

Final Report on the Public Survey on Police Officers' Tattoos by Ipsos Mori 25 October 2016

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Security classification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not protectively marked	May be published openly / immediately
	<input type="checkbox"/> Protected	Review whether broader publication
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted	Not for open publication. Restricted to:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Confidential	

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1. Key findings

- In terms of public confidence, the overwhelming majority of respondents said it would make no difference to their confidence in an officers' ability whether or not the officer had a visible tattoo(s) (81%);
- 58% of respondents say they would feel comfortable in dealings with a police officer with a visible tattoo(s). A figure comparable to that for other professions such as teachers (56%), doctors (56%) and paramedics (61%);
- Younger age groups are more likely to say they feel comfortable with tattooed officers: 71% of 15-34 year olds, 57% of 35-44 year olds and 63% of 45-54 year olds compared with only 49% of 55-64 year olds and 41% of 65 +;
- Furthermore, respondents with educational qualifications are also more likely to feel comfortable with tattooed officers (between 57% and 65%) than those with no formal qualifications (44%);
- The overwhelming majority of respondents agree that people with a visible tattoo(s) should be allowed to join the police service (60% agreeing vs.13% disagreeing);
- Younger respondents (aged 15-34) are again more likely to agree to joiners having tattoo(s) (71%) than older respondents (aged 55 and over) (49%);
- Although opinion was more evenly split on the final question as to whether or not police officers should be required to cover up their tattoo(s) at all times when in uniform, only one-third felt they should cover up. Most respondents either said officers should not be required to cover up (37%) or else expressed the neutral position of neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they should cover up (28%);
- There is a noticeable generational split in responses to the question on the covering up of visible tattoos. Younger respondents (aged 15-34) are far more likely to disagree that officers should cover up their tattoo(s) (46% should not cover vs. 27% should cover) compared to those aged 55 and over (28% should not vs. 44% should). Just over a quarter of respondents in each age group also say they neither agree nor disagree to covering up;

- Non-white respondents are somewhat weaker in support of officer tattoos than white respondents: 47% feeling comfortable, 68% no difference in confidence and 47% allowing joiners with tattoos. However, they are more likely to prefer officers to cover up their visible tattoos when in uniform and on duty (51% compared to 32% of white respondents).

2. Brief background

The Police Federation of England and Wales commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a public opinion survey between the 9th and 28th September 2016¹. This was to complement the Federation's own survey of police officers between the 4th and 29th August. It was commissioned in order to provide an evidence base on what the public really think about tattoos in the police service and seek to challenge some of the conscious and unconscious bias that seems to lie behind some of the new restrictive policies in many forces. When Staffordshire's PCC consulted their Citizen Panel on this issue they found the public were not bothered at all about officers with visible tattoos.

Four questions were asked as part of one of Ipsos MORI's regular face-to-face omnibus surveys in order to ascertain the public's views on visible tattoos among police officers. The first question provided for a comparative perspective by asking about tattoo acceptability among other professions as well police officers. The remaining three questions focused solely on police officers. Although tables report all responses, we focus on differences in terms of main splits (for example, between comfortable/uncomfortable).

3. How comfortable are the public with officers with visible tattoos?

Table 1 below sets out responses to the first question which viewed acceptability in terms of how comfortable or not respondents would feel in dealings with someone with a visible tattoo from each of six listed professions (police officers, teachers, doctors, train conductors, firefighters and paramedics).

¹ The survey was conducted using Ipsos MORI's weekly face-to-face omnibus survey ("Capibus"). 928 English and Welsh adults aged 15+ were interviewed in home by Capibus interviewers. The Capibus survey is conducted using a random location sampling methodology. Census Output Areas are randomly selected from all available areas covering the entire country, and interviewers then conduct interviews using a quota methodology within these areas. Responses were then weighted to ensure they were representative of the population demographically.

Table 1: How comfortable or not would you feel in dealings with someone with a visible tattoo from each of the following professions?

