



AVZ Blog (August 2022) Roads Policing officers, England and Wales

Key points (2021/22)

- The numbers of Roads Policing officers increased to 4,102, up by 11 officers (0.3%).
- Half of police services reported an increase.
- As a share of total police numbers, roads policing fell slightly to 3%. Total police numbers increased by 4%.
- This does not bode well for enforcement or collision investigation, key work of roads policing.

AVZ calls

- More investment in roads policing is required if roads are to be made safer, especially for those walking and cycling.

Roads policing officers by police service/region (England and Wales)

The Home Office has published the latest statistics on police workforce (year ending March 2022). The results are not encouraging for roads policing. In England and Wales., roads policing officer numbers rose to 4,102, an increase of 11 officers. The Metropolitan Police Service which reported a loss of 46 officers. Excluding the Met, roads policing officers rose by 2% in England and Wales.

In comparison, total police officer numbers increased by 4% to 135,031 police officers. Whilst small, this increase was still over 10 times that for roads policing officers.

Home Office data caveats

The Home Office statistics contain warnings about the data, including:

- Comparisons at force level should be made with caution due to regional collaborations. Additionally, police functions data are often affected by re-structuring within police forces. Therefore, comparisons over time for specific functions should be made with caution.
- Some smaller forces (e.g. Lincolnshire) have employees who work within units whose function is to provide both roads policing and armed policing, therefore comparisons over time and between forces for the functions 'Traffic Units' (4a) and 'Firearms Unit' (5h) should be made with caution.

Lincolnshire had previously reported no roads policing officers but now reports 30, including 20 in a [new dedicated roads policing unit](#).

In London, TfL reports over 2,000 officers in their Roads Policing and Transport Command (RTPC) but this includes many officers assigned to patrol buses and transport stations, with a focus on other crime, including sexual offences.

Police service and region

As usual with roads policing, there was inconsistency across the country. Half of police services increased roads policing officer numbers whilst the others reported decreases. This ranged from the Greater Manchester Police which reported an increase of 70 officers whilst Lancashire Police had a loss of 50 officers. Table 1 shows the change in officers and percentage change.

Table 1: Roads Policing officers, England and Wales 2020/21-2021/22

	Roads Policing				Total police	
	2020/21	2021/22	change 2020/21-2021/22		2021/22	2021/22
	no.	no.	no.	%	no.	% Roads Policing
Cleveland	17	20	3	18%	1,437	1.4%
Durham	61	65	5	8%	1,266	5.2%
Northumbria	102	91	-12	-11%	3,573	2.5%
North East	180	176	-4	-2%	6,276	2.8%
Cheshire	131	119	-12	-9%	2,239	5.3%
Cumbria	71	75	4	5%	1,295	5.8%
Greater Manchester	142	213	71	50%	7,388	2.9%
Lancashire	199	149	-50	-25%	3,270	4.6%
Merseyside	108	126	18	16%	4,042	3.1%
North West	651	681	30	5%	18,235	3.7%
Humberside	66	67	1	2%	2,136	3.1%
North Yorkshire	60	81	21	34%	1,587	5.1%
South Yorkshire	67	70	2	4%	2,868	2.4%
West Yorkshire	159	152	-7	-4%	5,680	2.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	352	369	17	5%	12,272	3.0%
Derbyshire	71	66	-5	-7%	1,947	3.4%
Leicestershire	51	58	7	13%	2,294	2.5%
Lincolnshire	-	30	30	n/a	1,203	2.5%
Northamptonshire	17	13	-4	-21%	1,428	0.9%
Nottinghamshire	18	35	17	94%	2,344	1.5%
East Midlands	156	202	45	29%	9,216	2.2%
Staffordshire	76	52	-24	-32%	1,832	2.8%
Warwickshire	45	40	-5	-11%	1,045	3.8%
West Mercia	81	85	4	5%	2,354	3.6%
West Midlands	165	157	-7	-4%	7,579	2.1%
West Midlands	366	334	-32	-9%	12,809	2.6%
Bedfordshire	33	31	-2	-6%	1,396	2.2%
Cambridgeshire	53	57	5	9%	1,645	3.5%
Essex	143	139	-3	-2%	3,574	3.9%
Hertfordshire	76	72	-4	-5%	2,239	3.2%
Norfolk	28	27	-1	-4%	1,838	1.5%
Suffolk	66	64	-2	-3%	1,338	4.8%
Eastern	398	391	-8	-2%	12,030	3.2%
London, City of	22	22	-	0%	884	2.5%
Metropolitan Police	822	776	-46	-6%	33,984	2.3%
London	844	798	-46	-5%	34,868	2.3%
Hampshire	99	106	7	7%	3,223	3.3%
Kent	107	94	-13	-13%	3,967	2.4%
Surrey	83	73	-11	-13%	2,121	3.4%
Sussex	109	111	2	2%	2,911	3.8%
Thames Valley	173	171	-2	-1%	4,534	3.8%
South East	572	554	-18	-3%	16,756	3.3%
Avon and Somerset	60	70	10	17%	3,057	2.3%
Devon and Cornwall	89	103	14	15%	3,409	3.0%
Dorset	43	39	-4	-9%	1,355	2.9%
Gloucestershire	33	38	5	15%	1,229	3.1%
Wiltshire	39	42	3	8%	1,127	3.7%
South West	264	292	28	11%	10,178	2.9%
Dyfed-Powys	68	72	4	6%	1,230	5.9%
Gwent	61	58	-3	-5%	1,430	4.1%
North Wales	58	55	-3	-5%	1,660	3.3%
South Wales	120	120	-	0%	3,269	3.7%
Wales	307	305	-2	-1%	7,589	4.0%
England and Wales	4,091	4,102	11	0%	140,228	2.9%
England and Wales (ex London)	3,248	3,304	56	2%	105,360	3.1%

