

# “A Long, Long Way To Go”



An Assessment of the Metropolitan Police  
at the Commissioner's Mid-Term

David Spencer





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## About the Author

**David Spencer** is Policy Exchange's Head of Crime & Justice. He was previously a Detective Chief Inspector with the Metropolitan Police Service and was the founding Chief Executive of Police Now.



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# Endorsements

“This Policy Exchange report clearly demonstrates where the Met has made progress in recent years and the areas where the force continues to be lagging far behind where it should be. There is still much to be done on the fight against crime in London – particularly knife crime and street theft – where rates of offending are far higher than other cities. Only a zero-tolerance approach to this sort of criminality, and the criminals responsible, will do.

“The force must continue to increase its use of facial recognition technology – an area which it should be commended for having pushed forward over recent years. Contrary to the apparent instincts of the Mayor of London, the force must keep using powers such as stop and search which is proven to reduce violent crime on our streets.

“Political leaders must back the police when they strongly enforce the law. Too often police officers feel stymied by an over-zealous oversight regime which has led to a sense of withdrawal from the streets by the police – something which benefits only the criminals who make life a misery for the law-abiding majority of people in our capital city. The Government, Mayor of London and Commissioner should carefully consider what this this excellent report has to say.”

**Rt Hon Chris Philp MP**, Shadow Home Secretary and Member of Parliament for Croydon South

“This is a timely report, assessing the Met’s attempts to improve in the years since the horrific Sarah Everard case. It portrays a very mixed picture, with tentative signs of progress in reducing knife crime, and 2025 set to be a record low for homicides, but there is clear evidence that the force does not have a grip on higher-volume street crime, such as shoplifting and thefts from individuals, and the prevalence of these crimes is especially damaging for public confidence. The fact that this visible public disorder sits alongside the Met’s continued disproportionate overreach into areas which few right-minded people would consider a police matter, only exacerbates the public’s frustration. As such, the Met’s political masters, in London and nationally, should take responsibility for setting out what is and is not a policing priority, legislating if necessary, and then backing frontline police officers to robustly challenge criminals without fear of being punished for doing so. As a former Met officer myself, I desperately want the force to succeed, but as this report sets out, there is certainly some way to go before the Met can be described as anything like a high-performing

police force.”

**Jonathan Hinder MP**, Member of Parliament for Pendle and Clitheroe and former Metropolitan Police Inspector

“This Policy Exchange report demonstrates how the Metropolitan Police is still a long way from being anything like an effective crime fighting force. The force has simply been too slow to make the necessary changes and too timid in its approach to crime and criminals. Of grave concern, and as clearly shown here, the way the Met has policed protests – particularly since the October 7th terrorist attacks – has demonstrated that ‘two-tier policing’ has become embedded in our police forces. The Government must take seriously the report’s recommendations – particularly those relevant to the ineffective oversight of the force by the Mayor of London. The safety of those who live, work and visit the capital are dependent on ministers taking this situation more seriously.”

**Nick Timothy CBE MP**, Member of Parliament for West Suffolk

“This Policy Exchange work lays bare just how badly the Mayor has let London down on crime. The failures at the top of the Met keep getting in the way of the frontline officers who are trying to do their jobs. Londoners are paying the price while City Hall looks the other way. It’s clear the Home Secretary needs to take this seriously and be prepared to step in.”

**Councillor Laila Cunningham**, Councillor for Lancaster Gate (City of Westminster)

“Policy Exchange has produced a timely and authoritative assessment of the Metropolitan Police at a pivotal moment in its history. This report highlights both the scale of the challenges inherited by Sir Mark Rowley and the serious shortcomings that still impede the Met from delivering the level of protection the public rightly expects. Its clear-eyed analysis of crime-fighting performance, public confidence, and the urgent need for stronger leadership accountability provides an essential roadmap for reform. I commend this work for its rigour and its unwavering focus on the rights and safety of law-abiding Londoners.”

**Lord Jackson of Peterborough**, Member of the British Transport Police Authority

“This compelling paper by David Spencer of Policy Exchange, “A Long, Long-Way To Go”, reviews the performance of the Metropolitan Police since the appointment of the current Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley QPM, in 2022. Notwithstanding some successes, overall performance has been far from

good enough. Important structural change is needed, backed up with dismissals of those who have failed to deliver. The paper makes five core recommendations:

the Home Secretary should become the “policing body” for the Metropolitan Police; responsibility for the national leadership of the police counter-terrorism network should be transferred to a national Counter-Terrorism Policing body led by a Chief Constable; the force should be put in “Special Measures”; the Home Secretary should order an inspection of the Met’s approach to protests policing per S.54 (2B) Police Act 1996; the Commissioner should review the performance of senior leaders and middle management backed with dismissals where appropriate. In short, we simply cannot continue as we are with the regime structured as it is. London and the country need better.”

**Lord Sandhurst KC**, former Deputy High Court Judge and former Recorder of the Crown Court

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Given the very poor performance of the Metropolitan Police across a wide range of areas for an extended period – including prior to the present Commissioner’s term of office and particularly in relation to the fight against crime – the Home Secretary should become the “policing body” for the Metropolitan Police. This would remove the Mayor of London’s role in relation to oversight of policing in the capital. Shifting direct political oversight to the Home Secretary, as the minister principally responsible to Parliament for policing and crime, will enable both Government and Parliament to exercise far greater scrutiny and influence over the force’s performance in a way which has the potential to deliver the significant improvements which are required.
2. To enable the Metropolitan Police to shift the force’s principal focus to local crime fighting, the Government should transfer responsibility for the national leadership of the police counter-terrorism network from the Metropolitan Police to a national Counter-Terrorism Policing body led by a Chief Constable.
3. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary should return the Metropolitan Police to the “Engage” process – more commonly known as “Special Measures”. The force was, based on performance across several areas, erroneously removed from the “Engage” process in January 2025. There should be a presumption that all materials relating to the “Engage” process should be made publicly available. The current lack of transparency provides the public with little confidence that the necessary steps are being taken to deliver substantial improvements in the force’s performance.
4. The Home Secretary should order an inspection of the Metropolitan Police’s approach to protest policing using section 54 (2B) Police Act 1996. This should include consideration of both the strategic approach and operational tactics used, including what new strategies and tactics are required to more effectively deal with large-scale and widespread protests. This should consider the strategies and approaches used in other jurisdictions to determine what might be learned and adopted by the force – in particular the willingness of police chiefs to use non-human based means of “creating distance” between officers and protestors.



5. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police should review the performance of his most senior leaders and where individuals have been found to have failed to perform to the necessary standard, in some cases over very long periods, they should be replaced at the earliest opportunity. There should also be a substantial change in the approach to performance management for middle and senior leaders in the organisation – including being prepared to more willingly remove officers and staff who fail to deliver the necessary levels of performance, particularly in relation to fighting crime. Data should be published on every senior officer's performance on crime-fighting throughout their leadership career. There should be a substantial increase in the transparency of the force's Frontline Policing performance meetings, where local police commanders are questioned on their performance. This should include the publication of performance data, the publication of the meeting's minutes and the option for members of the public to attend these meetings through online hosting.

## Executive Summary

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Mark Rowley QPM, has been in office for just over three years of his initial five-year appointment. At the time of his appointment in 2022, the force was in a state of near-constant crisis: public confidence had fallen to the lowest levels on record; one officer had been found to have committed the most heinous of crimes – the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard; the number of knife crime offences had exceeded 14,000 crimes;<sup>1</sup> protest groups had regularly brought parts of the capital to a standstill. Rowley was appointed with the task of abating this state of near permanent crisis and turning round the force to more effectively serve the public.

Three years in, this report seeks to answer one key question:

**How effective is the Metropolitan Police at performing its core function of protecting the public – and in particular protecting the public from crime and criminals?**

The Metropolitan Police – now approaching the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding by Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel in 1829 – is the UK’s largest police force. With an annual budget of £3.5billion<sup>2</sup> and over 46,000 police officers and staff,<sup>3</sup> the force has responsibilities as London’s local police force alongside a series of national responsibilities – principally concerned with the fight against terrorism. The Metropolitan Police is charged with one of the most important of public service missions – whether the force is achieving that mission matters to Londoners, the wider British public and visitors to our capital city.

To assess the Metropolitan Police’s performance, Policy Exchange has considered and graded the force’s activities across four key areas. Wherever possible we have used data to make objective judgements on the force’s capabilities and performance. The four areas on which we have reviewed the force’s performance, are:

- Public Confidence
- Crime Fighting
- Policing Protests
- Public Trust, Conduct & Professionalism

We do not review in detail the Metropolitan Police’s national responsibilities – including leadership of the police counter-terrorism network. There are substantial reasons for believing the police counter-terrorism network – and particularly the existing leadership arrangements through the Metropolitan Police – are functioning well. However, there

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1. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Police force area data tables, year ending to March 2025, table P6, [link](#)

2. Home Office, Provisional Police Grant Report 2025/26 (England and Wales), [link](#)

3. Metropolitan Police, Workforce data report, September 2025, [link](#)

can also be little doubt that the force's leadership role over the counter-terrorism network makes it harder for senior officers and staff to provide sufficient focus on the fight against crime in the capital. While the argument for retaining the leadership of the police counter-terrorism network within the Metropolitan Police has often been focused on its effectiveness, too little attention has been given to the fact that this dual responsibility contributes to the force's less effective performance as the capital's local police force. Given this, we recommend that in the coming years responsibility for leading the national police counter-terrorism network be transferred from the Metropolitan Police to a separate organisation.

**Chapter 1 – Public Confidence:** We primarily use the headline measure from the Public Attitudes Survey produced by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to make this assessment. This shows that the proportion of Londoners who believe that the police locally is doing a good job has declined further from 2022 levels: from 50 per cent in 2022 to 45 per cent in the twelve months to June 2025.<sup>4</sup> Despite the Commissioner's "New Met for London" plan pledging to rebuild confidence,<sup>5</sup> the force's efforts have so far failed to have the positive impact required. We attribute the continuing decline in confidence to three main factors: ineffective crime-fighting – principally in relation to the failure to detect sufficient high-volume crime and in particular theft offences; the poor handling of many large-scale protests; and the failure to sufficiently strengthen neighbourhood policing as a crime-fighting force from the earliest stages of the Commissioner's term of office.

We consider the Metropolitan Police's performance over the last three years in relation to **Public Confidence** to have been **Inadequate**.

**Chapter 2 – Crime Fighting:** The Metropolitan Police's performance at fighting crime is broadly a story of opposites. The force continues to be highly impressive at solving and suppressing homicides. The number of homicides has fallen sharply in recent years, with 42 offences recorded in the first half of 2025, compared with an average of 141 per year in the twenty years between 2003 and 2022. The force solves an impressive 95% of homicides.<sup>6</sup>

However, the force is incredibly poor at addressing high-volume crime. Levels of reported shoplifting over recent years in the capital have increased significantly – rising three-fold since 2020/21 and by 167 per cent since 2021/22 (the year prior to Sir Mark Rowley's appointment as Commissioner) to 93,705 offences in 2024/25.<sup>7</sup> Knife crime offences in the year to March 2025 reached 16,297 offences – an 80.8 per cent increase on 2014/15 levels and 26.7 per cent increase on 2022/23 levels (the year Sir Mark Rowley was appointed as Commissioner).<sup>8</sup> There are, however, signs that knife crime in the capital is starting to be suppressed from these peaks – for the first ten months of 2025 there has been a fall of 14.82 per cent in knife crime compared to the same period in 2024.<sup>9</sup>

There are other very recent indicators that further crime types may also be on a downward trend in the capital: for the main basket of victim-based offences there has been a 4.5 per cent reduction for the first ten

4. MOPAC, Trust and Confidence Dashboard, [link](#)
5. Metropolitan Police, A New Met for London 2023-2025, [link](#)
6. Metropolitan Police, Homicide Dashboard, [link](#)
7. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables, Table P1 [link](#)
8. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Police force area data tables, year ending to March 2025, table P6, [link](#)
9. Metropolitan Police, Knife Crime Stats Tables – October 2025, [link](#)

months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.<sup>10</sup> Positively, the number of Non-Crime Hate Incidents the force has recorded in recent years has also fallen significantly; from 3,610 in 2021 (the year before Sir Mark Rowley was appointed as Commissioner) to 2,253 in 2024 – a fall of 37.6 per cent over that period allowing officers to focus their attention on the fight against actual crime.<sup>11</sup>

The force is particularly poor at solving high-volume crime, most notably theft offences. For the year to March 2025 the Metropolitan Police solved only around: 1 in 20 reported robberies and burglaries, 1 in 76 reported bicycle thefts, 1 in 179 reported theft person offences and 1 in 13 reported shoplifting offences.<sup>12 13</sup> Such low rates of crimes being solved contribute to the public’s perception that there is a very low likelihood of consequences for those committing crime. The force has the potential to deliver substantial improvements in this area, particularly given the ongoing investment in its technological capabilities – including facial recognition deployments, improvements in CCTV collection and analysis, and drone first-responder technologies. A substantial step-change in performance is essential.

