

Using Research to Improve Policing post Casey—and Why that Might not Happen

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Abstract

Crime is a problem that extends beyond police and policing. As the saying goes, ‘you can’t arrest your way out of crime’, nor can you police your way out of a recruitment crisis, or baton-charge to improve trust. Policing faces some novel challenges, but not every policing problem is unique and there are ideas from outside policing that can help. This article makes suggestions on ways to resolve some of the issues raised in the Casey review using evidence from different disciplines and concludes with some reasons why research evidence is not routinely used in policing and what can be done to change this.

Keywords: research-into-practice, evidence-based policing, behavioural science, evidence-based policy making, policing

THE CASEY REVIEW marks the third major review of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS, the Met) in my lifetime, starting with Scarman and MacPherson. These reports point to deep-rooted problems with how the Met operates institutionally. Scarman and MacPherson were both directed at the failings in how London’s black community is served and policed by the Met. The latest review by Baroness Casey again places culture at the core of many of the problems faced by the Met, including sexism, misogyny, racism and homophobia. But these issues are not unique to the Met, nor are the solutions. A deep irony of policing is that police forces do not routinely or systematically use evidence in the form of data, statistics and research to inform how policing is done.¹

How can more and better evidence help policing now?

Baroness Casey argues in her review that: ‘[p]ublic consent is broken...The Met should be

reformed so that the Peelian principles of policing by consent—securing and maintaining the respect and approval of the public—are its guiding principles, and the measures against which all of its policies and practices are tested.’²

What should the police do to gain and keep public trust and confidence? There is painfully little evidence about what really moves the dial to improve trust and confidence—particularly at a population level—although news coverage does impact public perceptions.³ But as Bradford and Jackson (this issue) discuss, it is possible to improve individuals’ trust in policing by ensuring those using the service have a good experience of it. In policing terms, it is possible to make low- and high-stakes interactions between police and the public of better quality if police officers adhere to principles of procedural justice. In a recent US study, the largest experimental test of what is called procedural justice training for officers was published.⁴ This is the latest

²Casey Review Final Report, p. 22.

³P. Dawson, et al., ‘Understanding public confidence in the police within a changing crime landscape’, *SN Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 12, 2023, p. 198.

⁴D. Weisburd, et al., ‘Reforming the police through procedural justice training: a multicity randomized trial at crime hot spots’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 119, no. 14, 2022, e2118780119.

¹L. G. Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders, 10–12 April 1981: The Scarman Report*, London, Penguin Books, 1982; W. Macpherson, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, London, HMSO, 1999; L. Casey, *Baroness Casey Review Final Report: An Independent Review into the Standards of Behaviour and Internal Culture of the Metropolitan Police Service*, London, Metropolitan Police Service, 2023.

in a line of research showing that officers trained to act in ways that give citizens a voice, are respectful and transparent, leads to better quality interactions with the public and reductions in police use of force. Use of procedural justice, in turn, is thought to correlate with an increase in the public's trust and confidence in the police, increasing their legitimacy. But effective interactions can be driven by simple changes to paperwork, without the need for training. In an experiment on traffic stops in Australia, researchers found that trust and confidence in police were higher following a procedural justice approach to stops. Raising the stakes, it is also possible to achieve improvements in the quality of interaction in counter-terrorism interviews. Simply giving officers a checklist to guide how they open, conduct and close an interaction, reminding them of what 'good' looks like, can be effective.⁵

Engage the public in policing through deliberation

It is not just how police on the streets act. Improving and maintaining trust also involves better engagement and communication with the public. But what does 'better' mean? For one, as Campbell notes, it means having a clear public engagement strategy that is not 'what we've always done'.⁶ That might mean intentionally segmenting audiences, working out what is effective in terms of media channels, medium and format for those groups and having a clear message. This also comes with the need to test messaging rigorously, particularly because nudge-type communications typically

lead to single digit percentage point differences and need large samples to be reliable.⁷

