

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE WELLBEING OF OUR WORKFORCE?

National Police Workforce and Wellbeing Survey

National Deep Dive Report: Wellbeing and Workload | September 2026



This report answers the question: How can we improve the wellbeing of our workforce?

Context for this report

[Leapwise](#), on behalf of [Oscar Kilo](#), the National Police Wellbeing Service, conducted the National Police Workforce and Wellbeing Survey 2026. The survey was run over four weeks from 1 June to 29 June 2026, with 33 forces actively participating in the survey (two forces extended due to exceptional circumstances, closing on 5 and 6 July respectively). Nationally, the survey received 56,677 valid responses (including non-territorial forces) – with a record 27.8% response rate among participating forces and 27 forces achieving response rates of over 15%.

This report provides enhanced insights from the National Police Workforce and Wellbeing Survey 2026 on England and Wales territorial forces. The survey is intended to provide **essential information for national policing organisations and local forces about employee wellbeing and experience.**

Leapwise and Oscar Kilo are exploring the findings in more detail through a series of deep dives, of which this report is one. This report identifies some of the key drivers of wellbeing, to help prioritise improvement efforts nationally and locally. A key aim of this survey was to drive meaningful change and identifying the factors that can shift the dials on wellbeing is an important step towards that aim.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wellbeing in policing remains a significant challenge – driven in large part by the workload pressures

Wellbeing remains a significant challenge across policing

56% are fatigued or physically exhausted by work

45% find work emotionally exhausting

44% feel burnt out because of their job

Workload pressure is the strongest driver of wellbeing

53% face unrealistic time pressures

55% find it difficult to take enough breaks at work

This is not purely a resilience issue

The relationship between workload and wellbeing is consistent across the workforce – regardless of role, rank, engagement levels or line manager support

Wellbeing figures are % often or always; workload figures are % who agree.

What drives wellbeing for the workforce overall?



Workload pressures

Facing unrealistic time pressures and finding it difficult to take breaks are the most closely associated factors with wellbeing, driving exhaustion among the workforce



Fairness of pay

Feeling that pay is unfair increases stress about finances



Personal characteristics

Older colleagues and specials & volunteers have higher wellbeing, and those with mental health conditions have lower wellbeing even accounting for differences in other factors, such as workload pressure



The workforce also identify **manager and leadership support** as an important contributor to their wellbeing

While workload pressure is the main driver of wellbeing, additional tailored support may help those facing the biggest challenge

The sections of the workforce facing the biggest wellbeing challenge fall into two broad groups: those whose poorer wellbeing is primarily explained by workload pressure, and those for whom it is also influenced by factors beyond workload. Improving wellbeing therefore requires both workload reduction and targeted support.

1 High workload pressure

For certain groups, high workload pressures explain the vast majority of their lower wellbeing levels

- Incident response
- Constables



Reduce workload & demand pressure

2 Personal characteristics

For some groups, reported wellbeing remains relatively lower even after accounting for workload and other organisational factors.

- Mental health conditions, neurodiversity & other health conditions
- Younger colleagues
- Limited duties



Targeted support based on their specific needs

3 Dual pressures for shift workers

Finally, the survey highlights a combination of both workload pressures and role-specific challenges impacting shift workers, with a minor impact based on shift length and type

- Those on 8-hour shift have slightly better wellbeing
- Those on 'day-only' or 'day and late' shifts have better wellbeing than those on 'day and night' shifts



Targeted workload reduction and consider impact of shift type

Improving wellbeing requires both reducing workload pressures and addressing the wider factors that shape employee experience

Wellbeing driver	How to address it
Workload pressures	1 Increase team capacity in most-affected areas: Those under heavy pressure cite insufficient capacity as the key challenge, though nationally demand is highly correlated with stated workload pressure. 2 Streamline internal processes: Duplication, bureaucracy and other internal processes are often cited as important contributors to workload pressures. 3 Upskill managers / leaders to better manage and distribute workload: Almost two-thirds of the workforce cite workload management as having a key impact on their workload, and it was the most common critique of leaders.
Belonging to a group needing tailored support	1 Develop targeted support pathways for key groups: The survey suggests some groups experience lower wellbeing for reasons not explained by workload or organisational factors, indicating a need for tailored interventions. 2 Strengthen support following illness, injury or mental health challenges: Wellbeing support and follow-up after trauma, illness and periods of restricted duties can play a key role, including through flexible working, workplace adjustments and role design to support colleagues with specific challenges.
Ineffective manager or leadership support	1 Build managers' capability to support wellbeing: The workforce consistently identified supportive line management as a positive influence on wellbeing and poor management as a contributor to poor wellbeing. 2 Improve communication and transparency: Many colleagues linked wellbeing to feeling informed, listened to and supported. Clear communication and visible decision-making can strengthen trust.
Perception that pay doesn't fairly reflect the work	1 Increase recognition where pay cannot be changed: While individual forces have limited influence over pay, recognition, appreciation and visible acknowledgement can help colleagues feel valued. 2 Improve transparency around progression and reward: Perceptions of unfair progression and inconsistent access to opportunities emerged as recurring concerns in free-text responses. 3 Focus on the wider employment experience: Job quality, development opportunities, flexibility and supportive management can help mitigate some of the pressures associated with dissatisfaction about pay.



1. WHAT IS THE WELLBEING CHALLENGE?

Poor wellbeing and workload pressures are widespread across policing – worse than in comparable public sectors

This is a system-wide issue: around half the workforce is affected by physical or emotional exhaustion, burnout or compassion fatigue. Policing sits well above comparable public sector benchmarks, and the position has barely moved since 2025.

56%

often or always fatigued or physically exhausted by work

45%

often or always find their work emotionally exhausting

44%

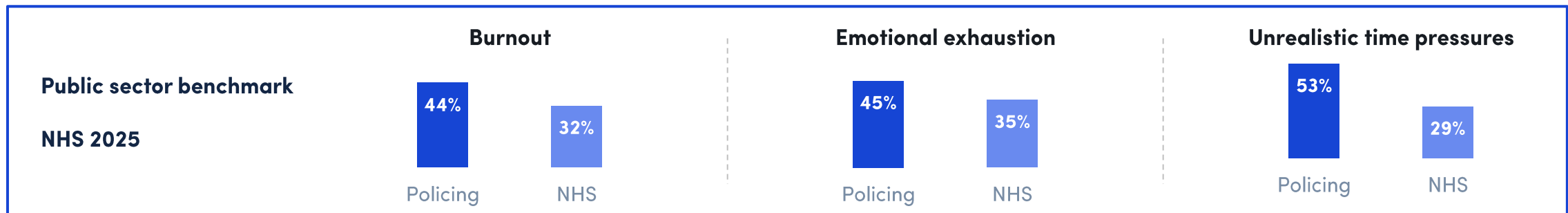
often or always feel burnt out because of their job

53%

agree they face unrealistic time pressures

55%

agree they find it difficult to take enough breaks



The national average masks notable high pressure and poor wellbeing among colleagues in incident response, constables and sergeants

The wellbeing challenge is concentrated at the frontline: The national average understates the problem at the sharp end. Incident response, and the constable and sergeant ranks carry the worst of both workload and wellbeing, which gives leaders a clear focus given finite resource.

