



# Great Expectations!

Work and Workplace Expectations, Realities,  
and Retention of Police Officers in Scotland

**Research Report**

**SIPR** | Scottish Institute  
for Policing Research

Edinburgh Napier  
UNIVERSITY 



# Authors

**Professor Kirsteen Grant**, Edinburgh Napier University

**Dr Britta Heidl**, Edinburgh Napier University

**Professor Christof Backhaus**, Technische Universität Braunschweig

**Diane Vincent**, Edinburgh Napier University

September 2024

# Executive Summary

This research compares the 'work' and 'workplace' expectations of probationers (new recruits) and early career officers (with up to two years of experience) with the lived experiences of established police officers (with three or more years of experience). It examines the extent to which the expectations of early career officers are realistic, understood, and are being fulfilled for established officers. The wellbeing and retention of police officers are of key concern to Police Scotland. Providing an in-depth examination of the reasons behind turnover intention (desire to leave) and, importantly, the retention factors that might encourage officers to remain within Police Scotland is the driving force behind this research.

The research is broadly structured around four antecedents, or themes: police culture and work environment; management and leadership; training and career progression; and wellbeing and work-life balance. Drawing on psychological contract theory as an analytical lens, it focuses on the implications and consequences for officers' job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intention (i.e., retention factors). All empirical data were collected within Police Scotland. The methodology consisted of a sequential mixed methods approach, with qualitative data firstly generated from 32 interviews (15 probationers and 17 established officers), followed by a quantitative survey of 1,297 police officers.

By comparing new and early career officers' expectations with the lived experiences of established officers, this report shines a light on several areas of dissonance that Police Scotland should be cognisant of. Probationers' hopes for the job were geared around having a challenging, rewarding, and varied role in which they can 'make a

difference', where they are treated inclusively and with respect, and where they have opportunities to develop, grow and progress. Yet, on average, established officers reflected that their job has not fully measured up to the job they envisaged, and a substantial share of respondents (45%) indicated that with hindsight they would not choose to become a police officer again. Where the eventual job does not match up to high initial expectations, current probationers and early career officers are at greater risk of voluntary turnover.

The report aims to inform future Human Resource policy and practices to shape the work and workplace expectations and lived experiences of police officers. Police Scotland should take account of the changing needs and work and workplace expectations of a new generation of police officers when developing the next iteration of its People Strategy, including its approach to strategic organisational and culture development. The report makes seven specific recommendations to Police Scotland.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers are grateful to the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) for funding this project through its Developing Effective Policing Systems, Capability, and Resilience (DEPSCR) fund.

The research team would like to thank Police Scotland and all participants who gave their time to make this research possible. The team is also grateful to Professor Sarah Charman, University of Portsmouth, for her invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this report.

Finally, the team wishes to acknowledge Jane Douglas for her work on the design of the report.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Kirsteen Grant** is Professor of Human Resource Management at Edinburgh Napier University. She is also an Associate Director of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). Kirsteen's research interests incorporate professional, responsible, and extreme work; future of work; younger workers; and talent management. She has published widely, and between 2019-2021 she edited the *Journal of Management Development* and now serves on multiple editorial, advisory, and review boards. Kirsteen draws on complementary backgrounds in academia and organisational practice and is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and Certified Management and Business Educator (CMBE).



**Britta Heidl** is Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Edinburgh Napier University. Her research focuses on leadership and its impact on employees; ethical leadership; learning and development; upskilling; and remote work. Britta lectures on a range of postgraduate leadership and HRM courses and draws on complementary experience gained from previous private sector roles. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), reviews for a range of academic journals, and holds roles as external examiner and member of a journal editorial board.



**Christof Backhaus** is Professor of Marketing at Technische Universität Braunschweig in Germany and Visiting Professor at Edinburgh Napier University. Prior to joining TU Braunschweig in 2023, Christof served as Professor of Marketing and Head of Research at The Business School at Edinburgh Napier University. His research interest lies primarily in the fields of relationship marketing, sponsorship, innovation management and mobility management. Christof has led or been involved in many empirical research projects in collaboration with practice. His work has been published in several leading journals.



**Diane Vincent** is Research Assistant at Edinburgh Napier University. Diane draws on her professional membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and a wide range of Human Resources/Organisation Development experience gained from a range of public and private sector roles up to and including Director level. Currently working as a freelance strategy consultant, Diane's interests include workforce strategy and planning, organisational culture change, and leadership development.



# Summary of Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Police Scotland should aim to bridge the gap between probationers' expectations, college experience, and the realities of the frontline demand and workplace that they will encounter (i.e., the 'lived experience') upon leaving the college learning environment. This should begin at the point of recruitment and continue throughout the induction, on-boarding, and initial training phases of the probationer journey. In addition, the role and content of marketing and associated recruitment campaigns should be reviewed to ensure they portray an accurate and realistic, rather than overly glamourised, image of the realities of being a police officer.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Police Scotland should distinguish between management and leadership behaviours, capabilities, and competencies and review its provision of both management and leadership development. Emphasis should be placed on developing and embedding leadership principles and behaviours that are aligned to the core organisational values and which are intended to develop a culture of inclusion and (mutual) respect. To help facilitate this, the organisation should consider the introduction of 360-degree assessment as a developmental tool for sergeant level and above. This would require dedicated resource towards the provision of high-quality feedback to participants as well as associated development plans.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### PROVISION OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

Police Scotland should review the topics, volume and ratio of training that is provided online (via the Moodle platform) and conduct an in-depth evaluation of

its effectiveness at each level (immediate reaction, learning, transfer, and return on investment) (see, Reio et al., 2017). Additionally, the organisation should review its overall provision and balance of learning methodologies to ensure that training and development opportunities are packaged collectively and clearly as a strategic learning framework. In striving towards being a 'learning organisation', the strategic learning framework should promote a culture of experiential learning, reflection and ongoing feedback.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### CAREER PROGRESSION

Police Scotland should conduct a thorough (independent) review of its development pathways and promotions process with a lens on consistency and transparency, fairness and inclusion, as well as removal of any potential for nepotism or discrimination to occur. Incorporating 360-degree assessment and feedback as essential criteria for promotion may be beneficial. It may also prove beneficial to review the linkages between the organisation's promotions, development planning and performance appraisal processes.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

### TALENT MANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Police Scotland should consider developing a strategic talent management and succession planning framework, encapsulating how 'talent' is defined, identified, nurtured, deployed, and rewarded at all levels throughout the organisation. Consideration should be afforded, where applicable, to how prior relevant skills and experience, e.g., in leadership and management, can be more specifically recognised, valued, and utilised.

## RECOMMENDATION 6 WELLBEING

As part of the wider organisational development approach, Police Scotland should conduct a multi-level review of the impact (lived experience) of employee support and wellbeing provision. As line managers, particularly at sergeant level, are crucial to ensuring effective wellbeing support, its provision should be captured within the approach to developing management and leadership behaviours and competencies that are aligned to the organisation's core values.

## RECOMMENDATION 7 EMPLOYEE VOICE

Police Scotland should consider ways to capitalise and build upon the work and workplace hopes and expectations of new officers, as well as alleviate or mitigate their concerns and fears. The introduction of forums which bring together probationer and early career representatives with senior officers may be an insightful means of progressing this recommendation. Moreover, linking this to the organisation's existing employee engagement methodology and metrics (e.g., annual engagement survey) could provide a vehicle to follow-up on the lived experience – or journey – of early career officers, as well as capture early indications of turnover intention.



# Contents

- 1. **Introduction** ..... 8
- 2. **Framing 'Work' and 'Workplace' Expectations of Police Officers** ..... 10
- 3. **Theoretical Framework** ..... 13
- 4. **Methodology** ..... 15
- 5. **Interview Findings** ..... 16
- 6. **Survey Results** ..... 28
- 7. **Conclusion and Recommendations** ..... 40
- 8. **References** ..... 47
- 9. **Appendix** ..... 50

**List of Tables and Figures**

- Table 1: Interview Sample Profile ..... 14
- Table 2: Survey Sample Profile ..... 15
- Table 3: Correlation Matrix PCB and Outcomes ..... 37
- Table 4: Cross-tabulation PCB and Satisfaction ..... 37
- Table 5: Cross-tabulation PCB and Engagement ..... 37
- Table 6: Cross-tabulation PCB and Turnover Intentions ..... 38
- Table 7: Job Expectations versus Realities ..... 39

- Figure 1: Survey Framework ..... 28
- Figure 2: Police Culture ..... 29
- Figure 3: Work Environment ..... 30
- Figure 4: Perceived External Reputation..... 31
- Figure 5: Management and Leadership ..... 32
- Figure 6: Training and Career Progression..... 32
- Figure 7: Wellbeing and Work-life Balance..... 33
- Figure 8: Psychological Contract Breach ..... 34
- Figure 9: Performance – Impact Matrix ..... 34
- Figure 10: Satisfaction ..... 35
- Figure 11: Engagement ..... 35
- Figure 12: Remuneration ..... 36
- Figure 13: Turnover Intentions..... 36
- Figure 14: Job Expectations versus Realities ..... 39

# 1. Introduction

Police Scotland was established on 1 April 2013, bringing together eight regional police forces in Scotland as well as the specialist services of the Scottish Police Services Authority. The land area covers some 28,168 square miles, which is around a third of the UK's landmass containing a range of urban, rural, island and remote communities. Police Scotland is overseen by the Scottish Police Authority and is the second largest force in the UK (after the Metropolitan Police). It employs around 23,000 officers and police staff with approximately 16,356 (full time equivalent) of these being police officers (Police Scotland, 2024).





According to Bittner (1974, p. 17), policing is one of the 'best known but least understood' institutions. Arguably, this statement holds even more relevance today where the public-facing operating environment is far more complex, and police are facing a broader range of crime as well as operational and political challenges. Driven by core values of integrity, fairness, and respect, the wellbeing and retention of police officers and staff is of key importance to Police Scotland (Police Scotland, 2023b). Yet, painting a similar picture to that within the police service in England and Wales (Charman and Tyson, 2023), turnover due to voluntary resignations is of deep concern. Indeed, Percival (2022), reporting data from an internal Police Scotland exit survey conducted between October 2021 and August 2022, revealed that 568 officers left during this period with almost 40% of leavers citing that they wanted a career change. The figures showed that more than 36% left because of lack of career advancement, more than 20% due to poor working patterns, and a further 20% because of lack of resources. Perceived lack of recognition (16%) and remuneration (11%) were also contributing factors to officers' decisions to resign. The high number of resignations raises important questions concerning the extent to which changing needs and expectations of a new generation of police officers are fundamentally altering the employment relationship, or whether there is some degree of organisational failure accounting for high levels of voluntary turnover (Charman and Tyson, 2023).

Providing an in-depth examination of the reasons behind turnover intentions (desire to leave) and, importantly, the retention factors that might encourage officers to remain within Police Scotland, is the driving force behind this research. The project

compares the 'work' and 'workplace' expectations of probationers (new recruits) and early career officers (up to two years of experience) with the workplace realities and lived experience of established police officers (three or more years of experience). It examines the extent to which the expectations of early career officers are realistic, understood, and are being fulfilled for established officers. The research focuses on the positive and negative implications and consequences for officers' job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intention (retention factors). It seeks to inform future Human Resource (HR) policy and practices to enhance the employee-employer relationship and shape the work and workplace expectations and lived experiences of police officers.

**The project is guided by four empirical research questions:**

- **What were the motivations for new probationers to join Police Scotland?**
- **What are the key work and workplace expectations of probationers?**
- **To what extent are these work and workplace expectations being fulfilled for established police officers?**
- **Does a rhetoric-reality gap exist between expectations and their fulfilment?**

## 2. Framing 'Work' and 'Workplace' Expectations of Police Officers

The shifting work and workplace expectations of younger workers is well-documented both within generational literature (Rudolph et al., 2021; Schroth, 2019) and studies specific to policing (Elntib and Milincic, 2021; Hoel and Dillern, 2022; Watkinson-Miley et al., 2021; Williams and Sondhi, 2022), although the longer-term implications for job satisfaction and retention are only emerging.

For example, younger workers often have different expectations from the established workforce about the employment relationship, leadership, work-life balance, and wellbeing (Grant et al., 2021), and it is necessary to understand these needs and expectations more fully in the context of turnover intention (Williams and Sondhi, 2022). At the heart of this debate is the idea that the traditional 'job for life' is less well understood by the younger workforce, who tend to perceive their career as being more transient throughout the course of their working life (Grant et al., 2021). This perspective fundamentally shifts the emphasis of a traditional career built on the principles of long-term commitment, trust, and loyalty to one employer (as has been the case in policing) towards a more transactional employment relationship that is concerned with a mutual exchange that works for both employer and employee in the shorter-term. Arguably, this emerging generation of workers places greater emphasis on a career that fits around their lives and interests and are less tolerant than their older counterparts of perceived organisational unfairness and injustices (Bal et al., 2008; Tyson and Charman, 2023).

This (changing) context highlights an interesting juncture between the extent to which the police service must adapt to the changing motivations and expectations of the emerging workforce versus the extent to which younger probationers need to better understand and equip themselves to meet the demands and expectations of the service. For example, Hughes (1958) referred to 'reality shock' when describing a disconnect between job expectations and realities. This reality shock is often evident from the early stages of the socialisation process before the recruit has fully experienced the realities of the job (Charman, 2017; De Vos et al., 2003). Indeed, Haarr

(2005, p. 431), when exploring reasons for new police officers dropping out within the first 16 months of their policing career, identified 'a conflict between the version of policing embodied in their ideal and the reality of policing in practice'. Any gradual shift in attitudes and values towards work and employment can be beneficial in holding organisations to account and challenging employers to proactively identify and address the organisational factors that drive disappointment, dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions. Alain and Grégoire (2008) highlight two levels of disappointment: the first is endogenous disappointment (stemming from the gap between employees' expectations and reality), and the second is exogenous disappointment (which stems from employees' observations of the words, attitudes and behaviours of more experience colleagues). What is important to note is that organisational factors, as opposed to employee attitudes, are often considered to be the main predictors of dissatisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, and turnover intentions within policing (e.g., Charman and Bennett, 2022; Charman and Tyson, 2023, 2024; Tyson and Charman, 2023).

### POLICE CULTURE

As evidenced in the Casey Review of behaviour and internal culture within the Metropolitan Police (Casey, 2023) as well as in the most recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) report into organisational culture in Police Scotland (HMICS, 2023), police culture is a complex phenomenon, particularly within traditional command and control hierarchies which are deeply rooted in tradition. Schein (1999, p. 29) notably described organisational culture as 'the sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history', hence making it difficult to transform culture. Indeed, Cox and Kirby (2018) found that Police Foundation degree students in England and Wales very quickly assimilated a police identity, which affected their attitudes and behaviours. Brough et al.'s (2016) study indicated the presence of five dominant and dynamic organisational culture characteristics: the police family (e.g., high trust and camaraderie); control

(e.g., structure and hierarchy); us versus them (both the public and senior management); masculinity (in coping strategies and negative attitudes towards psychological health), and sub-cultural differences (across roles, ranks and stations). Wieslander (2018, p. 310) also incorporates language such as 'collegial, solidarity, trust, loyalty and code of silence' to describe policing culture, and Atkinson (2017) identified evidence of patriarchal dispositions within police culture that subordinated femininity and youth.

