

A Force to be Reckoned With

A Policy Report by the Policing Reform Working Group



KEY FACTS

The cost of policing is high and rising

- With an annual budget of over £17.5 billion, the Police Service makes up more than half of the entire public order and safety budget (which includes the fire services, law courts and prisons).ⁱ
- Policing has not always commanded such a large proportion of national expenditure - over the past decade alone, spending on the police has increased by 40 per cent in real terms (or 75 per cent in cash terms).ⁱⁱ
- Taken as a percentage of its GDP, the UK now spends more on law and order than any other OECD country.ⁱⁱⁱ

Victims and witnesses aren't confident in the criminal justice system...

- According to national polling, the public believe that “creating a society where people feel safe” is the most essential function of the criminal justice system (CJS).^{iv}
- “Thirty-six per cent of those who had been both a victim and a witness were confident that the CJS was effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice, compared with 47 per cent of those who had not experienced crime in the previous 12 months.”^v

... trust and confidence in the police are also low ...

- When asked by Ipsos MORI to rank their trust in various professions, police received only 59 per cent of respondent's backing (down from 64% in 2003).^{vi}
- Only 48 per cent of people agree with the statement: “The police will be there when you need them.”^{vii}

- Only 51 per cent of people agree with the statement: “The police are dealing with issues that matter to the local community.”^{viii}

.. and, despite drops in the official crime rate, fear of crime is up

- Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of people thought crime had increased either ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’ nationally in the previous two years. More than half of those thought it had risen ‘a lot’.^{ix}
- In response to the question: “What is the most important issue facing Britain today?” a staggering 47 per cent of people polled by Ipsos MORI last year answered: “Crime.”^x
- Crime is “a bigger cause for concern for Britons than the citizens of any equivalent western European nation, and even the United States.”^{xi}

But there are more police than ever, so what’s going wrong?

- The Service now employs 140,000 full-time officers. This represents an increase of more than 16 per cent in the number of fully sworn police officers since 2000.^{xii}
- However, for the level of recorded crime, this remains low – England and Wales has one officer for every 39 recorded crimes annually.^{xiii}
- Compared with Italy (one officer for every 9 recorded crimes), France (one officer for every 17 recorded crimes), Belgium (one officer for every 28 recorded crimes).

Firstly, people are confused by, and distrustful of, official crime statistics

CSJ polling result: When asked “Which of these would you most trust to provide accurate crime rates?” 64 per cent of respondents selected “an independent body”, compared with 2 per cent who selected “the Government” and 18 per cent who selected “the police”.

Crime is historically high – the average citizen (who, in Britain, is aged 39) has lived through a fourfold increase in overall crime during the course of their lifetime.^{xiv}

But more than that, the public want the police to deal with ASB and disorder

- Research has found: “Levels of concern about safety are profoundly shaped by the presence of incivilities and disorder in an area. Indeed, the research suggests that in some areas, levels of disorder are more influential than crime in shaping perceived risk.”^{xv}
- According to recent experiments, the simple presence of graffiti or litter in the area doubled the rate of theft.^{xvi}
- There are over 24 million reported incidents of antisocial behaviour annually.^{xvii}

Police need more time for patrol

CSJ polling result: 85 per cent of respondents think that there are not enough police on the streets.

CSJ polling result: When asked “Which of the following would make you feel safer?” 62 per cent of respondents chose “Seeing more police on the street” compared with 26 per cent who chose “Finding out that more criminals were being arrested”.

- Government estimate have police patrolling for 14 per cent of their time and “spending almost as much time in the police station (43.1 per cent of their time) as they are on the streets”^{xviii} This translates to the average full-time police officer patrolling for less than seven hours a week.
- At that rate, having a police presence outside of Oval tube station 24 hours a day would require the devoted patrol time of 24 police officers. In order for the police to add one full-time officer to street patrol, five new officers need to be employed.
- Police visibility is further reduced by the common practice of “double crewing”, whereby officers patrol in pairs – effectively halving the extent and visibility of police patrol.^{xix}
- Only 1 per cent of an officer’s time is spent on foot patrol.^{xx}
- Whereas, PCSOs spend 75 per cent of their time on patrol.^{xxi}

Police need to intervene more when on patrol ...

CSJ polling result: 72 per cent of respondents think it is never acceptable for an on-duty police officer not to intervene when they have observed a crime or a threat to public safety.

CSJ polling result: 76 per cent of respondents think that the police are too little against antisocial behaviour.

... and they need more discretion on how to intervene

CSJ polling result: 78 per cent of respondents felt that if the victim of a non-serious crime does not want the offender charged, then the police should have the discretion to deal with the situation without arresting.

Instead, officers told us of an ineffective and inefficient “arrest or ignore” culture

- In total, evidence-gathering and preparation for an average arrest requires 6.5 hours of police time. This is the case regardless of whether or not an investigation has taken place, as the decision to charge is taken after the case file is submitted. An arrest resulting in trial takes an average of 7.81 hours of police time.^{xxii}
- The amount of officer time required for an on-the-spot disposal is, on average, between 93 per cent and 96 per cent less than for an arrest.^{xxiii}
- If an officer can issue a penalty notice or give a verbal warning, 7 extra hours can be spent on visible patrol and performing informal interventions on the street.

