

Briefing

No respect: Young BAME men, the police and stop and search

Peter Keeling

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'If I see them, and they're coming towards me, my heart will race out of my chest, my legs will literally turn to jelly'

'Making me feel alarmed and distressed is you not doing your job at the end of the day. I'm not meant to feel like that, I'm meant to put trust in you, you get me?'

'I call it jump-out gang. They just jump out on you. And it's a gang of police and they're jumping out on you, and they're grabbing you up'

'Stop and search is an incendiary policing tool if not used with care ... In practical terms the damage such apparent unfairness inflicts on community relations can eclipse any improvement in public safety'

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Introduction

Almost exactly 30 years after the Brixton riots, history repeated itself in the summer of 2011 in cities across Britain. Once again, one accelerant to that unrest was a perception among black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people that they were being unfairly treated by police forces using stop and search.

Public figures, including – commendably – the then Home Secretary, pledged action. In the subsequent five years the number of stop and searches effected in England and Wales fell from 1.2 million to 380,000 without any deleterious impact on levels of crime. However, shockingly, the likelihood of someone black being stopped and searched in that period actually rose in relation to white people. A black person is now six times more likely to be searched.

Meeting young BAME people engaged through some of the Criminal Justice Alliance's 120 member organisations made clear how toxic this discrepancy, which corrodes their self-esteem, is to good community relations. Too many of them feel a visceral hostility towards police as a consequence. What's most stark is that too many are so obviously also becoming alienated from public institutions meant to protect them at the very point of their transition to adulthood.

That's why we decided to listen to what young BAME people had to tell policymakers and those police forces genuinely wrestling with this problem. Much of it, as the recommendations outlined here indicate, was constructive and thoughtful.

We also resolved to test whether the views we were hearing were representative of the two million young BAME people in England and Wales, each of them a key part of twenty-first century Britain's future. Polling has confirmed, worryingly, that they were. Almost 1.5 million young BAME people, for example, believe police stop and search powers are currently used unfairly toward their communities.

We inhabit a country where it's becoming a truth universally acknowledged that politicians, policymakers and those who lead our public services don't listen enough to those they serve. We hope that all of them – including Police & Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables – will not just listen to the two million young people to whom this report gives voice. We hope they'll now act, and ensure that history does not repeat itself again.

Ben Summerskill
Director, Criminal Justice Alliance

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Key findings

- 1** The number of stop and searches carried out each year in England and Wales is in decline, but this decline has disproportionately favoured white people. While the overall number of searches has dropped from a high of 1.2 million to a low of 380,000 in 2015/16, BAME people collectively are now *three times* more likely than white people to be searched, up from twice as likely the year before.
- 2** Black people in particular are now *six times* as likely to be searched, up from four times the previous year. In some parts of the country, this difference is even more stark.
- 3** Stop and search is often promoted as a useful police tactic to reduce crime. Many young BAME people agree – when it is used fairly. However, there remains limited evidence to support the theory that stop and search actually reduces crime.
- 4** Where evidence does exist of stop and search having a deterrent effect, the effect is highly localised and short-lived. Furthermore, this effect doesn't take account of the damaging consequences to police/community relations.
- 5** While arrest rates following stop and search – an important measure of its effectiveness – have improved, the vast majority of searches still result in nothing being found and no further action being taken.
- 6** Furthermore, the most recent review of stop and search records nationally found that 15 per cent still did not show any reasonable grounds for a search.
- 7** When stop and search is used in a way that is perceived to be unfair or ineffective, it has a lasting corrosive impact on young peoples' trust in the police, their willingness to cooperate with the police and, consequently, the police's ability to carry out investigations and reduce crime.

- 8** For BAME communities in particular, stop and search undermines confidence in the police. Three quarters of young BAME people think they and their communities are targeted unfairly by stop and search.
- 9** Stop and search is often the most confrontational encounter a young person will have with the police. When a search is not carried out with basic levels of decency and sensitivity, it can have a lasting effect on a young person and can make him feel 'victimised', 'humiliated', even 'violated'.
- 10** Young BAME people express feelings of being harassed and provoked by police officers who are sometimes perceived to want to 'trip them up' and escalate an encounter to a stop and search.
- 11** Young BAME people we spoke to also made clear they felt that police often made incorrect assumptions about them, sometimes about their clothing or their behaviour, but most often because of their ethnicity.
- 12** Young BAME people's perceptions of stop and search have a powerful impact on their overall impression of, and trust in, the police. Nearly two fifths of young BAME people have less trust in the police because of what they know about stop and search.

1. Three decades of disquiet

Stop and search has long proved a controversial power. It originated with the 'sus' law, introduced by the Vagrancy Act 1824, which furnished an officer with the power to stop and search an individual on the basis of his suspicion alone.

Lord Scarman's acclaimed investigation into the 1981 Brixton riots specifically identified overuse of this historic power – particularly against ethnic minority communities – as playing a causal role in the breakdown of relations between the police and the communities they served. He referred starkly to such activities provoking '... the hostility of young black people, who felt they were being hunted irrespective of their innocence or guilt. And their hostility infected older members of the community who, hearing the stories of many innocent young people who had been stopped and searched, began themselves to lose confidence in, and respect for, the police. However well-intentioned, these operations precipitated a crisis of confidence between the police and certain community leaders.'

The *Scarman Report* marked a step-change in the way policing and its effects on the community were understood. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) subsequently created a new general power to stop and search an individual or vehicle. This remains the most commonly used authority under which stop and search is conducted, accounting for 99.7 per cent of all searches in 2015/16.

Crucially, the new powers under Section 1 of PACE were only to be exercised where an officer had *reasonable* suspicion that a person was in possession of prohibited articles. The Act's accompanying Codes were changed in 1991 to include a requirement to record the ethnicity of the person being stopped and searched. Consequently, for the first time there was hard data on the exact extent to which stop and search was being deployed against people from ethnic minorities.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 also introduced two further powers to stop and search *without* reasonable suspicion. Section 60 allows a senior police officer who reasonably believes people may be carrying weapons in a localised area or 'that incidents involving serious violence may take place' to authorise other officers to carry out searches in that area without any requirement for reasonable suspicion for a period of 24 hours. Section 81, later merged into Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000, allowed senior officers to authorise such searches in order to prevent acts of terrorism.

