



Institute for
Public Safety
Crime and Justice

Analysis of Special Constabulary National Statistics

Briefing Paper 4

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National Statistics on Special Constables – September 2018

The mid-year national police workforce statistics were published on 24th January, relating to 30th September 2018. The report on the statistics, and full statistical output by force can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2018>

These mid-year statistics only report on total number of Specials, not on any of the detail in respect of ethnicity and gender, or the volume of joiners and leavers. The next full-year national workforce statistics for Specials will be published in July 2019, relating to March 2019.

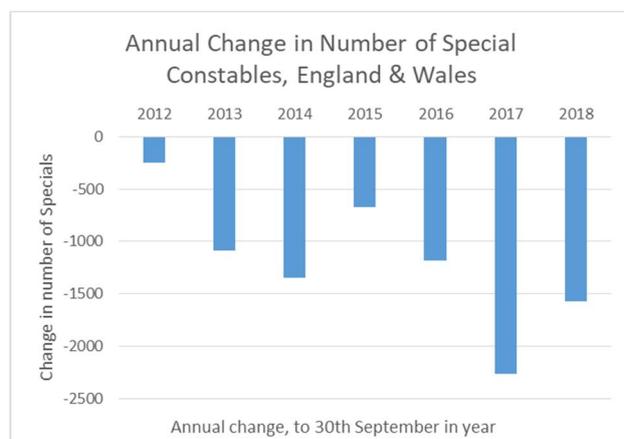
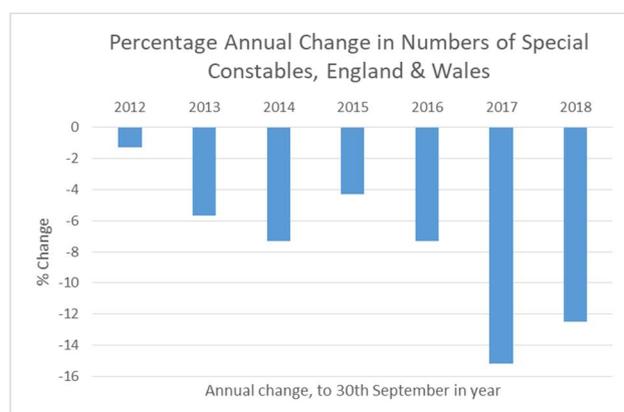
Key findings from the 30th September 2018 data include:

- Special Constable numbers nationally have continued to fall. In the twelve month period September 2017-2018, there was a **national reduction of 12.5%** (a reduction of one in eight, representing 1,572 fewer Specials);
- The figures record that in September 2018, there were **11,029** Specials in England & Wales (not counting BTP), the lowest number of Specials since 2004;
- This decline in numbers reflects the continuation of a consistently downward trend in Specials numbers in every data period since 2012. Numbers have now almost halved (a reduction of 45.8%) since 2012;
- The data suggests that there may be some *slight* slowing in the pace of reduction nationally. There is also a potentially positive signal in the six month period March 2018 to September 2018, during which an increased number (albeit still a minority) of Special Constabularies saw growth;
- However, a continuity of reductions across most forces and almost all CiP regions, and a continuing double-digit national annual rate of reduction, suggests that the downward trend in Specials numbers over recent years has clearly not yet 'bottomed out'. Analysis of this data is suggestive that further falls should be seen as very likely in coming data periods;
- The Metropolitan Special Constabulary continued a trend seen over recent years of experiencing falls slightly larger in percentage terms than the national picture, with a 16.5% annual reduction in numbers representing 408 fewer Specials. However, as with other recent data periods, falls in numbers in the Met only represent one element in the wider national picture of reduction, with the Met accounting for 26% of the national total reduction;
- Over the twelve month period September 2017-2018, reductions in numbers of Specials were seen in 33 forces, with double-digit percentage reductions in 25 forces, meaning the pattern of reducing numbers remains widespread across most forces, and not just accounted for by larger-scale changes in specific force contexts;
- Some forces bucked the trend in reductions over the period September 2017-2018. In particular, Surrey, Cleveland, Essex, Gloucestershire, Merseyside, Wiltshire and Hertfordshire saw increased numbers during the period.

