

Interim response of the Metropolitan Police Authority's Consultation on Recommendation 61 of the Stephen Lawrence Report to the Association of Police Authorities (APA)

Introduction

In February 2001 the Home Secretary's Lawrence Steering Group invited all police authorities to consult with their communities to seek their views on the implementation of Recommendation 61 of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report.

The MPA Consultation

The consultation on Recommendation 61 gave this Authority the unique and important opportunity to engage dynamically with a range of pan London and local communities on this critical aspect of how they should be policed.

The consultation process was threefold - an opening conference, targeted consultation meetings and questionnaires. This report describes the process and outcomes. The interest generated has been significant, reflecting the real anxiety felt by many Londoners about the nature of the interface between the police and public, particularly young black men.

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

In the consultation meetings held with a cross-section of London's communities, there was general support for the principle of stop and search. Some groups raised issues about the effectiveness of stop and search in crime reduction, bearing in mind that the proportion of arrests that led to convictions was approximately 5% of all disposals.

- On the specific issue of police stops there was support for the implementation of the recommendation in full, broadly supporting the Home Office finding that the need to give a record when someone has been stopped. A widely expressed viewpoint was that public trust and confidence would increase when stops are carried out fairly and with good reason;
- Youths from the black and ethnic minority communities were of the view that the option to receive such a record was likely to make little difference to their

trust and confidence in the police, who they felt were likely to distort the record given.

- The headline questionnaire analysis appears to support the views expressed during the community consultation, that a record should be given. Further work is underway and the Authority will not be in the position to confirm its findings until early July 2001.
- For implementation of Recommendation 61 to be workable and useful it is essential to devise a definition of a “stop” that will make sense to operational officers and not impede mutual trust.

Activities undertaken.

The MPA has:

- held a consultation conference, inviting key individuals, community groups and young people, to give their views on the implementation of Recommendation 61.
- conducted consultation meetings with different community groups (see attached list A1);
- developed a consultation questionnaire which was distributed to over 700 groups and pan-London organisations (see attached A2);
- sought responses on the issue electronically via the MPA website;
- engaged with local and community groups and pan-London organisations to carry out consultation
- taken part in radio programmes and phone-ins to seek the views of Londoners;
- held a specific consultation meeting with police officers to seek their views on the recommendation with the aim of getting a clearer understanding of the practical issues of implementing Recommendation 61.
- sought the assistance of Dr Richard Stone, Adviser to the Mayor and former adviser to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, to facilitate a meeting between the MPS and MPA and community representatives to develop a definition of a police stop.

1. The consultation conference

The Authority, in partnership with the MPS, organised a consultation conference which over 124 delegates attended. The event was planned on a very tight timescale to achieve the Home Office original deadline for consultation of end March 2001. A wide range of organisations and individuals were invited to the event, including the Greater London Authority and Mayor’s office, the Association of Police Authorities (APA), Action Group for Irish Youth, Community and Police

Consultative groups, the Chinese Office and various black, Asian and other and ethnic minority groups. Speakers at the event, which was chaired by Toby Harris, Chair of the MPA, included Peter Herbert, MPA member and leading light of the Society of Black Lawyers, and Ian Blair, Deputy Commissioner. A panel of commentators, widely drawn, responded to a scenario acting out the perceptions of a stop. In the afternoon delegates were allocated to workshops to explore the issues raised in more detail. (Reports of the workshops can be made available if required).

2. Consultation meetings

In planning the wider consultation the MPA involved a number of organisations and groups to ensure as wide as possible a network of contacts and advice

These included:

- The Black Londoners Forum/Operation Black Vote,
- The Society of Black Lawyers, and
- The 1990 Trust.
- The Action Group for Irish Youth,
- MPS Independent Advisory groups
- Newham's Youth Action Scheme,
- Age Concern
- (Westminster) Chinese Community and
- Kensington and Chelsea Independent Advisory Group
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Advisory Group

A database of groups and organisations was also developed. Where direct access was not possible, the Authority worked in partnership with lead organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the Rough Sleepers Unit.

The Society of Black Lawyers, the 1990 Trust and the Black Londoners' Forum assisted the Authority in ensuring that 'hard-to-hear' groups were informed of the Authority's role in the project.

The Society of Black Lawyers (working with the West Norwood Community Development Project) assisted the Authority with the consultation by coordinating consultation meetings with schools and youth clubs in the South London area.

