

Average Time From Arrest To Sentence For Persistent Young Offenders: May 2008

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

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Executive summary

Background

This Bulletin presents the latest figures on the average time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders.

These figures are used to monitor the pledge to halve the average time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in England and Wales from 142 days in 1996 to 71 days.

Main Points

- The average time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in England and Wales was 56 days in May 2008, 1 day lower than in April 2008.
- The overall average time from arrest to sentence for cases sentenced in magistrates' courts was 45 days in May 2008 – down 2 days from the previous month.
- Cases sentenced in the Crown Court took an average of 200 days from arrest to sentence during May 2008, down 1 day from April 2008.

Average Interval from Arrest to Sentence

The bulletin

This bulletin contains statistics on the average time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in England and Wales.

This bulletin presents figures for May 2008. In-year figures for 2008 will be revised as more data is entered onto the Police National Computer, and when the arrest dates survey for 2008 has been completed – please see the Notes section for further details.

The main body of the bulletin is organised in three parts. This first part contains commentary on the latest figures, the second has detailed tables of results, and the final part comprises of notes on the pledge and methodology used and also includes contact points for enquires.

England and Wales

The average time between arrest and sentence for persistent young offenders during May 2008 was 56 days, 1 day lower than in the previous month.

Further figures can be found in table 1 (page 6). A graph showing monthly progress from January 1997 is shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Average time (days) between arrest and sentence for persistent young offenders – England and Wales, January 1997 to May 2008



Cases sentenced at Magistrates' Courts

For May 2008, cases sentenced at magistrates' courts represented 93 per cent of all persistent young offender cases. As table 2 (page 7) shows, the overall average time from arrest to sentence for these cases was 45 days, down 2 days from the previous month.

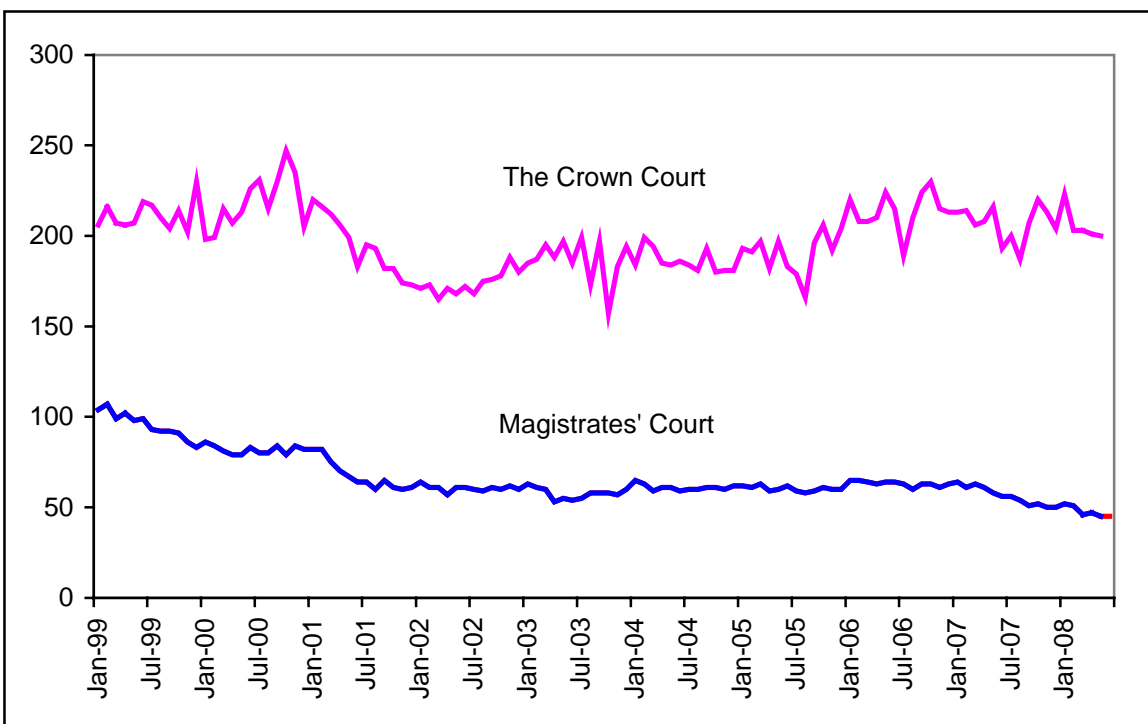
Cases sentenced at the Crown Court

The average time from arrest to sentence for cases sentenced at the Crown Court during May 2008 was 200 days, down 1 day from the previous month. For further figures please see table 3 (page 8).

