

Court Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals Statistics for Northern Ireland, 2020

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1 Key Findings

This bulletin presents information on prosecutions and convictions for criminal cases dealt with in the Crown and magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2020, as well as for out of court disposals completed within the same period. Completion of cases in the justice system in 2020 was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and this is reflected in the numbers recorded in this bulletin.

Prosecutions and Convictions

- The number of prosecutions disposed at Crown Court in 2020 was 1,163, a 24.2% decrease from 1,534 in 2019. The number of prosecutions at magistrates' courts fell 28.2% from 27,967 in 2019 to 20,092 in 2020.
- In 2020, 85.3% (18,135) of prosecutions in all courts resulted in a conviction, up from, 84.8% (25,011) in 2019.
- The majority, 82.3% (17,494), of prosecutions completed at all courts in 2020 were cases where the defendant was male (Crown Court, 88.7% (1,031) and magistrates' courts, 81.9% (16,463)).
- At all courts, persons in the 18 to 29 age range made up 39.7% (8,437) of prosecutions and 40.2% (7,287) of those convicted in 2020, with defendants aged 18 to 24 making up 21.3% (4,537) of cases prosecuted and 21.6% (3,917) of cases resulting in conviction. At all courts, cases where the defendant was aged 25 to 29 made up 18.3% (3,900) of cases prosecuted and 18.6% (3,370) of cases resulting in conviction.
- Of all offence categories, motoring offences made up the largest proportion of prosecutions at all courts: 8,821 (41.5% of all prosecutions) in 2020. Of all offence categories, drugs offences had the highest conviction rate at all courts, at 93.4% (1,972).
- Monetary penalties were the most frequently utilised disposal at all courts in 2020, with 53.6% (9,725) of all convictions having this type of disposal as their primary outcome. While a custodial outcome was imposed in 14.1% (2,561) of cases that resulted in conviction at all courts in 2020, for Crown Court, a custodial disposal was imposed in 48.9% (511) cases.

Out of Court Disposals

- A total of 4,502 Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs) were issued in 2020. PNDs were issued for offences under Covid-19 Regulations in 3,661 (81.3%) cases.
- Most PNDs, 68.4% (3,080), were issued to males. Persons in the 18 to 24 age group received 59.4% (2,672) of all PNDs issued. Offences in the Miscellaneous Crimes against Society and Public Order categories constituted the largest proportion of PNDs issued, with 87.4% (3,935) and 7.7% (347) respectively of all PNDs issued for offences in these categories.
- The number of out of court, diversionary disposals recorded against individuals' criminal records in 2020 was 3,232, a fall of 22.5% from 4,171 in 2019. Most diversionary disposals were dealt with by way of caution, with 75.4% (2,437) of all diversionary disposals dealt with in this way.
- Of all those who received a diversionary disposal in 2020, most were in the younger age categories, with 53.8% (1,738) of all diversionary disposals handed out to the under 25 year old age group.
- In 2020, three-quarters of all diversionary disposals handed down (2,398) were to males.
- Of all diversionary disposals, 26.9% (870) were handed down for drug offences and a further 24.0% (776) were for violence against the person offences.

2 Introduction

About This Report

This bulletin is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It presents data on the number of prosecutions and convictions for magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in Northern Ireland for the year 2020. Data for the youth court, a special magistrates' court which deals with proceedings against juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17, are included with those for magistrates' courts.

Data are also presented on those offenders who were dealt with outside the courts, by way of diversionary disposal, i.e., those who receive a caution, informed warning, a youth conference plan or are subject to the community based restorative justice scheme, or by issue of a penalty notice for disorder (PND).

Some detail on the structure of the known offending population in 2020, with information on the breakdown of offences committed and the disposals received, is also included. Where an offender has had an out of court disposal imposed or been prosecuted for, or convicted of, several offences on the same occasion, only one offence, the principal offence, is counted. Details of principal offence methodology, data coverage and quality are detailed in Appendix 1.

Data in all tables and charts in the bulletin, along with supplementary data, are available from the Department of Justice website in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#).

The next update covering the 12 months to 31 December 2021 will be published in June 2021. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the Department of Justice website.

