

Policing the Possession of Cannabis: residents' views on the Lambeth experiment

Research Study Conducted by
the MORI Social Research Institute
and the Police Foundation

Fieldwork: November – December 2001
Published: March 2002

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Summary of Findings	3
1. Background and objectives	12
1.1 Background to survey	12
1.2 Objectives	13
2. Methodology	15
2.1 The Lambeth survey	15
2.2 The qualitative research	17
2.3 Reporting on the quantitative and qualitative findings	19
3. Measuring attitudes to the scheme	21
3.1 Knowledge of the Scheme	21
3.2 Perceived Impact of the scheme	21
3.3 Support for the Scheme	22
3.4 Intention or Impact?	24
4. Residents' views of the scheme – an overview	29
4.1 Knowledge of the Scheme	29
4.2 Perceived Impact of the scheme	31
4.3 Support for the Scheme	33
4.4 The qualitative findings – concerns about the scheme	38
5. Demographic variation	45
5.1 Ethnicity	45
5.2 Age	51
5.3 Gender	56
5.4 Social Class	59
5.5 Parents and age of their children	63
5.6 The relative role of different demographic factors	70
6. How attitudes to cannabis affect attitudes to the scheme	72
6.1 Measuring attitudes to cannabis	72
6.2 How attitudes to cannabis affect knowledge of the scheme	74

6.3	How attitudes to cannabis affect expectations about the impact of the scheme	75
6.4	How attitudes to cannabis affect support for the scheme	77
6.5	Concerns about criminal records and support for the scheme	79
7.	How knowledge, expectations and support interact	82
7.1	How knowledge of the scheme affects expected impact	82
7.2	How knowledge of the scheme affects support for the scheme	83
7.3	How expectations of impact affect support for the scheme	85
8.	The National Picture	87
8.1	Attitudes to cannabis	87
8.2	Perceived Impact of the scheme	89
8.3	Support for such a scheme	94
8.4	Summary of Omnibus Findings	97
9.	Conclusions and implications	101
9.1	Support for the scheme	101
9.2	Understanding support for the scheme	102
9.3	Who is most supportive of the scheme?	105
9.4	The national picture	107
APPENDICES		109
i.	Sample Profile	
ii.	Sample Profile by Ethnicity	
iii.	Questionnaire	
iv.	Example Topic Guide	
v.	Social Class Definitions	

Acknowledgements

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation and The Pilgrim Trust made grants toward this study. The Police Foundation would like to record its gratitude for their generous financial assistance. The Foundation was faced with a very narrow window of opportunity to carry out this study: we would like to thank the Trustees and executive staffs of the sponsoring organisations for their willingness to accelerate normal procedures in order to help us exploit this important opportunity.

Summary of Findings

In June 2001, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) approved a pilot scheme proposed by the Commander in Lambeth, covering the whole of the Lambeth borough. Under the scheme, adults who make a reliable admission of guilt relating to simple possession of cannabis are given a formal warning (providing they consented to this being administered). Adults who do not admit the offence, or who do not consent to a formal warning, are given an informal warning. Juveniles, who cannot give informed consent, are also given an informal warning, and their parents are notified. For both adults and juveniles, the cannabis is confiscated.

The MPS undertook to conduct an in-house evaluation of the Lambeth pilot, using its own Consultancy Group. However, while this was intended to examine officers' reaction to the scheme and to assess the degree to which police time had been redirected to more serious crime, the MPS's evaluation resources did not run to an assessment of *public* reaction to the scheme.

In response to this situation, the Police Foundation undertook to conduct such an investigation of community opinion. The Foundation approached the MORI Social Research Institute to collaborate in developing a research methodology to canvass public opinion in Lambeth about the experimental scheme. This report presents the findings of that research.

Note: the results presented in this report reflect the views of Lambeth residents at the time the survey was conducted (November and December 2001).

Knowledge and expectations of the scheme

The survey results show that knowledge of the scheme is mixed, both in terms of the proportion of people aware of the scheme and the accuracy of their knowledge. There is a widespread belief that the scheme will achieve its aim of redirecting police time into more serious crimes. At the same time, Lambeth residents are less sure that the scheme will make a difference to serious crime or use of hard drugs in the borough – although there is a more widely held belief that it will improve community relations. Key findings are as follows:

- Overall, awareness of the scheme is relatively mixed: 56% of the population have heard at least a little about the policing experiment, but only 30% feel that they know a fair amount or a lot. 41% have not heard of the scheme at all.

- There is however a considerable degree of misunderstanding about the scheme, with over a third of the people who know about the scheme believing that the police will “let people off” for cannabis possession, as opposed to understanding that the police will give a formal or informal warning for simple possession. 6% believe that cannabis has been legalised, and 2% that it has been decriminalised.
- There is a widely held view that the scheme will result in police time being redeployed into tackling more serious crime: 74% of the Lambeth population agree that this will be the case, while only 7% disagree.
- The predominant view, however, is that the scheme will make little difference to the level of serious crime and use of hard drugs: 45% feel the scheme will make no difference to the former, and 52% no difference to the latter. However, 29% think the scheme will lead to a decrease in serious crime, and 17% think it will lead to a decrease in the use of hard drugs.
- At the same time, around a fifth of residents have concerns about the scheme leading to an increase in these problems: 17% feel serious crime will increase and 21% believe use of hard drugs would increase.
- When considering the impact on drugs in general (as opposed to hard drugs), 33% feel the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use, while 46% disagree that this will occur.
- There is fairly widespread optimism about the scheme’s impact on community relations: 64% agree the scheme will improve community relations, while only 11% disagree.

Support for the scheme

Probably the over-riding message to emerge from the data is how positively the overall population of Lambeth has received the scheme. The survey contained a diverse range of measures of public reaction to the scheme, and across all of these, the survey consistently recorded high levels of public support:

- Over a third of the Lambeth public (36%) approve of the scheme outright, without placing any conditions on that approval.
- A further 47% of the Lambeth population offer *conditional* approval: 32% support the scheme provided the police spend more time on serious crime; and a further 15% approve provided it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth.

- Combining those who offer outright and conditional support, over eight in ten of residents (83%) approve of the scheme.
- Disapproval of the scheme is registered by fewer than one in ten residents (8%).
- The different operational components of the scheme are also well supported. The two most strongly supported aspects of the scheme – the parents of juveniles being notified, and people found in possession receiving a warning – are both approved of by over three quarters of the Lambeth population (88% and 78% respectively).
- Even the *least* supported aspect of the scheme (the police still being able to prosecute repeat offenders) is supported by 68% of the population.
- Seven in ten (71%) see the scheme as a better way to deal with young people who use cannabis, with only 10% of the population disagreeing with this
- There is, however, a widely held view that the scheme should not be extended to include harder drugs: 61% of the population disagrees with this notion. This compares with 22% who agree that the scheme should be extended to hard drugs. (It is important to note that this was never a component or expectation of the Lambeth policing experiment.)

Variations in levels of support across the Lambeth population

The analysis of the survey identified that there are differences in the level of support for the policing experiment across different sections of the Lambeth population. The main demographic differences are as follows:

Ethnicity

- More of the white population in Lambeth support the scheme outright than the black and Asian population (41% outright support for white residents compared with 28% and 25% respectively).
- Black and Asian residents are more likely to place conditions on their support; and black residents are more likely to disapprove of the scheme than white residents (10% compared with 7%).
- Related to this, white residents are more likely to see positive benefits such as the police redirecting their time (77% of white residents agree this will happen, compared with only 69% of black and 67% of Asian

residents), and an improvement in community relations (67% of white residents anticipate this will happen, compared with around 57% of black and Asian residents).

- Conversely, black and Asian residents are more likely than white residents to voice concerns about increases in serious crime and hard drugs. For instance, 30% of Asian residents, compared with 18% of black and 15% of white residents, think the scheme will lead to an increase in serious crime; and 24% of black residents think the use of hard drugs will increase, compared with 20% of white residents.

Age

- The results suggest that in general, the older the resident, the less likely they are to approve of the scheme outright and the more likely they are to disapprove. For instance, amongst 25-34 year olds, 40% offer outright approval of the scheme, while only 5% disapprove of the scheme; in contrast, amongst those aged 65 or over, only 29% offer outright approval, while 15% disapprove.
- As well as showing the lowest levels of approval for the scheme, older groups (particularly those over 65) are more concerned than younger groups about the scheme's impact on crime and drugs.

Gender

- The pattern is similar for gender: men are more likely to support the scheme outright (42% of men offer outright support compared with 32% of women).
- Conversely, women are more likely to place conditions on their support for the scheme (51% give conditional support, compared with 41% of men), and to voice concerns about increases in drugs and crime.

Social class

- Similarly, the higher the social class, the more likely a Lambeth resident is to support the scheme (for instance, 42% of ABs offer outright support, compared with only 33% of DEs).
- On the other hand, the lower the social class, the more likely the person is to disapprove of the scheme (for example, 11% of DEs disapprove compared with 4% of ABs) and to be concerned about increase in drug use and serious crime.

Parent status

- Parent status appears to have a smaller influence on attitudes than the variables listed above, and there appear to be few differences between parents and non-parents regarding either their approval of the scheme or their expectations of its impact.
- Amongst parents, there is more of a difference, based on the age of the eldest child: where the eldest child is 5-10, parents are more likely to disapprove of the scheme (11% disapprove compared with only 6% of parents of 11-17 year olds).

Drawing these findings together, the results suggest the residents of Lambeth who are white, aged 25-44, male, and from a higher social class are the most likely to approve of the scheme; while those who are non-white, aged 65 or over, female and of lower social class are most likely to disapprove. Parents of primary school children are also among the most likely to disapprove.

A regression analysis was also conducted to examine the relative influence of the different demographic variables. The results were in line with those outlined above, although gender was not found to contribute strongly (see section 5.6 for a full discussion).

That said, it should be noted that even amongst the demographic groups most likely to disapprove of the scheme, there are still relatively high levels of support for the scheme:

- Amongst the black population, 28% approve of the scheme outright, and a further 50% give conditional approval.
- Amongst the Asian population, 25% offer outright approval, and a further 58% give conditional approval to the scheme.
- Amongst those aged 65 or over, 29% approve of the scheme outright, and a further 40% give their conditional approval.
- Amongst those in social classes D and E, 33% approve outright and a further 43% approve of the scheme conditionally.

Similarly, support is also relatively high amongst several other sections of the population who might have been expected to disapprove of the scheme:

- Of those who against the legalisation of cannabis, 24% support the scheme outright and 47% offer conditional support.

- Of those who think cannabis leads to harder drugs, 26% support the scheme outright and 50% support it conditionally.
- Of those who think the scheme will lead to an increase in serious crime, 19% nevertheless support the scheme outright and 46% offer conditional support.
- Of those who think the scheme will lead to an increase in the use of hard drugs, 21% support the scheme outright, with 47% offering conditional support.

The national picture

A national omnibus survey exercise was also carried out to compare the national views about this approach to policing cannabis with those held in Lambeth. The key findings were:

- Nationally, people have more cautious views towards cannabis than those held in Lambeth. Slightly fewer of the national population agree with legalising cannabis (34% nationally versus 38% in Lambeth). More notably, there is far more disagreement nationally with legalisation than in Lambeth: 49% of the national population disagree with legalisation compared with only 40% in Lambeth. Similarly, more people nationally are concerned that cannabis leads to harder drugs than in Lambeth (53% of national population compared with only 37% in Lambeth).
- Nationally and in Lambeth, there is a high level of belief that schemes such as that in Lambeth would result in the police redirecting their time into tackling more serious crimes: 76% believe this nationally, and 74% in Lambeth. However, a larger proportion of the national population has doubts about this: in Lambeth, 7% disagree the police will redirect their time in this way, but nationally, 15% disagree.
- Similarly, nationally as in Lambeth, a substantial proportion agree that such schemes would improve community relations: 60% agree nationally, and 64% in Lambeth. But again, the national population is far more likely to doubt this benefit will be delivered: only 11% of Lambeth's population disagree that the scheme will lead to better police-community relations – whereas nationally 23% disagree that this would occur.
- Nationally and in Lambeth, the expectations about the scheme's impact are relatively similar. In both cases, around half the population believe

the scheme will make relatively little difference to the level of serious crime or use of hard drugs.

- There is less outright support nationally for such a scheme than is the case in Lambeth: only 27% offer outright approval of such schemes nationally, compared with 36% of the Lambeth population. Levels of conditional support are, however, fairly similar (49% nationally, and 47% in Lambeth).
- Finally, amongst the national population, people are more likely than in Lambeth to question whether such schemes are a better way of dealing with young people using cannabis. A similar proportion of the two populations think such schemes *are* a better way to deal with young people (68% nationally and 71% in Lambeth). But while only 10% disagreed with this in Lambeth, amongst the national population, 21% disagreed.

Part 1

Introduction

1. Background and objectives

1.1 Background to survey

In March 2000, the Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, chaired by Dame Ruth Runciman, published its report to extensive media coverage.

In June 2001, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) approved a pilot scheme put forward by its Commander for Lambeth to assess the use of warnings rather than prosecutions or formal cautions for possession of cannabis offences. Under the scheme, adults who made a reliable admission of guilt relating to simple possession of cannabis would be given a formal warning (providing they consented to this being administered). Adults who did not admit the offence, or who did not consent to a formal warning, would be given an informal warning. Juveniles, who cannot give informed consent, would also be given an informal warning, and their parents would be notified. For both adults and juveniles, the cannabis would also be confiscated.

One of the key arguments that the police made for introducing the pilot scheme was that Lambeth officers had been spending a disproportionate amount of time dealing with prisoners arrested for possessing small amounts of cannabis. Furthermore, such prisoners often received only nominal penalties on conviction for the offence, which called into question whether this was effective use of police time. By dealing with such individuals using warnings, Lambeth Police argued this would allow them to apply greater focus and resources to more serious crime problems, such as gun crime, street robbery, dealing and possession of harder drugs, burglary and hate crime.

The MPS mounted an in-house evaluation of the Lambeth pilot, using its own Consultancy Group. However, the MPS's evaluation resources did not run to an assessment of *public* reaction to the scheme.

In response to this situation, the Police Foundation proposed to conduct such an investigation of community opinion, a proposal which was welcomed by the MPS's Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing. With this endorsement, the Foundation approached the MORI Social Research Institute to collaborate in developing a research methodology to canvass public opinion in Lambeth about the experimental scheme.

The resulting project is presented in this report. It should be noted that this research was scheduled to parallel the MPS's own evaluation of the pilot.

However, it should also be stressed that the design, fieldwork, analysis and reporting of this project have been conducted independently of the MPS.

Finally, the Police Foundation commissioned MORI to be responsible for the day-to-day conduct the research. Nevertheless, rather than restricting their respective roles to commissioning body and research supplier, the two organisations have worked together collaboratively on instrument development, analysis and interpretation, and drafting the report. MORI has taken responsibility for signing off the methodological design, conducting the fieldwork and analysis to its usual standards, and reporting the data. The one exception to this is the logistic regression analysis described in Chapter 5 of the report. This was conducted by the Police Foundation, as clearly marked in the text.

1.2 Objectives

The pilot scheme in Lambeth clearly has potential for a wide and long-term impact on the way cannabis is policed. It is important that the views of local people are understood when analysing the success or failure of the scheme, hence the need for a robust and independent analysis of people's perceptions.

By understanding attitudes to the impact of the scheme and support for it - as well as how these interact together - this study not only gives an insight into what the residents of Lambeth think about the scheme, but should also aid the deliberations of operational decision makers, and inform the cannabis debate as a whole.

With all these issues in mind, the following objectives for the study were established by MORI and the Police Foundation:

- to measure public attitudes in Lambeth in relation to the police decision not to prosecute for possession of cannabis;
- to compare the attitudes of different demographic groups in Lambeth;
- to explore the attitudes to provide a deeper understanding of why people feel as they do; and
- to provide comparative national data against which the Lambeth data can be benchmarked.

At the planning stages of the research it was identified that it was important to assess several aspects of public attitude to the scheme. In particular, these included:

The Lambeth Cannabis Policing Experiment

- the extent and accuracy of residents' *knowledge* of the scheme;
- their expectations of the likely *effects* of the scheme; and
- their general levels of *approval or disapproval* towards the scheme.

The survey was designed accordingly, and these three dimensions of public attitude have also been used to help structure the present report.

2. Methodology

The ramifications of the policing experiment in Lambeth are considerable, and potentially national in scope. It was therefore essential that the methodology adopted for this study was robust. At the same time, the project had to be conducted within time and budgetary constraints. Consequently, at the design stage of the research, MORI and the Police Foundation were very aware of the tension between conducting the “ideal” project, and the need to be pragmatic within the constraints under which the project had to be conducted.

The study was designed with the aim of providing findings as robust as possible about how the experimental policing scheme is being received by Lambeth residents. To this end, the majority of the effort was put into a survey of over 2,000 Lambeth residents; the large sample size was used both to provide reliable statistical data about the population of Lambeth as a whole, and to allow comparisons between different sub-groups within that population.

A second component of the study involved qualitative research, principally in the form of focus groups. The reason for using these was two-fold: first, they were used to inform the design of the survey questionnaire; and secondly, they were used to provide some further understanding of the views of Lambeth residents. This has provided a useful additional dimension to the study.

The final part of the study was conducted to provide national data which could be compared with that collected in Lambeth. From the outset, when planning the research, it was recognised that the findings could have national implications. Consequently, several of the questions from the main survey of Lambeth residents were included in a MORI omnibus survey. Analyses were then conducted to compare the results from the two survey exercises.

The two Lambeth-based elements of the study – the main survey and the qualitative research – are discussed more fully below (Sections 2.1 and 2.2); the national survey exercise is discussed in Chapter 8.

2.1 The Lambeth survey

The Approach

Given the sensitivity of the survey, it was felt important that the interviews be carried out face-to-face rather than on the telephone. In addition, for the

quantitative research to be meaningful, it was key that it was representative of the communities that live in Lambeth, and that those interviewed reflected the population as accurately as possible on key demographic variables. This ruled out a postal survey approach, given that respondents would be self-selecting, and not representative of the population.

The survey was therefore conducted using face-to-face in-home interviews, as this approach was felt to be most likely to maximise respondent participation. Quota sampling was used to select respondents, with quotas being set to reflect the known population profile of the borough. This was felt to be the most effective way to obtain the large sample size required by the project within the available budget. Considerable care was taken to ensure the sample was representative of the population on Lambeth as a whole (see below).

Using this method MORI interviewed 2,055 Lambeth residents face-to-face, in-home between 3 November and 17 December 2001. These interviews were conducted in 137 randomly selected enumeration districts (EDs) across the Lambeth Borough Council area.

Sampling

Within each ED, interviewers were set quotas reflecting 1991 Census data. The one exception to this was that for the ethnicity quotas, the sample was based on ED level 1999/2000 ONS ethnicity projections as these provided a more up to date estimate of the borough's population profile. These quotas gave interviewers set targets for the number of interviews they should achieve by:

- gender;
- age;
- work status; and
- ethnicity.

This approach gave much greater control over who was interviewed, thus ensuring accurate representation.

At the analysis stage, the data were weighted by gender, age, and ethnicity to the known profile of the borough (using 1991 Census data, and ED level 1999/2000 ONS ethnicity projections) to correct for any difference between the sample and the population. A profile of the sample showing the unweighted and the weighted data can be found in Appendices i and ii. The rest of this report uses weighted data throughout which is representative of the borough as a whole.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed to address the key objectives of understanding how much knowledge residents had about the scheme, as well as their views on the effects of the scheme, and their support for it. Some elements were included because at the planning stages, they were seen as clear priority issues. For instance, questions were designed to assess residents' views about the impact the scheme would have on serious crime and use of hard drugs in the borough.

Other questions were incorporated following analysis of the preliminary focus groups (see below). For example, in the groups, residents appeared to be more supportive of some aspects of the scheme than others, so in the survey, questions were included to investigate support for specific elements of the scheme. Another example was that the initial focus groups raised the suggestion that the scheme would benefit police-community relations. Again, questions were incorporated in the survey to measure agreement with this viewpoint across the broader population.

The questions included in the survey are discussed more fully in the following chapters of this report. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix iii.