Originally intended as a response to football hooliganism, Section 60 became synonymous with crackdowns on knife crime and anti-gang operations. It was often thus regarded as an almost exact revival of the type of indiscriminate stop and search – used disproportionately against black communities – that helped trigger the Brixton riots.

Hearing of many innocent young people who had been stopped and searched they began to lose confidence in, and respect for, the police

Some may think stop and search will help 'control the streets' in the short-term, but it may lead to major disorder in the long-term

The unfair use of stop and search against people from ethnic minority communities was highlighted again by Lord Macpherson's 1999 inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. It made several key recommendations, including tighter recording of stops.

Critically, Lord Macpherson acknowledged the uncomfortable claim that the Metropolitan Police force was 'institutionally racist' and that its use of stop and search was a factor in this finding. Nevertheless, just like Lord Scarman, he still acknowledged the 'genuine usefulness' of stop and search as a way to prevent and detect crime.

In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights made a landmark ruling on the legality of stop and search without reasonable suspicion under the anti-terrorism laws, ruling that there were insufficient safeguards in place to protect individuals against 'arbitrary interference'. The then coalition government responded by suspending the use of Section 44 and replacing it with a curtailed version, Section 47A, a power never since actually used.

In 2011, some recording requirements were removed. Police forces could now choose whether to record whether anything was *actually found*. A requirement to record a 'stop and account' that doesn't result in a search was also ended.

The overall number of Section 60 stops – those localised and without grounds for reasonable suspicion – has hugely reduced, from over 150,000 in 2008/09 to fewer than 1,000 in 2015/16. The consequential arrest rate from Section 60 searches – key evidence that a stop is actually *justified* – also remains extremely low, at just six per cent, and ethnic 'disproportionality' remains a key issue. In London in 2015/16, black people accounted for well over half of all Section 60 stops, in spite of being just one in eight of the population.

The 2000s saw a huge rise in the use of stop and search under Section 1 of PACE to a high of over 1.2 million stops in 2010/11. Then during 2011, exactly 30 years after the Brixton riots, cities across England and Wales once again saw scenes of massive civil unrest.

The 2011 riots also once again raised important questions about the relationship between the police and the communities they serve. A powerful 2013 report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) articulated specific concerns about the use of stop and search and whether over-use was a bar to community confidence in the police. 'Very few forces,' it said, 'could demonstrate that use of stop and search powers was based on an understanding of what works best to cut crime.'

Furthermore, HMIC's review of nearly 9,000 stop and search records found that over a quarter did not provide lawful grounds for a stop. 'Apart from the fact that it is unlawful,' the report concluded, 'conducting stop and search encounters without reasonable grounds will cause dissatisfaction and upset, and whilst some may think it will help to "control the streets" in the short-term, it may lead to major disorder in the long-term.'

2. The recent picture

In a widely-welcomed move in 2014, Home Secretary Theresa May firmly criticised the negative effects of excessive use of stop and search. 'If the numbers do not come down, if stop and search does not become more targeted, if those stop-to-arrest ratios do not improve considerably,' she told the House of Commons, 'the Government will return with legislation to make those things happen. Nobody wins when stop and search is misapplied. It is a waste of police time. It is unfair, especially to young, black men. It is bad for public confidence in the police.'

When the government introduced a 'Best Use of Stop and Search' (BUSS) scheme all police forces pledged to rise to the then Home Secretary's challenge. The scheme rated each force's compliance with five performance measures – recording outcomes, lay observation, community complaint triggers, reducing the number of Section 60 stops and monitoring the impact of stops.

The scheme also encouraged forces to record more detailed outcomes of searches in order to establish whether an outcome – for example, an arrest for carrying drugs – was actually linked to the original claimed reason for the search. This is something central to whether a stop has been carried out lawfully. (Latest statistics from individual forces show that many are still not providing such data and, more worrying, on average over a quarter of outcomes are still not linked to the reason for the search.)

By 2015, according to HMIC's annual report on police legitimacy, just 11 of 43 police forces were complying with all five features of the BUSS scheme. Almost one in three were not complying with three or more features. Crucially, while a review of over 4,000 stop and search forms found an improvement on 2013, 15 per cent of records still failed to demonstrate *any* reasonable grounds for a search. Eventually, after subsequent 2016 reviews, HMIC declared all but four forces to be compliant.

It remains the case that for the vast majority of people who are stopped and searched nothing is found

In total, stop and search was used 380,000 times in the year ending March 2016, the latest full year for which figures are available. This marks a low point since a high of over 1.2 million in 2010/11 and, on the face of it, significant progress.

Recent years have also seen a small improvement in the arrest rate – a critical measure of the effectiveness of stop and search – from nine per cent in 2011/12 to 16 per cent in 2015/16. (These rates vary hugely across forces.) However, it remains the case that for the vast majority of people who are stopped and searched, they are not arrested.

In 2015/16, 250,000 people a year were stopped and searched where nothing was found and with *no further action* taken by police. The proportion of such cases in the most recent periods is shown by constabulary in the table on pages nine and ten.

This is in spite of the damage many such encounters do to an individual's current and future relations with the police, and those of their families. It's also in spite of there still being very little hard evidence to demonstrate that

The 'knife crime myth' about stop and search

Some commentators – including retired Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe – have suggested that stop and search might have a deterrent effect on the carrying of knives. This assertion might seem compelling given a recent surge in knife crime in London coinciding with an all-time low in the Metropolitan Police's total use of stop and search.

However, this argument draws false links between the decline in the use of stop and search and an uptick in knife crime, a point recognised by the Home Secretary in a speech to the National Black Policing Association in October 2015. It was notable that the Metropolitan Police responded by conceding that there was 'no definitive evidence to prove or disprove the suggested link'.

