Missing Persons: Data and Analysis

2012/2013

Foreword

Behind every missing person episode is someone with their own life history which may have been a contributory factor in them going missing. While we know that in a relatively small number cases 'going missing' can be a lifestyle choice, we also know that missing episodes are often symptoms of other factors in their lives including mental & physical abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and mental health challenges. While we must concentrate upon those who go missing, we cannot forget about the potential impact such events have upon families and friends, particularly when such incidents have tragic outcomes. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us all to maximise our efforts to keep vulnerable people safe and support those also affected by missing events.

The police service and the National Crime Agency (NCA) continue to work closely on a national and local level with its partners, both statutory and from the non-governmental sector to improve the quality of investigations and, crucially, the safeguarding arrangements which must underpin all our work.

This report has been created by the NCA's UK Missing Persons Bureau and draws substantially on missing persons data provided to this central point by the police across the United Kingdom. Last year we experienced the challenges around data collection and we are pleased to report that we continue to improve both quality and timeliness in this area. We are particularly grateful to our colleagues in the Department of Education for their support in aligning our statistical data for missing persons.

We are pleased that this assessment has been able to draw on a higher quality and more complete data set than its predecessors. In this regard we are grateful to police colleagues for their support in collecting accurate data which can be used to enhance our understanding of 'missing' and direct our services and efforts according to identified risk. This, in turn, will enable us to improve our goals to safeguard vulnerable people and support their families and friends.

The last 18 months has seen the implementation of changes in the 'missing' definition. Starting in April 2013, changes have been introduced at differing times throughout the period depending upon the particular police area. The upshot in data terms is that like-for-like comparisons will remain challenging for the next couple of years. In this connection we have commissioned a Capability Assessment led by NCA-CEOP Command and supported by the Home Office and HMIC to inform us and our colleagues of the current picture nationally. This is in addition to the forthcoming thematic inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. This year has also seen the transfer of the UK Missing Persons Bureau to NCA-CEOP Command – an integration that sees missing children and adult services being delivered by a single command of the NCA.

At the beginning of this foreword we wrote of the close cooperation between the NCA and police services and, their statutory & non-statutory partners. We may all work in different ways but, we know we all have the common goals of safeguarding the vulnerable and supporting their families and friends uppermost in our thoughts. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to once again pay tribute to the hard work, professionalism and dedication of our colleagues in the police service, public, voluntary and private sectors, who work tirelessly each day to deliver those goals.

Chief Constable Patrick Geenty – National Policing Lead for Missing Persons

Johnny Gwynne, NCA Director, CEOP Command

November 2014

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Executive summary

The data report 2012/13 shows a reduction in the number of missing person incidents recorded by the police services[1] of England, Wales and Scotland. Recorded incidents have dropped by 2.2% over the previous financial year and by 6.3% since 2010/11. It is judged that the decline in reports is due to improved preventative work and consistency of operational practice.

Missing person incidents recorded in England, Wales and Scotland indicate that overall around 306,000 records were made in 2012/13 - around 273,000 in England and Wales and 33,000 in Scotland - in comparison with 313,000 in 2011/12 and 327,000 in 2010/11.

Despite small reductions in incidents, the figures translate into 838 missing reports every day, or someone being recorded missing by the police every two minutes.

Many people go missing more than once. Repeat missing incidents account for approximately 38% of all missing incidents. With regard to the 306,000 recorded incidents, around 116,000 incidents relate to people missing more than once in 2012/13.

The report also contains an in-depth analysis based on data from a representative number of police areas using the 'Compact'[2] system. The analysis covers how long people go missing for, from where they go missing, how the incidents are risk assessed and how many incidents result in a fatal outcome. Most missing incidents conclude quickly with no harm to the missing person and most return within two days. However, each year more than 1,000 are still outstanding after a week. In 97% of cases no harm is recorded to the person. However, it is estimated that 0.25% of cases (around 760 cases per year) result in a fatal outcome.

The UK Missing Persons Bureau uses details of missing persons' cases and unidentified persons and bodies' cases to find people and to cross match or link the missing and the found. Data from all the police areas in England, Wales and Scotland showed that 23 areas recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2012/13, with 298 found in England and Wales; around 85% were found in the Metropolitan Police area. A further 15 cases were recorded by Police Scotland and British Transport Police.

The report uses data from police command and control computer systems to avoid underestimation of the total number of cases reported to the police. Although many constabularies have dedicated missing persons case management systems, data from these systems may not provide a full picture.

In addition, it must be recognised that the difference in data collection and recording practices between the police service and local authorities (on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE)) means that it is difficult to draw comparisons between the figures produced in this report and figures published annually by the DfE. Local authorities are required to report data on looked after children to the DfE on an annual basis. Part of this data collection relates to missing children. Prior to April 2014 definitions used by the police and the DfE were not consistent. For example, for the purpose of completing the DfE return local authorities only recorded children missing if they were outstanding for a period exceeding 24 hours. The DfE makes reference to the discrepancy in its national statistics on

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[1] Throughout this report police service, police area and constabulary are used synonymously.
[2] Bespoke missing person case management system supplied by WPC Software in use in 23 police areas.

looked after children and caveats the discrepancy for 2012/13[3]. As a result of collaboration between the DfE, Home Office, UK Missing Persons Bureau and other interested parties compatible definitions are in use for the 2014/15 year.

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[3] Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2013, DfE, SFR 36/2013 (September 2013)

Missing incidents in 2012/13

All 43 police services in England and Wales supplied data either on the number of missing persons recorded for all four quarters in 2012/13 or an aggregated figure for the year.

Table 1: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2012/13

Police Area	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon & Somerset	2,771	2,699	2,414	2,200	10,084
Bedfordshire	670	730	599	609	2,608
Cambridgeshire	882	804	581	547	2,814
Cheshire	743	746	704	680	2,873
City of London	32	24	27	13	96
Cleveland	835	883	705	788	3,211
Cumbria	518	493	311	247	1,569
Derbyshire	1,161	1,161	1,010	1,001	4,333
Devon & Cornwall	2,448	2,490	2,037	1,952	8,927
Dorset	637	833	567	525	2,562
Durham	549	534	422	398	1,903
Dyfed-Powys	691	675	616	580	2,562
Essex	1,202	1,155	848	787	3,992
Gloucestershire	484	513	514	497	2,008
Greater Manchester	6,363	5,638	4,893	4,735	21,629
Gwent	932	1,046	883	772	3,633
Hampshire	2,102	1,872	2,045	1,943	7,962
Hertfordshire	955	720	729	662	3,066
Humberside	1,594	1,652	1,388	1,200	5,834
Kent	2,278	2,244	2,020	1,809	8,351
Lancashire	2,355	2,231	2,602	1,331	8,519
Leicestershire	1,677	1,643	1,464	1,145	5,929
Lincolnshire	855	803	653	633	2,944
Merseyside	3,357	3,519	4,063	2,894	13,833
Metropolitan[4]					38,904
Norfolk	865	1,000	864	739	3,468
North Wales	473	467	626	665	2,231
North Yorkshire	659	807	751	719	2,936
Northamptonshire	1,314	1,298	1,052	998	4,662
Northumbria	4,203	4,364	3,363	3,303	15,233
Nottinghamshire					4,460
South Wales	1,592	1,583	1,635	1,394	6,204
South Yorkshire	1,721	1,658	1,430	1,413	6,222
Staffordshire	1,086	1,017	826	717	3,646
Suffolk	720	787	680	692	2,879
Surrey	296	406	359	324	1,385
Sussex	3,085	2,162	2,797	2,352	10,396
Thames Valley	2,645	2,606	2,210	2,316	9,777
Warwickshire	465	440	385	348	1,638

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[4] The total number of incidents recorded by the MPS in 2012/13 has been taken from its Merlin reporting system rather than Command and Control to exclude multiple Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) messages connected to missing persons enquiries which were inflating the figures.

West Mercia	1,211	1,251	1,507	900	4,869
West Midlands	4,281	4,059	3,501	3,730	15,571
West Yorkshire	1,028	1,097	1,100	1,001	4,226
Wiltshire	913	942	802	713	3,370
Total					**273,319**

Table 2: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England and Wales 2012/13 per 1,000 Population

Police Area	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Avon & Somerset	1,615,576	10,084	6.2
Bedfordshire	625,019	2,608	4.2
Cambridgeshire	814,711	2,814	3.5
Cheshire	1,031,690	2,873	2.8
City of London	7,604	96	12.6
Cleveland	558,386	3,211	5.8
Cumbria	499,104	1,569	3.1
Derbyshire	1,024,090	4,333	4.2
Devon and Cornwall	1,682,853	8,927	5.3
Dorset	750,299	2,562	3.4
Durham	619,596	1,903	3.1
Dyfed Powys	516,350	2,562	5.0
Essex	1,740,888	3,992	2.3
Gloucestershire	602,159	2,008	3.3
Greater Manchester	2,702,209	21,629	8.0
Gwent	577,981	3,633	6.3
Hampshire	1,915,165	7,962	4.2
Hertfordshire	1,129,096	3,066	2.7
Humberside	921,190	5,834	6.3
Kent	1,748,384	8,351	4.8
Lancashire	1,465,668	8,519	5.8
Leicestershire	1,025,319	5,929	5.8
Lincolnshire	718,838	2,944	4.1
Merseyside	1,385,666	13,833	10.0
Metropolitan	8,300,765	38,904	4.7
Norfolk	865,302	3,468	4.0
North Wales	690,434	2,231	3.2
North Yorkshire	802,646	2,936	3.7
Northamptonshire	700,576	4,662	6.7
Northumbria	1,424,328	15,233	10.7
Nottinghamshire	1,098,908	4,460	4.1
South Wales	1,289,302	6,204	4.8
South Yorkshire	1,352,144	6,222	4.6
Staffordshire	1,102,026	3,646	3.3
Suffolk	732,332	2,879	3.9
Surrey	1,143,509	1,385	1.2
Sussex	1,622,082	10,396	6.4
Thames Valley	2,295,597	9,777	4.3
Warwickshire	547,974	1,638	3.0
West Mercia	1,229,853	4,869	4.0
West Midlands	2,762,716	15,571	5.6
West Yorkshire	2,240,711	4,226	1.9
Wiltshire	688,750	3,370	4.9
Total	**56,567,796**	**273,319**	**4.8**

The overall number of missing persons incidents per 1,000 population was 4.8[5].