While new police officers undertake extensive training, Charman (2017), in a longitudinal study of new probationers, found that self-perceptions of new officers often differed to the traditional officer model – the model through which the workplace culture is established and reinforced. This process of socialisation, or institutionalisation, from the perspectives of tutors and senior officers who may hold different perspectives or values to the new generation of officers can influence the onset of cynicism and disengagement (Williams and Sondhi, 2022). Indeed, Hoel and Dillern (2002) found a disconnect between in-house and on patrol aspects of policing in that in-house police students were expected to be obedient, compliant, and passive, but while on patrol they were expected to be proactive, forward-thinking, and take personal responsibility for their learning.

Police culture is often thought to be shaped primarily by 'organisational' rather than 'occupational' factors (Brough et al., 2016; Cordner, 2017), thus giving primacy to people, work practices, and organisational structures. Attributed at least in part to organisational culture issues, Charman's (2017) longitudinal study identified a significant change in new probationers' attitudes and beliefs over the course of the first four years of their careers. As time wore on there was a belief among the probationers that their frequently mentioned desire to 'make a difference' was in jeopardy. Mirroring Fyfe et al.'s (2018) findings, the probationers argued that their stated good intentions were also affected by political and budgetary constraints as well as a lack of support from the media and public. Thus, their disappointment grew, manifesting in increasing levels of dissatisfaction and cynicism.



## JOB SATISFACTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND TURNOVER INTENTION

On the one hand, job satisfaction – or dissatisfaction – is defined by Coomber and Barriball (2007, p. 299) as 'an individual's appraisal of the degree to which the job fulfils one's own job values', or expectations. For instance, Paoline and Gau (2020, p. 72) found that the top factors for job satisfaction among serving police officers were intrinsic factors such as 'helping people' and 'the people they worked with', whereas more dissatisfied officers placed higher value on extrinsic factors such as pay, benefits, retirement, and pension (*cf. Paoline and Gau, 2018; Watkinson-Miley et al., 2021*). Job engagement, on the other hand, is often considered to be the opposite of burnout and occurs when employees perceive a sense of energetic connection with their work and the people they work with, particularly when they view themselves as being able to cope effectively with the demands of their jobs (*MacLeod and Clarke, 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2006*). Hence, engagement can be defined as a positive and fulfilling state of mind that is characterised by vigour (energy), dedication (employee voice and involvement), and absorption (efficacy) in work and work-related tasks (*Schaufeli et al., 2002*).

While it is widely known that police work can be stress-inducing and demanding, Falconer et al. (2013) suggest that organisational factors such as leadership and management style, and the ways in which work is organised are typically considered by police officers to contribute more to stress than the operational aspects of the role, and in turn can have negative consequences for job satisfaction and engagement. In terms of work expectations, new probationers are often more equipped and prepared for the visible operational aspects of the role, but less prepared for the less visible organisational cultural aspects. Indeed, Demou et al. (2020), using data collected from police officers and staff in Scotland, found the main stressors to be working hours, workload, culture, leadership, and organisational change, rather than the operational aspects of the role. Moreover, the research identified that participants' backgrounds,

experiences, and personal attributes impacted on their reactions to these stressors (*Purba and Demou, 2019*).

The prevalence of organisational, as opposed to operational, stressors again highlights the significant role of organisational culture on the job experiences of police officers (*Fyfe et al., 2018*). Lived experiences of work-related stress often have negative consequences for job satisfaction and impact on the decision to remain or leave the organisation (turnover intention) (e.g., Yun et al., 2015). Shim et al. (2015) noted that turnover intention among police officers is predominantly driven by individual emotional characteristics and organisational treatment. For example, Charman and Tyson (2023) found that police officers suffered from irreconcilable identity threats through an incompatibility between their work and non-work roles, as well as the perception that their work was not valued or recognised, and that their prior expectations were not being met. Chiming with the top reasons for resignation cited in Police Scotland's exit survey (Percival, 2022), Tyson and Charman (2023) found that sources of dissatisfaction and intention to leave included lack of voice and recognition of skills and experience, as well as barriers to career development and progression. When examining the impact of stressors on organisational commitment, Charman and Bennett (2022) similarly identified lack of voice, leadership, autonomy and support to be key contributing factors. The inference is that many police officers who remain in post may experience diminishing affective commitment towards the police service thus increasing the possibility – even probability – that they will choose to leave. With a clear association identified between turnover intention and actual resignations (*Shim et al., 2015*), the police service must handle turnover intention – the cohort that Paoline and Gau (2020, p. 73) describe as 'wobblers' – early and proactively before intention to leave becomes reality.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The research draws upon psychological contract (PC) theory as an analytical lens through which to investigate work and workplace expectations, and the extent to which these are being met. PC theory (Rousseau, 2001) enables us to better understand the implicit employment relationship and social exchange (Blau, 1964) that takes place between employer and employee. A PC comprises the implicit assumptions and expectations about what an individual perceives they are entitled to. These expectations are generally formed by assumptions about, or actual promises made by the organisation. An important aspect of this research is the potential significance – and consequence – of a perceived breach or violation of the PC. A breach occurs when an individual perceives that the organisation has not met one or more of their implied or promised expectations and obligations (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). Where this is perceived to be more than a simple breach, a violation of the PC causes emotional distress and/or anger (Morrison and Robinson, 1997), potentially resulting in withdrawal (lack of engagement) and may influence an individual's decision to remain in or leave the organisation.

## 4. Methodology

The project comprised a mixed-methods approach beginning with 32 semi-structured interviews (15 probationers all within three months of joining Police Scotland, and 17 established officers with between 10 and a half and 28 years of experience as a police officer)<sup>1</sup>.

Probationer interviews each lasted around 45 minutes, with established officer interviews typically lasting one hour. The interview sample profile is summarised in **Table 1**. Interview participants were anonymised, and a numerical identifier assigned to each transcript. To attribute quotes to the findings, participants were labelled with either 'P' to denote a probationer or 'E' to denote an established officer.

**TABLE 1: INTERVIEW SAMPLE PROFILE**

Probationer participant	Age range	Gender	Established participant	Age range	Gender	Tenure (years)
P01	30-34	M	E01	35-39	M	13
P02	35-39	M	E02	40-44	M	23
P03	25-29	M	E03	35-39	M	11
P04	20-24	M	E04	50-54	F	16
P05	25-29	F	E05	40-44	M	19.5
P06	25-29	F	E06	50-54	M	28
P07	30-34	M	E07	35-39	F	10.5
P08	20-24	M	E08	45-49	F	18.5
P09	35-39	M	E09	45-49	F	20
P10	35-39	F	E10	40-44	F	20
P11	30-34	F	E11	45-49	M	22
P12	30-34	M	E12	40-44	M	18
P13	30-34	F	E13	35-39	F	12
P14	20-24	F	E14	35-39	F	19
P15	25-29	M	E15	50-54	F	14.5
			E16	50-54	M	27
			E17	40-44	M	18

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that eight of the 15 probationers are over the age of 30, hence have chosen to join Police Scotland as a second career. Age and prior experience may impact on their work and career expectations.

Interviews were audio recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim. The insights obtained from the abundant interview data were then used to develop a framework which was validated via an online survey. Inclusion of a survey in addition to the interviews was chosen for two reasons: to increase the overall sample size and generalisability of the findings; and to examine the strength of relationships between the identified variables. The Qualtrics platform was used to administer the survey. A link to the survey was placed on Police Scotland's staff intranet and Police Scotland sent out reminders to all operational police officers encouraging them to participate. In total, 1,788 responses were collected which represents a response rate of 10.8%. A range of responses were excluded due to incomplete questionnaires (409), response pattern (1), and inconsistent answers to control items (81). This results in 1,297 useable responses. The survey included scales covering work expectations (police culture, work environment, management and leadership, training and career progression, and wellbeing and work-life balance) as well as PC breach, job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intentions. Some demographic information was also collected. Two Police Scotland officer intakes across 2021/22 and 2022/23 delivered an average of 214 recruits, with an overall gender profile of 62% male and 38% female (Scottish Police Authority, 2024), hence our sample is broadly representative of this profile.

The survey sample is presented in **Table 2**. Most respondents are male (62.1%) and between the age of 30-49 years old (76.8%). In terms of their standing within Police Scotland, 71.5% of respondents consider themselves in a frontline policing role, many have lengthy organisational tenure, with 66.2% reporting tenure of over 12 years, and most respondents currently holds the rank of constable (64.2%). To analyse and present the survey results in a way that allowed for comparisons between responses from early career and established officers, the sample was split into those with up to two years of experience (50 respondents) and those with three or more years of experience (1,247 respondents). This is noteworthy as a small limitation in that comparing groups of unequal sizes may affect the results.

**TABLE 2: SURVEY SAMPLE PROFILE**

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Age	Frequency	Percent
Male	806	62.1	18-29	125	9.6
Female	390	30.1	30-39	455	35.1
Prefer to self-describe	4	0.3	40-49	541	41.7
Prefer not to say	92	7.1	50 or older	176	13.6
No information	5	0.4	<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>			
Role	Frequency	Percent	Tenure (years)	Frequency	Percent
Frontline policing role	927	71.5	up to 2	50	3.9
Corporate/office-based role	365	28.1	3 to 5	129	9.9
No information	5	0.4	6 to 11	260	20.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>	12 to 20	578	44.6
			21 or more	280	21.6
			<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Legacy Experience (tenure >= 11 years)	Frequency	Percent	Current Rank	Frequency	Percent
no	439	33.8	Constable	833	64.2
yes	858	66.2	Sergeant	300	23.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>	Inspector	113	8.7
			Chief Inspector or above	47	3.6
			No information	4	0.3
			<i>Total</i>	<i>1,297</i>	<i>100.0</i>

## 5. Interview Findings

To recap, where quotes are included, these are differentiated as either probationer (P) or established officer (E).

*"Being part of Police Scotland is like being given the keys to a house that you've always wanted to live in, that you admired the house from the outside but once you get the keys, you realise that there are floors and rooms in the house where you don't feel you belong or which you are not welcome in. That there are parts of the house that are crumbling and the thing that you once thought was your dream home, the reality is there are bits of it that are falling apart...That's my best metaphor to describe Police Scotland" (E08).*

The metaphor above captures the essence of this empirical study. The interviews sought to uncover and paint a picture of the *dream house* from the outside (prior perceptions and expectations) and identify the *floors* and unpack the *rooms* where these expectations were met or unmet. The sentiment of the metaphor was echoed throughout the interviews when comparing hopes and expectations with actual experiences and realities.

### PRE-JOINING MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

When asked about **motivations for becoming a police officer**, the reasons cited mirrored those of previous studies noted in section 2 (e.g., Elntib and Milincic, 2021; Watkinson-Miley et al., 2021). All participants spoke – often animatedly – about intrinsic and altruistic reasons such as helping people and making a difference to local communities, rather than primarily to uphold the law. For example, one probationer highlighted: *"It's not just about arresting people, it's about helping people"* (P07), and for another: *"I will be able to go to bed at night feeling like I have done some good*

*in the world"* (P09). Some probationers also commented that volunteering, having had previous (positive) interactions with the police, and/or having friends or family members who are police officers, led them to view police officers as role models and inspired them to join.

Probationers frequently spoke about teamwork and camaraderie being important, for instance: *"They [police officers] talk about the police family, and it really is"* (P13). This idea of a police 'family' was often discussed in the context of policing being considered as a professional job with one's whole life becoming consumed by being a police officer. One probationer explained: *"The reality is that your whole life, even your off-duty life, changes because you're no longer just [name]"* (P07). Echoing this point, an established officer reflected: *"I was warned [by a serving officer prior to joining] that if you make this decision, you will never be the same person again once you join, so think really strongly about it"* (E07). Both groups of participants also cited extrinsic factors such as job security, pension, and structured career progression as key motivations for joining the service.

However, there was some dissonance between the probationers' expectations and the realities of the job as described by the established officers. For example, a probationer reflected: *"You see police programmes on TV, and it seems like an interesting role... You see the lights flashing and it's alluring; all that dramatic excitement"* (P12). Similarly, another probationer highlighted that their expectations were about *"...being a real-life version of what you see on TV"* (P13). In contrast, what emerged from the established officer group was a more balanced and nuanced perspective, for example: *"I quickly realised that every day was not rushing around arresting people; there were long periods of boredom"* (E17). The participant went on to explain:

*"You view it [job] through TV or books, which paint an image of it being a glamorous job with lots of excitement and action, which, when you are young, is very appealing, and I suppose you don't look much beyond that"* (E17).



Participants were asked **what characteristics sprung to mind when thinking about Police Scotland** as an employer. Most of the probationers stated characteristics associated with Police Scotland – and the public sector generally – being a “good employer” (P01). Many related this specifically to their high expectations of care and support for officers’ welfare. For instance, one probationer commented: *“The wellbeing support here [police college] has been amazing. I think week one we had a welfare check and at certain points we’ve always had check-ins”* (P10), with another corroborating: *“I would expect that your health and wellbeing is really their [Police Scotland’s] number one priority. And that’s been drilled into us here a lot, so yes, I would hope to see that in practice, because that’s what they’ve said”* (P11).

Despite concerns of institutional discrimination and racism being raised formally in a statement by former Chief Constable Sir Iain Livingstone during a Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Board meeting in May 2023 (Police Scotland, 2023a), several probationers also cited their perception of Police Scotland’s approach to diversity and inclusion as a positive characteristic. For example: *“I have been pleasantly surprised on how big an emphasis there is in inclusion and fairness”* (P09). Another probationer explained it this way:

*“I know there’s been a massive change in culture...things like mental health, diversity, inclusion. I think they’ve [Police Scotland] done the right thing in moving away from, you know, you’d maybe think there was a certain person that had to be police. And it’s not the case, because you don’t need to be six-foot, male, to get in. Diversity is bringing it all together”* (P07).

While the characteristics described by probationers were positive and full of hope, the established officers reflected on this question from a position of lived experience and were universally more cynical about workplace realities. One participant described Police Scotland’s characteristics as: *“...quite uncaring...blame culture...as a frontline officer, you are not really supported”* (E01). Most of the established officer group had worked in legacy regional police forces prior to the formation of Police Scotland and often commented on perceived differences between regional and central structures and resources (cf. HMICS, 2023). Participants highlighted several characteristics mainly in the context of the political nature and size of Police Scotland, suggesting that it is: *“...driven more by politics than the needs of individuals”* (E02). Others described the organisation as: *“A huge machine and now too corporate”* (E05), and: *“Too big, but well meaning. Confused and conflicted”* (E16). Participants also referred to perceptions of poor change management, using words such as *“disorganised”* (E01) and *“chaotic”* (E03, E09, E10) to describe its characteristics.



When asked to reflect generally on their **hopes and fears around being a police officer**, probationers again related their hopes to altruistic factors such as: *“To know that I’m helping people”* (P04). Another probationer highlighted: *“You’re potentially getting called to the worst day of somebody’s life and, you know, I hope that when I get there I can actually be of help to that person”* (P11). Participants also expressed a desire to get to know the local community, and to build a positive image of Police Scotland, for example:

*“A lot of young people are, oh the police are bad guys, they’re out to get you kind of thing, whereas that’s really not the case. I’d hope to change that a little bit”* (P03).

Mirroring this view, another probationer explained:

*“If I can help support one person put their mind at ease or change their behaviour, deal with somebody in a way that can change their attitude towards a police officer then I will have done my job”* (P06).

Many probationers also spoke animatedly about their hope that the job will be interesting, exciting, and challenging, and that no two days will be the same. Relatedly, both groups of participants placed a strong emphasis on having sought out a career that does not involve being ‘stuck behind a desk’. For instance, reflecting on the reason for leaving their former employment, a probationer highlighted: *“To be honest with you, like sitting behind a desk, I needed to be out and about working with the public, be outside or inside, but just like constantly on the go. I like a new challenge everyday”* (P15), and for an established officer: *“I just wanted a career where there was a wee bit of adrenaline involved and I wasn’t stuck behind a desk”* (E05).

