

Average Time From Arrest To Sentence For Persistent Young Offenders: August 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 52 days in August 2008, 2 days lower than in July 2008.
- The overall average time from arrest to sentence for cases sentenced in magistrates' courts was 43 days in August 2008 – down 2 days from the previous month.
- Cases sentenced in the Crown Court took an average of 209 days from arrest to sentence during August 2008, up 22 days from July 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 August 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 August 2008 was 52 days, 2 days 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 August 2008



Cases sentenced at Magistrates' Courts

For August 2008, cases sentenced at magistrates' courts represented 94 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 43 days, down 2 days from the previous month.

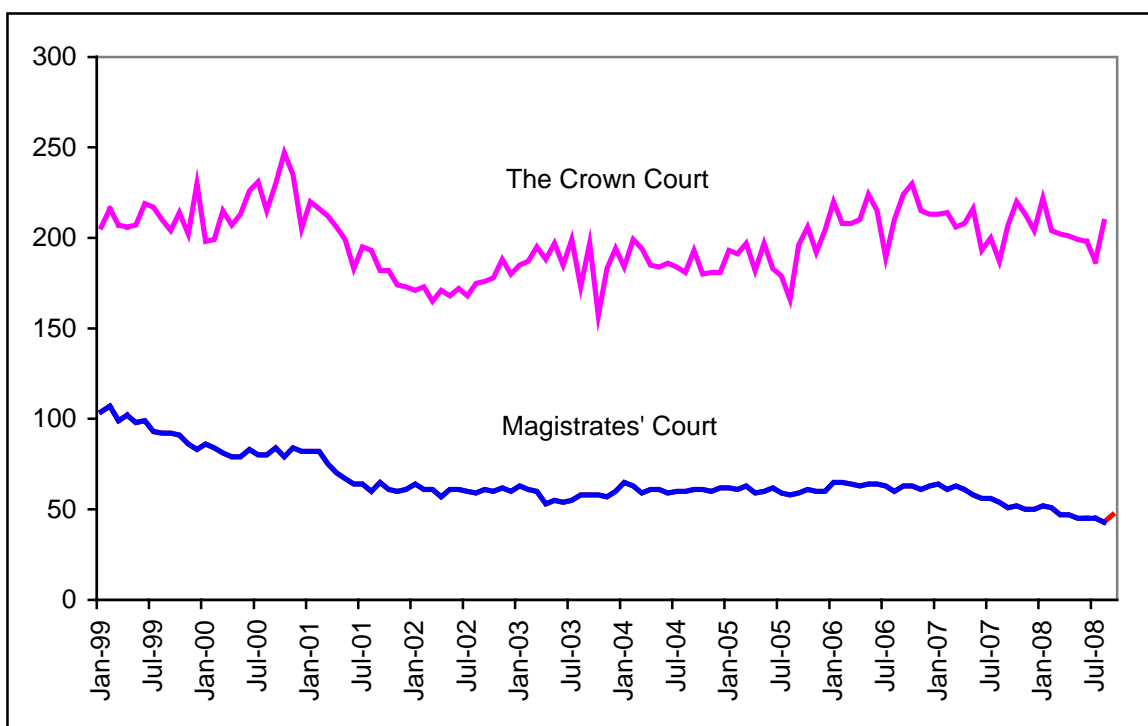
Cases sentenced at the Crown Court

The average time from arrest to sentence for cases sentenced at the Crown Court during August 2008 was 209 days, up 22 days 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 August 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 August 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 (June - August 2008) was 41, 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 – January 2008 to August 2008

