
Police on the Beat

A comprehensive new study into the alarming level of assaults on front-line Police Officers

In 2006 a British Police Officer was assaulted on our streets every 20 minutes.

Research and report by Grant Shapps MP
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Key Report Findings:

- In 2006 a police officer was assaulted somewhere in Britain every 20 minutes.
- In the last 5 years a record 126,860 police officers have been assaulted on Britain's streets.
- In 2006 alone, 25,368 police officers were assaulted. That is an average of 70 assaults on police every day.
- Last year one-in-six Policemen and Policewomen in England, Scotland & Wales were assaulted while on duty.
- Five out of every six Police Officers have been the victim of assaults in the line of duty since 2002.

Introduction

The research behind this *Police on the Beat* report aimed to discover the true extent to which our police officers are exposed to risk whilst policing Britain. **The outcome is that we now know for the first time that a Police Officer on Britain's streets is assaulted every 20 minutes.**

Having spent time joining police on the beat in his own Welwyn Hatfield constituency, MP Grant Shapps undertook this nationwide study in order to measure the level of violence that Policemen and Policewomen are now exposed to, simply carrying out their day to day work. It quickly became clear that both threats and actual physical assaults were far from confined to one part of the country.

Grant Shapps used Freedom of Information requests to all 51 Police Forces in England, Scotland and Wales and has received **results from 98% of Forces**, making this the most comprehensive insight ever into the risks our police are exposed to on the streets.

The report aimed to assess how many police officers have been assaulted over the last five years. **The shocking truth is that five out of every six officers have been the victims of assault over the period.**

In addition to the scientific data collected, Policemen and Policewomen from across the country have been contacted in order to provide background to this study.

Many officers report being “very conscious” of the increasing risk of assault and speak of being “uncomfortable” about the perceived lack of attention to reducing the dangers to serving police officers.

There have of course been high profile tragic incidents over the last few years and 7 deaths as a result of violent attacks¹ which receive a great deal of publicity, but the extent of the danger to our Police Officers on a daily basis has, until now, remained almost entirely hidden.

¹ Source: www.policememorial.org.uk

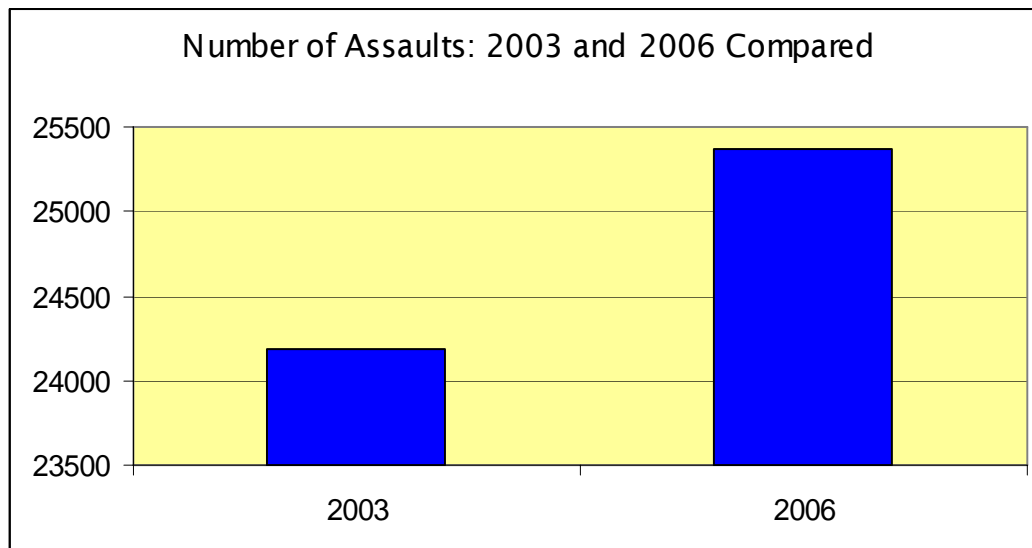
Results Table

Fig. 1 - Results from all Police Forces who returned information (96% of Constabularies).

