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Police Service Strength



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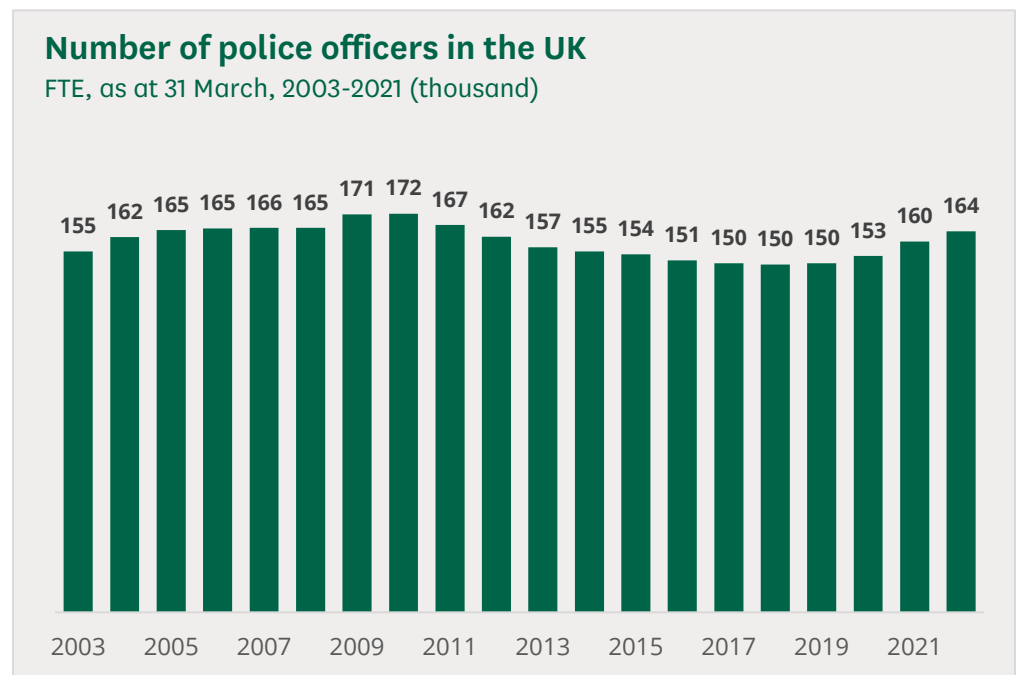
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Summary

The number of police officers in the United Kingdom increased each year between 2003, when there were just under 155,400 officers, and 2010, when there were 171,600.

Following this peak, the number of police officers fell each year up until 2018. Numbers have since risen and as of 31 March 2022, there were 164,017 police officers operating in the United Kingdom. This was an increase of 6% from the number of police officers operating in 2003, but a 4.5% fall from 2010.

These figures are given on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis rather than headcounts and exclude Police Community Support Officers and Special Constables.



Notes: Data for England & Wales and Scotland is as of 31 March; data for Northern Ireland is at 01 July for 2018-2020, 01 August for 2021 and calendar year end for previous years.

Sources: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#) (various editions); Scottish Government, [Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics](#), (various editions); Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Strength of Police Service Statistics](#) (various editions), Figure for police officer strength in Northern Ireland as at 31 March 2022 provided to House of Commons Library by PSNI on request.

This briefing explores police service strength data from the Home Office, Scottish Government, and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The paper analyses England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland in turn, and includes international comparisons where available.

Latest figures

1. **England and Wales:** on 31 March 2022, there were 140,228 police officers in England and Wales compared with 135,301 on the 31 March 2021 (Excluding British Transport Police and Central Service Secondments).
2. **Scotland:** on 31 June 2022, there were 16,610 police officers in Scotland compared to 17,289 on 31 June 2021.
3. **Northern Ireland:** on 01 October 2022, there were 6,813 FTE police officers in Northern Ireland compared to 6,960 at 01 October 2021.
4. **British Transport Police:** on 31 March 2022 there were 2,960 FTE police officers employed by the British Transport Police.
5. **Central Service Secondments (CSS):** on 31 March 2022 there were 266 police officers on CSS.

1 England and Wales

Data on the strength of the police service is published biannually by the Home Office. Detailed statistics are published in July, showing the situation at 31 March. Headline statistics are published in January showing the situation at 30 September in the previous year.

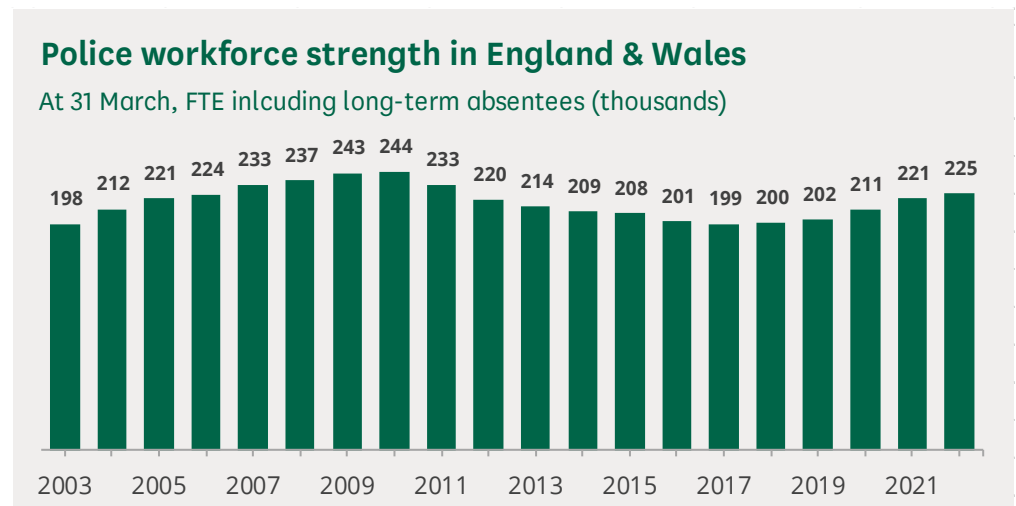
1.1 Police workforce in England and Wales

The police workforce is composed of police officers and police staff.

Of the full time equivalent (FTE) paid workforce in the police service of England and Wales at the end of March 2022, 62% were police officers (of various ranks), 34% were support staff or designated officers (combined) and 4% were Police Community and Support Officers (PCSOs).

The size of the police workforce in England and Wales increased year on year to a peak in 2010. The police workforce fell year on year until 2018, before rising again. At 31 March 2022, there were 225,229 personnel, an 8% reduction compared to 2010 and an increase of 2% from 31 March 2021.¹

The chart below shows the trend in total police workforce from 2003 to 2022:



Notes: excludes special constables, central service secondments and BTP. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Table H3

¹ Excludes special constables, secondments to central services, and British Transport Police.

