

Notes on Experimental Statistics: Defendants prosecuted for combinations of offences

Background

The CSV file accompanying this document contains Experimental Statistics showing the numbers of defendants prosecuted for different combinations of offences and the numbers of defendants prosecuted at magistrates' courts for each offence in calendar years 2017 and 2018.

Most of the information in the 'Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018' publication is reported on a 'principal offence basis'¹. This means that where a defendant is proceeded against for more than once offence, they will only be counted for their principal offence. The Experimental Statistics in the accompanying CSV provide the number of defendants prosecuted for particular offences and the number of defendants prosecuted for each combination of two offences irrespective of whether those offences are principal or non-principal.

As the CSV file contains prosecutions data only, all data presented are derived from magistrates' courts' case management systems, not the Crown Court. The data include offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by government departments, private organisations and individuals.

This CSV builds on the experimental 'Prosecutions for non-principal offences, by principal offence' CSV which was published for the first time alongside the 'Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017' publication². This CSV shows an alternative way of presenting the data, and explanation of the different methodologies is provided below.

These are **Experimental Statistics** – we would particularly welcome feedback from users on their value and presentation.

How to use

The meanings of the columns in the CSV are as follows:

- **year** – year of defendant's appearance in the magistrates' courts
- **offence_x & offence_y** – offences, shown at the offence level
- **n_defendants_offence_x** – the total number of defendants prosecuted for offence_x. Includes defendants prosecuted for one or more counts of offence_x, and defendants prosecuted for offence_x alongside other offence
- **n_defendants_offences_x_and_y** – the number of defendants prosecuted for both offence_x and offence_y. Includes defendants prosecuted for these offences alongside additional offences

To find the total number of defendants prosecuted for a particular offence, refer to columns "offence_x" and "n_defendants_offence_x". This will include defendants for whom offence_x was the principal offence for which they were dealt with and defendants for whom offence_x was their non-principal offence. To find which offences defendants were prosecuted for alongside a particular "offence_x", filter on the offence of interest and refer to columns "offence_y" and "n_defendants_offences_x_and_y".

¹ See the 'Guide to Criminal Justice Statistics' accompanying this publication for further information on the 'principal offence' and how it is determined.

² www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2017

As an example, to find which offences defendants were prosecuted for alongside ‘8.21 Engage in controlling / coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship’, filter to offence_x = ‘8.21 Engage in controlling / coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship’ and refer to “offence_y” and “n_defendants_offences_x_and_y” columns. Table 1 shows an extract from the 2018 ‘Defendants prosecuted for combinations of offences’ dataset.

Table 1: Extract from the 2018 ‘defendants prosecuted for combinations of offences’ CSV

year	offence_x	n_defendants_offence_x	offence_y	n_defendants_offences_x_and_y
2018	8.21 Engage in controlling / coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship	920	105 Common assault and battery	457
2018	8.21 Engage in controlling / coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship	920	8.01 Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	200

Table 1 can be interpreted as follows: In 2018, a total of 920 defendants were prosecuted for ‘engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate/family relationship’ as either a principal or a non-principal offence. Of those defendants, 457 were also prosecuted for ‘common assault and battery’ and 200 were also prosecuted for ‘assault occasioning actual bodily harm’.

‘Common assault and battery’ and ‘assault occasioning actual bodily harm’ were the two offences for which defendants were most commonly prosecuted in combination with ‘engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate/family relationship’. Further combinations can be found in the accompanying CSV.

Note that some of the 920 defendants prosecuted for ‘engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate/family relationship’ may have been prosecuted for multiple counts this offence. Such defendants are only counted once. Similarly, Table 1 shows 457 defendants prosecuted for both ‘engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate/family relationship’ and ‘common assault and battery’. Defendants prosecuted for multiple counts or either or both offences are only counted once.

