



PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ON THE POLICE AND HOW THEY CAN BE IMPROVED

[Abstract](#)

This project revolves around the public perceptions of the police and how it can be improved. Public perceptions in as important to the police as policing is to the public and it's imperative that both the police and the public have trust and belief in each other. The police's sole aims are to maintain public safety, uphold the law and prevent crime. Although it's easy to say that some of the public dislike and distrust the police, there are also members of the public that do truly believe in the police and perceive them to exactly as the police should be; safe, protective and available.

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Maxim Tapsell Date: 06/05/2022

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BSc.

Signed: Maxim Tapsell Date: 06/05/2022

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged in the Reference Section.

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I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for interlibrary loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1

Public perceptions have been changing each year since the introduction of the police force in the United Kingdom. This dissertation will focus on many different objectives to help gain a clear understanding of the current public's perception of the police force and how the public can improve these perceptions in the future. The following objectives will be looked at:

- Objective 1) How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force.
- Objective 2) An analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 3) An investigation into the effect the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has had on the public perception on the police force in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 4) The public trust in the British police force.

This dissertation will be researching many different varieties of public perceptions and comparing them all to understand what the public's perception currently is. The public perceptions of the police are fundamental to the police forces throughout the United Kingdom. Without the public's support and backing, it is hard for a police officer or force to conduct their job effectively and efficiently each day (Ivkovic, 2008). Perceptions of the police will vary due to many factors in the modern-day world. The sole objective is to find out why these varying factors have such meaningful participation in the constantly changing perceptions in the modern-day police forces throughout the United Kingdom. This dissertation will prove to be an important academic piece as it will help build on current research to provide the public with a deeper understanding of how the public perceive the police and the reasoning behind the information and data gathered. This dissertation is also

important as it can help build and gather an insight into the public experiences with the police and why it was a good experience or not such a good experience. 'There is some support for the idea that the perception of the police during the first contact with a member of the public is likely to be the most powerful predictor of future opinions on the police' (Awan, 2018).

Objective 1) How the public experience was in any involvement with the police force.

The first area to be researched during this dissertation will include research on how the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force, how these public members found the participation, and whether it was satisfactory, well dealt with or poorly dealt with and unsatisfactory (Weitzer et al. 2005). This research will help piece together the public's perception and gain a clear understanding of the factors behind the reasons for a positive or negative interaction with the British police force. 'The public can be considered to perceive the police as "symbols of moral authority' (UKessays, 2018).

1.2

Objective 2) An analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom

The media and the police force have crossed paths many times in their lines of work each day since the media first became widely available to the public. For example, this article, states, 'we rarely look at the wider implications. This is where the media scores heavily, because not only do they have the financial resources to carry out what is called 'investigative reporting' - but they also make it a strong policy to recruit

capable people and pay them well to bring exciting, interesting, 'informative' stories to our eyes' (Warwick, 2016). The above statement not only shows that the general public does not have the time in their lives, or the funding, to be able to find out what really happened in the stories reported by the media on the police force, but it also shows the power and capabilities of the media has in their hand to feed their own versions of the stories out to the general public, however, they want to.

Despite that, the media coverage surrounding the police can also massively work in the police forces' favour. Just recently, the police forces around the United Kingdom have released a media relations number to the public, to help the police ensure a close relationship with the public and media on day-to-day stories surrounding the police force. 'A successful working relationship between the police service and the media is vital. Working with the media to communicate to the public can help solve crimes, bring offenders to justice, and keep communities safe' (Media Relations, 2017).

From comparing the statement in (Warwick 2016) and (Media Relations, 2017), it becomes clearer to see that the polices' value the media's relationship with them, very highly, whereas some, such as in (Warwick 2016) may say the media has the power and resources available to do their own investigation without the police, which may be due to the polices budget cuts and resources. 'Police are facing a "new era of austerity" with some forces potentially facing their worst ever annual budget cuts fuelled by the coronavirus crisis' (Dodd, 2020).

1.3

Objective 3) An investigation into the effect the Black Lives Matter movement had on public perceptions of the police force in the United Kingdom.

Another area that will be researched and evaluated in this dissertation includes the 'Black Lives Matter' organisation and movement (Matter, 2022). With the 'Black Lives Matter' organisation and movement being so recent and currently spreading awareness at an extremely fast and clear rate it becomes a key factor in the public's perception and why they have chosen that perception. Following this area of research will be another area of research including an in-depth look into how ethnic minority communities perceive the police (Adams et al. 2017). This will be ranging from past experiences with the police to the levels of trust and belief in the police force in their communities. It is important to evaluate the transparency in the police forces in the United Kingdom, as transparency is perhaps one of the most important values a police officer and force can have (Jackson 2015). Transparency is imperative for an officer to understand other sides of the story, imperative for the officer to step into a witness, victim or offender's shoes and see the story from their eyes before making any sort of decisions. Therefore, the transparency of the police force will be a key component of this objective.

1.4

Objective 4) The public trust in the British police force.

The fourth area to be researched during this dissertation will cover the public's trust in the British police force (Hough, 2012). Trust is an essential element not only for the people but for the police as well. Trust can be in many ways, this can include the

trust in their safety, the public trust that police will uphold the law and their rights. Without a strong trust in the relationship and bridge between the public and the police force, it becomes much harder for the police to do their jobs and live their lives in a safe and crime-free manner. Therefore, it is essential to gather fundamental research behind the trust in the police force, as, without faith, it can change perception in an instance and vice versa (Merry et al. 2012). With public trust being such an important element to the police's success in upholding the law and protecting the citizens around them, it is essential the police forces around the United Kingdom do everything they can to keep the public on board and in strong cooperation. 'Without individual and community cooperation, very few crimes would come to the attention of the police and very few crimes would ever be solved' (Brantingham et al. 2021). In order for a relationship between the police force and the public to be maintained and created, there needs to be a level of trust and understanding between both parties. Therefore, the police need to reach new measures in order to understand the tension between both parties and understand the wants and needs the public need and are communicating across. 'The Metropolitan Police told GB News that they have been "carrying out a wide range of activities to build stronger relationships with our communities and understand their tensions' (Iman, 2021).

