

# Evidence-Based Policing of U.K. Muslim Communities: Linking Confidence in the Police With Area Vulnerability to Violent Extremism

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## Abstract

Preventing the growth of political views justifying violence is central to global strategies for countering terrorism. In Western democracies, targeting resources on local “hot spots” of low confidence in the police is essential for making these strategies evidence based. This research explores the relationship between two kinds of evidence for targeting resources across 335 neighborhoods in a large metropolitan area: police scoring of human intelligence data and public opinion surveys ( $N = 30,412$ ). We map the intelligence data by classifying each Census Output Area (COA) as high, medium, or low risk of vulnerability to violent extremism. Independent survey data for each neighborhood that measures confidence in the police is then compared to categorizations of vulnerability from intelligence sources. The results suggest that while Muslim respondents have lower levels of confidence in the police than other ethnic minority groups, their confidence levels are even lower in areas where intelligence suggests the greatest risk of extremist violence. Given the convergence of indicators of COAs with lowest confidence in police and highest risk of extremist violence, the value of combining these measures appears substantial for evidence-based targeting of “hearts and minds” strategies for preventing extremist, pro-violence views.

## Keywords

terrorism, police legitimacy, confidence in police, human intelligence, Muslim communities, Islamist extremism

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## Introduction

Traditional methods of intelligence gathering can be seen as “top down,” whereby police penetrate potentially violent organizations by the use of human intelligence gathered with informants and covert surveillance technology (Bouza, 1976). Recent scholarship on policing, in contrast, offers what Innes (2006) describes as a “bottom up” approach, relying on survey and other data indicating communities’ normative beliefs, such as legitimacy and confidence in the police (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). The potential for connecting these two approaches may seem to be an obvious strategy for evidence-based targeting of police resources (Sherman, 2013). Yet as of early 2015, we have not found any research exploring the connection between intelligence indicators and community public opinion surveys. The fundamental question is of special importance: Are these two data sources consistent or conflicting, in terms of their assessments of risk levels across neighborhoods?

This question is especially relevant in the United Kingdom, where police agencies routinely conduct community surveys (at great expense) as well as gathering human intelligence. The question is also relevant beyond the United Kingdom, since many other Governments have joined the United Kingdom in a strategy to prevent violent extremism by focusing on “winning hearts and minds” (U.K. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007). The U.K. version of this strategy, called Prevent, is an essential component of the Government’s counterterrorist strategy labelled CONTEST, which was launched with four strands: pursue, prevent, protect, and prepare (Home Office, 2006). From a police perspective, preventing violent extremism relies primarily on engaging with communities to ensure that issues are dealt with in a manner that engenders trust.

Much theorizing led to a “hearts and minds” agenda. But given its emphasis on day-to-day interactions between police and the public, it is surprising to see how little research has been undertaken into the specific ways in which religion, in particular, can affect confidence levels with the police. This is particularly poignant when much of the current threat comes from groups operating *in the name* of Islam, regardless of their theological consistency with basic Islamic texts.

The U.K. security services unequivocally state that the most significant threat to the United Kingdom is from Al Qaeda—which has long inspired violent extremism in the name of Islam. Because violent Islamist extremists are purporting to be Islamic, it seems strategically important to understand the relationship in Western democracies between Islam in general and local police legitimacy. The desired outcome of this research is to undo stereotypes associated with religion per se and focus on building relationships with each minority community one at a time. It is also necessary to emphasize that the police should, normatively, engage with all religions in all communities, as no person is unaffected by crime.

Breen (2007) suggests that the study of terrorism has been analytically and methodologically poor, relying too much on untested hypotheses and secondary information. Even the claim that local policing practices affect police legitimacy in relation to terrorism is largely untested. The current research aims to fill this gap with methodologically sound on (1) how different communities view the police and (2) how that perception varies when compared to the mapping of intelligence assessments of community vulnerability to violent extremism. Our research uses secondary data from an independent and detailed survey of the community to assess public confidence in the police. We then code vulnerability to violent extremism by scoring intelligence on violent extremism held by confidential police sources. The two data sets are then compared to establish what relationship exists between levels of confidence in policing and vulnerability to violent extremism, using communities as the unit of analysis. The results aim to assist police decision makers in selecting the most appropriate way to engage with communities in preventing violent extremism.

## Legitimacy and Terrorism

Much research around the relationship between authorities and the public has been based on the concept of legitimacy. Tyler (2004) defines legitimacy as:

... the belief that the police are entitled to call upon the public to follow the law and help combat crime and that members of the public have an obligation to engage in cooperative behaviours. (pp. 86–87)

Sunshine and Tyler (2003) found that legitimacy had the strongest effect on public support which itself was measured by three indices; compliance with the law, cooperation with the police, and empowerment of law enforcement authorities. They found that procedural fairness was the strongest antecedent of legitimacy. The implications for preventing violent extremism are clear: Community support is achieved through legitimacy and legitimacy is achieved by treating people fairly.

