



Proven reoffending statistics quarterly bulletin, October to December 2020

Published 27 October 2022

Main Points

This publication provides the proven reoffending results for the October to December 2020 offender cohort. This latest offender cohort period coincides with a period of both national and regional lockdowns imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the associated reoffending follow-up and waiting periods for this cohort overlap with varying degrees of operational restrictions. As a result, volatility continues to be seen in the reoffending figures.

The overall proven reoffending rate was 23.1% for the October to December 2020 offender cohort.



This represents a decrease of 2.1 percentage points from the same quarter in 2019, the lowest rate in the timeseries.

Adult offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 22.7%.



This is a decrease of 1.9 percentage points since the same quarter in 2019, the lowest rate in the timeseries.

Juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 29.2%.



The juvenile reoffending rate decreased by 5.2 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. However, for context, the number of offenders in the cohort has fallen by 86% since the same financial quarter in 2009.

Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 29.5%.



This represents a 3.5 percentage point decrease since the same quarter last year.

Adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months had a proven reoffending rate of 54.9%.



This is a decrease of 4.0 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 56.5%, which is a decrease of 5.1 percentage points since the same quarter in the previous year.

This bulletin, associated tables and data tools present the proportion of offenders who reoffend (proven reoffending rate) and the number of proven reoffences by offender history, demographics,

individual prisons, probation area, local authorities and youth offending teams. For technical details please refer to the accompanying [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).

For any feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at ESD@justice.gov.uk

1. Statistician's comment

“Figures presented in this statistical release show proven reoffending statistics for the October to December 2020 offender cohort. Proven reoffences are measured over a one-year follow-up period and a further six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court.

Reoffending figures for this latest cohort, as well as more recent offender cohorts, highlight the continued volatility resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These statistics are likely to continue oscillating in the short-term before potentially more stable trends are observed as we move further away from the periods of lockdowns.

This latest offender cohort coincides with the second national lockdown imposed due to the pandemic,¹ as well as a continued period of recovery for the courts. Whilst the number of cases processed between October and December 2020 continued to rise, so too did the number of outstanding cases and the average age of outstanding cases.²

Furthermore, the reoffending follow-up and waiting periods for this cohort overlapped with the third national lockdown, regional lockdowns, and various other restrictions – such as the closure of pubs and cancellation of large-scale events. While there were no court closures during these two lockdown periods, police recorded crime data have shown overall reductions in the reporting and recording of many crime types during periods of lockdown.³

The number of offenders in the October to December 2020 cohort broadly matches the same quarter in 2019, showing recovery from the historic lows observed in the previous two quarters as a result of the pandemic. The number of reoffenders also climbed from previous quarters but is still 8.9% lower than the same quarter in 2019.

The overall proven reoffending rate was 23.1% for the October to December 2020 offender cohort, the lowest rate observed in the timeseries. This also represents a decrease of 2.1 percentage points from the same quarter in 2019.”

¹The first national lockdown was implemented on 23 March 2020 and transitioned to phased reopening until August 2020 (including a limited number of jury trials resuming from 18 May 2020). The second national lockdown was implemented on 5 November 2020 and returned to a three-tier restriction system from 2 December 2020. The third national lockdown was implemented on 6 January 2021 and transitioned to phased reopening until June 2021.

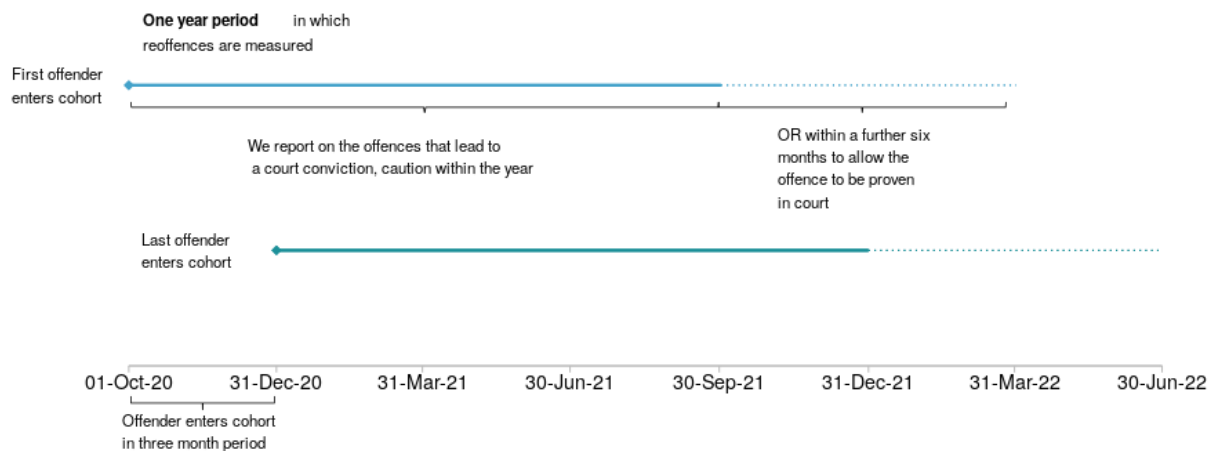
² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/972864/ccsq_bulletin_oct_dec_2020.pdf

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>

How is proven reoffending measured?

An offender enters this cohort if they were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a reprimand or warning in the three-month period spanning October to December 2020. It is important to note that this is not comparable to publications prior to the October 2017 proven reoffending publication, which reported on a 12-month cohort.

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 as shown in the diagram below in relation to the latest offender cohort.



In addition to the October to December 2020 cohort, we also present the historical data, back April to June 2009 onward, in this publication.

