

Home Office Research Study 275

Offending in England and Wales: First results from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey

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Foreword

The Crime and Justice Survey is a new national self-report offending survey. It provides the first national self-report evidence on offending levels amongst the general population aged ten to 65 living in private households in England and Wales.

The survey shows that offending in the general population is uncommon with one in ten committing an offence covered by the survey in the last year. Offending is highest during the teenage years, with males being more likely to offend than females. However, even among this group many only offend infrequently or commit relatively trivial offences. A minority of offenders, though, are highly prolific and account for the vast majority offences measured. Targeting these prolific offenders and those most likely to become prolific offenders will therefore be an important feature of strategies to reduce crime.

The survey also shows that although most offences are not formally sanctioned a substantial minority of offenders, particularly the most serious or prolific, have contact with the criminal justice system at some point.

Future waves of the survey will follow up young people aged ten to 25. This will provide evidence on how offending 'careers' develop and change over time and allow further examination of the role of risk and protective factors. It will also provide further data on trends in youth offending.

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Executive summary

This report presents the first findings from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS). This is a new national survey covering around 12,000 people aged between ten and 65 living in private household in England and Wales. It provides a unique picture of the extent and nature of offending across the general household population, covering a much broader age range than in previous self-report offending surveys. The survey does not cover people living in institutions, including prisons, or the homeless.

The C&JS collected information on the extent of lifetime and last year offending. It also looked at drug and alcohol use, attitudes to and contact with the criminal justice system and experiences of victimisation. This report focuses on offending behaviour. It concentrates on 20 'core' offences which were measured by the survey (see Box 1). These exclude some offences that were asked about in less detail (handling stolen goods, various types of fraud, and 'technology' offences, such as illegally downloading software).

All 'core' offences were transgressions against criminal law, though they will inevitably include some incidents that are relatively trivial (e.g. a low value theft from the workplace). However, there is value in collecting information about such lower level activity. Minor transgressions can run alongside more serious offending. Exploring the full range of offending throws light on what differentiates serious and prolific offenders, and although individual offences may themselves be trivial, they can lead to significant social and economic costs at an aggregate level.

The report identifies serious and prolific offenders. Serious offenders are defined as those committing: theft of a vehicle; burglary; robbery; theft from the person; assault with injury; or the selling of Class A drugs. Prolific offenders are those who committed six or more offences in the last year.

Box 1 The seven offence categories and 20 core offences

PROPERTY OFFENCES

1. Burglary: domestic burglary*; commercial burglary*
2. Vehicle related theft: theft of vehicle*; attempted theft of a vehicle; theft from outside vehicle; theft from inside vehicle; attempted theft from a vehicle
3. Other thefts: from work; from school; shoplifting; theft from person*; other theft
4. Criminal damage: to a vehicle; to other property

VIOLENT OFFENCES

5. Robbery: of an individual*; of a business*
6. Assaults: with injury*; without injury

DRUGS

7. Selling drugs: Class A drugs*; other drugs

* denotes a serious offence

How many offend?

Although a substantial minority of people do transgress at some point in their lives most only do so on a few occasions, committing relatively minor offences. Serious and prolific offending among the general household population is extremely rare, and concentrated among teenagers, especially males.

