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Criminal Justice Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, April 2017 to March 2018 (provisional)

Main points

1.61 million individuals dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)	↓	The total number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS in England and Wales has declined since 2008 and fell 7% in the latest year to a record low, with 1.61 million individuals prosecuted or given an out of court disposal in the year ending March 2018.
1.38 million defendants were prosecuted	↓	The number prosecuted at magistrates' courts fell by 5% in the latest year, driven by decreases in prosecutions for indictable and summary motoring offences.
The conviction ratio was 87%	↑	The overall conviction ratio increased by one percentage point in the latest year to 87%, the highest in the decade.
Custody rate for indictable offences rose to 32%	↑	The custody rate for indictable offences has increased since March 2011, from 24% to 32%.
ACSL increased to 20.2 months for indictable offences and was 17.1 months overall	↑	Average custodial sentence length (ACSL) has steadily increased since March 2008, when it was 12.4 months overall and 15.1 months for indictable offences.

This publication gives criminal justice statistics for the latest 12 month period. These are presented alongside the same rolling 12 month periods for the previous 10 years, giving longer-term trends across comparable periods.

Trends should be interpreted with caution as the data presented are provisional and subject to change for the 2018 Criminal Justice Statistics annual bulletin, scheduled to be published on 16 May 2019. For full and detailed commentary, please refer to the annual publication. For technical detail please refer to the accompanying guide to criminal justice statistics.

An interactive Sankey diagram for offending histories which can be found at: moj-analytical-services.github.io/criminal_history_sankey/index.html.

We have changed how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk

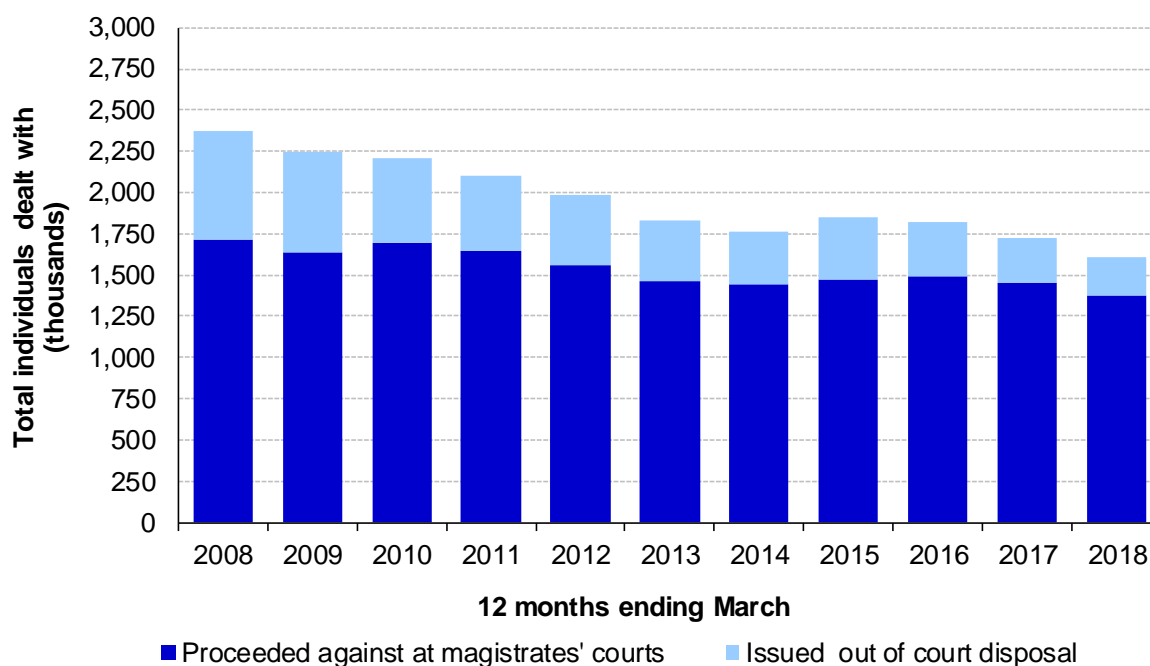
For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please contact us at CJS_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk

1. Overview of the Criminal Justice System

1.61 million individuals were dealt with by the CJS in the latest year

The total number of individuals¹ formally dealt with by the criminal justice system (CJS)² in England and Wales has declined since 2008 and fell 7% in the latest year to a record low, with 1.61 million individuals dealt with in the year ending March 2018 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Individuals dealt with formally by the CJS³, 12 months ending March 2008 to March 2018 (Source: Table Q1.1 and historical data)