 Source: [Home Office \(2022\), Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#)

Size of police service

Roads policing officers range from 13 reported in Northamptonshire to 776 in the Met. Figure 1 shows the distribution of roads policing officers by police service. Two-thirds of all police services (29) report having fewer than 100 roads policing officers.

And it cannot be forgotten that these statistics are for the equivalent of full-time roads policing officers. When shift work, training, leave and sick days are factored in, there are much fewer on the ground at any one time.

Share of total police

Overall, roads policing fell to only 2.9% of total police numbers. Cumbria reported the highest share at 5.8%.

It has been over two years since the HMICFRS published its report recommending that roads policing become a strategic national requirement. The Home Office has yet to respond. And whilst most Police and Crime Commissioners reference road safety in their police and crime plans, these statistics show that significant investment in roads policing has yet to happen.

Roads policing officer roles

The Home Office reports the number of officers assigned in Roads Policing to specific roles:

- Traffic units (95%)
- Traffic wardens/ Police Community Support Officers (>1%)
- Vehicle Recovery (>1%)
- Casualty Reduction Partnership (3%)
- Road policing command team (2%).

Only two police services reported any staff assigned to vehicle recovery (MPS and Sussex Police).

What isn't reported is the number of Forensic Collision Investigators. It is not possible to know the resources and thus priority being allocated to fatal and life-threatening injury collision investigation.

AVZ calls

Two years on from the HMIC report, roads policing officers remain few in number, and are decreasing in too many police services. Whilst most police and crime plans include road safety as a local priority, this will require more investment in roads policing. Community Speed Watch programmes are complementary but not a replacement for roads policing.

Best use must be made with these limited resources. AVZ argues this means tackling those offences which pose harm to others, especially those more vulnerable.

See here for more information on our [roads policing campaign](#) and contact amy@actionvisionzero.org for more information on your police service.

Figure 1: Roads policing officers (2021/22).