The Home Office released a report in 2016 on the impact of Operation BLUNT 2, a spring 2008 initiative by the Metropolitan Police to dramatically increase the number of weapon searches in London. In ten prioritised boroughs, the number of weapon searches more than tripled, with the expectation that crimes such as assault involving a sharp weapon, robbery and possession of a weapon would come down.

However, the subsequent analysis of police recorded crime 'found no statistically significant crime-reducing effect from the large increase in weapons searches during the course of Operation BLUNT 2. This suggests that the greater use of weapons searches was not effective at the borough level for reducing crime.'

Robust evidence from New York similarly outlines a lack of correlation between stop and search – or 'stop and frisk' – and violent crime. Since 2011, the number of stops in New York fell by over 90 per cent. Rather than an

increase in the number of violent crimes (as predicted by the New York Police Department), the decline in the controversial use of stop and frisk has coincided with a 23 per cent drop in shootings and a 33 per cent drop in murders.

The Home Office report admits candidly that any evidence base for crime-reducing effects of stop and search is 'limited'. Research into the use of stop and frisk in New York using annual crime data and over larger geographical areas is, at very best, inconclusive. It has been shown that stop and frisk may lead to a small reduction in the probability of a crime occurring in *very small* geographical areas. But even if this small deterrent effect does exist it is both localised and short-term, lasting only four days with a radius of 300 feet.

British evidence is similarly insubstantial. There is some suggestion that targeted stop and search as part of wider police deployment at crime 'hotspots' could have a deterrent effect on crime. However, another study of Operation BLUNT 2 found that while there was an immediate positive effect on recorded crime in hotspot areas where five or more stops occurred, it only took three days for crime rates to return to levels comparable to the time before the increase in the use of stop and search.

As the Home Office report concluded, even where there is evidence about an apparent crime-reducing effect of stop and search, the results are very mixed and there are firm counteracting arguments. These analyses do not take into consideration the serious negative impact stop and search tactics can have on police/community relations and the consequential impact on public willingness to positively engage with the police and the law.

To summarise what we know:

- There's no evidence that the reduction in the use of stop and search in Britain has caused an increase in knife crime.
- Any evidence of increased stop and search having a clear and crucial crime-reducing effect is inconclusive, both in London and New York.
- In those cases where stop and search *has* been shown to have any deterrent effect, it is both very short-lived and highly localised.
- None of this evidence takes into account the damaging impact of stop and search on community relations.

stop and search has a material deterrent effect on crime. This is highlighted in the in-depth focus on knife crime on page seven.

More disturbing, in 2015/16 BAME people collectively were being stopped and searched at *three times* the rate of white people, having been only *twice* as likely to be stopped the previous year. Black people in particular are now *six times* as likely to be stopped and searched as white people nationally, up from *four times* in 2014/15.

Black people are now six times as likely to be searched as white people nationally

It appears clear from this data that any reduction in the overall use of stop and search in recent years has disproportionately favoured white people. Meanwhile, the huge negative impact of what are often regarded as 'coercive tactics' on police relationships with the communities they serve is well rehearsed.

Above all, the purpose and effectiveness of stop and search is directly undermined when it is perceived to be implemented unfairly. Not only is public confidence compromised, but police may be cutting themselves off from vital sources of intelligence because lower confidence leads to lower levels of public cooperation.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission has described stop and search as 'probably the leading cause of tension between young people and the police'. If young BAME people still feel, as Lord Scarman put it three decades ago, 'hunted irrespective of their innocence or guilt', that will almost certainly have a lasting impact on their perceptions of the police.

The following chapters are intended to give voice to some of those young people from across the country.

How many times more likely are BAME people than white people to be stopped and searched? How often is no further action taken?

The table on the right shows how many times more likely a BAME person in England and Wales is to be stopped and searched compared to a white person, by police force. The figures are for 2015/16, the latest full year available, and the figures in brackets are for the previous year.

The final column – No Further Action – shows the proportion of stop and searches that result in nothing being found and no further action being taken. They are the latest figures collated by each force. These are precisely the stops that most exacerbate distrust between the police and local communities.

Table: How many times more likely are BAME people than white people to be stopped and searched? How often is no further action taken?

Force	Black	Asian	Mixed race	Chinese or other	NFA %
Avon and Somerset	5.1 (4.2)	1.2 (1.2)	1.6 (1.7)	0.9 (0.7)	65.7
Bedfordshire	2.8 (2.3)	1.5 (1.6)	2.1 (2.2)	1.0 (0.6)	67.9
Cambridgeshire	5.8 (3.7)	2.1 (1.6)	1.6 (1.3)	0.4 (0.5)	54.3
Cheshire	5.7 (4.8)	0.4 (1.5)	1.2 (1.5)	0.8 (1.4)	55.3
City of London	8.1 (10.0)	2.5 (3.2)	1.5 (1.6)	0.3 (0.3)	51.5
Cleveland	2.8 (2.4)	1.1 (0.9)	0.6 (0.7)	0.8 (0.4)	64.3
Cumbria	5.5 (1.7)	2.1 (1.3)	0.7 (1.0)	0.5 (3.5)	71.4
Derbyshire	3.5 (2.7)	2.8 (2.0)	2.0 (2.3)	0.1 (0.5)	70.3
Devon and Cornwall	7.7 (7.1)	1.2 (1.0)	1.0 (0.9)	1.0 (4.4)	67.8
Dorset	19.5 (12.8)	1.6 (1.4)	2.2 (2.1)	0.8 (0.4)	49.9
Durham	0.8 (0.9)	0.5 (0.5)	0.5 (0.3)	0.4 (0.4)	67.7
Dyfed-Powys	3.5 (5.6)	1.0 (1.3)	1.0 (2.0)	0.5 (0.2)	63.1
Essex	6.7 (4.9)	2.1 (1.4)	2.3 (1.7)	1.3 (1.0)	66.8
Gloucestershire	7.5 (5.7)	1.4 (1.1)	3.2 (2.0)	1.1 (1.3)	69.8
Greater Manchester	2.7 (2.4)	1.5 (1.3)	2.0 (1.9)	0.5 (0.6)	75.1
Gwent	1.7 (4.2)	1.4 (1.8)	4.1 (1.7)	0.6 (1.0)	79.3
Hampshire	8.1 (5.5)	1.1 (0.9)	1.8 (1.4)	0.4 (0.5)	62.4
Hertfordshire	3.4 (3.1)	1.6 (1.4)	1.9 (1.9)	1.3 (2.1)	68.3
Humberside	2.2 (2.2)	0.8 (2.2)	1.2 (1.5)	0.0 (0.5)	71.7
Kent	8.3 (5.7)	0.9 (1.0)	1.5 (1.2)	15.0 (15.9)	58.4
Lancashire	3.5 (1.9)	1.4 (1.1)	1.3 (0.7)	0.3 (0.2)	70.0