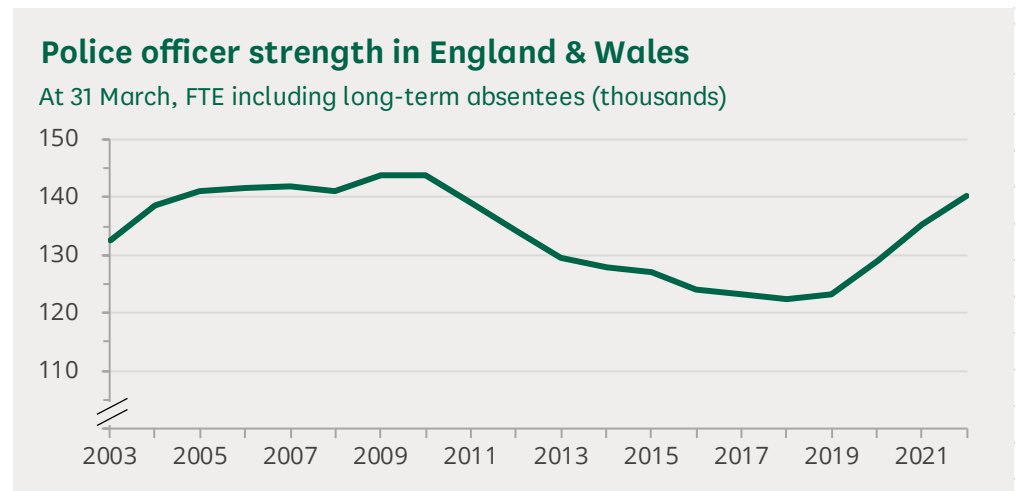
1.2

Police officer strength in England and Wales

The current headline measure of police officer strength includes long-term absentee staff, such as those taking career breaks or parental leave. At 31 March 2022, the total strength of the 43 police forces in England and Wales was 140,228 FTE officers.

Including those on Central Service Secondments (CSS) and British Transport Police (BTP) the total was 143,454.

The chart below shows the trends in police officer strength, as of 31 March, between 2003 and 2022.



Notes: excludes special constables, secondments to central services and British Transport Police. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Table H3

Between 31 March 2021 and 31 March 2022, police officer strength in England and Wales increased by 4,927 FTE officers (3.6%). Since 31 March 2010, police officer strength across the 43 forces has fallen by 2% (-3,506 officers).

As of 31 March 2022, in addition to the officers in the 43 police forces, there were 266 officers in CSS and 2,960 working for the BTP.

Table A1 (available for download from this [briefing paper's webpage](#)) shows data on the strength of each police force in England and Wales, as well as CSS and BTP numbers.

All 43 police forces except for Warwickshire had an increase in officer numbers in the year leading up to 31 March 2022. Nottinghamshire and North Yorkshire Police had the largest officer increases, around 7%. Gloucestershire reported the smallest increase of 1%.

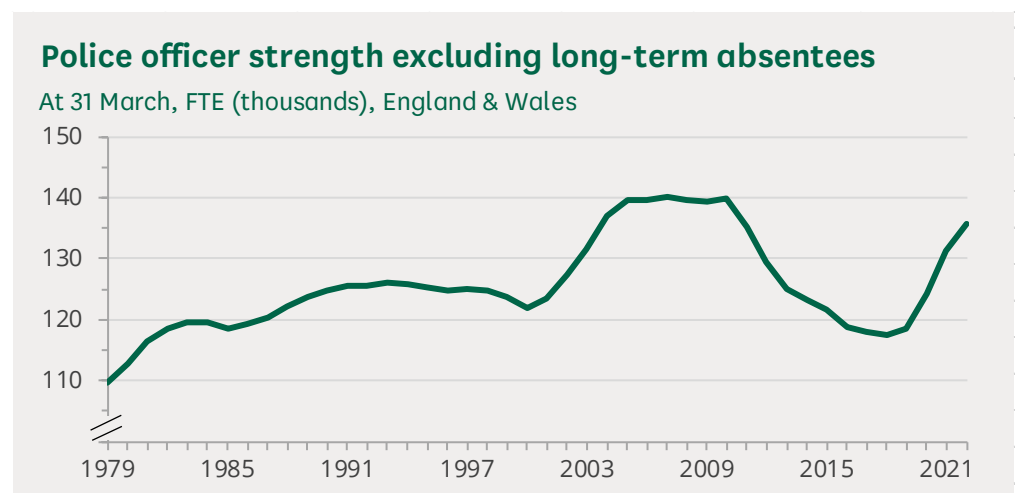
In Wales, Gwent Police had the largest rise of 5%.

Long-term absences

Before March 2003, long-term absent (LTA) staff, such as those taking career breaks or parental leave, were not included in measures of police officer strength. The Home Office still collects police strength data based on this definition, which allows comparison over a longer period of time.

Excluding absent staff there were 135,573 FTE police officers in the 43 police forces across England and Wales on 31 March 2022. These figures represent a drop of 3% compared to 2010. As of 31 March 2022 there were around 4,700 police officers considered long-term absentees.²

The chart below shows police officer strength excluding long-term absentees at 31 March each year, from 1979.



Notes: excludes special constables, secondments to central services and British Transport Police. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Table H1 (various editions)

Police officer strength generally increased through the 1980s, and the first part of the 1990s. By 1993, police officer strength was 126,128 which was 15% higher than in 1979.

From 1993, police strength fell in six of the seven following years so that strength stood at 121,958 by 2000. Between 2000 and 2006 officer strength increased by a total of 17,678; this equates to an average yearly increase of 2.4%. After reaching a peak in 2007 at 140,032, police officer strength has decreased in most subsequent years until 31 March 2018, when there were 117,456 officers. This figure has since increased to 135,573 FTE officers as of 31 March 2022.

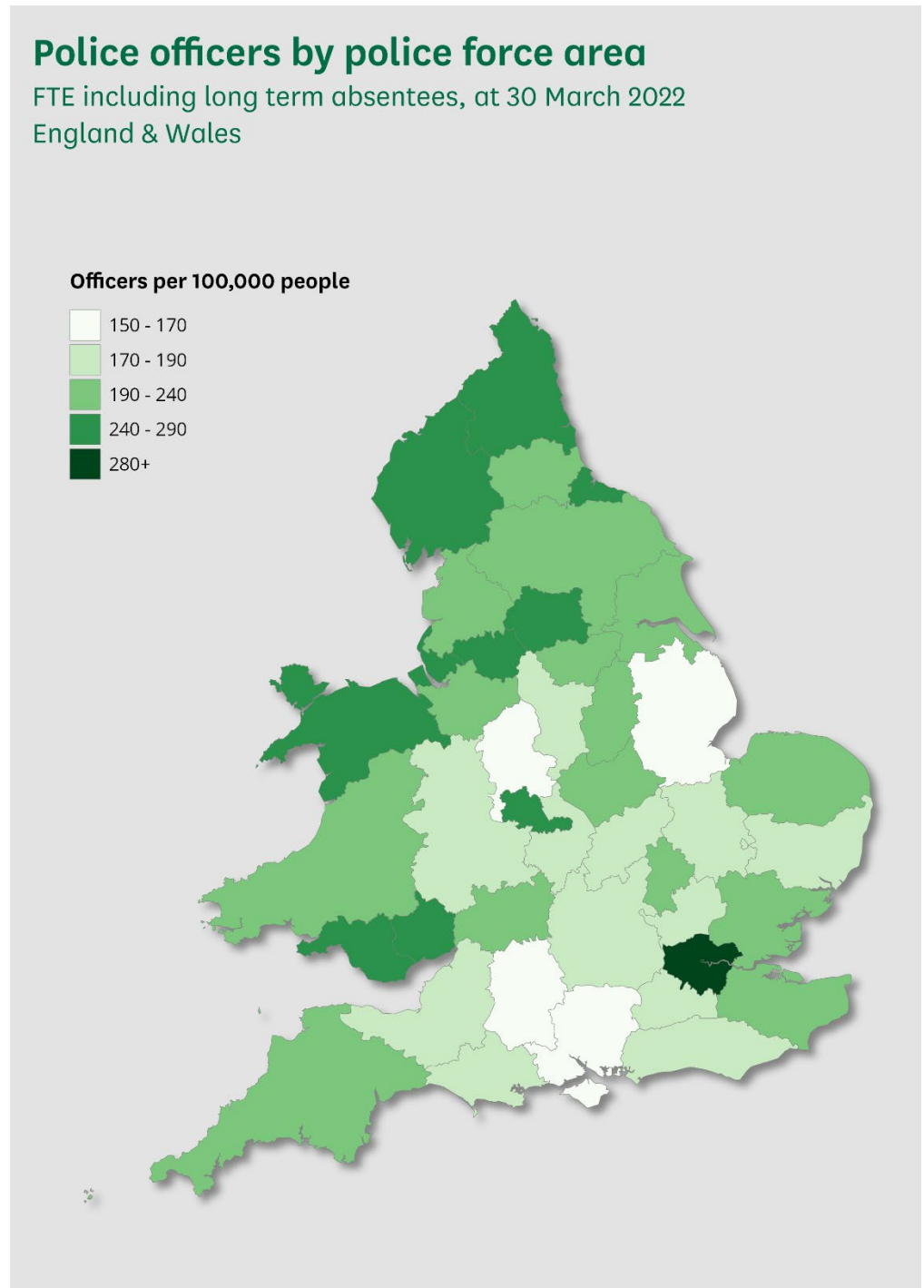
Table A2 (available for download from this [briefing paper's webpage](#)) shows police officer strength for all 43 police forces in England and Wales, excluding long term absentees, between 1979 and 2022.