Going further, there is a case to be made for a version of deliberative democracy being directly involved in police governance, for example citizens' assemblies being trialled in Walthamstow.⁸ These forums do not usurp or undermine statutory decision making—or the role of police and crime commissioners—but ensure that, following an expert briefing, a representative segment of the public's voice is heard, with recommendations flowing from these discussions directly informing decisions. It is particularly important for organisations to commit to implement recommendations arising from citizens' assemblies or provide feedback explaining why a recommendation is not being implemented. Public deliberation—through citizens' assemblies or town halls—can lead to the public making sensible and actionable decisions that represent the community, help them solve their own problems and provide meaningful interaction between citizens and police.⁹

Diversity & bias in police recruitment

If different people are wanted in policing, processes need to be debiased, the candidate market segmented, friction reduced during applications and processes made more transparent. In terms of advertising jobs and getting in new recruits, this revolves around the 'three Rs': reach, recruitment and retention. Reach is how far, wide and deep advertising goes and which groups are reached with it—that is, who has their eyes on it. The world of online advertising opens up numerous opportunities for testing ideas.¹⁰ For example, the

⁵G. Wood, T. R. Tyler and A. V. Papachristos, 'Procedural justice training reduces police use of force and complaints against officers', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 117, no. 18, 2020, pp. 9815–9821; K. Murphy, L. Mazerolle and S. Bennett, 'Promoting trust in police: findings from a randomised experimental field trial of procedural justice policing', *Policing and Society*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2014, pp. 405–424; B. Langley, et al., 'A simple checklist, that is all it takes: a cluster randomized controlled field trial on improving the treatment of suspected terrorists by the police', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2021, pp. 629–655.

⁶A. Campbell, *But What Can I Do?*, London, Penguin Books, 2021.

⁷S. DellaVigna and E. Linos, 'RCTs to scale: comprehensive evidence from two nudge units', *Econometrica*, vol. 90, no. 1, 2022, pp. 81–116.

⁸A. France, 'First citizens' assembly set up in east London to help scrutinise Met Police', *Evening Standard*, 12 October 2023; <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/met-police-waltham-forest-citizens-assembly-sarah-everard-way-couzens-casey-london-b1113126.html>

⁹R. Taylor, *Citizens' Assemblies: An Introductory Guide*, London, House of Lords Library, 2019.

¹⁰B. Ariel, M. Bland and A. Sutherland, *Experimental Designs*, London, Sage, 2022.

Government Equalities Office and Indeed ran a series of experiments to try and increase the number of jobs advertised as 'flexible'. The results from an experiment with 20 million job adverts which showed that prompting employers to include the word 'flexible' in an advert increased the number of adverts mentioning 'flexible' by 20 per cent. In turn, those adverts attracted 30 per cent more applicants.¹¹ How could this apply to policing? When advertising jobs, police forces need to understand the possible motivators of people from different demographics in applying for a role in policing (not exclusively police officers). Examples include thinking about the possible 'hook' for a job advert—is it public service, teamwork, career certainty or otherwise which is advertised?¹² The Met has done this. When tested with the general public, white and ethnic minority women had higher approval ratings of Met job adverts that emphasised 'career advancement' and 'helping the vulnerable' over 'skillset'.¹³

Recruitment processes a need to be 'debiased' as much as possible and need to be made as easy as possible from the perspective of the candidate. There is substantial evidence that candidate names can be cues for biased decision making.¹⁴ One way of ensuring that candidate characteristics do not influence initial sifting decisions is to use 'blind hiring' processes whereby those reviewing applications do not have access to candidates' demographic information or indeed anything else about the candidate. One example used by

public sector organisations is be [applied.com](https://www.applied.com)—a hiring platform used as a 'first filter' on applicants which helps with debiasing because applicants are asked to complete job-specific tasks on the platform without giving away who they are. Responses to those tasks are assessed by people who know nothing about the candidates. Blind sifting means organisations will find people who can do what they need and interview people they may not have done otherwise.