1.5

In conclusion, this dissertation will be conducting research through many different avenues to gather data and information on how the public truly perceives the police forces throughout the United Kingdom and how they can be improved in the future. This report will bring added value to already key dissertations on how the public

perceives and feel about the police forces throughout the United Kingdom. All of the areas of research above, will be evaluated to a high degree in order to find the best ways to improve the public's perception on the police forces throughout the United Kingdom. The police are constantly looking for ways to improve and further develop their relationship with the public and communities throughout the United Kingdom (Kelling 1998). Following the previous reference and conducting more recent research, it is clear to see that the police forces throughout England and Wales are implementing measures to increase the police-community relationship, 'Creating Police Encounter Panels, which they hope will give communities an opportunity to feedback, watch Body Worn Video (BWV) footage and offer views on what went well or what could improve' (Iman, 2021).

Therefore, looking for ways to improve the public's perception as much as possible is a key topic constantly being looked at and researched and will be extremely important not only to the police, but to the public as well (Tong 2013).

These areas of research are extremely important to this report as it not only provides key research and a clear and modern collection of facts and figures, but it also helps to provide an important comparison level between both sides of the public's perceptions. This research will bring extreme value to this dissertation as it is important to justify and understand how important the public's perception of the police's value really is (Tankebe, 2013). The value of a good public perception of the police is occasionally overlooked and it is important to investigate how important the public's perception really is. Following from that, this research will all come to a conclusion where comparisons will be made between all public perceptions researched as proven with statistics and figures, really just how important the public's perception is. This is why it is clear to also gain a further understanding on

how the police are trying and can potentially improve the current modern-day perceptions of the police. By looking into potential ways for the public's perception to improve, it can bring great value to the future of the communities around the United Kingdom and bring a following domino effect to a greater, further trusted, efficient and effective police force (Lau, 2008).

Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Perceptions of the police can be altered in a variety of ways. For example, all different parts and Burroughs of the United Kingdom all have their very own specific police force and, in some cases, work with other details around the United Kingdom, all in all, to reach the same goal; preventing crime, keeping the public safe and to enforce the law (Neyroud et al. 2012). Throughout this literature review, there will be research on all four objectives set out for this dissertation. The objectives are as follows:

- Objective 1) How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force. An investigation into the effect the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has had on the public perception on the police force in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 2) An analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom.

- Objective 3) How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force.
- Objective 4) The public trust in the British police force

2.2 Public Perception

Public perception is how the public views events or ongoing social controversies or issues and, therefore, has an emotional feeling towards a good side, a neutral side, and a wrong side. These views tend to sway the change of social proceedings if so heavily perceived in one way rather than another way. Public perceptions has been statistically proven to change throughout different ethnicities, sexual and financial backgrounds. 'Two-thirds of minority ethnic Britons believe the police and criminal justice system are biased against them' (Dodd, 2020). With such data presented above, it comes to attention and proves the variety of public perceptions revolving the police in 2022.

The police in 2022 are implementing new ways in which they can reach to ethnic minority communities to help reveal the issues and reasonings behind the accused biased policing to help find ways to resolve the issues presented. One of these methods is to further and boost ethnic minority recruitment. 'Recruitment of BAME officers spiked when the London residency rules were first introduced, to more than 25 per cent of new recruits in 2016/17' (Wright, 2022). BAME, also known as, Black, Asian and minority ethnic. These new measures to boost the recruitment of BAME applicants is in place in order to help resolve and negative public perceptions on the police force throughout the United Kingdom and to also help reach communities the

police have struggled to reach previously and help the police gain a much-needed understanding into the issues being raised by ethnic minority communities throughout the United Kingdom.

It is also shown that perception of the police force in the United Kingdom can be determined by a person's sexuality. 'Many minority groups, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex ('LGBTI') community, mistrust the police, fearing that they might incur abuse from the police, and possible victimisation' (Miles-Johnson, 2008).

It is also becoming more and more clear of the downward trend of the public's confidence in the police, as the public are starting to perceive the police more and more negatively in the United Kingdom each year. 'According to the 2020 Crime Survey of England and Wales, public confidence in the police has been on a downward trend over the last two years – from 62% in 2017 to 55% in 2020' (Mynenko, 2022). How can the police gain back an incline in public confidence and positive perceptions? This can be done by carrying out a more direct approach to policing, in a sense that the police need to be out and communicating with the public daily and having the resources available to note down any community issues or issues the public feel like raising. The police will then need to assure the public that they will do everything in their power and within their resources to raise their issues higher up the ranks. This can help the public gain confidence and perhaps come to a realisation that the police can be trusted and can have public confidence in them. 'The emphasis on public confidence and satisfaction reminds officers that they need to extend as much care and consideration to all those with whom they come into contact' (Waddington, 2010).

2.3 Community social views

Where a public member lives or resides, that community can have different perceptions than another. This can be due to several measures, such as higher crime rates or county lines crime. In Schafer et al. (2003) suggests that a perception of the police can be formed by the current neighbourhood or community culture and how the residents respond to the police to further domino affect other community members' perception of the police. 'Perceptions of procedural justice mediate the relationship between local crime density and residents' intention to cooperate with police (Kruger et al. 2016). The police forces across the United Kingdom have to ensure that they can work with their communities to ensure effective and efficient policing and good community morale. However, in some communities, a history of crime or hatred of the police can travel a long way through generations, thus affecting the future society and public perceptions of the police. An example of this is within the Travelling community. The traveller community has a history of not agreeing or experiencing tensions with the Police force. 'Throughout the ages, there have been attempts by the state to extinguish our nomadic way of life, which today is hanging on by a thread. The government's new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is set to further erode our customs, and subject us to disproportionate policing' (Smith, 2021). This further provided evidence on the history of tensions between the police and the on-going tensions and issues the traveller community experiences with the police. This can further increase the negative perception the travelling community has with the police and may further reduce communications and relationships with the police forces across the United Kingdom. 'Today, evidence shows that GRT communities remain the most marginalised within society when it comes to their relationship with the authorities, including the police, fraught with

difficulty and mistrust on both sides' (Ousley, 2018). GRT, otherwise known as, Gypsy, Romany and Traveller communities have a history of mistrust with the police and society as whole. This comes from the culture of the GRT communities, where the GRT communities tend to live a more out-of-the-way lifestyle but believe they can inhabit any area they deem suitable.

