



Exploratory Analysis of Proven Reoffending Rates by Follow-Up Period

Summary

The proven reoffending statistics publication provides data on a quarterly basis on proven reoffending rates. A proven reoffence is defined as any offence committed in a one-year follow-up period that leads to a court conviction, caution, reprimand, or warning, allowing a further six-month waiting period for the offence to be proven in court.

This analysis presents the proven reoffending rates for varying follow-up periods, using three months and six months, and one, two, three, four, five, six and seven years. The extra six-month waiting period is kept the same for each follow-up period and uses the same methodology as the one-year follow-up period used in the official publication. The analysis uses the cohort of offenders from April 2016 to March 2017, to provide data on reoffences up to 2024.

The [2010 Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis](#) included the reconviction rates using varying follow-up periods up to nine years. This analysis was also replicated in the [2012 Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis](#) using follow-up periods up to nine years. This analysis provides a further update to the follow-up period analysis, using the new measure for proven reoffending which has been included in publications since October 2017 (affecting offender cohorts since October 2015).

The results for this analysis show that using the 2016/17 cohort of offenders, 14.0% reoffended within 3 months, which increased to 29.4% after one year and increased to 53.2% after seven years.

Table 1: Proportion of offenders in the 2016/17 cohort of offenders who reoffended (reoffending rate) across varying follow-up periods up to seven years (Table A1)

Follow-up period	Reoffending rate (%)	Adult reoffending rate (%)	Child reoffending rate (%)
Three Months	14.0	13.7	18.3
Six Months	21.0	20.4	28.6
One Year	29.4	28.6	41.0
Two Years	38.6	37.5	52.6
Three Years	43.7	42.5	59.1
Four Years	47.1	45.9	63.2
Five Years	49.6	48.4	65.9
Six Years	51.6	50.4	67.9
Seven Years	53.2	52.0	69.4

The results within this report come from the supporting tables which provide the data in more depth.

Introduction

The aim of this report is to understand what happens to reoffending rates when the follow-up period is varied, and how it contributes to our understanding of reoffending patterns. The analysis also provides an update to the [2012 Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis](#), using the latest methodology. Currently, in the proven reoffending statistics publication, a one-year follow-up period is used as it captures a broad range of offences whilst allowing for timely reporting.

Short follow-up periods (less than 12 months) might provide quicker insights into the impact of interventions, however they may not accurately reflect reoffending events which occur over a longer timeframe and are heavily influenced by the pace of police and court processing. Shorter follow-up periods will also over-represent prolific offenders. Longer follow-up periods allow for a wider picture of reoffending, especially in cases which may take longer to be proven in court, however the reporting is much less timely.

Throughout the report, any reference to a follow-up period includes the additional 6-month waiting period for the offence to be proven, which has been kept the same across all of the varying follow-up periods.

Please note that caution should be used when comparing figures in this report. This report covers periods that overlap with Covid-related lockdowns, court closures, and other operational restrictions, as well as post-pandemic periods that were affected by the continued recovery of the courts system, particularly around continued delays in the processing of court cases. The 2022 Criminal Bar Association strike will also have had an impact on the progression of cases through the courts.

For this analysis, some data for the three-year follow-up period is affected by lockdowns and court closures, primarily within the six-month waiting period. Data for the four-year follow-up period onwards is subsequently impacted by either lockdowns, operational restrictions, or the ongoing recovery of the courts system.

Methodology

The methodology used within this analysis follows that of the current methodology for the proven reoffending statistics publication, with the addition of varying the follow-up periods. For more detail, please see the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#).

In the proven reoffending statistics publication, an offender will enter the cohort of offenders if they were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, or received a caution in a given three-month period. A proven reoffence is then defined as any offence committed by an offender in the cohort within a one-year follow up period that resulted in a court conviction or caution in this time frame, or a further six-month waiting period to allow time for cases to progress through the courts.

In this analysis, the one-year follow-up period is varied (whereas the six-month waiting period remains the same for each follow-up period) to provide reoffending rates over different time periods.

The measures used follow that of the [Proven reoffending quarterly statistics](#). This includes:

- Reoffending rate (the proportion of offenders who reoffend (%))
- Average number of reoffences per reoffender
- Average number of previous offences per offender

The 2016/17 cohort (1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017) is used as this is the first full performance year since the change in data source which affected the cohorts from October 2015 onwards.

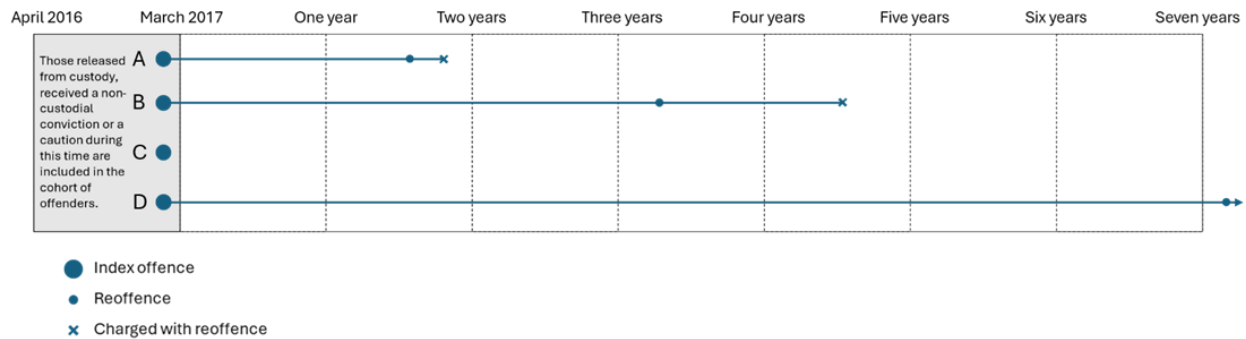
Proven reoffending statistics are reported with a lag between the dates of the reported cohort, and when the reoffending data for that cohort is published. This is because the time needed for the reoffences to occur, for the reoffences to be proven in court, for the data to be uploaded to the systems and for quality assurance must be accounted for. This means, at the time of writing, there were seven full performance years in which reoffending rates can be calculated.

It should be noted that the statistics for the cohort in this report for the one-year follow-up period will not match data previously reported in published reoffending statistics, as a different snapshot of the Police National Computer (PNC) is used, meaning data has been updated and revised since it was first made available.

Additionally, the results from this analysis are not directly comparable to those produced in the 2010 and 2012 compendiums due to differences in methodology and data sources. The [2010 compendium](#) used an old measure, which looked at only those starting a community sentence, or who were discharged from custody. The [2012 compendium](#) used a wider group of offenders but was based on a 12-month cohort (while the current methodology uses a 3-month cohort). Additionally, both compendiums were based on an old data source that was changed for October 2015 data onwards, following probation service reforms. More details of the changes can be found in "[How the measure of proven reoffending has changed and the effect of these changes](#)".

Within this analysis, the number of offenders, reoffenders and reoffences are calculated by quarter, and are aggregated to provide data for a whole year. Therefore, a single offender may be included multiple times if they offended in more than one quarter.

Figure 1: How cases of reoffending are included in the rates for each follow-up period



To note: Reoffences are measured on an individual basis, e.g., for a one year follow-up period, an offender who is released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction, or a caution on the 30th March 2016 will be counted as a reoffence if they reoffend by the 30th March 2017 and are charged within a year and six months of the 30th March 2016, so by the 30th September 2017.

Figure 1 above depicts different offender outcomes:

- Offender A commits another offence within two years of their index offence and is charged within two years and six months of their index offence so is counted as a reoffender for the two-year follow-up.
- Offender B commits another offence within four years of their index offence, but the charge for the reoffence occurs at four years and seven months after the index offence. As this is more than four years and six months, it is not counted as a reoffence for the four-year follow-up period, but is counted as a reoffence for the five-year follow-up period since the reoffence occurred within five years and the charge occurred within five years and six months.
- Offender C does not reoffend, so they will only be recorded as an offender.
- Offender D reoffends after the end of the seven-year follow-up period, so the reoffence will not be recorded and therefore offender D will only be recorded as an offender.

Due to the nature of how the follow-up periods are measured, the number of reoffenders and proven reoffences for each follow-up period will include the number from that period and previous periods, i.e., the reported numbers are cumulative, if a reoffence occurs within the first year and charged within a year an 18-month window, then it will be included in all the subsequent follow-up periods (e.g. 1 year, 2 year, etc.).

The results in this report and in the supporting table provide breakdowns similar to those used in the publication.

Results

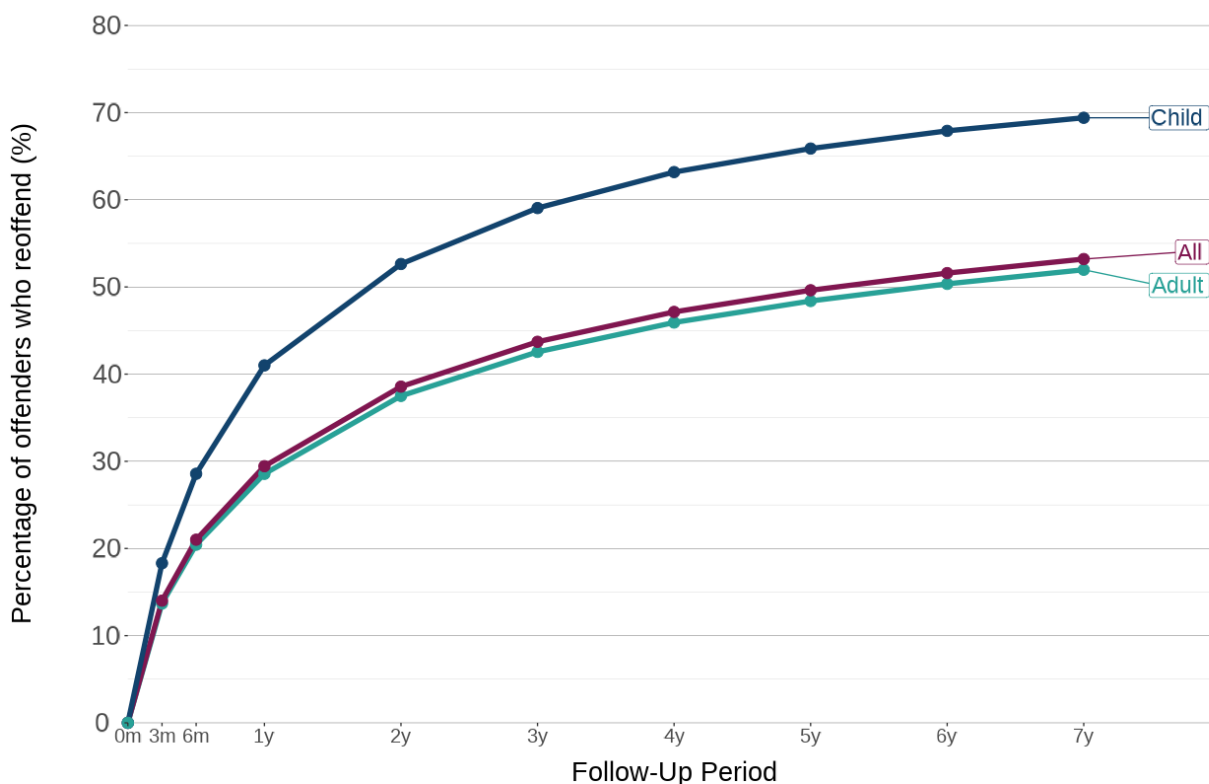
Reoffending Rates

After a one-year follow-up period, the overall proven reoffending rate was 29.4% for offenders released from custody, starting a non-custodial conviction, or a caution in 2016/17. This increased from 14.0% at a three-month follow-up period. After seven years, the reoffending rate was 53.2%.

For adults, over half (55.0%) of those who reoffended by the end of the seven years had reoffended in the first year. The rate of reoffending for adults increased from 13.7% after three months, to 28.6% after one year, to 52.0% after seven years.

The child cohort makes up only 7.0% of the overall cohort, therefore the results are open to more volatility. For the child cohort, 59.1% of those who reoffended by the end of the seven-year follow-up period had reoffended in the first year. The rate of reoffending for children increased from 18.3% after three months to 41.0% after one year, to 69.4% after seven years.

Figure 2: Percentage of overall, adult and child offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort of offenders who commit a proven reoffence by follow-up period (Table A1)



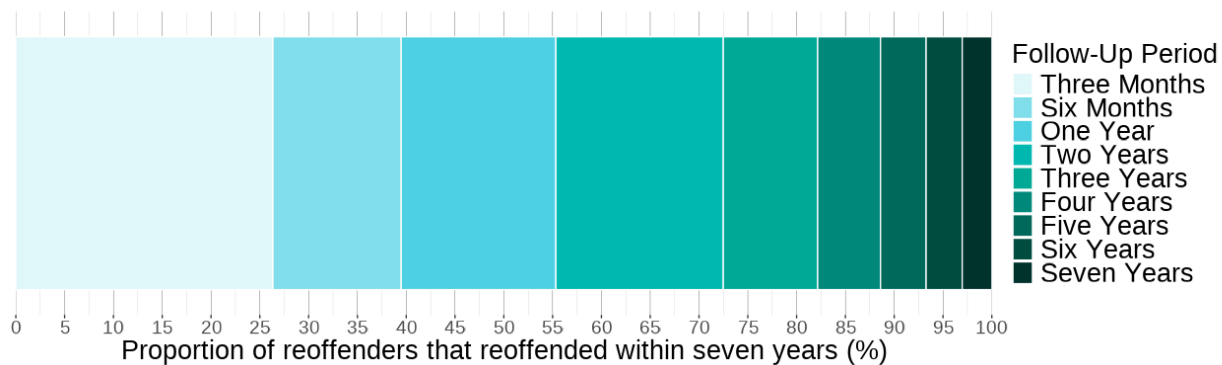
Whilst the rate of reoffending increases by a substantial amount at each follow-up period, especially in the first year, the size of the increase is smaller as each year passes past a two-year follow-up period. Table 2 below shows that the biggest difference in the rate of reoffending between consecutive follow-up periods is between the 0 to 3-month follow-up period, where the rate of reoffending increased to 14.0%. In comparison, between six and seven years, the rate of reoffending only increased by 1.6 percentage points.

Table 2: Percentage point increase in the rate of reoffending and number of reoffenders and reoffences across each follow-up period, and proportion of reoffenders that committed a proven reoffence within a seven-year period, by follow-up period (Table A1)

Follow-up period	Reoffenders	Reoffences	Reoffending Rate (%)	Percentage point increase from previous follow-up period
Three Months	67,025	168,248	14.0	N/A
Six Months	100,461	312,276	21.0	7.0
One Year	140,787	565,407	29.4	8.4
Two Years	184,436	986,757	38.6	9.1
Three Years	209,041	1,330,009	43.7	5.1
Four Years	225,423	1,601,730	47.1	3.4
Five Years	237,311	1,842,257	49.6	2.5
Six Years	246,723	2,070,935	51.6	2.0
Seven Years	254,424	2,302,148	53.2	1.6

Figure 3 shows that of the cohort of offenders who had reoffended by the end of the seven-year follow-up period, 26.3% of the reoffenders had reoffended within the first three months, and 39.5% of the reoffenders had reoffended within the first six months, with 55.3% of them reoffending within the first year.

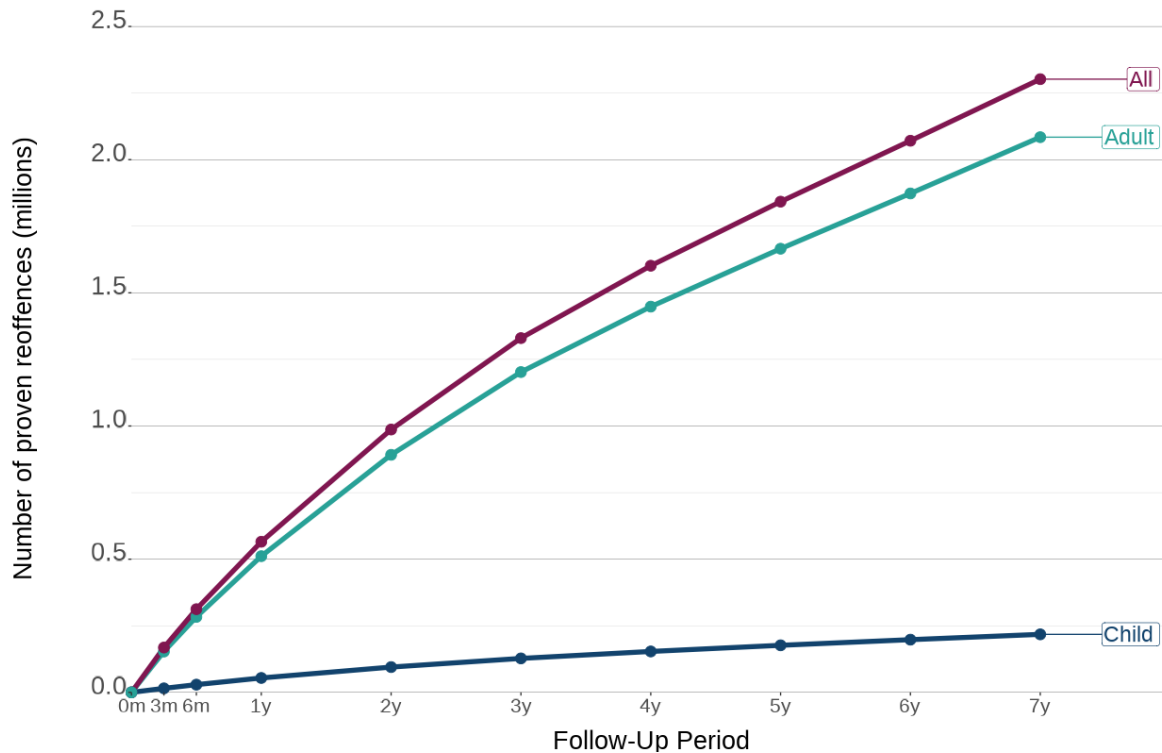
Figure 3: Proportion of reoffenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort of offenders that commit a proven reoffence within a seven-year period, by follow-up (Table A1)



Reoffences

For the overall cohort of April 2016 to March 2017, just over 2.3 million proven reoffences were committed by the end of the seven-year follow-up period.

Figure 4: Number of proven reoffences (millions) committed by the cohort of offenders from 2016/17 in England and Wales (Table A1)



The number of reoffences for children was much lower than that of adults as the cohort size for children is smaller (33,640 offenders) compared to that of adults (444,598 offenders). Although children tend to have higher reoffending rates compared to adults, and a slightly higher number of average reoffences per reoffender, their overall number of reoffences is much lower than adults, due to their much smaller cohort size.

Figure 5: Proportion of reoffences committed in England and Wales by the cohort of reoffenders from 2016/17 within a seven-year follow-up period by follow-up period (Table A1)

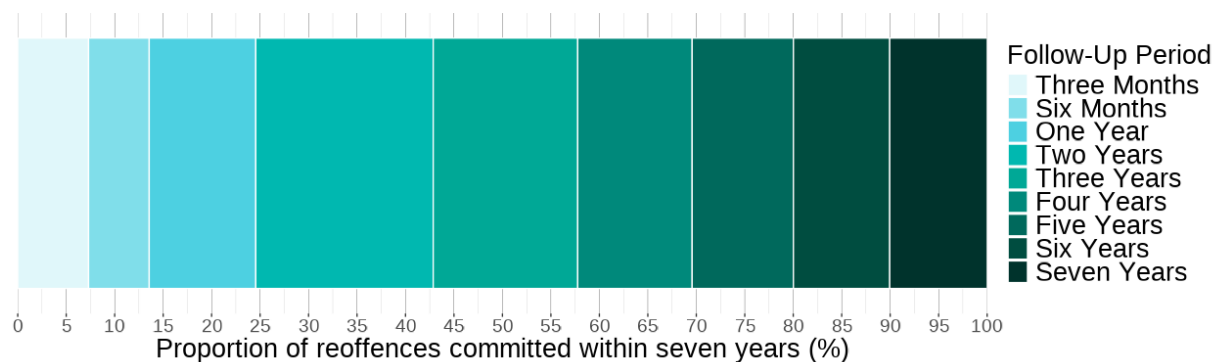
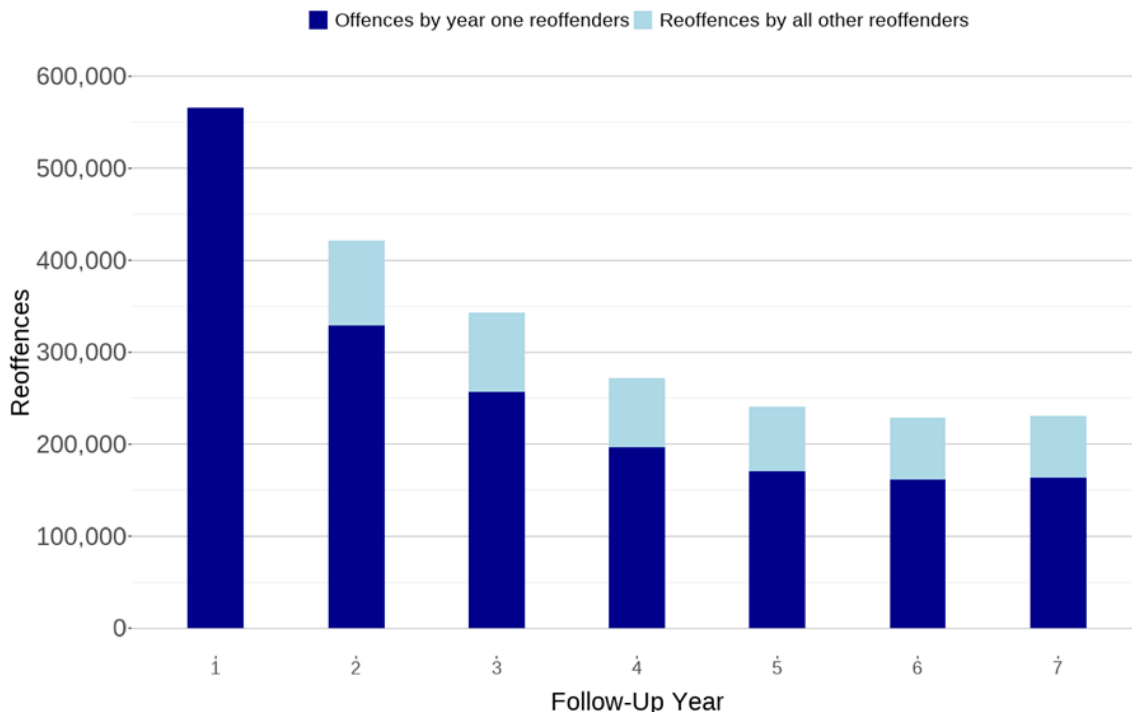


Figure 5 shows that 7.3% of total reoffences committed across the seven years were committed in the first three months, and 24.6% were committed within the first year. The instances of reoffences are fairly spread across the seven years in comparison to the proportion of reoffenders (Figure 4) which suggests that some individuals continue to reoffend across the time period and indicates that there are some individuals who are persistent reoffenders.

This is emphasised by Figure 6, which shows how many of the reoffences that occurred in each individual follow-up period were committed by offenders who had reoffended within the first year. Please note that data for three and six months are removed for this figure.

Figure 6: Number of proven reoffences committed in each of the follow-up periods by offenders who reoffended within the first year in England and Wales from the cohort of offenders from 2016/17 (Table B1)



Offenders who committed a reoffence within the first year went on to commit a large proportion of reoffences in subsequent follow-up years. This means that despite committing just under a quarter of the 2.3 million reoffences by the end of the first year, many offenders within this group then continued to reoffend and ended up committing 80.1% of all reoffences across the seven years.

Additionally, analysis across all reoffenders shows that a large proportion of the total number of reoffences were committed by a relatively small group of persistent reoffenders. Just 12% of reoffenders (30,750) committed 20 or more reoffences across the seven years; however, this group accounted for just under 1.1 million reoffences, representing 47.0% of all the proven reoffences across the seven years. (Further detail provided in Table B2 and B3 in the accompanying follow-up tables).

Average reoffences per reoffender

The average number of reoffences per reoffender increased from 2.51 after three months, to 4.02 after one year to 9.05 after seven years.

Figure 7: Average number of proven reoffences per reoffender in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort of offenders, by follow-up period (Table A1)

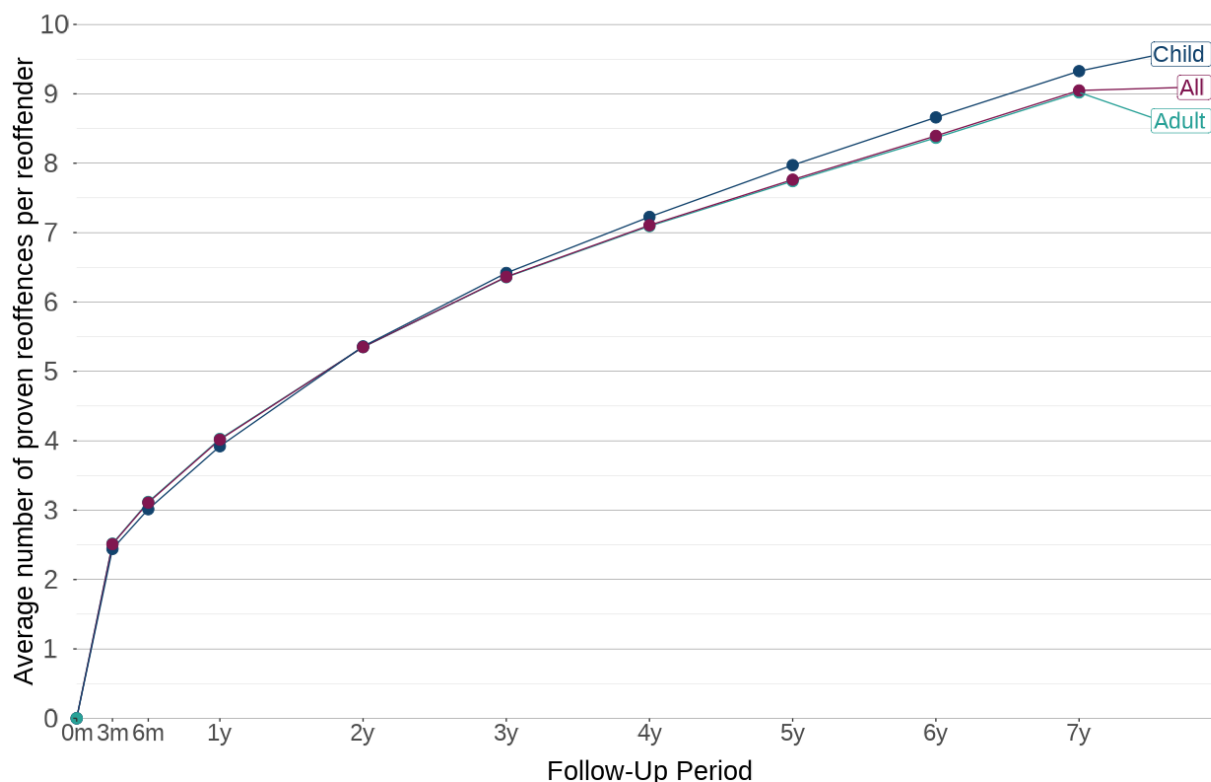


Figure 7 shows that the size of the increase in proven reoffences per reoffender was smaller with each consecutive follow-up period. However, it is important to note that no adjustment has been made for factors that may lead to a decline in the number of offences over time such as time in prison, death or migration. The pattern over time for the number of reoffences per reoffender was very similar between adults and children.

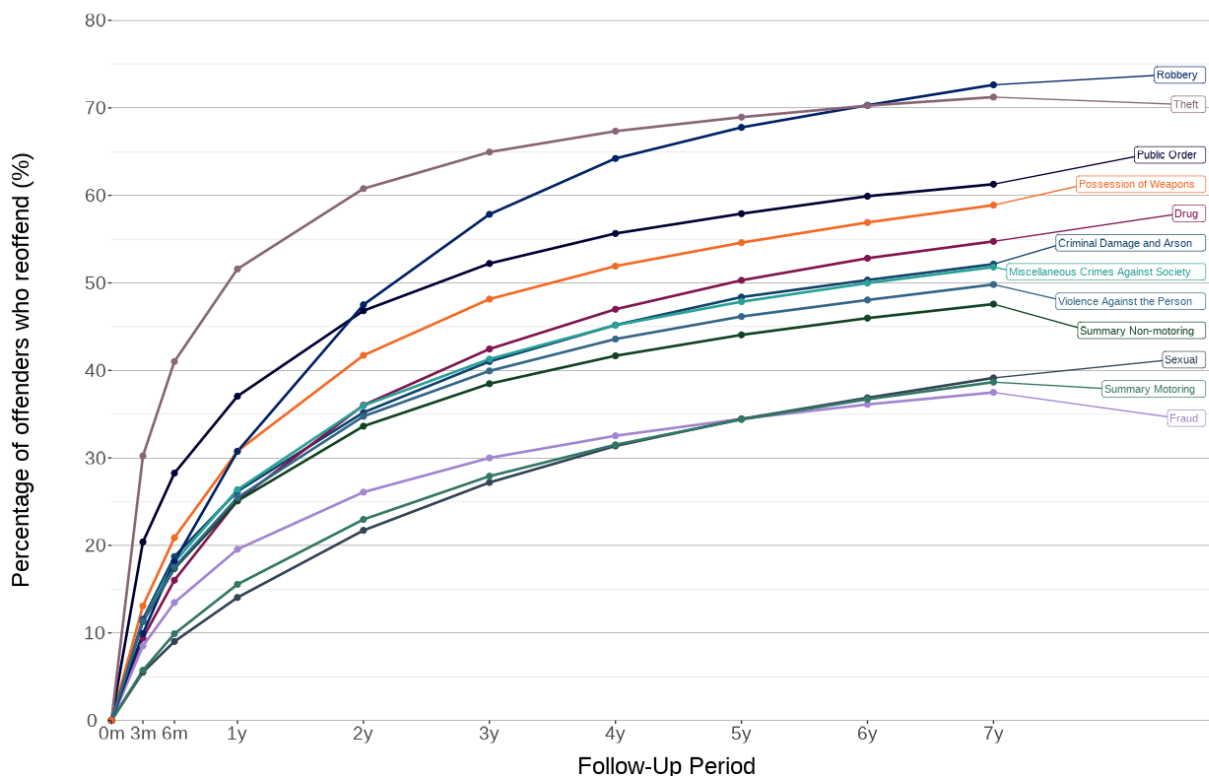
Index offence type

The index offence is the original offence that leads to an offender being included in the April 2016 to March 2017 cohort. More information on which offences can be counted as an index offence can be found in the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#). Please note that their reoffences could be in any category. Due to a slight database inconsistency, and to avoid misrepresentation since this category is a mix of offence types, the “other” offence category has been removed from the analysis and charts.

Adults

Figure 8 below shows that the majority of index offences show a similar growth pattern. However, the growth rate in reoffending for adults with an index offence of theft is more pronounced and increases more sharply over the first few years compared to other index offence categories.

Figure 8: Percentage of adult offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort who reoffend, by index offence type and follow-up period (Table A4a)



After seven years, the index offence with the highest reoffending rate for adults was robbery. After three months, 9.9% of adult offenders who had robbery as their index offence reoffended, which increased to 30.7% after one year and 72.6% after seven years. Of those with an index offence of robbery who reoffended by the end of the seven years, 42.3% had done so within one year.

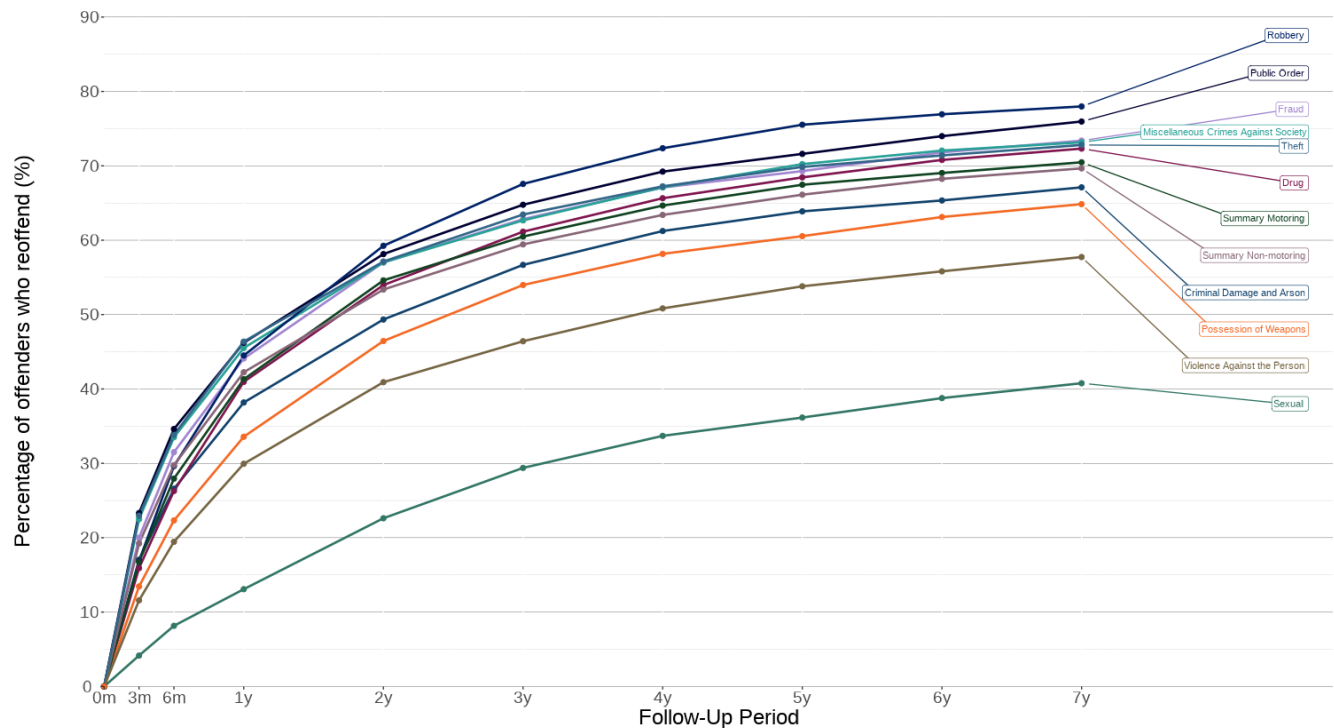
After seven years, the index offence with the lowest reoffending rate was fraud. After three months, 8.5% of adult offenders who had fraud as their index offence reoffended, which increased to 19.6% after one year and 37.5% after seven years. Of those with an index offence of fraud who reoffended by the end of the seven years, 52.2% had done so within one year.

Children

Child offenders have a smaller cohort size, therefore the rate of reoffending per index offence category for children is open to more volatility.

Figure 9 below shows that the majority of reoffending rates over time for index offences also show a similar growth pattern, with child offenders with an index offence of robbery having the highest rate of reoffending at the end of the seven years, and child offenders with an index offence of a sexual offence having the lowest rate of reoffending across all follow-up periods.

Figure 9: Percentage of child offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort who reoffend, by index offence type and follow-up period (Table A4b)



After three months, 16.9% of child offenders who had robbery as their index offence reoffended, which increased to 44.5% after one year, and to 78.0% after seven years. Of children with an index offence of robbery who reoffended by the end of the seven years, 57.1% had done so within the first year.

Index disposal

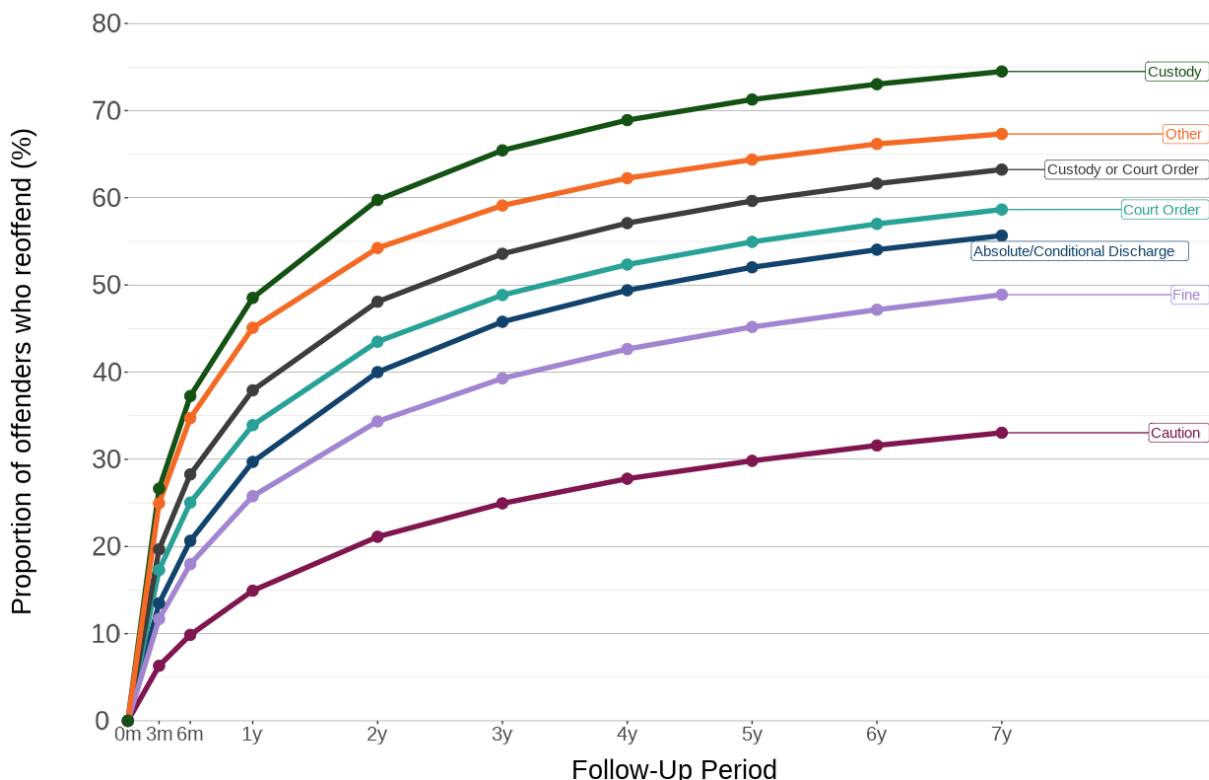
The index disposal of the offender is the type of sentence the offender received for their index offence.

Users should exercise caution when comparing the effectiveness of different sentence types because the presented rates do not control for differences in offender characteristics receiving those sentences. For further information, please consult research from 2019 on the [impact of short custodial sentences, community orders and suspended sentence orders on reoffending](#) as well as the [guide to proven reoffending statistics](#)

Adults

As shown in Figure 10 below, for adult offenders, no matter the follow-up period, the reoffending rate for those with an index disposal of Caution was the lowest, and the highest for adults with an index disposal of Custody. After seven years, 33.0% of adults with an index disposal of Caution had reoffended, and 74.5% of adults with an index disposal of Custody had reoffended.

Figure 10: Percentage of adult offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort who commit a proven reoffences by index disposal and follow-up period (Table C1a)

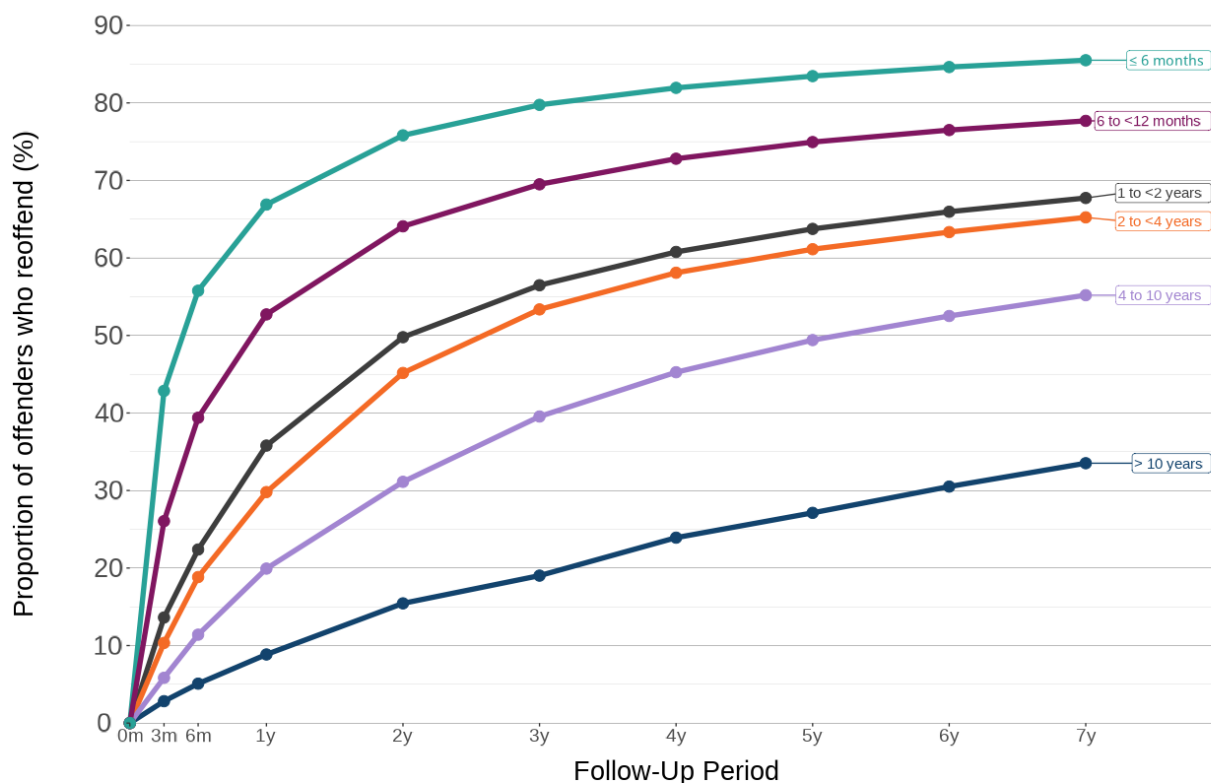


45.2% of adults with an index disposal of Caution who reoffended within seven years had committed a reoffence within the first year. 65.1% of adults with an index disposal of Custody who reoffended within seven years had committed a reoffence within the first year.

Reoffending by custodial sentence length - adult offenders

Figure 11 below shows that adult offenders with shorter sentences have higher rates of reoffending across each of the follow-up periods. Adult offenders with sentences of less than or equal to six months had a rate of reoffending of 66.9% after one year, which increases to 85.5% after seven years. Adult offenders with a sentence of more than ten years had a rate of reoffending of 8.9% after one year, and 33.5% after seven years.

Figure 11: Percentage of adult offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort who reoffend, by custodial sentence length and follow-up period (Table C2a)



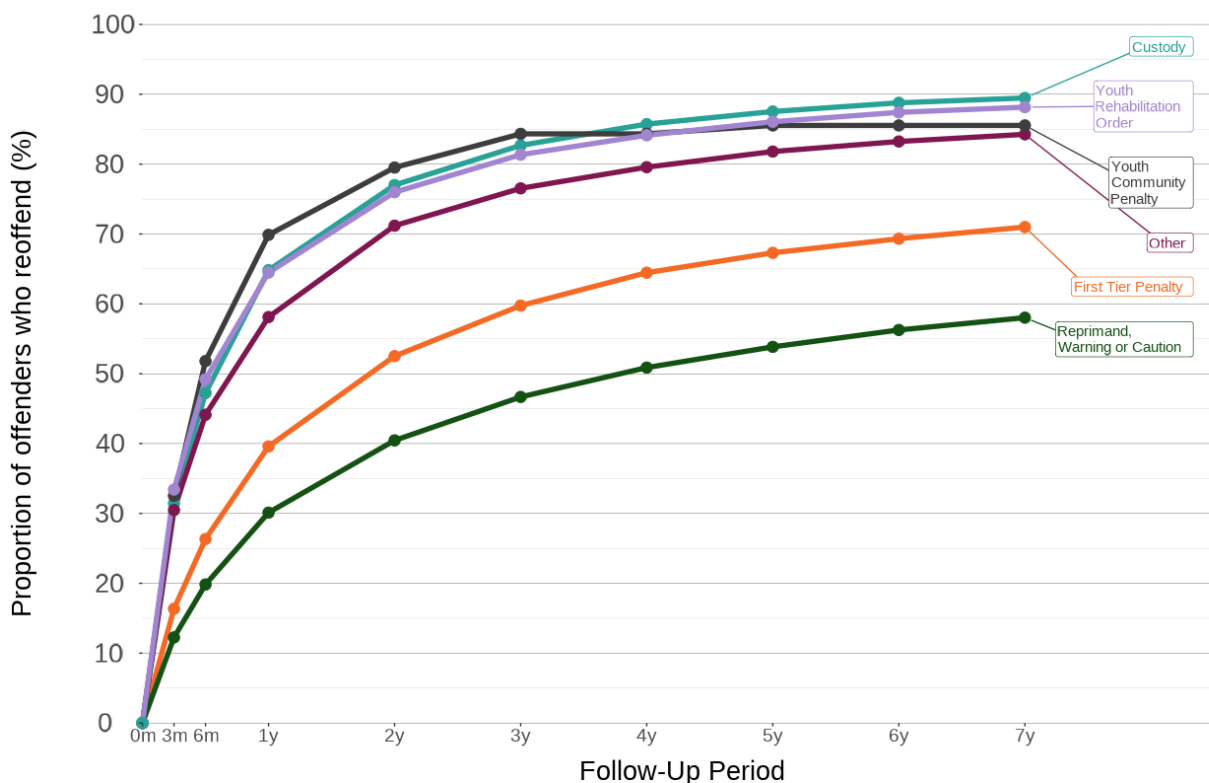
Children

Due to the small size of the child cohort, rates by index disposal must be interpreted with caution.

For child offenders, the lowest reoffending rate across all follow-up periods was for those with an index disposal of Reprimand, Warning or Caution. Child offenders with an index disposal of Youth Community Penalty had the highest reoffending rate until the fourth year, where child offenders with an index disposal of Custody had the highest until the end of the seven years.

72.4% of children with an index disposal of Custody who reoffended within seven years had done so within the first year. 51.9% of children with an index disposal of Reprimand, Warning or Caution who reoffended within seven years had done so within the first year.

Figure 12: Percentage of child offenders in England and Wales from the 2016/17 cohort who commit a proven reoffence by index disposal and follow-up period (Table C1b)



Conclusion

The results present reoffending rates over an extended follow-up period, providing a fuller picture of reoffending patterns and long-term trends. They also offer additional evidence supporting the robustness of the established one-year proven reoffending measure.

For the 2016/17 offender cohort, over half (55%) of all individuals who reoffended during the seven-year follow-up period did so within the first year after release from custody, or the start of a non-custodial conviction or caution. These first-year reoffenders accounted for just over 80% of all reoffences recorded across the full seven-year period.

The report further shows that trends in proven reoffending rates remain broadly consistent over time. Groups with higher reoffending rates at the one-year follow-up generally continue to show higher rates across the seven-years.

Overall, the findings show that extended follow-up periods add valuable context and give us a more complete understanding of long-term reoffending behaviour, while the one-year proven reoffending measure remains a timely and reliable indicator.

Contact

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

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

Other enquiries and feedback on these statistics should be directed to the Analysis directorate of the Ministry of Justice:

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Future publications or development

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. Should you have any feedback related to these statistics, please contact us at reoffendingstatistics@justice.gov.uk