



# DPA

Disabled Police  
Association

**See the  
abilities;**

**Support the  
disabilities**

# Police National Hearing Survey 2024

Katherine Buffery & Andrea Shoetan

# National Hearing Survey 2024



**HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT  
CONSTABULARY**

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Analytical support provided by **Harry Nobbs**, National Police Chiefs' Council

## Introduction

The National Hearing Survey was carried out by Andrea and Kathie from the Disabled Police Association in 2024 to identify issues impacting the police workforce and to provide the evidence needed for change.

This survey was built by a collaboration of **the Disabled Police Association, Greater Manchester Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police.**

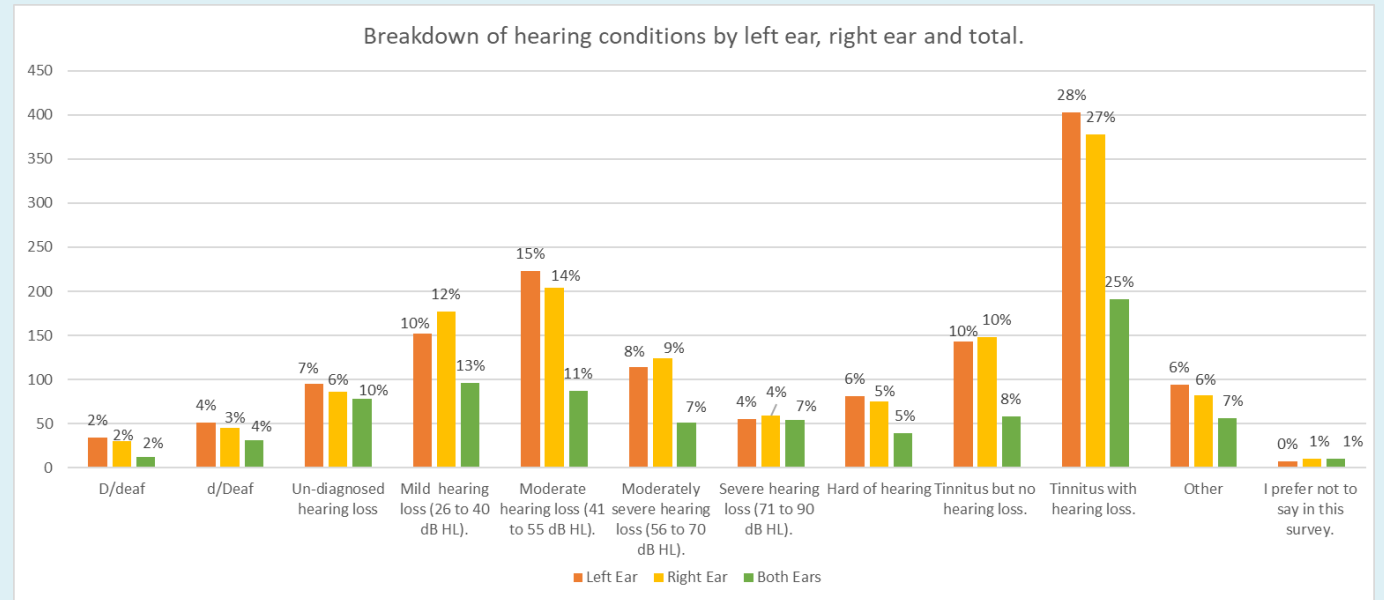
The survey received 2,468 responses, with 51% of these being complete returns and the remainder being partial.

The Disabled Police Association is grateful for the large response received from across the policing network.

# Current Hearing Overview

- Respondents report that they commonly experience hearing issues in one ear as opposed to both.
- This could be attributed to the side the person wears their earpiece
- This is observed across all shown sound frequencies.
- Right and left ear hearing difficulties are roughly equal with no notable bias for one side over the other.

Figure 1.1



# Causes of hearing loss

Two questions were asked regarding the causes of hearing loss. One question asked about Conductive hearing loss (outer ear) and the other about Sensorineural (inner ear) conditions.

## Outer Ear Hearing loss:

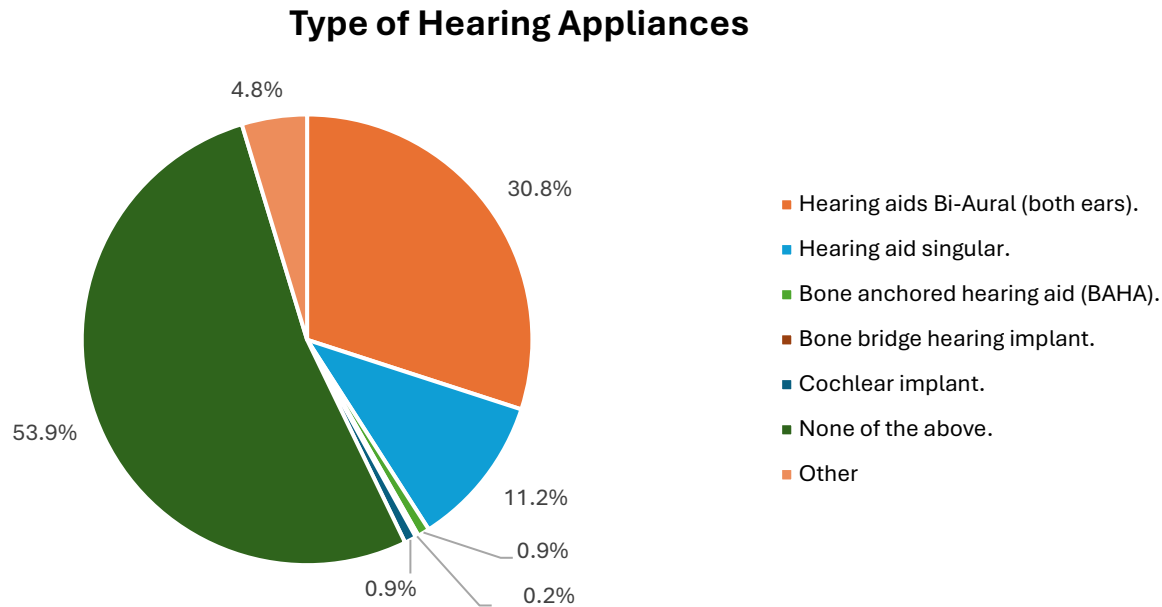
- Many respondents answered this question with 'None of the above' or 'Other' as in many cases the cause is unknown.
- However, trauma, wax buildup and perforated eardrums were significant factors.