Table 3: Missing person incidents reported to the police in Scotland 2012/13 per 1,000 Population

Police Area	Population	No of Missing Incidents	Incidents Per 1,000 Population
Central Scotland	295,920	2,008	6.8
Dumfries & Galloway	148,060	591	4.0
Fife	367,370	2,381	6.5
Grampian	555,280	2,027	3.7
Lothian & Borders	962,040	4,842	5.0
Northern	291,110	1,196	4.1
Strathclyde	2,229,300	17,923	8.0
Tayside	405,720	1,831	4.5
Total	**5,254,800**	**32,799**	**6.2**

The overall number of missing persons incidents per 1,000 of the population for Scotland was 6.2[6].

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	56,567,796	273,319	4.8
Scotland	5,254,800	32,799	6.2
Total	**61,822,596**	**306,118**	**5.0**

The overall number of missing person's incidents per 1,000 of the population for England, Wales and Scotland was 5.0.

Table 5: Missing person incidents reported to the police in England, Scotland and Wales in 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13

Financial Year	No of Missing Incidents
2012/13	306,118
2011/12	313,019
2010/11	326,764

Over the last 12 months, assessment and analysis work, including problem profiling and strategic assessment, by individual police areas has continued to produce a rich local picture and identify the triggers causing people to go missing. This work has been used to

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[5] The total average figure for per 1,000 population has been calculated using the total population estimates and total number of missing incidents to maintain accuracy. Population figures are Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates for 2012.
[6] 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.

drive prevention work, reducing repeat runaways and children and adults missing from care settings. Local pictures of missing persons are used in the work of some local safeguarding children's boards and local safeguarding adult's boards in England and Wales. Together with their local authorities, the police service has also developed effective multi-agency protocols, established Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and introduced processes which assist to safeguard vulnerable missing people and reduce the numbers of repeat missing persons. Prevention work is judged to have had a notable impact on the number of missing persons recorded by the police. Some constabularies have reported a reduction of as much as a third following implementation of good practice.

It is likely that the number of recorded missing person incidents is lower than the actual number of incidents. The police service advises that some missing person cases may be recorded on command and control systems under other incident types (e.g. concern for safety, concern for welfare or truant). These incident types may not be captured in the figures used in this report. In addition, a number of police services[7] adopted an alternative missing persons' definition[8] and approach to recording and investigating people who have gone missing, building upon the work carried out by Sussex Police. This will have had an impact on the number of recorded missing cases. The pilot by Sussex Police has subsequently led to the implementation of a new definition of 'missing' that came into force on 1 April 2013. Some police services were able to undertake preparatory steps prior to implementation, resulting in some areas 'going live' ahead of this date. For the data set out in this report, other police services were still recording incidents in accordance with the 2010 guidance[9].

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 the police in England, Wales and Scotland by using a heat map to shade in each police area a colour which represents how many missing person's incidents have been recorded. The colours range from light to dark shades of blue, with the darker shades representing higher numbers of recorded incidents. The bandings for each shade were chosen to break down the police services into five groups of similar size based on the number of incidents recorded in each police area.

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[7] Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Staffordshire, and West Midlands police services.
[8] The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) approved a new definition for 'missing' that became effective from 1st April 2013. This definition and further information may be found within the ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013.
[9] ACPO Guidance on the Investigation, Management and Recording of Missing Persons 2010.

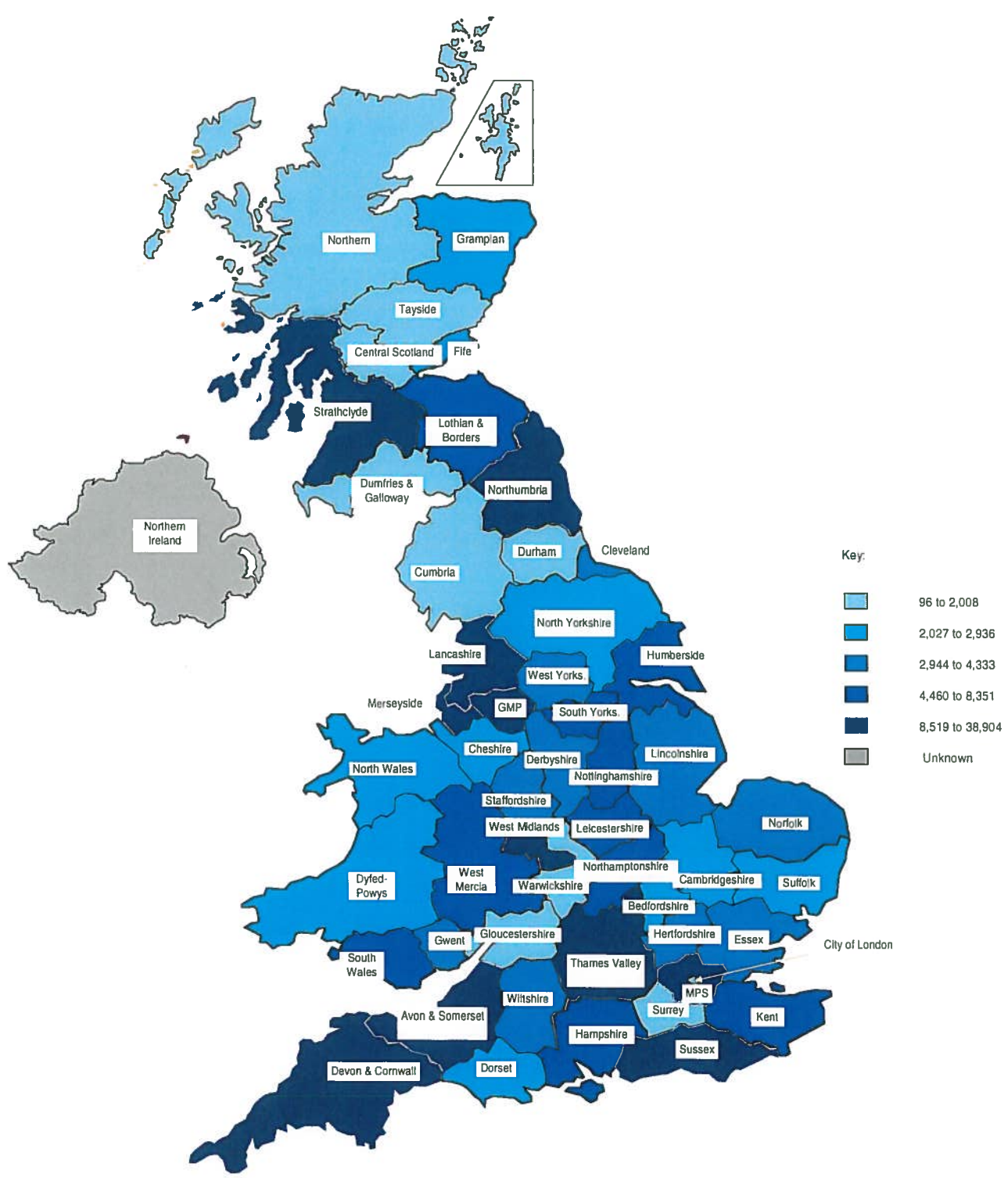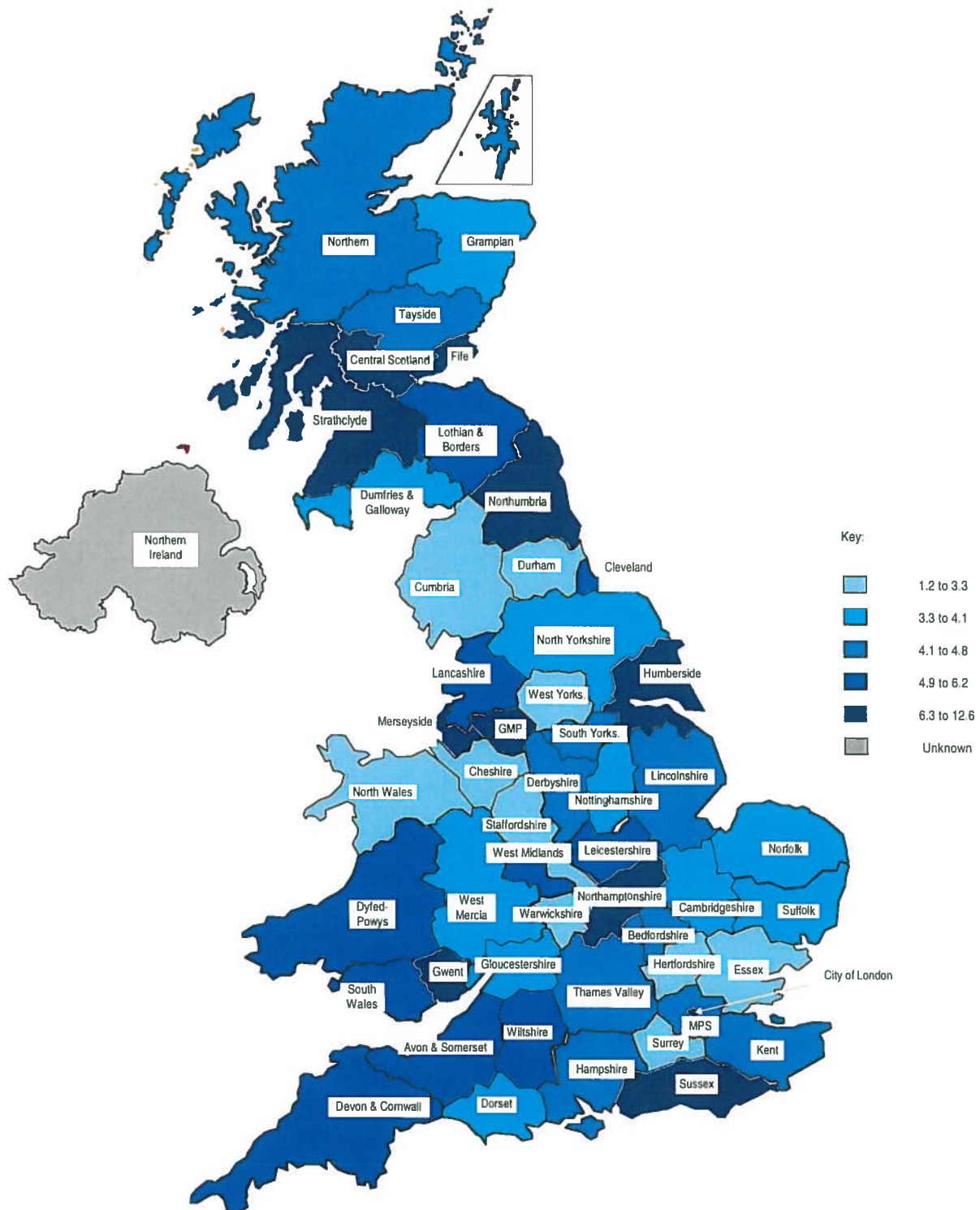# Figure 1: Map of missing person incidents by police area 2012/13

