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What do Young People think of the Gardaí?:An Examination of Young Peoples Attitudes Toward and Experiences of the Gardaí

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What do Young People think of the Gardaí?

An examination of young peoples attitudes toward and experiences of the Gardaí

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part
fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters in Criminology

By

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September 2009

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of **Masters in Criminology** is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above

Signature of candidate: _____

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

National strategies point toward the importance of young people being consulted in relation to services and policies that affect them. Interest in the attitudes of young people to police has increased in recent decades yet this has not yet been explored in Ireland. This thesis examines the attitudes of a sample of young people in the Garda Dublin Metropolitan Region North to the Gardaí as well as their experiences of contacts with members of An Garda Síochána. This is done mainly through the quantitative research method of a survey. One hundred and three young people aged 15-19 in four different education centres in the Dublin Metropolitan Region North were surveyed. The survey was based on the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008, which was administered to approximately 10,000 adults. The survey was edited to make it more focused toward and friendlier to young people. The research found that the young people had a much lower satisfaction rate and a higher level of contact with the Gardaí than their adult counterparts. The contacts were mainly Garda-initiated and negative experiences for the young people. The young people also reported a high level of unacceptable behaviour by Gardaí mainly relating to being disrespectful or impolite, violence and stopping or searching without reason. The research showed that the young people involved had similar experiences to those found internationally and that they felt unfairly discriminated against. This may impact on the legitimacy of the Garda organisation in the eyes of the young people and therefore needs to be addressed. This can be done on a local level through increased non-adversarial contact between Gardaí and young people and through changes in Garda practices including a review of stops and searches and the necessity for them. Further research is also recommended nationally into the use of force and Garda violence towards young people and the attitudes of young people towards the Garda Síochána on a larger scale.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Context

In recent decades many researchers and governments have taken an interest in the public's attitudes towards and opinions of police forces. This has been done for many reasons, such as public relations exercises, to influence policy change and to make police forces more effective in working with the public to detect and investigate crime (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008; Frank et al, 2005). Internationally, there has also been an increasing interest in the attitudes that young people hold toward the police (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008; Hurst & Frank, 2000).

In Ireland annual Garda Public Attitudes surveys of adults have been published since 2002. Five of these surveys, including the most recent in 2008, have been large-scale studies involving a national sample of 10,000 members of the public. The Garda Public Attitudes surveys have been the main sources of information on this topic in Ireland yet none have included the opinions of young people under the age of 18. The executive summary of the 2008 publication recognises that “the sampling methodology is biased towards the settled community and is likely to under-represent certain hard-to-reach groups” (Garda Research Unit, 2008: v) and notes that all respondents were over the age of 18.

This research will therefore focus on the attitudes of a number of young people in one Garda District, that is, Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) - North. The purpose is to ascertain and examine the attitudes of young people to the Gardaí, to gather information on their experiences with them and to compare results to that of the national survey of adults.

1.2 Rationale

One of the aims of the National Children's Strategy is to provide an opportunity for young people's voices to be heard on matters that may concern them in their lives. In addition, the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010 states one of its goals as strengthening and developing information and data sources to support

more effective policies and services. There has also been a drive in recent years towards the development of Community Policing. One aspect of this is concerned with service delivery and the idea that service delivery must reflect the concept that the Gardaí exist to serve the community and that the needs of communities must be taken into account so as to facilitate the delivery of a community centred service that is effective, efficient, appropriate and accountable (Garda Síochána Inspectorate, 2007; Garda Síochána, 2008). This study is also an exercise in accountability, as the national study is, with regards to the satisfaction levels of the young public with the service provided (Garda Síochána, 2009b).

The 2008 Garda Public Attitudes survey found that 81% of adults surveyed were satisfied with An Garda Síochána. However, international research has shown that young people generally have less positive attitudes towards the police than adults. This study is an insight into the attitudes and experiences of a relatively small group of young people in Ireland towards the nation's police force, which have been previously ignored.

Sanders and Young (2007) examined various pieces of research in the UK with regards to the contact that the police had with young people and found that young people were in contact with police disproportionately in relation to adults. Connolly (2002) also names young people as one of the police property groups¹ in Ireland yet they have not been afforded a voice in the national surveys. The high level of contact that young people have with police suggests that the opinions of young people are at least as important as, if not more so, than adults. However, this is not something that has been studied in Ireland to date.

Furthermore, as police are often the first and only justice professionals that young people have contact with the nature of these contacts may influence young people's willingness to engage positively with the system as a whole (Hurst & Frank, 2000). Young people's attitudes to the police are also especially important as adolescence is a time when attitudes can be formed or changed and experiences at this time may impact on young people's attitudes as adults (Hinds, 2007).

¹ Police property groups are defined by Sanders and Young (2007:65) as "those who are perceived to be deviating from a 'respectable' norm."

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

To determine the attitudes of young people from differing school types in the Dublin Metropolitan Region North toward An Garda Síochána and explore the young people's experiences of dealing with Garda members.

1.3.2 Objectives

- To contribute to the research gap in Ireland on young peoples attitudes to the police.
- To give the young people in DMR-North an opportunity to voice their views on, and share their experiences of, the Gardaí.
- To present findings on the level of satisfaction among young people in DMR-North with the Gardaí.
- To make recommendations based on the study.

1.4 Research Questions

- Are young people satisfied with An Garda Síochána?
- What are young people's experiences of contact with members of An Garda Síochána?
- What are the main types of contacts and do these influence satisfaction levels?
- Are changes needed to improve the service delivered by An Garda Síochána to young people, if so what changes should be made?

1.5 Research Methodology

The research is a quantitative study. The data was gathered through a survey, which has been based on the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008. The survey uses mainly closed questions to allow numerical data to be collected. It also contains a number of qualitative questions to obtain participants opinions on subjects in greater detail.

1.6 Organisation of the Dissertation

Following this chapter, Chapter Two addresses the existing literature on the topics of: attitudes; adult's attitudes to the police; and young people, the police and attitudes. Irish and international research is discussed.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology including the research design and research methods. A description of the data collection and analysis processes are given. Validity, reliability and the strengths and limitations of the study are explored.

Chapter Four is a presentation of the findings using charts, tables and written descriptions.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings drawing on the literature reviewed earlier. It also contains the conclusions and recommendations relating to changes to Garda practices and policies and further research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Before it is possible to design a research study on attitudes to police it is paramount that existing literature on the topic is examined. This chapter is an overview of a number of available literatures related to this study. The scene is set with a brief exploration of the concept of attitudes and attitude change. Attention is then focused on international research on public attitudes to the police centring on those of adults. Following on from this Irish research on the subject is examined by looking at satisfaction levels and the public's experience of crime and contacts with the Gardaí. The chapter culminates with a review of international research on young people, the police and attitudes.

2.2 Attitudes

2.2.1 *Attitude Theories*

The concept of attitudes is an important one in many disciplines from social psychology, to advertising, to politics, as attitudes can influence many aspects of people's behaviours including what they buy and whom they vote for (Brehm et al, 2005). Aronson et al (2007:191) define attitudes as "evaluations of people, objects, or ideas". These evaluations can be positive, negative or mixed (Brehm et al, 2005).

One of the central questions asked in relation to attitudes is how are they formed? Tesser (1993) has argued that at least some attitudes are genetic. A study by Martin et al. (1986) found that identical twins had more similar attitudes than fraternal twins. Much discussion on attitudes however focuses on the ABC Model. This describes attitudes as being made up of three components, affective, behavioural and cognitive that together form our evaluations of attitude objects, that is, the people, objects or ideas.

The affective component consists of emotional reactions toward the attitude object. This relates to attitudes that are based on emotions and values. Attitudes in

relation to highly emotive subjects in the arenas of politics, sex and religion are likely to be affectively based (Aronson et al. 2007). These attitudes have a variety of sources such as from people's values and morals or from sensory reactions such as disliking the taste of cabbage. They can also be the result of classical or operant conditioning.²

The behavioural component consists of thoughts and beliefs in relation to the attitude object. These stem from people's observations of how they behave toward an object and is linked to Bem's (1972) self perception theory which describes how under certain circumstances people do not know how they feel until they see how they behave. The circumstances under which this may occur are, firstly, if their initial attitude is weak or ambiguous, or, secondly, if there are no other probable explanations for their behaviour.

The cognitive component consists of actions or observable behaviour toward the attitude object. Cognitively based attitudes are based on relevant facts; we classify the positive and negatives of the object and decide if we want to react positively to it. For example, when looking to buy something such as a new computer an attitude is likely to be formed on the believed merits of the object such as the reputation of the brand, the programmes installed and the relative price. Each of the ABC components can be a factor in influencing attitude change.

2.2.2 *Attitude Change*

Attitudes can and do sometimes change. When they do this is often a response to a social influence. People can be swayed by what others say or do. Even though attitudes are often very personal and internal they are still highly social phenomena, directly and indirectly influenced by the imagined or actual behaviour of others (Aronson et al. 2007). This is important to keep in mind for this study, as attitudes of young people toward Gardaí can be formed and changed by the actual behaviour of Gardaí toward individual young people as well as the shared views and experiences of parents or peers. There are various conditions under which attitudes are most likely to change including as a reaction to cognitive dissonance and on receipt of a persuasive communication.

² Classical conditioning occurs when an emotional response, for example feelings of happiness towards a loved one, are accompanied by a neutral stimulus, the smell of their shampoo, and eventually the smell of the shampoo alone is enough to elicit the feelings of happiness. Operant conditioning is when behaviours that we choose to take part in become more or less frequent depending on whether we are rewarded or punished.

Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance states that when one simultaneously has two thoughts that conflict with each other an uncomfortable feeling of dissonance occurs. This is also linked to behaviour if one says or does something that is contrary to their beliefs dissonance occurs. The mind deals with this discomfort in a number of ways. One is by ignoring or eliminating the dissonant cognitions. Another way is to revise the importance of certain cognitions, if the dissonant cognitions outweigh the other in importance; the mind has less difficulty dealing with it.³ When one cannot find an external justification they will attempt to find an internal justification. For example, if a young person who had a negative attitude towards the police then had a number of positive contacts which caused them to speak positively about the police, the desire to relieve dissonance could cause them to bring the two cognitions, attitude and behaviour, closer together and an attitude change could occur in favour of what they have said. However although dissonance techniques can be powerful for individuals they are very difficult to carry out on a mass scale (Aronson et al. 2007).

To alter the attitudes of many persuasive communications are often used. These are communications such as advertisements or speeches that promote a particular side of an issue. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) proposed two routes to persuasion: central and peripheral, which affect different people at different times for different reasons. The central route to persuasion is taken under certain circumstances when people are motivated to pay attention to the facts in a communication and they are most persuaded when these facts are logically compelling. Under other conditions, such as a lack of interest, ability to understand or because of distractions people are not motivated to pay attention to the facts and only notice the surface characteristics of the message such as how long it is or who is delivering it. This is the peripheral route. When the central route is taken attitude change is long lasting and resistant to change, in contrast, when the peripheral route is taken attitude change is often temporary and susceptible to further change (Aronson et al. 2007).

³ For example, if a young person wishes to become a police officer when they leave school as they wish to help people but is provided with research that the force is corrupt they may decide that the research is flawed or biased therefore reducing dissonance and therefore allowing them to continue with their positive attitude toward joining the force.

2.3 Attitudes to Police

Over the past twenty years researchers and police administrators have become increasingly interested in public attitudes to police. Frank et al (2005) outline two reasons for this. Firstly, the increasing focus on community policing has seen a shift in perceptions of the value of community members. They are now seen as a resource to the police, as satisfied consumers will act as the “eyes and ears” of the police. Bridenball & Jesilow (2008) agree that public satisfaction is needed to help the police enforce the law. Secondly, citizens are becoming viewed as consumers who are in a position to evaluate the effectiveness of police policies and procedures.

Research has shown that public attitudes are generally in line with the level of support for law and order; positive assessments of the police are linked to a strong sense of involvement and inclusion in the political system or general approval of government (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008). The perceived level of police legitimacy is also important, as people are more likely to comply and engage with authority if they believe it is legitimate (Hinds, 2007). This said the public generally have favourable attitudes towards police (Hurst & Frank, 2000, Frank et al, 2005). In addition, it has been found that some people in spite of reporting negative encounters with the police are still satisfied with them; this suggests that some citizens may allow for “mistakes” (Frank et al, 2005). This may be an effort by individuals who generally hold a positive attitude towards police to reduce cognitive dissonance after a negative experience by branding the experience a mistake or “once off”.

Reisig & Parks (2000) identify three models to explain variables related to attitudes toward the police; experience with police, perceptions of the quality of life in the community and the neighbourhood context. The most studied of these is the first: experience with the police. Contact with the police and the manner in which these exchanges are handled have consistently been found to influence attitudes (Hurst, 2007, Frank et al, 2005). The type of contact and the quality of the contact have been found to be important within this.

Research on public attitudes to contact with the police or experiences of them has been investigated at two different levels: direct and vicarious. People with direct experience with the police have been found to have stronger attitudes towards them be they positive or negative. However, in general, recent direct contact with the police is

more associated with negative attitudes (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008). Rosenbaum et al. (2005) also found that direct contact can strengthen already held beliefs or be dismissed because of them. Direct contact with the police can be police or citizen initiated. Police initiated contacts include being stopped and questioned and routine vehicle checks. Citizen initiated contacts include reporting a crime and getting documents signed. The former have been found to be a determinant of negative attitudes and the latter of positive (Rosenbaum et al, 2005, Hinds, 2007).

Vicarious contacts, which can range from hearing of another's good or bad contact or media reports of such, can also influence people's attitudes toward the police. Rosenbaum et al (2005) completed a study that measured citizens' attitudes toward the police at two intervals. Negative vicarious contact was found to be more influential in relation to the initial attitudes. On the second interview it was found that both positive and negative vicarious experiences affected an attitude change. Interestingly, positive vicarious experiences were found to be more likely to change attitudes.

Some studies have shown that the quality of the contacts people have with police officers are more influential in their perceptions of the force than the type of contact. Frank et al (2005) surveyed 613 residents in a mid-western city in the USA. The survey showed that of those who had had recent contact with the police 94% provided explanations for their views of the police based on the behaviour of the officers they had contact with. Respondents who discussed the negative attributes of officers they encountered were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the police. Similarly Brandl et al (1994) who compared specific attitudes about police performance during contacts to more general attitudes toward them found the perception of whether the contact was positive or negative was a determinant of attitudes.