## Inner Ear Hearing loss:

- 35% of respondents to this question stated that noise exposure was responsible for their inner ear hearing loss. Ageing was also shown to be a significant factor.
- There were many other reasons provided, such as hereditary conditions, trauma, Covid-19, stress and police earpieces, Ménière's disease and Eustachian Tube Disorder.

# Use of Hearing Appliances

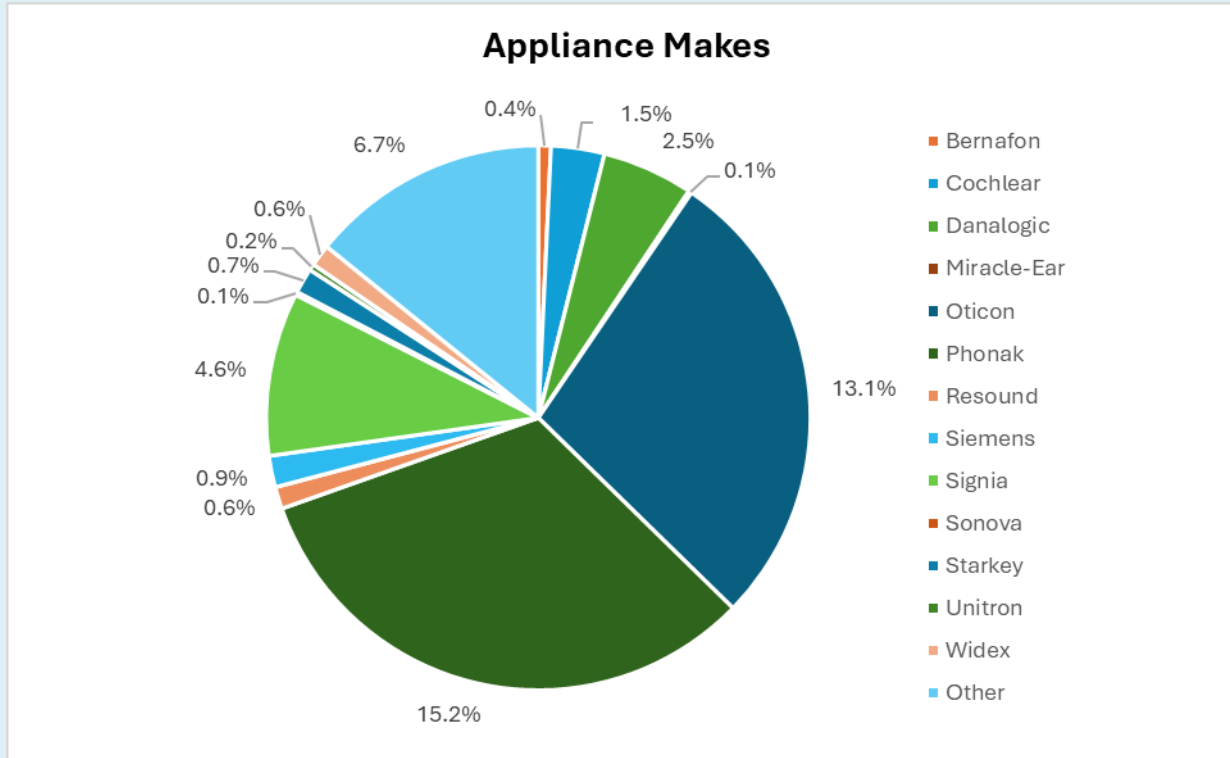
Figure 2.1



- 31% of respondents reported using hearing aids in both ears (Bi-Aural), which is the highest recorded use of hearing appliances.
- 11% were one hearing aid
- However, over 54% of users stated they use none of the options shown.

# Use of Hearing Appliances

Figure 2.2



- Figure 2.2 shows the wide variety of brands used by those with hearing difficulties.
- Many different brands of hearing appliance are used by respondents with Phonak and Oticon being the most common brands.
- There is a large variety of different models of appliances
- Many users did not know the model they have been issued with.
- This could account for some of the 7% recording 'Other' as their answer

