

# Statistics on the number of police officers assaulted in 2015/16, England and Wales

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## Key Figures

In 2015/16 there were:

- 7,903 assaults involving injury reported to force health and safety teams by officers, and 270 reported by PCSOs (excluding the British Transport Police).
- 15,491 crimes of “assault without injury on a constable” recorded across all forces (including the British Transport Police).
- An estimated 23,000 assaults on officers across all forces (including the British Transport Police).

## Introduction

This note summarises the two data sources for assaults on police officers collected by the Home Office:

- self-reported assaults data held within police forces’ Human Resource (HR) or health and safety systems;
- police recorded crime data.

Data on assaults are **NOT** National Statistics, due to their known limitations. Neither of these data sources currently provides a complete picture of assaults against police officers, but together they can help to indicate the scale of the issue. The main limitations of each data source are as follows:

### Self-reported data

- This only includes assaults that officers report to their health and safety or HR teams. In some cases officers will choose not to report cases, as it is usually not compulsory to do so.
- These figures only include assaults which result in injury.

### Police recorded crime data

Within the recorded crime data set there are two separate sources of data:

- Forces supply the number of crimes of “assault without injury on a constable” to the Home Office as part of their recorded crime data. This only includes assaults where no injury was involved.
- Some forces have supplied separate data on the total number of assaults (including those involving injury) on officers from their crime recording system, as part of a voluntary data collection for 2015/16. These figures are not perfectly comparable across forces, as the accuracy with which different forces are able to provide these figures varies.

Estimates of the number of assaults on police officers in [2014/15](#) were published alongside the police workforce statistical bulletin in July 2015. The Home Office has worked with police forces to try and improve the data further, in order to give a more complete picture of assaults. While it is clear that there are still some limitations in the way in which forces record assaults, the data published in this note are more robust and complete than those published previously.

## Self-reported data

One source of data on assaults on police officers is self-reported data held within police forces’ Human Resources (HR) or health and safety systems. In July 2015 these data were published by the Home Office for 2014/15. This was the first time such data had been published since 2009/10. Data for 2015/16 can be found in table 1.

Following discussions with police forces, the Home Office requested that police forces only include assaults which resulted in injury when providing data for 2015/16. In previous years, it was requested that forces also include assaults which did not result in injury. However it was apparent that there were inconsistencies between forces in terms of the data provided, and so the collection was changed to improve comparability across forces.

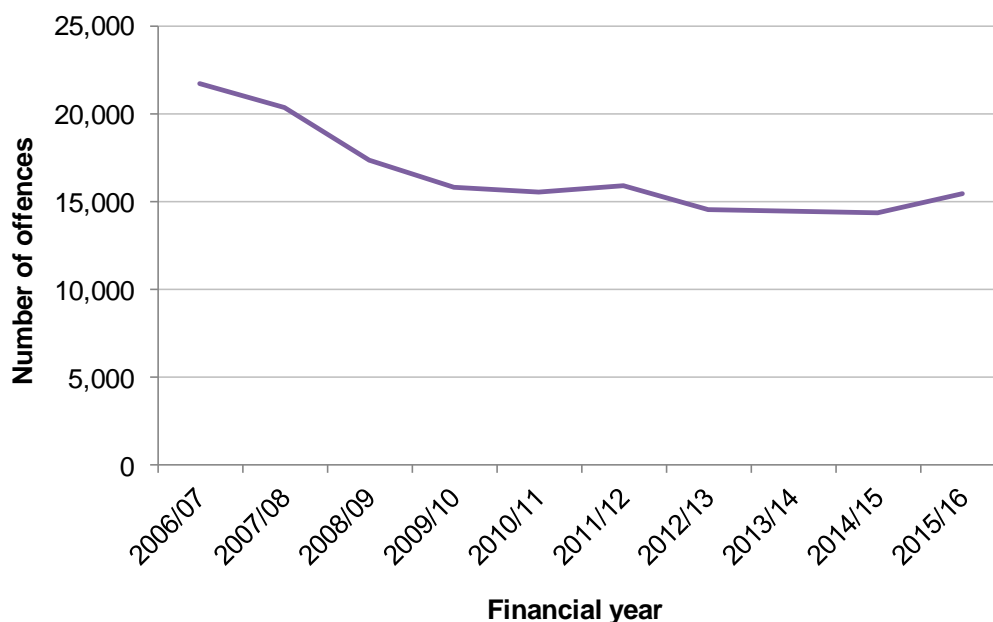
These self-reported assaults data do not on their own show the true scale of assaults. Firstly, as described above, these data only include cases where an officer suffers an injury. Additionally, it is usually voluntary for officers to report them to their health and safety or HR teams, and many do not do so. Comparisons across forces should therefore be made with caution, as a higher number of assaults may reflect an increased likelihood of officers reporting the assaults, rather than an increased risk of assault. Comparisons over time should also be made with caution due to the change in definition.

## Police recorded crime data

Another data source for assaults on police officers is the number of recorded crimes of “assault without injury on a constable”. These are published within the latest “[Crime in England and Wales](#)” release by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

These figures only include assaults that do not result in injury. There is not a corresponding crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable”, with such assaults recorded under the relevant offence classification, such as “violence with injury”. Figure 1 shows that between 2006/07 and 2012/13 there has been a general downward trend in the number of offences of “assault without injury on a constable” recorded by the police. It then remained fairly stable until the latest year, where the number of offences increased by 8%, from 14,395 to 15,491 offences (compared with a corresponding increase of 26% over the same period for “assault without injury” i.e. those cases not involving police officers).

