Ministry of Justice

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First time entrants (FTE) into the Criminal Justice System and Offender Histories: Year ending December 2023

1. Main table

The proportion of adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence with long criminal careers was 33% in 2023, broadly in-line with 2022.	↔	In year ending December 2023, the proportion of adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence with long criminal careers (15 or more previous cautions or convictions) was 33%. This is similar to 2022 but down compared to the years 2013 to 2020, where between 36% and 39% of adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence had long criminal careers.
The proportion of the offenders convicted for an indictable offence who are first time offenders[1] has increased since 2013.	↑	In 2023, 18% of offenders convicted for an indictable offence were first-time offenders, in-line with 2022 but up 8 percentage points since 2013.
The proportion of juvenile offenders convicted for an indictable offence who were first time offenders has increased since 2013.	↑	46% of juvenile offenders convicted for an indictable offence in 2023 were first-time offenders. This proportion has increased 29 percentage points since 2013, despite the number of juvenile first-time offenders remaining stable.
The proportion of offenders cautioned or convicted for an indictable offence in 2023 with at least one prior caution or conviction was 78%, in-line with 2022.	↔	78% of offenders had at least one prior caution or conviction in 2023, this was in-line with 2022 but a decrease of 3 percentage points from 2013 (81%).

This publication provides an overview of trends in first time entrants into the Criminal Justice System and Offender Histories in England and Wales.

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

[1] Offenders with no previous cautions or convictions. This count differs from First Time Entrants (FTEs) because all offenders prosecuted by an English or Welsh police force, irrespective of country of residence, are included.

2. Statistician's comment

The proportion of adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence with long criminal careers (15 or more previous cautions or convictions) was 33% in 2023. This was broadly in line with 2021 and 2022, but down compared to the period between 2013 and 2020 where, on average, 38% of adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence had long criminal careers.

The proportion of offenders convicted for an indictable offence who are first time offenders was 18%, in line with 2022 but an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 2013. The number of juvenile first-time offenders convicted of an indictable offence in 2023 has remained similar to 2013, despite the proportion increasing (from 17% to 46%).

This publication covers the period from year ending December 2013 to year ending December 2023. Please be aware that figures from 2020 onwards have been impacted by the lockdown restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 and industrial action taken by the Criminal Bar Association between April 2022 and October 2022.

3. Long criminal careers

In year ending December 2023, 33% of all adult offenders convicted for an indictable offence had a long criminal career (15 or more previous cautions or convictions). The proportion of all offenders (juveniles and adults) convicted for an indictable offence with a long criminal career was 31% in 2023, in-line with 2022. In 2023, immediate custody was the most likely outcome (43%) for those convicted of an indictable offence with a long criminal career.

Figure 1: Proportion of offenders convicted for indictable offences by previous criminal history, December 2013 to December 2023 (Source: Criminal History Pivot tool - Q4 2023)

4. First time offenders[1]

There were around 63,700 first-time offenders convicted in 2023. This represents 22% of all offenders, an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 2013 but similar levels to 2022. Despite the increase in proportion, the number of convicted first time offenders since 2013 has decreased by 10%, from around 70,900.

There were around 28,100 first-time offenders convicted of an indictable offence in 2023, an increase of 8% compared to 2022. However, whilst the number of first-time offenders has increased, the proportion has remained stable (between 17% and 18%).

The number of juvenile first-time offenders convicted of an indictable offence in 2023 remained similar to 2013, at around 3,600.

However, in the same period, the proportion of juvenile offenders convicted of an indictable offence who were first-time offenders has increased (from 17% to 46%). This is due a 70% decrease in the total number of distinct juvenile offenders (from around 29,600 to around 9,000), meaning that whilst the number of juvenile first-time offenders has remained stable, the proportion of juvenile offenders they represent has increased.

Figure 2: Proportion of juvenile offenders convicted for an indictable offence by previous criminal history, December 2013 to December 2023 (Source: Criminal History Pivot tool - Q4 2023)

5. Offence type by criminal history

In 2023, first time offenders convicted of an indictable offence were most often convicted for drug offences (24%) and violence against the person offences (18%). This trend has remained broadly stable since 2019, with on average around 21% of first-time offenders being convicted for drug or violence offences each year. There has been a change in this trend since 2013, when drug and violence offences accounted for 12% and 14% respectively.

In contrast, offenders convicted of an indictable offence in 2023 with a long criminal career were most often convicted of theft offences, with 47% being convicted for this type of offence. This continues a long-term trend, with theft offences accounting for most offences committed by offenders with a long criminal career since 2013.

6. Personal characteristics

Males accounted for 87% of all offenders cautioned or convicted for an indictable offence in 2023, this proportion has remained stable in the last ten years between 83% and 87%. In contrast, the proportion of all offenders that juveniles accounted for has almost halved since 2013, from 10% to 6%.

The characteristics of first-time offenders have remained broadly stable since 2013. Around 1 in 7 first-time offenders in 2023 were adult females (14%), with adult males accounting for the majority (68%).

Adult offenders were more likely than juvenile offenders to receive a conviction in 2023; 88% of adult sentencing occasions resulted in a conviction, compared to 70% of juvenile sentencing occasions.

Further information

The data presented in this publication are provisional and updated in each publication. Figures provided for more recent years are subject to change in future publications as ongoing cases pass through the Criminal Justice System.

A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed can be found on our website.

Accompanying files

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

- ODS format tables containing data on first time entrants into the Criminal Justice System and Offender Histories in England and Wales up to December 2023
- An interactive pivot tool containing data on the number of all offenders cautioned or sentenced for indictable and summary offences, by previous criminal history, offence type, age group, ethnicity, gender, disposal category and disposal type, from December 2013 to December 2023
- An interactive pivot tool containing data on the latest offence for offenders cautioned or sentenced by first and all previous offences, offence type, disposal category and disposal type, from December 2013 to December 2023
- An interactive pivot tool containing data on the number of First Time Entrants by offence type, age group, ethnicity, gender, disposal category and disposal type, from December 2013 to December 2023
- An interactive Sankey diagram looking at outcomes for offenders cautioned or convicted by previous offending history, age group, gender and offence group, from December 2013 to December 2023
- A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed
- The pre-release access list for this publication

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Future publications

Next update: May 2025

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Contact

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