Tankebe's (2007) research in Ghana found that legitimacy was built on trust rather than procedural fairness. He argues that the method of measuring legitimacy needs to change when considering non-Western sociopolitical settings. This could be of paramount importance when examining perceptions of heterogeneous religious minorities in the United Kingdom with strong links to other cultures and countries.

With Tankebe (2007) arguing that legitimacy is built on trust, and Tyler (2004) asserting that it is built on procedural fairness, creating concrete measures of legitimacy proves problematic. Perceptions of confidence in the police may prove helpful in assessing their levels of legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Confidence is defined as "firm trust" or "assured expectation" (Coulson, Carr, Hutchinson, & Eagle, 1984). The questions analyzed from the public survey explore all these themes and provide a signpost to levels of legitimacy, although not an exploration of legitimacy itself.

It is possible to state an argument against adding a new emphasis on community legitimacy in relation to terrorism. One confidential analysis of terrorist operations that were successfully foiled by police showed very few relying *solely* on community intelligence. However, the reliance on a "top down" approach could simply be seen as a failure of police to engage effectively with communities. The amount of knowledge the community actually holds about criminality or terrorism can also be questioned. If this is so, is the "hearts and minds" agenda built on well intentioned but misinformed foundations? Worse, is it built on what could be interpreted as an arguably Islamophobic assumption that all Muslims must know what illegal activity is going on or being planned in their community? There must be a middle ground acknowledging that to effectively counter extremism, there needs to be effective relationships with all communities. At the same time, that ground would also acknowledge the necessity of using covert investigative techniques.

These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Tyler and Huo (2002), for example, point out that intrusive police tactics are tolerated when the public trusts the motives behind the use of those tactics. Lowe and Innes (2008) emphasize that to in order to combat endogenous (or home grown) terrorism:

Counter measures and their implementation must attend very carefully to questions of legitimacy in order that they do not increase levels of social support for the terrorist cause ... such matters are particularly important where the impetus is to prevent violent radicalization. (p. 3)

Evidence on police legitimacy can therefore be seen as an essential tool for targeting resources in countering violent extremism. To understand what shapes perceptions of confidence in the police, it is essential to understand how communities identify themselves, and the role that ethnicity and religion plays in creating that identity.

## Identity, Ethnicity, and Islam

Barker (2001) argues that legitimation and identity are inextricably linked. People identify with those who share their values and characteristics. Commands from “our people” are more effective than commands from others. Within the context of a “war on terror” and active debate around foreign policy, Barker’s argument could be used to explain confidence deficits amongst religiously defined communities. Similarly, Wrong (1995) argues that legitimacy presupposes shared norms and beliefs, something that is continually being questioned and tested in diverse communities.

Against this backdrop and the current threat from international terrorism, there has been a glaring omission of the role that religion, and particular Islam, plays in creating or reducing confidence in policing. This may be true for cultural reasons within criminology that are unrelated to terrorism. Spalek (2002), for example, notes that criminological research, in general, has rarely focused on religion. She quotes Morrison (1995) as stating that criminology was “born with the death of God.”

Nonetheless, some social scientists have examined issues pertaining to Islam. Rosen (2000) identified the principle of “Wathiqā” (meaning “to place confidence in”) as being integral part of Arabic culture. This trust is generated more by relationships with a person, rather than the capability of the person. From a South Asian perspective, Quraishi (2005) describes a social phenomenon called “biraderi,” where kinship and friendship ties are given prominence. The process is often referred to as “lina and dina” or “giving and taking” and creates an interdependence and social cohesion. The potential implications for neighborhood policing in this context are clear, at least from a theoretical viewpoint: Trust must be built through engagement (or relationship building) rather than issues of procedural fairness or operational effectiveness.

The omission of criminological research in the area of religion is all the more important when self-identity is based on religion rather than nationality. Modood et al. (1997) note that the majority of South Asians indicate that religion is more than or as important as nationality to them.

A number of theoretical observations are made for the 21st-century relationships between Muslims, society, and the police in Western democracies (Quraishi, 2005). First, the loosening of social control mechanisms (such as the family), combined with societal strains, has caused exclusion and marginalization for many Islamic immigrants in Western nations. Second, criminological theories around the media such as “media deviancy amplification” have created the emergence of Islam as the new “folk devil” in those nations. Finally, the colonial past, which created concepts such as the “Martial Races Theory” (describing the military use of certain tribes) and indentured labor (where racial stereotypes were used to decide who could work well), assists in explaining issues of identity and belonging in contemporary times.

All of these theories can be applied when examining levels of confidence in the police from Muslim communities. Lowe and Innes (2008) highlight the national importance of getting policing right at neighborhood level:

If violent radicalisation can, at least in part, be driven by disaffection with and insecurity within an individual’s immediate social milieu, it would appear that, in some regards, national security is contingent on levels of neighbourhood security. Understanding local perceptions and experiences of crime, security and policing thus becomes a salient counter-terrorism tool. (p. 6)

An evidence-based policing strategy for counterterrorism might therefore—if the evidence supported it—target a confluence of protective services and neighborhood policing in which a number of agencies and communities play a role in preventing violent extremism. This would allow for what Lowe and Innes (2008) call a “situational approach” whereby, due to the complex push and pull factors that cause radicalization, the only solution is to have a thorough local understanding of what is happening in each specific community. By adopting key themes of neighborhood

policing—accessibility, accountability, and being heard (Home Office, 2004)—the foundation can be laid for creating this “situational” approach.

