Missing Persons: Data and Analysis

2011/2012

Foreword

Great strides have been made in the missing people arena since last year and we will continue to see the benefits of these changes in the coming months and years. Not least of these has been the agreement with our partners in the Department for Education to better align our statistical data regarding missing people. This will ensure that we can better focus on the most vulnerable looked after children and adults.

The interest that has been generated from the change in the 'missing' definition has data at the heart of it. There has been widespread surprise at the numbers of incidents of people that go missing – measured last year by the UK Missing Persons Bureau to be 327,000. This equates to approximately 20 missing reports per police force per day, every day. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to continue to fine tune our reporting and recording mechanisms to ensure that our data both informs our response to better safeguarding and promotes good practice to reduce missing incidents.

It is to this end that I ask all police forces to provide the UK Missing Persons Bureau with the most comprehensive figures on missing data in their areas as possible. Accurate and complete data returns are essential for helping the Bureau to produce the most precise picture at a national level. I remain very grateful to those police forces who readily see the benefit of supplying the data returns for the Bureau in order for them to produce this report.

We continue to look at ways of enhancing our knowledge and understanding of missing data and are actively looking at creating a national register and database. The benefits of this would be many, not least of which would be the ability for police forces to access information on all missing people. This will be one of our goals for 2013/14.

Lastly, I would like to thank the police forces, our partner agencies and charity organisations for the contribution they make towards missing people and for the achievements this year, at both an operational and strategic level. We will continue to maintain the momentum and drive through innovative change in this important area of policing and strive to provide an increasingly better service to those who are most vulnerable in our society. With your assistance and cooperation, we will continue to do all we can to remove the barriers that prevent us from attaining excellent service provision to those who require it and I thank you for your support.

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 person's incidents recorded in the financial year 2011/12. The figures provided by police forces indicate that overall around 313,000 missing person's incidents were recorded in 2011/12; around 280,000 in England and Wales and around 33,000 in Scotland.

This means that police in Britain recorded approximately 858 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 192,000 people went missing at least once in 2011/12.

Data from police forces also indicates that 24 police forces in England and Wales recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2011/12, with a total of 357 found in England and Wales. The vast majority of these (around 90%) 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 report presents information relating to missing person's[1] and unidentified bodies under the code of practice on the collection of missing person's 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 person's and unidentified bodies reported to the police in the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Police forces in England and Wales are required under the code to supply quarterly data on the number of missing person's and unidentified bodies reported to the police. Other UK police forces, e.g. Scottish police forces can supply data on a voluntary basis. No returns were received from Guernsey, Isle of Man, States of Jersey or Northern Ireland police forces. 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.

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[1] 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.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/201103CRIIMP02.pdf
NB: Definition accurate at the time of data collection.

The limitations to the data used to produce the report 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.

Missing incidents in 2011/12

All 43 police forces in England and Wales supplied data either on the number of missing person's recorded for all four quarters in 2011/12 or an aggregated figure for the year.

Table 1: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2011/12

Police Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon & Somerset	1,655	1,607	1,359	1,171	5,792
Bedfordshire	799	639	558	574	2,570
Cambridgeshire	826	753	708	642	2,929
Cheshire	1,213	1,081	870	724	3,888
City of London	41	56	40	23	160
Cleveland	981	1044	825	875	3,725
Cumbria	400	359	492	324	1,575
Derbyshire	1,666	1,474	1,291	1,190	5,621
Devon & Cornwall	2,769	2,772	2,349	2,321	10,211
Dorset	781	785	609	639	2,814
Durham	700	639	507	484	2,330
Dyfed-Powys	559	516	561	405	2,041
Essex	1,426	1,369	1,183	1,097	5,075
Gloucestershire	640	652	580	501	2,373
Greater Manchester	7,540	6,830	6,077	6,024	26,471
Gwent	1,234	1,194	1,073	920	4,421
Hampshire	2,319	2,340	1,408	1,191	7,258
Hertfordshire	1,178	1,028	1,033	1,056	4,295
Humberside	2,067	2,062	1,705	1,568	7,402
Kent	2,429	2,403	2,099	2,233	9164
Lancashire	2,864	2,367	2,170	2,084	9,485
Leicestershire	1,777	1,632	1,496	1,324	6,229
Lincolnshire	754	769	642	646	2,811
Merseyside	4,461	3,791	3,183	3,237	14,672
Metropolitan[2]	11,169	10,312	10,107	9,929	41,517
Norfolk	847	736	839	708	3,130
North Wales	307	420	363	399	1,489
North Yorkshire	746	517	677	704	2,644
Northamptonshire	1,181	1,385	1,041	1,196	4,803
Northumbria					6,901
Nottinghamshire	1,197	1,145	935	888	4,165
South Wales	1,502	1,372	1,324	1,241	5,439
South Yorkshire	1,210	2,043	1,776	1,574	6,603
Staffordshire	1,107	1,202	890	883	4,082
Suffolk	981	794	939	725	3,439
Surrey	321	303	291	277	1,192
Sussex	3,345	3,220	2,826	2,725	12,116
Thames Valley	1,885	1,947	2,022	2,211	8,065

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[2] The total number of incidents recorded by the MPS in 2011/12 has been taken from their Merlin reporting system rather than Command and Control to exclude multiple Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) messages connected to missing persons enquiries being included which were inflating the figures.

Warwickshire	568	512	471	410	1,961
West Mercia	1,835	1,722	1,504	1,642	6,703
West Midlands	3,622	3,248	3,871	3,730	14,471
West Yorkshire	1,266	1,084	1,118	1,005	4,473
Wiltshire	1,111	932	889	920	3,852
Total					**280,357**

Table 2: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2011/12 per 1,000 Population

Police Force	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Avon & Somerset	1,601,701	5,792	3.6
Bedfordshire	617,125	2,570	4.2
Cambridgeshire	806,769	2,929	3.6
Cheshire	1,028,693	3,888	3.8
City of London	7,412	160	21.6
Cleveland	557,444	3,725	6.7
Cumbria	499,817	1,575	3.2
Derbyshire	1,019,631	5,621	5.5
Devon and Cornwall	1,671,475	10,211	6.1
Dorset	745,338	2,814	3.8
Durham	618,578	2,330	3.8
Dyfed Powys	514,938	2,041	4.0
Essex	1,729,141	5,075	2.9
Gloucestershire	598,289	2,373	4.0
Greater Manchester	2,685,386	26,471	9.9
Gwent	577,077	4,421	7.7
Hampshire	1,901,813	7,258	3.8
Hertfordshire	1,119,824	4,295	3.8
Humberside	918,047	7,402	8.1
Kent	1,731,351	9164	5.3
Lancashire	1,461,295	9,485	6.5
Leicestershire	1,018,387	6,229	6.1
Lincolnshire	714,768	2,811	3.9
Merseyside	1,380,770	14,672	10.6
Metropolitan	8,196,995	41,517	5.1
Norfolk	859,426	3,130	3.6
North Wales	688,417	1,489	2.2
North Yorkshire	798,989	2,644	3.3
Northamptonshire	693,967	4,803	6.9
Northumbria	1,420,419	6,901	4.9
Nottinghamshire	1,090,695	4,165	3.8
South Wales	1,283,326	5,439	4.2
South Yorkshire	1,343,805	6,603	4.9
Staffordshire	1,098,265	4,082	3.7
Suffolk	730,133	3,439	4.7
Surrey	1,135,367	1,192	1.0
Sussex	1,609,080	12,116	7.5
Thames Valley	2,275,173	8,065	3.5
Warwickshire	546,554	1,961	3.6
West Mercia	1,224,115	6,703	5.5

West Midlands	2,739,733	14,471	5.3
West Yorkshire	2,227,371	4,473	2.0
Wiltshire	684,028	3,852	5.6
Total	**56,170,927**	**280,357**	**5.0**

The overall number of missing person's incidents per 1,000 population was 5.0[3].

Table 3: Missing person incidents reported to the police in Scotland 2011/12 per 1,000 Population

Police Force	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Central Scotland	295,920	2,256	7.6
Dumfries & Galloway	148,060	739	5.0
Fife	367,370	2,514	6.8
Grampian	555,280	2,245	4.0
Lothian & Borders	962,040	4,740	4.9
Northern	291,110	1,339	4.6
Strathclyde	2,229,300	19,283	8.6
Tayside	405,720	2,060	5.1
Total	**5,254,800**	**32,662**	**6.2**

The overall number of missing person's incidents per 1,000 of the population for Scotland was 6.2[4].

Table 4: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England, Wales and Scotland per 1,000 Population

	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
England and Wales	56,170,927	280,357	5.0
Scotland	5,254,800	32,662	6.2
Total	**61,425,727**	**313,019**	**5.1**

The overall number of missing person's incidents per 1,000 of the population for England, Wales and Scotland was 5.1.

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[3] 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 Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates for 2011.
[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.

Table 5: **Missing person incidents reported to the police in England, Scotland and Wales in 2010/11 and 2011/12**

Financial Year	No of Missing Incidents
2011/12	313,019
2010/11	326,764

Data for 2011/12 shows a reduction in the number of missing incidents recorded by police forces compared to the figures provided by police forces in the preceding financial year. The total number of missing person's incidents recorded in these police forces shows a 4% decrease since 2010/11.

Over the last year further analysis work has been ongoing within police forces in order to better understand the local picture and the triggers for 'missing'. Such analysis has continued to be 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, established Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and processes which assist to safeguard vulnerable missing people and reduce the numbers of repeat missing person's. This type of prevention work can have a notable impact on the number of missing person's incidents recorded by a police force. Some police 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 person's 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. In addition, in the latter half of 2011 and into 2012 a number of police forces[5] adopted an alternative missing person's definition[6] and approach to recording and investigating people who have gone missing, building upon the work carried out by Sussex Police, and this will have had an impact on the number of recorded missing cases. The pilot will be ongoing and it will be interesting to see how this impacts the data report for 2012/13 as a result.

