Public Awareness of Police Accountability

Prepared for the Committee on Standards in Public Life by Chris Prosser and the Committee's Research Advisory Board, using data collected by Ipsos MORI through the Capibus OmniBus survey.

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Summary

This summary provides an overview of the key insights from a survey on public awareness and attitudes towards police accountability conducted between 21st November and 3rd December 2014 for the Committee on Standards in Public Life. This report incorporates the headline findings provided by Ipsos MORI to the committee and extends the analysis to demographic differences in responses and the relationship between knowledge of the new police accountability framework and attitudes towards police accountability.

Headline findings

1) Perceptions of standards of public life

- Most respondents trust judges (71%) and senior police officers (59%) to tell the truth. More respondents said they did not trust local councillors to tell the truth (38%) than said they did trust them to tell the truth (32%).
- More respondents thought the standards of conduct of public office holders were low (34%) than thought they were high (24%).

2) Accountability and responsiveness in local policing

- Most respondents agreed that police were held to account for their actions (55%) and that police were dealing with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter (54%).
- Almost equal numbers of respondents thought it was clear who to complain to about problems with local policing (38%) as thought it was unclear (39%).
- Only a quarter of respondents thought local people had a say in how police spend their time and budget, whilst 42% did not.

3) Knowledge of police accountability arrangements

- 68% of respondents said they had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).
- Most respondents (53%) did not know that PCCs were elected and only 44% recalled the 2012 PCC elections.
- Only 26% of respondents living in London said they were familiar with the arrangements for police accountability in London.
- Only 10% of respondents said they would be able to name their PCC.

4) Engagement with and interest in Police and Crime Commissioners

- In line with the actual turnout at the election, very few respondents reported having voted in the 2012 election (20%).
- Very few respondents (8%) reported having had any contact with their PCC and only 15% said they were aware of public meetings on policing issues in their local area.
- 84% of respondents could name at least one source of information they would use to find out information about policing issues in their local area.
- Respondents were generally not very interested in policing matters. 60% said they were not interested in finding out about policing issues in their local area. Similarly more respondents (41%) said they were not interested in the work of PCCs than said they were interested (29%).

5) Local Police and Crime Panels

- Only 15% of respondents said they had heard of local Police and Crime Panels and most respondents did not know how they were appointed.
- Despite most respondents not having heard of local Police and Crime Panels, twice as many respondents thought the panels would provide sufficient oversight of PCCs (34%) as did not (17%).
- More respondents said they were not interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels (42%) than said they were interested (27%).

Demographic differences

The survey was analysed for differences in answers on five key demographic variables: social grade, education, age, gender, and ethnicity.

1) Social grade

- Respondents in higher social grades were more likely to have heard of PCCs, know that PCCs are elected, recall the 2012 election, have voted in that election, and heard of police and crime panels.
- Those in higher social grades were also more likely to say they were interested in policing issues, finding out about the work of PCCs and were aware of public meetings on police and crime issues.
- In general those in higher social grades are also more trusting of public office holders and have a higher opinion of the standards of conduct of public office holders.
- These differences in knowledge, interest, and perceptions of general standards do not generally translate into attitudes about police accountability, priorities, or the say that local people get in policing matters.

2) Education

- Respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to say they were interested in policing issues, finding out about the work of PCCs and were aware of public meetings on police and crime issues.
- They were also more trusting of public office holders and have a higher opinion of the standards of conduct of public office holders.
- Again these differences in knowledge, interest, and perceptions of general standards do not generally translate into attitudes about police accountability, priorities, or the say that local people get in policing matters, with the exception of those with a university education, who are more likely than other respondents to say that the police are dealing with the issues that matter than other types of respondents.

3) Age

- Older voters were more likely to have heard of PCCs and say they could name their PCC, have voted in the 2012 election, have heard of police and crime panels, and say they were aware of public meetings on crime issues.
- Younger voters were generally more optimistic about the conduct of public office holders and were more trusting of public office holders than older voters and more likely to see the standards of conduct of public office holders as being high.

- Once again however these differences did not translate into differences in attitudes about police accountability.

4) Gender
- Responses were very similar between men and women and only two gender differences emerged in the analysis:
- Men were more likely to know that PCCs were elected and said they would be able to name their PCC.

5) Ethnicity
- Non-white respondents were less knowledgeable about the police accountability framework: most had not heard of PCCs, were less likely to know PCCs were elected, and were more likely to say they did not know where to go for information on police and crime issues.
- However they were much more likely to say they were interested in policing issues and the work of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels.

The effect of knowledge of the police accountability framework on attitudes towards police accountability

Knowing about the new police accountability framework did not have much of an effect on respondent's opinions about police accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

- Those who had not heard of PCCs were just as likely as those that had to think that the police were held to account for their actions and were focusing on the policing issues that matter in their local area.
- Those who had heard of PCCs were equally as likely to think that local people did not have a say in policing issues as those that had not heard of them.
- The one difference that did emerge is that people who had heard of PCCs were more likely to say it was clear who to complain to if they had a problem with local policing.

Conclusion

Overall most respondents did not know very much about the new police accountability framework, nor were they very interested in policing issues or the work of Police and Crime Commissioners. However most respondents had a positive impression of the conduct and accountability of police. The majority of respondents thought Senior Police Officers could be trusted to tell the truth, that police are held to account for their actions and that police deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter in their local area. Although the generally positive impression of policing is good news for the police, to the extent that they are based on the interest and engagement of the public the results of the survey are clearly problematic for the new police accountability framework.

1. Introduction

In late 2014 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CPSL) launched an inquiry into accountability, leadership and ethics in local policing. The inquiry comes two years after the introduction of a new accountability structure for local policing with elected Police and Crime Commissioners. As part of the inquiry the Committee commissioned a survey designed to assess public knowledge of, and attitudes towards, this new framework.

The introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in 2012, as part of the wider reforms to police accountably structures, was designed to increase the accountability of the police to local people. Democratically elected PCCs were established by the government to increase local accountability of the police by acting as 'the voice of the public' in policing issues. The Home Secretary said "the purpose of directly-elected police and crime commissioners was clear. They'd be elected, visible, well-known in their communities and accountable to the electorate."[1]

As the Home Secretary herself admitted, the success of elected PCCs in achieving these aims was "a little mixed."[2] Public engagement with PCCs has been very low: only 15.1% of the electorate turned out to vote at the PCC elections – the lowest recorded turnout at a peacetime non local government election in the UK. Previous surveys have found that only a small fraction (8-11%) of those surveyed were correctly able to name the person elected to be their PCC.[3]

Whilst it might not be reasonable to expect many members of the public to have specialist knowledge of the police accountability model and how it works, the rationale behind the introduction of PCCs was designed to increase public engagement and democratic scrutiny. The new model of police accountability is working adequately only if the public knows about it, understands it and engages with it. It is therefore important to know what the public know about the model, and how they do or would engage with it.

1.1. The survey

In order to address these questions the Committee commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a survey into public knowledge of and attitudes towards police accountability structures. The survey was carried out as part of Ipsos MORI's Capibus OmniBus survey. 1059 English adults were interviewed between the 21st November and 3rd December 2014 at home by Capibus interviewers. These responses were then weighted for demographic characteristics to give a nationally representative sample.

The survey asked the respondents a series of questions relating to:

1) Their trust in public office holders to tell the truth.
2) Their perceptions of standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK.
3) Their perceptions of police accountability and priorities in their local area.

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[1] Speech by Home Secretary Theresa May to Policy Exchange about Police and Crime Commissioners. Delivered on 7 November 2013. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/police-and-crime-commissioners-one-year-on-warts-and-all

[2] Ibid.

[3] See https://www.ipsos-mori.com/newsevents/blogs/makingsenseofsociety/1499/Police-and-Crime-Commissioners-one-year-on.aspx and http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/images/dynamicImages/How%20not%20to%20run%20an%20election.pdf.

4) Their knowledge of PCCs (or the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for respondents in London).
5) Their engagement with PCCs.
6) Their engagement and interest in policing issues in their local area.
7) Their knowledge of and attitudes towards local Police and Crime Panels.

All but five questions were answered by all 1059 respondents. Three questions relating specifically to PCCs – whether respondents remembered the 2012 election, whether they would be able to name their PCC, and whether they had had any contact with their PCC – were asked only of those who lived in areas with elected PCCs (i.e. those outside of London, 866 respondents). Only those living in London were asked whether they were familiar with the London arrangements for police accountability (193 respondents). Only those who said they recalled the 2012 PCC elections were asked whether they voted in those elections (367 respondents).

1.2. Analysis

This report presents an analysis of the survey, showing both overall answers given to each question and their breakdown by five key demographic characteristics, which an examination of the data suggests produce key differences in knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the police accountability framework: social grade, education, age, gender, and ethnicity. The analysis here is informed by a multivariate statistical analysis of each survey question, which estimates the effect of each of the demographic variables controlling for the others. This report presents the (weighted) survey responses for each of the variables that this analysis suggests has 'statistically significant' variation in responses between different levels of that variable. Statistical significance means that there is a low probability that the differences observed in responses are simply due to chance and that what we observe is representative of the greater population. Here the conventional cut-off of 5% is used, meaning that there is at most a 1 in 20 chance that the patterns we observe are due to random sampling variation.

Social grade

National Readership Survey social grades are used here to capture the key information about respondents' socio-economic positions. The proportion of the sample falling into each grade is shown in the table below. Due to the small number or respondents in the A grade, the A and B grades are combined in the subsequent analysis.

Grade	Social class	Occupation	Proportion of sample (weighted)
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional	3.24%
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional	23.58%
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional	27.37%
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers	21.73%
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers	15.26%
E	Non working	Casual or lowest grade workers, and those who depend on the welfare state for their income	8.83%

Education

A respondent's level of education is measured by four categories which record their highest level of formal qualifications. The lowest level of education is those who have no formal qualifications, followed by those who have GCSEs or equivalent (e.g. O levels, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1-2), then by those who have A levels or equivalent (e.g. NVQ level 3). The highest level of education are those who have a Bachelors degree or higher (or equivalent, e.g. NVQ level 4). The breakdown of the sample is shown in the table below.

Education level	Proportion of sample (weighted)
No formal qualifications	15.66%
GCSEs or equivalent	31.34%
A levels or equivalent	20.07%
Bachelors degree or higher	32.92%

Social grade and education are highly correlated: 64% of ABs have a university education, compared to 35% of C1s, 16% of C2s, 12% of Ds, and 5% of Es. Similarly only 3% of ABs have no formal qualifications, rising to 7% of C1s, 16% of C2s, 37% of Ds, and 42% of Es. The results presented here might be distorted by this correlation, leading to misleading conclusions about the effect of social grade or education. The results for both variables presented here is informed by the multivariate statistical analysis, which allows the effect of social grade to be estimated controlling for the effect of education (and vice versa). Where the results for both are presented here the multivariate analysis suggests that both social grade and education have independent effects.

Age

Respondents were classified into six age groups, the breakdown of which is shown in the table below.

Age group	Proportion of sample (weighted)
24 and under	15.9%
25-34	16.89%
35-44	16.06%
45-54	17.06%
55-64	13.57%
65 and over	20.52%

Gender

51.03% of the respondents (weighted) were female and 48.97% were male.

Ethnicity

Although the ethnic group that each respondent identified was collected by the survey, the distinction here is made between 'white' and 'non-white' respondents. Although this is obviously a very crude measure of ethnicity, other than 'White British' the numbers of respondents sampled from specific ethnicities are too small to give any clear picture of the effect of ethnicity beyond this broad distinction. The results presented here are therefore necessarily indicative only, and extreme caution should be used in extrapolating these patterns to particular ethnic groups. 86.38% of respondents (weighted) identified as white, and 13.62% identified with a non-white ethnicity.

1.3. Key findings

In general respondents were not very knowledgeable about the new police accountability framework nor very interested in policing issues. Most respondents had heard of PCCs but almost a third of respondents had not. Less than half of respondents knew that PCCs were elected or remembered the election in 2012. Very few respondents said they knew their PCC's name, had any contact with their PCC, or were aware of public meetings on policing issues in their local area. Knowledge of local Police and Crime Panels was even lower than knowledge of PCCs, only 15% of respondents said they had heard of them. Despite the introduction of the new police accountability framework, most respondents said it was not clear who to complain to about policing matters and that local people did not have a say in police matters.

Lack of knowledge about the new police accountability framework can perhaps be explained by a lack of interest in policing matters: the majority of respondents said they were not interested in finding out more about policing issues in their local area, or the work of PCCs or local Police and Crime Panels.

Some types of respondents were more engaged with policing matters than others and were both more knowledgeable about and more interested in policing issues. Respondents in higher social grades, more educated respondents, and older respondents were more likely to have heard of PCCs, remember and have participated in the 2012 election, and have heard of Police and Crime Panels. These respondents were also more likely to say they were interested in finding out about policing issues and in the work of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels.

One set of respondents broke this general trend of interest and knowledge about police accountability. Compared to white respondents, ethnic minority respondents knew much less about the new police accountability framework but they were also considerably more interested in finding out about policing issues and in finding out about the work of PCCs and local Police and Crime Panels.

Despite their lack of knowledge and interest, most respondents seemed to be reasonably happy with the conduct and accountability of police. The majority of respondents thought that Senior Police Officers could be trusted to tell the truth, that the police are held to account for their actions, and that the police deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter in their local area.

Knowing about the new police accountability framework had very little effect on respondent's views on police accountability and responsiveness to their local communities – those who had not heard of PCCs were just as likely as those that had heard of them to think that the police were held to account for their actions, that the police deal with the issues that matter in their area, and that local people have a say in how the police spend their time and budget. The one exception to this pattern was on the question which asked how clear respondents thought it was who to complain to if they had a problem with local policing. Those who had heard of PCCs were more likely to say it was clear who to complain to than those who had not.

2. Perceptions of standards of public life

In order to gauge general attitudes towards Public Office Holders and opinions on standards of public life, as well to provide some comparisons with the biennial surveys on public attitudes to standards in public life conducted between 2004 and 2012 the survey asked respondents how much they trusted three public office holders to tell the truth: Senior Police Officers, Local Councillors, and Judges and what their overall perceptions were of the standards of conduct of public office holders.[4]

Key findings

- Most respondents trust judges (71%) and senior police officers (59%) to tell the truth.
- More respondents said they did not trust local councillors to tell the truth (38%) than said they did trust them to tell the truth (32%).
- Younger respondents are more trusting of public office holders than older respondents.
- More respondents thought the standards of conduct of public office holders were low (34%) than thought they were high (24%)
- Respondents in the higher social grades, younger respondents, more educated respondents, and ethnic minority respondents all had more positive perceptions of the standards of conduct of public office holders.

2.1. Trust in Public Office Holders to tell the truth

In line with the public attitudes to standards in public life surveys, judges were the most trusted public office holders, 71% of respondents said they trusted judges to tell the truth, followed by senior police officers, who were trusted by 59% of respondents (these numbers, and those that follow, combine those who 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' that the profession in question can be trusted). Local councillors were the least trusted of the three public office holders asked about in the survey, with more respondents disagreeing (38%) than agreeing (32%) that local councillors could be trusted. These numbers are all considerably lower than those reported in the 2012 survey on public attitudes to standards in public life carried out for the Committee. In the 2012 survey, 80% of English respondents said they trusted judges to tell the truth, 70% trusted Senior Police Officers to tell the truth, and 52% said they could trust local councillors to tell the truth. It is important to note however that the 2012 survey (and previous public attitudes to standards in public life surveys) also asked respondents opinions about the trustworthiness of other professions, many of which were considered much less trustworthy than the three professions asked here (e.g. tabloid journalists, who only 15% of English respondents considered trustworthy). The inclusion of professions perceived as less trustworthy may have boosted the apparent trustworthiness of other professions, and so the drop in trust found in the current survey should be taken with a grain of salt – the *relative* trustworthiness of Judges, Senior Police Officers, and Local Councillors is the same in the current survey as the 2012 survey.

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[4] For the most recent report, see:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/337017/Public_Attitude_Survey_2012.pdf

Figure 2.1. Trust in public office holders to tell the truth
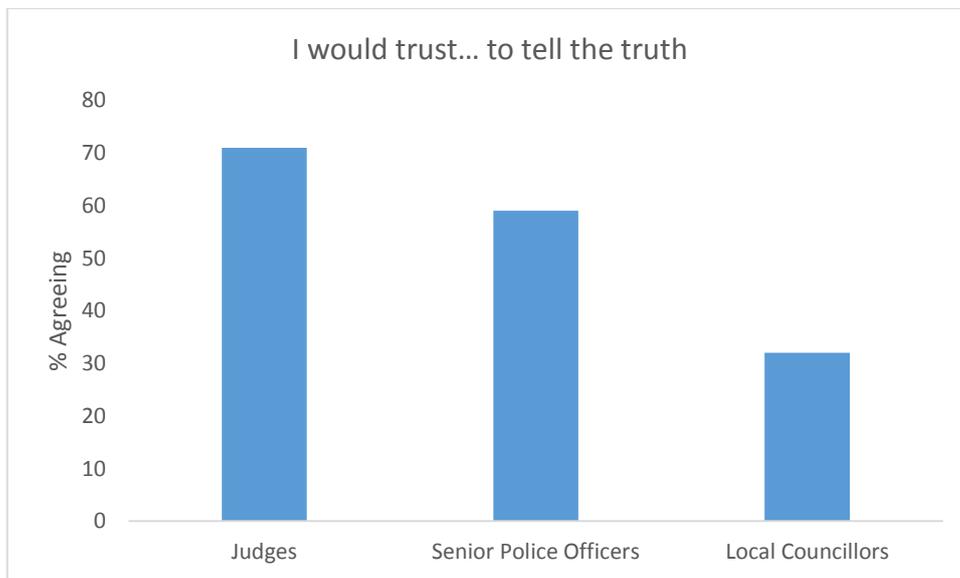
Base: all respondents

The public attitudes to standards in public life surveys have previously suggested that trust in public office holders is higher amongst those in higher social grades. In the current survey however, attitudes to only one public office holder appears to be linked consistently with social grade: judges. For Senior Police Officers and Local Councillors, trust did not decline with social grade, although respondents in the C2 grade (skilled manual workers) were the least trusting of both Senior Police Officers and Local Councillors.

Figure 2.2. Percent agreeing that each profession can be trusted to tell the truth by social grade.

Base: all respondents

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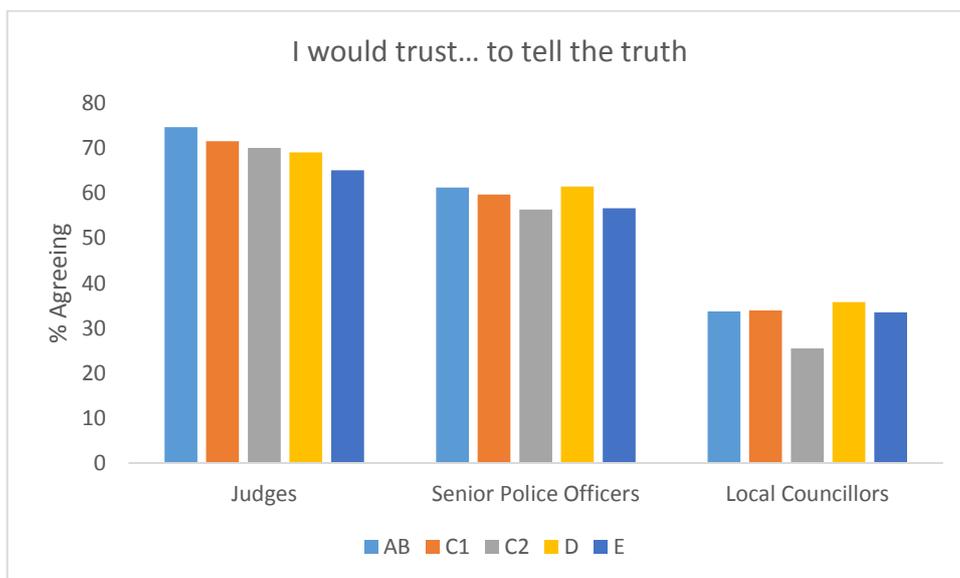
One demographic characteristic was consistently linked to differences in trust across the three public office holders. Younger respondents are consistently more trusting of public office holders than older respondents. As figure 2.3 shows, this effect is most pronounced for Senior Police Officers and Local Councillors.

Figure 2.3. Percent agreeing that each profession can be trusted to tell the truth by age group.