The key evidence on which this approach depends, however, is a test of the key hypothesis: that human intelligence and community opinion surveys will identify the same communities as being at highest risk of generating violent extremism. More precisely, the test can examine what kinds of communities are at high, medium, and low risk for religiously justified violence, both in general and specifically within the category of communities in Western democracies in which high concentrations of Muslim citizens reside.

## **Data and Methods**

In order to explore the relationship between confidence in the police and vulnerability to violent extremism, we employed a three-stage research plan. First, levels of confidence from opinion surveys of all geographic communities in a U.K. region were ascertained and mapped. Second, human intelligence reports on each community were scored to assess a high, medium, or low level of vulnerability to violent extremism, which we also mapped. Third, we analyzed the relationship between the two data sources, using quantitative methods.

## **Mapping Levels of Trust and Confidence in the Police**

The geographic setting for this research was a metropolitan area in the United Kingdom. The data used in this study to measure confidence in policing were drawn from a large survey, conducted annually by an independent polling company for the local police force. Roughly 21,000 face-to-face interviews are conducted annually for the full force area, with quota sampling for age, ethnicity, gender, and employment status, based on the 2001 census. Two hundred and fifty interviews are conducted within each Operational Command Unit (OCU). In order to achieve these quotas, 25 sampling points are allocated by OCU and at each of these points 10 surveys are conducted. A sampling point is decided by dividing the amount of Census Output areas (COAs) by 25, equaling “x.” Every xth COA is then made a sampling point. The survey data used here were collected between October 2006 and January 2008. The sample used in this analysis covers only the metropolitan area of the particular police force, yielding a total sample of 30,462 surveys over the whole time period.

The survey has sampling quotas for age, ethnicity, gender, and employment status. To ensure balanced or “representative” samples of households, a sampling frame was used based on COAs. Answers to questions were marked on a Likert-type scale normally ranging from 1 to 7. In order to interpret the findings, the mean of the Likert-type scale was used as a measurement of strength of the perception.

A major limitation of this survey data is that the firm collecting it does not report response rates based on the number of attempts made to obtain each interview. This serious limitation means that some COAs may have much higher response rates than others. The worst case scenario is that response rates in some areas are so low that the sample is highly biased, overstating the local prevalence of opinions associated with people who can be reached by the survey, while understating the local prevalence of opinions of people who either refused to respond or were not reachable through the contact procedures employed by the firm. The firm did, for the record, acknowledge that it knew what the response rates were. But because those data were not part of the contract for the work, the firm asked for a substantial fee to retrieve and disclose the response rates to the first author. Since that fee was beyond the financial means of the research project, we are unable to report or assess the potential impact of variable response rates on the results.

What is clear from our secondary analysis of the survey data is that they show responses consistent with agreed-upon “quota sample” targets for a demographically diverse sample. Survey data on

the demographic background of respondents who provided the basis for the analysis included marital status, children living with respondent, gender, age, employment status, ethnicity, religion, address, length of time they have lived in neighborhood, their knowledge of police officers, contact with police, whether they have been a victim or witness (in the last 12 months), and experiences of stop and search.

These data were analyzed for various outcomes at one or more of three levels of geographic analysis: the police force as a whole, the 21 administrative districts within the force, and the neighborhood (335 neighborhoods making up the force area).

### *Measuring Vulnerability to Violent Extremism*

The mapping of vulnerability to violent extremism was based on the scoring of intelligence held by the police in relation to International Terrorism. Data were scored by internal police analysts as part of their routine work. We have no data on the reliability or accuracy of these analyses, but they used methods that were standard across U.K. policing at the time. A coding system was used where points are awarded depending on the seriousness of the piece of intelligence held. This weighting allows for the fact that intelligence assessed as serious, corroborated, and perceived as reliable would be awarded more points. On the basis of points scored, areas were classified as high, medium, or low risk of vulnerability to violent extremism. The number of individual pieces of intelligence mapped was over 1,000 and covered the time period of 1998–2008. It is not possible to say anything further about the methodology used due to the confidential nature of the intelligence. Here again, however, the methods were standard at the time in the United Kingdom.

### *Linking Intelligence and Public Surveys*

Finally, we combined these two data sources into comparisons between areas classified according to their vulnerability to violent extremism and confidence levels in the police. The analysis also examined how the relationship with confidence varies between Muslim and non-Muslim respondents and to what extent individual factors contribute to perceptions of confidence. Next, these confidence data were merged with the categorization of areas as low, medium, and high as based on the intelligence data. Data from  $n = 53,165$  respondents were from neighborhoods classified as low;  $n = 2,014$  respondents were from neighborhoods classified as medium; and  $n = 921$  respondents were from neighborhoods classified as high.