The 1990 Trust published an article on the MPA consultation exercise in the April edition of their publication, 'Black to Black' and included details of the MPA website and questionnaire to which individuals were encouraged to respond.

The Action Group for Irish Youth, which has contact with a range of Pan-London and local Irish community groups organised a specific consultation. A number of issues were raised including perceptions of disproportionality in stops and searches of the Irish community. Questionnaires were circulated and leading criminologist Professor Jock Young contributed to the Irish community consultation.

The consultation involved organisations including, for example, Youth Offending Teams, the Refugee Council, NACRO's Youth Crime Section, the Association of Combined Youth Clubs, the Greater London Forum for the Elderly, Victim Support London, and the GLA.

Efforts were made to include the opinions of known 'hard-to-hear' individuals and groups, such as prostitutes, the homeless and travellers. Questionnaires were sent to contacts made, however, it is impossible to gauge what the level of response from these groups are to the questionnaire.

One important aspect of the consultation programme was a workshop held with around 50 serving police officers. This was a constructive exercise: all the officers were from boroughs and were currently involved in day to day operational policing. There was some scepticism expressed about the need for change but in general the delegates recognised the need to maintain and improve the confidence and trust of communities and the potential for misuse of stop and search process to erode that. Most saw advantage in a framework for recording stops and the discussion largely concentrated on the definition issues raised elsewhere in this report.

The APA 'Know Your Rights' stop and search campaign material, including leaflets and posters in a variety of different languages has been invaluable in the consultation. The materials have been particularly useful in the meetings held with young people and the level of interest in these was high.

The use of website bulletin boards and chat rooms and a free phone enquiry number were explored but the deadline, financial costs and staffing required to support the consultation exercise prevented a wider range of consultation methods from being utilised.

3. The consultation questionnaire

In addition to the consultation meetings and events that were planned, we recognised that the views of a far wider range of individuals could be sought by means of a consultation questionnaire. Two versions – one for adults, drafted by the MPA and the MPS, and one for children – were produced. The MPS provided a working definition of a police stop and stop and search that could be easily understood by members of the public. The questions were deliberately

kept brief and focussed in order to gain the maximum response from those completing it.

The questionnaire underwent several revisions and advice was sought from the London Research Unit and MORI on the structure and content.

Over 4,000 copies of the questionnaire were sent to a range of organisations on the database. A range of other groups and individuals that have received information about the questionnaire has sought copies for completion either as individuals or as organisations. For example, following the Community Police Consultative Groups (CPCG) meeting in Lewisham, a housing association requested 500 copies of the questionnaire to circulate to all residents; Waltham Forest Council African and Caribbean Workers Group received and circulated copies of the questionnaire to all employees in the group. Local Racial Equal Councils are collating local responses to the questionnaires from the various local organisations that they have circulated these to.

To improve the chances of a high return rate, a Freepost licence was attained from the post office. This appears to have had a significant effect on the rate of return, which is just achieving the deadline for response of 30 May.

E-Consultation

In addition to the paper form the consultation questionnaire was placed on the MPA's web site. The level of response has been encouraging.

POLICE STOPS QUESTIONNAIRE - A HEADLINE ANALYSIS

587 questionnaires have been analysed to date. This excluded about 60 questionnaires from the consultation that was carried out with young people in South London, and a similar number that were completed by children aged 8 – 16 years. The Authority is continuing to receive questionnaires from individuals and groups such as the Students Union, who were eager to be part of the consultation. Detailed analysis of all the responses will not be available until early July, however, the top line results indicate the following:

Summary and Headlines.

From the available data it is clear that concern regarding respectful, informed operation of stop and search procedures is highest among the Black (British), Asian (British) and mixed communities. The most support for the recording of stops comes from these groups.

There is a correlation between the age of respondents and general levels of support for stop and search. Younger respondents were most concerned about

the proper implementation of stop and search. Support for stops and searches generally increased with the age of the respondent.

It may follow that the least support for stops and searches will be found within the young black (British) community.

88% of the 434 respondents agreed that stop and search is a vital policing tool.

76.9% of all respondents felt that confidence would be strengthened by recording stops.

- **“Is stop and search a vital tool?”**

88% of the 434 respondents to the question posed agreed with the idea of stop and search being a vital tool. However, when responses to this question were broken down by the identified ethnic group of the respondent it is apparent that 21.8% of black (British) respondents disagreed. This compares with just 7.6% of British respondents.

