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Traffic police –drastic and disproportionate cuts

Key points

- Traffic police have suffered disproportionately under budget cuts
- According to the Home Office, traffic police officers (outside of London)
 - have fallen by 43% since 2010, compared to 17% drop in police overall
 - fell by at least five times as much as total police in six police services (Cambridgeshire, Dyfed-Powys, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire)
 - continued to fall in the last year, whereas total police numbers stabilised
 - currently account for only 3.1% of total police in England and Wales

RoadPeace calls

Traffic units must be spared further cuts, and investment allocated to strengthening them, as done in London. Our roads will not be made safer or feel safer until more traffic officers are seen enforcing traffic laws.

Current calls by the government for police to prioritise tackling knife crime must come with additional investment and not at the expense of traffic units whose numbers have already been cut too much.

Introduction

In 2010, Teresa May, then Home Secretary, announced police budgets were to be cut. This briefing highlights the impact on traffic police with a comparison to total policing. Roads policing is not recognised by the Home Office as core (priority) work for the police.

Data is from the Home Office's annual statistics on police workforce which defines traffic police as full time officers enforcing traffic offences, special escort officers, motorway policing teams, Automatic Number Plate Recognition officers and collision investigation units (Home Office, 2018). Data is presented by police region (which cover three to six police services), individual police services (referred to as police force area (PFA) by the Home Office), and given for both traffic police and total police for 2009/10 to 2017/18 (See Appendices).

As shown below, traffic police have been cut much more than police overall

- Outside of London, traffic police have been cut 2 ½ times that of total police
- In London, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) created the Roads and Transport Policing Command in early 2015 which saw traffic police rise from 264 to 1433. This merger was funded mainly by Transport for London (65%). London is thus discussed separately.

Table 1 Changes in police and traffic police numbers

	Traffic officers			Total police officers		
	2009/10	2017/18	Change	2009/10	2017/18	Change
England and Wales	5,635	4,352	-23%	143,734	122,407	-15%
Excluding MPS	5,338	3,061	-43%	110,368	92,017	-17%

Change in traffic police (see Appendix 1)

- Traffic police have declined by at least half in four of the 10 police regions: South West (-63%), East of England (-55%), North East (-53%) and Yorkshire and Humber (-50%).
- In addition to the MPS, three police services recorded an increase in traffic units: Warwickshire (10 to 68), West Mercia (101 to 147) and Cheshire (90 to 98).
- All other police services recorded a decline, with the largest in Cleveland, down 78% (115 to 25), Devon and Cornwall, down 76% (239 to 57), and Norfolk, down 75% (103 to 26).
- Other police services where the decline was more than half were Greater Manchester (310 to 134), Leicestershire (86 to 42), Avon and Somerset (157 to 71), Wiltshire (83 to 28) and Gloucestershire (65 to 29).

Changes in total police officers (see Appendix 2)

- The police region with the lowest decrease was Wales (7%), whilst the North East had the highest decrease (25%).
- All police services saw a decline in overall numbers of officers, except for Surrey, where there was a 6% increase.
- Eleven police services saw decreases of 20% or more, of which nine were in the Midlands and the North.

