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Public and police perceptions of policing ethics

Conference or Workshop Item

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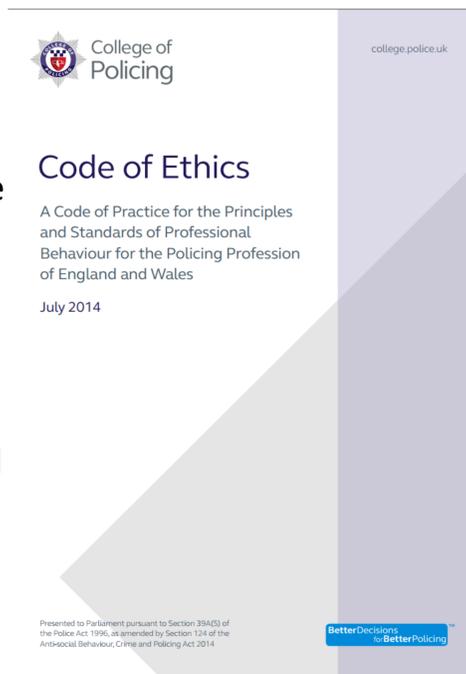
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Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
And all our participants.

2014 Code of Ethics:

“2.1.1 ...**The public expect** the police to do the right thing in the right way...”, but where is the **EVIDENCE** of what the public expect or value? How does “The New Code” compare to “The Blue Code” and do the public:

- “...expect the police to do the right thing in the right way.”
- understand the need for cop culture and group loyalty
- just want crimes solved....



Method

- 520 police officers
- 370 members of the public
- Same 7 questions about 11 scenarios* describing:
 - Theft
 - Assault
 - Looking the other way
 - Bribery & accepting gifts
 - Moonlighting

Example scenario:

At 2 A.M. an officer, who is on duty, is driving a patrol car on a deserted road. The officer sees a vehicle that has been driven off the road and is stuck in a ditch. The officer approaches the vehicle and observes that the driver is not hurt but is obviously intoxicated. Upon finding that the driver is an off duty police officer, instead of reporting the accident and potential offences the officer transports the driver home.

If a police officer engaged in this behaviour and was discovered doing so, what, if any, disciplinary action do YOU think SHOULD follow.

None	0	2	A fine	7	11
A verbal reprimand	2	7	A demotion in rank	8	25
A written reprimand	12	22	They should be dismissed or forced to resign	69	32

If a police officer engaged in this behaviour and was discovered doing so, what, if any, disciplinary action do YOU think would be likely to result in reality?

None	0	9	A fine	5	9
A verbal reprimand	1	16	A demotion in rank	4	19
A written reprimand	11	26	They should be dismissed or forced to resign	75	21

If a police officer discovered a colleague behaving in this manner, do you think they would report them?



If you discovered a police officer behaving in this manner, do you think YOU would report them?



Conclusions

- Public more lenient than police
- Public think officers are less likely to report and discipline to be too lenient compared to officers' views
- Police and public do not see receiving gifts as unethical
- Public view the use of violence as more problematic than the police do
- Police see disciplinary action as harsher than it should be
- Public think disciplinary action is more lenient than it should be (but think it is more lenient than it is in reality)
- Possible difference between what the public value and what is of value to the public (Bennington and Moore, 2011)