



# Stop and Search Report

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April 2013

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Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 HMIC commissioned YouGov to investigate the police's 'stop and search' power and how far the public have noticed a change in policing since the Service has had its budget cut.
- 1.1.2 There are 43 police forces in England and Wales and HMIC wish to understand public perceptions within each of these police forces<sup>1</sup> as well as within England and Wales as a whole.

### 1.2 Method and Sampling

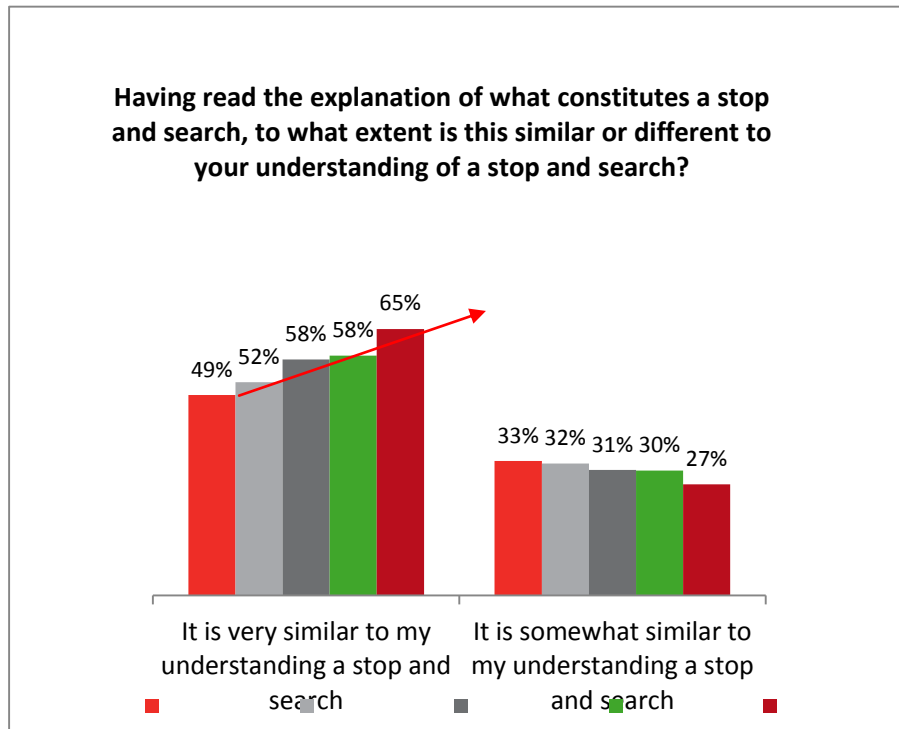
- 1.2.1 The research consisted of two elements: a survey among adults in England and Wales and a separate survey among those who have been stopped and searched.
- 1.2.2 The first survey consisted of 19, 078 respondents in England and Wales
- 1.2.3 The survey was conducted online via the YouGov panel of over 300,000 people – the survey was carried out between the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.
- 1.2.4 Survey quotas were set to reflect the population of the UK by age, gender, region, social grade and ethnicity, the sample was then selected from the panel. Weights were applied once the survey had completed to correct for any non-response bias.
- 1.2.5 The second survey addressed only the core stop and search questions among those who have been stopped and searched in the past using HMIC's own data source.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Lond on was excluded from the sample due to difficulties reaching robust sample sizes in this area.







**Figure 2. Qu: SAS3. Having read the explanation of what constitutes a stop and search, to what extent is this similar or different to your understanding of a stop and search?**

**Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales**

### 3 Public perceptions of stop and search

#### 3.1 Perceptions of safety

- 3.1.1 Among the whole sample, 34% believe that stop and searches are carried out occasionally in their local county or city and 21% believe that they are carried out a 'lot'. This perception increases in urban police forces such as Metropolitan and Greater Manchester where 37% and 27% respectively, believe that stop and searches are carried out 'a lot'.
- 3.1.2 A further 28% of the public, report that they don't know how often stop and searches are carried out. This increases to 35% in South Wales, 34% in Derbyshire and 35% in Lancashire.
- 3.1.3 In spite of low awareness of the number of stop and searches in their local area, around half (51%) agree that they feel safer in the knowledge that the police are using stop and search while 29% are generally apathetic; neither agreeing nor disagreeing. A similar proportion (48%) also agree that they have greater confidence in the police knowing that they are carrying out stop and searches, yet 31% again feel no positive impact on account of stop and search.

