

# Uniforms and Degrees: Investigating Student Experiences of Higher Education and Policing

CCPR Annual Conference: Problems and Solutions in UK Policing

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Steven Wadley and Matthew Phillips – Birmingham City University

[Steven.Wadley@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Steven.Wadley@bcu.ac.uk) and [Matthew.Phillips2@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Matthew.Phillips2@bcu.ac.uk)

Research  
motivation...

# Student Outreach Initiatives

- Departmental involvement with student outreach
- Social Sciences and Law
- Year 12/13 + taster days + exploration days
- 13 schools and colleges within West Midlands area
- 2 x main motivating factors:
  1. Numbers on Criminology, Policing and Investigation
  2. Introduction of 4<sup>th</sup> pathway
- Appetite and interest
- Ways to engage

# Current research

A small, but developing body of work focusing on policing education

Opportunities and challenges of the PEQF (Wood, 2018)

Public expectations of police education (Andrew, 2024)

Embedding employability within Higher Education (Pepper and McGrath, 2018)

Police education and professionalism (Williams, *et al.* 2019)

Little exists on student opinions (post-compulsory education)

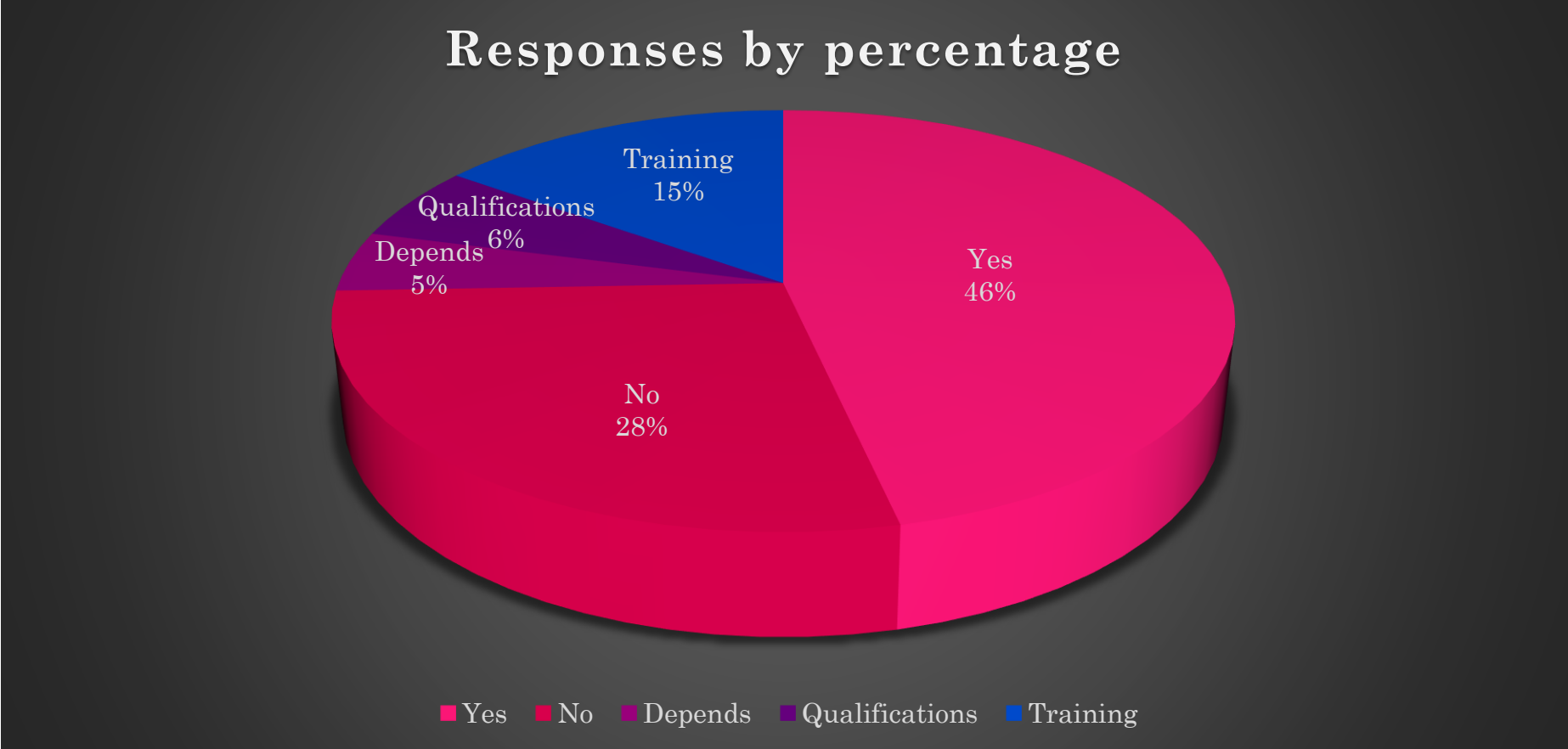
# Methodology

- Participants recruited via school/college liaison
- Mixed methodological approach
- Feeder schools and colleges to Birmingham City University
  - Cadbury College, Walsall College, Dudley College and Solihull College\*
- 88 responses\*
  - Age range: 16-19 (Year 12 and 13)
  - 70 x female, 18 x male
  - Ethnicity: broad range – representative of area
  - Intend to go to university: Yes = 70%, No = 10%, Undecided = 20%
- Engaged in outreach
- Exclusions

