

# Best Practices Establishing Physical Fitness Wellness Programs in State Law Enforcement Agencies

Joseph C. “Cory” Harrison

## **Abstract**

*On a national level members of the law enforcement community, specifically sworn officers, have been identified as a high risk classification to adverse medical conditions. Many of these medical conditions have been directly attributed to high stress scenarios and the general lifestyle of law enforcement officers. The purpose of this research is to identify best practices in establishing a physical fitness wellness program in which law enforcement officers participate with the intent of mitigating these adverse risk factors.*

## **Introduction**

A law enforcement officer’s job is complex, dangerous and extremely demanding, often times requiring officers to successfully develop strategies in an effort to find successful resolutions to a variety of scenarios. There are scenarios in which officers are required to make life and death decisions in a split second. These decisions are routinely made with limited information and most often have substantial long term consequences. These life altering decisions can result in officers experiencing both physical and mental health concerns, and on occasion expose the officer to criminal and/or civil liabilities.

How do the culture, duties and stresses associated with law enforcement employment affect law enforcement officers? Does the stress associated with the job affect officers physically, mentally or does it have a unique affect at all? How do officers successfully mitigate the impacts of stressors in their lives, both professionally and personally? Does participation in wellness programs that include physical exercise result in physically and mentally healthier officers? This research will attempt to identify and evaluate “The Impacts of Wellness Programs on the Law Enforcement Profession.” Admittedly, my initial perception is if agencies do not recognize the value of their officers’ physical and mental health by placing emphasis on their well-being, they are doing a disservice to their members. Agencies have the responsibility to provide an opportunity for those who take care of the public to take care of themselves. As simple as this may seem, it is actually quite complicated when considering the culture of law enforcement. There is a need to thoroughly evaluate and develop best practices to sustain and improve physical and mental health in the law enforcement profession. After all, what is more important than the well-being of those who ensure ours?

Law enforcement officers impact the lives of an untold number of community members daily. These impacts result from tasks such as assisting a disabled motorist, responding to a call for help or looking for a missing person, to more intense scenarios such as dealing with victims of crime, responding to emergencies and investigating heinous crimes that result in injuries and death. Although rarely considered, the individuals involved in these scenarios are not the only people affected by the exposure to these traumatic events. The men and woman that make up the law enforcement community are human, and like any human, they also possess emotions that are often times not considered or unintentionally overlooked due to the general expectation of their job duties.

When considering the job of a law enforcement officer, what is the public expectation? Does the public consider the law enforcement occupation a job or a profession? Dictionary.com defines the word "job" as: "a post of employment; full-time or part-time position." It also defines the word "Profession" as: "the body of persons engaged in an occupation or calling." Note the word "calling" in the later definition of "profession." Unlike the normal job, that requires filling of a post and providing services for an allotted amount of reimbursement, the profession requires the individual to possess a passion or calling. This "calling" is likely attributed as a factor to the stress officers' experience. Unlike a normal job position, officers maintain a continuous state of readiness, that includes an obligation to act beyond their normal duty assignment or scheduled work hours. For example, consider the instance of a conscientious officer lying in bed, not able to sleep, wondering if one of the many decisions they made during their shift was the right one? Remembering that individual who they arrested earlier in their shift, they ponder whether it really was the best decision or whether there was an alternate way that case could have been resolved? The constant thought of court preparation and testimony explaining to an attorney, judge or jury why they made the decision they did never leaves the mind. Not to mention, they likely replay the earlier pursuit they were involved in that resulted in the recovery of a stolen vehicle, awaiting tomorrow's supervisory review of the video to confirm that they followed all department policies and procedures during the excitement of the event. All of this stress and apprehension develops as a result of an officer simply trying to do the right thing and keep their community safe. The point being, the human brain doesn't stop working just because you are no longer on the clock or in a patrol vehicle. The law enforcement officer's profession is part of their entire life whether they want it to be or not. It is expected that as part of an officer's inherent police duties, they will be subjected to the stress and heavy heartedness that comes from the day-to-day encounters they are exposed to. This exposure is not just limited to public encounters, but also comes from the organizational stressors that are developed through their employment and natural survival instinct.

These officers encounter the public during the worst moments of their lives and make decisions that could have a significantly negative impact on them. On the contrary, these same officers stand by the public during some of their best moments. All the while, these officers are potentially experiencing fatigue from assorted side effects from many elements commonly associated with the profession of law enforcement i.e. lack of sleep, shift work, poor eating habits and a lack of coping skills. Unfortunately, the

day-in-and day-out, over-and-over, never-ending cycle of significant high stress scenarios or traumatic events create a roller coaster of emotions ranging from normal to the intense emotion of fight or flight have the tendency to play a role in the officers physical and mental health well-being.

During this research, numerous articles covered topics that are closely related to or associated with law enforcement officers' all around well-being will be considered, as well as the effectiveness of implementing law enforcement officer wellness programs from both a physical and mental health perspective. Additionally, a survey will be conducted that analyzes the effect of coping mechanisms on current law enforcement officers; specifically, Florida Highway Patrol troopers. From an overarching perspective, I believe that officer wellness is often times overlooked and the overwhelming majority of agencies do not have wellness programs providing officers an opportunity to de-conflict or cope with the daily stressors they encounter.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Law Enforcement Culture**

Throughout a law enforcement officer's career, they will be faced with many challenges and these challenges will undoubtedly have stemmed from significant exposure to highly stressful and sometimes traumatic events, many of which, have catastrophic outcomes. In some cases, these highly stressful and traumatic events can result in significant physical and/or mental health concerns for the officer. (Papazoglou, & Anderson, 2014).

Stressors experienced by officers that extend over a period of time can eventually take their toll on officers and if not appropriately handled can result in devastating outcomes. It has been determined that being exposed to stress for extended periods of time can diminish the level of service officers provide to their communities. Additionally, the stressors experienced by officers that initially originate through the performance of their law enforcement duties have the propensity to not only affect the officer's professional life but, also infiltrate into other aspects of their life, including their personnel lives. (Chae & Boyle, 2013).

Stressors can originate in officers' lives from a multitude of sources; some of these sources are attributed to the general culture or working conditions of a law enforcement officer. These working conditions seemingly "come with the job." For example, an officer may experience many real or perceived "Occupational Stressors." Occupational Stressors can be identified with some of the following scenarios that in many cases seem to be routine operational procedures in the law enforcement profession: lack of organizational support, shift work and equipment concerns, etc. (Rudofossi, 2007), (Papazoglou, & Anderson, 2014)

Several studies have outlined occupational stressors and their effects on the law enforcement community. A study of 460 Swiss police officers performed by Gerber, Hartmann, Brand, Holsboer-Trachsler, and Pühse, (2010) found that the effects of shift work increase social stress in law enforcement. In a separate study, Constantini and

colleagues (2010), discovered female Israeli officers experienced elevated stress levels as a result of the weight they are required to carry as part of their issued law enforcement equipment. Additionally, Constantini et al. (2010), also concluded that officers carrying heavy equipment, specifically in times of inclement weather, may experience symptoms of chronic stress. In a separate study, Groer and colleagues (2010), it was found that intense training scenarios significantly increased the levels of stress hormones in officers. One case in particular, Plaxton-Hennings (2004), outlined an officer involved shooting scenario that resulted in the officer being placed on administrative leave and being reassigned to alternate duties. It was determined through this course of the study that this scenario, although common practice in the law enforcement profession, negatively impacted the officer's mental health status. (Papazoglou, & Anderson, 2014)

Two specific stressors attributed to stress in the law enforcement profession are identified as "Organizational Stressors" and "Police Inherent Stressors." Organizational Stressors are recognized as stress placed on the officer from an organization or administration perspective; as a result, the officer perceives the organization as bothersome. Some examples include: the agency organizational structure/authoritarian structure, the thought that work is superseding the officer's personal home life, or a perceived lack of communication/consultation with representatives of the organization and the officer. Police Inherent Stressors are identified as stress that is experienced or caused from the expected law enforcement related duties that are inherent to public safety and public service. These Police Inherent Stressors routinely involve danger, crime, traumatic events, human suffering and violence, etc. A study, Violanti and Aron (1993) that primarily focused on Organizational Stressors found that psychological effects on officers stemming from Organizational Stressors were six times greater than the stressors experienced by officers as a result of performing police inherent duties. (Gerber, Kellmann & Puhse, 2010)

Research suggests physical and mental health problems including officers experiencing thoughts associated with suicide have been linked to certain risk factors; specifically, factors that are routinely experienced by officers within the law enforcement profession. These risk factors can include: lack of sleep, alcohol consumption, organizational stress, shift work, traumatic stress symptoms, unhealthy personal relationships and/or a combination of these scenarios. (Chae & Boyle 2013)

In order to successfully mitigate the impacts associated with stressors experienced by officers there is a need to develop and provide alternative positive coping mechanisms for officers within the law enforcement community. A report produced by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, 1999) entitled, "Stress at Work," noted that 40% of employees in the general workforce alleged their job was either very or extremely stressful, and 25% of employees noted their job was their number one stressor in their lives. (Crouch, 2014)

## **Law Enforcement, Physical Health – Mental Health**

Officers that experience ongoing high levels of stressors are subject to risk of medical complications, Gershon, Lin, & Li, 2002; Kohan & O'Conner (2002); Norvell & Belles (1993). A study performed by, Violanti, Vena, & Petralia (1997) confirmed the life

expectancy of a retired male law enforcement officer in the United States is 66 years of age. A study of 100 New York police found their officers are at risk of metabolic syndrome which is a condition that includes excessive body fat, high cholesterol and increased blood sugar levels. Of the 100 officers, 25 % had metabolic syndrome and 40% of officers were found to be obese. The inability for officers to sleep and obtain meaningful rest was also linked to stressors experienced in the law enforcement profession through this research. (Crouch, 2014)

In a study being performed at the University at Buffalo researchers and John M. Violanti, PH.D, have found that officers in the law enforcement profession are at a higher risk for an assortment of health complications that include: high blood pressure, insomnia, increased levels of destructive stress hormones, heart problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide. Over 400 law enforcement officers have participated in Violanti's research and results from the pilot studies have found officers the age of 40 have a risk of a coronary medical episode over a 10-year period and collectively officers maintained a higher than average pulse rate and blood pressure. Violanti said, "Policing is a psychologically stressful work environment filled with danger, high demands, ambiguity in work encounters, human misery and exposure to death" and "The body becomes physiologically unbalanced, organs are attacked, and the immune system is compromised as well. It's unfortunate, but that's what stress does to us." As it relates to suicide, the study showed 23% of male and 25% of female officers reported having thoughts of suicide. (Baker, 2008)

The World Health Organization recommends reducing stress in the workplace and this is further supported by a study, Swanson et al. (1998) that found a direct correlation between officers that experience high levels of stress and officers who experienced physiological and psychological disturbances. A significant relationship exists between stress and both physical and mental health problems that officer's experience. Additionally, it was also found that there is an association between illness related work absenteeism and stressors. (Gerber, Kellmann & Puhse, 2010)

### **Law Enforcement Challenges, Agency Liability**

Through research, officers that were found not physically fit, were also found to be more prone to injury or illness. These officers were also found to be at a risk of losing the respect of community members based on their appearance. The failure to maintain physical fitness standards for officers within an agency; specifically, when there is a foreseeable risk to others, such as the general public can result in liability to the agency. The inability for officers to perform essential job duties also increases agency liability. There are documented court cases that have resulted in law enforcement agencies being held civilly liable for failing to maintain physical fitness standards for the officers within their department. The lack of physical fitness standards within an agency is interpreted as an agency shortcoming. The following court cases are for reference and are associated with agency liability resulting from the failure to maintain standards of physical fitness: Parker v. District of Columbia, Monell v. Department of Social Services of the City of New York. (Quigley, 2008)

When an applicant applies for a position within a law enforcement agency, as part of the training and hiring process, the majority of law enforcement agencies will require the applicant officer to undergo and successfully complete rigorous physical training as part of the hiring process. However, after the applicant has completed their training and is hired by the agency the overwhelming majority of agencies do not have any mechanism in place to sustain, maintain or build upon the level of fitness initially established during the applicant hiring process. Not only does this negatively impact the officers all around health but, the lack of physical fitness in the law enforcement community has also attributed to rising cost of healthcare and worker compensation claims. (Crouch, 2014)

A study performed by, Boyce and Hiatt (1992), found that post recruit training, officers did not sustain the continued training that supported cardiovascular improvement. Officers were only found to sustain their muscle strength, endurance and flexibility for a period of approximately three years following the conclusion of their applicant recruit school. (MacDonald, 2008)

### **Law Enforcement, Coping Skills**

There are mechanisms available for officers who are exposed to scenarios resulting in the development of stress to employ in an effort to effectively deal with or cope with stress and its effects. However, not every officer that experiences stress will react or interpret stress in the same way. As opposed to utilizing healthy coping skills, unfortunately, many officers employ coping skills that are not always positive and can prove to be detrimental to an officer's well-being. In some cases, officers cope with stress by implementing negative habits that include: poor eating, excessive alcohol consumption and smoking, all of which result in an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease. (Crouch, 2014)

Some officers will develop negative coping skills that include alcoholism. In many cases these officers have employed these strategies in an effort to overcome or handle the pressures associated with the seemingly never-ending stress they have experienced throughout their career. Furthermore, officers experiencing and battling the symptoms of post-traumatic stress often times turn to consuming alcohol as a way of relief to mitigate the effects or feelings associated with their painful experience or experiences. (Chae & Boyle, 2013)

One mitigating factor to consider when trying to reduce stress in the law enforcement profession is the process of instilling a culture of positive coping skills that result in resilience. These skills should start at the entry recruit level and should be reinforced throughout the officer's career with training in an effort to avoid future stressors from becoming harmful. (Papazoglou, & Anderson, 2014)

### **Wellness Programs, Establishment**

What is a wellness program? In an article written as part of a Police Executive Research Forum, wellness programs were described as follows: "In recognition of the critical role that officer wellness plays in police work, law enforcement agencies across

the country have created programs aimed at preserving and promoting officers' physical and emotional health." (Miller, & Sloan, 2018)

Through research, it has been determined that high levels of stress can be effectively mitigated by officers implementing effective coping skills through the mechanisms of physical fitness, Labbate et al., (1995); Norvell & Belles, (1993); West, Otte, Geher, Johnson, & Mohr, (2004), (MacDonald, 2007). Simply put, if officers are in a condition of improved physical fitness it will not only benefit the officer it will also benefit the agency. (Crouch, 2014)

In a recent article, Doctor Violanti was quoted saying "Intervention is necessary to help officers deal with this difficult and stressful occupation." He also said, "We want to educate them on how to survive 25 years of police work. They need to learn how to relax, how to think differently about things they experience as a cop. There is such a thing as post-traumatic growth. People can grow in a positive way and be better cops and persons after they survive the trauma of police work. That is an important message." (Baker, 2008)

Officers that employ positive coping skills have been shown to increase their ability to navigate through life's stressors they have experienced by acknowledging experiences resulting from traumatic incidents and dealing with those experiences. Research shows the percentage of officers who are married or in a committed relationship do not experience the levels of suicidal ideation as officers who are not in such a relationship. There is a significant value in peer support programs that provide a sounding board in the process or system of counseling services. These peer support programs may play a role in the prevention of suicidal behaviors in officers throughout the law enforcement community. (Chae & Boyle 2013)

## **Wellness Programs, Challenges**

It is accepted that wellness programs are one item that routinely lack in the culture of law enforcement agencies. There are several factors that contribute to the lack of wellness programs, one of which, is financial. Budgetary impacts affect most agencies and the topic is a line item that can be deferred with no immediate negative consequences. From the perspective of agency budget the majority of funds are allocated in support of their staff; however, very little, if any of these funds are dedicated to the sustainment and well-being of their officer's post-employment. Agencies will see officers who may work several years before recognizing any negative implications resulting from a lack of physical fitness through wellness programs. Adding to the complicity of this challenge, officers are often time negligent or hesitant to complete annual physicals due to their belief they don't need them, fear of what they may find or the simple fact they don't have time. (Crouch, 2014)

Through the implementation and participation of wellness programs there are numerous studies that suggest that better physical fitness resulting in weight loss simultaneously improves mental health status. Additionally, it has been shown to mitigate the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The following studies outline a correlation between stress and how it is specifically impacted as a result of weight loss: Johannessen and Berntsen (2013), Leahey et al. (2012) and Diana et al.

