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Making and Breaking Barriers

Assessing the value of mounted police units in the UK: Summary report

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Preface

While the use of mounted police (i.e. police horses and riders) can be traced back to before the advent of the modern police service in 1829, very little is known about the actual work of mounted police from either academic or practitioner standpoints. Police horses are thought to have unique operational and symbolic value, particularly in public order policing (making barriers) and community engagement (breaking barriers) deployments. They may represent a calming presence or, and potentially at the same time, an imposing threat of force. Yet, the relationship between the use of police horses and broader notions of policing by consent in the UK is presently unknown, and all evidence for these claims is anecdotal at best.

In recent years, mounted units have come under resource scrutiny in the UK due to austerity measures. Some forces have eliminated their mounted capacities altogether, while others have developed collaborative or mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring forces. The relative costs and benefits of the available options – maintaining units, merging and centralising mounted resources or eliminating them in whole or part – cannot at present be assessed confidently by individual forces or by national coordinating agencies such as the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC).

This research makes a timely contribution to pressing decisions regarding the future of mounted units, and should be of interest to police managers including mounted section, public order, and neighbourhood commanders, as well as Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners. It will also be of value to academics and researchers interested in a wide range of public policing issues including public trust and legitimacy, police visibility and public order police work.

The research undertaken for this project was multi-method and exploratory in nature. Beginning in February 2013, the project has examined mounted police in multiple deployment scenarios including neighbourhood policing, football policing and public order policing in festival and demonstration settings. This project also includes research activities designed to understand the costs of mounted policing, and a survey of senior mounted police officers in other countries to understand the potential transferability of these findings.

This report presents a summary of key findings and conclusions from the main report, and full details of the methods and underlying data can be found in the main report document.

This research was commissioned by the ACPO Mounted Working Group (MWG) through Avon and Somerset Constabulary, to assess the value of mounted police units in the UK across various deployment scenarios. It has received funding and contributions from Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Metropolitan Police Service, the University of Oxford's John Fell Fund and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Knowledge Exchange Opportunities scheme. The project has been undertaken through the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford, in partnership with RAND Europe.

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ANGEL HOTEL
HEDDLU POLICE
GMB
Community
SOCIALISM

Background

Mounted units have been part of the British police 'tool-kit' since before the inception of the modern-day service in 1829. Their use has periodically been reviewed by senior police officials, but they have consistently been retained as a deployment option for public police.[1] The image of the mounted police officer is a powerful one that reflects the diverse roles of police in a democratic society. Mounted policing resonates with accounts of policing that stress public consent and the police role as peacemaker and with accounts that have pointed to a rather different idea of policing, with mounted officers charging protesting crowds or confronting striking miners, and representing the power of the state to physically threaten, coerce and constrain citizens. Within these accounts of what mounted police do is their ability, in certain contexts, to create barriers – for example, separating crowds or intervening in conflict – and in others, to encourage connections between the police and the public.

This research on mounted police has been commissioned at a time of widespread cuts to public policing capacity in the UK[2] since the advent of government austerity measures in 2010. In overall terms, a 20 per cent reduction in police budgets over five years has led to almost 16,000 officer posts being lost since 2009.[3] In this context, a number of forces have determined that mounted police units are too expensive to justify maintaining. In turn, in the past three years, the number of forces with mounted units in the UK has decreased from 17 to 12[4], and overall capacity of mounted units has dropped substantially.

Where some forces have eliminated their mounted capacities, other forces have developed collaborative or mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring forces to share mounted resources. This means that they may be used as needed, providing public-order readiness without the full burden of cost. Still other forces have a relatively unchanged capacity, despite force-wide cuts. Underlying the choice to cut, merge or maintain mounted branch capacities are a number of assumptions about what mounted police do, and do well, relative to other modes of deployment. However, at present, these opinions are largely unsupported by empirical study and analysis.

As of the end of 2013, the 12 mounted police units in the UK have 271 officers, 103 staff and 247 horses, which represents a cut of nearly a quarter of national mounted capacity since the beginning of 2012. For further details on these developments, see Tables 1 and 2, below.[5]

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1 Scott, H. 1970. *Scotland Yard*. London: Mayflower.

2 While this report has been commissioned by ACPO, which represents chief police officers in England and Wales, the term 'UK' is used throughout the report to reflect the fact that the ACPO Mounted Working Group also includes the Police Scotland mounted section, and there is no mounted presence in Northern Ireland. As such, the research has examined data from all mounted activity in the UK, rather than only in England and Wales.

3 As of November 2014: see A. Travis. 2014. 'Police numbers fall by further 3,488 officers'. *The Guardian* online 29 January 2014, at: http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/29/police-numbers-fall-by-3488-officers.

4 This reduction includes an amalgamation of mounted units alongside the amalgamation of Scottish police units into Police Scotland; there had previously been two Scottish mounted units in Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders, and there is now one for all of Scotland.

5 Data for these tables are drawn from Mounted Working Group internal documents.

Table 1: Mounted Capacity 2012 and 2013

	Apr 12	Dec 13	Difference	% Change
Officers	359	271	- 88	-25%
Staff	134	103	- 31	-23%
Horses	318	247	- 71	-22%

Table 2: Forces with mounted units (incl. recently disbanded)[6]

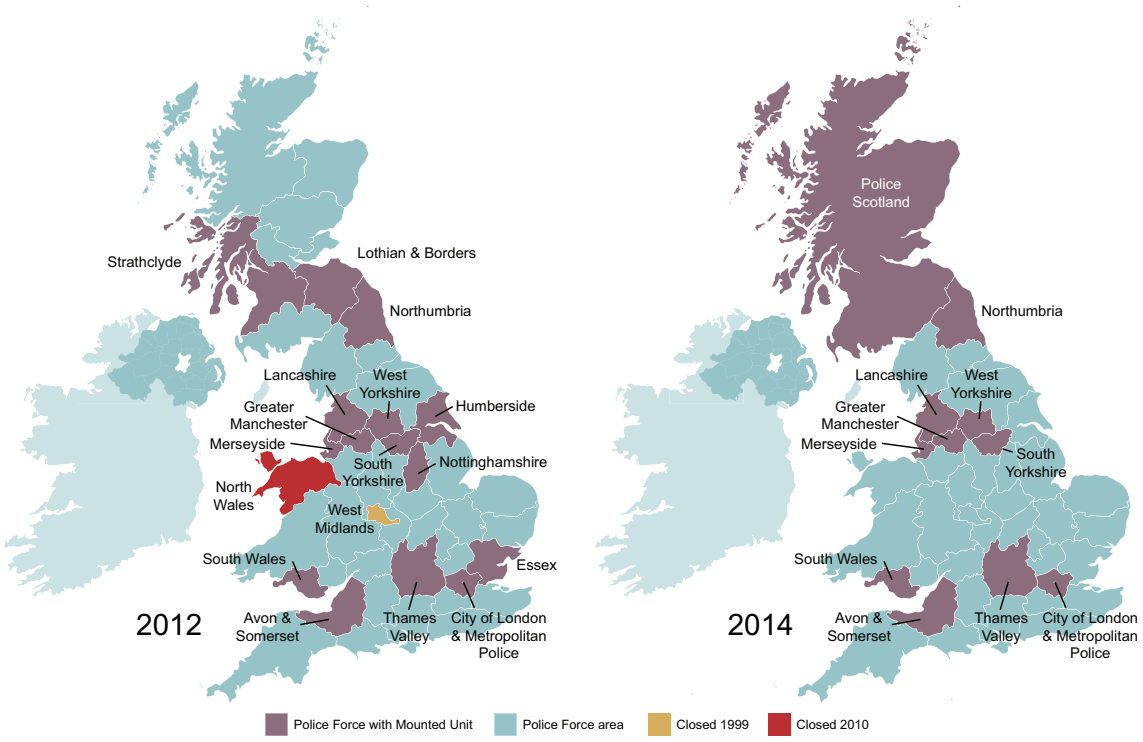
Force	Active or Disbanded (date disbanded)
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	Active
City of London Police	Active
Cleveland Police	Disbanded (2013)
Essex Police	Disbanded (2012)
Greater Manchester Police	Active
Humberside Police	Disbanded (2013)
Lancashire Constabulary	Active
Merseyside Police	Active
Metropolitan Police Service	Active
Northumbria Police	Active
North Wales Police	Disbanded (2010)
Nottinghamshire Police	Disbanded (2012)
Scotland (Police Scotland)	Active (amalgamated Lothian and Borders and Strath-clyde Police mounted sections)
South Wales Police	Active
South Yorkshire Police	Active
Thames Valley Police	Active
West Midlands Police	Disbanded (1999)
West Yorkshire Police	Active

