



**WA POLICE
UNION**

Statistical profile of WA Police officer attrition 1980 to 2022

May 2023

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	5
Methodology.....	5
Further information	6
Resigned.....	7
Gender	8
Age	9
Length of service	10
Rank	11
Police Auxiliary Officers	12
Retired Medically Unfit	13
Gender	14
Age	15
Length of service	16
Rank	17
Assault Police Officer	17
Dismissed	18
Gender	19
Age	19
Length of service	20
Rank	20
Deceased.....	21
Gender	22
Age	23
Length of service	24
Rank	25

Executive Summary

The WA Police Union has managed to document 5,374 sworn officers who departed WA Police Force from 1980 to 2022 either due to resignation, medical retirement, dismissal, or death. This represents **81 per cent** of officially reported numbers.

WAPU has used these documented cases to create a statistical profile of departing officers throughout the period.

Resigned

WAPU managed to document 4,651 sworn officers who resigned from WA Police. The percentage of resigned female officers has increased from **10.9 per cent** in the 1980s to **30.1 per cent** in the 2020s.

The average age of resigned officers has increased from 30.9 years old in the 1980s to 39.3 years old in the 2020s. Further, just **4.9 per cent** of resigned officers in the 1980s were aged 30 years and older when they joined WA Police compared to **37.2 per cent** in the 2020s.

The average length of service for resigned officers increased from 7.3 years to 10.6 years throughout the period. Although the average length of service has been declining compared to when officers first joined WA Police.

The rate of separations for Police Auxiliary Officers is more than five times higher than for sworn officers.

Retired Medically Unfit

WAPU managed to document 492 sworn officers who retired medically unfit (RMU) from WA Police. The percentage of RMU female officers has increased from **9.2 per cent** in the 1980s to **19 per cent** in the 2020s.

The proportion of RMUs aged 50 years and older doubled from **33.3 per cent** in the 1980s to **66.7 per cent** in the 2020s,

Some **94.4 per cent** of documented RMUs in the 1990s had more than 10 years' service. This had declined to **85.7 per cent** by the 2020s.

The proportion of RMUs who held a final rank of Senior Constable or Sergeant has increased from **65.6 per cent** in the 1980s to **85.7 per cent** in the 2020s.

A **72.3 per cent** positive correlation was found to exist between the rate of Assault Police Officer offences and the rate of RMUs since 1999/2000.

Dismissed

WAPU managed to document 60 sworn officers who were dismissed from WA Police. Results should be interpreted with caution given the documented cases accounted for just over half of officially reported numbers.

Female officers accounted for **13.3 per cent** of total dismissals. The average age of dismissed officers was 39.1 years old.

The average length of service for dismissed officers increased from 18.7 years in the 1980s to 21 years by the 2020s.

72.5 per cent of officers dismissed from 2000 to 2022 were either First Class Constables or Senior Constables.

Deceased

WAPU managed to document 172 sworn officers who died while employed by WA Police. Male officers accounted for a disproportionately high number of deaths.

Some 22 of the 172 deceased officers were killed in the line of duty (either by accident or attack). Eighteen of those killed in the line of duty died between 1990 and 2009.

The proportion of deceased officers aged 50 years and older has increased from **26.7 per cent** in the 1990s to **60 per cent** in the 2020s.

The proportion of deceased officers with more than five years' service increased from **73.3 per cent** in the 1990s to **100 per cent** in the 2020s.

Sergeants and Senior Constables have accounted for a disproportionately high number of deaths since 2010.

Introduction

This research paper has been produced by the WA Police Union (WAPU). Founded in 1912, WAPU has been at the forefront of representing the rights, interests, and welfare of police officers throughout the State. WAPU currently has more than 7,000 Members – **98 per cent** of all police officers and police auxiliary officers in the WA Police Force.

The current level of police officer attrition is a major concern of Police Federation of Australia (PFA) affiliates¹. The PFA has even called for a national summit of police ministers and commissioners to address the issue.

WAPU has created a statistical profile of WA Police Force (“WA Police”) officer attrition from 1980 to 2022. The objective is to provide some historical context around existing levels of WA Police attrition as well as identify any notable trends over the period.

Methodology

This research paper defines “attrition” as WA Police officers who left the agency either due to resignation, medical retirement, death, or dismissal. In other words, it examines officers who chose to leave their police careers prior to retirement. A WAPU Morale Study in 1988 found that **77 per cent** of Members wanted to be a police officer until retirement (then a mandatory age of 60 years old).

This paper focuses on attrition among sworn officers given the availability of data. Although Police Auxiliary Officers are examined under ‘Resigned’ (see page 12).

WAPU first obtained sworn officer attrition data from WA Police Annual Reports from 1980 to 2000 and from quarterly attrition and headcount reports received from 2001 onwards. Documented cases were then sourced from WAPU’s Membership Database and old membership book. The goal was for the number of documented cases to be equal to **50 per cent** of WA Police reported numbers to have a representative sample.

WAPU examined each type of attrition by following categories:

- Decade (2020’s only covers the period 01/01/2020 to 31/12/2022)
- Gender
- Average age officer joined WA Police
- Average age officer left WA Police
- Average length of service in years
- Final rank held by separating officer

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-17/police-recruitment-crisis-putting-community-at-risk/102304538>

It needs to be remembered that WA Police constantly updates its attrition data. This can result in the number of documented cases being higher than the reported figure. However, this proved a rare occurrence for this research paper.

WAPU found more comprehensive data for some types of attrition compared to others. But this research paper nonetheless provides a reasonable insight for each of the four types examined.