2.2 The qualitative research

Qualitative research uses techniques such as one-to-one in depth interviews and focus groups. With both these methods, the researcher uses a topic guide, which serves as an aide-memoire of the range of issues to be covered during the interview or group. This ensures the researcher covers all the issues pertinent to the research – but at the same time, it gives them the flexibility to probe issues as they emerge. This provides greater opportunity to explore the key issues being discussed than is possible in a survey questionnaire, where the interviewer will generally have to follow a predetermined list of questions. Qualitative and survey research are often used to complement each other: where the qualitative research allows an exploration of issues, the survey component allows the key issues to be tested with a larger sample of people.

In the present study, focus groups were used to help shape the development of the questionnaire. They were also used to provide contextual findings to help interpret the survey of Lambeth residents at the core of the study. Four of the focus groups were carried out before the quantitative stage in October 2001, and as noted above, a number of questions identified in these groups were incorporated in the survey questionnaire. A further two groups were run in parallel with the main quantitative survey in December 2001 to provide contextual findings from two further research audiences. The topic guide can be found in Appendix iv.

The composition of the focus groups was as follows:

October 2001:

Group 1: Parents of children aged 14-19

Half parents of boys, half parents of girls
Half mothers, half fathers
Black
Social class ABC1¹

Group 2: Parents of children aged 14-19

Half parents of boys, half parents of girls
Half mothers, half fathers
White
Social class C1C2D

Group 3: Young people aged 17-20

All to have left school at least a year ago
Male
Black
Social class C1C2D

Group 4: Young people aged 17-20

All to have left school at least a year ago
Male
White
Social class C1C2D

December 2001:

Group 5: Young professionals

Social Class ABC1 (with particularly weight on ABs)
Aged 25-35
Ethnicity: half white, half black
Approximately half single, half married or in couples
None with children
Mixed gender.

Group 6: Small Business People

Approximately half market traders, half owning own shops/small businesses
Aged 30-50
Ethnicity: mixed
All traders working in Lambeth, half living inside the borough, half outside

In addition to the focus groups, an attempt was made to interview members of the public who had been stopped by the police for possession of cannabis.

¹ The social class scale used to define these groups is defined in the appendix v.

This was intended to explore how the scheme was being viewed by members of the public on the “receiving end” of the new police practice. Recruitment for these interviews was by a third party, and unfortunately, the respondents did not meet the criteria specified for these interviews; they have not therefore been analysed in this report².

2.3 Reporting on the quantitative and qualitative findings

To a large extent, the qualitative findings mirrored the quantitative survey results. This report therefore focuses on the quantitative results, although references are made to the focus group findings where this provides additional useful perspectives.

2.4 Interpretation of the data

It should be noted that a sample, not the entire population, of Lambeth has been included in the survey. This means that all results are subject to sampling tolerances. Consequently, not all the differences between different populations revealed by the survey data will be statistically significant. (A guide to the statistical reliability of the findings is appended.) Throughout this document, **the discussion focuses on reporting the findings that are statistically significant** (except where explicitly stated to the contrary). In other words, where this document reports differences between two populations (eg men and women), this can be taken to denote differences which are statistically reliable.

At some points, the report uses the phrase “is most likely to...” (as in “people over 65 are most likely to ...”). Where this phrase is used, it means that that subgroup has the highest score on the particular measure being discussed, *and* that that score is significantly higher than at least some of the other subgroups. In other words, “people over 65 are most likely to ...” can be interpreted as: people over 65 have the highest score of the given measure, and their score on that measure is higher than that for one or more of the other age groups.

The term “net agreement” is also used in a number of places in the report. This represents the balance when the proportion of people disagreeing with a particular statement are subtracted from the proportion of people who agree. In other words if 55% agree and 30% disagree, the net agreement

² The intention of these interviews had been to talk with general members of the public who had had contact with police under the scheme. In fact, three of the four respondents were not simply general members of the public, but had been active in various ways campaigning for a relaxation of the legislation relating to cannabis. They were not therefore felt to be representative of the more general public. For information, it is worth noting that in line with their pro-cannabis attitudes, they felt the scheme was a move in the right direction, but advocated it should be extended further.

score is +25. The net score is a convenient way to summarise the findings relating to a particular variable. Scores range from +100 (100% of people agree with a statement) to -100 (100% of people disagree). A negative net score means that more people disagree than agree.

Finally, it should be noted that where percentages do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5%.

3. Measuring attitudes to the scheme

As noted previously, the survey objectives were to assess residents' *knowledge* about the pilot scheme, their views on the likely *impact* of the scheme, and their level of *approval* for it. This chapter outlines how each of these key objectives was addressed in the survey.

3.1 Knowledge of the Scheme

To measure levels of awareness about the scheme, Lambeth residents were asked two questions. Firstly, all respondents were asked a general question to establish how much they had heard about the scheme:

- *'How much, if anything, have you heard about changes in the way the police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?'*

Those who said that they had heard at least a little were then asked what they knew about the scheme in Lambeth. This question was asked unprompted; in other words, it tested what people could spontaneously recall about the scheme, rather than prompting them about specific features of the scheme. The intention behind these questions was to test both the *level* and *accuracy* of people's knowledge about the scheme³.

3.2 Perceived Impact of the scheme

To understand what impact, if any, respondents think the scheme would have in Lambeth, respondents were asked to give their levels of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. The first statement reflected the stated aims for the scheme:

- *'The scheme will mean that the police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes'*

³ At the design stage of the research, it was anticipated that some respondents would have limited or inaccurate knowledge about the scheme. Therefore, before asking about the like impact of, and their support for, the scheme, all respondents were read an explanation of how the scheme operates. The text read to respondents was as follows:

The scheme does not legalise cannabis, it only changes how the police deal with it. Under the scheme, people caught in possession of cannabis are now given a warning instead of a formal caution or prosecution, the Cannabis will be confiscated, and if they are juveniles, their parents are notified. The idea is that it will free-up Police time to focus on more serious enforcement problems. It should also mean that cannabis possession by itself will not lead to young people getting cautions or convictions. Under the scheme, the Police will keep a record of who they give warnings to - and if someone is getting warned repeatedly, the Police can still decide to prosecute them.

The other two statements reflected views expressed in the focus groups, one reflecting an adverse impact, the other a more positive outcome:

- *'The scheme will lead to an increase in drug use'*

- *'The scheme will improve relations between the police and the community'*

As previously mentioned, one of the main motivations for Lambeth Police implementing the scheme was to free up police time to tackle more serious crimes, and the problem of harder drugs, with the ultimate aim of reducing both these problems. The focus group discussions were used to explore whether people believed this would happen.

A range of views were expressed in these groups, including confidence among some participants that these results would be achieved. At the same time, two other views were expressed:

- first, that even if the scheme did free up police time, this would have relatively little impact on levels of serious crime and the use of hard drugs; and
- secondly, some focus group participants voiced concerns that the scheme could act as a magnet, drawing hard drugs and crime into the borough.

To test the degree to which these views were held across the borough, the survey asked:

- *'Overall, what effect do you think the scheme would have on serious crime in Lambeth?'*

- *'And overall, what effect do you think the scheme would have on use of hard drugs in Lambeth?'*

For each question, respondents were given response options on a five point scale: "decrease a lot"; "decrease a little"; "there will be no difference"; "increase a little"; and "increase a lot".

3.3 Support for the Scheme

A key intent of the survey was to establish the level of residents' support for the scheme. It was felt important to assess not only their overall support, but also to examine several other elements of their support for the scheme. This was approached in several ways.

First, as noted previously, the initial focus group discussions suggested that residents may be more supportive of some aspects of the scheme than others. For example, some young people who were supportive of the initiative overall were less than enthusiastic that the police would continue to confiscate the cannabis. It therefore appeared important to test the differential levels of support for different aspects of the scheme. Consequently, respondents were asked how much they agreed that the following components should be part of the scheme:

- *'Person caught in possession of cannabis is given a warning'*
- *'Police keep a record of the warning'*
- *'Cannabis gets confiscated'*
- *'If juveniles, their parents are notified'*
- *'The police can still choose to prosecute people if they have warned them previously'*
- *'The police will still prosecute people for supplying cannabis'*

One of the arguments put forward when announcing the scheme was that it would avoid the criminalisation of individuals for possession of small quantities of cannabis. At the planning stages of the research, it was felt that this was particularly important in relation to younger people. The survey therefore also measured support for the scheme as a way of preventing young people getting involved in the criminal justice system. This was achieved by asking residents to state their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:

- *'The scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis'*

A strong message came out of the pre-survey focus groups that even though there is general support for this initiative as a way of policing cannabis, people do not support the same principle being applied to harder drugs. This is an important finding in terms of support for the scheme, as people seem to view cannabis in a very different way to harder drugs. This key issue therefore needed to be tested in the quantitative survey. Respondents were asked to give their level of agreement or disagreement that:

- *'The scheme should be extended to include harder drugs'*

The penultimate survey question asked about *overall* approval of the scheme.

- *'Which of the following statements most reflects your views?'*

It was important here to establish whether approval was outright, or whether it was *conditional approval*, dependent on the what the scheme achieves. The answer categories reflected this:

- *'I approve of the scheme'*

- *'I approve of the scheme but only if it means the police spend more time on serious crime'*

- *'I approve of the scheme but only if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth'*

- *'I disapprove of the scheme'*

- *'I don't think the scheme will make much difference'*

This key question has been used in the analysis to examine who supports the scheme and what conditions they place on that support.

3.4 Intention or Impact?

A principle intention of Lambeth Police when announcing the experimental scheme was that it would free up police time to focus on more serious policing problems, particularly harder drugs and serious crime – with the implication that this would allow them to be more effective at keeping these problems in check.

It was therefore important to test out Lambeth residents' reactions in relation to this aspect of the scheme. Did they agree that the scheme would result in the police putting more resources into these policing areas – and if so, did they believe it would have an impact on the use of hard drugs and serious crime? Additionally, was people's support for the scheme dependent on there actually being a reduction in use of hard drugs and serious crime, or are residents content simply that the police are devoting more effort to these areas?

Comparing the responses to different survey questions allows us to draw some insight into this. First, as noted above, two of the questions asked in the survey were:

- *'How much do you agree that: 'The scheme will mean that the police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes'*

- *'Overall, what effect do you think the scheme would have on serious crime in Lambeth?'*

Cross referencing between the responses to these questions provides an indication of how much Lambeth residents accept one of the key arguments the police have made for introducing the scheme.

Similarly, as noted, where the survey asks about overall support for the scheme, the response options were designed to allow an analysis of what people expect if they are to support the scheme. For example, are people happy to support the scheme if they know that the police *intend to* spend more time on serious crimes; or is support more dependent on impact and outcomes – that the scheme *has to reduce serious crime* before gaining residents' support?

- *'I approve of the scheme but only if it means the police spend more time on serious crime'*

- *'I approve of the scheme but only if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth'*

One aspect of the analysis in the following pages is therefore to examine the degree to which people are happy with the police simply redirecting their resources to serious crime and hard drugs, and how much they actually want to see a reduction in those problems.

Part 2

Analysis and Findings

4. Residents' views of the scheme – an overview

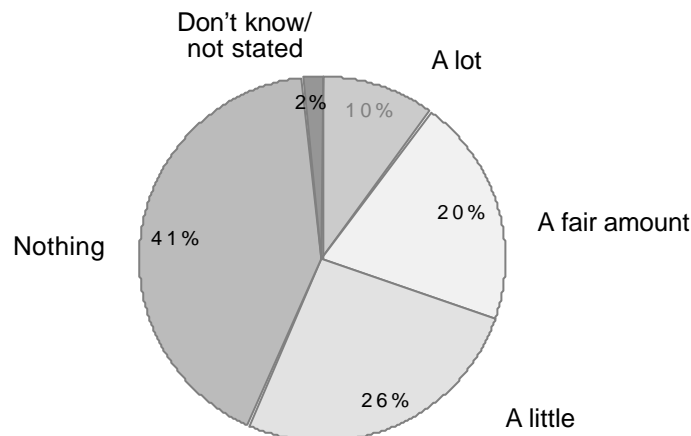
As noted, the survey was used to record residents' knowledge of the scheme, their expectations about its impact, and their level of support for the scheme. The following chapter presents the data on these measures for the residents of Lambeth as a whole. Demographic and other variations in people's knowledge of and attitudes towards the scheme are explored later in the report.

4.1 Knowledge of the Scheme

Awareness of the scheme was fairly mixed, as can be seen in the chart below. Over half (56%) said that they knew at least a little about the scheme but two in five (41%) said that they knew nothing about it at all.

Awareness of the Scheme

Q6 *How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?*



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Those who said that they knew at least a little about the scheme (a sub-sample of 1,144 respondents) were asked to say exactly what they knew. Respondents were not prompted about the features of the scheme, so responses represented spontaneous recall of how the scheme operated. Responses were coded for ease of analysis.

The table below shows all the responses that were given. Those in the left hand column are responses which *are* aspects of the scheme (so the

respondents were correct), whilst those in the right hand column do not accurately reflect details of the Lambeth initiative. As the table indicates, the accuracy of people's understanding of the scheme in Lambeth is mixed.

Accuracy of knowledge about the Lambeth policing scheme

✓ Correct responses	✗ Incorrect responses
38% say police give warnings instead of cautions	37% say police will 'let people off for possessing cannabis'
14% say cannabis confiscated by police.	6% cannabis has been legalised
3% more lenient attitude	2% decriminalised/ no criminal record for possession
1% to enable police to concentrate on hard drugs/ more serious crimes	2% cannabis re-graded to class C drug
1% if juveniles, parents are notified	2% police will let people off for small amounts/personal use/ but not supplying
1% pilot/experimental project/scheme	1% planning to/trying to legalise cannabis
1% people not being charged/prosecuted for possession.	1% non-arrestable offence
	1% police will give cautions
	*% opening of cannabis cafes

Base: All who know a lot, a fair amount or a little about the scheme (1,144)

Source: MORI

Of particular note are the following percentages:

- ✓ Two in five respondents (38%) correctly said that the police will give warnings instead of cautions;
- ✓ 14% knew that cannabis would be confiscated by the police;
- ✓ 3% said that the police are taking a more lenient attitude towards cannabis.

Equally notable are the following inaccurate perceptions:

- ✘ Nearly two in five (37%) thought that the police will ‘let people off for possessing cannabis’;
- ✘ 6% said - incorrectly - that cannabis had been legalised;
- ✘ 2% said that cannabis had been decriminalised or that you could no longer get a criminal record for possession;
- ✘ 2% thought that cannabis had been re-classified from a Class B to a Class C drug.

4.2 Perceived Impact of the scheme

Looking at the measures of residents’ perceptions of the likely impact of the scheme, the key notable findings are:

- 74% agreed with the statement that *‘the scheme will mean that the police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes’*. Only 7% disagreed, and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- However, when respondents were asked what effect the scheme would have on serious crime however, only 29% said the level of serious crime would decrease. The most common response (45%) was that there will be no difference, while 17% believed that crime would increase.
- Similarly, only 17% felt that use of hard drugs would decrease; around half the sample (52%) believed there would be no difference in serious drug use, while 21% suggested it would increase.
- When considering drugs more generally (rather than just hard drugs), a third of residents (33%) agreed with the statement that *‘the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use’*. However, almost half (46%) disagreed with this statement.
- 64% agreed that *‘the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community’*. Only 11% disagreed.

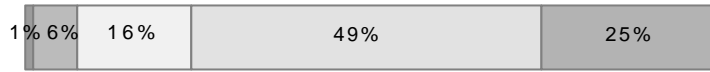
The following charts present these findings in more detail.

Impact of the Scheme

Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree Tend to disagree Neither/ nor Tend to agree Strongly agree

Police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes



The scheme will improve relations between the Police & the Community



The scheme will lead to an increase in drug use



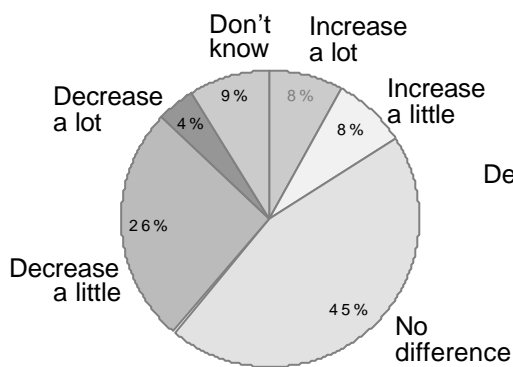
Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

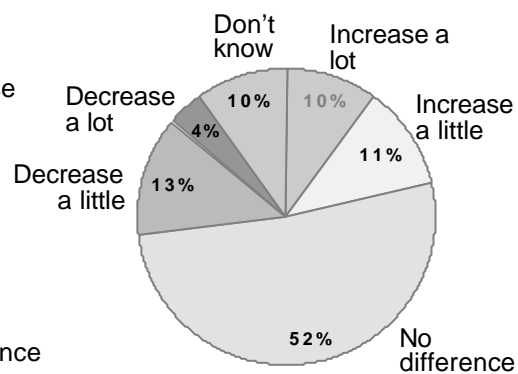
Impact on level of crime and use of hard drugs

Q11/12 What effect do you think the scheme in Lambeth would have on...

Level of serious crime



Use of hard drugs



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

In considering these findings as a whole, the key messages that appear to emerge are:

- Most people in Lambeth appear to believe the police will act on their intention to re-direct their resources into serious crime. However, they

are far less likely to believe it will actually make a difference – either to serious crime or to use of hard drugs.

- Looking at the two findings related to drugs, a sizeable minority (33%) believe that drug use generally will increase as a result of the scheme. However, a much smaller number (21%) believe the scheme will result in greater use of *hard* drugs.
- Regardless of the impact on drugs, Lambeth residents as a whole tend to see the scheme as a positive influence on police-community relations, with 64% agreeing the scheme will result in this outcome.

4.3 Support for the Scheme

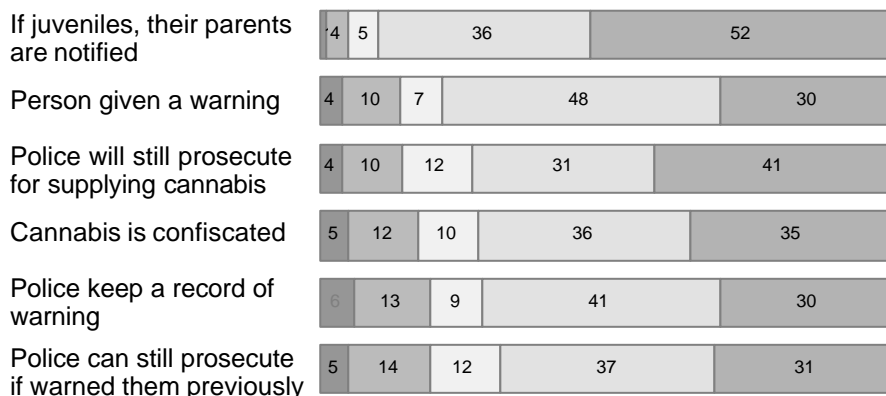
Specific aspects of the scheme

As can be seen in the figure below, there are high levels of support for the different elements of the Lambeth policing scheme. Aspects of the scheme attracting most agreement are parents of juveniles being notified and a warning being given to the person caught.

Support for aspects of the scheme

Q8 Looking at this card, can you tell me how much you agree or disagree that the following should take place?

Strongly disagree Tend to disagree Neither/ nor Tend to agree Strongly agree



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Looking at each of these components in turn, the following findings emerge:

Notifying parents

During the preliminary focus groups amongst parents there was strong support for the idea that if young people are caught in possession of cannabis, their parents should be notified. This view has been reinforced by the survey results where there is overwhelming support for this initiative; nine in ten residents (88%) support the idea and only 5% disagree. The same proportion neither agreed nor disagreed.

Warning those found in possession

Similarly, there are high levels of support for the practice of giving those found in possession of cannabis a warning. Eight in ten respondents (78%) agreed with the statement that 'a person caught in possession of cannabis is given a warning'. 14% disagreed that this should happen, and 7% say that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Prosecuting dealers

During the initial focus groups, some felt that those who deal in cannabis are also likely to be involved in more serious drugs and crimes, so the police should concentrate on them, not the small time user. The survey shows that residents are supportive of the police continuing to prosecute those supplying cannabis; 72% of residents agree that this should happen, compared with 14% who disagree and 12% who neither agree nor disagree.

Cannabis is confiscated

When the issue of confiscating cannabis was discussed in the initial focus groups, the reaction from some quarters was fairly critical. For instance, some people - primarily young people who had admitted to using cannabis - were annoyed that the police could confiscate their cannabis at all. From their perspective, this element of the scheme sent out mixed messages. Specifically, they believed (incorrectly) that the police practice of no longer arresting or cautioning implied that cannabis possession has been legalised; they therefore felt the practice of confiscating the cannabis ran counter to this. Others in the younger focus groups voiced a degree of suspicion about what would happen to the cannabis after it had been confiscated.