Confidence-in-police data were presented for ethnic minority Muslim, ethnic minority-non Muslim, and White non-Muslim divided by categorization of area vulnerability to violent extremism.<sup>1</sup>

Then a set of three ordinary least squares regression analyses was conducted predicting public confidence in policing in areas of the three different categories of intelligence (high, medium, and low) using several demographic characteristics as well as police contact. Finally, the  $z$  test for equality of coefficients was conducted to investigate if the contribution of the predictors of public confidence differed in high-, medium-, or low-risk areas.

To differentiate between respondents three categorizations have been made; White respondents ( $n = 23,786$ ), ethnic minority Muslim ( $n = 3,004$ ), and ethnic minority non-Muslim ( $n = 3,622$ ) respondents.

## **Findings**

Across the region, Muslim respondents had lower confidence levels in the police than non-Muslim respondents. However, Muslim respondents did have higher perceptions of police–community relations. It is worth noting that a large proportion of non-Muslims are White, and therefore the

actual difference might not be between Muslims and non-Muslims but explained by ethnic minority status. The following analysis therefore aimed to compare perceptions between ethnic minority Muslims and ethnic minority non-Muslims.

Table 1 indicates that both groups have median scores closer to the maximum score, so both groups are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the overall level of service provided by the Police. However, Muslim respondents have a statistically significant lower satisfaction levels than ethnic minority non-Muslims in 5 of the 10 questions, of which only 6 had any significant difference—so 5 of the 6 significant differences showed lower levels for Muslims. Again, Muslims respondents do have slightly higher perceptions of police–community relations than ethnic minority non-Muslims, but the difference is quite small.

In order to test for perceptions of empowerment of the police, further results were analyzed comparing ethnic minority Muslim and ethnic minority non-Muslim responses on questions about stop and search. Ethnic minority Muslim respondents had a lower opinion of the appropriateness of stop and search than ethnic minority non-Muslims (Muslim: Median = 2,  $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = .62$ ); Non-Muslim (Median = 3,  $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = .66$ ,  $Z = -2.86$ ,  $p = .004$ ). In summary, we find that across the force area, Muslims have lower confidence in the police than White and ethnic minority non-Muslim respondents.

When the region is split into 21 divisions which were categorized as high, medium, or low vulnerability to violent extremism, we can test to see how confidence levels vary when taking ethnicity and religion into consideration.

Figure 1 below graphs the mean for all survey questions relating to confidence in the police against vulnerability of to violent extremism. The score is an average of all scores for 10 questions relating to police confidence. It shows that at the divisional level, satisfaction with the police increases as (intelligence analysts' coding of) vulnerability to violent extremism decreases for ethnic minority respondents. In the areas coded as most vulnerable to violent extremism, Muslims have the lowest confidence levels in the police. It is also clear that the difference in confidence levels between religious/ethnic groups is largest in those areas most vulnerable to violent extremism.

When the analysis is conducted at the smaller *neighborhood* level (using analysis of variance) we see differences from the results at the divisional level. While in the neighborhoods most vulnerable to violent extremism significant differences across the three groups of respondents were also seen,  $F(3, 464) = 3.73$ ,  $p = .011$ , *partial*  $\eta^2 = .02$ , here *White as well as ethnic minority Muslim* respondents had the lowest confidence levels (White non-Muslim:  $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ; ethnic minority Muslim:  $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ; ethnic minority non-Muslim:  $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). Post hoc tests showed that the significant differences lay between the White and the ethnic minority non-Muslim group ( $p = .047$ ) and the ethnic minority Muslim and the ethnic minority non-Muslim group ( $p = .030$ ). There was no statistical difference between the confidence ratings of the White and the ethnic minority Muslim group ( $p > .05$ ).

In conclusion, this section shows generally that as vulnerability to violent extremism increases, confidence in police decreases. This is particularly consistent for ethnic minority Muslim respondents.

The next stage of research aims to explore whether there are any predictors of confidence levels in the police, and if so, to establish if they vary among religious/ethnic respondents or against different categorizations of intelligence on vulnerability at the neighborhood level. A multiple regression conducted across the three categories of neighbourhood<sup>2</sup> and ethnicity/religious classification evaluated how much a respondent's situation predicts confidence levels and how this varies between neighborhood categorization. The test was conducted against the survey question (dependent variable) "*Taking everything into account I have confidence in the police in this area.*" The combination of predictors was significantly related to confidence levels for all three neighborhood categories. The sample correlation coefficient varied considerably across the neighborhood categories with predictors playing a much stronger role in high-vulnerability neighborhoods than in medium or low.

