



Length of time spent in Youth Custody 2016/17

England and Wales

Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice

Statistics bulletin

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Length of time spent in Youth Custody: April 2016 to March 2017

This publication looks at the length of time children and young people in the Youth Justice System (YJS) spent in custody in the secure estate in England and Wales for the year ending March 2017.

The length of time a child or young person spends in the youth secure estate is measured in custodial episodes. A 'custodial episode ending' is a count of the number of nights from the date the child or young person was admitted into the youth secure estate until the date their episode ended or the date of their 18th birthday (whichever is earliest). A child or young person will be counted more than once if they had more than one custodial episode that ended within the year. An episode may end if the young person is released to the community, transitioned to the over 18 secure estate, transferred to a Mental Health Unit or turns 18 years old.

Main points

Around 2,350 custodial episodes ended in the youth secure estate



The number of custodial episodes ending in the youth secure estate has fallen by 14% in the last year, and by 26% compared with the year ending March 2015.

The median time spent in youth custody per episode was 90 nights



The median number of nights per episode in youth custody has remained the same as the previous year, but is an increase of three nights compared with the year ending March 2015.

The majority of custodial episodes ended within three months



57% of custodial episodes (around 1,350) ended within three months (1 to 91 nights). While this is fewer custodial episodes, the proportion this accounts for is the same as the previous year.

Most custodial episodes ended within three months for both BAME and White children and young people

55% of custodial episodes ended within three months (1 to 91 nights) for BAME children and young people, compared to 59% for White children and young people.

186 (8%) custodial episodes lasted more than one year



The proportion of episodes lasting more than one year (366 nights or more) has increased by 1 percentage point in each of the last two years, although the number of custodial episodes ending has fallen in the last year.

30% of the custodial episodes ending were Remand only



700 custodial episodes ended where the child or young person was held on Remand only. This has remained at between 27% and 30% of all episodes over the last two years.

Due to a change in data source in 2017, the methodology for these statistics has been reviewed and is no longer comparable to the methodology used in previous publications.

This is the first publication based on this new methodology, and three years of comparable data have been provided. For more details on the methodology and change in data source, see *A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics*.

We would welcome any feedback to informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk

Things you need to know

This is a one-off publication, with the focus on episodes children and young people spent in custody which ended between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 (hereafter the year ending March 2017). In previous years, these statistics have been included in the annual *Youth Justice Statistics*¹, however due to a change in data source and subsequent methodology, these are being published separately for 2016/17. Data for the year ending March 2018 will be included in the *Youth Justice Statistics, 2017/18* publication.

In this report, a custodial episode ends when:

- A child or young person is released to the community²;
- A child or young person is transferred to a mental health unit (whether or not their sentence has been served);
- A young person is transferred to the over 18 secure estate; and
- A young person turns 18³.

Young people may remain in the youth secure estate after they turn 18 years old. In these cases, the number of nights is calculated up to their 18th birthday. Any transfers between establishments or custodial orders received after a young person turns 18 are not counted.

Custodial episodes ending refers to the youth secure estate only and does not take into account any time the child or young person may go on to spend in the young adult or adult secure estate as part of the same sentence. See *A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics* for more information.

The same child or young person will be counted more than once if they had more than one custodial episode ending within the time period.

Due to a change in administrative databases it has not been possible to replicate the same methodology in previous annual *Youth Justice Statistics* publications. For a full explanation on how the methodology differs, please see *A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics*.

Three years' worth of comparable data have been presented in this report, based on a consistent methodology. The data published in this report for the years ending March 2015 and March 2016 will differ from the data previously published for the same time period due to the change in methodology. Therefore, the data in this report should not be compared with any reports previously published on length of time in custody.

This report has been presented in two parts. The first part looks at the characteristics of children and young people by custodial episode ending for all custodial episodes ending within a specified time period. The second part looks at the length of these custodial episodes by number of nights.

The contents of the report will be of interest to government policy makers and those monitoring policy, the agencies engaged with the Youth Justice System (YJS) at both national and local levels, as well as academics, the voluntary and community sector and others who want to understand more about the YJS.

¹ [Youth Justice Statistics](#)

² This includes if a child or young person has a licence period attached to their sentence.

³ If a young person remains in the youth secure estate past their 18th birthday, the number of nights they spend from that point onwards will not be counted. Their release type upon actual release (even if after their 18th birthday) will be counted in the accompanying Supplementary Tables.

The data described in this publication come from a bespoke analysis of eAsset and the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF). Details of all the administrative databases and bespoke collections used for this report can be found in *A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics*.

The data in this report are compared with the previous two years (the year ending March 2016 and the year ending March 2015) based on a consistent methodology. All data referred to are available in the Supplementary Tables that accompany this report. As mentioned above, these data should not be compared with previously published data covering the same time period due to a change in methodology.

The change in methodology means that the proportion of episodes ending by nights can now be calculated for ethnicity, custodial order type, release type, sector type, offence group and YOT region.

In this report, ethnicity is reported as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and White.