Force	Black	Asian	Mixed race	Chinese or other	NFA %
Leicestershire	4.0 (3.9)	1.3 (1.2)	1.7 (1.7)	0.3 (0.4)	64.7
Lincolnshire	3.0 (2.3)	0.6 (0.5)	1.2 (0.5)	0.1 (0.0)	62.8
Merseyside	1.9 (1.8)	0.6 (0.6)	0.8 (0.8)	0.4 (0.5)	55.9
Metropolitan Police	3.3 (2.8)	1.1 (0.9)	1.3 (1.1)	1.0 (0.9)	68.2
Norfolk	8.0 (6.9)	2.2 (1.1)	1.4 (1.5)	0.7 (0.6)	79.2
North Wales	2.3 (2.5)	0.8 (0.6)	0.4 (0.7)	1.0 (1.1)	73.8
North Yorkshire	2.1 (2.3)	3.0 (2.3)	1.7 (1.0)	0.5 (0.6)	52.8
Northamptonshire	5.5 (3.6)	1.8 (1.2)	2.2 (1.7)	1.8 (1.1)	67.1
Northumbria	2.9 (1.6)	1.1 (1.0)	0.6 (0.7)	0.2 (0.1)	67.1
Nottinghamshire	4.7 (3.9)	2.1 (1.2)	2.1 (1.2)	1.1 (1.0)	49.0
South Wales	2.3 (2.2)	1.0 (0.8)	1.0 (1.1)	0.3 (0.4)	75.2
South Yorkshire	3.3 (2.4)	3.1 (2.2)	2.5 (2.1)	0.6 (0.4)	70.9
Staffordshire	5.4 (2.9)	2.2 (1.4)	2.1 (1.9)	0.5 (0.4)	72.3
Suffolk	8.1 (8.2)	1.7 (1.0)	2.4 (2.8)	1.3 (0.6)	67.1
Surrey	8.4 (5.9)	1.7 (1.5)	1.9 (1.3)	0.5 (0.5)	76.9
Sussex	10.2 (8.0)	1.5 (1.4)	1.4 (1.3)	1.0 (0.8)	71.8
Thames Valley	3.6 (2.8)	1.6 (1.7)	2.8 (2.4)	0.7 (0.5)	62.7
Warwickshire	7.3 (6.8)	1.4 (1.4)	2.3 (2.4)	1.1 (1.0)	64.8
West Mercia	9.1 (7.3)	3.9 (3.1)	2.3 (2.2)	0.8 (0.5)	62.6
West Midlands	3.2 (2.6)	1.6 (1.6)	2.0 (1.7)	0.1 (0.2)	69.3
West Yorkshire	1.6 (1.3)	1.4 (1.0)	1.6 (1.0)	0.3 (0.2)	68.8
Wiltshire	7.5 (6.7)	1.7 (1.2)	2.1 (1.5)	1.1 (0.6)	72.8

3. 'Jump-out gangs' – What young people feel about stop and search

'I call it "jump-out gang". They just jump out on you. And it's a gang of police and they're jumping out on you, and they're grabbing you up. Yeh, they'll fling you about.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

A stop and search is likely to be the most confrontational encounter someone will ever have with the police. Not only are they being detained in public, often in a place highly visible to onlookers, but they are then made subject to an invasive procedure.

'They were just violating me basically.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'It feels like they're assaulting me.' (Slough, Asian, 15)

'It was like two of them, like one trying to grip him down – he wasn't even moving – one trying to make sure he stays there and then one like touching him up and all of that like.' (Birmingham, black, 16)

Without very good reason, stop and searches can also make young people feel anxious, confused and upset.

'I got stopped and searched literally when I was about 16, and being thrown around by officers, and almost being goaded into a retaliation, I just remember bursting out crying, not knowing what to do, how to respond.' (Manchester, black, 26)

'I was under pressure because he started squeezing my genitals, and like, obviously – it's self-respect innit?' (Slough, Asian, 16)

'So now I'm thinking – now my heart is racing now, cause I don't know what these guys want, it's not the first time something like this has happened.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

I got stopped when I was about 16, being thrown around by officers, and almost being goaded into a retaliation

Some young people do recognise that stop and search is a legitimate tool to help tackle crime.

'It's needed in a way because there is actually people that would actually do, like, mad things.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'It would be ridiculous to tell the police to not do stop and searches if they found something and that's stopping something from happening.' (Manchester, black, 20)

However, it's crucial to the perception of stop and search as legitimate that the reason for a stop is properly explained. Many young people we spoke to feel that the level of reasonable suspicion required is not being met.

I felt completely violated, I was scared and horrified

'Making a guess and having reasonable suspicion are two different things. Like, they could just make a guess and "oh, look, he is carrying a knife" – but that could be one out of 20. And then for those other 19 people, they could be physically hurt or emotionally scarred or end up not trusting the police. And something happens to them and they think, do you know what, I'm not even going to call the police. Making that assumption, you just lose a lot of trust. And it affects a lot of people that way.' (Manchester, black, 26)

Young people also talk about the speed at which an encounter can escalate to a stop and search and the abruptness of the search itself.

