EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

POLICING IN HACKNEY

CHALLENGES FROM YOUTH IN 2020

Research conducted by
ACCOUNT

#FairerHackney
hackney cvs   ACCOUNT

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Account is a social action project led by young people and based in Hackney.

The group started in 2012 as the Young people's Stop and Search Monitoring Group at Hackney Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), tasked with scrutinising police activity in the borough.

Since 2019 the group has expanded its role to also include research, campaigns and outreach work in the community.

On top of its media and research work the group meets regularly with the local Basic Command Unit (BCU) to hold officers to account on issues including use of force, Stop and Search, racial disproportionality and taser usage.

The group also advocates for young people at Hackney Council and other local government bodies.

Contents

Methodology: Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodology that enables communities to take real ownership of knowledge. All too often research is designed and carried out by privileged people in powerful institutions. In our community, as young Black people, we are often the focus of research studies. Rarely do we get the chance to lead and create research ourselves. PAR is a way to reverse that injustice. It is a way to generate knowledge, use it to our advantage, and push for the change we want to see.

TRAINING

Research ethics • Interviewing technique • Statistical analysis • Historical archival research • Racial Identity Training

SAMPLE

9 interviewees • All raised in Hackney
All young Black men (aged 15 – 24)

RESEARCH DESIGN

Deciding what we wanted to change • Choosing a focus • Creating interview questions

INTERVIEWS

Recruiting Young People • Carrying out extended interviews • Transcribing

DATA ANALYSIS

Coding interview data • Statistical analysis • Choosing themes • Creating Report

1.TRAUMA

"It's when they say like 'the description matches you', I'm like how?! I would step outside and getting stopped by them like 'yeh we got the description matches exactly what you're wearing, black jacket, black trousers' what, everyone's got black jacket black trainers, how can you just see me and be like 'yeah, I done that crime'?"

TRAUMA

KEY STATISTICS

In Hackney in the last year…
(July 2019 to August 2020)

10,827
Stop and Searches carried out

5,851
Stop and Searches carried out on Black people

768
searches per 1000 population
for young black men (aged 15 -19)

136
searches per 1000 population
for young white men (aged 15 -19)

This means if you are a young black man, you are **6 times more likely** to be stopped and searched than your white peers

If you are black you are **4** times more likely to have force used against you
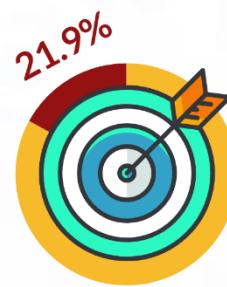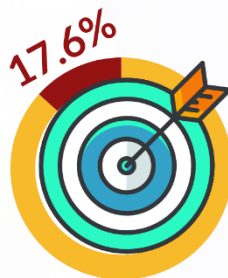
103
uses of force per 1000 population
for black people

25
uses of force per 1000 population
for white people

17.6%
Stop and Searches of **Young Black Men** that led to a 'positive outcome' (aged 15-24)

21.9%
Stop and Searches of **Young White Men** that led to a 'positive outcome' (aged 15-24)

[1] Metropolitan Police, 'Metropolitan Police Stop and Search Dashboard - "Hackney" "S&S R12 Summary"', *Met.Police.Uk*, 2020 <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/stop-and-search-dashboard/> [accessed 27 April 2020].

For many young people we spoke to, the use of handcuffs by police officers caused psychological distress.

Evidence shows that handcuff usage has increased dramatically in Hackney and London in the last 3 years (by 158% in Hackney).[2] Whilst police leaders claim that handcuffs are a necessary tool, the research team are concerned that the impact of handcuff usage is not being properly understood. As well as being physically painful their usage can create negative emotions, including embarrassment and humiliation. For some young people we spoke to handcuffs were described as 'degrading'. This may be having a negative impact on relations with the police and impacting on young people's sense of self-worth.

Many young people believe they are singled out for excessive police attention due to their skin colour.

Out of the young people we spoke to, nearly all chose to bring up the issue of their racial identity and its relation to policing. Young Black men in particular often believed they were the targets of racial profiling. Some claimed this was due to being stereotyped as gang members. Others spoke about being treated like a threat, facing excessive treatment and disproportionate use of force. Much of the statistical data on police use of force in relation to ethnicity supports the claims made by young people. Young Black Men in Hackney are 6 times more likely than their white peers to be Stopped and Searched. Black people are also 4 times more likely to have force used against them.

Police in Hackney also Stop and Search young black men with a much lower 'hit rate' than white people. From August 2019 to July 2020 22% of searches in Hackney led to a positive outcome. For young black men (aged 15-19) this figure was 14%.[3] The research team are concerned that this may be having a traumatic impact on young black men's sense of identity in relation to their race.