² Figure calculated by subtracting the 2022 figure for England and Wales in Table A2 from Table A1 in the appendix.

Police per 100,000 population

The following map and table show the number of police officers per 100,000 head of population as of 31 March 2021.

Major population centres tended to have a greater rate of police officers per 100,000 head of population, such as the Metropolitan and Merseyside police forces.



Notes: Metropolitan Police Service and City of London forces have been combined.

Sources: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales; ONS, Census 2021, first results](#), released 28 June 2022.

Police officers per 100,000 people by police force area

At 31 March 2022, FTE, including long term absentees

	Police officers	Officers per 100,000 population	Rank
London	34,868	396	1
Merseyside	4,042	284	2
West Midlands	7,579	260	3
Cumbria	1,295	259	4
Greater Manchester	7,388	258	5
Cleveland	1,437	252	6
South Wales	3,269	248	7
Northumbria	3,573	247	8
Gwent	1,430	243	9
North Wales	1,660	242	10
West Yorkshire	5,680	242	11
Dyfed-Powys	1,230	238	12
Humberside	2,136	228	13
Kent	3,967	214	14
Lancashire	3,270	214	15
South Yorkshire	2,868	209	16
Leicestershire	2,294	204	17
Cheshire	2,239	204	18
Nottinghamshire	2,344	204	19
Durham	1,266	201	20
Norfolk	1,838	201	21
Bedfordshire	1,396	198	22
North Yorkshire	1,587	194	23
Essex	3,574	192	24
Devon and Cornwall	3,409	191	25
Gloucestershire	1,229	191	26
Hertfordshire	2,239	187	27
Derbyshire	1,947	184	28
Cambridgeshire	1,645	184	29
Northamptonshire	1,428	182	30
West Mercia	2,354	181	31
Thames Valley	4,534	180	32
Surrey	2,121	176	33
Suffolk	1,338	176	34
Avon and Somerset	3,057	175	35
Warwickshire	1,045	175	36
Dorset	1,355	174	37
Sussex	2,911	171	38
Staffordshire	1,832	161	39
Hampshire	3,223	161	40
Lincolnshire	1,203	157	41
Wiltshire	1,127	152	42
England & Wales	140,228	235	

Notes: From Office for National Statistics 2021 census; Figures for London are for Metropolitan Police Service and City of London combined.

1.3

Police officer diversity in England and Wales

The Home Office collects data on the sex and ethnic group³ of police officers.

Of the 140,228 police officers in England and Wales as of 31 March 2021, 46,959 were female. This is the highest proportion (33.5%) of female officers since 2010.

The table below shows the proportion of police officers who were female, and the proportion from minority ethnic groups, each year from 2010.⁴

Police officer diversity in England and Wales						
FTE, at 31 March						
	Total	Female		Total	Ethnic Minority ^b	
	Strength	Number	% of total	Strength ^a	Number	% of total
2010	143,735	36,988	25.7%	141,935	6,642	4.7%
2011	139,110	36,532	26.3%	137,485	6,615	4.8%
2012	134,100	35,962	26.8%	132,242	6,664	5.0%
2013	129,585	35,401	27.3%	127,623	6,537	5.1%
2014	127,909	35,653	27.9%	125,785	6,715	5.3%
2015	126,818	35,737	28.2%	124,739	6,982	5.6%
2016	124,066	35,498	28.6%	121,655	7,218	5.9%
2017	123,132	35,842	29.1%	120,516	7,562	6.3%
2018	122,405	36,417	29.8%	119,357	7,850	6.6%
2019	123,171	37,427	30.4%	120,023	8,329	6.9%
2020	129,110	40,319	31.2%	125,709	9,174	7.3%
2021	135,301	43,762	32.3%	131,806	10,046	7.6%
2022	140,228	46,959	33.5%	136,274	11,053	8.1%

Notes: a) Total strength for minority ethnic groups excludes those who did not state their ethnicity (around 4,000 officers). Total strength for both includes long-term absentees and excludes CSS and BTP. b) excluding White minority groups. **Source:** Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Tables H2, D1 & D2 (various editions); ONS 2019 [mid-year population estimates](#).

As of 31 March 2022, 36% of police officers in England and Wales with the rank of constable were female, a slight increase on the previous year.

The proportion of women holding more senior ranks was lower. Of officers ranked chief inspector or higher, 29% were female, although this has increased from 14% in 2010 and from 23% in 2016.

³ The ethnic groups used by the Home Office are: 'White', 'Black', 'Asian', 'Mixed' and 'Other'. Officers may choose not to state their ethnicity.

⁴ This includes 'Black', 'Asian', 'Mixed' and 'Other' groups. It does not include White minority groups or those who didn't state their ethnicity.

275 in every 10,000 male officers in the police held senior ranks compared with 220 in every 10,000 female police officers.

As of 31 March 2022, 11,000 (8.1%) police officers declared themselves as being from a minority ethnic group, this figure has been increasing year-on-year since 2010. This is considerably lower than the proportion of the general population from a minority ethnic group (15.2%).⁵

Of the police officers that identified as being from an ethnic minority, 31% were of mixed ethnicity, 16% from Black or Black British backgrounds, 45% from Asian or Asian British backgrounds, and 8% from “Other” ethnicities.⁶

Officers from minority ethnic backgrounds were under-represented at senior ranks, accounting for 5% of officers at the rank of chief inspector or above. This proportion is slightly higher than between March 2020 and March 2021.

The Metropolitan Police Service was the force with the largest proportion of officer from minority ethnic groups (17%). However, the ONS estimates that 41% of the resident population of London are from a minority ethnic background.⁷ The force with the next highest proportion is West Midlands (14%), followed by Bedfordshire and Greater Manchester (both 10%) and Leicestershire (9%).

Cumbria, Durham, and North Wales have the smallest proportion of officers from minority ethnic groups (each with 1%). Seven of the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales did not have any officers from a minority ethnic background ranked chief inspector or higher at 31 March 2022.⁸

1.4

Joiners and leavers

In the 12 months to 31 March 2022, the 43 police forces of England and Wales recruited 12,127 FTE police officers (excluding people who had transferred between police forces). This is up from 4,735 recruits in 2016, (a 172% increase), and 8,130 in 2018 (a 58% increase).

During the year, 7,141 officers left the service (down from 8,727 the previous year). Women accounted for 41% of joiners and 27% of leavers. The table below shows recruitment and leaving numbers.