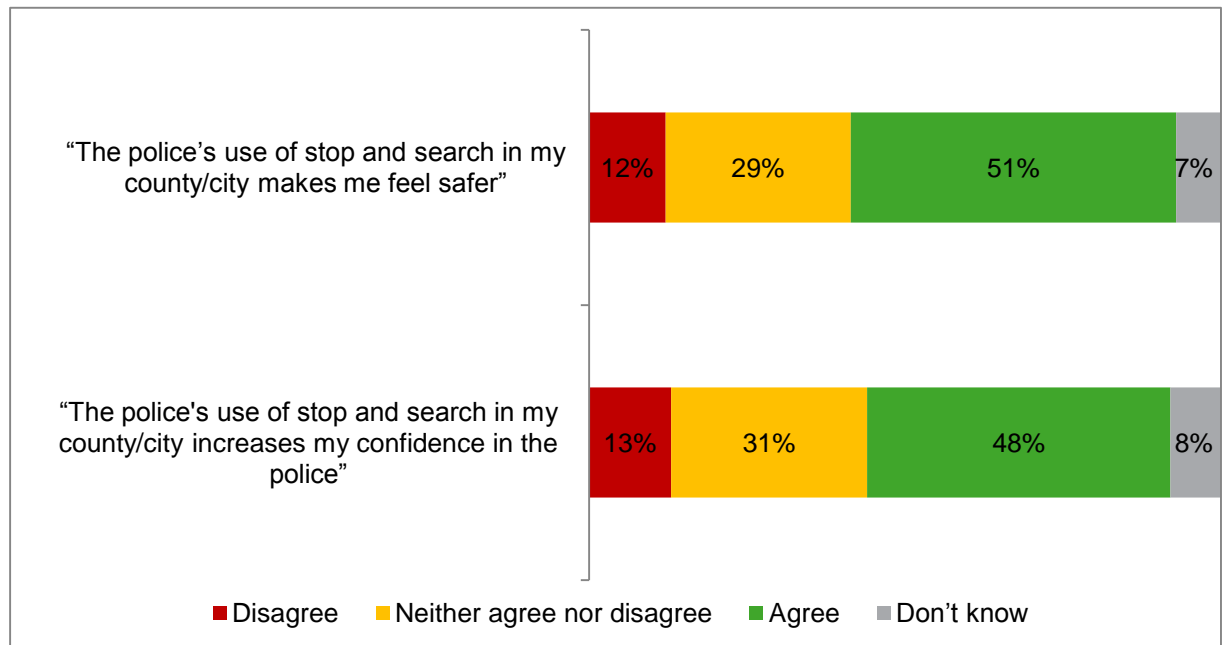


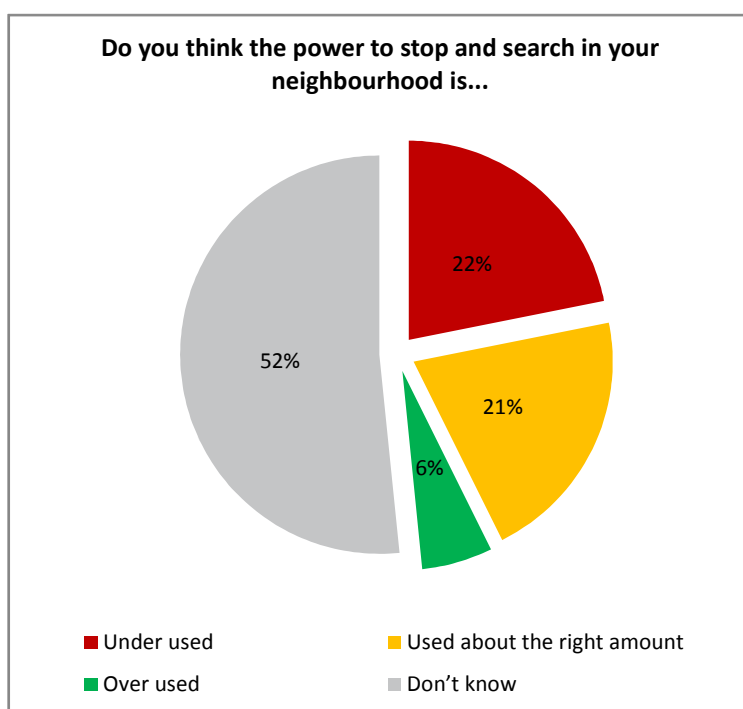
Figure 3. Qu: SAS18. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales

- 3.1.4 Across ethnic groups, those who are white British are more likely to agree that they feel safer as a result of stop and searches than other ethnic groups. 53% of white British agree that "the police's use of stop and search in my county/city makes me feel safer" compared to 48% of 'white other' and 40% of black and minority ethnic groups.

## 3.2 Level of effectiveness

- 3.2.1 When asked if the power to stop and search in the local area is over used or under used, around half (52%) report that they don't know. Just 1 in 5 (21%) believe stop and search is used 'about the right amount' and 22% that it is 'under used'.



**Figure 4. Qu: SAS20. Do you think the power to stop and search in your neighbourhood is...**

**Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales**

- 3.2.2 In London, 13% believe that stop and search powers are 'over used' compared to just 6% across the total sample. Whereas in Gwent, 28% believe that stop and search is 'under used' along with 26% in South Yorkshire, Staffordshire and West Midlands police forces.
- 3.2.3 The majority of the public is positive about the effect of stop and searches in helping local police forces to carry out their duties. 78% agree that stop and search helps catch criminals and 75% agree that it helps prevent crime. A slightly lower proportion (62%) agrees that stop and search is helpful to gather intelligence.
- 3.2.4 Other areas where stop and search is considered to be helpful is the prevention of drug dealing "taking drugs and weapons off the streets" and theft "when looking for a suspect say after a robbery".

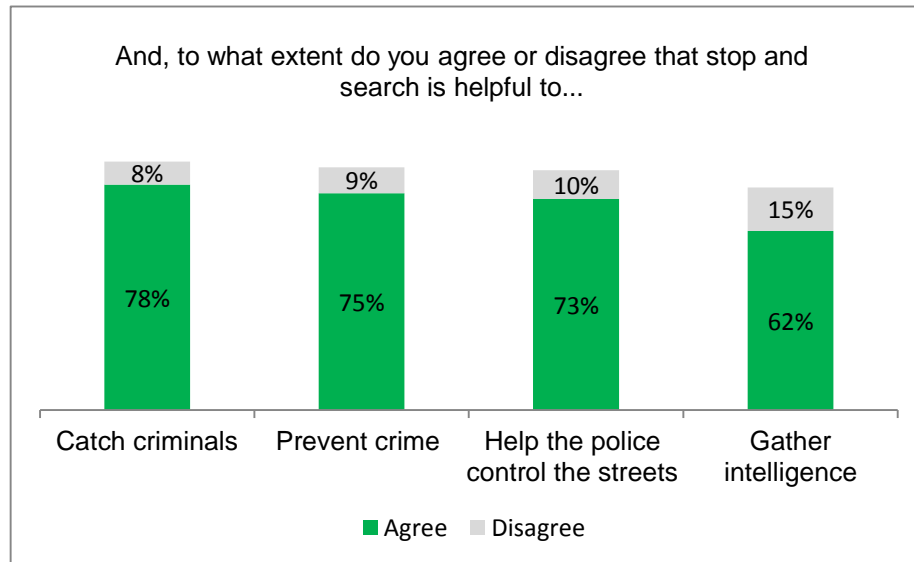


Figure 5. Qu: SAS19. And, to what extent do you agree or disagree that stop and search is helpful to...

Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales

- 3.2.5 Older age groups are more likely to believe that stop and search has a positive effect; 85% of over 55s agree that stop and search is 'helpful to catch criminals' compared to 70% of 18 to 24s. Fewer minority groups also believe that stop and search is effective; only 62% of black, minority and ethnic groups agree that stop and search is helpful to prevent crime compared to 77% of white British.
- 3.2.6 Stop and search is considered an acceptable procedure as long as there is justification; 58% say that they would feel fine if they or a friend were stopped and searched "provided that it was justified and the reason was fully explained". Londoners appear to be more opposed to stop and search as just 46% claim that they would be fine with this even if it were justified.
- 3.2.7 Just a quarter (25%) claim that they would feel "embarrassed it was happening in public" and 20% would feel "embarrassed because of what others might think". For black, minority and ethnic groups, 30% would be embarrassed it was happening in public.



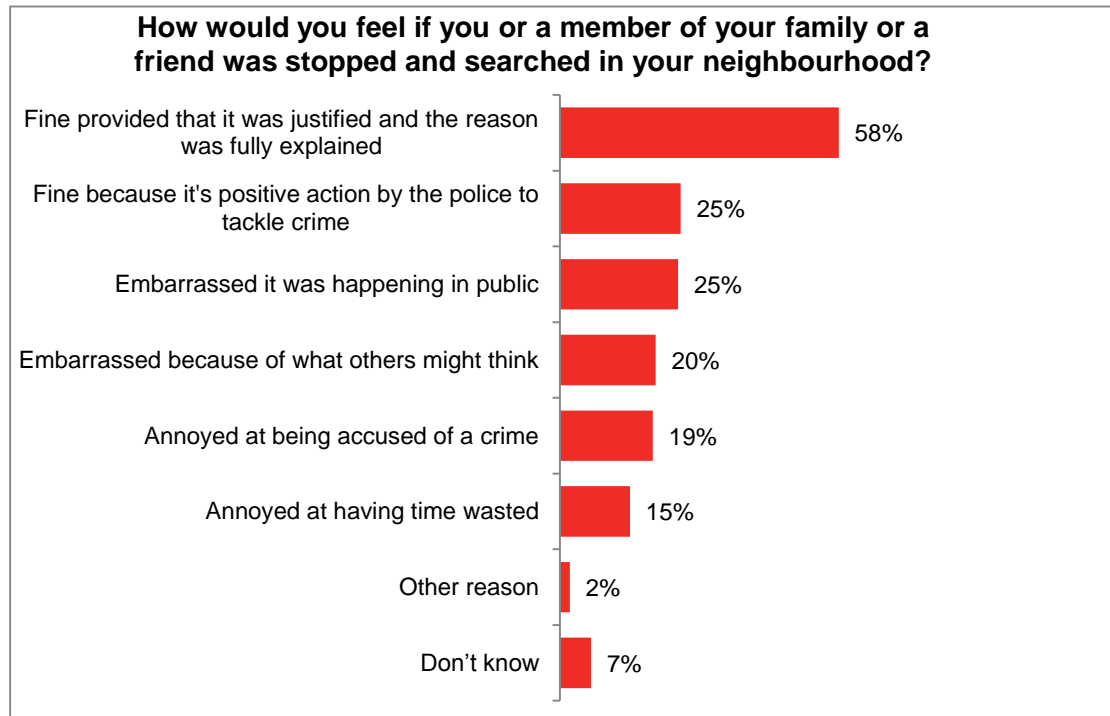
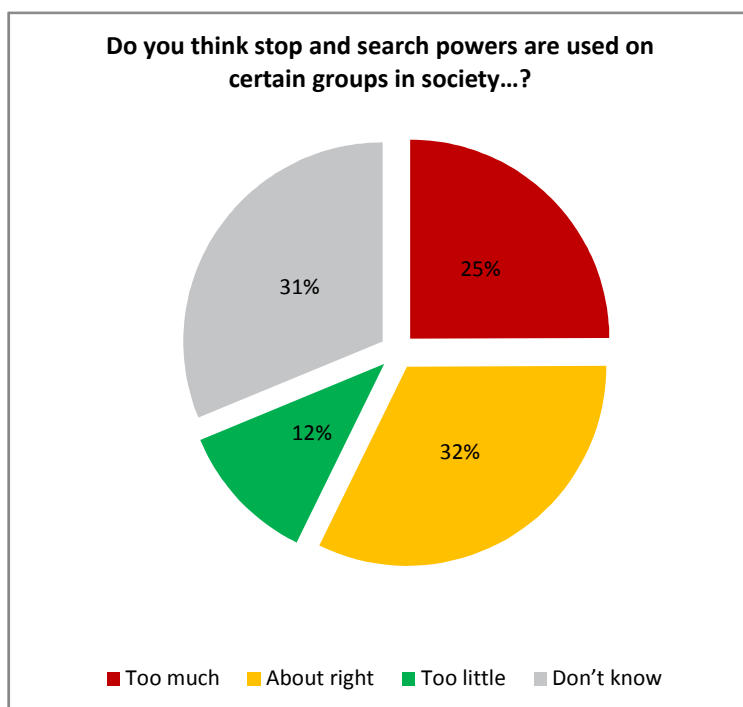