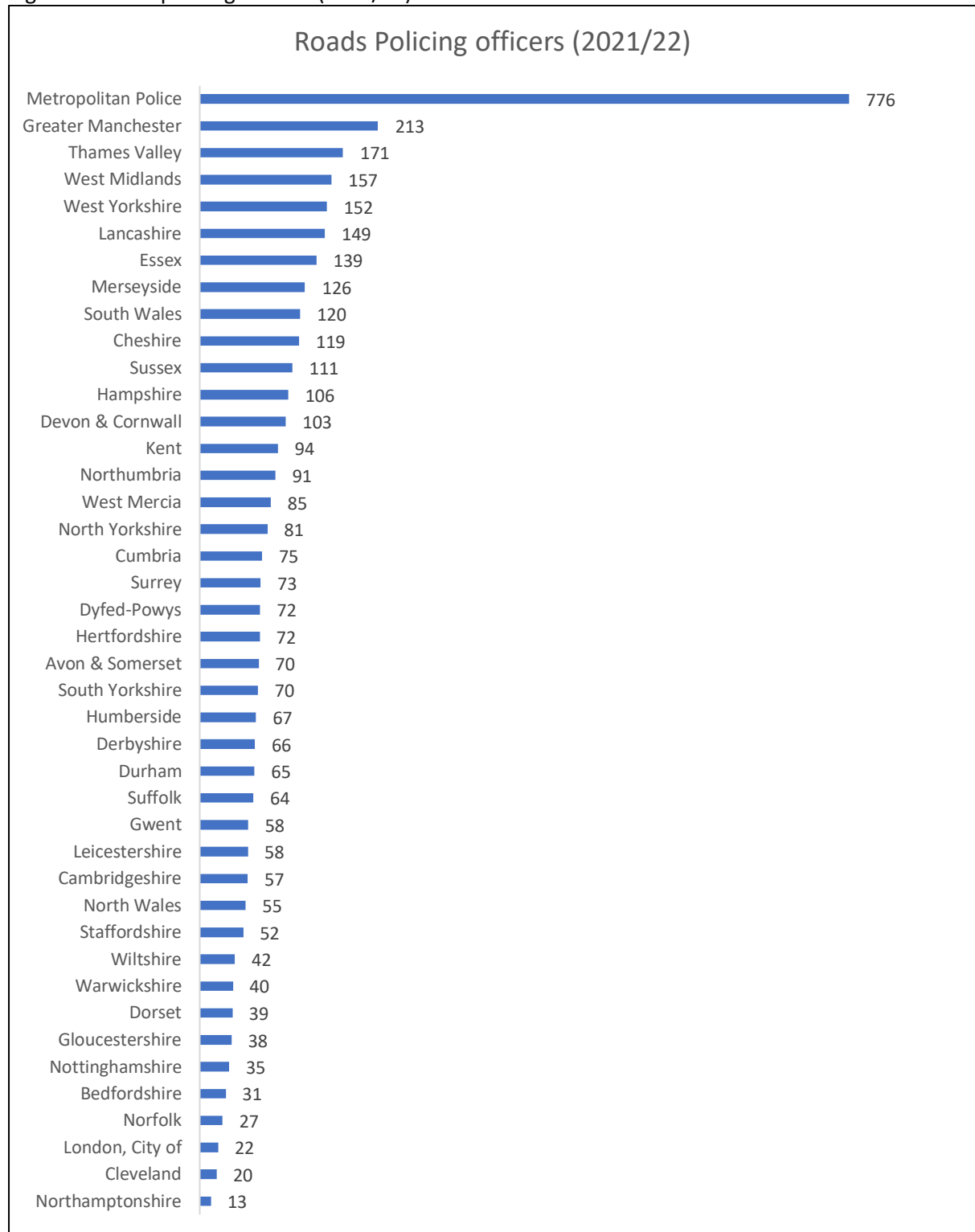


Table 2: Roads Policing officer roles, England and Wales (2021/22)

Police service	Traffic Units	Traffic wardens / Police Community Support Officers - Traffic	Vehicle Recovery	Casualty Reduction Partnership	Road policing Command Team	Road Policing total
Cleveland	19	-	-	1	-	20
Durham	64	-	-	1	-	65
Northumbria	85	-	-	5	1	91
North East	168	-	-	7	1	176
Cheshire	116	-	-	-	3	119
Cumbria	62	-	-	4	9	75
Greater Manchester	211	-	-	-	2	213
Lancashire	147	-	-	2	-	149
Merseyside	117	-	-	9	-	126
North West	652	-	-	15	14	681
Humberside	67	-	-	-	-	67
North Yorkshire	74	-	-	3	4	81
South Yorkshire	69	-	-	1	-	70
West Yorkshire	152	-	-	-	-	152
Yorkshire and the Humber	361	-	-	4	4	369
Derbyshire	64	-	-	2	-	66
Leicestershire	57	-	-	1	-	58
Lincolnshire	29	-	-	-	1	30
Northamptonshire	11	-	-	2	-	13
Nottinghamshire	35	-	-	-	-	35
East Midlands	196	-	-	5	1	202
Staffordshire	51	-	-	1	-	52
Warwickshire	39	-	-	1	-	40
West Mercia	85	-	-	-	-	85
West Midlands	154	-	-	2	1	157
West Midlands	329	-	-	4	1	334
Bedfordshire	31	-	-	-	-	31
Cambridgeshire	57	-	-	-	-	57
Essex	139	-	-	-	-	139
Hertfordshire	72	-	-	-	-	72
Norfolk	24	-	-	3	-	27
Suffolk	60	-	-	4	-	64
Eastern	384	-	-	7	-	391
London, City of	21	-	-	-	1	22
Metropolitan Police	671	16	11	41	38	776
London	692	16	11	41	39	798
Hampshire	105	-	-	-	1	106
Kent	92	-	-	1	1	94
Surrey	73	-	-	-	-	73
Sussex	105	-	1	5	-	111
Thames Valley	167	-	-	4	-	171
South East	541	-	1	10	2	554
Avon and Somerset	67	-	-	2	1	70
Devon and Cornwall	89	-	-	12	2	103
Dorset	37	-	-	-	2	39
Gloucestershire	38	-	-	-	-	38
Wiltshire	42	-	-	-	-	42
South West	273	-	-	14	5	292
Dyfed-Powys	68	-	-	3	1	72
Gwent	55	-	-	3	-	58
North Wales	52	-	-	3	-	55
South Wales	115	-	-	4	1	120
Wales	290	-	-	13	2	305
England and Wales	3,886	16	12	119	69	4,102