Although Reisig and Parks (2000) differentiate between perceptions of the quality of life in the community and the neighbourhood context models they are to some extent linked. Their model of perceptions of quality of life in the community suggests that citizens often hold the police accountable for perceived problems within their neighbourhood. The neighbourhood context associates attitudes towards the police with the social conditions in their area. The latter is highly likely to influence the former. Bridenball & Jesilow (2008) found that the level of visible crime such as prostitution, public drinking and graffiti as well as the level of recorded crime such as burglaries influenced the Santa Ana residents' attitudes toward the police. However,

even in lower crime middle class areas the perception of the crime level, which may be distorted to a higher than actual level, was found to influence people's attitudes.

Victimisation, race and gender have also been explored in relation to attitudes toward the police. People who have been the victim of a crime are more likely than non-victims to report negative attitudes (Dean, 1980; Homant et al., 1984). Race has been found to be a strong predictor of attitudes toward the police with non-whites being more negative in their attitudes (Frank et al, 2005; Rosenbaum et al, 2005). In Frank et als' (2005) study however contact with the police reduced the difference between races. Findings in relation to ones gender impacting on attitudes have been mixed with some studies reporting that females are more positive, some that they are more negative and others that gender is unimportant (Hurst, 2007). Age is also significant but this will be looked at in detail in relation to young people's attitudes to the police.

2.4 Irish Research on Public Attitudes to the Police

2.4.1 Overview

Each year since 2002 a Garda Public Attitudes survey has been conducted in Ireland. Samples of around 10,000 were involved in the surveys conducted in 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. One thousand people were surveyed in 2003 and 2004. The annual surveys began by being conducted on the telephone or by post. In the year 2006 face-to-face interviews became the preferred method and this has continued since. Results in respect of what the writers describe as key indicators, such as satisfaction with overall service, satisfaction with contact with the Gardaí, Garda approachability and overall performance at local level, have been relatively consistent over the recent surveys despite changes in survey companies and methodology. For example, satisfaction with the overall service has fluctuated less than ten percent over the years with a low of 79% in 2006 and a high of 87% in 2002.

2.4.2 Satisfaction

The most recent survey conducted in 2008 is focused on for the purpose of this study. In 2008 81% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied with the overall service of the Gardaí. However the level in different Garda divisions varied widely the lowest being 71% and the highest 89%. Satisfaction levels in Dublin Metropolitan

Region (DMR) North, where the current research took place, positioned in the middle at 80%. This was an increase of 1.1 percentage points on the previous year. There was no significant difference between male and female satisfaction levels nationwide. Nineteen percent of 18-24 year olds were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' compared to 15% of those 65+. There were also differences across social classes with 'farmers' having the highest level of satisfaction at 86% and 'skilled working class' and 'other working class and lowest level of subsistence' the lowest at 79 and 80 percent respectively.

2.4.3 *Experience of Crime*

Regarding crime reporting, 84% of those who said they had been a victim of a crime in the previous year said that they reported it.⁴ Although this was down on 2007 figures the number is still relatively high. However, only 44% of those who reported a crime were happy with being kept informed of the progress in the investigation. Males and those in age categories 18-24 and 25-44 were somewhat over represented as victims. Crime victimization levels ranged from just 2.3% in Mayo to 19.3% in DMR South. DMR North was well above the average of 8.5% at 14%. Only 40% of respondents said that they were happy with the way they were kept informed in relation to progress of their case in DMR North.

2.4.4 *Contact with the Gardaí*

Forty percent of respondents said they had contact with the Gardaí during the previous year; this includes Garda-initiated contacts and citizen-initiated contacts. Garda manner in relation to these contacts under a number of headings was measured as 'better than expected', 'as expected' or 'worse than expected'. Over the five headings the average ratings were: 'better than expected' 18%, 'as expected' 70% and 'worse than expected' 12%. This does not indicate however how the respondents were actually dealt with, as 'what they expected' could have been good or bad. The satisfaction with overall contacts with the Gardaí was 79%, slightly lower than the overall rating of the service at 81%. However, 72% of respondents still felt that the Garda service needed to be improved. When asked how approachable Gardaí were at their local station 79% said that they were 'approachable' or 'very approachable'. The

⁴ The three most recorded reasons for not reporting a crime, starting with the highest, were: believed Gardaí could not have done anything, no chance of recovering property and not serious enough/no loss.

most common reason given for unapproachability was that they are 'just not interested'. Regarding whether a member of the Gardaí had behaved in an unacceptable manner towards them one out of every thirteen respondents said they had. DMR North was higher than this average with over one in ten reporting that Gardaí had behaved in an unacceptable manner towards them. The most frequent reason given was that they were 'disrespectful or impolite'.

2.5 Young People, the Police & Attitudes

Young people have a high level of contact with police in comparison to adults (Hinds, 2007). As there are few indoor spaces willing to accommodate groups of young people they tend to occupy public areas thus making them more visible to police patrols (Loader, 1996). Research has shown that young people are subject to a high number of police initiated contacts; mainly, move on, stop and search, and stop and question (British Home Office, 1995; Sanders & Young, 2007). Young males seem to be the main target for these stops. Niall Crowley CEO, Equality Authority (2008) stated that focus groups set up around Ireland for the purpose of researching a new resource pack against the stereotyping of young people identified the Gardaí as having a poor opinion of, and little respect for, young people. All this said the British Crime Survey (1995) identified that it may be difficult for police to avoid high levels of contact with young people due to public requests for intervention by the police regarding them.

Although police initiated contacts with young people are high the opposite is true for citizen initiated contact. This is despite the fact that there is a high level of victimisation among young people (British Home Office, 1995; Hinds 2007). There are suggestions that this may be because young people see victimisation, such as being assaulted by bullies, as normal and therefore do not report crimes (British Home Office, 1995). However the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of young people may also impact on the likelihood of young people reporting crimes they are victim of. Hinds (2007) found that young people who believe that police use procedural justice in their contact with young people and that the police do a good job are more likely to view police as legitimate. Young people who had prior negative contact with the police on the other hand viewed them as less legitimate. This highlights the

importance of the quality of the contact between young people and the police and the use of fair practices in influencing young people's attitudes toward them.

International research has shown that young people generally have less positive attitudes towards the police than adults (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008; Hurst & Frank, 2000). Like adults, how police treat young people impacts on their views of them. In the British Crime Survey (1995) the majority of 12 to 15 year olds felt that they were treated fairly by police however a significant 27% felt that they were treated unfairly and this was generally linked to searches, which, as mentioned, young people are subject to more of. This survey also revealed that almost half of the young people involved felt that the police broke the rules at least sometimes. This is likely to impact on perceived legitimacy as described above. Hinds (2007) research revealed that many contacts between the police and young people are adversarial and this leads to the formation of negative attitudes toward the police. Young victims also rate the police less favourably (British Home Office, 1995; Hurst & Frank, 2000). These situations can lead to young people feeling both over-controlled and under-protected.

Demographic variables have also been cited as factors in determining the attitudes of young people toward the police. Perceived and actual social conditions in the community, including quality of life, crime levels and the level of crime control, has been a relatively consistent indicator with the negatives associated with these being linked to more negative attitudes toward the police (British Home Office, 1995; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Hurst, 2007). Race, age and gender have also been examined.

Race is possibly one of the most often studies variables in relation to attitudes toward the police. The literature suggests that races other than Caucasians have less positive attitudes toward the police. However the degree to which race may affect attitudes varies. Lieber et al. (1998) found that a person's race was the strongest predictor of attitudes concerning police fairness and performance. This is supported by Hurst (2007) who found that Black teenagers are more negative in their assessment of the police. However, Peek et al. (1981) observed that race, was at best, only a weak predictor of attitudes. Interestingly in Hurst's (2007) study Black teenagers rated police higher in the area of crime control. This may be viewed as them perceiving the police as doing a better job than their Caucasian counterparts do. However, it is more likely due to them being subject to higher levels of crime control as ethnicity has been linked to reporting of prior negative contacts with the police (Hinds, 2007).

The British Crime Survey (1995) found that although attitudes were relatively stable across age groups older teenagers tended to be the most negative in their attitudes. However, the older teenagers in the study were also subject to a higher level of policing and, as discussed, contact can be a factor in predicting negative attitudes toward the police. Research findings on the influence of gender on young people's attitudes toward the police have been mixed and inconsistent with some studies showing that girls are more positive towards police, others more negative or that gender is not important at all (Hinds, 2007; Hurst 2007).

2.6 Chapter Summary

It has been shown that there is international interest in gathering the opinions of members of the public to police forces. In Ireland the Garda Síochána have been committed to obtaining information on the adult public's satisfaction levels and experiences of the services they provide for a number of years. Studies such as those mentioned are evidence that there has been increased interest in young people's attitudes toward police in recent decades. However, this has been significantly limited in Ireland where the main source of public attitudes to the police, the Garda Public Attitudes surveys, completely ignore the attitudes of young people under the age of 18 years old. There is therefore a gap in this type of research in Ireland. This study seeks to address this gap by collecting and presenting information on the attitudes, opinions and experiences of young people in one Garda district to Ireland's police force.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In order to fully understand a study and make judgements on its validity information on research methodology is necessary. The purpose of this chapter is to provide that information through outlining the research design and research methods. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research are looked at along with a more limited section on qualitative methods. A description of the processes involved in the survey design, piloting and administration is given. The sampling method and how access was sought and gained are explained. The important issue of ethics is also discussed. How the survey data was analysed including the use of pre-coding and statistical software is delineated. The chapter concludes with information on the validity and reliability of the research and a discussion on its strengths and limitations.

3.2 Research Design & Research Methods

The research design used in this study is an exploratory one with descriptive elements. According to Maxfield and Babbie (2005) one of the general purposes of criminal justice research is to explore a specific problem, in particular, on issues for which little is known. Schutt (2006:14) states, 'the goal [of exploratory research] is to learn 'what is going on here?' and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations.' This fits with the nature of this research, as there is currently no research in Ireland on the attitudes of young people to the Gardaí. In addition, the aim is not to prove a hypothesis rather to learn more about the subject in order that one may possibly be developed in the future. The objective of descriptive research is to describe things, such as the demographics and attitudes of consumers who buy a product or use a service (Kotler et al. 2006). This study also aims to describe the views and attitudes of young people in Dublin Metropolitan Region North toward the Gardaí. As with the majority of criminological research the design is also cross-

sectional. Data is collected latterly to capture the situation at a specific point in time (King & Wincup, 2008), in this instance, young people's attitudes to the Gardaí in Spring 2009.

A quantitative methodology is employed in this study. Although the national surveys published by the Garda Research Unit were administered using face-to-face interviews the data collected was quantitative as the interviews were used to gather mainly numerical data on a survey form not to gather qualitative experiences. Quantitative research is quantifiable, systematic and efficient. Quantification can make observations more explicit, make it easier to aggregate and summarise data and it allows for statistical analysis (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005). These methods are appropriate for this study, as numerical data that can be quantified can be collected efficiently.

According to Bachman & Schutt (2008) survey methods are popular as they are very versatile and well-designed surveys can enhance knowledge of most social issues. Surveys, as opposed to case studies, broaden the focus to include samples of cases to represent the total population that one is interested in and can allow for generalisation (King & Wincup, 2008). Surveys are regularly used successfully to communicate with the public and gather their opinions and are seen as an important tool in the gathering of public attitudes toward the police (Frank et al, 2005). Information on public attitudes provides feedback to the police on their performance and can thus be seen as an accountability mechanism (Moore, 1992). The survey used in this study is based on the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008 with some adjustments, which will be discussed under survey design. This allows the results to be systematically compared to that of the national survey.

3.3 Survey

3.3.1 Design

As noted the survey used in this study was based on the survey used for the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008. Permission was granted by the Garda Research Unit to use the survey as a template for this research. The survey is designed under various headings to allow for ease for understanding. Demographic questions are asked to obtain information on variables such as age and gender. These are placed at

the beginning of the survey with the more personal open-ended questions at the end. Beginning surveys with straightforward questions and gradually moving toward more complex and sensitive questions ensures there is a greater likelihood that the respondent will become at ease and complete the study (Denscombe, 2007).

The majority of the questions in the survey are fixed choice questions and Likert-type response categories. Fixed choice or closed questions are useful as they provide more uniform responses that can be processed more easily (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005). Filter questions are used to ensure that the questions are only asked to the relevant participants and Likert-type response categories are used to gauge satisfaction levels in various areas and opinions on crime and the Gardaí. Furthermore, a number of open-ended questions were added to allow some qualitative data to be collected and to allow the young people to describe their experiences and suggestions for improvement in their own words. Open-ended questions are used to obtain participants opinions on subjects in greater detail (Bachman & Schutt, 2008). These give a greater insight into the opinions of the young people and the reasons behind them. The survey has also been edited to make it more user friendly to young people by reducing the number of questions and in some cases the number of options and altering the wording slightly for some of the questions and choices. Options relating to victimisation of sexual crimes have been removed to avoid any distress that this may cause some participants and the necessity of reporting such experiences in line with child protection guidelines.

3.3.2 *Pilot*

The survey was piloted for ease of reading, understanding, time needed to complete and to ascertain if other issues needed to be addressed by the study before being finalised.⁵ The piloting raised issues around the clarity and wording of some questions. These questions were all adapted to address the issues raised. For example, question 10 asked respondents to rate how the Gardaí met their expectations in a number of areas and respondents during the pilot survey noted that they had various contacts with the Gardaí and would rate them differently for each one. As a result, in the finalised survey respondents were asked to think about their most recent contact when answering this question. It also became apparent during the pilot that there were

⁵ A copy of the final survey is included in Appendix A.

too many options on some questions and options that may not be applicable to young people on others. This caused frustration with some respondents. As a result the number of options were reduced on some questions with some similar responses being merged and others removed.