The force has made tackling violence against women and girls a key area to be prioritised in the fight against crime – with particular efforts made over the last three years to bolster staffing and leadership in the local “Public Protection Units” which principally investigate sexual and domestic abuse offences. While the number of rape offences detected by the police has remained relatively stable with 2,194 detections in 2022/23 and 2,224 in 2024/25, there are early indicators that performance in this area may be improving with the proportion of sexual offences solved increasing for the first ten months of 2025 compared to 2024 from 8.2 per cent to 12.0 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

We consider the Metropolitan Police’s performance over the last three years in relation to **Crime Fighting** to have **Required Improvement** – and in some areas, particularly high-volume crime, it would be more accurate to describe the force as having performed inadequately.

**Chapter 3 – Policing Protests:** Over the last three years, London has experienced a surge in large-scale and disruptive protests — particularly driven by the pro-Palestine movement which has, since the terrorist atrocities of the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, mobilised significant numbers of people onto the streets. This is in addition to the often criminal actions by environmental and other protestors.

During the last three years the Metropolitan Police has too often chosen to prioritise the rights of protestors over the rights of the wider public and, particularly in Westminster, the rights of Parliamentarians – with access to Parliament itself being substantially obstructed on several occasions. With the apparently differential treatment of different groups based on either the cause of the protest or the identity of those protesting, it has become increasingly clear that “two-tier policing” is not merely a perception but a reality. This inconsistent application of police powers and the law is perhaps one of the most troubling aspects of modern policing – a factor

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10. Metropolitan Police, Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

11. Metropolitan Police, Freedom of Information Request, Ref: **01.FOI.24.041891**, [link](#)

12. Metropolitan Police Service, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

13. Offences are considered to be “solved” if a “positive outcome” category has been assigned to the crime report. “Positive outcome” categories includes eight categories – these include where a suspect is charged, receives a caution, a “Community Resolution”, [link](#)

14. Metropolitan Police Service, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

which has seriously damaged policing's reputation for fairness in the eyes of many.

Senior officers have recognised that in the policing of protests they have not got everything right. They particularly recognise that the failure to make arrests, when they should have been made, during the early stages of the large-scale pro-Palestine protests, was a particular failing.<sup>15</sup> There have in recent times also been more occasions where the Metropolitan Police has taken a more robust approach to the policing of protests – which is to be applauded. However, there remain substantial problems with the force's approach to public order and protest policing which must be resolved.

We consider the Metropolitan Police's performance over the last three years in relation to **Policing Protests** to have been **Inadequate**.

**Chapter 4 – Public Trust, Conduct & Professionalism:** Since his appointment in 2022, Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley has made a clear commitment to raising the force's standards of professional conduct. In 2024/25, 123 officers were dismissed from the force and a further 60 added to the barred list following their departure after resignation or retirement — this represents a more than threefold increase on pre-2022 levels.<sup>16</sup> However, the force must find the right balance between discipline and fairness – there are some indications that in the force's efforts to stamp out wrongdoing, good frontline operational officers may be unfairly targeted through over-zealousness.

Rowley's willingness to publicly defend officers who have been wrongly prosecuted and hauled through misconduct procedures in high-profile cases has been important. The most significant recent example is Metropolitan Police officer Sergeant Martin Blake, who shot and killed the criminal Chris Kaba during a policing operation only a few days after Kaba had used a firearm against a rival in Hackney. Despite Sergeant Blake acting with substantial courage under immense pressure and being found not guilty of murder at an Old Bailey trial, at the time of writing he continues to be at risk of misconduct proceedings due to decisions by the Independent Office for Police Conduct. This is nothing less than disgraceful. While the Government has committed to making amendments to the accountability regime for officers acting in the furtherance of their operational crime-fighting duties, they must go further – as has been previously outlined by Policy Exchange.<sup>17</sup> In particular, the powers of the Independent Office for Police Conduct must be substantially curtailed.

One area which requires significant change is that of holding senior and middle-ranking leaders to account. Currently the weight of accountability is felt overwhelmingly by the most junior frontline officers – in cases such as those outlined above – rather than by senior and middle-ranking officers and staff for crime-fighting performance. If the Metropolitan Police is to deliver for the public there must be reasonable consequences for police leaders for both success and failure in relation to crime fighting.

The force's approach to holding these leaders to account for their performance has, for many years, been entirely inadequate. While some

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15. D. Spencer, S. Laws, N. Webb (2024), *Might Is Right? The 'Right to Protest': in a new age of disruption and confrontation*, Policy Exchange, [link](#)

16. College of Policing, *Police dismissals (Home Office forces) 2024/5 to 2025*, [link](#)

17. See for example: D. Spencer (2024), *Your Money or Your Life: London's Knife Crime, Robbery and Street Theft Epidemic*, Policy Exchange, [link](#)

steps have been taken in the right direction since Sir Mark Rowley was appointed as Commissioner these have been too tentative and too slow. As a result, there remain a great many improvements required to the force’s entire approach in this area.

A core part of Sir Mark Rowley’s legacy should be focused on implementing such a system of performance accountability for these leaders at the senior and middle-ranking levels of the force. Without it the Metropolitan Police will never have any chance of succeeding when it comes to its core mission of fighting crime on behalf of the law-abiding public. While some changes in police officer terms and conditions may require the amendment of Police Regulations by Government, there are many steps which the Commissioner could take independently. He should do so without any delay.

We consider the Metropolitan Police’s performance over the last three years in relation to **Public Trust, Confidence and Professionalism** to have been **Adequate**.

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Public Confidence	Crime Fighting	Policing Protests	Public Trust, Conduct & Professionalism
Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate
Required Improvement	Required Improvement	Required Improvement	Required Improvement
Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for leaders taking over any organisation in the depths of crisis is the chance to achieve in weeks and months the sort of substantial changes which might usually take years. Amidst the very substantial challenges that had engulfed the force, that was the opportunity which the new leadership of the Metropolitan Police was presented with in late-2022. It is an opportunity which was wasted. Late 2022 and early 2023 was the time when the force, at every level, should have been reorientated towards a focused mission of “Crime Fighting First”. That such an explicit shift is only now being expressed in these terms, three years on, is hugely disappointing. Instead, too much time has been spent pacifying “stakeholders” (both internal and external) and their often sectional interests – a practice which continues today.

If the Metropolitan Police is to become – and to be seen to become – more successful in its core mission, and so regain the public’s confidence, those at the top of the organisation must be willing to demonstrate the iron-will and grit to hold senior and mid-level police leaders to account for crime-fighting performance. Currently, there is insufficient evidence to show that such an iron-will exists – instead only an inadequate impression



of performance accountability exists. Making this correction will be central to any reckoning of Sir Mark Rowley's term – indeed, his entire legacy as Commissioner depends upon it.

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Based upon our assessment of the force's performance we make five core recommendations:

1. Given the very poor performance of the Metropolitan Police across a wide range of areas for an extended period – including prior to the present Commissioner's term of office and particularly in relation to the fight against crime – the Home Secretary should become the “policing body” for the Metropolitan Police. This would remove the Mayor of London's role in relation to oversight of policing in the capital. Shifting direct political oversight to the Home Secretary, as the minister principally responsible to Parliament for policing and crime, will enable both Government and Parliament to exercise far greater scrutiny and influence over the force's performance in a way which has the potential to deliver the significant improvements which are required.
2. To enable the Metropolitan Police to shift the force's principal focus to local crime fighting, the Government should transfer responsibility for the national leadership of the police counter-terrorism network from the Metropolitan Police to a national Counter-Terrorism Policing body led by a Chief Constable.
3. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary should return the Metropolitan Police to the “Engage” process – more commonly known as “Special Measures”. The force was, based on performance across several areas, wrongly removed from the “Engage” process in January 2025. There should be a presumption that all materials relating to the “Engage” process should be made publicly available. The current lack of transparency provides the public with little confidence that the necessary steps are being taken to deliver substantial improvements in the force's performance.
4. The Home Secretary should order an inspection of the Metropolitan Police's approach to protest policing using section 54 (2B) Police Act 1996. This should include consideration of both the strategic approach and operational tactics used, including what new strategies and tactics are required to more effectively deal with large-scale and widespread protests. This should consider the strategies and approaches used in other jurisdictions to determine what might be learned and adopted by the force.
5. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police should review the performance of his most senior leaders and where individuals have been found to have failed to perform to the necessary standard, in some cases over very long periods, they should be replaced at the

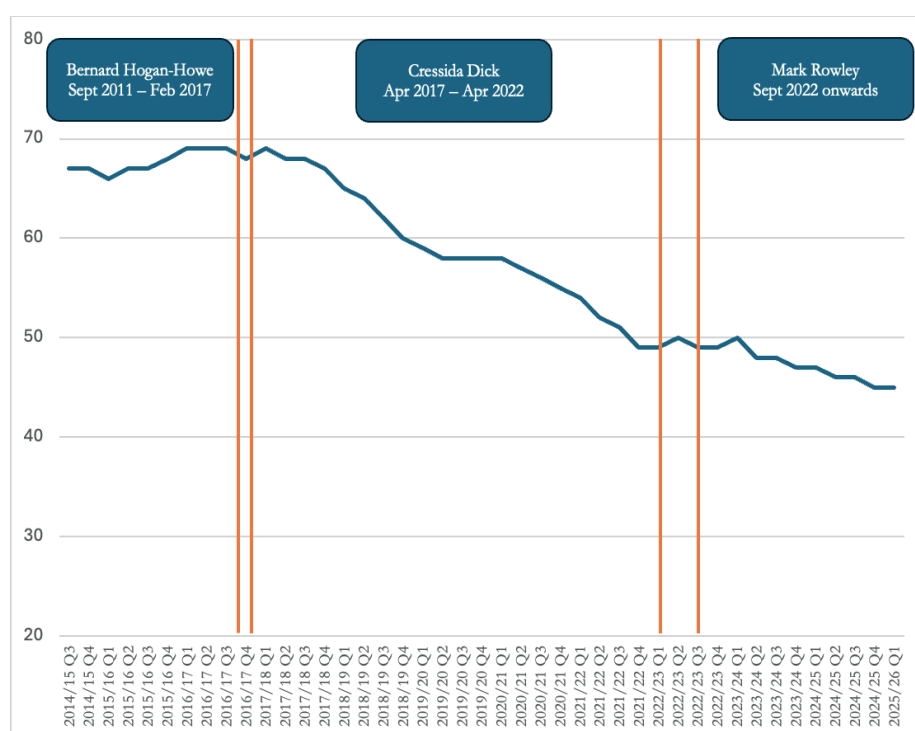
earliest opportunity. There should also be a substantial change in the approach to performance management for middle and senior leaders in the organisation – including being prepared to more willingly remove officers and staff who fail to deliver the necessary levels of performance, particularly in relation to fighting crime. Data should be published on every senior officer’s performance on crime-fighting throughout their leadership career. There should be a substantial increase in the transparency of the force’s Frontline Policing performance meetings, where local police commanders are questioned on their performance. This should include the publication of performance data, the publication of the meeting’s minutes and the option for members of the public to attend these meetings through online hosting.

# 1. Public Confidence

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

In our 2022 report “Policing Can Win: The New Met Commissioner’s First 100 Days” Policy Exchange said: “The public’s confidence in the Met is the primary metric against which Sir Mark Rowley’s term as Commissioner should be judged”.<sup>18</sup> Against this measure it is difficult to conclude other than Sir Mark Rowley’s Commissionership has, so far, failed to meet expectations.<sup>19</sup>

## Metropolitan Police: Public Confidence (December 2014 – March 2025)<sup>20</sup>



Measuring the public’s confidence in the Metropolitan Police is principally done through the Public Attitudes Survey, conducted by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime since 1983. Around 19,200 Londoners are asked for their views on policing in the capital, with results published on a quarterly basis. Within the Public Attitudes Survey,

18. D. Spencer (2022), Policing Can Win: The New Met Commissioner’s First 100 Days, Policy Exchange, September 2022, [link](#)

19. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has conducted the Public Attitudes Survey since 1983, with around 19,200 Londoners asked for their views on policing in the capital: Mayor of London website, Taking part in MOPAC’s surveys, [link](#)

20. MOPAC, Trust and Confidence Dashboard, [link](#)

Londoners are asked: “Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?”<sup>21</sup> – this is the principal accepted metric for determining the public’s confidence in the police.

During the later stages of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM’s (latterly Lord Hogan-Howe) term as Commissioner, Rowley’s predecessor but one, between December 2014 and December 2016, the public’s confidence had remained relatively stable at between 66 and 69 per cent.

In the five years prior to Rowley’s appointment, under the leadership of his predecessor, Dame Cressida Dick QPM, the public’s confidence in the Metropolitan Police fell precipitously. The proportion of Londoners who believed that the police were doing a good job locally fell from 68 per cent in the twelve months to March 2017 to 49 per cent in the twelve months to March 2022.

Dick’s Commissionership was marked by one of the most catastrophic events in the force’s history – the kidnapping, rape and murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by a serving Metropolitan Police officer. However, it is notable that levels of public confidence had already fallen significantly prior to the murder – having dropped from 68 per cent in the twelve months to March 2017 to 56 per cent in the twelve months to December 2020.