# Use of Police Radios

Figure 3.1

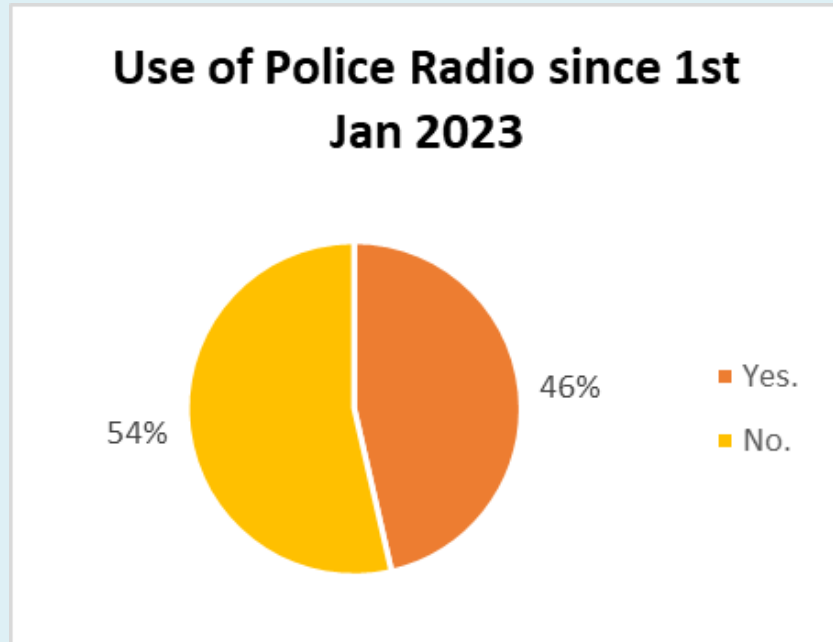
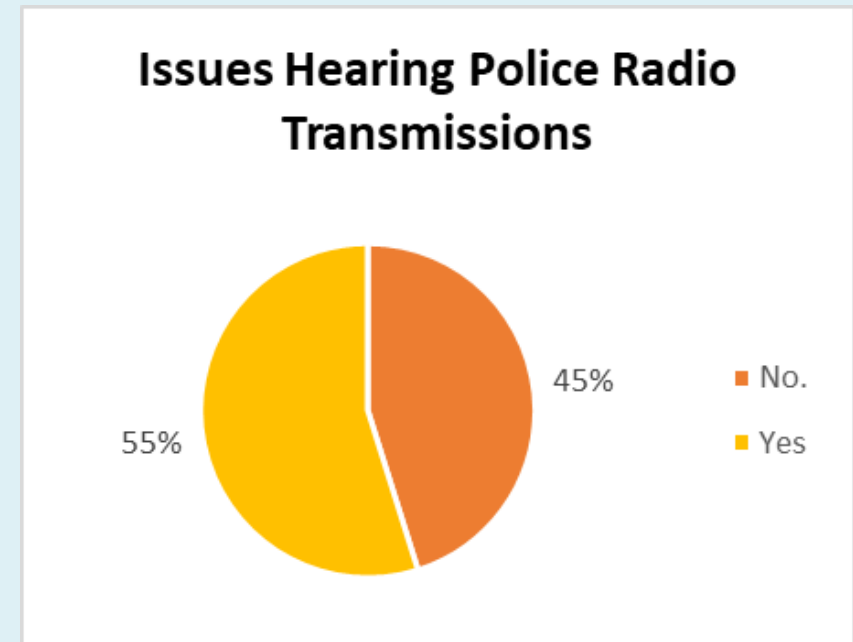


Figure 3.2

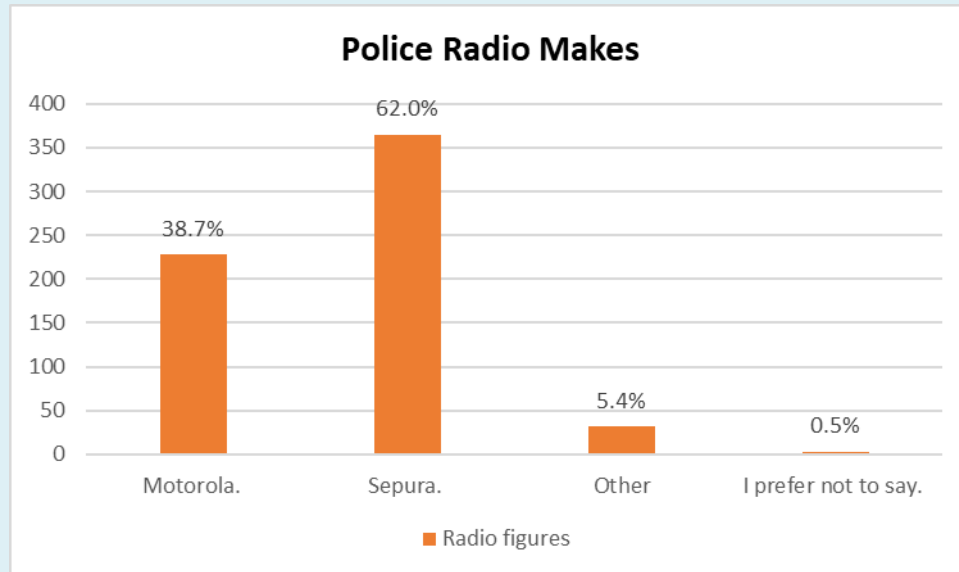


- 589 (46%) respondents reported using a police radio since January 2023.
- Of these respondents, 578 answered the relative question following being asked the question if they had any issues with hearing police radio transmissions.
- 55% replied stating that they did experience issues with hearing radio transmissions.