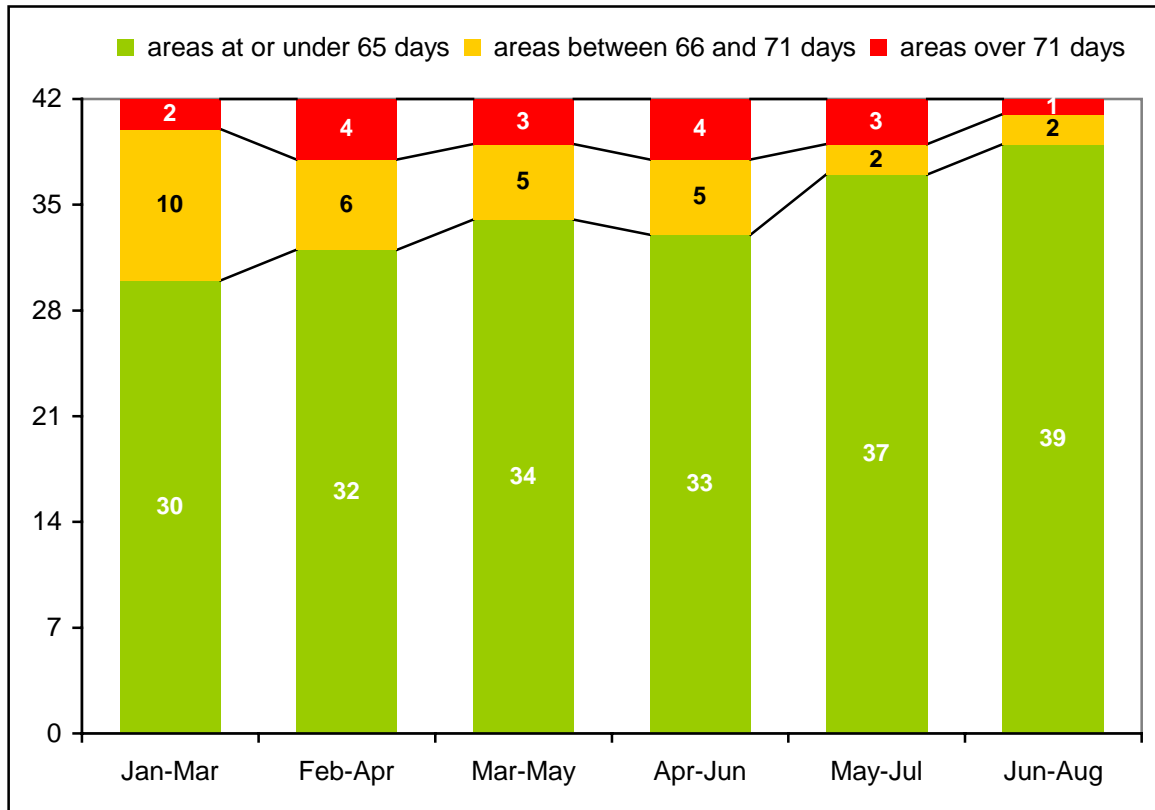


Figure 4: Geographical spread of Criminal Justice System areas within target by rolling three-month arrest to sentence averages – rolling quarter ending August 2008

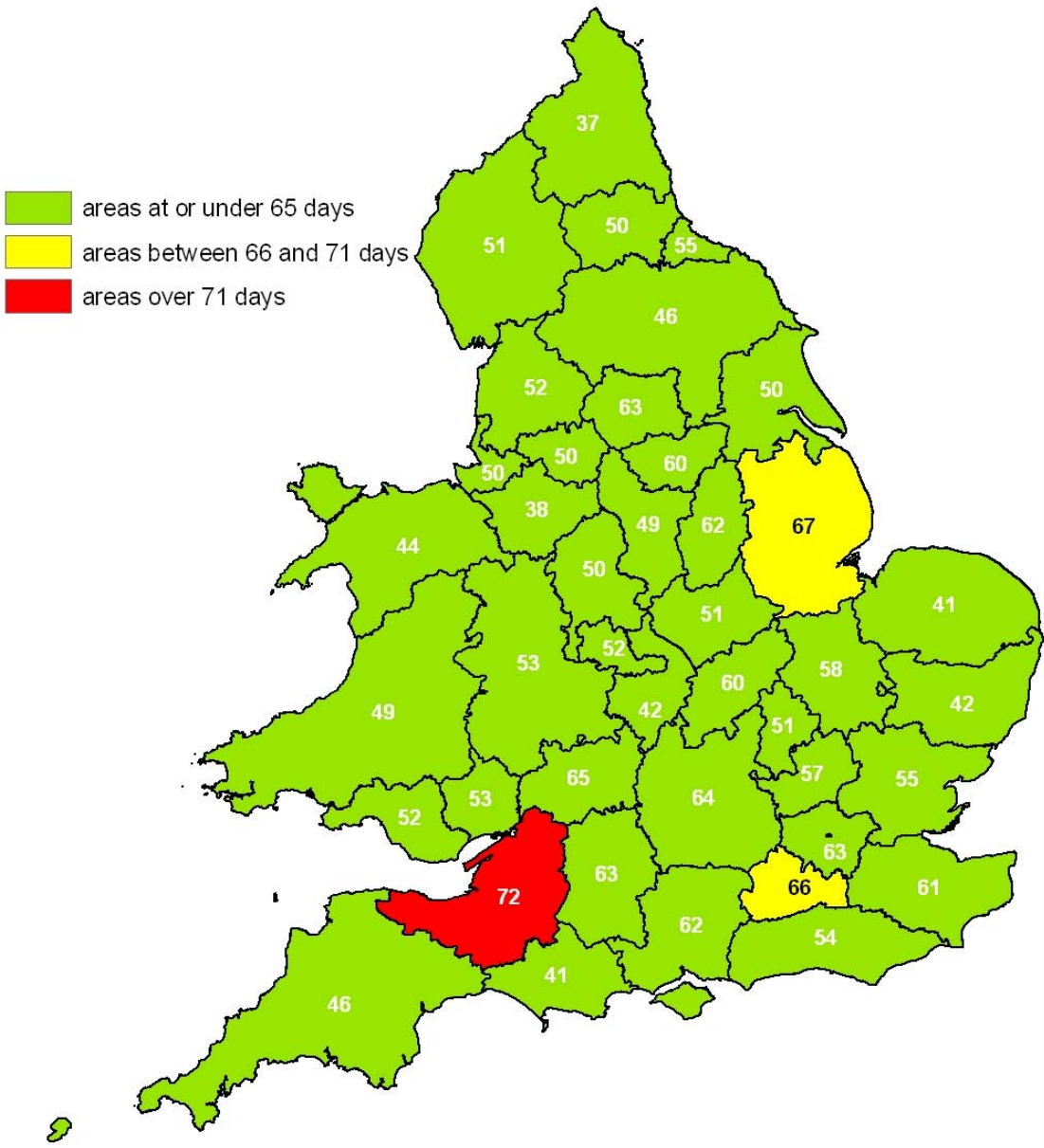


Table 1: Average number of days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in England and Wales

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	7,275 (+5)
	April – June (r)	56	7,447 (+22)
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2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	62	2,638 (+2)
	February (r)	62	2,433 (+2)
	March (r)	56	2,204 (+1)
	April (r)	57	2,654 (+8)
	May (r)	57 (+1)	2,419 (+5)
	June (r)	56	2,374 (+9)
	July (r)	54	2,686 (+9)
	August (r)	52	2,161 (+38)
	September (p)	58	2,230

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 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 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	6,804 (+4)
	April – June (r)	46	6,938 (+19)
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2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	52	2,484 (+1)
	February (r)	51	2,253 (+2)
	March (r)	47 (+1)	2,067 (+1)
	April (r)	47	2,493 (+6)
	May (r)	45	2,239 (+4)
	June (r)	45	2,206 (+9)
	July (r)	45	2,512 (+7)
	August (r)	43 (+1)	2,034 (+37)
	September (p)	47	2,076

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)	209 (-1)	455 (+1)
	April – June (r)	199 (-1)	500 (+3)
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2008 ⁽²⁾	January (r)	222 (-1)	146 (+1)
	February (r)	204	177
	March (r)	202	132
	April (r)	201	160 (+2)
	May (r)	199 (-1)	177 (+1)
	June (r)	198	163
	July (r)	187 (+1)	174 (+2)
	August	209	127

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 January 2008 to August 2008⁽²⁾

Area ⁽¹⁾	Jan 08 to Mar 08 (r)	Feb 08 to Apr 08 (r)	Mar 08 to May 08 (r)	Apr 08 to Jun 08 (r)	May 08 to Jul 08 (r)	Jun 08 to Aug 08
Avon and Somerset	69	67	71	76	74	72
Bedfordshire	56	74	75	68	57	51
Cambridgeshire	65	67	68	65	67	58
Cheshire	37	41	45	46	44	38
Cleveland	63	60	51	53	50	55
Cumbria	58	50	49	46	51	51
Derbyshire	46	45	49	53	49	49
Devon and Cornwall	62	58	53	43	45	46
Dorset	63	78	57	53	45	41
Durham	48	47	35	42	41	50
Dyfed-Powys	54	55	49	38	39	49
Essex	59	52	44	41	49	55
Gloucestershire	69	55	59	62	72	65
Greater Manchester	54	52	53	54	51	50
Gwent	54	58	61	72	64	53
Hampshire	66	62	58	61	62	62
Hertfordshire	69	61	58	66	60	57
Humberside	62	58	49	51	49	50
Kent	69	69	66	75	65	61
Lancashire	56	50	47	48	52	52
Leicestershire	70	73	74	74	65	51
Lincolnshire	86	78	92	67	87	67
Merseyside	57	58	61	59	55	50
Metropolitan	72	71	70	69	65	63
Norfolk	48	43	53	54	52	41
North Wales	61	56	55	53	51	44
North Yorkshire	60	55	48	46	44	46
Northamptonshire	59	50	56	61	66	60
Northumbria	56	53	53	46	42	37
Nottinghamshire	68	71	66	64	59	62
South Wales	65	56	55	50	52	52
South Yorkshire	66	69	59	56	52	60
Staffordshire	64	56	49	47	49	50
Suffolk	49	47	47	43	47	42
Surrey	71	56	43	40	48	66
Sussex	61	53	46	44	52	54
Thames Valley	63	62	60	50	60	64
Warwickshire	62	45	43	31	38	42
West Mercia	42	48	48	53	52	53
West Midlands	53	53	52	57	56	52
West Yorkshire	61	65	64	68	64	63
Wiltshire	69	64	50	63	61	63
British Transport Police	51	62	57	68	62	56
England and Wales	60	58	57	56	55	54

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-gb/practitioners/MonitoringPerformance/ReducingDelays

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

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General enquires about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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