**Gender and Trust in the Police: An Analysis Using the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2023-2024)**

**Word count - 1975**

**Introduction**

This report investigates the relationship between gender and trust in the police among non-victims, using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Trust in the police is a key indicator of institutional legitimacy and understanding demographic differences can help identify gaps in public confidence. Gender is a key factor, with prior research suggesting it may shape how individuals perceive and interact with authority. The focus on non-victims allows for a diversion away from the direct effects as a result of personal victimisation. The dataset used includes 30,847 observations and focuses on two variables: ‘sex’, which notes the main household respondents gender, and ‘poltrst’ (Police trust) , which captures the individuals “trust in the police as an organisation” \*reference\*. Police trust was recoded from a four-point Likert scale to make it suitable for binary comparison. The CSEW is a large-scale household survey designed to measure the extent and nature of crime experienced by people living in private households. It captures both reported and unreported crimes, public attitudes towards crime and policing, perceptions of safety and trust in the criminal justice system. This makes it well-suited to explore whether trust in the police differs significantly between men and women in the absence of victimisation.

**Research Question Justification**

The primary question I intend to answer is what is the relationship between gender and trust in the police among non-victims in England and Wales - with the null hypothesis stating, there are no gender differences, while the alternative states associations do exist - Tyler (1990) develops ‘procedural justice theory’, which suggests that when people view the law as legitimate they are more likely to follow it voluntarily, even without fear of punishment. This legitimacy comes from fair treatment, for example trust in legal authorities is built when people feel they are treated fairly - not just in favourable outcomes. He notes negative experiences with legal authorities such as being a victim of crime and feeling ignored by police can reduce trust and this perceived legitimacy. Tyler’s theory suggests trust in police depends more on perceived fairness than on fear of punishment, supporting expectations of lower trust following victimisation. Expanding on this framework, Jackson and Bradford (2010) conceptualise trust in the police as multi-dimensional, including effectiveness, procedural fairness and community engagement. They believe trust increases when the police are seen to represent the community, act fairly, and protect citizens. Additionally, they argue a poor experience following victimisation may challenge this moral alignment. Nonetheless, these theoretical models justify the use of trust in the police as a meaningful and measurable dependent variable. Moreover, Pickering et al (2024) examines gender differences in police trust nationally, finding that women across England generally report higher levels of trust in the police than men (p. 748). However, this relationship reverses in London where he found that only 34% of women trust the police - a significant drop from the national level. This underscores the use of examining gender differences among trust by showing the contextual differences that vary from national to regional. He also highlights that women’s trust is shaped by experiences and perceptions of institutional fairness and treatment by authority. This links to Tyler’s procedural justice theory, demonstrating that even gender differences are significant predictors. Additionally, Jackson et al. (2012) supports the inclusion of gender as a variable by showing that trust in the police is shaped by how different social groups perceive fairness and legitimacy. They argue that procedural justice influences public trust, and that this process is experienced differently based on group identity, including gender (p.11). Perceived exclusion or unfair treatment can make people feel less connected to the police, even if they haven’t had direct contact. Therefore, this shows that gender still affects how much people trust the police, even those who are not victims.

**Sample**

The CSEW uses a stratified, multistage probability sampling design to ensure a representative sample of adults in England and Wales. Households are selected from postcode sectors - primary sampling units (PSUs) - stratified by police force area. In each selected PSU, addresses are chosen randomly, and one adult aged 16 or over is selected using an algorithm. This design ensures that every eligible individual in the population has a known, non-zero chance of being selected. The target audience is individuals who are 16 and over living in private residential households in England and Wales, excluding people in communal institutions such as prisons and care homes as well as the homeless. Respondents are divided into two forms, Victim Form (VF) which is respondents who reported a crime in the past 12 months, and Non-Victim Form (NVF) which is respondents who did not report victimisation in the past 12 months. The sample size for each wave is typically around 35,000. The CSEW includes multiple weighting variables including, main weight which adjusts for design effects and non-response, Household size weighting which adjusts for the unequal probability of selection due to varying household sizes, and calibration to ONS population estimates which ensures representativeness across region, age, sex. Thus, weighting is essential for accurate population-level estimates and comparisons. Typically, response rates for the CSEW are around 70 percent. Additionally, the high response rate contributes to the low risk of non-response bias compared to many other large-scale social surveys. As a result, the sampling design provides a robust framework for attaining national estimates of victimisation and police trust which is essential for this study. The CSEW captures a ‘dark figure’ of crime, revealing patterns of social attitudes and responses to crimes not captured within general police statistics (Office for National Statistics, Home Office, 2024). However, a limitation of the CSEW’s sampling design is the exclusion of institutionalised populations, such as those in prisons. These groups may have essential experiences, and attitudes towards the police which may limit the representativeness, reducing the ability to generalise findings on a national scale.