The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS fell by 7% in the latest year. The number of individuals prosecuted at all courts fell by around 5%, which is broadly in line with the latest crime outcomes statistics published by the Home Office⁴. These show that the number of crimes resolved with a charge/summons fell by 6% in the latest year. This is despite a 11% increase in overall recorded crime⁵ (to 5.5 million offences), believed to be associated with improved recording among police forces and victims' greater willingness to report crimes. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), estimated 10.6 million incidents of crime in the latest year (including fraud and computer misuse)⁶, a non-statistically significant reduction of 4% compared with the previous year.

¹ A single individual (includes people and companies) can be counted more than once in a given year if they are dealt with by the CJS on more than one separate occasion. Includes individuals prosecuted, given a caution, Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) or cannabis/khat warning and community resolutions.

² The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS is the sum of all defendants prosecuted at magistrates' court plus all individuals issued an out of court disposal (including community resolutions).

³ Adding three years of community resolutions data causes the apparent increase in OOCs from the year ending March 2015, but the downward trend continued for each type of OOC throughout the period.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727127/crime-outcomes-hosb1018-tabs.ods

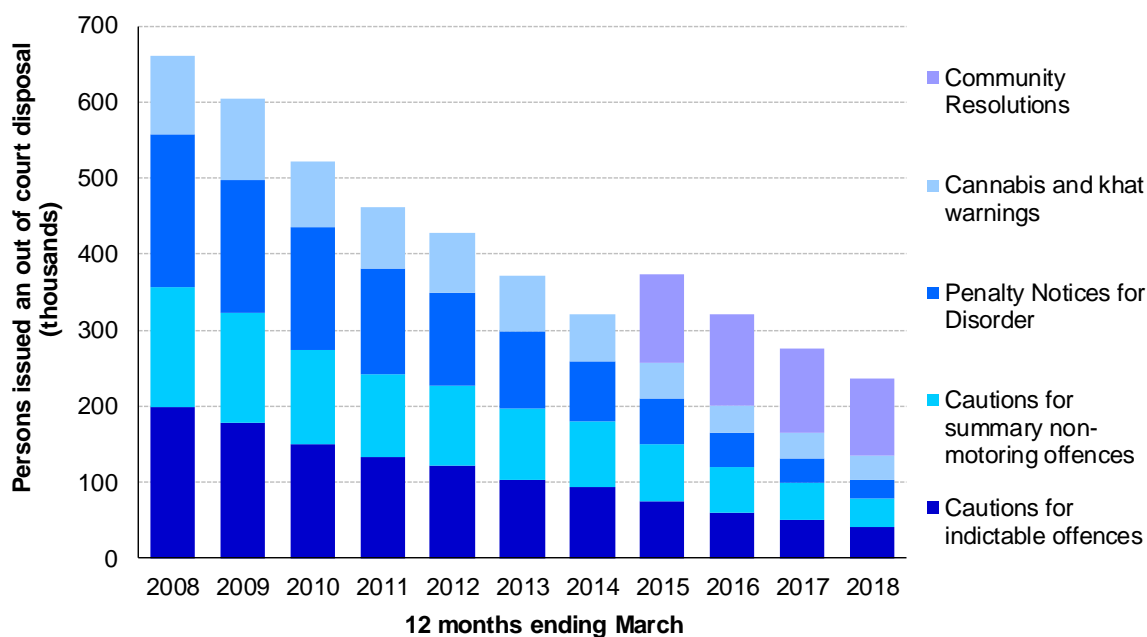
⁵ This is the figure for the overall change in recorded crime (including fraud) published by the Home Office. See the annual version of this publication for further discussion of the trend in recorded crime.

⁶ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018

2. Out of Court Disposals

The use of out of court disposals (OOCs) decreased by 38,500 (14%) in the year ending March 2018, with 236,600 individuals issued an OOC. This decreasing trend can be seen across all OOC types and continues the steady decline in the use of OOCs over the last ten years. The use of Community Resolutions⁷ has also been decreasing since 2016. The decrease in the number of OOCs followed a number of policy changes relating to police practice and OOC availability⁸.

Figure 2: Out of court disposals issued, by disposal, 12 months ending March 2008 to March 2018 (Source: Tables Q.1.1, Q2.1 & Q2.2 and historic data)



The number of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs) administered was 24,100, falling 27% from the previous year. The most common offences that resulted in a PND were 'drunk and disorderly', theft (under £100), possession of cannabis, and causing harassment, alarm or distress, and together these accounted for 92% of all PNDs issued.