Figure 6. Qu: SAS21. How would you feel if you or a member of your family or a friend was stopped and searched in your neighbourhood? Please select all that apply. I would feel....

Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales

### 3.3 Impact on minority groups

- 3.3.1 A quarter of people living in England and Wales believe that stop and search is used too much on some groups in society while around a third (32%) believe that stop and search is used on certain groups in society 'about right'.



**Figure 7. Qu: SAS22. Do you think stop and search powers are used on certain groups in society...?**

**Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales**

- 3.3.2 Among non-white British groups, there is a greater perception that stop and search is being used too much on some groups. Around a third (31%) of non-white British groups think that stop and search powers are used too much on certain groups in society, which increases to around 2 in 5 (42%) among black, minority and ethnic groups.
- 3.3.3 70% of the sample also agrees that “certain groups of people in society are likely to be stopped and searched more often than others in the UK”. When pressed on which groups are more likely to be stopped and searched, the largest number of mentions was ‘youths’ and ethnic minorities such as ‘Asians’ and ‘Blacks’.

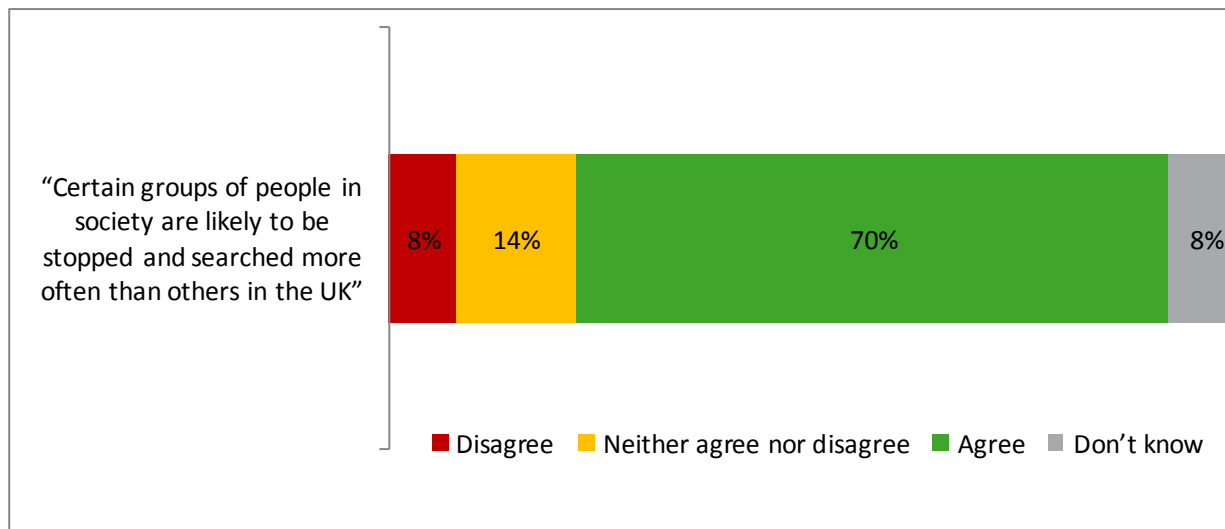


Figure 8. Qu: SAS22. SAS23. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. "Certain groups of people in society are likely to be stopped and searched more often than others in the UK"

Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales

- 3.3.4 58% of those who agree believe that this is occurring because these groups are more likely to be committing crimes while 31% believe that the police are discriminating against these groups. This perception that stop and search occurs among these groups on account of discrimination increases to 42% among non-British white groups and 55% among black, minority and ethnic groups.
- 3.3.5 Other possible reasons mentioned are stereotyping; "I think that there is an element of discrimination here but I think that this is driven by stereotyping" and bias "there is unconscious bias in police stopping Black and Asian citizens".