'There is no time to talk. You know why? Cause straight away, they're putting their hands on you. They don't get what they want, they put their hands on you.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'I felt completely violated, I was scared and horrified because it happens quite quickly and you know, they say what they want to say.' (Slough, Asian, 22)

Poor communication from police officers conducting a search also has a negative impact.

'They say a whole bunch of jargon that we don't understand.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'Being 18 and not really ever being involved with the police, some of the things they were saying I didn't understand, I was like what's going to happen and is this going to go onto my criminal record, am I in loads of trouble?' (Slough, Asian, 22)

But poor communication doesn't always just mean use of police jargon. It relates to officers' perceived attitude and how they interact with young people.

'Most of the police are always rude.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

'I've been searched so many times for no reason. You know what they say to you? "If you don't have nothing, let me search you." I hate when they say that.' (Slough, black, 15)

'It's like, I've got to speak to the police as if I'm in an interview and I'm trying my hardest to work for a job.' (Manchester, black, 26)

And where officers try to be familiar, young people themselves can interpret this as sarcastic and disingenuous.

'Yeh because every time I see a police officer now, they just say "what you got in that bag fam [mate]?" Now they start to take the mick. Now they start taking the mick, they say "fam" now.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

Thankfully, young people are also nowadays often aware of their rights when being stopped and searched. It can leave a bad impression where officers do not comply with the correct procedures.

'There was one time I asked a police officer for his badge number and he just didn't give it to me, he just walked off.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

'I realised after half an hour I could have just walked off there and then because I asked her "am I detained?" she said "no, you're not" and I said "ok, I'm on my way then" and then she said "no, that's fine, I'm just gonna detain you".' (Slough, Asian, 16)

For some a search is, at worst, an unfair accusation of criminality and the impact is unsurprising. Young people can be left feeling humiliated and victimised.

'It just makes you feel a bit like a victim basically.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'Like they take the mick out of you cause they have a badge.'
(Slough, Asian, 15)

And for some young people, the unreasonableness of a search may actually be stated for them by the officers themselves.

'He said to me: "I'm just gonna search you for the fun of it".'
(Slough, black, 15)

Young people describe how they feel under pressure, because of the threat of stop and search, to adapt their behaviour to escape notice or, if stopped, to simply accept any apparent discrimination because resistance will be interpreted as aggression.

'It's interesting that now the onus is on us – and by us I mean, me or you, black people – to change how we respond to police when the issue lies with them and their kind of prejudices. They say "he was resisting, he was speaking too aggressively" when really the focus should not be on that, it should be on the prejudices that police officers come with.'
(Manchester, black, 26)

It just makes
you feel a bit
like a victim
basically

Many young people also suggest police somehow try to 'trip them up' or provoke them into escalating an encounter. They find it particularly unfair when in their minds it is the police who are initiating the confrontation and harassing them.

'When police ask you a question like "oh are you ok?" if you don't give like a simple quick yes, it's fine, it's alright, they start asking more questions. And then it's like trying to make you slip up on something and say something that they will start to get suspicious on. And then all of a sudden – if it's a big group of kids, all it takes is one quick call on the radio and then another vehicle shows up and all of a sudden you're circled in with a few police asking all sorts of questions and assuming you've all done something, and asking how long you've been here for, do you live in the area.'
(Manchester, black, 20)

'But then because they're in their uniform, if we start getting aggressive, they'll be like "oh just throw them in jail" and this and all of that "you're going down for this, you're going down for that".' (Birmingham, black, 16)

'I feel like sometimes they're gonna try and draw the reaction out of me. Like they're trying to force me to react in a certain way so they can take me down and they can put me in the back of the car.' (Manchester, black, 20)

'They should just leave people alone, until they find evidence.'
(Birmingham, black, 17)

Many young people also perceive police tactics when using stop and search to be aggressive, particularly given the speed at which a search can take place. They describe feelings of being constantly watched, seeing police cars often slow to a crawl as they go past and the worry that at any point a situation could escalate.

'They're looking at you, and they're just watching you the whole time.'
(Slough, black, 15)

'There's ways of doing things, and there's ways of, like, communicating and – there's not. There's always an aggression when it comes to police. If you're asking anyone in my area, it's aggression.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

Half the time they
don't even say sorry

'They want to stop and search you, they will jump on you, and they will tackle you to the ground. My friend, just three days ago now, in Wood Green, he got his tooth knocked out of his head. And police left him. They was gonna stop and search him, but because he turned around, they jumped on him, they slammed him on the ground. They didn't arrest him, they didn't search him, you know what they did? They just drove off. As soon as the cameras came out, they drove off.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

Finally, young people also describe the way an encounter is concluded as important to their lasting impression of the stop and search.

'Half the time they don't even say sorry.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

'They just say "on your way boy".' (Slough, Asian, 16)

4. 'They think they're all above us' – What young people think about the police

Many of the young people we spoke to struggled to find anything positive to say about the police. An overriding feeling is that unfair use of stop and search had left a damaging impression and that police too often jump to conclusions.

'They thought I had a weapon on me that I was going to use to hurt somebody because I looked pissed off. So they've just straight away jumped at their own thoughts. People could be pissed off, walking down the road, I could be sad, and what? You're gonna pull up somebody about their looks and their feelings? We don't judge you about your feelings and looks, so why do the same to us?' (Tottenham, mixed race, 21)

While many young people feel their ethnicity has been a material factor in officers' decisions to stop them, they also talk about feeling stereotyped because of the types of clothing they wear, tattoos and even the type of bag they carry. They think the police see these things as part of a typical 'gang' appearance.

'We wear tracksuits and that. Most times we're all in tracksuits and so they always think we're up to something.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

'They need to stop coming with the assumptions, and going off their own thing, cause not everybody is who they or what they think they are. I could be in a hoody and with my hood up and what not. With these trousers on, they'd think we were a gang.' (Tottenham, mixed race, 21)

'Someone has a man bag, they think there's always something in the bag.' (Slough, Asian, 15)

'It's not just racism cause the way my white friends were dressed was different compared to what my black friends were dressed. My black friends dress all tracksuited out, just relaxed and then my white friends, all smart and that sort of.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

But feeling targeted because of their ethnicity is undoubtedly a very important factor in young people's mistrust of the police.

