

# NATIONAL UNIFORM & EQUIPMENT SURVEY: RESULTS

---



**Key insights:  
Summary of  
findings from  
the 2024 survey**

**October 2025**

**Authors:**

**Dr Camilla De Camargo,  
Dr Stephanie Wallace,  
Lois Fairclough,  
Dr Sahrish Khan,  
Zac Mader,  
Belinda Goodwin,  
& Dr Yuze Sha**

# ACCESS THE FULL REPORT HERE:

---



## National Uniform & Equipment Survey Results

# Table of contents



---

→	01	Executive summary
→	03	Why does It matter?
→	04	Research highlights: demographics & representation
→	05	<b>Key results:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall experience of wearing uniform</li><li>• Variation in experience by force</li><li>• Most problematic uniform items</li><li>• Fit &amp; functionality</li><li>• Value for money &amp; quality</li><li>• Uniform-related wellbeing</li><li>• Uniform-related physical health</li><li>• Female experienced health conditions</li><li>• Male experienced health conditions</li><li>• Uniform complaints</li><li>• Uniform-related sick leave</li><li>• Uniform access &amp; stores</li><li>• Perception of uniform</li><li>• National uniform debate</li><li>• Voices from the front line</li></ul>
→	20	Recommendations
→	22	Contact us

---

# Executive summary



## About the survey

The 2024 National Uniform & Equipment Survey gathered insights from over **20,800** uniformed police officers and staff across England and Wales - the largest survey of its kind to date. The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with the current uniform, described by many as ill-fitting, uncomfortable, and unfit for purpose. Respondents consistently report that the uniform restricts their movement and fails to meet the functional demands of their role.

Critically, the uniform is linked to adverse impacts on health and wellbeing. Over half of respondents said they experience at least one physical health condition they believe has been caused or worsened by their uniform, with women disproportionately affected. Others highlighted impacts mental health, confidence, and morale. Despite these challenges, most complaints about uniform are ignored, with only a small proportion resulting in adjustments or replacements.

The current approach to uniform provision is highly inconsistent across forces, amounting to what many describe as a **“postcode lottery.”** Respondents overwhelmingly believe that uniform decisions are driven by cost at the expense of quality and officer wellbeing. While the uniform remains an essential symbol of professionalism and authority, less than half of respondents feel proud to wear it, and only one in three believe it makes them look smart. There is clear support however, for reform: nearly half of respondents back the introduction of a national uniform standard to address these persistent problems.

“

“Being comfortable in my uniform would change my opinion on policing and be able to conduct my role in a more positive and productive way.”

”



# Executive summary



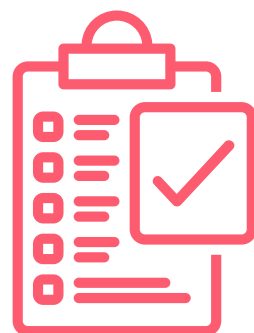
## Key findings at a glance

- 56% report a negative experience wearing uniform; only 20% were positive.
- 51% say uniform is unfit for purpose; 64% say it restricts movement.
- Uniform fails to regulate temperature: 74% report being too hot in summer, 40% were too cold in winter.
- Critical items perform poorly: 69% dissatisfied with cargo trousers, 61% with body armour.
- 62% of men and 85% of women report at least one physical health condition caused/worsened by uniform.
- Complaints are often ignored: 69% see no action taken, with only 8% receiving replacements.
- Only 47% feel proud wearing their uniform, and 37% feel they look smart.
- 48% support the idea of a national uniform.

## Recommendations

Given the findings from the National Uniform & Equipment Survey, the headline recommendations are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** Determine the highest minimum national standards for police uniform.
- **Recommendation 2:** Establish a single point of accountability in the form of a Strategic Uniform Board (SUB).
- **Recommendation 3:** Create a framework to allow better procurement and design of uniform.
- **Recommendation 4:** Improve user experience around the logistics of uniform.
- **Recommendation 5:** Continuous review, feedback and iteration of uniform.



# Why does it matter?



## The uniform is more than just clothing



Uniform symbolises professionalism, authority, and service. It shapes how those in uniform feel about their role, and how the public perceives them. At its best, it supports safety, confidence, and pride. But when poorly designed, it can undermine morale, health, and diminishes public trust.



## Longstanding issues



Evidence of poor workwear and PPE design is widespread across emergency services, and policing is no exception. These issues are often trivialised or dismissed, but over time they erode productivity, workplace culture, and staff retention.



## Building the evidence base



Dr Camilla De Camargo's doctoral research examined the history and design challenges of the police uniform in England and Wales, showing how uniform both reflects and reinforces organisational culture, while often failing to meet wearers' needs. Building on this, Dr De Camargo led the When the Uniform Doesn't Fit project in 2023, using focus groups across five forces to document lived experiences of discomfort, poor fit, and inequity.

The findings from this earlier research have led directly to the commissioning of this first-ever National Uniform & Equipment Survey, developed in collaboration with Dr Stephanie Wallace, the Police Federation of England and Wales, UNISON, the Superintendent's Association, and BlueLight Commercial.



## A unique moment for change



With national policing reforms in progress, more than 46,000 new officers and staff already in place through the Police Uplift, and a further 13,000 being recruited into visible, uniformed roles under the Policing Guarantee, now is the moment to make sure the uniform empowers—rather than restricts—the people who wear it.

# Demographics & representation

**20,838** Responses



**43**

Forces of England & Wales

“

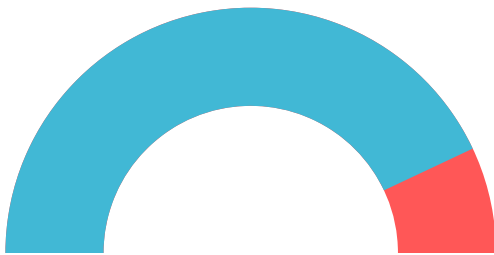
**43,372** free-text responses

”

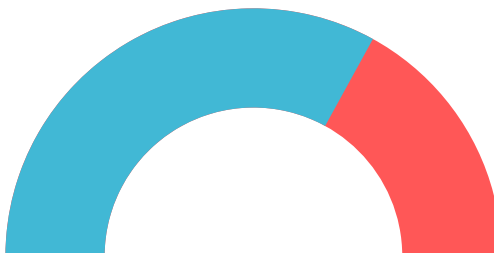
“

- Average age: **37yrs**
- Average time in service: **8 years**

”

