

How we use stop and search

Stop and search remains a hugely important police power for protecting the public, tackling crime and keeping our streets safe.

The Public Attitude Survey tracks the views of the public on stop and search and 83 per cent agree that we should use the power and 78 per cent are confident in our fair use of it. We feel this means we have a strong public mandate for continued use of stop and search in London.

We do not underestimate the impact stop and search has on communities and individuals; we know that to maintain public confidence in its use, stop and search must be used in a fair, effective and professional manner.

Why we use stop and search

The main reason we use stop and search is to allow officers to investigate their suspicions about an individual without having to arrest them.

How effective stop and search is, is as much about avoiding unnecessary arrests as it is about a crime being detected.

Stop and search protects the public by preventing crime, identifying offenders and building public confidence in their policing service.

In 2019/20 stop and search resulted in almost 65,000 criminal acts being discovered and 34,000 arrests. This includes 4,418 arrests for possessing weapons and displays what a vital crime fighting tool it is and how it protects the public by taking weapons off the streets.

Effective stop and searches

We believe a stop and search is most likely to be fair and effective when:

- the search is justified, lawful and stands up to public scrutiny
- the officer has genuine and objectively reasonable suspicion they will find a prohibited article or item for use in crime
- the person understands why they have been searched and feels they have been treated with respect
- the search was necessary and was the most proportionate method the police officer could use to establish whether the person has such an item

It's important to measure the impact stop and search has on communities and individuals. We do this through both community engagement, scrutiny and community accountability; we also publish [stop and search data](#) every month.

We engage with a variety of stakeholders including the Independent Office for Police Complaints, the Black Police Association, community leaders and young people to ensure our use of stop and search is ethical, fair and professional.

London boroughs have local Community Monitoring Groups which scrutinise performance and practice every month. The chairs of these groups meet quarterly as the Community Monitoring Network which operates under the independent direction of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.

Stop and search and gender, age and race

The number of times stop and search is used does vary according to gender, age and race

The reasons for these variations are complex and include the use of the power to tackle gangs and specific crimes. Whether the variations are proportionate does depend on which population base is used to make comparisons.

No population base will ever accurately capture a street population or offender profile in a given area, at a given time.

We will learn from experience, from others, and strive to improve by working with our communities and stakeholders to make sure that stop and search continues to protect the public.