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Criminal Justice Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, July 2017 to June 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 5% 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 June 2018.
1.38 million defendants were prosecuted	↓	The number prosecuted at magistrates' courts fell by 4% 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 was 32%	↑	The custody rate for indictable offences has increased by one percentage point over the year, and from 24% to 32% since June 2010.
ACSL was 20.2 months for indictable offences and was 17.1 months overall	↑	Average custodial sentence length (ACSL) has steadily increased since June 2008, when it was 12.6 months overall and 15.4 months for indictable offences.
Offenders with long criminal careers account for nearly two fifths of the offending population.	↑	The number of offenders convicted for indictable offences has been decreasing year on year since 2011, falling by 40%. Over the same period the proportion with a long criminal career has increased by 8 percentage points.

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 figures are 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.

Alongside this bulletin we are publishing a new analytical paper on prolific offenders and an updated interactive Sankey diagram for offending histories which can be found at:

https://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

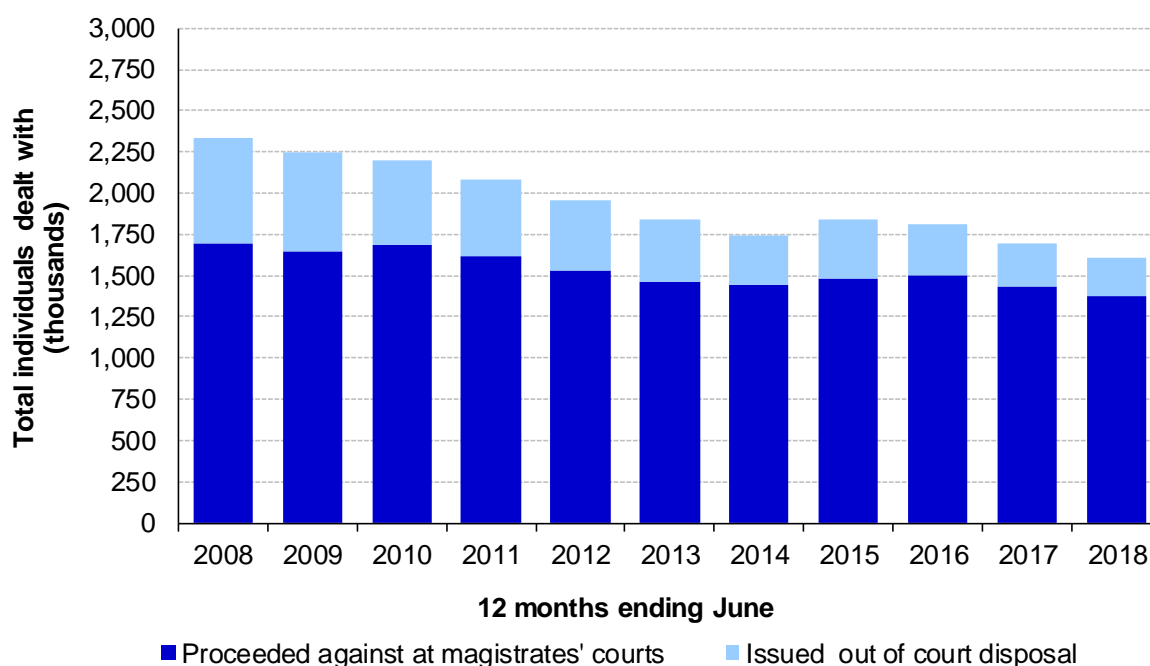
For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please contact us at CJS_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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 5% in the latest year to a record low, with 1.61 million individuals dealt with in the year ending June 2018 (see Figure 1).

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



The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS fell by 5% in the latest year. The number of individuals prosecuted at all courts fell by 4%, which is broadly in line with the latest crime outcomes statistics published by the Home Office; the number of offences given a charge/summons fell by 7% in the latest year⁴. This is despite a 10% increase in overall recorded crime (to 5.0 million offences excluding fraud⁵), 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 6.2 million incidents of crime in the latest year (excluding fraud and computer misuse), a statistically significant increase of 6% compared with the previous year⁶.