Three main fears emerged from the discussions with probationers: **colleague relationships**; **personal safety**; and **personal resilience and wellbeing**. Referring again to the *“police family”* (P03, P06, P11, P13), some probationers were concerned about personality clashes or not fitting in with their shift colleagues, for instance: *“I just want to be able to come across fine and fit in well”* (P01), and for another: *“I’m hoping that the people I end up working with become family”* (P06). While probationers frequently commented on the excellent training they were receiving, which had already alleviated many of their fears, concern for personal safety, mainly in the context of escalating

violence and *“fear of the unknown”* (P12), was often discussed. Commenting on their training, a probationer reflected: *“One of our sergeants said, ‘some people would think nothing of stabbing you just because you’re in a uniform’. That’s all you are, there’s no person, you’re just a uniform to them. So, yes, I’m probably scared of being attacked”* (P10). According to another probationer: *“There’s always a fear of things getting violent and going wrong. You wouldn’t be in the right mind if you didn’t think that going out there you weren’t going to come across violence”* (P01). While probationers spoke positively about the inputs and signposting to welfare services they had received during their training, some also commented – often at length – on the (yet unknown) impact of the job on their personal resilience and wellbeing. For example: *“My fear is that I am going to get up one day and not be able to cope with the things I have dealt with”* (P06), and for another: *“Longevity, and demands of the job, I suppose, because I know it can take a toll mentally and physically, so that’s what I’m worried about, especially the mental aspect”* (P15).



## SPECIFIC WORK AND WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES

Both groups of participants were asked specifically about their expectations (probationers) and lived experience (established officers) of four organisational antecedents, or themes, which are discussed next.

### Police culture and work environment

Mirroring their hopes for the job, probationers were primarily interested in being part of a high functioning team and being looked after and supported, both in terms of their personal wellbeing, and individuality and inclusion. One probationer explained: *"The staff at the college are brilliant and it does seem that there's a lot of support around you"* (P03), and for another: *"It [Police Scotland] seems to be quite an equal place for people of different backgrounds, and there's a good mixture of females, males, and people from other cultural backgrounds"* (P04). On a day-to-day basis, probationers described their expectations of a demanding but highly varied and exciting role, encompassing *"...a bit of everything"* (P07). One probationer highlighted: *"What's been drilled into us is that you shouldn't be going into a shift expecting that you'll be doing anything, because you don't know what's going to be thrown at you every day...So, what I'm expecting is the unexpected"* (P11). Another probationer described it this way:

*"You could be sitting having a ten-hour shift and absolutely nothing happens, and then at the end of the shift you're held on for another several hours because you're suddenly sent to a road accident that's come out the blue in the middle of the night, or some sort of violent incident, or a domestic related incident that isn't a quick fix. So, I think it's going from that 0 to 100. You're sitting there and you're tired and getting through the shift and then suddenly you're all go"* (P01).

Established officers were generally more critical of the work culture and environment. For example, one participant described their job experience as being: *"Starkly different [from their initial training] in a significantly negative way...My experience had been really positive up until moving into my first team, away from the supportive learning environment at the police college"* (E08). Another participant explained it this way:

*"The reality was completely different from what I expected... I didn't expect there to be so much paperwork, I didn't expect to have the sense of responsibility that you have, the*

*sort of decision-making that could come back to haunt you down the line...but that was the reality...I stupidly didn't think any of that through in advance and then you're in it and I couldn't believe how much the system worked against people"* (E04).

While diversity and inclusion were most often discussed positively by probationers, one participant highlighted: *"I think I had a bit of a preconception that it could be a bit of a boys' club aspect to things. I think there probably will be an element of that"* (P12). Indeed, direct experience of macho and misogynistic behaviours was cited by five of the established officers who took part in this study. Reflecting on cultural change, one participant highlighted: *"It was an overly masculine culture, driven by machismo, and I don't think that's changed a huge amount, sadly"* (E11). Reinforcing this view, another participant added: *"The terminology that I still routinely hear from officers, and even officers of rank, who refer to a female sergeant as 'that wee female that works in...'. You would never hear someone describe [a person] as the 'wee male sergeant'"* (E13). A third participant described their experience this way: *"I was often told that I was too young in service to apply for things, but one of the boys on my course, someone who I joined with and worked in the same division was supported to apply for a move and got it"* (E14) (cf. Charman, 2024).

Many of the established officers again voiced disdain around the formation of Police Scotland and its longer-term impact on police culture and the work environment, and in particular, its impact on employees. For one participant: *"I'm a speck in the dust in the atmosphere of Police Scotland"* (E12), and for another: *"I don't think there's any particular malice towards staff, but you are simply a number and there is a lack of depth in the employment relationship as a result"* (E11). Participants were often critical of the political, bureaucratic, and *"corporate machine"* (E05) that is Police Scotland. Many commented on diminishing resources and an increasing workload, highlighting that this is placing unreasonable demands on frontline officers and in some cases is leading to stress and burnout. One participant put it this way:

*"When Police Scotland came along it was awful, there was a real resource challenge. I don't think it's anyone's fault, it's just such a big organisation now, it doesn't function particularly well, and as an employee it's frustrating"* (E04).

## Management and leadership

Once again, many of the probationers highlighted that the inputs they had received from senior staff at the police college were highly encouraging, for example: *“So far, with the kind of leadership and management I’ve seen during my time at the college, I’m very positive about the level of support. If that support is mirrored out there with your supervisors, I feel very positive”* (P04), and for another: *“I expect them [managers] to be supportive, because that’s all I’ve experienced here [college], really good support from all leadership”* (P05). Thinking beyond the college environment to joining a shift and becoming part of a policing team, probationers spoke, with some trepidation, about their expectation of *“mutual respect”* (P7, P15) from senior officers, and having a welcoming and approachable sergeant who is prepared to spend time with and answer questions from probationers. One probationer highlighted: *“My sergeant has been in touch over e-mail a few times, so I get the impression he is quite involved with the team, and that would be my expectation”* (P14).

On-going mentorship from their designated tutor constable, and feedback throughout the two-year probationary period were also viewed as being important. One probationer explained: *“I would expect to be told where I need to improve, but also told what I’m doing well at to try and reinforce the positives...I expect to be paired up with somebody that’s going to take an interest in me and help to develop me into the best officer I can be. I would feel let down and disappointed if that wasn’t the case”* (P02). Police Scotland prides itself on being a *‘learning organisation’* (e.g., Engelmann, 2023) and probationers also frequently referred to their expectation of being allowed – even empowered – to make and learn from mistakes as they develop into the role of constable. For example: *“I’m hoping that there’s enough support provided within the team and an understanding that we are new to this, and taking into account that we are wearing L-plates”* (P06), and for another: *“The understanding that people make mistakes because they are new and understanding that we are all humans and potentially will make a mistake from time-to-time, and so you won’t be kind of thrown under the bus if you make an honest mistake”* (P09).

Reflecting positively on their own experiences, several of the established officers mentioned that individuals’ experiences of the job are heavily dependent upon line managers and the localised leadership they receive, for instance: *“I think it [first year] was better than expected, I loved it at the start. We were part of a big team, and I had a brilliant sergeant who was fantastic and really well known in the town...It exceeded my expectations, it was fantastic”* (E12). Another participant highlighted:

*“It has always been down to leadership and management styles that have made things significantly better for me. So, those have been the times when I have been happiest at my work – when I felt supported, wanted, and recognised...It’s the personalities around you that make or break your experience”* (E08).

Yet, other established officers cited numerous examples of unmet expectations concerning line management, which had negatively impacted their job experience. For one participant: *“Unfortunately, there’s no training you can give someone to be a decent human being, but these people get promoted and they miss the fact that the whole purpose of promotion is people management – line management”* (E14). Others commented disparagingly on senior (executive-level) leadership, highlighting, for example: *“I thought it would be a forward-thinking organisation who put their staff first, put their welfare first and listened...My experience was that none of that was true”* (E01). In a similar vein, another participant reflected: *“I basically expected to be led well and have people who were good leaders because that’s just what goes with the job. I learned quite early that’s not the case”* (E11). Several participants referenced the organisational values when discussing senior leaders, for example:

*“Over time I’ve realised that our leaders can often say things but then not follow through with actions...When dealing with members of the public I always stick to our values, but sometimes you can see those [values] slip with senior leaders. I am much more aware of our senior leadership and become frustrated with some of the things they do. A lot of it for me is about fairness and respect in the workplace”* (E03).

Perhaps signalling a positive change in culture, some established officers reflected on how their experiences of poor line management and leadership have helped them develop their own leadership style. For instance: *"I only wanted to become a line manager because I had worked with so many bad ones. I feel that leadership is actually inept; there are some really good managers but there are too many who should never have been promoted"* (E09), and for another: *"I learned a lot of things that made me think I'm not going to do that going forward: if and when I get promoted to sergeant, I won't treat people like that"* (E11). According to one senior established officer: *"As an Inspector myself now, working with senior managers, I'm frankly gobsmacked at some of the leaders we have. We now have senior people in the police that I'm not saying are incapable, because that's too strong a word, but they are not good enough to be doing the job that they're doing..I feel that frontline officers are let down by leaders that don't understand what they're doing"* (E16). Echoing this sentiment, another senior established officer described it this way:

*"I understand the type of leader that I want to be because of all the bad experiences I've had. So, now that I know the kind of leader that I want to be, it's about me identifying the people that I can trust and creating a network for myself, because without doing the development work yourself, you're just going to be continually let down."* (E13).

### Training and career progression

Once again highlighting their perception that Police Scotland appears to recognise and value people as individuals, a probationer commented: *"I've been told they'll [senior officers] do everything they can to help you with your career goals"* (P10), with another adding: *"From what I've experienced, they've [senior officers] been nothing but supportive...even at this point, they've asked us what our aspirations are, and they want to explore and see what suits you, try different things"* (P05). There was an expectation among probationers that throughout their two-year probationary period they would be exposed to different training opportunities and given time and support to develop a specialism. Indeed, there was a palpable excitement about the variety of development and career options available, for instance: *"I've always loved the dog unit. I like missing persons as well – I would also love to do that training. I'm also quite interested in helicopter stuff...There is so much you can do, there are so many different options"* (P03). When asked about future career aspirations, most probationers mentioned that they aspired to develop a specialism, and several spoke about the need to be competent in the role



of constable before specialising or being promoted. According to one probationer: *"I do want to progress, 100%, but I think, as well, that you've got to be humble in the role that you're in, and, you know, make sure that you're good at that"* (P07).

While the established officers agreed that a wide range of training and career opportunities exist, several voiced their concern about the (increasing) volume and quality of training that is now provided online via the Moodle platform as opposed to in-person. According to one participant: *"A lot of training has moved onto the Moodle system, but people don't pay enough attention to it, they tick the box but don't learn anything from it really, and there's an overload of information at times"* (E14), and for another participant: *"It's a cheap way of training, it can be mass produced...That for me is not proper training"* (E02).

Some mature probationers (many of whom had joined Police Scotland as a second career) highlighted an expectation of having brought transferable skills and experience that would be recognised by Police Scotland and potentially lead to accelerated career progression, for example: *"Because of my age and my experience, I would hope that I have got the skills that would mean that I could get promoted fairly quickly"* (P09). However, echoing the findings of the HMICS investigation into Police Scotland's culture (HMICS, 2023), several of the established officers spoke extensively about prior skills and experience being unrecognised – even undermined – by police culture, for instance one participant commented: *"Policing is not good at recognising or using people's specific skills, we tend to ignore them"* (E16).

Highlighting that police culture tends to favour length of service over skillsets, another participant described their experience this way: *"I had real aspirations to get promoted and to climb the ranks...What really disappointed me was that I quickly realised that I wasn't going to be able to get promoted at the rate that I would have liked and that any aspirations that I had to do that were quickly dispelled because I was immersed in the response police culture where anyone that's got aspirations to be promoted is thought of really negatively"* (E13). Mirroring this perception, another participant explained it this way:

*"You might as well whitewash and draw a line under anything you did previously because no one is interested. What they are interested in is the length of time that you have served and the rank that you hold, so police officers will often introduce themselves by their rank and length of service e.g., [Name], Superintendent with 20 years policing, as that is what means something"* (E08).

While several of the established officer group were already in promoted positions, chiming with the HMICS (2023) inspection of organisational culture in Police Scotland, the promotions process was an area of particular concern for them. Many participants were critical of the internal promotions process, particularly regarding its perceived fairness and transparency<sup>2</sup>. For one participant: *"In frontline policing there are favourites who get pushed forward for things. I suppose you'd call it nepotism...Policing is very much 'if your face fits'"* (E01), and for another: *"My expectations were that if you held a senior role within policing then you must have done something significant to earn that role...A lot of it has been down to who you know or being in with the right people...So, nepotism for people who have been promoted as opposed to us having systems and processes in place that are good identifiers of good leaders"* (E08). Aligning with Charman (2024), reflecting on the influence of gender in career development and promotion prospects, another participant reflected on their experience:

*"I was maybe three or four years in service, and I was working with a chap who I joined with, so we had exactly the same length of service. We were exactly the same age and, without sounding arrogant, I was 100% more competent...But because he played [football] with the sergeant, he got his blue light driving before I did. And you know, that was probably the first example of something that happened which I just felt was so unfair because I deserved that course. But because he had that relationship with the gaffer, he was encouraged...I've seen countless examples like that over the years"* (E13).

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that no participants at any time mentioned performance appraisal in the context of development or promotion.

Several established officers also spoke about the lack of 'talent management' within formal career development and promotions processes. According to one participant: "It's [Police Scotland] too big now; we've got people moving about everywhere and there is not the same kind of focus on talent" (E02), and for another participant: "Big national promotion processes are simply flawed in terms of getting the best out of people and identifying the best candidates. It's just a wholesale market that just doesn't really work and you don't see the real person in terms of who can do the job or can't do the job" (E11). Focusing specifically on talent identification, another participant highlighted: "Our leaders still to this day rely on self-identification, no one is spotting the future talent.. There are better measures of someone's readiness for a more senior rank, i.e., 360 type assessment and assessment also carried out by an external body rather than being assessed by your pal on the interview panel" (E08). This sentiment was summarised by a participant in this way:

*"My initial expectations were that, you know, if you were a hard-working officer, if you were competent, if you were good at your job, then that would be recognised and nurtured. But that just never, ever happened" (E13).*

## WELLBEING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

New probationers were impressed by the inputs and signposting they had received to a wide range of welfare support provision. For example: "The wellbeing support here [police college] has been amazing...I feel very supported" (P10), and for another probationer: "The support seems to be there from the people higher up, so at least I know through inputs here, the welfare checks and all these different things, I know that even if you're struggling then there will be someone there to speak to, to support you" (P01).