# Use of Police Radios

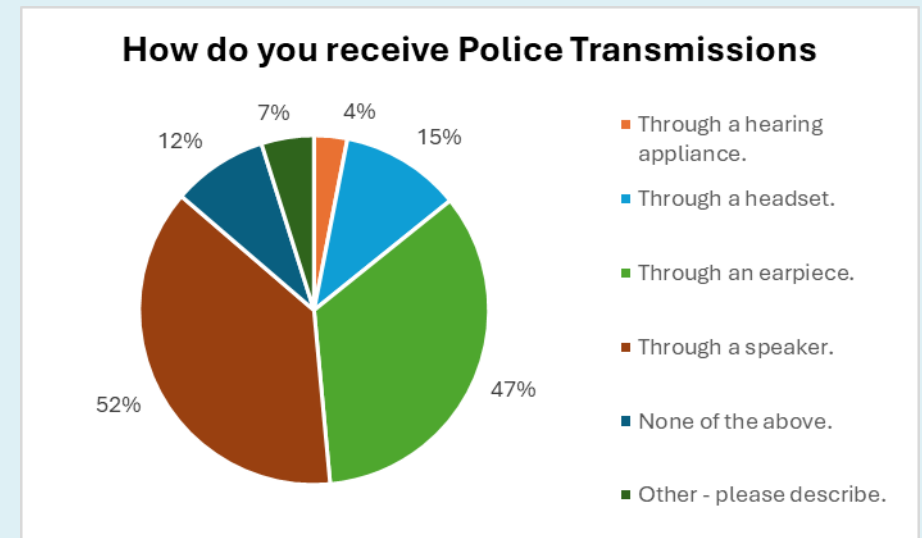
Figure 3.3



Respondents generally receive transmissions through an earpiece or a speaker. There are a wide variety of appliances used, including Bluetooth headsets and streamers (a separate device that allows direct streaming of radio transmissions into the user's hearing aid/implant).

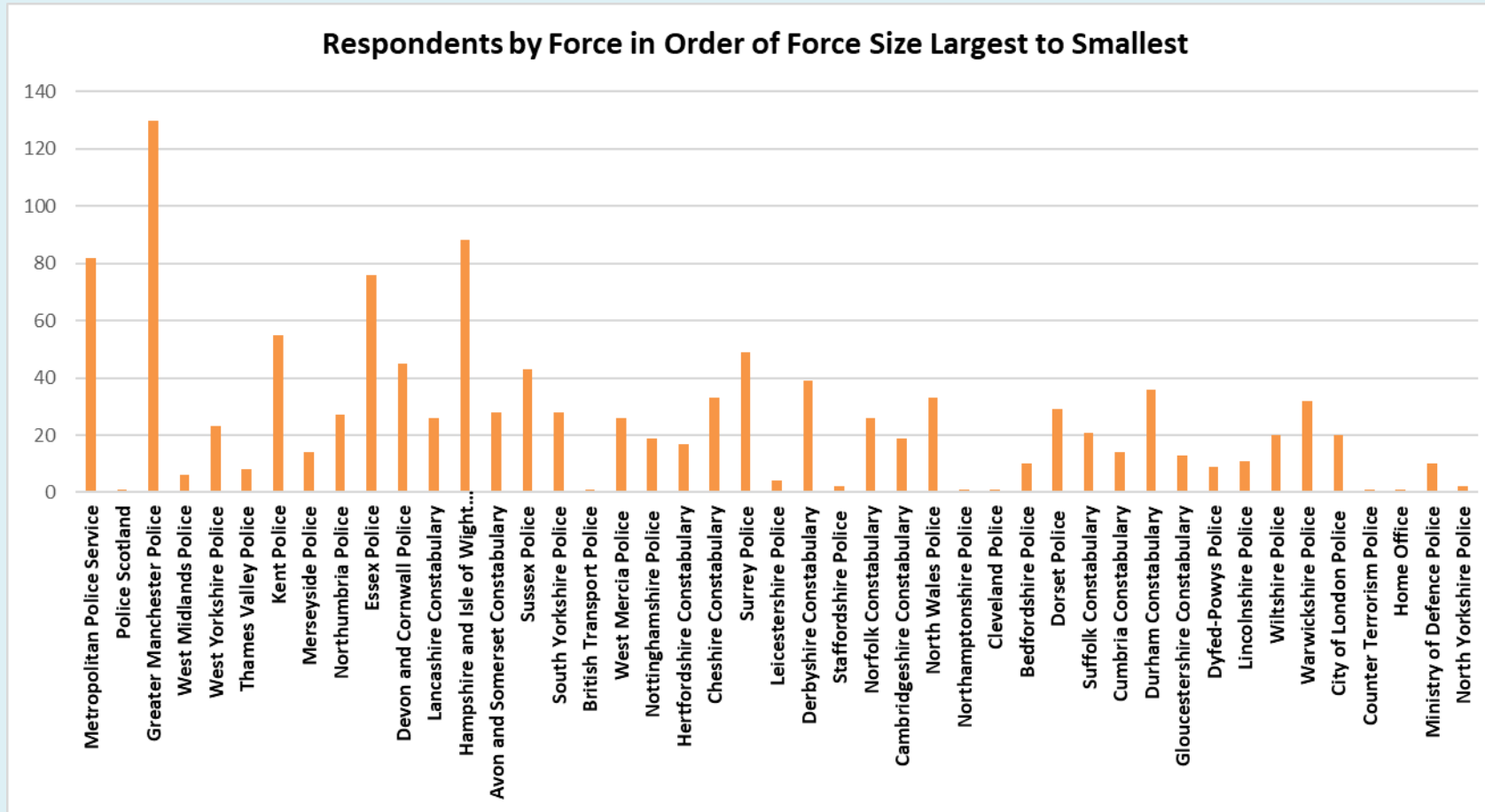
- Motorola and Sepura provide most of the police radio equipment for handheld radios.
- Responses also received from control room operators who use an ICCS hard wired system from 5 different suppliers

