

Speeding offence detection and disposal in England and Wales, 2017-18

A report for the RAC Foundation

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Summary

This report provides an annual update on statistics on speeding offences detected by police forces in England and Wales. In my previous study for the RAC Foundation – *Automated Road Traffic Enforcement: Regulation, Governance and Use* – I noted that hidden beneath the headline national figures there were significant variations between constabularies which made it difficult to make sweeping general conclusions about offence detection and disposal practices. That observation holds for this report too which looks at data for the year ending March 2018, the most recent available.

In 2017-18, some 2,292,536 speeding offences were detected in England and Wales, a 3.6% (79,279) increase on the previous 12 months.

By comparison, over the same period the number of mobile phone use offences detected fell by 35% (down 30,304 to 56,549). Likewise, the number of seat belt and obstruction-related offences also fell.

Elsewhere insurance offences rose 2.8% year-on-year to 71,979 in 2017-18, though driving without a licence was down 5% to 19,560.

The previously-controversial extension of fixed penalty notice enforcement for careless driving appears to be gaining less interest from constabularies with a reduction of 1,714 (9%) in the number of offences detected.

The constabulary-level variations in detection rates is significant but difficult to understand from the bald numbers. However, reasons for the differences are likely to include: road network length, road type, traffic volume and makeup, local priorities dictated by police and crime commissioners, financial and human resources, and the availability of detection technology.

To put the figures in a road safety context, there were 24,801 people who were killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Britain's roads in 2017, a 3.5% increase on the figure for 2016¹. Looking at fatalities only the number killed on Britain's roads in 2017 was 1,793, one higher than the 1,792 killed in 2016.

It is worth underlining that this report is not seeking to criticise individual practices in the various police force areas.

¹ However, the method for determining between injured and seriously injured has recently changed thus the 2016 and 2017 KSI figures are not directly comparable.

Table 1: Total number of speeding offences detected by police forces in England and Wales in 2017-18 and how they were detected.

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected 2016-17	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected 2017-18	% year-on-year change	Proportion of offences detected by camera 2017-18
Avon and Somerset	184,654	199,337	8%	100%
Bedfordshire	68,262	74,297	9%	100%
Cambridgeshire	38,486	45,763	19%	98%
Cheshire	54,787	58,408	7%	95%
City of London / Metropolitan Police²	88,044	139,318	58%	89%
Cleveland	13,486	11,308	-16%	97%
Cumbria	45,734	45,702	0%	99%
Derbyshire	10,202	10,480	3%	96%
Devon and Cornwall	41,994	42,888	2%	98%
Dorset	24,980	23,027	-8%	95%
Durham	7,430	8,802	18%	95%
Dyfed-Powys³	1,358	793	-42%	0%
Essex	98,545	95,967	-3%	96%
Gloucestershire	24,988	21,727	-13%	99%
Greater Manchester	120,094	101,421	-16%	100%
Gwent⁴	161	242	50%	1%
Hampshire	81,213	79,126	-3%	93%
Hertfordshire	66,912	51,158	-24%	98%
Humberside	54,948	57,930	5%	98%
Kent	18,347	18,878	3%	93%
Lancashire	64,680	61,242	-5%	99%
Leicestershire	40,445	37,340	-8%	99%
Lincolnshire	54,190	47,020	-13%	98%

² The Home Office releases data from the 43 Police Force Areas. As in the previous report the analysis in this document amalgamates the figures for the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police. The City of London police force is primarily a specialist organisation dealing with financial crime and policing the square mile. It does not have any fulltime officers dedicated to road traffic enforcement and in 2017/18 detected only 3,888 incidences of speeding.

³ The number of speeding offences detected by camera in the Dyfed-Powys and Gwent police force areas are not separated out in the PentiP database and instead are all reported under the South Wales Police force. Therefore, the figures for the Dyfed-Powys, Gwent and South Wales constabularies should be treated with caution.

⁴ See Footnote 3.

