The Price of Policing: Uncovering Local Economic Divides in Stop and Search – A Study of London and Merseyside

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This study examines the spatial concentration of stop and search (S&S) practices through a comparative analysis of the 2022 Merseyside and Greater London policing data. While existing research extensively explores the ethnic dynamics of S&S, this study expands upon it by considering how differing social compositions between these two regions influence the economic dynamics of policing. Specifically, London's highly diverse, multicultural population contrasting with Merseyside's relatively more homogenous demographic. Departing from a purely demographic focus, this investigation examines the geographical distribution of policing practices and the relationship between S&S incidences and localised economic inequality. By assessing these policing encounters at the local level, the findings hope to reveal statistically significant correlations between S&S incidence and economic inequality. By comparing these regions, this study offers new insights into how differing social make-ups shape the relationship between spatial justice, economic disparity and policing strategies.

The key research question is:

"To what extent do the spatial patterns of stop and search in Merseyside and Greater London, reflecting their differing social compositions, correlate with localised economic disparities at the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level?'"

While previous studies have primarily focused on London and its internal dynamics, this research aims to expand the scope to Merseyside, the next largest policing area in England and Wales in terms of stop and search volume – but with a significantly different social makeup. This comparative approach seeks to build upon existing knowledge by examining how the relationship between S&S and economic inequality varies across distinct regional contexts.

To address the research question, this study will conduct a quantitative spatial analysis of 2022 stop and search data from Merseyside and Greater London, sourced from official police records. This data will be aggregated at the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level and correlated with indices of economic inequality, including income deprivation and house prices, derived from publicly available national statistics. Spatial concentration of stop and search incidents will be analysed using regression models to identify areas of high policing activity. Statistical regression models will then be employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between stop and search rates and economic inequality, controlling for relevant confounding factors. Finally, a comparative analysis will determine how these relationships differ between London and Merseyside, considering their distinct social compositions.