



Institute for
**Public Safety
Crime and Justice**

Exploring views of Police Support Volunteers in England and Wales

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September 2021

About the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice

Established in 2014, the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) at the University of Northampton delivers high quality research and evaluation, insight, and innovation in the fields of public safety, crime and justice. The IPSCJ is situated at the interface between practice, policy, and academia, adopting an evidence-based approach to enhance public service delivery models, organisational strategy, and outcomes for service users. The IPSCJ collaborates with partner organisations at local, regional, national, and international scales to address key global challenges of the 21st century. The core mission of the IPSCJ is to support positive evidence-based policy and practice change for the benefit of society.

The IPSCJ has five research and evaluation portfolios:

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- Evaluating Community Sentence Treatment Requirements in England, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement and local CSTR Programme Boards
- Assessing the Effectiveness of Mental Health Street Triage in the East Midlands, funded by Northamptonshire Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

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- National programme of research in partnership with the NPCC portfolio for Citizens in Policing, funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund

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- Organisational development programme with the East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit (EMSOU), funded by EMSOU
- Place-based leadership development in Kenya and Uganda, funded by the Danish Institute Against Torture
- Workforce engagement in Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police, funded by Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police

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- Understanding serious violence in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, funded by Nottinghamshire Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
- Evaluation of Women's Health Services for Perinatal Female Offenders in HMP Peterborough, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of national findings from 1,305 responses to a survey undertaken across England and Wales of Police Support Volunteers. This is the largest response ever to a survey of PSVs, representing a response rate of 17% nationally. Response levels were variable across forces, but with responses by at least some PSVs from 39 forces.

The results from the survey of PSVs are predominantly positive. This reflects similarly positive patterns of response in previous surveys in 2016 and in 2018. There are some improvements in response to the 2021 survey compared to 2018, reflected in the key statistics summary on the next page of this report, and which reflect some enduring strengths for the PSV programmes across forces. A third of PSVs say that their experience as a volunteer has been a lot better than they expected when joining. A large majority of PSVs feel they are adding value, describe their morale as high, say they intend to stay, feel valued, feel part of a team with good relationships with others in policing, and feel well recruited, trained, supported, and equipped.

The results of the surveys highlight the large impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had for PSVs, with a third of respondents having not volunteered in the past year. For those who had volunteered during this time, the amount of time volunteered was lower for over half of the sample, and around a third undertook different tasks compared with those normally completed before the pandemic. Just under a third of those who had continued to volunteer during the pandemic had stopped volunteering for at least a short period of time. It is clear the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted and reduced the volunteering of PSVs. The challenges will be to effectively re-engage, whilst also learning from some of the good practice reflected in the survey responses in terms of models of communication with volunteers.

In terms of considerations for further improvement for PSV programmes based on the findings, two broad areas emerge across the survey responses, which are consistent with the findings from the surveys undertaken with PSVs back in 2016 and in 2018:

- A desire by some PSVs to be better engaged and utilised, including seeing improved utilisation of existing skills, requests for more opportunities for further training and skill development, and wanting to see a greater range of roles for PSVs.
- Improvements in communication and culture. PSVs need to be better understood, integrated, and have an improved sense of belonging and of being valued.

Key Statistics

Sample



1,305 PSVs Completed Survey, representing estimated 17% of PSV population

23% declared a disability

Volunteered less than 10 hours:
2018: 42%
2021: 56%

Covid-19 Pandemic

Satisfaction with communication during pandemic:

- Those who stopped volunteering – 76%
- Those who continued volunteering – 82%



c. 1 in 3 did different tasks during pandemic

Recruitment and Training

Recruitment was positive < 2 years service:



2018: 35%
2021: 41%

Sufficient ongoing training to remain effective:

2018: 66%
2021: 80%



Management

Disagree that force maximises use of time:

2018: 22%
2021: 16%



c. 1 in 5 felt more a burden than a help

Outcomes



Describe morale a good:

2018: 94%
2021: 94%

95% feel volunteering has positive impact on their wellbeing



93% feel they are making a difference



89% feel they are valued

Retention



See themselves volunteering for the police in the long-term:

2018: 60%
2021: 66%

Planning to leave in the next 6 months:

2018: 9%
2021: 6%



Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	6
2. Survey Sample	7
3. Volunteering during the Pandemic	10
3.1 Results for participants who have not volunteered in the last year	11
3.2 Results for participants who have volunteered in the last year	14
3.3 Key Points and Implications	16
4. Recruitment and Training	18
4.1 Recruitment	18
4.2 Equipment and Support	18
4.3 Training	19
4.4 Key Points and Implications	19
5. Management, Treatment and Relationships	20
5.1 Management of volunteers	20
5.2 Treatment	22
5.3 Relationships and belongings	24
5.4 Key Points and Implications	24
6. Outcomes and Positive Impact	25
6.1 Outcomes and positive impact	25
6.2 Key Points and Implications	27
7. Retention and Improvements	28
7.1 Retention	28
7.2 Improvements	29
7.3 Key Findings and Implications	31
8. Variations in experience across groups	32
8.1 Introduction	32
8.2 Differences between groups	32
8.3 Volunteered in the last year or have not	37
8.4 Hours volunteered	37
8.5 Length of service	38
8.6 Differences in morale by agreement with statements relating to volunteer experience	39
8.7 Key Points and Implications	40
9. Conclusions	42

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of national findings from a survey undertaken across England and Wales of Police Support Volunteers. The survey was distributed in the early summer of 2021, via every police force in England and Wales. There were 1,305 responses to the survey from PSVs, reflecting a response rate of 17%. This survey is the third of its kind, following on from national surveys of PSVs undertaken in 2016 and 2018. The response this time was slightly higher than in previous years.

The survey covered a range of questions about the experience of being a Police Support Volunteer, including:

- Exploring the experience of volunteering during the pandemic.
- The demographics, length of service, and future intentions of PSVs.
- Experience of recruitment and training.
- Experience of their support, management, and treatment as volunteers.
- Relationships between the PSVs and others in policing.
- Outcomes, impact, and potential improvements for the future.

Many of the questions were the same or very similar to previous surveys, allowing comparison between the three rounds of national surveying.

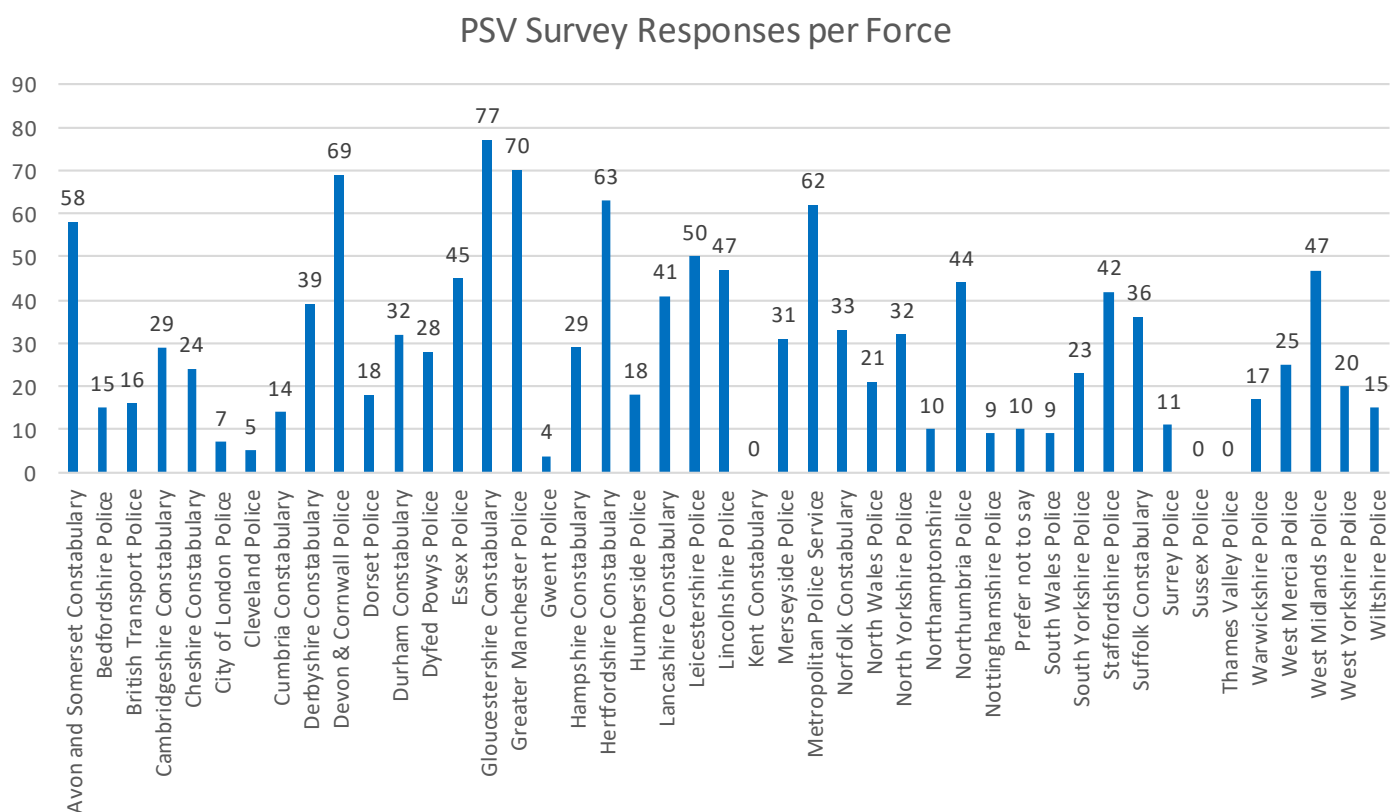
This report provides findings from the survey, at a national level, as well as some key observations and conclusions drawing from the results of the survey analysis. The next chapter of the report explores the survey respondents, and then subsequent chapters focus in on different aspects of the experiences and perspectives of PSVs.

2. Survey Sample

This chapter provides an overview of the survey sample, drawing comparison to the National Benchmarking Report 2021 as appropriate.

In total, 1,305 Police Support Volunteers (PSVs) completed the survey, which represents a 17% response rate against benchmarking data (Britton *et al.*, 2021) where it is detailed that there are approximately 7,632 PSVs nationwide. This section provides an overview of the survey sample in terms of who took part and how that compares to the population of PSVs. This report will demonstrate how perceptions of experience differ between demographics, highlighting the importance of the representativeness of the sample. Figure 2.1 shows how many PSVs from each force completed the survey.

Figure 2.1: Forces in which Participants Volunteered



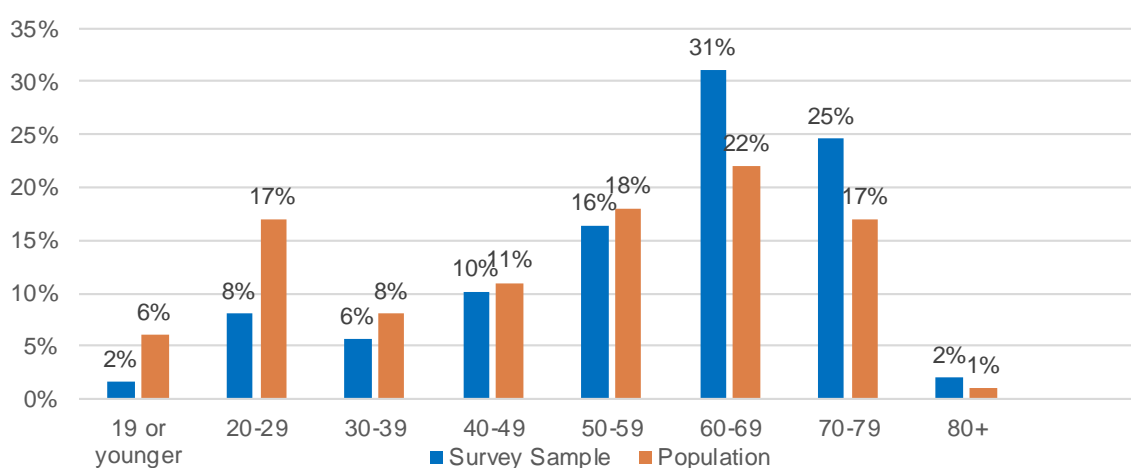
There are more males in the sample (56%) compared to females (44%). In addition, 4 (0.3%) participants preferred to self-describe (3 stating 'non-binary' and 1 stating 'binary'). As such, the sample comprises slightly more male PSVs compared to benchmarking data, where there are 52% males compared to 48% females.

About 5% of the sample is from an ethnic minority background, comprised of 2.3% Asian or Asian British; 1.2% from an 'other' background, 1% from a black or black British background and 0.7% mixed or of a multiple ethnic background. The extent to which this is representative of the volunteering population is unknown as many forces do not routinely collate this information and as such benchmarking data were too incomplete to provide a meaningful comparator. The ethnic minority make-up of the sample does not reflect the overall population in England and Wales, where approximately 14% of the population are from an ethnic minority

background. Therefore, it is clear that those from minority ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented in the sample, but the extent to which they are under-represented in the PSV population as a whole is unknown.

The figure below shows the age range of the sample as compared to the actual population of PSVs according to benchmarking data. It illustrates that whilst nearly half of PSVs are aged over 60 years, the sample is over-representative of this group at 59%. Whilst PSVs are generally characterised as older, it should be noted that 1 in 5 PSVs are aged 18-29 years but are slightly underrepresented in the survey sample.