I would trust… to tell the truth

Legend: 24 and under | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+
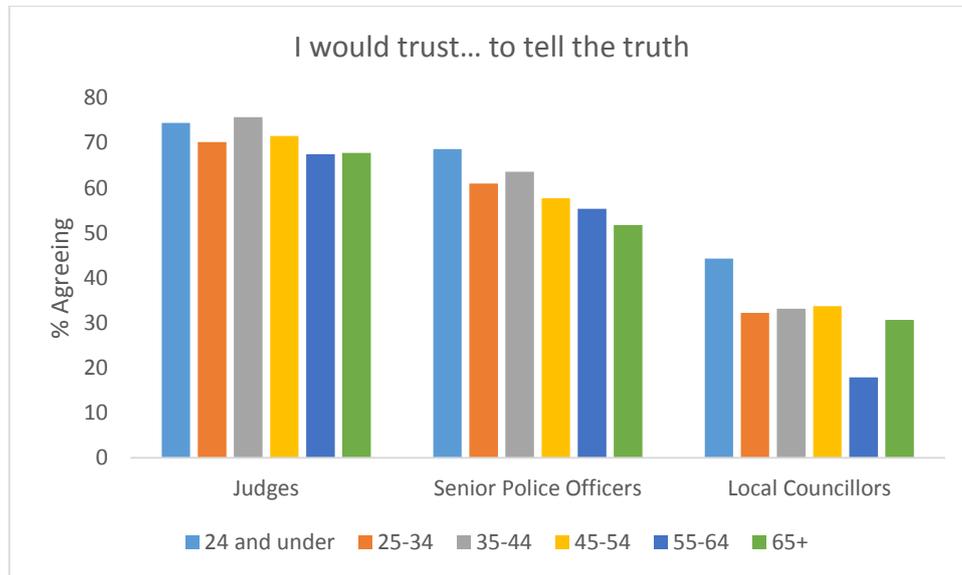
Base: all respondents

The analysis of the survey suggests that there were no significant differences in perceptions of the trustworthiness of the three public figures examined here for respondents with different levels of education, nor were any gender or ethnic differences apparent.

2.2. Standards of conduct of public office holders

On the whole, when asked how they rated the standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK the respondents to the survey were pessimistic in their evaluation. More respondents thought the standards of conduct of public office holders were low (34%) than thought they were high (24%), though the largest number of respondents were neutral on the matter, with 40% saying they were neither high nor low. This is a more pessimistic response than that from the 2012 survey where, despite a consistent decline between 2004 and 2012, positive attitudes retained a slight lead over negative attitudes. This more negative result may be due to sampling error, but it is important to note that the intervals are similar, with the highest proportion indicating that they believed standards are neither high nor low.
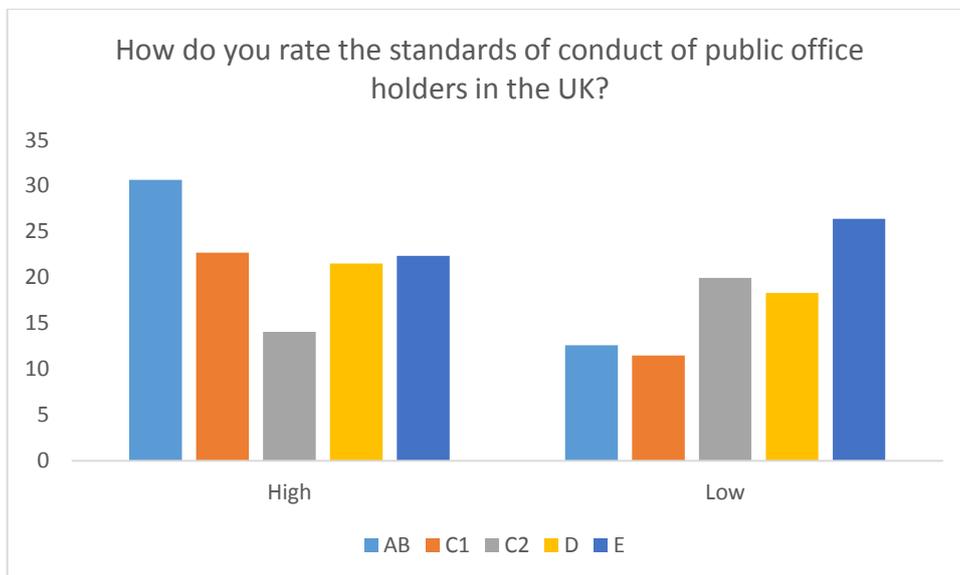
How do you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK?
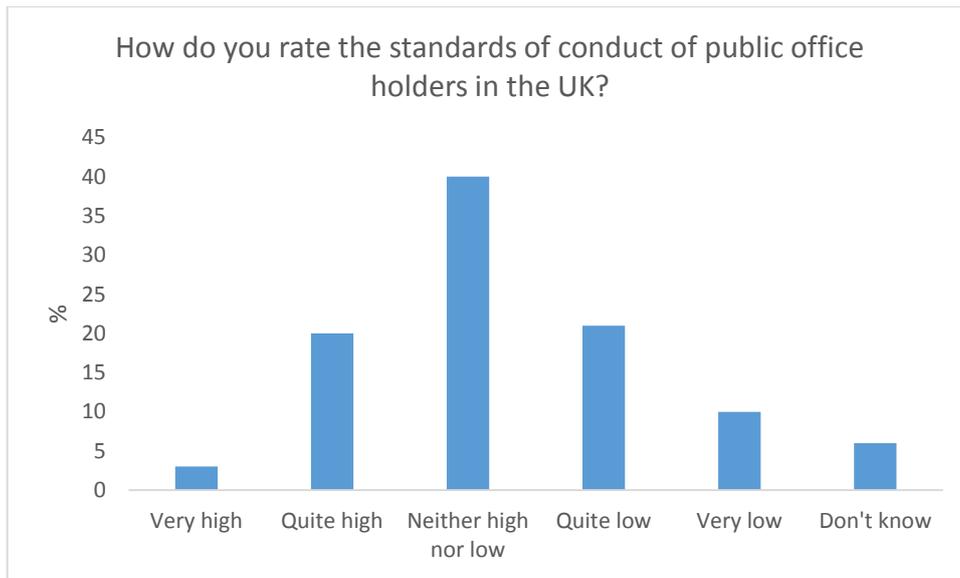
Base: all respondents

As figure 2.5, which combines those who thought standards where 'very high' and 'quite high', shows, those in the AB social grade were more optimistic about the standards of conduct of public office holders than those of in other social grades, whilst those in C2 were again (see figure 2.2) the most pessimistic about the conduct of public office holders. There was very little variation in the responses between the C1, D, and E social grades.

Figure 2.5. Perceived standards of conduct of public office holders by social grade.

How do you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK?

Base: all respondents

Just as they considered public office holders to be more trustworthy, younger respondents were also more optimistic about the standards of conduct of public officer holders, with a clear divide between

those in the 34-44 age bracket or younger, and those in the 45-54 age bracket and older. Slightly more of those 44 or younger thought the standards of conduct of public office holders were high (26%) than low (25%). Considerably more of those 45 or older thought standards of conduct were low (37%) than high (19%).
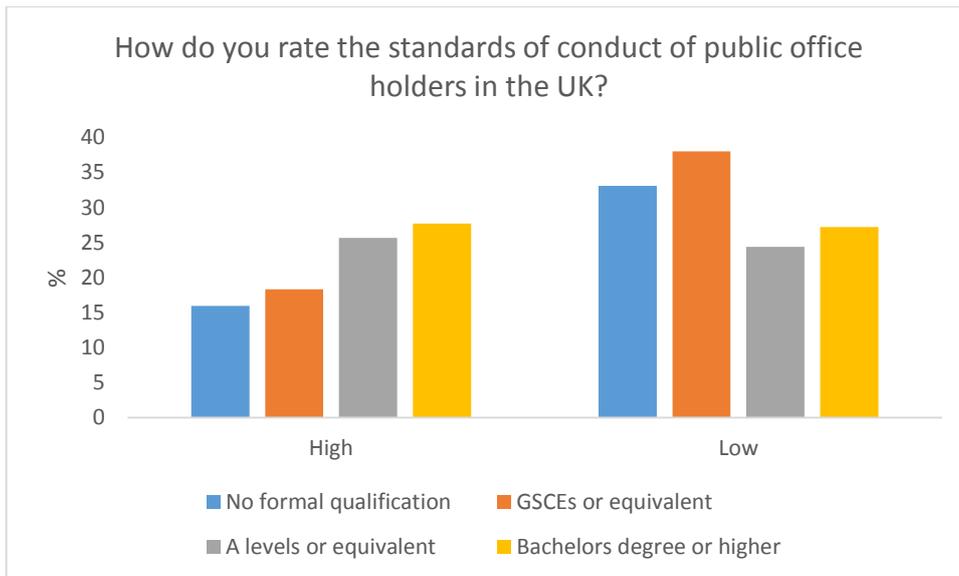
Figure 2.6. Perceived standards of conduct of public office holders by age group.
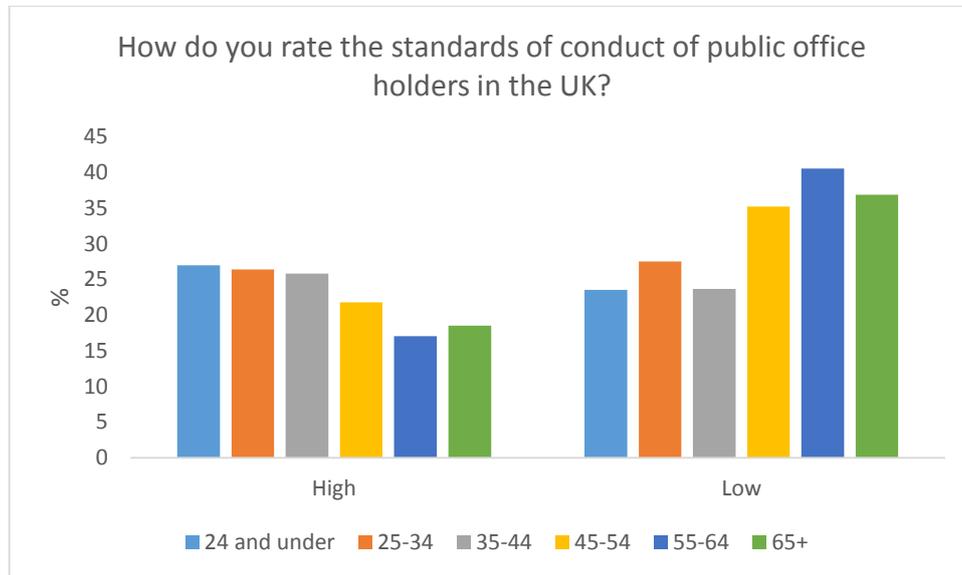
Base: all respondents

The perceived standard of conduct of public office holders also varied by the respondents' level of education. As figure 2.7 shows, those with higher levels of education were more likely to think public office holders had high standards of conduct than those with lower levels of education. 27% of those with A levels (or equivalent) and above thought public office holders had high standards of conduct, whilst only 18% of those with lower levels of education thought the same. Another 27% of those with A levels or higher levels of education thought the standards of conduct of public office holders were low, whilst 36% of those with lower levels of education thought the same.

How do you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK?

Legend: No formal qualification, GSCEs or equivalent, A levels or equivalent, Bachelors degree or higher

Base: all respondents

Finally, as figure 2.8 shows, there was a considerable difference between respondents of different ethnicities. White respondents were considerably more pessimistic about the standards of conduct of public office holders, with 20% of white respondents saying they thought standards were high and 33% saying they thought they were low. Non-white respondents were more optimistic about standards of conduct, with 38% saying they were high and 18% saying they were low.

Figure 2.8. Perceived standards of conduct of public office holders by white and non-white ethnicity.

How do you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the UK?

Legend: White, Non-white
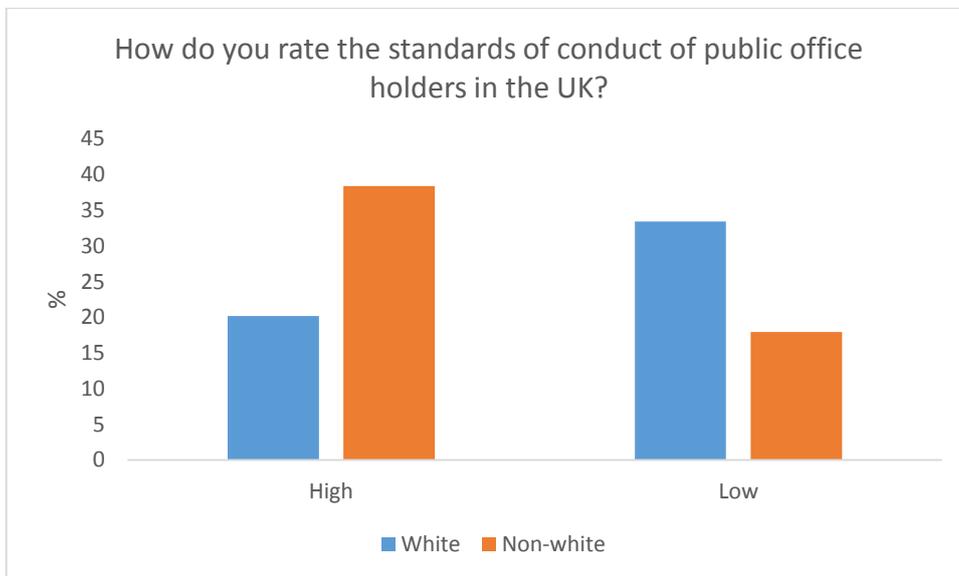
Base: all respondents

The survey does not suggest any gender differences in perceptions of the standards of conduct of public office holders.

3. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing

In order to get a sense of the public's views on the standards of police accountability and police responsiveness to local needs that was separate from respondents' knowledge of the new police accountability framework the survey asked four questions about respondents' views about the accountability of police in their local area and whether police responded to local needs before asking about their knowledge of the new police accountability framework. The questions asked the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with four statements about policing in their local area:

- That the police are held to account for their actions.
- That the police are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.
- That it is clear to complain to if you have a problem with local policing.
- That local people have a say in how the police spend their time and budget.

Key findings
- Most respondents agreed that police were held to account for their actions (55%) and that police were dealing with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter.
- Almost equal numbers of respondents thought it was clear who to complain to about problems with local policing (38%) as thought it was unclear (39%). Respondents who had heard of PCCs were more likely to think that it was clear who to complain to (41%) than those who had not (30%).
- Only a quarter of respondents thought local people had a say in how police spend their time and budget, whilst 42% did not.

Overall respondents were generally positive about police accountability and priorities, as shown in figure 3.1, which combines those who 'strongly' and 'tend to' agree, and those who 'strongly' and 'tend to' disagree. A majority (55%) of respondents agreed that the police are held to account for their actions, with 21% disagreeing. Similarly a majority (54%) of respondents thought that police were dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their local area, with 18% disagreeing. The respondents were less positive about the clarity of complaints procedures, with more respondents disagreeing than agreeing in both cases. 38% of respondents agreed that it was clear who to complain to whilst 39% disagreed. Only a quarter of respondents agreed that local people have a say in how their local police spend their time and budget, with 42% disagreeing.
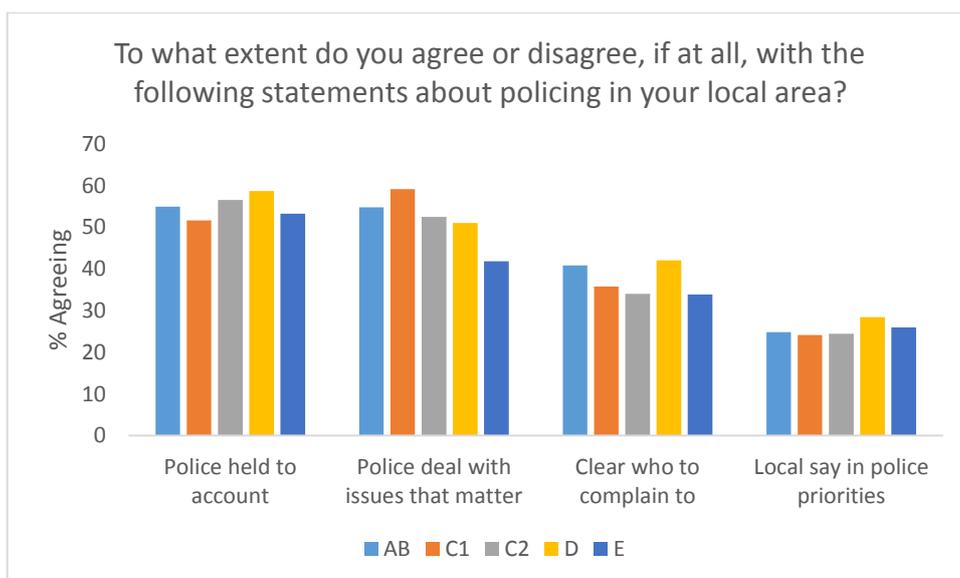
Figure 3.1. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing.

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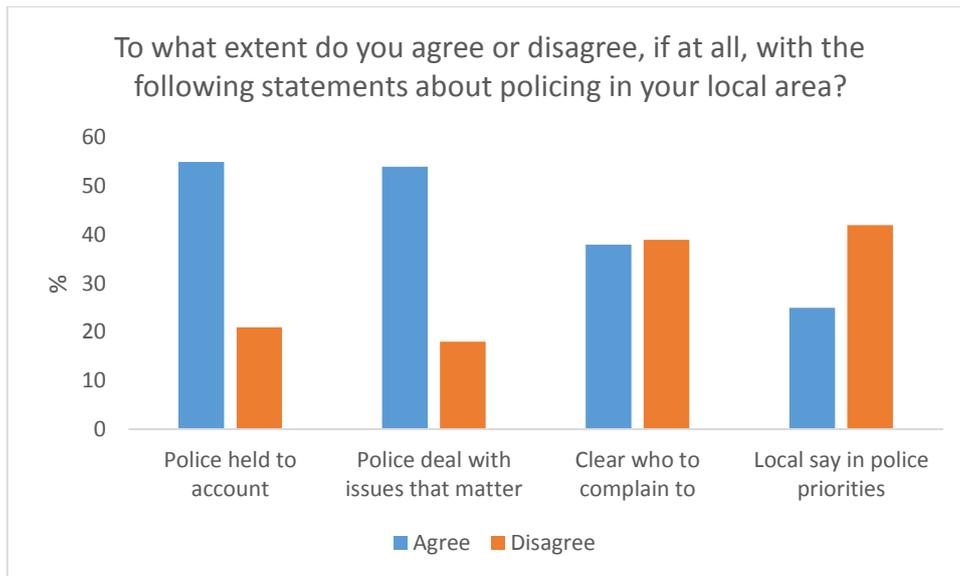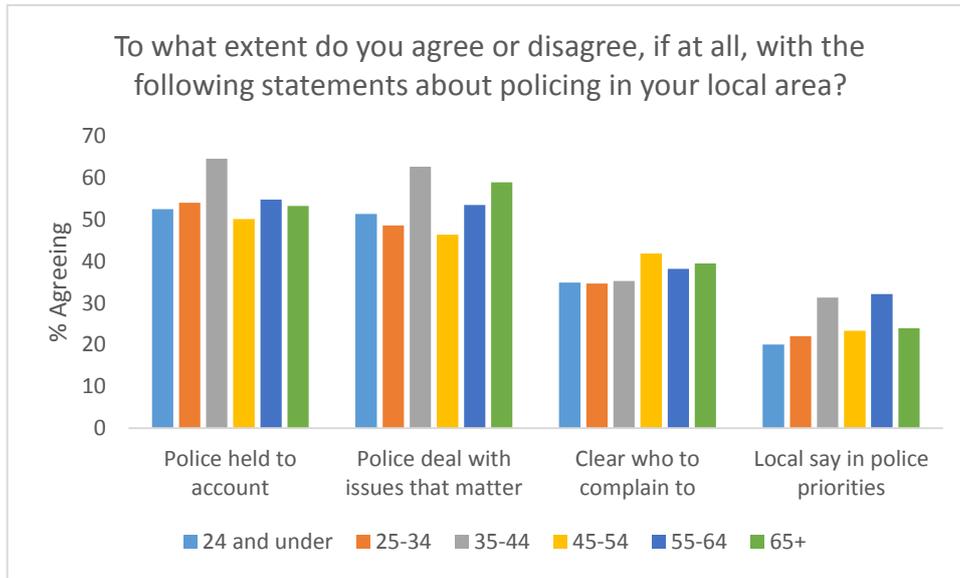
Base: all respondents

There was very little variation in responses between different social grades (figure 3.2), age groups (figure 3.3), or education level (figure 3.4). Some categories appear to have different respones to each question, however this variation is not systematic – that is, responses do not change in a predictable and consistent way according to higher or lower social grade, older or younger voters, or education levels. A multivariate statistical analysis also suggests that most of the variation in these answers is not statistically significant. There was also very little variation between answers according to gender or ethnicity.

Figure 3.2. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing by social grade.

Base: all respondents

Figure 3.3. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing by age group.

