



Home Office



Police Workforce, England and Wales, 30 September 2017

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Further information

The biannual *Police Workforce, England and Wales* publication and other Home Office statistical releases are available from the [Statistics at Home Office](#) pages on the GOV.UK website.

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1 Introduction

1.1 General introduction

This release is a mid-year update of the [Police workforce, England and Wales](#) publication series. It contains statistics on the numbers of police officers, police staff, police community support officers (PCSOs), designated officers, traffic wardens, special constables and police support volunteers (PSVs) in post on 30 September 2017 in the 43 police forces of England and Wales and the British Transport Police (BTP)¹. This release also contains experimental statistics on misconduct and criminal investigations for the year ending 31 March 2017.

Unless otherwise stated, total workforce figures quoted in the bulletin include those on career breaks or other forms of long-term absence, and include those seconded in to police forces from other forces or central services (e.g. the Home Office, the National Crime Agency). The workforce figures in this release are all presented on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis unless indicated otherwise.

The [User Guide to Police Workforce Statistics](#) contains further information including a glossary, conventions used, and other background information. The data in this release can be found in the [Police workforce, England and Wales, 30 September 2017: data tables](#).

1.2 National Statistics status

Police workforce statistics have been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure that they continue to meet the standards required to be designated as National Statistics. The Home Office has worked closely with the UK Statistics Authority and the Office for Statistics Regulation (the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority) during this process, and, as a result, has made several changes to the [‘User guide to Police Workforce statistics’](#), which is published alongside this release. It contains further information on the quality and limitations of the various datasets, and the ways in which the Home Office engages with users of the statistics.

The UK Statistics Authority confirmed the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics in November 2015. This means that these statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, impartiality, quality and public value, and are fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

This release also contains data on misconduct and criminal investigations for the year ending 31 March 2017. These data in this section of the release have been designated as **Experimental Statistics**, to acknowledge that further development will take place in the coming years.

¹ Data for the British Transport Police are largely excluded from analysis in this report, their data can be found in the accompanying [data tables](#).

2 Key findings

2.1 Police workforce

As at 30 September 2017, there were 121,929 police officers, in the 43 police forces in England and Wales, the lowest number of officers since comparable records began in 1996.

Table 2.1: Police workforce, as at 30 September, England and Wales¹

Worker type	30 Sept 2016	30 Sept 2017	Percentage change (%)
Police officers ²	122,859	121,929	-0.8
Police staff	60,795	62,031	2.0
Police community support officers	10,551	10,056	-4.7
Designated officers ³	3,990	4,362	9.3
Special constables ⁴	14,864	12,601	-15.2
Police support volunteers ^{4,5}	..	6,909	..

Source: Home Office, [Workforce Table 7](#)

Notes:

'..' Denotes data not available

1. Excludes BTP.
2. Excludes secondments to central services.
3. Some forces are unable to provide data on some types of designated officers separately. In these cases designated officers have been counted under police staff.
4. Special constables and police support volunteers do not have contracted working hours so their numbers are provided on a headcount rather than a FTE basis.
5. Police support volunteer data were collected for the first time in September 2017.

2.2 Misconduct and criminal investigations

In the year ending 31 March 2017, the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales assessed 42,604 cases following either a public complaint or a conduct allegation. Of these, 3,243 cases were investigated as misconduct or gross misconduct, and proceedings were brought in 1,663 cases. Of these:

- 945 were referred to a misconduct meeting (cases relating to misconduct where the most serious outcome is a final written warning).
- 718 required a misconduct hearing or special case hearing (cases relating to gross misconduct [or repeated misconduct] where the most serious outcome is dismissal).

Following a hearing or special case hearing, there were a total of 393 dismissals in the year ending 31 March 2017, 291 relating to officers and 102 to staff.

Data were also collected for the first time on the number of cases held in private. In the year ending March 2017, 84 hearings and 6 special case hearings were held in private.

In the year ending 31 March 2017, there were 195 criminal investigations, 168 of which related to police officers, and 27 police staff. Of those, 108 (64%) officers and 22 (81%) staff members were found guilty after a criminal investigation.

3 Police workforce, as at 30 September 2017

There were 198,388 workers (FTE) employed by the 43 police forces in England and Wales on 30 September 2017, a small increase of 180 compared with a year earlier, but a decrease of 296 on the figure as at 31 March 2017. In addition, as at 30 September 2017 there were 12,601 special constables (headcount) and 6,909 police support volunteers (PSVs)² (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Police workforce^{1,2} as at 30 September 2017, England and Wales

	30-Sep-16	31-Mar-17	30-Sep-17	Change in 12 months 30 Sep-16 to 30 Sep-17	
				Number	Percentage
Police officers	122,859	123,142	121,929	-930	-0.8%
Police staff⁴	60,795	61,063	62,031	1,236	2.0%
PCSOs	10,551	10,213	10,056	-495	-4.7%
Designated officers⁴	3,990	4,255	4,362	372	9.3%
Total workforce³	198,208	198,684	198,388	180	0.1%
Special constables (headcount)⁵	14,864	13,503	12,601	-2,263	-15.2%
PSVs (headcount)^{5,6}	6,909

Source: [Workforce Table 7](#)

Notes:

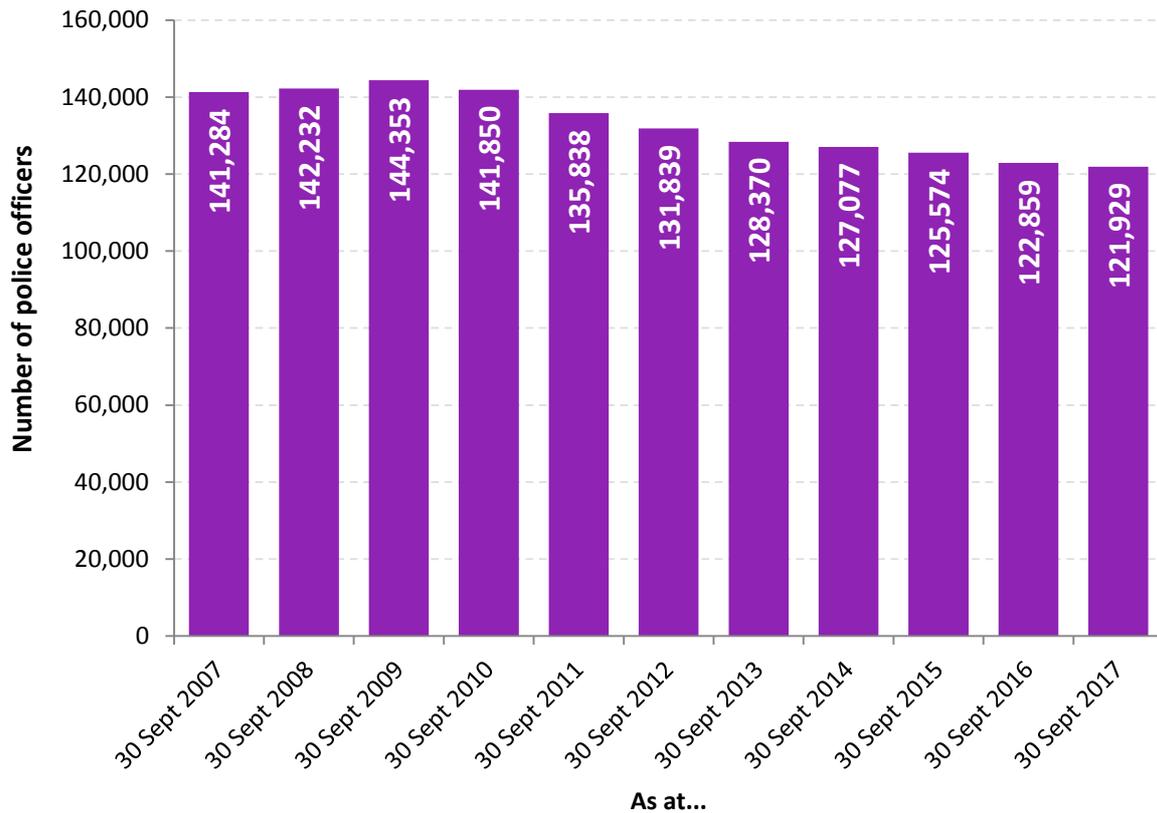
1. Excludes British Transport Police.
2. Excludes secondments to central services.
3. Total workforce includes a small number of traffic wardens. Figures on the number of traffic wardens quoted in this release are very small as police forces have mostly transferred these duties to local authorities. Special constables, as volunteers, have been excluded from this count.
4. Some forces could not separately identify designated officers from police staff. In these cases designated officers have been counted under police staff.
5. Special constables and PSVs do not have contracted working hours so their numbers are provided on a headcount basis rather than FTE.
6. Police support volunteer data were collected for the first time in September 2017.

² Individuals who by choice put their time, experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of the force without expectation of compensation or financial rewards, except for the payment of pre-determined out of pocket expenses.

As at 30 September 2017, there were 121,929 police officers in the 43 police forces in England and Wales, a 0.8% decrease from 122,859 police officers as at 30 September 2016. In addition, the British Transport Police employed 3,028 police officers whilst a further 407 police officers were seconded out to central services³.

Figure 3.1 shows the long term trend in police officers numbers. Police officers numbers have fallen by 22,424 (16%) since the peak in 2009, when there were 144,353 officers. Furthermore, the number of officers as at 30 September 2017 is the lowest number since comparable records began in 1996.

Figure 3.1: Number of police officers^{1,2} as at 30 September 2007 to 2017, England and Wales



Source: [Workforce Table 7](#)