Figure 3.4



# Responses by force

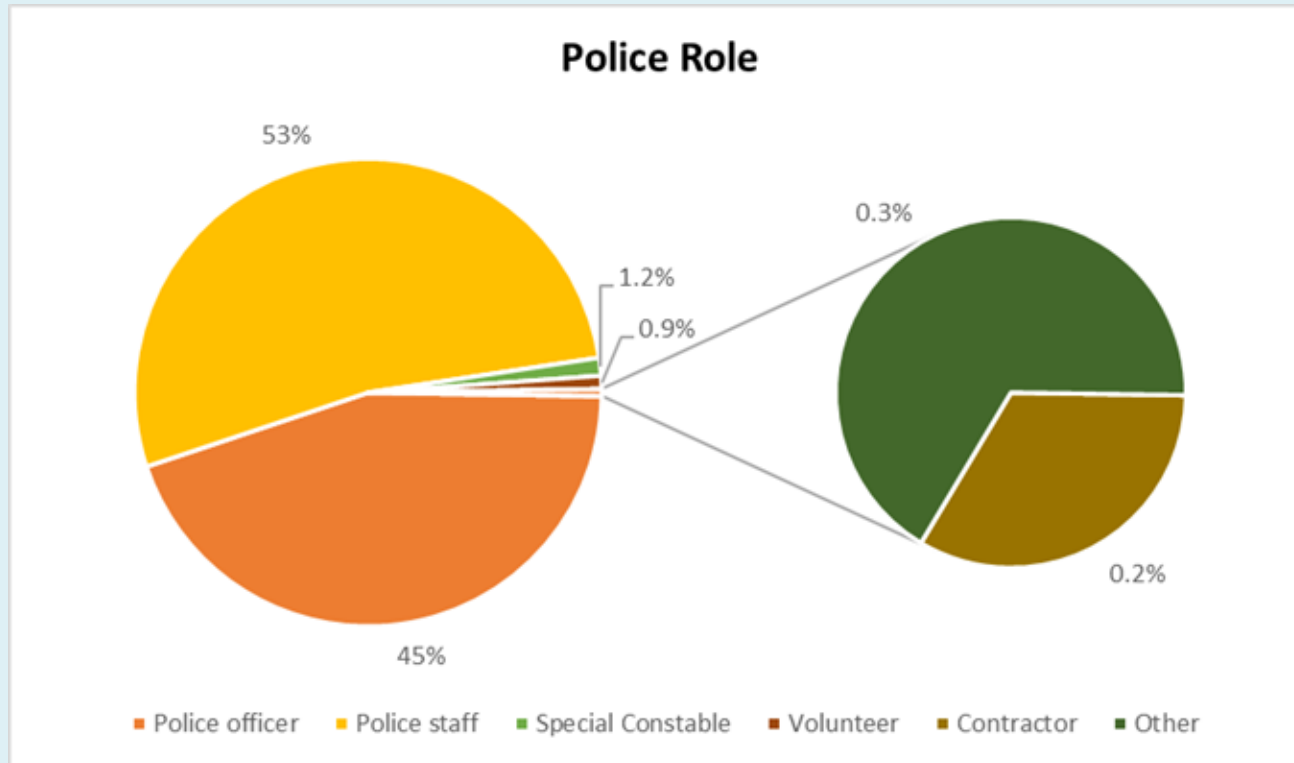
Figure 4.1



- Responses were from across the UK policing network.
- The greatest number of representation came from Greater Manchester Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
- The graph is in order of force size. The number of responses does not correlate
- For example, The Metropolitan Police were the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest responder despite being the largest force by 30%.
- Only one response was received from Police Scotland, despite it being the second largest UK police Force.