Cases sentenced at the Crown Court include both time spent in magistrates' courts before committal to the Crown Court and time spent in Crown Court proceedings after committal. However, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of these periods separately.

The average arrest to sentence times for cases sentenced at the Crown Court and magistrates' courts between January 1999 and May 2008 are shown separately in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Average time (days) from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders by sentencing court – England and Wales, January 1999 to May 2008



Criminal Justice System Areas

A breakdown by criminal justice area on a three-month rolling average basis is shown in table 4 (page 9).

On this basis, the number of areas achieving the 71-day target in the latest period (March - May 2008) was 40, as shown in figure 3 and 4 below.

Figure 3: Number of Criminal Justice System areas within target by rolling three-month arrest to sentence averages – October 2007 to May 2008

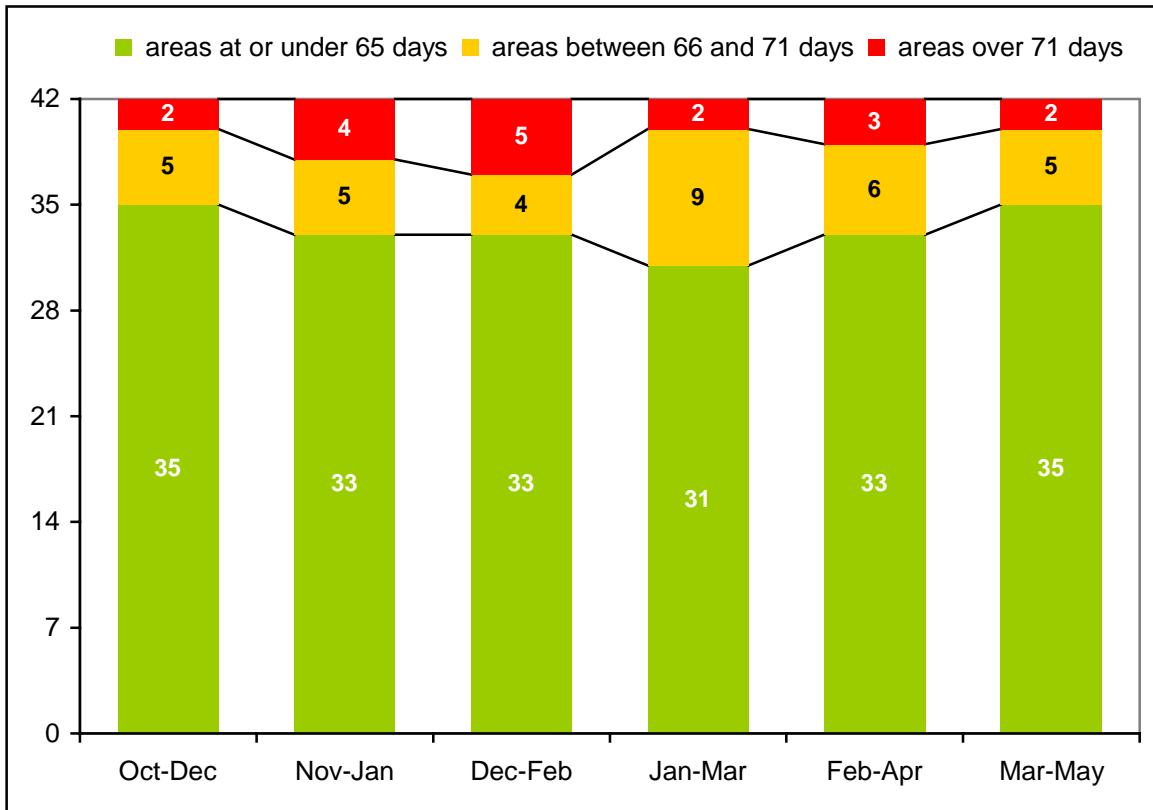


Figure 4: Geographical spread of Criminal Justice System areas within target by rolling three-month arrest to sentence averages – rolling quarter ending May 2008

