

Police perceptions of eyewitness evidence and research

Gini Harrison
Catriona Havard
Hayley Ness
Graham Pike

The Open University



Overview

- Why is eyewitness research important?
- What do police know about research and recommendations?
- What are their thoughts about the relationship between police and researchers?
- What is their access to research and recommendations?
- What are their thoughts on current practices?

Eyewitness research... Why?

				Toney				
				Webb				
				Bauer				
			Dotson	Mitchell				
			Linscott	Holdren				
			Kotler	Sarsfield				
			Daye	Watkins				
			Honaker	Youngblood				
			Bullock	Lavemia				
			Shepard	Robinson				
			Cotton	Smith				
			Cruz	Ochoa	Green			
			Hernandez	Washington	Adams			
			Smith	Velasquez	Rainge			
		Nelson	Jimerson	Green	Williams			
		Dabbs	Ortiz	Bradford	Johnson			
		Snyder	Byrd	Ollins	Abdal			
		Bloodsworth	Miller	Ollins	Charles	Gray		
	Vasquez	Scruggs	Mahan	Saunders	Butler	Brown		
	Woodall	Chalmers	Mahan	Pierce	Washington	Townsend		
	Jones	O'DellHarris	Williamson	Pope	Nesmith	Jean		
	Callace	Davis	Fritz	Thomas	Waters	Anderson		
	Brisson	Davis	Jones	McSherry	Fain	Mayes		
	Alejandro	Moto	Richardson	Webb	Johnson	Webster		
	Johnson	Webb	Atkins	Godschalk	Lloyd	Maher		
	Saecker	Mitchell	Miller	McGee	Sutherland	Lowery		
	Durham	Reynolds	Criner	Bromgard	Bibbins	Willis		
	Hicks	Wardell	Danziger	Echols	Erby	Scott		
	Salazar	Gray	Krone	Scott	Avery	Charles	McMillan	
Green	Willis	Gregory	Dominguez	McCray	Laughman	Yarris	Gray	
DiazBravo	Cromedy	Dixon	Johnson	Richardson	Harison	Hunt	Ruffin	
Piszczek	Reid	Gonzalez	Mercer	Salaam	Goodman	Good	Dedge	
Villasana	Cowans	Wyniemko	Holland	Santana	Moon	Brown	Whitfield	Evans
O'Donnell	Sutton	Jones	Powell	Ulise	Booker	Woods	Williams	Terry
Alexander	Matthews	Rose	Rollins	Kordonowy	Rodriguez	Doswell	Waters	Diaz
1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27
Years in Prison								



Wrongful convictions:

- 311 people exonerated to date
- 18 people had been sentenced to death before DNA proved their innocence and led to their release
- The average sentence served is 13.6 years
- Eyewitness misidentification is the single greatest cause of wrongful convictions, accounting for more than 70% of convictions overturned



Exploring the relationship between research and practice



Forensic and Police Psychology are expanding research fields

Eyewitness research accounts for around a third of this

(Snook et al, 2009)

Wide array of topics:

- System variables – within CJS control
 - ID procedures: double blind, instructions, feedback
 - Line-up format: choice/number or foils, presentation
- Estimator variables – outside of CJS control
 - Demographic factors, encoding conditions, crime type

Exploring the relationship between research and practice



Plenty of research, but the uptake of evidence based practice is varied between and within countries

Aim was to explore barriers preventing implementation of research evidence, and to determine whether:

- research findings are being communicated effectively
- research methods are deemed suitable by police

