

Missing Persons: Data and analysis

2010/2011

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Foreword

It has been recognised in the recent Parliamentary Inquiry into support for the families of missing people that missing people and their families have not always received the service they deserve from the police and other agencies. I welcome the new cross Government Strategy¹ for Missing Children and Adults, which focuses primarily on vulnerable people who go missing by providing a framework in which we can all deliver the best possible protection for missing people and their families.

Last year, the UK Missing Persons Bureau produced the first estimate of the annual number of missing persons reported to the police service. It is excellent to see a more complete and accurate analytical picture in the second missing persons data report, which includes data received from all police forces in England and Wales.

Interestingly, this year's report shows a reduction in figures from last year. There are a number of possible reasons for this; for example:

- last year's data included estimates while this year's report is based on actual figures for England and Wales
- analysis work conducted by police forces to better understand the local picture driving prevention work to address repeat runaways and individuals missing from care
- effective multi-agency working at a local level and the development of multi-agency protocols.

I encourage police forces that have not already done so to adopt such good practice. These measures improve the safeguarding of vulnerable people and can also reduce the number of incidents requiring a response, thus reducing the cost to police forces.

I am very grateful to police forces for providing their data returns to the UK Missing Persons Bureau and to the Bureau for producing this report. This information is crucial to inform the future policing strategy for missing persons and to help inform our priorities.

However, there remains a need for more detail in the data returns from police forces. Forces are encouraged to collect the fullest picture possible of missing person's data to both inform the local response to missing incidents and to enrich the national picture and provide strategic direction. This is our goal for 2012/13.

To assist in realising this goal, the Bureau has consulted with key partners including law enforcement agencies and charities to identify the data required to provide a consistent and informed response to missing people at a national level. Recommendations will be made to Government later this year on the potential for a UK-wide database of missing and unidentified persons.

I am looking forward to working with police forces and our partners to secure an accurate picture of missing persons to inform our response at an operational and a strategic level.

¹ The Home Office (2011) Missing Children and Adults A Cross Government Strategy may be accessed here: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police/missing-persons-strategy>

The figures contained within this report highlight the magnitude of the task faced by all in the delivery of the new strategy. To drive forward progress in this area we must be different and innovative in how we get our work done and achieve excellent service delivery. If we don't get this area of policing and safeguarding right, vulnerable individuals will come to harm. Your assistance with this is hugely appreciated.

Deputy Chief Constable Patrick Geenty – ACPO Missing Persons Lead

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Executive summary

All police forces in Britain provided at least a figure for the total number of missing persons incidents recorded in the financial year 2010/11. The figures provided by police forces indicate that overall around 327,000 missing persons incidents were recorded in 2010/11; around 288,000 in England and Wales and around 39,000 in Scotland.

This means that police in Britain recorded almost 900 missing reports every day, or that someone was recorded missing by the police around every 2 minutes.

Some individuals may be reported missing more than once and the data collected from police forces, when adjusted for instances of individuals going missing repeatedly, indicates approximately 216,000 people went missing in 2010/11.

Data from police forces also indicates that 28 police forces in England and Wales recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2010/11, with a total of 424 found in England and Wales. The vast majority of these (around 80%) were found in the Metropolitan Police area. The link between missing people and unidentified cases is important as the UK Missing Persons Bureau uses details from both kinds of case to help match unidentified people, bodies and remains to missing person reports.

The report includes analyses appendices (A and B) which report data from a sample of police forces on how long people go missing for, where they go missing from, how they are risk assessed and how many result in a fatal outcome.

Introduction

This bulletin presents information relating to missing persons² and unidentified bodies under the code of practice on the collection of missing persons data made under Section 39 and 39A of the Police Act 1996 (more details of the background of this code are available in Appendix C). The report covers missing persons and unidentified bodies reported to the police in the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Police forces in England and Wales are required under the code to supply quarterly data on the number of missing persons and unidentified bodies reported to the police. Other UK police forces, e.g. Scottish forces can supply data on a voluntary basis. The data are used to measure the extent of missing and unidentified incidents in England and Wales and to inform decision-making by the police, local authorities and non-governmental agencies on the provision of services to help find vulnerable missing people and support families.

The number of incidents will not directly equate to the total number of individuals reported missing during the year, because some individuals are reported missing more than once.

² The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of a missing person is "anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established." A person does not have to be missing for 24 hours before they can be reported as missing to the police. This definition and further information may be found within the ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons which can be accessed here: <http://www.npia.police.uk/en/17187.htm>

There are limitations with the data used to produce the report that are set out in Appendix C. It should be noted that data has mainly been taken from police forces command and control computer systems. Although many police forces have dedicated missing persons systems the figures from these systems may not provide a full picture and may underestimate the total number of cases reported to that police force. This underestimation is caused by cases which are closed (i.e. because the person has been found) on the police force command and control system before they can be transferred onto a dedicated missing persons system. This can result in as few as 30% of cases being transferred onto the dedicated system.

No returns were received from Guernsey, Isle of Man, States of Jersey or Northern Ireland police forces so figures for these forces have not been included within this report. The code only requires forces in England and Wales to submit data to the Bureau.

Missing incidents in 2010/11

All 43 police forces in England and Wales supplied data either on the number of missing persons recorded for all four quarters in 2010/11 or an aggregated figure for the year (see Table 1).

Table 1: Missing persons incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2010/11

Police Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon & Somerset	1,855	1,675	1,465	1,558	6,553
Bedfordshire					1,893
Cambridgeshire	644	780	662	560	2,646
Cheshire	1,036	1,205	974	1,024	4,239
City of London	41	56	40	23	160
Cleveland	1,073	1,000	879	854	3,806
Cumbria	653	573	361	421	2,008
Derbyshire	1,451	1,427	1,415	1,400	5,693
Devon & Cornwall	2,585	2,553	2,099	2,088	9,325
Dorset	296	254	213	220	983
Durham	718	631	473	655	2,477
Dyfed-Powys					2,387
Essex	2,895	3,154	2,500	1,903	10,452
Gloucestershire	644	625	588	520	2,377
Greater Manchester	5,025	4,777	4,005	5,660	19,467
Gwent	999	993	759	975	3,726
Hampshire	2,611	2,498	2,090	2,018	9,217
Hertfordshire	433	487	470	536	1,926
Humberside	1,684	1,932	1,733	1,776	7,125
Kent	2,439	2,450	2,066	2,429	9,384
Lancashire	3,049	3,064	2,344	2,387	10,844
Leicestershire	1,649	1,468	1,396	1,317	5,830
Lincolnshire	731	697	553	550	2,531
Merseyside	4,347	4,146	4,354	4,211	17,058
Metropolitan ³	13,759	13,393	11,403	10,737	49,292
Norfolk	750	767	738	762	3017
North Wales	483	411	371	431	1696
North Yorkshire	796	796	535	534	2661
Northamptonshire	1,416	1,774	1,123	1,052	5,365
Northumbria	1,907	1,667	1,501	1,684	6,759
Nottinghamshire	1,406	1,263	1,083	1,044	4,796
South Wales	1,466	1,671	1,494	1,300	5,931
South Yorkshire	1,949	1,911	1,535	1,654	7,049
Staffordshire	1,347	1,193	928	968	4,436
Suffolk	1,034	1,051	880	787	3,752
Surrey	442	408	354	350	1,554
Sussex	2,202	3,306	2,612	2,658	10,778
Thames Valley	2,083	1,962	1,751	1,750	7,546
Warwickshire	496	437	356	415	1704
West Mercia	2,098	1,924	1,721	1,605	7,348
West Midlands	3,946	3,871	3,578	3,809	15,204
West Yorkshire	640	539	1,020	1,244	3,443
Wiltshire	818	687	856	768	3,129
Total					287,567

³ The total number of incidents recorded by the MPS in 2010/11 is much less than the number reported in 2009/10 as they have revised their data extraction techniques to exclude multiple Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) messages connected to missing persons enquiries which were inflating the figures. The revised figure for the number of missing incidents for 2010 for the MPS is 49,744.

Table 2: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2010/11 per 1,000 Population

Police Force	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Avon and Somerset	1,623,195	6,553	4.0
Bedfordshire	614,768	1,893	3.1
Cambridgeshire	789,705	2,646	3.4
Cheshire	1,009,288	4,239	4.2
City of London	11,677	160	13.7
Cleveland	563,461	3,806	6.8
Cumbria	494,350	2,008	4.1
Derbyshire	1,010,579	5,693	5.6
Devon and Cornwall	1,680,370	9,325	5.5
Dorset	715,042	983	1.4
Durham	611,647	2,477	4.0
Dyfed Powys	506,054	2,387	4.7
Essex	1,737,994	10,452	6.0
Gloucestershire	593,527	2,377	4.0
Greater Manchester	2,629,388	19,467	7.4
Gwent	561,420	3,726	6.6
Hampshire	1,884,158	9,217	4.9
Hertfordshire	1,107,521	1,926	1.7
Humberside	921,239	7,125	7.7
Kent	1,684,117	9,384	5.6
Lancashire	1,449,289	10,844	7.5
Leicestershire	993,938	5,830	5.9
Lincolnshire	703,008	2,531	3.6
Merseyside	1,353,421	17,058	12.6
Metropolitan	7,813,500	49,292	6.3
Norfolk	862,346	3017	3.5
North Wales	678,461	1696	2.5
North Yorkshire	802,155	2661	3.3
Northamptonshire	687,319	5,365	7.8
Northumbria	1,431,517	6,759	4.7
Nottinghamshire	1,086,587	4,796	4.4
South Wales	1,260,495	5,931	4.7
South Yorkshire	1,328,315	7,049	5.3
Staffordshire	1,071,362	4,436	4.1
Suffolk	719,511	3,752	5.2
Surrey	1,127,322	1,554	1.4
Sussex	1,573,985	10,778	6.8
Thames Valley	2,253,492	7,546	3.3
Warwickshire	535,982	1704	3.2
West Mercia	1,192,714	7,348	6.2
West Midlands	2,655,121	15,204	5.7
West Yorkshire	2,249,543	3,443	1.5
Wiltshire	661,592	3,129	4.7
Total	55,240,475	287,567	5.2

The overall number of missing persons incidents per 1,000 population was 5.2⁴.

⁴ The total average figure for per 1,000 population has been calculated using the total population estimates and total number of missing incidents to maintain accuracy. Population figures are ONS mid-year estimates for 2010.

