Lara Vomfell (WBS)

'Police bias in stop and search, but not as we know it'

Ethnic minorities are more likely to be stopped and searched by police than White people. Police forces typically argue that this is because they target crime perpetrators which happen to be of minority status. We investigate this claim by testing increasingly weaker versions of the initial claim on a novel dataset of 2,161 police officers of the West Midlands Police force. Our work shows that police officers do not behave in accordance with that claim: Ethnic proportions in officers' searches are unrelated to the ethnicities of crime suspects encountered by officers or officer teams. Instead, search behaviour is primarily driven by the ethnic composition of the officer's patrolling area. Additionally, we find no stable officer bias across time. Our results provide strong evidence that neither crime numbers nor prejudice explain officers' search behaviour.

Date/Time
Thursday 20th June 2019
2.30 pm – 3.45 pm

Location
Library, Wolfson 1