Worst affected function: local incident response

73% are fatigued or physically exhausted due to work

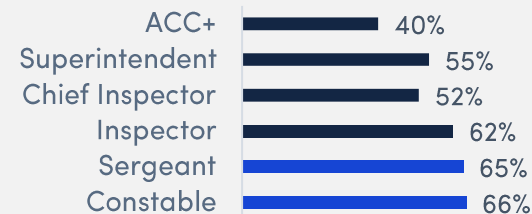
63% are burnt out because of their job

82% face unrealistic time pressures at work

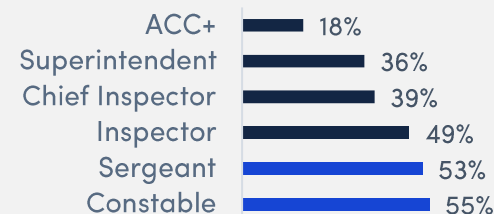
87% struggle to take enough breaks at work

Worst affected ranks: constables and sergeants

Ranks closer to the frontline report high rates of physical exhaustion



The burnout rate for Constables is three times that than for ACC+



Hidden demand: unpaid hours

63% work unpaid hours

44% work an hour or more unpaid per week

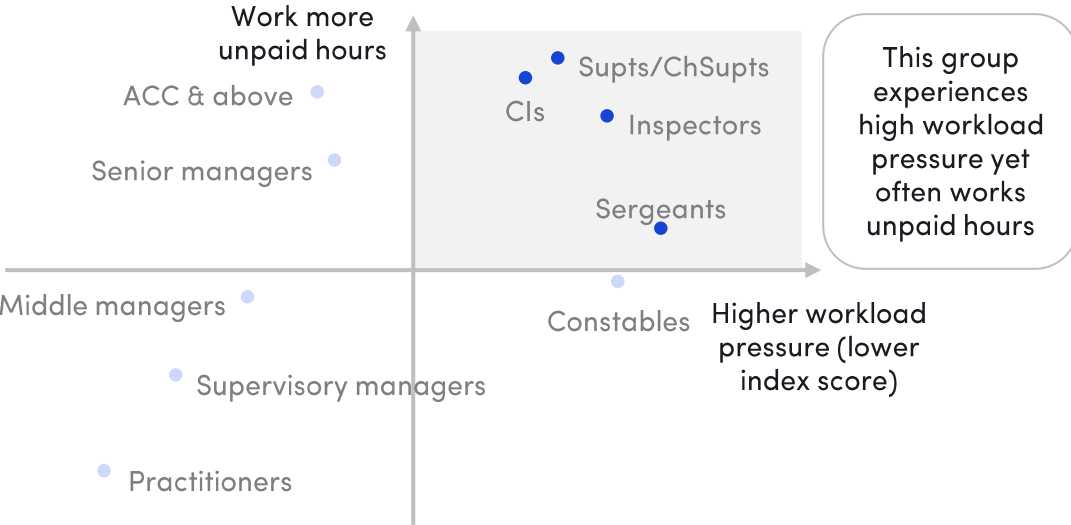
40% report is it to manage their workload

More of policing's demand is being met off the books compared to healthcare: Only 37% of the policing workforce report not working unpaid hours, compared to 51% in the NHS

Workload challenges are higher for senior officers and response cops than records suggest due to unrecorded overtime, a ‘hidden’ pressure

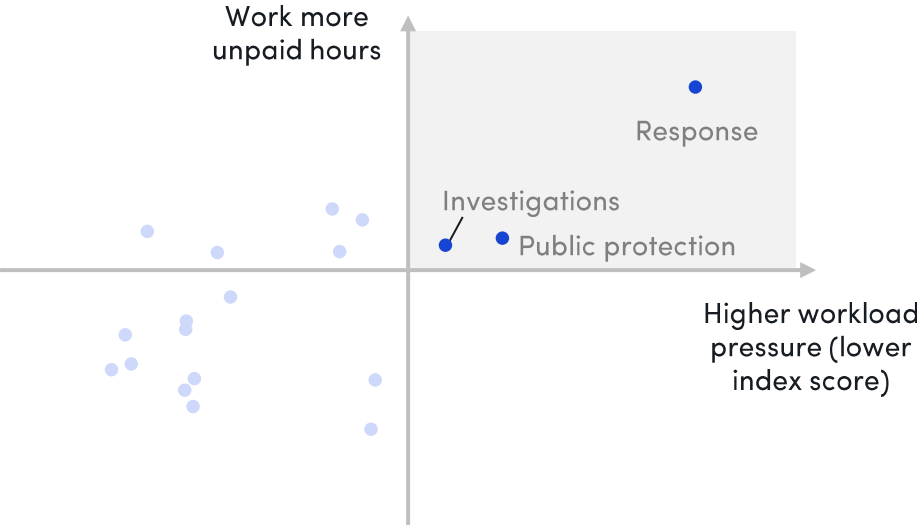
For senior officers, unpaid hours is arguably part of the job, but many junior officers are also working unpaid hours (around three-quarters)

<u>Proportion working unpaid hours by staff band & officer rank</u>	
Constables	69%
Sergeants	76%
Practitioners	45%
Inspectors	90%
Supervisory manager	57%
Chief inspectors	95%
Middle manager	67%
Supts (incl. Chiefs)	97%
Senior manager & above	84%
ACC +	93%



Unpaid hours are more likely to be worked in incident response, roads policing and neighbourhood policing

<u>Functions working most unpaid</u>		<u>Functions working least unpaid</u>	
Incident response	81%	Dealing with the public	48%
Roads policing	70%	Any other function	50%
Neighbourhoods	68%	Technology and ICT	52%
NPCC	67%	Criminal justice arrangements	53%
Public protection	67%	Intelligence	53%



These issues may have wider impacts – driving attrition and working unpaid hours, and preventing the workforce from accessing support

The workforce thinks wellbeing and workload issues are the main driver behind multiple undesirable trends

What are the main reasons you'd like to leave the force?

Most selected reason:

For better work-life balance (54%)

What makes it difficult for you to access health & wellbeing support?

Most selected reason:

Lack of time or workload pressure (38%)

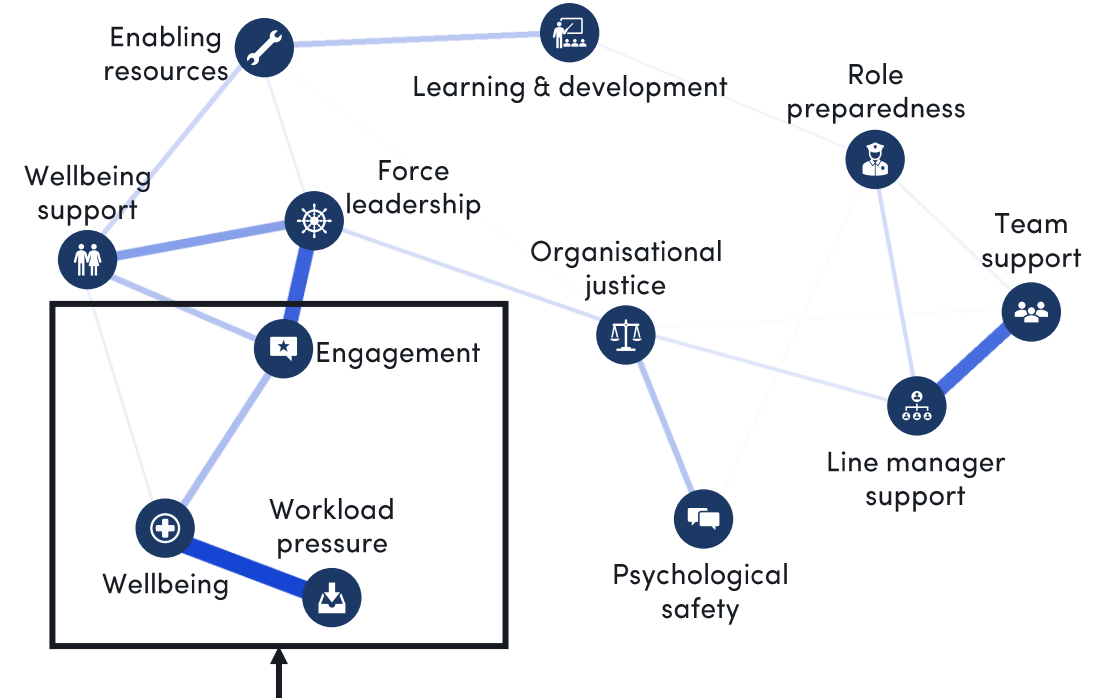
What were your main reasons for working unpaid hours?