- **“Everyone knows the difference between a conversation and a formal stop?”**

58.4% of British respondents agreed with this, but there was less agreement from members of other ethnic groups, with 51.4% of all respondents disagreeing with the statement. In particular 65.3% of black (British) respondents and 70.6% of other respondents disagreed.

- **“The current arrangements should continue?”**

There was broad cross-community support on the issue of whether current arrangements should continue, with 82.3% of all respondents agreeing. It should be noted that 86.6% and 83.3% of British and Asian (British) respondents, respectively, support the continuation of current arrangements.

In view of the previous response indicating a lack of knowledge about what a stop is, it is unclear whether respondents were aware of the current arrangements for dealing with police stops and stops and searches.

Almost a third, 26.7%, of black (British) respondents were not supportive of the continuation of current arrangements. Comparatively, 20.8% of white and other respondents did not support the continuation of current arrangements.

- **“Confidence would be strengthened by recording stops?”**

76.9% of all respondents felt that confidence would be strengthened by recording stops. Support was most pronounced in the Asian (British) and Black (British) communities with 97.3% and 89.3% respectively agreeing. 66.8% of British respondents agreed with the statement.

Responses analysed by race is attached as appendix 5

Limits from sample size: The statistical significance of replies by mixed and Chinese/Vietnamese respondents is less than that for other groups (16 & 2 respondents, respectively). Given the scale of responses from the British (white) community (consistently over 220) the statistical significance is considerably stronger. There were also over 100 responses from members of the black (British) community. The analysis therefore focuses on the sentiments of the British and black (British) communities and also from the community (all ethnic groups) as a whole.

Definition of “stop”

One clear message resulting from all aspects of the consultation was the difficulty of achieving an acceptable definition of a “stop”. The MPA consulted police officers as well as the general public on their views on a definition of a police stop.

After a great deal of discussion, the officers were unanimous in their support of the definition proposed in the APA guidance as being the closest, and most practical definition of a stop that they felt officers could work to.

This definition forms the basis for the development of a definition, which both the MPA and MPS recognise will need widespread consultation internally, and with the public.

The role of Dr Richard Stone in facilitating an agreed definition of a police stop.

Dr Richard Stone, as the former adviser to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, has an unique insight into the meaning and intent of the report’s recommendations, including Recommendation 61. He assisted the MPA in facilitating meetings between the MPA, MPS and community representatives to explore the definition of a police stop, along with Lynne Featherstone, an Authority member.

Although some progress was made, no agreed definition emerged from the workshop. The Deputy Commissioner Ian Blair, the Chair of the Police

Federation, Glen Smyth, and Dr Stone agreed that a smaller forum, with key individuals should undertake further work to progress this area of work.

The group which comprised Cindy Butts, MPA member and Deputy Chair of the Consultation, Diversity and Outreach Committee, Ian Blair, Deputy Commissioner of the MPS, Naz Uddin, D I Cheryl Burden and Dr Richard Stone (facilitator), met on one occasion and held further consultation by telephone and e-mail.

Draft definition proposed by working group

The definition proposed by the working group is outlined below. It extends into an outline of consequential actions.

- A. A "stop" by police occurs where an officer attempts to -
- delay a person from moving freely in a public place
 - so that the officer can speak to the individual
 - because the officer
 - (a) believes that the person is suspected of a criminal offence or,
 - (b) wishes to seek an account of the individual's actions or,
 - (c) wishes to seek an account of the individual's possession or suspected possession of any article.
- B. Whenever reasonably practicable in these circumstances, an officer will always -
- make a written record of the stop
 - offer a copy of that written record to the individual stopped, although there is no obligation on the individual to take a copy.
- C. The officer will ask for and record the details of the individual (name, address, date of birth, ethnicity) but will inform the person that there is no obligation to provide these.
- D. This policy does not include encounters which are for the purpose of
- general conversation,
 - the provision of directions
 - the seeking of witnesses to an offence of which this individual is not suspected
 - during the course of public order operations.

- E. Any person can ask for and will be given a written record of any encounter, even outside these provisions, which involves the individual or any person for whom the individual is directly responsible, provided the record is asked for at the time.

The exact nature of this written record will require further debate and consultation but those involved so far have agreed that the record should be as minimal as practicable, preferably in the nature of a carbonised tick box form.