In Smith (2021) it also suggests that the GRT communities believe that they are not being given support from the police but rather being told what they can't do in everyday life. This is suggested in the following statement, 'Travellers and Romany Gypsies are caught in a vicious cycle as the government fails to deliver sites where we can live. The police tell us where we can't go, but no one is saying where we can go' (Smith, 2021). This only further passes on the tensions to the younger generations of the GRT communities to perceive the police in a negative and unsupporting manner.

2.4 Ethnic Minority Communities

Different ethnicities have tended to experience different perceptions of the police and find it hard to build a barrier of trust with the police forces throughout the United Kingdom due to several potential reasons. In Ronald et al (2008), policing an ethnic minority community is described as the 'largest long line of fault in policing history'. It has been stated that an ethnic minority member of the public finds it difficult to experience a police-citizen level of communication and trust. Trust is an important ingredient to a meal full of effective policing, public relations, and morale (Larsson et al., 2016). Therefore, the police must find ways to reach out to ethnic communities

which feel like they cannot reach out to the police and feel a great deal of mistrust towards the police forces of the United Kingdoms. In Bowling et al (2003) states that research had been carried out to determine how the police had tended to approach an individual. This research found that specific stereotypes had been used over the last three decades to classify people on their ethnic origin. Statistics, as shown above, can only further potentially cause more mistrust in the police for the ethnic minority communities. The police forces across England and Wales have a strong requirement of transparency and integrity. With the police using specific stereotypes to classify people into brackets of a certain ethnic origin is not a fitting way of dealing with the public and can further be offensive to be classified over a stereotype, therefore changing the way the public perceive how the police operate and carry out their work as police officers. Over the last couple of years, organisations and awareness protests have been carried out to combat such statistics. It shows poor transparency from the police forces throughout the United Kingdom and can further cause a threat to the public and members of the ethnic minority communities (Dahan et al., 2021). For a police force to improve their public relations and improve the public perceptions of them, the police force needs to ensure complete transparency with all ethnicities and create a strong bridge of communications between the communities and the police force. This can help ethnic minority communities communicate with trust to the police first-hand. This can help boost the morale of those in an ethnic minority community and reassure them that the police are there to preserve their safety and prevent any crime in their area of the United Kingdom (Boggess et al., 2021). This can help improve public perception of the police. Ethnic trust in the police is important as without trust; it is hard for the police to communicate with communities and any public member who has suffered from a

crime or witnessed a crime (Hanway, 2018). Trust is needed to ensure a clear and understanding level of communication to keep the public safe and the police safe in the future.

‘Only 44% of people from minority backgrounds trust the police’ (Abraham, 2021) With 44% as of 2021, from ethnic minority backgrounds, trusting the police, it only proves the point further that change needs to occur in order to gain the trust of all communities within the United Kingdom. That is just shy of half of the people in the United Kingdom, from an ethnic minority community, have trust in the police. This can make the jobs of the police a substantial amount harder but can also affect all ethnic minority communities day to day lives, as they have no trust in the service that is meant to keep them safe. This a bad perception to have of the police, and without change, can further proceed onto the next generations of the ethnic minority communities to perceive the police in the same way.

2.5 Absence of professionalism

Professionalism is a must have when being a police officer, and it is required in order to build a strong relationship with the public and the communities around the United Kingdom. It is also very important as it helps the police maintain a top standard of integrity in their life and day to day work as a police officer. A lack of professionalism can come in forms such as lack of work ethic and potentially even police corruption. For example, in the case of Wayne Couzens, the lack of professionalism perceived by the public in the dealings with a previous allegation many years before the rape and murder of Sarah Everard has completely altered the way the public perceive the professionalism and the integrity of how police deal with police allegations. ‘Six years

before Couzens raped and murdered Sarah Everard, he was investigated for an indecent exposure allegation after being accused by a member of the public of driving naked from the waist down' (Grierson, 2021).

In (Warner, 2016) it had shown that in the year 2016, there were a little over 15,000 corruption reports in only ten different forces around England and Wales. That is just a quarter of the number of police forces in England and Wales, with the figure being 43. Corruption in the police needs to be challenged at all costs and eradicated as soon as possible (Doig, 2003). With corruption being such an arduous task to prove and solve, it becomes difficult for the police to resolve this issue. Following the difficulty, it is to prove corruption in the police force, it is hard to ensure public morale is high and public perception of the police is positive when the public understands that there is corruption in the police forces throughout the United Kingdom. This can potentially break the barrier of trust the public may have had in the police. When corruption cases are investigated, and when the verdict is decided, the media will also tend to juice almost everything out of the corruption case and shine a line on reasons for the public to potentially lose trust in the police forces throughout the United Kingdom (Bradford et al. 2015). In the essence of trying to improve the public's perception of the police in England and Wales, with corruption present, it becomes a difficult task as the only way to improve this aspect of public perception is to combat corruption head-on, which is already being conducted, but not in a fast-paced manner (Moran, 2002). The main punishments used to combat corruption in the police force include, loss of job for the police officer(s) involved or even potential imprisonment. 'At least 309 police officers and police community support officers in the UK have been convicted of offences in the last three years' (BBC, 2015).

One of the main ways to discover corruption tends to come internally within the police force itself. For example, in Darbyshire (2015), It has been said that almost half of the officers who are serving or have served in the police force had seen that their colleagues had conducted corruption on the job, 'Nearly half of 17,200 officers and staff surveyed said that if they discovered corruption among their colleagues and chose to report it, they didn't believe their evidence would be treated in confidence and would fear 'adverse consequences.' As presented in the statement above, the fear of 'adverse consequences' is a fear that the police forces' anti-corruption team and superior officers need to address professionally and reassure their officers that there will not be 'adverse consequences' if corruption is reported. With this issue being addressed, it can further present a safer, more professional police force to the public eye, increasing the positive reactions and perceptions to and of the police forces throughout the United Kingdom.