At present, there is no minimum national standard for mounted policing capacity, though such a standard is currently in development, based in part on this research project. In the absence of such a standard, the decision to maintain, expand or cut mounted police capacity has been entirely up to individual forces. In turn, there is currently no national guidance as to the necessary level of mounted resource required for an emergency response to large-scale disorder or to other kinds of events, such as the recent UK floods in winter 2013–14, where mounted police were required to access areas that were impassable to police vehicles or police on foot.

Alongside these issues regarding overall national capacity, the recent cuts present potential regional and local capacity concerns. The loss of units from certain geographical areas may increase the distance between forces without mounted units and their nearest available mounted section, which would increase response times and potentially decrease availability of mounted units in times of need. As outlined in Figure 1 below, the geographic coverage of mounted units has been reduced substantially in the last two years:

6 The Royal Parks Constabulary (2004), West Midlands Police (1999) and Royal Military Police (1999) have also disbanded their units in the past 15 years.

Figure 1: Map of forces with mounted sections, 2012 and 2014



While any decision to cut police capacity is certainly taken seriously, decisions to cut mounted units have to date been taken in the absence of systematic evidence that can assist decisionmakers in understanding the potential impact on overall policing capacity in an area. This research has revealed a variety of opinions on police horses among police officers and managers, from those who feel they are largely ornamental to those who see them as essential and irreplaceable. However, these beliefs are currently based in anecdotal evidence and personal experience rather than empirical data.

To address this limitation in available evidence, the Mounted Working Group (MWG) commissioned the research team to consider ways in which the relative value of mounted police work may be measured and understood, as well as provide evidence testing the value of mounted police in various deployment scenarios. The research team took a broad understanding of the notion of value that mirrors the ways in which the value of police work is assessed more generally. This notion of value involves understanding their capacities to respond to and also prevent crime and disorder, as well as their capacities for public engagement and ability to garner public trust and legitimacy. Alongside these considerations of value, the research has also sought to capture an estimation of the financial costs of mounted policing.

It is important to note that it is not within the scope of this project to provide recommendations on what should be done regarding mounted policing in the future. This research provides evidence on which police managers may make better-informed decisions. However, these decisions still rest with police managers and, while this research does show demonstrable and measurable value of mounted police in various deployment scenarios, the decision to maintain, expand or cut mounted capacity will be based on the priorities a police force sets within limited and contracting budgets.

HEDDLU POLICE

Research Approach

The research approach was exploratory in nature. The research activities were structured to examine the most important areas for development of new evidence regarding mounted policing, while also providing adequate flexibility to address additional areas of interest that were identified during the project. While each research activity listed below was designed to address its own set of specific research questions, the activities were also interrelated and intended to address the overarching questions of the study, which were:

- First, what do mounted police do when deployed in different scenarios?
- Second, when deployed, how and in what ways do they provide value to the overall policing operation?
- Third, what impact does their deployment have on public perceptions of policing?
- Finally, what are the costs and potential drawbacks of using mounted police units in policing operations?

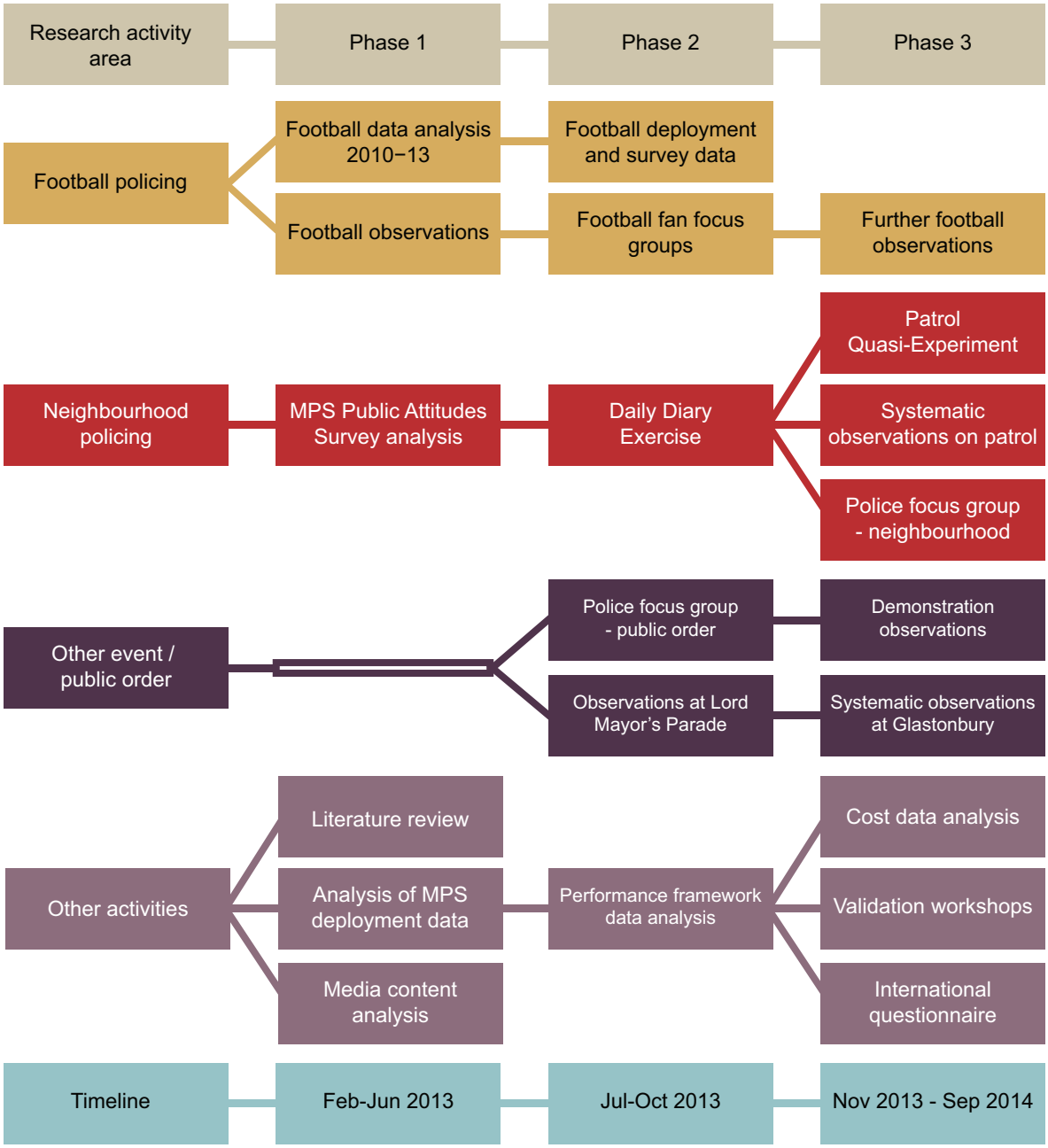
The project began in February 2013, and in the intervening time the research team – alongside a number of volunteer researchers – has engaged in wide-ranging research activities including:

- A quasi-experiment in Gloucestershire and London, measuring the effects of mounted police patrols using before–after surveys and systematic social observation (SSO) methods
- Focus groups with mounted and non-mounted police officers
- Focus groups with football fans
- Observations of mounted police in demonstration/public order settings
- Observations of mounted police in peaceful event and festival settings
- A 'costing' exercise using operational order,[7] UK football policing unit and police officer survey data to examine relative resourcing of football deployments with and without mounted units, alongside the outcomes of those deployments
- A 'daily diary' activity-sampling exercise with mounted officers on patrol shifts
- A structured content analysis of newspaper articles featuring mounted police in national newspapers over a three-year period
- Analysis of national mounted police Performance Framework data, collected through the MWG
- An analysis of the relative and absolute costs of mounted policing
- An international questionnaire of mounted sections in other countries.

[7] Operational orders are planning documents containing numbers and types of police officers used in an operation.

After completion of these research activities, the research team then presented preliminary findings at validation workshops with police practitioners held in sites across the UK, to provide additional insight into the findings and also examine gaps in the data that could not be addressed during fieldwork. A graphical overview of the research approach is provided in Figure 2, which shows which activities occurred at which phase of the project, and also categorises activities according to the area of mounted police work they investigate.[8]

Figure 2: Research approach by area of activity and project phase



[8] This figure includes activities that are not reported in this summary report, but which are discussed in the main report document.

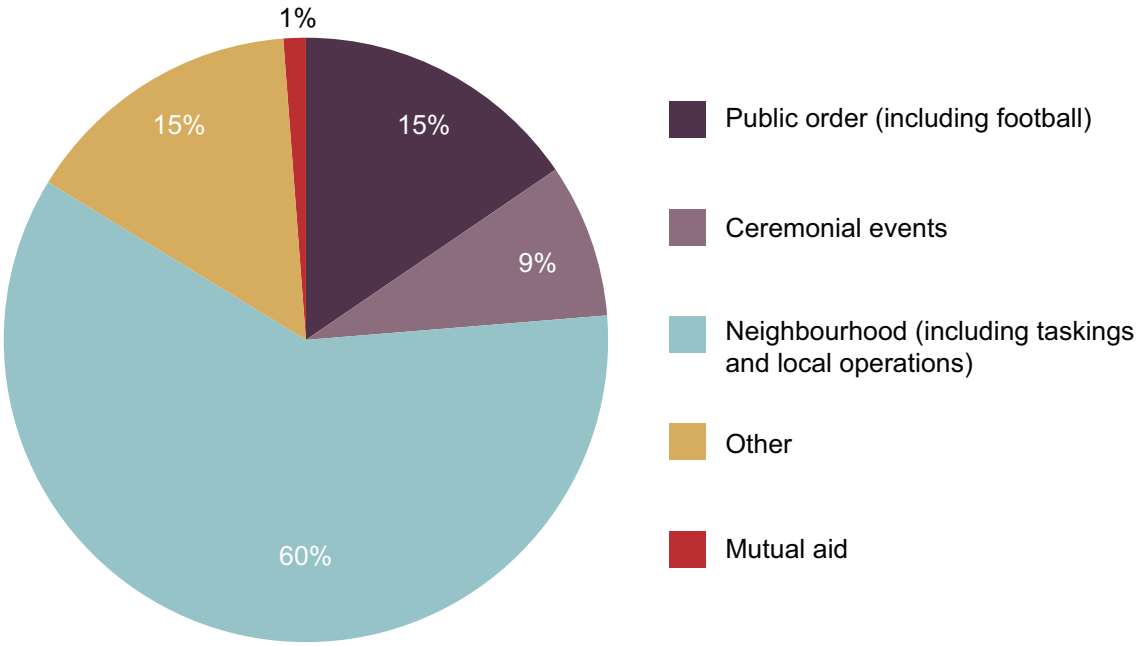
Key Findings

From these research activities and validation exercises, this project developed a substantial amount of data over an 18-month period, and this is reported at greater length in the main report. The key findings from this research are summarised as follows:

1. Mounted police spend substantially more time on neighbourhood-level patrol or supporting local policing than on any other area of activity.

Overall, it is clear that neighbourhood work accounts for most of the working time of mounted officers. Analysis of current Performance Framework data, collected by the MWG, shows that across the UK mounted units spend approximately 60–70 per cent of their time in local patrols and less than 20 per cent of their time in public order situations. The remaining time is spent on activities including ceremonial activities and mutual aid. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: National mounted deployments 2013, by activity type



Using data from a ‘daily diary’ exercise, it is possible to better understand how a patrol shift is spent. On average, a standard shift involves about one-third (31 per cent) of shift time on patrol, one-quarter (28 per cent) on stable duties, 10 per cent on travel to and from assignments, and the remaining time is shared between activities such as briefings and administrative work. The percentage of time mounted police spend in ‘public facing’ activities (37 per cent), such as patrol and responding to incidents, is slightly lower

than the percentage of time spent by neighbourhood and response officers in public facing activities (44 per cent), as reported in previous research on local policing teams.[9] Additionally, observations with mounted and foot patrols suggest that each spend a similar amount of time in actual patrol activities on a shift, with both patrolling on average between 2 h 15 m and 2 h 20 m per shift.

Finally, mounted police patrol shifts do not tend to involve a substantial amount of intervention in crime and investigation. The Framework data reports that mounted officers were involved in 740 arrests (either leading or assisting) in 2013, or approximately 2.7 arrests per officer in the year. They appear to be more involved in direct crime-reduction work, as the Framework data shows 16,472 instances of crime reduction-related activity in the year, or approximately 60 such acts per mounted officer per year. In this data, crime reduction-related activity may include, for example, stop-and-search, stop-and-account, and hot-spots patrols.[10]

2. In neighbourhood settings, mounted police patrols are associated with higher levels of visibility, trust and confidence in police.

Police visibility is, in the UK, consistently associated with public trust and confidence – on average, people who perceive more visible policing have more confidence in the police.[11] Mounted patrols would seem to be an extremely visible form of policing and, accordingly, a quasi-experiment to investigate the effect of mounted community patrols on trust and confidence in local areas was developed for this project.

