

What else matters

Other considerations when looking at strategies to improve police perceptions.

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Alongside the activities that can have a direct impact on perceptions, there are factors associated with how people think and feel about policing over which the police are able to exert much less influence. While the police will have much less immediate control over these factors, they may nevertheless need to take them into account in any strategies to improve police perceptions.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and feelings of safety

Public perceptions of crime and disorder are closely associated with perceptions of the police. Analysis of the Crime Survey of England and Wales suggests that people who live in areas with lower crime rates tend to be more satisfied and confident in the police than those who live in areas with higher crime rates. Review evidence also shows that living in a community that is perceived to be close, tight-knit and able to look after itself also increases the likelihood that someone will hold positive opinions about the police.

Conversely, a meta-analysis of 66 studies shows that fear of crime and victimisation – along with other factors – are negatively associated with satisfaction with police. In short, people are more likely to hold negative views about the police if they feel unsafe and do not think that the police are effective in reducing crime.

Resources

- [College evidence briefing on what works in policing to reduce crime](#)
- [Crime reduction toolkit](#)

You can also search for examples of police practice on the College's [practice bank](#).

News media

The way in which crime and policing are reported in newspapers, radio and television bulletins, as well as online, may shape [people's perceptions of the police](#).

However, it is possible that the impact of news coverage may not be that greater overall, especially when compared with other sources of information. Research from the US has shown that people's perceptions of the police are more likely to be influenced by personal and vicarious experiences of the police than by news coverage.

A systematic review has found a relationship between [people being exposed to high-profile incidents and aware of negative news coverage](#), and those people holding negative views of the police. This association is not likely to be straightforward. It may also not hold true in the UK. Most of the research is from the US, which has a different news media environment.

Resources

- [Authorised professional practice on media relations](#)

You can also search for examples of police practice on the College's [practice bank](#).

Tags

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