

## **Summary of Key Findings**

### **Caring for and about those who serve: Work-life and employee well being within Canada`s Police Departments**

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This study seeks to focus attention on the important topics of work-life conflict and role overload within Canadian police organizations. More specifically we seek to identify mechanisms by which role overload and work-life conflict can be reduced or prevented within police organizations in Canada. It is our hope that this research will significantly increase the profile of work-life conflict and role overload as serious workplace health issues within police forces today. It is also our hope that the results of this study will make it possible for interested stakeholders and policy makers within Canadian police organizations to generate practical steps that can be taken by organizations and employees to minimize role overload and its harmful consequences.

This study is part of a much larger study of work-life and employee well-being issues being conducted by the authors (the 2011-12 National Work-Life and Employee Well-being Study). In total 25 police forces across Canada participated in this study. Just over 7000 (n = 7091) worn officers and civilian employees of police forces across Canada took part in this study. This report focuses on the responses given by the 4500 police officers who answered the survey. A second report will focus on the responses given by the 2500 civilian members of the police who responded to the survey.

### **Demographic Profile: Canada's Police Officers**

#### **The typical Canadian police officer is a male Gen X'er with the rank of Constable**

The majority of police officers in this sample (75%) are males between the age of 30 and 45 (i.e. 56% of the sample are in the Gen X cohort). Only 8% of the sample are less than 35 years of age (i.e. Gen Y) while one in three (36%) are Baby Boomers (i.e. over the age of 45).

Two-thirds of the respondents are Constables, 16% are Sergeants, 6% Staff Sergeants, and 15% in Command positions. This distribution by rank is reflective of police forces across Canada.

#### **The sample is geographically well distributed**

The sample is geographically well distributed. While a majority of the respondents (51%) live in Ontario, a substantial proportion (23%) live in the Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and 13% live in British Columbia. Other respondents live in the Maritimes (3%) or the North (1%). Only 1% live in Quebec.

### **Most police officers today have tertiary education**

Higher levels of education have been linked to increased professionalism of police officers and a greater demand for career development and training. Police officers today have more formal education than they did two decades ago. While the number of police officers with a college diploma (33%) has not changed over time, the number with a university degree has more than doubled in the last ten years with 38% of the police officers in our sample reporting at least one university degree. The rest of the officers in this sample (29%) have a high school education. Police forces have to change how they manage to accommodate this change in education.

### **Police officers are very well paid**

Police officers are very well paid. Virtually no one in the sample earns below \$60,000 per year (2%) and relatively few (9%) earn less than \$80,000 per year. Half the sample (52%) earn between \$80,000 and \$99,000 and 38% earn \$100,000 or more. By comparison, the modal *family* income in Canada in 2010 as reported by Statistic Canada was \$65,000 per year.

### **Most police officers live in families where money is not an issue**

While the majority of the respondents (46%) live in families where money is not an issue, one in five say that in their families money is tight. The rest (34%) indicated that while they can live comfortably on their family's financial resources, they do not have money for extras.

### **Many police officers work a rotating shift**

Many of the officers in the study perform shift work— a finding that is not surprising given the need for officers to be available 24/7. While just under half (44%) of the sample work a fixed day shift (i.e. 9 to 5 workday), the majority work some kind of shift schedule (14% work a fixed shift and 42% work a rotating shift). Also important to note is the high degree of variability in the shifts worked (52% of the sample work two or three different shift patterns while 31% work four or more different shift patterns a month) and the fact that the two most common shift lengths are 10 hours (39%) and 12 hours (41%).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Shiftwork**

The high use of long, ever changing, shift arrangements within police departments is a cause for concern given the empirical evidence (from this study and others) linking shift work to disruption in biorhythms, physical and mental health problems, exhaustion, as well as challenges with respect to work life balance, and problems at home. Police departments need to determine how to increase the amount of control employees have over their shift schedules. Strategies that have worked in other organizations include empowering “teams” to arrange the schedule within the group and allowing individuals to “exchange shifts” within their group after the shift schedule has been set. Decreasing the frequency with which shift schedules are changed (i.e. longer periods between rotation) and shortening the length of shifts should also be explored.

### **Many police officers have to balance heavy work demands with high demands at home**

Virtually all the police officers in the sample were married or living with a partner (85% married, 6% single, 9% divorced) and had children living at home (78%). While just under one in four (22%) of the respondents do not have children, 15% have one child, 41% have two children and one in four (23%) have three or more children.

Many of the police officers in this sample (28%) have children under the age of five (preschoolers) and as such are at higher risk with respect to work-life conflict. Just under half the sample (42%) are parents to adolescents (children age 5 to 12) and one in three (35%) have teen age children (13 to 18) and/or children older than 18 (35%).

