# National Policing Wellbeing Survey 2021/22

## Forensic Services

*Appendix Report*

**Acknowledgements**

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This report is intended as a basis for discussion. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material contained within, the authors will not be liable for any loss or damage incurred through the use of this report.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The third National Wellbeing Survey was designed to assess the current state of wellbeing from the perspective of the policing workforce.[1] The survey was available to the forty-three Home Office forces in England and Wales. On request, the Ministry of Defence Police and Guernsey Police were also able to participate in this research.

The research was undertaken to support the benefits realisation of the National Police Wellbeing Service which impacts on, and informs, strategic policing initiatives.

A key aim of this study was to investigate changes in key measures relating to staff attitudes, motivation, and wellbeing since the National Wellbeing Survey conducted approximately twelve months earlier in November 2020.[2] Additional factors affecting wellbeing were also investigated in the 2021 survey and predictive statistical analyses were undertaken to provide findings that can be used to inform future national policing wellbeing programmes.

The results presented in this appendix report for Forensic Services respondents are intended to supplement the more detailed overview presented in the main national report. For predictive findings, discussion text and change over time findings, please refer to the upcoming main national-level report which will be published on the Oscar Kilo website in Spring 2022.

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[1] This research was supported by funding from the National Police Wellbeing Service.
[2] It is noteworthy that the previous 2020 National Policing Wellbeing Survey was conducted after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2    METHODS

The National Wellbeing Survey 2021 was designed using proven question sets for each of the measures[3] and circulated online to personnel from the forty-three Home Office police forces in England and Wales.[4]

The research was undertaken by independent researchers from the Policing Research Unit at Durham University Business School in collaboration with the National Police Wellbeing Service and was conducted in accordance with Durham University ethical guidelines for research. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality for all participants is assured. All questions within the survey were completely optional; respondents could choose to leave blank and skip any question they did not wish to answer.

Responses were collected over a seven-week completion period from the end of October 2021.[5] In total, the survey received 36,633 responses (14.7% response rate), of which 784 responses were received from individuals working within Forensic Services roles.

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[3] The measures have either been developed by the research team and/or are based on, or adapted from, peer reviewed academic scales which have been selected and tested in this context. The research team are available to discuss the measures further, as appropriate.

[4] We thank Durham Constabulary for their support in enabling secure data procedures for distributing and accessing responses from this survey.

[5] The 2021 National Policing Wellbeing Survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 3    FINDINGS

## 3.1    Introduction

The findings presented in this appendix report are for the overall sample of respondents obtained from Forensic Services respondents in the National Wellbeing Survey 2021/22.

In total, the survey received 784 responses from individuals working within Forensic Services. By role, this resulted in a sample of 745 police staff, 27 police officers, and 9 respondents who selected 'other'.[6, 7]

For ease of interpretation and comparison, the average scores reported across the key measures are graded against a nine-point classification ranging from extremely low to extremely high.[8] Moreover, to assist in understanding the findings, the key measures included within this report are defined and discussed in the glossary (see Section 4).

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[6] It is worth noting that a large proportion of Forensic Services respondents indicated they were based within forces in the regional area of Yorkshire and the Humber. However, this was found to have minimal impact on the reliability of the findings and on the overall average scores noted in this appendix report.

[7] These samples are too small to provide average scores for these role groups separately.

[8] The varying rating scales utilised for each measure in the survey are noted where relevant throughout this report. For ease of interpretation and understanding, each of these has been converted within the discussion text into a standardised nine-point classification which comprises the descriptors *Extremely Low, Very Low, Low, Moderately Low, Moderate, Moderately High, High, Very High* and *Extremely High*.

## 3.2    Key Findings

For easier comparison against the overall scores presented within the main national-level report, the average scores for Forensic Services respondents for repeated topics from the National Wellbeing Survey 2020/21 are presented in Table 1. Measures within Table 2 are areas that have been newly introduced into the National Wellbeing Survey design this year.

