



Home Office

Police protest powers, June 2022 to March 2024, England and Wales

December 2024



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Presented to Parliament pursuant to sections 73, 74 and 79 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

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ISBN 978-1-5286-5346-6

E03259017 12/24

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum.

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

Police protest powers, England and Wales

1. Background

On June 28 2022, police forces were given enhanced powers to manage protests as part of the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#). This included amendments to sections 12 and 14 of the [Public Order Act 1986](#), as well as the creation of a new section 14ZA. Along with these changes, a legal obligation was placed on the Home Secretary to lay in Parliament a report on the use of these powers.

The full Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 will also be subject to post-legislative scrutiny between April 2025 and April 2027. This will include a review of sections 73, 74 and 79, as well as the other public order measures in the Act.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 amended the definition of “serious disruption to the life of the community” in section 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986. On 15 June 2023, the definition was further amended by the Public Order Act 1986 (Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community) Regulations 2023. This change is likely to have had minimal impact on the statistics presented in this bulletin.

2. Data coverage and quality

From April 2023, data was requested retrospectively for the period of 28 June 2022 onwards under the Annual Data Requirement from the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police on their use of protest powers under sections 12, 14 and 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022).

The data in this release covers the period from 28 June 2022 (when the powers came into effect) up to 31 March 2024.

The information presented does not give an indication of the total number of processions and assemblies that have taken place, rather the data in this release includes only those where at least one of the enhanced protest powers was used.

Data was provided by all 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police, however, 2 forces (Metropolitan Police Service and West Yorkshire Police) were only able to provide data from April 2023, when the data collection was first introduced. In total, 10 forces (including the British Transport Police) had made use of the protest powers under sections 12, 14 or 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986, and the remaining 34 forces confirmed that they had not used these protest powers in the specified period.

There were a range of reasons given from forces who reported they had not made use of the protest powers. Some forces indicated that there had not been any large-scale assemblies or processions within their area, and it would have been disproportionate to use the legislation during the smaller protests that had taken place. Other forces indicated that while protests in their area had caused some disruption, the threshold of ‘serious disruption’ (as required by legislation) had not been met for conditions to be imposed on events.

Additionally, others indicated that engagement between Police Liaison Teams and protestors to outline what would be acceptable ahead of any event, with a threat of imposing conditions if this was compromised, had negated the need to use the powers outlined in this report.

Following a mass stabbing in Southport on 29 July 2024, large-scale disorder occurred across the UK between 30 July and 7 August 2024. The data in this release does not cover that period.

3. Official statistics in development

The protests powers data in this report has been labelled as 'Official statistics in development' to indicate they are new and further development is ongoing. The Home Office continues to work with forces, the National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC), and the National Policing Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to improve the quality and consistency of the data in this collection. Figures in this release may be subject to revision in future editions of these statistics.

Home Office analysts intend to incorporate future releases of this data into the '[Police powers and procedures](#)' statistical series. We will undertake user engagement to better understand the use and value of these statistics, and to consider the scope of the data collection. We welcome feedback, and if you have any immediate feedback or enquiries about this release, please contact PolicingStatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk.

4. Main facts and figures

Data from the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales, and the British Transport Police (BTP), shows that:

- in the period 28 June 2022 to 31 March 2024, 10 forces made use of the powers under sections 12, 14 or 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the PCSC Act 2022)
- since sections 12, 14 and 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the PCSC Act 2022) came into force, they have been used to apply conditions to 473 protests
- of these 473 protests, 434 were recorded as processions (conditions imposed under section 12) and 39 were recorded as assemblies (conditions imposed under section 14); the powers have not been used to apply conditions to any one-person protests (section 14ZA)
- of the 10 police forces in England and Wales (including BTP), who used at least one of these powers on at least one occasion, the Metropolitan Police used these powers most often, applying them to 448 protests between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 (95% of the total)
- there were 277 people arrested for breaching conditions at processions or assemblies

5. What data has been collected?

Data has been collected from all 44 police forces in England and Wales (including BTP) on their use of protest powers under section 12, 14 and 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022).

Additional information has also been collected on the theme of the procession or assembly, the conditions that were put in place on the procession or assembly, and the trigger for applying such conditions.

5.1 Theme categories (multiple options may be chosen)

- social justice
- anti-fascism
- cultural nationalism
- animal rights
- international
- anti-government
- environment
- none or unknown

5.2 Trigger categories (multiple options may be chosen)

- noise that may result in serious disruption to the activities of an organisation
- noise that may result in the alarm, distress, intimidation or harassment of persons
- serious disruption to life of the community
- disorder
- damage to property
- intimidation

5.3 Conditions applied categories (multiple options may be chosen)

- number of attendees
- location or route taken
- duration
- noise
- other

Data has also been collected on the number of resulting arrests, including the conditions breached and demographic information of the person arrested.