**Measurement**

The independent variable in this study is gender, measured using the variable sex, which is coded as 1 = female and 2 = male. This is a nominal categorical variable with mutually exclusive values. The dependent variable is trust in the police, captured using ‘poltrst’, which asks respondents: “in general, how much do you trust the police as an organisation?” This is an ordinal variable on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = A lot to 4 = Not at all. For the purpose of analysis, this was recoded into a binary variable where 1 and 2 represent high trust, and 3 and 4 represent low trust. This simplifies statistical testing while capturing public confidence. Descriptive statistics show high trust in the police is common across both genders. 72.9% of women reported high trust compared to 72.4% of men, showing only a small difference. Low trust was reported by 27.1% of women and 27.6% of men. In total 11,398 people reported high trust and 4,295 reported low trust across the full-sample. This suggests there may be only minor gender differences in trust at the descriptive level, however further testing is required to assess the significance. Three sources of response bias are relevant and may affect the reliability of these measures. First, social desirability bias which reflects respondents feeling high amounts of pressure and therefore report higher levels of trust to appear socially responsible or respectful of authority. This is particularly relevant to the CSEW as it involves face-to-face interviews. Second, definition bias may arise from the broad wording of the trust question. Respondents may interpret “trust” differently depending on their own priorities. Third, cultural or identity-based bias may influence responses if gendered experiences shape how people evaluate policing. This is particularly impactful as it may distort the true relationship between gender and trust, particularly in the CSEW, where interpretations vary by demographic group.

**Analysis**

To test whether there is a relationship between gender and trust in the police among non-victims, a chi-squared test of independence was used. This test is appropriate because both variables are categorical - gender being a nominal variable and trust in the police being a binary variable. Chi-squared tests assess whether the distribution of responses on one variable differs significantly across the categories of another. It is a widely used method for testing associations in contingency tables and does not assume a normal distribution, making it suitable for the CSEW. The null hypothesis states there is no association between gender and the trust in police, while the alternative hypothesis states there is an association between them. A significance level of 0.05 was chosen, and with one degree of freedom, the critical chi-squared value is 3.84. The test returned a value of X^2 = 0.52 with a p-value of 0.47 (See Appendix A1) As the test-statistic is below the critical value and the p-value is greater than the threshold, there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. As a result, this means that there is no statistically significant relationship between gender and trust in the police in this dataset for non-victims. Moreover, descriptive statistics also confirmed this conclusion. The proportion of men and women who reported high trust was nearly the same: 37.3% of women and 36.5% of men. Low trust responses were almost identical at 13.9% and 14.0% (See Appendix A2) The similarity between groups suggests that any differences are minimal and are likely due to chance. One limitation is that the binary recoding of trust may reduce the subtle differences in perception for example, those who feel “a fair amount” of trust are grouped with those who feel “a lot”, which therefore overlooks the potential gendered variations in attitudes of trust. Additionally, chi-squared only detects associations and does not account for factors such as age or ethnicity, all of which could interact with gender’s influence on police trust. This therefore limits the ability to draw broader conclusions. While the test suggests gender is not significantly associated with trust among non-victims, there is a possibility that gender is significant in interactions with other characteristics, such as income. Future research may consider the intersection of several social characteristics to get a more nuanced understanding.