 Frequencies relating to sleep quality and experienced workplace incivility are provided in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

**Table 1: Average Scores for Repeated Measures**

| Measure | All Respondents (Average) | Score Classification |
|---|---|---|
| Emotional Energy | 3.78 | *Moderate* |
| Fatigue *(past 2 weeks)* | 4.72 | *Moderately High* |
| Symptoms of Anxiety *(past 3 months)* (1-10 scale) | 6.16 | *Moderately High* |
| Symptoms of Depression *(past 3 months)* (1-10 scale) | 5.45 | *Moderate* |
| Physical Wellbeing *(past 3 months)* (1-5 scale) | 3.34 | *Moderately High* |
| Psychological Detachment from Work | 4.16 | *Moderate* |
| Disturbed Sleep *(past 3 months)* | 4.39 | *Moderately High* |
| Insufficient Sleep (less than 6 hours) *(past 3 months)* | 4.41 | *Moderately High* |
| Job Satisfaction | 5.21 | *High* |
| Intention to Quit | 3.38 | *Moderately Low* |
| Life Satisfaction (1-10 scale) | 7.02 | *High* |
| Sense of Being Valued by Co-Workers (0-10 scale) | 7.49 | *High* |
| Sense of Being Valued by Supervisor (0-10 scale) | 6.52 | *Moderately High* |
| Sense of Being Valued by the Force (0-10 scale) | 4.82 | *Moderate* |
| Sense of Being Valued by the Public (0-10 scale) | 5.00 | *Moderate* |
| Experienced Workplace Incivility *(past 12 months)* (1-6 scale) | 2.20 | *Low* |
| Sense of Competence at Work *(past 3 months)* | 5.34 | *High* |
| Sense of Autonomy at Work *(past 3 months)* | 4.50 | *Moderately High* |
| Sense of Relatedness at Work *(past 3 months)* | 4.53 | *Moderately High* |
| Prosocial Motivation | 5.92 | *Very High* |
| Work Engagement | 5.50 | *High* |

**Notes**:

1. All of these measures used a 1 to 7 scale, unless stated.

2. Due to continuous development of question sets, the scales used in 2021 to measure psychological detachment and experienced workplace incivility are adapted versions of the scales used in 2020; as such, these average scores are not directly comparable with the average scores presented in the 2020/21 national report. Please see the 2021/22 national-level report for a detailed discussion of change in scores over time between the two surveys.

**Table 2: Average Scores for Additional Measures**

| Measure | All Respondents (Average) | Score Classification |
|---|---|---|
| Vision Clarity | 4.72 | *Moderately High* |
| Perceived Organisational Support | 4.05 | *Moderate* |
| Supportive Leadership | 5.03 | *High* |
| Supervisor Listening | 4.86 | *Moderately High* |
| Team Belonging | 5.64 | *High* |
| Challenge Stressors (1-5 scale) | 3.92 | *High* |
| Hindrance Stressors (1-5 scale) | 3.79 | *High* |
| Process Improvement Behaviour | 5.50 | *High* |

**Note**: All of these measures used a 1 to 7 scale, unless stated.

**Table 3: Sleep Quality by Shift Work**

| Shift Working | Disturbed sleep *(Frequency of "very often" and "all of the time")* | Insufficient Sleep *(Frequency of "very often" and "all of the time")* |
|---|---|---|
| Shifts  (*n* = 331) | 20.7% | 31.8% |
| No Shifts  (*n* = 452) | 18.5% | 26.8% |

**Note**: For insufficient sleep, individuals were asked how frequently they received less than 6 hours of sleep in the 3 months prior to the survey.

**Table 4: Frequency of Experienced Workplace Incivility**

| Measure | All Respondents | |
|---|---|---|
| | **%** | *n* |
| *Experienced being put down or treated in a condescending manner* | | |
| Never | 30.3 | 237 |
| Once or twice | 45.7 | 358 |
| Monthly or a few times a month | 16.3 | 128 |
| Weekly or more frequently | 7.6 | 60 |

**Note**: We measured individuals' experiences of general workplace incivility by someone in their force over the past 12 months.