Table 3: Missing person incidents reported to the police in Scotland 2010-11

Police Force	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Central Scotland	293,760	2,148	7.3
Dumfries & Galloway	148,190	716	4.8
Fife	365,020	3,230	8.8
Grampian	550,620	2,287	4.2
Lothian & Borders	949,710	5,193	5.5
Northern	290,330	1,221	4.2
Strathclyde	2,221,330	22,071	9.9
Tayside	402,640	2,331	5.8
Total	5,221,600	39,197	7.5

The overall number of missing person's incidents per 1,000 population for Scotland was 7.5⁵.

Table 4: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England, Wales and Scotland

	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
England and Wales	55,240,475	287,567	5.2
Scotland	5,221,600	39,197	7.5
Total	60,462,075	326,764	5.4

Table 5: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England, Scotland and Wales in 2009/10 and 2010/11

Financial Year	No of Missing Incidents
2010/11	326,764
2009/10	356,000 ⁶

Data for 2010/11 shows a reduction in the number of missing incidents recorded by forces compared to the figures provided by police forces in the preceding financial year. These data however are not strictly comparable as not all forces returned data last year and so the overall figure was estimated while this year's report is based on actual figures and is therefore likely to provide a more accurate picture.

Data were available from 16 forces for both 2009/10 and 2010/11. A comparison of the total number of missing persons incidents recorded in these forces shows an 11% increase since 2009/10 (see table 6). Given the data limitations it is not possible to get a reliable indication of the trend in numbers of missing incidents. In addition, any changes observed

⁵ The total average figure for per 1,000 population has been calculated using the total population estimates and total number of missing incidents to maintain accuracy.

⁶ The figure for 2009/10 contained estimates for forces which had submitted only partial data or no data, which were based on either the partial data supplied or calculated on the basis of the force's population.

may be due to improved recording, rather than an actual increase in the number of missing incidents.

Table 6: The number of missing incidents in sixteen forces⁷ for 2009/10 and 2010/11

Financial Year	No of Missing Incidents
2010/11	143,100
2009/10	128,316 ⁸

It is understood that in a number of police forces over the last year there has been analysis work conducted to better understand the local picture. This analysis has been used to drive prevention work to address repeat runaways and children and adults missing from care. Some police forces have also developed effective multi-agency protocols and processes which assist to safeguard vulnerable missing people and reduce the numbers of repeat missing persons. This type of prevention work can have a notable impact on the number of missing person's incidents recorded by a police force. Some forces have reported a reduction of as much as one third following the implementation of this type of good practice.

It is likely that the number of recorded missing incidents is lower than the actual number of incidents as police forces advise that some missing persons cases may be recorded on command and control systems under other incident types (e.g. concern for safety, concern for welfare or truant) in which case they will not be recorded as a missing person, so will not be captured in these figures.

Some research also suggests that many individuals who go missing may not be reported to the police. One recent research study⁹ from The Children's Society found that of a sample of around 7,000 young people who reported running away, 70% did not think that they were reported¹⁰ as missing to the police by their parents.

The geographic distribution of missing person's incidents is illustrated in figure 1. The map illustrates the number of missing person's incidents recorded by police forces in England, Wales and Scotland by using a heat map to shade each police force a colour which represents how many missing persons incidents they have recorded. The colours range from light to dark shades of blue, with the darker shades representing higher numbers of recorded incidents. The method used behind the colour shading was to split the police forces into 5 groups of roughly the same size based on the number of incidents recorded in each police force area.

⁷ Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan, South Wales, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex and West Mercia

⁸ The figure for the Metropolitan Police Service for 2009/10 has been adjusted in order to provide a more accurate comparison to the 2010/11 data due to a change in the data extraction techniques in 2010/11 to exclude multiple Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) messages connected to missing persons enquiries which were inflating the figures. The revised figure for the number of missing incidents for 2010 for the MPS is 49,744.

⁹ Rees, G (2011) *Still Running 3 – Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways* (London: The Children's Society)

¹⁰ It should be noted that his study questioned children and asked them whether their parent or guardian had reported them missing, rather than taking this information from police records or their parents or guardian so it is possible that in some cases the children were not aware that they had been reported as missing to the police when in fact they had been reported as missing.

Figure 1: Map of missing persons incidents by police force 2010/11

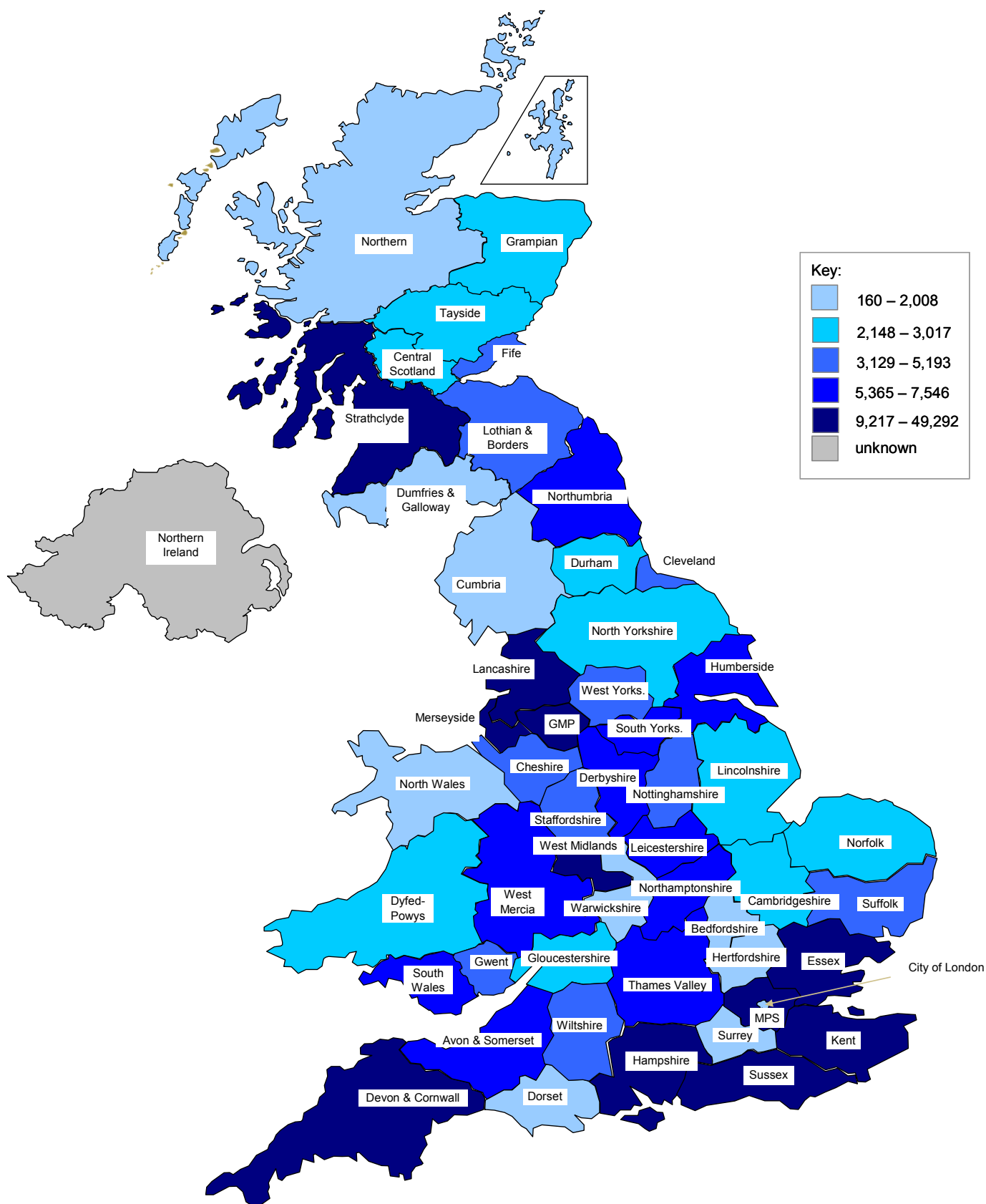
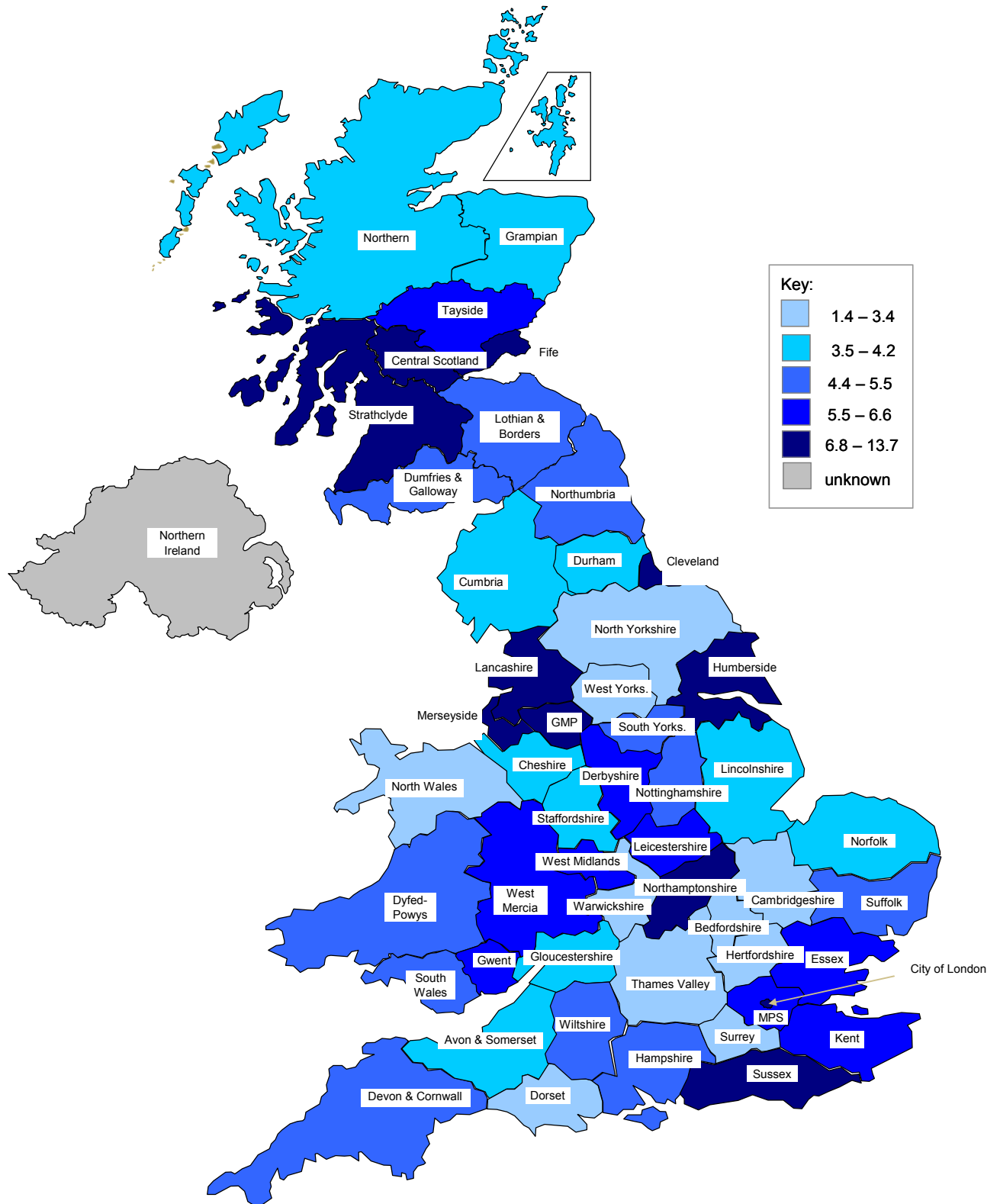


Figure 2: Map of missing persons incidents per 1,000 population 2010/11



Estimating the total number of missing individuals/repeat incidents

The number of missing *incidents* will not directly equate to the total number of individuals reported missing during the year, as some people are reported missing more than once. Eight forces have been able to supply information on the total number of missing incidents and the total number of missing individuals reported in 2010/11. Dividing the number of incidents by the number of people who went missing provides an indication of the percentage of missing incidents which relate to individuals who have previously been reported missing.