Base: all respondents

Figure 3.4. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing by education level.
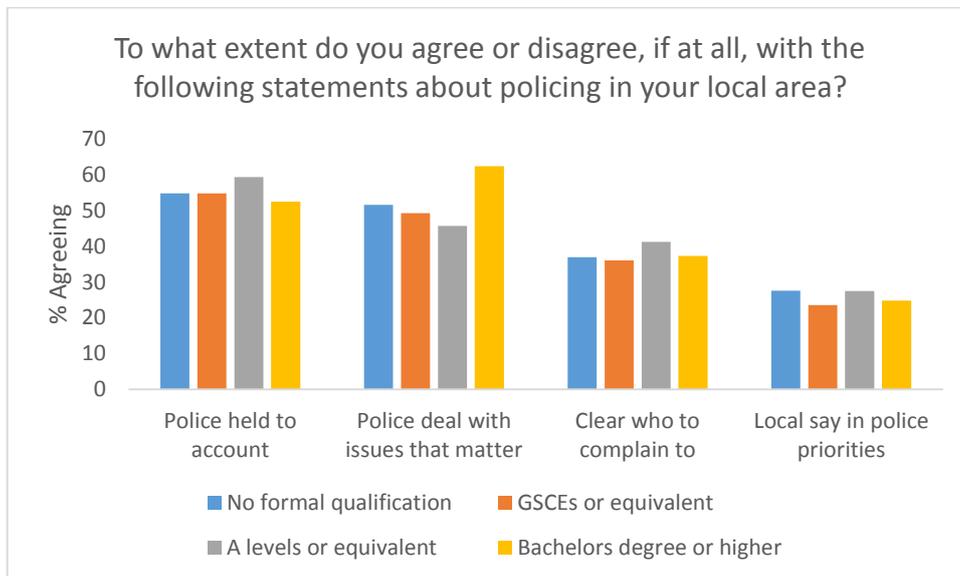
Base: all respondents

With one exception knowledge of the new police accountability framework had no impact on respondents' attitudes towards the accountability questions asked here (68% of respondents had heard of PCCs, see section 4.1). As shown in figure 3.5, those who said they had not heard of Police and Crime Commissioners were just as likely to agree that police are held to account for their actions, that police deal with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter, and that local people have a say in how the police spend their time and budget, as those who had not heard of

Police and Crime Commissioners. The one exception to this is that people who had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners were much more likely to agree that it was clear who to complain to if you have a problem with local policing (41%) than those who had not heard of them (30%).

Figure 3.5. Accountability and responsiveness in local policing by knowledge of Police and Crime Commissioners.
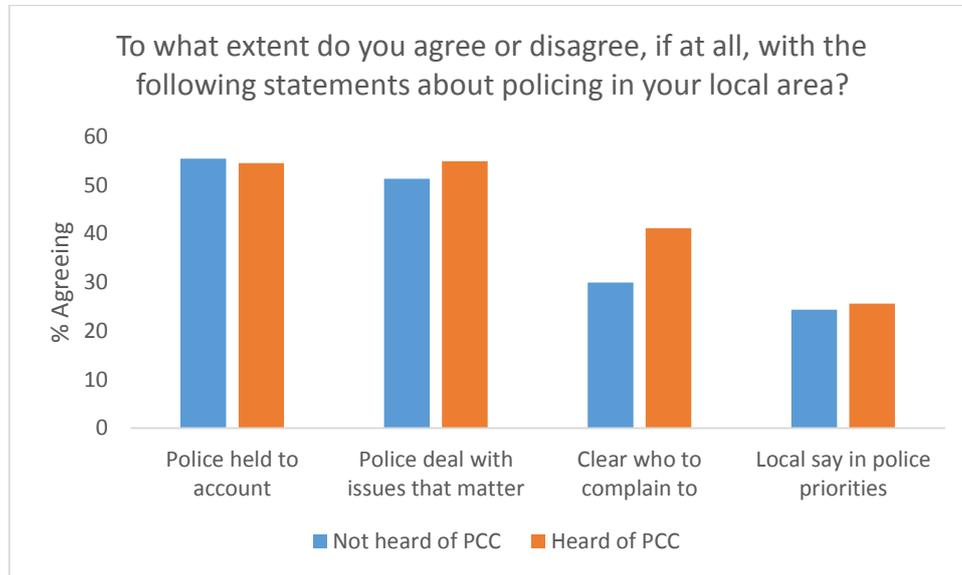
Base: respondents outside London

4. Knowledge of police accountability arrangements

In order to gauge the extent to which the public is aware of the main feature of the new police accountability framework – the elected Police and Crime Commissioners – the survey asked respondents a number of questions about their knowledge of the Police and Crime Commissioners introduced in 2012:

- Whether they had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners.
- How they thought Police and Crime Commissioners were chosen.
- Whether they recalled the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held in 2012 (for those outside of London).
- Whether they were familiar with the arrangements for police accountability in London, i.e. the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (for those in London).
- Whether they thought they could name their Police and Crime Commissioner.

Key findings
- 68% of respondents said they had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Most respondents (53%) did not know that PCCs were elected and only 44% recalled the 2012 PCC elections.
- Only 26% of respondents living in London said they were familiar with the arrangements for police accountability in London.
- Only 1 in 10 respondents said they would be able to name their PCC.
- Respondents in higher social grades, older respondents, and respondents with higher levels of education were generally more knowledgeable about PCCs and were more likely to have heard of PCCs, know how they were chosen, recall the 2012 elections, and say they would be able to name their PCC.
- Ethnic minority respondents were much less likely to say they had heard of PCCs (39%) than white respondents (73%), and were less likely to know they were elected (30%).
- Men were more likely to know that PCCs were elected (54%) than women (39%), and were more likely to say they could name their PCC.

4.1. Heard of Police and Crime Commissioners

Overall most respondents said that they had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (68%). Responses varied considerably by social grade, as shown in figure 4.1: 88% of those in the AB grades had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners, whilst only 53% of those in the D grade (who had the lowest knowledge of PCCs) had heard of them.
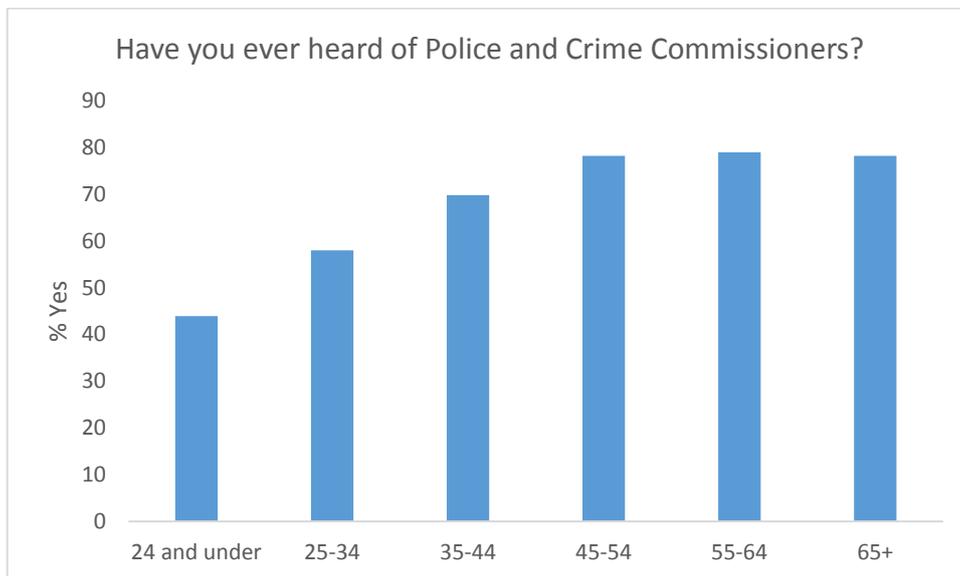
Figure 4.1. Whether respondent had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners by social grade.
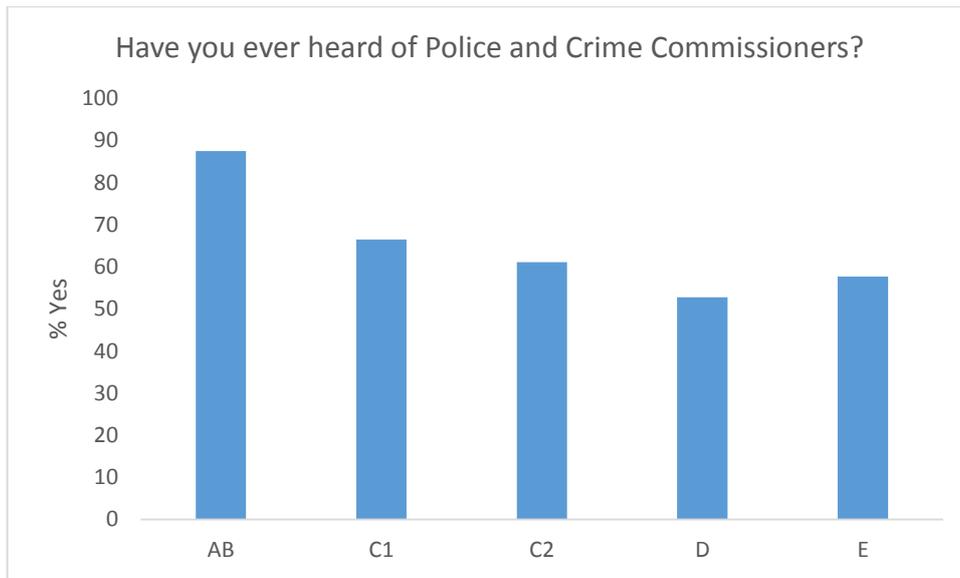
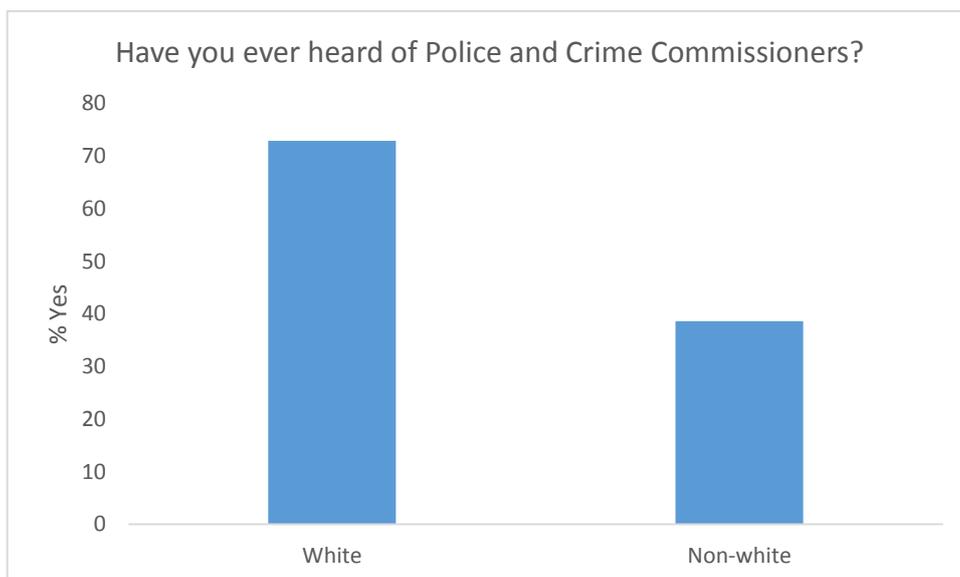*Base: respondents outside London*

There were also big differences in the knowledge of Police and Crime Commissioners in different age groups as shown in figure 4.2. Less than half of those 24 or younger had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (44%), whilst more than 78% of those older than 45 had heard of them.

Figure 4.2. Whether respondent had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners by age group.

Base: respondents outside London

Similar variation was found for education level, as shown in figure 4.3. More educated voters were much more likely to have heard of Police and Crime Commissioners: only half of those with no

formal qualification had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners whilst 81% of those with a university degree had heard of them.

Figure 4.3. Whether respondent had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners by education level.
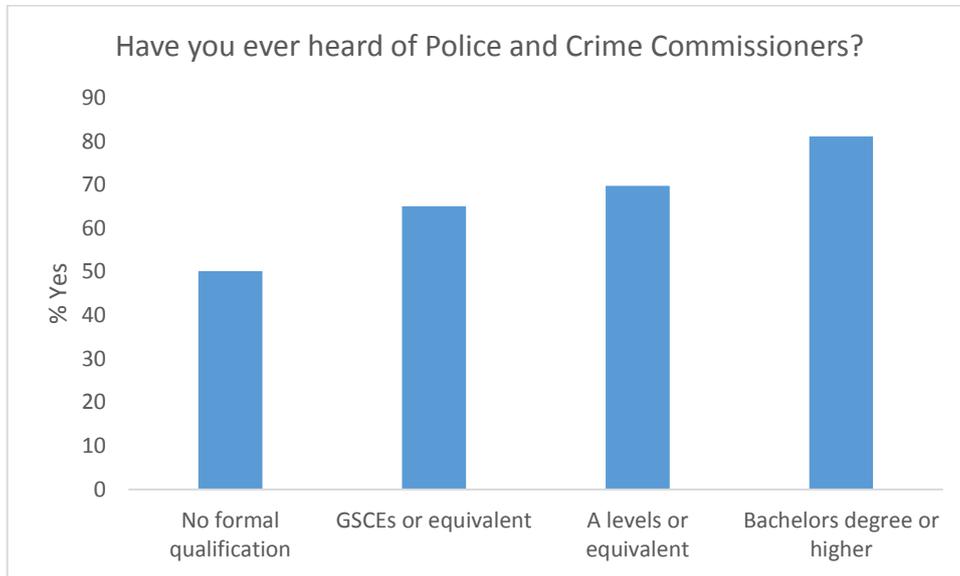
Base: respondents outside London

Responses also varied considerably by ethnicity, as shown in figure 4.4. 73% of white respondents had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners whilst more than twice the number of non-white respondents said they had not heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (54%) than had (25%). There was no significant gender differences in those who had heard of PCCs.

Figure 4.4. Whether respondent had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners by ethnicity.

Base: respondents outside London

4.2. Knowledge of how Police and Crime Commissioners are appointed

Most of the respondents in the survey did not know that Police and Crime Commissioners were elected (53%), though more thought PCCs were elected than appointed by any other means, as shown in figure 4.5. More than a quarter of respondents said they did not know how PCCs were appointed.
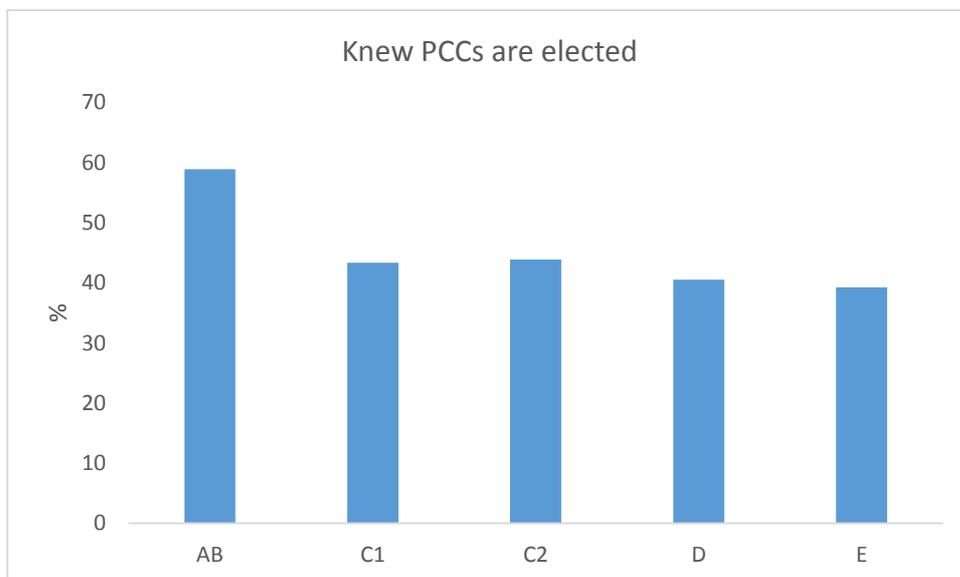
Figure 4.5. How respondents thought Police and Crime Commissioners are chosen.
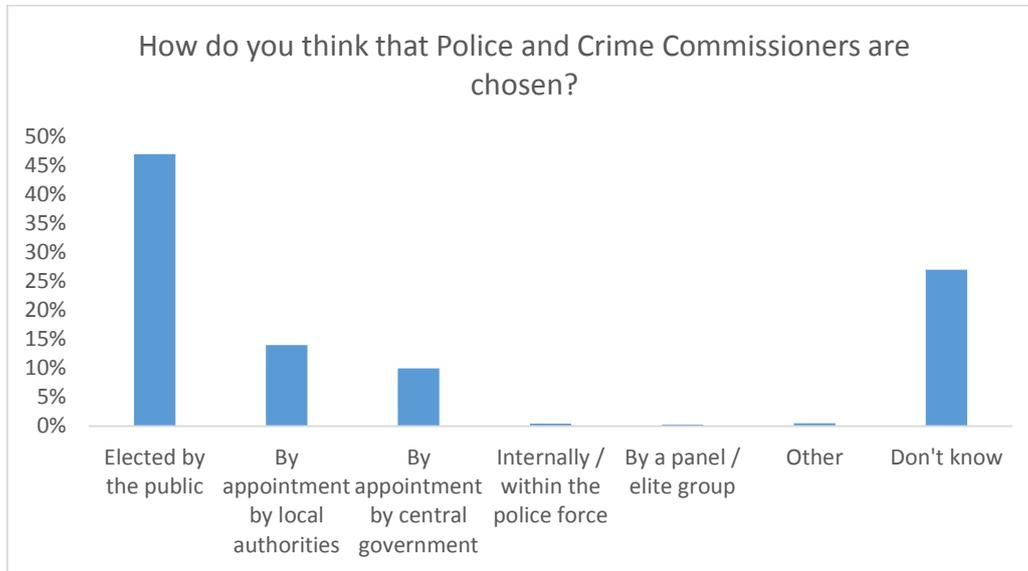
Base: all respondents

Whether respondents knew that Police and Crime Commissioners were elected varied considerably by social grade, education level, gender, and ethnicity, but not by age. Most of those in the AB category knew that Police and Crime Commissioners are elected (59%) whilst a majority of those in the other social grades did not (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Percentage of respondents knowing PCCs are elected by social grade.

Base: all respondents

As figure 4.7 shows, the higher the level of education voters had the more likely they were to know that Police and Crime Commissioners are elected. Only 36% of those with no formal qualification knew that Police and Crime Commissioners are elected, compared to 60% of those with a university education.
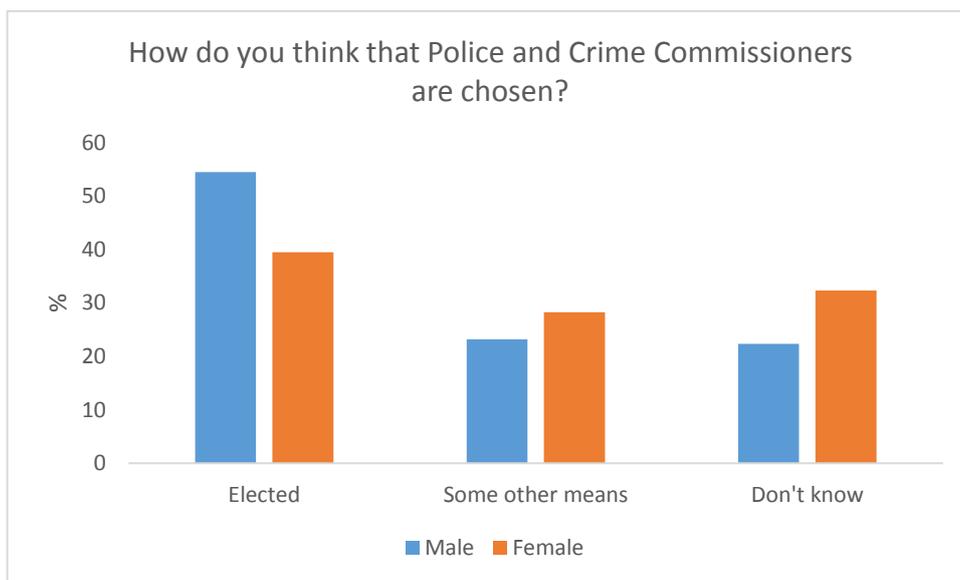
Figure 4.7. Percentage of respondents knowing PCCs are elected by education level.
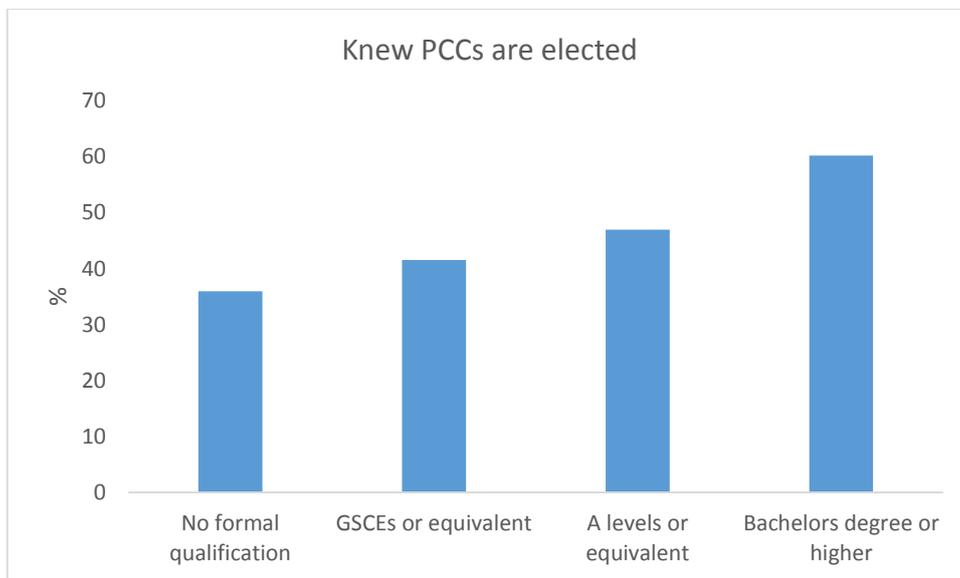
Base: all respondents

Men were also more likely to know that Police and Crime Commissioners were elected (54%) than women (40%) as shown in figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8. How respondents thought Police and Crime Commissioners are chosen by gender.