6. Use of powers under section 12 - Processions data

Section 12 of the [Public Order \(PO\) Act 1986](#) gives police powers to impose conditions on public processions which they reasonably believe are necessary to prevent intimidation, serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community. Section 73 of the [Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts \(PCSC\) Act 2022](#) expands on the legislation to include examples of what could constitute serious disruption in this context and adds a new trigger for imposing conditions where noise resulting from the procession may cause serious disruption to the activities of an organisation or a significant detrimental impact on persons in the vicinity.

A procession is defined as a march or moving protest.

Between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, 434 processions had conditions imposed upon them under section 12 of the Public Order Act. Five police forces used this power to impose conditions on processions, with the Metropolitan Police accounting for most of these (422 out of 434, or 97% of the total). The other 4 police forces to use this power were City of London (8 times), West Mercia (2 times), South Wales and Bedfordshire (one time each).

6.1 Theme of processions with conditions applied

Of the processions where conditions were applied, most had an 'environmental' theme (411 out of 434, or 95% of the total). The next most common theme was processions inspired by 'international' events (17 out of 434 processions, or 4% of the total) (Table 1). Three processions had an anti-government theme, 2 had an anti-fascism theme and a further 2 had a 'cultural nationalism' theme. Lastly, there was one procession where powers were used but there was no applicable theme to apply from the categorisations listed.

Table 1: Theme of processions with conditions applied to them between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Theme	Number of processions	Percentage of processions
Environmental	411	95%
International	17	4%
Anti-government	3	1%
Anti-fascism	2	<1%
Cultural nationalism	2	<1%
Not applicable	1	<1%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_01

Notes:

1. No processions with conditions applied were recorded with a social justice or animal rights theme.
2. Percentages exceed 100% because processions can have more than one theme applied to them.

6.2 Triggers for conditions being placed on processions

Each procession can have multiple triggers for placing conditions on it. Therefore, the total number of triggers applied is higher than the number of processions.

The most common trigger for putting conditions on processions was concerns around serious disruption from the event (426 out of 434 processions, or 98% of the total). Eighteen processions had a trigger of 'disorder', 11 had a trigger of 'damage', 2 had a trigger of 'intimidation' and one had a trigger of noise causing disruption to an organisation in the vicinity of the protest.

Table 2: Triggers for applying conditions to processions between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Trigger	Number of processions	Percentage of processions
Serious disruption	426	98%
Disorder	18	4%
Damage	11	3%
Intimidation	2	<1%
Noise (organisation)	1	<1%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_02

Notes:

1. No processions with conditions applied were recorded with a trigger of noise that may result in the alarm, distress, intimidation or harassment of persons.
2. Percentages exceed 100% because processions can have more than one trigger for applying conditions.

6.3 Conditions applied to processions

Each procession can have multiple conditions applied to it (including before and after the event). Therefore, the total number of conditions is higher than the number of processions.

The most common condition placed on processions was on its location or route (424 out of 434 processions, or 98% of the total). Ten processions had conditions placed on their duration, and 11 had 'other' conditions placed upon them.

Table 3: Conditions applied to processions between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Condition	Number of processions	Percentage of processions
Location or route	424	98%
Duration	10	2%
Other	11	3%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_03

Notes:

1. No processions with conditions applied were recorded with conditions placed on numbers or noise.
2. Percentages exceed 100% because processions can have more than one condition applied to them.

7. Use of powers under section 14 - Assemblies data

Section 14 of the [Public Order \(PO\) Act 1986](#), as amended by section 74 of the [Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts \(PCSC\) Act 2022](#), gives police the same powers as section 12 but specifically in regard to public assemblies. It also removes the restriction on the types of conditions that can be placed.

An assembly is defined as a static gathering.

Between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, 39 assemblies had conditions imposed upon them under section 14 of the Public Order Act. Seven police forces used this power to impose conditions on assemblies, with the Metropolitan Police accounting for most of these (26 out of 39, or 67% of the total). The other 6 police forces to use this power were West Yorkshire (4 times), British Transport Police (3 times), West Mercia (2 times), Leicestershire (2 times), Gwent and North Wales (one time each).

7.1 Theme of assemblies with conditions applied

The majority of assemblies with conditions applied had an 'international' theme (34 out of 39, or 87% of the total). Only 3 assemblies had an 'environmental' theme (8% of the total).

Table 4: Theme of assemblies with conditions applied to them between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Theme	Number of assemblies	Percentage of assemblies
International	34	87%
Environment	3	8%
Anti-fascism	2	5%
Cultural nationalism	2	5%
Anti-government	1	3%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_04

Notes:

1. No assemblies with conditions applied were recorded with a social justice or animal rights theme.
2. Percentages exceed 100% because assemblies can have more than one theme applied to them.

