



AVZ Blog (August 2022) Driving bans are still too rare England and Wales (2021)

Key points

In 2021, the Ministry of Justice reports that:

- Driving bans given at court increased by 31% in 2021, up to 78,816 drivers directly disqualified.
- Lifetime bans increased to 251, up from 9 in 2020 and 12 in 2019.
- Most bans are given for offences where a driving ban is mandatory, and predominantly for impaired driving.
- Bans remain rare for convictions for speeding (2.5%) and careless driving (5.3%). But this varies greatly across the country:
 - Speeding bans — vary from a high of 15.9% in Wiltshire and 10.5% in Northamptonshire to 0.5% in Durham and 0.7% in South Wales
 - Careless driving bans — vary from 12.7% in Greater Manchester to no bans being issued in Cleveland.

Action Vision Zero calls for more bans to be given for “sober” unsafe driving, including with bans given to all extreme speeders and careless driving bordering on dangerous driving.

Overall

The Ministry of Justice has published data on driving bans issued in 2021. Disqualifications given at court rose to 78,816, up 31% from 2020. This was greater than the increase in motoring convictions and was largely due to an increase in drink and drug driving convictions. Table 1 presents the number of disqualifications given by motoring offence in 2020 and 2021.

One in seven drivers convicted at court in 2021 received a driving ban (14%). This is the third year of an increase in this rate (up from 10% in 2018). For comparison, only one percent of convicted drivers receive a custodial sentence. The vast majority only have penalty points put on their driving licenses.

Ban duration

Table 2 shows the lengths of bans given in 2021. Of the longer bans given, these were primarily for drink and drug driving.

Lifetime bans rose to 251. This is a large increase from previous years (9 in 2020, 12 in 2019, and 5 in 2018). Four police service areas comprised 40% of lifetime bans given:

- London (38)
- West Yorkshire (24)
- West Midlands (20)
- Merseyside (20)

Dangerous driving accounted for 159 lifetime bans (63%) in 2021. Another 20 lifetime bans were given to those convicted of disqualified driving.

Reason for ban

Most bans are given for offences where they are mandatory. Seven out of ten disqualifications are for such offences (e.g. causing death/serious injury by driving, dangerous driving, drink driving and drug driving, etc).

Table 1: Driving bans, England and Wales

	2020	2021	2020-2021		2021
	no.	no.	no	%	% total
01. Causing death by dangerous driving	166	166	0	0%	0%
02. Causing death by careless driving under influence of drink or drugs	19	15	-4	-21%	0%
03. Causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving	103	181	78	76%	0%
04. Causing death by driving unlicensed or uninsured drivers	2	4	2	100%	0%
04a. Causing death by driving whilst disqualified	1	1	0	0%	0%
05. Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking	1	1	0	0%	0%
06. Causing serious injury by dangerous driving	268	364	96	36%	0%
07. Cause serious injury by driving whilst disqualified	7	5	-2	-29%	0%
08. Causing bodily harm by furious driving	2	1	-1	-50%	0%
09. Causing danger by interfering with a vehicle, road or traffic equipment	4	4	0	0%	0%
10. Dangerous driving	3,532	4,691	1,159	33%	6%
11. Driving with alcohol in the blood above the prescribed limit	26,580	29,967	3,387	13%	38%
12. Drive a motor vehicle with the proportion of specified controlled drug above specified limit	12,938	19,514	6,576	51%	25%
13. Other offences related to drink or drug driving	5,630	7,897	2,267	40%	10%
14. Using or causing others to use a handheld mobile phone whilst driving	13	83	70	538%	0%
15. Careless driving offences (excl. mobile phone offences)	443	716	273	62%	1%
16. Failing to stop or provide information after accident	384	550	166	43%	1%
17. Theft of a motor vehicle / aggravated vehicle taking	1,018	1,004	-14	-1%	1%
18. Driving licence related offences	4,658	6,406	1,748	38%	8%
19. Vehicle insurance offences	1,472	2,221	749	51%	3%
22. Fraud, forgery, etc. associated with vehicle or driver records	3	5	2	67%	0%
23. Defective vehicle parts	23	27	4	17%	0%
24. Vehicle test offences			0		0%
25. Speed limit offences	2,846	4,676	1,830	64%	6%
26. Neglecting road regulations (other than speeding)	92	172	80	87%	0%
27. Failing to supply information as to identity of driver when required	187	281	94	50%	0%
28. Miscellaneous (other) motoring offences	3	7	4	133%	0%
Total	60,395	78,959	18,564	31%	100%

Source: MoJ (2022)

Impaired driving accounts for the majority of driving bans (73%). As shown in Table 1, this includes

- Drink driving (38%)
- Drug driving (25%)
- Other offences related to drink/drug driving (10%)

Unsafe but sober (i.e. unimpaired) driving

In June 2021, AVZ published [Driving Bans: Underused and Inconsistent](#). This blog highlighted how rare it was for drivers convicted at court other offences, particularly speeding (1.9%) and careless driving (5.4%), to be disqualified from driving. We also highlighted the variation across the court areas.