The joiner rate (recruitment in proportion to total strength) across England and Wales was 9.1% (excluding transfers).

⁵ ONS figures on minority ethnic groups refers to non-white ethnic groups and exclude White ethnic minority groups. Population data from the [ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates dataset](#).

⁶ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales 31 March 2022](#), Table D2

⁷ [ONS mid-year population estimates](#), 2019

⁸ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Table D1

The police force with the highest rate of new joiners was Northamptonshire (13.4%), followed by Gwent (13.1%) and Bedfordshire (12.9%). The lowest rate was for the City of London (3.8%).

The rate that officers left as a proportion of the overall strength (known as the wastage rate) was 6% across England and Wales (excluding transfers).

The police forces with the largest wastage rates were Suffolk (8.2%), Northamptonshire and City of London (8.1% each). Warwickshire had the lowest wastage rate, at 2.6%.⁹

Police officer recruitment & leavers, England & Wales						
FTE, 12 months to 31 March						
	Recruitment			Leavers		
	Total	Of which female		Total	Of which female	
		Number	%		Number	%
2007	8,671	3,014	35%	8,178	1230	15%
2008	7,981	2,597	33%	7,846	1275	16%
2009	9,873	3,245	33%	7,732	1286	17%
2010	6,912	2,110	31%	6,825	1069	16%
2011	2,197	693	32%	6,664	968	15%
2012	2,394	678	28%	6,889	997	14%
2013	2,358	785	33%	6,794	1209	18%
2014	5,589	1,812	32%	6,904	1359	20%
2015	6,866	2,125	31%	7,386	1623	22%
2016	4,755	1,487	31%	7,723	1759	23%
2017	7,532	2,521	33%	8,569	2126	25%
2018	8,128	2,793	34%	8,574	2080	24%
2019	9,428	3,269	35%	8,727	2199	25%
2020	14,518	5,143	35%	8,546	2253	26%
2021	13,296	5,401	41%	7,043	1924	27%
2022	14,241	5,820	41%	9,303	2700	29%

Note: Date taken from open data tables and may not match other Home Office datasets. Figures include transfers. A number of joiners and leavers do not declare their sex or prefer to self-describe.

Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales 31 March 2021: joiners open data tables](#), accessed 8 November 2022; Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales 31 March 2021: leavers open data table](#), accessed 8 November 2022.

⁹ Home Office, [Police Workforce England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Tables JL1 and JL3

1.5

Other police service staff

At 31 March 2022, there were 85,000 FTE staff in all supporting roles, similar to 2021 figures ¹⁰. Staff in supporting roles comprise civilian staff, police community support officers (PCSOs), designated officers and traffic wardens.

Police Civilian Support Staff

On 31 March 2022, there were 76,250 FTE civilian staff in supporting roles in the 43 police forces of England and Wales ¹¹, including designated officers. ¹²

This is an increase of 316 staff on the previous year but a decrease of 9% compared to 2010. ¹³

¹⁰ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table H3

¹¹ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table H3

¹² It was not possible to provide separate police staff figures for the year ending 31 March 2022 as some police forces were unable to provide data on designated officers separately and therefore figures are combined with those for police staff.

¹³ Excluding PCSOs and traffic wardens.

1.6

Measuring the “policing frontline”

In December 2010, the Home Office asked Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to define what constitutes the “policing frontline”, categorising police roles. The resulting definition states the frontline:

“comprises those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law.”¹⁴

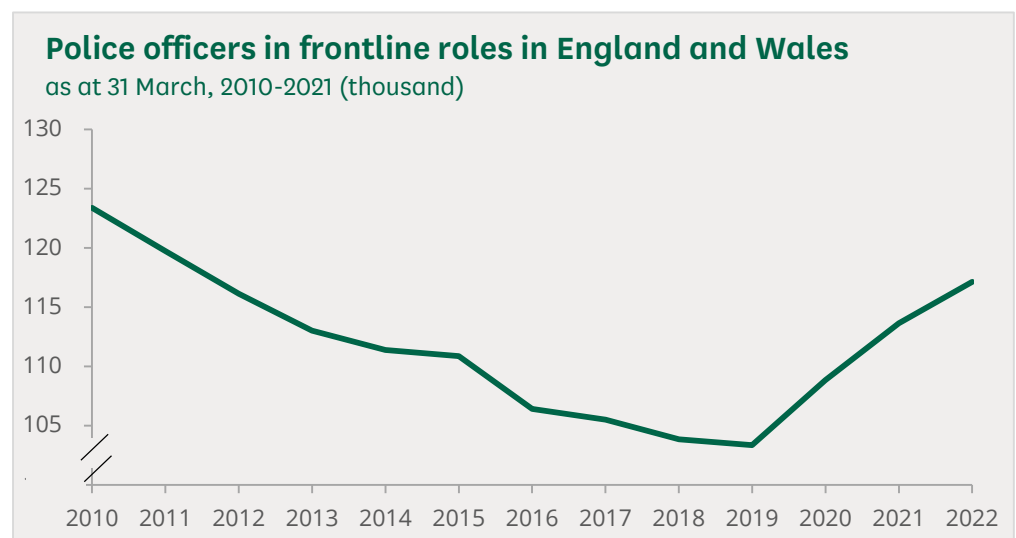
From 2012, the Home Office published the number of police officers on the frontline, using HMIC’s definition.

From 31 March 2016, the police functions used by the Home Office and HMIC to calculate the number of frontline policing roles changed. From that point, the roles used to calculate the policing frontline are based on [Police Objective Analysis \(POA\) categories](#).

The change in framework means that frontline measures between 2016 and previous years, calculated under the old framework, are not directly comparable.

The appendix contains further detail on the methodology of measuring the frontline. Table A5, in the [briefing's](#) accompanying download shows the number of police officers in frontline roles based on the new framework.

The chart below shows the number of police officers in frontline roles for 2010 to 2022. Please note figures for 2010 to 2014 are Home Office estimates calculated under the new framework.



Notes: 2010 to 2014 figures are Home Office estimates using the new framework.

Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table F5

¹⁴ HMIC, [Demanding Times: The frontline and police visibility](#), 2011 p.18.

As of 31 March 2021, there were 117,132 police officers in frontline roles – this is the highest level measured using the new framework. The number of police officers in frontline roles fell by 16% between 2010 and 2019 and has since increased by 13% between 2019 and 2022.¹⁵

The chart below shows forces ranked by the proportion of their police officers in frontline roles according to the new framework at 31 March 2022.

Nottingham and North Wales police forces had the highest proportion of police officers in frontline roles (95.7% and 95% respectively), closely followed by Staffordshire (94.4%).



Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Table F5

¹⁵ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table F3

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

PCSOs are civilians employed by a police authority in a 'highly visible, patrolling role'. PCSOs are currently funded partly through government grants to police authorities and partly through match funding from other organisations. Further information relating to PCSOs can be found in the Library briefing [Police Community Support Officers](#).

Table A3 (available for download from this [briefing paper's webpage](#)) shows the number of PCSOs in each of the 43 police force areas since the role was introduced. As of 31 March 2022 there were 8,750 FTE PCSOs, a 6% reduction (534 officers) on the year before.

