A COMPARISON OF PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE IN ENGLAND AND WALES BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID

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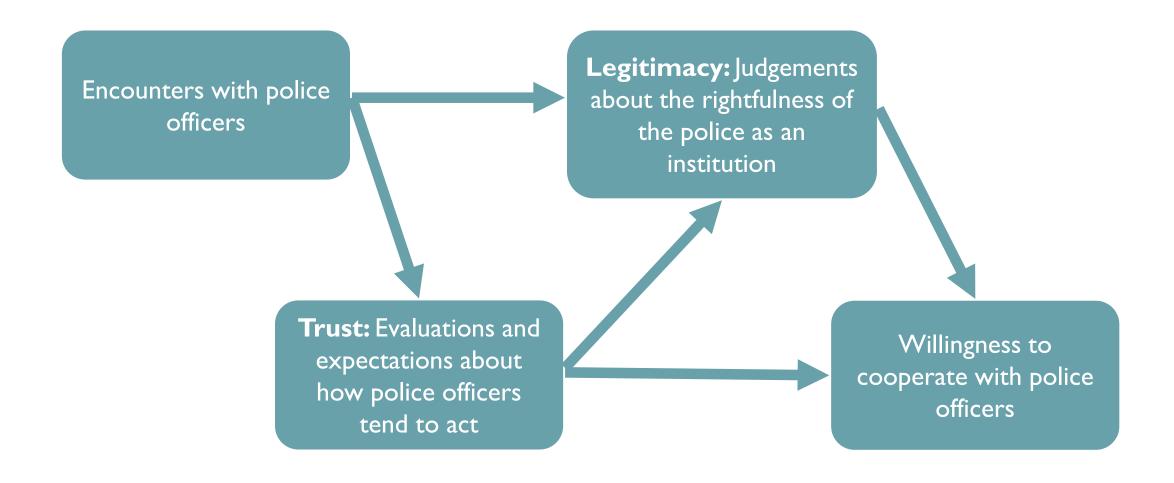
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Background

- Policing in the UK is based on the principle of policing by consent which requires public trust and confidence.

- Levels of trust and confidence in the police in England and Wales have declined in recent years (YouGov, 2019, 2020; Brown and Hobbs, 2023; Bradford, 2024)

- High levels of trust and confidence in the police have been shown to facilitate compliance and cooperation with the police (Hough et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2012; Huq et al., 2017;   ).

- Individuals who believe police actions are procedurally fair are more likely to perceive them as a legitimate and trustworthy institution (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Trust, Confidence, Legitimacy

- Trust: a belief in the reliability of the police to behave fairly and effectively during interactions.
  - *trust in specific officers and*
  - *trust in the police service as an institution.*

- Confidence in the police represents a generalised support of the police, or the degree to which trust is systematically shown to be warranted (Cao, 2015).

- Legitimacy is the belief that authorities, institutions and social arrangements are appropriate, proper and just (Tyler, 2006).
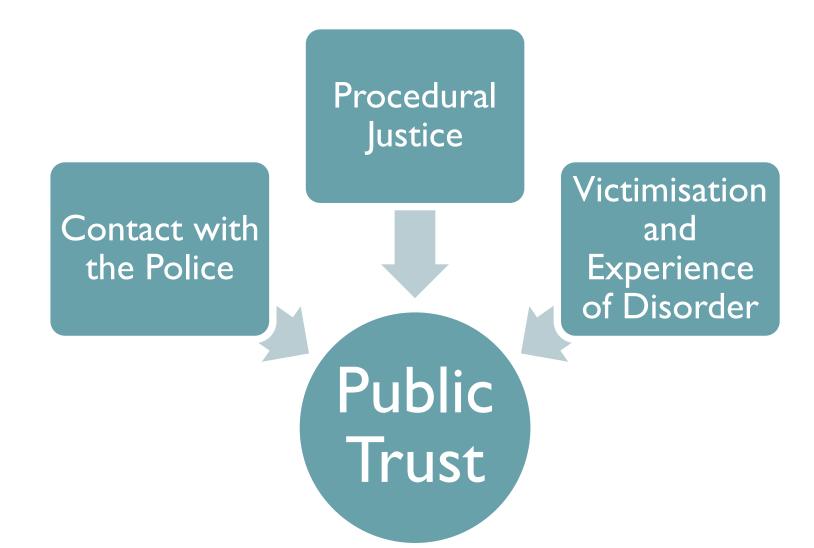
An overview of Procedural Justice Theory