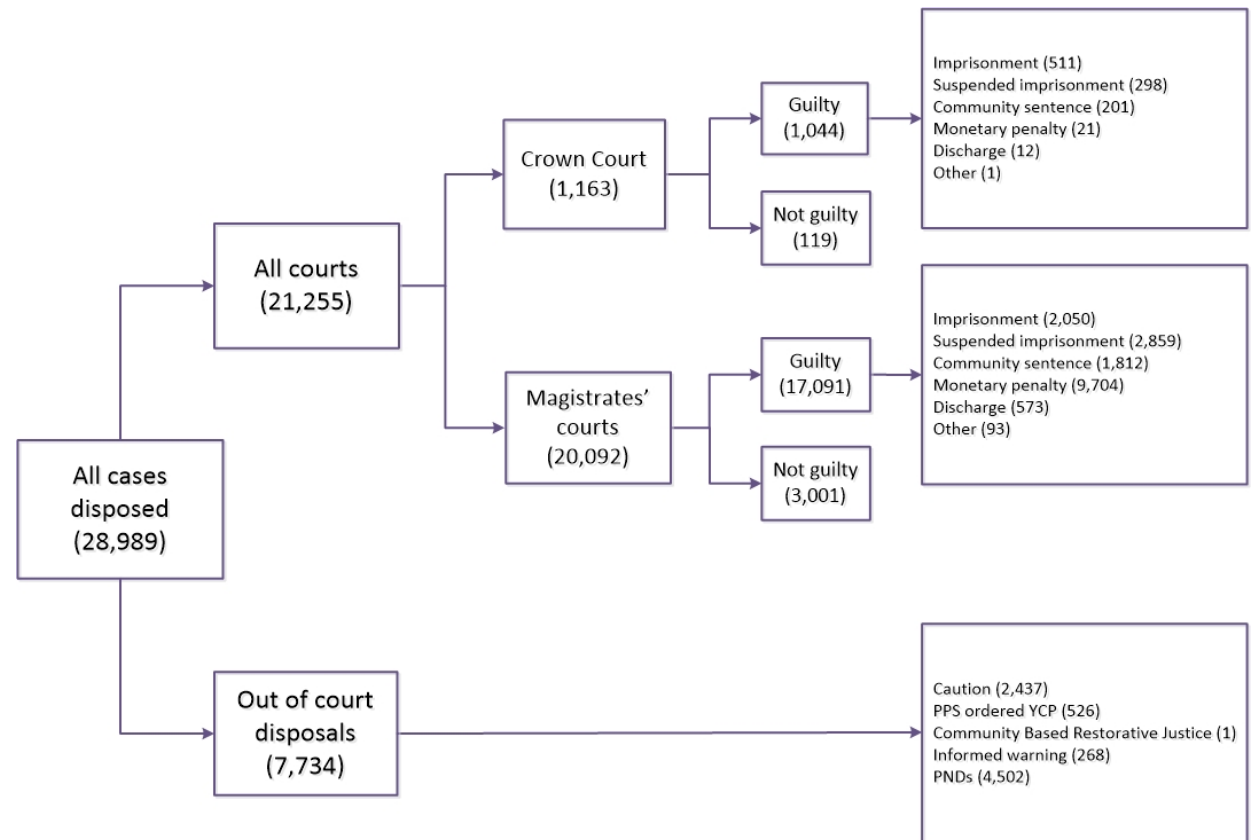
3 Findings

3.1 Overview

The findings detailed in this report are split into two main sections: the first deals with prosecutions and convictions at courts in Northern Ireland in 2020 and the second deals with out of court disposals issued over the same period. All commentary in this document relates to tables that can be found in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#).

In total, there were 28,989 separate cases disposed in 2020, whether at court or through out of court disposal. This is significantly fewer than the 34,963 cases disposed in 2019, and is the lowest total in any of the last five years (Figure 1). This figure for 2020 reflects the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the workings of the justice system in 2020, when court sittings were suspended for a period and the justice system as a whole did not operate at its full capacity.

Figure 1: Outcomes of cases dealt with at court and by out of court disposal, 2020

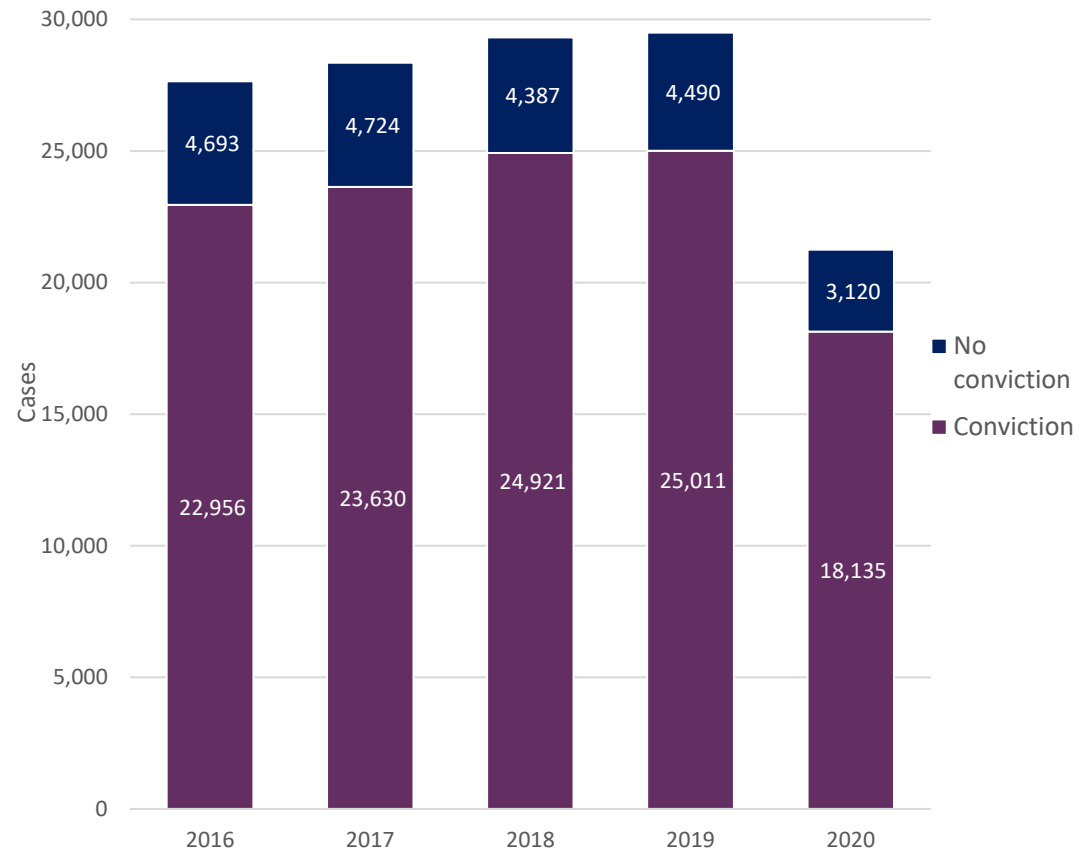


3.2 Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts - Overview

The number of prosecutions disposed at all courts was 21,255 in 2020, down 28.0% from 29,501 in 2019, again illustrating the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, the number of prosecutions in magistrates' courts in 2020 was 20,092, a fall of 28.2% from 27,967 in 2019. At 1,163 the number of prosecutions in Crown Court in 2020 also decreased (24.2%) from the total of 1,534 in 2019. In 2020, 85.3% (18,135) of prosecutions in all courts resulted in a conviction, a conviction rate slightly higher than that observed in 2019 (84.8%) and the highest rate observed in the last five years (Figure 2).

At 89.8% (1,044), the conviction rate for cases disposed at Crown Court was higher in 2020 than that for 2019 (87.3%), and is the highest rate observed for cases dealt with at Crown Court in the last five years. In magistrates' courts, 85.1% (17,091) cases disposed in 2020 resulted in a conviction. This was a higher proportion than that observed in 2019 (84.6%) and also, along with the figure recorded in 2018, the highest in any of the last five years (Tables 1a, 1b and 1c in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).