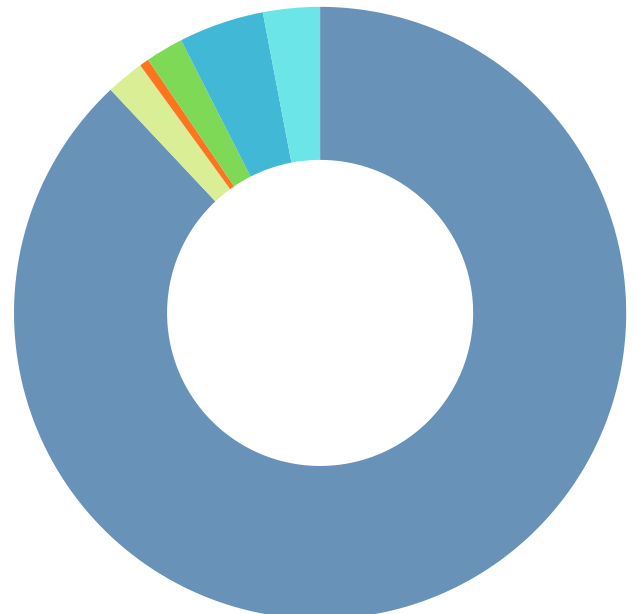


**86% Officers, 14% Staff**



**66% Male, 34% Female**

- White British = 88%
- Asian = 2%
- Black = 0.5%
- Mixed = 2%
- Other = 4.5%
- Prefer not to say = 3%



# Overall experience of wearing uniform

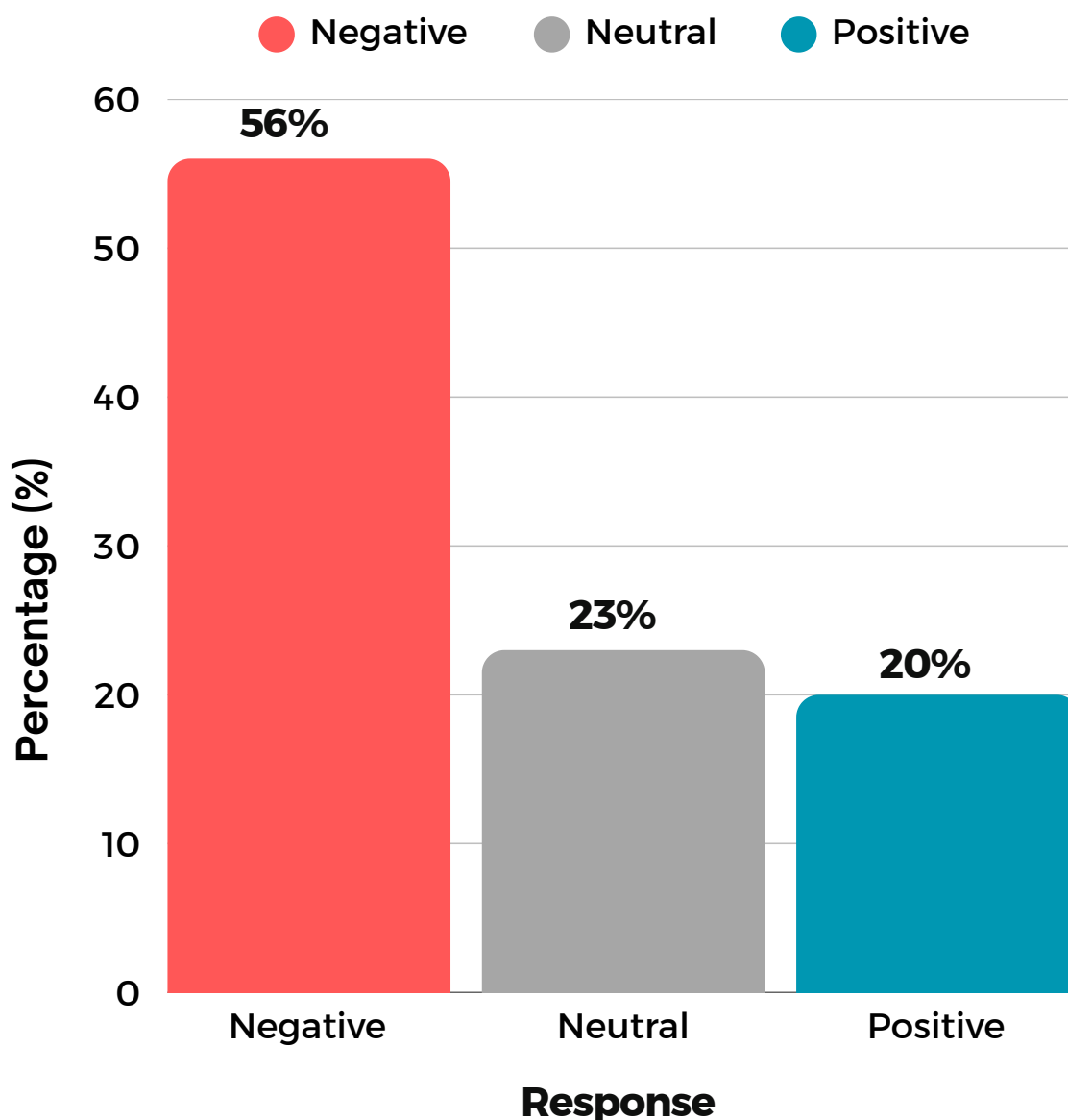


The results of the first National Uniform & Equipment Survey reveal that the overall experience of wearing police uniform in England and Wales is overwhelmingly negative.

The majority (**56%**) of the survey respondents reported their overall experience of wearing the uniform as negative, compared to just 20% that view their experience of wearing the uniform as positive. The remaining 23% remained neutral or did not have an opinion.

The survey results indicate that there are numerous and intersecting factors that contribute to the overall experience of wearing the uniform.