Comparison with other products published alongside the ‘Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018’

The Experimental Statistics accompanying this note count defendants on a different basis to the other products published alongside the ‘Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018’. Other accompanying products are presented on either a ‘principal offence’ basis or an ‘all offence’ basis. To illustrate the differences, taking the number of prosecutions for offence ‘1 Murder’ in 2018 as an example:

- 635 defendants were prosecuted for murder as their principal offence (source: ‘Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data’ tool)
- 658 defendants were prosecuted for at least one count of murder (source: the “n_defendants_offence_x” column of the CSV accompanying this document). This

‘defendant basis’ figure is higher because it includes defendants for whom another offence was the principal offence for which they were prosecuted³

- Defendants were prosecuted for a total of 681 counts of murder (source: ‘Experimental statistics: All offence prosecutions and convictions by Home Office offence code’ tool). This ‘all offence’ figure is higher because some defendants were prosecuted for multiple counts of murder.

Comparison with ‘Prosecutions for non-principal offences, by principal offence’ published May 2018

In May 2018, we published ‘Prosecutions for non-principal offences, by principal offence’ CSV as part of the ‘Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017’ publication. The ‘Defendants prosecuted for combinations of offences’ CSV accompanying this file builds on that and presents data on a different basis to offer a slightly different interpretation of patterns of offending. Both use different methods to offer insight into patterns of types of offences for which defendants are prosecuted and associated offences. Both methods are valid and have different strengths and limitations. The key differences between these methods are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: differences between Experimental Statistics products

Product	Defendants prosecuted for combinations of offences	Prosecutions for non-principal offences, by principal offence	Reason for presenting on defendant-basis alongside the May 2019 publication
First published:	Published May 2019	Published May 2018	
How does it count...	Counts defendants	Counts offences	
...a defendant prosecuted for one count of offence x?	One defendant counted within n_defendants_offence_x	Not counted – only counts non-principal offences	Includes total numbers of defendants prosecuted for each offence, which are on a different basis to the rest of the publication. This is the first time these have been published, which adds new insight.
...a defendant prosecuted for multiple counts of offence_x?	One defendant counted within n_defendants_offence_x	Multiple non-principal offences counted	Aids interpretability and brings the statistics more in line with the rest of the bulletin, which is focused on numbers of defendants.
...a defendant prosecuted for offences A (principal offence), B & C (non-principal offences)?	Counts the defendant for combinations AB, BC and AC (i.e. three times)	Count the defendant for combinations AB and AC (i.e. twice) Combination BC not counted as neither is a principal offence	To include interactions between non-principal offences and remove trends caused by certain offences being more likely to appear as either the principal or non-principal offence

³ Where defendants were prosecuted for murder as a non-principal offence, they may have been prosecuted for an offence with an equally severe statutory maximum penalty, or been dealt with for a different offence at magistrates’ court and sent to the Crown Court for trial for murder. Explanation of how the principal offence is selected in the prosecutions data is available in the ‘Guide to Criminal Justice Statistics’ accompanying this publication.

We welcome feedback from users on which method of presentation best suits their needs.

An example of some analysis using the Experimental Statistics 'Prosecutions for non-principal offences, by principal offence' published in May 2018 is the ONS 'Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system' report published in December 2018⁴.

Other notes

- A defendant may be prosecuted for more than two offences, so they may be counted in more than one offence combination. Because of this, values for "n_defendants_offences_x_and_y" will not sum to the total number of defendants and values should not be added together.
- While we have made every effort to ensure data presented are accurate, there are a small number of offences where data submitted to us had an incorrect or invalid offence code. These are labelled as 'Not Known' in the "offence_x" and "offence_y" columns
- Data on defendants prosecuted are drawn solely from the magistrates' courts records. For some offences, cases may bypass the magistrates' courts and go straight to the Crown Court, so these records will not appear in the prosecutions data.
- Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts. This is particularly important for non-principal offences, which have not been subject to the same level of validation as the principal offence datasets. Consequently, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations, such as risks of inconsistent offence coding or erroneous data entry, are taken into account when those data are used.

Data supplier

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Further information on data sources and definitions can be found in the guidance document produced alongside the main report - Guide to Criminal Justice Statistics at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-december-2018

The main bulletin and accompanying tables and tools can also be accessed.

⁴www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffendingvictimisationandthepaththroughthecriminaljusticesystem/2018-12-13#court-proceedings