The Survey

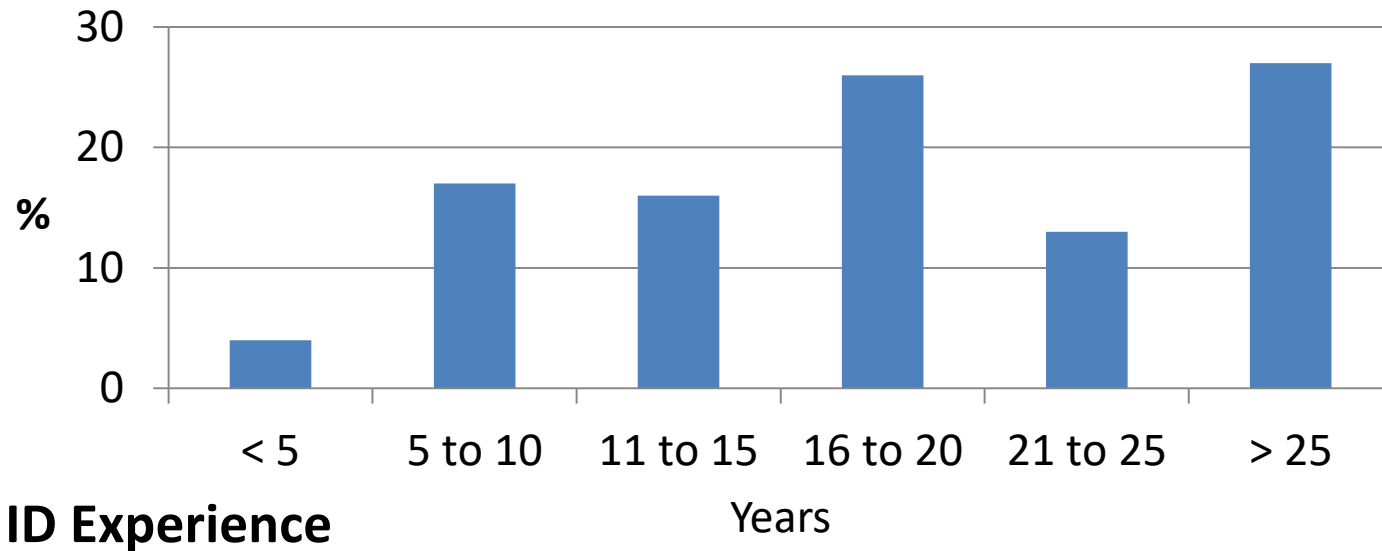


Method

- Web based survey
- Focus Groups with Met and GMP

Respondents

- 32 have worked in ID suites
- 121 staff who have never worked in an ID suite

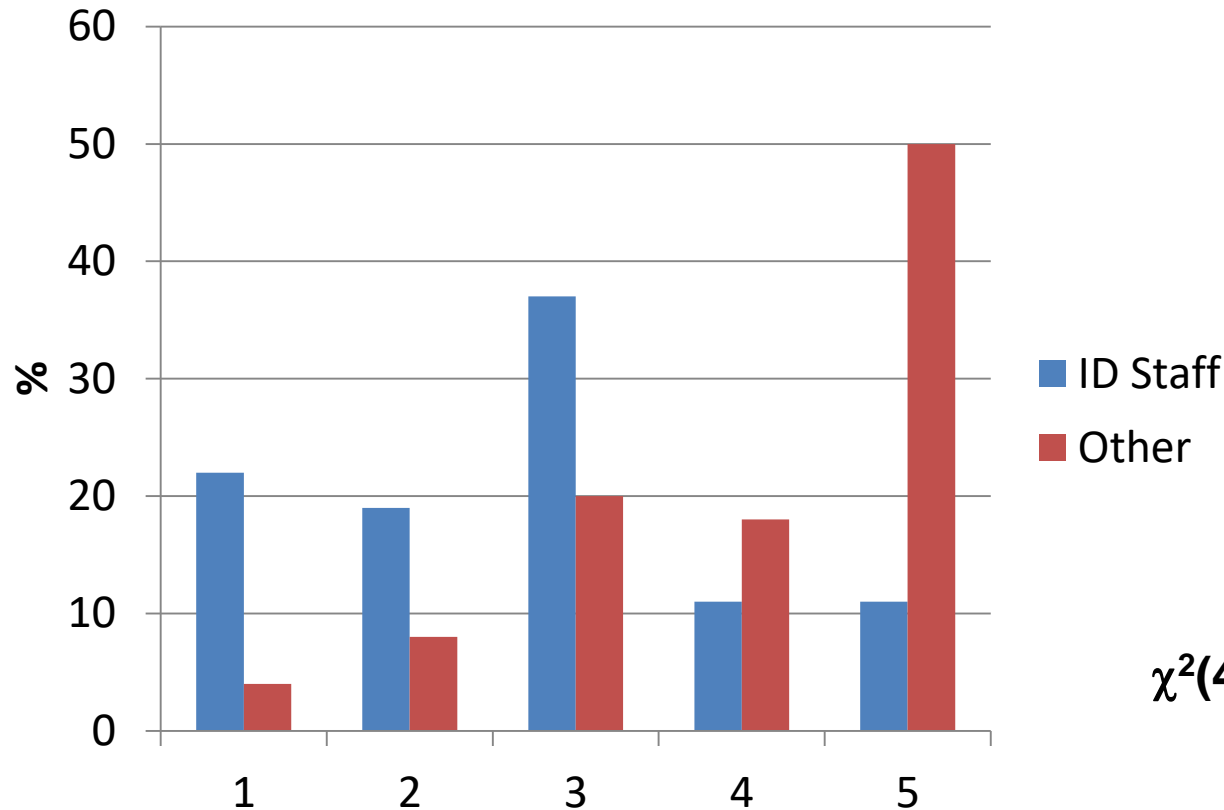




Knowledge of existing research evidence



Knowledge of research



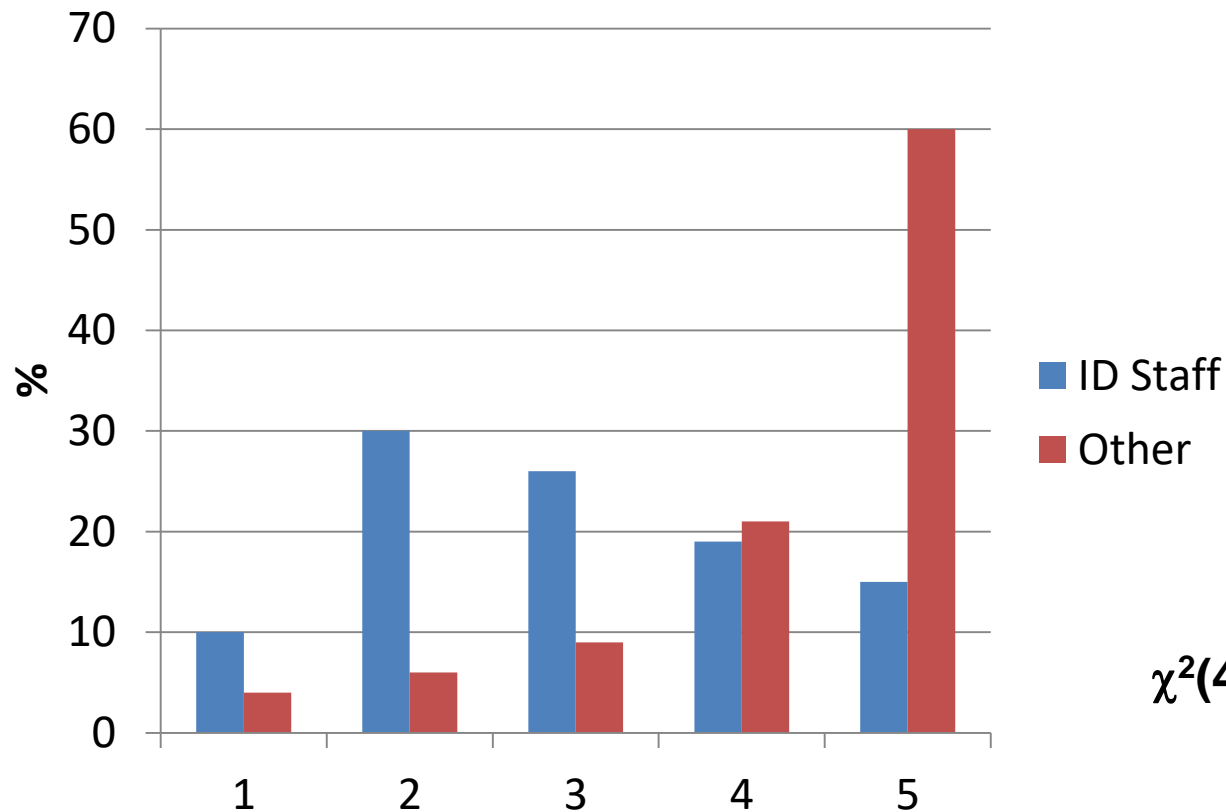
$\chi^2(4) = 20.5, p < .001$

1 = I try to keep up to date by reading relevant material and attending conferences
2 = I occasionally read relevant material
3 = I have read some research

