



Ministry
of Justice

Quality statement – proven reoffending statistics

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Introduction

Proven reoffending statistics are published in compliance with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) quality strategy for statistics, which states that information should be provided as to how the bulletin meets user needs:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ministry-of-justice-statistics-policy-and-procedures

The MoJ aims to provide a high quality and transparent statistical service covering the whole of the justice system to promote understanding and trust. This statement sets out our policies for producing quality statistical outputs and the information we will provide to maintain our users' understanding and trust.

Core Objectives

We aim to deliver a service in line with our four core objectives:

- Provision of data which are accessible, consistent and fully documented.
- Production of statistics which clearly communicate the story and meet users' needs.
- Provision of analysis which is timely and based on robust methodology.
- Building capacity, capability and engagement.

Trust in statistics is important as statistics are fundamental to good government, to the delivery of public services and to decision making in all sectors of society. Statistics provide the parliament and the public with a window on society and the economy, and on the work and performance of government.

Assessing the quality of statistics is not a one-off exercise. It must be done on a continuous basis. This document explains by what measures we will assess the quality of our statistics, what users can expect us to do, and the information we will provide to users to aid them in making their own assessment of the quality of the statistics we produce.

As required by the Code of Practice for Statistics¹ and in line with the Government Statistical Service's Quality Strategy and associated guidance,² we will measure and report on our quality using a framework based around European Statistical Systems (ESS) Dimensions of Quality.³

Statistical quality in the MoJ is defined as meeting users' needs with particular reference to the **relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, comparability and coherence** of the statistics collected, analysed and reported.

¹ <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

² <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/government-statistical-service-gss-quality-strategy/>

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-catalogues/-/KS-02-18-142>

Principle 1: Relevance

Relevance is the degree to which the statistics meet the current and potential needs of users.

The published proven reoffending statistics help users to understand the level of overall proven reoffending committed in England and Wales and trends over time. It also includes separate rates for adults and juveniles. A proven reoffence is defined as any offence committed in a one-year follow-up period that leads to a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning in the one-year follow-up or within a further six-month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court. These reoffending statistics are also presented based on different breakdowns (e.g. by index offence type, disposal type and reoffence type).

These statistics strive to be relevant across a range of users and the proven reoffending statistics team routinely seeks out feedback from both internal and external users to enhance what is published. When a change is requested, we work with analytical colleagues and data providers to explore what is possible and whether the data available is fit for this purpose before any change is made.

Potential users can also express demand for figures through direct requests under the Freedom of Information Act, Parliamentary Questions, public discourse and our own engagement with users.

Principle 2: Accuracy and Reliability

Accuracy is the closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value.

Proven reoffending results for offenders are based on administrative data systems which have been established to facilitate the operational passage of offenders through the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The data systems used in this instance are the Police National Computer (PNC), the national Delius (nDelius) system, Prison-Nomis (PNomis) and eAsset.

We work closely with the owners of these data systems to understand how their processes work, how data is collected and how data is validated upon entry. We continually seek to better understand how the data is used operationally (e.g. within HM Prisons and Probation Service) and how this may affect the statistics produced.

As data is extracted from these administrative systems and analysed to produce the published statistics, guidance from The Aqua Book⁴ is used to ensure thorough quality assurance procedures are adhered to during the statistics quarterly production process.

Despite carrying out validation on entry, prior to submission and within the statistical processes following extraction, the data are subject to some inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale data recording system (e.g. mistyped data entries). However, the validation procedures detailed above are felt to be proportionate in reliably minimising the impact that any errors may have on the published estimates.

Quality assurance checks include:

- On receipt of the data, a further series of checks are carried out, including simple sum checks, trend analysis to flag up areas of considerable change and assessing data consistency (e.g. where applicable, monitoring volumes of 'Unknown' or 'Other' groupings).
- Changes in system (including updates) and procedures can lead to reporting discrepancies as time may be needed to adjust to new ways of working. When new practices are implemented, work is conducted alongside to ensure that the data being received is consistent and of acceptable quality before it is published.
- Data from the PNC, nDelius, PNOMIS and eAsset are matched to produce proven reoffending statistics. Code used to extract and analyse the data has been checked by expert users of the system as well as other members of the reoffending statistics team.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-aqua-book-guidance-on-producing-quality-analysis-for-government

- We verify our data with timeseries available from past data which has been extracted and quality assurance checks are carried out within the team as the bulletin is developed.
- Once all publication products are complete, an analyst conducts a full set of quality assurance checks as set out in an established 'Quality Assurance log', raising issues to the team.
- Any subsequent corrections required prior to publication are actioned and, if required, any amendments required following publication are made – fully adhering to the department's revisions policy.