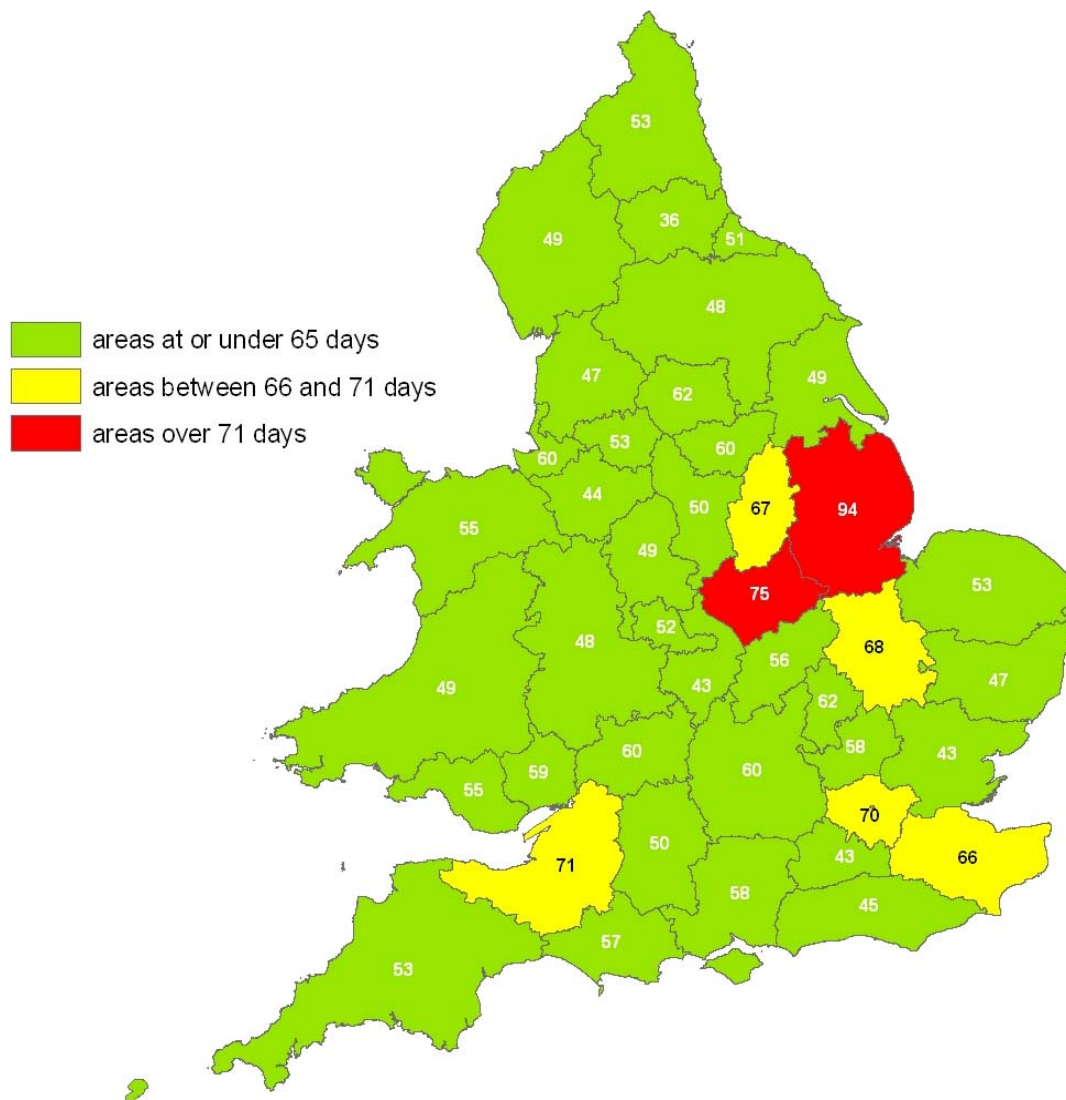


Table 1: Average number of days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in England and Wales

Period		Days	Number of cases
1996		142	-
1997		141	16,010
1998		125	18,605
1999		108	21,151
2000 ⁽¹⁾		95	23,131
2001		76	25,393
2002		68	26,116
2003 ⁽¹⁾		66	26,086
2004		69	26,363
2005		68	27,037
2006		72	28,252
2007		65	30,683
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2007	January – March	72	7,813
	April – June	67	7,928
	July – September	62	7,766
	October – December	60	7,176
2008	January – March (r)	60	7,233 (+30)
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2007	January	72	2,618
	February ⁽¹⁾	69	2,486
	March	73	2,709
	April	70	2,530
	May ⁽¹⁾	66	2,733
	June	64	2,665
	July	64	2,690
	August	62	2,668
	September	60	2,408
	October	62	2,688
	November	59	2,625
	December	61	1,863
2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	62	2,629 (+5)
	February (r)	62	2,414 (+11)
	March (r)	56	2,190 (+14)
	April (r)	57	2,627 (+20)
	May (r)	56	2,394 (+63)
	June (p)	56	2,300

Notes:

All period figures denoted by - are not applicable.