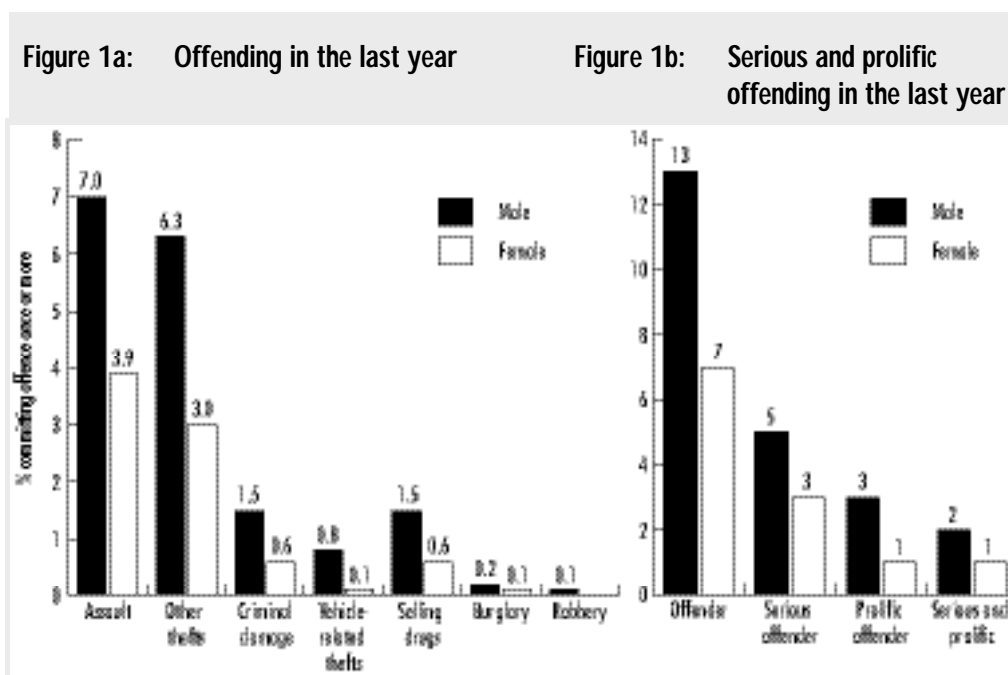
Lifetime offending

- Overall, four in ten people said they had committed at least one of the 20 core offences at some time in their lives. Miscellaneous thefts (e.g. from work, school and shops) were most common, followed by assaults (split fairly evenly between injury and no-injury incidents).
- About a fifth of lifetime offenders had only offended once; between 35 per cent and 40 per cent had done so on four or more occasions.

Offending last year

- Offending in the last year is far less common. One in ten people had committed a core offence in the last year.¹ Prevalence levels were low for most offence categories, except for other thefts and assault (Figure 1a). Robbery and burglary were extremely rare. Virtually all drug selling was to friends.
- Out of all 10-to 65-year-olds only four per cent had committed a serious offence in the last year; two per cent were prolific offenders. In all, five per cent were serious or prolific, and one per cent were serious and prolific – there being some overlap between the two.

1. Respondents were asked about offending in the 12 months prior to interview (interviews took place between January and July 2003).



- Overall, it is estimated that there were 3.8 million active (last year) offenders aged between ten and 65. The number of serious or prolific offenders is far lower. There were an estimated 540,000 serious and prolific offenders. A further 880,000 were serious but not prolific; 390,000 prolific but not serious.²
- A small group of offenders are responsible for the vast majority of offences measured by the survey. While prolific offenders form only two per cent of the sample and 26 per cent of last year offenders, they account for 82 per cent of all offences measured. These estimates are based on a sample of offenders in the general population and exclude those in prison or other institutions, for example. Other research has also demonstrated that offending is highly concentrated.

Gender differences

- Across most offence categories males were more likely to offend than females (differences were not statistically significant for burglary and robbery). Overall, 13 per cent of males had committed a core offence in the last year compared with seven per cent of females. Female offending is almost exclusively restricted to assault (with and without injury) and other thefts. Males are more frequently involved in a wider range of offences. The gender gap was smallest for assaults, though still males were almost twice as likely to have committed an assault.

2. All these estimates, being based on a sample, have confidence intervals associated with them. The high and low estimates are given in Tables 3.2 and A4.6.

- A half of all incidents committed by males were property related, 21 per cent were drug selling offences, 17 per cent non-injury assaults, and 14 per cent more serious violence. For females, non-injury assaults were a far higher proportion at 31 per cent, drug selling a lower proportion at 11 per cent.
- Males were more likely to be serious or prolific offenders (Figure 1b).

Age differences

- The C&JS is unique among self-report offending studies in surveying a wide age range. It supports other evidence that young people are more likely to be active offenders, at least for those offences covered.
- The peak rate of offending was among 14- to 17-year-olds (a third had committed a core offence), followed by 12- to 13-year-olds and 18- to 19-year-olds (both a quarter).
- Taking account of gender and age, the highest rate of offending was among boys aged between 14 and 17: four in ten admitted a core offence in the last year. While girls offended less, they did so at a more even rate throughout the teenage years – at around a fifth.
- Young males were also most likely to be serious and prolific offenders at around a tenth. Among females serious and prolific offending remains under five per cent for all age groups.
- Those aged between ten and 17 and between 18 and 25 each accounted for about a third of offences. Males aged between ten and 25 (14% of the sample) accounted for almost half (47%) of all offences committed.
- The majority of offences committed by juveniles are non-injury assaults or property offences. Among those aged between 26 and 65, property offences were most numerous (62% of incidents). For 18- to 25-year-olds, drug selling was almost as common as property crimes (38% and 40%).

The number of offenders and offences dealt with by the Criminal Justice System

The C&JS asked people about contact they had had with the police and the courts, in relation to any offence and also for 'core' offences. The results show that a substantial minority of offenders do have contact with the criminal justice system at some point, particularly the most serious. However, it also confirms that most offences are not formally sanctioned, though the sanction rate is relatively high for serious assaults.

- A quarter of those who had offended at some time in their lives had been arrested at least once, a fifth had been to court charged with an offence, and 16 per cent sentenced to a fine, community penalty or custody.

