrast sharply with what we found when we look at challenges stemming from the family domain (officers are three times more likely to report high levels of work role overload and work interferes with family than they are to report high levels of family role overload and that their family is getting in the way of the amount of time they spend on the job).

Taken together these data lead us to conclude that at Police Scotland, the wellbeing of frontline officers is a function of the stressors and demands that they face at work rather than their circumstances at home. This means that any efforts to improve officer wellbeing need to focus on the reduction of work demands and the key work-environmental stressors that lead to strain (e.g. organisational culture, the bureaucracy, multiple competing priorities).

**Many of Police Scotland's frontline officers are at risk when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing**

A substantive number of the police officers in our sample can be considered to be at risk when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing:

- just over one in three (38%) report high levels of perceived stress while only 6% reported low levels of perceived stress, and
- approximately half of the officers in the sample report moderate (29%) to high (16%) levels of burnout at work. This is in stark contrast to the data showing only 5% report high levels of burnout from what they have to do at home.

Burnout typically manifests itself when chronic stress is not attended to and will not go away on its own. The data from this study along with previous survey work we have done with Police Scotland leads us to conclude that many frontline officers at Police Scotland are suffering from chronic stress associated with their circumstances at

work. This is worrisome given research showing that the pandemic is likely to exacerbate issues associated with chronic stress rather than alleviate them.

Officers who are suffering from chronic stress would benefit from time away from work. Unfortunately, the data from this study suggests that the culture within Police Scotland and the officers' own work ethic means this is unlikely to happen as officers who are experiencing higher levels of stress or burnout within Police Scotland are either not encouraged and/or unable to take time off work to recover from the demands they face on the job. This last assertion is supported by the fact that just over a third of the officers in our sample said they went to work when they were mentally unwell and did so, on average, a staggering 19 times over the course of the last six months. These data are also in line with our findings regarding the work demands placed on Police Scotland officers and the work environment stressors they encounter on the job.

Efforts have to be made to improve the mental health of Police Scotland officers as the stress and burnout levels exhibited by this group are not sustainable over time. We recommend that the employer and the Scottish Police Federation work together to determine how best to address many of the chronic stressors that officers experience at work and focus on both short-term and long-term solutions. We consider this issue to be urgent given that the consequences of high levels of burnout (i.e. fatigue, alcohol consumption, poorer physical health, heart problems, professional mistakes) on the officers themselves, their families, and the communities they work in are potentially profound.

**The stresses and strains of the job are negatively impacting the physical health of many officers in the sample**

One in three of the officers in this sample reported that they were in poor physical health – a surprising finding given that most of our respondents are younger men who work in jobs that require a high level of physical fitness and stamina. These findings suggest that the mental strain many are under along with the demands they face at work are taking a toll on the physical health of these young men and women. This interpretation of the data is consistent with the data showing that one in three of the officers in our sample are missing work because of health issues and because of issues associated with COVID-19 while one in ten take time off because they are physically exhausted. The impact of COVID-19 on absenteeism is particularly troubling as our data show that each officer who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average over the past six months. The question then becomes, how can the service manage these higher levels of absenteeism without negatively impacting the wellbeing of the officers who need to work on their days off to meet service delivery expectations.

**Inattention to the wellbeing of frontline officers is negatively impacting Police Scotland's bottom line**

Although absenteeism is an individual behaviour, it is considered an employer outcome because there is a direct cost to the employer when someone does not show up to work. This connection allows us to draw a link between employee wellbeing and the employer's bottom line.

Why are officers missing work? Examination of the data collected as part of this study show that one in three officers are missing work because of health issues and issues associated with COVID-19, a finding consistent with the data showing that the vast majority of officers in this sample do not think that the service has implemented any policies or practices to protect either officers or their families from getting COVID-19. Other appreciable sources of absenteeism include childcare/family interferes with work (14%), emotional or mental fatigue (12%), physical fatigue (8%), and eldercare concerns (8%).

It would appear from these data that: (1) work demands and work stressors are contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to the physical and emotional exhaustion of Police Scotland officers, (2) that an inability to

balance work and family demands is also contributing to higher levels of absenteeism due to concerns with childcare and eldercare, and (3) that COVID-19 is exacerbating the above issues by contributing to a high level of absenteeism (each officer who missed work due to COVID-19 related issues missed 12 days of work on average) which is likely to increase the demands placed on other officers who need to work in their place.

What are the costliest forms of absenteeism at the time that the study was done (from most costly to least costly)? Our data would implicate absenteeism due to health problems, to COVID related issues, and to emotional/mental fatigue (i.e. taking a "mental health" day off work). These data reinforce our recommendation that the service take action to implement strategies and programs designed to improve police officer wellbeing. The consequences of leaving things the way they are and "hoping for the best" is likely to be ever-increasing levels of already-high absenteeism, increasing costs associated with policing communities in Scotland and reduced productivity for Police Scotland.

**Officers do not have time away from work to decompress from the chronic stressors they face on the job**

Time is a finite commodity and time spent in one set of activities must, by necessity, take away from the amount of time available for other undertakings. In our survey we asked respondents to tell us how the amount of time they spent in a variety of activities linked to their personal life, their family life or their work had changed over time (since the pandemic had begun) – had the amount of time increased, stayed the same or decreased. We found that three-quarters of the officers in our sample reported that the amount of time that they spend on recreational, or leisure activities had declined over time. One in three also reported a considerable decline over time in the amount of energy they had, the amount of time they had for themselves and the amount of sleep that they got each night. By comparison, very few officers reported that they had reduced their work hours during the pandemic or increased their use of leave days – a result that is not surprising given the data presented earlier in this report regarding the perceptions on the part of these police officers that the service is understaffed and under-resourced as well as an organisational culture that seems to discourage officers saying no to work.

The data collected for this study also implies that the officers' work and family situation has negatively impacted the career choices of an appreciable number of officers. This conclusion is supported by data showing that approximately one in five officers agreed that they have decided not to seek a promotion or transfer at this time. We also note that one in five officers reported that they had experienced reductions in their work productivity over time while 10% reported an increase in absenteeism.

These data further reinforce the conclusion presented earlier – that officers do not have enough time way from work to decompress from the chronic stressors they face on the job.

**The pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on officer wellbeing and how officers view the service**

Early research in the area shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it harder for employees to balance work and family and has negatively impacted employee wellbeing. We included a number of measures in the survey to get a better understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Police Scotland's front-facing officers. Examination of the responses to these questions leads us to conclude that the way in which Police Scotland has managed their workforce during the pandemic is likely to exacerbate issues with respect to employee wellbeing and damage their reputation as a supportive employer.

These conclusions are supported by the following data. First, an appreciable number of officers (one in ten) found themselves in a different role at work because of the pandemic. This meant that they were required to deal with the changes associated with a new work role on top of the changes associated with the pandemic itself. Second,

the vast majority of officers in the sample were unaware of any initiatives taken by Police Scotland to ensure the safety and wellbeing of either the police officers who worked for the service or officers' families during the pandemic. Employees (essentially those who were required by their job to interact with the community) expect their employer to take action to protect their health. The fact that almost none of the officers in the sample felt this had happened is likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of the employer as well as employee morale. This conclusion is supported by the fact that almost all the officers in the sample agreed with the following statement: "I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family's health." Fourth, the pandemic has added to the officers' workloads as they face the additional pressures of work dealing with COVID-19 protocols and calls related to COVID-19 issues (the data shows that on average officers spend 6.4 hours per week dealing with COVID-19 related activities) and work extra hours to replace colleagues who are absent from work because they have been exposed to/caught COVID-19.

**Most officers are reacting emotionally to the changes at work and at home imposed by COVID-19**

A disruptive change like the COVID-19 pandemic can also be expected to cause a variety of emotional reactions (i.e. strong feelings deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others) in people. Data collected in this study show that most of the officers we consulted are reacting emotionally to the changes at work and at home imposed by COVID-19. The most common reactions expressed by the officers in the sample were active negative feelings of frustration (81.1%) and uncertainty (61.6%). More than one third of officers also expressed negative feelings of anger, a lack of motivation, restlessness, boredom, sadness, and outrage. One in four indicated that they felt thankful. More disruptive change is to be expected when society and work life "return to normal" and we do not foresee improvements in these indicators of wellbeing at that time without some form of intervention.