Force	Assaults					Total
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Avon and Somerset	262	327	303	169	149	1210
Bedfordshire	311	349	345	273	359	1637
Cambridgeshire	122	137	155	94	136	644
Central Scotland		921	873	934	935	3663
Cheshire	430	392	441	782	658	2703
City of London	34	30	48	68	52	232
Cleveland		119	132	124		375
Cumbria	99	101	161	200	213	774
Derbyshire	300	265	243	227	161	1196
Devon and Cornwall	273	326	318	265	300	1482
Dorset		116	165	101	69	451
Dumfries and Galloway	110	176	187	131	124	728
Durham	239	239	167	166	91	902
Dyfed Powys	329	266	244	226	244	1309
Essex	268	316	388	424	312	1708
Fife	404	356	313	352	355	1780
Gloucestershire	239	211	237	298	260	1245
Grampian	500	533	451	486	408	2378
Greater Manchester				1081	1154	2235
Gwent	247	181	209	193	176	1006
Hampshire		467	515	408	427	1817
Hertfordshire	449	702	589	626	417	2783
Humberside	705	506	453	459	411	2534
Kent	637	851	757	688	702	3635
Lancashire				536	516	1052
Leicestershire	301	298	202	305	208	1314
Lincolnshire	208	198	166	201	226	999
Lothian and Borders	258	216	205	251	202	1132
Merseyside	1465	975	778	708	684	4610
Metropolitan	1465	2445	3488	3036	3339	13773
Norfolk	308	425	480	428	394	2035
Northern	236	249	200	284	222	1191
North Wales		99	118	119	99	435
North Yorkshire	547	305	322	423	300	1897
Northamptonshire	353	305	329	272	200	1459
Nottinghamshire		740 for whole period				740
South Wales	482	414	377	353	302	1928
South Yorkshire	169	217	164	137	117	804
Staffordshire	435	472	601	603	544	2655
Strathclyde	3932	4233	4101	4087	4023	20376
Suffolk	362	321	400	327	238	1648
Surrey	228	225	255	225	194	1127
Sussex	1091	711	731	738	787	4058

Tayside	100	155	185	154	122	716
Thames Valley	1532	1039	824	1003	1021	5419
Warwick	143	188	233	239	257	1060
West Mercia	252	235	219	155	89	950
West Midlands	4604	2410	2407	2479	2199	14099
West Yorkshire			634	840	832	2306
Wiltshire	130	168	107	105	140	650
Total	24559	24190	25220	26783	25368	126860

Fig. 2 - Number of Assaults on Police Officers; 2003 - 2006



Police Most At Risk Of Assault - The Hotspots

The table below details the average number of assaults an Officer in the twenty most dangerous areas will have had to endure since 2002.

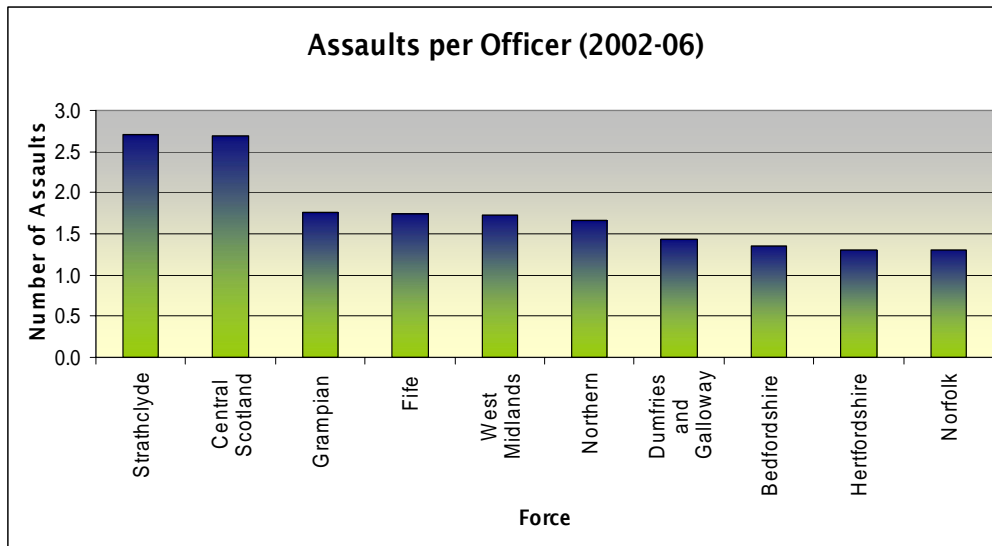
Fig. 3 - Assaults per officer (2002-06) - 20 most dangerous areas

