



Metadata for court level sentencing file

For 2009 sentencing statistics, court level sentencing data has been made available from the Ministry of Justice website. This has been supplied in the form of a CSV (comma separated variable) file. A CSV file is a flat file with no hard coded information. CSV files can be easily read in to a number of spreadsheet or database programmes e.g. Microsoft Excel, PASW Statistics, SAS, Microsoft Access, OpenOffice Calc etc.

The file has been compressed for ease of download and manipulation so that each row contains only a unique combination of variables, and a weighting factor that tells how many offenders that combination applied to.

In order to count the number of offenders sentenced, reduce the file to the cases you wish to examine then sum the values contained within the "Sentenced" column. Similarly to take a count of the number of offenders convicted reduce the file to the cases you wish to examine and sum the values in the "Convicted" column.

There may be differences between the numbers convicted and sentenced in a year or court for a two main reasons:

- Firstly, the conviction may have taken place in one year and sentencing may have taken place in another e.g. an offender convicted in December 2008 may have their sentencing hearing in January 2009 this record would appear as an offender sentenced in 2009 yet not convicted;
- Secondly, an offender convicted at magistrates' court and then committed for sentence to the Crown Court would appear in two rows of the file. For their magistrates' court row it would appear they had been convicted yet not sentenced, and for the Crown Court row it would appear they had been sentenced and not convicted. Neither is true; this is simply a feature of the database where data has been drawn from two sources (the Crown Court CREST system and the magistrates' courts LIBRA system).

Variables present in the file

Year : The year of the outcome of the court case, while only for 2009 at present this will be extended as more data is added to the file.

Police Force Area : The police force area (PFA) where the court case originated. There are 42 PFAs in England and Wales and these correspond to Criminal Justice Areas with the Metropolitan and City of London PFA grouped together as 'London'.

Court Type : Whether the conviction or sentence (or both) was given at the magistrates' or Crown Court.

Court : The magistrates' or Crown Court which dealt with the case. Magistrates' courts are often grouped and can operate from multiple magistrates' court buildings. Where multiple sites are grouped it is the larger group that statistics are displayed for, not the individual site. If you are having trouble locating your local court try searching within your local Police Force Area.

Offence Group : The offence group that the court case falls into. The groups shown here correspond to the offence groupings shown in Sentencing Statistics 2009 and are consistent with the offence groupings used by the Home Office for their crime statistics.

Offence Category : The offence category for the court case. This is a more detailed description of the offence for which an offender has been convicted or sentenced. Further details of the offences used by the Ministry of Justice can be found in appendix six of Sentencing Statistics 2009.

Convictions : The number of convictions

Sentenced : The number of sentences

Sentence Outcome : The result of the court case. Further details on sentencing and the types of disposal contained within each sentence outcome can be found in Appendix one of Sentencing Statistics 2009.

Multipers : The number of individuals who appeared in court for an identical case. This is a weighting variable used to calculate the number of convictions or sentences in each row of data.

Caveats

This is an experimental dataset made available to the public for the first time; where a conflict arises between the figures shown here and those contained within Sentencing Statistics or Criminal Statistics 2009 primacy should be given to the published figures in the annual volumes.

Further work to improve the data available here is ongoing and as it becomes available data for previous years will be added. We have also created an interactive tool to enable easier access to the court level sentencing statistics at www.justice.gov.uk/sentencing/statistics

The standard explanations and caveats that apply to all sentencing data produced by the Ministry of Justice still apply, namely:

The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to people for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

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 and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

The Suspended Sentence Order (SSO) was introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 for offences committed from April 2005 and replaced the Fully Suspended Sentence (FSS).