'Yeh, cause if they see me first thing they think is black male, that's it.' (Slough, black, 15)

'I have my white friends that, when I got stopped with them one time, the police spoke nice and casual, no problem. When I was with my black friends, when they came, they had no respect, nothing, they just came, they're like "listen, you're detained, now we're gonna search you". When we tried to speak back they'd tell us to "shut up, we're gonna do our job, this and that then you guys can leave".' (Slough, Asian, 16)

If you put four black people on my street, you'll see a police car stop every one

'They're talking as if they're speaking to the entire group but they're looking at certain people. They're looking at, you know what I mean, "what's your name, you here?" Ryan, Chris, then you hear Akeem, Dejon, and then they're like, they're looking at Akeem and Dejon, know what I mean.'
(Manchester, black, 20)

'But what I'm trying to show you is that I wasn't dressed up in any clothing that looks like a gang member would wear. I wasn't wearing, you know, a mask. I was wearing nice jeans, and a nice polo shirt. So I'm not looking gang-affiliated am I? I'm just looking like a normal person.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'That's the reason. That's all. Cause I'm black. I've drove past police officers and they just stare me down cause I'm black. See him, he's gonna do something, cause he's black, why not. So that's what they think.' (Birmingham, black, 17)

'So I'd say growing up as a teenager in this estate, and growing up with a peer group of black males, we got stopped and searched a lot. And with no product of, you know, criminal activity or no further action.'
(Manchester, black, 26)

'Police, if they see a black person, they automatically think, yeh that's him, that's a gang member, yeh let's jump out and get him. Well, I will tell you, if you put maybe like four black people on my street, I'll tell you – you'll see a police car stop every one. They will stop – they will keep stopping. And for what. People can't go outside and have a nice day and come back home. People can't go to the shop and get a drink.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'They wouldn't go stop and search a white boy for no reason.'
(Slough, black, 15)

Young people also feel that police officers can abuse their powers, confident they are protected because of the uniform and the badge.

Making me feel alarmed and distressed is you not doing your job

'The thing about police, they like, they abuse their power, cause behind the suit is a man, a human being, and everyone, they have personalities.'
(Lambeth, black, 19)

'They basically think they're all above us.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

'Some police officers just want to become police officers so they can bully people.' (Slough, black, 15)

'The badge does them too many favours.' (Slough, Asian, 16)

One explanation for the perceived abuse of power that young people return to is that police officers are bored and are stopping and searching people 'for fun'.

'To the police, it's like a game to them. It's like, it's fun. You know like we play games, and like, you'll play on a console, you just wanna enjoy it. You know like we play hide and seek or like you're running, you're chasing your friends, that's how it is.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

'They're just sad and bored. I've seen them walking at six in the morning, just walking by themselves, they're tired and walking.' (Slough, black, 15)

'But people in the street, they shouldn't be able to just stop. They just do it – it's like they do it for fun. Going for a cruise, let's see who we can find to stop. So that's what I think their mindset is.' (Birmingham, black, 16)

When young people are aware of correct procedure and understand their rights but they believe officers do not follow the rules or refuse to give information that a person being searched is entitled to, they perceive the officers as unprofessional and 'above the rules', which compounds resentment.

This perception of unprofessionalism reinforces young peoples' belief that they are being stopped unnecessarily and that the police are wasting their time and not spending their time tackling crime.

'Making me feel alarmed and distressed is you not doing your job at the end of the day. I'm not meant to feel like that, I'm meant to put trust in you, you get me?' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'How many times do people get searched but they don't find anything. It's just wasting time, they have to write the detail, everything, it's just long.' (Slough, black, 15)

'I felt violated, and I felt like, I felt disgusting. Because what people don't understand is, you want them to respect the police, but like I said to you, they're not doing their job.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

For some, the mistrust felt goes even further to perceptions of malice.

Stop judging people by the way they look, and stop searching people on suspicion

'I think they could manipulate things and get around you, maybe if they don't like you, they could get you arrested if they really wanted to, like cause they got friends and that, you know what "I don't like him, just arrest him, do this, do that, put weed in his pocket or something" I don't trust them.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

It all too often comes back to young people thinking that officers are making false assumptions based on irrelevant factors.

'I'd suggest that stop judging people by the way they look, and colour, and stop searching people on suspicion. You've got to be 100 per cent sure of what they did, like, they have to see you do something to stop and search you.' (Slough, black, 15)

'If they had – if they had the resources and all the proof they had to come stop and search me and harass me for something, then yeh, cool. But you can't go off your own intelligence and say look, I suspect he's smoking marijuana, and he's smoking whatever, and he's got whatever, let's go, go get them.' (Tottenham, mixed race, 21)

5. Three more decades of disquiet?

What became clear from our interviews is that feelings derived from negative experiences of stop and search can also have long-term effects, not just of anxiety, but of anger and hostility towards the police too.

'How I think about the police. If I see them, and they're coming towards me, my heart will race out of my chest, my legs will literally turn to jelly, and I'm just thinking to myself, like what is gonna happen now?' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'I'll never believe that they're just doing a simple check like they'd do to someone else five minutes later. I always assume they're thinking the worst so I'm prepared for anything from them.' (Manchester, black, 20)

'As a young adult, it's still affecting me. I would never have anything on me but when I'm around them I would start moving mad like, I just move a bit crazy like, how I shouldn't move cause I'm genuinely innocent.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'As soon as I've seen the uniform, I'm on edge.' (Manchester, black, 20)

'I think it's something that is going to stick with me, and it is something that when I do now see the police, I don't feel much of the safety aspect.' (Slough, Asian, 22)

'It's affected me because obviously I have no respect for them, and there might be some police officers who are genuinely out there to do their job, and as a result of past experiences, that's then led me to act in a certain way towards them. It's long term because obviously they've just ruined their reputation with me basically.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'It just makes me hate, it just makes me hate them.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

Many young people also describe the negative effect of being repeatedly stopped and searched and thus feeling harassed and targeted.