	Police officers	Teachers	Doctors	Train conductors	Firefighters	Paramedics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very comfortable	38	36	37	44	44	41
Fairly comfortable	19	20	19	20	21	20
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	19	18	19	22	21	20
Fairly uncomfortable	11	13	11	7	6	9
Very uncomfortable	12	13	14	7	8	10
Comfortable (Net)	58	56	56	65	65	61
Uncomfortable (Net)	23	26	25	13	14	18
Difference comfortable minus uncomfortable	+35	+30	+31	+52	+51	+43
Weighted Base	928	928	928	928	928	928

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were no DKs on this question.

The table provides overwhelming evidence that the public is not as concerned about members of these professions having visible tattoos as employers imagine. In terms of feeling comfortable with tattooed members of these professions, respondents view police officers (58%) as mid-way between firefighters (65%) and teachers/doctors (56%). However, comparing the net difference between those saying they are comfortable and those saying they are uncomfortable there is a more marked contrast between professions. The balance in favour of comfortable is somewhat lower for police officers (+35%), teachers (+30%) and doctors (+31%) than train conductors (+52%) and firefighters (+51%). Responses on paramedics (+43%) are in-between these two groups. However, that said, in addition about one-fifth of all respondents take a neutral position in saying they feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable dealing with someone from any of these professions, including police officers.

Response to this question by age for police officers shows a statistically significant ² generational difference with 73% of 15-24 year olds and 69% of 25-34 year olds saying they would feel comfortable in dealings with a police officer with a visible

² Statistically significant differences are reported by Ipsos MORI using the chi-square test at the 5% level ($p \leq 0.05$). This means that there is only a 5% probability that the reported differences are due to chance alone. Conversely, there is a 95% confidence level which means that if the survey were repeated 100 times one would expect the results to fall in the confidence range 95 times.

tattoo(s) compared with only 49% of those aged 55-64 and 41% of those aged 65 and over (table 2). The combined figure for younger respondents aged 34 and under is 71% compared to a combined figure of 45% for those aged 55 and over. In addition, about one-fifth of respondents in each age group take a neutral position of feeling neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

Table 2: How comfortable or not would you feel in dealings with someone with a visible tattoo from each of the following professions?
Police officers only by Age

	All	Age					
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very comfortable	38	53	53	41	41	31	18
Fairly comfortable	19	20	16	16	21	18	23
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	19	16	17	18	20	21	21
Fairly uncomfortable	11	5	6	11	9	15	18
Very uncomfortable	12	6	9	14	8	14	19
Comfortable (Net)	58	73	69	57	63	49	41
Uncomfortable (Net)	23	11	14	25	17	29	37
Difference comfortable minus uncomfortable	+35	+62	+55	+32	+46	+20	+4
Weighted Base	928	140	155	144	158	128	202

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were no DKs on this question.

4. How confident are the public in officers with visible tattoos?

The second question focused on what effect there is, if any, on the public's confidence in the ability of officers to do their duty whether or not they have visible tattoos. Table 3 sets out responses to this question for all respondents and by age.

When asked if they would have more or less confidence in an officer whether or not the officer had a visible tattoo, the overwhelming majority said it would make no difference to their confidence if the officer has a tattoo or not (81%). Therefore, whereas only 16% felt a negative impact on their public confidence in an officer if they had a visible tattoo, 83% did not have a negative reaction. This finding would seem to allay any fears that officers' visible tattoos have a negative impact on public confidence. In terms of age there is a statistically significant difference in response

with those aged 65 and over being *less* likely to say it makes no difference (72%) than younger age groups (15-34 and 45-54).

Table 3: *When thinking about a police officer who has a visible tattoo or tattoos when in uniform, would you say you have more or less confidence in their ability to do their duty than if they did not have a visible tattoo or tattoos, or would it make no difference?*

	All	Age					
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Much more confidence	1	1	3	1	2	1	1
A little more confidence	1	1	-	3	1	-	-
It would make no difference	81	88	83	80	85	80	72
A little less confidence	13	9	11	13	9	17	17
Much less confidence	4	1	1	2	3	3	11
More confidence (Net)	2	1	3	5	3	1	1
Less confidence (Net)	16	10	12	15	11	19	27
Difference more confidence <i>minus</i> less confidence	-14	-9	-9	-10	-8	-18	-26
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Weighted Base	928	140	155	144	158	128	202

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question.