PCSO numbers have fallen year on year since the peak of 2010, except for a slight rise in the year up to 31 March 2021. 13% of the PCSOs are based in the Metropolitan Police Service area. ¹⁶Of the PCSOs employed at the end of March 2022, 47% were female (4119). ¹⁷

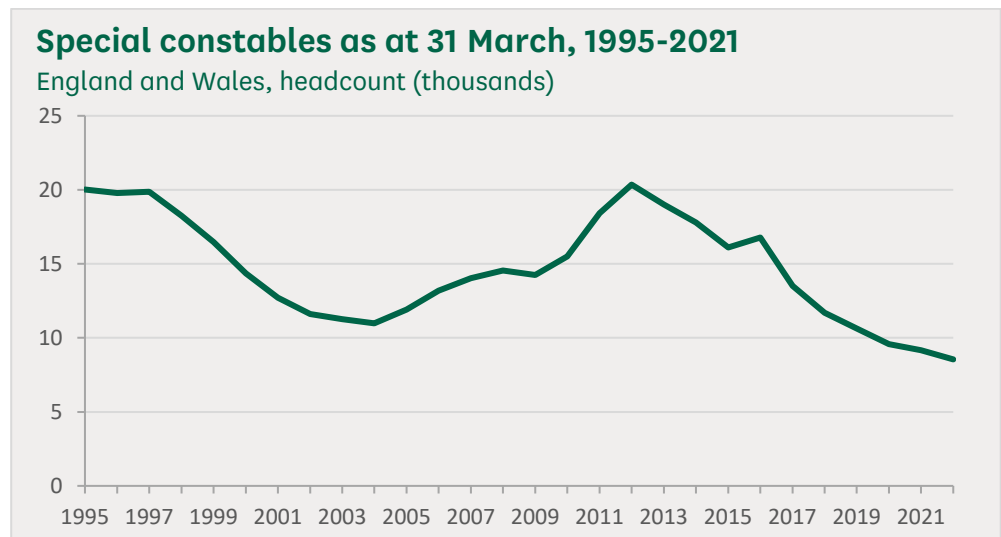
¹⁶ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table H7

¹⁷ Home Office: [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022: workforce open data tables](#)

Special Constabulary

Special Constables are a force of volunteers who receive training from their local police force to work with regular police officers. Further information on special constables can be found in the Library briefing [Special Constables](#). The chart below shows special constabulary strength from 1995 to 2022.

As of 31 March 2022, there were 8,545 special constables, a 7% decrease on the 2021 figure of 9,174.¹⁸



Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Table H12 (various editions)

Between 1997 and 2004, special constabulary strength decreased year on year at an average rate of 2%. From 2004, the number of special constables increased at an average rate of 9% until reaching the 2012 strength figure of 20,352. Between 2012 and 2015, special constables decreased at a rate of 5% per year. The number increased again in 2016, but decreased further in 2017.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2022, a total of 2,176 special constables joined the special constabulary, while 2,433 left¹⁹. Many special constables leave their posts to become police officers each year.

In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 512 (4%) police officer joiners who were previously special constables.²⁰

Table A4 (available for download from this [briefing paper's webpage](#)) shows the trend in special constabulary strength for each police force area in England and Wales between 1995 and 2021.

The following table shows special constabulary figures for 2022, as well as special constables per 100,000 population.

¹⁸ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table H12

¹⁹ Headcount, Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table JL2

²⁰ Home office, [Police workforce open data tables: joiners](#).

Special constables by police force area		
per 100,000 population, headcount, at 31 March 2021, England and Wales		
	Number of constables	Constables per 100,000 population
Northamptonshire	215	27
Essex	465	25
London	1,919	22
Wiltshire	153	21
North Wales	135	20
Norfolk	179	20
Gloucestershire	124	19
Cheshire	202	18
Lincolnshire	137	18
Warwickshire	100	17
Avon and Somerset	289	17
Kent	302	16
Dorset	122	16
Bedfordshire	110	16
Devon and Cornwall	276	15
Hertfordshire	180	15
Suffolk	111	15
Cambridgeshire	129	14
Staffordshire	163	14
Gwent	79	13
Surrey	159	13
Humberside	123	13
Merseyside	179	13
Nottinghamshire	142	12
North Yorkshire	100	12
Dyfed-Powys	61	12
Lancashire	176	11
Thames Valley	279	11
Hampshire	220	11
Cumbria	54	11
West Midlands	304	10
South Wales	133	10
Greater Manchester	279	10
Leicestershire	107	10
Cleveland	54	9
West Yorkshire	216	9
Northumbria	131	9
South Yorkshire	124	9
Derbyshire	88	8
West Mercia	81	6
Sussex	106	6
Durham	39	6
England and Wales	8,545	14

Notes: Figures for Metropolitan Police Service and City of London are combined. Sources: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales: 31 March 2022](#), Table H8; ONS, [ONS: Census 2021, first results](#).

1.7

Central Service Secondments

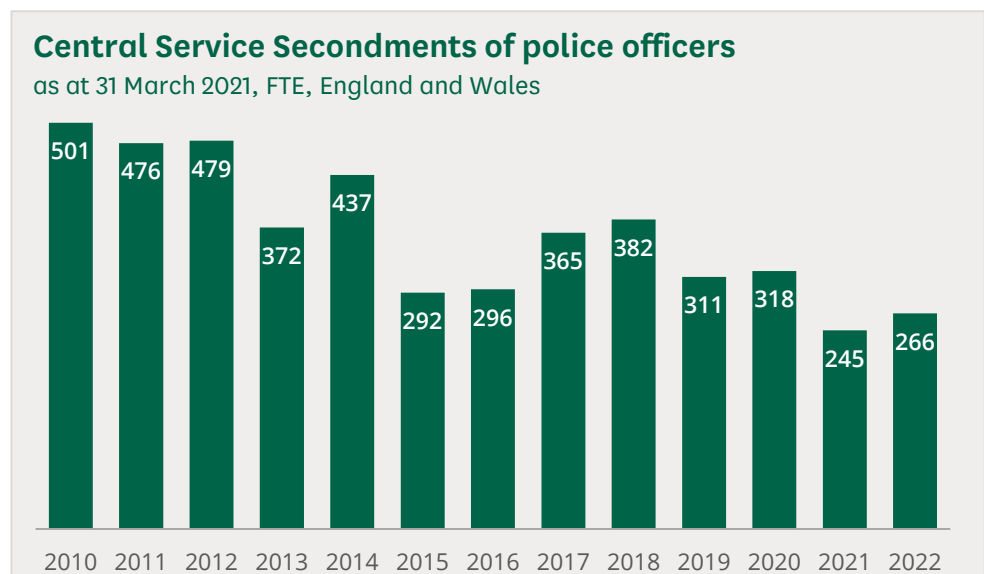
According to the [Guidance on Police Officer and Staff Secondments](#), police staff can take one the following types of secondments:

UK secondments – secondments to other police related UK organisations to provide specific expertise. These are set out in section 97 of the Police Act (police officers) or employment legislation and contracts of employment (police staff).

Mission deployments organised through the FCO. These are to meet the UK’s international commitments to enhance its policing contribution to international missions in conflict prevention and crisis management situations.

Overseas deployments in response to requests for assistance from the Police Service to meet a specific local need.