(2010). At the conclusion of these studies, it has been determined physical fitness is directly associated with the mitigation of stress officers experience on a daily basis. (Chiappetta, 2018), (Crouch, 2014)

Law enforcement unions are overwhelmingly averse to the subject of annual physical fitness testing. Often times unions that represent officers view the idea of wellness programs as just another means or mechanism to eliminate their represented officer's employment. Due to the nature of the law enforcement profession and the physical and/or mental implications experienced by officers, there is a need to facilitate a physical fitness wellness program that all inclusively supports members, agencies, unions and the law enforcement culture/community as a whole. (Crouch, 2014)

## **Wellness Programs, Benefits**

There are many benefits to the establishment of a physical fitness wellness program. Physical fitness wellness programs have shown to improve officer's standard of work, they result in a decline in absenteeism and the majority of citizens will be more satisfied with the officers all around service provided to neighborhoods. As previously discussed, department liability will also diminish due to officers having better options and physical abilities when encountering use of force scenarios. This could result in less injury to both the officers and the suspects involved in any given scenario. (Crouch, 2014)

Through participation in physical fitness exercise and the development of wellness programs, officers stand to reap the following: "Improved capability to perform specific physical tasks, improved ability to mobilize the body efficiently, improved tolerance to fatigue, reduced risk during physical tasks, better psychological preparation and reduced stress and associated health risks." Through better officer wellness not only does the officer benefit, but so does their agency. Studies have shown officers who are physically fit and remain active are 40 to 70 percent more likely to show up for work assignments. According to, Cashwell & Tooker (2008), "Fitness and wellness programs increase loyalty, reduce turnover, and generally improve morale." According to Jay Smith of FitForce "the lack of personal and agency fitness and wellness programs was cited as a primary contributor to poor health and a life expectancy of two to five years following retirement." Officers stand to benefit from the results of physical fitness exercise which will allow officers to experience longer, healthier and enjoyable lives. (Crouch, 2014)

Officers in the law enforcement profession that implement and participate in a physical fitness wellness plan are more equipped to adapt to scenarios and possess the inherent ability to perform physical challenges that are often encountered while performing their law enforcement duties. Additional studies have confirmed agencies that have instilled a physical fitness wellness plan have also experienced over the course of time, a decline in work related injuries as well as a decline in the number of officers that experience absenteeism. (Hamel, 2015), (Quigley, 2008)

Research suggests that the sympathetic nervous system is stimulated when a person exercises. This stimulation results in decreased levels of stress and decreased levels of depression, DiLorenzo et al., (1999). Officers that maintain a level of physical



fitness have the inherent ability to manage stress more efficiently and effectively due to their ability to maintain a disposition that reflects a demeanor of calmness. This reflects through their ability to control situations both from a physical perspective as well as an emotional perspective. This ability is credited to the routine exposure of an increased heart rate and increased epinephrine levels that any individual experiences when participating in physical fitness training or exercise. (MacDonald, 2008)

Law enforcement officers that participate in weight training have been shown to experience an increased positive attitude towards their chosen profession, an overall better standard of health and experience less anxiety, depression and hostility. (Norvell & Belles, 1993)

Furthermore, officer's that participated in a yoga style exercise experienced increased positive outlook or mood and experienced less stress. Due to the demanding nature of law enforcement, there are constant requirements placed upon officers to maintain a level of flexibility and be adaptive to any given scenario. According to, MacDonald "Physical fitness is associated with improved physical and psychological health." Officers who maintain a lifestyle that includes being physically fit have also been shown to experience overall benefits that include: an improved overall mental status, the ability to maintain vigilance and alertness while performing their law enforcement duties and an overall improved quality of life. Overall, through physical fitness exercise officers will benefit from better physical health which will inherently result in a better quality of life. (MacDonald, 2008)

Exercise is viewed as an escape or a strategy deployed as a coping mechanism to deal with or mitigate the effects of stressors officers experience, Berger (1996); Rostad & Long (1996). Research has shown that physical exercise has the ability to alter individual's moods or disposition, Ekkekakis & Acevedo (2006). Multiple research studies, Kobasa, Maddi, and Puccetti (1982) and Brown (1991) have confirmed when exercise is implemented, there is decline in the chances that illness will develop as the result of exposure from a perceived stressful event. People that implemented exercise have been noted to experience a lower number of psychological symptoms when they are confronted with a situation that increases stress, Lochbaum, Lutz, Sells, Ready, and Carson (2004). Additionally, Ensel and Lin (2004), found depression symptoms declined as well psychological complaints when someone is engaged in exercise. Exercise is a significant mechanism that enables officers to deploy a positive coping strategy that results in better physical fitness health regardless of perceived stress. (Gerber, Kellmann & Puhse, 2010)

## **Methods**

Initially, the expectation of this research was to determine the impacts of exercise on officer's health and well-being, both physically and mentally, while also considering the fiscal impacts to their respective agencies. However, while researching this topic, overwhelming evidence was discovered that shows exercise does indeed have a positive impact on officer's physical and mental health. One of the recognized attributes of exercise is that it serves as an effective coping mechanism to reducing stress. Any additional research performed would inevitably only confirm the obvious, while

reconfirming generally accepted standards that physical fitness is all-around positive. In the spirit of producing meaningful and productive research, that will ultimately benefit the law enforcement community as a whole, this research has adapted to concentrate on best practices for establishing a physical fitness wellness program for law enforcement officers.

The data obtained to perform this research was captured using multiple methods. These methods include two surveys. The first survey was an anonymous survey disseminated to all sworn members of the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) to determine the following information: current voluntary exercise standards (non-agency mandated), outcomes experienced by members that exercise, and to establish the level of support, buy-in and concerns from members in the event FHP created a formal wellness program. A weakness with the data collected from this survey is FHP members may recognize a need for physical fitness; however, may be reluctant in answering questions out of fear of a mandated physical fitness wellness program that they interpret could potentially negatively impact their career.

The second survey was disseminated to all state highway patrol agencies in the country to determine if they have a physical fitness wellness program. If the agency had a program, I asked for the positives and negatives of their program, any lessons learned and any roadblocks they experienced. If the agency did not have a physical fitness wellness program, the question was asked if they plan to establish one.

A weakness with the data collected from this survey is the overwhelming diversity among agencies when responses are collected throughout the entire country. For example, some agencies have laws that mandate physical fitness wellness programs, some have unions, some have mandatory physical fitness wellness programs and some have voluntary programs. In an effort to mitigate this weakness, very direct questions were asked in order to establish categories based on quantifying the data obtained in responses.

## **Results**

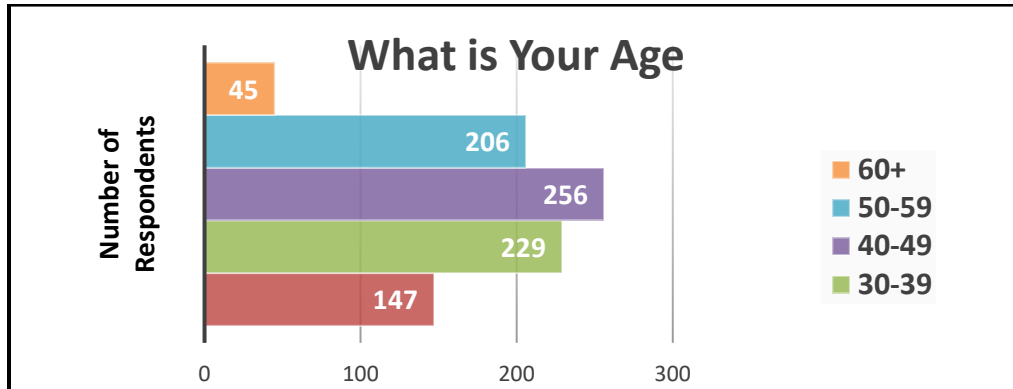
There were two surveys disseminated to properly evaluate this topic and evaluate as many aspects as possible. The first survey was entitled “Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – FHP Members” and the second survey was entitled “Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – State Law Enforcement.” Both survey results are defined and explained separately as outlined below.

### **Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – FHP Members Survey Results**

This survey was made up of 20 questions and was disseminated to 1583 sworn members of the Florida Highway Patrol. This survey generated 883 responses which represents a 56% response rate. Throughout the survey respondents occasionally skipped questions.

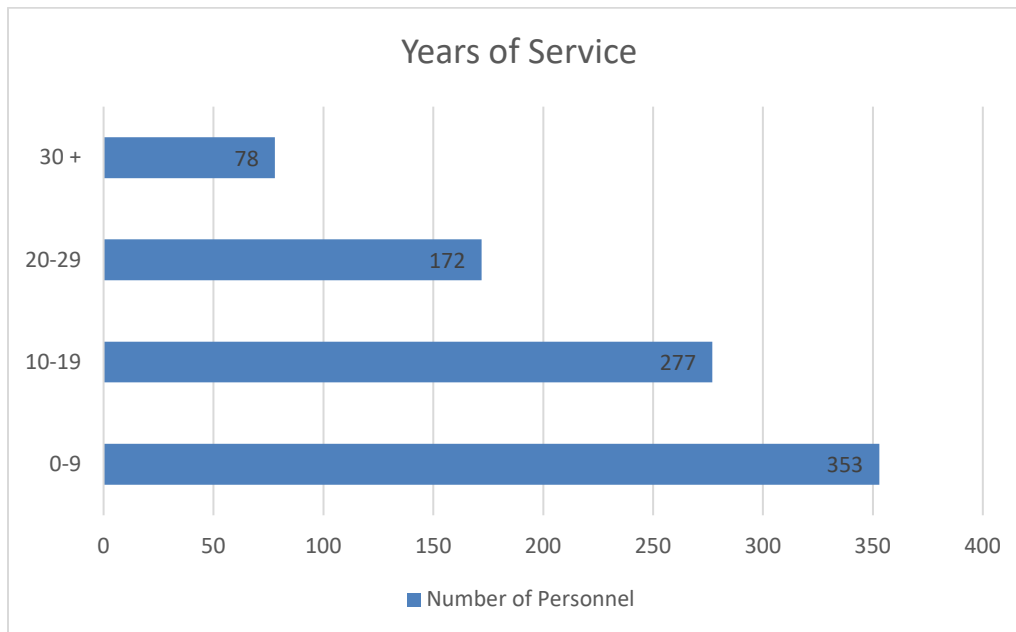
The survey began with general demographic information; question one asked the age of the respondent. The results of this question are as follows: 147 (17%) were ages 19-29, 229 (26%) were ages 30-39, 256 (29%) were ages 40-49, 206 (23%) were ages 50-59 and 45 (5%) were 60 years or older.

**TABLE 1: Survey 1 / Question 1: Employee Age Ranges**



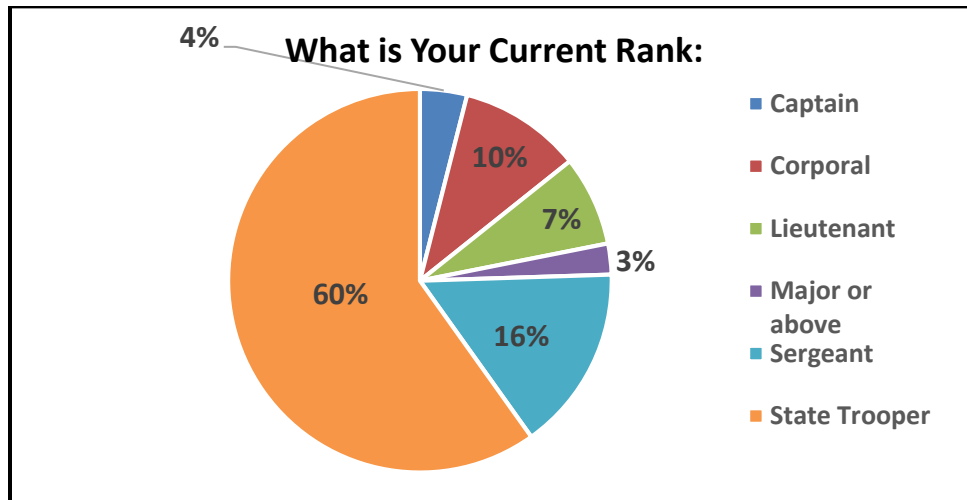
The second question queried member's years of service; three respondents skipped this question. Of the 880 responses, 353 (40%) respondents had 0-9 years of service, 277 (31%) respondents had 10-19 years of service, 172 (20%) respondents had 20-29 years of service and 78 (9%) respondents reported employment of over 30 years of service.