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 person's 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 five groups of roughly the same size based on the number of incidents recorded in each police force area.
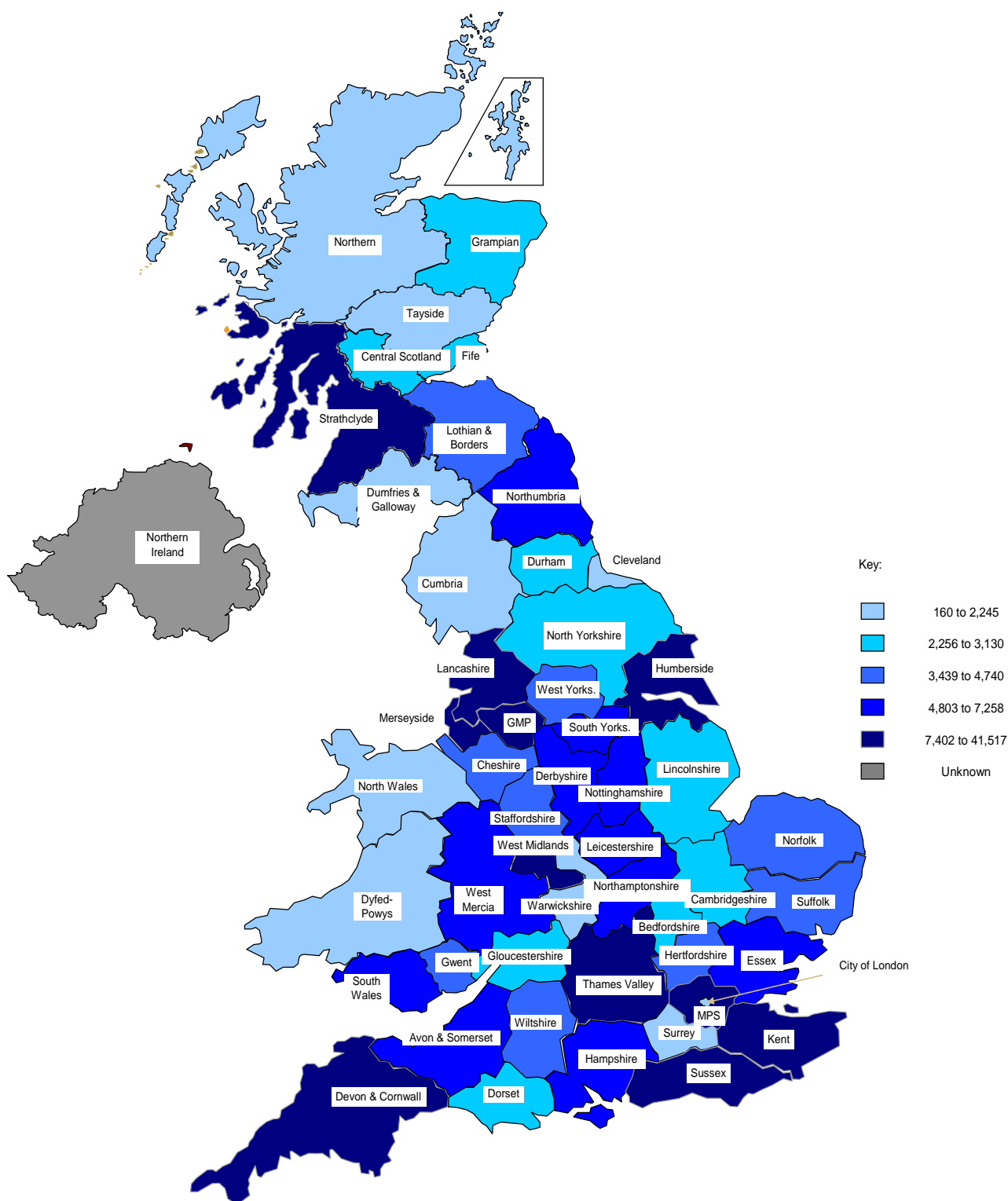
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[5] Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Staffordshire, and West Midlands police forces.
[6] The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) approved a new definition for 'missing' that will be rolled out by all forces in England and Wales from 1st April 2013. This definition and further information may be found within the Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013 at:
http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2013/201303-cba-int-guid-missing-persons.pdf

Figure 1: Map of missing person incidents by police force 2011/12

Key:

	160 to 2,245
	2,256 to 3,130
	3,439 to 4,740
	4,803 to 7,258
	7,402 to 41,517
	Unknown

Figure 2: Map of missing person incidents per 1,000 population 2011/12

Key:

	1.0 to 3.6
	3.6 to 4.0
	4.0 to 5.1
	5.1 to 6.5
	6.7 to 21.6
	Unknown
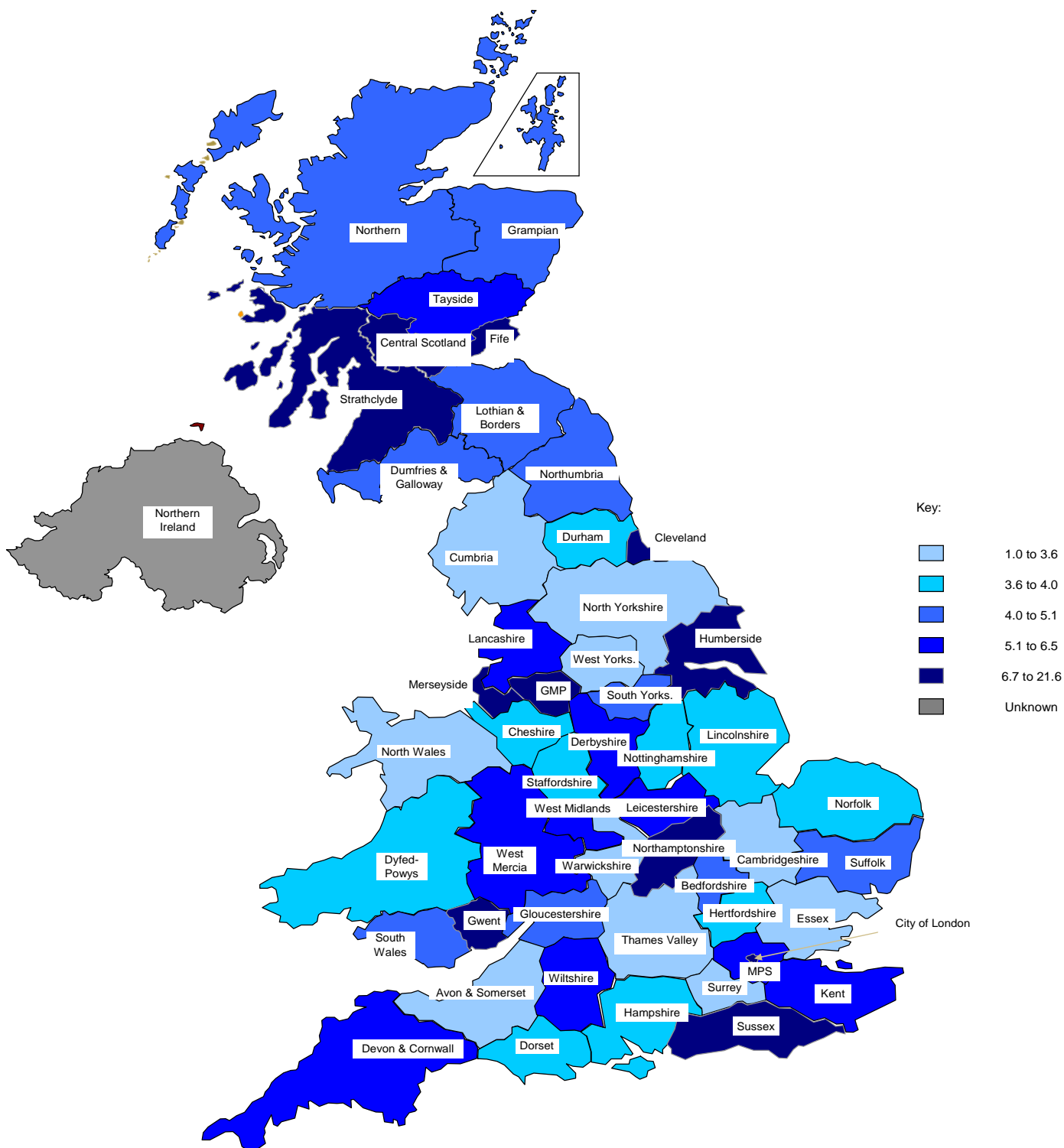
Estimating the total number of missing individuals/repeat incidents

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. 14 police forces have been able to supply information on the total number of missing incidents and the total number of missing individuals reported in 2011/12. 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 6: Number of individuals reported missing in 14 police forces in 2011/12

Police Force	Incidents[7]	Individuals	% of cases attributable to individuals who were only reported missing once	% of cases attributable to repeat incidents	ratio of people to reports
Derbyshire	3,366	2,024	60%	40%	1.7
Durham	1,096	742	68%	32%	1.5
Dyfed	951	701	74%	26%	1.4
Essex	5,375	3,995	74%	26%	1.3
Gloucestershire	2,373	1,619	68%	32%	1.5
Greater Manchester Police	24,962	13,956	56%	44%	1.8
Gwent	4,759	2,632	55%	45%	1.8
Hertfordshire	2,404	1,690	70%	30%	1.4
Humberside	3,799	2,090	70%	30%	1.8
Lincolnshire	2,342	1,649	70%	30%	1.4
Sussex	2,610	2,003	77%	23%	1.3
Warwickshire	1,121	820	73%	27%	1.4
West Mercia	3,007	2,090	70%	30%	1.4
West Midlands	9,912	5,730	56%	44%	1.7
Total	68,077	41,741	Average 61%	Average 39%	Average 1.6

The information available from police force dedicated missing persons systems indicates that, on average across these 14 police forces, the number of individuals reported missing once make up 61 per cent of the total number of missing person's incidents; in other words repeat missing person's incidents in 2011/12 accounted for over a third of missing incidents. This mirrors the statistics provided in last year's report in which figures based on data from eight police forces indicated that repeat missing person's accounted for just over a third of missing incidents. The consistency in the data may be due to the ongoing sharing of policies and practices in place in many of these police forces which is carried out to increase the safeguarding of vulnerable young people and reduce the numbers of repeat instances.