Yet, despite citing improvements in wellbeing support over time, the established officers painted a more cynical picture (cf. HMICS, 2024). According to one participant: "Employees are just a number, there is little or no compassion" (E10), and for another: "The wellbeing provisions in Police Scotland are nowhere near as comprehensive as they should be. You can't just sign post folks to a website or provide some pamphlets" (E13). Established officers often mentioned their perceptions that wellbeing provision does not always match the rhetoric. For instance: "A lot of the time we [senior officers] say the right things, but I don't always think the actions to support people match with what they [Police Scotland] publicise" (E02), and for another: "Police Scotland talks a good game





when it comes to wellbeing... We do talk about it, but we just talk about it. We absolutely pay lip service" (E16). Reflecting on their own experiences and often describing harrowing personal examples, established officers highlighted the importance of good line management in the provision of wellbeing support, for instance: "[Wellbeing support] is very subjective... We refer to it as a postcode lottery, but it's more of a person lottery depending on who your boss is and who you work with" (E14). Similarly, another participant explained their experience: "I've had understanding line managers who acknowledge that I'm in a modified role but who are still willing to find me interesting work and the opportunity to grow as an individual. I've also had comments such as 'if you want to get promoted, get your uniform on'... So, I've been exposed to the most amazing opportunities, but I've also come across the most toxic of cultures where people are treated appallingly by managers" (E09).

When asked to describe their **work-life balance expectations**, probationers spoke candidly about their expectations of challenging shift work, for example:

*"I like to play golf on a Saturday. I've already signed up to the fact that that's just not going to happen every Saturday now, and that's fine, I can live with that, I know what I've signed up for" (P02).*

Another probationer highlighted: "If you're cited for court, it could be any day, you don't know, so you can't turn around and say to the judge, 'sorry, I'm not coming, it's my day off'" (P07). However, perhaps signalling a change in employment expectations, probationers often referred to the importance of downtime for a healthy work-life balance and positive mental health. One probationer stated: "I know that you'd [probationer] be expected to be the first person to put your hand up and say, 'Oh I'll stay on for overtime, I'll do this'. But equally, I know to say, 'no' if I really can't for whatever reason" (P01). The participant went on to explain the importance of work-life balance to them as:

*"Being able to switch off when you go home, things like that, and being able to relax in a healthy and safe way. Enjoy your days off with family and to turn your mind off from the work" (P01).*

Conversely, several of the established officers commented on resource constraints and the high demands of the job having impacted their lifestyle and life choices, for example: "You have to commit quite a big part of your life to being a police officer..



*Certainly in my role, I spend a good part of my time both on and off the duty thinking about the job" (E05). Mirroring Charman and Tyson's (2024) findings, and highlighting the realities of their experience, one established officer reflected on their (unmet) expectations of flexibility and work-life balance when applying to the service and becoming a police officer:*

*"The recruitment adverts before I joined did not match the reality. The [adverts] told us things like 'Sarah is 22, she takes every Saturday off to play hockey' or 'Ruth is 32, she had two kids, she takes every Wednesday off to take her kids to football' and I thought that was what happened when you joined the police. I know people with kids who are thinking of joining and I've told them, don't do it" (E14).*

Senior established officers spoke with frustration about diminishing resources and an increasing workload having caused irreparable work-family conflict both for themselves and their teams. For example, one participant highlighted: *"There is more emphasis on work-life balance, but we are not able to provide it due to a lack of resources" (E15), while another emphasised the impact of this on individuals: "I've seen people crying over work requests being rejected to support with childcare arrangements or special occasions" (E01). Several senior established officers also expressed their frustration about being unable to provide more support to their teams, for instance: "Now there are not enough resources on shift, so I feel like I never have a day off as I have members of my team phoning me on rest days, etc. I'm simply trying to do my best for my team" (E10).*

Another participant explained it this way:

*"I have team members who are struggling, and I look at ways to provide flexible working, to try and support them... You need to look out for yourself and manage your own work-life balance or it won't happen. I've had chief inspectors phoning me from Spain on their holidays. That's not how we should be living our lives, but unfortunately the police is full of people like that" (E16).*

### Pay, benefits, and turnover intentions

Returning to the predominantly altruistic motivations for becoming a police officer, while pay and job security were important, probationers generally held the view that salary (extrinsic reward) was not their primary concern, for instance: *"It [salary] goes up every year so, you're only going to progress in that pay band. Personally, it's not really something that's affected my decision to join" (P03). In terms of their PC, what was important to probationers is the perceived 'trade-off' between a lower salary and the wide range of benefits and career opportunities that they anticipate and expect. For this reason, some of the mature probationers mentioned that they had taken a substantial pay cut to become a police officer. For one probationer: "I mean, I've nearly taken a 50% pay decrease to come here" (P11), and for another: "I don't think it [pay] would influence my career because I took that pay drop to be here, the advantages and the benefits of the job outweighed the pay" (P13).*





However, several participants were concerned that the salary of a police officer is not commensurate with the level of risk that comes with the job. One probationer commented: *"I know that will progress and that pay will get better, but I think for somebody potentially losing their life, for a parent to go out to work and not to come home, for kids to have no father, no mother, I think that needs to be addressed because I don't think it pays enough"* (P10). Established officers also spoke about pay in terms of risk and specialism suggesting, for example: *"I think that you should be paid for specialisms where there is an increased element of risk. You could be in a role where there is a risk that you could be stabbed and be paid the same as someone sitting in an office [corporate role]"* (E02). Indeed, there was a shared view among the established officers that frontline policing should be incentivised with measures to retain frontline experience rather than encouraging officers to move into corporate roles, for instance: *"Pay and grading structures need changed if we want to attract people into frontline roles as there's no financial benefit to being in these roles"* (E03). Removal of the former shift allowance was also frequently cited by established officers as having enticed police officers away from frontline policing, for instance: *"You used to get a shift allowance and I think if they were actually to pay folk on shifts more you would see an influx of people returning back to the frontline where we actually need the resources"* (E13)<sup>3</sup>.

Other established officers talked about pay and benefits (e.g., pension) having been eroded over time. For one participant: *"In the last 10 years or so, the pay is completely eroded and it's nothing like when I first joined in my first few years of the job"* (E05), and for another: *"The erosion of pay and conditions now sees us not recompensed as we should be for the job we do, for the risk, for the responsibility and for the impact on our lives"* (E11). Some probationers spoke positively about the pension scheme, even highlighting it as: *"Very attractive...a huge attraction for me"* (P09). However, relating the perceived erosion of pay and benefits to the retention of police officers, an established officer commented: *"The pension was the golden handcuffs, but we now have a turnover of people between five to eight years' service because the pension is not so great"* (E09). According to another participant: *"When I first joined you would be shocked if anyone left and the police would try to dissuade you, but the pension has changed, society has changed...I think we lose a lot more staff than we would have in the past"* (E02). A third participant described the situation this way:

*"In the last year, I've heard of four outstanding cops, and I really mean that, really good cops that have left, including my old sergeant who decided it wasn't worth it anymore. I could be a manager in Lidl and not have to face anything like what you face in the Police. There is no incentive to stay, people will take early retirement and the good cops will go"* (E07).

Both groups of participants discussed changing employment expectations, suggesting that policing is no longer viewed as a “vocation” (E17) or a “30-year career” (E06) as it once was. For one established officer: “The culture was that you signed up for 30 years, and I just accepted that” (E06). Most probationers held a shared view that policing could be a long-term career for them, but only for as long as the job continues to fit around their life and has no adverse impact on their health and wellbeing. One probationer explained: “At the moment I’m committed to this at least for the next two years, if not probably more than that...But, equally, I could do this for the next 20 years...But, say five, six years from now and something else comes up that’s more appealing, and just work-life balance and things, or life changes...I wouldn’t say I’m committed to 30-odd years, I’m open to it either way” (P01). Another probationer highlighted: “At this point in time, I would love to stay as long as possible...[but] I see a lot of people leaving because the demands of the job are crazy, so it can take a toll on you, and I don’t want that” (P15). A third probationer explained their perspective this way:

*“I would like to see myself within the police for ten to 15 years. Whether that happens or not we will see...It really depends on the demands of the service...If there is no respite there’s no energy left in the tank, and I don’t want to get to a position where I have no energy left in the tank and I can’t do my job...Within an organisation if you look after your employees they will stay, if you don’t, they won’t, so it really depends on that” (P06).*

Arguably, this changing perspective is in line with a younger generation of workers viewing their PC as a more short-term transactional arrangement for mutual (employee–employer) benefit, rather than building a traditional career based on long-term loyalty and commitment to a single organisation. The inference is that employees can place higher demands on employers to meet their needs and expectations, and where these are perceived to be unmet (i.e., a PC breach or violation), employees may choose to leave. An established officer highlighted: “Around 10 years ago, people

*started to talk about lots of people coming to policing for a period of time and then moving on to other things, and there’s no doubt that there’s some truth in that...I think there are certain people that come in...and don’t develop or get into the roles that they hope to and then they move on” (E17).* Indeed, established officers often mentioned the array of transferable skills that are amassed through being a police officer, highlighting that these are often highly sought after by other organisations making it feasible for police officers to change career. According to one participant: “For new people, I think it will be a springboard to other things – they’ll come in, develop their skills and get a bit of experience then leave after six to eight years” (E10), and for another: “I do see that there are other potential opportunities out there, there are other organisations who are desperate to get police officers, there are an awful lot of skills that you learn as a police officer” (E05).

Finally, established officers were asked what advice they would give to a family member who was thinking about becoming a police officer. Some participants were adamant that they would discourage or dissuade a family member from joining, for example: “I would say don’t join, do something else instead” (E01), and for another: “I’m sad to say it, but I would probably dissuade them from becoming a police officer unless their options were limited” (E05). Others remarked that, due to their own loyalty, they found the question personally challenging or conflicting, for example: “I wouldn’t dissuade them because we need people to become police officers, but if I had known 20 years ago what my job would consist of today, I’m not sure that I would have made the decision to become a police officer” (E10). Several participants also mentioned that they would be keen that the family member fully understood the demands of the role and the changing expectations of society in that a significant amount of police work is no longer crime related. For example, one participant highlighted:

*“I have had conversations with people who have been thinking about joining and have asked them what they think they are going to do. Usually what they think doesn’t match the reality of the role, and as a result I have put some people off from joining... It’s not all as it seems on TV, it’s not all cops and robbers or detectives in suits” (E03).*

## 6. Survey Results

Following the interviews, a survey was conducted to gain insight from a larger sample into the key themes and proposed relationships that emerged from interview data. The survey was designed to compare the perceptions and experiences of early career officers with up to two years of experience with those of established officers who had three or more years of experience as a police officer. The survey findings are structured and presented below in line with the framework depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Survey Framework

### POLICE CULTURE AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

**Police culture** was measured using items from Resick et al's (2007) Person-Organisation Fit (POF) scale and Lee et al's (2018) *Esprit de Corps* (collegiality) scale. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the respective statements on a scale from 1-5 whereby '1' indicates strong disagreement and '5' indicates strong agreement, and '3' represents a middle ground of neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

As illustrated in **Figure 2**, it is evident that police culture is perceived differently by early career officers when compared to established officers. Overall, the POF results are above 3, indicating some level of fit between officers' values and those of Police

Scotland. However, with an average POF of 3.27, established officers reported lower levels of POF than their early career colleagues (average of 3.86). A similar pattern is evident in the collegiality statements where early career officers rated collegiality on average as 2.9 and established officers rated it at 2.14. However, it is notable that both groups' averages are below 3, suggesting that respondents perceive a lack of collegiality overall.

## Police Culture

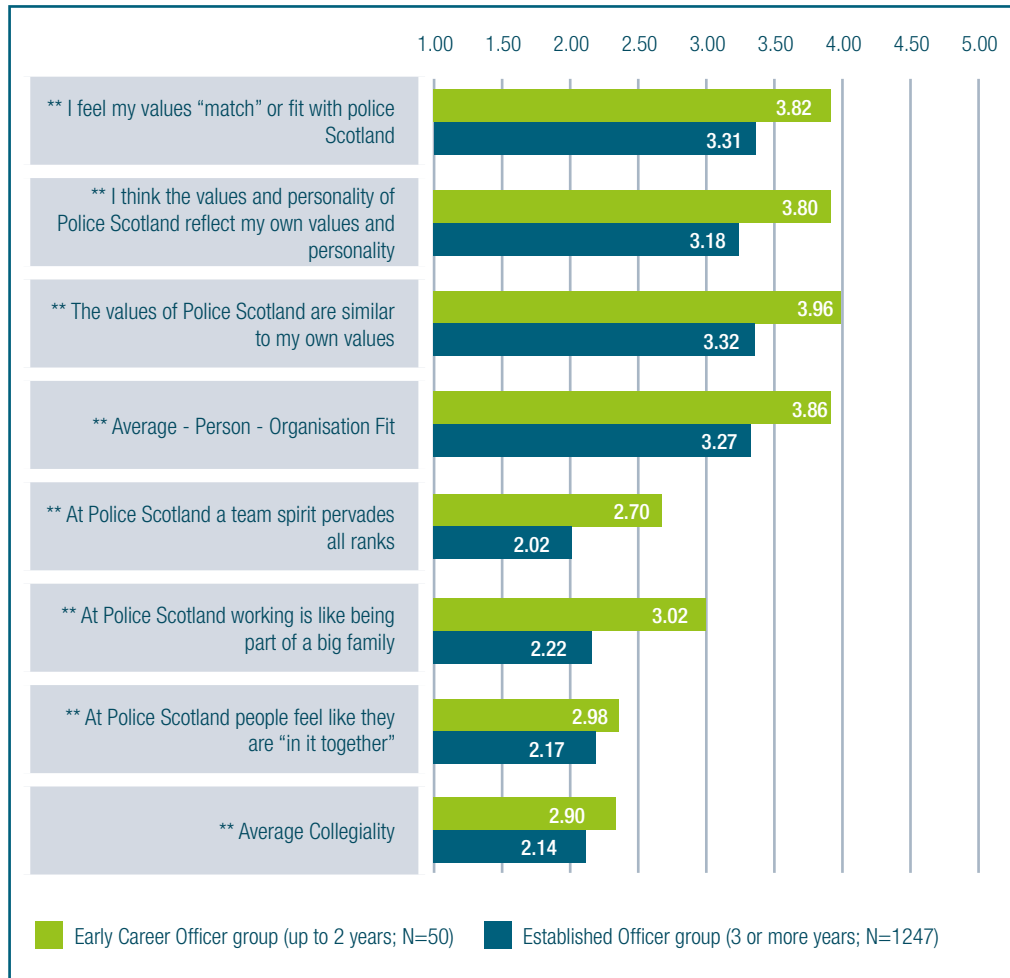


Figure 2. Police Culture (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )<sup>4</sup>

**Internal work environment** was measured with questions concerning perceived workload (Bolino and Turnley, 2005), prosocial impact (Grant, 2008), job resources (Zeytinoglu et al., 2007), citizen contact (Bosold et al., 2002; Gau and Paoline, 2017), staffing levels (Räikkönen et al., 2007), and red tape (DeHart-Davis and Pandey, 2005; Pandey and Scott, 2002).

The results in Figure 3 show that workload is perceived as high by both early career (average 4.11) and established officers (average 3.95). Both groups perceive their impact on society as positive, although this is significantly higher for early career officers (average 3.65) compared to established officers (average 3.32). The main difference stems from the statement: "I am very aware of the ways in which my work is benefitting others." There is no significant difference between early career and established officers when it comes to these perceptions of resources. Perceptions of citizen contact are, broadly speaking, negative as the results suggest that contact is more tense, unproductive, and threatening than relaxed, productive, and non-threatening. Early career officers rated these situations slightly more positively than established (more experienced) colleagues, although all averages are below a score of 3, indicating an overall negative perception. Staffing levels were rated between poor and tolerable, as opposed to good or excellent, which suggests a widespread lack of staff. There is a significant difference between early career (1.6) and established officers (1.4), though both groups perceive staffing levels as poor. Finally, perceptions concerning the level of red tape (bureaucracy) were rated on a scale from 0-10. Established officers reported significantly higher levels of red tape (8.38) than their early career colleagues (7.26), although, again, both groups indicated high levels of administrative burden. Generally, it is evident that early career officers perceive the police culture and work environment at Police Scotland more positively than established colleagues.