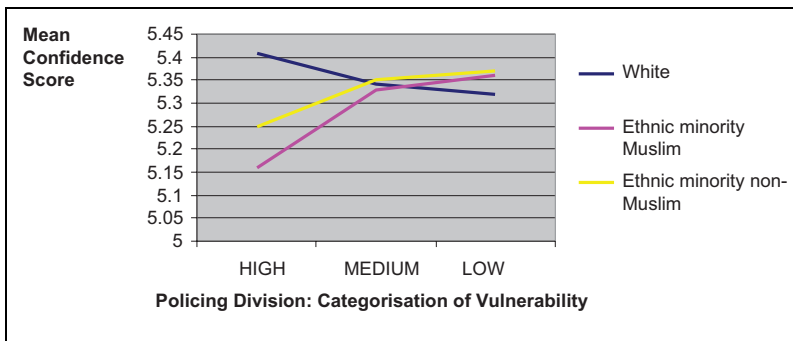
**Table 1.** Differences in Confidence Levels Between Ethnic Minority Muslim Respondents and Ethnic Minority Non-Muslim Respondents at Force Level.

Survey Question		Muslim	Ethnic minority non-muslim	Mann–Whitney <i>U</i> test
General satisfaction with the overall level of service provided by the police	Median	5	5	$Z = -6.58, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[4.98, 1.15]	[5.12, 1.17]	
How good a job are the police in your neighbourhood doing	Median	5	5	$Z = -7.20, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[4.89, 1.13]	[5.12, 1.15]	
Can the police be relied upon to be there when needed	Median	5	5	$Z = -6.38, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[5.02, 1.3]	[5.16, 1.35]	
Would the police treat you with respect if you had contact with them	Median	5	5	$Z = -4.96, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[5.53, 1.06]	[5.62, 1.14]	
Would the police treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	Median	6	6	$Z = -1.62, p = .871$
	Mean (SD)	[5.42, 1.19]	[5.39, 1.30]	
Can the police be relied upon to deal with minor crimes	Median	5	5	$Z = -3.81, p = .703$
	Mean (SD)	[4.93, 1.56]	[4.92, 1.56]	
Do the police understand issues that affect the community	Median	5	6	$Z = -1.744, p = .081$
	Mean (SD)	[5.30, 1.23]	[5.34, 1.24]	
Do the police deal with things that matter to this community	Median	5	5	$Z = -2.11, p = .035$
	Mean (SD)	[5.17, 1.23]	[5.23, 1.23]	
Overall confidence in the police in this area	Median	5	5	$Z = -5.30, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[5.14, 1.22]	[5.28, 1.18]	
How good or poor are relationships between people and police in this neighbourhood	Median	5	5	$Z = -3.50, p < .001^*$
	Mean (SD)	[5.90, 6.11]	[5.89, 5.13]	
Have you had contact with the police in the last 12 months	Median	2	2	$Z = -.801, p = .423$
	Mean (SD)	[1.82, 0.39]	[1.81, 0.39]	

Note. Possible scores ranged from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). As 11 tests were conducted on these data a Bonferroni correction was applied. After the Bonferroni correction, the critical *p* value was .005. The results that remained significant after the correction are marked with an \*.

In high-vulnerability neighborhoods, the most powerful predictors of confidence are also statistically significant. “Contact with the police” is the strongest predictor, accounting for 4% ( $.20^2 = .04$ ) of the variation with those who have had *no contact* having higher confidence in the police.<sup>3</sup> While this may suggest that if police improve contact they will increase confidence levels by 4%, that is a hypothesis that only experimental evidence can test. Although not appearing much, this accounts for over a quarter of the influence exerted by all the antecedents of the respondents described in Table 2. Being an ethnic minority Muslim accounts for 3% ( $.16^2 = .03$ ) of the variation, having a negative prediction of confidence. “Length of time in neighborhood” also has a 3% variance ( $-.18^2 = .03$ , the longer the time living there, the lower the perception of confidence). Being





**Figure 1.** Mean levels of confidence in police across different categorizations of vulnerability.

married positively accounts for 2% of the variance ( $.13^2 = .02$ ); married respondents have more confidence in the police.

When the multiple regressions are carried out in *high-vulnerability neighborhoods for Muslim respondents only*, we see that “contact with the police” remains the strongest predictor but increases in strength from 4% to 6.25% (Part correlation .25,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Having any contact with police predicts less confidence among residents of these high-vulnerability areas.

To test whether there is a significant difference between the strength of predictors in different categorizations of neighborhoods, the  $z$  test for equality of regression coefficients was used (Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 1998).<sup>4</sup>

Here we see that there is a significant difference between different vulnerabilities of neighborhood in the following predictors: high versus low: marital status, contact with police, being a victim, and being a witness; High versus medium: having children and being a victim; Medium versus low: marital status. These results can be highlighted as follows.

**Marriage.** The importance of marital status differed between high-, medium-, and low-vulnerability neighborhood. In high-vulnerability neighborhoods there is a significant positive correlation between being married and confidence levels, whereas in medium-vulnerability neighborhoods there is a nonsignificant negative correlation. In low-vulnerability neighborhoods there is a negative correlation.

**Police Contact.** In high-vulnerability neighborhoods, having contact with the police has a significantly stronger negative correlation with confidence than it does in medium or low neighborhoods.