2.6 Public Experiences with the Police

Experiences with the police are entirely different for each person. Each person dealing with the police has seen other things, heard different things and perceived different things; and therefore, no two answers will ever be the same, and no two responses from the police will be the same (Rosenberger et al. 2011). An experience dealing with an officer or the police, in general, is the most first-hand experience you can have with an officer and therefore making it a frontal image for the public's perception of the police. Suppose the police deal with a member of the people in an unsatisfactory way. In that case, it will not take long for that experience

to spread, but also for the person who experienced a bad experience to have less trust or belief in their police force and officers in the future. The article (Jayanetti, 2019) indulged in research to later found statistics regarding claims regarding police for sexual misconduct and abuse in the British police force. 'Nearly 1,500 accusations of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, exploitation of crime victims and child abuse, have been made against police officers in England and Wales over six years.' These statistics are proven to be further altering the public's perceptions and not only to the public but to the police force itself. The police force aims to make the United Kingdom a safer place for Great Britain citizens, enforce the law, and prevent crime. Figures such as the 1500 accusations of sexual assault go on to do the opposite of the police's aims and objectives.

This can further damage the public's perception of the police as the public will perceive dealings with the police force to be a dangerous scenario, where it should have the opposite effect. These altercations can occur due to the officers having the power to have an officer have a public member put into handcuffs and detain someone (Cao et al. 2000). This will put the member of the public in a difficult situation where the member of the people will not want to break the law by refusing to be handcuffed and attempting to escape the scene after being detained, but also feel as if the officer who has imprisoned the member of the public is breaking the law themselves.

The case of R v Couzens 2021 shows a perfect example of what is reported above. This case involved an officer, Wayne Couzens, who had used his police powers to detain his victim, Sarah Everard, to eventually kidnap Sarah to rape his victim further and proceed to murder his victim. When this story first occurred in the United Kingdom's media organisations and channels and across social media, it spread worldwide awareness that the police can also be criminals, which became a complete public protest and extreme unrest and trust in the British police forces. The police had made efforts to resolve this issue and attempt to calm public unrest by reminding people that they can call the police, even when stopped by an officer, to ensure their safety, tell the control room of their whereabouts and confirm it is a legitimate officer. 'Run away and call 999 if you feel in danger when stopped by lone officer' (O'Brien, 2021). However, this was not perceived to have been enough as that confirmation method can easily be prevented by an officer abusing their powers. Therefore, the public has called for and set up safe points and helpline numbers to call around bus stops and billboards around the United Kingdom if you feel unsafe (Foster et al. 2013). One of the organisations which has made a help line available to the public who feel unsafe walking alone at night or unsafe in public at all, is called Strut Safe. 'Initially people heard about Strut Safe through word of mouth, now most people find and share their number on social media. And the volume of calls they receive each weekend varies' (McDermott, 2021).

2.7 Racial Profiling

One significant issue the public perceives in the police forces throughout the United Kingdom is racial profiling. Racial profiling is when an officer assumes that a public member is carrying out a crime or offence by observing someone's race or ethnicity. 'Whites/Caucasians are twice more likely to receive a verbal warning for their conduct in a vehicle when compared to Blacks/African-Americans' (Gaill, 2017). Statistic, as shown above, should not be the case as the police need to uphold an utmost level of transparency and professionalism and should not differentiate punishments depending on the ethnicity of a person. Traffic stops are one of the more common reasons for interactions with the police in the United Kingdom. Therefore, such statistics shown above only further proves that racial profiling is still more existent than in the past. Like the one shown previous, statistics are another factor in the changing perception of the public's feelings and perceptions towards the police. It can only fuel an already struggling relationship between ethnic minority communities. It can potentially break the little trust that is left as ethnic minorities may feel as if they are in a war against the law (Moule et al. 2020); thus, the birth and improved Black Lives Matter movement occurred to spread awareness to the world of the everyday issues citizens of the United Kingdom are facing in their dealings with their police force.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertations literature review is straightforward for the public to see and the police that there is room for massive amounts of improvement, as it needs to be done as soon as possible. It is the best, more professional manner possible. Improvements need to be made to help officers gain the trust of ethnic

minorities who need to be heard. More assertive communication between communities needs to occur. This can be done by regular community talks and meetings or even a separate email for each community to help gain fast and precise replies to all of the communities needs and issues. With more outstanding communication comes a greater police force and a safer Britain, which will lead to a domino effect of better trust, less racial profiling, and better morale for all (Mayhill et al. 1985). Also, this research has concluded that I have achieved objectives 4 and 1.

Objective 1) How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force.

Objective 4) The public trust in the police force.

3, Research Methodology

3.1 Strategy and Introduction

Having an excellent strategy to collect data and research for a project such as this dissertation, public perceptions of the police, is extremely important, and it's

important to utilise as many different tools as possible (Briggs et al. 2012). The first route taken included taking quantitative data (Cramer, 2003). Next, qualitative data was obtained through the use of a survey. 'The anonymity of surveys allows respondents to answer with more candid and valid answers. To get the most accurate data, you need respondents to be as open and honest as possible with their answers' (Defranzo, 2022). Anonymity was necessary for this exact reason; therefore, it was added to the survey's disclaimer, which led to more accurate and comfortable responses from the public. This survey has 12 questions included, with 11 being multiple choice and one using a rating scale from 1 to 5. 100 people answered these questions. This does not include the comment boxes below a number of questions for specification. With the world suffering from a global pandemic and many people falling into the vulnerable category, it proved easier to record and collect quantitative data through the use of online social media applications.

For this survey, Facebook had been used (Shih et al. 2003). Due to the project being about the public's perceptions, it proved straightforward that it was imperative that data from the people had to be recorded first-hand. Facebook has been perceived as the best social network to use in order to get an accurate response and a reliable way of reaching a larger audience. 'Primary research is generally more conclusive than secondary research.' (SmartSurvey, 2022). Therefore, another route taken to gather research was to use computer technology to gather information and study to evaluate within this project. This was important as it added an imperative comparison to numerical data retrieved from the survey conducted by public members. This helps provide multiple insights into what the public perception currently is.

3.2 Choice

Having a good mixture of qualitative and quantitative data can only show more apparent results and understanding (Pope et al. 2000). The choice to use a survey was not a difficult choice to make. Surveys are one of the most straightforward methods to gather information from public members, and it provides transparent and fair results (Porter, 2004). By asking 100 people, as mentioned in the strategy, it ensured that I had asked a fair amount of people and even amount of people to provide precise results on which way the public perceives the police in the United Kingdom. It gives a clear understanding of how the public perception is swaying and whether it is favourable. Qualitative data was also imperative for this dissertation to find excellent and reliable results. It had helped compare results from people first-hand with a survey to people who had collected research and understood what the public perception was like before the survey was given out.

