Understanding voluntary resignations from the police service

Using semi-structured interviews to analyse police officers' decisions to voluntarily resign from the police service in England and Wales.

Key details

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Police region	South East
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	September 2021
Date due for completion	May 2024

Research context

In England and Wales, Home Office data (2022) indicated that there were 3,433 voluntary resignations in the year ending March 2022, a rise of 72% on figures from the previous year and a rise of 196% since the year ending March 2012 (Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016; Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2022). Put another way, 2.45% of the total police population voluntarily resigned in the year ending March 2022, while this figure was 0.86% of the total police population in the year ending 2012.

There is currently very little academic literature which examines the issue of why officers resign from the service despite a growing number of voluntary resignations within the police service of England and Wales.

This research will aim to more fully understand and appreciate the pressures of the policing working environment, the changing nature of crime and policing and the impact of these issues upon the wellbeing and job satisfaction of police officers. It will also aid policing organisations on how to address the rise in voluntary resignations. This research builds on previous research undertaken by the researchers which involved one police force area but this time has a national approach and is open to police leavers from all forces within England and Wales.

Aim

To evaluate the key and influential motivations behind the decision to resign from the police service.

Objectives

- To assess the attitudes of police leavers towards the policing organisation and the nature of police work.
- To consider the impact of informal policing cultures on job satisfaction amongst previously employed police officers.
- To analyse the potential for organisational changes which may reduce voluntary resignations.

Research methodology

This research involves 62 semi-structured interviews which were conducted with police officers who had voluntarily resigned from the police service within England and Wales since January 2021.

Individuals were recruited in two ways.

1. Responding to an advertisement included in a leavers questionnaire sent by the Police Federation
2. Responding to requests for participants posted by the researchers on Twitter and LinkedIn.

Ethical approval for the research was provided by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Board at the University of Portsmouth. The data is being analysed using Nvivo software.