



The police targeting of stop and search

Extract from Core Research report

The impact of s60 stops and searches on crime.

25 October 2006

(In light of the increased use of s60 stop and search, I have made this section of a research report that was completed in 2006 publicly available. The content of most of the other reports have been published elsewhere <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/439254/1> , but the section about s60 was never published, until now).

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1. Introduction

Stop and search plays an active role in policing in England and Wales. It is a police practice that is used for stopping members of the public when there is reasonable suspicion that a person has illegal items in their possession (such as drugs, firearms, or knives), are carrying items stolen from a previous crime (e.g. from a robbery or theft from a person), or are carrying items with the intent to use in committing an offence. There are a number of powers that can be used by the police to warrant the stop and search of members of the public (these are summarised in table 1.1), each with specific aims of control.

Power/basis for search	What is the object of the search?	When can it be used?
Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, s1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stolen goods• Articles for use in certain Theft Act offences• Offensive weapons, including bladed or sharply-pointed articles• Criminal Damage: Articles made, adapted or intended for use in destroying or damaging property.• Prohibited possession of a category 4 (display grade) firework, any person under 18 in possession of an adult firework in a public place.	Where an officer has reasonable grounds for suspicion.
Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, s23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Controlled drugs	Where an officer has reasonable grounds for suspicion.

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Firearms Act 1968, s47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firearms 	Where an officer has reasonable grounds for suspicion.
Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, as amended by s8 of the Knives Act 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offensive weapons • Dangerous instruments 	When authorisation by officer of the rank of inspector or above is given in relation to a specific place and time period
Terrorism Act 2000, s43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles which may constitute evidence that a person is a terrorist 	Where an officer has reasonable grounds for suspicion that the person is a terrorist.
Terrorism Act 2000, s44(1) and s44(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles which could be used for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism 	When authorisation by officer of the rank of Assistant Chief Constable (or equivalent) or above is given in relation to a specific place and time period. This must be confirmed by the Secretary of State within 48 hours.

Table 1.1. Powers that can be used by the police for conducting a search (Source: Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984: Code A)

[Sections 2-4.1 are not provided in this report extract but most of the content of these sections is available here: <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/439254/1>]

4.2. S60 searches

'Section 60' search powers (Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, as amended by s8 of the Knives Act 1997) have the defined objective of tackling offences associated with offensive weapons and dangerous instruments. This type of search is different to others considered in this research [the focus of the research was on stops and searches relating to PACE] as its grounds are not based on reasonable suspicion alone, but can be used when an officer of the rank of inspector or above gives authorisation for searches to be conducted in relation to a specific place and time period. In theory it could be assumed that s60 searches are more intelligence-led than other types of searches – in that a specific time and place has been identified as warranting search activity – but in practice the power tends to be used in a rather more voluminous manner to individuals.

Section 60 (s60) searches emerged as a power to counter hooliganism associated with football crowds. It has also been a search power applied to persons involved in demonstrations. More recently its use has been considered as a search power for tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in busy town centres. Only two police forces in England and Wales appear to use s60 powers in any regular form [recall, based on the use of s60 prior to 2006]. These are the Metropolitan Police and West Midlands Police. In London, section 60 searches accounted for 0.3% of all searches in 2002 – 2003 (the period of time that search data was available for this research). In West Midlands, s60 searches accounted for 42% of all searches in 2004. In the West Midlands s60 searches have been actively used as part of Operation Safer Streets.

The following statistics are provided on s60 searches in West Midlands for 2004,

- Number of searches: 21703
- Arrests generated from searches: 296
- Search productivity: 1.4% (i.e. 1 in 70 searches resulted in an arrest).

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These results show that in the West Midlands s60 searches have little impact on generating arrests. Of the arrests generated, 39% were for offensive weapons or firearms offences and 27% were for drug offences.