**Officers report high levels of resilience**

The survey collected information about a number of important moderators that are likely to influence the relationships between stressors, strain outcomes, and wellbeing of officers. We determined that most police officers have high levels of personal resilience but worry that these levels of resilience will diminish over time if officers do not cope more effectively with the stress they are experiencing at work.

**Many officers are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job**

Our data show that the vast majority of police officers in the sample are not coping effectively with the stress they face on the job/stress associated with the pandemic. In fact, a worrisome number are coping in maladaptive (negative) ways that may make things worse over time (i.e. working harder, trying to do it all, cutting back on sleep, having a drink or two, eating). These conclusions are supported by the following findings from this study. First, very few officers in the sample use either adaptive problem-focused coping strategies such as *set limits and compartmentalise* or emotion-focused coping strategies such as *seek social support from friends* to cope with the stress they are experiencing. Nor do they cope by making an effort to separate work from family or making sure that they take the time off from work (have lunch, take their breaks). Almost none of the officers in the sample *seek professional help* to cope with the high levels of job stress, stress and burnout they are experiencing at this point in time. These findings are very unfortunate given the proven utility of using such approaches to cope effectively with stress.

While the use of emotion-focused strategies is likely to temporarily reduce the emotional distress on the officers caused by heavy work demands and work-related strain, these strategies are unlikely to help over time as they do little to address the source of the stress (i.e. the stressor). The most common forms of adaptive emotion-focused

coping used by officers included watching TV and getting exercise. Deeper analysis of the data showed, however, that officers who watch TV to cope with stress often also cope by eating "comfort food" which again can contribute to negative outcomes in the long term by contributing to weight gain if abused.

Somewhat positive are the data showing that one in five officers regularly cope by exercising and reading – a highly effective way to cope for police officers as an officer who is physically fit is more likely to be at a healthy weight, have a strong body, and more able to engage in the bursts of speed and power officers need while on the job. More concerning are the data showing that just over one in three officers rarely if ever cope in this manner.

Finally, on the good news/bad news front, almost all the maladaptive (negative) coping mechanisms included in the survey were used relatively infrequently by the majority of officers. The fact that the maladaptive coping strategies did not group together is also positive in that it provides support for the idea that the officers were likely to use only one maladaptive strategy at a time. This good news is offset by the bad news that an appreciable number of the officers in the sample do engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms that could lead to serious negative outcomes: more than half of officers are likely to get by on less sleep and a third say they have at least a moderate likelihood of drinking alcohol to cope.

**Front-facing police officers within Police Scotland work in high strain jobs**

The data from this survey provide strong support for the idea that Police Scotland officers have high strain jobs (high work demands and low control over work). This is an important finding as research has unequivocally determined that individuals in high strain jobs are more likely to experience negative physical and mental health outcomes. Findings from this study, which determined that many of the officers in this sample report high strain, stress, and burnout at work, are what we would expect given the nature of the job (i.e. high demands, low control) They are also consistent with our data showing that the officers in the sample make very low use of healthy adaptive coping strategies. The fact that most officers perceive that they have little control over their work can also explain why officers do not access more adaptive coping strategies as the high demands of their work reduce their energy and ability to access healthy coping resources (working on weekends and holidays keeps officers away from family activities, shifts that run overtime, and supplemental work from home consume time and energy needed to go out and exercise, etc.).

We conclude from these findings that individual officers will not be able to make the changes needed in their work or work environment on their own. Change to the work culture and the introduction of more adaptive problem-focused coping resources will need to come from collective action and a partnership between the Scottish Police Federation, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, and Police Scotland.

**It is all about work**

On a positive note, the officers in our sample reported high levels of control over their family domain – a finding that is consistent with the data showing that most officers in the sample report lower levels of family role overload, family interference with work and burnout at home. The data also support our earlier conclusion – that the high levels of stress and burnout observed within our sample of frontline police officers working for Police Scotland is mostly due to factors associated with their job and their work environment rather than their gender or family circumstances.

**Very few differences in officer wellbeing were associated with either gender or parental status on their own**

We noted relatively few differences in the different measures of wellbeing considered in this study that could be attributed to either gender or parental status on their own. With two exceptions (the female officers in the sample were two times more likely than their male counterparts to have a partner who was also a police officer, and male police officers were more likely than female officers to have children) the male and female officers had very similar demographics and work profiles.

**While two gender differences were identified in our analysis – it is the lack of differences that is noteworthy**

While the male officers in the sample reported higher levels of work interferes with family than their female counterparts, we found no substantive differences in wellbeing outcomes that could be attributed to gender alone. This said, men are more likely than women to under-report their wellbeing in surveys and so we should be cautious in interpreting these findings, particularly in light of the fact that we identified a number of important gender differences in strain and wellbeing outcomes when parental status was taken into account.

We also noted only one substantive gender difference in how officers cope with stress (women were more likely than men to read and exercise) and no substantive differences in their personal resilience. The lack of gender differences in how officers cope is surprising as research in the area has shown that women are typically more likely than men to cope by seeking social support from others. Instead, we found that very few officers of either gender cope using by seeking support from others. These results support two conclusions: (1) the organisational culture deters people from seeking help from others, and (2) female police officers who wish to be accepted by their male counterparts often choose to "do police" rather than "do gender".

**Younger officers without children are more likely to be exposed to stressors due to their role as a response officer**

Compared to officers without children, those with children are older, more likely to be married/partnered, have more years of service as a police officer, hold positions that are higher in rank, and are less likely to work in response policing. These differences are consistent with life-cycle research showing that people typically get a job before they get married and get married before they have children.

Exposure to several work-environment stressors also varies with the parental status of the officer. Compared to officers without children, those with children were more likely to report high levels of stress because "workplace barriers make it hard to get work done" but less likely to experience stress due to "not having enough resources to do their work". It is also important to note that officers without children were more likely to be abstracted for court and to spend time dealing with custody issues and mental health issues in the community and report high levels of work-role overload. Follow-up analysis shows that these differences can be linked, at least in part, to the fact that parents are higher in rank and less likely to work in response policing than are officers without children.

**Parents report higher levels of work-life conflict than do officers without children**

Male and female officers with children were more likely than their counterparts without children to report high levels of family role overload and family interferes with work, and to report that they used some of their personal leave days to take care of personal or family issues. Non-parents, on the other hand, were more likely to agree that making arrangements for elderly relatives while they work involves a lot of effort.

**Officers who are parents reacted differently to the pandemic than officers without children**

The data from this study show that COVID-19 has had important impacts on how officers with children spend their time. More specifically, we note that officers with children were more likely than those without to say that since the start of the pandemic they have seen a considerable decline in the amount of personal time they have as well as time they have for themselves. Similar findings have been observed in other work sectors that we have studied and can be attributed to the fact that children are now at home and to the requirement for home schooling. We also note that the officers in our sample with children are more likely than their childless counterparts to say that in the last six months they have needed: (1) to change their work schedules to accommodate both work and family, (2) to spend time working at home in the evening and on weekends, (3) to take considerably more leave days to cope with family demands, and (4) to miss considerably more work due to COVID-19 related issues.

Finally, we observed only one difference of note in how parents cope with stress compared to officers without children. More specifically, we found that officers with children are less likely to cope by eating and watching TV – a finding that likely has more to do with the fact that they do not have time for such activities than anything else.

**Female officers with children and male officers without children anchor two ends of the work-family continuum**

The data from this study reveal a number of differences in officer wellbeing associated with both gender and parental status. Virtually all these significant differences (which are listed in Table 26Table 26) are between male officers without children and female officers with children. Consider the following:

- Female parents were more likely than other groups of officers in the sample to be married to another police officer and to indicate that they worked in an office-based role (21.5%) or in Command and Control (9%).
- Male officers without children in the sample were more likely than any other group to work in response policing.
- In all cases where we noted between-group differences in the extent to which officers found any of the 37 work stressors included in our analysis burdensome (12 stressors), we observed that female parents reported significantly lower scores and male non-parents significantly higher scores with respect to the stressor being considered.
- Male officers without children were the most likely and female officers with children were the least likely to spend time in all seven work activities where differences were observed (i.e. crime prevention and enforcement, custody, mental health calls, abstracted for court).
- Male officers without children were substantively more likely and female officers with children were substantively less likely than any of the other groups of officers in the sample to have a rest day cancelled.
- Female police officers with children at home spent fewer hours per week in work (41.5) than either their female counterparts without children (45.0) or male officers with (44.4) or without (44.0) children.
- Female officers with children were substantially more likely than any other group in the sample
    - to experience higher levels of family role overload.
    - to say that their family life kept them from spending time in career-enhancing activities.
    - to report that COVID-19 had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of sleep they get, the amount of energy they have, and the amount of time they have for themselves.
    - to report higher levels of family burnout.
    - to perceive that they were in better physical health.