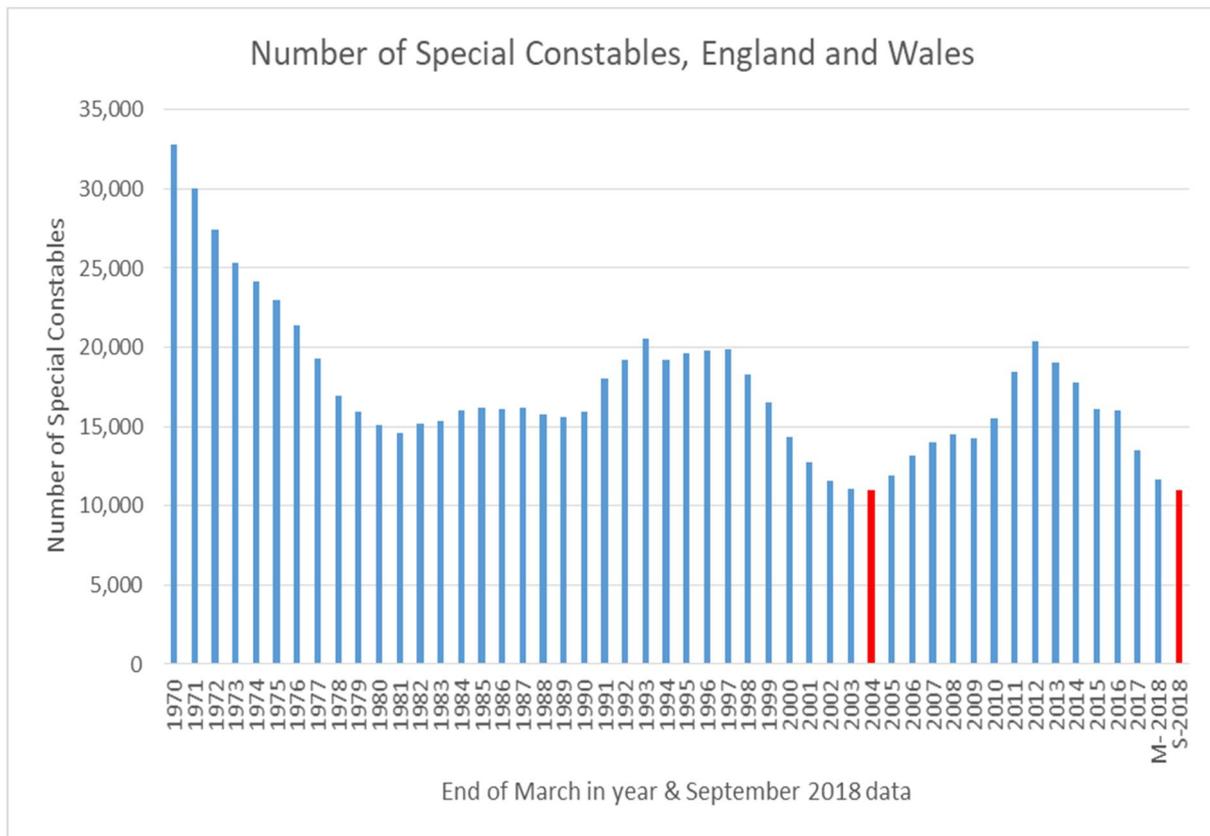
Total numbers of Special Constables nationally

The total numbers of Specials has continued to fall, consistent with a sustained trend of reducing numbers that has been seen since 2012. The numbers of Specials, at 11,029, is at the lowest level since 2004, and current numbers represent a reduction of 9,314 Specials – a fall of 45.8% - from the peak numbers in the recent period (in 2012). In the last three data periods there has been a *slight* softening in the rate of reduction. Nevertheless, the 12 month period September 2017-September 2018 again saw a double-digit fall, with 12.5% (one in eight) fewer Specials.

	Number of Special Constables (not including BTP)	% change on previous six months	% change on previous twelve months
September 2018	11,029	-5.7%	-12.5%
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		