## Overall, how would you rate your experience of wearing uniform?

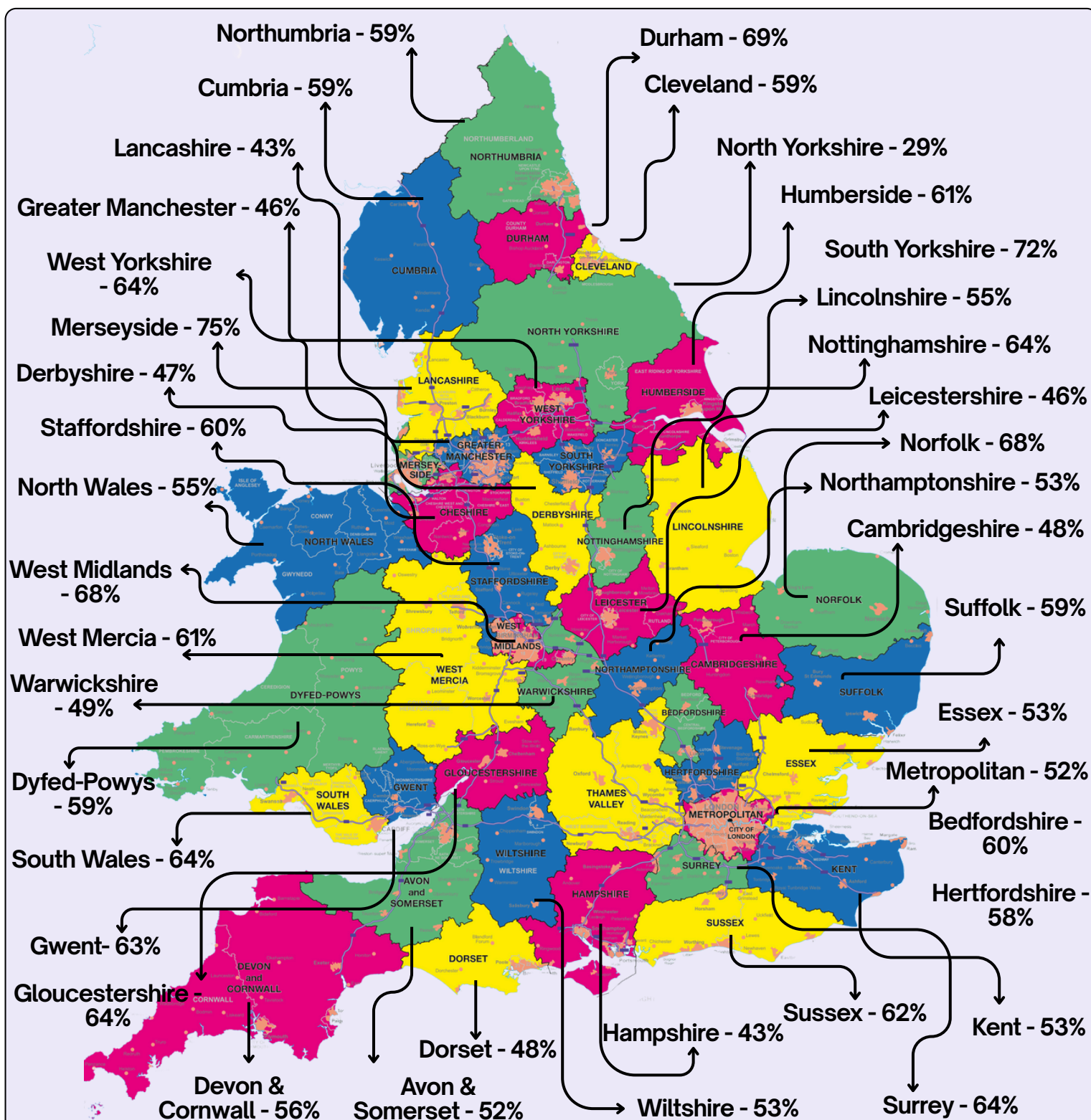




# Variation in experience by force

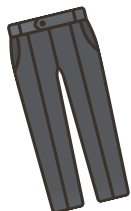


Experiences of wearing the uniform vary across forces, likely reflecting the differences in the quality of uniforms worn between them. For example, over 70% of respondents from Merseyside Police and South Yorkshire Police reported negative experiences of the uniform. This negative experience of uniform is reflected, to a slightly lesser degree, in a further 38 forces, where between 43-69% of respondents expressed negative experiences of wearing the uniform.



Negative response rates to the question: 'Overall, how would you rate your experience of wearing uniform?' by police force (neutral and positive responses not shown).

# Most problematic uniform items



## Cargo trousers & general purpose trousers

- Cargo trousers most frequently identified negative item.
- Worn by 58% of respondents.
- 69% of wearers found them problematic.
- General purpose trousers worn by 15% but rated as negative by 67% of wearers.
- Key issues: poor fit, discomfort, low quality, and restricted movement.
- Findings highlight that trousers may be impractical for operational use and negatively affect both physical and mental wellbeing.

“General-purpose trousers are just awful. Our entire department of women choose to purchase their own due to the shortened crotch.”



## General-Purpose Body Armour (GPBA)

- Second most worn item.
- Worn by 66% of respondents.
- 61% of wearers found problematic.
- Key issues linked to musculoskeletal strain, front-loaded fit and rigidity, and poor accommodation for female wearers and equipment storage.

“I think that it is fairly shocking that in this day and age, female and male officers are expected to wear the same uniform. There is currently no option [in my force] for a female utility vest or female trousers, just all unisex. Ever since starting the job, I have had a bad back from wearing my vest all day and the weight that this puts on my shoulders and back.”



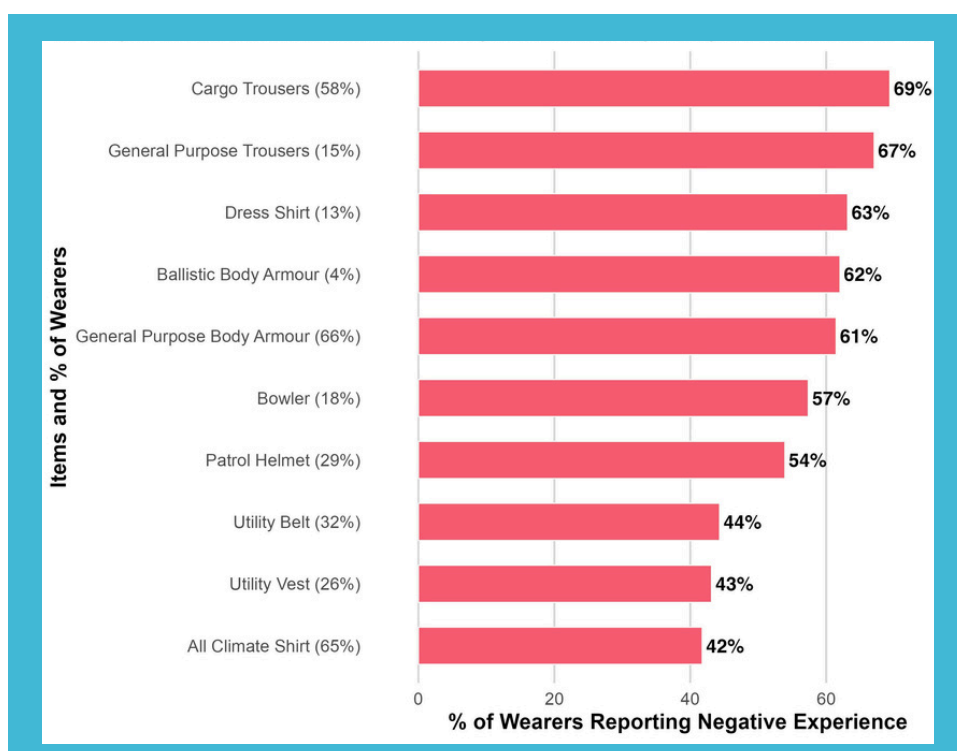
## Utility belt

- Worn by 32% of respondents, 44% reported a negative experience.
- Widely used for equipment carriage
- Some respondents praised the belt for storage capabilities whilst others described it as heavy, impractical, restrictive, and pain-inducing.
- Linked to back and hip pain.

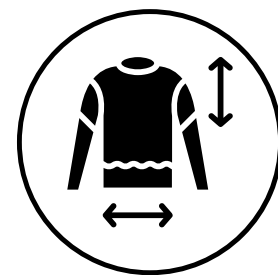
“The utility belt makes it awkward getting in and out of the car and bruises my legs and hips.”

