



# **Youth Justice Statistics 2020/21**

## **England and Wales**

Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice

Statistics bulletin

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## 11. Comparisons with the adult system

In the year ending March 2021:

- There were around 81,100 first time entrants (FTEs) to the criminal justice system, of which 11% were children. There have been year-on-year decreases for both child and adult (18+) FTEs over the last ten years, with the number of adult FTEs having a larger year-on-year fall than children for the first time in the latest year.
- Of all knife and offensive weapon offences committed in the year ending March 2021, 19% were committed by children. The number of offences involving a knife or offensive weapon committed by children fell by 21% in the last year, and by 12% for adults (18+).
- The number of sentencing occasions fell by 34% compared to the previous year, with adults and young adults having a larger year on year decrease than children for the first time (a 34% fall for adults, a 31% decrease for young adults and a 28% decrease for children).

For the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 snapshot:

- The overall custodial population was at its lowest level in the last ten years. Children accounted for 1% of the overall custody population.

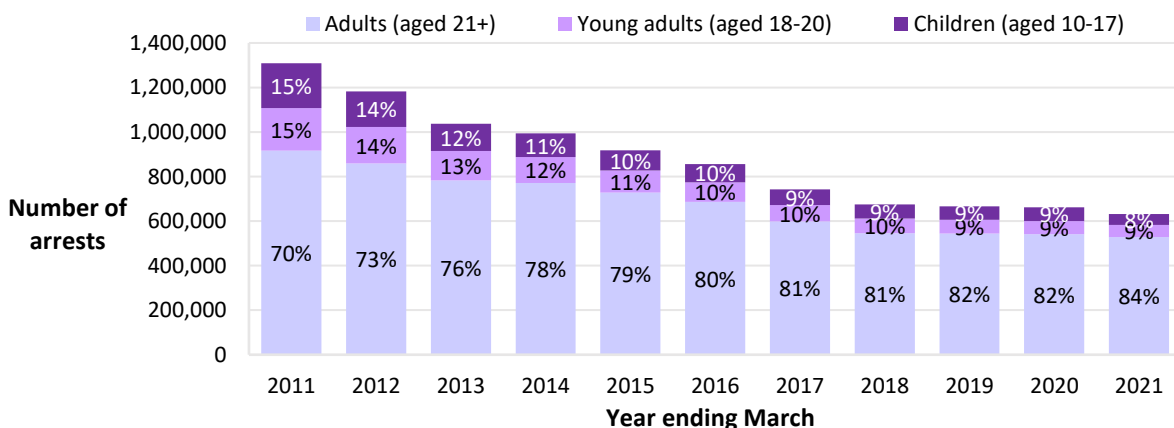
For the year ending March 2020 reoffending cohort:

- Children (aged 10-17) had the highest reoffending rate of the age groups at 34.2%, compared to 24.0% for young adults (aged 18-20) and 25.2% for adults (aged 21 and over).

This chapter looks at the comparisons at different stages of the criminal justice system between children aged 10-17, young adults aged 18-20 (where available) and adults (aged 21+).

### 11.1 Arrests by age group

**Figure 11.1: Number and proportion of arrests by age group, England and Wales<sup>23</sup>, years ending March 2011 to 2021**



Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.1

<sup>23</sup> Lancashire Police could not supply data for the years ending March 2018 and March 2019 (for reference, in the year ending March 2021 Lancashire represented 3% of all arrests of 10-17 year olds). Data have been removed for this force for all years so valid comparisons can be made.

