

The Beat Goes On

Study exploring the quality of life, wellbeing and mental health of former police officers in the UK.

Key details

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Police region	Yorkshire
Level of research	Professional/work based
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Date due for completion	October 2035

Research context

The nature of police work places individuals in challenging and stressful situations that can have lasting impacts on mental wellbeing and post-service adjustment (Garbarino and others, 2013). While a few survey studies have examined mental wellbeing among active police officers, these have been exclusively cross-sectional in design (for example, Faria and others, 2024) leaving a gap in understanding the long-term trajectories of wellbeing after leaving the force. This research will follow participants over time, capturing their experiences as they transition out of policing and adjust to life beyond the profession.

Research methodology

This study employs a survey design using validated questionnaires to collect quantitative data from former police officers and those planning to retire within the next 12 months. The survey captures demographic and service-related background, and includes the following questionnaires:

- mental wellbeing (short Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale)
- quality of life (EUROHIS-QOL 8-item index)
- depression, anxiety, and stress (DASS-21)
- sleep disturbance (PROMIS Sleep Disturbance Short Form 4a)
- post-traumatic stress symptoms (PCL-5-S)
- resilience (brief resilience scale)
- perceived organisational support (adapted POS scale)
- retirement adjustment (retirement adjustment scale, for retired participants only)

Additional items explore physical health, fatigue, lifestyle factors and the impact of policing on various life domains. The survey also includes open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights and participant suggestions for future support.

Research participation

This is a general population survey targeting current and former members of the UK police workforce. We aim to recruit a minimum of 1,000 participants in Wave 1 to ensure sufficient statistical power and subgroup representation.

Inclusion criteria

- Aged 18 years or older
- Currently residing in the United Kingdom

Either:

- Retired from UK police service
- Former UK police officer who left the force prior to retirement
- Planning to retire from UK police service within the next 12 months

Exclusion criteria

- Are under 18 years of age
- Have never served in a UK police force
- Are currently serving with no intention to retire within the next 12 months

Participants will be identified and contacted through the HR or Media department of individual forces (www.police.uk/pu/find-a-police-force), the National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO, England and Wales), Retired Police Officers' Association Scotland (RPOAS), Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Association (RUC GC Association) and Police Federation for Northern Ireland (PFNI, Northern Ireland), and relevant forums (for example, Reddit r/policeuk).

References

Faria PA and others. 2024. 'Predictive role of physical activity and health-related quality of life in police officers' work assessment'. European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education, 14(2), pp 299–310.

Garbarino S and others. 2013. 'Association of work-related stress with mental health problems in a special police force unit'. BMJ Open, 3(7), e002791.