Most selected reason:

It helped me manage my workload (40%)

High workloads and poor wellbeing are most closely related to reduced engagement

This chart shows the strength of the 'direct' relationship between each theme in the survey. The darker the line, the more strongly correlated the themes are, even once all other survey questions are accounted for.



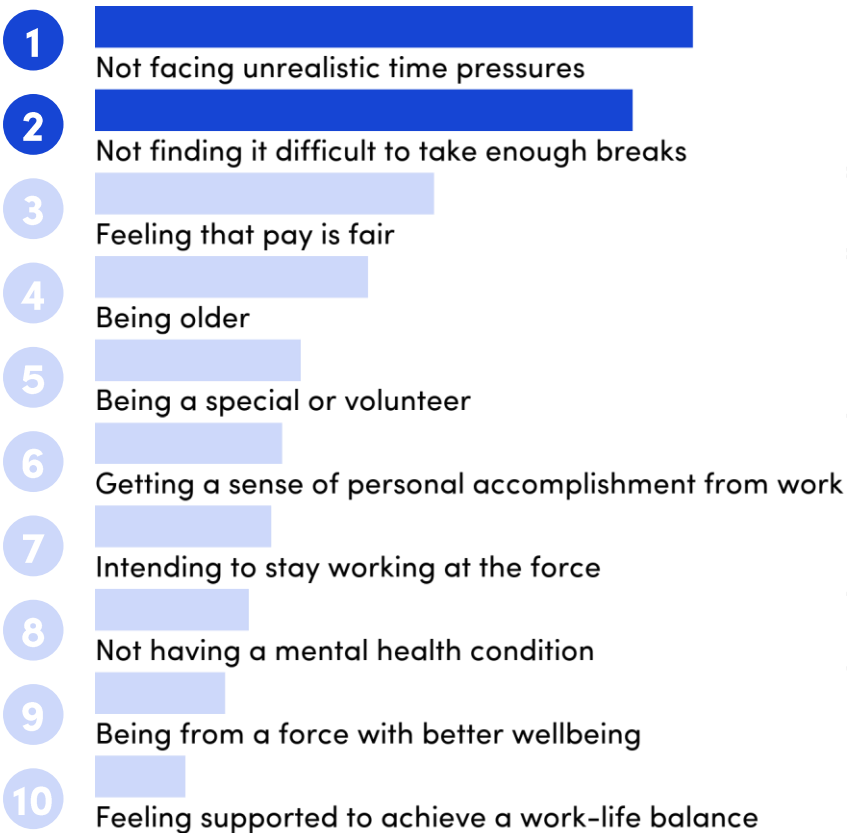
Wellbeing and workload pressures aren't 'directly' correlated with other themes except with engagement. Therefore, poor wellbeing may reduce engagement.



2. WHAT DRIVES WELLBEING?

Workload pressure is the factor most related with wellbeing across the workforce, with fair pay and personal characteristics also important

Good wellbeing is associated with...



Stronger relationship with the wellbeing index →

i Bar width is a **representation of how much explanatory power** each factor has for the wellbeing index. The **more strongly related** with wellbeing the factor is, the **wider the bar**.

1 Reducing workload pressures may be the most effective way to boost wellbeing

Facing unrealistic time pressures and finding it difficult to take breaks are the most closely associated factors with wellbeing, when accounting for all other factors measured in the survey. They drive exhaustion among the workforce.

2 Fairness of pay

Feeling that pay is unfair is strongly related with wellbeing. It's the factor with the third strongest relationship. We see later that specifically it's driving financial stress.

3 Personal characteristics

Even accounting for differences in other factors, such as workload pressure, older colleagues and specials & volunteers have better wellbeing, while those with mental health conditions have worse wellbeing.

Methodological approach: We created multiple imputed datasets (10) to ensure no individual was excluded from the analysis due to a non-response. On each imputation, we performed standard weighted linear regression of the index on all multiple-choice survey questions and several background characteristics. We calculated the partial R2 score for each factor and averaged these scores across the imputations. The bar widths represent these scores.

The workforce also identify that workload, support and leadership can improve wellbeing when done well, and harm it when done poorly

A few common themes emerged repeatedly across thousands of written comments describing both positive and negative experiences of wellbeing at work

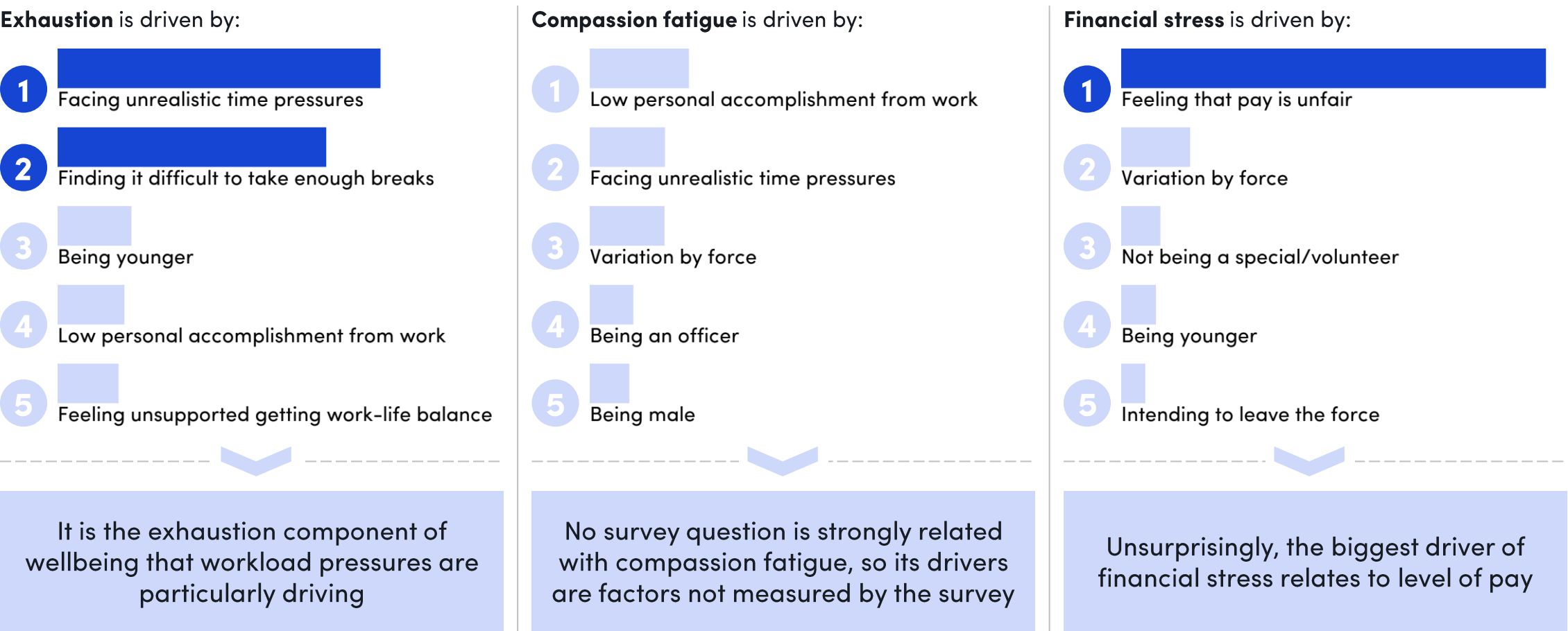
Workload • Wellbeing support • Leadership support • Job quality • Workplace culture