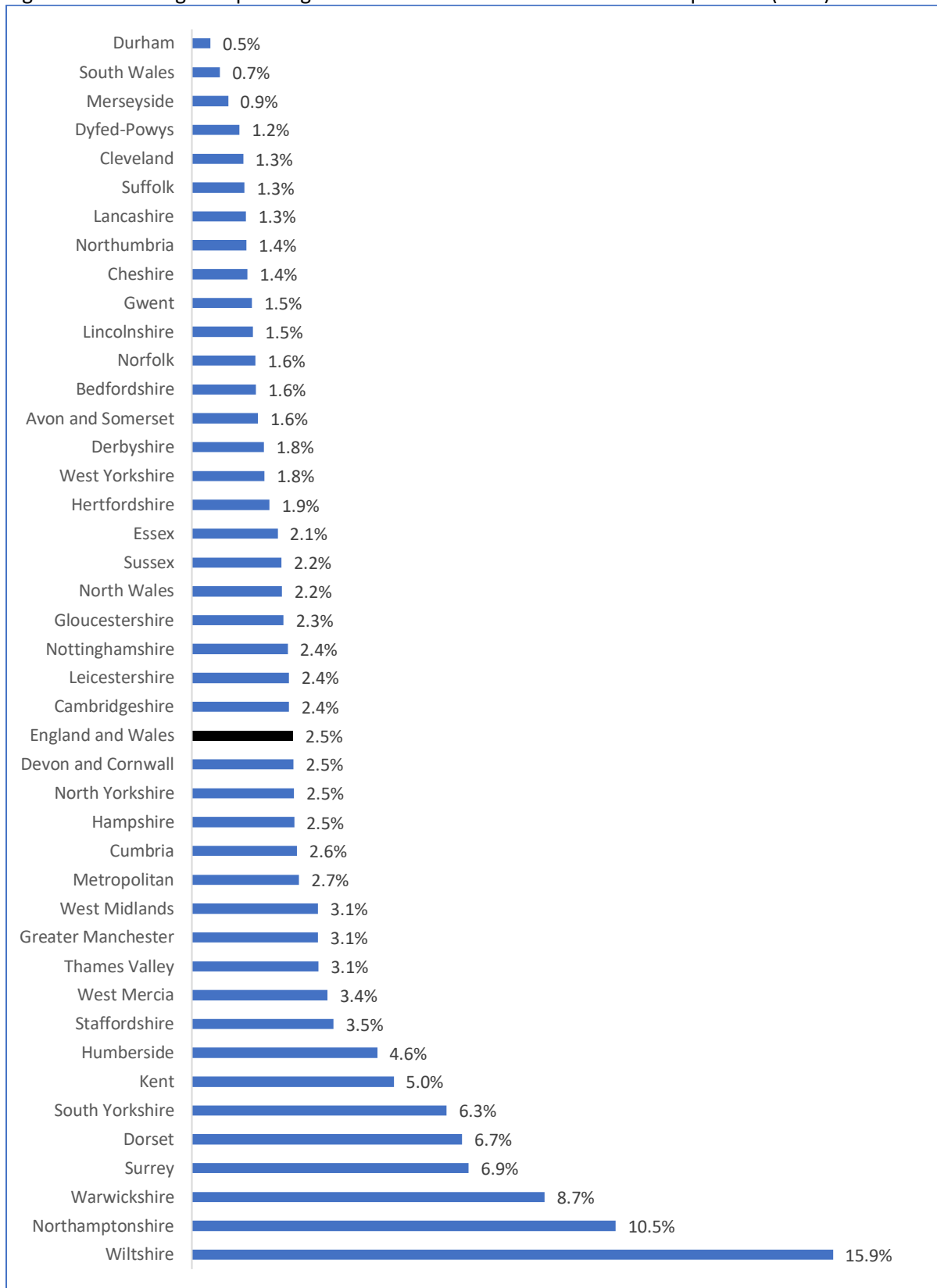
This 2022 blog shows that little has changed. Bans remain rarely given to drivers convicted of speeding (2.5%) or careless driving (5.3%). As the majority of these offences are sanctioned out of court, those convicted at court for these offences will include the most serious cases. For instance, with speeding, this includes drivers greatly exceeding the speed limit (e.g. 50mph in a 30mph limit) who are sent to court.

