



CAMPAIGN<sup>FOR</sup>  
COMMON  
SENSE



# Getting Along Again

## Launch Report

A call for common sense & fair play

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### *Join the Conversation*

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# About us

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The Campaign for Common Sense (CCS) exists to bring together those who want to have grown up discussion and debate.

We will conduct research, and organise events online and across the country, involving experts in all fields and bring them to the widest possible audience.

We will be champions for free speech and tolerance.

**We believe that**

...nobody has a monopoly on what is right and wrong.

...we all have far more in common than it sometimes seems.

...common sense and fair play are the best way to approach controversial issues.

...sensitive topics should be discussed frankly & calmly, without trading insults.

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## Foreword

### Mark Lehain

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Having worked in schools for the best part of 20 years, I've seen with my own eyes the incredible transformation that a child experiences when they get a great education.

I've also seen what happens to many when they leave school and their ability to express themselves is suddenly constrained.

**Don't think that Brexit will be a disaster?**

BANG – you're alt-right and racist.

**Use the "wrong" terminology around identity?**

CRASH – here's a mob calling for you to be "cancelled".

**Not sure that everyone is a victim of The System?**

WALLOP – complete this privilege survey to educate yourself.



It's really sad to see. And I don't think it's what anyone actually wanted. But well-meaning initiatives to make society fairer are actually making things worse and dividing people further.

**It doesn't need to be like this.**

Things can get better without forcing crazy ideas onto others. We just need to trust people more, and police their words and actions less – it has served us pretty well so far.

And right now of all times, our politicians should be focused on bigger things than micromanaging the lives of the rest of us.

That's why I've left education and set up the **Campaign for Common Sense** - a rallying point for people who have had enough of walking on eggshells, and who trust people to do the right thing.

I am convinced, and research shows, that there is far more common ground between people than those causing division claim - especially given the way the country has come together to face the challenges of coronavirus. I'm also certain that there are better ways to differ on things. We're not enemies, we just disagree!

If we reject the analysis that sets different groups against one another, focus on what we have in common, and learn to love the differences of opinion we have with everyone, we can keep people together in this otherwise anxious time.

It won't be easy. Those with a stake in the division will make all sorts of accusations as we do this. But I don't want the young people growing up now to have to endure the intolerance we've allowed to spread. Common sense and fair play must prevail!

*Mark Lehain*

# Introduction

## The Concept





## Introduction The Concept



### The concept of a 'common sense' stretches back a long way.

The idea that there are some truths shared by the overwhelming majority in society, and should form the basis of interactions and decision-making has been prevalent for centuries.

In recent decades, however, this appeal to common sense has found itself pushed aside by a vocal activist minority.



Most people are busy going about their lives, and have neither the desire nor time to closely track things in politics, courts, universities, and so on. Activists have taken advantage of this to push their agenda and values. The end result is that the majority have increasingly found their views overlooked in favour of those who shout the loudest and with the most anger.

This has not gone completely unnoticed by the public, and nor has it been welcomed. Polling we commissioned found that:

# 8 in 10

Agree that

"We need to restore some common sense in this country." <sup>1</sup>



# 4 in 5

Agree that

"There is a blame culture in this country that makes things worse." <sup>2</sup>

# 4 in 5

Agree that

"you have to walk on eggshells when speaking about certain issues these days." <sup>3</sup>



# 2 in 3

Agree that

"Political correctness makes divisions in our country worse." <sup>4</sup>



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## #CommSenseUK



## Significantly, there is majority support for these statements regardless of age, sex, socioeconomic grouping, or political leanings.

Significantly, **there is majority support for these statements regardless of age, sex, socioeconomic grouping, or political leanings.**

Despite this, businesses, politicians, and even public servants such as teachers and police, are exhorted to follow the demands of groups representing fringe causes.

Where they fail to comply with their demands they face public or online shaming or worse. **Slowly but surely our country is being shaped by unrepresentative concerns, and common sense has been marginalised.**

This is not to say that the views of these groups are necessarily wrong or pushed with malicious intent. Indeed, it is generally quite the opposite.

From issues of race, to sexuality, to appreciation of other cultures and customs, societies have often required people to speak up and reshape societal consensus, and in the process keep the common sense in tune with underlying changes.

**Slowly but surely our country is being shaped by unrepresentative concerns, and common sense has been marginalised.**



**It is clear that efforts to change people's behaviour and make society more inclusive are actually forcing people apart and making divisions worse.**



However, now the freedom of speech that enabled previous shifts in opinion to be heard and gain support is under attack on the grounds of inclusivity. Also, appeals for change are increasingly strident, polarising, and having a divisive effect.