Figure 2: Prosecutions and Convictions at all Courts, 2016 to 2020



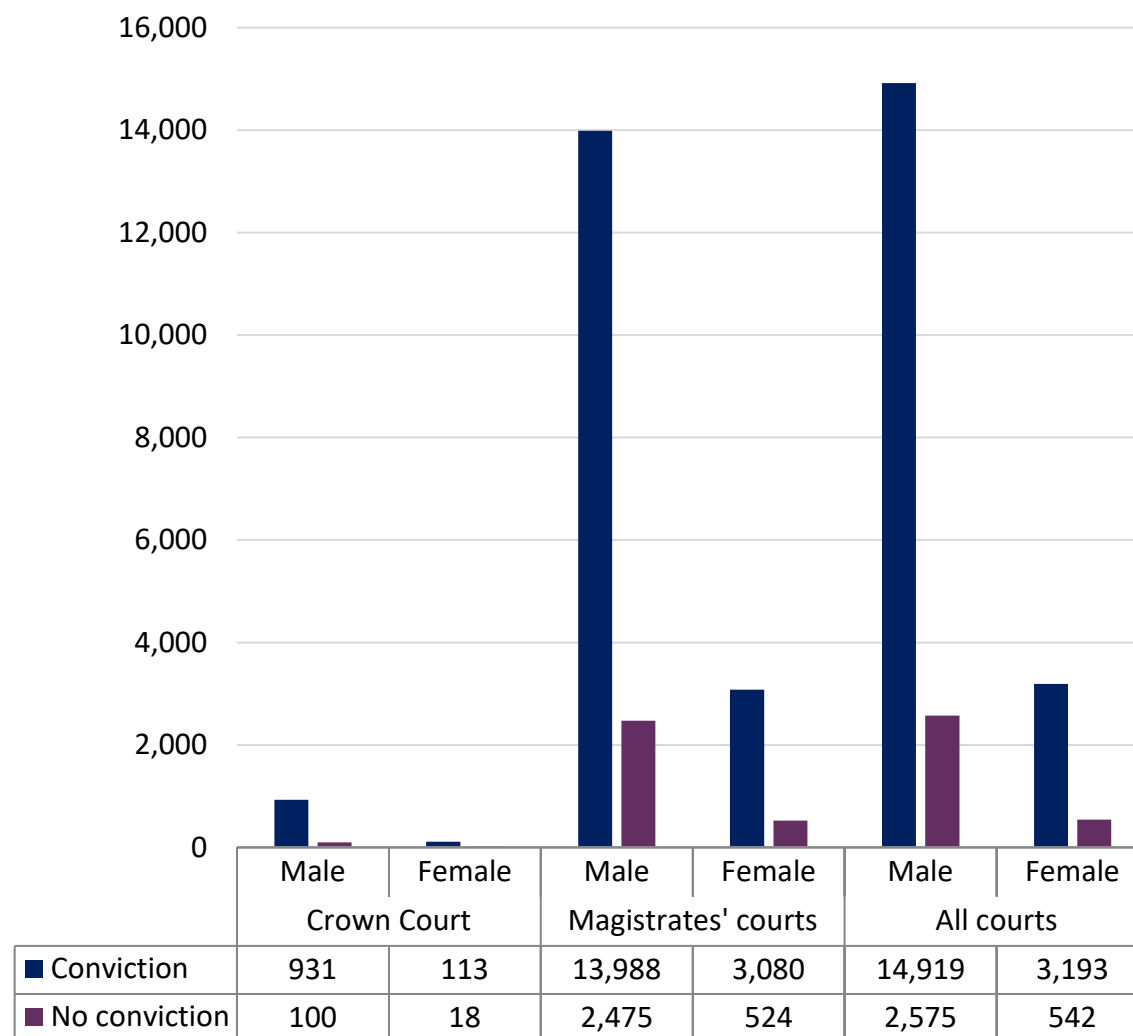
3.3 Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts – Gender of Defendants

Males constituted the majority of people prosecuted in all courts in 2020. Of all those prosecuted, 82.3% (17,494) were male. In the Crown Court, the proportion of prosecutions brought where the defendant was male was slightly higher at 88.7% (1,031), whereas, in magistrates' courts, the proportion of prosecutions brought where the defendant was male was 81.9% (16,463).

Prosecutions brought at all courts resulted in a conviction rate of 85.3% for males and 85.5% for females in 2020. In magistrates' courts in 2020, the conviction rate was slightly lower for males, 85.0% than that for females, 85.5%. For cases dealt with at Crown Court, 90.3% of cases involving males resulted in a conviction, compared with 86.3% of cases involving females.

In addition, a small number of prosecutions the defendants were classified as 'others'. The defendants included in this category included transgender individuals, companies and other public bodies and those for whom no gender was recorded (Tables 2a, 2b and 2c in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts
By type and gender of defendant, 2020



3.4 Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts - Age Group of Defendants

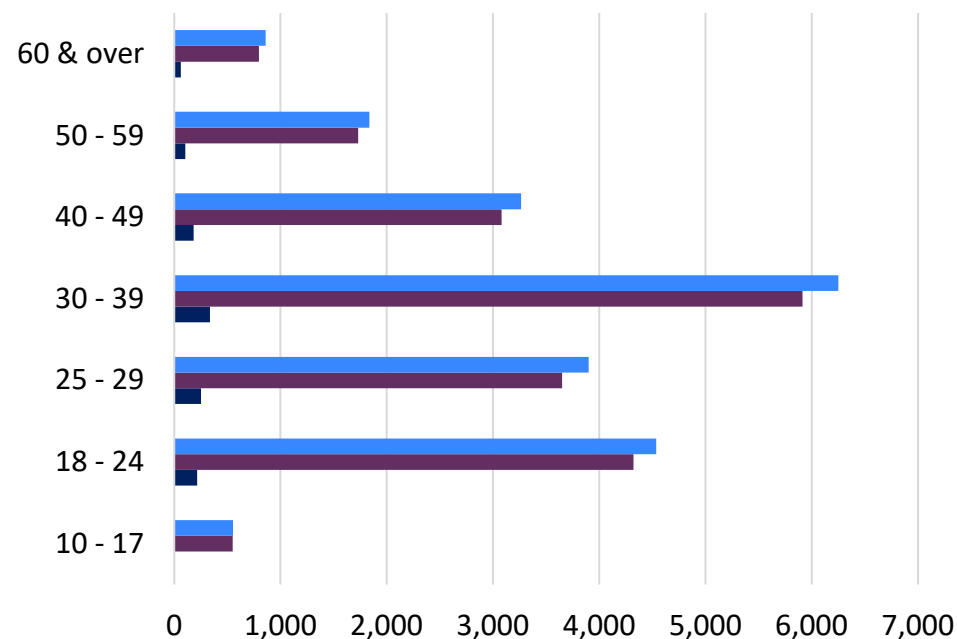
In 2020, in all court settings, defendants aged 18 to 29 made up 39.7% (8,437) of cases in which a prosecution was brought. At a more detailed level, defendants aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 29 made up 21.3% (4,537) and 18.3% (3,900) of prosecutions dealt with at all courts respectively. Defendants in the 30 to 39 year old age group accounted for a further 29.4% (6,249) of prosecutions at all courts in 2020.

At Crown Court, prosecutions where defendants were aged 18 to 29 made up 40.2% (467) of cases dealt with, comprising 18.6% (216) in the 18 to 24 age group and 21.6% (251) in the 25 to 29 age group. Defendants aged 30 to 39 accounted for a further 28.9% (336) Crown Court prosecutions.