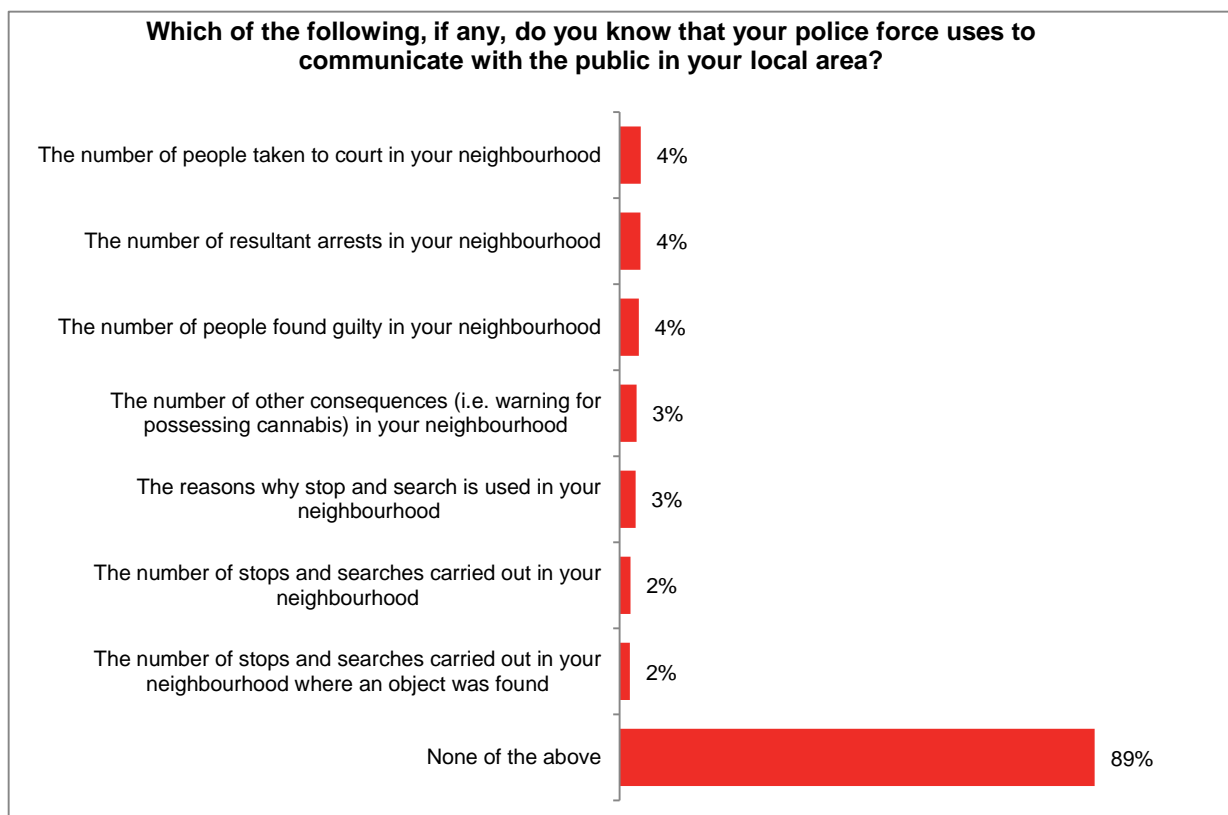


Figure 10. Qus: SAS27. Are you aware of information from your local police force about...Please select all that apply.

Base: 19,078 adults in England and Wales

## 4 Experiences of stop and search

### 4.1 Actions taken

- 4.1.1 Respondents were also asked if they had been stopped and searched within the last two years. Among our sample, 2% (262 respondents) reported that they had been stopped and searched.
- 4.1.2 Among those that have been stopped and searched in the last two years, around two in three (63%) have been stopped more than once. 18% of those stopped and searched were arrested as a result.
- 4.1.3 Nearly two thirds (61%) of those who have been stopped and searched in the last two years were told of the reason, however, a substantive 34% were not given a reason. The proportion not given a reason increases significantly among ethnic groups as 42% of black, minority and ethnic groups were not told of the reason for being stopped and searched.
- 4.1.4 Half of those in our sample who were stopped and searched were also shown a warrant card by an officer not uniform or the officer identified themselves. More than half (54%) were aware a form was being filled out at the time, 44% were told of their right to the copy of the form and 38% were given a copy of the form at the time.