More basic than blind hiring processes, police forces need to be much more transparent about the application process and what the job entails. This may sound obvious, but anecdotes of newly-hired detectives leaving before they start the job because they had not understood it would be night shift work are a (hopefully uncommon) example. Again, there is evidence that when organisations are clear about what they want and how processes work, people tend to be more content and trusting, even if things are not going as planned.¹⁵

Misconduct and complaints

Following several high-profile events, significant attention was paid to policing, the complaints process and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in 2023. One of the key issues was that investigations of complaints have taken too long, a fact reflected in changes in 2020 that introduced a twelve-month limit on investigations. With the IOPC and forces blaming one another for delays and forces questioning IOPC decision making, further reform of the complaints process is inevitable.¹⁶

Those who have managed to make a formal complaint are people who have collected the necessary information and stuck with the process. But that is not everyone. Valuable feedback is being lost because of bureaucratic 'sludge', 'frictions that prevent you from doing what you want to do or from going to

¹¹K. Londakova, et al., *Encouraging Employers to Advertise Jobs as Flexible*, London, Government Equalities Office, 2019; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/603fa8aae90e077dcfb91339/Encouraging_employers_to_advertise_jobs_as_flexible.pdf

¹²J. Weill, et al., *Behavioural Insights for Building the Police Force of Tomorrow*, New York, Behavioural Insights Team, 2019; https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BIT-Police-report_MKV5-WEB.pdf

¹³Behavioural Insights Team, *Testing Met Police Recruitment Messages with White Women and Ethnic Minorities*, London, Behavioural Insights Team, n.d.

¹⁴M. Bertrand and S. Mullainathan, 'Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination', *American Economic Review*, vol. 94, no. 4, 2004, pp. 991–1013.

¹⁵R. W. Buell, 'Operational transparency', *Harvard Business Review*, 1 March 2019; <https://hbr.org/2019/03/operational-transparency>

¹⁶Home Affairs Committee, *Police Conduct and Complaints*, London, House of Commons, 2023; Home Affairs Committee, *Policing Priorities*, London, House of Commons, 2022.

where you want to go'.¹⁷ This might be extra clicks in an online form, overly burdensome processes or unnecessary steps to get from A to B. Removing sludge is a good start, but it can be done differently. To make a complaint against a business, for example, the one-stop-shop resolver.co.uk can be used. Resolver is a semi-automated case management system for complaints. By selecting which service and firm the complaint concerns, the complaint is sent to the right department in that firm directly. As the complaint progresses, users are sent updates. That includes automatically sending it on to the regulator if the complaint is not dealt with in a timely fashion (there is a countdown showing how many days until that happens). There are also tips offered about what to do next if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome. The firms get more and better data about complaints and complaint handling—with the irony being that the handling of the complaint process and information coming out of it is considered valuable enough that companies pay for the service.

To have no complaints is not a realistic target for a police force. A job that involves emotionally charged interactions and physically restraining people is going to attract complaints. But complaints are not distributed evenly across police forces. Some officers never get any and a few get many, in part owing to role specialisation. Role types should be looked at, specifically which officers have the highest rate of complaints per frontline time—for example, 'complaints per hour deployed'—rather than solely looking at the raw number of complaints. More attention can then be directed to officers with high rates of complaints compared to their peers in the same units with the same time on the front line. Using that data, variation can then be examined. What are officers with lower rates of complaints doing differently? Are there differences in the deployments that would explain this? Data and analysis can then be used to go beyond the raw numbers and see which factors among the multitude posited explain variation in complaints. For those officers with comparatively high rates of

complaints, questions need to be asked about whether they should be removed from frontline duty or need training, and so on. But short of training—which is not always the answer—feedback could be given on their relative performance compared to their peers and test what impact that has.¹⁸

