



Home Office

The Start of a Criminal Career: Does the Type of Debut Offence Predict Future Offending? Research Report 77

Natalie Owen & Christine Cooper

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Keywords

Offending, chronic offenders, first time entrant, criminal career, robbery, burglary, vehicle crime

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they represent Government policy).

Executive Summary

Context

The primary aim of this study was to examine the relationship between an offender's debut offence and their future offending. A debut offence was defined as the offence for which an offender received their first caution or conviction (first proven offence). The study specifically looked at whether the type of debut offence committed predicted future chronic or serious offending careers, and whether the type of debut offence and subsequent re-offending had changed over time. This report builds on research from Sweden (Svensson, 2002) that showed that offenders who committed robbery or vehicle theft as their debut offence were at the greatest risk of becoming chronic offenders eight years later.

Identifying and targeting offenders who are most likely to become one of the small group of chronic offenders responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime, at an early stage of their criminal career, is a promising approach to crime prevention.

Methodology

Data for this analysis were obtained from the Police National Computer (PNC).¹ The PNC contains information on all recordable proven offences that have taken place in England and Wales. There are limitations to using data on proven offending as they only capture that part of a person's criminal career where they have been formally sanctioned and so represent an undercount of the true levels of offending. However, the PNC does provide a large volume of data on all recordable proven offences.

We obtained information on all first time entrants to the criminal justice system for: 2001, 2005 and 2009. Data from 2001 allowed a maximum follow-up period of nine years, to year end 2010, while the 2005 cohort enabled us to examine the profile of chronic offenders and, alongside the 2009 cohort, trends in the proportion and volume of different debut offence types.

There were three primary questions of interest.

- Does the type of debut offence predict chronic re-offending over time?
- Does the type of debut offence predict serious re-offending over time?
- Has the volume and type of debut offences changed over time?

Results

- There were 218,537 individuals on the PNC who had committed their first proven offence in 2001. Around three-quarters (74%) of the cohort were male and over one-third (37%) were aged 10 to 17 years at the time of their first offence.
- About one-third (31%) of these debut offences were acquisitive, one-fifth (19%) were violence and one-tenth were categorised as serious crimes.

¹ See methodology section in the main report for details.

- Just under one-half (47%) of the 2001 cohort committed a further proven offence during the 9-year follow-up period. However, 5 per cent of the cohort became chronic offenders (committing 15 or more offences) over the follow-up period and were responsible for nearly one-half of all proven re-offences (49%) committed by the cohort.
- Those offenders who had committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence were almost three times more likely to be chronic offenders compared with the cohort overall. These offenders were predominantly male and most likely to have received their first caution/conviction aged 10 to 17 years.
- The type of debut offence committed was a significant predictor of chronic offending status, taking into consideration gender and age at debut offence. For example, 1 in 5 young men aged 10 to 17 years at their first caution/conviction for robbery went on to be a chronic offender; 3 in 5 re-offended (but committed fewer than 15 re-offences) while only 1 in 5 did not commit a further proven offence. The results for burglary and vehicle theft were similar.
- Offenders who committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence were also most likely to commit a further serious offence (for example, robbery or a serious violence or sexual offence, see Annex A) within 9 years compared with other offence types; 44 per cent of men who committed robbery as their debut offence when aged 10 to 17 years committed a serious re-offence.
- Between 2001 and 2009 the number of offenders first cautioned/convicted fell by nearly one-fifth. This reduction was principally a result of a marked drop in the number of 10 to 17 year old first-time offenders. The numbers first sanctioned for burglary or vehicle theft fell by around one-half over this period. However, the number of offenders who committed robbery as their debut offence rose by 11 per cent.
- The number of chronic offenders at five years post-debut offence decreased between the 2001 and 2005 cohorts. There was an 11 per cent reduction in the number of re-offences committed by the chronic offender groups. This was in line with the fall in the size of the cohort; the mean number of offences committed by chronic offenders remained the same over time.

Conclusions

The findings from this analysis add to the debate about why crime has been falling and suggest approaches to crime prevention. This study adds to the evidence base, showing that offenders who committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence in 2001 were most likely to become chronic offenders. This small group of chronic offenders (5% of the cohort) were responsible for almost one-half of all the further proven offences committed by this cohort. This paper has extended Svensson's (*ibid.*) earlier analysis by showing that the type of debut offence was an independent predictor of chronic offending, taking into account gender and age of first proven offence.

The findings from the report have a number of implications for policy makers. The authors, using the assumption that first-time offenders committing robbery, burglary or vehicle crime from later cohorts will re-offend at the same rate as the earlier cohort, speculated that the decreasing number of first-time offenders, and changes in the types of debut offences committed, may mean that there will be fewer chronic offenders and therefore fewer offences committed in the future. This gives support to the proposition that preventing some kinds of offending may be particularly promising as a way of reducing overall levels of crime. However, the analysis does not explain why offenders of these three acquisitive crimes are more likely to become chronic offenders, or whether, with fewer people committing burglary and vehicle crime as a debut offence, other crime types will take their place as predictors of chronic offending. We should bear in mind that there are also cultural, social and economic factors that will influence the level of crime in society.

The findings from this study are of particular importance to the Government, voluntary and community organisations, statutory agencies and Police and Crime Commissioners who design and commission interventions targeted at those offenders who do most harm to society. They suggest that providing programmes to prevent and reduce robbery offences along with programmes to turn around the lives of young male offenders committing key debut offences will be important in reducing crime in the future.

Introduction

This report examined whether the type of offence for which a person was first cautioned or convicted by the criminal justice system (their debut offence) was predictive of their future offending career, in particular whether they went on to commit a high number of further offences. Identifying those who are most likely to become chronic offenders at an early stage of their criminal career is crucial, both for the individual and society as a whole; it can support an approach to crime reduction based on targeting offenders who are most likely to go on to commit numerous crimes during their criminal career. Research using data on both proven and self-reported offending has shown that the majority of crimes are committed by a small number of persistent, chronic offenders (Prime et al., 2001; Budd et al., 2005).

Previous research has shown the importance of looking at the criminal careers of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system, in particular those who become one of the small group of prolific offenders. First-time entrants to the criminal justice system account for around one-third of all offenders brought to justice every year (Ministry of Justice, 2012a) so it is important to have a good grasp of their subsequent offending behaviour.

There is also considerable evidence that those who commit crime at an early age are more likely to become persistent offenders (Prime et al., 2001). Farrington et al.'s (2006) longitudinal cohort study found that men who were convicted at an early age had the most convictions and sustained the longest criminal careers. However, less is known about which crime types are committed as debut offences and the relationship between these offences and future offending. Research in Sweden (Svensson, 2002) has shown that offenders who committed robbery or vehicle theft as their proven debut offence were at the greatest risk of becoming chronic offenders eight years later. However, until now there has been little information about debut offences in the UK context.

This report analyses data from three cohorts of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system in order to answer the following questions.

- What are the most common types of debut offences?
- Can the type of debut offence predict those offenders who go on to commit a large volume of offences in the future?
- Is the debut offence type related to the level of re-offending?
- Can the type of debut offence predict those offenders who go on to commit serious re-offences?
- Has the volume of certain debut offence types changed over the last decade?

Methodology

Data for this analysis were obtained from the Police National Computer (PNC). The PNC contains details of all recordable proven offences that have taken place in England and Wales,² together with information on the perpetrators. We collected information on three cohorts of offenders, who were first cautioned or convicted³ in each of the following years: 2001, 2005 and 2009. This allowed a follow-up period of nine years, to the end of 2010 for the 2001 cohort. This was the last complete year of data at the inception of the project (year end 2011); we allowed up to a year to ensure that all cases had gone through the courts and a judgement had been reached and entered onto the system. The 2005 cohort enabled us to examine the profiles of chronic offenders and, alongside the 2009 cohort, trends in the proportion and volume of different debut offence types.