Figure 2.2: Age range of survey sample compared to actual population



Two-thirds (66%) of PSVs stated that they are 'Christian' and 29% indicated that they are of 'No religion'. As with ethnicity, those from minority religions were too small in number to allow for reliable analysis of differences in experience and were therefore combined as 'Other religions', constituting 4% of the sample. There were no benchmarking data to provide an understanding of the representation of different religions in the sample as compared to the actual population. According to the 2011 Census data, 59% of the population are Christian, 25% are of no religion and 9% are from an 'other' religion, with the most dominant minority religion being Muslim, constituting 4%. Therefore, the sample is relatively proportional to the actual population. Although minority religions are underrepresented in the sample, the extent to which this results from the sample or the actual PSV population is unknown.

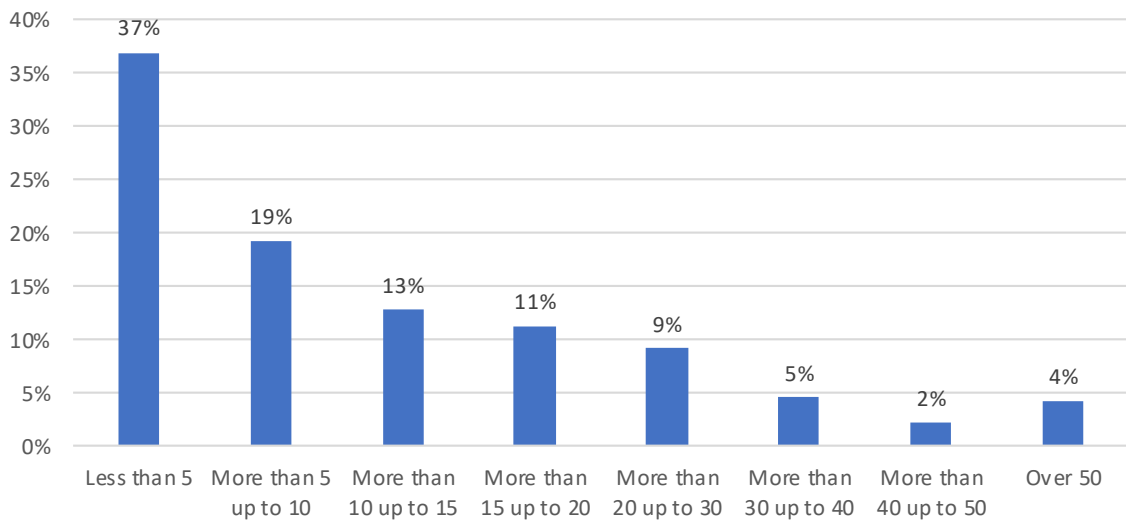
23% (277) of volunteers considered themselves to have a disability and there are no benchmarking data to compare with the PSV population. In the 2011 census, 18% of the population considered themselves to have a disability that limits them a little or a lot, suggesting that the sample comprises slightly more individuals with a disability compared with the population in England and Wales.

In total, 94% (1,149) of the sample described themselves as heterosexual or straight and 5% (67) described their sexual identity as 'gay' or 'bisexual' and 0.3% (4) classified themselves as having another sexual orientation. There are no reliable figures available to compare to the PSV population.

When comparing the length of time PSVs had volunteered in the sample to benchmarking data, the sample broadly follows a similar distribution pattern. As might be expected, given the age profile described above, those newer in service (<5 years) are slightly under-represented and those older in service are over-represented (5 years and over).

Figure 2.3 shows the breakdown of hours volunteers think that they have worked on average in recent months. Over a third (37%) said that they had worked less than 5 hours. Compared to 2018, 56% indicated that they had worked up to 10 hours a month which compares to 42% in 2018, 24% indicated that they volunteer up to between 10 and 20 hours compared to 32%. In 2018 and 20% said they volunteered more than 20 hours which compares to 26% in 2018.

Figure 2.3: Reported hours volunteers in recent months



3. Volunteering during the Pandemic

Participants were asked in the survey whether they had volunteered in the last year. There were 846 participants who said that they had volunteered in the last year, which equates to two thirds (66%)¹, this chapter presents the findings.

Participants were asked how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted their experience of being a police volunteer and the findings are presented in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1 Qualitative Analysis: How has Covid-19 impacted your experience of being a police volunteer over the past year? (please note both positive and negative impacts)

COVID-19 had a range of different impacts on the experiences of PSVs over the past year, responses most frequently related to:

- **Volunteering suspended** – The most common (48% of respondents) way in which coronavirus impacted on PSVs was that it caused many of their volunteering roles to become suspended. Some volunteers were frustrated that their role had been suspended, and felt it could have continued if adaptations were put in place.
 - *COVID has made it impossible to carry out my role as it relies on face to face contact*
 - *As victim support, although not ideal, can be successful by telephone it is hard to understand why volunteering under Victim Support has been suspended*
- **Desire to support** – 17 % of PSVs who specified how COVID-19 had impacted on their volunteering experiences highlighted how they had wanted to continue volunteering throughout the pandemic. Some volunteers wanted more opportunities than usual to help their paid colleagues with the extra work caused by the pandemic.
 - *Disappointed I couldn't volunteer and help aid the force's efforts and would have been nice to have something to do*
- **Social impact** – Some volunteers (9%) felt COVID had impacted on the social interaction they got from volunteering, many missed their colleagues and the teamwork.
 - *Missed the office banter and comradeship. Only went into the office one day a week but miss the socialising*
 - *The negative side (was) not being part of a team or making new relationships, not feeling useful or a part of the local community*
- **Poor communication** – 8.8% of PSVs who answered this question had experienced poor communication from their force during the pandemic and this was a way COVID had impacted on their volunteering experiences. Some volunteers received little in terms of general updates and some were unsure as to when they would begin volunteering again, if at all.
 - *Haven't been offered any opportunity despite wanting to. Haven't had any direct contact except for the general notices. Don't know if I'm a volunteer anymore*

¹ 444 said that they had not volunteered and 15 did not respond to the question.

3.1 Results for participants who have not volunteered in the last year

For those who had not volunteered in the last year, in response to the question 'did your Force suspend its volunteer programme at any point in Covid-19?', 311 (70%) volunteers said yes, 37 (8%) said no and 96 (22%) said that they did not know.

Box 3.2 Qualitative Analysis: Did your Force suspend its volunteer programme at any point during Covid-19? Did you have any communication or support from the force during this time?

Of the PSVs who had their volunteering programme suspended at some point during COVID, 81% had some communication from their force, whilst 11 % said they had no communication.

When PSVs specified a mode of communication, it was primarily via:

- **Email** – 55% of PSVs said their force had communicated through email during their volunteering programme's suspension.
 - *I had some emails telling us what was happening regarding COVID-19*
- **Phone** – 16% stated their force had used phone calls and texts to communicate
 - *A phone call during the first lockdown, and a follow up call sometime in the summer*
- **Video/Online meetings** – Skype, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams were all used to host video meetings and online training sessions for 15% of the sample
 - *There were several online meetings and a quiz. These were on Zoom or Microsoft (Teams)*

Other methods of communication included DutySheet (4%), social media (2%), newsletters (6%), and letters (2%). The rest did not specify what communication method was used.

In response to the question 'did you make the decision to stop volunteering in the pandemic at any point (e.g. due to shielding or concerns about safety)?', 42% (186) said yes.

Box 3.3 Qualitative Analysis: Did you make the decision to stop volunteering in the pandemic at any point (e.g. due to shielding or concerns about safety)? Please give the reason, if you are happy to.

When PSVs decided to stop volunteering during the pandemic, the most frequent reasons given for this related to:

- **Shielding** – Many stopped volunteering due to staying home and 'shielding' themselves or a loved one during the pandemic.
 - *I am in the extremely vulnerable group for COVID so have been self-isolating*
- **Safety concerns** – PSVs often stopped volunteering because of concerns regarding how safe they and others were from coronavirus when carrying out their role. Some individuals felt their role carried too great a risk of catching the virus and so decided to suspend their volunteering. Other PSVs felt other volunteers or staff members were not fully adhering to guidance surrounding reducing the transmission of the virus.
 - *I have not participated in other activities as (it) would require unnecessary travel on public transport during restrictions*

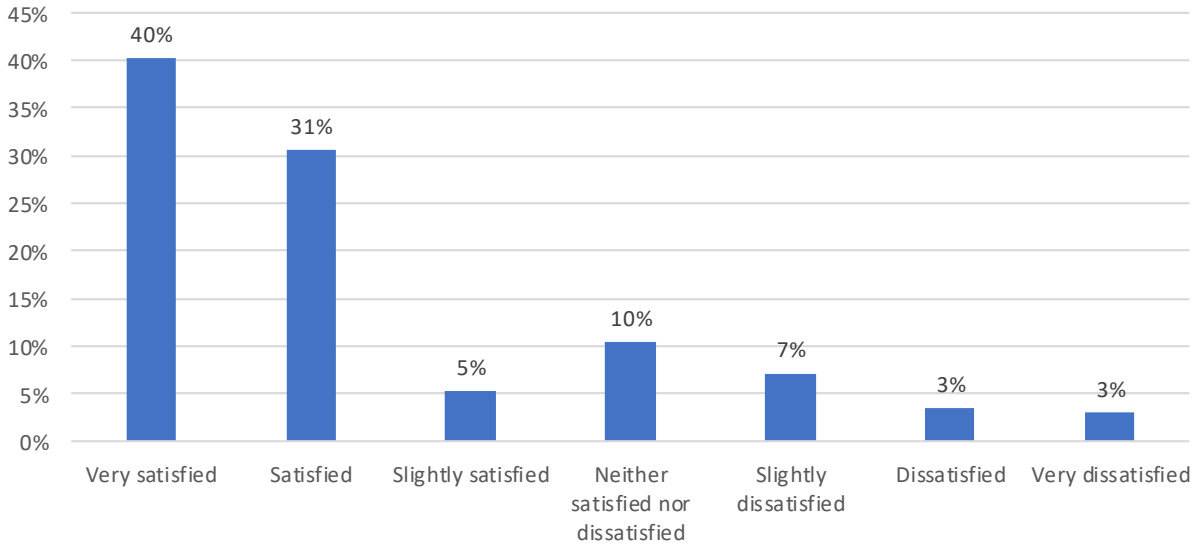
- *I had concerns that police officers were unvaccinated and also unable to socially distance due to the nature of their job so did not want contact with them in an indoor office environment*
- **Force rules** – Despite many wanting to continue volunteering, some forces suspended volunteering or did not allow volunteers into the police stations, which meant many PSVs could not fulfil their roles.
 - *The Bikesafe was / and still is suspended so not able to assist with the Motorcycle training*
 - *As I process traffic speeding data I needed access to the police station. Local rules by [Name of Force] prevented access*

The majority of those who had not volunteered in the last year said that they intended to return to volunteering (88%, 385), 11% (50) said that they did not know and only 4 (1%) said that they wouldn't. The reasons for not returning were:

- I am well over 80 and due to health issues is prudent and time to sit back and enjoy the remainder of my life*
- I have started working for HMPPS and now have a much more demanding job role working in a different city, so would find it difficult to fit volunteering in around this*
- There seems little scope for useful activity*
- It's been too long so decided not to start over again.*

When asked 'how satisfied are you with how your Force has communicated with you through the pandemic?' 76% were satisfied, with 40% being very satisfied, however 13% were dissatisfied.

Figure 3.1 Satisfaction with communication during the pandemic for those that had not volunteered in the last year.



Box 3.4 Qualitative Analysis: As a volunteer, how satisfied are you with how your Force has communicated with you through the pandemic? Please give a reason for your answer.

When asked how satisfied they were with how their force had communicated with them throughout the pandemic, 74% of participants felt satisfied with the communication (52% of these individuals felt very satisfied) and only 13% felt dissatisfied (with 20% of these individuals feeling very dissatisfied).

For PSVs who felt dissatisfied with the way their force had communicated with them throughout the pandemic, most often volunteers spoke about:

- **Little communication** – There was little communication from the force to PSVs who were dissatisfied with the communication level. Volunteers reported that they had been ignored when reaching out to the force with a query, and some wanted updates regarding when their volunteering role would resume if it had been suspended.
 - *I have been a volunteer in excess of 10 years. A request for re-vetting was made in January 2020, before the pandemic was appreciated, and no acknowledgement or response was forthcoming despite follow up requests. I feel that I have been totally ignored*
 - *They did not communicate at all through the pandemic*
- **Lack of care** – Some volunteers felt they had been treated with a lack of care by their force, often typified by the PSV then feeling as if they were not part of the 'policing team'.
 - *Feel I'm only on the receiving end of general communication not part of a local team (I'm just an email address)*
 - *Would have felt more valued as a volunteer had there been at least monthly updates*

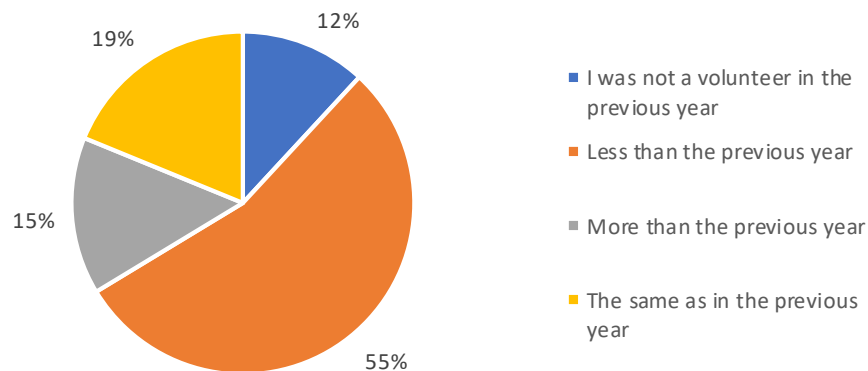
Those who were satisfied with the force's communication throughout the pandemic commented upon:

- **Receiving updates** – The majority of PSVs (67%) who felt satisfied with force communication levels attributed this to receiving regular communication updates. These updates could be general, discussing what had been happening in the 'world of volunteering' or more specific, such as informing PSVs when they could hope to resume their role again.
 - *I have been kept informed throughout the year, and received emails regularly to check on my well-being*
 - *Kept fully up to date with procedures and the COVID risk policy plus information relating to my personal role*
- **Feeling part of a team** – 9% of volunteers felt they were still made to feel part of a team through the way the force communicated with them.
 - *Lots of contact, virtual events and plenty of support. Still made to feel like part of the police family*
 - *They remained in contact and offered opportunities to catch up with the team through video chats and emails*

3.2 Results for participants who have volunteered in the last year

Figure 3.2 shows that of those that had volunteered in the past year, 55% said that they had volunteered less than in the previous year.