Researchers have found that the best predictors of misconduct in policing were the number of flags during vetting, that is, before the candidate has started the job.¹⁹ So, even before hiring, it is possible to work out who might have less regard for following rules of conduct or who might need particular support or training once they are in the role. Obviously, that does not mean blanket bans—it must be case by case—but it is likely an 80/20 rule at work where a majority of problems will be concentrated in a minority of individuals. It should be possible to triage vetting so that—above a certain number of flags—the default is 'flipped' to 'do not hire'. To hire then requires additional investigation and evidence, such as home visits and further interviews. Specific flags could also be weighted so that they are more or less important in vetting decisions, making this clear to applicants. Such operational transparency might deter some with particular flags from applying, thus saving time. Introducing approaches like this will slow recruitment for some—but it should be worth it rather than have a toxic colleague join the police. Even then, some will still get through who are not fit for policing. Police forces, like any employer, should make better use of probationary periods as a decision point for retention or exit. The pay does not reflect it, but the powers a warranted officer has are extraordinary—the screening process for who gets to use these powers should be too.²⁰

¹⁸B. Stanko and K. Hohl, 'Why training is not improving the police response to sexual violence against women: a glimpse into the "black box" of police training', in E. Milne, et al., eds., *Women and the Criminal Justice System: Failing Victims and Offenders?*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 167–186.

¹⁹T. Cubitt, et al., 'A predictive model for serious police misconduct by variation of the theory of planned behaviour', *Journal of Forensic Practice*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, pp. 251–263.

²⁰HMICFRS, *An Inspection of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny in the Police Service*, London, HMICFRS, 2022.

¹⁷C. Sunstein, *Sludge*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2021, p. 1.

Culture and culture change

Police and policing culture has motivated countless papers, reports and books—for example, Feilzer and Loftus in this issue. How to change police culture—with evidence of effectiveness in doing so—is thinner on the ground. In my view, we have to keep in mind that behaviour change is a core part of achieving cultural change in policing. This means focussing relentlessly on desired specific behaviours in order to drive wider cultural change. To go to the core of Baroness Casey's review, the target is to achieve a culture where racist, misogynist, homophobic and other discriminatory acts are not tolerated, ignored, or dismissed as 'banter'. Part of achieving this is identifying and understanding barriers to behaviour change—whether individual, institutional or systemic—and overcoming them.²¹

But individual responsibility should not always be placed at the centre of organisational culture change. This may feel overwhelming and thus lead to inaction. The interplay between individuals and the groups to which they belong could instead be leveraged. For example, one barrier to behaviour change could be the mistaken belief that others in a reference group think a behaviour is acceptable ('pluralistic ignorance'). This is a situation where most people privately hold an opinion, but they incorrectly believe that most other people hold the contrary opinion, and therefore end up acting against their own view. An example comes from Saudi Arabia where researchers surveyed young married men to ask them their privately held beliefs about their wife's employment outside the home. Many young men supported the idea, but (mistakenly) believed that other men of their own age—their reference group—did not. This misperceived social norm distorted labour market opportunities for their wives. The study found that exposing men to the knowledge that nearly 90 per cent of their peers supported the idea of wives working outside the home changed their behaviour—including increasing the

proportion of men who actively assisted their wives in searching for jobs.²²

Applying this idea to a policing context might mean using regular staff surveys to elicit views on specific behaviours, then publicising that specific behaviours are not tolerated within the organisation. But people need clear behaviours desired of them: say something to intervene (and how), report it (and to whom) or tools to help people to stop doing something (see Wire and Flanagan, this issue). This could also be targeted and tested with groups or teams more prone to express discriminatory attitudes.

Why isn't research evidence already routinely used in policing?

Cynthia Lum and Jerry Ratcliffe are both former police officers and two of the world's leading policing scholars. They have separately made significant contributions to the topic of getting research into practice. Table 1 below provides a summary of the points they have put forward in some of their published work.²³ I then expand on some points to illustrate problems with (i) implementation gaps; (ii) the need to link strategic and operational policing; (iii) the risk of chasing noise in data if we don't test ideas.