Encounters with police officers

Legitimacy: Judgements about the rightfulness of the police as an institution

Trust: Evaluations and expectations about how police officers tend to act

Willingness to cooperate with police officers

Source: Jackson and Bradford (2019)

Previous Research

- Procedural justice evaluations are a primary source of trust in the police. People who perceive police actions as fair are more likely to trust the police (Nix et. al., 2015;Jackson et al., 2023; Bradford, 2024)

- Victims of crime have lower levels of trust to the police (Bradford et al., 2017)

- Citizens' perceptions of procedural justice during interactions with the police positively affect their views of police legitimacy, satisfaction with police services, trust in the police, and confidence in the police (Donner et al., 2015).

- Expressive concerns about low-level disorder, social cohesion, collective efficacy and change in society that are associated most strongly with trust and confidence (Jackson and Bradford, 2009; Jackson and Sunshine, 2007; Jackson et al., 2012; Merry et al., 2012).

- Age, ethnicity and contact with the police seem to be consistently associated with attitudes towards the police (Brown and Benedict, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Research Hypotheses

H1: Perception of just and fair treatment from the police is associated with high level of trust.

H2: Contact with the police is associated with high level of trust.

H3: Being victim of a crime decreases trust in the police.

H4: Experiencing disorder decreases trust to the police.

H5: Events during the COVID had a negative effect on public trust to the police.

Data and Variables

- Data from the CSEW (2019-2020 and 2022-2023) is used

- SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) is used for analyses (R Software)

- **Dependent Variable:**

  - *Trust to the police (Latent)*

- **Explanatory Variables:**

  - Perceived procedural justice (Latent)

  - Police contact (Index)

  - Victimisation

  - ASB experience

  - Sex

  - Age

  - Number of children

  - Income

  - Education

  - Ethnicity

Latent Variables

Variable	Label
Trust to the Police	How good a job are the police IN THIS AREA doing (ratpol2)
	In general, how much do you trust the police as an organisation (polatt6b)
	The police in this area can be trusted (poltrst)
Perceived Procedural Justice	Police in this area can be relied on to be there when you need (patt1)
	Police in this area treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are (patt3)
	Police in this area understand the issues that affect this community (patt5)
	Police in this area are dealing with the things that matter to this community (patt6)

Police Contact Index

Variable	Label
	Whether had contact with police officers or Police Community Support Officers in the last 12 months:
locpcon3a	At an open public meeting
locpcon3b	Via an online meeting
locpcon3c	At a surgery or drop-in centre
locpcon3d	At a gathering in street near here
locpcon3e	They knocked on my door
locpcon3f	At a group I go to
locpcon3g	At an event in the local area
locpcon3h	At a community centre
locpcon3i	In the course of my job
nonemrg	Called 101 to contact police in last 12 months

Descriptive Statistics

Variable		N	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Trust to the police	ratpol2	61124	3.46	0.90	4	1	5
	poltrst	33253	3.05	0.75	3	1	4
	polatt6b	63587	3.91	0.85	4	1	5
Perceived Procedural Justice	patt1	63529	0.54	0.50	1	0	1
	patt3	62458	0.63	0.48	1	0	1
	patt5	62518	0.63	0.48	1	0	1
	patt6	62229	0.50	0.50	1	0	1
Contact with the police INDEX	police_contact	64917	0.11	0.37	0	0	8
Victim of a crime	tvictim	64917	0.22	0.41	0	0	1
Sex (Male)	sex	64917	0.47	0.50	0	0	1
Age	age	64576	53.16	18.61	54	16	104
Number of children in household	nchil	64917	0.43	0.86	0	0	9
Experienced/witnessed ASB last year	asbexp	64804	0.36	0.48	0	0	1
Personal (and partners) income	persinc2	53348	7.45	3.28	7	1	12
Highest qualification	educat3	52378	2.84	1.24	3	1	5
Ethnicity (Ref: White)	Asian	64726	0.06	0.24	0	0	1
	Black	64726	0.03	0.17	0	0	1
	OtherEth	64726	0.03	0.17	0	0	1
Survey Year (2022-23)	Year2022	64917	0.48	0.50	0	0	1

