

Leavers' Survey Headline Report October 2017 - July 2021

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Author: Nicola Chandler

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Executive Summary

Demographics

- Findings are based on the current total of 2,326 respondents to the Leavers' Survey, collected between 2017 and 2021.
- The majority of respondents identified as male (75%) with 25% of respondents identifying as female.
- Slightly under two thirds of the sample were Constables (64%), 22% were Sergeants and 14% were from the Inspecting ranks.
- The majority of respondents said that their service length was between 26 and 30 years (56%). Respondents were most likely to say that they had 31 years' service (36%) with the average service length being 25 years.

Reasons for leaving

- 77% of respondents said that they have reached pension age and have chosen to retire; 18% of respondents said that they have resigned of their own accord and have not yet reached pension age.
- Retirees most common reasons for leaving were linked to their pension, including having access to their full pension and their length of service. However, 40% of retirees said that their morale had a major impact on their decision to leave.
- Resigners most common reason for leaving was their morale, in which 77% of resigners said had a major effect on their decision to leave. Other common reasons for resigning were respondents' job satisfaction, the impact of the job on their family/personal life, and the impact of the job on their psychological health.
- 41% of resigners said that better paid jobs outside the police had a major effect on their decision to resign.
- More than a third of respondents said that the impact of the job on their physical and psychological health had a major effect on their decision to leave the police. However, amongst resigners 59% said that the impact of the job on their psychological health had had a major effect on their decision to resign.
- A quarter of respondents said that their workload had a major effect on their decision to leave the police; whilst 55% of resigners and 30% of retirees said that the number of officers available to meet demands on their team/unit had a major effect on their decision to leave.

- The proportion of resigners (64%) who said that the impact of the job on their family or personal life had had a major effect on their decision to leave was almost double the proportion of retirees (33%).

Reconsidering decision to leave

- Respondents were most likely to say that a better work-life balance (28%) would *definitely* make them reconsider their decision to leave.
- Improvements in welfare and work-life balance would make around 40% of respondents who were resigning from the police reconsider their decision to resign from the police service, compared to 22% and 25% of retirees respectively.

Plans after leaving

- Respondents were most likely to highlight that they intend to continue working at some point after leaving the police service (91%); however, the majority of respondents said that they would never consider returning to the Police Service (61%).
- Of the 39% of respondents who would consider returning to the Police Service, 80% said that they would like this to be to the same force, but 51% said that they would prefer for this to be in a different role, and 69% said they would like to return as a member of police staff.

Introduction

The PFEW Leavers' Survey opened on 25th October 2017. The survey is a rolling survey, with no designated closing date. The survey is open to any officer who is leaving the Police Service within the next three months, including those who are retiring, resigning or being required to leave by their force.

The survey was launched to gain an insight into officers' reasons for leaving the Police Service. The survey also aims to identify whether officers are gaining what they want to from their career within the police. Therefore, the findings from this survey, for the first time, provide information regarding attitudes and expectations of those leaving the Police Service across England and Wales. This allows comparison with findings from other PFEW surveys within the Through Career Project which contains multiple surveys gathering officers' attitudes at different points within their career. This report provides a summary of findings from the leavers' survey, in the period from October 2017 to July 2021.

Findings within this report are based on the current total of 2,326 respondents to the Leavers' Survey. It is not possible to provide a definitive response rate for this survey because the police workforce statistics published by the Home Office do not cover the same collection period as the survey data. However, the Home Office data show there to have been 27,640 leavers in the period between March 2017 and March 2021.

Using these figures as a benchmark, we can be confident that, statistically speaking, the sample size obtained in the survey is large enough that the percentages quoted in this report can be considered to be accurate within the normal bounds of academic rigour (with a margin of error of less than or equal to 5%). The smaller the margin of error, the more confident we can be that the results are representative of the overall sample. For example: If 60% of respondents answered 'Yes' to one of the survey questions and the margin of error is 5%, we can estimate that 55% - 65% of the whole population would answer the same if asked.

Demographics

The majority of respondents identified as male (75%) with 25% of respondents identifying as female. When looking at the gender of resigners and retirees, 35% of resigners were female compared to retirees where 22% of respondents were female; 65% of resigners were male and 78% of retirees were male.

The sample of respondents leaving the police comprised primarily of White respondents (95%) compared to 5% of respondents from a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic group (BAME). For resigners, 6% of respondents said that they were from a BAME background, compared to 5% of retirees.

Slightly under two thirds of the sample were Constables (64%), 22% were Sergeants and 14% were from the Inspecting ranks (12% were Inspectors and 2% were Chief Inspectors). Respondents from the Inspecting ranks were more likely to be retiring from the police were (18%) resigning from the police (1%). Similarly, 25% of retirees were at the rank of Sergeant compared to 14% of resigners who were at the rank of Sergeant. However, the majority of respondents were at the rank of Constable regardless of whether they had resigned (85%) or retired (58%) from the police.

The proportion of respondents from each rank overall differ slightly from the proportion of leavers by rank in the Home Office 2021 data (Figure 3), insofar as the survey sample includes slightly more Sergeants and Inspectors than the current make-up of the police service as a whole. The average age of respondents was 49 with 54 years the most common answer and a majority of respondents falling into the 46-55 age bracket (75%).