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 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749111/outcomes-jun2018-tables.ods (Table 3.1: Outcomes recorded in the year ending June 2018, by outcome type and group)

⁵ This is the figure for the overall police recorded crime by the Home Office, this figure excludes fraud as Action Fraud have taken over the recording of fraud offences on behalf of individual police forces. Latest data for year ending June 2018 can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749310/prc-pfa-mar2013-onwards-tables.ods

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesappendixtables>

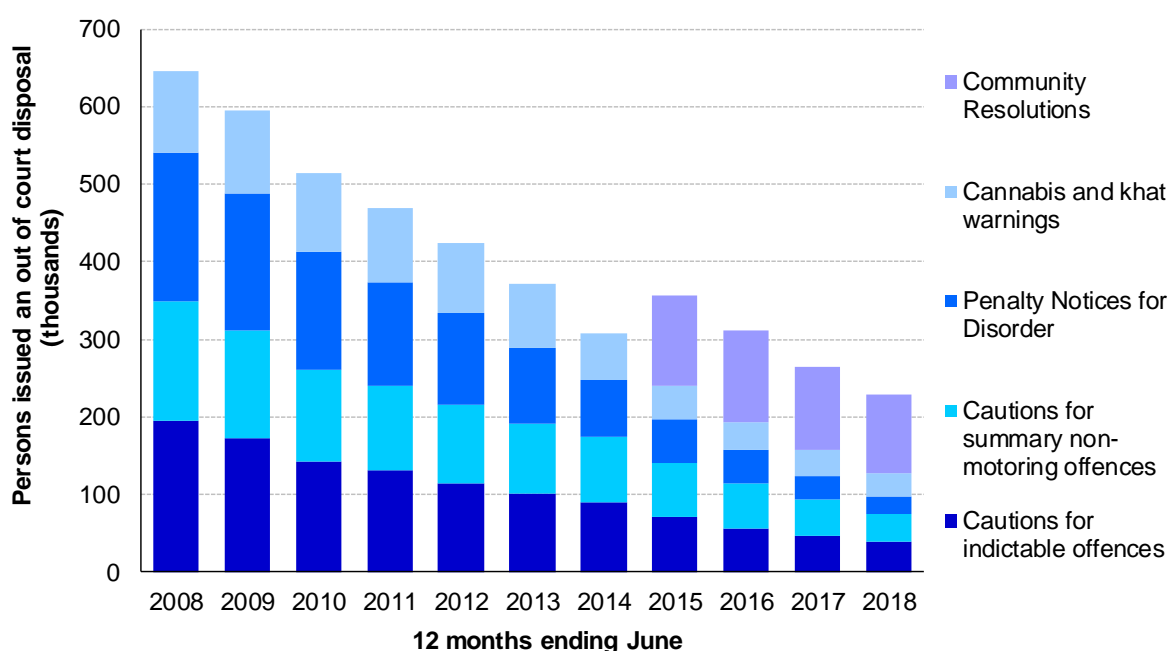
2. Out of Court Disposals

The use of out of court disposals (OOCs) decreased to 229,000

The use of OOCs decreased by 35,300 (13%) between June 2017 and June 2018, to 229,000 individuals issued an OOC.

The decline in use 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, to 101,000 in June 2018, a 6% decrease since June 2017. 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 June 2008 to 12 months ending June 2018 (Source: Tables Q.1.1, Q2.1 & Q2.2 and historic data)



The number of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs) issued was 22,700, falling 25% from the previous year. The most common offences that resulted in a PND were 'drunk and disorderly', theft (under £100), possession of cannabis, causing harassment, alarm or distress, which together accounted for 92% of all PNDs issued.

The total number of cautions administered was 75,300, 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 79% 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% to 10%.

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

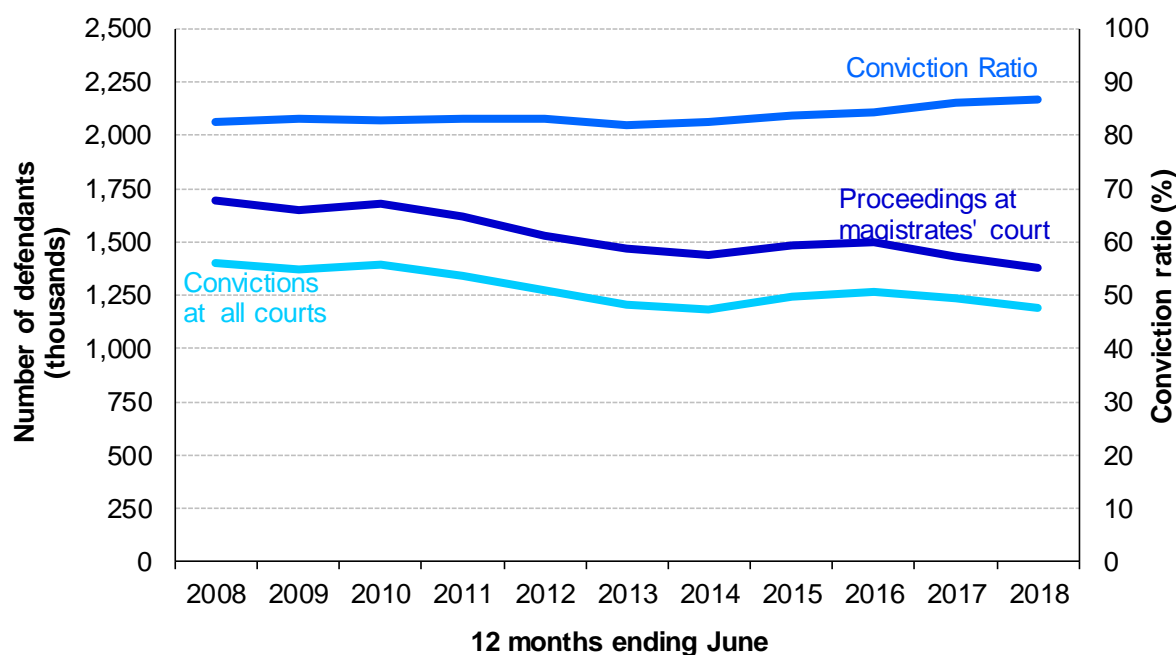
The total number of defendants prosecuted fell to 1.38 million