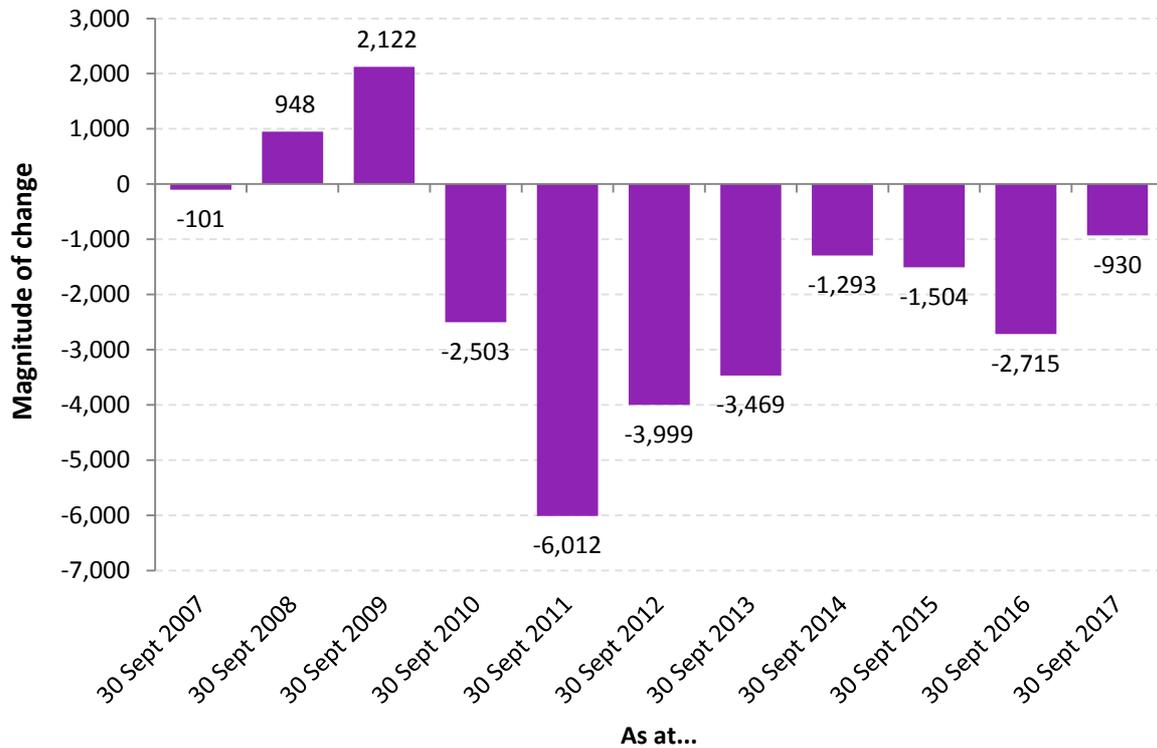
Notes:

1. Excludes BTP.
2. Excludes secondments to central services.

³ Secondments to central services are secondments to central government, e.g. the Home Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), or the National Crime Agency (NCA).

Across the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales, police officer numbers fell by 930 officers, between 30 September 2016 and 30 September 2017 (Figure 3.2). PCSO numbers fell by 495 over the same period to 10,056 PCSOs, and are now at their lowest level since 30 September 2006. Numbers of police staff and designated officers increased between 30 September 2016 and 30 September 2017, by 1,236 staff and 372 designated officers.

Figure 3.2: Change in the number of police officers^{1,2} as at 30 September 2007 to 2017, compared with the previous year, England and Wales



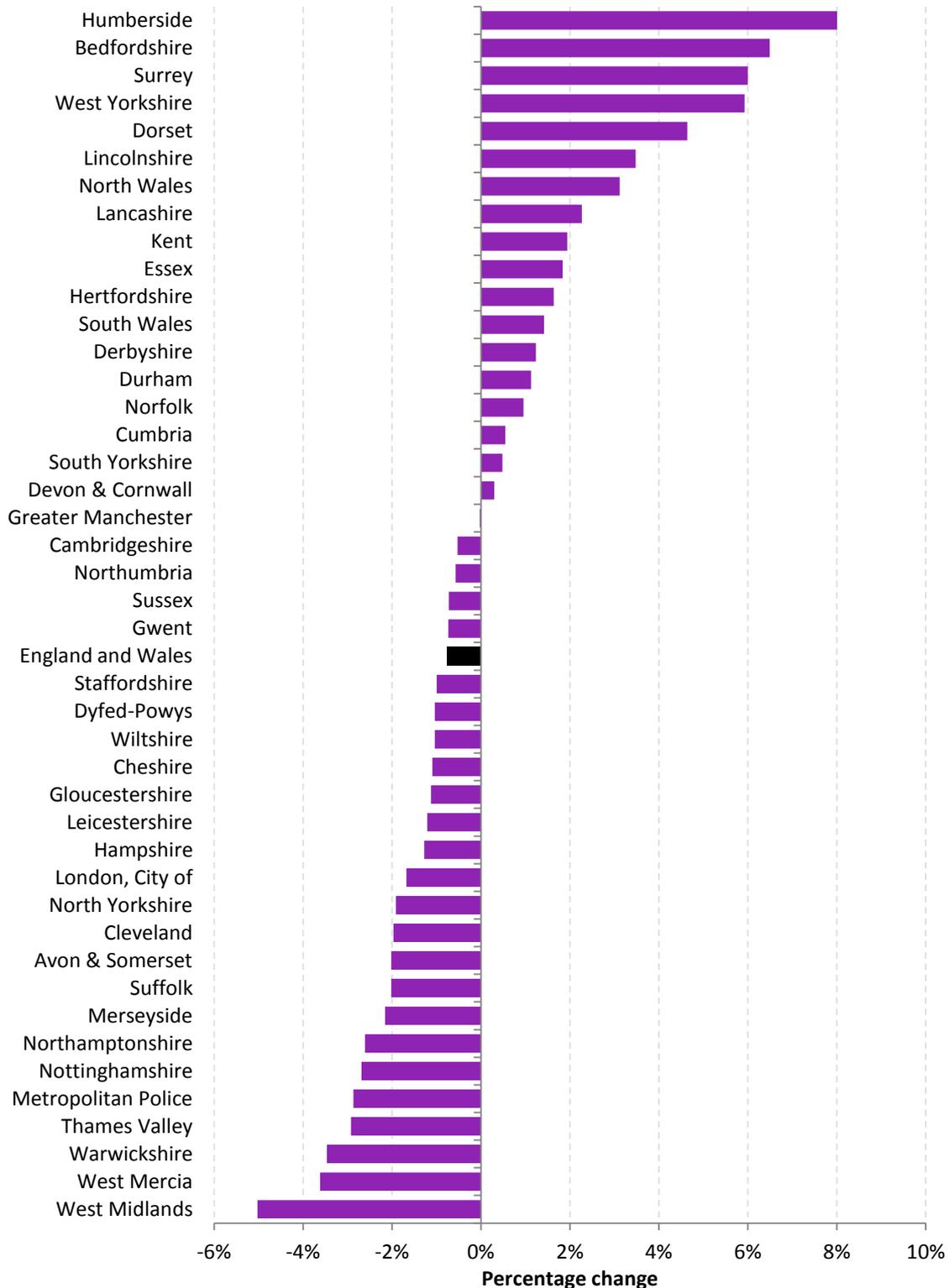
Source: [Workforce Table 7](#)