Figure 1: Gender

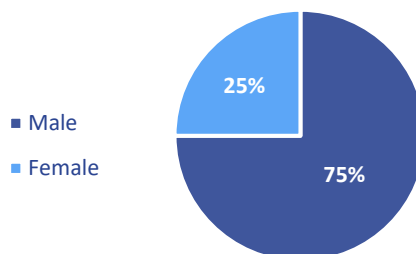


Figure 2: Ethnicity

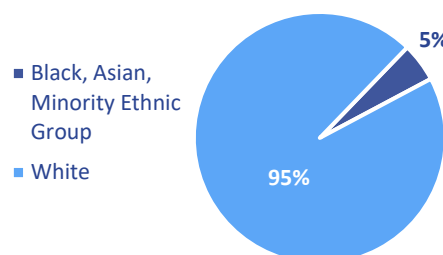
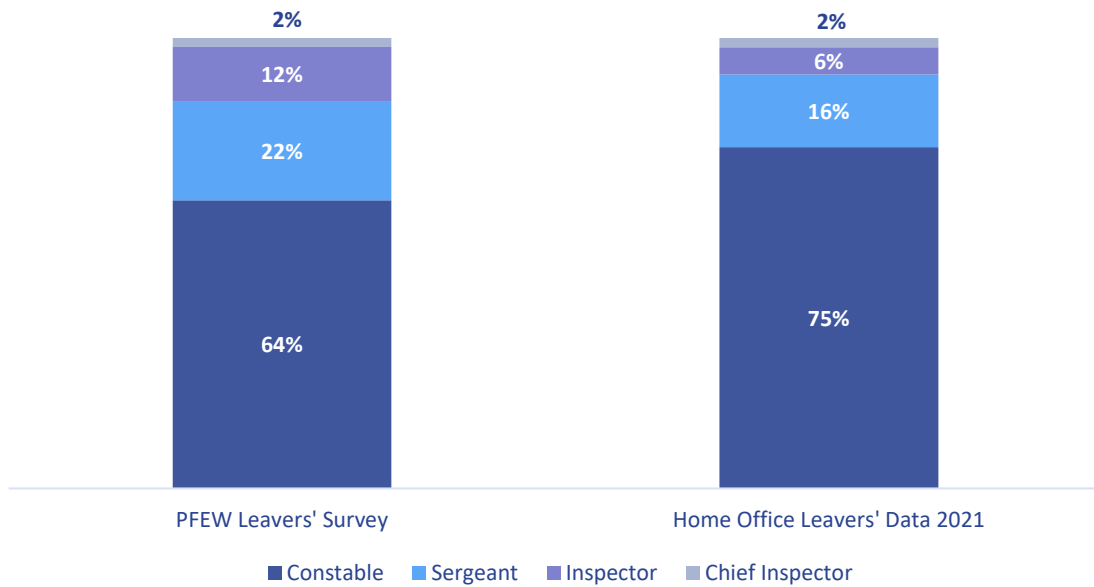


Figure 3: Leavers by Rank

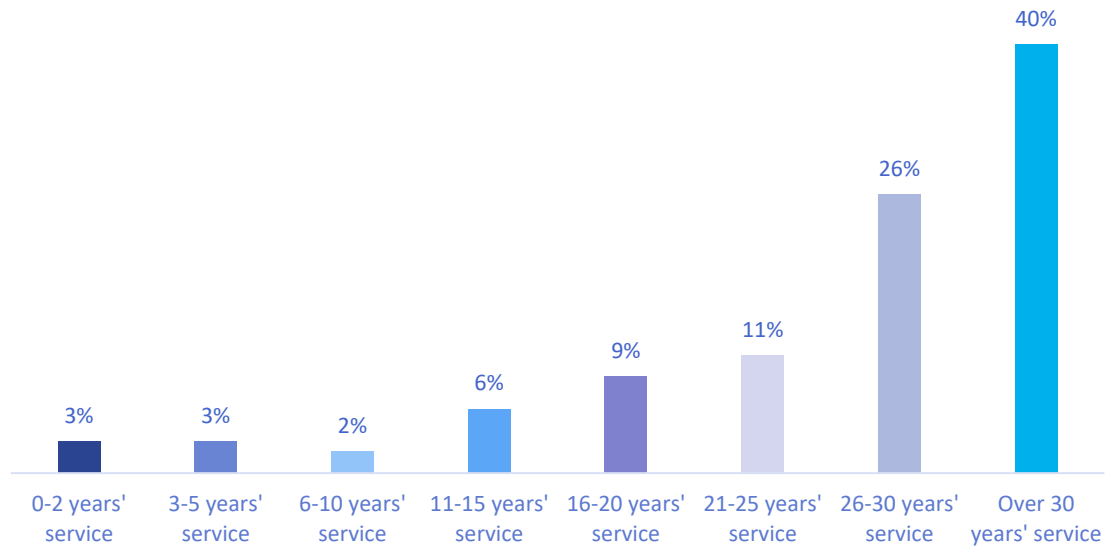


The majority of respondents said that they work in an Investigations role (25%), and 18% of respondents were from a Response role. Roughly 1 in 10 (10%) of respondents were working in a Neighbourhood role, 6% of respondents were from a Roads Policing role and 5% were working in a Custody role.

The majority of respondents said that their service length was between 26 and 30 years (56%) and with the average service length being 25 years. The average length of time respondents said they had been in their current rank was 19 years. As would be expected, respondents who were retiring were more likely than resigners to have been in the police longer; the average length of service of resigners was 12 years¹ and the average length of service of retirees was 29 years.

¹ 5% trimmed mean

Figure 4: Respondents' Length of Service



Reasons for leaving

Respondents were most likely to say that their reason for leaving the Police Service was that they have reached pension age and have chosen to retire (77%). This is compared to 18% of respondents saying that they have resigned of their own accord and have not yet reached pension age, 3% saying they are being required to leave by their force and 2% saying that they have taken voluntary exit².