4 = I have heard about research from other policing staff
5 = I don't know anything



Knowledge of recommendations



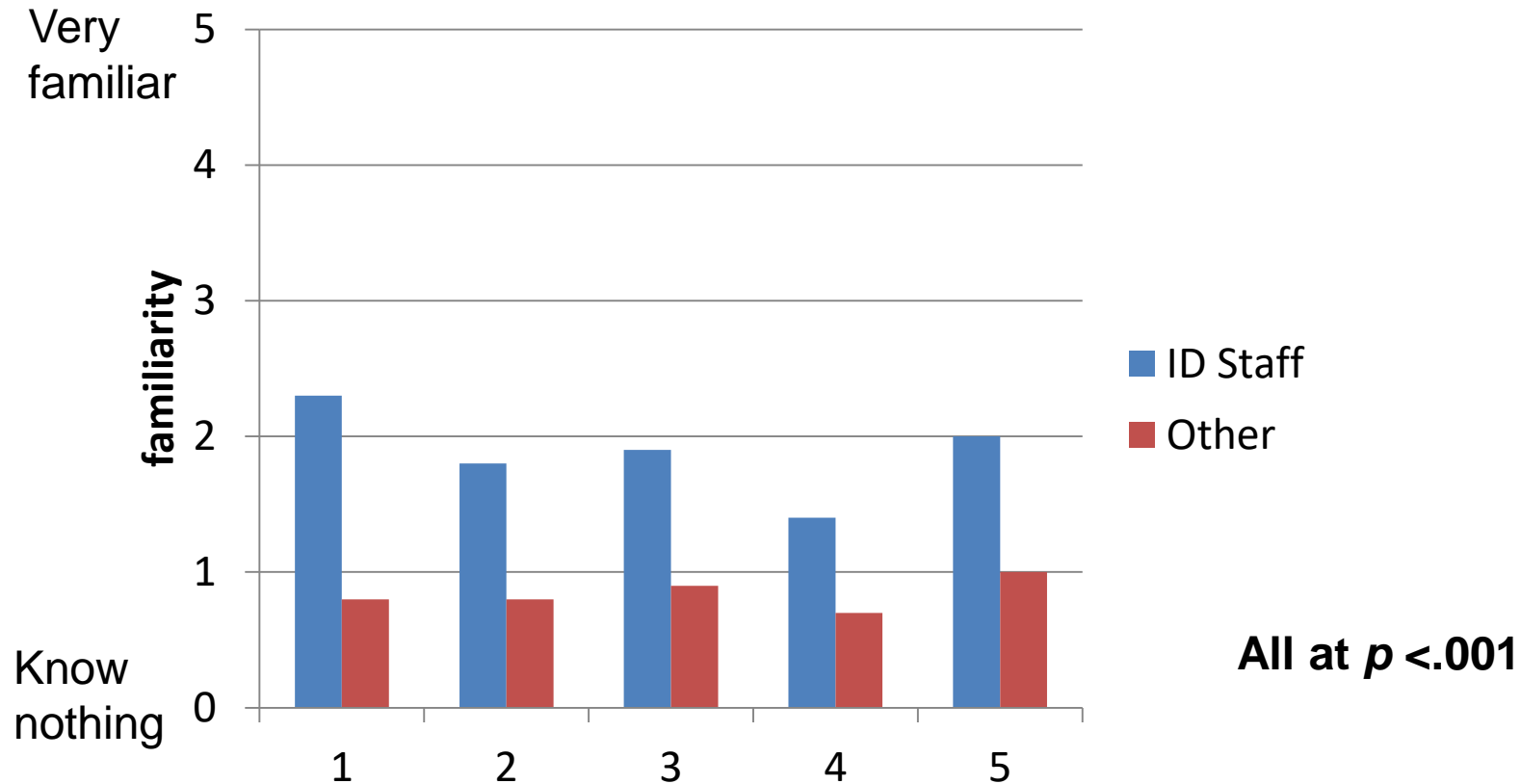
$\chi^2(4) = 23.4, p < .001$

1 = Very familiar
2 = Some idea
3 = Vague idea

4 = No idea
5 = Didn't know they existed



Familiarity with techniques



1 = Sequential presentation
2 = Double blind testing
3 = Confidence ratings

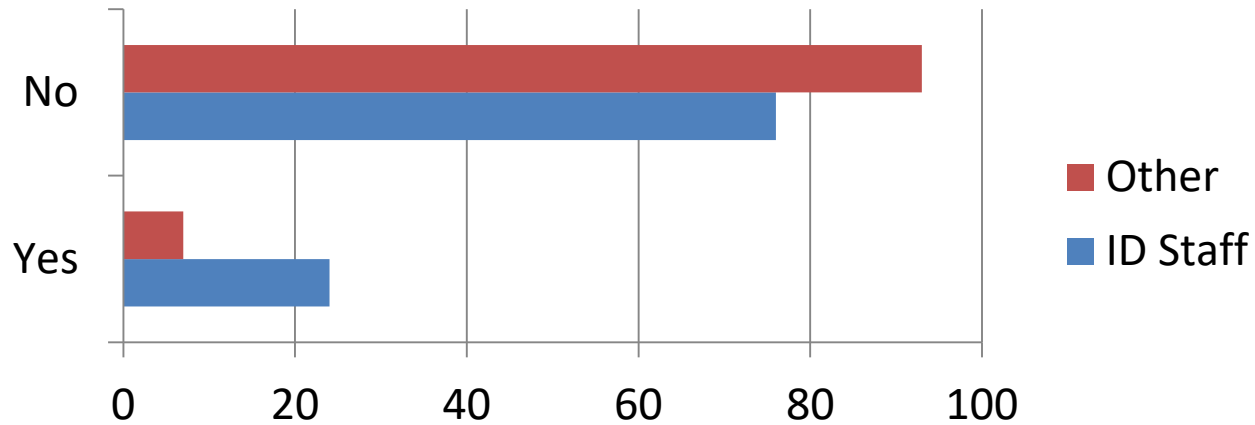
4 = Mystery person
5 = Elimination lineups



