



Ministry
of Justice



Women and the Criminal Justice System 2023

A Ministry of Justice publication under Section 95 of the
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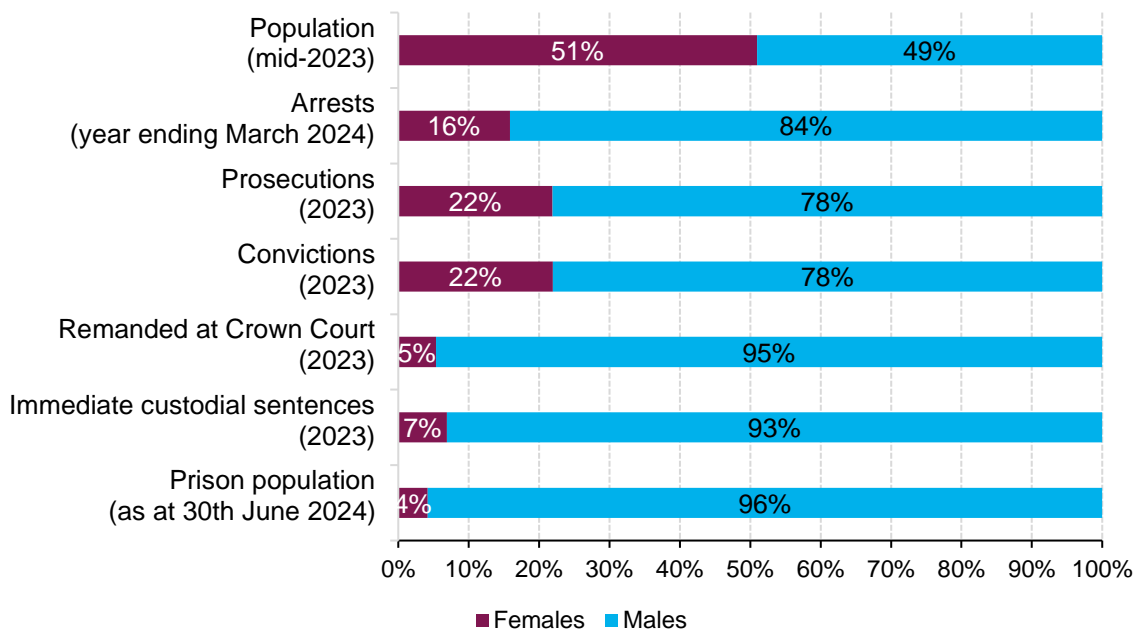
1. Executive Summary

This publication compiles statistics from data sources across the Criminal Justice System (CJS), to provide a combined perspective on the typical experiences of females who come into contact with it.

It considers how these experiences have changed over time and how they contrast to the typical experiences of males. No causative links can be drawn from these summary statistics, differences observed may indicate areas worth further investigation, but should not be taken as evidence of unequal treatments or as direct effects of sex.

In general, females appear to be substantially underrepresented throughout the CJS compared with males. This is particularly true in relation to the most serious offence types and sentences, though patterns by sex vary between individual offences.

Figure 1.01: Proportions of males and females throughout the CJS, 2023/2024, England and Wales



Key Messages

Victims

In 2022/23 the CSEW estimates that females are significantly more likely to be victims of headline crime than males.

Excluding fraud and computer misuse, females were significantly **less** likely of being a victim of personal crime than males.

In 2022/23, there were 590 homicides reported in the Home Office Homicide Index; 71% of which were males and 29% females.

Females were the victim in 59% of homicides acquainted with the suspect, whereas in cases where victim was male 41% were acquainted with the suspect.

Police Activity

In 2023/24, females accounted for 16% of arrests, compared to 84% for males.

In 2023/24, 720,500 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales. This is a 8% increase since 2022/23. Females accounted for 16% of arrests, which has remained stable over the last 3 years.

The proportion of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs) issued to females has fallen.

The number of OOCs issued overall has decreased in the latest 5 years. The proportion of PNDs issued to females has also mostly seen a decline over the same period, from 18% in 2019 to 15% in 2021, but has recently seen an increase back to 18% in 2023.

Defendants

In 2023, 22% of individuals dealt with by the Criminal Justice System were female, and 78% were male.

The proportion of females dealt with has decreased from 27% in 2019 to 22% in 2023. This is likely a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions placed on criminal courts as a result.

Females were typically dealt with for less severe offences at court.

Of all female defendants prosecuted at court, 14% were prosecuted for indictable offences compared to 26% of male defendants in the latest year.

In 2023, the average custodial sentence length for female offenders was 12.2 months compared 21.8 months for male offenders.

A greater proportion of female offenders are sentenced for offences that tend to receive shorter sentences.

Offender Management

The majority (96%) of the prison population were male.

As at 30 June 2024, 4% of the prison population were female, this proportion has remained stable for the last 5 years.

Females were serving shorter custodial sentence lengths.

As at 30 June 2024, 16% of females and 4% of males were serving sentences of less than 12 months.

In the 2022/23 HM Inspectorate of Prisons survey, females reported a high level and breadth of personal need.

Compared to males, a higher proportion of females reported: self-declared mental health problems, physical disability, having drug and alcohol problems, money worries and housing worries.

A higher proportion of female prisoners self-harmed in the year ending March 2024.

In the year ending March 2024, the number of individuals who self-harmed per 1,000 prisoners was 341 for females and 146 for males. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was over three times as high for females at 16.4.

Offender Characteristics

Ethnic minority groups accounted for a higher proportion of prosecutions against males compared to females.

In 2023, males from black ethnic group account for 7% of all male prosecutions. This compared to females from black ethnic group accounting for 4% of all female prosecutions.

A higher proportion of female offenders were first time offenders.

Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2023, 27% were first time offenders, compared to 21% for males.

Females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender compared to males.

In the latest cohort, females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender compared to males, at 4.38 and 4.04, respectively.

Across two of the attainment measures, the educational attainment of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence was slightly higher for females than males.

For example, 30% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to C, including English and Maths, compared to 21% of males.

More than half of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence were eligible for Free School Meals.

This was slightly higher for females (56%) than for males (53%). This contrasts with the proportion of pupils in the all-pupil population where 26% were eligible for FSM.

Offence Analysis

TV licence evasion was the offence with the highest proportion of female defendants in 2023.

In 2023, 74% of those prosecuted for TV licence evasion were female. This offence accounted for 12% of all female prosecutions.

Theft from shops was the most common indictable offence for female defendants in 2023.

Theft from shops accounted for 27% of all female prosecutions for indictable offences, compared to 12% for males.

Practitioners

Over the last 5 years, there have been increases in female representation across almost all CJS organisations and in the proportion of senior staff.

The largest increase in female representation was seen in HMPPS staff, from 49% in 2020 to 55% in 2024.

2. Introduction

Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 states that:

The Secretary of State shall in each year publish such information as they consider expedient for the purpose... of facilitating the performance of those engaged in the administration of justice to avoid discriminating against any persons on the ground of race or sex or any other improper ground...

Documents fulfilling this requirement have been published since 1992, in the form of statistical information. This report is a compendium of information from a range of data sources from across the CJS on the representation of females (and males) among victims, suspects, defendants and offenders.

The publication aims to help practitioners, policy makers, academics and members of the public understand trends in the CJS in England and Wales, and how these vary between the sexes and over time.

This is the latest biennial compendium of Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System and follows its sister publication Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System published in November 2023.

Publication of this report was delayed from November 2024 due to issues arising with data used to produce the publication Criminal Court Statistics, which are used within this report. For further information on work undertaken to ensure that data is fit for purpose see the Crown Court Data Quality report here [Criminal court statistics quarterly: July to September 2024](#).

In 2018, the Ministry of Justice published the Female Offender Strategy, which sets out the department's vision and plan to improve outcomes for women in the community and custody. The strategy sets out the Government's commitment to a new programme of work for female offenders, which will take some years to deliver, driven by our vision to see:

- fewer women coming into the criminal justice system and reoffending
- fewer women in custody, especially on short-term sentences, and a greater proportion of women managed in the community successfully; and
- better conditions for those in custody.

The strategy aims to take an evidence-based approach to reducing crime and rehabilitating offenders. The analysis in this report addresses the key subject areas and goes some way to provide an evidence base for monitoring progress and aiding policy making decisions for the future. The MoJ plans to publish a Female Offender Strategy delivery plan in the New Year setting out our plans for delivering these aims in the period to 2025.

Limitations on conclusions

Although we explore differences between sexes, it is important that inferences are not made about individuals from group-level data – since we consider averaged outcomes that do not take into consideration the unique sub-set of circumstances in each case.

If we take, for example, defendants: there can be a number of points of contact with the CJS, which range from an out of court disposal to standing trial in front of a jury. The sentencing outcome that a person receives depends upon the crime committed, their offending history and a series of mitigating and aggravating factors unique to the person or crime. Because of this, the statistics presented in this report do not represent the expected experiences of an individual female (or male) throughout the Criminal Justice System, but they can highlight areas where further investigation or research may be warranted.

It is important to note that for the majority of the report, no controls have been applied for other characteristics of those in contact with the CJS, such as average income or age, so it is not possible to determine what proportion of any differences identified in this report are directly attributable to sex. Much of the published

annual Criminal Justice Statistics and some of the statistics published elsewhere can be cross tabulated with other protected characteristics, such as ethnicity and age, however care must be taken when interpreting the results. It is also not possible to make any causal links between sex and CJS outcomes.

Recording of sex

‘Sex’ can be considered to refer to whether someone is male, or female based on their physiology, with ‘gender’ representing a social construct or sense of self that takes a wider range of forms.

Throughout this report we refer to sex rather than gender, because the binary classification better reflects how individuals are generally reported or managed through the CJS.

For example, prisons are either male or female institutions, with prisoners normally placed based on their legally recognised gender. However, given the range of recording practises (see technical guide for details) throughout the CJS, it is likely that most recording includes a mixture of physiological and personal identity.

Similarly, we refer to females / males and women / men in this report, as a reflection of the binary classification in use.

Proportion of unknown sex for key data sources

Source	Percent unknown sex
Crime Survey for England and Wales	0% (interviewer coded)
Homicide Index	<1%
Police Powers & Procedures	2%
Out of court disposals	1%
Magistrates' Courts	30% (see below)
Crown Courts	1%
Offender Management statistics	0% (see below)
Legal Aid Statistics	1%
Police National Computer	1%
Police Workforce Statistics	<1%
Judicial Diversity Statistics	0% (Self-declared)

In the Magistrate’s Courts of England and Wales, around 30% of defendants either had no sex recorded or were recorded as “unknown” sex. It is likely the majority of these unknown cases will have been less serious offences dealt with via the Single Justice Procedure whereby a magistrate can deal with a case where a defendant has pled guilty or not responded to prosecution notice. The defendant does not have to be present and therefore sex will not always be recorded in these cases.

For offender management statistics sex is determined by the type of prison in which an inmate is currently held, so male prison inmates are all categorised as male and female prison inmates are all categorised as female. Information about transgender prisoners can be found in the [Offender Equalities Report](#).

For future publications we plan to look in more detail at the sources not detailed above to better understand and report the level of unknown sex recorded in these areas.

Data

Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, these data have been extracted from large administrative and survey data systems generated by the courts, police forces and other agencies. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure the limitations of these data are taken into account.

All results relate to England and Wales unless explicitly stated otherwise. Large figures are generally presented rounded to the nearest thousand, and percentages to the nearest percentage point in the bulletin text (or however is most appropriate).

Data are presented in terms of calendar and financial years (usually 2021 or 2020/21), reflecting the reporting cycles and data collection of the agencies contributing information for this publication. For example, data on arrests are presented in financial years, while data from courts is presented in calendar years.

A 5-year time series' have been presented wherever possible, of whichever length is most appropriate in context. There are few comparisons to the population as a whole, but we have considered this to be 51% female, as based on population and household estimates from the Office for National Statistics 2021 census data.

Measures in this bulletin for 2020 and 2021 have been impacted by actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the latest figures represent both a reflection of the pandemic and the recovery from this. For example, in April 2020, the Judiciary published guidance on the prioritisation of listings. During the reporting period, all offences likely to result in custody were prioritised which impacted outcomes such as custody rate and average custodial sentences. This should be taken into consideration when interpreting trends that incorporate affected figures (e.g. prosecutions, convictions, sentencing, including ACSL and custody rates).

- The statistics reported in this bulletin are primarily Accredited Official Statistics, as drawn from either other published Accredited Official Statistics bulletins or the data underpinning them. However, as in previous reports, in order to present as full a picture as possible we have also included some statistics that do not. The following table details the source and status of data used within each chapter of the report

Chapter	Source	Status
3. Victims	Crime Survey for England & Wales	Accredited Official Statistics
	Homicide Index	Accredited Official Statistics
4. Police Activity	Police Powers & Procedures	Official Statistics
	Criminal Justice System Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
5. Defendants	Criminal Court Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
	Offender Management Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
	Legal Aid Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
6. Offender Management	Safety in Custody Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
	HMIP Annual Report survey	Not official statistics
	Parole Board	Not official statistics
	Youth Custody Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
7. Offender Characteristics	Proven Reoffending Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
	MoJ/DfE data share	Not official statistics
9. Practitioners	MoJ workforce data	Accredited Official Statistics
	HMPPS Staff equalities report	Accredited Official Statistics
	Police Workforce Statistics	Accredited Official Statistics
	Judicial Diversity Statistics	Official Statistics
	Crown Prosecution Service equalities data	Not official statistics

Where a source is not Accredited Official Statistics, users should consider this when making judgements about the weight that can be put on related findings.

The above sources that are Accredited Official Statistics include data quality note within their individual publications covering the specific data source. The publication team for this report carry out further quality assurance of the data presented in this publication and also seek external QA and feedback from the relevant statistical team for each source. This includes communication to understand any issues that should be covered in this report.

In the coming year the publication team intend to further consult with the owners of data without official statistics status in order to better understand what quality assurance processes they apply to the data provided for this publication.

Information provided

- Supplementary Excel (in an Open .ods format) tables accompany the chapters, providing additional data where the figures have not previously been published (or not published in that form). Where figures have been published, links are provided as part of the text and tables.
- A technical document titled A Technical Guide to Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System is available alongside this report, which provides users with information on the concepts and terminology used within the report, as well as information about data sources, data quality and references.
- A document titled A User Guide to Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System which provides an overview of what is included in the report and further information surrounding the additional dashboard and user engagement strategy.
- A dashboard (PowerBi) to allow users to have more interactivity with visualising trends, with additional breakdowns where possible.
- This report is also accompanied by an infographic summarising key findings.

Following some feedback on previous iterations of this, and the Ethnicity and the CJS publication, the production team is looking to focus more on the dashboard and reduce commentary within the WCJS bulletin (and Ethnicity and the CJS) in the future in order to maximise the experience of our users and flexibility of analysis. Feedback on this proposal is welcomed.

The Ministry of Justice would welcome any feedback on the content, presentation or on any other aspect of this bulletin – we can be contacted through: CJS_Statistics@justice.gov.uk

3. Victims

In 2022/23 the CSEW estimates that females are significantly more likely to be victims of headline crime than males.

Excluding fraud and computer misuse, females were significantly **less** likely of being a victim of personal crime than males.

In 2022/23, there were 590 homicides reported in the Home Office Homicide Index; 71% of which were males and 29% females.

Females were the victim in 59% of homicides acquainted with the suspect, whereas in cases where victim was male 41% were acquainted with the suspect.

This chapter explores the nature, extent and risk of victimisation, in relation to sex, from [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\): year ending March 2024](#) and [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)¹.

Crime Survey for England and Wales

The CSEW is a large nationally representative survey that asks people about their experience as a victim of a crime in the previous 12 months.

It offers insights into the experience of victims which other sources of data, such as police records, may not capture². In this section, where there are statistically significant differences between groups at the 95% level, this will be stated. Where differences are not referred to as being statistically significant these are either not significantly different, or differences have not been tested.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic the CSEW was moved to a telephone format referred to as the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). Data collected from the TCSEW in 2020/21 and 2021/22 are not presented as they are not directly comparable with CSEW data.

Headline crime³ against adults

In 2023/24, the CSEW estimated that 16.1% of adults were a victim of a headline crime on one or more occasions, this has decreased from 19.3% in 2019/2020. Females (16.6%) were significantly more likely than males to be victims of headline crime in 2023/24. However, the proportion of female and male adults who were a victim decreased by 2.3 percentage points and 4.1 percentage points respectively, when compared to the year 2019/20.

The CSEW also reported that 10.1% of adults were a victim of crime (excluding fraud and computer misuse) once or more. The proportion of female and male adults who were a victim decreased by 3% and 3.3% respectively, when compared to the year 2019/20.

Personal crime⁴ against adults

In 2023/24, 9.7% of adults were a victim of a personal crime once or more and 2.9% of adults were a victim of a personal crime excluding fraud and computer misuse once or more, up from 2.5% the year before.

¹ Data provided by the Home Office listing offences recorded as homicide as of 12th December 2023.

² As a survey that asks people whether they have experience as a victim of a crime, the CSEW does not cover homicides or crimes where there is no direct victim, such as possession of drugs or motoring offences.

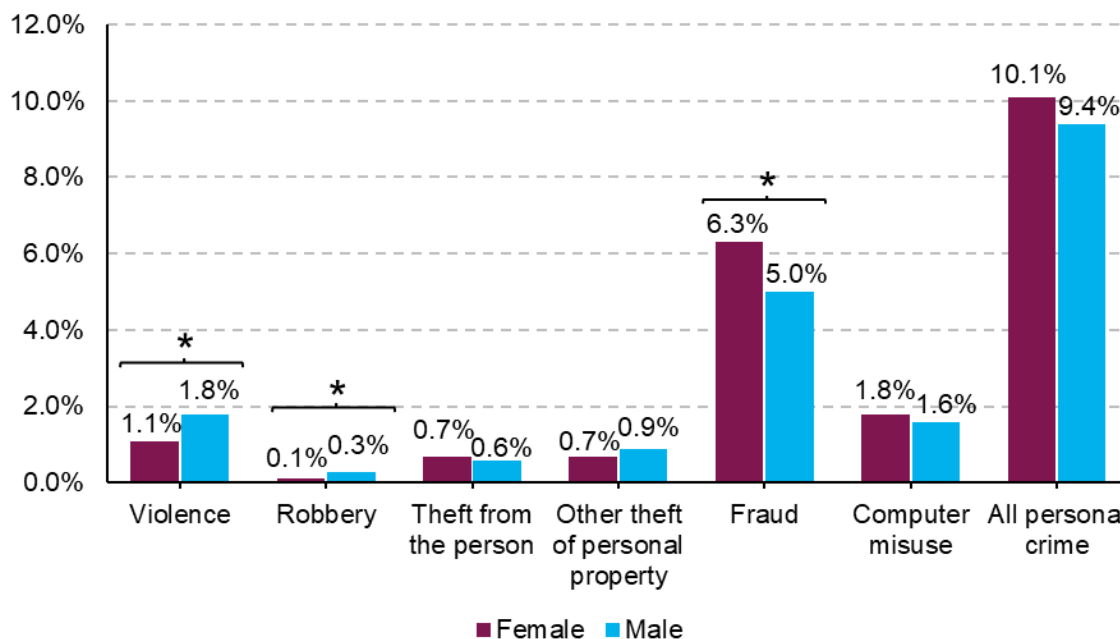
³ CSEW headline crime captures a range of personal and household victim-based crime in the interviewer-led parts of the survey, including violence with and without injury, robbery, theft, criminal damage, fraud and computer misuse.

⁴ Personal crime includes violence, robbery, theft from the person, other theft of personal property, fraud and computer misuse unless otherwise specified.

The CSEW reported that 10.1% of females and 9.4% of males were a victim of personal crime once or more in 2023/24, with no significant difference between men and women. However, there was a significant difference between males (3.4%) and females (2.4%) being a victim of personal crime excluding fraud and computer misuse once or more in 2023/24.

Figure 3.01 presents the breakdown of CSEW personal crime by type and sex in 2023/24. Males were significantly more likely to fall victim to violence with and without injury⁵ and robbery compared to females, while females were significantly more likely to be a victim of fraud in 2023/24.

Figure 3.01: Percentage of adults who reported being a victim of a CSEW personal crime by type and sex, England and Wales, 2023/24⁶



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 3: Victims - Table 3_02 and 3_03 [derived from ONS – CSEW])

Furthermore, the CSEW provides a breakdown of personal crime by age and sex for 2023/24. The proportion of males who were victim of personal crime including fraud and computer misuse was the highest for 16-24 and 25-34 age groups, at 12.1% and 10.1% respectively. The proportion of females who were a victim of personal crime was the highest for 45-54 age group at 11.3% and this was significantly different when compared to males.

The 16-24 age group had the highest proportion of being a victim of personal crime excluding fraud and computer misuse for both males and females, at 8.5% and 5.4% respectively, and this difference is statistically significant.

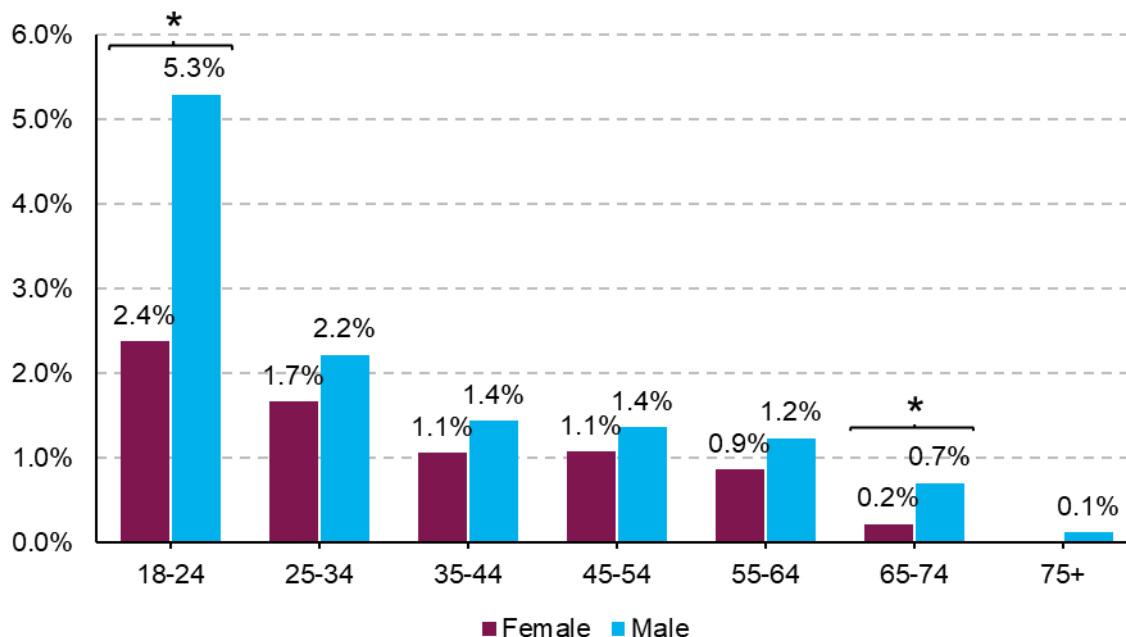
⁵ The estimates may underestimate the prevalence of domestic violence as victims may be reluctant to disclose in the presence of an interviewer.

⁶ Statistical significance between groups is represented with a ‘*’

Violent crime⁷

Violence with and without injury⁸ was reported by a higher proportion of males (1.8%) than females (1.1%) and this difference was statistically significant in 2023/24. Violent crime was the most prevalent in the 16-24 age group for both males and females, at 5.3% and 2.4% respectively and this difference was statistically significant.

Figure 3.02: Percentage of adults who were a victim of violent crime by age group, England and Wales, 2023/24⁹



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 3: Victims - Table 3_05 [derived from ONS – CSEW])

Homicide Index

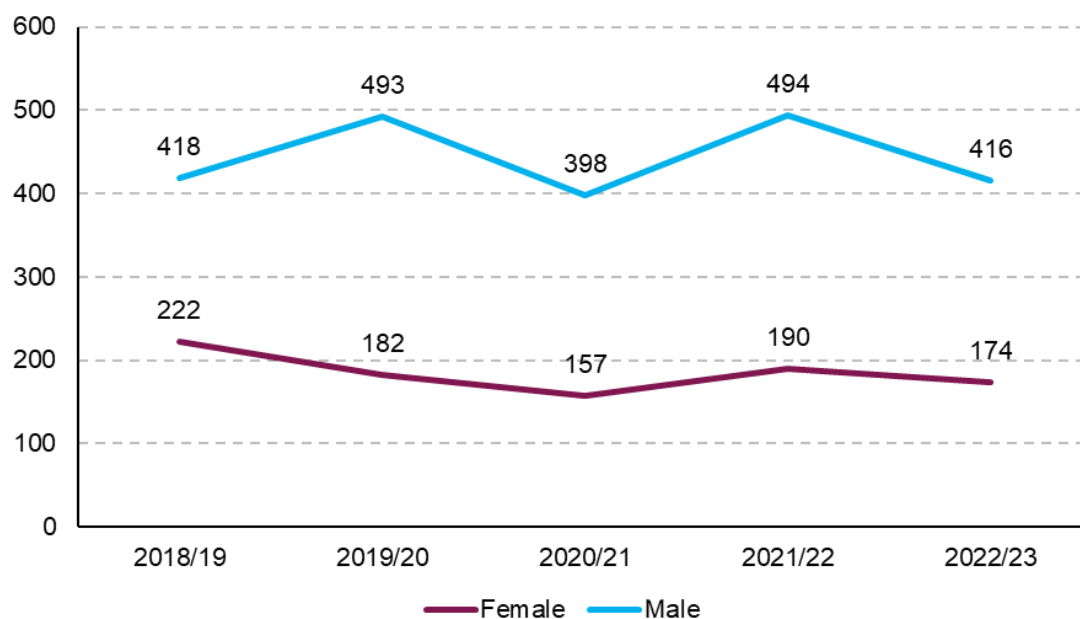
In 2022/23, there were 590 victims of homicide recorded by the police in England and Wales; 71% of which were males and 29% females. The relative proportion of male and female victims has remained relatively consistent over the last ten years. The most common age group for male victims of homicide was 16-24 years old (21%), followed by 25-34 years old (18%). For female victims, the most common age groups were 25-34, 45-54 and 75+ age groups at 17%. Male homicide victims had a higher prevalence in all age groups, except those 75+ where 58% of victims were female.

⁷ Violence with and without injury includes wounding, assault with minor injury and assault without injury.

⁸ The estimates may underestimate the prevalence of domestic violence as victims may be reluctant to disclose in the presence of an interviewer.

⁹ Statistical significance between groups is represented with a ‘*’

Figure 3.03: Number of homicide offences currently recorded by the police, by sex of victim, England and Wales, 2018/19 to 2022/23



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 3: Victims - Table 3_06 [derived from Home Office Homicide Index])

Method and location

A sharp instrument was the most frequent apparent method of killing in 2022/23 for both female (32%) and male victims (45%), accounting for 41% of all homicides, consistent with previous years. For females, this was followed by other methods (includes explosion, drowning, burning, poison or drugs, motor vehicle, other and not known) of killing at 31%.

The majority of female homicides took place in or around a house/dwelling (78%), whereas only 37% of male homicides took place here. Males were more likely to be victims of homicide in public places, notably on the street (34% males, 6% females). This reflects the difference in relationship of the victim to the suspect in cases for males and females – with females more likely to be killed by an acquaintance and males more likely by a suspect not known by the victim.

Principal suspects¹⁰ and circumstances

In 2022/23, female victims were more commonly killed by a partner or ex-partner (32%) or a family member (13%). For males the suspected killer was more commonly a friend or acquaintance (25%) or a stranger (19%).

In cases where the victim was acquainted with the principal suspect, the circumstance was most often quarrel, revenge or loss of temper (64% in male victim cases, 61% in female victim cases). In cases where the victim was not known to be acquainted with the suspect, the most common apparent circumstance for male victims was also quarrel, revenge or loss of temper (45%), while for female victims it was other circumstances¹¹ (35%).

¹⁰ For the purposes of the Homicide Index, a suspect in a homicide case is defined as either: a person who has been charged with a homicide offence, including those who were subsequently convicted and those awaiting trial or a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or died by suicide.

¹¹ It is not possible to show separately offences committed in the course of furtherance of a sexual attack as there is often insufficient information available.

4. Police Activity

In 2023/24, females accounted for 16% of arrests, compared to 84% for males.

In 2023/24, 720,500 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales. This is a 8% increase since 2022/23. Females accounted for 16% of arrests, which has remained stable over the last 3 years.

The proportion of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs) issued to females has fallen.

The number of OOCs issued overall has decreased in the latest 5 years. The proportion of PNDs issued to females has also mostly seen a decline over the same period, from 18% in 2019 to 15% in 2021, but has recently seen an increase back to 18% in 2023.

This chapter explores the activity of the police, by the sex of the suspect or offender they deal with. It covers statistics on stop and searches and arrests, which are published by the Home Office in the [Police powers and procedures England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK](#), year ending 31 March 2024 publication. There are also sections covering statistics on out of court disposals which come from the [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2023 - GOV.UK](#) publication, published by the Ministry of Justice.

Stop and Searches

Police officers have the power to stop and search individuals under different pieces of legislation. In this chapter, those conducted under section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 have been combined¹².

The total number of stop and searches in 2023/24 was 535,200, including vehicle searches and where sex was not known. This is a 9% decrease since pre-pandemic volumes (year ending March 2020) and a 2% decrease since 2022/23. The proportion of female suspects who were stop and searched was 11% in the latest year, compared to 84% of male suspects.

Age groups

In 2023/24, the highest proportion of male and female stop and searches were of those aged 30 or above, 45% of all female stop and searches and 36% of all male stop and searches¹³.

Reason for stop and search

There are various reasons why the police may carry out a stop and search, for example they may suspect an individual is carrying drugs or a weapon. For both males and females, drugs were the most common reason for stop and search, at 59% of male and 60% of female stop and searches in 2023/24. The second most common reason for female stop and searches was stolen property offences, accounting for 18% of all female stop and searches, compared to 10% of all male stop and searches.

Stop and search outcomes

Stop and search is an important detection tool for the police – it allows officers to search individuals without an arrest taking place¹⁴.

¹² Stop and searches under s60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 accounted for approximately 1% of all stop and searches (s1 and s60) in the latest year. For more information on stop and search legislation, please see the accompanying guidance document.

¹³ Where sex is known. Sex not known accounted for 2% of all stop and searches in 2023/24.

¹⁴ Stops and searches that do not result in an arrest should not be immediately regarded as a misuse of power. Arrests that result from stop and search may not be linked to the initial reason for the stop and search.

In 2023/24, 23% of both male and female stop and searches resulted in an outcome that was linked to the reason for the search, i.e. the officer found what they were searching for¹⁵.

In 2023/24, 69% of stop and searches (where sex is known) resulted in the principal outcome 'no further action'. Male stop and searches consistently result in higher proportion of arrests as the principal outcome, at 15% in 2023/24, compared to 11% of female stop and searches. Community resolutions were the principal outcome in 9% female and 8% male stop and searches.

Arrests¹⁶

In 2023/24, 720,500 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales. This is a 7% increase since pre-pandemic volumes (year ending March 2020) and 8% increase since 2022/23. Females accounted for 16% of arrests, which has remained stable over the last 3 years.

*Age groups*¹⁷

The number of arrests has seen a decline for children (under 17 years old) over the last 5 years, with both male and female children decreasing by 1 percentage point. The number of arrests for young adults (18 to 20 years old) has also decreased compared to 2019/20, by 1 percentage point for females and 2 percentage points for males. Conversely, the number of adult arrests (21 years old and over) has seen a 2 percentage point increase for both males and females.

Offence groups

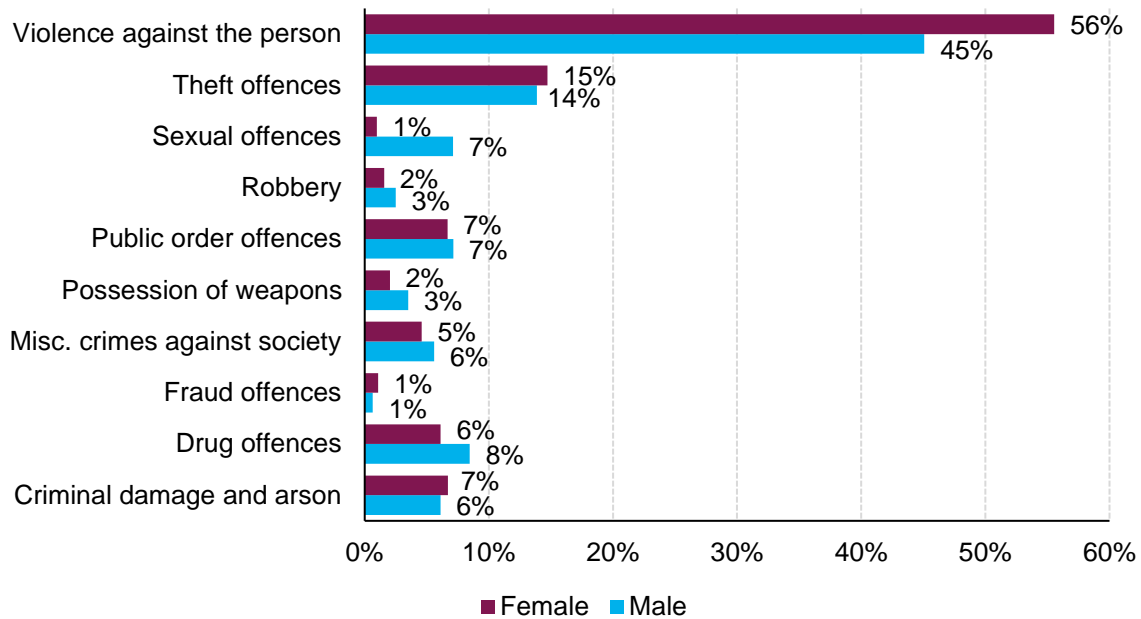
In 2023/24, violence against the person offences accounted for the largest proportion of arrests for both males and females. These offences accounted for a larger proportion of female arrests (56% of all female arrests in comparison to 45% of all male arrests). Theft offences and criminal damage and arson offences also accounted for a larger proportion of female arrests, at 15% and 7% respectively, compared to males (14% and 6% respectively).

¹⁵ Excluding 'unknown link' and 'unknown whether article found'.

¹⁶ The data in this section refers to arrests for notifiable crimes recorded by the police (excluding the British Transport Police).

¹⁷ Excludes where age is unknown (less than 1% of cases).

Figure 4.01: Proportion of arrests within each sex group, by offence group, England and Wales, 2023/24



(Source: Home office – Police Powers and Procedures: Stop and search and arrests – arrests open data tables)

Out of Court Disposals¹⁸

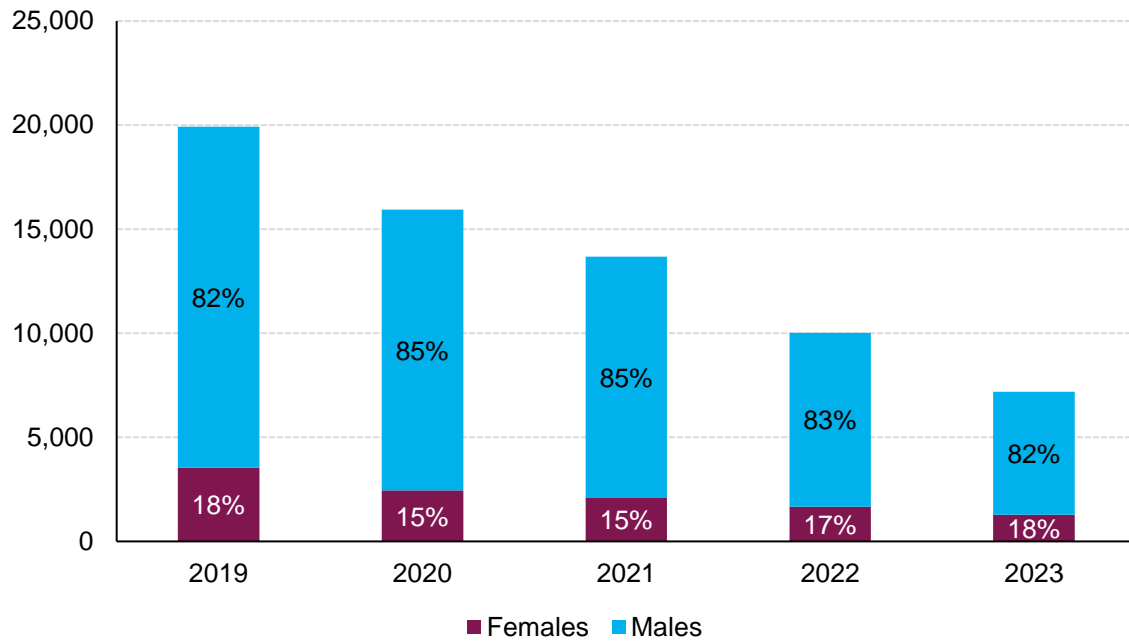
Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND)¹⁹ issued

The number of PNDs issued has continued to decline over the last 5 years, falling by 64% from 19,900 in 2019 to 7,200 in 2023. Whilst the volume of PNDs issued to both males and females has fallen by a similar percentage, the proportion of PNDs issued to females is at a similar level to 2019 (18%).

¹⁸ Out of court disposals available to the police and CPS in 2023 included: simple and conditional cautions; cannabis and khat warnings; penalty notices for disorder (PNDs); and community resolutions. Data broken down by sex is not available for cannabis and khat warnings or community resolutions, therefore these will not be included in the totals.

¹⁹ See technical guide for more information on PNDs

Figure 4.02: Number of Penalty Notices for Disorder issued, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: year ending December 2023 – Out of Court Disposals tool)

Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND) offences

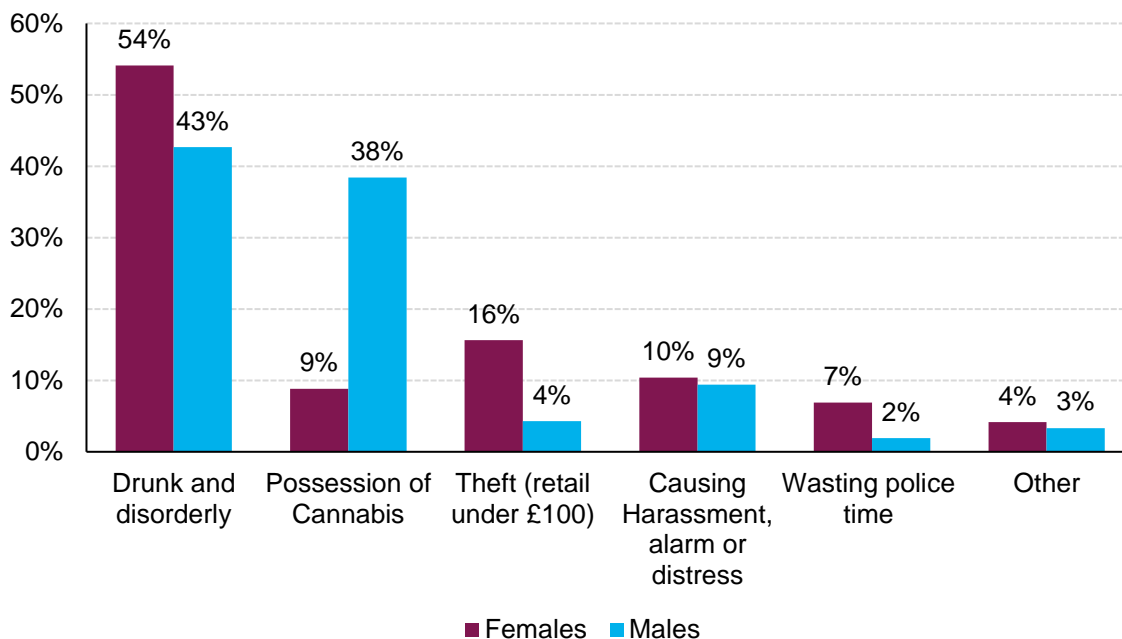
In 2023, 99.8% of PNDs issued were for higher tier offences for females and 99.3% for males. This breakdown has remained relatively constant over the last 5 years.

Drunk and disorderly accounted for the highest proportion of PNDs issued to females in 2023, accounting for 54% of all female PNDs in comparison with 43% of all male PNDs.

The largest disparity by offence can be seen for possession of cannabis which accounted for 38% of all male PNDs compared to only 9% of PNDs issued to females.

Whereas 16% of females were issued PNDs for theft (retail under £100) compared to only 4% of males. The proportion of females issued with PNDs for this offence has decreased since 2019 (23%).

Figure 4.03: Percentage of Penalty Notices for Disorder issued, by offence and sex, 2023, England and Wales

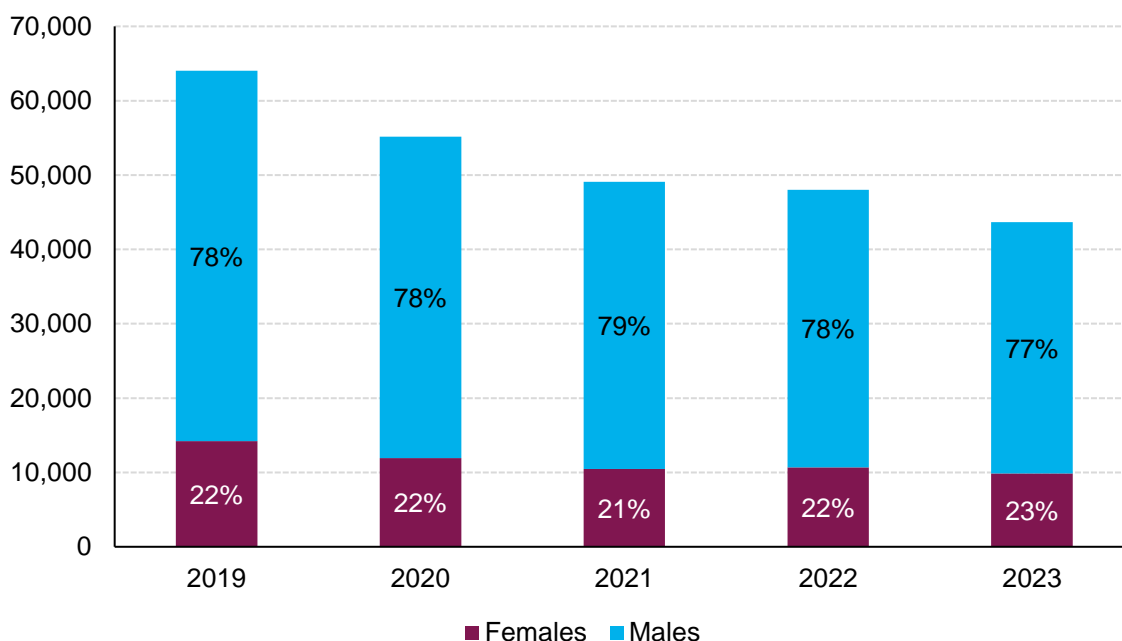


(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: year ending December 2023 – Out of Court Disposals tool)

Penalty Notices for Disorder - Payment

In 2023, 48% of PNDs were paid in full, and 40% resulted in a fine for late payment. A slightly lower proportion of females paid their PNDs in full (47%) compared to males (48%) and had a higher proportion of fines registered (43% compared to 39%).

Figure 4.04: Number of cautions issued, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: year ending December 2023 – Out of Court Disposals tool)

Cautions issued^{20, 21}

The number of cautions issued has declined over the last 5 years, falling by 32% from 64,000 in 2019 to 43,700 in 2023.

Of these, 77% were issued to males and 23% were issued to females in 2023. The proportion of cautions issued to females has remained broadly stable over the last 5 years.

Cautions - Offences²²

Of all cautions issued in 2023, 53% were for indictable offences, a proportion which has been decreasing over the last 5 years, from 57% in 2019.

The proportion of males issued a caution for indictable offences was 55%, compared to 46% for females. A higher proportion of females were cautioned for violence against the person offences (15%) compared to males (9%) - this has remained consistent since 2019.

In contrast, a larger proportion of male offenders were cautioned for drug offences (22%) compared to females (11%).

Caution types²³

The type of caution issued has been relatively consistent across males and females since 2019, with a slightly lower proportion of females receiving youth conditional cautions (4%) compared to males (5%). Both males and females have seen a rise in the proportion of adult conditional cautions being issued, mirrored by an equivalent decrease in adult simple cautions being issued.

Cautioning rates²⁴

The overall cautioning rate has fluctuated slightly across the past 5 years, ranging between 10% to 12%. Overall cautioning rates have been consistently lower for females than males, at 10% for females and 11% for males in 2023. Females had a higher cautioning rate for indictable offences (16%) compared to males (10%) in 2023.

²⁰ Figures on cautions exclude cases where sex is not known (1% of cases).

²¹ Summary motoring offences are not considered in relation to cautions or cautioning rates as these tend to be addressed using Fixed Penalty Notices. There is no published data available on Fixed Penalty Notices by sex.

²² Indictable offences include indictable-only and triable-either-way offences. Indictable offences are more serious offences that may (if triable-either-way) or must (if indictable only) be passed on to the Crown Court; while summary offences are typically less serious and almost always dealt with entirely in magistrates' courts. See accompanying technical guide for further details.

²³ Caution types include adult conditional caution, adult simple caution, youth caution, youth conditional caution. Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly have breakdowns by caution type from 2019 onwards.

²⁴ The cautioning rate is the number of offenders who were given a caution divided by the number who were either cautioned or convicted (excluding summary motoring offences).

5. Defendants

In 2023, 22% of individuals dealt with by the Criminal Justice System were female, and 78% were male.

The proportion of females dealt with has decreased from 27% in 2019 to 22% in 2023. This is likely a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions placed on criminal courts as a result.

Females were typically dealt with for less severe offences at court.

Of all female defendants prosecuted at court, 14% were prosecuted for indictable offences compared to 26% of male defendants in the latest year.

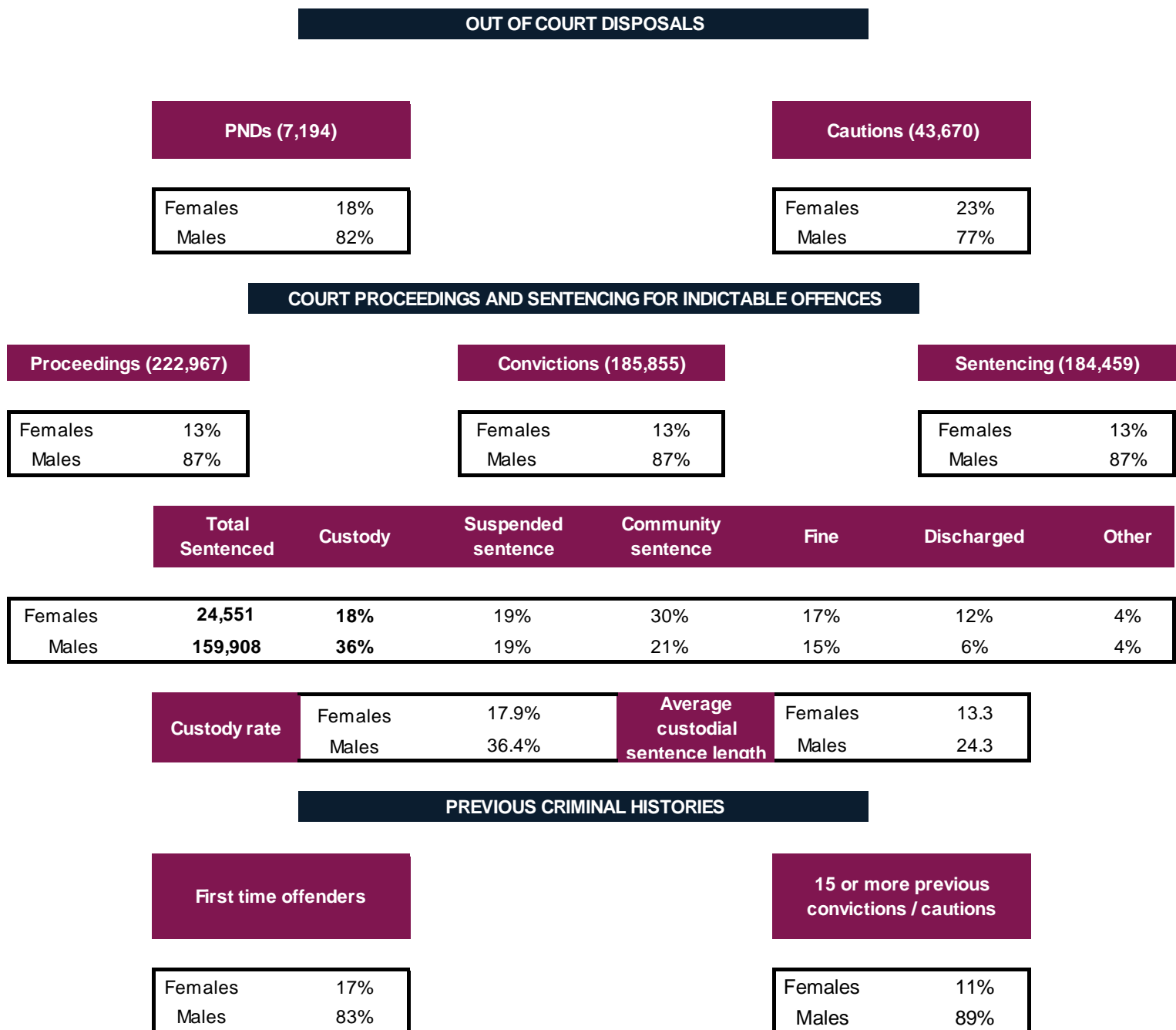
In 2023, the average custodial sentence length for female offenders was 12.2 months compared 21.8 months for male offenders.

A greater proportion of female offenders are sentenced for offences that tend to receive shorter sentences.

This chapter explores outcomes for defendants in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) predominantly drawing on data from the [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2023](#) publication. Other sources in this chapter include [Criminal Courts Statistics](#), [Legal Aid Statistics](#) and [Pre-Sentence Reports](#).

When a suspect is formally charged, they are brought before a magistrates' court (as a defendant) as soon as possible. Following proceedings at magistrates' court, defendants found guilty are subsequently convicted and sentenced. The defendant can be directed to appear in court or remanded on bail or custody. Figures for 2020 and 2021 in some categories such as custody rates and average custodial sentence lengths are affected by decisions made that affected courts in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5.01: Proportions of females and males throughout the Criminal Justice System, 2023, England and Wales^{25,26,27}



²⁵ Data underlying the figures in this flowchart is published in the data tools accompanying the [Criminal Justice System statistics](#) publication.

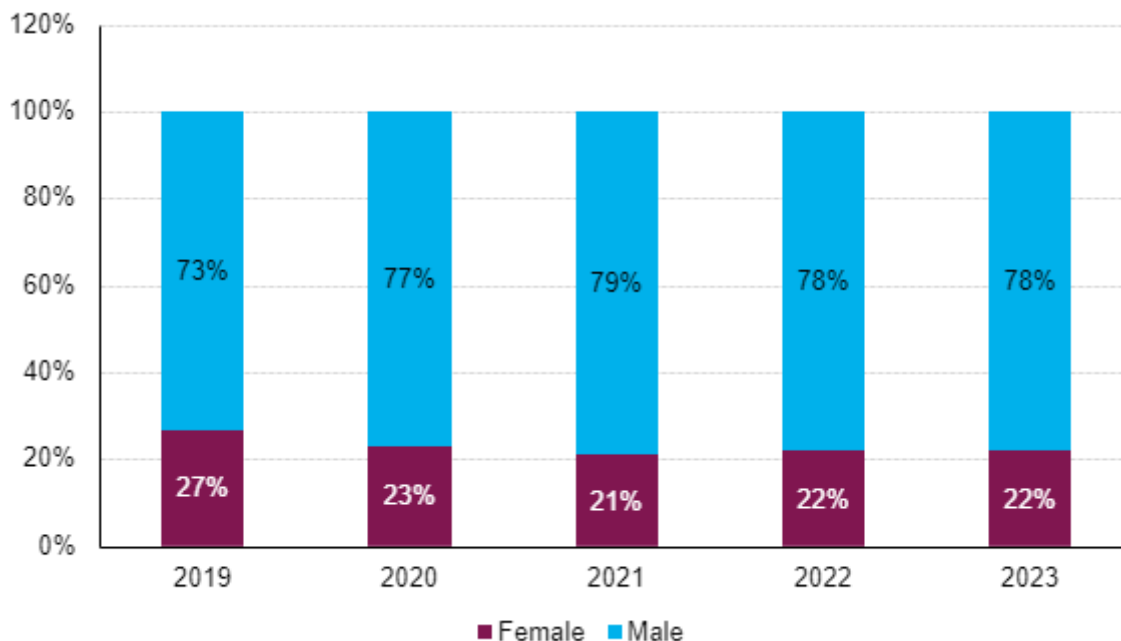
²⁶ Population estimates for mid-2023 are taken from [Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2023](#).

²⁷ The previous criminal histories data is published in the [First time entrant \(FTE\) into the Criminal Justice System and Offender Histories](#) publication. Figures based on indictable offences recorded on the PNC. A range of less serious summary offences, such as TV license evasion and many motoring offences are not recorded on the PNC. Therefore, any figures including summary offences would be an undercount of the true number of cautions and convictions. As such, summary offences have been excluded from this analysis.

Individuals²⁸ formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)²⁹

In 2023, 1.03 million individuals³⁰ were formally dealt with by the CJS, either by an out of court disposal (OOC) or court proceedings. Over the last 5 years the number of individuals formally dealt with has decreased, with proportions of males and females fluctuating in 2020 and 2021, likely a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions placed on criminal courts including prioritising cases involving offences likely to result in a custody which are generally less likely to involve females. Between 2017 and 2019, proportions of females and males remained constant at 26% and 74%.

Figure 5.02: Individuals formally dealt with by the CJS, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Prosecutions^{31,32}

The overall volume of prosecutions has fallen by 20% over the last 5 years from 1.2 million in 2019 to 962,000 in 2023. However, there was a more pronounced fall in the number of prosecutions for female defendants which fell by 34% in the last 5 years, from 321,000 in 2019 to 211,000 in 2023. Male prosecutions decreased by 15% in the same period, from 882,000 in 2019 to 751,000 in 2023.

22% of all prosecutions were for female defendants in 2023, an increase of 1 percentage point compared to 2021, but a decrease of 5 percentage points compared to 2019.

²⁸ A single individual can be counted more than once in a year if they are dealt with by the CJS on more than one occasion. The number of individuals formally dealt with by the CJS includes defendants prosecuted at magistrates' court and individuals given a caution or Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND). Cannabis warnings and community resolutions will not be considered when looking at out of court disposals because they are not recorded by sex. For more detailed analysis on out of court disposals, see Chapter 4: Police Activity.

²⁹ This section looks at persons only and excludes those where sex is not stated. Other defendants such as companies and public bodies are also excluded.

³⁰ Where sex is known. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 23% of all prosecutions in 2023.

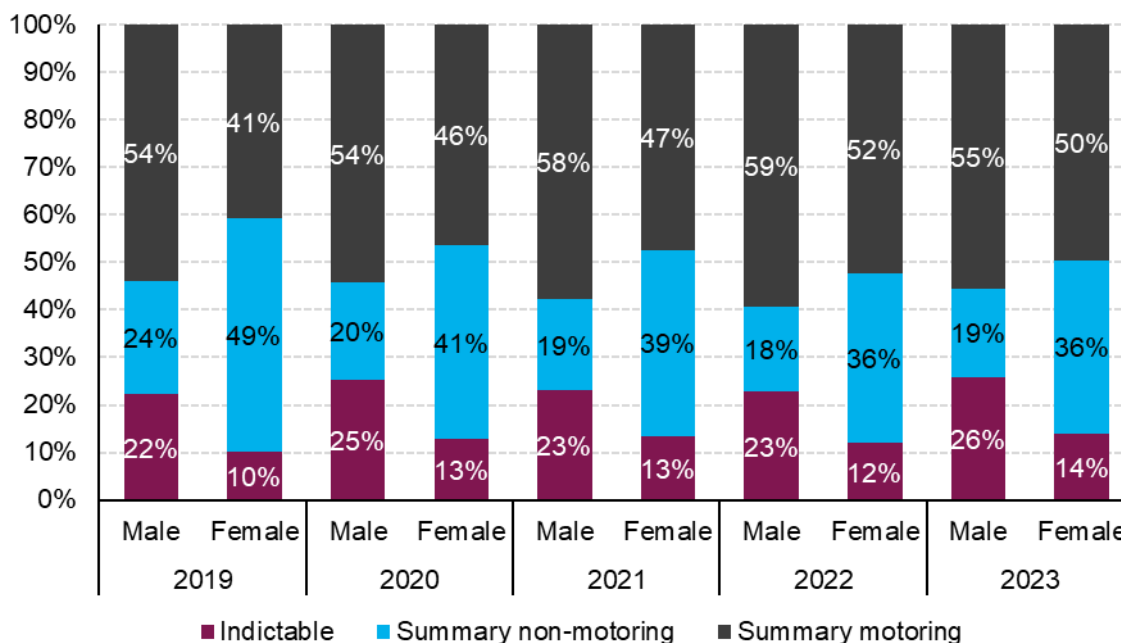
³¹ This section looks at persons only and excludes those where sex is not stated. Other defendants such as companies and public bodies are also excluded.

³² Indictable offences include indictable-only and triable-either-way offences. Indictable offences are more serious offences that may (if triable-either-way) or must (if indictable only) be passed on to the Crown Court; while summary offences are typically less serious and almost always dealt with entirely in magistrates' courts. See accompanying technical guide for further details.

A higher proportion of males were proceeded against for indictable offences (26%) compared to females (14%).

Over the last 5 years, the proportion of prosecutions for summary non-motoring offences has been decreasing for both male and female defendants. Despite these falls a higher proportion of females were proceeded against for summary non-motoring offences (36%) compared to males (19%).

Figure 5.03: Proportions of defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts, by offence type and sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Convictions³³

The proportion of convicted offenders who were female followed a similar trend to prosecutions, at 22% in 2023, a decrease from 27% in 2019. Of females convicted in 2023, 13% were for indictable offences, in comparison to 24% of male convictions.

Legal aid

Criminal legal aid consists of legal advice and representation provided to people being investigated or charged with a criminal offence, covering police stations, prisons, and the courts. **Crime higher** concerns legal representation in the Crown Court and above. **Crime lower** covers work carried out by legal aid providers regarding police station advice, magistrates' court work and prison law.

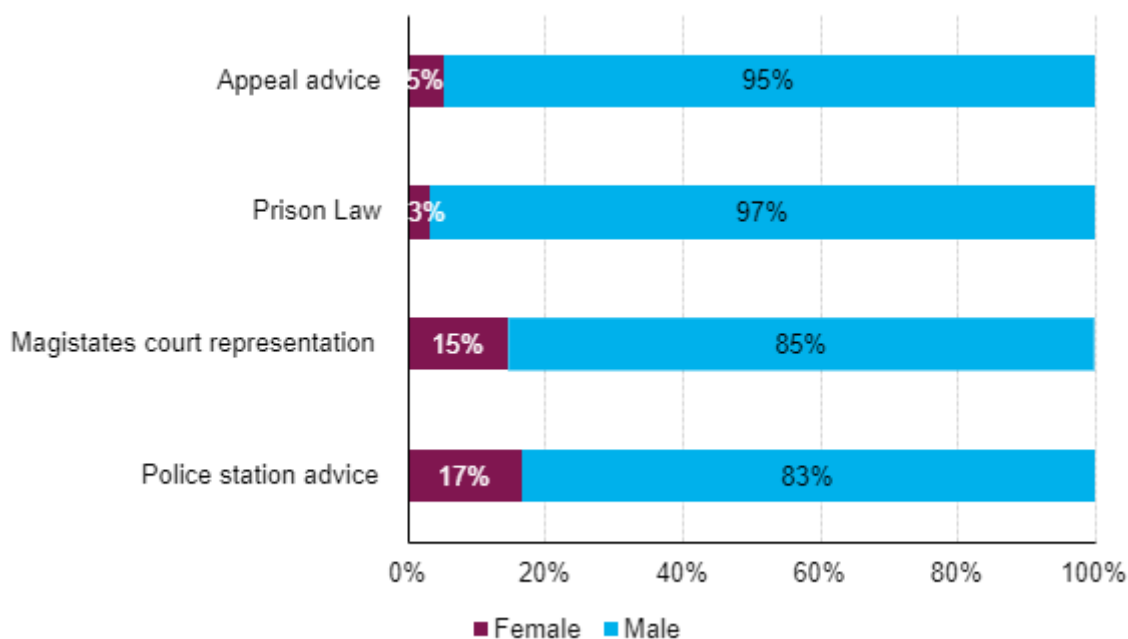
In 2023, 16% of the total crime lower legal aid workload was for female clients and this proportion has remained stable over the last 5-year period³⁴. The proportion of female legal aid recipients in the Crown Court was smaller, accounting for 9% of the crime higher legal aid workload in 2023³⁵.

³³ Where sex is known. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 23% of all convictions in 2023.

³⁴ Where sex is known. 1% of crime lower legal aid clients had an unstated sex.

³⁵ Where sex is known. 6% of crime higher legal aid clients had an unstated sex.

Figure 5.04: Crime lower legal aid workload, by sex and legal aid category, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System – Table 5.01 [derived from Criminal Legal Aid])

Police station advice and magistrates’ court representation constitute the majority of the total crime lower workload (98%). With police station advice alone making up 72% of the workload for males and 76% of females in 2023.

Prison law comprised less than 1% of the female and 2% of the male workload; both proportions have remained steady in the last 5 years but reflect falling prison law legal aid advice. This fall is mainly due to prison discipline hearings which have not returned to levels seen since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most common offences for which female legal aid clients received police station advice were offences against the person (47%) followed by theft offences (10%). In magistrates’ court representation, 29% of workload were offences against the person and 18% theft - similar trends are found for males.

In the Crown Court, 91% of crime higher legal aid work related to male clients. This proportion has remained very similar over the last 5-year period. Just as with crime lower, there has been a decreasing trend in the volume of Crown Court legal aid. The proportions receiving legal aid in the Crown Court for indictable offences has remained relatively stable across the past 5 years at 28% for males and 29% for females.

Remands^{36,37}

Police and pre-court remand

In 2023, 1.3 million defendants³⁸ were directed to appear at magistrates’ courts (including those who failed to appear). Of these, 290,000 defendants (30%) either had no sex recorded or were recorded as “unknown”

³⁶ Defendants are reported against their principal (i.e. most serious) remand status. Court custody includes those remanded in custody at any stage of proceedings at magistrates’ or Crown Court who may also have been given bail or not remanded at some stage of those proceedings. Court bail includes those remanded on bail at any stage of proceedings at magistrates’ or Crown Court who were never remanded in custody but who may also have been not remanded at some stage of those proceedings.

³⁷ The data in this section relates to persons remanded in each completed court case rather than to the number of remand decisions (a person may be remanded several times during a case).

³⁸ Where sex is known. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 23% of all prosecutions in 2023.

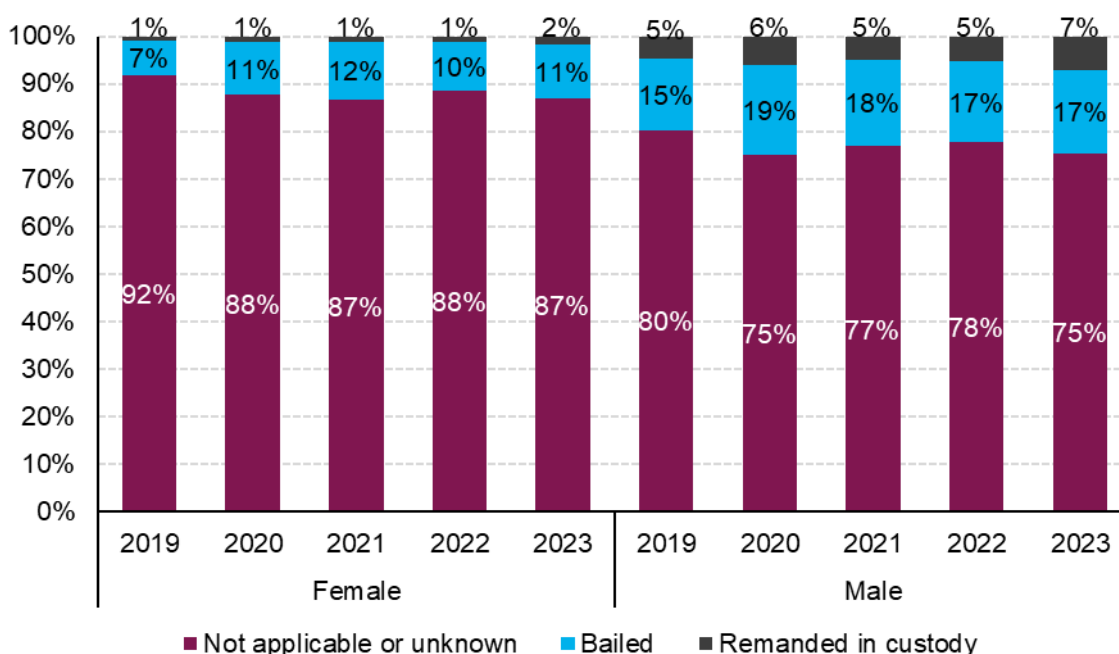
sex. It is likely the majority of these unknown cases will have been less serious offences dealt with via the Single Justice Procedure whereby a magistrate can deal with a case where a defendant has pled guilty or not responded to prosecution notice. The defendant does not have to be present and therefore sex will not always be recorded in these cases.

Over the last 5 years, a higher proportion of males were arrested and bailed or remanded in custody by the police, both accounting for 13% of all male remand decisions in 2023. In comparison, a lower proportion of female defendants were bailed (9%) or remanded in custody (4%) by the police in 2023. This is due, in part, to the different types of offences for which females and males are prosecuted.

Magistrates' court remand

Remands at magistrates' court followed similar trends to police remands over the last 5 years, with lower proportions of female defendants bailed or remanded in custody. In 2020, COVID-19 prioritisation of more serious offences led to an increase of the proportion of defendants granted bail and remanded in custody at magistrates' court.

Figure 5.05: Remand status at magistrates' courts, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



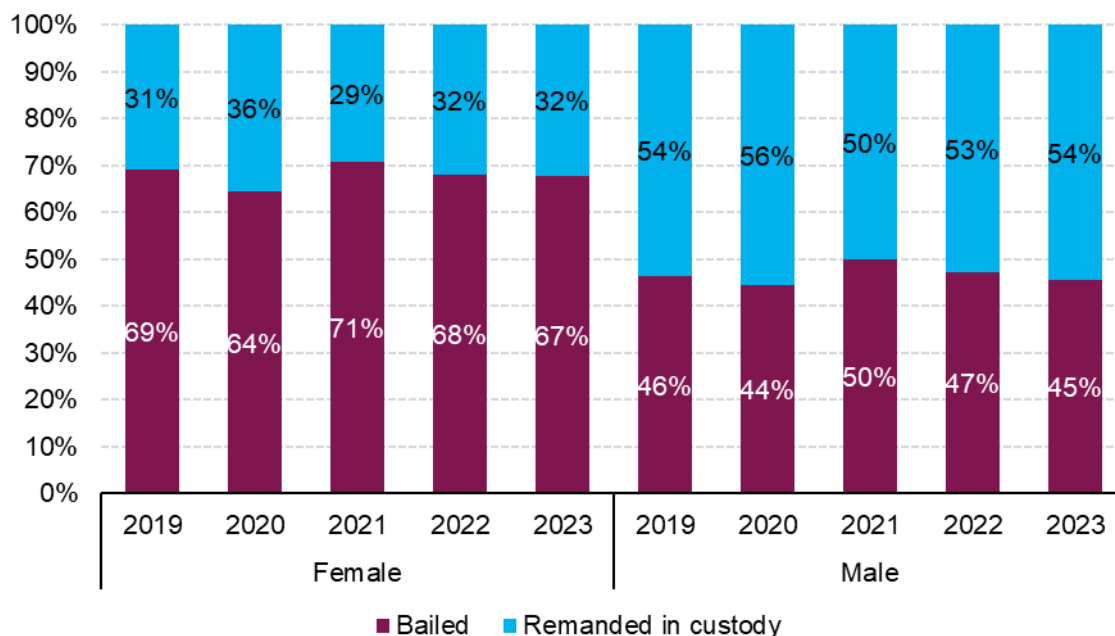
(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Remands data tool)

Of those remanded in custody at magistrates' court in 2023, 58% of female defendants were sent for trial or sentencing at Crown Court, compared to 73% of male defendants. This is reflected in the higher proportion of females remanded who were sentenced to immediate custody at the magistrates' court in 2023, 15% compared to 10% for males.

Crown Court remand

At the Crown Courts a higher proportion of females were bailed; 67% compared to 45% for males. These proportions are similar for both sexes over the last 5 years. In 2023, 32% of females appearing at the Crown Court were remanded into custody, whilst the proportion of male defendants was 64%.

Figure 5.06: Remand status at Crown Court, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: year ending December 2023 – Remands: data tool)

Outcomes for defendants remanded in custody at Crown Court

Of those remanded in custody at Crown Court in 2023, 54% of female offenders were sentenced to immediate custody compared to 47% of males. These proportions gradually decreased between 2021 and the latest year. Compared to male offenders, a larger proportion of females were given suspended sentences in each of the last 5 years, at 8% and 15% respectively in 2023.

Case Management

Effectiveness of trials³⁹

Between 2019 and 2023, the ineffective trial rate has increased for both males (from 16% to 27%) and females (from 20% to 32%), but both saw a peak in 2022 (36% for males and 38% for females). Ineffective trials have accounted for a higher proportion of all female trials than males in each of the last 5 years.

Between 2019 and 2023, the proportion of cracked trials has decreased for both males (from 34% to 30% of male trials) and females (from 37% to 30% of female trials), but both have seen an increase in the last year by 3 percentage points for females and 5 percentage points for males. Cracked trials accounted for a higher proportion of all female trials than males in each of the last 5 years.

Consequently, females had a lower proportion of trials that were effective, compared to males, in each of the last 5 years, at 38% of female trials and 43% of male trials in 2023.

Timeliness⁴⁰

In 2023, the median average days from the offence to the completion for defendants dealt with in **magistrates' courts criminal cases**⁴¹ was 184 days for females and 190 days for males. This is a 21% increase in median offence to completion from 2019 for females and 20% increase for males.

³⁹ See technical guide for further information on effective, ineffective and cracked trials.

⁴⁰ These are sourced from linked magistrates' courts and Crown Court administrative data systems. For more information and statistics on criminal court timeliness please refer to the [Criminal Court Statistics: July to September 2024](#) bulletin.

⁴¹ Including those sent to Crown Court.

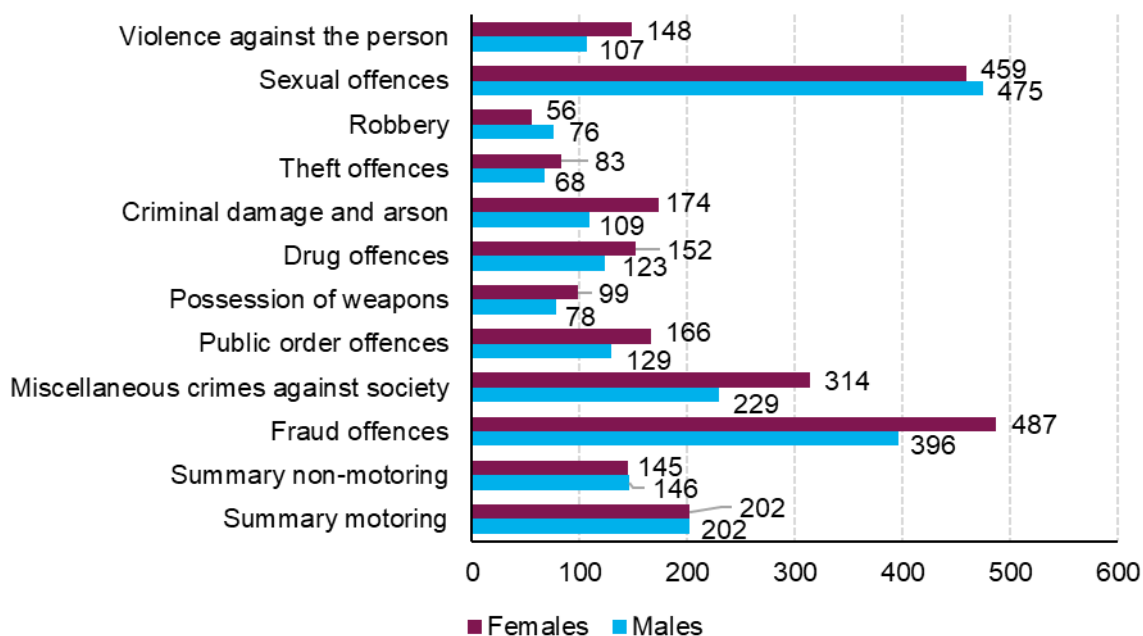
The median average days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with in **Crown Court criminal cases** was 501 days for females and 387 for males. This is a 54% increase in median offence to completion from 2019 for females and a 58% increase for males.

At Crown Court, the median average days from the offence to completion for all individual offence groups was higher for females than males except for possession of weapons and robbery offences in 2023. The largest difference between males and females in median days from offence to completion is the 221 days longer (27% longer) for females for sexual offence cases.

Plea at Crown Court⁴²

Female defendants tend to have lower guilty plea rates compared to males, this is true across the 5 year series - in 2023 female defendants had a guilty plea rate of 60% compared to 67% for male defendants dealt with at the Crown Court.

Figure 5.07: Median number of days from offence to completion (timeliness) at Crown Court, by offence group and sex, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System – Table 5.10 [derived from Criminal Court statistics])

⁴² Plea data is sourced from [Criminal Court Statistics: July to September 2024](#) bulletin and excludes companies, defendants with unknown sex and unknown plea.

Pre-sentence reports⁴³

In 2023, 14% of the 91,368 total pre-sentence reports (PSRs) prepared were for females, a proportion which has remained broadly consistent in the last five years.

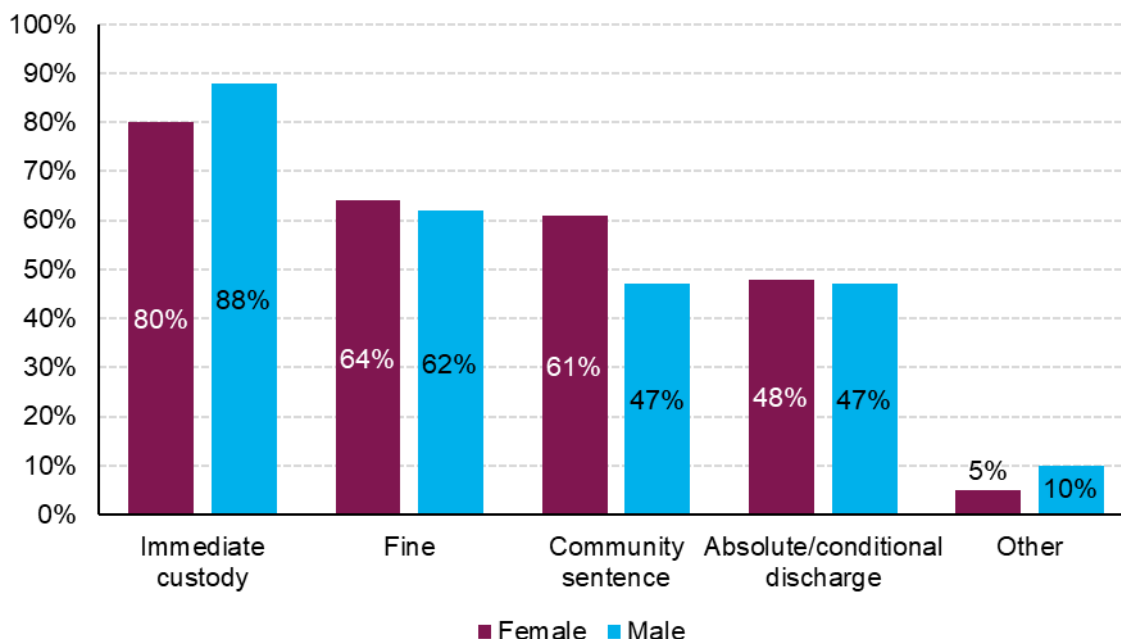
Since 2020, there has been a 34% increase in the total number of PSRs issued (from 68,077 to 91,368 PSRs issued in 2023), this shows that they have almost returned to pre-COVID levels (103,000 in 2019).

In 2023, 23% of all PSRs were oral, fast delivery PSRs⁴⁴; oral fast delivery PSRs accounted for 28% of PSRs prepared for females and 22% of PSRs prepared for males.

At 72% of all PSRs issued in 2023, written fast delivery PSRs were more common and accounted for 70% of all PSRs prepared for females and 72% of all PSRs prepared for males. Since 2019, there has been a 62% decrease in the number of oral fast delivery PSRs and a 47% increase in the number of written PSRs. Meanwhile, standard PSRs⁴⁵, which are given for more serious offences, were much less common and were given proportionally more often to male offenders (6%) compared with female offenders (2%). This aligns with the differences in the types of offence males and females were typically prosecuted for, as discussed in Chapter 8: Offence Analysis.

In 2023, the highest level of concordance between sentences proposed and sentences given (excluding suspended sentence orders) for both males and females was for immediate custodial sentences. Males have had a higher level of concordance for immediate custodial sentences in each of the last five years, at 88% in 2023 compared to 80% for females in 2023. In contrast, females have had a higher level of concordance for community sentences in each of the last five years, at 61% in 2023 compared to 47% for males.

Figure 5.08: The level of concordance between sentences proposed and outcomes, by sex and sentence type, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System – Table 5.14b [derived from Offender Management statistics])

⁴³ PSRs provide information to the court about the offender and any circumstances surrounding the offence, to help decide on a suitable sentence. Data on PSRs relates to those aged 18 or older and all offence types. All court reports included in published PSR statistics relate to offenders of known sex. Statistics on PSRs are published in the probation tables alongside [Offender Management Statistics](#).

⁴⁴ Fast Delivery PSR (oral) – The Criminal Justice Act 2003 removed the requirement for all PSRs to be written. An oral report is usually completed within 24 hours of conviction where a limited amount of information is required by the sentencing court.

⁴⁵ Standard PSR – A standard delivery (adjoined) PSR is based on a full risk assessment and is suitable for 'medium' and 'high' seriousness cases and/or where a custody is being considered.

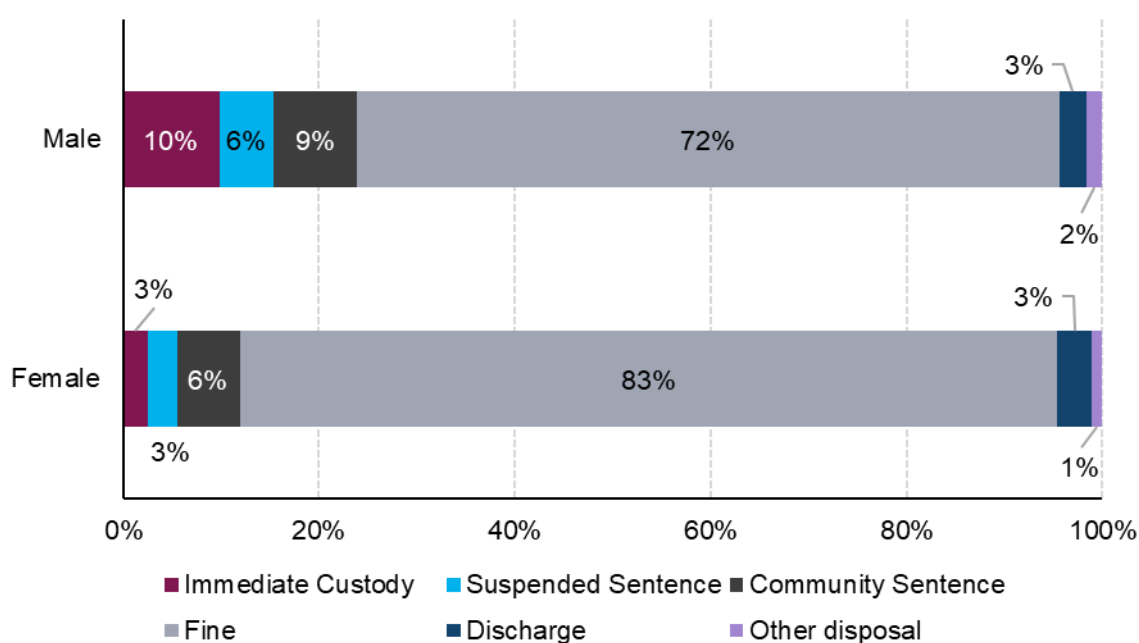
Sentencing⁴⁶

In 2023, 850,000 offenders were sentenced, of which 22% were female. This proportion has decreased over the past 5 years, from 27% in 2019.

In 2023, fines remained the most common sentence given to both male and female offenders sentenced at all courts, but females typically had less severe sentencing outcomes. Of those sentenced, a consistently higher proportion of female offenders were fined and had a lower average fine than male offenders over the last 5 years.

In 2023, 83% of female offenders were sentenced to a fine with an average fine of £250, compared to 72% of male offenders with an average fine of £308. Compared to male offenders, a larger proportion of female offenders were prosecuted for summary offences, which may account for this difference.

Figure 5.09: Proportions of offenders sentenced, by sentencing outcome and sex, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

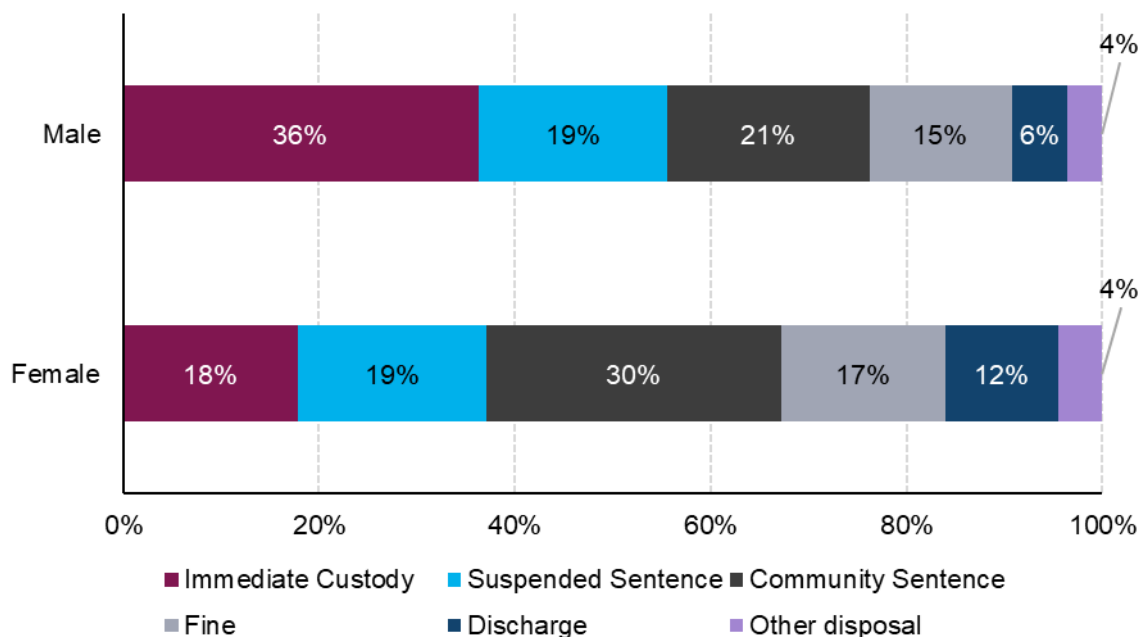
Sentencing outcomes for indictable offences

In 2023, a smaller proportion of female offenders were sentenced for indictable offences (14%), compared to male offenders (24%).

When comparing sentencing outcomes for male and female offenders, a consistently larger proportion of male offenders receive custodial sentences whereas larger proportions of female offenders receive community sentences or a conditional discharge.

⁴⁶ Where sex is known. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 23% of all sentences in 2023.

Figure 5.10: Proportion of offenders sentenced for indictable offences, by sentencing outcome and sex, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

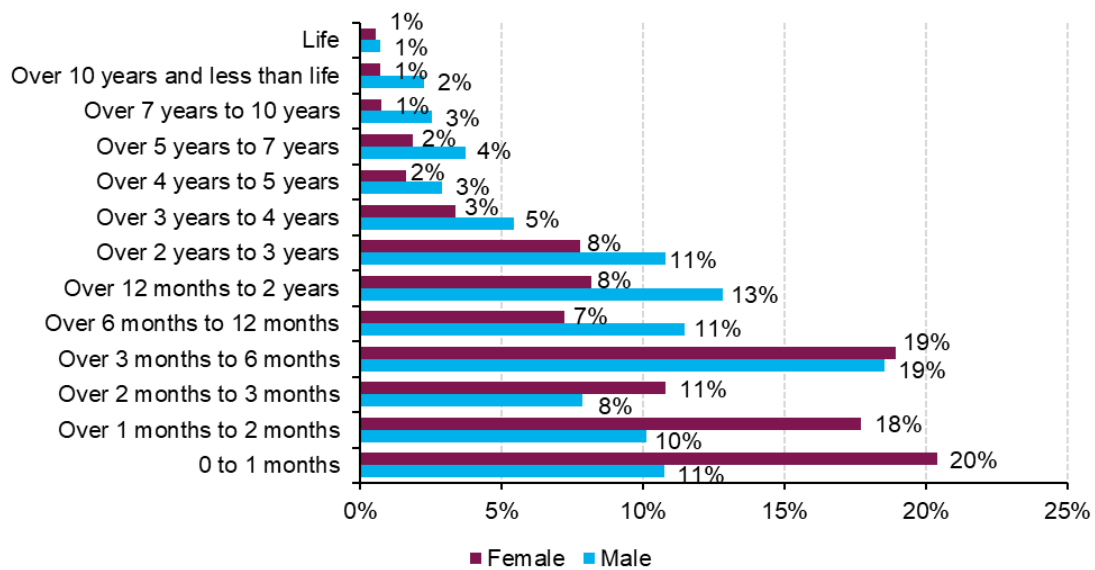
Relative Rate Index (RRI)⁴⁷ analysis shows that females were 28% less likely to be sentenced to immediate custody for indictable offences compared to males in 2023. RRIs have been consistently lower for females across the past 5 years, ranging between females being 30% to 32% less likely to be sentenced to immediate custody than males between 2019 and 2023.

Sentence lengths and average custodial sentence length (ACSL)

In 2023, 49% of female offenders who were sentenced to custody received sentences of up to and including 3 months, compared to 29% of males and these proportions have been decreasing for both female and male offenders over the last 5 years.

⁴⁷ See the technical guide for further information on RRI analysis.

Figure 5.11: Proportion of offenders sentenced to immediate custody, by custodial sentence length and sex, 2023, England and Wales

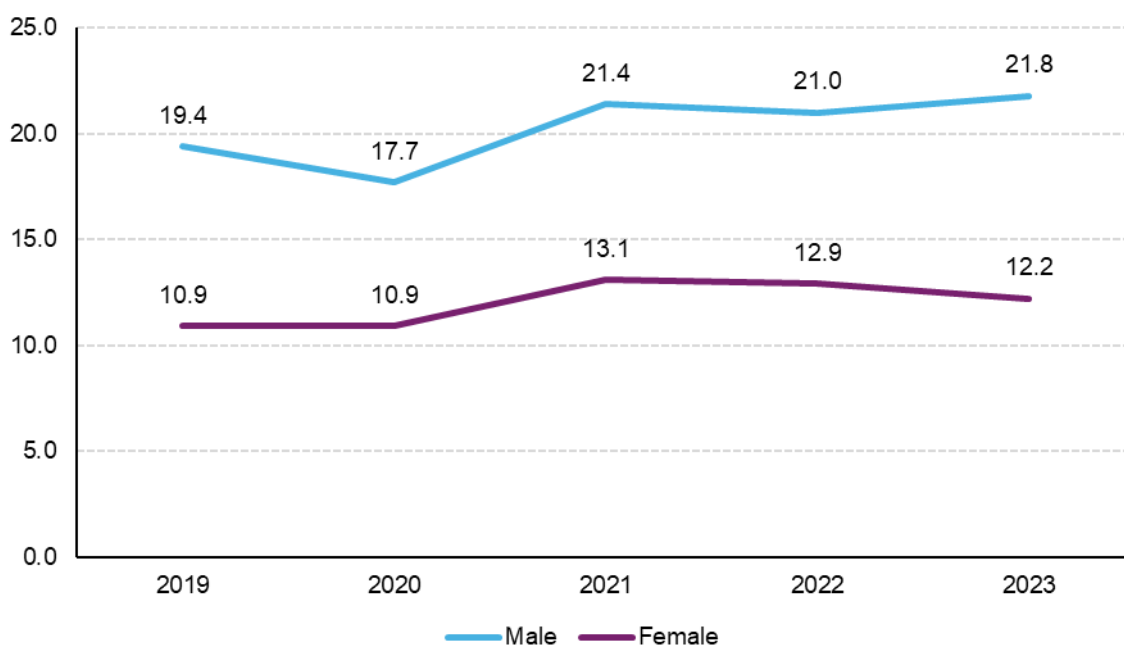


(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

The ACSL for male offenders in 2023 was 21.8 months compared to 12.2 months for female offenders. This is driven in part by a higher proportion of female offenders getting sentenced for offences that tend to receive shorter sentences.

The overall ACSL (where sex is known) has been broadly increasing over the last 5 years, from 18.7 months in 2019 to 21.1 months in 2023. This likely represents the rise in the proportion of sentences over 12 months and the decrease in sentences under 3 months.

Figure 5.12: Average custodial sentence length, by sex, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

6. Offender Management

The majority (96%) of the prison population were male.

As at 30 June 2024, 4% of the prison population were female, this proportion has remained stable for the last 5 years.

Females were serving shorter custodial sentence lengths.

As at 30 June 2024, 17% of females and 5% of males were serving sentences of less than 12 months.

In the 2022/23 HM Inspectorate of Prisons survey, females reported a high level and breadth of personal need.

Compared to males, a higher proportion of females reported: self-declared mental health problems, physical disability, having drug and alcohol problems, money worries and housing worries.

A higher proportion of female prisoners self-harmed in the year ending March 2024.

In the year ending March 2024, the number of individuals who self-harmed per 1,000 prisoners was 341 for females and 146 for males. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was over three times as high for females at 16.4.

This chapter (largely drawing from the 'Offender Management statistics Quarterly') provides statistics relating to offenders in custody or under probation supervision in the community, by sex. Topics include: [Prison Population](#), [Youth Custody](#), [Unsentenced prison remand population](#), [Sentences served in prison](#) (type and length), [His Majesty's Inspectorate for Prisons \(HMIP\) survey](#), [Self-harm in custody](#), [Probation \(Court Orders, and pre- and post-release supervision\)](#). Please see the user guide accompanying this bulletin for additional related data sources.

Prison population

The total prison population as at 30th June 2024⁴⁸ was 87,700. Females represented 4% of the prison population and this proportion has remained relatively stable over the last five years.

In June 2024 the prison population was 10% higher than compared to levels in June 2020. Whilst the broad proportions of male and female prisoners have remained relatively stable, the number of female prisoners increased by 13%, from 3,300 to 3,700, between June 2020 and June 2024. The number of sentenced prisoners remained higher in June 2024 than compared to June 2020 levels by 4% and 6% respectively for males and females.

Unsentenced remand prison population

As at the 30 June 2024, there were 17,100 prisoners held on remand (unsentenced), 900 of the prison population held on remand were female, representing 5% of the remanded prison population. This proportion has remained relatively stable over the last 5 years. despite a 50% increase in the total number of defendants remanded from 11,400 to 17,100 and a 44% increase in the number of women remanded from 600 to 864, between June 2020 and June 2024.

⁴⁸ Includes the following types of custody: remand, sentenced and non-criminal prisoners.

Youth secure estate

In June 2024, the number of children and young people aged 18 years old and under in the secure estate⁴⁹ was 538. Girls make up 3% of children and young people within the youth estate. There has been an average of 11 girls in the youth estate over the past six months.

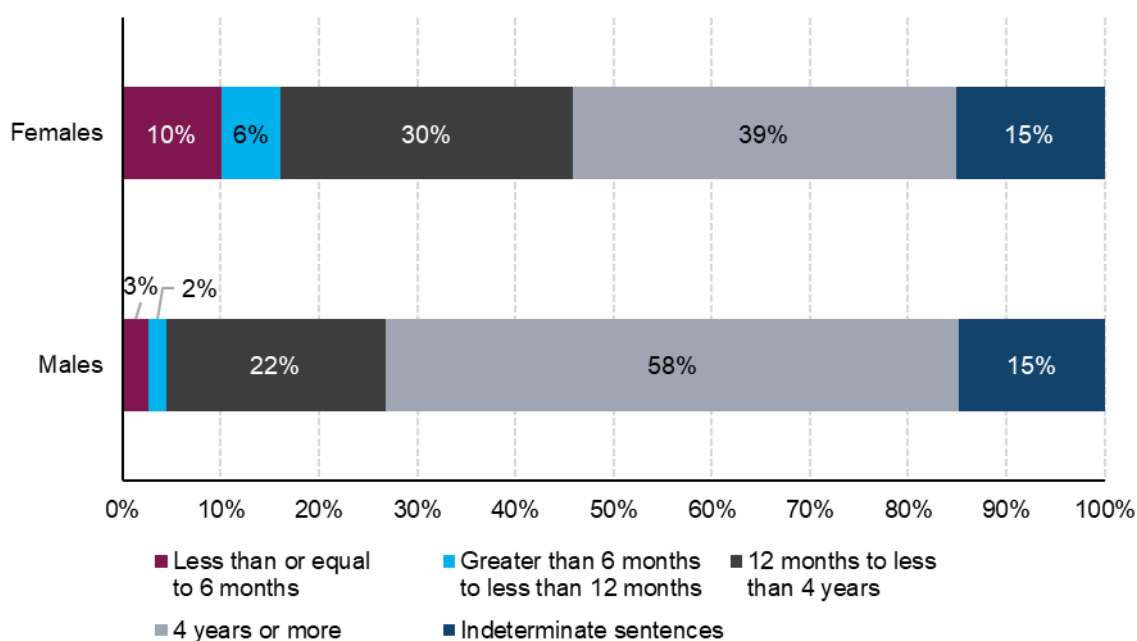
Sentences served in prison

Of the sentenced prison population, sentences can be divided into two broad groups: determinate sentences which are for a fixed period, and indeterminate sentences (these include life sentences and indeterminate sentences for public protection – IPPs).

As at 30 June 2024, 10% and 9% of the sentenced male and female prison population were serving indeterminate sentences respectively.

As at 30 June 2024, the sentence length profile of males and females differs, with a higher proportion of females (16%) serving sentences of less than 12 months, compared to 4% of males⁵⁰ (influenced by custodial sentencing in Chapter 5: Defendants and offence mix).

Figure 6.01: Proportion of prisoners serving immediate custodial sentences by sentence length and sex, as at the 30th June 2024, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Offender Management Statistics quarterly: January to March 2024 – Table 1_A_2)

⁴⁹ Monthly Youth Custody Official Statistics are published by the [Youth Custody Service](#). Secure estates include secure children’s homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs).

⁵⁰ Where sentence length was known and excluding recalls.

Prison experiences

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) for England & Wales aims to ensure independent inspection of places of detention, report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public. The HMIP Annual Report 2022/23 identifies differences in reported prison experiences between male and female prisoners^{51, 52}.

This section covers some of the key statistics included in the report, further breakdowns are published in the HMIP report for female and male prisoners broken-down by religion, race, nationality, and other protected characteristics.

In 2022/23, 6,403 prisoners completed the survey of which 422 were female.

Compared to males, a significantly higher proportion of females reported self-declared disability (long-term physical, mental, or learning needs), and having drug and alcohol problems, money worries and housing worries on arrival at the prison. A higher proportion of females also reported experiencing bullying or other victimisation from other inmates⁵³.

72% of female prisoners from ethnic minority groups reported that when searched it had been done in a respectful way. This was significantly lower compared to their white counterparts (85%).

A higher proportion of females reported having a disability (57% compared to 41% of males) and mental health problems (82% compared to 59% of males).

When asked "has your well-being got better or worse since you have been in this prison?" 32% of female prisoners who returned the survey stated their well-being had got better⁵⁴. This was highest for non-Muslim females at 38% and lowest for female prisoners 25 years of age or younger at 13%.

Self-harm in prison

Self-harm in prison custody is defined as 'any act where a prisoner deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent or severity of any injury.'

Historically, females consistently had a higher proportion of prisoners who self-harmed and a higher number of instances of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners.

In the year ending March 2024, the number of individuals who self-harmed per 1,000 prisoners was 341 for females and 146 for males⁵⁵. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was over three times as high for females at 16.4, compared to 4.5 for males.

⁵¹ The detailed results of the survey can be found in [HMIP Annual Report 2022/23](#)

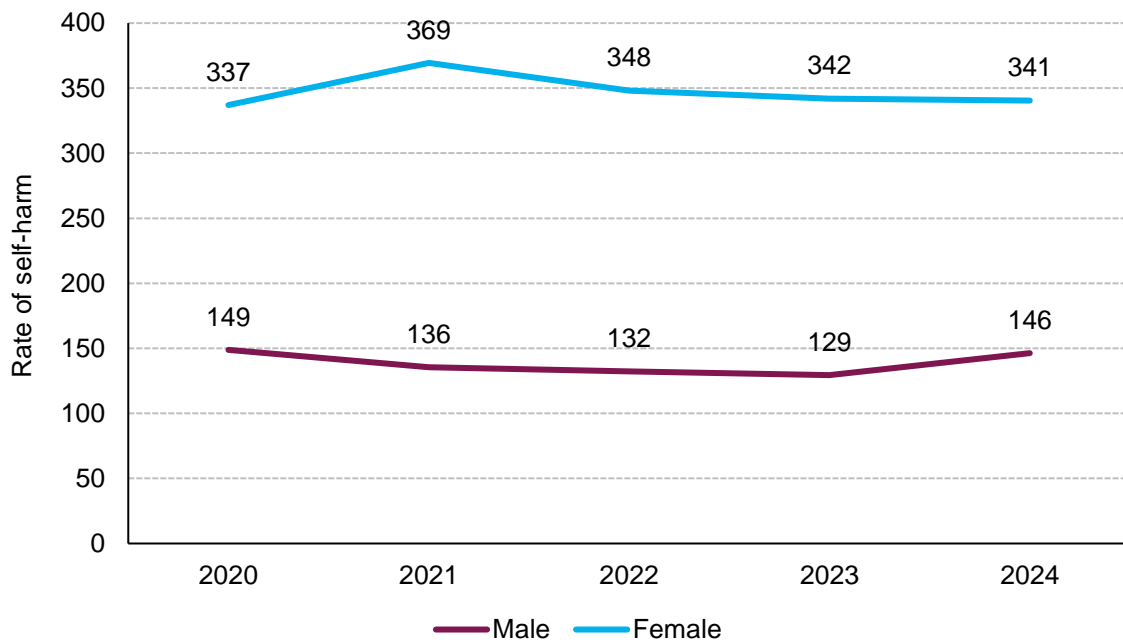
⁵² Where the differences between two proportions are reported as being significant there is less than 1% probability that the difference is due to chance – however any reason for this observed difference goes beyond the scope of this analysis.

⁵³ For more detail please see [Chapter 5 Women in Prison from the HMIP Annual Report 2021/22](#).

⁵⁴ This question is unique to the female questionnaire from July 2021 and therefore reflects responses from three out of the five prison establishments inspected in the reporting year for 2021/22.

⁵⁵ Individuals self-harming rates are derived by $1,000 \times (\text{number of individual in year}) / (\text{average monthly population for year})$. Prison population figures are from the [Offender Management Statistics quarterly](#) bulletin and are averaged across 12 months.

Figures 6.02: Rate of self-harm individuals in prison per 1,000 prisoners by sex of establishment, year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2024, England and Wales⁵⁶



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Safety in Custody Statistics, Self-harm summary tables - Table 3)

Probation

The Probation Service supervises offenders living in the community under a court order (including those starting supervision as a result of a community order or suspended sentence order with requirements) and those being released from custody.

In 2023, 17% of offenders starting a community order were female and 12% of offenders starting a suspended sentence order (with requirements) were female.

In 2023, 53% of male and 51% of female offenders were starting a community order for a summary offence.

For male offenders, starting a suspended sentence order in 2023, the most frequent offence groups were violence against the person (22%), drug offences (13%) and miscellaneous crimes against society (12%). For female offenders, starting a suspended sentence order in 2023, the most frequent offence groups were violence against the person (24%), theft offences (15%) and summary non-motoring offences (14%).

As with custodial sentences, females on average received shorter community orders (12.7 months) and suspended sentence orders⁵⁷ (17.2 months) compared to males (at 13.8 and 18.2 months respectively).

⁵⁶ In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count self-harm incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing figures shown here with other sources where data may be less complete.

⁵⁷ Suspended sentence order with requirements.

Parole board⁵⁸

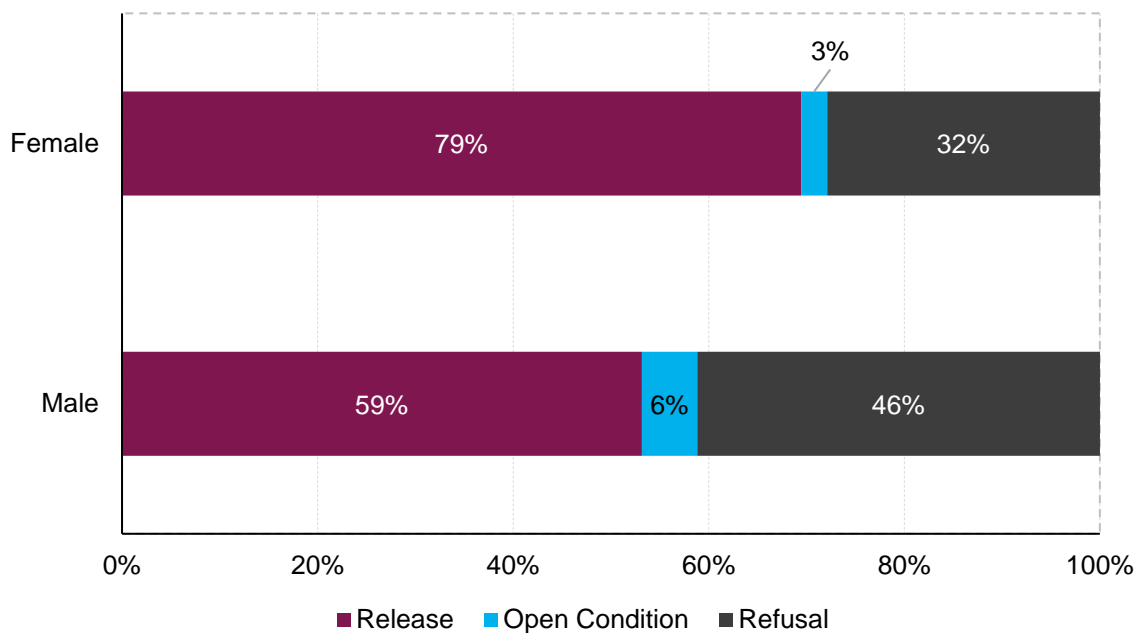
The parole board carry out risk assessments on prisoners to determine whether they can be safely released into the community. Recommendations can also be made on a prisoner’s suitability for a move to the open prison estate.

In the year ending March 2024, there were 6,900 oral parole board review hearings where sex was recorded. Of these, 3% were female and 97% were male. These proportions have remained stable across the past 5 years.

There were 520 oral parole board recall hearings where sex was recorded. Of these, 3% were female and 97% were male.

In the year ending March 2024, a higher proportion of female offenders received a release result from an oral review hearing (69%), in comparison with male offenders (53%) - a trend that has been consistent over the past 5 years. The proportion of females receiving a hearing result of release from an oral review hearing has increased from 65% in year ending March 2020 to 69% in year ending March 2024. The number of parole board review hearings concluded peaked for male and female offenders in the year ending March 2024 at 6,600 and 226 offenders respectively. The number of parole board review hearings with an outcome of release peaked for male and female offenders in the year ending March 2024 at 3,500 and 157 offenders respectively. In comparison, the number of parole board hearings with an outcome of release peaked for male offenders in the year ending March 2021 at 3,200 offenders.

Figure 6.03: Outcomes of oral Parole Board review hearings by sex, year ending March 2024, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System – Table 6.05a [derived from Parole Board])

⁵⁸ See technical guide for information relating to parole board.

7. Offender characteristics

Ethnic minority groups accounted for a higher proportion of prosecutions against males compared to females.

In 2023, males from black ethnic group account for 7% of all male prosecutions. This compared to females from black ethnic group accounting for 4% of all female prosecutions.

A higher proportion of female offenders were first time offenders.

Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2023, 27% were first time offenders, compared to 21% for males.

Females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender compared to males.

In the latest cohort, females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender compared to males, at 4.38 and 4.04, respectively.

Across two of the attainment measures, the educational attainment of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence was slightly higher for females than males.

For example, 30% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to C, including English and Maths, compared to 21% of males.

More than half of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence were eligible for Free School Meals.

This was slightly higher for females (56%) than for males (53%). This contrasts with the proportion of pupils in the all-pupil population where 26% were eligible for FSM.

This chapter looks at the interaction between sex and other key characteristics, including ethnicity and age, within the criminal justice system, using data from [Criminal Justice System statistics: year ending December 2023](#). To note, we refer to only the most serious (indictable) offences⁵⁹ throughout the court statistics portion of this chapter, due to ethnicity being largely unknown for less serious (summary) offences.

This chapter also includes analysis on [offending histories](#), [proven reoffending](#) and educational background of offenders through a data sharing exercise between Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Department for Education (DfE).

Sex⁶⁰ and Ethnicity⁶¹

Prosecutions and convictions

For indictable offences, ethnic minority groups account for a higher proportion of male prosecutions and convictions compared to female. This is true for prosecutions of black defendants (7% male, 4% female) and Asian defendants (6% male, 2% female).

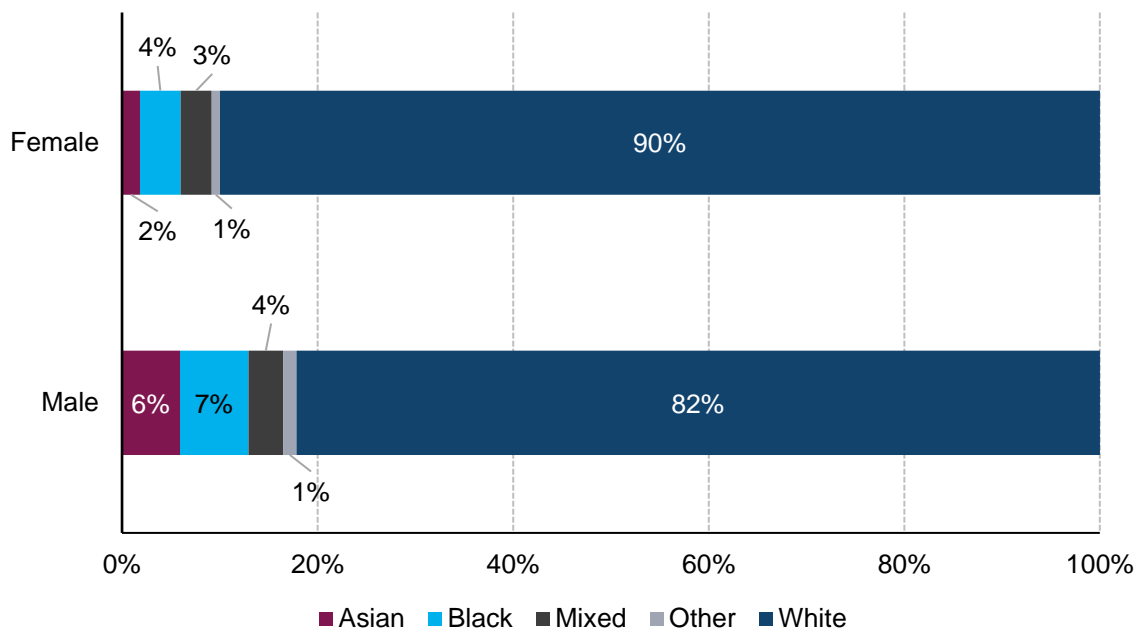
Mixed ethnic groups account for 3% of prosecutions and 4% of convictions for both male and female defendants. Male offenders from the white ethnic group represent 82% of prosecutions and 81% of convictions, while females from the white ethnic group account for 90% for both prosecutions and convictions. These proportions have remained broadly consistent across the last 5 years.

⁵⁹ Indictable offences include indictable-only and triable-either-way offences. Indictable offences are more serious offences that may (if triable-either-way) or must (if indictable only) be passed on to the Crown Court.

⁶⁰ Where sex is known. Excludes companies, public bodies etc. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 4% of all indictable prosecutions and 3% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

⁶¹ Where ethnicity was known. Defendants with unknown or not stated ethnicity accounted for 37% of all indictable prosecutions and 34% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

Figure 7.01: Proportion of prosecutions for indictable offences by sex and ethnicity, England and Wales, 2023



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Remands^{62,63}

For indictable offences, females across all ethnic groups had lower proportions of defendants remanded in custody compared to males, both at magistrates’ courts and Crown Court, of all those appearing at court.

In 2023, the highest proportion of females remanded in custody of all females appearing at magistrates’ court was across the other ethnic groups (17%), followed by the black (16%), Asian (15%), mixed (14%), and white (11%) ethnic groups. Similarly, males from the other ethnic group presented the highest proportion of defendants remanded in custody of all males appearing at magistrates’ court (35%), followed by the black (31%), Asian (29%), mixed (29%) and white (24%) ethnic groups.

At Crown Court, the highest proportion of females remanded in custody of all females appearing at the Crown Court was across the mixed ethnic group (45%), followed by the black (39%), white (36%), Asian (33%), and other ethnic groups (29%). For males, the ethnic groups with the highest proportion of defendants remanded in custody were other (61%), black (61%) and mixed ethnic groups (61%). The white and Asian ethnic groups had the lowest proportion at 55% and 54%, respectively.

Average Custodial Sentence Length (ACSL) and Custody Rate

Of all females sentenced in 2023 for indictable offences, Asian offenders had the highest custody rate at 23%, followed by the mixed ethnic group (22%), black (20%), white (19%) and other ethnic groups (17%). In contrast, male offenders from the other ethnic group had the highest custody rate at 42%, followed by the black (41%), other (41%), mixed (40%) and white ethnic group (37%).

In 2023, for indictable offences, male offenders from the Asian and the black ethnic groups had the longest ACSL, at 33.1 months. Followed by offenders from the mixed and other ethnic groups, both at 25.5 months.

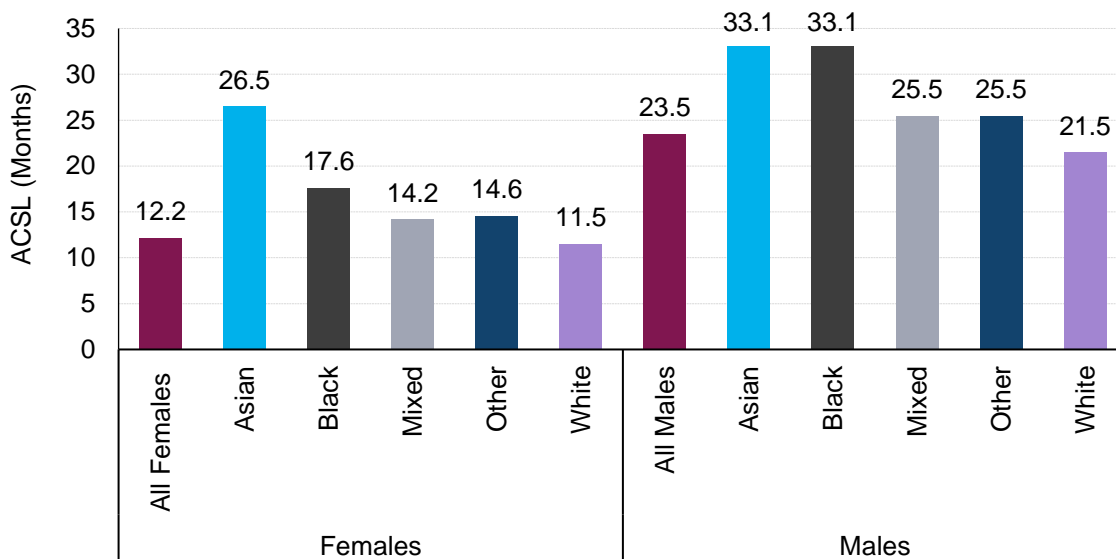
⁶² Where ethnicity was known. Defendants with unknown or not stated ethnicity accounted for 32% of all remanded in custody at magistrates’ courts and 30% of all remanded in custody at the Crown Court for indictable offences in 2023.

⁶³ Remands data in this section are based on the magistrates’ courts’ and on the Crown Court’s decision on whether a defendant prosecuted for a criminal offence, should – during the court proceeding – go on to be placed in custody or released on bail.

Male offenders from the white ethnic have the shortest ACSL at 21.5 months. For female offenders, the longest ACSL was across the Asian ethnic group, at 26.5 months, followed by the black (17.6 months), other (14.6 months), mixed (14.2 months), and white ethnic group (11.5 months).

Differences in offence mix can cause apparent disparity between groups when comparing ACSL. For example, female offenders are more often dealt with for less serious offences than males; therefore, ACSL is consistently lower for female offenders. Equally, the impact of offence mix can be seen across ethnic groups, with each ethnic group potentially more likely to be dealt with for a different combination of offences, whose overall seriousness may impact that group's ACSL.

Figure 7.02: Average custodial sentence lengths (ACSL) for indictable offences, by sex and ethnicity, England and Wales, 2023



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Sex⁶⁴ and Age⁶⁵

Prosecutions and convictions

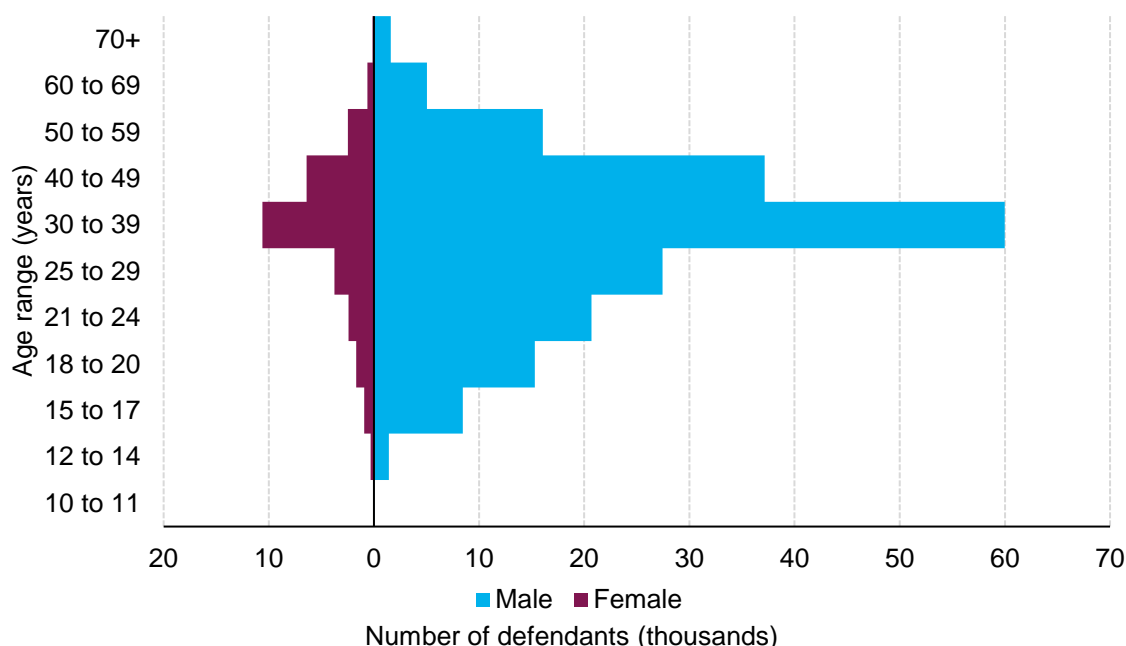
Prosecutions for indictable offences by age distribution in 2023 remained broadly similar across males and females.

The most common age bracket of both male and female defendants was 30 to 39, whilst the volume of male defendants in the category was over 5 times higher than females. This trend in age distribution was consistent across male and female convicted and sentenced.

⁶⁴ Where sex is known. Excludes companies, public bodies etc. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 4% of all indictable prosecutions and 3% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

⁶⁵ Where age was known. Defendants with unknown or not stated ethnicity accounted for 37% of all indictable prosecutions and 34% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

Figure 7.03: Age distribution of defendants dealt with for indictable offences, by sex, England and Wales, 2023



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Sex⁶⁶ and age⁶⁷ - children

The following section discusses child offenders at different stages of the Criminal Justice System. Reference will usually be made to ‘children’ by which we refer to individuals aged 10 to 17 years of age on first appearing at court⁶⁸. It should be noted that because children comprise less than 10% of all offenders prosecuted for an indictable offence (where sex and age of the defendant is known), trends should be interpreted with caution.

Prosecutions and convictions

In 2023, for indictable offences, female child defendants account for 11% of all children prosecuted, which has remained consistent over the past 5 years. The volume of children prosecuted for indictable offences has seen a 20% decline in the last 5 years. Children account for 4% of all female and 5% of all male prosecutions for indictable offences.

Violence against the person is the most common offence group for female child defendants, accounting for 53% of female child prosecutions in 2023. The second most common offence group is theft offences, accounting for 23% of female child prosecutions. Similar proportions are seen in convictions. In contrast, theft offences are the most common offence group for male child defendants at 20%, followed by violence against the person at 18%.

Remands

Female children had lower proportions of defendants remanded in custody compared to males, both at magistrates’ courts and Crown Court. At Crown Court, 51% of children were remanded in custody for

⁶⁶ Where sex is known. Excludes companies, public bodies etc. Defendants with sex not known accounted for 4% of all indictable prosecutions and 3% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

⁶⁷ Where age was known. Defendants with unknown or not stated ethnicity accounted for 37% of all indictable prosecutions and 34% of all indictable convictions in 2023.

⁶⁸ In this section, children are the standard unit we are describing, even when not explicitly stating so in the text. The only exceptions are when we are deliberately discussing ‘all aged’ offenders.

indictable offences in 2023. The proportion of female children remanded on bail at Crown Court remains consistently higher (71%) than that of male children (43%), whilst male children more often receive custodial remand decisions (52%) than female children (17%).

Average Custodial Sentence Length (ACSL) and Custody Rate

In 2023, 97% of all custodial sentences⁶⁹ given to children for indictable offences are given to male children, with males having custody rate of 8%, compared to 2% for females. The child custody rate has decreased for both male and female children over the last 5 years (3 and 1 percentage points, respectively). The ACSL for male children dealt with for indictable offences was higher than that of females in 2023, at 19.7 months compared to 6.9 months.

Offender Histories⁷⁰

First time offenders refers to 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. Offences resulting in Penalty Notices for Disorder are not counted as first offences.

First time offenders accounted for 22% of offenders who were cautioned or convicted in England and Wales in 2023, of which 83% were male and 17% females⁷¹. Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2023, 27% were first time offenders, compared to 21% for males. A higher proportion of females were first time offenders for all indictable offence groups, except for Robbery.

In 2023, offenders with a long history of reoffending (15 or more previous cautions or convictions) comprised 28% of all offenders, of which 89% were male and 11% were female. This cohort accounts for 23% of all female offenders cautioned/convicted, compared to 29% for males.

Proven Reoffending⁷²

A proven reoffence is defined as any offence committed in a one-year follow-up period that resulted in a court conviction, caution, reprimand, or warning within this timeframe, or a further six-month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court.

Adults

In the October 2022 to December 2022 cohort, the adult reoffending rate was higher for males at 27%, compared to 22% for females. In the latest cohort, females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender (also known as the frequency rate) compared to males, at 4.38 and 4.04, respectively.

Juveniles

In the October 2022 to December 2022 cohort, the juvenile reoffending rate was higher for males at 33%, compared to 21% for females. In the latest cohort, females had a higher average number of reoffences per reoffender (also known as the frequency rate) compared to males, at 4.85 and 4.10, respectively.

⁶⁹ Children can be sentenced to custody in three different establishment types: Young Offender Institutions are for males aged 15-17 only, no females. Secure Children's Homes and Secure Training Centres are for males (those who are younger or have more complex needs) and females aged 10-17.

⁷⁰ Figures based on indictable offences recorded on the PNC. A range of less serious summary offences, such as TV license evasion and many motoring offences are not recorded on the PNC. Therefore, any figures including summary offences would be an undercount of the true number of cautions and convictions. As such, summary offences have been excluded from this analysis.

⁷¹ Where sex is known. Offenders with sex not known accounted for less than 1% of offenders in 2023.

⁷² The figures presented in this section include both indictable and summary offences.

Educational background of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence

Findings from a recent data sharing exercise between the MoJ and the Department for Education (DfE) are presented here, with analysis on a matched cohort of those who finished Key Stage 2 (KS2) in 2008/09 or 2009/10, were aged 10 at the start of these academic years, and were in year 11 at the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4)⁷³.

To avoid inconsistency in the length of their offending histories, for those with a KS2 academic year of 2008/09 their offending data has been considered up to 31 December 2020 and for those with a KS2 academic year of 2009/10 it has been considered up to 31 December 2021.

This analysis compares the sex in the matched cohort of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence, broken down by disposal type, educational attainment, pupil characteristics, persistent absence and exclusion. Results are provided for the all-pupil cohort for comparison purposes⁷⁴.

*Educational Attainment at Key Stage 4 (KS4)*⁷⁵

Across two of the attainment measures, the educational attainment of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence was slightly higher for females than males. For example, 16% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) graded A* - C, including English and Maths, compared to 14% of males. This is considerably lower than the all-pupil population (55%).

The proportion of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence who achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to C, including English and Maths, was highest among those in receipt of a fine. This was higher for females (30%) than males (21%), this difference being the greatest among disposal types.

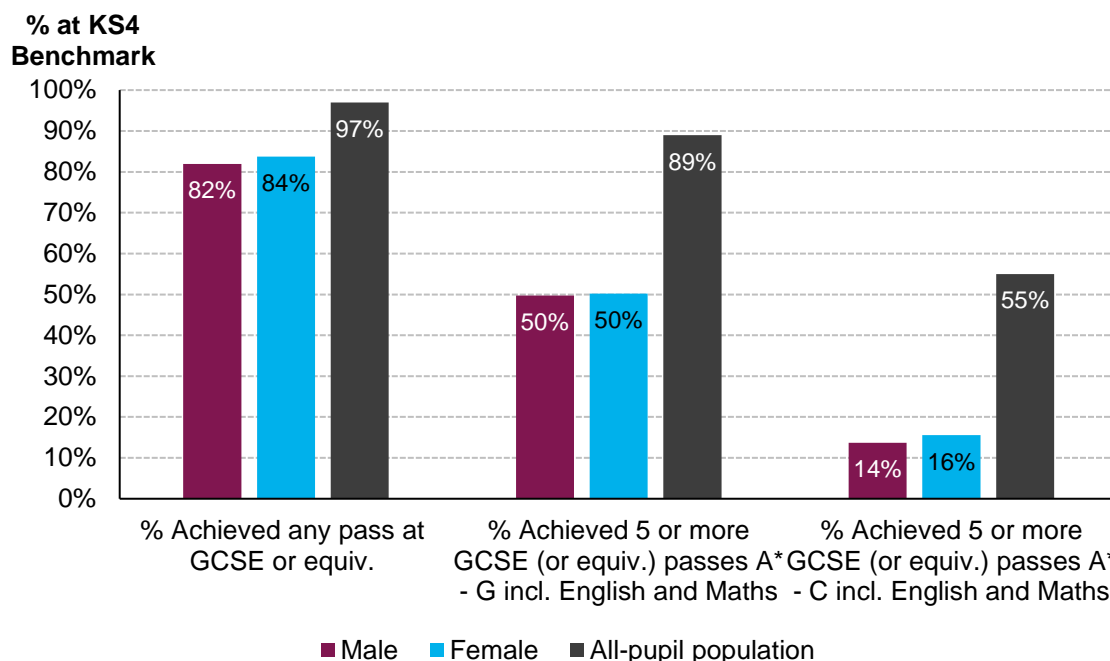
The wider attainment measure of 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to G, including English and Maths was achieved by a greater proportion of pupils (50% for both males and females). However, this was lower than the proportion of the all-pupil population achieving this attainment level (89%).

⁷³ Pupils who do not have a KS4 record are not included.

⁷⁴ All-pupil population totals refers to the wider student population who had a KS4 academic year of 2013/14 or 2014/15. The all-pupil population includes both young people who have been cautioned or sentenced for an offence, and those who have not. Offender numbers and pupil population figures quoted in this analysis may differ when analysing different education variables, since the information on these variables may not be recorded for all offenders and pupils.

⁷⁵ Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are typically aged 15 and 16.

Figure 7.04: Proportion of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence who matched to a Key Stage 4 attainment record in academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, and all-pupil population, by sex, in England



(Source: MoJ/DfE Data Share – Women in the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 7: Offender Characteristics – Table 7_03)

Pupil Characteristics

In this section, all analysis looks at those in the matched cohort of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence, who were eligible for Free School Meals⁷⁶ (FSM) and/or recorded as having Special Education Needs⁷⁷ (SEN), at any point during secondary school.

Free School Meals

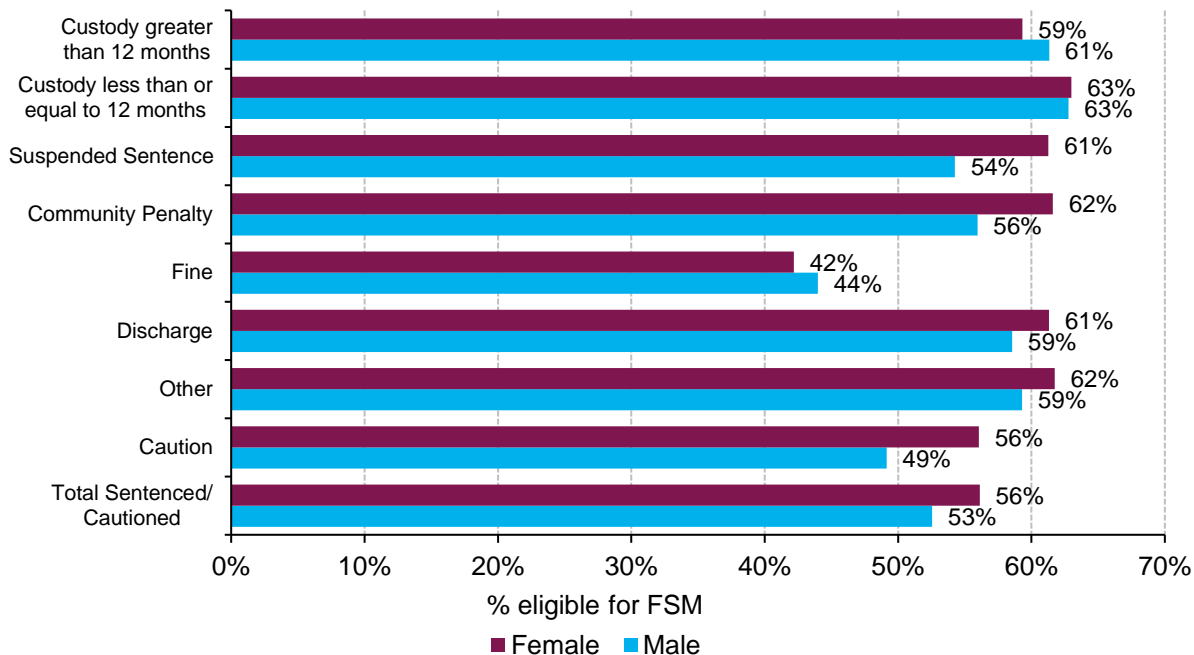
More than half of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence were eligible for FSM. This was slightly higher for females (56%) than for males (53%). This contrasts with the proportion of pupils in the all-pupil population where 24% were eligible for FSM.

The FSM eligibility of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence was higher for females across all disposal types except for fines and custody (less than or equal to 12 months), when compared to males. Figure 7.05 shows the greatest difference in FSM eligibility was for those who had received a suspended sentence or a caution with a 7-percentage point difference between males and females.

⁷⁶ A young person may be eligible to claim for FSM if they or their family meet certain criteria related to their income and benefits received.

⁷⁷ From 2014 Education, Health and Care plans were introduced. Under previous legislation pupils could be eligible for Statements of SEN. The period for local authorities to transfer children and young people with Statements of SEN to EHC plans started in September 2014 and ended on 31 March 2018. For the purposes of this analysis, 'EHC plan' will be used to describe both Statements of SEN and EHC plans unless stated otherwise in the particular context.

Figure 7.05: Proportion of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence matched to a Key Stage 4 academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, known to be eligible for free school meals, by sex and disposal type, in England



(Source: MoJ/DfE Data Share – Women in the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 7: Offender Characteristics – Table 7_04)

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

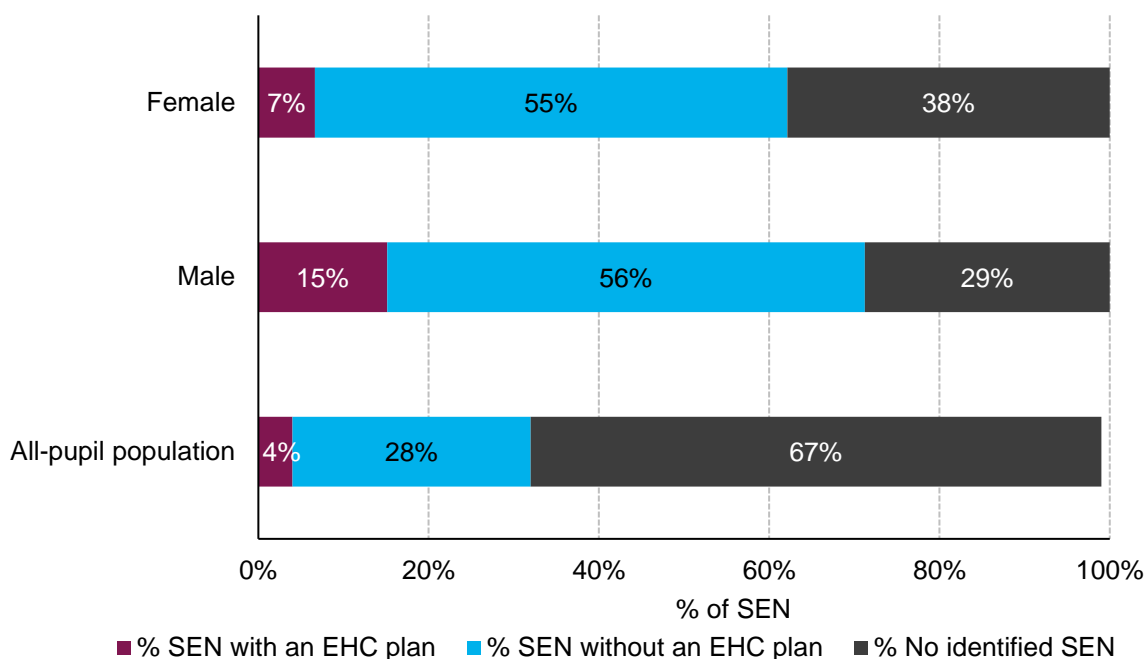
Of the young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence, a greater proportion of males were recorded as having SEN with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan⁷⁸ (15%) compared to females (7%). This was higher than the proportion of the all-pupil population who were recorded as having SEN with a EHC plan (4%).

Overall, more than half of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence had been recorded as having SEN support⁷⁹, 55% and 56% for females and males respectively. Across the disposal types, the greatest difference was among those in receipt of a fine, where 52% of males were recorded as having SEN support, compared with 44% of females.

⁷⁸ An EHC plan is a document which sets out a child's SEN and any additional help that the child should receive. A local authority may issue an Education, health and care plan for a pupil who needs more support than is available through SEN support. This will follow a statutory assessment process whereby the local authority considers the pupil's special educational needs and any relevant health and social care needs; sets out long term outcomes; and specifies provision which will deliver additional support to meet those needs.

⁷⁹ SEN support means support that is additional to, or different from, the support generally made for other children of the same age in a school. It is provided for pupils who are identified as having a learning difficulty or a disability that requires extra or different help to that normally provided as part of the school's usual curriculum offer. A pupil on SEN support will not have an EHC plan. SEN support replaces school action and school action plus, but some pupils remain with these provision types in first year of transition. More detailed information on the reforms can be found at the following: SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years.

Figure 7.06: Proportion of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence matched to a Key Stage 4 academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, and all-pupil population, with Special Educational Needs, by sex, in England⁸⁰



(Source: MoJ/DfE Data Share – Women in the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 7: Offender Characteristics – Table 7_04)

Persistent absence and exclusion

The matched cohort data also provided information on the proportion of those cautioned or sentenced for an offence that had a history of being persistently absent⁸¹ from school at any point during secondary school, had a previous record of being permanently excluded⁸² from school at any point during primary or secondary school, or had received a suspension⁸³ from school, at any point during primary or secondary school.

Persistent absence

Of those young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence, a greater proportion of females had been persistently absent (82%) than males (75%). The proportion of females persistently absent was higher across every disposal type compared to males. The greatest difference was for those dealt with by a community penalty (88% of females compared with 78% of males).

Exclusions

A larger proportion of males cautioned or sentenced for an offence received either a suspension (71%), or a permanent exclusion (11%) compared with females (62% suspension and 8% permanent exclusion). The largest difference for suspensions was between those who were dealt with by a fine. Among males in receipt of a fine, 61% had at some point received a suspension, compared with 44% of females, a 17-percentage point difference.

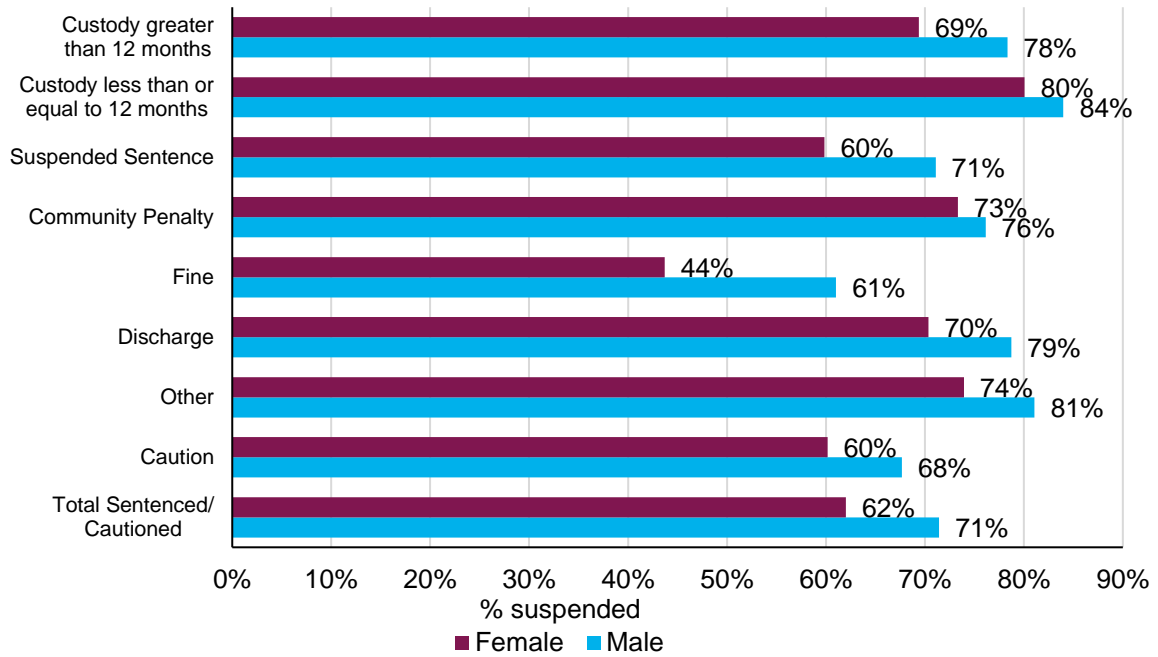
⁸⁰ Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

⁸¹ Persistent absence is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions.

⁸² A permanent exclusion refers to a pupil who is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned).

⁸³ Suspension refers to a pupil who is excluded from a school for a set period of time. Being suspended can involve a part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous period. A pupil may be excluded for one or more suspensions up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. This total includes exclusions from previous schools covered by the exclusion legislation.

Figure 7.07: Proportion of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence matched to a Key Stage 4 academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, with a record of suspension, by sex and disposal type, in England



(Source: MoJ/DfE Data Share – Women in the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 7: Offender Characteristics – Table 7_07)

8. Offence Analysis

TV licence evasion was the offence with the highest proportion of female defendants in 2023.

In 2023, 74% of those prosecuted for TV licence evasion were female. This offence accounted for 12% of all female prosecutions.

Theft from shops was the most common indictable offence for female defendants in 2023.

Theft from shops accounted for 27% of all female prosecutions for indictable offences, compared to 12% for males.

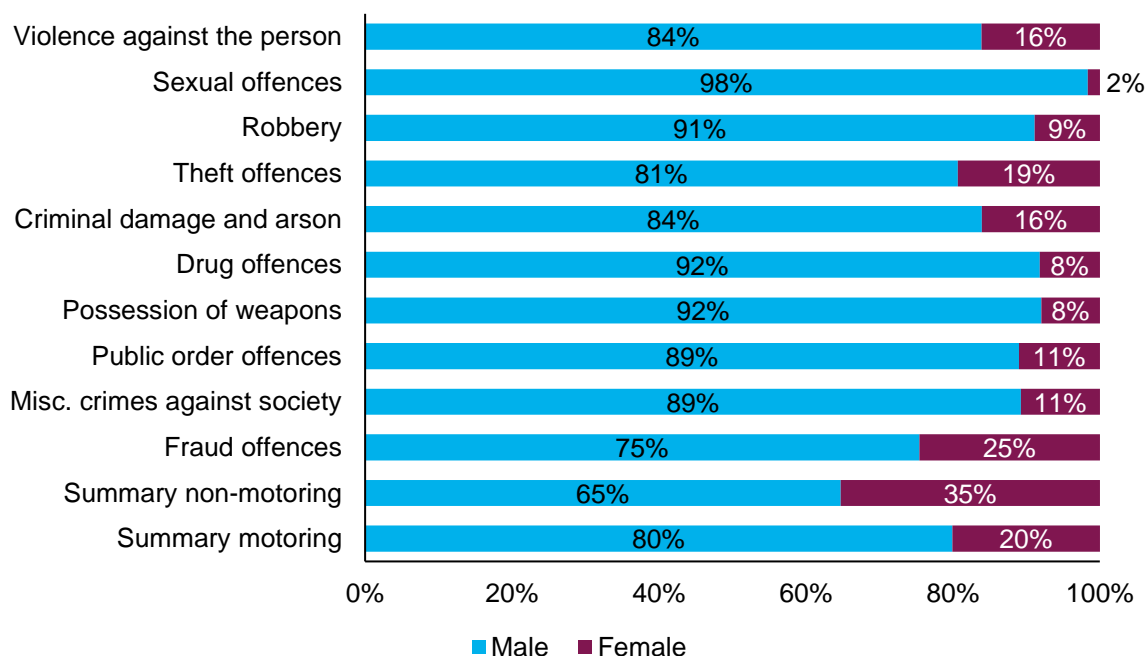
This chapter looks at the most common principal offences for which females are dealt with by the Criminal Justice System, in comparison to males⁸⁴. It further investigates the proportions of females and males contributing to the total prosecutions for different offence groups. All data presented in this chapter is from the [Criminal Justice System statistics: December 2023](#).

Comparisons across females and males do not account for previous offending history, detailed offence mix and other offender characteristics and that should be considered when interpreting results in this section.

Sex proportions across offence groups

As discussed in Chapter 5: Defendants, in 2023, 22% of individuals prosecuted in England and Wales are female, where sex is known⁸⁵. This varies by offence type, females account for higher proportion for summary offences (25% of 740,000) than indictable offences (13% of 223,000), where sex is known. Similar proportions are seen in convictions.

Figure 8.01: The proportion of male and female offenders prosecuted for each offence group, 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

⁸⁴ Where sex is known. Excludes companies, public bodies etc.

⁸⁵ There were 23% prosecutions in 2023 with sex not known.

The offence groups with the highest proportion of females prosecuted are summary non-motoring (35%), followed by fraud offences (25%), summary motoring (20%), theft offences (19%) and violence against the person (16%).

Changes in prosecutions

Prosecutions for summary offences have decreased by 24% since 2019 (974,000 to 740,000) and by 3% (766,000 to 740,000) when compared to 2022⁸⁶. However, this decrease has not been consistent. Year 2020 saw a sharp fall in prosecutions due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the courts response to it, followed by increases in prosecutions in 2021 and 2022.

Prosecutions for summary offences for females have decreased by 37% (288,000 to 182,000) since 2019 and by 2% (186,000 to 182,000) compared to 2022, while prosecutions for summary offences for males have decreased by 19% (686,000 to 558,000) since 2019 and by 4% (581,000 to 558,000) compared to 2022.

Female prosecutions for summary non-motoring offences showed a decrease of 51% since 2019 (157,000 to 77,000), compared to 33% decrease for males (211,000 to 141,000). Summary non-motoring offences saw an increase for both females, by 2% (75,700 to 77,000) and males, by 5% (135,000 to 141,000) in the latest year. Accordingly, summary non-motoring offences overall (where sex is known)⁸⁷ decreased by 41% compared to 2019 (368,000 to 218,000) and increased by 4% compared to 2022 (211,000 to 218,000).

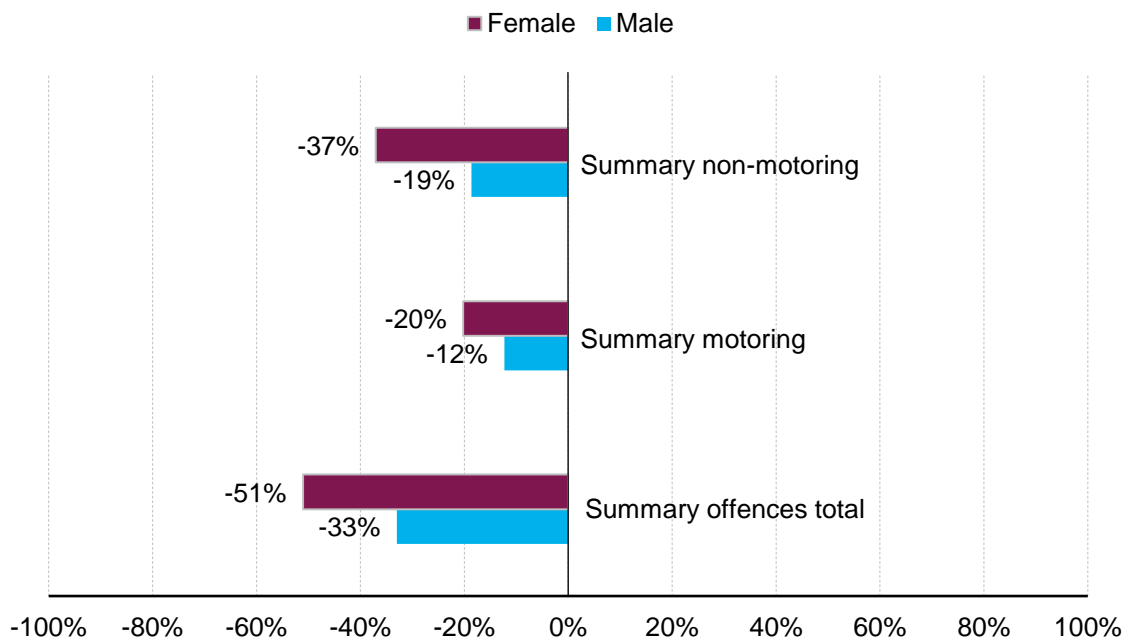
Female prosecutions for summary motoring offences decreased by 20% since 2019 (131,000 to 105,000), compared to 12% decrease for males (475,000 to 417,000). In the last year, prosecutions for summary motoring offences for females decreased by 5% (111,000 to 105,000) and by 6% for males (446,000 to 417,000). Consequently, summary motoring offences overall⁸⁸ decreased by 14% compared to 2019 (606,000 to 521,000) and by 6% compared to 2022 (556,000 to 521,000).

⁸⁶ There were 12% in 2019, 20% in 2022 and 27% in 2023 summary offence prosecutions with sex not known.

⁸⁷ There were 10% in 2019, 25% in 2022 and 27% in 2023 summary non-motoring offence prosecutions with sex not known.

⁸⁸ There were 12% in 2019, 18% in 2022 and 27% in 2023 summary motoring offence prosecutions with sex not known.

Figure 8.02: Change in prosecutions for summary offences, by offence group, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



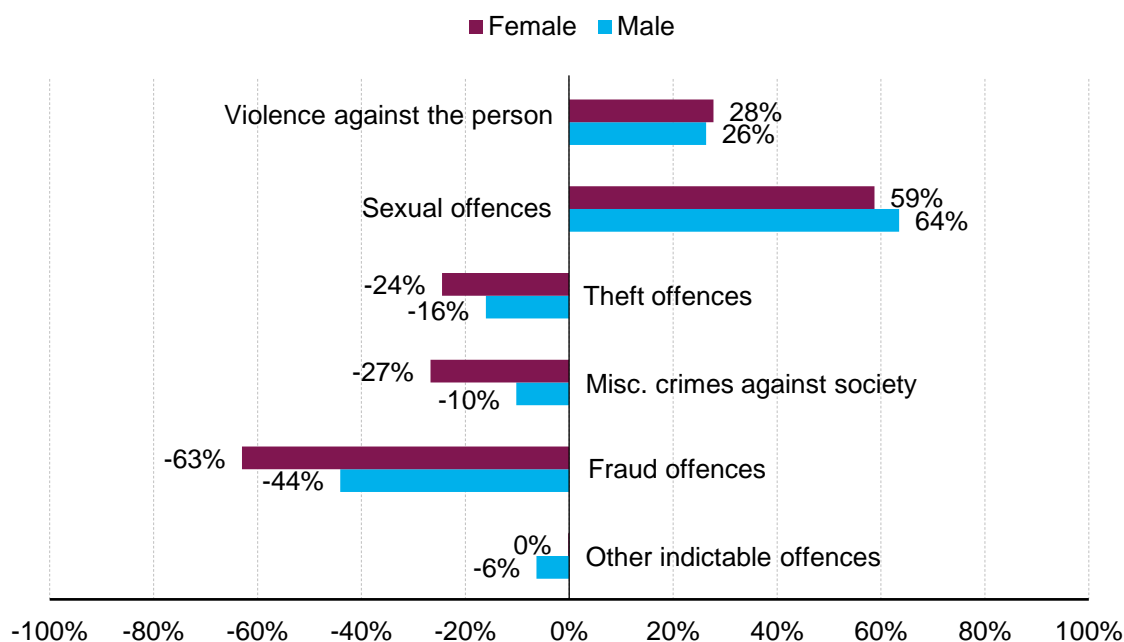
(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Prosecutions for indictable offences⁸⁹ have decreased by 3% since 2019 (229,000 to 223,000) and increased by 14% (196,000 to 223,000) when compared to 2022. Similarly, prosecutions for indictable offences for females have decreased by 11% (33,000 to 29,500) since 2019 and increased by 17% (25,300 to 29,500) compared to the latest year, while prosecutions for indictable offences for males have decreased by 1% (196,000 to 194,000) since 2019 and increased by 13% (171,000 to 194,000) compared to 2022.

There was a notable decrease (63%) in the number of fraud prosecutions for females compared to 2019 (2,400 to 883). This is mainly driven by benefit fraud offences and fraud by false representation offences. By contrast, violence against the person (28%, 7,100 to 9,000) is the offence group with the highest increase in the number of prosecutions for females since 2019, which is mainly driven by the assault of an emergency worker offence.

⁸⁹ There were 3% in 2019, 4% in 2022 and 4% in 2023 indictable offence prosecutions with sex not known.

Figure 8.03: Change in prosecutions for indictable offences, by offence group, 2019 to 2023, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2023 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Offence groups

The offence groups identified above will form the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Summary non-motoring offences

Summary non-motoring offences accounted for 36% (77,000) of all 211,000 prosecutions for females in 2023, compared to 19% (141,000) of all 752,000 prosecutions for males. The main driver of this for females is television licence evasion, which accounted for 32% of all female prosecutions for summary non-motoring offences, compared to 6% for males.

74% of the 33,800 prosecutions for television licence evasion are for females, compared to 26% for males. Of all offences with 50 or more prosecutions, television licence evasion has the highest proportion of females. Similar proportions are seen for convictions. A contributing factor is the greater availability of females when an enforcement officer visits the home⁹⁰.

The other summary non-motoring offence with a large number of prosecutions and a higher proportion of females than males is truancy, with females accounting for 66% of the 17,800 prosecutions for this offence, compared to males accounting for 34%. Similar proportions are seen for convictions.

Fines are the most common outcome, accounting for 89% of sentences for females for summary non-motoring offences and 76% for males.

⁹⁰ If enforcement officers suspect a household of watching or recording live TV without a valid licence and are not able to contact anyone at the property by letter or by telephone, they visit the household in person.

Summary motoring offences

Summary motoring offences is the most common offence group, accounting for 50% (104,600) of all 211,000 prosecutions for females in 2023. This is also the most common offence group for males, accounting for 55% (417,000) of all 752,000 male prosecutions. Speed limit offences specifically are the most common offence within the offence group, accounting for 48% of all female prosecutions for summary motoring offences and 38% for males.

24% of the 208,000 prosecutions for speed limit offences are for females, compared to 76% for males. Of all offences with 50 or more prosecutions, speed limit offences have the highest proportion of females within the summary motoring offences. Similar proportions are seen for convictions.

Fines are by far the most common outcome, accounting for 96% of sentencing outcomes for females for summary motoring offences and 94% for males.

Fraud offences

Despite fraud being the offence group with the second highest female proportion of prosecutions (25%, 880 of 3,600), fraud offences account for less than 1% of all female prosecutions and 3% of female prosecutions for indictable offences. Benefit fraud offence is the only specific offence within the group to have a higher proportion of females compared to males (56% of 112).

Fraud by false representation: cheque, plastic card and online bank accounts, was the highest contributing offence within the group, accounting for 68% of female prosecutions for fraud offences, compared to 75% for males.

Suspended sentenced are the most common outcome, accounting for 35% of sentences given to females for fraud offences, compared to 25% for males. Furthermore, males receive most commonly immediate custody (32%) for fraud offences, compared to 18% for females. The average custodial sentence length for females at 20.6 months is lower than for males at 23.0 months in 2023.

Theft offences

Theft offences account for 5% of all female prosecutions and 34% of female prosecutions for indictable offences in 2023. Hence, theft offences are the most common indictable offence group in indictable prosecutions for females. This is mainly driven by theft from shops, which is the most common indictable offence for female defendants in 2023 (27%, 7,906 of 29,500) as well as male defendants (12%, 22,600 of 193,500). This offence accounts for 80% of female prosecutions for theft offences, compared to 54% for males.

Community sentences are the most common outcome for females, accounting for 29% of sentences given for theft offences, compared to 22% for males. Males received immediate custody most frequently, accounting for 37% of sentences for theft offences, compared to 20% for females. The average custodial sentence length for females at 4.4 months is lower than for males at 9.7 months in 2023.

Violence against the person offences

Violence against the person was the second most common indictable offence group for females and the most common indictable offence group for males, accounting for 31% of female prosecutions for indictable offences in 2023, compared to 24% for males.

This is mainly driven by the assault of an emergency worker offence. This offence accounts for 52% of the 9,000 female prosecutions for violence against the person, compared to 22% of the 47,000 for males. Assault of an emergency worker was the second most common indictable offence for females after theft from shops,

accounting for 16% (4,700 of 29,500) of female prosecutions for indictable offences, compared to 5% (10,400 of 193,500) for males.

Assault occasioning actual bodily harm is the other violence against the person offence to note, accounting for 14% of female prosecutions for violence against the person, compared to 22% of male prosecutions.

Community sentences are the most common outcome for females, accounting for 39% of sentences given for violence against the person offences, compared to 23% for males. Males received immediate custody most frequently, accounting for 41% of sentences, compared to 15% for females. The average custodial sentence length for females at 17.1 months is lower than for males at 22.2 months in 2023.

9. Practitioners

Over the last 5 years, there have been increases in female representation across almost all CJS organisations and in the proportion of senior staff

The largest increase in female representation was seen in HMPPS staff, from 49% in 2020 to 55% in 2024.

This chapter reports on the trends in the composition of staff and practitioners throughout the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by sex. It draws upon published extracts of human resources records for the [police](#) (2023/24), Ministry of Justice, [His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service](#) 2023/24, [magistracy and judiciary](#). To allow for variable changes in headcount throughout the period considered, the sexes are best considered in terms of proportions of staff rather than absolute numbers.

Trends in CJS organisations

*Ministry of Justice*⁹¹: Female representation has remained broadly similar between 2019 and 2023, with a slight decrease from 67% in 2019 to 66% in 2023.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS): The percentage of female practitioners increased from 66% in 2019 to 68% in 2023. CPS was the organisation with the highest female representativity in the most recent data across the CJS organisations.

Police officers: The proportion of female practitioners increased from 30% in 2019 to 35% in 2023. This was the lowest proportion of female staff across the CJS organisations⁹².

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS): There was an increase in female representation across HMPPS as whole, from 49% in 2020 to 55% in 2024, representing the largest increase in the proportion of female staff across the CJS organisations across the latest 5 years. This differs between functions, with the Prison Service (including Youth Custody Service) having a lower proportion of females (rising from 39% in 2020 to 42% in 2024) when compared to the HMPPS HQ (and Area Services), and the probation service, which females represented 64% and 76% of respectively in 2024.

Judiciary: Female representation among court judges increased from 32% in 2020 to 38% in 2024. Across the same time period, female representation among all tribunal judges increased from 47% to 53%. Across all judges (court and tribunals), female representation increased from 38% in 2020 to 43% in 2024⁹³.

Magistrates: Serving Magistrates' presented a higher proportion of female practitioners, increasing slightly from 56% female staff in 2020 compared to 57% in 2024⁹⁴.

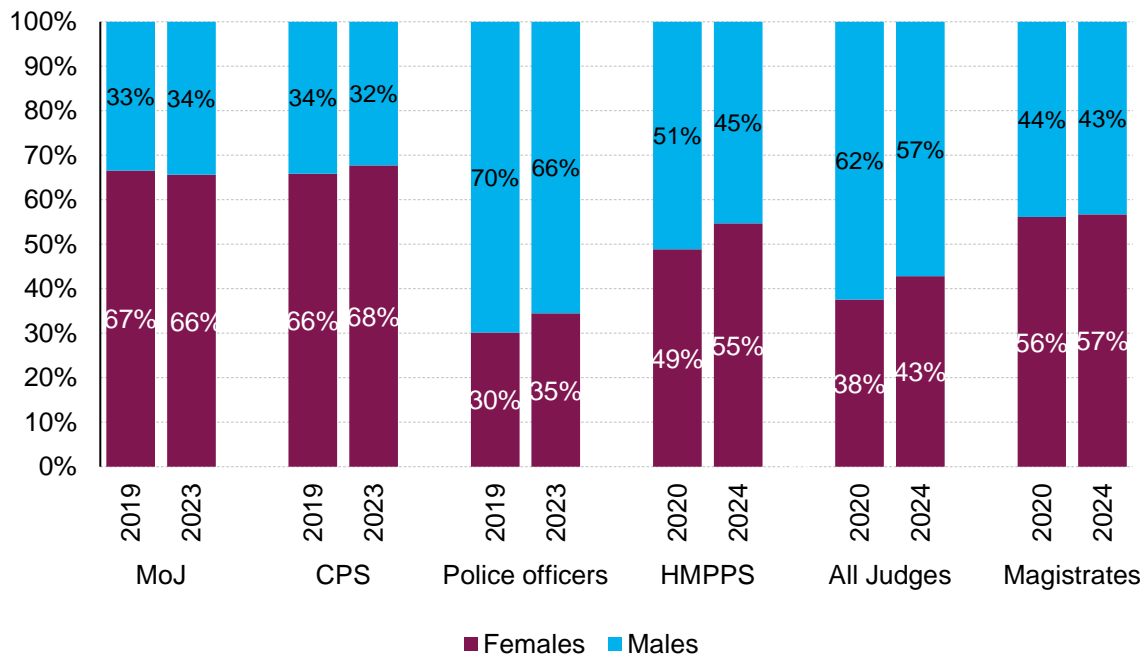
⁹¹ Includes: MoJ HQ, HMCTS, OPG, LAA and CICA, and excludes HMPPS

⁹² Figures relate to full-time equivalent police officers in post. Further information on additional workforce roles within the police can be found in the open data tables and associated bulletin can be found in the [Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2023](#) publication.

⁹³ Self-declared from HR records, as at 1 April 2022. Reported in table '3_4_JO_Trends' in the [Judicial Diversity Statistics](#) 2022 publication. See the Judicial Diversity Statistics publication for further information about non-legal members.

⁹⁴ Self-declared from HR records, for serving magistrates, as at 1 April 2022. Reported in table '3_5_JO_Magistrates' in the [Judicial Diversity Statistics](#) 2022 and 2018 publications.

Figure 9.01: Proportion of practitioners in organisations involved in the CJS of each sex, by organisation, most recent year available⁹⁵ and five years prior, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 9: Practitioners – 9.01b, 9.03b, 9.05b, 9.10 and Diversity of the judiciary [2020 and 2024])

Trends in senior staff and practitioners⁹⁶

Caution should be taken when considering the sex breakdown of senior staff because the number of individuals represented is small and changing a single case could have a noticeable effect.

In the most recent year, CPS and MoJ had the highest proportions of senior staff who were female at 57% and 56%, respectively. These were the only organisations where the representation of females in senior positions was higher than that of males.

Senior court judges (High Court and above) increased their female representation from 26% in 2020 to 30% in 2024, while female senior police officers increased from 27% to 30% over the same period. Contrarily, HMPPS⁹⁷ have seen a slight decrease in female representation of senior staff, from 45% in 2020 to 44% in 2024.

⁹⁵ Latest data available depending on whether snapshot is based on calendar year (CPS data) or financial year (all other sources).

⁹⁶ Senior roles are as follows:

CPS: Senior Legal Manager and Senior Civil Servant; **MoJ:** Senior Civil Servant; **HMPPS:** Senior Civil Servant; **Police:** Chief Inspector, Superintendent, Chief Superintendent, and Chief Officers; **Judiciary:** High Court Judges, Heads of Division and Lord Justices of Appeal.

⁹⁷ Excluding Probation Service staff.

10. Dashboard

A [web-based data visualisation tool](#) has been created alongside the report this year, allowing users to view and customise charts based on the published statistics. This dashboard should be seen as a prototype, and we hope to continue to develop it for future iterations if there is significant interest. The dashboard should be used as way to discover the data available from the Criminal Justice System and be used a launching point for further investigation. The production team are looking to focus more on the dashboard and reduce commentary within the WCJS bulletin in the future in order to maximise the experience of our users and flexibility of analysis. Feedback on this proposal is welcomed.

Further information



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.

Contacts

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: newsdesk@justice.gov.uk

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Data and Evidence as a Service division of the Ministry of Justice:

Criminal Courts and Sentencing Data and Statistics

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

Email: CJS_Statistics@justice.gov.uk

General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from: <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system>

Feedback

The structure and content of this report is continually being reviewed to reflect user requirements. If you have any feedback about the changes referred to in the introduction, or the report more generally, please contact the production team through the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

Email: CJS_Statistics@justice.gov.uk

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