² The most recent Home Office data on police leavers <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables> puts the proportion of voluntary leavers (including voluntary resignations and those on voluntary exit

Respondents were asked to highlight factors which have affected their decision to leave the police. Respondents most common reasons for leaving were: having access to their full pension, their length of service, their morale and the level of their pension. This was mirrored in the top reasons that retirees gave for leaving, however, in a different order (Figure 5). This is to be expected given that the number of retirees was much higher than the number of resigners without our sample.

Figure 5: Top reasons having a major effect on *retirees* decision to leave

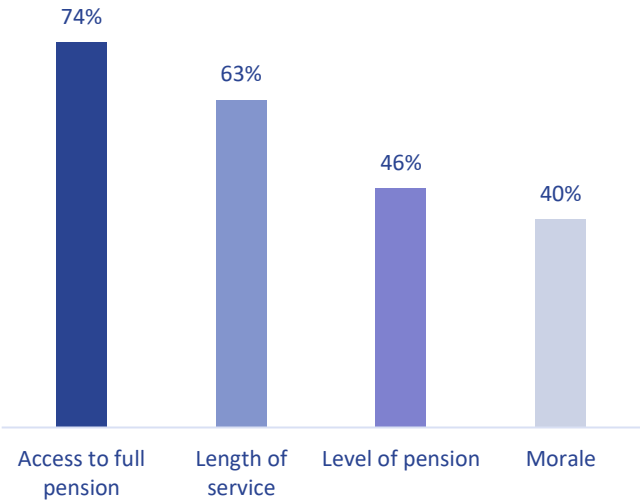
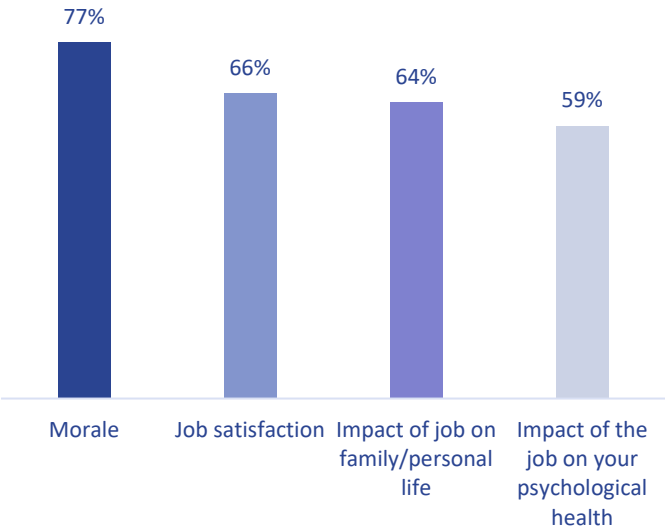


Figure 6: Top reasons having a major effect on *resigners* decision to leave



However, for respondents who had resigned from the police, the most common reasons for leaving were: their morale, job satisfaction, the impact of the job on family/personal life, the impact of the job on psychological health (Figure 6). Nonetheless, morale is shown as a contributing factor in decision to leave regardless of whether a respondent was resigning or retiring from the police.

Respondents’ top three reasons (Table 1) for leaving have also been ranked by length of service. This helps to highlight what the differences in reasons for leaving may be between respondents who have been in the police service for different lengths of time, and further facilitates understanding of what is behind “early leavers” decision to quit. Specifically, this analysis allows us to see that whilst reasons relating to pension are the reasons most often given for leaving amongst respondents with more years’ service, factors such as morale are more prominent amongst respondents with fewer years’ service.

Length of Service	Table 1: Had a major effect on decision to leave		
	Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3
10 years’ service or less	Morale (71%)	Satisfaction in the job (68%)	Officers available to meet demands on team/unit (59%)
11-20 years’ service	Morale (72%)	The impact of the job on family/personal life (64%)	Impact on psychological health (59%)
21-25 years’ service	Morale (61%)	Access to full pension (53%)	Impact on psychological health (52%)
26 years’ service or more	Access to full pension (78%)	Length of service (69%)	Level of pension (49%)

Since data collection began in 2017, the reasons that respondents most commonly gave for leaving the police have not changed substantially, with morale consistently appearing as the most common reason for resigning, whilst access to pension being the most common reason for retiring.

To further analyse respondents’ reasons for leaving, these factors have been grouped into separate categories: **Pay and Remuneration, Wellbeing and Morale, Job Demands, Officers’ Role, Treatment and Support, Personal and Professional Development, and Personal Circumstances.**

Pay and Remuneration

Respondents were most likely to say that having access to their full pension had a major effect on their decision to leave (61%), with 42% saying that the level of their pension had a major effect on their decision to leave. These findings may be somewhat expected considering that 77% of respondents said that they were leaving the police having reached retirement.

Roughly a fifth of respondents expressed that pension changes had a major effect on their decision to leave; 21% of respondents said that changes to their pension and 19% of respondents said that how pension changes have been implemented, had a major effect on their decision to leave. Pension changes were more likely to have an impact on the decision to leave amongst mid-career respondents. For example, 35% of respondents with between 11 and 20-years' service said that pension changes had a major impact on their decision to leave compared to 18% with 26 years' service or more, and 11% of respondents with 10 years' service or less.