In the year ending June 2018, 1.38 million defendants were prosecuted at magistrates' courts, down from 1.43 million in the previous year. This was an overall decrease of 4%, driven by falls in indictable and summary motoring offences.

The conviction ratio increased to 87%

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

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



The 4% decrease in overall prosecutions when compared to the year ending June 2017 is primarily driven by a 12% decline in defendants prosecuted for indictable offences, continuing the downward trend seen since 2011. A decrease was seen in all indictable offences except possession of weapons, where there was a 3% increase. Prosecutions for summary motoring offences decreased by 3% in the last year, reversing the upward trend seen since 2014, while summary non-motoring offences continued the gradual downward trend seen since 2016, decreasing by 1%.

There were 1.19 million offenders convicted in the year ending June 2018, a 3% decrease on the previous year. As convictions fell slower than prosecutions the overall conviction ratio increased from 86% last year to 87%, the highest in the decade. As with prosecutions, this decrease is driven by a fall in convictions for indictable and summary motoring offences (down 11% and 4% respectively). Decreases in the number of convictions for theft and drug offences were key drivers of the fall in indictable convictions respectively, accounting for 49% and 21% of the total fall in indictable convictions respectively. However, convictions for possession of weapons continue to show an increasing trend.

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

4. Remands

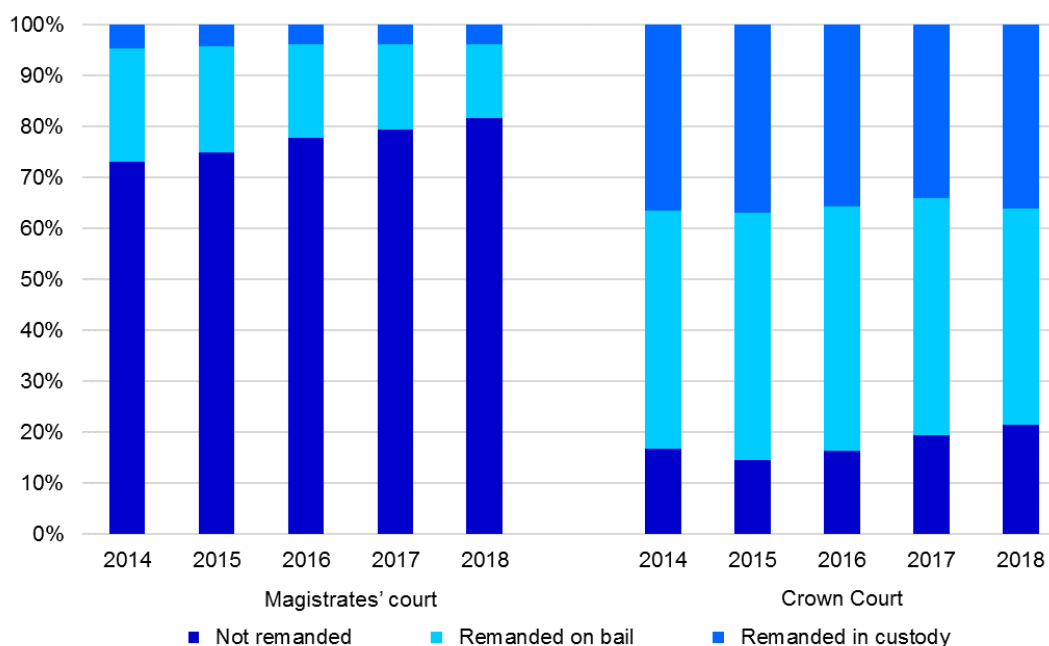
The overall trends of remands have remained reasonably stable, however, the proportion remanded on bail has continued to fall

In the latest year, the proportion of defendants summonsed or not remanded increased, the proportion bailed decreased and the proportion remanded in custody remained stable at Magistrates' Court but increased slightly at Crown Court.

In the year ending June 2018, there were 1.44 million defendants directed to appear at magistrates' courts (including those who failed to appear). Compared to the previous year, the proportion of defendants being summonsed increased from 68% to 74%, the proportion remanded in custody by the police fell slightly to 9% from 10% and the proportion arrested and bailed by police decreased from 22% to 16%, likely to be in part due to changes in pre-charge bail rules. 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 82% had their case concluded at magistrates' courts without being remanded, up from 79% in the previous year.

In the Crown Court, when compared to the previous year, increases were seen in the proportion of defendants not remanded (from 19% to 22%) and the proportion of those remanded in custody (from 34% to 36%). In contrast, a falling proportion of defendants were remanded on bail (from 47% to 42%).

Figure 4: Defendants' remand status in magistrates' courts and the Crown Court, year ending June 2014 to year ending June 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. In the year ending June 2018, of the defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts, 15% were sentenced there to immediate custody, and a further 60% of defendants remanded in custody in magistrates' courts were committed for trial or sentencing at the Crown Court. Of those remanded in custody at the Crown Court, 72% were sentenced to immediate custody. Of all defendants who were not remanded in custody at the Crown Court, 52% received an immediate custody sentence.

5. Sentencing

Custody rate¹² for indictable offences rose to 32%

In year ending June 2018, the overall custody rate remained 7%, while the custody rate for indictable offences increased to 32%, up from 31% last year and 24% in 2010.

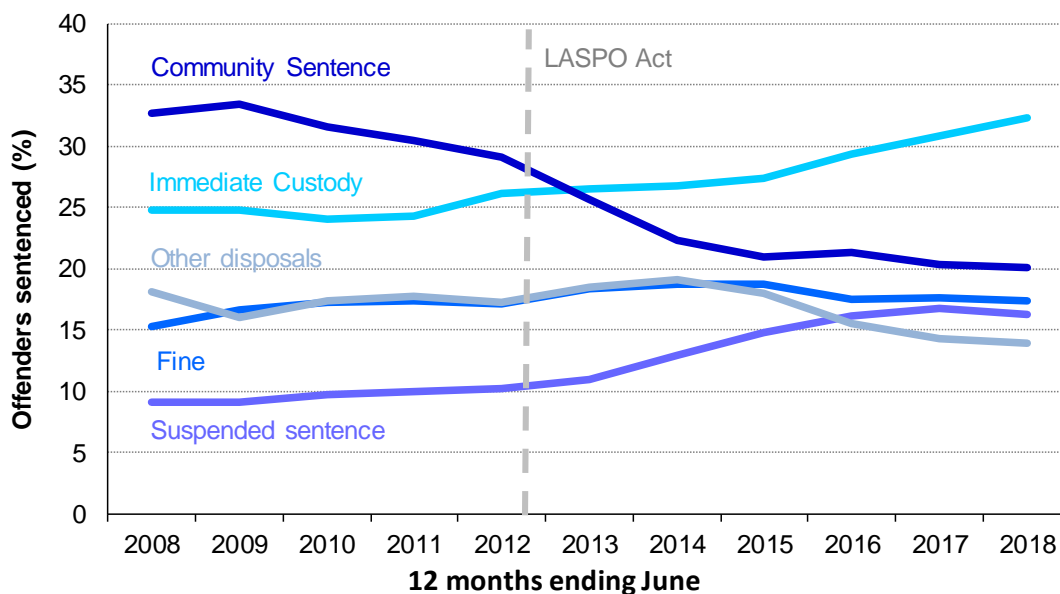
Average custodial sentence length (ACSL) increased to 20.2 months for indictable offences and was 17.1 months overall.

ACSL has steadily increased between June 2008 and June 2017, to 17.1 months overall (compared to 12.6 months in June 2008) and 20.2 months for indictable offences (compared to 15.4 months in 2008)

Compared to the year ending June 2017, the overall number of offenders sentenced at all courts has fallen by 41,000 (3%) to 1.19 million. Similar to the trend seen in prosecutions and convictions, this was driven by a decline in indictable and summary motoring offences, which have decreased by 12% and 4% respectively.