The appointment of Sir Mark Rowley as Commissioner was intended to be a turning point with a clear objective that the public’s confidence in the Metropolitan Police be stabilised and returned to the levels previously achieved. Within the Commissioner’s “New Met for London” plan, published in July 2023, the first metric mentioned against which the force intended to measure its progress was the confidence measure: “The proportion of Londoners who think the Met’s doing a good job locally”.<sup>22</sup> However, rather than increasing the public’s confidence in the force, Sir Mark Rowley has presided over further falls – from 50 per cent in the twelve months to September 2022 to 45 per cent in the twelve months to June 2025.

In an effort to present the data in a more positive light, in the “phase 2” version of the “New Met for London” plan – issued during the summer of 2025 – the Metropolitan Police presented the data differently.<sup>23</sup> Rather than a focus on whether members of the public believe the force are going a “good” job locally, the measure was expanded to a “good or fair” job, from a five-point scale of: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor or Very Poor.<sup>24</sup> This inevitably allows the force to attempt to claim as a headline measure a higher level of performance. Such efforts are merely a massaging of the reality.

The public’s confidence in whether the police are doing a good job is more than just a glorified customer satisfaction rate. It is central to whether the police can be effective at fighting crime and keeping the public safe. There is a large body of evidence which demonstrates that where people have higher levels of confidence in the police they are more likely to come forward with information or intelligence, are more likely to obey the law, and are more likely to defer to police authority.<sup>25</sup>

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21. Opinion Research Services, MOPAC Public Attitudes Survey 2019-2020 – Technical Report: Quarter 59, January 2020, [link](#)

22. Metropolitan Police, A New Met for London 2023-2025, [link](#)

23. Metropolitan Police, New Met for London Phase 2 (2025 – 2028), [link](#)

24. Ibid. p. 9

25. See for example: E. Stanko & B. Bradford (2009), Beyond Measuring ‘How Good a Job’ Police are Doing: The MPS Model of Confidence in Policing, Policing, Volume 3 (4), pp. 322–330, [link](#)

We attribute the continuing decline of the public's confidence in the Metropolitan Police to three key factors during the first two years of the Commissioner's leadership. Firstly, as we outline in part two of this report, the ineffectiveness in many areas of the fight against crime – which should be at the core of policing's mission. Secondly, a failure of approach in relation to the policing of the large-scale marches that have taken place in the capital since the terrorist attacks of the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, as we outline in part three of this report. And thirdly, a failure to deliver – and certainly to do so with any sense of urgency – on the Commissioner's promise of creating the “strongest ever neighbourhood policing”, as we outline here.<sup>26</sup>

There are four elements to the force's failure to deliver the “strongest ever neighbourhood policing”.

First, there was a significant delay in recognising that the doctrine of local policing had become one primarily focused on undertaking “community relations and engagement” rather than crime fighting. While officers working in local neighbourhoods should be those who work on building relationships with local residents and businesses, they must do so as part of their core purpose of fighting crime. That means gathering intelligence, knowing who local offenders are and arresting those offenders whenever possible. This need for a shift in doctrine is now recognised by the most senior leaders in the force as being necessary – particularly since the appointment of Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist KPM as the Assistant Commissioner for Frontline Policing. It can also be seen by the inclusion within Phase 2 of the “New Met for London” Plan of the principle of “Putting Crime-Fighting First”.<sup>27</sup> However, that it took two years to recognise this shift is far too long.

Second, the last three years has seen the number of police officers allocated to local borough-based policing fall from 19,662 officers in September 2022 to 18,031 officers in August 2025 – a drop of 1,631 officers, or 8.3 per cent. Partly this is a function of the overall fall in the Metropolitan Police's number of officers – a drop of 1,905 officers, or 5.6 per cent, during Rowley's tenure. However, given the fall in officer numbers has disproportionately fallen on borough-based policing, rather than elsewhere within the organisation, this would suggest that there has been a decision (or at least a willingness) to prioritise other functions above local policing.

The number of officers within the Metropolitan Police who are posted to non-operational departments is unacceptably high. Police officers are paid on the basis of their work being principally operational serving the public. The force should be entirely intolerant of officers not being posted to frontline operational roles. Almost every police officer in the following departments<sup>28</sup> should be redeployed away from their existing role to an operational frontline policing role:

- Strategy & Transformation: 130 officers
- Inquiry & Review Support: 60 officers

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26. M. Rowley, “More Trust, Less Crime, High Standards”, Speech at Institution of Technology and Engineering, London, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023, [link](#)

27. Metropolitan Police, New Met for London Phase 2 (2025 – 2028), [link](#)

28. Metropolitan Police Service, Workforce Data Report, September 2025, [link](#)

- Frontline Policing Headquarters: 59 officers
- Digital, Data & Technology: 34 officers
- Human Resources: 26 officers
- Culture, Diversity & Inclusion: 24 officers

Over the last three years, the number of volunteer special constables – almost universally based on local borough-based policing teams – has fallen from 1,535 officers to 879 officers – a fall of 42.7 per cent.<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that the Labour Government’s manifesto commitment to increase the number of police officers working in neighbourhood policing nationally during this Parliament is partly based upon recruiting an additional 3,000 special constables.<sup>30</sup> This is a feat which is unlikely to be achieved given the country’s largest force is unable to retain the special constables they already have.

One of the areas where there has been an increase in the force’s workforce is the number of Police Community Support Officers – from 639 in September 2022 to 1,025 in August 2025 – an increase of 386 over the three years.<sup>31</sup> The role was originally introduced with the purpose of providing a visible uniformed presence and contributing to efforts to improve community relations, at a far lower cost than fully warranted police officers. However, the ability of PCSOs to contribute to the practicality of the fight against crime – given they do not possess the full coercive policing powers invested in police officers – is limited. Given the cost of this increase in PCSOs is around £15 million per annum and the opportunity cost is fewer fully-warranted police officers (or other areas of investment) we would question whether this has been money well spent.

Remarkably, while the number of police officers has fallen significantly, the number of police staff members has grown from 9,991 staff members in September 2022 to 11,444; an increase of 1,453 or 14.54 per cent staff members during the Commissioner’s time in office.<sup>32</sup> While by no means are all police staff members merely back-office box-ticking bureaucrats – with many working as intelligence officers, 999 call handlers and crime scene investigators – there is no doubt that too many are.

The very many failings over long periods relating to the force’s decisions and processes over recruitment, vetting, training, deployment and performance management leaves questions to be asked about the capabilities of those responsible for the leadership and oversight of these functions. This is an area which must now be subject to intense scrutiny at the highest levels, including by those responsible for democratic oversight of the force.

One positive change has been the increase in the number of police officers committed to local Ward based policing from 1,564 officers in September 2022 to 1,859 officers in September 2025.<sup>33</sup> These police officers dedicated to local Ward policing are the individuals specifically tasked with confronting the crime and disorder problems which particularly concern local people within their local area. This shift in resourcing is key to enabling the force to be able to effectively tackle the crime which most

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29. Ibid.

30. Y. Cooper, Speech to the Institute for Government, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025, [link](#)

31. Metropolitan Police Service, Workforce Data Report, August 2025, [link](#)

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.



matters to the public – it is to be applauded.

Date	Number of police officers in Ward Based Policing Roles
September 2022	1,564
March 2023	1,446
November 2023	1,524
March 2024	1,607
September 2024	1,878
March 2025	1,858
September 2025	1,859

Third, there has been a failure to take sufficient steps to successfully mitigate the impact of the closure of 70 per cent of London's police stations which took place between 2008 and 2018. During this ten-year period the number of operational police stations in London fell from 160 to 45.<sup>34</sup> Facchetti (2021) examined the impact of police station closures over that period and found: an increase in violent crimes by 11 per cent, a 3.7 per cent fall in the likelihood of crime being solved by the police, a 9.5 per cent reduction in the reporting of non-violent offences due to under-reporting by victims, a reduction in the public's trust in policing and a reduction in house prices in the most deprived areas.

The closure of the vast majority of police stations in London took place well before the current Commissioner's term of office commenced. Furthermore, the decision to close police stations was almost certainly inevitable given the substantial reductions in the force's budget – with an £886 million reduction in the force's budget between 2013/14 and 2020/21. However, where the current senior leadership of the force can be criticised is that the negative impact of the decision to close large numbers of police stations was clearly apparent by September 2022, and as such strategies to mitigate that impact should have been in place as a corrective since that time. As of October 2025, there are plans to close a further ten police station front counters – reducing the number open across the capital to only 27.<sup>35</sup> The number of front counters open 24 hours per day, seven days a week will fall to just two – in a city of 9 million people.<sup>36</sup>

Fourth, in 2018 the Metropolitan Police changed its local policing model. Where previously each of the 32 London boroughs had its own Chief Superintendent leading local policing, now each Chief Superintendent is responsible for between two and four London Boroughs each. On average these individual Chief Superintendents are leading teams of around 1,500 police officers. Each has a bigger team than a third of the police forces in England and Wales – yet those forces outside of London are led by entire chief officer command teams. This expansion of the breadth of leadership within the capital has come at a cost of the ability of mid-level

34. E. Facchetti, Police Infrastructure, Police Performance, and Crime: Evidence from Austerity Cuts, Institute for Fiscal Studies, February 2021 (updated: March 2025), [link](#)

35. Metropolitan Police, Met Police progress in closing £260m funding gap, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

36. Ibid.

leaders to scrutinise the local policing delivered on their patch. While these changes took place long before the appointment of Sir Mark Rowley as Commissioner – albeit during his time as the Assistant Commissioner for Specialist Operations on the force's Management Board – not enough has been done to mitigate their impact.

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The public's confidence in policing was, rightly, one of the principle measures which the Commissioner chose to judge his own performance in turning around the force. It is inescapable that contrary to turning around the public's confidence, there have been further falls to levels which would previously have been considered unthinkable – with only 45 per cent of Londoners believing that the police are doing a good job in their local area. Given this, we consider the performance of the Metropolitan Police in relation to the public's confidence to have been **Inadequate** over the last three years.

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

## 2. Fighting Crime

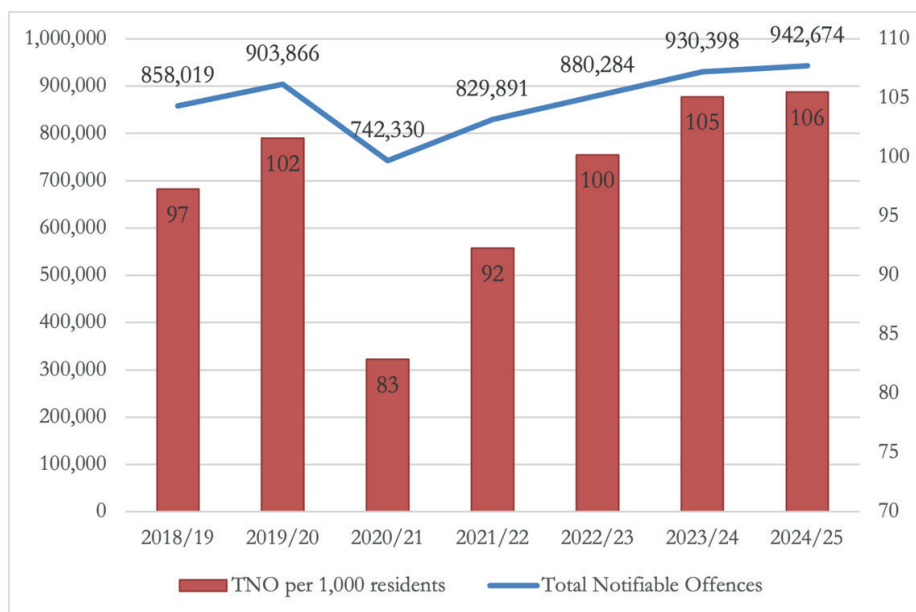
Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

The Metropolitan Police's ability to prevent, reduce and solve crime over the past three years has been mixed. There are areas where there have been notable achievements. The substantial fall this calendar year in the number of homicides in the capital, when compared to the last twenty years, is significant. If this year's levels can be sustained into future years it will be one of the Commissioner's most important crime-fighting legacies. However, there are other areas in the fight against crime – particularly relating to high-volume offending – where the force's performance has been inadequate.

### Total Notifiable Offences

In the year 2024/25 the number of Total Notifiable Offences (TNO) reported to the Metropolitan Police increased to their highest levels for a decade. Nearly one million offences were reported during the financial year 2024/25: 942,674 offences. The rate of Total Notifiable Offences per 1,000 of the population has increased by 6 per cent from 100 offences per 1,000 residents in 2022/23 (the year Sir Mark Rowley was appointed as Commissioner) to 106 offences per 1,000 residents in 2024/25.

The number of Total Notifiable Offences recorded by the Metropolitan Police and rate of Total Notifiable Offences per 1,000 residents (2018/19 – 2024/25)<sup>37</sup>



The TNO rate (per 1,000 residents) is similar to other forces with major urban centres.

