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Traffic police – the cuts continue

Key points

- Traffic police continue to suffer disproportionately under budget cuts
- According to the Home Office statistics (July 2019), traffic police officers outside of London:
 - continued to fall in the last year, whereas total police numbers increased marginally
 - currently account for only 3.1% of total police in England and Wales
 - have fallen by 47% since 2010, compared to 14% drop in police overall
 - fell by at least five times as much as total police in twelve police services (Kent, North Yorkshire, Dyfed-Powys, Cumbria, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Humberside, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Surrey)

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.

Introduction

Between 2010/11 and 2018/19, police budgets were cut 19% in real terms (Full Fact, 2019). RoadPeace has tracked the effects of these cuts on traffic police numbers (RoadPeace, 2019). This briefing updates this picture with the latest figures released for 2018/19 (Home Office, 2019).

The picture that emerges is that traffic police numbers, which had already experienced disproportionate cuts (RoadPeace, 2019), have been further cut again in both absolute terms and relative to the wider police workforce: once again, road crime is not being treated as real crime.

Analysis

Data is from the Home Office's annual statistics on police workforce. The changes since 2009-10 in the numbers assigned to traffic units¹ and the total number officers² and are shown for each police area in

¹ Traffic police are defined 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).

² This excludes backroom staff and community support officers.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.

For individual police areas, the numbers reported for the traffic units show levels of variation that are affected by mergers of police services and collaborative working³. In light of this, regional totals of traffic police can be a more reliable guide to the overall picture.

Changes since March 2017/18

Traffic police:

- Declined in England and Wales by 132 (3%) to 4,219.
- Declined most (127) in the West Midlands region, due to large decreases in West Mercia (84) and Warwickshire (34)
- Increased significantly in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) (98) and Lancashire (50)

Total police:

- Increased by 764 (1%) to 123,171.
- There were, however, declines across all police areas in the North East

Changes since 2009/10

London is discussed separately for good reason. In early 2015, the MPS created the Roads and Transport Policing Command and the number of police reported in its traffic unit rose from 264 to 1,433. This created a distortion in reporting for London and, given the numbers involved, for the overall national totals. Thus the discussion of the national picture below includes reference to totals that exclude the MPS.

Traffic police:

- Declined in England and Wales by 25%
- Declined by 47% when MPS is excluded
- Since 2009/10, traffic police have declined by at least half in five of the 10 police regions:
 - South West (-62%),
 - East Midlands (-59%),
 - East of England (-56%),
 - North East (-56%) and
 - Yorkshire and Humber (-56%).

Total police:

- Declined in England and Wales by 14%
- Declined by 16% when MPS is excluded
- The police region with the lowest decrease was Wales (6%), whilst the North East had the highest decrease (27%).

Traffic police as % of total:

- Fell from 3.9% to 3.4% for England and Wales
 - 4.8% to 3.1% if MPS is excluded
- Fell in all police regions, excluding London
- Fell in all police areas, except MPS, Cheshire, Lancashire and Warwickshire

³ Such as the Roads and Armed Policing Team in the East Midlands Operational Support Service (EMOpSS).

Relative Falls 2009/10 to 2018/19

Table 1 Percentage fall in numbers of traffic police relative to percentage fall in total police

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

References

- Full Fact. (2019). *Police funding in England and Wales*. Retrieved from <https://fullfact.org/crime/police-funding-england-and-wales/>
- Home Office. (2018). Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2018>
- Home Office. (2019). Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales#data-tables>
- RoadPeace. (2019). *Traffic Police - drastic and disproportionate cuts*. Retrieved from <http://www.roadpeace.org/download/roadpeace-traffic-police-drastic-and-disproportionate-cuts/>