However, when people were asked in the main survey to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the cannabis should be confiscated, support was high. The results indicate that seven in ten residents (71%) agree with the idea that cannabis should be confiscated, compared with 17% who disagree. Another 10% neither agree nor disagree.

Police keeping a record of the warning

The police have said that a procedure of the scheme will be to keep a record of the warning. Support amongst residents is high for this practice; 71% agree that this should happen, and one in five disagree (19%). Nine per cent of residents neither agree nor disagree that the police should keep a record of the warning.

Prosecuting those who have been warned before

Under the scheme, the police will still have powers to prosecute people who have been warned previously. During the introductory focus groups, some people disagreed with this aspect of the scheme, arguing that if the police can still prosecute people, then there was no real change to how cannabis has traditionally been policed.

In the survey, however, support for prosecuting those who have been warned before was high. Indeed, seven in ten residents (68%) agree that the police should be able to prosecute people if they have previously warned them. That said, this was the aspect of the scheme that received the least support in the survey – with one in five (19%) disagreeing with this practice, and another 12% unsure.

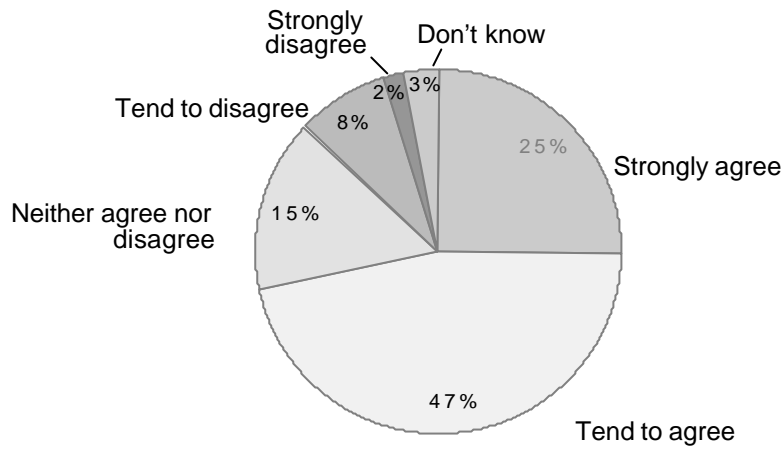
Looking at these six components of the policing experiment, it can be seen, therefore, that the Lambeth population as a whole show broad support for all of them. Even the component for which there is least agreement (prosecuting those warned before) is still supported by over two thirds of the Lambeth population.

Dealing with young people who use cannabis

As previously discussed, one of the aims of the Lambeth initiative is to try to prevent young people getting involved in the criminal justice system and receiving a criminal record for simple cannabis possession. The survey investigated this issue by asking respondents whether they agreed or disagreed that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis. Support amongst residents for this aspect of the scheme is high; seven in ten residents (71%) agree while only one in ten (11%) disagree.

The Scheme and Young People

Q9c To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
'The scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis'



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

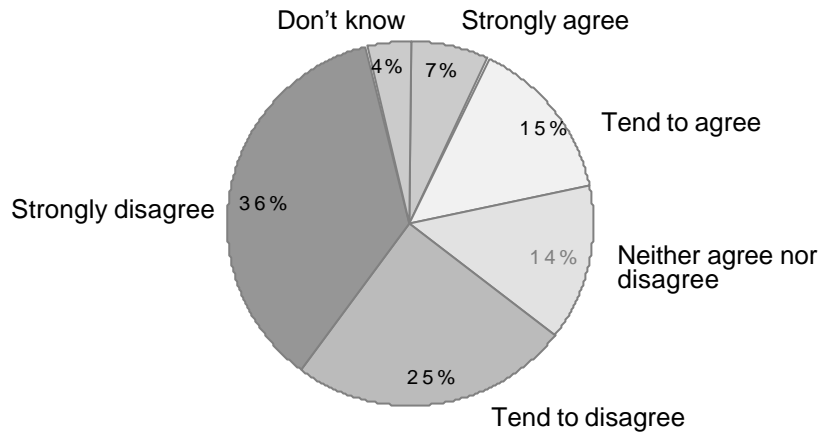
Source: MORI

Extending the scheme to include harder drugs

The preliminary focus groups suggested that there would be little support for extending the scheme to include harder drugs. This has been borne out by the main survey, with three in five residents (61%) *disagreeing* the scheme should be extended to include harder drugs. Only one in five residents (22%) agree that the scheme should be extended, and 14% neither agree nor disagree.

Extending the scheme to harder drugs

Q9e To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
 'The scheme should be extended to include harder drugs'



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

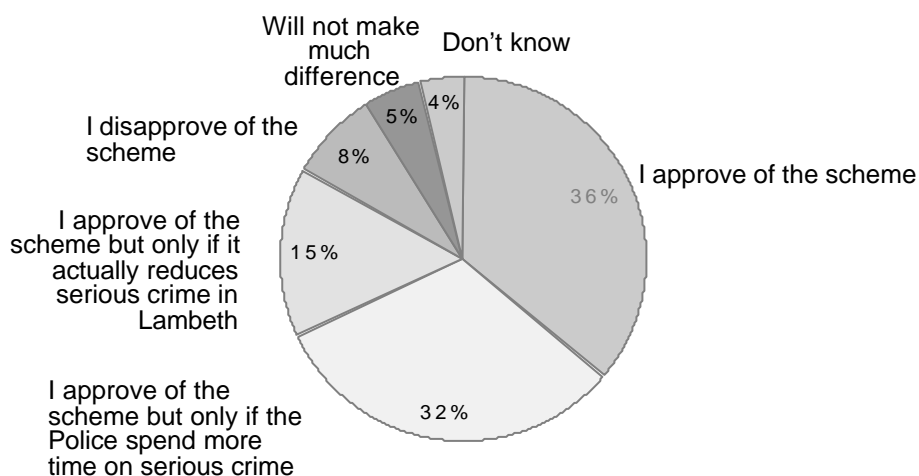
Source: MORI

Overall approval of the scheme

As can be seen in the chart below, more than a third of residents (36%) support the scheme outright (in other words, not placing any conditions on their support for the scheme). Another 47% supported it conditionally - that is if the scheme means the police spend more time tackling serious crime (32%) or if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth (15%). Only 8% disapprove of the scheme. Five per cent said that they didn't think it would make much difference.

Overall Approval of the Scheme

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

The overall approval for the scheme is therefore very high - eight in ten residents (83%) either support the scheme outright, or support it conditionally.

The high level of *outright* support for the scheme is noteworthy: the survey suggests that over a third of the Lambeth population think that this approach to policing cannabis is a good idea *in its own right* regardless of whether this leads to other policing benefits.

Looking more closely at the conditional approval responses which consider serious crime, the police's *intention* appears important to more people than the actual *impact* they have on serious crime. That is, more than twice as many residents say that they approve of the scheme if the police *spend more time on serious crimes*, as say that they approve it *if the level of serious crime actually reduces* (32% compared with 15%).

Taken overall, however, the strong message to emerge from the survey is that across Lambeth as a whole, support for the scheme is considerable.

4.4 The qualitative findings – concerns about the scheme

The preceding discussion suggests that the predominant attitude towards the Lambeth scheme is one of support, albeit that some place conditions on that support. Nevertheless, the survey also shows that a minority of the population are more critical, with 8% voicing disapproval of the scheme. While this proportion is relatively small, it would be useful to understand the nature of their concerns. In relation to this, the qualitative research provides some useful insights.

Support for liberalising cannabis policing

Before considering the concerns about the scheme, it is worth setting these views in context. As with the survey findings, the focus group discussions revealed the majority of the participants to be in favour of a relaxation of police practice, and indeed drugs legislation, in relation to cannabis. This was particularly evident in the two groups of 17 to 20 year olds. For example:

In relation to confiscating cannabis under the scheme:

What is the point, they take it off you. They should just forget it and legalise it. It is just everyday life.

White male, 17-20

I want them to legalise it. I would be very happy if they do that?

MORI – Do you agree?

- Definitely.

MORI – Does everyone else agree with that? Please shout out if you don't agree.

- And they could sell it in shops and everything?

Exchange involving several white males, 17-20

Just legalise it. Open up some cafes and legalise it.

Black male, 17-20

Indeed, where there was concern about the scheme, it tended to be because it did not go far enough:

MORI – What is it about it you don't like, the fact that they confiscate it?

- Yes.

- That and the fact they give you a warning.

- That is wrong.

Exchange involving several black males, 17-20

MORI - ...and if the someone gets warned repeatedly, the police can still prosecute them.

- I don't like that.

- No.

- No.

Exchange involving several black males, 17-20

The scheme we have got now, I am not happy with it, but we are stuck with it. It is going in the right direction, but it still should go further

White male, 17-20

Support for liberalising the policing of cannabis was also expressed in each of the adult groups. For example:

MORI - What action do you think the police should take when they catch someone with cannabis?

Male - Tell them to go home and smoke it at home. They might as well make it legal.

Female – Just legalise it.

Exchange in white parents' group

I come from a Rasta family who sees that [smoking cannabis] as part of my human rights.

Male, black parents' group

Male – I think the only way to deal with it would be to have like Amsterdam where you can go to a cafe and buy it.

Male – It's about time that happened.

Exchange in market traders' group

I think it should be treated the same way as alcohol at the moment. I think eventually it'll come to a stage when it is treated as a drug of choice and you either go to the pub and have a drink or you smoke a joint.

Male, professionals' group

Concerns about liberalising policing of cannabis

That said, in all four of the adults groups, some participants voiced concerns in relation to the scheme and the relaxation of how cannabis is policed. These were particularly explored in the last two groups (the market traders' group and the professionals' group, which took place in parallel with the survey), although concerns were also expressed in the two parents' groups which took place at the start of the study.

The concerns were expressed in relation to a number of areas. For instance, one view expressed was that the scheme was an admission of failure.

It's fine, but it's kind of saying that it's obviously got to such an issue that cannabis has actually got

to such a point where it's so hard to police, that so many people are doing it, they're saying "right, let's not do anything about it" in a way. Because it's obviously got to the point where they can't handle the number of people who are using it. They can't punish who they think they should punish.

Female, professionals' group

There was also some doubt expressed about how the police would use the time freed up by the scheme.

It will free it up but whether they use that time that they've got to the best of their ability is another thing.

Female, professionals' group

The trader's group also expressed the doubt that the scheme would not lead to much additional time being put into other crime problems. From their perspective, however, the reason for this was that the police had not been putting significant effort into dealing with simple possession for some years. They therefore felt the scheme was simply formalising what had been police practice for some time.

Female - Nobody is frightened to walk around with a spliff in their mouth in Brixton.

Male - And that's been happening for years.

Exchange in market traders' group

They weren't putting any effort on cannabis so it's not going to change anything. They weren't out there running after people smoking a spliff anyway. ... It's not going to make a blind bit of difference. It's not going to give them more time to concentrate on heavy drugs.

Female, market trader's group

Indeed, a view was expressed that the scheme was going to *increase* police action in relation to cannabis:

I think I heard you right about what the police line is, they are going to confiscate drugs. If they catch someone smoking, they are going to confiscate their cannabis. I think they ought to

get that across to a lot more people, because the amount of people I have had at my stall, smoking a spliff and having a good old laugh saying, oh, pot smoking is legal in Lambeth now, and they are going to be in for a bit of a surprise. I think the police are going to be in for a bit of a surprise as well, if they start trying to confiscate it, because people seem to be under the impression that it's legal.

Male, market traders' group (emphasis added)

The idea that Lambeth would become like a "little Amsterdam" also generated discussion in some of the groups. While participants in several of the groups saw this and the idea of cannabis cafes in positive terms, there were also concerns.

I like Amsterdam, I was there about three months ago. I like the place and I understand what they're trying to do, but I did actually sit there and think "I would hate to have to live here. I would hate to have to be brought up in it". It's like people can do what they want, and I understand it, but I think if I was a normal kid, and having to bring up children in a place like that, having to always be surrounded by it, I think it's a choice but it's so in the centre, you can't get away from it. ... I wouldn't want my home town to be like that.

Female, professionals' group

MORI - If one of these cafes opened up just next door to the market or next to your shops?

Female – Oh no, I don't think I'd like that.

Female – I wouldn't mind.

Female – But I don't think I'd want something like that next door to my business.

Female – It's like people don't want a mental home next to their house. You know you just don't want that sort of thing right on your doorstep.

Exchange in market traders' group

Related to this, a concern was expressed that the scheme would draw cannabis users into the borough:

Female – And that is why so many people move into Lambeth, they come to smoke.

Male – So everyone is coming in from Hampstead.

Female – Yes, but how many people start to smoke here, and when they caution them they start again.

Male – Exactly, they can't control it.

Female – You are going to catch the wrong people.

Female – That's why too many people come into Lambeth.

Exchange in the black parents' group

Even where there was general support for the scheme, there were also some concerns that the scheme would lead to an increase in drug use, and that this could have an adverse impact on crime levels.

As a scheme, I suppose it's a start. But we have already said that a lot of crime is drug related crime, particularly with youths, then the scheme is artificial. If you make it legal it will have a huge market.

Female, white parents' group

Finally, there were also a small number of participants who simply disagreed that the policing of cannabis should be relaxed:

This sounds worse to me, because I feel like they are going to waste time giving people continuous warnings, whereas they could have arrested someone on the first occasion and recorded it and finished, and that person is going to get a criminal record. As opposed to giving them continuous warnings and then eventually, so to me it seems like they are going to be wasting even more time. I don't know this now, I just learn this tonight. So it seems like they are going to be spending even more time, if these people keep getting caught with it, they are going to be giving continuous

warnings as opposed to arresting them on the first occasion and getting it over and done with. So I don't know.

Female, market traders' group

I am against all drugs, even the smoke.

Female, black parents' group

Hence, while the survey findings show high levels of support for the policing experiment in Lambeth, the qualitative research has highlighted a number of anxieties about the possible consequences of the scheme. These will need to be borne in mind as the future of the scheme is considered.

5. Demographic variation

In conducting the research, the Police Foundation and MORI were alert to the diversity of the population in Lambeth. Consequently, while overall the population offered broad support for the scheme, it was important to examine how views varied across different sections of the population. This was the main reason for adopting such a large sample size – as this would facilitate statistical comparison between different groups.

This chapter provides a comparison between different demographic groups. Five demographic variables were highlighted as being of particular interest:

- ethnicity
- age
- gender
- social class
- parent status

The following discussion considers each of these in turn. In reporting the views of the different groups, the same outcome measures have been used as were used in the analysis of the overall population in the previous chapter – in other words, knowledge, perceptions of impact, and support for the scheme.

Note: throughout this chapter, **where differences are reported between specific population sub-groups, these differences are statistically significant** (see definition in Chapter 2 for further details).

5.1 Ethnicity

The initial focus group research suggested there could well be some ethnic differences in attitudes to the scheme. For example, the discussion in the groups suggested that black parents and teenagers tended to have more liberal views about cannabis than those expressed by the white parents and teenagers. It was therefore of interest to examine whether this generalised to the black population of Lambeth as a whole. Our analysis of the survey data therefore included ethnic comparisons to test whether this was the case. The overall sample was comprised of 1,356 white residents, 533 black residents and 99 Asian residents.⁴

⁴ NB findings should be treated with caution due to relatively small base size.

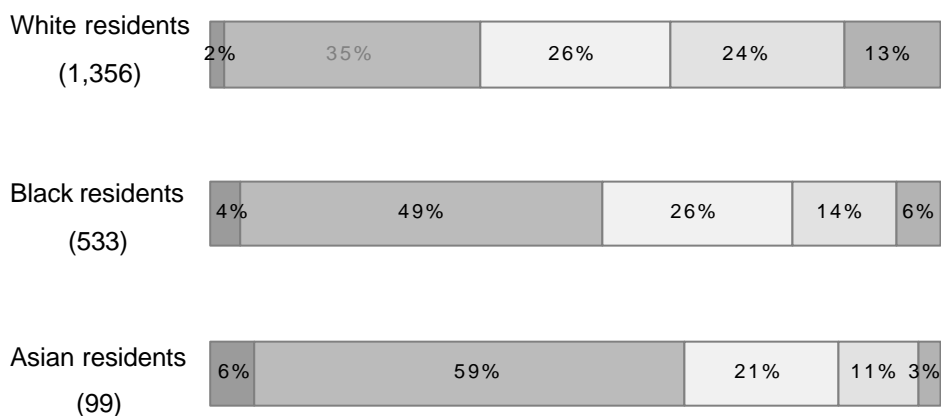
Knowledge

White residents were more likely to say that they have heard about the scheme than either black or Asian residents. Indeed, 63% of white residents said that they had heard at least a little about the scheme, compared with 46% of black residents, and only 35% of Asian residents. Of all the demographic groups analysed for this report, Asian respondents were the least aware of the scheme.

Knowledge about the scheme - Ethnicity

Q6 How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?

Don't know
 Nothing
 A little
 A fair amount
 A lot



Base: Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Furthermore, when asked to say exactly what they knew about the scheme, black and Asian residents were more likely than white residents to have incorrectly specified something which is not part of the Lambeth scheme. Key differences (amongst those who reported knowing at least a little about the scheme) included:

- White residents are more likely than black or Asian residents to know that the cannabis is confiscated by the police (16% compared with 8% of Black residents and 2% of Asian residents)
- Black residents were more likely to think that cannabis has been legalised (10% compared with 5% of white residents and 2% of Asian residents);
- Asian residents were more likely than white or black residents to think that possession of cannabis is no longer an arrestable offence (8% compared with 1% each for black and white residents).

- Asian and black residents were more likely than white residents to have given a ‘don’t know’ response when asked to specify what they knew about the scheme (31% and 20% respectively compared with 13% of white residents).

Hence, the findings suggest that black and Asian residents in Lambeth have the least awareness of the scheme; and, among those who *do* know of the scheme, these groups also have the greatest misunderstanding about the scheme.

Perceived impact of the scheme

There are also some significant differences in views of different ethnic groups about what impact the scheme will have.

White residents are more likely than black or Asian residents to:

- agree that the scheme will mean that the police put more time into tackling more serious crimes (77% agree compared with 69% and 67% respectively);
- agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community (67% agree compared with 57% and 58% respectively);
- disagree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use (51% compared with 39% of black residents and 31% of Asian residents).

Black residents are more likely than white residents to:

- agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use in general (38% agree compared with 30%), and to an increase in the use of *hard* drugs (24% agree compared with 20%);
- disagree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community (14% compared with 10% of white residents).

White and black residents are more likely than Asian residents to:

- think that the scheme will make no difference to the level of serious crime in Lambeth (47% and 43% respectively compared with 32% for Asian residents).

Asian residents are more likely than black or white residents to:

- think that the scheme will lead to an increase in serious crime; 30% gave this response compared with 18% of black residents and 15% of white residents;

- say that they neither agree nor disagree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use.

White residents, then, appear to be the most optimistic about the scheme, pointing to the positive impacts it will have on Lambeth, such as allowing the police to tackle more serious crimes and improving community/police relations. In contrast, black residents and Asian residents appear to be more sceptical, and show more concern about things like rising crime and more drug use.

Support for specific aspects of the scheme

When residents were asked to give their level of agreement or disagreement with specific aspects of the scheme, there were some marked differences by ethnicity. The statistically significant differences are noted below.

Black and Asian residents are more likely than white residents to:

- agree that someone caught in possession of cannabis should be given a warning. The net agreement score⁵ is +77 for black residents and +66 for Asian residents, compared with +61 for white residents;
- agree that the police should be able to prosecute people if they have warned them previously. The net agreement scores are +73 for Asian residents and +57 for black residents, compared with only +41 for white residents;
- agree that the police should still prosecute people for supplying cannabis. The net agreement scores are +76 for Asian residents and +64 for black residents compared with only +54 for white residents.
- agree that the police keep a record of any warnings given. The net agreement scores are +68 for Asian residents and +58 for black residents compared with +47 for white residents.
- agree that the cannabis should be confiscated. Net agreement is +79 for Asian residents and +59 for black residents, compared with only +47 for white residents.

White residents are more likely than black or Asian residents to:

⁵ In other words, the proportion who agree with the statement *minus* the proportion who disagree; see discussion in Chapter 2 for more details.