	Higher wellbeing when...	Lower wellbeing when...
Workload	Workloads are manageable through flexible working and greater control over demand <i>"Flexible working with option to work from home has greatly improved life / work balance and wellbeing."</i>	Demand exceeds available capacity and staffing levels <i>"More staff, cannot manage workload and it is becoming dangerous for everyone that works in my environment"</i>
Wellbeing support	Wellbeing support services are accessible and approachable <i>"Welfare support has been very helpful to me following difficult personal circumstances with my health."</i>	Wellbeing support is inadequate, including with limited follow-up after trauma, injury or illness <i>"The wellbeing provision, it is woefully inadequate and they do not look after officers when they need it most."</i>
Leadership support	Line managers are supportive and approachable <i>"Line manager support has kept me in work"</i>	Leadership is ineffective, with poor communication and lack of transparency <i>"When I raise issues nothing improves, managers are not interested in tackling problems."</i>
Development opportunities	Development and career opportunities, including positive role or team moves are available <i>"I changed my role so I can manage my emotional wellbeing better!"</i>	Pay, progression and development opportunities are perceived as unfair <i>"Better pay would reduce the financial burden and make me feel more valued at work."</i>
Workplace culture	Teams provide support, belonging and respect <i>"Having supportive colleagues and managers who are approachable and willing to listen has made the biggest positive difference to my wellbeing."</i>	Bullying, harassment and toxic culture undermine workplace culture <i>"Blame culture. We no longer support each other and all to quick to blame."</i>

Exhaustion is driven by workload pressures and financial stress by pay, while compassion fatigue is unrelated to survey questions

The wellbeing index includes several questions, which we've **grouped into three components**:

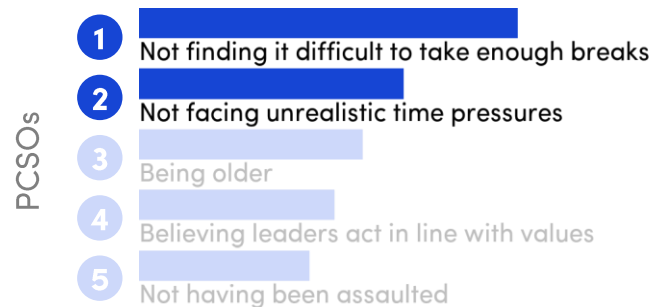
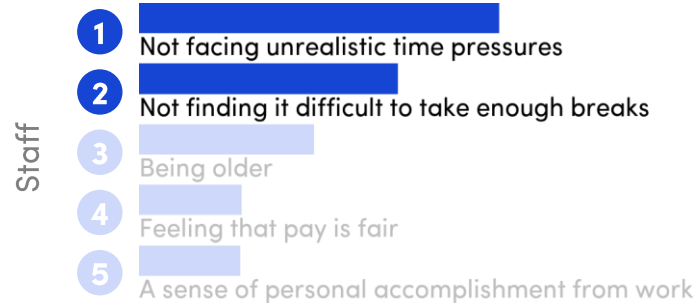
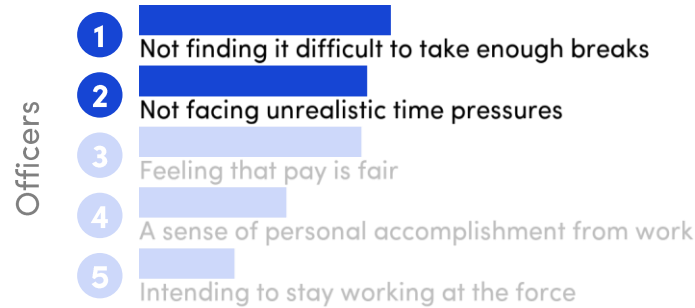
- Exhaustion: "Felt fatigue or physically exhausted by work?"; "Found your work to be emotionally exhausting?"; "Felt burnt out because of your job?"
- Compassion fatigue: "Found it difficult to empathise with victims of crime due to the demands of your job?"
- Financial stress: "Felt stressed about your finances?"



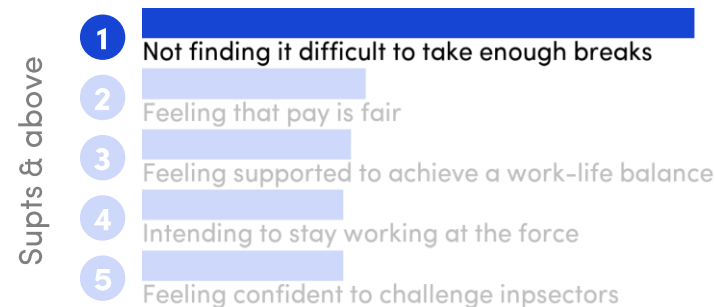
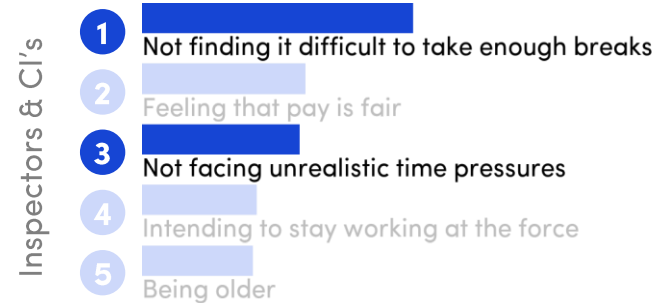
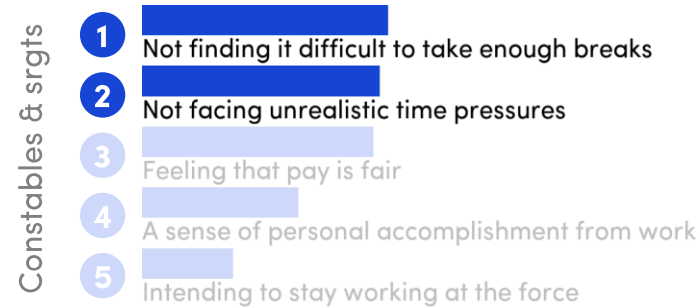
The question "Come to work even when you did not feel well enough to perform your duties?" is not included in this analysis

The drivers of wellbeing are similar across most roles within the workforce – with workload pressure the key factor for all groups

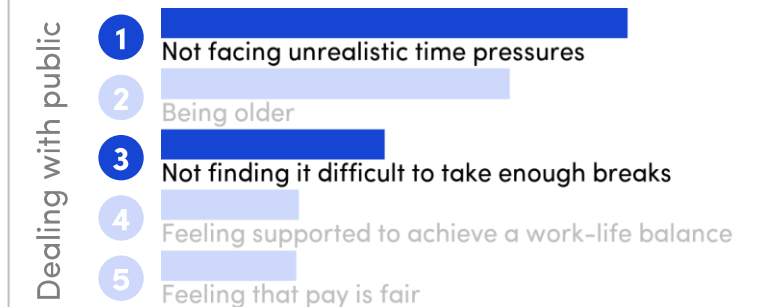
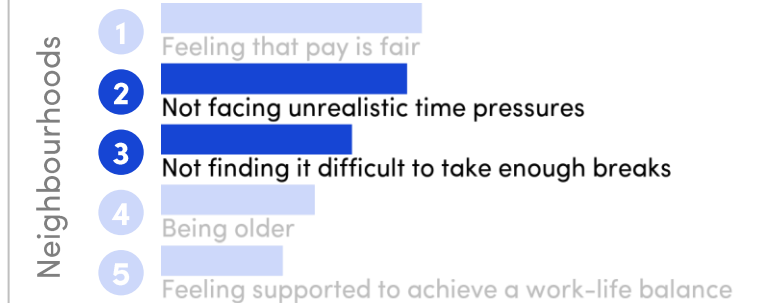
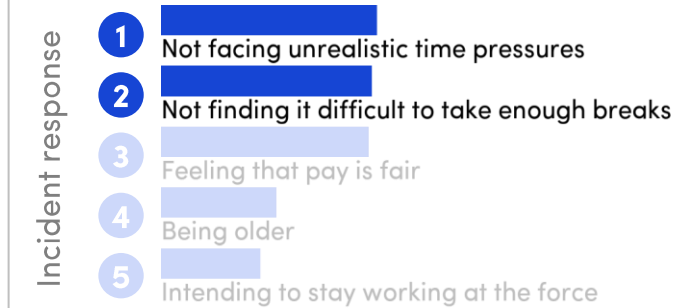
Top 5 drivers of wellbeing by role:



Top 5 drivers of wellbeing by rank:



Top 5 drivers of wellbeing by functional area:



Regardless of how engaged an individual is or how supportive their line manager is, workload pressure remains the key driver of wellbeing

We may hypothesise that the more engaged someone is, the less workload affects their wellbeing, because their motivation in their role means the heavy workload doesn't get them down.