# Responses by force

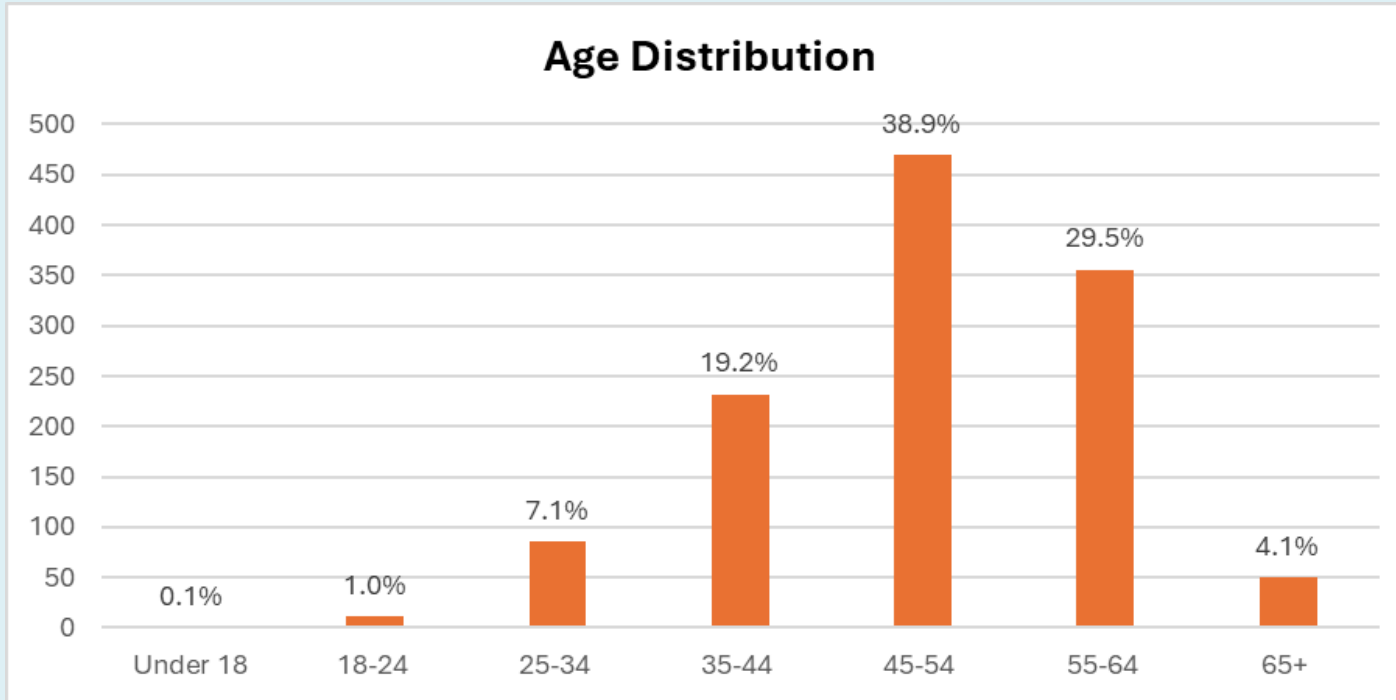
Figure 4.2



- 45% (543) of respondents were Police Officers, with a further 53% (642) of respondents serving in Police Staff roles.
- 29% of respondents describe their role as requiring daily frontline activities, with 8% on frontline duties weekly and 4% on a monthly basis.

# Demographic Data

Figure 5.1



- There were 1207 responses to question 22 regarding age. As shown in Figure 5.1, 45-54 bracket was the largest grouping with 470.
- The 55-64 bracket represented a large percentage of responses also, with 356 responses.
- High representation was also observed with the 35-44 age range, accounting for 19% of total responses.

# Demographic Data

- White participants provided the bulk of the responses by a significant margin, accounting for 94% of the total figure. The second highest grouping was participants choosing not to answer.
- Non-religious participants accounted for 41% of responses with Christian denominations also represented in high numbers.
- According to UK Government police workforce statistics (as of March 2024) 8.4% of officers come from minority ethnic groups, suggesting under-reporting.

Figure 5.2

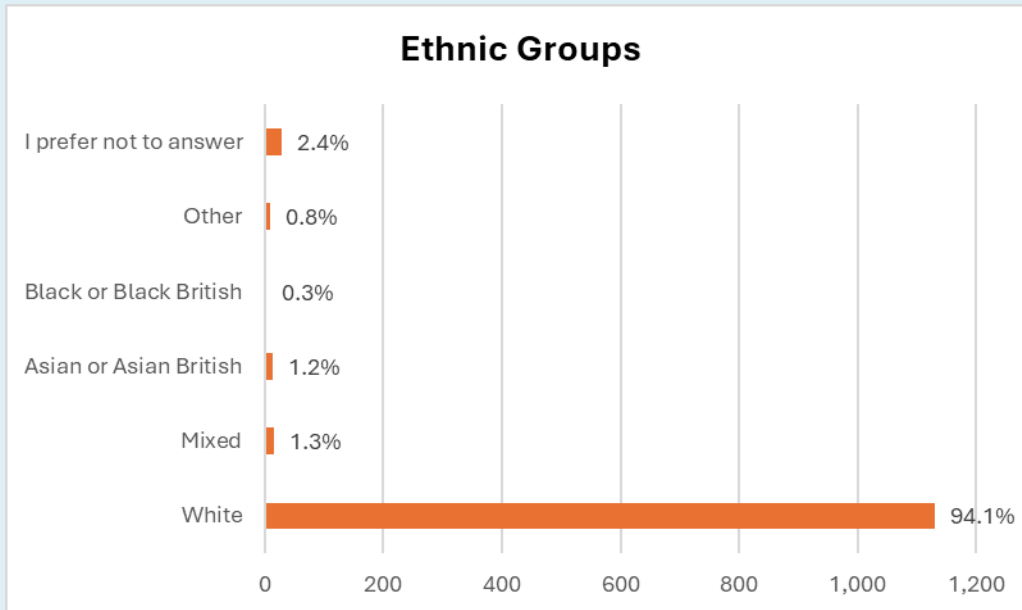
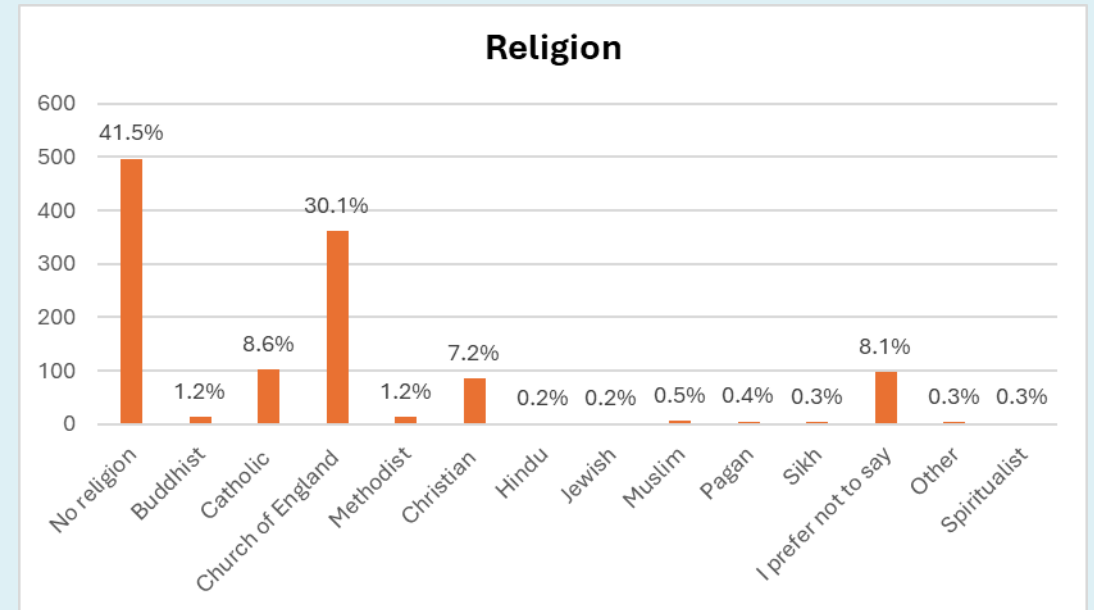