Base: all respondents

19

Unsurprisingly, given that they were more likely to say they had not heard of Police and Crime Commissioners, non-white respondents were much less likely to know that Police and Crime Commissioners are elected (30%), with 40% saying they did not know how PCCs were appointed.

*Figure 4.9. How respondents thought Police and Crime Commissioners are chosen by ethnicity.*
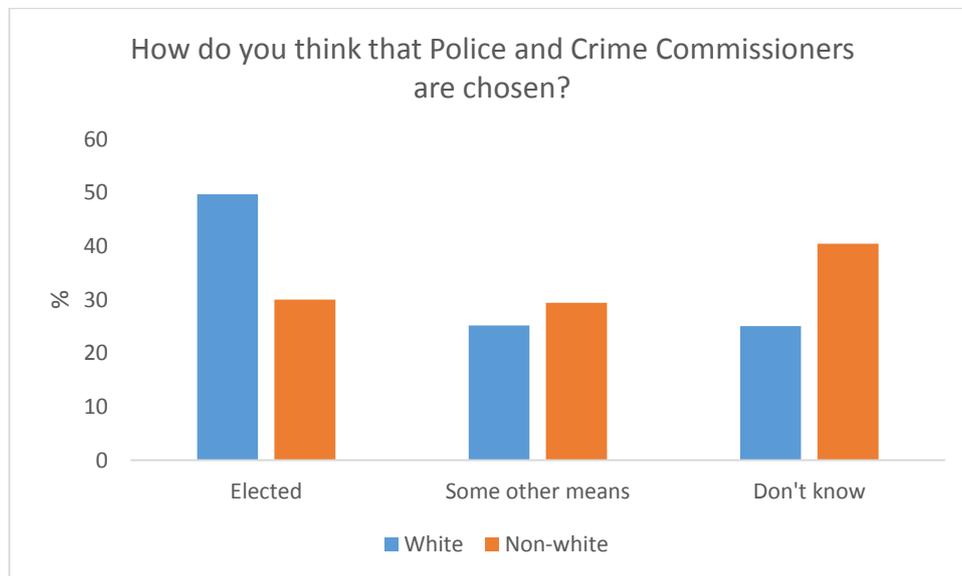
Base: all respondents

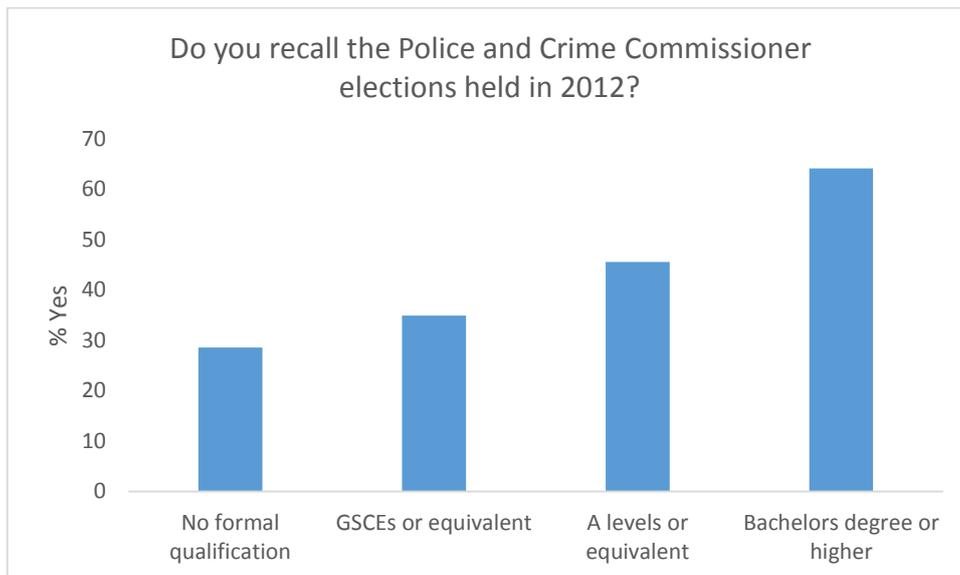## 4.3. Recall of 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections

Overall, just under half of the respondents (44%) said that they recalled the 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections. Recall varied considerably with social grade, education level, and gender. As shown in figure 4.10, 60% of those in the AB social grade said they recalled the election, whilst only a quarter of those in the D (25%) or E (26%) grades did. Similarly recall rose substantially with education, as shown in figure 4.11: only 29% of those with no formal qualification recalled the elections, whilst more than twice as many of those with a university education (64%) did. Slightly more men (48%) than women (41%) recalled the elections. The survey does not suggest any differences in recall of the elections amongst respondents of different ages, genders of ethnicities.

Figure 4.10. Recall of 2012 PCC elections by social grade.

Do you recall the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held in 2012?
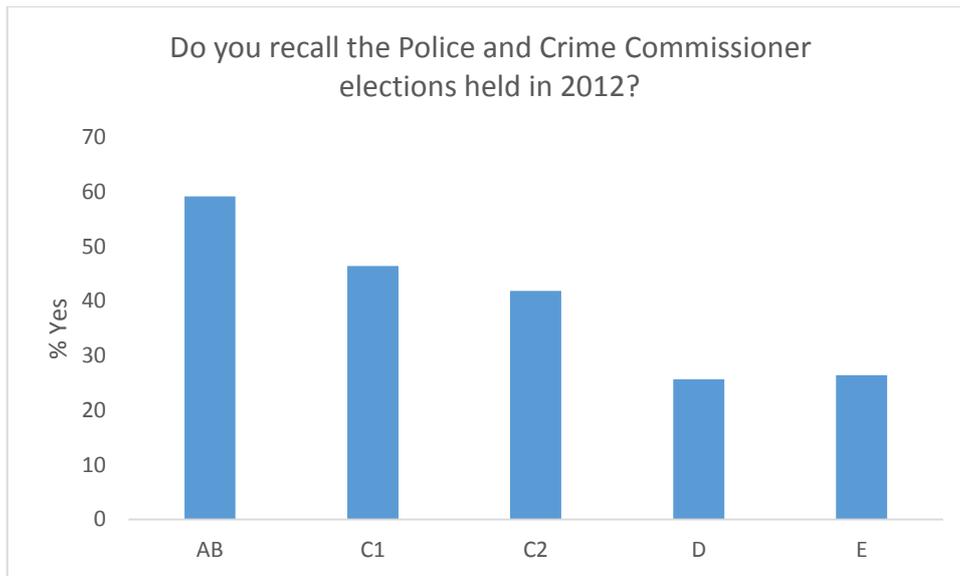
Base: respondents outside London

Figure 4.11. Recall of 2012 PCC elections by education level.

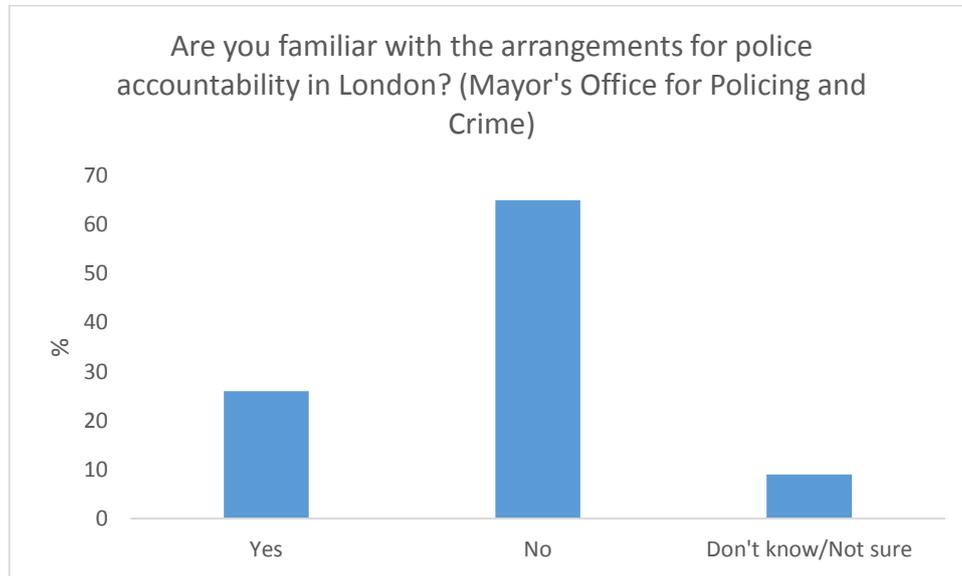**Do you recall the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held in 2012?**

Base: respondents outside London

4.4. Familiarity with the arrangements for police accountability in London

Respondents in London were much less familiar with the arrangements in place for police accountability in London (the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime), as shown in figure 4.12. Only 26% of respondents in London said they were familiar with these arrangements, which is roughly two-fifths of the proportion of respondents outside of London who had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (68%). The London sub-sample is too small (193 respondents) to draw clear inferences about the variation in knowledge between different demographic groups and so further

breakdown of these results in not shown here. Indicatively however the results suggest that older people are more likely to be familiar with the London arrangements for police accountability.

*Figure 4.12. Knowledge of police accountability arrangements in London.*

Base: respondents living in London

4.5. Ability to name Police and Crime Commissioner

Only 10% of respondents said they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner, a very similar proportion to those found in previous surveys who were actually able to name their PCC.[5] Although the proportion who say they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner always remains low, it varies considerably by demographic groups. Twice the number AB (14%) and C1 (13%) respondents said they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner compared to those in lower social grades (figure 4.13). 17% of those with a university education felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner, substantially more than those with only A levels (9%) or lower levels of education (figure 4.14).

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[5] See https://www.ipsos-mori.com/newsevents/blogs/makingsenseofsociety/1499/Police-and-Crime-Commissioners-one-year-on.aspx and http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/images/dynamicImages/How%20not%20to%20run%20an%20election.pdf.

Figure 4.13. Whether respondents felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner by social grade.
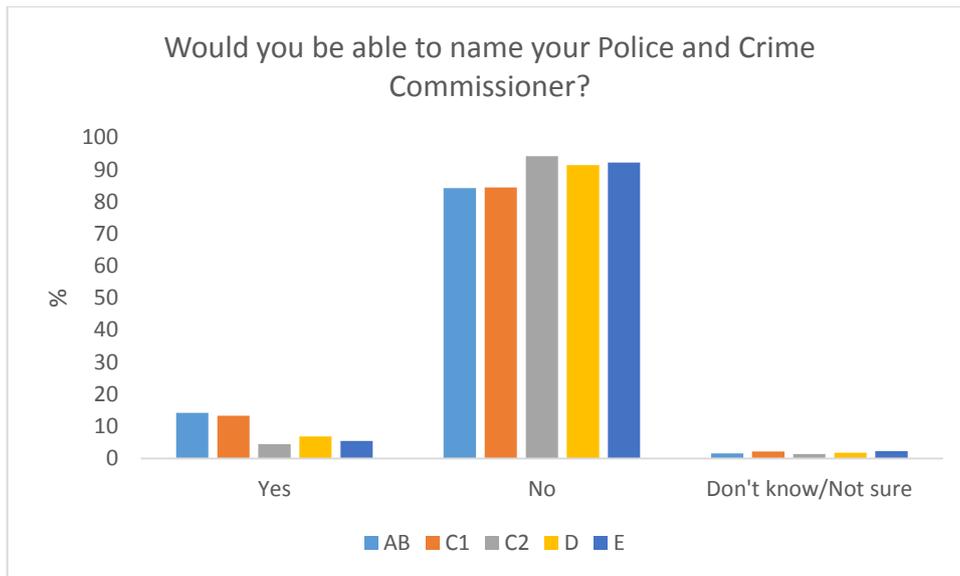
Base: respondents outside London

Figure 4.14. Whether respondents felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner by education level.
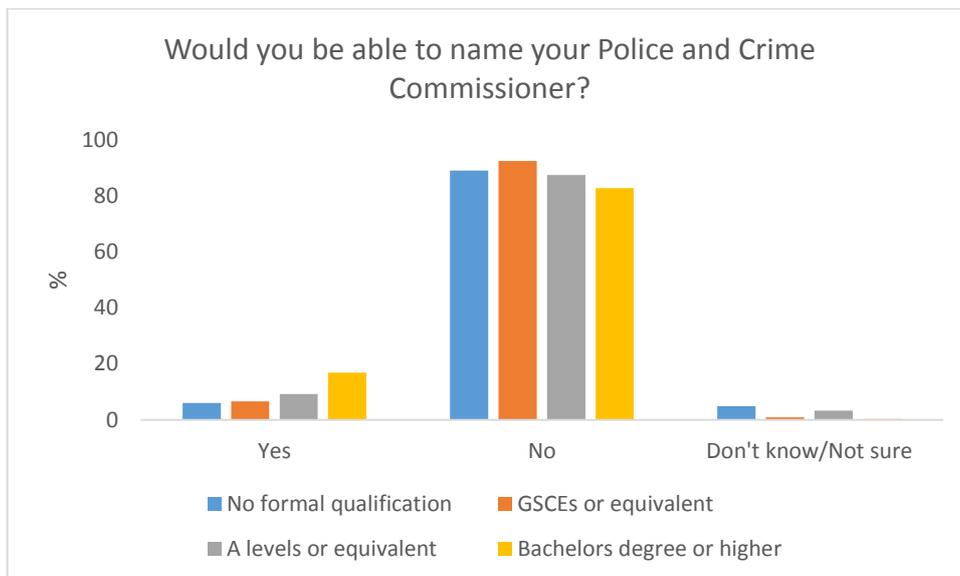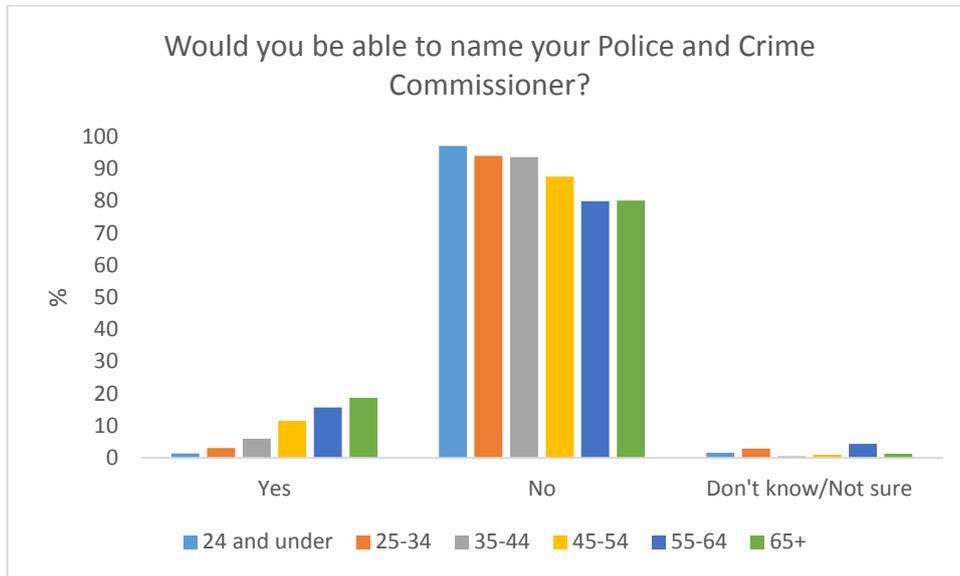

Base: respondents outside London

Older voters were also much more likely to say they could name their Police and Crime Commissioner. Only 1% of those 24 or under felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner, a proportion which rises with every age group, as shown in figure 4.15, with 19% of those 65 and over saying they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner.

Men were also more likely to say they could name their Police and Crime Commissioner, with 13% saying they would be able to, compared to 7% of women, although this could in part be due to the

tendency for men to be more confident about their political knowledge than women. There were no significant differences between white and non-white respondents.

Figure 4.15. Whether respondents felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner by age group.

Base: respondents outside London

Figure 4.16. Whether respondents felt they would be able to name their Police and Crime Commissioner by gender.

Base: respondents outside London

24
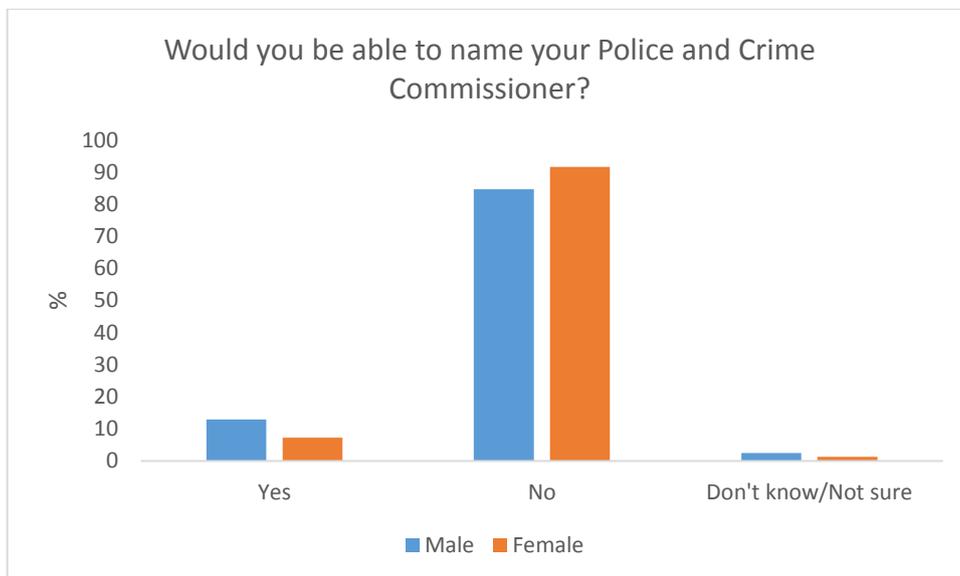
5. Engagement with and interest in Police and Crime Commissioners

In order to measure the public's interest in police accountability and policing issues more generally the survey asked several questions about the respondents' engagement with the work of Police and Crime Commissioners, both at the time of the 2012 election and in with their elected PCC following the election, as well as their general interest in policing issues:

- Whether they voted in the 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections.
- Whether they had any contact with their Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Whether they were aware of any public meetings in their local area about policing issues.
- How they would find out about policing issues in their local area.
- How interested they were in finding out about policing issues in their local area.
- How interested they were in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Key findings
- In line with the actual turnout at the election, very few respondents reported having voted in the 2012 election (20%).
- Respondents in higher social grades, respondents with higher levels of education, and older voters were more likely to say they voted in the 2012 elections.
- Very few respondents (8%) reported having had any contact with their PCC and only 15% said they were aware of public meetings on policing issues in their local area.
- 84% of respondents could name at least one source of information they would use to find out information about policing issues in their local area.
- Respondents in lower social grades, respondents with lower levels of education, and ethnic minority respondents were more likely to say they did not know where they would go for information about policing issues.
- Respondents were generally not very interested in policing matters. 60% said they were not interested in finding out about policing issues in their local area. Similarly more respondents (41%) said they were not interested in the work of PCCs than said they were interested (29%).
- Respondents in the highest social grade and the most educated respondents were more likely to say they were interested in policing matters than respondents in other categories.
- Ethnic minority respondents were more likely to say they were interested in policing matters. 56% of non-white respondents said they were interesting in finding out about policing issues, compared to 37% of white respondents. 38% of non-white respondents agreed they were interested in the work of PCCs compared to 27% of white respondents.

