

Patrol officers and public reassurance: a comparative evaluation of police officers, PCSOs, ACSOs and private security guards

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The objective of this study is to establish how well the public distinguishes between different uniformed patrol officer patrolling shopping malls, and whether they have different effects on feelings of safety and worry about crime. It is based on interviews with a sample of 502 shoppers at five shopping malls in Southern England. Using photographs, most respondents correctly identified the police officer and the PCSO, whereas fewer recognised the ACSO and private security guard, and few the ACSO. Police officers instilled the greatest feelings of safety, well above PCSOs, who, in turn, were rated above security guards and ACSOs. Police officers also generated the most worries, especially among young women. Police officers emit ‘control signals’ that have stronger positive effects on reassurance, reflecting correct identification combined with established regard and confidence. Patrol officers who were not police officer provided weaker ‘control signals’. Correct identification made less difference to reassurance they provided, especially for security guards. Police officers appear to be as cost-effective as PCSOs, though far less so than private security officers. Successful ‘reassurance policing’ depends on who carries out the policing as well as what is policed.

Keywords: patrol officer; reassurance; control signals; cost-effectiveness

Introduction

Even though UK crime levels have fallen during the last 15 years, public perceptions are that it is rising (Millie and Herrington 2012) and feelings of safety have barely improved, pointing to a ‘reassurance gap’ (Cooke 2005) between fears about personal security and the realities of being victimised. ‘Reassurance policing’ (Innes *et al.* 2004) offers a possible means of narrowing this gap and improving feelings of security (Tuffin *et al.* 2006), by targeting the ‘signal crimes’ that matter most to communities. Uniformed patrol is important to the idea of reassurance policing, since it is likely to help in bringing victimisation anxieties into line with actual victimisation risks: patrols, it is suggested, provide signals that criminal justice agencies are in control (Innes *et al.* 2004), so that visible, uniformed officers reassure observers that formal guardianship is in place. This helps allay feelings of anxiety and fosters a sense of safety and security (Innes 2011). Patrol officers can, however, also increase anxieties, since their presence can sometimes indicate that crimes have been, or are likely to be committed. Over-bearing ‘control signals’ (Innes *et al.* 2004)

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that are too strong might result from aggressive policing (Silverman and Della-Giustina 2001) or negative associations that some members of the public might have with regard to patrol officers and the authority they represent.

The last two decades have seen the diversification of the 'extended police family' in the UK (Johnston 1999, Wakefield 2003, Innes 2004, Fielding and Innes 2006, Jones *et al.* 2009). It has involved the introduction of police community support officers and accredited community safety officers (Cooke 2005), and an increase in the numbers of special constables who now help full-time warranted officers in policing and maintaining order. There has also been a large expansion in numbers of private security personnel (Shearing and Stenning 1987, Jones and Newburn 1998, Johnston 1999, Button 2002, Wakefield 2003), so that different sorts of uniformed patrol officers are now a common sight in UK high streets and shopping centres. This diversification may affect the reassurance effects of patrol if the public does not view support officers in the same way as it views warranted police officers. Type of officer deployed may affect the quality and, hence, strength of 'control signal' as a result of higher recognition or because of the varying public image and regard in which different uniformed officers are held.

This paper, therefore, examines the control signals that are associated with different types of patrol officers. It aims to establish how well the UK public distinguishes between the various sorts of uniformed officers patrolling UK shopping malls, and whether they have differing effects on the public's feelings of safety, security and anxieties. It compares the feelings of safety and worry that police constables (PCs), police community support officers (PCSOs), accredited community safety officers (ACSOs) and private security guards (SGs) create in policing privately managed shopping malls. The visibility of patrol officers of different sorts is indicative of control directed at incivilities and crimes that might affect shoppers' security feelings. Public perception of 'control signal' values may depend on the different types of patrol officer and how well the public is able to identify them, and this is the focus of this study.

Existing research

Research relevant to this study relates to safety and reassurance policing, the pluralisation of policing and the effects of different types of patrol officers on feelings of safety and security.

Pluralisation of policing

Within the UK police service, the diversification of the 'extended police family' (Johnston 1999, Wakefield 2003, Innes 2004) has included the introduction of police community support officers to assist with neighbourhood policing. It has been partly driven by managerialist pressures (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000, Fielding and Innes 2006) and cost-effectiveness (Drake and Simper 2005, Loveday 2005) against a background of widening police responsibilities (Morgan and Newburn 1998). PCSOs and accredited safety officers (ACSOs) were introduced by the UK Police Reform Act of 2002 and there has also been a proliferation of publically funded municipal wardens and private security personnel (Shearing and Stenning 1987, Jones and Newburn 1998, Johnston 1999, Button 2002, Wakefield 2003), so that many privately

managed spaces, such as shopping malls, are protected by a combination of privately and publically funded patrol officers.

Both PCSOs and ACSOs possess more limited powers than police constables, who may also be contracted to patrol privately managed shopping malls. Whereas warranted police officers have powers of arrest and are trained in first aid, PCSOs, who are employed by police services, deal with minor offences, such as begging, truancy, littering, breach of dog control orders or underage drinking or smoking (Public Sector Jobs 2012). They also protect crime scenes until police officers arrive, act as witnesses, deal with missing person enquiries, seize illegal narcotics, remove abandoned vehicles, collect CCTV evidence, carry out stop and search under certain circumstances, and visit the public to gather intelligence. PCSOs cannot arrest people, investigate crimes or interview prisoners (Public Sector Jobs 2012).

ACSOs (accredited community safety officers) are employed by UK local government councils to improve community safety and reduce anti-social behaviour. Their powers can cover the issuing of fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering, throwing fireworks on a thoroughfare, railway trespass, consuming alcohol in public, attempts to illegally purchase alcohol, giving false alarms to the fire service, failure to ensure regular attendance of pupils at school, behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress, and preventing cycling on pavements (Hampshire County Council 2004). Their other powers can include confiscating alcohol and cigarettes from young people, stopping vehicles for emission testing, requiring removal of abandoned vehicles, and requesting the name and address of persons acting in an anti-social manner (Hampshire County Council 2004). They have no detention powers (Crawford and Lister 2004b). Whereas PCSOs are ubiquitous and number c. 20,000 nationally, there are fewer ACSOs, numbering 2200 in 2010. While uniforms can vary for the same category of officer, the uniforms and badges of PCs, PCSOs and ACSOs distinctively differ, with these letters visible on officers' tunics.