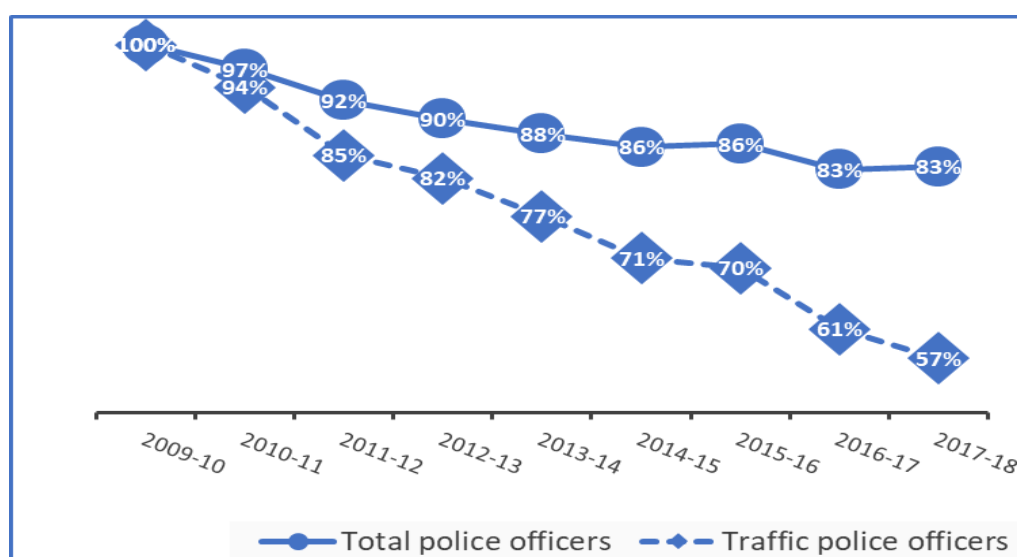


Figure 1 Decline in traffic and total officer numbers relative to 2009/10 (%), excluding London

Disproportionate cuts (See Appendix 3)

- Percentage fall in traffic police was less than that of total police in only six PFAs: Cheshire, MPS, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia.
- In all other PFAs it was greater. In most PFAs the drop was two or more times as great as that of the total, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentage fall in numbers of traffic police relative to percentage fall in total police

>1X but less than 2X	2X	3X	4X	5X
Cumbria	Avon and Somerset	Essex	Bedfordshire	Cambridgeshire
Dorset	City of London	Gloucestershire	Devon and Cornwall	Dyfed-Powys
Durham	Cleveland	North Yorkshire	Humberside	Hertfordshire
Gwent	Derbyshire	Thames Valley	Suffolk	Lincolnshire
Hampshire	Dorset		West Yorkshire	Norfolk
Lancashire	Greater Manchester		Wiltshire	Northamptonshire
Merseyside	Kent			
Northumbria	Leicestershire			
South Wales	South Yorkshire			
Surrey	West Midlands			
Sussex	Total (excl. MPS)			
Total England & Wales				

In the last year reported (2016/17-2017/18)

- Whilst total police remained stable in England and Wales, traffic police continued to fall, down another 7%.
- 28 police services reported a decrease, with the largest in Northamptonshire (-43%), from 52 officers to 30, and the West Midlands (-31%), down from 240 officers to 166
- Nottinghamshire reported an increase of 161%, rising from 18 officers to 47

RoadPeace calls

Traffic units must be spared further cuts, and investment allocated to strengthening them, as done in London. Our roads will not be made safer or feel safer until more traffic officers are seen enforcing traffic laws.

Current calls by the government for police to prioritise tackling knife crime must come with additional investment and not at the expense of traffic units whose numbers have already been cut too much.

RoadPeace is campaigning for road crime to be treated as real crime. This includes producing a series of briefings highlighting the infrequency and inconsistency of traffic offences being detected, and the need to reform our sentencing for road traffic crime.

References

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Appendix 1 Total police officers (full-time equivalent) – traffic units