Further information

Matthew Payne

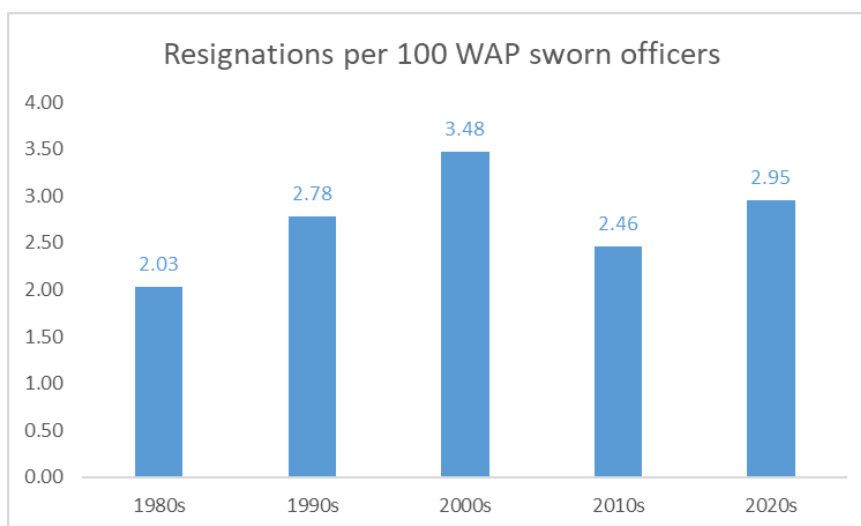
WAPU Research Officer

Phone: (08) 9321 2155

Email: matthew.payne@wapu.org.au

Resigned

WA Police reported that 5,777 sworn officers resigned from 1980 to 2022. Resignations accounted for **87.1 per cent** of total sworn attrition throughout the period. Resignation rates were highest in the 2000s. But the level of sworn resignations over the last three years indicate the 2020s will soon have the highest rate.



WAPU was able to document **80.5 per cent** of reported resignations. Although the level of documented cases was much higher from 2000 onwards.

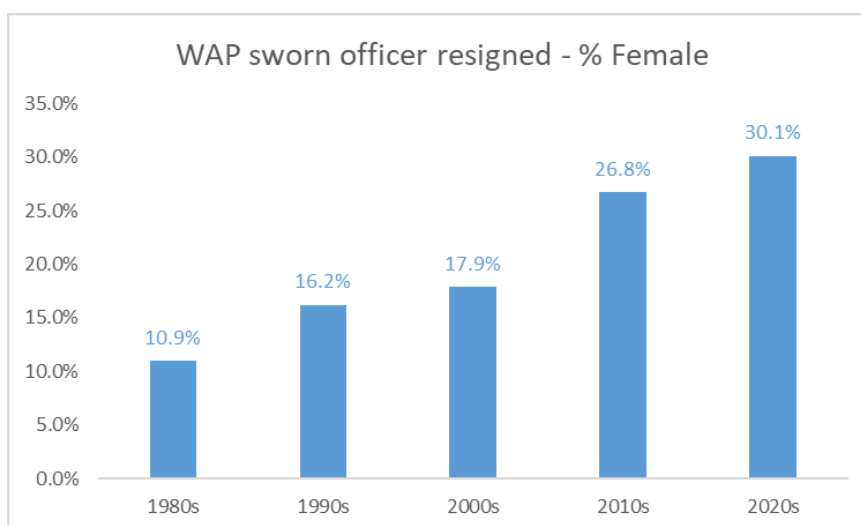
Decade	Reported	Documented	% Documented
1980s	604	411	68.0%
1990s	1,213	721	59.4%
2000s	1,785	1437	80.5%
2010s	1,505	1412	93.8%
2020s	670	670	100.0%
Total	5,777	4,651	80.5%

Gender

Female officers accounted for **21.5 per cent** of documented resignations. The average age that officers joined and resigned from WA Police were roughly the same for both genders. Although significantly more male officers resigned with 2 years or less service.

Average	Male	Female	Total
Total	3,652	999	4,651
Age - Joined (years)	25.5	25.7	25.5
Age - Resigned (years)	36.7	35.2	36.4
Length of service (years)	10.3	8.5	9.9
% More than 2 years' service	78.9%	94.1%	82.2%

The proportion of female resignations has more than tripled since the 1980s. Female officers accounted for **27.8 per cent** of documented resignations from 2010 to 2022. This is pertinent given that **22.3 per cent** of reported sworn officers were female, indicating that female officers resigned at a disproportionately higher rate.

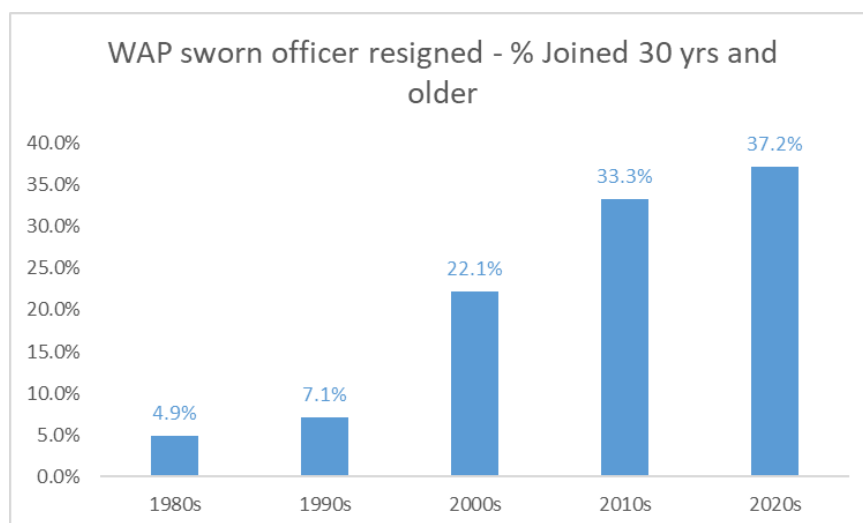


Age

The average age of when sworn officers joined and resigned from WA Police both increased over the period.