Uniformed private security personnel are specifically employed by the management of privately run shopping malls to protect premises against theft and to help prevent disorder and incivilities. Since 2001, they must hold a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence. They only have the powers of a private UK citizen, and must call for assistance from a police constable if they detain a suspected shoplifter or a shopper causing a disturbance.

As well as potentially affecting safety and worry perceptions in different ways, there are notable differences in relative costs of different types of shopping mall patrol officers. In terms of employment costs, taking account of pay, holidays, employer's pension contribution and national insurance payments, PCSOs cost approximately 63%, and security guards 26%, of a warranted police officer (Grampian Police 2012, Hertfordshire Police Federation 2012, Home Office 2012, Norfolk Constabulary 2012, Payscale UK 2012). ACSOs' employment costs are estimated at 42% of those of a police officer.

As well as these extensions to the 'policing family', there have been notable increases in the number of externally contracted security staff in response to retailing crime and anti-social behaviour in shopping centres and streets (Johnston 1999, Button 2002, Wakefield 2003), contributing to public-private, hybrid policing (Johnston 1999, Button 2002, Rigakos 2002, Innes 2004). In terms of public provision, there has been a proliferation of 'policing bodies' with, for example, 13 in Wandsworth, South London (Jones and Newburn 1998). Together, they have had to

contend with circumstances between 2000 and 2006 when over half of the shoppers have had problems with anti-social behaviour and retailers have lost £9 billion to crime (British Retail Consortium 2006). This diversification of patrol officers may have enabled services to be provided at lower cost, but, equally, the character of these services may not be unaffected if the public does not view support officers in the same way as they view warranted police officers.

Reassurance policing, signal crimes and control signals

Safety, reassurance and the maintenance of civil order (Fielding and Innes 2006) are at the heart of policing, which involves societies authorising people to create public safety (Bayley and Shearing 1992). Visible, uniformed foot patrol is a key element in the 'reassurance policing' perspective (Innes 2004), whose aim is to improve feelings of safety and security. Crimes and disorder events carry a 'signal value' (Slovic 2000) which determines the amount of anxiety their threat creates. 'Signal crimes' change the way the public thinks, feels or behaves (Innes *et al.* 2004) about crime risk and safety. Uniformed patrol officers counter feelings of insecurity through their visible presence which enhances feelings of safety (Bahn 1974), so that 'signal crimes' or the offences most strongly connected to feelings of public insecurity (Innes 2004) should be the focus of reassurance policing and inform patrol staffing and routing.

The reassurance policing perspective is that uniformed officers on patrol present formal 'control signals' (Innes *et al.* 2004) that provide reassurance and indicate that policing agencies are in control. Patrol should be visible, accessible and familiar (Povey 2001). An important aspect of visibility and familiarity is that officers should represent a recognisable 'national brand' (Povey 2001) in terms of their uniform and the role it represents. Whether a uniform is recognised and what it symbolises to the observer are likely to be key elements in reassuring citizens. The required patrol visibility dosages needed to affect public attitudes to risk may be difficult to establish (Crawford *et al.* 2005), but it seems likely that greater patrol frequency and conspicuousness will help provide reassurance or a reduction in fear (Bahn 1974, Innes *et al.* 2004). As well as high visibility, officers being well-known and individually recognised improves the symbolic reassurance provided by uniformed foot patrol (Bahn 1974, Silverman and Della-Giustina 2001), though this may be less relevant in large shopping malls than in local neighbourhoods. The importance of officers being at fixed locations that maximise visibility as 'steady posts' has also been argued for (Bahn 1974), though not empirically tested.

Through dealing with crime and incivilities, patrol officers may also create anxieties as well as allay them. The 'signal value' of a uniformed patrol officer is likely to be largely positive for most citizens, but may also generate feelings of anxiety and worry. Aggressive policing, such as of the New York Police Department in the 1990s, affects fear of police officers among its recipients (Silverman and Della-Giustina 2001), presenting control signals that are too strong or even negative. Visible uniformed patrol officers, therefore, may sometimes result in mixed signals, providing a sense of security and safety but also creating anxieties and increasing worries, an aspect to be examined in this paper. The balance of positive and negative 'signal values' (Innes *et al.* 2004) may also depend on the different types of patrol officers and how well the public is able to identify them, and this is central to this study.

'Control signal' strength may also depend on the number of patrol officers and the frequency or chances of their being seen. Limited number of officers patrolling large neighbourhoods may mean fewer residents may see them (Bennett 1991), particularly those who work, so that the effects on improved security feelings have not been conclusively demonstrated. Limitations on the impact of visible vehicular patrol have also been reported (Kelling *et al.* 1974), although not delivering planned patrol 'dosages' to the different types of beats raise concerns about this study's implementation and the findings (e.g. Larson 1975). While it has proved difficult to link improved reassurance to stronger neighbourhood, patrol presence and patrol officers certainly affect safety feelings, once they have been observed (e.g. Crawford *et al.* 2005). Shopping malls have more people per unit area than neighbourhoods, so that patrol officers are likely to be closer to and far more visible to the public, so that more will be observed at work and control signals stronger.

The public's perceptions of the different sorts of patrol officers in terms of security and anxiety may depend on the correct identification of their uniforms, and the way these relate to the feelings of confidence (Jackson and Sunshine 2006, Jackson and Bradford 2009), and the safety and reassurance they associate with the roles that these uniforms symbolise. For some, they may partly be negative symbols that also increase anxiety. Uniforms are also associated with perceptions of the various officers' varying degrees of legitimacy (Sunshine and Tyler 2003, Tyler 2004) and their competence as capable guardians (Cohen and Felson 1979). The essence is the regard for and the trust in the different types of patrol officers in terms of their provision of formal guardianship. A uniform indicates membership of an organisation (Joseph and Alex 1972), and is a mantle of symbolism (Niederhoffer 1967) that is endowed with considerable force (Howton 1969), and power that enables greater public compliance and commands respect (Johnson 2001). Different types of officers wear different uniforms that represent distinctive 'brands' (Audit Commission 1996), and the extent to which these can be recognised by the public and their varying effects on reassurance is central to this study.