Top 10 force areas for Total Notifiable Offences per 1,000 residents (to March 2025)<sup>38</sup>

Force Area	TNO per 1,000 residents (excluding fraud)
Cleveland	122.1
West Yorkshire	114.5
Greater Manchester	108.2
South Yorkshire	106.3
Metropolitan Police	105.5
West Midlands	103.7
Humberside	99.4
Gwent	97.6
Avon and Somerset	94.3
Northumbria	93.5

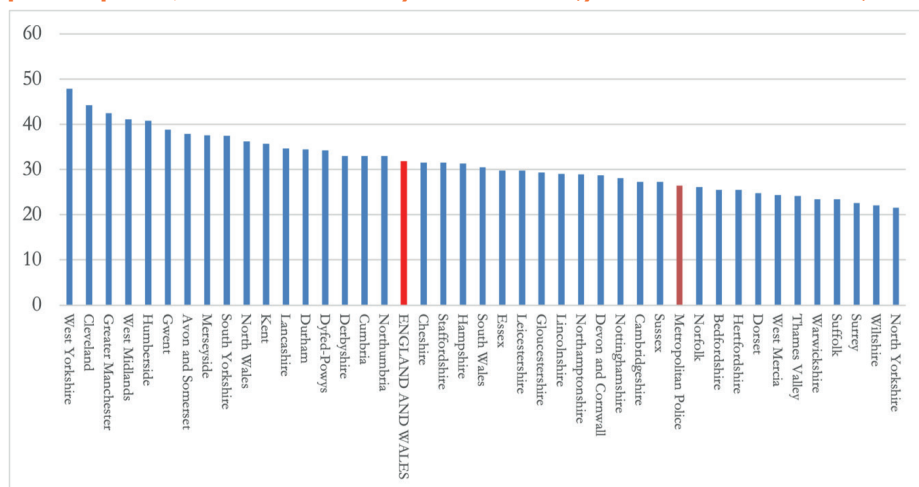
## Overall Violence and Homicide

An area of success has been the suppression of overall violence in the capital. The population-adjusted rate of overall levels of violence in London is far lower than forces with other major urban centres in England and Wales – 45 per cent lower than West Yorkshire Police, 42 per cent lower than Greater Manchester Police and 41 per cent lower than West Midlands Police.

37. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (years to March 2019 to March 2025), table P1 & P3, [link](#)

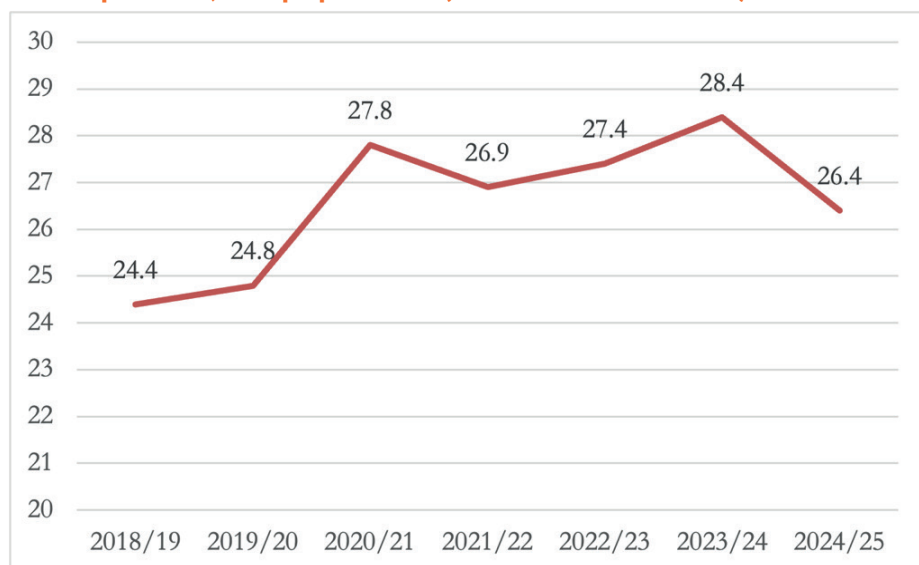
38. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (years to March 2019 to March 2025), table P3, [link](#)

### Number of Violence Against the Person offences reported to the police per 1,000 residents by force area (year to March 2025)<sup>39</sup>



In the most recent financial year (to March 2025) the rate of overall violence offences fell to a rate below that observed at any point over the last five years.

### Violence Against the Person offences recorded by the Metropolitan Police per 100,000 population (2017/18 – 2024/25)<sup>40</sup>



The number of homicides committed in London in the first six months of this calendar year (January to June 2025) has – following a long-term downward trend – fallen significantly compared to previous years. During 2010 to 2019 there were an average of 123 homicides per year.<sup>41</sup> There were 134 homicides in each of the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. For the first six months of 2025, there were 42 homicides – a substantial fall in the number of offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. While every death in such circumstances is a tragedy, these are statistics

39. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (year to March 2025), table P3, [link](#)

40. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (years March 2019 to March 2025), table P3, [link](#)

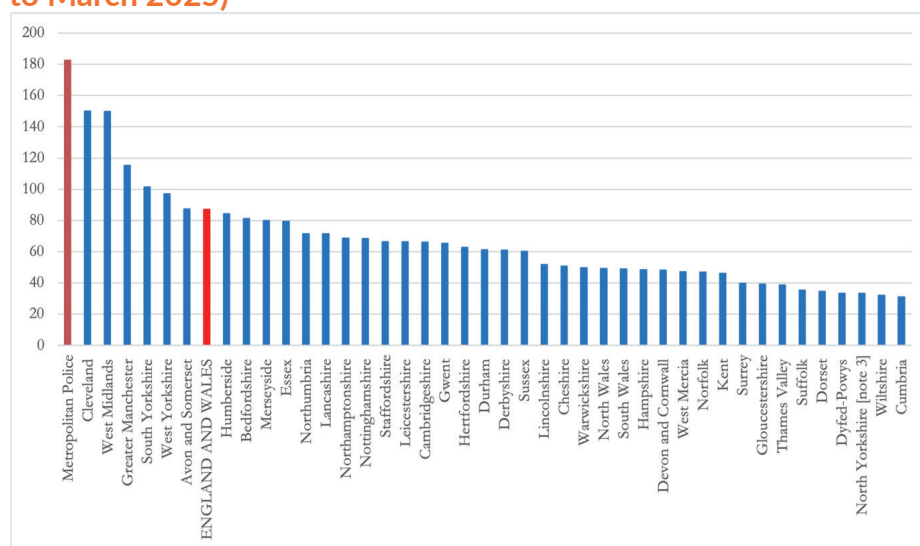
41. Metropolitan Police, Homicide Dashboard, [link](#)

which are deserving of recognition – since 2003 there has been only one calendar year (2014) where the number of homicides had previously fallen below 100. The ability of the Metropolitan Police to detect the most serious offences – as measured by the homicide detection rate – is hugely impressive, with only 5 per cent of homicide investigations closed over the last decade without having been solved. The ability of the force to solve the most serious crimes – and thereby impede serious criminals from continuing to commit further offences – is principally due to the force’s willingness to commit very significant resources and leadership capability and capacity to such investigations.

## Knife Crime

Offences involving the use of a knife, bladed or pointed article have remained stubbornly high, with rates of offending in London far outweighing other parts of the country. In the year to March 2025, London represented nearly a third (31.9 per cent) of all knife crime in England and Wales compared to only 14.6 per cent of the population of England and Wales.<sup>42</sup> For the year to March 2025 rates of knife crime in London, per 100,000 residents, were 17.8 per cent higher than West Midlands, 36.8 per cent higher than Greater Manchester, 44.6 per cent higher than South Yorkshire and 46.9 per cent higher than West Yorkshire.<sup>43</sup>

### Knife Crime per 100,000 population in England and Wales (Year to March 2025)<sup>44</sup>



42. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables (to March 2025), Table P5 [link](#)

43. Ibid.

44. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables (to March 2025), Table P7 [link](#) - due to the very low residential population of the City of London Police area the Crime Survey of England and Wales does not provide this data. There were 18 relevant knife crime offences in the year to March 2025 in the City of London Police area.

45. Ibid.

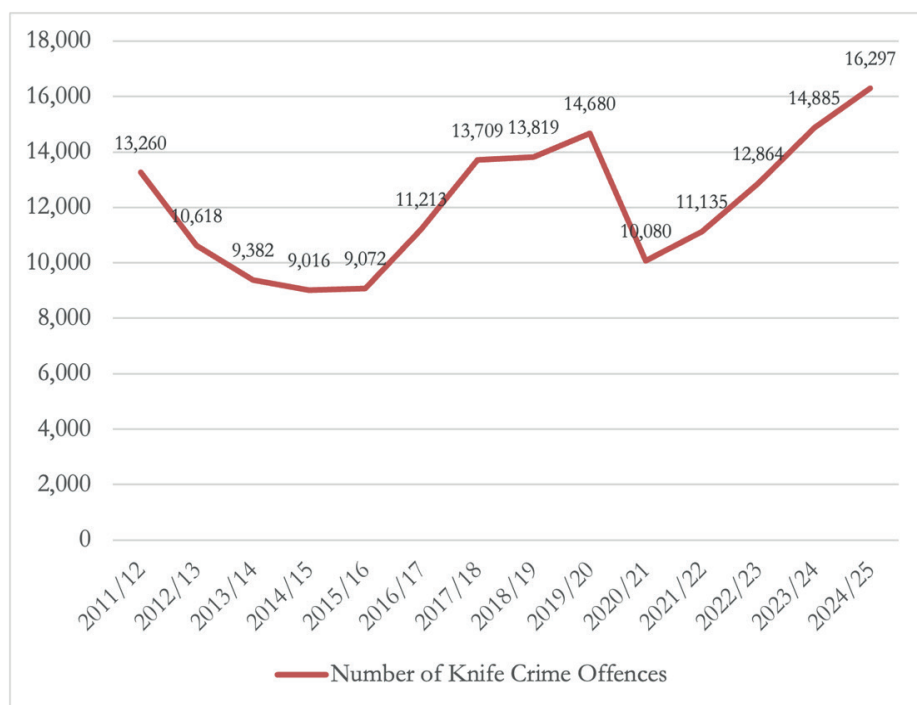
Knife crime offences in the capital have risen to record levels over recent years. Broadly coinciding with Boris Johnson’s second term as Mayor of London and Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe’s term as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police the levels of knife crime in London fell by nearly a third – from 13,260 offences in 2011/12 to 9,072 offences in 2015/16.<sup>45</sup> Broadly coinciding with the Mayoralty of Sir Sadiq Khan, from 2015/16 the number of knife crime offences steadily increased to



14,680 offences in 2019/20, with falls during the Covid-19 pandemic to just above 2012/13 levels.<sup>46</sup> Since the pandemic the volume of knife crime offences have increased every year with the number of knife crime offences in the year to March 2025 reaching 16,297 offences – an 80.8 per cent increase on 2014/15 levels.<sup>47</sup>

There are potential indications that knife crime in the capital is starting to be suppressed. For the first eight months of 2025 (January to August 2025) Metropolitan Police data shows there were 9,430 knife crime offences in London’s Metropolitan Police area, compared to 10,778 during the first eight months of 2024 (January to August 2024) – a year-on-year fall of 12.51 per cent.<sup>48</sup> If this trend can be maintained over the coming months and years it may be an indication of a consistent fall after many years of increasing knife crime violence in the capital.

### Number of knife crime offences in London’s Metropolitan Police area (2018 – 2024)<sup>49</sup>



### Theft Offences

Levels of theft offending in London are perhaps the most significant crime problem facing police chiefs anywhere in the country. The rate of property theft (per 100,000 residents) is far higher in the capital than other urban centres in England and Wales, with substantial increases in the years since the Covid-19 pandemic. Too often it appears that theft is considered to be the “price” for living in or visiting major towns and cities. Certainly in London that appears to be the case given the apparent failure of policing and the wider criminal justice system to take the steps necessary to suppress this very evident crimewave.