Excessive use of force by police can have a serious long-term impact on the mental health of young people.

Most encounters with police do not involve excessive use of force. Despite this our research suggests that when excessive force is used it can have a damaging long-term impact on the emotional well-being of those it targets.
Academic research talks about the 'asymmetrical' impact of negative encounters with police.[4] This means that these negative experiences have a much bigger impact than positive experiences. Our research suggests that this could partly be due to the trauma caused by excessive use of force.

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2 Metropolitan Police.
3 This is compared to 18% for young white men of the same age category.
4 Ben Bradford, *Stop and Searchand Police Legitimacy* (Routledge, 2017), p. 177.

2. TRUST

NO JUSTICE NO PEACE

54
15-05

54

RUGBY ROAD

"I feel like another issue would be, again, police and how they've treated communities in the past, which has just destroyed communities where they've just really took the piss in terms of the 'Sus' laws back then. So, you see how there's that boundary where the elders will say 'don't trust the police'. And the youngers will grow up thinking, yeah, well, it is their reality, don't trust the police, and that also destroys community, in a sense, because who do you trust? Who do you call when there's a problem? I mean, you're not going to call the police, you're going to call your boy."

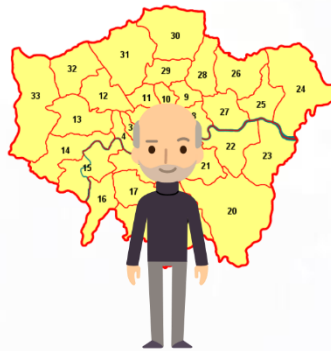# TRUST

KEY STATISTICS

"Police can be relied upon to be there when needed"
(Survey question from Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) Public Attitudes Survey)

56%
agree

for Hackney
residents
(2019-20)

69%
agree

average for
Metropolitan Police
(London)
(2019-20)

63%
agree

for respondents
living in council
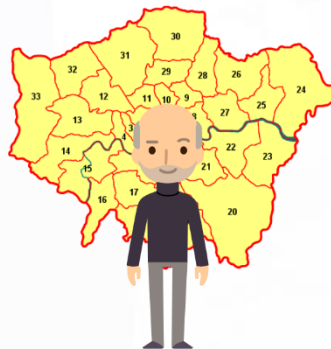housing
(Hackney, 2018-19)

72%
agree

for respondents
living in other
accomadation
(private renting,
mortage etc.)
(Hackney, 2018-19)

"The police in this area treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are"
(Survey question from Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) Public Attitudes Survey)

53%
agree

for Hackney
residents
(2019-20)

76%
agree

average for
Metropolitan Police
(London)
(2019-20)

For a variety of reasons, many young people we spoke to had problems with trusting the police.

For many of the young people we spoke to, the police were not seen as a group who could be trusted. This was for a variety of reasons.

Some young people spoke about a belief that engaging with the police could lead to being wrongly criminalised. Some young people referred to past examples where they had been treated automatically as perpetrators, as opposed to victims. Other young people spoke about their perception of the police being 'inefficient' or not able to intervene effectively. Others spoke about beliefs handed down from elders in their community that warned against trusting the police.

The young people we spoke to with low trust towards police, could point to examples where they had witnessed police abuses of power.

Out of those young people we spoke to who had low trust in the police, all were able to pinpoint an experience, often in their childhood, where they first began to distrust the police.

For some young people this experience was a direct encounter, e.g. a Stop and Search, for others it was witnessing an encounter in a public place. For some young people we spoke to it was witnessing police attempting to, as they saw it, 'provoke' a confrontation with young people.

Due to of a lack of trust, many young people said that they would not call on police to help them.

A key part of our research focused on the outcomes of low trust. One area we were interested in was young people's willingness to call on police for help. We found that among young people with low trust, the police were not seen as an appropriate way to get help.

This was often the case even during a serious incident involving conflict or violence. For some young people this seemed to put them in further danger, when they opted instead to 'take matters into their own hands'.