Two thirds of the respondents had responsibility for the care of one or more elderly dependents and 13% were part of the “sandwich group” as they had to balance work, childcare and eldercare.

### **Many officers are also responsible for the care of at least one elderly dependent**

Eldercare responsibilities are bi-modally distributed within the sample. While 34% of the police officers in this sample report that they have no responsibility for an elderly dependent, 33% say that they are responsible for the care of 3 or more elderly dependents. The rest of the sample have responsibility for one (15%) or two (18%) elderly dependents.

### **One in five police officers cope with the demands of the job by not having children**

While the majority of respondents (70%) indicated that their work had not impacted the number of children that they had, almost one in five (17%) agreed that they had had fewer children because of their work.

### **Most police officers today are married to highly educated professionals**

The irregularity of the hours and the nature of the work often requires police officers to give priority to their work role. This is easier in families where the police officer has a partner who assumes primary responsibility for family role responsibilities. Unfortunately our data indicates that this is not the case for the majority of the police officers in our sample, 66% of whom are married to highly educated managers and professionals. Only 11% have a partner who stays at home full time while 15% say that their partner is employed in a clerical position.

### **Most police officers are part of a dual career family**

Half the police officers in the sample (49%) are part of a dual-career family (i.e. both partners in highly paid but demanding "white collar"/ professional positions). Almost one in four (22%) live in *dual-income: male primary breadwinner families* while 11% are part of a what has been referred to as a *"traditional" family* (i.e. male works, partner stays home). In both of these family types the police officer is considered to be the primary breadwinner within the family. Finally, ten percent of the respondents are in *dual income - female primary breadwinner families* where the women is the primary breadwinner.

### **Many police officers live in families where the role of breadwinner is shared**

While half (54%) of the police officers in this sample stated that they were the primary breadwinner in their family the rest either said that responsibilities were shared in their family (41%) or that their spouse was the primary breadwinner (4%).

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Being the breadwinner**

Analysis of our data show that police officers who are in families where breadwinning responsibilities are shared seem to be better off with respect to role overload, feeling overwhelmed with the amount they have to do at work and at home (i.e. time crunched) and work-life balance than their counterparts who have primary responsibility for the breadwinner role. Unfortunately, the culture of most police organizations does not support the dual career family type as they expect officers to put work first and maintain a separation between work and family domains - something that is more problematic when one has a partner who contributes significantly to the financial well-being of the family. These data support the need for police organizations to focus on changing their culture to accommodate changes in Canadian society.

### **Many police officers live in families where the role of caregiver is shared**

Half of the police officers in the sample stated that in their family their partner has primary responsibility for childcare. Responsibility for childcare is shared in just over one in four (27%) families and 20% of the police officers in the sample had primary responsibility for childcare in their family.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Caregiving**

Analysis of our data show that police officers who have the responsibility for childcare in their families seem to be at disadvantage to those without such responsibilities (i.e. higher demands at home, higher interfere from family to work. The fact that these individuals have higher demands at home combined with a workplace culture that values putting work first and a job that gives them little control over their job or their hours of work means that officers in this group (many of whom are female officers) have to put family first and career second. These data support the need for police organizations to focus on changing their culture to accommodate societal changes with respect to family type and responsibilities for childcare and breadwinning.

### **Police forces have traditionally experienced very little turnover of staff**

Two-thirds of the police officers in this sample (64%) have been with their current organization for 11 or more years and an additional 21% have been with their current police force for 6 to 10 years. Only 15% of sample have been with their current police force for 5 years or less.

## **Implications of low turnover for Canadian police forces**

The fact that most police officers have worked for their current force for more than a decade has several important implications for police forces in Canada. First, the lack of turnover means that most police forces are likely to have an entrenched organizational culture. Second, many police forces have a high number of people in their workforce who are “survivors” of the downsizing of the 90's. Survivors have been found to be less loyal and trustful of senior management. This may make it hard for police forces to successfully implement the types of transformational change needed to thrive in a seller's market for labour. Finally, the relatively low number of police officers with 6 to 10 years of work experience indicates that police forces across Canada are likely to experience succession planning issues within the next several years

## **Very little career mobility within Canadian police forces**

Just under half (42%) of the police officers in the sample have been in their current job for 4 or more years. While one in three (35%) have been in their current job for 2 or 3 years only 24% can be considered to be relatively new to their job (been in their position for a year or less). These data suggest that there is little career mobility within Canada's police force.