While the original reason for the British constable's blue uniform was to distinguish it from the red and white military uniform, many cities in other countries, such as New York in 1853, followed the lead provided by the British forces (Johnson 2001). Psychological tests indicate that blue represents security and comfort, while black, which is perhaps closer to the true colour of modern police uniform, represents power and strength (Johnson 2001). There are contradictory findings on the effects of dressing in more civilian styled, blazers rather than uniforms, with Mauro (1984) casting doubt on findings that they reduced assaults and improved attitudes towards the police (Tenzel and Cizanckas 1973, Cizanckas and Feist 1975, Tenzel *et al.* 1976).

Despite the high visibility of uniforms worn by patrol officers, respondents are often inaccurate in their recollections about having seen an officer on a given day, let alone a particular sort of uniformed officer. Responses can be affected by interviewer effects, stereotypical views about and support or otherwise for officers, expectations and interviewer effects (Milne and Bull 1999), while many people experience 'change blindness' or difficulties in observing aspects of their perceptual environment (Drake and Simper 2005), attributable to selectivity in what is noticed and registered. However, where appearances are similar, there may be potential confusion, the more so when there may be an assumption that any uniform wearer must have some

authority (Draper 1978, Button 2002, Button 2007). Most security guards wear uniforms, and the sharing of police uniforms with others such as PCSOs may diminish the power and authority of the police uniform (Cooke 2005), an issue that will be considered in this paper. High visibility jackets may add to this confusion (Millie 2010), although fewer officers wear these inside shopping malls than when policing communities.

Different types of patrol officers and public reassurance

Police officers provide notably more reassurance than either street wardens, or neighbourhood wardens and traffic wardens (Audit Commission 1996, Crawford *et al.* 2004, 2005). It is perhaps unsurprising that traffic wardens fared worst, providing less public reassurance than postal workers and gas or electricity workers (Audit Commission 1996). The results for security guards were mixed, having a negative effect in one study (Audit Commission 1996), and high reassurance effects in another, in Halton Moor, near Leeds (Crawford *et al.* 2005). Police officers together with PCSOs achieved the highest public reassurance, with 64% of respondents reassured 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' by their visible presence, compared with only 32% for private security guards and 20% for council wardens (Crawford *et al.* 2005). These UK findings endorse those from Illinois, where police officers similarly provided greater reassurance to university students than other uniformed personnel (Balkin and Holden 1983). Unfortunately, no study has specifically distinguished the reassurance effects of police officers compared with PCSOs or ACSOs, so that little is still known about their relative effects on feelings of public safety. It appears clear, nevertheless, that patrol officers do affect public reassurance.

It appears that the perceptions of shopping centre and town centre managers may differ from those of the wider public. Managers' perceptions were that police were more acceptable than private security personnel in town centre streets, but that the reverse was the case within shopping centres (Beck and Willis 1995), where private security personnel predominate. Even if this is the case, it is unlikely to reflect poorer recognition of police officers, since they have higher levels of recognition compared with traffic wardens and street wardens, with 80% of respondents to a survey recognising an image of a warranted police officer and 59% a PCSO (Crawford *et al.* 2004). Half of 23 police divisional commanders thought that council run wardens and patrols had contributed to public safety (Crawford and Lister 2004b).

This study aims to compare the ability of the public in large shopping malls to recognise and discriminate between the different sorts of patrol officers – police officer, PCSO, ACSO, and private security officer – and to measure their relative effects on survey respondents' feelings of safety and worry. The comparative cost-effectiveness of different types of officers is also estimated. It is hypothesised that police officers will be rated more highly in terms of feelings of safety than PCSOs, ACSOs and private security personnel, and that they will, equally, best allay anxieties about personal security and anti-social behaviour. It is also expected that police officers will be best recognised of the four patrol officers, and the effects of correctly identifying patrol officers will be considered. The study also investigates the importance of safety to respondents when compared with other factors in choosing to visit shopping centres and whether different sorts of patrol officers generate differing levels of worry about crime and incivilities.

Methodology

Sampling and sample size

Data were collected¹ using interviews based on sampling at five shopping centres at Festival Place, Basingstoke; Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth; Brighton Marina; Centre MK, Milton Keynes; and Cabot Circus, Bristol. All are large, privately run shopping malls with 'hybrid' patrol policing, and, therefore, environments where private security officers and a variety of other patrol officers are visible to the public and, given the variety of shops and centres, that a varied cross-section of the public use. Key points in shopping centres with high pedestrian flow, such as meeting points, rest areas and central squares, were selected as the places to question shoppers, with the next one to pass selected on completion of the current interview. Sample size was 517 cases, with an 86% response rate. There was a wide distribution of respondents across the age range and female:male ratio was 57:43. Interviewers were trained in order to minimise any interviewer 'effects' and the survey instrument, a structured questionnaire was piloted prior to implementation of the full survey over five days in June, 2011, throughout the period when shopping centres were open.

Research instrument

Respondents were shown four photographs of different patrol officers dressed in the uniforms of a PO (police officer), a PCSO (police community support officer), an ACSO (accredited community safety officers) and a SG (private security officer or security guard). All were male to avoid gender bias in comparing officers, although this may affect the findings about the views of female and male respondents.

Rating scales were used to measure perceptions of safety and worry instilled by different types of patrol officer and the importance of different factors in deciding to visit the shopping centre. Respondents were asked to match the officer photographs to the correct patrol officer. They were also questioned about when they had last seen a patrol officer of each type, how frequently they shopped, what affected their decision to use that shopping mall and whether they had seen the different sorts of officers patrolling the shopping centre. Respondent age and gender were also recorded.