A debut offence was defined as the offence for which an offender received their first caution or conviction (first proven offence). Following an initial analysis of the data a decision was made to exclude:

- all non-UK nationals and those with unknown nationality from the samples⁴ (between one-quarter and one-third of each cohort) as it was not possible to ascertain whether the first proven offence in England and Wales was the offender's first ever proven offence;
- all offenders for whom the debut offence type was unknown (0.1%);
- all offenders where the offence had taken place outside England and Wales (0.8%);
- all breach offences (0.5%);⁵ and
- those aged under 10 years (the age of criminal responsibility) and over 95 years, due to doubts over the reliability of their age data on the PNC.⁶

The PNC contains limited socio-demographic information on offenders, but extensive data on all proven offences. We used a limited range of data for this analysis in order to focus on the research questions. The data extracts employed in this analysis included the following variables:

- age of offender at their first proven offence;
- gender;
- type of police or court disposal for the debut offence;
- number of re-offences committed during the follow-up period; and
- number of serious re-offences committed during the follow-up period.

The following definitions and categorisation were applied to the data.

2 Data are included on all recordable proven offences from 2000 onwards and include all prior offences for those offenders who have a criminal history prior to 2000.

3 Those receiving a fixed penalty notice were excluded because no guilt had been accepted.

4 2001: 23 per cent; 2005: 31 per cent; and 2009: 36 per cent.

5 According to the Ministry of Justice (2012b): "... breaches of court orders that are a criminal offence in their own right (e.g. breach of an anti-social behaviour order) have been included in the published tables since 2009. Prior to 2009 these were excluded from the count of court proceedings because of recording issues and are not included in the published tables."

6 Due to the exclusions noted above the findings in this report cannot be compared with published Ministry of Justice statistics.

- If there was more than one debut offence recorded on the PNC the principal offence was recorded as the debut offence. The principal offence is defined as the offence for which the offender receives the heaviest sentence or the offence that carries the more severe statutory maximum penalty.
- Debut offence types were categorised into 16 categories. A breakdown of offence types and some examples of the offences included in these categories can be found in Annex A.
- Chronic offending was defined as having committed 15 or more re-offences over the follow-up period, in line with the definition used by the Ministry of Justice in the re-offending statistics (Ministry of Justice, 2012a). In addition, we plotted the cumulative percentages of all the re-offences committed by the 2001 cohort using a Lorenz curve, to illustrate the disproportional contribution of prolific repeat offenders to overall re-offending. The analysis showed that ten per cent of re-offenders (5% of all offenders) were responsible for around one-half of all re-offences committed by the cohort, see Annex B for a full description and a graph showing the Lorenz curve.

We also created a category of serious offences based on a number of sources on the seriousness of crimes:

- the number of prison days or their equivalents for non custodial sentences given at court for all Home Office offence codes;
- all offences in the Ministry of Justice list of serious offences against the person – used in the analysis of re-offending;
- all offences named in the Serious Crime Act 2007;
- all offences categorised as serious sexual offences; and
- all offences for which the Sentencing Council’s guidelines state a maximum sentence of seven years or more.

A count of serious re-offences was generated for each offender, see Annex A for a selection of serious offence types which include: murder; blackmail; burglary in a dwelling with violence; and the threat of violence and rape.

Considerations

The PNC is a valuable data source. It provides a large volume of data on all proven offences. This analysis focused on specific questions about re-offending, therefore we only analysed a proportion of the available data on the offending careers from the PNC. For example, we did not request details of the type of crimes committed as re-offences, just the number of re-offences and whether they were serious. This allowed us to concentrate our analysis on chronic and serious offending outcomes without becoming overwhelmed by the sheer weight of data.

The PNC has very limited data on the socio-demographics of offenders. Information on other aspects of offenders' lives (such as educational achievement, exclusion from school, substance misuse or offending within families or friendship groups) known to be associated with offending and undoubtedly influential in an offender's criminal career, was not available from this source. More generally, there are limitations to using data on proven offending, as they only capture the part of a person's criminal career where they have been dealt with by the criminal justice system and as such are likely to be an undercount of their true level of offending.

There is a disparity in the proportion of different crimes detected by the police. This has an impact on the likelihood of being arrested and charged for different offence types and on the number of proven re-offences. The sanction detection rate for all crimes was 28 per cent in 2009/10, but varied considerably according to offence type: violence against the person, 40 per cent; robbery, 20 per cent; burglary, 13 per cent; and drug offences, 94 per cent. The differential detection rates also have an effect on the number of re-offences, which are likely to be higher for those who commit offences where there is a higher detection rate. There may also be a difference in how first-time offences are treated by the police. For example, a first-time low-level offence, even if it comes to the attention of the police, may result in no further action or a restorative justice sanction that is not recorded on the PNC. For these reasons the first offence recorded on the PNC is often not the first crime that the person has committed, although it may be the same offence type. However, there is an argument that the first time an individual is officially labelled and treated as an offender is an important step in their offending career (Soothill et al., 2004) and, as such, worthy of close attention.

Results

Who were the first-time offenders?

We focussed most of the analysis on the 2001 cohort as we were interested in re-offending over the longest possible time period. The 2001 cohort comprised 218,537 individuals who received their first caution/conviction that year, of whom three-quarters were male. The age at which offenders committed their first proven offence ranged from 10 to 92 years, with an average age of 24 years (standard deviation = 12). The most common age was 15 years.

Table 1: Basic demographics (2001 cohort)

Percentages	
Gender	All (%)
Males	74
Females	26
Unknown	0.1
Age group	
10–17 years	37
18–24 years	30
25+ years	33

Base: n=218,453 (base different to total cohort due to missing data on age and gender).

What debut offences were committed in 2001?

First-time offenders in the 2001 cohort committed a wide range of offences. Nearly one-third (31%) were acquisitive, see Table 2. Shoplifting was the most common acquisitive offence.

Table 2: Proportion of debut offence type (2001 cohort)

Percentages	
Debut offence type	All (%)
Shoplifting	13
Theft (other)	8
Vehicle theft	4
Fraud & forgery	4
Burglary	3
Acquisitive offences (total)	30
Violence offences	18
Serious violence offences	1
Robbery	0.5

Violence to the person (total)	19
Motoring offences	15
Criminal damage	12
Drugs offences	10
Public order offences	8
Weapons offences	2
Obstructing justice	1
Sexual offences	1
Other offences	0.5
Other non-acquisitive offences (total)	51

Base: n=218,537.

Nearly one-fifth of all debut offences were violent. Many of these were common assault, which is recorded as a summary offence, indicating a relatively low-level of harm caused. Motoring offences accounted for 15 per cent of debut offences. Less than one per cent of the cohort had committed serious violence or robbery as their debut offence. However, one in ten offenders had committed a serious debut offence as defined in this study, see Tables B1 and B2 in Annex B for a breakdown of debut offences by age and gender.

What was the level of re-offending over nine years in the 2001 cohort?

The great majority (84%) of the 2001 cohort had not re-offended 1 year after their first formal sanction. However, after 9 years follow-up, nearly one-half (47%) had been re-convicted, although about one-half of these committed only one or two further offences. A minority (5%) of the cohort committed **15 or more re-offences** and were **categorised as chronic offenders**, see Table 3. Over three-quarters of chronic offenders were aged 10 to 17 years when they committed their first proven offence (77%) and the majority were male (87%).

Table 3: Grouped number of re-offences nine years after debut offence (2001 cohort)

Percentages	
Re-offending group	All (%)
No re-offences	53
1–2 re-offences	22
3–6 re-offences	13
7–10 re-offences	5
11–14 re-offences	2
15+ re-offences (chronic offenders)	5

Base: n=218,537.

Chronic offenders were responsible for 49 per cent of all re-offending for the cohort as a whole. Between 2001, when they received their first caution/conviction, and the end of 2010 this group had committed 318,346 proven offences. On average they committed 27 re-offences each within 9 years. This compares with an average of four re-offences for all other members of the cohort who re-offended within this time frame.