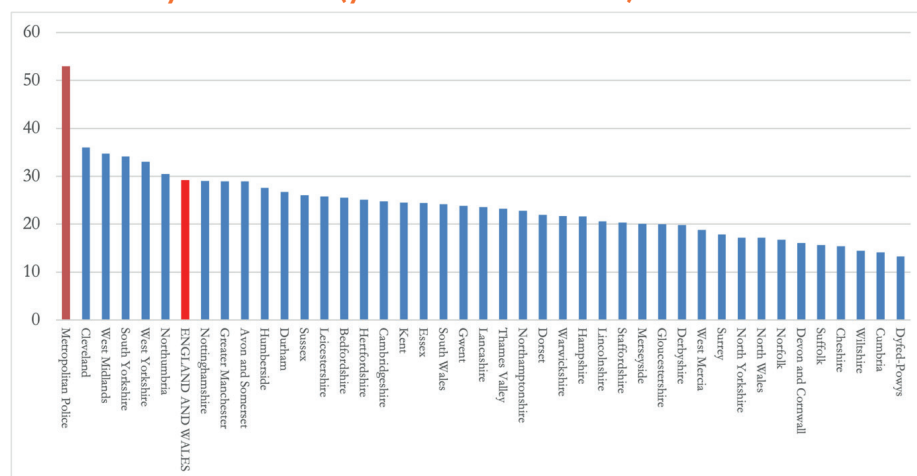
46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

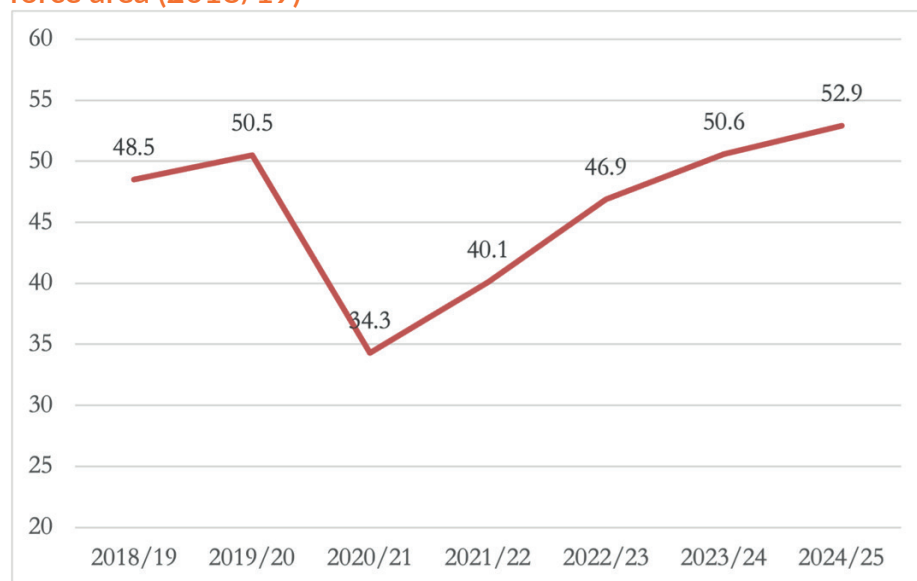
48. Metropolitan Police, Knife crime statistics in London, monthly tables to end of August 2025, Table 1, [link](#)

49. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Police force area data tables, year ending to March 2025, table P6, [link](#)

## Number of Theft offences reported to the police per 1,000 residents by force area (year to March 2025)<sup>50</sup>



## Theft offences per 100,000 residents in the Metropolitan Police force area (2018/19)<sup>51</sup>



Robbery offences (which are in essence theft offences with the addition of actual, threatened or implied force) are also partly driving the rates of knife crime offending in the capital, with the majority of knife crime offences being robberies. Of the 16,297 knife crime offences committed in the year to March 2025 the majority, 10,038 offences or 61.59 per cent of all knife crime offences, were robberies – far higher than any other offence type.<sup>52</sup>

50. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (year to March 2025), table P3, [link](#)

51. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables (years March 2019 to March 2025), table P3, [link](#)

52. Crime Survey of England and Wales: Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables (to March 2025), Table P5 [link](#)

### Volume of different types of serious knife crime offences committed in London's Metropolitan Police area (year to March 2025)<sup>53</sup>

Offence Type	Number of Knife Crime Offences	Proportion of Knife Crime Offences
Robbery	10,038	61.59%
Assault <sup>54</sup>	4,598	28.21%
Threats to kill	1,255	7.70%
Rape and sexual offences	282	1.73%
Attempted murder	70	0.43%
Homicide	54	0.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,297</b>	<b>100%</b>

The theft of a mobile phone is a significant feature of robberies in London. Of the 35,061 robbery offences (including both those offences where a knife is used and those where no knife is used) committed in London's Metropolitan Police's force area in 2024, mobile phones were stolen in 31.5 per cent of them.<sup>55</sup> Both the total number of robberies and the proportion where a mobile phone was taken have increased over the three years to 2024. The total number of robberies increased by 18.3 per cent or 5,416 offences over the three years to 2024.<sup>56</sup> In 2021 21.6 per cent of robberies were of mobile phones – in 2022 and 2023 the proportions increased to around half of all robberies.<sup>57</sup> In 2024 the proportion of robberies where a mobile phone was stolen in around one third of offences.<sup>58</sup>

For so-called “theft person” offences (where an item is stolen from a person, but unlike a robbery no force is used or threatened) the proportion of crimes where a mobile phone was stolen are even higher, representing between 68.5 per cent and 72.6 per cent of offences during the last four years.<sup>59</sup>

Taking robbery and theft person offences together 81,279 mobile phones were stolen in London's Metropolitan Police area in 2024.<sup>60</sup>

### Shoplifting

Levels of reported shoplifting over recent years in the capital have increased significantly, rising three-fold in only four years to 93,705 offences in 2024/25 from 31,007 in 2020/21. The sense that thefts from retail premises have, in effect in recent years, been “decriminalised” is unsurprising given the levels of and increase in crime which retailers are now experiencing. Policy Exchange has previously estimated that the national cost of crime to businesses is around £38 billion per annum.<sup>61</sup>

53. Offences included are: Assault with injury, ABH, GBH or assault with injury with intent to cause serious harm

55. Metropolitan Police Service, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. R. Bootle, D. Spencer, J. Vitali, B. Sweetman (2024), The Costs of Crime – and How to Reduce Them, Policy Exchange, [link](#)

54. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables (to March 2025), Table P5 [link](#)

### The number of shoplifting offences reported to the Metropolitan Police (2020/21 to 2024/25)<sup>62</sup>



Businesses themselves have increasingly voiced their concerns about this type of offending. Baroness White of Tufnell Park, the former chairwoman of the John Lewis Partnership, previously described the increase in shoplifting as an “epidemic”.<sup>63</sup> Ryan McDonnell, the chief executive of Lidl’s British business, argued that there was “no doubt” that increasing crime was “affecting the whole industry”.<sup>64</sup> James Lowman, Chief Executive of the Association of Convenience Stores, said the businesses he represents were facing an “onslaught” of retail crime.<sup>65</sup>

Professor Emmeline Taylor of City University, London said last year that “the police in England and Wales have lost grip on the scale and severity of acquisitive crime, and, in turn, retailers have lost confidence in them and the wider criminal justice system”.<sup>66</sup> Certainly based on the London data Professor Taylor would appear to be correct – the Metropolitan Police has for too long had an insufficient grip on this issue or its impact. There are signs – through interventions such as Operation Zoridon, described below – that the force may well be starting to take the issues at hand seriously, but it will take more than one successful operation for the public and retailers to be certain that is the case.

62. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables, Table P1 [link](#)

63. BBC News, “Shoplifting an epidemic, says John Lewis boss”, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, [link](#)

64. Mail Online, “John Lewis boss Dame Sharon White says chain has been hit by £12m rise in shoplifting as she puts blame on organised crime gangs”, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023, [link](#)

65. BBC News, “Store thefts: I’ve been hit by bottles, says retailer as crime soars”, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024, [link](#)

66. City University, “Professor Emmeline Taylor creates plan for Co-op to curb theft and violence towards supermarket workers”, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024, [link](#)

67. Metropolitan Police, Met recovers thousands of stolen items in UK’s largest ever crackdown on organised shoplifting gangs, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

#### Operation Zoridon<sup>67</sup>

In October 2025, the Metropolitan Police Service carried out Operation Zoridon – which the force described as its “largest ever focused crackdown on organised shoplifting gangs operating in London”. The initiative targeted more than 120 shops suspected of purchasing goods stolen from major retailers and reselling them at discounted prices.

The identification of premises to be targeted was undertaken as a result of intelligence gathering by police officers – including surveillance operations – tracing goods stolen from major retailers through the use of “SelectaDNA”. Over two days police officers – working alongside retailers and officials from Trading Standards, the London Fire Brigade and Border Force – executed search warrants and various licensing and compliance checks at target locations.

Thirty-two people were arrested on suspicion of handling stolen goods, drugs offences and immigration offences. Thousands of stolen items were recovered, including: make-up, branded food and electronics goods. Several retail premises were subject to closure notices.

## Solving Theft Offences

In sharp contrast with the force’s ability to solve the most serious types of crime, the ability of the Metropolitan Police to solve high-volume offences – particularly theft related offences – is woefully poor. For the year to March 2025 the Metropolitan Police solved only around: 1 in 20 reported robberies and burglaries, 1 in 76 reported bicycle thefts, 1 in 179 theft person offences and 1 in 13 shoplifting offences.<sup>68 69</sup> Such low rates of crimes being solved contribute to the public’s perception that there is a very low likelihood of consequences for those committing crime and that there is a desperate need for the police and criminal justice system to take a tougher approach to crime and criminals.<sup>70</sup>

### Rates of various types of theft offences solved (ie a suspect was charged, cautioned or other “positive disposal”) in London’s Metropolitan Police area (2022/23 to 2024/25)<sup>71</sup>

Year	Robbery	Burglary	Bicycle Theft	Theft Person	Shoplifting
2022/23	7.27%	6.37%	1.25%	0.89%	10.48%
2023/24	5.18%	5.74%	1.14%	0.73%	8.35%
2024/25	5.38%	5.81%	1.31%	0.56%	7.75%

Organised criminality is a key driver for the current robbery and theft person crime epidemic in London. The Metropolitan Police state that 80 per cent of mobile phones stolen in London are Apple iPhones with a resale value of £300-400.<sup>72</sup> Approximately 75 per cent of mobile phones stolen are then shipped abroad, with Algeria and China currently being the two most prevalent end-point locations.<sup>73</sup>

68. Metropolitan Police Service, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

69. Offences are considered to be “solved” if a “positive outcome” category has been assigned to the crime report. “Positive outcome” categories includes eight categories – these include where a suspect is charged, receives a caution, a “Community Resolution”, [link](#)

70. D. Spencer & A. Tait (2025), A Portrait of Modern Britain: Crime and closing the ‘Toughness Gap’, [link](#)

71. Metropolitan Police Service, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

72. House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee, Oral Evidence: Phone Theft, HC 882, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, [link](#)

73. Ibid.

### Operation Echosteep<sup>74</sup>

In late 2024, the Metropolitan Police’s Specialist Crime Command launched Operation Echosteep, a year-long investigation to tackle an organised crime group trading in very high volumes of stolen mobile phones. The operation began when a single stolen iPhone was traced by the victim to a warehouse near Heathrow. Inside the warehouse a box was subsequently found to contain around 1,000 mobile phones bound for Hong Kong.

Subsequent inquiries by the police uncovered the criminal network was responsible for exporting up to 40,000 stolen phones over the last year, potentially accounting for 40 per cent of all phone thefts in London. Street-level thieves had been stealing handsets and then selling them on to local handlers for up to £300 each. Large numbers of the devices were then shipped abroad in bulk, mainly to China and Hong Kong. Evidence was uncovered that the devices were then being sold for up to \$5,000 in China.

Two individuals were arrested, charged and remanded in custody awaiting trial for handling stolen goods. A further fifteen people were arrested in relation to street-level offending such as theft, handling stolen goods and conspiracy to steal. According to the Metropolitan Police, Operation Echosteep has already contributed to a city-wide reduction in theft and robbery offences.

As part of tackling the market for smartphones the Metropolitan Police have, since October 2023, requested that Apple and Google take steps to prevent stolen smartphones from being able to connect to their cloud networks. Despite being a potentially key means of limiting the market for the £50 million worth in devices being stolen on the streets of London every year, with the associated trauma and pain to victims of crime and the public as a whole, to date Apple and Google have declined to do so.<sup>75</sup> The Metropolitan Police are right to have continued to press both technology companies and Government to pursue this approach.