Survey questions indicated that the meaning of safety concerned ontological security (Giddens 1991, Bottoms 2011), for instance, how safe different patrol officers make respondents feel when visiting the mall. The meaning of security, safety and worry may not be identical for every respondent, and there has been considerable debate about fear of crime and how it is best measured (e.g. Killias 1990). An important aspect relates to the context in which questions are placed, such as the merits of those that consider levels of fear due to walking alone in either daylight or darkness situations (Killias 1990). Some of this is inconsequential to this study, given that it deals with security feelings inside patrolled shopping malls, which are well lit whatever the time of day, and in which, shoppers are unlikely to be alone while the mall is open. The meanings of 'safety' and 'worry' were not defined for respondents and, hence, depend on their interpretation within the context provided by the survey. This parallels that of Home Office reports, such as Povey's (2001). As with all attitude surveys, there is the additional issue that one respondent's 'very good' may not have the same meaning as another respondent's, since meanings are

liable to differ between different individuals, as well as change for the same individuals over time (Author & Other Author, year).

Statistics

Many of the survey responses are in the form of ordinal or nominal scales, so that non-parametric inferential statistics are used to compare and contrast outputs for the different sorts of patrol officer. These include Cockran Q (shown as 'Q' in the findings), Chi-square (χ^2), Wilcoxon (Wn), McNemar (Mn) and Mann-Whitney U (MW) tests. *F* tests are used for intervally scaled data. Kendall's tau_b (Kb) correlation coefficient is also used to measure the association between pairs of ranked variables. Nagelkerke's R^2 is used to measure effect size. Some non-significant test statistics have been omitted from the text.

Findings

Feeling safe while shopping is important and 81% of respondents rated safety as very important, underlining its significance for the shopper. It was as important as the mix of shops available in deciding to visit a shopping centre (Figure 1), and particularly important for older people (Kb = $-.164$, $p = .000$), though the effect size is small. Public transport and parking spaces were less important, a clean and pleasant environment somewhat less, and good places to eat far lesser so. 'A pleasant environment' was best rated when 'very important' and 'quite important' responses are combined. However, few rated any of the five factors as either 'not very important' or 'not at all important'. Feelings of safety depend partly on who provides formal guardianship in large, modern shopping centres, and privately owned spaces which are open to the public. Safety and reassurance may also depend on the informal guardianship and behaviour of other people using shopping centres, who collectively present informal control signals (Innes *et al.* 2004), but this may also hinge on the presence of capable, formal guardianship provided by uniformed officers specifically employed to carry out this role.

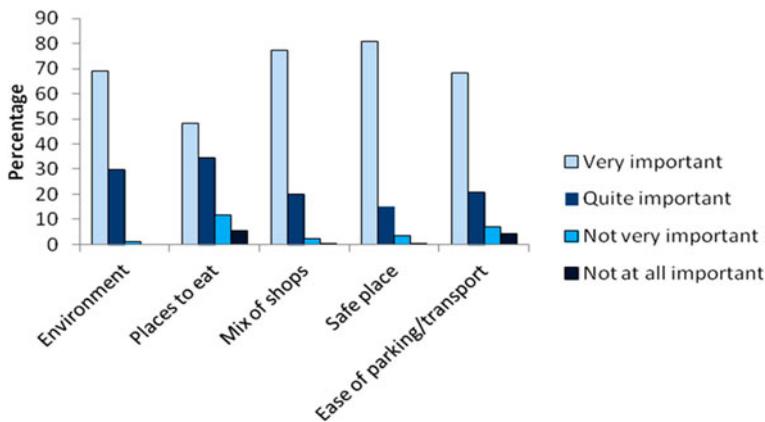


Figure 1. Importance of factors when deciding to visit shopping centres.

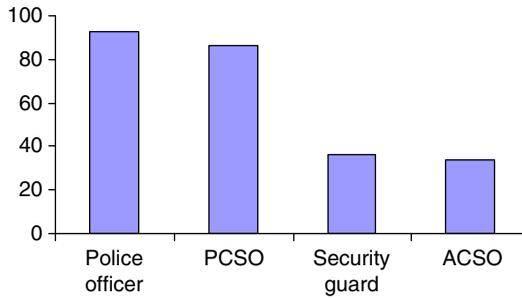


Figure 2. Percentage of different patrol officers correctly identified.

Correct recognition of the different officers

Shoppers proved better at recognising police officers and PCSOs than security guards and ACSOs (Cochran’s Q, $p = .000$). The majority of respondents correctly identified police officers and PCSOs, whereas little more than a third managed to recognise either ACSOs or security guards (Figure 2). They were rather better at identifying police officers, with 92% correct, than PCSOs at 86% correct (Mn, $p = .000$), but equally poor at recognising security guards and ACSOs (Mn, $p = .151$). Levels of recognition of PCs and PCSOs were higher than in Crawford’s *et al.* (2004) study. Only 29% of respondents correctly identified all four patrol officers. Respondents who correctly identified police officers and PCSOs were younger ($F = 11.6$, $p = .001$, 34 cf. 46 years; $F = 10.3$, $p = .001$, 33 cf. 42 years, respectively). Although younger respondents visited shopping centres more often ($Kb = .112$, $p = .001$), it was their youth and not the visits that affected their superior recognition abilities, since youth was associated with correct identification, when controlling for visiting frequency (PCSOs, $\chi^2 = 55.3$, $p = .003$; PCs, $\chi^2 = 55.2$, $p = .003$), but frequency of visit was not, when controlling for age (PCSOs, $\chi^2 = 7.3$, $p = .20$; PCs, $\chi^2 = 8.8$, $p = .12$). Age had no effect on the identification of ACSOs and security guards ($F = .1$, $p = .7$; $F = 2.2$, $p = .2$).