In some quarters this phenomenon of minority concerns has been negatively characterised as 'political correctness'. At the same time, commentators and comedians have parodied legitimate worries as an appeal to out-dated views of the past. As a result, 'political correctness' has become so hackneyed as to now be used as a brickbat with which to beat appeals to common sense.

**Yet according to our polling, six times as many people think political correctness has gone too far than think it hasn't gone far enough <sup>5</sup>.**

The proportion of people who think it has gone 'too far' outweigh 'about right' or 'not gone far enough' in every single demographic group, including among Remain voters, 18-24 year olds, and Green Party voters.

It is clear that efforts to change people's behaviour and make society more inclusive are actually forcing people apart and making divisions worse.



**The proportion of people who think it has gone 'too far' outweigh 'about right' or 'not gone far enough' in every single demographic group, including among Remain voters, 18-24 year olds, and Green Party voters.**







Over two-thirds of UK adults agreed with the statement “political correctness makes divisions in our country worse”. It also found that 7 in 10 (69 per cent) agreed that political correctness “divides society even more by pigeon-holing everyone”



7 in 10

As mentioned above, our polling found **over two-thirds of UK adults agreed with the statement “political correctness makes divisions in our country worse”**. It also found that **7 in 10 (69 per cent) agreed that political correctness “divides society even more by pigeon-holing everyone”** - again with majority agreement in every single demographic and political group<sup>6</sup>.



2 in 5

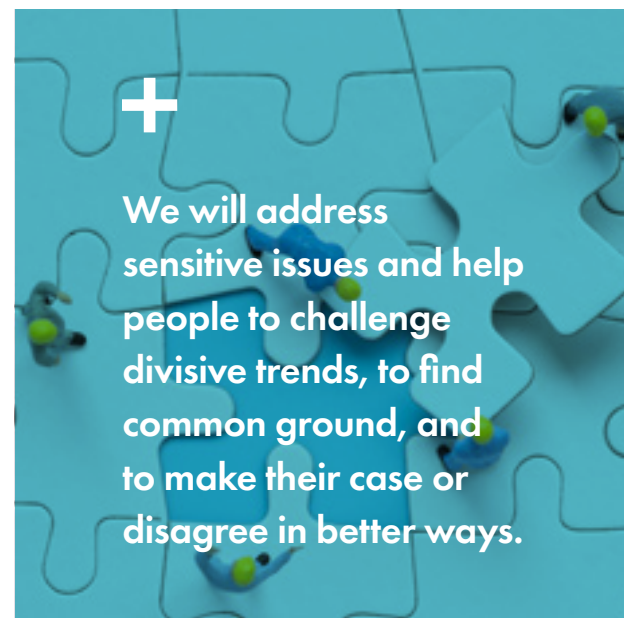
In addition, 2 in 5 people (39%) of people agreed that **if they had more of the facts they’d be more comfortable taking on political correctness** – over twice the proportion who said they would not (17%)<sup>7</sup>.

## Our Mission

It is from this that the Campaign for Common Sense derives its mission.

**We will address sensitive issues and help people to challenge divisive trends, to find common ground, and to make their case or disagree in better ways.**

We urge those in positions of authority to trust people to use their common sense and compassion, to figure their own way through complex and sensitive issues. To do otherwise is counter-productive and actually makes things worse for everyone.



To start things, in this report we examine several areas where we believe developments have been especially divisive and out-of-step with public opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Table 269, CCS polling

<sup>5</sup> Table 21, CCS polling

<sup>2</sup> Table 272, CCS polling

<sup>6</sup> Table 300, CCS polling

<sup>3</sup> Table 256, CCS polling

<sup>7</sup> Table 279, CCS polling

<sup>4</sup> Table 275, CCS polling

# Part Two Freedom of Speech





## Part Two Freedom of Speech

### The first casualty of common sense being squeezed from our lives is our freedom to speak as we wish.

History has shown that societies are more than capable of self-regulating their language to be inclusive, without authorities setting stringent guidelines and rules. Indeed, inclusive moves needed free speech to get going in the first place.

Yet in everyday interactions across life there is now an ever-more onerous policing of what we can or can't think, say and do.

In our polling we found that **three-quarters of people agreed that political correctness "makes everyone uncertain about what they can or can't say"**, with majority agreement in every single demographic and political group <sup>8</sup>; and **4 out of 5 (78%) people agreed that "you have to walk on eggshells when speaking about certain issues these days"** <sup>9</sup>.

A classic example of this has been the debate over immigration in recent decades.