**TABLE 2: Survey 1 / Question 2: Employee Years of Service**



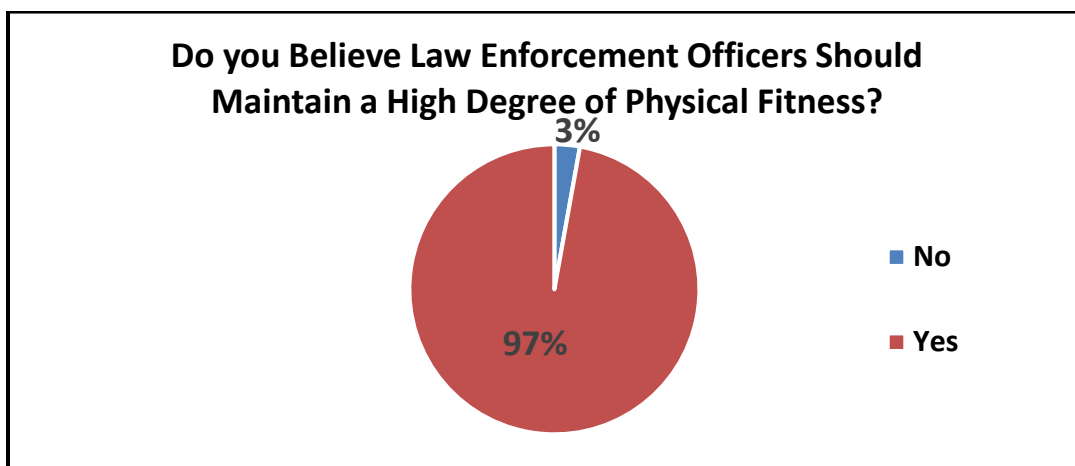
Question 3 determined respondents rank; one respondent skipped this question and 882 respondents answered the question. Of the respondents that replied, 528 (60%) were Troopers, 138 (16%) were Sergeants, 67 (7%) were Lieutenants, 35 (4%) were Captains and 23 (3%) were the rank of Major or above within the Florida Highway Patrol.

**TABLE 3: Survey 1 / Question 3: Rank with the Florida Highway Patrol**



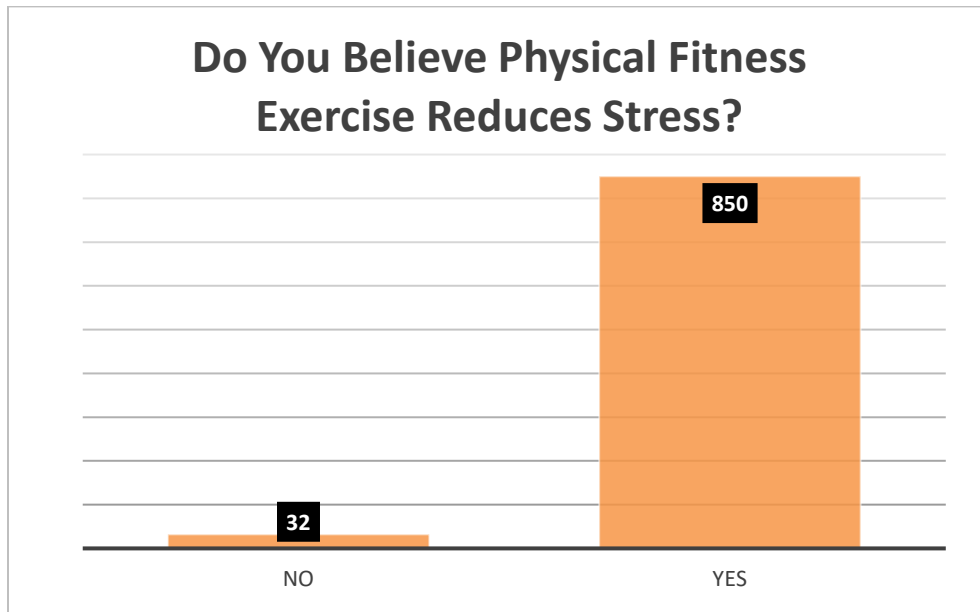
Question 4 surveyed respondents to determine if they believed Law Enforcement Officers should maintain a high degree of physical fitness. Of the 883 responses, 858 (97%) replied they believe Law Enforcement Officers should maintain a high degree of physical fitness while 25 (3%) replied they did not.

**TABLE 4: Survey 1 / Question 4: Belief, High Degree of Physical Fitness**



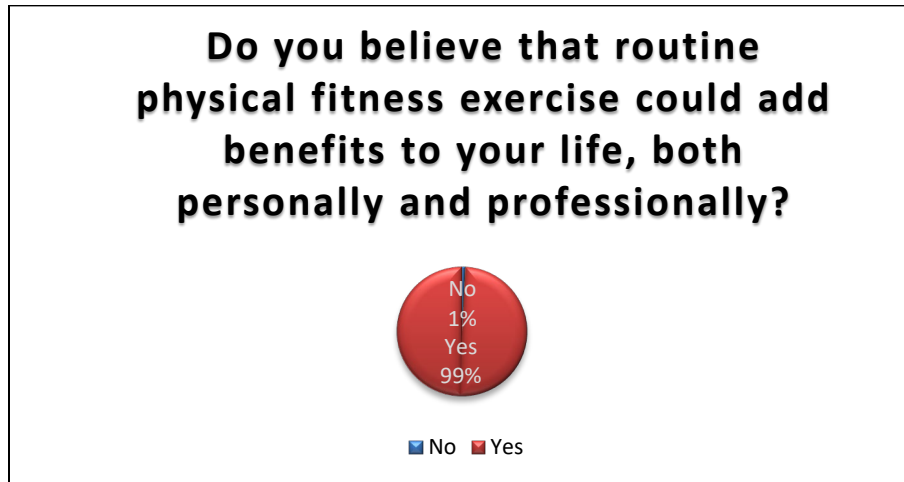
Question 5 surveyed the respondents to determine if they believed physical fitness played a part in the reduction of stress. This question was skipped by one respondent. Of the 882 respondents, 850 (96%) indicated they believed stress was reduced as a result of performing physical fitness exercise, while 32 (4%) respondents did not.

**TABLE 5: Survey 1 / Question 5: Physical Fitness Exercise Effects of Stress**



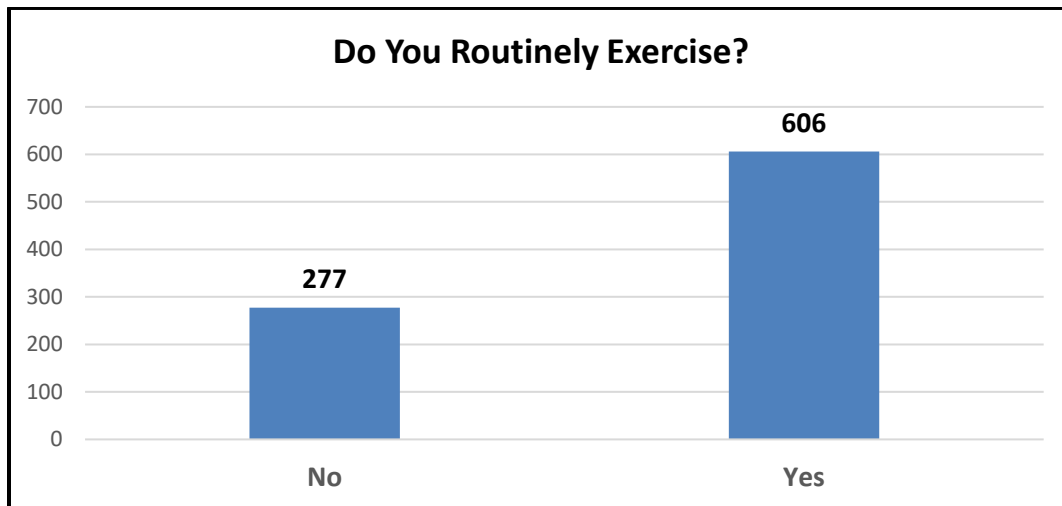
Question 6 was asked to determine if respondents felt there was a positive benefit, both personally and professionally, derived from participation in physical fitness exercise. One person skipped this question and 882 responded. Of the 882 respondents, 875 (99%) felt there were benefits while 7 (1%) felt there were no benefits derived from physical fitness exercise.

**TABLE 6: Survey 1 / Question 6: Physical Fitness Exercise: Are there Benefits Personally and Professionally**



Question 7 surveyed respondents to determine if they routinely exercise. Of the 883 respondents, 606 (69%) answered in the affirmative, while 277 (31%) indicated they did not routinely exercise.

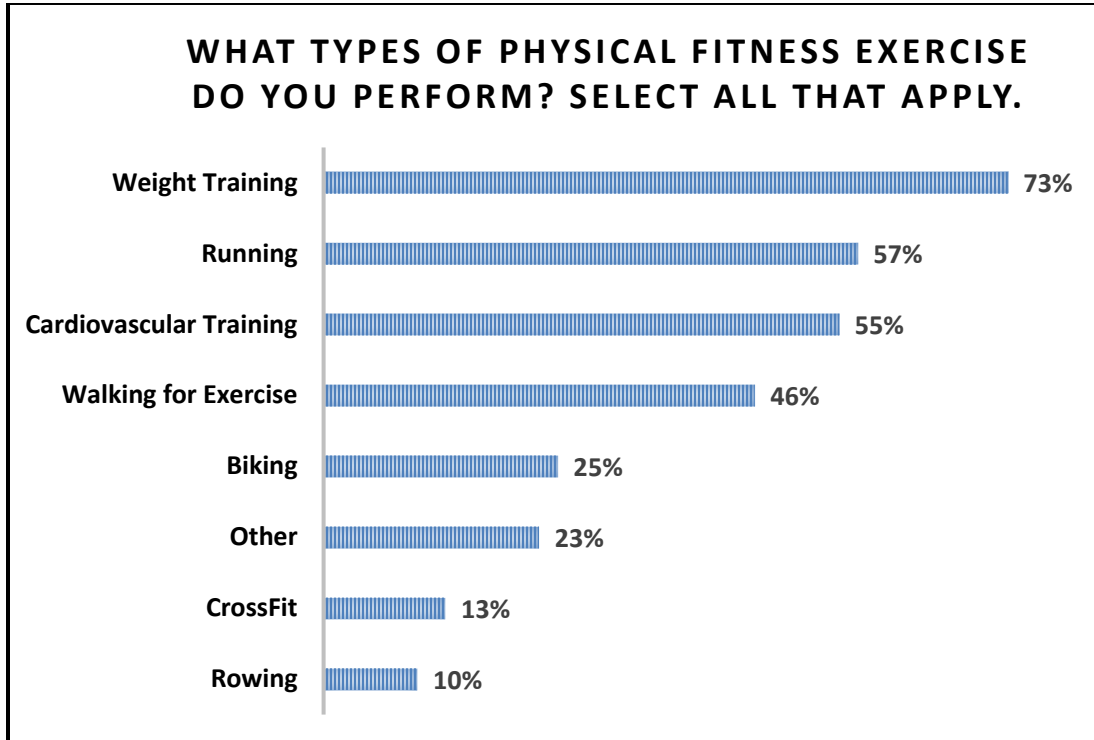
**TABLE 7: Survey 1 / Question 7: Do you Routinely Exercise**



Question 8 was dependent upon the respondent’s answer in question 7 and was only presented to those who replied they routinely exercise. The purpose of this question was to determine the type of exercise respondents who routinely exercise participate in. Respondents were instructed to select all options within the question that applied to their exercise regimen. Of the 606 respondents that routinely exercise 404 (73%) participate in weight training, 345 (57%) participate in running, 334 (55%) participate in cardiovascular training, 276 (46%) walk for exercise, 150 (25%) bike for

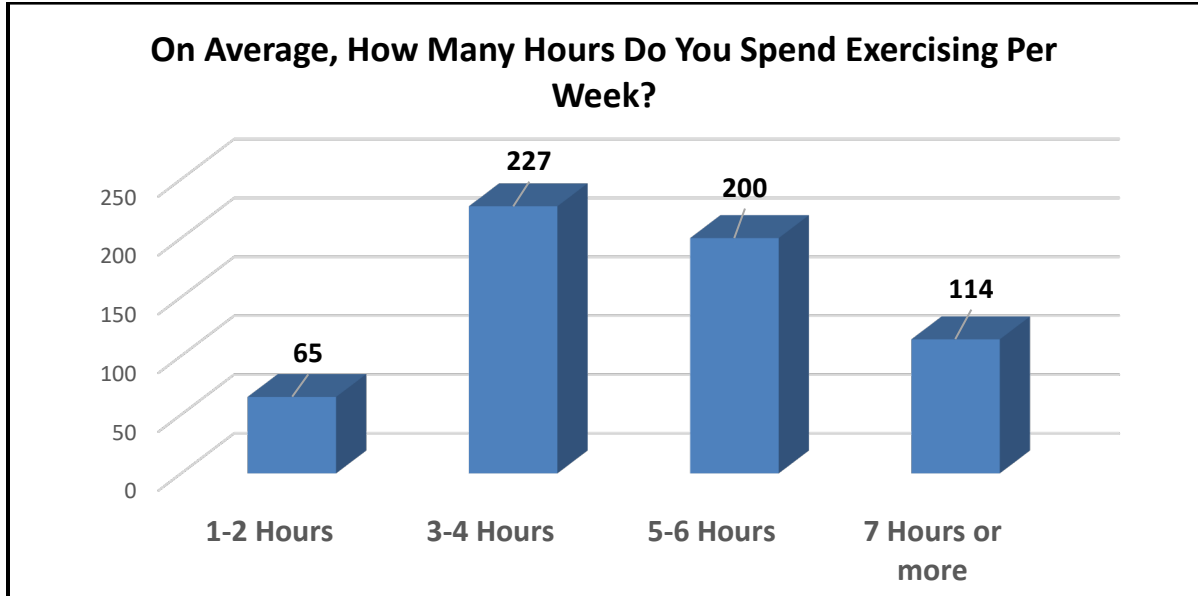
exercise, 63 (10%) row for exercise, 76 (13%) participate in CrossFit exercise and 141 (23%) of respondents participate in other types of exercise.

**TABLE 8: Survey 1 / Question 8: Respondents Exercise Type Participation**



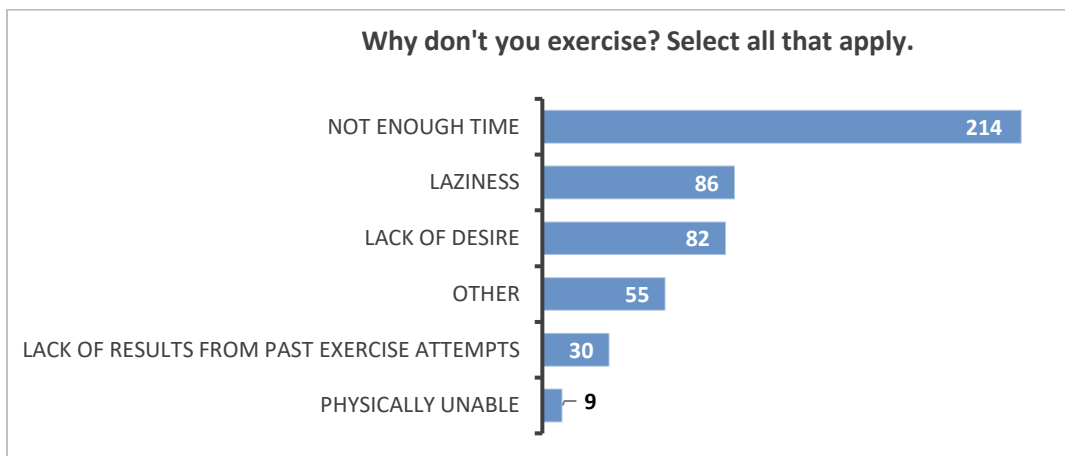
Question 9 was also dependent upon the respondent's answer to question 7 and was only presented to those who indicated they routinely exercise. The purpose of this question was to determine how much time respondents spend exercising on a weekly basis. Of the 606 respondents who reported routine exercise 65 (11%) exercise 1-2 hours per week, 227 (37%) exercise 3-4 hours per week, 200 (33%) exercise 5-6 hours per week and 114 (19%) exercise more than 7 hours per week.