5.1. Voting at the 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections

The survey asked those that recalled the 2012 PCC elections whether they voted in these elections. Of these 45% said that they did vote, giving a total turnout of 20% in the survey, slightly higher than the actual turnout of 15.1%.

Of those that recalled the election, which varied substantially by social grade and education (see section 4.3), the reported turnout differs greatly by social demographics. Respondents in the AB and C1 categories were much more likely to vote than respondents in the lower social grades (figure 5.1), with just over half of respondents in the AB and C1 categories saying they voted, compared to less than 35% of those in the lower social grades, who were much less likely to recall the election to begin with (and so the effect of social grade on turnout is slightly supressed in figure 5.1).
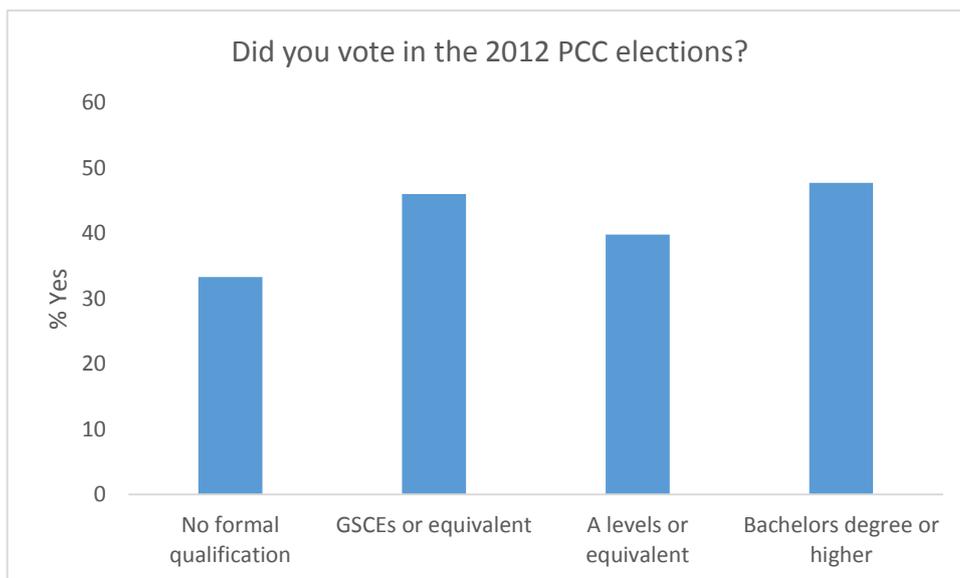
Figure 5.1. Whether respondent voted in 2012 PCC elections (of those that recalled election) by social grade.

Did you vote in the 2012 PCC elections?
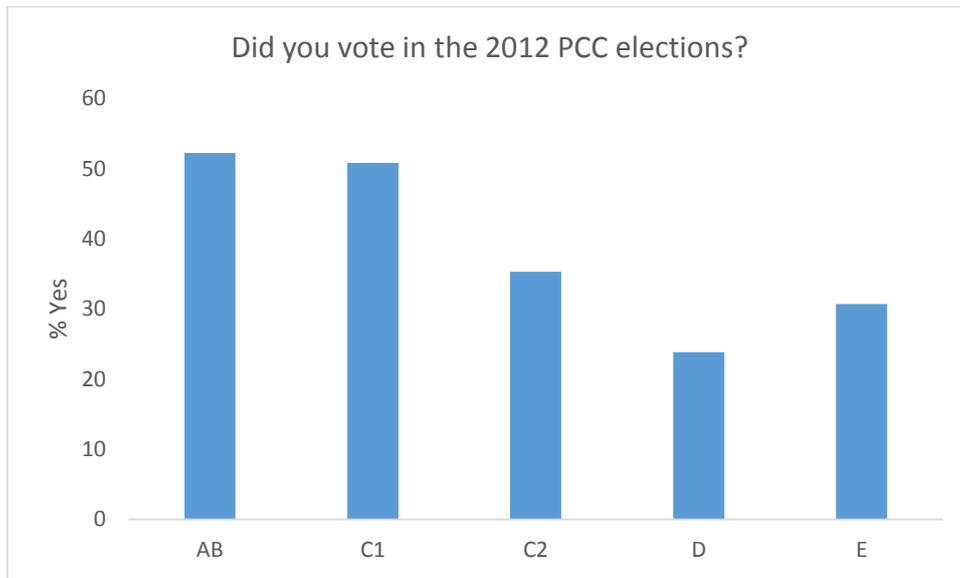
Base: respondents who recalled election

Similarly those with higher levels of education were more likely to say they voted in the elections (figure 5.2): only 33% of those with no formal qualifications said they voted, compared to 48% of those with a university degree (again, those with higher levels of education were also much more likely to recall the elections, and so the effect of education on turnout is slightly supressed in figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. Whether respondent voted in 2012 PCC elections (of those that recalled election) by education level.

Did you vote in the 2012 PCC elections?

Base: respondents who recalled election

Older voters were also much more likely to say the voted in the elections than younger voters (figure 5.3), with only 18% of those 24 or younger who recalled the election saying they voted, compared to 56% of those 64 and older.

Figure 5.3. Whether respondent voted in 2012 PCC elections (of those that recalled election) by age group.

Did you vote in the 2012 PCC elections?
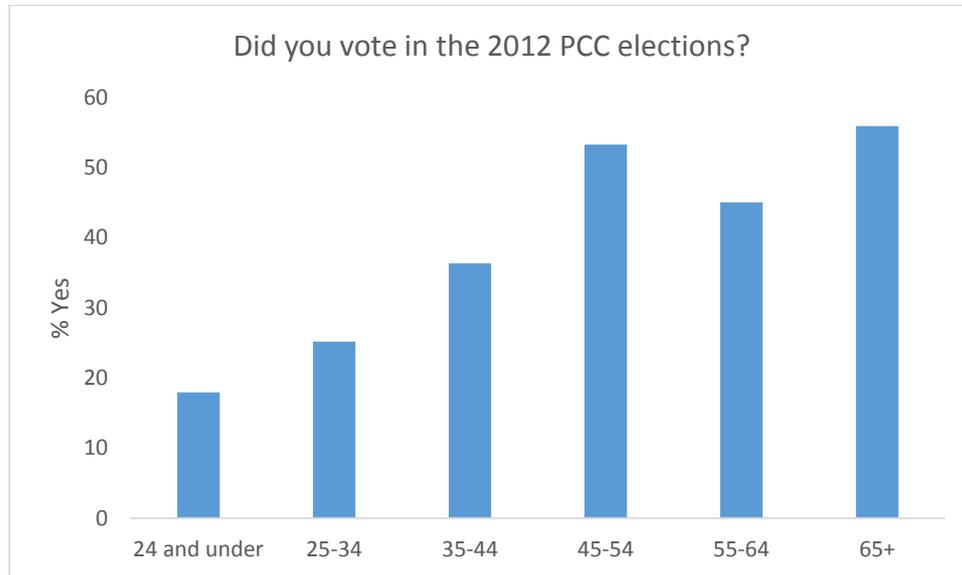
Base: respondents who recalled election

The survey did not suggest any significant gender or ethnic differences in turnout at the 2012 election.

5.2. Contact with Police and Crime Commissioners

Very few respondents reported having had any contact with their Police and Crime Commissioner, with only 8% reporting any form of contact. Of those that reported contact, the most common form of contact was through written letters and telephone calls. It should be noted that only 1.6% of respondents reported these forms of contact, and that the proportion of respondents giving any of the forms of contact lie well within the margin of error for the survey. Any conclusions about contact with Police and Crime Commissioners beyond the fact that most people have not had any contact with them should be drawn with extreme caution.

Contact with Police and Crime Commissioners does not seem to vary in a systematic fashion across social grades (figure 5.4) or any other demographic characteristic (not shown here). The highest levels of contact were reported by those in the E social grade, though as those in the AB and C1 grades reported more contact than those in the C2 and E grades it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the effect of social grade on contact with Police and Crime Commissioners.

Figure 5.4. Contact with Police and Crime Commissioner by social grade.

Have you had any contact with your Police and Crime Commissioner?
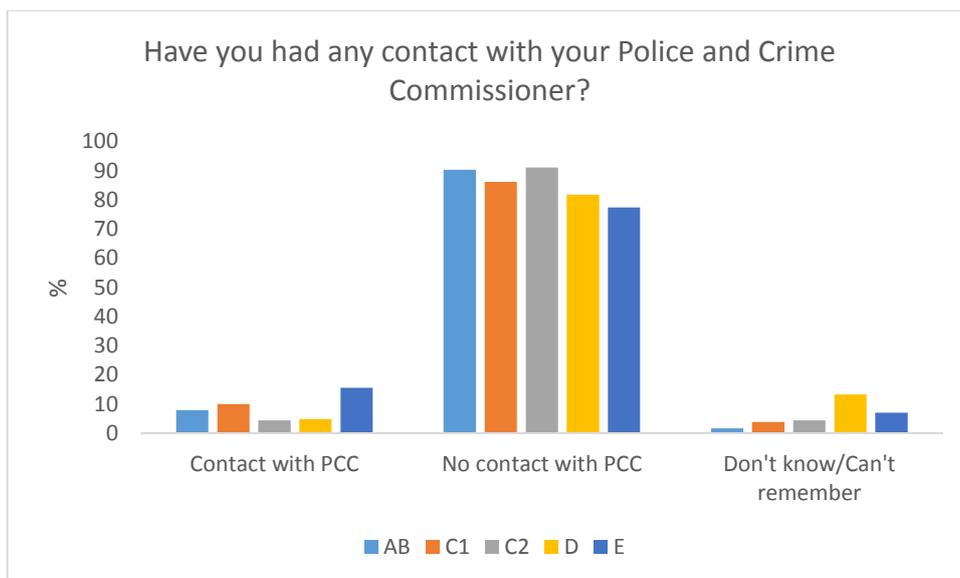
Base: respondents outside London

5.3. Awareness of public meetings on policing issues

Most respondents said they were unaware of public meetings on local policing issues, with only 15% reporting that they were. Those in the AB social grade were slightly more likely to be aware of public meetings than those in other social grades (figure 5.5) with 20% saying they were aware of public meetings, with 13-14% of respondents in the other social grades reporting they were.

Figure 5.5. Awareness of public meetings on policing issues by social grade.

Are you aware of any public meetings in your local area on policing issues?

Base: all respondents

28
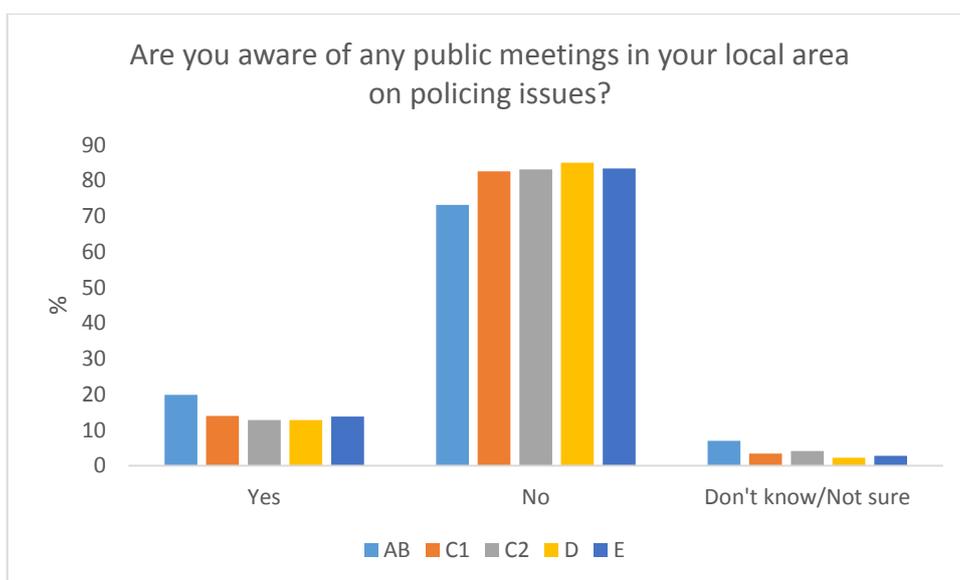
Respondents with a university degree were also more likely to say they were aware of public meetings (18%) compared to those with lower levels of education (between 12% and 15%) as shown in figure 5.6, but there is very little variation between the other levels of education.

Figure 5.6. Awareness of public meetings on policing issues by education level.
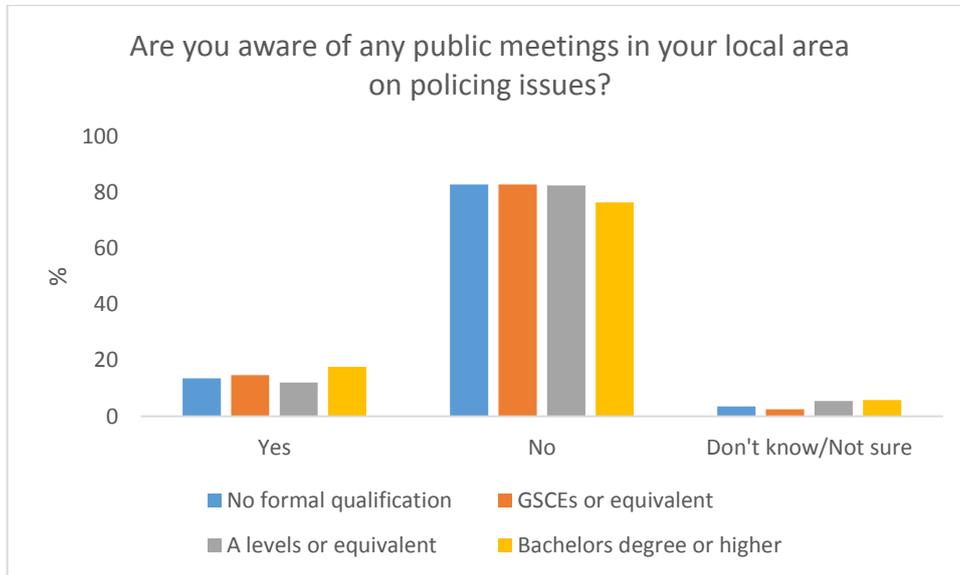
Base: all respondents

The most variation in those who had heard of public meetings is found in different age groups, as shown in figure 5.7. Only 4% of those 24 or younger were aware of public meetings, rising steadily to 23% of those 65 or older. There were no apparent differences in whether respondents had heard of public meetings according to gender or ethnicity.

*Figure 5.7. Awareness of public meetings on policing issues by age group.*
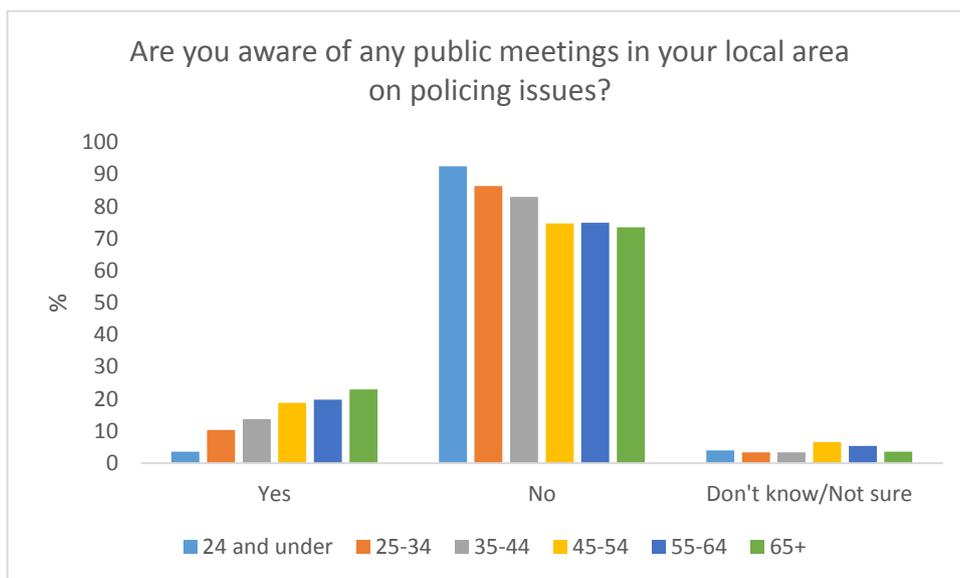
Base: all respondents

5.4. Information about policing

84% of respondents could name at least one source of information they would go to find information about policing issues in their local area. The most popular sources of information (shown in figure 5.8) were the internet (30%) and local newspapers (28%), which had double the number of respondents than the next most popular category (word of mouth: 14%).

Figure 5.8. Where respondents would go to find information about policing issues in their local area.

How, if at all, would you find out about policing issues in your local area?
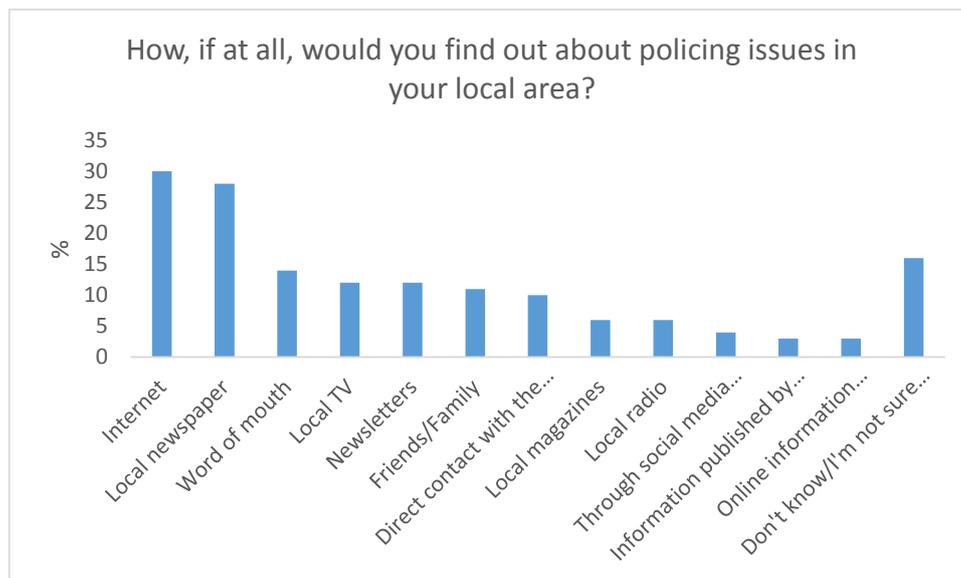
Base: all respondents

A small but substantial group of respondents said they did not know where they would go to find information about local policing issues (16%). As figures 5.9-5.11 show, these respondents were not distributed evenly between demographic groups. Only 10% of those in the AB social grade said they did not know where they would go to find information on local policing issues, rising steadily to 25% of those in the E social grade (figure 5.11).
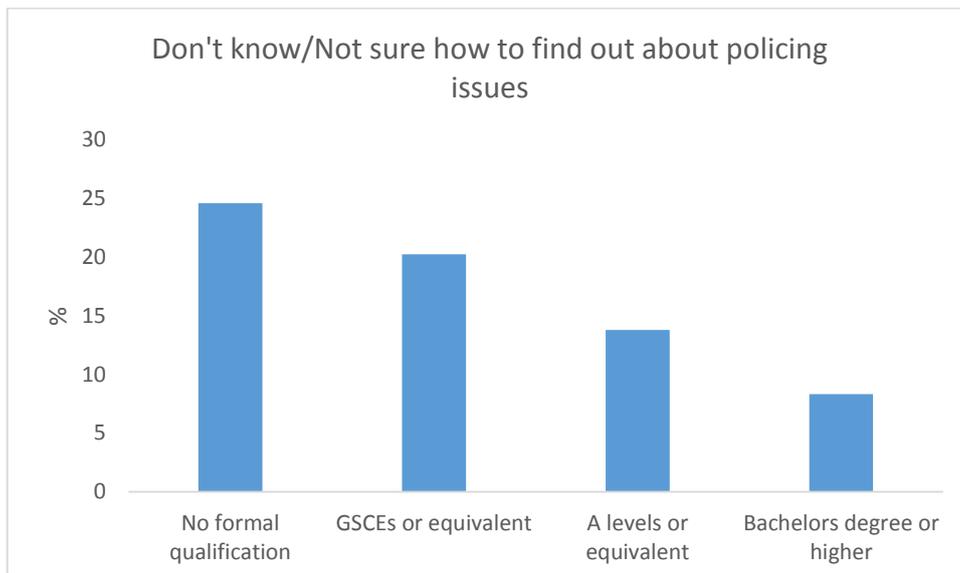
Figure 5.9. Respondents who do not know where they would get information about local policing issues by social grade.