3 .3 Time Frame

The time frame for my qualitative research was restricted as this project had a time frame to be completed by, however did not prove to be a problem due to use of social networks to reach an audience in a fast manner with good responses. It was possible to make notes, gather the research, and evaluate it over a more extended period. However, despite that, the quantitative research was decided to be carried out in a short period of time. The survey spanned four days which had managed to gather 100 responses over the four days. It was decided that a shorter time frame,

for the collection of quantitative research, as it can provide quick results and can obtain a more straightforward response on how the exact current public perceptions really are of the police forces in England and Wales. Qualitative research is critical research, and it should not be done quickly. Qualitative research should be done over a more extended period, which was decided upon. This ensured a good evaluation of the research gathered and confirmed that it was reliable and sound research to be inserted into this dissertation (Barkman, 2022).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

It was clear that when doing the survey, the results and responders had to be kept anonymous (Wheelan, 2007). This is because it provides a more comfortable answering situation for the survey respondent. It is also imperative as the survey can ask more private questions such as age and sexuality in the biography of the study, including a disclaimer which had explained that all answers were to be used in a report and would be kept anonymous. The biography also explained that all responses are to be destroyed post-dissertation.

Before the conduction of this dissertation, an ethical form was carried out to explain and understand the limitations of questions to be asked in the survey and understand how important it is to protect the public data, which is also enforced under the Data Protection Act of 1998 (Jay et al. 1999).

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation had mainly focused on the results of the survey conducted and handed out via social media, alongside primary research through the internet (Fang et al. 2014). Both methods have worked well in finding the best possible results and data to gain great insight and understanding into what the public perceives the police to be and how the public feels like the police can improve in the future. Due to the responders being anonymous, the responses collected from the survey prove to have been answered comfortably and honestly. This was important for the responders and the dissertation at hand, as it ensured the most accurate results possible for the readers and the dissertation. Furthermore, the survey was only a series of 12 questions, which was not too time-consuming for the responders but also convenient questions which provided important data. The qualitative method of research has proven to be time consuming but valuable, understandable, and reliable, which later proved to be a significant factor in the evaluation of the results. All the elements had combined to establish and reinforce the public perceptions very accurately.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

Following chapter 3, this chapter will present the responses from the survey handed out on social media. This chapter will also include an analysis of the results.

Regarding all objectives for this project.

- Objective 1) How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force.
- Objective 2) An analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 3) An investigation into the effect the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has had on the public perception on the police force in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 4) The public trust in the British police force.

the survey was designed to cover almost all purposes set to find out the best and most reliable results from the public themselves. This gave a clear and reliable understanding of the accurate public perception of the police in the United Kingdom.

This survey was posted on a social media platform to gain fast and reliable results first-hand. The posting of the study had spanned four days, and after the fourth day, had managed to gain 100 responses from all different genders, ethnicities and age groups. The survey had 12 questions included, which does not include the 'please specify' comment boxes. Moreover, 11 of the 12 questions were all multiple-choice questions, whereas 1 of the questions contained a rating scale. The survey was designed and created through Google Forms, which was simple and highly efficient to use.

4.2 Analysis of Findings

After the 100 responses had been evaluated, it was clear that the most popular age group to respond was the 55-64 years old age group, with the final percentage being 32%. This was then followed by the age group of 45-55-year-olds at 25%. Finally, an option for prefer not to say was provided to those who did not feel comfortable discussing their age (Bunyan, 1981). This may be the most popular age range as due to their age, they may have experienced more encounters with the police, and have seen how the police have evolved across their lifetime.

Regarding the ethnicities in the survey, the majority response out of the 100 respondents had selected white/Caucasian, which had equalised to 74%, whilst the remaining ethnic minorities, Hispanic, Asian, black/African American and other ethnic groups had made up the remaining 26% (Keams et al. 2020).

Another question asked regarding the gender of the person responding to the survey resulted in an almost even mix of genders, with the female percentage being 59%

and the male respondents equalling 39%, which left 2% selecting the option to prefer not to say. The prospect of non-binary was also available (Miller 1999).

Finally, before the arrival of public perception questions, the respondents were also asked to describe their sexual orientation. Of the 100 people who had undertaken the survey, 77% of respondents had selected heterosexual/ straight, whereas 13% said they would prefer not to say. This left the remaining 10% with homosexual, asexual and pansexual (Socia et al. 2016).

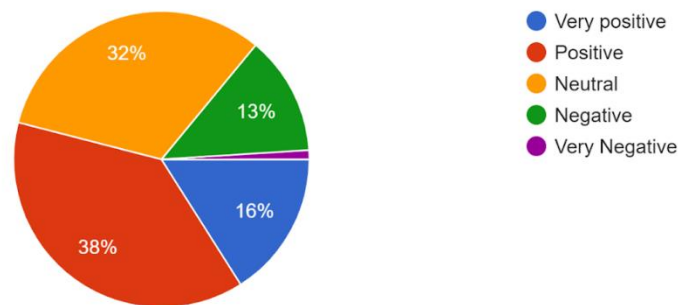
4.3 Data presentation

Question 1

How would you describe your current perception of the police?

How would you describe your current perception of the police?

100 responses



From the 100 responses received, it is clear that the public's current perception is largely dominant from 'neutral' and above. With this project being on the current public perceptions of the police, this chart provided a clear understanding that such a large percentage of the public perceives the police to be a largely positive perception. Despite that, there is also a smaller percentage of the 13% of respondents currently perceiving the police forces in the United Kingdom negatively and an even smaller 1% experiencing very negative feelings towards police forces in the United Kingdom. 'In the year 2019/2020, 74% of all respondents to a survey reported having confidence in the police. This was a slight decrease from the 78% reported between 2015 and 2018' (Myknenko, 2022).

Following this question was an opportunity for the respondents to specify their reasoning why. One of the more positive specifications of their current perception of the police involved 'They have a good order in place, but because of budget cuts and

pressure to deliver over the recent years, it's made it hard for them to do their job effectively.' This is an outstanding response as it shows the public understanding that the police do run off a budget and do everything, they can to help the public despite the budget being almost like an anchor feature in today's policing (Brian et al. 2017). Despite that, there were also some negative specifications, which include 'Too much focus on woke crimes. More focus on day-to-day crimes such as burglary is needed. They need to do more work on knife crime in London. Not enough presence to deter crime.' This is also an excellent specification made, related to the positive questions above. It references the little presence, which can only be an issue due to lack of funding (Ratcliffe et al. 1999). However, in the negative comment shown above, it's clear that some public members feel that the police are not doing enough to combat somewhat more minor crimes and instead focus on severe and more glorified crimes. 'The public has concluded that there aren't sufficient police resources to deal with minor crimes' (BBC, 2020).