Table 2: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
I now have access to my full pension	61% (686)
The level of my pension	42% (473)
Changes made to my pension	21% (237)
How recent pension changes have been implemented	19% (214)
Better paid jobs outside of the police	17% (189)
My basic pay	13% (143)
My allowances	11% (119)

Factors related to pay (13%) and allowances (11%) were less frequently highlighted by respondents as having a major effect on their decision to leave, likely also because the majority of respondents were coming towards the end of their career in the police. Despite this, 17% of respondents said that better paid jobs outside of the police had a major effect on their decision to leave the police.

However, when broken down by reason for leaving, 41% of resigners said that better paid jobs outside of the police had a major effect on their decision to leave, compared to only 11% of retirees. Similarly, basic pay had a major effect on decision to leave for 30% of resigners and allowances had a major effect on decision to leave for 20% of resigners compared to 8% of retirees. Given that respondents retiring from the police will be receiving their pension, it is expected that concerns over pay and allowances would have less influence on their decision to leave than respondents who are resigning from the police.

Wellbeing and Morale

Within this category, respondents were most likely to say that their morale had a major effect on their decision to leave the police (48%). Similarly, 48% of respondents to the 2020 Pay and Morale survey said that their personal morale was low. This suggests that low morale has an impact both on respondents during their service as well as having an effect on their reasons for leaving.

However, respondents’ health was also highlighted by more than a quarter of respondents as having a major effect on their decision to leave; 39% of respondents said that their psychological health and 35% of respondents said that their physical health had a major effect on their decision to leave. Similarly, 38% of respondents highlighted the stress of the job as having a major effect on their decision to leave. Constables were notably more likely to say that morale had a major effect on their intention to leave (53%) compared to either Sergeants (43%) or Inspecting ranks (31%). However, the proportion of respondents citing job stress as a major factor in their decision to leave saw less variation, ranging from 40% of Constables to 37% of Sergeants and 33% of Inspecting ranks; highlighting the prevalence of job stress across all Federated ranks.

Overall, a quarter of respondents said that their workload had a major effect on their decision to leave. This increased to more than one in three respondents in Response Policing and Investigations roles.

Table 3: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
My morale	48% (532)
My psychological health	39% (437)
The stress of my job	38% (426)
My physical health	35% (394)
My job satisfaction	35% (218)
My overall workload	25% (277)
Ability to take annual leave when I would like	21% (231)
Number of rest days cancelled	11% (124)

When broken down by reason for leaving, we similarly see that 59% of resigners said that the impact of the job on their psychological health had had a major effect on their decision to leave compared to 35% of retirees. Further, 45% of resigners said that the impact of the job on their physical health had had a major effect on their decision to leave compared to 33% of retirees.

Job Demands

Certain job demands had a greater effect on respondents' decisions to leave than others. For example, over a third of respondents (35%) said that the number of officers available to meet the demands placed on their team or unit had a major effect on their decision to leave. This rose to 56% of respondents in a Response Policing role.

Conflicting demands on respondents' time was another factor which was shown to have a major effect on the decision to leave for around a third of respondents (32%); this increased to 49% for respondents working in a Response role and 39% for respondents in a Neighbourhood Policing role. Only 10% of respondents said that the requirement to do overtime had a major impact upon this decision; however, this increased to 19% for resigners and reduced to 8% for retirees.

Table 4: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
The number of officers available to meet the demands placed on my team/unit	35% (390)
The number of conflicting demands on my time	32% (361)
Less demanding jobs outside of the police	27% (307)
My working hours	21% (234)
My shift pattern	18% (207)
The amount of annual leave and rest days I am given	11% (125)
The requirement to do overtime	10% (116)

When broken down by reason for leaving, findings show that proportions of resigners and retirees roughly mirror the findings for each variable in Figure 5; for example, 55% of resigners and 30% of retirees said that the number of officers available to meet demands on their team/unit had a major effect on their decision to leave. Considering that respondents retiring from the police likely to have more years in service, these similar patterns are to be expected.

Officers' Role

When considering factors related to officers' role, a quarter (25%) of respondents highlighted the opportunity to do their job to a standard they can be proud of, as having a major effect on their decision to leave. This increased to 38% of respondents within a Response Policing role. In comparison, very few respondents highlighted access to protective equipment (7%) and the force being unable to accommodate their preferred working pattern (4%) as having a major effect on their decision to leave.

Table 5: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
The opportunity to do my job to a standard I can be proud of	25% (278)
The role I have been allocated	18% (202)
The opportunity to help the public as much as I would like to	18% (109)
Availability of equipment and technology of an appropriate standard	16% (179)
The realities of being a police officer have not lived up to my expectations	15% (63)
My access to necessary and effective protective equipment	7% (75)
My force have not been able to accommodate my preferred working pattern	4% (49)

Although 25% of the sample overall say that doing the job to a standard they can be proud of had a major effect on their decision to leave, 44% for resigners said that doing the job to a standard they can be proud of had a major effect on their decision to leave compared to 20% of retirees. Similarly, 30% of resigners said the opportunity to help the public as much as they would like to had a major effect on their decision to leave; this was compared to just 14% of retirees.

Treatment of Officers

Overall, the treatment of officers had a mixed effect on respondents' decisions to leave. Slightly over a quarter of respondents highlighted the overall treatment of police as having a major effect on their decision to leave (35%); this increased to 45% for respondents in a Response role. This is compared to only 3% of respondents who said that their relationship with colleagues had a major effect on their decision to leave. Furthermore, 34% of respondents highlighted the management of change within the police as having a major effect on their decision to leave the police.