Figure 2: Map of missing person incidents per 1,000 population 2012/13

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. 25 constabularies have been able to supply information on the total number of missing incidents and the total number of missing individuals reported in 2012/13. 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 25 police areas in 2012/13

Police Area	Incidents[10]	Individuals	% of cases attributable to repeat incidents	ratio of reports to people
Bedfordshire	502	413	18	1.2
Cambridgeshire	1,909	1,323	31	1.4
Derbyshire	3,061	1,957	36	1.6
Dorset	817	591	28	1.4
Dyfed Powys	2,418	809	67	3.0
Essex	4,126	3,211	22	1.3
Gloucestershire	2,008	1,401	30	1.4
Greater Manchester	21,488	10,791	50	2.0
Gwent	3,932	2,355	40	1.7
Hampshire	7,905	4,531	43	1.7
Hertfordshire	2,204	1,634	26	1.3
Humberside	2,699	1,593	41	1.7
Kent	8,351	5,235	27	1.6
Lincolnshire	2,189	1,608	27	1.4
Merseyside	5,374	3,196	41	1.7
Northumbria	6,560	3,919	40	1.7
Nottinghamshire	4,251	3,107	27	1.4
Staffordshire	3,749	2,308	28	1.6
Suffolk	2,623	2,114	19	1.2
Surrey	1,385	875	37	1.6
Sussex	2,183	1,692	32	1.3
Warwickshire	971	676	30	1.4
West Mercia	2,507	1,925	23	1.3
West Midlands	7,817	5,261	33	1.5
Wiltshire	2,243	1,680	25	1.3
Total	**103,272**	**64,205**	Average 38%	Average 1.6

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[10] The number of incidents recorded on dedicated missing persons systems. The number of incidents may differ to the figure supplied from command and control systems.

The information available from police dedicated missing persons systems indicates that, on average across these 25 police areas, 38 per cent of cases are attributable to repeat missing person incidents. In other words repeat missing persons incidents in 2012/13 accounted for over a third of all missing incidents. This mirrors the statistics provided in last year's report in which figures based on data from 14 police areas indicated that repeat missing persons accounted for just over a third of missing incidents.

Work conducted by the National Policing Lead for Missing in association with the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) including the UK Missing Persons Bureau, CEOP Command[11] has improved consistency of operational practice. Evidence based policy development and practice design has undoubtedly contributed to effective safeguarding of vulnerable people and reduced the number of repeat missing incidents. Not only does this safeguard a vulnerable section of the missing population (as the service advises that the majority of these repeat cases relate to children), but this may also reduce the cost to the police of investigating cases as repeat incidents can represent a substantial percentage of the overall number recorded by a constabulary with estimated costs of missing persons investigations between £1,325.44 and £2,415.80[12]. Police areas implementing good practice may achieve up to a 30% reduction in the costs of missing investigations.

Within the 25 police services that supplied data, the proportion of incidents that could be attributed to separate individuals ranged from 33 to 82%. Assuming the pattern in these police areas was similar to that experienced in other police areas 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 103,000 and an upper estimate of around 252,000 individuals for the year.

Table 7: High, medium and low estimated number of individuals reported missing in 2012/13

	Population	No of Missing Incidents		No of Missing Individuals Low Estimate	No of Missing Individuals Medium Estimate	No of Missing Individuals High Estimate
England and Wales	56,567,796	273,000		92,000	170,000	225,000
Scotland	5,254,800	33,000		11,000	20,000	27,000
Total	**61,822,596**	**306,000**		**103,000**	**190,000**	**252,000**

It is likely that both the number of missing incidents and number of missing individuals are underestimates of the actual national picture, as surveys of the police service by the UK Missing Persons Bureau show that some missing person's cases may be recorded under other incident types. In these cases the incident will not be recorded as a missing person, and it will not be captured in these figures.

Using this data it can be estimated that in England, Wales and Scotland, around 190,000 people go missing per year. However, the rate at which people go missing may vary from area to area depending on factors including demographics and procedures in place.

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[11] From 1 April 2014 UK Missing Persons Bureau became part of the NCA CEOP Command to further align the work of the UK Missing Persons Bureau and the Missing Children's team.
[12] Shalev Greene, K. and Pakes, F (2012) 'Establishing the cost of missing person investigations'. Report submitted to West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police.
http://www.ports.ac.uk/departments/academic/icjs/csmp/files/filetodownload.160035.en.pdf

Who goes missing?

36 out of 43 of the English and Welsh police areas supplied demographic information for people who were reported missing for all four quarters; the MPS was unable to provide demographic information on an age/gender basis. The data covered 121,726 incidents (approximately 45% of the total 273,000 missing incidents for England and Wales). Some geographic areas may be over or under represented (e.g. urban or rural areas) and this may influence the demographic breakdown seen. A further analysis of urban-rural categorisation is available on page 25. This data relates to incidents, people who go missing more than once in the year will be counted multiple times.

Age and Gender

The data (n=121,726) from 36 of 43 police areas in England and Wales suggests that more men than women go missing. The returns show the gender split of missing incidents to be 53% male and 47% female. This is fairly consistent with the make up of the general population (49% male and 51% female).[13]

Table 8: Gender of Missing Incidents by Age Group (n=121,726)

