



Ministry  
of Justice



# Youth Justice Statistics 2014/15

## England and Wales

Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice  
Statistics bulletin

Also available on the Gov.uk website at

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

# Executive Summary

This publication looks at the English and Welsh Youth Justice System (YJS) in the year ending March 2015 in terms of the number of young people in the system, their offences, outcomes and the trends over time. For the first time, the publication includes statistics on the use of force as recorded under the Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR) System, which is used in parts of the youth secure estate.

## Overview

The YJS in England and Wales works to prevent offending and reoffending by young people under the age of 18. The system is different to the adult system and is structured to address the needs of young people. The YJS is far smaller than the adult system (see Chapter 11 for more details). The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is the executive non-departmental public body that oversees the YJS in England and Wales.

The overall number of young people in the YJS continued to reduce in the year ending March 2015. Reductions have been seen in the number entering the system for the first time (First Time Entrants, FTEs), as well as reductions in those receiving disposals<sup>1</sup>, including those receiving custodial sentences.

Compared to the year ending March 2010, there are now 67% fewer young people who were FTEs, 65% fewer young people who received a youth caution or court disposal<sup>2</sup> and 57% fewer young people (under 18) in custody in the youth secure estate.

The reoffending rate has increased (by 5.6 percentage points since the year ending March 2008, to 38.0% in the year ending March 2014), but there were significant falls in the number of young people in the cohort, the number of reoffenders and the number of reoffences.

---

<sup>1</sup> A disposal is an umbrella term referring both to sentences given by the court and to youth cautions issued by the police.

<sup>2</sup> According to the YJMIS data.

### **Arrests and youth cautions<sup>3</sup>**

In the year ending March 2015 there were around 950,000 arrests for notifiable offences<sup>4</sup> in England and Wales, of which 94,960 were of people aged 10-17 years. Therefore arrests of 10-17 year olds accounted for 10% of all arrests. This is the same as the proportion of young people in England and Wales of offending age<sup>5</sup>.

The number of arrests of young people has fallen by 13% between the years ending March 2014 and March 2015. This continues the downward trend seen since the peak in arrests in the year ending March 2007. Since the peak it has fallen by 73%.

Young people from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic (BAME) groups<sup>6</sup> accounted for 23% of arrests of young people in the year ending March 2015, compared with 75% for White young people<sup>7</sup>. The majority of these (11%) were Black young people.

In the year ending March 2015, the Police issued 20,080 youth cautions (previously reprimands and final warnings)<sup>8</sup>. This is a decrease of 22% on the 25,625 given in the year ending March 2014, and a decrease of 81% on the 106,403 given in the year ending March 2005. Compared with the year ending March 2014, use of cautions fell for all offence types in the year ending March 2015, except for possession of weapons, which rose by 12%.

### **Proven offences by young people**

Overall young people were convicted of 87,160 proven offences (those resulting in a caution or conviction) in the year ending March 2015. The number of proven offences has been decreasing; it has fallen by 4% from the year ending March 2014 and by 70% since the year ending March 2005.

The number of proven offences has fallen amongst most offence types, but increased for violence against the person offences, criminal damage offences and sexual offences compared with the previous year. This has led to a change in the proportional makeup of proven offences by offence type.

---

<sup>3</sup> Youth cautions (which include youth conditional cautions) are the only out of court disposals currently available for young people. See explanatory notes for further details.

<sup>4</sup> Notifiable offences are those offences which require the police to record an incident as a crime and report the occurrence to the Home Office.

<sup>5</sup> In England and Wales people of offending age are classed as those aged 10 years or older. The general 10-17 population figures are from the ONS mid year estimates for 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Ethnicity information is self-identified.

<sup>7</sup> Ethnicity was not stated or unknown for 2% of young people

<sup>8</sup> Historical comparisons between Youth & Youth Conditional Cautions and Reprimands & Warnings should be treated with caution because of changes in legislation. For further information, see Explanatory Notes.

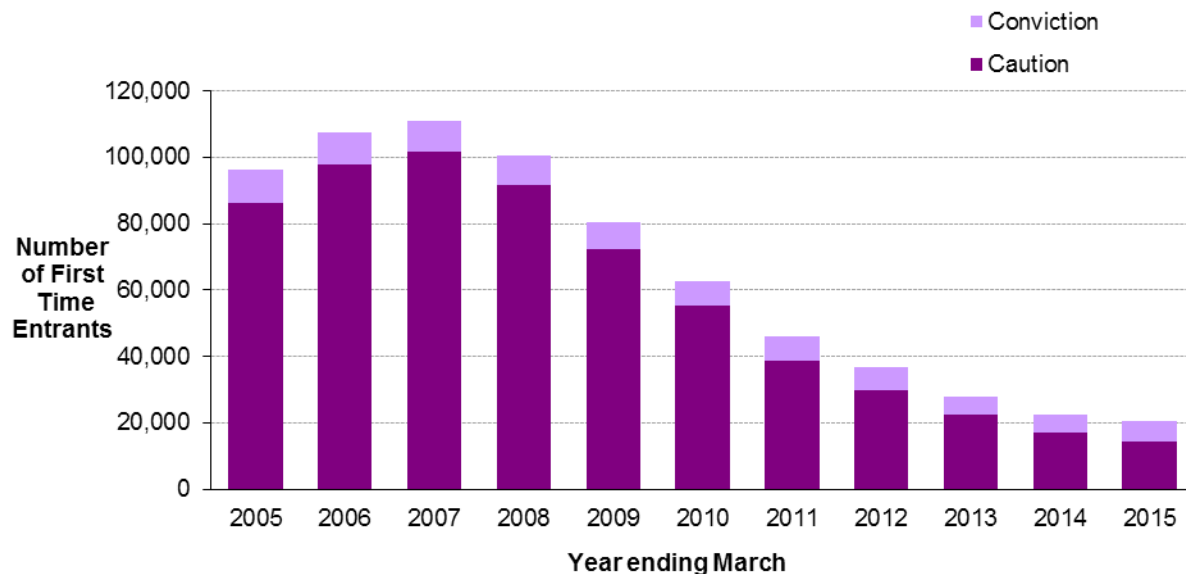
The largest proportion of proven offences in the year ending March 2015 were violence against the person offences, which also increased the most compared with March 2010 (by 4 percentage points) and now make up 24% of total offences over this period. Drug offences and sexual offences also increased, by 2 percentage points and 1 percentage point respectively. On the other hand, the largest decrease was for theft and handling stolen goods which decreased by 4 percentage points. The proportions for criminal damage offences, burglary and robbery remained fairly constant between the years ending March 2010 and March 2015.

### First Time Entrants (FTEs)

The number of FTEs in the YJS has continued to fall since it peaked at 110,784 in the year ending March 2007 (**figure ES.1**). In the year ending March 2015 there were 20,544 FTEs. This represents a fall of 9% in the last year and a fall of 82% since the peak number of FTEs.

Of the 20,544 FTEs in the year ending March 2015, 70% received a caution, with the remaining receiving convictions (predominantly resulting in community sentences). The proportion of FTEs receiving a caution has fallen since the year ending March 2005 when they accounted for 90% of FTE disposals.

**Figure ES.1: Trends in first time entrants, years ending March 2005 to March 2015**



In the year ending March 2015, 31% of FTEs to the YJS were young people aged 10-14 and the average age of a FTE was 15.2 years.

Young people from BAME<sup>9</sup> groups accounted for 18% of all FTEs in the year ending March 2015 while White young people accounted for 75%<sup>10</sup>. This compares to 15% BAME and 82% White in the year ending March 2010<sup>11</sup>. Since the year ending March 2010, the number of BAME young people entering the YJS has fallen by 61% compared with a 70% fall for White young people.

### **Young people receiving a substantive outcome<sup>12</sup>**

There were 37,946 young people who received a substantive outcome in England and Wales in the year ending March 2015. This number has reduced by 9% from the year ending March 2014 and by 65% since the year ending March 2010.

### **Use of remand for young people**

Young people were remanded at court on 18,414 occasions in the year ending March 2015 (down by 12% on the previous year). In the majority of these cases (87%) the young person was bailed, while in 5% of cases the young person was remanded in the community. In the remaining 8% of cases the young person was remanded in custody. Two thirds (66%) of these custodial remands did not result in a subsequent custodial sentence. On average, there were 240 young people held in the youth secure estate on remand at any one time in the year ending March 2015, representing 23% of the average custodial population.

### **Young people sentenced**

In the year ending March 2015, there were 30,960 young people sentenced in England and Wales. This has fallen by 10% in the last year.

The number of young people sentenced to immediate custody fell by 19% between the years ending March 2014 and March 2015 (from 2,260 to 1,834). This number has fallen by 70% since the year ending March 2005, when 6,127 young people were sentenced to immediate custody.

The average custodial sentence length for young people sentenced for indictable offences was 14.9 months. This is based on the full custodial term (for fixed term sentences only) not just the period actually spend in custody.

Information published by the MoJ in *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2014*<sup>13</sup> show that in the year ending December 2014, a greater proportion of

---

<sup>9</sup> Ethnicity as recorded by Police on the Police National Computer (not self-reported).

<sup>10</sup> The remaining 7% had unknown ethnicity.

<sup>11</sup> The proportion with unknown ethnicity has increased from 2% to 7% over the same period.

<sup>12</sup> A substantive outcome is an out of court or court disposal. The figures in this section come from an extract of the live YJMIS system taken in December 2015.

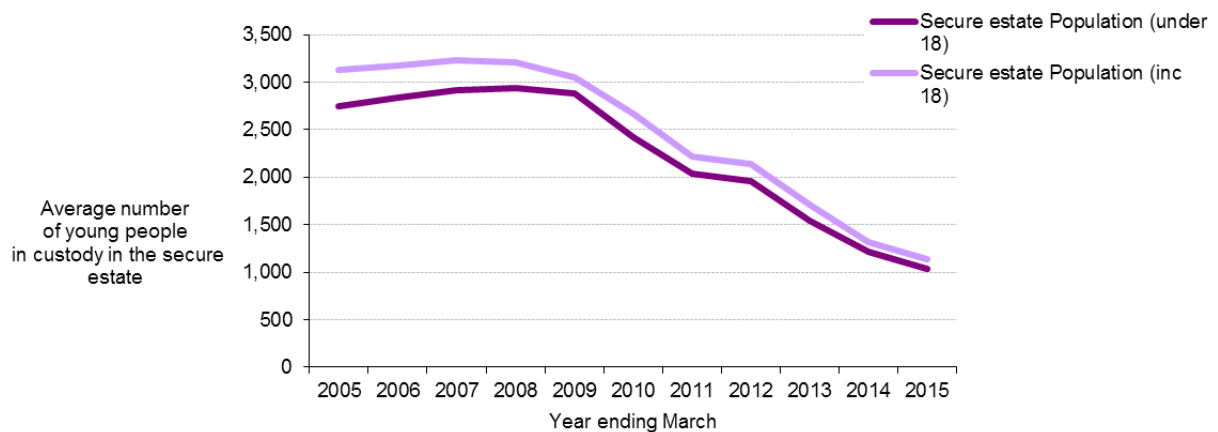
<sup>13</sup> Published on 26 November 2015 and available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/race-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2014> Proportions are based on individuals with known ethnicity only.

young people from BAME groups sentenced for indictable offences received custodial sentences (11%) and a smaller proportion received community sentences (71%) compared with White young people (8% and 74% respectively).

### Young people in custody in the youth secure estate<sup>14</sup>

The average population of young people in custody in the year ending March 2015 was 1,037. The average population in custody has reduced by 15% in the last year, and by 65% from the peak in the year ending March 2008 (**figure ES.2**).

**Figure ES.2: Average custody population, years ending March 2005 to March 2015**



Just as there has been a decline in the average number of young people held in the secure estate, in general there has also been a decline in the number of young people in each offence group since the year ending March 2010.

In the year ending March 2015, 60% of the young people held in custody in the secure estate were from a White ethnic background. Young people from a Black ethnic background accounted for 21% of young people in custody in the secure estate. This compares to 78% of young people who received a substantive outcome in that year who were from a White ethnic background and 9% who were from Black young people across the same period.

The average number of days a young person spent in the secure estate in one episode was 100 days in the year ending March 2015. This remained relatively unchanged from the year ending March 2014 when the average was 99.

<sup>14</sup> Note that although the YJB is only responsible for placing 10-17 year olds. Young people aged over 17 remain in custody in the youth secure estate if they only have a short period of their sentence left to serve, to avoid disrupting their regimes. The data presented in this summary are for the under 18 population only.

The average number of days young people spent in the secure estate by legal basis for detention also remained unchanged for Detention and Training Orders (DTOs) (108 days) and remand (52 days)<sup>15</sup>. The average time in custody in the secure estate reduced however for young people detained on long term sentences from 409 days in the year ending March 2014 to 323 days in year ending March 2015.

### **Behaviour management in the youth secure estate**

In the year ending March 2015, there were 28.2 restrictive physical interventions<sup>16</sup> per 100 young people in custody in the youth secure estate. This rate is broadly unchanged when compared with the rate in the previous year (28.4), but follows on from the general increase seen since the year ending March 2010 (when it was 17.6).

In the year ending March 2015, the number of self harm incidents<sup>17</sup> per 100 young people has continued to increase compared with both the year ending March 2010 and the year ending March 2014. The rate was 5.3 in the year ending March 2010 and increased to 6.6 in the year ending March 2014 and 7.7 in the year ending March 2015.

In the year ending March 2015, the number of assaults<sup>18</sup> per 100 young people increased compared with both the year ending March 2010 and the year ending March 2014. In the year ending March 2010 it was 9.0 and increased to 14.3 in the year ending March 2014 and 16.2 in the year ending March 2015.

The number of single separation<sup>19</sup> incidents per 100 young people has decreased quite noticeably, from 94.7 in the year ending March 2010 to 39.0 in the year ending March 2014 and 35.5 in the year ending March 2015.

There were a total of 2,475 use of force incidents as recorded under the Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR)<sup>20</sup> system across the five establishments where MMPR has been implemented for the year ending March 2015. This gives an

---

<sup>15</sup> Please note that the time in the secure estate by legal basis refers to the most precedent legal basis only. See chapter 7 for further details.

<sup>16</sup> Defined as any occasion when force is used with the intention of overpowering or to overpower a young person. Overpower is defined as restricting movement or mobility.

<sup>17</sup> Self harm in custody is defined as any act by which a young person deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent or severity of any injury.

<sup>18</sup> Figures for assaults in two Secure Training Centres have been revised this year following an error in the data. For more information please see the explanatory notes on data sources and quality.

<sup>19</sup> Single separation refers to the confining of a young person in their bedroom, to another room or area as a means of control and without the young person's permission or agreement, without a member of staff being present and with the door locked in order to prevent exit. The data are only collected for Secure Training Centres and Secure Children's Homes.

<sup>20</sup> MMPR is a behaviour management and restraint system that has been developed specifically for staff working with young people in Secure Training Centres and under-18 Young Offender Institutions. See Chapter 8 for further details.

average of 206 use of force incidents per month<sup>21</sup>, and an average of 30 incidents per 100 young people in custody per month. MMPR techniques were involved in 1,439 of these incidents (58%) or an average of 120 incidents per month.

### **Deaths in custody and number of safeguarding and public protection incidents**

In the year ending March 2015, there were no deaths of young people in custody in the secure estate<sup>22</sup>. Prior to that, there were three deaths during the year ending March 2012. Between the years ending March 2005 and March 2015, there have been eight deaths.

In the year ending March 2015, there were 213 safeguarding and public protection incidents<sup>23</sup>. This compares to 254 incidents in the year ending March 2014. It should be noted that in 2013, a new system for reporting these incidents was introduced, so it is too early to say if this is an emerging trend<sup>24</sup>.

### **Reoffending by young people**

38.0% of young people from the year ending March 2014 cohort reoffended within 12 months of their index disposal or release from custody<sup>25</sup> (the reoffending rate), with an average of 3.12 reoffences per reoffender. The reoffending rate for young people has been generally increasing since the year ending March 2008 (by 5.6 percentage points) and by 1.9 percentage points since the year ending March 2013.

There has been a big change in the number of young people in the cohort (on which reoffending statistics are based); the number has gone down in each year since the year ending March 2007. There have also been decreases in the number of young people that subsequently reoffend and the number of reoffences they committed. However, within this smaller cohort the reoffending rate is higher because the total number of offenders in the cohort has gone down at a faster rate than the number of

---

<sup>21</sup> Two out of the five establishments do not have the full 12 months of data for the year ending March 2015, and because of this, monthly rather than yearly results have been presented.

<sup>22</sup> The most recent death was in July 2015. This will be reported in next year's Annual Statistics (year ending March 2016).

<sup>23</sup> There is a requirement for YOTs to report to the YJB safeguarding and/or public protection incidents that occur involving a child under (or recently under) their supervision. Mandatory reporting is required when a child is charged with offences of murder/manslaughter, rape or a MAPPa serious further offence; or if they die (in any circumstances) or are the victim or alleged victim of a suicide attempt or rape. For a more detailed breakdown of the data, information about deaths in custody and safeguarding more generally, refer to the YJB Safeguarding Report, April 2013 - March 2015 available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486686/Safeguarding\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486686/Safeguarding_Report.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> For more information on this change, and deaths in custody and safeguarding more generally, refer to the YJB Safeguarding Report, April 2013 - March 2015 available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486686/Safeguarding\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486686/Safeguarding_Report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> The index disposal is the type of sentence the offender received that led to their being included in the cohort.



reoffenders (by 69% for offenders and 66% for reoffenders, compared with the year ending December 2003).

Cautions account for half of the index disposals given to offenders in the cohort. The reoffending rate for young people who received this disposal type had the largest increase between the years ending March 2013 and March 2014 (increasing by 4.3 percentage points to 30.6% in the year ending March 2014). Only 2% of index disposals were for young people released from custody. The reoffending rate for these reduced (by 0.8 percentage points to 67.1 in the year ending March 2014).

The reoffending rate for 10-14 year olds is now higher than that for 15-17 year olds (38.9% and 37.8%, respectively), this higher rate for 10-14 year olds was first seen in proven reoffending quarterly statistics published in October 2015.

### **Criminal history of young people**

The proportion of young people sentenced for indictable offences and who were previously known to the YJS has decreased over time. In the year ending March 2005, 88% of the young people sentenced for an indictable offence, had one or more previous convictions or cautions. By the year ending March 2015 this proportion had fallen to 77%.

In the year ending March 2015, 4% of young people sentenced for an indictable offence had 15 or more previous convictions or cautions. This figure has risen from the 2% in the year ending March 2005 but remained the same from 4% in the year ending March 2014.

In the year ending March 2015, young people convicted and cautioned had on average 2.3 previous convictions/cautions. After remaining relatively stable between the years ending March 2005 to March 2007, the average number of previous convictions or cautions has been generally increasing (except in the last year, when it decreased from 2.5 to 2.3 in March 2015).

### **Average time from offence to completion**

The criminal court timeliness measure is an estimated average of the time criminal cases spend in the Criminal Justice System, across both Magistrates' and Crown tiers of criminal court.

In the year ending March 2015, for all completed criminal cases<sup>26</sup> involving young people, the average number of days from the time that the offence took place until the case was completed (and a final decision was made) was 119 days (the median was 87 days). This is an increase on 111 days (median 82 days) in the previous year and continues the upward trend since year ending March 2011.

---

<sup>26</sup> In magistrates and at Crown Courts.