5. Should people with visible tattoos be allowed to join the police?

The third question asked whether people with a tattoo(s) that would be visible in uniform should be allowed to join the police service (table 4).

Table 4: *To what extent do you agree, or disagree, that people with a tattoo or tattoos that would be visible in uniform should be allowed to join the police service?*

	All	Age					
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	36	52	47	41	35	29	20
Tend to agree	24	23	20	19	28	24	27
Neither agree nor disagree	26	22	23	25	26	30	31
Tend to disagree	8	3	5	9	7	10	14
Strongly disagree	5	1	4	5	4	6	8
Agree (Net)	60	75	67	61	63	53	47
Disagree (Net)	13	4	9	15	10	16	22
Difference agree <i>minus</i> disagree	+47	+71	+58	+46	+53	+37	+25
Don't know	*	-	1	-	1	*	-
Weighted Base	928	140	155	144	158	128	202

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question.

* Small base.

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that people with a visible tattoo should be allowed to join the service. The overwhelming majority of respondents agree that people with visible tattoos should be allowed to join the service (60% agree vs. 13% disagree). Furthermore, although there is agreement across all age groups, there is a very noticeable generational difference. Those under 34 are more likely to agree with the statement (71% for 15-34 combined) than those aged 55 or over (49% for 55 and over combined). Also it should be noted that about a quarter of all respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

6. Should officers with visible tattoos be required to cover up?

The final question asked whether an officer with a visible tattoo or tattoos when in uniform should be required to keep them covered up at all times (table 5). This question produced opinion fairly evenly split between agreeing they should be covered, disagreeing they should be covered and the middle response of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

Table 5: To what extent do you agree, or disagree, that if a police officer has a tattoo or tattoos that would be visible in uniform, they should be required to keep them covered up at all times when in uniform and on duty?

	All	Age					
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	14	7	7	16	8	17	27
Tend to agree	20	17	22	22	18	26	18
Neither agree nor disagree	28	30	24	26	33	29	28
Tend to disagree	17	19	17	17	19	11	16
Strongly disagree	20	27	28	19	22	18	11
Agree (Net)	34	24	29	37	26	43	45
Disagree (Net)	37	46	45	36	41	29	27
Difference disagree <i>minus</i> agree ^a	+3	+22	+16	-1	+15	-14	-18
Don't know	*	1	1	-	1	-	-
Weighted Base	928	140	155	144	158	128	202

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question. (a) *Note*: Difference row in this table is based on % disagree *minus* % agree since this shows direction towards the view that officers should not have to cover up.

* Small base.

Therefore although among all respondents there was only a slight majority in favour of not covering up over covering up (+3%), there was a sizeable 28% who appeared indifferent to the issue. In effect this means that probably only about a third of the public are definitely in favour of officers having to cover up. Furthermore, there is again a clear generational difference in responses. Whereas among 15-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds a sizeable percentage are more in favour of allowing officers' tattoo(s) to be uncovered (+22% and +16% respectively)³, the reverse is the case for respondents aged 55-64 and 65 and over with a sizeable percentage in favour of tattoos being covered (-14% and -18% respectively). Comparing combined responses for all 15-34 year olds with all those 55 and over produces a stark contrast – 18% of younger respondents in favour of tattoos being uncovered, but 16% of older respondents more in favour of tattoos being covered. However, once again among all age groups between a quarter and a third of respondents took a neutral view of this issue, which means that overall those who favour covering up are in a minority of all respondents..