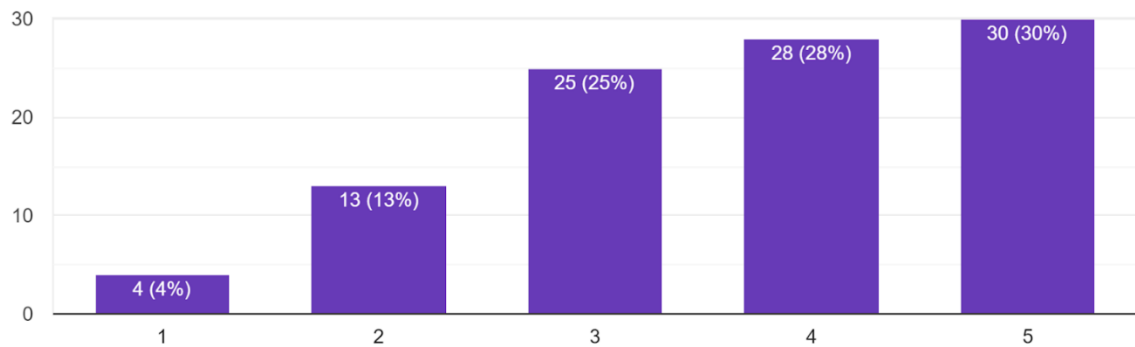
Question 2

How would you rate your experiences with the police?

Question two included a rating scale, where the survey provided the respondents with an opportunity to rate their experiences and dealings with the police force.

How would you rate your experiences with the police?

100 responses



The above bar chart is rated with number 1 on the scale being very unsatisfactory and number 5 being very satisfactory. As it is clear to see in the above bar graph, the rating of number 1, very unsatisfactory, was selected the least, whereas on the opposite side of the bar graph, very satisfactory, had the most selections. The above bar graph moved in an ascending and inclining type pattern where again, like question 1, had been heavily in favour of the neutral and above selections being chosen the most by the public members. This again shows a good perception (Stank et al. 2012).

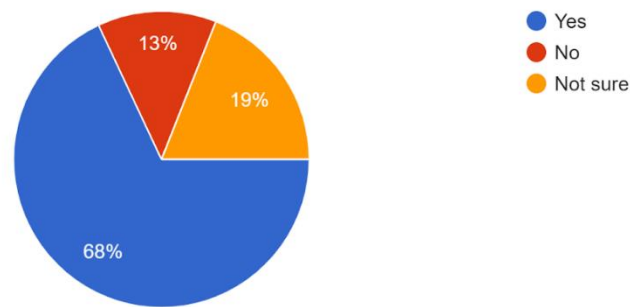
Question 3

Would you say you trust the police force?

This question was essential to be included in the survey. The reasoning for this is that without trust, the public perception will be utterly negative as there's no bridge or link between reliable communication and faith in the police.

Would you say you trust the police force?

100 responses

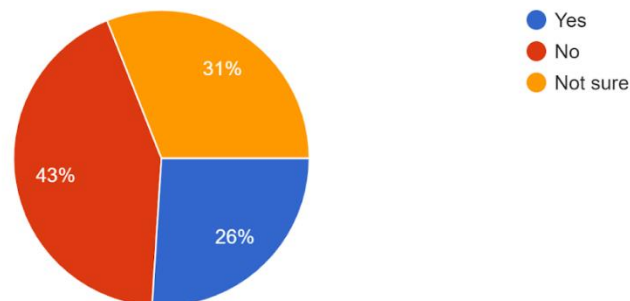


When asked if the respondent trusted the police force, 68% of the respondents had selected the option of yes rather than the 13% of the people who had selected no. With such a deciding factor of the public perception (Wang 2012), it was essential to add a comment box, where it was asked for all of the people who had selected no or not sure would leave a specification for their reason why. One of the reasons for the answer no was specified by mentioning 'Unpredictable and untrustworthy responses.' This is also backed up with findings from Myknenko (2022). With some members of the public feeling this way, it may be because of communication issues and those members of the general feel as if the police can do more to reach out to members of the community and gain that level of trust through excellent and clear communication (Crank 2014).

Question 4

Do you believe the police force abuses its powers?

Do you believe the police force abuse their powers?
100 responses



Again, following the previous patterns in the above charts and graphs, it's clear that most of the 100 respondents have trust and belief in the police to do the right thing and do their job correctly and fairly (Huang et al. 2000). Despite the overwhelming number of participants who had voted no, there is also a reason why some had selected the yes button. This can be down to public perception, media or first-hand experiences of abuse of power. This can also be seen and backed up after research was conducted on the Wayne V Couzens 2021 case in chapter 2.

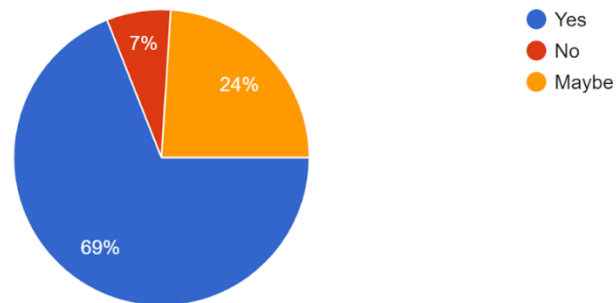
Question 5

Do you believe social media applications and websites play a part in public perceptions of the police?

Social media is the largest and fastest-growing platform globally (Bruns, 2013). It involves many different genders, ethnicities, and age groups who all have the right to voice their opinions and comment on things they may or may not believe in. Hence the reason this question was involved in this questionnaire. Social media is a massive influencer influencing factor for many people's views. This can range from watching videos involving the police, police discussions or even following celebrities and role models on social media platforms (Binder 2016). When asked in the survey if the public believes social media plays a part in the public perceptions of the police, a staggering 69% of people voted for yes. This question also left people on unsure of their opinions as 24% of the respondents responded with the maybe option, leaving the remaining 7% in the no category. Following this question, the respondents were asked to specify why. One of the specifications of their selections included 'People believe what they read.' This brings it back to following their role models or celebrities (Newton, 1991). Role models and celebrities are massive influences in today's world and have the power to influence large groups of followers or fans on their perception of today's issues and controversies, such as the public perception of the police (Dimsdale 2021).