<sup>4</sup>Here, and in the following figures, a note of caution is warranted in relation to the relatively small sample size of the early career officer group ( $n=50$ ).

Work Environment

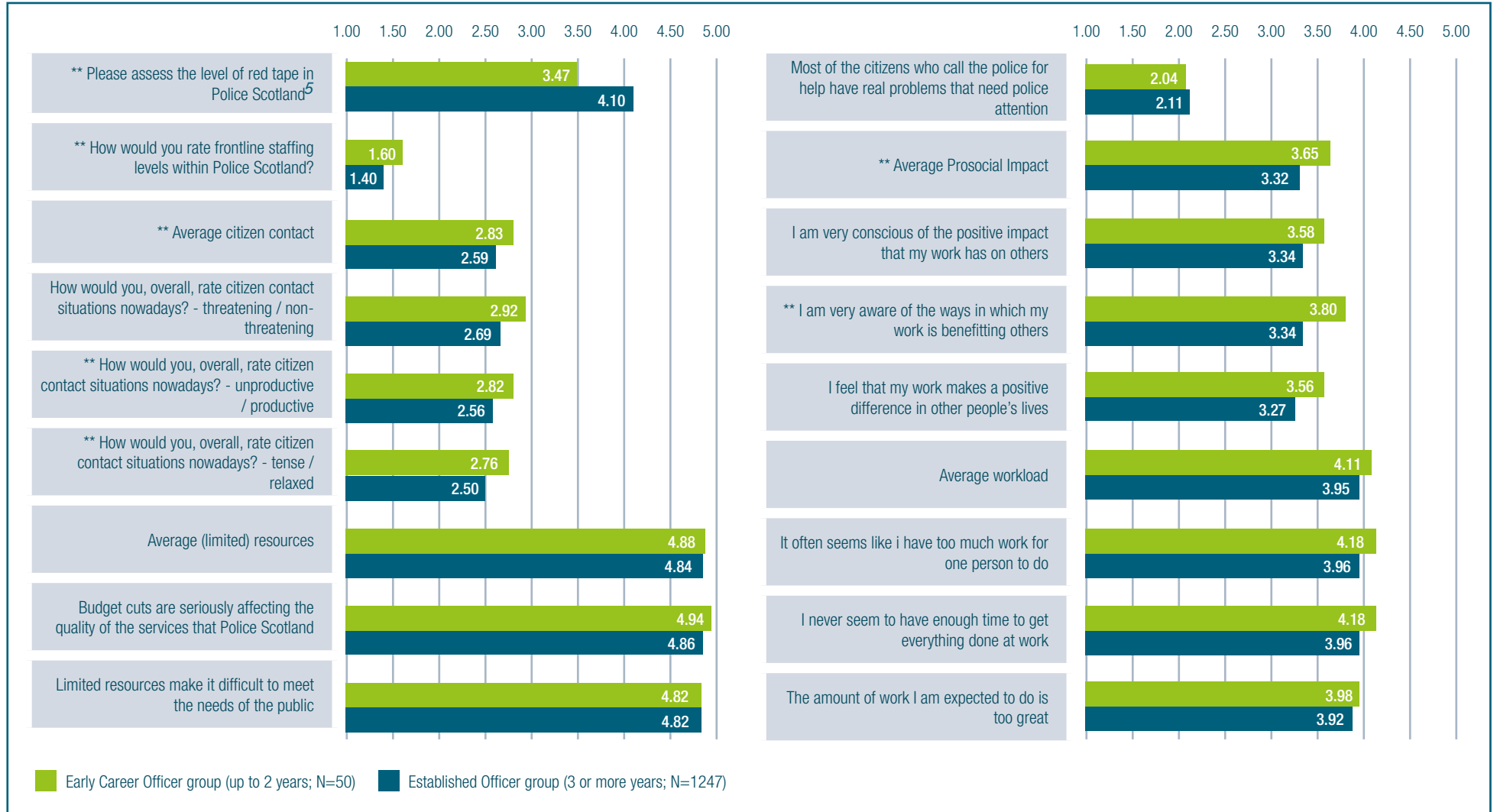


Figure 3: Work Environment (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

<sup>5</sup> The red tape-item was originally assessed on a 0-10 scale, and has been rescaled here to match with the 1-5 approach used for the remaining items.

The **external work environment** was measured using items from Smidts et al. (2001) and Mael and Ashforth (1992) (cf. Bartels et al., 2007; Zhu et al., 2017). As shown in **Figure 4**, the way in which respondents perceive Police Scotland's external reputation differs significantly between early career and established officers. Early career officers rated external reputation as better across all items when compared to their more established colleagues. Overall ratings, however, are low, indicating that generally police officers perceive the external reputation of Police Scotland to be poor. In two categories, early career officers rated perceived external reputation as positive: 1) *family and friends' attitudes* (average of 3.76) and 2) *Police Scotland is regarded as a good organisation to work for* (average of 3.18). Established officers' average scores for all items are below 3 indicating a more cynical view.

### Perceived External Reputation

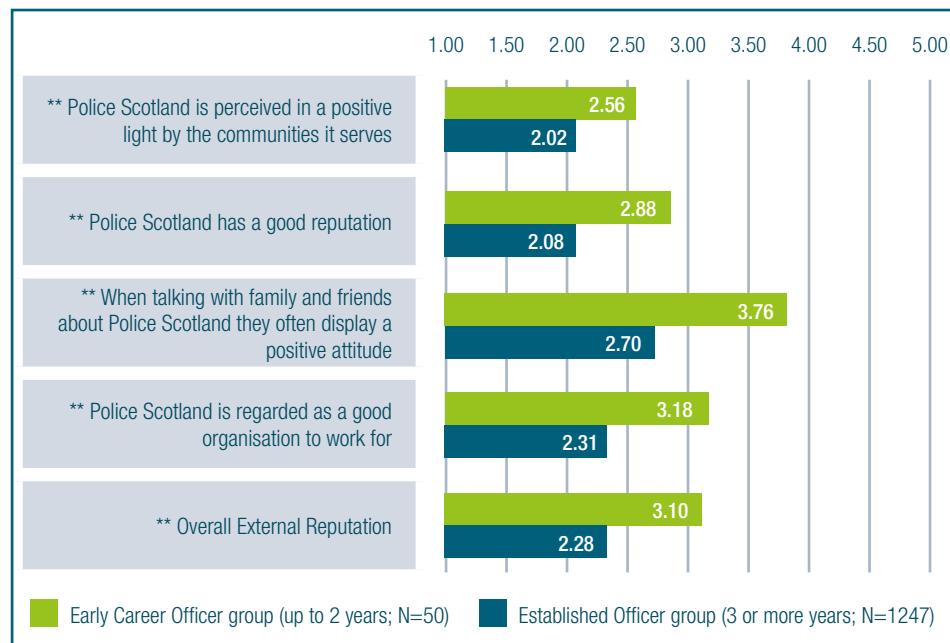


Figure 4: Perceived External Reputation (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

### MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

**Management** was measured using items from Paoline and Gau's (2020) Supportive Supervisor Relations scale. As illustrated in **Figure 5**, these items ask respondents about their relationship with their direct supervisor (line manager). Results for all items are above 3, indicating perceptions of supportive supervisor relationships. Scores were higher for early career officers (average score 4.03) compared to established colleagues (average of 3.67). **Leadership**, which relates to the executive or senior leadership within Police Scotland, was measured using Wright et al.'s (2012) scale and is rated less favourably. Although scores from early career officers are higher (average 2.6) compared to their more experienced colleagues (2.02), all scores are below 3, which indicates general disagreement with the statements and therefore disapproval with the leadership at executive and senior level.



### Management and Leadership

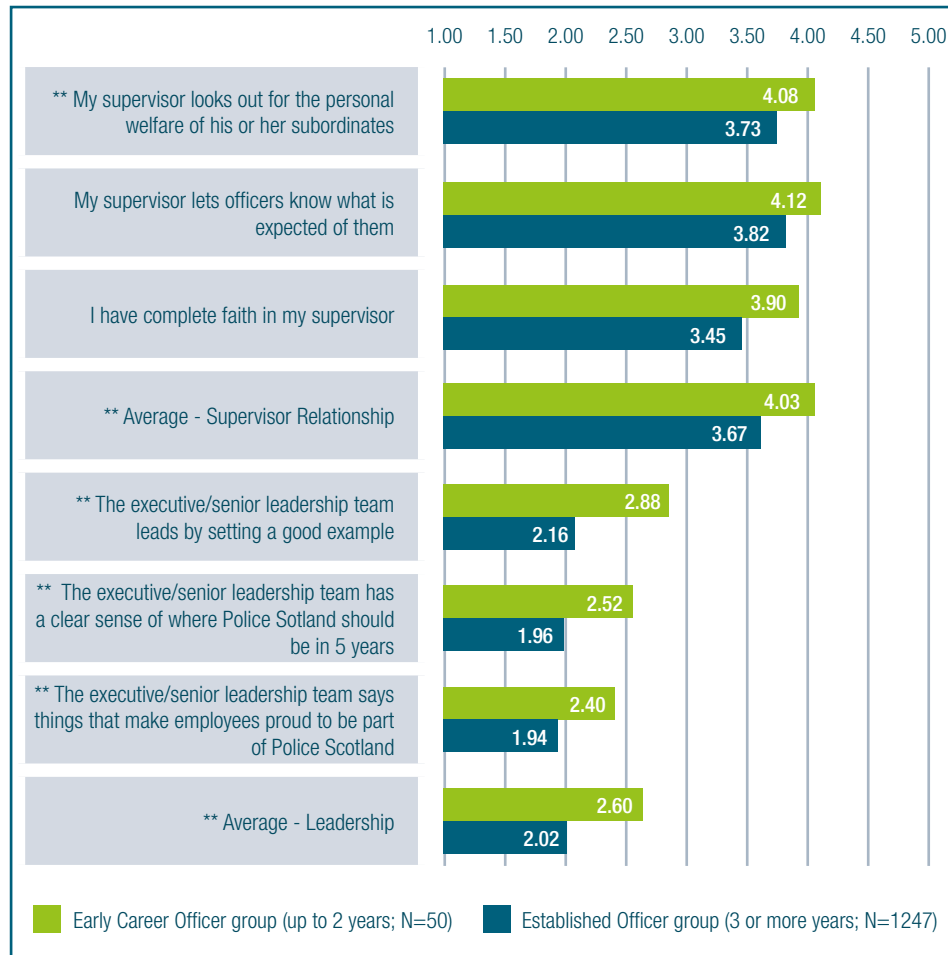


Figure 5: Management and Leadership (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

### TRAINING AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Perceptions of **training and career progression** were measured using Bartoll et al.'s (2014) scale. In **Figure 6**, the results show that there is a significant difference between how early career officers and established officers perceive training and career prospects within Police Scotland. Overall, early career officers perceive both career opportunities and training as more positive than established colleagues. It is noteworthy, however, that even among the early career officers, the only item that was rated positively, i.e., where the score indicates agreement with the statement provided is: *My job offers good prospects for career advancement*, where early career officers agreed with this statement (average of 3.66). All other scores are below the average of 3 and therefore indicate disagreement. Established officers expressed their disagreement by scoring all statements below 3. Notably, they had concerns about the promotions process and its fairness and consistency (average of 1.81). This paints a picture of high expectations around career progression from early career officers while highlighting that established officers are unhappy about their training and career opportunities.

#### Training and Career Progression

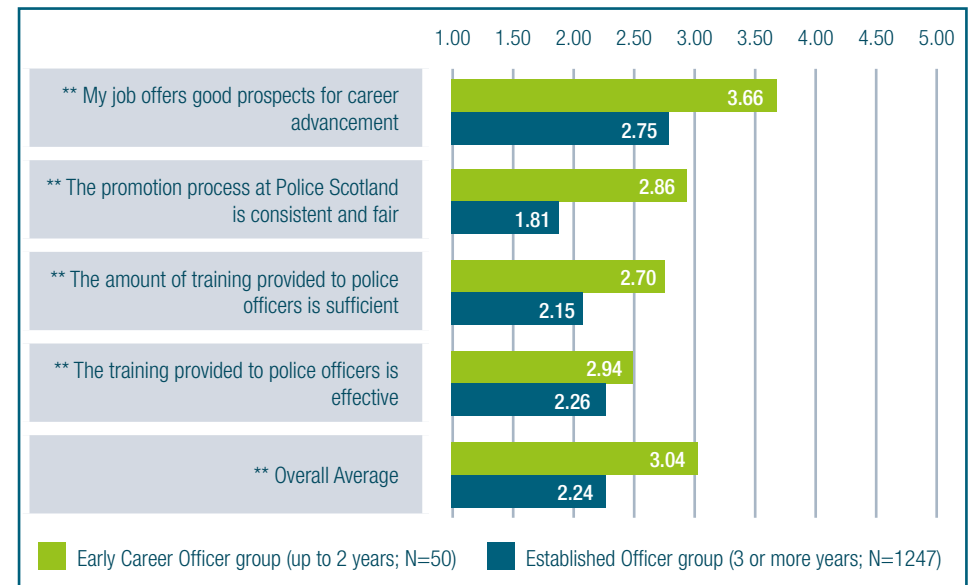


Figure 6: Training and Career Progression (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )



## WELLBEING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Wellbeing of police officers was measured using scales for work-life balance (Thompson et al., 1999) and work-family life conflict (Lee et al., 2018). While higher ratings of work-life balance indicate better wellbeing, higher ratings of work-family conflict suggest lower levels of wellbeing.

As depicted in **Figure 7**, the **work-life balance** scores show a relatively poor perception of work-life balance with all scores below 3. There is a significant difference between early career and established officers with regard to the question: *Police Scotland encourages employees to set limits on where work stops and home life begins*. While both groups score this item below 3 and therefore indicate broad disagreement, established officers report even lower levels of work-life balance in this regard. When considering **work-family life conflict**, both respondent groups indicated perceived conflict. This results in overall low wellbeing scores for both early career and established officers.



## Wellbeing and Work-life Balance

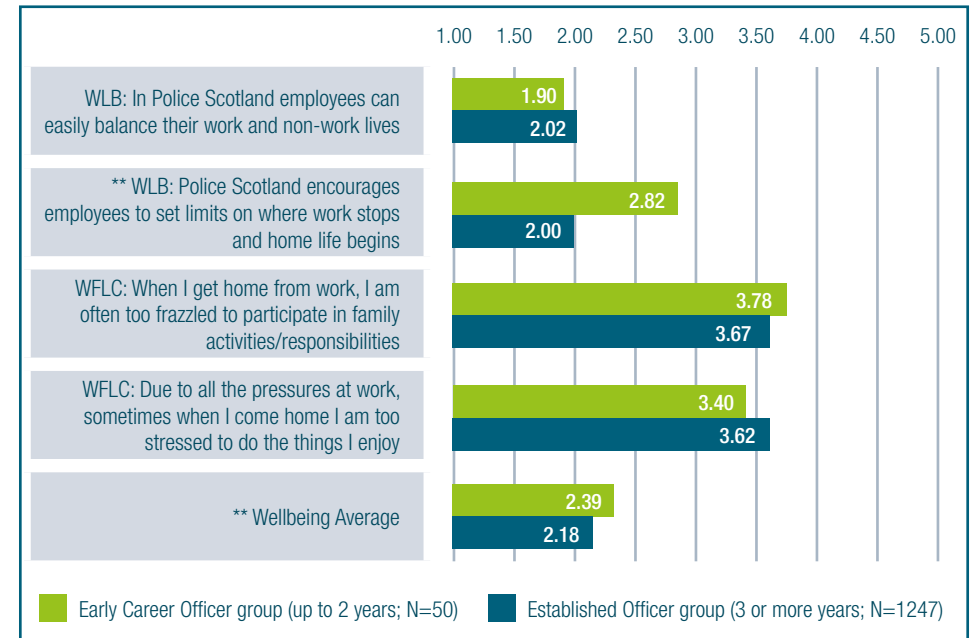


Figure 7: Wellbeing and Work-life Balance (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ ). Wellbeing average scores are based on actual WLB and reverse coded WFLC scores.