- Male officers without children were more likely than were officers in the other three groups to state that the pandemic had resulted in a considerable reduction in the amount of time they spent on recreational and leisure activities.
- Male officers without children in the sample are less likely to cope by setting priorities and planning their time.

**TABLE 26. SUMMARY OF HOW GENDER AND PARENTAL STATUS IMPACT KEY FINDINGS**

| | Male Officers Without Children | Female Officers With Children |
|---|---|---|
| Demographics | | More likely to be married to another police officer |
| Work Profile | Less likely to be in CID; More likely to work in response policing (51.5%) | More likely to work in an office-based role (21.5%) or in Command and Control (9%) |
| Work Environment Stressors | Reported significantly higher stress scores for 12 of the stressors considered in this analysis (the extent to which the other stressors were problematic did not vary by group) | Reported significantly lower stress scores for 12 of the stressors considered in this analysis (the extent to which the other stressors were problematic did not vary by group) |
| Work Demands | Most likely to spend time in 7 out of 10 of the activities examined in this study – See Table 9 (e.g. crime prevention and enforcement activities, dealing with mental health issues)<br>Most likely to have a rest day cancelled or disrupted<br>Most likely to have had leave cancelled or disrupted | Least likely to spend time in 7 out of 10 of the activities examined in this study (e.g. crime prevention and enforcement activities, dealing with mental health issues, custody, abstracted for court)<br>Spend fewer hours in work per week<br>Least likely to have a rest day cancelled or disrupted<br>Least likely to have been called into work when they were on rest day/annual leave |
| Work-life Conflict | | Most likely to report that their family keeps them from spending the amount of time they would like on their job/career (FIW) |
| Burnout - Family | | Highest levels of burnout from demands in family domain |
| Physical Health | | Perceive themselves to be in better physical health |
| Employer/Employee Change Index | Most likely to say that the amount of time that they have for recreational/leisure activities has decreased considerably since the pandemic began | Most likely to say that the amount of time that they have for themselves, the amount of sleep they get, the amount of energy they have and the amount of time for themselves had decreased considerably since the pandemic began<br>Most likely to say that the number of times that they have had to use their leave days to cope with family demands has increased considerably since the pandemic began |
| Absenteeism | | Most likely to report going to work when they are mentally unwell |
| Coping strategies | Less likely to say that they cope by setting priorities and planning their time. | |

Note: Male officers with children have lowest levels of control over family

We suspect that these gender by parental status differences are due in whole or in part to the fact that female officers with children are more likely to work in an office environment or in Command and Control while male and female officers without children are more likely to work in Response policing.

**Final Words**

Regardless of their gender or whether they have children, Police Scotland officers holding the rank of constable and sergeant work in high strain jobs (i.e. they report high work demands and high levels of job stress and low levels of control over their work). Despite the fact that the police officers in this sample report high levels of individual resilience, a number of factors relating to the organisational culture of the service make us worried about the wellbeing of these officers once the pandemic runs its course. Levels of work role overload, perceived

stress, and work-related burnout are not, in our opinion, sustainable over time – particularly when one considers that Police Scotland officers lack the appropriate coping resources to deal with this strain in healthy ways. From the organisation's perspective, this will amount to rising costs and lower productivity due to rising absenteeism and presenteeism, rising costs of benefits, and possibly lower retention.

Male police officers without children face a greater number of challenges with respect to the work environment stressors included in our analysis – a finding that we attributed to the fact that half of the officers in this group work in a response role. Female officers with children do not seem to be exposed to the same types of stressors or demands as the other officers in the sample – a finding we suspect is due to these women being more likely to work in office roles and command and control and are not engaging in the same set of work activities as officers who are working in response roles. These demographic differences should be considered in any interventions that are planned to address stress during the pandemic.

Finally, we also found that while parents appear to be resilient to the stresses of COVID-19, their resources are finite. They do not have additional coping resources to deal with the work and family stress imposed by COVID-19. In time, despite high control over their family situation, officers with children may find their situation unsustainable which could create a crisis of burnout both at work and at home post-pandemic.

# Appendix A: Methodology

### Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix B) collected demographic and work situation information from police officers and asked questions relating to all constructs shown in Figure 1. The survey instrument was carefully reviewed by police officers from the SPF and ASPS to ensure that it focused on issues that matter to police in Scotland. With one exception (Work Environment Stressors) the questionnaire represents validated measures that have been previously published in peer-reviewed academic journals (see Table 27 for references).

The demographic, work profile, and stress and wellbeing measurement tools listed in Table 27 are closed-form multiple choice questions. The survey questionnaire also asked three open-ended questions to explore issues related to stress and wellbeing in more depth. More specifically we asked the following:

- Police Scotland recognises that resources (e.g. people, cars, technology) are a key part of your job. Can you identify one work-related change (other than add more resources) that could be practically implemented quickly that would help you cope with the stresses you encounter in the course of your work and improve your well-being? (G division only)
- Please tell us what you think will be the most important benefit of introducing mobile working as part of standard equipment for frontline officers.
- Do you have any comments you would like to add?

Qualitative analysis of responses to open-ended questions will be published in a separate report.

### Statistical Analyses

Several approaches to statistical analyses are used in this report including the calculation of frequencies and means, and principal component analysis. In the section below, each of these approaches is described in layman's terms to help the reader interpret the findings. The approach taken in this report with respect to between-group analysis (e.g. our analysis of the impact of rank on the findings) is also described in this section.

#### Means and Frequencies

Much of the demographic data as well as data on the respondent's work situation and work demands were asked as closed-form questions requiring respondents to fill in a response (e.g. their age, years of service, hours worked per week). Responses were used to calculate the mean answer to each of these questions. In statistics, the term mean is used to refer to the average value of something. For example, in the survey we asked respondents to tell us how many years that they had worked for Police Scotland. The mean number of years working for Police Scotland was calculated for the total sample and by gender and parental status by adding all values provided by our respondents and then dividing the total by the number of people in each group who had responded to this question.

All constructs included in our model were quantified using scales that have been fully or partially validated in past research (see Table 27 for references). For example, we have scales measuring stress, work role overload, family role overload, to name a few. Each scale includes multiple items. In all cases respondents were asked to use a 1 to 5 Likert scale to rate either: (1) the extent to which they agree/disagree with each of the statements in the measure, (2) the frequency with which they encounter the condition being described in the scale, or (3) to what extent they had experienced a change in the condition during COVID-19. We then use these responses to calculate

the respondent's mean score on this outcome as the summed average of the responses they gave to the various items in the measure. For example, our measure of job-related stress includes 6 items. A respondent's level of job-related stress was, therefore, obtained by summing the scores representing the responses they gave to each of these 6 questions and then dividing this total by 6.

To help the reader interpret the findings, in this report we use population norms established by expectations set in past research to recode the responses into three categories as follows[5]:

- % low (mean scores from 1.0 to 2.5)
- % moderate (mean score from 2.5 to 3.5)
- % high (mean from 3.5 to 5.0)

In this report we provide frequency distributions for all constructs included in Figure 1 for the total sample and by rank. A frequency distribution is an overview of all values of the variable (i.e. low, moderate, and high) and the number of times they occur.