**TABLE 9: Survey 1 / Question 9: Hours per Week Exercising**



Question 10 was also dependent upon the respondent's answer to question 7 and was only presented to those who indicated they did not routinely exercise. As such, this question was only posed to 277 (32%) respondents, one of which skipped the question. Respondents were instructed to select all options within the question that applied to their reasoning. The intent of this question was to determine why respondents choose not to exercise. Of the 276 respondents that replied, 214 (78%) did not exercise due to lack of time, 86 (31%) did not exercise due to laziness, 82 (30%) did not exercise due to lack of desire, 30 (11%) did not exercise due to lack of results from previous exercise attempts, 9 (3%) did not exercise due to being physically unable to do so and 55 (20%) did not exercise due to other reasons.

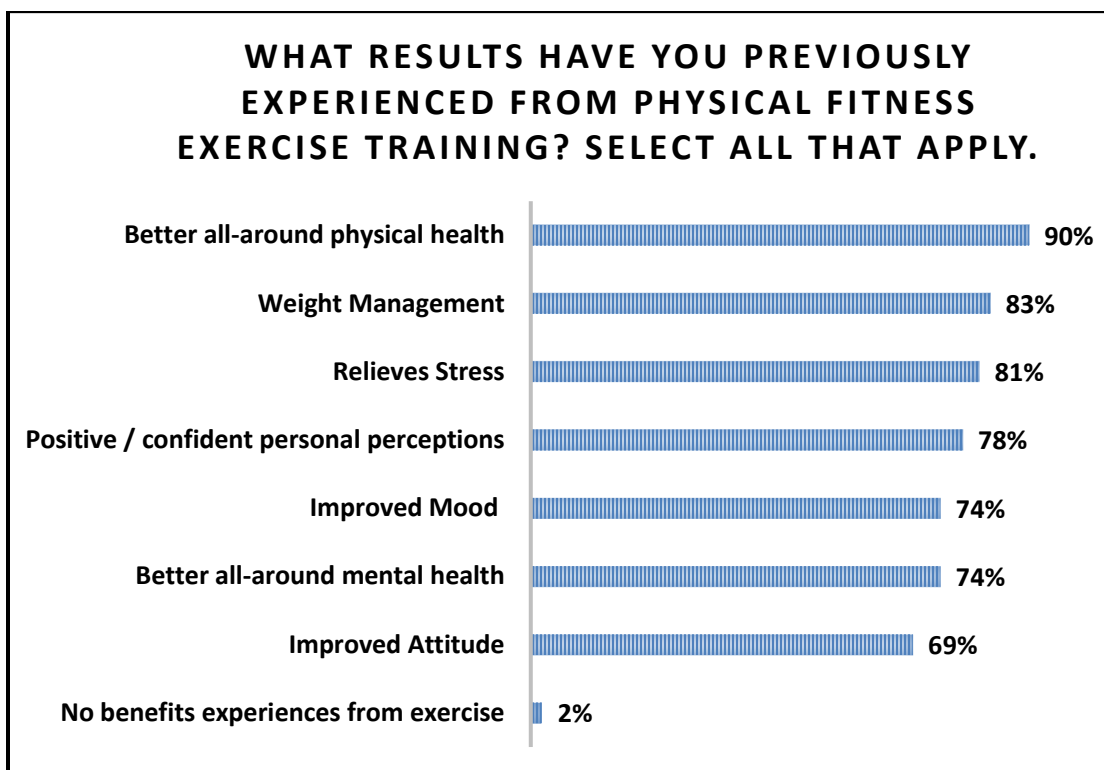
**TABLE 10: Survey 1 / Question 10: Reasons for Not Exercising**





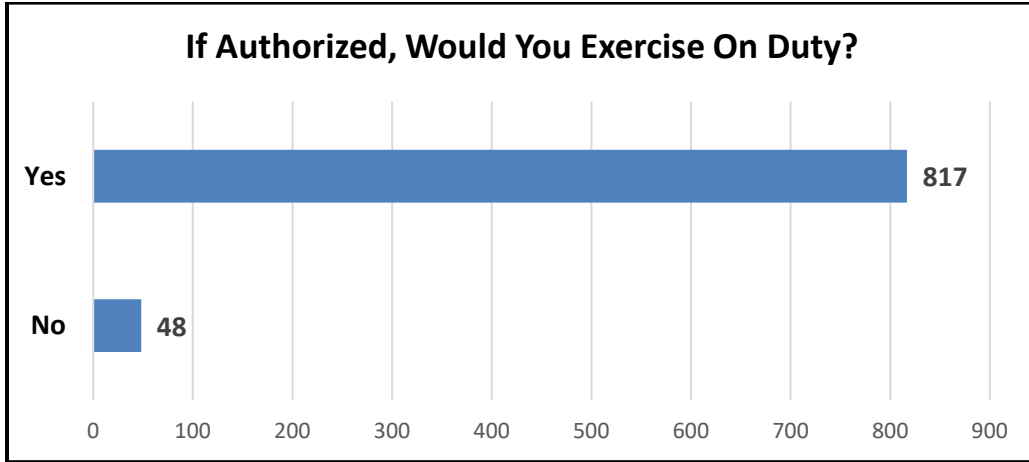
Question 11 focused on results, if any, from previous physical fitness exercise participation. Respondents were instructed to select all options within the question that applied to benefits they had previously experienced as a result of their exercise regimen. Of the 883 surveyed, 865 respondents answered this question while 18 skipped this question. Of the 865 respondents that provided a response, 782 (90%) experienced better all-around physical health, 717 (83%) experienced weight management results, 697 (81%) experienced a reduction in stress, 676 (78%) experienced their personal perception as being positive and/or confident, 647 (74%) experienced an improved mood, 638 (74%) experienced better all-around mental health, 596 (69%) experienced an improved attitude and 15 (2%) experienced no benefit from participation in exercise.

**TABLE 11: Survey 1 / Question 11: Results Experienced from Physical Fitness**



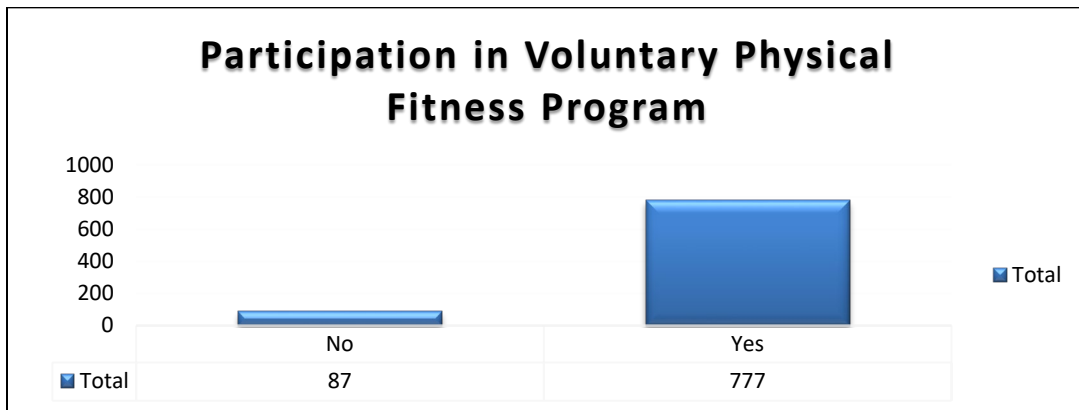
In an attempt to determine perspective, question 12 queried respondents to determine whether they are amenable to exercising in an on-duty status, if authorized. Of the 883 surveyed, 865 respondents answered this question and 18 respondents skipped this question. Of the 865 respondents that replied, 817 (94%) indicated they would exercise in an on duty status if provided the opportunity and 48 (6%) indicated they would not.

**TABLE 12: Survey 1 / Question 12: Exercise in an On-Duty Status**



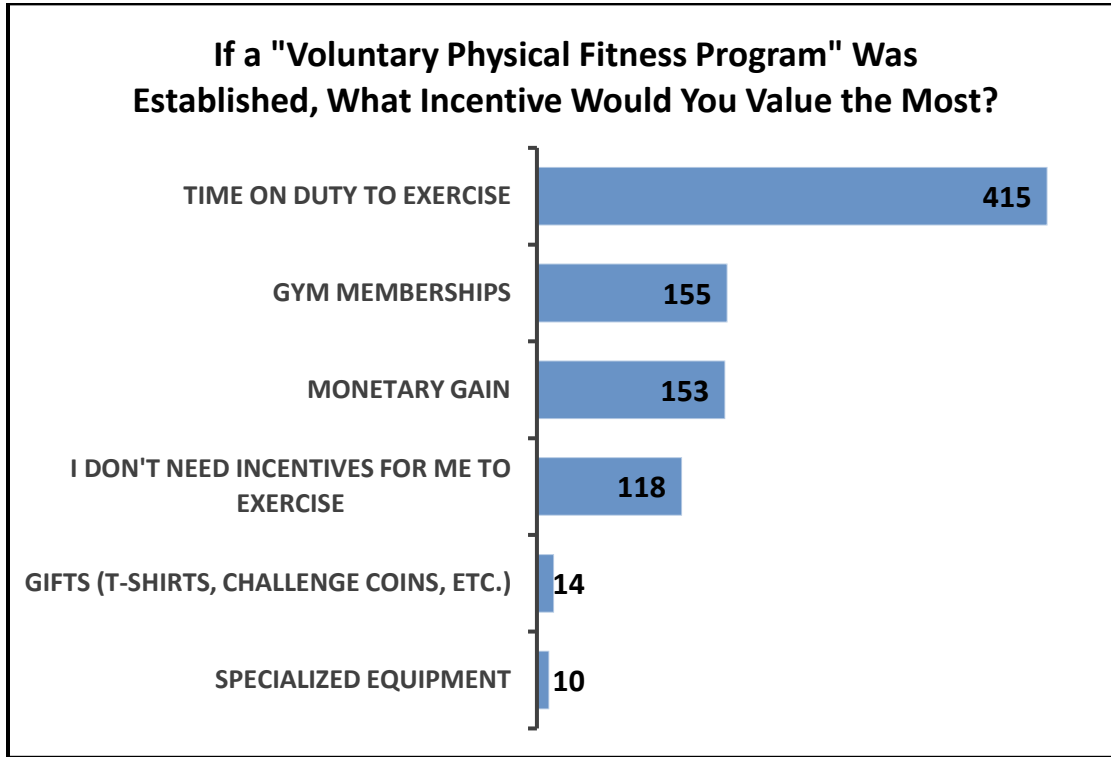
Respondents were asked in question 13 if they would be willing to participate in an incentive-based voluntary physical fitness program if a program existed within the Florida Highway Patrol. One respondent skipped the question and 862 respondents answered. Of the 862 respondents 833 (97%) answered in the affirmative while 29 (3%) indicated they would not.

**TABLE 13: Survey 1 / Question 13: Participation in Voluntary Physical Fitness Program**



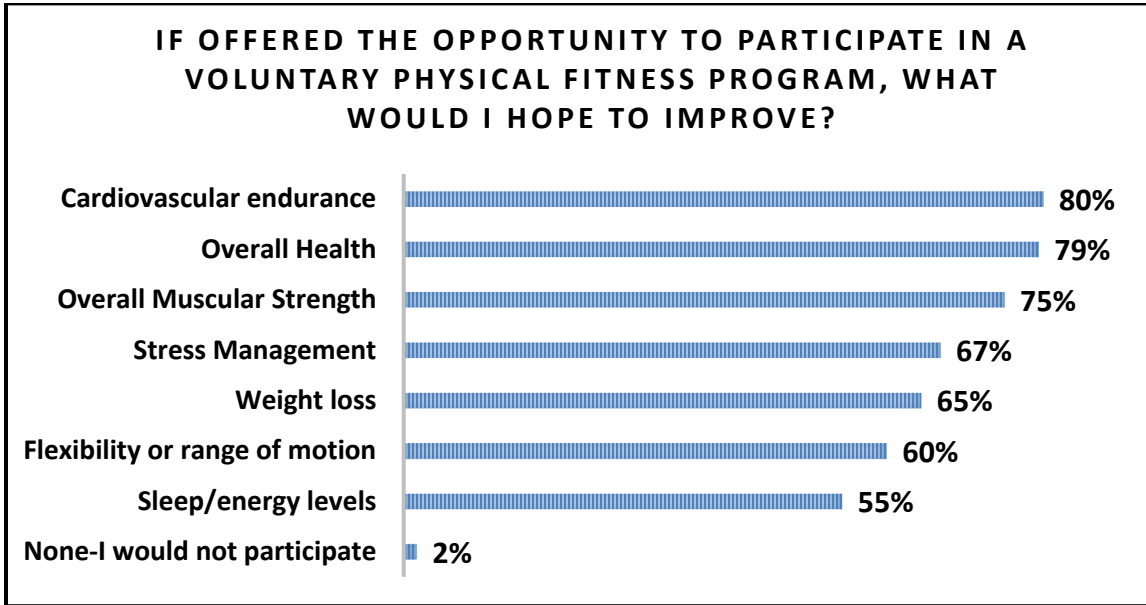
Question 14 focused on what incentives respondents valued the most in the event incentives were provided for physical fitness participation. Eighteen respondents skipped the question and 865 respondents answered the question. Of the 865 that responded 415 (48%) valued time on duty to exercise, 155 (18%) valued gym memberships, 153 (17%) valued monetary gain, 14 (2%) valued gifts (t-shirts, challenge coins, etc.), 10 (1%) valued specialized equipment and 118 (14%) indicated they needed no incentive to exercise.