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 | 2018-19 | 12 month change | Change since 2009-10 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| North East | Cleveland | 115 | 113 | 102 | 100 | 92 | 88 | 43 | 28 | 25 | 26 | 4% | -77% |
| | Durham | 96 | 91 | 93 | 90 | 83 | 69 | 68 | 58 | 55 | 61 | 11% | -36% |
| | Northumbria | 189 | 153 | 170 | 144 | 151 | 144 | 139 | 127 | 109 | 89 | -18% | -53% |
| Sub-total | | 400 | 356 | 364 | 333 | 326 | 301 | 250 | 213 | 189 | 176 | -7% | -56% |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | Humberside | 116 | 115 | 110 | 103 | 96 | 83 | 81 | 53 | 55 | 4 | -93% | -97% |
| | North Yorkshire | 99 | 107 | 99 | 85 | 96 | 92 | 89 | 81 | 65 | 60 | -8% | -39% |
| | South Yorkshire | 130 | 121 | 118 | 107 | 111 | 93 | 93 | 74 | 67 | 70 | 5% | -46% |
| Sub-total | | 659 | 639 | 563 | 534 | 527 | 291 | 272 | 327 | 331 | 287 | -13% | -56% |
| North West | Cheshire | 90 | 76 | 109 | 106 | 89 | 119 | 118 | 102 | 98 | 96 | -2% | 7% |
| | Cumbria | 86 | 87 | 84 | 87 | 82 | 87 | 87 | 75 | 71 | 46 | -35% | -46% |
| | Greater Manchester | 310 | 296 | 282 | 284 | 248 | 226 | 243 | 124 | 134 | 135 | 1% | -56% |
| | Lancashire | 171 | 159 | 155 | 145 | 142 | 113 | 112 | 110 | 110 | 160 | 45% | -6% |
| | Merseyside | 164 | 176 | 161 | 148 | 136 | 127 | 118 | 112 | 96 | 100 | 4% | -39% |
| Sub-total | | 821 | 793 | 789 | 770 | 698 | 672 | 678 | 523 | 509 | 538 | 6% | -34% |
| West Midlands | Staffordshire | 67 | 61 | 52 | 58 | 49 | 47 | 49 | 46 | 50 | 47 | -6% | -30% |
| | Warwickshire | 10 | 10 | 25 | 39 | 37 | 35 | 108 | 72 | 68 | 34 | -50% | 240% |
| | West Mercia | 101 | 88 | 83 | 83 | 80 | 70 | 159 | 164 | 147 | 63 | -57% | -38% |
| | West Midlands | 351 | 298 | 276 | 286 | 282 | 264 | 273 | 240 | 166 | 159 | -4% | -55% |
| Sub-total | | 530 | 457 | 436 | 466 | 448 | 416 | 589 | 521 | 430 | 303 | -30% | -43% |
| East Midlands | Derbyshire | 88 | 84 | 75 | 69 | 65 | 64 | 64 | 62 | 57 | 63 | 10% | -29% |
| | Leicestershire | 86 | 75 | 73 | 67 | 66 | 62 | 62 | 40 | 42 | 39 | -7% | -55% |
| | Lincolnshire | 84 | 79 | 71 | 71 | 71 | 65 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | -100% | -100% |
| | Northamptonshire | 68 | 63 | 61 | 59 | 59 | 38 | 35 | 52 | 30 | 30 | 0% | -56% |
| | Nottinghamshire | 47 | 43 | 36 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 18 | 47 | 22 | -53% | -53% |
| Sub-total | | 372 | 343 | 315 | 282 | 276 | 242 | 176 | 173 | 178 | 153 | -14% | -59% |
| East of England | Bedfordshire | 57 | 56 | 52 | 47 | 46 | 47 | 47 | 39 | 32 | 25 | -23% | -57% |