In line with the survey framework in **Figure 1**, having reported on the four antecedents, we now turn attention to the relationships between the antecedents and the extent to which respondents perceived that their work/workplace expectations were being met/unmet. A combination of measures including **psychological contract breach** (PCB), **job satisfaction**, **engagement**, and **turnover intention** (intention to leave) was used.

## PERCEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BREACH

Perceived **psychological contract breach** (PCB) was measured using Robinson and Morrison's (2000) scale. For PCB, as shown in **Figure 8**, the higher the score the more officers experience PCB. Expectedly, it is evident that early career officers reported significantly lower levels of PCB (average 2.95) than their more established colleagues (average 3.53).

### Psychological Contract Breach

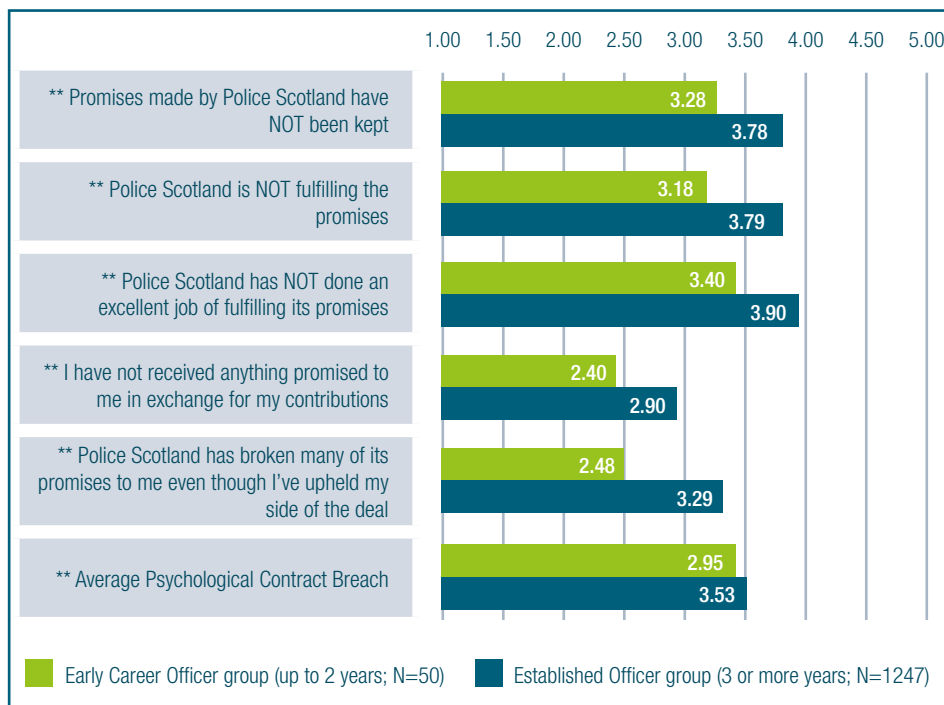


Figure 8: Psychological Contract Breach (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

To better understand how the antecedents (police culture and work environment; management and leadership; training and career progression; and wellbeing and work-life balance) impact on PCB, a correlation analysis was conducted including the

average scores of these variables. Based on this, **Figure 9** presents a performance-impact matrix, which includes the average scores of the antecedent variables (performance) and their impact (correlations) on PCB. As 'resources' are not related to PCB they are not represented here. It can be observed that the impact of antecedents on PCB varied quite significantly from perceptions of *senior leadership*, perceived external reputation, and *training and career opportunities* showing the highest levels of impact on PCB, to *workload*, *supervisor relationship*, and *prosocial impact* with lower levels of impact on PCB. It is important to note that all top three antecedents in terms of impact on PCB show relatively low performance, which means that officers are, on average, dissatisfied with their lived work experience concerning these important factors.

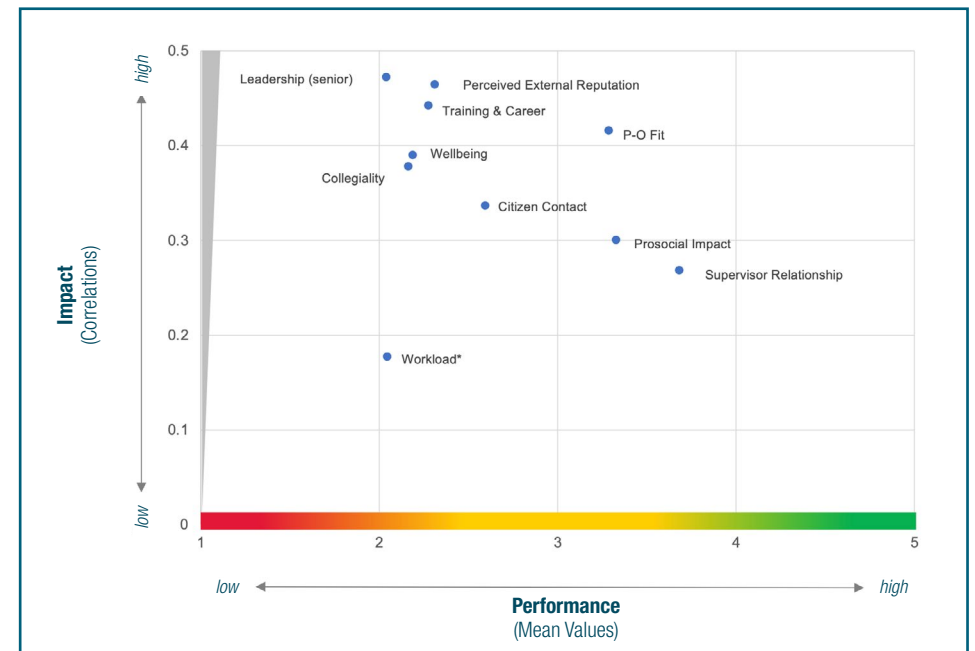


Figure 9: Performance - Impact Matrix (\*Performance scale means were reverse coded due to wording of original scale items. Besides Workload (positive correlation with PCB), all other constructs show negative correlations (i.e., a buffering impact) with PCB)

## JOB SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

**Job satisfaction** was measured using items from the Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire - Job Satisfaction Sub-scale (MOAQ-JSS) (Bowling and Hammond, 2008). **Figure 10** displays an overall positive result for employee satisfaction. All scores for both early career and established officers are above 3, although early career officers report significantly higher levels of satisfaction (average 3.92) than established colleagues (average 3.33), indicating a decline in job satisfaction over time.

### Satisfaction

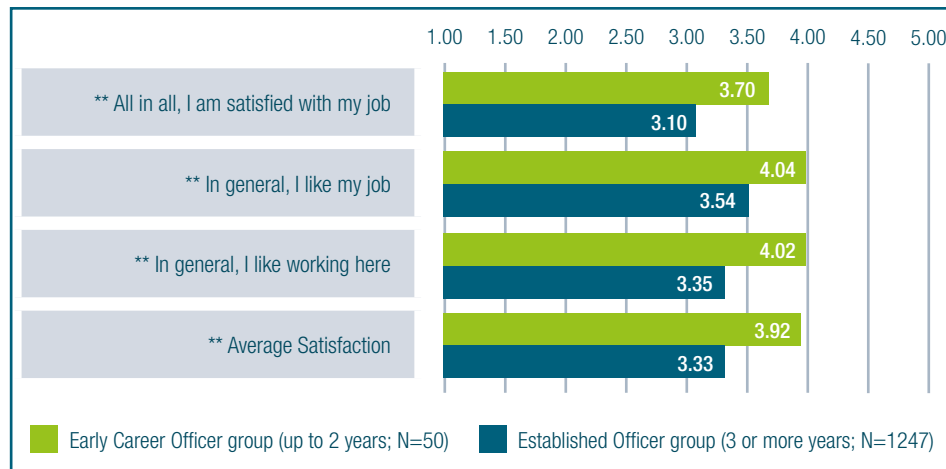


Figure 10: Satisfaction (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

In terms of **engagement**, Schaufeli et al's (2006) scale was used. As **Figure 11** illustrates, results are more mixed with some scores below 3, indicating disagreement with the statements and lower levels of engagement, while some scores above 3 indicating agreement with the statement and higher levels of engagement. Like satisfaction, early career officers rated their engagement higher on average (3.68) than established colleagues (3.11).

### Engagement

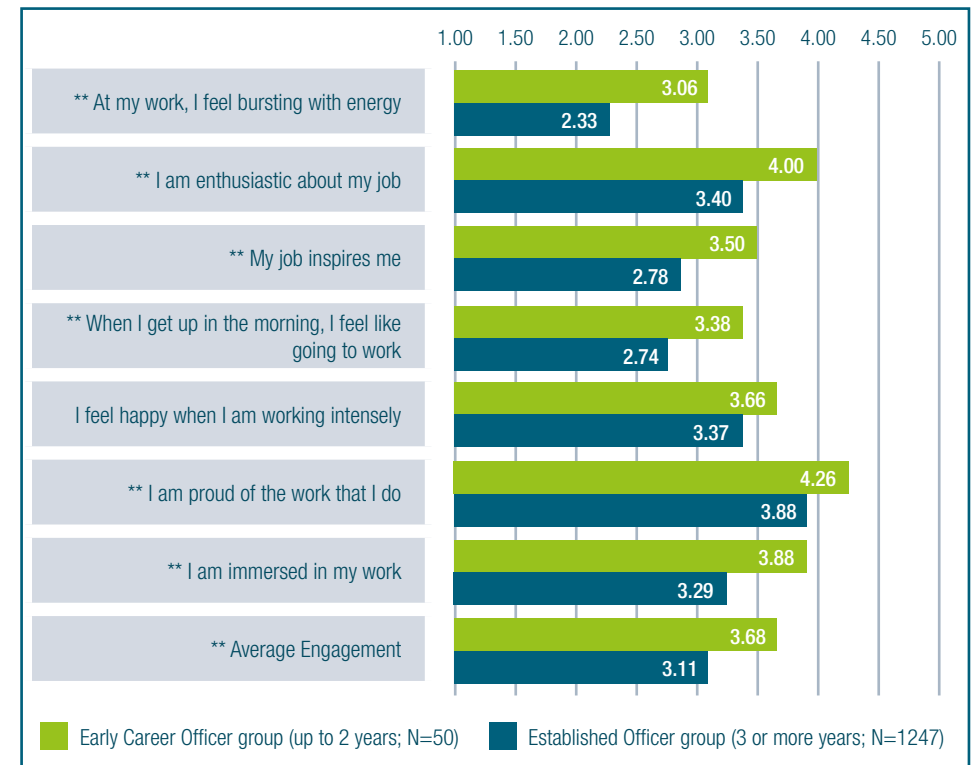


Figure 11: Engagement (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

## PAY, BENEFITS, AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS

Pay and benefits were measured using Heneman and Schwab's (1985) scale. In terms of respondents' **satisfaction with their salary**, and as depicted in **Figure 12**, the responses portray a neither satisfied nor dissatisfied workforce with average ratings of just below and above 3. No significant difference between early career and established officers was found regarding salary. However, looking at the **satisfaction with the benefits package**, ratings are lower showing general dissatisfaction. Early career officers report somewhat higher satisfaction with the benefits package than established officers, although averages for both groups are below 3.

### Remuneration



Figure 12: Remuneration (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

Items from Mobley et al. (1978) were used to measure **turnover intention** (cf. Skelton et al., 2020). **Figure 13** presents the turnover intentions of early career and established officers. Responses show that overall turnover intentions of early career officers are significantly lower (average 2.1) than those of established officers (average 2.92). For early career officers, all scores are below 3 which indicates that turnover intentions are not (yet) of concern. However, for established officers the results are more mixed with several scores surpassing a score of 3, which indicates that there is some desire or intention to leave Police Scotland even if, on average, this is at a relatively low level.

### Turnover Intention



Figure 13: Turnover Intentions (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BREACH AND OUTCOMES

This section focuses on relationships between PCB and job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intention and is based on cross-tabulations and correlation analysis. To check for the impact of tenure (in years), this is also included in the correlation analysis. The correlation matrix is shown in **Table 3**. PCB is significantly correlated with all outcome variables, i.e. PCB is negatively related to satisfaction and engagement and positively related to turnover intentions. Results also show that tenure is significantly correlated to turnover intention ( $r = 0.106$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), but not to PCB, satisfaction, or engagement. Given the differences displayed in earlier discussion between early career and established officers regarding satisfaction and engagement, this seems surprising. However, it indicates that while the survey uncovered significant differences between the up to two years tenure (early career officers) and three year or over tenure (established officer) groups, the trend might not translate across the whole tenure range.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix PCB and Outcomes

	PCB	Satisfaction	Engagement	Turnover Intention	Tenure
PCB	1				
Satisfaction	-.446**	1			
Engagement	-.439**	.719**	1		
Turnover Intention	.440**	-.614**	-.578**	1	
Tenure	0.024	-0.006	0.028	.106**	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

For the cross-tabulation, PCB is categorised as: 1) no PCB, i.e., those officers who responded on average that they disagree or strongly disagree to experiencing PCB; 2) the middle ground, i.e., those who on average neither agreed nor disagreed that they are experiencing a PCB; and 3) those respondents who reported PCBs. Outcome averages for satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intentions are based on the respective average scores and grouped into five categories<sup>6</sup>, to broadly represent the five scores which are used in the survey question where '1' indicates low levels of satisfaction/engagement/turnover intention and '5' indicates high levels of satisfaction/engagement/turnover intention.

## PCB AND JOB SATISFACTION

Table 4 presents the **satisfaction** averages broken down by respondents' perceptions of PBC. It shows that there are stark differences in the response patterns and therefore in the satisfaction scores between the different groups. Among those respondents who experienced no PCB, the vast majority (91%) indicate satisfaction with their work, and only 5.1% are dissatisfied with their work. Amongst those who experience PCB, only 36.7% express satisfaction with their work and 34.8% express dissatisfaction with their work. These trends are also supported by the correlation analysis, which reports a significant negative correlation between PCB and satisfaction ( $r=-.446$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Taken together, this suggests that experiencing PCB negatively impacts on police officers' job satisfaction.