The total number of cautions administered was 78,800, falling 20% from the previous year. Drug offences, theft and violence against the person were the most common indictable offences⁹ for which an offender received a caution (accounting for 80% of all cautions for indictable offences). The overall cautioning rate¹⁰ (among those cautioned or convicted excluding summary motoring offences) fell in the latest year from 12.1% to 10.2%.

The number of Community Resolutions administered was 102,100, decreasing 7% between March 2017 and March 2018.

⁷ Separately identifiable data on community resolutions were first collected from police forces under the full crime outcomes framework introduced from April 2014. These have been incorporated where comparable years of data are available.

⁸ See the annual version of this publication for further detail.

⁹ The majority of information presented in this publication is on the principal offence and principal sentence. Where prosecutions involve more than one offence, the principal offence is reported. See the technical guide for more information.

¹⁰ The cautioning rate is the proportion of offenders who were either cautioned or convicted (excluding convictions for motoring offences) that were given a caution.

3. Court prosecutions and convictions

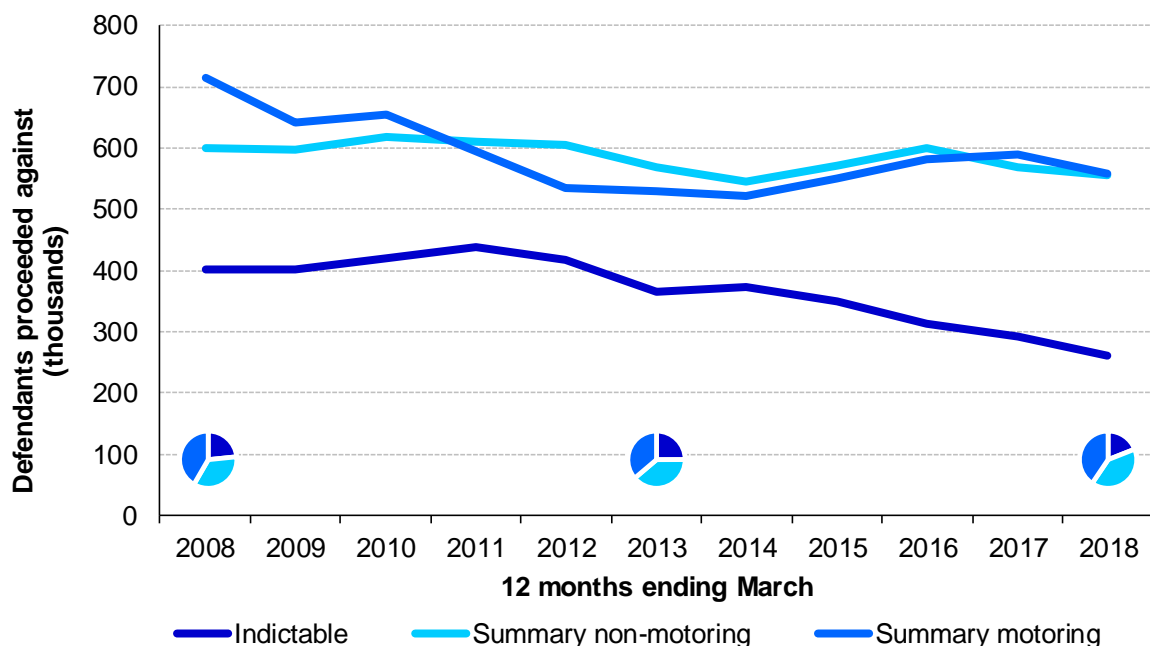
The total number of defendants prosecuted fell to 1.38 million

In the 12 months ending March 2018, 1.38 million defendants were prosecuted at magistrates' courts, down from 1.45 million in the previous year. This was an overall decrease of 5%, driven by falls in indictable and summary motoring offences.

The conviction ratio increased to 87%

The overall conviction ratio¹¹ increased from 86% to 87% in the latest year, the highest in the decade.

Figure 3: Defendants prosecuted at magistrates' courts, 12 months ending March 2008 to March 2018, by type of offence (Source: Table Q3.2)



The decline in overall prosecutions since the year ending March 2017 is primarily driven by a decline in defendants prosecuted for summary motoring and indictable offences. The number of prosecutions for summary motoring offences fell by 5% in the last year, reversing the upward trend seen since 2014. Prosecutions for indictable offences have steadily declined since 2014 and decreased by 10% in the last year, and prosecutions for summary non-motoring offences decreased 2% in the last year, continuing the downward trend seen since 2016.

There were 1.19 million offenders convicted in the year ending March 2018, down 4% on the previous year. As with prosecutions, this decrease is driven by a fall in convictions for indictable and summary motoring offences (down 11% and 5% respectively), however there was an increase of 1% in convictions for summary non-motoring offences – these offences account for 40% of all offenders found guilty.

¹¹ Conviction ratio is calculated as the number of offenders convicted as a proportion of the number prosecuted in a given year.

4. Remands

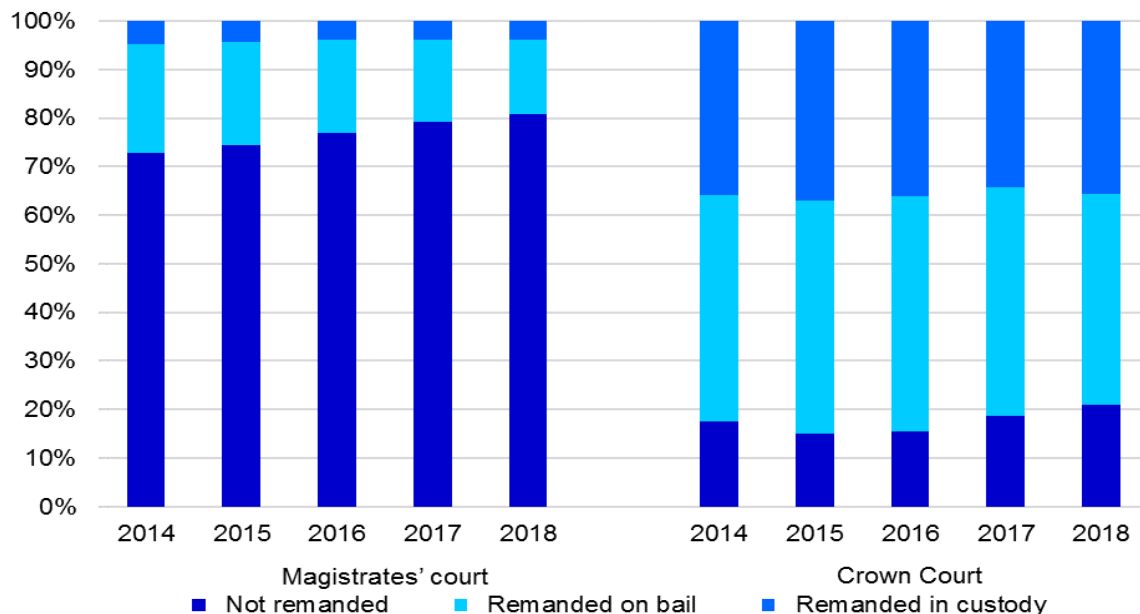
The overall trends of remands have remained stable.

In the latest year, there was a slight decrease in the number of defendants remanded on bail and in custody, and a slight increase in those summonsed and not remanded.

In the year ending March 2018, there were 1.44 million defendants directed to appear at magistrates' courts (including those who failed to appear). The proportion of defendants being summonsed increased from 68% to 73%, the proportion remanded in custody by the police remained stable at 10% and the proportion arrested and bailed by police decreased from 22% to 18%¹². Bail was granted to 15% of defendants prosecuted at magistrates' courts, falling from 17% in the previous year. The proportion of defendants remanded in custody remained stable at 4%, while 81% had their case concluded at magistrates' courts without being remanded, increasing from 79% in the previous year.

In the Crown Court, the proportion of defendants not remanded increased from 19% to 21% in the latest year, those remanded in custody also increased from 34% to 36%. In contrast, there was a decrease in the proportion of defendants remanded on bail (from 47% to 43%).

Figure 4: Defendants' remand status in magistrates' courts and the Crown Court, 12 months ending March 2014 to March 2018 (Source: Table Q4.2 and Q4.3)



Defendants are more likely to be remanded in custody for indictable offences than summary offences, so the proportion of defendants remanded in custody at the Crown Court is higher than at magistrates' courts. Of those remanded in custody at the Crown Court, 72% were sentenced to immediate custody, and 51% of all defendants who were not remanded at the Crown Court received an immediate custody sentence. 15% of defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts were sentenced there to immediate custody; and 60% of defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts were sent for trial or sentencing at the Crown Court.