**Victimization.** Having been a victim in the last 12 months is only of importance in low-vulnerability neighborhoods; in medium and high neighborhoods, this predictor does not reach significance. It could be suggested that the more vulnerable an area is to violent extremism, the less the impact of being a victim has on confidence in the police.

Thus, we see that in the areas most vulnerable to violent extremism, “contact with the police” has the largest effect on confidence levels in that “contact” accounts for deterioration in confidence. This effect is amplified if only Muslim respondents are considered. In contrast, “contact” has much less influence on confidence in neighborhoods that are not vulnerable to violent extremism.

**Table 2.** Summary of OLS Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Overall Confidence in the Police in Different Categories of Neighborhood Vulnerability to Violent Extremism.

Predictor	High			Medium			Low					
	B	SE	β	Part Correlation	B	SE	β	Part Correlation	B	SE	β	Part Correlation
Gender	-0.02	0.14	-.01	-.01	-0.01	0.11	-.00	-.00	0.08	0.04	.04	.03**
Employment status	0.19	0.13	.09	.07	0.08	0.11	.03	.03	0.06	0.04	.02	.02
Age	0.05	0.05	.06	.05	0.1	0.04	.12	.10**	0.04	0.01	.06	.05***
Marital Status	0.49	0.19	.19	.13***	0.15	0.14	.06	.04	-0.18	0.04	-.07	-.06***
Have children	-2.33	0.18	-.09	-.07	-0.26	0.13	-.1	-.08**	0.09	0.04	.04	.03**
Been a victim	-0.09	0.31	-.02	-.16	-0.3	0.21	-.06	-.06	0.47	0.06	-.12	-.11***
Been a witness	-0.06	0.25	-.01	-.01	-1.19	0.27	-.18	-.18***	-0.61	0.1	-.08	-.08***
Time in neighbourhood	-0.13	0.03	-.21	-.18***	-0.02	0.03	-.03	-.02	-0.05	0.05	-.09	-.08***
Contact with police	0.65	0.17	.22	.20***	0.26	0.14	.08	.07*	0.15	0.05	.05	.05***
Know police	-0.09	0.20	-.02	-.02	0.15	0.16	.04	.04	0.09	0.06	.02	.02
Ethnic minority Muslim or not	0.64	0.2	.18	.16***	0.14	0.13	.05	.04	0.05	0.04	.02	.02
R <sup>2</sup>	.15				.09				.05			
F		(11,333) = 5.38***				(11,587) = 5.21***					(11,4706) = 23.03***	

Note. OLS = ordinary least squares.

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .01.

## Discussion

### *Muslims have Lower Confidence in the Police Than Other Non-Muslim Minorities*

At a force level, we see that ethnic minority Muslims had the lowest confidence in the police, even when compared to ethnic minority non-Muslims. There are a number of potential reasons for this. Primary among these reasons is the relationship between deprivation levels and the locations of Muslim respondents in deprived areas. Another potential reason is identified by Barker (2001), who suggests that minority communities identify with what they are not (e.g., identifying as being non-White). In this area, British foreign policy may be seen as the cause for lowering levels of confidence. To what extent foreign policy reflects on the police service, as opposed to the Government, remains uncertain. Quraishi (2005) and Macey (2002) identify actual or perceived Islamophobia as another potential contributor to the erosion of legitimacy. Alternatively, the police could be perceived as ignoring the principles of “Wathiqah” (trust based on relationships) identified by Rosen (2000).

In addition, ethnic minority Muslim respondents perceived that they are more likely to be stopped and searched than ethnic minority non-Muslims and had a much lower confidence in the appropriateness of this power, even when compared to non-Muslim ethnic minorities. Opinions around the appropriateness of stop and search may represent a lack of empowerment of the police and therefore a lack of willingness to grant legitimacy. The application of this finding for police strategy is potentially important. Whether or not proportionately more Muslims are stopped than non-Muslims, it can be very important for officers to understand that generating understanding may reduce hostility when carrying out stop and search. If they do not understand that, then their actions may contribute to a spiraling decline in confidence—and an attendant increase in the risk of contributing to a social climate supporting extremist views.

A causal analysis for the deficit in confidence is beyond the scope of this research. What is clear is that the police are required to reduce violent extremism while engaging with communities that have low confidence levels in the police. These two factors make the aim of “building trust” a major target. Faced with some of the potential causes highlighted earlier, we may hypothesize that police can offer a service that builds trust by not being Islamophobic, by stressing police independence from any social biases, by problem solving on behalf of the community, and by building personal relationships.

### *Muslims Have Higher Opinions of Police–Community Relations*

When compared to non-Muslims generally and ethnic minority non-Muslims, we see that Muslims have slightly (but significantly) higher levels of confidence in police–community relations. This could be a result of a cultural obligation to require good relations. However, it may also be the case that relationships between the police and Muslim communities in this region are actually good. The finding should be seen as an open door to meaningful engagement which in turn promotes confidence and reduces vulnerability to violent extremism.