3.3.3 Administration

The survey was group-administered. The response rate of group-administered surveys is not usually a concern, as generally most members of a group will participate (Bachman & Schutt, 2008). However, it is recognised that it is important to stress to potential participants that their involvement is entirely voluntary. This will be discussed further in relation to ethical issues. The most cited difficulty with group-administered surveys is generally in the convening of the group. This was not a difficulty in relation to this study as the group of students in a school setting is ready made. Issues of concern in relation to survey groups in an institution type setting are that approval is needed from the administration and participants may feel that the research is not independent of the institution (Bachman & Schutt, 2008). However, to minimise this risk part of the introduction of the study to the participants included an emphasis of the researcher's independence from these institutions and the young people were also given a chance to ask questions about the study. Prior to the introduction being given a number of students in some of the groups enquired as to whether the researcher was a member of an Garda Síochána, when it was explained that this was not the case the students appeared somewhat more relaxed. Gaining approval is discussed below under Access. Students were encouraged to seek clarification if they did not understand something in the survey. Many used this opportunity, which gave the researcher the chance to explain things to the whole group lest someone else did not understand but did not ask. An example of where and explanation was given is that a number of students asked what 'white collar crime' was and this was duly explained.

3.4 Sampling

The research was conducted on young people male and female attending educational institutions in the Garda Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) North. The primary sampling unit are the schools in the area. Schools were chosen from various areas within the DMR North from the Department of Education's list of schools in each of the following categories: fee-paying schools, voluntary secondary schools, community schools, schools designated as disadvantaged and Youthreach projects. This was to allow for a broad range and socio-economic mix of research participants. Non-probability sampling was used as ease of access was necessary due to time and personnel constraints.

A number of schools were approached with those who agreed to participate providing the sample. The secondary sampling unit was young males and females in transition year in these schools; all students in the Youthreach project were invited to take part. This included some young people aged 18 and over. It was decided not to exclude these young people from the study as their opinions are also valid due to being part of the primary target peer group and as none of these young people, by their own admission, had been previously involved in the national Garda Public Attitudes Survey.

A total sample of approximately 100-150 young people between the schools was sought for this study and 103 surveys were completed in four different education centres. These included a designated disadvantaged school, a community school, a voluntary secondary school, and a Youthreach.⁶ The age ranged from 15 to 19 years old with a majority of 59% of participants being 16 years old. Fifty-nine of the participants were male and forty-two were female; two surveys did not contain this

⁶ Designated disadvantaged schools are assessed and prioritised on the basis of socio-economic and educational indicators such as unemployment levels, housing, medical card holders and information on basic literacy and numeracy and receive extra resources once designated. Community Schools were established in the 1960s in order to provide a broad curriculum for all the young people in a community and offer a wide range of both academic and vocational subjects. They are managed by boards of management, which are representative of local interests. Voluntary secondary schools are privately owned and managed. They are under the trusteeship of religious communities, boards of governors or individuals. In the past, voluntary secondary schools provided a more academic education but increasingly, they provide a range of academic, practical and vocational subjects. Youthreach is directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-20. It offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification. It operates on a full-time, year-round basis

information. The valid percentages are therefore 58% male and 42% female to the nearest whole number.

3.5 Access

Access to the participants was gained through the schools. The principals of the schools were the main gatekeepers to the participant group in this study. The parents of the young people also had a role in this in relation to consent. To gain access to the schools a letter was sent to the principals explaining the purpose of the study, the time necessary to complete and stressing that as little disruption as possible would be caused. Contact details were given and the letter was followed up with a phone call to the principal. These communications stressed that the survey was to be conducted at a time that suits the school with regards to the school holiday times and the need to schedule around these. Principals were assured of the anonymity of the young people and the schools as no identifiable information would be published in the study. There are many schools from each of the chosen school types in the DMR North so individual schools are not identifiable. Although a fee-paying school in the DMR North was approached no reply was given to written or telephonic communication and therefore no fee-paying school participated in the survey. A school from each of the other identified types and a Youthreach agreed to participate.

3.6 Ethical Issues

The World Medical Association developed the Declaration of Helsinki as a set of ethical principles for the medical community regarding human experimentation. Ethics in social research have developed from this and other medical research ethics. The declaration states that research should benefit the participants and that they should be informed and participate voluntarily. It was envisaged that this study would be of some benefit to the young people themselves in feeling that their views are important and listened to. Furthermore it may inform the Gardaí in their interactions with young people and possibly lead to a national study that will allow many more young people's views to be heard and as a result policy changes may take place that will benefit young people in this study. The British Society of Criminology ethics

code was also adhered to. Some of the specific issues in this that were engaged were that the researcher strived to protect the rights of participants, their interests, sensitivities and privacy through careful construction of the survey and confidentiality. In addition, the researcher was sympathetic to the constraints on organisations participating so as not to inhibit their functioning by imposing any unnecessary burdens on them as discussed previously in relation to access.

All participants were in the senior cycle of schooling or had left formal schooling and were participating in the alternative education project Youthreach. There are different views around the ability to give consent at this age but many believe that young people in these age groups are capable of giving informed consent. This was explained to the principals of the school who were given the choice as how to proceed with parental consent. The choices included: all parents/guardians would be sent consent forms that must be signed and returned before the young person participates; alternatively a letter of opt-out consent could be sent to the school or the researcher which required parents to sign and return if they did not wish their child to participate. Both letters explained the nature and purpose of the study and confidentiality issues. Only one school chose not to use the opt-out method. This choice was respected however it resulted in only eight students participating out of a year group of approximately 65 students. The teacher noted that absenteeism and the returning of parental consent were ongoing issues with the year group and school in general. The principals of the remainder of the schools were required to sign a consent form stating that they would inform the parents of the research and their entitlement to disallow their child from participating.⁷

The young people were not required to put their names on their surveys and the schools are not identified in the study. This was also explained to the young people and they were given the choice of whether or not to participate. Parents were informed of these issues through an explanation letter and students were informed verbally with time to ask questions. The voluntary aspect was stressed and those who decided not to participate were given an alternative activity. One young person in one school decided not to participate due to language difficulties and one in another school without a reason given. One parent in the opt-out group signed and returned the form so their child did not participate in the survey.

⁷ Each of the consent forms can be viewed in Appendix B

Research often brings up issues for participants and it is important for researchers to anticipate these and strategize methods to alleviate this. The student's teachers were all given information on the Garda Ombudsman to pass onto the young people as the content of the research may lead to questions as what they can do if they are unhappy with how they have been treated by a member of the force. They were also given information on the study of Criminology.

3.7 Analysis

The majority of the survey questions were pre-coded. The qualitative open-ended questions were coded prior to analysis. The coding process can require the researcher to interpret the meaning of the responses, which may lead to misunderstanding or bias (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005). To reduce the likelihood of this all students were asked to indicate prior to description whether the contacts described in the open-ended questions 41 (a) and (b) were positive or negative contacts in their opinion. Variables of 'positive attitude', 'positive behaviour', 'positive attitude and behaviour', 'positive undefined', 'neutral/undefined', 'negative attitude', 'negative behaviour-general', 'negative behaviour-violence', 'negative attitude and behaviour', 'negative-wrongful stop/search/accusation' and 'negative-undefined' were identified and coded for entry into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). All data was cleaned to look for inappropriate respondents and illegible/unclear responses prior to computer entry. Other checks such as logical checks and range checks were also completed. The 'cleaned' data was processed and analysed by SPSS. Frequency and descriptive statistics were used. The coding was monitored to ensure coding reliability throughout the process. The findings were then interpreted and conclusions drawn based on the data collected and the information examined in the literature review.

3.8 Validity & Reliability

Validity of this survey was maximised by ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of schools and participants thus making it more likely for truthful responses to be given. The phenomenon of 'social desirability' was also reduced due

to these methods, as answers could not be attributed to individual students. Furthermore, the independence of the researcher was stressed to alleviate and desire to try to please by answering in a certain way and no reward was offered for participation. In addition, as one person conducted the research and analysis the possibility of breakdowns in communication between researchers that can taint results was eliminated. A limited amount of data triangulation was also possible due to the ability to compare qualitative answers in the survey to quantitative questions. The homogeneous responses by young people to many questions also points towards the validity of the findings. The use of a standardised questionnaire increases reliability as all respondents are asked the same questions in the same way and the possibility of human rewording to different participants is removed. In addition, the use of a computer programme such as SPSS, which was used in this research, reduces the possibility of human error in analysis.

3.9 Strengths & Limitations of the Study

Surveys allow data to be collected from a larger number of people than interviews using the same resources. The cross-sectional nature of this research is appropriate, as the research was not designed to measure attitudes, for example, before and after a policy change.

The survey is of a self-report nature and it is not possible in the constraints of this study to verify the data given in relation to, for example, victimisation reports. However, many studies have been done on self-reporting and have found that in general self-report data is valid and reliable for most research purposes (Thornberry & Krohn, 2000). Self-reporting is useful to measure crimes that are rarely reported, such as those committed on young people as shown in the literature review, or observed by police (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005).

Time and resource restraints mean that the survey could only be conducted with a maximum of 150 participants; this does not allow for national generalisation. The survey was however conducted in one Garda Division – DMR North, which may allow for recommendations to be made in relation to practices in this area. Also as no research in relation to this subject topic and research population has been completed in Ireland to date the information gathered is valuable in that it could possibly act as a stepping stone to a larger study.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The study's design is exploratory with descriptive elements. A quantitative methodology was utilised and some qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions. The survey was based on the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008 with alterations made to make it more applicable and accessible to the study group. It was group-administered in a school setting. The sample came from different categories of school to ensure a variety of young people participated. Access was granted through the consent of principals and the young people's parents. Both the Declaration of Helsinki and the British Society of Criminology ethics code were drawn on for the research. Confidentiality was ensured and maintained. The data was coded and then analysed using SPSS. Validity was maximised through anonymity of participants and the elimination of social desirability. Homogeneous responses of participants were recorded which indicates the validity of the findings. The use of a standardised questionnaire and computer software for analysis increased reliability. Although generalisation to the youth population is not possible the restriction of data collection to one Garda district allows recommendations to be made in relation to that area's practices.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the research that relate to the young peoples attitudes towards Gardaí. This includes findings on their satisfaction levels and responses to statements about the Gardaí. Furthermore their experiences of contact with the Gardaí are illustrated. Finally it describes the suggestions for improvements that the young people made.⁸

4.2 Overall Satisfaction with Garda Service

The research found that 62% of the young people surveyed were at least satisfied with the service provided to the community by An Garda Síochána (see Figure 1).⁹

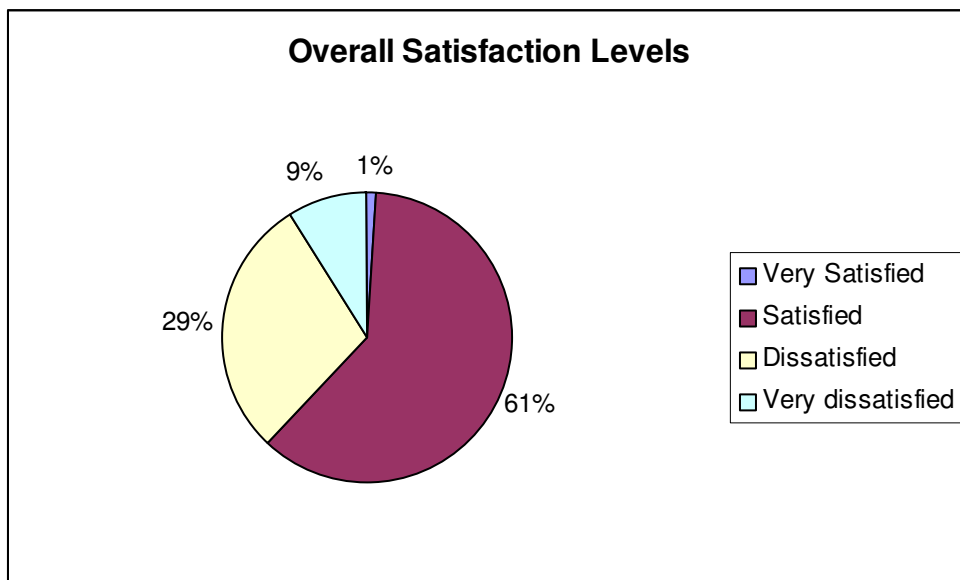


Figure 1: Young People's Overall Satisfaction with the Gardaí

Missing values have been excluded. Percentages rounded to nearest whole.

⁸ Further results from the survey in figure and table form can be found in Appendices C & D respectively.

⁹ Two respondents did not answer this question.

The level of dissatisfaction was 38%. Male respondents were less likely to be satisfied than their female counterparts with 54.2% being ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ compared to 15% of females in these categories. Comparison shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender Breakdown of Overall Satisfaction Levels

Satisfaction Level	Male	Female
Very satisfied %	0	2
Satisfied %	46	83
Dissatisfied %	39	15
Very dissatisfied %	15	0

Missing values have been excluded. Percentages rounded to nearest whole

4.3 Views of An Garda Síochána

When asked about how approachable the Gardaí were at their local station 43% said that they were ‘approachable’ or ‘very approachable’, 31% said they were ‘unapproachable’ or ‘very unapproachable’.¹⁰ The most common reasons cited for approachability were ‘can communicate with them’ and ‘they are members of the community’. While for unapproachability it was ‘unfriendly/rude’, followed by ‘they are just not interested and ‘they think they are superior/formal manner’.¹¹

The young people were given a number of statements about the Gardaí in Ireland and asked whether they agreed or disagreed and the level to which they did so. For the majority of the statements agreement is desirable but not achieved (see Table 2).¹² A statement that had a strong level of disagreement (70%) was ‘When people are dissatisfied with what the Gardaí do, it is easy to have the matter corrected’. The strongest disagreement and level of opinion was to the statement ‘Young people are treated better by the Gardaí than adults’ which 83% of participants disagreed. In relation to the other statement which specifically mentions young people ‘The Gardaí provide good leadership in the guidance and direction of our young people’ only 23% of participants agreed.

¹⁰ The remainder of the young people stated that they did not know if the Gardaí were approachable or not.

¹¹ The full list of reasons given for why participants thought the Gardaí were approachable or unapproachable are shown in Table I, Appendix D.

¹² Results have been amalgamated for ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ and also for ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’.