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected 2016-17	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected 2017-18	% year-on-year change	Proportion of offences detected by camera 2017-18
Merseyside	66,828	60,681	-9%	82%
Norfolk⁵	88,500	92,750	5%	95%
North Wales	19,891	20,462	3%	86%
North Yorkshire	30,459	29,922	-2%	99%
Northamptonshire	51,664	47,860	-7%	100%
Northumbria	57,074	66,327	16%	99%
Nottinghamshire	26,101	27,155	4%	99%
South Wales⁶	37,289	42,390	14%	100%
South Yorkshire	41,090	47,811	16%	99%
Staffordshire	29,396	41,392	41%	98%
Surrey	47,732	74,163	55%	99%
Sussex	68,541	56,828	-17%	97%
Thames Valley	138,275	131,401	-5%	96%
Warwickshire	47,185	43,409	-8%	98%
West Mercia	81,989	66,858	-18%	97%
West Midlands	53,097	34,966	-34%	95%
West Yorkshire	123,217	174,796	42%	98%
Wiltshire	989	1,191	20%	0%
TOTAL ENGLAND & WALES	2,213,257	2,292,536	4%	97%

⁵ Suffolk and Norfolk central ticket offices merged in July 2015; therefore, all notices for Suffolk and Norfolk are reported under Norfolk.

⁶ See Footnote 3.

Table 2: How speeding offences were disposed of by police force area in 2017-18. Figures for 2016-17 in brackets.

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by FPN	Proportion of offences dealt with by FPN	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by speed awareness courses	Proportion of offences dealt with by speed awareness courses 2017-18	Total number of speeding offence detections cancelled 2017-18	Proportion of offences cancelled 2017-18	Number of Speeding Offences ending in Court Action 2017-18	% Taken to Court 2017-18
	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
Avon and Somerset	199,337 (184,654)	64,267 (61,576)	32% (33%)	89,863 (80,235)	45% (43%)	29,719 (30,892)	15% (17%)	15,480 (11,940)	8% (6%)
Bedfordshire	74,297 (68,282)	19,827 (18,060)	27% (26%)	30,937 (30,859)	42% (45%)	17,255 (13,040)	23% (19%)	6,030 (6,300)	8% (9%)
Cambridgeshire	45,763 (38,486)	13,289 (12,156)	29% (32%)	18,754 (16,819)	41% (44%)	8,867 (5,623)	19% (15%)	4,762 (3,887)	10% (10%)
Cheshire	58,408 (54,787)	16,369 (15,993)	28% (29%)	28,668 (27,450)	49% (50%)	3,845 (3,703)	7% (7%)	9,526 (7,640)	16% (14%)
City of London / Metropolitan Police	139,318 (83,687)	31,923 (29,635)	23% (36%)	47,926 (35,463)	34% (42%)	35,232 ⁷ (6,502)	25% (6%)	23,652 (16,332)	17% (19%)

⁷ This statistic is something of an anomaly given the jump in the number of cancellations based on previous years. Furthermore, the total number of speeding detections is also significantly higher than previous years. At present, we are unable to state with confidence whether this is a true figure or an accounting / typographical error on the part of the Home Office / Metropolitan Police.

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by FPN	Proportion of offences dealt with by FPN	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by speed awareness courses	Proportion of offences dealt with by speed awareness courses 2017-18	Total number of speeding offence detections cancelled 2017-18	Proportion of offences cancelled 2017-18	Number of Speeding Offences ending in Court Action 2017-18	% Taken to Court 2017-18
	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
Cleveland	11,308 (13,486)	3,203 (3,872)	28% (29%)	6,765 (8,078)	60% (60%)	369 (342)	3% (3%)	971 (1,194)	9% (9%)
Cumbria	45,702 (45,734)	14,577 (15,042)	32% (33%)	23,995 (24,157)	53% (53%)	3,046 (3,291)	7% (7%)	3,968 (3,224)	9% (7%)
Derbyshire	10,480 (10,202)	8,882 (8,673)	85% (85%)	151 (210)	1% (2%)	1,384 (1,251)	13% (12%)	61 (68)	1% (1%)
Devon and Cornwall	42,888 (41,994)	18,585 (17,740)	43% (42%)	21,976 (21,829)	51% (52%)	678 (852)	2% (2%)	1,647 (1,572)	4% (4%)
Dorset	23,027 (24,980)	19,249 (19,110)	84% (76%)	376 (1,566)	2% (6%)	2,551 (3,420)	11% (14%)	829 (806)	4% (3%)
Durham	8,802 (7,430)	2,590 (2,199)	29% (30%)	5,387 (4,598)	61% (62%)	352 (196)	4% (3%)	473 (437)	5% (6%)
Dyfed-Powys⁸	793 (1,358)	692 (1,149)	87% (86%)	0 0	0% 0%	14 (34)	2% (3%)	87 (175)	11% (13%)