### Domestic and Sexual Violence

Combatting domestic abuse and sexual violence has been a core focus of the Metropolitan Police over recent years. Police recorded levels of domestic abuse have fallen over the past three years from 95,281 offences in 2022/23 to 87,651 offences in 2024/25.<sup>76</sup> Any sense of this being a successful outcome however should be caveated given the evidence which suggests that domestic abuse offences are frequently under-reported. As such, it is difficult to say whether this represents a true fall in domestic abuse in the capital or merely a fall in levels of reporting. The number of domestic abuse crimes which have led to a “positive outcome”<sup>77</sup> has also fallen over the period at a more precipitous rate than the number of reported offences, with 9,453 domestic abuse crimes solved in 2022/23 and 6,765 in 2024/25.<sup>78</sup> There has therefore been a 22 per cent fall in the

75. House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee, Oral Evidence: Phone Theft, HC 882, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, [link](#)

76. Metropolitan Police, Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

77. Offences are considered to be “solved” if a “positive outcome” category has been assigned to the crime report. “Positive outcome” categories includes eight categories – these include where a suspect is charged, receives a caution, a “Community Resolution”, [link](#)

78. Metropolitan Police, Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

74. Metropolitan Police, Met dismantles suspected smuggling gang in UK’s largest phone theft crackdown, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

proportion of reported domestic abuse offences solved over the three years with the positive outcome rate reducing from 9.92 per cent in 2022/23 to 7.72 per cent in 2024/25.<sup>79</sup>

### The number of domestic abused offences reported to the Metropolitan Police, and the number and proportion of domestic abuse crimes solved by the Metropolitan Police<sup>80 81</sup>

Year	Number of Domestic Abuse offences recorded	Number of Domestic Abuse offences solved	Proportion of Domestic Abuse offences solved
2022/23	95,281	9,453	9.92%
2023/24	94,903	7,896	8.32%
2024/25	87,651	6,765	7.72%

The number of police recorded rape offences in the Metropolitan Police area has increased over a three-year period from 24,898 offences in the financial year 2022/23 to 26,442 offences in 2024/25.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile the number of rape offences solved by the police has remained relatively stable with 2,194 crimes solved in 2022/23 and 2,224 in 2024/25. There are early indicators, however, that performance in this area may be improving with the proportion of offences solved increasing for the first ten months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024 from 8.2 per cent to 12.0 per cent.<sup>83</sup>

### The number of rape offences reported to the Metropolitan Police, and the number and proportion of rape offences solved by the Metropolitan Police<sup>84 85</sup>

Year	Number of Rape offences recorded	Number of Rape offences solved	Proportion of Rape offences solved
2022/23	24,898	2,194	8.81%
2023/24	24,208	2,235	9.23%
2024/25	26,442	2,224	8.41%

## Crime Fighting Tactics – Targeting High Harm Offenders: “V100”

In the early stages of the Commissioner’s term of office the force made commitments to specifically target the highest harm predators who commit violent offences against women and girls.<sup>86</sup> Identification of the highest-harm offenders was conducted by analysis of those previously suspected of committing offences which included, but was not limited to:<sup>87</sup>

- Domestic abuse
- Rape and other sexual offences
- Stalking and harassment

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Offences are considered to be “solved” if a “positive outcome” category has been assigned to the crime report. “Positive outcome” categories includes eight categories – these include where a suspect is charged, receives a caution, a “Community Resolution”, [link](#)

82. Metropolitan Police, Crime Dashboard, [link](#)

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Offences are considered to be “solved” if a “positive outcome” category has been assigned to the crime report. “Positive outcome” categories includes eight categories – these include where a suspect is charged, receives a caution, a “Community Resolution”, [link](#)

86. Metropolitan Police, Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, [link](#)

87. Metropolitan Police, Freedom of Information Request Reference: 01.FOI.25.047631, [link](#)



- Honour-based abuse
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Online harassment and other tech-enabled abuse

Some 35,000 individuals in the capital were identified as being of particularly notable risk of offending, with one early analysis showing that 92% of the top “V100” named suspects had been suspected of murder or rape as the most serious criminal allegation against them during the previous year.<sup>88</sup> The “V100” subjects identified for targeted enforcement were updated on a monthly basis following analysis. During the early stages of the “V100” programme, of the 199 subjects, “positive action” (i.e. including conviction, charge or arrest) was taken against 54 per cent of those targeted for intervention.<sup>89</sup>

This type of intervention, with police resources deployed based on the use of rigorous analysis to identify those individuals who pose the risk of significant harm to the public, is to be applauded. The Commissioner’s commitment to this analytical and precision-based approach by the police has been evident throughout his term of office. It is an approach which provides the potential for considerable positive impact in other areas of criminality and types of offences. Efforts should be made by the Metropolitan Police and other forces to expand this approach to other crime types beyond those where they are currently used.

**Crime Fighting Tactics – Stop and Search:** Stop and search is a vital law enforcement tactic, particularly when deployed in high-crime “hotspot” locations. The effectiveness of stop and search is clearly demonstrated in the recent analysis published by criminologists Alexis Piquero and Lawrence Sherman (2025). Their study considered whether Stop and Search Encounters (SSEs) in London led to reduced weapons-related deaths and injuries by examining 15 years of data (2008 to 2023) encompassing 4.3 million SSEs and 58,503 recorded knife injuries.<sup>90</sup> The authors particularly examined two “quasi-experiments”: a “Cutback” in SSEs between 2014 and 2017 and a “Surge” in SSEs between 2018 and 2020.<sup>91</sup> They found that knife injuries significantly increased following the start of the Cutback period and fell significantly following the Surge period. The authors concluded, having conducted a series of detailed and rigorous statistical tests, that:

*“increased SSEs [Stop and Search Encounters] can significantly reduce knife-related injuries and homicides in public places”.<sup>92</sup>*

Prior to his election as the Mayor of London, Sir Sadiq Khan had previously made clear his opposition to stop and search. In 2018 he said:

*“The last few years have shown what can be achieved when there’s a concerted effort to reduce the overuse of stop and search. But there’s still much more to be done, and if I’m Mayor I’ll do all in my power to further cut its use. Overuse of stop and search can have a dramatic effect on communities. It undermines*

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88. Metropolitan Police, Data Protection Impact Assessment for VAWG 100 project, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023, [link](#)

89. Metropolitan Police, Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, [link](#)

90. A. R. Piquero & L. W. Sherman (2025), Did More Stop and Search by Police Cause Less Knife Injury in London? Evidence from 2008–2023, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, March 2025, [link](#)

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.



public confidence in our police if Londoners are being stopped and searched for no good reason.”<sup>93</sup>

Stop and search is often framed as being an example of “racist” policing – incorrectly claiming that “disproportionality” in its deployment is evidence of discrimination. Black people are more likely than white people to be stopped and searched in London; however, black people are also vastly “over-represented” amongst: victims of non-domestic knife crime homicides, those charged with non-domestic knife crime homicides, and those suspected of committing robbery offences when described by victims. When comparing the distribution of stop and search by ethnicity against the distribution of non-domestic knife-enabled murder victims, murder suspects, or robbery suspects who are black, any “disproportionality” against black people is eliminated.<sup>94</sup>

Proportion of non-domestic knife crime murder victims who are black (2003 – December 2024)	45.6%
Proportion of murder suspects who are black (2003 – February 2024)	43.5%
Proportion of robbery suspects who are black (2018 – 2023)	48.6%
Proportion of those stopped and searched who are black (July 2023 – June 2025)	39.5%
Proportion of Londoners who are black (2021 census)	13.5%

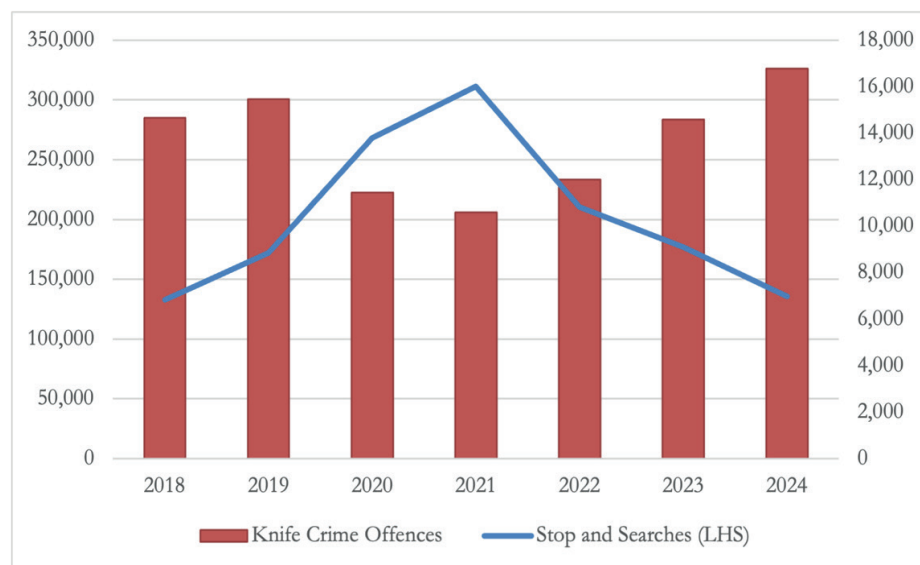
Denying the reality of the distribution of serious offending does not benefit anyone who lives, works or visits the capital – particularly those who are most likely to be involved in serious violence as victims. That black people are “over-represented” compared to the resident population when stop and search tactics are used is not evidence of a police force or police officers pursuing a racist – whether institutional or otherwise – approach to policing. It is evidence that the police are being realistic about both the tragedy that is the number of young black men who die on our streets every year and those who are committing serious offences of knife-enabled homicide and robbery.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of stop and searches in London fell precipitously between 2021 and 2024 from 311,352 to 135,739. Meanwhile, the volume of knife crime offences increased substantially over the same period. In 2024, the number of knife crime offences in the capital reached 16,879 offences in 2024 – an 86.2% increase on 2014/15 levels.

93. Evening Standard, Sadiq Khan: ‘I’d do everything in my power to cut stop and search’, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2018, [link](#)

94. Metropolitan Police, MPS Crime Dashboard, [link](#) & MPS Stop and Search Dashboard, [link](#)

### Levels of knife crime and stop and search in London’s Metropolitan Police area (2018 – 2024)<sup>95 96</sup>



As Chief Constable Sir Stephen Watson QPM, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, told Policy Exchange in 2025:

“If you don’t back your officers to do stop and search, they will stop doing stop and search. And if you stop doing stop and search, you’ll see street robberies going up.”<sup>97</sup>

The decision to substantially roll-back stop and search has had a catastrophic impact on the fight against crime. However, given the previously stated objectives of the Mayor of London to reduce stop and search, it is the occupant of that office, rather than the Commissioner, who should be held principally responsible for this failure.

### Crime Fighting Tactics – Facial Recognition

Sir Mark Rowley has led the push to increase deployments of Live Facial Recognition technology to target wanted offenders in crime “hotspots” across the capital. From a relatively low 24 deployments in 2023, the Met since 2024 has deployed the technology an average of once every 2 days at locations across London.<sup>98</sup> Between 2023 and September 2025, the force arrested 1,416 individuals during Live Facial Recognition deployments for a wide range of offences including violent and sexual offences.<sup>99</sup>

During 2024 the force conducted 179 deployments with an average of 3.2 arrests on each occasion.<sup>100</sup> For 2025 the force has conducted deployments at a marginally higher rate, with the number of arrests per deployment also increasing to 5.0 per deployment.<sup>101</sup> This suggests that the Metropolitan Police is both increasing the tempo of deployments as the force becomes more confident in its use and is becoming more effective at identifying offenders as the technology matures. Both are to be applauded.

95. Crime Survey of England and Wales, Police force area data tables, year ending to March 2024, table P6, [link](#) & Metropolitan Police, MPS Stop & Search Dashboard, [link](#)

96. Stop and search data relates to the financial year (April to March) while Knife Crime data relates to the calendar year (January to December)

97. Sir Stephen Watson QPM, “The Fight Against Crime and Disorder: Turning Round Greater Manchester Police”, Policy Exchange, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025, [link](#)

98. Metropolitan Police, Live Facial Recognition, Deployment Records, [link](#)

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

### The number of Live Facial Recognition deployments and resulting arrests by the Metropolitan Police (2023 – September 2025)<sup>102</sup>

	2023	2024	2025 (to 16/9/25)	Total
Number of deployments	24	179	162	365
Total hours	124	880	897	1530
Average hours of deployment	5.17	4.92	5.54	5.21
Total arrests	37	572	807	1416
Average arrests per deployment	1.5	3.2	5.0	3.9

The Commissioner’s investment in the use of technology in the fight against crime – including the use of Live Facial Recognition, CCTV analysis and drone technology – has the potential to make a significant difference in the years to come and should be commended. The force must continue to pursue the advantage which can be gained in the fight against crime from the adoption of new technologies by accelerating their deployment to the policing frontline at the earliest opportunity.

### Non-Crime Hate Incidents

The decision by the Metropolitan Police to cease the investigation of Non-Crime Hate Incidents is a welcome step forward. As Policy Exchange has previously written, they are a “chilling distraction from the public’s priorities on policing”.<sup>103</sup> The manner in which the Metropolitan Police, and other forces – and particularly guided by the oversight of the College of Policing – had allowed them to proliferate was erroneous. The Government should take steps to eliminate them entirely.

### Number of Non-Crime Hate Incidents recorded by year by the Metropolitan Police (2019 – 2024)<sup>104</sup>

Year	Number of Non-Crime Hate Incidents Recorded
2019	2,212
2020	2,974
2021	3,610
2022	3,001
2023	2,772
2024	2,253

\*

The Commissioner has led efforts to bring the Metropolitan Police’s crime fighting efforts into the twenty-first century by focusing on tactics such as Live Facial Recognition, the use of drones and efforts to target high-

102.Ibid.

103.D. Spencer (2024), Non-Crime Hate Incidents: A chilling distraction from the public’s priorities on policing, Policy Exchange, [link](#)

104.Metropolitan Police, Freedom of Information Request, Ref: **01.FOI.24.041891**, [link](#)

harm offenders. The force’s ability to catch – and there are indications suppress – the most serious of crimes, in particular homicide offences is impressive. That there are early indications that the long-term rise in knife crime and some other offences may be being impeded is also positive.

However, the performance of the force at tackling high-volume offending, in particular theft-related offences, over the last three years has been incredibly poor, with insufficient signs of this being likely to change to a substantial degree in the near-term. Perhaps the most significant crime-fighting failure is the seeming inability of the force to catch anything other than very low numbers of those offenders committing very high-volumes of theft-type offences. While this has been a long-term trend, there are too few signs of sufficiently successful efforts being made to change this across the capital. There is certainly no indication of the force taking a “zero-tolerance” to anything other than the most serious crimes. Until this changes the belief that many residents and visitors have, that there is a culture of impunity to crime in London, will continue. We believe that this is an important contributor to the force’s low levels of overall public confidence described in section one of this report.

