



Ministry
of Justice

Estimate of the number of individuals of working age (16-64 and 16+) with a nominal record on the Police National Computer

Ad hoc statistical release

This ad hoc provides estimates of the number of individuals with a nominal record on the Police National Computer (PNC), as a proportion of the working age population. Data is taken from the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) extract of PNC and the Home Office's database.

Published 28 October 2024

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1. Background, data and sources

Police National Computer

The Police National Computer (PNC) is a database used by law enforcement agencies. The Home Office manage the PNC, and the MoJ receive a regular extract of data from the PNC. The PNC covers the UK.

2. Table

Table 1. Number of nominal records on the Police National Computer for individuals with a criminal element against their names, and as a proportion of the working age^{6,7} population of the United Kingdom, 2024.

Source ^{1,2,3,4}	PNC estimate ⁵	Population ^{6,7}	Proportion
MoJ PNC extract	9,400,000	42,400,000	22
Home Office PNC extract	12,600,000	55,200,000	23

Ministry of Justice extract of PNC data

According to the MoJ extract of PNC data there were 9.4 million offenders of working age (16-64) with a nominal record (August 2024). Nominal records include not only those persons with convictions but also those with impending prosecutions, cautions, cases that require no further action and any other criminal justice activity on their record¹.

Age was calculated as age at date of data extraction. Individuals were included if they met this criteria, regardless of the age at which their record was created or last updated.

Home Office data

The Home Office reported that there were 12.6 million² nominal records held on the PNC for individuals with a criminal element against their names (April 2024).

¹A definition of nominal records is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nominal-criminal-records-on-the-police-national-computer/nominal-criminal-records-on-the-police-national-computer>

² Data was sourced from: <https://unlock.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/FOI2024-05347-PNC-data-April-2024.pdf>

An age breakdown was not included in the Home Office Freedom Of Information response, and so it is assumed that it includes all ages, including those under 16 and over 64. However, MoJ estimate less than 0.3% would be aged under 16, and so the 16+ population estimate⁷ was used as the most appropriate comparable estimate.

Based on these two data extracts, it was estimated that approximately 1 in 4 working age people in the UK have a criminal record.

Strengths and limitations

The MoJ recognise this is an estimate which has limitations and that a comprehensive programme of work would need to be undertaken to determine a precise figure.

Not all records on the Home Office database are included on the MoJ extract: estimates suggest at an aggregate level, there are in the region of around 500,000 – 1 million fewer records. This does not impact MoJ reporting of cautions and convictions but may impact the count of all those with a ‘criminal record’. For example, the Home Office data contains information on amongst others ‘missing/wanted offenders with a criminal record’ and ‘firearms certificate with a criminal record’ which do not appear in the MoJ extract.

The PNC holds data on those with a caution or conviction back to at least 1995. Where an offender has been cautioned or convicted since 1995, it will contain their complete criminal history. It might not contain complete coverage of offenders who last offended prior to 1995, and therefore might undercount the number of working age people in the UK with a conviction.

Finally, the PNC covers the UK but the data from the three jurisdictions is different in terms of actual data held as well as the legislative and policy requirements.

As the MoJ extract of PNC is likely to be an undercount of all nominal records MoJ estimate that the number of people with a nominal record with a criminal element equates to 1 in 4 working age people.

Notes

1. Home Office estimates sourced from [FOI2024/05347](#) dated 26th June 2024, which provided the number of nominal records held on the Home Office extract of the PNC for individuals with a criminal element against their names as at April 2024 (latest report at the time).
2. Estimates include all individuals with a nominal record on the Home Office's Database or the MoJ extract of the PNC, regardless of the police force or court that dealt with their offence, and regardless of offence, case or disposal type.
3. Age was calculated on the MoJ extract of the PNC as current age at 2nd August 2024 (latest report at the time).
4. Home Office FOI2024/05347 did not present an age breakdown. While the estimate will include some under 16s, it is assumed that the majority of individuals would be aged 16+.
5. It is possible for an individual to have multiple PNCIDs, if police forces are not aware or have not yet merged records. As such an individual could be counted more than once.
6. The [Labour Force Survey \(ONS\)](#) estimate of those aged 16-64 at June-August 2024 was used as a population estimate for the UK, from the [October 2024 publication](#). The LFS is a household survey of the employment circumstances of the UK population.
7. The [Labour Force Survey \(ONS\)](#) estimate of those aged 16+ in the UK at Jun-Aug 2024 was used as a population estimate for the UK, from the [October 2024 publication](#).

Contacts

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