However, workload is a key driver of wellbeing regardless of engagement

Top 5 drivers of wellbeing for the **most engaged** 10% of the workforce:

- 1 Not facing unrealistic time pressures
- 2 Not finding it difficult to take enough breaks
- 3 Being older
- 4 Feeling recognised by the force
- 5 Being male

Top 5 drivers of wellbeing for the **least engaged** 10% of the workforce:

- 1 Not finding it difficult to take enough breaks
- 2 A sense of personal accomplishment from work
- 3 Feeling that pay is fair
- 4 Not facing unrealistic time pressures
- 5 Intending to stay working at the force

We may hypothesise that the more supported by their line manager someone feels, the less workload affects their wellbeing, as their manager may absorb some of the pressure.

However, workload is a key driver of wellbeing regardless of line manager support

Top 5 drivers of wellbeing for the **most supported** 18%* of the workforce:

- 1 Not finding it difficult to take enough breaks
- 2 Not facing unrealistic time pressures
- 3 Feeling that pay is fair
- 4 A sense of personal accomplishment from work
- 5 Not having a mental health condition

Top 5 drivers of wellbeing for the **least supported** 10% of the workforce:

- 1 Not facing unrealistic time pressures
- 2 Not finding it difficult to take enough breaks
- 3 Feeling that pay is fair
- 4 A sense of personal accomplishment from work
- 5 Being older

* 18% of the workforce has a line manager support index score of 10/10 and so filtering to the top 10% is impossible



3. DO ANY GROUPS NEED
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

Several segments of the workforce have lower wellbeing and may require tailored approaches to improve their wellbeing

These subgroups have the lowest wellbeing index scores

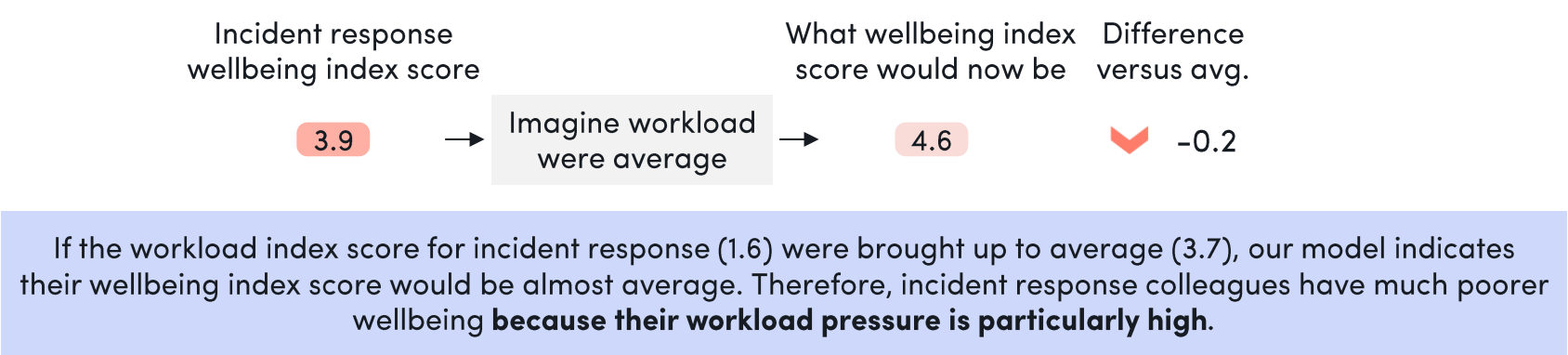
Mental health condition	3.4
ADHD	3.7
Learning difference	3.8
Pagan	3.9
Incident response	3.9
ASD	3.9
Other health condition	4.0
On limited duties	4.0
Working shifts	4.0
Transgender	4.1
Long term illness	4.1
Physical disability	4.1
'Other' religion	4.1
Constables	4.2
25-34 year olds	4.2
Neurological/movement disorder	4.2

Selected groups	Why do these groups have worse wellbeing than others?	What can policing do about this?
Incident response	Response officers report a particularly higher workload pressure, which explains their lower wellbeing	Make a bigger and particular effort to reduce incident response officers' workload
Mental health conditions		
Younger people	- Workload pressures are also the key driver for these groups - But their lower wellbeing scores are not fully accounted for by issues covered by the survey questions	Since the factors in the survey cannot explain why these groups have lower wellbeing, they may need tailored support
Limited duties		
+ several other groups		
Shift workers	- Those on shifts report much higher workload pressure, which mostly explains their lower wellbeing - Evidence also suggests shift length and type may have a minor effect	Target workload reduction interventions at shift workers (and consider further investigation into impact of shift length)

For incident response officers, workload issues are particularly acute, which explains their lower wellbeing

Mental health condition	3.4
ADHD	3.7
Learning difference	3.8
Pagan	3.9
Incident response	3.9
ASD	3.9
Other health condition	4.0
On limited duties	4.0
Working shifts	4.0
Transgender	4.1
Long term illness	4.1
Physical disability	4.1
'Other' religion	4.1
Constables	4.2
25-34 year olds	4.2
Neurological/movement disorder	4.2

Bringing incident response’s workload pressure up to average explains almost all their below average wellbeing



Incident response officers told us how intense their workload pressures are

- "We are sent from job to job, without having time to complete the paperwork to a good standard. We don't even have time to have a break and eat without being interrupted, or working whilst eating."
- "It is extremely difficult for response officers to respond to incidents and manage a workload. Response officers on BE are mostly not managing to have a refreshment break, let alone time to complete workload."
- "Working through breaks in order to get work done. Being off late due to high demands on workloads and being deployed to other incidents/jobs which have not had the time to complete or investigate other prior incidents/jobs."

For some, the group’s defining characteristic may explain their lower wellbeing, so they may need bespoke support as well

Mental health condition	3.4
ADHD	3.7
Learning difference	3.8
Pagan	3.9
Incident response	3.9
ASD	3.9
Other health condition	4.0
On limited duties	4.0
Working shifts	4.0
Transgender	4.1
Long term illness	4.1
Physical disability	4.1
‘Other’ religion	4.1
Constables	4.2
25-34 year olds	4.2
Neurological/movement disorder	4.2

If all survey questions were answered the same way, these are the groups whose wellbeing would nonetheless be the lowest, indicating their defining characteristics may directly impact their wellbeing

	Index score		What index score would be		What index score would be	Difference versus avg.
People with mental health conditions	3.4		3.5		4.3	▼ -0.5
Young people (aged 25-34)	4.2	→	4.4	→	4.5	▼ -0.3
Those on adjusted, recuperative or restricted duties	4.0		4.1		4.5	▼ -0.3

Even once we imagine these groups responded the same as everyone else, their wellbeing would still be worse. This suggests **the characteristic of the group contributes to their poor wellbeing**. For example, having a mental health condition or being young may be driving low wellbeing and perhaps those with worse wellbeing are more likely to be on limited duties. This suggests **these groups will need bespoke support** to improve their wellbeing.