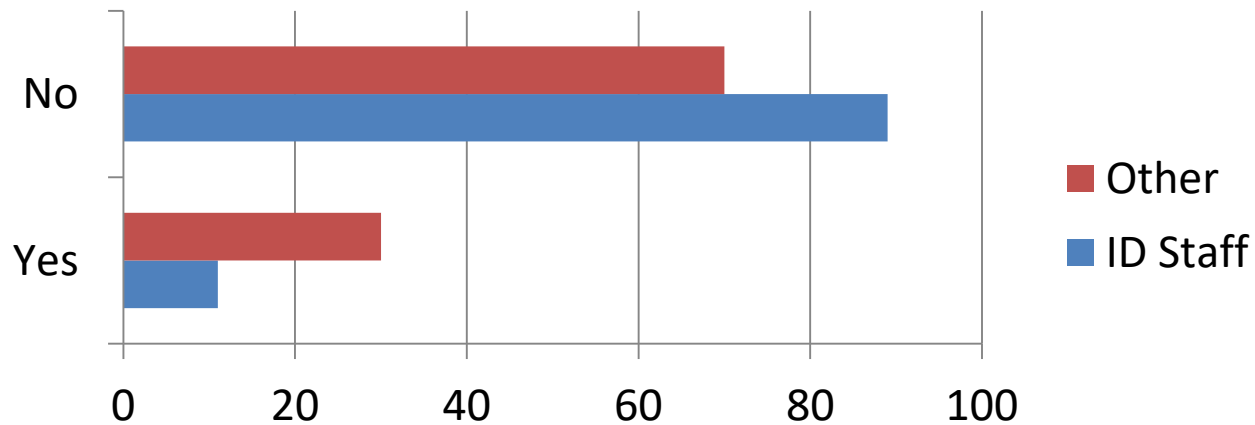
Evaluation of current researcher/police relationship



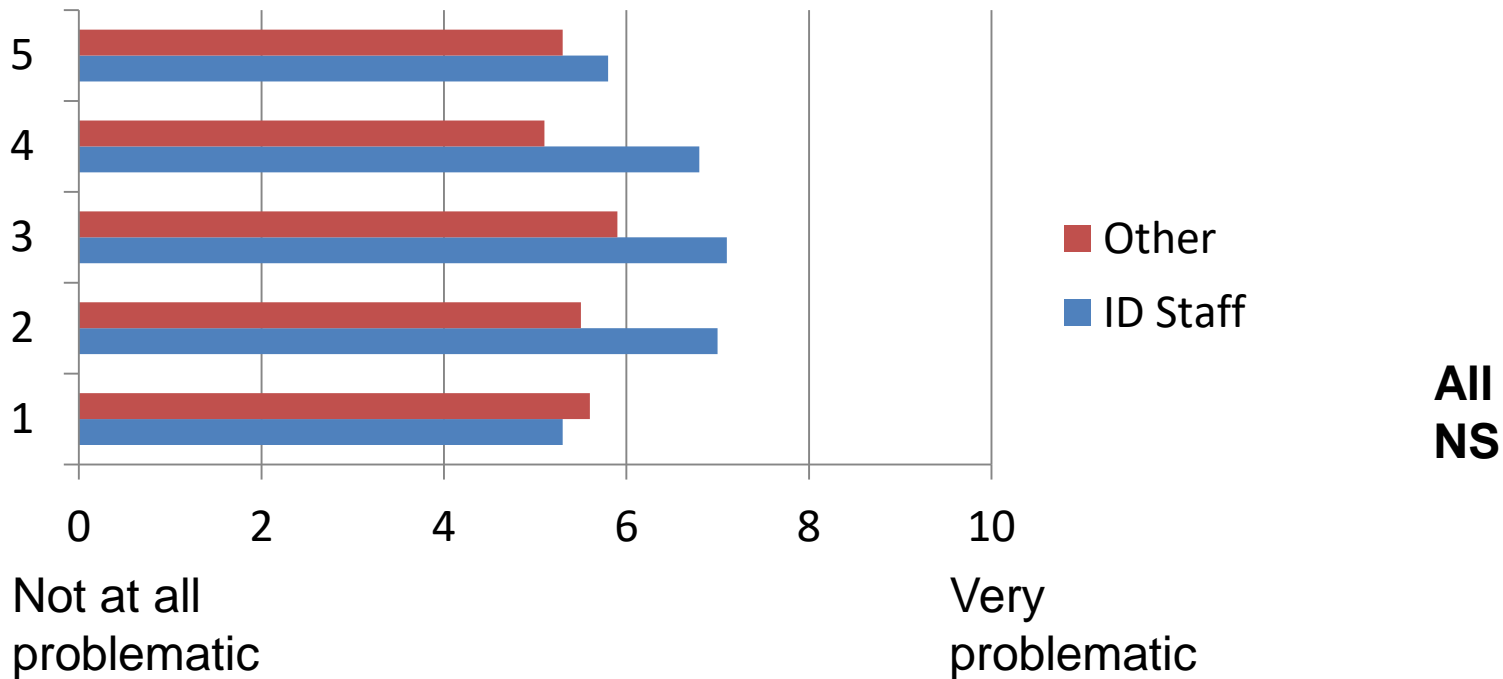
Involvement in research?



Did the research lead to any practical outcomes?