65 per cent of people tend to or strongly support a "significant reduction in the levels of immigration"



Polling has persistently shown that the British public favour controls on immigration<sup>10</sup> - with one recent poll revealing 65 per cent of people tend to or strongly support a "significant reduction in the levels of immigration."<sup>11</sup> And yet to speak out in support of the majority - or common sense - view on issues of migration and asylum often lead to accusations of racism.

For instance, the organisation *MigrationWatch UK* frequently found itself the target of groups calling its analysis as racist.

When it launched in 2002 with a prediction that net immigration to the UK would grow by two million over the next decade, it was ostracised by the Home Office and denounced as closet racists for even raising the subject<sup>12</sup>.

In the end its predictions were on the low-side, and it has continued to represent the common view that controls on immigration are both necessary and popular, using empirical data to support its analysis.

This hasn't stopped various groups seeking to silence *MigrationWatch* from publishing research on the topic of immigration. The founding Chairman, Sir Andrew Green, extracted an apology from the Daily Mirror in 2012, after it compared *MigrationWatch* to the Nazi Party and Ku Klux Klan<sup>13</sup>. And David Coleman, Professor of Demography at Oxford University and honorary consultant to *MigrationWatch*, was the target of a petition from Oxford Student Action for Refugees for his associations with the think-tank<sup>14</sup>.



The regulation of free speech doesn't stop with the judging of groups or individuals seeking to influence the political debate. It reaches into the arts too.

A recent poll by Arts Professional of people working in the sector found that more than 80% of respondents felt that those who "share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised." Just over half (52%) said they'd felt "pressurised, harassed or bullied for speaking out."<sup>15</sup>

Even deliberately 'edgy' satirical content being judged on whether it has offended one group or another.

The concept of a 'right to not be offended' has gained ground. Appeals, particularly but not exclusively on the left, are made for those who stand on stage to 'check their privilege' before making jokes on any given topic. Artists are told it's ok to "punch up, not down" – but who is 'up' and who is 'down' is never clear until it's too late.



In our polling, we found that **82 per cent of people agreed "too many people are easily offended these days"**, with a majority agreeing with the statement in every single demographic and political group<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, **more than two-thirds of people (68%) agreed that "comedians should be free to tell jokes even if some people are offended"**, again with majority agreement across every single demographic and political group<sup>17</sup>.

Yet despite common sense clearly being in favour of comedians exercising their right to free speech, whether it offends or not, comedians from all across the political spectrum have been condemned by the media and politicians, and even had the police called over poor-taste (and generally unfunny) jokes.

For instance, Jo Brand, commenting on the trend for throwing beverages on politicians on Radio 4, joked "why bother with a milkshake when you could get some battery acid?", before adding afterwards "I'm not going to do it, it's purely a fantasy".

Soon people were reporting her to the Metropolitan Police and former UKIP leader Nigel Farage - himself a victim of the 'milkshaking' craze - called her remarks an "incitement to violence"<sup>18</sup>.



The latest battlefield in the war on being offended is in UK universities, where increasingly students are responding to the challenge of hearing alternative views and ideas by banning speakers from sitting on panels – known as 'no-platforming'.

This might have had some justification if it were applied to stop extremists whipping up unrest or violence. However, it is now invoked against views and ideas that are mainstream but challenging to those in positions of campus power.

Some of the most absurd examples of this abandonment of common sense are those in which life-long campaigners for diversity and minority rights have been no-platformed by students.

For instance, Peter Tatchell has spent a lifetime fighting for LGBT rights, frequently getting arrested and beaten-up in the process. In 2015 he signed an eminently sensible letter criticising the National Union of Students (NUS) for its policy of no-platforming<sup>19</sup>. A few months later the national LGBT representative for the NUS refused to share a platform with Tatchell, claiming - without evidence - he had supported speakers who "incite violence" and he had used "racist language"<sup>20</sup>.

Although the debate did ultimately take place with Tatchell on the panel, the effect of the pronouncement was obvious – stand up for the values of "democratic political exchange" and you will be smeared, demonised and those who support you will be similarly treated.