The latest proven reoffending statistics based on annual average cohorts can be found at: [annual tables](#).

Users should be cautious when making any comparison between cohorts before and after October 2015. This is because there is a change in data source from October 2015 onwards. In addition, users should be cautious when comparing the 3-monthly cohorts to one another (e.g., October to December 2018 to July to September 2018). This is due to the smaller 3-month cohort size the measure is likely to be more variable than the previous 12-month cohort measure of reoffending. For further details on this, and how proven reoffending is measured, please see the guide to proven reoffending statistics and 'How the measure of proven reoffending has changed and the effect of these changes'.⁴

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/proven-reoffending-statistics-october-to-december-2020>

2. Overall – adult and juvenile offenders

The overall proven reoffending rate was 23.1% for the October to December 2020 offender cohort.

This represents a decrease of 2.1 percentage points from the same quarter in 2019, and the lowest rate in the timeseries.

Proven reoffences are measured over a one-year follow-up period and a further six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court. As with previous cohorts, the October to December 2020 offender cohort was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This cohort period overlaps with the phases of both national and local lockdowns during winter 2020. Furthermore, the reoffending follow-up period also overlapped with various other operational restrictions in place throughout 2021. Limits on criminal court activity over this period meant a reduction in the volumes of cases processed and an increase in outstanding cases in Magistrates' and Crown Courts⁵.

As a result, we now observe marked effects on the volume of offenders in the cohort and the volume of subsequent proven reoffenders (Figure 1). The size of the offender cohort has decreased by 0.4% since the same quarter in 2019; similarly, the number of reoffenders has decreased by 8.9% over the same period.

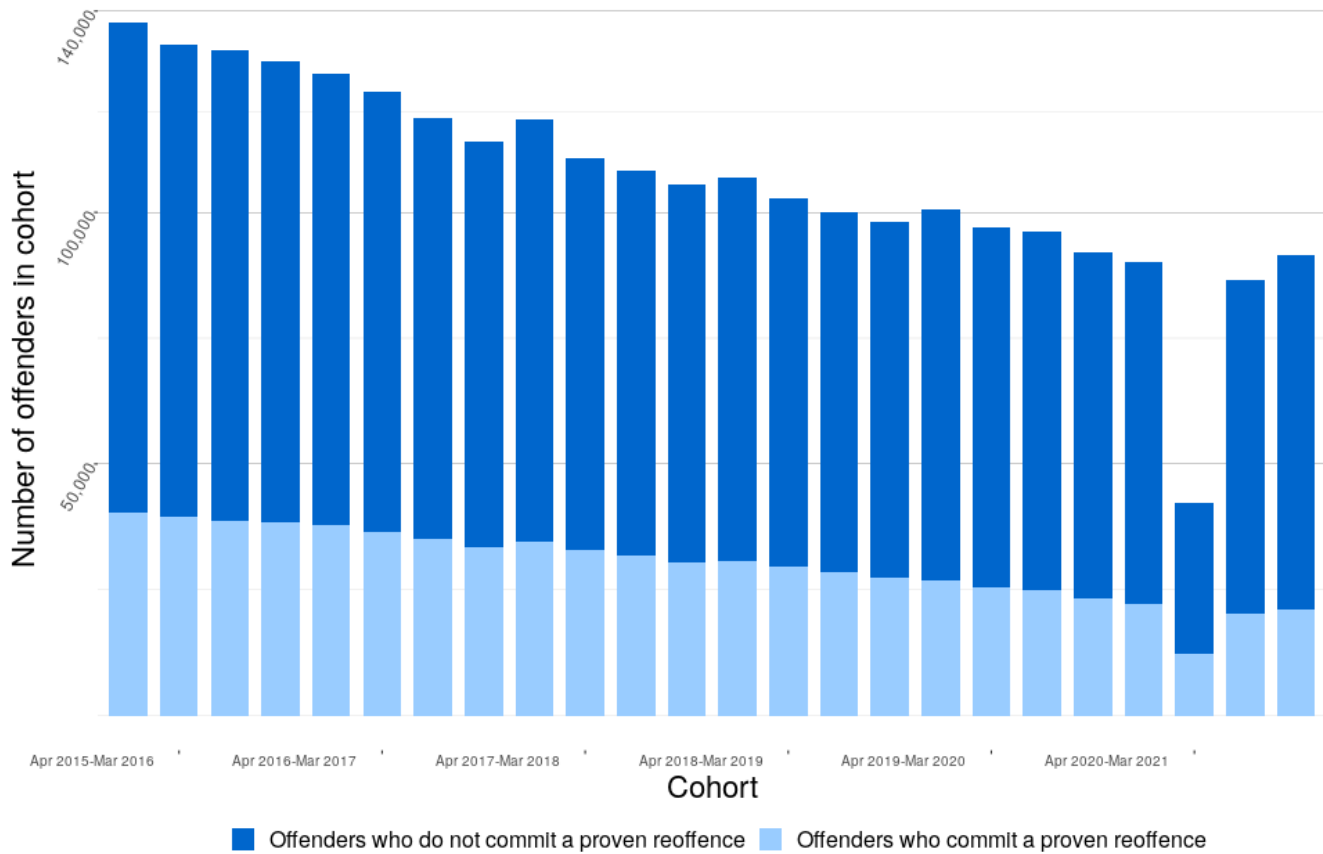
This has led to an overall proven reoffending rate for the October to December 2020 cohort of 23.1%, a 2.1 percentage point decrease from the same quarter in 2019. Just over 21,000 of the 92,000 offenders (95% adult and 5% juveniles) reoffended, committing almost 74,000 proven reoffences over the one-year follow-up period.