Feelings of safety and different patrol officers

All types of officers signalled more positive effects (‘very safe’ & ‘quite safe’) which far outweighed more negative ones (‘not very safe’ & ‘not safe at all’) (Figure 3). Police officers instilled greater feelings of safety than PCSOs (Wn , $p < .001$)² and the

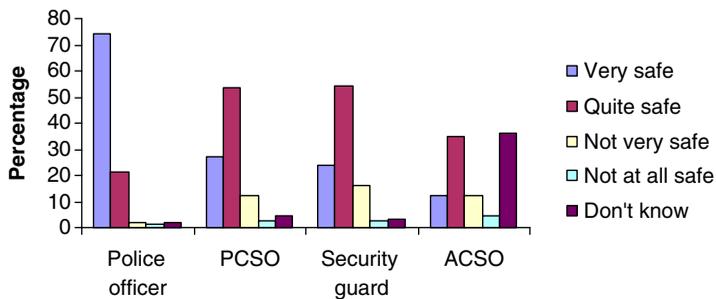


Figure 3. Effects of different patrol officers on safety.

effect size was very large ($r = .66$) (Figure 3). Police officers made almost three times as many respondents feel very safe. PCSOs, in turn, instilled greater feelings of safety than security guards ($Wn, p < .02$), but the effect size is small ($r = .11$). As might be expected, therefore, the difference between police officers and security guards is very marked ($Wn, p < .001$) with a very large effect size ($r = .70$). Thirty six per cent of respondents said they did not know what the effects of ACSOs were on their safety feelings. However, they fared even worse in terms of their effects on safety than security guards ($Wn, p = .000$), albeit with a small effect size ($r = .10$), indicating that where the names, uniform and associated symbolism do not have distinctive and clear meaning, more respondents cannot give an answer, and those that do, express weaker feelings of reassurance.

Respondents' age affected safety perceptions. More older than younger shoppers felt PCSOs, SGs and ACSOs (where they were identified) instilled greater safety (PCSOs: $Kb = -.19, p = .000$; SGs, $Kb = -.10, p = .006$; ACSOs, $Kb = -.15, p = .000$), albeit with a small effect size, though not police officers ($Kb = -.046, p = .24$). This was largely because police officers made 76% of the sample feel very safe compared with only 28% of PCSOs, 24% of SGs and 19% of ACSOs. Police officers thus appealed strongly across all age groups, universally generating greater safety feelings.

It appears highly likely that high levels of recognition of police officers and PCSOs, coupled with knowledge of their distinctive 'brand', reflected in very different roles and standing, resulted in the high safety scores accorded police officers and the notably lower safety ratings of PCSOs. The lower safety ratings still of private security guards, however, do not appear to depend on correct identification, since safety ratings did not differ between respondents who were able and those unable to identify them ($\chi^2 = 2.4, p = .67$).

Knowing that the officer is a security guard fails to raise safety feelings above those who do not know what he is, and this perhaps indicates that there is a certain level of reassurance that is associated with uniformed staff not known to be police officers or PCSOs. This appears to be far lower than where a police officer can be correctly identified. For uniformed officers who are identified as not being police officers (since most respondents were able to identify the police officer and PCSO), correct identification may be less important if lower levels of confidence and trust are accorded, irrespective of type of officer. Evidently to maximise reassurance, people need to be able to recognise a patrol officer, and have a belief that the uniform represents high levels of confidence, legitimacy and trust.

Feelings of worry about crime and different patrol officers

All types of patrol officers signalled positive effects ('less worried'), which far outweighed negative ones ('more worried'). However, the effects of different uniformed officers on worry were, to some extent, at odds with those on feelings of safety. Fewer respondents felt worried as a result of sighting a PCSO compared with a police officer ($Wn, p < .001$; Figure 4), though the effect size was relatively small ($r = .20$). Police officer sightings made 22% more worried, compared with only 9% with PCSOs. There were similar contrasts between police officers and security guards with regards to worry ($Wn, p < .001; r = .22$). Levels of worry due to sighting PCSOs and security guards did not differ ($Wn, p = .283$). Though police constables

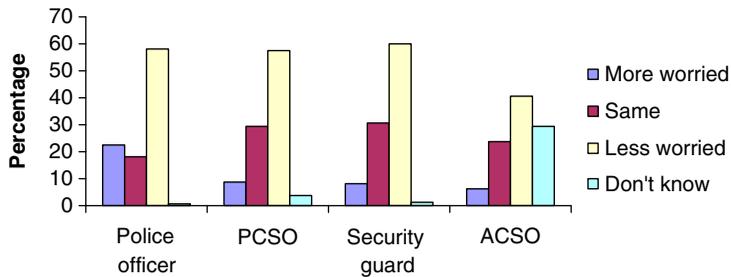


Figure 4. Crime worries prompted by different patrol officers.

instilled greatest reassurance, they also increased worry about crime. However, only 3% of people stated that, on seeing a police officer, they would be both more worried about crime and not feel very safe, so that there were few people for whom police officers had a fully detrimental effect in terms of the two key control signal effects.

With regard to police officers, respondents who felt less safe particularly worried more ($\chi^2 = 8.1, p < .044$): only 19% of those who felt 'very safe' were more worried compared with 30% of those who felt less safe than this (i.e. felt 'quite safe' or 'not very safe' or 'not safe at all'). This effect was markedly age-related, since safety and worry were unrelated for those over 55 years ($\chi^2 = .6, p = .73$), whereas those under 55 years citing very safe feelings also expressed more worry ($\chi^2 = 25.9, p = .000$). High reassurance appears to reflect fuller confidence in police officers, which produces a bulwark against crime worries. Lower reassurance from police officers seems to reflect lower confidence and leaves people feeling less safe and open to anxieties, evidently because they may associate police officers' presence with crime. For PCSOs, security guards and ACSOs, increased worry was less marked, and was not related to safety (χ^2 , all non-significant).

Inability to identify the police officer increased worries about crime ($\chi^2 = 7.504, p = .006$). Twice as many unable to correctly identify a police officer expressed increased worries (41% cf. 21%). It appears that being unable to correctly recognise a police officer, though affecting only 8% of the sample, is indicative of lower confidence that shows through in anxieties about crime which are associated with an officer's presence. Identification errors had few other effects, other than, perhaps predictably, to increase numbers unable to assess safety effects: increases in those citing 'don't know' were related to incorrect identification for PCSOs ($\chi^2 = 3.7, p = .055$), and ACSOs (MW, $p = .017$).