We have adopted some rounding conventions in this publication to aid interpretation and comparisons. Figures over 1,000 have been rounded to the nearest 10. Figures under 1,000 are unrounded. Percentages have been calculated from unrounded figures and then rounded to the nearest whole percentage. Unrounded figures have been presented in the Supplementary Tables.

To aid interpretation, we have grouped the number of nights into approximate monthly durations. As there can be between 28 to 31 days in a specific month, the monthly groupings used should be treated as an approximation. This table shows the number of nights that fall into each grouping:

Monthly groupings	Number of nights
Within 3 months	1 to 91 nights
3 to 6 months	92 to 182 nights
6 to 9 months	183 to 273 nights
9 to 12 months	274 to 365 nights
Over 12 months	366+ nights
or	
12 to 15 months	366 to 456 nights
15 to 18 months	457 to 547 nights
18 to 21 months	548 to 638 nights
21 or more months	639+ nights

1. Characteristics of custodial episodes ending

In the year ending March 2017, just under 2,350 custodial episodes ended. Of these:

- Two-fifths (41%) of those whose episode ended came from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. This is an increase from 37% in the previous year and from 36% in the year ending March 2015⁴. This compares to 18% of the 10 – 17 year old general population being from a BAME background⁵.
 - Just under a third (30%) of the cohort were held on Remand only⁶. This is an increase from 27% in the previous year but is the same as in the year ending March 2015.
 - The majority (86%) of custodial episodes ended when the child or young person was released to the community.
 - The vast majority (92%) of the cohort were in the same establishment at the start and end of the custodial episode.
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1.1 Custodial episodes ending cohort

In the year ending March 2017, just under 2,350 custodial episodes ended in the youth secure estate. This is a fall of 14% compared with the previous year and of 26% compared with the year ending March 2015.

Figure 1.1: The number of custodial episodes ending and the number of unique children and young people, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017

	Year ending March		
	2015	2016	2017
Number of custodial episodes ending in the youth secure estate	3,192	2,730	2,347
Unique number of children and young people	2,623	2,320	2,003
Number of young people who turned 18 during their custodial episode	734	645	557

As shown in Figure 1.1, a child or young person will be counted more than once if they had more than one custodial episode that ended within the year.

1.2 Demographics of the children and young people whose custodial episodes ended

In the year ending March 2017, of the number of custodial episodes that ended in the youth secure estate:

- The majority were male (97%) rather than female;
- More were White (59%) than BAME; and

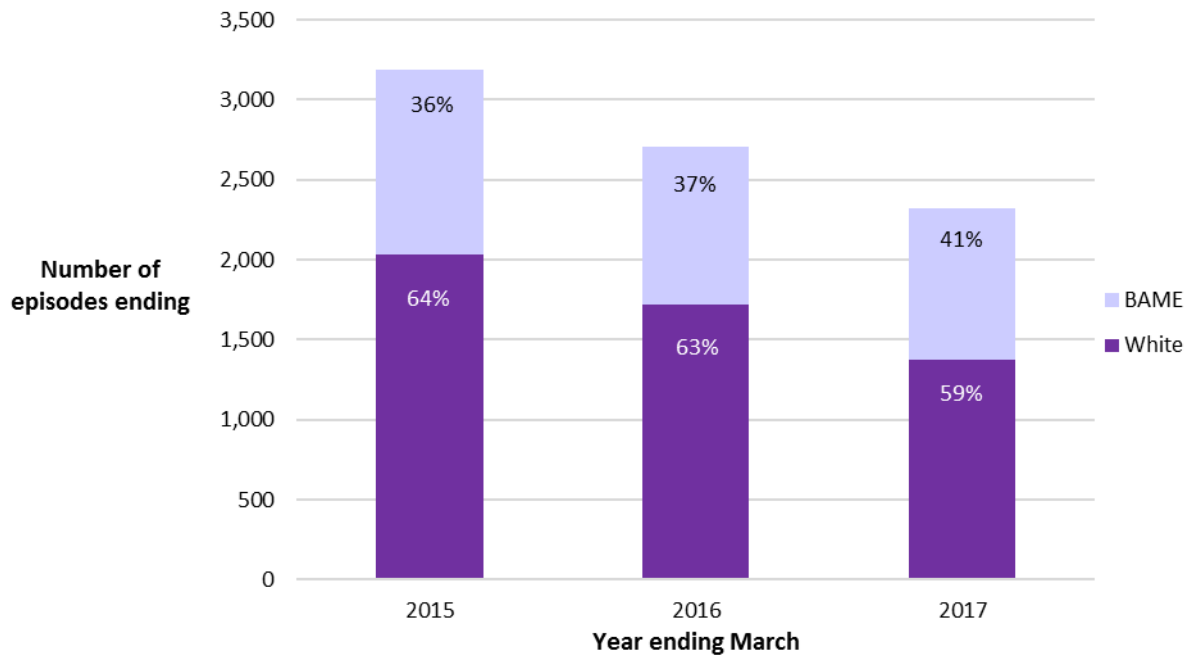
⁴ Proportions are based on where ethnicity is known. In the year ending March 2017, the ethnicity was not known for 1% of all custodial episodes ending.