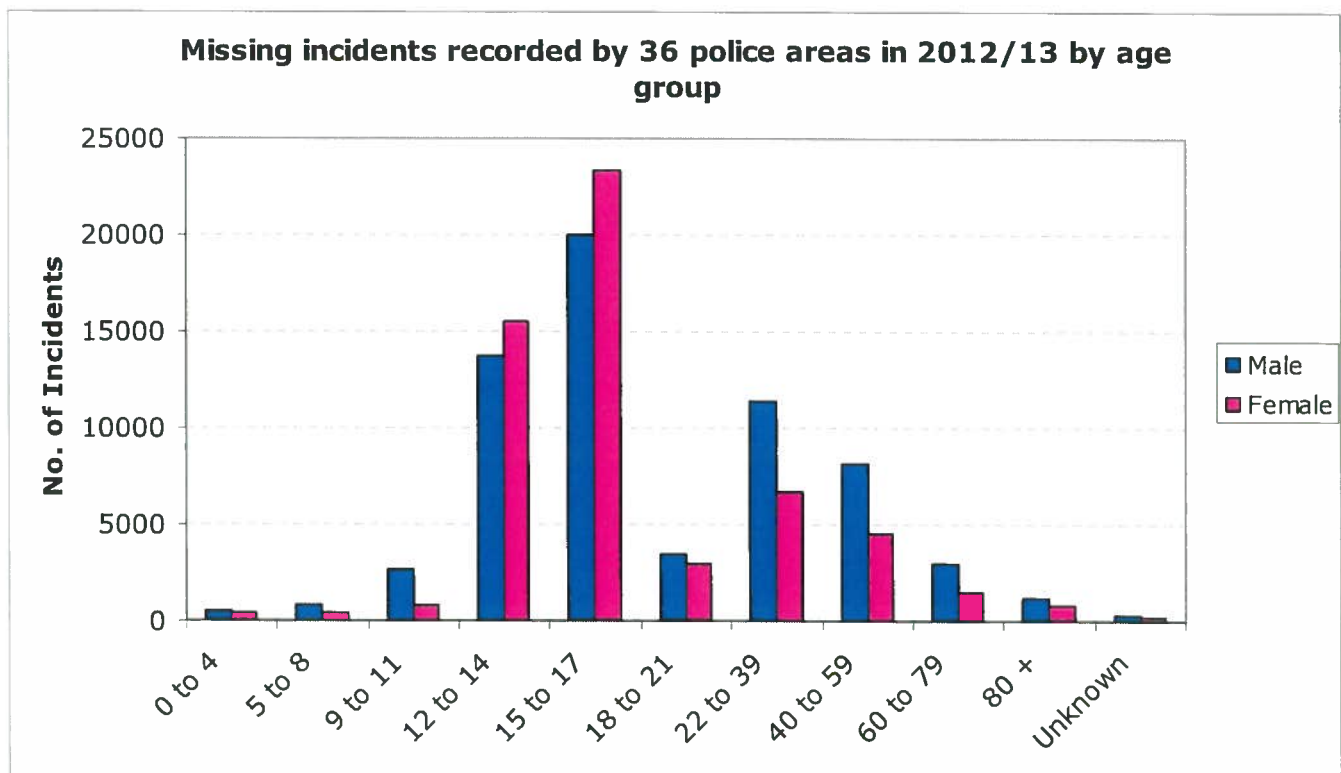| Age group	Male	Female	% Male	% Female	Total
0-4 years	455	347	57	43	802
5-8 years	816	344	70	30	1,160
9-11 years	2,678	833	76	24	3,511
12-14 years	13,696	15,486	47	53	29,182
15-17 years	19,996	23,314	46	54	43,310
18-21 years	3,384	2,971	53	47	6,355
22-39 years	11,332	6,647	63	37	17,979
40-59 years	8,108	4,480	64	36	12,588
60-79 years	2,955	1,446	67	33	4,401
80+ years	1,202	770	61	39	1,972
Unknown	270	196	58	42	466[14]
Total	**64,892**	**56,834**			**121,726**

In total, children and young people[15] 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 36% of the total missing reports (see Figure 3). These figures are likely to include multiple incidents relating to the same young person who has gone missing repeatedly.

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[13] Population figures for England and Wales from the ONS population estimates for mid 2012.
[14] It is not possible to assert that the 'unknown' figure should be a larger figure than quoted to include cases from the 7 police areas that did not supply demographic information. This chart relates only to demographic information supplied in 121,726 incidents.
[15] Children and young people are defined as 0-17 years.

Figure 3: Missing incidents in England and Wales by age group 2012/13

The data supplied by police services is already aggregated into specified age groups.[16] The number of incidents of missing persons 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 boys (53%) and girls (47%) were reported missing, for young people aged 12 to 17 years more girls were recorded missing by the police than boys (54% and 47% respectively). Conversely, slightly more incidents were recorded for men than women in each of the age groups over the age of 18 years and for boys in the 0 to 11 age group. This data supports previous research findings[17] and is consistent with the data received from the police for 2011/12; 2010/11 and 2009/10. Please see Table 8 for this data.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is coded on missing persons reports using the 6+1 police officer-defined ethnicity codes which are the codes used on the Police National Computer (PNC) system. The police also use ethnicity descriptions based on 16 + 1 self defined ethnicity codes for the majority recording of other policing incidents such as stop and search, crime recording and custody records. It is difficult to see how 16+1 system could be used for missing incidents unless it is applied retrospectively on the return of the missing person.
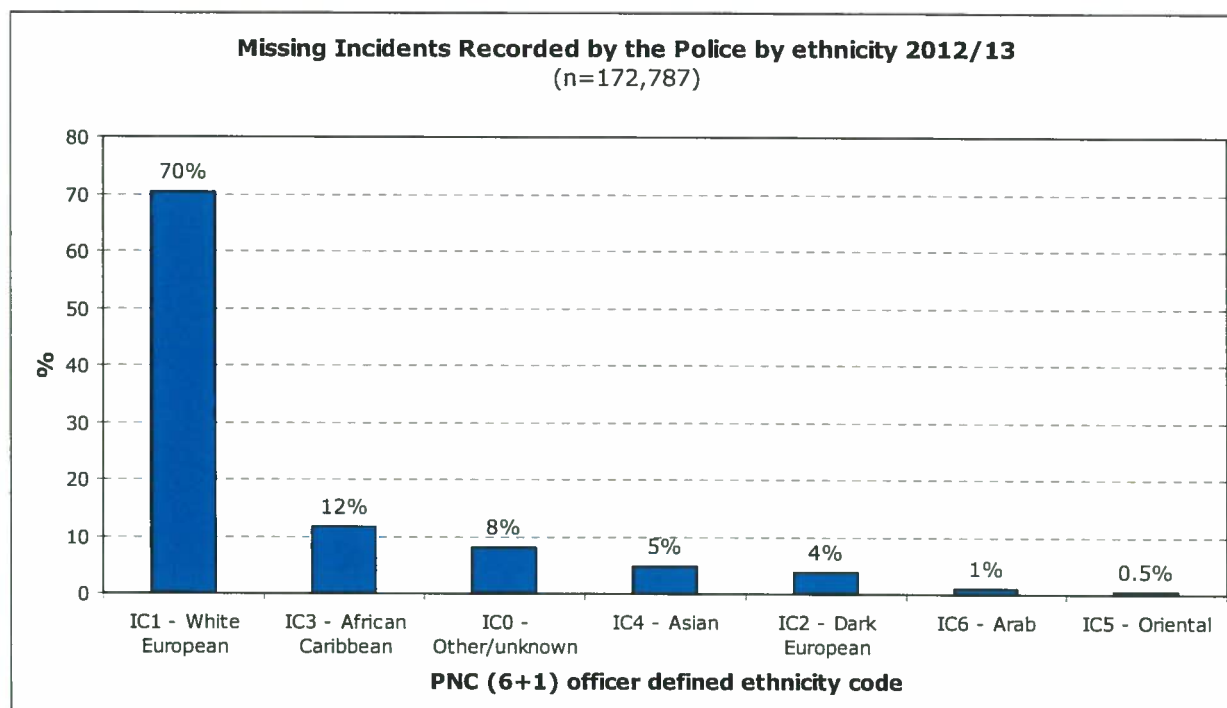
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[16] In an attempt to reduce the data burden on the police, the service is asked to supply data in these age groups rather than for every individual case.
[17]Rees, G (2011) *Still Running 3 – Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways* (London: The Children's Society)

Ethnicity data was provided by the same 36 police areas and the MPS, but will not necessarily reflect the overall picture. Additionally, in approximately 8% of the cases where data was provided, the ethnicity of the missing person was unknown.
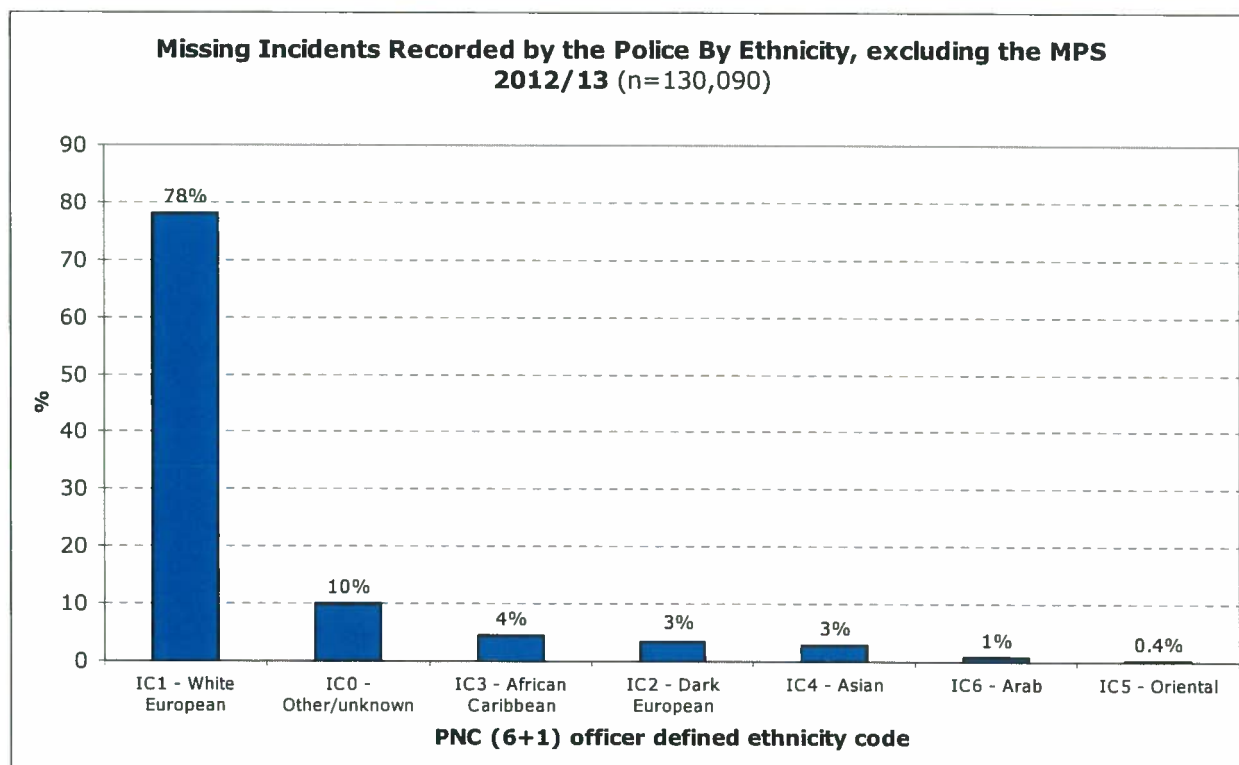
The data provided by the police, detailed in Figure 4, show that the majority of missing persons reports were for White European individuals; this is followed by reports for African Caribbean individuals. The data indicate that individuals from some ethnic minority groups may be over represented in the 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 MPS. The MPS figures account for over a quarter of all data used in this analysis and contribute to 60% of the entire 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.