⁸ See Footnote 3

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by FPN	Proportion of offences dealt with by FPN	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by speed awareness courses	Proportion of offences dealt with by speed awareness courses 2017-18	Total number of speeding offence detections cancelled 2017-18	Proportion of offences cancelled 2017-18	Number of Speeding Offences ending in Court Action 2017-18	% Taken to Court 2017-18
	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
Essex	95,967 (98,545)	34,333 (38,509)	36% (39%)	52,332 (51,764)	55% (53%)	5,751 (3,352)	6% (3%)	3,550 (4,918)	4% (5%)
Gloucestershire	21,727 (24,988)	7,009 (9,275)	32% (37%)	10,174 (9,248)	47% (37%)	2,825 (5,297)	13% (21%)	1,719 (1,167)	8% (5%)
Greater Manchester	101,421 (120,094)	24,056 (28,788)	24% (24%)	40,023 (48,495)	39% (40%)	27,063 (33,893)	27% (28%)	10,275 (8,895)	10% (7%)
Gwent⁹	242 (161)	154 (99)	64% (60%)	40 (24)	17% (16%)	8 (10)	3% (5%)	37 (28)	15% (19%)
Hampshire	79,126 (81,213)	23,946 (26,633)	30% (33%)	43,128 (43,962)	55% (54%)	6,827 (5,579)	9% (7%)	5,224 (5,033)	7% (6%)
Hertfordshire	51,158 (66,912)	13,305 (20,035)	26% (30%)	21,424 (30,600)	42% (46%)	10,899 (10,703)	21% (16%)	5,249 (5,571)	10% (8%)
Humberside	57,930 (54,948)	19,078 (18,362)	33% (33%)	31,744 (29,309)	55% (53%)	2,262 (2,450)	4% (4%)	4,846 (4,827)	8% (9%)

⁹ See Footnote 3.

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by FPN	Proportion of offences dealt with by FPN	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by speed awareness courses	Proportion of offences dealt with by speed awareness courses 2017-18	Total number of speeding offence detections cancelled 2017-18	Proportion of offences cancelled 2017-18	Number of Speeding Offences ending in Court Action 2017-18	% Taken to Court 2017-18
	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
Kent	18,878 (18,347)	14,415 (14,476)	76% (79%)	310 (163)	2% (1%)	1,745 (1,273)	9% (7%)	2,124 (2,333)	11% (13%)
Lancashire	61,242 (64,680)	17,505 (19,044)	29% (29%)	29,019 (31,436)	47% (49%)	4,320 (5,064)	7% (8%)	10,353 (9,135)	17% (14%)
Leicestershire	37,340 (40,445)	10,344 (10,903)	28% (27%)	18,003 (19,306)	48% (48%)	4,687 (5,465)	13% (14%)	4,301 (4,768)	12% (12%)
Lincolnshire	47,020 (54,190)	14,543 (17,687)	31% (33%)	20,279 (23,826)	43% (44%)	4,534 (4,829)	10% (9%)	7,658 (7,767)	16% (14%)
Merseyside	60,681 (66,828)	17,871 (17,083)	29% (25%)	26,247 (31,242)	43% (45%)	7,798 (7,605)	13% (11%)	8,764 (10,896)	14% (16%)
Norfolk¹⁰	92,750 (88,500)	28,638 (27,748)	31% (31%)	48,060 (44,287)	52% (50%)	11,928 (10,951)	13% (12%)	4,124 (5,514)	4% (6%)
North Wales	20,462 (19,891)	16,905 (16,654)	83% (84%)	370 (278)	2% (1%)	264 (259)	1% (1%)	2,922 (2,700)	14% (14%)

¹⁰ Includes data for Suffolk, see Footnote 5.

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	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
North Yorkshire	29,922 (30,459)	24,986 (26,070)	84% (86%)	66 (199)	0% (1%)	1,283 (763)	4% (3%)	3,583 (3,426)	12% (11%)
Northamptonshire	47,860 (51,664)	14,171 (15,816)	30% (31%)	24,217 (25,540)	51% (50%)	7,187 (7,425)	15% (14%)	2,281 (2,871)	5% (6%)
Northumbria	66,327 (57,074)	19,897 (17,151)	30% (30%)	36,114 (31,549)	54% (55%)	5,455 (3,677)	8% (6%)	4,815 (4,609)	7% (8%)
Nottinghamshire	27,155 (26,101)	24,873 (23,293)	92% (89%)	109 (142)	0% (1%)	570 (713)	2% (3%)	1,602 (1,953)	6% (7%)
South Wales¹¹	42,390 (37,289)	32,034 (28,834)	76% (77%)	15 (78)	0% 0%	4,070 (4,383)	10% (12%)	6,271 (3,994)	15% (11%)
South Yorkshire	47,811 (41,090)	17,313 (14,903)	36% (36%)	26,079 (22,201)	55% (54%)	1,584 (1,169)	3% (3%)	2,833 (2,817)	6% (7%)
Staffordshire	41,392 (29,396)	13,199 (10,947)	32% (37%)	20,194 (15,703)	49% (53%)	3,009 (354)	7% (1%)	4,483 (2,380)	11% (8%)

