



Published 15 August 2024

Criminal Justice Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, year ending March 2024

Main points

1.48 million individuals were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)



The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS in England and Wales increased by 6% in the latest year but remains slightly below the level seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Out of court disposals (OOCs) decreased by 2%



Despite an overall decrease in the total number of OOCs issued in the latest year, there was a 3% increase in community resolutions.

Prosecutions and convictions increased by 8% and 7% respectively



Prosecutions for indictable offences increased 17% in the latest year and were 4% higher than in the year ending March 2020 – increases were seen in theft offences (up 32%) and violence against the person (up 19%).

The proportion and volume of defendants remanded in custody increased slightly



In the year ending March 2024, there was a one percentage point increase in the proportion of defendants remanded in custody across each stage of court proceedings.

The average custodial sentence length (ACSL) for indictable offences remained unchanged at 22.9 months



The largest increases in ACSL were for fraud offences (up 2.8 months) and sexual offences (up 2.3 months).

This publication provides criminal justice statistics for the latest 12-month period, with comparisons made to corresponding periods in previous years where appropriate.

The bulletin is accompanied by overview tables. For technical detail about sources, data quality, and terminology, please refer to the accompanying technical guide to criminal justice statistics.

The publication may include revisions for figures previously published where additional data has become available since those publications.

Introduction

This report presents key statistics on activity in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for England and Wales. It provides commentary for the 12-month period of April 2023 to March 2024 (referred to as the 'latest year').

The contents of this bulletin will be of interest to government policy makers in the development of policy and their subsequent monitoring and evaluation. Others will be interested in the way different offences are dealt with in the CJS, trends in sentencing outcomes and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The time series in this publication is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic response and the procedural changes required to ensure criminal courts continued to function effectively.

Changes and revisions in this publication

The release of the latest Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly (CCSQ) was recently postponed for further quality assurance following concerns about the quality of key data inputs. This is in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. The CCSQ release includes wider caseload measures for each criminal jurisdiction which is more granular than the information presented in this high-level quarterly release. We are confident that the impact of any data issues identified on these sentencing statistics is negligible and will not impact published trends. We will provide further updates in future releases regarding the impact of any revisions to the published series.

Since the Q4 2022 CJSQ publication, we have delivered marked improvements to the underlying data processing which underpins this publication. The development of the data and the changes made have a limited impact on existing trends observed in previous releases. Users can find out more information on these changes in the [technical appendix](#) published alongside the previous report. We will continue to improve our data and provide more accurate series.

For feedback related to the content of this publication, please contact us at CJS_Statistics@justice.gov.uk

