ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
IMPACT REPORT

The Impact Report should be completed and submitted using the grant reference as the email subject to, reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk on or before the due date.

Please complete each box as fully as possible, adhering to the word counts, please do not include images within the text. Appendices are not accepted.

Principal Investigators are expected to consult with co-investigators on the content of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Reference:</th>
<th>ES/J004596/1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator/s:</td>
<td>Daniel Stevens and Nick Vaughan-Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Public Perceptions of Threat in Britain: Security in an Age of Austerity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description

Please include a short overview of the projects impacts (max 2000 characters with spaces).

Scientific
Conference presentations at five major national and international meetings.
Invited presentation at the University of Queensland, May 14 2014.
Book manuscript Public Perceptions of Security Threats: Surveys and Stories in advanced stages of preparation and under contract with Manchester University Press (manuscript due in early 2015).
Article, “Repoliticising the Subject of Threat and (In)Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge” under revise and resubmit at Security Dialogue.
Publicly available (at the UKDA) archive of transcripts of focus group work: 26 hours of discussions with 20 groups (60 participants) across Britain.
Publicly available (at the UKDA) archive of survey data from 2004 British adult citizens, consisting of 756 variables.
Poster, “Border Security: Public Perceptions and Experiences”.


Project website, with open access resources: [https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/research/projects/publicperceptionsofthreatinbritain/](https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/research/projects/publicperceptionsofthreatinbritain/)

Short pilot film created by an AV artist inspired by our project: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdMXVYhqe08&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdMXVYhqe08&feature=youtu.be)

Public engagement: Focus groups enabled public participation in the research design and an opportunity for marginalised groups to voice their opinions on public policy issues.
1. **Scientific impact**

Please **summarise** below the scientific impact(s) your project has had. *(Max 2000 Characters with spaces)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• People tend not to think of security threats in national or international terms unless prompted: if elites are to take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizens’ views on security threats seriously different starting points are required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals identify different kinds of threats at the global, national, community and personal levels. This has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implications for government initiatives designed to shape perceptions of security threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals are much more concerned with online banking and cyber-bullying than the Tier One issue of ‘hostile attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on UK cyber space by other states and large scale cyber crime.’ Other priority issues not mentioned in the NSS are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial insecurity and Islamophobia among Muslims, which illustrates the gulf between ‘official’ and ‘lay’ knowledge of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perceptions of more security threats tend to increase hostility towards immigrants and minorities, but perceptions of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more global threats do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of government messages about security threats is low and does not lessen perceptions of threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Despite the 2010 NSS’ commitment to building a ‘much closer relationship with the public’ minority groups feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powerless in the formulation of national security policy. This is potentially significant ahead of the 2015 Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence and Security Review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The mixed methods research design provides a new paradigm for future projects on security threats and other related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This is the first project that has examined perceptions of the breadth of security threats as opposed to perceptions of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific threats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The theories developed in our articles and forthcoming book are likely to influence future theoretical progress in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The qualitative work explores what is at stake in attempting to understand the contemporary politics of threat and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insecurity from the perspective of ordinary citizens rather than elites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The quantitative work theorizes a range of different threats, their origins and effects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The three principal outputs, all recorded on ROS, are:

“Citizens and Security Threats: Issues, Perceptions, and Consequences Beyond the National Frame.” Forthcoming in the *British Journal of Political Science* this provides the first comprehensive analysis of the breadth of security threats identified by individuals, their origins, and their effects on a range of political attitudes and behaviours. It leads us to conclude that government and researchers in IR and political behaviour need to go beyond thinking of security threats in the national frame.

“Repoliticising the Subject of Threat and (In)Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge.” Under revise and resubmit at *Security Dialogue*, this paper uses our conversations with members of the public nationwide to demonstrate that the idea of a singular ‘public’ is impossible to sustain when thinking about security threats: rather, public perceptions of threat and (in)security are analytical lenses through which difference and the politics of security comes to the fore. Such stories offer a counter-archive to traditional narratives based on security elites, and challenge the notion of the ‘us’ that is all-too-often taken for granted when formulating, implementing, and evaluating ‘national’ security policy.

“Contemporary Security Threats: Causes and Consequences.” This paper compares the origins and consequences of perceptions of four specific threats—terrorism, immigration, the economy, and environmental degradation—at the global, national, community, and personal levels. We demonstrate how predispositions such as mortality salience and authoritarianism vary in their relationships with perceptions of these threats and the different kinds of attitudes that are affected by them.

We explore these themes further in our forthcoming book, and others such as definitions of security threats for the public, the effects of government messages, and challenges and opportunities of mixed-methods research in this field.
We have presented findings from this project at five major international conferences: the 2012 Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties, and the 2013 British International Studies Association, International Studies Association (ISA), Midwest Political Science Association, and International Society of Political Psychology annual meetings.

Stevens gave a presentation on “Citizens and Security Threats: Issues, Perceptions, and Consequences Beyond the National Frame” at the University of Queensland in May 2014.