# Finding #1

Importance of a degree to policing

# Should a police officer have a degree to do their job?

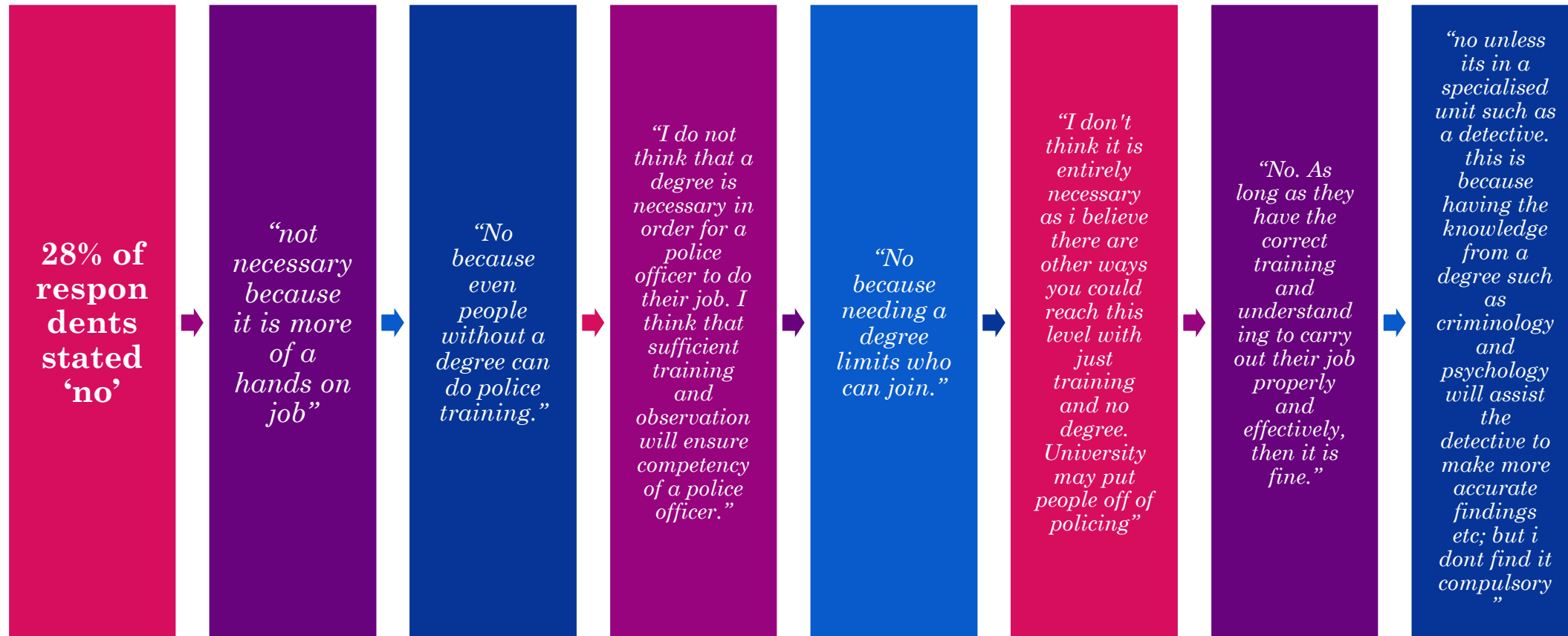


# Should a police officer have a degree to do their job?





# Should a police officer have a degree to do their job?



# Should a police officer have a degree to do their job?

26% other responses – training/qualifications/depends

*“Not necessarily in policing but in a legal subject such as criminology”*

*“Depends on level of police officer”*

*“It is important that police officers are well trained, this can include holding a degree.”*

*“no however sufficient courses should be applicable to those who dont have knowledge or a degree in policing”*