# 4    GLOSSARY OF KEY MEASURES

## *Anxiety and Depression Symptoms*

Anxiety refers to feelings of tension and nervousness, worried thoughts and physical changes in relation to thinking about an uncertain outcome or impending event. Depression refers to feelings of sadness, despair, discouragement and worthlessness. Symptoms of anxiety and depression tend to be highly linked. Lower scores on these measures are more desirable.

## *Challenge and Hindrance Stressors*

Challenge stressors reflect individuals' perceptions of work-related demands, such as workload, time pressures, and levels of responsibility. Individuals who experience challenge stressors, although they may find them stressful, will view them as an opportunity for personal gain, such as growth and personal development or achievement of important outcomes.

Hindrance stressors also refer to work-related demands; however, individuals view these demands as constraints that hinder their performance and achievements at work. This impacts strongly on their wellbeing and reduces their engagement in discretionary behaviours. Examples of such constraints include bureaucratic barriers, administrative difficulties and poorly designed work processes, which do not provide individuals with the opportunity for personal gain and prevent achievement of valued goals.

## *Disturbed Sleep and Insufficient Sleep*

The importance of sleep for restorative daily functioning is well-recognised. Exposure to emotionally stressful situations has been shown to be related to reduced sleep quality and higher levels of sleep disturbance. Moreover, when reduced sleep quality occurs, sensitivity to emotional and other stressful situations increases, which can exacerbate the impact of stressors on individual emotional energy and wellbeing. A lack of recovery can have serious impacts on individuals' health, wellbeing and performance. In this study, we asked individuals how often they had less than six hours of sleep, and how frequently they had experienced sleep disturbance, for example in the form of restlessness, difficulty falling asleep, or unintentional early waking. Lower reported frequencies of disturbed sleep and insufficient sleep are more desirable.

*Emotional Energy*

Emotional energy is central to individuals' wellbeing and can be considered as the amount of emotional and mental energy individuals have available to them to meet the daily demands and challenges they face in their roles. Low levels of emotional energy are manifested by both physical fatigue and a sense of feeling psychologically and emotionally 'drained' at work. Prior research has found that low emotional energy levels are related to reduced organisational commitment, lower productivity and performance, reduced engagement, ill-health, decreased physical and mental wellbeing, increased absenteeism and turnover intentions, and lower levels of persistence in the face of difficulties.

*Experienced Workplace Incivility*

Workplace incivility can be thought of as a generalised form of low-intensity, subtle, harmful behaviour directed towards others, which can be verbal (being rude or disrespectful) or non-verbal (excluding or ignoring someone). Individuals were asked how frequently they had experienced being treated in a condescending manner by someone in their force while at work over the past 12 months. Lower reported frequencies are more desirable.

*Fatigue*

Fatigue can be thought of as an overwhelming sense of being tired, lacking energy and feeling exhausted. Fatigue arises through engaging in demanding activities. While fatigue is related to emotional exhaustion, it differs in that it can be relieved by using compensation mechanisms such as working more slowly or taking adequate rest and gaining sufficient sleep. Prior research has shown that fatigue is associated with reduced communication skills, reduced ability to handle stress, increased risk taking, reduced decision-making ability, increased errors of judgment and likelihood to have an accident, an inability to recall details, a lack of attention and vigilance, reduced performance, and increased absence from work. A lower score on this measure is more desirable.

*Intention to Quit*

We asked individuals whether they were thinking about, or looking for, alternative employment and whether they intend to quit the organisation in the near future. While prior research has shown that intention to quit is moderately associated with individuals leaving

the organisation, it can be considered as a way of assessing their levels of disengagement and withdrawal from their job. A lower score on this measure is more desirable.

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as how content an individual is with their job. We measured a single dimension of affective job satisfaction to represent an overall emotional feeling that individuals have about their job.

### Life Satisfaction

An individual's judgement of their life satisfaction is dependent on their assessment and views of their personal circumstances. This judgment takes place against an internal standard which they have set for themselves. It can be considered as a measure of an individual's subjective wellbeing and a comment on their feeling of overall satisfaction with life.

### Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support refers to individuals' beliefs regarding the degree to which their organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing. It also refers to a feeling of assurance that their organisation will provide support when individuals face particularly difficult or challenging circumstances when carrying out their duties. When individuals feel valued, their socioemotional needs of respect, being cared for and receiving approval will be met, and they will reciprocate with higher levels of discretionary effort and felt obligation. Perceived organisational support is more strongly related to social exchange rather than economic exchange because it is most affected by discretionary actions by the organisation rather than as a result of external constraints, such as government regulations. Perceptions of positive support from the organisation affect an individual's relationship with their organisation, and have an important impact on individuals' wellbeing and commitment towards their organisation. Individuals were asked these questions in relation to their force.

### Physical Wellbeing

Physical wellbeing refers to the overall condition and functioning of the body. Physical wellbeing has been linked to disease management, nutrition and physical exercise. Respondents rated their general physical health over a three-month period.

*Process Improvement Behaviour*

Process improvement behaviour is a set of proactive actions aimed at implementing positive, constructive change through finding solutions to organisational problems, making small changes to working procedures and the introduction of new working methods. It is based on personal initiative and conscious decision-making, rather than a formal requirement, and is therefore thought of as an extra-role behaviour.

*Prosocial Motivation*

Individuals with strong prosocial values are motivated by a core desire to help and benefit others, which influences their actions and decisions. For this measure, we asked whether individuals feel motivated have a positive impact by helping and benefiting others in society through their work.

*Psychological Detachment from Work*

Psychological detachment from work refers to an individual's state of mind when they are not working, and their ability to distance themselves from job-related issues, problems or opportunities (such as receiving job-related phone calls at home). It demonstrates an individual's ability to switch off and distance themselves from their job, not only physically but also mentally. There is strong research evidence for the importance of psychological detachment in the recovery from work stress. Such recovery experiences help employees replenish cognitive resources lost due to work demands, which further increases their psychological health and life satisfaction, and decreases the negative impacts from stressors on employees' wellbeing and performance.

*Psychological Need Satisfaction*

Research has suggested that people have three universal psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which need to be satisfied to maintain optimal performance and wellbeing. *Autonomy* relates to feeling able to act and make choices that reflect one's personal beliefs and values. *Competence* relates to an individual's feelings of being skilful, effective and being able to make a contribution. *Relatedness* refers to a need to feel a sense of belonging and being part of a team where they feel respected and valued. Psychological needs can be thought of as nutrients that are essential for individual's adjustment, integrity and growth. Satisfaction of psychological needs are essential for individual wellbeing. When

the fulfilment of psychological needs is frustrated, this results in individuals becoming defensive or passive and suffering from ill-health. We asked individuals the extent to which each of the psychological needs are met, in general, whilst at work over the past three months.

### Sense of Being Valued

Value is defined as the relative importance or worth that people feel they deserve. We asked individuals to rate the extent to which they feel valued by their co-workers, supervisor, force and the public.

### Supervisor Listening

Supervisor listening signals to individuals that their supervisor is open, interested and supportive, leading to employees feeling more comfortable when approaching and talking to their supervisor.

### Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership stresses the importance of personal integrity and serving others, such as employees and communities. It focuses on the development of people to their fullest potential through an understanding of each person's different characteristics, strengths and interests. Supportive leaders serve as role-models, build trust and provide feedback and resources to their people. It is argued that supportive leadership combats negative outcomes associated with the promotion of self-interest which underlies many incidents of unethical behaviour.

### Team Belonging

Team belonging can be considered as whether individuals feel accepted by other members of their work team, whether they have a sense of belonging to their team and feel connected to team members.

### Vision Clarity

Individuals were asked their opinions on how clear their organisation's vision is to them, whether it has defined objectives and whether it is easy to understand. Individuals were asked these questions in relation to their force.

***Work Engagement***

Engagement is a measure of an individual's personal expression of their self-in-role. A person is engaged in their work when they are able to express their authentic self and are willing to invest their emotional, cognitive and physical energies into their work and job roles. To do this requires them to feel that the work has meaning, that they feel safe and that they have the necessary resources. Improved engagement can lead to higher individual performance, enhanced wellbeing and reduced staff turnover.