Six areas, in three matched pairs, were selected for the quasi-experiment; four in Gloucestershire and two in south London. None had recent experience of mounted community patrols. One test area in each pair received a series of mounted community patrols (seven–eight patrols over a four-week period), while in the other control area in each pair it was business as usual. Pre and post surveys of local residents demonstrated that, first, the introduction of mounted community patrols was noticed by local residents – in one test site 50 per cent of local residents surveyed in the post period were aware there had been recent mounted patrols in their area. Second, having recently seen mounted police was, overall, associated with significantly higher levels of trust and confidence. Third, trust and confidence, across a range of indicators, increased in the test areas *relative to* the control areas after the mounted patrols had taken place, suggesting that this form of visible policing may indeed have a positive effect on trust and confidence.

Two provisos are in order, however. First, this effect came mainly from one area in Gloucestershire, albeit the observed effects did occur in the other sites as well. Second, the patrols appeared to have had, primarily, a ‘buffering’ effect on public opinion; during

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9 Mclean, F. & J. Hillier. 2011. An observational study of response and neighbourhood officers: NPIA.

10 Comparative data for foot officers or other specialists, such as dog handlers or firearms officers, were unavailable, and so this report cannot comment on the degree of difference between these types of officers in terms of arrests and crime-reduction activity.

11 See e.g. Bradford, B., J. Jackson & E. A. Stanko. 2009. ‘Contact and Confidence: Revisiting the Impact of Public Encounters with the Police.’ *Policing and Society* 19 (1): 20–46; Sindall, K. and P. Sturgis. 2013. ‘Austerity Policing: Is Visibility More Important Than Absolute Numbers in Determining Public Confidence in the Police?’ *European Journal of Criminology* 10 (2): 137–53.

the experimental period, trust and confidence declined in the control sites but stayed constant or slightly increased in the test sites. The inference, therefore, is that the mounted patrols inhibited a fall in trust and confidence in the test sites that would have occurred had they not taken place; that is, they bolstered or shored up public trust and confidence in the police, rather than necessarily increasing it.

The design of the quasi-experiment also does not allow separation of the effect of the simple visibility afforded by the mounted patrols in the test sites from the use of police horses as a particular way of delivering this visibility – in other words, the survey data cannot determine whether a higher number of foot patrols might have generated a similar effect. However, based on observations of foot and mounted community patrols conducted during the experiment (see below), it seems reasonable to suggest that horses provide a specific form of visibility that generates substantially more engagement between members of the public and the police. Both police visibility in a general sense and the use of mounted police, specifically, may have had the effect of buffering trust and confidence in the test sites.

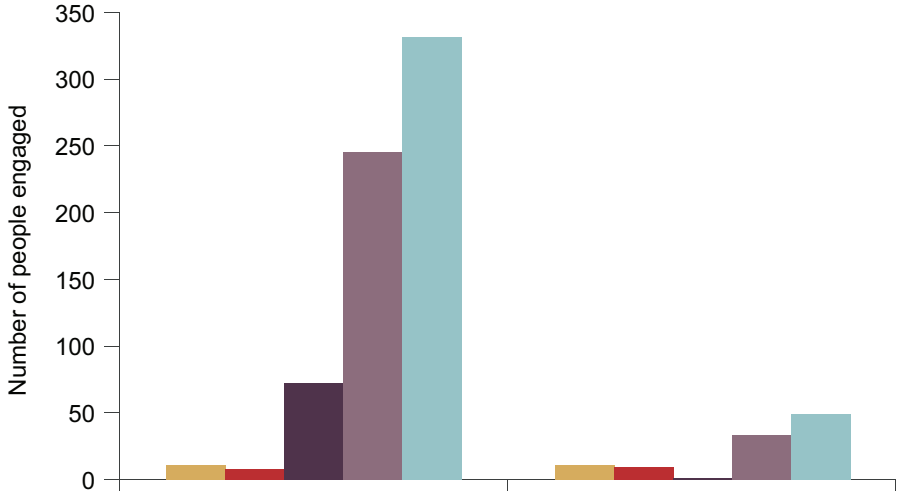
3. In both neighbourhood and peaceful crowd settings, mounted police generate far greater levels of casual engagement, by volume over similar time periods, than foot officers. However, both generate approximately equivalent levels of extended engagements with members of the public.

During the mounted police patrols in Gloucestershire and London, a team of observers joined officers on patrol to measure levels and quality of ‘engagements’ between police and members of the public. An engagement is any active noticing of, greeting,

or interacting with police officers.[12] Observers followed patrols using a mobile app to record systematic social observation (SSO)[13] data, to provide a comparison between the activities of foot and mounted patrols.

Overall, mounted police generated approximately six times as many engagements of all kinds compared with foot patrol officers over the same time period; in real terms, this amounted to an average of 332 engagements per mounted officer per shift, and 50 per foot officer per shift. This difference is attributable in part to the fact that mounted patrols were much more likely than foot officers to generate 'multiple encounters', or impromptu crowds forming around the officers for extended group engagements, and this effect is clearly related to the attraction of the horse. Additionally, the qualitative observations accompanying the SSO exercise suggest that mounted patrols were positively received by people across demographic categories – people across age, ethnic, and gender backgrounds were seen to approach the mounted officers during their patrols. Engagement data is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Mean engagements with police, by foot and mounted patrols



	Mounted	Police
Interactions per shift	12	12
Encounters per shift	9	10
Multiple encounters per shift	74	2
Acknowledgements per shift	246	34
Total engagements/shift	332	50

12 These were broken down into categories of length and substance, from the lowest (acknowledgement, such as a brief hello) to somewhat more substantial (encounters, brief but normally insubstantial conversations; as well as multiple encounters, where groups formed around officers but no one individual was engaged in extended discussion with officers) to highest (interaction, a conversation extending over a minute in length between one person or group and an officer).

13 SSO is a method that brings together qualitative observational data with quantitative evidence regarding specific aspects of interest within social observations. For examples of its use in studies of public police work see e.g. Mastrofski, S.D., Parks, R.B., Reiss, A.J., Worden, C.D., Snipes, J.B. and Terrill, W. 1998. Systematic Social Observation of Public Police: Applying field research methods to policy issues. NIJ Research Report, December 1998; Schulenberg, J.L. 2014. Systematic Social Observation of Police Behaviour: The process, logistics, and challenges in a Canadian context. *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*. 48, 297-315.

However, foot and mounted patrols generated virtually equivalent levels of more substantial engagements (those classified as encounters and interactions) over equal time periods, meaning that mounted police generate substantially more casual acknowledgements but not more extended engagements. Additionally, foot patrols were significantly more likely than mounted patrols to be engaged in activities directly related to crime, traffic or antisocial behaviour during their patrols, with 46 per cent of foot patrol interactions and 19 per cent of mounted patrol interactions[14] directly addressing these areas of police work.