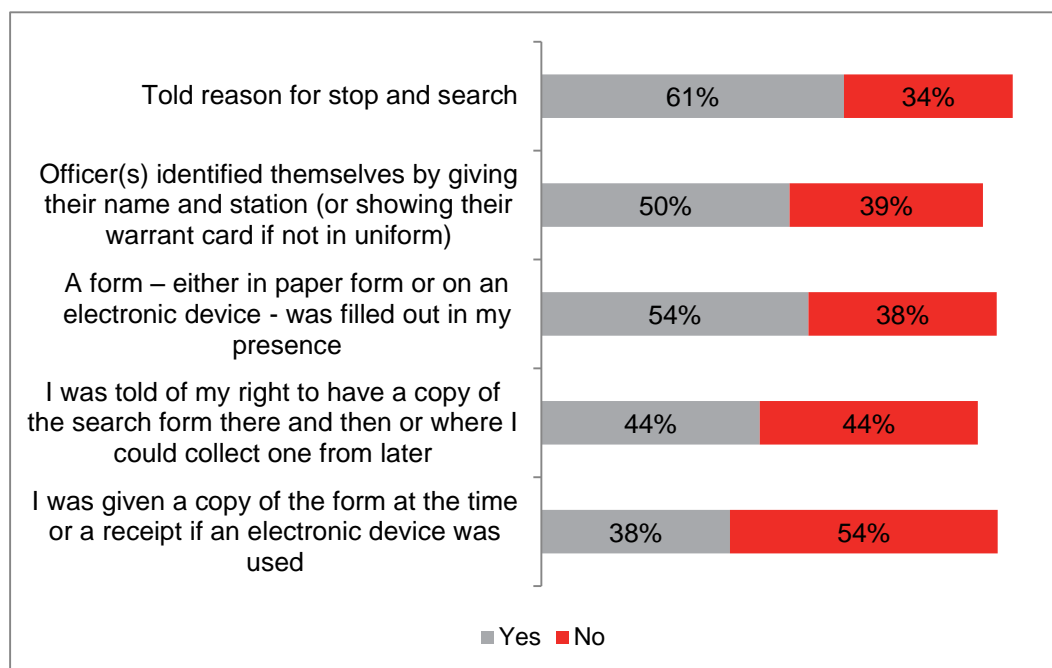


Figure 11. Qus. SAS6: Thinking about the last time you were stopped and searched, were you told of the reason? SAS7. And, did the officer(s) identify themselves by giving their name and station (or showing their warrant card if not in uniform)? SAS8. Thinking about the last time you were stopped and searched which of the following occurred:

Base: 262 stopped and searched in the last two years



## 4.2 Respect and privacy

- 4.2.1 Proper treatment by the police during a stop and search is somewhat split with 43% reporting that they were not treated with respect and 36% reporting that they were treated with respect. A further 53% also claimed that they were not given any privacy when they were stopped and searched while just 13% reported that 'there was a lot of privacy'.
- 4.2.2 Women are more likely to report that they received privacy (55%) and that they were treated with respect (44%) compared to men of which, just 39% claimed to have had privacy and 34% reported that they were treated with respect.
- 4.2.3 Although two thirds (65%) of those who have been stopped and searched claimed that they were not given privacy or treated with respect, just 16% went on to make a formal complaint. Many assumed that it happened all the time and it wasn't enough of an issue to raise a complaint.



Figure 12. Qu: SAS12. You said you did not make a formal complaint, why not?

