



## DEBATE PACK

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# Policing and crime- Opposition Day Debate

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## Summary

On Wednesday 29 January 2020 there will be an Opposition Day Debate on 'Policing and crime'. This debate pack provides background on the current key issues in English and Welsh policing (policing is a devolved matter).

Police forces in England and Wales are emerging from a period of financial pressure. They are responding to evolving crime threats including digital crime, county lines drug dealing and serious violence.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has reported that the police have responded well to these challenges. However, they have raised continued concerns about the resourcing of police forces and called for fundamental reform of police governance which facilitates better collaboration at a regional and national level. These concerns have been shared by several stakeholders and commentators.

In September 2019 the previous Johnson Government committed to undertake a "formal review of the powers, capabilities, governance and funding" needed by police services. The new Johnson Government has committed to establishing a Royal Commission on the criminal justice system. It is not clear to what extent the Commission will look at the governance and funding of police services. It is also not clear if/ when the review committed to last September will be launched.

On the 23 January 2020 the Government [announced the 2020/2021 police funding settlement](#) which increased the funding available for Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales from £12.1 billion in 2019/20 to a provisional £13.1 billion in 2020/21.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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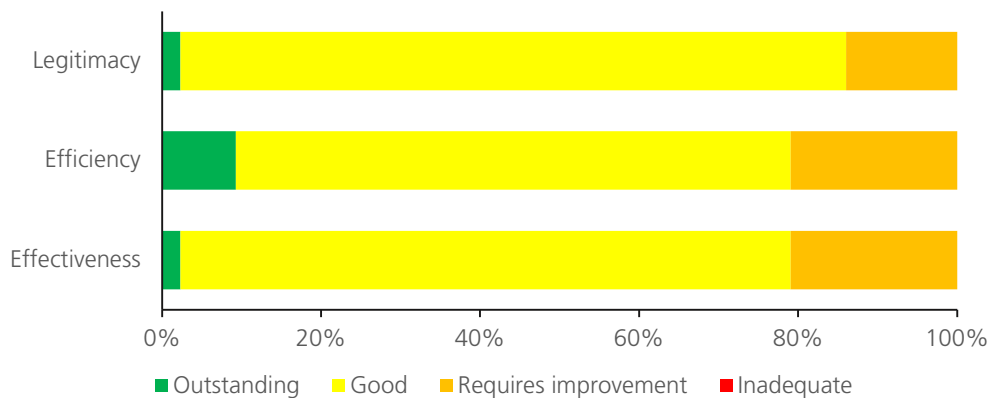
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# 1. Do police services need reforming?

In general, the police are judged to be responding well to their current challenges. The police is a highly valued public service, around [61% of people say they are satisfied with their local force](#). Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) generally scores forces highly against its inspection criteria. As shown in the chart below forces generally receive 'good' scores across the three core inspection criteria of 'legitimacy', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness'.

## PEEL assesment scores

All police forces in England and Wales



Source: HMICFRS, PEEL: national overviews, July 2019

Note: Not all forces are inspected annually. These results represent the latest score for each force.

However, there have been growing concerns about the police's ability to respond to new and evolving crime threats and meet the public's expectations. In particular there have been calls for fundamental reform to facilitate better collaboration between forces at a regional and national level, and reform to the process by which the police are funded.

## 1.1 The 43-force structure

The police service in England & Wales is divided into 43 'territorial' police forces, the British Transport Police (which polices Britain's railways), the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (which protects the UK's civil nuclear sites) and the National Crime Agency. Police forces are 'operationally independent'. This means they make day to day decisions about how they tackle and investigate crime independently and without political interference.

Police forces are overseen by local elected Police and Crime Commissioners and supported by a number of national bodies which aim to coordinate their work and enforce standards across the system. It has been argued by the Home Affairs Select Committee, HMICFRS, the National Audit Office and the Chair of the National Police Chiefs

Council that the current governance framework for police services needs reviewing. Whilst there are nuances to each of these stakeholder's views, they broadly agree that the current system is too fragmented. This fragmentation makes it difficult for the police service to combat crime threats that cross police force boundaries. **The Library's research briefing [Policing in the UK](#) describes the governance framework for UK policing and discusses the calls for it to be reformed.**

In the [Spending Round 2019](#) the previous Johnson Government committed to undertaking a "formal review of the powers, capabilities, governance and funding" needed by police services. A formal 'terms of reference' was not published for this review so it's unclear to what extent it was intended to address the concerns about the current governance framework for policing. It also not clear whether, following the 2019 General Election, the new Johnson Government still intends to take this review forward.