Table 2: Views of Garda Síochána

	Strongly agree/ Agree %	Neither %	Strongly disagree/ Disagree %
The Gardaí serve the interests of the rich more than the poor	55	19	26
Gardaí discriminate against immigrants	37	36	24
Gardaí are representative of the communities they serve	41	29	31
Gardaí are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable people	36	24	40
The local Gardaí are fully answerable to the people for their actions and conduct	33	26	41
The people in my community have a real say in deciding what is important for the Gardaí to do	13	20	66
When people are dissatisfied with what the Gardaí do, it is easy to have the matter corrected	13	17	70
The Gardaí carry out their role in a fair impartial manner	32	20	49
The Garda organisation is made up of honest and honourable people	23	25	53
The Gardaí provide good leadership in the guidance and direction of our young people	23	16	60
Anyone in Garda custody would be well treated	27	20	52
Young people are treated better by the Gardaí than adults	4	13	83
People in Garda custody have their rights fully respected	22	19	41
I would encourage a friend or relative to join the Garda Síochána	28	32	42
People like me would be welcome in the Garda Síochána as members	43	28	29
If my rights were violated, I could rely on the Gardaí to help me	38	24	38
The Gardaí never blame victims of crime for what happened to them	40	31	29

4.4 Contact with and Experiences of the Gardaí

4.4.1 Levels of Contact

Eighty-five percent of the young people reported having had contact with the Gardaí in the past year. More young people reported Garda initiated contact (77%) than self-initiated contact (51%). The main reason given for self-initiated contact was the signing of passport forms at just under 41%, all others were under 10%.¹³

¹³ Full details can be seen in Table II, Appendix D.

The level of crime victimisation reported in the past two years was almost 19%. The most common crime that the young people were victim of was assault, with 58% of the young people who stated that they had been a victim of a crime reporting that this was a crime they were victim of. Despite this a minority (37%) of victims initiated contact with the Gardaí through reporting the crime. Where crimes were not reported the two most common reasons given were ‘believed Gardaí could not have done anything’ (31%) and ‘no involvement wanted with the Gardaí’ (26%).

The main reasons given for Garda-initiated contact were ‘stopped and questioned’ (61.8%), ‘moved on’ (48.5%) and ‘stopped and searched’ (40.6%).

Table 3: Garda-Initiated Contact

Type of Contact	Percent
To produce documents	6.9
To investigate a traffic collision	2
To investigate noise/disturbance	10.8
To make a witness statement	7.8
Alleged driving/traffic offence	2
Moved on	48.5
Stopped & questioned	61.8
Stopped & searched	40.6
Arrested, detained for questioning or searched	11.9
To receive summons	2.9
Other	6.9

Excludes missing data from three respondents

Males were more likely than females to have these types of contacts, for example, they were more than twice as likely to report being stopped and searched (See Figure 2).

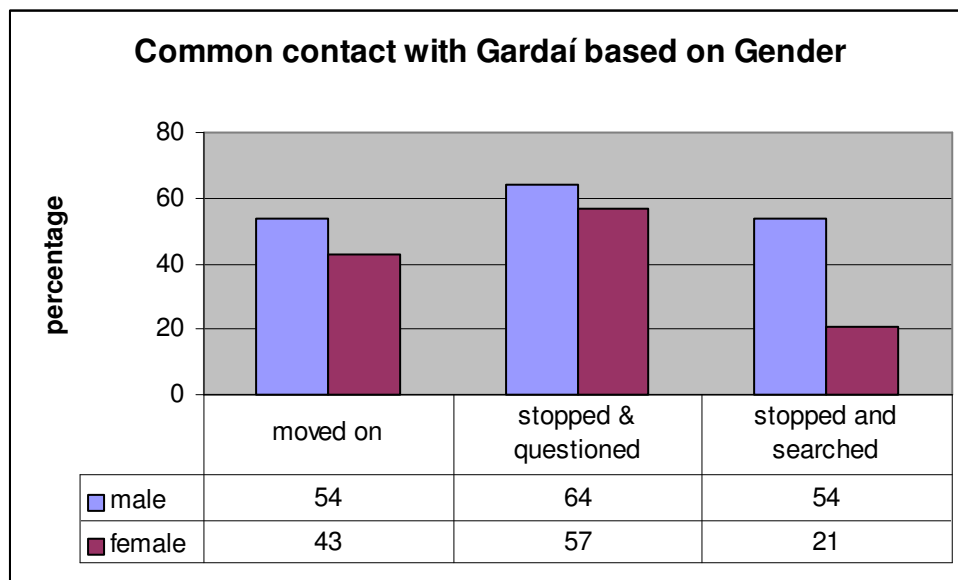


Figure 2: Common Contact with Gardaí based on Gender

4.4.2 Garda Manner

The young people were asked about the helpfulness, competence, sensitivity, politeness and interest of the Gardaí during their last contact. The majority of the young people said that Garda manner met or exceeded their expectations, ranging from 55% for ‘politeness’ to 76% for ‘competence’ (see Table 4).

Table 4: Garda Manner

	Better than expected %	As expected %	Worse than expected %	n
Helpfulness	16	59	25	95
Competence	9	67	24	86
Sensitivity	10	55	35	90
Politeness	19	36	46	92
Interest	18	48	31	90

Some percentages do not sum exactly to 100 due to rounding

4.4.3 Overall Satisfaction

Thinking of their overall contact with the Gardaí 59% of the young people were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’.

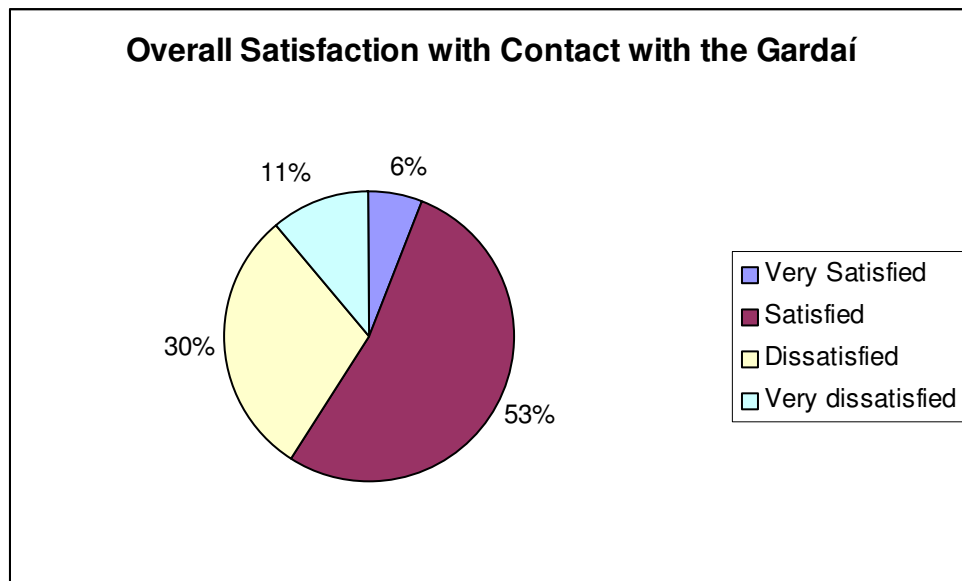


Figure 3: Young People’s Overall Satisfaction with their Contact with Gardaí

Missing values have been excluded. Percentages rounded to nearest whole.

Males were more likely to be ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ with 53% falling within these categories compared to 21% of females.

4.4.4 Unacceptable Behaviour by Garda Members

Almost two-thirds of the young people reported that a Garda had behaved in a way towards them that they considered unacceptable (60.8%). The types of unacceptable behaviours cited equally most frequently were that; the Garda had been ‘disrespectful or impolite’ and that they had been ‘stopped or searched without reason’ (see Table 5). Over a quarter of young people reported that the unacceptable behaviour was that the Garda had ‘swore’. Although discrimination due to age, gender, race or ethnicity was reported by almost 13% of young people while completing the survey many young people made a point of telling the researcher that it was age discrimination that they were referring to and some participants circled the word age on their survey. Racist language did not feature significantly. Race was not recorded by the survey but it was observed by the researcher that all participants but one were Caucasian.

Table 5: Nature of Unacceptable Behaviour

Nature of Behaviour	%
Was disrespectful or impolite	43.1
Did not follow proper procedures	11.8
Stopped or searched without reason	43.1
Harassed	13.7
Clearly was very lax in carrying out duty	4.9
Used racist language	2
Used sexist or sectarian language	2
Made wrongful accusation	29.4
Behaved in a violent way	15.7
Discriminated due to age, gender, race or ethnicity	12.7
Swore	26.5
Searched house without reason	3.9
Took an item of your property	15.7
Other	2

A large majority (88%) said that they did not report the unacceptable behaviour; the remainder reported it to the Garda station or sergeant while none of the young people made a report about unacceptable behaviour to the Garda Ombudsman. The main reason given for non-reporting was that they ‘did not trust that the complaint would be looking into properly, followed by ‘did not think it was serious enough’ and ‘did not think would be believed’. This is consistent with the view described earlier that young people did not feel that when people are dissatisfied with what the Gardaí do, it is easy to have the matter corrected. Responses are shown in Figure 4.

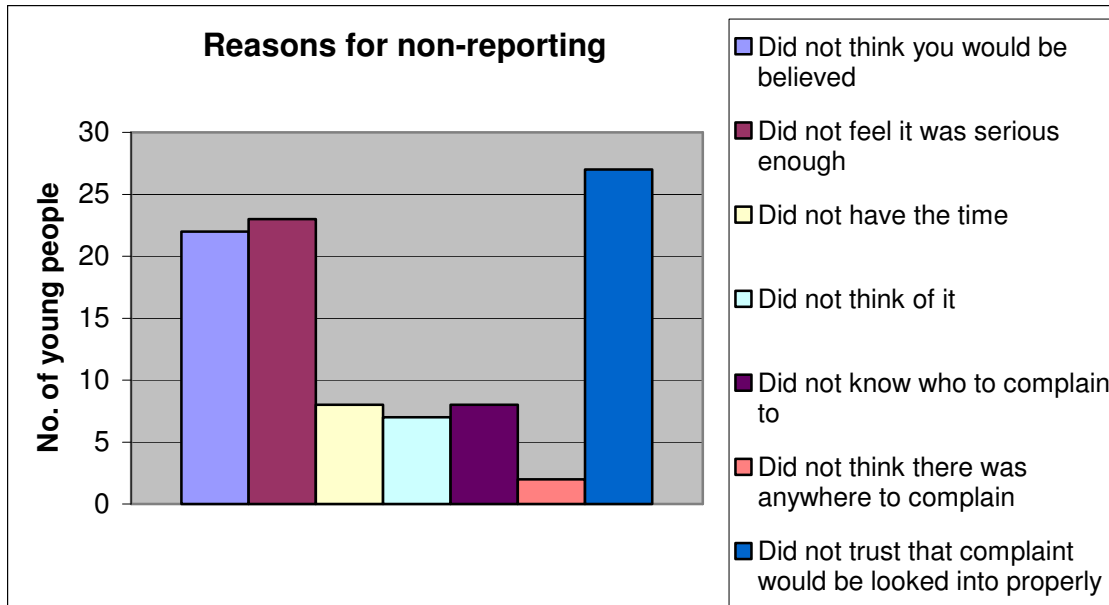


Figure 4: Reasons for Non-reporting of Unacceptable Behaviour

4.4.5 Descriptions of Direct Contact Experiences

The young people were asked to describe in their own words a positive or negative experience they had with the Gardaí in the past year.¹⁴ The most commonly reported contact category was negative-violence followed by a wrongful stop, search or accusation. The levels of violence reported varied. Some young people described pushing and shoving:

I was push[ed] against a wall and jabbed repeatedly in the chest very hard with a pen by a plain clothes female Garda after saying that the Garda were acting inappropriately. (Male, 16yrs)

Gardaí pushing and searching me for no reason. (Male, 16yrs)

While others described serious assaults:

I was walking home from training when I heard three bikes from behind me. When I turned around it was the Gardaí. They stopped me and took my wallet and phone and kicked me around till I was hospitalised later that day and need[ed] stitches. (Male, 16yrs)

I was arrested (named area) I wasn't told what station I was being brought to. [I was] humiliated in front of my friends by being dragged to the ground in the lashing rain and was processed in (named station) and was left in a holding cell. A Garda entered the cell and asked me if I was ok. I was sitting on the bed and said 'yeah'. When I did he kicked

¹⁴ Sixty-three out of 103 described a contact, the remainder had had no contact in the past year or the data was missing.

*me in the head and said 'yeah you're not now ye cheeky little bollox'.
(Male, 17yrs)*

Many descriptions of perceived wrongful stops, searches or accusations were brief and appeared relatively straight forward, for example “a Garda car pulled over and searched us for no reason”, whereas others described what could represent dishonest behaviour from the Gardaí involved:

I crashed into a Garda car with my bike because the car behind me moved forwards and I brought my bike forwards and I accidentally slammed into the Garda's bumper. He got out and without so much as asking me what happened he took my details and [gave me] a caution and drove off. The next day I got a letter from the guards about violence against a member of the guards. (Male, 16yrs)

I had my bag searched for drink. I thought she had taken everything out, then she asked 'do you have anything else in here you shouldn't?' I said 'no, you just took all the drink I had' then she looked and she had left one can in my bag and then she told me I was a liar and put me down for a JLO. It wasn't my fault as I thought she had taken everything out. (Female, 17yrs)

Young people who reported negative direct experiences were more likely to say that they were dissatisfied overall with the Gardaí than those who chose to describe positive experiences with 67% of those describing negative contacts dissatisfied compared to only 22% of those who described positive contacts. Nevertheless, thirteen young people who stated that they were satisfied with the Gardaí described negative experiences. There was not a significant difference in the rates of positive or negative contacts described by males compared to females, however in relation to violent negative experiences 23% of males described these compared to only three percent of females.

Examples of positive experiences that the young people gave included one where a Garda gave the young person an umbrella when it was raining and when Gardaí spoke to them in a polite or friendly way. Other experiences that were described as positive were when the young person knew that what they were doing was wrong or illegal and the Garda was not aggressive or rude:

A few of my friends and I were out one night. We were drinking and had alcohol on us. The Garda approached and politely asked us to leave the drink on the ground and move somewhere else. They were polite and respected us. (Male- 16yrs)

In a number of descriptions of similar incidents the young people expressed surprise that the Gardaí had behaved as they did, with one young female stating that “they were actually listening to us and not being rude or shouting...which was a big change from what they’re normally like”. Most of the positive experiences described related to a positive manner, for example, “my local community guard was very strict but polite and level headed”, or were not easily defined but the young person had stated that it was a positive experience, for example, “I had a positive contact. I asked for directions to Topman”.