## **Conclusions and recommendations: Career development**

The time in current job data are worrisome as research on career development has found that the more time an individual spends in the same job the more likely they are to feel frustrated with their ability to meet their career aspirations and career potential. This is likely to be particularly problematic given the increased number of police officers with territory education and the high proportion of officers in the Gen X cohort. It is suggested that police forces examine ways to increase job mobility and career development. Suggestions in this area include a tenure system and secondments to other forces.

## **Prevalence of key predictors of overload and stress in Canadian police organizations**

### **Police officers devote long hours to work**

Police officers devote long hours to work. Three-quarters of the officers in our sample (78%) work more than 45 hours per week. Two thirds (64%) cannot get everything done during work hours and take work home to complete outside of their regular hours on evenings and weekends (a phenomena which is referred to as supplemental work at home or SWAH). These officers spend another 6.7 hours in work per week (i.e. donate a work day's worth of time a week to the force). Respondents also spend an average of 4.3 hours per week in work related commuting.

In summary, the typical police officer in the sample spends 53.5 hours in work per week overall (including supplemental work at home and commuting) and as such can be considered to be high risk with respect to high work-life conflict, stress, depressed mood, absenteeism and poorer physical health.

### **Many police officers are married to people who work as hard as they do**

Half of the police officers in this sample (52%) are married to people who work spend as many hours in paid employment as they do (i.e. more than 45 hours per week). Furthermore, a majority (59%) have partners who take work home to complete outside of their work regular hours (e.g. evenings and weekends). These partners spend approximately 8 hours in SWAH per week.

The rest of the police officers in the sample were the primary breadwinner in their family and had partners who worked significantly fewer hours per week than they did.

### **Police officers are highly dependent on e-mail to stay connected to work**

Virtually all the police officers in the sample spend time each work day (97%) and non-work day (79%) reading and responding to work-related e-mail. On average, police officers in this sample spend 2.3 hours in e-mail communication on work days and an hour a day on their days off.

### **While most feel that technology has not impacted them (either positively or negatively)**

The majority of the police officers in the sample do not feel that work extension technology has impacted the amount of stress they are under (66% reported no change), the amount of work they do each day/their workloads (56% reported no change), and their ability to balance and family (70% reported no change).

### **...A substantive number of the respondents report challenges because of technology**

Just over one in four (28%) of the police officers in this sample said that their use of work extension technology has increased the amount of stress they are under and the amount of work they do each day/their workloads (37%) while 15% reported that the technology made it harder for them to balance work and family demands, approximately the same percent (17%) who felt that the technology had enhanced their ability to balance competing work and family demands.

### **The majority of police officers have substantive demands at home**

Just under two thirds (62%) of the police officers spend time each week in childcare and one in five (20%) spend time each week in eldercare. Police officers with children spend an average of 24 hours a week in care or activities with their children. Officers with eldercare spend an average of 7 hours a week in care or activities with their elderly dependents. On average a police officer spends 16 hours per week in dependent care.

### **Police officers rely on their partners for caregiving**

On average the partners of the police officers in the sample spend an average of 32 hours a week in care or activities with their children and nine hours a week in elder care. In other words, their partners spend almost twice the amount of time in dependent care that they do.

## **Key stressors facing police today include dealing with multiple competing demands...**

What are the most common types of stressors within the police environment today? Our study found that the majority of police officers today often experience stress associated with the need to deal with multiple competing complex ever-changing demands simultaneously. The sheer volume of the work (assigned files, phone calls, walk ins, e-mails) is overwhelming and the stress is exacerbated by other people's sense of urgency, unrealistic deadlines, pressures to do a high quality job, the increased complexity of the cases, and a culture that makes it unacceptable to say no. Adding to the stress is the fact that the work itself is emotionally taxing and many worry that they will put others in jeopardy if they cannot get the task done quickly and perfectly.

### **...and understaffing**

The stress caused by these factors is intensified by the fact that a plurality of police officers (40%) face understaffing in their area. Those reporting this form of stress note that officers who leave are not being replaced quickly enough (unfilled positions in the area) and that there is not enough staff coverage in their area to allow people to take breaks during work hours (i.e., lunch, coffee) or to backfill maternity leave, secondments, absenteeism. These data can be used to make the case that "doing more with less" does come at a cost – increased stress and decreased well being of employees who must deal with higher and more complex workloads with either the same (or worse, reduced) staffing complements.

### **The court system and managing public expectations are stressful for one in five**

Other key sources of stress experienced by one in five police officers include managing public expectations (the media and the public), dealing with the court system (attending court when on duty and off duty) and being required to do work that is outside their mandate.

### **Organizational stressors are more problematic for police today than operational stressors**

Four other stressors stand out as being problematic for a majority of the police officers in the sample: the culture of policing (i.e. 57% said that in their force it was unacceptable to say no to more work), the increased complexity of the work (files are more complex than in the past), the amount of time spent doing paper work, and the lack of clear cut priorities and direction.