| | Cambridgeshire | 101 | 95 | 86 | 85 | 76 | 72 | 68 | 63 | 60 | 56 | -7% | -44% |
| | Essex | 257 | 227 | 229 | 217 | 76 | 148 | 130 | 102 | 94 | 114 | 21% | -55% |
| | Hertfordshire | 139 | 132 | 124 | 110 | 99 | 91 | 90 | 86 | 76 | 59 | -23% | -58% |
| | Norfolk | 103 | 101 | 100 | 96 | 95 | 91 | 88 | 32 | 26 | 25 | -4% | -76% |
| | Suffolk | 67 | 65 | 56 | 92 | 88 | 89 | 45 | 41 | 39 | 37 | -5% | -45% |
| Sub-total | | 724 | 676 | 647 | 648 | 480 | 538 | 467 | 362 | 327 | 315 | -4% | -56% |
| London | Metropolitan | 297 | 301 | 331 | 306 | 264 | 1,433 | 1,289 | 1,375 | 1,290 | 1,388 | 8% | 368% |
| | City of London | 30 | 34 | 31 | 24 | 25 | 24 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 22 | 28% | -28% |
| Sub-total | | 327 | 335 | 362 | 329 | 288 | 1,457 | 1,304 | 1,391 | 1,307 | 1,410 | 8% | 331% |
| South East | Hampshire | 181 | 172 | 159 | 150 | 145 | 150 | 148 | 134 | 110 | 102 | -7% | -44% |
| | Kent | 138 | 138 | 124 | 112 | 101 | 94 | 93 | 91 | 89 | 95 | 6% | -31% |
| | Surrey | 100 | 89 | 94 | 99 | 96 | 94 | 105 | 90 | 85 | 70 | -18% | -30% |
| | Sussex | 159 | 160 | 150 | 144 | 139 | 143 | 135 | 111 | 97 | 91 | -6% | -43% |
| | Thames Valley | 228 | 219 | 207 | 209 | 203 | 204 | 193 | 185 | 162 | 158 | -3% | -31% |
| Sub-total | | 805 | 779 | 734 | 714 | 684 | 685 | 674 | 611 | 543 | 515 | -5% | -36% |
| South West | Avon and Somerset | 157 | 147 | 130 | 101 | 96 | 62 | 74 | 69 | 71 | 61 | -13% | -61% |
| | Devon and Cornwall | 239 | 235 | 0 | 0 | 57 | 88 | 78 | 60 | 57 | 80 | 38% | -67% |
| | Dorset | 76 | 63 | 52 | 50 | 47 | 54 | 54 | 44 | 43 | 44 | 2% | -42% |
| | Gloucestershire | 65 | 62 | 60 | 53 | 48 | 45 | 37 | 26 | 29 | 24 | -18% | -63% |
| | Wiltshire | 83 | 76 | 66 | 50 | 44 | 40 | 35 | 33 | 28 | 28 | -2% | -67% |
| Sub-total | | 620 | 583 | 308 | 254 | 292 | 288 | 277 | 233 | 229 | 237 | 3% | -62% |
| Wales | Dyfed-Powys | 84 | 83 | 78 | 81 | 77 | 80 | 78 | 67 | 69 | 62 | -10% | -26% |
| | Gwent | 63 | 63 | 72 | 73 | 60 | 62 | 57 | 50 | 52 | 53 | 2% | -16% |
| | North Wales | 88 | 83 | 69 | 67 | 70 | 68 | 64 | 59 | 59 | 59 | 0% | -33% |
| | South Wales | 143 | 140 | 131 | 125 | 130 | 122 | 120 | 119 | 128 | 111 | -13% | -22% |
| Sub-total | | 378 | 368 | 349 | 345 | 336 | 332 | 318 | 295 | 308 | 285 | -7% | -25% |
| Total England and Wales | | 5,635 | 5,329 | 4,868 | 4,675 | 4,356 | 5,220 | 5,005 | 4,650 | 4,352 | 4,219 | -3% | -25% |
| Total (excluding Met Police) | | 5,338 | 5,028 | 4,536 | 4,369 | 4,092 | 3,787 | 3,716 | 3,275 | 3,061 | 2,832 | -8% | -47% |