Decade	Age - Joined	Age - Resigned
1980s	22.6	30.9
1990s	22.7	33.3
2000s	25.3	36.6
2010s	27.0	38.0
2020s	27.7	39.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>25.5</i>	<i>36.4</i>

Perhaps the most notable age-related trend was the proportion of resigned officers who joined WA Police when they were 30 years or older. The proportion in 2020s was more than seven times that of the 1980s.



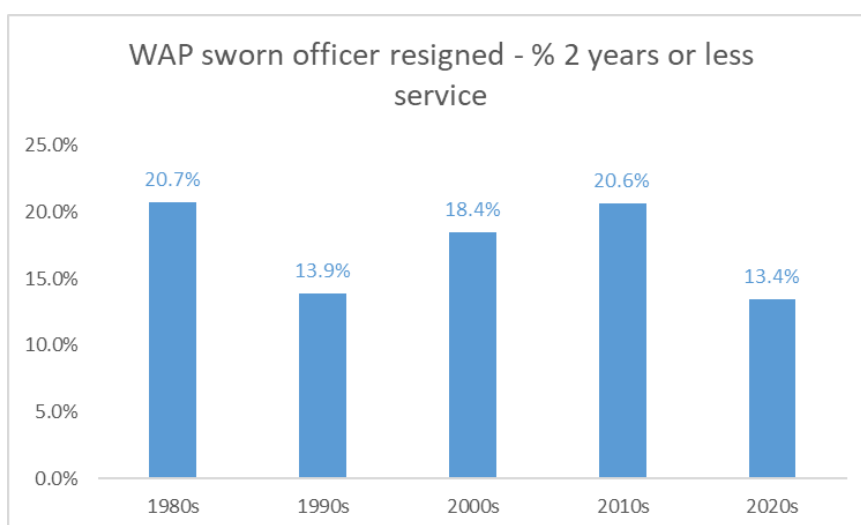
Resigned officers aged 30 years and older had an average length of service of 5.7 years. This compares to 11.2 years for resigned officers aged under 30 years. There seems little doubt that the average age of sworn recruits is increasing. But the data suggests that older recruits are likely to have a much shorter career span.

Length of service

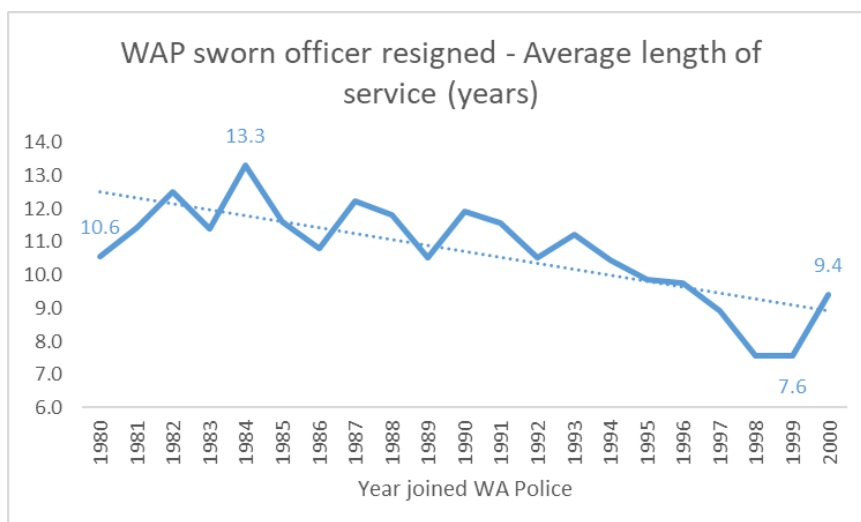
The average length of service of resigning officers increased from 1980 to 2000 before stabilising.

Decade	Length of service – Average (years)
1980s	7.3
1990s	9.6
2000s	10.3
2010s	10.0
2020s	10.6
<i>Total</i>	9.9

The proportion of documented resignations who were recruits or probationary officers (generally those with 2 years or less service) remained relatively stable over the period. Although this proportion did increase over the 1990s to 2010s.



The number of documented resignations also allows resignations to be analysed from when officers joined WA Police. The number of resignations was examined for 2,227 officers who joined WA Police from 1980 to 2000. The number was filtered by officers with a maximum length of service of 22 years, given that is the maximum length of service that officers who joined in 2000 could have. This left 1,962 officers for comparative purposes. The results showed that the average length of service generally declined throughout the period.

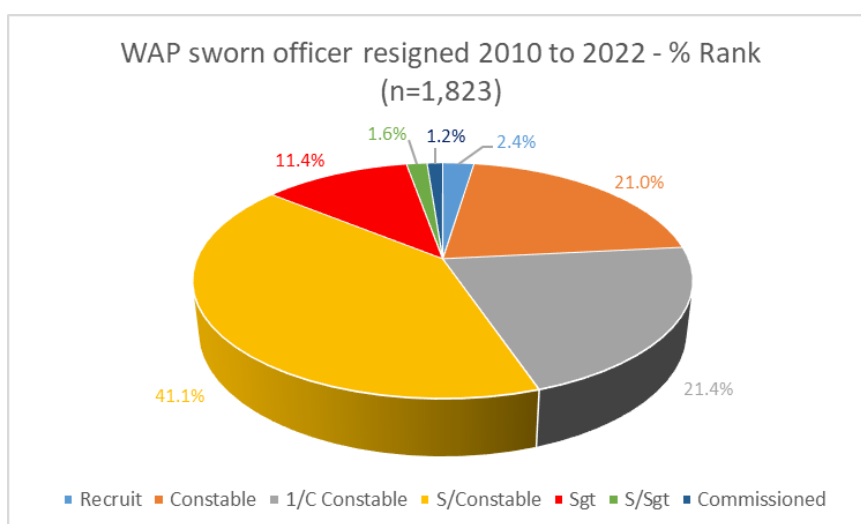


Officers who joined WA Police in 1984 resigned with an average length of service of 13.3 years. By contrast, officers who joined in 1999 resigned with an average length of service of 9.9 years. The average length of service for resigned officers has been increasing by decade (see page 10). But the above graph suggests that trend is being driven by officers who joined WA Police before the decade they resigned.