The researchers also recorded the tone (positive, neutral, ambiguous or negative) of encounters and interactions, and found that while a majority of both foot and mounted patrol encounters and interactions were positive, a significantly higher proportion of mounted encounters were positive compared with foot patrols, while there was no difference in tone of interactions. It is also noteworthy that encounters where female police were presence – whether on foot or on horseback – were also significantly more positive than those where only male officers were present. Nonetheless, most engagements of all kinds were either positive or neutral in tone, whether generated by foot or mounted patrols.[15]

In a similar observation exercise at Glastonbury Festival, the researchers found a similar ratio of levels of engagement when comparing foot and mounted patrols. In this case, observers found a ratio of about 3.5 times as many engagements for mounted police over equivalent time periods in 'public' compared with their counterparts on foot. For various logistical reasons researchers were unable to record the tone of encounters in quantitative terms in the festival setting, but qualitative observations consistently found that, in the peaceful crowd setting, most engagements with both foot and mounted patrols were generally positive and brief. Where members of the crowd at Glastonbury were observed expressing negative sentiments about the police presence, this was normally related to the fact that police were present rather than about the form of policing. Some negative sentiments about the horses were overheard during observations at the festival, and where these were heard by researchers they related to concerns about animal welfare or fear of horses.

4. In football settings, the presence of mounted police has a statistically significant association with the incidence of arrests, the quality of police interactions with the public and possibly the incidence of disorder at matches. However, due to variability in the numbers of police officers deployed at these events, it remains uncertain whether there is a causal relationship between these factors.

Data were analysed from the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) for three years of Premier League and Championship matches (2010–2013), examining outcomes such as arrests, ejections and reports of disorder against the presence or absence of mounted police at those matches. Across the nearly 2,800 matches analysed, the data

[14] All activities involving crime, traffic or antisocial behaviour were classified as interactions within the dataset.

[15] The researchers recorded a number of other variables relating to the engagements, such as level of conflict in the engagement, type of citizen compliance with any requests made by police, and levels of respect shown by the citizen(s) and the officer(s) involved.

suggest that the presence of mounted police was associated with a higher probability of arrests occurring at a match. Conversely, looking only at matches where mounted units were in attendance, the number of horses was negatively associated with the probability of a disorder report[16] being filed by a Football Intelligence Officer (FIO). These statistical relationships make some sense, as police participants and written reports of match policing operations suggested that mounted police are able to provide 'sterile' areas offering space away from the crowd in which officers may make arrests (which can otherwise be very complicated in crowd settings); mounted police are believed to increase enforcement against ticket touting owing to their height above the crowd and thus their ability to identify ticket touts; and they may also prevent escalations in disorder owing to a capacity for rapid intervention in crowd settings. However, these statistical associations, while significant, were quite weak in both cases.

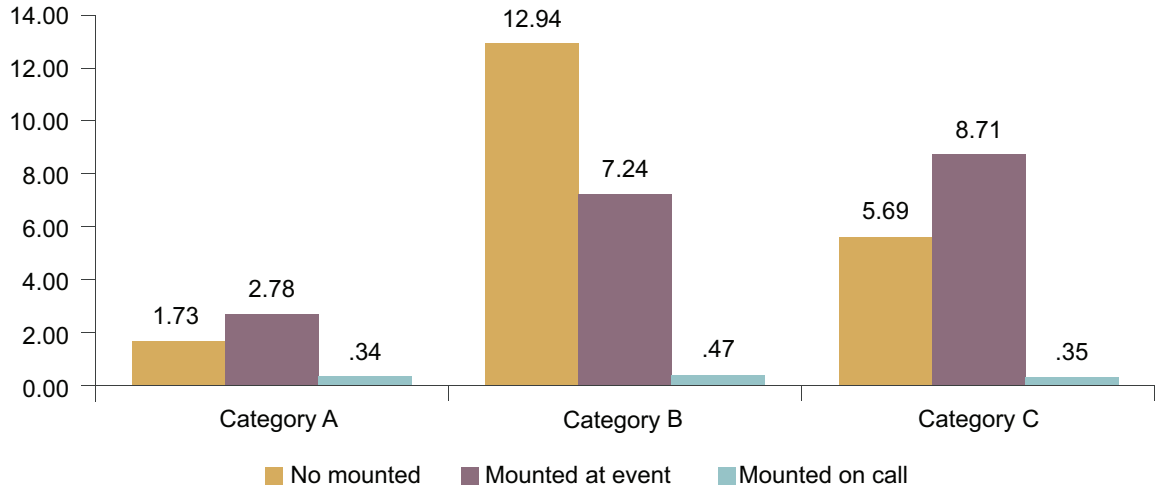
Alongside this analysis, a similar exercise was conducted analysing UKFPU data for a smaller set of matches from the 2013–2014 season. This exercise also included information from surveys of officers at football matches and full resourcing data from operational orders (where the first football data exercise did not have full resourcing data, only the presence or absence and number of mounted units). Some 119 survey responses across 49 matches were received, normally from Silver and Bronze Commanders, and also from FIOs and others such as police constables and tactical advisors. In this exercise, police were asked to provide estimates of the quality of policing at the match as well as the quality of interaction with members of the public at the match, and also their estimations of levels of disorder in the crowd.

Analysis of the survey data shows that police opinions about the quality of policing at a match were statistically unrelated to the presence or number of mounted police at a match. However, police opinions about quality of interactions with the public at a match were related to mounted police presence, with more positive interactions being reported at matches where mounted police were present. Police judgements concerning disorder levels were also negatively related to the presence of mounted police in this exercise. This provides further indicative evidence that mounted units may impact on levels of disorder.

However, a number of pieces of evidence (especially from the operational orders) cast doubt on whether there is a specific effect of horses at football matches. In particular, when all resourcing is taken into account, i.e. total police numbers, substantial variability in the levels of resourcing at football matches is revealed. Using a metric of police per 1,000 fans, the data show that Category A (low-risk) matches and Category C (high-risk) matches where mounted police are present tend to have a higher number of police present overall, while by contrast Category B (medium-risk) matches where mounted police are present have a substantially lower number of police overall. Interestingly, matches that report having mounted police 'on call' – available nearby in case of emergency but not at the football ground otherwise – tend to have the lowest ratio of police per attendee. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

[16] A disorder report is a form submitted by Football Intelligence Officers after a football match, usually when there has been notable incidence of disorder at the match.

Figure 5: Police per 1,000 attendees at matches where mounted police were present, were on call, and were not present, by match category



Due to this variability in resourcing, the data from this exercise cannot determine what accounts for the apparent effect of mounted police on the quality of public interactions, incidence of arrests and possibly disorder, since in each case it could be either the total numbers of police or the presence of police horses. Additionally, the operational order data also raise the possibility that some football grounds have learned to police football matches with substantially lower numbers of total police (using mounted police present or on call, or no mounted presence) without an appreciable decrease in the quality of the operation. In the absence of further evidence a more conclusive indication of the effect of mounted police at football matches is not possible.

5. Based on focus groups and observations, the public engagement value of mounted police in football settings appears lower than that observed in neighbourhood settings.

Two focus groups were held with 'serious' football fans, where fans were asked to comment on their opinions of policing activities at football matches.[17] The discussions in these focus groups suggest that overall mounted police are viewed somewhat less negatively than other police by fans; where fans tended to highlight many negative aspects of the overall policing approach, on balance their view of mounted policing was more neutral or positive. Nonetheless, there are also fans who view mounted police very negatively, often due to a fear response generated by the presence of a large and somewhat unpredictable animal. It is unclear whether the more positive attitude towards mounted police is a function of the personalities of mounted officers or the presence of the horse itself, as fans noted that officers on foot sometimes seemed more likely to want to 'have a go' at fans than their mounted counterparts, and that mounted officers were

[17] Participants were organised through the Football Supporters' Federation, and were normally either involved with their team fan associations or other fan-related organisations. To avoid undue bias in the discussion, participants were not told that the researchers were interested in mounted policing, but rather asked about different tactics used at matches.

seen as more friendly than foot officers. However, it is also worth noting that mounted police were not a paramount consideration for fans in these focus groups, and in both focus groups the participants had to be encouraged to discuss mounted police and did not identify mounted policing as an issue of particular interest to them.