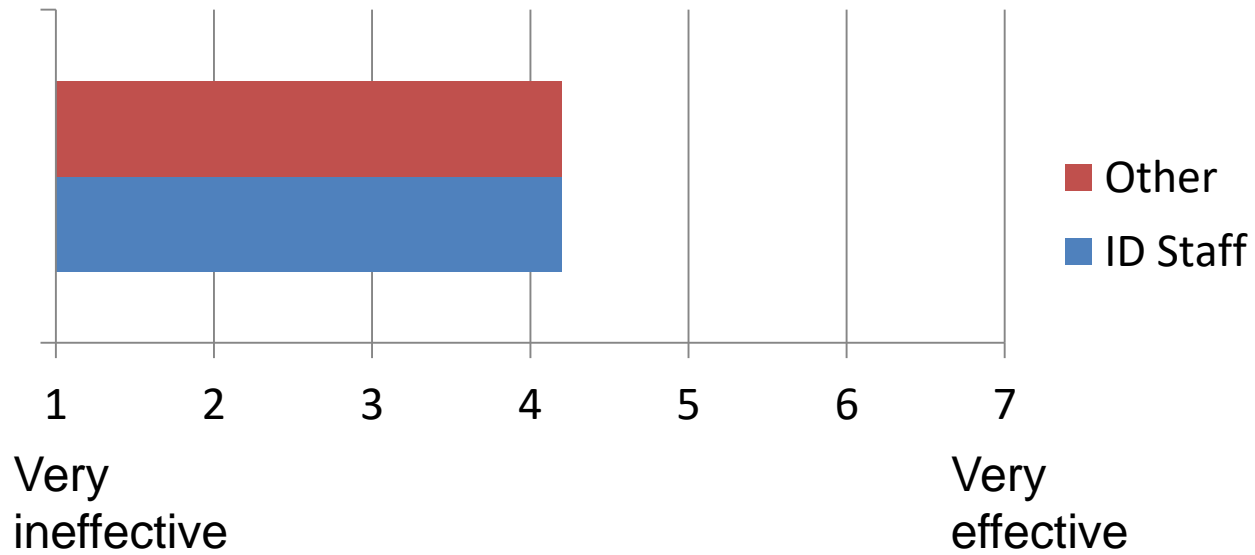
What prevents research evidence being put into practice



- 1 = Questions too academic
- 2 = Methods not applied enough
- 3 = Analysis too complex

- 4 = Conclusions too complex
- 5 = Project went well, but then nothing happens

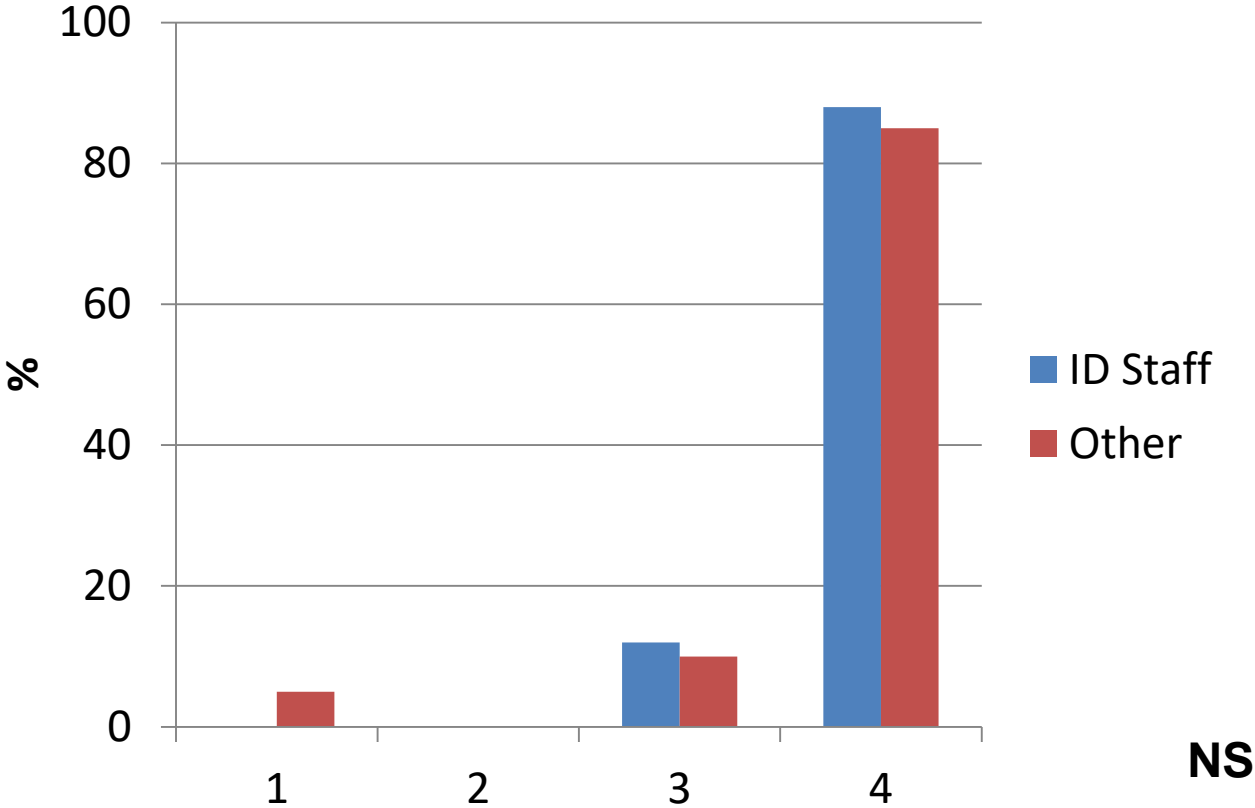
Effectiveness of researcher/police relationship



NS



What should the relationship be?