*“they should have the correct knowledge of correct knowledge and training to do their job correctly. there should be a course available for policing which can be done through university or an apprenticeship to make sure they have the knowledge.”*

*“maybe not necessarily a degree but some sort of formal training”*

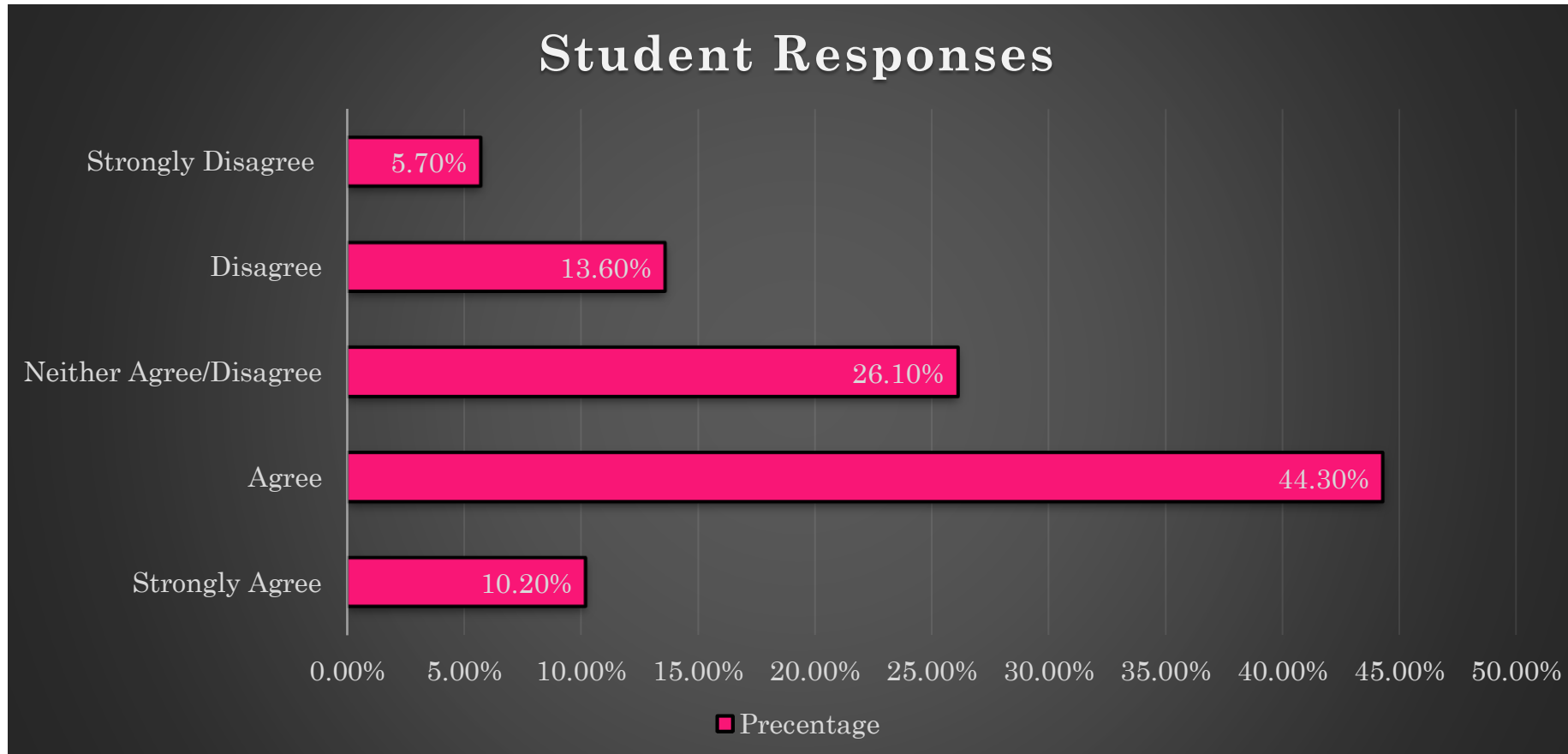
*“Yes and no, I think police officers should have at least some degree of higher education where they learn more about their field and become experienced, however I don't think degrees are suited to everyone and there should be options that do not require a degree.”*

