

# Statistics on the number of police officers assaulted in 2016/17, England and Wales

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## Key Figures

In 2016/17 there were:

- 8,973 assaults involving injury reported to force health and safety teams by officers, and 280 reported by PCSOs (excluding the British Transport Police).
- 16,531 crimes of “assault without injury on a constable” recorded across all forces (including the British Transport Police).
- An estimated 24,000 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 2016/17. 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 [2015/16](#) were published alongside the police workforce statistical bulletin in July 2016.

## Self-reported data

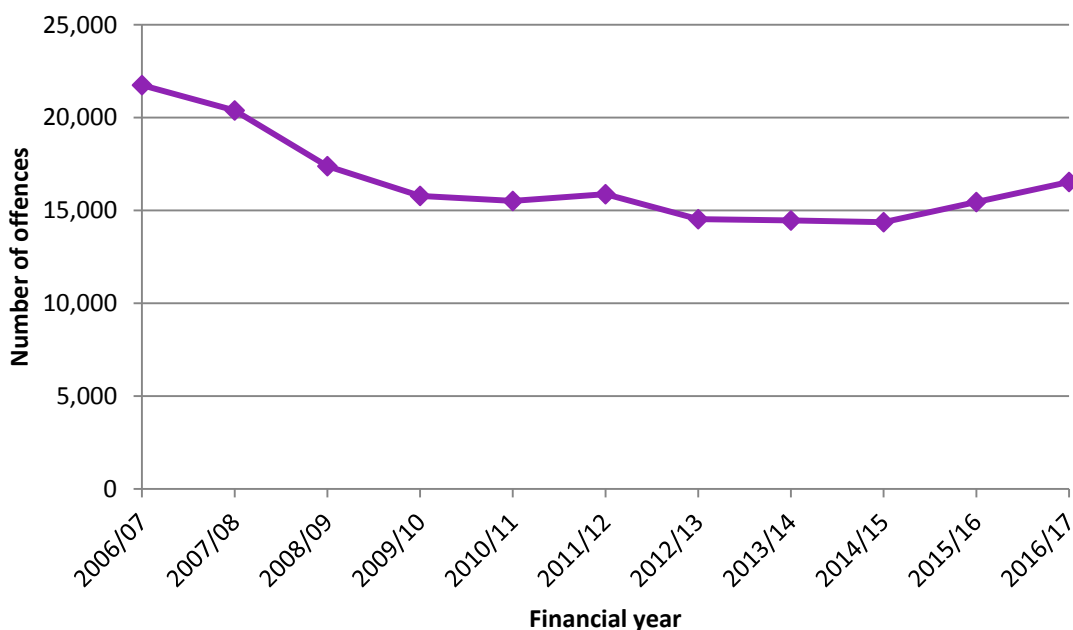
One source of data on assaults on police officers is self-reported data held within police forces’ Human Resources (HR) or health and safety systems. These self-reported assaults data do not on their own show the true scale of assaults. Firstly, as described above, these data only include cases where 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. In 2016/17 there was 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”. A corresponding crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable” was later introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. 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 (Figure 1). It then remained fairly stable until the 2015/16, where the number of offences increased by 8%, from 14,366 to 15,451 offences (compared with a corresponding increase of 26% over the same period for “assault without injury” i.e. those cases not involving police officers). In the year ending March 2017, 16,531 offences of “assault without injury on a constable” were recorded by the police, a 7% increase compared with the previous year (compared to a corresponding increase of 19% over the same period for “assault without injury”).

**Figure 1:** Number of offences recorded under “assault without injury on a constable”, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2006/07 to 2016/17<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 Office for National Statistics (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 2016, there were 178 offences where an officer was injured by a firearm (excluding air weapons), with 5 or fewer offences recorded in each of the most recent 4 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 2016](#)" bulletin table 3.2 for further breakdowns of these statistics.

For 2016/17 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. For 2016/17, 20 of the 43 police forces in England Wales 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 Annex A are not directly comparable at police force area level.

## **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 20 forces that provided more complete data, this is estimated to be around 69%, with it ranging from 49% to 93% at force level. It is then possible to apply the overall proportion (69%) 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 each force. It is then possible to use the data from the 20 forces that provided good quality data and the remaining forces which an estimate has been calculated for to estimate the total number of assaults on officers in England and Wales (plus the British Transport Police). This gives an estimate of approximately 24,000 assaults in 2016/17. This assumes that the proportion of assaults that do not involve injury in these 20 forces is representative of the national picture. While there is no evidence that this is not true, it should be noted that the 20 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 20 forces, due to the recording limitations described above. Caution should be exercised when comparing this estimate with the estimate reported for 2015/16, which was based on less complete data from a smaller number of forces (15). As previously mentioned, a corresponding crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable” was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Therefore when analysing data for 2017/18 the Home Office will not need to estimate the total number of assaults on a police officer as there will be a corresponding crime classification for both with and without injury on a constable to calculate this figure.

## **Police community support officers**

Self-reported assaults data are collected separately for police community support officers (PCSOs). In 2016/17 there were 280 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.

**Annex A: Assaults on police officers, England and Wales, 2016/17**

	<b>Self-reported assaults<sup>1,2,3</sup></b>	<b>Police recorded crime - assault without injury on a constable<sup>1,4</sup></b>	<b>Police recorded crime - total number of assaults<sup>1,5</sup></b>
Avon & Somerset	195	466	519
Bedfordshire	49	157	169
British Transport Police <sup>6</sup>	..	379	..
Cambridgeshire	23	265	291
Cheshire	280	293	537
Cleveland	42	200	232
Cumbria	95	153	211
Derbyshire	43	188	..
Devon & Cornwall	199	386	..
Dorset	57	223	..
Durham	116	261	..
Dyfed-Powys	74	146	184
Essex	186	480	..
Gloucestershire	89	74	..
Greater Manchester	774	617	..
Gwent	37	150	..
Hampshire	732	699	1,161
Hertfordshire	157	394	..
Humberside	43	272	..
Kent	367	669	..
Lancashire	222	228	312
Leicestershire	46	212	243
Lincolnshire	66	188	..
London, City of	5	16	..
Merseyside	163	296	455
Metropolitan Police	2,082	2,726	..
Norfolk	98	369	..
North Wales <sup>7</sup>	..	285	..
North Yorkshire	80	371	..
Northamptonshire	49	164	281
Northumbria	302	226	..
Nottinghamshire	86	286	..
South Wales	22	236	..
South Yorkshire	95	191	250
Staffordshire	55	328	372
Suffolk	73	293	..
Surrey	132	299	..
Sussex	222	592	866
Thames Valley	211	664	852
Warwickshire	69	104	205
West Mercia	98	333	529
West Midlands	812	649	1,312
West Yorkshire	372	868	..
Wiltshire	55	135	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,973</b>	<b>16,531</b>	<b>9,147</b>

**Footnotes:**

1. These data are **NOT** National Statistics.
2. These figures are correct as at the time of publication. 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 2017.
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 14 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 2017.
7. North Wales were not able to provide self-reported assaults data for the year ending 31 March 2017.