Re-offending rates were higher for those who were first sanctioned at a young age. **Offenders aged 10 to 17 years at their first offence were most likely to become chronic offenders**, nearly 4 times more likely than those aged 18 to 24 years and 11 times more likely than adults aged over 25 years when committing their debut offence.

Re-offending rates for women were around one-half those for men (26% and 51% respectively).

Table 4: Profile of chronic offenders (2001 cohort)

	Chronic offenders	Whole cohort
% of the cohort	5	100
% male	87	74
% aged 10–17 years	77	37
% aged 18–24 years	18	30
% aged 25+ years	5	33
Range number of re-offences	15–152	-
Mean number of re-offences (standard deviation)	27 (13)	-
Sum of re-offences	307,090	-
Number of offenders	11,256	218,537

Base: n=218,537.

Did certain debut offences predict chronic re-offending?

First-time offenders who committed robbery, vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence were nearly three times more likely to become chronic offenders within nine years compared with the cohort overall. In all, 14 per cent of offenders who committed these 3 crimes as a first offence became chronic offenders, compared with 5 per cent of the cohort overall. These offenders accounted for 7 per cent of the cohort overall but 19 per cent of all re-offending. Table 5 shows the proportion of offenders who committed each offence type who were categorised as chronic offenders.

Table 5: Proportion of offenders who became chronic offenders, by debut offence type (2001 cohort)

Percentage	
Debut offence type	Chronic offenders (%)
Robbery	14
Burglary	14
Vehicle theft	14
Criminal damage	8
Shoplifting	7
Theft (other)	7
Weapons offences	6
Violence offences	4
Obstructing justice	4
Drugs offences	3

Sexual offences	3
Serious violence offences	3
Public order offences	3
Fraud & forgery	2
Motoring offences	1
Other offences	2
All offence types	5

Base: n=218,537.

We have seen that those who committed their debut offence at a young age were more likely to become chronic offenders. **When we bring together age and crime type, 10 to 17 year olds who had committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence were much more likely to become chronic offenders compared with those who committed their debut offence later in life**, see Table 6.

Those aged 18 years or more who had committed burglary as their debut offence were most likely to be classified as chronic offenders compared with those in the same age group who had committed other debut offences. For example, offenders who were aged 18 to 24 years when they received their first caution/conviction for burglary were more than three times as likely to be a chronic offender compared with this age group as a whole; those aged 25 years or more and committed burglary were 4 times more likely to be a chronic offender.

Table 6: Proportion of offenders who became chronic offenders, by debut offence type, age and gender (2001 cohort)

Percentages	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Robbery	17	5	3	17	2
Vehicle theft	17	6	2	15	5
Burglary	15	10	4	14	9
Criminal damage	12	2	1	9	4
Obstructing justice	12	4	1	5	3
Theft (other)	12	4	1	9	3
Motoring offences	11	2	<0.5	1	1
Violence offences	10	2	<0.5	5	2
Weapons offences	10	4	1	6	6
Public order offences	9	2	<0.5	3	2
Sexual offences	9	2	1	3	0
Serious violent offences	8	2	0	3	1
Shoplifting	8	9	3	12	4
Fraud & Forgery	6	3	1	3	1
Drugs offences	6	3	1	3	2
Other offences	8	3	1	2	2
All offence types	11	3	1	6	3
Base (n=)	81,391	64,559	72,503	162,134	56,139

There were differences between men and women in the type of debut offence that was most likely to lead to chronic offending. **Men who had committed robbery, vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence were most likely to be chronic offenders nine years later; while women offenders who had committed burglary or weapons offences as their debut offence were most likely to be chronic offenders**, see Table 6.

There were also differences in the pattern of re-offending of men and women. Male chronic offenders were responsible for 42 per cent of all re-offending within the 2001 cohort, while female chronic offenders were responsible for 6 per cent (266,757 re-offences and 40,317 re-offences respectively). Men in the chronic re-offending group committed one-half of all re-offending by men, while women in the chronic re-offending group committed 41 per cent of all re-offending by women. **However, there was no difference in the average re-offending levels according to gender.** Both men and women in the chronic re-offending group had committed an average of 27 re-offences (standard deviation = 13).

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Was debut offence type an independent predictor of chronic offending?

The analysis has shown that those who had committed certain offence types at the onset of their criminal career were more likely to become chronic offenders than those who had committed other offence types. We have also shown that gender and age at first proven offence were important factors in the development of a criminal career. This is supported by the literature that consistently shows that individuals who start offending at a young age are more likely to go on to commit a large number of offences and have long criminal careers (Farrington et al., 2006).

To find out whether the type of debut offence was still an important factor in predicting chronic re-offending when we controlled for age and gender a series of multivariate analyses (logistic regressions) were performed, see Annex B for further details. We could not control for other factors known to be important correlates of offending, such as substance abuse, school attendance or peer relationships, as the data were not available. This limited the extent to which the model could explain the relationship between the offender and extent of offending.

The regression models showed that the type of debut offence committed was a significant predictor of chronic offending status nine years later, taking into consideration gender and age at debut offence. Those who committed robbery as their debut offence were 1.7 times more likely to become a chronic offender compared with all other

offence types. Offenders who committed vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence were 1.6 and 1.5 times, respectively, more likely than offenders who committed other debut offence types to become chronic offenders,⁷ controlling for age and gender.

The logistic regressions allowed us to compare the relative likelihood of different sub-groups of offenders becoming chronic offenders. For example, the proportion of women aged 25 years or more at their first caution/conviction who committed a burglary offence compared with the proportion of young men aged 25 years or more who committed the same offence. The analysis showed that **19 per cent of young men aged 10 to 17 years when they received their first caution/conviction for robbery became a chronic offender, nearly 1 in 5**. The findings for vehicle theft or burglary were similar (18% and 17% respectively). This compares with just over one in ten young men who were cautioned/convicted for a violence offence who became chronic offenders and seven per cent of young men who committed a motoring offence as their debut offence. There were similar findings for young men aged 18 to 24 years at first proven offence and for women offenders, see Annex B, Table B6.

We looked at court disposals to see if there was an incapacitation effect that may, in part, explain the re-offending rates. The data on disposals for debut offences showed that only two per cent of the cohort had been sentenced to a term in prison. This held true for most offence types including burglary, vehicle theft and violence. However, nearly one-quarter of those who were sanctioned for robbery received immediate custody. Despite the comparatively high level of custodial sentences, those committing robbery as their debut offence had the highest re-offending rates of all offence types. The data received on disposals did not allow for an analysis of the length of time spent in prison or the number of periods of incarceration so we could not assess the time at risk, which may vary according to offence type. Time 'at risk' (at large in the community and not in custody) may have an impact on re-offending rates.

Was having committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as a debut offence related to re-offending?

We were also interested in whether offenders who had committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft were more likely to commit any further offences within the nine year follow-up period, even if the re-offending did not meet chronic levels. Offenders committing these debut offences were most likely to re-offend compared with those who had committed other offences. For example, **three-quarters of offenders who committed robbery as their debut offence committed at least one more proven offence within nine years**. Similar re-offending rates were evident for those who committed burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence (70% and 69% respectively) compared with 47 per cent of the cohort overall, see Annex B, Table B3.

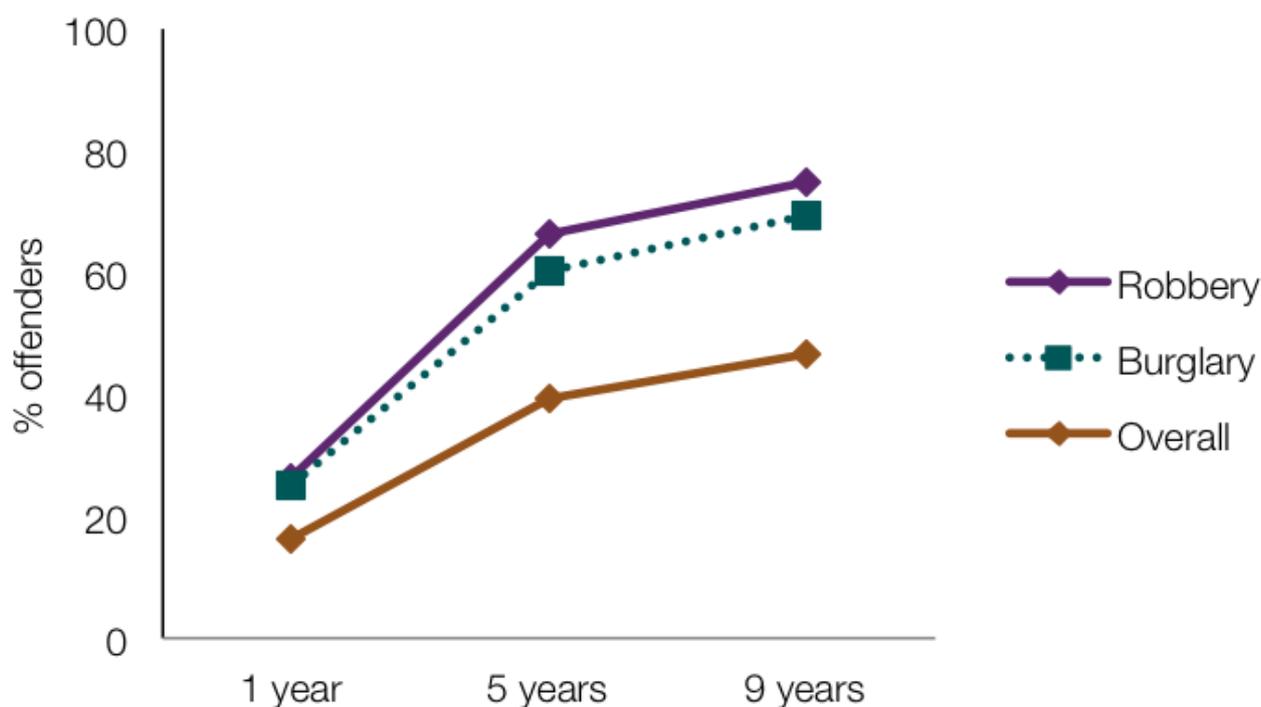
Those offenders who committed motoring offences, sexual offences, and fraud or forgery as their debut offences were least likely to have committed any proven re-offences during the following 9 years (31%, 32% and 32% respectively). The level of immediate imprisonment varied from 26 per cent for sex offenders to 1 per cent for motoring offenders, so it seems unlikely that incapacitation accounts for the lower re-offending rates for these offenders.

Age was an important factor in re-offending. Overall 65 per cent of those who were aged 10 to 17 years at their first offence re-offended within the 9 years, with 47 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds and 26 per cent of those aged 25 or more at their first offence re-offending with the time frame, see Annex B, Table B4.

⁷ These models accounted for 14 per cent of the variance contained within the data. This indicates that other factors, not entered into the model, are important in explaining chronic offending status.

Those offenders who committed robbery, vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence were more likely to re-offend within nine years compared with other offenders in the same age group. Overall 4 out of every 5 10 to 17 year olds who committed robbery as their first offence re-offended within 9 years. Re-offending rates for young people committing vehicle theft or burglary were also very high, at 74 and 73 per cent respectively. Re-offending rates for those aged 25 years or more at their first caution/conviction were higher for offenders committing these three debut offences but considerably lower compared with the youngest members of the cohort, see Annex B, Tables B4 and B5 for details on differences between age and gender.

The likelihood of re-offending was not evenly distributed over the years. An offender was most likely to re-offend in the first year (16%) but, as Figure 1 shows, the rate of re-offending continued to increase over time. The proportion of the cohort who had re-offended rose substantially 1 year after the debut offence and then 5 years later by an average of 36 percentage points for the 3 specific offences, and 23 percentage points for the cohort overall. It had risen again four years later, although by less (nine percentage points and eight percentage points respectively). These findings show that engaging offenders even two to three years post debut offence could still be important in preventing re-offending.



Did committing robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as a debut offence predict serious re-offending?

Just over one-quarter of the 2001 cohort committed a serious re-offence within the nine-year follow-up period. Serious offences included crimes such as burglary, grievous bodily harm, possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life or injure property, robbery, blackmail, and aggravated vehicle taking. Men were twice as likely to commit a serious re-offence compared with women (14% and 7% respectively). Offenders who were aged 10 to 17 years at their debut offence were 2.5 times more likely to commit a serious re-offence compared with 18- to 24-year-olds (23% and 9% respectively); and more than 7 times more likely than older adults (3%).

Offenders committing robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence were most likely to commit a serious re-offence within the nine year follow-up period compared with offenders who had committed other debut offence types. However, it should be remembered that these three debut offences were, according to our definition, serious offences (except theft from a vehicle). Just under one-half (47%) of those receiving their first sanction for robbery committed a serious re-offence compared with just over one-quarter (27%) of the cohort as a whole. Similar results were seen for burglary (41%) and vehicle theft (38%). Only one-quarter of chronic offenders had not committed a serious re-offence within nine years compared with three-quarters of the cohort overall. One in five chronic offenders had committed five or more serious re-offences within this time frame.

Again, regression analysis showed the importance of gender and the age at which the offender committed their debut offence: 44 per cent of men who committed robbery as their debut offence aged 10 to 17 years went on to commit a serious re-offence, as did around one-third of men in this age category who committed burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence. This compared with nearly one-quarter of young men whose debut offence was violence and 16 per cent who had committed a motoring offence. The proportion of offenders with a sanction for a serious re-offence who were aged 25 years or more when they committed their first proven offence was substantially lower, see Annex B, Table B7.

Although the proportion of women who committed a serious re-offence was lower across the board, **just over one-quarter of women aged 10 to 17 years when sanctioned for a robbery debut offence had committed a serious re-offence in the following nine years;** the proportion for burglary and vehicle theft was just under one-fifth, see Annex B, Table B7.

Has the proportion of first-time offenders committing robbery, vehicle theft or burglary changed over time?

Given that those who had committed robbery, vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence were most likely to become chronic offenders it is important that we look at trends in the numbers and proportions of these debut offences. Overall, the proportion of debut offences accounted for by burglary, vehicle theft and robbery fell from seven per cent in 2001 to five per cent in 2009. **The proportion of offenders who committed burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence fell significantly (34% and 40% respectively) between 2001 and 2009, see Table 7. However, the proportion of debut offences accounted for by robbery rose by 33 per cent.**

Looking in more detail at the age of those who committed robbery as a debut offence, we see that the proportion of offenders who were aged 10 to 17 years when they committed their robbery debut offence increased by 64 per cent between 2001 and 2009. This compares with an increase of 41 per cent for those aged 18 to 24 years. While the proportion of those who were aged 25 years or more at the time of their first sanction for committing robbery remained the same between 2001 and 2009, see Annex B, Table B8.

Table 7 also shows significant changes over the period. Sexual and violent offences made up a significantly higher proportion of debut offences in 2009 compared with 2001, a rise of 66 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. The rise in the proportion of sexual offences may, in part, reflect changes in reporting practices by victims. Sanction detection rates for violence against the person have risen since 2002–03 and this may, in part, account for the rise in the proportion of violence as a debut offence.

Table 7: Proportion of debut offence types, by cohort year and change over time

Percentages	Change 2001–09				
	2001 (%)	2005 (%)	2009 (%)	% point difference	Change (%)
Violence offences*	18	27	29	10.8	62
Motoring offences*	15	14	14	-1	-6
Shoplifting*	13	11	10	-2.7	-21
Criminal damage*	12	13	10	-1.9	-16
Drugs offences*	11	7	9	-1.1	-10
Theft (other)*	8	7	7	-1.2	-15
Public order offences*	8	5	5	-2.9	-37
Fraud & forgery*	4	3	3	-0.4	-11
Weapons offences	2	3	2	0	0
Vehicle theft*	4	3	2	-1.6	-40
Obstructing justice*	1	2	2	0.8	58
Sexual offences*	1	2	2	0.9	66
Burglary*	3	2	2	-0.9	-34
Serious violence offences	0.7	0.6	0.7	0	0
Robbery*	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.2	33
Other*	0.5	0.7	1	0.7	144
Base (n=)	218,537	235,166	181,588		

* Statistically significant difference between 2001 and 2009 at $p < 0.05$ two-tailed.