Following the 2019 General Election the new Johnson Government used the [December 2019 Queen's Speech](#) to announce that it will establish a Royal Commission on the criminal justice system. The Chair of the National Police Chiefs Council (the coordinating body for UK police forces), Martin Hewitt QPM, issued a statement calling for policing to be a "critical part" of the Royal Commission. He said it would be a "[missed opportunity if police structures are excluded](#)".

The Police Foundation (an independent thinktank) has opened its own [Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales](#). The Review is chaired by Sir Michael Barber (the former Head of No 10's 'Delivery Unit'). Sir Mark Sedwill (the Cabinet Secretary) [welcomed the launch of the review and committed to engaging with its work](#).

## 1.2 Funding system

Funding for police services in England and Wales is set for five years at periodic spending reviews and adjusted annually. It has long been recognised that the process by which funding is allocated to police forces requires reform. Funding to forces, through their [Police and Crime Commissioners](#) (PCCs), has not kept track with overall spending on police services.

In July 2015, the Government issued a [consultation](#) on reforming how police forces in England and Wales are funded by central Government. This followed a year-long Home Office review of the current system, involving consultation with police forces.

The reform was put on pause by the Home Office later in 2015 after errors were found in the information shared with PCCs and police forces concerning the indicative impact of the Government's proposed funding model. The Home Affairs Committee's 2015 Report, "[Reform of the Police Funding Formula](#)", criticised the original process and made recommendations on future reform.

In September 2016, the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service [wrote to all PCCs](#) setting out the Government's plans to

continue the process of reform by launching the Review of the Police Core Grant Distribution Formula. However, [it was suggested in the media](#) in mid-2017 that the reforms would not go ahead.

In a [Written Statement](#) in January 2018 announcing the publication of the provisional settlement for 2018/19, the Minister stated “It is intended that the funding formula will be revisited at the next Spending Review.” This was due to take place in 2019 but has now been scheduled for 2020, and it is not yet clear whether the review will include reform of the Police Allocation Formula.

**The Library has published an Insight [How our local police forces are funded](#) which discusses the potential reform of police funding further.**

## 2. Police and crime statistics

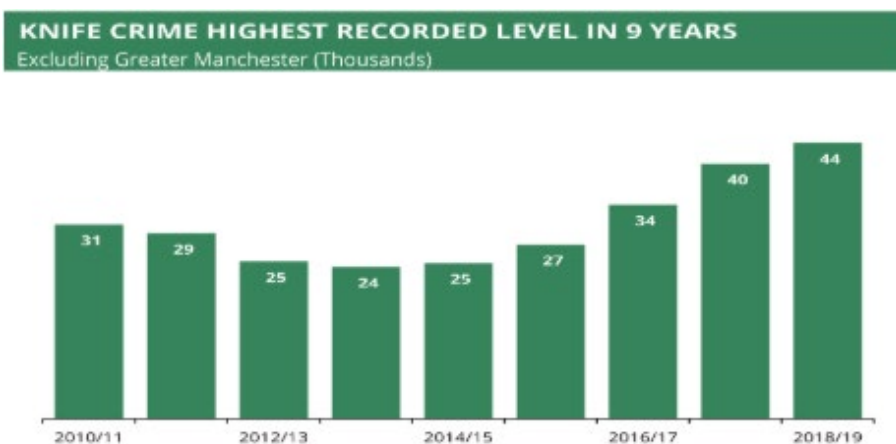
### 2.1 Police Officers



Total police officer strength in the United Kingdom increased year on year between 2003, when there were 155,000 officers, and 2010, when there were just over 171,600. Since 2010 the number of police officers has fallen each year. At 31 March 2019 there were just over 150,000 police officers operating within the United Kingdom. This was a reduction of 3.3% compared to 2003 and a decrease of 12.4% from 2010.

Further statistics on police numbers can be found in the Library research briefing [Police Service Strength](#).

### 2.2 Knife Crime Statistics

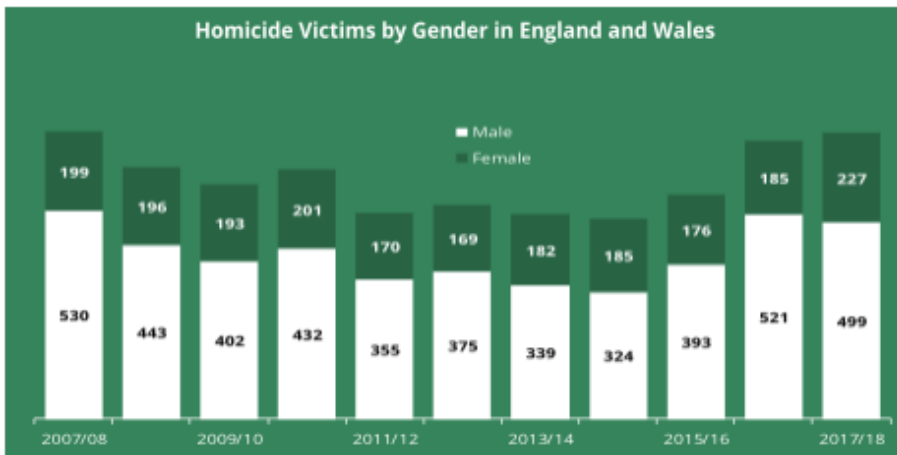


In the year ending March 2019, there were around 47,000 (selected) offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in England and Wales.