**TABLE 27. LIST OF STRESS AND WELLBEING MEASUREMENT TOOLS**

| Question | Measure | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | Stressors in work environment | This measure expands on past research undertaken by Drs. Duxbury and Halinski to determine major predictors of work stress and role overload in Canadian police services (see Duxbury, L., Higgins, C. & Halinski, M. (2015), "Identifying the Antecedents of Work role overload in Police Organisations", *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42 (4), 361-381). Input from representatives of the Scottish Police Federation and members of the Research Advisory Board resulted in the addition to the original measure of a number of stressors of relevance to Police Scotland. |
| **Strain outcomes** | | |
| 19 | Job-related stress | House, R. and Rizzo, J. (1972). Toward the measurement of organisational practices: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 56, 388-396 |
| 21 | Work interferes with family (items 3-8)<br>Family interferes with work (items 1,2,9) | Gutek, B., Searle, S., & Kelpa, L. (1991). Rational versus gender role explanations for work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 76*, 560-568. |
| 22<br>23 | Work role overload<br>Family role overload | Caplan, R.D., Cobb, S., French, J.R.P., Jr., Harrison, R.V., and Pinneau, S.R., Jr. (1980). *Job demands and worker health: Main effects and occupational differences*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research |

[5] Note: In all cases where a different recoding procedure was used than that described in this section, we make a note in the report on how the categorization was done.

| Question | Measure | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| **Wellbeing outcomes** | | |
| 25<br>26 | Absenteeism<br>Presenteeism | Based on:<br>Moos, R. H., Cronkite, R. C., Billings, A. G., & Finney, J. W. (1988). *Health and daily living form manual*. Stanford, CA: Social Ecology Laboratory, Department of Psychiatry, Stanford University |
| 27 (items 1-8) | Perceived stress | Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour, 24*, 385-396. |
| 27 (items 9-16) | Burnout | Maslach, C., & Jackson, S.E. (1981). "The measurement of experienced burnout". Journal of Occupational Behavior. 2(2):, 99–113. |
| 28 | Physical health | DeSalvo, K., Bloser, N., Reynolds, K., He, J., & Muntner, P. (2006). Mortality prediction with a single general self-rated health question: A meta-analysis. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 21(3), 267–275. |
| 30/31 | Employee/Employer Change Index | Pyper, W. (2006). Balancing career and care. (Cat. 75-001-XIE). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada. (based on this measure) |
| 32 | Emotional reactions to COVID-19 | Developed for this study by the authors – from interview data. Based on Russell, JA. A circumplex model of affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1980;39:1161–1178. |
| **Moderators** | | |
| 20 | Control over work | Dwyer, D. J., & Ganster, D. C. (1991). The effects of job demands and control on employee attendance and satisfaction. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 12(7), 595-608. |
| 24 | Control over family | Walters, V., Lenton, R., French, S., Eyles, J., Mayer, J., and Newbold, B. (1996). Paid work, unpaid work and social support: A study of the health of male and female nurses. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 43(11) 1627-36. |
| 29 | Resilience | Campbell-Sills, L., & Stein, M. B. (2007). Psychometric analysis and refinement of the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): Validation of a 10-item measure of resilience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 20(6), 1019–1028. |
| 33 | Coping strategies | Higgins, C., Duxbury, L., and Lyons, S. (2010), Coping with Overload and Stress: A Comparison of Professional Men and Women, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 72 (2), 847-859 |

**Principal Component Analysis**

Principal component analysis is a technique that researchers use to discover the underlying dimensions of a scale. For example, a scale measuring an organisation's culture may have sub-dimensions such as "supportive management" and "supportive policies". To uncover these underlying dimensions, we use a technique known as principal component analysis (more commonly referred to as factor analysis). Principal component analysis identifies questions that respondents are answering in a similar fashion. In other words, it identifies questions that are highly inter-correlated. Since scales are supposed to have the property of being highly inter-correlated this technique identifies sub-scales in a larger scale.

Factor analysis was performed on two of the measures used in this study. Question 1 on our survey includes 37 items relating to a variety of stressors typically encountered within the police the work environment. Factor analysis of these 37 items revealed 6 dimensions of work stressors as described in Section 4.1 of the report.

Similarly, question 28 on our survey includes 24 items that relate to possible ways that people can cope with stress. Factor analysis of these 24 items revealed that the police officers in our sample used 6 different strategies to cope with stress as described in Section 7.3 in the report.

**Tests of statistical significance**

We can never be 100% certain that a relationship exists between two variables or constructs (e.g. between work role overload and job stress). Using probability theory and the normal (bell) curve we can, however, estimate the probability of being wrong if we assume that our finding a relationship (e.g. work role overload is positively associated with stress) is true. Tests for statistical significance are used to tell us the probability that the relationship we have observed between two or more variables can be attributed to random chance or not (i.e. the likelihood that we would be making an error if we assumed that the relationship we see in the data actually exists). If the probability of being wrong is small, then we say that our observation of the relationship is a statistically significant finding. Statistical significance means that there is a good chance that we are correct when we claim that a relationship exists between two variables. Typically, a result is considered to have statistical significance if there is less than 5% probability of the result being explained by chance. This is conventionally denoted as "$p < 0.05$". The smaller the p-value, the smaller the likelihood that the result can be explained by chance (i.e. smaller p-values indicate stronger statistical significance).

Statistical significance is not the same as practical significance (i.e. the finding may be statistically significant, but the implications of the finding could have no real practical application). Often times, when differences are small but statistically significant, it is due to a large sample size. If the sample were smaller, the difference would not be enough to be identified as statistically significant. In this study we examine both the statistical and practical significance of all our findings.

Analysis of between-group differences (see below) require the researcher to determine if the findings are statistically significant. In between-group differences, the research is testing the hypothesis that two or more groups are different enough with respect to their score on a particular variable of interest that it is unlikely that the difference can be attributed to chance.

For example, in this analysis we determined that female officers (38.2%) were approximately twice as likely to have a partner who is a police officer than were their male counterparts (16.8%). This large difference is statistically significant. Further examination of the data shows that female officers with children (42.1%) were more likely than female officers without children (33.5%) to be married to a police officer while the difference

between male officers with children (16.3%) and without children (18.1%) was too small to be statistically significant.

**Approach to the analysis of between-group differences**

Although statistical significance is necessary in the interpretation of findings, we do not rely on it alone because it does not always indicate practical significance. Results of statistical analysis may be statistically significant, but their magnitude may be too small to be useful in practice by decision makers. In this report, we have tried to focus only on the most meaningful differences between groups.

As a rule of thumb for the reader, between-group differences which are greater than 8% are typically statistically and practically significant. In some instances, we have elected to highlight some smaller (i.e. differences of less than 8%) statistically significant differences because they are part of an important pattern or trend in the findings (i.e. they are substantive).

# Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

## Welfare and Wellbeing Survey

Dear Colleague,

Last year the Scottish Police Federation, in partnership with Police Scotland and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS), surveyed officers who were territorially based in P, D, G, J, K and L Divisions. We had an excellent response to the survey with significant amounts of data gathered from across the country. This data was used to benchmark workloads and wellbeing prior to the introduction of technologies and systems such as Mobile Data Devices and CAM. These changes have now been rolled out to some officers in some divisions.

A lot has happened since this first survey. Most officers now have access to Mobile Data Devices and CAM and your jobs and lives have been considerably impacted by COVID-19 and the need to social distance. To help the Federation and ASPS, and by extension Police Scotland understand the impact these changes have had on your wellbeing and how you do your job we are asking you to complete a second survey which is similar to the previous wellness survey you completed but shorter. It can be accessed either at home or at work. As usual the survey will be administered and analysed by the independent research team at Carleton University under the direction of Professor Linda Duxbury.

The response rate for our last survey was a phenomenal 40% and has given the research team a rich data set to work with. As the data analysis progresses, we now have empirical evidence that shows the impact of policing on you and your colleagues' wellbeing. Statistical tools have been applied to show the causes of stress and what needs to happen to prevent it. To maintain the integrity of this 2-stage survey, we were not able to report on the findings from the first stage of the research. We do, however, commit to publish and report the full results of both surveys to you later this year.

This survey also gives us a good opportunity to understand the impact of COVID19 on you and your family and on these projects, to ensure the right support is in place. This will also allow us to benchmark internationally with other Forces.

The early results with regards to officer wellbeing and workloads are stark but not surprising and we have already drawn some data out that has been used effectively in our campaign to secure better funding for the Police Service. Please then help us provide the science to support you and bring about a better, safer workplace by taking the time to complete this survey.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The first sections in the survey ask questions relating to Demographics, Workplace Stressors, Work-life Balance, and Health and Wellbeing. The last two sections give you the opportunity to provide Feedback on Mobile Working and CAM and the Impacts of COVID. Depending on

the configuration of your computer or mobile device you may or may not be able to pause and return to the survey. Please note though that all unfinished surveys will be deleted. You may leave questions blank for whatever reason. You may also withdraw your response at any time before completing the survey by closing your browser window or navigating away from the survey. Your responses are anonymous and only summary results will be presented to Police Scotland. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact the Carleton University research team by sending an email to Sean Campeau (sean.campeau@carleton.ca). The ethics for this project have been reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (project #108419) at (613) 520-2517 or ethics@carleton.ca.

We thank you for taking the time to complete this very important survey. We value your response. Please record your answers to each of the questions by indicating the response that best represents your situation. All the responses will be held in the strictest of confidence and only aggregate data will be reported.