For cases dealt with in magistrates' courts in 2020, 39.7% (7,970) prosecutions were brought against defendants in the 18 to 29 age range, comprising 21.5% (4,321) of cases where the defendant was 18 to 24 and 18.2% (3,649) cases where the defendant was aged 25 to 29. Prosecutions where the defendant was in the 30 to 39 year old age group accounted for 29.4% (5,913) of cases deal with at magistrates' courts in 2020.

A smaller percentage of prosecutions in Crown Court, 0.3% (4), were against defendants in the 10 to 17 age group in 2020, compared with those in magistrates' courts, 2.7% (550) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Number of Prosecutions at Court by Age Group of Defendant and Court Type, 2020

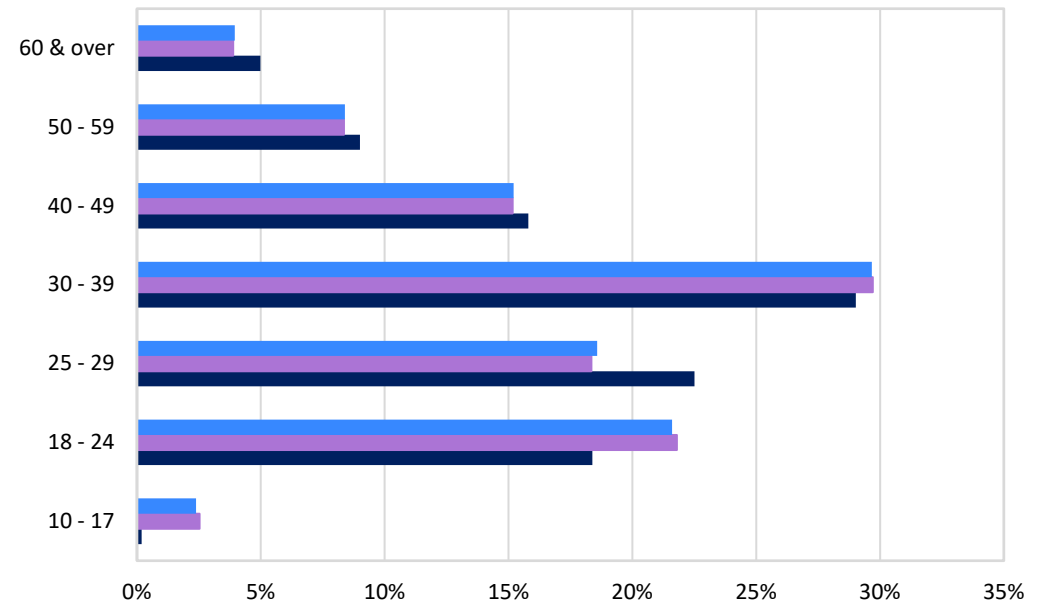


	10 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 & over
All courts	554	4,537	3,900	6,249	3,265	1,836	860
Magistrates' courts	550	4,321	3,649	5,913	3,082	1,731	798
Crown Court	4	216	251	336	183	105	62

Defendants in the 18 to 29 age range made up 40.2% (7,287) of convictions at all courts in 2020, comprising 21.6% (3,917) in the 18 to 24 age group and 18.6% (3,370) in the 25 to 29 age group. Defendants in the 30 to 39 age group accounted for a further 29.7% (5,380) of convictions handed down at all courts. Cases where the defendant was in the 18 to 29 age range accounted for 40.9% (427) of convictions at Crown Court, comprising 18.4% (192) of cases where the defendant was 18 to 24 and 22.5% (235) of cases where the defendant was in the 25 to 29 age group. Defendants within this 30 – 39 year old age group accounted for 29.0% (303) of cases that resulted in a conviction in the Crown Court. Cases where the defendant was in the 10 to 17 age group accounted for 2.4% (433) cases that resulted in a conviction at all courts, 0.2% (2) cases where a conviction was handed down at Crown Court and 2.5% (431) cases resulting in conviction at magistrates' courts in 2020.

Figure 5: Proportion of Convictions at Court by Court Type and Age of Defendant, 2020

In magistrates' courts in 2020, cases where the defendant was in the 18 to 29 age range accounted for 40.1% (6,860) of convictions, comprising 21.8% (3,725) of cases where the defendant was 18 to 24 and 18.3% (3,135) of cases where the defendant was in the 25 to 29 age group. Defendants within the 30 to 39 year old age group accounted for 29.7% (5,077) of cases that resulted in a conviction in magistrates' courts in 2020 (Figure 5). The adult age group with the highest likelihood of conviction at Crown Court was the 25 to 29 year old group, with 93.6% (235) of prosecutions against a defendant in this age group resulting in a conviction, while in magistrates' courts, the age group with the highest likelihood of conviction was the 18 to 24 year old group, 86.2% (3,725) (Tables 3a, 3b and 3c in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).



	10 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 & over
All courts	2.4%	21.6%	18.6%	29.7%	15.2%	8.4%	3.9%
Magistrates' courts	2.5%	21.8%	18.3%	29.7%	15.2%	8.4%	3.9%
Crown Court	0.2%	18.4%	22.5%	29.0%	15.8%	9.0%	5.0%

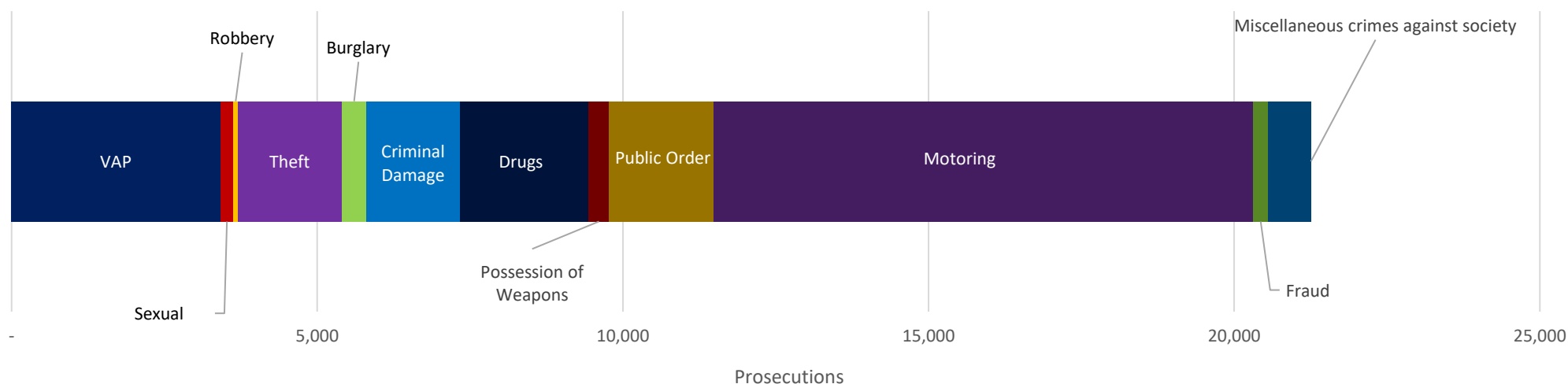
■ All courts ■ Magistrates' courts ■ Crown Court

3.5 Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts - Offence Classifications

Overall, across all courts, the largest proportion of cases disposed fell into the motoring offences category in 2020, comprising 41.5% (8,821) of all cases disposed at courts in that year. Violence against the person (VAP) offences accounted for 16.1% (3,413) of cases disposed at all courts in 2020, while cases where the principal offence fell into the drugs category made up 9.9% (2,111) of all cases disposed at court in 2020 (Figure 6).