**TABLE 14: Survey 1 / Question 14: Voluntary Physical Fitness Program Value of Incentives**



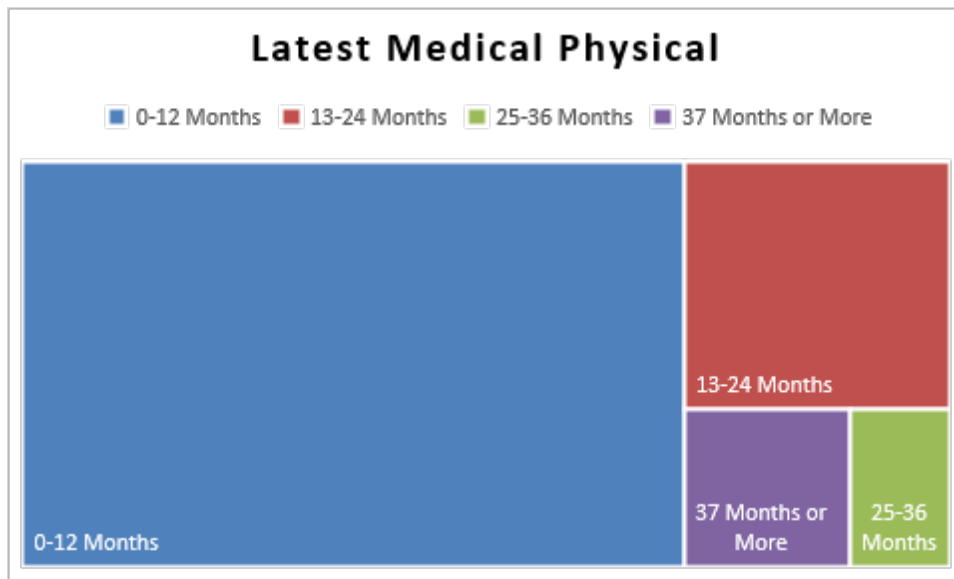
Respondents were asked in question 15 what attribute they would hope to improve if offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary physical fitness program. Eighteen respondents skipped the question and 865 respondents answered the question. Respondents were instructed to select all options within the question that applied to attributes they hoped to improve. Of the 865 respondents, 690 (80%) hoped to improve cardiovascular endurance, 685 (79%) hoped to improve overall health, 648 (75%) hoped to improve overall muscular strength, 579 (67%) hoped to manage stress, 558 (65%) hoped to improve weight loss, 521 (60%) hoped to improve flexibility or range of motion, 473 (55%) hoped to improve sleep and/or energy levels and 14 (2%) replied they would not participate.

**TABLE 15: Survey 1 / Question 15: Voluntary Physical Fitness Program Opportunities for Improvement**



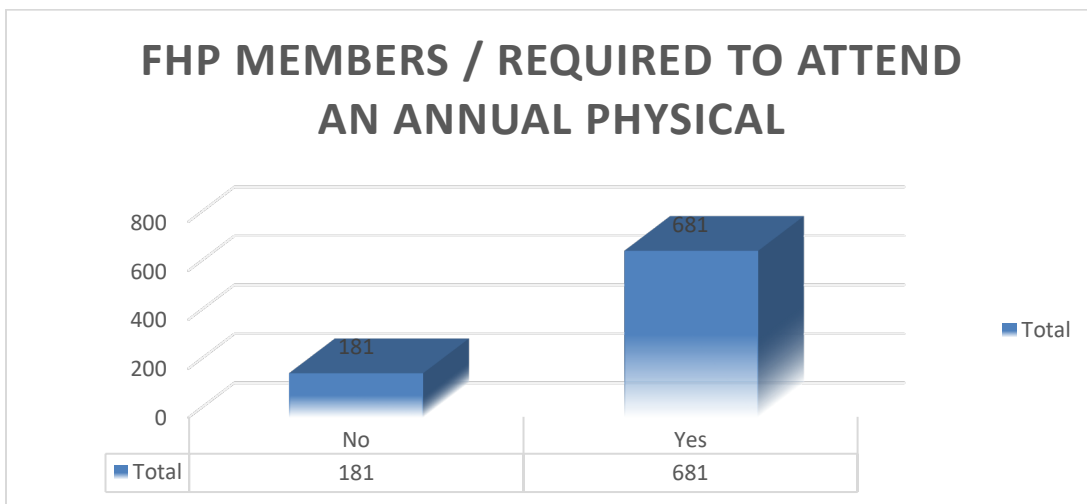
The intent of question 16 was to determine the last occasion respondents attended a medical physical. Twenty respondents skipped the question and 863 respondents answered this question. Of the 863 respondents, 616 (71%) attended a medical physical during the last 12 months, 151 (18%) respondents attended a medical physical 13 to 24 months prior to this survey, 36 (4%) respondents attended a medical physical 25 to 36 months prior to this survey and 60 (7%) respondents attended a medical physical 37 months or more prior to responding to this survey.

**TABLE 16: Survey 1 / Question 16: Latest Medical Physical**



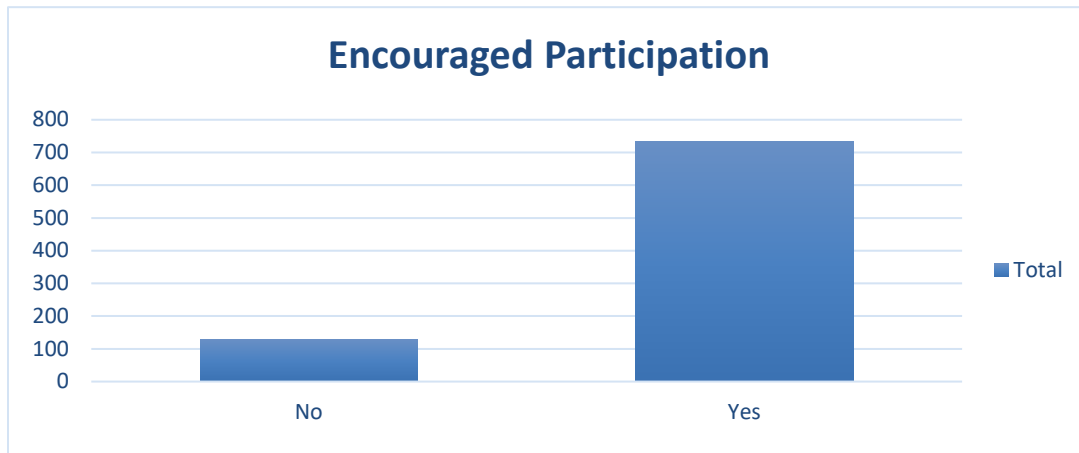
Question 17 asked if respondents felt Florida Highway Patrol members should be required to attend an annual medical physical. Of the 883 respondents, 862 replied to this question while 21 skipped this question. Of the 862 that responded 681 (79%) indicated members of the Florida Highway Patrol should be required to attend an annual medical physical and 181 (21%) replied they should not be required to attend an annual medical physical.

**TABLE 17: Survey 1 / Question 17: FHP Members Required to Attend Annual Physical**



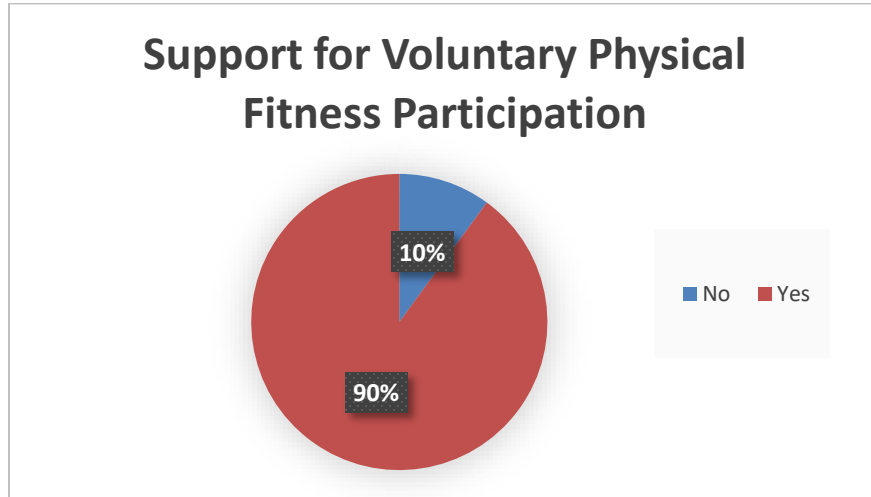
Question 18 evaluated if allowing Florida Highway Patrol members to attend their annual medical physical in an on-duty status would encourage participation in attending their annual medical physical. Of the 883 respondents, 864 responded to this question and 19 skipped this question. A majority, 734 (85%) believed participation would increase if the annual medical physical could be completed in an on-duty status and 130 (15%) believed participation would not increase.

**TABLE 18: Survey 1 / Question 18: Annual Medical Physical On-Duty Status**



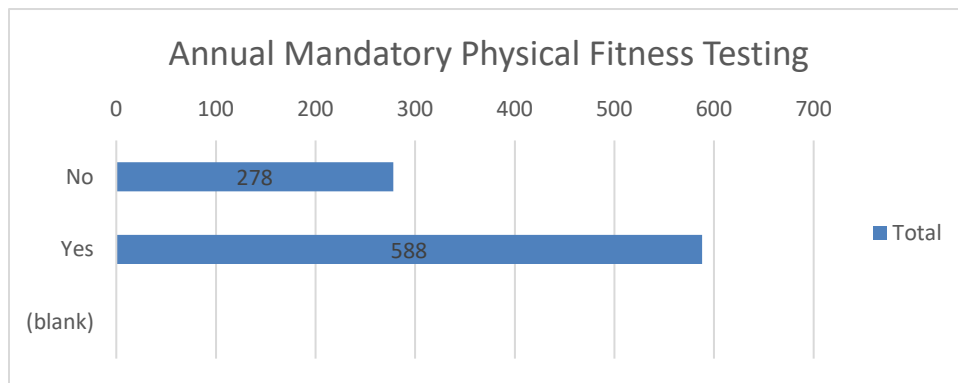
Question 19 surveyed respondents to determine if they supported members being offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary physical fitness test. Out of the 883 respondents to this survey, 864 provided a response and 19 skipped the question. Of the 864 respondents, 777 (90%) supported the opportunity to participate in a voluntary physical fitness test and 87 (10%) of respondents did not support voluntary participation.

**TABLE 19: Survey 1 / Question 19: Support for Voluntary Physical Fitness Participation**



Question 20 queried respondents to determine if they supported members being required to pass a minimum standard of physical fitness judged through annual testing. Though 883 respondents responded to this survey, 866 provided a response to this question and 17 skipped this question. Of the 866 respondents, 588 (68%) supported mandatory annual physical fitness testing while 278 (32%) of the respondents did not support mandatory physical fitness testing.

**TABLE 20: Survey 1 / Question 20: Mandatory Annual Physical Fitness Testing**

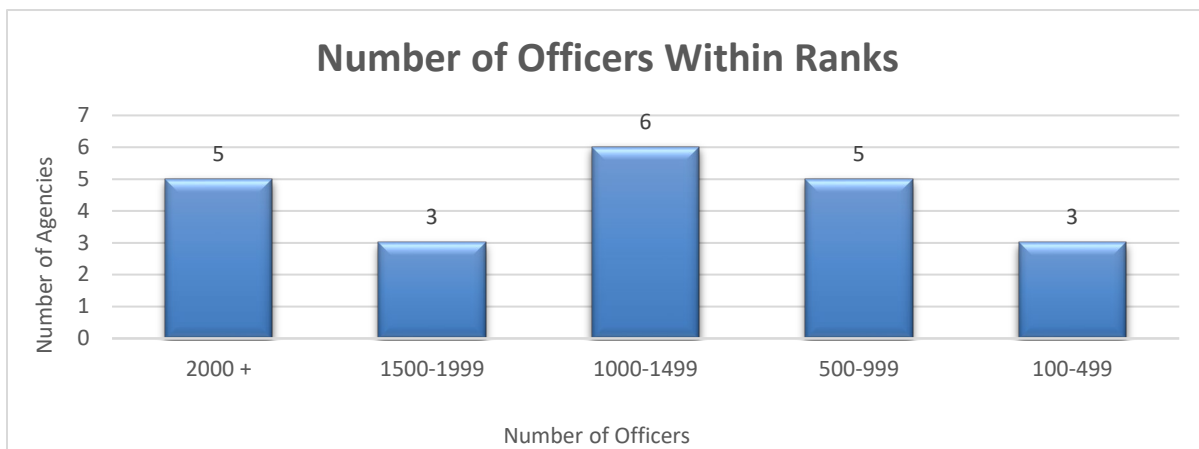


## Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – State Law Enforcement Survey Results

The second survey that was deployed was entitled Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – State Law Enforcement. This survey was made up of 20 questions and was disseminated to 49 state highway patrol agencies throughout the United States. This survey generated 22 responses which represents a 45% response ratio. Throughout the survey respondents occasionally skipped questions.

This survey began with determining how many officers each of the 22 responding agencies have within their ranks. Of the responding agencies, 5 (23%) were found to have 2000 or more officers, 3 (14%) were found to have between 1500 and 1999 officers, 6 (26%) were found to have between 1000 and 1499 officers, 5 (23%) were found to have between 500 and 999 officers and 3 (14%) were found to have between 100 and 499 officers.

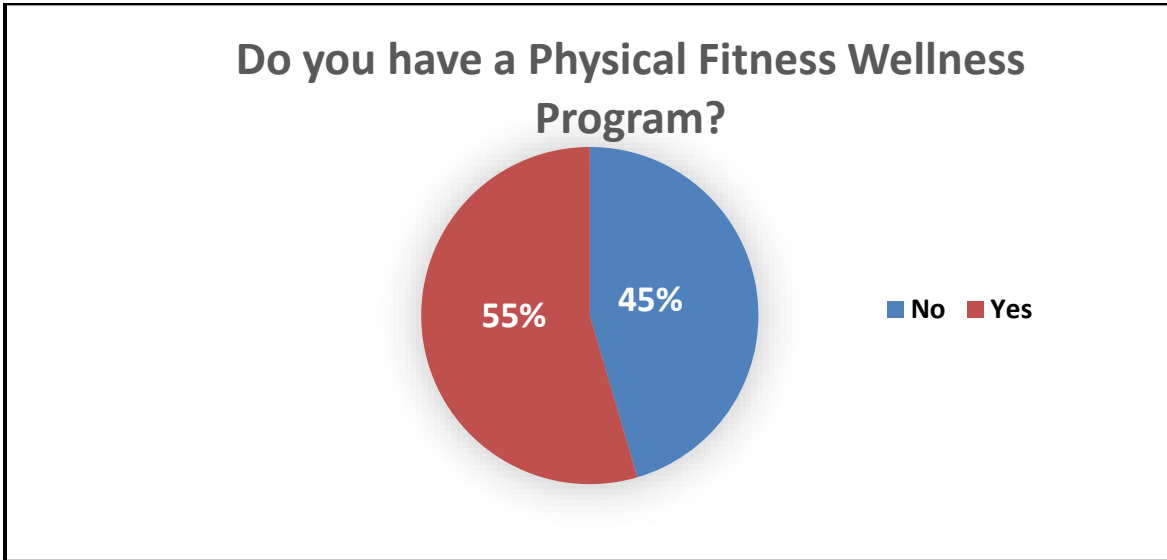
**TABLE 21: Survey 2 / Question 1: Number of Officers within Ranks**



The second question of this survey determined if the responding agency presently has an established physical fitness program. Of the 22 responding agencies 12 (55%) do in fact have some form of physical fitness wellness plan, while 10 (45%) of responding agencies do not.