## Most negative items among wearers

Among those who wore the item: % reporting it as contributing to negative experience of uniform



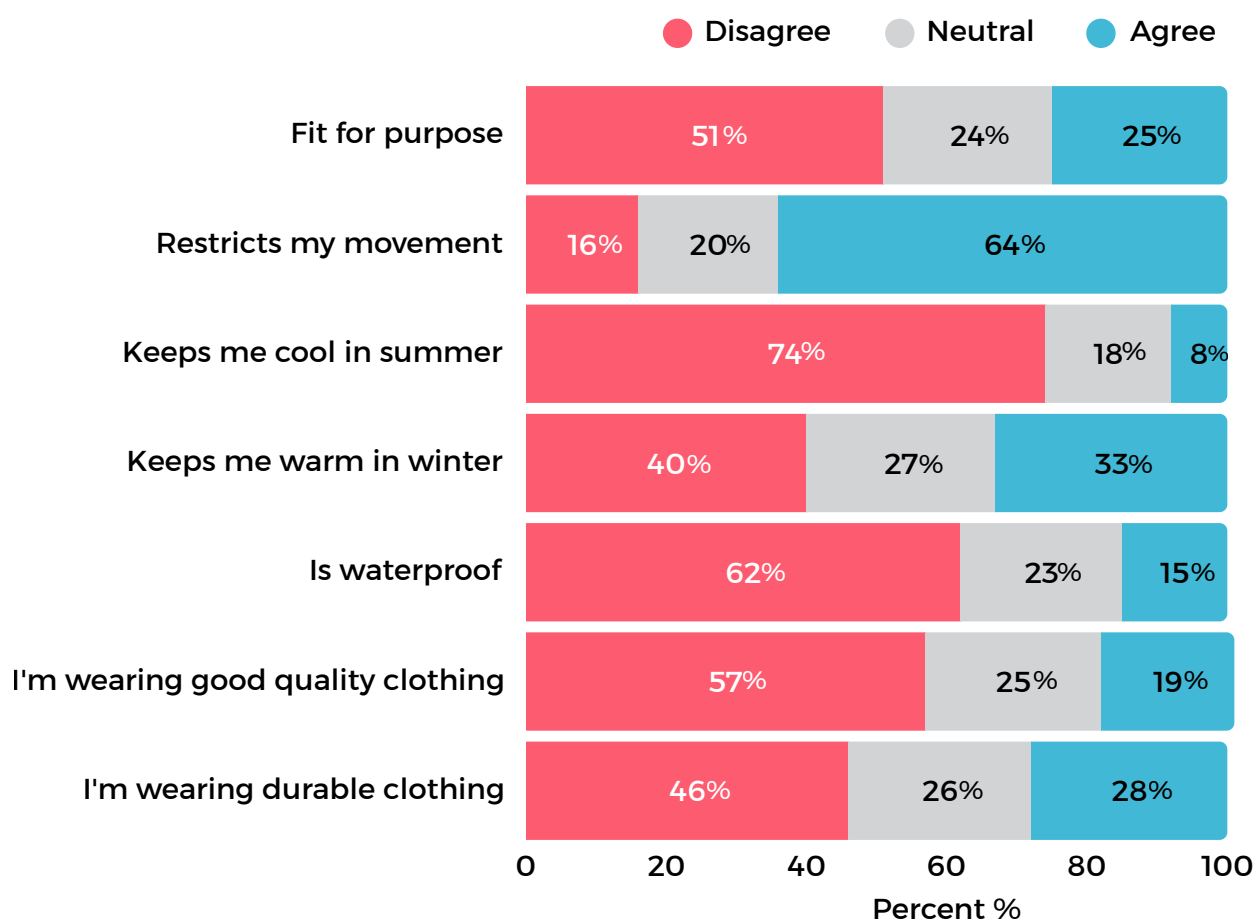
# Fit & functionality



The uniform is a requirement of the job and thus worn for extensive periods of time. It is imperative that it then works well for the individual wearing it. Functionality, therefore, relates to how the uniform performs for that individual and will be affected by their role, level of physical activity in that role, and the tasks they carry out on a daily basis. External factors such as weather can also impact the experience of wearing uniform.

**The majority (51%) disagreed that the uniform was fit for purpose.**

## Uniform functionality ratings



**6 in 10 (64%)** respondents reported that their uniform restricts their movement which makes certain tasks difficult. For those that reported having the highest level (level 5), of physical activity in their role (front line officers, for example) **just under three-quarters (74%)** reported that their uniform restricts their movement, compared to two-thirds (66%) that had a more sedentary role (however those in more sedentary roles also report issues).

“

“The uniform is a requirement of the job - so the force should ensure the uniform is ‘fit for purpose’. I wear it every day and sometimes for shifts that can last 17+ hours. So, it is not right that the uniform is not fit for purpose! It is definitely a reason I would consider moving out of this role.”

”