Figure 5.3



# Demographic Data

Figure 5.3

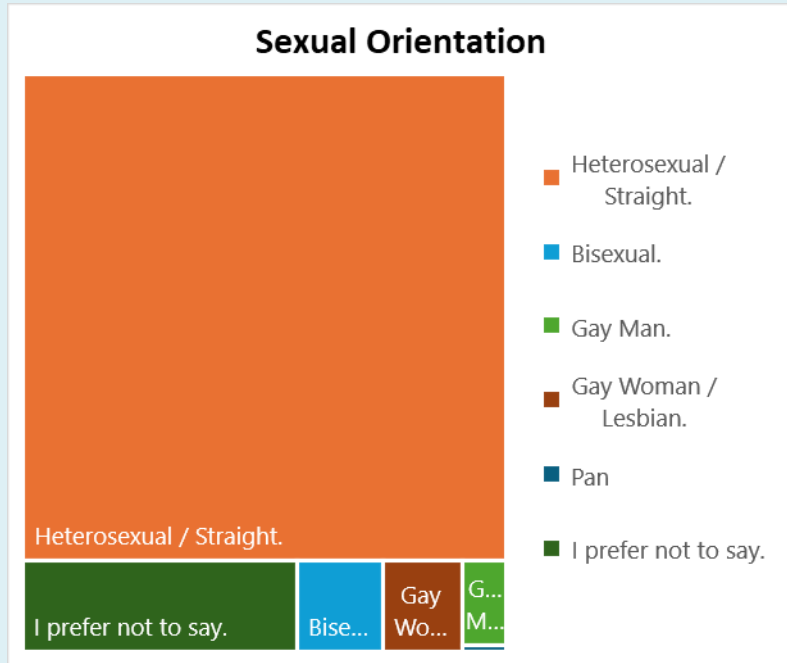
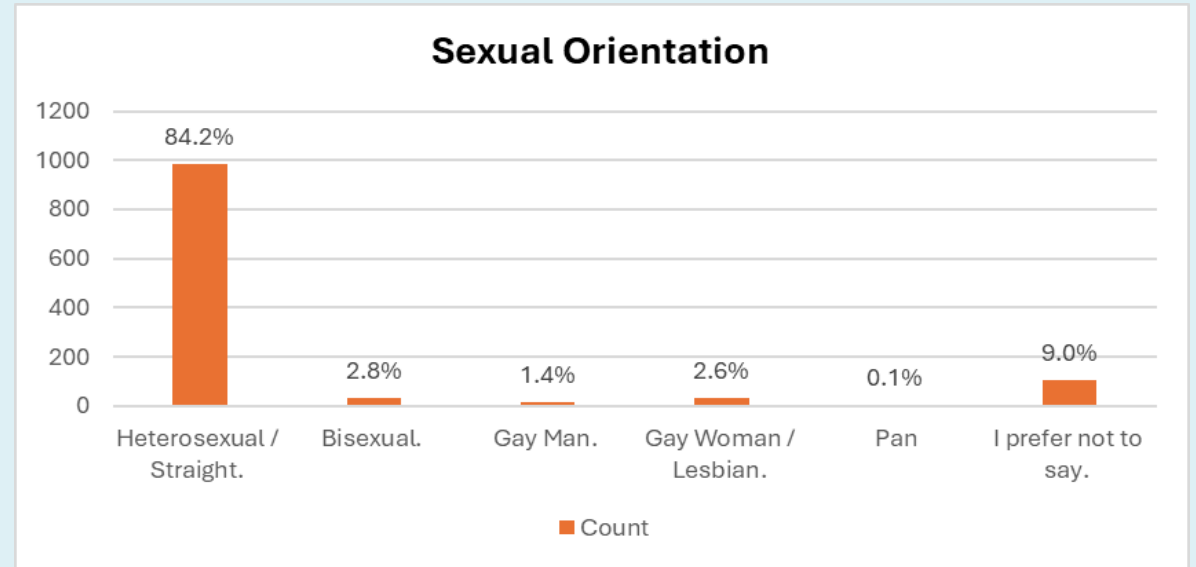