Notes:

1. Excludes BTP.
2. Excludes secondments to central services.

Of the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales, 25 recorded falls in police officer numbers in the year ending 30 September 2017 compared with 12 months earlier (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Change in the number of police officers as at 30 September 2017, compared with 30 September 2016, by police force area



Source: [Workforce Table 1](#)

Notes:

- Greater Manchester Police had a small change of -0.03%.

4 Experimental statistics: Misconduct and criminal investigations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers data from the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales on the number of cases of police misconduct and criminal investigations involving officers and staff, in the year ending 31 March 2017. It covers the number of cases received and assessed by forces, as well as the outcomes at misconduct meetings, hearings, special case hearings and criminal investigations.

In carrying out their duties, police officers and police staff are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional behaviour. These standards are set out in the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#) and apply to all police officers and special constables, with equivalents in local policy for police staff. The College of Policing's [Code of Ethics](#) sets out the principles, values and behaviour expected of everyone who works in policing.

The police discipline system is designed to deal with circumstances where it is alleged the standards of professional behaviour have been breached. This could come to light either via a 'public complaint' arising from a complaint from a member of the public, or as a 'conduct matter' which can arise from an internal conduct allegation or from an incident such as a death or serious injury following police contact. The system that deals with disciplinary proceedings arising from public complaints and conduct matters involving police officers (both full-time regular officers and special constables) is set out in legislation, and for staff in local policies within police forces.

When a force receives a public complaint or a conduct matter comes to their attention, they make a decision as to whether the conduct could be a breach of the standards of professional behaviour set out in the regulations. Where behaviour is suspected of falling short of these standards, it is the responsibility of the police force to conduct a formal investigation or refer the matter to the [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#), formerly the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), depending on the nature of the case.

At the end of the investigation, the investigator will decide whether the individual has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct, or if there is no case to answer. Where a decision is made that there is a case to answer, the appropriate authority also decides what form disciplinary proceedings will take. In misconduct cases, it may be concluded that proceedings are not warranted and as such management advice can be issued. Where misconduct proceedings are brought, this will either be a referral to a misconduct meeting (in the case of misconduct) or a misconduct hearing (in the case of gross misconduct or where the officer already has received a final written warning for misconduct). Some cases are referred to special case hearings, which is a fast-tracked process when evidence is incontrovertible and it is in the public interest for the matter to be resolved without delay.

Hearings convened under the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#) are now held in public in the vast majority of cases. This reform was introduced in May 2015 in order to increase the transparency of the police discipline system. Public hearings are accessible to members of the public and press as well as any interested party for the purposes of proceedings and details of the hearing are published on the force's website. Where it is more appropriate, hearings may be held in private; this may be relevant, for example, where there are sensitive national security matters to be discussed at the hearing or where there is the involvement of vulnerable individuals. An independent legally-qualified chair makes the decision whether to hold all or part of the hearing in private based on specific criteria set out in the

[Regulations](#). The provisions came into force in 2015, and the data related to public and private hearings were collected for the first time in 2016/17.

A decision is made at the end of the process as to whether the individual has been found to have committed misconduct or gross misconduct, and any associated attached sanctions are determined.

A simplified flow chart of the misconduct process can be found on page 13 (Figure 4.1).

Further information about complaints and the discipline system can be found in statutory guidance issued by the [Home Office](#) and the [IOPC](#). The [User Guide to Police Workforce Statistics](#) also contains further information on the misconduct process.

4.2 How to use these data

Data are collected by the Home Office from each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. The IT systems are usually managed by the force's Professional Standards Department (PSD), which is responsible for upholding and improving professional standards in the force, and investigate public complaints and internal conduct matters.

Officer and staff data

Different discipline systems exist for police officers and police staff (which includes civilian staff, PCSOs, designated officers and traffic wardens). Police officers and special constables are subject to the regulations as set out in the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#). However, members of police staff are not subject to the same regulations. Therefore, while misconduct and gross misconduct cases against police officers and special constables tend to be dealt with and recorded in a similar way by most forces (with some exceptions), there are often different processes and recording practices for staff cases of misconduct and gross misconduct. Data relating to staff cases in this chapter should therefore be used with caution; they may be incomplete and not directly comparable across forces.

Local resolutions

When a force receives a public complaint, or when an internal conduct matter arises, they make a decision as to whether the conduct meets the requirements for a formal investigation. In the case of public complaints, some do not meet the criteria for an investigation and are resolved locally without referral to disciplinary proceedings.