The presentation of officers, whether mounted or on foot, appeared to be important in terms of how their activities were interpreted. Factors such as whether or not they were wearing a public order helmet, involved in a 'bubble' transporting fans to and from the stadium or engaged in other policing activities associated with a heightened police response, provides signals to fans about how the match they are attending will be policed. In turn, the focus group participants indicated that not only whether or not the horse was present, but how they were deployed, impacted their interpretations of policing at a match.

Observations at football matches suggest that mounted police are often waiting in the wings of an operation rather than actively engaging with match-goers. This differs from their observed approach to neighbourhood policing as well as in festival policing, where they are seen to approach people and present themselves as approachable. Certainly, mounted police were often approached by fans during matches and were normally happy to engage, and also provided a highly visible form of policing in a large crowd situation. As observations at football matches were limited to London grounds, it is possible that different football policing approaches are in place in other force areas. However, the data from focus groups indicated that mounted police were used as a tactical resource for crowd control at football matches (and were often wearing public order equipment), and this appears to have a limiting effect on their overall engagement value, when compared with their presence in neighbourhood level settings.

6. In demonstration or public disorder settings, mounted police do not provide substantial public-engagement value, and their value in these situations appears mostly tactical.

The research team observed mounted police in two demonstration settings, both relating to far-right activities and involving counter-protest groups. These were the March for England in Brighton in April, and a National Front leafleting activity in Oxford in July. In discussions with public order police prior to these events, commanders reported that they deployed mounted in public order settings to engage with crowds prior to, and in an effort to prevent serious disorder.

However, observations at both of these events found that mounted police were primarily used to forcibly or at least actively divide opposing crowd groups from one another, and instances of friendly interaction between mounted police and demonstrators during these events were particularly rare and normally non-existent. Police on foot – especially police liaison officers – were much more important in terms of engaging citizens in this context. When mounted units were not actively intervening and controlling crowd members, they were normally positioned alongside other police. As such, where their engagement value was limited in football contexts, it was limited to a greater extent where conflict was expected.

7. In specific instances where coercive crowd control is required, mounted police provide a unique capacity that does not have an obvious equivalent among other available police tools.

During the initial stages of the research, as well as during discussions, interviews and focus groups with police, it was regularly suggested that mounted police provide a specific and unique capacity in controlling crowds. Whether or not they have public engagement value in disorderly crowds, observations at the demonstration events

indicated that where horses were required to intervene, their interventions generated compliance and restored (at least temporary) order in ways that might have created substantial disorder had they been done by foot officers or vehicles. In simplest terms, event-goers are unlikely to risk an altercation with a horse, and the observations suggest (in conjunction with the findings from football fan focus groups) that this has something to do with their unpredictability and the potential consequences of being kicked or charged. Police horses thus provide a substantial deterrence and use of force capacity. They offer visibility above crowds and mounted officers are able to see and track individuals and instances of disorder that would not be visible to officers at ground level.

However, it is not clear (one way or the other) what effect their use of force on crowd members has on pacifying or potentially aggravating crowds throughout the course of an event; it is possible that crowd members may be pacified by the presence of mounted police but this may also generate negative sentiments towards the police that can have other consequences. As the research was unable to secure interviews or focus groups with demonstration organisers (despite multiple attempts) this report cannot comment on the ways in which mounted police are perceived by crowd members in these contexts.

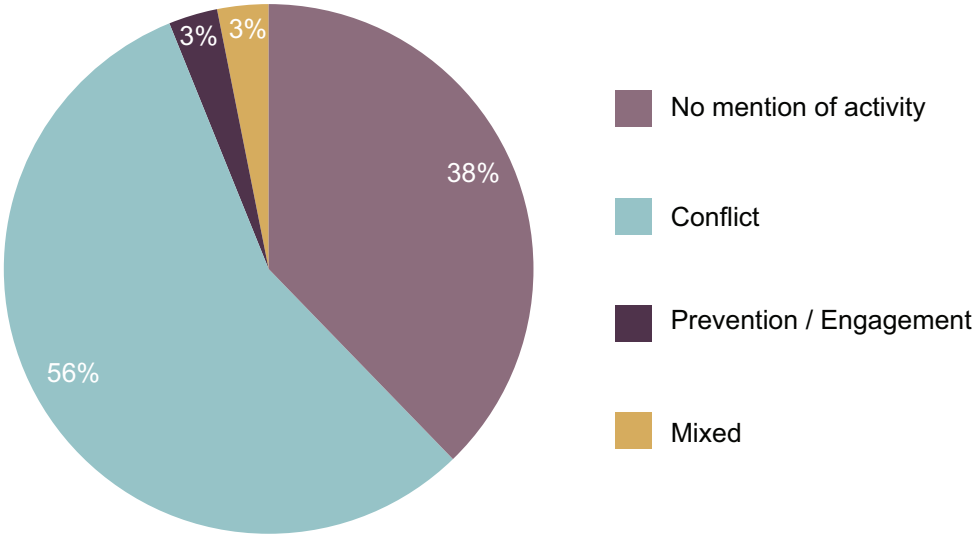
It is also possible, and was suggested by police officers throughout the study and particularly in the focus groups with officers, that the presence of mounted police in demonstration settings has a positive impact on how other police do their jobs in these contexts. Police reported being calmed by the presence of mounted police, as mounted units gave them confidence that crowds could be controlled and officers could be kept safe if disorder were to escalate. This may have knock-on effects regarding how non-mounted police react to challenges from the crowd and may help them to avoid unnecessary escalation, although further research on this question is warranted.

8. National newspaper coverage highlights the memorability of mounted police in demonstration settings, which provides a reminder of the risks of coercive intervention.

In reviewing the coverage of mounted police in five national newspapers over a three-year period (2007–2010), it became clear that mounted police were rarely mentioned in news stories, with 151 stories over that time period including a reference to mounted policing. Where they were mentioned this was normally only in passing or peripheral to the central story. Despite their limited amount of overall coverage, where they were mentioned this was more often than not referring to their actions in a football or demonstration setting. While only 10 to 20 per cent of mounted police work takes place in crowd control and public order activity, over 60 per cent of newspaper coverage (97 of 151 articles) was related to these deployments.

Many newspaper articles did not mention the specific activities in which mounted police were engaged, as 38 per cent (56 articles) only mentioned their presence within a broader story involving police rather than any details about what mounted police did. However, where the activities of mounted police were mentioned, these were predominantly in conflict situations where police were seen to clash with members of the public. As shown in Figure 6, 56 per cent (84 articles) discussed instances of mounted police in conflict with citizens, and only six per cent (or nine articles) showed them in other contexts such as public engagement or patrol activity.