Reliability is the closeness of early estimates to subsequent estimated values.

This publication and the data within it are published quarterly.

To note though, the COVID19 pandemic has caused MoJ to have to change its data gathering, access and release practices, focussing efforts on priority analysis and statistics. In particular, access to the Police National Computer (PNC) had been paused, to minimise non-essential travel by our analysts. Furthermore, due to the late delivery of data, delays also occurred earlier this year in the production of the Police National Computer (PNC) data extracts required for producing proven reoffending statistics; this meant that the statistical release reporting on the April to June 2019 offender cohort period, originally intended for release in April 2021, was cancelled. However, this latest edition of the proven reoffending statistics publication covers both the offender cohort periods April to June 2019 and July to September 2019.

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Office Statistics, the MoJ is required to publish transparent guidance on its policy for revisions. A copy of this statement can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ministry-of-justice-statistics-policy-and-procedures. Information on the way in which scheduled and unscheduled revisions are treated in the MoJ proven reoffending statistics publications can also be found in the supporting guidance documentation.

Principle 3: Timeliness and Punctuality

Timeliness refers to the time gap between the publication date and the reference period for the statistics.

Each set of proven reoffending statistics is published with a ‘time lag’ of around 24 months. For example, one-year reoffending results for the July to September 2019 quarterly cohort has been published in July 2021.

This ‘time lag’ is felt to be timely and allows us to strike a balance between the need to minimise the delay in releasing statistics and ensuring a robust and high-quality product. The lag accounts for the proven reoffending one-year follow-up period and allows a six-month waiting period for cases to progress through the courts, it provides time for any amendments to initial source data following validation, and time for the analysis to be carried out as well as a short period for the bulletin to be produced.

Punctuality is the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication for statistics.

Proven reoffending statistics are usually published at quarterly intervals at 9:30am on a date which has been pre-announced 12-months in advance, in line with the Code of Practice: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements

Any change to the pre-announced release date(s) would follow the approval of the Chief Statistician for the MoJ and we would explain clearly the reasons for the changes to users at the earliest opportunity.

As such, due to the late delivery of data, in addition to the latest lockdown as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, delays occurred in the production of the PNC data extracts required for producing proven reoffending statistics earlier this year; this has meant that the statistical release reporting on the April to June 2019 offender cohort period, originally intended for release in April 2021, was cancelled. However, this latest edition of the proven reoffending statistics publication covers both the offender cohort periods April to June 2019 and July to September 2019.

Principle 4: Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users can access the statistics and data.

Quarterly releases providing proven reoffending results are available on the gov.uk website; dates of future releases can be found on the Official Statistics calendar.⁵

These statistics seek to address a range of users' needs and are published alongside a technical guide document to aid users' understanding.

Both the guide and each release include contact details for the lead statistician or respective mailboxes within Data and Evidence as a Service for users to address any concerns. These inboxes are routinely monitored and any queries are actioned as quickly as possible.

Published data tables are available in ODS format as standard.

Furthermore, Data and Evidence as a Service worked towards ensuring compliance with the public sector's legal obligations to meet accessibility standards by 2020.

Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the commentary, illustrations, accompanying advice and technical details.

The commentary is written by professional statisticians and aims to be impartial, helping users put the figures into meaningful context. The bulletin is produced independently, and figures are subject to strict pre-release access for essential individuals only – no other access to statistics in their final form are made available prior to publication.

All technical terms, acronyms and definitions are explained in the bulletin itself (where appropriate), supporting footnotes in the published data tables and in the supporting guidance documentation.

All published data tools are supported by definitional and practical guidance to support users in making accurate and reliable use of the tool functionality.

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements

Principle 5: Comparability and Coherence

Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time, by region or another domain.

The administrative systems that underpin the proven reoffending statistics are in operation within the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales.

A time series of data is presented in the publication. Any changes in source data are flagged and caveated in the accompanying technical guide as well as in the associated tables, charts and text where practicable; this includes notes of any variation in source and key events (e.g. policy changes) that may have affected a period. In addition, the publication makes clear when users of the statistics need to exercise caution when comparing rates.

Alongside the raw binary reoffending rates, adjusted rates using the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS4/G) are also presented. These take account of the influence that differences in offender mix can have on the binary reoffending rates.

Coherence is the degree to which the statistical processes that generate two or more outputs use the same concepts and harmonised methods.

A certain proportion of offenders who could not be matched to the PNC are excluded from the offender cohort and so figures may not represent all proven offenders. This, along with the differing time lags used to compile other statistics, means that the number of offenders presented in this publication will be different to those included in other similar statistical releases.

Users are also advised to use Official Statistics for most purposes, only using any published management information to understand the very latest high-level position.