⁵ For ethnicity, population is based on the ONS 2011 census. The ethnic breakdown of the population will likely have changed from 2011, so these figures should be treated as an estimate.

⁶ The child or young person may receive bail which would end their custodial episode and then receive a custodial sentence for the same case at a later date which would count as a new custodial episode.

- Just under half were aged 17 at the start of their episode (47%).

Figure 1.2: The number and proportion of custodial episodes ending by ethnicity⁷, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 1

As shown in Figure 1.2, of the custodial episodes that ended in the year ending March 2017:

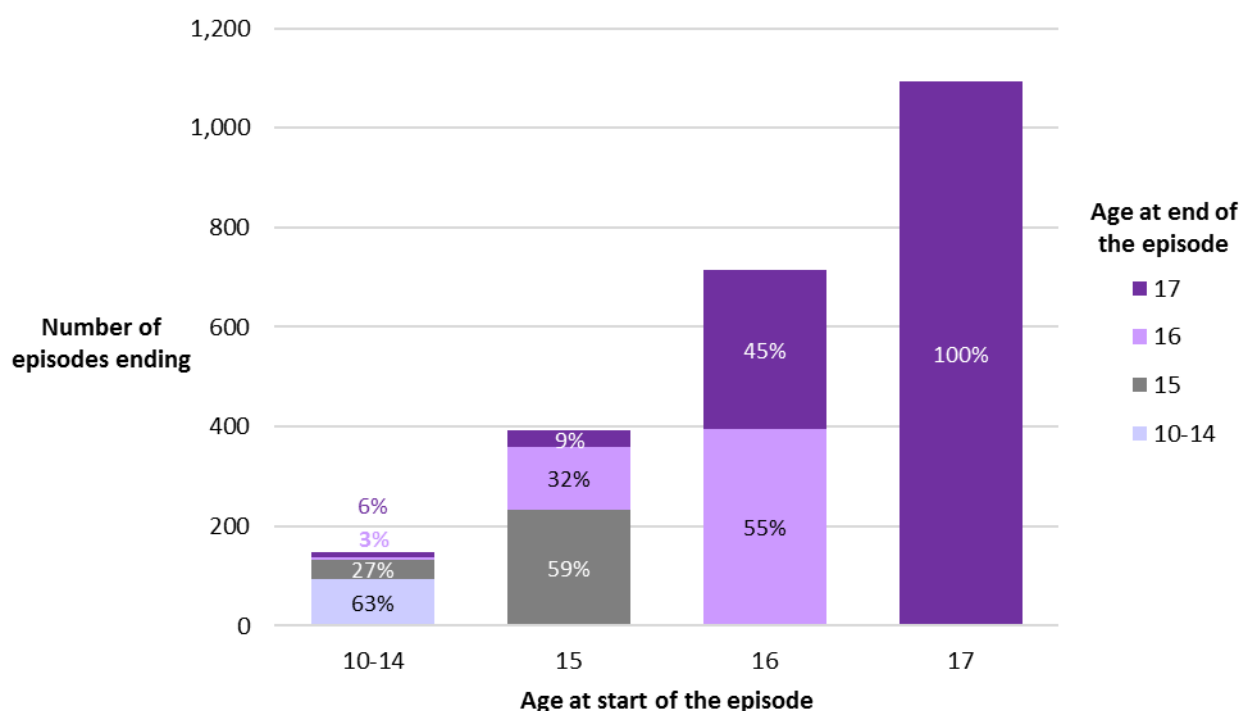
- 41% of the cohort came from a BAME background. This is an increase from 37% in the previous year and from 36% in the year ending March 2015.
- This compares to 18% of the 10 – 17 year old general population⁸ being from a BAME background, and 45% of the youth custody snapshot population⁹.

⁷ Proportions are based on where ethnicity is known. In the year ending March 2017, the ethnicity was not known for 1% of all episodes ending.

⁸ For ethnicity, population is based on the ONS 2011 census. The ethnic breakdown of the population will likely have changed from 2011, so these figures should be treated as an estimate.

⁹ [Youth Custody Data, Chapter 7](#)

Figure 1.3: The number of custodial episodes ending by age at the start of the episode and age at the end of the episode, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 2

In the year ending March 2017, 47% of the cohort were aged 17 when the custodial episode began. Under this report's methodology, if a child or young person remained in the youth secure estate after their 18th birthday, the number of nights is calculated only up to their 18th birthday, resulting in 100% of 17 year olds ending their custodial episode aged 17.

Of the 6% in the cohort who were aged 10-14 when they started their custodial episode, when that episode ended:

- Most (63%) were still aged 10-14;
- 27% were aged 15;
- 3% were aged 16; and
- 6% were aged 17¹⁰.

1.3 Custodial episodes ending by region of YOT

The number of custodial episodes ending has fallen for all YOT regions in the latest year. The highest number of custodial episodes ending in the year ending March 2017 were for those who were attached to a London YOT (29%), which is similar to the previous two years (Supplementary Table 1).