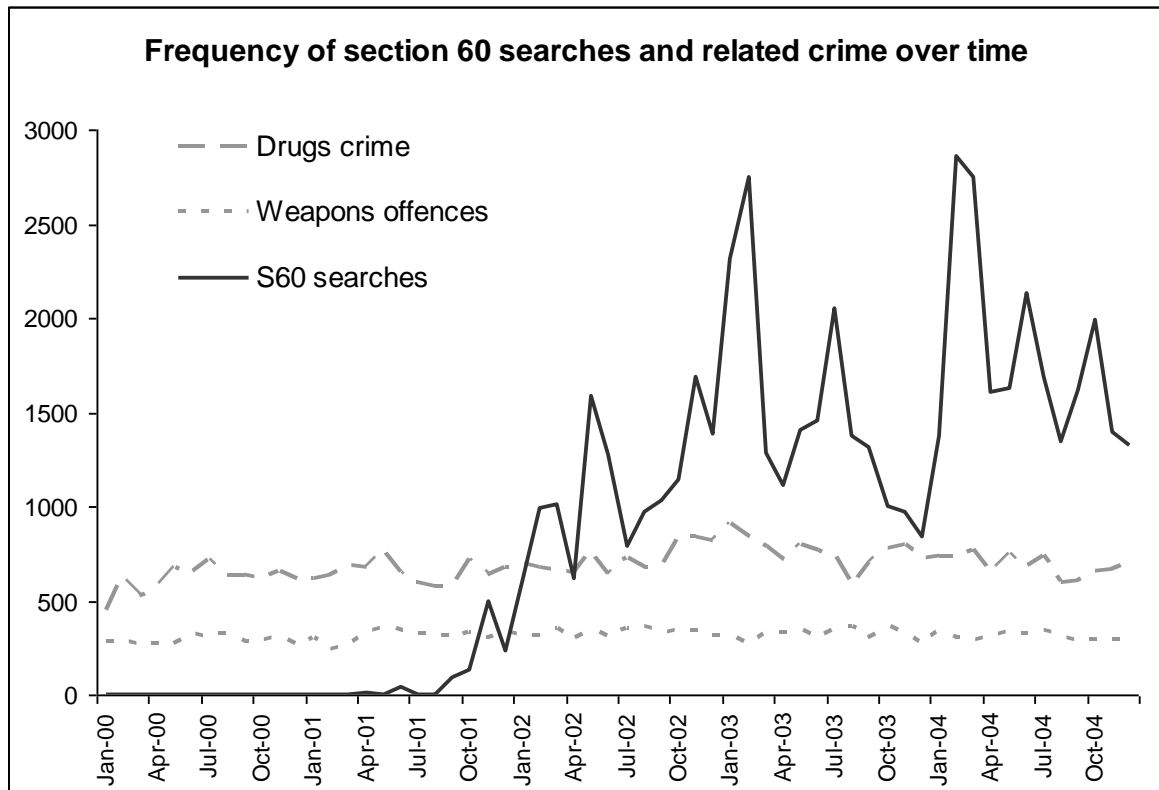
Section 60 searches are targeted towards tackling firearms and weapons offences, and as the arrests they generate from searches are very small, a comparison of s60 searches against these types of offences would not be self-fulfilling in the relationships it exposed i.e., the arrests they generate will have a very minor impact on recorded crime, so crime trends will not be biased by this type of search activity. Instead, it provides an opportunity to explore the disruptive nature and deterrent effect that searches have on crime by examining the activity of s60 searches in relation to firearms and weapons offences. As over a quarter of the arrests that s60 notices generate are for drugs offences it would also be useful to examine the deterrent effect that this search power has on this type of crime.

Figure 12a shows the change in volume of s60 searches over time in relation to drugs crime and firearms and weapons offences. The use of s60 searches increased significantly in the West Midlands after October 2001, and was actively used in pulses in early 2003 and early 2004. Visual interpretation of these charts shows that the use of this power appears to have had no effect on weapons or drug offences in the West Midlands over the same period of time – the drugs crime or weapons offences have not reduced over this time.

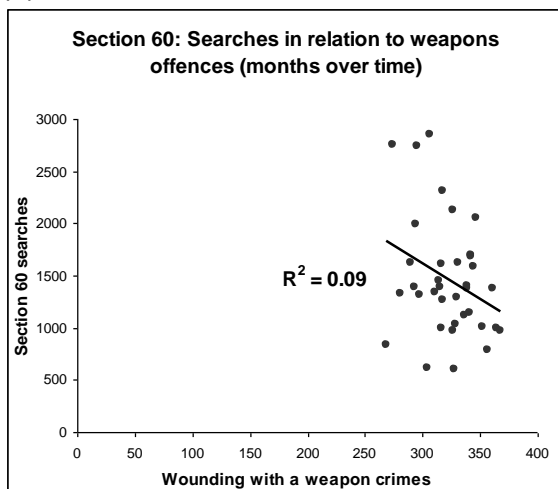
Figure 12b and c show regression plots comparing s60 searches with weapons offences and drug offences respectively. These figure shows that the volume of s60 searches was not related to the volume of these types of offences i.e., they are statistically significant in showing that no relationship exists. This indicates, that either at best, s60 searches helped to keep these crimes under control in that these crimes did not increase, or that they had no deterrent effect on weapons offences and drug offences. By observing 12a, it shows that drug offences and weapons offences remained unchanged since January 2000. As s60 searches show large variation in their activity since their introduction in October 2001, the increase in s60 search activity appears to have no relation with the levels of drugs or weapons offences, before or after the introduction of this search activity. This, therefore, suggests that rather than keeping these crimes under control at the same level, s60 searches have little impact on these types of offences in general. Significantly, it suggests that in no manner does this search power appear to have any impact in reducing these types of crime.