## **How are police organizations viewed as employers?**

### **One in five Canadian police officers are eligible to retire within five years**

The aging of Canada's workforce (Boomers getting older), the undersupply of youth (birth rates have declined in Canada for the past 40 year) and a lack of hiring in the 1990s and the first part of this millennium means that police forces need to be aware of the retirement intentions of their workforce. Our data show that 20% of police officers are eligible to retire within 5 years. What do respondents plan on doing when they retire? While one in three (34%) do not plan on working at all, half (52%) plan on working part-time for another organization and 14% plan on working

full time for another organization. It would appear from these data that police forces incent skilled professionals to leave when they are still relatively young and willing able to contribute.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation: Retirement**

These data indicate that police forces across Canada need to consider changing retirement policies and perhaps implement phased retirement plans.

### **Sixty percent of police officers are committed to their force**

Commitment, or engagement as it is often referred to in the practitioner literature, is loyalty to the organization. While 60% of the officers in this sample report high levels of commitment to their police force, 30% report moderate commitment and 11% report low levels of commitment

### **What factors reduce organizational commitment?**

The data from this study support the following conclusions with respect to organizational commitment (loyalty to the employer, willingness to go the extra mile, engagement):

- Police officers who are expected to perform work outside their mandate report lower levels of commitment.
- Police officers who work in an area which is understaffed report lower levels of commitment
- Police officers who are expected to make court appearances (particularly on their day off) report lower levels of commitment.
- Police officers who feel that communication in their force is ineffective and do not receive timely feedback report lower levels of commitment.
- Police officers who face constant changes to policies and legislation that govern their work report lower commitment.
- Police officers who experience high levels of work interferes with family report lower commitment.

### **Conclusions: Commitment**

Police forces pay a price if they do not have enough staff and expect officers to perform work outside their mandate and on their days off - reduced organizational commitment and employee engagement. While police officers may put their work first and their family second, the expectation from their employer that they will do so is associated with a decline in commitment. In fact, work interferes with family is the most important predictor of commitment in this study.

### **One in five police officers have high intent to turnover**

One in five of the respondents have high intent to turnover (11% are thinking of leaving their current police force several times a week or more, 10% are thinking of leaving once a week). The majority (79%) have low intent to turnover.



## **What factors increase employee intent to turnover?**

The data from this study support the following conclusions with respect to who is more likely to be thinking of leaving their place of employment":

- Police officers who are expected to perform work outside their.
- Police officers who work in an area which is understaffed.
- Police officers who feel that communication in their force is ineffective and do not receive timely feedback.
- Police officers who experience high levels of work interferes with family.

## **Conclusions: Intent to Turnover**

Virtually the same factors predict commitment as predict intent to turnover reinforcing the idea that police forces need to deal with issues such as understaffing, expecting people to perform work outside their mandate and work life conflict if they want to retain key talent. They also need to increase the amount of feedback they give officers and communicate more actively with their employees. Forces who do not address these issues will either lose a substantive number of employees in the next several years or be faced with managing a force where many have "retired on the job" (low commitment but do not leave).

## **Two-thirds of police officers are satisfied with their jobs**

Two thirds (65%) of the respondents report high job satisfaction. While only 5% are dissatisfied with their jobs, 30% are neutral.

## **What aspects of their jobs are officers satisfied with?**

Generally police officers are very satisfied with the extrinsic aspects of their work including the amount of job security they have (95%) and their pay (80%). Most are also satisfied with their job in general, the sorts of things they do on the job and the number of hours they work. These findings are consistent with the high levels of pay within policing and the fact that many people go into policing because of the type of work. Also worthy of note are data showing that while the majority are satisfied with their workloads, one in four are dissatisfied with this aspect of their work.

## **What are they dissatisfied with?**

Fewer than half the police officers in this sample were satisfied with the development opportunities offered by their organization and their ability to meet their career goals and aspirations within their current place of work. One in three police officers were dissatisfied with both of these aspects of their work.

## **What reduces job satisfaction?**

The data from this study support the following conclusions with respect what lowers job satisfaction for those working in policing:

- Shiftwork.
- Being expected to perform work outside their mandate.
- Working in an area which is understaffed.
- Having to make court appearances (particularly on their day off).
- Having the perception that communication in their force is ineffective and agreeing that they do not receive timely feedback.
- Low levels of control over their work.
- High levels of work interferes with family.
- High levels of total role overload.

### **Conclusions: Job Satisfaction**

While commitment and job satisfaction share a number of predictors in common, there are three differences that are worthy of note: shift work, low levels of control at work and high levels of overload lead to lower levels of job satisfaction but do not impact commitment.