# Value for money & quality

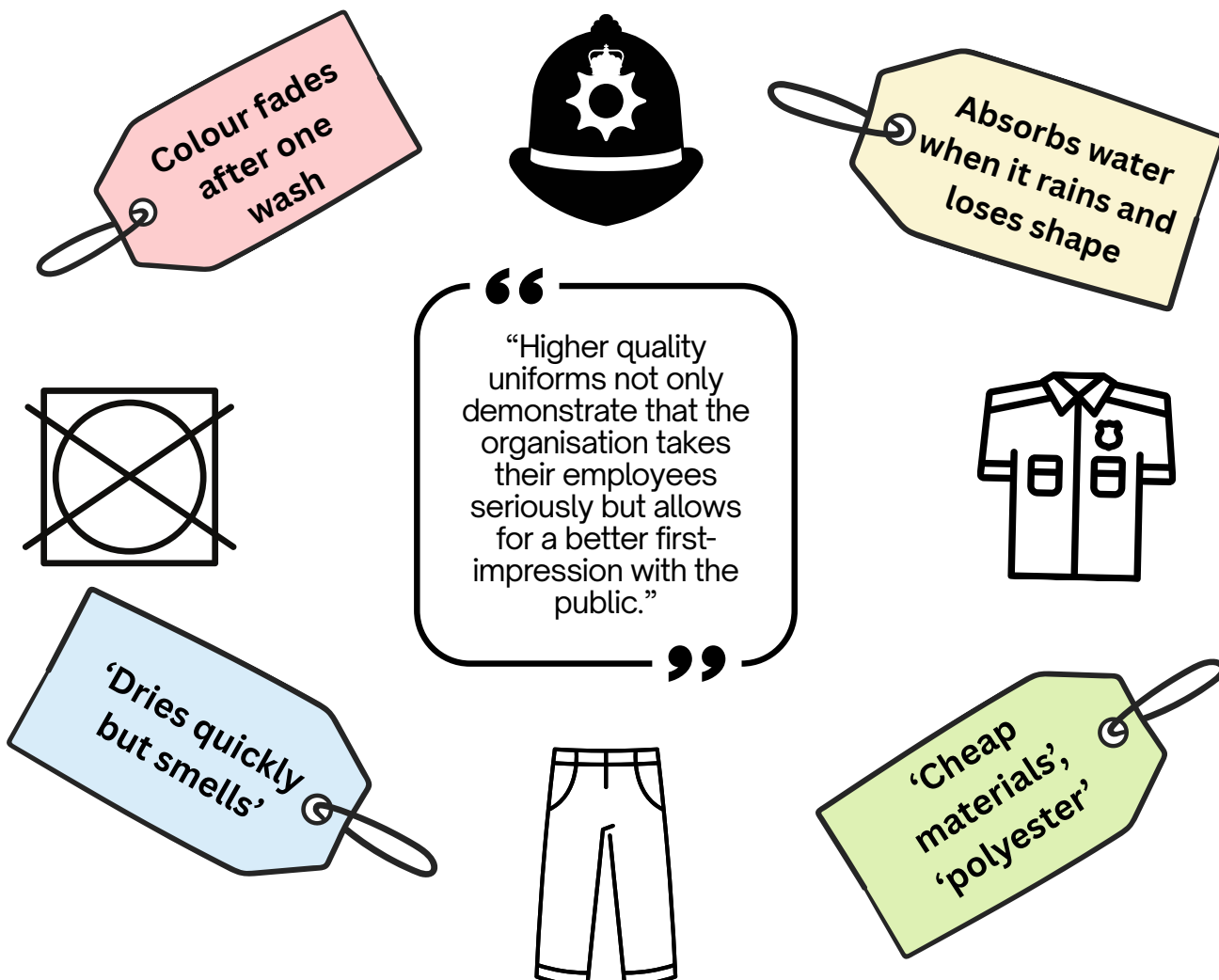


Three quarters of respondents agreed that most uniform decisions are based on cost vs 4% who disagreed.

On the whole, respondents **feel the uniform is not durable (46%) and of poor quality (57%)**, which is reinforced in the comments. Many use the word 'cheap' when discussing the quality of the uniform and the materials used. Quality and cost were recurring themes, with respondents expressing that poor quality and poor durability are the result of the cheapest and lowest quality materials being sourced.

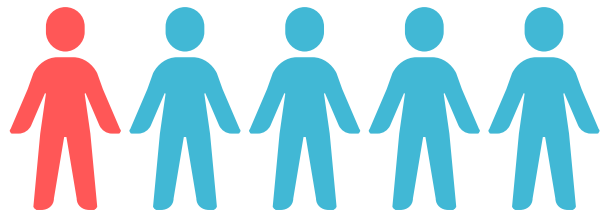
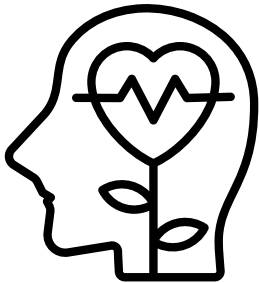
"Whilst cost needs to be considered, if you buy cheap, you buy twice."

Survey comments indicate that investment in better quality clothing from the outset would not only improve workforce morale, but also increase longevity of uniform pieces, and would improve the public's perception of the police.





# Uniform-related wellbeing



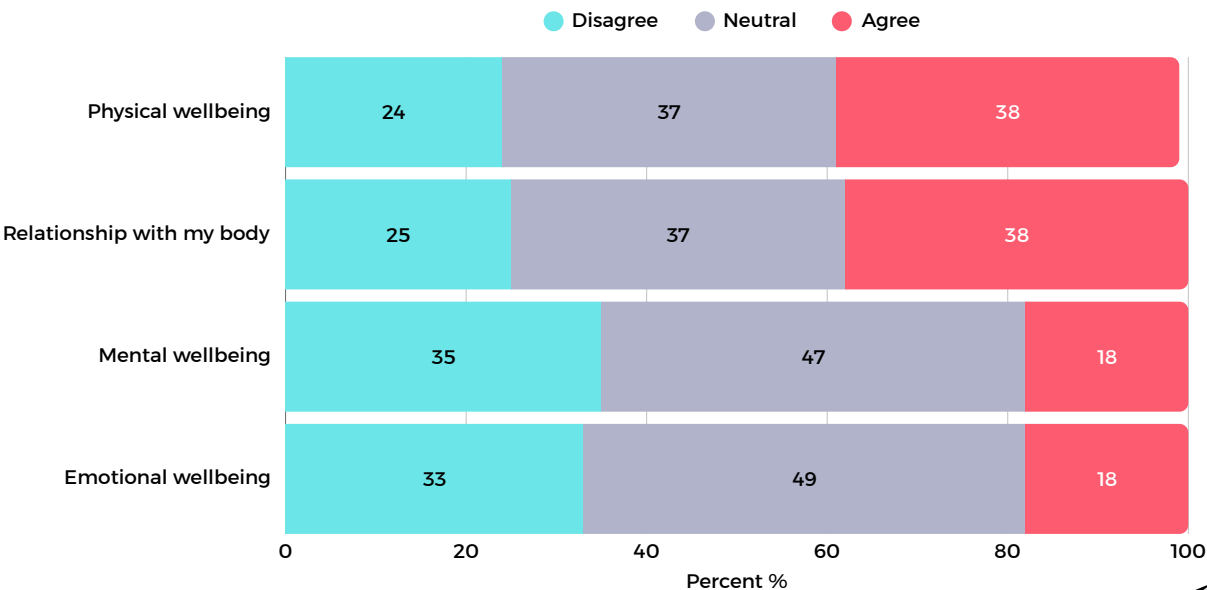
**1 in 5 respondents said uniform impacted their mental wellbeing**

While physical health impacts are more visible, the uniform also takes a serious toll on the mental and emotional wellbeing of those who wear it.

Nearly 1 in 5 respondents (18%) said that wearing their uniform had negatively affected their mental or emotional health.

## Wellbeing and uniform wear

Q. Uniform has affected my...



“Uniform should not be detrimental to an officer’s health and wellbeing. If we can get uniform right, we can reduce sick days, improve motivation and improve officers’ health and wellbeing.”

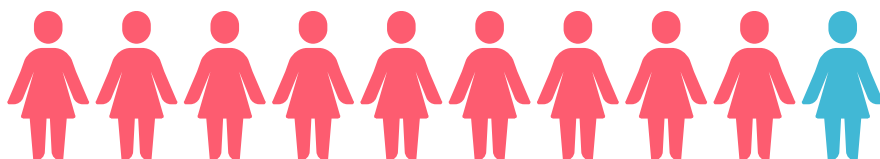
“I am ignored no matter how many times I raise this matter. I am put at risk every day and despite highlighting this on numerous occasions no action is taken - I feel as though my wellbeing and welfare is completely disregarded and I am not important.”



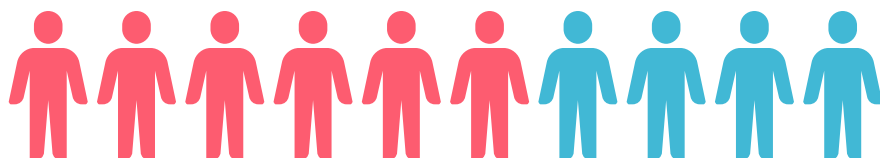
# Uniform-related physical health



**85%** of female respondents reported at least one physical health condition was caused or aggravated by uniform.



**62%** of male respondents reported at least one physical health condition was caused or aggravated by uniform.



On average **57%** of all respondents reported that wearing their uniform has either caused or worsened a physical health condition.