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 | 2018-19 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| North East | Cleveland | 6.7% | 6.8% | 6.7% | 6.8% | 6.6% | 6.6% | 3.3% | 2.2% | 2.0% | 2.2% |
| | Durham | 6.4% | 6.3% | 6.8% | 6.6% | 6.4% | 5.9% | 5.8% | 5.1% | 4.9% | 5.5% |
| | Northumbria | 4.5% | 3.7% | 4.3% | 3.8% | 4.2% | 4.1% | 4.0% | 3.9% | 3.4% | 2.9% |
| Sub-total | | 5.4% | 5.0% | 5.3% | 5.1% | 5.2% | 5.0% | 4.2% | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.3% |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | Humberside | 5.6% | 5.9% | 5.9% | 5.8% | 5.6% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 3.2% | 3.1% | 0.2% |
| | North Yorkshire | 6.7% | 7.4% | 7.1% | 6.2% | 6.8% | 6.6% | 6.4% | 5.9% | 4.8% | 4.4% |
| | South Yorkshire | 4.4% | 4.2% | 4.3% | 3.9% | 4.1% | 3.6% | 3.6% | 3.0% | 2.7% | 3.0% |
| | West Yorkshire | 5.5% | 5.3% | 4.5% | 4.7% | 4.6% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 2.5% | 2.9% | 3.0% |
| Sub-total | | 5.4% | 5.4% | 5.0% | 4.9% | 4.9% | 2.8% | 2.6% | 3.2% | 3.1% | 2.7% |
| North West | Cheshire | 4.2% | 3.7% | 5.4% | 5.2% | 4.6% | 6.1% | 6.0% | 5.1% | 4.9% | 4.8% |
| | Cumbria | 6.9% | 7.4% | 7.4% | 7.7% | 7.1% | 7.6% | 7.6% | 6.7% | 6.5% | 4.0% |
| | Greater Manchester | 3.8% | 3.8% | 3.8% | 3.9% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 3.6% | 2.0% | 2.1% | 2.1% |
| | Lancashire | 4.7% | 4.6% | 4.7% | 4.5% | 4.6% | 3.9% | 3.8% | 3.9% | 3.7% | 5.5% |
| | Merseyside | 3.6% | 4.1% | 3.9% | 3.8% | 3.4% | 3.3% | 3.1% | 3.2% | 2.8% | 2.9% |
| Sub-total | | 4.2% | 4.2% | 4.4% | 4.4% | 4.1% | 4.1% | 4.1% | 3.3% | 3.2% | 3.4% |
| West Midlands | Staffordshire | 3.1% | 2.9% | 2.7% | 3.2% | 2.8% | 2.7% | 2.9% | 2.8% | 3.1% | 3.0% |
| | Warwickshire | 1.0% | 1.1% | 3.0% | 4.8% | 4.6% | 4.2% | 8.1% | 8.6% | 8.4% | 4.2% |
| | West Mercia | 4.2% | 3.9% | 3.8% | 4.0% | 4.1% | 3.5% | 7.9% | 8.0% | 7.4% | 3.2% |
| | West Midlands | 4.1% | 3.7% | 3.5% | 3.8% | 3.9% | 3.7% | 3.8% | 3.5% | 2.5% | 2.4% |
| Sub-total | | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.4% | 3.8% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 4.8% | 4.6% | 3.9% | 2.8% |
| East Midlands | Derbyshire | 4.2% | 4.2% | 4.1% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 3.4% | 3.4% | 3.7% | 3.3% | 3.6% |
| | Leicestershire | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.4% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 2.2% | 2.4% | 2.1% |
| | Lincolnshire | 6.9% | 6.5% | 6.2% | 6.3% | 6.5% | 5.9% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| | Northamptonshire | 5.0% | 4.8% | 5.0% | 4.7% | 4.8% | 3.1% | 2.9% | 4.4% | 2.4% | 2.5% |
| | Nottinghamshire | 1.9% | 1.8% | 1.7% | 0.8% | 0.7% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 1.0% | 2.5% | 1.1% |
| Sub-total | | 4.0% | 3.8% | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.3% | 2.9% | 2.1% | 2.3% | 2.3% | 2.0% |
| East of England | Bedfordshire | 4.6% | 4.6% | 4.5% | 4.3% | 4.5% | 4.4% | 4.4% | 3.5% | 2.8% | 2.1% |
| | Cambridgeshire | 6.9% | 6.8% | 6.2% | 6.2% | 5.6% | 5.3% | 5.0% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 3.9% |