¹² The Police and Crime Act imposed a maximum bail time of 28 days for pre-charge bail in April 2017, and this is likely to have led to a decrease in the number of people remanded on bail from the police.

5. Sentencing

Custody rate¹³ for indictable offences rose to 32%

In year ending March 2018, the overall custody rate remained 7%, while the custody rate for indictable offences increased to 32%, up from 24% in 2011.

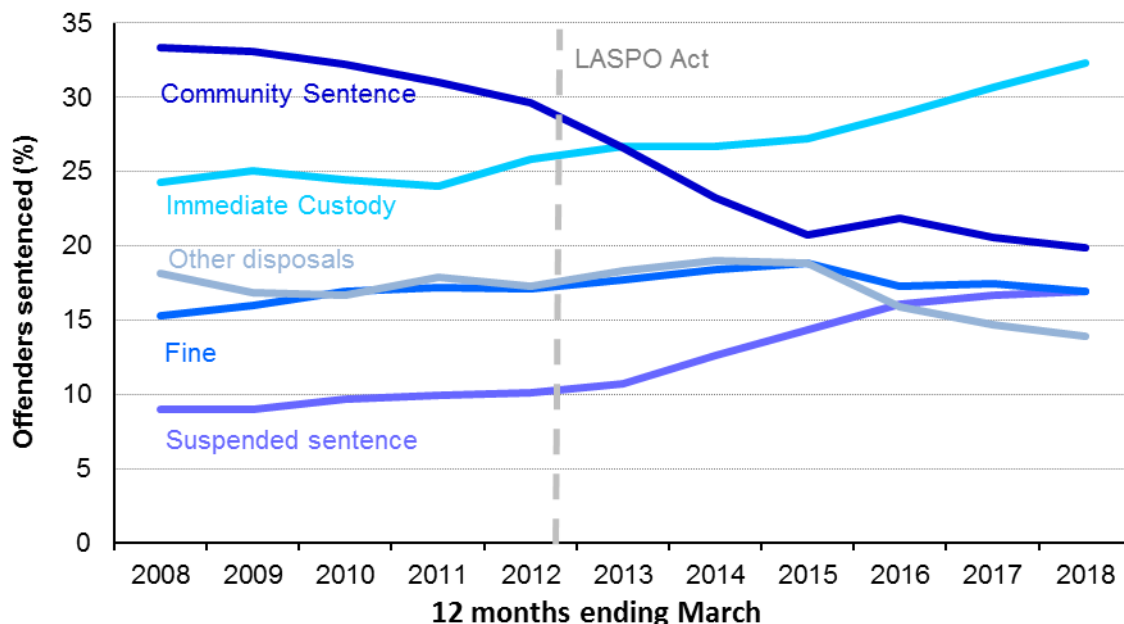
Average custodial sentence length (ACSL) increased to 20.2 months for indictable offences and was 17.1 months overall.

ACSL has steadily increased since March 2008, when it was 12.4 months overall (now 17.1 months) and 15.1 months for indictable offences (now 20.2 months).

Since the year ending March 2017, overall number of offenders sentenced at all courts has fallen by 50,800 (4%) to 1.19 million. Similar to prosecutions and convictions, this is driven by a decline in indictable and summary motoring offences, which have seen decreases of 11% and 5% respectively.

The most common sentence given continues to be a fine, accounting for 75% of all offenders sentenced, increasing by 10 percentage points since 2011. In the year ending March 2018, a greater proportion of offenders (32%) received immediate custody for indictable offences than any other sentence outcome, up by 2 percentage points since 2017. Since 2008, the proportion of offenders receiving a community sentence for indictable offences has declined by 13 percentage points to 20%, and the proportion of offenders receiving a suspended sentence for indictable offences increased by 8 percentage points to 17%.

Figure 5: Sentencing outcome trends for indictable offences at all courts, 12 months ending March 2008 to March 2018 (Source: Table Q5.3)



The only offence group to see an increase in the number of people sentenced in the latest year was possession of weapons, where 4,500 (up from 4,100) individuals were sentenced. The custody rate for the offence group also increased 2 percentage points to 36%.