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[7] 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 14 police forces that supplied data, the proportion of incidents that could be attributed to separate individuals ranged from 55 to 77%. Assuming the pattern in these police forces was similar to that experienced in other police 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 154,196 and an upper estimate of around 215,875 individuals for the year.

Table 7: High, medium and low estimated number of individuals reported missing in 2011/12

Number of missing individuals

	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Low Estimate	Medium Estimate	High Estimate
England and Wales	56,170,927	280,000	154,000	172,000	216,000
Scotland	5,254,800	33,000	18,000	20,000	25,000
Total	**61,425,727**	**313,000**	**172,000**	**192,000**	**241,000**

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 person's 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 per 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 police forces have initiated working practices and protocols which have reduced the instances of repeat missing person's cases. Not only does this safeguard a 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 police forces of investigating cases as repeat incidents can represent a substantial percentage of the overall number recorded by a police force.

Who goes missing?

32 of the English and Welsh police forces supplied demographic information for those who were reported missing for all four quarters. The data covered 156,826 incidents (approximately 56% 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.
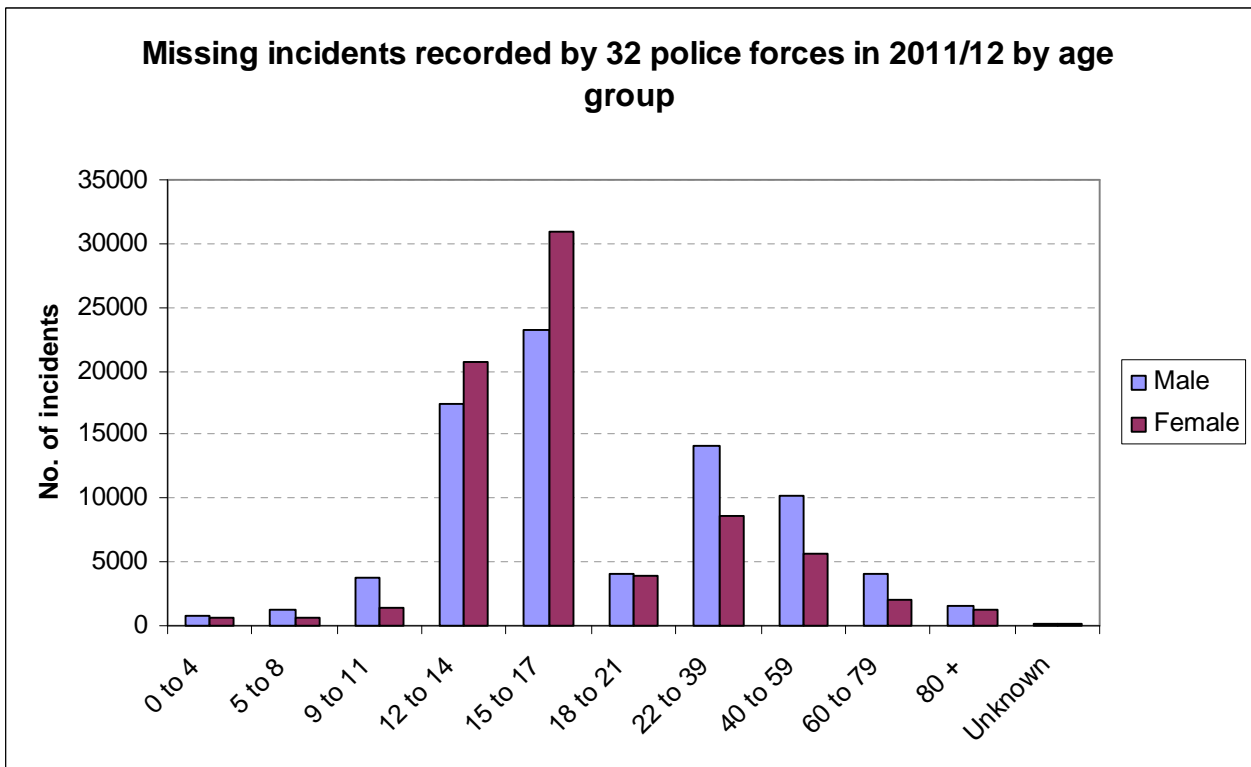
Gender

The data (n=156,826) provided by 32 police forces suggests that approximately equal numbers of men and women go missing. The returns show 52% of the individuals were male and 48% female. This is consistent with the make up of the general population (49% male and 51% female).[8]

Age

In total, children and young people 18 years and under made up 64% 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 35% of the total missing reports (see Figure 3 and the Table in Appendix B). These figures could include multiple incidents relating to the same young person if they have gone missing repeatedly.

Figure 3: Missing incidents in England and Wales by age group 2011/12

The data supplied by police forces is already aggregated into specified age groups.[9] The number of incidents of missing person's recorded in each age group is shown in Figure 3 above.

An analysis by age and gender indicates that although overall a similar proportion of men (52%) and women (48%) were reported missing, for young people aged 12 to 17 years more females were recorded missing by the police than males (44% for males and 56% for females). Conversely, slightly more incidents were recorded for men than women in each

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[8] Population figures for England and Wales from the ONS population estimates for mid 2011.
[9] In an attempt to reduce the data burden on police forces, they are asked to supply data in these age groups rather than for every individual case.

of the age groups over the age of 18 years and in the age group 0 to 11. This data supports previous research findings[10] and is consistent with the data received from police forces for 2010/11 and 2009/10. Please see Appendix B for a table of this data.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is coded on missing person's 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 provided by the same 32 police forces so again will not necessarily reflect the overall picture. Additionally, in approximately 9% of the cases where data was provided, the ethnicity of the missing person was unknown.

The data provided by police forces[11], detailed in figure 4, show that the majority of missing person's 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 over a quarter (27%) of all data used in this analysis, and it contributes 60% 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.
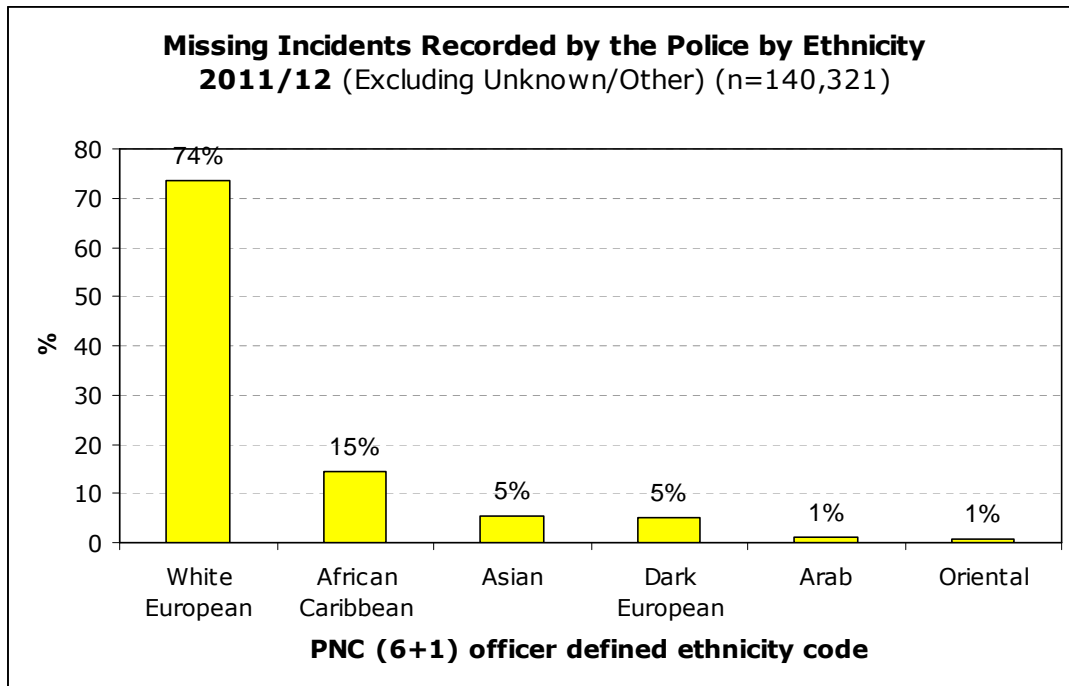
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[10]Rees, G (2011) *Still Running 3 – Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways* (London: The Children's Society)
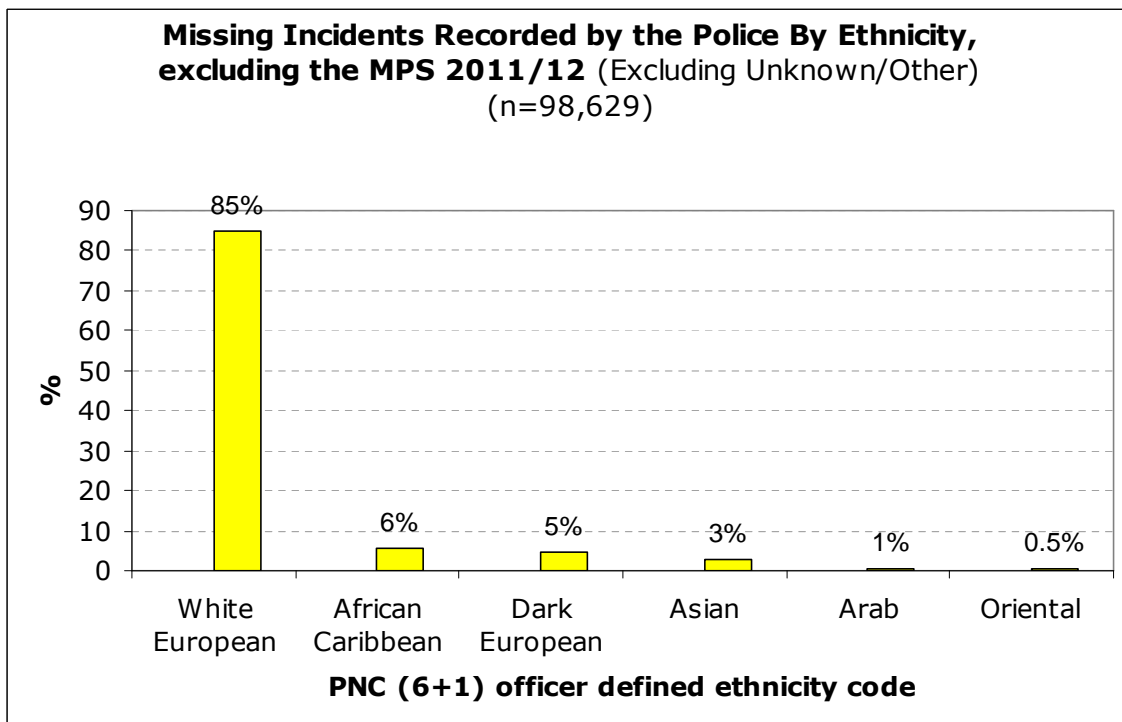[11] Ethnicity is recorded using police defined ethnicity codes.

