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The prison population in 2001: a statistical review

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Prison statistics are published annually. These findings are a summary of the Home Office report *Prison statistics England and Wales, 2001*.

Key points

- The average prison population in 2001 was 66,300, an increase of 3% on the average for 2000 (64,600). The average population in custody in 2001 was greater than in any previous year. The increase was in the sentenced population (up 3%), whilst the remand population was little changed.
- Between 2000 and 2001, the average female prison population increased by 12% to 3,740.
- The greatest proportion of male sentenced prisoners were serving sentences for violence against the person (22%), whilst two-fifths (40%) of the female population were serving sentences for drug offences.
- There were 4,810 prisoners serving life sentences on 30 June 2001. Almost three-quarters (72%) of these were convicted murderers.
- There was a record number of prisoners (512) received into custody for life in 2001. This is a continuation of the increase in receptions since 1994, when there were 222.
- 59% of prisoners discharged from prison in 1998 were reconvicted of a standard list offence within two years of release.

The average population in custody during 2001 was 66,300. This was an increase of 3% on the average for 2000, an increase of 20% on the average for 1996, and an increase of 45% on the average for 1991. The prison population increased steadily throughout 2001 and peaked in November, at 68,450, which exceeded the previous peak seen in 1998 (66,520).

The average remand population in 2001 was little changed from 2000; 11,240 compared with 11,280 in 2000. In comparison, the sentenced population increased from an average of 52,690 to an average of 54,050 between 2000 and 2001 (a 3% increase). Between 2000 and 2001, the number of female prisoners increased by 12% from an average of 3,350 to an average of

3,740, while the male prison population increased at a much lower rate (2%).

The main factors influencing the sentenced prison population are:

- the custody rate at the courts
- the average sentence lengths given
- the number of cases passing through the courts.

The Crown Court has the greatest impact on the prison population, although magistrates' courts also make a contribution, particularly on receptions, where more than half come from magistrates' courts. The custody rate is the proportion of those sentenced at court who are given a custodial sentence.

The views expressed in these findings are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy)

Table 1 Sentenced population in Prison Service establishments by offence group, England and Wales

Offence group	30 June 2001		30 June 2000		% change 2000–2001
	No.	%	No.		
Males total*	50,446	100	49,636		+2
Violence against the person	11,198	22	10,807		+4
Sexual offences	5,039	10	5,070		-1
Burglary	8,361	17	8,824		-5
Robbery	6,561	13	6,158		+7
Theft and handling	4,150	8	4,537		-9
Fraud and forgery	893	2	885		+1
Drug offences	7,936	16	7,526		+5
Motoring offences	2,630	5	2,291		+15
Other offences	3,678	7	3,538		+4
Females total*	2,836	100	2,590		+9
Violence against the person**	464	16	430		+8
Burglary	154	5	158		-3
Robbery	252	9	195		+29
Theft and handling	434	15	507		-14
Fraud and forgery	127	4	131		-3
Drug offences	1,132	40	947		+20
Other offences***	273	10	222		+23

Notes: * totals exclude those held for offence not recorded and in default of payment of a fine. ** includes sexual offences. *** includes motoring offences.

The key points (see Home Office, 2002 for more detail) on trends in court sentencing for indictable offences are:

The Crown Court

- Between 1992 and 2001 the custody rate for indictable offences at the Crown Court for adults rose from 45% to 64%.
- The average sentence length for adults also increased, from 21 months to 26 months.
- There was, however, a decrease in the number of adults sentenced at the Crown Court between 1992 and 2001, down from 60,900 to 53,200, a fall of 13%.

The magistrates' courts

- The custody rate for indictable offences of adults more than tripled from 5% in 1992 to 16% in 2001.

- Average sentence lengths for adults at magistrates' courts fell from 2.7 to 2.5 months.
- Between 1992 and 2001 the numbers of adults sentenced increased by 4%, from 157,700 to 163,800.

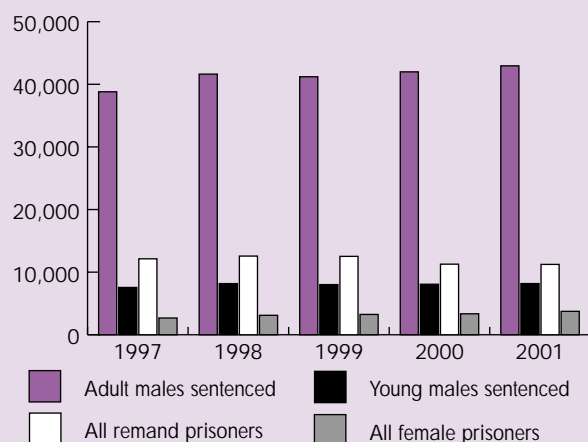
Make-up of the prison population

The average prison population in 2001 (Figure 1) increased from 2000 (see Elkins and Olagundoye, 2001) to reach:

- 42,950 sentenced adult male prisoners (2% increase)
- 8,180 sentenced male young offenders (1% increase)
- 3,740 female prisoners (12% increase), including 780 on remand and 390 sentenced young offenders.

In 2001, the average number of male remand prisoners decreased (by 1%) whilst females on remand increased by almost 11%. On the whole the remand population was unchanged from its levels of 2000, remaining at 11,240.

Figure 1 Average number of prisoners each year for 1997–2001



Of sentenced male prisoners, the largest proportion (22%) were held for 'violence against the person' offences (Table 1). The next largest groups were burglary (17%) and drug offences (16%). Between 2000 and 2001, the number of males held for motoring offences increased by 15%. Drug offences increased by 5%, whilst sexual offences decreased by 1%. Among sentenced females, the largest proportion (40%) was held for drug offences.

While the average prison population during 2001 was 66,300, the number of prisoners who were received during the year, initially as either remand, sentenced or non-criminal prisoners, was around 141,400. This is 11,700 more (9%) than 2000. Among these receptions

there were 64,800 adult male sentenced prisoners, 19,800 sentenced male young offenders and 7,300 sentenced female prisoners. In 2001, receptions of prisoners sentenced for less than 12 months decreased (by 2% on 2000), and receptions for longer sentenced prisoners (four years or more) increased by just over 8%. Just under a half of sentenced prisoners had previously been on remand (48% of males and 42% of females).

There were 4,600 receptions of non-criminal prisoners (87% of whom were held under the 1971 Immigration Act). The average non-criminal population was 1,010 (a 58% increase on the same population in 2000). This does not include persons held in detention centres controlled by the Immigration Service. There were also 1,460 receptions of people sentenced in default in payment of a fine. The average number of defaulters held in 2001 was 50, including two females; they served short sentences (average less than one week).

The average time spent in custody in 2001 by male untried prisoners was 49 days, whilst females spent an average of 39 days as untried prisoners. On the 30 June 2001 there were 650 untried prisoners who had been in prison for more than six months.

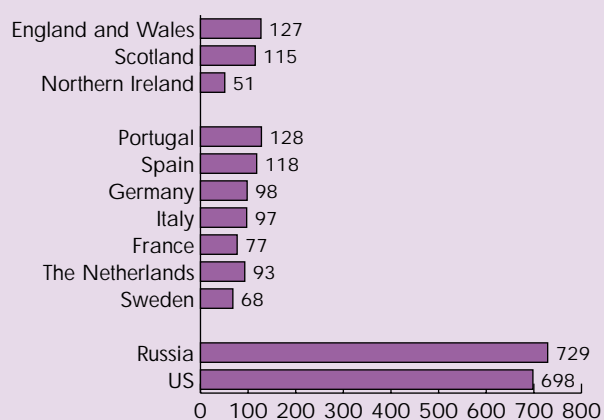
The proportion of sentenced adult male prisoners serving sentences of more than four years has increased from 42% to 47% over the last ten years. For females the proportion has decreased from 39% to 37% over the same period.

There were 4,810 prisoners serving life sentences on 30 June 2001. The average time served by prisoners serving a mandatory life sentence before being released on licence during 2001 was 13 years. Prisoners serving other forms of life sentence served an average of ten years.

International comparisons

The number of prisoners as a rate per 100,000 population in England and Wales in 2001 was 127 (Figure 2). This was the second highest in Western Europe – only Portugal

Figure 2 Number of prisoners per 100,000 population for selected countries in 2001



(128) had a higher rate. The US and Russia have the highest rates in the world.

Ethnicity and religion

On 30 June 2001, members of ethnic minorities made up 21% of the male prison population and 26% of female prisoners in England and Wales. Greater proportions of male white sentenced prisoners were in prison for violence against the person or sexual offences (33%) or for burglary (18%) than male black sentenced prisoners (27% and 10% respectively). Black male sentenced prisoners were more likely than white males to be held for robbery (21% compared with 12%) or drug offences (28% compared with 13%).

The religions with the greatest number of adherents were Anglican (37% of prisoners) and Roman Catholic (17%). Muslims accounted for 8% of all prisoners.

Prison discipline

Prisons reported 108,400 proven offences against prison discipline in 2001 – a rate of 163 offences per 100 prison population, the same rate as in 2000. The most common offences were disobeying lawful orders, threatening or abusive words or behaviour and drugs offences. The most common punishment was the award of additional days, followed by forfeiture of privileges and stoppage/reduction of earnings.

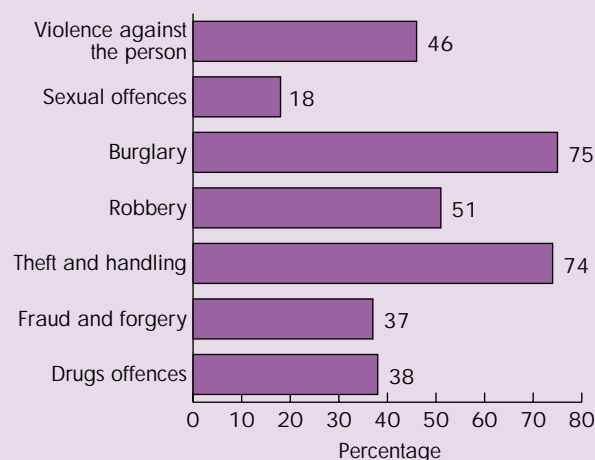
Reconvictions

Of prisoners released during 1998, the proportions reconvicted within two years were:

- adult males (55%)
- male young offenders (74%)
- females (52%)
- all prisoners (59%).

Figure 3 shows the proportions of prisoners reconvicted within two years for any offence, by the type of offence for which they were originally convicted and sent to prison.

Figure 3 Percentage of prisoners reconvicted of an offence within two years of release given for each category of original offence



Most reconvictions were not for the same offence as that for which the prisoner was sentenced originally. For most prisoners, theft or handling was the most common offence at first reconviction. The exception was those originally convicted for a drug offence, who were more likely to have a first reconviction for a further drug offence.

Of all sex offenders discharged from custody in 1998, 3% were reconvicted of a sexual offence within two years of release. However, few prisoners, whose original offence was not sexual, were reconvicted for a sexual offence within two years.

Home Detention Curfew (HDC) and parole

In 2001, 13,700 prisoners were released onto HDC. This is a release rate of 25% of those eligible, after the risk assessment. Only 5% of those released were recalled to prison. The most common reason for recall was failure to comply with the curfew conditions, accounting for 54% of all recalls. This included being absent from the curfew address within the curfew hours.

The rate of release for different types of prisoner indicates that a risk of reoffending is a key factor in the release decision. For example the release rate varied across the offence type of prisoners in a way that reflected risk of reconviction for different offences. Furthermore, 41% of women eligible for HDC were released onto HDC, compared with 24% of men (women tend to have lower reconviction rates).

Prisoners serving four years or more are not eligible for HDC but are eligible to be considered for parole. In 2001/02, the Parole Board considered 5,510 cases for parole and released 51%, the highest release rate since 1992.

Regimes, conditions and costs

Prison regimes, conditions and costs are reviewed in *Prison Statistics England and Wales, 2001*. The information includes:

- average time spent on purposeful activity per prisoner was 23.7 hours per week in 2001 (unchanged from 2000)

- time unlocked increased to 9.9 hours on weekdays and 8.6 hours per day at weekends
- 6,405 completions of programmes accredited as effective in reducing reoffending met the Key Performance Indicator target for 2001/02
- total education study hours increased by 1.2% between 2000 and 2001, to 9.8 million hours
- an average of 10,887 prisoners were employed in prison workshops, an increase of 4% on the 2000/01 average. Those employed in agriculture and horticulture averaged 1,744 prisoners – a fall of 12%, compared to 2000/01
- releases on temporary licence increased by 13,285 (5%) during 2001 to 270,122
- 11,204 prisoners were held two-to-a-cell designed for one in 2001, a decrease of 2% on 2000
- 11.5% of prisoners tested positive for drugs under Mandatory Drug Testing in 2001/02, compared with 12.4% in 2000/01
- in 2001 there were 13 escapes from establishments and 82 escapes from escorts
- there were 72 self-inflicted deaths in prisons in 2001, compared with 81 in 2000
- the cost per uncrowded place for 2001/02 is £36,535.

References

Elkins, M. and Olagundoye, J. (2001). *The prison population in 2000: a statistical review*. Home Office Findings No. 154. London: Home Office.

Home Office. (2002). *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 2001*. London: Home Office.

For a more detailed report see *Prison statistics England and Wales, 2001*. London: The Stationery Office.

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