3. ACCOUNTABIILITY

"They're [Police] taking the piss, they don't understand, nobody wants to complain, do you know how much of a stressful thing it is to fill out a form about a traumatic experience. People that have been raped barely want to fill out forms, why would I? Someone that's dealt with physical pain from a multitude of people with zero support, why would I go through that again, to write it down, for police to question me about it, it's a piss-take, I never want to deal with it again."
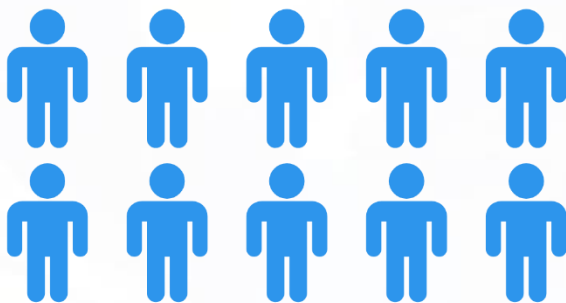
ACCOUNTABILITY

KEY STATISTICS

39 Custody related deaths 2017-19

30% of deaths in custody are Black people

Black people are
2 times more likely to die in custody than white people

There have been **10** deaths in custody since 1990 that a jury have ruled as
'Unlawful Killing'

Of these deaths there has been
0 successful prosecutions for murder or manslaughter

0

"Deaths of people from BAME [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic] communities, in particular young Black men, resonate with the Black community's experience of systemic racism, and reflect wider concerns about discriminatory over-policing, stop and search, and criminalisation."

Dame Elish Angiolini
Angiolini Report: Independent Report on Deaths and serious incidents in police custody

Source: BBC News 'How many black people die in police custody in England and Wales?' https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/52890363

The death of Rashan Charles in Hackney brought to light several issues around police accountability.

In Summer 2017 Rashan Charles died after swallowing a package whilst being restrained by an officer of the Territorial Support Group (TSG). This death continues to have a huge impact on relations with police in Hackney.

For many the death represented a lack of accountability and led to a perception that police 'got away with it'. The video footage that circulated on social media was seen by many young people across Hackney. The refusal of the Met Police to suspend the TSG officer pending investigation, as recommended by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), represents a key area where the accountability system could be seen to fail.

For many young people, the notion of police impunity added insult to injury, with the grief of loss made worse by a sense of injustice.

High profile incidents, like the Rashan Charles case, have the potential to damage trust in the police complaints system.

The police complaints system is the key place where young people can hold police to account. Our research suggested that many young people do not have confidence to engage in this system.

Our findings support the idea that high profile incidents such as a death in custody, especially when no 'justice' is seen to follow, can prevent young people from engaging with the complaints process. The widespread coverage these cases have on social media, among peers, across families and communities means they may 'set the tone' for less serious incidents.

Many young people didn't feel the police complaints process could be trusted.

For a variety of other reasons, many young people we spoke to didn't trust or want to engage with the complaints system.

One young person described the process as 'being asked to return to the lion's den to complain against the lions'. This highlighted a key issue about young people believing it was pointless complaining about police *to* police. For some young people engaging in the complaints process also involved revisiting trauma. This meant that without proper mental health support they did not feel it was worth their time, or good for their mental health, to engage in the system.

Recommendations[5]

For: London Borough of Hackney and Local Partners

1. **Funded, representative, effective and independent community scrutiny panels are needed to evaluate police complaints**
2. **Additional independent support needed for young people making complaints against police**
3. **More funding to support local safe spaces in which communities can heal from collective trauma and rebuild trust**

For: Hackney and Tower Hamlets Basic Command Unit (BCU)

4. **Fundamental changes are needed to develop effective transparency and accountability around racial disproportionality in Stop and Search encounters and institutional racism**
5. **Significant improvements needed in use of body worn video (BWV)**
6. **BCU needs to sign up to the Home Office Best Use of Stop and Search (BUSS) scheme**
7. **Handcuff usage and its impact on community relations needs greater scrutiny and accountability**
8. **Fundamental new approach needed for local officer retention**
9. **Scrutiny and Independent evaluation is needed of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID)**

For: Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

10. **The Territorial Support Group (TSG) need to be subject to and independent evaluation of their role, tactics, and effectiveness. This should include a review of recruitment, training, and their impact on community relations**
11. **MPS need to deliver a meaningful public apology for historical trauma caused to communities and families from death in custody incidents. Where appropriate, cases should be reopened**
12. **MPS need to comply with recommendations given by the Independent Office for Police Complaints (IOPC) during misconduct investigations**

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[5] For details of recommendations see full report.

Bibliography

Bradford, Ben, *Stop and Search and Police Legitimacy* (Routledge, 2017)

Metropolitan Police, 'Metropolitan Police Stop and Search Dashboard - "Hackney" "S&S R12 Summary"', *Met.Police.Uk*, 2020 <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/stop-and-search-dashboard/> [accessed 27 April 2020]

Sheridan, Ed, 'Hackney Police's Stance on Race Disparity in Stop and Search "Astounds" Equalities Boss', *Hackney Citizen*, 2020 <https://www.hackneycitizen.co.uk/2020/06/24/hackney-police-stance-race-disparity-stop-search-astounds-equalities-boss/> [accessed 21 August 2020]

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