<sup>8</sup> Table 303, CCS polling

<sup>9</sup> Table 256, CCS polling

<sup>10</sup> <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-of-concern/#kp1>

<sup>11</sup> [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/pyx8csk94c/BrightBlue\\_Results\\_170913\\_W.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/pyx8csk94c/BrightBlue_Results_170913_W.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/9745585/Labour-has-no-right-to-lecture-on-immigration.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sir-andrew-green---an-apology-523654>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/hounding-of-the-don-who-dared-to-speak-out-on-migrants-7208367.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/arts-staff-given-gagging-orders-to-curb-dissent-9vs9fn0dz>

<sup>16</sup> Table 257, CCS polling

<sup>17</sup> Table 265, CCS polling

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/police-investigate-jo-brand-over-remark-about-throwing-battery-acid-at-politicians-a4166921.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2015/feb/14/letters-censorship>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/peter-tatchell-hits-back-at-lgbt-student-leader-s-witch-hunt-a6873991.html>



# Part Three

## Transgender rights

## Part Three

### Transgender rights



#### Polling Suggests

**(61%) of people think that rights for people who were born male but identify as female and vice versa are about right or have gone too far.**

**The topic probably attracting the most controversy and outrage right now is that of transgender rights.**

Gender identity issues have become the bellwether for the latest aspect of the culture wars, with even some of the most avowed and respected campaigners falling foul of the new orthodoxy.

The real crime of Peter Tatchell in the no-platforming example of the previous chapter was to sign a letter supporting free speech. He did this alongside some of the world's most famous feminist thinkers, many of whom have championed women's rights for decades, and who have been given a similar treatment to Tatchell.

Germaine Greer and Linda Bellos have in recent years been no-platformed by Bristol University because they refused to accept the views of more militant trans-rights activists <sup>21</sup>. The author Julie Bindel was banned from speaking at Manchester University's student union in October 2015 over an article she had written on transgender issues thirteen years earlier <sup>22</sup>.

More recently we have seen the case of Harry Miller – who was visited at work by police for an allegedly transphobic tweet <sup>23</sup> – and the employment tribunal involving Maya Forstater <sup>24</sup>. The latter prompted a tweet by J.K. Rowling <sup>25</sup>, hardly a renowned social conservative, that attracted fury from hard-line trans-activists.

Behind these issues of free speech are more serious and far-reaching concerns. There can be no doubt that it has been necessary to create wider awareness around cases where biological circumstances have made life for some individuals difficult e.g. intersex people. But moves to gender being “self-identified”, and for sports to categorise according to gender and not sex, are out-of-step with public opinion.



Over three-fifths (61%) of people think that rights for people who were born male but identify as female and vice versa are about right or have gone too far.

61%

Think that changes in society to take into account of those who identify as neither male nor female are about right or have gone too far.

There is no appetite for significant further shifts in trans rights: our polling shows that **over three-fifths (61%) of people think that rights for people who were born male but identify as female and vice versa are about right or have gone too far.**

The same proportion (61%) think that changes in society to take into account of those who identify as neither male nor female are about right or have gone too far <sup>26</sup>.

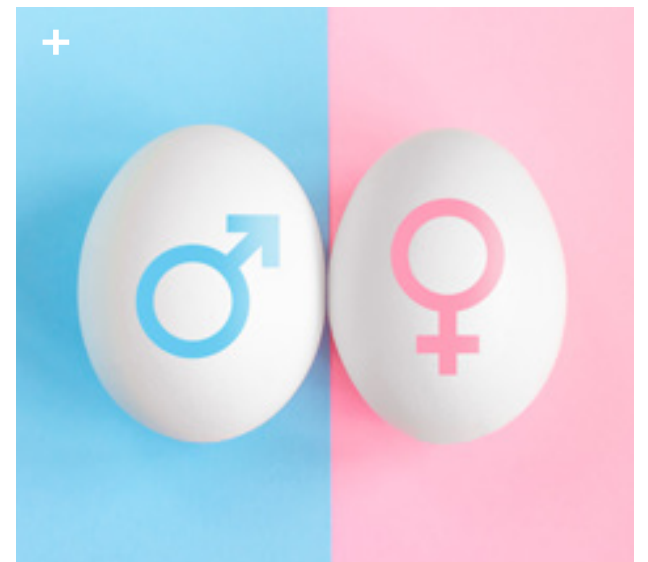
Given public opinion, attacking anyone who expresses discomfort or disagreement with further trans rights is ultimately damaging relationships between people. It could also undermine sympathy for those who genuinely find themselves struggling with aspects of their identity.

Most worrying are developments around the support and treatment of children struggling with gender identity.

It feels as though there has been an over-correction after years of ignoring the issue, resulting in various experts expressing major concerns about the impact on children.

Last year, Psychoanalyst Dr Marcus Evans - a former governor at the Tavistock Centre, England's only NHS youth gender clinic - warned that doctors were being too quick to give children and young people gender reassignment treatment <sup>27</sup>. Recently a test case has been heard at the High Court regarding whether children can consent to gender reassignment treatment <sup>28</sup>.