If the Metropolitan Police – and indeed policing and the criminal justice system more generally – is to more effectively tackle crime, a different approach is required to the status-quo. In particular, far greater efforts and resources should be applied to targeting the relatively small number of offenders who commit a substantial proportion of overall offences. By tackling these highly prolific offenders the police and criminal justice system could have a disproportionate impact on overall levels of crime. The common police response currently is to respond to each individual “high-volume” crime and victim of crime separately, in an effort to identify the suspect for each individual offence; rather than taking all steps to proactively target the most prolific offenders. In common policing parlance it might be the difference between being a “Crime Investigation Department” and a “Criminal Investigation Department”. To shift the approach and policies of police forces towards an approach which specifically targets high-volume offenders rather than individual offences would be a significant change. It is, however, an approach which, particularly in relation to volume crime, might well yield significant returns if taken in concert with other parts of the criminal justice system.

Given the decidedly mixed picture in the Metropolitan Police’s crime-fighting performance over the last three years, we consider the force’s performance to have **Required Improvement**. In some areas, particularly related to high-volume crime detection, that improvement must be very significant – with it being more accurate to describe the force as having performed inadequately.

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

## 3. The Policing of Protests

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

London, as the nation's capital city and seat of national Government, has long been a focus for protest and protestors. Over recent decades there has been a measurable increase in the number of disruptive and confrontational protests.<sup>105</sup> Groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and Shut the System have conducted a campaign of disruptive and often unlawful protest activity which has included tactics such as 'locking on' (where protestors attach themselves to buildings, the transport network or other structures to prevent their easy removal); mass obstruction of the highway (through both 'sit down' and 'slow walking' protests); and offences of criminal damage.

Since the Hamas terrorist attacks of the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, a high number of large-scale protests – co-ordinated principally by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign – have been held in London. Over the first six months of these mass protest marches (and the assemblies linked to them) they covered an average of 3.6km of central London's streets on each occasion and lasted, on average, five hours.<sup>106</sup>

March organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign <sup>107</sup>	Distance of Procession (Approximate) <sup>108</sup>	Start and Finish Times of Procession and Assembly (Approximate)
14 <sup>th</sup> October 2023: Portland Place to Whitehall	2.5km	12pm – 3.30pm
21 <sup>st</sup> October 2023: Marble Arch to Downing Street	3km	12pm – 4pm
28 <sup>th</sup> October 2023: Victoria Embankment to Parliament Square	5.5km	12pm – 4pm
11 <sup>th</sup> November 2023: Hyde Park to US Embassy	4.25km	12pm – 5pm
25 <sup>th</sup> November 2023: Park Lane to Parliament Square	3km	12.30pm – 5pm
9 <sup>th</sup> December 2023: City of London to Parliament Square	4.25km	12pm – 5pm

105.D. Bailey, Decade of dissent: how protest is shaking the UK and why it's likely to continue (January 2020), The Conversation, [link](#)

106.D. Spencer, S. Laws, N. Webb (2024), Might is Right? The 'Right to Protest' in a new era of disruption and confrontation, September 2024, [link](#)

107.Ibid.

108.The approximate distance is obtained by using open-source mapping software to estimate the protest route prescribed by the conditions applied by the Metropolitan Police for each march.

13 <sup>th</sup> January 2024: Bank to Parliament Square	4.25km	12 – 5pm
3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2024: Portland Place to Whitehall	2.75km	11 – 5.30pm
17 <sup>th</sup> February 2024: Marble Arch to Israeli Embassy	4km	1.30pm – 6pm
9 <sup>th</sup> March 2024: Hyde Park Corner to US Embassy	3.75km	12pm – 5pm
30 <sup>th</sup> March 2024: Russell Square to Trafalgar Square	2.25km	12.30pm – 5pm
13 <sup>th</sup> April 2024: Russell Square to Parliament Square	3.25km	12pm – 5pm
27 <sup>th</sup> April 2024: Parliament Square to Hyde Park	3.25km	12.30pm – 5pm

The demands placed on the Metropolitan Police because of these varying types of disruptive protests are considerable and increasing. However, the approach taken by the force over recent years within this domain has been found repeatedly wanting. In Policy Exchange’s 2024 report “Might is Right: The ‘Right to Protest’ in a new era of disruption and confrontation” we quoted the Metropolitan Police’s Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist, who acknowledged the force’s failings in the early stages of the pro-Palestine protests:

“When we look back at the policing of protests over the last 8 months, we know we didn’t get everything right – particularly in the early stages in October. We’ve developed our tactics since then, becoming faster and more decisive. On occasion we did not move quickly to make arrests, for example the man chanting for ‘Jihad’ which was a decision made following fast time advice from lawyers and the CPS. We are now much more focussed on identifying reasonable grounds for arrest, acting where needed, and then investigating, so in these circumstances its very likely arrests would be made more quickly now.”<sup>109</sup>

## Whitehall & Parliament Square

The failures of the Metropolitan Police to adequately police the area immediately surrounding the Palace of Westminster have been particularly egregious. While Parliament Square, Whitehall and the surrounding area have long been a focus for protest activities, recent years have revealed a pattern of the police appearing to prioritise the rights of protestors over Parliamentarians and members of the public going about their normal day-to-day activities.

The volume of protests taking place within Parliament Square, Whitehall and the immediate surrounding area are considerable. Taking one day as an example (21<sup>st</sup> February 2024), there were groups: singing and chanting against Brexit and the then-Conservative Government; holding a prayer vigil relating to climate change; holding a mass assembly to support the Palestinian cause; holding a protest against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; and calling attention to the activities of Hamas terrorists. It

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109. Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist, Metropolitan Police Service – interview with Policy Exchange, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024



was at a protest on this date which protestors projected “From the river to the sea, Palestina will be free” onto the Elizabeth Tower.

The phrase “From the river to the sea, Palestina will be free” – projected onto the Elizabeth Tower during a protest on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.<sup>110</sup>



Since the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 terrorist attacks Whitehall and Parliament Square have been the location for mass pro-Palestine assemblies and as both a finishing and starting point for many large-scale marches. The first substantial protest assembly in Parliament Square following the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 terrorist attacks occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, to coincide with a vote in the House of Commons relating to an Amendment to the King’s Speech debate as tabled by the Scottish National Party. The Amendment related to the Israel-Gaza conflict.



Emergency rally for Palestine 🇵🇸

On Wednesday MPs will vote on whether to call for a ceasefire in Palestine!

Join us at 5PM at Parliament on Wednesday 15 November to demand MPs vote for a [#CeasefireNow](#)

SHARE THIS POST!

[#FreePalestine](#)



3:24 PM · Nov 13, 2023 · 1M Views

332

5.1K

5.9K

137



I've lived in London all my life. I did 10 yrs of crowds and noise at Ministry of Sound. But leaving parliament today did not feel safe. I support rights of expression and protest. But don't other people have rights? Can I pls have a right to go home without feeling threatened?



1:03 AM · Nov 16, 2023 from London, England · 2.3M Views

3.3K

1.8K

4.4K

116



110.LBC, Backlash aimed at police after divisive 'From the River to the Sea' slogan projected onto Parliament, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024, [link](#)

On this occasion protestors obstructed the roads and footpaths around the Palace of Westminster and were jammed up against the barriers which exist to protect Parliament and Parliamentarians. Access for Members of Parliament, Peers, staff and the public via all the normal entrances and exits to the Estate was not maintained, compromising the rights of Parliamentarians and others to make their way to and from Parliament.

Since this protest, the Metropolitan Police have not significantly and consistently changed their approach to protests in and around the Palace of Westminster. On the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025, for several hours, many hundreds of pro-Palestine supporters gathered on the perimeter and effectively surrounded the Parliamentary Estate. Again, the police were unwilling to ensure that free and unobstructed access to Parliament was maintained.

As detailed in Policy Exchange’s 2024 report, “Might is Right” there are an abundance of legal powers available to the police which could be used to protect the rights of Parliamentarians, staff and visitors to the Parliamentary Estate – they have rarely used to their full extent. That the Metropolitan Police has repeatedly permitted such circumstances to transpire poses a serious impediment to the workings of Parliament; compromising the constitutional duties of Members of Parliament and Peers to ensure that the work of Parliament can continue without impediment.

### Core Police Failings

That the challenges related to protest activities which the Metropolitan Police have faced over the last three years have been considerable is not in doubt. However, across a range of areas the force has failed to adequately enforce the law when it comes to the behaviours and actions of disruptive or criminal protestors.

There have been four core failures by the Metropolitan Police, along with other authorities, in relation to their handling of protest over recent years.

First, the Metropolitan Police has frequently failed to prioritise the rights of ordinary members of the public, and in Westminster the rights of Parliamentarians and staff, over the rights of protestors. The Human Rights Act 1998 does not refer to a “Right to Protest” – the relevant rights are the “Right to freedom of expression” (Article 10) and “Right to freedom of peaceful assembly” (Article 11). However, the sense that many of the recent wave of protests have been “peaceful” by any ordinary understanding of the word – particularly when filled with antisemitic chanting through mobile sound amplifiers, calls for “jihad” on the streets of London, or the use of criminal damage as a tactic – is clearly false. Further, Articles 10 and 11 are qualified rights, in that they can be restricted where it is necessary and proportionate to protect public safety, prevent crime and protect the rights and freedoms of others. Too often, despite the qualified nature of these rights, we have seen the police choosing, in any “balancing of rights” exercise, to prioritise the rights and freedoms of protestors over the rights of ordinary people going about their daily lives.

Second, the force’s approach has, almost consistently, been to prioritise



the retention of public order at the immediate time of a protest, for example by not undertaking arrests at the time of the offence; rather than immediately enforcing the criminal law whatever the subsequent impact of that decision in the future. Delaying arrests reduces the likelihood of offenders being identified and successfully prosecuted. It also has the potential of leading to a belief amongst the wider public that the forces of law and order have lost control of the streets and yielded control to a mob. Such a belief risks emboldening those who may commit criminal offences in the future or risks more widespread instances of public disorder further undermining the rule of law.

Third, the force and police commanders have been willing to treat different individuals and groups differently, dependent on the cause or identity (principally defined by race, ethnicity, religion) of the group or person concerned. Over recent years this differential approach – most commonly termed “two-tier policing” – has particularly been in evidence during the policing of protest.

Senior police officers have vigorously denied the existence of “Two-Tier Policing”. During the widespread disorder of Summer 2024, the Commissioner said on Sky News that those debating whether there is bias in policing: “legitimise the violence that the officers I am sending on mutual aid today will face on the streets. They [those debating the issues] are putting [the officers] at risk by suggesting that any of those officers are going out with any intent other than to operate without ‘fear or favour’ in protecting communities.”<sup>111</sup> At the time, the author of this report described these as “novel terms” for the debate into policing in this country and contended that these terms should be termed the “Rowley Doctrine”.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the denials, it has become increasingly evident that “two-tier policing” is a reality. The Commissioner has made repeated statements that the police have insufficient legal powers to place greater limitations on protest marches or assemblies over the last two years. Despite this claim the force did apply very stringent conditions in relation to protest assemblies and marches organised by the United Kingdom Independence Party taking place in Tower Hamlets on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025 partly because: “Tower Hamlets has the largest percentage of Muslim residents anywhere in the UK and the prospect of this protest taking place in the heart of the borough has been the cause of significant concern locally.”<sup>113</sup>

Such a decision may well have been justified on the grounds of preventing serious public disorder. However, the willingness of the police to impose such stringent restrictions to safeguard the local Muslim population, while apparently being unwilling to go similarly far on behalf of the Jewish community or the broader public at previous events, indicates a readiness among senior officers to apply different standards to different groups. If the rationale for the force’s decision is because they feared public disorder from those resisting the protest (rather than from the protestors themselves) it is tantamount to an admission that “mob-rule” has taken priority over the rule of law – an unacceptable state of

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111.Sky News, Met Police Chief Mark Rowley addresses ‘two-tier policing’ accusations and keyboard warriors, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024, [link](#)

112.D. Spencer (2024), Let’s not shut down dissenters over two-tier policing, The Telegraph, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024, [link](#)

113.Metropolitan Police, Met intervenes to prevent serious disorder at Whitechapel protest, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

affairs.

Fourth, there has been a lack of transparency in how the police make decisions in relation to protest. This lack of transparency is particularly evident in the negotiations between the police and protest organisers alongside the role of staff networks, pressure groups and other “advisory groups”. One example of this related to the London Muslim Communities Forum (LMCF), described by the Metropolitan Police when it was created in March 2012 as a “new strategic advisory body for the MPS [Metropolitan Police Service] to help build better relations with London’s Muslim communities, and to improve how we engage and consult with them”.<sup>114</sup> The Chair of the LMCF, Attiq Malik, was alleged to have led chanting of the slogan “from the river to the sea” – which is commonly understood to be a call for the destruction of Israel – at a rally in Luton in 2021.<sup>115</sup> Following this matter being reported in the press, the Metropolitan Police ended its relationship with Mr Malik.<sup>116</sup> At the time the Metropolitan Police also said: “We are already working on a new advisory group ‘charter’ that will include a shared commitment to engage through mutual respect and inclusivity”.<sup>117</sup> As of late-2025, no such “charter” appears to have been published.