7.2 Triggers for conditions being placed on assemblies

Each assembly can have multiple triggers for placing conditions on it. Therefore, the total number of triggers applied is higher than the number of assemblies. The most common trigger for putting conditions on assemblies was concerns around serious disruption from the event (32 out of 39 assemblies, or 82% of the total). Eleven assemblies had a trigger of ‘disorder’ and ‘damage’, 4 had a trigger of ‘intimidation’ and 3 had a trigger of noise causing disruption to an organisation or people in the vicinity of the protest.

Table 5: Triggers for applying conditions to assemblies between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Trigger	Number of assemblies	Percentage of assemblies
Serious disruption	32	82%
Disorder	11	28%
Damage	11	28%
Intimidation	4	10%
Noise (organisation)	3	8%
Noise (people)	3	8%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_05

Notes:

1. Percentages exceed 100% due to the fact that assemblies can have more than one trigger for applying conditions.

7.3 Conditions applied to assemblies

Each assembly can have multiple conditions applied to it (including before and after the event). Therefore, the total number of conditions is higher than the number of assemblies. The most common condition placed on assemblies was on its location (33 out of 39 assemblies, or 85% of the total). Twenty assemblies had conditions placed on their duration, 3 had a condition placed on the number of attendees and one had ‘other’ conditions placed upon them.

Table 6: Conditions applied to assemblies between 28 June 2022 and 31 March 2024, England and Wales

Condition	Number of assemblies	Percentage of assemblies
Location or route	33	85%
Duration	20	51%
Numbers	3	8%
Other	1	3%

Source: Home Office, Police protest powers data tables, June 2022 to March 2024, PP_06

Notes:

1. No assemblies were recorded with conditions placed on noise.
2. Percentages exceed 100% because assemblies can have more than one condition applied to them.

Most assemblies had conditions applied prior to the event (23 out of 38 assemblies where the information was provided), rather than during the event (16 out of 38).

8. Single-person protest data

Section 79 of the [Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts \(PCSC\) Act 2022](#) inserts a new section 14ZA into the [Public Order \(PO\) Act 1986](#) which allows police to place conditions on protests being carried out by one person. The relevant triggers for the use of this power relate to noise resulting from the protest which may cause serious disruption to the activities of an organisation or a significant detrimental impact on persons in the vicinity.

No police forces reported use of this power to apply conditions to any one-person protests.

9. Persons arrested for breaching conditions at protests

Police forces were asked to provide details of persons arrested for specifically breaching conditions imposed on protests only. Therefore, the numbers in this section should not be used as an indicator of the total number of people arrested at protests, instead, it is a count of those arrested for breaching the conditions imposed. For example, a person arrested for criminal damage would not be included in these figures if it did not relate to a condition applied. Furthermore, people can be arrested for breaching multiple conditions. Therefore the number of conditions breached may be higher than the number of people arrested.

In total, 277 persons were arrested for breaching conditions applied to either a procession (213 people arrested) or assembly (64 people arrested).

The age of the person arrested was known for 262 arrests. 62 of those were aged 18 to 24, 29 were aged 25 to 29 and 171 were aged 30 or over. There were no persons aged 17 or under arrested for breaching conditions at protests.

The sex of the person arrested was known for 57 arrests. There were 37 males arrested (65% of the total where sex was known) and 20 females (35% of the total where sex was known). The proportion of female arrests is substantially higher than the proportion of overall arrests for [notifiable offences in the year ending March 2024](#) that were females (16%). However, given the low volume of arrests for breaching protest conditions, this finding should be interpreted with some caution.

Self-defined ethnicity was not stated or not recorded for 225 arrests. Of the 52 arrests where self-defined ethnicity was stated, 43 people were White (83% of arrests where the information was known). Seven people stated their ethnicity as Asian or Asian British, one as Mixed and one as 'Other'.

Officer-defined ethnicity was not recorded for 218 arrests. Of the 59 arrests where officer-defined ethnicity was recorded, 47 were White (80% of arrests where the information was known – a similar proportion, 79%, [to overall arrests for notifiable offences in the year ending March 2024](#) although comparisons should be made with caution due to the low volume of arrests reported in this report). Seven people were defined by officers to be of Asian appearance, one as Black and 4 as 'Other'.

10. Future reporting and other sources of data related to this report

The Home Office continues to collect data on the use protest powers under sections 12, 14 and 14ZA of the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022) as part of the Annual Data Requirement. We intend to incorporate these statistics into an annual 'Police Powers and Procedures' publication in future.

The Home Office also publishes Accredited Official Statistics on the [police power of arrest for all notifiable offences on an annual basis](#).

The Office for National Statistics publish data on crime in England and Wales, including public order offences: [Crime and justice - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics and as part of our commitment to continuous development and improving the statistics, we invite users to provide feedback on the statistics and analysis within this bulletin and associated data tables. Users can contact Home Office statisticians at policingstatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk.

E03259017

978-1-5286-5346-6