The purpose of this definition is to stop the sterile debate about whether a casual conversation is a stop. There will be need for further debate around

- the handling of group encounters, such as the spillover from a pub fracas
- the definitions of 'public order operations' and of 'public places'
- the transition between the seeking of witnesses and the forming of reasonable suspicion
- the nature of the recording form
- the question of whether ethnicity should be self defined or defined by the officer

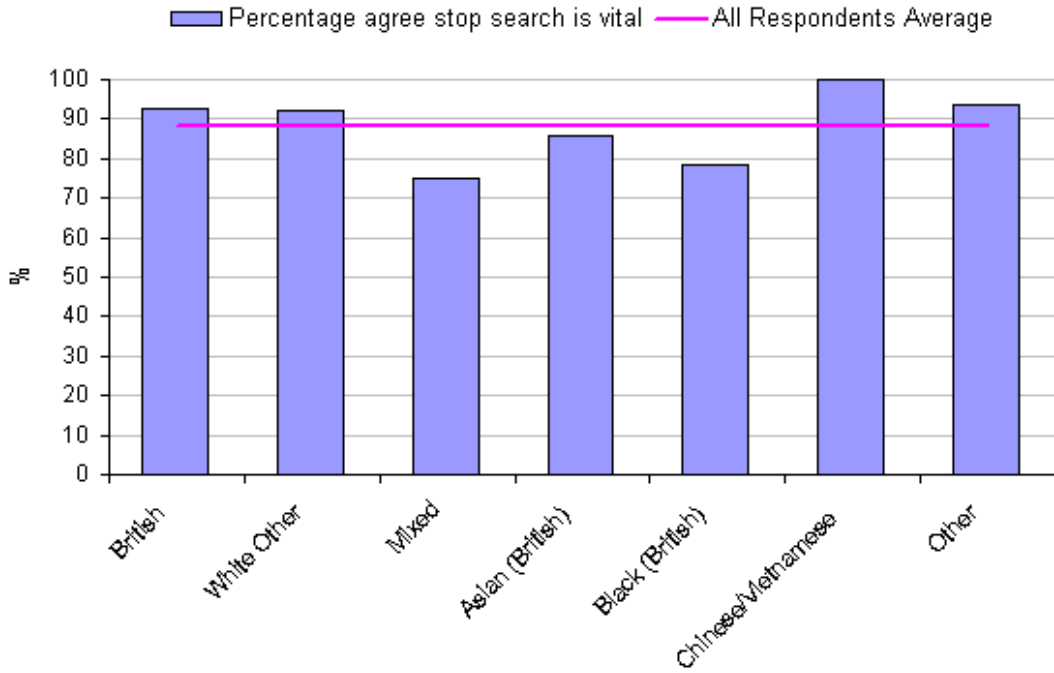
Groups and Communities Consulted on Recommendation 61

The Authority has had consultation meetings with 12 separate groups. Many, but not all of these were held in partnership with the MPS. The groups consulted were:

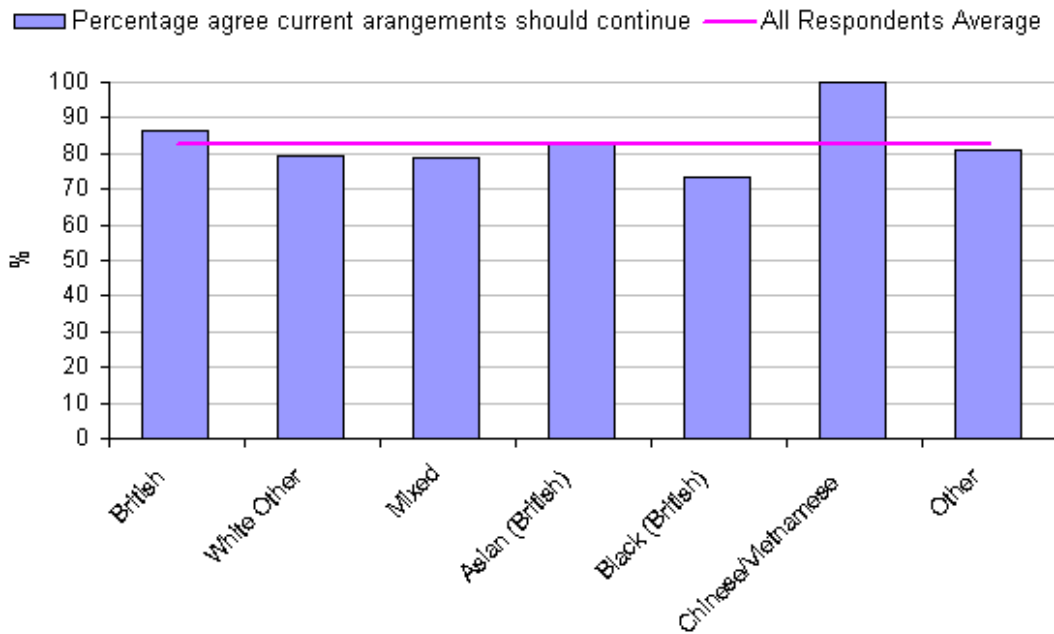
- Community and Police Consultative Groups (via the consultation question and meetings in Sutton (17 April) and Hammersmith and Fulham, (22 May) Lewisham, and Brent.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community – organised in partnership with MPS in LGBT Advisory Group (16 May 2001)
- Racial Equality Councils – organised in partnership with the Commission for Racial Equality. (24 May 2001)
- South London Youth Organisations and Schools organised in partnership with the Society of Black Lawyers and West Norwood Community Development Project. (17, 18, 21, 22 and 24 May 2001)
- MPS Police Officers – organised in partnership with the MPS. (21 May 2001)
- Children of London – organised in partnership with the London Office for Children’s Rights Commissioner (held 30 May as part of a London wide consultation with over 600 children)
- Irish Community – in partnership with the Action Group for Irish Youth. (14 May 2001)
- Faiths Community – Youth Groups organised in partnership with the Southwark Bishops (to be held 8 June 2001).
- Asian Community – organised in partnership with Youth Action Group, Greenwich Racial Equality Council, Sutton Islamic Centre, and Tower Hamlets Council Drug Action (to be held 9 June 2001)
- In addition to the above, meetings and or detailed discussions were held and questionnaires distributed to the following organisations:
- 32 Youth Offending Teams

- Westminster school
- Kensington and Chelsea Independent Advisory Group
- Rough Sleepers Unit

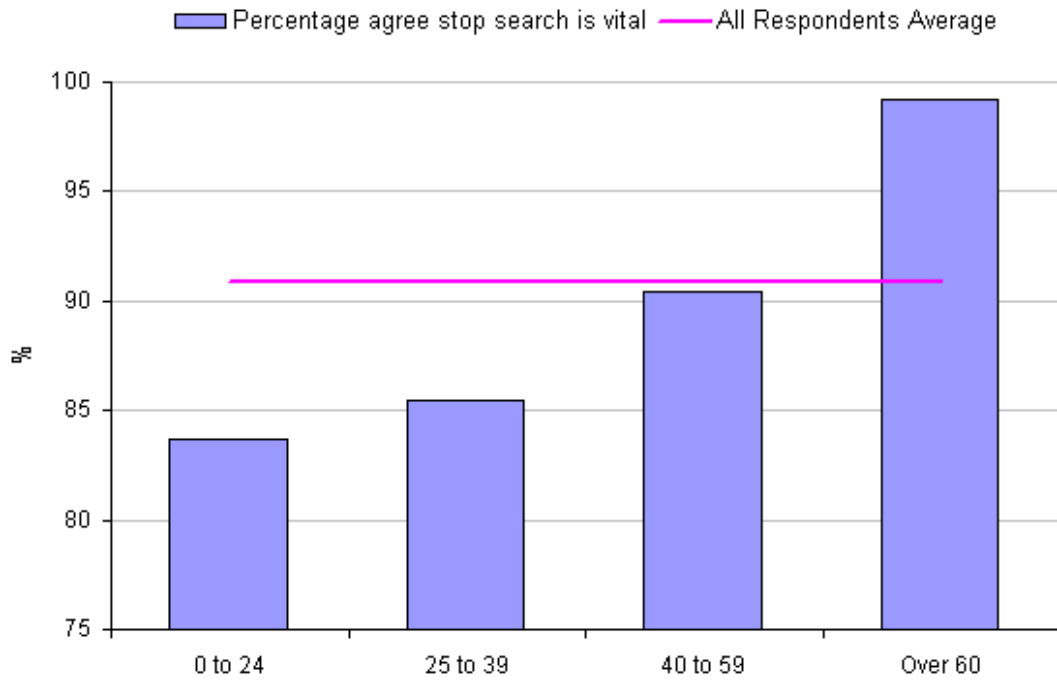
Is Stop/Search Vital According to Ethnic Group