- Among serious or prolific lifetime offenders, about a third had had been arrested at some time, around a quarter had been to court and just over a fifth given a sentence (fine, community penalty or custody).
- The probability of sanction is lower when looking at the last year. Overall, six per cent of last year offenders had been arrested in the period, with only one per cent of all last year offences resulting in a court appearance. These figures will understate the sanction rate given delays in processing cases, but previous work has also shown only a small minority of offences result in conviction.
- The probability of an offence being detected and proceeded against varied. By far the highest figure was for injury assaults, where about one in five resulted in police contact. The lowest figure was for selling drugs, where less than one in 200 incidents resulted in police contact.
- Although, relatively few offences result in conviction, the criminal justice system does bring to justice offenders responsible for many offences. The C&JS estimates that those convicted in the last year were responsible for a quarter of serious offences reported to the survey. This will understate the proportion of serious crime accounted for by those brought to justice since the survey excludes those in custody and will undercount those serving community penalties.

Offending patterns

The 2003 C&JS provides some information on when people begin and cease offending. However, this is somewhat limited by the cross-sectional nature of the survey; further sweeps of the survey will provide richer longitudinal information.

- Among all those who had offended at some point in their lives the mean age of onset was 15. Male offenders had an average onset age of 15, female offenders 16. However, there was considerable variation in age of onset. About ten per cent of offenders first offended before the age of ten, while around a fifth only offended for the first time at 18 or older.
- Shoplifting and, not surprisingly, theft from school started earliest. Drug selling had a relatively late onset – (mean age at first offence being 19).
- For non-active offenders, the average age when they last offended was 23, although a third had stopped offending before the age of 18. Female desisters stopped offending slightly earlier (mean age 21) than males (23). Many ‘desisters’ had relatively short criminal careers.
- There was some evidence that serious and prolific offenders were more likely to start offending early and have longer criminal careers. Among active prolific

offenders, for instance, the mean age of onset was 12, while for serious and prolific offenders it was 11.

Seriousness of offences

To give an indication of the types of offences uncovered by the C&JS, last year offenders were asked detailed questions about the last time they had committed each offence type (up to a maximum of six).

- Around seven in ten assaults involved the use of excessive force (force exceeding a grab or push); 58 per cent involved punching or slapping, 25 per cent kicking but only six per cent hitting the victim with a weapon or object.
- While most incidents of damage and theft were relatively minor in cost terms, a significant minority were serious. This was particularly the case with criminal damage. A quarter of criminal damage incidents involved damage estimated at more than £100, as against 9 per cent of thefts.

Victim characteristics

- In three-quarters of incidents (excluding those directed specifically at businesses or organisations) the offender already knew the victim(s) in some way (just over half involving victims known well). Assaults and 'other thefts' were more likely to be against victims known to the offender. Only 20 per cent of violent incidents were against strangers.
- Assaults committed by females and young people were more likely to involve a victim known well – about three-quarters did.
- In almost four in five assaults the victim was male. Nearly all assaults by males were against males. In assaults committed by females, the victim was more often male than female, especially when the offender was older.
- Three-quarters of victims of assault were aged between ten and 25.

Co-offending

- A quarter of offences involved one or more co-offender. Co-offenders most often featured in vehicle-related thefts (62%) and criminal damage incidents (44%). Only about a fifth of violent offences and other thefts involved co-offenders.
- Most male offenders offended with other males, but only half of female offenders when they offended with others did so solely with females. Co-offenders tended to be within the same age group as offenders and were usually aged between ten and 25.

Motivations

- Most offences measured by the survey were not planned but committed on the spur of the moment: about eight in ten were. 'Other thefts' were most likely to be planned.
- Reasons for committing offences varied considerably by offence type. For example assaults were mainly driven by being annoyed or upset with someone, while vehicle-related thefts often happened because the offender was bored or wanted a 'buzz'. 'Other thefts' happened mainly because the offender wanted money or what was stolen.
- Motivations were generally similar for males and females, though in assaults, self-defence featured more for males than females.

Alcohol use

- Overall, one in ten incidents were committed when the offender had been drinking at the time of the incident, and two per cent when the offender had taken both drugs and alcohol. Drinking was most common in relation to criminal damage (40% of incidents were committed when the offender had been drinking, or drinking and taking drugs). It was also relatively common for vehicle-related thefts. The contribution of alcohol was, perhaps surprisingly, lower than this for assaults: in only 17 per cent of incidents of assault did the offender say he/she had been drinking. This figure, however, rises to 37 per cent of assaults committed by males aged between 16 and 25.

Drug use

Previous research among offenders in the criminal justice system has shown drug use to be an important contributory factor in offending. However, the C&JS shows drug use is rarely a factor, even less so than alcohol, when it comes to offending in the general population. This reflects the types of offender (often minor) and drug user (often recreational) picked up in the general population. Prolific drug offenders are unlikely to be picked up.

- Overall, five per cent of incidents were committed when the offender had taken drugs (or both drugs and alcohol). Offenders had most often used drugs at the time of vehicle-related thefts (11%). Having taken drugs was generally more evident in property crimes than in violence.
- For offences as a whole, two per cent of offenders said that being under the influence of drugs contributed to the offence. The influence of drugs was higher for shoplifting than other offences, at eight per cent. The figure was also relatively high (5%) for vehicle-related thefts.