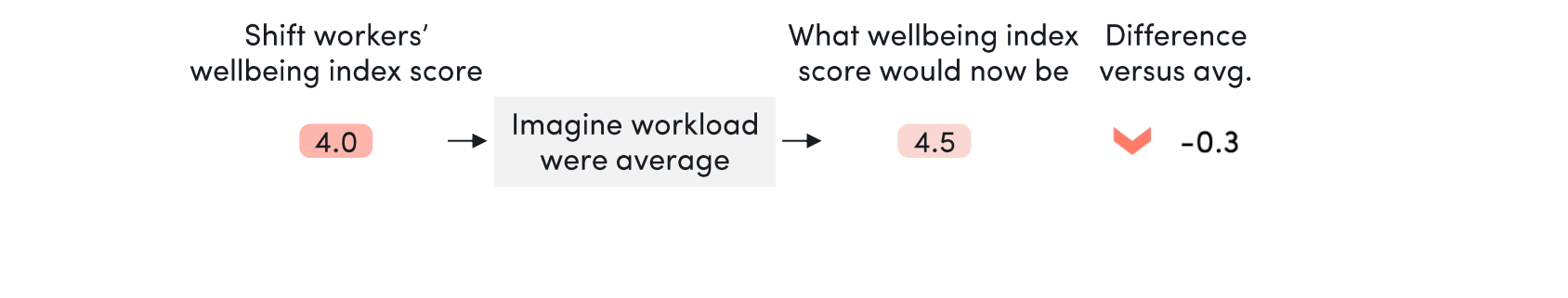
These groups would also have lower wellbeing than average even if all questions were answered the same way:

- Neurodiverse colleagues
- Those with a long-term illness
- Those selecting ‘other’ health condition
- Pagans and transgender colleagues (there were fewer than 250 responses for these two categories so we’re less confident modelling their scores)

Workload pressures explain some of the wellbeing challenge for shift workers; while those on shorter shifts and day shifts fare better

Mental health condition	3.4
ADHD	3.7
Learning difference	3.8
Pagan	3.9
Incident response	3.9
ASD	3.9
Other health condition	4.0
On limited duties	4.0
Working shifts	4.0
Transgender	4.1
Long term illness	4.1
Physical disability	4.1
'Other' religion	4.1
Constables	4.2
25-34 year olds	4.2
Neurological/movement disorder	4.2

Those who work shifts have lower wellbeing than those working office hours mostly because shift workers experience a higher workload pressure



Having a shorter shift and avoiding night shifts appears to boost wellbeing by around 10%
The following wellbeing index scores are the predicted scores when force, function and shift length/type (length when analysing effect of shift type and vice versa) are kept constant. These variables were kept constant because they are correlated with shift length and type. This means the scores presented here are directly comparable.

	Fixed shifts	Variable shifts
8 hours	4.2	4.1
Longer length	3.9	3.9
Day shifts	4.2	4.2
Day and late shifts	4.1	4.0
Day and night shifts	3.9	3.9

All analysis on this slide is for officers only; officers on shifts scored 2.4 for workload versus officer average of 4.3



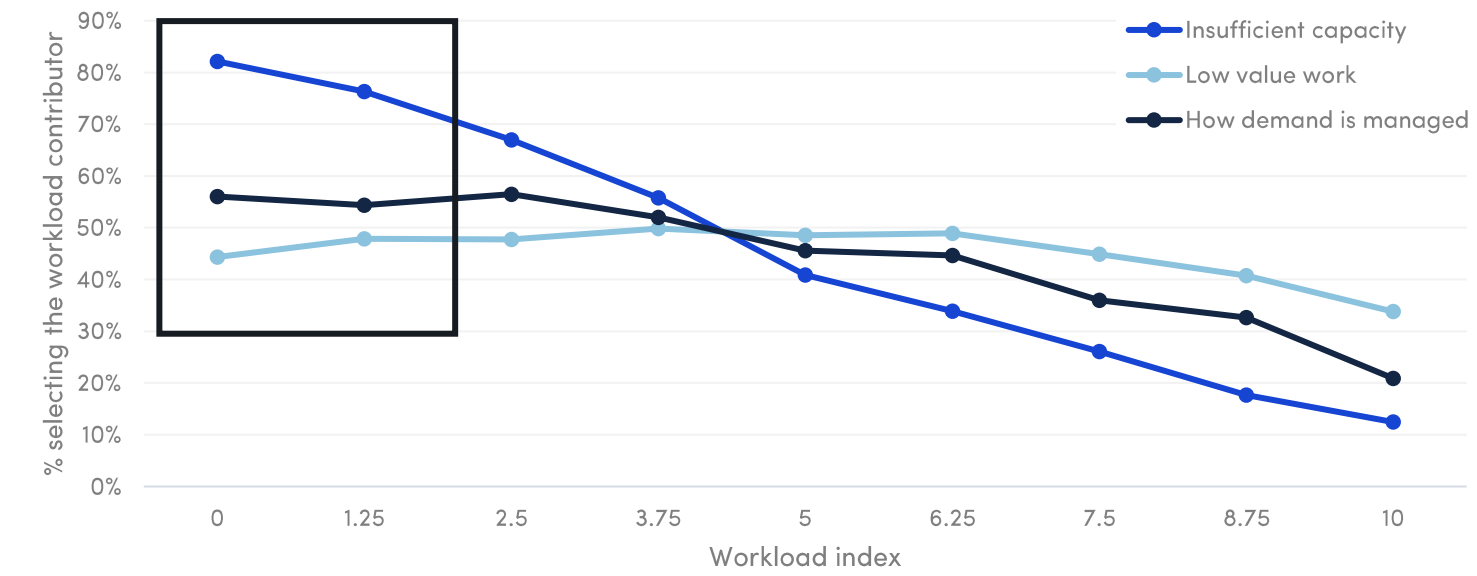
4. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WELLBEING?

Improving wellbeing requires both reducing workload pressures and addressing the wider factors that shape employee experience