Rank	Force	Assaults (2002-06)	No. of Officers	Assaults per Officer (2002-06)
1	Strathclyde	20376	7538	2.7
1	Central Scotland	3663	1365	2.7
3	Grampian	2378	1349.29	1.8
4	Fife	1780	1020	1.7
4	West Midlands	14099	8153	1.7
4	Northern	1191	714	1.7
7	Dumfries and Galloway	728	509	1.4
7	Bedfordshire	1637	1205	1.4
9	Hertfordshire	2783	2127	1.3
9	Norfolk	2035	1556	1.3
9	Sussex	4058	3105	1.3
9	Thames Valley	5419	4242	1.3
13	Suffolk	1648	1320	1.2
13	Cheshire	2703	2170	1.2
13	Staffordshire	2655	2273	1.2
13	North Yorkshire	1897	1642	1.2
17	Humberside	2534	2243	1.1
17	Dyfed Powys	1309	1174	1.1
17	Northamptonshire	1459	1325	1.1
17	Merseyside	4610	4353	1.1

The table above means that, for example, an officer in the Central Scotland Force will have on average been assaulted 2.7 in the period 2002 to 2006.

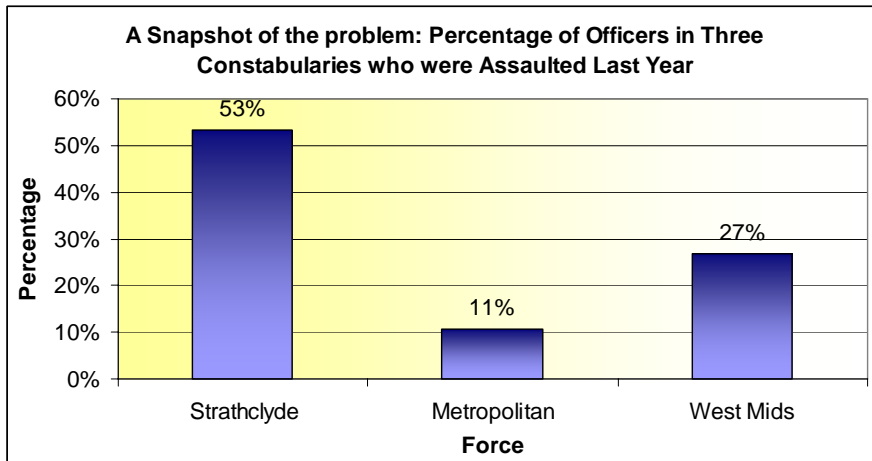
Over the past five years each officer in the twenty Forces included in the table above will have been assaulted at least once. In the two Scottish constabularies that head the list; Strathclyde and Central Scotland the average Officer will have been physically attacked almost three times.