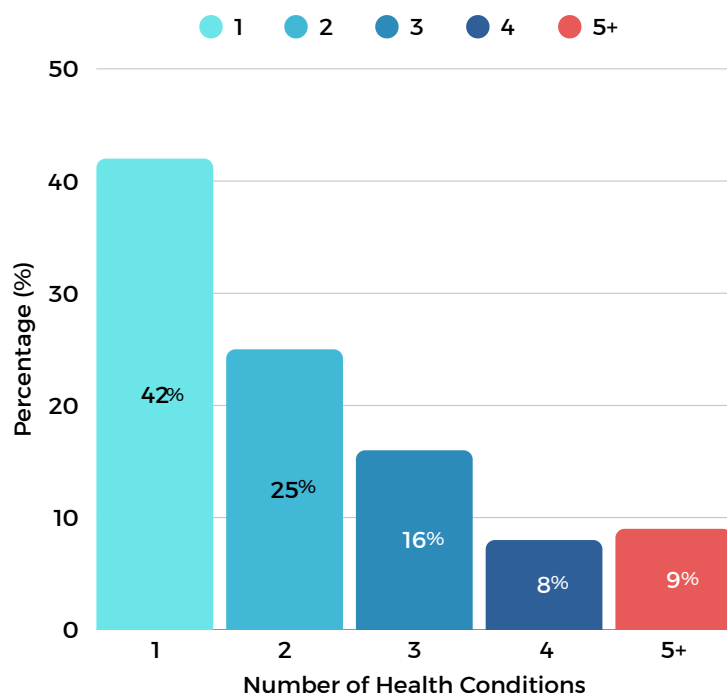
**40%** report they experience these health conditions every day as a result of wearing the uniform.



**38%** reported the uniform had negatively affected their physical wellbeing & their relationship with their body.



## How many conditions do you believe have been caused or made worse by your uniform?



Respondents reported a range of uniform-related health concerns, including:

- Headaches and migraines from headwear (helmets, caps, bowler hats).
- Foot problems (e.g. plantar fasciitis, infections) linked to patrol boots.
- Back pain and musculoskeletal strain from restrictive clothing and heavy PPE.
- Skin issues from non-breathable fabrics.

Overall, ill-fitting, restrictive uniform and equipment goes beyond general discomfort & could lead to long-term health conditions.

# Female experienced health conditions

While this section highlights health conditions reported in relation to female officers and staff experiences of police uniform, these conditions may not be unique to this group. They may also occur across the wider workforce. The categorisation reflects how the issues were raised within the data, rather than suggesting they are restricted to one group.

Females were more likely to report multiple conditions they attribute to wearing the uniform.

1 in 5 reported 3 or more conditions.

38% female wearers reporting thrush and 26% reporting UTIs-made worse during the female menstrual cycle.

55% reported bloating, with comments linking this to the restrictive design of uniform trousers.

Reported trousers as ill-fitting and restrictive, sometimes causing significant discomfort and even injury.

38% reported they experienced crushed breasts due to the fit of body armour. Cysts, mastitis and scar rubbing were also reported.

23% reported musculoskeletal pain.

Female wearers reported ill-fitting PPE causing discomfort, particularly during hormonal changes, highlighting a lack of consideration for women's bodies and health needs.

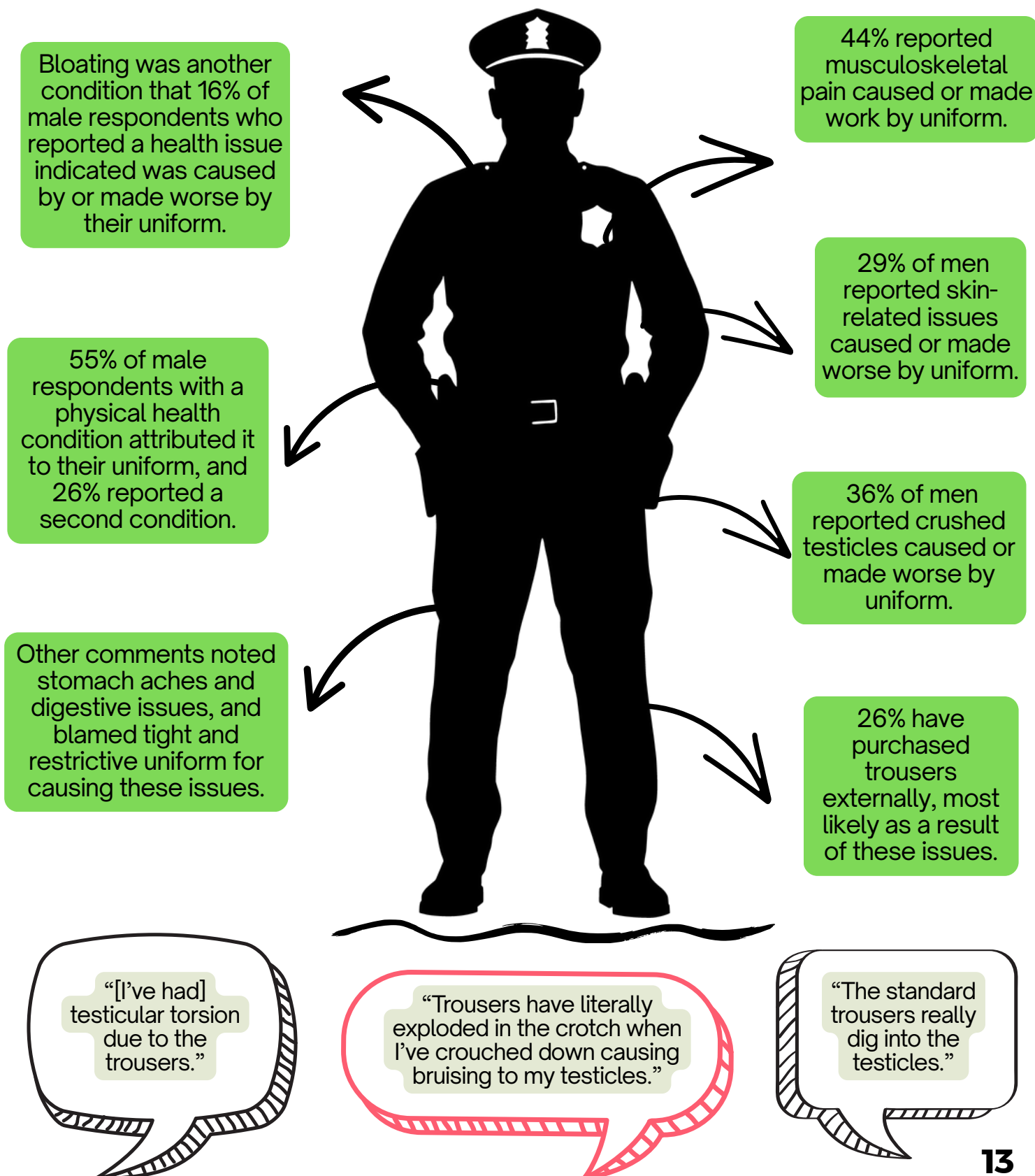
"The current duty trousers dig uncomfortably and painfully into female genitals."