Other common themes that arose from the descriptions of contacts were that many of the young people felt discriminated against due to their youth, appearance or the area they were from. In addition they stated that Gardaí often asked them where they lived and if they were in an area that they were not from they were told to go home:

I was stopped and checked for alcohol when I was walking home. I had none so the Gardaí just drove off. I felt discriminated against because I was young. (Male, 16yrs)

[The Gardaí] told me to move away and I didn’t do anything to disturb the peace, took details for no reason just because I was in an area that I didn’t live in. (Female, 16yrs)

The young people were asked if their overall contacts with the Gardaí in the past were positive or negative. Sixty percent of participants reported that they were negative.¹⁵

4.4.6 Vicarious Contact

When asked to describe a positive or negative contact that a friend or family member experienced 38 young people did so. The remainder said that no one they knew had had contact in the past year or did not answer at all. Sixty-six percent of the contacts described were negative with forty-four percent of those relating to violence. None of the young people who described positive vicarious experiences were dissatisfied with the overall service of the Gardaí and only 11% of those who

¹⁵ Further selections of the responses that young people gave in relation to positive and negative contacts are quoted in Appendix E.

described negative vicarious experiences said that their own overall contacts with the Gardaí had been positive.

4.5 Suggested Improvements

4.5.1 Overall Service

As with the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008 the young people were asked does the service that the Gardaí provide need to be improved (see survey Q15b, Appendix A). Almost three-quarters felt that it did. They were then given a list of ways that it may be improved. The most common item selected was for Gardaí to be friendlier, with 77% of young people who felt it needed to be improved choosing this. Following this was more Garda foot patrols at 45% and more contact with the community at 38%.¹⁶

4.5.2 Relationship between the Gardaí and Young People

The young people were also asked does the relationship between the Gardaí and young people need to be improved. Eighty-five percent said that it did and these were then asked how an improvement could be made. The suggestions were many and varied. A small number of participants felt that young people should have more respect for the Gardaí and that this would improve the relationship. However, the majority focused on changes that the Gardaí could make to their practices and attitudes. Many young people suggested more than one way through which the service could be improved.

The most referred to improvements related to the Gardaí ceasing to discriminate against young people through, for example, making wrongful accusations or moving on for no reason, with 30% of young people suggesting this. This reflects the earlier reported findings in relation to unacceptable behaviour and also direct contact with the Gardaí that young people were often moved on or stopped or searched for what they felt was no reason and therefore felt discriminated against. These are the words of some of the young people in relation to discrimination:

The Gardaí discriminate against young people and always assume we have done something wrong. Gardaí have accused a lot of young

¹⁶ All responses are shown in Table III, Appendix D.

people in my area of things they haven't done. Due to all this most opinions in the area of the Gardaí are negative. This needs to be sorted. (Female, 16yrs)

I was walking home one night and the Guards stopped me and searched me. They thought I had a weapon on me when I didn't. Because I had my hood up they said 'I look like I was trying to disguise something'. (Male, 16yrs)

Twenty-eight percent of young people felt that the Gardaí could improve their attitude and manner and listen to them more. Straightforward suggestions such as “be more positive to younger people and a nicer attitude” reflect this. Twenty-seven percent of young people thought that the Gardaí should treat young people fairly and with more respect. Seventeen percent suggested that Gardaí be less aggressive and violent. A young female who suggested both of the latter improvements wrote “to treat the young people with respect and don't hit them or be violent for nothing”. Other quotes from young people with suggestions falling into these aforementioned categories included:

Gardaí should be more polite and less violent (more restraining). (Male, 15yrs)

They need to respect young people more and not to think all young people are doing harm. (Female, 16yrs)

They should understand us and actually listen to us. (Male, 15yrs)

Stop the Garda harassing, assaulting and disposing of evidence, not keep it for their personal use (cannabis, alcohol). (Male, 16yrs)

Other suggestions for improvement included for the Gardaí to focus more on serious crimes and to be more lenient on minor crimes. A number of young people also called for the Gardaí to be more involved with the community and with young people and for them to get to know them better as this would allow a better relationship to be fostered between both groups.¹⁷

¹⁷ A further selection of the responses that young people gave for suggested improvements are quoted in Appendix F.

4.6 Chapter Summary

Overall satisfaction with the Gardaí was low, however slightly more young people found the Gardaí approachable than unapproachable. The participants disagreed with statements about Gardaí that would have indicated a high level of confidence in and opinion of them. They had a high level of contact with the Gardaí, yet despite victimisation were unlikely to initiate contact themselves. The majority reported that Gardaí had behaved in an unacceptable manner towards them but few believed that it would be easy to have this rectified or that they would be believed if they reported it. Most of the contacts they described were negative and overall they were dissatisfied with them. Despite the apparent lack of faith in complaint procedures it did not put the young people off from making numerous suggestions as to how the relationship between themselves and the Gardaí could be improved. These findings will now be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on and interpretation of the main findings. It makes comparisons to the Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2008 and looks at the relationship between this study and the other studies discussed previously in the literature review in relation to public attitudes to police. The implications of the research for service provision and practice are addressed. Recommendations for future research are also provided.

5.2 Young People's Satisfaction with An Garda Síochána

The young people surveyed were 18% less satisfied than their adult counterparts in DMR-North. This is consistent with international research, which has shown that young people generally have less positive attitudes towards the police than adults (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008; Hurst & Frank, 2000). The young people were asked three times in different ways about their satisfaction and experiences of the Gardaí. The highest satisfaction was at the beginning when asked about their overall satisfaction with the service, this decreased when asked about their satisfaction with their contact with Gardaí and again when asked whether their overall contact with them were positive or negative at the end. This may suggest that as the survey encouraged the young people to think in-depth about their experiences and opinions of the Gardaí that the responses at the latter end of the survey may be a better reflection of how they truly felt.

5.3 Garda Manner

Common themes in various parts of the findings showed dissatisfaction with Garda manner including explanations for Gardaí being unapproachable because they are unfriendly or rude and with 46% of young people stating that Garda 'politeness'

was worse than expected. The latter question also did not take account of what level of service the young people did expect, therefore, it is also possible that at least some of the 'as expected' answers were also negative. In addition Garda manner and attitude was a focus of many of the suggestions made for improvement. These findings support the Equality Authority's (2008) research, which found that Gardaí have poor opinion of and little respect for young people.

There was almost a 3:2 difference in the numbers of young people describing the Gardaí as unapproachable compared to adults. This is perturbing; as international research (British Home Office, 1995), as discussed in the literature review, has shown that young people are less likely to report victimisation to police in general. Therefore if they also consider the local police unapproachable it may further decrease the likelihood of reporting victimisation, which can lead to resources not being distributed as necessary and a feeling of helplessness among young people. This was reflected in the findings in that only 37% of victims reported the crime. The under reporting is also likely to be higher than shown here as it has been suggested (British Home Office, 1995) that young people can see some types of victimisation as normal therefore they may not report it. Even in this survey, the young people were initially asked if they were a victim of a crime in the past two years. Then, if they decided no were asked to skip ahead, so they may not have looked at what is considered a crime against them.

5.4 Contact with the Gardaí

The young people had a much higher level of contact with the Gardaí compared to adults at more than double the percentage. In line with previous international research (British Home Office, 1995; Sanders & Young, 2007) the young people also reported a high incidence of Garda-initiated contact. The majority of the young people felt that the Gardaí treat them worse than adults. This is substantiated by the fact that more than three in five of young people stated that a member of the Gardaí had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them compared to only one in thirteen of adults in the country and one in ten in DMR North. Cross-tabulation showed that over 90% of those who described positive experiences were satisfied with the Gardaí. This indicates satisfaction levels were linked to the quality

of the contact, as was the case in Frank et al's (2005) study of adults and Hinds (2007) study of young people.

Similar to the findings of Sanders and Young (2007) and the British Home Office (1995) this research showed that young people were subject to a high number of move on's, and stops and search or question. This impacted on their feelings of being discriminated against and was subject to many of their descriptions about contact with the Gardaí and suggestions for improvement. Conversely they had little self or citizen initiated contacts and those they did have were mainly for the signing of passport forms.

Vicarious contact also appeared to have some correlation to satisfaction levels as all of the young people who reported positive vicarious contacts were also satisfied. However, due to the small number who responded to this question it is difficult to make any firm judgements on their significance.

5.5 Violence & Aggression

Gardaí are required to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality at all times (Garda Síochána, 2009a), yet the most described contacts that young people had with Gardaí were those that involved violence or aggression on behalf of the Gardaí. This said the young people were only asked to describe one contact and if there was one contact that involved violence or aggression this is likely to have stood out in their minds and therefore be chosen for description. However, it is nonetheless worrying as Gardaí are the upholders of the law and although an element of force is often necessary for the job a high level of violence towards young people cannot be accepted.

5.6 Legitimacy

Hinds (2007) found that young people with prior negative contact with police viewed them as less legitimate than those who did not. With the high level of reported unacceptable behaviour, the complaints about Garda manner and the fact that the majority of the young people reported that their overall contacts with Gardaí were negative it is likely that the Gardaí are not viewed as legitimate by the majority of

young people in the study. As discussed in the literature review low legitimacy may cause a number of problems including lack of cooperation with police and under reporting of victimisation. Of the young people surveyed only 37% compared to 84% of adults said that they had reported the last crime that they were victim to.

The young people were also very unlikely to report the unacceptable behaviour they experienced to the sergeant, station or Ombudsman. This is also an indication of the lack of legitimacy that the Gardaí and other institutions have in the eyes of the young people with most believing that the complaint would not be looked into properly. This was echoed when four out of five of the young people disagreed with the statement 'when people are dissatisfied with what the Gardaí do, it is easy to have the matter corrected'. Due to the extent of the unacceptable behaviour reported and, for example, that over a quarter of young people reported that Gardaí had swore at them, it may make it difficult for the young people to view the Gardaí as a professional and legitimate organisation.

5.7 Gender

The issue of gender in relation to people's attitudes towards the police has raised disagreements and inconsistent results have been reported due to much conflicting research outcomes. This research also does not offer conclusive findings on this. Although males were more likely to be subject to stops and searches and to describe violent or aggressive encounters with the police, they were not significantly more likely to depict negative encounters on a whole. They did however have lower levels of overall satisfaction and this might be due to the higher degree of negativity experienced in contacts, for example, violent and aggressive behaviour.

5.8 Young People's Suggestions for Improvement

The young people's suggestions for improvement were generally related to the areas of the unacceptable behaviour and negative experiences reported. When asked in general how the Gardaí should improve the majority felt that they should be friendlier whereas for the adults in the 2008 survey the priority was for greater manpower and more Garda foot patrols. The differences here are likely to do with the

facts that young people have more direct contact with the Gardaí and more Garda initiated contact so a friendlier attitude would be important whereas adults have more citizen initiated contacts and concerns about loss of property and safety.

The young people also expressed that they felt discriminated against and that they were being unfairly moved on or stopped and searched on a regular basis. They did not understand why they were stopped or moved on so often or told to go home if they did not live in an area. Their suggestions were not always detailed with many stating that the Gardaí should just 'stop' these behaviours. However as reported in the British Crime Survey (1995) it may be difficult for police to reduce the contact they have with young people due to requests they get from adults to 'deal' with them. Moving them on may seem like the easiest and least confrontational technique. This does not explain however the high level of apparent unfounded stops and searches. Some of the young people stated that they felt that they were subject to these as the Gardaí were bored or had nothing else to do and suggested that they focus on more high profile crimes such as drug dealing.

The young people expressed that they did not feel listened to or understood. Suggestions for improvement in manner and these areas were common and could cost little or nothing to implement in these difficult economic times. Some also felt that increased awareness and contact between young people and the Gardaí in non-confrontational settings such as community groups, schools and through the Community Policing initiatives would improve the relationship. If young people were to have a better view of the Gardaí from a younger age through these suggestions legitimacy and thus compliance may be improved. It may also help the Gardaí get to know the local young people and improve their handling of them when necessary which may be positive for both groups.

The suggestions of the young people may not be incompatible with those of the Gardaí as there have been some measures introduced in recent times that may influence change in the nature of the relationships between the Gardaí and young people. Gardaí have become involved in Garda Youth Diversion Projects which are community-based crime prevention initiatives, which seek to divert young people from anti-social and/or criminal behaviour. According to the Department of Justice (2003) by doing so the projects also enhance Garda/community relations. Community policing initiatives also have this aim. These have seen dedicated units of Gardaí liaising closely with local communities. Although the objectives are generally to

improve the public's relationship with the Gardaí a by-product by improving relationships may be an improved view of certain groups within the Gardaí. One of the 'strategic imperatives' in the Policing Plan for 2008 was 'to renew and invigorate the culture of the Garda Síochána' through an 'assessment of the culture of the organisation and appropriate interventions'. This suggests that an improvement in the Garda culture is already a matter being tackled. Even though this is a welcome step the Plan did not outline how this was to be achieved or indicate what elements of the culture needed to be changed which makes it impossible to know whether it includes Garda manner and actions towards young people.

5.9 Conclusions

The research has shown that the young people involved have similar feelings towards and experiences of the police as has been found internationally in larger scale studies. They have a lower level of satisfaction than adults and have a high level of contact with the Gardaí, particularly Garda-initiated contact with move-ons and stops and searches featuring predominately.

The young people felt that they were unfairly discriminated against due to their age or appearance and that the way in which the Gardaí spoke to them and behaved towards them was unacceptable. Many found them unapproachable and felt that they should be friendlier. This may have an impact on the legitimacy of the Gardaí in the eyes of young people and lead them to feeling both over-controlled and under-protected.

A lack of confidence in or connectedness to the Gardaí may be why so few of the young people were willing to report crimes committed on them. It may also make necessary contact with them more difficult and adversarial as their past experiences may lead to the young people's defences being raised when in contact with Gardaí.