The chart below shows the number of Central Service Secondments (CSS) between 2010 and 2022. The number of police officers on CSS decreased by 51% from 501 in March 2009 to 245 in March 2021, the lowest figure recorded over the period. It has since risen to 266 at 31 March 2022, a 9% increase.²¹



Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Table H1 (various editions)

²¹ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Table H3 (various editions)

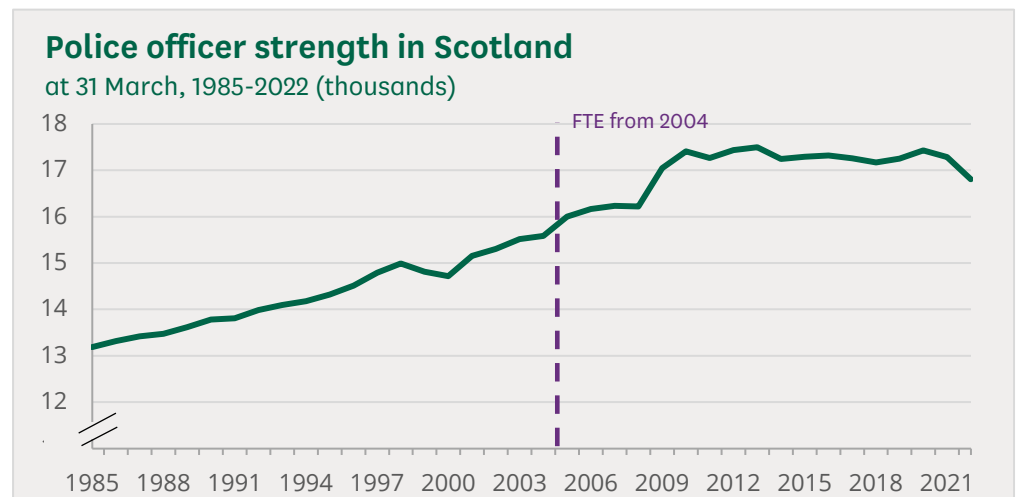
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Police strength in Scotland

Data on the total strength of the Scottish police is published quarterly by the Scottish Government, in terms of officers.²²

From 01 April 2013, the eight police forces of Scotland were amalgamated under one command as per the [Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#). As a result, it is not possible to produce time-series statistics on the number of police officers for sub-areas of Scotland. Only national police figures are published.

The chart below shows police officer strength for Scotland from 1985 to 2022:



Notes: Figures between 1985 and 2003 are headcounts. Figures from 2004 are full time equivalent (FTE) and therefore not directly comparable to those previously recorded.

Source: Scottish Government, [Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics Scotland](#) (various editions)

From 1985 to 2013, there was an almost continuous increase in Scottish police strength year on year. As of 31 March 2022, police strength was 27% greater than in 1985.

Over the last few years there has been a slight decrease. Figures fell in 2010/11 and 2013/14, although these were followed by increases the next year.

Data for the year ending 31 March 2022 show there were 16,805 FTE police officers in Scotland, 4% lower than the 2013 high of 17,496 officers and 3% lower than the figures for the year to 31 March 2021.

²² Scottish Government, [Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics Scotland](#) (various editions)

2.1

Police officer diversity in Scotland

The most recent information on police diversity in Scotland comes from the Police Scotland [Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming & Outcomes Progress Report 2021](#) although this uses information for the end of March 2020.

According to the report, 32% of police officers in Scotland were female which marks a 1 percentage point increase from 2019.

Only 1.5% of police officers reported that they were from a minority ethnic group. This figure has remained around 1% since 2010. Of the overall Scottish population, 4% identified as being from a minority ethnic group.²³

As of 31 March 2021, 27% of officers in a promoted post (at sergeant or above) were female, an increase of 2 percentage points on 2019.

For more senior ranks, superintendent or above, 26% were female, an increase of 5 percentage points on 2017.

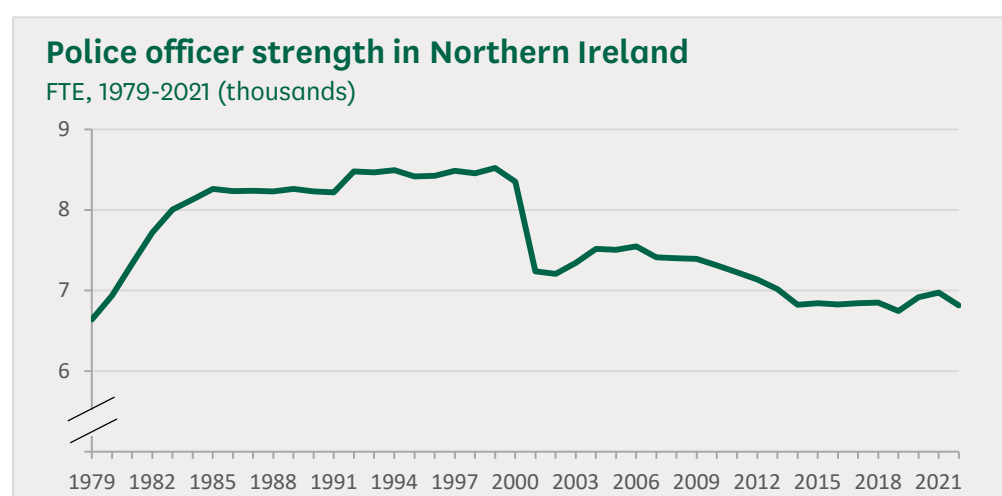
²³ [Scotland Census 2011](#)

3

Police strength in Northern Ireland

Data on the strength of the police force is published by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), both in terms of officers and police staff.

The chart below shows the trend in police officer strength in Northern Ireland from 1979 to 2022:



Sources: Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Strength of Police Service Statistics](#), updated 01 October 2022, accessed 14 October 2022 and previous editions. Historical data compiled from sources provided by PSNI.

Following a large drop in strength from 2000 to 2001, there has been a steady decrease in the number of full-time regular police officers.

Numbers rose slightly in 2020 and 2021. As of 01 October 2022, the FTE police officer strength in Northern Ireland stood at 6,813. This is a 7% decrease on 31 December 2010²⁴, and a 20% decrease compared with 1999 when police officer strength was at its peak.

As of 1 October 2022, there were also 2,484 FTE police staff, including temporary workers.²⁵

²⁴ Data for 2022 is for 01 October, data for 2021 is for 01 August, data for 2020 and 2019 is for 1 July and data for 2018 and prior is at 31 December.

²⁵ Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Strength of Police Service Statistics](#), updated 01 October 2022, accessed 14 October 2022.

3.1

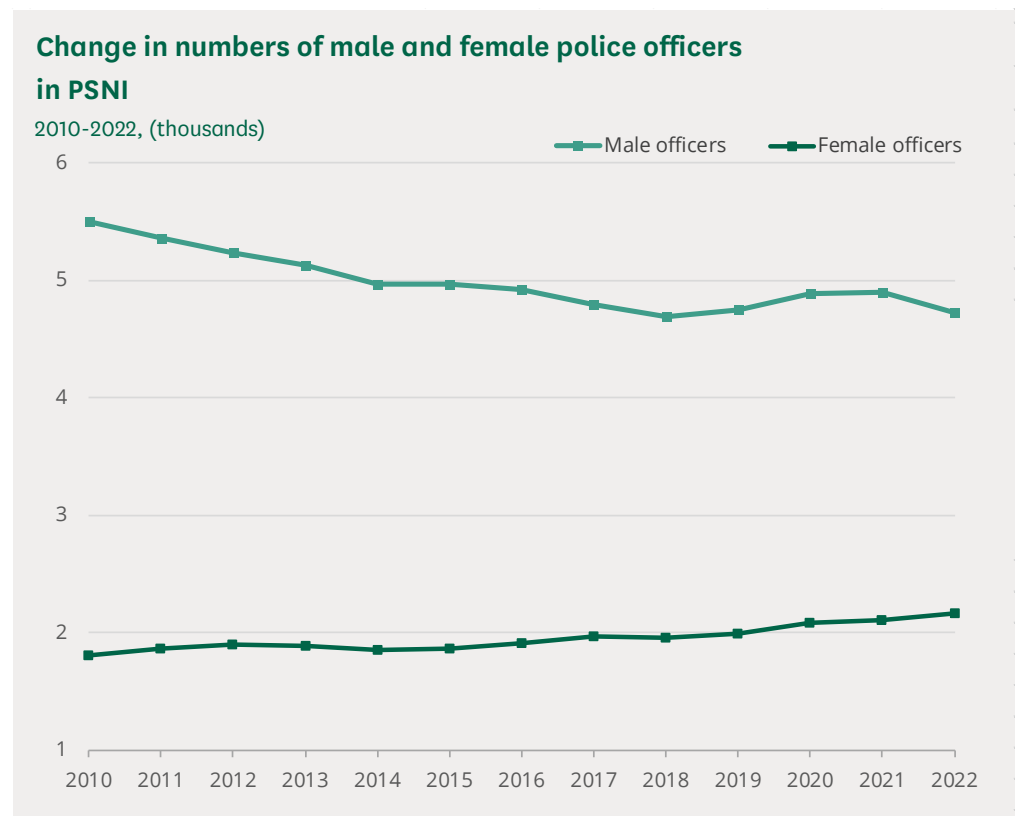
Police officer diversity in Northern Ireland