Do you believe social media applications and websites plays a part in public perceptions of the police?

100 responses

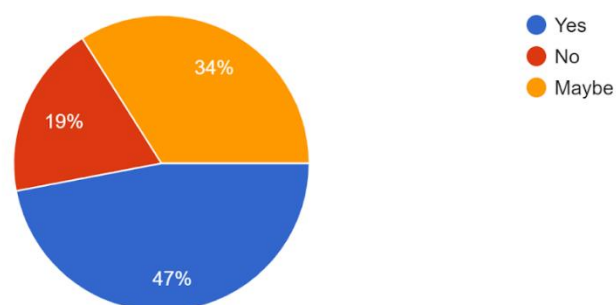


Question 6

Do you think the police can improve the public perception of them?

Do you think the police can improve the publics perception of them?

100 responses



A large part of this project is to discuss and evaluate how the public believes the police can improve their perceptions of them. As shown in the chart above, there

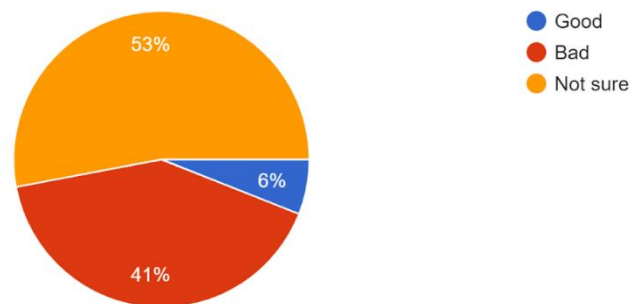
was not much difference between the yes option and the maybe option, with a remaining percentage of 19% for no. To better understand why and how the public believes the police can improve their perceptions, there was a please specify box below question 7, which had asked, if yes please establish. One of the respondents had made their point by saying, 'Yes, by continuing the involve communities.' This is further backed in the literature review in Smith (2021), where it shows that the GRT communities believe that the police need to do more for their community, therefore leaving a bad perception of the police in that community and implying that the perception could be improved, if more was done to improve the way the police deal with the GRT community. Community work is essential for the police to ensure a good relationship with the public and maintain a good public perception. This was a good suggestion by the respondent. It shows clearly that potentially their community feels as if the police are not doing enough to gain a relationship with the community and, therefore, can alter the community's perception of the police force in that area.

Question 7

Do you believe the media portrays the police in a good or bad way?

Do you believe the media portrays the police in a good or bad way?

100 responses



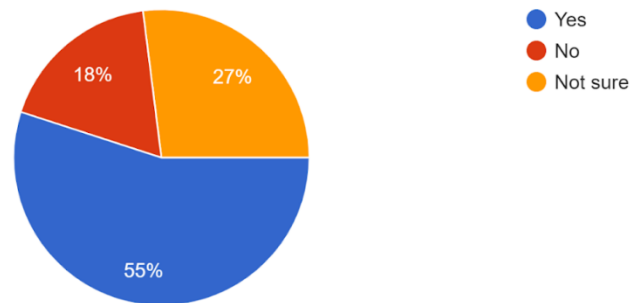
Closely related to the above asked question, question 7, the respondents were asked if they believe the media reported and portrayed the police in a good or bad way. Staggeringly, the majority vote, which equalled over half of the number of people who took the survey, had selected the not sure answer. Despite that, the more shocking percentage included the 'bad' selection. This came with 41% of the people who took the survey. This clearly shows that the public believes that the media present and shares a wrong perception of the police (Williams et al. 2019). On the other hand, a smaller percentage of 6% had voted good, which is a significantly smaller percentage and amount of people than the people who had selected wrong.

Question 8

Do you believe that the 'Black Lives Matter movement has influenced the public's perception of the police?

Do you believe that the 'Black Lives Matter movement has had an influence on the public's perception of the police?

100 responses



Black Lives Matter protests and the organisation itself are doing an incredible job raising awareness in today's police forces worldwide and in the United Kingdom (Langford et al. 2015). With this organisation having such a large following and belief worldwide and in the United Kingdom, it became evident that this question needed to be asked in the survey provided to the public. When asked if the people believed that the Black Lives Matter organisation had sway in public perception, over half of the respondents had voted for yes, with the percentage being 55%. This had left 18% of the respondents to vote for no, and the not sure category makes up the remaining portion. This shows that the public believes that the Black Lives Matter spreading of awareness and their methods of communication are reaching the world and the general public in the United Kingdom and are providing the public with another factor of emotional feelings and perceptions towards what the police can or have done. Post question 9, a please specify box had a mixture of responses. One of the responses included 'It's made the public more aware of how the police deal with situations. It's opened people's eyes.' This also relates to the literature review as in Moule et al (2020) it states that there is 'little trust' and it also states that they may

be a potential 'war against the law' which had then lead to further research on the way the public are perceiving how the police operate and that it is opening eyes to the current issues being raised by the black communities around the united kingdom.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, from observing and evaluating the data retrieved from the survey, it is clear that the public still has mixed perceptions of how they view the police forces throughout the United Kingdom. All of the questions in the survey had majority votes relating to good perceptions of the police. In contrast, smaller percentages of the respondents in each question were either unsure or negatively viewed the police. Therefore, concluding that the public, in the modern-day policing era, still has mixed emotions on how they perceive the police forces throughout the United Kingdom.

This chapter achieved objective's 1,2,3,4 with qualitative and quantitative research in each objective. These objectives are:

- How the public's experience was with any involvement with the police force.
- Objective 2) An analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom
- Objective 3) An investigation into the effect the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has had on the public perception on the police forces in the United Kingdom.
- Objective 4) The public trust in the police force.

5, Conclusion

In conclusion with this project revolving around the public's perception of the police and how they can be approved, it becomes clear to see an understanding that all objectives that had been set out had been achieved throughout the rest of the dissertation.