Don't know/Not sure how to find out about policing issues
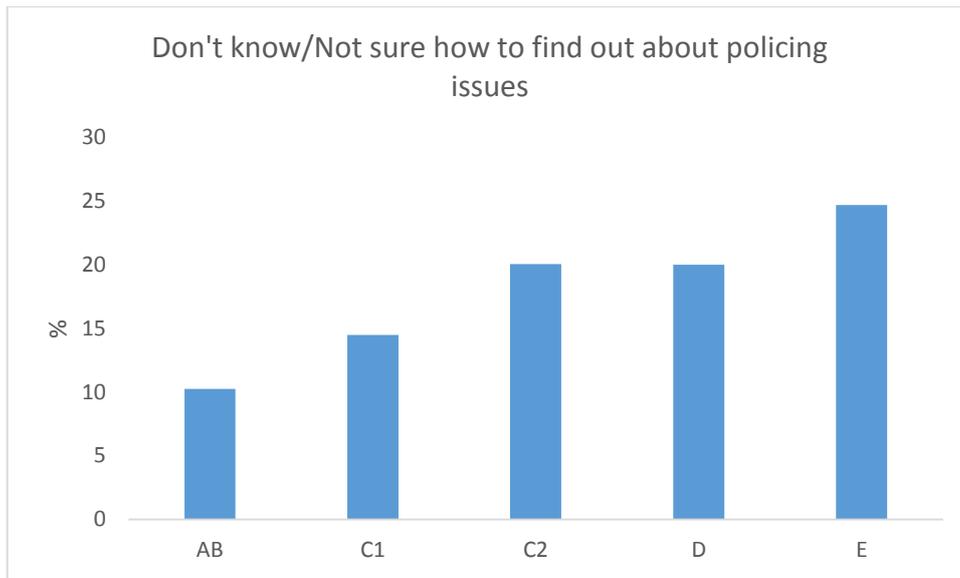
Base: all respondents

Respondents with lower levels of education were also more likely to say they did not know where they would go for information about local policing issues (figure 5.12). 25% of those without formal qualifications said they did not know where they would go for information, dropping to only 8% of those with a university degree.

Figure 5.10. Respondents who do not know where they would get information about local policing issues by education level.

Don't know/Not sure how to find out about policing issues

Base: all respondents

There was also a considerable difference between ethnicities, as shown in figure 5.13. 28% of non-white respondents said they did not know where they would go for information about local policing

issues, more than double the 13% of white respondents who said the same. There were no significant differences by age or gender.

Figure 5.11. Respondents who do not know where they would get information about local policing issues by ethnicity.

**Don't know/Not sure how to find out about policing issues**
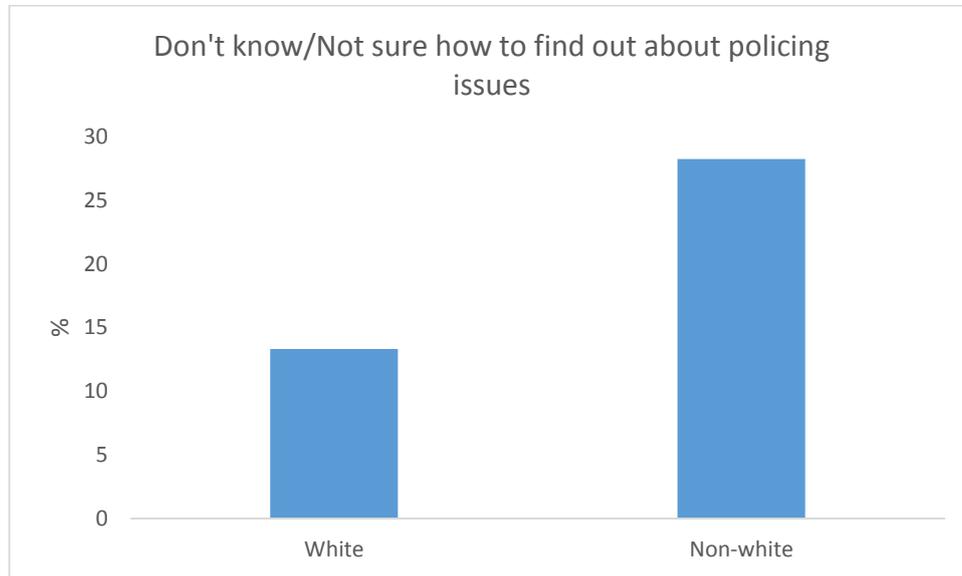
Base: all respondents

5.5. Interest in local policing issues

On the whole respondents were not particularly interested in finding out about policing issues in their local area, as shown in figure 5.12. 60% of respondents said they were not interested in finding out about policing issues, whilst only 38% said they were interested.
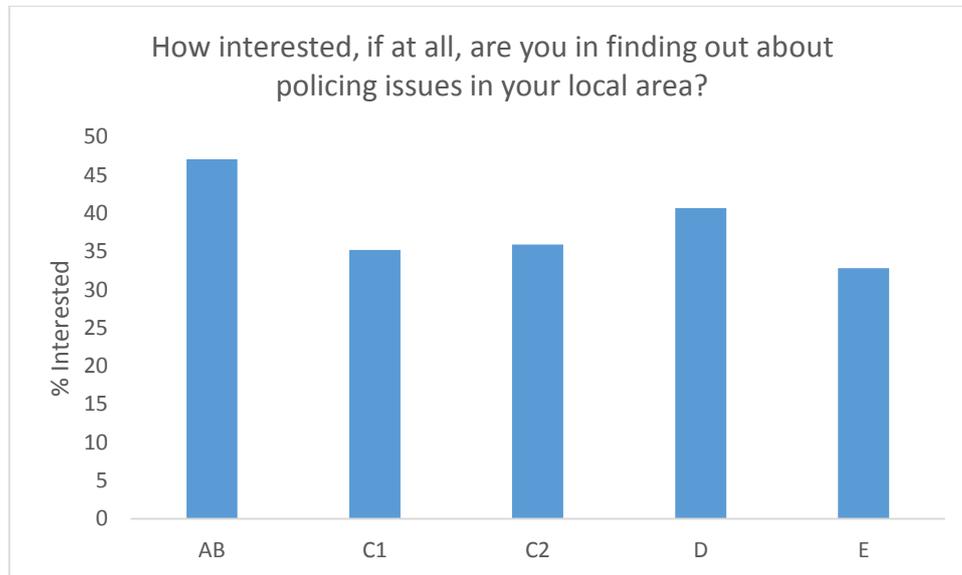
Figure 5.12. Interest in finding out about policing issues in local area.

How interested, if at all, are you in finding out about policing issues in your local area?

Base: all respondents

32
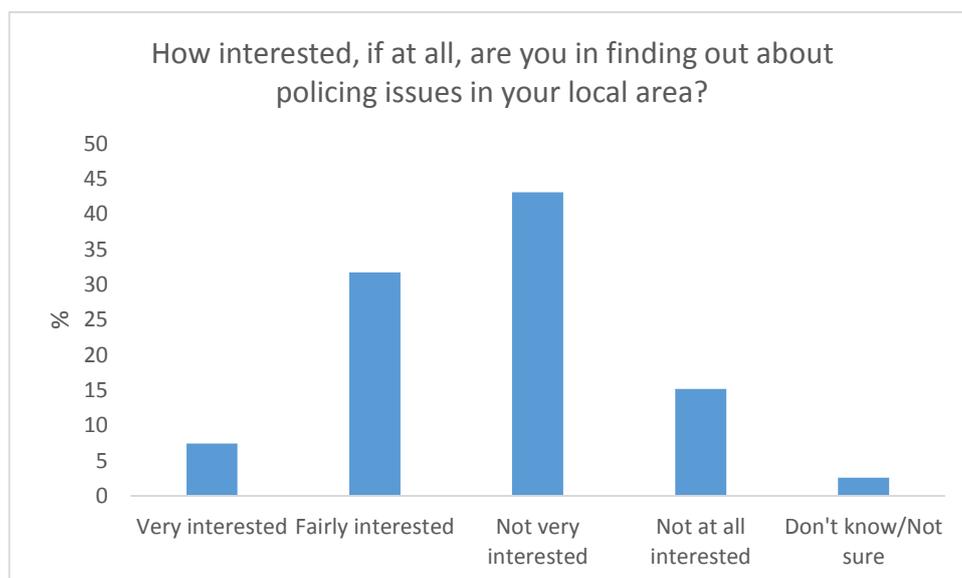
Although those in the AB social grade (figure 5.13) are more interested in finding out about local policing issues (47%) than respondents in lower social grades, there is not much systematic variation between the other social grades: respondents in the D social grade are slightly more interested in finding out about policing issues (41%) than Cs (35%-36%) or Es (33%).
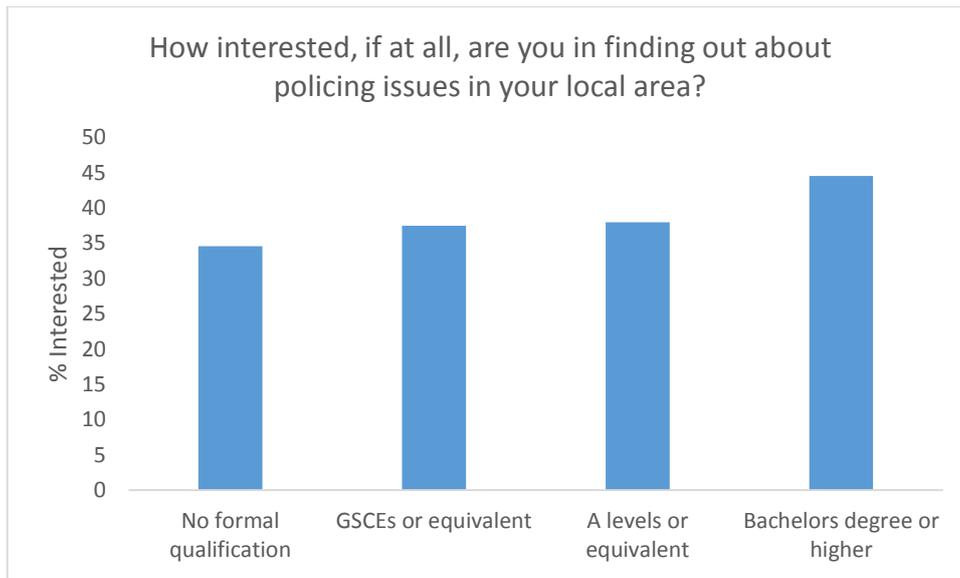
Figure 5.13. Interest in finding out about policing issues in local area by social grade.

Base: all respondents

Similarly, although those with a university education (figure 5.14) are more interested in finding out about local policing issues than those with lower levels of education (45%), there is not much variation between the other levels: those with no formal qualifications are the least interested in finding out about policing issues (35%), but only slightly less so than those with only GSCEs (or equivalent), who report almost the same levels of interest as those with A levels (38%).

How interested, if at all, are you in finding out about policing issues in your local area?

Base: all respondents

Following a similar pattern, the youngest respondents are the least interested in finding out about local policing issues (32%), whilst those in the 35-44 and 55-64 age groups are the most interested (46-47%).

Figure 5.15. Interest in finding out about policing issues in local area by age group.

How interested, if at all, are you in finding out about policing issues in your local area?
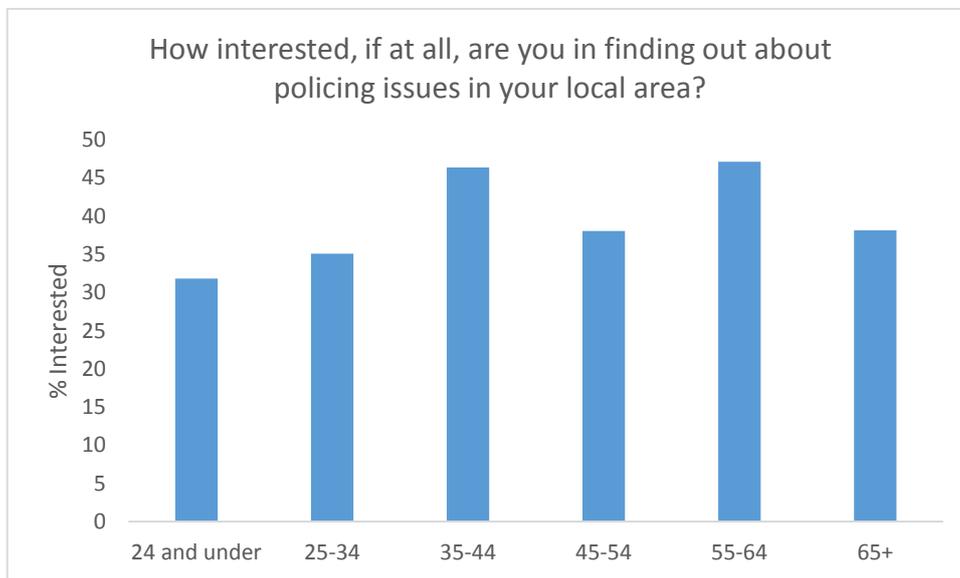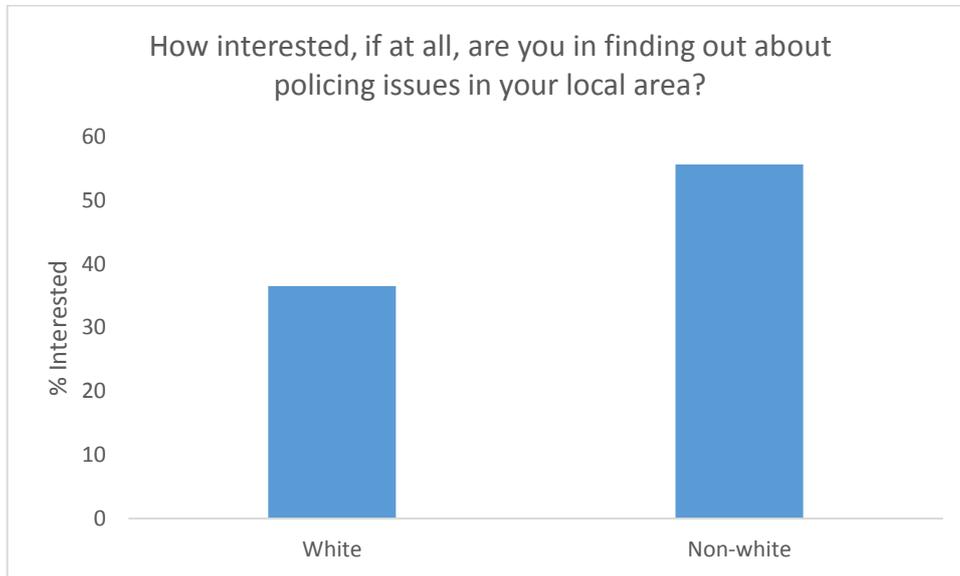
Base: all respondents

One of the clearest differences in interest in finding out about local policing issues is between ethnic groups, as shown in figure 5.16. More white respondents said they were not interested in finding out about local policing issues (61%) than said they were interested (37%). Conversely, most non-white

respondents said they were interested in policing issues (57%), with 40% saying they were not interested.

Figure 5.16. Interest in finding out about policing issues in local area by ethnic group.

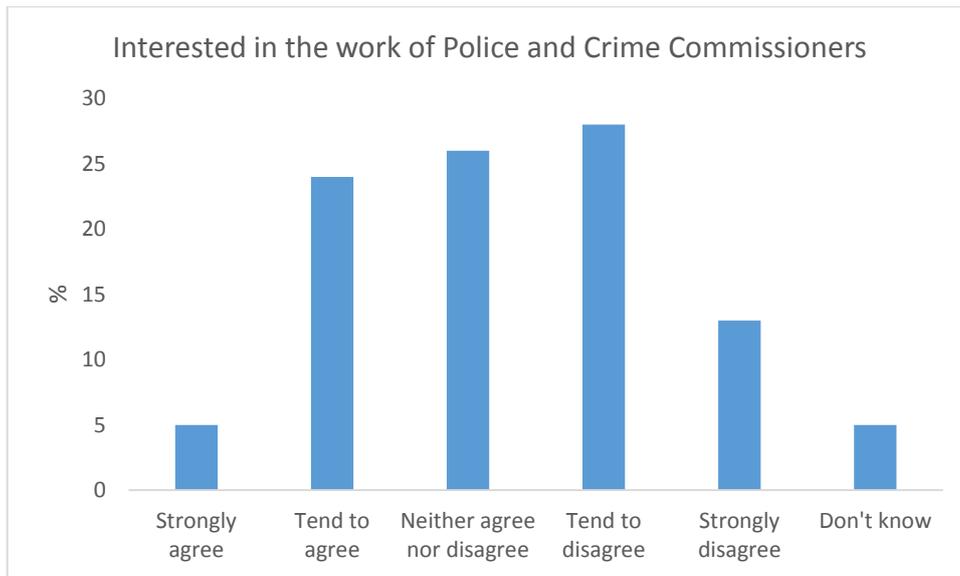
Base: all respondents

There were no apparent gender differences in interest in finding out about local policing issues.

5.6. Interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners

Interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners followed a similar pattern as interest in finding out about local policing issues. Overall, more respondents disagreed (41%) with the statement 'I am interested in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners' than agreed with it (29%), as shown in figure 5.17.
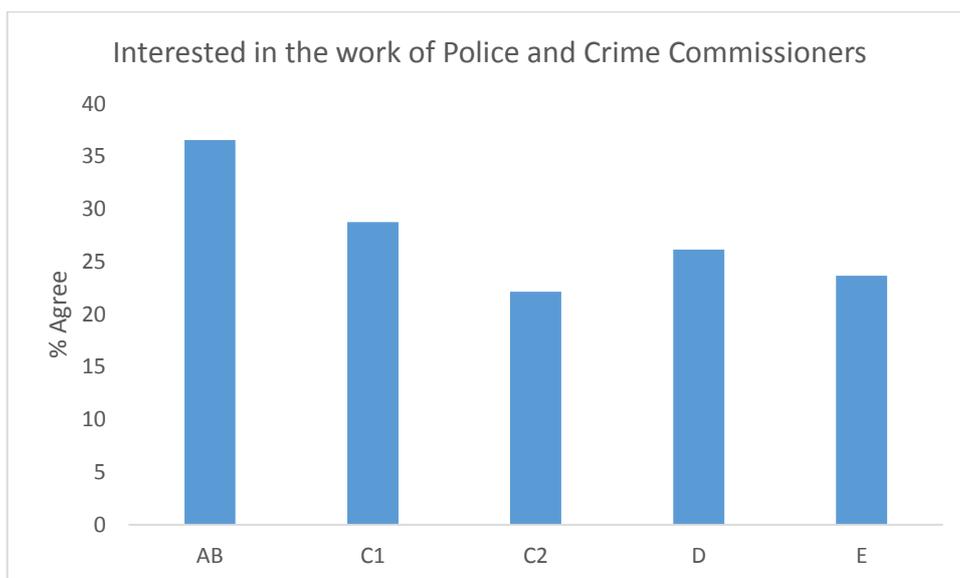
Figure 5.17. Interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners.
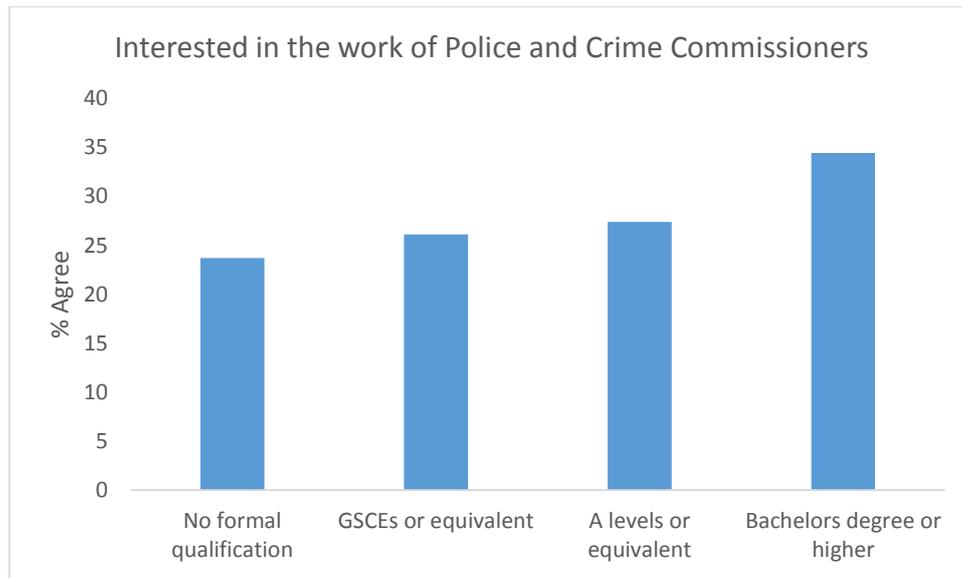
Base: all respondents

Again, those in the AB social grade (37%) and with a university education (34%) were the most likely to say they were interested in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners (figures 5.18 and 5.19). The variation in interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners between the other social grades does not lend itself to an obvious interpretation – respondents in C1 and D were more likely to be interested in the work of PCCs than those in C2 and E. Conversely, level of education has a linear relationship, with more educated respondents displaying more interest than less educated respondents.