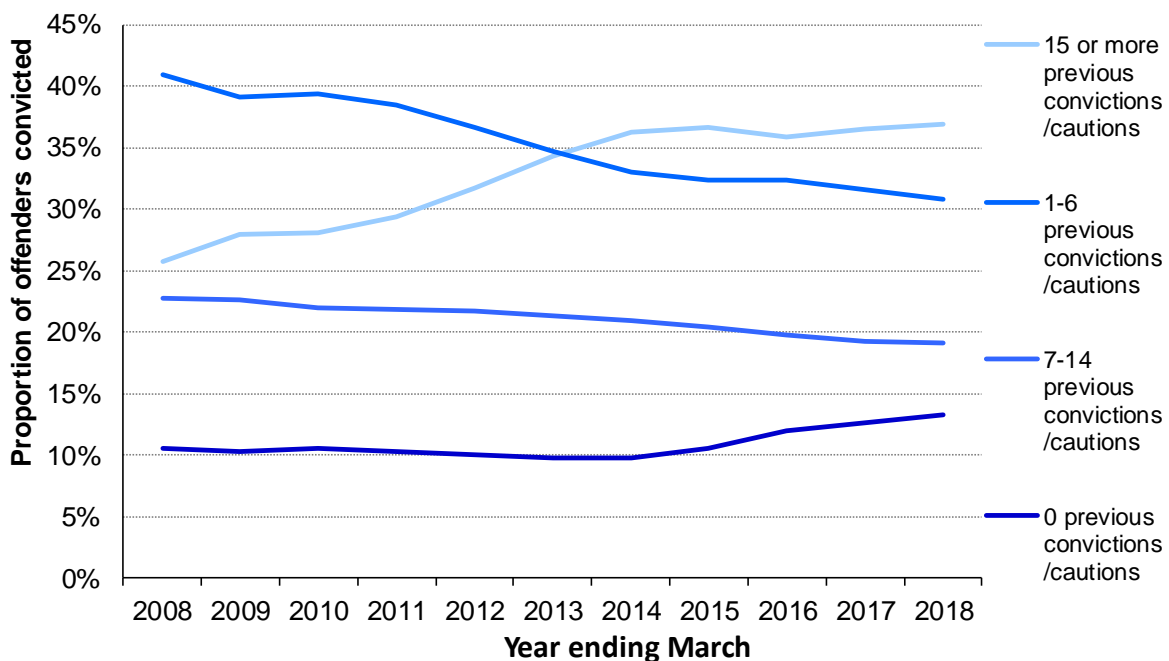
¹³ Custody rates are calculated as the number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody as a proportion of all sentenced.

6. Offending Histories

Whilst the overall number of offenders convicted for an indictable offence has decreased, offenders with long criminal careers now account for over a third of the offending population.

As highlighted in table 3.2b, the number of offenders convicted for an indictable offence has been decreasing year on year since 2011, falling by 38%. Over the same period the proportion with a long criminal career convicted for an indictable offence¹⁴ has increased. In the year ending March 2018 over a third (37%) of the offending population had a long criminal career; an increase of 8 percentage points since 2011.

Figure 6: Offenders convicted for indictable offences by previous criminal history, year ending March 2008 to 2018 (Source: Table Q6.1)



The proportion of the offending population who are first time offenders has increased year on year since the year ending March 2013, and is now at its highest level since 2000. In the year ending March 2018, 13% of the offending population were first time offenders, a 3 percentage point increase since the year ending March 2013.

Recent police recorded crime figures published by the ONS¹⁵ showed a 25% increase in the number of weapons possession offences recorded in the year ending March 2018 when compared with the year ending March 2017, and over the same period the number of first time offenders convicted for this offence type has also increased (8%). In the year ending March 2018 the number of juvenile and adult first time offenders convicted of a weapons possession offence was at its highest level since the year ending March 2008 (837 and 1,645 offences respectively) with the number of juvenile first time offenders more than doubled and for adults increased by 56%.

¹⁴ Offenders with a long criminal career are those with 15 or more previous cautions or convictions.

¹⁵ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018

Further information

The data presented in this publication are provisional. Final data for each calendar year is published in May each year in our Criminal Justice Statistics annual bulletin, following further data cleaning and the incorporation of additional cases not available in our original extracts of administrative data.

Known Issues

A summary of known issues has been published within the data tools in the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2017 publication, found here: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2017

In line with our revisions policy, these figures have not been revised because the change is relatively small at an aggregate level. All of these corrections have been implemented from our “Criminal Justice System Statistics: March 2018” publication.

Accompanying files

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

- A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to sentencing trends and background on the functioning of the criminal justice system.
- A set of overview tables, covering each section of this bulletin.
- A set of offending histories tables, including a data tool.

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 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.

Contact

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