Also important to note that the findings with respect to career development are consistent with those reported earlier with respect to time in current position and support the following recommendation: Canadian police forces need to increase the number of development opportunities they provide employees if they want to improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover.

### **Absenteeism due to ill health and emotional fatigue common in Canadian police forces**

Two-thirds of the police officers responding to our survey were absent from work at least once in the six months prior to this study being done. These individuals missed 7 days of work in a six month period or approximately 14 days of work a year. This is a relatively high level of absenteeism.

Why do people miss work? Data from this study identifies three main factors contributing to absenteeism within police organizations: health problems (51% of the sample), mental or emotional fatigue (28% of the sample) and issues with childcare (27% of the sample).

### **Conclusions: Absenteeism**

These findings support the idea that work-life, workload and work stress issues are taking their toll on the physical and mental health of police and provide yet another reason for addressing these issues (decrease the costs associated with absenteeism). The high number of days absenteeism due to mental and emotional fatigue (approximately 8 days a year) is worthy of note as in this case the absenteeism can be linked to the nature of the work (i.e. it is the job that is causing the employee to experience emotional and mental fatigue). Addressing the issues causing this form of absenteeism is critical as emotional fatigue is a precursor to employee burnout.

## **Role overload and work-life conflict in police organizations**

### **Police officers are twice as likely to let work interfere with family as the reverse**

Police officers experience high levels of work interferes with family (i.e., long hours in paid work and work related stress hinder the performance of duties at home). Just under half of the sample (43%) report high levels of work interferes with family. Another one in three report moderate levels of this form of work-life conflict. Only one in four (24%) report low levels of work interferes with family.

The reverse trend is observed when one considers family interferes with work (i.e. family role responsibilities such as a child's illness hinder performance at work). Only one in five respondents (20%) report high levels of family interferes with work while one in three (34%) report low levels of family interferes with work. The rest of the respondents (46%) report moderate levels of family interferes with work.

These findings are consistent with the data on workloads and work schedules (shift work) reported previously.

### **Work-life conflict negatively impacts work performance of one in five police officers**

Approximately one in five of the police officers in this sample reported that in the last 12 months they have experienced negative changes to their circumstances at work because of conflicts with demands at home. More specifically, 22% report that work-life challenges have caused them to reduce their work productivity while one in five say that conflict between work and home has meant that they reduced their work hours, were absent from work more often, made greater use of the benefits offered by the organization and turned down a promotion.

### **Who is more likely to experience high levels of work interferes with family?**

This form of work-life conflict is more likely to be experienced by officers who are expected to deliver on multiple competing priorities and perform work outside their mandate in an environment where asking for help is frowned upon and communication and feedback is rare. Officers who care about their work and the people they serve are also more likely to meet their work demands at the expense of their family. Finally, it should be recognized that younger officers are at increased risk of this form of work-life conflict - a finding that can be partially explained by how their work is arranged (shift schedules mean that officers are often working evening and weekends - time that many families traditionally spend together) and the fact that they are more likely to have to attend court on their days off.

### **Who is more likely to experience high levels of family interferes with work?**

The data from this study shows that this form of work life conflict is experienced by younger police officers with significant family demands (responsibility for childcare), significant work demands (understaffing, multiple competing demands, work outside their mandate) and an inability to control either their family circumstances (family incomes are tight which make it

harder for the officer pay for childcare, especially when they are working shifts) or their work circumstances (low control over work, shift work, culture which discourages officers from seeking help).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Work Life Conflict**

Data on work-life conflict within Canada's police forces support the following conclusions

- Work-life conflict occurs when demands are heavy but control is low: there are a number of predictors common to both forms of work-life conflict examined in this study: younger age, shift work, the expectation that the officer will deliver on multiple competing ever changing work priorities, and perform work outside their mandate, low control over work, a culture that discourages seeking help from others, and understaffing.
- Gender is not a predictor of either form of work life conflict, a finding that is consistent with the fact that many of the younger male police officers in this sample are in families where childcare and breadwinning is shared.
- To increase their efficiency and effectiveness police forces need to deal with the issue of work-life conflict.
- Work-life issues are inexorably linked to the issue of succession planning. If the police force wants to encourage suitable candidates to move into leadership positions they need to make the senior positions more “doable” in terms of workloads and expectations.

### **How healthy are Canadian police officers?**

#### **Many police officers are in poorer physical health**

The data indicate that approximately one in five police officers are in poorer physical health - a surprisingly high proportion of a sample which is largely made up of younger men.