### *Confidence in the Police Is Lower Where Vulnerability to Violent Extremism Is Higher*

Figure 1 shows how for ethnic minority communities, confidence deteriorates as vulnerability increases. We also see that in the most vulnerable divisions, there is the greatest difference in confidence levels between ethnic/religious groups. Muslim respondents demonstrate the strongest deficit in confidence in the most vulnerable areas. The implications are straightforward; confidence is needed to tackle problems associated with violent extremism but where vulnerability to violent extremism is highest, confidence in the police is lowest, especially in Muslim populations.

There is a difference when data are analyzed at neighborhood level. Here we still see an inverse relationship between vulnerability and confidence among Muslim respondents. However, in high-vulnerability neighborhoods White respondents have confidence scores which are as low as those of the ethnic minority Muslim respondents. In these high-vulnerability neighborhoods, the White population is lower (at 15% of the total populations in vulnerable neighborhoods) than anywhere else. This finding proves unique to White respondents. For example, the ethnic minority non-Muslim population in these areas is even smaller than the White group but their confidence is higher. Whether deprivation concepts of “otherisation” (Spalek, 2008) combine to have a race-specific effect on a group who may perceive they are indigenous is one possibility.

Further research that examines engagement strategies in this area may therefore be required. In the same way that officers become experts in certain fields (firearms, family liaison, and child abuse), so neighborhood officers should receive training tailored to their specific neighborhoods. Strategy may best be built not at force or even divisional level, but in one neighborhood at a time, as both problems and perceptions between different neighborhoods vary. Any focus on engagement with the intention of increasing confidence may use neighborhood data to better understand what push and pull factors exert pressure on the confidence of the community.

### *The Strength of “Predictors” Increases With Vulnerability to Violent Extremism*

By knowing that predictors increase with vulnerability, police may be able to focus their resources for engagement in specific areas with maximum potential benefit. As a politician canvasses in areas that contain the most undecided voters (swing areas), so the police can concentrate in areas where their presence has the greatest effects on confidence levels. This could be seen as a controversial strategy were it not for the fact that the areas that have the greatest “swing potential” are also those that are the most deprived. This is where the importance of defining the role of policing comes into play. If the police are seen as Islamophobic, racist, or irrationally target oriented, then a focused presence in a swing area may indeed cause a swing—but in the wrong direction. However, if the police adopt the principles of neighborhood policing (accountability, accessibility, and the community having a voice) with an attitude of social entrepreneurialism, then a positive swing may be achieved. This change may bring with it the collateral that Sunshine and Tyler (2003) associate with legitimacy; cooperation, empowerment, and deference to the law. For this to take place, it is essential for the police to understand which predictors produce the greatest swing in vulnerable areas.

### *Having Contact With the Police Is the Strongest Predictor of Low Confidence*

This result does not vary with categorization of neighborhood. It is also true for force as a whole; the difference is only the degree of its strength, being strongest in high-vulnerability neighborhoods at 4% of a total 15% variation. Yet what we must remember is that this is a predictive analysis, not a causal one. If people have contact with the police because they have had a problem, their dissatisfaction with police may have been caused *by the problem itself, not by what police did* after the problem arose. In other words, contact with police may indicate a failure of *prevention*, rather than a failure of police *response*. If this is a general rule that holds for people of all races and ethnicity, there may be little that police can do in general about such contacts. Stop and search, however, would be an exception to that rule, where how the police treat people may be more important than the decision to stop, per se.

With that proviso in mind, it is still worth considering whether there are implications for how police might improve public confidence in them among those citizens who do have contact with police. This also relates to the differential strength of the prediction in high-vulnerability

**Table 3.** Z Test for the Equality of Regression Coefficients Between Categories of Neighborhood Vulnerability to Violent Extremism.

Predictor	Z test for the equality of variance between category of neighborhood		
	High vs. Low	High vs. Medium	Medium vs. Low
Ethnic Minority Muslim or not	0.08	-0.31	0.67
Know police	-0.88	-0.91	0.31
Marital Status	3.42***	1.43	2.22***
Have children	-1.76	10.61***	-19.60
Contact with police	2.82***	1.77	0.70
Employment status	0.94	0.60	0.23
Time in neighborhood	-2.10	-2.45	1.16
Been a witness	5.24***	0.97	0.78
Been a victim	2.01***	3.11***	-2.04
Gender	-0.73	-0.07	-0.78
Age	-1.83	-2.39	1.39

Note.  $Z < 1.92$  = insignificant,  $z > 1.92$  = significant (\*\*\*)

neighborhoods. The  $z$  test (Table 3) confirms that there is a statistically significant increase in the strength of this predictor high-risk neighborhoods compared to low-risk areas. When the multiple regressions are conducted for Muslim respondents only, at neighborhood level, the strength of this predictor increases to 6.25% out of a 14% variation. This could be due to a “Gestalt” psychology whereby Muslim respondents perceive the police to be highly professional, and their high expectations are challenged when they actually come into contact with the police. There are certain predictors that the police can have no control over such as “marriage” or “time in the neighborhood.” It is therefore encouraging that the strongest predictor is the one the police have the most control over—its contact with the public. If interactions between a police officer and a citizen can affect confidence levels, then the police may have an opportunity to build confidence in Muslim communities where this predictor is the strongest. Communication processes may be the key to helping police interaction boost public confidence rather than eroding it.