**Discussion / Conclusion**

This report has examined whether gender influences trust in the police among non-victims using data from the CSEW. A chi-squared test of independence was used to assess the relationship between the variables ‘sex’ and ‘poltrst’. The analysis found no statistically significant relationship between gender and police trust, with men and women reporting very similar levels of high trust (72.4% and 72.9%). This suggests that gender, across respondents of no recent victimisation is a weak predictor of public confidence in the police. One way to improve the survey quality would be to expand the sampling frame to include individuals currently excluded from the CSEW, such as people living in prisons or care homes. These groups may potentially hold different opinions relating to authority, particularly trust in the police. The absence limits the representativeness of the findings in this study, and including them would significantly improve this. Measurement could also be improved by refining the trust question. The current question, ‘how much do you trust the police as an organisation?’ can be inferred differently across demographic groups which limits the study’s reliability. To overcome this, there could be a more critical focus, such as on police effectiveness or community presence which may capture more accurate and meaningful responses. An ethical concern within this study relates to the sensitivity of questions about policing. Respondents may feel uncomfortable, such as those from marginalised backgrounds or those who have had negative experiences. To reduce this harm, ensuring informed consent and giving respondents the opportunity to skip questions may minimise potential distress. Overall, while the findings were not significant, they raise questions about how trust is measured and whose perspectives are represented in national surveys.

**References**

Jackson, J. and Bradford, B. (2010) ‘What is trust and confidence in the police?’, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 4(3), pp. 241-248. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paq020>

Jackson, J., Bradford, B., Stanko, E.A. and Hohl, K. (2012) *Just Authority? Trust in the police in England and Wales*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203115398>

Office for National Statistics and Home Office (2024) *Crime Survey for England and Wales: Technical Report 2023–2024*. London: Office for National Statistics.

Tyler, T.R. (2021) *Why people obey the law*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1j66769>

Pickering, S. *et al.* (2024) ‘London, you have a problem with women: trust towards the police in England’, *Policing & society*, 34(8), pp. 747–762. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2024.2334009>.

**Appendix**

A1 -

A black text on a white background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A2 -

A number and percentages on a white background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

B -R Code

setwd("C:/R\_ESOSD")

getwd()

rm(list = ls())

##### ESSENTIALS OF SURVEY DESIGN AND ANALYSIS FINAL REPORT ####

#Load packages

library(haven) #for .dta files

library(dplyr) #for data manipulation

# Read both STATA datasets

nvf <- read\_dta("csew\_apr23mar24\_nvf.dta")

vf <- read\_dta("csew\_apr23mar24\_vf.dta")

#checking the structure of both

str(nvf)

str(vf)

names(vf)

labels(vf)

#DEPENDANT VARIABLE - POLTRST "in general how much do you trust the police as an organisation"

#section 4 - measurement

variables <- nvf %>%

select(poltrst, sex)

# Load required libraries

library(dplyr)

library(janitor)

library(haven)

library(dplyr)

str(variables)

library(dplyr)

library(janitor)

library(haven)

# Step 1: Convert labelled Stata variables to numeric

variables <- variables %>%

mutate(

poltrst = as.numeric(poltrst),

sex = as.numeric(sex)

)

# Step 2: Recode into analysis-friendly format

variables <- variables %>%

mutate(

trust\_binary = case\_when(

poltrst %in% c(1, 2) ~ 1, # High trust

poltrst %in% c(3, 4) ~ 0, # Low trust

TRUE ~ NA\_real\_

),

gender\_label = case\_when(

sex == 1 ~ "Male",

sex == 2 ~ "Female",

TRUE ~ NA\_character\_

)

)

# clean descriptive table

desc\_table <- variables %>%

filter(!is.na(trust\_binary), !is.na(gender\_label)) %>%

tabyl(gender\_label, trust\_binary) %>%

adorn\_totals("row") %>%

adorn\_percentages("row") %>%

adorn\_pct\_formatting(digits = 1) %>%

adorn\_ns()

# View the result

print(desc\_table)

#SECTION 5 - Analysis

# Load required package

library(janitor) # for clean output

# Create a contingency table

trust\_table <- table(variables$gender\_label, variables$trust\_binary)

# View the table

print(trust\_table)

# chi-squared test

chisq\_test <- chisq.test(trust\_table)

# View results

print(chisq\_test)

library(janitor)

# Two-way tabyl + formatting for percentages and counts

variables %>%

tabyl(gender\_label, trust\_binary) %>%

adorn\_totals("row") %>%

adorn\_percentages("row") %>%

adorn\_pct\_formatting(digits = 1) %>%

adorn\_ns()