We have deposited all the qualitative and quantitative data in the UK Data Archive
http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=851004&type=Data%20catalogue

Our findings and outputs have had an impact on academic research in security studies and political psychology in particular:

1. Security studies
   i) They help to move security studies in both ‘traditional’ and ‘critical’ guises beyond a focus on the speech acts, practices, and policy-making of security elites. The findings and outputs have enhanced academic understandings of the role of culture and context in shaping what counts as a security threat, for whom, and why.
   ii) We substantially build upon and develop two of the most influential positions in contemporary European security theorising:
      a. securitization theory and efforts at refining understanding of the process by which an audience legitimises or refuses an act of securitization;
      b. analyses of contemporary cultures of surveillance, unease, and suspicion associated with International Political Sociology perspectives.

A blog post by Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister refers to the panel we convened at the 2013 ISA as central to the furthering of the ‘vernacular turn’ in IR: http://www.e-ir.info/2013/06/19/vernacular-securities-and-everyday-life/

Further evidence is provided by the reviews of work emanating from the research. The reviewers of our book proposal and sample material said that, “The project is of high academic rigour and quality, and will be a significant and useful contribution to the general security literature” (Reviewer 1), and “The authors are leading researchers in their field and the book itself will be of significant interest to researchers in the areas of political psychology, British politics, international relations generally, and security studies specifically” (Reviewer 2). A review of the forthcoming article in the BJPS said, “This is an interesting article, which brings new research findings into the field. It's based on a comprehensive appreciation of the existing literature and makes a number of contributions to a range of literatures: to the nascent "vernacular" or everyday politics of security, to security studies and to literatures on political attitudes.”
2) Political psychology

i) Our presentations and papers have contributed to understanding of how individuals perceive and respond to multiple threats.

ii) Methodologically, our research indicates the inadequacy of confining threats to perceptions that are either national or personal.

iii) We have advanced understanding of the influence of key predispositions in political and social psychology, such as mortality salience and authoritarianism.

iv) Our examination of multiple threats also demonstrates how differences in the characteristics of threats interact with individual-level differences among the public.

While these are the biggest areas of impact, one of our papers has also been cited in “Thatcher's Spiral and A Citizen Renaissance” (Crompton 2013), which focuses on the interactions between citizens and policy makers, in *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture.*
### 2. Economic and societal impact

**A** Please **summarise** below the economic and societal impact(s) your project has had. [*Max 2000 Characters with spaces*]

**Policy debates on EU border security**
We presented the implications of the research for understanding contemporary attitudes towards airport border controls at the 2nd Global Automated Border Control Conference, hosted by Frontex and the EU Commission in Warsaw. Conventionally key stakeholders in EU border security have paid little attention to the differential effects of new security technologies on different groups – particularly minorities – within the travelling public. Our proposal went through a rigorous and competitive peer-review process before being accepted. A summary of our evidence was published in the final conference programme, available on-line at: [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Images_News/ABC_Conference_Report.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Images_News/ABC_Conference_Report.pdf).

**Media and civil society groups**
An initial press release summarising our key findings attracted attention from several civil society groups representing Muslim communities (see section 2D). In particular, they were interested in our finding that terrorism is not considered to be one of the main security threats facing the British public at the community or personal levels, because the communities they represent often feel victimised as a result of latent forms of Islamaphobia being connected with the contemporary terrorist threat.

**Public engagement**
Focus groups allow participants to express views that might not be otherwise heard and in this context they are recognised as a mechanism not only for empowering individuals, but also for new possibilities in democratising research and public engagement in policy-making. Engaging with our programme of research offered an alternative forum for members of minority groups who often feel that they are unfairly targeted by a culture of suspicion and surveillance in public spaces yet unable to voice their concerns.

### B Please outline the **findings and outputs** from your project which have had the economic and societal impact(s) outlined in 2A. [*Max 2000 Characters with spaces*]


**Project website, with open access resources:** [https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/research/projects/publicperceptionsofthreatinbritain/](https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/research/projects/publicperceptionsofthreatinbritain/)
A short pilot film created by an AV artist inspired by our project:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdMXVYhqeo8&feature=youtu.be

Public engagement:
Focus groups enabled public participation in the research design and an opportunity for marginalised groups to voice their opinions on public policy issues. Archive of over 600 pages of material based on more than 26 hours of recorded discussions with 20 groups (60 participants) across 6 major cities in Britain (Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leicester, London, Oldham).

C Please outline how these impacts were achieved. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Policy: Our awareness of the Frontex event and desire to submit a proposal arose as a result of Vaughan-Williams’ appointment to the Frontex Pool of Experts on EU Border Security.

Media: We worked on the content and targeting for press releases with the communications offices of the Universities of Exeter and Warwick, in collaboration with the ESRC press office.

Public engagement: In our research, we used the focus groups, in particular, to encourage participants to talk freely about their experiences of contemporary security threats in their everyday lives. For example, we asked them to tell us a story about how/when they encountered a security threat, how they felt at the time, why it was threatening, and what could have been done or could be done to lessen their sense of threat. We also asked participants if they had any suggestions for how the government might go about managing security threats and communicating with citizens more effectively. Through the publication of findings, presentations of conclusions, press releases, the project website, the archive of transcripts and other mechanisms, we hope to feed the ideas of our participants into scientific and public policy debate.