The first objective set out to achieve included an 'evaluation around the public's experiences with the police forces in the United Kingdom.'

This objective was achieved through the use of survey data gathering which helped to understand what the public experiences were with any involvement with the police force, which after the data collection, turned out positively. However, in the research carried out in Chapter 2, had shown that the public had little confidence and trust in the police force and found that some interactions with the police made the public felt unsafe.

The second objective included an 'Analysis of the media's portrayal of the police force in the United Kingdom.'

The third objective was an 'investigation into the effect the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has had on the public perception on the police forces in the United Kingdom.'

This had been successful through the use of qualitative research through the internet and quantitative research through the survey. This objective helped give almost another spine to this dissertation, as it had shown such incredible responses and statistics which proves the support and the effectiveness this organisation and charity has in spreading awareness to the public. It was clear to see the perception change from the public after reading and hearing about the Black Lives Matter

organisation. The research presented in chapter 2 in Abraham (2021) had shown the lack of trust ethnic minority communities have in the police, 44%, and shown that the birth of the 'Black Lives Matter' organisation had opened the public's eyes to this.

This dissertation had done exactly that and provided clear statistics and data which had provided a clear answer to the public's perception of the police in the United Kingdom. This was possible due to survey questions and extreme qualitative research which had inevitably revealed the public's perception of the police, which till this day remains an almost even split between the public on whether they perceive the police as a positive public service or a negative public service.

The fourth objective completed included 'The public trust in the police force.'

In almost all cases it was related to the fact that the police need to engage with the communities around the United Kingdom in an almost relationship-type manner, where the public can feel like they have someone there to keep them safe and to prevent crime, and the police feel as if they can go to the public if they need the help of questions answered. However, it was found that with the lack of trust the public have in the police proves to make life harder for the public and the police to do their job.

This dissertation had done exactly that and provided clear statistics and data which had provided a clear answer to the public's perception of the police in the United Kingdom. This was possible due to survey questions and extreme qualitative research which had inevitably revealed the public's perception of the police, which till this day remains an almost even split between the public on whether they perceive the police as a positive public service or a negative public service.

This dissertation had shown significant success in the attempts to find out what the public perceptions really are and that is thanks to the research undertaken. Although on occasions it had proven hard to find certain parts of research which had provided this dissertation with some limitations, however, if qualitative data was not available or possible to retrieve and evaluate, quantitative data was which had proved perfect when using both forms of data in comparison.

In final conclusion, after evaluating all data and research found throughout this project, this dissertation has found that the public has mixed emotions surrounding their perceptions of the police and perceives the police in a negative manner in some aspects, such as professionalism and trust, whereas the public perceives the police in a good manner in their efforts of trying to create a relationship with the communities around the United Kingdom.

Recommendations

From evaluating the processes carried out throughout this dissertation, it is clear to see that there are some methods than can be used differently in the future. In future projects, it would be useful and better to hand out surveys in person. With the global pandemic being present it hasn't been possible for the survey to be handed out in public from person to person. This would make an improvement as its more first hand and you gather true emotions and clearer responses from the members of the public.

Another recommendation that would be made includes the fact that the qualitative data was hard to find in some instances. Therefore, relating to the in-person

surveying and interviewing, it would be more accurate to be able to go and interview members of the police force as well as the public to help gain both sides of the stories surrounding the public perceptions. This would make the data more accurate and reliable when used in the comparison.

The final recommendation for the next project undertaken would be to gather another 100 responses to the survey given out to a different audience and to corollate that data from both audiences asked, this would give a further understanding into how different audiences respond to the survey.

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Appendences

questionnaire

responses

settings

Public Perceptions of the Police and how they can be improved.

All responses to my questions asked in this questionnaire will be used as research in my independent project, dissertation, based around the publics perceptions of the police force throughout the United Kingdom and the factors that may cause these perceptions. Some questions throughout this survey will also improve ways in-which you can answer ways you believe the perceptions of the United Kingdoms police force can be improved. These questions will include questions which will provide me with an understanding as to whether any experiences or dealings with the police may have been the main factor on your concluded perceptions or whether there may be other experiences, for example technological factors. All responses to this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purpose of my dissertation. All data will be destroyed after completion of my dissertation and kept anonymous. Thank you.

What is your age?

18 or under

19-34

35-44

45-54

+

Tt

?

questionnaire

responses

settings

whether there may be other experiences, for example technological factors. All responses to this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purpose of my dissertation. All data will be destroyed after completion of my dissertation. Thank you.

...

What is your age?

18 or under

19-34

35-44

45-54

55-64+

Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity? *

White or Caucasian

+

Tt

?

⋮

What is your ethnicity? *

☐ White or Caucasian

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Asian

☐ Other Ethnic Group

What is your gender? *

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-Binary

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

?

⋮

What is your gender? *

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-Binary

☐ Prefer not to say

What is your sexual orientation? *

☐ Asexual

☐ Bisexual

☐ Homosexual/Gay

☐ Heterosexual/Straight

☐ Lesbian

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

?

⋮

What is your sexual orientation? *

☐ Asexual

☐ Bisexual

☐ Homosexual/Gay

☐ Heterosexual/Straight

☐ Lesbian

☐ Pansexual

☐ Prefer not to say

How would you describe your current perception of the police? *

☐ Very positive

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

?

⋮

How would you describe your current perception of the police? *

☐ Very positive

☐ Positive

☐ Neutral

☐ Negative

☐ Very Negative

Please state why. *

Long answer text

How would you rate your experiences with the police? *

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

?

How would you rate your experiences with the police? *

12345

UnsatisfactorySatisfactory

Would you say you trust the police force? *

Yes

No

Not sure

If 'No' or 'Not sure', Please state why.

Long answer text

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

?

Do you believe the police force abuse their powers? *

Yes

No

Not sure

Do you believe social media applications and websites plays a part in public perceptions of the police? *

Yes

No

Maybe

+

📄

Tt

🖼️

▶️

☰

Please state why. *

Long answer text

...

Do you think the police can improve the publics perception of them? *

Yes

No

Maybe

If 'Yes', please specify.

Long answer text

?

Do you believe the media portrays the police in a good or bad way? *

Good

Bad

Not sure

Do you believe that the 'Black Lives Matter movement has had an influence on the publics perception of the police? *

Yes

No

Not sure

Please specify.

?