(i) Implementation gaps. Rarely does a rigorous, evidence-based result lead to implementation as 'business as usual' in policing. Why? One reason is because many experimental tests in policing are treated as one-off projects. 'How do we scale this?' rarely seems to be front and centre at the point a project begins—and almost certainly never once results are known. 'Hotspots' policing is the clearest example of 'failure to scale'—a failure lamented since at least 2008. Poor translation of research evidence into practice also severely hampers its use. For example, when left to their own devices, police forces

²¹M. Hallsworth, 'A manifesto for applying behavioural science', *Nature Human Behaviour*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2023, pp. 310–322; D. Soman and C. Yeung, *The Behaviorally Informed Organization*, Toronto, Rotman-UTP Press, 2021.

²²L. Burszty, A. L. González and D. Yanagizawa-Drott, 'Misperceived social norms: women working outside the home in Saudi Arabia', *American Economic Review*, vol. 110, no. 10, 2020, pp. 2997–3029.

²³J. Ratcliffe, *Evidence-Based Policing: The Basics*, London, Routledge, 2023; C. Lum, *Translating Police Research into Practice*, New York, Police Foundation, 2009; https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ideas_Lum_0.pdf

Table 1: Barriers to the use of evidence in policing based on Lum and Ratcliffe

Lum (2009)		Summary
1	Cultural resistance to change (p. 2)	Organisations and individuals find change difficult and the scope of change required to embed EBP into everyday operations is daunting and can lead to inaction.
2	Isolated approaches to evidence-based policing (one-offs) (p. 3)	Insufficient thought or resources are given to implementation of specific approaches that have evidence demonstrating their effectiveness.
3	(Fast) response dominates (slow) prospective and planned operations (p. 3)	What needs to happen now, responding to crises, dominates any long-term planning. Ratcliffe refers to this as ‘fire brigade policing’, noting that actual fire services long since shifted their emphasis to fire prevention.
4	Decision making driven by non-operational demands (p. 3)	Senior officers face wider pressures—including resource constraints—that mean what is prioritised for action is not evidence-based or evidence-informed.
5	Habit (p.3)	‘This is how we’ve always done it’ becomes a guiding principle that prevents innovation.
Ratcliffe (2023)		Summary
1	Policing experience and craft are ignored by academics (p. 215)	Officers trust their own decision making for the everyday judgement calls they have to make and feel that these are not valued in discussions about research and evidence in policing.
2	‘Evidence-based policing isn’t for street cops’ (p. 218)	This questions the relevance of research to the frontline. There is also a view that EBP would prevent officers’ use of discretion in a given situation because ‘what the evidence says’ should be done is X.
3	Officers shoulder the professional and reputational risk in testing out ideas but researchers do not (p. 220)	Researchers do not hold any risk when undertaking research projects that rely on operational policing. If the project fails, officer(s) shoulder the responsibility reputationally for the force and professionally as individuals. This, quite reasonably, may incentivise officers to avoid engagement in novel projects testing new ideas.
4	Being evidence-based is unachievable (p. 221)	The bar of being evidence-based is not reachable, particularly if the only bar to reach for is randomised controlled trials. But forces can aspire to be evidence-informed, which allows a much wider range of evidence to be considered. As Ratcliffe notes, something is better than nothing.
5	Information overload leads to the status quo (p. 222)	The volume of research coupled with a lack of operationally relevant evidence-synthesis prevents police using evidence.
6	Academic incentives mask what the evidence really says because of publication bias (p. 224)	There are gaps in research literature because of the ‘file drawer problem’: positive results are more likely to be published so that is what is submitted for publication. The ‘matrix’ in Lum (Figure 1) shows this problem neatly—there

(Continues)

Table 1. Continued

Ratcliffe (2023)	Summary
7 Rank stifles innovation (p. 226)	are only five 'backfire' studies out of the ninety-two studies in the summary. Policing often operates based on 'doing what the boss says'. For some decisions that might be appropriate, but policing can move beyond 'eminence based' decision making, just as medicine has.

running randomised hotspots experiments suffer numerous avoidable problems, undermining results. Senior officers need to know the 'how' of implementation at a level of detail that is rarely available publicly—that is, in the style of operational guidance. If they had this clearly set out for them, some of the issues in the recent report on hotspots, for example, may have been avoided.²⁴

So why don't all forces 'just do it'? One issue that both Lum and Ratcliffe note is that there is a strong status quo bias at work, partly because changing business as usual can be a lot of effort.²⁵ In addition, most of the effort comes before the task briefing itself and is behind the scenes. The benefits of well implemented analytical functions and the results these can produce to the good of policing are rarely high on any priority list in policing versus operational demands.