- Another question asked current drug users whether they had committed a crime to buy drugs in the last year. Overall, just one per cent of all drug users and one per cent of all last year offenders had committed a crime to buy drugs (0.2 per cent of the whole sample). For drug users who had committed a 'core' theft offence in the last year, the figure rises to four per cent.

The relevance of sanctions

- In nearly three-quarters of incidents, offenders felt it unlikely they would get caught. Similarly, offenders were not usually worried about the consequences if they were caught. There were some differences across offence type. For instance, a higher proportion of those involved in vehicle-related thefts thought they were likely to get caught and were concerned about it.
- The question arises as to why people who think it likely they will be caught commit the offence at all. A higher proportion of those thinking they were likely to get caught said they offended because of revenge, were annoyed by someone, or were acting in self-defence. These spurs to offending, then, seem to serve to override an immediate concern about being caught.
- The most common reasons given for ceasing to offend were 'I knew it was wrong' and 'I grew up, settled down'. This suggests a natural process of maturation. The percentages giving these responses varied by offence type but ranged from about half for those selling Class A drugs to over 80 per cent for those who had committed criminal damage.
- However, a substantial minority of those who had in the past committed burglary, vehicle-related thefts, shoplifting, or drug selling said that being caught by the police, or fear that this could happen, was a reason why they stopped. The impact of official sanction in deterring offenders, then, appears to be relatively strong, but certainly not the main factor.

Methodological notes

The 2003 C&JS had a random probability sample design. The main sample comprised 10,079 people aged from ten to 65 living in private houses in England and Wales. The number of young people was boosted to around a half (N=4,574) as this is a group of key interest (weighting was applied to correct for this in analysis). In addition there was a booster sample of 1,882 non-white respondents. This report focuses on the main sample only. Results for black and minority ethnic groups will be available in due course. The response rate for the main sample was 74 per cent. Fieldwork (by BMRB Social Research and the National Centre for Social Research) took place between January and July 2003. The first part of the interview was interviewer administered; the second part

including the more sensitive questions was self-administered. Computer assisted techniques were used. The offending count module used Audio CASI whereby the questions and responses are pre-recorded and listened to by the respondents through headphones, as well as being presented on the computer screen. This was to make it easier for those with literacy problems to take part.

While the C&JS is state of the art in many ways it is still subject to the following limitations that should be considered in interpreting the findings:

Sample coverage – the C&JS covers the general household population. By definition it excludes those resident in institutions, including prison, and the homeless. As such it will exclude some of the highest rate offenders.

Sampling error – the estimates are from a sample and are therefore subject to sampling error. That is they may differ from the figure that would have been obtained if the whole population of interest had been interviewed. The degree of this error can be estimated. Throughout this report the differences identified are significant at the five per cent level i.e. we are 95 per cent certain that the difference exists in the population.

Non response bias – although the response rate is high for a large-scale general household survey, it may still be that non-respondents differed in key respects from those who took part. Other research suggests that non-respondents tend to be more delinquent than those who respond.

Accuracy of responses – respondents may be unwilling or unable to provide honest and accurate answers and this may vary across different groups.

The future

The plan is for the 2003 C&JS to be followed by three further sweeps (the 2004 survey fieldwork has been completed). Each will be restricted to 5,000 young people, with the sample comprising both a panel and a fresh element. Each year those aged from ten to 25 at first interview will be followed up for re-interview (the panel), while new ten- to 25-year-olds will 'top up' the sample to ensure it remains representative. Future sweeps, therefore, will not only provide data on trends in youth offending but also longitudinal evidence on the development of offending 'careers'.

This report presents the first findings from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS), a new survey commissioned by the Home Office. A sample of around 12,000 people aged from ten to 65 living in private households in England and Wales were interviewed between January and July 2003. The survey collected information on the extent and nature of offending, drug and alcohol use, attitudes to and contact with the criminal justice system and experiences of victimisation.³ This report focuses on offending behaviour. Respondents were asked about offending in their lifetime and in the last 12 months. This is the first nationally representative self-report offending survey to cover such a wide age range.

Survey aims

The main aims of the survey were to provide:

- A measure of the number of offenders in the general household population in England and Wales and the offences they commit, including those who will not have been processed by the criminal justice system. The coverage of offending behaviour is discussed later.
- An estimate of the proportion of offenders and offences that come to the attention of criminal justice agencies.
- An estimate of the proportion of active offenders who are young people and the proportion of crime they commit.
- Information on the nature of offences committed and, in particular, offender motivations.
- Information on patterns of drug use and links to offending.
- Data to identify the risk factors associated with the onset and continuation of offending and drug use, and factors associated with desistance.

Although the C&JS measures legally proscribed offences and the terms 'offender' and 'offence' are used throughout this report, it should be borne in mind that some of the incidents reported to interviewers, while technically illegal, will be relatively minor transgressions. This is discussed further below.