Figure 3.2: ‘In the past year have you volunteered more or less or the same amount as you did in the previous year?’



60% (497) of volunteers said that they had been doing the same volunteer tasks/ roles during the pandemic, 29% (242) said that they had been doing different tasks during the pandemic and 12% (97) said that they did not volunteer prior to the pandemic.

Box 3.5 Qualitative Analysis: Has the volunteering that you have done this year been on different tasks than prior to Covid-19? Why have you been doing different tasks and what have those tasks been?

For PSVs who had been doing different tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic, most commented on:

- **Alternative roles** – The most common reason for doing a different task during the pandemic was that they had found an alternative role volunteering. Alternative volunteering roles included helping at COVID test sites and vaccination hubs, distributing Personal Protective Equipment to police forces, and assisting in different police roles.
 - *Supporting the delivery of Domestic Violence Leaflets and helping out where required*
 - *Additional demands during COVID. New tasks included PPE distribution across the force area, working in force clothing stores, picking and packing uniforms and equipment for officers and staff. In addition to normal driving duties moving/delivering police vehicles.*
- **Remote working** – Many PSVs had been completing different tasks due to working remotely to protect from COVID. Often these tasks were within the remit of their original role but were adapted to function via telephone or video meetings for the volunteering to continue.
 - *Meetings on Microsoft teams instead of in person. Telephone victim support*
 - *I have been on lockdown so unable to do normal tasks. I have joined the Cadet Leaders and have been attending MS Teams meetings every week.*

I have also attended several Zoom presentations re Cybercrime, phishing, fraud etc.

- **Volunteering suspended** – A large amount of PSVs had been doing different tasks during the pandemic because their original volunteering task had been suspended.
 - *Fleetcare functions have been put on hold since the pandemic. Different tasks have been food and PPE deliveries... and assisting rollout of new mobile devices to the Constabulary*
 - *I have been doing volunteer work in crown court as an usher. The work we normally do is relatable to nightlife which has been predominantly closed for the year*

In response to the question 'did your Force suspend its volunteer programme at any point in Covid-19?', 520 (62%) volunteers said yes, 215 (25%) said no and 111 (13%) said that they did not know.

Box 3.6 Qualitative Analysis: Did your Force suspend its volunteer programme at any point during Covid? Did you have any communication with the Force during this time?

Of the PSVs that had their volunteering programme suspended at some point during COVID, 84.62% had some communication from their force, whilst 6.73% said they had no communication.

When PSVs specified a mode of communication, it was primarily via:

- **Email** – 49% of PSVs said their force had communicated through email during their volunteering programme's suspension.
- **Phone** – 10% stated their force had used phone calls and texts to communicate
 - *Yes, phone calls with my line manager and emails from various people.*
- **Video meetings** – Skype, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams were all used to host video meetings and online training sessions for 20% of the sample
 - *There were Teams meetings, presentations and meetings that were optional to attend.*

Other methods of communication included DutySheet (9%), social media (6%), newsletters (5%), and letters (1%).

(Communication was) only via DutySheet and following on Twitter

In response to the question 'did you make the decision to stop volunteering in the pandemic at any point (e.g. due to shielding or concerns about safety)?' 28% (240) said yes.

Box 3.7 Qualitative Analysis: Did you make the decision to stop volunteering in the pandemic at any point (e.g. due to shielding or concerns about safety)? Please give a reason for your answer.

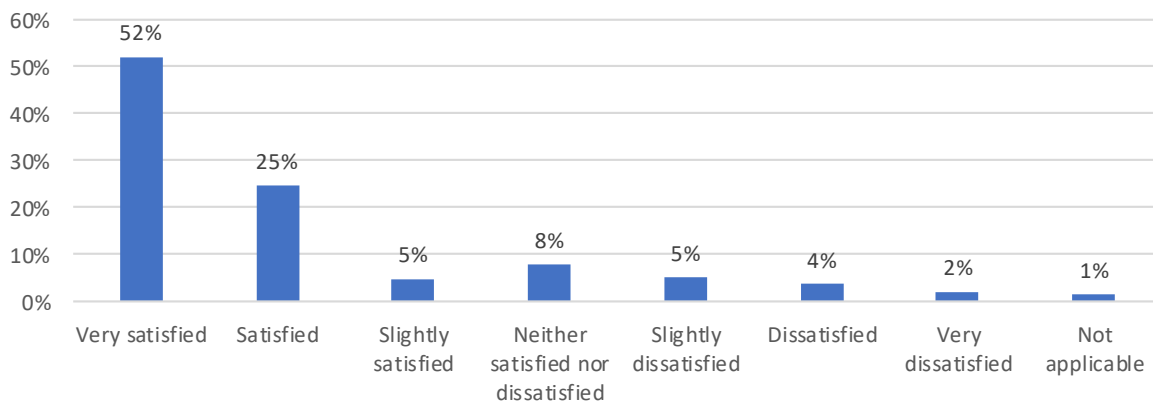
Of the respondents to the question regarding whether PSVs had decided to stop volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic, 72% had not stopped volunteering and 28% had.

When PSVs had decided to stop volunteering during the pandemic, the most common reasons were due to:

- **Safety concerns** – Many volunteers expressed a variety of safety concerns which deterred them from volunteering. These reasons ranged from concerns regarding transport to their place of volunteering to the nature of their volunteering carrying a greater risk of contracting COVID-19.
 - *Travelling to the place of duty on public transport was a barrier and a concern for me.*
 - *My role involved entering the police station and carrying other people in my own car, which I was not prepared to do during times when infections were at their highest*
- **Force rules** – Some PSVs wished to continue volunteering but were unable to due to decisions made by the force during the pandemic, for example police stations being closed to volunteers.
 - *CCTV station (was) closed to volunteers*
 - *We were told to stop going into stations*
- **Shielding** – Other PSVs stopped volunteering during the pandemic due to needing to 'shield' themselves or their loved ones.
 - *I had to shield due to health concerns*

When asked 'how satisfied are you with how your Force has communicated with you through the pandemic?', 82% were satisfied, with 52% being very satisfied, however, 7% were dissatisfied.

Figure 3.3 Satisfaction with communication during the pandemic for those that had volunteered in the last year.



3.3 Key Points and Implications

- The results demonstrate that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a considerable effect on PSVs. However, the results are very positive in terms of satisfaction with communication during the pandemic, with most participants being satisfied (76% were satisfied of those who had not volunteered in the past year and 83% satisfied for those who continued to volunteer in the past year). It is noted, however, that a minority, approximately one-in-ten volunteers were dissatisfied with communication during the pandemic.
- For those who had volunteered in the past year, the amount of time volunteered was lower for over half of the sample, with around a third undertaking different tasks

compared with those normally completed before the pandemic. Just under a third of those who had continued to volunteer during the pandemic had stopped volunteering for at least a short period of time.

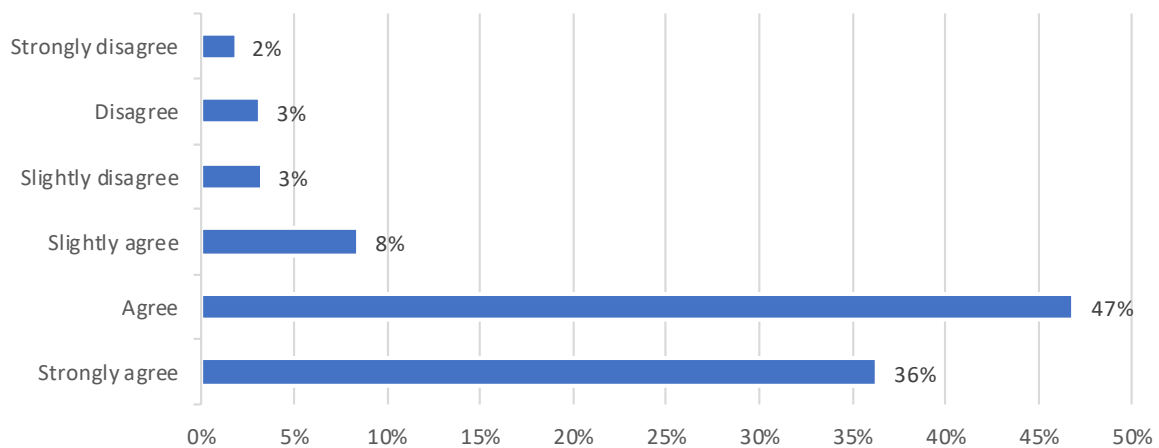
- Evidently, the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted and reduced the volunteering patterns of PSVs. The challenges will be to effectively re-engage, whilst also learning from some of the good practice developed in terms of models of communication with volunteers.

4. Recruitment and Training

4.1 Recruitment

92% (1040) agreed that the PSV recruitment process was a positive experience and 412 (36%) strongly agreed. Those who had served less than 2 years were slightly more likely to strongly agree that it was a positive experience 41% (128) compared to 35% (276) of those that had served 2 years or more.

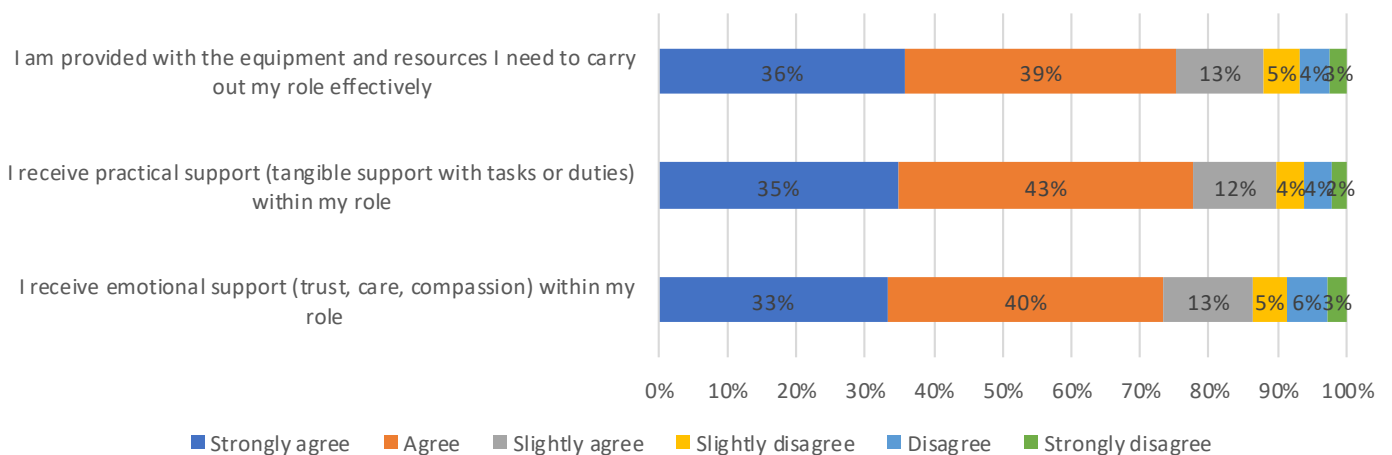
Figure 4.1: Level of agreement that the PSV recruitment process was a positive experience.



4.2 Equipment and Support

88% (1028) of participants agreed that they were provided with the equipment and resources they needed to carry out their role effectively, with 36% (420) strongly agreeing. 86% of participants (893) agreed that they receive emotional support within their role, with 33% (344) strongly agreeing. 90% (1,027) agreed that they receive practical support within their role, with 35% (398) strongly agreeing.