1 = Researchers and police should work separately

2 = Police should not be involved in conducting research and researchers should keep them up to date

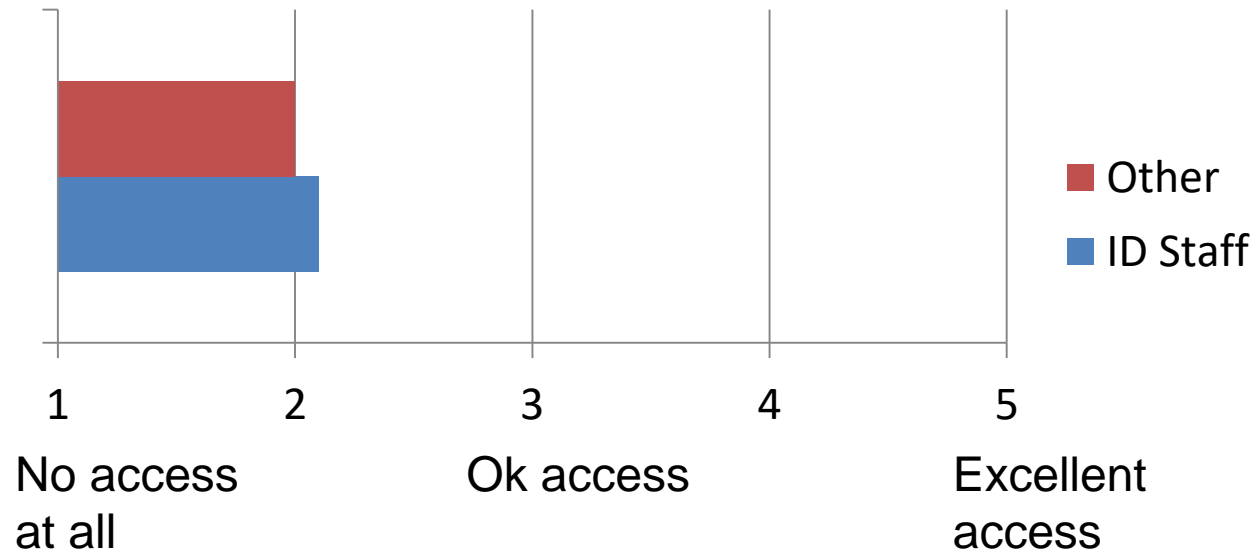
3 = Police should not be involved in conducting research and their force should keep them up to date

4 = Police and researchers should work together as much as possible



Access to research

Police access to research findings



NS

Methods for disseminating research evidence



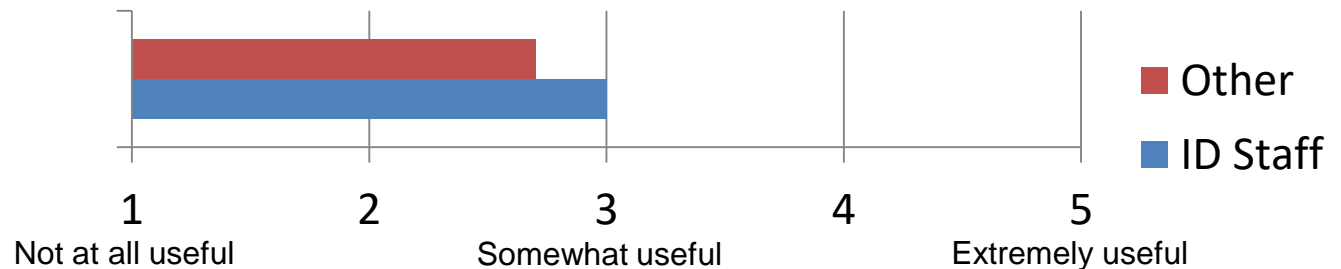
Social media sites/blogs



Subscription to paper based research articles



Online discussion forums

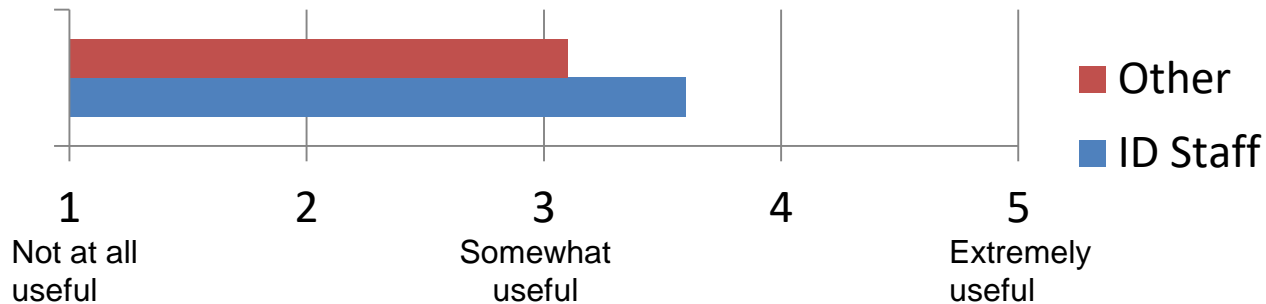


All
NS

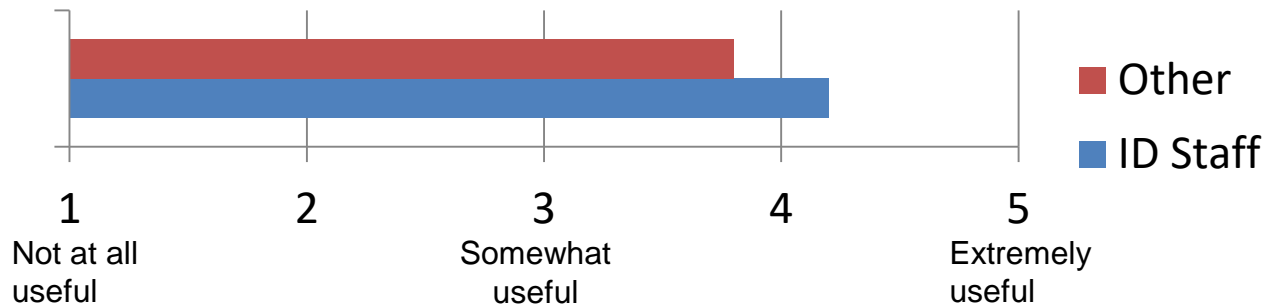
Methods for disseminating research evidence