Rank

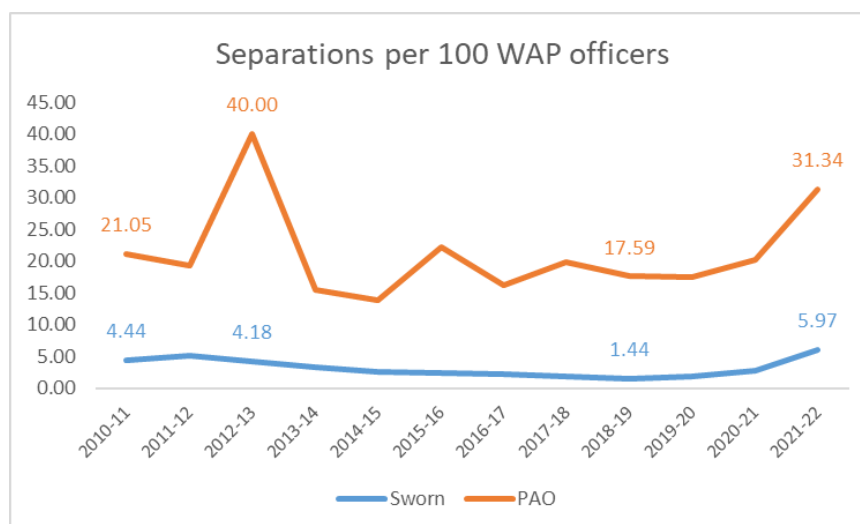
WAPU Membership records did not contain the final rank of most documented resignations prior to 2010. Final rank could nonetheless be identified for at least 1,823 sworn officers who resigned over the 2010 to 2020 period.

Some **10.9 per cent** of resignations were detectives. First Class Constables and Senior Constables (uniform and detectives) accounted for **62.5 per cent** of final ranks documented.



Police Auxiliary Officers

Police Auxiliary Officers (PAOs) commenced serving in WA Police in the 2010-11 financial year. WA Police attrition and headcount reports reveal that PAOs have significantly higher levels of attrition compared to their sworn counterparts. Further, the separation rate² for PAOs has almost doubled since 2018-19.



The equivalent of almost one-third of PAOs departed WA Police in 2021-22. This compares to about **6 per cent** of sworn officers.

Unfortunately, WA Police does not detail the type of attrition experienced for PAOs like it does for sworn officers. WAPU was nonetheless able to document 142 PAO resignations over the 2012-13 to 2021-22 period.

Average	Male	Female	Total
Total	88	54	142
Age - Joined (years)	33.0	33.7	33.3
Age - Resigned (years)	36.4	37.7	36.9
Length of service (years)	2.5	3.1	2.7
% More than 2 years' service	37.5%	51.9%	43.0%

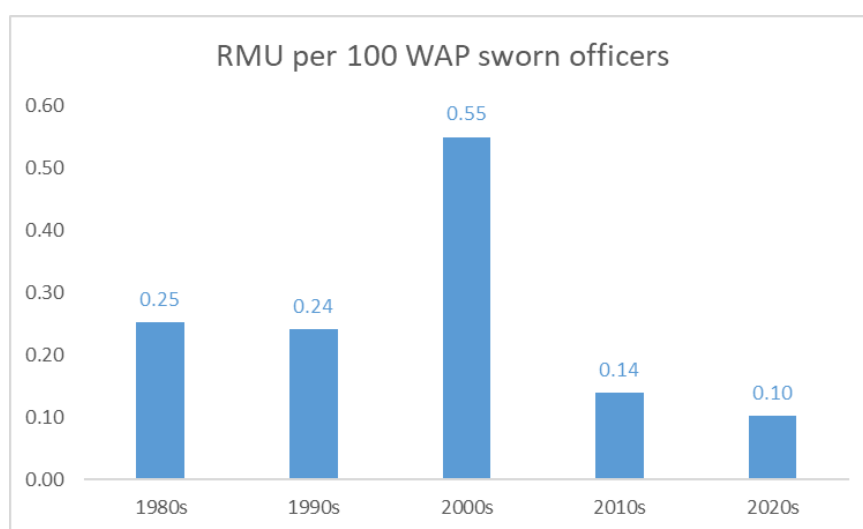
More than **38 per cent** of PAOs who resigned were female. Resigned PAOs tended to join WA Police in their early thirties. The high PAO separation rate was reflected with the average length of service being just 2.7 years. But **51.9 per cent** of resigned female PAOs had more than 2 years' service compared to **37.5 per cent** of male PAOs.

² "Separation rate" is the total of all attrition including retirement.

Retired Medically Unfit

WA Police reported that 568 sworn officers were retired medically unfit (RMU) from 1980 to 2022. RMUs accounted for **8.6 per cent** of total sworn attrition throughout the period. However, it should be acknowledged that seriously injured officers may have chosen to resign from WA Police rather than go through the medical retirement process.

RMU rates were clearly highest in the 2000s. However, the commencement of the WA Police Compensation Scheme on 1 January 2022 will likely result in the 2020s rate being considerably higher than its current level.



WAPU was able to document **86.6 per cent** of reported RMUs. There was a slight anomaly with the number of documented cases for the 1990s being higher than the reported number.