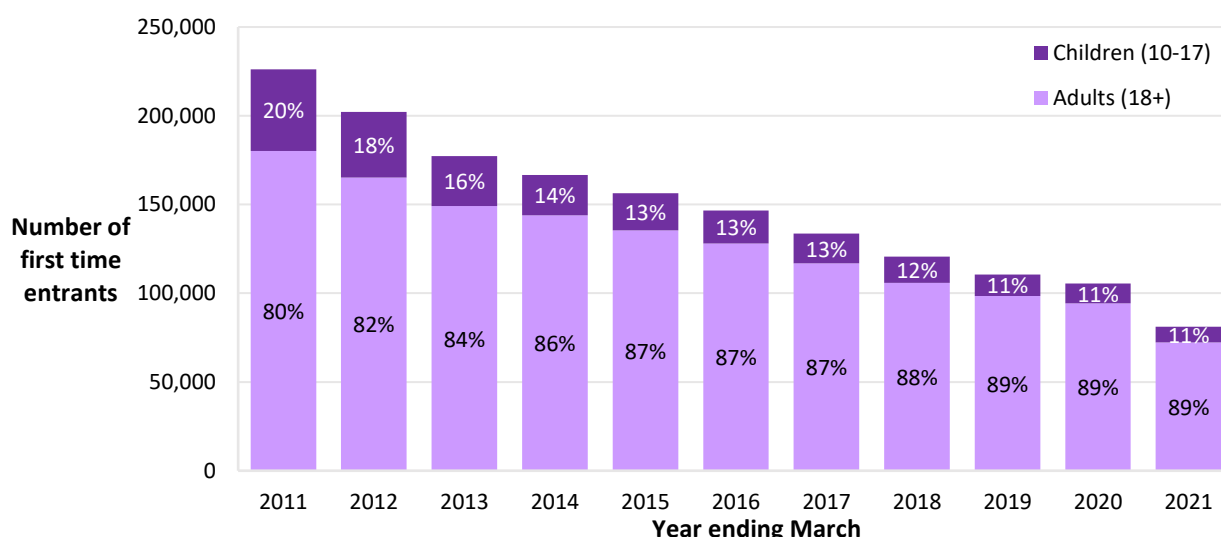
There were around 632,100 arrests (where age was known) in the year ending March 2021, which is a 4% decrease on the number of arrests in the previous year (just under 640,000) and a 52% decrease compared with over 1.31 million arrests in the year ending March 2011.

The overall number of arrests has generally been decreasing over the last ten years for all age groups. As the volumes of arrests have decreased at different rates across the three age groups, the proportions have changed over the course of the decade.

Children accounted for 8% of overall arrests in the year ending March 2021, compared to 15% ten years previously. In the same period, the proportion of young adults arrested has seen the smallest change in share, decreasing from 15% to 9%, while the proportion of adults arrested has increased from 70% to 84%.

## 11.2 First time entrants to the criminal justice system by age group

**Figure 11.2: Number and proportion of first time entrants to the criminal justice system by age group, England and Wales, years ending March 2011 to 2021**



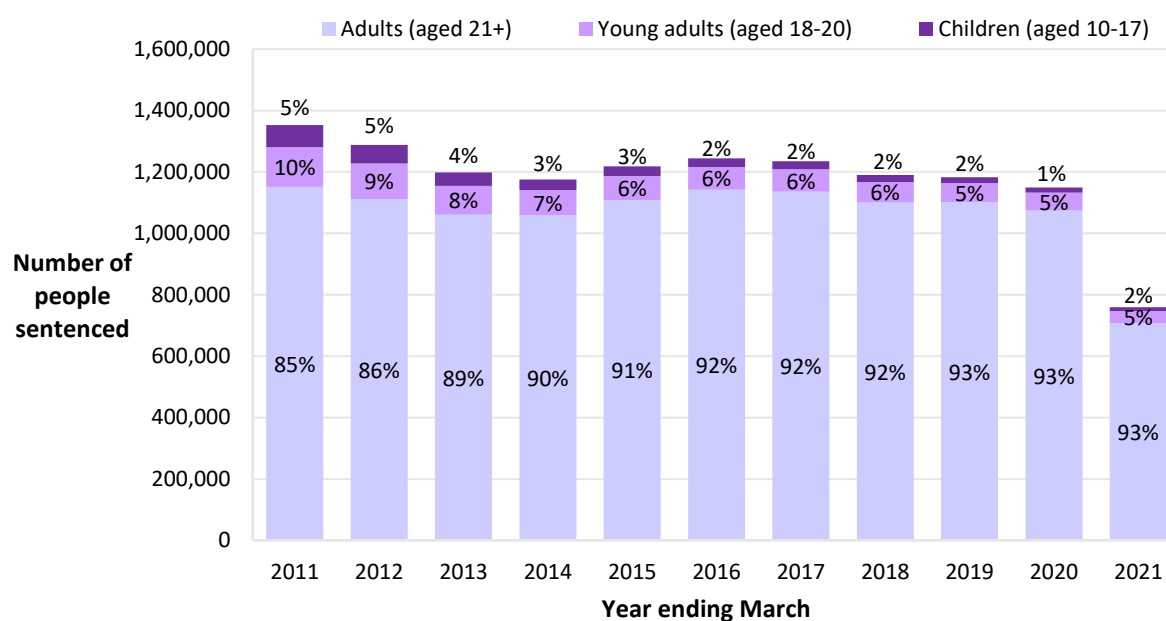
*Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.2*