In all courts in 2020, prosecutions brought for drugs offences were most likely to end in conviction, with 93.4% (1,972) of cases in this category resulting in a conviction. Similarly, in cases where the principal offence was in the motoring offences category, 93.0% (8,202) resulted in a conviction. Cases where the principal offence was in the sexual offences category were least likely to result in a conviction in all courts in 2020, with 63.9% (140) of such cases resulting in a conviction.

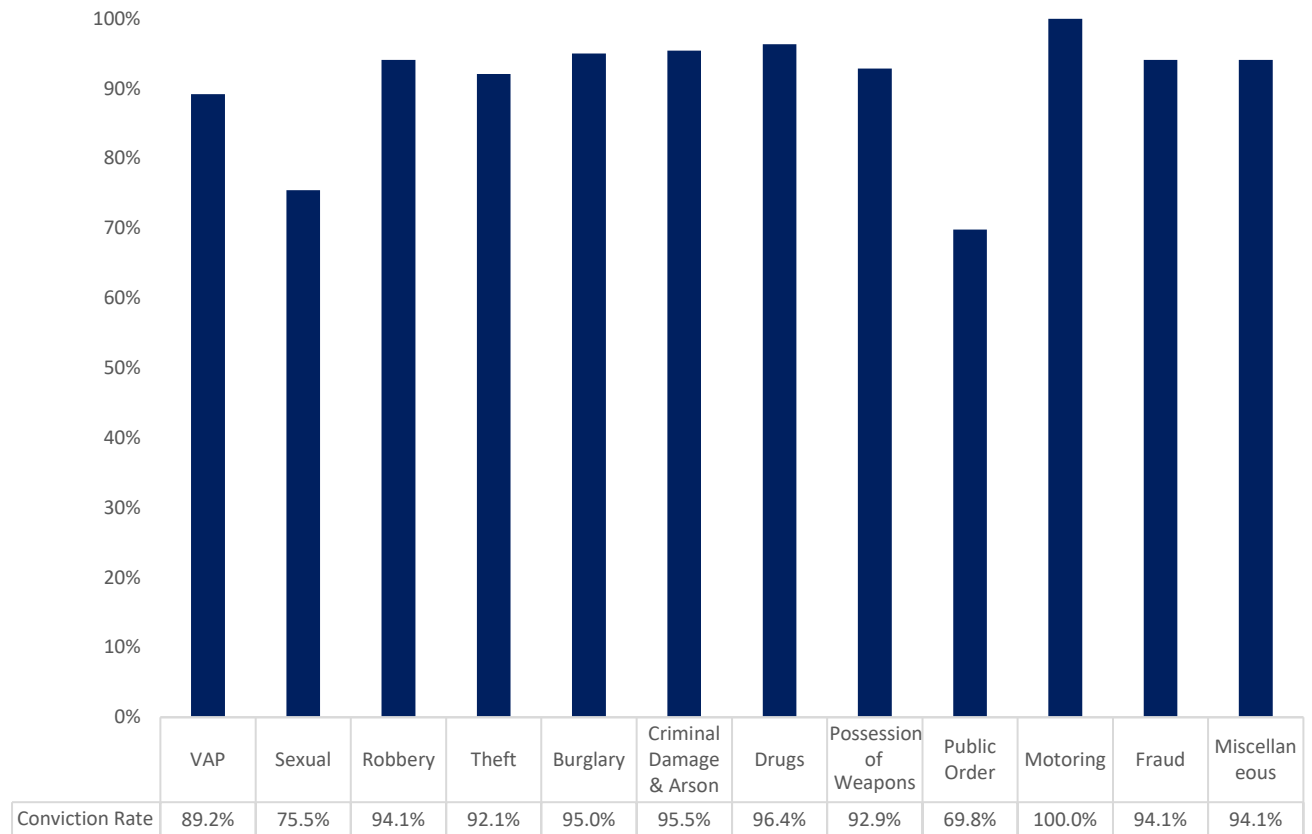
Figure 6: Cases disposed by offence category in all courts, 2020



In the Crown Court the largest proportion of cases disposed in 2020 fell into the VAP (19.9%, 232) and drug (18.9%, 220) offence categories. Cases where the principal offence at disposal fell into the drugs category made up a further 18.9% (220) of all cases disposed at Crown Court in that year. Cases where the principal offence fell into the possession of weapons category made up the smallest proportion of cases disposed in Crown Court (1.2%, 14) of cases disposed. Similarly, relatively few cases in the criminal damage and arson (1.9%, 22), fraud (2.9%, 34), motoring (3.5%, 41) and robbery (4.4%, 51) offence categories were disposed at Crown Court. Cases in the theft, public order, burglary and miscellaneous crimes against society categories made up 6.5% (76), 9.1% (106), 10.4% (121) and 11.7% (136) respectively, of the total cases disposed at Crown Court in 2020.