1.4 Custodial episodes ending by release type

Supplementary Table 1 shows that in the year ending March 2017, of the custodial episodes that ended:

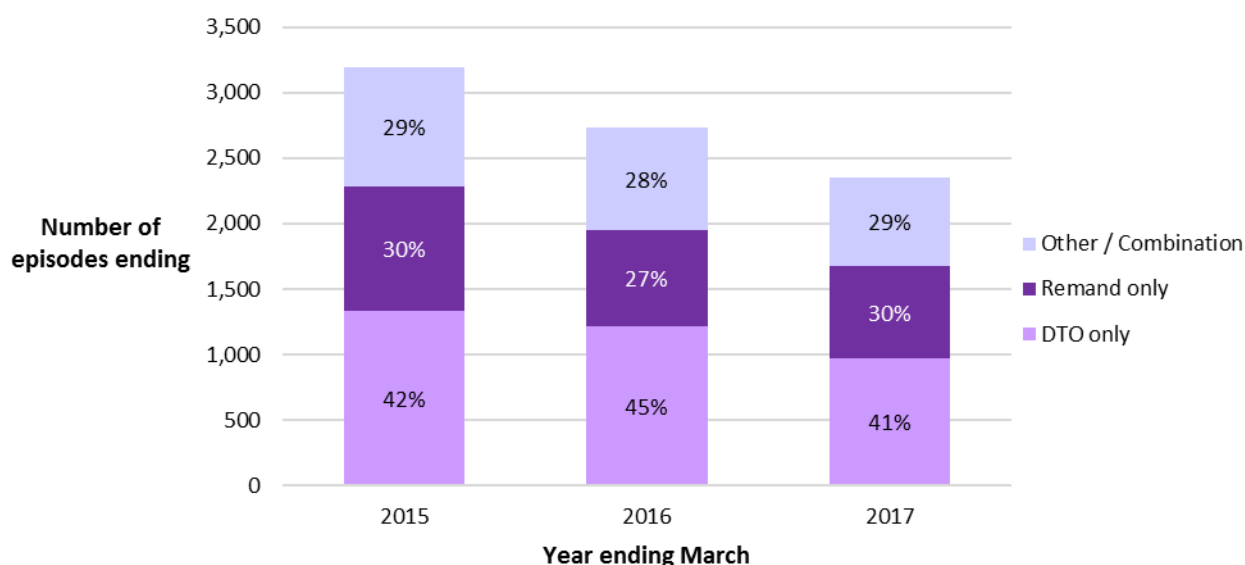
- 86% were released to the community;
- 14% transitioned to the over 18 secure estate; and
- Less than 1% were released to a Mental Health Unit¹⁰.

¹⁰ Proportions do not sum due to rounding.

These proportions have been broadly stable since the year ending March 2015.

1.5 Custodial episodes ending by custodial order type

Figure 1.4: The number of custodial episodes ending by custodial order type¹¹, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 1

As shown in Figure 1.4, the proportions of custodial episodes ending by each custodial order type have remained broadly stable over the last two years, with around a third being on Remand only.

Other / Combination refers to custodial episodes where the child or young person had received a combination of orders (for example remand and Detention and Training Order (DTO)) and/or where the child or young person's custodial order was something other than a remand or DTO¹².

1.6 Custodial episodes ending by ethnicity and custodial order type

Figure 1.5: Proportion¹³ of custodial episodes ending by ethnicity¹⁴ and custodial order type, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017

	Number of custodial episodes ending	DTO only	Remand only	Other / Combination	Total
BAME	950	35%	34%	31%	100%
White	1,374	46%	27%	28%	100%

Supplementary Tables: Table 3

As shown in Figure 1.5, the split for custodial episodes ending by custodial order type for BAME children and young people was more even than for White children and young people. A higher proportion (46%) of the custodial episodes ending for White children and young people were DTO only (a fall compared with 50% in the previous year and 48% in the year ending March 2015). The 35% of custodial episodes ending for BAME children and young people that were DTO only in the

¹¹ Detention and Training Order (DTO) only refers to episodes where the child or young person had only received DTO custodial order/s. This does not include any DTO recalls.

¹² This includes; All recalls, Section 90, Section 91, Section 226, Section 226b, Section 228 or Breach of Gang Injunction (a civil tool).

¹³ Proportions do not sum due to rounding.