Some forces do not record a final assessment for cases that are resolved via a local resolution. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing the total number of cases arising from complaints across forces. Forces with higher numbers of final assessments may be those who record a final assessment for all cases received, or resolve fewer cases locally, rather than those who genuinely deal with more cases.

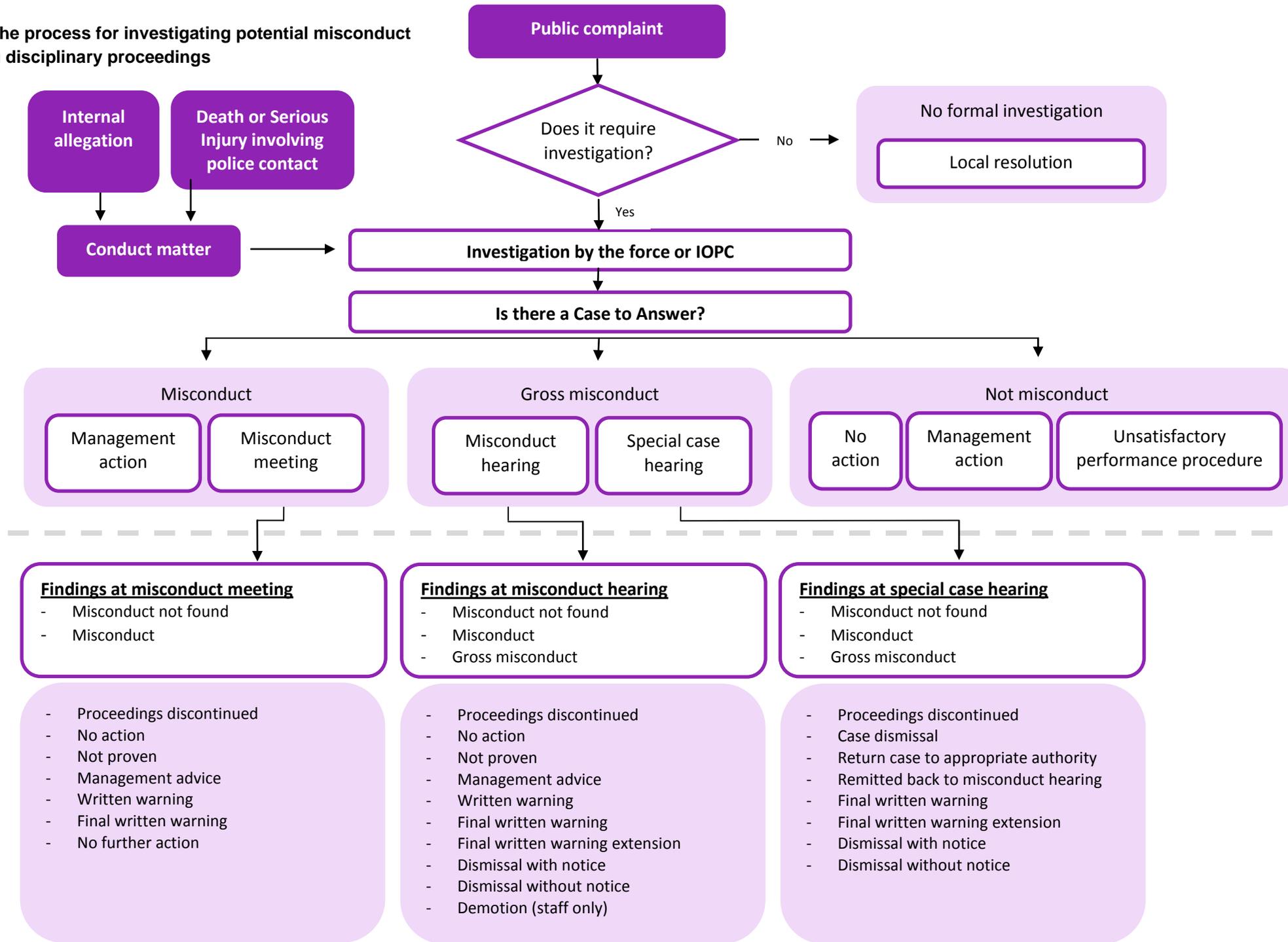
Similarly, care should be taken when comparing the way in which forces deal with the cases they receive. Forces appearing to send a greater proportion of cases to hearings and meetings may be those who locally resolve more of their cases (and do not record a final assessment for these).

Experimental Statistics status

Due to the provisional and evolving nature of this dataset, these statistics have been designated as **Experimental Statistics**. The Police Conduct Regulations plan to be updated, therefore, these statistics will undergo further development in the coming years to ensure they align with the new regulations. It is also important to note a number of changes which have been made to the police

discipline system. The introduction of the [Police \(Conduct, Complaints and Misconduct and Appeal Tribunal\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) and [Police Barred List and Police Advisory List Regulations 2017](#) took effect on 15 December 2017. These extend the disciplinary provisions to former officers and introduce a police barred list which will act as an absolute bar on those who have been dismissed taking up other roles within policing. As these changes were introduced after this dataset was collected from forces, they are not reflected in these statistics. These statistics will undergo further development in the coming years to ensure that they align with the amended regulations.