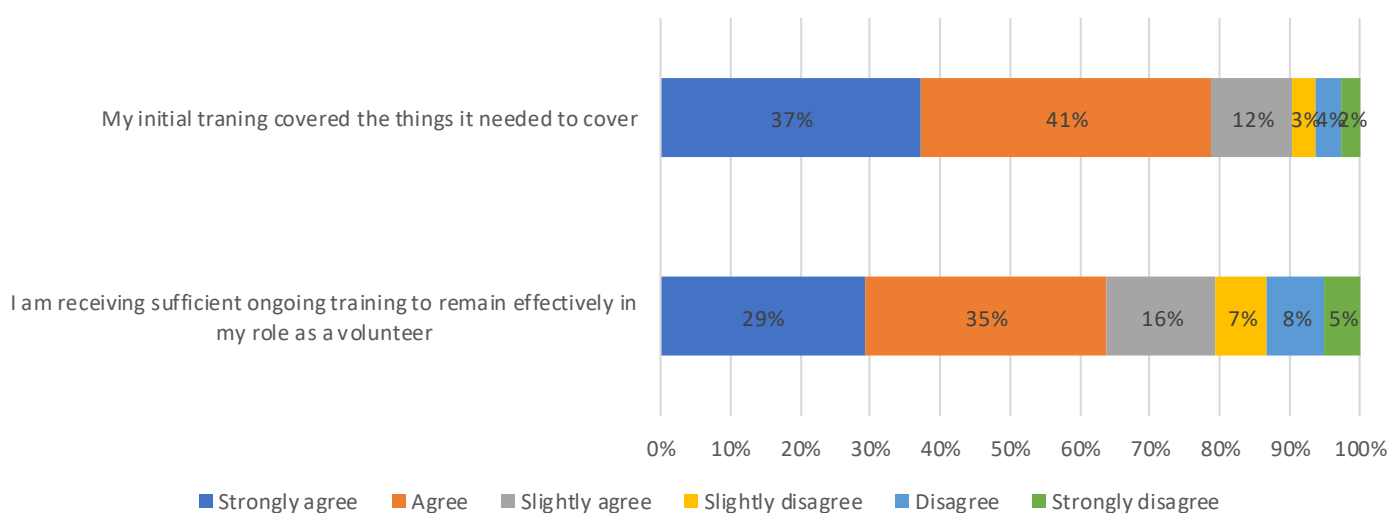
Figure 4.2: Agreement with statements relating to equipment and support



4.3 Training

Agreement was high with the statement ‘my initial training covered the things it needed to cover’ at 90%, which was slightly lower than in 2018 when it was 95%. However, agreement with the statement ‘I am receiving sufficient ongoing training to remain effective in my role as a volunteer’ was higher at 80% in 2021 compared to 66% in 2018 (and with 29% strongly agreeing compared to 20% in 2018).

Figure 4.3: Agreement with statements relating to training



4.4 Key Points and Implications

- Throughout the survey responses, a key feature is the positive overall response of those PSVs completing the survey.
- It is not possible to know whether those PSVs who responded to the survey may be more positively minded regarding their experience of volunteering than those who have not engaged with the survey process. For example, in respect of elements such as recruitment and initial training, there is some potential that the survey understates the degree of negative experience, because those who have had negative experiences of recruitment may not stay, or may be less engaged, and thus be less likely to complete a survey.
- Notwithstanding that caveat, a sizeable majority of PSVs responding to the survey see their recruitment as having been a positive experience. This suggests that on the whole the process of ‘on boarding’ new PSVs works well for most of them, with only a very small proportion of the survey respondents voicing more negative perspectives.
- The same positive picture can be seen across elements of equipment, practical support, and emotional support.
- Whilst responses regarding ongoing training remain primarily positive, they are somewhat less positive than for other elements of the PSV experience. This may indicate some level of remaining gap for PSVs in this respect. On a positive note, there has been an improvement in response in the survey in 2021 compared to 2018 in respect of ongoing training, suggesting that some progress in this regard is already being made.

5. Management, Treatment and Relationships

5.1 Management of volunteers

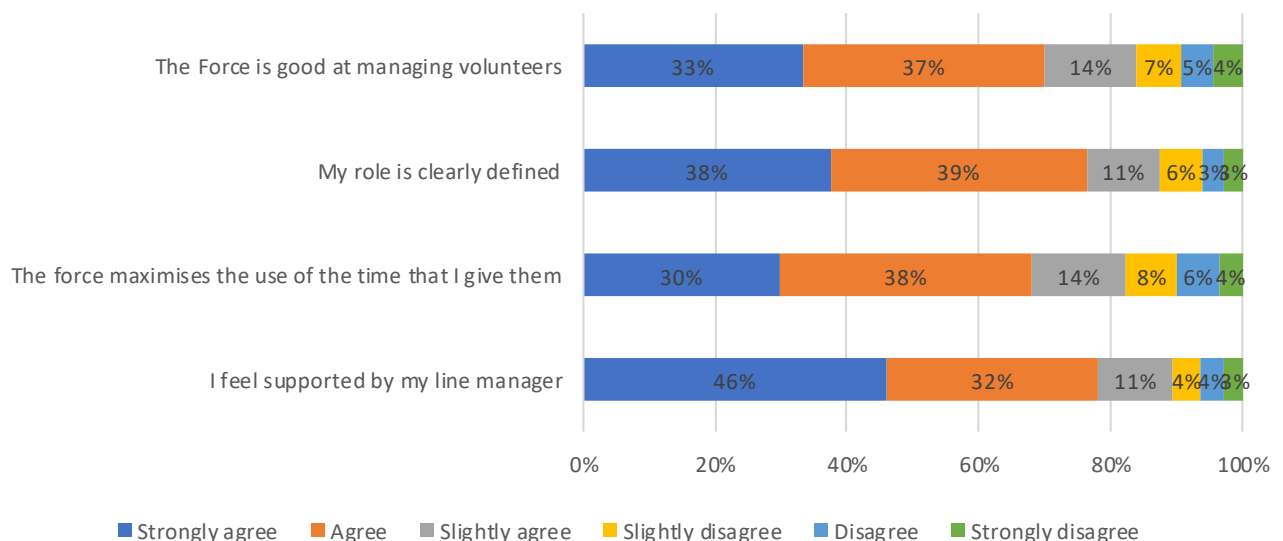
Results relating to management were positive. 84% of volunteers agreed that the force is good at managing volunteers (although 14% said that they slightly agree) and 16% said that they disagree. In the 2018 survey 22% disagreed that the force is good at managing volunteers.

88% of volunteers agreed that their role is clearly defined (although 11% slightly agreed) and 12% said that they disagree. When asked whether they had a role profile, under half (46%) said yes, 17% said no and 36% said that they did not know.

82% of volunteers agreed that the force maximises the use of their time (although 14% slightly agreed) and 18% said that they disagree. In the 2018 survey 38% disagreed that the force maximises the use of their time.

89% of volunteers agreed that they felt support by their line manager (although 11% said that they slightly agree) and 11% said that they disagree.

Figure 5.1: Agreement with statements relating to management



Box 5.1 Qualitative Analysis: Please can you provide detail about your level of agreement with the statement 'The force is good at managing volunteers' - what is it specifically that makes you feel that they are or are not good at managing volunteers?

In answer to the statement 'The force is good at managing volunteers', 74.34% of those surveyed agreed (with 39.71% of those strongly agreeing) and 14.14% disagreed (with 26.78% of them strongly disagreeing).

Of those who disagreed, the most frequent responses related to:

- **Poor communication** – The majority of PSVs who felt their force was not good at managing volunteers attributed this to poor communication, for example, receiving very few updates during the pandemic.

- *Despite chasing my line manager and the officer in charge I have yet to have an answer from them*
- *I have not been used as a volunteer for 4 years as I was never contacted and do not know why*
- **Lack of support** – The second most common reason for disagreeing with the statement was due to experiencing a lack of support, this resulted in PSVs feeling unappreciated, undervalued, and as if the force did not truly understand volunteers.
 - *Everything we try to do, we face hurdles and blockages - when staff see we are volunteers, we get ignored or put to the very bottom of their to do list.*
 - *The force I feel struggles to understand it's volunteers. The volunteers who manage the volunteers carry the service. Paid employees just don't get 'it'*
- **Lack of opportunities** – Many PSVs spoke of having very few volunteering opportunities, some of them had had no opportunities at all, whilst others felt the opportunities which were available had little meaning and did not utilise PSVs' skills and experience.
 - *The jobs available are not identified and offered to volunteers specifically to suit their skills*
 - *I don't feel the volunteers are used as effectively as they could be, and tend to be used as a last resort*

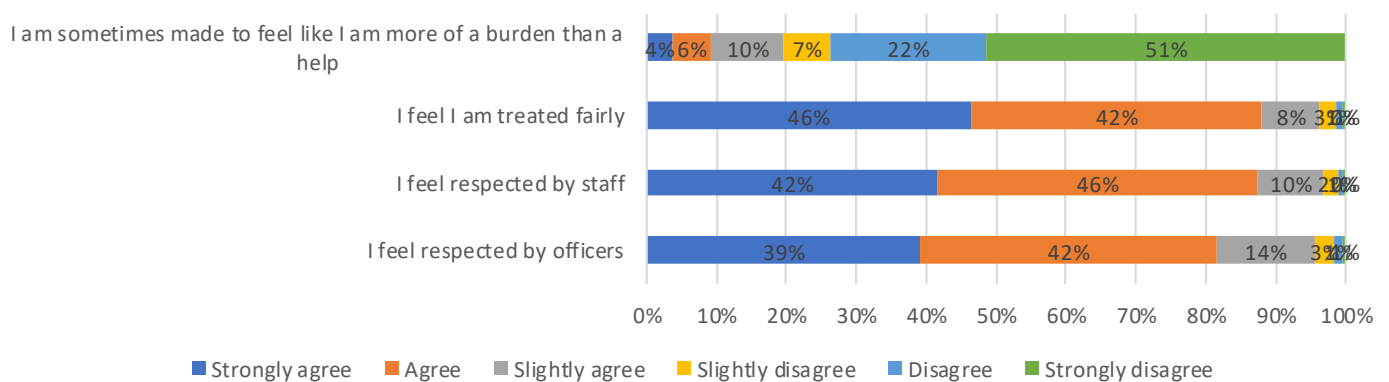
Those who agreed their force was good at managing volunteers often commented on:

- **Good communication** – The force being good at communicating with their volunteers made PSVs feel they were managed well. Volunteers appreciated being updated with news relevant to their roles and having an open line of communication with members of their force.
 - *Communication is extremely good, we also know that we can contact our line manager or other volunteers at any time (through) various methods of communication email text phone et cetera.*
- **Feeling supported** – PSVs felt part of managing their volunteers well, was due to the forces providing a good level of support. This ensured PSVs felt appreciated and valued, whilst making for a positive volunteering environment.
 - *(There is) appreciation and acknowledgement of (volunteers') input shown by the force in meetings*
 - *Making us feel part of a family. Very approachable*
- **Training and skill utilisation** – PSVs who received ongoing training and had their skillsets utilised felt their force was good at managing volunteers. This made PSVs feel they were given responsibility and trusted to carry out their roles.
 - *[Name of Force] are always good humoured and it is clear that they respect us, (even if we are just volunteers!) we train, and we train and we train. I feel that they know that we know our job. I feel fully enfranchised when on call-out. From my perspective, they give us full latitude to undertake our taskings as we feel best. The force are always collaborative and I feel that this makes for a really good working environment*
 - *My manager understands my skill set, and treats me as an individual*

5.2 Treatment

95% of volunteers agreed that they felt respected by officers and 97% agreed that they felt respected by staff. Strength of agreement was slightly higher for feeling respected by staff, with 19% of volunteers only slightly agreeing (14%) or disagreeing (5%) that they felt respected by officers compared to 13% of volunteers only slightly agreeing (10%) or disagreeing (3%) that they felt respected by staff. Agreement was also high with the statement 'I feel I am treated fairly' with 96% agreeing and 4% disagreeing. However, a fifth (20%) of volunteers agreed that they were sometimes made to feel more of a burden than a help.

Figure 5.2: Agreement with statements relating to treatment



Box 5.2 Qualitative Analysis: If you disagreed that you are treated fairly, please can you give detail

For PSVs who did not feel they had been treated fairly, their responses centred around:

- **Poor treatment** – Some PSVs felt they had not been treated well by other staff at their police stations, this included not being spoken to or feeling welcomed in their place of volunteering.
 - *Recently when we went to our HQ to hand in the DutySheets, we were told the station was closed to the public, that really hurt*
 - *It's only courteous to reply to people if they go out of their way to say hello. This doesn't always happen with officers especially*
 - *I find that hardly anyone takes the time to speak to me so can't really comment*
- **Poor utilisation** – PSVs who felt they had not been treated fairly often attributed this to not being utilised well, for example not being given opportunities to volunteer that they felt interested in or felt would be worthwhile. PSVs often felt their force did not have a clear role for their volunteers.
 - *I feel like sometimes I am getting in the way of officers or PCSOs while I could be used to help the community*
 - *The force itself does not really seem to have a consistent and clear idea of what it wants from volunteers*
- **Lack of understanding by paid staff** – Many PSVs felt paid staff did not truly understand the PSV's role and the value and support they bring to the force.
 - *We are often subjected to the "why are you here?" attitude*
 - *One incident, someone said to me "you are just a volunteer"*

Box 5.3 Qualitative Analysis: I am sometimes made to feel more of a burden than a help

Of those who agreed with the statement 'I am sometimes made to feel like I am more of a burden than a help', most responses focused on:

- **Disrupting paid staff** – PSVs most often felt like a burden due to having to disrupt paid staff to carry out their volunteering.
 - *The police are busy and are carrying out their duties, don't really have the time to carry me*
 - *I feel a burden if I need to be shown what the role involves, staff try to avoid showing me the procedure*
 - *I sometimes feel a little unsure of what is expected of my role and feel I have to disturb officers to ask for help sometimes*
- **Lack of volunteering opportunities** – PSVs with few volunteering opportunities felt this was evidence enough that they were more a burden than a help.
 - *If paid staff are scratching about trying to find work for you, you don't exactly feel valued or helpful...*
- **Communication issues** – Some PSVs experienced communication issues with staff, such as not feeling part of a team. PSVs also found many staff misunderstood the PSV's role and their abilities.
 - *When some of the officers and PCSOs look down at you. Or give you a dirty look. And won't speak to you, even though you have had no previous communication with them. I ignore them, and just get on with my work*
 - *Occasionally feel that I am not trusted within my role which is to be expected. With the constant changes in staff, not all people know me or my role. Conversations sometimes stop when I enter a room as if I was an interloper*
 - *I think it's more about the police culture/experience. Perhaps staff/officers have limited working knowledge of how to incorporate volunteers into teams*