Base: 220 did not make a formal complaint

- 4.2.4 Attitudes towards stop and search experiences tend to be polarised; 41% agree that 'the last time I was stopped and searched, the police acted reasonably' while 41% disagree. And, reasons for being stopped and searched appear to be unclear for some as 41% disagree that they "understood why [they were] stopped and searched by the police" while 43% agree.
- 4.2.5 When asked how experiences of being stopped and searched have changed their opinion of the police force, around a third (36%) claimed that their opinion had not changed and 34% reported that their opinion of the police had diminished while 24% reported that their opinion had improved.

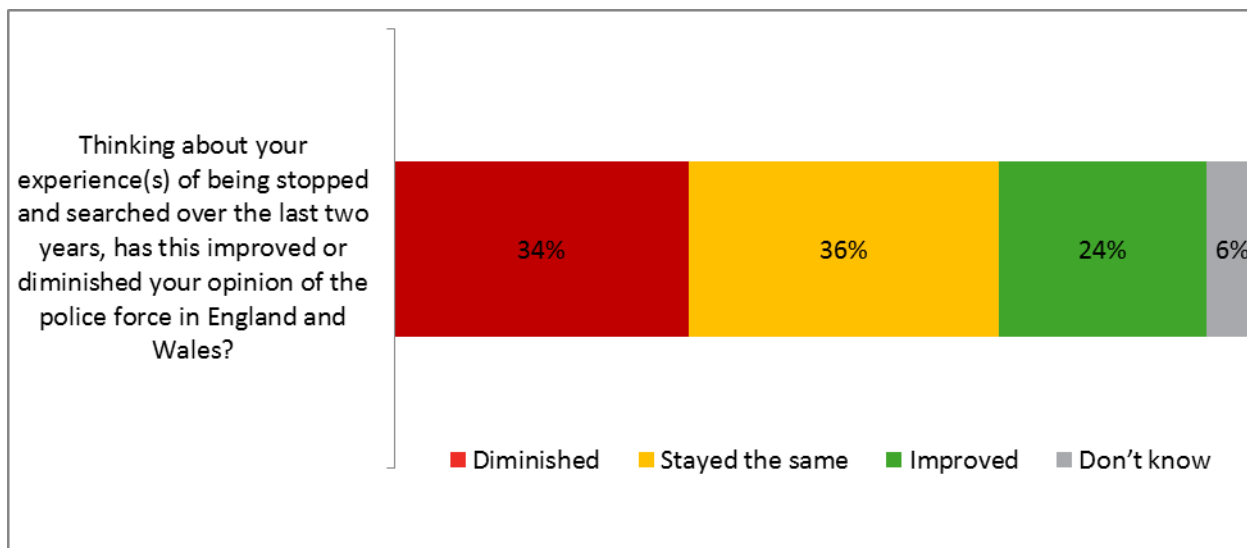


Figure 13. Qu: SAS16. Thinking about your experience(s) of being stopped and searched over the last two years, has this improved or diminished your opinion of the police force in England and Wales?

Base: 262 stopped and searched in the last two years

- 4.2.6 Men are also more likely to claim that their opinion of the police had diminished compared to women (37% vs. 24% of women), which may be linked to the greater amount of respect and privacy women seem to be offered.

## 5 Conclusion and implications

- 5.1.1 The majority of people in England and Wales understand the purpose of stop and search in their local areas and are positive about the effect it has on helping to reduce crime in their areas. As such, people tend to be accepting towards the need for stop and search as long as there is a just cause. However, minority groups tend to be more cautious of the effectiveness of stop and search powers.
- 5.1.2 Among the general public, perceptions of the police force in the context of stop and search is also positive with around half feeling safer in their local area and confident in their police force knowing that their local police are using stop and search. Furthermore, more than half would consider stop and search to be acceptable as long as there is proper justification.
- 5.1.3 However, there is a substantive group that have no strong feelings about the effectiveness of stop and searches carried out in their local area. Minority groups in particular are less likely to believe that stop and search is effective in helping their local police force to carry out their duties.
- 5.1.4 Communication seems to be a large barrier for the police force as a substantive proportion of the public are unaware as to how often stop and searches are carried out in their area and have very little information about their local police force.
- 5.1.5 Among those who have been stopped and searched, treatment by and perceptions of the police are polarised as some claim it has not changed their opinion of the police force while others say that their opinion has diminished. Women tend to have a better experience than men and are more likely to be treated with respect and offered privacy.