Statistician's comment

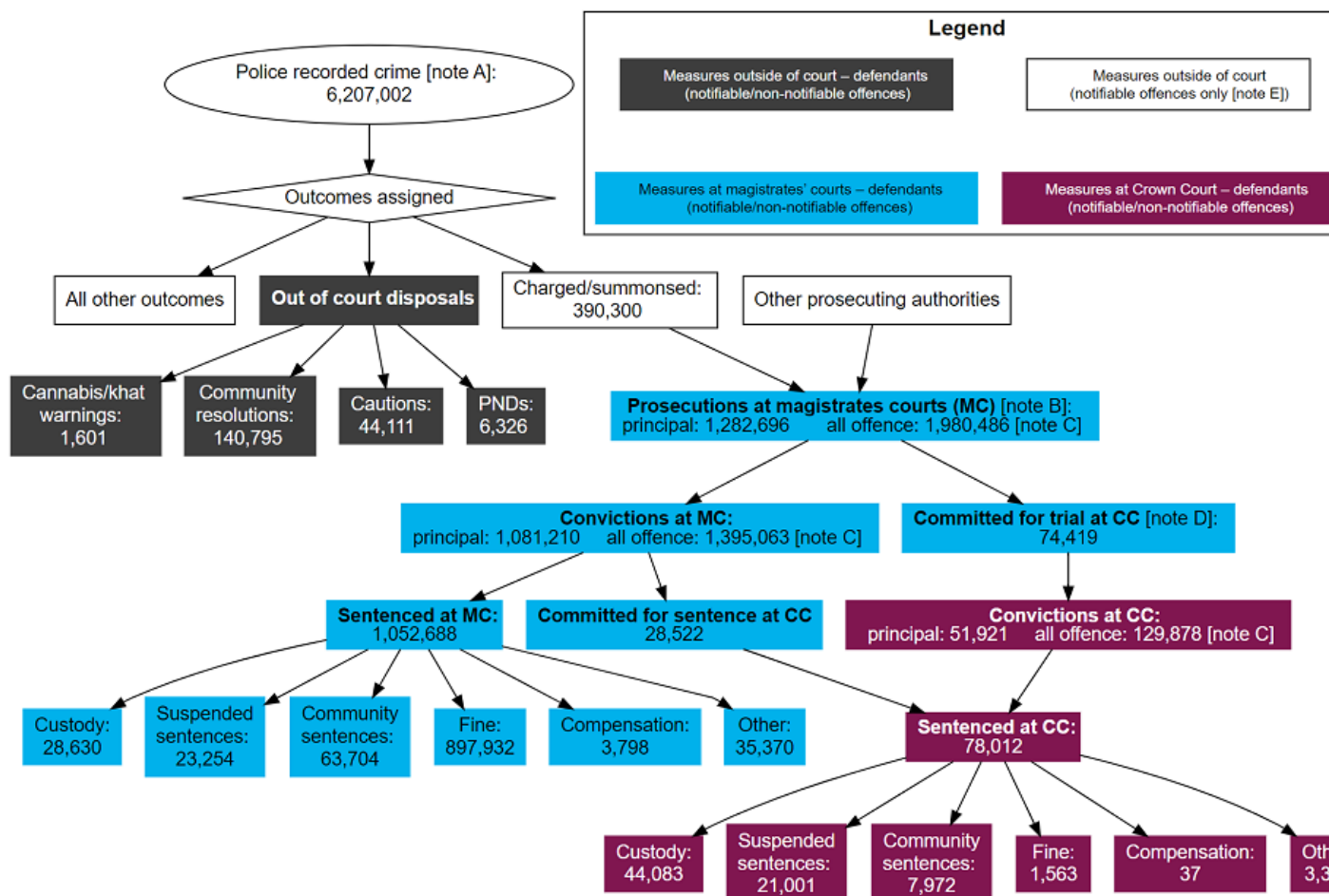
Demand on the criminal justice system continues to grow, including throughput into the criminal courts. The volume of prosecutions and convictions has continued to increase.

Prosecutions for the most serious offences surpassed pre-COVID levels, with theft and violence against the person seeing the largest increases.

The increased volume of prosecutions and convictions for more serious offences has increased demand on the prison system – the number of defendants dealt with remanded into custody increased across all remand stages (pre-court, magistrates' courts and Crown Court) and the number of offenders receiving custodial sentences is now at its highest since the start of the pandemic.

For defendants sentenced to custody, the average custodial sentence length remains broadly unchanged and maintained series highs seen over the last few years - this is now around 70% higher than it was in 2011.

Figure 1: Summary of the Criminal Justice System, year ending March 2024, England and Wales¹



Note ref.	Note text
[note A]	Covers all indictable offences, including triable either way, plus a few closely associated summary offences.
[note B]	Includes males, females, persons where sex "Not Stated" and other offenders, i.e., companies, public bodies, etc.
[note C]	Figures relate to a count on an all-offence (principal and non-principal) basis, as opposed to a count of defendants against their principal (most serious) offence.
[note D]	Number of defendants sent for trial at Crown Court.
[note E]	The term 'notifiable' covers offences that are notified to the Home Office, and they are collectively known as 'recorded crime'. Notifiable offences include all indictable and triable-either-way offences (excluding section 6 of the Bail Act 1976), together with certain closely associated summary offences. Police recorded crime statistics cover notifiable offences.