<sup>6</sup> Outcome categories are created as follows: 1-1.49 1: 1.5-2.49 2: 2.5-3.49 3: 3.5-4.49 4: 4.5-5.5

Table 4: Cross-tabulation PCB and Satisfaction

			Satisfaction Average (1 – low satisfaction, 5 - high satisfaction)					
			1-1.49	1.5-2.49	2.5-3.49	3.5-4.49	4.5-5	Total
PCB Average Category	low	N	5	3	6	65	77	156
		%	3.2	1.9	3.8	41.7	49.4	100
	medium	N	11	62	85	258	52	468
		%	2.4	13.2	18.2	55.1	11.1	100.0
	high	N	64	170	192	213	34	673
		%	9.5	25.3	28.5	31.6	5.1	100

% is based on number of responses in PCB category

## PCB AND ENGAGEMENT

Table 5 shows the trends of **engagement** scores when accounting for officers' different perceptions of PCB. Most respondents who reported no PBC also report higher levels of engagement (79.5%). For those respondents who experience PCB, the survey results are a bit more varied; 34.8% report low engagement levels, 41.7% report medium engagement levels and only 23.4% report high engagement level. This shows that there is a stark contrast to those officers who do not perceive PCB and indicates that experiencing PCB might negatively impact officers' engagement with their work – a result that is further supported by the correlation analysis, which reveals a significant negative relationship between PCB and engagement ( $r=-.439$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Table 5: Cross-tabulation PCB and Engagement

			Satisfaction Average (1 – low satisfaction, 5 - high satisfaction)					
			1-1.49	1.5-2.49	2.5-3.49	3.5-4.49	4.5-5	Total
PCB Average Category	low	N	1	5	26	92	32	156
		%	0.6	3.2	16.7	59.0	20.5	100
	medium	N	11	60	200	179	28	478
		%	2.3	12.6	41.8	37.4	5.9	100.0
	high	N	53	185	285	132	28	683
		%	7.8	27.1	41.7	19.3	4.1	100

% is based on number of responses in PCB category



## PCB AND TURNOVER INTENTION

**Table 6** shows a cross-tabulation whereby officers' levels of turnover intention are analysed based on their perceptions of PCB. It is evident that there are different patterns of turnover intentions depending on the perceived level of PCB. Amongst those who do not perceive a PCB, 76.9%, and therefore most of the group, have low turnover intentions, while 12.2% report high levels of turnover intention. Contrary to this, among those who have perceived PCB, only 20.5% report low levels of turnover intention and the majority (52%) report high levels of turnover intentions and are therefore much more inclined to look for other jobs.

Correlation analysis shows that there is a strong and significant correlation ( $r=.440$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) between PCB and turnover intentions, further confirming the pattern visible in **Table 6**.

**Table 6: Cross-tabulation PCB and Turnover Intentions**

			Turnover Intentions Average (1 – low turnover intention, 5 – high turnover intention)					Total
			1-1.49	1.5-2.49	2.5-3.49	3.5-4.49	4.5-5	
PCB Average Category	low	N	66	54	17	15	4	156
		%	42.3	34.6	10.9	9.6	2.6	100
	medium	N	80	122	130	109	27	468
		%	17.1	26.1	27.8	23.3	5.8	100.0
	high	N	35	103	185	231	119	673
		%	5.2	15.3	27.5	34.3	17.7	100

*% is based on number of responses in PCB category*

## JOB EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITIES

Finally, using Quinn and Shepard's (1974) scale (cf. Moon and Jonson, 2012), officers were asked about their views on how well overall their job **lived up to the expectations** they had when they joined Police Scotland and whether they would decide to pursue the same career again, knowing what they know now. The results are depicted in **Figure 14** and scales ranged from 'not very much like the job I wanted' to 'very much like the job I wanted', and 'decide definitely not to take the job' to 'decide without hesitation to take the job'.

### Job Expectations versus Realities



Figure 14: Job Expectations versus Realities (\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between the two groups at  $p < 0.05$ )

When asked how well they would say their job measures up to the sort of job they wanted initially, early career officers rated their job closer to the job they wanted (average 3.08) than more established officers (average 2.82) hence indicating that

expectations are not being met for the established group. **Table 7** shows that there is a wide spread of answers with the largest group (24.1%) in the middle category, 42% indicating that their job is not like they expected, and 33.8% indicating that their job is much like they wanted it when they first became a police officer. This is also mirrored in the second question on whether they would decide to become a police officer again. As can be seen in Table 7, answers are spread relatively evenly across the entire range of answers, with a slightly lower percentage of answers towards the higher end from 22.3% of respondents who would definitely decide not to take the job again, to 14.7% of officers who would take the job again without hesitation. Early career officers, on average, rated this positively (3.62), whereas established officers' average is in the negative range (2.78). This means that, on average, established officers would not choose to become a police officer again.

Table 7: Job Expectations versus Realities

In general, how well would you say that your job measures up to the sort of job you wanted when you became a police officer?						
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Frequency	251	294	313	303	136	1297
Percent	19.4	22.7	24.1	23.4	10.5	100.0
Knowing what you know now, if you had to decide again whether to become a police officer, what would you decide?						
Frequency	289	294	281	242	191	1297
Percent	22.3	22.7	21.7	18.7	14.7	100.0

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Police officer wellbeing and retention are of key concern to Police Scotland. Providing an in-depth examination of the reasons behind turnover intentions (desire to leave) and, importantly, the retention factors that might encourage officers to remain within Police Scotland, was the driving force behind this research. To recap, the study compared the 'work' and 'workplace' expectations of probationers (new recruits) and early career officers (with up to two years of experience) with the workplace realities and lived experience of established police officers (with three or more years of experience). It examined the extent to which the expectations of early career officers are realistic, understood, and are being fulfilled for established officers.

The project was guided by four research questions:

- 1. What were the motivations for new probationers to join Police Scotland?**
- 2. What are the key work and workplace expectations of probationers?**
- 3. To what extent are these work and workplace expectations being fulfilled for established police officers?**
- 4. Does a rhetoric-reality gap exist between expectations and their fulfilment?**

Many of the high-level findings reported here are connected to wider organisational culture issues and outcomes, and, indeed, mirror several of those proffered within the recent HMICS inspection of organisational culture in Police Scotland (HMICS, 2023), particularly around probationers' expectations and experiences. Notably, HMICS (2023, p. 16) highlights key cultural challenges associated with: *'...a very different set of expectations, values and behaviours at the police college at Tulliallan to those experienced in frontline policing... We found that inclusivity, challenge and wellbeing were a focus at the college, but were not particularly valued at the frontline. Probationers' past experience and skills were, on the whole, disregarded once they were operationally deployed.'*

Our interview and survey findings are broadly aligned, and the research identified similar challenges pertaining to the work and workplace expectations and realities (lived experience) uncovered throughout the four antecedents that framed this

research: *police culture and work environment; management and leadership; training and career progression; and wellbeing and work-life balance.* Across all four antecedents there were notable differences between new officers (probationers and those with up to two years of experience) when compared to the lived experiences of established officers (with three or more years of experience as a police officer). Putting in place approaches to bridge this gap would go some way towards meeting the expectations of the new and next generations of police officers.

The associated recommendations provided here are intended to build on those proffered in the HMICS (2023) report and should be viewed as part of a larger strategic organisational development (OD) exercise to improve police culture and bridge the rhetoric-reality gap in the work and workplace expectations of police officers. To this end, the recommendations should be integrated, rather than standalone, as connections between the recommendations are crucial to improving the work and workplace experience within Police Scotland.

### POLICE CULTURE AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Probationers signalled mainly altruistic motivations for joining Police Scotland, i.e., reflecting a strong desire to make a difference to people and communities. These expectations were broadly based around their vision of an exciting, challenging, and varied job, with several probationers mentioning that their initial expectations were formed by television programmes they had watched. Overall, probationers were highly



complementary of the training and induction experience they had been receiving at the police college. However, this (excellent) training experience may have elevated their future workplace expectations for when they are eventually deployed to a shift to a level that might be difficult to fulfil (cf. Charman, 2017; HMICS, 2023).

Interview and survey findings highlighted that police culture is perceived differently by early career officers when compared to established officers. Notably, probationers' expectations were often in stark contrast to the job experiences described by established officers. Established officers highlighted that their reality of the job often did not match up to their early expectations and college experience. They often spoke

about the challenges of (increasing) resource constraints and high job demands, as well as a prevailing culture of masculinity and misogynistic behaviours. While a few participants cited positive changes to the culture in Police Scotland, the highly political and bureaucratic nature, as well as sheer size of Police Scotland, was problematic for many participants, and particularly for those who had experience in smaller legacy forces prior to the formation of Police Scotland in 2013. Notably, these issues were perceived to have negatively impacted their employment relationship (PC) and, in some cases, their health and wellbeing.



# Recommendation 1

## WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Police Scotland should aim to bridge the gap between probationers' expectations, college experience, and the realities of the frontline demand and workplace that they will encounter (i.e., the 'lived experience') upon leaving the college learning environment. This should begin at the point of recruitment and continue throughout the induction, on-boarding, and initial training phases of the probationer journey. In addition, the role and content of marketing and associated recruitment campaigns should be reviewed to ensure they portray an accurate and realistic, rather than overly glamourised, image of the realities of being a police officer.

## MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Probationers related their workplace expectations of supervisory management and leadership to the positive interactions they had experienced at the college. They highlighted a desire for mutual respect, constructive feedback, and patience from superiors. It is useful at this juncture to make a distinction between tutorship, supervisory (line) management, and executive/senior leadership. The tutor constable role (i.e., the person dedicated to supporting recruits through their two-year probationary period) was viewed by probationers as being crucial in providing advice and direction, as well as ongoing support and feedback (see Charman, 2017). Similarly, the shift sergeant role was seen as critical in ensuring that adequate support structures and learning opportunities are in place. Indeed, reflecting the principles of a 'learning organisation' (e.g., Engelmann, 2023), the opportunity – even empowerment – to make and learn from mistakes without fear of retribution was a crucial expectation of probationers.

While the survey results indicated higher satisfaction overall with supervisory level management than with executive/senior level leadership, some established officers cited several examples of management and leadership having fallen short of their expectations. Some of these examples related to line management level and reflected a perception of poor management training and development, as well as flaws in the promotions process which, in their view, enabled people to be promoted into people management positions without the requisite skillset. Some established officers also remarked negatively on aspects of senior leadership behaviours (i.e., bringing the organisational values to life), attributing this, in some cases, to a lack of experience, leadership development, and poor strategic change management.

## Recommendation 2

### MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Police Scotland should distinguish between management and leadership behaviours, capabilities, and competencies and review its provision of both management and leadership development. Emphasis should be placed on developing and embedding leadership principles and behaviours that are aligned to the core organisational values and which are intended to develop a culture of inclusion and (mutual) respect. To help facilitate this, the organisation should consider the introduction of 360-degree assessment as a developmental tool for sergeant level and above. This would require dedicated resource towards the provision of high-quality feedback to participants as well as associated development plans.

### TRAINING AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Probationers shared their enthusiasm and excitement about the range of career and development opportunities available within Police Scotland. Established officers agreed that a wide range of training and career opportunities exist, although several voiced concern about the high volume of training that is now provided online as opposed to in-person. While there are cost benefits associated with online training, officers were concerned about the quality and potentially inadequate learning and assessment processes associated with many of these packages.

## Recommendation 3

### PROVISION OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

Police Scotland should review the topics, volume and ratio of training that is provided online (via the Moodle platform) and conduct an in-depth evaluation of its effectiveness at each level (immediate reaction, learning, transfer, and return on investment) (see, Reio et al., 2017). Additionally, the organisation should review its overall provision and balance of learning methodologies to ensure that training and development opportunities are packaged collectively and clearly as a strategic learning framework. In striving towards being a 'learning organisation', the strategic learning framework should promote a culture of experiential learning, reflection and ongoing feedback.

The survey highlighted a significant difference between how early career officers and established officers perceive training and career prospects within Police Scotland, with early career officers being more optimistic, particularly around the existence of career opportunities. Eight of the 15 probationers interviewed were over the age of 30 and had joined Police Scotland as a second career. These interviews revealed that the older probationers were keen that their transferable skillsets and experience would be recognised and valued within Police Scotland and potentially aid faster career progression. However, the established officers were quick to point out that recognition of prior skills and experience is, at best, problematic and often even undermined within police culture. Linked to this, perceived unfairness within all aspects of the promotions process was a key – and often emotive – bone of contention for several of the established officers (cf. HMCIS, 2023). This most often concerned perceptions of nepotism and gender-related bias, as well as a lack of formal and transparent talent management processes. Overall, the picture that emerged was one of high expectations around training and career progression from probationers and early career officers, but dissatisfaction from the established officers based on their lived experiences.

# Recommendation 4

## CAREER PROGRESSION

Police Scotland should conduct a thorough (independent) review of its development pathways and promotions process with a lens on consistency and transparency, fairness and inclusion, as well as removal of any potential for nepotism or discrimination to occur. Incorporating 360-degree assessment and feedback as essential criteria for promotion may be beneficial. It may also prove beneficial to review the linkages between the organisation's promotions, development planning and performance appraisal processes.

# Recommendation 5

## TALENT MANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Police Scotland should consider developing a strategic talent management and succession planning framework, encapsulating how 'talent' is defined, identified, nurtured, deployed, and rewarded at all levels throughout the organisation. Consideration should be afforded, where applicable, to how prior relevant skills and experience, e.g., in leadership and management, can be more specifically recognised, valued and utilised.

## WELLBEING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Probationers spoke animatedly about the vast range of welfare and wellbeing support that had been signposted – and promised – at the police college. There was also a strong feeling that line managers and senior officers would offer considerable support to probationers once they are deployed to a shift. While several of the established officers recognised improvements in wellbeing provision over the years, most were critical or cynical about how wellbeing support is provided. This was often linked to the nature and size of Police Scotland, for example, with some participants referring to themselves as "just a number" (E10) or "speck of dust in the atmosphere" (E12). Several established officers also referred to Police Scotland being good at 'talking the talk' (i.e., signposting), but less adept at 'walking the walk' when it comes to wellbeing support. These criticisms were often levelled at line managers.

Probationers reflected a realistic view of shift work and its associated implications for work-life balance and work-family life conflict. Yet, perhaps reflecting the trends of a new generation of workers, they also recognised strongly the importance of downtime and non-work activities. This was often at odds with the culture that established officers described in interviews and reported in the survey where resource constraints and an increasing workload often significantly hamper planned time off and work flexibility. Indeed, the survey indicated a relatively poor perception of work-life balance and work-family life conflict overall.

# Recommendation 6

## WELLBEING

As part of the wider organisational development approach, Police Scotland should conduct a multi-level review of the impact (lived experience) of employee support and wellbeing provision. As line managers (particularly sergeant level) are crucial to ensuring effective wellbeing support, its provision should be captured within the approach to developing management and leadership behaviours and competencies that are aligned to the organisation's core values.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND RETENTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

Aligning with other empirical studies (e.g., Charman, 2017; Hoel and Dillern, 2022; Williams and Sondhi, 2022), the findings of this research indicate a potential shift over time in the expectations of a new generation of police officers. Arguably, this is in line with a younger generation of workers, more generally, who perceive their career as more transient, i.e., a shorter-term transactional PC arrangement for mutual (employee-employer) benefit, rather than pursuing a career built upon long-term loyalty and commitment to a single organisation (as has traditionally been the case in policing).

Yet, during the interviews most of the probationers were open to the idea of a long-term career within Police Scotland, but only for as long as they believe that Police Scotland continues to look after their welfare needs and expectations, that the job continues to fit around their life, and that it has no long-term adverse impact on their health and wellbeing. The survey also signalled that experiencing a perceived PCB negatively impacts on officers' job satisfaction and engagement. Taken together, these factors raise important implications for HR in terms of the 'employment deal' and HR's approach and commitment to exemplary people management and development policies and practices. The inference of these (changing) work and workplace expectations (PC) is that new officers can place higher demands on their employer and senior officers to meet their perceived needs and expectations, which, arguably, have been heightened by the excellent experience they received at the police college. Where these expectations are later unmet in the workplace (i.e., through experiencing a PC breach or violation), these officers are at greater risk of voluntary turnover.

