

# **Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis**

## **Executive Summary**

Ministry of Justice  
Statistics bulletin

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## Executive Summary (from the main report)

The Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis is a new publication designed to answer an array of statistical questions that are not covered in existing statistical publications on reoffending. The focus of the Compendium is to address commonly asked questions by the media and practitioners; it shows the relative effectiveness of different disposals given prior to or in court, reoffending figures by individual prisons, detailed breakdowns of published material, long-term time series on reoffending, and international comparisons.

It also presents, for the first time, analysis of reconviction of prisoners from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction. This survey allows detailed analysis of an offenders' reconviction behaviour according to their early life experiences, pre-prison accommodation, education and employment, substance use and mental health needs.

The key findings from this Compendium are outlined in the seven sections below.

### 1. Long-term trends in reconviction rates

The Reoffending of adults in England and Wales National Statistics publication<sup>1</sup> measures the percentage of adults who are discharged from custody or start a court order under probation supervision between January and March and who are reconvicted at court within one year. This is referred to as the reoffending rate in the National Statistics publication, but will be referred to in this Compendium publication as the reconviction rate as it only includes court convictions. The latest adult reconviction rate for adults is 40.1 per cent.

The Reoffending of juveniles in England and Wales National Statistics publication<sup>2</sup> proven reoffending by juveniles who received a reprimand or warning as well as those leaving custody, starting a court order or otherwise convicted in court between January and March. The latest proven reoffending rate for juveniles is 37.3 per cent.

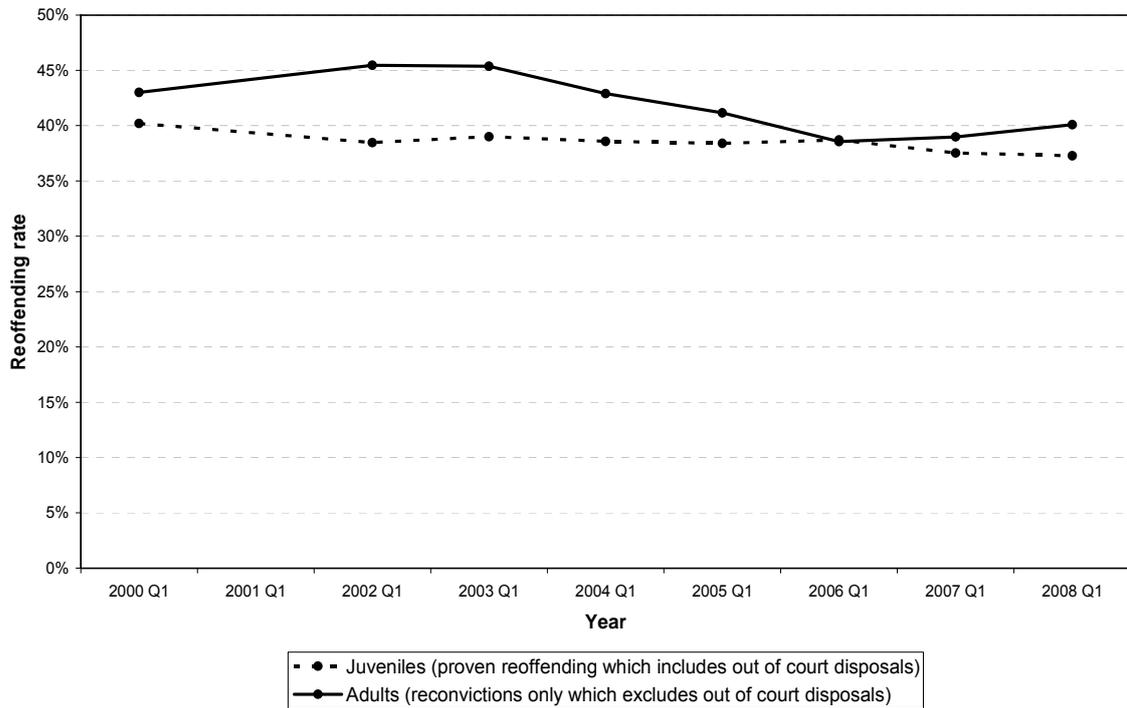
Figure 1 below shows the one-year adult reconviction rate and juvenile proven reoffending rate from 2000 to 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Latest publication: [Reoffending of adults: results from the 2008 cohort](#); Ministry of Justice, March 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Latest publication: [Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2008 cohort](#); Ministry of Justice, March 2010.

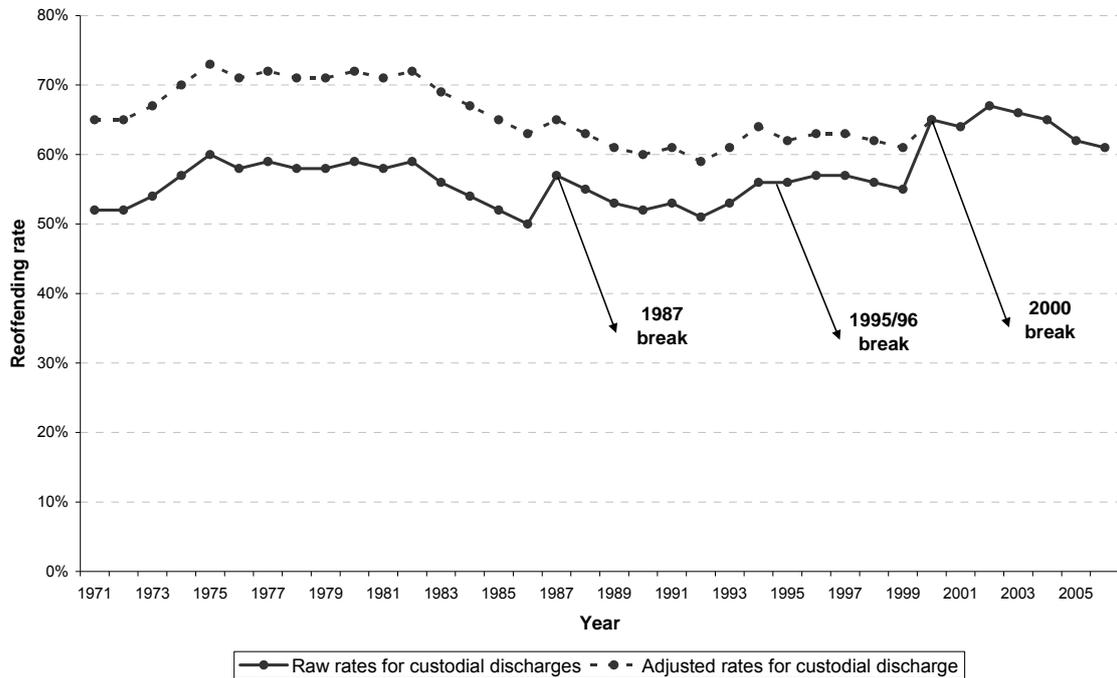
**Figure 1: Adult reconviction rate and juvenile proven reoffending rate, 2000 to 2008**



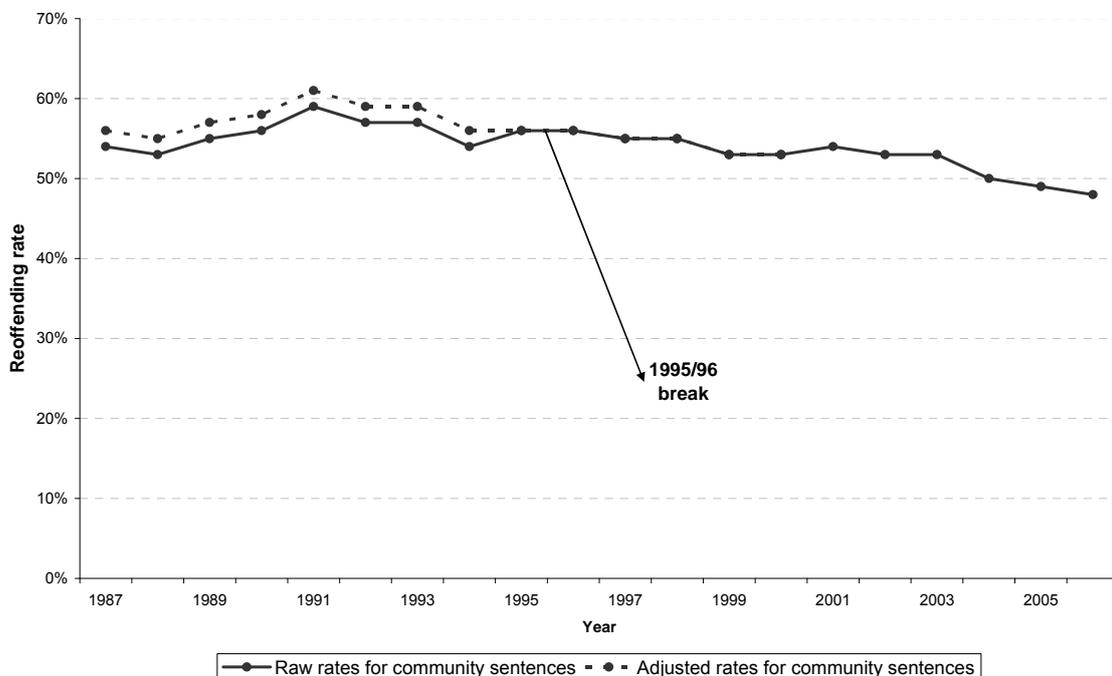
Proven reoffending and reconviction rates have only been published on a consistent basis from 2000 onwards. This is due to changes in the methodology for measuring reoffending. For the first time, this publication provides the most consistent statistical series possible between 1971 and 2006, adjusting for known methodological changes.

Figure 2 below shows the raw two-year reoffending rates and the adjusted reconviction rate for offenders discharged from custody and Figure 3 shows the same for offenders commencing a community sentence.

**Figure 2: Raw two-year reoffending rate and break adjusted reconviction rate for offenders discharged from custody, 1971 to 2006**



**Figure 3: Raw two-year reoffending rate and break adjusted reconviction rate for offenders commencing community sentences, 1987 to 2006**



As well as longer time series, there is often interest in the number of offenders that are reconvicted after different follow up years. Of the offenders who were discharged from custody or commenced a court order between January and March 2000:

- 20 per cent had been reconvicted within three months;

- 43 per cent within a year;
- 55 per cent within two years;
- 68 per cent within five years; and
- 74 per cent had been reconvicted within nine years.

## **2. Effectiveness of different disposals and interventions**

A comparison of all short custodial sentences (under twelve months) and court order commencements under probation supervision in 2007 showed that court orders were more effective (by 7 percentage points) at reducing one-year proven reoffending rates than custodial sentences of less than twelve months for similar offenders.

A comparison of cautions, fines and conditional discharges between 2005 and 2007 showed that cautions were slightly more effective at reducing one-year proven reoffending rates when compared with similar offenders who received a fine or a conditional discharge. The one-year proven reoffending rates were up to 2.7 percentage points lower for those offenders receiving a caution.

The Enhanced Thinking Skills programme is a cognitive-behavioural programme targeted at prisoners between 2006 and 2008 which addresses thinking and behaviour associated with offending with the objective of reducing reoffending. The programme was effective at reducing the one-year reconviction rate by 6 percentage points when compared with a group of similar offenders who were not on the programme.

## **3. Reoffending rates not previously reported**

Individual prison reconviction rates in 2007 varied considerably from 26.7 per cent to 76.6 per cent for offenders sentenced to under twelve months and 2.0 per cent to 54.9 per cent for offenders sentenced to more than twelve months. A large part of this variability is likely to reflect the mix of offenders who are held in different prisons and therefore comparisons between prisons should not be made using these figures.

Penalty notices for disorder are not included in the Reoffending in England and Wales publications<sup>3</sup> as the recording of these are known to be incomplete by some police forces. In 2008, 24.5 per cent of adults and 32.5 per cent of juveniles receiving a penalty notice for disorder reoffended within one year.

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<sup>3</sup> Latest adult publication: [Reoffending of adults: results from the 2008 cohort](#); Ministry of Justice, March 2010. Latest juvenile publication: [Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2008 cohort](#); Ministry of Justice, March 2010.

#### 4. Reconviction and prisoners' lives and needs

Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction allows us to fully look at reconvictions by prisoner needs for the first time.

**Early years, family life and schooling:** Reconviction rates were higher for prisoners who experienced violence in the home, emotional, sexual or physical abuse as a child, who had been expelled or permanently excluded from school, or who had no qualifications.

Forty-one per cent of the sample reported having observed violence in the home as a child. These offenders had a higher one-year reconviction rate than those who did not (58 per cent compared with 48 per cent).

- Forty-one per cent of the sample reported having observed violence in the home as a child. These offenders had a higher one-year reconviction rate than those who did not (58 per cent compared with 48 per cent).
- Twenty-nine per cent of offenders reported experiencing emotional, sexual, or physical abuse as a child. These offenders had a higher one-year reconviction rate than those who did not (58 per cent compared with 50 per cent).
- Forty-two per cent of prisoners had been expelled or permanently excluded from school. Sixty-three per cent of offenders who had been expelled or permanently excluded from school were reconvicted for an offence within a year, compared with 44 per cent of offenders who were not.
- Just over half (53 per cent) of the sample reported to have at least one qualification<sup>4</sup>. Around 85 per cent of the general population has at least one qualification. Sixty per cent of those with no qualifications were reconvicted within a year of leaving prison compared with 45 per cent of those with qualifications.

**Accommodation and employment:** Prisoners were less likely to have worked in the year before custody and were more likely to have been homeless than the general population.

- Fifty-one per cent of prisoners had been in employment in the year before custody. This is lower than the UK general employment rate, which was 75 per cent in 2006 for those of working age. Forty per cent of offenders who were in employment in the year before prison were reconvicted within a year of leaving prison compared with 65 per cent of those who had not been in employment.
- Fifteen per cent of offenders were homeless prior to custody. Seventy-nine per cent of offenders who had been homeless prior to custody were

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<sup>4</sup> This includes GCSE/ 'O' Levels or equivalent and higher qualifications, and trade apprenticeships.

reconvicted within a year compared with 47 per cent of those who had accommodation.

**Drugs and alcohol:** Eighty-one per cent of the sample reported that they had used drugs at any point prior to custody.

- Fifty-eight per cent of the sample reported to have been poly-drug<sup>5</sup> users at some point prior to custody. Seventy-one per cent reported using drugs in the year before custody. The British Crime Survey in England and Wales (2007/08) found that around 13 per cent of men aged 16-59 and 6 per cent of women in the general population had used illicit drugs in the past year.
- The highest reconviction rate was observed for the 33 per cent of the sample who reported being poly-drug users in the four weeks before custody. Of these prisoners, 71 per cent were reconvicted compared with 48 per cent of those who only used Class B and/or C drugs in the four weeks before custody.
- Twenty-two per cent of the sample drank alcohol every day in the four weeks before custody. These prisoners were more likely to be reconvicted compared with those who did not drink every day in the four weeks before custody (62 per cent compared with 49 per cent).

**Mental health:** Seventeen per cent of offenders reported having been treated/ counselled for a mental health or emotional problem in the year before custody. Offenders reporting to have received treatment/ counselling for a mental health or emotional problem in the year before custody had a similar reconviction rate (54 per cent) to those who did not (52 per cent).

## 5. Adult and Juvenile comparisons

Juveniles receiving a reprimand or warning between 2000 and 2008 have a higher proven reoffending rate than adult offenders receiving a caution. In 2008, 25.5 per cent of juveniles receiving a reprimand or warning and 19.2 per cent of adults receiving a caution reoffended within one year.

An offender enters the Criminal Justice System on the day they received their first reprimand, warning, caution or conviction. In 2008, 21 per cent of juveniles and 9 per cent of adults entering the Criminal Justice System reoffended within a year.

## 6. International comparisons

Raw reoffending rates between countries should not be directly compared – there are a range of underlying differences in the justice systems and the methods of calculation. This should be considered when reviewing international

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<sup>5</sup> A poly-drug user is defined as one who used Class A drugs and Class B drugs, or Class A and Class C, or Class A and Class B and Class C drugs.

evidence on what works to reduce reoffending. The raw reoffending rates in 2004 for England and Wales, Scotland and The Netherlands were 54.7 per cent, 44.6 per cent and 29.3 per cent respectively. After harmonising these definitions the apparent gap narrowed and the harmonised reoffending rates were 45.1 per cent, 44.3 per cent and 38.0 per cent.

## **7. Other reoffending analyses**

To be eligible for the home detention curfew scheme, offenders need to be serving a prison sentence between three months and four years and may be discharged up to 135 days earlier, dependent on the length of their sentence. During 2008/09, 4.6 per cent of offenders on home detention curfew reoffended whilst on the scheme.

An offender can become a restricted patient at the time of a conviction if he or she is ordered by a court to receive hospital treatment instead of a prison sentence. Between 1999 and 2007, 5.8 per cent of offenders discharged from a psychiatric hospital were reconvicted within two years of their discharge.

The Compendium also includes papers on the reoffending rates of offenders with varying requirement combinations when commencing a community order or a suspended sentence order, the time spent in prison for adult offenders in a one-year follow up period, and a comparison of reoffending rates for two different definitions of serious reoffending.

**Iain Bell**

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### Contact points for further information

The publication and spreadsheet files of the tables contained in this document are available for download at

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/compendium-reoffending.htm>

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

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Email: [press.office@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

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7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ  
Tel: 020 3334 3737

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

Other National Statistics publications, and general information about the official statistics system of the UK, are available from [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

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