"Crushed vagina, constantly having to stand up to rearrange trousers.... Honestly, if I left my job these would be the number one reason."

"The stab vest doesn't incorporate breasts."

# Male experienced health conditions

While this section highlights health conditions reported in relation to male officers and staff experiences of police uniform, these conditions may not be unique to this group. They may also occur across the wider workforce. The categorisation is used to reflect how the issues were raised within the data, rather than to suggest they are restricted to one group.





# Uniform complaints



## 36 %

of respondents have raised complaints with their line manager about their uniform.

## 69 %

of respondents have raised complaints reported no action was taken.

In some instances, individuals were allowed to wear or purchase alternative clothing, though reimbursement often appeared to be at the discretion of individual managers or forces. While some complaints were heard by immediate line managers, they were either denied or not acted upon when escalated to senior management. Many respondents reported feeling powerless in these decisions.

### Frustration with complaints

- 790 comments expressed frustration about uniform issues.
- 19% considered complaining but chose not to.
- When asked why, many felt complaints would be futile and not lead to meaningful change.
- Uniform issues often viewed as structural/systemic, not individual problems.

**Uniform complaints consistently trivialised.**

### Complaint outcomes

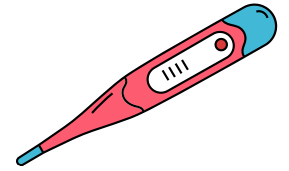
- Most common outcome: no action taken (51–86% of cases).
- Only 4–20% led to a uniform change or adjustment.
- 1–27% resulted in an occupational health referral.
- 7–29% reported other outcomes, often unresolved or still under review.

**Significant inconsistency across forces, with many issues unaddressed.**

### Impact on career decisions

- 5% have considered leaving policing entirely due to uniform.
- 5% chose specific roles because of the uniform.
- 9% unsure if uniform influenced career choices.
- However, 51% said uniform had **no role** in career decisions.

# Uniform-related sick leave



1 IN 20

5% of respondents said they had taken sick leave as a direct result of wearing the uniform.

48 %

of all respondents recognise the uniform has affected them negatively but did not lead them to take time off work because of it.

717 =

Comments linked sick leave to uniform and equipment.

407 =

Comments specifically mentioned back pain and/or injury.

345 =

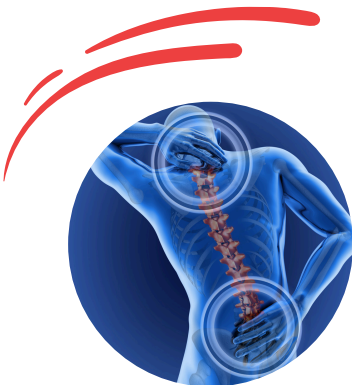
Comments referring to body armour or stab/tactical vest in reasons for sick leave.



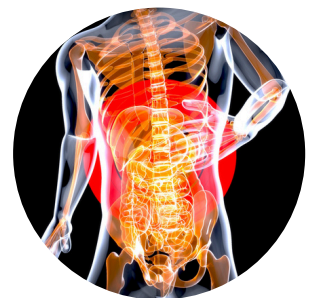
Female wearers reported breast pain, stomach issues, 37 UTIs, 20 IBS, 18 thrush; many described embarrassment and reluctance to raise these issues, despite 85% being affected and 42% experiencing symptoms on a daily basis.



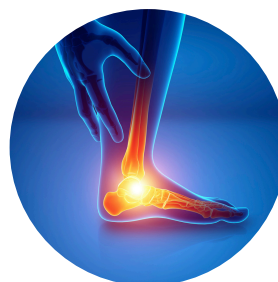
Foot problems also noted, incl. plantar fasciitis and general foot pain, with boots cited 36 times as a cause.



"I have had persistent lower back pain, which has led to being unhappy due to pain. I did not take time off work as I could still turn up to work, albeit in pain, and help colleagues. It didn't feel right to abandon them."



"I have experienced repeated UTIs which are exacerbated by trousers worn every day...wouldn't mention this to my Sergeant at the time as he was male."



"After wearing the patrol boots issued by the police and patrolling the streets with them, I developed plantar fasciitis."

"I have been diagnosed with costochondritis due to the tightness of the body armour..."

# Uniform access & stores



The majority of wearers (83%) were initially fitted by uniform stores, while 17% self-measured or measured externally and submitted their sizes. Some respondents reported that fitting services were unavailable in their force, suspended during Covid-19, or limited due to Police Uplift resource pressures:

- “No fitting or measuring provided, you just try some on and go from there.”
- “Too many new officers meant no slots were available.”

➤ **50%**

of respondents said obtaining new or replacement uniform items was somewhat or extremely difficult, compared with 31% who found it somewhat or extremely easy.

➤ **19%**

Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) survey respondents waited over 3 months for replacement uniform.

➤ **56%**

Over half (56%) visited uniform stores, but 32% could not get items in their size.

➤ **1 IN 10**

12% did not know visiting stores was possible, while a further 12% said it was no longer an option to attend stores, or they were not allowed (8%).



Some reported positive experiences (helpful, friendly staff).

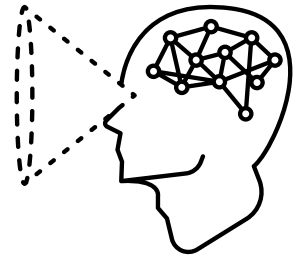


Some reported negative experiences (reluctant staff, long waits, restrictive points system).



- Mixed experiences: staff described as helpful but also reluctant to issue items.
- Difficulties with appointments and non-standard requests.
- Points system seen as restrictive, leaving some without replacements.
- Provision described as a “**postcode lottery**”, impacting morale and wellbeing.

# Perception of uniform



## When wearing the uniform:

**51% felt they look professional.**

**47% felt proud, however 1 in 5 (22%) did not.**

**34% felt they 'did not look smart'.**



Respondents reported that the poor fit of some uniform items, made them feel unprofessional, 'scruffy' and self-conscious.



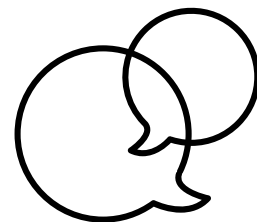
"The current uniform looks unprofessional/looks old and behind the times – Members of the public are often commenting on this."

"The fit is appalling, unprofessional and I [can't] bear to be seen in public looking so bad."