- agree that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis: 74% of white residents agree compared with 66% of black residents and 64% of Asian residents.

There are two aspects asked about where there are no differences of opinion by ethnicity:

- the high level of support for the idea that the parents of juveniles caught in possession of cannabis should be notified is consistent amongst all ethnic groups, with eight in ten residents agreeing that this should happen.
- there is a strongly held view amongst all ethnic groups that the scheme should *not* be extended to harder drugs; net agreement scores are -42 for white residents, -40 for Asian residents and -36 for black residents.

Hence, in addition to being more sceptical about the benefits of the scheme, the black and Asian population also appear to be more supportive than the white population of the formal actions taken by the police under the scheme – giving warnings, keeping a record of the warnings, prosecuting suppliers, and so on. Similarly, they are less certain that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people possessing cannabis.

Overall approval for the scheme

This contrast between the different ethnic populations also emerges when looking at *overall* support for the scheme. Significant differences are as follows:

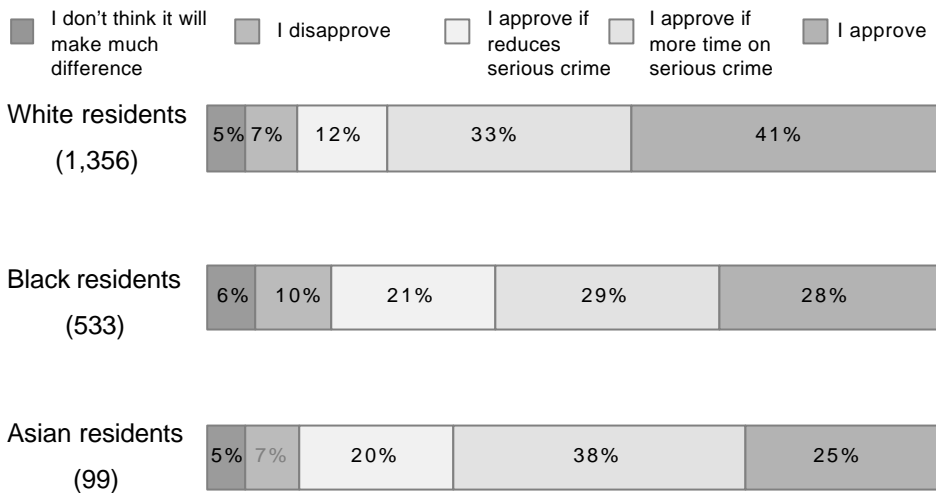
- outright approval of the scheme is higher amongst white residents, where 41% say that they approve of the scheme compared with 28% of black residents and 25% of Asian residents.
- Black and Asian residents are more likely than white residents to say that they approve of the scheme only if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth (21% and 20% respectively, compared with 12%).
- Black residents are more likely than white residents to say that they disapprove of the scheme (10% compared with 7%).

A difference also emerges between the Asian and black populations:

- Asian residents are more likely than black residents to say that they approve of the scheme if it means that the police spend more time on serious crime (38% compared with 29%).

Approval of the Scheme

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Hence, in line with their greater scepticism about the scheme, black and Asian residents are less likely than the white population to support for the scheme outright; and are more likely to make their support dependent on there being an actual reduction in serious crime.

The survey findings therefore present quite a different picture to that emerging from the initial qualitative research in relation to the views of different ethnic sections of the Lambeth population. The focus groups appeared to indicate that black parents and teenagers were more liberal toward cannabis than their white counterparts. Based on this, it might have been predicted that black residents as a whole would have more liberal attitudes to cannabis – and therefore would have been more welcoming of the policing scheme than white residents. In contrast, however, the survey findings suggest the opposite: that black residents – and Asian residents – are:

- more sceptical about the impact of the scheme;
- more supportive of the formal actions that the police continue to take under the scheme;
- more likely to want to see a reduction in crime before offering the scheme their support.

5.2 Age

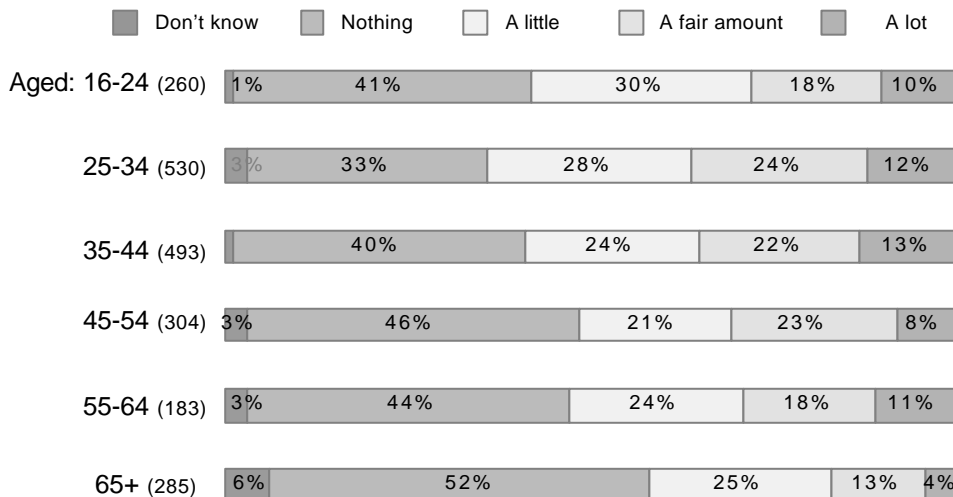
One of the justifications for the scheme was that it was a better way to deal with young people in possession of cannabis. The analysis stage was therefore used to explore whether different age groups were reacting differently to the scheme. The overall sample was made up of 260 residents aged 16-24; 530 aged 25-34; 493 aged 35-44; 304 aged 45-54; 183 aged 55-64; and 285 aged 65 or over. Findings comparing the different age groups are reported below.

Knowledge

As can be seen in the chart below, younger people are more likely to say that they have heard at least something about the pilot scheme than older residents. Indeed, around half of those aged 65 or over say that they have heard nothing about the scheme. The group who are most likely to say that they know at least a little about the scheme are those aged 25-34 (65% a lot/a fair amount/a little).

Knowledge about the scheme - Age

Q6 How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Amongst those who *had* heard of the scheme, there was no clear pattern of which age groups knew more or less about the scheme than others. Whilst younger people are more likely claim to have heard about the scheme than older residents, those young people who *have* heard about it still demonstrate misunderstanding about the specifics of the scheme. For example:

The Lambeth Cannabis Policing Experiment

- 25-34 year olds are the group most likely to know that the scheme is to enable police to concentrate on harder drugs and more serious crimes (3%), but are also most likely to think - incorrectly - that cannabis has been decriminalised (4%).
- 16-44 year olds are significantly more likely than those aged 65 or over to know that the police give warnings instead of cautions for cannabis possession (41% compared with 29%). However, 16-44 year olds are also more likely than those aged 55 or over to believe that cannabis has been re-classified to a Class C drug (3% compared with 0%).
- 16-24 year olds are the age group most likely to think - incorrectly - that the scheme involves opening cannabis cafes (2%), and that cannabis has been legalised (10%).
- Those aged 35-54 are significantly more likely than those aged 16-24 to know that the police have relaxed the law and got a more relaxed attitude to policing cannabis (4% compared with 1%).

Overall, however, the message to emerge is that there are no clear differences in how accurately different age groups understand the scheme.

Perceived Impact of the scheme

There are some distinct differences of opinion about the impact of the scheme by age. The following differences are all statistically significant:

Those aged 65 or over are more likely than all other age groups to:

- think that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use *generally* (+ 28 net agree compared with -14 on average for the population as a whole).
- think that the use of *hard* drugs will increase (+ 26 net increase score compared with + 4 on average).
- think that serious crime in Lambeth will increase as a result of the scheme (+ 9 net increase versus -13 on average).

All other age groups are significantly more likely than those aged 65+ to say that there will be *no difference* in the use of hard drugs or the level of serious crime in Lambeth.

Those aged 16-34 are:

- more likely than those aged 45+ to agree that the scheme will mean that the police put more time into tackling serious crimes (+ 70 compared with + 63).
- more likely than those aged 45-54 to agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community (+ 55 net agree compared with + 48).

It is clear, therefore, that older residents, particularly those aged 65 or over are more pessimistic about the outcomes of the scheme. They are much more likely to agree that outcomes will be negative, such as an increase in the level of crime or level of drug use. In contrast, younger age groups are more likely to point to the positive impacts the scheme would have for Lambeth.

Support for specific aspects of the scheme

Similarly, levels of agreement for specific aspects of the scheme differ by age. Focusing again on the statistically significant differences, the key findings are:

Older residents aged 65 or over are more likely than all other age groups to agree that the police:

- should still be able to prosecute people supplying cannabis (+ 79 net agree compared with + 59 on average).
- should be able to prosecute people if they have warned them previously for cannabis possession (+ 74 net agree compared with + 49 on average).
- keep a record of the warning (+ 76 net agree compared with + 52 on average).

This age group are also:

- more likely than all other age groups to agree that cannabis found on people should be confiscated (+ 80 net agree compared with + 53 on average). However, of note, all those aged 45 or over are significantly more likely than those aged 16-44 to agree with this element of the policing experiment.
- more likely than all other age groups (except 55-64 year olds) to agree that if juveniles are caught in possession of cannabis, their parents should be notified (+ 91 net agree compared with + 75 to + 84 for the

other age groups). (Note also, 16-25 year olds (net agreement of + 75) are less likely to agree with this than *all* other age groups.)

- more likely than those aged 25-64 to agree with the practice that people found in possession of cannabis are given a warning (+74 net agree compared with +60). There is also a high level of support for this amongst 16-24 year olds (+ 72 net agree).
- less likely to agree that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis (+ 50 net agree compared with a population average of + 60).

Other findings of note are as follows:

Those aged 25-44 are most likely to disagree with the following aspects of the scheme:

- that the police can still prosecute people if they have warned them previously;
- that the police keep a record of the warning.

Those aged 16-44 are most likely to disagree that:

- the cannabis should be confiscated - a reaction which may not be surprising given the negative response of the young people in the preliminary focus groups to this aspect of the scheme.

There is one aspect of the scheme where all age groups agree:

- there is strong view amongst all age groups that the scheme should *not* be extended to include harder drugs.

Hence, older residents are more pessimistic about the impact the scheme will have on the area – and they appear to be most supportive about the parts of the scheme which still maintain formal control over cannabis – such as confiscating cannabis, or keeping a record. Amongst younger residents, there is still majority support for the controls remaining under the scheme, but to a smaller degree than for the older residents – suggesting, if anything, that the younger age groups would be content with a further relaxing of how cannabis possession is policed. That said, there is minimal support for extending the scheme to other drugs, amongst any age group.

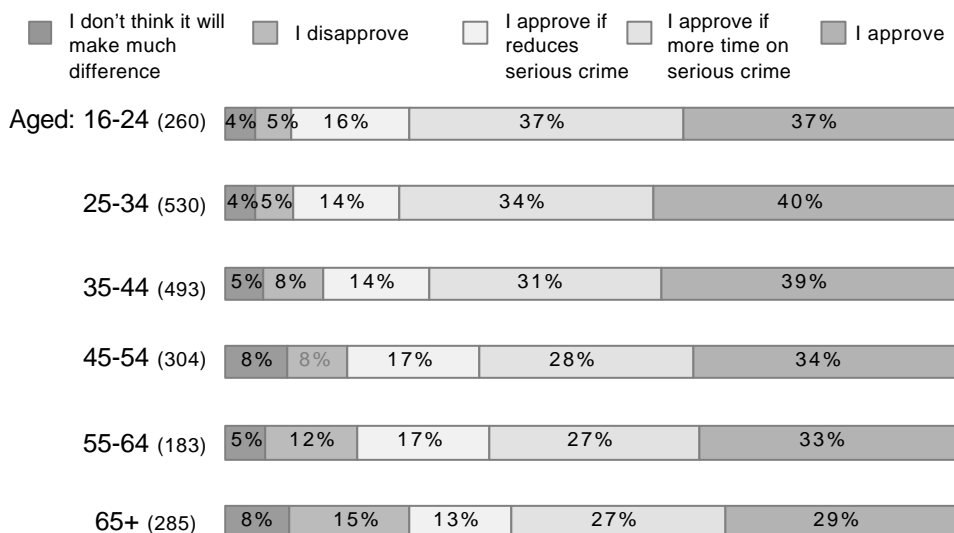
Overall Approval

These age differences also emerged when considering overall approval for the scheme:

- Outright approval for the scheme (with no conditions) is significantly higher amongst those aged 25-44 than those aged 65 or over (around 40% compared with 29%).
- Residents aged 55 or over are most likely to say that they disapprove of the scheme.
- While those aged 16-24 are amongst those offering the greatest outright support for the scheme, interestingly they are also most likely to say that they approve of the scheme provided the police spend more time on serious crime (37% compared with 32% on average across the population; the difference is statistically significant between 16-24 year olds and those aged over 45, of whom only around 27% hold this view). In other words, while this age group offers some of the strongest support for the scheme, it is also most likely to place some conditions on that support.

Approval of the Scheme

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Given that older residents aged 55+ are generally more pessimistic about the impact the scheme may have on the area, and that they seem to favour more formal policing of cannabis, it is no great surprise that they are least in

favour of the Lambeth initiative. However, it should be pointed out that even amongst this age group, over three in ten approve the scheme outright, and over two in five offer conditional approval.

In considering this, it is worth recalling the earlier point that the older residents are least aware of the scheme. It is possible that their pessimism about the impact of the scheme, and their lower levels of support for the scheme, relate not so much to their age per se as to their lack of awareness of the scheme. How awareness of the scheme affects expectations and support are explored later in this report. The overall sample is broken down into 950 men and 1,105 women.

5.3 Gender

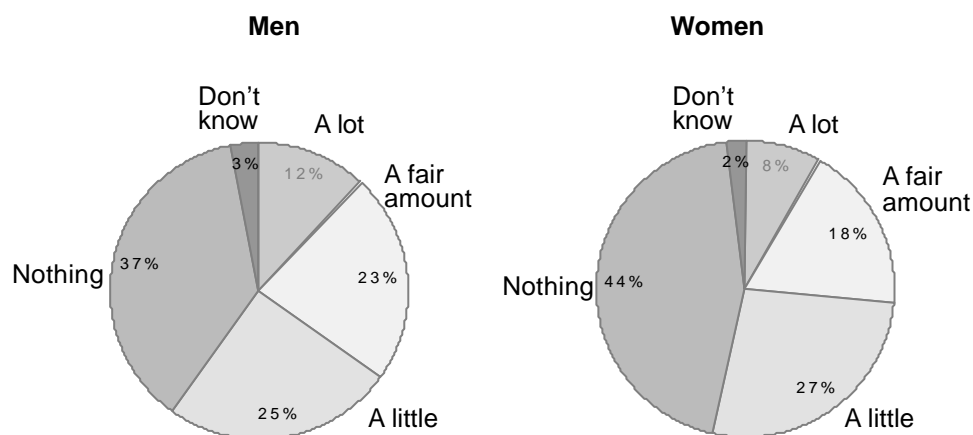
Men are more likely to be involved in reported crime than women, and they are also more likely to be stopped by the police. It was possible, therefore, that men and women had different views about the Lambeth scheme. The analysis below compares perceptions about the scheme amongst men and women. The differences reported between the two genders are statistically significant.

Knowledge

Men are more likely to say that they have heard at least something about the pilot scheme than women (60% a lot/a fair amount/a little compared with 53%). Conversely, women are more likely than men to say that they have heard nothing about the scheme (44% compared with 37%).

Knowledge about the scheme - Gender

Q6 *How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?*



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

In terms of the accuracy of what they know about the scheme, there is relatively little difference between men and women. The only significant difference is that men are more likely than women to think that cannabis has been decriminalised (3% compared with 1%).

Perceived Impact of the scheme

Looking at the impact of the scheme, there are a number of significant differences in the views of men and women.

Women are more likely than men to:

- Agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use generally (35% agree compared with 30%). Men are more likely to say that they neither agree nor disagree with this (19% compared with 15%).
- Say that the use of *hard* drugs in Lambeth will increase as a result of the Lambeth initiative (23% compared with 18%). Men on the other hand, are more likely to say that use of hard drugs will decrease (19% compared with 15%).
- Say that the level of *serious crime* in Lambeth will increase as a result of the scheme (19% compared with 14%). Again, men are more likely to say the opposite – that there will be a decrease in levels of serious crime (32% for men and 27% for women).

Conversely, however, men and women have the same views on the following outcomes of the scheme asked about:

- That the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community; net agree scores are +53 for men and +52 for women.
- That the scheme will mean that the police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes; net agree scores are +66 for men and +68 for women.

Overall, then, men tend to be more optimistic about the impact of the scheme, while women remain somewhat more concerned that crime and drug problems will increase as a result of the scheme. Even so, these concerns are still voiced only by a minority of women.

Support for specific aspects of the scheme

Looking at support for specific aspects of the scheme, there are again significant differences by gender.

Women are more likely than men to agree with the following aspects of the scheme:

- That someone caught in possession of cannabis should be given a warning (+ 68 of women net agree compared with + 60 for men);
- That the police keep a record of the warning (+ 57 net agree compared with + 46);
- That the Cannabis is confiscated (+ 57 net agree compared with + 48);
- That if juveniles are caught in possession of cannabis, their parents are notified (+ 85 net agree compared with + 80);
- That the police can still choose to prosecute people who have been warned previously (+ 52 compared with + 44);
- That the police should still prosecute people for supplying cannabis (+ 61 net agree compared with + 56).

There are, however, two aspects of the scheme where there are no differences of opinion by gender:

- Similar proportions agree that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis (net agree scores are + 59 for men and + 61 for women).
- The strong level of disagreement that the scheme should be extended to include harder drugs is constant amongst both men and women; net agree scores are -40 for men and -39 for women.

Overall Approval

The key findings are as follows:

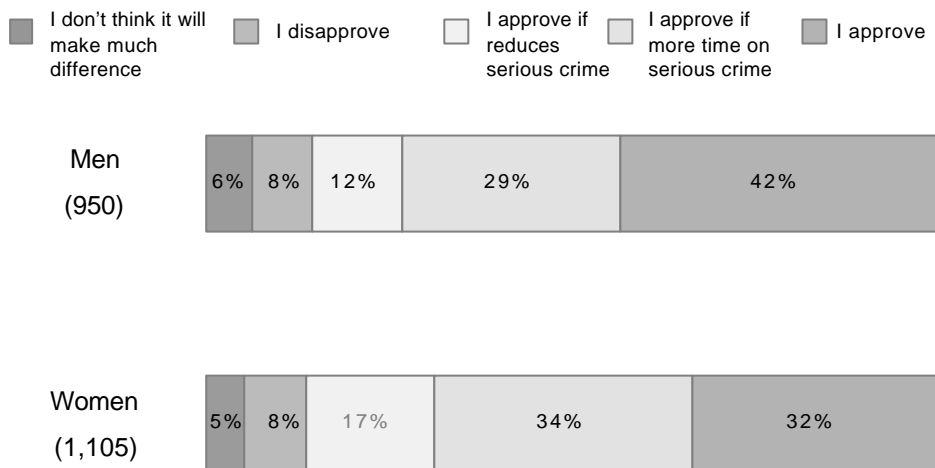
- Outright approval for the scheme (without any conditions) is significantly higher amongst men than women (42% compared with 32%).
- Women, on the other hand, are significantly more likely to give *conditional* approval to the scheme than men: 34% of women say that support the scheme if it means that the police spend more time on serious crimes compared with 29% of men; and 17% of women say that

they support the scheme but only if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth compared with 12% of men.

- There are no differences in the proportions who say that they disapprove of the scheme, or who think that the scheme will make no difference.

Approval of the Scheme

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

In summary, then, the emerging picture is that men in Lambeth are generally more supportive of the scheme, and more likely to see the outcomes as positive. In contrast, women are more sceptical about the impact of the scheme, and their approval is more dependent on whether the scheme leads to other policing benefits.

Given that men are more supportive of the scheme, their lower level of support for the specific aspects of the scheme probably does not mean dissatisfaction with the scheme. Rather, it would appear that men would be content for some of the formal controls of the scheme to be further relaxed. In contrast, women, who are more sceptical about the impact of the scheme, appear to want to retain the formal policing controls that make up the scheme.