Figure 4: Missing incidents recorded by ethnicity[12] including the Metropolitan Police data

Missing Incidents Recorded by the Police by Ethnicity 2011/12 (Excluding Unknown/Other) (n=140,321)

PNC (6+1) officer defined ethnicity code

- White European: 74%
- African Caribbean: 15%
- Asian: 5%
- Dark European: 5%
- Arab: 1%
- Oriental: 1%

A significant number of missing incidents (14,196) were classified as Other or Unknown ethnicity.

Figure 5: Missing incidents recorded by ethnicity excluding the Metropolitan Police data

Missing Incidents Recorded by the Police By Ethnicity, excluding the MPS 2011/12 (Excluding Unknown/Other) (n=98,629)

PNC (6+1) officer defined ethnicity code

- White European: 85%
- African Caribbean: 6%
- Dark European: 5%
- Asian: 3%
- Arab: 1%
- Oriental: 0.5%

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[12] The figures have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

Unidentified people, bodies and remains

The Bureau also collects information on people found alive, but who cannot 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 forces[13]. 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 8 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 8: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies, and remains, found and recorded in 2011/12 by police force.

Police Force	Body	Body Part	Alive	Total
England and Wales				
Avon and Somerset	1	0	1	**2**
Cheshire	1	0	0	**1**
City of London	0	0	2	**2**
Dorset	1	0	1	**2**
Dyfed-Powys	1	1	0	**2**
Greater Manchester	3	0	0	**3**
Hampshire	1	0	0	**1**
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	**2**
Humberside	1	0	0	**1**
Kent	0	0	1	**1**
Lancashire	3	1	0	**4**
Lincolnshire	0	1	0	**1**
Merseyside	0	1	0	**1**
Metropolitan[14]	54	3	263	**320**
North Wales	1	0	0	**1**
North Yorkshire	0	0	1	**1**
Northamptonshire	1	0	0	**1**
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	**1**
South Wales	1	0	1	**2**
Suffolk	0	1	0	**1**
Sussex	3	0	1	**4**
West Mercia	1	0	0	**1**
West Midlands	1	0	0	**1**
West Yorkshire	1	0	0	**1**
Total	**77**	**8**	**272**	**357**
Scotland				
Dumfries and Galloway	1	0	0	**1**

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[13] 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.
[14] Data obtained from MPS Operation Compass.

Lothian and Borders	1	0	0	**1**
Northern	0	1	0	**1**
Strathclyde	2	1	1	**4**
Total	**4**	**2**	**1**	**7**
Other				
Overseas	0	1	0	**1**
Interpol[15]	50	8	6	**64**
British Transport Police	26	0	5	**31**
PSNI	1	0	0	**1**
Total	**77**	**9**	**11**	**97**
Total	**158**	**19**	**284**	**461**

According to Bureau records, 24 police forces in England and Wales recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2011/12, with a total of 357 found in England and Wales. Including those reported by Scottish police forces and British Transport Police a total of 395 unidentified people, bodies or remains were found in 2011/12. In addition, 66 cases were found overseas, by the Police Service of Northern Ireland or reported to the Bureau by Interpol[16]. These Interpol cases are reported to the Bureau to ensure that they are not linked to reports of missing person's from the UK.

The vast majority of unidentified person's, bodies or body parts (70%) were recorded 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. In addition, the MPS is known to record person's in custody who are unable to reveal their identity as unidentified alive cases and this will contribute significantly to the large number of alive cases that are being recorded. 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 2012, are shown in Table 9 below. This data includes all known outstanding cases, including those notified to the Bureau in the years before 2011/12 if they still remain unidentified, whereas Table 8 only includes notified cases from 2011/12.

Table 9: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains on record which remain outstanding (correct to the end of 2011/12)

Police Force	Body	Body Part	Alive	Total
England and Wales				
Avon and Somerset	14	3	0	**17**
Bedfordshire	2	0	0	**2**
Cambridgeshire	2	0	0	**2**
Cheshire	5	0	0	**5**
City of London	8	0	1	**9**
Cleveland	3	0	0	**3**

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[15] 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.
[16] 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.

|				
Cumbria	4	3	1	**8**
Derbyshire	8	0	1	**9**
Devon and Cornwall	21	6	0	**27**
Dorset	13	0	0	**13**
Durham	3	0	2	**5**
Dyfed-Powys	5	3	0	**8**
Essex	25	2	2	**29**
Gloucestershire	3	2	0	**5**
Greater Manchester	10	2	1	**13**
Gwent	8	0	0	**8**
Hampshire	4	10	0	**14**
Hertfordshire	2	0	4	**6**
Humberside	5	1	0	**6**
Kent	28	2	1	**31**
Lancashire	7	3	0	**10**
Leicestershire	2	0	1	**3**
Lincolnshire	2	2	0	**4**
Merseyside	10	4	1	**15**
Metropolitan[17]	276	10	28	**314**
Norfolk	5	2	0	**7**
North Wales	13	4	0	**17**
North Yorkshire	7	1	0	**8**
Northamptonshire	7	0	0	**7**
Northumbria	4	3	0	**7**
Nottinghamshire	2	0	1	**3**
South Wales	9	2	0	**11**
South Yorkshire	0	0	1	**1**
Staffordshire	11	0	1	**12**
Suffolk	7	2	3	**12**
Surrey	12	1	1	**14**
Sussex	45	6	1	**52**
Tayside	1	3	0	**4**
Thames Valley	9	1	2	**12**
Warwickshire	1	0	0	**1**
West Mercia	3	2	2	**7**
West Midlands	6	3	2	**11**
West Yorkshire	6	2	1	**9**
Wiltshire	1	1	0	**2**
Total	**619**	**86**	**58**	**763**
Scotland				
Central Scotland	2	0	0	**2**
Dumfries and Galloway	11	3	0	**14**
Fife	2	0	0	**2**
Grampian	0	1	0	**1**
Lothian and Borders	7	1	1	**9**
Northern	5	2	0	**7**
Strathclyde	23	5	4	**32**
Total	**50**	**12**	**5**	**67**

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[17] Data supplied from MPS Operation Compass. 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	49	1	0	**50**
Guernsey	5	0	0	**5**
Interpol	335	40	8	**383**
Isle of Man	3	0	0	**3**
Ministry of Defence	1	0	0	**1**
Overseas	5	2	0	**7**
Northern Ireland	5	8	0	**13**
States of Jersey	2	1	0	**3**
Total	**405**	**52**	**8**	**465**
Total	**1,074**	**150**	**71**	**1,295**

# Unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains cases

A heat map has been created to indicate the number of cases recorded by the police forces across all years, which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2012.