Age and gender, were also related to feelings of worry on seeing certain sorts of officers. Younger shoppers especially expressed more worry about seeing police officers ($F = 14.9, p = .000$) and this was rather more marked for women than men (women: $F = 8.1, p = .005$; men: $F = 6.3, p = .013$). There was a similar effect, though weaker, for security guards, with younger people more worried ($F = 4.9, p = .03$), though this persisted only for women ($F = 4.2, p = .04$), not for men ($F = .5, p = .48$). There was no significant relationship between age and worry for PCSOs or ACSOs, irrespective of gender.

Therefore, police officers instilled strikingly greater feelings of safety than PCSOs or security guards, though they also generated to a smaller degree greater amounts of worry. PCSOs fared better in terms of reassurance than security guards, but caused

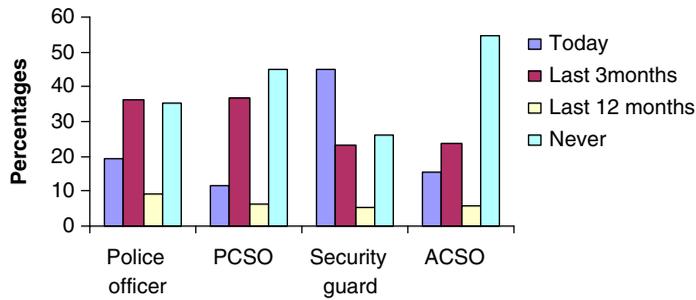


Figure 5. When respondents last saw different patrol officers.

similar anxiety to them, though rather less than police officers, indicating that they may represent a helpful compromise in terms of their contribution to reassurance policing patrol. Younger people, especially women, were more worried by police officers and security guards.

Effects of having seen patrol officers

Respondents were asked when they had last seen the four different sorts of officers patrolling the shopping centre. Their responses show notable differences (Figure 5).

Security guards had been seen more recently than police officers ($F=38.6$, $p = .000$; medium effect size, $r = .36$), who, in turn had been seen more recently than PCSOs ($F=11.4$, $p = .001$, small effect, $r = .21$). There were fewest recent sightings of PCSOs and ACSOs who did not differ ($F=3.0$, $p = .08$), with 45% and 55% of respondents, respectively, never having seen these officers in the shopping centre. People who visited the shopping centre more frequently reported more recent sightings for every type of officer (all officer types: $p < .01$, $Kb = .25$ to $.34$). More frequent visitors also felt safer with police officers ($Kb = -.10$, $p = .04$), though the effect was small. Frequency of visit did not affect safety due to other types of officers, nor did it affect worry (Kb tests, all non-significant).

The effects of having seen patrol officers may reflect how observant people are, whether they notice them, as much as their having actually seen the different officers. At one centre, police officers and PCSOs were in plain view of people being questioned, yet only 39% and 52% indicated they had seen them. Only a quarter of respondents correctly identifying an ACSO had seen one, so that there may be an element of chance in selecting correct answers.

Reassurance and cost-effectiveness

An overall measure of the safety provided by each type of officer was calculated by multiplying the proportions of respondents who felt 'very safe' by +2 and 'safe' by +1, and summing the two scores. Similarly proportions of respondents for each officer type who felt 'not very safe' were multiplied by -1 and those who felt 'not at all safe' by -2 and then summed. The difference between the two scores represents the net safety gain for each officer type (Figure 6). A net worry index was calculated, on the same basis, for each patrol officer type by calculating the difference between

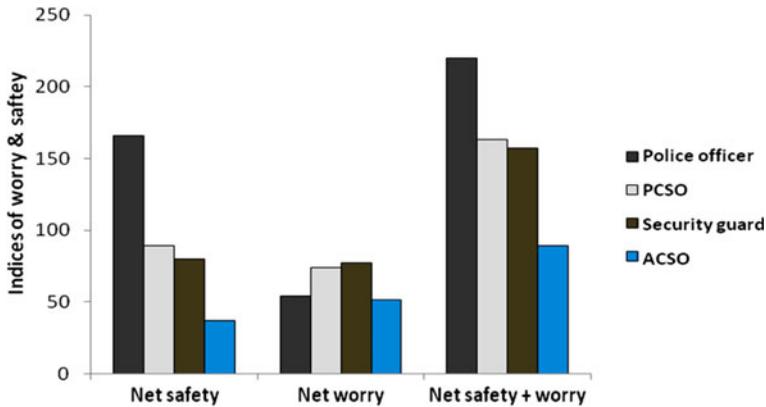


Figure 6. Levels of net safety increase, net worry reduction and safety increase + t'sworry reduction by patrol officer type.

the percentage that expressed 'more' and 'less' worry, scored as -1.5 and $+1.5$, respectively.

Creating summary indices of net safety improvement and net worry reduction in this way assumes that the differences between different response categories for each of these two scales are equal and scales are linear. This cannot be known. However, these safety and worry scores are intended to provide an approximate, comparator of the overall impact. The safety and worry scores for each officer type were also summed to provide a single measure of overall reassurance, since safety improvement and worry reduction, though correlated, show a low degree of co-variance, so that, to an important extent, they appear to measure different aspects of reassurance.³ Clearly, summing safety and worry scores assumes that they are aligned on scales with comparable dimensions, which cannot be verified with these data.

The index of safety confirms that the number of respondents for whom officers have a positive effect on safety outweighs the negative effects for every patrol officer type, that police officers emit a strikingly stronger safety signal than either PCSOs or security guards, and that these, in turn, have far stronger beneficial effects than ACSOs (Figure 6). There were fewer differences in net worry between different officer types, with police officers and ACSOs showing lowest net reductions in worry. However, taking net safety and worry together, police officers maintain the most positive effects on reassurance and ACSOs the least so. There were only small differences between PCSOs and security guards for feelings of safety, worry reduction and for safety and worry combined (Figure 6).