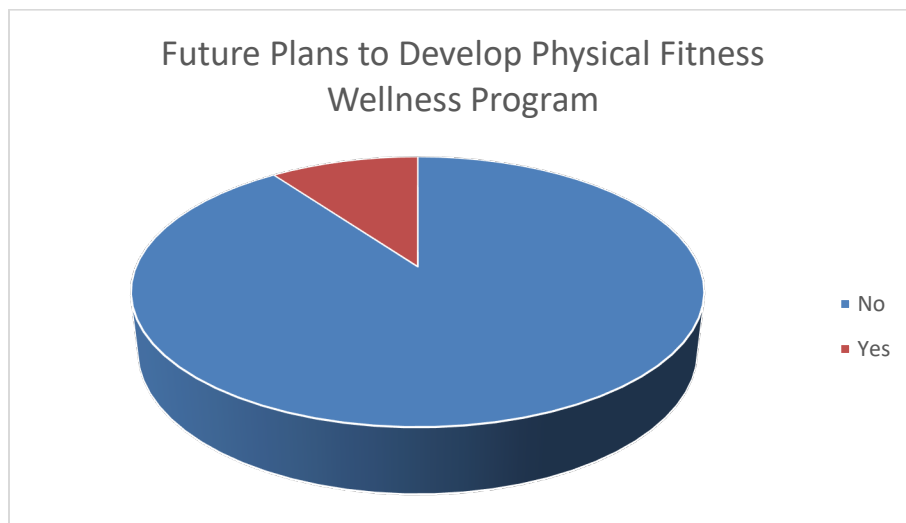


**TABLE 22: Survey 2 / Question 2: Agencies that have physical fitness wellness programs**



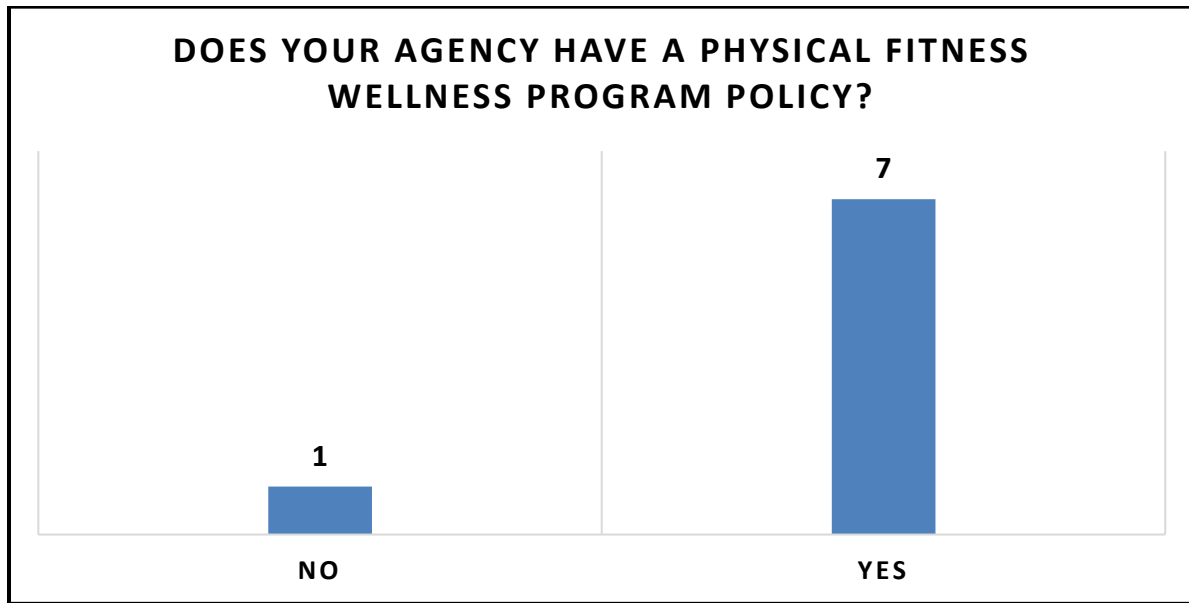
Question 3 was built on question 2 and was only shown to respondents that replied that their agency does not have a physical fitness wellness plan. As a result, 10 respondents were queried to determine if their agency has any future plans to develop a physical fitness wellness plan. Of these respondents queried, 9 (90%) indicated they did not have any plans and 1 (10%) agency replied they did have future plans to develop a physical fitness wellness plan.

**TABLE 23: Survey 2 / Question 3: Development of Physical Fitness Wellness Program**



Question 4 was a continuation from question 2 and was only shown to respondents that replied that their agency has a physical fitness wellness plan. As a result, 12 respondents were surveyed to determine if they had an existing physical fitness wellness plan policy. Four respondents skipped this question and 8 replied. Of the 8 that replied 7 (87%) do have a physical fitness wellness plan policy and 1 (13%) does not.

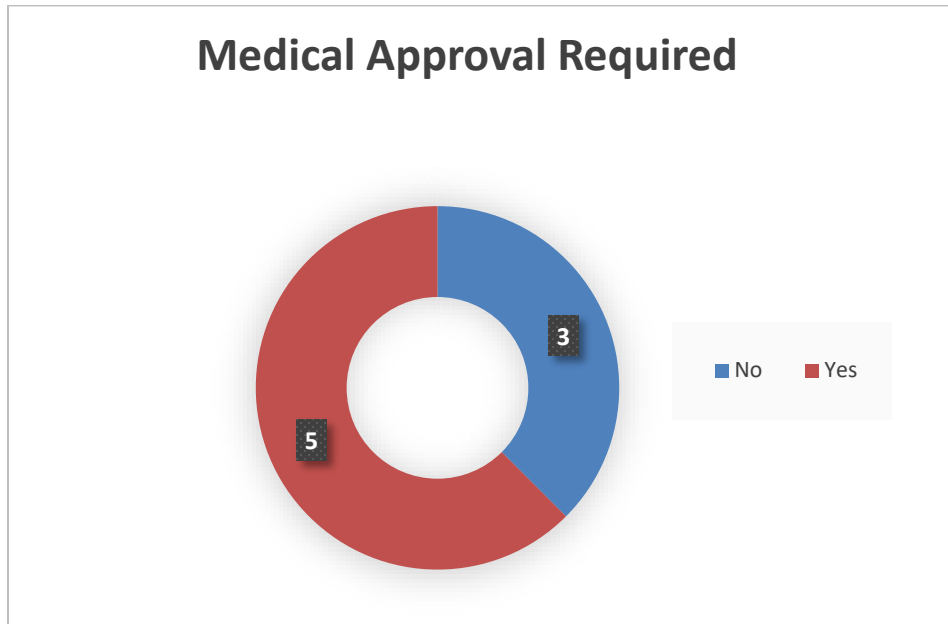
**TABLE 24: Survey 2 / Question 4: Physical Fitness Wellness Program Policy**



Question 5 was only presented to the 12 respondents that answered in the affirmative for question 2. This question requested a brief summary from the respondents outlining an overview of their physical fitness wellness plan. Of the 12 who were presented this question, 7 respondents replied, while 5 skipped this question. The responses varied, but in general they included outlines of physical requirements, how often physical fitness testing was required, incentives for physical fitness and progress towards physical fitness goals, types of exercises evaluated during testing and agency standards of required fitness.

Question 6 was also presented to 12 respondents based on their response to question 2. This question determined if their respective agencies require their membership to provide medical approval prior to participating in physical fitness wellness plan. Of the 12 surveyed, 8 respondents replied and 4 skipped this question. Of the 8 that provided responses, 5 (62%) required medical approval and 3 (38%) did not require medical approval prior to participating in physical fitness wellness programs.

**TABLE 25: Survey 2 / Question 6: Is Medical Approval Required**



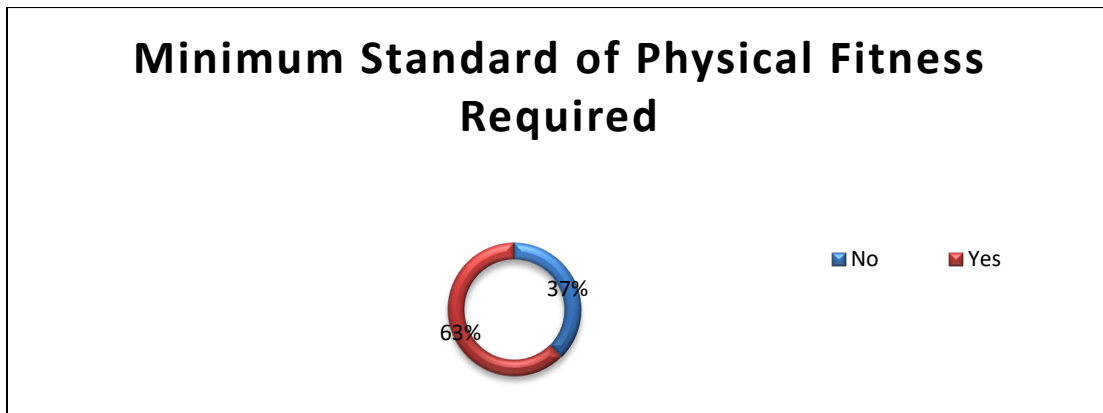
Question 7 was also built from responses in question 2 and as a result was only presented to 12 respondents. Eight respondents replied to this question and 4 skipped this question. The intent of this question was to determine if participation of officers within the surveyed agencies was on a voluntary or involuntary basis. Of the 8 responses 6 (75%) indicated participation was mandatory and 2 (25%) indicated that participation was on a voluntary basis.

**TABLE 26: Survey 2 / Question 7 Sworn Officers' Participation Voluntary / Mandatory**



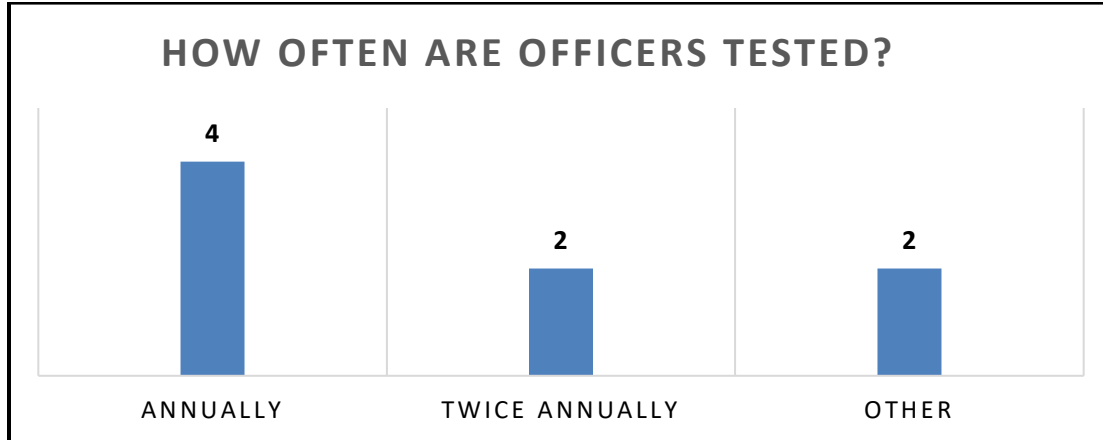
Question 8 was also built from responses in question 2 and as a result was only presented to 12 respondents. Eight respondents replied to this question and 4 skipped this question. The purpose of this question was to determine if there is a minimum standard of physical fitness officers are required to maintain in order to remain in their role at their respective agency. Of the 8 responses received from this question, 5 (62%) noted there was a minimum standard of fitness while 3 (38%) noted there was not a minimum standard of fitness. Additionally, agencies were provided an opportunity to provide comments related to this question. Five (62%) of respondents provided additional comments that outlined topics including exemptions to their minimum standards, standards only being enforced during promotional processes, participation versus pass / fail, union agreements and physical fitness courses presented by agencies to their officers.

**TABLE 27: Survey 2 / Question 8: Minimum Standards of Physical Fitness Required to be Maintained**



Question 9 was generated based on responses from question 2 as well. As a result, only 12 respondents were provided this question; 8 of the respondents replied to this question and 4 skipped this question. This question asked how often agency members were required to test on physical fitness. Of the 8 responses, 4 (50%) of agencies tested annually, 2 (25%) of agencies tested semiannually and 2 (25%) of agencies tested using other methods not identified in this survey.

**TABLE 28: Survey 2 / Question 9: How Often Are Officers Tested**



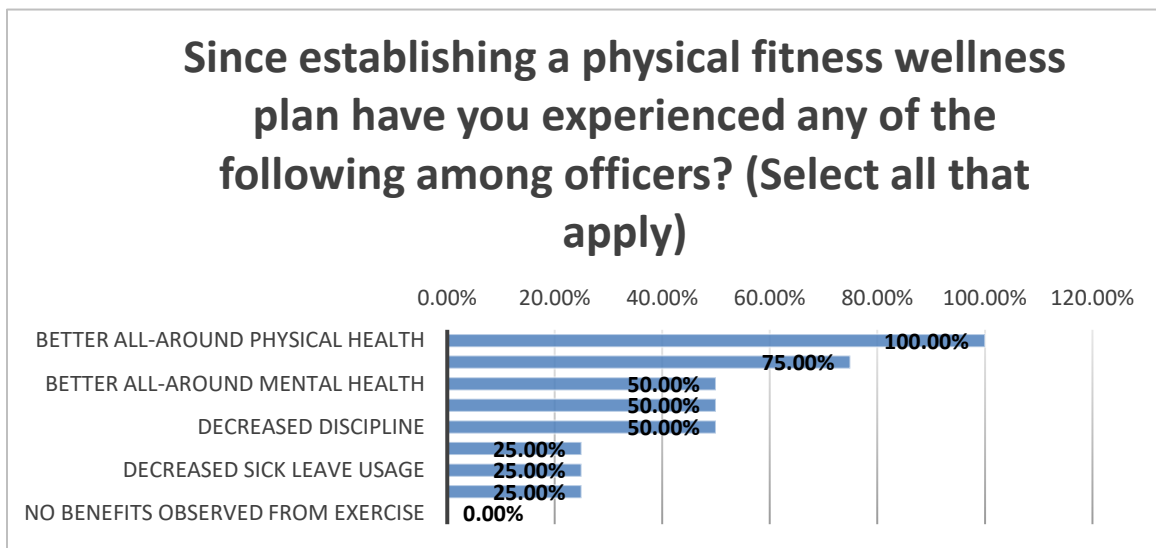
Question 10 was used to determine if there were consequences for officers who were unable to pass a physical fitness test. This question was only displayed to the 12 respondents that indicated they had a physical fitness program. This question generated 8 responses and resulted in 4 respondents skipping this question. Of the 8 responses, 5 (62%) of the agency respondents indicated there were consequences while 3 (38%) of the agency respondents indicated there were no consequences. This question also requested respondents to provide comments if there were consequences at their agency for failure to pass their physical fitness standards. All 5 (62%) agency's that indicated there were consequences also made comments which included the following topics: improvement plans, weight loss plan, ineligibility for promotional opportunities, physical fitness re-testing, discipline standards including dismissal, consultation with agency dietitians, ineligibility for advanced training and required medical examinations.