5.4 Social Class

Respondents were asked the occupation of the chief income earner in their household, and attributed to a social class category accordingly (a list of social class definitions can be found in Appendix v). The overall sample was

divided between 362 residents of social class AB, 608 of class C1, 275 of class C2, and 784 residents of social class DE. The results have been analysed by social class to investigate how this factor affects views towards the scheme. Findings are outlined below.

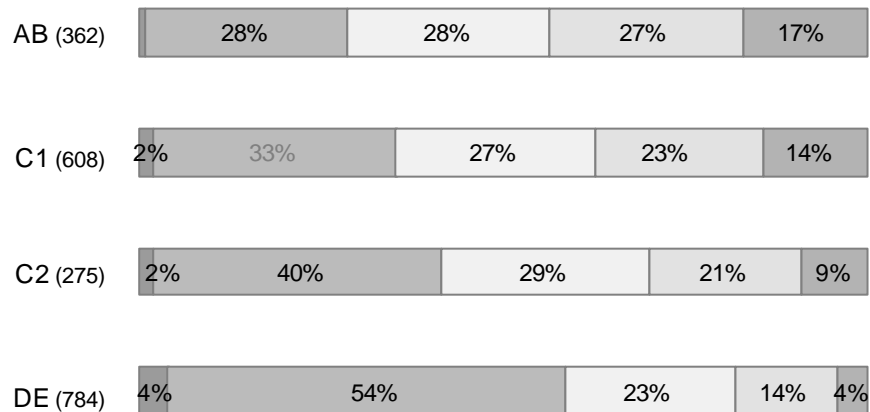
Knowledge

Residents from social class AB, C1 and C2 are significantly more likely to say that they have heard at least a little about the scheme than those from social class DE; fewer than half of those from social class DE had actually heard *anything* about the scheme.

Knowledge about the scheme - Social class

Q6 *How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?*

■ Don't know ■ Nothing ■ A little ■ A fair amount ■ A lot



Base: Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Amongst those who did know about the scheme, there were also some significant differences both in what people knew about the scheme and in the accuracy of that knowledge:

AB's and C1's are more likely than DE's to:

- Think - incorrectly - that the police will be 'letting people off for possessing cannabis' (41% compared with 31%).

Additionally, AB's, C1's and C2's are more likely than DE's to:

- Know that the police will give warnings instead of cautions for possession of cannabis (41% compared with 33%)
- Believe – incorrectly – that the police have relaxed the law and got a more lenient attitude towards cannabis policing (4% compared with 1%)

It would appear, then, that the lowest social class residents are least informed both about the existence of the scheme and about what the scheme is trying to achieve. Higher social class residents are more informed, but even among these, there are some misconceptions about the details of the scheme.

Perceived impact of the scheme

Again there are significant differences in how people of different social classes view the likely impact of the scheme.

Residents from social classes C2 and DE are:

- more likely to think that serious crime will increase as a result of the scheme than ABC1's (21% compared with 13%).
- more likely to think that the level of *hard* drug use will increase than ABC1's (25% compared with 17%).
- *less* likely to agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and community (net agree + 48 compared with + 57).

In addition, residents from social class DE are more likely to:

- agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use in general than all other groups. These other groups (AB, C1 and C2) on the other hand, are more likely to disagree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use.

There are no differences by class in whether people agree the scheme will mean that the police put more time into tackling serious crimes, although residents from social class DE are more likely than other groups to say that they neither agree nor disagree.

Residents in the lower social class groups – who are less likely to say that they have heard about the scheme – are also less positive about the likely impact on the scheme on the community. This may link with age, as

retired people will be classed as 'E' – and as already noted, older people are also more negative about the scheme.

Support for specific aspects of the scheme

In terms of specific aspects of the scheme, there are also some differences by social grade:

C2 and DE residents are:

- significantly more likely than AB and C1 residents to agree that the police should still prosecute people for supplying cannabis (+65 compared with +52).
- significantly more likely to agree that if juveniles are caught in possession of cannabis, their parents should be notified (+87 net agree compared with +79).

Residents from social class DE are:

- most likely to agree that cannabis should be confiscated (+64 net agree compared with +53 on average).
- most likely to agree that the police should still be able to prosecute people they have warned previously (+58 net agree compared with +49 on average).
- significantly less likely than all other groups to agree that the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis (66% agree compared with 71% on average).
- on the other hand, those in social class DE are significantly less likely than other groups to be concerned about the scheme being extended to harder drugs. The majority still disagree with this (53% of DEs disagree with extending the scheme to include harder drugs) – but for social classes AB, C1 and C2, this is rejected far more strongly (64-67% of these groups disagree with extending the scheme).

Overall Approval

Across all social classes, at least a third of Lambeth residents approve of the scheme outright. There is however a trend that as social class decreases, so does approval for the scheme:

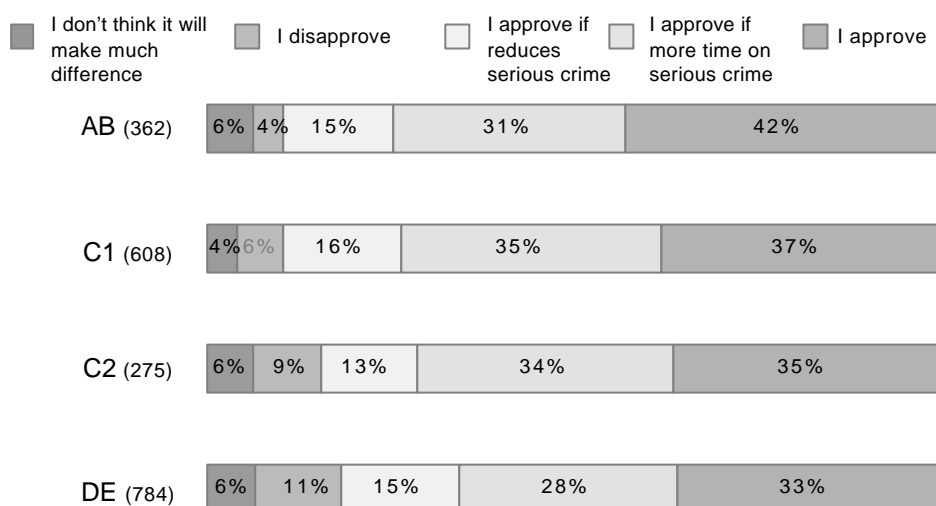
- as well as being more optimistic about the outcomes of the scheme, ABC1 residents are also more likely than C2DE residents to either

approve or conditionally approve of the Lambeth scheme, with nearly nine in ten ABC1s offering such support.

- In contrast, C2DE residents are most likely to say that they disapprove of the scheme – with between two to three times the disapproval score of ABs.

Approval of the Scheme - Social class

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

Overall then, it would appear that there is a fairly clear social class effect: higher social class residents of Lambeth are better informed about the scheme, more likely to see it as having a positive impact, and more likely to approve of the scheme.

In contrast, lower social class residents have anxieties about the impact of the scheme on drug use and serious crime; and their higher level of support for the formal police actions that make up the scheme imply that they have somewhat more punitive views about how cannabis possession should be dealt with. Accordingly, they are less supportive of the scheme than their higher social class counterparts – though even amongst DE's, over three quarters approve of the scheme.

5.5 Parents and age of their children

The final demographic variable analysed in detail is parent status. Parents are an important group to consider, as they may well hold different views to non-parents. Parents may well have concerns about their children getting involved with cannabis, and this could mean that they are more critical of

the scheme than those households without children. Conversely, the scheme was intended as a more constructive way of dealing with young people in possession of cannabis, with less likelihood of young people getting a criminal conviction; some parents may therefore welcome the scheme for this reason. Given these different possible reactions of parents, it was important to examine how parents as a whole were reacting to the scheme.

In the pre-survey focus groups it emerged that parents' anxiety about their children getting involved with cannabis - or at least becoming aware of it - heightens when their children are around the age of 11 or 12, during the transition from primary to secondary school. This means that comparing the views of households with children and those without, is not the only relevant variable. It is also important to take the *age of the eldest child* within those households with children into consideration. The analysis has therefore grouped households with children into three categories based on the age of the eldest child; these are households where the eldest child is:

- of pre-school age (under 5);
- of primary school age (5-10); and
- of secondary school age (11-17).

The overall sample breaks down into 751 households with children, and 1,265 with no children. In terms of the age of the eldest child, the sample divides into 196 households where the eldest child is of primary school age, 221 where the eldest child is of primary school age, and 344 households where the eldest child is of secondary school age⁶.

⁶ It will be noted that there is a discrepancy between the total number with children in household (751) and the sum of the 'Eldest child' breaks (761). This is because information about young people in the household was collected via two questions; firstly, respondents were asked the total number of children aged under 18 in their household, then they were asked the ages of any young people aged under 18 in the household.

The discrepancy arises because some respondents gave no answer to the number of children, but then specified ages of children. To get both questions to match, some forcing of the data would be needed - ie manually changing the data collected. Since it is not known how many children these respondents have, and data cannot be added to this question, the *ages* of the children would have to be removed instead, so that both bases equal 751. It was therefore decided that, given the small number involved - which will make no statistical difference to the data - the data would be left with this minor discrepancy.

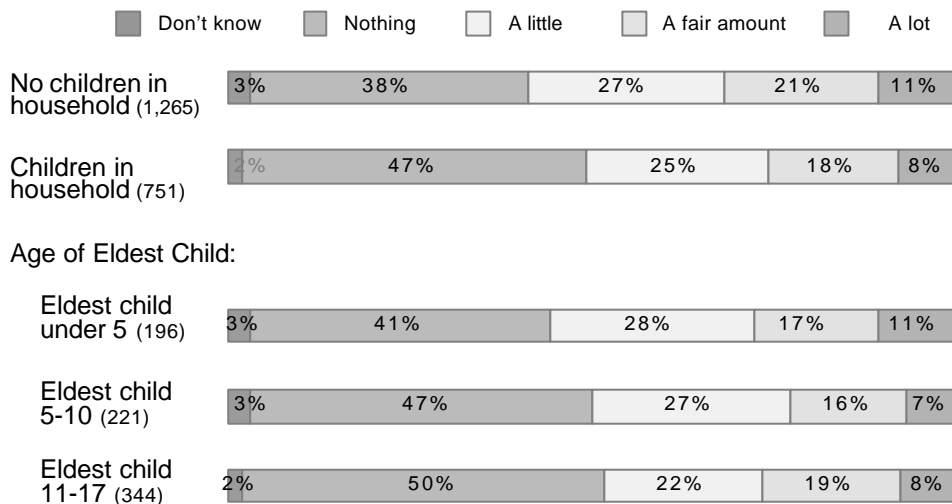
Knowledge

Those living in households *without* children are significantly more likely to have heard of the scheme than those in households with children: among non-child households, 59% had heard at least something about the scheme, compared with only 51% of respondents who lived in households with children.

Similarly, among those living in households *with* children, the older the children, the less likely the respondent was to have heard of the scheme: in households with under-fives, 56% had heard of the scheme; while in households with secondary school children, only 48% had heard of it.

Knowledge about the scheme - Parents

Q6 How much, if anything, have you heard about the changes in the way the Police in Lambeth deal with people found in possession of cannabis?



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

This finding is somewhat counter-intuitive: it might have been predicted that in households with older children, parents would have been more concerned about their children getting involved with cannabis, and so would have been more sensitised to media reports about the scheme. This does not, however, appear to be happening.

One possible explanation of this is that it may be related to the age of the respondent. As already noted, the younger the respondent, the more likely they are to have heard of the scheme. It is likely that respondents with no children are younger than those with children; and similarly, that respondents with pre-schoolers will generally be younger than those with teenagers. Consequently, the relative youth of respondents with no children or young children may be what has resulted in them being more aware of the scheme.

In terms of the *accuracy* of respondents' knowledge about the scheme, there are few differences in the answers given by those who are parents and those who are not parents. Indeed parents and non-parents are equally likely to have given responses which *do* reflect aspects of the Lambeth scheme, as responses which *do not*.

Similarly, the age of the eldest child does not generally seem to influence parents' awareness of the specifics of the scheme, although the proportion knowing that the police will give a warning instead of a caution for cannabis possession is higher in households where the eldest child is under 5 (43% compared with 38% on average).

Perceived Impact of the Scheme

With the demographic comparisons described earlier in this chapter, the different sub-populations had a range of different views about the impact of the scheme. In contrast, parent status appears to have relatively little effect on expectations about the scheme, as described below.

There are no differences in the views of households with children, and those without on the following outcomes of the scheme:

- That the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use in general; net agree scores are -13 for parents, and -15 for those without children.
- That the scheme will mean that the police spend more time on tackling serious crimes in the borough (net agree scores are +67 each respectively).
- That the scheme will improve relations between the police and local community; net agree scores are +54 for households with children and +52 for those without).
- That the scheme will lead to an increase in the levels of serious crime in Lambeth; net agree scores are -11 for households with children and -13 for those without.

However, households *with* children are significantly more likely than those without to think that the use of hard drugs in Lambeth would *decrease* as a result of the scheme (19% compared with 15%).

In terms of the age of eldest child in households which contain children, there are the following points to note:

- Parents of pre-schoolers are significantly more likely than those in households with primary or secondary school aged children to agree that the scheme will mean the police put more time into tackling serious crimes (net agree score + 74 compared with + 64 and + 65 respectively).
- Parents of secondary school children are significantly more likely to say that the level of serious crimes in Lambeth will *increase* compared with parents of younger children (22% of parents of 11-17 year olds compared with 15% of parents of younger children)

Whilst there are few differences between the views of parents and those without children, the two findings above may suggest that those with *younger children* are more optimistic about the outcomes of the scheme. They are more likely to believe that the police will act on their intention to re-direct their resources into serious crime than those with older children. In addition, those with younger children are less likely to expect that the level of serious crime will increase.

Again, this may reflect the age of the respondents: parents of younger children will tend to be younger, and as noted previously, younger Lambeth residents are more optimistic about the scheme. This, however, is only conjecture, and would merit further examination.

Support for specific aspects of the scheme

When residents were asked to give their level of agreement or disagreement with specific aspects of the scheme, again there were few differences between the views of those who have children in their household, and those who do not. High levels of support for the following aspects of the scheme are consistent amongst households with children, and those without:

- That the scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis (net agreement of + 63 for those with children in the household and + 59 for those without).
- The practice of giving someone caught in possession of cannabis a warning (+ 63 net agree for those with children in the household compared with + 64 for those without).
- The fact that the police will keep a record of the warning (+ 54 net agree for those with children compared with + 51 for those without).
- The fact that any cannabis found will be confiscated (+ 54 net agree for those with children compared with + 52 for those without).

- That if juveniles are caught in possession of cannabis, their parents will be notified (+84 net agree compared with +83 for those without children).
- That the police can prosecute people if they have warned them previously (net agreement scores are +49 for households with children compared with +48).
- That the police can still prosecute people for supplying cannabis; net agreement scores are +58 for those with children compared with +59 for those without.

Interestingly, those with children in their household are significantly more likely to agree that the scheme should be extended to include harder drugs than those without children in the household (25% agree compared with 20%). Explanations for this are beyond the scope of this study.

There are also some differences in views by the age of the eldest child in the household. Households where the eldest child is aged 11-17 are significantly more likely to:

- Agree that the police should keep a record of the warning than households where the eldest child is aged 5-10 (net agreement scores are +59 and +48 respectively).
- Agree that the cannabis should be confiscated compared with those households where the eldest child is aged under 5 (+58 net agree compared with +47).
- Agree that the police should still prosecute people for supplying cannabis than those whose eldest child is younger than 11. Net agreement scores are +66 for households where the eldest child is aged 11-17 compared with +58 for those with 5-10 year olds, and +48 for those whose eldest child is under 5.

These findings show that parents whose eldest child is of secondary school age are more likely to prefer some formal policing of cannabis. The explanation for this needs further consideration. On the one hand, this is in line with the preliminary focus group findings that parents become more concerned about cannabis as their children make the transition to secondary school. On the other hand, as noted above, parent status is correlated with age, and the findings outlined earlier in this chapter suggest that older residents tend to be more conservative.

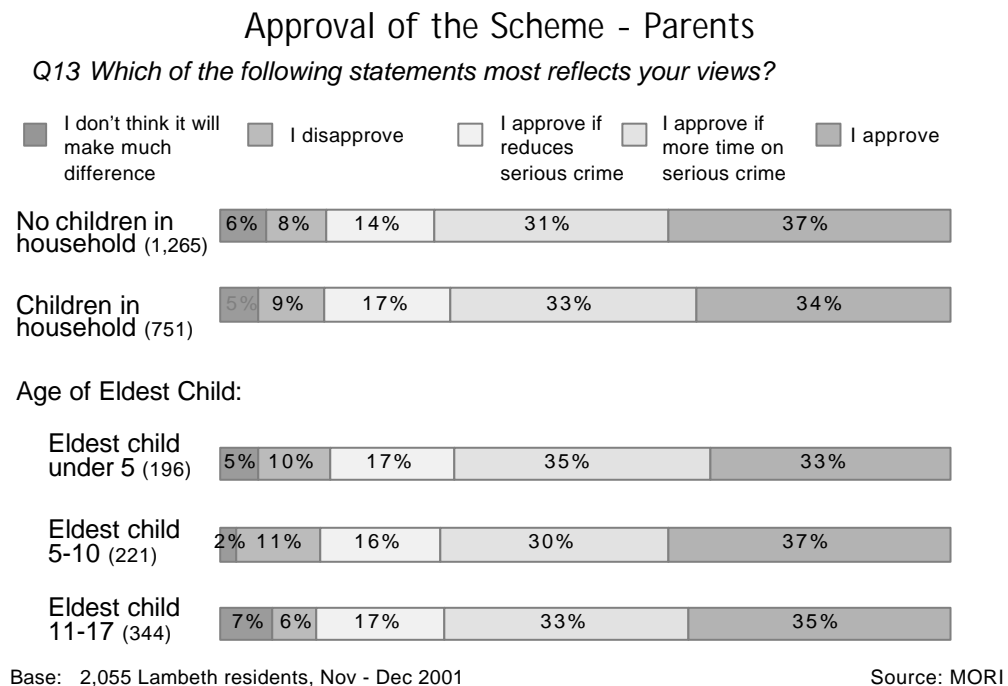
Overall Approval

Again, there are no differences in the levels of approval of the scheme between respondents in households with children, and those without.

However, there is some variation in terms of age of the eldest child; the significant differences are:

- Households where the eldest child is aged 5-10 are more likely than those where the eldest child is 11-17 to say that they *disapprove* of the scheme (11% compared with 6%).
- On the other hand, households where the eldest child is aged 11-17 are more likely than those aged 5-10 to say that the scheme will not make much difference (7% compared with 2%).

Overall, however, as shown on the chart below, the over-riding picture is that the age of the eldest child has relatively *little* influence on respondents' views about the scheme.



The results relating to parent status are interesting. Based on the focus groups, it had been expected that parents would show greater anxieties about cannabis than non-parents, and that this would be particularly marked for parents of older children.

The results, however, provide relatively little support for this. While the demographic comparisons outlined earlier in this chapter showed a range of contrasts between different populations, comparisons between respondents with children and without seem to be characterised by a *lack* of difference. Hence, whilst more respondents without children have heard about the scheme than those with children, their views on the impact of the scheme, and their support for the scheme are very similar. In particular, parents *do not* hold different views to those without children about whether the scheme is a better way to deal with young people who use cannabis or about whether the parents of juveniles caught in possession of cannabis should be informed.

There are, however, some differences related to the age of the children in the household. In general, parents whose eldest child is younger than 11 years of age can be said to be more optimistic about the outcomes of the scheme; for example, they are more likely to believe that the police will act on their intention to re-direct their resources into serious crime than those with older children. In contrast, those whose eldest child is of secondary school age are more sceptical about the outcomes of the scheme, and prefer more formal policing of cannabis, suggesting that they are more concerned about the issue of cannabis altogether. These differences are, however, relatively limited, and may be explained, at least in part, by the age of the respondent.

5.6 The relative role of different demographic factors

The preceding analyses tell us that support and opposition for the policing experiment are not randomly distributed throughout the population of Lambeth. The findings hint that support and opposition are concentrated in different social groups. However, while these tables show differences between different subgroups of the population, they do not look at the different demographic variables *in combination*. They do not therefore allow us to describe precisely where support and opposition for the scheme comes from.