Figure 6: Activities of mounted officers reported in newspaper articles



Moreover, one-third (48 of 151) of the stories involving mounted police were historical accounts of mounted police in conflict settings, often referencing the use of mounted police against protesters in London in the 1960s or relating to the miners' strike in the 1980s.

While it is a statistically rare occurrence in terms of their actual numbers of deployments, the idea of mounted police intervening in protests through charges and other forms of physical force offers a symbol of mounted police work – and policing more generally – that remains in the public consciousness for decades. This finding was further reinforced in examining the media coverage after the March for England event, where online media sources (both local and national) tended to include pictures and discussion of police on horseback at the event within their coverage, even though the mounted presence represented a small fraction of the total police presence at the event.

9. The cost of mounted policing is unclear, and may differ substantially between forces. Estimates from available data broadly suggest that mounted police cost approximately £6,550 per annum more than officers in other operational support roles, and approximately £15,500 to £22,000 more per annum than the base costs of keeping an officer in the field.

This research used a number of strategies to clarify the costs of mounted policing. First, the Police Objective Analysis (POA)[18] provided a basis for comparing the costs of mounted police with the costs of other operational support officers, where operational support officers include mounted, dogs, firearms and certain other specialist units. This analysis suggested a cost of approximately £6,550 more per officer, though this varied widely between forces, with numbers from some forces suggesting that mounted police cost less than other operational support officers, while others cost almost £19,000 more

[18] The POA is an annual comparative analysis of policing spend between UK police forces. The data for this exercise are collected and analysed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and then used by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to create 'Value for Money' profiles of each force.

per annum. This variation may represent differences in the ways forces report their data to the POA exercise, though the final number – £6,550 – equates roughly to the annual cost of keeping a horse. However, it is worth noting that the data from the POA is reported inconsistently between forces, and this figure should be treated with caution.

Recognising the limitations in the POA data, an exercise with Directors of Finance at four constabularies was undertaken involving an end-to-end costing of annual and start-up expenses for a mounted section, taking into account the actual costs of training, equipment purchases and replacement, and other costs such as feeding and veterinary bills. This analysis determined a 'premium' cost attached to mounted policing (i.e. the cost above the 'base' cost of any police officer, such as salary and administrative overheads) of approximately £15,500 to £22,000 per annum difference. However, it should be recognised that all types of officers have other unique additional costs and so this is not a comparative figure with an 'average' officer but rather an addition to costs required for all officers. Further, the number from this second exercise does not include any cost recovery from mutual aid, which may offset the cost somewhat. Nonetheless, it would appear fair from this analysis to suggest that three mounted officers cost about as much as four neighbourhood officers, though this will vary somewhat from force to force.

Overall, regarding cost, it is also worth noting that based on further analysis of POA data, in forces with mounted units the average share of overall Net Revenue Expenditure represented by the spend on mounted is in the area of 0.31 per cent, and across all UK police spending the expenditure on mounted is less than 0.002 per cent of total. Thus, despite being more expensive per officer, they nonetheless generally represent a very small part of the overall policing spend in any force area as well as in the UK as a whole.

10. Overall, there are substantial points of commonality between the ways in which mounted police are used in the UK and the ways in which they are used in other countries.

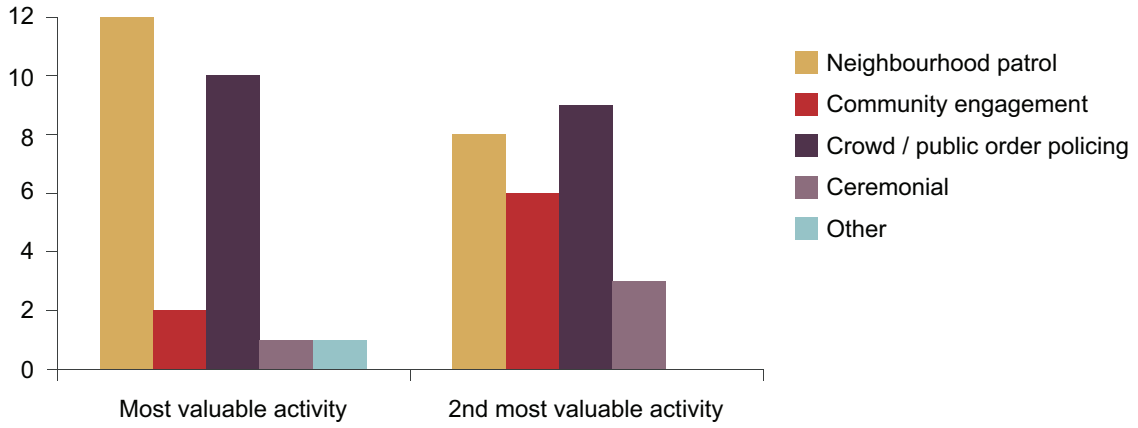
The international questionnaire generated responses from 26 forces across 14 countries in North America, Europe and Australia. The questionnaire was distributed through contacts provided by the College of Policing and the European Police College (CEPOL), and then using respondent referrals (snowballing) to identify contacts at other forces.[19] The questionnaire asked force representatives working in mounted sections to identify the proportion of their mounted officers' time spent on various activities, the size of their unit and details about its history, and their estimations of the value placed on mounted police by the police service generally.

This exercise suggests that, similar to the UK, patrol generally constitutes a substantial amount of overall mounted police activity among the forces who responded to the survey. With the exception of two forces who never engage in mounted patrols, most other respondents reported that their mounted sections spend a substantial amount of their time on patrol. For all but four forces, patrol occupied the highest proportion of operational activities. In addition, as shown in Figure 7, when asked to identify the most valuable activities in which

[19] The questionnaire was distributed in English only. A request email was sent to 40 separate force-level contacts with one response per force. This represents a response rate of 65 per cent for the exercise. It is worth noting that the sample is drawn from known contacts only so cannot claim representativeness for all mounted police sections internationally.

mounted engage, 20 of 26 respondents included patrol as one of their top two most valuable mounted section activities, with public order activities also being consistently ranked within the top two activities. This suggests that mounted police internationally are operationally-focused, rather than being primarily symbolic or ceremonial resources.

Figure 7: Most valuable activities of mounted police sections, international survey respondents



However, some differences between UK mounted policing and the international respondents did appear. For example, the proportions of time spent on patrol vary between forces, with some forces reporting higher than 70 per cent of operational time spent on patrol, while others spend under 30 per cent. Additionally, in free-text responses, some forces reported a much more crime-oriented approach to deployment, suggesting that their patrols were always focused at hot-spots or high crime areas and rarely if ever at the sort of town-centre engagement-oriented patrols observed in the UK. Another force reported that they never use horses for intervening in disorderly crowds, particularly that they avoid the use of horse charges as a tactic. Nonetheless, the survey responses were characterised by broad similarities in beliefs about and strategies for mounted policing to what was found in the UK.

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Conclusions

This project collected a significant amount of secondary data as well as developing a wealth of new empirical data on the value of mounted police. The research has examined the value of mounted police across a number of key deployment settings, focusing particularly on neighbourhood patrol and crowd control activities, reflecting the core importance of these activities in terms of the justification for maintaining mounted resources.

While there are complexities to the interpretation of the data in this report when taken as a whole, some clear messages nonetheless emerge. Based on these findings, four key conclusions are outlined below regarding the value of mounted police. Some of these conclusions are in line with accepted wisdom or anecdotal accounts regarding the value of mounted police, but this report also finds some important points of departure with traditional thinking.