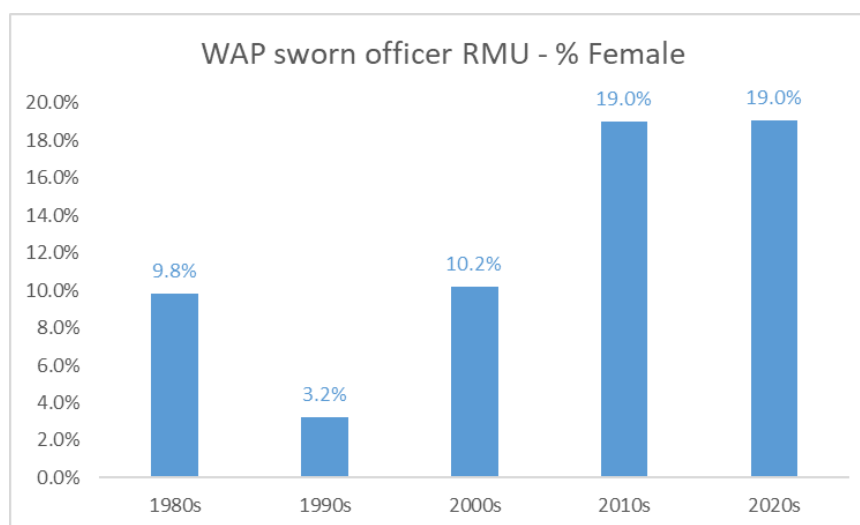
Decade	Reported	Documented	% Documented
1980s	75	51	68.0%
1990s	105	125	119.0%
2000s	282	216	76.6%
2010s	85	79	92.9%
2020s	21	21	100.0%
Total	568	492	86.6%

Gender

Female officers accounted for **10.2 per cent** of documented RMUs. Males RMUs were noticeably older when they left WA Police. This was reflected by average length of service with **92.5 per cent** of male RMUs having more than 10 years' experience compared to **76 per cent** of female RMUs.

Average	Male	Female	Total
Total	442	50	492
Age - Joined (years)	24.1	25.9	24.1
Age - RMU (years)	49.1	42.8	48.3
Length of service (years)	24.1	16.1	23.3
% More than 10 years' service	92.5%	76.0%	90.7%

The current proportion of female RMUs 1980s is now almost six times levels in the 1990s. The **19 per cent** female RMU level over 2010 to 2022 was slightly below the total female proportion of sworn officers.

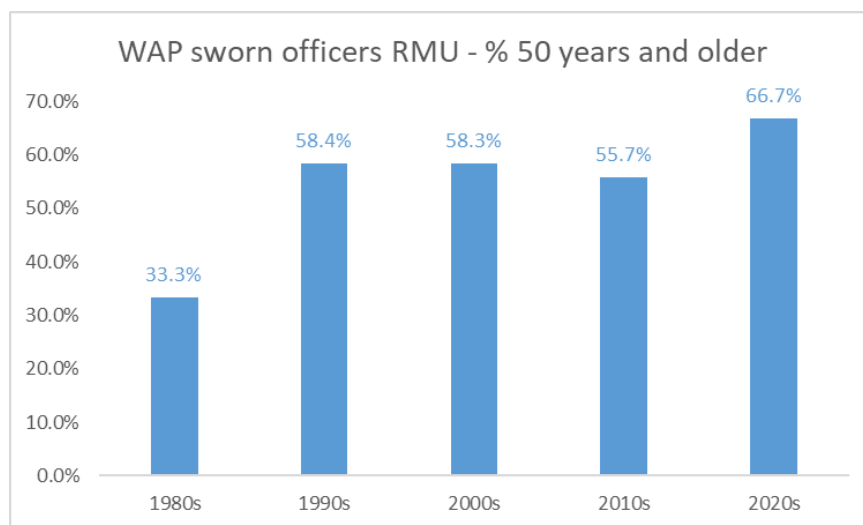


Age

The average age of when sworn officers joined and were RMU from WA Police both increased over the period.

Decade	Age - Joined	Age - RMU
1980s	24.1	43.7
1990s	23.7	48.1
2000s	23.6	48.9
2010s	25.5	49.7
2020s	27.6	49.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>24.1</i>	<i>48.3</i>

Apart from a slight dip in the 2010s, the proportion of RMUs aged 50 years and older has generally been increasing every decade since the 1980s.

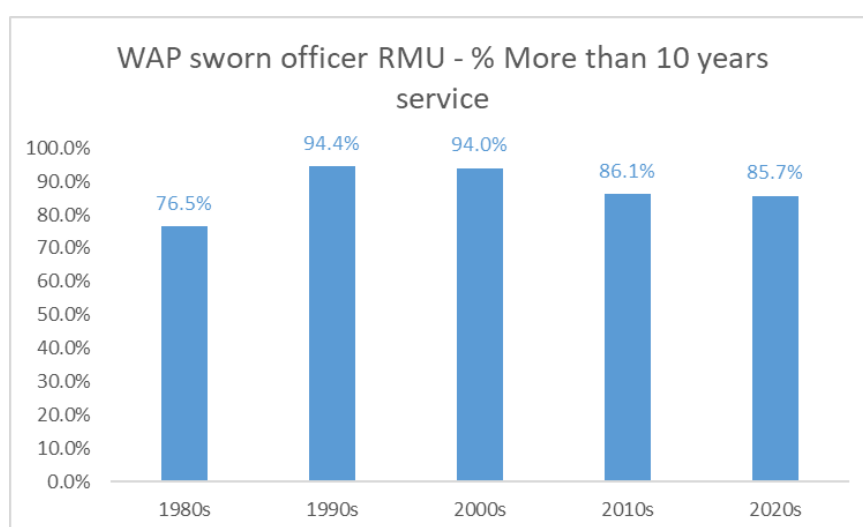


Length of service

The average length of service of RMUs has generally remained stable since the 1990s.