#### **Who is more likely to be in poor physical health?**

Our analysis indentified only two substantive predictors of physical health:

- Living in families where money is tight.
- Work in an organization whose culture makes it difficult to get help.

### **Conclusions: Health**

Money does not buy happiness but it does help one purchase supports and services that are associated with better physical health. Health also appears to be linked to having a support network at work.

## **High levels of stress and depressed mood are systemic in Canadian police organizations**

The data indicate that work stress, workloads and work-life issues may be having a negative impact on the mental health of a substantive portion of Canada's police officers. Half the officers in this sample (50%) report high levels of stress and another 46% report moderate levels of stress. Only 4% of the sample report low levels of stress. The sample is more evenly distributed with respect to levels of depressed mood as approximately equal numbers of respondents report high levels of depressed mood (30%) as report low levels of depressed mood (30%). The rest of the respondents (40%) report moderate levels of depressed mood.

## **Who is more likely to experience high levels of stress and depressed mood?**

Who is at risk with respect to stress? The data from this study indicates that police officers with significant family demands (high levels of family role overload), significant work demands (multiple competing demands, work outside their mandate) and an inability to control either their family circumstances (family incomes are tight) or their work circumstances (low control over work, culture which discourages officers from seeking help) are at higher risk. The data show that depressed mood and perceived stress have virtually the same predictors

## **Conclusions and Recommendations: Employee Mental Health**

The data show that depressed mood and perceived stress have virtually the same predictors, which emphasize the importance of police forces addressing the systemic causes of stress and depression within the workplace: multiple competing priorities, expectations that people will perform work outside their mandate, ineffective communication, and a culture that makes it hard to seek help.

## **Overload an important predictor of employee well-being**

Role overload is defined as a “a type of role conflict that results from excessive demands on the time and energy supply of an individual such that satisfactory performance is improbable.” Three types of overload are examined in this study: total role overload (collective demands are so great that time and energy resources are insufficient to adequately fulfill the requirements of the various roles to the satisfaction of self or others), work role overload (total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of their work roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably), and family role overload (total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of their family roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably).

## **Most police officers face unremitting demands at work**

Just under half (40%) of the sample report high levels of total role overload (36% report moderate levels and 24% report low levels). One in three police officers are "time crunched" at work - the same percent who are time crunched at home. What is different about the pressures from the two domains is that work demands are unremitting (80% indicated that the pressures

from work are always high) while family demands are more variable (only 20% report that the pressures from their family area always high).

### **Who is more likely to experience high levels of total role overload and work role overload?**

The data from this study show that these two form of overload are more likely to be experienced by officers who are expected to deliver on multiple competing priorities despite understaffing in their area. Why do these conditions cause some people to feel overloaded but not others? Those who report higher overload are more likely to worry that if they do not complete a task it will "fall through the cracks" and people will be negatively impacted. This would suggest that the more one is committed to "serving" the public the more likely one is to suffer the consequences of overwork. The challenge of getting everything done is exacerbated by the fact that asking for help is frowned upon within many police forces and significant time is spent in administrative work. The data from this study show that work interferes with family and total role overload go hand in hand (share many predictors) suggesting that many officers deal with overload by putting work first and family second, a finding that is not surprising given our findings on police culture. Finally, it is interesting to note that role overload is not associated with age, gender, or circumstances at home. Instead it is all about work.

### **Who is more likely to experience high levels of overload at home?**

The predictors of family role overload are somewhat different from those predicting work role overload. The data from this study shows that this form of work life conflict is experienced by younger male police officers with significant family demands (shared responsibility for childcare as well as eldercare), significant work demands (multiple competing demands, work outside their mandate) and an inability to control either their family circumstances (family incomes are tight) or their work circumstances (low control over work, culture which discourages officers from seeking help). The data from this study show that family interferes with work and family role overload go hand in hand (share many predictors) suggesting that many officers who have no alternative (incomes are tight, responsibilities at home are shared) deal with overload at home by putting family first, a strategy that is likely to hinder their advancement at work.

### **What can police organizations do to address these issues?**

#### **Organizational culture is key**

Organizational culture, refers to the unwritten rules and corporate norms that dictate how things are done, how things work, what is to be done and what is valued in the organization (i.e., "the way things are done around here"). Two sets of organizational beliefs were asses in this study: the belief that the culture values employees who keeps their personal issues out of the workplace (i.e. *The Myth of Separate Worlds*) and the belief that the culture values employees who always give priority to work (i.e. *Work Takes Priority*).

## **The culture in policing is one that expects work to take priority over family**

A plurality of those working in policing perceive that the culture within their workforce is one where work is expected to take priority over family (46% agree) and that employees who do not bring family matters to work are more valued than those who do not keep work and family domains separate (40% agree).