(ii) Linking strategic and operational decision-making. Operational policing focusses on responding to crime and the collection and processing of evidence relating to individual crimes. Strategic policing focusses on aggregated trends in crime and responses to

them. These different approaches manifest as 'horizontal' thinking—as though the layers above or below are not connected to one another. This disconnect between the strategic and operational can mean that when it comes to guiding prospective police activity, it is not strategy doing the guiding. Instead, it is the noise of short-term crime trends, seasonal variation or staff shortages.

Two bridges between strategic and operational layers are accountability and feedback.²⁶ That is, if there is a strategic objective to keep robbery or shop theft 20 per cent lower than seasonal expectations for that month—say, 500 offences—that drives local operational planning about how that will happen. That in turn drives deployment and tactics. There is then a period when there is concerted effort on that issue, with metrics to log police activity. We are then into a numbers game—to what extent has this focus caused a reduction in robberies? That information is then fed back up the chain of command to the strategic level and reported, as shown in Figure 1 below.²⁷ All of this sounds great, but it begs the question: how does one know if something was effective? This leads to the need to evaluate rigorously what is done. Otherwise, elephant-sized claims of effectiveness balance on pinheads of evidence.

(iii) Chasing noise & 'triple digit policing'. Linked to the operational-strategic gap is statistical literacy inside policing. Analysts try to bridge the operational and strategic with

²⁴Ibid.; J. A. List, 'Optimally generate policy-based evidence before scaling', *Nature*, vol. 626, no. 7999, 2024, article 7999; D. Weisburd, *Place Based Policing*, New York, Police Foundation, 2008; <https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Weisburd-2008-Place-Based-Policing.pdf>; O. Jeffrey, et al., *Evaluation Report on Grip and Bespoke-Funded Hot Spot Policing*, London, Home Office, 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-spot-policing-in-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2022/evaluation-report-on-grip-and-bespoke-funded-hot-spot-policing>.

²⁵W. Samuelson and R. Zeckhauser, 'Status quo bias in decision making', *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1998, pp. 7–59.

²⁶M. Hallsworth, et al., *Behavioural Government*, London, Behavioural Insights Team, 2018; <https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BIT-Behavioural-Government-Report-2018.pdf>

²⁷J. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Cambridge MA, Belknap Press, 1990.