To examine this, a logistic regression analysis was conducted to begin to explore the *relative* influence of different demographic variables in shaping approval or disapproval of the scheme. In line with the collaboration between the Police Foundation and MORI which was a feature of this project, the Police Foundation took responsibility for this part of the analysis. The results are useful and informative, and are outlined below.

First, the analysis confirms that support and opposition for the scheme is greater amongst particular groups and this tendency cannot reasonably be the result of chance factors. As a result of this analysis, it is possible to

profile the groups that are more likely to support and oppose the scheme. The profiles are efficient predictors of attitude.

There are four components of the profile, and each component helps predict support or opposition independently of the other three. The predictors of support for the scheme are as follows:

- Being under 60
- Being currently in a non-manual job
- Not belonging to an ethnic minority group
- Not having a pre-teen child.

Conversely, the predictors of opposition are:

- Being over 60
- Being in a manual job
- Belonging to an ethnic minority group
- Having a pre-teen child.

Overall, the predictors of approval are stronger than the predictors of opposition but there are technical statistical reasons why this is so (a large number of separate ethnic groups are involved in the prediction of opposition).

These findings are interesting. The relationship between age, job status and liberal attitudes to recreational drug use has been demonstrated in a number of studies. However, the tendency for those with pre-teen children to take a more cautious approach to liberal schemes for handling the drugs issue is an interesting development. The attitudes of pre-teen parents may reflect general concerns about their children's future during this difficult period of growth and development.

It should also be emphasised that older ethnic minority group members on lower incomes living in Lambeth are probably most exposed to the problems that accompany drug dealing and abuse. The observed tendency for members of these groups to predispose towards opposition to this scheme should be seen in this light.

6. How attitudes to cannabis affect attitudes to the scheme

Demographics are not the only factors likely to influence awareness of and attitudes to the Lambeth policing experiment. It was also predicted that people's attitudes to cannabis could be a key driver of how they perceive the scheme. Specifically, it was predicted that the more liberal people are about cannabis, the more likely they are:

- to have heard of the scheme;
- to see the impact of the scheme as being positive; and
- to support the scheme.

The data from the survey were analysed to test these predictions. The findings are reported below.

6.1 Measuring attitudes to cannabis

In order to assess how attitudes to cannabis influence attitudes to the scheme, it is important first to be able to *measure* respondents' attitudes to cannabis. Two questions were included in the Lambeth survey as proxy measures or indicators of people's attitudes to cannabis. These are outlined below.

Measure 1: Views on whether cannabis should be fully legalised

The first measure of attitude to cannabis was whether the drug should be fully legalised. This arose in the focus groups as an issue where there was a range of opinion. In each of the groups, there were some respondents who expressed the view that the scheme did not go far enough, and that cannabis *should* be fully legalised. This view emerged particularly when people were told that the scheme had *not* legalised cannabis, but merely changed how possession of it is policed.

At the same time, each of the adult groups also contained people who were more cautious on this point, arguing that the police should retain some degree of control over cannabis.

Because of this range of views, this appeared to be a useful basis for categorising people in relation to their views about cannabis. In the survey, people were therefore asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement that '*cannabis should be fully legalised*'. Respondents were then put into three categories, based on their responses:

- **most liberal:** two in five (39%) agreed that cannabis *should* be fully legalised
- **neutral:** around one in six (18%) said that they neither agreed nor disagreed
- **most cautious:** the remaining two in five (40%) disagreed with legalisation

Measure 2: Belief that cannabis leads to harder drugs

Perhaps the most serious charge raised by those who are concerned about the use of cannabis is that it is a “gateway drug” that leads to the use of more dangerous drugs. Many feel that even if cannabis itself is less harmful than other drugs, its use contributes to an acceptance of drugs use, increases misunderstanding about the greater harm of other drugs, and exposes users to a sub-culture of hard drugs and dealing.

As a second measure of respondents’ attitudes to cannabis, the survey examined the degree to which people accepted these arguments. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that ‘*using cannabis leads to using harder drugs*’. For the purposes of this analysis, those who agreed with the statement were regarded as more cautious about cannabis, while those who disagreed were regarded as most liberal. Responses broke down as follows⁷:

- **most liberal:** two in five (40%) disagreed that cannabis leads to harder drugs
- **neutral:** around one in six (18%) said that they neither agreed nor disagreed.
- **most cautious:** nearly two in five (37%) agreed that using cannabis leads to harder drugs

⁷ It was striking that with both measures, the proportions of people categorised as liberal, neutral and cautious were so similar. This raised the question as to whether both measures were identifying the *same* sub-populations. In other words, if a respondent was “liberal” on one measure, did this automatically mean they were “liberal” under the other measure. This was examined further, and it was found *not* to be the case. Of the people classed as “liberal” under one measure, at least 30% were classed as neutral or cautious under the other measure; and similarly, of the people classed as “cautious” on one measure, at least 30% were classed as neutral or liberal under the other measure.

In other words, the two measures were categorising the respondents somewhat differently. Even so, as discussed below for *both* measures of attitudes to cannabis, similar patterns emerge relating to perceptions of the scheme. This suggests that the relationship between liberal attitudes to cannabis and positive attitudes towards the scheme is robust.

It is also worth noting that 28% of the Lambeth population are categorised by *both* measures as “liberal” towards cannabis; and 27% are categorised by both measures as “cautious”.

Having categorised the respondents using these two measures, it was then possible to examine how attitudes to cannabis affected perceptions of and attitudes towards the scheme. This is reported below.

6.2 How attitudes to cannabis affect knowledge of the scheme

The data shows that, as predicted, people with liberal attitudes are far more likely to be aware of the scheme than those with cautious attitudes. For both measures of attitudes to cannabis, 70% of “liberals” had heard of the scheme, compared with only 44% of people who were “cautious” about cannabis. This difference was statistically significant. The table below presents this data in more detail, reporting how awareness of the scheme varied with attitudes to cannabis.

Percentage of respondents who had heard at least something about the policing experiment, broken down by attitudes to cannabis

Attitude to cannabis			
	Liberal %	Neutral %	Cautious %
Percentage aware of scheme (Respondents' categorised using Measure 1: Cannabis should be legalised)	(Base: 796) 70%	(Base: 361) 58%	(Base: 822) 44%
Percentage aware of scheme (Respondents' categorised using Measure 2: Cannabis leads to harder drugs)	(Base: 804) 71%	(Base: 381) 56%	(Base: 765) 44%

Source : MORI

There are a variety of possible explanations for this pattern of results. For instance, it may be that people who have more liberal views about cannabis are more responsive to or interested in news about the scheme, resulting in greater recall of the scheme. Alternatively, it may be that people who are more liberal in relation to cannabis may be in social networks that are more likely to talk about issues such as the policing of drugs; if so, such individuals are likely to have more exposure to messages about the scheme. A third possibility might be that those with more liberal attitudes may be younger, and that messages about the scheme may be more prevalent in

media targeted at young people. Further research, however, would be needed to test out these competing hypotheses.

6.3 How attitudes to cannabis affect expectations about the impact of the scheme

When looking at people's expectations of the scheme, similar patterns emerge. Specifically, within the population of Lambeth, the more "liberal" a person's views are about cannabis, the more likely they are to see the policing scheme as delivering benefits and the less likely they are to see it as generating problems. The detailed findings, focusing on the statistically significant differences, are as follows.

Those who think that cannabis *should be legalised* are:

- more likely to disagree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use than those who think that cannabis should not be legalised (69% disagree compared with 28%).
- more likely to agree that the scheme will mean the police put more time into tackling more serious crimes than those who want to prohibit the drug (83% agree compared with 69%).
- more likely to agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community than those who do not want to legalise cannabis, or neither agree nor disagree (76% agree compared with 57% each respectively).
- more likely to think that the level of serious crime in Lambeth will decrease (38% compared with 29% on average for the population as a whole).
- more likely to think that the use of hard drugs will stay the same (67% compared with 52% for the population as a whole).

Similarly, the most "liberal" group on the second measure, ie those who *do not think that using cannabis leads to using harder drugs* are:

- more likely to disagree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use (70% compared with only 28% of those who agree that cannabis opens a gateway to other drugs)

- more likely to agree that the scheme will mean that the police put more time into tackling more serious crimes (82% agree compared with a 74% average for the population as a whole).
- more likely to agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community than those who think there is a gateway effect or who neither agree nor disagree (71% agree compared with 63% and 56% respectively).
- more likely to agree that the scheme will lead to a decrease in the level of serious crimes in Lambeth (36% compared with 26% of those who agree that cannabis leads to other drugs and 25% who neither agree nor disagree).

In contrast, those with the most cautious views on cannabis are more likely to see the scheme as causing problems in Lambeth. For instance:

Those who are against the legalisation of cannabis are:

- more likely to agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use generally (49% agree compared with 18% of those who want cannabis legalised).
- more likely to disagree that the scheme will mean the police concentrate on serious crimes (10% disagree compared with 6% for those who want to legalise cannabis).
- more likely to disagree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community (16% disagree compared with 8% for those who are pro legalisation and 9% of those who neither agree nor disagree).
- more likely to think that the level of serious crime will increase (28% compared with 9% of those who want to legalise cannabis, and 10% who neither agree nor disagree that cannabis should be legalised).
- more likely to agree that the use of hard drugs in Lambeth will increase (35% compared with 9% of those who are pro-legalisation and 17% who neither agree nor disagree that cannabis should be legalised).

Similarly, those who think that using cannabis leads to using harder drugs are:

- more likely to agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use (53% compared with only 17% of people who disagree that cannabis leads to harder drugs).
- more likely to disagree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community (15% compared with 11% on average for total population of Lambeth).
- more likely to think that the scheme will lead to an increase in the level of serious crime in Lambeth (29% compared with 8% of those who disagree that cannabis leads to other drugs, and 12% of those who neither agree nor disagree).
- more likely to believe that the scheme itself will lead to an increase in the use of hard drugs (38% compared with 10% of those who disagree that cannabis leads to other drugs, and 13% of those who neither agree nor disagree).

It can therefore be seen that people's expectations about the impact of the scheme are very much linked to their attitudes to cannabis. Again, to understand in detail *why* this relationship exists would require additional research, probably qualitative in nature. It would, however, appear reasonable to assume that people's attitudes about cannabis relate in some way to their fears about the consequences of cannabis use, and that this in turn may determine their expectations about the impact of the scheme.

6.4 How attitudes to cannabis affect support for the scheme

Finally, similar patterns are again revealed when looking at how support for the policing scheme varies with attitudes to cannabis. The statistically significant differences are listed below.

Attitudes to the legalisation of cannabis affect approval of the scheme:

- Those who agree that cannabis should be fully legalised are more likely to say that they approve of the scheme outright without any conditions than those who are against legalisation or those who neither agree nor disagree (52% compared with 24% and 29% respectively).
- Residents who are neutral about whether cannabis should be legalised are most likely to say that they approve of the scheme provided it means that the police spend more time on serious crimes (38% compared with

32% of those who think cannabis should be legalised and 29% of those who think it should not).

- Residents who are either cautious or neutral about legalising cannabis are more likely than those who are pro-legalisation to support the scheme provided it actually reduces the level of serious crime in Lambeth (18% and 20% respectively compared with 10%).
- Those who are *against* the legalisation of cannabis are far more likely to say that they disapprove of the scheme (16% disapprove compared with 2% of the “pro-legalisers” and 4% of those who are neutral on legalising cannabis) or that it won’t make much difference (9% compared with 3% and 4% for the other two groups).

Similarly, approval of the scheme is also influenced by people’s attitudes to cannabis leading to harder drug use.

The most “liberal” residents, (ie those who disagree that cannabis leads to using harder drugs) are:

- Most likely to approve of the scheme outright (49% compared with 26% of those who believe that cannabis leads to harder drugs, and 30% of those who neither agree nor disagree).

In contrast, those who see cannabis as a gateway to other drugs, or who are neutral on the issue are more likely to:

- Approve of the scheme only if the level of crime in Lambeth decreases (20% and 16% compared with 10% of those with liberal views).
- Disapprove of the scheme (13% and 8% compared with 3% of “liberals”)
- Say that the scheme will not make much difference (7% each respectively compared with 3% of “liberals”).

Hence, looking across these findings as a whole, outright approval of the scheme is strongest amongst those with the most liberal views about cannabis. Those who have more neutral or cautious views about cannabis are more likely to place conditions on their approval of the scheme - they want to see an actual reduction in the level of crime before they support the scheme. Lastly, disapproval for the scheme is strongest amongst those with more cautious or conservative views on cannabis, and this group are also most likely to think the scheme will make no difference.

These trends reported in this chapter are in a direction that was predicted at the outset of the research - so in some ways are not surprising. What is more surprising, however, is that while those with the most conservative views show the least approval for the scheme, they nevertheless still show fairly high levels of support for it: as noted above, outright, unconditional approval for the scheme is offered by:

- 24% of those who are against the legalisation of cannabis and
- 26% of those who believe that cannabis leads to harder drugs

In other words, even amongst the Lambeth residents with the most conservative attitudes to cannabis, around a quarter of these residents still approve of the scheme *regardless* of what impact the scheme has on police deployment or levels of serious crime. Hence, even amongst those who might be expected to be the most critical of the scheme, a substantial minority still appear to see the scheme as the right way forward.

6.5 Concerns about criminal records and support for the scheme

The preceding discussion looks at how attitudes to cannabis affect support for the scheme. The study also looked at how *attitudes about getting a criminal conviction* for cannabis possession influenced support for the scheme.

One of the motivations of Lambeth Police for instigating the pilot scheme was to try to prevent people, and especially younger people, becoming involved in the criminal justice system for cannabis possession.

This issue also arose in the focus groups with parents at the start of the study. Some parents voiced a concern that their children could get a criminal record for cannabis possession, and if so, that this could hold them back in getting a job⁸. It was therefore predicted that the sections of the public who were most concerned about convictions following people into later life would be the most supportive of the scheme - as it removed this risk. More specifically, it was predicted that this section of the population would see the scheme as a better way of treating young people found in possession of cannabis.

⁸ Interestingly, many of the young people in the initial groups did *not* appear concerned about this: some suggested that they would not admit to having a conviction if applying for a job; others said that it would be for such a minor offence that potential employers would be unconcerned.

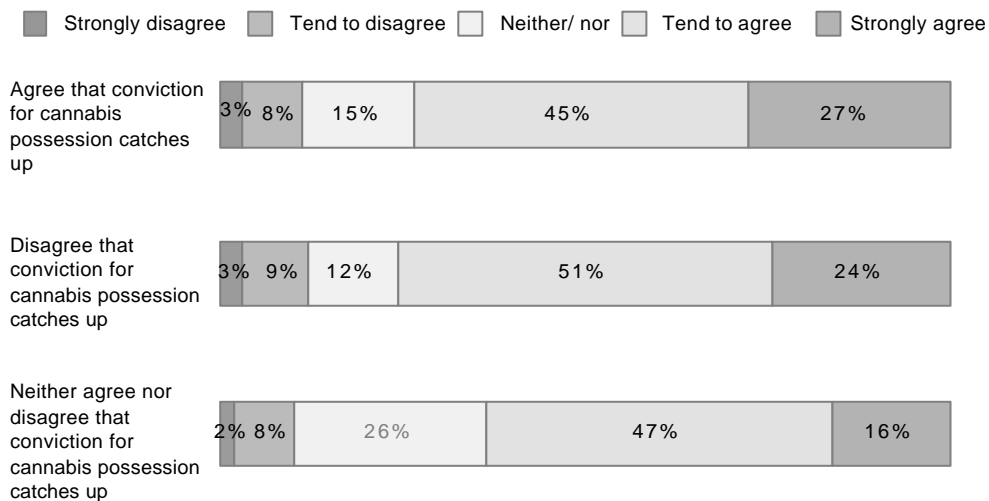
These hypotheses were tested out in the survey. Respondents were asked how much they agreed with the statement that *'having a criminal conviction for possession of cannabis could catch up with me in later life'*. 65% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 17% disagreed.

These groups of respondents were then compared on their overall support for the scheme, and on how much they agreed with the statement, *'The scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis'*. It was predicted that those who agreed that a conviction would catch up with them in later life would be more likely both to support the scheme and to see the scheme as a better way of dealing with young people caught with cannabis.

The results did not, however, support these predictions. When comparing people who *were* concerned about the long term effects of a conviction with those who were *not* concerned, there were no significant differences in the levels of approval for the scheme. Similarly, there was no difference between these groups in whether they felt the scheme was a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis (see chart).

Impact of the Scheme - Young People

Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
The scheme is a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis



Base: 2,055 Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

The explanations for this would require further examination. One explanation is that *other* factors are far more important in determining whether people approve of the scheme than the fact that people no longer get a conviction for cannabis possession. If so, it would suggest that whether or not people get a conviction is actually a relatively low-salience issue, and that the generally high levels of approval arise from some other aspect of the scheme (eg that it frees up police time). This particular issue,

the relative weight that people put on the different benefits of the scheme, is not something that has been examined in the present study, but this would merit some further investigation.

7. How knowledge, expectations and support interact

Another important question identified at the planning stages of the research was how the various outcome measures interacted with each other. For instance, are people who have heard of the scheme more inclined to support it than those who have not? How does knowledge of the scheme affect people's expectations about what the scheme will achieve? Does the level of support people have for the scheme depend on what impact they expect it to have? These issues are explored below.

7.1 How knowledge of the scheme affects expected impact

One pattern to emerge from the analysis is that greater awareness of the Lambeth experiment is associated with greater optimism about the benefits of the scheme. For instance, comparing those who say they know *a lot or a fair amount* about the scheme with those who know *a little or nothing*, the significant differences are that more knowledgeable residents are more likely to:

- agree that the scheme will improve relations between the community and the police (net agreement score +62 compared with +48 and +49 respectively).
- agree that the scheme will lead to a decrease in the level of serious crime in Lambeth (34% compared with 29% and 26% respectively).

Similarly, residents who say that they know only *a little or nothing* about the scheme are:

- most likely to agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in drug use *in general* (35% and 37% compared with 25% of those who know a lot or a fair amount about the scheme).
- more likely to agree that the use of *hard* drugs would increase (23% and 25% compared with 14%).
- most likely to agree that the scheme will lead to an increase in the levels of serious crime in Lambeth (17% and 21% compared with 10%).

Hence, on a range of measures, those who are relatively aware of the scheme are more optimistic about its impact, while those who know relatively little are more pessimistic. A similar pattern emerges when comparing those who know at least something about the scheme with those who know nothing at all.

In contrast, the data suggests another relationship also exists: there is some indication that higher levels of knowledge are also linked to a more sceptical outlook:

- 53% of those who knew *a fair amount or a lot* about the scheme believe it will make *no difference* to the level of serious crime in Lambeth, compared with 45% of those who knew little and 40% of those who knew nothing about the scheme.
- the more knowledgeable were also more likely to say the scheme would make *no difference* to the use of hard drugs in Lambeth: 64% of those who knew *a lot or a fair amount* and 56% of those who knew *a little* held this view, compared with only 43% of those who knew *nothing* about the scheme.

In general, the preceding findings indicate that those who are least aware of the scheme are most likely to see crime and drug problems getting worse as a result of the scheme. For those who are more aware of the scheme, however, the findings are somewhat ambiguous:

- on the one hand, there is some indication that those who are more aware of the scheme are more likely to be optimistic about its impact;
- at the same time, the more aware population of Lambeth is also more likely to be sceptical, questioning whether the scheme will make a difference to serious crime and hard drugs in the borough.

7.2 How knowledge of the scheme affects support for the scheme

People's approval of the scheme also appears to vary in relation to their level of awareness. Residents who have heard *a lot or a fair amount* are significantly more likely than those who have heard *a little or nothing* at all to say that they:

- approve of the scheme outright (41% compared with 38% and 33%).