Figure 5.18. Interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners by social grade.
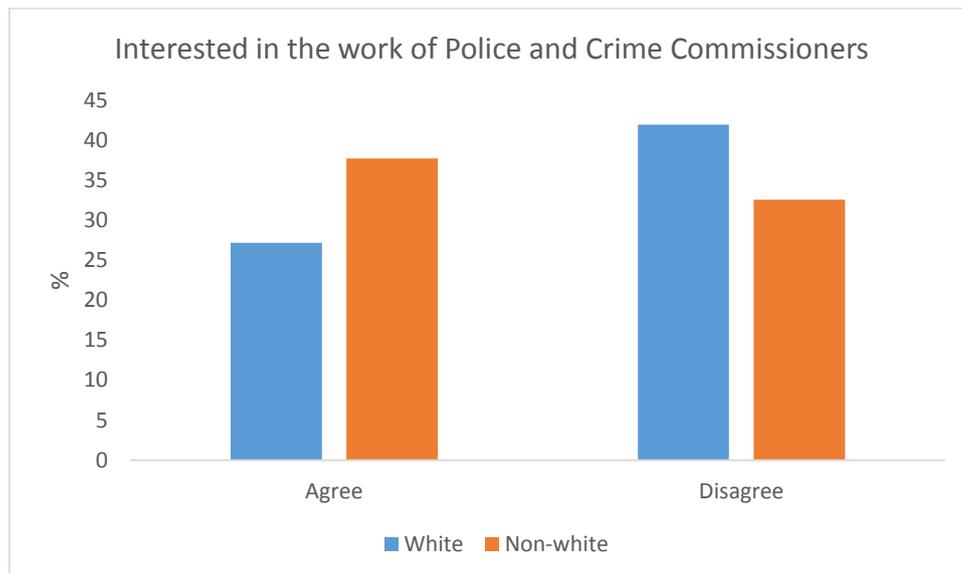
Base: all respondents

Interested in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners

Base: all respondents

Again the levels of interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners varied considerably by ethnicity. Non-white respondents were more likely to say they were interested (38%) than not (33%), while the reverse is true of white respondents who were more likely to say they were not interested (42%) than interested (27%).

Figure 5.20. Interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners by ethnic group.

Interested in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners

Base: all respondents

The survey did not suggest any significant differences in interest in the work of PCCs between different age groups or genders.

6. Local Police and Crime Panels

Finally, in order to further measure the public's knowledge of and engagement with the new police accountability framework, the survey asked respondents four questions about their knowledge of and interest in local Police and Crime Panels:

- Whether they had heard of local Police and Crime Panels
- Whether they knew how local Police and Crime Panels were chosen
- Whether they thought local Police and Crime Panels provided sufficient oversight of Police and Crime Commissioners
- How interested they were in the work of local Police and Crime Panels.

Key findings
- Only 15% of respondents said they had heard of local Police and Crime Panels and most respondents did not know how they were appointed.
- Despite most respondents not having heard of local Police and Crime Panels, twice as many respondents thought the panels would provide sufficient oversight of PCCs (34%) as did not (17%).
- Those who had previously heard of panels were much more likely to think that they would provide sufficient oversight of Police and Crime Commissioners (48%) than those that had not (30%).
- Respondents in the higher social grades, older respondents, and respondents with higher levels of education were generally more likely to have heard of local Police and Crime Panels.
- More respondents said they were not interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels (42%) than said they were interested (27%).
- Respondents in higher social grades, respondents with higher levels of education, older respondents, and ethnic minority respondents were all more likely to say they were interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels.

6.1. Knowledge of local Police and Crime Panels

Overall levels knowledge of local Police and Crime Panels were very low: only 15% of respondents said that they had heard of them. Even amongst those who had heard of Police and Crime Commissioners (who we could consider to be more informed about police accountability arrangements) only 20% said they had heard of the panels, though this was considerably higher than those who had not heard of Police and Crime Commissioners, only 4% of which said they had heard of local Police and Crime Panels.
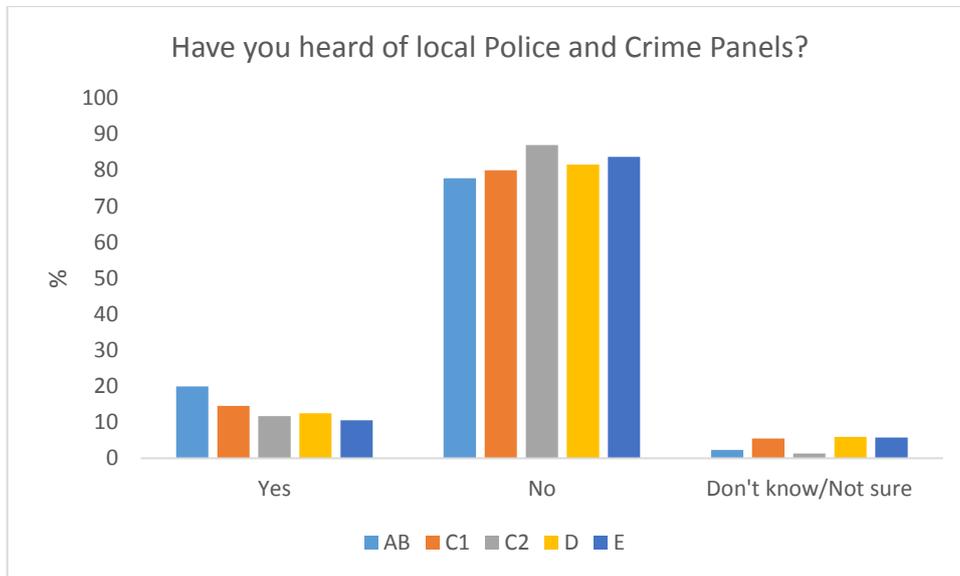
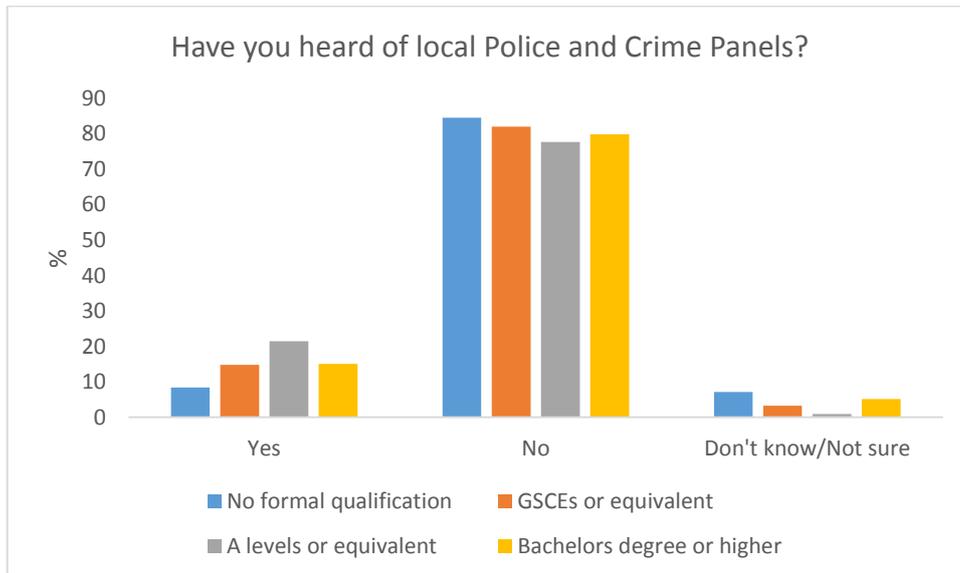**Have you heard of local Police and Crime Panels?**
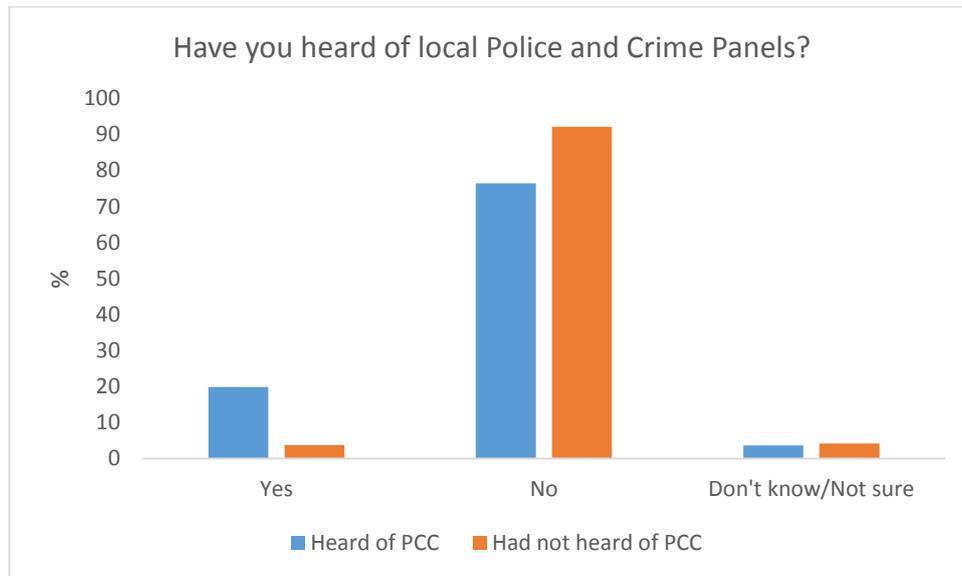
Base: all respondents

Awareness of local Police and Crime Panels varied in similar ways to knowledge of other elements of the police accountability framework. Respondents in higher social grades were more likely to have heard of local Police and Crime Panels than those in lower grades (figure 6.2). Similarly more educated voters were more likely to have heard of the panels (figure 6.3) though this trend only occurs between those with no formal qualifications, GSCEs (or equivalent) and A levels: those with a university education less likely than those with A levels to say they had heard of the panels. A similar trend exists for age, as shown in figure 6.4. Older voters are generally more aware of local Police and Crime Panels, but those 65 and over are slightly less aware of the panels than those 55-64. No differences were found for different genders or ethnicities.

Figure 6.2. Whether respondents had heard of local Police and Crime Panels by social grade.
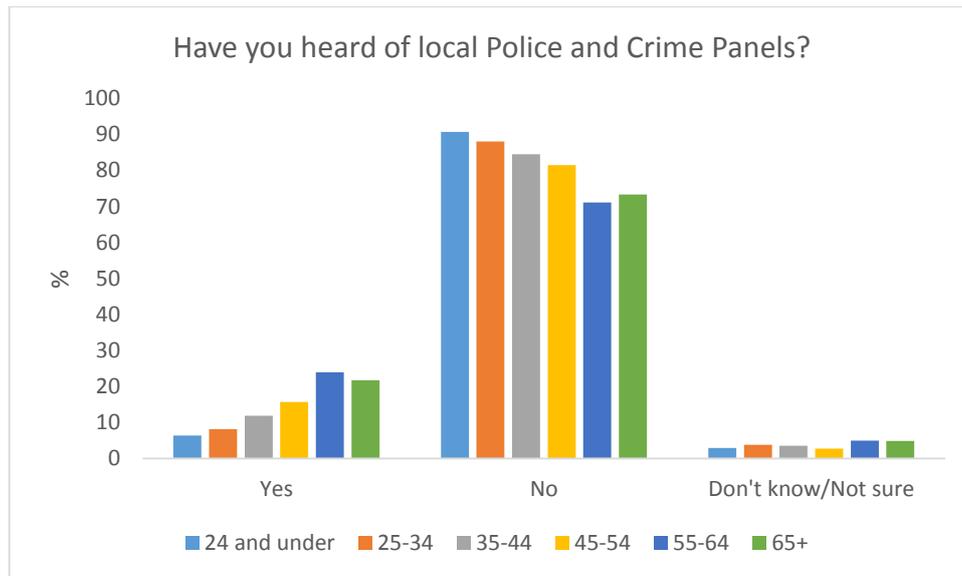

Base: all respondents

Figure 6.3. Whether respondents had heard of local Police and Crime Panels by education level.
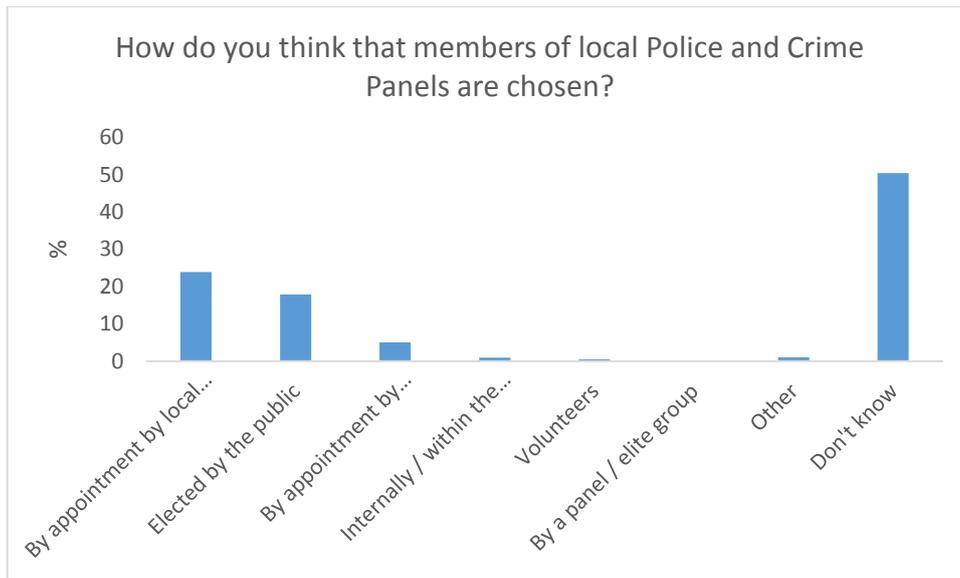

Base: all respondents

Base: all respondents

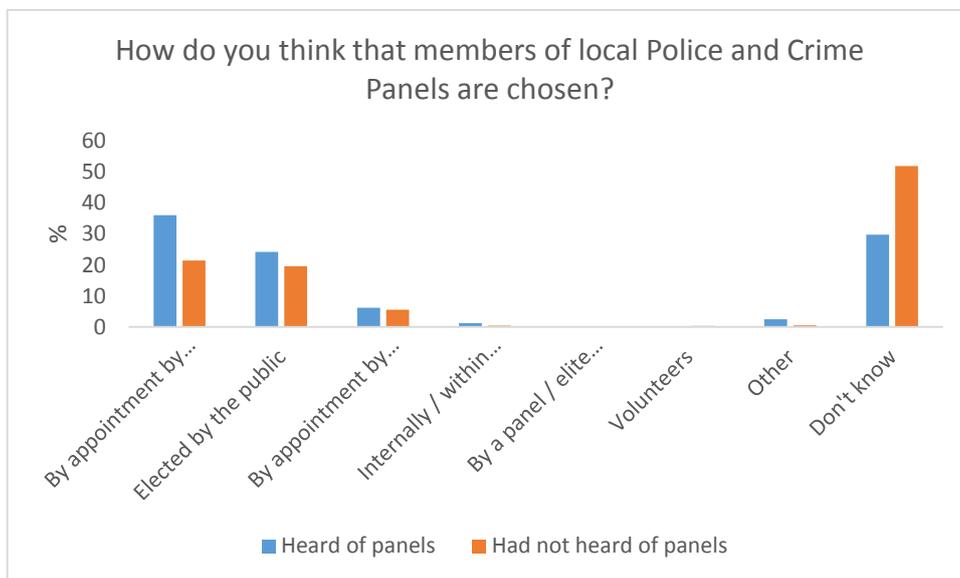## 6.2. Knowledge of local Police and Crime Panel appointment procedure

Unsurprisingly given the low levels of public awareness of the local Police and Crime Panels, most respondents did not know how the panels are appointed (figure 6.5), with 51% saying they did not know. 24% correctly knew that local Police and Crime Panels were appointed by local authorities. Given that this is higher than the proportion of respondents who had actually heard of local Police and Crime Panels, this suggests a certain amount of guessing. Amongst those who said they had heard of panels (figure 6.6) more respondents gave the correct answer (36%) than any other category. Just over half of those had not heard of local Police and Crime Panels said they did not know how they were appointed, the remaining respondents, almost equal proportions thought panels were appointed (21%) and elected by the public (20%).

Figure 6.5. How respondents thought local Police and Crime Panels are appointed.

How do you think that members of local Police and Crime Panels are chosen?

Base: all respondents

Figure 6.6. How respondents thought local Police and Crime Panels are appointed by whether respondent had heard of local Police and Crime Panels.

How do you think that members of local Police and Crime Panels are chosen?

■ Heard of panels   ■ Had not heard of panels

Base: all respondents
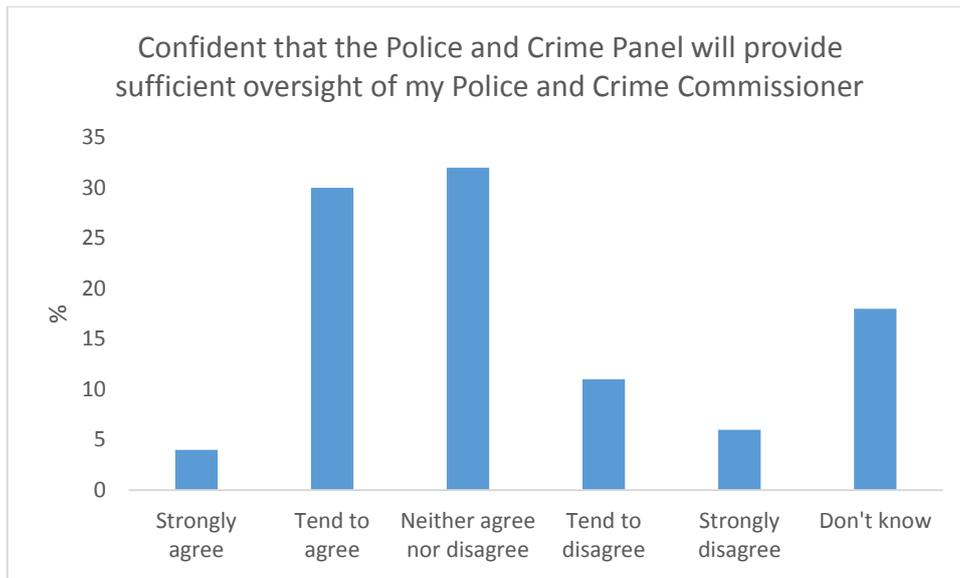
6.3. Confidence in local Police and Crime Panels

Overall more respondents had confidence in the ability of local Police and Crime panels to provide sufficient oversight of Police and Crime Commissioners (34%) than did not (17%). As shown in figure 6.8, almost a third of respondents (32%) had no strong opinion on the matter, and said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Confident that the Police and Crime Panel will provide sufficient oversight of my Police and Crime Commissioner

Base: all respondents

Confidence in local Police and Crime Panels did not vary markedly between different demographic groups. One category that did show variation in attitudes however was between those who had previously heard of local Police and Crime Panels and those that had not (figure 6.8). Those who had previously heard of panels were much more likely to say that they would provide sufficient oversight of Police and Crime Commissioners (48%) than those that had not (30%).

Figure 6.8. Confidence that Police and Crime Panels will provide sufficient oversight of PCCs by whether respondent had previously heard of panels.