Did the number of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system change over time?

There were statistically significant changes in the proportions of the debut offence types over time. However, this does not show whether the numbers of offenders committing robbery, burglary and vehicle theft had changed over time. The National Crime Recording Standard altered in 2002 so comparisons of numbers of offenders between 2001 and 2005–09 should be viewed in the light of the impact of this change. For example, the number of offences recorded under violence against the person increased statistically significantly in 2001–02. Analysts believe that the change in the recording standard contributed to around 23 per cent of this increase, see Simmons et al. (2003).

Across the three cohorts, the number of offenders who entered the criminal justice system for the first time decreased between 2001 and 2009 by 17 per cent; this equates to 36,949 fewer offenders, see Table 8.

Table 8: Number of first-time entrants in the 2001, 2005 and 2009 cohorts, and percentage change over time

Numbers and percentage change over time					
2001	2005	2009	Change 2001–05 (%)	Change 2001–09 (%)	Change 2005–09 (%)
218,537	235,166	181,588	8	-17	-23

The increase in the size of the 2005 cohort probably reflects the offences brought to justice target that was implemented 2004–08. This resulted in higher numbers of cautions for low-level, often first-time offending. In the 2005 cohort cautions accounted for 70 per cent of all disposals for debut offences, compared with 66 per cent in the 2001 and 2009 cohorts. As cautions account

for the greatest proportion of disposals, a rise in cautions will have a relatively large impact on the number of proven offenders (there were 21,026 more offenders cautioned in 2005 compared with 2001; the number of convictions actually fell between 2001 and 2005, by 4,296 offenders).

There were fewer first-time offenders aged 10 to 17 years in the 2009 cohort. The reduction in the size of the cohorts between 2001 and 2009 was mainly attributable to the fall in the number of young men entering the criminal justice system. The number of 10 to 17 year olds receiving their first caution/conviction fell by nearly one-third (32%) 2001-09. This equates to 26,119 fewer juvenile first-time offenders. This may represent the shift in policy towards diverting young people away from the criminal justice system and an end to offences bought to justice targets.

Table 9: 2001, 2005 and 2009 cohorts, by age and gender*

Numbers and percentage changes over time				
	2001	2005	2009	Change 2001–09 (%)
10–17 years	81,391	93,159	55,272	-32
18–24 years	64,559	59,128	51,132	-21
25+ years	72,503	82,776	75,118	4
Total	218,453	235,063	181,522	
Men	162,134	166,230	126,856	-22
Women	56,179	68,337	54,117	-4
Total	218,313	234,567	180,973	

*Totals do not exactly match the cohort sizes in Table 8 as some offenders had missing or unreliable data for age and/or gender.

The number of men receiving their first formal sanction decreased by just over one-fifth (21%) between 2001 and 2009, while the number of women remained around the same level.

Did the number of offenders committing robbery, burglary or vehicle theft fall between 2001 and 2009?

The number of offenders who received their first caution/conviction for burglary or vehicle theft fell by around one-half between 2001 and 2009. **Overall 44 per cent fewer offenders received their first caution/conviction for robbery, burglary or vehicle theft in 2009 compared with 2001.** However, the number of offenders who committed robbery as their debut offence rose by 11 per cent. As robbery only accounts for a small proportion of debut offences this equates to an increase of 118 offenders who committed robbery as their debut offence, see Table 10.

Table 10: Change in the number of offenders, by debut offence over time

Numbers and percentage change over time					
	2001	2005	2009	Change 2001–09 (%)	Change 2005–09 (%)
Vehicle theft	8,470	6,777	4,237	-50	-37
Public order offences	16,961	11,736	8,843	-48	-25
Burglary	5,895	5,079	3,213	-45	-37
Shoplifting	27,650	26,052	18,191	-34	-30
Criminal damage	25,683	30,198	17,961	-30	-41
Theft (other)	16,975	15,646	11,923	-30	-24

Fraud & forgery	7,659	6,912	5,665	-26	-18
Drugs offences	22,874	16,242	17,083	-25	5
Motoring offences	32,945	32,568	25,682	-22	-21
Weapons offences	5,170	7,218	4,304	-17	-40
Serious violent offences	1,529	1,431	1,284	-16	-10
Robbery	1,108	1,029	1,226	11	19
Obstructing justice	3,059	4,437	4,027	32	-9
Violent offences	38,613	64,322	51,831	34	-19
Sexual offences	2,911	3,989	4,022	38	1
Other	1,035	1,530	2,096	103	37
Total	218,537	235,166	181,588	-17	-23

Similar trends in debut offences were seen between 2005 and 2009, although in most cases the size of the change was smaller. This is likely to be due to the fact that the National Crime Recording Standard was the same for each of these years. This is also likely to explain the reduction in violent debut offences seen between 2005 and 2009 (19%), which is in line with a general trend towards fewer offenders. The number of offenders who committed a debut sex offence was stable during this period.

Did the number of chronic offenders change over time?

We compared the number of offenders categorised as chronic offenders (15 or more re-offences) five years following their debut offence in the 2001 and 2005 cohorts. **The number of chronic offenders within the cohorts five years after the debut offence fell by 494 between 2001 and 2005**, see Table 11. The mean number of offences (and standard deviation) was the same across the two cohorts indicating that the profiles of the chronic offenders remained the same over time. **The reduction in the total number of re-offences between the two cohorts, which fell by 11 per cent, was explained entirely by the reduction in the number of offenders.** There were fewer chronic offenders and therefore fewer re-offences rather than chronic offenders committing fewer re-offences.

Table 11: Profile of chronic offenders at five years follow-up, 2001 and 2005 cohorts

	2001	2005
Number of offenders	5,710	5,216
% of the cohort	3	2
Range of re-offences	15-99	15-125
Mean no. re-offences (standard deviation)	24 (10)	24 (10)
Sum of re-offences	138,661	122,821
% who committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft	19	16

Discussion

This paper investigated whether an individual's future offending can be predicted from the type of debut offence (first proven offence) recorded on the Police National Computer (PNC). In particular we examined whether there was an association between the type of debut offence and subsequent chronic or serious offending. The findings from this analysis add to the debate about why crime has been falling and suggest approaches to crime prevention.

It is well established in the criminal careers literature that a small number of prolific offenders are responsible for causing a high proportion of crime and that the younger the age of first proven offence, generally the longer and more prolific the criminal career (Prime et al., 2001; Farrington et al., 2006). This study has added to the evidence base showing that offenders who committed robbery, burglary or vehicle theft as their debut offence in 2001 were most likely to go on to become chronic offenders (defined as having committed 15 or more re-offences within in the 9 years following their debut offence). This finding is in line with similar research in Sweden, which identified robbery and vehicle crime as “strategic debut crimes”⁸ associated with chronic offending (Svensson, 2002). This paper extends Svensson's analysis by showing that the type of debut crime was an independent predictor of chronic offending. Offenders who had been sanctioned for a debut offence of robbery, burglary or vehicle theft (controlling for age and gender) were more likely than other first-time offenders to re-offend within nine years, more likely to become chronic offenders and more likely to commit serious re-offences. When taken together, the type of debut offence, gender and the age of the offender at their first proven offence were critical factors in predicting future offending. However, we acknowledge that there are limitations with predicting future criminality from past events. For example, in this analysis only 19 per cent of young men who committed robbery as a first offence went on to become chronic offenders and there were a number of first time offenders committing other offences who went on to offend at prolific levels (Tilley, 2013).