Fines account for the majority (76%) of all offenders sentenced overall. However, for indictable offences, a greater proportion of offenders (32%) received immediate custody than any other sentence outcome, up by 1 percentage point compared to 2017. Compared to 2008, the proportion of offenders receiving a community sentence for indictable offences has declined by 13 percentage points to 20%, and the proportion receiving a suspended sentence has increased by 7 percentage points to 16%.

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



The only offence group to see an increase in the number of people sentenced to immediate custody in the latest year was possession of weapons, where 4,500 (up from 4,200) individuals were sentenced. The custody rate for the offence group also increased by 1.8 percentage points to 35.4%.

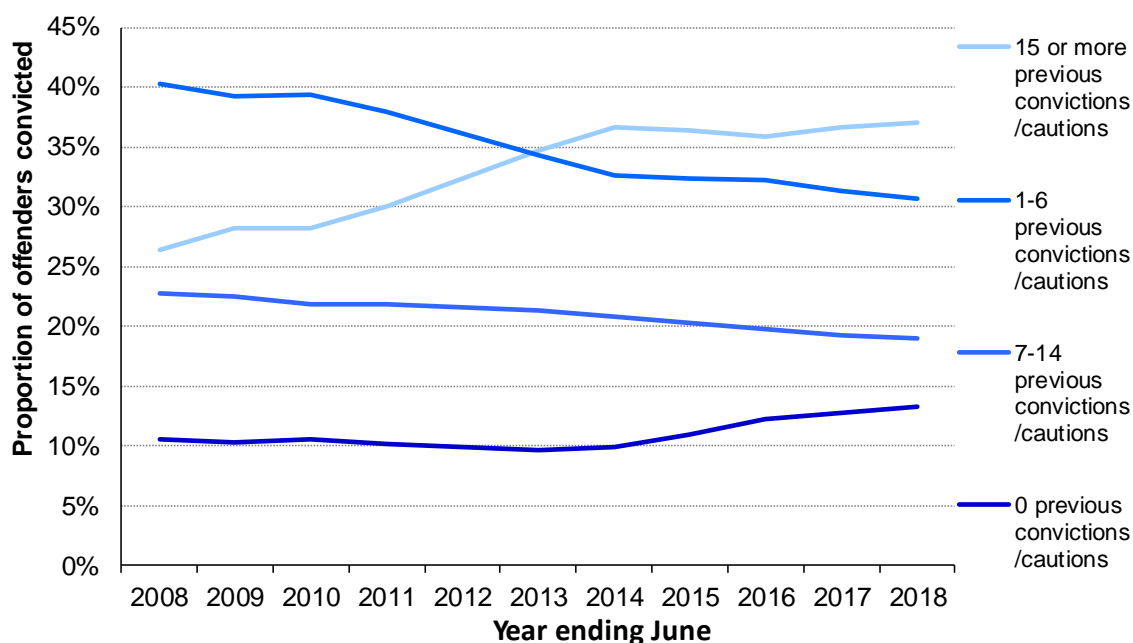
¹² Custody rates are calculated as the number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody as a proportion of all sentenced.

6. Offending Histories

Whilst the overall number of offenders convicted for an indictable offence has decreased, offenders with long criminal careers now account for nearly two-fifths of the offending population.

As highlighted in table 3.2, the number of offenders convicted for an indictable offence has been decreasing year on year since 2011, falling by 40%. Over the same period the proportion with a long criminal career¹³ has increased. In the year ending June 2018 nearly two fifths (37%) of the offending population had a long criminal career; an increase of 7 percentage points since 2011.

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



The number of first time offenders has decreased for the third year in a row, from 30,985 in the year ending June 2016 to 27,760 in the year ending June 2018, however the proportion of the offending population who are first time offenders has increased year on year since the year ending June 2013, and is now at its highest level. In the year ending June 2018 13% of the offending population was a first time offender, a 4 percentage point increase since the year ending June 2013.

Recent police recorded crime figures published by the ONS¹⁴ showed a 23% increase in the number of weapons possession offences recorded in the year ending June 2018 when compared with the year ending June 2017, and over the same period the number of first time offenders convicted for this offence type has also increased (9%). Conversely, during this time the average custodial sentence length for possession of weapons offences fell from 14.2 months to 12.9 months, as highlighted in table Q5.2. Sentencing is entirely a matter for the independent courts and differences in sentencing outcomes will be the result of a number of factors being taken into account. These can include whether the offender has previous convictions, or whether an early guilty plea was entered, as well as the particular aggravating and mitigating factors present in each case.

¹³ Offenders with a long criminal career are those with 15 or more previous cautions or convictions.

¹⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2018>

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.

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 data tools and analysis on Prolific Offenders

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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