In the year ending March 2021, there were around 81,100 first time entrants (FTEs) to the criminal justice system, of which 11% were children (aged 10-17). There have been year-on-year decreases for both child and adult (18+) FTEs over the last ten years, with the number of child FTEs decreasing by 81% in this time, compared to a 60% decrease for adults. This has led to a change in the composition of the overall number of FTEs, with those aged 10-17 accounting for a smaller proportion of the total in the latest year at 11%, compared to 20% the year ending March 2011.

In the latest year, adults had a larger year on year decrease than children for the first time (a reduction of 23% for adults compared with 20% for children).

### 11.3 People sentenced at court by age group

**Figure 11.3: Number and proportion of sentencing occasions of people by age group, England and Wales, years ending March 2011 to 2021**



*Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.3*

In the year ending March 2021, there were around 759,300 court sentencing occasions. Of these, just over 12,200 (2%) were for children.

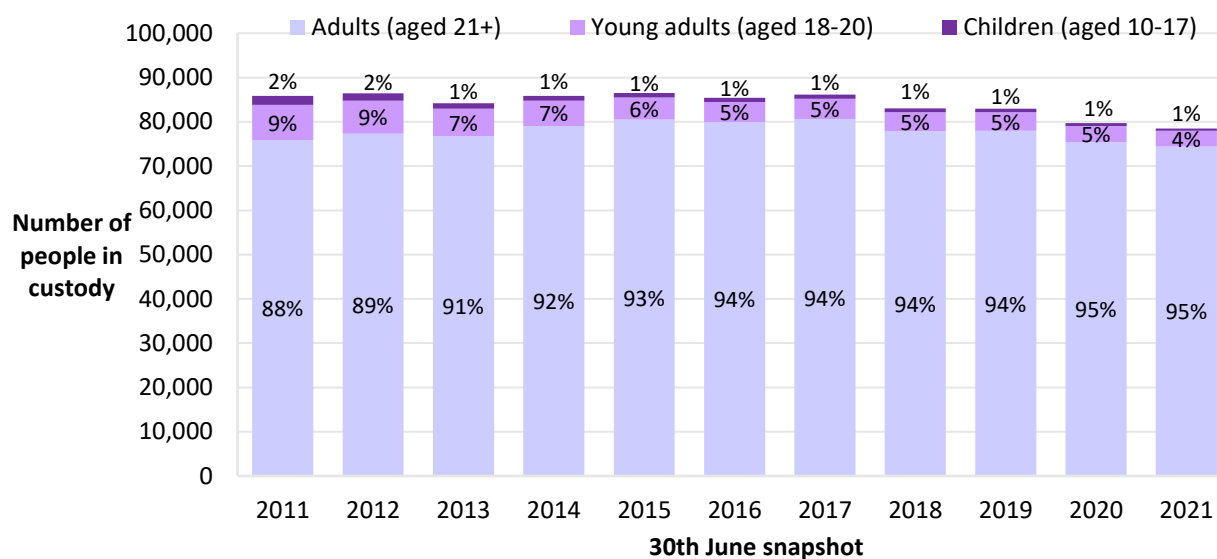
The number of sentencing occasions has reduced by 34% in the latest year, and has also reduced within all three age groups:

- The number of occasions when children (aged 10-17) were sentenced reduced by 28%;
- The number of occasions when young adults (aged 18-20) were sentenced reduced by 31%; and
- The number of occasions when adults (aged 21+) were sentenced reduced by 34%.

These figures represent larger decreases than seen at any time previously in the time series and are likely to be due to the impact of court closures and subsequent backlogs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 11.4 Custody population by age group

Figure 11.4: Number and proportion of people in custody by age group, England and Wales, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to 2021



Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.7

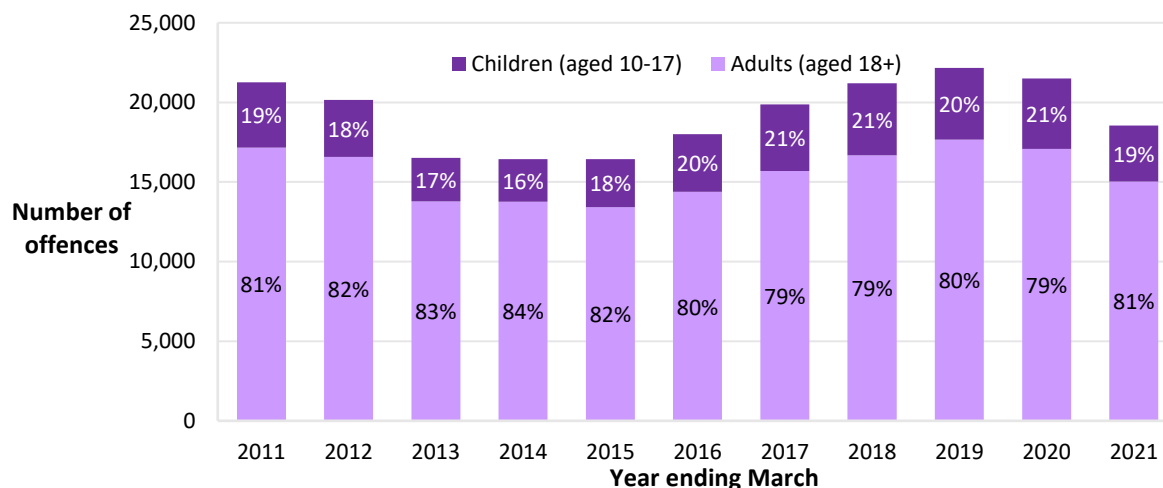
On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 there were around 78,500 people in custody. Children accounted for 1% (around 500) of the custodial population while young adults (aged 18-20) accounted for 4% (around 3,500) and adults (aged 21+) accounted for 95% (around 74,400). These proportions have remained relatively stable over the last five years<sup>24</sup>.

The custodial populations for all three age groups are at their lowest levels in the last ten years, though the custodial population for children and the custodial population saw much larger decreases in that time, falling by 75% and 56% respectively compared with a 2% decrease for the adult population.

<sup>24</sup> Figures do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## 11.5 Knife and offensive weapon offences resulting in a caution or sentence by age group

**Figure 11.5: Number and proportion of knife or offensive weapon offences resulting in a caution or sentence, by age group, England and Wales, years ending March 2011 to 2021**