However, in addition to treatment and management of change, the support which respondents receive from senior leadership was said to have a major effect on the decision to leave for 28% of respondents. This is compared to only 12% of respondents who said that the support from line management had a major effect on their decision to leave.

Table 6: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
How the police overall are treated	35% (222)
How change is managed within the police	34% (383)
The support I receive from senior leadership	28% (324)

The fairness of the rewards I receive for my work	25% (287)
The fairness of the policies and procedures that affect my work	22% (249)
Fear of future violence from members of the public whilst on duty	14% (161)
The treatment I receive compared to my colleagues	13% (148)
The support I receive from my line manager	12% (140)
My experience of verbal insults and threats from members of the public	9% (104)
My experience of attacks from members of the public	7% (79)
My relationship with my colleagues	3% (36)

Additional analysis (Table 7) shows that mid-career respondents (11-20 years' service) were most likely to highlight treatment, management of change, senior leadership support and fairness of rewards as having a major effect on their decision to leave. Specifically, 55% of respondents with 11-20 years' service said that how the police are treated overall had a major effect on their decision to leave, compared to 28% of respondents with 26 years' service or more.

However, when looking at reasons for leaving between resigners and retirees, resigners are much more likely than retirees to say that treatment of the police had a major effect on their decision to leave; 49% of resigners and 31% of retirees said that how the police are treated had a major effect on their decision to leave. Similarly, 42% of resigners and 25% of retirees said that the support they receive from senior leadership had a major effect on their decision to leave.

Service length	Table 7: Major effect on decision to leave			
	How the police overall are treated	How change is managed within the police	The support I receive from senior leadership	The fairness of the rewards I receive for my work
10 years or less	39%	27%	27%	33%
11 – 20 years'	55%	45%	49%	39%
21 – 25 years'	49%	42%	39%	29%
26 years or more	28%	31%	23%	22%

Personal and Professional Development

When compared to other topic areas, respondents were much less likely to highlight personal and professional development as having had a major effect on their decision to leave; within this topic area, respondents were most likely to say that better opportunities for progression outside of the police has had a major effect on their decision to leave (18%).

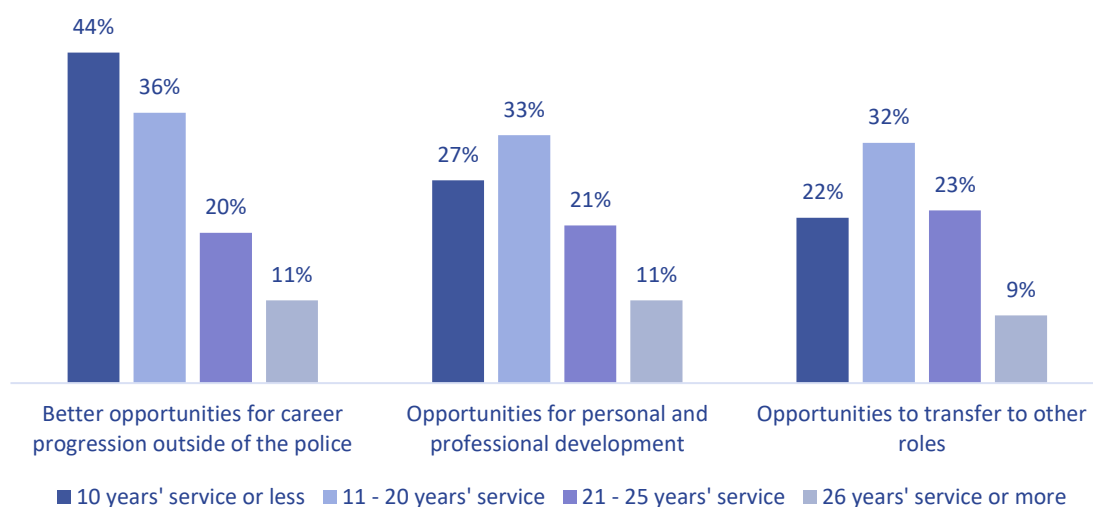
Table 8: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
Better opportunities for career progression outside of the police	18% (203)
Opportunities for personal and professional development	16% (181)
Opportunities to transfer to other roles	15% (171)
A desire to use transferable policing skills in other jobs	15% (166)
My opportunities for promotion	14% (162)
My opportunities for specialisation	11% (126)
My access to training necessary to do my day to day job role	9% (102)

More respondents with fewer years' service highlighted development opportunities as having a major effect on their decision to leave. Respondents with 10 years' service or less were most likely to say that better progression opportunities outside of the police had a major effect on their decision to leave (44%) compared to 11% of respondents with 26 years' service or more. This was mirrored in the proportion of respondents resigning from the police saying that better opportunities for career progression had a major effect on their decision to leave (48%) compared to 11% of respondents retiring from the police. Additionally, respondents with 11-20 years' service were most likely to say that opportunities for personal and professional development (33%), and transfer to other roles (32%) have had a major effect on their decision to leave.

Also looking at breakdown of the data on the basis of respondents' rank, we see that Inspecting ranks were more likely to say that opportunities for promotion had a major impact on their decision to leave (22%), particularly when compared to Constables (12%), with 18% of Sergeants saying this reason had a major impact on their decision to leave.

Additionally, it was resigners who were most likely to say that opportunities for personal and professional development (34%) and the opportunity to transfer to other roles (34%) had a major effect on their decision to leave; this was compared to 11% and 10% of retirees respectively.