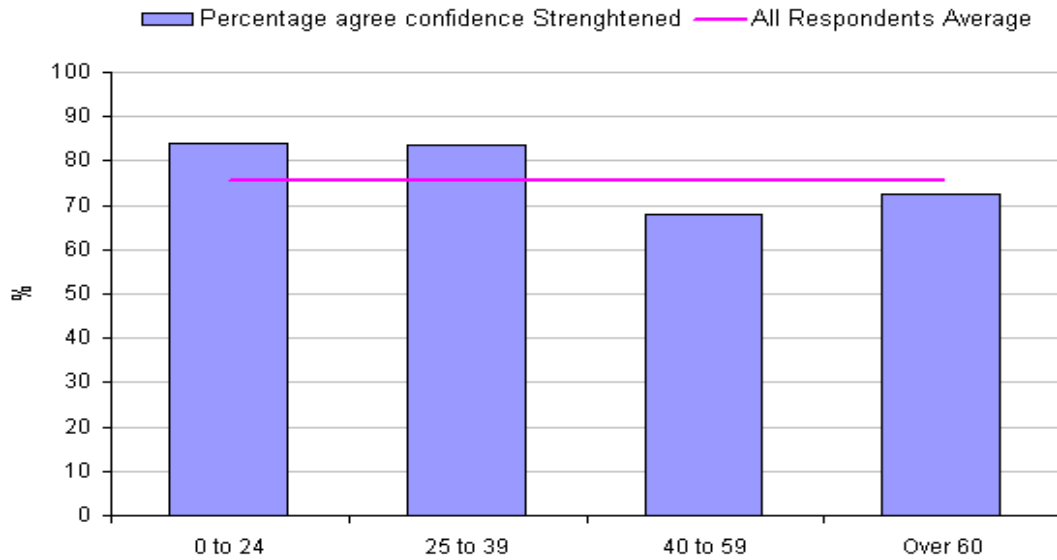
Current Arrangements Should Continue According to Ethnic Group



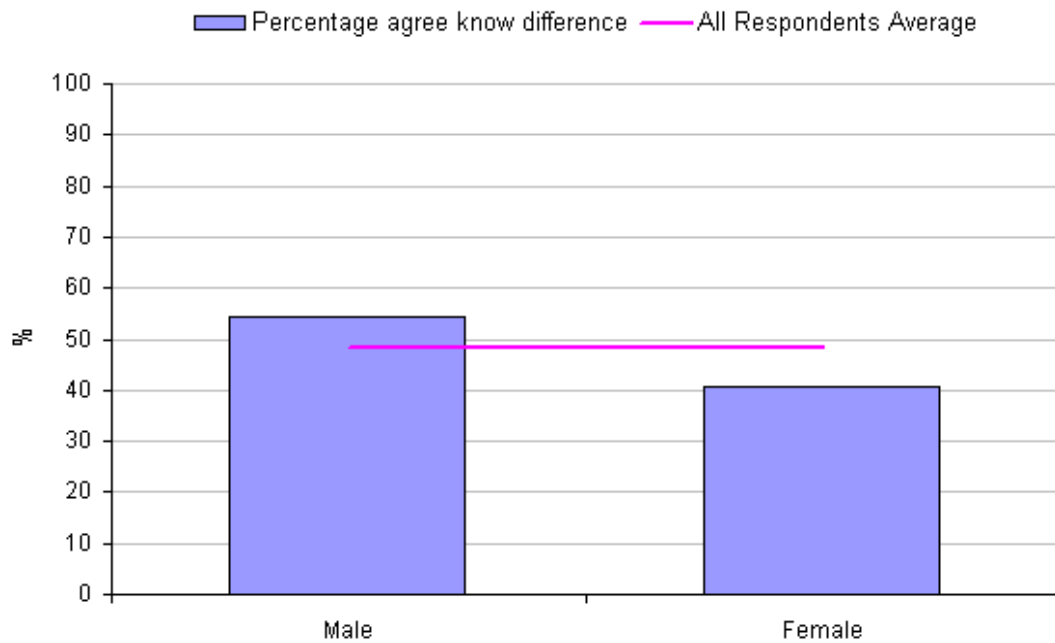
Is Stop/Search Vital According to Age Group



Recording All Stops/Searches Increases Confidence According to Age Group



Everybody Knows Difference Between Formal Stop and Informal Conversation by Gender



Current Arrangements Should Continue According to Gender