¹¹ See Footnote 3.

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	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
Surrey	74,163 (47,732)	23,416 (15,375)	32% (32%)	34,840 (23,785)	47% (50%)	2,814 (1,894)	4% (4%)	13,092 (6,673)	18% (14%)
Sussex	56,828 (68,541)	16,196 (21,452)	29% (31%)	27,054 (31,577)	48% (46%)	5,495 (8,057)	10% (12%)	8,083 (7,455)	14% (11%)
Thames Valley	131,401 (138,275)	47,179 (52,996)	36% (38%)	72,573 (73,159)	55% (53%)	7,076 (6,615)	5% (5%)	3,817 (4,706)	3% (3%)
Warwickshire	43,409 (47,185)	12,051 (13,388)	28% (28%)	21,186 (24,359)	49% (52%)	7,786 (5,088)	18% (11%)	2,237 (4,254)	5% (9%)
West Mercia	66,858 (81,989)	22,894 (27,877)	34% (34%)	34,937 (41,838)	52% (51%)	4,454 (6,991)	7% (9%)	4,571 (5,283)	7% (6%)
West Midlands	34,966 (53,097)	8,256 (12,647)	24% (24%)	14,353 (21,904)	41% (41%)	4,858 (11,014)	14% (21%)	7,490 (7,488)	21% (14%)
West Yorkshire	174,796 (123,217)	45,390 (32,515)	26% (26%)	79,091 (53,188)	45% (43%)	24,239 (19,016)	14% (15%)	23,470 (18,489)	13% (15%)
Wiltshire	1,191	1,064	89%	0	0%	25	2%	58	5%

Police Force	Total Number of Speeding Offences Detected	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by FPN	Proportion of offences dealt with by FPN	Total number of speeding offences dealt with by speed awareness courses	Proportion of offences dealt with by speed awareness courses 2017-18	Total number of speeding offence detections cancelled 2017-18	Proportion of offences cancelled 2017-18	Number of Speeding Offences ending in Court Action 2017-18	% Taken to Court 2017-18
	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	2017-18 (2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)	(2016-17)
	(989)	(888)	(90%)	0	0%	(15)	(2%)	(37)	(4%)
Total England & Wales	2,292,536 (2,213,257)	778,474 (784,654)	34% (36%)	1,006,779 (982,442)	44% (44%)	241,331 (243,050)	11% (11%)	227,318 (203,562)	10% (9%)

Table 2, above, uses the most recent figures available (2017-18) to show the differing means of dealing with a speeding offence once it has been detected. Interestingly, Avon and Somerset Constabulary not only detects a lot of speeding offences it also cancels a significant number: 29,719, which represents 15% of all offences detected¹². However, Greater Manchester continues to be the force which sees the highest proportion of offences cancelled: 27,063, or 27% of offences detected.

As with last year the proportion of speeding offenders sent on a speed awareness course also shows widespread regional variation. In general, the number of speeding offences that are dealt with by an awareness course increases as the number of detected offences increases. Derbyshire in particular has a very low rate of speed awareness courses offered, representing just 1% of the number of speeding detections. At the other end of the scale 60% of offenders detected in Durham are sent on a course. Of those detecting over 100,000 speeding offences Thames Valley leads the way with 55% (72,573) of speeding detections dealt with by awareness course.

Table 3, below, shows how the total number of detected speeding offences has changed over recent years, from 2011/12 to 2017/18, force by force.

¹² Reasons for cancellation are not noted in the statistical release but can relate to a variety of factors including emergency response vehicles responding to an emergency.

Table 3: Speeding offence detections by police force areas 2011-12 to 2017-18.