To begin the survey, please click on the arrow button.

# Section A: Demographics

We need some demographic information to help us interpret the findings. Please be assured that all the findings from this survey will be held in confidence by the researchers at Carleton University who are administering and analysing this survey on behalf of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Federation. No one other than the researchers will see your responses.

1. Did you complete the first Wellbeing and Welfare survey?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Prefer not to say

2. What gender do you identify with?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. I identify with another gender (please specify) _____
    d. Prefer not to say

3. What is your age? _____ Years

4. Are you married or living with a partner?
    a. Yes
    b. No

(Only ask questions 4 and 5 to officers how respond yes to being married or living with a partner)

5. Prior to COVID did your partner have paid employment?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Are they still employed?

    a. Yes
        a. Working from home
        b. Working outside the home
    b. No

6. Is your partner a police officer?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. Do you have children living with you at home?
    a. Yes
    b. No

8. Other than children, do you have other dependent care responsibilities?
    a. Yes
    b. No

9. How many years of service have you had with Police Scotland?_____ Years

10. What is your rank? (If acting, please select your acting rank)

    a. Constable
    b. Sergeant
    c. Inspector
    d. Chief Inspector
    e. Superintendent or above
    f. Prefer not to answer

11. Please tell us which geographical division your workplace is physically located in.

    a. D Division
    b. G Division
    c. J Division
    d. K Division
    e. L Division
    f. P Division
    g. Other (please specify) _____

12. Do you work for a national division?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. Which of the following descriptors best describes your current role?
    a. Response
    b. Community policing
    c. CID
    d. Road policing
    e. Command & control
    f. Custody
    g. Specialist Ops
    h. Office-based
    i. Other (please specify) _____

14. Did your role change because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
    a. Yes, (please describe your role before the pandemic) _____
    b. No

15. In the past 12 months, has Police Scotland implemented any initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing:

Of police officers?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Of the families of police officers?

a. Yes
b. No

If yes to either question, please list what they have implemented in the section below.

_____

_____

_____

16. Many of the changes associated with Policing 2026 may impact the amount of time you spend in certain activities at work. To help us evaluate some of these impacts, we would like to know approximately how many hours in a week do you typically spend in each of the following work activities (please leave blank if not applicable):
    a. Frontline policing in crime prevention activities? _____ hours
    b. Frontline policing in enforcement activities? _____ hours
    c. Traveling to and from work? _____ hours
    d. Engaging with the community? _____ hours
    e. Writing reports? _____ hours
    f. Reading, reviewing, or approving reports? _____ hours
    g. Abstracted from your home station? _____ hours
    h. Abstracted for court? _____ hours
    i. Dealing with custody issues? _____ hours
    j. Dealing with mental health issues in the community? _____ hours
    k. Working at home outside of your regular work hours? ____ hours
    l. Dealing with COVID-related activities? ____ hours
    m. In total – including all work activities? _____ hours

    Please specify what these COVID-related activities entail_____

17. How often during a typical work week do you have time for an uninterrupted break or meal during your work shift?
    a. Never
    b. Rarely (i.e. once or twice per week)
    c. About half the time
    d. Most of the time (i.e. four or five times per week)
    e. Always

## Section B: Work Environment

The following questions are designed to provide us with an indication of the extent to which various work stressors are present within your work environment. These data will allow us to explore the impact each of these stressors have on your ability to do your job as well as your welfare and wellbeing.

### Work Environment stressors

18. Please think back over the past year and indicate, for each item, the frequency with which this work stressor is a source of stress for you.

| | **Rarely** | Monthly | **Weekly** | Several times per week | **Very Often/Daily** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not enough officers and/or staff to do the work required | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Not enough officers on duty to allow people to take breaks during work hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The cases I deal with are more complex than in the past and require greater effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The culture makes it unacceptable to say no to more work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The culture makes it difficult to seek help from others when you are overloaded | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I am responsible for too many different things/roles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Ineffective communication makes it harder for me to do my job (lack of timely feedback, unclear expectations) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Managing the expectations of the public | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Managing relationships with the media/public (social media, being "on camera") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Negative images of the police in the news | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Too many competing ever-changing number one priorities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Lack of control over my work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Managing other people's sense of urgency | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Pressures to do a high-quality job while meeting an unrealistic deadline | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Dealing with multiple competing demands simultaneously | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Lack of resources (equipment/supplies) to do the work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Taking on work that is outside my core role (e.g. custody duties) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The sheer volume of the work (call volume, reports, e-mails) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The shortage of experienced staff in my area | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

| | **Rarely** | Monthly | **Weekly** | Several times per week | **Very Often/Daily** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The amount of time spent in administrative work (forms, telephone calls, e-mail, typing, rekeying) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The IT infrastructure (computers, devices, or networks are not working or inadequate) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I can't get everything done and I worry about cases falling through the cracks | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Constant changes in policy/legislation without adequate support/training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The backlog of calls / cases | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Jobs that are passed on from the previous shift | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Not having the resources to respond to calls (e.g. cars, people) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Lack of appropriate training for my job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Insufficient time allowed for training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Poor communication between different areas of the organisation – the answer you get depends on who you ask. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I cannot deliver the level of service that I believe is required by the community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The condition of the estate negatively impacts my experience at work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Police Scotland is bogged down by process (e.g. IVPD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Fear of the “hindsight brigade” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Verbal assault from a member of the public | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Physical assault from a member of the public | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my physical health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I worry about the impact of COVID-19 on my family’s health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

## Job tension

19. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I work under a great deal of tension | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have felt fidgety or nervous as a result of my job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If I had a different job, my health would probably improve | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Problems associated with my job have kept me awake at night | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I often "take my job home with me" in the sense that I think about it when doing other things | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel guilty when I take time off from my job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Control over work

20. Below is a list of statements that could be used to describe a person's job. Please read each statement carefully and indicate the extent to which each of these statements describe your job:

| | No Control | Slight Control | Some Control | Moderate Control | A Lot of Control |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often can you predict the amount of work you will have to do on any given day? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How much control do you have over how quickly or slowly you have to work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How much control do you have over how much work you get done? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How much are things that affect you at work predictable, even if you can't directly control them? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| In general, how much overall control do you have over work and work-related matters? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Section C: Work-Life Balance

**The following are ways in which work, family, and personal life can interact. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by selecting the most appropriate answer for each question. Please select N/A if the question does not apply to you.**

### Work interferes with family, family interferes with work

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Making arrangements for children while I work involves a lot of effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Making arrangements for elderly relatives while I work involves a lot of effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My work schedule often conflicts with my personal/family life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My family dislikes how often I am preoccupied with work while at home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| The demands of my job make it difficult to be relaxed at home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My work takes time I would like to spend with family or friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My work makes it hard to be the kind of partner I would like to be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My work makes it hard to be the kind of parent I would like to be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| My family/personal life often keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like on my job/career | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

22. Please indicate how often each of the following situations applies to you at work. **Work role overload**

| | Never/ Hardly ever | Sometimes | About half the time | Most of the time | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often does your job require you to work very fast?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often does your job require you to work very hard?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do expectations at work mean that you cannot get everything done?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do you have time to just sit and contemplate when at work?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do the number of tasks you have to do at work exceed the amount of time you have to do them in?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do you feel emotionally exhausted from all you have to do at work?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do you feel physically exhausted from all you have to do at work?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often do your colleagues make too many demands on you?..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How often does your supervisor make too many demands on you?.... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

23. Please think about your home life and indicate how often the following situations apply to you at home.

**Family role overload**

| | Never/ Hardly ever | Sometimes | About half the time | Most of the time | Always | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often do expectations at home leave little time to get things done? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do you have time to just sit and contemplate when at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do you run out of time at home to do all the things that need to be done? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often does the number of tasks you have to do at home exceed the amount of time that you have to do them? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do you feel emotionally exhausted from all you have to do at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do you feel physically exhausted from all you have to do at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do your children make too many demands of you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often does your partner make too many demands of you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| How often do other family members make too many demands of you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Control over family

24. Below is a list of statements that could be used to describe your situation outside of work. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much control you have over:

| | No Control | Slight Control | Some Control | Moderate Control | A Lot of Control | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your use of time at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Your ability to meet competing family demands? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| Your use of the family's income? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| What tasks or projects you do when at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| The number of times you are interrupted when at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Family and family-related matters in general? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