All period figures denoted by (r) are based on revised data and replace those provided in the last bulletin in the series.

All period figures denoted by (p) are based on provisional data.

- (1) Full application of the new methodology (to remove double counting of Arrest to Charge survey time) required the recalculating of time-series figures. This has resulted in the substantive changes on the previously published numbers.
- (2) In-year figures for 2008 will be revised as when the arrest dates from the annual Arrest to Charge survey for 2008 are collected in March 2009.

Table 2: Average number of days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders sentenced at Magistrates' Courts in England and Wales

Period		Days	Number of cases
1999		96	18,851
2000 ⁽¹⁾		83	21,146
2001		68	23,752
2002 ⁽¹⁾		63	24,280
2003 ⁽¹⁾		58	24,481
2004		61	24,698
2005 ⁽¹⁾		61	25,498
2006		63	26,529
2007		57	28,904
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2007	January – March	63	7,351
	April – June	58	7,469
	July – September	54	7,332
	October – December	51	6,752
2008	January – March (r)	50	6,767 (+28)
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2007	January	64	2,484
	February	61	2,350
	March	63	2,517
	April	61	2,372
	May	58	2,585
	June	56	2,512
	July	56	2,554
	August	54	2,500
	September	51	2,278
	October	52	2,527
	November	50	2,487
	December	50	1,738
2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	52	2,476 (+6)
	February (r)	51	2,235 (+9)
	March (r)	46	2,056 (+13)
	April (r)	47	2,470 (+17)
	May (r)	45	2,217 (+54)
	June (p)	45	2,141

Notes:

All period figures denoted by (r) are based on revised data and replace those provided in the last bulletin in the series. All period figures denoted by (p) are based on provisional data.

- (1) Full application of the new methodology (to remove double counting of Arrest to Charge survey time) required the re-calculating of time-series figures. This has resulted in the substantive changes on the previously published numbers.
- (2) In-year figures for 2008 will be revised as when the arrest dates from the annual Arrest to Charge survey for 2008 are collected in March 2009.

Table 3: Average number of days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders sentenced at the Crown Court in England and Wales

Period	Days	Number of cases	
1999	212	2,271	
2000	218	1,976	
2001	196	1,632	
2002 ⁽¹⁾	178	1,829	
2003 ⁽¹⁾	188	1,590	
2004	186	1,653	
2005 ⁽¹⁾	192	1,526	
2006	214	1,704	
2007	206	1,769	
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2007	January – March	210	459
	April – June	206	456
	July – September	197	433
	October – December	213	421
2008	January – March (r)	210	450 (+2)
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2007	January	213	132
	February	214	136
	March	206	191
	April	208	156
	May	216	148
	June	193	150
	July	200	136
	August	187	167
	September	207	130
	October	220	160
	November	213	138
	December	204	123
2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	223 (+1)	145 (-1)
	February (r)	203 (-1)	176 (+2)
	March (r)	203	129 (+1)
	April (r)	201 (-2)	156 (+3)
	May	200	174

Notes:

All period figures denoted by (r) are based on revised data and replace those provided in the last bulletin in the series. All period figures denoted by (p) are based on provisional data.

- (1) Full application of the new methodology (to remove double counting of Arrest to Charge survey time) required the re-calculating of time-series figures. This has resulted in the substantive changes on the previously published numbers.
- (2) In-year figures for 2008 will be revised as when the arrest dates from the annual Arrest to Charge survey for 2008 are collected in March 2009.

Table 4: Average number of days from arrest to sentence (three-month rolling averages) for persistent young offenders in England and Wales and by Criminal Justice Area from October 2007 to May 2008⁽²⁾

Area ⁽¹⁾	Oct 07 to Dec 07 (r)	Nov 07 to Jan 08 (r)	Dec 07 to Feb 08 (r)	Jan 08 to Mar 08 (r)	Feb 08 to Apr 08 (r)	Mar 08 to May 08
Avon and Somerset	67	66	67	69	67	71
Bedfordshire	69	66	58	49	59	62
Cambridgeshire	54	49	56	65	67	68
Cheshire	38	32	35	37	41	44
Cleveland	59	63	63	63	60	51
Cumbria	51	53	52	58	50	49
Derbyshire	52	52	48	46	45	50
Devon and Cornwall	58	60	61	62	58	53
Dorset	65	54	64	61	75	57
Durham	52	48	55	48	48	36
Dyfed-Powys	53	52	45	54	55	49
Essex	55	53	55	56	49	43
Gloucestershire	64	74	72	69	55	60
Greater Manchester	62	62	61	54	52	53
Gwent	39	42	54	54	58	59
Hampshire	64	63	67	65	62	58
Hertfordshire	67	95	74	69	61	58
Humberside	57	58	62	62	58	49
Kent	58	59	65	69	70	66
Lancashire	63	66	65	56	50	47
Leicestershire	59	63	69	70	73	75
Lincolnshire	41	43	55	86	78	94
Merseyside	80	71	65	57	58	60
Metropolitan	69	72	73	72	71	70
Norfolk	55	52	57	48	43	53
North Wales	49	45	58	61	56	55
North Yorkshire	65	60	62	59	55	48
Northamptonshire	46	53	55	59	50	56
Northumbria	64	61	59	56	53	53
Nottinghamshire	53	58	65	68	71	67
South Wales	56	60	63	65	56	55
South Yorkshire	65	72	76	66	69	60
Staffordshire	48	51	60	64	56	49
Suffolk	52	52	46	49	47	47
Surrey	51	66	78	71	56	43
Sussex	60	64	67	60	51	45
Thames Valley	71	63	65	62	62	60
Warwickshire	38	49	45	62	46	43
West Mercia	60	50	44	42	48	48
West Midlands	51	53	55	54	52	52
West Yorkshire	63	59	61	61	65	62
Wiltshire	74	59	62	69	64	50
British Transport Police	67	69	60	51	62	57
England and Wales	60	60	62	60	58	56

Note:

All Figures denoted by * are based on 40 or fewer cases and should be interpreted with particular care.

All period figures denoted by (r) are based on revised data and replace those provided in the last bulletin in the series.

- (1) The area classification is based on the Police Force that investigated the offence and entered the charge or summons details on the Police National Computer. In a small proportion of cases, prosecution and court proceedings may have been handled in different areas to that which first recorded the cases.

Notes to the pledge

The pledge

1. The original Government pledge was to halve the time it takes to deal with persistent young offenders from arrest to sentence in England and Wales from 142 days in 1996 to 71 days by 2002. The timely process of these offenders at the target level remains an ongoing commitment.
2. Overall responsibility for the pledge is shared jointly by all Criminal Justice System departments and agencies. However, the agency with the lead responsibility for overseeing delivery nationally is the Office for Criminal Justice Reform.
3. From 2005, the pledge has been applied to all Criminal Justice System areas, who are required to achieve the compliance target on a consistent basis. The Local Criminal Justice Boards are responsible for delivery in the local areas.
4. Since 1997, this National Statistics bulletin published by the Ministry of Justice has presented national and local performance against the target.

Notes to the data and methodology

Data sources

5. The raw data used to identify persistent young offenders, and to calculate the average time interval from arrest to sentence across relevant cases are:
 - the Police National Computer, which is the police's central management information database. The source provides a full collection of cases, and all the variables needed to determine the offenders classification and to contribute to the calculation of performance against the target; and
 - the annual Arrest to Charge survey, which is an annual sample survey designed to enable the calculation of robust representative estimates of subsidiary time from the initial to the process stage.

Please see the definitional and calculation rules for details on data usage.

Paths through the system

6. Offenders can take two paths through the Criminal Justice System:
 - one where they are arrested and subsequently processed by the police, then listed to appear in court for however many hearings are necessary until the session where the sentence is passed on them; and

- another where they are reported and information is laid against them by the police, then they are summoned to appear in court for however many hearings until the final session where the sentence is passed on them.

Definitional rules

7. The data used to identify whether a defendant found guilty of an offence is a persistent young offender comes from the Police National Computer. Under the counting rules such an offender is:
 - a young person who is aged 10 to 17 at the point of process, and 18 or under at the start of the calendar year in which they are sentenced guilty of an offence;
 - who has been sentenced guilty of offences by any criminal court in the United Kingdom on three or more separate occasions in the past for one or more recordable offences on each of the occasions; and
 - within 3 years of the last of these sentencing occasion is subsequently arrested and then found guilty of at least one more recordable offence.

Under this definition, it is possible for young adults aged 18 and 19 years at sentence, but not those aged 20 years or over, to fall in the category.