7. Further demographic breakdowns on each question

The following tables 6 to 10 show additional demographic breakdowns by gender, region, educational qualifications and ethnicity for each question. In respect of the first question on feeling comfortable dealing with an officer with visible tattoos, there is very little difference in response by gender (table 6). By region those in the North appear to be somewhat more comfortable than those living elsewhere in England and Wales. There is also a statistically significant difference in response in terms of educational qualifications insofar as those with qualifications are significantly more likely to feel comfortable (61%, 65% and 57%) than those with no qualifications (44%).

³ % disagreeing *minus* % agreeing that officers should be required to keep visible tattoos covered up at all times when in uniform and on duty.

Table 6: How comfortable or not would you feel in dealings with someone with a visible tattoo from each of the following professions?

Police officers only breakdown by gender, region and education.

	Gender		Region				Education			
	Male	Female	North	Midlands ^a	South	London	No formal qualifications	GCSE & equivalent	A-level & equivalent	Degree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very comfortable	38	39	44	35	38	35	25	45	47	34
Fairly comfortable	18	21	20	20	17	21	18	16	19	23
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	21	17	15	18	23	22	22	18	16	20
Fairly uncomfortable	11	10	12	14	7	9	17	8	9	11
Very uncomfortable	13	12	9	12	15	13	17	13	9	12
Comfortable (Net)	55	60	64	55	56	56	44	61	65	57
Uncomfortable (Net)	24	22	21	26	22	22	34	21	18	23
Difference comfortable <i>minus</i> uncomfortable	+31	+38	+43	+29	+34	+34	+10	+40	+47	+34
Don't know										
Weighted Base	454	474	244	315	232	137		239	198	301

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were no DKs on this question.

(a) Midlands also Includes Eastern England and Wales.

Table 7 reports the same breakdowns in respects of responses to the second question on confidence in officers with tattoos compared with those without tattoos. Again the main differences are regional and educational. Those in the North (84%) are slightly more likely to say it makes no difference than those in London (75%), although across all regions this view is very widely held. Likewise those in London are likely to be less confident in tattooed officers (22%) than those in the North (13%). Respondents with no formal qualifications (24%) are also likely to say they would be less confident than those with GCSE (13%) or A-level qualifications (15%). However, again the overwhelming majority of all groups say it would make no difference.

Table 7: When thinking about a police officer who has a visible tattoo or tattoos when in uniform, would you say you have more or less confidence in their ability to do their duty than if they did not have a visible tattoo or tattoos, or would it make no difference? Breakdown by gender, region and education.

	Gender		Region				Education			
	Male	Female	North	Midlands ^a	South	London	No formal qualifications	GCSE & equivalent	A-level & equivalent	Degree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Much more confidence	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1
A little more confidence	1	1	1	*	1	2	-	2	1	1
It would make no difference	78	83	84	80	81	75	75	83	82	80
A little less confidence	15	11	11	13	12	16	16	12	12	14
Much less confidence	5	3	2	4	4	6	9	2	3	3
More confidence (Net)	2	2	2	1	4	3	1	4	2	2
Less confidence (Net)	19	14	13	17	15	22	24	13	15	17
Difference more confidence minus less confidence	-17	-12	-11	-16	-11	-19	-23	-9	-13	-15
Don't know	*	1	1	1	*	-	*	*	1	*
Weighted Base	454	474	244	315	232	137	122	239	198	301

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question.

(a) Midlands also Includes Eastern England and Wales.

* Small base.

Table 8 reports the demographic breakdown in respect of allowing people with tattoos to join the police service. Again the only noticeable difference is those in the North (67%) and those with an A-level qualification (68%) are more likely to support such entrants than those in London (53%) and those with no qualifications (51%). However, again all groups are highly supportive of people with tattoos being allowed to join the police service.

Table 8: To what extent do you agree, or disagree, that people with a tattoo or tattoos that would be visible in uniform should be allowed to join the police service?

Breakdown by gender, region and education.