Age is one of the nine grounds under which people may not be discriminated against by the Gardaí and young people have the right to be treated equally under law (Garda Síochána, 2009a). The law also provides them with extra protections that are not available to adults due to their vulnerable status as children. Young people may be more visible to Garda patrols but this should not mean that are automatically more suspicious than adults. The majority of the young people in the study cannot vote and

they generally do not initiate contact with the Gardaí or report unacceptable behaviour towards them. This puts them in a vulnerable position and may allow Gardaí abuse the powers that they have been given in a way that they are unlikely to do with adults. It appears that in relation to some of the discretionary activity of the Gardaí that the young people in the study have been treated in a harsher manner than adults, for example, being asked to move on without specific reason or being searched without being offered an explanation as to why.

The Gardaí have been subject to much criticism in recent years some of which has been founded and dealt with by matter of the courts and tribunals. Young people are not voters and therefore their voice may not be a priority in politics. However, as stated there have been some inroads made on this and it is possible that the time has now come to listen to young people as one of the main consumer groups of the Garda service.

The general attitude conveyed by the young people towards the Gardaí was negative but attitudes can and do change and for relationships to improve it is necessary for changes to be made. Even though these young people may at present have an unfavourable opinion of the Gardaí this could still be changed if they were to have positive experiences with them.

5.10 Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be drawn from the findings. These include recommendations in relation to service provision and practice and further research. The majority of the recommendations relate to the DMR-North, as this is where the research took place, unless otherwise stated.

5.10.1 Recommendations for Service Provision and Practice

The Gardaí have put in place many safeguards and policies in recent years to improve their practices in relation to human rights and customer service such as the continued implementation of the Action Plan following the Garda Human Rights Audit Report (Garda Síochána, 2007) and the completion of a Declaration of Professional Values & Ethical Standards and Garda Customer Service Charter. This study recommends that these continue to be in the forefront of the minds of both

Garda management and rank and file members. Of particular interest are Articles 1,2 and 8 of the Standards which state, respectively that Gardaí must: Respect the human dignity of every person; Uphold and protect the human rights of all and; Adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality at all times.

There should be an effort to increase community activity between Gardaí and children. This should begin pre-teen to allow positive contacts to be initiated prior to the time when young people are most likely to begin having possible adversarial contacts. However it should also include young people who are teenagers at present to encourage a change in attitude. It could take the form of regular school visits and being involved in club activities. In addition there could be an increased effort of local Gardaí to get to know the young people in their area through friendly conversation while on patrol. This may allow a relationship to be developed which could benefit both the Gardaí and the young people when it is necessary for the Gardaí to intervene in the young people's lives. Community Gardaí could take the lead on this however it would be necessary for all patrol Gardaí in the area to make an effort.

Gardaí should be encouraged to be mindful of their tone and language while dealing with young people and to give them an opportunity to be heard. This may minimise the adversarial nature of contacts between the two groups and reduce dissatisfaction with the Gardaí.

An evaluation of the reasons for the reported high level of stops and move-ons by the Gardaí should be completed to discover whether in fact they are justified or if in fact the young people are being discriminated against. In addition, when appropriate Gardaí should explain to young people why, for example, they are asking them to move on or stopping them. If Gardaí are required to give a reason as to why they are doing this it may reduce the number of times they enforce these practices unnecessarily, also if young people are provided with a justifiable reason they may be less likely to perceive that they are being discriminated against.

There should be a drive by the Garda Ombudsman Commission to inform young people of the service and to encourage reporting of unacceptable behaviour in the area. This could include a schools campaign, visits to youth groups or advertising and providing information on social networking sites.

Records should be kept nationally of all contact that Gardaí have with young people under the age of 18 for their protection, as is practice with most institutions and services that engage with young people.

5.10.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The Garda Public Attitudes Survey of adults is completed on a national basis. It may be beneficial to also complete a survey similar to the one in this study on a large-scale basis to explore the attitudes of young people nationally to the Gardaí and their experiences of them. This would allow generalisations to be drawn and recommendations to be made for changes, if necessary, in Garda practices and policies nationwide.

Future research could also investigate the issue of gender in more detail and provide information on the opinions of young people from new communities. It would also be important for participants to be sourced outside of the educational setting to allow for a broader participant base.

Due to the high level of unacceptable behaviour reported and the references made in the contacts that young people had with the Gardaí about violence and aggression toward them an in-depth investigative study could be completed to discover the extent of and circumstances that may give rise to this behaviour.

In conclusion, this research has provided an insight into the attitudes of some young people from Dublin to the Garda Síochána as well as looking at their experiences of dealing with its members. It has provided an opportunity to the young people involved to have their opinions gathered and listened to. It has also given them a chance to make suggestions for improvement and has incorporated these into recommendations for changes to service practice and provision in their area. This information has not been gathered in Ireland to date and could now provide a platform for further research to be completed nationally. This is in line with national policy to allow young people to voice their opinions on services that affect them. It is now important that other young people are also given the opportunity to voice their opinions and have their experiences gathered in relation to An Garda Síochána.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THE GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

Age _____ Gender: Male _____
Female _____

1. How satisfied or dissatisfied overall are you with the service provided to the community by the Garda Síochána.

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied

The following set of questions relate to any experience of being the *victim* of crime in the past two years

2. Were you the victim of a crime in the past two years?

Yes			
No		→	go to Q9

If yes please mark below

	Type of crime (tick)	No. of Occasions in the past year	Report ed to Gardai (Y/N)
burglary of your home or outbuildings (breaking and entering and stealing or attempting to steal)			
theft of bicycle			
criminal damage to home or other property			
Robbery involving force or threat of force (including mugging)			
theft from your person without force (e.g. pickpocket, phone or handbag stolen without force)			
physical assault (e.g. beaten up, hit)			
Threatened with physical violence			
Other (please specify)			

4. Thinking of the most recent incident, was the crime reported to the Garda Síochána?

Yes			
No		→	go to Q5

If yes did you report it yourself? _____

5. If you did not report a crime, why not? (tick all that apply).

Not serious enough/no loss	
No chance of recovering property	
No insurance claim anticipated	
Believed Gardaí could not have done anything	
Believed Gardaí would not have been interested	
Felt the Gardaí would not believe you	
No involvement wanted with the Gardaí	
Fear of reprisal	
Did not have time	
Other (please specify)	

.....	
Don't Know	
Please go to Q9.	

- 6(a). Did you or anyone else in your household receive a letter acknowledging the report of the crime?

Yes		Go to Q5b
No		Go to Q6
Don't know/can't remember		Go to Q6

- 6(b). To what extent did you find the letter helpful?

Very helpful	
Helpful	
Not much help	
No help	

7. Were you or anyone else in your household contacted through any other means by the Gardai about significant developments?

Yes	
No	
Don't know/can't remember	

8. Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with being kept informed of progress?

Satisfied	Dissatisfied

If dissatisfied why?

9. a) Have you had contact with the Garda Síochána in the past year for any of the reasons below?

	Yes	No
Contact initiated by you		
to report a crime		
to report a disturbance/nuisance		
to report a traffic incident		
to report suspicious activity		
to report lost/found property		
to make a general enquiry		
to make a complaint		
to enquire about a person in custody		
to be a witness		
signing passports		
to avail of other services (witness documents etc.)		
Garda-initiated contact		
to produce documents		
to investigate a traffic collision		
to investigate noise/disturbance		
to make a witness statement		
alleged driving/traffic offence		
Moved on		
Stopped & questioned		
Stopped & searched		
Arrested, detained for questioning		

or searched		
to receive summons		
any other reason (please specify)		
.....		
.....		

10. Thinking about the **most recent** contact you had with the Gardaí to what extent did the manner of the Garda with whom you spoke meet your expectations in terms of the following?

	Better than you expected	As you expected	Worse than you expected
Helpfulness			
Competence			
Sensitivity			
Politeness			
Interest			

11. Did the Garda Síochána get in touch later to inform you about the outcome of your contact?

Yes	
No	

12(a). Have you dialled 999 or 112 and asked for emergency Garda response in the past year?

Yes		
No		→ Go to Q14

12(b). Was your call answered within 10 seconds?

Yes	
No	
Not sure	

12(c). How long did it take for the Gardaí to call out to you?

Within 15 minutes	
More than 15 minutes	
Did not respond	

13. If you called for 999 or 112 for the Garda, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service you received?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied

The following questions relate to your overall contact with the Gardaí and suggestions for improvement

14. Thinking of your contact with the Gardaí in general, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service you received?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied

15(a). Do you think the service that the Garda provides needs to be improved?

Yes		
No		→ go to Q16

15(b). How do you think the service could be improved?

More Gardaí on foot patrols	
Greater Garda numbers	
Enforce traffic laws more thoroughly	
Garda stations open longer	
Gardaí to be friendlier	
More contact with the community	
Other(s) (please specify)	

The next questions deal with Garda approachability and behaviour

16. In general, how approachable do you think the Gardaí are at your local station? (**tick one only**)

Very approachable		→ go to Q17(a)
Approachable		
Unapproachable		→ go to Q17(b)
Very unapproachable		
Don't Know		→ go to Q18

17(a). Why do you think they are approachable? (**Check all that apply**)

Very friendly/helpful	
I know them	
Very reassuring	
They have time for you	
They are members of the community	
Can communicate with them	
Other (please specify)	
.....	
.....	

17(b). Why do you think they are unapproachable? (**Check all that apply**)

Unfriendly/rude	
Not always there/station frequently closed	
Just not interested	
Think they are superior/formal manner	
Minor complaints dealt with more seriously	
Unhelpful	
Distance themselves from the community	
Are violent/aggressive	
Other (please specify)	
.....	
.....	

Continue at Q 18

18. Has a Garda ever behaved towards you in a way you consider unacceptable or you considered wrong?

Yes		
No		→ go to Q21

19. In what way was the behaviour unacceptable? (**tick all that apply**).

Was disrespectful or impolite	
Did not follow proper procedures	
Stopped or searched without reason	
Harassed	
Clearly was very lax in carrying out duty	
Used racist language	
Used sexist or sectarian language	
Made wrongful accusation	
Behaved in a violent way (e.g. pushing)	
Discriminated due to age, gender, race or ethnicity	
Swore	
Searched house without reason	

Took an item of your property	
Other – please specify	

20. (a) Did you report the unacceptable behaviour?

To Garda Ombudsman		→	go to Q20b
To Garda station or sergeant		→	go to Q20b
Did not report		→	go to Q20c

20. (b) Were you happy with the outcome of your complaint?

Yes	
No	

20. (c) If you did not complain why not? (tick all that apply).

Did not think you would be believed	
Did not feel it was serious enough	
Did not have the time	
Did not think of it	
Did not know who to complain to	
Did not think there was anywhere to complain	
Do not trust that complaint would be looked into properly	

The following questions are concerned with Garda presence in your locality and road safety

21. When was the last time you remember seeing a Garda in your area?

Today	
Yesterday	
2-7 days ago	
1-4 weeks ago	
Longer	
Can't remember	

22. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this level of Garda visibility in your area?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied

23. All in all, how good a job do the Gardaí do in your area?

Very Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Poor	Very Poor

24. The Garda Síochána has limited resources and is faced with a wide range of demands. In **your opinion**, what priority do you think the Garda **should give** to the following policing tasks?

	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority
Investigate crime			
Patrol on foot or bicycle			
Patrol by car/van/motorcycle			
Enforce drink/drive laws			
Enforce speed laws			
Ensure effective traffic management and flow			
Enforce laws relating to wearing of seatbelts			
Advise on personal safety and home security			
Stopping drug dealing			

Stopping drug use			
Ensure immediate response to emergencies			
Deal with public annoyances (e.g. loud music, street fights)			
Deal with vandalism			
Provide help and support to victims of crime			
Work with community groups (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert, youth clubs, schools, senior citizens)			
Enforce immigration laws			
Deal with under-aged drinking in pubs			
Deal with under-aged drinking on the streets			
Tackle the sale of alcohol to those under age			
Target organised crime			
Deal with joyriding			
Enforce laws relating to fraud & white collar crime (e.g. Skimming bank & credit cards, bribery)			
Deal with crimes of sexual violence			
Deal with domestic violence incidents			

25. In **your opinion**, what priority do you think the Garda **actually give** to the following policing tasks?

	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority
Investigate crime			
Patrol on foot or bicycle			
Patrol by car/van			
Patrol by motorcycle			
Enforce drink/drive laws			
Enforce speed laws			
Ensure effective traffic management and flow			
Enforce laws relating to wearing of seatbelts			
Enforce other traffic laws			
Advise on personal safety and home security			
Enforce laws relating to drugs			
Ensure immediate response to emergencies			
Deal with public annoyances (e.g. loud music, street fights)			
Deal with vandalism			
Provide help and support to victims of crime			
Supervise licensed premises			
Work with community groups			
Enforce immigration laws			
Deal with under-aged drinking in pubs			
Deal with under-aged drinking on the streets			
Target organised crime			
Deal with youths racing around in cars			
Enforce laws relating to fraud and white collar crime			
Deal with crimes of sexual violence			
Deal with domestic violence incidents			

The next set of questions concern the relationship between Gardai and the community, personal safety and crime generally in Ireland

26. Please indicate whether you **agree** or **disagree** with each of the following statements

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
The Gardai serve the interests of the rich more than the poor					
The better off you are, the better you are treated by the criminal justice system					
Gardai discriminate against immigrants					
Gardai are representative of the communities they serve					
Gardai are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable people					
The local Gardai are fully answerable to the people for their actions and conduct					
The people in my community have a real say in deciding what is important for the Gardai to do					
When people are dissatisfied with what the Gardai do, it is easy to have the matter corrected					
The Gardai carry out their role in a fair impartial manner					
The Garda organisation is made up of honest and honourable people					
People who are different are likely to experience ridicule or personal attack on our streets					
The Gardai provide good leadership in the guidance and direction of our young people					
Anyone in Garda custody would be well treated					
Young people are treated better by the Gardai than adults					

27. Please indicate whether you **agree** or **disagree** with each of the following statements

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
People in Garda custody have their rights fully respected					
Penalties for people caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be more lenient					
Penalties for possession of so-called "soft" (e.g. hash) and "hard" (e.g. cocaine/heroin) drugs should be the same					
Young people who are caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be treated as criminals					
Young people caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be cautioned (i.e. given formal warning rather than being charged) for first offence					
Alternatives to prison, such as fines, community service and probation, should be used for all but the most serious crimes and offenders					
Prison does not prevent re-offending					
I would encourage a friend or relative to join the Garda Síochána					
People like me would be welcome in the Garda Síochána as members					
If my rights were violated, I could rely on the Gardai to help me					
The Gardai never blame victims of crime for what happened to them					
Domestic violence is a private matter, not a Garda matter					
Irish culture accepts violence as a means to resolve problems					
The criminal justice system treats crimes of violence committed by strangers as different to those committed by people known to the victim					
Victims of crime get a raw deal from the courts					

28. How safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood after dark?

Very safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe

29. How safe do you feel in your home at night?

Very safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe

30(a). Do you worry that you might become a victim of a crime?