### **Conclusions: Culture of Policing**

The data from this study support the following conclusion: police officers work in an environment that values 24/7 availability and expects officers to make work a priority - always. Furthermore, they believe that officers who do not follow these "informal rules" will not advance in the organization and will be viewed negatively by their colleagues and supervisors.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Police organizations need to focus on cultural change**

The data from this study (see the report itself for the numbers) show that police organization that promote a culture where work and family are expected to be kept separate and expect work to come first pay a price. Police officers who work for an organization that endorses these two cultures are less committed to their employer, less satisfied with their jobs, more likely to be thinking of leaving their current place of work and more likely to be absent from work (findings virtually the same as observed with view that work should take priority). They are also more likely to experience high levels of stress and depressed mood, greater conflict between work and family (work interferes with family and family interferes with work), and higher levels of three of the forms of overload (total role overload, time crunched at work and time crunched at home) explored in this analysis. While these two cultures are highly inter-related and both detrimental to all stakeholders, working within an organization which expects employees to give work priority over any other demands and values such behaviour in their promotion process is more problematic and should be addressed first.

### **Perceived control is also key**

Perceived control is defined as the *belief* that one can determine one's own behavior, influence one's environment, and/or bring about desired outcomes. Two measures of perceived control are examined in this study: *Control at work* and *Control over home*.

### **Police officers have more control over their family than their work**

Police officers are more likely to report that they have high levels of control over their home situation (50% report high control while only 7% low control) than their work situation (only 11% report high control while 39% report low control). These data, when combined with the organizational culture data presented earlier mean that many police officers will use their higher levels of control at home to help them make work a priority.

This is unfortunate as the data from this study show that perceived control over ones' work domain is strongly associated with all but three of the outcomes (employment changes index, both measures of family role overload) considered in this analysis.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Control Over Work**

This study has determined that police officers have little predictability over their work demands (see section on work stressors) and little control over their hours of work. As such it is not surprising to see that most police officers in this sample, regardless of rank, say that they have little control over their work. This is unfortunate given the data presented in this report (see the main report) linking a lack of control over ones' work situation to a myriad of negative consequences for the employer (lower commitment, lower job satisfaction, higher absenteeism, higher intent to turnover), the employee (higher stress and depressed mood, greater work-life conflict, greater sense of being overloaded and time crunched at work). Police forces need to address this issue given the expected competition for labour that they are expected to face in the very near future and the very strong link between increased control at work and the organization's ability to recruit and retain employees identified in this analysis.

### **Control over ones family domain is also key**

Control over ones family situation is strongly associated with all but four of the outcomes considered in this study.

### **Officers with low control over their family domain are more likely to be absent from work**

Control over ones' family domain is not associated with organizational commitment, job satisfaction or intent to turnover. It is, however, strongly associated with absenteeism and the types of decisions employees make about their careers. Of note is the fact that police officers with lower levels of control over their family domain are ten times more likely than those who report high levels of control to report that work life issues have negatively impacted decisions at work. More specifically employees with lower control at home are more likely to say that they had turned down a promotion at work and that work-life issues had negatively impacted their productivity at work. Also interesting are the data showing that police officers with lower levels of control over their family domain are twice as likely as those with higher levels of control to report that they were absent from work in the six months prior to the study being done - a finding that is likely due to increased absenteeism due to childcare and eldercare issues.

### **Employees with greater control over their family domain enjoy better health and work-life balance**

Control over family is strongly associated with employee well-being and work-life balance. When compared to those with high levels of control at home, police officers with low levels of control over their family domain are:

- twice as likely to report high levels of stress and depressed mood,
- half as likely to report that they are in good health,
- three times more likely to report high levels of work interferes with family,



- five times more likely to report high levels of family interferes with work,
- twice as likely to report high levels of total role overload,
- five times more likely to report that family demands are unremitting,
- four times more likely to report that family demands exceed the amount of time they have available (i.e. time crunched at home), and
- twice as likely to report that the demands at work exceed the amount of time they have available (i.e. time crunched at work).

### **Conclusion: Control over family key to performance at work and mental health**

Police officers who do not have high levels of control over their family (half the sample) find it more difficult to perform in police organizations that value the strict separation of work and family domains and expect work to come first. As such it is not surprising to see the link between low control over family and higher family to work interference. Individuals with low control over their family (our data indicate that such people are in dual career relationships and share or have primary responsibility for childcare) find family demands unremitting and that there is just not enough time in the day to do all they are expected to do at home. Something has to give in these circumstances - and that something is career advancement, attendance at work, productivity and their own well-being. This occurs even though control over family is not associated with either employee engagement or job satisfaction. The fact that police forces are not able to impact an employees' control over their work environment emphasizes the importance of increasing control over work and cultural change.