Mounted police are a unique policing resource with both heightened response and public engagement value.

Mounted police generate positive assessments of policing in neighbourhoods, increase visibility and generate substantially higher levels of engagement with members of the public than equivalent levels of foot patrol. On top of this value, they also offer the ability to provide heightened response to crowd situations, and can intervene in disorderly crowds in ways that generate compliance more quickly than other options such as police on foot or in vehicles. Secondarily, they are able to provide assistance over rough terrain; while these instances are comparatively rare, they can prove valuable in situations such as the recent flooding in the south-west of the UK, search-and-rescue operations for high-risk and vulnerable persons or deployments in rural areas. While there are many kinds of police activities for which mounted police are normally unsuitable – particularly, rapid response to calls for service – this research suggests that, for certain outcomes, there are areas of police activity where mounted police are exceptionally and uniquely useful.

Based on the use patterns and demonstrable value of mounted police units identified by this research, consideration should be given to positioning them strategically as a resource primarily to support neighbourhood policing.

Initial fieldwork and discussions found that mounted police are traditionally seen by mounted and non-mounted officers at both senior and junior levels as public-order resources whose core value lies in their ability to control crowds. This characterisation of their work is reflected in their current placement within the National Conflict Management (NCM) portfolio. In turn, the work of mounted police at neighbourhood levels was often

seen as very secondary – possibly even something that was done to pass the time between public order events. Recognising that some forces have begun to focus much more on neighbourhood-level tasking and support of operations for their mounted sections, the accepted wisdom appears nonetheless broadly to be that the cost of mounted policing is justified by their use in crowd situations. However, this research suggests that the primary value of mounted police lies in their work at neighbourhood level. Neighbourhood deployments account for the majority of the actual work of mounted police, and the effects from their deployment at neighbourhood level were found to be more substantial than those found in other contexts. In turn, their exclusive location in the NCM area may usefully be reconsidered.

It is not entirely possible to separate the effects of the horses from the effects of the officers riding them.

A horse may increase the likelihood of engagement with citizens, and on their own may have an effect on citizen attitudes. Indeed, observations show that horses generate substantially more casual engagement with citizens than do neighbourhood foot patrols, and this difference is attributable in large part to the horse itself. However, while mounted police may create a space for positive engagements with and interpretations of police in neighbourhood contexts, officers also determine the tone and content of that engagement, especially where engagements turn into extended conversations. In turn, the value of a police horse is bolstered by a personable, outgoing and engaged rider. The importance of the actions of the officer (rather than simply the presence of an officer on horseback) within a deployment was reflected in football focus groups, and is recognised within the broader crowd psychology literature and available guidance on the importance of dialogue and liaison in public order policing.[20] The value of horses in these contexts is thus connected to the riders' actions.

The value of mounted police is not easily monetised, and estimations of their value will be related to the priorities of police in an area.

This research outlines many of the benefits of mounted policing. While there is some indication from this research of the additional cost represented by mounted police, these benefits are not easily monetised. Mounted units clearly provide a substantial value in terms of public engagement in neighbourhood settings when compared with foot patrol. The research also provides evidence of the value of mounted police in certain types of public order scenarios, however it cannot provide conclusive evidence on whether or to what degree they 'improve' public order capacity overall. Moreover, the choice to deploy mounted units will depend in large part on the priorities of a police organisation – and the degree to which that organisation feels that the kinds of engagements generated by mounted police are in line with organisational goals. It is therefore important to understand the relative value that a force's management places on the specific capabilities and effects of mounted police, when judging whether or not mounted police are an appropriate resource to develop and deploy.

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20 See for example Stott, C. J. 2009. *Crowd Psychology and Public Order Policing*. Report submitted to the HMIC inquiry into the policing of the London G20 protests.

Limitations

This report represents the first systematic attempt to understand the value of mounted police units across different deployments and ways of measuring value in police work. As an exploratory project, the researchers used a number of different methods to understand the impact of mounted police deployments. The data used for this report present a number of key limitations owing to the scope and nature of the research, and its conclusions should be considered in light of these limitations. Five core caveats to the findings are outlined below, and further discussions of the limitations in the data are explored in the main report.

First, **the data have been limited in many instances by being non-random in nature**. The data for the patrol quasi-experiment, survey of officers at football matches, focus groups and observations, and international questionnaire all constitute various forms of non-random samples,[21] owing either to time and resource constraints within the project, or the nature of the methodology involved. The data should nonetheless be seen as reliable, but it does suggest that results should be validated through further testing. To this end, the main report suggests a number of research and tracking exercises that could be undertaken by police forces to enrich future understanding of the value of mounted units and other police deployment options.

Second, cost data, and in particular the POA data, are known to be problematic since different forces report their data differently to CIPFA. Estimates and approaches vary in how police forces attribute costs to different areas of police work, and **there is no single agreed approach to unit costing** across police forces in the UK. As such, cost data are indicative of the probable additional cost represented by mounted police, but these data should be treated with caution.

Third, **the data are not able to indicate whether or not mounted police have an impact on crime**. The data from the quasi-experiment suggest that the high visibility of police on horseback may be useful in hot-spots patrols, and discussions with police during the project suggest that mounted units are taking part in successful hot-spots operations. However, in the absence of systematic testing of crime-reduction deployments – which was outside of the scope of this project – any conclusions to this end are at present speculative.

Fourth, in terms of **international transferability of these findings** the international questionnaire suggests that these findings may be transferable outside of the British context. However, certain findings – particularly the effects of mounted patrols on neighbourhood trust, confidence and visibility – may be related to a particularly British appreciation of policing on horseback (and the desire for close police-community relations in the UK). Only further similar research in other contexts would provide clear answers regarding the effectiveness of mounted policing in other countries.

Finally, despite repeated attempts, the research team was not able to make contact with protest groups or those attending demonstrations to conduct focus groups, interviews or questionnaires. As such, **the data are unable to provide an indication of how mounted police are viewed by those attending demonstrations**. This would appear to be a priority for further research, given the regular use of mounted police in these contexts and the memorability of their roles in protest policing as demonstrated in the newspaper analysis.

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[21] This means that data were collected from a population thought to be able to provide the best available data for the study, but were not selected randomly from a known population of relevant individuals and groups.

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12	Mounted police on night-time patrol, Cardiff 2006	Courtesy of South Wales Police Mounted Section
17	Mounted police on patrol during Rugby League World Cup, 2013	Courtesy of South Wales Police Mounted Section
22	Mounted and other police escorting fans at Bristol City vs Bristol Rovers, 2013	Dan Regan
23	Mounted and other police at English Defence League demonstration, Sheffield 2013	Courtesy of South Wales Police Mounted Section
28 top left	Mounted police with fans at Heineken Cup Final, 2011	Courtesy of South Wales Police Mounted Section
28 top right	Mounted police on patrol, South Wales 2008	Courtesy of South Wales Police Mounted Section
28 bottom left	Mounted police during pitch incursion at Bristol City vs Bristol Rovers, 2013	Joe Meredith
28 bottom right	Mounted and other police at English Defence League demonstration, Rotherham 2014	Courtesy of Gloucestershire Constabulary
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