Figure 4.1: The process for investigating potential misconduct and bringing disciplinary proceedings



4.3 Cases received and finally assessed

In the year ending 31 March 2017, the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales assessed 37,924 cases involving officers (and special constables) that related to complaints or conduct matters, and 4,680 cases involving police staff. These figures are likely to be an undercount since some forces do not record a final assessment for cases where the conduct does not constitute misconduct, and therefore resulted in no action or was resolved locally outside of the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#).

Caution should therefore be taken when comparing the total number of cases arising from complaints across forces. Forces with higher numbers of final assessments may be those who record a final assessment for all cases received, or resolve fewer cases locally, rather than those who genuinely deal with more cases. Furthermore, given the provisional nature of this dataset, caution should be taken when comparing data over time as the Home Office works to improve consistency in recording practices across forces.

Data on the number of cases that lead to a final assessment relating to misconduct or gross misconduct are more reliable and potentially comparable, as these figures relate to the outcome of an investigation or the conclusion of the process of dealing with the complaint or conduct matter. Where there has been an investigation into the conduct of an individual arising from a public complaint or internal allegation, at the conclusion of the investigation a 'Case to Answer' decision is made to determine whether the individual should face any disciplinary proceedings and, if so, what form the proceedings should take. Forces are required to record these decisions on their IT systems under the regulations.

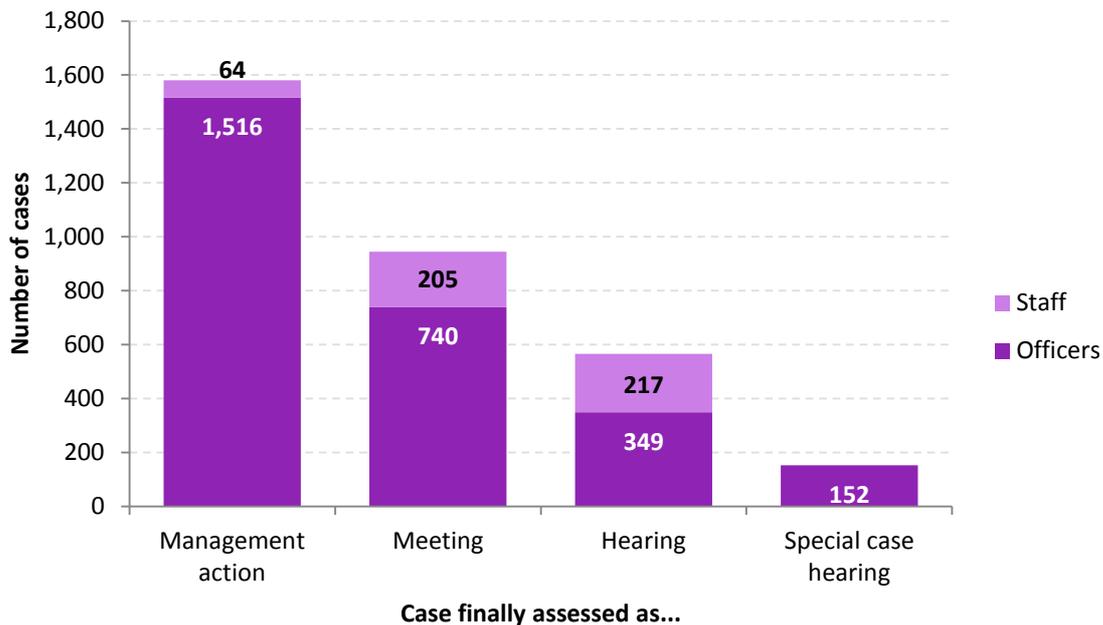
Of the complaint and conduct matter cases finalised by the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2017, 3,243 (7.6%) were finally assessed as relating to misconduct or gross misconduct.

Of these 3,243 cases:

- Investigations led to misconduct proceedings being recommended in 1,663 cases:
 - 945 were assessed as misconduct and referred to a misconduct meeting.
 - 718 required the bringing of a misconduct hearing or special case hearing (where the force considers there are sufficient evidence and public interest grounds that the officer may need to be dismissed without delay) as they related to matters that could lead to the dismissal of the individual.
- The remaining 1,580 did not require the bringing of misconduct proceedings but required 'management action' which is 'action or advice intended to improve the conduct of the officer concerned'

Figure 4.2 shows the number of cases that resulted in management action, meetings or hearings (including special case hearings), for both officers and staff.

Figure 4.2: Number of cases received and finally assessed as relating to misconduct or gross misconduct, year ending 31 March 2017¹



Source: [Misconduct Table 1](#)

Notes:

- Members of police staff are not subject to the same regulations as officers. Staff data should be used with caution, as they may be incomplete and not directly comparable across forces.