The Lambeth Cannabis Policing Experiment

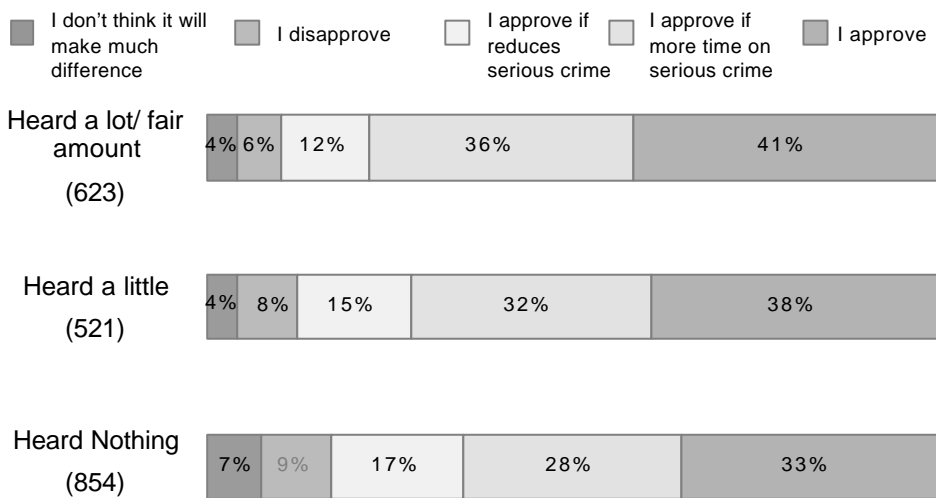
- approve of the scheme if it means that the police spend more time tackling more serious crimes (36% compared with 32% and 28% respectively).

Conversely, those who say that they know *nothing* about the scheme, are significantly more likely to say that they:

- approve of the scheme only if it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth (17% compared with 12% of those who say that they know a lot/a fair amount).
- disapprove of the scheme (9% compared with 6% of those who say that they know a lot/a fair amount)
- don't think the scheme will make much difference (7% compared with 4% of those who know a little about the scheme).

Approval of the Scheme - Knowledge

Q13 Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: Lambeth residents, Nov - Dec 2001

Source: MORI

It can therefore be seen that the more residents have heard about the scheme, the more likely they are to approve of it. At the same time, those who have heard least about the scheme are more likely to disapprove of the scheme, and more likely to want to see reductions in serious crime before they offer their support.

This should not, however, be taken to mean that knowing about the scheme *makes* people more supportive of the scheme. The causal relationship may

well be more complex than this. For instance, it could be that this relationship between knowledge of and support for the scheme is a result of people’s attitudes to cannabis in general: those with more liberal views about cannabis may be predisposed to support the scheme, *and* have social networks where issues such as the policing scheme are more likely to be discussed. If so, the greater level of knowledge about the scheme *and* the support offered for the scheme, may both arise from the influence of a third variable, attitude about cannabis.

Hence, while the above results show there is a relationship between knowledge of and expectations for the scheme, the actual mechanism by which these are linked requires further investigation.

7.3 How expectations of impact affect support for the scheme

Expectations of the scheme – in terms of both expected impact on serious crime and expected impact on use of hard drugs – relate closely to levels of approval for the scheme. This is shown in the following table:

How approval of the Lambeth scheme varies according to expectations about the outcome of the scheme

	Those who think serious crime will increase	Those who think serious crime will decrease	Those who think hard drugs will increase	Those who think hard drugs will decrease
Base:	(346) %	(588) %	(436) %	(340) %
% who offer outright approval for scheme	19	46	21	42
% who offer approval if police spend more time on serious crime	26	35	28	35
% who disapprove of the scheme	25	1	23	1
% who think scheme will make no difference	8	1	8	2

The key messages to emerge from this are that those who think that serious crime and hard drugs will decrease are most likely to give:

- outright (unconditional) approval for the scheme
- conditional approval for the scheme – their approval depending on the police putting more time into serious crime
- conversely, those who think the level of serious crime and hard drugs will increase are most likely to disapprove of the scheme or say the scheme will make no difference.

It can be seen therefore that the more optimistic individuals are about the impacts of the scheme, the more they approve of the scheme. This finding is not surprising – though, as above, how these two variables are linked would merit some further exploration.

The other point that is worth noting is that these figures again indicate wide-ranging support for the scheme. As noted in the table above, 19% of people who think serious crime will increase and 21% of people who think use of hard drugs will increase nevertheless approve of the scheme outright. Hence, even amongst people who expect the scheme to make serious crime and hard drugs worse in Lambeth, around a fifth still provide strong support for the scheme.

8. The National Picture

It was clear from the early planning stages of this project that the experimental scheme in Lambeth was likely to have national implications. Whatever findings emerged from the Lambeth survey, it was felt that a question would remain regarding whether these findings would be replicated across the country as a whole.

To provide comparative data, several questions from the main Lambeth survey were repeated on a MORI face-to-face omnibus survey⁹. As the scheme is only operating in Lambeth, respondents in the national survey were asked how they would view such a scheme if it were introduced in their local area.

This chapter examines these national findings and compares them with the results for Lambeth to aid understanding of how a scheme like the Lambeth initiative might be received elsewhere.

8.1 Attitudes to cannabis

As a context for understanding people's attitudes to a scheme like the one in Lambeth, the national sample were asked questions about their attitudes to cannabis. These questions mirrored those asked in Lambeth – whether they believed cannabis should be legalised, and whether they thought it led to harder drugs. The findings indicate that nationally people are notably more cautious about cannabis than is the case in Lambeth. Findings are as follows.

Belief that cannabis should be fully legalised

When respondents in the national omnibus survey were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that cannabis should be legalised, the results indicated far greater reservations nationally about legalising cannabis than were evident in Lambeth:

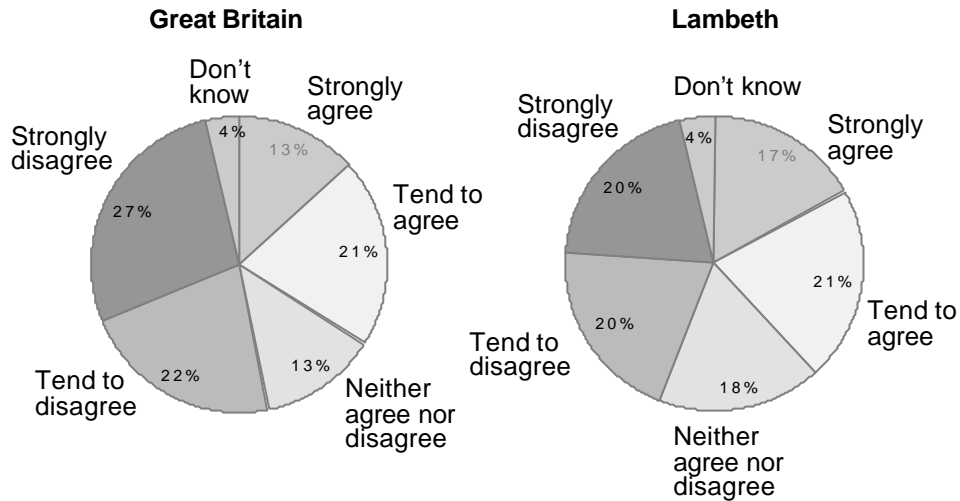
- Almost half of the national population disagree with cannabis being legalised, compared with only 40% in Lambeth.
- Furthermore, nationally people are far more likely to disagree *strongly* with legalisation (27% nationally compared with 20% in Lambeth).

⁹ MORI Financial Services Omnibus Wave 5: Fieldwork 21 January -5 February 2002. 1,952 interviews completed face-to-face. Results are weighted by class, sex by age, and television region to reflect the population of the country.

- Similarly, only 34% nationally agree with legalising cannabis, compared with 38% in Lambeth.

Attitudes to Drugs

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Cannabis should be fully legalised



Base: 1,952 Great Britain residents

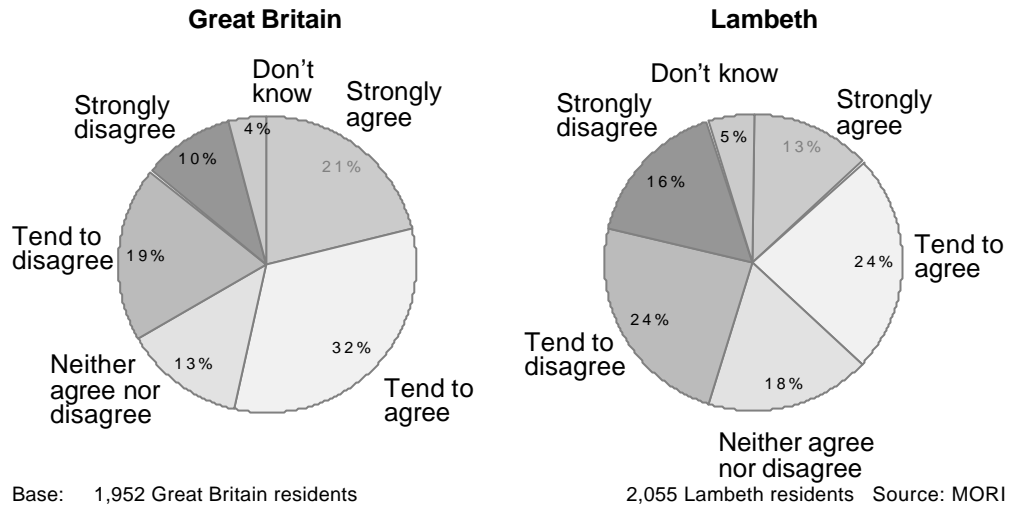
2,055 Lambeth residents Source: MORI

Belief that cannabis leads to harder drugs

This difference of attitude is even more pronounced when looking at people’s views about whether cannabis leads to harder drugs. In Lambeth, only 37% felt that cannabis leads to harder drugs. Nationally, however, over half (54%) believe this to be the case. Similarly, in Lambeth, 40% took the “liberal” view that cannabis does *not* lead to harder drugs – but nationally, only 29% believe this.

Attitudes to Drugs

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Using Cannabis leads to using harder drugs



Hence, nationally there appears to be a more cautious perspective towards cannabis than is the case in Lambeth – and this difference is fairly pronounced. With this as a backdrop, the analyses below look at national attitudes to the introduction of schemes like that in Lambeth – and examines whether these harder attitudes towards cannabis are reflected in people’s expectations and support for such a scheme.

8.2 Perceived Impact of the scheme

Across Great Britain as a whole, people are reasonably optimistic about the impact a scheme like the Lambeth initiative would have on their area. There are, however, some notable differences compared with the results from Lambeth. Below, each of the variables covered in the omnibus questionnaire are considered in turn.

Police spending more time on serious crime

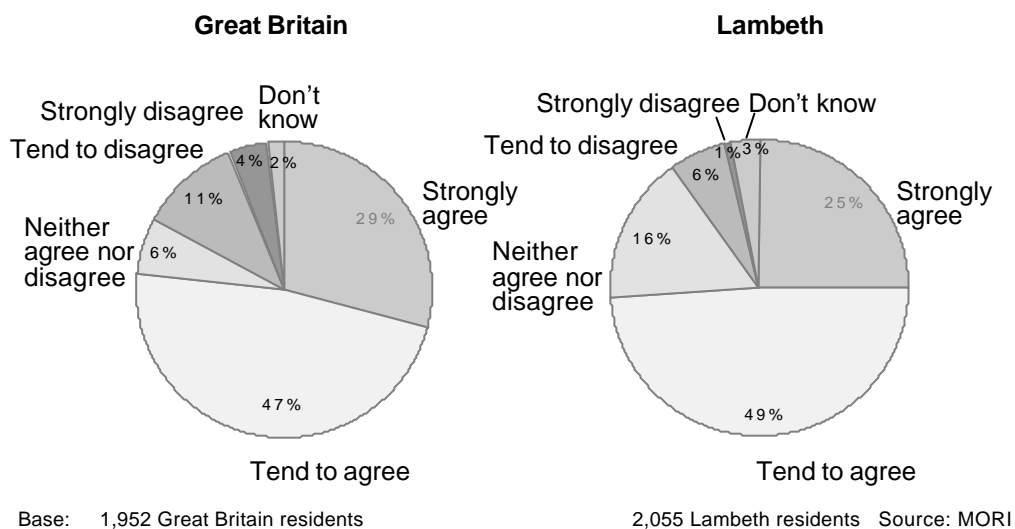
Overall, the national and Lambeth figures show approximately the same level of belief that the police would put more time into tackling serious crimes. Nationally, 76% agree that if such a scheme were introduced in their area, it ‘*would mean that police spend more time tackling more serious crimes*’; this compares with 74% of the Lambeth population who believe this in relation to the Lambeth scheme.

At the same time, the national figures show considerably higher levels of disagreement with the statement: 16% disagree that the police would redirect their time, compared with only 7% in Lambeth (see chart below).

The other point to note is that the national data shows notably higher levels of *strong* agreement or disagreement with the statement: 4% strongly disagree nationally compared with only 1% of the Lambeth population; and 29% agree nationally, compared with only 25% in Lambeth.

Impact of the Scheme

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Police will put more time into tackling more serious crimes



In terms of sub-group findings, the picture to emerge nationally is similar to that seen in the Lambeth survey:

- Younger people are significantly more likely to agree that the scheme would mean the police put more time into tackling serious crimes than older residents (81% agree for 16-34 year olds compared with 73% for those aged 35 or older).
- There are no differences in the levels of agreement or disagreement within gender or between parents and those without children.¹⁰

However, the results for social class do vary from Lambeth. In the Lambeth survey there was no difference in the level of agreement or disagreement by social class. However at a national level, those of social class C2 are significantly more likely to *disagree* that the police would spend more time

¹⁰ Note that on the national Omnibus survey, a child is aged under 16, whilst the definition for the main Lambeth survey is that a child is under the age of 18.

on serious crimes than all other groups (21% disagree compared with 16% on average across all social classes).

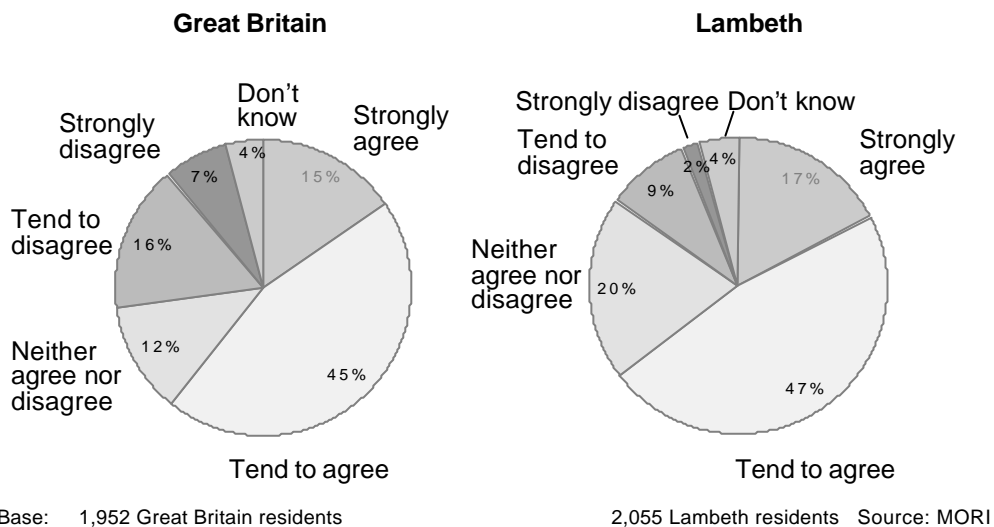
Improve relations between the police and the community

Nationally, three in five (60%) agree that a scheme like the Lambeth pilot would improve relations between the police and the community – in line with the finding in Lambeth (64%). However, almost twice as many of the national population disagree with this statement than those in Lambeth (23% disagree nationally compared with 11% in Lambeth), whilst fewer say that they neither agree nor disagree (12% compared with 20%).

Hence, as with the previous variable, the level of agreement that such a scheme can improve police-community relations is similar at a national level and in Lambeth – but nationally, there is much more disagreement that this benefit will arise.

Impact of the Scheme

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
The scheme would improve relations between the Police and the Community



When looking at subgroups, a similar pattern emerges nationally as in the Lambeth results in the following areas:

- Nationally, as in Lambeth, there are no differences by gender in levels of agreement that a scheme would improve police-community relations (59% of men agree compared with 61% of women).

- Similarly, there are no differences between those with children in the household and those without, as in the Lambeth survey (63% of those with children agree compared with 59% of those without).
- Young people are more likely than older residents to agree the scheme will benefit community relations (66% of 16-34 year olds agree compared with 60% across the national sample as a whole).

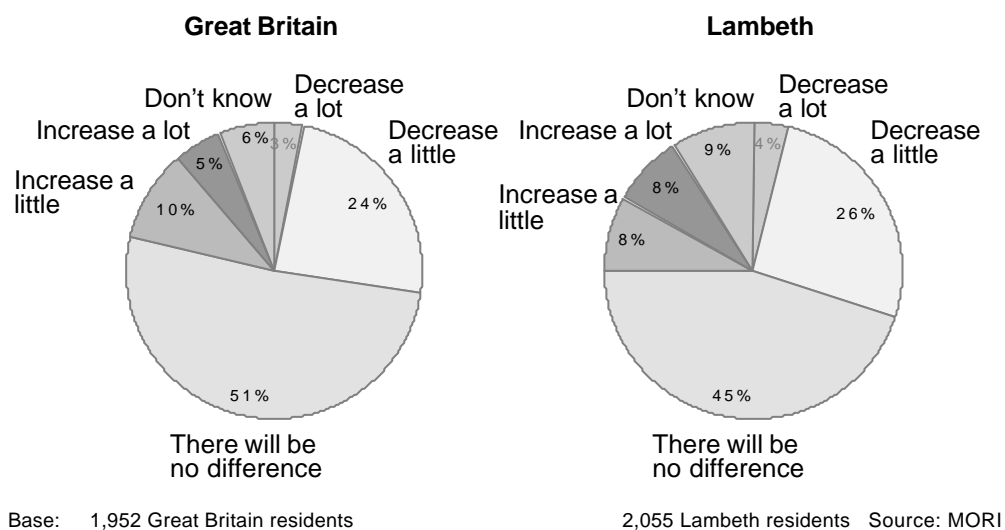
However, the national and Lambeth findings do show some differences by social class. In Lambeth C2DE residents are significantly more likely to agree that the scheme will improve relations between the police and the community than ABC1 residents – but this is not the case nationally, where there are no significant differences of opinion by social class.

Effect on Serious Crime

Respondents in the national survey were asked what effect a scheme like the one in Lambeth would have on the levels of serious crime in their area. As in Lambeth, the most common response was that there would be no difference to the level of serious crime. However, significantly more people gave this response nationally than in Lambeth (51% compared with 45%). Nationally, a slightly smaller proportion expect crime to decrease than in Lambeth, although the difference is relatively small (27% compared with 30%).

Effect of Scheme

Q (If a scheme like the one in Lambeth were introduced in the area where you live) Overall, what effect do you think the scheme would have on serious crime in the area? **Serious crime will . . .**



In terms of the attitudes to this question amongst demographic sub-groups,

there are no differences in the results for parents and for those without children, mirroring the picture for this group in Lambeth. However, amongst the other main sub-groups examined, there are some differences:

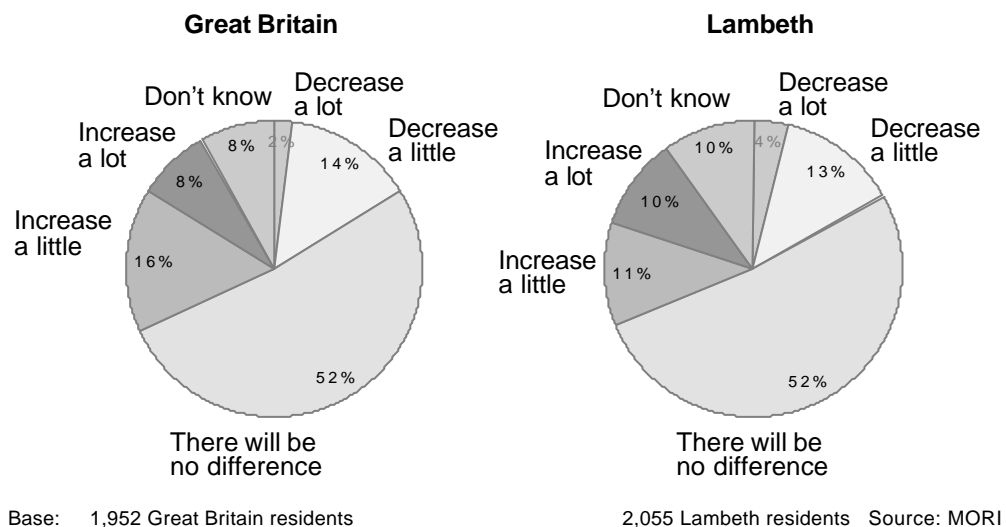
- As in Lambeth, the national picture shows that those aged 65 or over are more likely to say that the levels of serious crime will increase (22% compared with 16% on average).
- There are no significant differences nationally in the views of men and women regarding the impact on serious crime. This differs from the findings in Lambeth, where women were more likely to say that crime would increase, and men said the opposite - that crime would decrease.
- In Lambeth, C2DE residents were significantly more likely than ABC1 residents to say that the scheme would lead to an increase in serious crime. However nationally, DE's are most likely to say crime will increase (19%) followed by C1's (15%).