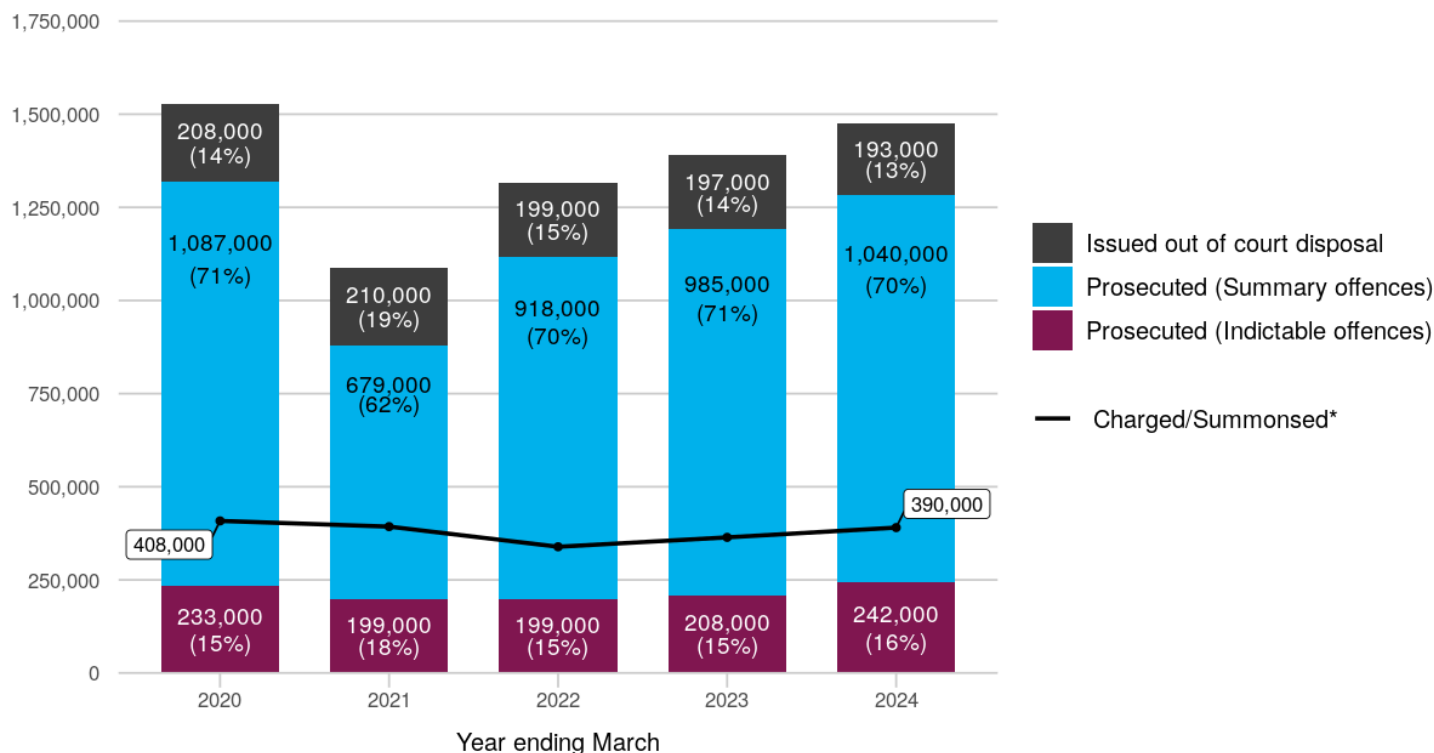
¹ Statistics described in Figure 1 relate to tables Q1.1 and Q2.2 in the Overview Tables accompanying this release. Those presented in coloured boxes indicate where we are responsible for the data described. Details on remaining figures' origin can be found in the Overview Tables.

1. Overview of the Criminal Justice System

1.48 million individuals were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)

The number of individuals² formally dealt with by the CJS³ in England and Wales increased by 6% in the latest year but remains slightly below the level seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2: Number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS & offences resulting in a charge/summons
England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2024



Source: Table Q1.1 and Q1.2

*Number of notifiable offences given a charged/summonsed outcome, excludes fraud

Police recorded crime (including fraud) was 6.21 million in the latest year, a decrease of 1% from the previous year, but this remains 9% higher than in the year ending March 2020. Despite the slight decrease in recorded crime, charges increased by 7% in the latest year, although this remains 4% lower than in the year ending March 2020.

Out of court disposals continued to decrease, down 2% in the latest year and 7% lower than in the year ending March 2020 (see the Out of Court Disposals chapter).

The number of defendants prosecuted increased by 8% and a 7% increase was also seen in convictions (see the Prosecutions and Convictions chapter). Prosecutions, convictions and sentencing in 2020 and 2021 were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic response and trends in the years following this reflect the recovery of court processes.

In the latest year, prosecutions increased by 6% for summary offences and 17% for indictable⁴ offences. Convictions increased by 5% for summary offences and 14% for indictable offences – indictable cases typically take longer in the courts, and this may partly explain the lower increase in convictions (compared to prosecutions).

² An individual (includes companies) can be counted more than once in a year if dealt with by the CJS on multiple separate occasions.

³ The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS is the sum of all defendants prosecuted at magistrates' court plus all individuals issued an out of court disposal (including cautions, Penalty Notice for Disorder, cannabis/khat warning and community resolutions).

⁴ Indictable only offences are the most serious and must be tried at the Crown Court; summary offences are the least serious and must be tried at magistrates' courts; and triable-either-way offences are of intermediate severity and may be tried at either court based on the circumstances of the case. Indictable only and triable-either-way offences are often referred to collectively as 'Indictable'. See accompanying technical guide for further details.

2. Out of Court Disposals

Out of court disposals (OOCs) decreased by 2%

Despite an overall decrease in the total number of OOCs issued in the latest year, there was a 3% increase in community resolutions.

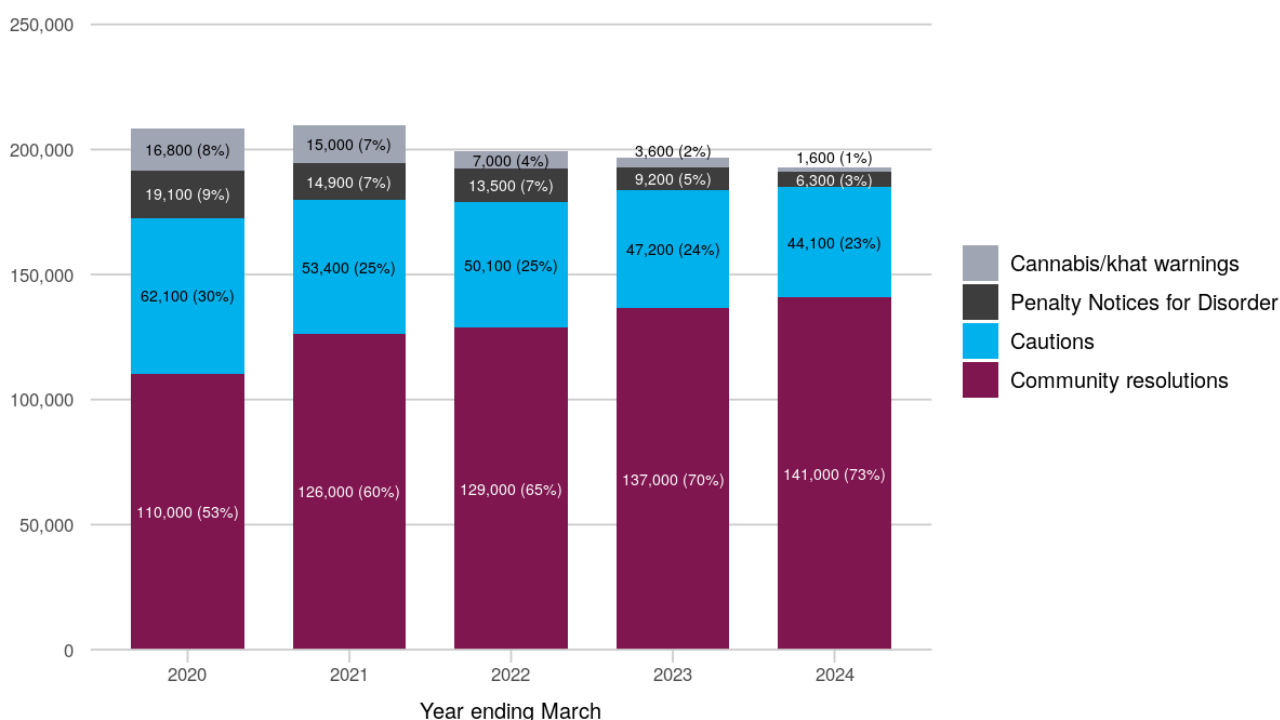
Out of court disposals (OOCs) are sanctions used by the police to address offences without the need to be dealt with at court.

There were around 193,000 OOCs in year ending March 2024, which represented an overall decrease of 2% when compared to the previous year. Despite this, there was an increase of 3% in community resolutions⁵, with over 140,000 issued, representing 73% of the total number of OOCs.

Over the last five years, community resolutions have increased by 28% while all other OOC types have decreased - cannabis/khat warnings by 55%, penalty notices for disorder (PNDs) by 31% and cautions by 7%.

Figure 3: Number of out of court disposals issued

England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2024



Source: Table Q1.1

There were 6,300 PNDs in year ending March 2024 - 43% of which were issued to offenders for being drunk and disorderly, 33% for possession of cannabis and 9% for causing harassment, alarm, or distress.

Around 44,100 offenders received a simple or conditional caution⁶, an overall decrease of 7% when compared to the previous year. The number of cautions issued for theft offences increased 3% in the latest year, while all other offence groups decreased.

Overall cautioning rates⁷ decreased over one percentage point, to 9% overall. Cautioning rates for drug offences and criminal damage & arson were the highest, at 19% and 16%, respectively.

⁵ Some police forces have moved to reduce the types of out of court disposals used for adult offenders. In these areas, the only out of court disposals used are community resolutions and conditional cautions. Cannabis/Khat warnings will not be used. Visit [Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023) for further information.

⁶ Cautions are presented on a principal offence and principal caution basis, where only the most serious caution received is reported. See the technical guide for more information. The figures provided have been drawn from an extract of the Police National Computer (PNC) data held by the Department.

⁷ The cautioning rate is calculated as the proportion of offenders who were either cautioned or convicted (excluding convictions for motoring offences) that were given a caution.

3. Prosecutions and Convictions

Prosecutions and convictions increased by 8% and 7%, respectively

Prosecutions for indictable offences increased 17% in the latest year and were 4% higher than in the year ending March 2020 - increases were seen in theft offences (up 32%) and violence against the person (up 19%).

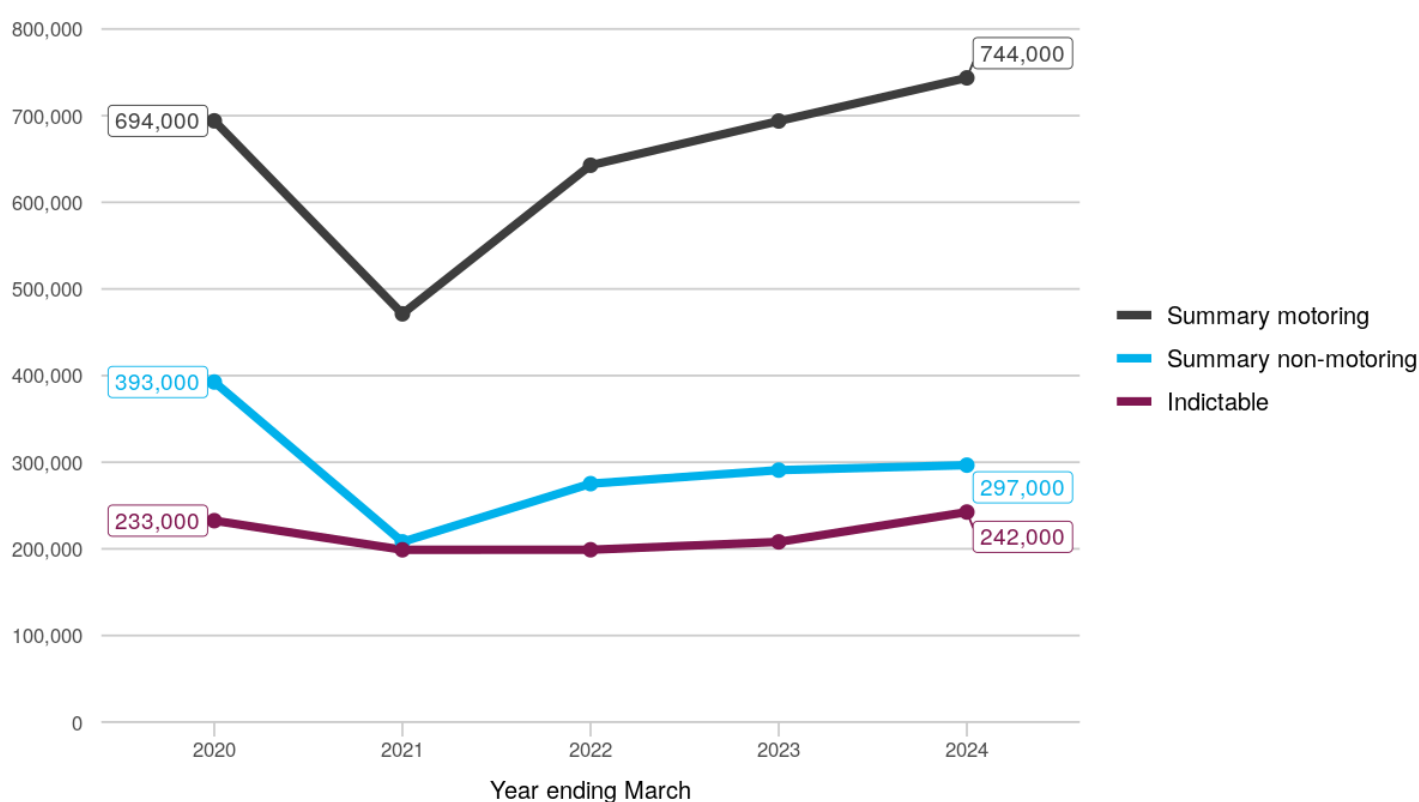
In the year ending March 2024, there were 1.28 million defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts, an increase of 8% compared to the previous year. This included a 17% increase in prosecutions for indictable offences and a 6% increase for summary offences.

Increases were seen across all offence groups, including theft offences (up 32%), sexual offences (up 20% - continuing increases seen for the last five years) and violence against the person (up 19%).

Despite the increase seen in the latest year, total prosecutions remain 3% lower than in the year ending March 2020.

Figure 4: Number of prosecutions at magistrates' courts, by offence type

England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2024



Source: Table Q3.2

In the year ending March 2024, 1.13 million offenders were convicted, 7% more than in the previous year but slightly below pre-COVID levels. Convictions for indictable offences increased by 14% and summary offences increased by 5%. The largest percentage increase was seen among theft offences – in line with prosecutions (up 31%).

Despite overall conviction volumes remaining below levels seen prior to COVID-19, convictions for both violence against the person and sexual offences have increased compared to the year ending March 2020, up 18% and 43% respectively. Trends in convictions for indictable offences tend to lag prosecutions due to the time taken between completing proceedings in the magistrates' court (counted as prosecutions) and cases completing at Crown Court⁸.

⁸ It is not advised to use these figures to calculate conviction rate as a result of this. Offenders who are prosecuted for an offence may be convicted of a less serious offence in a different offence group. Crown Court cases are not necessarily concluded in the same year as the defendant was sent for trial.

4. Remands⁹

The proportion and volume of defendants remanded in custody increased slightly

In the year ending March 2024, there was a one percentage point increase in the proportion of defendants remanded in custody across each stage of court proceedings.

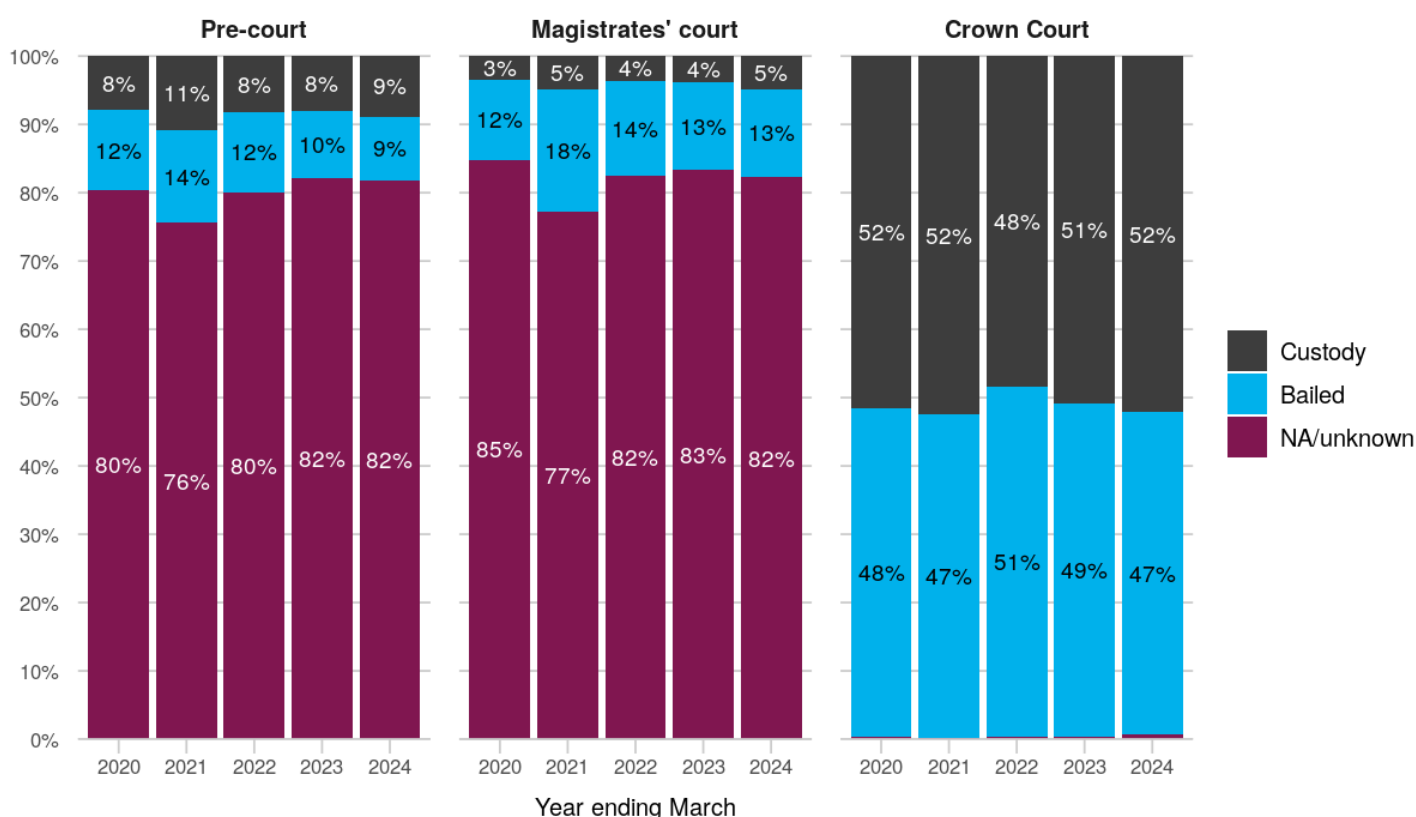
In the year ending March 2024, 1.28 million defendants were directed to appear at magistrates' courts by the police or other prosecuting authorities. The proportion of defendants held in custody prior to appearing at magistrates' court¹⁰ increased slightly from 8% in the year ending March 2023 to 9% in the latest year.

At magistrates' court, the proportion of defendants granted bail in the year ending March 2024 remained consistent at 13%. The proportion remanded in custody increased from 4% to 5% in the latest year, with the remaining 82% representing cases where a remand decision was not applicable or unknown¹¹.

At Crown Court the proportion of defendants remanded in custody increased to 52%, up from 51% in the previous year. Defendants are more often remanded in custody for indictable than summary offences, so the proportion remanded in custody at Crown Court is higher than at magistrates' courts.

Figure 5: Defendants' remand status prior to appearing at court, at magistrates' court and at Crown Court

England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2024



Source: Tables Q4.1, Q4.2 & Q4.3

Across all criminal courts, 26% of defendants that were sentenced after being remanded in custody received a non-custodial sentence. Of the defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts in the year ending March 2024, 10% were sentenced to immediate custody and a further 72% were committed for trial or sentencing at Crown Court. Of those remanded in custody at Crown Court, 71% were sentenced to immediate custody.

⁹ Defendants are reported against their most serious remand status. All hearings except for sentence hearings are considered and the most serious status is ranked with custody as most serious, then bail and then not applicable/unknown. A defendant's remand status may change several times throughout their court journey, however what we report only reflects their most serious status during that period and does not reflect the number of remand decisions made.

¹⁰ The not applicable/unknown category for remand status prior to appearing at court will include cases where the defendant is not arrested by the police and is instead summonsed to appear at court or is prosecuted by an authority other than the police, meaning no remand decision is applicable. Unknown remand status accounts for a low volume of this category.

¹¹ The not applicable/unknown category for remand status at magistrates' court will include cases that are dealt with outside of court, such as Single Justice Procedure cases, or dealt with at a single court hearing, meaning no remand decision is required. Unknown remand status accounts for a low volume of this category.

5. Sentencing

The average custodial sentence length (ACSL) for indictable offences remained unchanged at 22.9 months

The largest increases in ACSL were for fraud offences (up 2.8 months) and sexual offences (up 2.3 months).

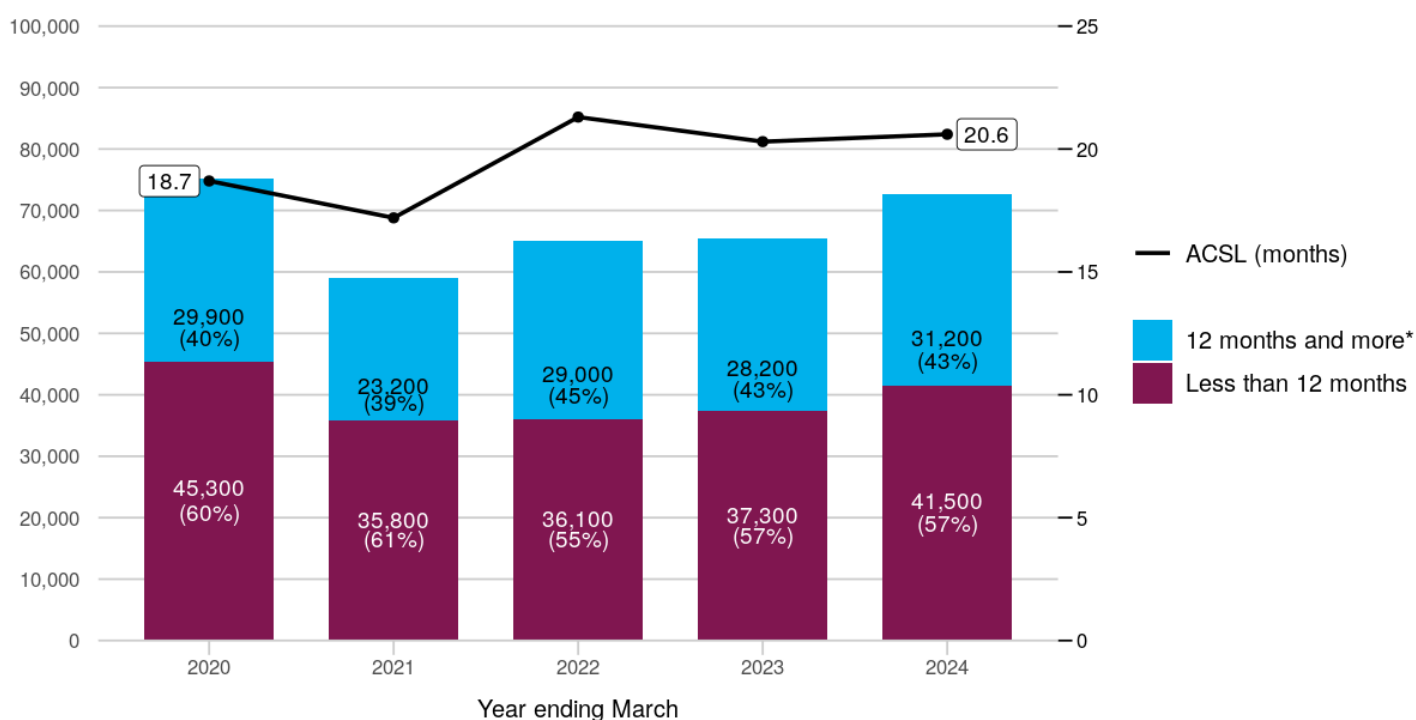
There were 1.13 million offenders sentenced in the year ending March 2024, a 6% increase from the previous year, but this remains slightly below (3%) pre-COVID levels. Most (80%) offenders were sentenced to a fine, with summary motoring offences accounting for 73% of all fines issued.

The number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody increased on the previous year, up by 11% to 72,700, however this remains 3% below pre-COVID levels. Of those sentenced to immediate custody, 43% received a sentence of 12 months or more. In the year to March 2020 this proportion was 40% but accounted for only 1,300 fewer offenders.

The custody rate for indictable offences increased slightly to 33.1% in the latest year, up more than six percentage points from levels seen a decade ago (26.8%), this represents the highest custody rate seen across the time series. However, the volume of custodial sentences issued for indictable offences remains slightly below pre-COVID levels, 64,500 in the latest year compared to 65,400 in year ending March 2020.

Figure 6: Number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody at criminal courts, by sentence length. Average Custodial Sentence Length (ACSL) plotted on the secondary axis.

England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2024



Source: Table Q5.4

*Includes life and indeterminate sentences

The overall ACSL¹² was 20.6 months in the latest year, up 0.3 months on the previous year. For indictable offences, the ACSL remained at 22.9 months, although this is 5.1 months higher than the level of 10 years ago. The largest increase in the latest year was for fraud offences, up 2.8 months to 22.4 months - there were also increases ACSL for violence against the person offences (up 0.5 months), sexual offences¹³ (up 2.3 months), drug offences (up 1.8 months) and miscellaneous crimes against society (up 1.5 months).

¹² Average custodial sentence length excludes life and indeterminate sentences. Custodial sentences with amount of 60 years and over are assumed to be errors and are excluded from the calculation.

¹³ We advise caution when comparing ACSL for sexual offences prior to 2017. See [technical appendix](#) for further details.

Further information

Accompanying files

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

- A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to sentencing trends and background on CJS.
- A user guide listing all products alongside this release; this allows easy navigation of all files accompanying this release.
- A set of overview tables covering each section of this bulletin.

Accredited official statistics status

National Statistics are [accredited official statistics](#) that meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in May 2020¹⁴. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled as accredited official statistics. It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for accredited official statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. Accredited official 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 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 and in particular on the specific issues identified in the introduction. Please send any comments you have on this publication.

Contact

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/media-enquiries>

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to Criminal Courts & Sentencing Data and Statistics team in the Analysis directorate of the Ministry of Justice:

Email: CJS_Statistics@justice.gov.uk

Next update: November 2024

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>

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

¹⁴ [Office for Statistics Regulation: Proven re-offending and criminal justice system statistics](#)