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

Missing Incidents Recorded by the Police by ethnicity 2012/13 (n=172,787)

A significant number of missing incidents (13,863) were classified as Other or Unknown ethnicity.

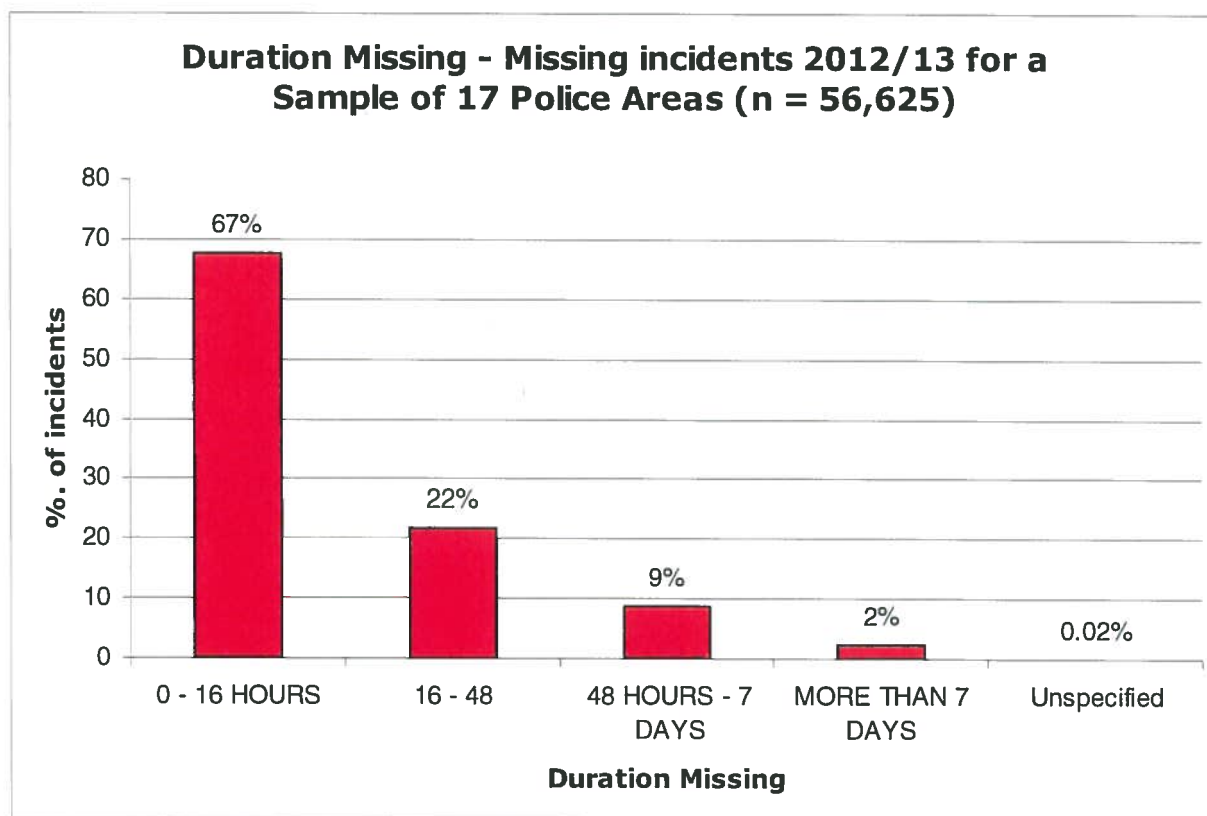**Figure 5: Missing incidents recorded by ethnicity excluding the Metropolitan Police data**

Missing Incidents Recorded by the Police By Ethnicity, excluding the MPS 2012/13 (n=130,090)

Analysis of 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, 17 of 23 constabularies which use the Compact system to record data provided details on the length of time for which people went missing. The data does not include any information from command and control systems. Although these data only represent a partial picture of those recorded by the police, it does provide an indication of the duration for which people are missing. The data indicate that the majority (67%) of missing people return or are located within 16 hours with only 2% outstanding for longer than a week. The data only represent a partial picture, but it is consistent with previous research which has also found that the majority of missing person's incidents are resolved quickly[18]. In addition, the 'duration missing' is consistent with the results from 2011/12 which indicated that 70% of people were located or returned within 16 hours with only 2% outstanding for longer than a week.

Figure 6: Duration people go missing for in 2012/13, for 17 constabularies

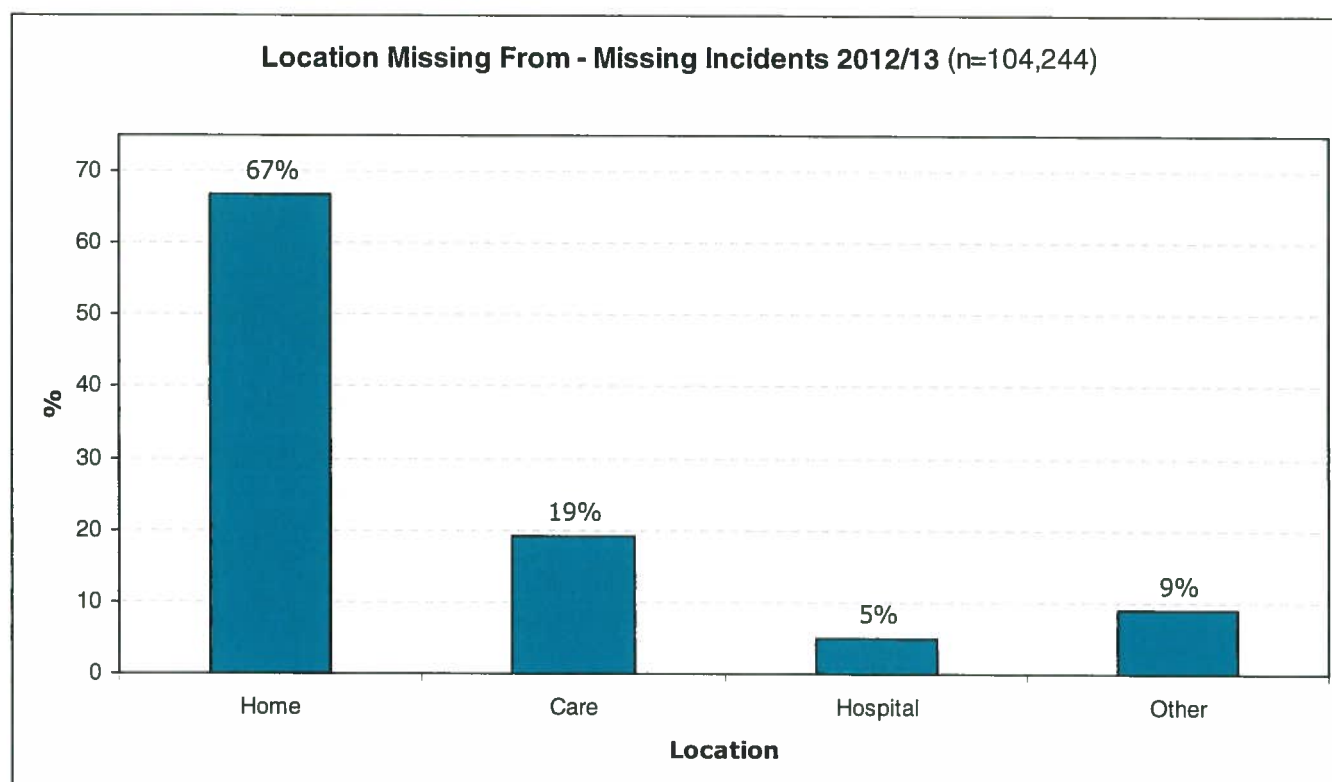Duration Missing - Missing incidents 2012/13 for a Sample of 17 Police Areas (n = 56,625)

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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

Where do people go missing from?

Data supplied by 31 police areas suggest that out of the four key police 'missing from' categories (home, care, hospital or 'other' – '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 are 'missing from home'. Cases reported as 'missing from care' account for just under one fifth of the cases. However, the 'missing from home' figure may be higher due to incorrect recording of 'missing from home' for incidents of missing children in foster care when this should be recorded as missing from care. 5% of incidents were 'missing from hospital' and 9% of cases the people were 'missing from other'.