We have also seen the leaking of new guidelines for English and Welsh schools drawn up by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). These required schools to open up areas of school life that had been separated by sex to those who identify with a certain gender <sup>29</sup>.



Very recently the Crown Prosecution Service released similar guidance and a programme of study for schools, again suggesting that school facilities should be made available according to gender identity, not sex <sup>30</sup>.

The irony in all this is that schools have been largely praised for their sensitive handling of children struggling with transgender issues. By ignoring common sense in favour of the ideology of a tiny minority, the EHRC and CPS guidance risked setting back schools' careful and considered efforts. They would also have triggered huge public outrage, and, most importantly, made life miserable and awkward for trans- and non-trans students alike.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bristol-university-students-ban-transphobic-feminists-73d0pmrx7#>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36101423>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/14/transgender-tweet-police-acted-unlawfully>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/dec/18/judge-rules-against-charity-worker-who-lost-job-over-transgender-tweets>

<sup>25</sup> [https://twitter.com/jk\\_rowling/status/1207646162813100033](https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033)

<sup>26</sup> Table 23, CCS polling

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-47359692>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/05/high-court-to-decide-if-children-can-consent-to-gender-reassignment>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.economist.com/britain/2019/10/03/transgender-rules-for-english-schools-face-a-backlash-from-women>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/01/29/schools-warned-could-face-legal-action-fail-allow-trans-pupils/>



# Part Four

## History and statues



## Part Four

### History and statues



6 in 10

Six out of ten people (61%) agreed that “statues of historical figures in the UK, even if they are controversial, should be preserved rather than removed”.

**The drive for cultural correctness doesn’t begin and end with current-day issues like gender identity.**

It also reaches back into history, imposing onto the past the morals and norms of the present, and judging historical societies and figures accordingly.

Philanthropists from the era of colonialism honoured for their contributions to our universities and museums; great generals that fought for freedom against tyranny; world-famous leaders and peacemakers: these and others have found themselves on the wrong side of the virtuous anger of the new puritanism.

**Once again, the activists are completely out of step with the wider public: six out of ten people (61%) agreed that “statues of historical figures in the UK, even if they are controversial, should be preserved rather than removed”.** Fewer than 1 in 10 thought they should be removed.

The modern drive to cleanse our public spaces of certain historical figures began in South Africa and the US ‘Deep South’ - places with difficult and complex recent histories of racial conflict.

Yet it has quickly been adopted by predominantly white middle-class students in the UK. It started with campaigners at Oxford University taking against Cecil Rhodes and trying to remove a statue of him in the grounds of Oriel College. This despite Rhodes having donated heavily to Oxford and the bursary bearing his name being responsible for thousands of students getting on courses they might otherwise not have <sup>31</sup>.



They were soon followed by campaigners in Bristol seeking to cleanse their city of memorials to Edward Colton - the slave trader who, on his death, donated much of his wealth to Bristol and its charities <sup>32</sup>.

With controversy stirred and media coverage swelling, attention turned to statues of military leaders from the era of slavery. A Guardian journalist called for Nelson's Column to be toppled because he would have used slaves aboard his ships <sup>33</sup>, and a UN ambassador felt it necessary to apologise for quoting Sir Winston Churchill because the man who regularly tops polls of 'our greatest Briton' had defended the country's colonial past <sup>34</sup>.

In perhaps the most absurd abandonment of common sense, early last year students in Manchester felt it necessary to protest against a statue to Mahatma Gandhi on grounds of the father of modern India being insufficiently inclusive <sup>35</sup>.

# 6 in 10

## Agree that

political correctness "gives too much power to a small minority of people who like to take offence."



The argument for each of these desecrations of memory and history is essentially that their mere existence offends those living in the present. Rather than exercising an understanding of the past, the minority are projecting their overbearing political correctness back in history.

In contrast with the tearing down of old symbols of power in post-Communist countries, or the toppling of statues of dictators in post-fascist states, this new revisionism isn't about strength and taking control - it is cleansing public life to appease a vocal minority.

According to our polling, **6 out of 10 of UK adults (61%) agreed that political correctness "gives too much power to a small minority of people who like to take offence."** <sup>36</sup>

It is important to note that once again one cannot simply say that this is a reactionary opinion held by the Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells – as **our polling found net agreement for this across demographic and political groups** <sup>37</sup>.