## Section D: Physical and Mental Health

**The following questions will provide us with an indication of your physical and mental health. Please select the answer that best represents your situation or fill in the required information.**

25. In the past six months, how many days have you: Absenteeism

| | |
|---|---|
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of health problems?..... | ___ days |
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of children-related problems | ___ days |
| Been unable to report to work or carry out your usual activities because of problems concerning elderly relatives?..... ….. | ___ days |
| Taken a day off work because you were physically fatigued?..... | ___ days |
| Taken a day off work because you were emotionally or mentally fatigued?..... | ___ days |
| Taken a sick day off work because a leave day was not granted?..... | ___ days |
| Taken a day off work to avoid issues at work (abusive colleagues, difficult boss, difficult work environment)?..... ..... | ___ days |
| Not gone to work because of self-isolation/other COVID related issues | ___ days |

26. In the past six months, how many times have you: presenteeism and work interferes with family

| | |
|---|---|
| Used time off to take care of personal/family issues? | ____times |
| Gone to work when you were physically unwell? | ____times |
| Gone to work when you were mentally unwell? | ____times |
| Had a rest day cancelled or disrupted? | ____times |
| Had leave cancelled or disrupted? | ____times |
| Been called in to work when you were on a rest day or annual leave? | ____times |

27. How often in the last three months have you: Perceived Stress and Burnout

| | Never/ Hardly ever | Sometimes | About half the time | Most of the time | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Been upset because something happened unexpectedly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt that you were unable to control important things in your life?…..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt nervous or stressed? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt confident about your ability to handle your personal/family problems? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt that things were going your way? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Found that you could not cope? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Been able to control irritations in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt you were on top of things? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Been angered because of things that happened outside of your control? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "burned out" from your job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "frustrated" by your job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "used up" at the end of the work day? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt emotionally drained by your job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt fatigued when you got up in the morning and had to face another day at work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt challenged to concentrate at work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Experienced insomnia? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "burned out" because of the demands placed on you at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "frustrated" by all the demands placed on you at home? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt "used up" by your family at the end of the day? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt emotionally drained by your family circumstances? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt fatigued when you got up in the morning and had to face another day with your family? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Felt challenged to concentrate at home when with your family? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

28. Compared to other people your age, would you say that your health is:
    a. Poor
    b. Fair
    c. Good
    d. Very good
    e. Excellent

Resilience (hardiness, persistence)

29. Please indicate the extent to which you find each of the following statements to be true about you:

| | Not true at all | Rarely true | Sometimes true | Often true | True nearly all the time |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am able to adapt when changes occur | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I can deal with whatever comes my way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to see the humourous side of problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Coping with stress can make me stronger | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I stay focussed under pressure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am not easily discouraged by failure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I think of myself as a strong person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am unable to handle unpleasant or painful feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Section E: Impact of COVID-19

The questions in this section all relate to COVID-19 and are included to help us understand the impact of the Pandemic on you, your family and your work.

30. Looking back over the last six months (i.e. since COVID lockdowns began) please indicate the extent to which challenges with respect to balancing work and family/life have caused you to:

| | No Reduction | A Little Reduction | Somewhat Reduced | Much Reduced | Considerably Reduced |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduce your work hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce your work productivity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Suffer a reduction in income | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce the amount of time you have for yourself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce the amount of sleep you get | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce the amount of energy you have | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce the amount of time you spend on recreational or leisure activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

31. Looking back over the last six months (i.e. since COVID lockdowns began) please indicate the extent to which challenges with respect to balancing work and family/life have caused you to:

| | No Increase | A little Increased | Somewhat Increased | Much Increased | Considerably Increased |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Decide not to apply for transfer or promotion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Be absent more often from work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Increase your use of employee benefits (i.e. EAP services, prescription drugs) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Use your vacation days to cope with family demands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Adjusted your work hours – now work more in evenings and on the weekend | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

32. An event like COVID is likely to elicit an emotional response from people. **Emotions** have been defined as strong feelings deriving from one's circumstances, mood or relationships with others. They are responses to significant internal and external events such as anger, fear, happiness, sadness, grief, guilt, hope, loneliness, outrage, resentment, frustration. Emotions can fluctuate over time which is why we hear people talking about being on an "emotional roller coaster". What were the dominant emotions that you experienced over the course of the last several months? (please check all that apply)

___ Frustration
___ Sadness
___ Guilt
___ Loneliness
___ Resentment
___ Uncertainty
___ Apathy
___ Unmotivated
___ Disoriented/Dazed
___ Other (please specify) _____

___ Happiness
___ Grief
___ Hope
___ Outrage
___ Anger
___ Boredom
___ Calm
___ Restless
___ Thankful

33. Here are some things people do when they are under stress. How often have you used each of the following strategies to cope with your work and life circumstances since COVID lockdown began:

| | Never/ Hardly ever | Sometimes | About half the time | Most of the time | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spend time alone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Eat | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Smoke | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Get some exercise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Watch TV | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Read | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Take medication to calm myself down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Drink some alcohol | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Work harder (just try and do it all) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Seek help from family or friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Seek help from colleagues at work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Talk to family or friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Talk to colleagues at work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Prioritise and do what is important first | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Delegate work to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Schedule, organise and plan my time more carefully | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce the quality of the work I do | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Get by on less sleep than I would like | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Make sure that I take time off from work (breaks, lunch) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Seek counselling from a mental health professional | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Make a conscious effort to separate my work life from my family life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Recognise that I cannot do it all and set limits (say no) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Try to be very organised so that I can keep on top of things | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Request help from people who have the power to do something for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

34. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to help us better understand how COVID-19 has impacted police officer welfare, wellbeing, and work-life balance issues? If yes, please enter your first name and email address below.

The contact information provided by respondents will be held in confidence by the research team. The data will be stored on Carleton University servers and it will not be shared in any way with anyone outside the research team.

First name: _____
Email address: _____

## Section F: Feedback on Mobile Working and CAM

This survey is designed to help us evaluate the impact of two specific Policing 2026 initiatives on employee wellbeing: mobile work and CAM. The questions in this section ask about how CAM and mobile working have affected you in your job.

35. Do you use a PSoS Mobile Device or any related technology such as Pronto?
    a. Yes – please specify how many months ago you were given this capability _____
    b. No

36. Please tell us about the benefits that mobile work has provided to people in jobs such as yours.

_____
_____

37. Please tell us about the challenges that mobile work has presented to people in jobs such as yours.

_____
_____

38. All things considered, please rate the extent to which the implementation of mobile working in your division has changed how you do your job?

| Drawback outweigh benefits | Drawbacks slightly outweigh benefits | Neutral Drawbacks=Benefits | Benefits slightly outweigh drawbacks | Benefits outweigh drawbacks | No opinion/I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

39. Please tell us about the benefits that the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) has provided to people in jobs such as yours.

_____
_____
_____

40. Please tell us about the challenges that the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) has presented to people in jobs such as yours.

_____
_____

41. All things considered, please rate the extent to which the implementation of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) in your division has changed how you do your job?

| **Drawback outweigh benefits** | **Drawbacks slightly outweigh benefits** | **Neutral Drawbacks=Benefits** | **Benefits slightly outweigh drawbacks** | **Benefits outweigh drawbacks** | **No opinion/I don't know** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** |

42. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please be assured that your responses will be held in confidence by the researchers. Please e-mail if you have any questions.

Sean Campeau (doctoral candidate)
Sean.Campeau@carleton.ca

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**LETTER SENT BY E-MAIL ONLY**

Audrey Nicol MSP (Convener)
Criminal Justice Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

justice.committee@parliament.scot

1 June 2022

CO-062-2022

Dear Convenor

**ROUNDTABLE ON MENTAL HEALTH IN POLICING – FOLLOW UP**

I refer to the above roundtable at the Criminal Justice Committee on Wednesday 18 May 2022.

During the session, I was asked whether the Authority has any data on, or has conducted any form of investigation into suicide amongst police officers. I committed to reviewing what information the Authority has and our consideration of this issue.

In February 2020, in the wake of reported officer suicides, the Authority's Resources Committee explored the broader issue suicides with Police Scotland. Police Scotland reported that, based on information available at that time, there was nothing to suggest that any of the recent cases were caused directly by the pressure of work. The Committee sought information and assurance about the wellbeing support packages available to officers and staff. This was followed up at our Authority meeting, later the same month, in public where Police Scotland outlined work that had taken place with the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and highlighted that Scottish Action for Mental Health had been invited to conduct a peer review on Police Scotland's wellbeing initiatives.