Figure 7: Locations missing from in 2012/13 for 31 police areas

Location Missing From - Missing Incidents 2012/13 (n=104,244)

How are missing persons cases risk assessed?

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

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[19] ACPO (2005) *Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*
http://library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/Missing-Persons-2005-ACPO-Guidance.pdf
ACPO (2010) *Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons* (Second Edition)
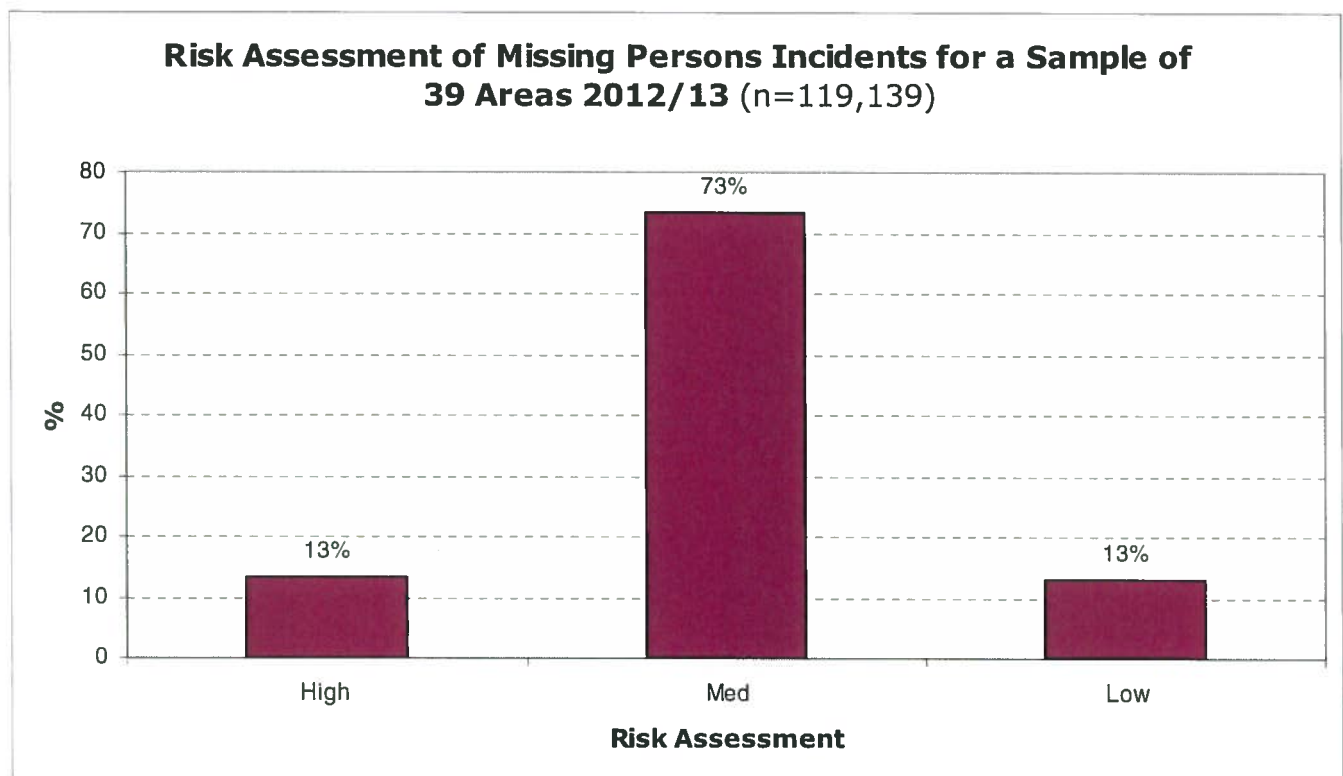http://library.college.police.uk/docs/npia/missing-persons-guidance-2010.pdf
ACPO (2013) *Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons* (Third Edition)
http://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Interim-Missing-Persons-Guidance-2013.pdf

39 police areas supplied data on risk assessments categorisation, and this is illustrated in Figure 8. In managing missing persons' cases, the police will usually record an incident on a command and control system before transferring (automated interfaces or transfer systems are in place in many areas) the incident to a dedicated missing persons' case management system. The number of cases transferred varies from police area to police area but is often no more than 40% of incidents. Only missing persons incidents held on dedicated missing persons systems have been used in this section of analysis, but it nevertheless provides a reasonable picture.

Figure 8: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2012/13 for 39 police areas

Risk Assessment of Missing Persons Incidents for a Sample of 39 Areas 2012/13 (n=119,139)

Three constabularies, using a direct entry method into a dedicated missing persons' case management system, supplied data to the UK Missing Persons Bureau. Direct entry of data into a case management system is likely to be a more accurate methodology for recording risk in all cases rather than splitting risk recording between command and control systems and dedicated case management systems. When comparing Figures 8 and 9, it may be seen that police areas using a direct entry method appear to have more confidence in using the 'low' risk category, recording nearly 60% more low risk category cases than police areas using a combination of systems. These low risk cases can be seen to reduce the percentages of medium and high risk cases.

Figure 9: Risk assessments for missing incidents 2012/13 for three police constabularies

Risk Assessment of Missing Persons Incidents for a Sample of Three Constabularies 2012/13 (n=17,084)

Missing incidents by urban – rural categorisation of police areas

The data on the number of incidents for each police area have 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 those police areas which are categorised as 'most urban'. Generally numbers decrease as the environment is more rural. Further research would be required to the causes for this.

Figure 10: Missing person incidents by urban-rural categorisation of police areas

Average Rate of Missing Person Incidents By Urban-Rural Categorisation of Police Areas 2012-13

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

Distance missing people were found from home

The distance missing people were found from home data (n= 66,522) is extracted from 17 police areas using Compact. The data indicates that the majority (66%) of missing people are located within five miles of their home[21]. The fact that 17 forces submitted data for 2012/13 represents a substantial increase from 2011/12 when only four police areas supplied this data. However, whilst the number of forces submitting data in these categories has increased, the data itself is relatively consistent in distances from home in which individuals are found. Given this consistency, it seems reasonable to assume that this is likely to be indicative of the nationwide picture.

Figure 11: Distance found from home

Distance Missing People were Found from Home for a Sample of 17 Police Areas 2012/13 (n=66,522)

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[21] Home may include foster care, children's homes and the like

Figure 12: Circumstances while missing

The data (n= 56,661) indicate that 28% of missing people stayed with or met up with a friend while missing.

Circumstances While Missing for a Sample of 17 Police Areas 2012/13 (n=56,661)

Circumstance	% of Incidents
WITH PERSON / LOCATION KNOWN FROM ORIGINAL INFO.	2%
STAYED IN HOTEL / OTHER COMMERCIAL PREMISES	2%
SLEPT ROUGH	3%
MET UP WITH OTHER	3%
WENT TO PLACE PREVIOUSLY LIVED / FREQUENTED	4%
WENT TO LOCATION - NO KNOWN CONNECTIONS	6%
NOT KNOWN	12%
MET UP WITH FRIEND / AQUAINTANCE	12%
MISPER DECLINED TO GIVE INFORMATION	14%
OTHER	14%
STAYED WITH FRIEND	28%

% of Incidents

Figure 13: Who missing people were found by

The data (n= 56,661) indicate that 43% of missing people were located by the police.

Reported Found Information for a Sample of 17 Police Areas 2012/13
(n=56,611)

Category	%
OTHER INDIVIDUAL	1%
OTHER AGENCY	1%
SOCIAL SERVICES	2%
HEALTH SERVICES STAFF	2%
FRIEND / AQUAINTANCE OF MISPER	3%
CARE HOME STAFF	9%
OTHER	11%
FAMILY (INC. FOSTER / GUARDIANS)	27%
POLICE	43%

%

Harm suffered whilst missing

Information on the harm suffered whilst missing is not included within the quarterly returns. However, the 16 police areas which use the Compact system to record data provided details on these areas for the year 2012/13. Although these data only represent a partial picture it does provide an indication of the likelihood of coming to harm whilst missing.

The data (n=55,792) indicate that the majority (97%) of missing people suffer no harm whilst missing. However, there are limitations to this data as it is based on officer's interpretation and is open to subjectivity. In addition, during the return interview and/or safe and well check the missing person may not disclose that they came to harm.

Table 9: Harm suffered whilst missing in 2012/13

Police Area	No harm suffered	Physical injury	Self harmed	Accidental harm	Sexual offence victim	Emotional harm	Found deceased	Unspecified	Total
Bedfordshire	472	8	5	0	5	0	3	3	496
Cambridgeshire	1747	15	28	4	6	1	11	0	1812
Derbyshire	2939	35	47	7	2	1	3	0	3034
Essex	3870	61	98	20	8	2	23	0	4082
Gloucestershire	1937	20	21	7	6	2	18	0	2011
Gwent	3828	17	33	8	5	4	16	0	3911
Hertfordshire	2121	19	31	7	1	2	6	0	2187
Humberside	2606	39	23	6	3	0	4	0	2681
Kent	8019	88	71	16	9	5	13	0	8221
Merseyside	5220	41	43	14	6	6	15	0	5345
Nottinghamshire	4120	30	36	12	6	3	11	0	4218
Staffordshire	2731	13	42	7	6	8	12	1	2820
Suffolk	2474	36	48	15	2	2	9	0	2586
Sussex	2044	22	32	12	8	5	16	0	2139
West Mercia	2384	24	37	4	4	4	15	0	2472
West Midlands	7537	108	52	19	28	8	23	2	7777
Column Totals	**54,049**	**576**	**647**	**158**	**105**	**53**	**198**	**6**	**55,792**
	96.9%	1.0%	1.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	100.0%

How many incidents result in a fatal outcome?