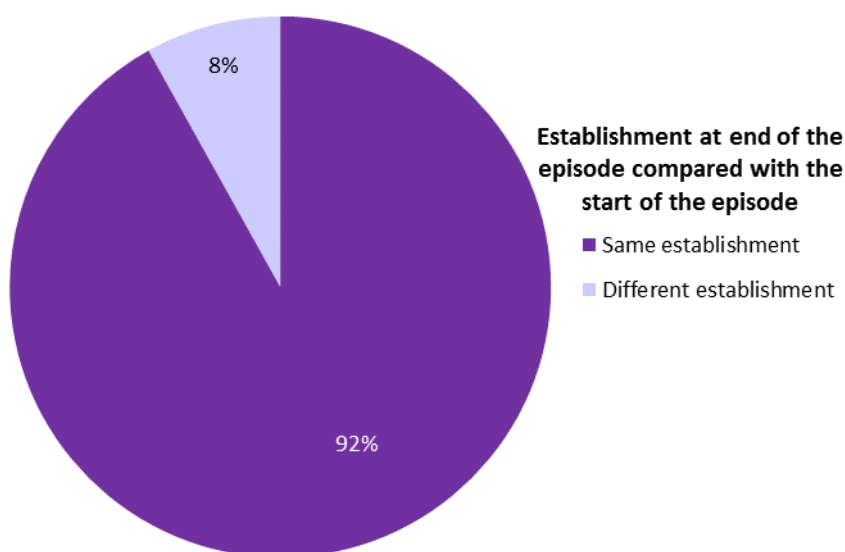
¹⁴ Excludes episodes ending where the ethnicity is not known.

latest year is consistent with the proportion in the previous year, and an increase from 32% in the year ending March 2015.

1.7 Custodial episodes ending by establishment at the start and the end of the episode

Within a custodial episode spent in the youth secure estate, children and young people may move establishments. This may be for a number of reasons. These data look at the establishment the child or young person was placed in at the start of their episode and then at the end of their episode. This does not take into account any transfers between these dates. This count excludes transfers between main and specialist sites within the same establishment.

Figure 1.6: The number of custodial episodes ending by difference in start and end establishment, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 1

In the last year, the vast majority (92%) of the cohort were in the same establishment at the end of the custodial episode as the start. This is broadly similar to the previous two years.

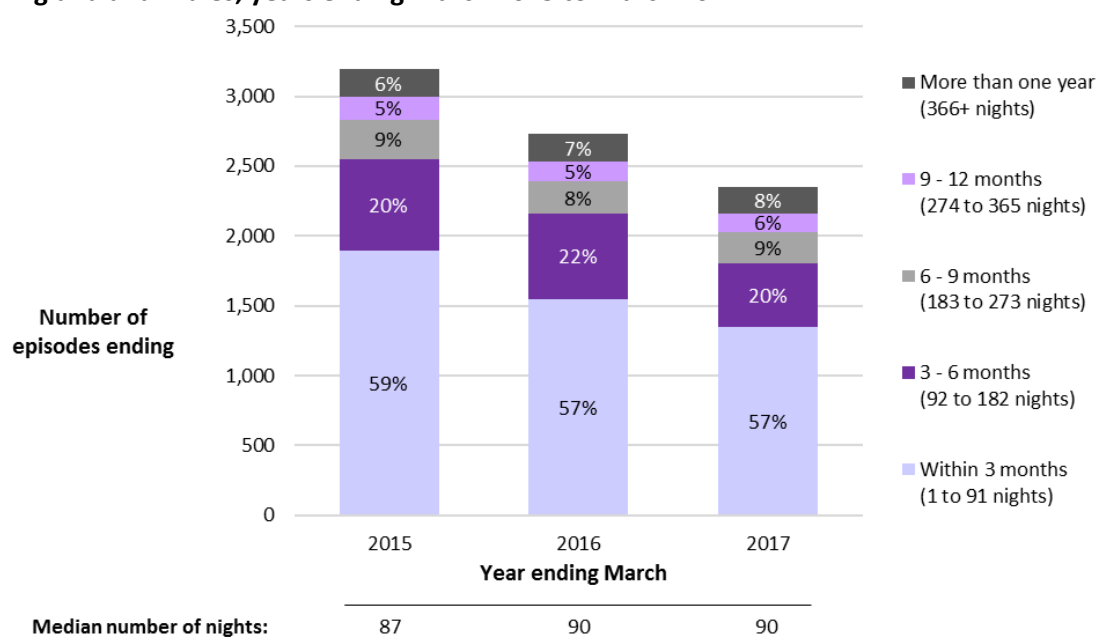
2. Length of custodial episodes

In the year ending March 2017:

- Just under 2,350 custodial episodes ended, of which the majority (57%) ended within three months (1 to 91 nights).
- The median number of nights spent in youth custody per custodial episode was 90 nights. This is the same as the previous year, but is an increase of three nights compared with the year ending March 2015.
- 186 custodial episodes lasted more than one year (366 nights or more), accounting for 8% of all custodial episodes ending.
- For both BAME and White children and young people, most custodial episodes ended within three months (55% and 59% respectively)¹⁵.
- 197 (8%) custodial episodes ended within seven nights, of which the majority were children and young people on Remand only (183).
- Two thirds of Detention and Training Order (DTO) only custodial episodes ended within three months.
- The majority (85%) of Remand only custodial episodes ended within three months.
- There was variation in the median number of nights per custodial episode by custodial order type. For Remand only custodial episodes the median was 23 nights, for DTO only, 90 nights and for Other / Combination, 224 nights.