On 1 September 2022, women made up 31.4% of full-time regular police officers in Northern Ireland. This represents a 1.3 percentage point increase on the previous year.²⁶

Since 2010, the number of female police officers has increased by 20%. Numbers increased year on year from 2010 and then fell for two consecutive years in 2013 and 2014. It has increased every year since (except for 2018) to just under 2,170 female police officers in 2022.

The number of male police officers fell year on year between 2010 and 2014 (from 5,505 to 4,965). After a slight increase in 2015, the number of officers fell again to a low of 4,688 in 2018.

Numbers then increased for three years but fell in 2022, to 4,729. This is a 14% decrease on 2010.



Note: Figure for 2022 is at 1 September 2022, figure for 2021 is at 1 July 2021, figure for 2020 calculated using officer numbers at 1 January 2021 and diversity data at 01 November 2020. Data for 2017 and before is as of 31 December. Sources: Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Workforce Composition Statistics](#) and [Strength of Police Service Statistics Northern Ireland](#) (various editions)

²⁶ Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Workforce Composition Statistics](#), updated 1 September 2022, accessed 17 October 2022.

Since 2010, the proportion of full-time regular police officers identifying from minority ethnic groups has consistently been below 1%. The proportion of ethnic minority officers currently stands at 0.6% and has been increasing year on year since 2010. According to the Office for National Statistics, 3.4% of the general Northern Ireland population are from minority ethnic groups.²⁷

In September 2022, 66% of police officers considered themselves to be Protestant, 32% Roman Catholic, and 1% did not consider themselves either²⁸.

²⁷ ONS 2021, [mid-year population estimates](#)

²⁸ Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Workforce Composition Statistics](#), updated 1 September 2022, accessed 17 October 2022.

4

British Transport Police

The British Transport Police (BTP) staff work in railways, providing a service to rail operators, their staff, and passengers across the country. They also police TFL services, the Midland Metro tram system, Tyne and Wear Metro and the Glasgow Subway.²⁹

BTP officer numbers increased by 11% between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2022. At 31 March 2022 there were 2,960 BTP officers – a 2% increase on March 2021.³⁰

The chart below shows BTP police officer strength between 2010 and 2022.



Source: Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales](#), Table H1 (various editions)

At 31 March 2022, in addition to 2,960 FTE police officers, the BTP also employed:

- 1,365 support staff and designated officers (combined), eight fewer than in 2021
- 231 police community support officers (PCSO), one officer fewer than in 2021
- 247 special constables, 20 fewer than in 2021

²⁹ British Transport Police, '[About us](#)' accessed 24 August 2021

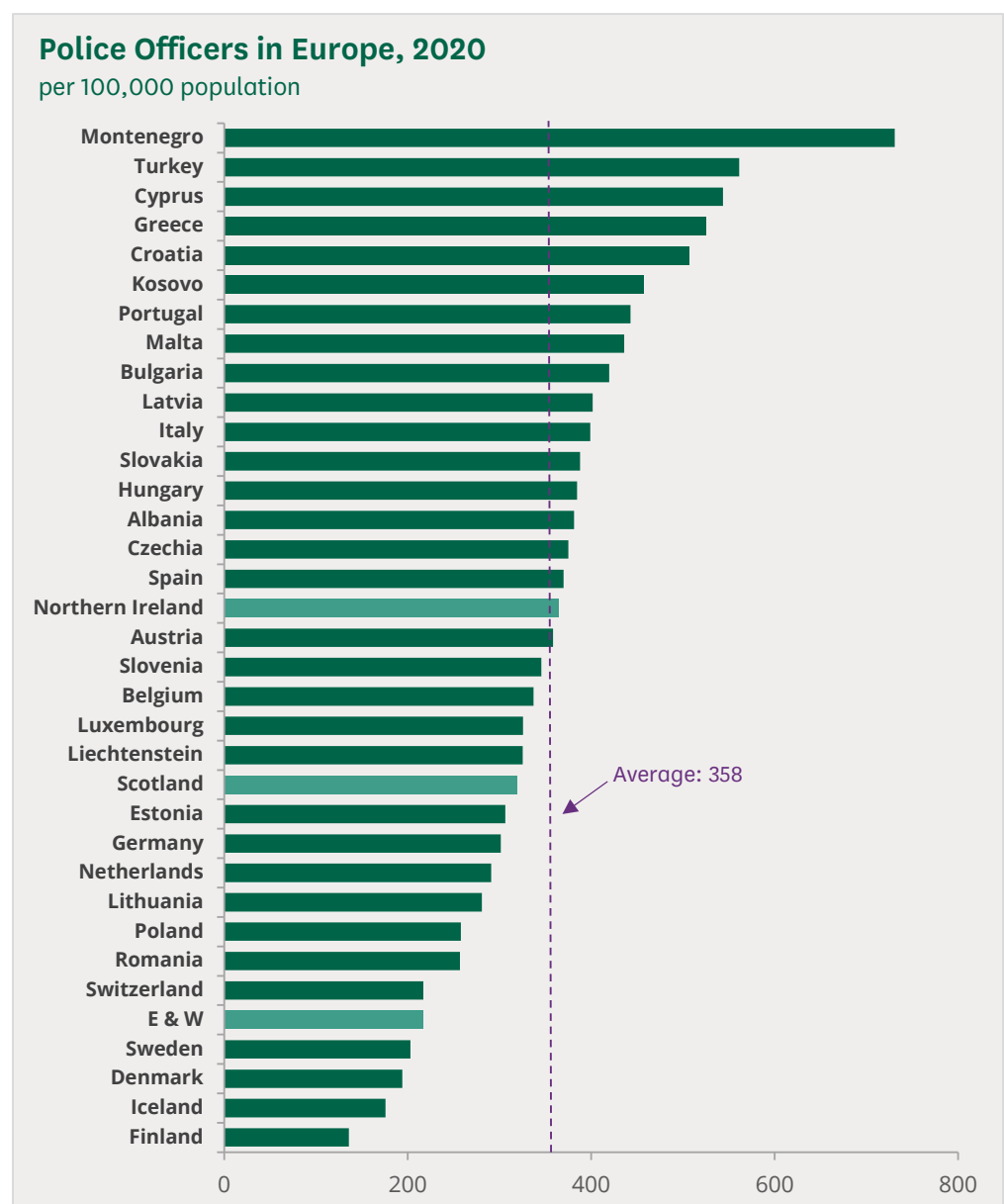
³⁰ Home Office, [Police Workforce: England and Wales, 31 March 2022](#), Table H1

5

International comparisons

Police forces are organised differently in different countries. Some countries have more than one 'police force', all of which perform policing duties. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between countries, as there is no information available on the percentage of policing duties carried out by each of these bodies.