Online access to original research articles



Online access to plain English summaries

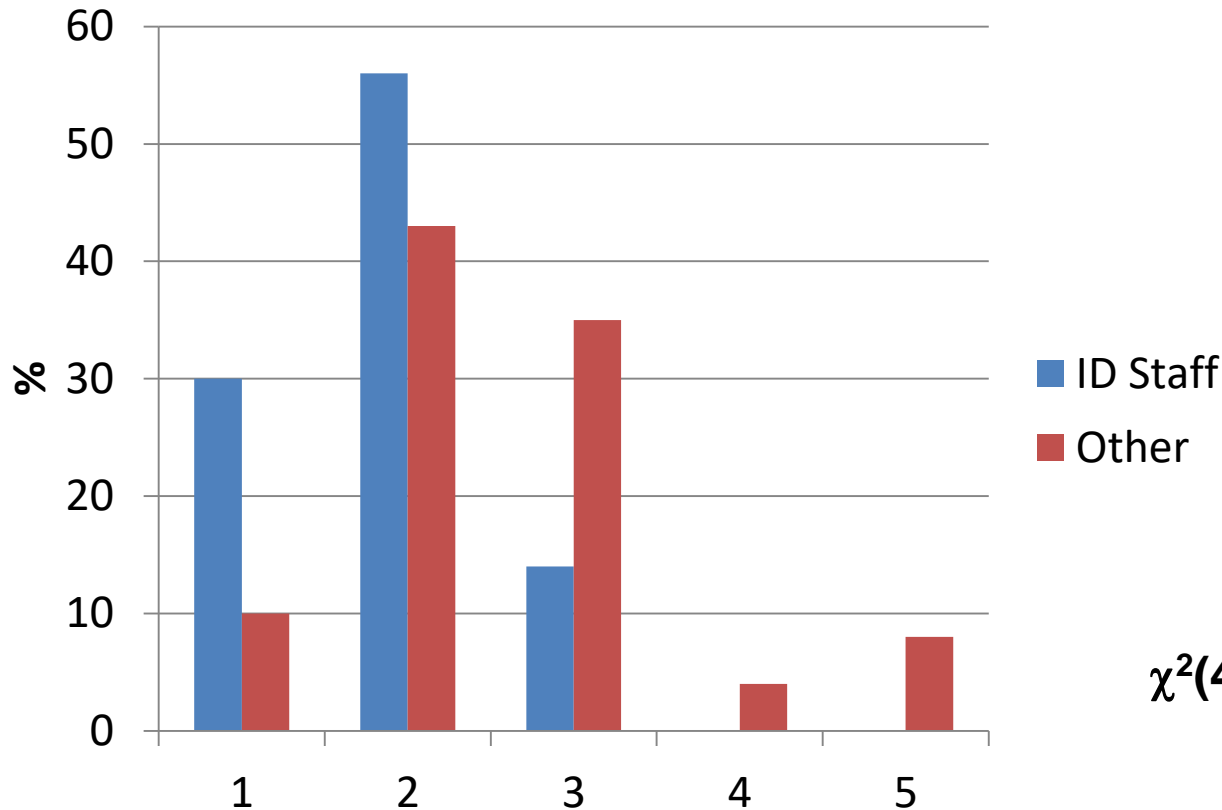




Evaluation of current ID practice



Effectiveness of current ID practice



$\chi^2(4) = 11.8, p < .05$

1 = They work very well

2 = They generally work well, and don't need much improvement

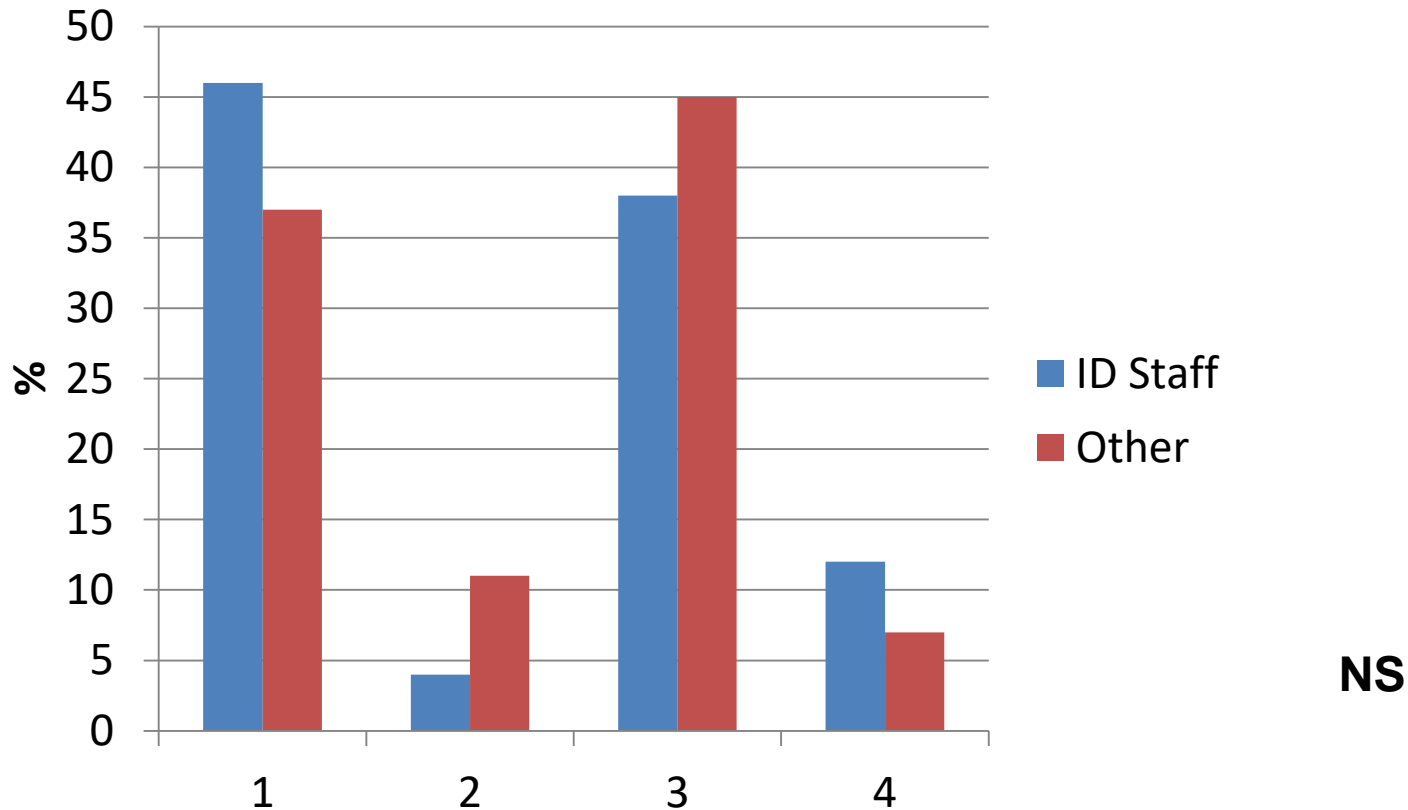
3 = Some aspects work well, but changes are needed

