

# Can we measure justice?

**Guest bloggers and researchers Sarah Armstrong, Beth Weaver and Trish McCulloch ask whether we can measure justice and how different people experience justice?**

How do people experience justice? How do people decide if justice is just? These questions are at the heart of a project launching today, carried out by researchers at Dundee, Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities and funded by the Scottish Government. In 'Measuring Justice: Defining Concepts, Developing Practice', we will be exploring the ways that different people who come into contact with justice agencies – including victims, witnesses, accused, convicted – experience and assess their experience of justice.

The project will run through April 2019 and mainly involves an international review of research across a field of areas to round-up what is known about and the best techniques for measuring and understanding perceptions of justice. There are two important themes guiding our work. First, a concept called 'procedural justice' has influenced the way justice is understood and studied; the idea, supported by nearly 40 years of evidence, is that *how* people are treated fundamentally shapes their judgment about *what* is a fair outcome. Second, Scottish public services are moving towards a 'person-centred service' ethos and we will be exploring the ways that Scottish justice 'users' feel that services respect and respond to their needs.

By learning more about how an abstract concept like 'justice' is actually experienced during encounters with the police, courts, lawyers and more, we hope to contribute to developing policies and practices that realise Scotland's aim to be a just and fair society. The findings may have implications for both criminal and civil settings of justice processes. In the final phase of the project we will be organising a workshop bringing a range of people together to share their experiences and expertise on justice in Scotland. At the end of this work we will produce materials that can be used by a range of groups to consider how they might define, measure and assess the quality of a justice experience.

We will be occasionally blogging about what we find as we go along, and hope you will follow this work. Further information about the project is on the [Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice \(SCCJR\) website](#), including details of how to contact the team. Keep in touch!

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The post [Can we measure justice?](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).

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# Justice Secretary reflects on stop and search

*Writing in the Scotsman this week, Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf reflected on the use of stop and search and how improved guidance for police has introduced a better balance between individual rights and allowing the police to continue to address crime in all its aspects.*

One of the key challenges for any government minister is understanding how the impact of your policies is felt by people in their day-to-day lives. Actions have consequences, sometimes unintended ones, and getting the balance right is tricky. As a politician, my job is to see it from both sides by meeting, talking and listening to people.

But in the case of police powers to stop and search, I have first-hand experience of the impact on people.

As a young Asian man growing up in Glasgow I've been stopped and searched around a dozen times, sometimes at the airport, but when I was younger in the street or in my car or a friend's car.

That was quite a few years ago now. Today I am in the privileged position of Justice Secretary and in a position to ensure the police have the tools to do their day job and civil liberties are protected.

Stop and search has an important place in terms of tackling, indeed preventing, crime and protecting the public. It is right that the police, who work day and night to keep our communities safe, have these powers.

But I know that I wasn't alone in being concerned about some of the practices around stop and search.

It is vital there is a balance between, on the one hand, allowing the police to continue to address crime in all its aspects, and, on the other, the right of the public, including our young people, to go about their daily lives untroubled by unjustified police activity.

As a parliament and as a country we have been having this very debate over the last few years and this government has responded by putting in place the checks and balances needed.

We introduced a statutory code of practice in 2017 to ensure that stop and search is used legally and proportionately and that

searches are carried out with fairness and respect, including specific guidance on searching children and vulnerable adults.