### **Who you work for matters a lot - supportive management**

Our research has clearly demonstrated that work and family policies are ineffective if supervisors do not support them. While employees want increased work-time and work location flexibility, simply offering flexible work arrangements and family friendly benefits is not enough. There is a tremendous amount of inequity in organizations today as supervisors act as gatekeepers to many of the benefits offered by the firm. Who you work for within an organization has become more important than where you work.

### **While half of the police officers in this sample work for a supportive manager, half do not**

Just over half (52%) of the respondents work for supportive managers but almost one in five (19%) work for non-supportive managers and 29% work for a "mixed" manager. Management support is strongly associated with all but three (employment changes index, work demands unremitting, family demands unremitting) of the outcomes examined in this study.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Police organizations need to focus on their managers**

Supportive management is strongly associated with the financial health of the organization as well as its ability to recruit and retain talent. It is also strongly associated with employee well being (stress, depression), work-life conflict and the perception that one is overloaded and crunched for time at work and at home. It is also a key predictor of intent to turnover, job satisfaction, commitment and absenteeism. Police organizations need to increase the number of

supportive managers within their organizations while simultaneously reducing the number of managers who are seen to be non-supportive. They can do this by getting managers to increase the extent to which they engage in supportive behaviours and decrease the extent to which they engage in non-supportive behaviours

### **What do police managers need to work on with respect to management support?**

Data says that police managers need to increase the extent to which they ask for input before making decisions that affect the work of those who report to them. While this behaviour runs counter to the para-military, rank-based structure of most police departments it is important to the engagement and retention of educated professionals. Many managers also need to improve their communication skills. They need to share information, listen to employees, and give positive feedback. Finally, police managers need help with respect to planning the work to be done (a finding that is consistent with the challenges with respect to multiple competing priorities mentioned earlier) and given the time and skills needed to coach and mentor their subordinates.

### **What do "police" managers need to stop doing?**

Managers within Canada's police forces need to reduce the extent to which they display two behaviours. First, is the high number of police officers (25%) who perceive that their immediate manager cares more about their own career and well-being than the well-being of their staff. The second area of concern involves micro-management with 22% of the police officers agreeing that they are micro-managed. A number of other problematic behaviours were seen in this study including agreement that their manager puts in long hours and expects me to do the same, has unrealistic expectations about how much work can be done, focuses on hours of work not output and makes me feel guilty for time off for personal or family reasons. These behaviours are examples of how managers are transmitting the culture within their area by acting in a manner consistent with the cultural values associated with the myth of separate worlds, work takes priority over life, and a focus on hours not output.

### **What do police organizations need to do to increase the number of supportive managers?**

Police organizations need to commit resources to improving "people management" practices within their organization. They can increase the number of supportive managers within the organization by giving managers at all levels *the skills* they need to manage the "people" part of their job, *the tools* they need to manage people, *the time* they need to manage this part of their job and *incentives* to focus on the "people part" of their jobs rather than the operations.

### **Perceived flexibility**

Perceived flexibility is defined as the amount of control officers perceive they have over their work hours and work location. Employees, who perceive that they have high levels of control over when and where they work have been found to be more committed to the organization. They also report greater job satisfaction, lower absence, and greater work-life balance.

### **Most police officers have very little control over their hours of work**

The data from this study indicate that police officers have very low perceived flexibility with half (46%) reporting very little flexibility and only 14% with high flexibility. The fact that more than three-quarters of the police officers surveyed find it difficult to work from home or be home when their children get home from school is not surprising given the nature of police work. More troublesome (given the strong link between these forms of flexibility and employee well-being and family functioning) are the data showing that approximately half of the officers in the sample find it very difficult to arrange their shift schedule, vary their work hours, interrupt their work day and return to work and take time off for training. More positive is the fact that most can take their holidays when they want and take a paid day off to deal with a sick child or an elderly dependent that needs assistance.

### **Conclusions: Police organizations need to determine how to increase work flexibility**

The data from this study shows that perceived flexibility is a strong predictor of all the outcomes included in our analysis. Police organizations who care about the well-being of their employees as well as their image in the labour market need to focus on increasing employee control over work hours. Such initiatives will benefit both the employee (improved mental and physical health, better ability to balance work and family, increased ability to manage demands at work and at home) and the employer (increased commitment and loyalty, decreased turnover, decreased absenteeism) alike and as such deliver a win-win solution to challenges associated with overload and stress.

### **Gender and Rank**

Rank and gender within rank are strongly associated with virtually all the attitudes, outcomes and moderators included in this study. Key differences are summarized their own summary document as well as in the main report.