**Figure 1: Number of offences recorded under “assault without injury on a constable”, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2006/07 to 2015/16<sup>2</sup>**



**Footnotes:**

1. Includes the British Transport Police
2. These figures are published in table A.04 of the “[Crime in England and Wales](#)” statistical release.

Figures are also published by the ONS on the number of injuries sustained by on-duty police officers as a result of firearms offences. In the 10 years up to 31 March 2015, there were 125 offences where an officer was injured by a firearm (excluding air weapons), with fewer than 10 offences recorded in each of the most recent 5 years. It should be noted that some of these offences may also be recorded within the self-reported assaults data presented above. See ONS's "[Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending 31 March 2015](#)" bulletin table 3.2 for further breakdowns of these statistics.

For 2015/16 the Home Office asked forces to provide data on a voluntary basis on the total number of assaults on police officers, taken from their crime recording systems. This includes both the "assault without injury on a constable" crime classification mentioned above, and assaults with injury that involve police officers. Around a third (15) of police forces provided these data, although some stated that the quality was variable and that the data may not be complete. As a result, these data are likely to be an underestimate of the total number of assaults in some forces. A further limitation of the data is that it is not always possible for forces to identify whether the police officer was on or off duty at the time of the assault. For these reasons, the figures in table 1 are not directly comparable at police force area level.

**Table 1: Assaults on police officers, England and Wales, 2015/16**

	Self-reported assaults <sup>1, 2, 3</sup>	Police recorded crime - assault without injury on a constable <sup>1, 4</sup>	Police recorded crime - total number of assaults <sup>1, 5</sup>
Avon & Somerset	167	499	..
Bedfordshire	119	173	194
British Transport Police <sup>6</sup>	..	378	..
Cambridgeshire	44	235	..
Cheshire	123	294	442
Cleveland	72	171	..
Cumbria	81	165	236
Derbyshire	47	242	436
Devon & Cornwall	157	346	..
Dorset	91	220	..
Durham	99	219	..
Dyfed-Powys	43	110	..
Essex	308	386	..
Gloucestershire	104	90	..
Greater Manchester	817	640	..
Gwent	66	162	..
Hampshire	331	601	993
Hertfordshire	70	332	492
Humberside	34	221	..
Kent	335	447	..
Lancashire	240	275	383
Leicestershire	89	217	330
Lincolnshire	83	238	..
London, City of	1	15	..
Merseyside	140	294	584
Metropolitan Police	1396	2553	..
Norfolk	107	368	..
Northamptonshire	148	264	323
Northumbria	341	356	..
North Wales	75	174	221
North Yorkshire	81	188	..
Nottinghamshire	45	267	..
South Wales	25	214	..
South Yorkshire	61	204	..
Staffordshire	139	324	460
Suffolk	73	238	..
Surrey	151	372	..
Sussex	220	598	..
Thames Valley	214	689	868
Warwickshire	36	91	159
West Mercia	107	276	442
West Midlands	628	560	..
West Yorkshire	320	671	..
Wiltshire	75	114	..
Total	7903	15491	..

**Footnotes:**

1. These data are **NOT** National Statistics.
2. These figures are correct as at 8 July 2016. They are not fully comparable because reporting practices may vary between forces.
3. These figures include assaults where there was a deliberate intention by the assailant(s) to directly harm a police officer. This includes cases where the assault involved the use of a motor vehicle, animal (e.g. dog), or missile (e.g. bricks, masonry). Includes assaults on police officers in the execution of their duty and those assaults on off-duty officers, whilst acting in their capacity as police officers.
4. Police recorded crime figures for the year ending 31 March 2016.
5. These figures are not perfectly comparable across forces, as the accuracy with which different forces are able to provide these figures varies. Data was also provided by a further 12 forces, however the quality was deemed unsuitable for publication.
6. The British Transport Police were not able to provide self-reported assaults data for the year ending 31 March 2016.

## An estimate of the total number of assaults on police officers

Based on the forces that provided data on the total number of assaults from their crime recording systems, it is possible to estimate the proportion of all assaults on police officers that do not involve injury. This is done by calculating the number of assaults without injury as a proportion of the total number of assaults. For the 15 forces that provided more complete data, this is estimated to be around 67%, with it ranging from 50% to 89% at force level. It is then possible to apply the overall proportion (67%) to the number of crimes of “assault without injury on a constable” for the remaining police forces, to estimate the total number of assaults on officers in England and Wales (plus the British Transport Police). This gives an estimate of approximately 23,000 assaults in 2015/16. This assumes that the proportion of assaults that do not involve injury in these fifteen forces is representative of the national picture. While there is no evidence that this is not true, it should be noted that the 15 forces that provided the most complete data excludes many of the larger forces.

This estimate is relatively crude, and should be interpreted with caution. If anything, it is likely to be an underestimate of assaults, as it is unlikely that all assaults with injury are included in the data provided by the 15 forces, due to the recording limitations described above. Caution should be exercised when comparing this estimate with the estimate reported for 2014/15, which was based on less complete data from a smaller number of forces. The Home Office intends to refine the estimate further in future.

## Police community support officers

Self-reported assaults data are collected separately for police community support officers (PCSOs). In 2015/16 there were 270 self-reported assaults on PCSOs in England and Wales (excluding the British Transport Police). The limitations outlined above also apply to this figure. It is noticeable that the number of assaults on PCSOs is far lower than for officers, even when considered relative to their numbers. This is likely to reflect the different role of PCSOs, including the fact that they are not able to use force or exercise powers such as that of arrest. These may decrease the risk of falling victim to an assault.

## Future development of these statistics

The Home Office intends to continue to work with police forces in the coming years to further improve the quality and comparability of data on assaults on the police. This will involve considering how forces currently record assaults, and how this can be standardised further.