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Careless and Dangerous Driving-- How Court prosecutions vary by police area

Key points

- Almost five times as many drivers were prosecuted at court in England and Wales in 2013 for Driving Without Due Care and Attention, commonly referred to as Careless Driving, than for Dangerous Driving.
- There was wide variation in the ratio of prosecution for Careless Driving to Dangerous Driving by police service (1.5-16.9).
- A high ratio meant drivers were much more likely to be prosecuted for Careless Driving than Dangerous Driving. Three police services had very high Careless Driving: Dangerous Driving prosecution ratios-- over twice as high as the England and Wales average, with
 - Almost 17 times as many prosecutions in Norfolk for Careless Driving than Dangerous Driving.
 - Over 14 times as many prosecutions in Suffolk for Careless Driving than Dangerous Driving whilst in Dyfed Powys it was 10 times as many.
- A low ratio meant that drivers were more likely to be prosecuted for Dangerous Driving:
 - Gwent had the lowest ratio with 1.5, with two drivers prosecuted for Dangerous Driving for every three drivers prosecuted for Careless Driving.
 - Nottinghamshire prosecuted 1.8 times as many Careless Drivers at court as Dangerous Drivers.
- In London, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) reported over 6 times as many drivers prosecuted at court for Careless Driving than Dangerous Driving.

Dangerous Driving

- Only 12 drivers a day were prosecuted for Dangerous Driving in England and Wales.
- Prosecutions for the year 2013 by police service area varied from as low as 24 in Dyfed Powys and 27 in Dorset to a high of 590 in London and 342 in West Yorkshire.
- Dangerous Driving had an average conviction rate of 88%, ranging from 73% in Leicestershire to 98% in Cambridgeshire and Warwickshire, with almost half of all police services having conviction rates of 90% and over.

Careless Driving (Driving without Due Care and Attention)

- The offence of Driving without Due Care is commonly referred to as Careless Driving, but that is the name of the group of offences that includes Driving without Due Care and Attention and also Use of a Mobile Phone whilst Driving.
- On average, only 58 drivers a day are prosecuted at Court for Careless Driving in England & Wales (less than 1.4 per police force).
- Prosecutions by police service varied from as low as 109 in Gwent, 230 in Cumbria and 154 in Cleveland to 3728 in London, 765 in Essex, and 868 in West Yorkshire.
- Careless Driving has an average conviction rate of 78%, ranging from 51% in Durham and 58% in Dyfed Powys to 86% in Nottinghamshire.

Table 1: Dangerous Driving and Careless Driving, England and Wales (2013)

Offences	Careless Driving			Dangerous driving			Careless to Dangerous prosecution ratio
	Prosecutions	Guilty	Conviction Rate	Prosecutions	Guilty	Conviction Rate	
Police Area							
Norfolk	609	466	77%	36	22	61%	16.9
Suffolk	521	408	78%	37	30	81%	14.1
Dyfed Powys	248	143	58%	24	19	79%	10.3
Cambridgeshire	450	396	88%	48	42	88%	9.4
Lincolnshire	373	322	86%	48	30	63%	7.8
West Mercia	771	503	65%	100	73	73%	7.7
Dorset	208	148	71%	27	17	63%	7.7
Wiltshire	298	222	74%	40	33	83%	7.5
Warwickshire	271	217	80%	40	35	88%	6.8
Essex	765	651	85%	113	86	76%	6.8
North Wales	511	439	86%	78	66	85%	6.6
Metropolitan Police District	3,728	2,832	76%	590	458	78%	6.3
Hertfordshire	400	320	80%	66	49	74%	6.1
Leicestershire	420	242	58%	70	44	63%	6.0
Gloucestershire	243	189	78%	44	32	73%	5.5
Hampshire	509	357	70%	93	66	71%	5.5
South Wales	587	470	80%	108	74	69%	5.4
North Yorkshire	397	338	85%	74	52	70%	5.4
Derbyshire	347	292	84%	65	45	69%	5.3
Surrey	393	328	83%	74	54	73%	5.3
Staffordshire	648	548	85%	124	81	65%	5.2
Devon and Cornwall	382	316	83%	75	46	61%	5.1
Northamptonshire	421	359	85%	85	61	72%	5.0
Durham	329	167	51%	71	56	79%	4.6
Sussex	439	381	87%	95	76	80%	4.6
Humberside	328	274	84%	72	55	76%	4.6
Avon and Somerset	562	467	83%	136	104	76%	4.1
Lancashire	531	428	81%	136	89	65%	3.9
Merseyside	384	318	83%	104	76	73%	3.7
Bedfordshire	229	179	78%	63	47	75%	3.6
Cumbria	238	187	79%	67	52	78%	3.6
Kent	355	259	73%	106	90	85%	3.3
Cheshire	206	178	86%	64	54	84%	3.2
Thames Valley	412	327	79%	128	105	82%	3.2
South Yorkshire	399	261	65%	133	95	71%	3.0
Northumbria	382	321	84%	135	96	71%	2.8
West Midlands	818	610	75%	298	239	80%	2.7
Greater Manchester	739	636	86%	282	226	80%	2.6
West Yorkshire	868	700	81%	342	264	77%	2.5
Nottinghamshire	231	198	86%	128	96	75%	1.8
Cleveland	154	105	68%	86	64	74%	1.8
Gwent	109	84	77%	71	45	63%	1.5
E & W	21,213	16,586	78%	4,576	3,444	75%	4.6

Source: MoJ (2014) Data set requested by RoadPeace. 484-14.xls. Received 16/07/2014

¹ MoJ definitions include *Suspended Sentences* in *Other disposals*; these have been excluded here.

²Totals may differ, as sentencing can take place in a different year to the original finding of guilt.