4.4 Outcomes of misconduct meetings and hearings

Misconduct meetings

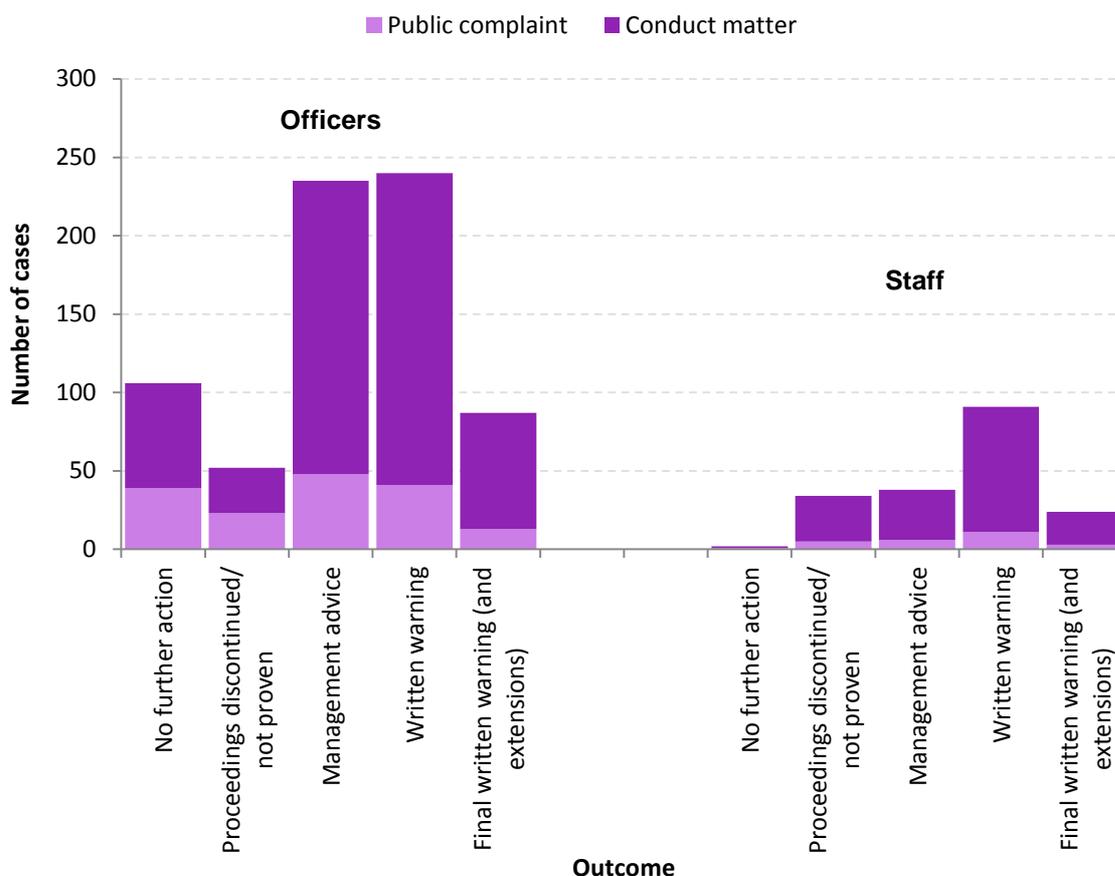
A misconduct meeting is held where there is a case to answer in respect of misconduct, and where the most serious outcome would be a final written warning. In the year ending 31 March 2017, 909 officers and staff attended a misconduct meeting.

The most common outcome at a misconduct meeting, for both officers and staff, was a written warning, with a third (33%) of meetings involving officers and almost half (48%) of those involving staff resulting in this outcome. The second most common outcome for both officers and staff was management advice (33% of officer cases and 20% of staff cases). The most serious at a misconduct meeting is a final written warning (or final written warning extension). In the year ending 31 March 2017, 12% of officer cases and 13% of staff cases resulted in this outcome.

For officers, there was also a noticeable difference between the outcomes of cases following a public complaint and cases following a conduct matter. Conduct matters were more likely to result in more serious action, such as written warnings, whereas public complaints most frequently resulted in management advice, or a written warning.

In 21% of all cases, the outcome was either no action, the accusations were not proven or the proceedings were discontinued (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Outcomes of misconduct meetings, year ending 31 March 2017¹



Source: [Misconduct Table 4](#)

Notes:

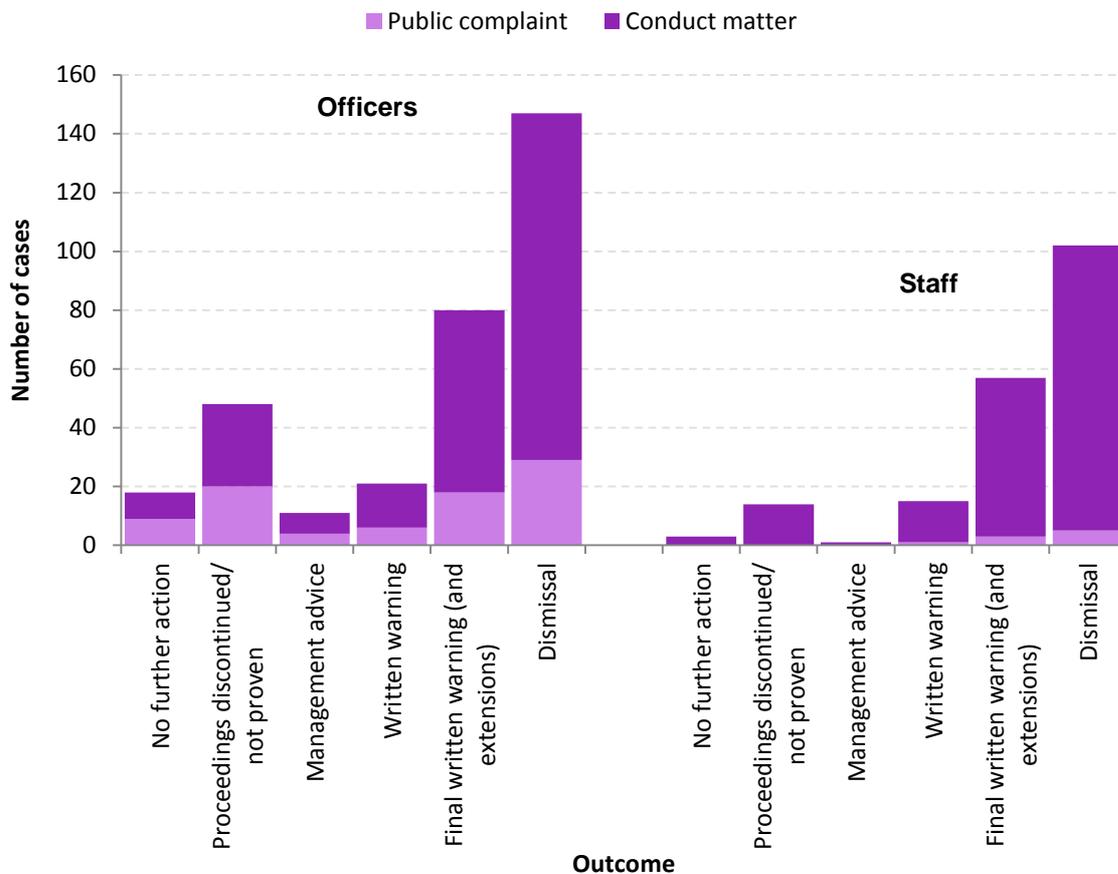
1. The total number of outcomes may not always exactly match the total number of cases assessed. This can be for a range of reasons, including where the officer or staff member resigns ahead of the meeting.