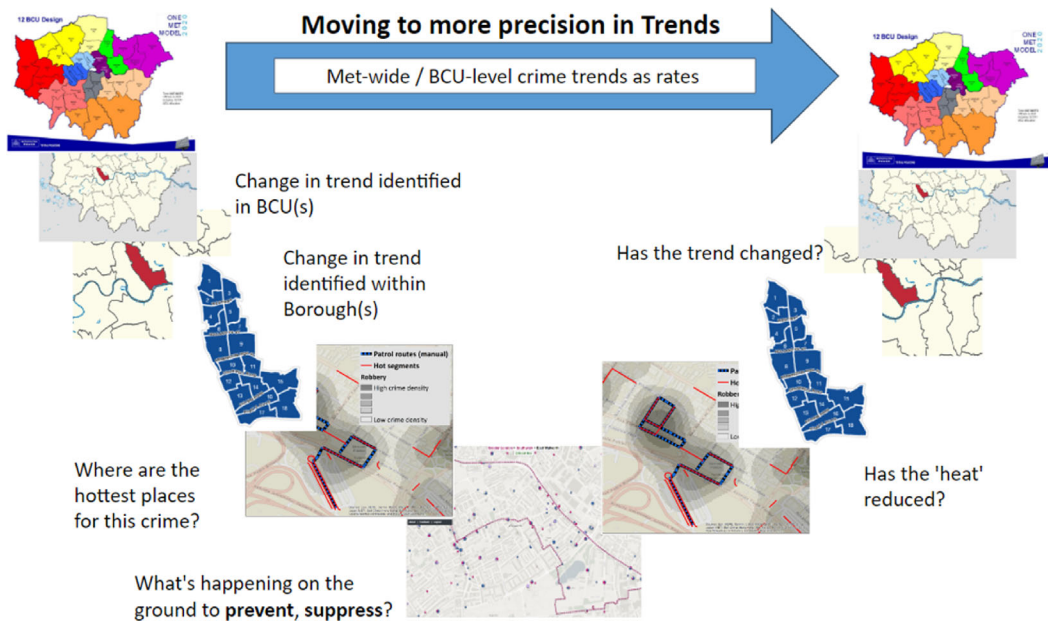


Figure 1: The 'bathtub' from strategy to street-corner and back again

presentations and briefings. But those asking for analysis often lack understanding of the problems with data and the impact it has on decision making. For example, the smaller the time period, geographical area or just the number of observations, the more data jumps around. This means that month-to-month crime counts for low frequency crimes move up and down a lot and relative percentage changes will be dramatic. Take homicide, which thankfully does not have high numbers each month in the UK. For an individual force there might be fewer than ten in a given month. But, if we are looking at percentage changes, this might look alarming: if there were four in April and six in May, that is a 50 per cent increase. Why does that matter? For one, seasonal variation drives trends in many crime types, as can the weather on a given day—something that every officer knows and is well researched.²⁸ But also, large percentage shifts might lead to the false attribution of changes in crime to police activity. This means that forces might be taking credit

for crime reduction when it is just a particularly wet July or, more problematically, chasing noise in data.

This point about chasing noise has direct implications for police use of research evidence, with suggestions that unless there are triple digit changes in crime, no one senior is interested. How is a triple digit change possible? If there was one crime last month and two this month that is a 100 per cent increase in crime. When research comes out suggesting a decent impact on crime based on an experiment—say, a 7 per cent reduction—it pales against the variation encountered in everyday briefings and is ignored. This might also be why results in policing research are sometimes presented as 'relative percentage difference': because relative differences before and after something has been done tend to be larger numbers. This can be countered by training senior leaders on the basics of crime data and bringing a dose of realism to the impacts that policing can have on crime. The yardstick is this: the first Covid pandemic lockdown was the most expensive, comprehensive and well implemented crime-control intervention in UK history—an entire population asked to stay indoors and avoid

²⁸J. Corcoran and R. Zahnow, 'Weather and crime: a systematic review of the empirical literature', *Crime Science*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2022, p. 16.

other people with high levels of compliance. Yet it ‘only’ managed to reduce police recorded crime by 25 per cent compared to the previous year.²⁹ That fact alone should be food for thought when hearing even double-digit claims of effectiveness.

Conclusion

This essay has set out ways in which evidence, behavioural science and testing can contribute to addressing some of the issues highlighted in Baroness Casey’s review of the Met. More could be done—particularly with technology routinely embedded in policing. What has not been mentioned, for example, is the possibility of testing the impact of rapid supervisor reviews of body-camera footage for officers with high rates of complaints, or testing the use of ‘credible messengers’ to reinforce anti-misogynist values

within police forces. Testing out ways to improve officer decision making that reduces discrimination is another.³⁰ The point is that there exists a wide range of evidence out there that can help forces now, next month and next year. But evidence alone will not solve problems: it needs to be tested and the findings implemented. There are other challenges, but ones that can be and have been overcome.

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²⁹N. Stripe, *Coronavirus and Crime in England and Wales: August 2020*, London, Office for National Statistics, 2020; <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/coronavirusandcrimeinenglandandwales/latest>

³⁰O. Dube, S. J. MacArthur and A. K. Shah, ‘A cognitive view of policing’, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2023, working paper 31651.