

STATISTICAL BULLETIN: ROBBERY OFFENCES

Introduction

This bulletin provides information on volumes and sentence outcomes for adult offenders¹ sentenced for offences covered by the Sentencing Council's definitive guideline on robbery offences.

There are three definitive robbery guidelines: *Robbery – street and less sophisticated commercial*; *Robbery – professionally planned commercial*; and *Robbery – dwelling*.² These guidelines include offences covered by the Theft Act 1968 (section 8(1)).

The Court Proceedings Database (CPD), maintained by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), is the main data source for robbery offences overall in this bulletin.³ This has been supplemented with information from the Crown Court Sentencing Survey (CCSS),⁴ maintained by the Sentencing Council. Any figures shown which relate to the type of offence (for example robbery in a dwelling) are derived from the CCSS.

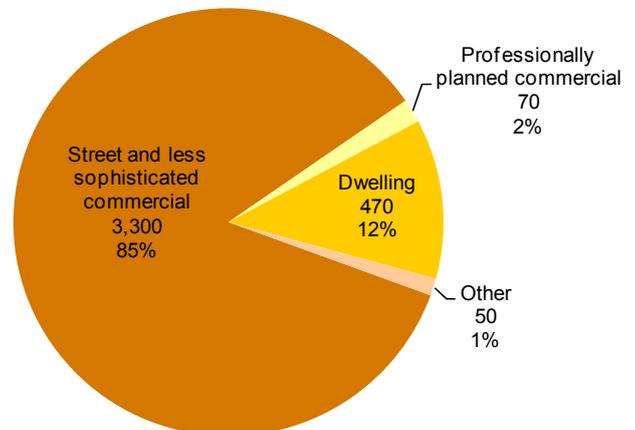
Additional figures are available to download as Excel spreadsheets at the following link:

<http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/publications/?type=publications&s&cat=statistical-bulletin>

Sentence volumes

- Over the last four years the number of adult offenders sentenced for robbery offences has been decreasing, from 5,500 in 2011 to 3,900 in 2014.
- In 2014, approximately 3,300 adult offenders were sentenced for street and less sophisticated commercial robbery offences (comprising 85 per cent of all robbery offences).
- Around 70 adult offenders were sentenced for professionally planned commercial robbery and a further 470 offenders were sentenced for committing the offence of robbery in a dwelling.

Figure 1: Number and proportion of adult offenders sentenced for robbery offences, by type of offence, 2014



¹ Includes adult offenders (aged 18 or over) at the time of conviction.

² This breakdown differs from the draft consultation guideline, and therefore these figures are different from the statistical bulletin published in October 2014.

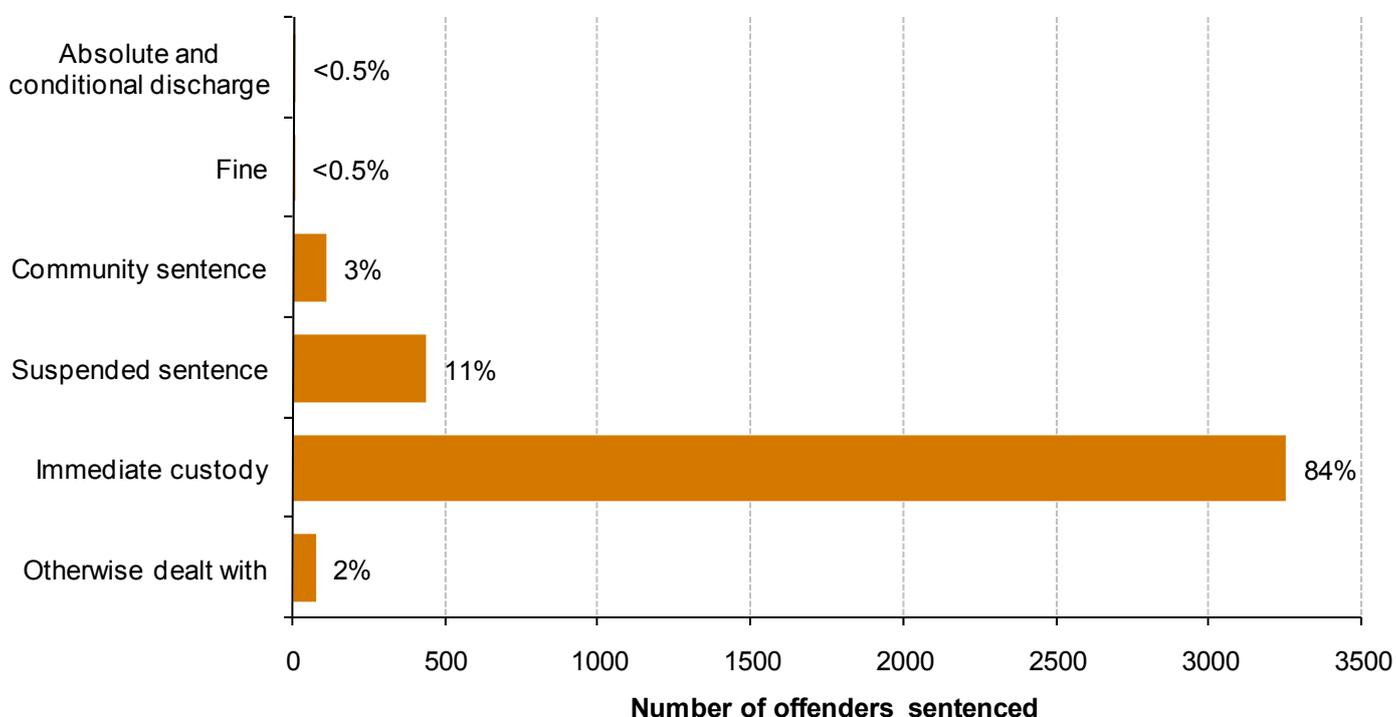
³ Robbery totals shown here differ from MoJ published statistics as these figures exclude offences of assault with intent to rob, which are included in MoJ figures.

⁴ From 1st October 2010 to 31st March 2015 the Council conducted the Crown Court Sentencing Survey (CCSS) which collected data on sentencing practice in the Crown Court. The CCSS enables analysis to be carried out on the location of robbery offences, where judges have recorded it on the survey form. The form includes the following locations: 'Street'; 'Park/Playground'; 'Shop/Business/Pub'; 'Bank'; and 'Other' (a free text box). For the purposes of this bulletin, the first three options have been grouped together to represent the category 'Street and less sophisticated commercial'. The category 'Professionally planned commercial' contains cases where the location indicated on the form was 'Bank'. The option to indicate that the robbery was in a dwelling is not explicitly available on the survey form and was therefore obtained using free text responses. Proportions have been calculated using those robbery cases where a location was provided on the CCSS form. In 2014, for 16 per cent of robbery cases recorded on the CCSS the location was not known or not stated.

Sentence outcomes

- Over the last decade, immediate custody has remained the most frequently used sentence outcome for both robbery offences as a whole and also for each different type of robbery, comprising on average around 84 per cent of sentence outcomes for all robbery offences.
- The use of community sentences has been gradually declining since 2007, and comprised just three per cent of all sentence outcomes in 2014.
- Conversely, the use of suspended sentences has increased during the last decade, and now ranges between nine and 11 per cent, which is comparable to the proportion of community sentences in 2004.⁵ These trends are consistent with that seen across the whole Criminal Justice System.⁶

Figure 2: Sentence outcomes received by adult offenders sentenced for robbery offences, 2014



⁵ These changes are as a result of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which made suspended sentences more readily available from 2005 onwards. Also more recently, the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment Offenders Act 2012 made further changes to availability by extending powers to suspend sentences of up to two years' custody (an increase from 12 months).

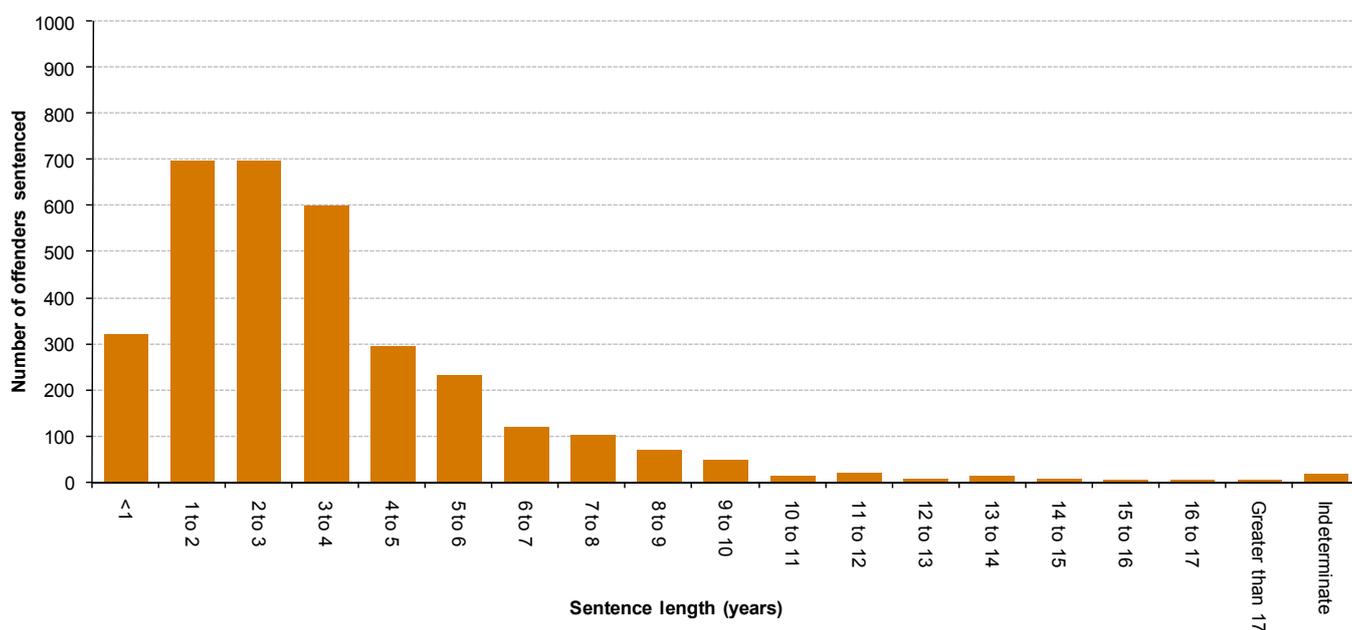
⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly>

Sentence lengths

- Since 2007 the average (mean)⁷ custodial sentence length imposed on adult offenders sentenced to immediate custody for robbery offences has been gradually increasing. In 2014 the mean custodial sentence length was 3 years 7 months, after any guilty plea reductions, and the median⁸ was 3 years 0 months.
- In 2014, 71 per cent of adult offenders sentenced to immediate custody for robbery offences received a sentence length of four years or less, while six per cent received a sentence length of longer than eight years.

Figure 3: Sentence lengths received by adult offenders sentenced to immediate custody for robbery offences, 2014

Note: Sentence length intervals do not include the lower bound, but do include the upper bound sentence length, for example the category '<1' includes sentence lengths less than and including one year, and '1 to 2' includes sentence lengths over 1 year, and up to and including 2 years.



- Offenders sentenced for professionally planned commercial robbery tended to receive longer sentence lengths, with just under a quarter receiving a sentence length longer than eight years, compared to 18 per cent for robbery in a dwelling and four per cent for street and less sophisticated commercial robbery.
- The mean custodial sentence length for street and less sophisticated commercial robbery in 2014 was 3 years 5 months, after any guilty plea reductions, and the median was 3 years 0 months. Professionally planned commercial robbery⁹ had higher mean and median custodial sentence lengths in 2014, which were, respectively, 5 years 0 months, and 4 years 2 months.
- The highest mean and median custodial sentence lengths in 2014 were, however, for robbery offences which occurred in a dwelling, with a mean of 5 years 8 months and a median of 5 years 4 months.

⁷ The mean is calculated by taking the sum of all values and then dividing by the number of values.

⁸ The median is the value which lies in the middle of a set of numbers when those numbers are placed in ascending or descending order.

⁹ Average sentence lengths should be treated with caution due to the low number of offenders sentenced for this offence.

Further information

Volumes of sentences

The data presented in this bulletin only include cases where the robbery offence was the principal offence committed. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences this is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe. Although the offender will receive a sentence for each of the offences that they are convicted of, it is only the sentence for the principal offence that is presented in this bulletin.

Sentence outcomes

The outcomes presented are the final sentence outcomes, after taking into account all factors of the case, including whether a guilty plea was made. This contrasts with the sentencing ranges presented at step 2 of the definitive guideline, which set out sentence lengths before taking into account certain factors, such as whether a reduction is appropriate for a guilty plea. Therefore, the sentence outcomes shown in the data are not directly comparable to the ranges provided in the definitive guideline.

General conventions

Actual numbers of sentences have been rounded to the nearest 100, when more than 1,000 offenders were sentenced, and to the nearest 10 when less than 1,000 offenders were sentenced.

Data sources and quality

The primary source of data for this bulletin is the Court Proceedings Database (CPD), which is maintained by MoJ. Every effort is made by MoJ and the Sentencing Council to ensure that the figures presented in this publication are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used. Subsequently, although numbers in the accompanying tables available online are shown to the last digit in order to provide a comprehensive record of the information collected, they are not necessarily accurate to the last digit shown.

Further details of the processes by which MoJ validate the records in the CPD can be found within the guide to their Criminal Justice Statistics publication which can be downloaded via the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>

The Sentencing Council's Crown Court Sentencing Survey (CCSS) has been used for the information on type of offence. This information was collected directly from the sentencer at the time of sentencing. In 2014 the overall national response rate for the CCSS was 64 per cent. National totals for each type of robbery (e.g. robbery in a dwelling) have been estimated using a simple weighting methodology. This involved using the proportion of robbery cases in each robbery type (obtained from the CCSS), and the total number of defendants sentenced for robbery (obtained from the CPD). In addition, these estimated totals have been used to produce estimates for figures on sentencing outcomes and demographics, for each robbery type, based on the relevant proportions from the CCSS. The figures for robbery as a whole (from the CPD) therefore cannot be directly compared to any figures split by robbery type. The latest findings from the CCSS can be found at: <http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CCSS-Annual-2014.pdf>

Contact points for further information

We would be very pleased to hear your views on our statistical bulletins. If you have any feedback or comments, please send them to: research@sentencingcouncil.gsi.gov.uk

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Further information on the Sentencing Council and its work can be found at: <http://sentencingcouncil.org.uk>