The C&JS was commissioned by the Home Office as part of a programme of surveys designed to measure levels of self-report offending and drug use among various groups in the

3. The British Crime Survey (BCS) is the national victimisation survey for England and Wales. However, because the BCS only covers people aged 16 and over, a module on victimisation was included in the C&JS to measure the experiences of children (see Wood, 2004).

population. It covers the general household population in England and Wales. By design, it excludes those serving custodial sentences at the time of fieldwork and it will pick up few who are serving community penalties. Therefore two other self-report offending surveys have also been undertaken. One is of those in custody – the 2000 Prisoner Criminality Survey (Budd et al., forthcoming). The other covers those serving sentences in the community – the 2002 Community Penalties Criminality Survey (Budd et al., forthcoming). A Home Office survey among arrestees has also been developed. Together, this suite of surveys help build a better picture of offending. However, there are important methodological differences between them and direct comparisons will need to be treated with caution.

Crime and Justice Survey design

The 2003 C&JS had a random probability sample design. The main sample comprised 10,079 people aged from ten to 65, just under a half (N=4,574) of whom were aged between ten and 25. Young people were over-sampled because they attract particular policy and criminological interest on account of evidence that they are most likely to offend and use illicit drugs. The C&JS, which is being repeated annually, will also be used to monitor levels of youth crime over time. A sufficiently large sample size was therefore required for robust estimates. Weighting was applied to correct for this over-sampling in analysis.

Importantly, though, the survey covered a wider age range than usual in self-report offending surveys, which normally focus on young people. This allows us to identify the proportion of crime for which young people are responsible, and how offending patterns differ with age.

The C&JS also included an additional ‘booster’ sample of 1,882 black and minority ethnic respondents to allow separate examination of their experiences. Results will be reported later.

The size, breadth and representativeness of the sample make the C&JS a unique source of data on offending in England and Wales. Moreover, it was carefully designed to take on board lessons from previous self-report offending surveys and incorporates some innovative techniques to improve the quality of the data collected (see Chapter 2).

Limitations

Although the C&JS is ‘state of the art’ in many ways, it remains subject to some limitations. The main ones are:

- Sampling error – based on only a sample of the population, estimates are subject

to sampling error. That is the results obtained may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population had been interviewed. Statistical theory enables us to calculate the degree of error. Throughout this report differences between groups are statistically significant at the five per cent level (i.e., it is 95 per cent certain that the difference exists in the population) unless otherwise specified.

- Non-response bias – despite the high response rate (74% for the main sample), it may be that non-respondents differ in key respects to those who took part. For example, those with particularly chaotic lifestyles might be difficult to contact and more likely to refuse. There is evidence from other research that non-respondents tend to be more anti-social than respondents (see Farrington et al., 1990).
- Accuracy of responses – respondents may be unable or unwilling to provide honest and accurate responses, and this may vary across different groups. Respondents were asked at the end of the interview how honest they had been when asked about offending and drug use. The results are encouraging with 97 per cent saying they answered all offending questions honestly (see Appendix B).
- Incomplete coverage of offences – the ‘core offences’ (see below) focus on mainstream offences such as robbery, assault, burglary, thefts of and from vehicles, and other miscellaneous thefts. But the survey does not cover all offences (e.g. sexual offences⁴).
- Exclusions from the sample – people in institutions (including prisons), or who are homeless are not covered.⁵ Also, a random general population survey will pick up relatively few ‘serious’ offenders because of sample size constraints.

Measuring offending

The C&JS covers a range of behaviours from minor anti-social and delinquent behaviours, such as truancy, under-age drinking and fare evasion, to serious criminal offences, such as robbery and burglary. The inclusion of low-level anti-social behaviour was deliberate. Its extent is of interest in its own right. Evidence indicates that young people are predominantly involved in less serious delinquent behaviour (MORI, 2003). Moreover, the inclusion of less serious behaviours can act as a ‘softener’ for questions about more serious transgressions.

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4. It would be impossible for a survey to cover all offence types adequately. Sexual offences, in particular, were excluded because legal advice suggested that assurances of confidentiality could not be given if such offences were covered.
 5. A study to explore the feasibility of including the institutional population in the C&JS concluded that it would be difficult, and that its inclusion would not impact on overall estimates of offending and drug use. Since only a small proportion of the population are in institutions, rates for this group would have to be extremely high for their inclusion to have serious impact on population estimates. A report of the study can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offending1.html>.

The focus of this report, however, is on the 'core' criminal offences covered by the survey (robbery, assault, burglary, criminal damage, thefts of and from vehicles, other miscellaneous thefts and selling drugs). For these offences, information was collected on the number of incidents committed in the last year; the proportion that came to the notice of justice agencies, and the circumstances of the incident, such as why it happened and the involvement of co-offenders.