Confident that the Police and Crime Panel will provide sufficient oversight of my Police and Crime Commissioner
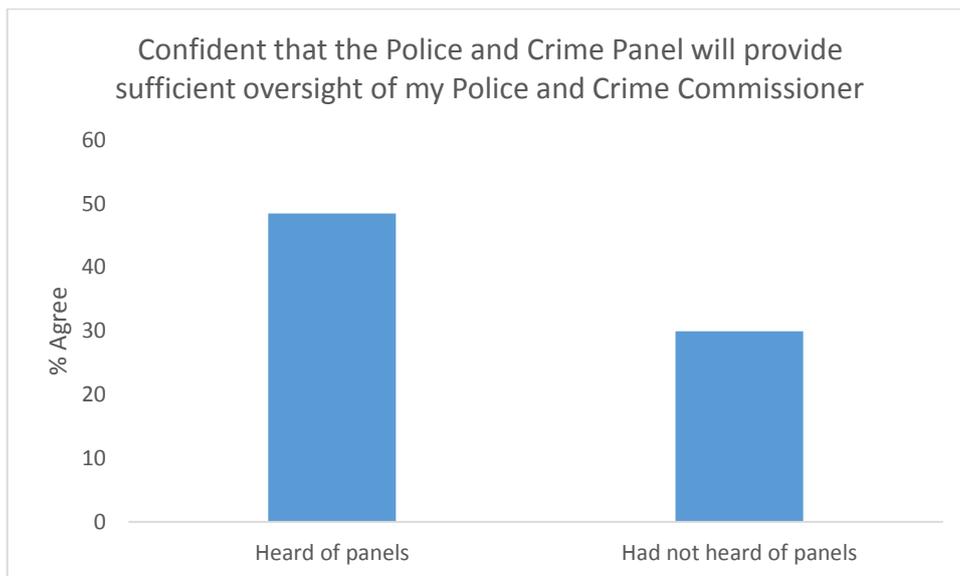
Base: all respondents

6.4. Interest in the work of local Police and Crime Panels

Interest in the work of local Police and Crime Panels follows a very similar pattern to interest in the work of Police and Crime Commissioners. More respondents said they were not interested in the work of local Police and Crime panels (42%) than were interested (27%), as shown in figure 6.11.
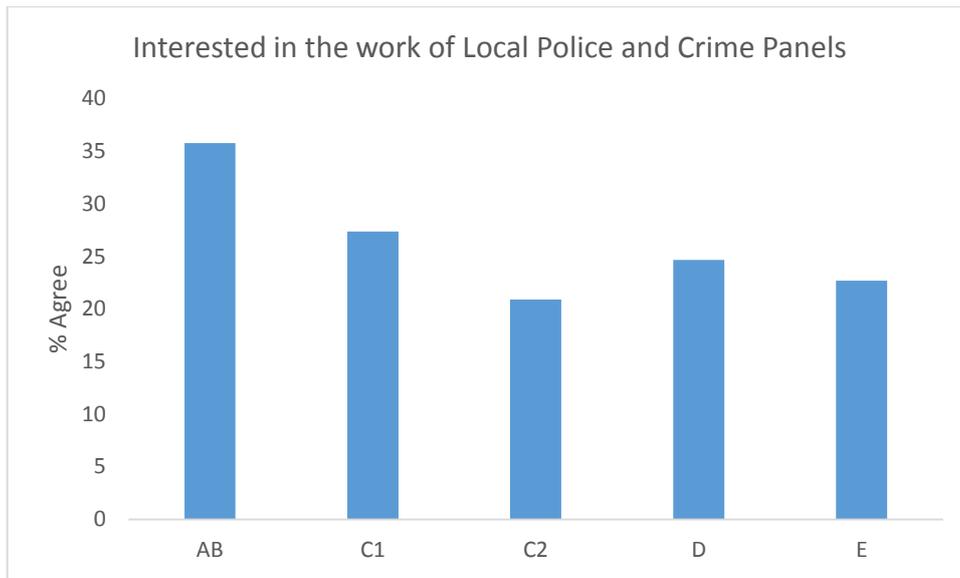
Figure 6.9. Interest in work of local Police and Crime Panels.
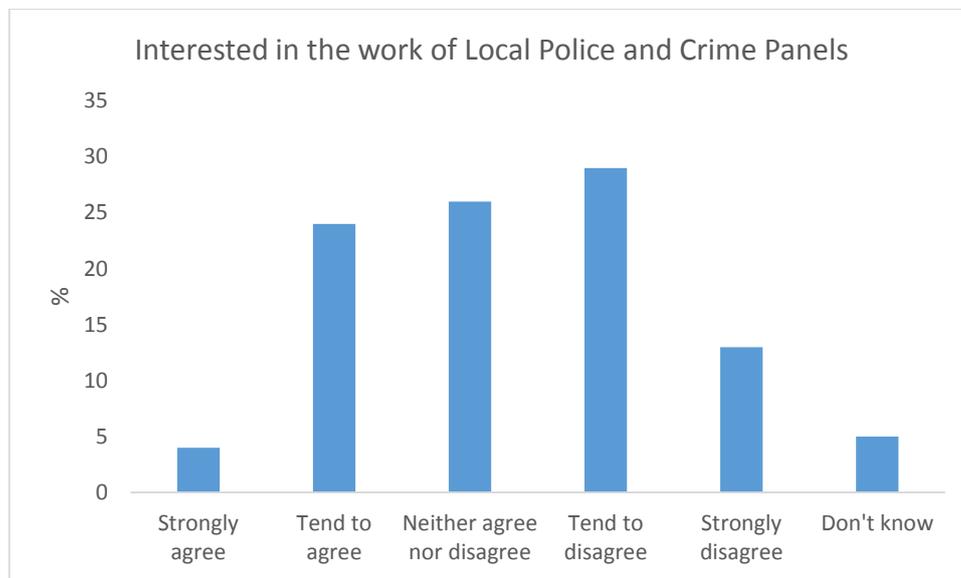
Base: all respondents

Once again those in the AB social grade were more likely to say they were interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels (figure 6.12), though the variation between the other social grades is not systematic. Similarly those with a university education say they are more interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels than those with lower levels of education (figure 6.13), but the variation between the lower levels of education is not systematic. Older voters are also more interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels (figure 6.14). The survey does not suggest any significant gender differences in the interest of the work of local Police and Crime Panels.

Figure 6.10. Interest in work of local Police and Crime Panels by social grade.

Base: all respondents

Figure 6.11. Interest in work of local Police and Crime Panels by education.
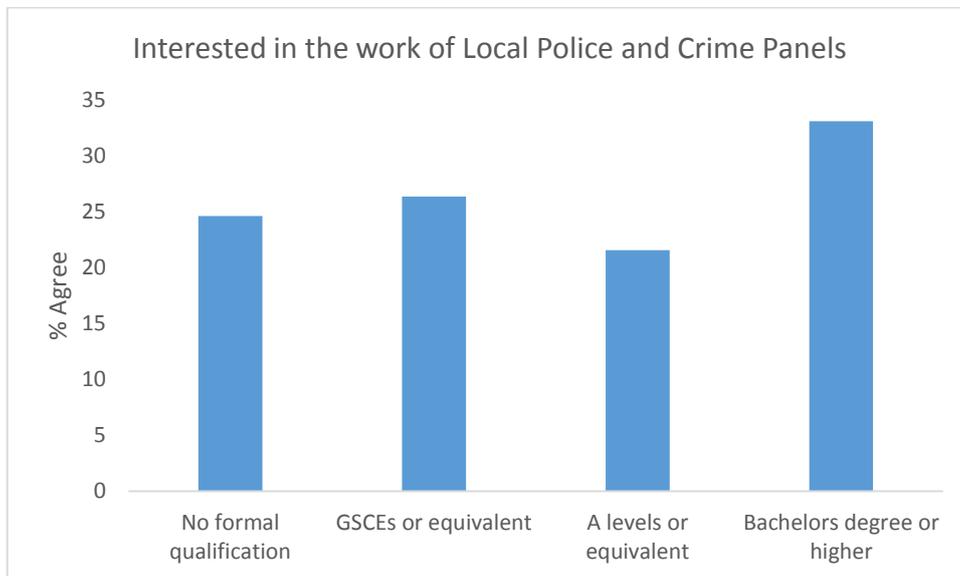
Base: all respondents

Interested in the work of Local Police and Crime Panels
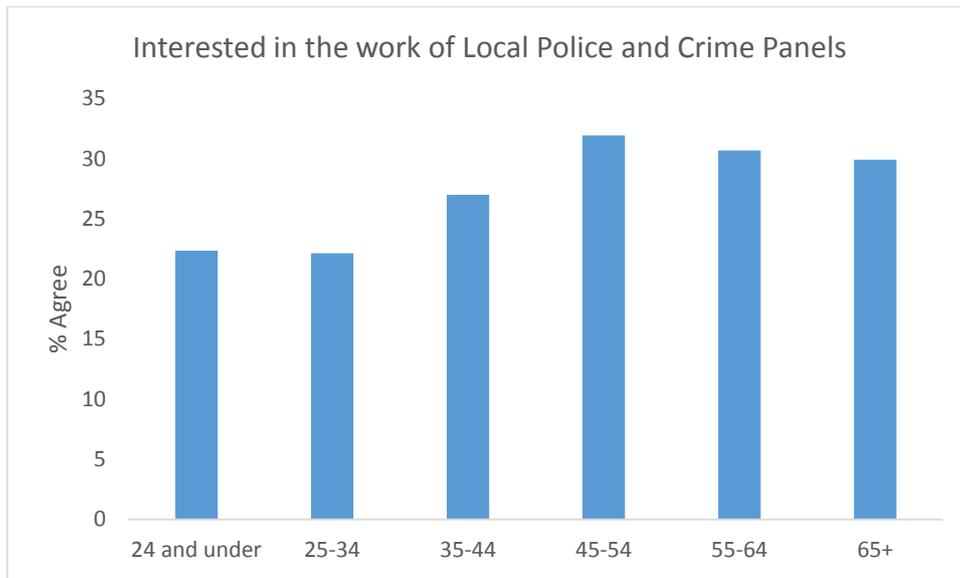
Base: all respondents

Finally, there is once again a difference between respondents of different ethnicities. White respondents are more likely to say they are not interested in the work of local Police and Crime Panels (44%) than they are to say they are interested (26%). Conversely, non-white voters are more likely to say they are interested (39%) than not interested (27%).

Figure 6.13. Interest in work of local Police and Crime Panels by ethnicity.

Interested in the work of Local Police and Crime Panels
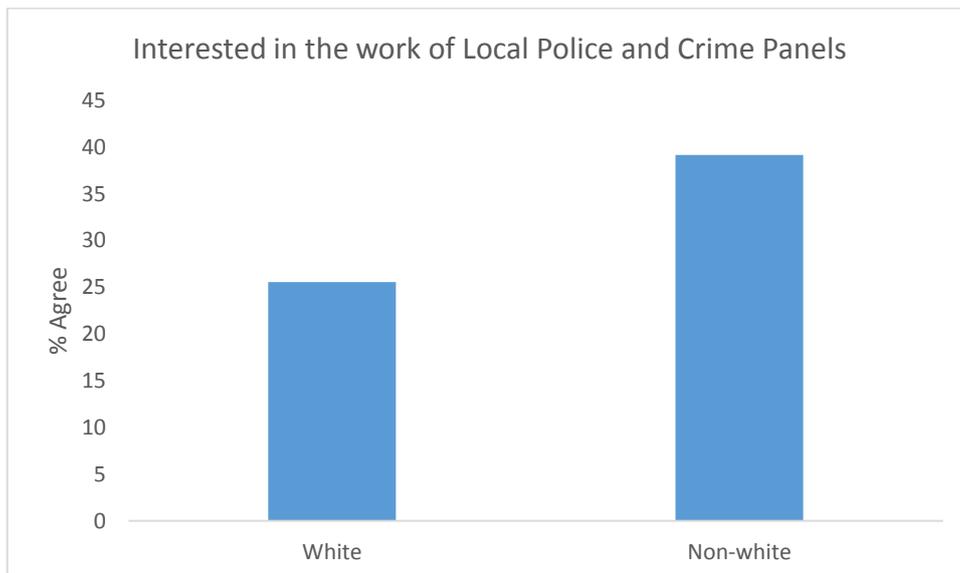
Base: all respondents

7. Conclusion

The introduction of a new police accountability framework, with Police and Crime Commissioners elected by the public, aimed to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the police. In the introduction to this report, we stated that the new model of police accountability is working adequately, only if the public knows about it, understands it and engages with it. The results of the survey reported here suggest that on this basis, the new model of police accountability is not working adequately.

On the whole respondents were not very knowledgeable about the new police accountability framework nor interested in policing issues. Although most respondents had heard of PCCs, a large proportion (32%) had not. The majority of respondents did not know that PCCs were elected and did not recall the 2012 PCC elections. Only 1 in 10 respondents said they would be able to name their PCC. Very few respondents reported having any contact with their PCC or that they were aware of public meetings on policing issues in their local area.

Knowledge of local Police and Crime Panels was much lower than that of PCCs. Only 15% of respondents said they had heard of the panels, and very few respondents knew how they were appointed. Perhaps reflecting their lack of knowledge on the topic, most respondents did not have a strong opinion about whether the panels were able to provide sufficient oversight of their PCCs, although of those who did have an opinion, more thought that they would provide sufficient oversight than did not.

Despite the introduction of PCCs most survey respondents thought that local people did not have much say in policing matters, with only one in four saying they did. Knowing about the new police accountability framework did not have much of an effect on this attitude, those who had heard of PCCs were equally as likely to think that local people did not have a say in policing issues as those that had not heard of them. Similarly most respondents said that it was not clear who to complain to about policing issues, though in this case those who had heard of PCCs were more likely to say it was clear who to complain to.

A large part of why the respondents generally did not know much about the new police accountability framework is their lack of interest in policing matters and the work of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels. The majority of respondents said they were not interested in finding out about policing issues in their local area and more respondents said they were not interested in the work of PCCs or Police and Crime Panels.[6]

Although they are not very interested in policing matters, most respondents had a positive impression of the conduct and accountability of police. The majority of respondents thought Senior Police Officers could be trusted to tell the truth, that police are held to account for their actions and that police deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter in their local area.

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[6] Although the picture of public knowledge of and engagement with the new police accountability framework painted by the survey is not particularly optimistic, if anything it probably *inflates* the degree of knowledge and interest in policing matters for two reasons. 1) the least knowledgeable and engaged members of the public are also the most likely not respond to surveys, which means that those that do respond to the survey are likely to be more knowledgeable about and interested in political issues. 2) There is a tendency for respondents to claim knowledge about and hold opinions on survey questions even when they do not really know anything about the issue at hand. See for example "Why one in ten Britons support the Monetary Control Bill (even though it doesn't exist)" by Patrick Sturgis in *Sex, Lies, and the Ballot Box*, edited by Philip Cowley and Robert Ford.

Not all types of respondents were equally engaged with and knowledgeable about the new police accountability framework. Respondents in higher social grades were more likely to have heard of PCCs, know that PCCs are elected, recall the 2012 election, have voted in that election, and heard of police and crime panels. Those in higher social grades were also more likely to say they were interested in policing issues, finding out about the work of PCCs and were aware of public meetings on police and crime issues. In general those in higher social grades are also more trusting of public office holders and have a higher opinion of the standards of conduct of public office holders. However these differences in knowledge, interest, and perceptions of general standards do not generally translate into attitudes about police accountability, priorities, or the say that local people get in policing matters.

Similarly, respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to say they were interested in policing issues, finding out about the work of PCCs and were aware of public meetings on police and crime issues. They were also more trusting of public office holders and have a higher opinion of the standards of conduct of public office holders. Again however these differences in knowledge, interest, and perceptions of general standards do not generally translate into attitudes about police accountability, priorities, or the say that local people get in policing matters, with the exception of those with a university education, who are more likely than other respondents to say that the police are dealing with the issues that matter than other types of respondents.

Older voters were generally more knowledgeable about and engaged with police accountability issues. They were more likely to have heard of PCCs and say they could name their PCC, have voted in the 2012 election, have heard of police and crime panels, and say they were aware of public meetings on crime issues. Younger voters however were generally more optimistic about the conduct of public office holders and were more trusting of public office holders than older voters and more likely to see the standards of conduct of public office holders as being high. Once again however these differences did not translate into differences in attitudes about police accountability.

Very few gender differences emerged in the analysis. Men were more likely to know that PCCs were elected and said they would be able to name their PCC but responses to other questions were very similar between men and women.

A fascinating pattern of differences between white and non-white respondent's knowledge of and interest in police and crime issues emerged in the analysis. Non-white respondents were less knowledgeable about the police accountability framework: most had not heard of PCCs, were less likely to know PCCs were elected, and were more likely to say they did not know where to go for information on police and crime issues. Conversely however they were much more likely to say they were interested in policing issues and the work of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels.

One question these findings raise is the extent to which they are driven by attitudes towards police accountability specifically or simply reflect wider trends of disengagement with public life. This question cannot be answered from the present survey alone but comparisons with wider trends of engagement suggest that both factors are likely to play some role. Demographic differences in engagement with police accountability and interest in policing issues reflect wide societal trends in engagement with public life: those in higher social grades, who are more educated, and older people are much more engaged with public life, whilst those in lower social grades, with lower levels of education, and younger people are more disengaged. Perceptions of general standards in standards in public life also reflect previously observed trends: those in higher social grades, with higher levels of education, and younger people are more positive about the standards of conduct in public life,

whilst those in lower social grades, with lower levels of education and older people are more pessimistic.[7]

There might be some reasons to be more optimistic about public perceptions of police accountability. Whilst knowledge of the new police accountability framework reflects wider patterns of public engagement, these trends are not reflected in opinions about the extent to which police are held to account for their actions. However even if most people are reasonably satisfied with policing, it is difficult to ignore the fact that engagement with police accountability is especially low, even for a generally disengaged public.

The extent to which this reflects apathy about policing issues or actually reflects satisfaction with policing is open to question. On the whole the public are fairly satisfied with standards of policing. Most of those surveyed said that they thought the police were held to account for their actions and that the police focused on the issues that mattered in their local areas. Similarly nearly three quarters of those surveyed in the 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales had overall confidence in the local police.[8]

Public concern with crime is also lower than it has been at any point during the past two decades. Figure 7.1 shows the proportion of respondents to monthly Ipsos MORI surveys saying what they thought was the most important issue facing Britain at the moment. At its peak in 2007 55% of respondents said crime was one of the most important issues facing Britain. In the most recent survey in December 2014 only 12% said the same. To some extent this might reflect the rising importance of other issues – particularly the economy during the financial crisis, at figure 7.1 illustrates. This trend is also exhibited by concern for the NHS, which also drops away sharply as concern with the economy rises. As concern with the economy has fallen, concern with the NHS has again risen. Concern with crime however has continued to fall, suggesting that this trend is occurring not just as a result of other issues trumping crime in the survey, but reflects a genuine drop in concern with crime and policing issues. Given that crime levels are the lowest on record this trend is perhaps not surprising.[9]
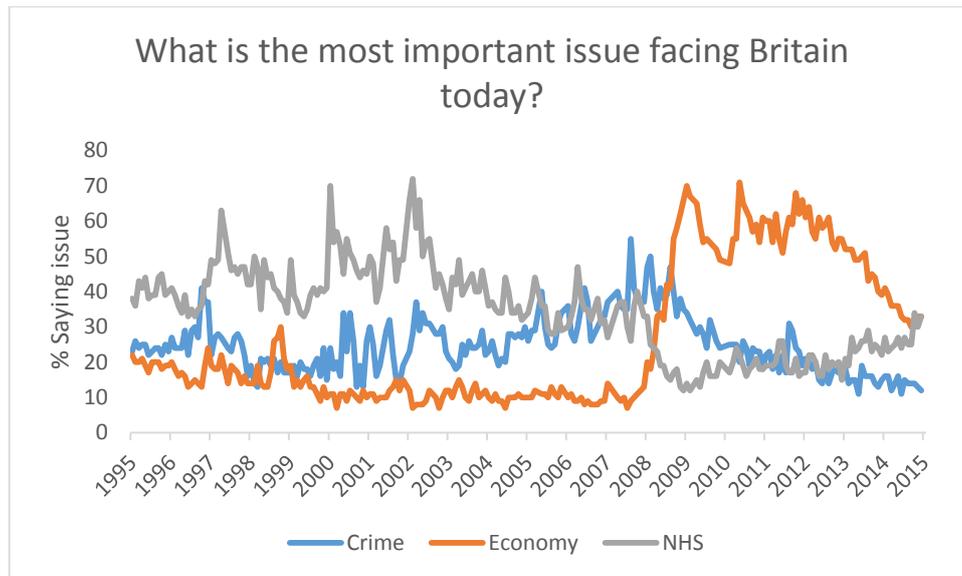
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[7] A pattern which effectively echoes the findings of the surveys of public attitudes towards conduct in public life
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/337017/Public_Attitude_Survey_2012.pdf.
[8] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-victimisation-and-public-perceptions--2012-13/rpt---chapter-1.html#tab-Perceptions-of-the-police.
[9] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-june-2014/stb-crime-stats--year-ending-june-2014.html.

What is the most important issue facing Britain today?

Whilst these trends might be good news for policing in general, they present a serious challenge for a police accountability framework based on engagement with the public and democratic participation. If the new model of police accountability is working adequately only if the public knows about it, understands it and engages with it, the evidence here suggests that for the time being at least, it is not working. It remains to be seen whether Police and Crime Commissioners will be able to rise to the difficult task of engaging a public who think that things are largely fine as they are and who think that crime is not one of the most pressing issues facing the country.

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[10] https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchspecialisms/socialresearch/specareas/politics/trends.aspx#issues.