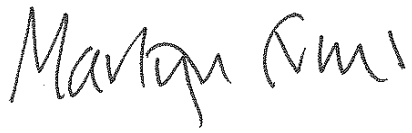
I/

I can confirm that the Authority holds no data on the number of circumstances of suicides amongst police officers. Nor has any quantitative data been reported to the Authority by Police Scotland. The Authority understands that detail on the cause of death of officers or staff in service is not recorded.

The Authority and Police Scotland take the health and wellbeing of our workforce seriously and we are committed to supporting out workforce where required. This is an area of ongoing interest for the Authority. Police Scotland's health and wellbeing activity is reported publicly to our People Committee quarterly and annually to the full Authority meeting.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



MARTYN EVANS
Chair

**NSPCC Scotland Written Evidence to The Criminal Justice Committee evidence session *Tackling online child abuse, grooming and exploitation*, Wednesday, 18 May 2022**

**What is currently defined as online child sexual abuse?**

- Child sexual abuse (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline Children and young people may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.
- *What is the nature of online child sexual abuse?* Children face a range of abuse risks online, from the production and distribution of child abuse images to the harmful effects of exposure to inappropriate content, to the growing scale of grooming facilitated by social networks. Platforms provide new opportunities for groomers to initiate, maintain and escalate their abuse.
- *How is online abuse different?* With so many children using social networks, gaming, and messaging sites, it means that today's young people are increasingly exposed to the threat of abuse, from both adults and their peers. Groomers can readily exploit the design features of social networks to target significant numbers of children, and to move them from well-known open platforms to encrypted apps and sometimes unscrupulous messaging sites. New types of technology, notably livestreaming and video-chat sites, have provided new opportunities for abusers to control and coerce children
    - For children subjected to technology-facilitated abuse, the impacts can be life-changing. Despite the common misconception that online abuse is less impactful, NSPCC research has shown that the impact of 'online' and 'offline' abuse is the same, no matter how the abuse took place.

**What is the scale and extent of this crime?**

- We know that the scale and extent of online child sexual abuse is continuing to rise.
- NSPCC data shows that online grooming offences in 2020/21 reached a record high – with the number of sexual communication with a child offences in England and Wales increasing by almost 70% in three years
- In 2021, UK law enforcement received 97,727 industry reports relating to online child abuse, a 29% increase from the previous year
- Internet-facilitated abuse increasingly results in more serious sexual offences against children, with the average age of children in child abuse images – particularly girls – trending younger
- Last year alone there was a 16% increase in reports of child sexual abuse material online made to the Internet Watch Foundation, the organisation who remove CSAM content from the internet. They assessed over 150,000 reports of child sexual abuse imagery online. https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/annual-report-2020/ (more can be found on their website)

**How agencies and organisations are responding and what are the challenges**.

- The key challenge for all agencies in Scotland at present is the lack of an overarching strategy to tackle online child sexual abuse. Scotland has a wealth of services working within this area but there is no government leadership with the issue straddling multiple government departments and Ministerial portfolios. Any strategy would have to consider a continuum stretching from prevention, deterrence and early help through to conviction and rehabilitation. The UK Government and the Welsh Government have both published strategies to tackle child sexual abuse in the last few years featuring sections on online harm

with the Welsh Government producing a standalone action plan specifically addressing online harm.

The On-line Safety Bill

- Our key asks of the Bill and how we need it to respond to online child abuse is outlined in the parliamentary briefing
    - The current response to online child sexual abuse from tech companies is poor
    - We want to see regulation put in place so that firms are held accountable for the harm that children experience on their sites
    - The onus should not rest on children and families to pick up the pieces of industry inaction – it is not parents responsibility alone to take action.

- Protecting children from sexual content online and on social media.
    - Our main asks are:
        - We want to see a statutory user advocate body
        - Addressing cross platform harms
        - Addressing risk in private messages
        - Address breadcrumbing (material that facilitates illegal material)
        - Amend the child safety duty so that all sites in scope of legal but harmful material
        - Implement senior manager liability

**NSPCC's '6 tests of the Online Safety Bill'**

If the Online Safety Bill is to fully deliver for children, we suggest a number of areas where the Government should adopt a more ambitious, child-centred and targeted approach.
Our analysis illustrates a number of areas where the response to the risks of child sexual abuse could be made more robust and its efficacy improved. We make a number of developed recommendations to ensure the legislation provides a more effective and fit-for-purpose response to the detection and disruption of a number of threats, including online grooming.

To strengthen the Bill, the Government should:

**Introduce duties to tackle cross-platform child abuse:**
well-established grooming pathways see abusers exploit the design features of social networks to contact children before they move communication across to encrypted messaging and live streaming sites.11 Similarly, harmful content spreads with considerable velocity and virality across social networks and messaging sites.

The Online Safety Bill must effectively respond to the dynamics of the abuse threat to ensure its provisions coherently target the problem. Companies must face clear requirements to tackle the cross-platform nature of harms when meeting their safety duties; risk assess their products to address how they contribute to grooming and abuse pathways; and face a new duty to co-operate on tackling harms across their sites, including through sharing intelligence on rapidly shifting risks.

**Tackle the ways in which abuse is facilitated on social networks, but may not meet the criminal threshold:** the Bill must effectively tackle the range of ways in which abusers use social networks to form offender networks; post 'digital breadcrumbs' that signpost to illegal content; and share child abuse videos that are carefully edited to evade content moderation guidelines.
This range of techniques, known as 'breadcrumbing', must clearly and unambiguously be brought into scope, to disrupt abusers who currently can organise abuse in plain sight, and exploit social

networks to signpost to child abuse content hosted on third party messaging apps, offender forums and the dark web.

By giving the regulator powers to treat activity that facilitates child abuse with the same severity as illegal material, through amending the scope of the illegal safety duty, legislation will empower Ofcom to tackle egregious harm upstream. Social networks will no longer be able to allow tens of millions of interactions with accounts that actively facilitate the discovery of child abuse material[1]and abuse could be tackled at the earliest possible stage.

**Proactively tackle the child abuse risks in private messaging and groups**: we welcome the Bill's scope including both public and private messaging. However we have substantive concerns that the legislation places onerous constraints on Ofcom's ability to proactively tackle the significant risks of grooming and child abuse in private messages, and the ways in which abusers share or signpost to child abuse images in private groups.

As it stands, Ofcom would be unable to require any form of proactive technology to tackle child abuse in private messages in its codes of practice, including industry standard 'hash' tools that are routinely used to detect child abuse images.

Ofcom will need to be equipped to produce a Code of Practice that is capable of responding to the nature and extent of the child abuse threat. If the regulator had to take site-by-site action to address harm after it has already occurred, primarily as a function of regulatory design, the systemic approach to tackling online harms would be weakened.

**Adopt a strengthened approach to tackling harmful content for children:** the Bill rightly intends to offer a higher standard of protection to children than adults but introduces a 'child use test' that sets a higher threshold than the ICO's Children's Code in respect of whether service is considered likely to be accessed by a child. This means highly problematic services including Telegram and OnlyFans could be excluded from the **c**hild safety duties, because they can legitimately claim that children don't account for a 'significant' part of their user base. This could result in lower overall standards of protection, and harmful content simply being displaced to sites not covered by the child safety duty. It is unclear which harms to children will be covered by the child safety duties. The Government should therefore commit to publishing schedule of priority harms for children, similar to the list of priority offences in schedules 6 and 7.

**Commit to a statutory user advocacy body for children:** the Bill should introduce a statutory user advocacy body representing the interests of children, funded by the industry levy. This is essential to create a level playing field: to ensure there is effective counterbalance to industry interventions, provide an early warning function of new and emerging harms, and to provide the regulator with credible and authoritative expertise, support, and challenge.

Legislation should draw more directly on what exists in other regulated sectors, from postal services to public transport, where funded user advocacy models ensure dedicated expertise that can intervene on behalf of users in regulatory decisions. As it stands, children – the most vulnerable of internet users, and clear and heightened risk of online sexual abuse – will receive less systemic advocacy than passengers on a bus or customers of a post office. User advocacy is a crucial

[1] 12 Data suggests there were over 6 million user interactions with certain types of content in Q1 2021, which if annualised suggests there are tens of millions of interactions with such content on surface web sites

component of building effective regulatory regime and addressing the clear asymmetry with well-resourced regulated companies.

