Ministry of Justice

Women and the Criminal Justice System 2025

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1. Introduction

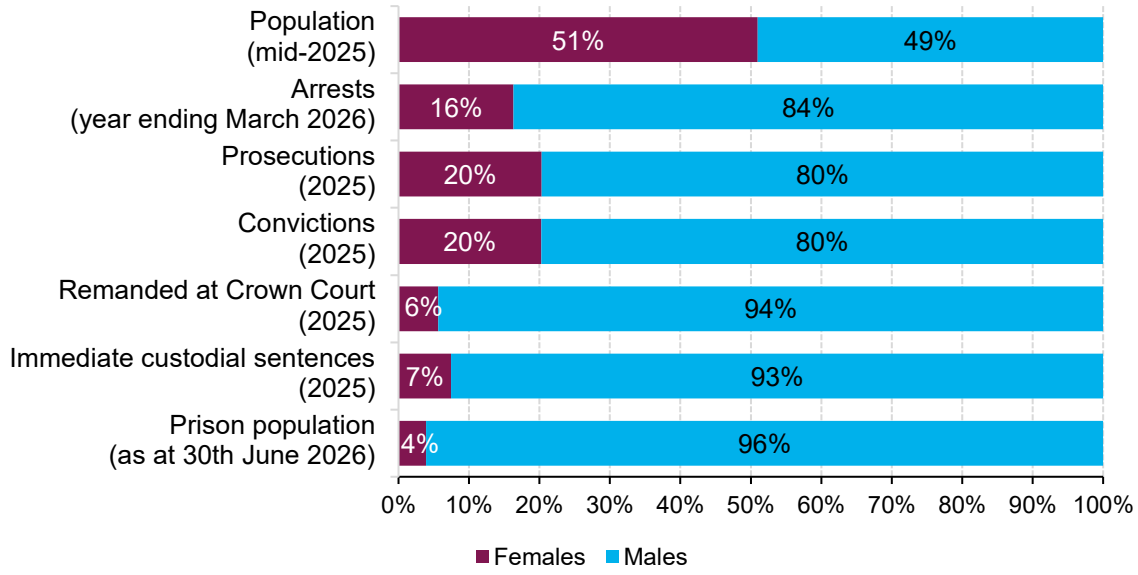
This publication compiles statistics from a range of data sources across the Criminal Justice System (CJS), to provide a combined perspective on the typical experiences of females in comparison to males among victims, suspects, defendants and offenders, and how this has changed over time.

This is the latest biennial compendium of Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System and follows its sister publication Statistics on Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System published in November 2025.

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.

Females are 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, England and Wales



(Source: See sources via relevant chapters throughout the report)

Limitations on conclusions

Although we explore differences between sexes, it is important that inferences are not made about individuals from group-level data as we consider averaged outcomes that do not take into consideration the individual circumstances which differ in each case. Therefore, the statistics presented in this report provide a combined perspective on the typical experience by sex, but it can highlight areas where further investigation or research may be warranted when looking at differences between groups.

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, geography, offence mix or offender history), so it is not possible to determine what proportion of differences identified in this report are directly attributable to sex. Statistics published elsewhere can be cross tabulated with other protected characteristics, such as ethnicity and age. It is not possible to make any causal links between sex and CJS outcomes. The identification of differences should not be taken as evidence of bias or as direct effects of sex.

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. However, given the range of recording practises 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 resolutions	1%
Magistrates' Courts	25% (see below)
Crown Courts	3%
Offender Management statistics	0% (see below)
Legal Aid Statistics	N/A (see below)
Police National Computer	1%
Police Workforce Statistics	<1%
Judicial Diversity Statistics	0% (Self-declared)

In magistrate's courts of England and Wales, around 25% 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, with prisoners normally placed based on their legally recognised gender, 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.

Information by sex is currently unavailable for Legal Aid Statistics. Since the introduction of Crime Apply in August 2024 information on sex, ethnicity and disability has not been collected.

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. Data are presented in terms of calendar and financial years (usually 2025 or 2025/26), reflecting the reporting cycles and data collection of the agencies contributing information for this publication.

A five-year time series' have been presented wherever possible. There are few comparisons to the population as a whole, but we have considered this to be 51% female, as based on population estimates from the Office for National Statistics.

Information provided

We are reviewing the format of this publication and the supporting products provided alongside it. We are considering how these products can best work together to meet users' needs, including the balance between reporting and exploration of the data. We welcome feedback on which products users find most useful and how they could be developed for future editions.

A web-based data visualisation tool has been created alongside the report, allowing users to have more interactivity with visualising trends, with additional breakdowns where possible. 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.

This publication also contains:

- 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.

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

2. Key Messages

3. Victims

There was a statistically significant difference between males and females in the likelihood of being a victim of crime in 2024/25.

In 2024/25, 17.7% of females were a victim of crime once or more, compared with 16.5% of males.

In 2024/25, there were 522 victims of homicide recorded; 70% of victims were male and 30% were female.

Female victims were acquainted with the principal suspect in 63% of homicides, compared with 40% of homicides where the victim was male

4. Police Activity

In 2025/26, females continued to account for only 16% of arrests.

In 2025/26, 737,600 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales, a 2% increase from the previous year. Females continued to account for 16% of arrests.

5. Defendants

In 2025, females accounted for 20% of defendants prosecuted and convicted.

Female prosecutions decreased by 6% compared with 2024 from 214,900 to 203,100, while total prosecutions increased by 3%.

Females continue to be typically dealt with for less severe offences at court.

A higher number of female prosecutions was initiated by Television Licence Enforcement Office and Local Authorities (13% of female prosecutions compared with 1% of males in 2025), reflecting differences in the offence profiles.

6. Sentencing

Females had a lower custody rate than males and typically received shorter custodial sentences.

In 2025, the custody rate for females was 3.6% (5,100 defendants) with an ACSL of 10.5 months, compared with an 11.2% male custody rate (48,600 defendants) with an ACSL of 20.5 months.

7. Offender Management

Only 4% of the prison population were female.

As at 30 June 2026, 4% of the prison population were female, a proportion which has remained relatively stable for the last five years.

In the 2025/26 HM Inspectorate of Prisons survey, females reported a high level and breadth of personal need.

Compared to males, a higher proportion of female prisoners reported disability, mental health problems, drug or alcohol problems, and bullying or victimisation by other prisoners.

A higher proportion of female prisoners self-harmed compared to male prisoners.

In the year ending June 2026, the number of individuals who self-harmed per 1,000 prisoners increased to 349 for females and decreased to 142 for males. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was almost four times as high for females at 15.8.

A higher proportion of female offenders were first time offenders.

Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2025, 32% were first time offenders, compared to 23% for males.

8. Offender Characteristics

Ethnic minority groups accounted for a lower proportion of female prosecutions than males

Ethnic minority groups accounted for 11% of female prosecutions compared to 20% of male prosecutions.

Educational attainment and eligibility for Free School Meals was slightly higher for females than males who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence.

17% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to C, including English and Maths, compared to 15% of males and well below the all-pupil population (55%).

9. Offence Analysis

Theft offences accounted for most of the observed increase in female indictable prosecutions in recent years.

Theft offences drove recent increases in female indictable prosecutions and accounted for a larger proportion in 2025 compared with males (39% compared with 25% respectively).

Summary railway offences replaced television licence evasion as the leading female summary non-motoring offence category in 2025.

The decline in television licence evasion prosecutions has had a greater impact on females with other summary railway offences becoming the largest female summary non-motoring offence category.

10. Practitioners

Female representation increased across most CJS organisations.

Female representation among police officers rose from 33% in 2021 to 37% in 2026, and among judges from 39% in 2021 to 44% in 2025.

3. Victims

There was a statistically significant difference between males and females in the likelihood of being a victim of crime in 2024/25.

In 2024/25, 17.7% of females were a victim of crime once or more, compared with 16.5% of males.

In 2024/25, there were 522 victims of homicide recorded; 70% of victims were male and 30% were female.

Female victims were acquainted with the principal suspect in 63% of homicides, compared with 40% of homicides where the victim was male

This chapter explores the nature, extent and risk of victimisation, in relation to sex, using the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW): year ending March 2025 and Home Office Homicide Index data for the year ending March 2025.

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 capture[1]. 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 crime[2] against adults

In 2024/25, the CSEW estimated that 17.1% of adults were a victim of a headline crime on one or more occasions. There was a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of being a victim of headline crime, with females (17.7%) more likely than males (16.5%) to be a victim.

Personal crime[3] against adults

In 2024/25, 10.8% of adults were a victim of a personal crime once or more - excluding fraud and computer misuse, this proportion was 2.9%.

Although there was no statistically significant difference between females and males for personal crime overall, there were differences for particular offences.

- Females were significantly more likely than males to be victims of fraud, while males were more likely to be victims of violence with and without injury[4].

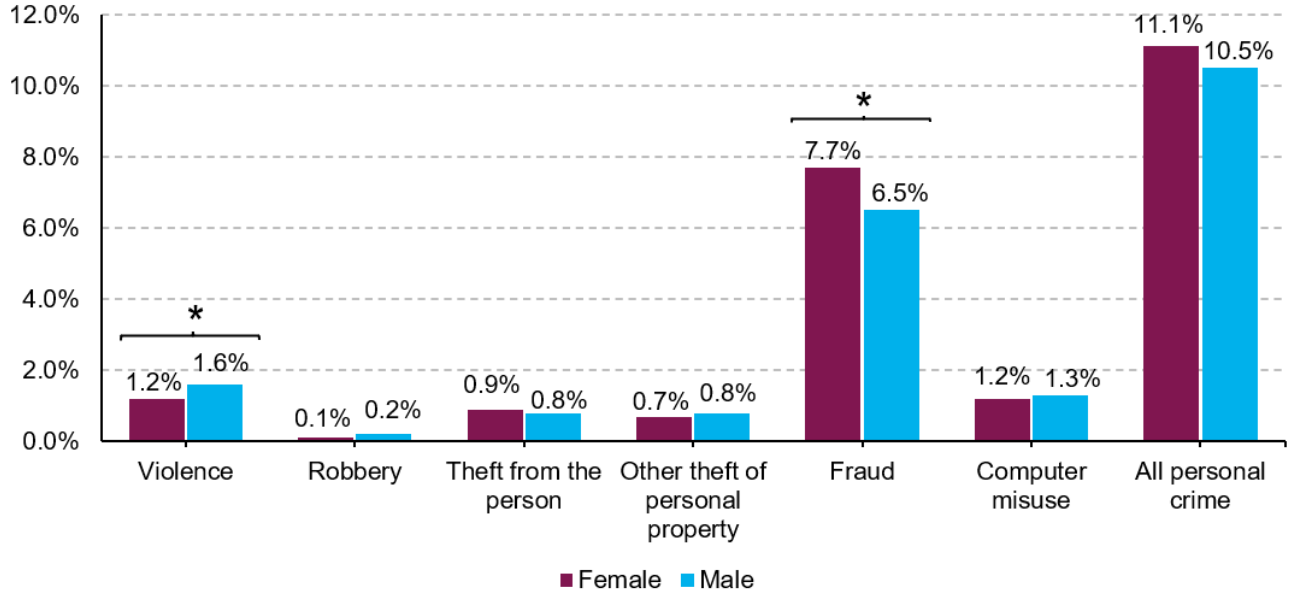
[1] As a survey that asks people whether they have experience as a victim of a crime, the CSEW does not cover homicides or crimes where there is no direct victim, such as possession of drugs or motoring offences.

[2] 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.

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

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

Figure 3.01: Percentage of adults who reported being a victim of a CSEW personal crime by type and sex, England and Wales, 2024/25[5]



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

Violence with and without injury[6] was reported by a higher proportion of males (1.6%) than females (1.2%) and this difference was statistically significant in 2024/25. Violent crime was the most prevalent in the 35-44 age group for males (2.3%) and 25-34 for females (1.9%).

Homicide Index (2024/25)

There were 522 victims of homicide recorded by the police in the year to March 2025 in England and Wales, held within Home Office Homicide Index, a decrease of 8% from the previous year. The volume of female victims remains largely unchanged while male victims have been decreasing to the lowest annual total in the series. Females accounted for 30% of all victims, broadly consistent over the last five years.

- The age profile of homicide victims varied by sex, although low numbers within age groups mean caution is advised. Female victims were most commonly aged 45–54 (21%), compared with 35–44 (19%) for males.
- A sharp instrument was the most frequent apparent method of killing for both female (35%) and male (41%) victims. For female victims, this was followed by strangulation (17%), whereas for male victims, it was followed by hitting, kicking etc. (26%).
- Most homicides with a female victim took place in or around a house or dwelling (76% compared with 43% of male victims). Male victims were more likely to be killed in public places, notably on a street, footpath or alleyway (32% compared with 6% of female victims).
- Female victims were more likely than male victims to be acquainted with the suspect (63% compared with 40% for males), particularly a partner or ex-partner (35% compared with 4% for males).

[5] Statistical significance between groups is represented with a '*'

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

4. Police Activity

In 2025/26, females continued to account for only 16% of arrests.

In 2025/26, 737,600 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales, a 2% increase from the previous year. Females continued to account for 16% of arrests.

This chapter explores police activity by the sex of the persons stopped and searched and/or arrested. It covers statistics on stop and searches and arrests, which are published by the Home Office in Stop and search, arrests, and mental health detentions, March 2026 - GOV.UK . It also covers trends in Penalty Notices for Disorder and cautions issued, published in the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 - GOV.UK.

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 combined.

The total number of stop and searches in 2025/26 was around 537,200, where sex was known, an increase of 12% on the previous year. Females represented 13% (67,800) of total stop and searches, an increase of 14% from the previous year.

- In 2025/26 age profiles were similar for females and males, with those aged 21-40 accounting for almost half of searches for each sex.
- Drugs was the most common reason for stop and search for both sexes, accounting for 63% of female searches, similar to males, though females accounted for a smaller proportion of all drug offence stop and searches (13%).
- The majority of stop and searches resulted in the principal outcome “no further action” (67% for females and 63% for males). A smaller proportion of female searches resulted in an arrest (12% compared to 16% for males).
- 25% of both sexes 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 for[7].

Arrests[8]

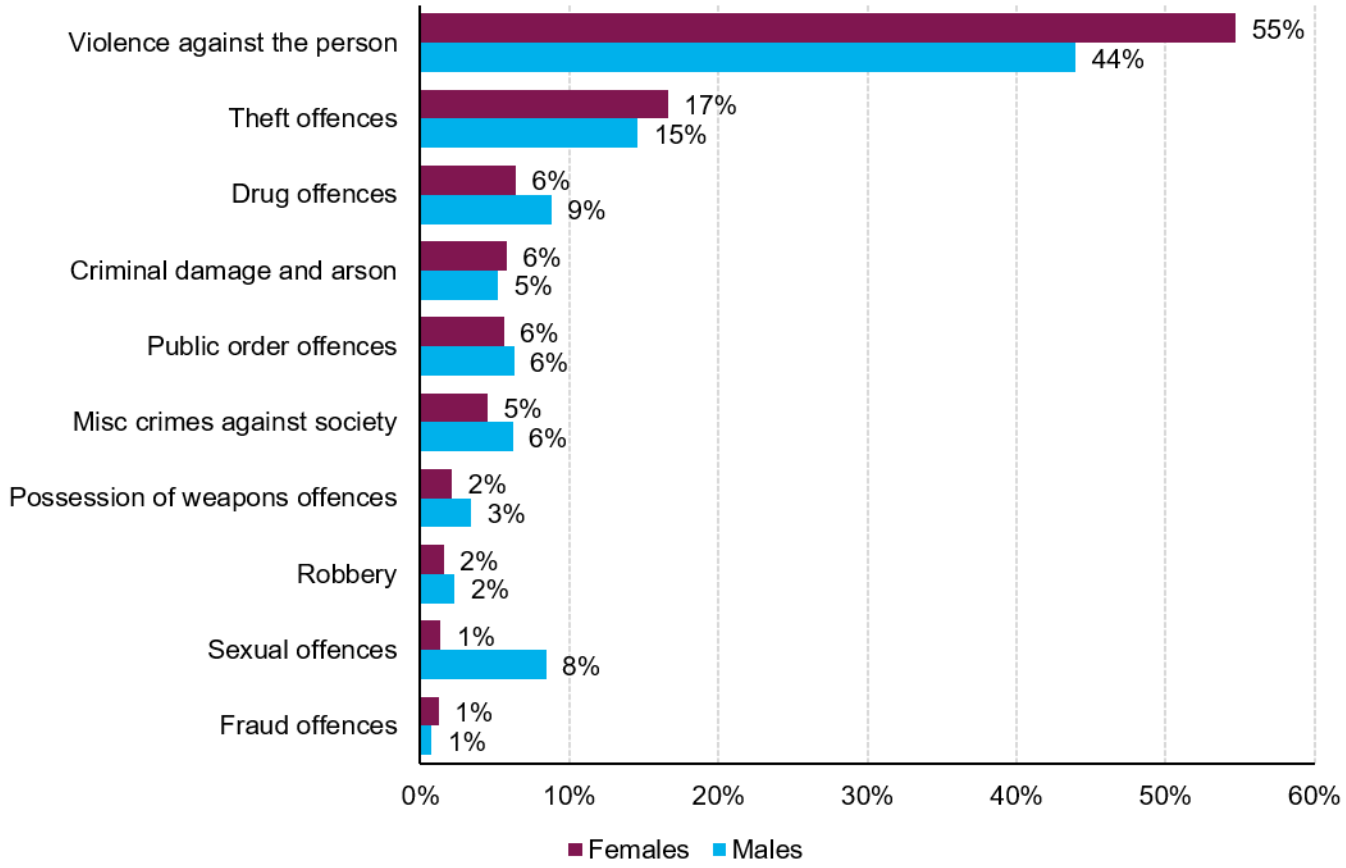
In 2025/26, 737,600 arrests were carried out by police in England and Wales where sex is known, an increase of 2% compared to the previous year. Arrest of females increased by 4% on the previous year but continued to account for around 16% of all arrests, remaining relatively stable over the longer-term trend.

- Adult arrests increased for both females and males, broadly in line with the overall adult increase of 3% from the previous year. While arrests of children decreased by 5%, with a 1% decrease for females and 6% for males
- In 2025/26, violence against the person offences accounted for the largest proportion of arrests for both males and females but accounted for a larger proportion of female arrests (55% compared to 44% of male arrests). Drug offences and sexual offences accounted for a larger proportion of male arrests.

[7] Excluding ‘unknown link’ and ‘unknown whether article found’.

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

Figure 4.01: Proportion of arrests within each sex group, by offence group, England and Wales, 2025/26, England and Wales



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

Out of Court Resolutions[9]

In 2025, around 80% of out of court resolutions were community resolutions – this has increased markedly over the last decade, as the volumes of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND) and cautions have fallen. Currently it is not possible to breakdown community resolutions data by sex – we will look to expand the available evidence and seek to develop our understanding.

- PNDs continued to fall to a series low of around 3,900 in 2025, with 15% issued to females, relatively stable to previous years**.** The most common offence was drunk and disorderly behaviour for females (32% of female PNDs) and cannabis possession for males (over half of male PNDs).
- The number of cautions issued also continues to decline, to around 41,800 in 2025, the lowest in the series. Less than a quarter continue to be issued to females (23% in 2025).

[9] Out of court resolutions available to the police and CPS in 2025 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.

5. Defendants

In 2025, females accounted for 20% of defendants prosecuted and convicted.

Female prosecutions decreased by 6% compared with 2024 from 214,900 to 203,100, while total prosecutions increased by 3%.

Females continue to be typically dealt with for less severe offences at court.

A higher number of female prosecutions was initiated by Television Licence Enforcement Office and Local Authorities (13% of female prosecutions compared with 1% of males in 2025), reflecting differences in the offence profiles.

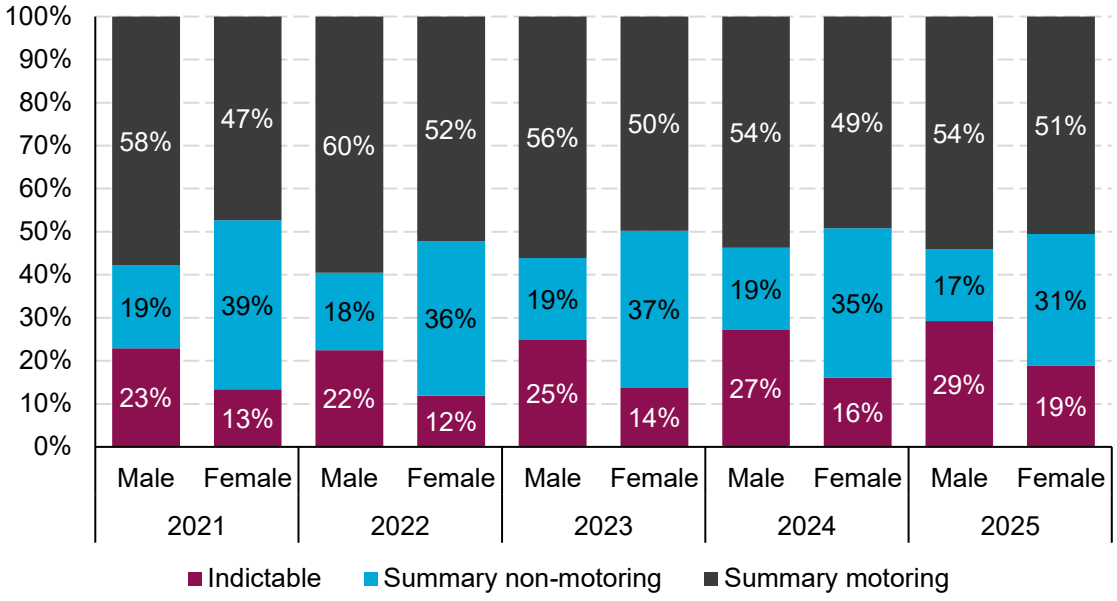
This chapter explores defendants in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), including prosecutions and convictions, remands and case management. The chapter predominantly references data from the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 - GOV.UK. and Criminal Courts Statistics.

Prosecutions and convictions[10]

In 2025, there were 1.36 million defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts, an increase of 3% compared to the previous year and the highest seen since 2017. This annual increase was caused by a rise in male prosecutions (up 2%), while female prosecutions decreased (down 6%).

- Female defendants accounted for 20% of prosecutions and convictions where sex is known in 2025. This has tended to gradually decrease from a series high of 27% in 2019.
- The proportion of prosecutions for indictable offences has continued to increase for both females and males, reaching the highest in the series from 2017 to 2025. Females accounted for 19% of female prosecutions and 29% of male prosecutions.

Figure 5.01: Proportions of defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts, by offence type and sex, 2021 to 2025, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

[10] 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.

Remands

A small proportion of female defendants are typically remanded into custody at each stage of proceedings compared to male defendants. For most defendants, before court and at magistrates' courts, remand status was recorded as either not applicable or unknown (around 80%). This reflects the high volume of Single Justice Procedure cases, which are dealt with remotely and do not require a remand decision.

- Around 7% of female defendants were remanded in custody by the police, compared with 15% of male defendants – with a further 11% of females and 13% of males granted police bail.
- Only 16% of females dealt with at the magistrates' courts were remanded into custody (2%) or bailed (14%) - this has been consistently lower than those seen for male defendants (7% and 19% respectively).
- Of those defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts, 49% of females were subsequently sent to the Crown Court for trial or sentencing, compared with 69% of males. Conversely, a higher proportion of females remanded in custody were sentenced to immediate custody at the magistrates' court (18%, compared with 13% of males).
- The differences were also evident at the Crown Court, where 35% of female defendants were remanded in custody compared with 56% of male defendants. Correspondingly, 65% of females were granted bail compared with 44% of males.

Case Management

This section focuses on factors relating to cases moving through magistrates' courts and the Crown Court, including prosecuting authority, plea, trial effectiveness and timeliness.

The majority of females are dealt with at magistrates' courts where most prosecutions are initiated by the police or the CPS.

- A higher proportion of female prosecutions were initiated by TV Licence Enforcement Office and Local Authorities (8% and 5% respectively) compared to males (1% each).
- The median number of days from offence to the completion at the magistrates' courts for criminal cases[11] was broadly similar for female and male defendants in 2025 at 186 days and 187 days respectively.

Around 9% (7,159) of defendants dealt with in Crown Court trial cases were female, compared with 91% (69,736) who were male.

- At the Crown Court, female defendants tend to have a lower guilty plea rate than males (56% compared with 62% in 2025). The proportion of cases dropped has consistently been higher for female than male defendants (25% compared with 16% in 2025).
- The effective trial rate at the Crown Court for trials involving only female defendants increased to 40% in 2025. However, this remained below male defendants (44%), with a consistent pattern of higher ineffective rates for female only trials across the published series.
- The median number of days from offence to completion at the Crown Court was longer for females (444 days) than males (333 days), with timeliness increasing for both. The differences are seen in time spent pre-court and at court, with female defendants typically taking longer in each stage. This difference is seen across the series and likely a reflection of variations in plea rates, remand status, offence severity and case mix.

[11] Including those sent to Crown Court.

6. Sentencing

Females had a lower custody rate than males and typically received shorter custodial sentences.

In 2025, the custody rate for females was 3.6% (5,100 defendants) with an ACSL of 10.5 months, compared with an 11.2% male custody rate (48,600 defendants) with an ACSL of 20.5 months.

This chapter explores sentencing outcomes by sex where known, including sentence types and custodial sentences. It also covers pre-sentence reports. This draws on data primarily from Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 - GOV.UK and Pre-Sentence Reports.

In 2025, around 885,000 offenders were sentenced at the criminal courts, of which 20% were female, a slight decrease from 21% the previous year. Female defendants are typically prosecuted for less serious offences and as such typically receive less severe sentencing outcomes.

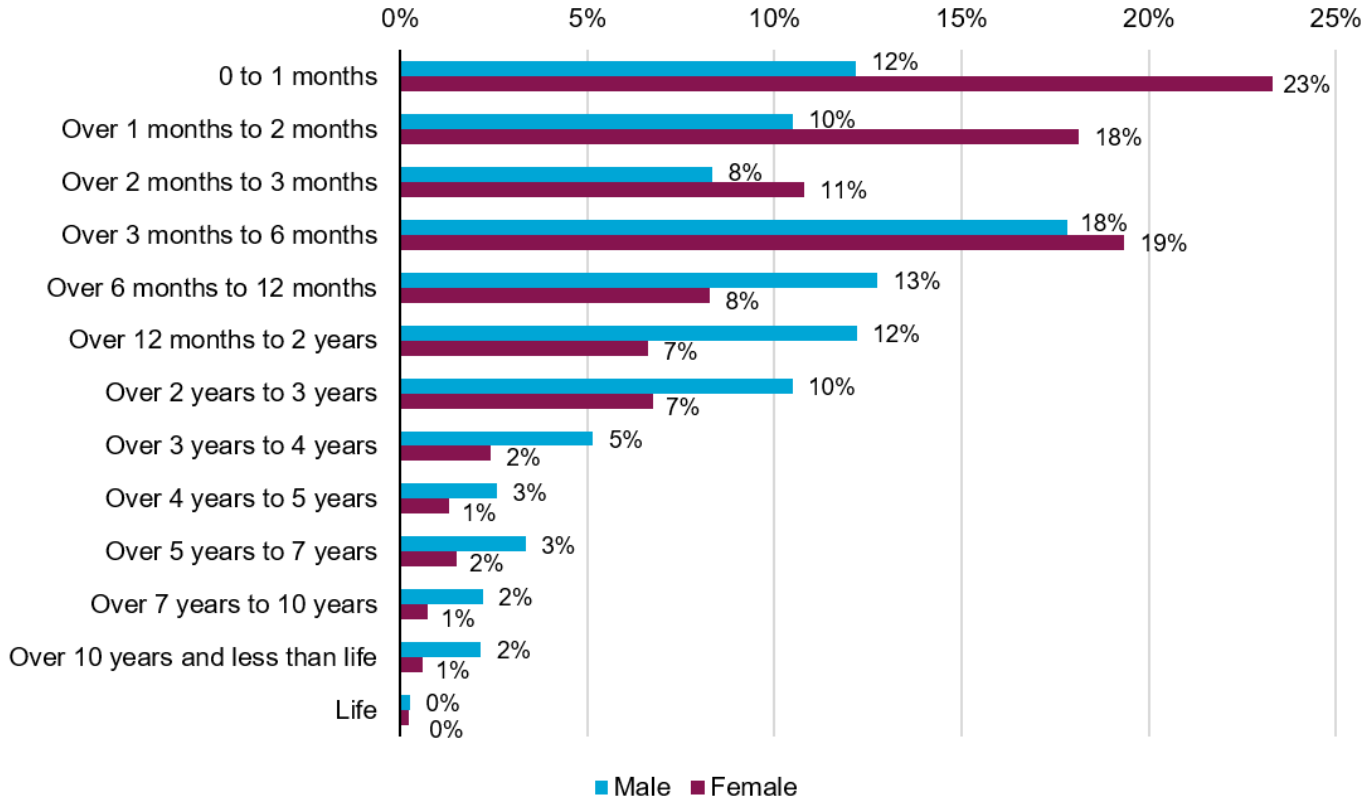
- Fines remained the most common sentence given to both male and female offenders sentenced at all courts but of those sentenced, a consistently higher proportion of female offenders were fined (79% compared to 68%) and had a lower average fine amount than male offenders (£254 compared to £320).
- For the more serious indictable offences a consistently larger proportion of male offenders received custodial sentences (36% compared to 18%), whereas larger proportions of female offenders received community sentences or a discharge (25% compared to 39%).

Sentence lengths and average custodial sentence length (ACSL)

The ACSL for male offenders in 2025 was 20.5 months, compared with 10.5 months for female offenders. This partly reflects differences in the types of offences resulting in immediate custody.

- In 2025, 80% of female offenders sentenced to immediate custody received sentences of up to and including 12 months, compared with 62% of male offenders
- In 2025, theft offences, which typically receive shorter custodial sentences, accounted for 43% of immediate custodial sentences for females compared with 24% for males.
- The number of females receiving immediate custody for theft increased by 17% between 2024 and 2025, from 2,361 to 2,762. This contributed to the fall in the overall ACSL for females. Differences in sentencing outcomes by offence group are explored further in Chapter 9.

Figure 6.01: Proportion of offenders sentenced to immediate custody, by custodial sentence length and sex, 2025, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Relative Rate Index: Sentencing outcomes

Relative Rate Index (RRI) [12] analysis shows that females were 49% less likely to be sentenced to immediate custody for indictable offences compared to males in 2025. This pattern remained broadly similar over the last five years. These differences were statistically significant and fell outside the zone of tolerance in every year and were therefore considered practically significant.

Selected offence groups were examined based on the volume of female prosecutions. Among these, the RRI was greatest for violence against the person offences, where females were 67% less likely than males to receive immediate custody, compared with 53% for fraud and 44% for theft. All three differences are considered practically significant.

Pre-sentence reports

Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) provide information about an offender and their circumstances to assist the court in determining an appropriate sentence.

In 2025, 14% of the 104,264 PSRs prepared were for females, similar to the previous year.

- Written fast delivery PSRs remained the most common type of PSR accounting for similar proportions in females and males, at 78% and 79% respectively.
- Oral fast delivery PSRs accounted for a higher proportion of PSRs for females than for males (21% compared with 15%). This was down from 22% and 17% respectively in 2024.
- Standard PSRs were less common, accounting for 2% of females and 6% of males in 2025, unchanged from 2024.

[12] See the technical guide for further information on RRI analysis.

In 2025, the highest level of concordance between the sentence proposed in the PSR and the sentence given by the court, excluding suspended sentence orders, was for immediate custodial sentences for both females and males.

- Concordance for immediate custodial sentences was higher for males than females in each of the last five years, at 87% and 79% respectively in 2025.

- In contrast, concordance for community sentences was higher for females than males in each of the last five years. In 2025, 60% of community sentences proposed for females resulted in a community sentence, compared with 44% for males. These figures show differences in concordance by sex and sentence type but do not explain the reasons for these differences.

7. Offender Management

Only 4% of the prison population were female.

As at 30 June 2026, 4% of the prison population were female, a proportion which has remained relatively stable for the last five years.

In the 2025/26 HM Inspectorate of Prisons survey, females reported a high level and breadth of personal need.

Compared to males, a higher proportion of female prisoners reported disability, mental health problems, drug or alcohol problems, and bullying or victimisation by other prisoners.

A higher proportion of female prisoners self-harmed compared to male prisoners.

In the year ending June 2026, the number of individuals who self-harmed per 1,000 prisoners increased to 349 for females and decreased to 142 for males. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was almost four times as high for females at 15.8.

A higher proportion of female offenders were first time offenders.

Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2025, 32% were first time offenders, compared to 23% for males.

This chapter provides statistics relating to offenders in custody or under probation supervision in the community by sex, and includes information on reoffending/offending history. 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, Safety in custody, Probation (Court Orders, and pre- and post-release supervision), offending histories and proven reoffending. Further information on these topics can be found in the relevant source publications.

Prison population

The total prison population as at 30 June 2026 was 85,858. Females represented 4% of the prison population (3,350 prisoners); this proportion has remained relatively stable over the last five years.

- The number of female prisoners decreased by 6% from the previous year (from 3,566 in June 2025), while the number of male prisoners decreased by 2% (from 83,768 in June 2025)
- Similar to the wider prison population, girls accounted for 4% of the 392 children and young people held in a secure youth estate.

There were 15,386 prisoners held on remand (unsentenced), a decrease of 13% from the previous year. Females accounted for 5% of the total remand population.

- The number of unsentenced female prisoners on held on remand decreased by 21% from the previous year (down from 956 to 755) while males decreased by 13% (down from 16,745 to 14,631).
- This downward trend began in September 2025 and is likely to be partly driven by increased Crown Court sitting days and the expansion of magistrates' sentencing powers.

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 imprisonment sentences for public protection – IPPs).

The sentence length profile of males and females differs, with a higher proportion of females (10%) serving sentences of under 12 months, compared to only 4% of males (influenced by custodial sentencing in Chapter 6: Sentencing and offence mix).

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.

In 2025/26, 6,518 prisoners completed the survey, of which 693 were female. Higher proportions of female than male prisoners reported health problems and experiences of bullying or victimisation

- Compared to males, a higher proportion of females reported self-declared disability (61% compared to 49%), mental health problems (82% compared to 61%), and drug or alcohol problems (47% compared to 27%).
- A higher proportion of females reported experiencing bullying or other victimisation from other prisoners (49% compared to 34%).

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 have consistently had a higher rate of self-harm incidents in prison, with both a higher proportion of prisoners who self-harmed and a higher number of instances of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners.

- Female prisoners consistently report a higher rate of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners. In year ending June 2026, this increased to 349 per 1,000 for females (up from 333 the previous year) and 142 for males (down from 151 the previous year)[13]. The number of instances of self-harm per self-harming individual was almost four times as high for females at 15.8, compared to 4.2 for males. Self-harm rates in the female estate are substantially influenced by a small number of individuals who repeatedly self-harm.

Assaults in prison

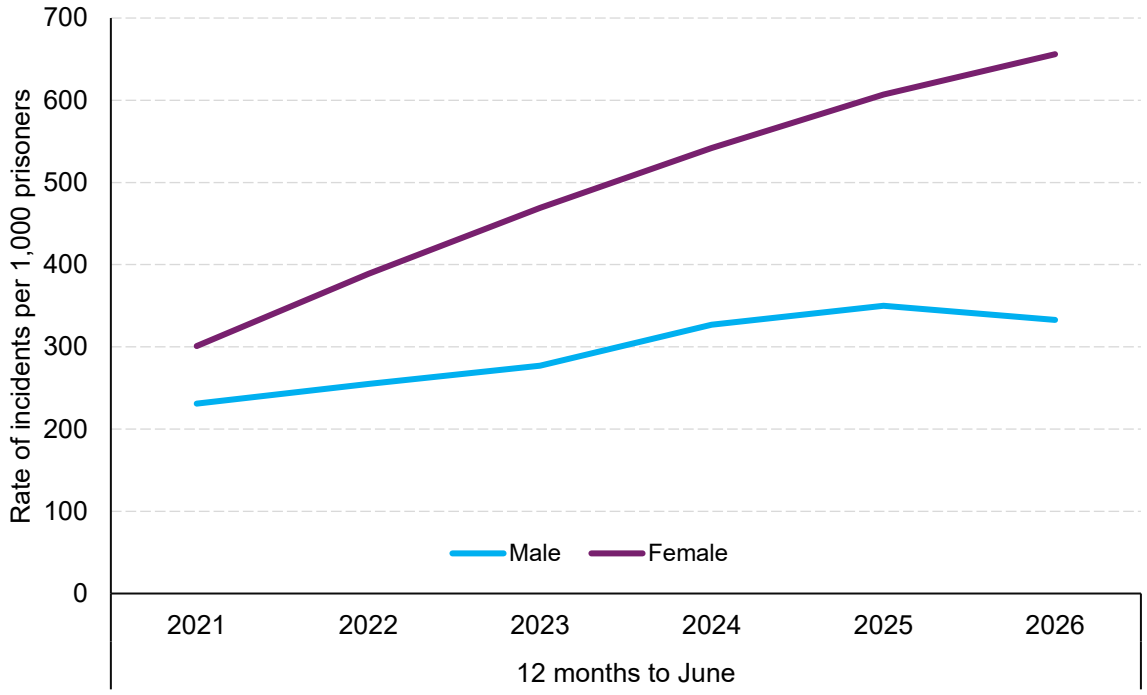
Assaults in prison custody are defined as 'unwanted physical contact between two or more individuals, excluding lawful Use of Force by staff (but including where staff are assaulted during use of force) or anything of a purely verbal or threatening nature'.

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

The rate of assaults[14] has been higher in female establishments than male establishments for each year since 2019. In the year ending June 2026, the rate of assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners was almost double in female establishments (at 656) compared to male (at 333).

- For both prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, the rate of incidents per 1,000 prisoners was higher in female establishments than male with both rates peaked in the latest year.
- For prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, the rate was 1.5 times higher in female establishments than male; for assaults on staff, the rate was over three times higher.
- The rate of serious assaults[15] was also higher in female establishments (49 serious assaults per 1,000 prisoners) than male establishments (39 per 1,000 prisoners) in the year to June 2026. However, the proportion of assaults that were serious remains higher in male establishments (12%) than in female establishments (7%).

Figure 7.01 Rate of assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners by sex, year ending June 2021 to year ending June 2026, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Safety in Custody Statistics; Assaults summary tables – Table 4)

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 2025, 15,671 offenders started community order supervision, of which 18% were female. Of the 9,640 offenders starting suspended sentence order supervision (with requirements) 12% were female.

[14] Assault rates are derived by 1,000 x (number of incidents in year)/(average monthly population for year). Prison population figures are from the Offender Management Statistics quarterly bulletin and are averaged across 12 months.

15 Serious assaults are those which fall into one or more of the following categories: a sexual assault; requires detention in outside hospital as an in-patient; requires medical treatment for concussion or internal injuries; or incurs any of the following injuries: a fracture, scald or burn, stabbing, crushing, extensive or multiple bruising, black eye, broken nose, lost or broken tooth, cuts requiring suturing, bites, temporary or permanent blindness.

- Offence profiles differed between female and male offenders starting a suspended order. While violence against the person was the most frequent offence group for both male and female (25% compared with 23% for males), this was followed by theft and summary non-motoring offences for females (16% and 13%) compared with miscellaneous crimes against society and drug offences for males (14% and 11%).
- As with custodial sentences, females on average received shorter community orders (13.2 months) and suspended sentence orders[16] (17.2 months) compared with males (13.7 and 18.0 months respectively).

Offender Histories[17]

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 24% of offenders who were cautioned or convicted in England and Wales in 2025 where sex was known, of which 80% were male and 20% females.

- Of all female offenders cautioned or convicted in 2025, 32% were first time offenders, compared to 23% for males. A higher proportion of females were first time offenders for all indictable offence groups, except for robbery and theft offences.
- In 2025, offenders with a long history of reoffending (15 or more previous cautions or convictions) comprised 25% of all offenders, of which 89% were male and 11% were female. This cohort accounts for 18% of all female offenders cautioned/convicted, compared to 26% for males.

Proven Reoffending[18]

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. This section considers a cohort released in October to December 2024.

- The adult reoffending rate was higher for males at 31%, compared to 26% 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 5.83 and 5.23, respectively.
- The juvenile reoffending rate was higher for males at 33%, compared to 23% 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 5.27 and 4.56, respectively.

[16] Suspended sentence order with requirements.

[17] 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.

[18] The figures presented in this section include both indictable and summary offences.

8. Offender characteristics

Ethnic minority groups accounted for a lower proportion of female prosecutions than males

Ethnic minority groups accounted for 11% of female prosecutions compared to 20% of male prosecutions.

Educational attainment and eligibility for Free School Meals was slightly higher for females than males who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence.

17% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) graded A* to C, including English and Maths, compared to 15% of males and well below the all-pupil population (55%).

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 Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 - GOV.UK.. To note, we refer to only the most serious (indictable) offences[19] 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 educational background of offenders through a data sharing exercise between Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Department for Education (DfE).

Across the criminal justice system, there were differences in outcomes by both sex and ethnicity, where known, in 2025. A larger proportion of female defendants were from the White ethnic group compared with males.

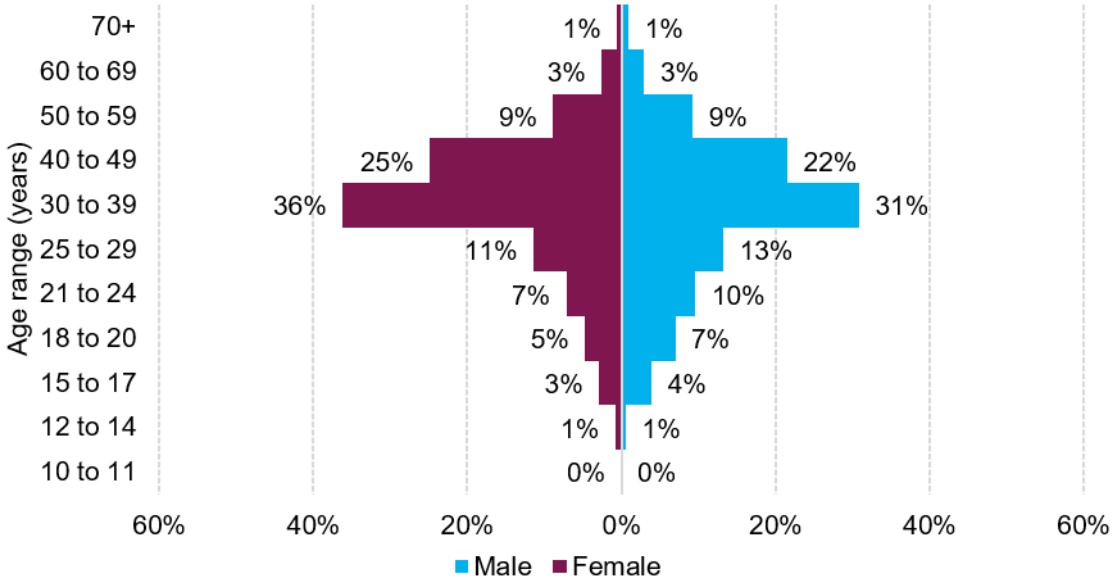
- White defendants accounted for 89% of female indictable prosecutions and 79% of male prosecutions.
- The largest differences were seen among Black defendants (5% of females compared with 8% of males) and Asian defendants (2% compared with 7%). This pattern has remained broadly consistent over the last five years.
- Male offenders had higher remand and custody rates than females across all ethnic groups, reflecting the lower severity of offences typically seen for female defendants. Male custody rates were relatively similar across ethnic groups, ranging from 36% to 38%, compared with 13% to 21% for females.
- Average custodial sentence length (ACSL) was also lower for females than males across ethnic groups. White offenders had the shortest ACSL for both males (19.2 months) and females (8.7 months). Differences in ACSL may partly reflect variation in the types and seriousness of offences committed within the indictable offence group.

The age distribution of prosecutions for indictable offences in 2025 remained broadly similar across males and females.

- The most common age bracket for those prosecuted, convicted and sentenced of both male and female defendants was 30 to 39. However, a smaller proportion of female defendants were aged under 30 (27%) compared with males (35%).

Figure 8.01: Age distribution of defendants dealt with for indictable offences, by sex, England and Wales, 2025

[19] 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.



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Female children (aged 10 to 17 when sentenced) accounted for 12% of children prosecuted for indictable offences in 2025, a proportion that has broadly been increasing since 2017. However, the overall number of children prosecuted has decreased by 27% over this period. 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.

- Offence profiles differed by sex. Violence against the person accounted for almost half (48%) of prosecutions of female children, followed by theft (24%). For male children, theft was the most common offence group (21%), followed by possession of weapons (17%).
- Female children were less likely than males to be remanded into custody or receive custodial outcomes. At the Crown Court, 35% of female children were remanded in custody compared with 42% of males. Among those sentenced for indictable offences, the custody rate was 2% for females and 6% for males, with males accounting for 97% of custodial sentences given to children.
- Average custodial sentence length is not presented because the small number of custodial sentences means extreme values can substantially influence the average.

Educational background

This section presents findings from a recent data sharing exercise between the MoJ and the Department for Education (DfE) comparing the educational background and characteristics of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence. Definitions and further methodological information is available in the accompanying user guide.

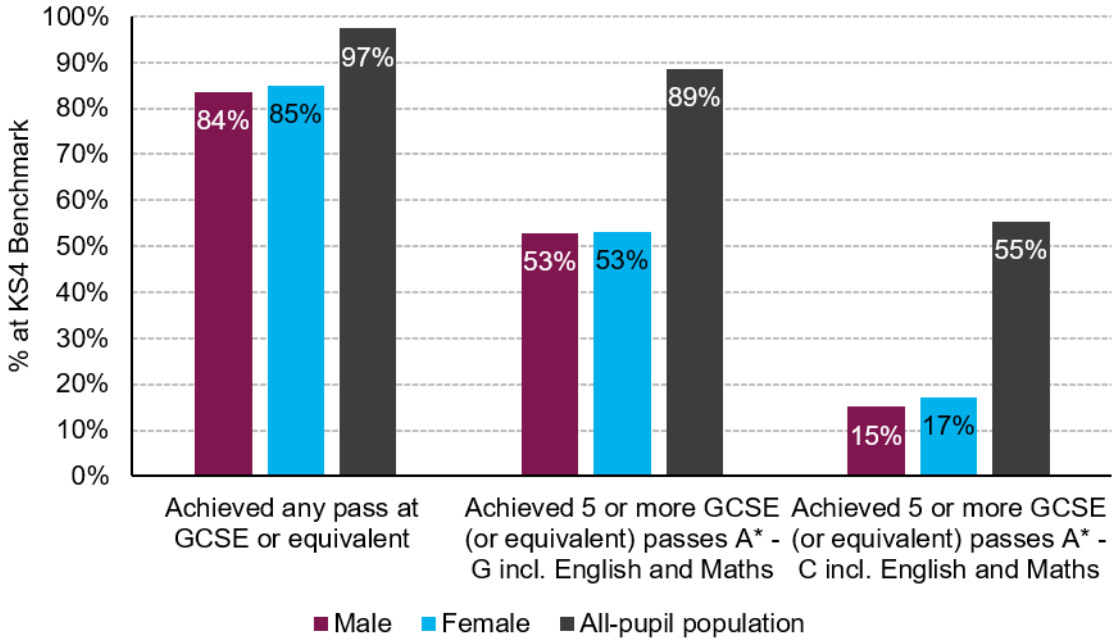
This analysis compares the sex in the matched cohort broken down by disposal type, educational attainment, pupil characteristics, persistent absence and exclusion. Results are provided for the all-pupil cohort (which includes both young people who have been cautioned or sentenced and those who have not) for comparison purposes.

- Across the three attainment measures, the educational attainment of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence was slightly higher for females than males and well below the all pupil-population. For example, 17% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) graded A* - C, including English and Maths, compared to 15% 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 (32%) than males (22%), this 10-percentage point difference being the greatest among disposal types.

Figure 8.02: 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 8: Offender Characteristics – Table 8_03)

Pupil Characteristics

- More than half of young people who had been cautioned or sentenced for an offence were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). This was slightly higher for females (54%) than for males (51%) – true across most disposal types. This contrasts with the proportion of pupils in the all-pupil population where 24% were eligible for FSM.
- Of the young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence, 14% of males were recorded as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (14%) compared to 6% females and 4% for the all-pupil population.
- Overall, more than half of young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence had been recorded as having SEN support, 53% and 55% for females and males respectively.

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 absent from school at any point during secondary school, had a previous record of being permanently excluded from school at any point during primary or secondary school, or had received a suspension from school, at any point during primary or secondary school.

- Of those young people cautioned or sentenced for an offence, a greater proportion of females had been persistently absent (79%) than males (71%). The proportion of females persistently absent was higher across every disposal type compared to males.

- A larger proportion of males cautioned or sentenced for an offence received either a suspension (68%), or a permanent exclusion (10%) compared with females (59% and 8% respectively).

9. Offence Analysis

Theft offences accounted for most of the observed increase in female indictable prosecutions in recent years.

Theft offences drove recent increases in female indictable prosecutions and accounted for a larger proportion in 2025 compared with males (39% compared with 25% respectively).

Summary railway offences replaced television licence evasion as the leading female summary non-motoring offence category in 2025.

The decline in television licence evasion prosecutions has had a greater impact on females with other summary railway offences becoming the largest female summary non-motoring offence category.

This chapter looks at the most common offences for which females are dealt with by the Criminal Justice System, in comparison to males. 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 Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 - GOV.UK.

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.

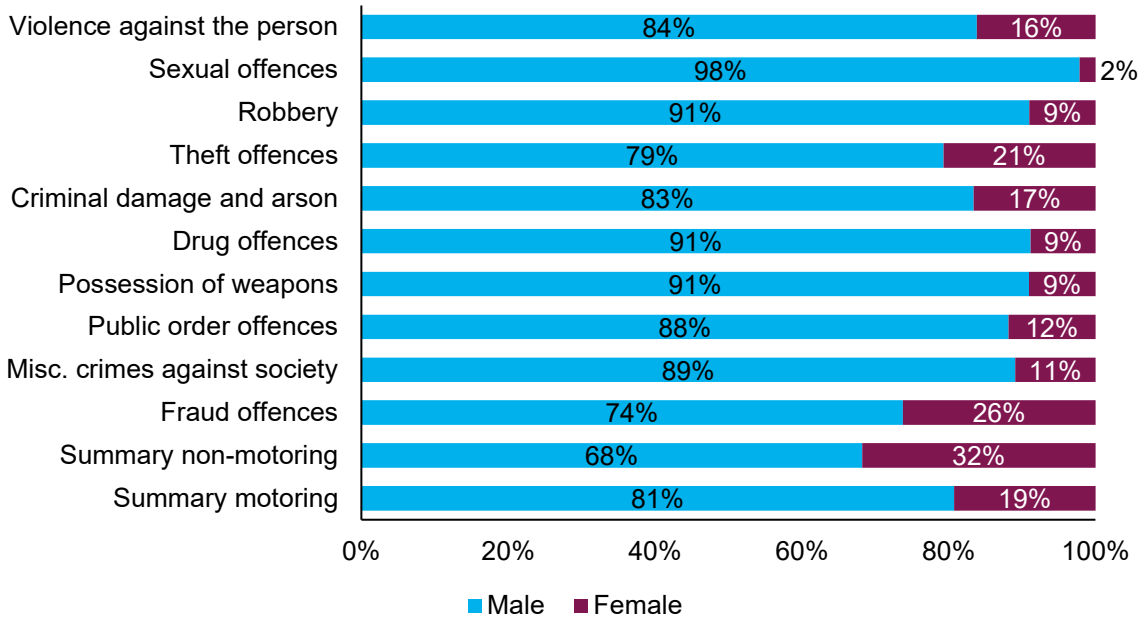
Offence group breakdowns by sex

In 2025, females accounted for 20% of individuals prosecuted in England and Wales where sex is known (see chapter 5: Defendants).

This varies by offence type; females account for a higher proportion of summary offences (23% of the total) compared with indictable offences (14% of the total), with similar proportions for convictions.

The female share of prosecutions within each offence group was highest for summary non-motoring offences (32%) and fraud offences (26%).

Figure 9.01: The proportion of male and female offenders prosecuted for each offence group, 2025, England and Wales



(Source: Ministry of Justice – Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2025 – Outcomes by Offence data tool)

Offence groups

Summary motoring offences accounted for around half of female prosecutions in 2025, similar to males. Speed limit offences were the highest contributing offence, accounting for almost half (48%) of all female summary motoring prosecutions, compared with 37% for males.

The proportion of prosecutions accounted for by summary non-motoring offences was nearly twice as high for females (31%) than for males (17%). There have been notable falls in prosecutions for TV licence evasion in recent years – accounting for only 21% of female prosecutions. Summary railway offences (27%) and truancy (18%) are the main contributing offences in the latest year.

- The proportions of males and females prosecuted within each indictable offence group remained broadly similar between 2021 and 2025. However, the mix of offences within female and male prosecutions changed.
- Increases in theft offences can be seen for both males and females. They accounted for almost two-thirds (64%) of the overall increase in female indictable prosecutions over this period, compared with 43% for males.
- By contrast, violence against the person accounted for a smaller share of female indictable prosecutions, falling from 31% to 26%, despite an increase in the number prosecuted. Its share of male indictable prosecutions remained unchanged at 22%. While drug offences also accounted for a smaller share for both females and males, falling from 13% to 11% and from 24% to 18%, respectively.

10. Practitioners

Female representation increased across most CJS organisations.

Female representation among police officers rose from 33% in 2021 to 37% in 2026, and among judges from 39% in 2021 to 44% in 2025.

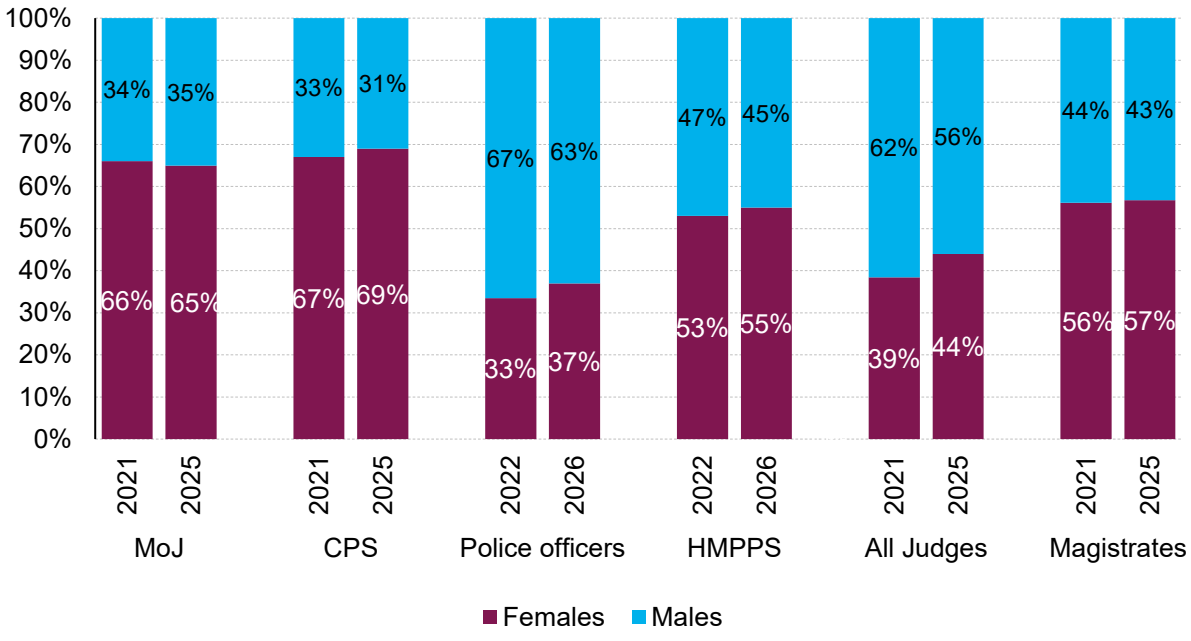
This chapter reports on the trends in the composition of staff and practitioners throughout the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by sex. It draws upon published extracts of human resources records for the police (2025/26), Ministry of Justice[20], His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service 2025/26, magistracy 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

Female representation varied across criminal justice system organisations. In the latest year available, the highest proportions were in the Crown Prosecution Service (69%) and Ministry of Justice (65%), while the lowest remained among police officers (37%)[21].

The largest proportionate increases in female representation were among judges and police officers. The proportion of female judges (courts and tribunals combined)[22] and police officers increased by 5 and 4 percentage points respectively (from 39% in 2021 to 44% in 2025 and from 33% in 2021 to 37% in 2026).

Figure 10.01: Proportion of practitioners in organisations involved in the CJS of each sex, by organisation, most recent year available[23] and five years prior, England and Wales



[20] Includes: MoJ HQ, HMCTS, OPG, LAA and CICA, and excludes HMPPS

[21] 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 2026 publication.

[22] Self-declared from HR records, as at 1 April 2025. Reported in table '3_4_JO_Trends' in the Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025 publication. See the Judicial Diversity Statistics publication for further information about non-legal members.

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

(Source: Ministry of Justice – Women and the Criminal Justice System: Chapter 10: Practitioners – 10.01b, 10.03b, 10.05b, 10.10 and Diversity of the judiciary [2021 and 2025])

Trends in senior staff and practitioners[24]

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 2025, MoJ continued to have a higher proportion of senior staff who were female than male, but female representation at Director level or equivalent seniority (SCS) has decreased slightly from 55% in 2021 to 52% in 2025.

Senior court judges (High Court and above) and senior police officers continued to have lower female representation than male representation. Female representation among senior court judges was 28% in 2025, while around three in ten senior police officers were female. HMPPS[25] also continued to have a lower proportion of females than males among its senior staff[26].

[24] 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.

[25] Excluding Probation Service staff.

[26] Excluding Probation Service staff.

Further information

Accredited official statistics status

Accredited Official Statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. These Accredited Official Statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in January 2011 and May 2020[27]. 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.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the OSR, which sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

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 OSR promptly. Accredited Official Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained and reinstated when standards are restored.

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Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to: CJS_Statistics@justice.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:
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[27] https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/criminal-justice-system/