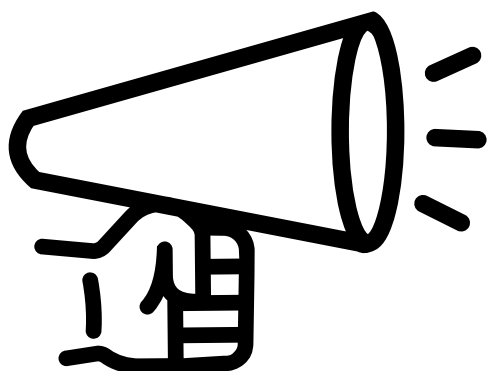
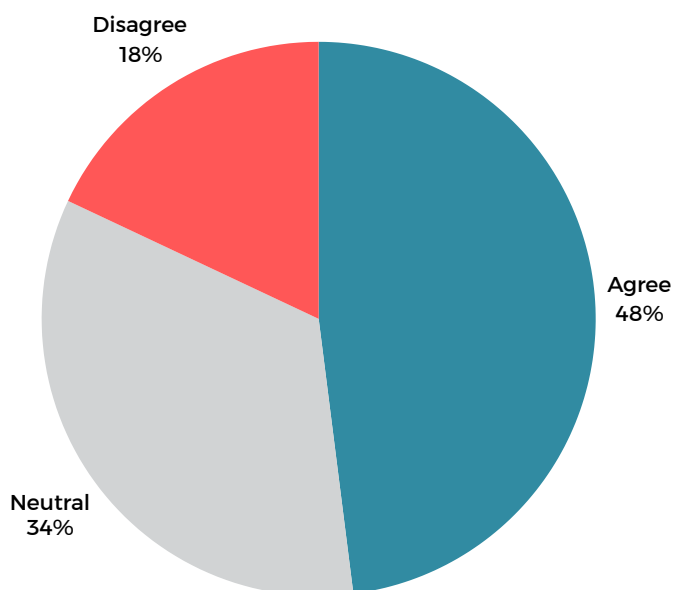
# National uniform debate



Support for a national uniform is inconclusive. Nearly half of respondents (48%) backed the idea, with just 18% opposed. Many of the 34% who were undecided indicated their position would depend on improvements to quality, comfort, and role suitability. For most, this debate is not about appearance alone, it reflects deeper concerns about equity, consistency, and professional standards.

Respondents described a **"postcode lottery"** in uniform provision, where access to high-quality kit varies dramatically between forces. For many, standardisation offers a route to fairness and cohesion, ensuring all officers and staff are treated with equal dignity, regardless of location or role. However, despite these potential benefits, implementing a national uniform is complex and will require coordinated leadership.

## Thoughts on introducing a national uniform



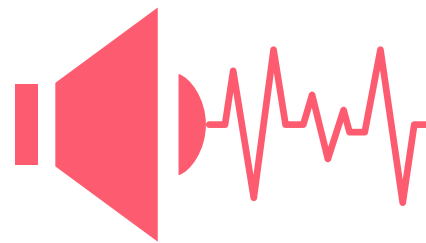
"Every force looks different... as if we're competing with each other. A national uniform would give us pride and unity."

"Please advocate for our archaic uniform standards to be replaced with modern, practical solutions... a standardised uniform across all organisations would mean less disparity."

"Please develop kit with the officers who have to wear them day in and day out but also in conjunction with specialist companies."

The message is clear: officers and staff want uniform that works, that is fit for purpose, fit for form, and fit for the future.

# Voices from the front line



“Higher quality uniforms not only demonstrate that the organisation takes their employees seriously but allows for a better first-impression with the public.”

“Uniform does not translate well over to those who are in office jobs - it may be practical for more physical exercise but is not for internal work. The uniform has created long lasting effects on me both mentally and physically to a point where it is a key reason I am actively trying to leave the force.”

“I would honestly enjoy my job more if the uniform was better.”

“We wear our uniform for ten hours a day. It should fit correctly and be comfortable whether we are sitting, standing, driving or walking.”

“I feel nothing would change [if I did complain] and I would have to continue to wear it anyway.”



“Response policing is inherently often a very physical and demanding role, police uniform should assist with this and not hinder it.”

“[I’ve] definitely gotten skin cysts from the pressure of wearing the armour, because when I’ve stopped wearing it for an extended period I get far less. Bruising of ribs from body armour pressing against lowest rib after multiple days of running in it.”

“I really hope this survey is not just a tick box exercise, because if these changes were implemented it would quite literally change my working life, my mental well-being, finances and my physical health.”

“I cannot move about easily and it restricts my leg movement and effects my physical ability, which makes me feel less safe and at a disadvantage.”

“There is nothing I feel they would be able to action as this is the set uniform standards. So many people have issues with it, it is almost expected to just get on with it as this is what we are working with.”

“I have extreme back pain that only occurred once I started wearing the uniform. I get the worst pain in my ovaries as the band of the cargo pants has no elastic and presses into them.”



# Recommendations

## 1. Set national minimum standards

Establish clear, evidence-based national standards for all uniform items and PPE. These must account for:

- Functionality, comfort, and role-based flexibility.
- Inclusivity across gender, body type, and protected characteristics.
- Operational effectiveness, professionalism, and visual identity.

Develop national guidelines for climate suitability, durability, layering, and smart textiles. Standards should be reviewed every three years.

## 2. Create a strategic uniform board

A permanent Strategic Uniform Board (SUB) should be established to lead national uniform reform. This body should include:

- Representatives from the Police Federation, UNISON, and GMB.
- EDI, health, and sustainability experts.
- Procurement professionals and uniform designers.
- Frontline officers, staff, and force stores managers.

The Board should have formal authority to review and approve national designs, issue standards, and coordinate procurement.

## 3. Transform procurement and supplier relationships

Move away from lowest-cost models toward ethical, sustainable, and value-driven procurement. Require all suppliers to meet:

- Ethical and environmental sourcing standards.
- Inclusive design protocols (gender-fit, adjustability, breathability).
- Durability testing and field trials.

Use collective bargaining power to secure better contracts and reduce costs through bulk purchasing and shared design specifications.

“Please help us find better kit and make us happy.”

# Recommendations

## 4. Improve access, fitting and logistics

Uniform access must be consistent, responsive, and inclusive. All forces should:

- Provide accessible fitting and re-fitting appointments (including after maternity/sick leave).
- Establish uniform wardrobes or try-on hubs at main stations.
- Offer digital portals for reordering, tracking, and feedback.
- Ensure sufficient allocation of core items (no more “2 pairs for 6 days”).


Stores staff must be trained in EDI, trauma-informed approaches, and occupational health considerations.

## 5. Embed continuous feedback and accountability

Uniform performance must be routinely reviewed, not just in crisis. Forces should:

- Introduce anonymous feedback channels for all uniformed staff.
- Monitor physical and mental health data linked to uniform and kit.
- Include uniform satisfaction metrics in wellbeing surveys.
- Ensure complaint pathways are stigma-free and acted upon.

The SUB should produce an annual Uniform Equity Report, summarising findings, feedback, and updates.




“I welcome this survey as an opportunity to voice my discomfort and hope it brings about positive change for my colleagues and I.”

## Closing STATEMENT

This survey makes it clear: uniform matters. It affects not only appearance, but also performance, safety, health, and wellbeing. Officers and staff are calling for meaningful change.

This is a crucial moment for national reform. Police uniform must be fit for purpose, fit in form, and ready for the future.



# Contact us

---



Email:

impactofuniform@gmail.com or  
ResearchandDataCollection@polfed.org



Link to full  
report:

[National Uniform Survey Results](#)



QR Code to  
full report:

