



## Proven reoffending statistics quarterly bulletin, January to March 2021

Published 26 January 2023

This publication provides the proven reoffending results for the January to March 2021 offender cohort. This latest offender cohort period overlaps with the third national lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a period of on-going recovery for the courts. As a result, volatility continues to be seen in the reoffending figures, with overall proven reoffending down from the same quarter last year but up from the previous quarter.

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| <p><b>The overall proven reoffending rate was 24.3% for the January to March 2021 offender cohort.</b></p>            |  | <p>This represents a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 1.2 percentage points over the last quarter. Over time, the overall proven reoffending rate has fluctuated between 23.1% and 31.8%.</p>                                                  |
| <p><b>Adult offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 24.0%.</b></p>                                                 |  | <p>This is a decrease of 0.2 percentage points since the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 1.2 percentage points over last quarter.</p>                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 31.1%.</b></p>                                              |  | <p>The juvenile reoffending rate decreased by 3.0 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year but increased by 1.9 percentage points over last quarter.</p>                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 30.9%.</b></p>           |  | <p>This represents a 0.9 percentage point decrease since the same quarter last year but an increase of 1.3 percentage points over last quarter.</p>                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months had a proven reoffending rate of 53.9%.</b></p> |  | <p>This is a decrease of 3.6 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 57.0%, which is a decrease of 2.2 percentage points since the same quarter in the previous year.</p> |

This bulletin, associated tables and data tools present the proportion of offenders who reoffend (proven reoffending rate) and the number of proven reoffences by offender history, demographics, individual prisons, probation area, local authorities and youth offending teams. For technical details please refer to the accompanying [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).

For any feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at [ESD@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ESD@justice.gov.uk)

## Statistician's Comment

“Figures presented in this statistical release show proven reoffending statistics for the January to March 2021 offender cohort. Also included are the annual reoffending statistics for the April 2020 to March 2021 period. Proven reoffences are measured over a one-year follow-up period and a further six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court.

The overall proven reoffending rate was 24.3% for the January to March 2021 offender cohort, which represents a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 1.2 percentage points over last quarter. Across almost all offender breakdowns we see a similar trend, with reoffending rates down from the same quarter last year, but up from the previous quarter. This highlights the volatility we continue to see due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These statistics are likely to continue oscillating in the short-term before potentially more stable trends are observed as we move further away from the periods of lockdowns.

This latest offender cohort coincides with the third national lockdown, and phased re-opening, imposed due to the pandemic <sup>1</sup>, as well as a continued period of recovery for the courts. Whilst the number of cases processed between January and March 2021 returned to pre COVID-19 levels, the number of outstanding cases and the average age of outstanding cases continued to rise <sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, whilst there were no court closures during the third lockdown period, police recorded crime data have shown overall reductions in the reporting and recording of many crime types during periods of lockdown <sup>3</sup>.

The number of offenders in the January to March 2021 cohort is down on the same quarter in 2020 by 6.4% and is also down by 7.9% from the previous quarter. The number of reoffenders is also down by 7.8% and 2.9% respectively. This quarter's cohort of offenders and reoffenders is the second smallest in the timeseries, behind only the pandemic-driven historic low of April – June 2020.”

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<sup>1</sup> The first national lockdown was implemented on 23 March 2020 and transitioned to phased reopening until August 2020 (including a limited number of jury trials resuming from 18 May 2020). The second national lockdown was implemented on 5 November 2020 and returned to a three-tier restriction system from 2 December 2020. The third national lockdown was implemented on 6 January 2021 and transitioned to phased reopening until June 2021.

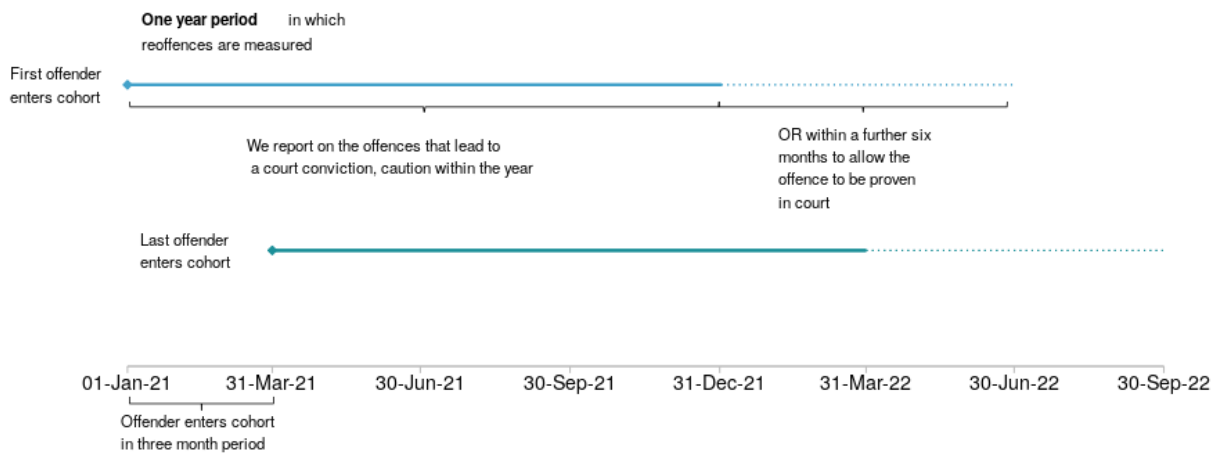
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>

## How is proven reoffending measured?

An offender enters the cohort if they were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a reprimand or warning in a three-month period: January to March 2021. It is important to note that this is not comparable to publications prior to the October 2017 proven reoffending publication, which reported on a 12-month cohort.

A proven reoffence is defined as any offence committed in a one-year follow-up period that leads to a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning in the one-year follow-up or within a further six-month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court. This is shown in the diagram below in relation to the latest offender cohort.



In addition to the January to March 2021 cohort, we also present the historical data, from April to June 2009 onward, in this publication.

Users should be cautious when making any comparison between cohorts before and after October 2015, due to a change in data source from October 2015 onwards.

In addition, users should also be aware that comparisons between 3-monthly cohorts (e.g., October to December 2018 to July to September 2018) are likely to be more volatile as cohort populations are much smaller than the previous 12-month ones.

For further details on this and how proven reoffending is measured please see the guide to proven reoffending statistics and 'How the measure of proven reoffending has changed and the effect of these changes'.

## 1. Overall – adult and juvenile offenders

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**The overall proven reoffending rate was 24.3% for the January to March 2021 offender cohort.**

This represents a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the same quarter in 2020. Over time, the overall proven reoffending rate has fluctuated between 23.1% and 31.8%.

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Proven reoffences are measured over a one-year follow-up period and a further six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court. As with previous quarters, the January to March 2021 cohort was impacted by the operational restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, the follow up period for this cohort incorporates the third national lockdown and the subsequent phased reopening of the country. Although courts remained open during this time, and the number of cases being processed returned to pre-pandemic levels, there was an increase in the number of outstanding cases in both Magistrates' and Crown Courts<sup>4</sup>.

As a result, we continue to observe marked effects on the volume of offenders in the cohort and the volume of subsequent proven reoffenders (figure 1). The size of the offender cohort has decreased by 6.4% since the same quarter in 2020; similarly the number of reoffenders has decreased by 7.8% over the same period.

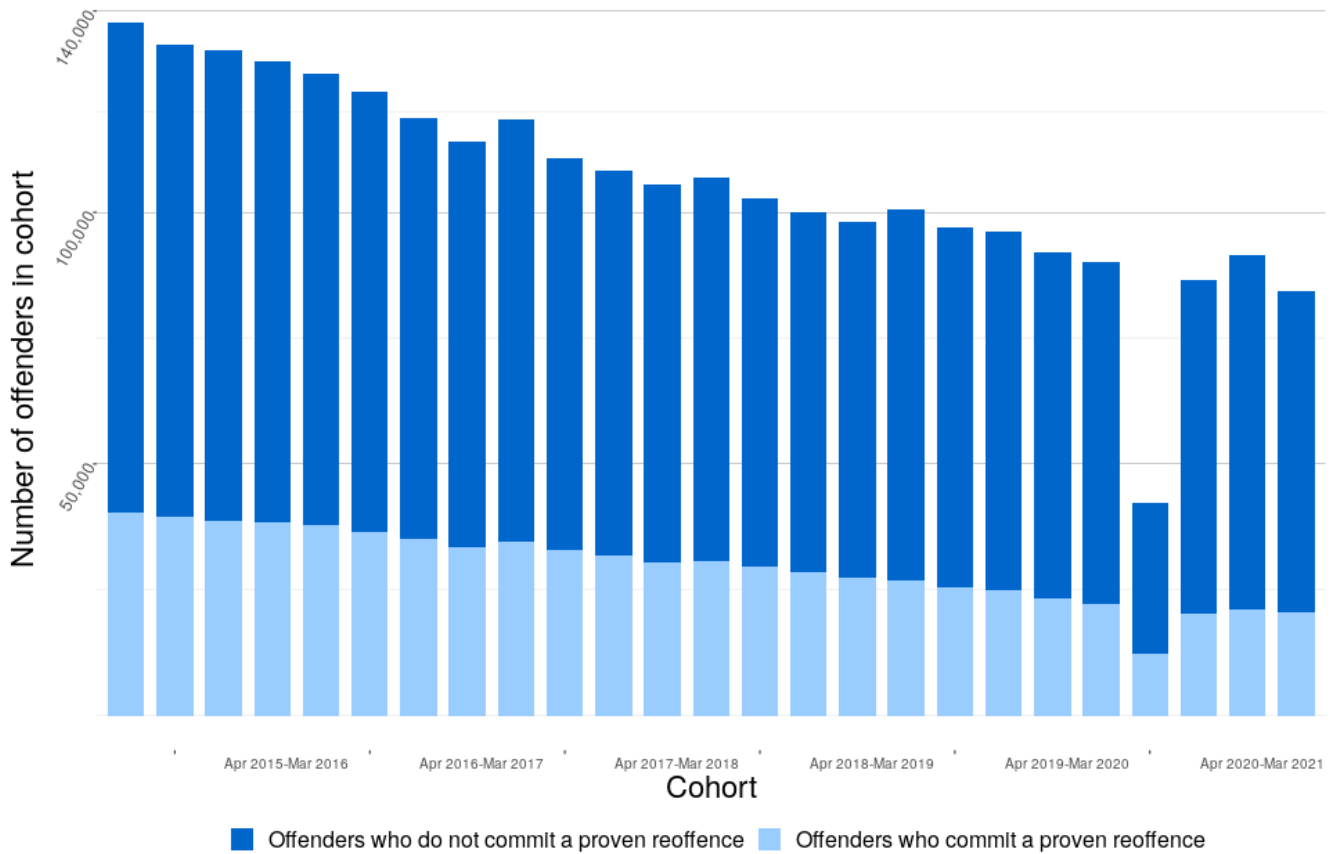
This has led to the overall proven reoffending rate for the January to March 2021 cohort standing at 24.3%, a 0.4 percentage point decrease from the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 1.2 percentage points over the last quarter. The rate is, based on close to 20,000 of a total of 84,000 offenders (made up of 95% adult and 5% of juveniles) committing almost 74,000 proven reoffences over a one-year follow-up period.

Reoffenders within this latest cohort committed an average of 3.6 reoffences each (also known as the frequency rate). More broadly, the frequency rate has been in general decline since a peak of 4.06 in 2016. The total number of reoffences has also generally declined over this period. The number of proven reoffences has decreased by 8.6% since the same quarter in 2020.

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<sup>4</sup> For details on trends in criminal court activity, please refer to (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>.)

**Figure 1: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence and the number of offenders in each cohort, April 2015 to March 2021 (Source: Table A1)**



Of this offender cohort, 85% were male and 15% were female, with the gender split remaining reasonably stable over time. Male offenders reoffended at a higher rate of 25.2% compared to female offenders who reoffended at a rate of 19.3%. Since 2009, these rates have fluctuated between 23.9% and 33.8% for males and 18.3% to 24.4% for females.

## 2. Adult offenders

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### Adult offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 24.0%.

This is a decrease of 0.2 percentage points since the same quarter in 2020. Over time, the overall proven reoffending rate has fluctuated between 22.7% and 30.6%.

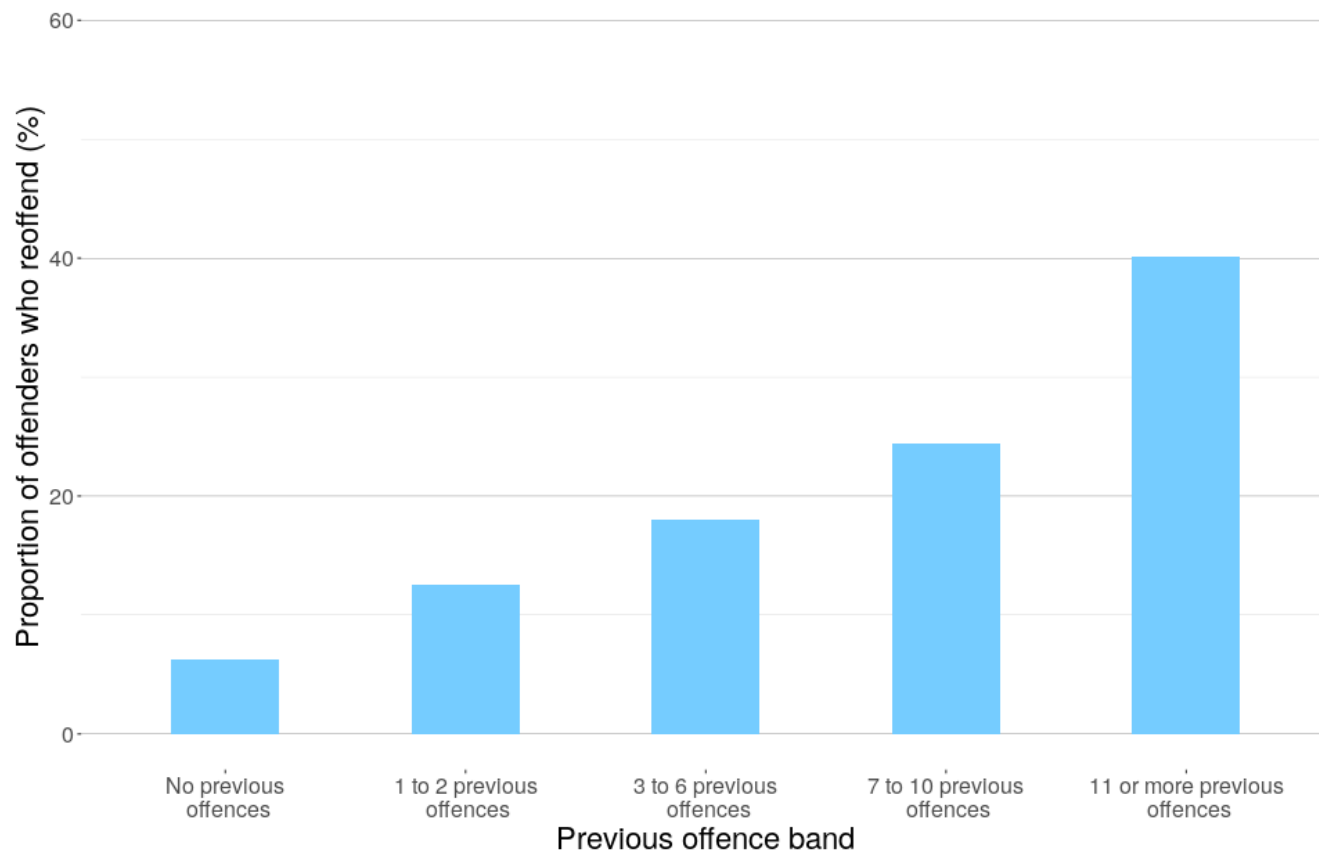
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With the exception of recent quarters affected by the pandemic, the adult reoffending rate has remained broadly flat since 2008. The latest figure for the January to March 2021 cohort was 24%, a 0.2 percentage point decrease since the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 1.2 percentage points over last quarter.

Over time, the rate has fluctuated between 22.7% and 30.6%. As with the overall proven reoffending rate, the continuing reduction in the rate for recent cohorts may predominantly be due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined earlier.

For the latest quarterly cohort, around 69,000 proven reoffences were committed over the one-year follow-up period by around 19,000 adults. Those that reoffended committed on average 3.59 reoffences; this represents a 1.2% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2020 but an increase of 2.2% over the last quarter.

**Figure 2: Proportion of adult offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by number of previous offences, January to March 2021 (Source: Table A5a)**



Offenders with a larger number of previous offences have a higher rate of proven reoffending than those with fewer previous offences. In the January to March 2021 cohort, the proven reoffending rates for adults ranged from 6.3% for offenders with no previous offences to 40.1% for offenders with 11 or more previous offences (figure 2).

Adult offenders with 11 or more previous offences made up 39% of all adult offenders in the cohort, represented 66% of all adult reoffenders and committed 76% of all adult proven reoffences.

### 3. Juvenile offenders<sup>5</sup>

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#### **Juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 31.1%.**

The juvenile reoffending rate decreased by 3.0 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. However, for context, the number of offenders in the cohort has fallen by 86% since the same financial quarter in 2009.

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The juvenile reoffending rate was 31.1%, a 3.0 percentage point decrease from the same quarter in the previous year.

Over 1,000 of approximately 4,000 juvenile offenders in the January to March 2021 cohort, committed a reoffence within a one-year follow-up period (equivalent to around 5,000 proven reoffences). It is important to note that the number of offenders in the cohort has fallen by 86% since the same quarter in 2009. The rate of reoffending has fluctuated between 29.2% and 43.6% over the timeseries.

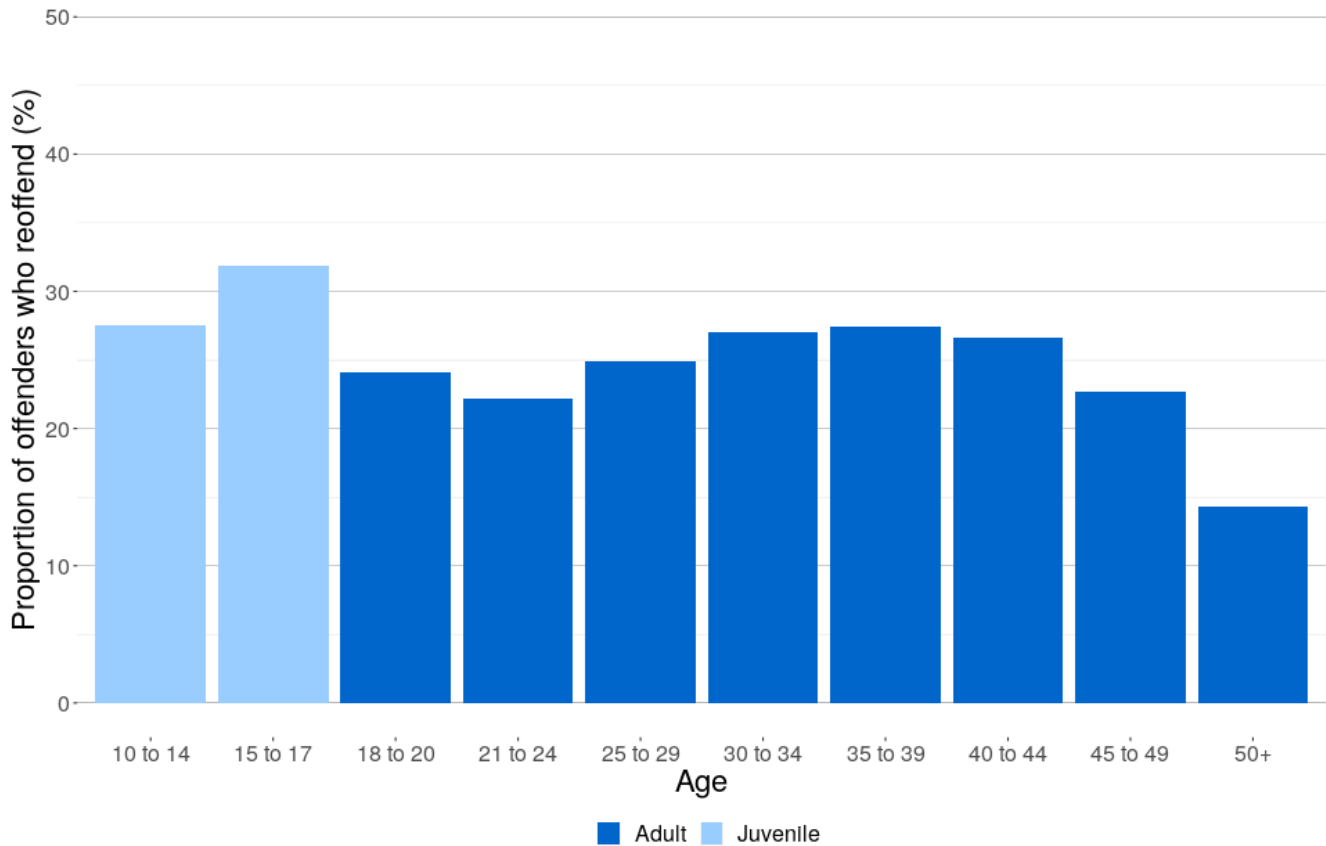
Those that reoffended committed on average 3.76 reoffences each. As with the adult cohort, juvenile offenders with 11 or more previous offences had a higher reoffending rate than those with no previous offences, 60.3% and 16.1% respectively.

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<sup>5</sup> Juveniles are defined as those aged 10 to 17 years old.



**Figure 3: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by age, January to March 2021 (Source: Table A3)**



As with previous quarters, 15 to 17-year-old offenders have the highest reoffending rate, closely followed by the 10 to 14-year-old offenders, with reoffending rates of 31.9% and 27.5% respectively (figure 3). The proven reoffending rate for juveniles is higher than adults and the rate starts to fall with increasing age after the 35 to 39-year-old group.

## 4. Adult reoffending by disposal<sup>6</sup>

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**Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 30.9%.**

This represents a 0.9 percentage point decrease since the same quarter last year.

**Adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months had a proven reoffending rate of 53.9%.**

This is a decrease of 3.6 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 57.0%, which is also a decrease of 2.2 percentage points since the same quarter in 2020.

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Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 30.9%, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points compared to the same quarter in 2020 and a decrease of 9 percentage points since the same quarter in 2011.

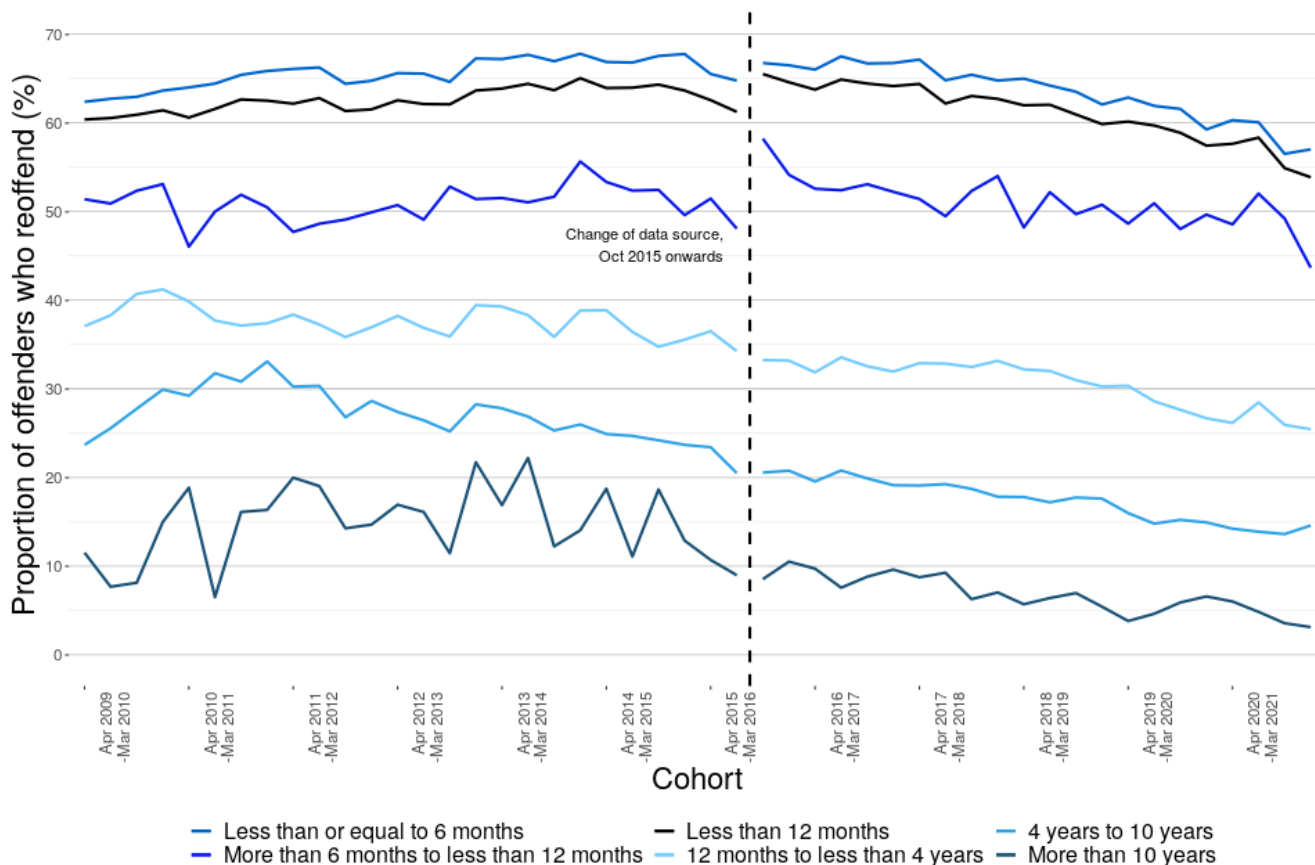
The proven reoffending rate for adult offenders starting a court order<sup>7</sup> specifically was 28.8%, a 0.7 percentage point increase when compared to the same quarter in 2020 and a 7.6 percentage point decrease when compared to the same financial quarter in 2011. When adjusted for offender mix (i.e., when controlling for offender characteristics), the increase observed in the corresponding financial quarter in 2011 is smaller at 1.4 percentage points.

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<sup>6</sup> For proven reoffending statistics, a disposal is defined as a caution, court order, custody, or other disposal resulting from a conviction at court, such as a fine or discharge. A different methodology is used for proven reoffending statistics by disposal type. The first proven offence within each disposal is treated as the start point for measuring proven reoffending. Therefore, some offenders will appear in more than one disposal category.

<sup>7</sup> Community order or suspended sentence order.

**Figure 4: Proportion of adult offenders released from custody who commit a proven reoffence, by custodial sentence length, April 2009 to March 2021 (Source: Table C2a)**



The proven reoffending rate for adult offenders released from custody was 36.7%, a 3.5 percentage point decrease compared to the same quarter the previous year. However, adults who served sentences of 12 months or more reoffended at a substantially lower rate, at 21.4%, compared to those who served a sentence of less than 12 months, at a rate of 53.9%. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 57.0%, a decrease of 2.2 percentage points since the same quarter in the previous year (figure 4).

Users should exercise caution when comparing the effectiveness of different sentences because the presented rates do not control for differences in offender characteristics receiving those sentences - for further information please consult recent research on the [impact of short custodial sentences, community orders and suspended sentence orders on reoffending](#) as well as the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Proven reoffending rates by disposal should not be compared to assess the effectiveness of sentences, as there is no control for known differences in offender characteristics and the type of sentence given. For further information see [Annex D of the October 2016 publication](#) (page 41) and the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).

## 5. Juvenile reoffending by disposal<sup>9</sup>

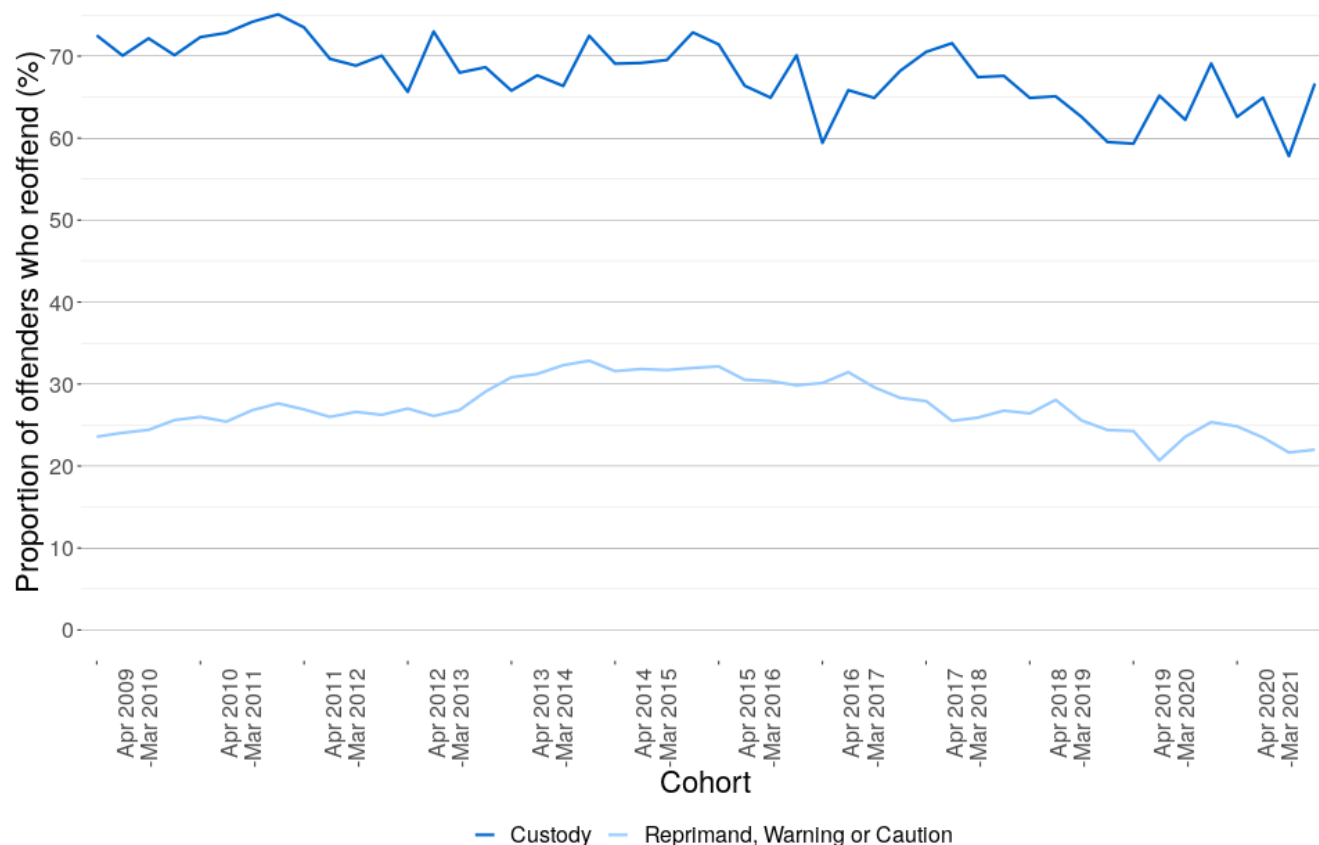
**Juvenile offenders given youth cautions had a proven reoffending rate of 22.0%.**

This represents a decrease of 3.4 percentage points since the same quarter in 2020.

The reoffending rate for juvenile offenders given youth cautions has decreased by 3.4 percentage points since the same quarter last year.

Reprimands and warnings for youths were abolished under the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 with effect from 8 April 2013 and replaced with youth cautions. Youth cautions are a formal out-of-court disposal that can be used as an alternative to prosecution for juvenile offenders in certain circumstances. A youth caution may be given for any offence where the young offender admits an offence and there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute.

**Figure 5: Proportion of juvenile offenders released from custody or given a reprimand, warning or caution who commit a proven reoffence, April 2009 to March 2021 (Source: Table C1b)**



<sup>9</sup> The juvenile proven reoffending data by disposal uses the same methodology as that adopted for adult reoffending by disposal (see section 5 for more details).

For the January to March 2021 cohort, 57 juvenile offenders were released from custody and 38 (66.7%) were proven to have committed a reoffence within a year. The rate has decreased by 2.4 percentage points since the same quarter in 2020 (figure 5). There is, however, likely to be more variation from one quarter to another due to the small size of the cohort.

## 6. Index offences<sup>10</sup>

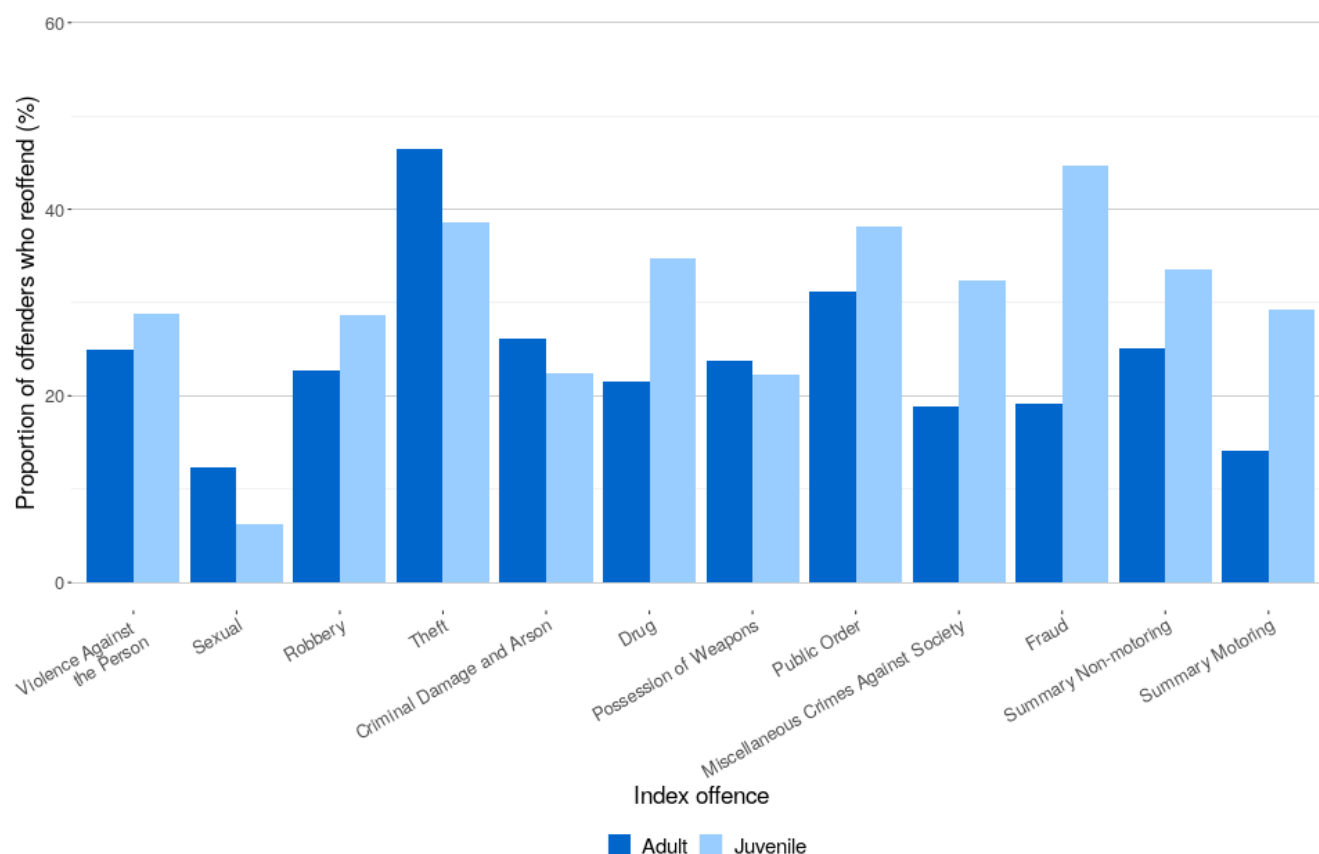
For the January to March 2021 adult cohort, the index offence category associated with the highest reoffending rate was theft (46.5%)<sup>11</sup>.

This is up from 46.0% in the same quarter in 2020.

The highest reoffending rate of 46.5% amongst adult offenders was those with an index offence of theft (figure 6), followed by those with a public order index offence (31.2%).

Due to a slight database inconsistency, the “other” offence category has the largest cohort size and highest rate of reoffending in the index offence table. To avoid misrepresentation, and since this category will be a mix of offence types, this category has been removed from subsequent analysis and charts.

**Figure 6: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by index offence (except the ‘other’ offence category), January to March 2021 (Source: Table A4a/b)**



<sup>10</sup> An index offence refers to the offence that leads to an offender being included in the offender cohort.

<sup>11</sup> For details on trends in criminal court activity, please refer to (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>.)

The proportion of reoffences committed depending on index offence has remained broadly stable over time. In the adult cohort, the lowest rate of reoffending was observed among those with a sexual offence as their index offence, with a rate of 12.4%. The Public Order index offence category saw the largest percentage point decrease in reoffending rate since last quarter, a 2.5 percentage point difference. Those with an index offence of Theft saw an increase of 3.0 percentage points over this period.

In the juvenile cohort, those with an index offence of fraud had the highest proven reoffending rate at 44.6% (figure 6), followed by those with an index offence of theft at 38.6%. Those with the lowest rate, were offenders who had committed a sexual index offence. Their reoffending rate was 6.3%. Those who committed criminal damage and arson index offence saw the largest percentage point decrease in reoffending rate since last quarter a 15.9 percentage point difference. Fraud index offences represented the biggest percentage point increase over the same period (a 12.2 percentage point difference).

## 7. Proven Reoffences

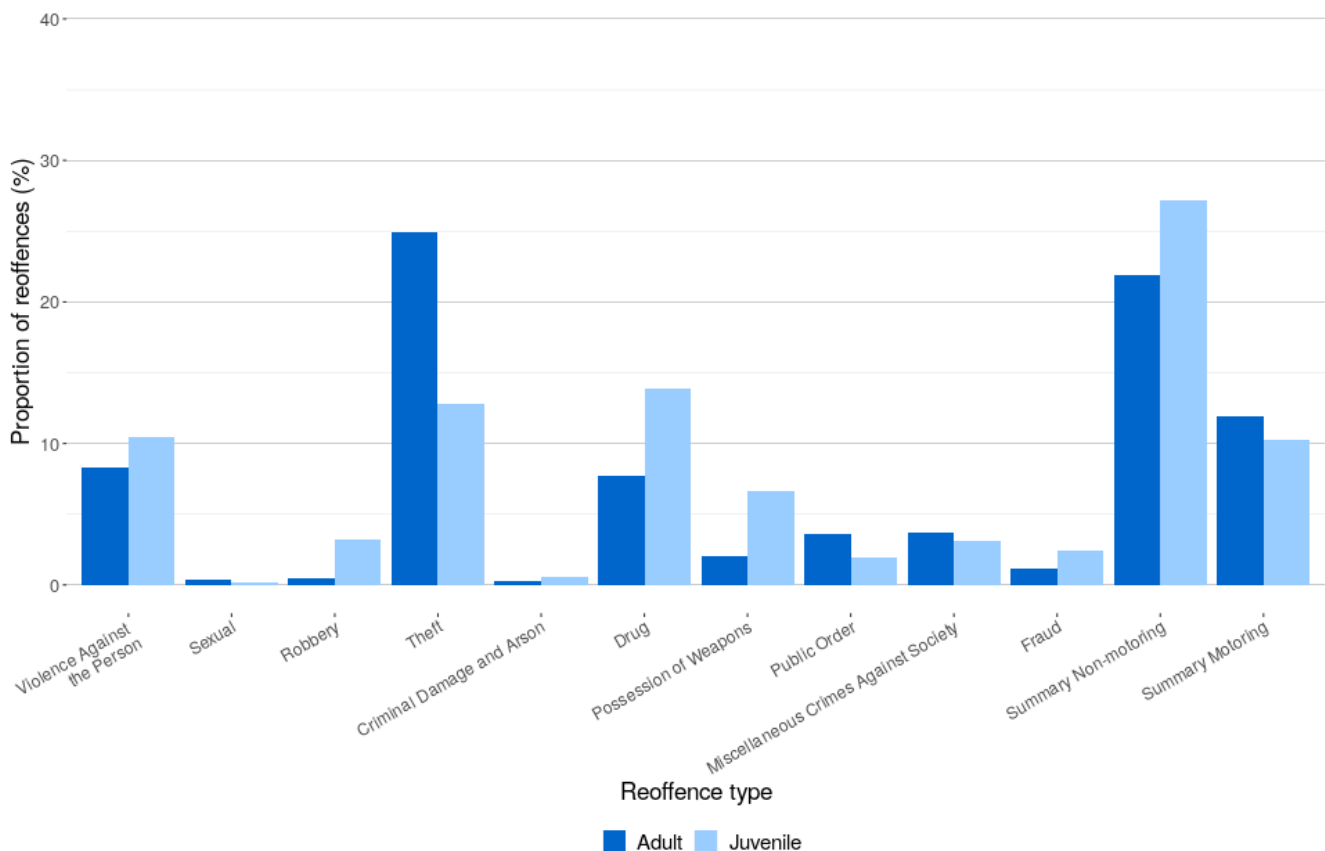
For the January to March 2021 adult cohort, 24.9% of proven reoffences were Theft, making up the highest proportion of reoffences.

This represents a decrease of 3.5 percentage points compared to the same period in 2020.

For the adult offender cohort, highest proportion of proven reoffences were for Theft (24.9%), followed by Summary Non-motoring offences (21.9% of reoffences) (figure 7). Despite the general decrease in the number of proven reoffences committed by adult offenders, in recent cohorts, the share of each reoffence category has remained broadly stable over time.

As with reoffending by index offence (section 6), the proven reoffence category of “other” is removed from subsequent analysis and charts.

**Figure 7: Proportion of proven reoffences for adult and juveniles committed in the one-year follow-up period, by reoffence type, January to March 2021 (Source: Table B3)**



For the juvenile offender cohort, Summary Non-motoring make up the largest proportion of reoffences (27.2%), followed by Drug (13.8%) and Theft offences (12.8%). In terms of the split by reoffence category, there has been some variation over time with violence against the person having an increasingly larger proportion of total juvenile reoffences within more recent cohorts; this currently stands at 10.4% of total proven reoffences.



For adult and juvenile offender cohorts combined, 32% of all reoffences took place within three months after release from custody or after receiving a non-custodial conviction at court, a reprimand or a warning. This percentage increases to 58.3% within sixth months after release and steadily increasing at an average rate of 7% per month of reoffence beyond that point.

## Further information

### Accompanying files

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

- A set of [overview tables](#), covering each section of this bulletin.
- Four [data tools](#) providing proven reoffending data for England and Wales, split by various categories (covering April 2010 - March 2021).
- A [technical guide](#) to proven reoffending statistics providing information on how proven reoffending is measured and the data sources used.
- A data quality statement which outlines our policies for producing quality statistical outputs and the information provided to maintain our users' understanding and trust.

### Revision

Please note that following further quality assurance, revisions have been made to the disposal type figures for the October - December 2020 cohort. Updated figures can be viewed in the accompanying [tables and data tools](#).

### National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

### Future publications

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

### Contact

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Other enquiries and feedback on these statistics should be directed to the Data and Evidence as a Service division of the Ministry of Justice:

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**Next update: 27 April 2023**

**URL:** [www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics)

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