**TABLE 29: Survey 2 / Question 10: Physical Fitness Failure Consequences**



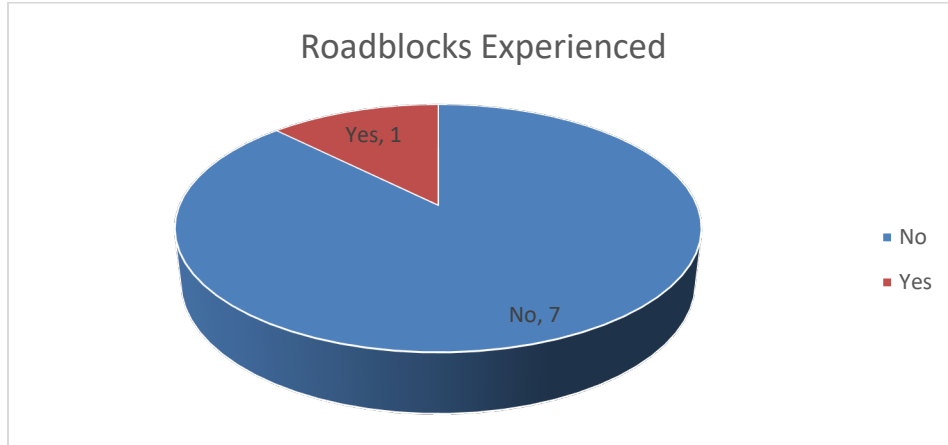
Question 11 was intended to determine if agencies had positive or negative results following the implementation of a physical fitness wellness plan. This question was only displayed to the 12 respondents that indicated they had a physical fitness program. This question generated 4 responses and resulted in 8 respondents skipping the question. All respondents were instructed to select all of the listed results that applied to their scenario. Of the 4 respondents, 4 (100%) of agencies indicated their membership experienced better all-around physical health, 3 (75%) of agencies indicated their membership experienced improved positive / confident personal perceptions, 2 (50%) of agencies indicated their membership experienced all of the following: better all-around mental health, improved mood/attitude and a decrease in discipline. One (25%) of agencies indicated their membership experienced all of the following: less stress among officers, decreased sick leave usage among officers and a decrease in worker's compensation claims. It should be noted, each agency reported benefits from their physical fitness wellness plan.

**TABLE 30: Survey 2 / Question 11: Physical Fitness Results**



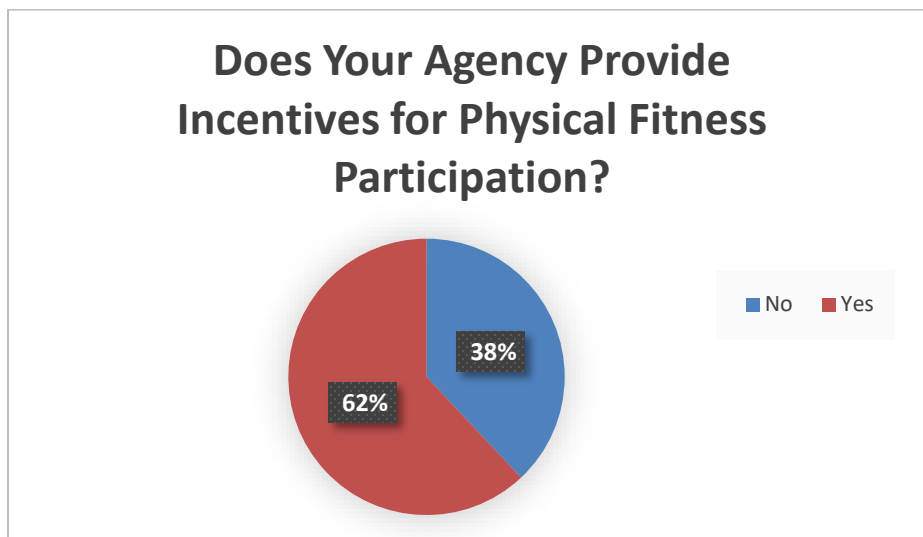
Question 12 was only presented to the 12 respondents who had previously indicated their agency has a physical fitness program. Eight respondents replied to this question and 4 skipped this question. The intent of this question was to determine if agencies experienced roadblocks while establishing their physical fitness wellness program. Of the 8 responses, 7 (87%) of the agencies experienced no roadblocks while 1 (13%) agency reported experiencing roadblocks. This question also allowed agency respondents to provide comments. The only noted comment was membership resistance.

**TABLE 31: Survey 2 / Question 12: Roadblocks Experienced**



Respondents were asked in question 13 if their agency provided incentives for participating in their physical fitness program. Like many of the previous questions, this question was only presented to the 12 respondents that indicated they have a physical fitness program. This question generated 8 responses and resulted in 4 respondents skipping this question. Of the 8 responses, 5 (62%) of the agency respondents indicated their agency provided incentives for physical fitness participation while 3 (38%) of the agency respondents indicated their agency provided no incentives. Additionally, respondents were offered the opportunity to provide comments. Comments provided focused on the type of incentives agencies provided to their members and included some of the following: promotional opportunities, monetary awards, reduction in health insurance premiums and additional days off.

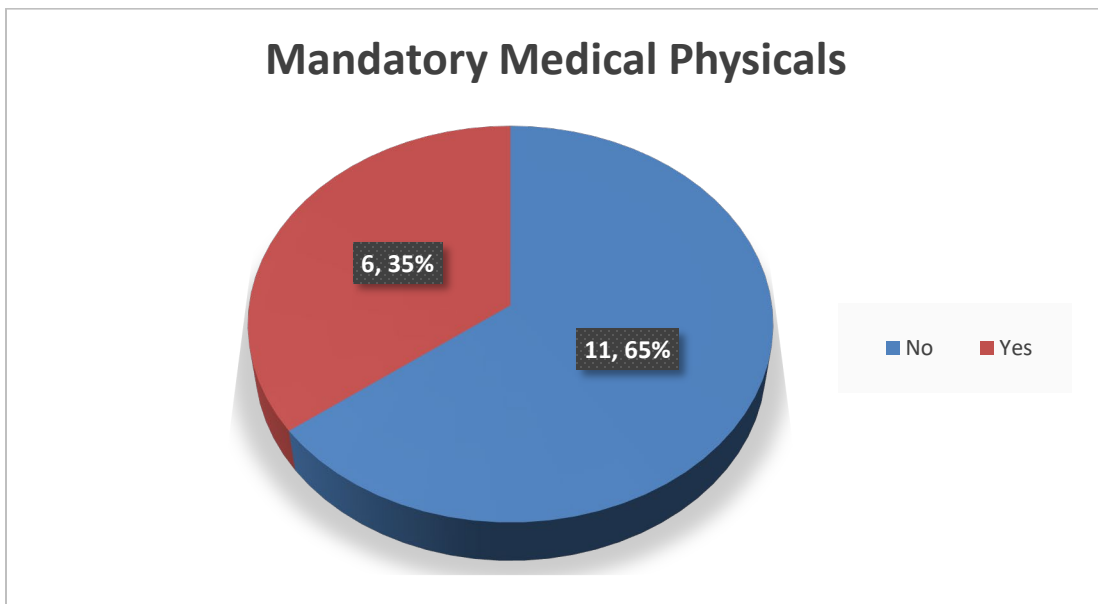
**TABLE 32: Survey 2 / Question 13: Physical Fitness Agency Incentives**



Question 14 asked if providing incentives related to participation in physical fitness wellness programs improved officer participation. This question was asked of the same 12 respondents in previous questions and generated 4 responses and resulted in 8 respondents skipping the question. Of the 4 responses, 3 (75%) respondents indicated that providing incentives to officers for participation in their program improved officer involvement, while 1 (25%) respondent believed it did not improve participation.

Question 15 asked if agencies required their officers to attend an annual medical physical. Of the 22 respondents, 17 respondents replied and 5 skipped this question. Of the 17 respondents that provided a response 11 (65%) did not require their officers to attend an annual medical physical while 6 (35%) respondents required their officers to attend an annual medical physical.

**TABLE 33: Survey 2 / Question 15: Mandatory Medical Physicals**



Question 16 asked respondents if their agency provided any additional medical screening beyond the normal annual medical physical. Eighteen of the 22 respondents to this survey answered this question and 4 skipped this question. Of the 18 respondents that answered, only 2 (11%) of the agencies provided additional screening while 16 (89%) of the agencies did not provide any additional screening. This question also provided an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments. The comments that were provided generically indicated that many insurance companies provide additional testing services.

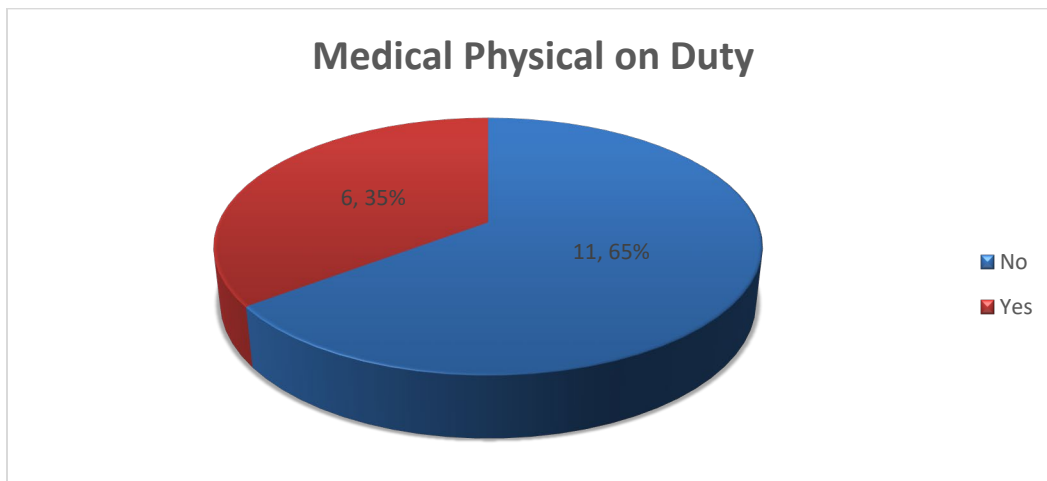


The intent of question 17 was to determine if agencies provide incentives to their officers for attending medical physicals. This question generated 18 responses while 4 respondents skipped this question. Of the 18 responses, 14 (78%) of the agencies did not provide any incentives for annual medical physicals and 4 (22%) of the agencies did provide incentives. This question also provided an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments. The comments provided related to this question are summarized as follows: Reduction in health care premiums, penalty's by state health care insurance companies for failure to attend annual medical physical and agencies paying for annual medical physicals.

Question 18 is a continuation to question 17 and was only asked to the 4 respondents that indicated they do provide incentives to officers for completing their annual medical physical. The intent of this question was to determine if providing these incentives increases officer participation. Of the 4 respondent, 3 provided a response and 1 skipped the question. All 3 (100%) respondents indicated providing officers with incentives for completing annual medical physicals increased officer participation.

Question 19 asked survey participants if their agencies allowed officers to attend their annual medical physical in an on-duty status. Seventeen surveyed agencies responded while 5 skipped the question. Of the 17 that responded, 11 (65%) allow personnel to attend their annual medical physical in an on-duty status and 6 (35%) responded they do not authorize attendance of annual medical physical in an on duty status.

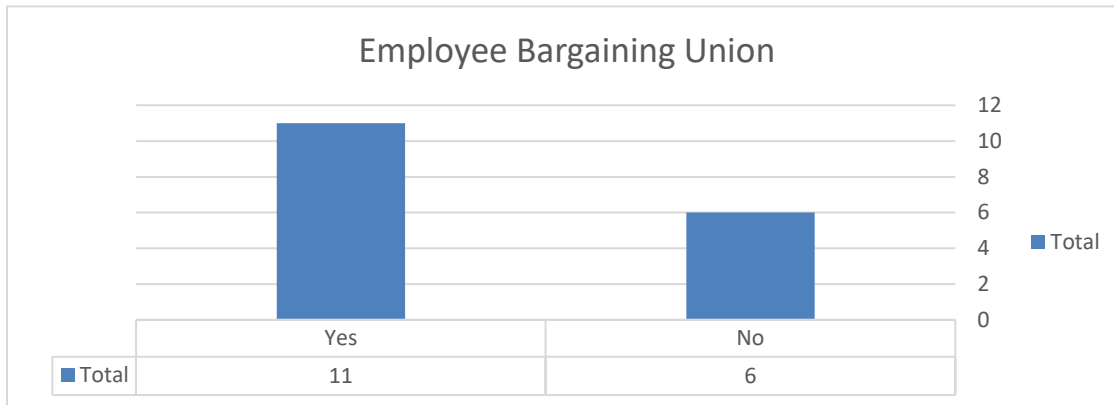
**TABLE 34: Survey 2 / Question 19: Mandatory Medical Physical On-Duty**



Question 20 asked if their respective agency has an employee bargaining unit and also provided an opportunity for respondents to provide comments related to this topic. Seventeen of the 22 agencies responded and 5 skipped this question. Of the 17

agencies that responded, 10 (59%) indicated they do have a union and 7 (45%) agencies indicated they do not have a union. Additionally, there were 7 comments that generally discussed the following: incentives for participating in physical fitness, multiple comments related to the challenges that come from working with unions as it relates to physical health, and physical health being a condition of employment.

**TABLE 35: Survey 2 / Question 20: Employee Bargaining Union**



### Discussion

In order to gain a broad, in-depth perspective, it was necessary to survey members of the Florida Highway Patrol along with representatives of state agencies across the nation. This strategy was implemented with two goals: (1) evaluate officer views on best practices in establishing physical fitness wellness programs, with a focus on member attitude / mentality and (2) identify successful procedures related to physical fitness wellness programs, with an emphasis on operational guidelines. Survey results were analyzed to illuminate not only preferences, operating standards and expectations, but most importantly, results of existing physical fitness wellness programs.