Police Time Required for Disposals

	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Standard Caution	Conditional Caution	Guilty Plea (Court)	Trial (Court)	Restorative Justice
Police Time (hours) ¹	0.53	1.73	2.09	7.59	7.81	0.3
Cost (£) ²	13.49	43.45	52.35	189.96	195.23	7.50

¹ Ibid.

² Costings for police time provided to the Working Group by Norfolk Constabulary, based on the Office for Criminal Justice Reform’s “Waterfall” model.

And, ironically, conflicting CPS targets mean that tough cases get let go anyway:

- The police are measured on volume of convictions, whereas CPS are measured on conviction rate:

“Say you have 100 burglary cases. Prosecutor A tries 100 and convicts 60. Prosecutor B tries 10 and convicts 10. Under police rules, Prosecutor A has performed better. Under CPS rules, Prosecutor B has performed better.”

CSJ polling result: 69 per cent of respondents felt that a decision – taken by the CPS – not to charge an offender lowers their confidence in the police.

Inspections take even more police time and need to be streamlined

- One Force was able to evidence to the Working Group some 53 separate pieces of inspection activity over a period of 40 months.

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- ⁱ HM Treasury, *Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2008: National Statistics* (London: HM Treasury, 2008), http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/A/pesa08-09_pu548_210408.pdf, Table 5.2.
- ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*
- ⁱⁱⁱ Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, *Strategic Priorities for the UK: the Policy Review* (London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006), 22.
- ^{iv} Home Office, *Public confidence in the criminal justice system, Findings* (London: Home Office, 2004), <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/r221.pdf>.
- ^v Kershaw, C., Nicholas, S., and Walker, A., *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08* (London: Home Office, 2008), <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0708.pdf>, 121.
- ^{vi} *Ibid.*
- ^{vii} *Ibid.*
- ^{viii} *Ibid.*
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*
- ^x Ipsos MORI, *Political Trends: The most important issues facing Britain today* (London: Ipsos MORI, 2008), <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/content/the-most-important-issues-facing-britain-today.ashx>. Subsequent polling by Ipsos MORI has shown concern for "crime" at 35%, with this decline having being offset by concern for "the economy".
- ^{xi} Morris, N., "The Big Question: Does fear of crime reflect the reality of life on Britain's streets?", *The Independent*, 22 January, 2008. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/the-big-question-does-fear-of-crime-reflect-the-reality-of-life-on-britains-streets-771727.html>; Kershaw, C., Nicholas, S., and Walker, A., *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08* (London: Home Office, 2008), 129. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0708.pdf>.
- ^{xii} Garside, R., and Groombridge, N., *Criminal justice resources staffing and workloads: an initial assessment* (London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, 2008), 6, http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/opus978/Criminal_justice_resources_staffing_and_workloads.pdf.
- ^{xiii} Ministry of Justice, *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Studies 2006*, 2006, http://www.europeansourcebook.org/esb3_Full.pdf. Author's own calculations. This publication does not include comparable data regarding officer strength for several countries, most significantly Germany and Spain.
- ^{xiv} Home Office, *A Summary of Recorded Crime Data 1898 to 2001/2*, (London: Home Office, 2008) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/recordedcrime1.html>.
- ^{xv} Innes, M., *The Signal Crimes Perspective* (London: National Reassurance Policing Programme, 2004), <http://www.upsi.org.uk/resources/signalcrimesin60secs.pdf>.
- ^{xvi} Keizer, K., Lindenberg, S. and Steg, L., "The Spreading of Disorder", *Science* 322 (2008).
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xviii} PA Consulting Group, *Diary of a Police Officer*, (London: Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, 2001), v. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/prgpdfs/prs149.pdf>. Home Affairs Select Committee, *Policing in the 21st Century* (London: Home Affairs Select Committee, 2008), 3. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmhaff/364/36402.htm>.
- ^{xix} PA Consulting Group, *Diary of a Police Officer*, (London: Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, 2001), v. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/prgpdfs/prs149.pdf>.
- ^{xx} *Ibid.*, 27.
- ^{xxi} Home Affairs Select Committee, *Policing in the 21st Century* (London: Home Affairs Select Committee, 2008), 3. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmhaff/364/36402.htm>.
- ^{xxii} Home Office, "Efficiency Planning Toolkit – Ready Reckoner", (London: Home Office 2006). http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/human-resources/efficiency-planning/EPI_Readyreckoner.xls?view=Standard&pubID=528315.
- ^{xxiii} Home Office, "Efficiency Planning Toolkit – Ready Reckoner", (London: Home Office 2006). http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/human-resources/efficiency-planning/EPI_Readyreckoner.xls?view=Standard&pubID=528315.