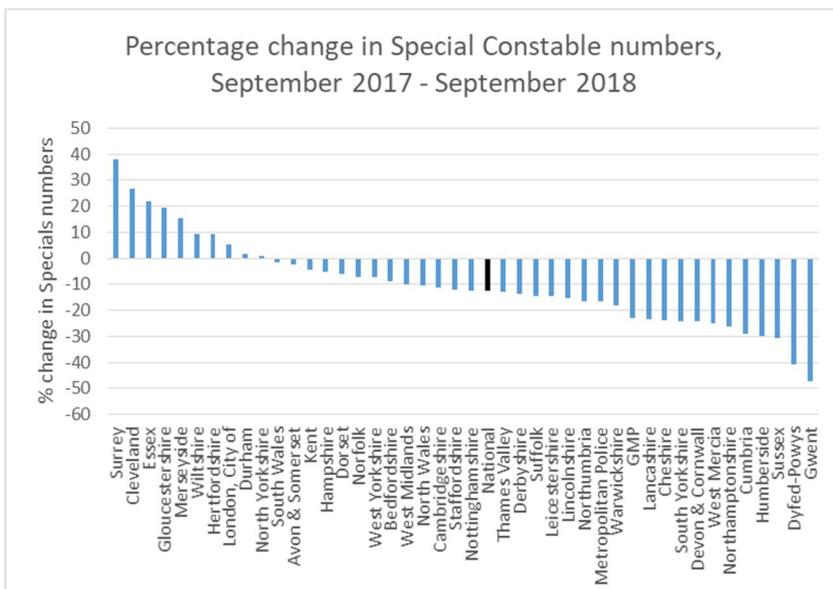
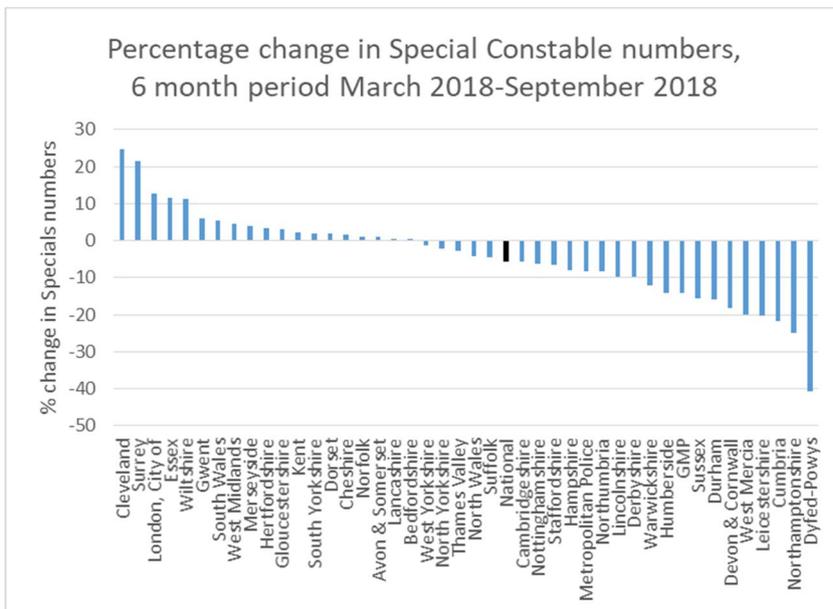
Looking at longer-term trends, over the period of almost half a century since 1970, the annual average for Special Constable numbers nationally has been 17,477. The current figure is 37% below that longer-term average. The figure for September 2018 stands close to the long-term lowest point for Specials numbers; the 11,029 total in September 2018 being only 41 higher than the all-time recent low in numbers, recorded in 2004 at 10,988.



Percentage changes in numbers at individual force level

As is typically the case with Special Constabularies, there is a very mixed picture with wide variation in terms of trends in the data when looked at across individual forces. The percentage changes for the six month period (March 2018-September 2018) and for the annual change period (September 2017-September 2018) are shown for each force in the graphs below. Caution is needed in focusing too much on relatively short-term trends at individual force level: some apparently large changes in percentage terms may represent relatively small raw numbers of Specials, some force changes may reflect local data issues (e.g. data ‘cleansing’), and the data at force level for Specials numbers tends to be quite volatile.

A majority of forces have continued to see reductions. There is perhaps some positive signal in a comparatively larger number of growing Special Constabularies (19) in the six month period March-September 2018 than has typically been the case in recent years. Five forces saw double-digit growth in the annual period September 2017-2018: Surrey, Cleveland, Essex, Gloucestershire and Merseyside.



Forces with reductions in their Special Constable numbers remain in the large majority; for the annual period September 2017-2018, 33 forces experienced reducing numbers, with 25 showing double-digit reductions. Taking that twelve month period, the pattern across forces reflects a slight worsening compared to recent years. However, as mentioned above, taking the March-September six month period, more forces (19) reflect growth, albeit in many cases relatively small levels of growth.

