



# **Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales**

## **Personal Resilience Questionnaire Survey 2011**

### **Summary report on results**

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Emma Donaldson-Feilder and Taslim Tharani

Affinity Health at Work  
287 Mayall Road  
London SE24 0PQ  
Tel: 020 7738 4792

Email: [emma@affinityhealthatwork.com](mailto:emma@affinityhealthatwork.com)

Website: [www.affinityhealthatwork.com](http://www.affinityhealthatwork.com)



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### **A. Introduction**

The 2011 Personal Resilience Questionnaire survey is the fifth that the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales (PSAEW) has conducted. It aims to: gather information, provide a tool for Branches, support national lobbying and encourage members to reflect on their own health and wellbeing. This year's survey was conducted using an online questionnaire, the link to which was made available to all PSAEW members during the period from 18th April until 20th May. 1076 people submitted a fully completed questionnaire through the online system, a 72.4% response rate.

### **B. Findings from the survey responses**

#### ***1. Health and wellbeing***

The data showed that just over a quarter of respondents reported mild levels of anxiety symptoms and around 20% reported moderate or severe symptoms. For depression, about 15% reported mild symptoms and about 6% reported moderate or severe symptoms. Thus over 45% report some level of anxiety symptoms and over 20% report some level of depression symptoms.

Responses regarding whether people had been treated for various health conditions showed that just under half had not been treated for any of the conditions covered and more than half those reporting treatment were only treated for one of the conditions listed. Neck or back pain was the most frequently reported condition for which respondents had been treated, other chronic joint pain the second most frequent, with stress/anxiety/depression and hypertension being joint third most frequent.

#### ***2. Absence, leave and rest days***

The average number of sick days taken in the past 12 months was 1.84 days and 88% of respondents had taken no sick days at all. Of those who had taken sickness absence, 75% had taken only one period and there was a fairly broad spread in terms of the number of days taken. 37% of respondents reported taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence and 26% reported taking leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities in the past year. 75% had not taken all their annual leave in the past 12 months and 76% had not taken all their rest days in the past month.

#### ***3. Working hours***

57% of respondents reported working 50-60 hours per week, 13% said they worked 60-70 hours and 1% reported working 70 or more hours per week – thus 71% of respondents are in breach of the Working Time Directive. 60% of respondents said they did not log their hours accurately; the most frequently selected reasons for this were 'I am too busy/it is not a priority', 'There is no point' and 'It is not possible to record the hours worked at home'.

#### ***4. Feedback on the toolkit and Revitalised***

Nearly three-quarters of respondents had looked at the 'Be a better Superintendent' toolkit and 46% said they had used it either a little or a lot. 8% of respondents had accessed the Revitalised online health management system.



## **5. Working conditions and individual factors**

Responses to questions about organisational issues showed that the majority of respondents perceive everyone in their organisation to work long hours, that working long hours is seen as a way to show you are performing well and that people feel they mustn't be seen as fallible. A majority perceive there to be 'in' crowds and cliques and only just over half felt it was OK to challenge norms. Nearly 40% report that senior management's approach to managing performance was harsh and unhelpful.

Regarding their ACPO team, the majority of respondents perceived their ACPO team to work long hours and not reinforce the importance of work-life balance with their behaviour, despite saying that work-life balance is important. Nearly three-quarters of respondents felt that their ACPO team did not stop pressure being passed on and over a quarter said their ACPO team showed bullying behaviour. On the positive side, nearly three-quarters felt their ACPO team was supportive and about two-thirds felt their ACPO team showed appreciation. Views of line managers were rather more positive than views of ACPO, though managers were still seen to work long hours themselves and over 50% were not reinforcing the importance of work-life balance through their behaviour.

Respondents reported high levels of demands across all the areas covered by the survey, including tight deadlines, excessive breadth and depth of responsibility, managing difficult human resources issues and attending numerous meetings. Around three-quarters reported being expected to perform on-call duties on their rest days and that their force had an expectation that they would take on additional responsibilities for public order, firearms, CBRN cadres etc without sufficient consideration of how this affects their workload. Over 60% agreed that their force expects them to be at work or answer the phone at unreasonable times. Nearly three-quarters reported being exposed to a large number of traumatic incidents in their time working for the police service.

Over three-quarters of respondents reported receiving phone calls at all times of day and night, 70% agreed that it was difficult to balance the demands of work with their non-work life and only 6% never take work home. Over 50% said they did not have enough resources/staff to do the job. Between 50% and 60% felt they received the training they needed, received helpful feedback on their performance, had a say over their career and had a say over their working location. The picture painted is one of high demand, low control and low support, which is high risk in terms of stress-related problems.

The majority of respondents were ambitious to do well, got a buzz from working in the Superintending ranks, felt that the Police Service was a vocation for them and that being a Superintendent was part of their identity. Nearly 90% said that looking after their health was a priority for them; however, nearly two-thirds had a tendency not to say 'no' and only about half felt they were good at managing their time.

Questions about recent changes showed that respondents felt things had shifted substantially in the last year: nearly 90% reported that the demands of their job had increased in the last year and over 70% were concerned about having to work longer due to changes in pension arrangements; over 60% were more worried about their personal finances than a year ago, 45% reported enjoying their work less than a year ago and 40% were more concerned about their career progression than a year ago.