Figure 7: Having a major effect on decision to leave by length of service



Personal Circumstances

Over half of respondents highlighted that their length of service had a major effect on their decision to leave. This is unsurprising considering that 66% of respondents have 26 years' service or more. However, two in five respondents (39%) also said that the effect of the job on their family/personal life has had a major effect on their decision to leave the police. Around a third of respondents also highlighted a desire for a new challenge (33%) and restrictions the job places on their private life (30%) as having a major effect on their decision to leave.

Table 9: Most common reasons respondents said had a major effect on their decision to leave	% (N)
My length of service	52% (597)
The effect of the job on my family/personal life	39% (436)
A desire for a new challenge	33% (374)
The restrictions the job places on my private life	30% (338)
There has been a change in my family/personal circumstances	12% (137)
The length of my commute	9% (99)
I am relocating	4% (50)

The proportion of resigners (64%) who said that the impact of the job on their family or personal life had had a major effect on their decision to leave was almost double the

proportion of retirees (33%). However, this still shows a third of retirees noting the impact on family or personal life as having a major effect on their decision to leave the police. Interestingly, we did not find any difference between the proportion of female resigners and male resigners who said that the impact of the job on their family life had a major impact on their decision to leave. It is believed that one of the reasons female officers are more likely to resign than male officers is due to maternity and childcare. Whilst this was not borne out in our sample, this may be because officers who resign during or after maternity leave were less likely to have access to, and therefore complete, this survey. Furthermore, 47% of resigners and 26% of retirees said that the restrictions the job placed on their private life had a major effect on their decision to leave.

Open text responses

Respondents were asked to list their top three reasons for leaving the police. As is fitting with the findings discussed above, the reason given most often as primarily contributing to respondents' leaving was retirement or end of service, including respondents who cited their age as having an impact on their leaving. In relation to this, respondents also discussed the changes to their pension as having an impact on their decision to leave. Within this, respondents also discussed their concern that if they did not leave now, they would not be able to accrue further pension due to their length of service, or that the government may change their pension conditions further overall. Less frequently, respondents also highlighted feelings of poor pay for the job performed, as motivating them to leave.

Respondents also said that health reasons had an impact on their decision to leave. This was in relation to both physical and mental health as well as struggling with the physical demands of the job. It was also regularly discussed by respondents that the management of the service, as well as managers within the service had had an impact on their decision to leave. Specifically, respondents noted a lack of support both generally as well as in relation to factors such as promotion or personal problems.

Similarly, respondents also discussed life outside of work as having a notable impact on their decision to leave. This included the impact the job on family and home life and the desire for a better work-life balance. Some respondents also cited personal circumstances and changes in their lives outside of work as having an impact on their decision to leave; this included family illness, caring responsibilities and having a young family.

Respondents also highlighted the desire to do something new or different outside of the service as having an impact on their leaving. This theme included respondents who said that they had obtained employment or opportunities elsewhere, as well as respondents who said

that they wished to pursue further education, travel, or to simply ‘do something different’ without necessarily expanding further on what this might be.

Reconsidering decision to leave

Respondents were also asked about whether certain factors might make them reconsider their decision to leave. Overall, respondents were most likely to say that a better work-life balance (28%) would *definitely* make them reconsider their decision to leave. Additionally, around a quarter of respondents said that improvements in welfare (25%) and pension provisions (24%) would definitely make them reconsider their decision to leave.

An additional 37% of respondents said that a better work-life balance *might* make them reconsider their decision, with 30% of respondents saying that improvements in welfare and 28% saying that improved pension provisions *might* make them reconsider their decision to leave. Constables were most likely to say that improvements in welfare would definitely make them reconsider their decision to leave (29%), compared to 20% of Sergeants and 16% of the Inspecting ranks.

Table 10: Definitely would make me reconsider my decision to leave the Police Service	% (N)
Better work-life balance	28% (303)
Improvements in welfare	25% (274)
Improved pension provisions	24% (265)
Lower workload	22% (241)
Higher salary	20% (215)
Better career opportunities	19% (203)
A different senior leadership team	16% (170)
Improved equipment or technology	15% (159)
More opportunities to change roles	15% (158)
More opportunities for flexible working	13% (143)
More interesting and varied workload	12% (47)
More opportunities to help people in the community	11% (44)
More opportunities for training	11% (123)
Transfer to a different team	8% (85)
A different line manager	6% (68)

Respondents who are resigning of their own accord are more likely to say that certain factors would definitely make them reconsider their decision to leave, when compared to those retiring. For example, improvements in welfare and work-life balance would make around 40% of respondents reconsider their decision to resign from the police service (Table 11).

Again, as discussed in relation to reasons for leaving, we did not find substantial differences in the proportion of female and male respondents who said that improved work-life balance would make them reconsider their decision. Moreover, we did not find that female resigners were substantially more likely than male officers to say that access to flexible working would have made them reconsider their decision (at 27% and 21% respectively). As stated above, this may be because those female officers who leave due to maternity and childcare reasons may not have had access to the survey, however it could also suggest that linking female officers decision to leave purely to family circumstances underplays the impact that other factors common across the service (such as low morale and the health impacts of the job) have on both female and male officers' decision to leave.