'Since I was 15 to, I'm grown up, to 18, it's been happening. It's happened through my whole entire life.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'You can't be making assumptions on younger people, and young men out there. It's quite wrong, it hurts us in a way, this is why we don't trust the police. This is why we don't have no faith in the police whatsoever. Because once you're being targeted so many times, you've had enough and you ain't just gonna bother listening.' (Tottenham, mixed race, 21)

It is also clear that many young people do not make use of complaints procedures, even when feeling that they have been stopped unfairly.

'I was really annoyed, and after that, I was just angry. I wanted to report it but I just thought there was no point.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

You can't
be making
assumptions
on young men.
It hurts us

It's made me
lose a lot of faith
in the criminal
justice system

'You make a complaint to the IPCC, [Independent Police Complaints Commission] but knowing the reputation of complaint procedures, just not having the energy or the time, or being bothered to do anything. Cause I know nothing's probably gonna happen.' (Manchester, black, 26)

Particularly concerning is the effect that negative experiences can have on the likelihood that a young person might call the police for assistance or be cooperative with the police in the future.

'It's crazy, it's just old habits innit, they've messed me about too much and I will never forgive them. But I would just never, never help them, I swear.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'I don't trust them, I don't like them. Me personally, if I ever had a problem, I'd never go to them. I'd never call them. Can't trust them.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

'I'd mind my own business. If I saw a crime happening, if someone died from it, if someone was in critical condition, I'd call an ambulance. But I wouldn't call the police.' (Slough, Asian, 15)

Young people express concerns about long-term trends around policing, the overuse of coercive measures in particular areas and the damaging effect of stop and search on future community relations.

'For me personally it's more about the younger people in the community growing up, and the kids growing up, cause like we don't believe in our policemen, we don't have nothing positive to say about the police. It's gonna be like a vicious circle.' (Lambeth, black, 19)

'I've lived here for my entire life. And look at this. Now it's just, it's mad, it's mad. I've never met anybody who hasn't been stopped and searched by the police.' (Tottenham, black, 18)

'I think the younger generation's gonna be worse than us.' (Slough, Asian, 15)

Finally, young people also describe the effect these experiences have on their perception of the criminal justice system as a whole.

'Because of the police I just have no faith in the criminal justice system at all. Cause if you're doing such things at a lower level, which are so unfair and unlawful, then when it comes to the judge, you're just gonna think well he's not gonna be understanding, he can't relate to us, he's just gonna take the police's word over ours. And I come from a mindset where it's the police's word against ours, and they're always gonna pick the feds.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

'It's made me lose a lot of faith in the criminal justice system. Like, I don't think it's fair at all.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

6. Hard Data from across the country (YouGov Polling)

Almost 1.5 million young BAME people think their communities are unfairly targeted by stop and search

In-depth face-to-face interviews with individuals are a powerful way of illustrating – in plain, compelling language – their genuine strength of feeling about a perceived and continuing unfairness in their everyday lives. We recognise it's often too easy, nevertheless, for researchers, campaigners and others to assume that such stark personal insights must be universal.

Therefore, in order to test the rigour of our own engagement with dozens of young BAME men from across the country, we commissioned YouGov to carry out a representative poll of over 500 young BAME people in England and Wales aged between 16 and 30. This community is 1.98 million strong.

Repeatedly, on a range of issues, this robust polling of a demographically representative national sample – the results of which are detailed below – confirmed the views or anxieties expressed to us by the young BAME men we'd interviewed. The polling also included young BAME women who, although not often the targets of stop and search, are and will be a key and influential part of the community it currently affects so disproportionately.

Q: Do you think police stop and search powers are used fairly towards black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people and white people in Britain today?

A: I think BAME people tend to be unfairly targeted by stop and search **74%**
I think all groups are equally targeted by stop and search **22%**
I think White people tend to be unfairly targeted by stop and search **4%**

In 2017, three quarters of young BAME people (1.47 million) think that they and their communities are being targeted unfairly by stop and search.

Q: Do you think stop and search is used more or less than it was five years ago?

A: More **37%**
About the same **18%**
Less **16%**
Not sure **29%**

In spite of the huge fall in the *overall* number of stops and searches in recent years – from 1.2 million to some 380,000 – young BAME people are simply not aware of this. Almost three quarters of a million young BAME people think stop and search is being used more than it was five years ago.

Q: How does what you know about stop and search affect how much you trust the police?

A: I have more trust **17%**
No effect **47%**
I have less trust **36%**

Almost two in five young BAME people in England and Wales, more than 700,000 of them, have less trust in the police because of what they currently know about stop and search.

Q: Do you agree that police officers use fair and accurate information to decide who is stopped and searched?

A: Strongly agree	7%
Agree	19%
Neither	32%
Disagree	31%
Strongly disagree	11%

More than two in five young BAME people think police officers don't exercise their stop and search powers on the basis of fair and accurate information.

Just as indicated by so many of the young men we interviewed, however, there isn't universal opposition to the *principle* of stop and search among young BAME people nationally if – an important qualification – it's used fairly.

Q: Do you agree or disagree that if used fairly, stop and search is a good tactic to help reduce crime?

A: Strongly agree	26%
Agree	45%
Neither	21%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	2%

Current perception of police activity appears to be affecting the likelihood of young BAME people considering working for the police. This is something identified by many forces as a critical step forward in building wider community confidence in the twenty-first century.

Q: Does what you know about the current use of stop and search make you more or less likely to consider applying to work for the police?

A: More likely	8%
No difference	64%
Less likely	28%

More than half a million young people in England and Wales are less likely to consider working for the police given what they themselves know about the current use of stop and search.

Finally, at a time when empathy for national identity is often considered important, the polling does indicate a worrying disconnect between some young BAME people and their national identity as a consequence of their perceptions of the current use of stop and search.

Q: Does what you know about the current use of stop and search make you more or less proud to be a British citizen in 2017?

A: Less proud	24%
No effect	61%
More proud	6%
Not a British citizen	8%

Almost half a million young BAME people are *less* proud to be British citizens as a consequence of what they know about the current implementation of stop and search. For some observers at least, that might ring a worrying alarm bell.