**Take steps to hardwire the safety duties, and to deliver a 'culture of compliance' in regulated firms:** the Bill would benefit from a number of targeted improvements that would actively promote cultural change in companies and embed compliance with online safety regulations at 'C-suite' and in Board level decision-making.
Senior management liability should be extended to cover substantive product decisions, not simply a failure to cooperate with the regulator. Companies should be required to appoint a senior manager, at or reporting to Board level, who is personally liable for whether a platform meets its safety duties. As it stands, senior managers of wholly negligent companies could escape any personal liability so long as they co-operate with the regulator.

Companies should also face a broader set of compliance responsibilities, including the Joint Committee's recommendation that risk assessments should be approved at Board level. Companies should be subject to proactive information disclosure duties, placing the onus on regulated firms to flag substantive product changes.

**Educating young people about online abuse, grooming and exploitation.**

- We would flag the need to support for RSHE curriculum, as well as integrated online lessons in this curriculum so it reflects children's daily experiences of sex and relationships.

**Overall position on RSHE:**

- At the NSPCC, we believe that learning about healthy bodies and healthy relationships is a core entitlement all children should receive. Educative programmes are an opportunity to make sure that all young people know that they have a right to be treated, and responsibility to treat others, with dignity and respect.
- We support inclusive Relationships, Sex and Health Education that is age- and developmentally appropriate for all children and young people in primary and secondary schools. The delivery of high quality and inclusive RSHE is important because it can help students recognise healthy and unhealthy behaviour, reflect on their own experiences and attitudes, and contribute to a positive school culture.
- RSHE has the potential to prevent harm to children in two ways: by enabling more adults to identify concerning behaviour, and children to recognise abuse and seek help; and reducing instances of peer sexual abuse by supporting children to recognise how concepts like consent must also apply to their own actions with their peers. However, many teachers still lack the confidence to deliver it.
- This is why the NSPCC is urgently calling on the Government to provide each and every school with the support and resources they need to confidently deliver a high-quality curriculum.

**Note on VAWG/ Ofsted / Everyone's Invited:**

- Last year's Ofsted review was shocking but sadly unsurprising. It reinforced the testimonies published by Everyone's Invited and shows that harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and peer sexual abuse is present in all schools. For many pupils, but especially girls, it's an everyday part of school life they should not have to tolerate.
- We were pleased that Ofsted listened extensively to children and that has helped expose what's happening. This demonstrates the importance of actively seeking out and acting on

children's views. In response, young people's voices and experiences must shape policies and be central to the inspection process.

- There needs to be a whole school approach to preventing harmful behaviour. Teachers should work with students to create a positive culture in which healthy behaviour flourishes, harmful attitudes are challenged, and inappropriate behaviour doesn't escalate.

**Note on need for online learning embedded within the curriculum:**

- However, this problem isn't limited to classrooms and corridors. Schools need to work closely with safeguarding partners to understand and address risks children face in their communities and ensure there is a joined-up response from services when they experience sexual abuse.
- For example, as the online world develops at such a pace, all professionals must be supported to understand and reflect the realities children and young people face both off and online. Whether it be through language or examples used as part of the RSHE curriculum, it is crucial to reflect the current realities for children to foster a culture of open discussion which helps children speak out, understand what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is, as well inform staff on these issues and in turn, inform a better response to keeping children safe wherever they are.

**Examples of good practice:**

**Report Remove**

NSPCC and IWF's 'Report Remove' tool which allows young people to report an image or video shared online, to see if it's possible to get it taken down. It keeps the young person informed at each stage of their report, and provides further support where necessary. We would like to see the promotion of such tools more proactively across Scotland.

**Oor Fierce Girls**

Oor Fierce Girls is a campaign which focuses on promoting healthy relationships. It helps people broaden their understanding of what a relationship should consist of and how to identify the warning signs of an unhealthy one. It was developed by self-identifying girls who had experienced peer to peer sexual abuse. Recognising professionals discomfort in addressing issues around sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour, the girls came together to promote 'safe spaces' for children to explore their experiences. The campaign began in Dundee and is being roll out in other parts of the country.

**Joanne Smith, Policy Manager, NSPCC Scotland**

26 May 2022

Your Ref:

Our Ref: 075.22

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Dear Convener,

Further to the Evidence Session on Online Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation on 18 May 2022, please find below information pursuant to the request to provide "*data on the scale and activities of vigilante groups whose activities relate to child sexual abuse, grooming and exploitation.*"

Police Scotland is an active part of UK-wide National Police Chief Council structures, including specific strategic and practice & policy groups, relating to what are referred to as Online Child Abuse Activist Groups (OCAGs).

Police Scotland does not recognise, in a formal sense, the term "vigilante groups", nor does the NPCC. Police Scotland's policies and approach to OCAGs are consistent with the UK-wide position.

**Prevalence**

The OCAG phenomenon was known in Scotland as early as 2016, but increased significantly in prevalence though 2017 and 2018. Since then recorded incidents have receded and stabilised. There was some fluctuation through the pandemic and the various levels of lockdown restrictions, but prevalence through the early part of 2022 has again become stable. Recorded OCAG incidents in Police Scotland since 2018 are as follows:

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 (to date) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **129** | **79** | **93** | **43** | **36** |

Police Scotland's policies and approach are now well embedded and understood across local policing divisions and are considered business as usual. Police Scotland does not endeavour to map or track the numbers of OCAGs themselves.

OCAGs are not in any way officially recognised and it would be impossible to determine how many there actually are at any given point in time.

**Police Scotland Position**

Police Scotland's now longstanding and consistent position has been that it does not endorse, condone or encourage the activities of OCAGs. Police Scotland does not work with or advise OCAGs, or individuals who comprise OCAGs, as to how to carry out their activities. Whilst it might be necessary for Police Scotland to note a formal statement from a person who purports to be a member of an OCAG, whether to secure intelligence or evidence or to deal with an incident safely and professionally, including why they might be present at a particular location, this is not endorsing, condoning or encouraging OCAG activity. Police Scotland will ensure that a clear and consistent message is provided to such groups and individuals that they are acting independently of the Police and that it is the position of the Chief Constable that all such investigations are matters for the Police and not members of the public.

Police Scotland will always respond when information is received to suggest a child or young person may be at risk of harm or that a person might pose a risk of harm to children. The fact that a member of the public reporting such a risk of harm happens to be, or might be, a member of an OCAG is incidental. The response will focus on identifying and mitigating any risk posed to a child or young person, or any other person and, thereafter, securing any evidence of criminality.

Where there is deemed to be sufficient evidence, persons might be arrested and charged and the necessary report will be submitted to the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service. This can apply to persons reported by OCAGs as well as to OCAG members themselves where they are assessed to have committed an offence.

I hope this is sufficient, but please let me know if you require more information.

Yours sincerely,

Bex Smith
Assistant Chief Constable
Major Crime, Public Protection and Local Crime

**Stop It Now! Scotland / Lucy Faithfull Foundation**

**Supplementary evidence**

I wanted to write to thank you and the committee for the invite to give evidence on 18th May 2022.

I was particularly struck by the thoughtfulness of questions from committee members and the general consensus around support for a public health approach to the prevention of online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

I have attached a copy of our annual review from last year that may be of interest to you and showcases more of the work we do around the prevention of sexual harm in Scotland.

I would also welcome a further discussion with the committee or individual members about the role perpetrator-focused prevention has in reducing sexual harm. There is growing evidence in particular of the contribution made to online protection of children from harm by deterrence, disruption and early interventions targeting those who offend online or at risk of doing so. We are keen this evidence is known about by policy makers and the wider public.

Our office is close to Leith Walk in Edinburgh and easily accessible from Holyrood. We would be happy to meet with yourself or members of the committee individually or as a small group and we could shape the visit to meet the needs of those who wish to visit. Alternatively, we would also welcome members to contact us individually or as a group to discuss more about the prevention of online harm in Scotland either online or at Holyrood.

I noted from the Committee meeting that there was some interest in the subject of adolescent technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour. We are hosting the following event at the end of June which may be of interest: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/keep-children-safe-tackling-technology-assisted-harmful-sexual-behaviour-tickets-332844746597.

I have copied in the clerk to the committee and Russell as co-convenor for information.

Thanks again for your interest in our work and please feel free to get in touch if we can be of help in the future.

Best wishes

Stuart

**Stuart Allardyce**

Director Stop It Now! Scotland / Lucy Faithfull Foundation