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## **2015 sees further fall in numbers of dedicated roads policing officers**

*Majority of forces record year-on-year fall in full-time roads policing officers*

*1,437 fewer designated officers in 2015 than in 2010, excluding Met Police*

*Transport Committee report advises maintaining specialist officer numbers*

**2015 saw a further fall in the number of full-time roads policing officers tasked with enforcing motoring laws and keeping local and major highways in England and Wales safe, new data seen by the RAC indicates.**

Figures supplied in answer to a parliamentary question show <sup>1</sup> there were 1,437 fewer dedicated roads policing officers outside London last year than in 2010, taking the overall tally to 3,901 officers – a 27% reduction. Therefore between 2010 and 2015, there was the equivalent of more than 5 fewer officers each week whose responsibilities were predominantly roads policing and accident investigation.

Thirty out of 42 forces recorded a fall in the number of roads policing officers between 2014 and 2015 – collectively accounting for 352 fewer officers. West Yorkshire saw a reduction of 91 officers, explained by a switch to mixed speciality units. <sup>2</sup> Avon and Somerset witnessed the next biggest fall in officer numbers (34 fewer officers, a 35% drop), while Northamptonshire saw the next greatest reduction as a proportion of all dedicated roads policing officers (21 fewer officers, a 36% drop).

Just twelve forces reported increases in dedicated roads policing officers

year-on-year, totalling 162 more officers, although these increases do not make up for the losses within other forces, leading to the overall net reduction in numbers. Essex claimed a near-doubling of officers (up 72 to 148 officers), while Devon and Cornwall reported 31 more officers (up from 57) and Cheshire 30 more (up from 89). The remaining nine forces gained on average three dedicated officers each.

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RAC head of external affairs Pete Williams said: “Overall, these figures make for grim reading and are likely to be met with dismay by law-abiding motorists.

“While some of the numbers may be explained by organisational changes, such as officers taking on multiple roles and police forces working in partnership to tackle crime, the data still clearly shows that a majority of forces have seen a further fall in the number of officers whose primary responsibility is tackling crime on our roads.

“A recent report made by the Transport Select Committee <sup>3</sup> called on the Government to support police forces in maintaining the numbers of specialist officers on the roads. We look forward to the Government’s response to the Committee’s recommendations given the data now available.

“These findings also beg the question whether forces are increasingly turning to technology to enforce the law. Fixed speed cameras are a common sight on many roads, including on the hundreds of miles of highway being

upgraded to smart motorways. However the majority of motoring laws that exist to make our roads safer still rely on a physical officer present to either apply the law, or deter drivers from committing an offence in the first place.

“The National Police Chiefs’ Council has stated its commitment to tackling the so-called ‘Fatal Four’ causes of serious accidents – inappropriate and excessive speed, driving under the influence of drink and drugs, not wearing a seatbelt and driving while distracted – but just how practical is this given the latest falls in officer numbers?”

Enforcement of the law and the behaviour of other motorists were two major concerns flagged by motorists surveyed as part of the latest RAC Report on Motoring. Sixty-two per cent said there are not enough police on the roads to enforce existing laws, while 34% listed drivers who use a phone without a hands-free kit as one of their top concerns.

Pete Williams added: “We are acutely aware that the police are doing their best to manage challenging budgets and scant resource; however the sustained reduction in roads policing officers is at odds with the consistent number of serious motoring offences being committed<sup>4</sup>, and the concerns already expressed by motorists around the lack of visible police presence on our roads.

“The UK has a multitude of laws governing our roads – but a reducing number of dedicated individuals out there to enforce them. Plans to increase penalties for the use of handheld mobile phones at the wheel are welcome, but risk being undermined by falling numbers of dedicated roads police officers.

“The RAC believes the motoring public deserves honesty from the Government around whether there are enough resources in place to apply the law and cut down on illegal driving behaviour, some of which undoubtedly puts innocent lives at risk.”

### **Top forces by reduction in dedicated roads policing officers, 2014 to 2015**

1	West Yorkshire	-91
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2	Avon & Somerset	-34
3	Lancashire	-29
4	Greater Manchester	-22
5	Northamptonshire	-21
6	South Yorkshire	-18
7	West Midlands	-18
8	Durham	-14
9	Humberside	-13
10	West Mercia	-10

**Top forces by % reduction in dedicated roads policing officers, 2014 to 2015**

1	West Yorkshire	-40.4%
2	Northamptonshire	-36.1%
3	Avon & Somerset	-35.3%
4	Lancashire	-20.5%
5	Durham	-16.6%
6	South Yorkshire	-15.9%
7=	Humberside	-13.3%
7=	Nottinghamshire	-13.3%
9	West Mercia	-12.5%
10	Wiltshire	-9.9%