D Please outline who the findings and outputs outlined above had an impact upon. This can be at a broad societal level through to specific individuals or groups. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Policy: The Frontex conference included a range of representatives. Our research argued that to encourage voluntary participation in new forms of biometric technology the views and experiences of different user groups need to be considered. It attracted the attention of policy-makers and industry representatives, including the Director of Schengen, the Sales Director of Safran Morpho, the Director of Research and Development, Frontex, and colleagues at the Centre for Irish and European Security.

2 e.g., from EU member states and agencies, non-EU states, international organisations, industry and research bodies, and academics
Media: Civil society groups representing Muslim communities were interested in our finding that terrorism was not identified as one of the main security threats facing Britain in terms of its ‘span’—it is seen as a global and national but not as a salient community or personal threat—because the communities they represent often feel victimised as a result of latent forms of Islamophobia being connected with the contemporary terrorist threat.
  - 28/12/2012, The Muslim News:  
    http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=6073
  - 10/1/2013, The Message of Islam:  

Public engagement: our focus groups engaged with 60 participants in 6 major cities in Britain, varying by sex, age, religion and lifestage. For some participants engagement in the research was itself a positive potential model for future collaboration between governments and citizens in formulating national security strategy:
“Sometimes you feel marginalised and we feel our voices are not being heard. These kinds of sessions need to be organised across the country on a much bigger scale. How long are people going to wait while the common man is suffering” (Azza, London).
“The role of government should be to consult with the public […] meetings like this for example will bring things to mind that you might not normally think of and this is an opportunity for potentially new ideas through the likes of research to be fed up through the ranks” (Bob, Cardiff).
3. Unexpected and potential future impacts

A Unexpected Impacts

Please note which, if any, of the impacts that your research has had were unexpected at the outset of the project, explaining where possible why you think this was the case.

Engagement with Michael Bluett, an independent Audio-Visual artist, arose as a result of discussions held at the ‘Security and the Everyday’ workshop, University of Warwick, November 2013. These discussions led to the production of a short pilot film designed to communicate some of the findings from our qualitative focus group work. It uses AV techniques to experiment with ways of presenting direct quotations from otherwise marginalised voices in society. The clip is freely available on YouTube and can be accessed here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdMXVYhqeo8&feature=youtu.be

As well as interest in working on a similar project with colleagues in Australia, we have since received inquiries from colleagues at Harvard University for advice about a survey on perceptions of security threats in Ukraine, and the University of California, Berkeley regarding our assessment of contemporary perceptions and experiences of security threats in Britain. The Joseph Rowntree Trust contacted us in July 2014 about our research and interests they have in a National Security Strategy that is more firmly rooted in public perceptions of security threats. We will be engaging further with them later in the year.

A further impact that we did not discuss in our proposal is on graduate research. We have had enquiries for support from two PhD students working on similar projects.

B Potential Future Impacts

If you have a clear idea of the impact your project is likely to have in the future please detail these below.

Scientific

The data archive will allow researchers in security studies and political psychology a new online resource for the study of security threats, threat perception, and political behaviour. This is likely to shape other scientific impacts in our respective fields.

Economic and societal

As the UK government prepares a new National Security Strategy document in conjunction with the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, we plan to submit evidence to the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy, based on the findings of our research (the deadline is the end of September 2014). We will stress the importance of how government frames threats—for example, as global or national—the disconnect between what the government and the public
sees as the most pressing security threats, and the low levels of awareness and effectiveness of
government actions designed to mitigate threats.
We also intend to extend our research programme cross-nationally, which would lead to impact
beyond the UK.
We will seek opportunities to work with Michael Bluett and other AV artists in order to develop
new ways of communicating research findings to non-academic audiences.

4. Impact limitations

A Limited scientific impact
Please state below any major scientific difficulties that have limited the scientific impact of your project.
The statement should refer to an effect on impact rather than simply detail research difficulties or other
project activity problems. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

B Limited economic and societal impact
ESRC recognises that some of the research it funds will not have an economic or societal impact in the
short term. Please explain briefly below if this is the case for your project, and refer to your grant
application where relevant. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

While the research has already had demonstrable societal impact, the project has only recently
ended and we expect to achieve greater non-scientific impact over the longer term. In particular,
our original application referred to ‘benefits for key stakeholders in local and central government
departments and agencies tasked with the formulation and review of security policy.’ Those
reviews are under way and we are currently in the process of preparing our evidence based on
published and forthcoming scientific outputs (see Section 3B), but this process will unfold over
the period 2014-16.

Declarations

Please read the statements below. Submitting this Impact Report confirms your agreement.

• This Impact Report is an accurate statement of the impacts of the research to date. All
c o-investigators named in the proposal to your Research Council or appointed
 subsequently have seen and approved the Report.