The C&JS also covered some other forms of potentially more serious offending including handling stolen goods, various forms of fraud,⁶ and technology crimes such as sending viruses, hacking and illegally downloading material. Far less information was collected about these offences.⁷ They are therefore not included in the 'core' offences' analysis presented in this report, though Chapter 3 presents some results.

The 'core' offences all pertain to legal offences, but even so these will range in seriousness. They will inevitably include – and are meant to include – incidents that, while technically criminal, are relatively trivial and unlikely to provoke much in the way of a formal response if they were known about (e.g. a low value theft from the workplace). The result is that a relatively large proportion of respondents will admit to having committed some type of offence at some time. This offers scope for the challenge that the C&JS (like other self-report offending surveys) fails to differentiate minor offending from more serious criminality, giving an inflated estimate of the number of 'real' offenders. This challenge, though, can be taken too far. This is because:

- Minor transgressions can run alongside more serious offending.
- Exploring the full range of offending behaviour can throw light on what differentiates serious and prolific offenders from those who only occasionally transgress.
- Although many individual offences may themselves be trivial in terms of monetary loss say, they can add up to significant social and economic costs at the aggregate level if a significant number of people commit them, even if only occasionally.

Chapter 2 discusses the C&JS measure of offending in more detail.

6. Tax evasion, unauthorised use of a credit card, fraudulently claiming social security benefits and work expenses, and false insurance claims.

7. Many of these questions were only asked of respondents aged 18 and over. They were asked if they had committed the offences in the last year. They were not asked exactly how many times they had done so, nor about any resulting contact with official agencies.

For a general discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of self-report data, see Farrington et al., 1996, Hindelang et al., 1981 and Elliott et al., 1989.

The future

The plan is for the 2003 C&JS to be followed by three further annual sweeps. Each will be restricted to 5,000 young people, with the sample comprising both a panel and fresh element. Each year those aged from ten to 25 at the time of their first interview will be followed up for re-interview (the panel), while new respondents aged from ten to 25 will be introduced to 'top up' the sample to ensure that it remains representative.⁸

This innovative design allows the C&JS to better meet various information needs. The panel element will give longitudinal data to examine the development of offending 'careers' and identify factors that contribute to onset, continuation and desistence. At the same time, the sample will remain representative thus providing robust trend data on the prevalence of youth offending and drug use in England and Wales.

Structure of report

Chapter 2 provides an overview of self-report methodology and the design of the C&JS.

Chapter 3 presents findings on the prevalence of offending on a lifetime and last year basis. It provides estimates of the number of offences committed and the proportion committed by young offenders.

Chapter 4 examines levels of serious or prolific offending and identifies the proportion of crime accounted for by prolific offenders.

Chapter 5 identifies the proportion of offenders and offences that come to official notice.

Chapter 6 discusses patterns of offending in terms of age of onset, duration and reasons for desistence.

Chapter 7 outlines the nature of offences committed and comments on offender motivations.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the findings.

8. Fieldwork for the 2004 C&JS is taking place between January and July 2004. The aim is to achieve about 3,300 panel interviews and 1,700 fresh interviews.

Reports covering the other main topics in the C&JS (and the experiences of black and minority ethnic groups) have been published or will appear in due course. The main topics are:

- Anti-social behaviours (Hayward and Sharp, 2004);
- Fraud and 'technology' offences committed;
- Drug and alcohol use;
- Victimization among children under the age of 16 (Wood, 2004); and
- Attitudes towards crime and the criminal justice system.

This chapter discusses how the Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS) adds to our understanding of offending and crime. It discusses other sources of information and how self-report offending studies provide important complementary data. The chapter also outlines the design of the survey (there are further details in Appendix B).

Administrative statistics on offenders

Most information on offending is derived from the processing of known offenders. For example, there is information on the number of people cautioned or convicted, by offence, and the number of offenders in custody or serving a community sentence. Most data on offenders provide a snapshot at a particular point in time, but no sense of how individual criminal careers develop. An exception is the Home Office's Offenders Index (OI), a database of the criminal conviction history of individuals convicted since the 1960s. For example, the OI shows that 33 per cent of males and 9 per cent of females born in 1953 had a conviction for a standard list offence by the age of 46.⁹ This information is invaluable, but nonetheless captures only offending which is officially sanctioned. Many offences (and offenders) are never formally processed.

Police statistics on crime

The traditional measure of the amount of crime committed comes from figures of offences recorded by the police. These allow a fine-grained picture of the distribution of crime across different areas, but the count is limited to crimes that the police know about and that they record. Routine police figures say little about offenders.

Victimisation surveys

Evidence on the extent to which official statistics underestimate the 'true' level of crime comes from victimisation surveys. These ask a sample of the population to recall incidents of crimes against them or their household in a specific time period. They give little insight into the number of individual offenders involved, since some may commit many crimes. Nonetheless victimisation surveys are important in capturing better the 'real' amount of crime experienced, and how this changes over time – which itself may indicate changes in offending levels.

9. For further information on the Offenders Index see www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offendersindex1.html.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is the national victimisation survey for England and Wales, and has provided victimisation estimates over more than twenty years.¹⁰ The BCS indicates that there were 12.3 million offences against individuals and households in 2002/03, less than half of which were reported to the police (Simmons and Dodd, 2003). For offence types that can be compared with police figures, the BCS registers nearly three times as many as recorded by the police.

Self-report surveys of offending

Self-report offending methodology first gained currency in the 1950s and has since flourished as a tool to understand the extent and nature of criminal and delinquent behaviour. The methodology is based on the simple premise of directly asking people about their offending behaviour.

There have been several small-scale, localised surveys in the United Kingdom. The best known is the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development – a unique prospective longitudinal study that has followed up a sample of males from the age of eight into their late forties. It has been an invaluable source of information on the development of delinquent and criminal careers and the factors associated with onset and desistence (Farrington, 2003a). Several other local area surveys have emerged in recent years, including the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (Smith et al., 2001; Smith and McVie, 2003) and the Peterborough Youth Study and Adolescent Development Study (Wikstrom, 2003).

In terms of nationally representative surveys, the Home Office has previously commissioned the 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyles Survey (YLS) (Flood-Page et al., 2000), the 1992/1993 Youth Lifestyles Survey (Graham and Bowling, 1995), and a survey in 1983 covering juvenile delinquency (Riley and Shaw, 1985).¹¹ Each has been a cross-sectional survey of a sample of young people in England and Wales. The 1998/1999 YLS found that almost a fifth of 12-to 30-year-olds had committed one or more offence in the 12 months prior to interview.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) commissions an annual Youth Survey to examine young people's experience of crime, both as offenders and victims. The survey has been conducted since 1999. The 2003 survey included a sample of nearly 5,000 11-to 16-year-olds in mainstream schools and a sample of about 600 pupils excluded from school. Around a quarter (26%) of mainstream pupils had committed at least one of the offences asked about

10. The British Crime Survey only covers crimes against households and individuals aged 16 and over. It does not cover offences against commercial or public bodies, children, or those not resident in private households. It covers most 'mainstream' offences but is not comprehensive – e.g. it does not cover homicide or fraud. Further details about the BCS are at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html>.

11. Further details on the Youth Lifestyles Survey including links to reports can be found at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offendingyls.html>.

in the 12 months prior to interview. The figure was far higher among excludées at 60 per cent (MORI, 2003).

The International Self-Report Delinquency Study was undertaken in 1991/1992 covering 13 countries, including England and Wales. It examined cross-national differences in the prevalence of delinquency and aimed to identify any variability in factors related to it. Relative to the four other countries with similar sample designs, England and Wales had a lower level of overall delinquency (38% of those sampled had committed a delinquent act in the last year), although the comparability of the surveys remains in some doubt (Junger-Tas et al., 2003).¹²

These studies have consistently demonstrated that delinquency and offending is fairly widespread, although serious or persistent offending is much less common. These patterns are to be expected given that self-report surveys typically include many relatively trivial incidents that would often be considered marginal in terms of 'real' criminality. Farrington (2003b) summarises key findings from self-report studies on criminal careers and the causes of offending.

The Crime and Justice Survey

The current Crime and Justice Survey builds on previous national self-report studies. But it has been designed to provide more information than other studies and includes innovative data collection techniques to improve the quality of the data collected. A considerable amount of feasibility work was undertaken before the full survey was commissioned.¹³ The academic community was extensively consulted about the design of the survey.

The important features of the 2003 survey are:

- an extended age range from ten to 65, though with a sufficient number of young people to provide robust estimates;
- inclusion of a booster sample of people from black and minority ethnic groups;
- a large sample of around 12,000 respondents in total;
- a sophisticated questionnaire designed to give a better measure of offending than hitherto available;

12. The Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland all had nationally representative samples. The last year prevalence rates were 62%, 57% and 70% respectively. Spain, using a large stratified urban sample, had a last year rate of 59%.

13. Two feasibility studies were undertaken – one to test the validity of the self-report method for the general population (BMRB Social Research); the other to investigate the feasibility of conducting the survey among the institutional population (Office for National Statistics). Professor David Farrington was commissioned to summarise what had already been learnt from self-report offending surveys and to identify information gaps the new survey could fill. Professor Peter Lynn was commissioned to consider methodological issues. All reports from the feasibility phase are available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offendingcjs.html>.

- use of Audio-CASI to ensure respondents with literacy problems could participate; and
- a sample design to allow the future collection of longitudinal data for young people.

Age range

Many previous studies have focused on adolescence and young adulthood. The YLS only covered 12- to 30-year-olds, while the MORI Youth Survey conducted on behalf of the Youth Justice Board covers young people aged from 11 to 16.