4 = They don't work that well, and significant changes are needed

5 = They are in need of a complete overhaul



What should changes aim to do?



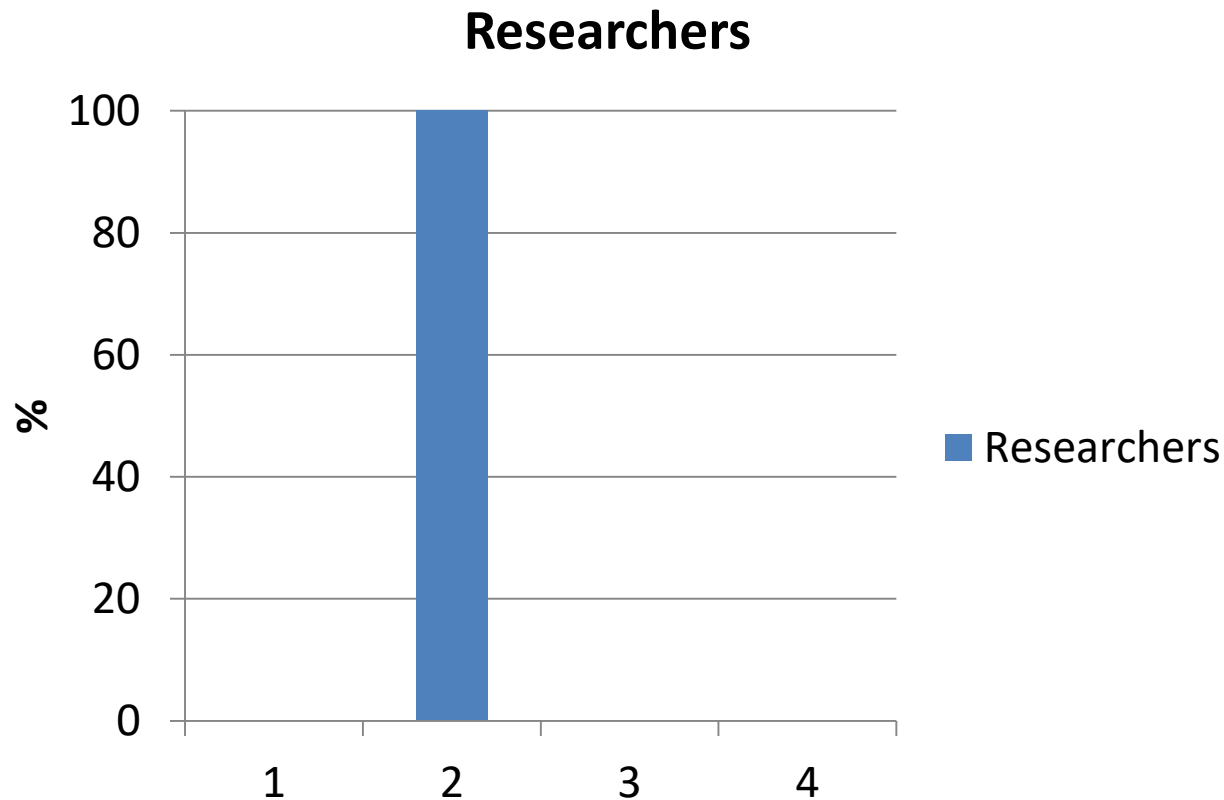
1 = Increase positive identifications

2 = Reduce misidentifications

3 = Increase positive, but not at cost of also increasing misidentifications

4 = Reduce misidentifications, but not at cost of also reducing positive identifications

Our guess at what researchers would answer



1 = Increase positive identifications

2 = Reduce misidentifications

3 = Increase positive, but not at cost of also increasing misidentifications

4 = Reduce misidentifications, but not at cost of also reducing positive identifications



In what percentage of ID procedures do you think the witness makes a positive identification?

- Research suggests around 36% - 48% (Slater, 1994; Behrman & Davey, 2001)
- Our survey: Mean = 40.56

In what % is the suspect in the parade not the perpetrator

- Research suggests around 20% (Clark and Godfrey, 2009)
- Our survey: Mean = 20.76 (or 1 in 5 suspects are not guilty)
- Range = 0% to 80 % (only 10% believe it is more than 50%)



Speed

- “the process time between offence and ID is too long”
- “they take too long to arrange, the procedure is difficult and time consuming”
- “The time taken to run an ID parade - from arrest to parade - is often quite an issue, with victims viewing a parade sometimes weeks after an incident. This obviously impacts on the likelihood of success.”



Stacked in favour of suspect (in terms of appearance)

- “Solicitors are allowed to choose people who look almost identical.”
- “The 'line up' is usually chosen by the solicitor and made up of people who look extremely similar to the suspect. The 'covering up' of distinctive marks/scars is frankly crazy.”
- “The odds appear to be stacked in favour of the suspect. e.g male with tattoo on face, the tattoo was edited out so the id parade could take place the victim could not id the suspect.”



Conclusions



- Fundamental difference in goals of police (pos ID) and research (mis ID)
- Knowledge of research, techniques and particularly recommendations are poor
- Current collaborations do not lead to practical outcomes and the complexity of analysis and conclusions is one barrier
- Police believe they should collaborate with researchers as much as possible
- Current access to research is very poor
- Police would like access to plain English summaries of research