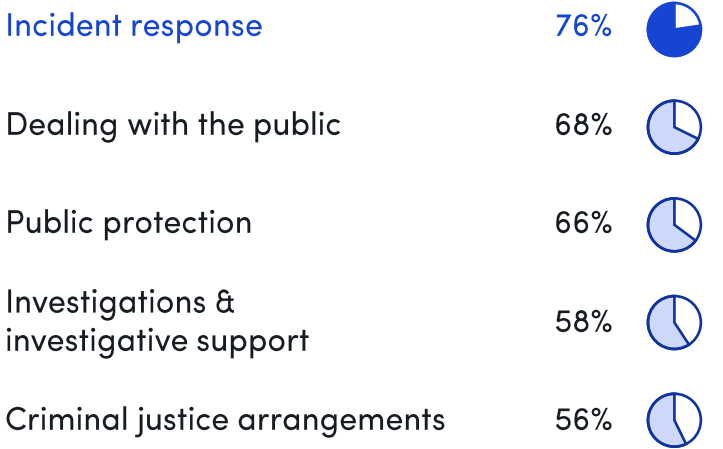
Wellbeing driver	How to address it
Workload pressures	1 2 3 Increase team capacity in particular areas: Those under heavy pressure say insufficient capacity is the main driver of workload, though triangulation does not support this and limited financial constraints may make this less feasible. Streamline internal processes: Duplication, bureaucracy and other internal processes are often cited by the workforce as an important contributor to workload pressures. Reducing them would reduce workloads. Upskill managers/leaders to better manage/distribute workload: Almost two-thirds of the workforce cite an aspect of workload management as having a key impact on their workload and it was the most common critique of leaders.
Belonging to a group needing tailored support	1 2 Develop targeted support pathways for key groups: The survey suggests some groups experience lower wellbeing for reasons not explained by workload or organisational factors, indicating a need for tailored interventions. Strengthen support following illness, injury or mental health challenges: Feedback identifies the importance of wellbeing support and follow-up after trauma, illness and periods of restricted duties. Flexible working, workplace adjustments and role design can support colleagues with specific challenges.
Ineffective manager or leadership support	1 2 3 Build managers' capability to support wellbeing: The workforce consistently identified supportive line management as a positive influence on wellbeing and poor management as a contributor to poor wellbeing. Improve communication and transparency: Many colleagues linked wellbeing to feeling informed, listened to and supported. Clear communication and visible decision-making can strengthen trust. Equip leaders to manage pressure, not pass it on: Leaders play a key role in setting priorities, managing competing demands and creating psychologically safe environments.
Perception that pay doesn't fairly reflect the work	1 2 3 Increase recognition where pay cannot be changed: While individual forces have limited influence over pay, recognition, appreciation and visible acknowledgement can help colleagues feel valued. Improve transparency around progression and reward: Perceptions of unfair progression and inconsistent access to opportunities emerged as recurring concerns in free-text responses. Focus on the wider employment experience: Job quality, development opportunities, flexibility and supportive management can help mitigate some of the pressures associated with dissatisfaction about pay.

The workforce believes that insufficient capacity in teams has a big impact on workload, particularly for those under the highest pressure

For those under the most workload pressure, insufficient capacity is seen as the primary reason why
 This graph shows, for different levels of workload pressure, what the workforce believes has the biggest impact on their workload



Percentage selecting capacity issues by function

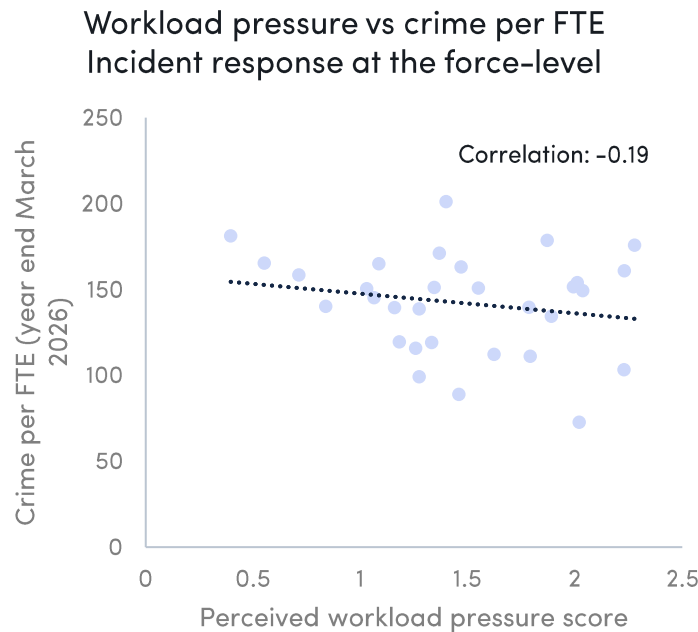


Road policing (51%), neighbourhood policing (51%), force command (48%), 'other' local policing (46%), infrastructure & assets (45%), operational support (44%), finance, commercial & risk (43%), intelligence (42%), HR (41%), other functions (40%), technology and ICT (39%), CTP (38%), NPCC (23%), other national (23%)

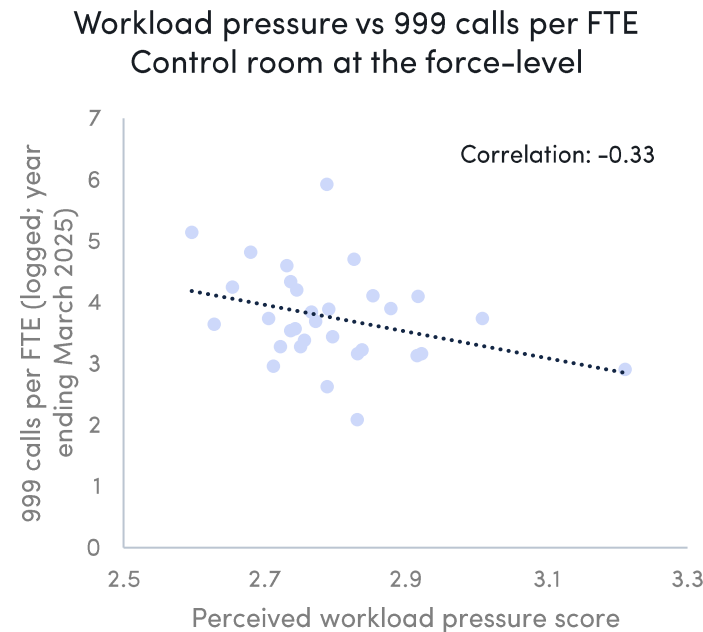
According to the workforce, insufficient capacity is most acute in areas experiencing very high workload pressure. This includes functions like incident response, the control room, public protection and investigations.

However, insufficient capacity within teams explains only some of perceived workload pressures and may be impractical to address

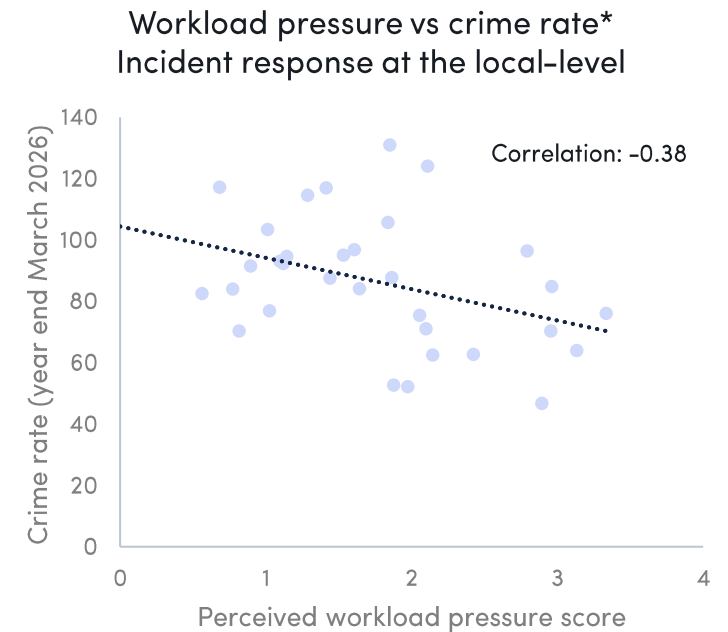
There are relatively weak correlations between workload index scores and measures of external demand



Each data point is a participating force's incident response team. The x-axis shows the team's workload index score and the y-axis total recorded crime per incident response FTE for the force.
Data sources: Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables, March 2026 edition, sheet P3 ([hyperlink here](#)); Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2026 ([hyperlink here](#))



Each data point is a participating force's 'dealing with the public' function. The x-axis shows the team's workload index score and the y-axis the number of 999 calls per control room FTE logged.
Data source: HMICFRS Value for money dashboard, 2025/26 profiles ([hyperlink here](#)).