Figure 5.4



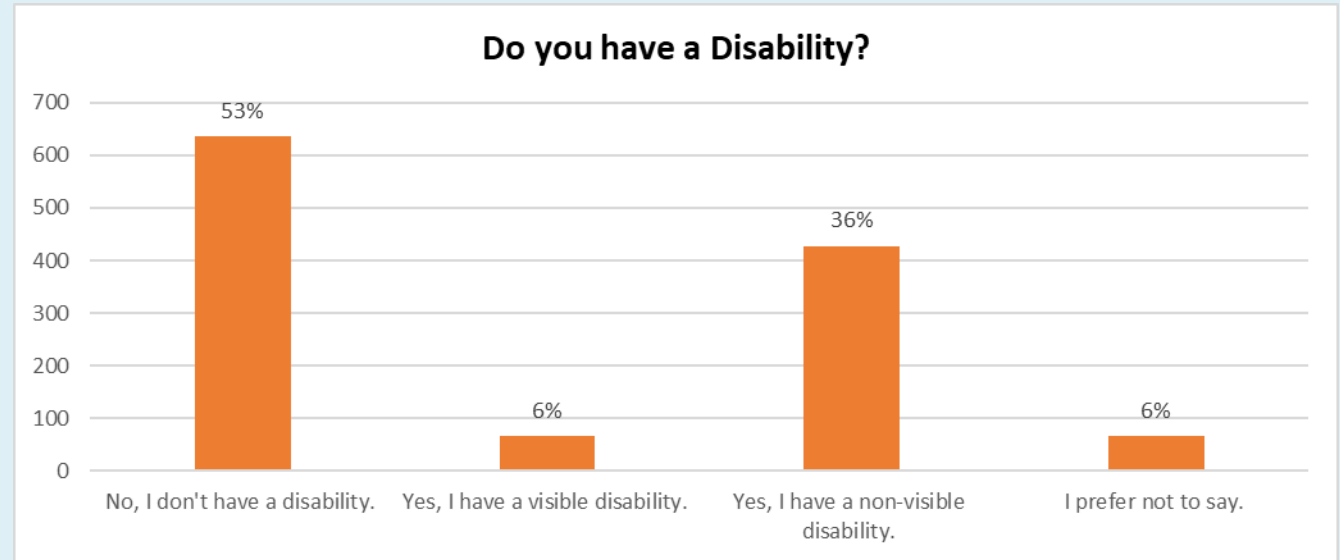
- Cis (a person whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth) Males and Females made up the largest majority of respondents, accounting for 92.7%
- As per orientation, Heterosexual responses accounted for a significant majority of responses at 84%.
- Across both of these questions, 'prefer not to say' made of a large portion of responses, signifying a potential hesitancy to share any hearing difficulties.

# Disabilities Reported by Respondents

Figure 6.1

Have you shared your disability?	Count
Yes	377
No, I have no reason to share.	35
No, I don't wish to share my disability	43
No, I have not been given the opportunity	10

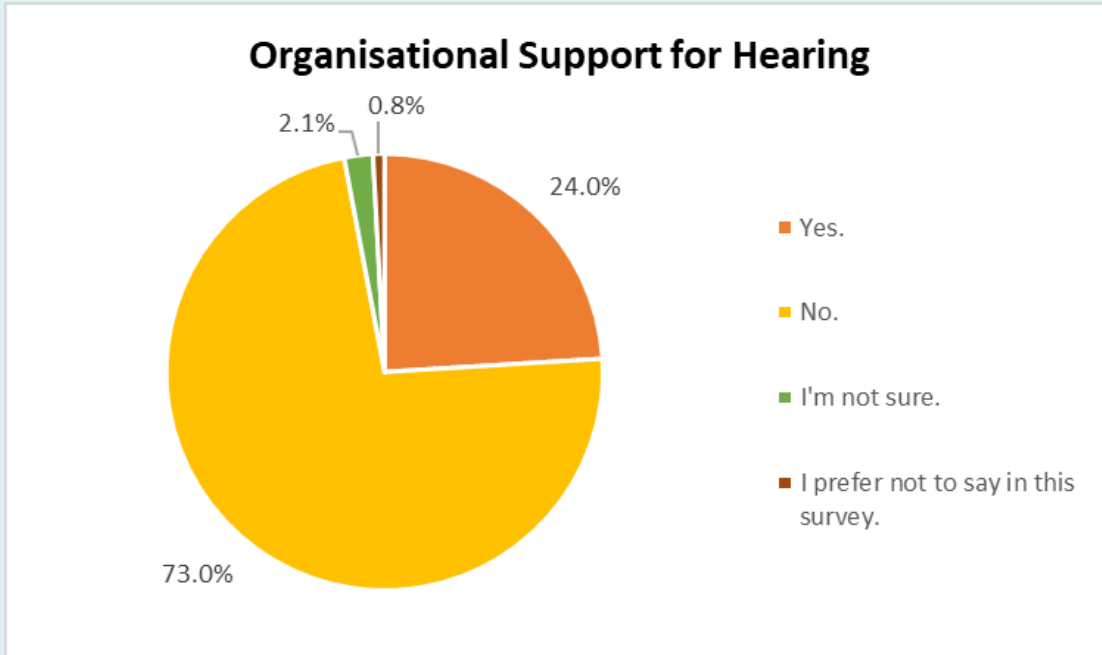
Aside from hearing loss, many respondents reported disabilities such as ADHD, Dyslexia, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Diabetes.



# Support

Over 70% of respondents do not seek support from organisations or peers for their hearing difficulties. 24% do however, with the majority of those (214) getting support from their police force.

Figure 6.2



- Regarding how people with hearing difficulties are supported in the future, many respondents would like their force to provide regular hearing tests. Another frequently mentioned idea is for the provision of superior quality headsets.
- Policing culture was also mentioned multiple times, suggesting that UK policing needs greater awareness of the challenges faced by those with hearing difficulties.
- Some forces such as Greater Manchester Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary have dedicated staff support networks for hearing.
- Support in other forces may fall under Disability support networks. As per the table above, 54% of respondents did not classify themselves as having a disability so may not ask these networks for support.



# Recommendations

1. A national understanding of policing work environments.
2. Support to quash the stigma and enable Police Officers and Staff to feel confident in sharing hearing loss.
3. Technology - Research new technology advantages vs current earpieces including bone conducting headsets. Potential for reducing hearing loss for Police Officers and Staff.
4. Updated medical standards for new recruits.
5. Mandatory hearing test every 2 years for: frontline and control room staff as well as any other roles that routinely use radios call equipment.
6. Functional hearing tests for those that share hearing loss and already wear hearing aids or implants.
7. Connection - of hearing aids to radio headsets and other equipment, for example through device pairing. Future proof hearing accessibility needs.