All this flows against common sense as the majority of people would understand it, and simply further alienates people from debates about history and historical acts that are genuinely worth having.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-35435805>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-42404825>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/22/toppling-statues-nelsons-column-should-be-next-slavery>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/10/08/un-ambassador-space-says-winston-churchill-racist-responsible/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-50062791>

<sup>36</sup> Table 304, CCS polling

<sup>37</sup> Table 304, CCS polling

## Part Five Police priorities





## Part Five

### Police priorities



**The prevailing culture of cultural correctness has become so pervasive that it has influenced our politics, laws, and priorities of those meant to keep us safe.**

When people go against the flow, it can become extremely difficult for them.

In November 2018, Sara Thornton - former chief constable of Thames Valley police and then chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council - told its annual conference that she wanted the police "to solve more burglaries and bear down on violence before we make more records of incidents that are not crimes" <sup>38</sup>.

She said this in the context of crime levels in 2018 being at their highest for thirteen years, up by about 10 per cent with sexual offences up 24 per cent, and robberies including muggings up 30 per cent. It had also been only a year since the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had released new guidance saying online abuse should be treated the same as face-to-face abuse <sup>39</sup>.

While most would regard Thornton's comments as common sense, they attracted outrage from various quarters.

Sue Fish, the former chief constable of Nottinghamshire Police, described the comments as "shameful", while the Shadow Home Secretary, Diane Abbott, told the same conference that the police ought not to have to "pick and choose" what they investigated, thereby furthering the myth that there are limitless resources available for every 'crime' authorities have determined should be the latest police priority.

But it is Sue Fish and Diane Abbott who are out of touch with public opinion. **Our polling showed that 3 out of 5 people (59%) agreed that "the police spend too much time investigating things that are not politically correct, when they should be focused on other priorities."** Only 10% disagreed, and there was more support than opposition for this question across every age group and region.

Given real public opinion and tight finances, directing time and money towards the latest outcry looks even more ill-judged and wasteful.

In recent years a social media outcry has often led to the police having to divert time and money to investigating incidents that Sara Thornton herself described as "not crimes".

**Our polling showed that 3 out of 5 people (59%) agreed that "the police spend too much time investigating things that are not politically correct, when they should be focused on other priorities."**

A Freedom of Information request in 2016 found the number of arrests made by the Metropolitan Police for alleged breaches of Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 had increased by 37 per cent over the last five years <sup>40</sup>. The FOI revealed that in total 2,130 people were arrested between 2010 and 2015 for "sending by public communication network an offensive / indecent / obscene / menacing message / matter" - offences deemed illegal under section 127 of the Act.







# 2,130

People were arrested between 2010 and 2015 for “sending by public communication network an offensive / indecent / obscene / menacing message / matter”.

To be clear, some of these arrests would have been on absolutely valid grounds of online stalking or posting harmful content (or content that had caused harm to others in its creation). However, there is plenty of evidence that the police are now often chasing down social media users on the basis of spurious offence-taking and the desire to be seen to be ‘doing something’ about a social media outrage.

For instance, in 2018 a 19 year-old girl from Liverpool was hauled in front of a Judge and given a community order for posting offensive lyrics from rapper Snap Dogg’s “I’m Trippin” as she paid an online tribute to a boy who died in a road crash <sup>41</sup>.

In similar cases of heavy-handed policing, a YouTube user was convicted of a hate crime for teaching his dog to give a Nazi salute <sup>42</sup>, a 19 year-old man was arrested for joking on Twitter about the Glasgow bin lorry crash <sup>43</sup>, and a full police hunt was started, ending in arrests and charges brought, against the men who participated in the burning of the Grenfell Tower effigy <sup>44</sup>.

In each of these examples, the offender undoubtedly put unpleasant content onto social media. But as with expressing offensive views in the real world, each of the individuals were on the wrong end of a wave of online condemnation for their actions, the shame of which most would consider suitable punishment. The intervention of the police and courts simply sapped time and money away from proper crimes – largely to appear inclusive and sate the thirst for retribution from the online mob, but out-of-step with the wider public.

The intrusion of the police into social media platforms doesn’t begin and end with the monitoring of what people say. Increasingly resources are diverted towards the police maintaining a social media presence, with stretched forces building teams of social media managers posting cringe worthy content.

Earlier this year Dorset Police attracted heavy criticism for hiring a social media manager whose starting salary was more than that for a newly trained police officer <sup>45</sup>.

Yet it’s little surprise that forces are throwing money at social media experts when they’re churning out posts like those of Sussex Police, promoting their



£750 ‘Pride’ wrapped patrol cars <sup>46</sup>. Or the Met Police, who gleefully circulated photos of their officers joining in the dancing at the Notting Hill carnival - the same carnival at which almost 100 people were arrested for crimes ranging from drug and weapon possession, to assaults on police officers <sup>47</sup>.