Decade	Length of service – Average (years)
1980s	18.7
1990s	23.5
2000s	24.4
2010s	23.5
2020s	21.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>23.3</i>

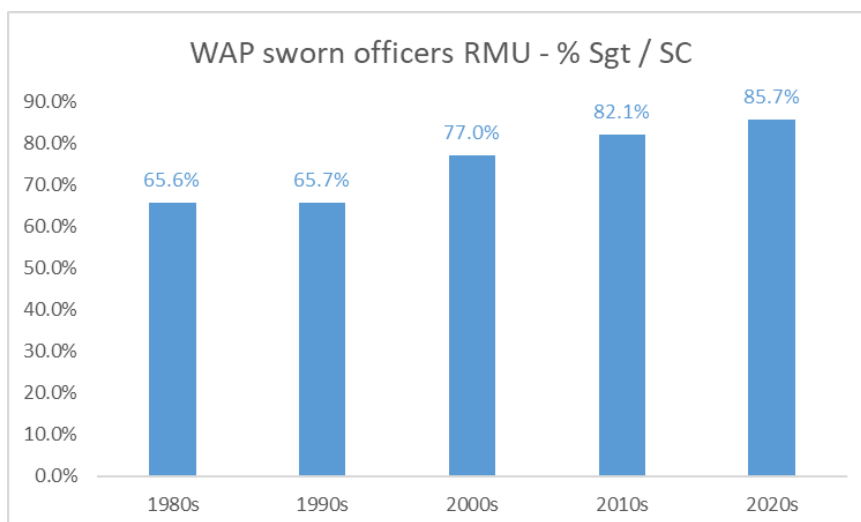
However, the above table masks an important trend. Some **94.4 per cent** of documented RMUs in the 1990s had more than 10 years' service. This had declined to **85.7 per cent** by the 2020s.



There is not enough data for the 2020s to draw any definitive conclusions. But less experienced officers nonetheless appear to be forming an increasing proportion of RMUs. It remains to be seen if this trend continues the longer the WA Police Compensation Scheme operates.

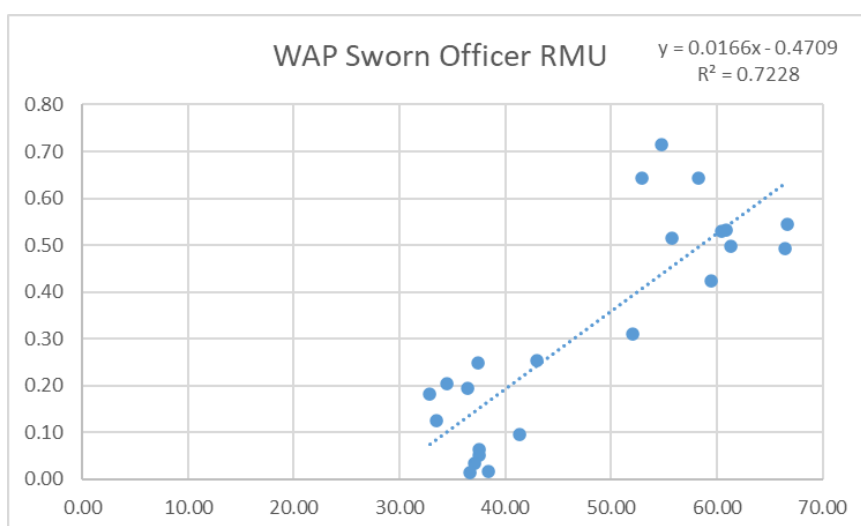
Rank

WAPU was able to document the final rank for **74.9 per cent** of documented cases. The proportion of RMUs who held a final rank of Sergeant or Senior Constable (uniform and detective) has been increasing every decade since the 1980s.



Assault Police Officer

Assault Police Officer has been a distinct offence under the WA Criminal Code since late 1985. Simple regression analysis reveals a **72.3 per cent** positive correlation between the rate of Assault Police Officer offences and Sworn RMUs since 1999-2000³.

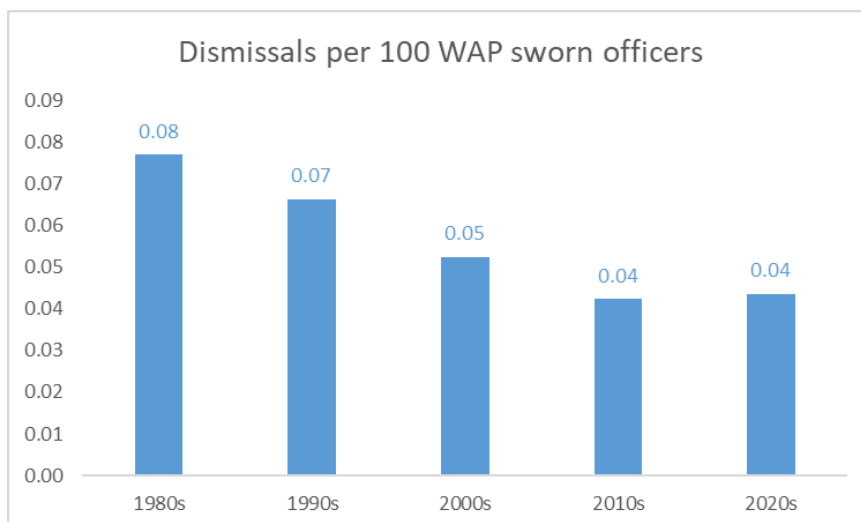


Not every RMU officer was necessarily assaulted throughout their career. But the above nonetheless indicates that the level of violence directed towards WA Police officers by the community is a strong contributing factor towards the rate of RMUs.

³ Offence rate is number of offences per 100,000 population. Both rates were adjusted using a 3-year Weighted Moving Average.

Dismissed

WA Police reported that 114 sworn officers were dismissed under section 8 of the *Police Act 1892* from 1980 to 2022. The rate of dismissals has generally declined since the 1980s. However, it should be acknowledged that some officers may have chosen to resign from WA Police rather than go through the dismissal process.



WAPU was able to document just **52.6 per cent** of reported dismissals. This percentage was well below half for the 1980s and the 1990s. The corollary being that the statistical profile of dismissals should be read with caution.