Region	PFA	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Change since 2009-10
North East	Cleveland	115	113	102	100	92	88	43	28	25	-78%
	Durham	96	91	93	90	83	69	68	58	55	-43%
	Northumbria	189	153	170	144	151	144	139	127	109	-42%
	Sub-total	400	356	364	333	326	301	250	213	189	-53%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Humberside	116	115	110	103	96	83	81	53	55	-52%
	North Yorkshire	99	107	99	85	96	92	89	81	65	-34%
	South Yorkshire	130	121	118	107	111	93	93	74	67	-49%
	West Yorkshire	315	296	236	238	225	22	9	120	144	-54%
	Sub-total	659	639	563	534	527	291	272	327	331	-50%
North West	Cheshire	90	76	109	106	89	119	118	102	98	9%
	Cumbria	86	87	84	87	82	87	87	75	71	-17%
	Greater Manchester	310	296	282	284	248	226	243	124	134	-57%
	Lancashire	171	159	155	145	142	113	112	110	110	-36%
	Merseyside	164	176	161	148	136	127	118	112	96	-41%
	Sub-total	821	793	789	770	698	672	678	523	509	-38%
West Midlands	Staffordshire	67	61	52	58	49	47	49	46	50	-25%
	Warwickshire	10	10	25	39	37	35	108	72	68	579%
	West Mercia	101	88	83	83	80	70	159	164	147	45%
	West Midlands	351	298	276	286	282	264	273	240	166	-53%
	Sub-total	530	457	436	466	448	416	589	521	430	-19%
East Midlands	Derbyshire	88	84	75	69	65	64	64	62	57	-35%
	Leicestershire	86	75	73	67	66	62	62	40	42	-51%
	Lincolnshire	84	79	71	71	71	65	2	1	2	-98%
	Northamptonshire	68	63	61	59	59	38	35	52	30	-56%
	Nottinghamshire	47	43	36	16	15	13	13	18	47	0%
	Sub-total	372	343	315	282	276	242	176	173	178	-52%
East of England	Bedfordshire	57	56	52	47	46	47	47	39	32	-44%
	Cambridgeshire	101	95	86	85	76	72	68	63	60	-40%
	Essex	257	227	229	217	76	148	130	102	94	-63%
	Hertfordshire	139	132	124	110	99	91	90	86	76	-45%
	Norfolk	103	101	100	96	95	91	88	32	26	-75%
	Suffolk	67	65	56	92	88	89	45	41	39	-42%
	Sub-total	724	676	647	648	480	538	467	362	327	-55%
London	Metropolitan	297	301	331	306	264	1,433	1,289	1,375	1,290	335%
	City of London	30	34	31	24	25	24	15	16	17	-43%
	Sub-total	327	335	362	329	288	1,457	1,304	1,391	1,307	300%
South East	Hampshire	181	172	159	150	145	150	148	134	110	-39%
	Kent	138	138	124	112	101	94	93	91	89	-35%
	Surrey	100	89	94	99	96	94	105	90	85	-15%
	Sussex	159	160	150	144	139	143	135	111	97	-39%
	Thames Valley	228	219	207	209	203	204	193	185	162	-29%
	Sub-total	805	779	734	714	684	685	674	611	543	-33%
South West	Avon and Somerset	157	147	130	101	96	62	74	69	71	-55%
	Devon and Cornwall	239	235	0	0	57	88	78	60	57	-76%
	Dorset	76	63	52	50	47	54	54	44	43	-43%
	Gloucestershire	65	62	60	53	48	45	37	26	29	-55%
	Wiltshire	83	76	66	50	44	40	35	33	28	-66%
	Sub-total	620	583	308	254	292	288	277	233	229	-63%
Wales	Dyfed-Powys	84	83	78	81	77	80	78	67	69	-18%
	Gwent	63	63	72	73	60	62	57	50	52	-17%
	North Wales	88	83	69	67	70	68	64	59	59	-33%
	South Wales	143	140	131	125	130	122	120	119	128	-10%
	Sub-total	378	368	349	345	336	332	318	295	308	-19%
Total England and Wales		5,635	5,329	4,868	4,675	4,356	5,220	5,005	4,650	4,352	-23%
Total (excluding Met Police)		5,338	5,028	4,536	4,369	4,092	3,787	3,716	3,275	3,061	-43%

Source: (Home Office, 2019)