Fig. 4 - Assaults per officer - 10 most dangerous areas



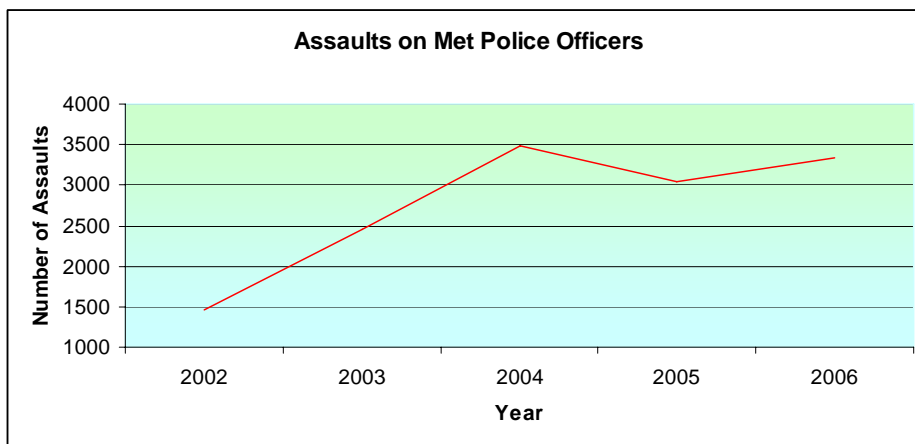
The areas with the highest number of assaults on Police Officers in 2006 were Strathclyde, London - the Metropolitan Police Force - and the West Midlands. In the West Midlands, last year more than a quarter of frontline Policemen and Policewomen will have been attacked. In Strathclyde the figure is a staggering 53%.

Fig. 5 - Percentage of Officers assaulted last year, three Constabularies



These three Police Forces accounted for 9,561 assaults. The problem in London is worsening. The number of assaults in the Metropolitan area has risen by 128% since 2002.

Fig. 6 - Number of Assaults on Police Officers in the Metropolitan area since 2002



Reaction to this report and quotes

Grant Shapps MP:

“The number of attacks on our Police Officers in the last five years reveals the hidden yet perilous reality of life on the front line. The truth is that yet another Government target, safety initiative or programme will do little to protect our frontline Police.

“It is only by rebuilding a sense of social responsibility that we can hope to tackle this truly deep-rooted problem. Preventing our Officers from being assaulted requires a change in attitude towards our Police. This is a process which starts at home and that means that backing the family and encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their actions must be at the heart of the Government’s response.”

PC Copperfield, serving Police Officer and author of the best-selling book *Wasting Police Time*:

“I have spent five years in the Police Force and have been assaulted on at least two occasions. The problem is worsening as people have less and less respect for the uniform we wear. The Government needs to take violence against Police Officers more seriously and hopefully this valuable report will be the catalyst.”

Jan Berry, Chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales:

“These shocking results add weight to a survey we conducted last year of the 141,000 police officers throughout England and Wales and send a clear message to the Government and Chief Constables that police officers must be afforded the best possible protective equipment and training.

“Police officers are struggling to effectively and safely deliver a 24/7 emergency response to the public in the face of growing violence, increased assaults and dwindling numbers.

“A number of forces are failing to provide the minimum officer safety refresher training, further evidence our health & safety is not being taken seriously.

“By seeking to treat the police the same as Whitehall bureaucrats, the government is likely to see many more officers leave the service.”

Comment by Geoff Hyams, ex Met Detective Inspector and MD of Police Oracle, the UK’s leading police website:

“This report focuses the mind on an issue that needs urgent attention.

The changing structure of the police service in the UK is resulting in an inexorable decline in skills and experience. This makes officers more vulnerable to assault.

You cannot safely police an increasingly violent society, which has a decreasing respect for authority, with a shrinking, de-skilled police service. Both the police and public are set to suffer, and if not addressed quickly, will be a situation very difficult to recover.”

Conclusion

This report has shown the reality faced by the very people protecting us. It is clear that far too many police officers are being injured, many seriously. Whilst the still infrequent murder of a police officer always grabs press and public attention, a hidden - but growing - problem is the rising risk of assault while policing Britain's streets.

This report concludes that the rising number of assaults is likely to mean that the Police Forces will continue to face huge challenges in recruiting new officers and PCSOs.

Addressing the scale of assaults on Britain's police will take more than yet another new Government initiative. The evidence in this report suggests that across Britain respect for the police has crumbled.

Having discussed the findings with serving police officers, the report's author believes that the scale of the problem is more to do with divisions in society, the breakdown of the family and a lack of individual responsibility, rather than a shortage of Government programmes and targets for police safety.

It is clear that the very people charged with protecting the public are being targeted more and more frequently and there needs to be a fresh look at how Government can help facilitate, rather than micro-manage, improved safety for our police, by working to rebuild an ethos of social responsibility.