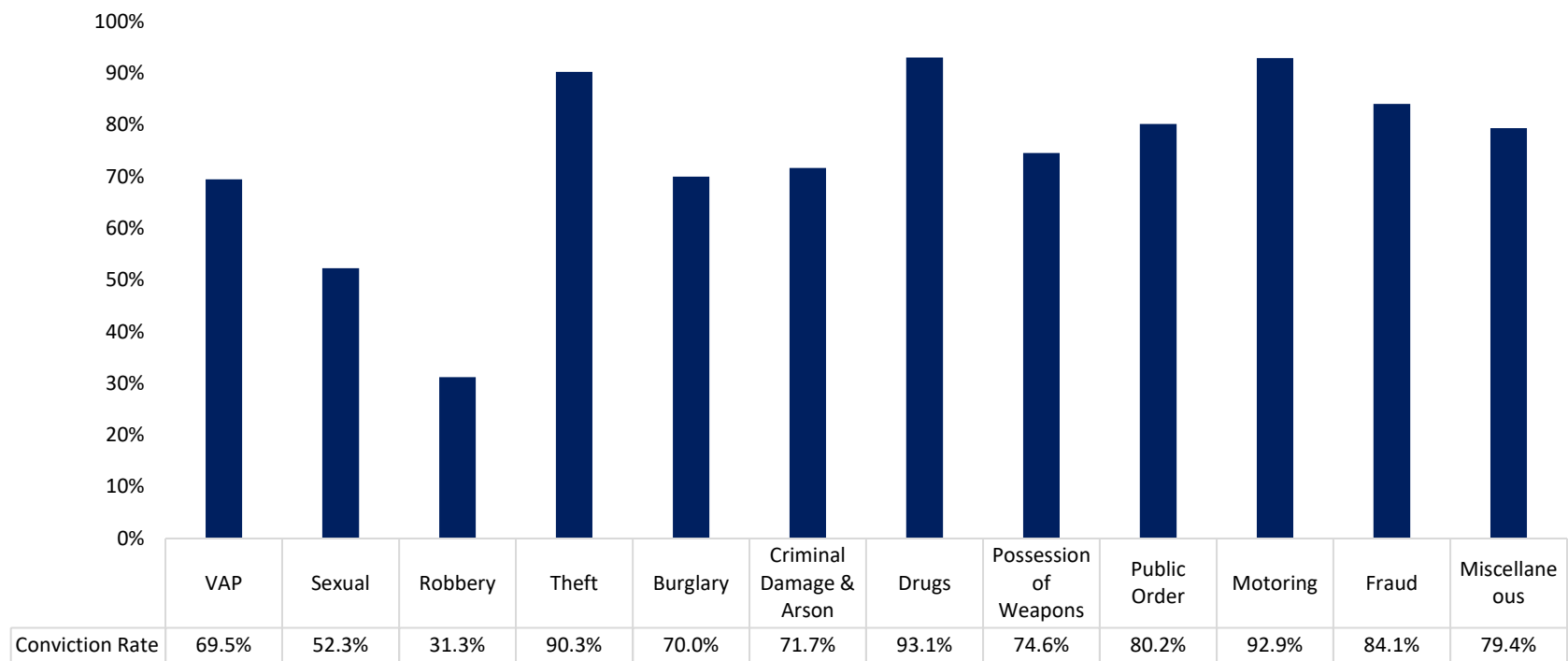
In the Crown Court in 2020, prosecutions brought for motoring offences and for drugs offences were, proportionately, most likely to end in conviction, with 100.0% (41) and 96.4% (212) respectively, of prosecutions brought for offences in these categories, resulting in a conviction. For cases which fell into the criminal damage and arson category, 95.5% (21) resulted in a conviction and, for cases which fell into the burglary category, 95.0% (115) of cases disposed at Crown Court resulted in a conviction. Cases which fell into the public order offences category however, were least likely to result in a conviction (69.8%, 74) (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage Convictions in Crown Court by Offence Category, 2020



Overall, in magistrates' courts, the largest proportion of prosecutions fell into the motoring offences category in 2020, comprising 43.7% (8,780) of all cases disposed at magistrates' courts in that year. In magistrates' courts, prosecutions brought for drugs offences were, proportionately, most likely to end in conviction, with 93.1% (1,760) of prosecutions brought for offences in this category resulting in a conviction. Similarly, 92.9% (8,161) of prosecutions for offences in the motoring offences category resulted in a conviction in magistrates' courts. Prosecutions for offences in the robbery category however, resulted in a conviction in 31.3% (5) of such cases, disposed in magistrates' courts (Table 4 in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)) (Figure 8).

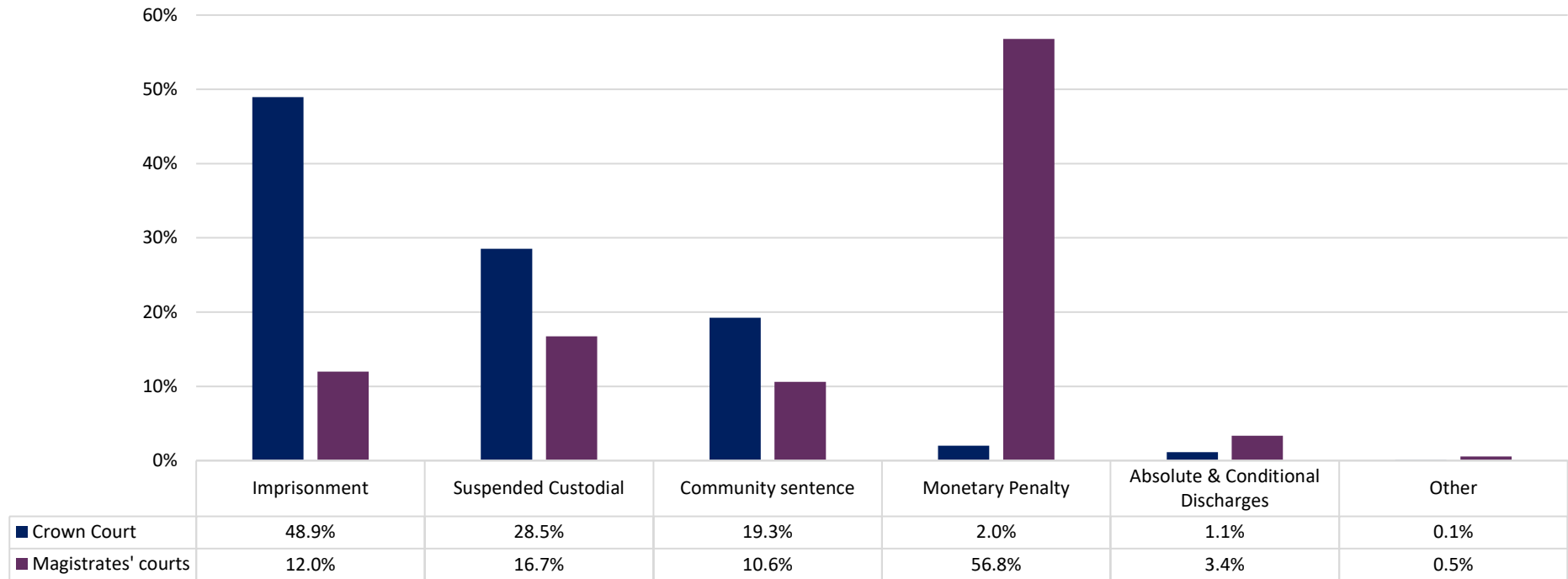
Figure 8: Percentage convictions in magistrates' courts by offence category, 2020



3.6 Prosecutions and Convictions at Courts – Main Disposal Types

Monetary penalties were the most frequently utilised disposal at all courts in 2020, with 53.6% (9,725) of all convictions having this type of disposal as their primary outcome. A custodial outcome was imposed in 14.1% (2,561) of cases that resulted in a conviction at all courts, with a suspended custodial outcome imposed in a further 17.4% (3,157) of convictions. A community sentence was the primary disposal in 11.1% (2,013) of convictions in all courts in 2020.