Effect on Hard Drug Use

When considering what impact a scheme like the Lambeth pilot would have on the level of hard drug use, 24% of people nationally said that this would increase - significantly more than gave this response in Lambeth (21%). Both nationally and in Lambeth, however, the most commonly held view was that such a scheme would make no difference to the use of hard drugs.

Effect of Scheme

Q And overall, what effect do you think the scheme would have on use of hard drugs in the area? **Use of hard drugs will**



In terms of the views of different sub-groups, some findings mirror those found in Lambeth:

- Nationally - as in Lambeth - those aged 65+ are more likely than other age groups to say that the level of hard drug use will increase (33% compared with 24% on average across the national population).
- Similarly, across Great Britain as a whole, residents from social class DE are least likely to say that there will be no difference to the level of hard drug use (46% compared with 52% across the population as a whole) - as found in the Lambeth survey.

However, there are also some differences between the national picture and the views of Lambeth residents:

- In Lambeth there were no significant differences between the views of parents and non-parents on this issue. Nationally, however, households with children were significantly more likely to say that the levels of hard drug use will decrease than households without children (19% compared with 14%).
- In Lambeth, women are significantly more likely to say that hard drug use would increase; whilst men said the opposite – that hard drug use would decrease. In contrast, across Great Britain as a whole, men and women have the same views on whether the level of hard drug use would increase, decrease or stay the same.

8.3 Support for such a scheme

The national picture shows somewhat less support for such a scheme compared with that evident in Lambeth – both in terms of overall levels of approval and in terms of whether the scheme is seen as a better way to deal with young people caught in possession of cannabis. Nevertheless, even though national support is lower than in Lambeth, overall levels of support nevertheless are still relatively high. Key findings are outlined below.

Overall Approval of the Scheme

As in Lambeth, those who took part in the national omnibus survey were asked how much they approved of the scheme. A quarter (27%) said that they would approve of the scheme outright, without any conditions – significantly fewer than in Lambeth (36%). The levels of *conditional*¹¹

¹¹ That is, if the police spend more time on serious crimes or if serious crime is actually reduced.

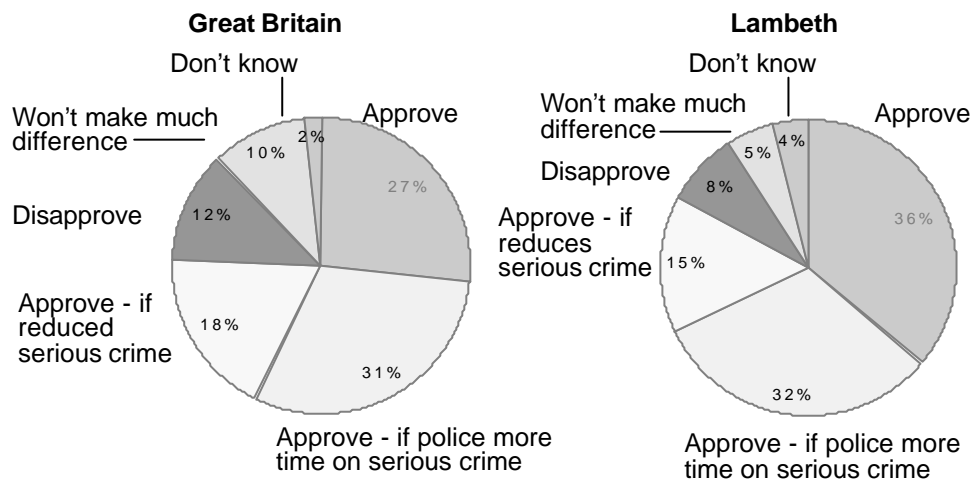
support however, are in line with the Lambeth survey (49% compared with 47%).

Disapproval of the scheme, on the other hand, is significantly higher amongst Great Britain residents as a whole than those in Lambeth (12% compared with 8%). Similarly, nationally there are many more people who do not think that such a scheme would make much difference (10% compared with 5% in Lambeth).

Across Britain as a whole, therefore, there is less outright support for such a scheme than in Lambeth, and greater levels both of scepticism about the impact of the scheme and of outright disapproval. Nevertheless, the idea of such a scheme gains at least conditional support from three quarters of the British population.

Approval of Scheme

Q (If such a scheme was introduced) Which of the following statements most reflects your views?



Base: 1,952 Great Britain residents

2,055 Lambeth residents Source: MORI

In terms of demographic groups, there are the following points to note:

- Attitudes by age are very similar across the country as in Lambeth. For example, those aged over 65 are least likely to give outright approval for the scheme, as is the case in Lambeth.
- However, attitudes by gender differ across the country compared with Lambeth. Nationally, women are as likely as men to support the scheme – outright or conditionally. In contrast, women in Lambeth are more likely to give conditional approval than men.

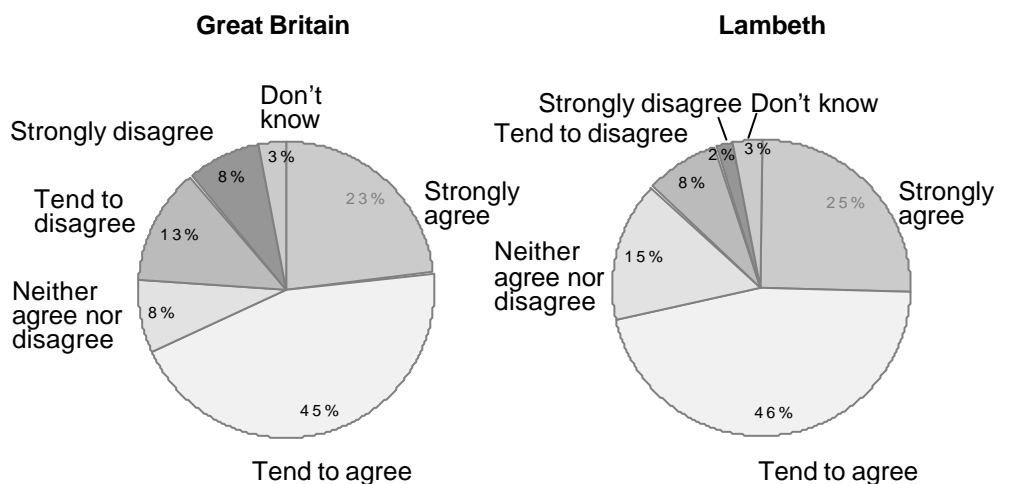
- In Lambeth the trend in terms of social class was that as social class decreases, so does support for the scheme. This is not the case nationally. Whilst AB's are significantly more likely than any other group to approve of the scheme outright (34% compared with 26% across the population), there are no other significant differences between the different social classes.
- Similarly, parent status appears to have a different effect nationally compared with in Lambeth. In Lambeth, there were no differences in the level of support for the scheme between respondents in households with children, and those without. Across Great Britain as a whole, however, those with children are significantly more likely to support the scheme outright than those without children (30% compared with 24%).

The scheme as a better way to deal with young people

When respondents were asked to give their level of agreement or disagreement that such a scheme would be a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis, 68% of people agreed – significantly fewer than in Lambeth (71% agree). Conversely, across the country as a whole, about twice the number disagreed as in Lambeth (21% compared with 10%).

Impact of the Scheme

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
The scheme would be a better way of dealing with young people who use cannabis



Base: 1,952 Great Britain residents

2,055 Lambeth residents Source: MORI

8.4 Summary of Omnibus Findings

The pattern to emerge from the national survey is interesting. On the one hand, there seems to be less support for the scheme nationally than in Lambeth: outright approval is lower in Britain, whereas disapproval and the feeling that the scheme won't make much difference are higher. Similarly, there is much more disagreement across Britain that such a scheme is a better way to deal with young people than was the case in Lambeth.

On the other hand, when looking at several of the key impact measures (the police putting more time into serious crime, and the effects on serious crime and hard drugs), the pictures in Lambeth and across Britain are surprisingly similar. There are high levels of agreement that the police will put more time into serious crime; and the predominant view is that a Lambeth type scheme will make little difference to serious crime and hard drugs (although nationally, slightly more people think that the scheme will lead to an increase in hard drugs than do so in Lambeth).

Given that people seem to have relatively consistent views about the impact of a scheme like that in Lambeth, what explains the different in levels of support between the national population and that in Lambeth? One factor would appear to be attitudes to cannabis: while nationally, people see the impact of the scheme in quite similar terms to those in Lambeth, they appear to be notably more cautious in their attitudes to cannabis. In other words, the greater reticence nationally for legalising cannabis, and the greater concern that cannabis will lead to harder drugs may be a key factor in explaining why nationally, support for the scheme is lower than in Lambeth.

That said, this interpretation is based solely on the data available within the omnibus survey. There are of course other factors that will come into play differently in Lambeth and nationally and these too are likely to explain the different levels of support for the scheme. Exploring these would, however, probably involve additional research, including focus groups with people from different parts of the country.

Part 3

Discussion

9. Conclusions and implications

What, then, do these findings tell of how the cannabis policing experiment in Lambeth is being received? And what, if any, are the broader implications for the national debate?

9.1 Support for the scheme

Probably the over-riding message to emerge from the data is how positively the overall population of Lambeth has received the scheme. The survey contained a diverse range of measures of public reaction to the scheme – ranging from approval of the scheme overall, to support for individual aspects of how the scheme operates, to judgements about the appropriateness of the scheme for dealing with young people. Across all of these measures, the survey consistently recorded high levels of public support:

- over a third of the Lambeth public (36%) approve of the scheme outright, without placing any conditions on that approval
- a further 47% of the Lambeth population offer *conditional* approval: 32% support the scheme provided the police spend more time on serious crime; and a further 15% approve provided it actually reduces serious crime in Lambeth
- combining those who offer outright and conditional support, over eight in ten of residents (83%) approve of the scheme
- disapproval of the scheme is registered by fewer than one in ten residents (8%)
- the survey tested support for six components of the scheme¹²; for each of these components, over two thirds of the Lambeth population agree with these aspects of the scheme
- the two most strongly supported aspects of the scheme – parents of juveniles being notified, and people found in possession receiving a warning – are both approved of by over three quarters of the Lambeth population (88% and 78% respectively)

¹² Giving people a warning for cannabis possession; the police keeping a record of that warning; the cannabis being confiscated; the parents of juveniles found in possession of cannabis being notified by the police; the police having the option to prosecute repeat offenders; and the police continuing to prosecute for cannabis supply.

- even the *least* supported aspect of the scheme (the police still being able to prosecute repeat offenders) is supported by 68% of the population
- finally, seven in ten (71%) see the scheme as a better way to deal with young people who use cannabis, with only 10% of the population disagreeing with this

When people were asked whether the scheme should be extended to harder drugs, 61% of the population disagreed (compared with 22% who agreed). This question was included principally because some of the participants in the early focus groups advocated it – and it is important to note that this was never a component (or even an expectation) of the Lambeth policing experiment.

Overall, then, the design and implementation of the scheme appear to be well attuned to the views of the Lambeth public. How should this support be interpreted?

9.2 Understanding support for the scheme

What underlies this strong support for the scheme? As well as demographic variables (discussed below) the research collected data on four factors that were seen as possible candidates to explain the support expressed towards the scheme. These were:

- knowledge about the scheme;
- expectations of what the scheme would achieve in relation to serious crime and hard drugs;
- expectations about how the scheme would affect community relations; and
- attitudes to cannabis

Below the discussion considers how each of these factors fared in terms of their ability to explain the high levels of support for the scheme.

Knowledge and expectations about impact on crime and drugs

The discussion in Chapter 7 indicated that the more people are aware of the scheme, the more they agree with the scheme. Furthermore, the discussion went on to show that people who think the scheme will reduce serious crime and use of hard drugs are around twice as likely to approve of the scheme outright as those who think that serious crime and hard drugs will increase. Does this therefore mean that the high levels of support for the scheme are a result both of high levels of knowledge of the scheme and of optimistic expectations about what the scheme will achieve?

At best, this can only be a partial explanation:

- first, levels of support for the scheme appear far higher than levels of knowledge. When asked, 41% said they had heard nothing about the scheme, and a further 26% said they had heard only a little. Therefore the high levels of support for the scheme arose even though many people know comparatively little about it¹³.
- secondly, turning to people's expectations of what the scheme will achieve, around three quarters believe that the police will put more time into serious crime as a result of the scheme. Nevertheless around half of people believe the scheme will make little difference to levels of serious crime and hard drugs. This indicates that people's support for the scheme does *not* consistently derive from a belief that the scheme will reduce crime and hard drugs

It should also be noted that the survey data only shows a static snapshot of how knowledge, expectations and support for the scheme are interlinked at a particular point in time. This therefore provides little insight into whether changes in knowledge or expectations would lead to changes in the level of support for the scheme.

For instance, the survey shows that people's knowledge of the scheme is relatively inaccurate, and that the predominant view is that the scheme will make relatively little difference to serious crime or use of hard drugs. What isn't known is how people's support for the scheme will change as their understanding of the scheme becomes more accurate. Similarly, as the effects of the scheme start to be felt (whether positively or negatively), people in Lambeth will have to decide whether or not their expectations of the scheme were correct. Again, it is not known how this will affect their support for the scheme.

Hence, while this survey provides useful information about people's awareness and expectations of the scheme, and their support for the scheme, it is not clear how these factors will evolve over time. Hence, while it would seem reasonable to assume that these factors are related to some degree, it is not possible at this stage to say with any confidence that awareness and expectation of the scheme *explain* the high levels of support shown towards the scheme.

¹³ As noted previously, once people had reported their initial level of awareness of the scheme, all respondents were read an explanation of how the scheme operates. Therefore, when asked about their support for the scheme, all respondents had already been provided with the details of the scheme. Presumably, however, for the 67% who know nothing or only a little about the scheme, their support for the scheme must have been based mainly on what they had heard about the scheme during the survey.

Expectations about community relations

In looking at other candidates to help explain the high levels of support for the scheme, it is noteworthy that 64% believe it will improve relations between the police and the community. This compares with only 30% believing that serious crime will decrease; and only 17% believing that hard drugs would decrease. Hence, far more people appear to believe the scheme will have a positive outcome on community relations than on crime and drugs.

What is particularly notable about this is that the proportion of people expecting an improvement in community relations is similar to the high levels of overall support for the scheme – which suggests that to some extent, people’s belief that the scheme will improve community relations may actually be one of the reasons they support the scheme.

That said, the same caveats apply as mentioned above. The importance of this variable in explaining support for the scheme would therefore need to be explored further before drawing firm conclusions.

The role of people’s attitudes to cannabis

The study developed two proxy measures for attitudes to cannabis: respondents’ views on whether cannabis should be legalised, and on whether cannabis was a gateway to harder drugs. Those who felt cannabis should be legalised and that it did not lead to harder drugs were classed as more “liberal” in their attitudes to cannabis; conversely, those who were against legalisation and who did see a link between cannabis and other drugs were classed as more “cautious” towards cannabis.

The results showed, perhaps unsurprisingly, that those who are more liberal about cannabis are more likely to have heard of the scheme, more likely to expect the scheme to deliver benefits, and more likely to support the scheme. These findings were consistent when considering both the proxy measures of attitudes to cannabis.

This relationship between the variables does not confirm the *direction* of this relationship. However, intuitively, it appears likely that liberal attitudes towards cannabis predate and *lead to* supportive attitudes towards the scheme. Furthermore, it is difficult to make a convincing argument that the relationship could work the other way (ie that supporting the scheme would *cause* people to have more liberal attitudes to cannabis). This therefore suggests that attitudes towards cannabis are indeed a something that determines how an individual will react to the scheme.

That said, it is important to note that this does *not* appear to be a simple relationship between variables: around a quarter of those with cautious

views about cannabis (ie those who believe it should not be legalised or that it leads to harder drugs) nevertheless still offer their outright approval for the scheme. Hence, even among those who might be expected to be some of the most critical towards the scheme, there is still a substantial minority who support the introduction of the scheme.

Hence, the study suggests that *all* of the explanatory variables included in the survey – knowledge of the scheme, expectations about the effects on drugs and crime, expectations about the effect on community relations, and attitudes to cannabis – may play some part in explaining the high levels of support for the scheme. However, to identify the relative importance of these different variables would require further examination.

9.3 Who is most supportive of the scheme?

This was analysed in two ways: the analysis of individual demographic variables, and the regression analysis which aimed to identify how the different demographic variables combined to influence approval for the scheme. The following summarises the main findings from these analyses. The results are drawn from the analyses of individual demographic variables; as discussed previously, however, the regression analysis provided similar results. The key findings appear to be that:

Ethnicity

- more of the white population in Lambeth support the scheme than the black and Asian population (41% outright support for white residents compared with 28% and 25% respectively)
- black and Asian residents are more likely to place conditions on their support; and black residents are more likely to disapprove of the scheme than white residents (10% compared with 7%)
- related to this, white residents are more likely to see positive benefits such as the police redirecting their time, and an improvement in community relations, whereas the black and Asian population is more likely to voice concerns about increases in serious crime and hard drugs

Age

- the results suggest that overall, the older the resident, the less likely they are to approve of the scheme outright and the more likely they are to disapprove

- there is, however, one exception to this general trend: 25-44 year olds are *more* likely to approve of the scheme outright than 16-24 year olds (although the difference is marginal – around 39-40% approval versus 37% approval)
- as well as showing the lowest levels of approval for the scheme, older groups (particularly those over 65) are concerned about the scheme's impact on crime and drugs

Gender

- the pattern is similar for gender: men are more likely to support the scheme outright
- conversely, women are more likely to place conditions on their support for the scheme, and to voice concerns about increases in drugs and crime

Social class

- similarly, the higher the social class, the more likely a Lambeth resident is to support the scheme and expect benefits will be delivered
- on the other hand, the lower the social class, the more likely the person is to disapprove of the scheme and to be concerned about increase in drug use

Parent status

- parent status appears to have a smaller influence on attitudes than the variables listed above, and there appear to be few differences between parents and non-parents regarding either their approval of the scheme or their expectations of its impact
- amongst parents, there is more of a difference, based on the age of the eldest child: where the eldest child is 5-10, parents are more likely to disapprove of the scheme (compared with parents of 11-17 year olds)

Drawing these findings together, the results suggest the residents of Lambeth who are white, aged 25-44, male, and from a higher social class are the most likely to approve of the scheme; while those who are non-white, aged 65 or over, female and of lower social class are most likely to disapprove. Parents of primary school children are also among the most likely to disapprove.

The results do therefore appear to indicate there are real demographic differences in support for the scheme, with some sections of the population showing more approval for the scheme than others. That said, even among the groups *least* likely to support the scheme, the results in Chapter 5 indicate that people in these groups are still relatively likely to support the scheme.

9.4 The national picture

Probably the main difference to emerge between Lambeth and the national picture is that in Britain, there is less outright approval for the scheme (27% compared with 36% in Lambeth), and more disapproval (12% compared with 8%). It is, however, noteworthy that the proportion of people offering *conditional* approval in the two areas is almost identical. Across Britain as a whole, the view that the scheme won't make much difference is also far more prevalent than in Lambeth (10% versus 5%).

The factor that most appears to underlie this is differences between how people in Lambeth and those in the rest of the country view cannabis: whereas nationally and in Lambeth, people's expectations of the policing scheme are very similar, the clear difference to emerge between the two populations is that people across Britain as a whole appear notably more cautious about cannabis. Even so, around a quarter of those across Britain still appear prepared to give outright support to a scheme such as the one in Lambeth being adopted in their own locality; and if conditional supporters are included, around three quarters of the British population can see merits in the scheme.

At the same time, it should be remembered that whereas the Lambeth survey was asking about a real scheme, the national survey was asking about a *hypothetical* one. Therefore, when considering these findings, it should be noted that if real-life schemes were proposed for areas other than Lambeth, it is possible that local views may depart from those expressed in the findings of this survey.

APPENDICES

- i. Sample Profile
- ii. Sample Profile by Ethnicity
- iii. Questionnaire
- iv. Example Topic Guide
- v. Social Class Definitions

NOTE TO READERS

Appendices i through to v of this report appear as a separate file.

To download these – please click on Appendices in documents file.