## Figure 6: Unidentified cases which remained unsolved to end of 2011/12
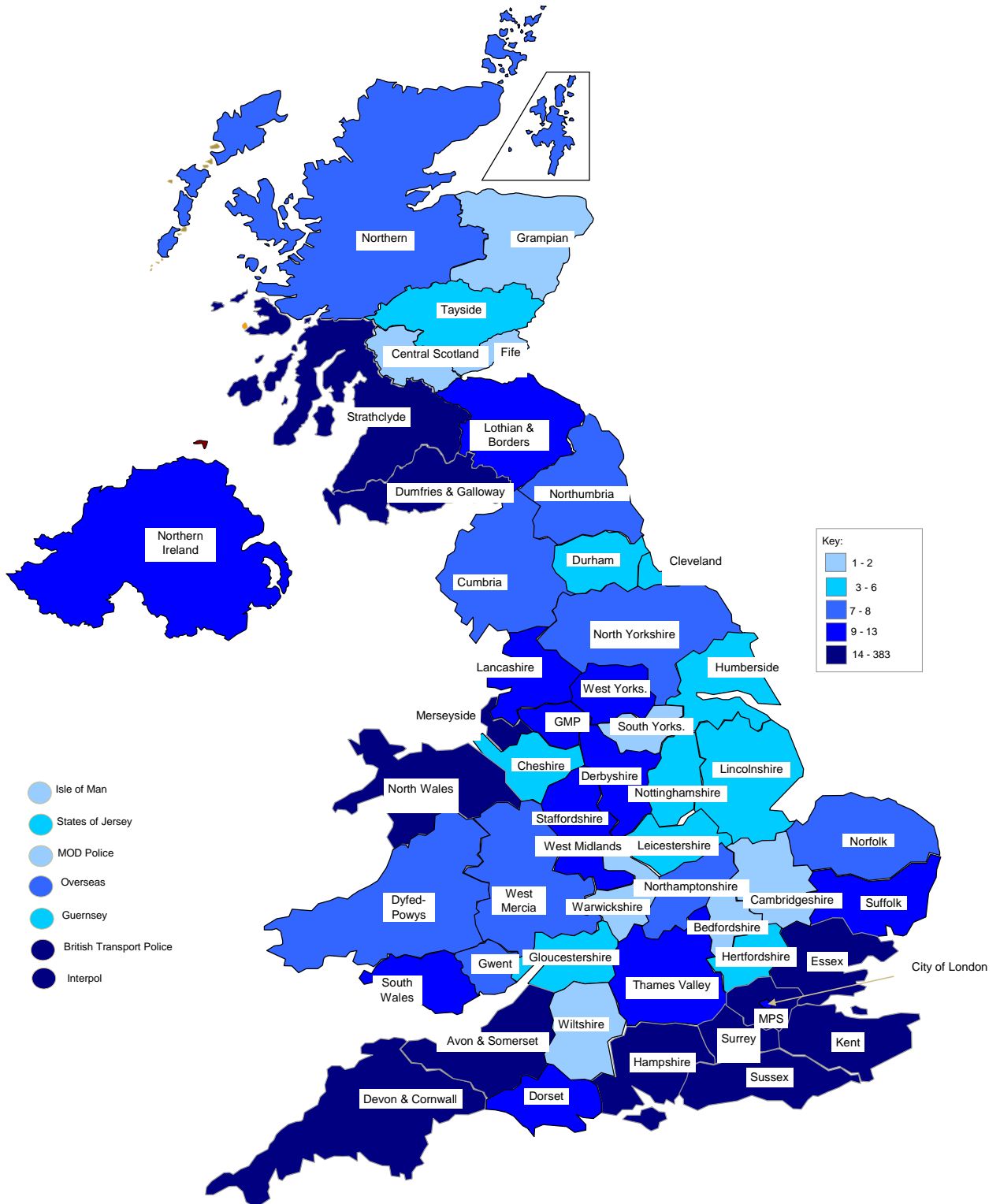
Of all of the unidentified cases recorded by police forces in 2011/12, according to Bureau records, around two thirds were alive unidentified people, around one third unidentified bodies and only a small number related to body parts (see Figure 7). Without the MPS data, which includes a large number of unidentified alive individuals, the split would be 74% bodies, 15% alive individuals and 11% body parts.

Figure 7: Unidentified cases recorded by police forces in 2011/12 by type

Unidentified cases recorded by forces in 2011/12 by type (n=461)
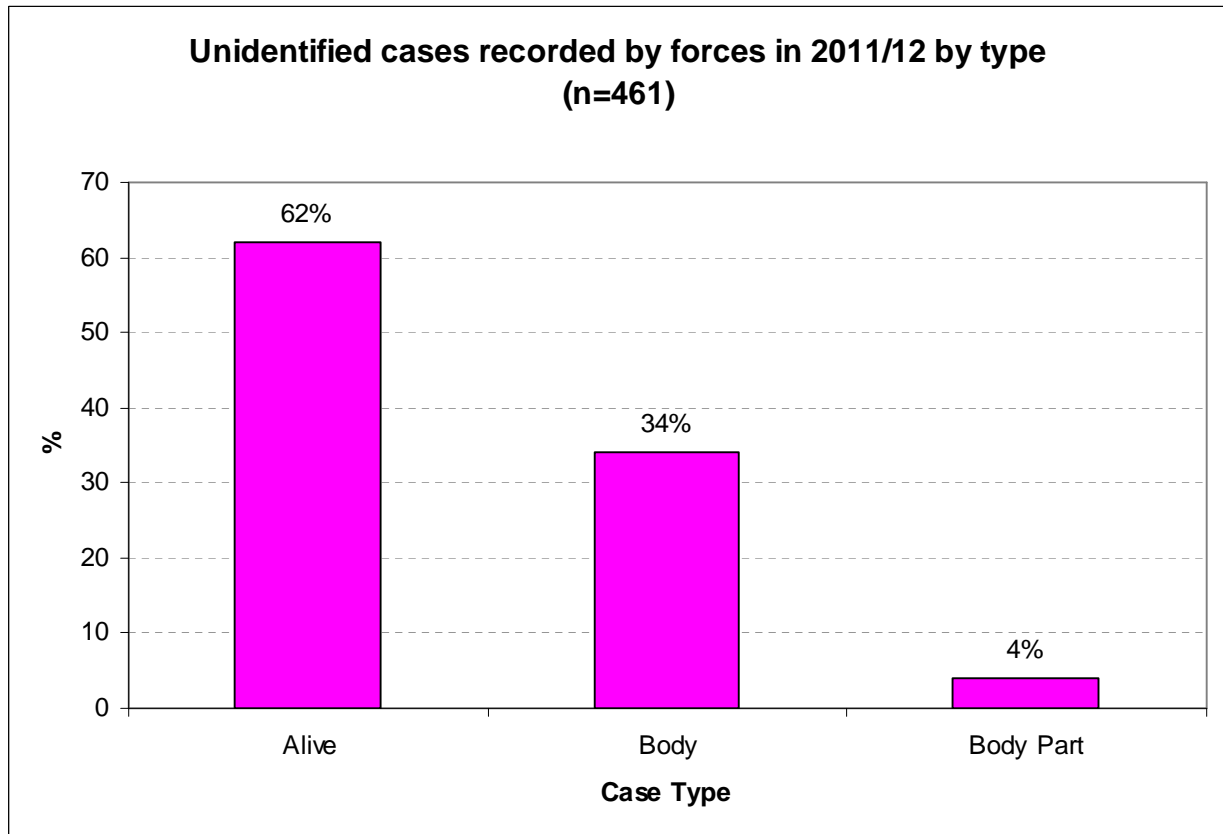
Figure 8: Unidentified cases which remain unidentified 2011/12 by type

Figure 8 shows the number of cases, no matter what year they were recorded, which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2012. The majority of these are unidentified bodies.
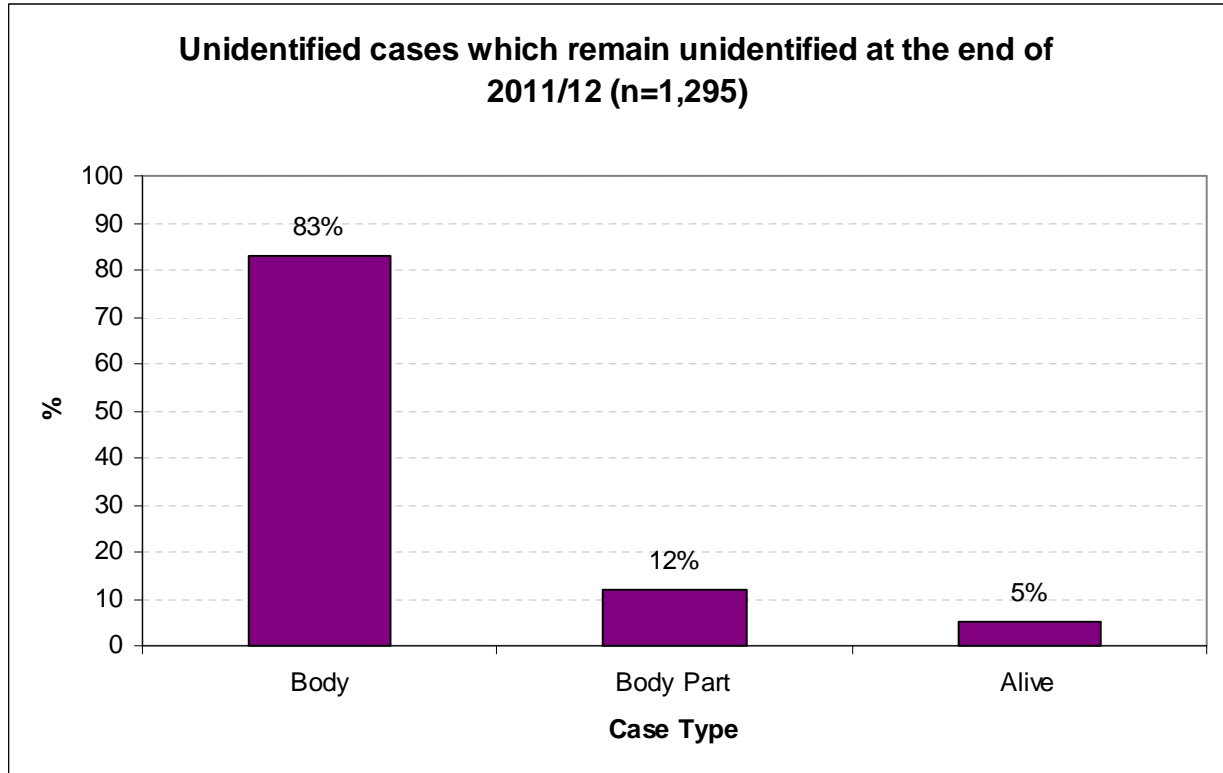
With the MPS data removed the split between the case types remains similar. It is not clear why the MPS records so many more unidentified body cases than other police forces but this may partly be due to the higher population and demographics within the Metropolitan Police area. In addition, the Metropolitan Police area has a large visitor population and temporary employment opportunities which makes conducting successful investigations to prove identity more challenging.

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. It is important to recognise that the report for 2013/14 will not be comparable to this report or previous reports due to the change in definition for missing and the introduction of the category of 'absent'. However, the 2012/13 data report will be in the same format as this and will provide a basis for comparison.

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 2011/12. 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 (70%) of missing people return or are located within 16 hours with only 2% 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 person's are resolved quickly[18].

