

Public perceptions and experience of Section 1 stop and search in Wales

Project exploring public perceptions of stop and search in Wales and its links to confidence and trust in policing.

Key details

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Police region	Wales
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Wales • Wales Violence Prevention Unit • South Wales Police • Dyfed-Powys Police • Gwent Police • North Wales Police
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	April 2025
Date due for completion	March 2027

Research context

In England and Wales, the police can conduct a Section 1 stop and search – detaining an individual for the purpose of a search to prevent and detect crime where reasonable grounds are met.

In the year ending March 2023, 547,003 stop and searches were recorded by the police in England and Wales (Halkon 2024). The Section 1 stop and search is part of a violence prevention strategy, but it is a contested and debated UK police power (HMICFRS 2021), with some limited evidence of effectiveness (Quinton and others 2017).

Research has indicated that stop and search powers are disproportionately used against those from ethnic minority communities (Bowling and Phillips, 2007) and that involvement in stop and searches is linked to lower levels of trust in the police (Bradford and others 2022, Harris and Jones, 2020).

To date, a limited body of research has explored public attitudes towards, or the experience of stop and search in the United Kingdom (Pearson and Rowe 2023). A 2020 survey measuring public perceptions on stop and search in London and Leeds found a higher proportion of respondents aged 18–24 and those reporting Black, Asian, and minority ethnicity felt stop and search was unnecessary and should be discontinued in policing (Independent Office for Police Conduct 2020). There is a need to understand public perceptions and attitudes towards stop and search in Wales.

Aims

This study aims to explore public attitudes and experiences of stop and search in Wales. This collaboration with police across Wales will build the evidence base on public perceptions of, and attitudes towards, stop and search practices, as well as trust in the police. The research aims not only to improve relationships between police and communities, but also to create a sustainable framework for ongoing collaboration.

Research methodology

Secondary data analysis and primary data collection will be conducted to understand perceptions of stop and search in Wales. It will explore if experience of stop and search is linked to confidence and trust in policing. Such knowledge will inform interventions to improve support and trust in policing. The project will also explore the potential for data sharing/linkage between police stop and search and other data sources to further explore these issues.

References

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