Table 2: Duration of driving bans, England and Wales (2021)

	Under 6 months	6 months	Over 6 months and less than 1 year	1 year	Over 1 year and less than 2 years	2 years and less than 3 years	3 years	Over 3 years and less than 4 years	4 years and less than 5 years	5 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than life	Life	Until driving test	Unknown
01. Causing death by dangerous driving				2	1	2	14		3	18	4	6	103	
02. Causing death by careless driving under influence of drink or drugs									3	3			9	
03. Causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving		3	1	39	25	20	20	1	5	3		5	43	16
04. Causing death by driving unlicensed or uninsured drivers				1	1	1							1	
04a. Causing death by driving whilst disqualified													1	
05. Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking									1					
06. Causing serious injury by dangerous driving			1	5	8	33	37	10	18	15	2	21	194	19
07. Cause serious injury by driving whilst disqualified							1						4	
08. Causing bodily harm by furious driving				1										
09. Causing danger by interfering with a vehicle, road or traffic equipment				1		2							1	
10. Dangerous driving	5	6	10	622	579	472	195	105	59	33	1	159	2,316	
11. Driving with alcohol in the blood above the prescribed limit	11	6	5	5,425	15,835	4,009	2,612	1,346	494	173	8	8	12	23
12. Drive a motor vehicle with the proportion of specified controlled drug above specified limit	4	9	8	12,140	3,439	944	2,551	167	141	50	13	9	13	26
13. Other offences related to drink or drug driving	324	350	84	1,773	2,553	1,098	1,093	256	240	94	6	6	5	15
14. Using or causing others to use a handheld mobile phone whilst driving	73	7	2										1	
15. Careless driving offences (excl. mobile phone offences)	234	211	54	153	35	21	5						3	
16. Failing to stop or provide information after accident	72	225	50	164	18	12	2	1	1	1			4	
17. Theft of a motor vehicle / aggravated vehicle taking	26	68	22	470	137	97	36	21	10	5	2	17	60	33
18. Driving licence related offences	799	1,105	592	1,249	1,224	658	245	190	142	118	8	20	21	35
19. Vehicle insurance offences	905	817	128	278	40	32	12	2	1	1			5	
22. Fraud, forgery, etc. associated with vehicle or driver records		2		1	2									
23. Defective vehicle parts	14	12				1								
25. Speed limit offences	4,442	164	18	35	4	7			3		2		1	
26. Neglecting road regulations (other than speeding)	160	9		2			1							
27. Failing to supply information as to identity of driver when required	158	72	6	23	5	10	6		1					
28. Miscellaneous (other) motoring offences	5	2												
Total	7,232	3,068	981	22,384	23,906	7,419	6,830	2,099	1,122	514	46	251	2,797	167

Source: MoJ (2022)

Figure 1: Percentage of speeding drivers convicted at court who were disqualified (2021)



Source: MoJ (2022)

Speeding

The area reporting the highest share of speeding drivers convicted at court who were banned was Wiltshire, which had a much higher rate (15.9%) than other areas. Wiltshire does not use speed cameras and so any speeding offences are detected by police officers. Northamptonshire reported the second highest share (10.5%).

Areas reporting the lowest share of speeding drivers convicted at court being banned were Durham (0.5%) and South Wales (0.7%). All four Welsh police areas reported lower than the national average (2.5%).

Even when driving bans were given for speeding, the bans tended to be of short duration. Over 95% were under six months and just 16 were longer than a year.

Careless driving

At 5.3%, careless driving had a higher rate of driving bans given than did speeding. But the variation across the court areas was even greater. At 12.7%, Greater Manchester had the highest share of careless drivers convicted at court being banned, followed by South Yorkshire (10.9%).

In Cleveland, none of the 37 drivers sentenced at court for careless driving in 2021 were reported as being banned. In Gloucestershire, only 1.5% of those convicted of careless driving were banned. Northamptonshire also reported a low rate (1.7%), unlike with speeding convictions.

Merseyside and Dyfed-Powys were the only areas in the bottom five for both speeding and careless driving. No area was in the top five for both.

Bans given for careless driving tended to be six months or over, but very few were over one year (8%).