Appendix 2 Total police officers (full-time equivalent) – all functions

Region	PFA	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Change since 2009-10
North East	Cleveland	1,724	1,655	1,529	1,463	1,382	1,326	1,314	1,283	1,257	-27%
	Durham	1,507	1,431	1,363	1,362	1,288	1,169	1,165	1,144	1,141	-24%
	Northumbria	4,187	4,102	3,921	3,750	3,646	3,514	3,514	3,289	3,174	-24%
	Sub-total	7,419	7,189	6,813	6,575	6,316	6,009	5,993	5,715	5,573	-25%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Humberside	2,058	1,952	1,856	1,771	1,701	1,614	1,614	1,641	1,794	-13%
	North Yorkshire	1,486	1,458	1,402	1,370	1,408	1,395	1,395	1,377	1,348	-9%
	South Yorkshire	2,953	2,888	2,772	2,767	2,722	2,587	2,587	2,483	2,459	-17%
	West Yorkshire	5,758	5,536	5,219	5,062	4,857	4,748	4,748	4,720	5,014	-13%
	Sub-total	12,254	11,835	11,249	10,970	10,688	10,343	10,343	10,221	10,615	-13%
North West	Cheshire	2,155	2,079	2,011	2,013	1,925	1,952	1,974	2,008	2,020	-6%
	Cumbria	1,238	1,180	1,125	1,121	1,150	1,143	1,143	1,112	1,095	-12%
	Greater Manchester	8,148	7,791	7,498	7,202	6,997	6,703	6,704	6,318	6,349	-22%
	Lancashire	3,649	3,448	3,323	3,200	3,074	2,919	2,919	2,850	2,969	-19%
	Merseyside	4,516	4,297	4,083	3,909	3,954	3,794	3,794	3,538	3,450	-24%
	Sub-total	19,707	18,795	18,041	17,445	17,101	16,510	16,533	15,825	15,883	-19%
West Midlands	Staffordshire	2,161	2,079	1,948	1,829	1,729	1,714	1,714	1,626	1,590	-26%
	Warwickshire	973	919	844	805	802	828	1,325	835	806	-17%
	West Mercia	2,391	2,251	2,191	2,087	1,966	2,014	2,014	2,055	1,974	-17%
	West Midlands	8,626	8,149	7,826	7,615	7,288	7,133	7,133	6,756	6,581	-24%
	Sub-total	14,151	13,398	12,808	12,337	11,784	11,689	12,186	11,272	10,952	-23%
East Midlands	Derbyshire	2,074	2,021	1,819	1,827	1,788	1,863	1,863	1,672	1,741	-16%
	Leicestershire	2,317	2,211	2,142	2,089	2,043	1,955	1,955	1,807	1,780	-23%
	Lincolnshire	1,206	1,202	1,142	1,130	1,091	1,100	1,100	1,087	1,087	-10%
	Northamptonshire	1,343	1,306	1,234	1,268	1,239	1,229	1,206	1,188	1,215	-10%
	Nottinghamshire	2,409	2,319	2,168	2,095	2,158	2,102	2,102	1,837	1,917	-20%
	Sub-total	9,349	9,059	8,505	8,409	8,319	8,249	8,225	7,591	7,740	-17%
East of England	Bedfordshire	1,246	1,214	1,157	1,092	1,019	1,073	1,072	1,119	1,130	-9%
	Cambridgeshire	1,471	1,398	1,377	1,384	1,370	1,362	1,362	1,346	1,383	-6%
	Essex	3,606	3,577	3,408	3,311	3,196	3,069	3,069	2,819	2,958	-18%
	Hertfordshire	2,130	2,048	1,984	1,953	1,927	1,911	1,911	1,952	1,952	-8%
	Norfolk	1,662	1,598	1,547	1,544	1,582	1,569	1,569	1,515	1,558	-6%
	Suffolk	1,246	1,244	1,175	1,195	1,226	1,147	1,147	1,102	1,127	-10%
	Sub-total	11,361	11,079	10,649	10,479	10,319	10,131	10,130	9,852	10,108	-11%
London	Metropolitan	33,367	32,441	32,140	30,398	30,932	31,877	32,370	31,517	30,390	-9%
	City of London	852	878	831	774	746	739	735	684	697	-18%
	Sub-total	34,219	33,319	32,970	31,172	31,678	32,616	33,105	32,202	31,088	-9%
South East	Hampshire	3,748	3,658	3,434	3,397	3,247	3,064	3,094	2,896	2,835	-24%
	Kent	3,787	3,668	3,498	3,323	3,268	3,188	3,188	3,258	3,261	-14%
	Surrey	1,890	1,885	1,974	1,970	1,938	1,863	1,863	1,986	1,994	6%
	Sussex	3,213	3,102	2,959	2,847	2,805	2,810	2,810	2,587	2,549	-21%
	Thames Valley	4,434	4,375	4,355	4,322	4,346	4,365	4,365	4,096	4,067	-8%
	Sub-total	17,072	16,688	16,220	15,859	15,604	15,289	15,320	14,823	14,706	-14%
South West	Avon and Somerset	3,302	3,210	3,039	2,873	2,800	2,707	2,706	2,668	2,597	-21%
	Devon and Cornwall	3,556	3,436	3,225	3,082	3,096	3,068	3,068	2,914	2,959	-17%
	Dorset	1,486	1,452	1,378	1,301	1,217	1,272	1,271	1,272	1,263	-15%
	Gloucestershire	1,309	1,262	1,207	1,198	1,188	1,165	1,165	1,089	1,073	-18%
	Wiltshire	1,181	1,099	1,057	1,050	1,020	1,015	993	983	994	-16%
	Sub-total	10,834	10,460	9,905	9,504	9,322	9,227	9,203	8,925	8,886	-18%
Wales	Dyfed-Powys	1,195	1,157	1,131	1,112	1,123	1,176	1,176	1,160	1,186	-1%
	Gwent	1,437	1,501	1,446	1,377	1,330	1,229	1,233	1,178	1,268	-12%
	North Wales	1,590	1,530	1,454	1,483	1,464	1,487	1,497	1,441	1,490	-6%
	South Wales	3,148	3,100	2,907	2,862	2,861	2,864	2,864	2,908	2,914	-7%
	Sub-total	7,369	7,288	6,939	6,833	6,778	6,756	6,770	6,687	6,857	-7%
Total England and Wales		143,734	139,110	134,100	129,584	127,909	126,818	127,808	123,113	122,407	-15%
Total (excluding Met Police)		110,368	106,669	101,960	99,186	96,978	94,941	95,438	91,596	92,017	-17%