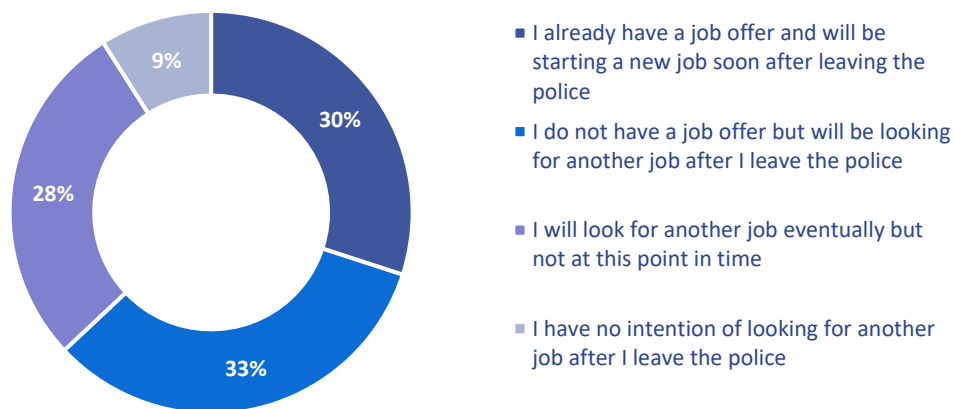
Table 11: Top factors which would definitely make respondents reconsider their decision to leave the police by reason for leaving

Reason for leaving	Better work-life balance	Improvements in welfare	Improved pension provisions	Lower workload
Resigning but not reached retirement age	40%	39%	29%	34%
Retiring having reached retirement age	25%	22%	23%	20%

Plans after leaving

Respondents were asked about what their plans are once they leave the Police Service. Broadly speaking there was little variation in respondents' answers as respondents were most likely to highlight that they intend to continue working at some point after leaving the police service (91%; Figure 8).

Figure 8: Respondents' plans for work after leaving the police



Respondents were also asked whether they would ever consider returning to the Police Service. The majority of respondents said that they would never consider returning to the Police Service (61%) compared to 39% of respondents saying that they would consider returning to the Police Service in future.

Of those respondents who said that they would consider returning to the police, little difference was seen in the respondents' preference for a similar or different role; 51% said that they would prefer for this to be in a different role, increasing to 65% for Neighbourhood respondents and 64% for respondents working in Response. Further, 56% of respondents said that they would prefer to return at the same rank. The large majority of respondents who would consider returning also said that they would like this to be to the same force (80%) and as a member of police staff (69%).

Figure 9: Preferences of respondents who would consider returning to the police

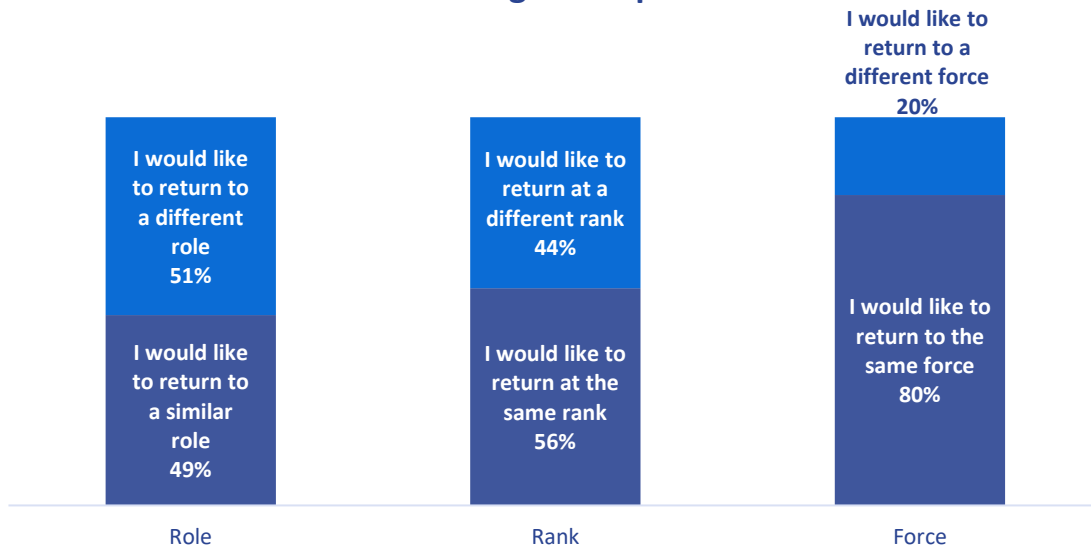
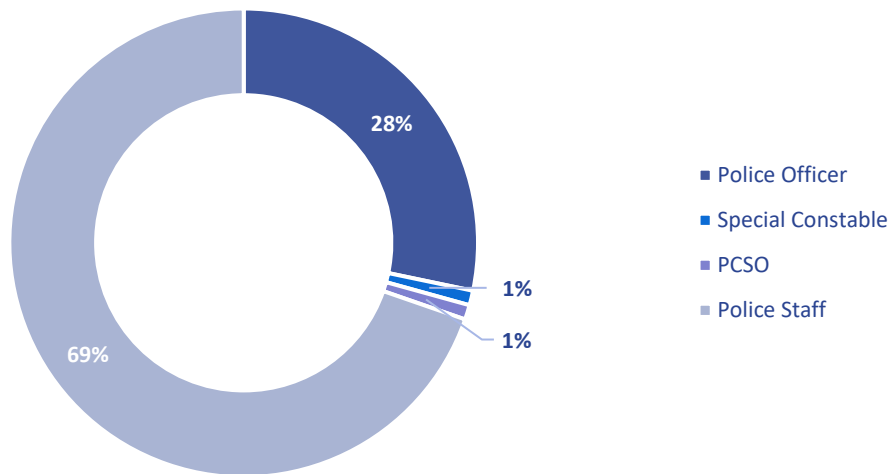