Recent trends in offences have been affected by undercounting in the Greater Manchester Police Force area prior to 2018/19. Excluding or including figures from Greater Manchester, this is the highest number of offences since the year ending March 2011, the earliest point at which comparable data are available. This is directly related with improvements in recording practices.

**Further statistics for knife crime can be found in the Library research briefing [Knife Crime in England and Wales](#).**

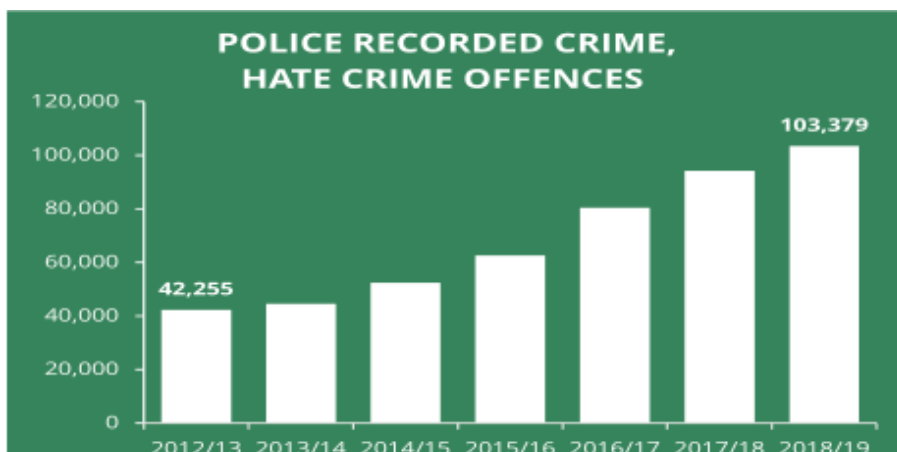
## 2.3 Homicide



In the year ending 31 March 2018, the latest full financial year for which such statistics are available, 726 deaths were “currently” attributed to homicide (as at 4 December 2018). This was an increase of 20 (3%) on the year to 31 March 2017 and 156 (27%) on the year to 31 March 2016.

**Further statistics for knife crime can be found in the Library research briefing [Homicide Statistics](#).**

## 2.4 Hate Crime Statistics



**Further statistics can be found in the Library research briefing**

**[Hate Crime Statistics](#)** which looks at Hate Crime in England & Wales using figures provided by the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) and the Police Recorded Crime Series. The paper also presents data on hate crime rates per 100,000 population in each police force area and for each hate crime strand. It also looks at similar figures in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## 3. Response to specific crime types

### 3.1 Knife crime and serious violence

The Home Office has been prioritising 'serious violence'. In April 2018, the previous Conservative Government published a [Serious Violence Strategy](#). Since then, both before and after the 2019 General Election, the Government has supported the dual approach to tackling violent crime: investing in early interventions to deal with causes of violence and stronger enforcement to bring offenders to justice.

The emphasis on early interventions has led to the creation of ['Violence Reduction Units' \(VRUs\) in thirteen police forces](#) who serve areas most affected by violent crime. Through VRUs police forces coordinate multi-agency projects aimed at diverting high-risk youth away from crime and violence. The current Government has committed to introducing legislation (the [Serious Violence Bill](#)) which will create a statutory duty on police forces and other public services to combat the causes of violence. The exact details of the Bill have yet to be published.

Forces have been increasing enforcement activities against violent crime. The National Police Chiefs Council have coordinated 'weeks of action' across forces called [Operation Sceptre](#) aimed at tackling knife crime. The Government has also encouraged forces to increase their 'stop and search' activity. The number of stop and searches [increased for the first time since 2009/10 in 2018/19](#).

**The Library has discussed the current Government and police response to knife crime and serious violence in several publications:**

- [Serious violence and knife crime: Law enforcement and early intervention](#), *Insight*, published January 2020.
- [How is the Government implementing a 'public health approach' to serious violence](#), *Insight*, published July 2019.
- [Police stop and search powers](#), *research briefing*, published December 2019.