Source: (Home Office, 2019)

Appendix 3 Traffic units as proportion of the total police numbers

Region	PFA	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
North East	Cleveland	6.7%	6.8%	6.7%	6.8%	6.6%	6.6%	3.3%	2.2%	2.0%
	Durham	6.4%	6.3%	6.8%	6.6%	6.4%	5.9%	5.8%	5.1%	4.9%
	Northumbria	4.5%	3.7%	4.3%	3.8%	4.2%	4.1%	4.0%	3.9%	3.4%
	Sub-total	5.4%	5.0%	5.3%	5.1%	5.2%	5.0%	4.2%	3.7%	3.4%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Humberside	5.6%	5.9%	5.9%	5.8%	5.6%	5.1%	5.0%	3.2%	3.1%
	North Yorkshire	6.7%	7.4%	7.1%	6.2%	6.8%	6.6%	6.4%	5.9%	4.8%
	South Yorkshire	4.4%	4.2%	4.3%	3.9%	4.1%	3.6%	3.6%	3.0%	2.7%
	West Yorkshire	5.5%	5.3%	4.5%	4.7%	4.6%	0.5%	0.2%	2.5%	2.9%
	Sub-total	5.4%	5.4%	5.0%	4.9%	4.9%	2.8%	2.6%	3.2%	3.1%
North West	Cheshire	4.2%	3.7%	5.4%	5.2%	4.6%	6.1%	6.0%	5.1%	4.9%
	Cumbria	6.9%	7.4%	7.4%	7.7%	7.1%	7.6%	7.6%	6.7%	6.5%
	Greater Manchester	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.9%	3.5%	3.4%	3.6%	2.0%	2.1%
	Lancashire	4.7%	4.6%	4.7%	4.5%	4.6%	3.9%	3.8%	3.9%	3.7%
	Merseyside	3.6%	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.4%	3.3%	3.1%	3.2%	2.8%
	Sub-total	4.2%	4.2%	4.4%	4.4%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	3.3%	3.2%
West Midlands	Staffordshire	3.1%	2.9%	2.7%	3.2%	2.8%	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%	3.1%
	Warwickshire	1.0%	1.1%	3.0%	4.8%	4.6%	4.2%	8.1%	8.6%	8.4%
	West Mercia	4.2%	3.9%	3.8%	4.0%	4.1%	3.5%	7.9%	8.0%	7.4%
	West Midlands	4.1%	3.7%	3.5%	3.8%	3.9%	3.7%	3.8%	3.5%	2.5%
	Sub-total	3.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.8%	3.8%	3.6%	4.8%	4.6%	3.9%
East Midlands	Derbyshire	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	3.8%	3.6%	3.4%	3.4%	3.7%	3.3%
	Leicestershire	3.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	2.2%	2.4%
	Lincolnshire	6.9%	6.5%	6.2%	6.3%	6.5%	5.9%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
	Northamptonshire	5.0%	4.8%	5.0%	4.7%	4.8%	3.1%	2.9%	4.4%	2.4%
	Nottinghamshire	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	1.0%	2.5%
	Sub-total	4.0%	3.8%	3.7%	3.4%	3.3%	2.9%	2.1%	2.3%	2.3%