Yes		
No		→ go to Q31

30 (b) How worried are you about the following?

	Ver y	Fairly	Not very	Not at all
Being mugged or robbed				
Being raped				
Being physically attacked by stranger				
Being attacked by someone you know				
Being insulted or pestered by anybody in street/public place				
Being subject to physical attack because of your religion/race/skin colour				

31. Do you worry that a family member or friend might become a victim of a crime?

Yes	
No	

32. Do you believe that crime in Ireland is increasing, decreasing or staying the same?

Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same

33. Do you believe that crime in your area is increasing, decreasing or staying the same?

Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same

34. How would you describe crime in Ireland today?

A very serious problem	A serious problem	A fairly serious problem	Not a serious problem	Not a problem

35. Thinking about where you live, do you think the following are a major problem, minor problem or not a problem?

	Major problem	Minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know
Teenage crime				
Drug abuse (taking drugs)				
Other drug crime (importing/selling)				
Public drunkenness				
Public nuisance				
Race/hate crime				
Violent crime				
Rape/sexual assault				
Domestic Violence				
Property crime				
Car crime				
White collar crime				

36. With regard to the country as a whole, do you think the following are a major problem, minor problem or not a problem?

	Major problem	Minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know
Teenage crime				
Drug abuse (taking drugs)				
Other drug crime (importing/selling)				
Public drunkenness				
Public nuisance				
Race/hate crime				
Violent crime				
Rape/sexual assault				
Domestic Violence				
Property crime				
Car crime				
White collar crime				

37. What do you believe to be the **main** cause of crime in Ireland today? (**tick one only**)

Drugs	
Drink/alcohol	
Drugs and drink	
Reduction in moral standards	
Human greed and individual deviance	
An unequal society – unfair distribution of wealth	
Insufficient education, health and welfare provision	
Lack of parental control	
The Irish system of criminal justice	
Poor policing	
Lenient penal system (police & judges too soft)	
Other (please specify)	
.....	
.....	
Don't know	

38. Please rank in order (1-6) of what you think is the best way to
 (a) combat teenage crime...?
 (b) Combat drug abuse...?
1 being the best way, 6 being the worst

	Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)	Prison/detention centres	Education	Youth clubs/more things to do	Rehabilitation /counselling	Other (give example)
(a) Teenage crime						
(b) Drug abuse (taking drugs)						

39. Which of the following do you feel is nearest to the truth? (tick one only)

Our criminal justice system is too soft on offenders	
Our criminal justice system deals with offenders properly	
Our criminal justice system is too hard on offenders	

40. Do you think it is important that young people as well as adults are asked about their opinion of the Gardai?

Yes	
No	

41. (a) Please describe a **positive** or **negative** contact **you** had with the Gardai in the past year.

41. (b) Please describe a **positive** or **negative** contact that **some one close to you** had with the Gardaí in the past year.

--

42. (a) Do you feel that the relationship between Gardaí and young people needs to be improved?

Yes	
No	

42. (b) If yes how do you think this should be done?

--

43. Thinking of all your contacts with the Gardaí in the past would you say they have been positive or negative overall?

Positive	
Negative	

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this survey. Your opinions are valuable and without your contribution this research would not be possible.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

Opt-In Parental Consent

Dublin Institute of Technology
Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Átha Cliath



Consent Form: Survey Research

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Niamh Feeney. I am completing a Masters in Criminology in DIT. As part of this I am required to complete a piece of research. This research is about the attitudes of young people to An Garda Síochána. I am investigating this because each year the Garda Research Unit publishes a national survey on public attitudes to the Gardai. However young people are excluded from participating in this survey, therefore I would like to gather the opinions of young people on the subject. International research shows that young people have a higher level of contact with the Gardai than most adults and I believe for this reason that their feelings and opinions on the topic are very relevant. This is in line with the National Children's Strategy that aims to provide an opportunity for young people's voices to be heard on matters that may concern them in their lives.

The students will be required to complete a survey similar to the one used in the Garda Research Unit publication. I will come to the school to introduce the study and administer the survey to the students. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. Each young person will be given the choice as to whether they wish to participate. The young people will not be asked to put their names on the surveys and the identity of themselves or the schools will not be revealed in the research.

Whether you allow your child to take part in this project is entirely up to you. If your child does take part, he or she may stop at any time without implications. In addition, you may ask to have your child's survey withdrawn from the study after the research has been conducted. Please sign below and return to the school if you wish to allow your child to take part. Your child will not be allowed to participate unless this form is returned by

If you want to know more about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely,

Niamh Feeney

Consent Statement

I understand the information contained in this consent form and I am willing to give consent for my child _____ (child's name) to take part in this research project.

Signed

Date

Parent/guardian

Opt-Out Parental Consent

Dublin Institute of Technology
Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Átha Cliath



Consent Form: Survey Research

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Niamh Feeney. I am completing a Masters in Criminology in DIT. As part of this I am required to complete a piece of research. This research is about the attitudes of young people to An Garda Síochána. I am investigating this because each year the Garda Research Unit publishes a national survey on public attitudes to the Gardai. However young people are excluded from participating in this survey, therefore I would like to gather the opinions of young people on the subject. International research shows that young people have a higher level of contact with the Gardai than most adults and I believe for this reason that their feelings and opinions on the topic are very relevant. This is in line with the National Children's Strategy that aims to provide an opportunity for young people's voices to be heard on matters that may concern them in their lives.

The students will be required to complete a survey similar to the one used in the Garda Research Unit publication. I will come to Youthreach to introduce the study and administer the survey to the students. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. Each young person will be given the choice as to whether they wish to participate. The young people will not be asked to put their names on the surveys and the identity of themselves or the schools will not be revealed in the research.

Whether you allow your child to take part in this project is entirely up to you. If your child does take part, he or she may stop at any time without implications. In addition, you may ask to have your child's survey withdrawn from the study after the research has been conducted. Please sign below and return to Youthreach if you **do not** wish to allow your child to take part by the 24th April 2009 Otherwise your child **will** be asked to take part in the survey.

If you want to know more about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely,

Niamh Feeney

Withdrawal of Consent Statement

I **do not** wish for my child _____ (Child's name) take part in this research project.

Signed

Date

Parent/guardian

Date

Principal Consent

Dublin Institute of Technology
Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Átha Cliath



Survey Research: Brief Outline of Study

My name is Niamh Feeney. I am completing a Masters in Criminology in DIT. As part of this I am required to complete a piece of research. This research is about the attitudes of young people to An Garda Síochána. I am investigating this because each year the Garda Research Unit publishes a national survey on public attitudes to the Gardai. However young people are excluded from participating in this survey, therefore I would like to gather the opinions of young people on the subject. International research shows that young people have a higher level of contact with the Gardai than most adults and I believe for this reason that their feelings and opinions on the topic are very relevant. This is in line with the National Children's Strategy that aims to provide an opportunity for young people's voices to be heard on matters that may concern them in their lives.

The students will be required to complete a survey similar to the one used in the Garda Research Unit publication. I will come to the school to introduce the study and administer the survey to the students. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. Each young person will be given the choice as to whether they wish to participate. The young people will not be asked to put their names on the surveys and the identity of themselves or the schools will not be revealed in the research.

By signing this form you are agreeing to inform the parents of the young people to participate of the study. A letter informing parents of the study with withdrawal of consent will be furnished to you for your convenience for distribution.

Sincerely,

Niamh Feeney

Consent Statement

I understand the information contained in this consent form and I am willing to give consent for young people in [insert school name here] to take part in this research project.

Signed

Date

Principal

APPENDIX C: FURTHER FIGURES

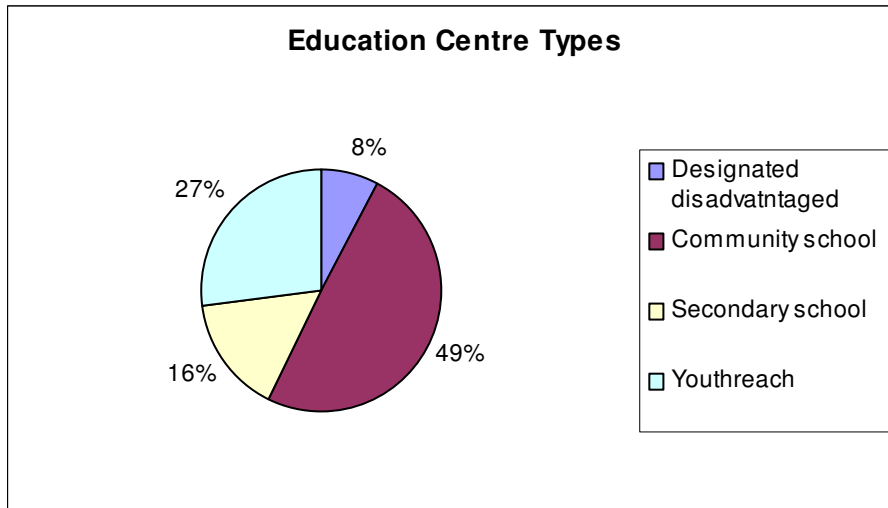


Figure I: Education Centre Types

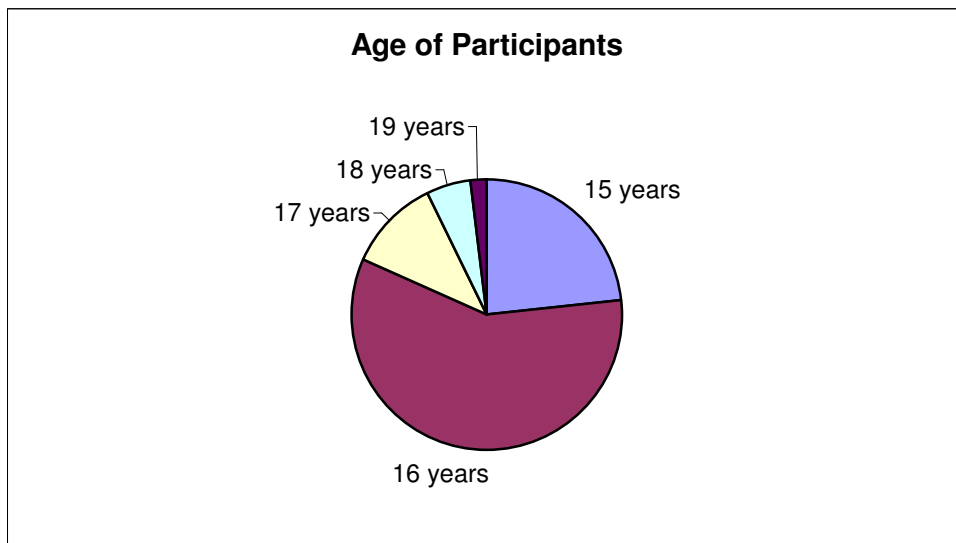


Figure II: Age of Participants

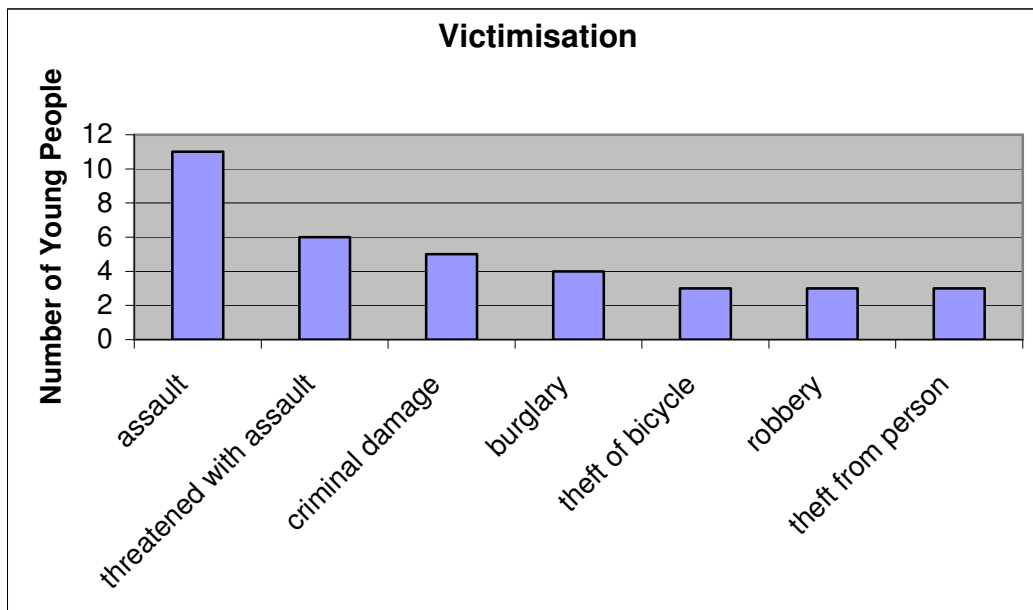


Figure III: Crimes Young People Victim to

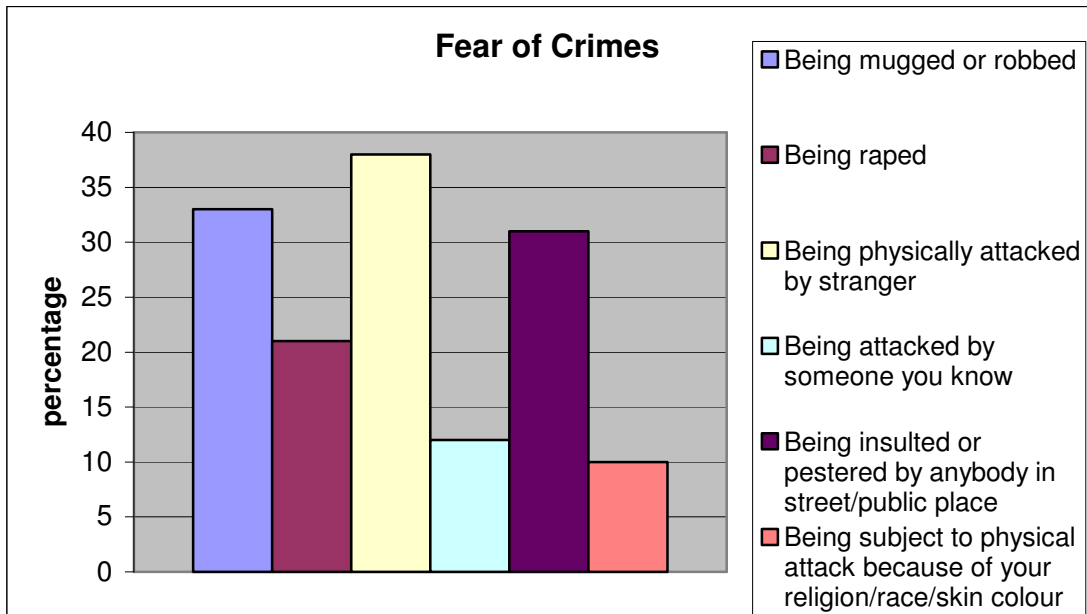


Figure IV: Q30 (b) How worried are you about the following?