Figure 9: Percentage convictions at court by disposal type and court type, 2020



The type of penalty imposed as a result of conviction varied according to court type in 2020. In Crown Court, 48.9% (511) of disposals had a custodial element, compared with 12.0% (2,050) in magistrates' courts. Similarly, in Crown Court, 28.5% (298) of disposals had a suspended custodial element, compared with

16.7% (2,859) in magistrates' courts. Conversely, in Crown Court, 2.0% (21) of disposals resulted in a monetary penalty as the primary outcome, compared to 56.8% (9,704) in magistrates' courts (Table 5a in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)) (Figure 9).

The Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 allowed for the introduction of three new sentence types within Northern Ireland: two public protection sentences, 'indeterminate' and 'extended' custodial sentences; and a further sentence, 'determinate' custodial sentence. The number of convictions where a public protection sentence was handed down in 2020 was 28, 1.1% of all custodial sentences. The number of sentences which combined custody and community supervision elements excluding those released on licence conditions was 430, 16.8% of all custodial sentences handed down at all courts. Other custodial sentences accounted for 82.1% (2,103) of those cases where a custodial sentence was handed down, at all courts (Tables 5b, 5c and 5d in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).

In all courts, the offence category most likely to result in a custodial outcome was robbery, with 81.1% (43) of disposals for offences in this category resulting in this type of outcome in 2020. Conversely, a custodial outcome was least likely for motoring offences (1.8%, 145), which were most likely to be dealt with by way of monetary penalty, with 89.9% (7,375) of convictions at all courts for offences in this category receiving this outcome as their main disposal.

Fraud offences were most likely to attract a suspended custodial sentence at all courts, with 38.2% (83) of convictions for offences in this category receiving such an outcome. A custodial sentence was the most likely outcome for convictions in the burglary offence category, with 57.0% (180) of convictions in this category resulting in such an outcome as their main disposal.

In Crown Court, the offence category most likely to result in a custodial outcome was robbery, with 87.5% (42) of disposals for offences in this category resulting in a custodial outcome in 2020. Similarly, custodial sentences were handed down for 73.9% (85) of convictions where the principal offence was in the burglary category and for 61.4% (51) of convictions where the principal offence was in the sexual offences category. Defendants convicted of miscellaneous offences at Crown Court were more likely to be dealt with by way of suspended sentence, with 53.1% (68) of convictions for offences in this category receiving this outcome as their main disposal.

In magistrates' courts, the offence category most likely to result in a custodial outcome was burglary, with 47.3% (95) of disposals for offences in this category resulting in a custodial outcome in 2020. Public order offences made up the biggest proportion of cases dealt with by way of suspended custodial sentence at magistrates' courts, with 36.6% (473) of convictions where the principal offence was in that category being dealt with in that way. Motoring offences were most likely to be dealt with by way of monetary penalty as the main type of disposal, with 90.4% (7,374) of convictions at magistrates' courts for offences in this category, receiving this outcome (Tables 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e and 6f in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).

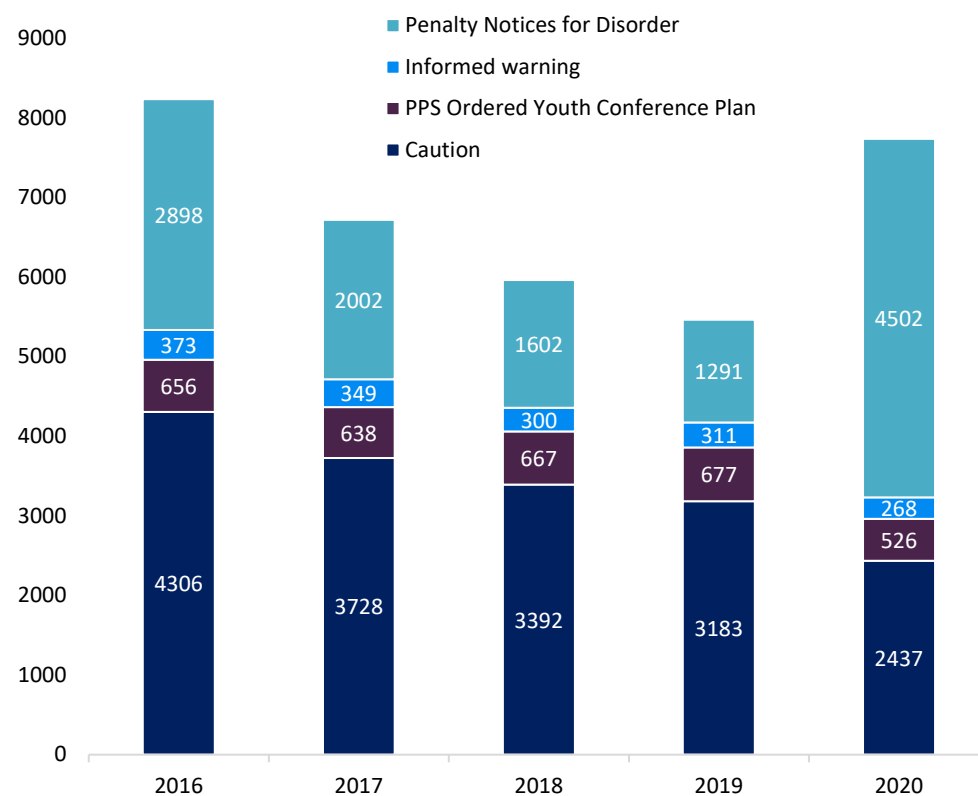
3.7 Out of Court Disposals - Overview

Non-court disposals allow the police to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, often first-time, offending which could more appropriately be resolved without a prosecution at court. In Northern Ireland a range of options exist, such as cautionary disposals, informed warnings, completion of Public Prosecution Service (PPS) ordered Youth Conferencing Plans and resolution through the Community Based Restorative Justice scheme.

Additionally, PNDs were introduced in Northern Ireland on 6th June 2012 as a result of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. PNDs are a fixed penalty designed to tackle low-level, anti-social and nuisance offending for offenders aged 18 and over and are issued for a range of minor offences. Unlike other out of court disposals, acceptance of a PND does not result in a criminal record. In 2020, offences under Health Protection Regulations, in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, were added to those offences which could be dealt with by way of PND and this had a significant effect on the number of PNDs issued.

The number of out of court disposals was 7,734 in 2020, a rise of 41.6% (2,272) from the 5,462 issued in 2019 and the highest number issued in the last five years. This increase was mainly due to Covid-19 offences being dealt with by way of penalty notice. In 2020, 3,661 PNDs were issued for offences under Health Protection regulations brought in as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, while the number of PNDs issued rose by 248.7%

Figure 10: Out of court disposals by type, 2016 - 2020



(3,211), the number of cautions issued fell by 23.4% (746), the number of PPS ordered Youth Conferencing Plans fell by 22.3% (151) and the number of informed warnings issued fell by 13.8% (43), on 2019 totals. There was one relevant community based restorative justice scheme out of court disposal recorded in 2020 (Table 7 in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)) (Figure 10).

3.8 Penalty Notice for Disorder Disposals

In 2020, 4,502 PNDs were issued, an increase of 248.7% from the total (1,291) issued in 2019. This increase was mainly due to Covid-19 offences being dealt with by way of penalty notice. In 2020, 3,661 PNDs were issued for offences under Health Protection regulations brought in as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of PNDs issued that were not under Health Protection Regulations associated with the Covid-19 pandemic was 841, a decrease of 34.9% from the total of 1,291 issued in 2019.

Of all PNDs issued in 2020, 68.4% (3,080) were issued to males. Of all those who received a PND, 18 to 24 year olds made up 59.4% (2,672). This was higher for PNDs issued under Covid-19 legislation, where 18 to 24 year olds accounted for 64.5% (2,360) of those who received a PND. PNDs were issued mainly for offences in the miscellaneous crimes category (87.4%, 3,935) and for public order offences (7.7%, 348), although 3.5% (156), were also issued for theft offences in 2020. However, for offences not under covid-19 legislation, PNDs were issued mainly for offences in the public order category, with 41.3% (347) of PMDs issued for offences in this category (Tables 8a, 8b and 8c in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).

3.9 Other Out of Court (Diversionary) Disposals

In 2020, the number of diversionary disposals issued which were recorded against individuals' criminal records was 3,232, a fall of 22.5% from the figure of 4,171 such disposals issued in 2019. Cautions were the most common form of diversionary disposal, making up 75.4% (2,437) of all diversionary disposals in

2020. Youth Conference Plans made up 16.3% (526) of disposals issued and informed warnings made up the majority of the remaining 8.3% (268) of diversionary disposals in 2020. There was one relevant community based restorative justice scheme out of court disposal recorded in 2020.

Most, 74.2% (2,398), diversionary disposals were issued to males in 2020. This is a slightly smaller proportion than in 2019, when 75.0% (3,127) of all diversionary disposals were issued to males. Of all diversionary disposals issued in 2020, most were handed out to offenders under the age of 25, with 53.8% (1,738) of all diversionary disposals being received by persons in that age group. This is a slight increase to the rate for 2019 when 52.8% of all diversionary disposals were issued to those under 25.

Drugs and VAP offences were the most frequently issued categories of diversionary disposals in 2020, with 26.9% (870) and 24.0% (776) respectively. Criminal Damage and Arson offences accounted for 11.4% (370) of all diversionary disposals in 2020, whereas motoring offences accounted for 11.1% (358). Offences in the theft category accounted for 9.9% (320) and public order offences accounted for 6.3% (205) of all diversionary disposals respectively (Tables 9a, 9b and 10 in accompanying [spreadsheet](#)).

4 Appendix 1 - Methodology and Counting Rules

What counts as a prosecution/conviction/diversionary disposal?

The data included in the bulletin are based on those for whom court proceedings were completed, or who had an out of court disposal recorded in Northern Ireland during the year 2020. The bulletin counts criminal proceedings brought to court by the Public Prosecution Service on behalf of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the National Crime Agency, the Airport Constabulary or Harbour Police in Northern Ireland and breaches of community sentences brought by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. Some prosecutions brought on behalf of the UK Border Agency are also included. The numbers of prosecutions completed are split into those where a conviction followed and those which did not result in a guilty finding. Prosecutions brought by government departments, other public bodies and private individuals are not included.

For the purposes of this bulletin, out of court disposals are broken into two categories, distinguishing those which result in a criminal record (diversionary disposals) from those which do not (PND). Diversionary disposals are those instances where an offender is subject to a caution, informed warning, a youth conference plan, or is subject to the community based restorative justice scheme. The purposes of a diversionary disposal are: (i) to offer a proportionate response to low level offending where the offender has admitted the offence, (ii) to deliver swift, simple and effective justice that carries a deterrent effect; (iii) to record an individual's criminal conduct for possible reference in future criminal proceedings or in criminal record or other similar checks; (iv) to reduce the likelihood of reoffending; and (v) to increase the amount of time the police have to spend dealing with more serious crime by reducing the amount of time police officers spend completing paperwork and attending court (in addition to simultaneously reducing the burden on courts themselves).

Police issued PND are a fixed penalty designed to tackle low-level, anti-social and nuisance offending for offenders aged 18 and over and are issued for a range of minor offences. They were introduced in Northern Ireland on the 6th June 2012 as a result of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. PNDs provide police with a swift financial punishment to deal with misbehaviour and a practical deterrent to future re-offending. Further information on PNDs can be accessed at the [nidirect website](#).

What counts as an offence?

Where an offender has had an out of court disposal imposed or been prosecuted for, or convicted of, several offences on the same occasion, only one offence, the principal offence, is counted. For cases brought before a court, the offence counted and used in the compilation of figures in this report is the one on which the court took its final decision. For diversionary disposals, the offence counted is the one recorded at the time the diversionary disposal was issued and, where applicable, subsequently recorded as completed with the PPS.

In relation to convictions, the principal offence counted is normally the one that draws the most severe disposal at conviction. Offences for which a defendant is convicted are not necessarily the same as those for which the defendant was initially proceeded against, as charges may be amended during the course of a case. The decision recorded is that reached by the court and takes no account of any subsequent appeal to a higher court. The basis for selection of the principal offence is laid down in rules issued by the Home Office; the Department of Justice has developed a [methodology](#) applicable to Northern Ireland based on these.

Data source and coverage

The statistics are produced using administrative data sourced from the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism (DSM1). They were extracted primarily based on records contained on the Criminal Records Viewer (CRV), held on Causeway. CRV utilises data which originated in the PSNI, PPS and from Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service. Causeway is an interconnected information system, launched as a joint undertaking by the Criminal Justice Organisations in Northern Ireland.

Full details of data relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, coherence, user need, cost and confidentiality is available in the [accompanying background quality](#) report. Details of the data quality checks and processes that DoJ has in place are available in the [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\)](#) document on the DoJ website.