East of England	Bedfordshire	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.3%	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%	3.5%	2.8%
	Cambridgeshire	6.9%	6.8%	6.2%	6.2%	5.6%	5.3%	5.0%	4.7%	4.4%
	Essex	7.1%	6.3%	6.7%	6.6%	2.4%	4.8%	4.2%	3.6%	3.2%
	Hertfordshire	6.5%	6.4%	6.3%	5.6%	5.1%	4.7%	4.7%	4.4%	3.9%
	Norfolk	6.2%	6.3%	6.5%	6.2%	6.0%	5.8%	5.6%	2.1%	1.6%
	Suffolk	5.4%	5.2%	4.7%	7.7%	7.2%	7.8%	3.9%	3.7%	3.4%
	Sub-total	6.4%	6.1%	6.1%	6.2%	4.7%	5.3%	4.6%	3.7%	3.2%
London	Metropolitan	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	4.5%	4.0%	4.4%	4.2%
	City of London	3.5%	3.9%	3.7%	3.1%	3.3%	3.2%	2.0%	2.3%	2.4%
	Sub-total	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	4.5%	3.9%	4.3%	4.2%
South East	Hampshire	4.8%	4.7%	4.6%	4.4%	4.5%	4.9%	4.8%	4.6%	3.9%
	Kent	3.6%	3.8%	3.5%	3.4%	3.1%	2.9%	2.9%	2.8%	2.7%
	Surrey	5.3%	4.7%	4.8%	5.0%	4.9%	5.0%	5.6%	4.6%	4.3%
	Sussex	5.0%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.0%	5.1%	4.8%	4.3%	3.8%
	Thames Valley	5.1%	5.0%	4.8%	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%	4.4%	4.5%	4.0%
	Sub-total	4.7%	4.7%	4.5%	4.5%	4.4%	4.5%	4.4%	4.1%	3.7%
South West	Avon and Somerset	4.7%	4.6%	4.3%	3.5%	3.4%	2.3%	2.7%	2.6%	2.7%
	Devon and Cornwall	6.7%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	2.9%	2.5%	2.1%	1.9%
	Dorset	5.1%	4.3%	3.8%	3.9%	3.8%	4.2%	4.2%	3.5%	3.4%
	Gloucestershire	5.0%	4.9%	5.0%	4.4%	4.1%	3.8%	3.1%	2.4%	2.7%
	Wiltshire	7.1%	6.9%	6.3%	4.7%	4.4%	3.9%	3.5%	3.4%	2.9%
	Sub-total	5.7%	5.6%	3.1%	2.7%	3.1%	3.1%	3.0%	2.6%	2.6%
Wales	Dyfed-Powys	7.0%	7.1%	6.9%	7.3%	6.8%	6.8%	6.6%	5.8%	5.8%
	Gwent	4.4%	4.2%	5.0%	5.3%	4.5%	5.0%	4.6%	4.2%	4.1%
	North Wales	5.5%	5.4%	4.7%	4.5%	4.8%	4.6%	4.3%	4.1%	4.0%
	South Wales	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	4.4%	4.5%	4.3%	4.2%	4.1%	4.4%
	Sub-total	5.1%	5.1%	5.0%	5.1%	5.0%	4.9%	4.7%	4.4%	4.5%
Total England and Wales		3.9%	3.8%	3.6%	3.6%	3.4%	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.6%
Total (excluding Met Police)		4.8%	4.7%	4.4%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.9%	3.6%	3.3%

Source: (Home Office, 2019)