**Figure 9: Duration people go missing for in 2011/12, for four police forces**
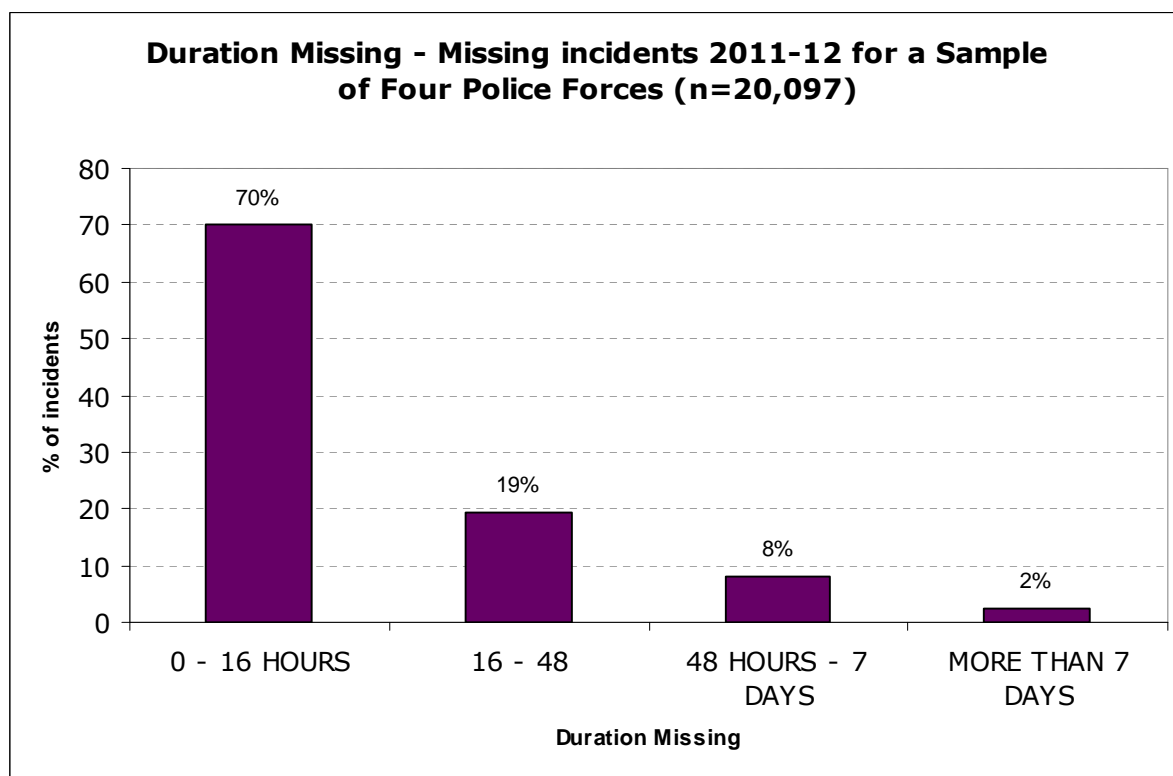
Where do people go missing from?

Data supplied by 33 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 over half of all missing incidents the people go missing from home. Cases reported as missing from care account for just under one fifth

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[18] 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

of the cases. 4% were missing from hospital and 22% of cases the people were missing from other types of locations.

Figure 10: Locations missing from in 2011/12 for 33 police forces

**Location Missing From - Missing Incidents 2011-12** (n=122,936)
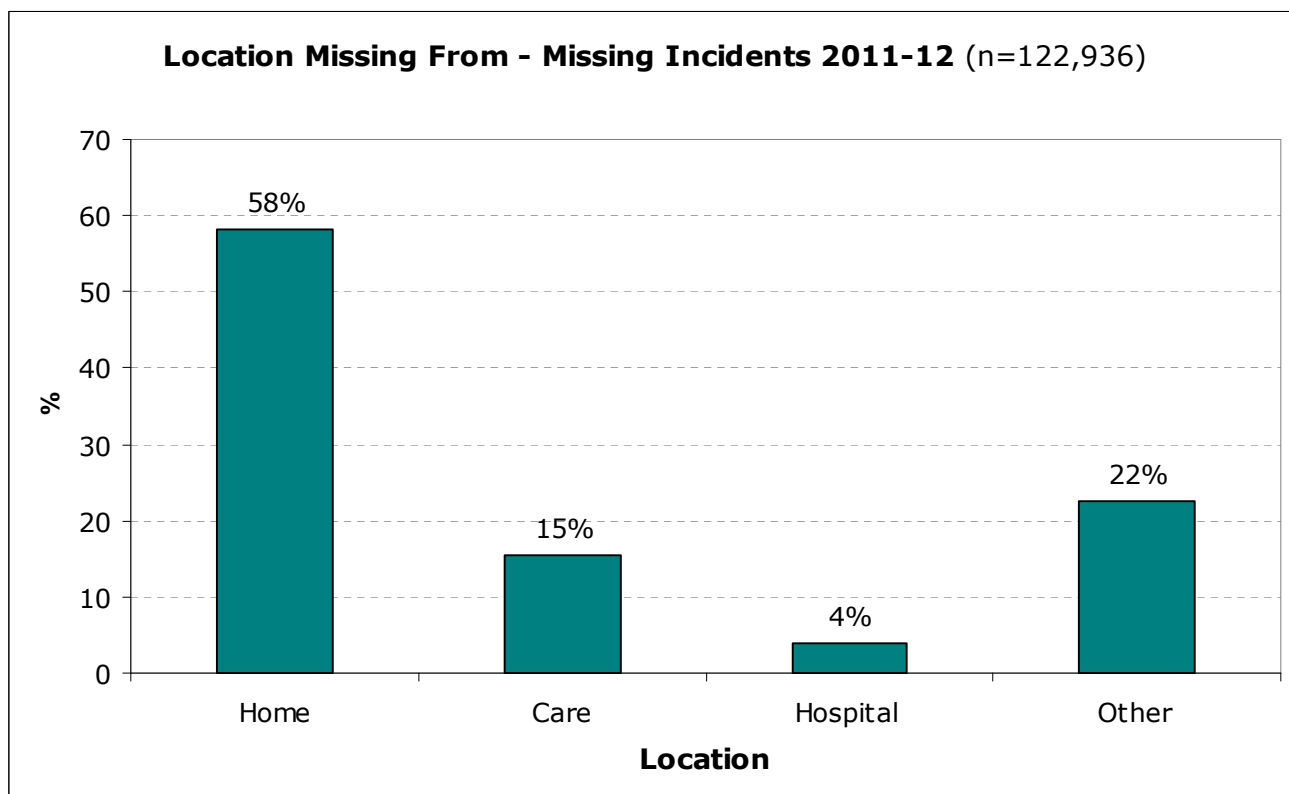
How are missing persons cases risk assessed?

Missing person's cases are risk assessed according to each police force's missing person's policies and processes. Generally these policies will reflect the 2010 ACPO guidance[19] on the management, recording and investigation of missing person's which grades cases into high, medium or low risk categories.

33 police forces supplied data on risk assessments allocated to their missing person's incidents for 2011/12. The distribution of incidents across the risk categories is illustrated in Figure 11. This data reflects only a partial picture as, aside from the limited number of police forces providing data, only missing person's 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.

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[19] ACPO (2010) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons: http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/201103CRIIMP02.pdf

Figure 11: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2011/12 for 33 police forces

Risk Assessment of Missing Persons Incidents for a Sample of 33 Forces 2011/12 (n=148,546)
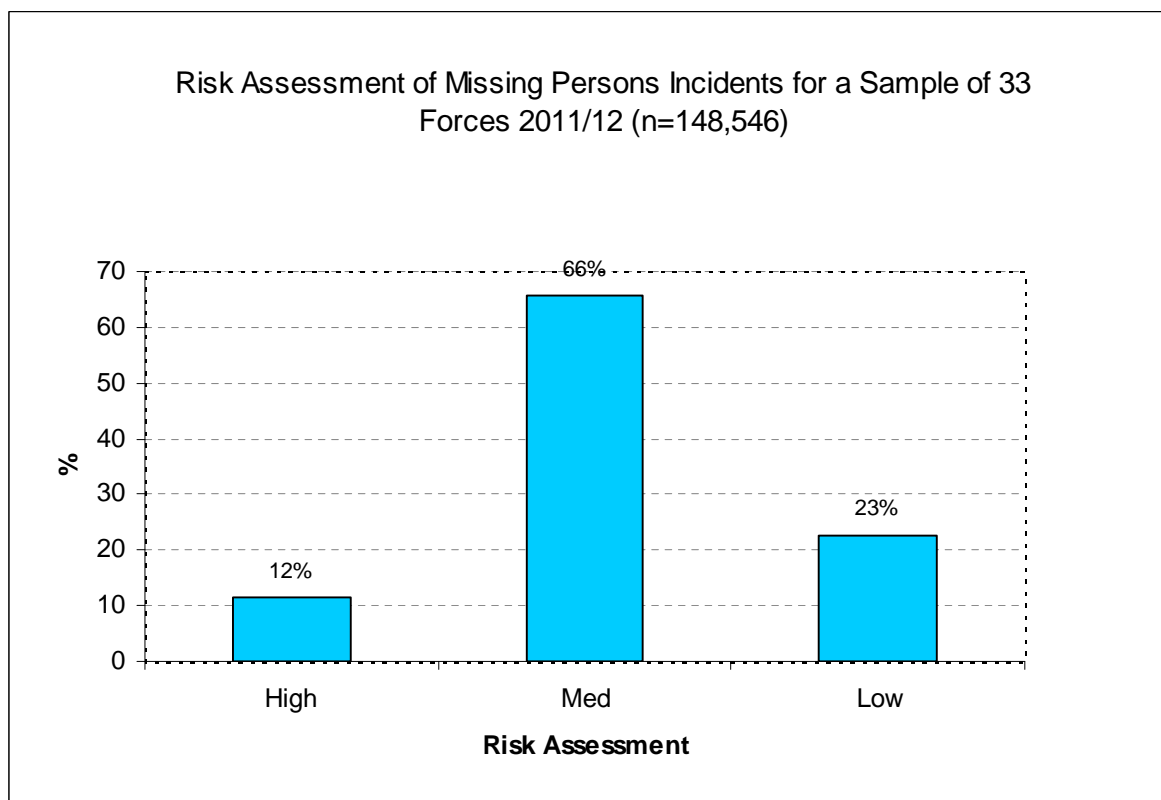
Some police forces record all of their missing person's cases on their dedicated missing persons system, irrespective of how quickly they return, or they record them on a system which is linked to their command and control system. Three of these police forces supplied data to the Bureau and the distribution of the risk assessments for these incidents is provided in Figure 12. 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 12: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2011/12 for three police forces