Change in the 12 months to...	Number of forces with growing numbers	Of those, the number of forces with double-digit percentage growth	Number of forces with falling numbers	Of those, the number of forces with double-digit percentage reductions
September 2018	10	5	33	25
September 2017	12	4	31	21
September 2016	14	7	28	17
September 2015	16	9	26	16
September 2014	13	8	29	13
September 2013	14	5	29	18
September 2012	19	7	23	12

Biggest numerical risers and fallers

The largest numerical falls in numbers for the twelve months September 2017-2018 occurred across eight forces. Three of these forces (the Met, GMP and Northamptonshire) were also amongst the handful of forces with largest numerical reductions in the preceding twelve month period of September 2016-2017.

Force	Numbers of Specials reduced in past year
Metropolitan Police	-408
GMP	-117
Lancashire	-106
Cheshire	-106
Devon & Cornwall	-105
West Mercia	-97
Northamptonshire	-91
Sussex	-79

In the six years of national falls between 2012 and 2018, the Met has consistently been the largest single contributor numerically to national reductions. In part this is just naturally reflective that it is several-fold the largest Special Constabulary (despite reductions, it is still 4.5x the size of the second largest). It has also tended, since 2012, to have larger percentage falls than the national average.

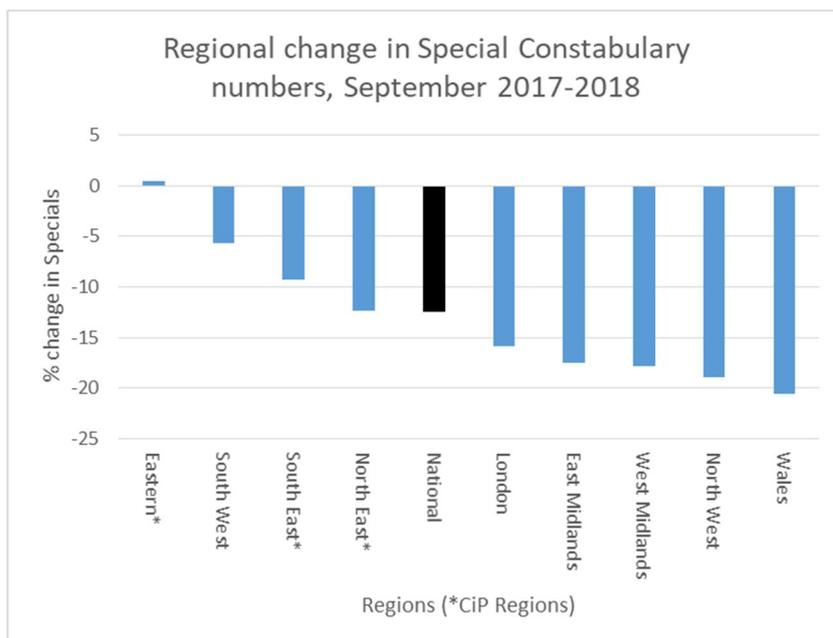
As reflected in the table above and below, and consistent with the pattern in recent years, the numerical scale of growth in those forces which have grown their Special Constabularies most has been substantially smaller than the numerical scale of reductions in those which have been most shrinking in size. Essex leads the way in terms of numerical growth, having increased by 85 Special

Constables over the September 2017-2018 period. In September 2015, Essex was the 14th largest Special Constabulary nationally; in September 2018 it is the second largest. Essex is the only force to demonstrate growth over the twelve month period on a similar numerical scale as the forces shown above for scale of reductions.

Force	Numbers of Specials increased in past year
Essex	86
Surrey	45
Merseyside	32
Gloucestershire	28
Hertfordshire	23
Wiltshire	21
Cleveland	17

Regional change

Most of the CiP regions have continued to see significant reductions, with only East of England not showing a fall. The biggest percentage falls regionally were in Wales (where numbers fell by a fifth, and all four forces saw reductions in the twelve month period September 2017-2018, with Gwent and Dyfed Powys nationally seeing the two largest reductions in percentage terms over the period).



The updated comparative picture across forces

Based upon this most recent September 2018 national data, the following two graphs show the comparative picture of current numbers of Specials across all forces in England & Wales. The first one shows ratio of Specials to Regulars in each force, and the second shows Specials per 100k population in each force. As has been the case in recent years, the West Midlands remains a notable outlier, with by far the smallest Special Constabulary comparatively in the country. At the other end of the scale, for the first time in several years, Northamptonshire is no longer an outlier in terms of comparatively high numbers of Specials, and has been displaced as the comparatively largest Special Constabulary in terms of Regular: Special ratio by Wiltshire. Consistent with the regional pattern over recent years, forces in North East England and in Wales are quite strongly represented in the comparatively smaller Special Constabularies.