Those who disagreed, and felt they were not a burden, frequently spoke about:

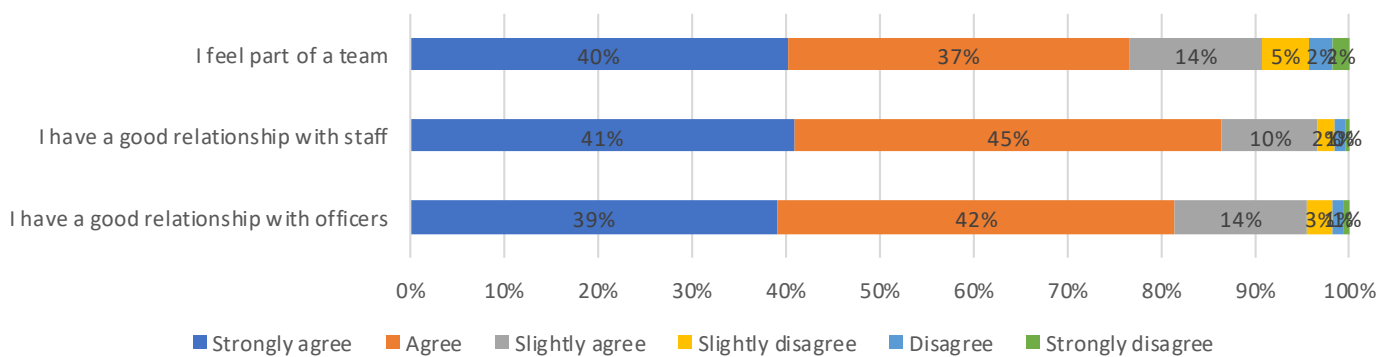
- **Strong relationships with colleagues** – Having positive relationships with colleagues was crucial in making sure the majority of PSVs did not feel burdensome, this included feeling valued and receiving positive feedback for their work and feeling included as part of a team.
 - *The force and all staff welcome us volunteers and treat us as though we're all a team, so I don't feel like a burden because they make me feel part of them*
 - *I feel very valued in my role by the people I support and by the staff I work with... I have always been made to feel like an asset to the Force and received praise for my work*
- **Sufficient opportunity** - Being given plenty of opportunities to volunteer was enough to ensure PSVs did not feel like a burden, these opportunities allowed them to contribute and to relieve paid staff of additional duties. Furthermore, some PSVs highlighted that if an opportunity to volunteer became available, this would be because it was needed, and thus they would not feel like a burden if carrying out a task that the force had specifically asked them to complete.

- Officers pass onto me Neighbourhood Watch issues to resolve which leaves them the time to do more relevant policing and then communicate with me for updates
- Officers and staff always request attendance at events or incidents so there is no burden as they have specifically wanted somebody in my role there

5.3 Relationships and belongings

95% of volunteers agreed that they have good relationships with officers and 96% agreed that they had good relationships with staff. Strength of agreement was slightly higher for staff than officers, with 17% of volunteers only slightly agreeing (14%) or disagreeing (5%) that they had a good relationship with officers, compared with 13% only slightly agreeing (10%) or disagreeing (3%) that they had a good relationship with staff. Agreement was high with the statement 'I feel part of the team' with 91% agreeing and 9% disagreeing.

Figure 5.3: Agreement with statements relating to relationships and belonging



5.4 Key Points and Implications

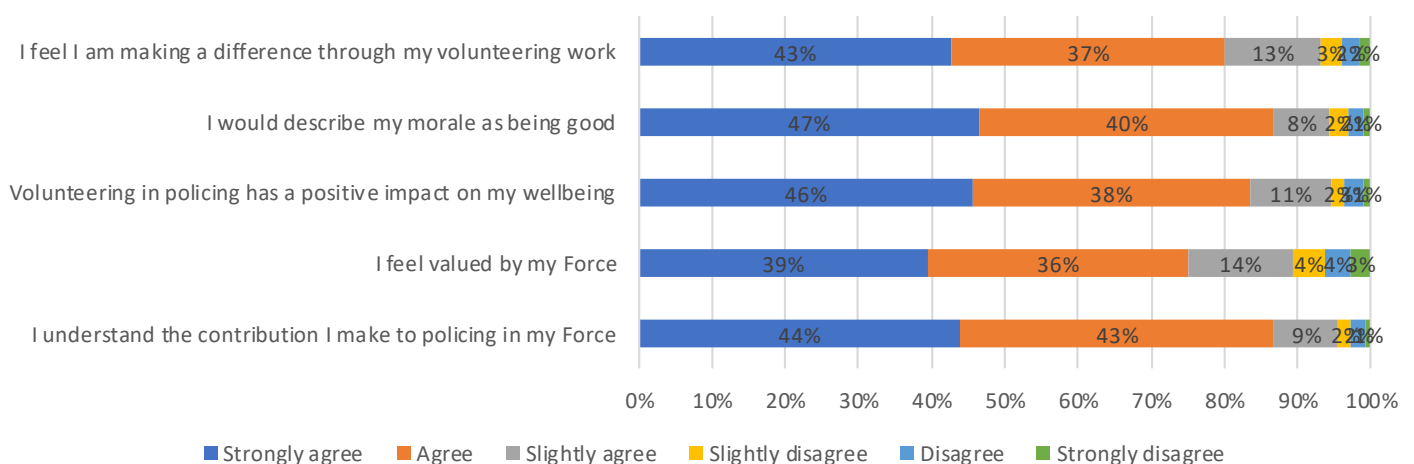
- Once again, the responses by PSVs in the surveys regarding management, treatment as a volunteer, and relationships, all reflect a predominantly positive picture.
- Across these aspects of experience, there is also a consistent minority who reflect a more negative experience. Depending on the questions, between 10% and 20% of PSVs tend to reflect a less positive experience. Whilst this does not take away from the primarily positive picture, it does draw attention to the need to consider those factors that appear to underpin these less positive experiences as a PSV for some.
- The factors that appear to drive less positive experience as a PSV are: (i) opportunities to deliver and to develop, to utilise skills or to undertake training and develop new skills, (ii) support, and (iii) communication.
- Underlying both positive and negative experience are elements of wider culture within police forces towards volunteers. Attitudes of officers and staff to why volunteers are there, the importance of their role, and their integration as a core part of the policing family rather than 'outsiders', are important in shaping the experience.

6. Outcomes and Positive Impact

6.1 Outcomes and positive impact

As with the 2018 survey 94% of volunteers agreed that their morale was good. In addition, 96% understand the contribution they make to policing, 95% agreed that volunteering in policing has a positive impact on their wellbeing and 93% agreed that they make a difference through their volunteering work. A slightly lower proportion agreed that they felt valued by their force at 89%.

Figure 6.1: Agreement with statements relating to personal benefits of volunteering



Box 6.1 Qualitative Analysis: Level of agreement with the statement 'I feel that I am making a difference through my volunteering work'

In response to the statement 'I feel that I am making a difference through my volunteering work', 88.44% agreed (with 45.96% of these strongly agreeing), whilst only 6.52% disagreed (21.43% of these strongly disagreed).

Of those who disagreed with the statement most often disagreed due to:

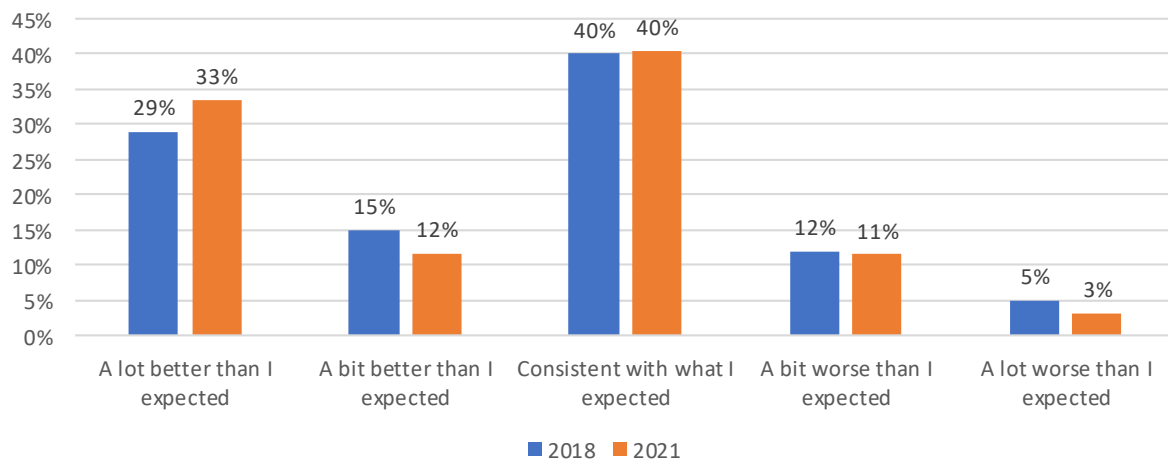
- **Lack of opportunity** – PSVs having few opportunities to volunteer made them feel they were not making a difference, some volunteers were given no opportunities at all. When PSVs were given opportunity to volunteer, they felt their tasks had little impact and were not making a difference to anyone.
 - *I have only been asked to volunteer once although I was happy to do more. I feel that Harlow Police have not made enough effort with their volunteers.*
 - *I'm only doing what others don't want to do as it's something boring and monotonous*
- **Not receiving feedback** – Many PSVs disagreed with the statement as they were not given feedback telling them they were making a difference. Also, some PSVs received minimal feedback as to why they were not given many volunteering opportunities.
 - *Still waiting to be a volunteer after not hearing from any one after 4 years I still do not know what happened*
 - *I haven't been given any volunteering work for a long time and, in the absence of any feedback, can only assume that my input is not required*

For participants who agreed with the statement, they often reported that they knew they were making a difference due to:

- **Receiving feedback** – Feedback was important to PSVs as it let them know how exactly their work made a difference to their force. Feedback was also crucial in letting PSVs know their work was appreciated and that they were valued.
 - *My manager acknowledges our contributions on a regular basis and often to a wider audience*
 - *My colleagues thank me at the end of each shift for my help, and I am aware that their appreciation of my assistance is referred to superior officers. I was nominated for the Volunteer of the Year Award two years ago*
- **Improving police service** – Many PSVs felt they made a difference as they recognised that the work they did lessened the workload of paid staff, which ensured they could focus on providing a quality police service.
 - *Given the reduced numbers and increased responsibilities of my regular colleagues in the unit, anything I do to ‘ease the burden’ makes a difference to their day to day workload*
 - *Helping with everyday tasks thereby freeing Police Staff to concentrate on other work*
- **Delivering community service** – PSVs who agreed they made a difference often felt this way due to wanting to contribute to their community, their volunteering was a way for them to do this. Some PSVs felt their work improved relationships between the community and police.
 - *I feel that the work I do assists in improving and maintaining the way the community see the police*

For 45% of PSVs, their experience had been better than they had expected and for 40% it had been consistent with what they had expected. However, for 14% it had been worse than expected, which is a slight improvement on 2018 when 17% had a worse than expected experience.

Figure 6.2: Actual experience compared to expected experience for volunteers in 2021 compared to 2018



6.3 Key Points and Implications

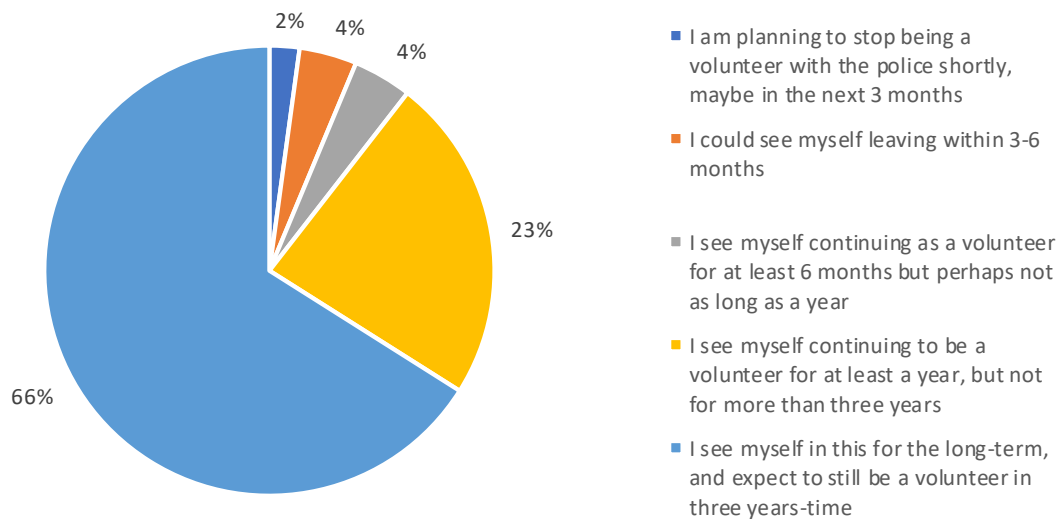
- PSVs responding to the surveys are very positive about their morale and about the impact they are having for policing and for communities. A vast majority of the PSVs responding see the contribution they make through their volunteering and feel they are making a positive difference. A large majority also describe their morale as being good and view their volunteering as contributing positively to their wellbeing. These figures are very positive and reflect some real strengths of the PSV programmes across forces.
- Whilst still predominantly positive, the responses in terms of feeling 'valued' are slightly less positive than for other questions. Where PSVs perhaps feel somewhat less 'valued', this appears to commonly relate to an absence of feedback, to limited opportunities to volunteer and contribute, and to limited options for developing new skills and growing into different roles.
- Almost half (45%) of PSVs felt their volunteering experience had been better than they had expected upon joining. This again reflects some key strengths in the delivery across PSV programmes. Having said that, there are also 14% of PSVs who respond that the experience has been less positive than they had anticipated at joining. This figure is positively a little down on its 2018 counterpart (17%), but still reflects roughly one in seven PSVs for whom the experience is less positive.
- PSVs often have core motivations of improving the police service and providing service to their communities, and where these outcomes are perceived to be being delivered through their volunteering, it underpins their positive sense of contribution and of making a difference.