Decade	Reported	Documented	% Documented
1980s	23	9	39.1%
1990s	29	11	37.9%
2000s	27	17	63.0%
2010s	26	14	53.8%
2020s	9	9	100.0%
Total	114	60	52.6%

Gender

Female officers accounted for **13.3 per cent** of documented dismissals. The average age at dismissal was approximately the same for both genders. But female dismissals tended to have a higher average length of service.

Average	Male	Female	Total
Total	52	8	60
Age - Joined (years)	25.2	23.4	25.0
Age - Dismissed (years)	39.0	39.8	39.1
Length of service (years)	12.8	15.3	13.1
% More than 10 years' service	53.8%	75.0%	56.7%

Age

Documented officers had an average age of 39.1 years old when they were dismissed.

Decade	Age - Joined	Age - Dismissed
1980s	22.2	33.0
1990s	22.5	37.6
2000s	23.8	39.3
2010s	28.4	43.9
2020s	27.6	38.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>39.1</i>

Length of service

The average length of service of dismissed officers generally increased from the 1980s to 2010s. The decline in the 2020s likely reflects the removal of officers who refused to comply with COVID-19 related directions from WA Police.

Decade	Length of service – Average (years)
1980s	18.7
1990s	23.5
2000s	24.4
2010s	23.5
2020s	21.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>23.3</i>

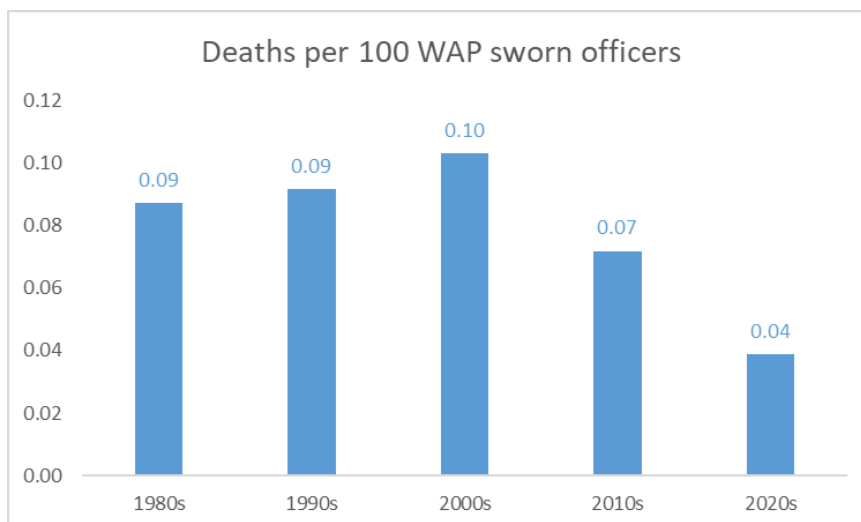
Rank

There was a scarcity of data among documented cases from the 1980s and 1990s about the final rank held by dismissed officers. But almost three-quarters of officers dismissed from 2000 to 2022 held the rank of First Class Constable or Senior Constable.



Deceased

WA Police reported that 174 serving sworn officers died throughout 1980 to 2022. These deaths include officers killed in the line of duty as well as those who died at work (such as a sudden heart attack while at their desk) or off-duty. The rate of death for sworn officers is now less than half that of the 2000s.



WAPU was able to document **98.9 per cent** of reported deaths. There was a slight anomaly with the number of documented cases for the 1990s being higher than the reported number.

Decade	Reported	Documented	% Documented
1980s	26	26	100.0%
1990s	40	45	112.5%
2000s	53	51	96.2%
2010s	44	40	90.9%
2020s	11	10	90.9%
Total	174	172	98.9%

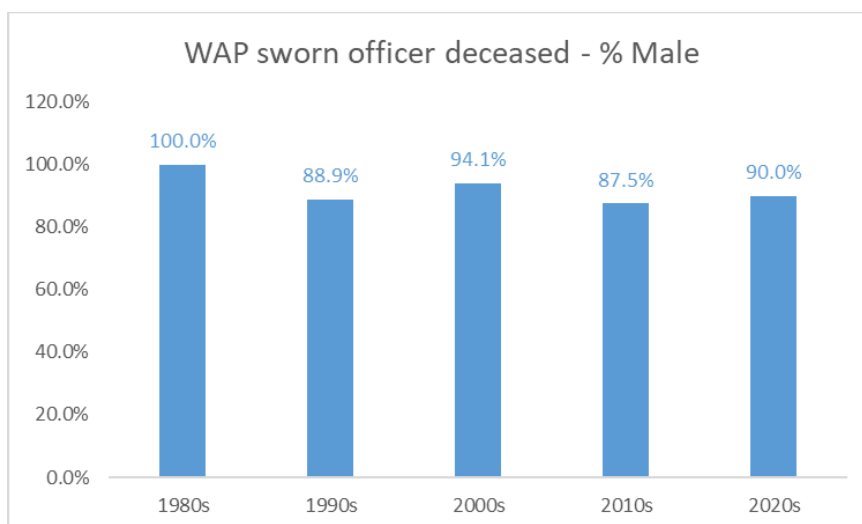
Some 22 of the 172 dead officers were killed in the line of duty, either due to accident or attack. Only two officers were killed in the line of duty from 2010 to 2022. By contrast, 18 officers were killed in the line of duty from 1990 to 2009.

Gender

Some **11.4 per cent** of documented deaths were female. Female officers tended die almost 11 years younger than their male counterparts with just over half the length of service. Although a slightly higher proportion of female officers were killed in the line of duty.

Average	Male	Female	Total
Total	158	14	172
Age - Joined (years)	25.0	24.2	25.0
Age - Deceased (years)	45.4	34.8	44.6
Length of service (years)	19.9	10.1	19.1
% Killed in the line of duty	12.7%	14.3%	12.2%

Some **78 per cent** of sworn officers throughout 2000 to 2022 were male. The proportion of deceased officers who were male was notably higher than this.