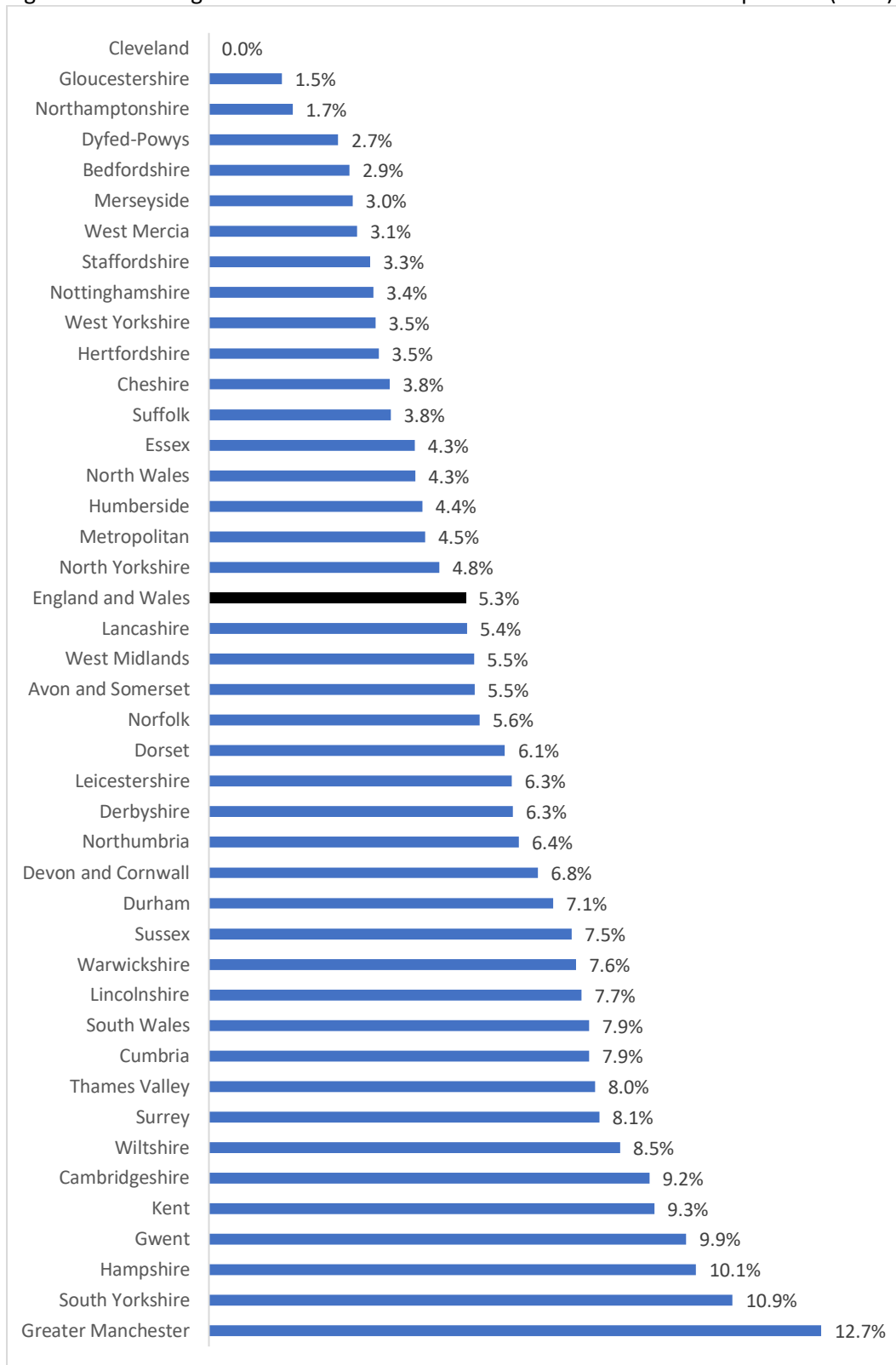
Mobile phones

Now that the legislation has been updated, there should be many more offences of mobile phone use being sanctioned. Given the level of impairment caused by the distraction involved, these too should result in driving bans—many more than the 83 given in 2021.

AVZ calls

Despite the recent increase, driving bans are underused. Bans given for key road danger reduction offences (speeding and careless driving) are rare and inconsistent. More bans should be given for “sober” unsafe driving, including bans being given to all extreme speeders and careless driving bordering on dangerous driving.

Figure 2: Percentage of careless drivers convicted at court who were disqualified (2021)



Source: MoJ (2021)