7. Retention and Improvements

7.1 Retention

Two thirds (66%) of volunteers could see themselves in it for the long term and expect to be a volunteer in three years-time.

Figure 7.1: How long volunteers intend to remain a PSV



6% were planning to leave in the next 6 months, this group were asked to state why they were planning on leaving.

Box 7.1 Qualitative Analysis: You have indicated that you will be leaving shortly, please could you state your reason for leaving?

For PSVs who stated they would be leaving shortly, the most common reasons given were:

- **To focus on paid employment** – The majority of PSVs likely to be leaving shortly stated this was due to needing to prioritise, or focus on, their paid employment.
 - *Due to work commitments not fitting around the time of the meetings*
 - *I do need a better paid job and might not have the time in the future to volunteer*
- **Due to lack of opportunities** – The second most common reason for leaving within the near future was not having enough opportunities to volunteer, for some this meant they were uncertain whether they still had a role as a PSV.
 - *I don't honestly think the police have anything for us to do and have struggled with using us since they recruited us. Wouldn't be surprised if we were let go*
 - *COVID has impacted the role of volunteers and the activities done by neighbourhood offices. I don't feel there is a role for me any longer*
- **Feeling poorly treated** – The third most likely reason for the PSV likely leaving was due to them feeling poorly treated by the force. This made them feel underappreciated and unsupported, and as if they were not part of the police 'family'.

- *I feel unvalued, under-utilised and Irrelevant. There is a strong feeling of a them and me situation with the officers*
- *(I am) made to feel undervalued, (I am) asking for help and not getting any*
- *Lack of any appreciation - I did over 350 hours last year, and nobody even said 'thanks'*

Likelihood of recommending the organisation as good place to volunteer. 4 in 10 (44%) selected 10 (extremely likely) and the average score was 8. 8% of participants selected between 0 and 4 which suggests that they are unlikely to recommend the organisations as a good place to volunteer (with 2% selecting 0 which is extremely unlikely).

7.2 Improvements

PSVs were asked in the survey for suggestions to improve the experiences of volunteers and the findings are presenting in boxes 7.2 and 7.3 below.

Box 7.2 Qualitative Analysis: How could your volunteering experience be improved?

Of responses regarding how volunteering experiences could be improved, PSVs most commonly suggested:

- **More opportunities & better skill utilisation** – The majority of PSVs who answered this question suggested their volunteering experience could be improved by providing them with more opportunities to volunteer, particularly ones which utilised their existing skills. For some, this meant more frequent opportunities within their current role or opportunities to volunteer in different police departments, and others felt the opportunities offered to them would be more worthwhile if they capitalised on the volunteer’s skillset.
 - *To be given more work, particularly where I can gain experience and prove myself for possible paid employment with the Force in the future.*
 - *Understand my skills and have a more tailored volunteering role and experience. This means I can help more, and feel more valued doing less mundane tasks*
 - *More should be done to promote the role and abilities of volunteers to the officers so that they could use the skills of volunteers more.*
 - *Maybe the Force could look at people’s CVs or ask us to submit them so that they could have a clearer understanding of the skills the volunteers may have. They could then be utilised in other departments.*
- **Better communication** – Many PSVs felt their experiences volunteering could be improved via better communication. Some felt better communication throughout the force as to what PSVs do would help to improve staff understanding of volunteers. Others felt communication should be improved to receive updates and hear what was going on throughout the force.
 - *It would be better if the existence of myself and my colleagues was more widely known throughout the organisation*
 - *Better general communication - a newsletter might be quite helpful. An occasional message from the Chief wouldn't go awry, perhaps via his weekly Vlog*

- **Better training** – Numerous PSVs felt more training would increase their abilities and would make them better in their roles. They felt better training was a key way in which their volunteering experiences could be improved.
 - *More training opportunities to build a more robust skillset.*
 - *I feel training is very important and I feel training on different systems could be a huge benefit both to my team and to make me more effective as a volunteer*
- **Feeling valued & included** – To give them better volunteering experiences, PSVs wanted to feel valued and appreciated for the work they did and the time they contributed as a volunteer. Some argued the key to feeling more valued could be increasing paid staff's understanding of PSVs and what they could give to the force. Furthermore, PSVs wanted to feel included in the force, and part of a team.
 - *Education of officers of what contribution the volunteers make to the force.*
 - *More involvement in planning events and more appreciation shown by some officers who appear not interested in us*
 - *Understanding and wider recognition of the role by decision makers within the organisation*
 - *You have got to have a positive buy in from operational officers on the ground. They need to want you there and value the contribution you make*

Box 7.3 Qualitative Analysis: Is there anything you can share about your experiences of volunteering elsewhere that could help improve the use of, or experience of, police volunteers?

Many respondents' experiences elsewhere highlighted ways in which the experience of PSVs could be improved, such as:

- **More opportunities** – The majority of these individuals argued that being given more opportunities to volunteer was a crucial way in which PSV experiences could be improved, this included better utilisation of their skills.
 - *Utilise the other skills that a volunteer brings and allow them to be seen as an integral part of the team*
 - *The whole organisation (the food bank) is totally volunteer focused and integrated into every aspect of the service. I am able to utilise my skills effectively and there are no barriers to this, whereas in the police I have a role description and I can't deviate from it or grow or bring in the skills and expertise I have*
- **Better communication** – PSVs stated better communication would improve the experiences of PSVs.
 - *There is a specific "chain of command" and regular (active) communication on what is happening locally in addition to nationally*
 - *We have social events which helps meeting others in the team and is useful for new volunteers. we have a monthly newsletter*
- **Value & appreciation** – PSVs stated volunteering experiences could be improved by being made to feel more valued and appreciated, this was something many of them felt in their other volunteering roles.
 - *Treated and respected more with the fire service also given a uniform, not just a blue tabard*
 - *With the Police I feel Volunteers are something to make the police feel better about themselves and are only seen as police staff when it suits for something like volunteer week. I feel volunteers are not respected as much*

as they should be. I feel we are just a box to tick for the force. Although within the department i work for i do feel respected and wanted but not police in general

- **Belonging** – Being made to feel part of a team was important to many volunteers and they felt this was crucial in improving the experiences of other PSVs.
 - *There is more opportunity for social interaction and getting to know other volunteers in other charities*
 - *PSVs need to be part of a team and invited to their meetings and activities. Especially needed for isolated roles like car cleaning, role-playing and CCTV monitoring*
- **Better training** – Many respondents believed volunteering for the police could be improved by receiving better training. Some felt better training could involve more specialised training for their individual roles, and others felt too much mandatory training should be avoided.
 - *There is a balance between training volunteers well in the role and not being overbearing with 'Mandatory training' whilst acknowledging some is necessary it can start to eat away at both the capacity and willingness to volunteer. The more bureaucratic the process becomes the less efficient the volunteer*
- **Clear roles** – Volunteers felt having a defined role with clear guidance as to what was expected of them was important and would improve the experiences of PSVs. Having clear roles was also a critical part of volunteers feeling there was a 'need' for them and also improved communication.
 - *Having a clear idea of why you are recruiting for volunteers prior to them starting! I honestly believe the team I am part of was setup with the best of intentions by all concerned but it's suffered in the 4 years it's been running due to lack of ownership and direction. Clear, prompt communications and setting of expectations - in my other volunteer role I know what I am being asked to do and who to contact for advice or queries*
 - *Having a defined role with regular updates and someone specific to communicate with is really helpful*

7.3 Key Findings and Implications

- Two thirds of the PSVs responding to the survey said they could see themselves volunteering longer-term, which is interesting set alongside the benchmarking survey data, which reflects that only a relatively small proportion of PSVs continue to volunteer for more than three or four years.
- For those who are thinking of leaving, lack of opportunities and under-utilisation are key factors.
- In terms of improvements for the future, more opportunities, and better skills utilisation are seen as key.
- PSVs would also like to see improvements in communication and culture, with improved understanding and engagement within forces in respect of their volunteer roles, leading to improved inclusion, belonging, and being valued.

8. Variations in experience across groups

8.1 Introduction

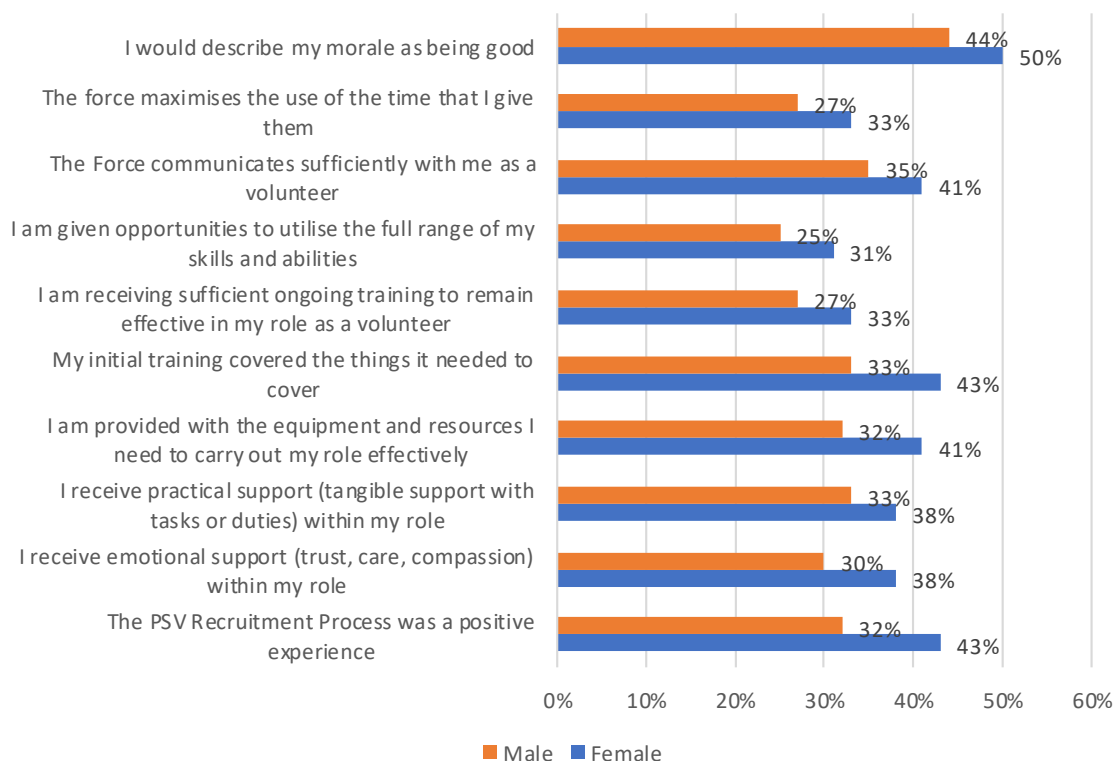
This section looks at the extent to which the experience of volunteers differs across demographic groups, in particular gender, ethnicity, age and those with and without a disability. It also looks at the relationship between whether people’s experience differs dependent on whether they have volunteered in the last year, how many hours they have volunteered and their length of service.

The relationship between these factors is looked at in two ways, firstly, by looking at the proportion of volunteers that agreed with each statement (this includes those that strongly agreed, agreed and slightly agreed). For example, how many women agreed that their morale was good, compared to men? This is useful in distinguishing differences between groups, however, it only goes so far in exploring the differences in experience within groups, particularly, as a high proportion of volunteers agreed with the positively worded statements. Therefore, secondly, the proportion of each group that ‘strongly agreed’ with each statement was also examined further to gain an insight to variations in experience.

8.2 Differences between groups

Males and females only significantly differ in the proportion that **agreed** with the statement ‘I receive emotional support (trust, care, compassion) within my role’, with women slightly more likely to agree (94%) than men (90%). However, women tended to be significantly more likely to **strongly agree** with the statements than men relating to recruitment, support, training, use of their skills and time, communication and moral (see the figure below).

Figure 8.1: Percent of volunteers that strongly agree with statements by gender



Ethnicity

Due to numbers it was only possible to compare white volunteers (1,197) against non-white volunteers (65). Non-white volunteers were significantly more likely to **agree** that they were sometimes made to feel like a burden, 30% compared to 19% of white volunteers. This is important to note but caution must be exercised due to small numbers.

Non-white volunteers were significantly more likely to **strongly agree** with the statements 'volunteering in policing has a positive impact on my wellbeing (60% compared to 45% of white volunteers), 'I feel I am making a difference through my volunteering work' (56% compared to 42% of white volunteers) and 'my role is clearly defined' (50% compared to 37% of white volunteers).