**Number of full-time equivalent<sup>1</sup> police officers within the traffic function<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales, as at 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2015**

	<b>Officer numbers as at 31/3/10</b>	<b>Officer numbers as at 31/03/14</b>	<b>Officer numbers as at 31/03/15</b>	<b>2010 to 2015 change</b>	<b>2014 to 2015 change</b>
West Yorkshire (note 3)	315	225	134	-181	-91

Avon & Somerset (note 4)	157	96	62	-95	-34
Lancashire (note 5)	171	142	113	-58	-29
Greater Manchester	310	248	226	-84	-22
Northamptonshire (note 6)	68	59	38	-30	-21
South Yorkshire	130	111	93	-37	-18
West Midlands	351	282	264	-87	-18
Durham	96	83	69	-27	-14
Humberside	116	96	83	-33	-13
West Mercia	101	80	70	-31	-10
Merseyside	164	136	127	-37	-9
Hertfordshire	139	99	91	-48	-8
South Wales	143	130	122	-21	-8
Northumbria	189	151	144	-45	-7
Kent	138	101	94	-44	-7
Lincolnshire	84	71	65	-19	-6
Wiltshire	83	44	40	-43	-4
Cambridgeshire	101	76	72	-29	-4
Leicestershire	86	66	62	-24	-4
Norfolk	103	95	91	-12	-4
Cleveland	115	92	88	-27	-4
North Yorkshire	99	96	92	-7	-4

Gloucestershire	65	48	45	-20	-3
Nottinghamshire	47	15	13	-34	-2
Warwickshire	10	37	35	25	-2
Staffordshire	67	49	47	-20	-2
North Wales	88	70	68	-20	-2
Surrey	100	96	94	-6	-2
Derbyshire	88	65	64	-24	-1
London, City of	30	25	24	-6	-1
Suffolk	67	88	89	22	1
Thames Valley	228	203	204	-24	1
Bedfordshire	57	46	47	-10	1
Gwent	63	60	62	-1	2
Dyfed-Powys	84	77	80	-4	3
Sussex	159	139	143	-16	4
Hampshire	181	145	150	-31	5
Cumbria	86	82	87	1	5
Dorset	76	47	54	-22	7
Cheshire (note 7)	90	89	119	29	30
Devon & Cornwall (note 8)	239	57	88	-151	31
Essex	257	76	148	-109	72
<b>Total England and Wales</b>	<b>5,338</b>	<b>4,092</b>	<b>3,901</b>	<b>-1,437</b>	<b>-191</b>

## Notes related to tables above

1. This table contains full-time equivalent figures that have been presented to the nearest whole number. Police workers with multiple responsibilities (or designations) (or designations) are recorded under their primary role or function. The deployment of police workers is an operational matter for individual chief constables.

2. Traffic function includes staff who are predominantly employed on motor-cycles or in patrol vehicles for the policing of traffic and motorway related duties. This includes officers employed in accident investigation, vehicle examination and radar duties. Also includes staff who are predominantly employed to support the traffic function of the force including radar, accident investigation, vehicle examination and traffic administration. Includes those officers working with hazardous chemicals, and those administrative staff predominantly serving the internal needs of the traffic function of the force and those officers in supporting roles.

3. Force corrected original figure quoted by Home Office. Force has reorganised its force structure to move from having specialist teams such as roads policing, firearms and dogs, to more flexible mixed speciality based units in its Safer Roads and Neighbourhood Support teams.

4. Force has gone through a re-organisation programme during the past 24 months which has streamlined ways of working but also built in budget cuts; operates a 'tri-force' model with other forces

5. The number of posts in the Road Policing Unit were reduced in February 2014 as a result of a change in structure throughout the force to support a "one team" ethos.

6. Regionalised the function with Derby, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire into East Midlands Support Operations Unit.

7. The increase in the number of traffic officers is as the result of a restructure, which moved to a centrally managed and locally based roads policing model.

8. In 2014 the Safer Roads Support Unit was created, taking the Roads Policing Officers back from local policing control and bringing them back under Operations Dept, this would explain the uplift.

## **ENDS**

<sup>1</sup> Data from parliamentary question asked by Jack Dromey MP answered on 12 May 2016 and covers financial years from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2015. Excludes Metropolitan Police, as merging of units leads to data from this

force being incomparable with other forces

<sup>2</sup> For reasons provided by specific forces, refer to full table dataset above

<sup>3</sup> [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news-parliament-2015/road-traffic-law-enforcement-report-published-15-16](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news-parliament-2015/road-traffic-law-enforcement-report-published-15-16)

<sup>4</sup> [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmtrans/518/51811.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmtrans/518/51811.htm)

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the RAC**

With more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). This is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.



## Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

## Contacts



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