The crime types of robbery, burglary and vehicle theft are similar in some respects. All three are acquisitive crimes that arguably require more nerve or confidence compared with the more common acquisitive offences of shoplifting and other types of theft, such as handling stolen goods. The analysis has also shown that the numbers of first offences for two of the crimes associated with chronic offending (burglary and vehicle crime) have fallen over time and that this has contributed to the crime drop over this period.

This analysis has shown, once again, that offending is concentrated among a small group of chronic offenders. This study provides further evidence that identifying and targeting offenders who are most likely to become one of the small group of chronic offenders responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime, early on in their criminal careers, may be a promising approach to preventing a considerable number of further crimes. In particular, the study suggests that we should concentrate resources principally on young men who commit robbery as their debut offence, as they are most likely to go on to commit further offences and their numbers have been increasing over time, albeit from a low base.

8 Svensson included burglary in a wider category of theft. Those who committed theft as their debut offence were third most likely to become chronic offenders. Svensson used a less conservative nine offences or more over an eight year follow-up to categorise his chronic offending group.

Indeed, some criminologists have argued that if we can prevent offenders committing strategic debut offences, then we may prevent individuals from commencing a criminal career (Farrell et al., 2011). Farrell et al. have also written widely about the effect of improvements in security on “keystone” crimes, such as vehicle theft. Keystone crimes are those that facilitate other criminal activity such as robbery and burglary. They have posited that the reduction in the number of these crimes has fed into the overall drop in crime seen over the last decade (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Our analysis has shown that fewer offenders⁹ committed vehicle theft or burglary as their debut offence in 2009 compared with 2001, particularly youths aged 10 to 17 years old, although, there was an increase in the low numbers of offenders who committed robbery. Using the figures from the analysis we can speculate about the influence of the changes in the numbers and profiles of first-time entrants on future patterns of offending.

If we assume that the same proportion (14%) of offenders committing robbery, burglary and vehicle theft as a debut offence in the 2009 cohort go on to become chronic offenders as from the 2001 cohort, the reduction in the numbers of these offenders over the period may mean that there will be around 350 fewer chronic offenders in 2014 and around 950 fewer chronic offenders in 2018. Assuming that the chronic offenders commit the same average number of proven offences (27) as in 2001 and 2005, this equates to about 9,450 fewer offences committed by chronic offenders from the 2005 cohort and about 25,650 fewer offences by chronic offenders from the 2009 cohort. In order to test whether the hypothesised reduction in the number of offences and offenders has actually taken place, the analysis described in this paper could be repeated when new data are available. However, it should be borne in mind that this reduction is based on speculation and that trends in crime are not linear. Other drivers, including social, cultural and economic factors, will also be important in determining the overall level of crime.

When looking at chronic re-offending over a 5-year period in the 2001 and 2005 cohorts we saw that the average number of offences committed by chronic offenders remained the same (24 re-offences). The decrease in the number of chronic offenders between 2001 and 2005 meant that there was an overall reduction in re-offences committed by the 2005 cohort compared with the earlier cohort. It therefore seems more than possible that the numbers of chronic offenders and the overall numbers of re-offences will continue to fall given the reduction in burglary and vehicle theft debut offences in the later cohorts. While this analysis covers only proven offences, this gives support to the proposition that preventing some types of offending may be particularly successful in reducing overall levels of crime.

The fall in the number of offenders committing burglary and vehicle theft debut offences between 2001 and 2009 was greater than the overall drop in offenders for the cohort as a whole (50% and 17% respectively). However, robbery, as a debut offence, increased in these cohorts. We cannot say whether this was a case of displacement due to security measures, diffusion of benefits from wide crime reduction interventions, or whether it has been subject to other forces. We also do not know whether, given the reduction in the number of people committing burglary and vehicle theft as a first proven offence, other offence types will take their place as predictors of chronic offending.

The findings from this research support the provision of effective interventions to prevent and reduce robbery offences, and programmes to turn around the lives of offenders committing key debut offences.

9 As a proportion and in absolute numbers.

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Annex A: Offence Categories and Offences

Burglary (Commercial and Domestic)

- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 10: Aggravated burglary in a building other than a dwelling (including attempts).
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 9: Burglary in a dwelling with violence or the threat of violence.
- Entering or breaking into any building other than dwelling-house with intent to commit felony.
- Armed with dangerous or offensive weapon or instrument with intent to break or enter into a dwelling.

Criminal Damage

- Criminal Damage Act 1971 Sec. 1, 2 & 3: Arson endangering life.
- Criminal Damage Act 1971 Sec. 1 as amended by Crime and Disorder Act Sec. 30(1) & (2): Religiously aggravated other criminal damage.
- Criminal Damage Act 1971 Sec. 3: Possession with intent to commit criminal damage.
- Magistrates Courts Act 1980; Allotments Act 1922; Criminal Damage Act 1971: Criminal damage, £5,000 or less.

Drugs (Misuse and Supply)

- Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 Sec. 50(1): Improperly importing controlled drug – class not specified.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 4(2): Production or being concerned in the production of class A drug: Heroin.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 4(3): Supplying, offering to supply or being concerned in class B controlled drug.
- Acquisition, possession or use of proceeds of drug trafficking.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 5(2): Possession of class A controlled drug: Cocaine.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 23(4): Obstructing exercise of powers of search concealing, etc.

Fraud and Forgery

- Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 Sec. 3 & 4: Using a false instrument or a copy of a false instrument.
- Make/possess/control apparatus/article/material designed/adapted for making false identity documents.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 19: False statements by company directors.
- Companies Act 1985 Sec. 221(5): Failing to keep proper accounting records.
- Computer Misuse Act 1990 Sec. 3: Unauthorised modification of computer material.
- Gaming Act 1968 Sec. 31: Use of machines by virtue of licence or registration.
- Fraud, forgery associated with vehicle or driving records.

Motoring Offences

- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 2B as added by Road Safety Act Sec. 20: Causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 4(2): Driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle whilst unfit through drink or drugs (impairment) – drink.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 143(2): Using motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 36(1): Failing to comply with traffic light signals.
- Highways Act 1835 Sec. 72: Pedal cycles – riding on footpath.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 16(4): Motor Cycle (Protective Helmets) Regulation 80: Driving or riding on a motor bicycle without wearing protective headgear.

Obstructing Justice

- Offences against the Person Act 1861 Sec. 38: Assault with intent to resist apprehension or assault on person assisting a constable.
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Sec. 331/ 334(1): Failure to disclose another person involved in money laundering – nominated officers in the regulated sector.
- Attempting to pervert the course of justice.
- Harming or intending to harm a witness.
- Fabrication of false evidence.
- Licensing Act 2003 Sec. 96: Obstruction of an authorised – inspection of premises before grant of certificate etc.

Other Theft

- Theft Act 1978 Sec. 3: Making off without payment.
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988: Summary offences.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 22: Receiving stolen goods.
- Licensing Act 2003 Sec. 144: Keeping of smuggled goods.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 1: Stealing from the person of another.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 1: Stealing by an employee.

Public Order

- Public Order Act 1986 Sec. 1: Riot.
- Criminal Law Act 1977 Sec. 51(2): Communicating false information alleging the presence of bombs.
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 Sec. 3(1): Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place injuring any person.
- Terrorism Act 2006 Sec. 6(1) & (5): Provide instruction/ training for terrorism.
- Public Order Act 1986 Sec. 18: Use of words or behaviour or display of written material intended or likely to stir up racial hatred.

Robbery

- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 8: Robbery.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 8: Assault with intent to rob.

Sexual Offences

- Sexual Offences Act 1956 Sec. 15: Indecent assault on male person under 16 years.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec. 1: Rape of a female aged 16 or over.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec. 64: Sex with an adult relative (offender aged 16 or over; relative aged 18 or over) – penetration.
- Sexual Offences Act 1956 Sec. 30: Man living on earnings of prostitution or exercising control over prostitute.
- Committing an act outraging public decency – common law.
- Sexual Offences Act 1956 Sec. 34: Letting premises for use as a brothel.

Serious Violence

- Offences against the Person Act 1861 Sec. 18: Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm.
- Explosive Substances Act 1883 Sec. 3: Possession of explosives with intent to endanger life.
- Murder.
- Manslaughter.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec. 3: Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs.
- Taking of Hostages Act Sec. 1: Detaining and threatening to kill or injure a hostage.

Shoplifting

- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 1: Stealing from shops and stalls (shoplifting).

Vehicle Theft

- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 1: Stealing from motor vehicles.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 1: Theft of motor vehicle.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec.12A as added by the Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992 Sec. 2: Aggravated taking where the only aggravating factor is criminal damage of £5,000 or under.

Violence

- Offences against the Person Act 1861 Sec. 47: Assaults occasioning actual bodily harm.
- Common and other types of assault.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997 Sec. 4: Putting people in fear of violence.
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Sec. 31: Racially or religiously aggravated fear or provocation of violence – words or writing.

Weapons

- Firearms Act 1968 Sec. 16 (Group 1): Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life or injure property.
- Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994 Sec. 16A. (Group 2): Possession of a firearm or imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.
- Firearms Act 1968 Sec. 21(5) (Group 1): Supplying firearms to person denied them under Sec. 21.
- Use another to look after/hide/transport a firearm.
- Prevention of Crime Act 1953 Sec. 1: Possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse.
- Criminal Justice Act 1988 Sec. 141: Manufacture, importation and sale of certain offensive weapons.

Other

- Offences against the Person Act 1961 Sec. 32: Endangering railway passengers by placing etc. anything on railway, taking up rails, changing points & signals etc.
- Common law. Libel.
- Health & Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 Sec. 2– 9, 33(1) (a), (b), 33(3): Neglect of safety at work.
- Unlicensed disposal of controlled waste that is also poisonous.
- Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006, Sec. 68: Use apparatus for the purpose of interfering with wireless telegraphy.
- Children and Young Persons Act 1933 Sec. 5: Giving intoxicating liquor to child under five years.
- Immigration Act 1971 Sec. 25(1): Knowingly facilitates (or assists) the entry of an illegal entrant.
- Immigration, Asylum & Nationality Act 2006 Sec. 21: Employing a person knowing that they are an adult subject to immigration control who has not been granted leave to enter or remain, or whose leave to remain is invalid, etc.

Examples of Offences Categorised as Serious

Violence against the person

- Murder.
- Offences against the Person Act 1861 Sec. 20: Malicious wounding – wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm.

Firearms

- Firearms Act 1968 Sec.16 (Group 1): Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life or injure property.
- Firearms Act 1968 Sec. 5(1) (Group 1): Possessing or distributing prohibited weapons or ammunition.

Offences against Children

- Children and Young Persons Act 1933 Sec. 1: Cruelty or neglect of children.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec.5: Rape of a female child aged under 13 by a male.

Sexual Offences against Adults

- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec. 52: Causing or inciting prostitution for gain.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec. 57: Arranging or facilitating arrival of a person into the UK for sexual exploitation (trafficking).

Theft

- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 9: Burglary in a dwelling with violence or the threat of violence.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec. 21: Blackmail.
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Sec. 327/334(1): Concealing, etc – criminal property.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec.19: Frauds by company directors other than 51/01.
- Theft Act 1968 Sec.15A as added by Theft (Amendment) Act 1996 Sec.1: Obtaining a money transfer by deception.

Drugs

- Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 Sec. 12: Manufacturing a scheduled substance.
- Customs and Excise Management Act 1979: Improperly importing goods under Sec. 50(1) (controlled drug – class not specified).
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 4(2): Production or being concerned in the production of class A drug: Cocaine.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Sec. 5(3): Possession with intent to supply class A controlled drug: Heroin.

Other

- Common law. Kidnapping.
- Public Order Act 1986 Sec. 1: Riot.
- Common law: Absconding from lawful custody (breaking out of prison and escape from lawful custody).
- Immigration Act 1971 Sec. 25(1): Knowingly facilitates (or assists) the entry of an illegal entrant.
- Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 Sec.6 & 12(1): Acting as a gangmaster in contravention of Sec. 6 (prohibition of unlicensed activities).

Annex B: Lorenz Curve, Additional Tables and Regression Analysis

A Lorenz curve is most commonly used in economics to demonstrate the unequal distribution of wealth. However, in this case it was employed to display the unequal distribution of re-offences amongst re-offenders in order to help inform a sensible cut-off for the chronic offending group. The cumulative percentage of total re-offences was plotted against the cumulative percentage of re-offenders on the graph, see Figure B1 below. The curve shows that 10 per cent of re-offenders (5% of all offenders) who committed 15 or more offences during the follow-up period of 9 years were responsible for around one-half of all re-offences 2001-10 (49%).

Figure B1: Lorenz curve to show cumulative percentage of total re-offences, by cumulative percentage of re-offenders – 2001 cohort

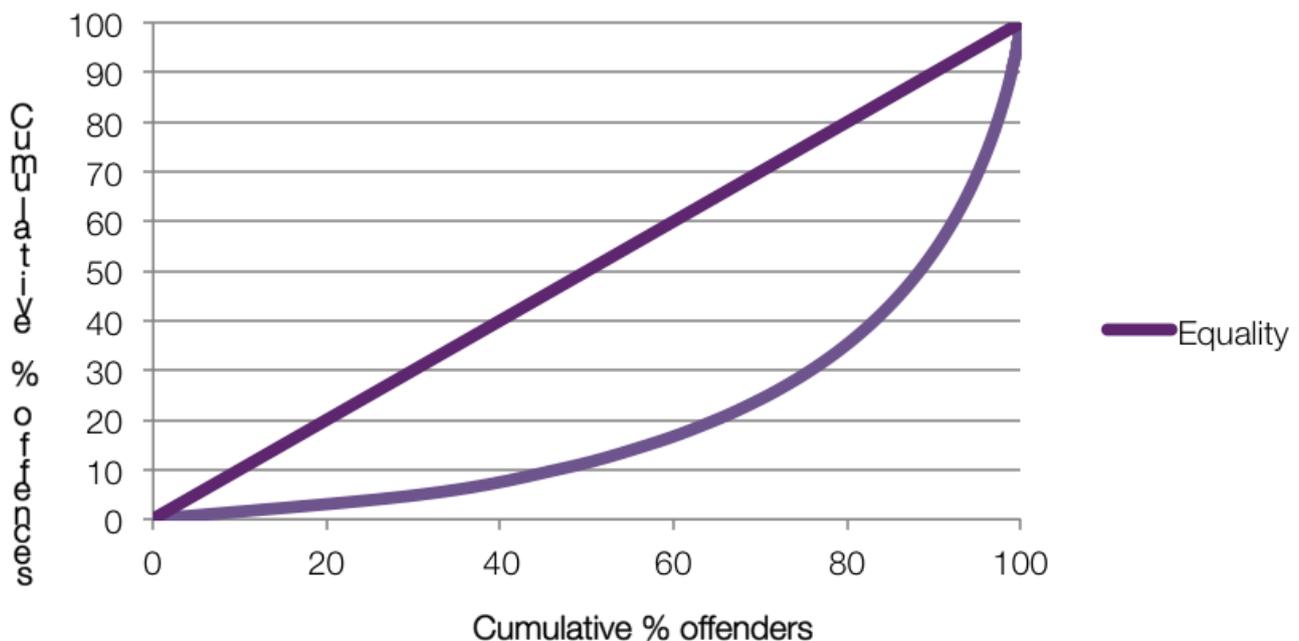


Table B1: Proportion of debut offences, by offence type and age group (2001 cohort)

Percentages	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)
Burglary	6	1	<0.5
Criminal damage	18	9	7
Drugs offences	7	18	7
Fraud & forgery	1	3	6
Motoring offences	1	15	30
Obstructing justice	1	2	2
Other	<0.5	<0.5	1
Public order offences	4	13	8