	Gender		Region				Education			
	Male	Female	North	Midlands ^a	South	London	No formal qualifications	GCSE & equivalent	A-level & equivalent	Degree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	38	35	42	34	41	25	28	36	47	35
Tend to agree	22	26	26	24	20	28	23	23	21	26
Neither agree nor disagree	24	28	21	27	27	31	31	29	24	24
Tend to disagree	9	7	8	9	7	11	13	8	5	8
Strongly disagree	6	3	3	6	4	5	5	3	4	6
Agree (Net)	60	60	67	57	61	53	51	59	68	61
Disagree (Net)	16	11	11	15	11	22	18	12	8	15
Difference agree minus disagree	+44	+49	+56	+42	+50	+31	+33	+47	+60	+46
Don't know	-	1	*	*	1	-	*	-	-	1
Weighted Base	454	474	244	315	232	137	122	239	198	301

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question.

(a) Midlands also Includes Eastern England and Wales.

* Small base.

Table 9 reports the breakdown on whether officers with visible tattoos should be required to cover up at all times. The only noticeable difference is between London and the North with those in the North more likely to disagree to covering up (40%) than those in London (29%). Even on education although those with no qualifications are more likely to agree to covering up than those with qualifications, no statistically significant difference between groups on this question is reported by Ipsos MORI.

Table 9: To what extent do you agree, or disagree, that if a police officer has a tattoo or tattoos that would be visible in uniform, they should be required to keep them covered up at all times when in uniform and on duty?
Breakdown by gender, region and education.

	Gender		Region				Education			
	Male	Female	North	Midlands ^a	South	London	No formal qualifications	GCSE & equivalent	A-level & equivalent	Degree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	14	14	14	17	12	12	23	9	15	14
Tend to agree	19	21	21	18	19	25	18	22	22	19
Neither agree nor disagree	29	28	24	28	30	35	28	30	27	29
Tend to disagree	17	16	18	18	13	18	14	14	13	21
Strongly disagree	21	20	22	19	26	11	17	24	22	17
Agree (Net)	34	35	35	35	31	37	41	31	37	33
Disagree (Net)	38	36	40	37	39	29	31	38	35	38
Difference disagree <i>minus</i> agree ^b	+4	+1	+5	+2	+8	-8	-10	+7	-2	+5
Don't know	-	1	1	*	*	-	*	-	*	*
Weighted Base	454	474	244	315	232	137	122	239	198	301

Figures as presented in Ipsos MORI tables with percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding figures do not always sum. There were a small number of DKs on this question.

(a) Midlands also Includes Eastern England and Wales; (b) *Note*: Difference row in this table is based on % disagree *minus* % agree since this shows direction towards the view that officers should not have to cover up. * Small base.

Finally, it should be noted in the context of diverse communities that there are noticeable differences in responses along the lines of ethnicity grouped by Ipsos MORI into white and non-white respondents. Non-white respondents are more likely to give negative responses, although the direction overall of responses is similar to those of white respondents (except in respect of covering up). These differences might in part explain the difference between London and the North given the somewhat greater concentration of the ethnic population in London. On every question responses of non-white respondents are significantly different statistically from those of white respondents. Table 10 below summarises these responses.

Table 10: Responses to each question by Ethnicity		
	White	Non-white
Weighted Base ^a	792	130
	%	%
Comfortable	60**	47
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	18	23
Uncomfortable	22	30
Don't know	-	-
Difference comfortable <i>minus</i> uncomfortable	+38	+17
More confident	2	3
No difference	83**	68
Less confident	15	27**
Don't know	-	2
Difference more confident <i>minus</i> less confident	-13	-24
Agree on joiners	62**	47
Neither agree nor disagree	26	30
Disagree on joiners	12	21**
Don't know	*	2
Difference agree <i>minus</i> disagree	+50	+26
Agree on covering up	32	51**
Neither agree nor disagree	29	24
Disagree on covering up	39**	25
Don't know	*	*
Difference disagree <i>minus</i> agree	+7	-26

(a) Total base 922 as 6 respondents did not answer the question.

* Small base. ** Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$).

Among non-white respondents 47% are comfortable dealing with officers with visible tattoos; 68% that it makes no difference to their confidence in an officer; and 47% agree that people with visible tattoos should be allowed to join the police service. However, they are more likely to agree about covering up tattoos (51%).