Age

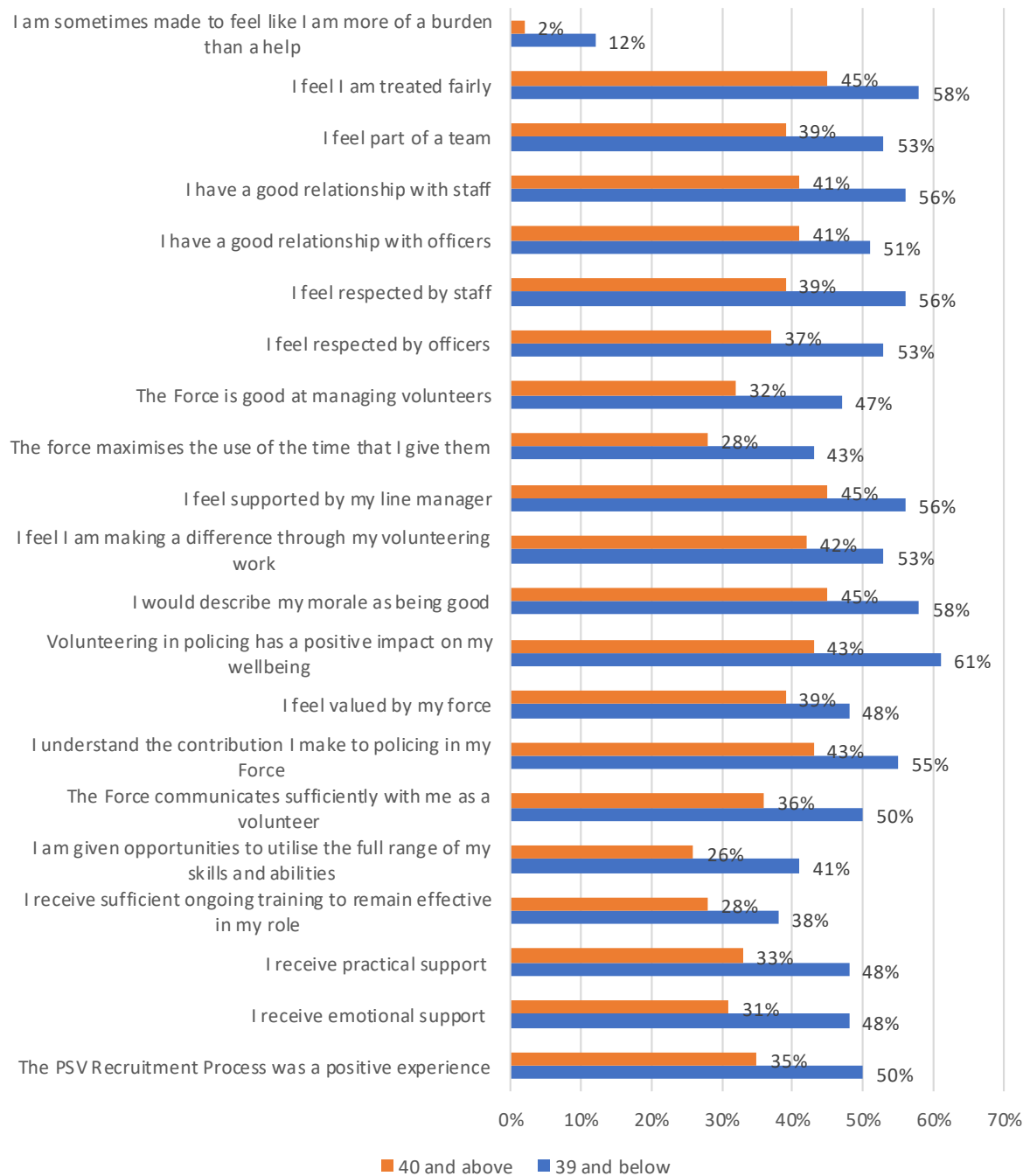
The data was analysed looking at the following age groups: 18-29 (9% of the population), 30-39 (6%), 40-49 (10%), 50-59 (16%) and 60 and over (59%). When looking at these groups those aged 18-29 and 30-39 tended to have a higher level of agreement to some statements than those that were aged 40 and over. Those aged 39 and below were significantly more likely to **agree** than those 40 and above with positively worded statements about recruitment, support, use of their time and abilities, the impact on their wellbeing and the management of volunteers.

- The PSV Recruitment Process was a positive experience (98% and 91% respectively)
- I receive emotional support (trust, care, compassion) within my role (93% and 86% respectively)
- I receive practical support (tangible support with tasks or duties) within my role (97% and 89% respectively)
- I am given opportunities to utilise the full range of my skills and abilities (85% and 74% respectively)
- The Force communicates sufficiently with me as a volunteer (89% and 82% respectively)
- Volunteering in policing has a positive impact on my wellbeing (99% and 95% respectively)
- The force maximises the use of the time that I give them (91% and 82% respectively)
- The Force is good at managing volunteers (90% and 84% respectively)

However, those aged 39 or below were also significantly more likely to agree with the statement 'I am sometimes made to feel like I am more of a burden than a help' than those aged 40 and over (31% and 18% respectively).

Those in the younger age group were more likely to **strongly agree** with statements which are represented in the figure below.

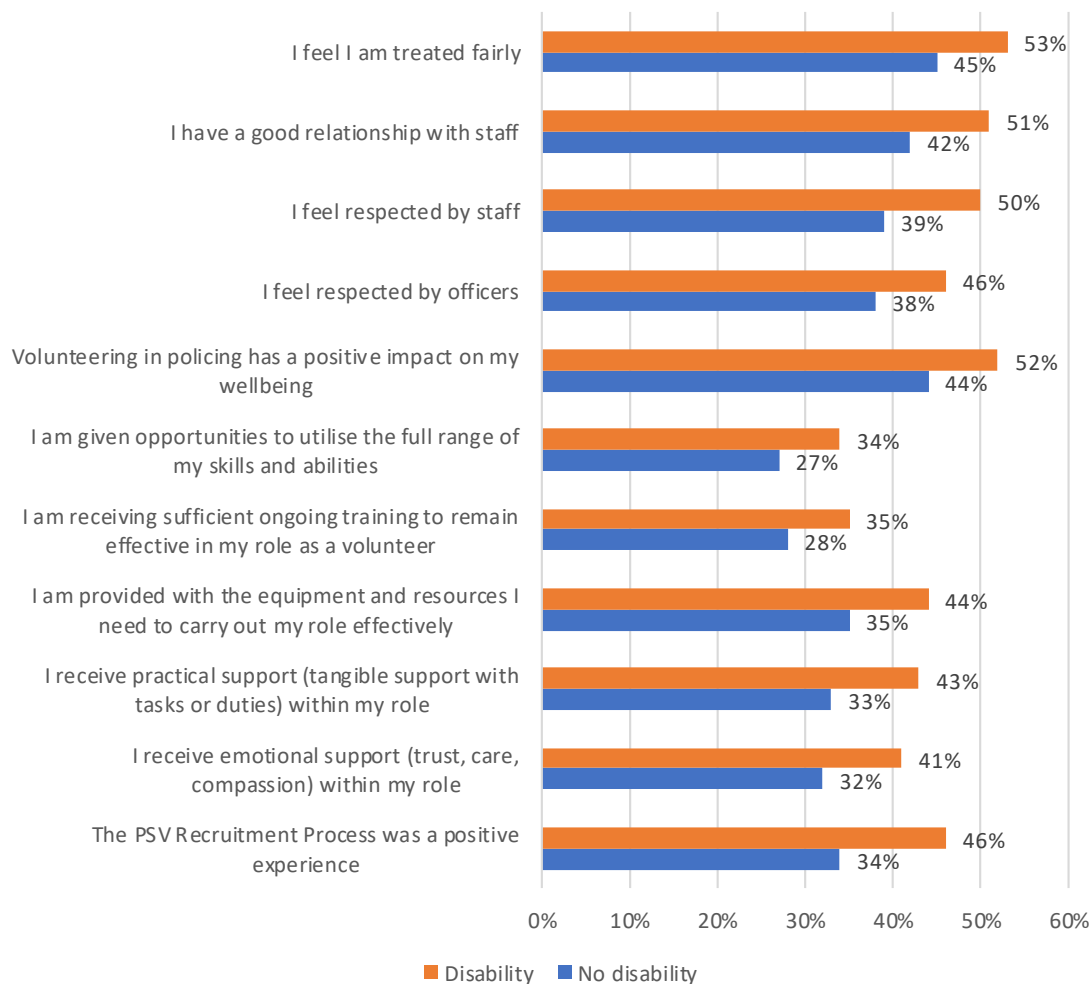
Figure 8.2: Percent of those that strongly agree by age 39 or below as compared to 40 and above



Disability

Those with a disability and those without only significantly differ in the proportion that **agreed** with the statement 'volunteering in policing has a positive impact on my wellbeing', with those with a disability slightly more likely to agree (98%) compared to those without (94%). However, those with a disability tended to be significantly more likely to **strongly agree** to the statements than those without relating to recruitment, support, resources, training, use of their skills, impact on their wellbeing, feeling respected, relationships and being treated fairly. See the figure below.

Figure 8.3 Percent that strongly agree with statements by those that have a disability and those that do not have a disability



Sexual Orientation

Due to small numbers it was not possible to differentiate between the experiences of all the different categories. Therefore, the experiences of those that classified themselves as heterosexual/ straight (1,149, constitute 90% of the sample) were compared to the other groups combined (71, which constitutes 10% of the sample and includes the categories 'gay/lesbian', 'bisexual' and 'Other sexual orientation'. There was only one statement where the two groups significantly differed on the proportion that **agreed** which was 'I receive practical support' with a lower proportion of those classified as non-heterosexual or straight agreeing (81% compared to 91% of 'heterosexual/straight' volunteers). In terms of the proportion that **strongly agreed**, the two groups significantly differed on one statement only and this was 'I

am sometimes made to feel like more of a burden than a help' with 9% of those that were in the 'non-heterosexual/ straight' category strongly agreeing compared to 3% of the heterosexual/ straight category strongly agreeing.

Religious Orientation

Due to small numbers it was not possible to differentiate between the experiences of all the different categories. Therefore, three categories were compared which were Christian (constituting 66% of the sample), those with 'no religion' (constituting 29% of the sample) and those from other religions (constituting 5% of the sample which included Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and 'other' religions). This is of course not ideal as the experiences of these different religious groups may be very different.

In terms of the proportion that **agreed**, those with a religion that was not Christian were less likely to agree that they:

- Are given opportunities to use the full range of their skills and abilities (59% compared to 77% of 'Christians' and 74% of those with no religion).
- Feel part of a team (80% compared to 92% of 'Christians' and 90% of those with no religion).

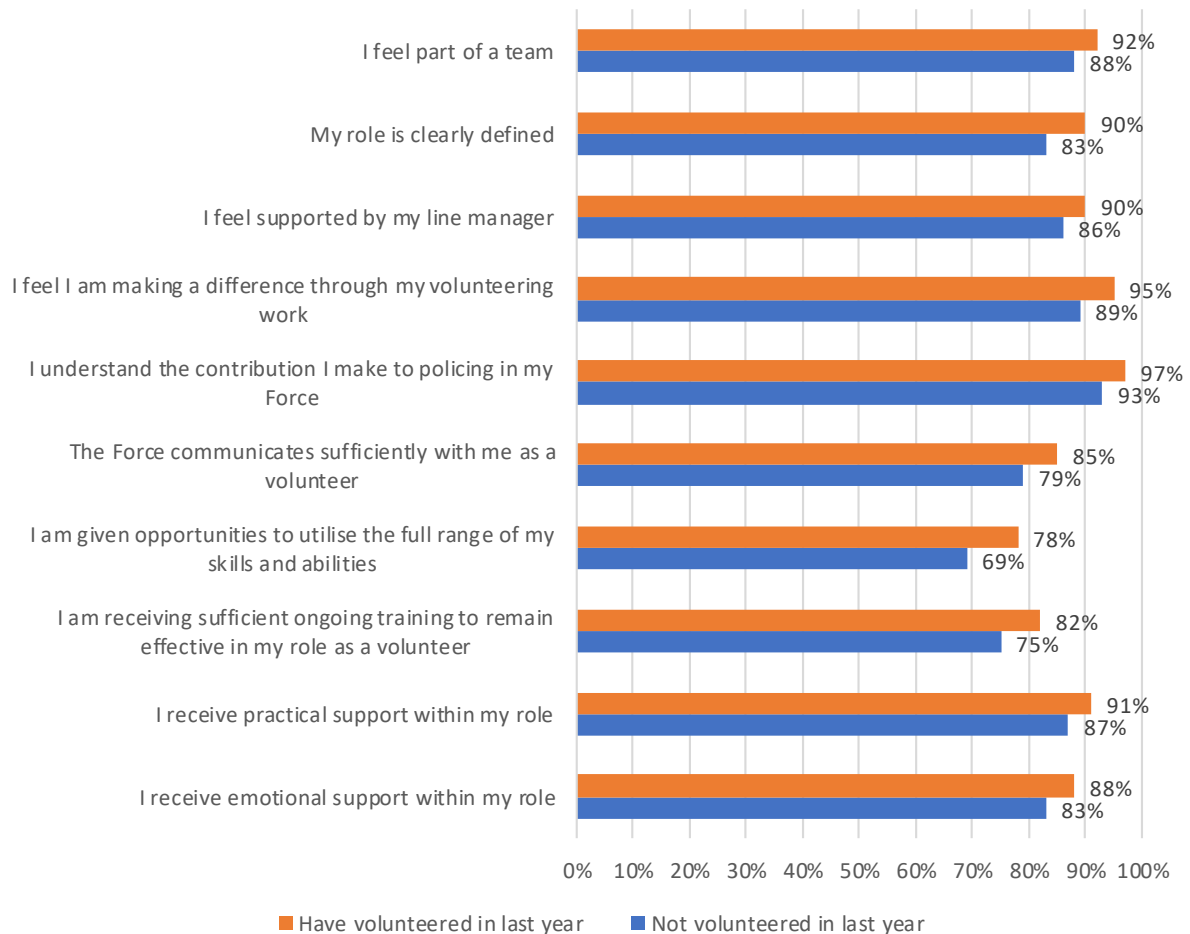
However, they were more likely to agree that they are 'sometimes made to feel more like a burden than a help' (40% compared to 17% of 'Christians' and 22% of those with no religion). This was the only statement that the groups differed on in terms of strongly agreeing with 3% of Christians strongly agreeing compared to 5% of those with no religion and 13% of those with a religion that was not Christian.

