

The Four Dimensions of Trust

1 What is trust and why does it matter for Police?

Trust mitigates uncertainty. It assures people that others will act as expected, particularly in situations of uncertainty, risk, or vulnerability. Trust can therefore be understood as:

- *the positive features of an individual's (the trustor's) expectations for how another party (the trustee) might act in situations of uncertainty, risk, or vulnerability.¹*

For members of the public, interactions with police can carry uncertainty, risk and vulnerability. To seek police assistance or co-operate with them, it is important that an individual can expect police to act in certain, positive ways. Being trusted, and losing trust, directly impacts on the ability of police to do their job. The positive features of an individual's trust judgements toward police can be broken into Four Dimensions as detailed in item 3.

2 Why should police have a shared, multi-dimensional concept of trust?

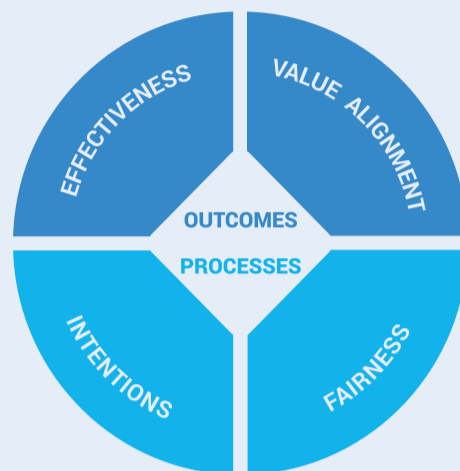
Approaching trust as multidimensional promotes an improved understanding of community perceptions of trust.

- *While police tend to enjoy relatively high levels of public trust, viewing trust in an aggregated form can disguise areas where police may have opportunities to improve. Monitoring each dimension over time can inform police initiatives and allow police to pre-empt possible changes in aggregate trust. How this can be achieved is depicted in item 4.*
- *A multidimensional understanding of trust allows police to better target their resources in the areas that need it most. This can serve as an efficiency with actions and initiatives being more precise and targeted to areas of need.*

A shared understanding of the trust dimensions is also valuable for policing because it may:

- *Allow for the creation and monitoring of consistent trust indicators.*
- *Facilitate the coordination of trust building initiatives. This is important as jurisdictional borders may not be relevant to communities when forming trust judgements. How police act in one state, territory or country may have ramifications for police elsewhere.*

3 The Four Dimensions of Trust.



Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the perception that policing is capable of undertaking what is expected of them. It refers to:

- *delivering expected outcomes such as apprehending criminals and preventing crime.*
- *undertaking their duties in a professional and competent manner.*

Value Alignment

Value Alignment: the perception that police understand and represent the values and needs of the communities they serve.

Communities expect police to reflect their values and to advocate for their interests. For some communities this alignment can only be achieved through the process of consultation and engagement itself.

Fairness

Fairness: the perception around how policing achieves its assigned goals and how police officers discharge their duties. It can be broken down into three distinct areas:

- *Procedural fairness: Police follow due process while ensuring equal protection, and equal rights in their policies, practices and procedures.*
- *Distributional fairness: Equal access for community members to police services which are equitably distributed.*
- *Fairness of quality: Consistency of the services delivery to communities.*

Intentions

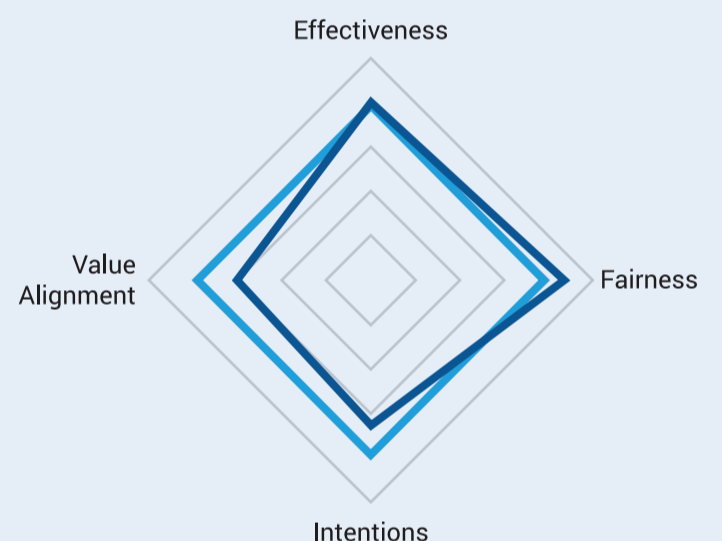
Intentions: the perception that police hold the right intentions in undertaking their duties and that these are undertaken in the interest of communities.

Police benefit from a general assumption that individuals who become police officers have benevolent motives, and therefore policing as an institution has good intentions. However, a member of the public must believe that an officer has the right intentions when interacting with or using their powers on them in particular.

4 From concept to practice

Understanding that trust is multidimensional allows for accurate monitoring of possible trends and targeted initiatives to address areas where trust could be improved.

The figure below depicts a 'trust diamond' formed when measuring public perceptions using the Four Dimensions. The white borders represent a hypothetical 'perfect' level of trust (i.e. there is 100% trust in the police). The light blue line depicts measures of 'aggregate trust' which is usually captured by general questions on survey vehicles such as 'do you trust police.' Finally, the dark blue lines represent the Four different Dimensions of Trust discussed in item 3.



In the above (hypothetical) example, the police organisation in question enjoys high levels of perceived Fairness and Effectiveness, but lower levels of Value Alignment and Intentions, both of which are lower than the aggregate trust. In this case, the best use of resources when it comes to building community trust would be to target resource investment in aligning police values with those of the community as well as the intentions of police in interacting with the public.

Theoretically, if these particular dimensions are targeted through specific initiatives, they may then also drive up aggregate trust over time.

1. This definition borrows from: Jon Jackson, Ben Bradford, Chris Giacomantonio and Rebecca Mugford. 'Developing Core National Indicators of Public Attitudes Towards the Police in Canada' SocArXiv (2020) p. 4