Figure 12d shows the levels of s60 searches by age in comparison to drugs and weapons offences by age. This again compounds a finding from this research [from the findings of the rest of the core research] that suggests that young people are disproportionately targeted for searches when it is neither volumetrically proportional to the crimes committed, and that s60 searches are not productive in the arrests they generate. Adding to this that s60 searches do not appear to influence the deterrence of crimes that this search power specifically aims to help address raises questions over the effective application of s60 searches.

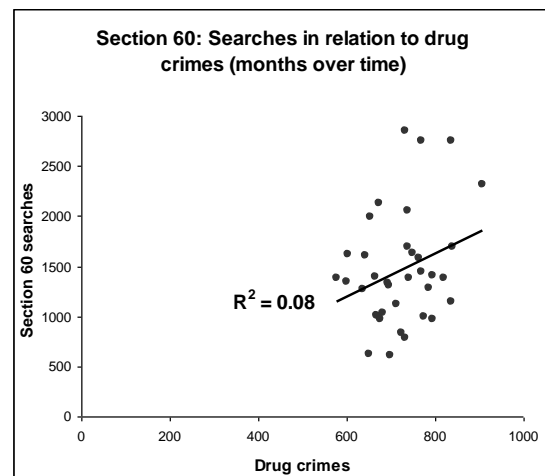
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(a)

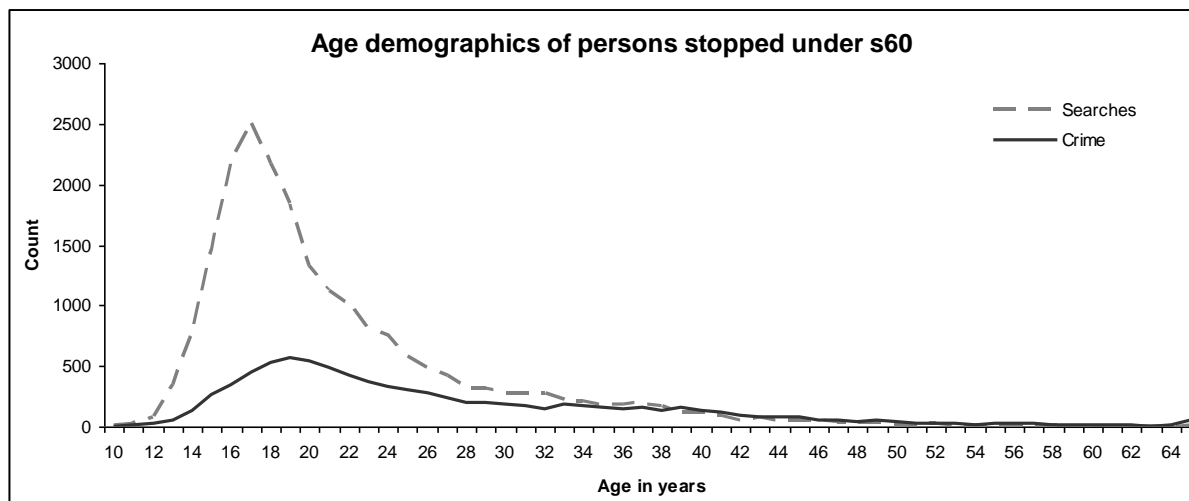


(b)



(c)

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(d)

Figure 12. Section 60 searches in relation to crimes they are aimed at tackling; (a) Change over time, (b) relationship between s60 searches and weapons offences, (c) relationship between s60 searches and drugs offences, and (d) age profile of those searched under s60 power in relation to the age profile of those accused of committing weapons and drugs offences

Summary

- In terms of helping to further understand the deterrent effect that searches may have, s60 search powers were examined due to the objective of their targeted impact to certain offences and their tendency of aiming to disrupt criminal behaviour rather than generate arrests. The results revealed that s60 searches had little general impact on drugs and weapons offences, and compounded the disproportionate targeting of searches to young people.