This follows a downward trend in proven reoffending for offender cohorts affected by the pandemic and the lowest rate in the timeseries. Since April – June 2009, the overall proven reoffending rate has fluctuated between 23.1% and 31.8%.

Reoffenders within this latest cohort committed an average of 3.52 reoffences each (also known as the frequency rate). More broadly, the frequency rate has been in general decline since a peak of 4.06 in 2016. The total number of reoffences has also generally declined over this period. The number of proven reoffences has decreased by 12.5% since the same quarter in 2019.

⁵ For details on trends in criminal court activity, please refer to (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>.)

Figure 1: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence and the number of offenders in each cohort, January 2015 to December 2020 (Source: Table A1)



Of this offender cohort, 84% were male and 16% were female, with the gender split remaining reasonably stable over time. Male offenders reoffended at a higher rate of 23.6% compared to female offenders who reoffended at a rate of 18.3%. Since 2009, these rates have fluctuated between 23.6% and 33.8% for males and 18.3% to 24.4% for females.

3. Adult offenders

Adult offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 22.7%.

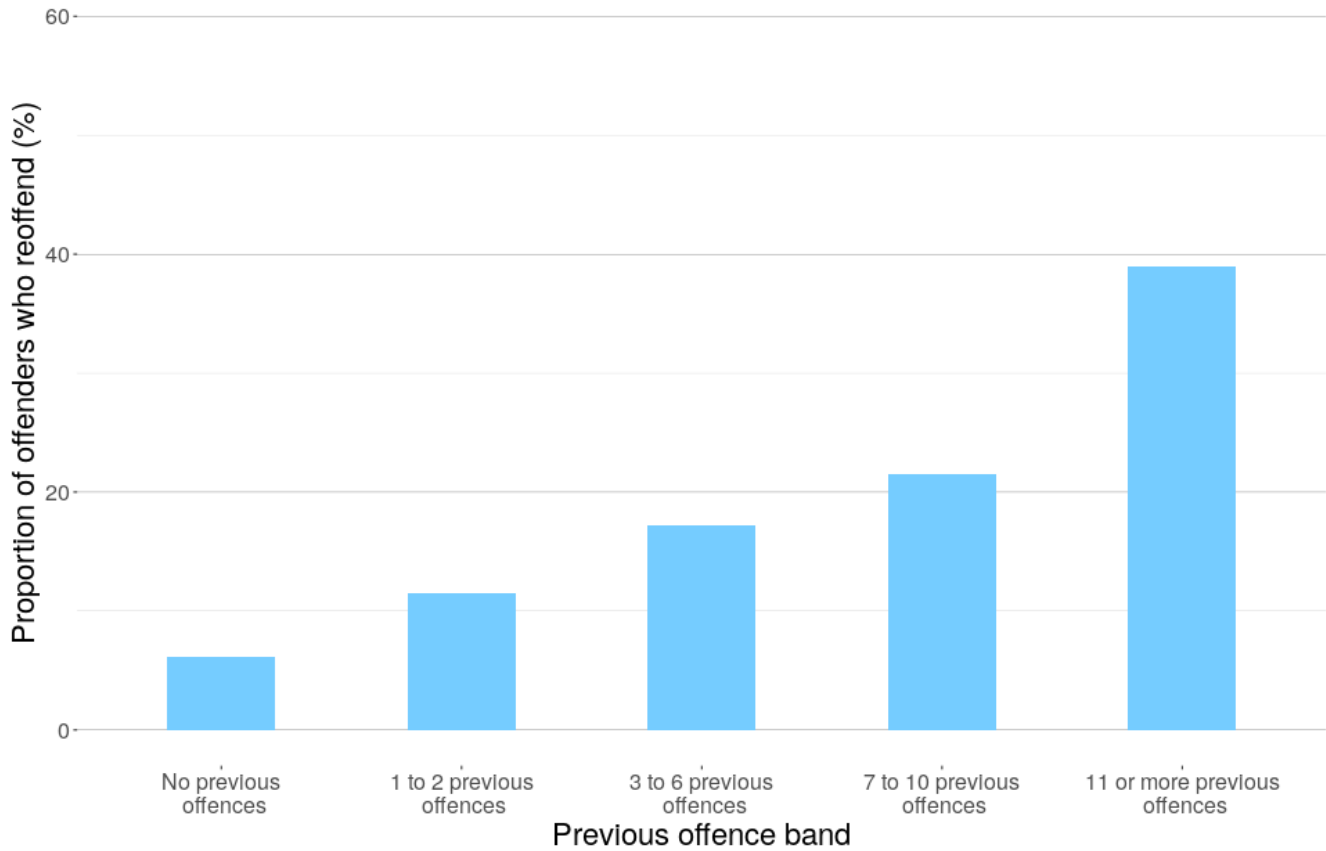
This is a decrease of 1.9 percentage points since the same quarter in 2019. Over time, the overall proven reoffending rate has fluctuated between 22.7% and 30.6%.

The adult reoffending rate had remained broadly flat since 2009 until 2018. However, the latest figure for the October to December 2020 cohort was 22.7%, a 1.9 percentage point decrease since the same quarter in 2019 and the lowest rate in the timeseries.

This also follows a reduction since the April to June 2019 cohort period when the rate stood at 25.8% and represented the largest year-on-year decrease in the timeseries so far. Over time, the rate has fluctuated between 22.7% and 30.6% over time. As with the overall proven reoffending rate, the continuing reduction in the rate for more recent cohorts may predominantly be due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined earlier.

For the latest quarterly cohort, around 70,000 proven reoffences were committed over the one-year follow-up period by just under 20,000 adults. Those that reoffended committed on average 3.51 reoffences; this represents a 5% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019 and the lowest frequency rate since October to December 2012.

Figure 2: Proportion of adult offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by number of previous offences, October to December 2020 (Source: Table A5a)



Offenders with a larger number of previous offences have a higher rate of proven reoffending than those with fewer previous offences. In the October to December 2020 cohort, the proven reoffending rates for adults ranged from 6.1% for offenders with no previous offences to 39.0% for offenders with 11 or more previous offences (Figure 2).

Adult offenders with 11 or more previous offences made up 39% of all adult offenders in the cohort, represented 67% of all adult reoffenders and committed 76% of all adult proven reoffences.

4. Juvenile offenders⁶

Juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 29.2%.

The juvenile reoffending rate decreased by 5.2 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. However, for context, the number of offenders in the cohort has fallen by 86% since the same financial quarter in 2009.

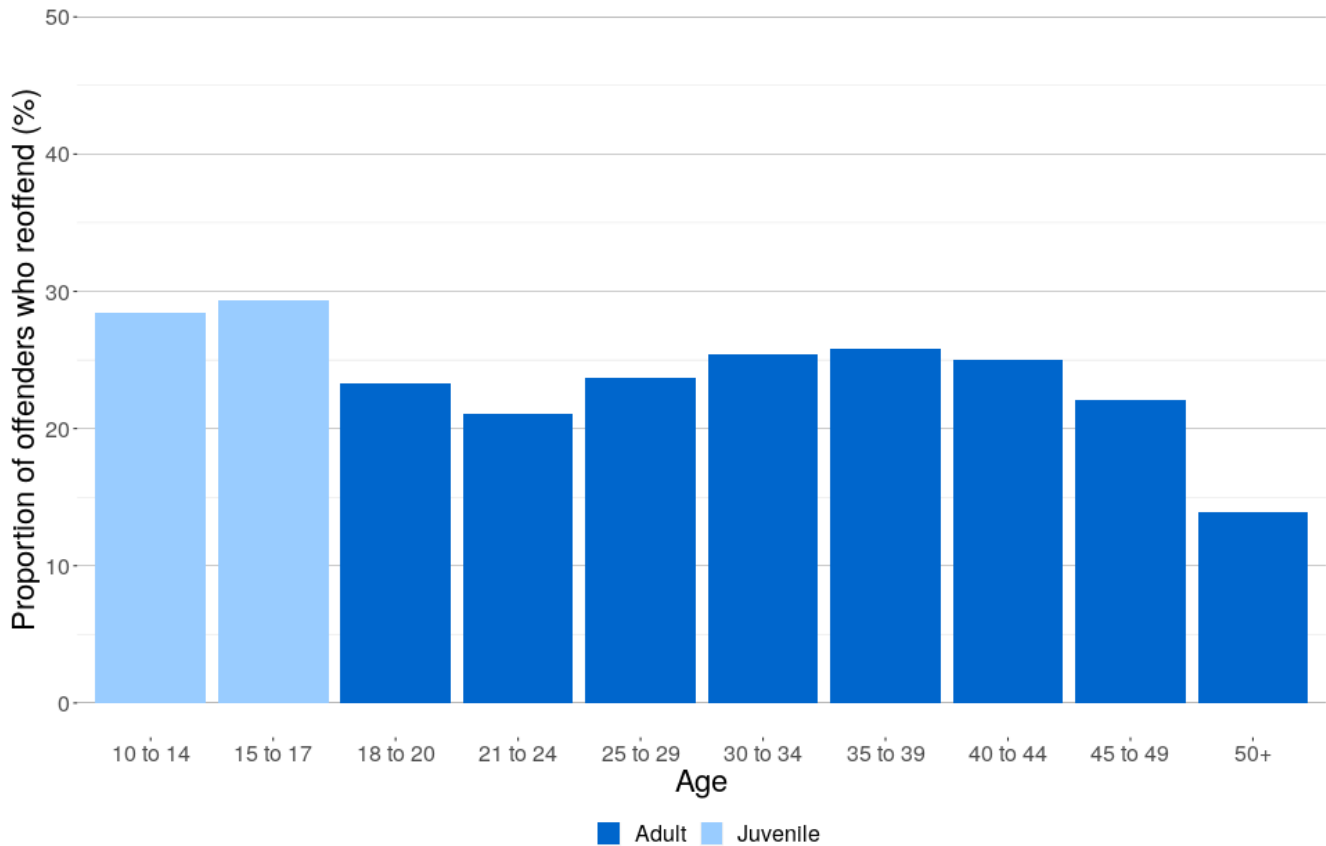
The juvenile reoffending rate was 29.2%, a 5.2 percentage point decrease from the same quarter in the previous year.

Over 1,000 of approximately 4,000 juvenile offenders in the October to December 2020 cohort, committed a reoffence within a one-year follow-up period (equivalent to around 5,000 proven reoffences). It is important to note that the number of offenders in the cohort has fallen by 86% since the same quarter in 2009 and has rate of reoffending has fluctuated between 29.2% and 43.6% over the years.

Those that reoffended committed on average 3.67 reoffences each. As with the adult cohort, juvenile offenders with 11 or more previous offences had a higher reoffending rate than those with no previous offences, 59.3% and 14.6% respectively.

⁶ Juveniles are defined as those aged 10 to 17 years old.

Figure 3: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by age, October to December 2020 (Source: Table A3)



As with previous quarters, 15 to 17-year-old offenders have the highest reoffending rate, closely followed by the 10 to 14-year-old offenders, with reoffending rates of 29.4% and 28.4% respectively (Figure 3). The proven reoffending rate for juveniles is higher than adults and the rate starts to fall with increasing age after the 35 to 39-year-old group.

5. Adult reoffending by disposal⁷

Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 29.5%.

This represents a 3.5 percentage point decrease since the same quarter last year and the lowest rate in the timeseries.

Adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months had a proven reoffending rate of 54.9%.

This is a decrease of 4.0 percentage points from the same quarter in the previous year. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 56.5%, which is also a decrease of 5.1 percentage points since the same quarter in 2019.

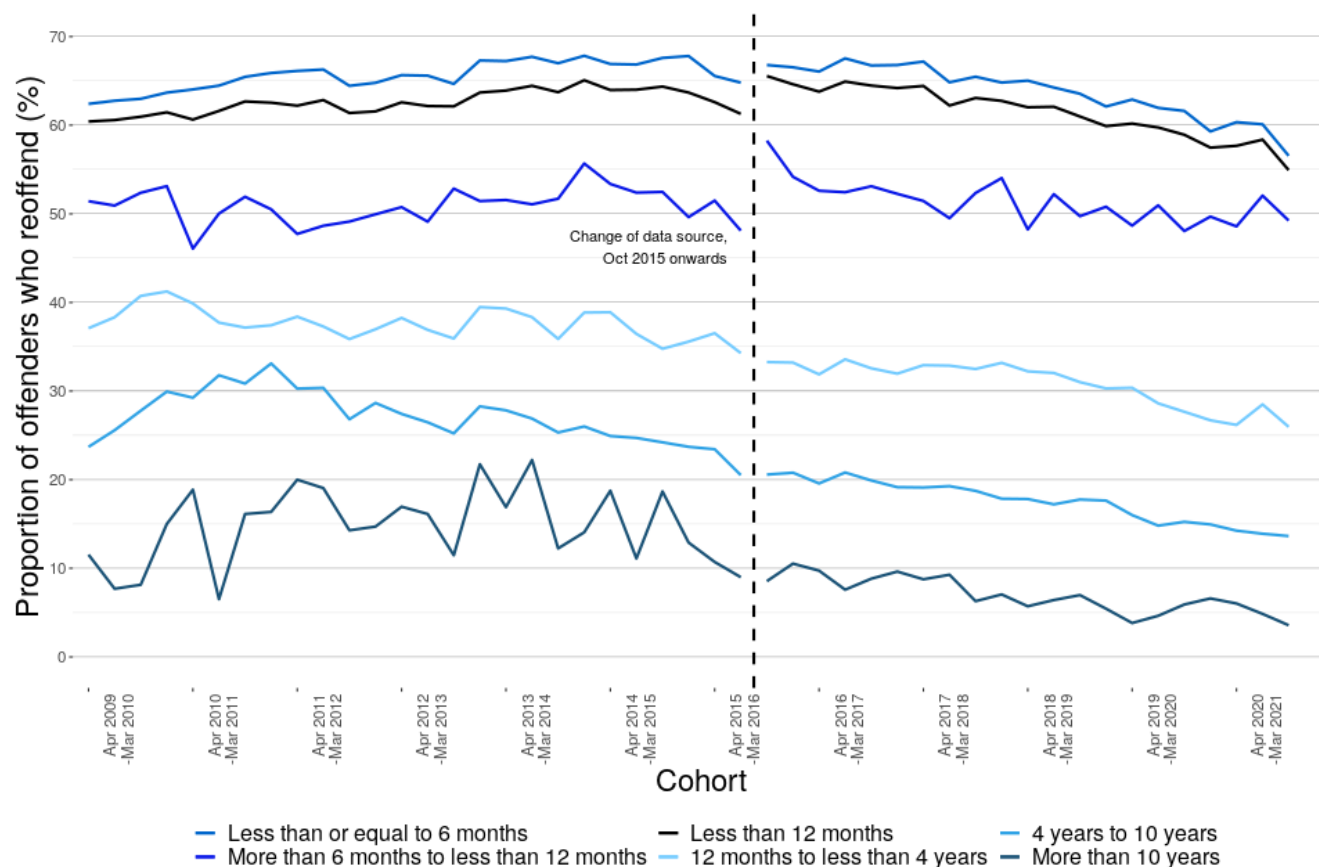
Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a proven reoffending rate of 29.5%, a decrease of 3.5 percentage points compared to the same quarter in 2019 and a decrease of 10.6 percentage points since the same quarter in 2011.

The proven reoffending rate for adult offenders starting a court order⁸ specifically was 26.2%, a 2.7 percentage point decrease when compared to the same quarter in 2019 and a 10.5 percentage point decrease when compared to the same financial quarter in 2011. When adjusted for offender mix (i.e., when controlling for offender characteristics), the decrease observed in corresponding financial quarter in 2011 is smaller at 3.3 percentage points.

⁷ For proven reoffending statistics, a disposal is defined as a caution, court order, custody, or other disposal resulting from a conviction at court, such as a fine or discharge. A different methodology is used for proven reoffending statistics by disposal type. The first proven offence within each disposal is treated as the start point for measuring proven reoffending. Therefore, some offenders will appear in more than one disposal category.

⁸ Community order or suspended sentence order.

Figure 4: Proportion of adult offenders released from custody who commit a proven reoffence, by custodial sentence length, April 2009 to December 2020 (Source: Table C2a)



The proven reoffending rate for adult offenders released from custody was 37.2%, a 4.4 percentage point decrease compared to the same quarter the previous year. Adults who served sentences of 12 months or more reoffended at a substantially lower rate at 21.4% compared to those who served a sentence of less than 12 months at a rate of 54.9%. Those released from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months had a proven reoffending rate of 56.5%, a decrease of 5.1 percentage points since the same quarter in the previous year (Figure 4).

Users should exercise caution when comparing the effectiveness of different sentences because the presented rates do not control for known differences in offender characteristics. For further information please consult the report on the [impact of short custodial sentences, community orders and suspended sentence orders on reoffending](#) as well as the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).⁹

⁹ Proven reoffending rates by disposal should not be compared to assess the effectiveness of sentences, as there is no control for known differences in offender characteristics and the type of sentence given. For further information see [Annex D of the October 2016 publication](#) (page 41) and the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).

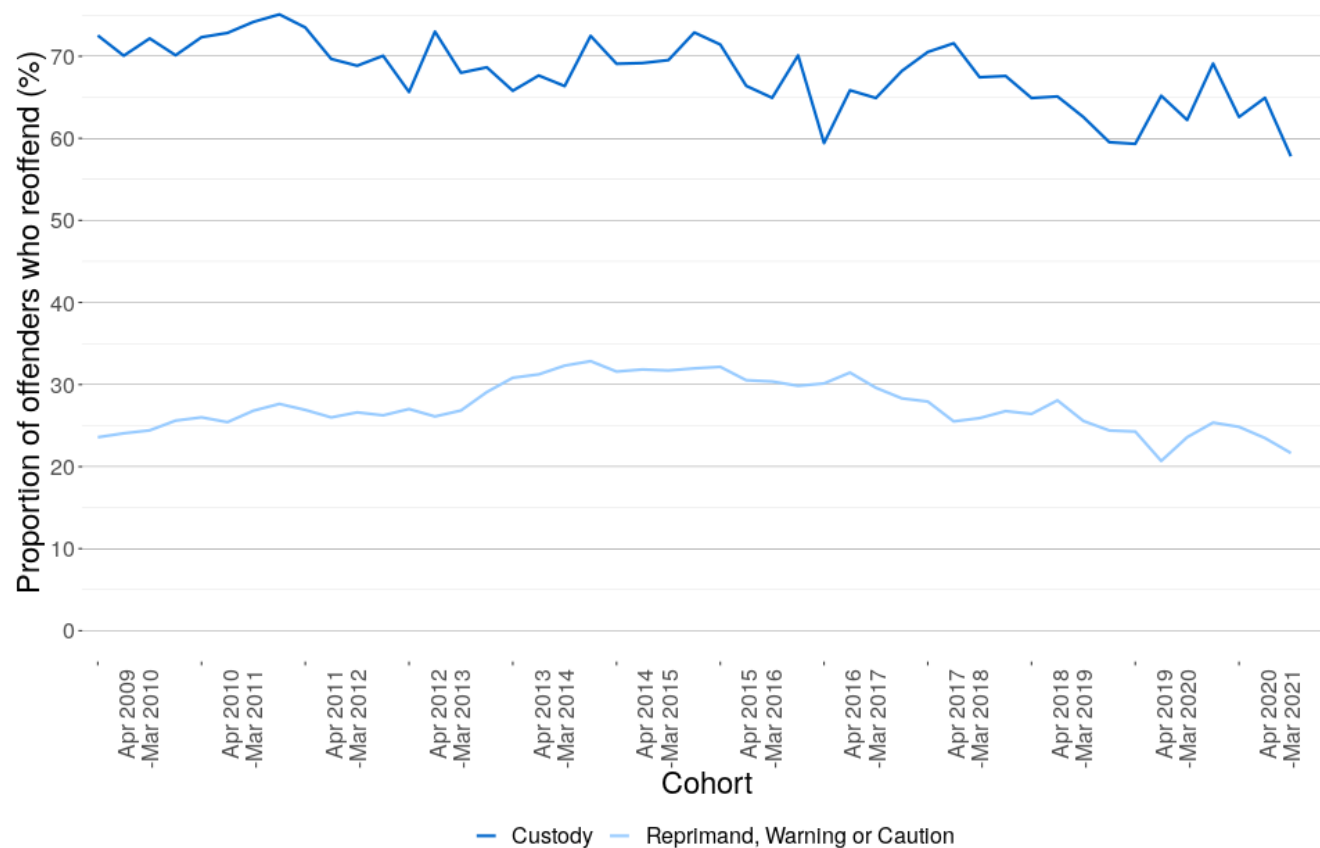
6. Juvenile reoffending by disposal¹⁰

Juvenile offenders given youth cautions had a proven reoffending rate of 21.7%.

This represents a decrease of 1.9 percentage points since the same quarter last year.

Reprimands and warnings for youths were abolished under the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 with effect from 8 April 2013 and replaced with youth cautions. Youth cautions are a formal out-of-court disposal that can be used as an alternative to prosecution for juvenile offenders in certain circumstances. A youth caution may be given for any offence where the young offender admits an offence and there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute.

Figure 5: Proportion of juvenile offenders released from custody or given a reprimand, warning or caution who commit a proven reoffence, April 2009 to December 2020 (Source: Table C1b)



For the October to December 2020 cohort, 64 juvenile offenders were released from custody and 37 (57.8%) were proven to have committed a reoffence within a year. The rate has decreased by 4.4

¹⁰ The juvenile proven reoffending data by disposal uses the same methodology as that adopted for adult reoffending by disposal (see section 5 for more details).

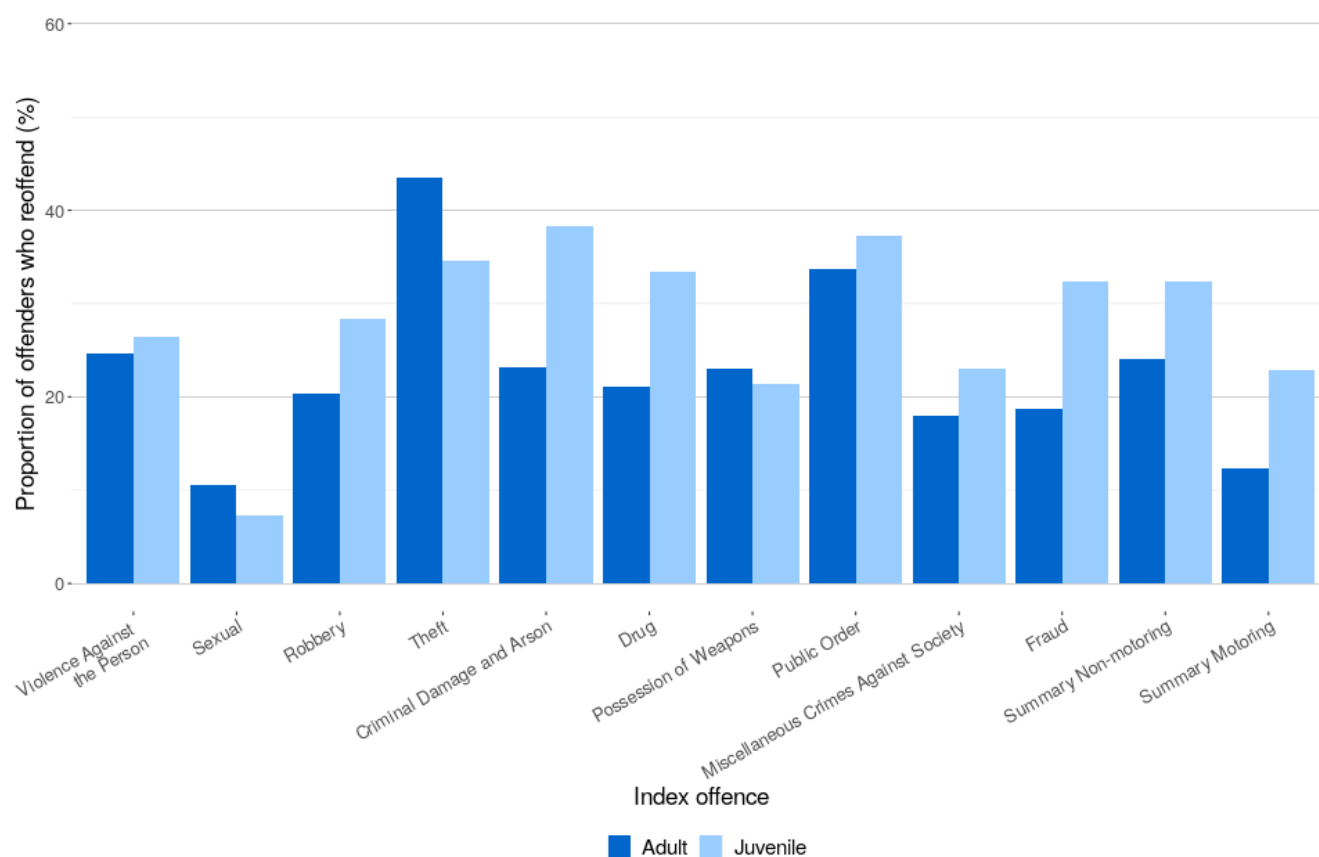
percentage points since the same quarter in 2019 (Figure 5). There is, however, likely to be more variation from one quarter to another due to the reduced size of the cohort.

7. Index offences¹¹

For the October to December 2020 adult cohort, the index offence category associated with the highest reoffending rate was theft, (43.6%). This is down from 47.5% in the same quarter in 2019.

The second highest reoffending rate of 33.7% amongst adult offenders was those with an index offence of public order (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders in England and Wales who commit a proven reoffence, by index offence (except the 'other' offence category), October to December 2020 (Source: Table A4a/b)



The proportion of reoffences committed by index offence has remained broadly stable over time. The lowest rate of reoffending in the adult cohort was observed amongst those with a sexual offence as their index offence, with a rate of 10.6%. Excluding the 'other'¹² offence category (not shown in Figure 6), the robbery index offence category saw the largest percentage point decrease in reoffending rate

¹¹ An index offence refers to the offence that leads to an offender being included in the offender cohort.

¹² 'Other' includes various offences not otherwise categorised and includes small numbers therefore it is best not to make comparisons with this index offence.

since the same financial quarter in 2009, with an 18.5 percentage point difference. Those with an index offence of fraud saw an increase of 4.4 percentage points over this period,

In the juvenile cohort, those with an index offence of criminal damage and arson had the highest proven reoffending rate at 38.3% (Figure 6), followed by those with an index offence of public order at 37.3%. Those with the lowest rate, excluding the 'other' offence category, were offenders who had committed a sexual index offence. Their reoffending rate was 7.3%. Those who committed miscellaneous crimes against society index offences saw the largest percentage point decrease in reoffending rate since the same financial quarter in 2009 (a 29.8 percentage point difference) whilst fraud index offences represented the biggest percentage point increase over the same period (an 8.3 percentage point difference).

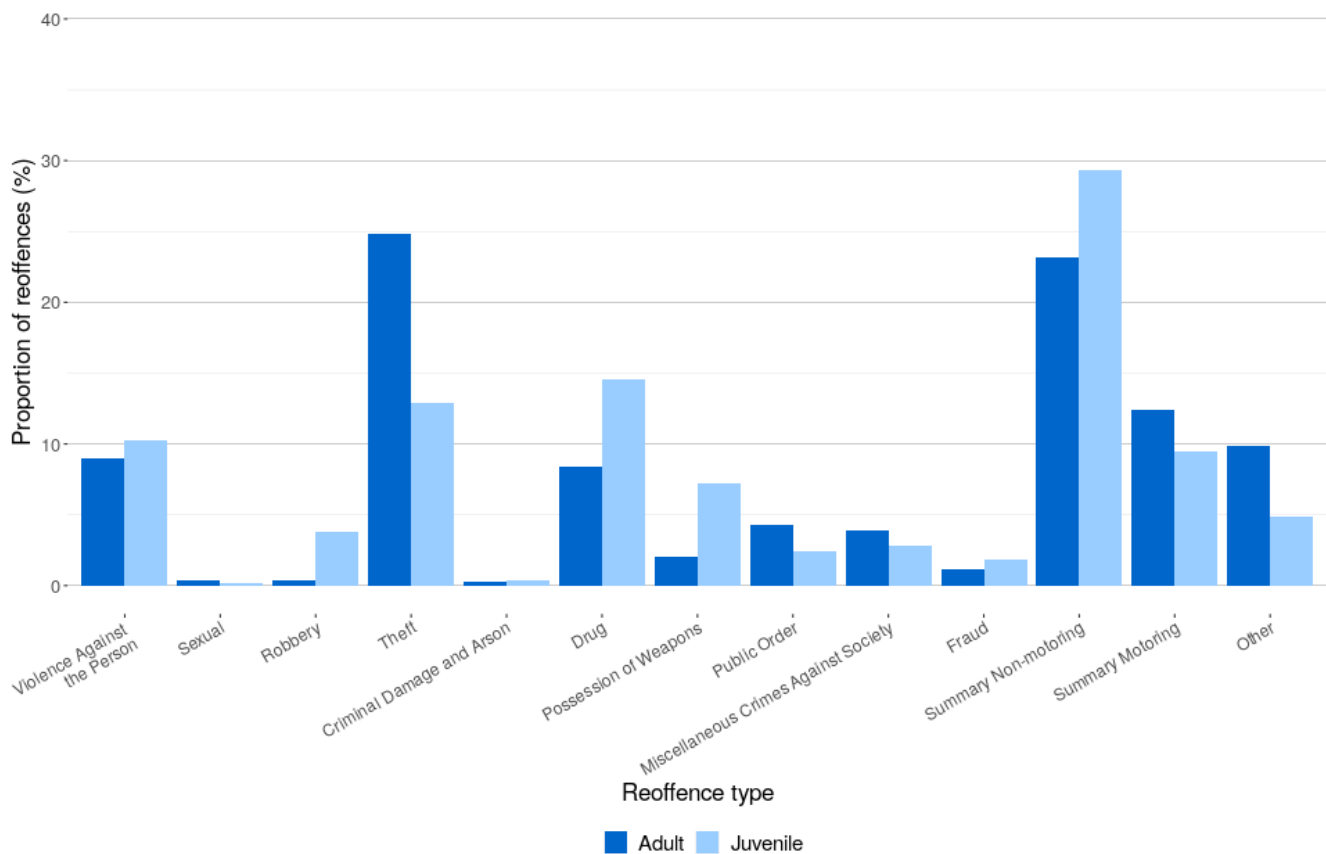
8. Proven Reoffences

The highest proportion of reoffences committed for the October to December 2020 adult cohort were for theft (24.8%).

This represents a decrease of 5.8 percentage points compared to the same period in 2019 for theft.

The second highest proportion of proven reoffences committed by adult offenders were summary non-motoring offences (23.1% of reoffences) followed by summary motoring (12.4% of reoffences) (Figure 7). Despite the decrease in the number of proven reoffences committed by adult offenders, particularly for the more recent cohorts, the share of each reoffence category has remained broadly stable over time.

Figure 7: Proportion of proven reoffences for adult and juveniles committed in the one-year follow-up period, by reoffence type, October to December 2020 (Source: Table B3)



For the juvenile offender cohort, summary non-motoring offences make up the largest proportion of reoffences (29.3%), followed by drug (14.5%) and theft (12.9%) offences. In terms of the split by reoffence category, there has been some variation over time with violence against the person taking up an increasingly larger proportion of total juvenile reoffences for more recent cohorts (up from 3.2% in October to December 2009 to 10.3% in October to December 2020).

For adult and juvenile offenders, respectively, 30.0% and 27.8% of all reoffences took place within three months after release from custody or after receiving a non-custodial conviction at court, a reprimand or a warning . This percentage increases to 56.0%% for adults and 57.3% for juveniles as we approach the sixth month and steadily increasing at an average rate of 7.3% for adults and 7.1% for juveniles beyond that point per month of reoffence.

Further information

Accompanying files

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

- A set of [overview tables](#), covering each section of this bulletin.
- One [data tools](#) providing proven reoffending data for England and Wales, by region, county as well as local authority (covering January 2010 - December 2020).
- A [technical guide](#) to proven reoffending statistics providing information on how proven reoffending is measured and the data sources used.
- A data quality statement which outlines our policies for producing quality statistical outputs and the information provided to maintain our users' understanding and trust.

Revision

Please note that following further quality assurance, revisions have been made to the figures for the July to September 2020 cohort. Updated figures can be viewed in the accompanying [tables and data tools](#).

National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Future publications

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

Contact

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Other enquiries and feedback on these statistics should be directed to the Data and Evidence as a service division of the Ministry of Justice:

Liz Whiting, Head of Reducing Reoffending and Probation Statistics

Ministry of Justice, 10th Floor, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Email: ESD@justice.gov.uk

Next update: 27 January 2022

URL: www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

Alternative formats are available on request from ESD@justice.gov.uk