2.1 Custodial episodes ending by nights

Figure 2.1: Number and proportion¹⁶ of custodial episodes ending by nights, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 4.a

¹⁵ Proportions are based on where ethnicity is known. In the year ending March 2017, ethnicity was not known for 1% of the custodial episodes ending.

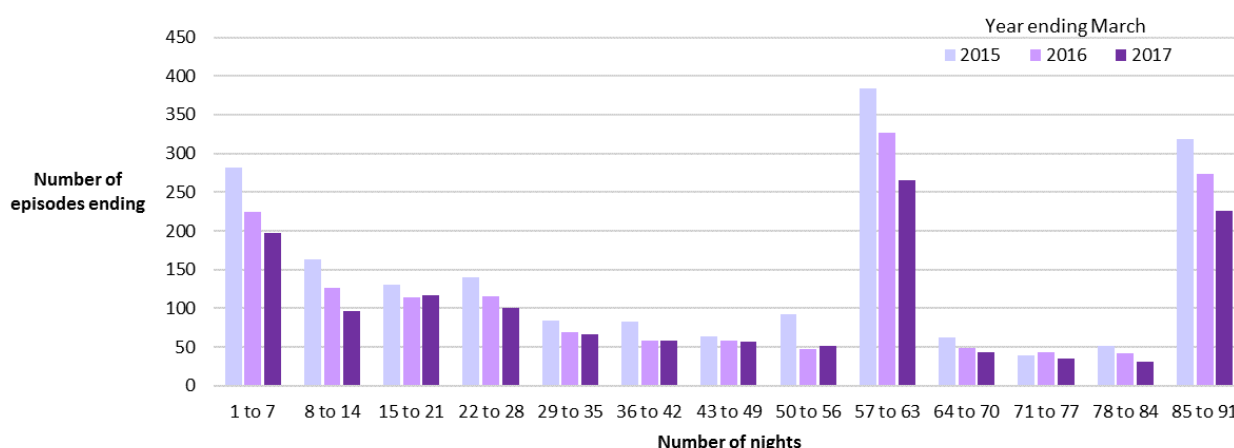
¹⁶ Proportions do not sum due to rounding.

In the year ending March 2017, just under 2,350 custodial episodes ended. The majority (57%) of those ended within three months (1 to 91 nights). The number of custodial episodes ending within three months has been decreasing over the last two years, however the proportion has remained broadly the same (Supplementary Table 4.a).

In the year ending March 2017, 186 (8%) custodial episodes lasted more than one year (366 nights or more). This is a similar volume to previous years, however the proportion this accounts for has increased by 1 percentage point each year.

The median number of nights spent in youth custody per custodial episode was 90 nights in the latest year. This remains unchanged from the previous year but is an increase of three nights compared with the year ending March 2015.

Figure 2.2: Number of custodial episodes ending (for custodial episodes less than three months) by weekly intervals, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017

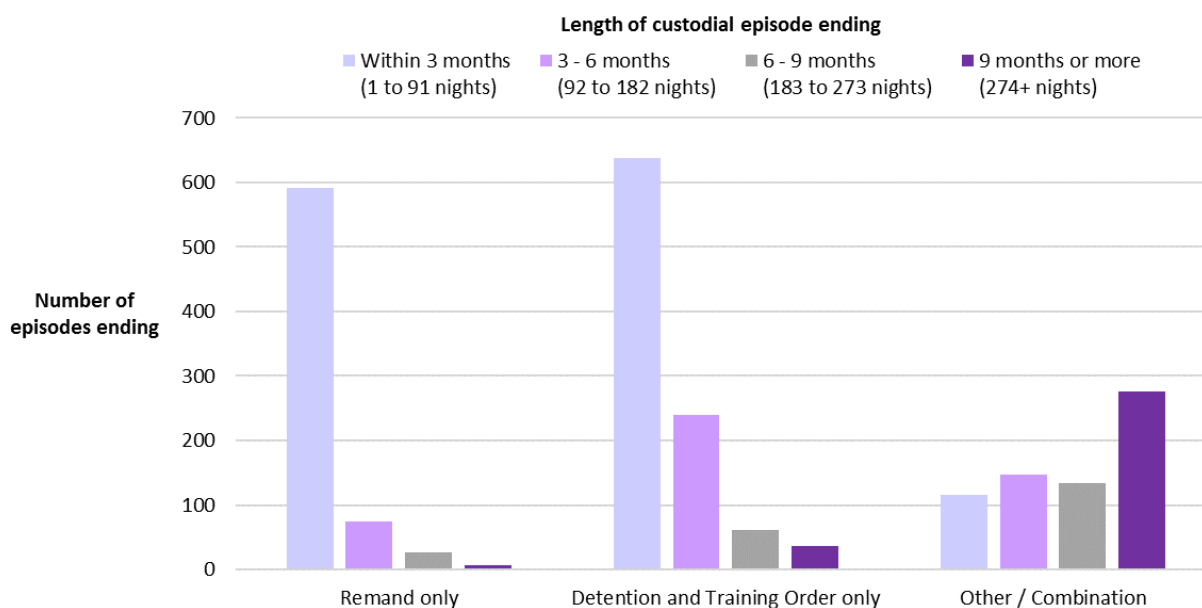


Supplementary Tables: Table 4.b

Of the nearly 1,350 custodial episodes of three months or less, 15% ended by seven nights in the year ending March 2017 (197 episodes). While the number of custodial episodes ending within seven nights has been reducing over the last two years, the proportion this accounts for has remained stable at 15%.