The most recent data for European comparisons is from 2020. The chart below displays police officer strength for countries where data is available:

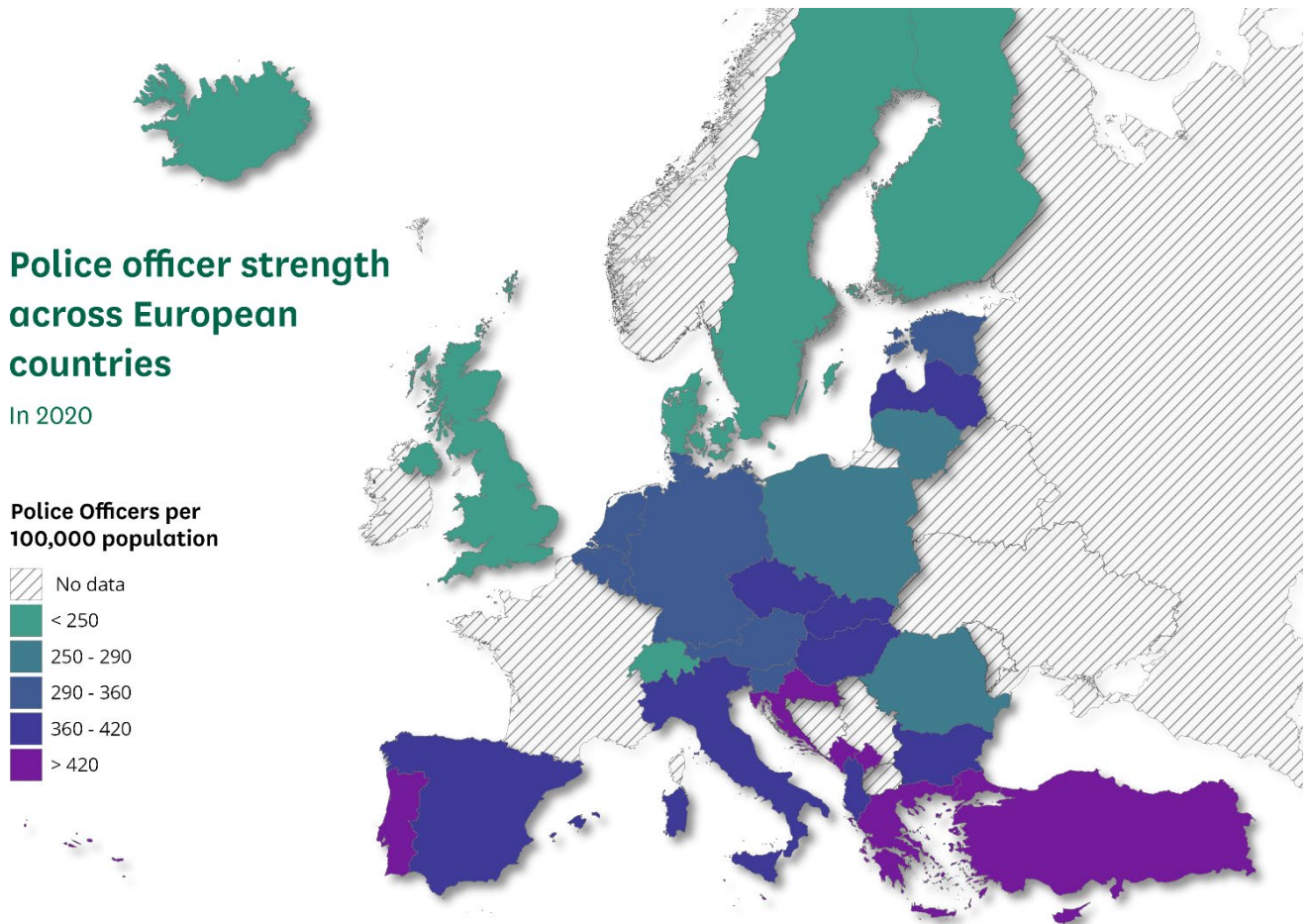


Note: See Table A6 for full data and sources.

In 2020, data was available for 35 nations.³¹ England and Wales ranked 31st for the number of police officers per 100,000 head of population. Northern Ireland was ranked 17th and Scotland 23rd.³²

Table A6 (available for download from this [briefing paper's web page](#)) shows the number of police per 100,000 people in selected European countries between 2010 and 2020.

This data is illustrated in the map below:



Source: Eurostat, Personnel in the criminal justice system, 21 July 2021; Home Office: Police Workforce, England and Wales, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Scottish Government, ONS 2019 [mid-year population estimates](#). See table A6 (appended) for exact figures).

Notes: Figures for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have been combined. EU collection methods may differ. Eurostat collection methods differ from those of England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

³¹ Data for 2020 Excludes Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Ireland, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and other countries that do not usually publish such data.

³² Eurostat figures for England and Wales are not available for 2019 or 2020. The figures provided are based on police officer numbers in the 43 Police forces in England and Wales at 31 March of each year including long-term absentees, available from the Home Office's [Police Workforce Statistics](#). Eurostat figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland are also not available for 2019. The figures provided are based on police officer numbers available from the Scottish Government's [Police Service Strength Statistics](#) and PSNI's [Strength of Police Service Statistics](#). The rate of police officers per 100,000 was calculated using the first results from the [ONS 2021 Census](#).

Southern European countries tend to report a higher number of police officers per 100,000 people. Turkey, Portugal, Greece and Croatia are among those with the largest proportion.

Northern European countries tend to report a lower number of police officers per 100,000 people. Finland, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden reported the lowest rate of police officers per 100,000 people.

However, it is important to note that countries may have different definitions of what constitutes a police officer, as well as methods of reporting. These differences may influence, or account for the variation in results.

6 Appendix: Methodology for measuring frontline policing

HMIC's 2011 definition

In March 2011, following an analysis of the approximately 60 police functions and roles, and a consultation with police sector representatives and the public, HMIC published a definition of the policing frontline in [Police Visibility: Demanding Times](#)³³:

The police front line comprises those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law.

In July 2013, HMIC revised the model used to divide the police into frontline and non-frontline roles. It remained based on the overall definition first used in 2011. HMIC grouped the different roles that comprise policing into three categories, as follows: 'operational frontline functions', 'operational support functions' and 'business support'. The Home Office estimated the number of staff on the frontline according to this definition using the strength figures from the Annual Data Return (ADR) of police forces.

Changes to categories in 2016

From 31 March 2016, the police functions framework was replaced with a new framework based on the Police Objective Analysis (POA) categories. These categories are as follows:

- **Visible operational frontline** which includes roles such as local policing, traffic units and wardens, PCSOs, police dog sections and firearms units.
- **Non-visible frontline** which includes those on the dispatch desk, airport and port policing units, police doctors, nurses & surgeons, public protection teams and intelligence gathering units.
- **Frontline support** which includes Police National Computer sections, criminal justice arrangements command teams and forensic services.
- **Business support** which covers functions without which the police service could not operate but are not operational policing roles. This includes human resources, finance teams, estates, Information Communication Technology, and training teams.

³³ HMIC, [Demanding Times: The frontline and police visibility](#), 2011 p.18.

The lists provided above are not exhaustive. Table F4 in the Home Office's [Police Workforce of England and Wales](#) data tables for 2022 provides more detail on the roles included within each category.

The new categories from 2016 are not directly comparable with the previous framework and thus figures for the number of staff and officers in frontline roles may not be comparable across the time-series.

The definitions were changed to ensure policing roles remained relevant and reflected current policing structures.

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