In perhaps the most shameful combination of excessive political correctness and overbearing police intrusion, South Yorkshire Police urged its 170,000 Twitter followers to report “non-criminal incidents” to widespread mockery and condemnation <sup>48</sup>.

Senior members of the Police argue that these initiatives are about improving the image of the force, and go some way to restoring the link between police and the communities in which they work. These same senior figures are quick to condemn the perceived lack of funding they receive from Government. As our polling shows, if there is a decision to be made over whether pounds are spent policing online content, or on face-to-face policing, the majority wants to see bobbies back on the beat.



<sup>38</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46053069>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40981235>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.theregister.co.uk/2016/06/02/social\\_media\\_arrests\\_up\\_37pc\\_london\\_section\\_127\\_communications\\_act/](https://www.theregister.co.uk/2016/06/02/social_media_arrests_up_37pc_london_section_127_communications_act/)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-43816921>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/youtuber-count-dankula-avoids-jail-following-hate-crime-conviction-teaching-896831>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/man-arrested-as-police-investigate-claims-of-offensive-twitter-message-about-glasgow-bin-lorry-crash-9942347.html>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46106224>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9796820/police-force-social-media-pay-frontline-cops/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.hastingsobserver.co.uk/news/sussex-police-defends-750-spend-on-pride-cars-1-8023617>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-49471203>

<sup>48</sup> <https://mobile.twitter.com/syptweet/status/1038891067381350401?s=20>



# Part Six

## Prison and sentencing



## Part Six

### Prison and sentencing

While the police fall over themselves trying to satisfy online mobs on issues as they arise, real criminals have increasingly used human rights legislation and appalling reoffending rates to secure shorter jail sentences or avoid jail entirely.

This has been at the same time that otherwise law-abiding people are hounded for relatively minor offences. There is a widespread perception that the real offenders are getting off too lightly.

According to our polling, **almost two-thirds of people (64%) agreed that there should be "harsher sentences for young people involved in crime"**, with net support across every category, except 18-24 year olds, and Liberal Democrats <sup>49</sup>.

In general, the public feel that the punishment isn't matching the offence when it comes to far too many serious crimes. According to recent YouGov polling, 70 per cent of people thought the sentences handed down to people who had been convicted by a court weren't harsh enough <sup>50</sup>.

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instead of being jailed.**

It's perhaps unsurprising the public feel this way when the newspapers are frequently filled with stories of serious offenders freed partway through their sentences only to transgress again while on parole. Also, it's not just leaving prison prematurely that goes against all common sense: many serious offenders never make it that far.

For instance, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) figures from 2016 revealed that almost 82,000 crimes committed in that year were by criminals who had been given community orders instead of being jailed <sup>51</sup>.





**MoJ figures from 2018 found that criminals were committing as many as 100 offences before being sent to prison for knife crime.**

The response to the rise in knife crime is equally depressing. Again official MoJ figures from 2018 showed that two thirds of knife crime offenders were escaping jail, and this at the same time as the number of offences hit an eight-year high <sup>52</sup>.

According to the data, one in five repeat knife offenders (18%) escaped prison despite the "two strikes and out" laws requiring minimum six month sentences. A further 19% escaped immediate custody by getting a suspended sentence.

The stats make for grim reading for anyone looking to have faith in the criminal justice system. MoJ figures from 2018 found that criminals were committing as many as 100 offences before being sent to prison for knife crime. 98 people who were jailed for the first time for possessing a blade had more than 50 past convictions and cautions <sup>53</sup>. Of these, six had more than 100 each. It just doesn't make sense.

**According to the data, one in five repeat knife offenders (18%) escaped prison despite the "two strikes and out" laws requiring minimum six month sentences.**

<sup>49</sup> Table 261, CCS polling

<sup>50</sup> [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/v1r2zq0fl2/Internal\\_CrimeQs\\_190930\\_FINAL\\_w.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/v1r2zq0fl2/Internal_CrimeQs_190930_FINAL_w.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1132354/knife-crime-gang-london-punishment-soft-sentences>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/12/13/two-three-knife-crime-offenders-spared-jail-offences-hit-eight/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/08/24/criminals-committing-100-offences-sent-prison-knife-crime-official1/>



## Part Seven

# Protesting and the police



## Part Seven

# Protesting and the police



### The right to protest is a cornerstone of any mature democracy.

By definition, many or most of these will be in support of movements or views that are important to a relatively small proportion of people. Indeed, many of the humanity's leaps forward in terms of rights and responsibilities have come about because of protests.

What has changed in recent times is the way that protestors have been empowered to occupy public spaces and cause significant disruption to others with the support of the authorities.