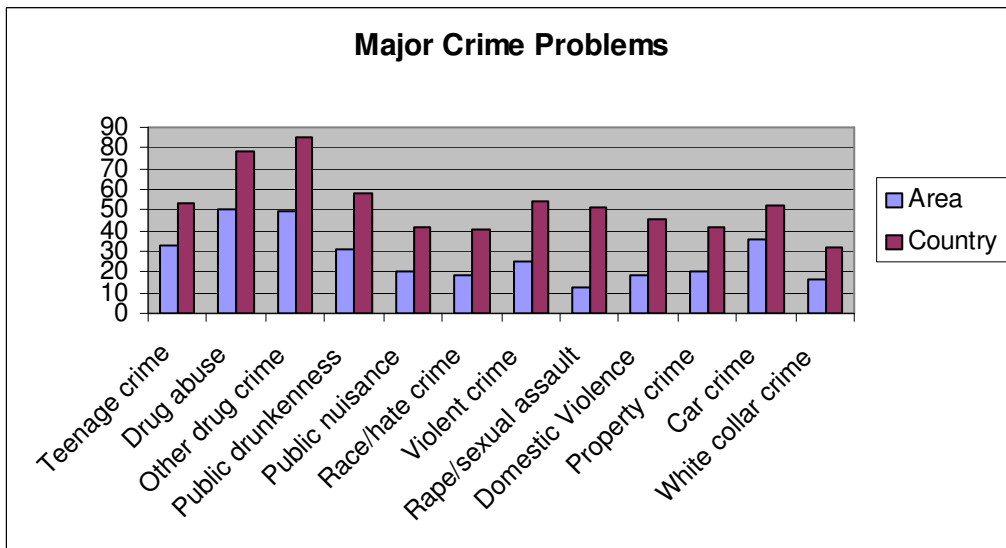


Figure V: Q35 & 36 Perceived Major Crime Problems in Area & Country

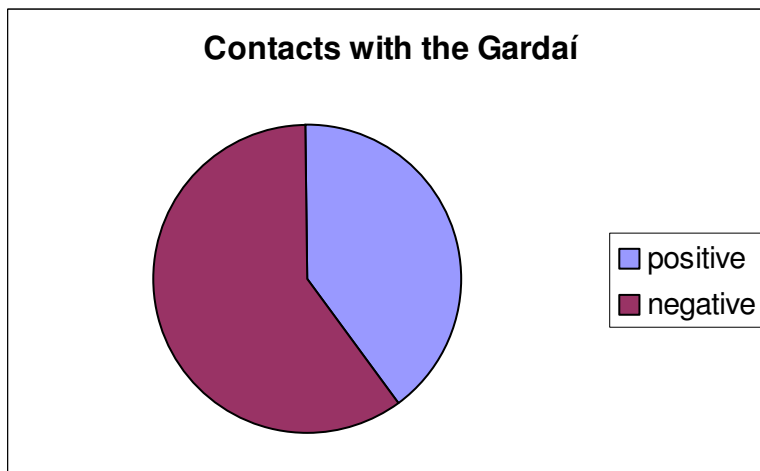


Figure VI: Q43 Thinking of all your contacts with the Gardaí in the past would you say they have been positive or negative overall?

APPENDIX D: FURTHER TABLES

Table I: Q17 (a)&(b) Reasons for approachability or unapproachability

Reasons why Gardaí were considered approachable		n = 43
Very friendly/helpful		26.2
I know them		9.8
Very reassuring		12.2
They have time for you		36.6
They are members of the community		26.8
Can communicate with them		51.2
Other		2.4
Reasons why Gardaí were considered unapproachable		n = 30
Unfriendly/rude		73.3
Not always there/station frequently closed		10
Just not interested		53.3
They think they are superior/formal manner		53.3
Minor complaints dealt with more seriously		13.3
Unhelpful		50
Distance themselves from the community		20
Are violent/aggressive		33.3
Other		6.7

Table II: Q 9 Self-initiated Contact

Type of Contact	Percent
To report a crime	8.7
To report a disturbance/nuisance	8.7
To report a traffic incident	1.9
To report suspicious activity	1
To report lost/found property	6.8
To make a general enquiry	6.8
To make a complaint	4.9
To enquire about a person in custody	6.8
To be a witness	2.9
Signing passports	40.8
To avail of other services (witness documents etc.)	1.9

Excludes missing data from one respondent

Table III: Q 15 (b) How do you think the service could be improved?

Improvements	Percent
More Garda on foot patrols	32
Greater Garda numbers	10.7
Enforce traffic laws more thoroughly	9.7
Garda stations open longer	8.7
Gardaí to be friendlier	56.3
More contact with the community	27.2
Others	7.8

Table IV: Q 26 & 27 (partial)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The better off you are, the better you are treated by the criminal justice system	25	36	21	14	4
People who are different are likely to experience ridicule or personal attack on our streets	18	46	18	16	3
Penalties for people caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be more lenient	19	15	10	31	25
Penalties for possession of so-called "soft" (e.g. hash) and "hard" (e.g. cocaine/heroin) drugs should be the same	19	16	10	31	25
Young people who are caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be treated as criminals	25	21	13	35	6
Young people caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy should be cautioned (i.e. given formal warning rather than being charged) for first offence	29	44	3	16	7
Alternatives to prison, such as fines, community service and probation, should be used for all but the most serious crimes and offenders	23	38	15	20	3
Prison does not prevent re-offending	27	31	21	18	3
Irish culture accepts violence as a means to resolve problems	11	33	25	20	11
The criminal justice system treats crimes of violence committed by strangers as different to those committed by people known to the victim	3	37	37	17	6
Victims of crime get a raw deal from the courts	11	32	45	9	3
Domestic violence is a private matter, not a Garda matter	6	8	13	35	39

Table V: Q21 When was the last time you remember seeing a Garda in your area?

Last sighting of Garda in area	%
Today	3.9
Yesterday	36.3
2-7 days ago	38.2
1-4 weeks ago	11.8
Longer	3.9
Can't remember	5.9

Table VI: Q24 & 25 Top 5 Desired and Perceived Priorities

	Desired priority	Perceived priority
1	Deal with crimes of sexual violence	Deal with crimes of sexual violence
2	Ensure immediate response to emergencies	Investigate crime
3	Stopping drug dealing	Enforce drink drive laws
4	Deal with domestic violence incidents	Enforce speed laws
5	Investigate crime	Deal with under-age drinking in pubs

APPENDIX E: CONTACT QUOTES

Descriptions of positive or negative contacts participants had with the Gardaí in the past year.

The Garda decided to search me and when found nothing baited me.

Out with friends, there was no drinking or drug abuse and we were all searched for no reason. The Gardaí just said empty your pockets and they checked our socks and shoes as well. It was humiliating as all the cars went by staring.

A negative contact I had with them was they keep telling us to move on, but there is no where to go and then they get angrier and angrier.

Gardaí telling us to move along when we are doing no harm, sitting close to our homes with our friends because we have nowhere to go.

Stopped in a car with a person with a provisional licence, searched car, smart comments by Gardaí were made. Just stopped and searched for no reason.

Being told to get off the green from outside my house and sworn at and shouted at.

Walking down the road with a few friends and Gardaí pulled up and were very rude and searched me for no reason.

I was walking home one night and the Guards stopped me and searched me. They thought I had a weapon on me when I didn't. Because I had my hood up they said 'I look like I was trying to disguise something'

Got told to move away from an area because I wasn't from there. Took my details.

Gardaí pushing and searching me for no reason.

I was with friends standing around in my local area. When a Garda car pulled over and searched us for no reason.

A few of my friends and I were out one night. We were drinking and had alcohol on us. The Garda approached and politely asked us to leave the drink on the ground and move somewhere else. They were polite and respected us.

A positive contact I had with the Gardaí was when a mate was drunk and couldn't move in [named area] and the Gardaí were actually listening to us and not being rude or shouting. They rang his mam but they said thanks to us for staying with him which was a big change from what they're normally like.

While walking home a police car pulled up and asked me where I lived. I told them, they then proceeded to tell me to go home, I replied that I was. They told me not to get cheeky.

Me and my friend were sitting on a wall waiting for a DART and a Garda squad car pulled up and yelled at us to get down and continued to question us and take our names.

The Gardaí just stopping the car to ask us to move on even though we're doing nothing wrong.

I was followed by two plain clothes Garda, stopped, told I look like someone they were looking for and asked questions.

Walking down road with friends and the Gardaí beat me up and I was dragged down the Garda station and did not get out until 6.30am.

They chased me into a garden then nicked me and smacked me with a torch, then charged me on trespassing for being in the garden.

Got arrested just for walking down the road and they stopped me and searched me and I wouldn't take my runner off so they arrested me and killed me.

Got taken out of a car and searched when was outside mates house waiting for them and was searched.

They stopped my friends car and searched all of us for no reason.

They stopped me for nothing and started searching me and shouting for nothing.

We were all standing around and the Garda came and told us to move away from my mates house and we didn't so they came back and arrested two of my mates.

When I was arrested for possession of an offensive weapon I was treated poorly. They were rough with me, didn't put my seat belt on me in the Garda car and wouldn't really listen to me.

I went to get my passport signed and the Garda was real cheeky and smart and I didn't like her attitude towards the situation.

I was stopped and accused of drinking randomly in the park one day and they brought me home and said that they seen me in another area drinking earlier in that same day with no proof or breathalyser when I was not drinking.

We were sitting round with friends. We were not doing anything illegal. Gardaí randomly drove up and searched everyone, being very hostile and acting like we had done something terrible. When they found nothing they just left without saying a word of apology etc.

I got stabbed and the Garda sent a letter to my house saying they were investigating it and they got my name wrong.

Went to give a statement and they were polite toward me.

A positive one was when me and my friend were having a smoke and the Guards pulled up and told us to put it out. They told us the effects of smoking like it stunting your growth and ever since then I haven't smoked.

I was in [named park] on a Saturday with my friends when a bunch of scumbags were making fun of us. The Gardaí who patrolled the park made them leave us alone and escorted them outside of the park. I think that's definitely a positive contact I've had with the Gardaí.

APPENDIX F: SUGGESTION QUOTES

Suggestions to improve the relationship between Gardaí and young people.

I feel it should be [improved] but I'm not sure it's possible. The damage is done and most people my age have a grudge about Gardaí. I do feel though that they do a good job with adults.

I think that they should have a bit more respect for younger people `cause they will give it back.

They should leave us alone and stop following us `cause they're bored.

More respect. The Gardaí should treat young people like everyone else.

Gardaí shouldn't pick on teenagers as much.

More community Garda. More Garda out on the roads.

The Gardaí should not accuse everyone who haven't really done anything. I think they stereotype people. Like if you're from a bad area, you're automatically bad.

They should stop talking down to us and moving us on for no reason.

Gardaí should go easier on young people.

People should be more familiar with the Gardaí from a younger age, this would take away from the bad image young people have of the Gardaí.

More school awareness programmes.

Gardaí not judging all young people as criminals and making more of an effort to patrol and get to know the community.

They need to respect young people more and not to think all young people are doing harm.

Gardaí should be more polite and less violent (more restraining).

Treat us better and don't be aggressive.

To be more respectful to us and don't put their hands on us without reason to.

Mutual respect, I don't think either of us has very much respect for each other for the most part.

The Gardaí should be more friendly and worried about all the teenagers doing drugs and drinking. There's always fights over it.

For the Gardaí to get involved with the kids in the community a bit more.

Being treated fairly, understanding.

Garda don't give young people enough time.

Stop hitting young people as much as they do and have some respect for victims in a situation.

Garda could try to be more soft on young people depending on what the crime is.

They should stop thinking they're something they're not.

They should be a bit friendlier and not so aggressive toward young people.

They should listen more instead of jumping to conclusions.

Gardaí stop thinking they're above people. They shouldn't just stop people for no reason. They should actually listen to people instead of making up their own stories.

A more communal Garda service.

They should be more lenient on minor crimes.

Garda being less aggressive towards younger people.

Stop harassing us.

They need to relax and give us a chance to explain and reason to our actions.

Stop bullying us for nothing.

They should give young people a chance to say what they need.

There should be more education and community things on.

By trying to find out who's the biggest trouble makers in the area. If they were more lenient against less serious things. If they talked to them more mannerly.

They should be more friendly and we shouldn't have to be afraid of them. They shouldn't be so rude.

By asking us how to stop teenage crime not asking parents who wouldn't know about it. To be more involved in youth centres and clubs, e.g. Scouts or GAA. By talking to us like adults and treating us equally as is our rights.

To treat the young people with respect and not hit them or be violent for nothing.

Be more positive to younger people and a nicer attitude.

Get the Guards to concentrate on the more high profile crimes/violent crimes rather than telling some teenagers off for loitering. Be consistent.

Stop being violent to young people.

I think if the Garda were more understanding of the area and knew how to deal with young people from this area the relationship would improve.