Source: [Home Office \(2022\), Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#)

Table 3: Roads Policing officers by police service/region, England and Wales

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	1 yr change	5 yr change
Cleveland	31	28	29	25	17	20	18%	-35%
Durham	59	57	62	64	61	65	8%	10%
Northumbria	134	116	99	101	102	91	-11%	-32%
North East	224	201	190	191	180	176	-2%	-21%
Cheshire	103	99	98	134	131	119	-9%	15%
Cumbria	76	80	50	64	71	75	5%	-2%
Lancashire	110	111	161	147	142	149	5%	36%
Greater Manchester	125	135	136	192	199	213	7%	70%
Merseyside	115	112	111	104	108	126	16%	9%
North West	529	537	557	642	651	681	5%	29%
Humberside	61	63	62	61	66	67	2%	10%
North Yorkshire	84	66	61	65	60	81	34%	-3%
South Yorkshire	76	69	71	69	67	70	4%	-8%
West Yorkshire	122	145	154	156	159	152	-4%	25%
Yorkshire and the Humber	342	343	348	351	352	369	5%	8%
Derbyshire	64	60	68	69	71	66	-7%	3%
Leicestershire	41	43	40	41	51	58	13%	40%
Lincolnshire	3	5	2	1	-	30		
Northamptonshire	54	31	33	17	17	13	-21%	-75%
Nottinghamshire	18	47	22	18	18	35	94%	94%
East Midlands	180	186	164	145	156	202	29%	12%
Staffordshire	47	51	48	67	76	52	-32%	11%
Warwickshire	72	68	36	41	45	40	-11%	-45%
West Mercia	164	147	64	70	81	85	5%	-48%
West Midlands	244	169	161	165	165	157	-4%	-35%
West Midlands	526	434	309	342	366	334	-9%	-37%
Bedfordshire	42	33	26	33	33	31	-6%	-26%
Cambridgeshire	63	60	57	48	53	57	9%	-9%
Essex	103	96	116	115	143	139	-2%	35%
Hertfordshire	86	76	59	79	76	72	-5%	-16%
Norfolk	34	31	30	27	28	27	-4%	-19%
Suffolk	42	44	44	61	66	64	-3%	54%
Eastern	369	340	331	362	398	391	-2%	6%
London, City of	24	21	25	20	22	22	0%	-8%
Metropolitan police	1,526	1,471	1,408	1,454	822	776	-6%	-49%
London	1,549	1,492	1,433	1,474	844	798	-5%	-48%
Kent	93	91	97	97	99	94	-5%	1%
Hampshire	135	110	102	105	107	106	-1%	-22%
Surrey	90	85	70	79	83	73	-13%	-20%
Sussex	116	101	95	103	109	111	2%	-4%
Thames Valley	188	167	163	160	173	171	-1%	-9%
South East	622	555	526	545	572	554	-3%	-11%
Avon & Somerset	72	77	67	60	60	70	17%	-2%
Devon & Cornwall	64	61	89	92	89	103	15%	60%
Dorset	46	44	44	43	43	39	-9%	-15%
Gloucestershire	30	35	29	33	33	38	15%	25%
Wiltshire	33	29	28	33	39	42	8%	26%
South West	245	247	258	261	264	292	11%	19%
Dyfed-Powys	72	75	67	68	68	72	6%	0%
Gwent	52	54	55	59	61	58	-5%	12%
North Wales	62	62	62	61	58	55	-5%	-12%
South Wales	121	133	115	114	120	120	0%	-1%
Wales	307	324	299	301	307	305	-1%	-1%
England and Wales	4,895	4,658	4,415	4,615	4,091	4,102	0%	-16%
England and Wales ex. London	3,345	3,166	2,982	3,141	3,248	3,304	2%	-1%

Source: [Home Office \(2022\), Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#)