Half a million young BAME people are less proud to be British citizens because of what they know about current use of stop and search

7. Recommendations from young BAME people

Many young people have constructive, positive ideas about how stop and search might be better deployed by police forces while reducing the anxiety and tension it often causes.

1. Police should always treat those they stop with respect and professionalism and communicate with them accordingly. Talking to those they stop as innocent 'humans' would dramatically improve relationships between the police and young people.

'I feel if you do stick at being like respectful and polite, you're gonna get that back.' (Slough, Asian, 22)

2. Police officers need actively to prevent the escalation of unnecessary hostility by listening to the young people they are stopping and taking their time before carrying out a search. Young people too often believe police are trying to 'goad' them into a 'retaliation', to 'provoke them or trip them up', in an effort to justify an arrest.

3. Police should mitigate young people's anxiety about stop and search by repeatedly explaining what it is, the reasons for a stop and why they have reasonable suspicion. The use of police 'jargon' should be avoided. Many young people agree with the need for stop and search, and that it is an 'appropriate' tool in certain circumstances. However, individuals who are searched often feel victimised because they don't understand what is happening, the incidents feel too quick and 'abrupt', and they don't believe there is sufficient reasonable suspicion.

'There's officers that are cool. There's been times like they're talking to us "it's part of procedure, I have to stop and search you" and you're talking to me like I'm a human. But if you talk to me like I'm a criminal, I will move like a criminal.' (Lambeth, black, 23)

4. Young people want police officers stopping them and their peers to be more representative of local communities. One police officer in every area should be responsible for liaising with young people on stop and search – through schools and youth centres – and become a designated point of contact when people become angry about its use.

'There should be like different police officers from different backgrounds and ethnicities and stuff.' (Slough, Asian, 15)

5. A consistent approach should be adopted to the use of police-worn body cameras when carrying out stop and searches. Forces should decide whether or not they are going to record all incidents, and announce this publicly. Irregular recording of incidents only serves to 'frustrate' young

people, who express annoyance that some officers turn cameras off during a search, leaving them unsure as to whether or not a recording is being made.

‘She told her member of staff to turn his camera off, then she turned off hers, and that’s when she started getting all aggressive.’ (Slough, Asian, 16)

6. Where appropriate and possible young people should be given the choice to conduct the search in a quieter location. Being stopped in your own community, in a place highly visible to potential onlookers, can be a ‘humiliating’ experience. Police can mitigate this by interacting in an easy and polite manner to reduce the stress of the experience, without being overly familiar to the point it ‘seems sarcastic’.
7. There should never be more police present during a stop and search than absolutely necessary. Having crowds of officers present can exacerbate an already ‘intimidating’ experience. Additional officers beyond those needed to carry out the search should move to a reasonable distance away from the search. This could minimise the perception among some young people that police are acting like a ‘gang’.

‘I see them as a gang. Because what they have just done is something what a gang would do.’ (Tottenham, black, 18)

8. Police should do more to ensure a young person is satisfied with the information they are provided with, and have been told of any relevant complaints procedure and other routes of redress. Explaining the repercussions of a stop to young people would ease their minds as some don’t know ‘whether or not it will go on their criminal record’. It’s not appropriate at the end of a search to simply say ‘on your way boy’. Such approaches cause lasting anger and anxiety towards police that can be harboured for years.

‘My hope is that relationships between communities like this and the police are re-established to a trusting one. There needs to be an integration of police, creating more initiatives within the community that will build relationships. Good police officers have to challenge the stereotyping which happens within institutions and make it trickle downwards, whether it’s through training or getting rid of some people. Challenging it. Being idealistic.’ (Manchester, black, 26)

About the study

This digest summarises the results of in-depth focus groups carried out with groups of young black, Asian and minority ethnic men aged 15–26 in Birmingham, Manchester, north London, south London and Slough over 12 months from summer 2016. The focus groups entailed semi-structured conversations about the young people's experiences of being stopped and searched, their perceptions of the police and their ideas for how things should be done differently. We are hugely grateful to abandofbrothers, Aik Saath, M13 Youth Project, The Pump, SE1 United and Ken Hinds for their help in moderating the focus groups.

Opinion polling was carried out by YouGov. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 503 black, Asian and minority ethnic men and women aged 16 to 30 living in England and Wales. Fieldwork was undertaken between 7 and 13 June 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted by age, gender and region to be representative of the population.

Useful reading

Do initiatives involving substantial increases in stop and search reduce crime? Assessing the impact of Operation BLUNT 2, R. McCandless, A. Feist, J. Allan & N. Morgan (Home Office, 2016)

PEEL: Police Legitimacy 2015 (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2016)

Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2016 (Home Office, 2016)

Stop and Search: The Anatomy of a Police Power, edited by R. Delsol and M. Shiner (Pangrave Macmillan, 2015)

Stop and think: A critical review of the use of stop and search powers in England and Wales (Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2010)

The Briefing: Stop and Search (Police Foundation, 2012)

The Brixton Disorders 10–12 April 1981, Lord Scarman (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981)

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Lord Macpherson (The Stationery Office, 1999)

The Criminal Justice Alliance

The Criminal Justice Alliance is a national coalition of over 120 organisations – including charities, research institutions, staff associations and think tanks – committed to crime reduction, better policing, fairer and swifter justice, reduced reliance on imprisonment and improved rehabilitation. The views expressed in this briefing are not necessarily those of individual CJA members.

www.criminaljusticealliance.org.uk

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No respect: Young BAME men, the police and stop and search

'I've never met anybody who hasn't been stopped and searched by the police'

'If I saw a crime happening, if someone died from it, if someone was in critical condition, I'd call an ambulance. But I wouldn't call the police'

'It's made me lose a lot of faith in the criminal justice system. Like, I don't think it's fair at all'

'If you're going to approach me in a calm way, I will speak calmly ... if I feel your energy, your negativity towards me, I'm obviously going to be negative towards you back'