Misconduct hearings

A misconduct hearing is held when there is a case to answer in respect of gross misconduct, or where the police officer has a live final written warning and there is a case to answer in respect of a further act of misconduct. There were 325 hearings involving officers and 192 hearings involving staff in the year ending 31 March 2017.

For both officers and staff, conduct matters led to misconduct hearings more frequently than public complaints. Just under half (45%) of all officer misconduct hearings resulted in dismissal, and a further 25% resulted in a final written warning (or final written warning extension). For staff, 53% of hearings resulted in dismissal and 30% in a final written warning (or final written warning extension).

Figure 4.4: Outcomes of misconduct hearings, year ending 31 March 2017¹



Source: [Misconduct Table 5](#)

Notes:

1. The total number of outcomes may not always exactly match the total number of cases assessed. This can be for a range of reasons, including where the officer or staff member resigns ahead of the hearing.

Special case hearings

A special case hearing is a fast-tracked misconduct hearing where the force considers there is already sufficient evidence and public interest grounds for the officer to be dismissed without delay. In the year ending 31 March 2017, 151 officers faced a special case hearing, with 144 (95%) leading to dismissal. One case was discontinued, and the remaining 6 cases resulted in a final written warning.

In total, in the year ending 31 March 2017, 291 officers and 102 staff members were dismissed following a hearing or special case hearing.

Private hearings and special case hearings

Hearings convened under the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#) are now held in public in the majority of cases. Public hearings are accessible to members of the public and press as well as any interested party for the purposes of proceedings and details of the hearing are published on the force’s website. Hearing’s may be held in private if it is more appropriate, for example where there are sensitive national security matters to be discussed at the hearing or where there is the involvement of vulnerable individuals. In the year ending 31 March 2017, 84 misconduct hearings were held in private and 6 special case hearings were held in private.

4.5 Criminal investigations

The Home Office also collects data on the number of criminal investigations involving officers and staff. In the year ending 31 March 2017 there were 195 criminal investigations, 168 of which related to police officers and 27 to police staff. The majority (93%) of these followed an internal conduct allegation.

Criminal investigations and proceedings are distinct from misconduct proceedings, as there are different tests and thresholds applied. For example, while a criminal prosecution relies on a burden of proof *beyond all reasonable doubt*, misconduct proceedings are in line with civil proceedings and rely on *the balance of probabilities*. This means that for criminal cases which do not result in conviction or are unsuitable for criminal prosecution, the individual can still be subject to misconduct proceedings and potentially be dismissed. In addition, where cases do result in criminal conviction, the individual can also be subject to misconduct proceedings. However, these are often paused while criminal proceedings are ongoing in order to avoid any potential prejudice to the proceedings.

Of the criminal investigations involving officers, 64% resulted in the officer being found (or pleading) guilty, a further 26% resulted in a not guilty verdict and a further 3% resulted in a caution, in the remaining 7% of cases proceedings were discontinued or no evidence was offered. For staff, 81% of cases resulted in the individual being found (or pleading) guilty and 15% resulted in a not guilty verdict, in the remaining 4% of cases proceedings were discontinued or no evidence was offered.

4.6 Additional data

For the reasons mentioned above, data on cases relating to public complaints in this chapter should not be used to measure the total volume of complaints received by the police in England and Wales. A more reliable data source for the total volume of complaints is published by the [IOPC](#).

The IOPC collects and publishes data on complaints against the police in England and Wales; however, this is collected on a different basis to the data covered in this chapter. The IOPC data cover the number of complaints, whereas data in this chapter relate to number of workers. For example, in the event of one complaint being made against three officers, the IOPC would count one complaint, whereas three cases would be counted in the Home Office data. The opposite is also true, if four complaints were made about the same incident involving one officer, four complaints would be counted by the IOPC but just one case recorded in the Home Office statistics.

The latest IOPC publication can be found here: <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/research-and-learning/statistics/complaints-statistics>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/statistics>

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