Dividing the annual costs of the four types of patrol officer by safety, worry and combined safety and worry indices provides an estimate of the cost-effectiveness of each officer type with respect to safety, worry and overall reassurance (safety + worry). Security guards provided the most cost-effective reassurance signals, with the lowest costs per unit for safety and for safety + worry (Figure 7), reflecting their lower pay and pension costs. They provided reassurance relating to safety feelings at half the cost of police officers, and in terms of worry and safety combined, they are an estimated 2.6 times as cost-effective as police officers (Figure 7). Despite far higher pay and pension costs, the stronger positive reassurance signals of police officers means that they are at least as cost-effective as PCSOs with regard to safety

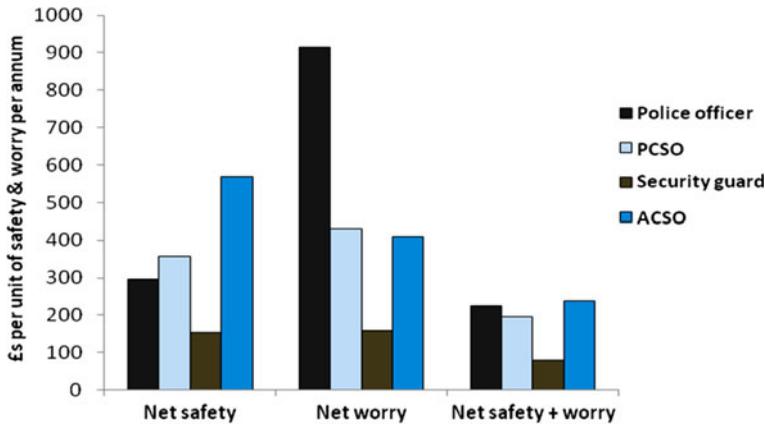


Figure 7. Reassurance cost-effectiveness: cost per unit of net safety increase, worry reduction, and safety increase + worry reduction by patrol officer type.

alone and very comparable for safety and worry combined (Figure 7). When recognised, ACSOs appear to provide far less cost-effective safety reassurance than other patrol officers, and rather less so in terms of worry plus safety, despite low employment costs. However, more often than not, ACSOs were not recognised by respondents.

Discussion

Police officers instilled strikingly greater feelings of safety than PCSOs, security guards, or ACSOs, though they also generated, to a smaller degree, more worry. Overall, PCs may be regarded as producing higher levels of reassurance. PCSOs fared better in terms of safety reassurance than security guards, but caused similar crime worries, though rather less than police officers. ACSOs fared worst in terms of instilling safety, though only to a small extent, compared with security guards. However, difficulties in recognising ACSOs limit their effectiveness. Diversification introduced alternative forms of patrol officer, but the best-regarded of these, the PCSO, evokes a lower regard from the public than PCs, even after almost a decade of deployment. This indicates that PCSOs wearing similar uniforms to police constables has failed to diminish their authority (Cooke 2005), given their superior reassurance ratings in circumstances of high levels of correct identification of both sorts of officer. Equally, findings are at odds with the view that private security personnel were more acceptable to the public than the police in shopping centres (Beck and Willis 1995).

For the high levels of safety reassurance, people must first recognise the uniform and match it to the role, and second, it appears they must have a favourable regard for that role, placing confidence in the officer. That police officers are viewed as providing high levels of safety, therefore, reflects high recognition and, evidently, high regard for their policing competence. That PCSOs were cited as providing markedly lower safety feelings appears to reflect high recognition combined with a lower regard for their effectiveness (for example, Bentley 2010). Despite being well identified compared with security guards, PCSOs instilled only a little more safety.

For officers identified as not being police officers, therefore, correct recognition is of less consequence, indicating that different non-police officers in uniform tend to evoke not too dissimilar levels of reassurance in terms of safety perceptions. For the public, the police officer's uniform symbolises membership of the police as an organisation and its culture, and the public's regard for officers will derive from accumulated personal experience, media exposure over their life-times, experience of others known, and their historical reputation, which will be limited for officer roles in existence for only a decade.

Recognition, therefore, appears to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for elevated levels of safety reassurance, which also depends on perceptions of the different sorts of patrol officer 'brand' (Povey 2001). Recognition only benefited police officers, not PCSOs. Distinctive epaulets or uniforms (Bahn 1974) may, therefore, be of little or no consequence in boosting reassurance, if there is low regard for the standing of the type of patrol officer involved. Some respondents were reassured by officers they did not identify correctly, suggesting that a uniform, even without the strong association with a distinctive and well-known role, can evidently provide reassurance. If police officers are not to be used for patrol, then the evidence from this study suggests that it makes only a relatively small difference to safety and security if PCSOs or security guards are used or whether people are able to correctly identify these officers. Publicity regarding uniforms and roles of their wearers to improve on recognition and correct identification would, therefore, does not appear to be a means of enhancing the reassurance contribution of less well-recognised and novel forms of patrol, without also developing the image people have of different uniform wearers. Uniform and the image it symbolises can be a valuable means of improving the population's safety feelings. If the image and standing of PCSOs, ACSOs and licensed security guards can be improved and developed prudently, it would improve their cost-effective contribution to reassurance and well-being in public places.

Reassurance depends not only on patrol officers, but also on the characteristics of the public, notably age and gender. Older respondents particularly take account of safety considerations in deciding to visit shopping centres, whereas younger people were better at correctly identifying the different patrol officers. While police officers appealed across all age groups, younger people were less reassured by all other sorts of uniformed officers, whom, they were better able to recognise compared with older respondents. Younger people, particularly women, were more worried by seeing police officers and security guards. If a female officer had been used in survey pictures of different types of patrol officer, it is possible that there may have been fewer differences between genders, although the image of the male officer might, even then, have dominated the image of a police officer. Further research is needed to resolve this.

To the extent that this is purely a youthful phenomenon, so that people feel less worry as well as greater safety as they age, it may represent a stable situation. If, however, younger people retain their lower safety perceptions and anxieties about officers as they age, then providing public reassurance will become more challenging, and the overall contradictory signals of police officers in terms of safety-worry may become more marked across a wider age range in future years. If the latter, then the gap between police officers and PCSOs in terms of reassurance may be progressively narrowed, as worry increases offset higher safety feelings. PCSOs and other sorts of patrol officers may, therefore, eventually prove to be a more effective

substitute for police officers than these findings indicate, because they cause fewer anxieties as well as being a cheaper, if less flexible alternative. It indicates that it may be rather more difficult to reassure people in public spaces in the future. As it is, private security guards are a far more cost-effective option in shopping malls, and appear to have effects on reassurance not dissimilar to those of PCSOs. The proportions of young and female shoppers deserve consideration in deciding which sorts of patrol officers to deploy at different times, and the use of more female police constables may reduce the anxieties and elevate the overall reassurance police officers provide. Deploying more female security guards might also prove beneficial.