Tylerian theories of procedural fairness may be pivotal here. Even if we accept the view that procedural fairness cannot build confidence but can erode it, then a truly procedurally fair “contact counts.” Police would see the strength of this predictor reduce considerably.

### *Being an Ethnic Minority Muslim Is Also Strong Predictor of Lower Confidence in the Police*

The Muslim community is by no means homogenous. However, some of the findings here indicate the possibility that being an ethnic minority Muslim does make a difference in some geographic areas. The multiple regressions demonstrate that in neighborhoods vulnerable to violent extremism, being an ethnic minority Muslim accounts for a 4% out of 15% negative variation in confidence levels. This predictor is only statistically significant in the high-risk neighborhoods with medium- and low-risk neighborhoods still show a swing albeit smaller and statistically insignificant. The  $z$  test confirms this assertion. Here arguments around deprivation falter as other ethnic minorities in the same deprived area have a higher confidence in the police. It appears that being an ethnic minority Muslim, in isolation, in the high-risk areas, does have an effect on confidence levels.

The finding, however, was clearly not the same as results at force level, where being an ethnic minority Muslim made no statistically significant difference. As a strategy focuses on engaging with

the Muslim communities in high-vulnerability neighborhoods, the actual cause or causes of this finding may become clearer. Successful and targeted engagement becomes the conduit for understanding between the community and the police, breaking the cycle of misunderstanding that causes further alienation. The by-products are potentially those that Tyler identifies as products of legitimacy, the most important being cooperation.

### **Other Findings**

We found that at a force level, and in high-vulnerability neighborhoods, the longer respondents live in an area, the more likely it is that their confidence in policing decreases. A potential explanation could be that new members of the community have less social capital and may rely more on the police, even if only psychologically. Time then may create social glue through which the respondent vicariously adopts the experiences of the community.

Being a victim is the strongest predictor of lower confidence levels in the areas least vulnerable to violent extremism. The *z* test confirms these strong and significant differences. This may provide further support to the hypothesis that victimization causes contact with police, but it is the failure of prevention that causes lower confidence in policing.

### **Conclusion**

From Ottawa to Sydney to Paris, fatal attacks of late 2014 and early 2015 confirmed that the threat from terrorism in Western democracies is still severe. The threat comes primarily from terrorists operating in the name of Islam. And because the outcomes of police contacts are so highly linked to neighborhood levels of confidence, it is vital to understand how levels of confidence correlate highly with how vulnerable communities are to violent extremism.

The results of this research show that in one metropolitan area, Muslims have lower confidence in the police when compared to all other groups. More importantly, levels of confidence are lower in neighborhoods with higher vulnerability to violent extremism. We also see that factors that predict these perceptions of satisfaction are complex and varied. The strength of these predictors increases across neighborhoods (COAs) proportionately with vulnerability to violent extremism. In areas of high vulnerability to violent extremism, the strongest predictor on confidence in the police is “contact with the police in the last 12 months,” followed by “being a Muslim.” Both categories predict lower levels of confidence in the police. However, it appears that Muslim communities, above all other communities tested, have slightly higher opinions of the quality of police–community relations. This finding provides both a theoretical foundation for building greater confidence, and encouragement to develop and test better strategies of neighborhood engagement.

Police officers are well advised to be cognizant of the correlation of religion with satisfaction levels. This goes far beyond the clichés of observing dress codes in Mosques or being aware of periods of fasting. There appears to be a cultural need to build relationships where an officer is known in the community and more than that, known as a problem solver who achieves outcomes. In application, this means giving an officer the opportunity to remain in a community for a period of time that allows for the relationships to be built. In addition, “knowing your community” is not just about knowing who the resident criminals are but also knowing who makes up the population, what their cultural expectations are, and how a police officer can act to maximize the “swing” to achieve higher levels of confidence. The way police service is delivered to achieve satisfaction can be built around the unique characteristics of that neighborhood. Delivering engagement strategies either centrally or even at a divisional level is unlikely to tackle the question, “what does this neighborhood need?” There may thus be substantial advantages in building counterterrorism strategies at the neighborhood level, one neighborhood at a time.

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### Notes

1. The percentage of White Muslim respondents in this dataset was 0.14% and was thus too small to be included in any of the statistical analyses.
2. These tests were also conducted at divisional level. The correlation coefficients were smaller and did not vary across the classification of vulnerability at divisional level.
3. The way the question is asked means that the positive part correlation actually accounts for a negative relationship (confidence deteriorates with police contact)
4. These tests cannot be conducted using SPSS and were completed manually using:  $z = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2}}$ .

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