Data on the outcome of each incident are not included within the quarterly returns. Table 10 shows fatal outcomes in missing incidents for the financial year 2012/13 based on returns for 29 constabularies.

Table 10: The number of fatal outcomes recorded in 2012/13

	Missing persons incidents	No of fatal outcomes	Percentage of incidents
Avon & Somerset	10,084	24	0.24
Bedfordshire	2,068	6	0.29
Cambridgeshire	2,814	6	0.21
Cleveland	3,211	6	0.19
Devon & Cornwall	8,927	26	0.29
Derbyshire	4,333	7	0.16
Essex	3,992	33	0.83
Greater Manchester	21,629	32	0.15
Gwent	3,633	7	0.19
Hertfordshire	3,066	6	0.20
Humberside	5,834	5	0.09
Kent	8,351	15	0.18
Lancashire	8,519	15	0.18
Leicestershire	5,929	18	0.30
Lincolnshire	2,944	0	0.00
Merseyside	13,833	17	0.12
Metropolitan	38,904	157	0.40
North Yorkshire	2,936	13	0.44
Northumbria	15,233	11	0.07
Nottinghamshire	4,460	12	0.27
South Yorkshire	6,222	32	0.51
Staffordshire	3,646	14	0.38
Suffolk	2,879	11	0.38
Sussex	10,396	18	0.17
Thames Valley	9,777	28	0.29
Warwickshire	1,638	4	0.24
West Mercia	4,869	19	0.39
West Midlands	15,571	21	0.13
West Yorkshire	4,226	13	0.31
TOTAL	**229,924**	**576**	**Average = 0.25**

The figures indicate that around 0.25% of all missing person incidents result in a fatal outcome; this is equivalent to 1 in every 400 cases. Some of the police areas show a lower proportion of cases resulting in a fatal outcome than others. This may be due to the small numbers reported to the police. 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. It should be noted that the number of cases in Table 10 is not comparable to those shown in column 'found deceased' in Table 9.

In the majority of missing persons cases that have a fatal outcome individual are likely to 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.

Given that there are around 306,000 missing incidents per annum, the current data suggest that around 760 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 percent of incidents across the 29 constabularies which supplied data and the total number of incidents. This figure is in line with the estimation contained within the 2011/12 report which indicated that 750 incidents a year will result in a fatal outcome in Great Britain.

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 individual may never have been reported as missing which makes the identification process extremely difficult as cross matching with missing and found person cases cannot be conducted.

The UK Missing Persons Bureau uses details of missing persons cases and unidentified persons, unidentified bodies, body parts and remains cases to cross match or link the missing and the found. The current picture in relation to unidentified people, bodies and remains is outlined within this report.

Further work would be required with the police areas that have supplied data on fatal outcomes in order to break down the reasons for death and the links to missing and unidentified cases. There is a lack of knowledge on the breakdown of the characteristics of the individual who goes missing (age, sex, gender etc); the cause of death and how they were found. Analysis of fatal outcomes cases can assist with investigative processes and search practices.

Unidentified people, bodies and remains

The UK Missing Persons 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 were obtained from Hermes (the Bureau's database) and from the police[22]. There are limitations to these data as not all police areas may have notified the UK Missing Persons Bureau of every unidentified person or body they have recorded. Table 11 provides details of data provided by the police. Those that could not supply data or provided a nil return are not included in this table.

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[22] Data from police area operational notifications and from figures sent to the UK Missing Persons Bureau as part of the quarterly returns data supplied to the UK Missing Persons Bureau under the code of practice on missing persons data.

Table 11: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies, and remains, found and recorded in 2012/13 by police area.

Police Area	Body	Body Part	Alive	Total
England and Wales				
Derbyshire	1	0	0	1
Devon and Cornwall	3	1	0	4
Dorset	2	0	0	2
Dyfed-Powys	2	1	0	3
Essex	0	0	1	1
Gloucestershire	1	0	0	1
Greater Manchester	3	0	1	4
Hampshire	1	1	0	2
Hertfordshire	2	0	0	2
Kent	1	0	1	2
Lancashire	2	0	1	3
Lincolnshire	2	2	0	4
Merseyside	2	0	0	2
Metropolitan[23]	41	2	206	249
North Yorkshire	1	0	0	1
Northumbria	0	1	0	1
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	1
South Wales	1	0	2	3
Surrey	0	0	2	2
Sussex	4	0	0	4
Thames Valley	2	0	0	2
West Mercia	1	0	0	1
West Yorkshire	3	0	0	3
Total	**76**	**8**	**214**	**298**
Scotland				
Strathclyde	1	0	0	1
Total	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Other				
Overseas	3	0	0	3
Interpol[24]	33	3	2	38
British Transport Police	13	0	3	16
PSNI	1	0	0	1
Total	**50**	**3**	**5**	**58**
Total	**127**	**11**	**219**	**357**

All police areas notify the UK Missing Persons Bureau of unidentified found cases. According to records held at the UK Missing Persons Bureau, 23 police areas in England and Wales recorded at least one unidentified person, body or body part found during 2012/13, with a total of 298 found in England and Wales. Including those reported by Scottish police areas

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[23] Data obtained from MPS Operation Compass.
[24] Interpol notify the UK Missing Persons Bureau of unidentified people, bodies or body parts found overseas whose identity and nationality is not known but who may be British.

and British Transport Police a total of 315 unidentified people, bodies or remains were found in 2012/13. In addition, 42 cases were found by the Police Service of Northern Ireland and by overseas law enforcement agencies and reported to the UK Missing Persons Bureau by Interpol[25]. These Interpol cases are reported to the UK Missing Persons Bureau to ensure that links to reports of missing persons from the UK can be made.

The vast majority of unidentified persons, 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 areas, 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 persons 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 areas which still remain unidentified, up to the end of March 2013, are shown in Table 12 below. This data includes all known outstanding cases, including those notified to the UK Missing Persons Bureau in the years before 2012/13 if they still remain unidentified, whereas Table 11 only includes notified cases from 2012/13.

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[25] The Code of Practice stipulates that the UK Missing Persons Bureau should receive notifications regarding all foreign nationals missing in the UK and all UK nationals reported as missing abroad.

Table 12: The number of unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains on record which remain outstanding (correct to the end of 2012/13)

Police Area	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
Cumbria	4	3	0	7
Derbyshire	8	0	1	9
Devon and Cornwall	21	7	0	28
Dorset	13	0	0	13
Durham	3	0	2	5
Dyfed-Powys	5	4	0	9
Essex	25	2	2	29
Gloucestershire	4	1	0	5
Greater Manchester	10	2	1	13
Gwent	8	0	0	8
Hampshire	5	10	0	15
Hertfordshire	3	0	4	7
Humberside	5	1	0	6
Kent	28	2	1	31
Lancashire	8	3	1	12
Leicestershire	2	0	1	3
Lincolnshire	2	1	0	3
Merseyside	9	4	1	14
Metropolitan[26]	271	10	27	308
Norfolk	4	2	0	6
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	6	2	3	11
Surrey	12	1	1	14
Sussex	45	6	1	52
Thames Valley	10	1	0	11
Warwickshire	1	0	0	1
West Mercia	4	2	2	8
West Midlands	6	3	2	11
West Yorkshire	7	2	1	10
Wiltshire	1	1	0	2
Total	**617**	**83**	**55**	**755**
Scotland				
Central Scotland	2	0	0	2

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[26] 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.

Dumfries and Galloway	11	3	0	**14**
Fife	2	0	0	**2**
Grampian	0	1	0	**1**
Lothian and Borders	6	1	1	**8**
Northern	5	2	0	**7**
Strathclyde	23	5	3	**31**
Tayside	1	3	0	**4**
Total	**50**	**15**	**4**	**69**
Other				
British Transport Police	48	0	0	**48**
Guernsey	5	0	0	**5**
Interpol	331	38	8	**377**
Isle of Man	3	0	0	**3**
Ministry of Defence	1	0	0	**1**
Overseas	6	2	0	**8**
Northern Ireland	5	8	0	**13**
States of Jersey	2	1	0	**3**
Total	**401**	**49**	**8**	**458**
Total	**1,068**	**147**	**67**	**1,282**

Unidentified people, unidentified bodies and remains cases

A heat map has been created to indicate the number of cases recorded by the police, across all years, which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2013.