### 3.2 County Lines

County Lines drug dealing involves drugs gangs in big cities expanding their operations to smaller towns. These drug gangs often use children and vulnerable adults to transport and deal drugs. Senior members of the gang coordinate its activities using mobile phones. The National Crime Agency estimated in January 2019 that there were around [2,000 'county lines' selling drugs in England and Wales](#).

Tackling county lines drugs dealing was a key strand of the previous Government's [Serious Violence Strategy](#). They invested £3.6 million in the NCA to open the [National County Lines Coordination Centre](#) in September 2018. The centre brings together the NCA, regional organised crime units and local forces to coordinate law enforcement activities against county lines. A large amount of its work is in gathering, combining and analysing intelligence on county lines. It also



coordinates 'intensification weeks' of enforcement and provides training and support to local forces responding to county lines.

Police forces have also been working to join up their activity on county lines. Forces where county lines gangs are exporting from (normally large metropolitan forces) have sometimes supported enforcement activities in neighbouring 'county forces' where the drugs are being sold.

Coordination between local, regional and national law enforcement against county lines can be difficult. For example, The National County Lines Coordination Centre has developed a 'collection matrix' to build a national picture of county lines offending. This matrix is manually put together by staff in the centre from spreadsheets emailed to them from local forces. The centre has to collect intelligence manually in this way because the police do not yet have (in the words of HMICFRS) "a sufficiently integrated and automated system for managing intelligence on cross- border criminal activities".<sup>1</sup>

In January 2020 HMICFRS published an [inspection of law enforcements response to county lines](#). Whilst the Inspectorate praised the improved response to the issue, they highlighted that the...

...challenges faced by police forces when they try to work together on county lines are symptoms of a bigger problem. This is the 43-force structure of policing in England and Wales, and whether it is fit for purpose in the 21st century.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.3 Fraud

Fraud makes up around 13% of all crimes in England & Wales.<sup>3</sup> There have been longstanding concerns about the police response to fraud. Broadly, these concerns are:

- The current system is fragmented and inadequate for tackling a crime which crosses police force boundaries and borders.
- Action Fraud and the NFIB (the national policing bodies, based in the City of London Police, to which fraud is reported and analysed) provide a poor service to victims of fraud and police forces.
- Police forces do not prioritise fraud. The lack of resources dedicated to fraud means that many forces have failed to develop the specialist skills needed to investigate it. This has resulted in a large number of poor-quality fraud investigations.

The Home Affairs Select Committee, HMICFRS and the National Audit Office have all published recent critical reports on the police response to fraud. **The Library have discussed the police response to fraud in section 2.1 of the research briefing [Banking fraud](#).**

<sup>1</sup> HMICFRS, [Both sides of the coin The police and National Crime Agency's response to vulnerable people in 'county lines' drug offending](#), January 2020, p11

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p19

<sup>3</sup> ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#), 23 January 2019

## 4. Further Reading

### 4.1 Government publications

- Home Office, [Policing front line review](#), July 2019
- Home Office, [The Strategic Policing Requirement](#), March 2015

#### Police funding settlement 2020/2021

The Home Office has published several documents in support of the funding settlement.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January Kit Malthouse (Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service) made a [written statement detailing the settlement](#) (HCWS51). The Home Office have published a [policy paper](#), a [news story](#) and a [Factsheet](#) about the funding settlement on their website.

### 4.2 Parliamentary material

#### Library research

Relevant Library research has been highlighted throughout this debate pack. Below they are listed together.

- [Serious violence and knife crime: Law enforcement and early intervention](#), *Insight*, January 2020.
- [How is the Government implementing a 'public health approach' to serious violence?](#), *Insight*, July 2019.
- [How our local police forces are funded](#) *Insight*, December 2019.
- [Policing in the UK](#), *research briefing*, December 2019.
- [Introduction to police powers](#), *research briefing*, December 2019.
- [Police stop and search powers](#), *research briefing*, December 2019
- [Banking fraud](#), *research briefing*, July 2019.
- [Knife crime statistics](#), *research briefing*, December 2019
- [Homicide statistics](#), *research briefing*, December 2019
- [Hate crime statistics](#), *research briefing*, October 2019
- [Police service strength](#), *research briefing*, July 2019

#### Other

- Home Affairs Select Committee, [Policing for the future: Tenth Report of Session 2017–19](#), October 2018
- A selection of relevant [parliamentary questions](#), [debates](#) and [other parliamentary material](#) can be found on parliamentary search.

### 4.3 Key policy documents

- Institute for Government, [Performance tracker: Police](#), November 2019
- The Police Foundation, [Understanding the public's priorities for policing](#), November 2019
- HMICFRS, [State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2018](#), July 2019
- NAO, [Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales 2018](#), September 2018
- National Police Chiefs Council & Association Police and Crime Commissioners, [Policing Vision 2025](#), undated

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