The higher reassurance impact of police officers suggests that including them among a mix of officers deployed in shopping centres would benefit public reassurance, even if this were only intermittent. Their strongly positive effects make them almost as cost-effective as PCSOs. Such a decision would need to be placed in the context of the 'opportunity cost' of using police officers for more pressing demands in dealing with more serious offences that only they have the powers and training to handle. It needs to also take account of problems resulting from fragmentation and pluralisation of provision, particularly effectively integrating (Johnston 2007) and co-ordinating the different types of patrol officers who patrol shopping malls (Crawford and Lister 2004a). Furthermore, whereas fifteen minute intervals between patrol visits (Koper 1995) appear to deter offending at crime hotspots (Sherman and Strang 1995), little is known about the optimal frequency interval for patrol officers providing public reassurance signals. Officer patrols are inherently at odds with the untested recommendation that officers should stay put at locations where they are visible to the maximum number of people (Bahn 1974). Special constables, who are identical in appearance to police officers, and have equivalent powers and flexibility in terms of dealing with prevention and first aid, also may offer means of selectively boosting safety and reassurance through deployment at specific times and places. This might take account of times when young people, especially young women, use shopping centres. Otherwise, public resources would possibly be more cost-effectively used, if patrol officers in shopping malls and town centres were to patrol individually (Wilson and Brewer 1992, Blake and Coupe 2001), rather than in pairs, other than where patrol is coordinated, for example, covering different sides of the same street or shopping mall.

Conclusions

Police officers offer higher levels of reassurance in shopping malls than PCSOs, ACSOs or security guards. Despite their higher costs, on the assumptions used in this paper, their cost-effectiveness appears to differ little from that of PCSOs. Quality of control signal differs between different sorts of patrol officer and those from PCs are more valuable with respect to feelings of safety and security, though offset somewhat by effects on worry. Police officers' stronger control signals do not appear to only depend on high levels of 'familiarity' and 'recognition' (Povey 2001), but also on a higher regard for the 'brand' or their role in policing society. Their positive control signals substantially outweigh negative ones, although these are of concern, particularly for younger women. PCSOs' effects on worry, however, were less detrimental. Though familiar to and recognised by almost as many survey respondents, PCSOs emit notably weaker safety control signals and evoke levels of safety reassurance that

differed little from other non-police officers, whom, respondents were often unable to recognise. Familiarity and recognition do not by themselves strengthen control signals and enhance patrol effectiveness in terms of the reassurance they provide. They are necessary but not a sufficient condition for delivering reassurance policing. Regard for patrol officers also affects control signal quality, and this must be addressed if the maximum benefit is to be gained. When the image and regard for non police officers, such as PCSOs is elevated, then correct identification will be of benefit.

The success and cost-effective provision of reassurance policing in shopping malls does not appear to depend only on identifying and tackling the incivilities and crimes that matter most to people. Nor are visibility, accessibility and familiarity of patrol officers by themselves likely to reassure the public. Recognition is not a sufficient condition alone. Control signal strength depends also on the 'brand' or regard for the officers. Diversification of types of patrol officers offer potential to contribute to reassurance policing, but this is currently constrained, not primarily by problems of recognition, but, it seems, by potentially more immutable issues associated with their standing among the public. It appears that increasing the reassurance provided by patrol officers who are not police officers will depend on improving the public's view of their image in the case of PCSOs, and this plus the public's ability to accurately identify them in the case of ACSOs and private security guards. While police officers stand out as the best option for maximising feelings of safety, albeit with a small boost in worries about crime, costs per officer are higher than for other uniformed staff, though their cost-effectiveness appears similar to PCSOs. This makes them currently preferable to PCSOs in reassuring the public. They are far superior to security guards in terms of reassurance, though private security officers appear to be far more cost-effective. Given these quality difference in the reassurance signals, it does not seem likely that deploying larger numbers of non-police officers, such as security officers, in order to improve visibility and deliver control signals more frequently would result in reassurance levels similar to police officers, without also raising worries. More frequent contact between officers can affect familiarity and whether people begin to know officers personally, and this may affect reassurance effectiveness. Officers deployed in secondary schools are viewed more favourably and trusted more than neighbourhood patrol officers (Stavisky 2012), though it appears unlikely that similar levels of familiarity can be achieved in shopping malls or in neighbourhoods, where ratios of officers to shoppers are far higher.

This study has considered the comparative effects of patrol officers on security and safety in shopping malls, but it seems likely that the conclusions may also apply to community and neighbourhood policing. Diversification of police staffing and the deployment of different types of patrol officer appear to have an important bearing on the successful delivery of reassurance policing in shopping malls. The issue of which type of officers should be allocated to patrol public areas and private shopping malls depends on what levels of safety feelings are wanted and the willingness to pay for this. Though less effective than police officers, other types of patrol officers provide various levels of reassurance, sometimes more cost-effectively, and, depending on what communities are prepared to pay for different levels of reassurance, PCSOs and other officers can provide a useful contribution to reassurance policing. As it is, other officers can be and are substituted for police officers for patrol duties in shopping malls, but it is clear that this is not without some loss in terms of poorer public reassurance, even if patrol costs are lowered.

Notes

1. Surveys were organised and implemented by the first author and fuller findings are included in Rowland, 2011.
2. 'don't know' responses are excluded.
3. Although safety and worry perceptions are correlated for all four types of patrol officer ($p < .001$ for all 4 officer types), the effect size is small ($K_b < .19$ for all 4 officer types). The degree of co-association is also low (Nagelkerke $R^2 < .09$), indicating co-variance of between 5 and 10% between safety and worry, so that safety and worry may be taken to measure different aspects of reassurance. It, therefore, seems reasonable to sum their net effects into a single measure.

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