

Declining trust and confidence in the police: Exploring the generational gap

This project aims to explore the reasons why trust and confidence in Welsh policing is in decline, particularly among Generation Z.

Key details

Lead institution	University of South Wales
Principal researcher(s)	Gina Dolan, Becky Nicholls and Claire Parmenter rebecca.nicholls@southwales.ac.uk
Police region	Wales
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	April 2025
Date due for completion	April 2027

Research context

Public trust and confidence in UK police are in decline, with Generation Z (aged 18–29) reporting significantly lower levels of trust compared to previous generations. Gen Z’s lack of confidence is specific to criminal justice institutions, as Gen Z reported similar levels of confidence relating to parliament and political parties as older generations. This generational break of Gen Z appears to be most prevalent in the UK (The Policy Institute, 2022) in comparison to other European countries and other westernised countries.

This research seeks to explore the underlying reasons for this trend with a specific focus on Welsh citizens within Gen Z. To ensure the research generates relevant and impactful findings, the research will be co-produced with an advisory group (comprised of Gen Z volunteer representatives and representatives from each of the four Welsh police forces) to guide the study. By embedding

collaboration, evidence-based recommendations, and focus on an all-Wales approach for sustainable change, this project will contribute to long-term improvements in public trust and confidence in Wales.

The overarching aim of this research is to explore the views of Gen Z about declining trust and confidence in the police, and to translate the findings into actionable strategies to strengthening these relationships. To achieve this aim the following research questions will be addressed:

- what is the current landscape of trust and confidence in Welsh police felt by Gen Z? (aged 18–29)
- how do Gen Z form their perceptions of Welsh police?
- what factors erode or support Gen Z's trust and confidence in police?

Research methodology

This study will adopt a mixed-methods design using a co-productive approach (working in partnership with the advisory group) to generate evidence-based recommendations for enhancing public trust and confidence in policing. The research will involve three phases:

- phase one will be a short quantitative survey to understand the current landscape of trust and confidence among the Gen Z population
- phase two will be a group concept mapping exercise to identify what factors erode or support Gen Z's trust and confidence in police, how important these factors are, and how present they currently are
- phase three will be a Hydra 10KV debrief online session used to validate findings and generate evidence-based recommendations which can be used to inform strategies for building sustainable trust and confidence in policing across Wales

Research participation

We are seeking participation from people who are aged between 18 and 29 years and currently reside in Wales.

Please [contact the researchers](#) for further information.

References

The Policy Institute. 2022. 'Perceptions of the police: a generational crisis of confidence'. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/wvs-confidence-in-police.pdf>