Fringe groups have been allowed to cause days - and sometimes weeks - of disruption, damage and violence, with too many people in power unwilling to stand up and criticise their actions.

Worse still, often the police have stood idly by or even collaborated while the daily lives - and livelihoods - of the silent majority are thrown into chaos.

Examples of this include the 'Democracy Village' swamping Parliament Square for several years, and Extinction Rebellion shutting down large parts of London for weeks – with the explicit support of the authorities, regardless of the impact on the majority.



Even in the past month, we have seen Extinction Rebellion cause chaos for people in Cambridge, with police invoking emergency rules to close roads so that the protestors are not technically guilty of breaking the law <sup>54</sup>.

And there is no evidence of public support for this either: **our polling shows that two-thirds (65%) of people agree that “too often, public protests are disruptive to ordinary working people's lives”,** with only 17% disagreeing <sup>55</sup>.

And few would argue that stretched police resources should be diverted to supporting eco-protestors rather than trying to bring the crime and murder rate down in London <sup>56</sup>.

**Our polling shows that two-thirds (65%) of people agree that “too often, public protests are disruptive to ordinary working people's lives”, with only 17% disagreeing.**

The common sense approach is to allow protests to occur, but step in if they become disruptive to the functioning of society, people's livelihoods, or there is damage to public property. And just as legally organised events like football matches and carnivals are asked to contribute towards the costs of policing and clear-up, it feels only fair to pursue the organisers of protests to do something similar.

Much of the inaction and overspend of police when it comes to protests stems from a false perception that the British public have sympathy with those taking to the streets. As with many of the examples highlighted in this report, the reality is very different.







## Part Eight Conclusion

While the protestors find support in print and their representatives are given open invitations to push their arguments on broadcast outlets, research has shown that any residual support for a cause among the public often dissipates once people witness the actuality of the damage and violence of what is occurring.

Polling after the 2011 riots in London and Birmingham - albeit not protests but a good indicator of public sentiments to policing disruption - show a public markedly in favour of taking strong action, with 9/10 people supporting the use of water cannons, 84 per cent supporting the use of mounted police, and 78 per cent in favour of using tear gas <sup>57</sup>.

To be clear, CCS is absolutely NOT advocating such measures, merely pointing out the strength of feeling that British people have regarding public disorder and the gap between this and the attitudes of those in authority.

(There is evidence that the Brits are more hard-line about such things than Americans <sup>58</sup>.)



<sup>54</sup> <https://www.elystandard.co.uk/news/extinct-rebellion-cambridge-roads-closed-during-weeklong-protest-1-6517128>

<sup>55</sup> Table A1, CCS polling

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/oct/22/extinction-rebellion-protests-cost-met-police-37m-so-far>

<sup>57</sup> [http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today\\_uk\\_import/yg-archives-pol-sun-riots-100811.pdf](http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/yg-archives-pol-sun-riots-100811.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2014/08/22/faced-with-riots-british-support-harsher-policing>



## Part Eight Conclusion

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As the polling and real-world examples highlighted above demonstrate, all across Britain it is possible to point to initiatives by well-meaning people – operating largely in a bubble - attempting to make society fairer and in their view more inclusive, but that are instead making things worse and dividing people further.

### **It doesn't need to be like this.**

Things can get better without forcing crazy ideas onto people. The Campaign for Common Sense intends to act as a rallying point for people who have had enough of walking on eggshells.

We believe it is time to trust people more, and police their words and actions less.

We call on policy-makers and public servants to leave people to rely on common sense and the natural feel for fair play to guide us through life. After all, when one thinks about the progress

we've made in the last century alone, it has served British society pretty well.

Our polling shows that there is far more common ground between people than the activists and experts pushing this division claim. If people reject the false analysis that sets different groups against one another, focus on what we have in common, and learn to love the differences of opinion we have, we can bring people back together in this otherwise angry time.

It won't be easy. And those with a stake in promoting division and discord will throw all sorts of accusations around as the Campaign for Common Sense begins our mission.

But we feel it is time to take a stand, and to do our best to ensure that the nastiness and intolerance that has sprung up in the past decades around us doesn't endure for the next generation.

**Common sense and fair play must prevail.**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
COMMON  
SENSE**

## Getting Along Again

*A call for common sense & fair play*

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intends to act as  
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**...it doesn't need to be like this.**

**...things can get better without  
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time.**

**...good will and common sense  
must prevail.**





CAMPAIGN<sup>FOR</sup>  
COMMON  
SENSE



## Getting Along Again

A call for common sense & fair play

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