*“Not necessarily a degree but some form of training or education over the course of a couple of years”*

# Finding #2

Officers with degrees

# When dealing with the police, I would prefer that the officer had a degree

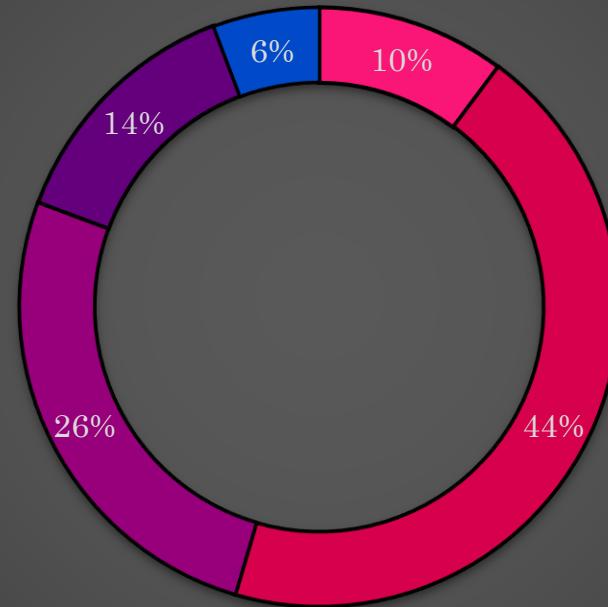


# Finding #3

Degrees support progression

I believe that if a police officer had a degree, it would help them progress in their career