40% of respondents said they aspired to move from Superintendent to Chief Superintendent (30% of respondents were already Chief Superintendents) and 23% said they aspired to move into ACPO.

## **6. Greatest concerns**

The final question asked respondents to indicate their areas of particular concern. 60% said that the decrease in pension provision was either their greatest or their second



greatest concern; and over a third of respondents said that increased work demands was either their greatest or second greatest concern. Forced retirement after 30 years' service was one of the greatest concerns for over 20% of respondents.

### **7. Influence of working conditions and individual factors on wellbeing**

Using multiple regression to explore the issues that had the strongest association with anxiety and depression, showed that agreement with the following statements was associated with both higher anxiety and higher depression symptoms:

- It is difficult to balance the demands of work with what I want/need to do in my non-work life
- I enjoy my work less than a year ago.

### **8. Impact of working hours on wellbeing**

The data suggest that those who work longer hours are more likely to have mild, moderate and severe anxiety and depression symptoms, but also more likely to take zero days sickness absence, take leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence and not to take all their annual leave or rest days. This suggests that people may avoid taking time off despite their symptoms – risking presenteeism (being at work but not productive), which may be costly to employers and carries the risk of burnout for individuals.

## **C. Findings from comparative analyses**

Comparisons with previous surveys show the levels of moderate/severe anxiety symptoms and of mild and moderate/severe depression symptoms, having been rather higher in 2009, have dropped slightly in 2011. They also show the proportion of respondents reporting being treated for none of the conditions listed in the survey dropping only slightly over the years and increasing again marginally in 2011. Average sickness days appear rather lower and the proportion of respondents taking zero sickness absence appears rather higher in 2011 than in previous surveys. The proportion of respondents taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence, having dropped in 2003 and 2006 then increased in 2009, has increased still further in 2011. The proportion of respondents taking leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities is higher in 2011 than it was in 2009, as is the proportion who have not taken all their annual leave or rest days.

Comparisons by gender suggest that a higher proportion of women experience mild, moderate and severe anxiety symptoms, while transgender respondents have higher proportions with mild symptoms, but lower proportions with moderate and severe anxiety symptoms. For depression, there are only very small differences across the genders. Rates of treatment for health conditions are pretty similar across the genders. Women and transgender respondents report taking more sickness absence days on average; and a smaller proportion of woman take zero sickness absence than men or transgender respondents. While similar proportions of men, woman and transgender respondents took leave/rest days to avoid sickness or due to caring responsibilities, more men and transgender respondents said they had not taken all their annual leave and more transgender respondents said they had not taken all their rest days. A higher proportion of women and transgender respondents than men report working 50 hours or less, but a higher proportion of women than men or transgender respondents also report working over 60 hours, with more men and transgender respondents in the middle 50-60 hours band.

Comparisons by number of years in Superintending ranks show few consistent patterns in terms of anxiety, depression or health conditions. Average sickness days appear particularly low and the proportion of individuals taking zero sickness absence particularly high for those with 2 years or less in the Superintending ranks. Higher proportions of those who had been in the Superintending ranks either for 2 years or less



or for 7 years or more reported working 50 hours or less and lower proportions of these groups reported working over 60 hours.

Comparisons by number of years pensionable service suggest that the level of anxiety symptoms decreases with increase in pensionable years. However, the proportion being treated for zero health conditions also decreases with increase in pensionable years. The proportions of respondents working 50 hours or less and over 60 hours both seem to increase with increase in years pensionable service, suggesting that more respondents with longer pensionable service are working at both extremes.

Comparisons by function suggested that those on secondment have lower levels of both anxiety and depression symptoms than other functions. Those in HQ Support/Specialist Departments appear on average to take higher sickness absence, though the proportions taking zero sickness absence does not vary greatly over the three functions. A smaller proportion of those working in Division/BCU/Operational functions reported working 50 hours or less, with a higher proportion working 50-60 hours.

Comparisons by rank showed only small differences in anxiety or depression symptoms or in proportions being treated for health conditions. Average sickness days are lower for Chief Superintendents than Superintendents, but the proportion of people taking zero sickness absence is about the same. More Chief Superintendents than Superintendents report working 50-60 hours and over 60 hours, with more Superintendents reporting working 50 hours or less.

#### **D. Recommendations**

Overall, the survey results give a picture of those in the Superintending ranks being under high levels of demand, working long hours and showing signs of anxiety and depression. The results also point to considerable concerns about recent changes. PSAEW and branches can help improve members' wellbeing through lobbying for improved conditions and supporting individuals in dealing with their work.

The survey results highlight a number of areas on which the PSAEW and branches can focus when lobbying for improved working conditions for members. Particularly:

- Working hours and presenteeism
- Demands and work-life balance
- ACPO and management approaches
- Recent changes and current concerns.

The areas identified by the survey findings in which individual members could take action, and be supported by the PSAEW and branches to do so, are:

- Time management and managing communication technologies
- Reducing working hours and improving work-life balance
- Looking after their health.