Risk Assessment of Missing Persons Incidents for a Sample of Three Forces 2011/12 (n=17,571)
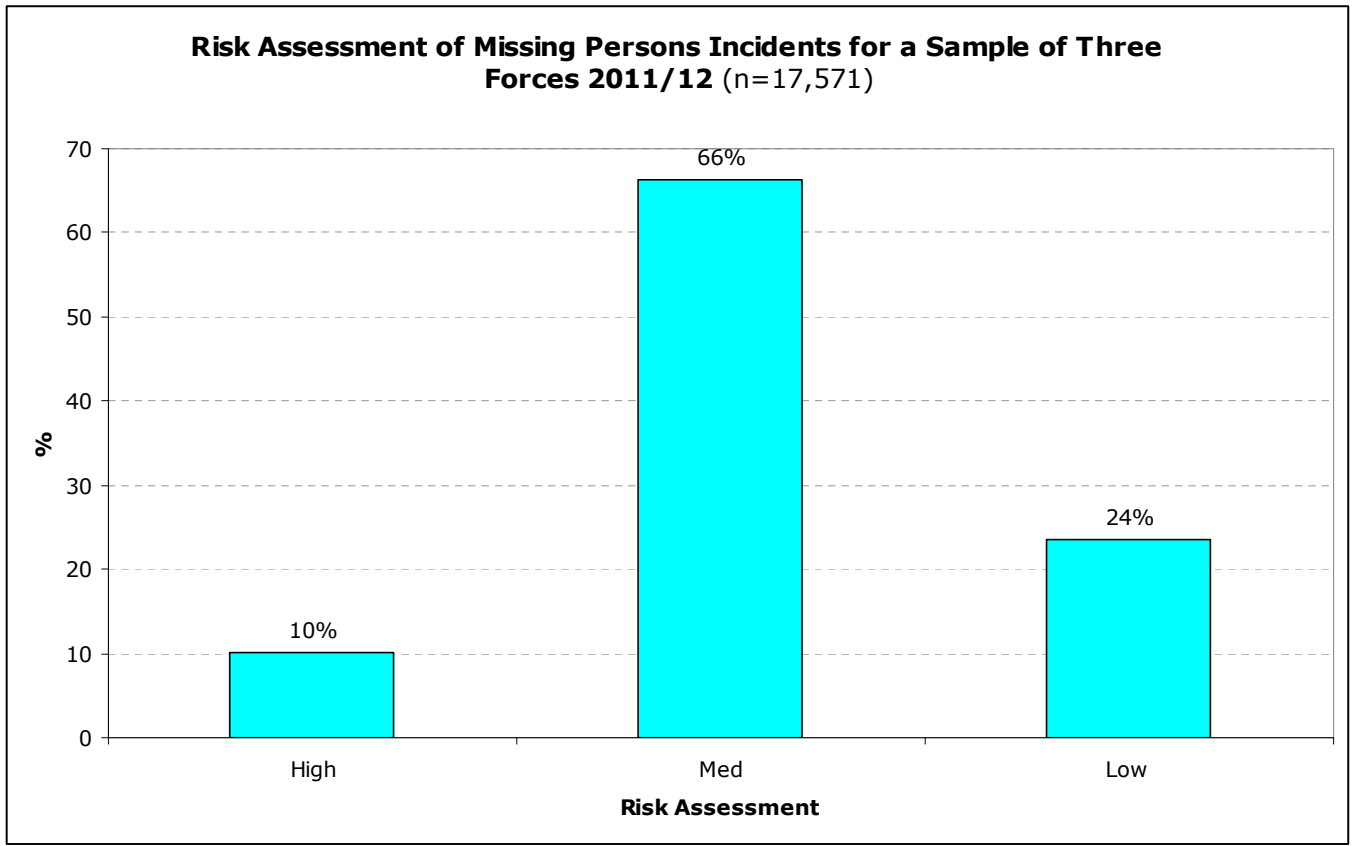
Missing incidents by urban – rural categorisation of police forces

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 urban[20]. The highest numbers of reports were in police forces which are categorised as 'most urban'. Generally numbers decrease the more rural the environment. Further research would be required to identify actual reasons for this.

**Figure 13: Missing person incidents by urban-rural categorisation of police forces**

Average Rate of Missing Person Incidents By Urban-Rural Categorisation of Forces 2011/12

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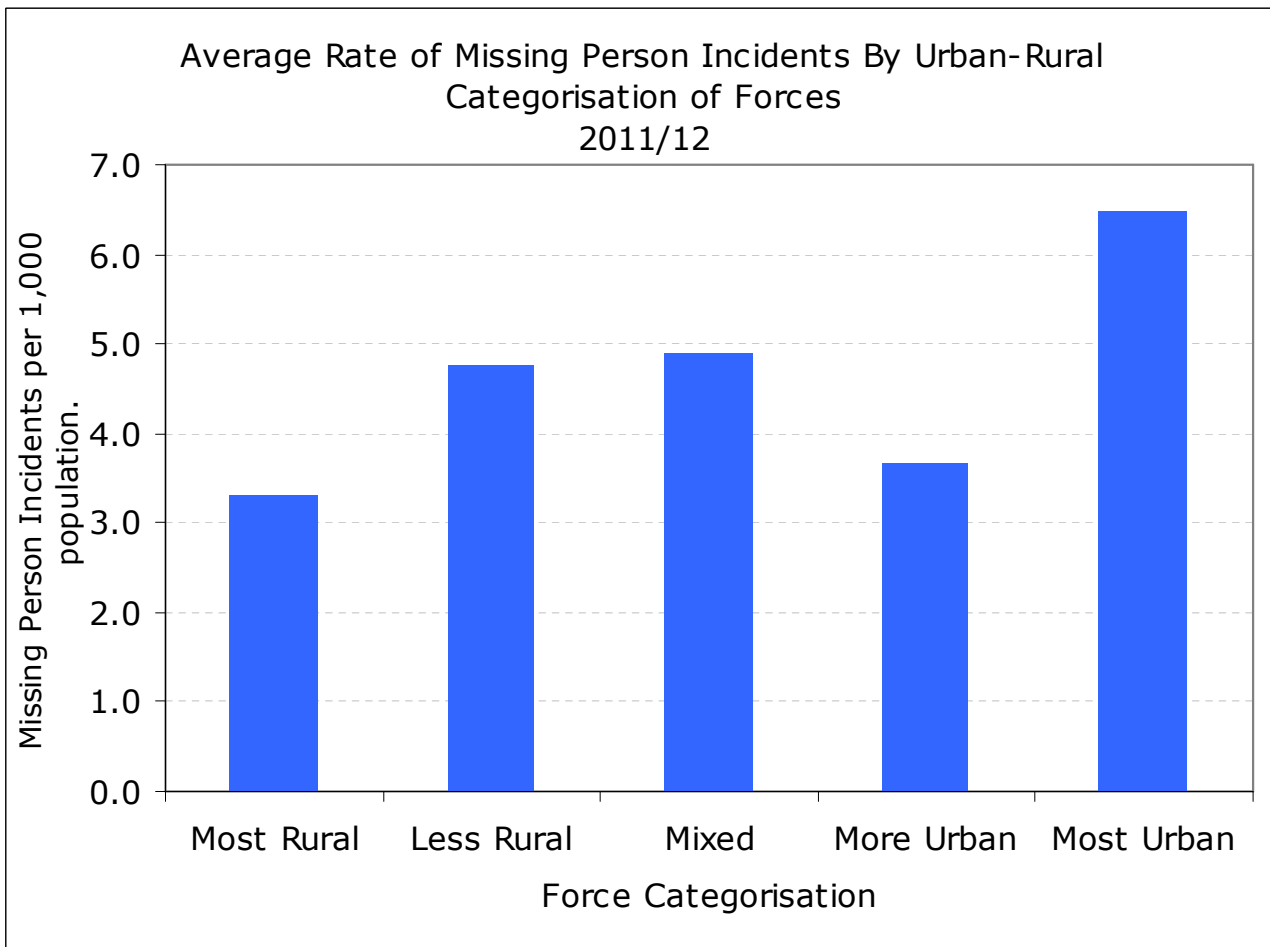
[20] Urban-rural categorisation based on Home Office categories.

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 2011/12. 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= 29,484) 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 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 (63%) of missing people are located within five miles of their home.