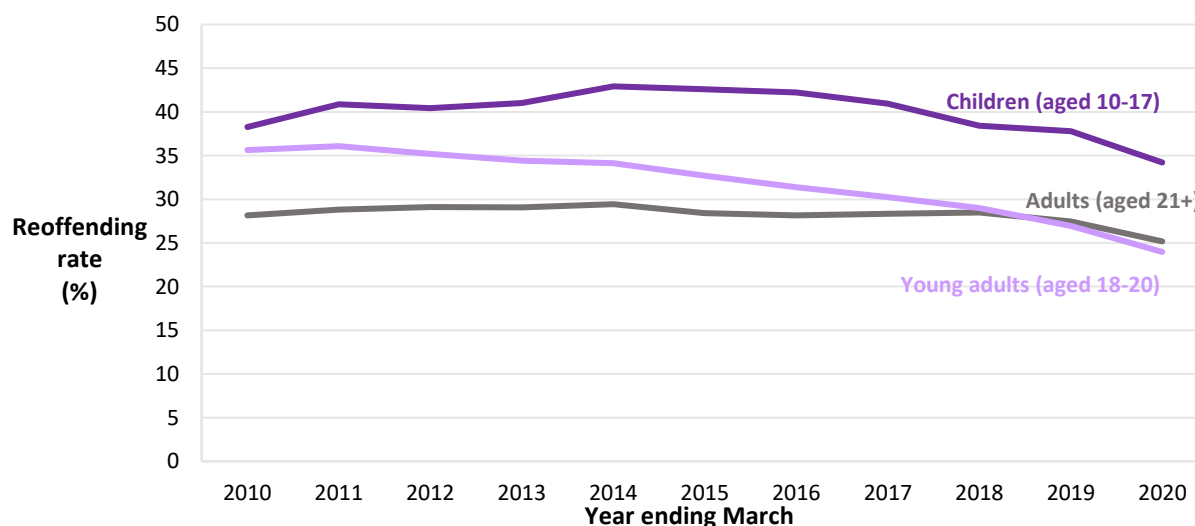


*Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.11*

In the latest year, children were involved in around 3,500 knife or offensive weapon offences, a fall of 21% from the previous year. Adults were involved in around 15,000 knife or offensive weapon offences, a decrease of 12% from the previous year.

## 11.6 Reoffending

**Figure 11.6: Annual reoffending rates by age group, years ending March 2010 to 2020**



*Supplementary Tables: Chapter 11, Table 11.6*

For the aggregated cohort in the year ending March 2020, children (aged 10-17) had the highest reoffending rate of the age groups, at 34.2% compared to 24.0% for young adults (aged 18-20) and 25.2% for adults (aged 21+).

Figure 11.6 shows that the reoffending rates of children (aged 10-17) and young adults (aged 18-20) have diverged over the last ten years. For the year ending March 2010 cohorts there was a difference of 2.6 percentage points between the reoffending rate for the two groups, compared to 10.2 percentage points for the year ending March 2020 cohorts.

The reoffending rate for young adults has followed a general downward trend over the last ten years and is now the lowest reoffending rate of the three age groups.

The reoffending rates for children (aged 10-17) and young adults (aged 18-20) have seen year on year decreases since the year ending March 2015.

The adult reoffending rate of 25.2% is the lowest seen in the ten year period for that age group. This represents a reduction of 2.3 percentage points from the year ending March 2019, which is the biggest decrease seen in the same period.

The extent of the reoffending rate decreases for all three age groups are likely in part due to the impacts of limits on court activity in the periods of restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent backlogs that meant some reoffences weren't counted. This is because they were not dealt with at court during the one-year follow-up period or the additional six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court.

## Further information

Most of the figures in this report have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and may be subject to change over time. Steps are taken to improve the completeness and accuracy of this information each year.

Other figures have been taken from official published statistics, which may be National Statistics. Further details on the sources of information are given in the [Guide to Youth Justice Statistics](#).

## Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

A [Guide to Youth Justice Statistics](#) providing further information on the data included in this publication and how these data are collected and processed. This includes a glossary of the terms used in this bulletin.

A set of additional annexes.

An Infographic, covering the main points.

A set of Supplementary Tables, covering each section of this bulletin.

A set of open explorable data.

A set of maps showing local level data.



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