Calculation rules

8. The full data used to calculate the overall interval between the initial stage (arrest or reporting / information laid) and the sentence stage for the cases of persistent young offenders comes from the Police National Computer in the main.
9. However, some additional data from the annual Arrest to Charge survey is used in the calculations for an ever-decreasing number of cases. For this minority of cases, survey results are used as proxy for time from the initial to process (charge or summons) stage, where that time is not recorded on the main data source. This time is then added to the usually larger interval from process to sentence stage derived from the aforementioned source.
10. The overall interval is commonly known as the average time from arrest to sentence, owing to the fact the vast majority of cases pass through that path. It can essentially be a national, sentencing court type jurisdiction or local area average of the intervals of all relevant cases in a given period.

Additional notes

National Statistics

11. This is a National Statistics publication produced by the Ministry of Justice. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The bulletin

12. The Ministry of Justice has produced the figures in this bulletin with assistance from the data source owner in the National Policing Improvement Agency.
13. The figures presented in this bulletin are obtained from separate monitoring exercises run on successive monthly data extractions from the Police National Computer from 1997.
14. In accordance with the counting rules, the bulletin covers all cases sentenced in magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales that are recorded on the Police National Computer.

The definition

15. A persistent young offender was first defined in the inter-departmental circular 'Tackling delays in the Youth Justice System' issued on 15 October 1997:

"A persistent young offender is a young person aged 10-17 who has been sentenced by any criminal court in the UK on three or more separate occasions for one or more recordable offence, and within three years of the last sentencing occasion is subsequently arrested or has an information laid against them for a further recordable offence."

16. Individuals can fall within this definition at the date of sentence. This happens where offenders are brought into the group by virtue of one or more offences committed after but dealt with before the fourth sentencing occasion. Essentially, this rearranges the usual order of counting occasions, so that offences which would not be expected to fall on the final occasion do so; with the longest lasting case then contributing to the arrest to sentence averages.

The calculations

17. In the instance where an offender is sentenced for more than one offence on the fourth sentencing occasion, only the longest running of these cases will contribute to the arrest to sentence averages.

The extraction

18. All cases in the consecutive counting of sentencing occasions are extracted from the source. However, some of them are then excluded from the monitoring exercise because the offences were:

- committed outside the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man;
- handled by a police force outside England and Wales, other than cases handled by the British Transport Police;
- proceeded with in courts outside England and Wales;
- resulted in no convictions being brought against the offender, for example where individuals were acquitted or cases against them discounted; and
- breaches of previous sentence order, for example probation orders.

However, from 1 January 2005 breaches of anti-social behaviour orders have been included in the exercise.

The amended methodology

19. From May 2006, all arrest to sentence figures have been calculated using an amended methodology. This new approach has been applied to remove the double counting of Arrest to Charge time for offences processed at arrest, or else that where overall time is recorded on the Police National Computer.

20. The new methodology has been retrospectively applied to backdated periods, so that all time-series are consistent within this bulletin and others released since the change. However, changes to statistics published prior to May 2006 may be partly or wholly due to this amendment and are not comparable.

The provisional statistics

21. From April 2007, more up to date statistics have been made available in this bulletin. The introduction of 2 months in arrears statistics has augmented the headline 3 month in arrears figures.

22. These provisional statistics were introduced after a longitudinal study of data collections from the Police National Computer, which revealed that from January 2005 around 95% of records are consistently inputted 2 months in arrears in England and Wales.

23. The collection of more data earlier has meant that 2 months in arrears statistics have become closer to the published National Statistics for England and Wales and for cases heard in magistrates' courts. These provisional statistics are adjusted in the order reflect observed historical and seasonal fluctuations.

The survey

24. The Arrest to Charge survey collects arrest or information laid dates in March for a representative sample of cases for the previous calendar year.
25. Respondents in each of the police constabularies and the British Transport Police complete the survey forms sent by the Ministry of Justice. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary champions the survey, and helps to ensure its prompt completion.
26. In the instance where survey forms contain offenders with more than one offence sentenced on a single occasion, only the longest running of these cases will contribute to the survey results.
27. The previous year's survey estimates are used to calculate in-year arrest to sentence figures until the current survey results are available.

Symbols and conventions

The following symbols have been used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

- Not applicable
- 0 Nil
- .. Not available
- (r) Revised data
- (p) Provisional data

Contact points for further information

Current and previous editions of this publication are available for download at:

www.justice.gov.uk/publications/averagetimearresttosentencepyo.htm

This bulletin, together with other information about delay in persistent young offender cases can also be found on the Youth Justice Board's reducing delays internet site at:

www.yjb.gov.uk/en-b/practitioners/MonitoringPerformance/ReducingDelays/

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

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