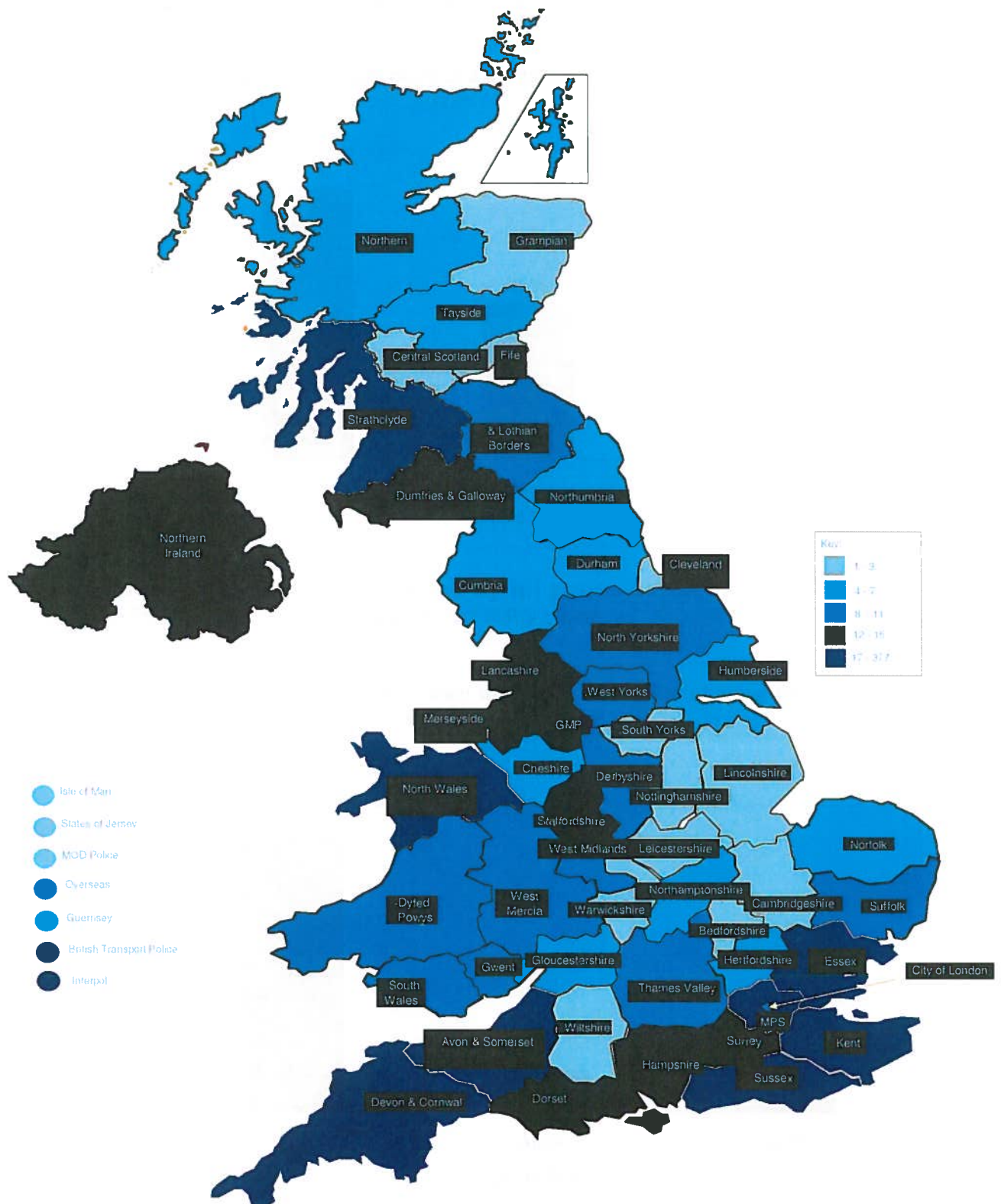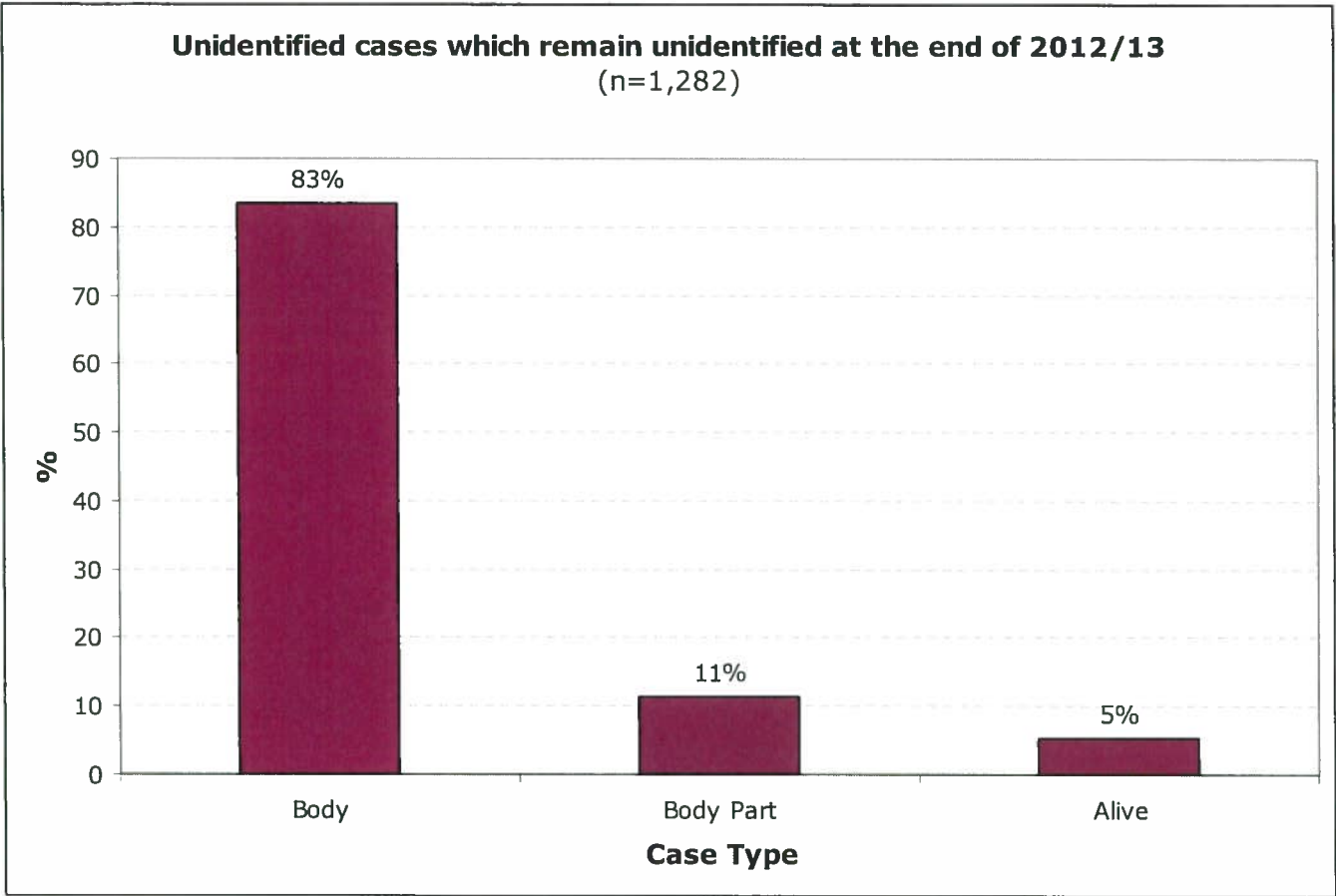## Figure 13: Unidentified cases which remained unsolved to end of 2012/13

Figure 16: Unidentified cases which remain unidentified 2012/13 by type

Figure 16 shows the number of cases which remained unidentified up to the end of March 2013, inclusive of all years of recording. The majority of these are unidentified bodies.

Unidentified cases which remain unidentified at the end of 2012/13
(n=1,282)

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 areas, 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 the police 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'.

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

Appendix A: Notes on statistics used in this bulletin

Background on data collection

This report presents information relating to missing persons[27] and unidentified bodies collated under the code of practice on the collection of missing persons data made under Section 39A of the Police Act 1996. The report covers missing persons and unidentified bodies reported to the police in the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

When the UK Missing Persons Bureau became part of the NPIA in 2008 (subsequently transferred to SOCA in April 2012 and to the NCA in October 2013), it was identified that there was no national collation of the number of people reported missing to the police. The UK Missing Persons Bureau, Government and an All Party Parliamentary Group have identified the need for comprehensive data on missing people.

The UK Missing Persons 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 persons with public authorities[28]. 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 the police in England and Wales to submit case details to the UK Missing Persons Bureau and to provide prompt updates and case cancellations (when the missing person has been found). It also requires police services 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 the police 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 services 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 the police with enough time to respond to the requirements of the code. This staged implementation also afforded police services 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.

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[27] 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.

[28] '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".

All police areas in England and Wales were required to comply with the statutory code by April 2010. The code is available for adoption on a voluntary basis by other police services within the UK: Police Service of Scotland, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the non-territorial police bodies. No data returns for 2012/13 were received from Guernsey, States of Jersey, Isle of Man or PSNI.

Limitations of the data

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

Data has been taken mainly from police command and control computer systems because although many police areas 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 area. This underestimation is caused by cases which are closed (i.e. because the person has been found) on the command and control system before they can be transferred onto a dedicated missing persons system. This can result in as few as 30% of cases being transferred onto a dedicated system.

Where police areas 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 area 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 areas supplied data from a Niche RMS[29] 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 area 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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[29] Niche Records Management System is a computer system used by the police. Niche RMS is used to manage all police data for various different functions within a single system.

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Population figures from iQuanta and from Office for National Statistics Mid-2012 population estimates for police areas in England and Wales. Police 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