Figure 14: Distance found from home

Distance Missing People were Found from Home for a Sample of Four Police Forces 2011-12 (n=29,484)
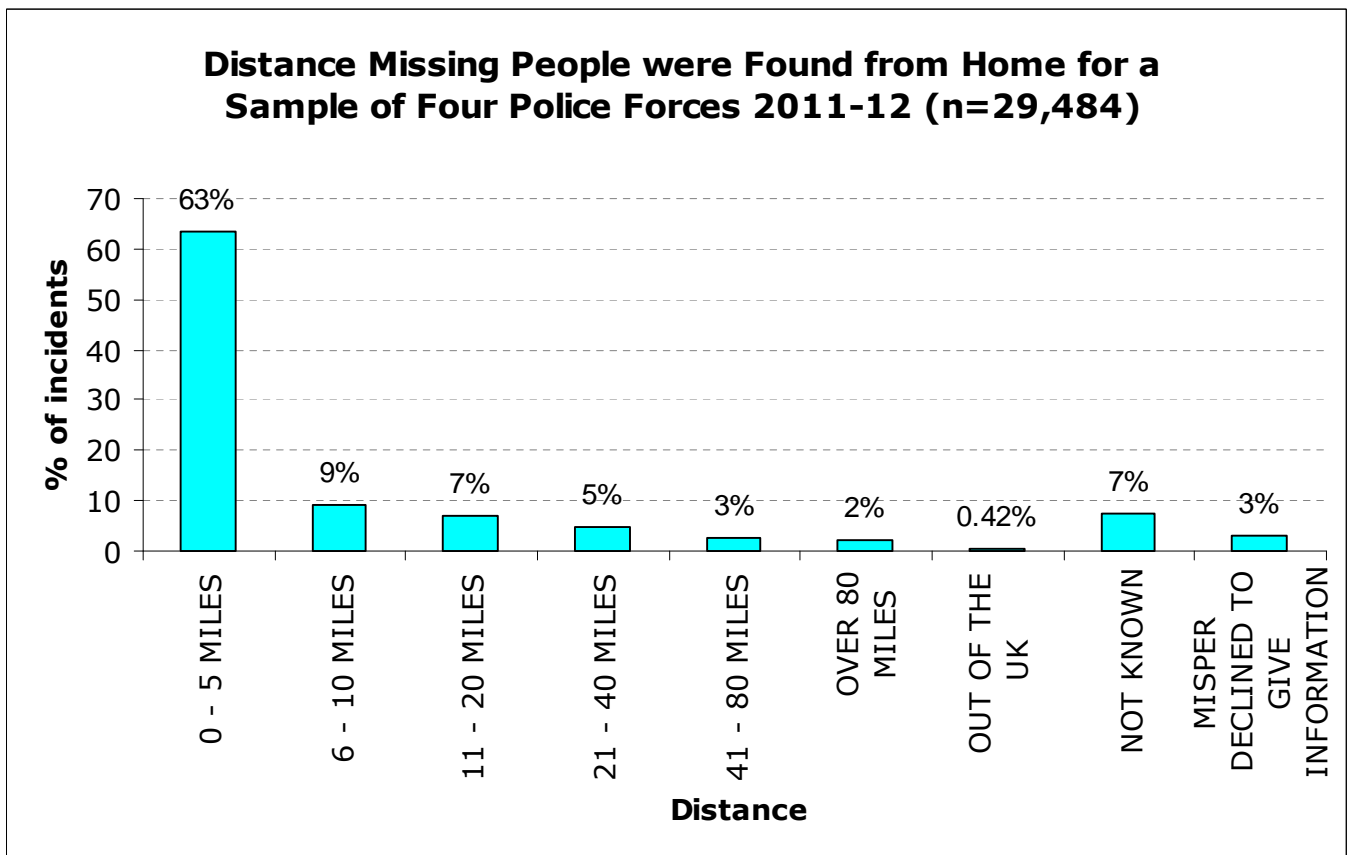
Figure 15: Circumstances while missing

The data (n= 20,096) indicates that the majority (27%) of missing people stayed with or met up with a friend while missing.

Circumstance While Missing for a Sample of Four Police Forces 2011-12 (n=20,096)

Circumstance	% of incidents
STAYED IN HOTEL / OTHER COMMERCIAL PREMISES	1%
WITH PERSON / LOCATION KNOWN FROM ORIGINAL INFO.	2%
MET UP WITH OTHER	3%
SLEPT ROUGH	3%
WENT TO PLACE PREVIOUSLY LIVED / FREQUENTED	5%
WENT TO LOCATION - NO KNOWN CONNECTIONS	7%
MISPER DECLINED TO GIVE INFORMATION	12%
MET UP WITH FRIEND / AQUAINTANCE	13%
NOT KNOWN	13%
OTHER	14%
STAYED WITH FRIEND	27%

Figure 16: Who missing people were found by

The data (n= 20,096) indicates that the majority (42%) of missing people were located by the police.

Reported Found Information for a Sample of Four Police Forces 2011/12 (n=20,096)

Category	%
OTHER INDIVIDUAL	1%
OTHER AGENCY	2%
SOCIAL SERVICES	2%
HEALTH SERVICES STAFF	2%
FRIEND / AQUAINTANCE OF MISPER	3%
CARE HOME STAFF	7%
OTHER	12%
FAMILY (INC. FOSTER / GUARDIANS)	29%
POLICE	42%
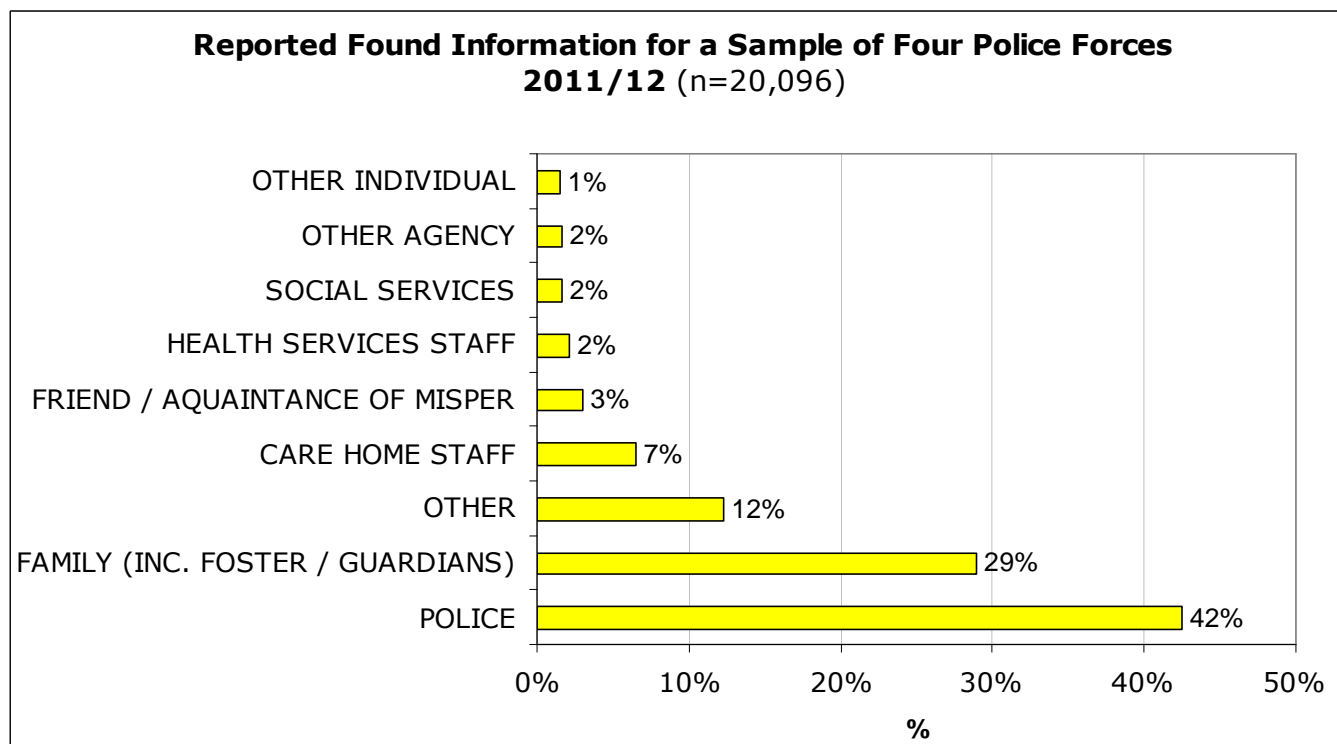
How many incidents result in a fatal outcome?

Data on the outcome of each incident are not included within the quarterly returns. However, recent figures have been obtained from 10 police forces relating to fatal missing outcomes for the financial year 2011/12, and these are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: The number of fatal outcomes recorded in 2011/12

	Leics	Notts	Derby	Sussex	West Mercia	South Wales	Staffs	Suffolk	West Yorks	MPS
Missing persons incidents	6,229	4,165	5,621	12,116	6,703	5,439	4,082	3,439	4,473	41,517
No of fatal outcomes	8	11	10	18	18	12	5	11	10	122
% of incidents	0.13	0.26	0.18	0.15	0.27	0.22	0.12	0.32	0.22	0.29

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. In addition, it is possible that the fatal outcome may relate to a longer term missing person case and the missing person incident may not be recorded in the same year as the fatal outcome.

Where a missing person's case has a fatal outcome 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 heath) or the individual may have been a victim of violent crime.

These figures are slightly lower, but comparable, with previous research[21] which suggested that in 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 313,000 missing incidents per annum, the current data suggest that around 750 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 ten police forces which supplied data and the total number of incidents. This figure is a slight reduction from the estimation contained within the 2010/11 report which indicated that 800 incidents a year will result in a fatal outcome in Great Britain. 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.

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[21] 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

33 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 156,826 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 11: Gender of Missing Incidents by Age Group (n=156,826)

Age group	Male	Female	% Male	% Female	Total
0-4 years	848	636	57	43	1484
5-8 years	1262	601	68	32	1863
9-11 years	3738	1346	74	26	5084
12-14 years	17498	20769	46	54	38267
15-17 years	23281	30902	43	57	54183
18-21 years	4124	3992	51	49	8116
22-39 years	14196	8676	62	38	22872
40-59 years	10149	5672	64	36	15821
60-79 years	4005	2098	66	34	6103
80+ years	1599	1266	56	44	2865
Unknown	84	84	50	50	168
Total	**80,784**	**76,042**			**156,826**

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 (subsequently transferred to SOCA in April 2012), it was identified that there was no national collation of the number of people reported missing to the police. Government and an All Party Parliamentary Group have 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 person's[22]. 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 also afforded police forces which could not automatically produce data on missing person's 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: Police Service of Scotland, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the non-territorial police forces.

Limitations of the data

Although all police forces supplied at least a high level figure for the number of missing person's 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 can 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 command and control system

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[22] '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".

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 to identify which figures were the most accurate (through consulting the police force concerned), 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 RMS[23] system this data was used as, although Niche is connected to command and control systems and is used to record missing person's, 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 person's 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.

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[23] 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.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/201103CRIIMP02.pdf

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Population figures from iQuanta and from Office for National Statistics Mid-2011 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

This document can be provided in alternative formats. Please contact missingpersonsbureau@soca.x.gsi.gov.uk if you require an alternative format.

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