## JOB EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITIES

Returning to probationers' hopes and fears for the job, their hopes were geared around having a challenging, rewarding, and varied role in which they can 'make a difference', where they are treated inclusively and with respect, and where they have opportunities to develop, grow and progress. Conversely, their fears centred around colleague relationships (i.e., becoming part of the 'police family', their personal safety in terms of the unknown and escalating violence, and their own personal resilience and mental wellbeing. What is notable, and evident within the interview and survey findings, is the indication from established officers that, on average, their job has not fully measured up to the job they envisaged, and a substantial share of respondents (45%) indicated that with hindsight they would not choose to become a police officer again.

# Recommendation 7

## EMPLOYEE VOICE

Police Scotland should consider ways to capitalise and build upon the work and workplace hopes and expectations of new officers, as well as alleviate or mitigate their concerns and fears. The introduction of forums which bring together probationer and early career representatives with senior officers may be an insightful means of progressing this recommendation. Moreover, linking this to the organisation's existing employee engagement methodology and metrics (e.g., annual engagement survey) could provide a vehicle to follow-up on the lived experience – or journey – of early career officers, as well as capture early indications of turnover intention.

In closing, this research has provided qualitative and quantitative insights into the work and workplace expectations of probationer and early career officers, alongside the 'lived experiences' of established officers. The report shines a light on several areas of dissonance – rhetoric-reality gaps at multiple levels – that Police Scotland should be aware of. Where the eventual job does not match up to their (high) expectations, current probationers and early career officers are likely to be at greater risk of voluntary turnover. Police Scotland should take account of the changing needs and work and workplace expectations of a new generation of police officers when developing the next iteration of its People Strategy, including its approach to strategic organisational and culture development.

Further research could focus on specific work and workplace expectations and realities based on protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, for example, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion or belief, as detailed analyses of relationships between such demographic factors were outside the scope of this research.

## 8. References

- Alain, M. and Grégoire, M. (2008). Can ethics survive the shock of the job? Quebec's police recruits confront reality. *Policing and Society*, 18, 169–189.
- Atkinson, C. (2017). Patriarchy, gender, infantilisation: A culture account of police intelligence work in Scotland. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 50, 234–251.
- Bal, P. M., De Lange, A. H., Jansen, P. G. W. and Van Der Velde, M. E. G. (2008). Psychological contract breach and job attitudes: A meta-analysis of age as a moderator. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72, 143–158.
- Bartels, J., Pruyn, A., De Jong, M. and Joustra, I. (2007). Multiple organizational identification levels and the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 173–190.
- Bartoll, X., Cortès, I. and Artazcoz, L. (2014). Full-and part-time work: gender and welfare-type differences in European working conditions, job satisfaction, health status, and psychosocial issues. *Scandinavian journal of work, environment & health*, 40, 370–379.
- Bittner, E. (1974). Florence nightingale in pursuit of Willie Sutton: A theory of the police, in H. Jacob (Ed.), *The Potential for Reform of Criminal Justice*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: John Wiley.
- Bolino, M. C. and Turnley, W. H. (2005). The personal costs of citizenship behavior: The relationship between individual initiative and role overload, job stress, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 740–748.
- Bosold, C., Ohlemacher, T., Kirchberg, W. and Lauterbach, O. (2002). *Polizei im Wandel: Das Erhebungsinstrument der standardisierten Befragung der Vollzugsbeamtinnen und -beamten der niedersächsischen Polizei 2001* [Policing in change: the assessment instrument of a survey among police officers in Lower Saxony in 2001] (Forschungsbericht Nr. 86). Hannover, Germany: Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut e.V.
- Bowling, N. A. and Hammond, G. D. (2008). A meta-analytic examination of the construct validity of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73, 63–77.
- Brough, P., Chataway, S. and Biggs, A. (2016). 'You don't want people knowing you're a copper!' A contemporary assessment of police organisational culture. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 18, 28–36.
- Casey, L. (2023). *Final report: An independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service*. Baroness Casey Review, March, <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023a.pdf>.
- Charman, S. (2017). *Police socialisation, identity and culture: Becoming blue*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Charman, S. (2024). Not just a numbers game: assessing the journey of women in policing from representation to inclusion. *Political Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13421>.
- Charman, S. and Bennett, S. (2022). Voluntary resignations from the police service: the impact of organisational and occupations stressors on organisational commitment. *Policing and Society*, 32, 159–178.
- Charman, S. and Tyson, J. (2023). Over and out: the conflicting identities of officers voluntarily resigning from the police service. *Policing and Society*, 33, 767–783.
- Charman, S. and Tyson, J. (2024). 'In the "too difficult" box?' Organizational inflexibility as a driver of voluntary resignations of police officers in England and Wales. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paad104>.
- Coomber, B. and Barriball, (2007). Impact Of job satisfaction components on intent to leave and turnover for hospital-based nurses: A review of the research literature. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44, 297–314
- Cordner, G. (2017). Police culture: individual and organizational differences in police officer perspectives. *Policing*, 40, 11–25.
- Cox, C. and Kirby, S. (2018). Can higher education reduce the negative consequences of police occupational culture amongst new probationers? *Policing*, 41, 550–562.
- DeHart-Davis, L. and Pandey, S. K. (2005). Red tape and public employees: Does perceived rule dysfunction alienate managers? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 15, 133–148.
- Demou, E., Hale, H. and Hunt, K. (2020). Understanding the mental health and wellbeing needs of police officers and staff in Scotland. *Police Practice and Research*, 21, 702–716.

- De Vos, A., Buyens, D. and Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 537–559.
- Elntib, S. and Milincic, D. (2021). Motivations for becoming a police officer: A global snapshot. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 36, 211–219.
- Engelmann, L. (2023). *A critical exploration of the role, value and culture of police learning in Scotland*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Napier University.
- Falconer, M., Alexander, D. A. and Klein, S. (2013). *Resilience and well-being in a Scottish police force*. SIPR report, November. The Scottish Institute for Policing Research.
- Fyfe, N. R., Anderson, S., Bland, N., Goulding, A., Mitchell, J. and Reid, S. (2018). Experiencing organizational change during an era of reform: Police Scotland, narratives of localism, and perceptions from the 'frontline'. *Policing*, 15, 263–276.
- Gau, J. M. and Paoline III, E. A. (2017). Officer race, role orientations, and cynicism toward citizens. *Justice Quarterly*, 34, 1246–1271.
- Grant, A. M. (2008). Designing jobs to do good: Dimensions and psychological consequences of prosocial job characteristics. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3, 19–39.
- Grant, K., Egdell, V. and Vincent, D. (2021). Young people's expectations of work and workplace readiness: Two sides of the same coin? <https://www.napier.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/research-search/outputs/young-peoples-expectations-of-work-and-the-readiness-of-the-workplace-for-young-people>.
- Haarr, R. N. (2005). Factors affecting the decision of police probationers to "drop out" of police work. *Police Quarterly*, 8, 431–453.
- Heneman III, H. G. and Schwab, D. P. (1985). Pay satisfaction: Its multidimensional nature and measurement. *International Journal of Psychology*, 20, 129–141.
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (2023). *HMICS Thematic Inspection of Organisational Culture in Polie Scotland*. December, [https://www.hmics.scot/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS20231207PUB\\_0.pdf](https://www.hmics.scot/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS20231207PUB_0.pdf).
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (2024). *HMICS Frontline Focus – Wellbeing*. April, [HMICS20240411PUB.pdf](https://www.hmics.scot/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS20240411PUB.pdf).
- Hoel, L. and Dillern, T. (2022). Becoming a member of the police. Workplace expectations of police students during in-field training. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 44, 173–188.
- Hughes, E. C. (1958). *Men and their work*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Lee, D. J., Yu, G. B., Sirgy, M. J., Singhapakdi, A. and Lucianetti, L. (2018). The effects of explicit and implicit ethics institutionalization on employee life satisfaction and happiness: The mediating effects of employee experiences in work life and moderating effects of work–family life conflict. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147, 855–874.
- MacLeod, D. and Clarke, N. (2009). *Engaging for success: Enhancing performance through engagement*. London: Department of Business Innovation and Skills.
- Mael, F. and Ashforth, . E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 103–123.
- Mobley, W. H, Horner, S. O. and Hollingsworth, A. T. (1978). An evaluation of precursors of hospital employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63, 408–414.
- Moon, M. M. and Jonson, C. L. (2012). The influence of occupational strain on organizational commitment among police: A general strain theory approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40, 249–258.
- Morrison, E. W. and Robinson, S. L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops. *Academy of Management Review*, 22, 226–256.
- Pandey, S. K., and Scott, P. G. (2002). Red tape: A review and assessment of concepts and measures. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 12, 553–80.
- Paoline III, E. A. and Gau, J. M. (2020). An empirical assessment of the sources of police job satisfaction. *Police Quarterly*, 23, 55–8.
- Paoline III, E. A. and Gau, J. M. (2018). Police occupational culture: Testing the monolithic model. *Justice Quarterly*, 35, 670–698.
- Percival, R. (2022). Scots police officers REVEAL why they quit the national force in damning survey. December, *Scottish Daily Express*. <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/scots-police-officers-reveal-quit-28669170>.
- Police Scotland (2023a). *Chief Constable statement on institutional discrimination*. May, [Police Scotland Chief Constable Sir Iain Livingstone addresses institutional discrimination. - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/police-scotland-officer-numbers/).
- Police Scotland (2023b). *Police Scotland Annual Police Plan 2023/24*. <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2023/april/new-annual-police-plan-2023-24/>.
- Police Scotland (2024). *Officers & Staff Quarterly Fact Sheets, Quarter 1 – 31/03/2024*. <https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/police-scotland-officer-numbers/>.



- Purba, A. and Demou, E. (2019). The relationship between organisational stressors and mental wellbeing within police officers: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 19, 1286.
- Quinn, R. P. and Shepard, L. G. (1974). *The 1972-1973 Quality of Employment Survey*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Institute of Social Research.
- Räikkönen, O., Perälä, M. L. and Kahanpää, A. (2007). Staffing adequacy, supervisory support and quality of care in long-term care settings: staff perceptions. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60, 615-626.
- Reio, T. G., Rocco, T. S., Smith, D. H. and Chang, E. (2017). A Critique of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 29, 35-53.
- Resick, C. J., Baltes, B. B. and Shantz, C. W. (2007). Person-organization fit and work-related attitudes and decisions: Examining interactive effects with job fit and conscientiousness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1446-1455.
- Robinson, S. L. and Morrison, E. W. (2000). The development of psychological contract breach and violation: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21, 526-546.
- Rousseau, D. M. (2001). Schema, promise and mutuality: The building blocks of the psychological contract. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74, 511-541.
- Rudolph, C. W., Rauvola, R. S., Costanza, D. P. and Zacher, H. (2021). Generations and generational differences: Debunking myths in organizational science and practice and paving new paths forward. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 36, 945-967.
- Schaufeli, W., Bakker, A. B. and Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire. A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66, 701-716.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-romá, V. and Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3, 71-92.
- Schein, E. H. (1999). *The corporate culture survival guide. Sense and nonsense about culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schroth, H. (2019). Are you ready for gen Z in the workplace? *California Management Review*, 61, 5-18.
- Scottish Police Authority (2024). *Recruitment and protected characteristic impact report*. 28 February, <https://www.spa.police.uk/publication-library/recruitment-and-protected-characteristic-impact-report-28-february-2024/>.
- Shim, H. S., Jo, Y. and Hoover, L. T. (2015). A test of General Strain Theory on police officers' turnover intention. *Asian Criminology*, 10, 43-62.
- Skelton, A. R., Nattress, D. and Dwyer, R. J. (2020). Predicting manufacturing employee turnover intentions. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science*, 25, 101-117.
- Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. T. H. and Van Riel, C. B. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 1051-1062.
- Thompson, C. L., Beauvais, L. L. and Lyness, K. S. (1999). When work-family benefits are not enough: The influence of work-family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 392-415.
- Tyson, J. and Charman, S. (2023). Leaving the table: Organisational (in)justice and relationship with police officer retention. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 1-7.
- Watkinson-Miley, C., Cox, C. and Deshpande, M. (2021). A new generation of police officers: Experiences of student officers undertaking the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship in one UK police force. *Policing*, 16, 122-134.
- Wieslander, M. (2019). Learning the (hidden) silence policy within the police. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 41, 308-325.
- Williams, E. and Sondhi, A. (2022). A narrative review of the literature on the recruitment of younger police officers in age and in service: What are the implications for the police in England and Wales? *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 16, 648-662.
- Wright, B. E., Pandey, S. K. and Moynihan, D. P. (2012). Pulling the levers: Transformational leadership, public service motivation, and mission valence. *Public Administration Review*, 72, 206-215.
- Yun, Hwang, E. and Lynch, J. (2015). Police stressors: Job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intention among South Korean police officers. *Asian Criminology*, 10, 23-41.
- Zeytinoglu, I. U., Denton, M., Davies, S., Baumann, A., Blythe, J. and Boos, L. (2007). Deteriorated external work environment, heavy workload and nurses' job satisfaction and turnover intention. *Canadian Public Policy*, University of Toronto Press (January), 33(s1), 31-48.
- Zhu, J., Tatachari, S. and Chattopadhyay, P. (2017). Newcomer identification: Trends, antecedents, moderators, and consequences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60, 855-879.

# 9. Appendix

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Probationer question set

1. Why did you want to become a police officer? What attracted you to the job? When did you first think seriously about joining Police Scotland?
2. What did you know about being a police officer and about Police Scotland before you considered working there?
3. When thinking about Police Scotland as an employer, what thoughts/ characteristics/ adjectives come to mind?
4. Can you tell me a bit – generally – about your hopes and expectations of being a police officer? How do you think these expectations were formed?
5. Do you have any fears or concerns?
6. Focusing on your specific expectations, can you tell me what you expect from:
  - a. Police culture and work environment
  - b. Management and leadership
  - c. Training and career progression
  - d. Wellbeing and work-life balance
7. Once you complete your initial training and move into the role of constable, what support do you hope to get from more experienced colleagues?
8. Once you become a constable, to what extent do you believe that your pay and benefits recompense you for the nature of the role? Do you think this would influence your future career intentions?
9. Do you consider this a job for life? If not, how long do you think you might be a police officer before doing something else? What are your career intentions?

### Established officer question set

1. Thinking back to before you joined, why did you want to become a police officer? What attracted you to the job?
2. What did you know about being a police officer and the police service before you considered joining?
3. Thinking about Police Scotland as an employer, what characteristics/adjectives come to mind?
4. Thinking back to when you joined, can you tell me a bit – generally – about what your hopes and expectations were of being a police officer? Were there any fears or concerns?
5. In the first year after you joined, how would you describe your experiences in terms of the realities of the job, and how did this match with your initial expectations you described before?
6. Following that initial period, how did your perceptions of the realities of the job and the match with expectations develop over time? If there was a change in perceptions/met expectations, when did that occur?
7. Focusing on your specific expectations, can you tell me about the extent to which these have been/are being met both initially and how it developed later until today:
  - a. Police culture and work environment
  - b. Management and leadership
  - c. Training and career progression
  - d. Wellbeing and work-life balance
8. To what extent do you believe that your pay and benefits recompense you for the nature of the role? Do you think this would influence your future career intentions?
9. Do you consider this a job for life? If not, how long do you think you might be a police officer before doing something else? What are your career intentions?
10. What advice would you give to a family member who was thinking about becoming a police officer?





**POLICE**