There was also a significant difference between the groups on the proportion that **agree** with the statement 'I feel valued by my force' with Christians more likely to agree (97% compared to 94% of those of no religion and those from another religion other than Christian).

8.3 Volunteered in the last year or have not

Those that had not volunteered in the last year were significantly less likely to agree with some of the statements than those that had (see the figure below). The extent to which they were less likely to agree ranged between 4% and 9%.

Figure 8.4: Percent of volunteers that agree with statements by whether have volunteered in the last year



However, those that had not volunteered were significantly more likely to agree that 'I am provided with the equipment and resources I need to carry out my role effectively' (91% compared to 87% that had volunteered). They were also more likely to agree that they were sometimes made to feel like I am more of a burden than a help (25% compared to 17% of those that had volunteered).

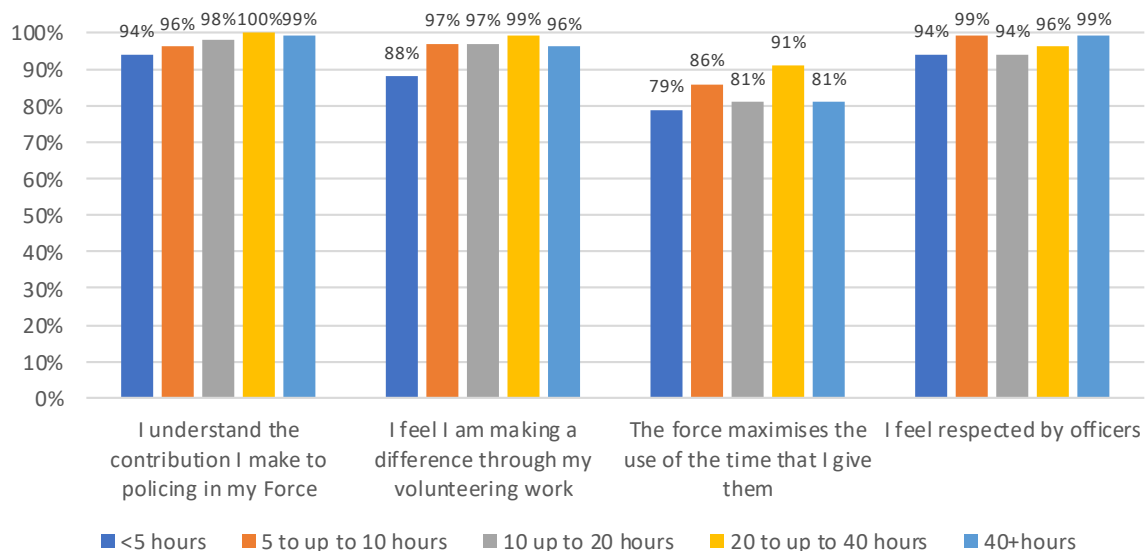
8.4 Hours have volunteered

What was noticeable when looking at hours volunteered was that those that volunteered less than 5 hours tended to have a notably lower level of **agreement** with statements than those that had volunteered 5 hours or more. This is important to note as over a third of the sample had volunteered less than 5 hours in recent months (37%), which is high compared to 2018 when 21% said that they had volunteered less than 5 hours. This may be due to the pandemic.

It is worth noting that 59% of those that said that they had not volunteered in the previous year said that they had volunteered 5 hours or less compared to 26% of those that said they

had volunteered in the last year. When looking at those that had volunteered in the last year (i.e. excluding those that had not), there were much fewer significant differences between the groups, with those having volunteered less than 5 hours level of agreement not being much different from the rest of the group (see figure below). The most notable gap was that 88% of those that volunteered 5 hours or less agreed that they feel they make a difference through their volunteering compared to over 96% of the rest of the groups.

Figure 8.5: Percent of those that agree by hours worked for those that have volunteered in the last year

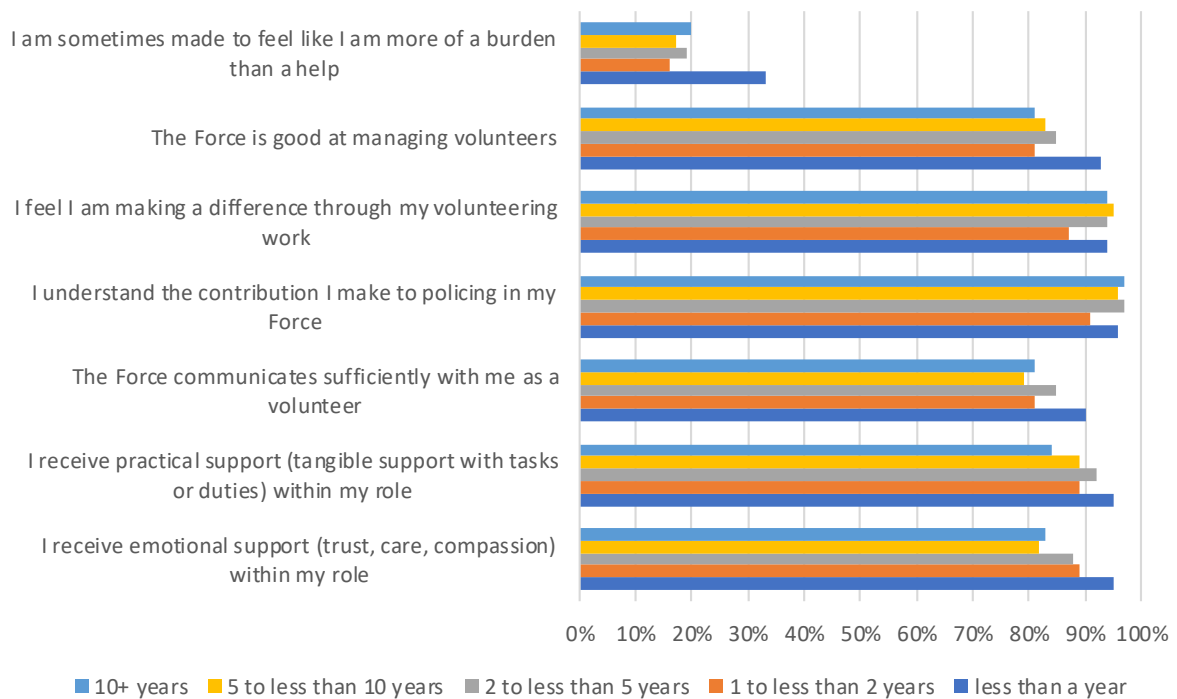


This suggests that when looking at the whole sample, those that have volunteered less than 5 hours have a lower level of agreement with statements because they have not volunteered in the last year (see section 8.8).

8.5 Length of service

Length of service was divided into five categories, less than 1 year (11%), 1 to less than 2 years (14%), 2 to less than 5 years (39%), more than 5 years but less than 10 years (20%), More than 10 years (16%). There were some significant differences across the groups in the proportion that **agreed** with some of the statements (see the figure below). It shows that those that had served less than a year tended to be the most positive group i.e. they were most likely to agree that they receive emotional and practical support, the force communicates sufficiently, and the force is good at managing volunteers. However, they were also more likely to agree that they were sometimes made to feel like more of a burden than a help (33%) compared to 16-20% of those in the other length of service categories.

Figure 8.6: Percent of volunteers that agreed with statements by length of service



In terms of the proportion that strongly agreed with statements those that had volunteered for a year were more likely to strongly agree that they receive emotional support, the force communicates sufficiently with them and the force is good at managing volunteers (reflecting the pattern of agreement above). They were also more likely to **strongly agree** that:

- The PSV recruitment process was a positive experience - 44% compared to 37-39% of those that had served 1 to less than 2 years, 2 to less than 5 years and 5 to less than 10 years. Only 23% of those that had served 10+ years strongly agreed but this may simply be a reflection of it having been some time ago.
- They were receiving sufficient ongoing training (45%). Those that had served 1 to less than 2 years and 10+ years were the least likely to strongly agree (25% and 24% respectively)
- The Force is good at managing volunteers, with 49% strongly agreeing compared to 35-40% of those that had served 1 to less than 2 years, 2 to less than 5 years and 5 to less than 10 years. Only 25% of those that had served 10+ years agreed with this statement.

8.6 Differences in morale by agreement with statements relating to volunteer experience

The level of agreement of volunteers that their morale is good was examined dependent on whether they agreed with each of the statements about their experience. All of the statements had a significant relationship with morale but the statements with the strongest relationships to morale are in the figure below². For example, 99% of those that agreed that

²¹ Strengths of association between measures of experience and morale were tested using the Chi-square test. All the measures that are associated with morale in figure 8.7 are significant at the <.001 level and had Phi values that were .411 or above.

they feel valued by their force agreed that they had good morale compared to only 54% of those that disagreed that they feel valued by their Force.

Figure 8.7: Percent of volunteers that agreed that their morale was good by whether they agreed or disagreed with experience statements (contains statements with strongest relationships with morale)



8.7 Key points and implications

As before it is important to note that satisfaction of volunteers is high across the board, but it is important to note any variations in experiences. Points of note are:

- Those that had not volunteered in the last year were less likely to agree with statements than those that had. This is important to note as they represent a third of the sample. This may mean that the pandemic has impacted volunteer likelihood of agreeing with statements, either reducing agreement with statements of those that have not been able to volunteer or elevating agreement amongst those that have been able to volunteer.
- Those that were in their first year of volunteering tended to be more positive than those that had been in volunteering longer as did those aged 39 or below compared to those 40 or above.
- Those with a disability were more positive than those without about their experiences and were more likely to agree that volunteering had a positive impact on their wellbeing. This appears to be a positive finding but would need further investigation to determine any other factors impacting the difference between the groups.
- The relationships between statements and morale particularly highlights the importance of feeling valued and that they are making a difference, perceiving volunteers are managed well, the impact on their wellbeing and feeling part of a team.
- It is worth noting that some groups were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they are sometimes made to feel more like a burden than a help. These groups were non-white volunteers, those 39 or under, non-heterosexual/ straight volunteers, those from a non-Christian religion and those that had served less than a year.

It is important to note when looking at variables such as gender, age etc. that differences that occur may be due to other factors. Therefore, further analysis would need to be

conducted to determine whether there are other factors interacting with a particular variable (e.g. gender), which may be responsible for the variation between groups on that variable (such as age, length of service, type of role and so on).

9. Conclusions

The results from the survey of PSVs are predominantly positive. This reflects similarly positive patterns of response in previous surveys in 2016 and in 2018. There are some improvements in response in the 2021 survey compared to 2018, which reflect some key enduring strengths for the PSV programmes across forces. This is the largest ever survey of PSVs, and the 17% response rate is positive. In effect, the response rate is higher, given that there will be some 'dormant' PSVs in forces who are in effect not reachable to respond. There is, of course, no way of knowing the degree to which the minority of PSVs who completed the survey are representative of PSVs as a whole. Nevertheless, 1,305 responses from PSVs represents a large and a strong voice for volunteers in policing provided through this survey.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact across PSV programmes. A sizeable proportion (a third) of respondents had not volunteered in the past year, and the majority who had undertaken some volunteering reported disrupted and reduced patterns of volunteering, with PSV programmes suspended for periods of time. The challenges will be to effectively re-engage with PSVs and to rebuild programmes, whilst also learning from some of the good practice reflected in the survey responses in terms of models of communication and role development with volunteers from the pandemic period.

In terms of considerations for further improvement for PSV programmes based on the findings, two broad areas emerge across the survey responses:

- A desire by some PSVs for better engagement and utilisation, with one in five PSVs saying they sometimes felt more of a burden than a help. Linked to this, specifically a desire to see improved utilisation of existing skills, a desire to see more opportunities for further training and skill development, and a desire to see a greater range of roles for PSVs to contribute to policing and to their local communities.
- Improvements in culture and communication. PSVs need to be better understood, integrated, and have an improved sense of belonging and of being valued.

Both of these areas of improvement are consistent with issues highlighted by PSVs in previous surveys in 2016 and 2018.

Overall, the message from this survey is – as has been the case with previous surveys of PSVs - a very positive one. A third of PSVs say that their experience as a volunteer has been a lot better than they had expected when joining. A large majority of PSVs feel that they are adding value, describe their morale as high, say they intend to stay, feel valued, feel part of a team with good relationships with others in policing, and feel well recruited, trained, supported, and equipped.



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