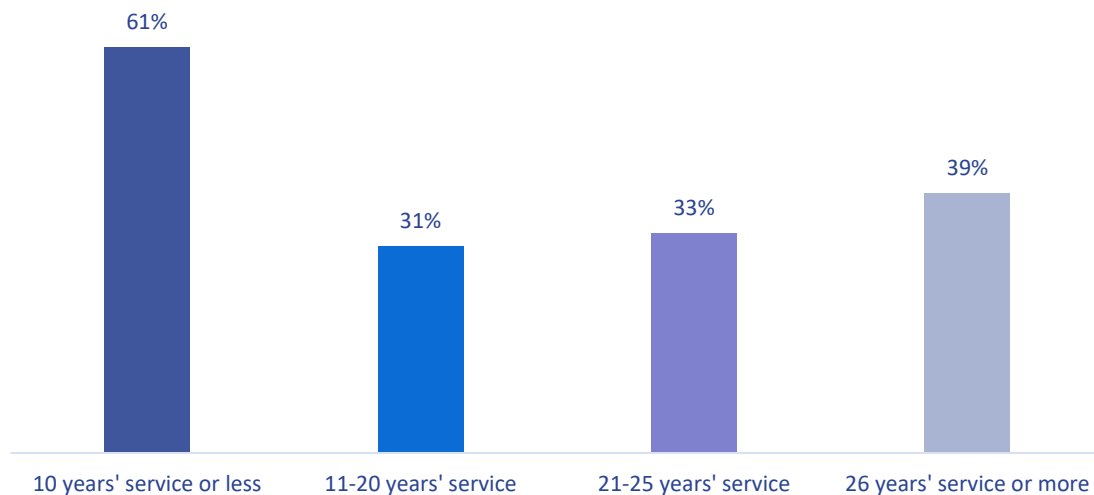
Figure 10: Would you prefer to return to the police as a...?



Respondents with fewer years' service were most likely to say that they would consider returning to the police in future. Overall, 61% of respondents with 10 years' service or less said that they would consider returning to the police in the future; these respondents were also more likely to say that if they returned to the police, they would like to return in a different role (64%). This is compared to 31% of respondents with 11-20 years' service who were least likely to say that they would consider returning to the police in future; respondents within this group who said that they would consider returning to the police in future were

more likely to say that they would prefer for this to be in a similar (54%), rather than different role (46%).

Figure 11: Respondents who would consider returning to the police in future by length of service



As might be expected, respondents with 26 years' service or more were least likely to say that they would prefer to return as a police officer (15%); that is, police officers currently retiring (from the Police Pension Scheme 1987) are able to access their pension and lump sum at 30 years' service and cannot accrue or earn any more pensionable service even if they continue making contributions. As these same restrictions do not apply to officers younger in service, this may also explain why the proportion of respondents with 10 years' service or less were most likely to say they would like to return as a police officer (68%; Table 12).

Table 12: Preferences of those respondents considering returning to the police in future

Length of Service	Police Office	Special Constable	PCSO	Police Staff
10 years' or less	68%	4%	4%	23%
11-20 years	61%	0%	2%	37%
21-25 years	39%	0%	0%	61%
26 years' service or more	15%	1%	1%	83%

Conclusion

The findings from the Leavers' Survey continue to show that the majority of respondents are leaving the police because they have reached pension age and are choosing to retire either because it is not financially viable for them to stay on or because they feel they have served their time. This is also reflected in the age breakdown of respondents where respondents with more years' service are most likely to say they are retiring rather than resigning as is most common amongst respondents with fewer years' service. However, separate from length of service and pension was the issue of morale amongst respondents; slightly under half of respondents said that their morale had a major effect on their decision to leave, increasing to around three quarters for respondents with fewer years' service. This is largely representative of other PFEW surveys which highlight the overall morale of police officers, and morale in the service as a whole, to be low. These findings therefore show that not only is this an issue for officers during their service but is also a contributing factor in respondents' decision to leave.

Further, findings also suggests that the majority of respondents did not have a job offer but would look for another job after leaving the police or in the future; fewer than one in ten respondents said that they did not intend to seek employment at some point after leaving the police. Therefore, although most respondents are leaving the Police Service because they have reached pension age, they do not necessarily see themselves as having reached the end of their working life. Despite the majority of respondents intending to work at some point after leaving the police, the majority of respondents said that they would never consider returning to the police. Of those respondents who said they would consider returning to the police, the majority of respondents with more years in service said that this would be as a member of police staff, compared to respondents with fewer years' in service who said that they would prefer to return as an officer. This is fitting with the findings that respondents resigning from the police are more likely than respondents retiring from the police to say that family circumstances have had a major effect on their decision to leave. This therefore suggests that once family circumstances are resolved, the majority of respondents younger in service may return to the police as an officer.

Results also demonstrate that overall respondents would be unlikely to change their mind and reconsider their decision to leave with relatively small proportions saying that there were factors which would definitely make them reconsider. This may be due to the average age and service length of respondents, given that a high proportion of respondents had served upwards of 25 years in the Police Service. However, around a quarter of respondents indicated that a better work-life balance would definitely make them rethink their decision to leave, increasing to over a third for respondents with less than 19 years' service. Whilst the majority

of respondents overall said that they were retiring, this length of service breakdown shows that for those with fewer years' service and for those resigning, there may be factors which could have prevented them from leaving the police.

As this is a rolling project, the research team will continue to monitor and report on these data, as well as looking at trends or changes in the data over time. More research is also needed to continue exploring what police officers expect and want out of their career, looking at the implications if these are not met. This is the intention of PFEW's broader Through Career research programme, which surveys members at the start of their career and subsequently tracks them throughout their career.