Each data point is a response team within a force. All local teams that could be identified from the information provided in the survey and also correspond to a CSP area are included. The x-axis shows the team's workload index score and the y-axis total recorded crime per 1000 for the CSP area.
Data source: same data source as in first graph but sheet C4

Actual external demand can only partially explain perceived workload pressure. Therefore, **increasing team capacity to deal with this demand may only be partially effective.** Moreover, increasing team capacity may be **impractical due to financial constraints.**

* Ideally, we'd have used crime per incident response FTE at the CSP area level but FTE at the CSP area level is not publicly available

Poor management of demand and a large volume of low value work are other key drivers of workload pressure

Demand management and low value work are common reasons for high workload pressure

The % shown here is the % of respondents that selected at least one of the reasons in the bullet point list as being among the top two influences on workload.

55%

% selected

Insufficient capacity

- Insufficient capacity or cover to meet expected demand

49%

% selected

Poor management of demand

- work arriving unpredictably/without notice
- work arriving without adequate handover
- unclear priorities when demand

47%

% selected

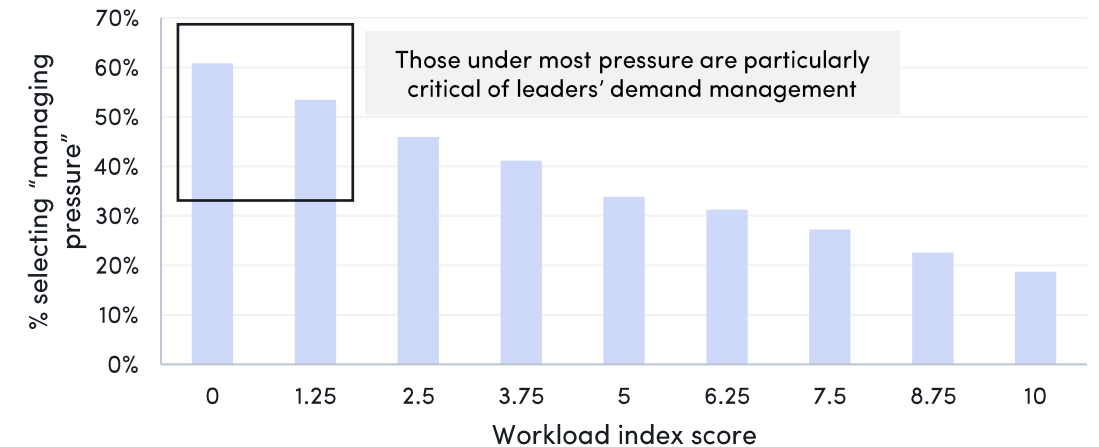
Low value work

- IT systems & processes creating duplication/extra steps
- Assurance, compliance or documentation requirements
- Other unnecessary or low-value work

Leaders' management of demand is the most common complaint about leaders, particularly for those under most pressure

Which two leadership areas require the most improvement?

- 1 Leaders managing pressure, instead of passing it down 43%
- 2 Decisions translating into consistent action 30%
- 3 Clear priorities or strategic decisions 23%



Forces may want to consider **upskilling leaders and managers so they can better manage demand and streamlining internal processes** to reduce workloads without affecting high value work

The workforce regularly mentioned insufficient capacity, demand management and low value work as key workload challenges

Key drivers	Freq. ¹	What do the workforce say drives workload pressures?		
Excessive policing demand	60%	The volume of policing demand exceeds the level that can be sustainably absorbed by available working capacity, inc. demand transferred from other public services / partners	<i>"Large amount of referrals come at once which meant having to increase my workload to ensure they were reviewed and finalised."</i>	Insufficient capacity
Workforce shortages	9%	Insufficient numbers of available officers and staff make it difficult to meet demand, with vacancies, absence and other workforce constraints reducing available capacity.	<i>"The department is understaffed. Many of us are taking on extra responsibilities in an effort to keep the department functioning."</i>	
Ineffective workload deployment	11%	Available workforce capacity is not optimally distributed across teams, roles or priorities, resulting in disproportionate workloads .	<i>"receiving work which is normally handled by other departments which is not normally in our allocation."</i>	Poor demand and workload management
Administrative burden	13%	Administrative, procedural and process requirements consume disproportionate time and reduce capacity available for core activity.	<i>"I believe we spend more time logging duplicate reports and over recording crimes than actually dealing with things productively."</i>	Lower value work
Competency constraints	4%	Gaps in skills, knowledge, experience, training or confidence increase the time required to complete work and create additional supervisory or support requirements.	<i>"Lack of training... has left me feeling like my workload has increased as it takes much longer to do my job."</i>	

Notes: 1. Free-text responses from four survey questions were analysed using a standardised codebook to consistently identify key wellbeing and workload drivers. The percentages listed represent the share of all Microsoft Copilot was used to apply predefined codes at scale, with coded responses aggregated to calculate the frequency and share of mentions for each driver.

The survey highlights continued support needs for those with mental health conditions, on limited duties and younger colleagues

Given exploration of the specific challenges and needs of colleagues with health conditions, on limited duties, and younger colleagues in in last year’s Drivers of Wellbeing deep dive, we have not repeated analysis in full here.

[↗ See last year’s report for more detail](#)

Colleagues with mental health conditions

2025 Findings

- Long-term health conditions were associated with lower wellbeing
- The wellbeing-gap remained even after accounting for other organisational factors included in the survey

“I was able to find a member of the now disbanded wellbeing support team who was able to signpost me to some actual help for the CPTSD I received as a result of a job I went to”

Colleagues on *limited duties*

2025 Findings

- Those on adjusted / recuperative duties had lower wellbeing
- Family support and team dynamics were important mitigating factors that could support wellbeing for those on limited duties

“More support to be given to officers on adjusted duties to get back to fitness rather than focusing on officers being placed on desk duties with workload and not giving them enough time to focus on fitness as part of shift. ”

Younger colleagues (25–34 yrs)

2025 Findings

- 2025 showed wellbeing increases with age, while wellbeing falls sharply in the first few years of service – pointing to a particular early-career challenge.

“The work/life balance and the flexi leave we have. This makes managing work loads and home life much more manageable. I believe this is a great policy.”

Finally, building supportive leadership and management is also an important driver of wellbeing

The findings highlight the role that day-to-day leadership and management can play in shaping people’s experience of work. Supportive managers can help colleagues manage pressure, feel valued and supported, and create an environment where wellbeing is taken seriously.

What does this mean in practice?

Supportive behaviours	What this looks like
Open conversations	Creating space to discuss workload, wellbeing and pressures at work
Early support	Recognising signs of stress and responding before issues escalate
Healthy ways of working	Encouraging breaks, boundaries and sustainable workloads
Employee voice	Involving people in decisions that affect their work
Leading by example	Demonstrating that wellbeing is a genuine organisational priority

Looking beyond the individual manager

Supportive leadership does not happen in isolation. Managers need the **time, capability, organisational support and wider culture** to lead effectively.

Our next deep dive on **leadership and change** will explore the organisational conditions that enable effective leadership and how forces can create environments where people and performance can thrive.

National and local action planning is underway, and we will support these efforts through further insights and knowledge sharing

Keep in touch with ongoing work and insights

There is already significant work underway nationally and locally to address the issues highlighted in this deep dive. We will continue to build the evidence base and share practical learning to support improvement across policing.

What's coming next:

- **Further deep dives** on *leadership and change* and *access to wellbeing support*, exploring these themes in more detail
- **Case studies of good practice from positive outlier forces and those demonstrating the largest improvements**, showcasing how forces are tackling wellbeing and workload challenges and driving improvement in practice.
- **A webinar series** bringing together the insights and learning, with space to reflect, share experiences and discuss how to drive national and local improvements.

Please share these insights with your colleagues and look out for opportunities to get involved.

LEAPWISE

Project Sponsor

Andy Rhodes OBE QPM

Jenna Flanagan

Leapwise points of contact

Annie Haswell

annie.haswell@leapwiseadvisory.com

Matthew Drury

matthew.drury@leapwiseadvisory.com

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BUILDING HIGH PERFORMANCE FOR THE PUBLIC