Table 7: Number of individuals reported missing in eight forces in 2010/11

Police Force	Incidents ¹¹	Individuals	% of cases attributable to individuals who only went missing once	% of cases attributable to repeat incidents	Ratio of people to reports
Essex	5,127	3,819	74%	26%	1.3
Gloucestershire	2,377	1,682	71%	29%	1.4
Gwent	2,643	1,721	65%	35%	1.5
Northumbria	6,759	4,150	61%	39%	1.6
Greater Manchester	15,871	11,536	72%	28%	1.4
Kent	9,384	5,827	62%	38%	1.6
West Mercia	3,524	2,368	67%	33%	1.5
West Midlands	13,393	7,714	58%	42%	1.5
Total	59,078	38,817	Average 66%	Average 34%	Average 1.5

The information available from police force dedicated missing persons systems indicates that, on average across these eight forces, the number of individuals reported missing make up 66 per cent of the total number of missing person's incidents; in other words repeat missing persons account for over a third of missing incidents. This is a lower percentage than last year's report in which figures based on data from five forces indicated that repeat missing persons accounted for just under half of missing incidents. This may be due to the representativeness of the data. It is also possible that this may be due to the good practice in place in many of these forces to increase the safeguarding of vulnerable young people and reduce the numbers of repeat instances.

Who goes missing?

Thirty-one of the English and Welsh forces supplied demographic information for those who were reported missing for all four quarters. The data covered 157,261 incidents (48% of the total missing incidents). Although these only represent a partial picture they provide an indication of the demographic make-up of people reported missing to the police. Some types of areas may be over or under represented (e.g. urban or rural areas) and this may influence the demographic breakdown seen. Also as this data relates to incidents, people who go missing more than once in the year will be counted multiple times.

¹¹ The number of incidents recorded on dedicated missing persons systems. The number of incidents may differ to the figure supplied from the force's command and control system.

Within the eight forces that supplied data, the proportion of incidents that could be attributed to separate individuals ranged from 58 to 74 per cent. Assuming the pattern in these forces was similar to that experienced in other forces where data were not available; these figures can be used to provide an upper and lower estimate of the number of individuals who go missing. This would indicate a lower estimate of around 189,523 and an upper estimate of around 241,805 individuals for the year.

Table 8: High, medium and low estimated number of individuals reported missing in 2010/11

Number of missing individuals

	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Low Estimate	Medium Estimate	High Estimate
England and Wales	55,240,475	288,000	167,000	190,000	213,000
Scotland	5,221,600	39,000	23,000	26,000	29,000
Total	60,462,075	327,000	190,000	216,000	242,000

It is likely that both the number of missing incidents and missing individuals are underestimates of the actual national picture as police forces advise that some missing persons cases may be recorded on command and control systems under other incident types (e.g. concern for safety or concern for welfare). In these cases the incident will not be recorded as a missing person, so will not be captured in these figures.

Using this data it can be estimated that in England, Wales and Scotland around 200,000 people go missing a year. However, the rate at which people go missing may vary from force to force depending on the demographics in the force area and the procedures that are in place.

A number of forces have initiated working practices and protocols which have reduced the instances of repeat missing persons cases. Not only does this safeguard this vulnerable section of the missing population (as police forces advise that the majority of these repeat cases relate to children) but also may reduce the cost to forces of investigating cases as repeat incidents can represent a substantial percentage of the overall number recorded by a police force.

Gender

The data (n=157,261) provided by thirty-one forces suggests that approximately equal numbers of men and women go missing. The returns show 51 per cent of the individuals was male and 49 per cent female. This is consistent with the make up of the general population (49 per cent male and 51 per cent female).¹²

¹² Population figures for England and Wales from the Office of National Statistics population estimates for mid 2010.

Age

In total, children and young people aged under 18 years made up 66 per cent of the missing incidents. The data suggest that children in the 15-17 year old age group were reported missing most frequently, with this group making up 36 per cent of the total missing reports (see Figures 3 and 4 below and the Table in Appendix B). These figures could include multiple incidents relating to the same young person if they have gone missing repeatedly. The data also shows that in terms of the population a higher percentage of the population of the 12 to 14 and 15 to 17 age groups go missing.

Figure 3: Missing incidents as a percentage of the population in England and Wales 2010/11

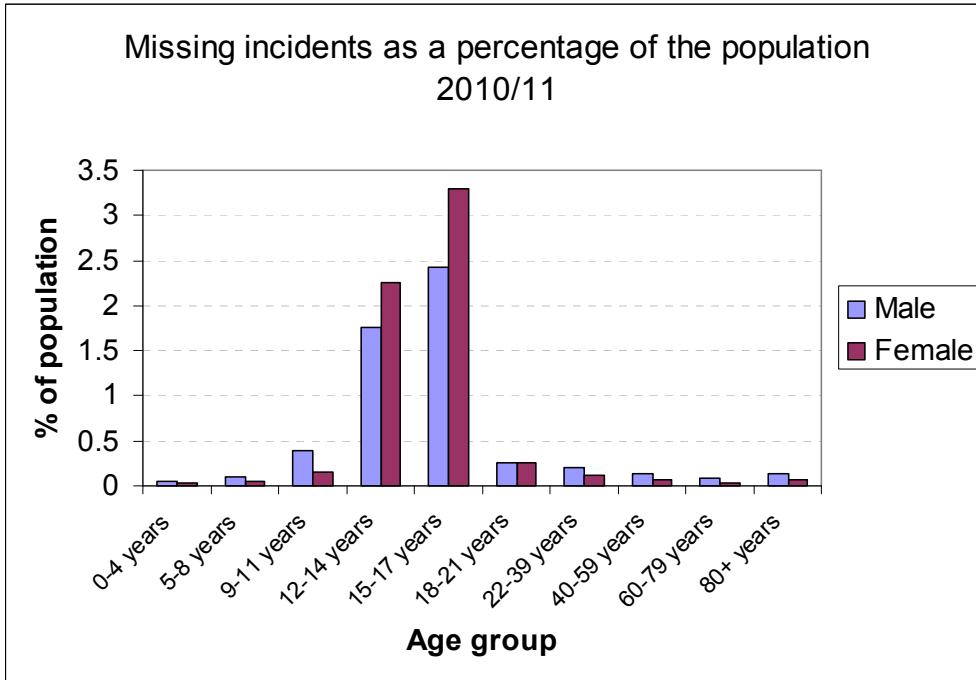
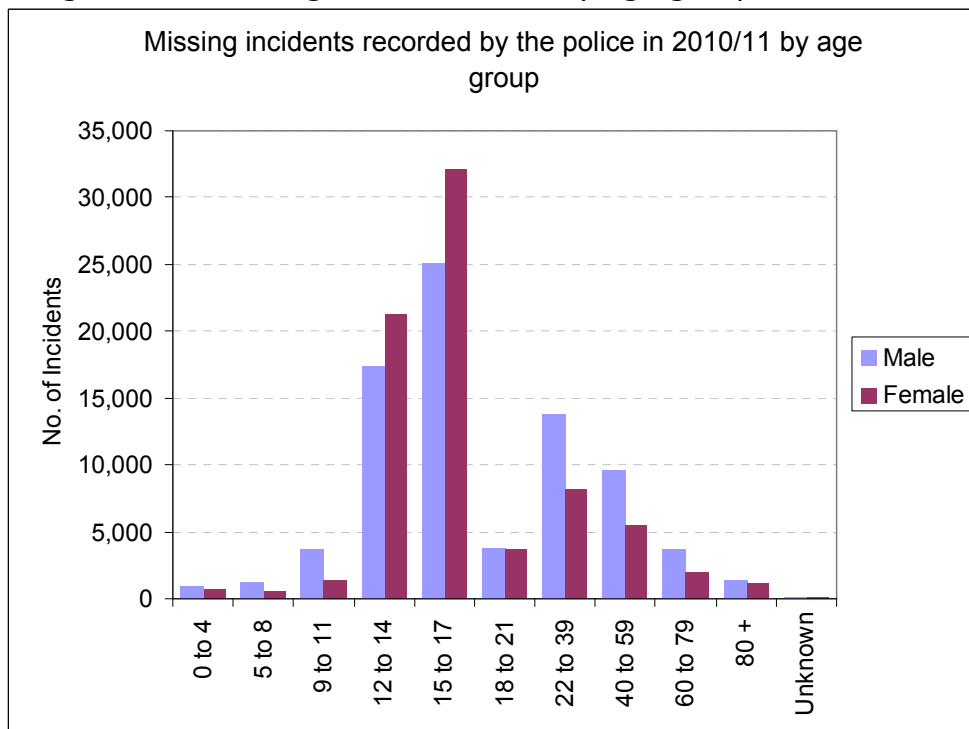


Figure 4: Missing incidents in England and Wales by age group 2010/11



The data are supplied by police forces already aggregated into specified age groups.¹³ The number of incidents of missing persons recorded in each age group is shown in Figure 4 above.

An analysis by age and gender indicates that although overall a similar proportion of men (51 per cent) and women (49 per cent) were reported missing, for young people aged 12 to 17 years more females were recorded missing by the police than males. Conversely, slightly more incidents were recorded for men than women in each of the age groups over the age of 18 years and in the age group 0 to 11. This data supports previous research findings¹⁴ and is consistent with the data received from police forces for 2009/10. Please see Appendix B for a table of this data.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is coded on missing persons reports using the 6+1 police officer-defined ethnicity codes which are the codes used on the Police National Computer (PNC) system.

Ethnicity data was not provided by 12 of the 43 police forces so data presented is not comprehensive and will not necessarily reflect the overall picture. Additionally, in approximately 2% of the cases where data was provided the ethnicity of the missing person was unknown.

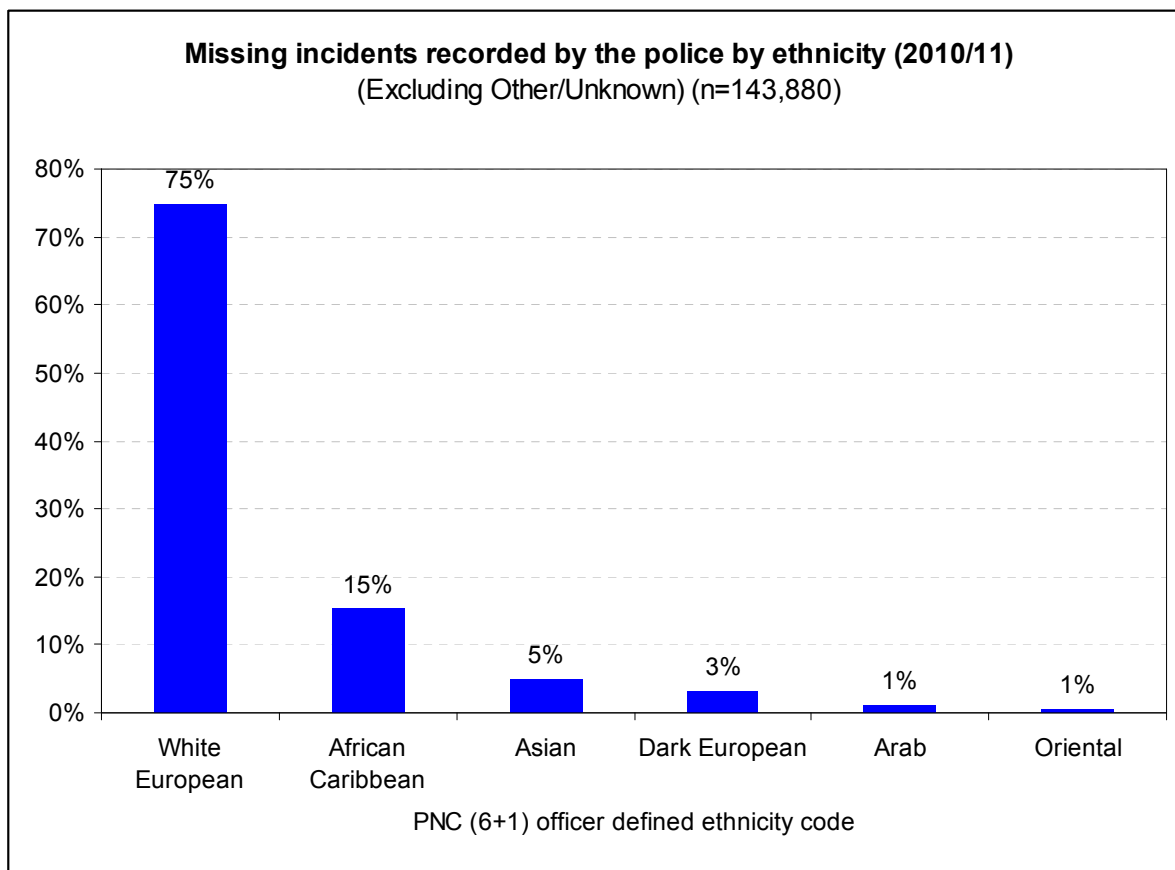
The data provided by police forces¹⁵ show that the majority of missing persons reports were for White European individuals, followed by reports for African Caribbean individuals. The data indicates that individuals from some ethnic minority groups may be over represented in the missing population compared to overall population figures for England and Wales. However, aside from the effect of the missing data, the ethnicity figures are noticeably influenced by the data from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The MPS figures account for just under one third (31%) of all data used in this analysis, and they contribute 72% of all the minority ethnic data. These higher rates may be partially or wholly accounted for by the age and ethnicity of the London population, including the proportion of children in care in the region who have a minority ethnic classification. The situation is expected to become clearer in future as both data coverage and quality improve. An analysis excluding the MPS data is in line with the ethnicity profile of England and Wales as a whole.

¹³ In an attempt to reduce the data burden on forces, they are asked to supply data in these age groups rather than for every individual case.

¹⁴Rees, G (2011) *Still Running 3 – Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways* (London: The Children's Society)

¹⁵ Ethnicity is recorded using police defined ethnicity codes

Figure 5: Missing incidents recorded by ethnicity



A significant number of missing incidents (15,300) were classified as Other or Unknown ethnicity.

Unidentified people, bodies and remains

The Bureau also collects information on people found alive, but who can not be identified, as well as unidentified bodies and remains. Unidentified people are individuals who, when found by police or other authorities, are unable to provide personal details due to, for example, injuries they have sustained or medical conditions such as amnesia or dementia. Information on missing people is used in conjunction with information on unidentified cases to assist in matching unidentified people, bodies and remains, to missing person reports.

Data was obtained from Hermes (the Bureau's database) and from police forces¹⁶. There are limitations to these data as not all police forces may have notified the Bureau of every unidentified person or body they have recorded. Table 9 provides details of data provided by police forces. Those that could not supply data or provided a nil return are not included in this table.

Table 9: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies, and remains, found and recorded in 2010/11 by police force.

Police Force	Body	Body Part	Alive	Total
England and Wales				
Avon and Somerset	1	0	0	1
Cambridgeshire	1	0	0	1
Cumbria	1	0	0	1
Devon and Cornwall	3	1	0	4
Durham	0	1	0	1
Essex	0	0	1	1
Gloucestershire	0	0	1	1
Gwent	0	0	1	1
Hampshire	0	1	0	1
Hertfordshire	1	0	0	1
Humberside	0	2	0	2
Kent	1	0	0	1
Merseyside	1	0	0	1
Metropolitan ¹⁷	94	2	287	383
Norfolk	1	0	0	1
North Wales	1	0	0	1
North Yorkshire	1	0	2	3
Northamptonshire	1	0	0	1
Nottinghamshire	2	0	0	2
South Wales	1	1	0	2
Staffordshire	1	0	0	1
Surrey	0	0	1	1
Sussex	3	0	0	3
Tayside	1	0	1	2
Thames Valley	1	0	0	1
West Midlands	1	0	1	2
West Yorkshire	2	0	0	2

¹⁶ Data from police forces operational notifications and from figures sent to the Bureau as part of the quarterly returns data supplied to the Bureau under the code of practice on missing persons data

¹⁷ Data obtained from MPS Operation Compass. It is not clear why the MPS records so many more cases than other police forces but this may partly be due to comprehensive recording practices, and/or the higher population and demographics of the Metropolitan Police area.

Wiltshire	1	1	0	2
Total	120	9	295	424
Scotland				
Dumfries and Galloway	1	0	0	1
Grampian	1	0	0	1
Lothian and Borders	0	1	1	2
Total	2	1	1	4
Other				
Overseas	4	0	1	5
Interpol ¹⁸	21	1	1	23
British Transport Police	21	0	3	24
Total	46	1	5	52
Total	168	11	301	480

According to Bureau records, 28 police forces in England and Wales recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2010/11, with a total of 424 found in England and Wales. Including those reported by Scottish forces and BTPs a total of 452 unidentified people, bodies or remains were found in 2010/11. In addition, 28 cases were found overseas or reported to the Bureau by Interpol¹⁹. These Interpol cases are reported to the Bureau to ensure that they are not linked to reports of missing persons from the UK.

The vast majority of unidentified person, body or body part (80%) were found in the Metropolitan Police area. It is not clear why the MPS records so many more cases than other police forces but this may partly be due to comprehensive recording practices, and/or the higher population and demographics of the Metropolitan Police area. British Transport Police records a high number of unidentified cases; these are mainly fatalities on the rail network, many of which are suicides.

The number of unidentified cases recorded in England, Wales and Scotland and other reporting police forces which still remain unidentified, up to the end of March 2011 are shown in Table 10 below. This data includes all known outstanding cases, including those notified to the Bureau in the years before 2010/11 if they still remain unidentified, whereas Table 9 only includes notified cases from 2010/11.

Table 10: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains on record which remain outstanding (correct to the end of 2010-11)

Police Force	Body	Body Part	Alive	Total
England and Wales				
Avon and Somerset	16	2	0	18
Bedfordshire	2	0	0	2
Cambridgeshire	2	0	0	2
Cheshire	5	0	0	5
City of London	8	0	0	8
Cleveland	2	1	0	3
Cumbria	6	2	1	9

¹⁸ Interpol notify the Bureau of unidentified people, bodies or body parts found overseas whose identity and nationality is not known but who may be British.

¹⁹ The Code of Practice stipulates that the Bureau should receive notifications regarding all foreign nationals missing in the UK and all UK nationals reported as missing abroad.

Derbyshire	8	0	0	8
Devon and Cornwall	22	5	0	27
Dorset	13	0	0	13
Durham	3	0	2	5
Dyfed-Powys	5	2	0	7
Essex	9	2	2	13
Gloucestershire	3	1	0	4
Greater Manchester	8	2	1	11
Gwent	8	0	0	8
Hampshire	4	9	0	13
Hertfordshire	2	0	4	6
Humberside	5	1	0	6
Kent	27	2	1	30
Lancashire	6	2	0	8
Leicestershire	2	0	1	3
Lincolnshire	2	1	0	3
Merseyside	10	3	1	14
Metropolitan ²⁰	289	12	26	327
Norfolk	5	2	0	7
North Wales	12	4	0	16
North Yorkshire	7	1	0	8
Northamptonshire	7	0	0	7
Northumbria	3	4	0	7
Nottinghamshire	3	0	1	4
South Wales	10	1	0	11
South Yorkshire	0	0	1	1
Staffordshire	5	0	1	6
Suffolk	5	2	3	10
Surrey	12	1	1	14
Sussex	43	6	1	50
Tayside	1	3	0	4
Thames Valley	9	1	3	13
Warwickshire	1	0	0	1
West Mercia	4	2	2	8
West Midlands	6	3	2	11
West Yorkshire	7	0	1	8
Wiltshire	1	0	0	1
Total	608	77	55	740
Scotland				
Central Scotland	2	0	0	2
Dumfries and Galloway	9	2	0	11
Fife	2	0	0	2
Grampian	0	1	0	1
Lothian and Borders	6	1	1	8
Northern	5	2	0	7
Strathclyde	22	4	3	29
Total	46	10	4	60

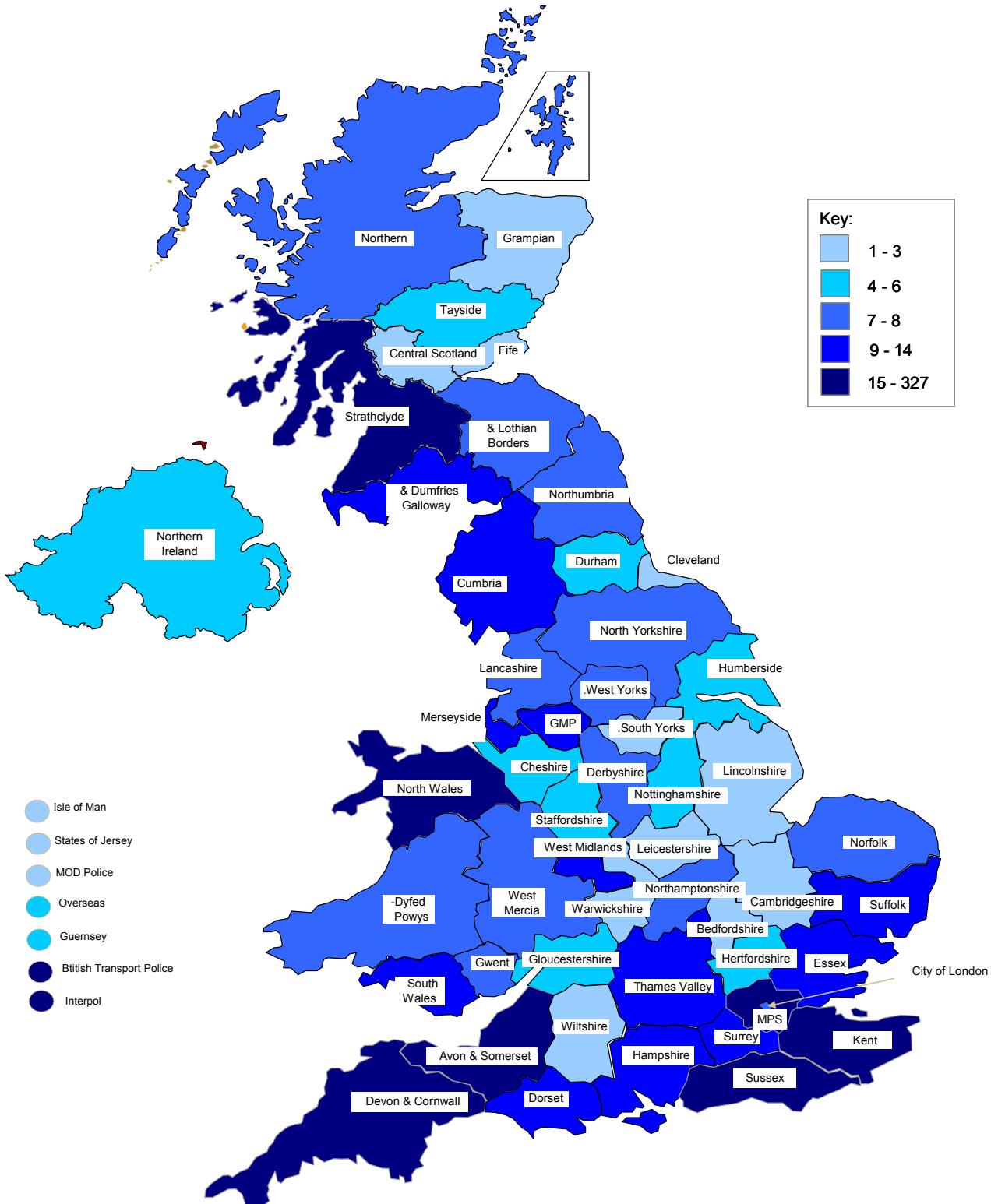
²⁰ It is not clear why the MPS records so many more cases than other police forces but this may partly be due to comprehensive recording practices, and/or the higher population and demographics of the Metropolitan Police area. The number of outstanding cases for the MPS also includes a large number of historic cases which have been recorded by the MPS Missing Persons Bureau since the 1960s.

Other				
British Transport Police	50	1	0	51
Guernsey	5	0	0	5
Interpol	220	31	4	255
Isle of Man	3	0	0	3
Ministry of Defence	1	0	0	1
Overseas	4	1	0	5
Northern Ireland	4	2	0	6
States of Jersey	1	1	0	2
Total	288	36	4	328
Total	942	123	63	1,128

Unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains cases

A heat map has been created to indicate the number of cases, no matter what year they were recorded by the police force, which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2011.

Figure 7: Unidentified cases which remained unsolved to end of 2010/11



Of all of the unidentified cases recorded by police forces in 2010/11, according to Bureau records, around two thirds were alive unidentified people, around one third unidentified bodies and only a small number related to body parts (see Figure 8). Without the Metropolitan Police Service data, which includes a large number of unidentified alive individuals, the split would be 63% bodies, 19% alive individuals and 17% body parts.

Figure 8: Unidentified cases recorded by police forces in 2010/11 by type

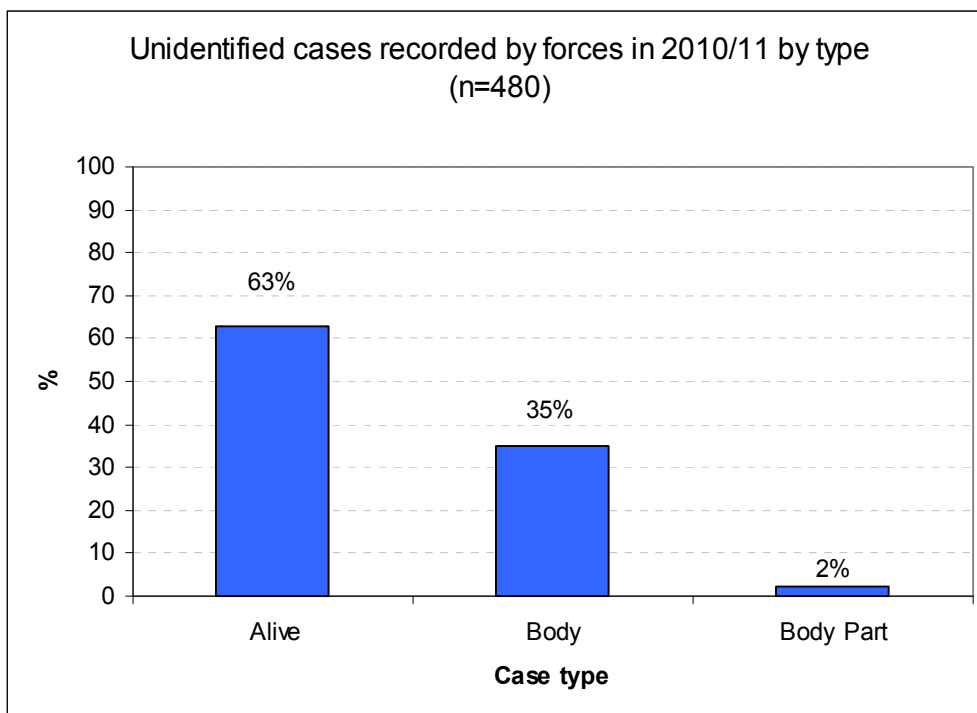
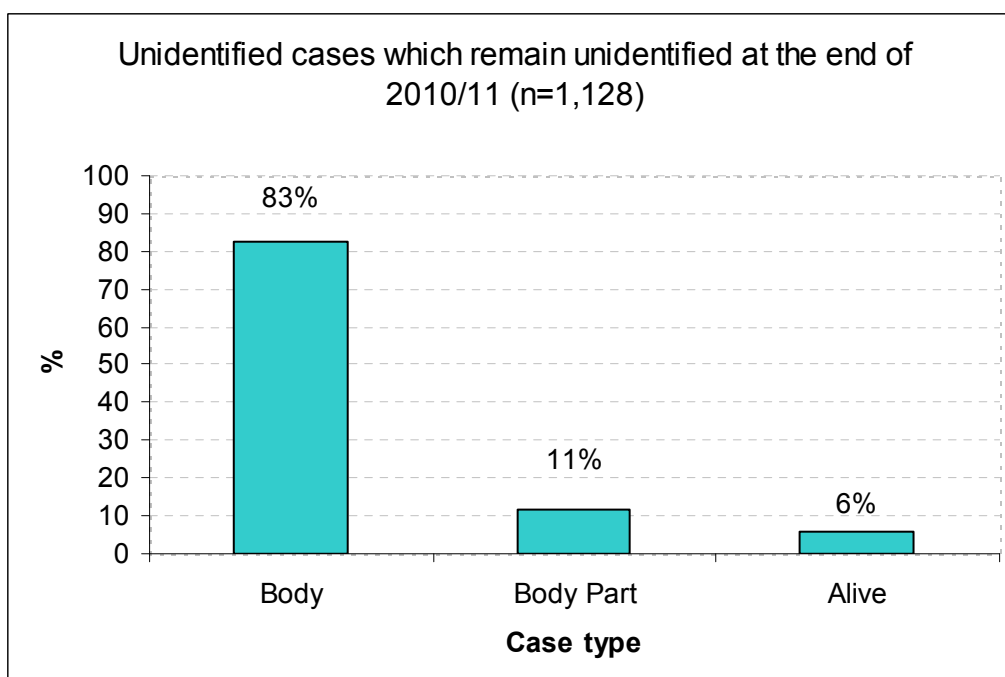


Figure 9: Unidentified cases which remain unidentified 2010/11 by type

Figure 9 shows the number of cases, no matter what year they were recorded, which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2011. The majority of these are unidentified bodies.



With the MPS data removed the split between the case types remains similar.

Future Data Collection

This report highlights a number of limitations relating to the data. However, work continues with police forces to improve compliance with the code and data quality.

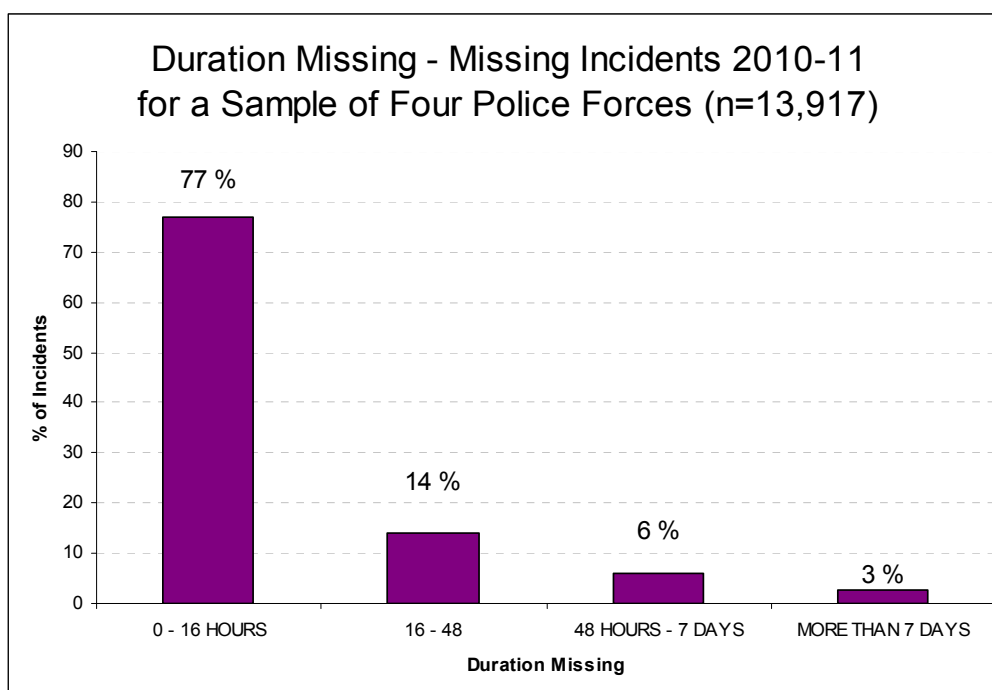
Increase in data returned by police forces which use the Compact computer system to record and manage their missing person's cases has enabled additional data to be included within the analytical appendices. The quality and range of data provided by police forces that use the Compact system should allow an improved picture to be produced in future years.

Appendix A: Analytical data

How long do people go missing for?

Information on the length of time people were missing is not included within the quarterly returns. However, four police forces that use the Compact system to record their data provided details of the number of missing people who returned within 24 hours for the year 2010/11. The data is extracted only from their Compact systems and does not include the missing incidents which were only recorded on their command and control systems. In some cases if a missing person is found or returns quickly the case is not transferred onto the Compact system but remains only on the command and control system. Although these data only represent a partial picture of those recorded by the police, it does provide an indication of the duration people are missing. The data indicates that the majority (77%) of missing people return or are located within 16 hours with only 3% outstanding for longer than a week. This data only represents a partial picture but it is consistent with previous research which has also found that the majority of missing persons are resolved quickly²¹.

Figure 10: Duration people go missing (2010/11), for four police forces

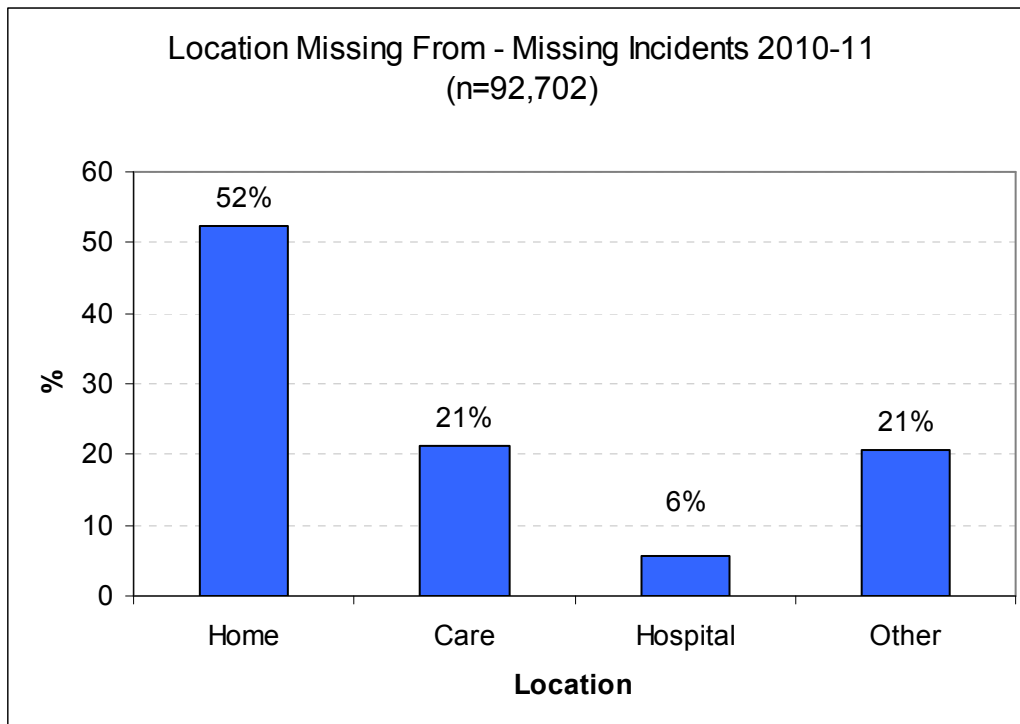


Where do people go missing from?

Data supplied by 24 police forces suggests that out of the four key ACPO categories of home, care, hospital or other (could be missing from the street, a place of work, rural location or a supermarket, for example) in half of all missing incidents the people go missing from home. One fifth of the cases reported are missing from care. Six per cent were missing from hospital and 21% of cases the people were missing from other types of locations.

²¹ Tarling, R. and Burrows, J. (2004) 'The nature and outcome of going missing: the challenge of developing effective risk assessment procedures', *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 16-26

Figure 11: Locations missing people went missing from in 2010/11 for 24 police forces



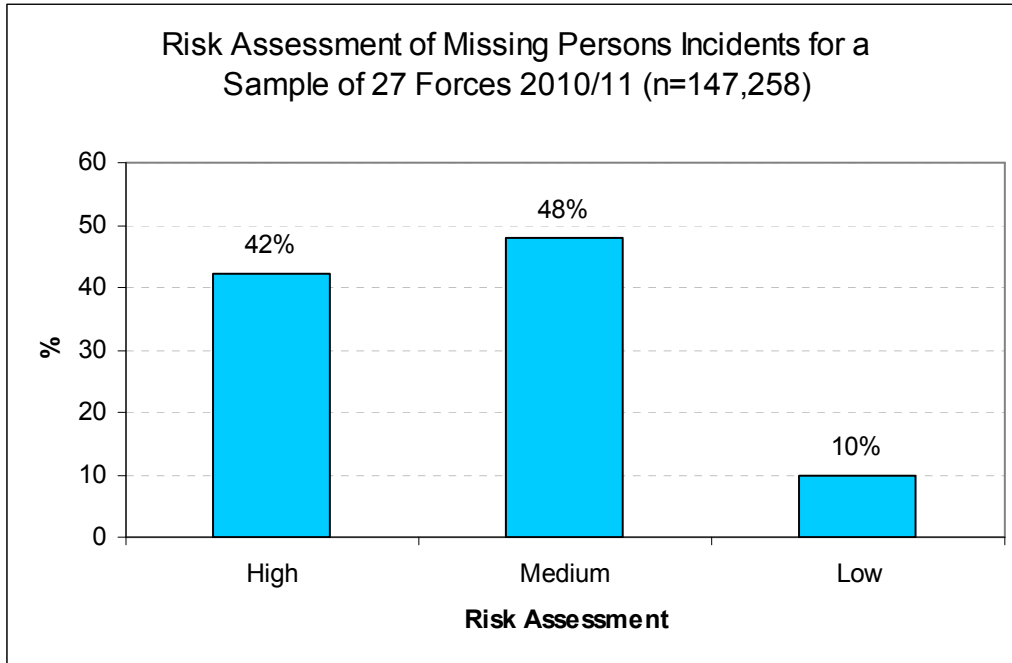
How are missing persons cases risk assessed?

Missing persons cases are risk assessed according to each police force's missing persons policies and processes. Generally these policies will reflect the 2010 ACPO guidance²² on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons which grades cases into high, medium or low risk categories.

Twenty-seven police forces supplied data on risk assessments allocated to their missing person's incidents for 2010/11. The distribution of incidents across the risk categories is illustrated in Figure 10. This data reflects only a partial picture as aside from the limited number of forces providing data, only missing persons incidents held on dedicated missing persons systems, rather than command and control systems, were used. It is likely that incidents in which the missing person returns or is found very quickly, are less likely to be transferred over to a dedicated missing persons system and this may influence the distribution of risk categories presented and could account for the small proportion of incidents assessed as low risk.

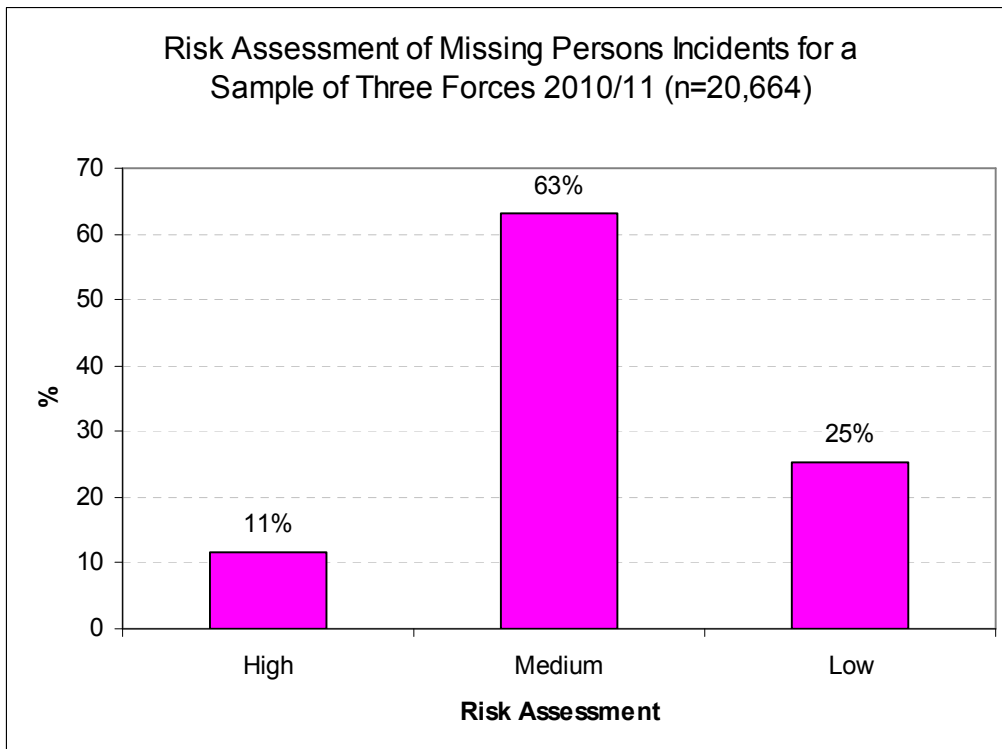
²² ACPO (2010) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons. (NPJA on behalf of ACPO) <http://www.npia.police.uk/en/17187.htm>

Figure 12: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2010/11 for 27 police forces



Some police forces record all of their missing person’s cases on their dedicated missing persons system, irrespective of how quickly they return, or they record them on a system which is linked to their command and control system. Three of these police forces supplied data to the Bureau and the distribution of the risk assessments for these incidents is provided in Figure 13. The difference between the proportion of high to low risk cases recorded in these police forces is likely to be due to the types of cases stored on the systems.

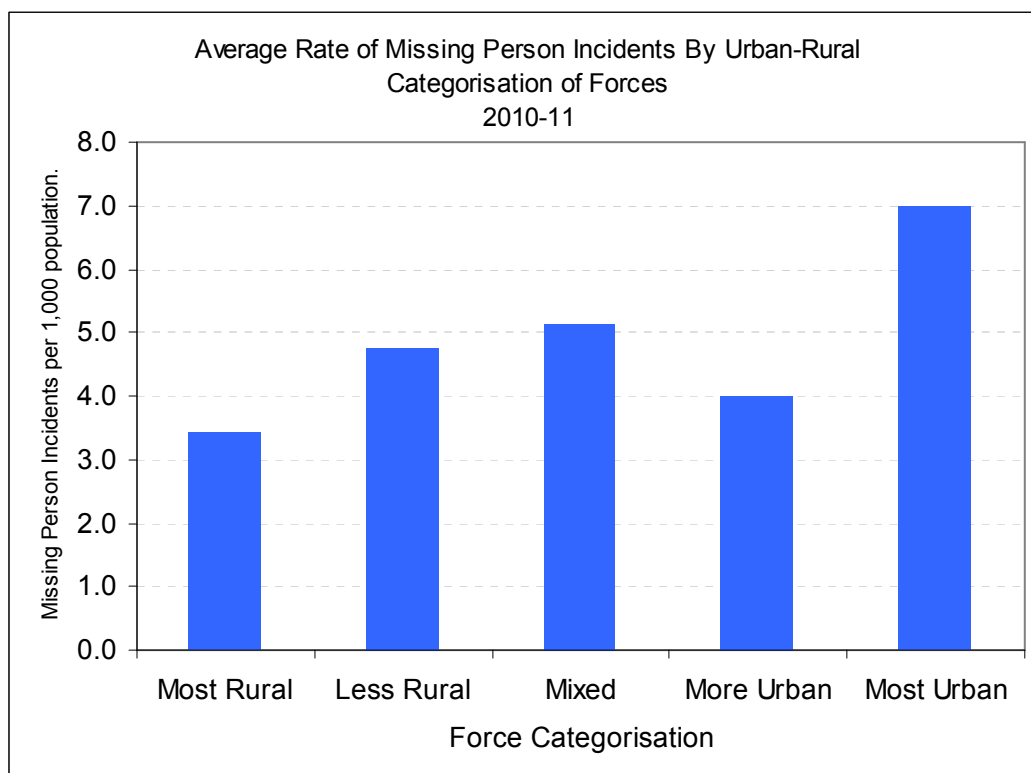
Figure 13: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2010/11 for 3 police forces



Missing incidents by urban – rural categorisation of police forces

The data on the number of incidents for each police force has been grouped in order to illustrate the distribution of cases across the different types of environment, ranging from the most rural to the most urban²³. The highest number of reports were in police forces which are categorised as 'most urban'. Generally numbers decrease the more rural the environment. There is a dip in the 'more urban' category; this maybe due to the demographics of individuals who reside in this kind of area, perhaps with a higher proportion of upper-middle class adults and perhaps either a lower proportion of children or children who may be less likely to run away. Or this could be something to do with the classification criteria or population level or size of the forces in these groups. Further research would be required to identify actual reasons for this.

Figure 14: Missing persons incidents by urban-rural categorisation of police forces



Distance missing people were found from home

Information on the distance missing people were found from home, circumstances while missing and who they were found by is not included within the quarterly returns. However, four police forces that use the Compact system to record their data provided details on these areas for the year 2010/11. Although these data only represent a partial picture it does provide an indication of the distance from home missing people were found, the circumstances while missing and how they were found.

The distance missing people were found from home data (n=17,042) is extracted only from their Compact systems and does not include the cases of missing incidents which have only been recorded on their command and control system. In some cases if a missing person is

²³ Urban-rural categorisation based on Home Office categories

found or returns quickly the case is not transferred onto the Compact system but remains only on the command and control system. The data indicates that the majority (69%) of missing people are located within 5 miles of their home.

Figure 15: Distance found from home

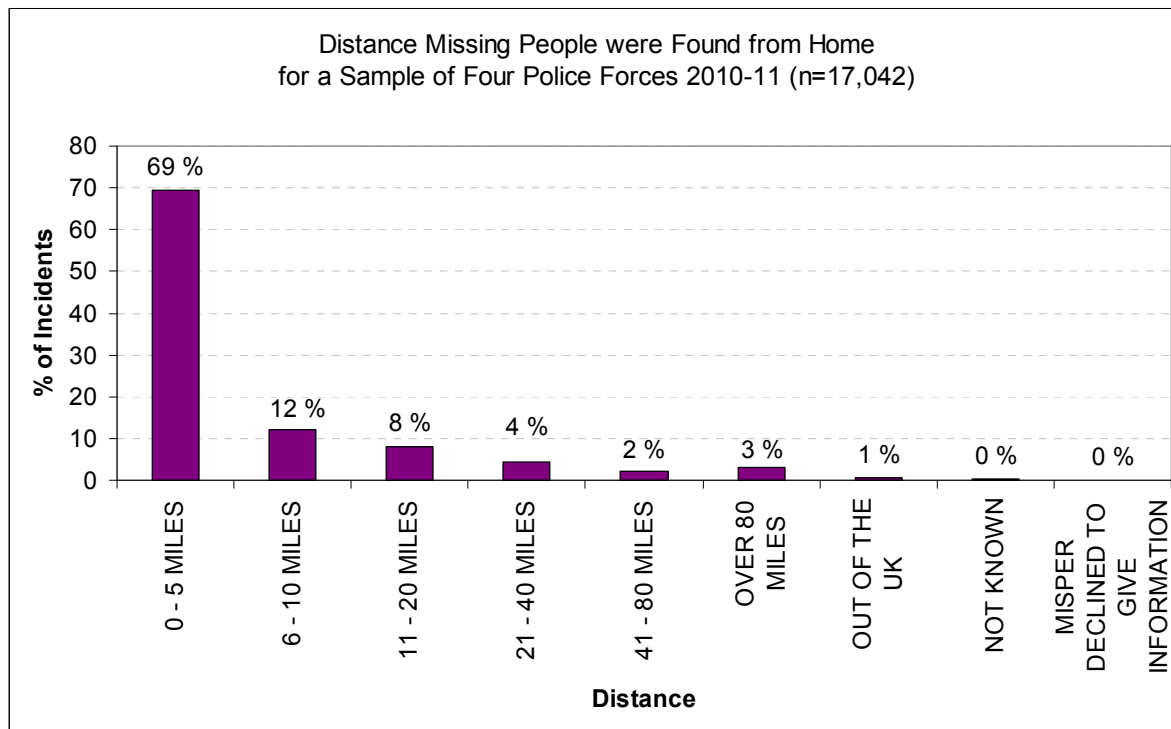


Figure 16: Circumstances while missing

The data (n= 13,917) indicates that the majority (39%) of missing people stayed with or met up with a friend while missing.

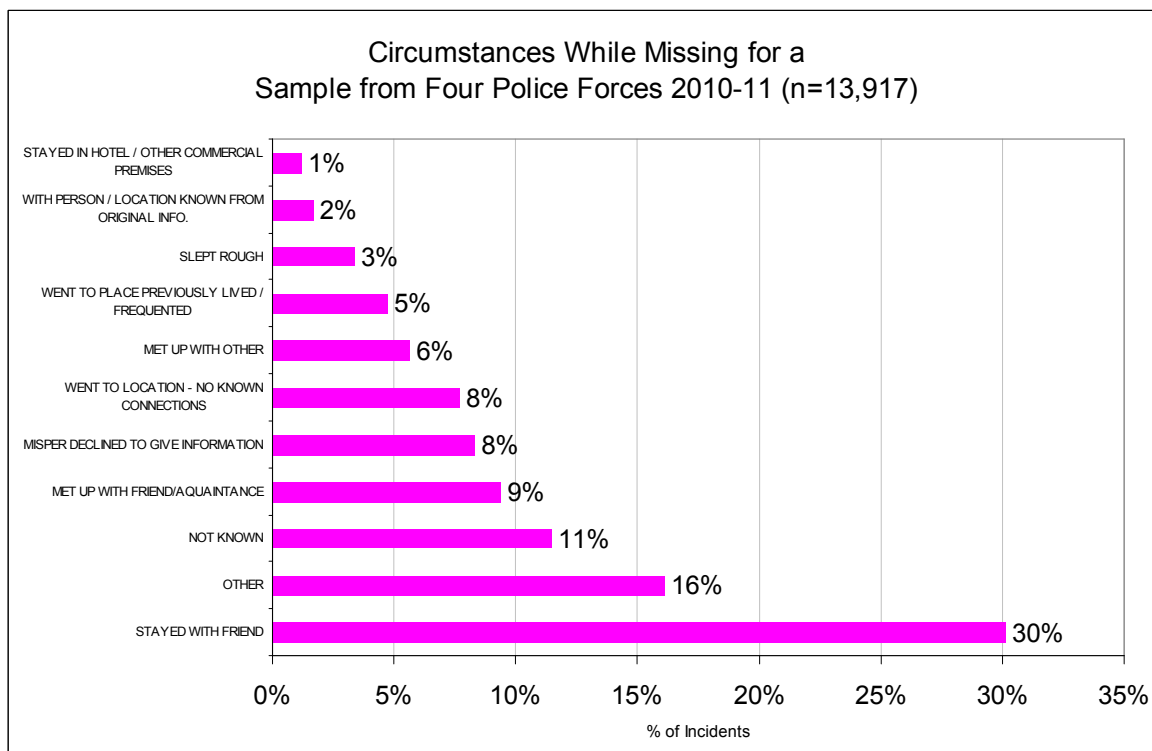
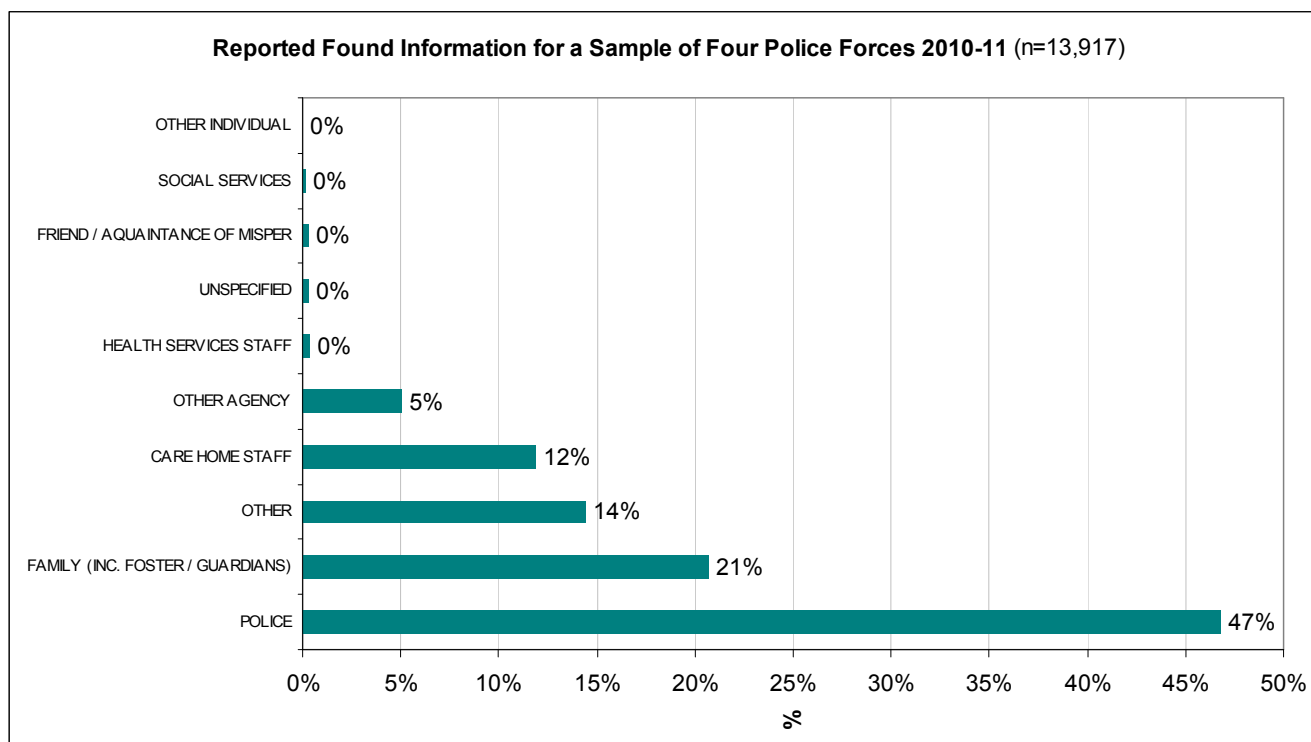


Figure 17: Who missing people were found by

The data (n=13,917) indicates that the majority (47%) of missing people were located by the police.



How many incidents result in a fatal outcome?

Data on the outcome of each incident are not included within the quarterly returns. However, recent figures have been obtained from 11 police forces relating to fatal missing outcomes for the financial year 2010/11, and these are shown in Table 10 (below).

Table 10: The number of fatal outcomes recorded in 2010/11

	Leics	Notts	Derby	Sussex*	Hants	West Mercia	South Wales	Staffs	Suffolk	West Yorks	MPS
Missing persons Incidents	5,830	4,796	5,693	10,778	9,217	7,348	5,931	4,436	3,752	3,443	49,292
No of fatal outcomes	10	13	11	19	17	17	10	5	18	17	134
% of incidents	0.17	0.27	0.19	0.18	0.18	0.23	0.17	0.11	0.48	0.49	0.27

Some of the police forces show a lower proportion of cases resulting in a fatal outcome than others. This may be due to the small figures reported to the police forces. Other factors include demographic or geographic differences (for example, number of known suicide locations), and a degree of random variation in the data.

Where a missing persons case has a fatal outcome this is not necessarily caused by the person going missing. It is likely that in the majority of fatal outcome cases individuals may have committed suicide, other causes of death include accidents and misadventure (including drowning, a fall or dying of exposure), natural causes (including heart attack or ill health) or the individual may have been a victim of violent crime.

These figures are slightly lower, but comparable, with previous research²⁴ which suggested that less than one per cent (0.6) of cases the missing person was found dead. The study used a sample of over 32,000 cases from the Metropolitan Police Service and showed that almost 95 per cent of those found dead were adults and three quarters were men.

Given that there are around 327,000 missing incidents per annum, the current data suggest that around 800 incidents a year will result in a fatal outcome in Great Britain. This figure is a central estimate and it has been calculated using the average per cent of incidents across the eleven police forces which supplied data and the total number of incidents.

More research needs to be completed to provide better estimates and a deeper understanding of this area. More detailed work on the area of fatal outcomes is in progress and a more accurate picture is hoped to be provided in due course.

Some of the individuals who are found dead by the police may not immediately be identified, perhaps due to not having any documents on them when they are found. The link between missing and unidentified cases is very important as the Bureau uses details of both kinds of cases to help identify these unidentified people, bodies and remains and find missing people. The current picture in relation to unidentified people, bodies and remains is outlined within this report.

²⁴ Newiss, G. (2006). Understanding the risk of going missing: estimating the risk of fatal outcomes in cancelled cases. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, Vol. 29, pp 246-260.

Appendix B: Gender of Missing Incidents by Age Group

31 of the English and Welsh police forces supplied information for all four quarters on the demographic breakdown of those who went missing. The data covered 157,261 incidents, and although these only represent a partial picture they provide an indication of the demographic make-up of people reported missing to the police. Some types of areas may be over or under represented (e.g. urban or rural areas) and this may influence the demographic breakdown seen. Also as this data relates to incidents, people who go missing more than once in the year will be counted multiple times.

Table 12: Gender of Missing Incidents by Age Group (n=157,261)

Age group	Male	Female	% Male	% Female	Total
0-4 years	943	662	59	41	1,605
5-8 years	1,315	582	69	31	1,897
9-11 years	3,671	1,435	72	28	5,106
12-14 years	17,366	21,295	45	55	38,661
15-17 years	25,045	32,065	44	56	57,110
18-21 years	3,814	3,639	51	49	7,453
22-39 years	13,761	8,196	63	37	21,957
40-59 years	9,573	5,472	64	36	15,045
60-79 years	3,727	1,931	66	34	5,658
80+ years	1,373	1,206	53	47	2,579
Unknown	113	77	59	41	190
Total	80,701	76,560			157,261

Appendix C: Notes on statistics used in this bulletin

Background on data collection

When the UK Missing Persons Bureau became part of the NPIA in 2008 it was identified that it was not possible to measure the total number of missing people in the UK as there was no national collation of the number of people reported missing to the police. The last government and the current government together with an All Party Parliamentary Group have all identified the need for comprehensive data on missing people.

The Bureau subsequently developed, under guidance of the then ACPO lead DAC Richard Bryan, and put into place, a Code of Practice for the Police Service on collecting and sharing data on missing persons²⁵. The aim of the code is to facilitate operational cross border work and provide a clearer understanding of the number of missing people in the UK. The code requires police forces in England and Wales to submit case details to the Bureau and to provide prompt updates and case cancellations (when the missing person has been found). It also requires police forces to send information quarterly on the number of recorded missing incidents and, where available, additional data on the demographic breakdown (e.g. age and gender) and categorisation (e.g. risk assessment and location they are missing from). The quarterly return is the number of missing incidents recorded by the police in that quarter; it does not include people who were recorded missing in the previous quarter and who have not been found.

A template for the quarterly return was provided to police forces to standardise the information being received and enable meaningful analysis to be undertaken. The minimum submission is the total number of incidents, as some police forces need to implement changes to data collection procedures to enable them to provide further details without significant manual effort.

The code came into force in April 2009 with a staged implementation process to provide police forces with enough time to respond to the requirements of the code. This staged implementation afforded police forces which could not automatically produce data on missing persons the time to obtain or configure IT systems which could provide the data with minimal manual effort.

All police forces in England and Wales were required to comply with the code by April 2010 as it is a statutory code of practice which is also approved by ACPO. The code is available for adoption on a voluntary basis by other police forces within the UK, for example, Scottish police forces, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), British Transport Police, military police forces, etc.

Limitations of the data

Although all police forces supplied at least a high level figure for the number of missing persons incidents there are a number of limitations with the accuracy of the data.

Data has mainly been taken from police forces command and control computer systems because although many police forces have dedicated missing persons systems the figures from these systems may not provide a full picture and may underestimate the total number of cases reported to that police force. This underestimation is caused by cases which are

²⁵ 'Missing persons' is a policing term used to describe the police business area relating to people who are missing. The term 'missing people' is also used in this document and should not be confused with the leading charity in this area called "Missing People".

closed (i.e. because the person has been found) on the command and control system before they can be transferred onto a dedicated missing persons system. This can result in as few as 30% of cases being transferred onto a dedicated system.

Where police forces provided figures from command and control and their dedicated missing person's computer systems steps were taken identify through consulting the police force concerned which figures were the most accurate, as this can vary depending on the systems and processes used.

The figures from command and control systems were not added to the dedicated missing person's figures where both were supplied as this would have resulted in double counting. Where police forces supplied data from a Niche RMS²⁶ system this data was used as although Niche is connected to command and control systems and is used to record missing persons the system provides a complete picture of their missing person's incidents without double counting cases.

It should be recognised that even figures taken from command and control systems may also be underestimations as one police force indicated that as many as 60 per cent of the missing persons cases on their system were misclassified (e.g. recorded as 'concern for welfare' or 'concern for safety' instead of 'missing person'). Additionally, not all missing people are officially reported to the police or recorded as missing and it is beyond the scope of this report to identify the extent of the number of missing people who are unreported to the police.

²⁶ Niche Records Management System is a computer system used by four police forces. Niche RMS is used to manage all police data for various different functions within a single system.

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<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1558848&show=html>

Population figures from iQuanta and from Office for National Statistics Mid-2010 population estimates for police areas in England and Wales. Police force area estimates are available from ONS on request. Other population estimates are available on the ONS website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/population/index.html>

Population estimates by ethnic group from Office of National Statistics experimental population estimates Table EE5, Population Estimates by Ethnic Group Rel.8.0, Office for National Statistics, 2011: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-50029>

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