| | Essex | 7.1% | 6.3% | 6.7% | 6.6% | 2.4% | 4.8% | 4.2% | 3.6% | 3.2% | 3.7% |
| | Hertfordshire | 6.5% | 6.4% | 6.3% | 5.6% | 5.1% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 4.4% | 3.9% | 2.9% |
| | Norfolk | 6.2% | 6.3% | 6.5% | 6.2% | 6.0% | 5.8% | 5.6% | 2.1% | 1.6% | 1.5% |
| | Suffolk | 5.4% | 5.2% | 4.7% | 7.7% | 7.2% | 7.8% | 3.9% | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.1% |
| Sub-total | | 6.4% | 6.1% | 6.1% | 6.2% | 4.7% | 5.3% | 4.6% | 3.7% | 3.2% | 3.0% |
| London | Metropolitan | 0.9% | 0.9% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 4.5% | 4.0% | 4.4% | 4.2% | 4.6% |
| | City of London | 3.5% | 3.9% | 3.7% | 3.1% | 3.3% | 3.2% | 2.0% | 2.3% | 2.4% | 2.9% |
| Sub-total | | 1.0% | 1.0% | 1.1% | 1.1% | 0.9% | 4.5% | 3.9% | 4.3% | 4.2% | 4.5% |
| South East | Hampshire | 4.8% | 4.7% | 4.6% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.9% | 4.8% | 4.6% | 3.9% | 3.8% |
| | Kent | 3.6% | 3.8% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 3.1% | 2.9% | 2.9% | 2.8% | 2.7% | 2.7% |
| | Surrey | 5.3% | 4.7% | 4.8% | 5.0% | 4.9% | 5.0% | 5.6% | 4.6% | 4.3% | 3.7% |
| | Sussex | 5.0% | 5.1% | 5.1% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 5.1% | 4.8% | 4.3% | 3.8% | 3.5% |
| | Thames Valley | 5.1% | 5.0% | 4.8% | 4.8% | 4.7% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.0% | 3.8% |
| Sub-total | | 4.7% | 4.7% | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.4% | 4.1% | 3.7% | 3.5% |
| South West | Avon and Somerset | 4.7% | 4.6% | 4.3% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 2.3% | 2.7% | 2.6% | 2.7% | 2.3% |
| | Devon and Cornwall | 6.7% | 6.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.8% | 2.9% | 2.5% | 2.1% | 1.9% | 2.7% |
| | Dorset | 5.1% | 4.3% | 3.8% | 3.9% | 3.8% | 4.2% | 4.2% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 3.6% |
| | Gloucestershire | 5.0% | 4.9% | 5.0% | 4.4% | 4.1% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 2.4% | 2.7% | 2.2% |
| | Wiltshire | 7.1% | 6.9% | 6.3% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 3.9% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 2.9% | 2.8% |
| Sub-total | | 5.7% | 5.6% | 3.1% | 2.7% | 3.1% | 3.1% | 3.0% | 2.6% | 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% | 5.4% |
| | Gwent | 4.4% | 4.2% | 5.0% | 5.3% | 4.5% | 5.0% | 4.6% | 4.2% | 4.1% | 4.0% |
| | North Wales | 5.5% | 5.4% | 4.7% | 4.5% | 4.8% | 4.6% | 4.3% | 4.1% | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| | South Wales | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.3% | 4.2% | 4.1% | 4.4% | 3.7% |
| Sub-total | | 5.1% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 4.9% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.1% |
| Total England and Wales | | 3.9% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 3.6% | 3.4% | 4.1% | 3.9% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 3.4% |
| Total (excluding Met Police) | | 4.8% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 4.4% | 4.2% | 4.0% | 3.9% | 3.6% | 3.3% | 3.1% |

Source: (Home Office, 2019)