The first survey was specifically directed to sworn officers of the Florida Highway Patrol to include every age classification and rank through the rank of major. Results reinforced the benefits of physical fitness programs and specifically, the belief that physical fitness is an effective coping mechanism for stress. Survey participants not only supported, but expected physical fitness among troopers of the Florida Highway Patrol. Approximately 97% of respondents believed that law enforcement officers should maintain a high degree of physical fitness, and 96% of members anticipate participation in physical fitness exercise would result in a reduction of stress. Almost all respondents (99%) noted that by participating in physical fitness exercise they would experience added benefits to their lives, both personally and professionally. This is further supported by the number of officers (69%) who take the initiative to currently exercise on their own time with zero incentive from their employer. Although analysis shows a desire to participate in physical exercise (90% indicated willingness to participate in a voluntary program and 68% supported a mandatory program), the number one reason for not exercising was lack of time.

As it relates to members attending their annual medical physicals, a majority of respondents reported that they attended their last appointment within the last 12 months and felt annual medical physicals should be a mandatory requirement by the agency. These results countered the initial expectation. Only 7% of the respondents reported it being over three years since their last annual medical physical. Additionally, 85% of members felt that if Florida Highway Patrol members were authorized to attend annual medical physicals in an on-duty status, participation would increase.

The second survey was disseminated to highway patrol agencies across the nation in order to obtain a benchmark of best practices with an emphasis on operational procedures. The staffing for responding agencies ranged from 100 to more than 2000 members. Of the 22 state agencies that responded, 12 have some form of physical fitness wellness program. Most agencies that have physical fitness wellness programs require participation, a minimum mandatory level of physical fitness, and some form of testing procedures, most often annually. Additionally, agencies provide incentives to their officers for physical fitness participation. A common challenge faced by agencies with programs was agencies that have unions reported roadblocks or challenges in negotiating member physical fitness. Regardless of how their program was implemented, 100% of responding agencies reported varying improvements among their personnel since establishing a physical fitness wellness plan.

As it relates to medical physicals for members, more than one-third of the agencies authorize their members to attend their medical physical in an on-duty status, while only 11% of the agencies offered additional medical screening to their employees. Interestingly, only 22% of agencies provided their members incentives to complete their annual medical physical; however, these agencies all agreed that providing incentives increased membership participation.

## **Recommendations**

Through a thorough review of both surveys, I was able to glean valuable information representing a myriad of perspectives from an in-depth look at one specific agency and further analysis of agencies throughout the nation.

An agency's most valuable asset is its members. Research has confirmed that heart disease, stress, unhealthy lifestyle, fatigue, exposure to critical incidents and many other scenarios can attribute to adverse medical risk factors for members of law enforcement. In 2018, suicide was the leading cause of law enforcement deaths. Heart attacks are also a common occurrence for law enforcement officers, significantly more when compared to other types of employment. Both of these causes of death can be partially mitigated through proper implementation of agency endorsed physical fitness wellness plans that include proper medical physicals. This measure is being employed nationally to mitigate risk factors. In the surveys alone, the vast majority of respondents confirmed a reduced level of stress after exercise which in turn improves mental health, decreases depression and decreases anxiety; 99% of respondents confirmed exercise added benefits to their personal and professional life, which in turn improves physical health, weight management, positive perception and improved mood/attitude. Each of

the state agencies that responded, confirmed, at least in some fashion, positive results were noted in their law enforcement members as a result of their physical fitness wellness plans. The overarching theme emerging from this research is the benefit of mandating participation in a physical fitness wellness plan.

In order to establish an effective physical fitness wellness plan, it is recommended to approach the program in two stages; both would include a physical fitness aspect and a medical wellness aspect. While keeping the mindset of not letting perfection stand in the way of immediate progress, the first stage will focus on quick wins that will immediately spark interest from agency membership and provide a valid means for better physical and mental health.

The first stage of the physical fitness aspect would include authorizing members to exercise in an on-duty status, specifically in coordination with supervision (outside of peak travel times, utilization of analytics, etc.) in an attempt to ensure calls for service are not impacted. The number of hours authorized would be a command decision; however, two work out sessions not to exceed 1.5 hours each week would provide ample opportunity to complete this task. This is supported by the 94% of officers who indicated they would work out on duty if authorized. Additionally, of the officers that reported they did not work out, 78% reported the reason was lack of time.

The first stage of the medical health aspect would include authorizing members the ability to attend their annual medical physical in an on-duty status after proper coordination with supervision. This recommendation is supported by 85% of survey respondents confirmed that they would be more inclined to attend an annual medical physical if it was authorized to attend in an on-duty status.

The second stage of the physical fitness aspect would include numerous steps, some of which will take time to incorporate. These steps should at a minimum include: garnishing the support of the appropriate agency bargaining union, program development and expectations (mandatory program, voluntary program, or incentive-based program; testing requirements etc.), drafting agency policy to ensure a well-rounded program and exploring member benefits through insurance companies.

The second stage of the medical health aspect would include exploring additional screening options for preventative health care above and beyond the normal routine annual medical physical. The goal behind this review would be to encourage members to attend more in-depth medical wellness visits with the hope of mitigating a potential medical condition before it becomes a safety concern. Not only will this benefit the members in identifying medical conditions; hopefully, before they become a serious concern, but this procedure could also significantly benefit agencies from a risk management perspective. In the event an employee's serious medical conditions is noted early and proper medical treatment is implemented it is anticipated long term cost and/or worker's compensation claims could potentially be reduced or mitigated completely.

Although there are many standard operating procedures, policies and approval processes an agency must overcome in order to establish a new program. Throughout this process of being a progressive leader in change, it is encouraging to recall the reason we are embarking on this journey, to ensure the safety of our own.

Cory Harrison began his law enforcement career as a Deputy Sheriff with the Jackson County Sheriff's Department in 2000. He was later hired by the Florida Highway Patrol in 2003 graduating the 104th recruit class. Upon graduation, he was assigned to Okaloosa and later Jackson Counties. Cory was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in Panama City and then District Lieutenant in Pensacola. Cory was appointed to serve as the Florida Highway Patrol's Homeland Security Coordinator in Tallahassee in 2016. Cory was later promoted to the rank of Captain where he served as the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Florida Highway Patrol. In June, 2020, Cory was promoted to Major. Cory earned an Associate's Degree from Chipola College and has successfully completed the Florida Highway Patrol, Leadership Academy, Session 2.

## References

- Baker, L. (2008, September 25). Researchers investigate impact of stress on police officers' physical and mental health. *University of Buffalo News Center*. Retrieved April 3, 2019 from <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2008/09/9660.html>
- Chae, M. H., & Boyle, D. J. (2013). Police suicide: Prevalence, risk, and protective factors. *Policing, An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, 36(1), 91-118. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13639511311302498>
- Crouch, R. S., Jr. (2014). *Wellness and fitness in law enforcement: We need to do better* (Order No. 1572919). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1651234266). Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1651234266?accountid=4840>
- Gerber, M., Kellmann, M., Hartmann, T., & Puhse, U. (2010, July). Do exercise and fitness buffer against stress among Swiss police and emergency response service officers? *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11(4), 286-294. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.02.004>
- Hamel, K. E. (2015). *Impact of physical fitness on law enforcement officer stress and coping skills [Doctoral dissertation]*. (Order No. 3682217). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1657428377). Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1657428377?accountid=4840>

- MacDonald, N. J. (2008). *The relationship between levels of stress and physical fitness, as experienced by law enforcement officers. [ Doctoral dissertation].* (Order No. AAI3308315). Available from PsycINFO. (621751815; 2008-99200-477). Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/621751815?accountid=4840>
- Miller, E., & Sloan, M. (2018, June), The San Diego police department's officer wellness program, 11(6). *Dispatch, COPS Office, USDOJ*. Retrieved from [https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/06-2018/sdpd\\_wellness.html](https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/06-2018/sdpd_wellness.html)
- Norvell, N., & Belles, D. (1993). Psychological and physical benefits of circuit weight training in law enforcement personnel. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*(3), 520-527.
- Papazoglou, K., & Andersen, J. P. (2014). A guide to utilizing police training as a tool to promote resilience and improve health outcomes among police officers. *Traumatology: An International Journal, 20*(2), 103-111. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0099394>
- Quigley, A. (2008, June). Fit for duty? The need for physical fitness programs for law enforcement officers, *The Police Chief, 75*(6), 62-64.

## Appendix A

### Physical Fitness Wellness Plan – FHP Members Survey Questions

#### Physical Fitness Wellness Plan - FHP Members

Thank you for taking the Physical Fitness Wellness Plan survey for FHP members. The purpose of this survey is to measure FHP members' exercise habits and attitudes towards physical fitness training.

The entire survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete. Answers provided will be kept confidential.

#### Physical Fitness Wellness Plan - FHP Members

1. What is your age:
  - 19-29
  - 30-39
  - 40-49
  - 50-59
  - 60+
  
2. Years of service:
  - 0-9
  - 10-19
  - 20-29
  - 30 +
  
3. What is your current rank:
  - State Trooper
  - Corporal
  - Sergeant
  - Lieutenant
  - Captain
  - Major or above
  
4. Do you believe law enforcement officers should maintain a high degree of physical fitness?
  - Yes
  - No

5. Do you believe physical fitness exercise reduces stress?  
Yes  
No
6. Do you believe that routine physical fitness exercise could add benefits to your life, both personally and professionally?  
Yes  
No
7. Do you routinely exercise?  
Yes  
No
8. What types of physical fitness exercise do you perform? Select all that apply.  
Running  
Rowing  
Biking  
Cross-Fit  
Weight Training  
Cardiovascular Training  
Walking for exercise  
Other
9. On average, how many hours do you spend exercising per week?  
1-2 Hours  
3-4 Hours  
5-6 Hours  
7 Hours or more
10. Why do you not exercise? Select all that apply.  
Physically Unable  
Not enough time  
Laziness  
Lack of Desire  
Lack of results from past exercise attempts  
Other



11. What results have you previously experienced from physical fitness exercise training? Select all that apply.  
 Better all-around physical health  
 Better all-around mental health  
 Improved Mood  
 Improved Attitude  
 Positive / Confident Personal Perception  
 Relieves Stress  
 Weight Management  
 No benefits experienced from exercise
12. If authorized would you exercise on duty?  
 Yes  
 No
13. If the Division implemented a "Voluntary Physical Fitness Program" that allowed members to be rewarded for maintaining a physical fitness routine, would you participate?  
 Yes  
 No
14. If a "Voluntary Physical Fitness Program" was established, what incentive would you value the most?  
 Monetary gain  
 Gym Memberships  
 Time on duty to exercise  
 Specialized equipment  
 Gifts (T-Shirts, Challenge Coins, etc.)  
 I don't need incentives for me to exercise
15. If offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary physical fitness program I would hope to improve? (Select all that apply)  
 Overall Muscular Strength  
 Cardiovascular endurance  
 Flexibility or range of motion  
 Weight loss  
 Sleep/energy levels Stress Management Overall Health  
 None-I would not participate
16. When was the last time you had a medical physical/checkup?  
 0-12 Months  
 13-24 Months  
 25-36 Months  
 37 Months or More

17. Do you believe members should be required to have an annual medical physical/checkup?  
Yes  
No
18. Would allowing members to attend their annual medical physical/checkup in an on-duty status encourage you to schedule and attend your physical each year?  
Yes  
No
19. Do you support members being offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary physical fitness test administered by the Florida Highway Patrol (i.e.) Physical Abilities Test or similar exercise?  
Yes  
No
20. Do you believe the Florida Highway Patrol should require members to pass a minimum standard of physical fitness through annual testing?  
Yes  
No

## Appendix B

### Physical Fitness Wellness Plan – State Law Enforcement Survey Questions

#### Wellness Plan Development – State Law Enforcement

The Florida Highway Patrol is seeking information to assist in the development of a Physical Fitness Wellness Plan. We appreciate you taking a few minutes to share information about your agency.

The entire survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

#### Physical Fitness Wellness Plan Development – State Law Enforcement

1. How many sworn officers does your agency have?  
Less than 100  
100-499  
500-999  
1000-1499  
1500-1999  
2000 +
2. Do you have an active physical fitness wellness program?  
Yes  
No
3. Is your agency planning to develop or create a physical fitness wellness plan?  
Yes  
No
4. Does your agency have a physical fitness wellness program policy?  
Yes  
No
5. Please briefly describe your physical fitness wellness plan (minimum requirements, course, type of exercise, etc.)
6. Are officers required to provide medical approval before participating in physical fitness wellness plans?  
Yes  
No

7. Is sworn officers' participation voluntary or mandatory?  
 Voluntary  
 Mandatory
8. Is there a minimum mandatory physical fitness standard that members of your agency are required to pass to maintain their role within the agency?  
 Yes  
 No  
 If yes, what is the standard?
9. How often are officers tested?  
 Monthly  
 Quarterly  
 Twice Annually  
 Annually  
 Other
10. If an officer fails the physical fitness test are there consequences (desk duty, improvement plans, administrative duties, separation from the agency, etc.)?  
 Yes  
 No  
 If yes, what are the consequences / improvement plan?
11. Since establishing a physical fitness wellness plan have you experienced any of the following among officers? (Select all that apply)  
 Better all-around physical health  
 Better all-around mental health Improved mood - attitude  
 Positive / confident personal perceptions  
 Less perceived stress  
 Decreased sick leave usage  
 Decreased workers comp claims  
 Decreased discipline  
 No benefits observed from exercise
12. Has your agency experienced any roadblocks or hurdles while establishing a physical fitness wellness program?  
 Yes  
 No  
 If yes, please explain.
13. Does your agency provide incentives for physical fitness participation?  
 Yes  
 No  
 If yes, what incentives are offered?

14. Does providing incentives improve member participation in physical fitness programs?  
Yes  
No
15. Does your agency require its members to attend an annual medical physical examinations/checkup?  
Yes  
No
16. Does your agency offer/pay for additional screening over and beyond the normal annual medical physical/checkup (preventive health test/screenings, etc.)?  
Yes  
No  
If yes, please explain.
17. Does your agency provide incentives to its officers to attend annual medical physical examinations/checkups?  
Yes  
No  
If yes, please explain.
18. Does providing incentives improve member participation in annual medical physicals/checkups?  
Yes  
No
19. Does your agency permit officers to attend their annual medical physical/checkup during compensated duty hours?  
Yes  
No
20. Does your agency have an employee bargaining unit?  
Yes  
No  
If yes, do they support your physical fitness wellness plan or your plans of creating one?
21. Contact Information  
Agency Name:  
Contact Name:  
Email Address:  
Contact Phone Number: