

# **Analysis of Special Constabulary National Statistics**

## **Briefing Paper 3**

**Dr Iain Britton**

**July 2018**

# Update on Special Constabulary national statistics for England & Wales, March 2018

## Introduction

This briefing updates on trends in the national police workforce data, the latest annual report of which has been published on 19<sup>th</sup> July relating to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

The national workforce statistics are published twice yearly, relating to 30<sup>th</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> March. The larger annual statistical package, published in relation to 31<sup>st</sup> March each year, publishes data for the 43 geographical forces in England and Wales plus the British Transport Police. The Special Constabulary data covers headcount, gender of Special Constables, ethnicity of Special Constables, and joiners and leavers. The workforce statistics for Special Constables have been published in the same consistent format since 1998. As some of the historical data returns do not include BTP data, some of the national data presented here omits BTP from national statistics, to retain like-for-like comparability of data through time over the period since 1998.

## Key headlines

There is a great deal of continuity in the March 2018 data, largely consistent with patterns in the national data set over recent years. Key headlines from the March 2018 data include:

- The main headline from the data is that the overall number of Special Constables has continued to fall, with another double-digit national fall in numbers;
- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 11,690 Special Constables across England and Wales (11,992 inclusive of the BTP), which is the lowest number since 2004. This marks an annual fall of 13.4%, representing 1,813 fewer Special Constables, over the twelve month period to March 2018;
- This fall in numbers in 2017-2018 also represents the sixth successive year of reductions, with an overall national shrinkage of the Special Constabulary since 2012 of -41.2%;
- The numbers joining are at their lowest level since 2004 at 2,723, representing a recruitment rate of only 20.2% of the cohort;
- The attrition rate is for the second annual period at over 30%, with 4,095 Special Constables leaving during the year, representing 30.2% of the overall cohort. Clearly this rate of attrition is significantly higher than the rate of recruitment, reflecting why numbers are continuing to fall quite rapidly;
- The proportion of female Special Constables has fallen (very slightly) to 29.4%, the lowest proportion of female Specials since the current data records began back in 1998. For the first time the proportion of female Regulars (29.8%) is higher than that for Special Constables;
- There are 10.3% of Specials who are BME, which remains significantly higher than the figure for Regulars (6.6%) but still down on the BME population nationally as a whole. As numbers have fallen of Special Constables as a whole, the raw number of BME Specials, 1,199, has also fallen and is at its lowest since 2007. The number of female BME Specials is 308, the lowest figure since 2006.

## Reductions in the number of Special Constables nationally

The number of Special Constables recorded for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 was **11,690**, (**11,992** including the BTP). This marks a 13.4% annual reduction from the figure of 13,503 (13,818 including BTP) for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, and represents a 41.2% fall in total (down 8,653) over the past six years from the peak of Special Constable numbers in 2012 of 20,343.

The table below reflects that reductions in numbers of Special Constables has now been a consistent picture over the past six years.

Within this, there has been a quite significant acceleration in pace of reductions over the past two years, with double-digit annual reductions of 15.6% in the twelve months to March 2017, and now 13.4% reduction in the year to March 2018. The fall in 2017-2018 is slightly smaller both in percentage terms (13.4% rather than 15.6%) and in numerical terms (1,813 rather than 2,493), so there is some sense of slowing in pace of change between the two years. Having said that, the reduction this year of 13.4% is, excepting the 2016-2017 figure, otherwise the largest percentage reduction in numbers since 1991, and is markedly up on the percentage reductions seen in the immediate period post-2012 (6.5%, 6.4%, 9.4%, and 0.5%).

	Number of Special Constables (not including BTP)	% change on previous six months	% change on previous twelve months
March 2018	11,690	-7.2%	-13.4%
September 2017	12,601	-6.7%	-15.2%
March 2017	13,503	-9.2%	-15.6%
September 2016	14,864	-7.1%	-7.3%
March 2016	15,996	-0.3%	-0.5%
September 2015	16,050	-0.1%	-4.3%
March 2015	16,074	-3.9%	-9.4%
September 2014	16,722	-5.6%	-7.3%
March 2014	17,789	-1.5%	-6.4%
September 2013	18,068	-5.0%	-5.7%
March 2013	19,011	-0.7%	-6.5%
September 2012	19,154	-5.9%	-1.3%
March 2012	20,343		

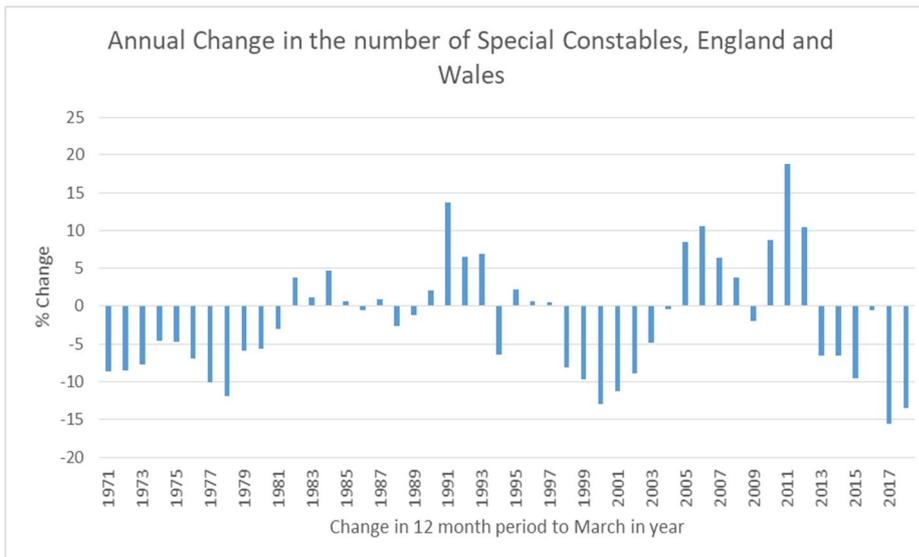
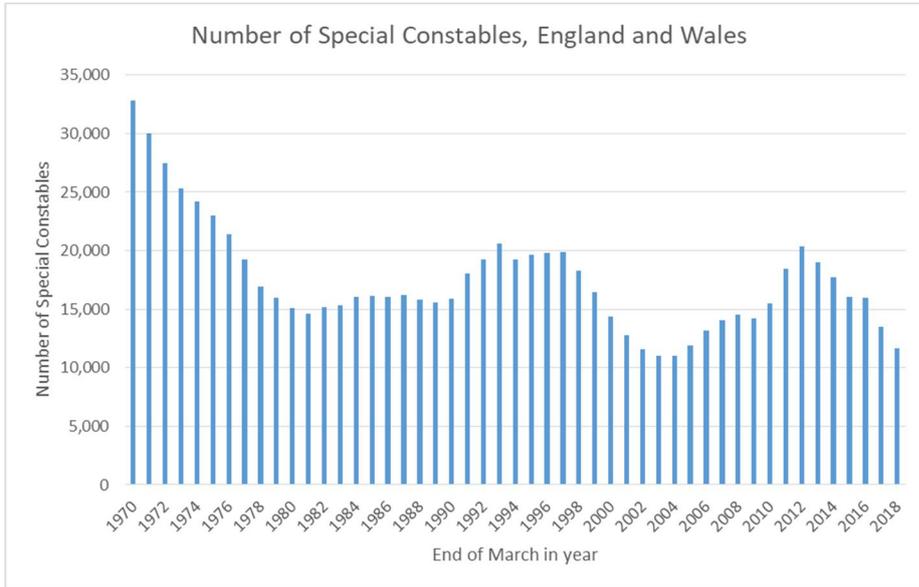
The graphs on the next page show firstly the trend in Special Constabulary national numbers for England and Wales over the past five decades, and then the annualised percentage change in numbers of Special Constables over the same period.

Looking at the longer-term trend in Special Constabulary numbers, the pattern in the data is somewhat cyclical in nature.

There have been periods of growth in the early eighties (1980-1984), the late eighties and early nineties (1989-1993), and then most recently in the period from 2004-2012. Each of these periods of growth has coincided with national initiatives directed at development and growth of the Special Constabulary (in the early 1980s, early 1990s, and most recently in the period leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games).

There have also been three sustained periods of reduction over the period since 1970. The first (and largest and longest-lasting) during the seventies saw Special Constabulary numbers fall by 55%,

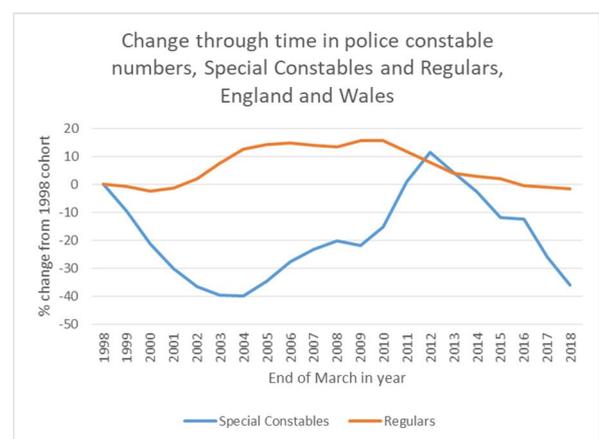
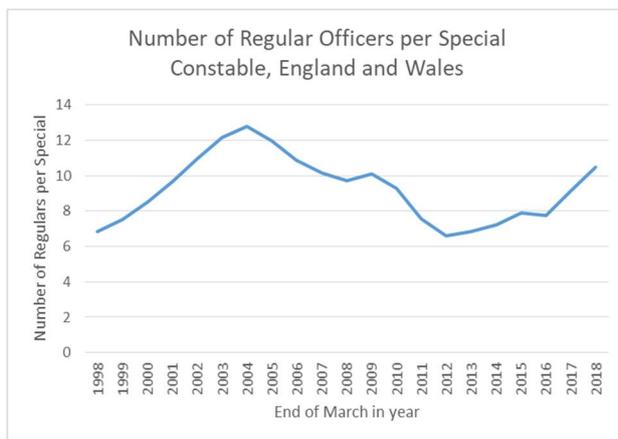
bottoming out at 14,604 in 1981. The second sustained period of reduction occurred between 1997 and 2004, and saw a reduction of 45%, bottoming out at 10,998 in 2004. Thirdly, the recent and ongoing period of reduction in numbers which began in 2012. The current period of shrinkage since 2012 has to date lasted for six years and seen a reduction of 41.2%.



The current figure of 11,690 Special Constables (excluding BTP) is now just 702 higher than the all-time low in Special Constabulary numbers, recorded in March 2004 at 10,988. It would require a further fall of 6% to reach that all-time low. Across the past 20 years of annual data, the average annual total of Special Constables sits at 15,438 – the current figures for Special Constables is 3,748 below that average, and would require growth by a third from the current figure (+32.1%) to re-establish numbers at that longer-term average.

The graph on the left below shows the ratio of Regular officers to Special Constables over the past twenty years. When the graph goes lower, as it did for most of the period between 2004 and 2012, it reflects nationally that there are more Special Constables in proportion to the number of Regulars, and conversely when the graph rises, as it has done since 2012, it reflects that there are fewer Special Constables compared to Regulars.

The graph on the right shows the relative fortunes of Special Constabulary and Regular numbers over the past two decades, based on variation from the starting point in the data set of 1998. The graph reflects that the variation in number of Special Constables (both upwards and downwards) is much more marked than has been the case for Regulars. The sorts of reductions in numbers seen across Special Constabularies annually in the two most recent annual data periods (15.6% and 13.4%) have been more or less as large in a single year as the totality of movement in the Regulars data from the 1998 benchmark year over the two decade period.

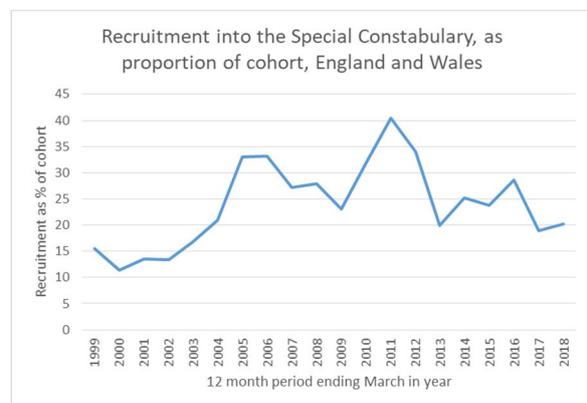
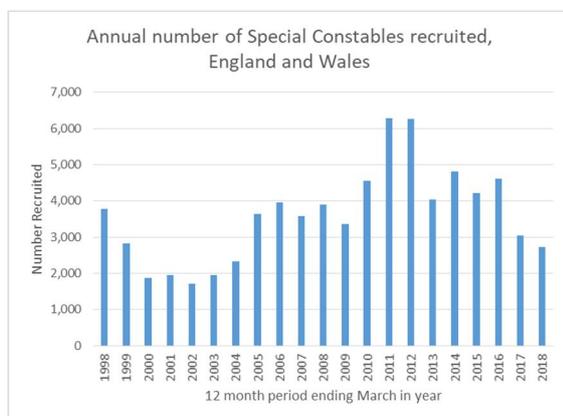


## Recruitment into the Special Constabulary

One of the more striking figures within the March 2018 data for Special Constables is the number of Special Constables recruited in the twelve month period to 31<sup>st</sup> March. In this period 2017-2018 there were only 2,723 new recruits into the Special Constabulary. This represents a recruitment rate of 20.2% of the cohort as a whole. This represents numerically the lowest recruitment figure since the twelve month period 2003-2004. The figure does sit broadly consistent with that of 3,041 Special Constables being recruited in the twelve month period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, which represented a 19.0% national recruitment rate. However that figure, as can be seen in the table below, represented a quite steep drop from other recent years.

Year ending 31st March	Number of Special Constables joining in the year	Recruitment as a % of overall numbers
2008	3,904	27.8
2009	3,358	23.1
2010	4,546	31.9
2011	6,275	40.5
2012	6,263	34.0
2013	4,045	19.9
2014	4,804	25.3
2015	4,217	23.7
2016	4,606	28.7
2017	3,041	19.0
2018	2,723	20.2

As would be expected, during the period of growth in Special Constabulary numbers between 2004 and 2012, the annual recruitment rate into the Special Constabulary stood at 31.3%. During the subsequent period of reduction in numbers between 2012 and 2018, the annual average recruitment rate has reduced to 22.8%. The two graphs below show (on the left) the annual numbers recruited into the Special Constabulary over each of the past twenty years, and (on the right) the annual rate of recruitment (expressed as a percentage of the overall cohort size of Special Constables).

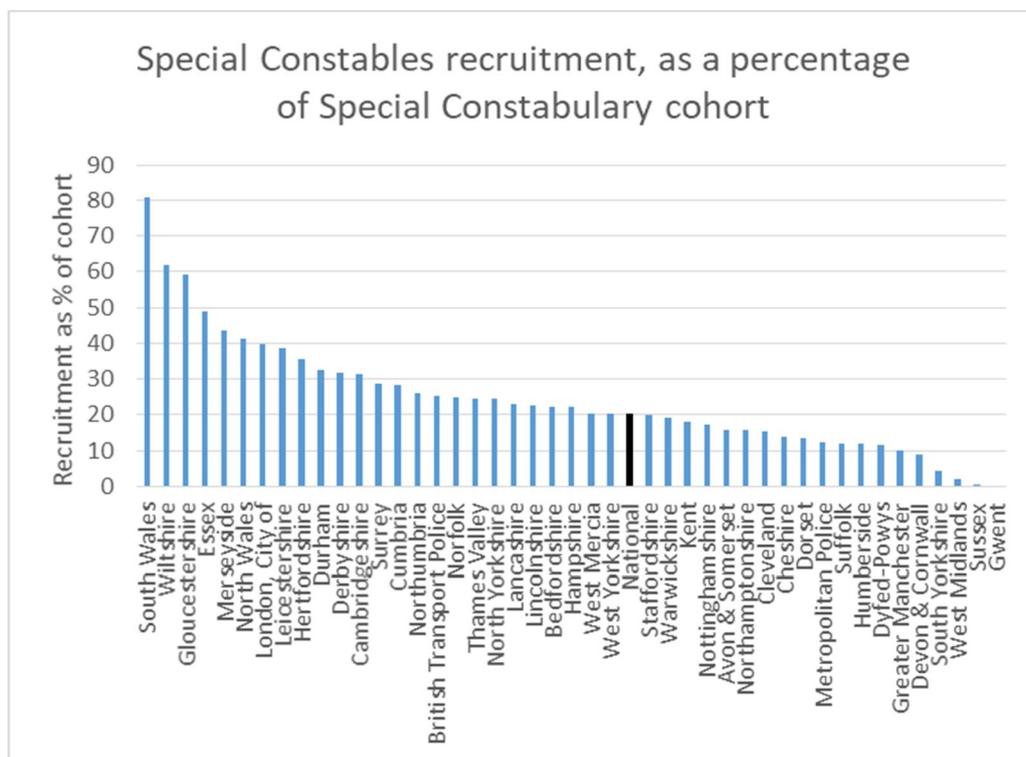


In basic numerical terms, the scale of recruitment into the Special Constabulary in 2016-2017 (3,041) and for the most recent data period of 2017-2018 (2,723) represent less than half the scale of numbers being recruited at the peak of the pre-Olympics growth period (annual recruitment in 2010-2011 was at 6,275, and 2011-2012 saw similarly high levels at 6,263).

The figures for recruitment of 3,041 and 2,723 for the past two annual periods also sit a long way below the equivalent numbers for attrition from the Special Constabulary (5,008 in 2016-2017 and 4,095 in 2017-2018) for the same time periods.

Even assuming a reducing figure for attrition in upcoming years, it would seem reasonable to estimate a scale of recruitment being required somewhere in the region of 3,500 or above as a minimum to maintain the current cohort nationally. To see any significant building back up of numbers something more towards 4,500 or above would likely be required in recruitment volumes, and sustained over a period of several years.

Looking at recruitment figure at force level, there is a large scale of variation across the 44 forces.



One factor that is playing a key role in the past year's data in pulling down the overall picture of Special Constabulary numbers is the number of comparatively large Special Constabularies – including the Metropolitan Special Constabulary (largest Special Constabulary, and 10<sup>th</sup> lowest recruitment rate), GMP (2<sup>nd</sup> largest, and 6<sup>th</sup> lowest recruitment rate), Devon & Cornwall (6<sup>th</sup> largest, and fifth lowest), with Northamptonshire (10<sup>th</sup> largest), Cheshire (11<sup>th</sup> largest) and Avon & Somerset (12<sup>th</sup> largest) also all at the lower end of recruitment rates. If the Special Constabularies are ranked by size in March 2017, the top nine forces have a combined recruitment rate of only 14.9%.

This is the explanation for the national average picture on recruitment rate sitting at a low level of 20.2% despite a dozen forces having far healthier recruitment rates of 33% or more. Five forces have a recruitment rate of 40% or more (South Wales, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Essex and Merseyside).

At the far right of the graph, four forces (South Yorkshire, West Midlands, Sussex and Gwent) show little or no recruitment in the period 2017-2018.

Some caution is needed in the interpretation of figure such as these, as they represent percentage rates, and therefore sometimes a force can appear very positively at the upwards end of the data presented in this way, but in reality that can be in part a result of recruiting against a proportionately small base cohort. So, for example, in the graphs which follow in a later section, it can be seen that South Wales – despite ‘topping’ this graph - is still in March 2018 the third smallest force comparatively (both in terms of Special Constables per 100k population and in terms of the Regulars: Specials ratio).

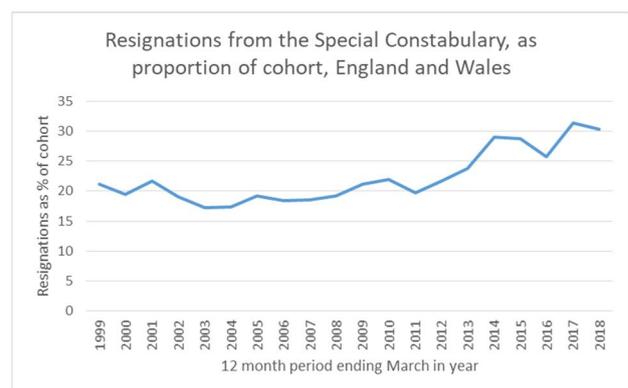
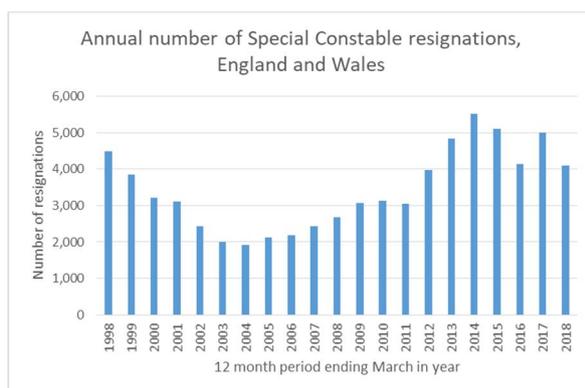
## Leavers from the Special Constabulary

The last two years of data represent the highest attrition rates recorded for the Special Constabulary since the modern period of data records began in 1998. During the twelve month to end of March 2018, there were 4,095 Special Constables who ended their volunteering, representing an annual attrition rate (the percentage of the Special Constabulary departing during the year) of 30.3%. This compares with 5,008 leavers in the 12 month period to March 2017, which represented a 31.3% attrition rate.

The numbers leaving and attrition rates for the past decade are shown in the table below.

Year ending 31st March	Number of Special Constables leaving in the year	% attrition
2008	2,690	19.2
2009	3,071	21.1
2010	3,130	22.0
2011	3,052	19.7
2012	3,983	21.6
2013	4,837	23.8
2014	5,515	29.0
2015	5,110	28.8
2016	4,138	25.7
2017	5,008	31.3
2018	4,095	30.3

The two graphs below show (on the left) the annual attrition from the Special Constabulary, and (on the right) this attrition expressed as a percentage of the overall cohort of Special Constables, to show an annual rate of attrition.

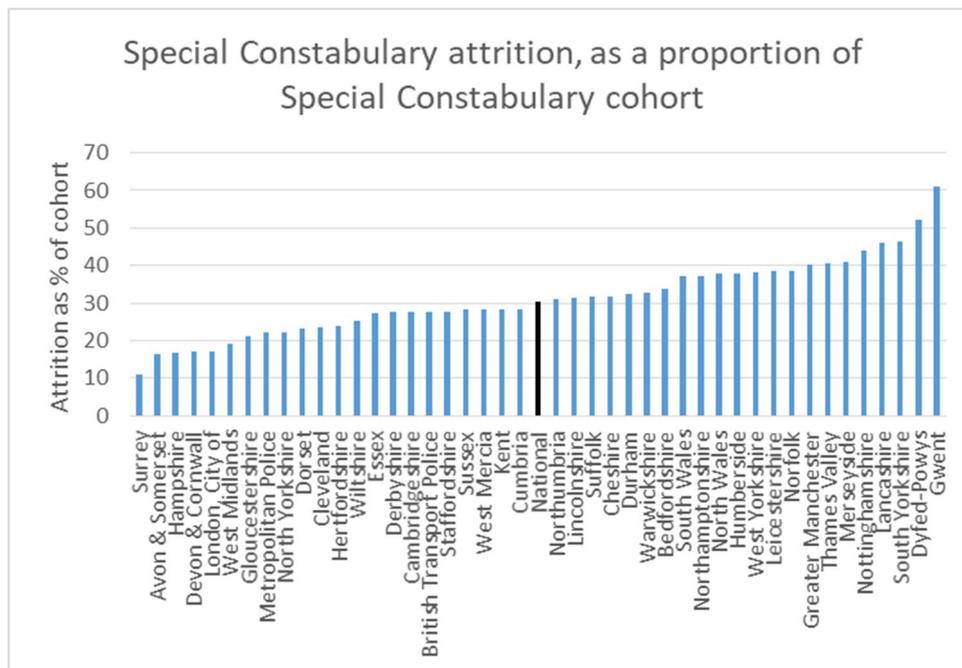


In broad terms, the annual rate of attrition from the Special Constabulary sat broadly stable at or around 20% between 1998 and 2011. Since 2011 the rate of attrition has steadily climbed up to over 30%. From 2012 onwards, there have been (numerically) markedly greater numbers leaving the Special Constabulary than has been the case in the preceding decade of annual data, representing a key factor in the overall reduction in numbers. Some of this rise in attrition from the Special

Constabulary during that period has been fuelled by disproportionately large numbers leaving the Metropolitan Special Constabulary, a point discussed in more detail in a later section of the briefing.

The data reflects almost one in three Special Constables leaving during the year, which is clearly a very high figure and challenges sustainability of models for the Special Constabulary. These rates of attrition, upwards of 30%, also sit much higher than the national recruitment rate of 20.2% discussed in the previous section. In basic terms, the data shows one in three Special Constables leaving, whilst recruitment replaces only one in five.

The graph below shows the variation in attrition rates over the past twelve months up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, for each force nationally. As has been seen in previous year's data, it is striking what a widespread variation there is across forces nationally.



As the graph above shows, whilst the national average for attrition is itself at a high-point over recent years of over 30%, there are twenty-two forces with higher rates than the national average, and sixteen forces had attrition rates of over a third of the Special Constabulary cohort leaving within the year. At the extreme right end of the graph – (albeit that some caution needs to be exercised as some forces will have ‘one off’ administrative or other factors in their annual figure) – there are eight forces showing attrition rates of over 40% (four in ten) of the Special Constable cohort leaving with the twelve month period.

In marked contrast, at the other end of the graph six forces have an attrition rate of under 20% (Surrey, Avon & Somerset, Hampshire, Devon & Cornwall, City of London and West Midlands).

The levels of resignation from Special Constabularies vary widely across the country. This likely reflects a range of factors including:

- Patterns of Regular recruitment locally;
- The relative proportion of Regular-pathway and ‘career’ Special Constables in the local cohorts, and related patterns in the demography of recruitment;

- Research by the IPSCJ and others has consistently identified the impact of issues of the quality of experience, morale, levels of support and quality of leadership in impacting upon decisions to resign from, or remain in, the Special Constabulary;
- As many Special Constables leave early in their careers as a Special (typically in forces average point of resignation can be in the range of 18 months to two years of service), the factors of experience which associate with attrition will likely predominantly relate to aspects of early experience. In particular IPSCJ research has pointed to issues of adequacy of practical elements of training, and how initial periods of induction and competency development are supported and managed;
- 'One off' factors in some forces.

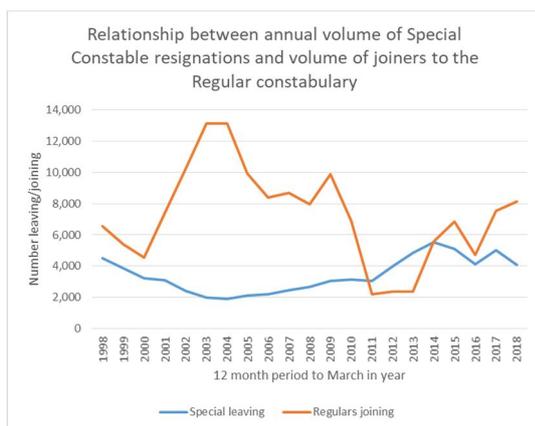
### ***Has there been a surge in Special Constables joining the Regulars?***

An element of the increase in attrition rate from the Special Constabulary which attracts a lot of attention in discussions on Special Constable numbers is the link between growth in attrition and the re-opening of Regular recruitment over the past 3-4 years.

No doubt this has been a factor in many forces, albeit from the data available it is difficult to pinpoint the scale of this impact, and the relationship between Regular recruitment patterns and Special Constabulary attrition.

Other data, including the recent benchmarking surveys of forces, suggest a third or more of those Specials leaving have left to join the Regulars in recent years. In some force contexts, there have clearly been recent years when the rate of translation into the Regulars from the Special Constabulary has been significantly upwards on that, and has had a quite intense local effect on overall numbers of Special Constable.

The graph below shows the past two decades of national data for both the volume of Regulars recruited by forces in each year, and also the volume of Special Constables leaving the Special Constabulary.



The graph suggests that there hasn't been a particularly clear and identifiable relationship over the longer-term between the volume of Regular recruitment and the scale of attrition from the Special Constabulary. The graph shows that between 2000 and 2005, as volumes of Regular recruitment rose most sharply, the volume of leavers from the Special Constabulary was actually falling. Likewise, during the period that saw the sharpest reduction in Regular recruitment (particularly marked between 2009 and 2012), the numbers leaving the Special Constabulary was level or slightly rising.

The graph also shows that whilst the recent rise in numbers leaving the Special Constabulary began from 2011, the recent growth in Regulars recruitment mainly comes in somewhat later in the data, from 2013 onwards; in effect suggesting the upwards trajectory of Special Constable attrition had begun *before* the ‘floodgates’ of re-opened Regular recruitment mostly kicked in.

Looking across the raised pattern of attrition from the Special Constabularies nationally since 2012 as a whole, it seems likely that in the earlier period (say, 2012-2016) the predominant driver to rising attrition may perhaps have been more the Metropolitan Police Service scale of departures (discussed later), whilst in the more recent years of shrinkage (2015-2018) this factor of large-scale movements into the Regulars has probably grown to be a more significant driving factor to the rise in attrition. Both of those factors also need to be seen alongside the wide variation in attrition rate across forces – a great deal of this variation across forces simply can’t be sensibly explained in terms of Regular recruitment, or in terms of post-2012 ‘tracking down’ from pre-2012 growth surge. A significant proportion of the attrition pattern points to other key issues, in particular (as discussed above) how well Special Constables are led and supported, and the quality of their experience.

## The picture of change across individual forces

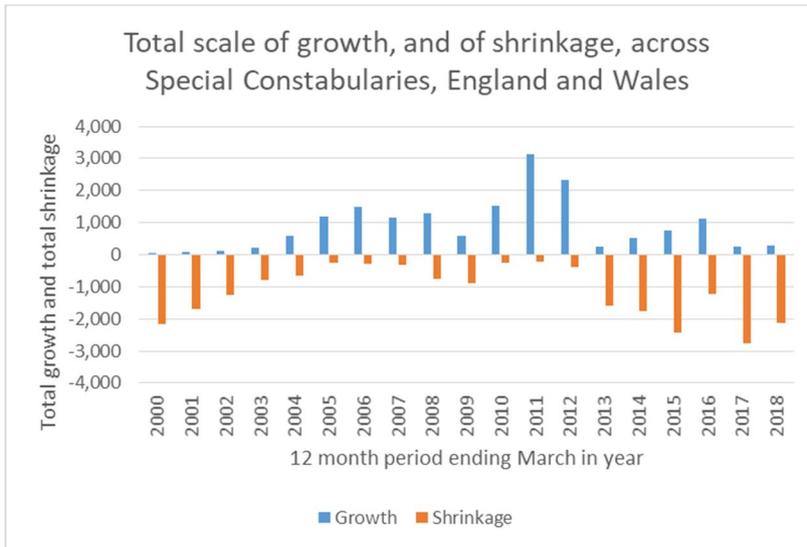
One of the most visible factors across the March 2018 data is the effective absence of significant growth in Special Constabularies. Very few forces (only twelve) grew their Special Constabularies numerically in the twelve months to March 2018, and those that did saw mostly quite modest levels of growth.

Force	Numerical growth	% growth
Essex	59	16.0
Wiltshire	57	35.0
Gloucestershire	49	41.5
South Wales	39	43.8
Hertfordshire	25	10.6
Hampshire	17	4.7
Surrey	17	14.4
Leicestershire	12	3.8
London, City of	12	20.7
Merseyside	6	2.7
North Yorkshire	4	3.2
Northumbria	2	1.1

At the other end of the spectrum, the twelve month period to March 2018, once again (consistent with recent years) saw some big reductions in numbers. Thirteen forces shrank their numbers by more than the biggest force for growth (59, seen in Essex).

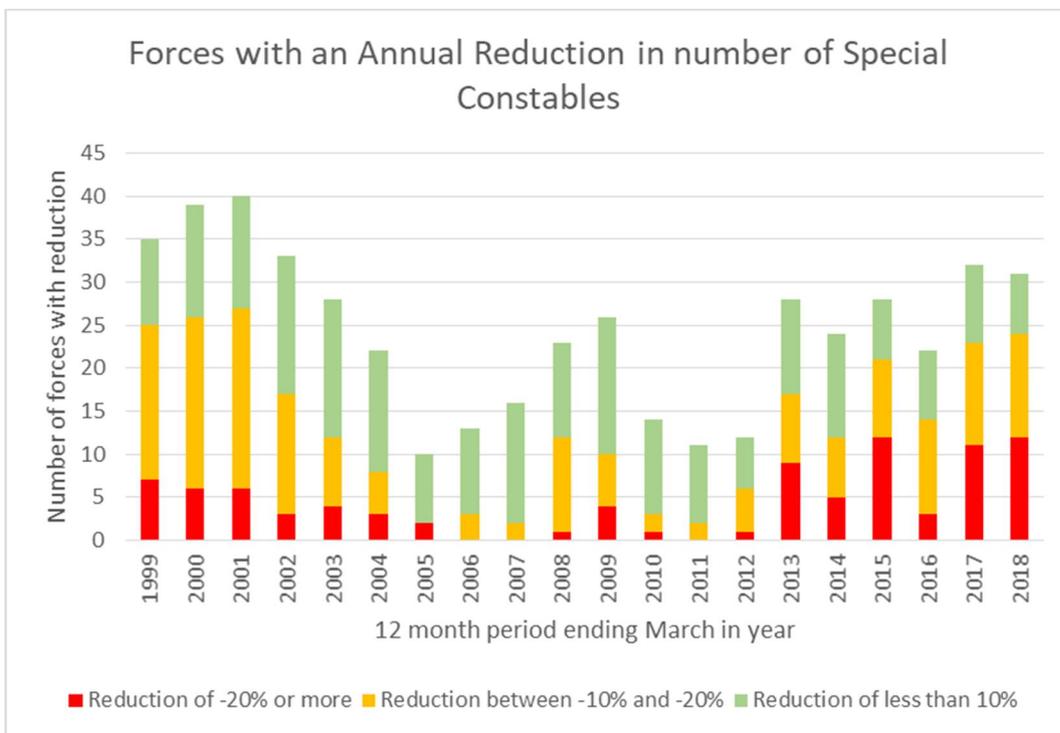
Force	Numerical reduction	% reduction
Metropolitan Police	-415	-15.6
Greater Manchester	-201	-30.4
Northamptonshire	-136	-28.7
Lancashire	-135	-28.0
West Yorkshire	-118	-22.4
South Yorkshire	-110	-40.6
Cheshire	-103	-23.7
Sussex	-89	-29.6
Thames Valley	-80	-15.9
Humberside	-76	-30.0
Devon & Cornwall	-72	-15.4
Dyfed-Powys	-65	-39.9
Nottinghamshire	-64	-26.8

This pattern – of very limited growth, and of quite widespread shrinkage, at individual Special Constabulary level - is shown in the graph below.



The graph clearly shows not just the scale of reductions again across those Special Constabularies which are getting smaller, but also the near-absence of growth in forces over the past two years.

The graph below similarly shows that patterns of reduction in numbers are seen quite widely across forces.

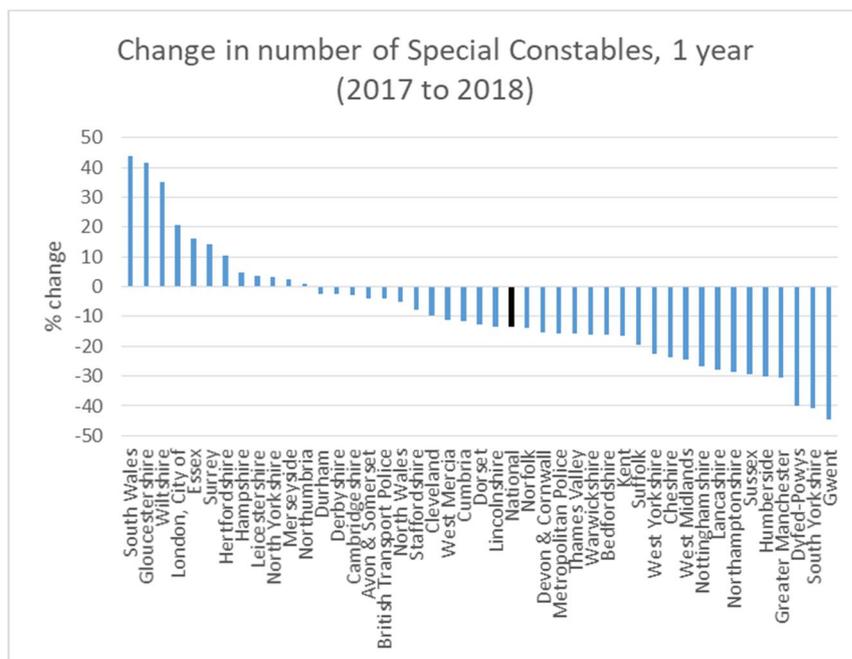


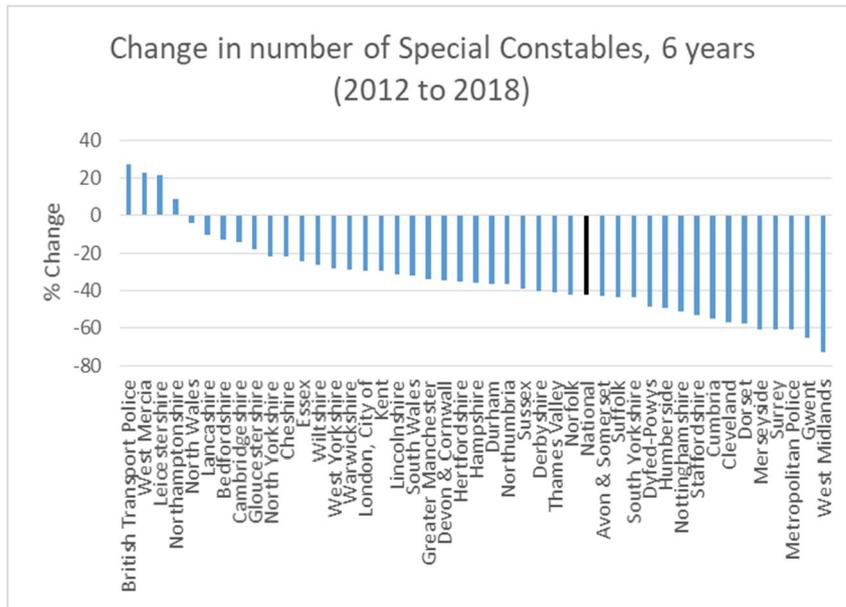
For the second year running, over 30 forces saw their Special Constabulary become smaller. Again, consistent with 2016-2017, a dozen forces saw reductions of other 20% (one in five fewer Specials) within a single year.

Of even more concern, eight of the forces where the Special Constabulary shrank by 20% or more in 2017-2018 also saw reductions of 20% or more in the preceding annual period 2016-2017 as well – GMP (a 30.4% reduction following on from a 23.6% the previous year), Humberside (30.4% this year, 33.6% the previous year), Northamptonshire (28.7% following a 34.3% reduction), South Yorkshire (40.6% and 29.2%), Sussex (29.6% and 22.2%), West Midlands (24.4% and 32.3%), West Yorkshire (22.4% and 48.8%), and Gwent (44.6% and 27.0%).

To put the scale of some of these reductions in a context, 20%+ reductions represent a larger percentage change, in a single year, than the totality of the (much talked about and debated) 14.9% percentage national reduction in Regular officers since 2009.

As is typically the case with Special Constabulary data, national trends reflect a very wide variation in data at individual force level. The following two graphs show the percentage change in Special Constabulary numbers for the past year, and over the six years since 2012.



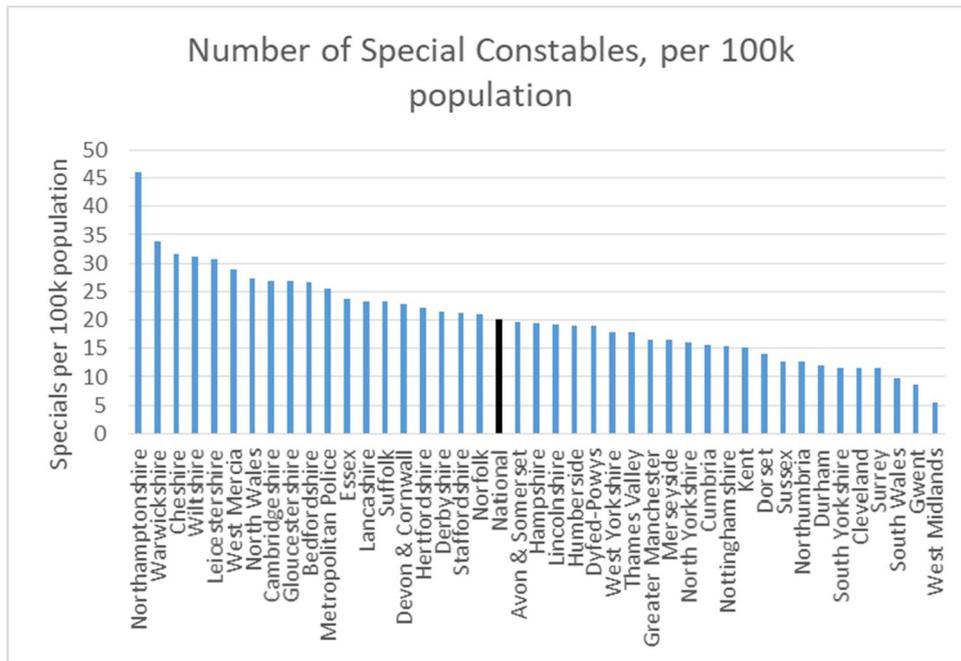


Focusing on the second graph, what it shows is both the spread and the depth of reductions across individual Special Constabularies in the six years since 2012. Whilst (as discussed later) the reductions in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary contribute a sizeable chunk of overall national reduction post-2012, what the graph above signals is the widespread nature of reducing numbers. All but four forces (BTP, West Mercia, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire) have smaller numbers than they did in 2012. Over three quarters of forces (36 forces) have seen reductions of more than 20% (a fifth) since 2012. Ten forces have seen the size of their Special Constabularies more than half over the six year period, in five cases (West Midlands, Gwent, MSC, Surrey, Merseyside) by 60% or more.

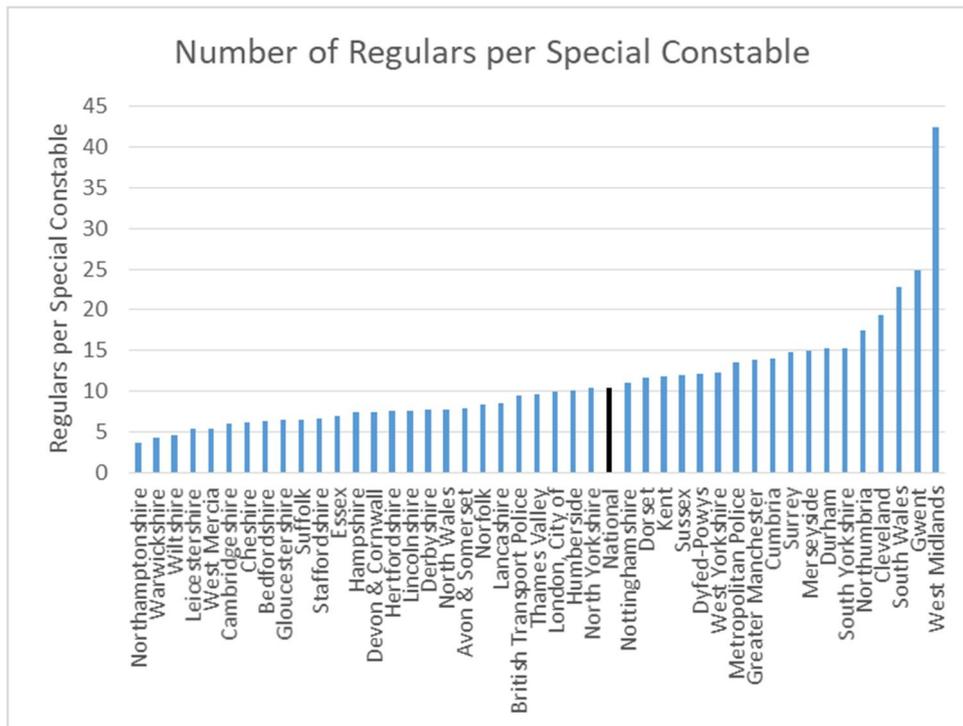
## Volume of Special Constables across forces

There continue to be wide variations in the comparative scale of the Special Constabulary across forces.

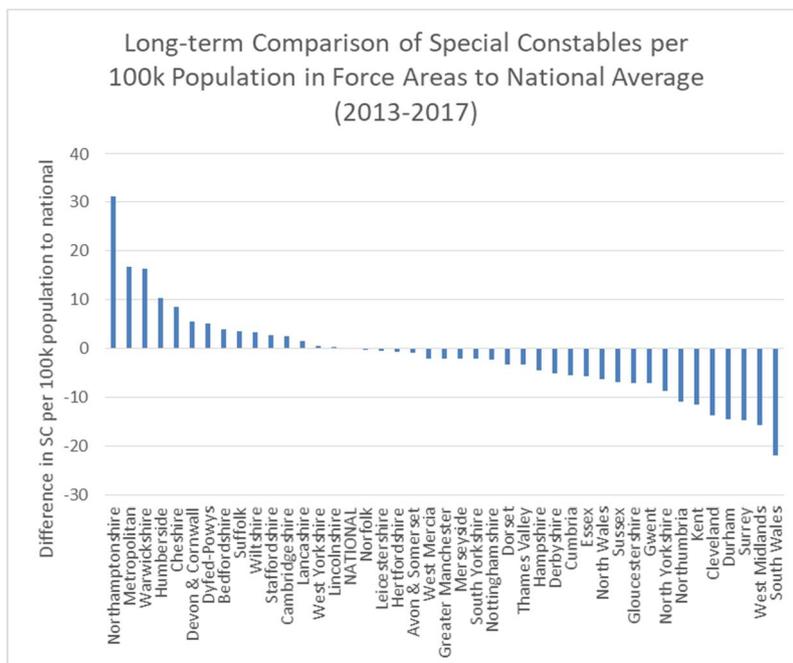
The graph below shows the number of Special Constables per 100k population of the force area. It shows a wide spread, with in effect Northamptonshire, at one extreme of the graph, having for its population nine times the number of Special Constables that the West Midlands has at the other end of the graph. But putting those two relative outliers to one side, there are several forces with 30 or more Specials per 100k population, and several with around about ten or less.



An alternative way to compare numbers between different Special Constabularies is to look at the ratio of Regular officers to Special Constables. Looking at the graph below, there is some consistency of both methods of comparison. For example, in that the 'smallest' Special Constabularies based on either measure are the same three of Gwent, South Wales and the West Midlands. And that Northamptonshire and Warwickshire remain the two 'largest' Special Constabularies whether based upon per 100k population or based upon Regular: Specials ratio.



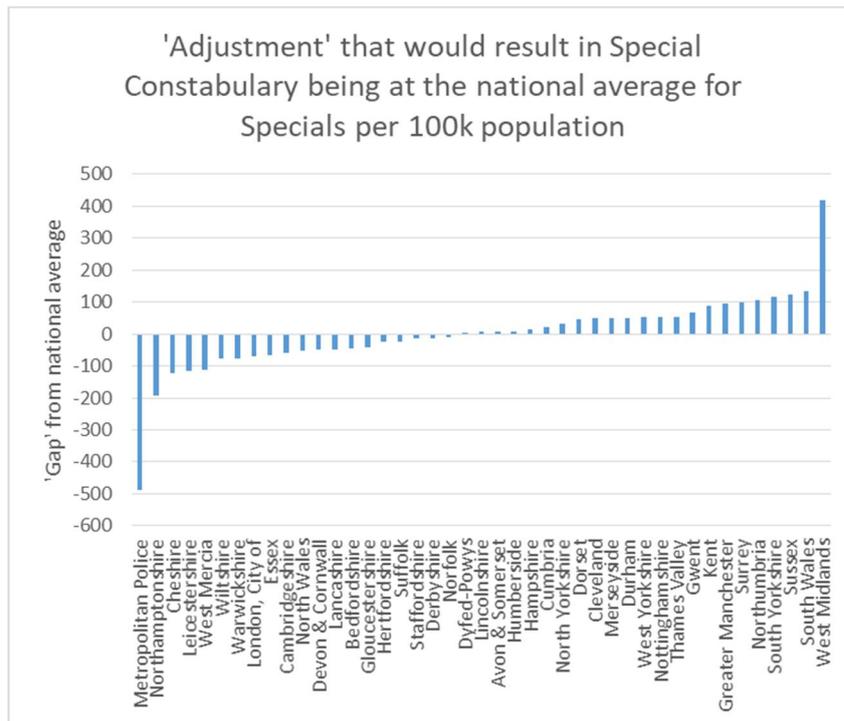
There tends to be quite a degree of variation across different years data in respect of individual Special Constabularies. So, rather than just taking the current data for March 2018, as the two graphs above do, the graph below looks to plot the longer-term average positions for forces, year on year over a number of years, based on their numbers per 100k population. This provides a more 'strategic' picture of relative sizes of different Special Constabularies over a period of time, rather than a snapshot for just one given year.



The longer-term data of comparative size has a lot of consistencies with the 'snapshot' of the data for March 2018. For example, Northamptonshire still 'tops' the graph, and South Wales and the

West Midlands are still at the other end, reflecting that over this more strategic time period 2013-2017 their Special Constabularies are still the ‘smallest’ comparatively. There are some significant ‘movers’ between the longer-term strategic picture and the 2018 ‘snapshot’. For example, Essex has moved to be comparatively ‘larger’ as a Special Constabulary, as have Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Going the other way, Gwent has moved to be a comparatively ‘smaller’ Special Constabulary in the 2018 data compared to its longer-term 2013-2017 position. As would be expected, so has the Metropolitan Special Constabulary. After two sizeable years of reductions, Humberside shifts from comparatively above average in size to slightly below average.

Another way of looking at the differences in size of Special Constabularies is to ask the question how many more or fewer Specials it would take for each Special Constabulary to be at the national average. The graph below shows this, again based on per 100k population.

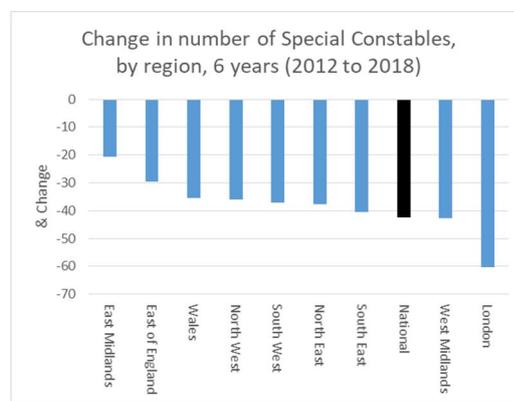
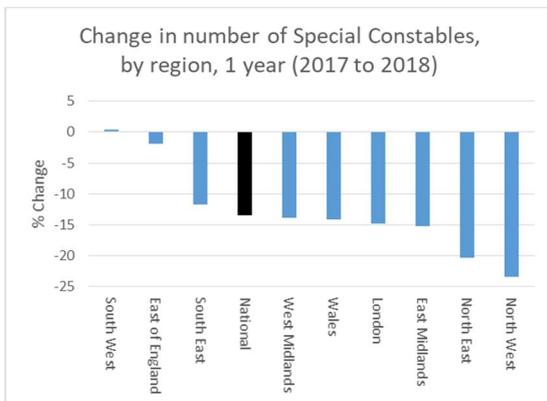


Logically, given that the national average is indeed an ‘average’, there is an even sense of forces that would need to grow their Specials numbers and those who would reduce to sit at the national average. The two largest ‘movers’ would be the MSC, which is still about 500 Special Constables above where it would be to be of average size, and the West Midlands, which would need to build numbers by approximately 400 to be an average size. Other forces which would need to see increases of 100 Special Constables or more to be at national average are South Wales (+136), Sussex (+125), South Yorkshire (+116), Northumbria (+107) and Surrey (+101).

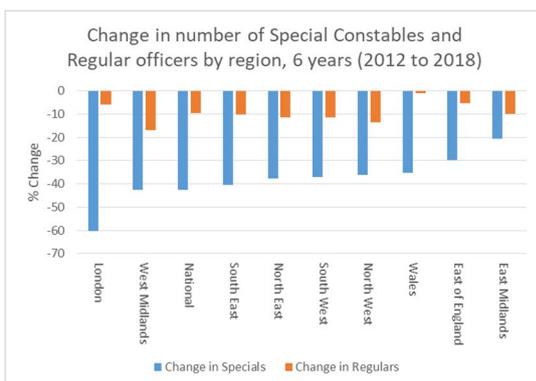
## Regional trends

Looking at numbers of Special Constables by region over the six years since 2012 (the right hand graph below), every region has seen reductions, albeit these have varied quite significantly in scale. Whilst the change in the London region (in effect reflecting the Metropolitan Special Constabulary reductions) have been over 60% in the past six years (six out of ten fewer Specials), in the East Midlands that figure is only one fifth fewer Specials (-20.6%) and in the East of England just under a third (-29.7%).

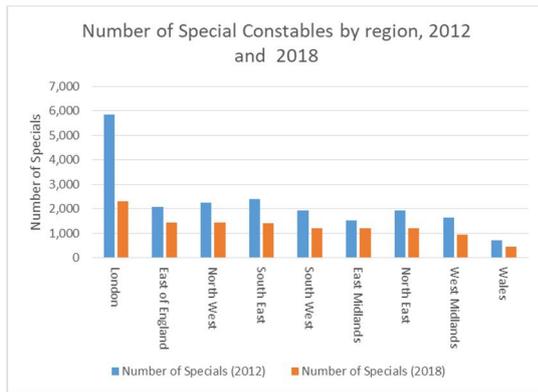
Looking at the left hand graph below, this shows the reductions only for the past twelve month period, 2017 to 2018. The South West saw a slight increase in the last year (+0.3%), and East of England only a very small decrease (-1.9%), whereas the North West (-23.4%) and the North East (-23.4%) had levels of reduction over the most recent twelve month period that were higher than the national average reduction (13.4%)



The graph below compares the reductions, by region, for Special Constables and for Regular officers over the past six years.

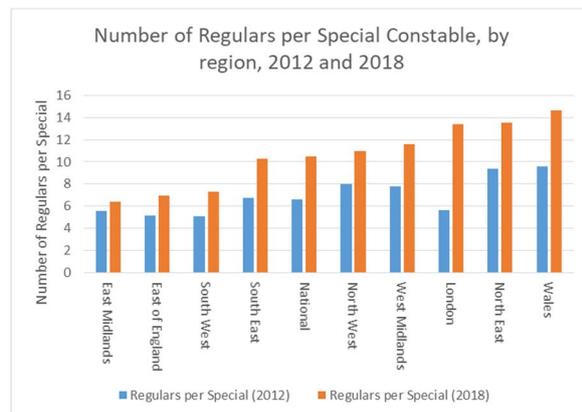
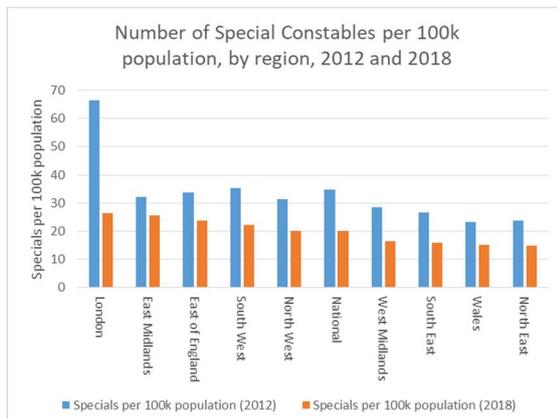


Looking in terms of raw numbers, as can be seen in the graph below, it is London region (effectively the MSC, in terms of this pattern of change, as City of London Special Constabulary is very much smaller and hasn't shown the same trend) which saw the largest share regionally of reductions, by a sizeable degree.



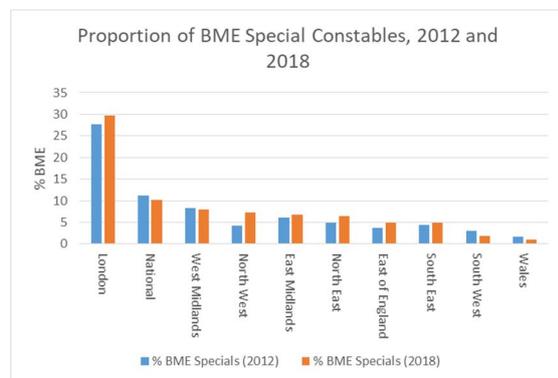
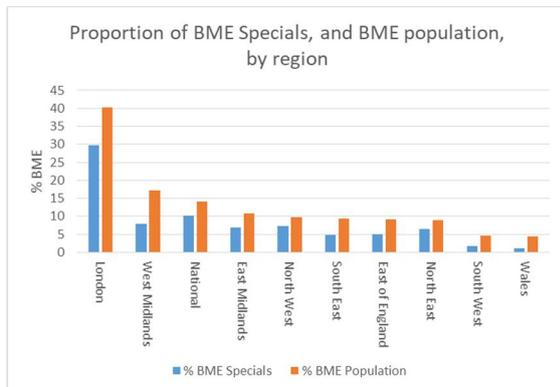
In terms of the comparative scale of Special Constabularies regionally, despite the scale of reductions over the past six years, looking at the figures in terms of Special Constables per 100k by region (the graph on the left below), London still has (slightly) the largest Special Constabulary per population in its region. Wales and the North East have historically had smaller Special Constabularies than elsewhere in the country, but as can be seen in the graph, whilst this remains the case it has become somewhat more marginal in the past six years.

Looking at the Regulars: Specials ratio by region, the East Midlands has the lowest number of Regulars per Special Constable, and Wales the highest. It is notable how much variation there is by region in that ratio, with East Midlands, East of England and South West having comparatively more Specials for each Regular officers than Wales, North East and London. As would be expected, London has seen the most marked shift in that measure over the past six years, having seen not only the largest fall in Special Constable numbers but also the third smallest fall in Regulars over the period.



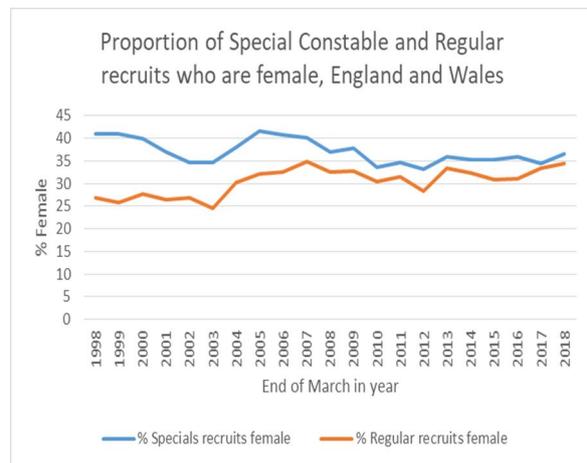
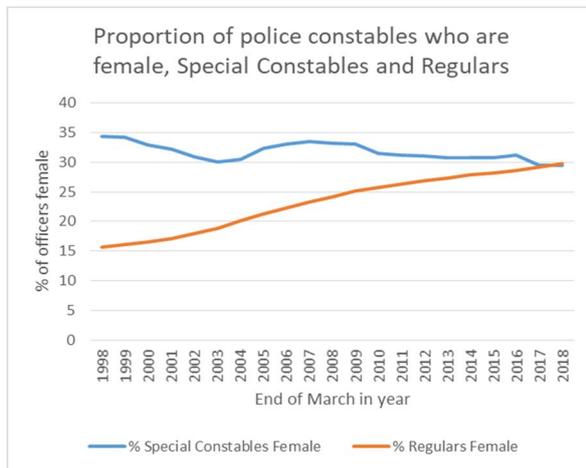
Finally, from a regional perspective, the graphs below show the proportion of BME Special Constables by region. The graph on the left shows the proportion of BME Special Constables and of BME population by region. It reflects that no region meets the challenge of having a BME representation in its Special Constabulary equal or greater than the BME in the population served; and that should be seen within the context that the BME statistics utilised (in the Home Office workforce statistics and in this briefing) date back from 2011, so will likely underestimate the current up-to-date BME general population seven years later.

The graph on the right below reflects a varied picture in terms of the change in BME Special Constabulary proportion over the past six years; four regions have shown a slight increase in BME percentage of Special Constables, and five have seen falls.

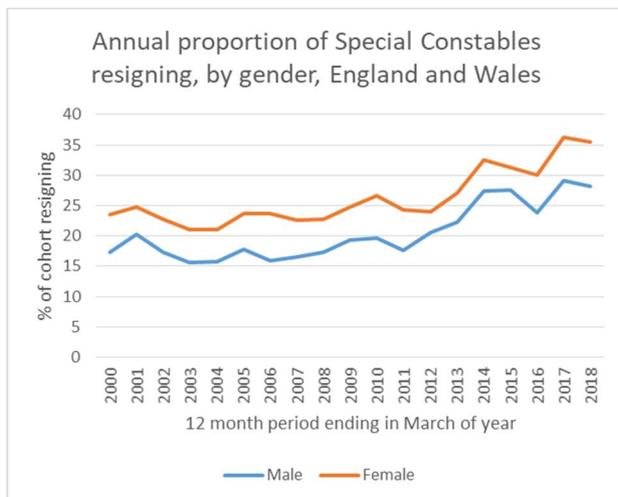


## Gender

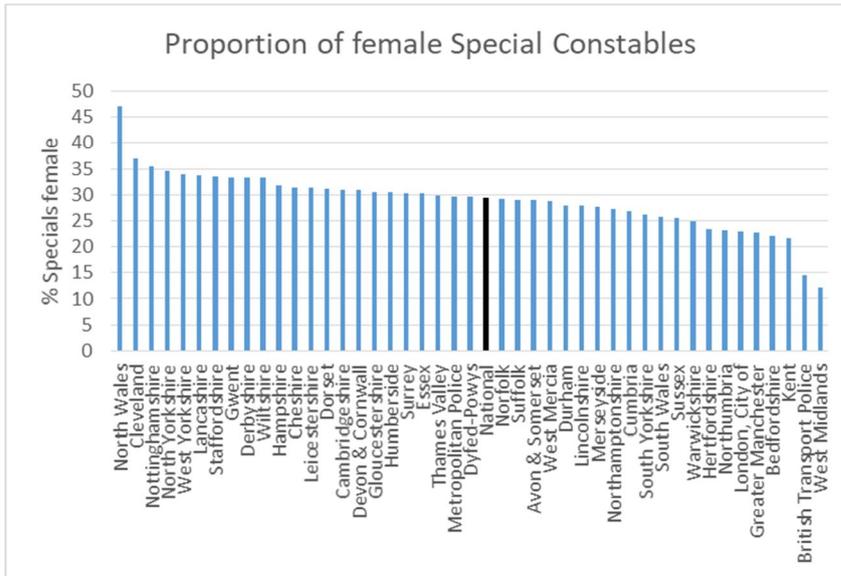
The 2018 data in respect of gender and the Special Constabulary is largely consistent with previous data. As shown in the graph below (on the left), there has been little change in the proportion of female Special Constables over the past two decades. Twenty years ago the proportion of Special Constables who were female was comparably much higher than the proportion of female Regulars. Over the past two decades, the proportion of female Regular officers has slowly but steadily increased, whilst the proportion of female Special Constables has remained broadly the same. The graph below (on the right) shows the pattern over the past two decades in the proportion of Special Constable recruits and Regular officer recruits who are female. For the first time in this data sequence, in March 2018 there was a greater proportion (albeit by a small margin) of female Regulars (29.8%) than there were female Special Constables (29.4%). Whilst the proportion of female Regular recruits has slowly tracked upwards over the past two decades, the proportion of female Special Constable recruited has slowly tracked downwards, with little if any change over the past decade.



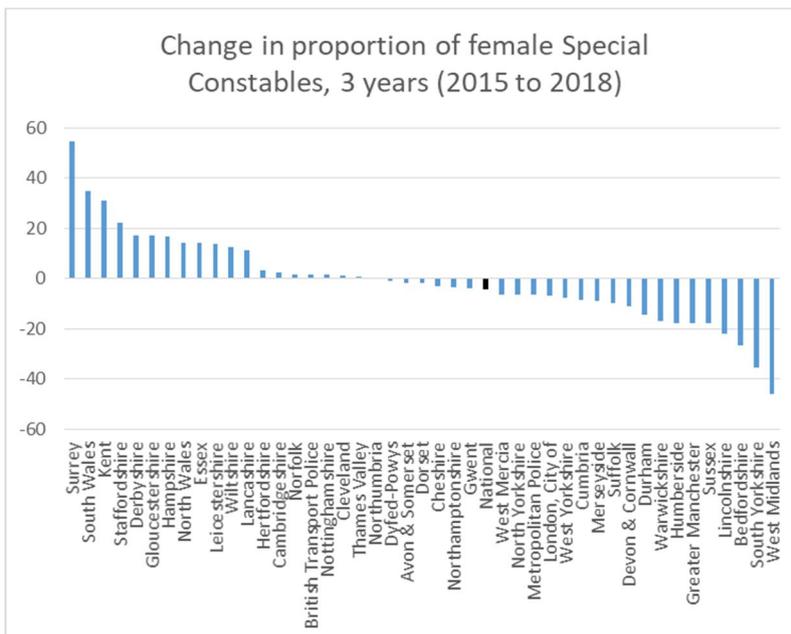
The March 2018 data for attrition rate by gender also remains consistent with previous data. In each and every year over the past two decades, the attrition rate for female Special Constables has been higher than that for male Specials, as reflected in the graph below.



As with almost all aspects of the Special Constabulary, the national picture has underlying it a great deal of local variation. At one end of the spectrum (looking at the graph below) the proportion of male and female Special Constables is almost 50-50 in North Wales (47.15), whereas at the other extreme of the graph, BTP has only 14.6% and the West Midlands 12.3%. Away from those two ends of the data spread, a number of forces have fewer than one in four Special Constables female (Warwickshire, Hertfordshire, Northumbria, City of London, GMP, Bedfordshire and Kent, as well as BTP and West Midlands), whereas several have a third or more female Specials (North Wales, Cleveland, Nottinghamshire, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Gwent, Derbyshire and Wiltshire).

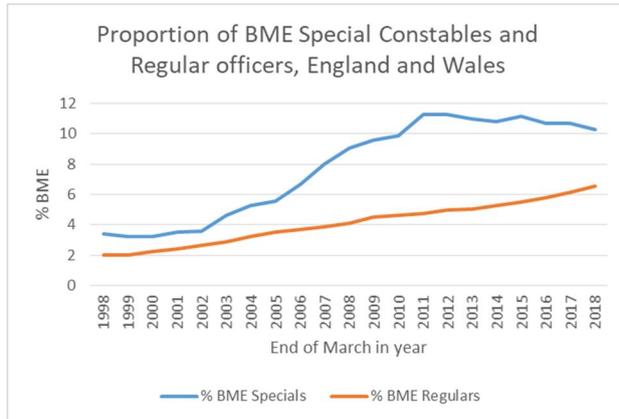


Looking at the trend in proportion of Special Constables in each force, there has again been a very mixed picture. Over the past three years, the proportion of female Specials has risen quite sharply (by over 20%) in Surrey, South Wales, Kent and Staffordshire. The proportion of female Special Constables has also gone down markedly in several other forces, including 20% or more reductions in that proportion of female Specials in Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire, West Yorkshire and the West Midlands.

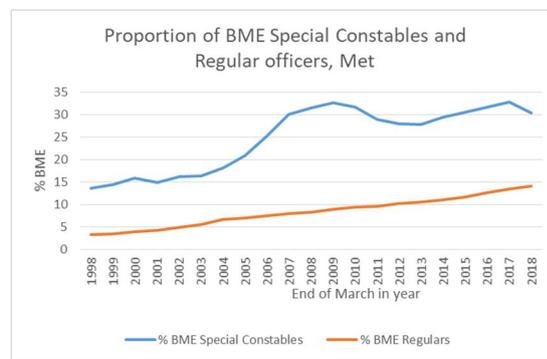
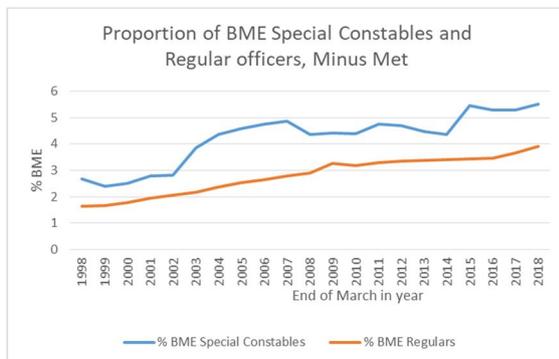


## Ethnicity

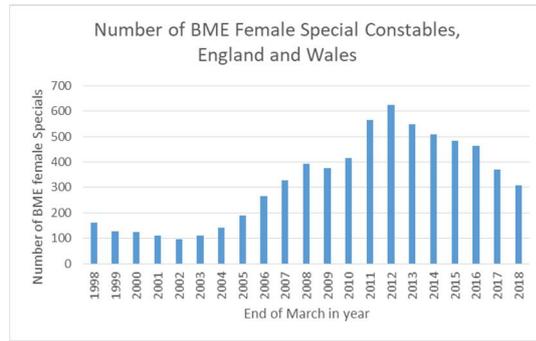
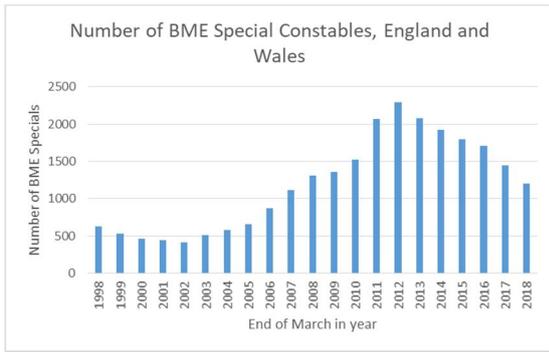
As shown in the graph below, the proportion of BME Special Constables remains significantly higher than the numbers for Regular officers. However, over the past decade there has been little change in the proportion of BME Special Constables, whilst there has continued to be growth (albeit slow growth) in the proportion of BME Regulars. So the gap between the two has gradually been growing smaller.



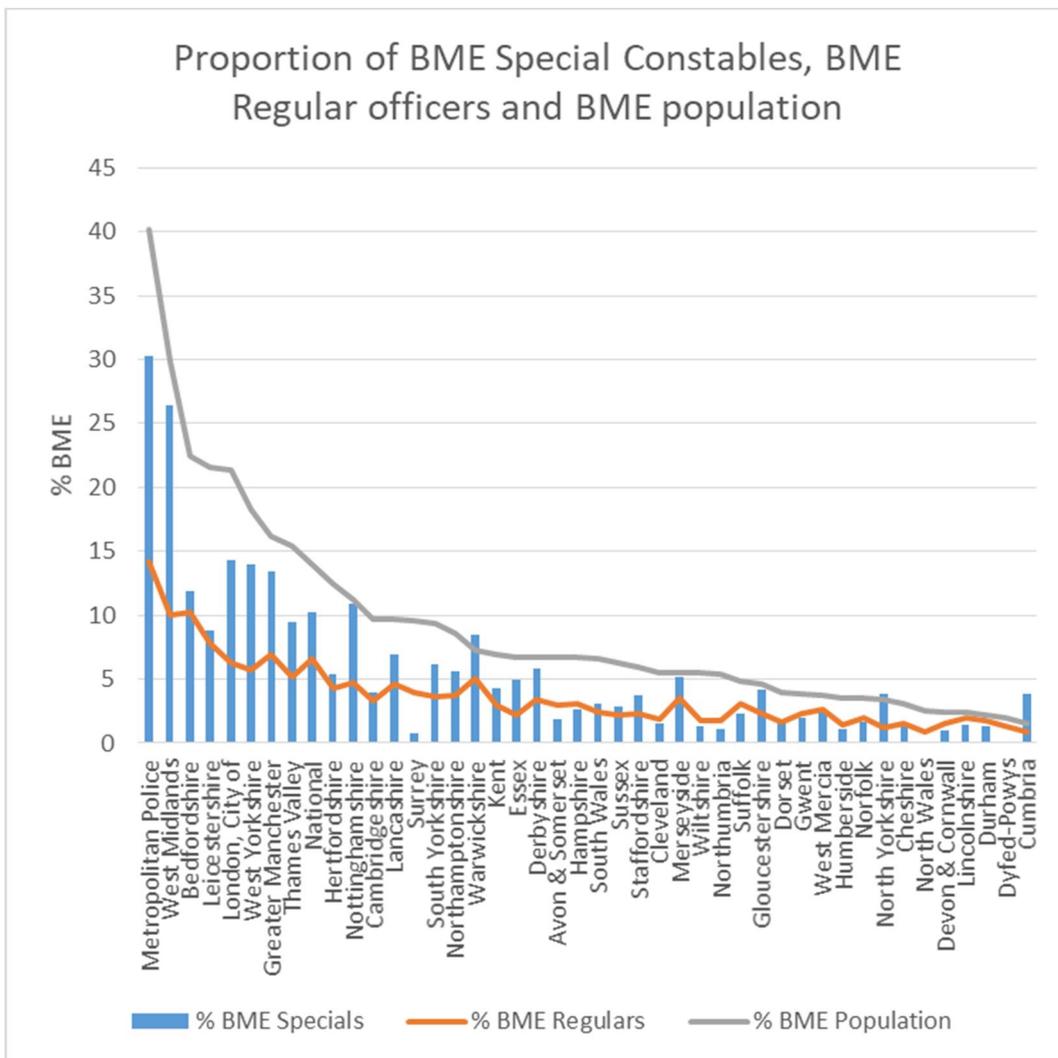
The Metropolitan Special Constabulary, despite its sharp reductions in size, still has 56.7% of the national population of BME Special Constables, with 680 BME Specials in the MSC out of a national total of 1,199. This proportion has fallen somewhat from its peak in 2013, where the MSC had 70% of the national BME Specials. As such, the MSC numbers in terms of BME Specials have a major effect on the overall national numbers. The two graphs below show the numbers for the Met, and for the 'rest of forces', for BME proportion of Special Constables and Regular officers.



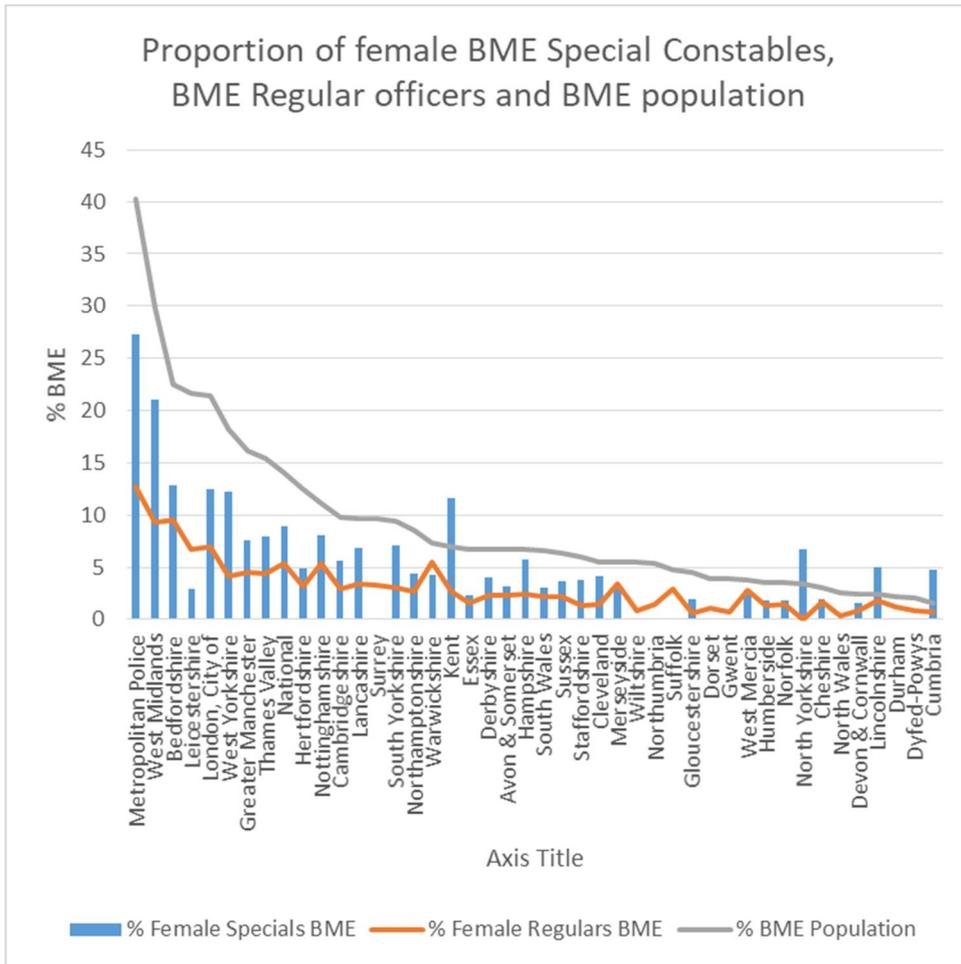
Given the reductions in Special Constable numbers both more generally across England and Wales, and specifically within the MSC (where, as said above, the proportion is greatest), one would expect the raw numbers of BME Specials nationally to have reduced. That national trend is shown in the graphs below, with the graph on the left showing overall number of BME Specials, and the graph on the right showing the numbers of female BME Special Constables.



The graph below shows the proportion of BME Special Constables for each force, alongside the proportion of Regular officers, and the BME population for their force areas.



The graph below shows the same data, but this time for the BME population for force area, and for the proportion of female BME Special Constables and Regulars. In broad terms, the proportion of BME female Specials is a little lower than for BME Specials overall.



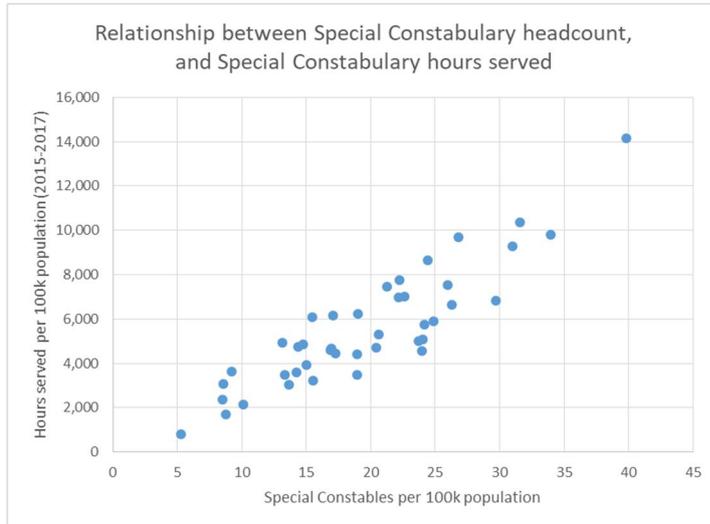
## **Is the Special Constabulary shrinking but becoming more productive, and are reductions in numbers shaped by ‘cleansing’ of inactive Specials from the data?**

There are broader questions here in respect of changes in the effectiveness or professionalisation of the Special Constabulary which are not readily answerable from the data available. It is possible (indeed no doubt very likely) that some Special Constabularies may have strengthened some aspects of how they deliver and the ‘effect’ they achieve, separate to issues of headcount. The national pilot project work, being undertaken by the IPSCJ and partnering with Essex (and planned to be also with other forces) will seek to develop in time a broader model to capture ‘value’ across the Special Constabulary. In the meantime, the data available systematically across the 44 forces does not tell us very much in respect of whether there have been any such broader, more qualitative, improvements in delivery and impact.

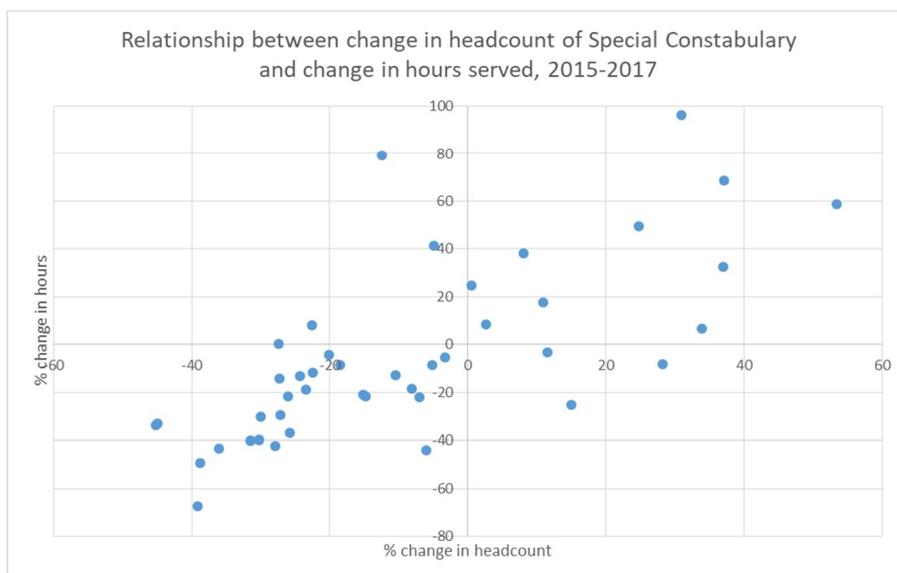
One more specific debate that is more readily answerable from the data is the argument that whilst Special Constabularies have become smaller, they have also become more ‘productive’ in the sense of hours served. One aspect of this argument is that the fall in numbers is in part simply the (positive) product of a ‘cleansing’ out of those less active or inactive Specials, meaning that the cohort that remains may be numerically smaller but is more productive per Special Constable, as it has simply adjusted out those who were not in effect delivering in any case.

The general argument that ‘hours’ are rising as ‘headcount’ is falling is not supported by the data we have available. For each of the three years that IPSCJ has data for every force (2015, 2016 and 2017), the average hours per Special Constable nationally has remained almost exactly the same in each of those three years, and the total number of hours served has fallen almost in exact proportion to the headcount reductions during that period. If the falling numbers of Specials were to be down to ‘cleansing’ out less active or inactive Special Constables from the cohort, then what we would expect to see in the data would be signals such as an increase in average hours served by Specials year on year. This doesn’t appear to be the case.

At individual force level, the data similarly reflects that ‘headcount’ is actually a strong predictor of ‘hours served’. As the graph below shows, whilst there is inevitably some variation at local level in forces, the broad shape of the relationship is strong and quite consistent across forces nationally, showing that those Special Constabularies with higher numbers of Special Constables per 100k population tend to also be the ones delivering more hours per 100k population, and vice versa.



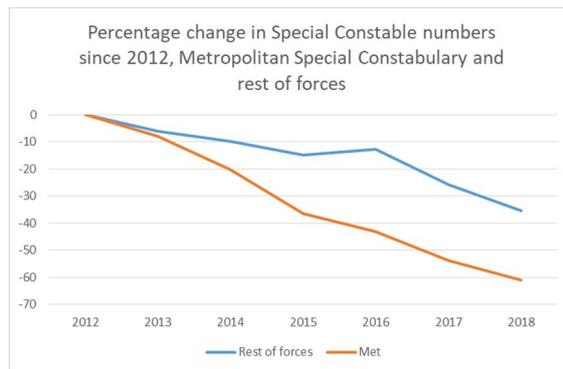
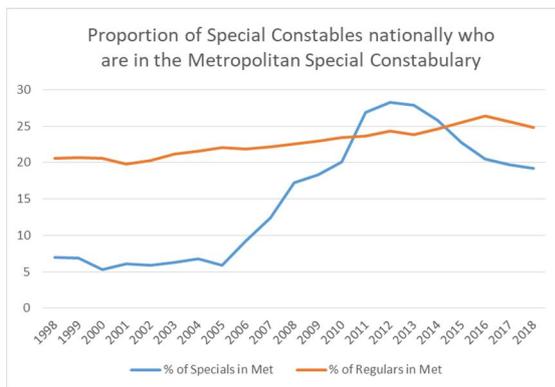
A linked argument, quite commonly heard at force level, is that whilst Special Constabulary numbers have fallen recently, the actual hours served by Special Constables have nevertheless risen in the same period. Once again, looking nationally across the data there seem to be only very limited examples at individual force level in support of such arguments. Looking at the period 2015-2017, the graph below plots each force in terms of its percentage change in headcount and the percentage change in hours served. Only 3 forces (of the 44) sit in the top left quadrant of the graph (where headcount has fallen but hours risen). Similarly the opposite is also true, in that only 3 of the forces are in the bottom right quadrant (with a rising headcount over the period but falling hours served). As can be seen, the vast majority of forces sit either in the bottom left quadrant (falling headcount and falling hours) or the top right quadrant (rising headcount and rising hours). In essence, this spread of the forces across the graph suggests that, on the whole, claims (despite being quite commonly made) that “our numbers are down but hours are up” do not seem to be grounded in the data for the vast majority of forces over the past three years.



This relationship between hours served and headcount merits further analysis, and in particular it would be interesting to look in a more sophisticated manner at 'operational' hours, etc. But at a first look across the data that we have currently available comprehensively at a national level, it does seem that (i) hours served and headcount tend to reflect one another quite closely, and (ii) that there is no particular signalling in the data of any rise in average hours served, which one would expect if numbers falling was being driven by 'cleansing' out less active or inactive Specials.

## What has been the relationship between the national reductions in Special Constable headcount and reductions in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary?

The Metropolitan Special Constabulary (MSC) currently represents almost a fifth (19.2%) of the national Special Constabulary cohort, and as the graph below (on the left) shows during the period of reductions in numbers since 2012 that proportion has at times been even higher, peaking at over a quarter (28.3%) of Special Constables nationally being in the MSC in 2012. So, given the relative size of the MSC, representing one if five Specials nationally, it will always have a more significant impact on national figures as a whole than smaller forces' Special Constabularies.

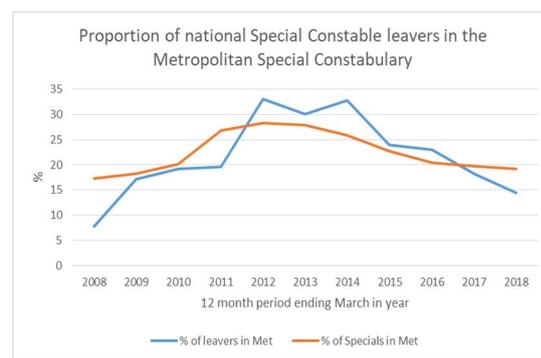
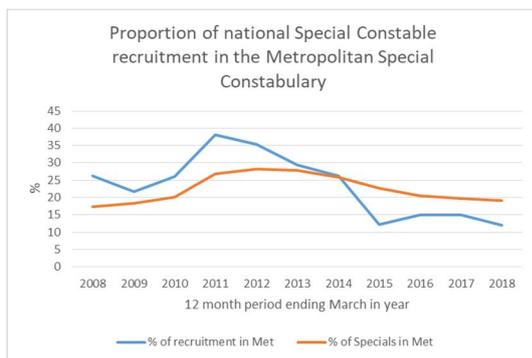


As shown in the graph on the right above, over the current period of reductions nationally that began in 2012, the Metropolitan Special Constabulary has shrunk much more quickly than have the numbers of Special Constable in the rest of forces in England and Wales, albeit both have tracked down markedly during the past six years.

The MSC has contributed 40.5% of the totality of reductions nationally since 2012, clearly signalling that the 60.9% reduction in numbers (a loss of three in every five Specials) from the MSC from 5,752 to only 2,723 has played a significant part in the overall pattern of reductions nationally. This is reflected in the table below, which shows the 'Met effect' during the period of reducing numbers.

Year	National change in numbers of Special Constables	National change (minus MSC)	MSC Change in numbers	MSC Change as % of national change
2013	-1,332	-883	-449	33.7
2014	-1,247	-531	-716	57.4
2015	-1,690	-762	-928	54.9
2016	-78	310	-388	***
2017	-2,493	-1,883	-610	24.5
2018	-1,813	-1,398	-415	22.9
Total	-8,653	-5,147	-3,506	40.5

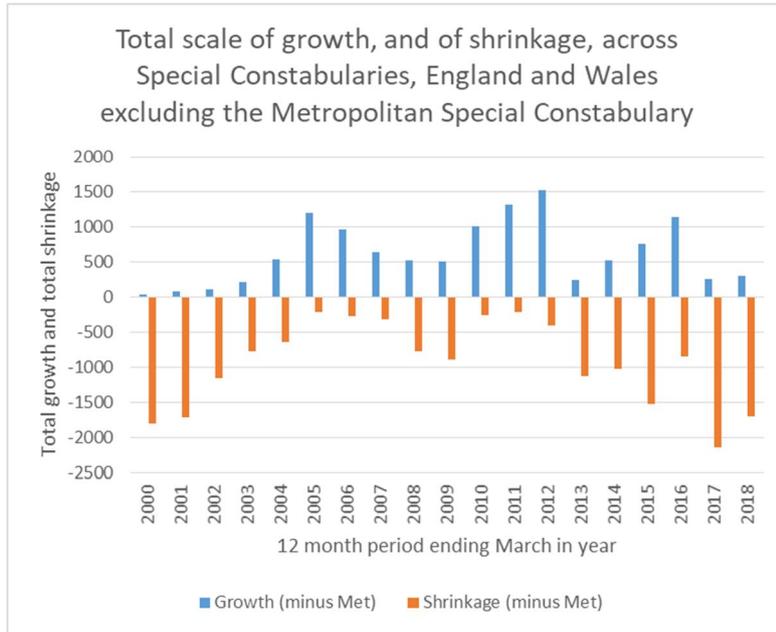
The two graphs below show the proportion of joiners (on the left) and leavers (on the right) within the MSC as a proportion of the numbers nationally, with the other line on each graph showing the proportion of all Specials nationally who were within the MSC for the respective annual periods. In essence, if the blue line is above the other line on the graphs, the MSC is contributing disproportionately highly to joiners or leavers, if the line is below it is making a less than proportionate response. The graph of joiners shows that up until 2014 the MSC was recruiting disproportionately higher numbers than the rest of Special Constabularies nationally, whereas since 2014 that has reversed. The graph of leavers shows that the MSC had a disproportionately low level of leavers between 2008 and 2011, and then a higher proportion from 2012 through to 2016.



In the period immediately after 2012 and through to around about 2016, the main ‘effect’ the MSC was playing on the numbers more generally was through having a disproportionately high rate of attrition. Since around about 2014, the comparatively low rate of recruitment into the MSC compared to national average has grown to be more significant, in terms of trends within the MSC influencing the national picture.

In the years 2012-2016, the MSC was having a markedly disproportionate effect on the broader national picture. In the past two years that effect has been much more ‘in line’ with the wider picture across all forces nationally. In 2016-2017, the MSC represented 19.7% of the Specials cohort nationally and 24.5% of reductions. In 2017-2018 the MSC was 19.2% of the overall national cohort and contributed 22.9% of the national reductions. So in both years the ‘effect’ was slightly disproportionately high, but nowhere near the proportion of reductions Met contributed by the MSC in the earlier years of shrinkage post-2012.

Having discussed this impact of the MSC, it is important to note that whilst the MSC impact has been significant since 2012, it still only accounts for a minority (four-tenths) of the wider national picture. The graph below shows – for national data across forces but excluding the MSC – the scale of growth in Special Constabulary numbers (in forces where the Special Constabulary was expanding) and reductions in numbers (for forces where the numbers were shrinking) for each year since 2000. The graph shows that there are still significant movements in numbers of Special Constables nationally, taking the MSC out of the picture, and that in particular there are large volumes of reduction in forces other than the Met in each of the past six annual data periods since 2012.



## Discussing the future

It is challenging to make predictions about the future of Special Constabulary numbers, given the scale of local variability across the data. However, some broad observations from the data would include:

**If nothing changes, the numbers look set to continue to fall.** In very basic mathematical terms, the current rate of attrition (30.3%) sits a long way above the current rate of recruitment (20.2%).

If rates remain 'as is', the table below reflects what would project from those rates of attrition and of recruitment in coming years.

FUTURE SCENARIO - IF RATES REMAIN AS PER 2017-2018	Numbers of Specials	Leavers	Attrition rate	Joiners	Recruitment rate
31st March 2018	10,690	3,239	30.3	2,159	20.2
31st March 2019	9,610	2,912	30.3	1,941	20.2
31st March 2020	8,640	2,618	30.3	1,745	20.2
31st March 2021	7,767	2,353	30.3	1,569	20.2
31st March 2022	6,983	2,116	30.3	1,410	20.2
31st March 2023	6,277	***	***	***	***

### The rate of attrition will probably reduce

In broad terms, the currently high (and arguably unsustainable) attrition rate is explained by two elements:

- (i) 'Cyclical', or 'one-off' factors. These include elements such as spikes in volume of leavers following periods of rapid (and arguably unsustainable) growth – so, on the bigger scale and particularly in the MSC data there has been a sense of post-2012 surge in reductions following a pre-2012 growth spike, and on more local scale similar pattern in some rapid-growth forces, e.g. Northamptonshire and West Yorkshire. And it has also included a sense of 'surge' in transition into the Regulars, in the immediate aftermath of recruitment processes re-opening circa 2014 onwards;
- (ii) 'Structural' factors, which more fundamentally underpin the higher attrition levels over the longer-term. These include the demographics of recruits (still primarily young), and the sense of imbalance between many recruits wishing to join the Regulars and fewer 'career' Specials. And it includes problems relating to support, leadership and the quality of experience.

In these basic terms, there seem reasons to think the 'cyclical' elements of attrition may start to reduce in impact in the next 1-2 years. The post-2012 falls are now less influential within the data, and any initial 'surge' effect of Regulars recruitment is likely now to again be dropping out of the figures.

However, the more 'structural' factors seem much harder to change, and given that challenge, attrition rates are likely to remain quite high, but just probably less high than the recent peaks of rising above 30%. Perhaps a figure in the range of 25%-27.5% might be realistic to predict.

Assuming attrition of 25%, and a maintenance of the present low rate of recruitment, numbers would be predicated to continue to fall, but at a somewhat slower rate.

<b>FUTURE SCENARIO - IF ATTRITION REDUCES TO 25%</b>	<b>Numbers of Specials</b>	<b>Leavers</b>	<b>Attrition rate</b>	<b>Joiners</b>	<b>Recruitment rate</b>
<b>31st March 2018</b>	10,690	2,673	25.0	2,159	20.2
<b>31st March 2019</b>	10,177	2,544	25.0	2,056	20.2
<b>31st March 2020</b>	9,688	2,422	25.0	1,957	20.2
<b>31st March 2021</b>	9,223	2,306	25.0	1,863	20.2
<b>31st March 2022</b>	8,781	2,195	25.0	1,774	20.2
<b>31st March 2023</b>	8,359	***	***	***	***

### **Raising recruitment is crucial, but presents a major challenge.**

If numbers are to be maintained, or indeed built back up, then levels of recruitment need to be increased.

This seems to represent a major strategic challenge.

In part, there may be some shorter-term ('cyclical'/'one off') factors at play again, in particular one of the challenges in Specials recruitment volumes falling is the diversion of resource to Regular recruitment and training, and some of that diversionary problem may represent a shorter-term spike around initial surges in Regulars recruiting rather than be more enduring.

However, there seem to be some quite fundamental challenges to building up recruitment levels. At a strategic level, there is something of a policy-aversion to numerical growth in Special Constabularies, in part a symptom of previous exercises in growth which are viewed as 'playing a numbers game', poorly planned and executed, and unsustainable. At more tactical and practice levels, little is still known about 'what works' in broadening the appeal of the Special Constabulary and little progress has to date been made in greater cohesion and co-ordination of attraction, recruiting and training Specials nationally (albeit some projects, such as the all-Wales and South-East regional pilot projects, show some promise).

There also remains, as a broader context to these challenges, a great deal of uncertainty as to the future impact of changes in Regular officer recruitment and training models. It could be that these have an effect of reducing numbers of 'Regular-pathway' Specials, which if that turned out to be the case would obviously further drive down Specials recruitment as a whole, given that the majority of current recruits are 'Regular-pathway'.

### **Building numbers back up would require significant change, in particular in levels of recruitment.**

Any agenda of building up Special Constable numbers will require quite significant shifts in the data, and in particular substantially higher levels of recruiting than have been seen during more recent years. The tables below give an indicative sense of what numbers may need to look like to re-build up Specials numbers to where they were in 2016 (circa 16k) or back in 2012 (circa 20k).

<b>BUILD BACK TO 16k, 27.5% ATTRITION</b>	Numbers of Specials	Leavers	Attrition rate	Joiners	Recruitment rate
<b>31st March 2018</b>	10,690	2,940	27.5	3,838	35.9
<b>31st March 2019</b>	11,588	3,187	27.5	4,160	35.9
<b>31st March 2020</b>	12,561	3,454	27.5	4,510	35.9
<b>31st March 2021</b>	13,617	3,745	27.5	4,888	35.9
<b>31st March 2022</b>	14,760	4,059	27.5	5,299	35.9
<b>31st March 2023</b>	16,000	***	***	***	***

<b>BUILD BACK TO 16k, 30.3% ATTRITION</b>	Numbers of Specials	Leavers	Attrition rate	Joiners	Recruitment rate
<b>31st March 2018</b>	10,690	3,239	30.3	4,137	38.7
<b>31st March 2019</b>	11,588	3,511	30.3	4,485	38.7
<b>31st March 2020</b>	12,561	3,806	30.3	4,861	38.7
<b>31st March 2021</b>	13,617	4,126	30.3	5,270	38.7
<b>31st March 2022</b>	14,760	4,472	30.3	5,712	38.7
<b>31st March 2023</b>	16,000	***	***	***	***

<b>BUILD UP TO 20k, AT 27.5% ATTRITION</b>	Numbers of Specials	Leavers	Attrition rate	Joiners	Recruitment rate
<b>31st March 2018</b>	10,690	2,940	27.5	4,367	40.85
<b>31st March 2019</b>	12,117	3,332	27.5	4,950	40.85
<b>31st March 2020</b>	13,735	3,777	27.5	5,611	40.85
<b>31st March 2021</b>	15,568	4,281	27.5	6,360	40.85
<b>31st March 2022</b>	17,647	4,853	27.5	7,209	40.85
<b>31st March 2023</b>	20,003	***	***	***	***