Robbery	1	<0.5	<0.5
Sexual offences	1	1	3
Shoplifting	21	7	8
Theft (other)	9	8	6
Vehicle theft	8	3	<0.5
Violence offences	18	16	19
Serious violence offences	1	1	1
Weapons offences	3	2	2
Base (n=)	81,391	64,559	72,503

Table B2: Proportion of debut offences, by offence type and gender (2001 cohort)

Percentage	Men (%)	Women (%)
Burglary	3	1
Criminal damage	13	7
Drugs offences	12	6
Fraud & forgery	2	6
Motoring offences	17	10
Obstructing justice	1	2
Other	<0.5	1
Public order offences	8	6
Robbery	1	<0.5
Sexual offences	2	<0.5
Shoplifting	7	29
Theft (other)	7	9
Vehicle theft	5	2
Violence offences	17	19
Serious violence offences	1	<0.5
Weapons offences	3	1
Base (n=)	162,134	56,179

Table B3: Proportion of re-offenders at nine years, by debut offence type (2001 cohort)

Percentage	All re-offenders (%)
Robbery	75
Burglary	70
Vehicle theft	69
Criminal damage	57
Weapons offences	54
Shoplifting	49
Theft (other)	48

Drugs offences	47
Violence offences	47
Obstructing justice	46
Public order offences	45
Serious violence offences	39
Sexual offences	32
Fraud & forgery	32
Motoring offences	31
Other offences	34
All Offences	47

Base: n=218,537.

Table B4: Proportion of re-offenders at nine years, by debut offence type and age (2001 cohort)

Percentages	10–17 year olds (%)	18–24 year olds (%)	25+years old (%)
Burglary	73	62	37
Criminal damage	69	47	29
Drugs	62	47	31
Fraud & forgery	56	43	22
Motoring offences	66	42	24
Obstructing justice	69	49	32
Other offences	63	44	25
Theft (other)	65	43	23
Public order offences	68	47	29
Robbery	81	62	34
Serious violence offences	61	45	17
Sexual offences	61	46	19
Shoplifting	53	53	31
Vehicle theft	74	58	34
Violence offences	67	47	25
Weapons offences	71	54	25
All offences	65	47	26
Base (n=)	81,391	64,559	72,503

Table B5: Proportion of re-offenders at nine years, by debut offence type and gender (2001 cohort)

Percentage	Men (%)	Women (%)
Burglary	72	54
Criminal damage	59	43
Drugs offences	50	34
Fraud & forgery	37	27

Motoring offences	32	23
Obstructing justice	51	39
Other offences	35	32
Theft (other)	54	34
Public order offences	47	37
Robbery	79	59
Serious violence offences	42	29
Sexual offences	32	37
Shoplifting	62	39
Vehicle theft	71	49
Violence offences	50	38
Weapons offences	55	43
All offences	51	36
Base (n=)	162,134	56,179

Table B6: Proportion of offenders who become chronic offenders, by age, gender and offence type (2001 cohort)

Percentage	Men			Women		
	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)
Robbery	19	6	2	9	2	1
Burglary	17	5	1	8	2	1
Vehicle theft	18	6	2	8	2	1
Violence offences	11	3	1	5	1	<0.5
Motoring offences	7	2	1	3	1	<0.5

Table B7: Proportion of offenders who go on to commit serious re-offences, by age, gender and offence type (2001 cohort)

Percentage	Men			Women		
	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)	10–17 years (%)	18–24 years (%)	25+ years (%)
Robbery	44	21	9	26	11	4
Burglary	34	15	6	19	7	3
Vehicle theft	33	14	6	18	7	3
Violence offences	24	9	4	12	4	2
Motoring offences	16	7	3	8	3	1

Table B8: Changes in the proportion of debut offence types between 2001 and 2009, by age group

Percentage	10–17 years		18–24 years		25+ years	
	% point diff	Change (%)	% point diff	Change (%)	% point diff	Change (%)
Vehicle theft	3.2	-42*	0.1	-3	0	0
Burglary	2.1	-36*	-0.4	+27*	0	0
Fraud & forgery	0.4	-36*	1	-30*	0.9	-14

Theft (other)	2.5	-27*	0	0	0.4	-7
Criminal damage	3.2	-18*	-0.4	+5*	-0.5	-7
Motoring offences	0.2	-19*	0.5	-3*	7.1	-23
Serious violence offences	0	0	-0.1	13*	0.1	-10
Public order offences	-0.1	3	5.2	-40*	4	-52
Weapons offences	-0.1	+2	-0.4	+20*	0.1	-8
Shoplifting	-0.9	+4*	2	-30*	3.5	-44
Drugs offences	-0.8	+11*	5.7	-31*	-1.1	+16
Sexual offences	-0.2	+31*	-0.6	+106*	-1.1	+45
Violence offences	-8.2	+46*	-10.8	+67*	-12.6	+66
Robbery	-0.7	+64*	-0.1	+41*	0	0
Obstructing justice	-0.6	+85*	-1.1	+56*	-0.6	+38
Other	-0.1	+46	-0.5	128	-1.1	+118
Violent offences	-8.2	+45*	-10.9	+64*	-12.5	63
Acquisitive offences	10.5	-17*	2.3	-7*	5.3	-19

* Statistically significant difference between 2001 and 2009 at $p < 0.05$.

Regression analysis

A series of logistic regression models were fitted. Logistic regression enabled the establishment of which variables are statistically related to a given dependent variable, when all under examination have been considered. This technique determines associations between variables but does not imply a causal relationship.

Interpretation of the models

There were two dependent variables – chronic offending and serious re-offending. The variables were entered into the regression model using the ‘enter’ command. The variables included were the same in both modelling procedures:

- age of respondent (10–17, 18–24, 25+);
- gender (male, female);
- debut offence type (for example, burglary compared with other offence types).

Each debut offence type was entered into a separate model. The tables below present the beta, standard error, significance levels and exponential of the co-efficient (odds ratio). The odds ratio is the change in the odds of being a chronic/serious (re-)offender compared with the base category, controlling for all other independent variables, i.e. if the odds ratio is greater than one, the odds of being a chronic offender are increased compared with the base category, if the odds ratio is less than one the odds decreased. For these models the base categories used were those in which the respondents showed the likelihood of being a chronic or serious offender, i.e. females and those aged 25 years or older at caution/conviction. All coefficients were tested to see if they were statistically different to zero.

Outcome chronic offending status

Burglary				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.876	.029	.000	2.401
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.687	.044	.000	14.684
(18–24 years)	1.357	.048	.000	3.883
Burglary (yes)	.390	.040	.000	1.477
Constant	-5.538	.049	.000	.004

Robbery				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.891	.029	.000	2.438
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.707	.044	.000	14.988
(18–24 years)	1.359	.048	.000	3.891
Robbery (yes)	.500	.089	.000	1.649
Constant	-5.550	.049	.000	.004

Vehicle theft				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.865	.029	.000	2.374
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.671	.044	.000	14.450
(18–24 years)	1.346	.048	.000	3.843
Vehicle theft (yes)	.466	.034	.000	1.593
Constant	-5.530	.049	.000	.004

Regression analysis: Outcome serious offending status

Burglary				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.810	.018	.000	2.248
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.124	.022	.000	8.364
(18–24 years)	1.044	.025	.000	2.839
Burglary (yes)	.418	.031	.000	1.519
Constant	-3.998	.026	.000	.018

Robbery				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.824	.018	.000	2.279
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.141	.022	.000	8.509
(18–24 years)	1.045	.025	.000	2.843
Robbery (yes)	.816	.066	.000	2.262
Constant	-4.008	.026	.000	.018

Vehicle theft				
	B	Standard error	Significance	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.808	.018	.000	2.242
Age group (25+ years)			.000	
(10–17 years)	2.121	.022	.000	8.340
(18–24 years)	1.038	.025	.000	2.822
Vehicle theft (yes)	.355	.027	.000	1.427
Constant	-3.996	.026	.000	.018

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