2.2 Custodial episodes ending by nights and custodial order type

Figure 2.3: Number of custodial episodes ending by nights and custodial order type, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 7.a

Figure 2.4: The median number of nights per custodial episode by custodial order type, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017

	Year ending March		
	2015	2016	2017
Remand only	21	21	23
Detention and Training Order only	86	90	90
Other / Combination	196	204	224

Supplementary Tables: Table 7.a

Figures 2.3, 2.4 and Supplementary Table 7.a shows that in the year ending March 2017, for Remand only custodial episodes:

- The majority (85%) ended within three months (1 to 91 nights). This proportion has increased by 1 percentage point each year (although the actual number of custodial episodes ending has decreased);
- The number of custodial episodes ending reduced as the number of nights increased;
- Just 1% ended after 9 months (274+ nights); and
- The median number of nights was 23 in the latest year, an increase of two nights compared with both the previous year and the year ending March 2015.

For Detention and Training Order (DTO) only custodial episodes:

- Two thirds (66%) ended within three months (1 to 91 nights). While the number of custodial episodes ending have decreased each year, the proportion is fairly similar compared with the previous year (65%) but is a fall compared with 71% in the year ending March 2015;
- The number of custodial episodes ending reduced as the number of nights increased; and
- The median number of nights was 90 in the latest year, which is the same as the previous year but an increase from 86 nights in the year ending March 2015.

For Other / Combination custodial episodes, the trend is different:

- The largest proportion (41%) are custodial episodes ending after 9 months (274 nights or more), which is as expected as this group includes sentences which carry longer terms. This proportion has increased from 38% in the previous year and 36% in the year ending March 2015.
- In the latest year, the median number of nights was 224, which has been steadily increasing since the year ending March 2015.

Supplementary Table 7.b shows that for custodial episodes where the child or young person was on Remand only, of the custodial episodes ending within three months, 31% ended within seven nights (183 episodes). This is a slight decrease compared with 33% in the previous year (202 episodes) and 34% in the year ending March 2015 (264 episodes).

2.3 Custodial episodes ending by nights and ethnicity¹⁷

Figure 2.5: Proportion of custodial episodes ending by nights and ethnicity, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017

	Number of nights						Total
	Median	1 – 91	92 – 182	183 – 273	274 – 365	366+	
BAME	90 nights	55%	19%	10%	7%	9%	100%
White	90 nights	59%	20%	9%	5%	7%	100%

Supplementary Tables: Table 5.a

As shown in Figure 2.5, the majority of custodial episodes ended within three months (1 to 91 nights) for both BAME and White children and young people. While the number of custodial episodes ending within this time has decreased in each of the last two years for both BAME and White children and young people (Supplementary Table 5.a), the proportion of custodial episodes ending within three months has been consistently slightly higher for White children and young people than BAME children and young people in each year.

In the year ending March 2017, the proportion of custodial episodes ending within three months was:

- 55% for BAME children and young people (similar to previous years); and
- 59% for White children and young people (58% in the previous year and a slight reduction from 62% in the year ending March 2015).

The proportion of custodial episodes that lasted more than one year (366 nights or more) has been higher for BAME children and young people than White children and young people in each of the last three years (9% for BAME and 7% for White in the latest year).

The median number of nights per custodial episode for BAME children and young people has remained fairly stable over the last two years; at either 90 or 91 nights. For White young people the median has remained stable compared to the previous year (both 90), but is an increase from 83 in the year ending March 2015.

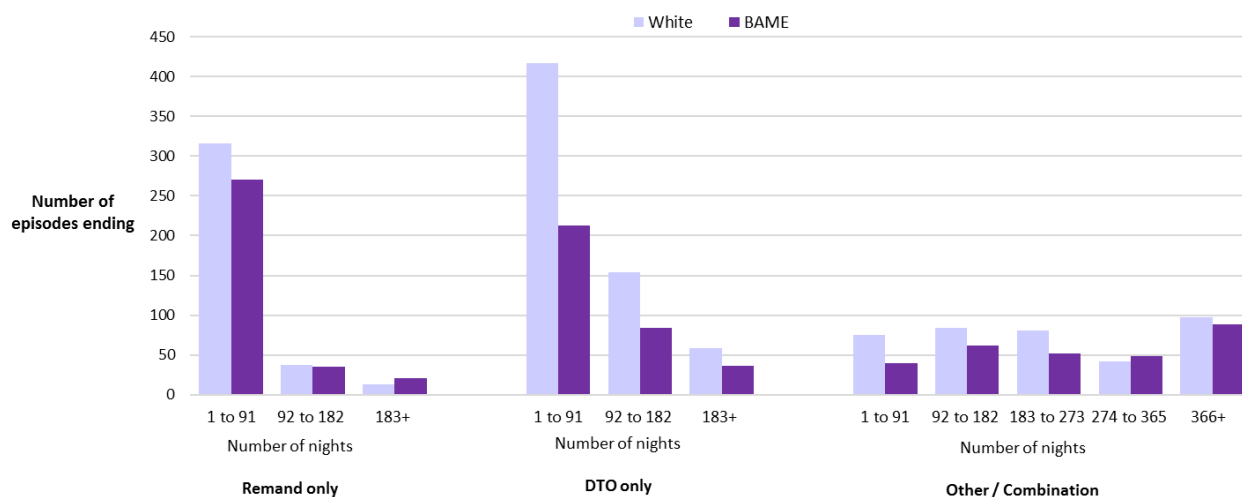
Supplementary Table 5.b shows the number of nights per custodial episode by ethnicity. In the latest year, of all custodial episodes ending within three months, the majority were White children and young people (61%). As the number of nights increases, the proportions for BAME and White children and young people become more evenly split. In the latest year, for custodial episodes lasting more than one year, 48% were BAME.

¹⁷ Proportions are based on where ethnicity is known. In the year ending March 2017, ethnicity was not known for 1% of the custodial episodes ending.

2.4 Custodial episodes ending by nights, custodial order type and ethnicity¹⁸

As shown in Figure 1.5, in the year ending March 2017, there was a more even split of custodial episodes ending by custodial order type for BAME children and young people than for White children and young people. A higher proportion of custodial episodes ending for White children and young people were DTO only (46%), compared to BAME children and young people (35%).

Figure 2.6: Number of custodial episodes ending by nights, custodial order type and ethnicity, secure estate in England and Wales, year ending March 2017



Supplementary Tables: Table 11.a

As shown in Figure 2.6, in the latest year:

- The majority of DTO only and Remand only custodial episodes ended within three months (1 to 91 nights) for both White and BAME children and young people; and
- A higher proportion of Other / Combination custodial episodes ending for BAME children and young people were for a greater number of nights; 86% spent longer than three months compared to 80% for White children and young people.

Figure 2.7: The median number of nights per custodial episode, by custodial order type and ethnicity, secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to March 2017

	BAME			White		
	Year ending March			Year ending March		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Remand only	28	27	27	20	19	21
DTO only	89	90	90	76	90	90
Other / Combination	255	233	259	168	197	202

Supplementary Tables: Table 11.a

Figure 2.7 shows that while there has been little change in the median number of nights for Remand only custodial episodes for each ethnicity, the median has been consistently higher for BAME children and young people than for White children and young people in each of the last three years.

The median number of nights for DTO only custodial episodes was 90 for BAME and White children and young people in both the latest year and the previous year. Compared with the year ending

¹⁸ Proportions are based on where ethnicity is known. In the year ending March 2017, ethnicity was not known for 1% of the custodial episodes ending.

March 2015, this has remained broadly stable for BAME children and young people, but is an increase of 14 nights for White children and young people.

The median number of nights for Other / Combination custodial episodes has been consistently higher for BAME children and young people than for White children and young people in each year. The median number of nights for Other / Combination custodial orders ending has been gradually increasing each year for White children and young people, to 202 nights in the latest year. The equivalent median for BAME children and young people saw a decrease between the years ending March 2015 to March 2016, and then an increase in the latest year, to 259 nights.

2.5 Custodial episodes ending by nights and sector type¹⁹

Supplementary Table 8.a shows that in the latest year:

- 222 custodial episodes ended where the child or young person had been placed in Secure Children's Homes only, with 59% ending within three months (1 to 91 nights). The median was 90 nights.
- 367 custodial episodes ended where the child or young person had been placed in Secure Training Centres only, with 66% ending within three months (the median was 60 nights).
- 1,650 custodial episodes ended where the child or young person had been placed in Young Offender Institutions only, with 58% ending within three months (the median was 88 nights).
- 108 custodial episodes ended where the child or young person was placed in a Combination of sectors, with 19% ending within three months (the median was 300 nights). Caution should be taken drawing comparisons with these figures due to the small cohort size.

¹⁹ Children and young people may move within different establishments within their sector. Children or young people will be counted in the Combination group if they move from an establishment in one sector to an establishment in a different sector.

Further information

Most of the figures in this report have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and may be subject to change over time. Steps are taken to improve the completeness and accuracy of this information each year.

Further details on the sources of information are given in *A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics*.

Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A Guide to Youth Justice Statistics providing further information on the data included in this publication and how these data are collected and processed. This includes a glossary of the terms used in this bulletin.
- A set of Supplementary Tables, covering each section of this bulletin.

National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.



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General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

For enquires direct to the Youth Justice Board please email: informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk

Next update: 24 January 2019 (in *Youth Justice Statistics, 2017/18*)

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