Percentage of Responses



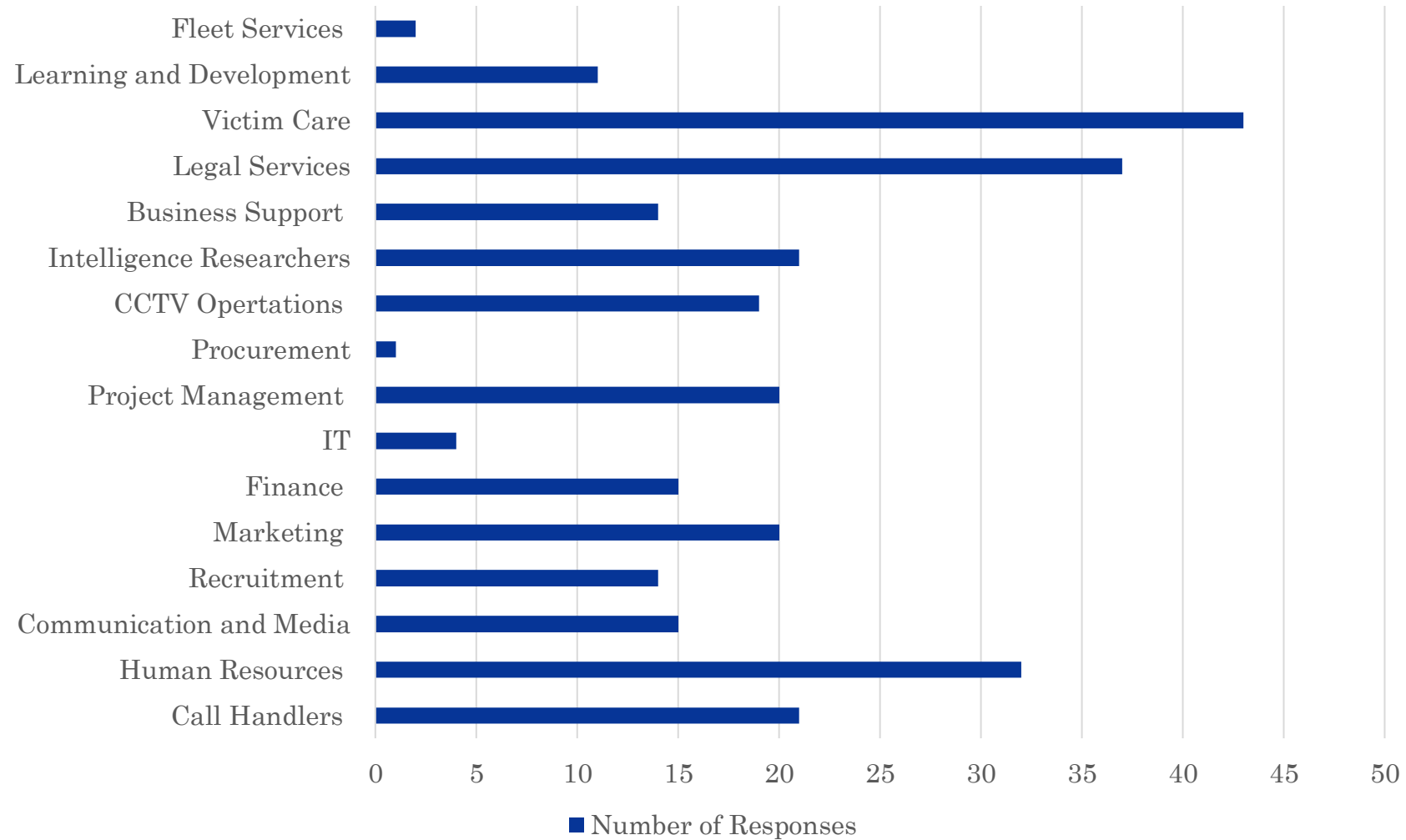
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree/Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

# Finding #4

Other career opportunities

# What career opportunities interest you?

Career Opportunities





# Why is this research important?

- **Finding 1** – positive correlation between degree holder and policing profession
  - **Finding 2** – recognition of the value of a degree
  - **Finding 3** – being a degree holder equates to career progression
- **Finding 4** – potential missed opportunities by policing organisations to engage at a school/college level
  - As HEI's it is important to gauge potential participation levels and changes to programmes
    - Implication for Graduate Outcome data
      - Refreshing and developing content
        - Officers of the future

Thanks for listening!  
Any questions?

[Steven.Wadley@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Steven.Wadley@bcu.ac.uk) and [Matthew.Phillips2@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Matthew.Phillips2@bcu.ac.uk)

# Resources

- Andrews, T. (2024) *Public expectations of police education in England and Wales*, Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 18, pp 1-9
- Pepper, I. and McGrath, R. (2018) *Embedding employability within higher education for the profession of policing*, Higher Education Skills and Work-Based Learning, 9(3), pp 319-328
- Williams, E., Norman, J. and Rowe, M. (2019) *The police education qualification framework: a professional agenda or building professionals?*, Police Practice and Research, An International Journal, 20(3), pp 259-272
- Wood, D. A. (2018) *Embedding Learning and Assessment Within Police Practice: The Opportunities and Challenges Arising from the Introduction of the PEQF in England and Wales*, Policing, 14(2), pp 347-382