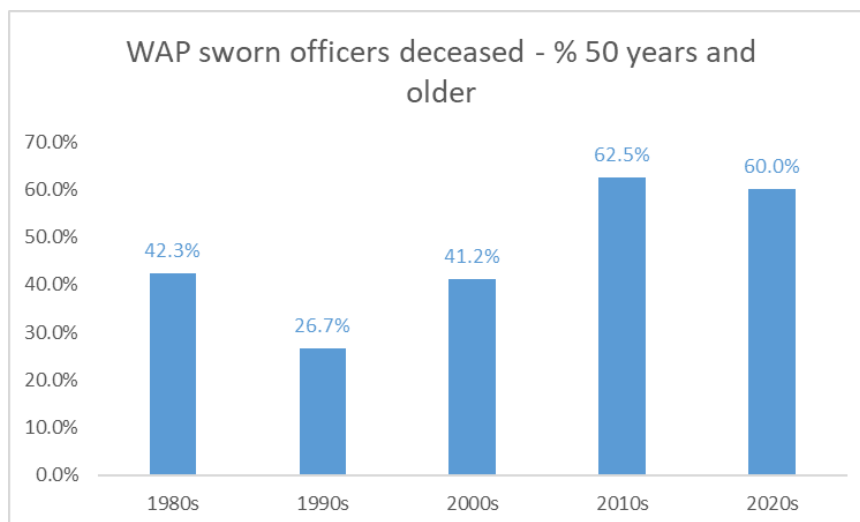


Age

The average age of deceased officers generally increased throughout the period.

Decade	Age - Joined	Age - Deceased
1980s	22.8	43.0
1990s	23.7	39.4
2000s	23.8	44.6
2010s	29.9	50.5
2020s	24.7	48.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>44.6</i>

Most deceased officers from 2010 to 2022 were aged 50 years and older. Indeed, the proportion of these officers has more than doubled since the 1990s.

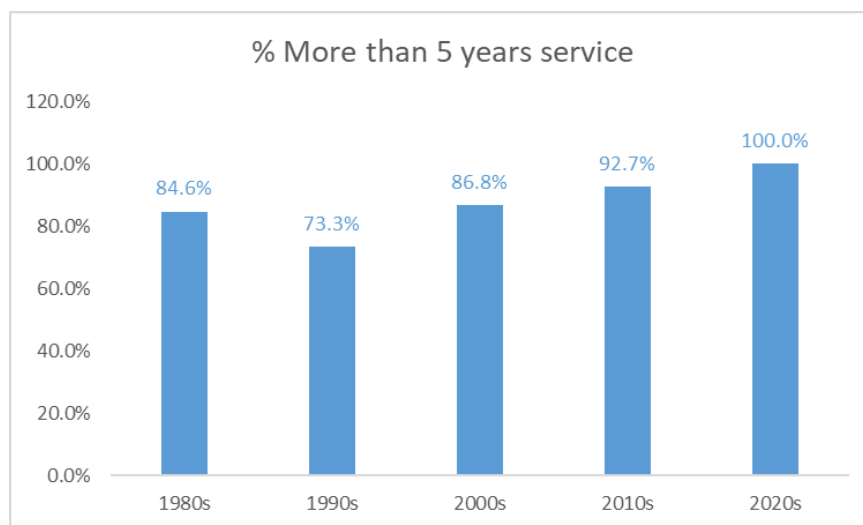


Length of service

The average length of service of resigning officers has generally increased since the 1990s.

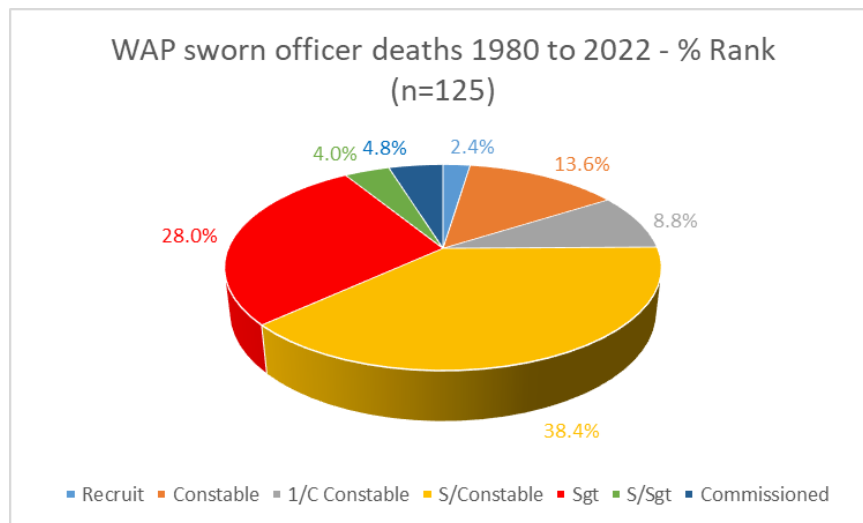
Decade	Length of service – Average (years)
1980s	19.7
1990s	15.3
2000s	20.4
2010s	19.9
2020s	23.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>19.1</i>

The proportion of documented officers who died from 1990 to 2022 with more than five years' experience increased throughout the period. All deceased officers in the 2020s had more than 5 years' experience compared to **73.3 per cent** of officers who died in the 1990s. The result for the 1990s likely reflects how several less experienced officers were accidentally killed in the line of duty during that decade.



Rank

Nearly two-thirds of deceased officers from 1980 to 2022 held the rank of Senior Constable or Sergeant.



Perhaps more importantly, 39 or **78 per cent** of documented deaths from 2010 to 2022 were Sergeants or Senior Constables. This is significantly higher compared to the total composition of sworn officer ranks.