Police Force Area	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	% Change 2011-12 – 2017-18
Avon and Somerset	38,654	95,105	88,428	111,502	120,037	184,654	199,337	416%
Bedfordshire	14,060	15,156	35,019	50,401	47,546	68,262	74,297	428%
Cambridgeshire	34,827	36,577	26,014	50,582	44,703	38,486	45,763	31%
Cheshire	40,446	38,418	35,319	49,762	49,843	54,787	58,408	44%
City of London / Metropolitan Police	74,567	86,693	91,259	95,996	79,432	93,839	139,318	87%
Cleveland	20,980	17,028	11,983	7,889	10,796	13,486	11,308	-46%
Cumbria	37,674	38,772	37,556	38,462	38,377	45,734	45,702	21%
Derbyshire	7,525	10,015	9,158	18,034	11,984	10,202	10,480	39%
Devon and Cornwall	14,085	15,132	13,199	17,177	25,210	41,994	42,888	204%
Dorset	33,440	27,265	27,484	24,630	26,227	24,980	23,027	-31%
Durham	8,076	8,143	7,586	7,044	6,846	7,430	8,802	9%
Dyfed-Powys ¹³	4,021	4,598	4,145	2,048	1,640	1,358	793	-80%
Essex	25,980	28,823	45,706	73,170	79,049	98,545	95,967	269%
Gloucestershire	10,847	12,495	15,001	20,934	18,090	24,988	21,727	100%
Greater Manchester	114,278	118,471	82,740	91,064	127,367	120,094	101,421	-11%
Gwent ¹⁴	809	651	495	382	135	161	242	-70%
Hampshire	68,901	88,183	84,857	80,907	88,658	81,213	79,126	15%
Hertfordshire	49,090	49,330	47,715	58,826	78,131	66,912	51,158	4%

¹³ See Footnote 3.

¹⁴ See Footnote 3.

Police Force Area	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	% Change 2011-12 – 2017-18
Humberside	43,814	48,291	56,811	53,058	53,732	54,948	57,930	32%
Kent	24,080	24,758	28,818	26,885	21,660	18,347	18,878	-22%
Lancashire	55,862	52,860	55,617	65,109	69,547	64,680	61,242	10%
Leicestershire	44,488	33,759	34,189	47,043	38,696	40,445	37,340	-16%
Lincolnshire	18,277	22,182	48,003	51,310	48,280	54,190	47,020	157%
Merseyside	48,235	46,467	50,379	50,503	59,611	66,828	60,681	26%
Norfolk¹⁵	91,555	78,168	87,765	90,157	75,741	88,500	92,750	1%
North Wales	11,683	14,234	14,356	18,866	17,416	19,891	20,462	75%
North Yorkshire	21,151	20,411	41,896	45,517	30,370	30,459	29,922	41%
Northamptonshire	25,780	21,440	22,004	42,023	59,628	51,664	47,860	86%
Northumbria	59,737	73,936	94,093	67,476	62,838	57,074	66,327	11%
Nottinghamshire	23,406	24,195	27,082	34,545	35,626	26,101	27,155	16%
South Wales¹⁶	30,927	42,372	34,203	47,483	43,493	37,289	42,390	37%
South Yorkshire	55,961	45,523	52,243	41,951	46,093	41,090	47,811	-15%
Staffordshire	15,472	19,923	50,517	51,861	41,373	29,396	41,392	168%
Surrey	49,904	51,086	54,310	51,745	72,218	47,732	74,163	49%
Sussex	80,422	68,030	56,974	58,975	63,651	68,541	56,828	-29%
Thames Valley	137,206	152,328	153,430	139,674	145,639	138,275	131,401	-4%
Warwickshire	33,731	35,765	43,488	41,353	48,821	47,185	43,409	29%
West Mercia	84,038	83,577	78,580	98,560	86,992	81,989	66,858	-20%
West Midlands	78,087	74,707	56,587	52,580	44,395	53,097	34,966	-55%
West Yorkshire	102,694	108,314	78,267	88,855	130,174	123,217	174,796	70%

¹⁵ The merger between Norfolk and Suffolk occurred in July 2015. In order to provide a realistic estimate of enforcement change between 2012 and 2018 figures for Norfolk in the chart are for both Norfolk and Suffolk.

¹⁶ See Footnote 3.

Police Force Area	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	% Change 2011-12 - 2017-18
Wiltshire	5,447	3,819	4,782	2,108	1,287	989	1,191	-78%
Total England & Wales	1,740,217	1,837,000	1,888,058	2,066,447	2,151,352	2,213,257	2,292,536	32%