DWLS (Diagonally Weighted Least Squares) Regression Results for Trust to the Police

Predictor	Estimate	Std. Err	z-value	p-value	Std. LV	Std. All
Perceived Procedural Justice	1.838	0.261	7.050	<0.001	0.823	0.823
Police Contact	0.047	0.010	4.857	<0.001	0.066	0.026
Victimisation	-0.160	0.009	-17.31	<0.001	-0.225	-0.097
ASB Experience	-0.235	0.008	-28.07	<0.001	-0.330	-0.161
Sex	-0.016	0.008	-1.967	0.049	-0.022	-0.011
Age	-0.001	0.000	-2.368	0.018	-0.001	-0.015
Number of children	0.024	0.005	5.026	<0.001	0.034	0.030
Income	0.010	0.001	7.807	<0.001	0.014	0.046
Education	0.008	0.003	2.295	0.022	0.011	0.013
Asian	0.032	0.018	1.777	0.076	0.045	0.010
Black	-0.208	0.024	-8.536	<0.001	-0.292	-0.047
Other Eth.	-0.019	0.025	-0.758	0.448	-0.026	-0.004
Year (2022-23)	-0.210	0.009	-23.86	<0.001	-0.295	-0.142

Model Fit Statistics

Estimator: DWLS (Diagonally Weighted Least Squares)
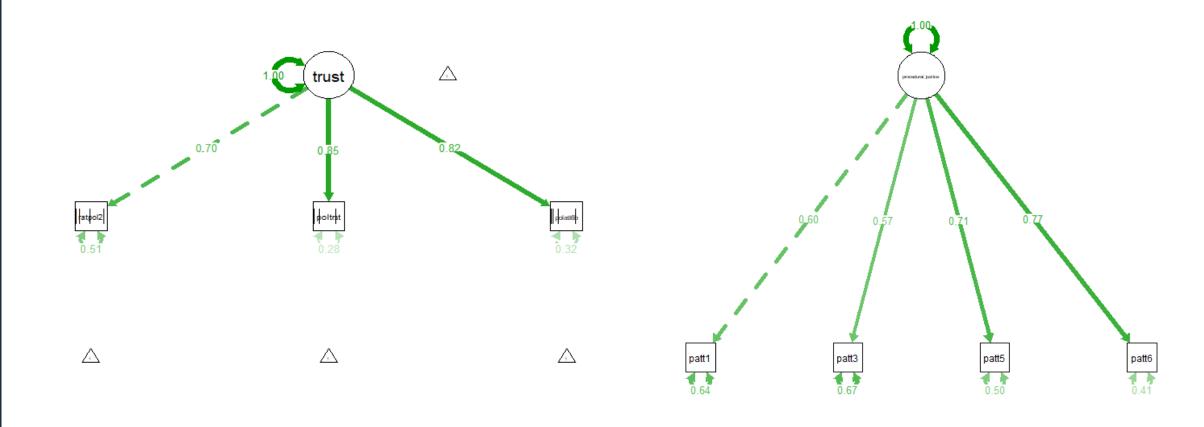**Pairwise deletion of missing values**
Optimization Method: NLMINB
N = 43,843

Chi-Square (scaled) : 1060,377 df: 85, P value: .000

FIT INDEX	STANDARD	SCALED	
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	.977	.96	Good fit
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	.994	.99	Excellent fit
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	.02	.016	Excellent fit
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	.044	.044	Good fit

SEM Model

Findings & Discussion

Perceived procedural justice is the strongest predictor of public trust. People with positive PJ perceptions have higher trust in the police.

People who had contact with the police (even indirectly) have higher level of trust. Visibility is important.

Victimisation or experience of disorder (ASB) lowers trust to the police.

Women have lower level of trust compared to men.

People with higher education and income levels have more trust.

Blacks have lower level of trust to the police compared to whites.

Trust to the police decreased in 2022-23.

Further Questions

- Effects of media coverage of the police on public trust.

- Effects of social media on public trust and confidence.

- Effects of recent events
  - *George Floyd incident and Black Lives Matter movement*
  - *Sarah Everard case*
  - *David Carrick*