Taken together these four factors have led to a failure by the police to use the full range of the powers available to them under the existing legal regime to tackle disruptive or criminal protestors. While the challenges relating to protest are considerable, there is a clear need for a step-change in how the force consistently responds to and polices protest in the capital. As a result, we consider the performance of the Metropolitan Police to have been **Inadequate** in relation to policing protests over the last three years.

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

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114. Metropolitan Police Service, London Muslim Communities Forum launched, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012, accessed via webarchive on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024, [link](#)

115. The Telegraph, Met Police adviser led ‘from the river to the sea’ chant, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2023, [link](#)

116. Metropolitan Police Service, Response to video shared by the Telegraph, Attiq Malik’s role on the London Muslim Communities Forum, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023, accessed via webarchive on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025, [link](#)

117. Ibid.

# 4. Public Trust, Conduct & Professionalism

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

Whilst most police officers serve with integrity and act consistently in line with the standards expected of them by the public, this is not universally the case. The impact of a series of high-profile cases on the public’s trust and confidence in the Metropolitan Police over recent years has been significant.

## Police Misconduct

No case of police misconduct stands out more than the abhorrent crimes committed by the serving Metropolitan Police officer who murdered Sarah Everard in March 2021. Several reviews were commissioned in the aftermath:

- the Home Office-sponsored independent inquiry by Dame Elish Angiolini DBE QC into the matters arising from the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard;<sup>118</sup>
- a Metropolitan Police-sponsored review of the force’s culture and standards of behaviour, led by Baroness Louise Casey of Blackstock DBE CB;<sup>119</sup>
- several investigations of allegations of misconduct by the Independent Office for Police Conduct;<sup>120</sup> and
- a thematic inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements.<sup>121</sup>

Later that year, in December 2021, two police officers were convicted of misconduct in public office and sentenced to terms of imprisonment after it was discovered that they had taken and shared photographs of the murdered sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman at a crime scene they were supposed to be guarding.<sup>122</sup> Their mother, Rev. Mina Smallman, called for the resignation of the previous Commissioner, Dame Cressida Dick.<sup>123</sup>

In February 2022 the Independent Office for Police Conduct published

118.The Angiolini Inquiry, [link](#)  
119.Metropolitan Police, Baroness Casey Review, [link](#)  
120.Independent Office for Police Conduct Statement (10<sup>th</sup> March 2021), [link](#)  
121.Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Inspection of capability and capacity to vet and monitor officers and staff, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021, [link](#)  
122.R v Deniz Jaffer and Jamie Lewis, Sentencing Remarks, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021, [link](#)  
123.BBC News, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, [link](#)

its Learning Report into Operation Hotton, a series of investigations into the conduct of several officers working at Charing Cross Police Station between 2016 and 2018.<sup>124</sup> Of the fourteen officers investigated, two were found guilty of gross misconduct and were dismissed from the force (or would have been dismissed had they not already resigned) while six officers were dealt with under unsatisfactory performance or reflective practice procedures. The case was a contributing factor in the departure of Dame Cressida Dick as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

It was in the aftermath of these events which Sir Mark Rowley was appointed as Commissioner. Sir Mark has made an unequivocal commitment to raising the professional conduct standards expected of officers and staff in the force, with consequences for those who fail to meet those standards. He told the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee on the first occasion he appeared before them as Commissioner, in October 2022 that: "Clearly, there have been too many cases where we have had examples of officers behaving appallingly, through to serious criminality".<sup>125</sup> In his "A New Met for London" strategic plan, published in 2023, Rowley said: "You'll see the people who fall short of our high standards being dealt with swiftly and robustly".<sup>126</sup>

It is clear that the Metropolitan Police has made efforts to root out those within the force who do not meet the necessary standards. During the financial year 2024/25, 123 police officers from the force were dismissed and placed on the College of Policing's barred list – with a further 60 placed on the barred list following resignation or retirement.<sup>127</sup> This is a more than three-fold increase in the rate of officers being placed on the barred list compared to the years 2020/21 and 2021/22. For his determination in dealing with those officers who commit misconduct Sir Mark is to be commended.

However, the force must also be careful not to be over-zealous in its approach. There are two types of cases which must be handled with particular care, with misconduct investigations rarely pursued. Firstly, this includes where managers have attempted to deal with poor performers and are then subsequently accused of "over-bearing conduct". Secondly, this includes where officers have been required to use their powers – particularly the use of force – in an apparently lawful and proportionate way, and a complaint is subsequently made by individuals who may be seeking to use the misconduct process for their own nefarious ends.

### Public Trust

Measuring the public's trust (as with the public's confidence) in the Metropolitan Police is principally done through the Public Attitudes Survey, conducted by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime since 1983. Around 19,200 Londoners are asked for their views on policing in the capital, with results published on a quarterly basis. Within the Public Attitudes Survey, Londoners are asked: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Metropolitan Police is an organisation that I can trust?".<sup>128</sup>

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124.Independent Office for Police Conduct, Operation Hotton Learning Report, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022, [link](#)

125.London Assembly, Police and Crime Committee: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022, [link](#)

126.Metropolitan Police, A New Met for London (2023-2025), [link](#)

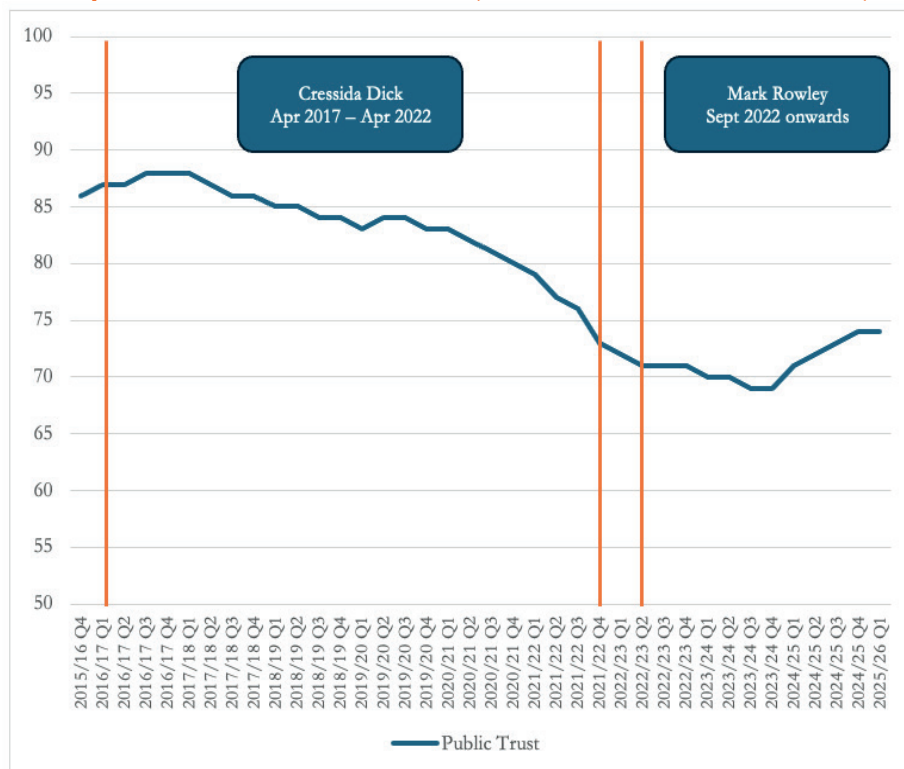
127.College of Policing, Police dismissals (Home Office forces) 20245 to 2025, [link](#)

128.MOPAC, Trust and Confidence Dashboard, [link](#)

During the later stages of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe's (latterly Lord Hogan-Howe) term as Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley's predecessor but one, between March 2016 and March 2017 public trust in the force was relatively stable at between 86 and 88 per cent. In the five years prior to Rowley's appointment, under the leadership of his predecessor Dame Cressida Dick, the public's trust in the Metropolitan Police fell: the proportion of Londoners who believed that the force could be trusted fell from 88 per cent in the twelve months to March 2017 to 80 per cent in the twelve months to March 2022.

During the first two years of Rowley's term of office, levels of trust in the force continued to fall, from 77 per cent in the year to September 2022 to 69 per cent in the twelve months to December 2023. The most recent data, however, suggests that over the past year Rowley has presided over a modest recovery in levels of trust amongst Londoners, with 74 per cent of Londoners trusting the force in the twelve months to June 2025. It is vital that the force continues this upward trajectory – and if Sir Mark is able to do so he should certainly be commended for leading this recovery.

#### Metropolitan Police: Public Trust (March 2016 – March 2026)<sup>129</sup>



### Police Accountability Regime

Where the Commissioner has been entirely correct is his forceful defence of officers who have taken action to tackle dangerous criminals and terrorists but then been the subject of many years of investigation and prosecution by the Independent Office for Police Conduct and the Crown

<sup>129</sup>MOPAC, Trust and Confidence Dashboard, [link](#)

Prosecution Service. These include the case of Sergeant Martyn Blake who shot and killed the dangerous criminal Chris Kaba in September 2022. Blake was subsequently tried at the Old Bailey for murder and found not guilty by the jury in October 2024; although remarkably the Independent Office for Police Conduct has ordered that the officer should be subject to a misconduct hearing.<sup>130</sup>

In a similar case, Jermaine Baker was shot by police in 2015 while Mr Baker was lying in wait as part of a gang to ambush a prison van to break free one of his associates – who himself was in court for possession of a machine gun. The gang were in possession of an imitation Uzi sub-machine gun. It took seven years for the public inquiry to conclude that the officer in question, known as W80, acted lawfully.<sup>131</sup> The Independent Office for Police Conduct still decided that eight years after the incident the officer should face a misconduct hearing. The hearing’s independent Chair subsequently terminated proceedings saying the officer had no case to answer.<sup>132</sup> Again, the Commissioner was clear in his support of the officer and others who find themselves in such circumstances.

While the Government has committed to making amendments to the accountability regime for officers acting in the furtherance of their operational crime-fighting duties,<sup>133</sup> they must go further – as has been previously outlined by Policy Exchange.<sup>134</sup> In particular, the powers of the Independent Office for Police Conduct must be substantially curtailed.

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While the Commissioner has made considerable efforts to drive higher standards of behaviour by Metropolitan Police officers and staff, a key element which is yet to be seriously addressed is the fundamental imbalance within policing’s “accountability” system. In particular, that the weight of accountability is felt overwhelmingly by the most junior frontline officers – Constables and Sergeants, including in cases such as those outlined above – rather than by senior and middle-ranking officers and staff. Certainly, genuine accountability for the performance of policing’s middle and senior managers in the fight against crime is currently entirely insufficient.

To ensure senior and middle-ranking officers are more effectively held to account for their performance, there are some changes which would require the Home Office to make amendments to police regulations. This would include altering the terms of employment for senior and middle-ranking police officers to enable chief constables to more easily dismiss officers who are shown to be ineffective in a crime-fighting operational leadership role.

However, there are also steps which the Commissioner could take independently – some of which the force has recently started to do. In relation to Chief Inspectors, Superintendents and Chief Superintendents (who generally lead local policing teams) an “early-exit scheme”, for those who have decided they might wish to leave the force, is being made

130. Independent Office for Police Conduct, “IOPC concludes Met officer should face misconduct hearing over Chris Kaba shooting”, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025, [link](#)

131. The Jermaine Baker Public Inquiry: Report into the Death of Jermaine Baker, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022, [link](#)

132. Independent Office for Police Conduct, Disciplinary panel finds Met officer who shot Jermaine Baker has no case to answer, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

133. Home Office & Ministry of Justice, Government response to the police accountability rapid review, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025, [link](#)

134. D. Spencer (2025), Your Money or Your Life: London’s Knife Crime, Robbery and Street Theft Epidemic, Policy Exchange, [link](#)

available.<sup>135</sup> While this is a sensible step forward it has been a long-time coming and is far from sufficient to ensure officers and staff at the most senior levels of command in the Metropolitan Police can be held to account for performance in the future.

In the future, and at a minimum, data should be published on every senior officer’s crime-fighting performance throughout their leadership career. There should be a substantial increase in the transparency of the force’s Frontline Policing performance meetings, where local police commanders are questioned on their performance. This should include the publication of performance data, the publication of the meeting’s minutes and the option for members of the public to attend these meetings through online hosting.

If the Metropolitan Police and other forces are to deliver for the public there must be reasonable consequences for both success and failure for police leaders in relation to crime fighting. Currently those consequences are insufficient – it is something the Commissioner must take further steps to change during his remaining time in office.

We consider the Metropolitan Police to have performed **Adequately** in relation to Public Trust, Conduct and Professionalism over the last three years.

Outstanding
Adequate
Required Improvement
Inadequate

135.BBC News, "Met wants 'sub-standard' senior officers to leave", 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025, [link](#)



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