The 2003 C&JS is much wider in coverage, sampling those aged from ten to 65. We can thus examine early development of offending and how it changes in later life, on which there is little self-report evidence. The extended age range also enables us to estimate the proportion of crime committed by young people. While future sweeps of the survey will focus on young people, the baseline data covering the wider age range fills a key knowledge gap.

Sample size and coverage

Many self-report offending surveys have relatively small sample sizes, which places constraints on the robustness of estimates. The 2003 C&JS had a comparatively large main sample of 10,079: 4,574 of whom are aged from ten to 25.

The questionnaire and its administration

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the research, academic and policy communities. The instrument was thoroughly tested before the full survey. Cognitive interviews tested comprehension, understanding and relevancy, including among those under the age of 16 and people known to have been involved in crime and drug use.

The interview included interviewer-administered and self-administered sections, both of which used computer-assisted techniques. Computer programmes allow the development of sophisticated questionnaires with complex routing and customised 'text fills'. CASI (Computer- Assisted Self-Interviewing), whereby respondents read the question and answer codes from the computer screen and enter their own answers, was used for the most sensitive questions about offending, alcohol and drug use, and family and educational experiences. CASI has the advantage over paper and pencil techniques of ensuring respondents answer all relevant questions in the correct order and prevents them pre-

empting later questions. There is also some evidence that CASI results in higher admittance of 'deviant' behaviours such as drug use and offending (Percy and Mayhew, 1997; Flood-Page et al., 2000; O'Reilly et al., 1994).

An important innovation on the C&JS was the use of Audio-CASI for the key self-administered sections. With Audio-CASI respondents listen to pre-recorded questions and answer categories through headphones and then enter their response into the computer. Audio-CASI has the advantage over normal CASI of permitting those with reading difficulties to participate without interviewer assistance – thus preserving confidentiality. Audio-CASI had not previously been used in a large-scale household survey in England and Wales, but was adopted for the C&JS because of the need to interview children and the particular sensitivity of the questions. It proved extremely successful in practice. Further details about Audio-CASI are in Appendix B.

Measuring offending

The main purpose of the C&JS is to provide more robust measures than hitherto available of the prevalence of offending and the number of offences committed. Key to this was careful design of the offence screener questions to avoid some problems identified in other surveys.

Offence specific screeners

Although the C&JS covers a wide range of anti-social and delinquent behaviours, only 20 'core' offences were asked about in detail. These core offences fall into seven broad offence categories: burglary; vehicle-related thefts; other thefts; criminal damage; robbery, assault, and selling drugs (Chapter 3 gives more detail).

The 20 core screener questions (listed in Appendix C) were designed to reflect the legal definition of offences but used simple descriptive language. Some surveys opt for fewer, broader screeners with follow-up questions to find out the types of offence committed. The danger with this approach is that the screener is inevitably 'looser' and allows greater ambiguity as to what should be reported. Although the C&JS used tightly worded 'screener' questions to measure offending it may still be that some incidents reported would not necessarily meet the criteria of an offence if they became known to the police. Respondents were asked details about the 'last' incident of each type reported to try and assess if this was a problem.¹⁴ There was no evidence that respondents were erroneously reporting non-criminal incidents though, as already discussed, the survey inevitably picks up some relatively trivial incidents.

14. Respondents could be asked these detailed follow up questions about up to six offence types, with the most serious offence types being given the highest priority.

Respondents were first asked if they had ever committed each of the respective offences even if it was a long time ago. Those who had committed an offence were then asked how many times they had done so, and their age at the first and last (or only) incident. Respondents were only asked if they had offended in the last 12 months if this could not be ascertained from the age information. The ordering of the questions was designed to encourage respondents to provide honest answers. It was felt that simply asking 'cold' about offending in the last year could discourage respondents from being honest.¹⁵

For all offence types admitted to respondents were asked how many such incidents resulted in police contact, a court appearance and a conviction. This was to allow robust estimates of the proportion of offences resulting in contact with the criminal justice system (see Chapter 5).

Avoiding double counting

A common problem in self-report surveys is double counting of incidents, particularly where a series of offence screeners are used. If questionnaires are inappropriately designed, respondents can be misled into reporting a single incident at more than one question. This was addressed in the C&JS by ensuring that offence screener questions were sufficiently specific, and logically ordered. Where appropriate, instructions were also given to respondents, for instance through the use of the term 'Apart from anything else you have already mentioned'.

The questionnaire was designed to try and eliminate an offender reporting a single offence on more than one occasion. However, it remains the case that incidents may be double-counted if, by chance, co-offenders are picked up in the sample. For example, if the sample includes two individuals who offend together and they both report the same incidents then the count of incidents will be inflated. In practice, though, it is unlikely that there will be many co-offenders included in the survey.

Counting the number of offences

Some previous self-report studies, including the Youth Lifestyles Survey, have asked respondents to provide banded frequencies for the number of offences committed in the last year. This has been justified on the grounds that prolific offenders can have difficulty recalling the exact number of offences they have committed. However, it means that survey analysts have to put their own figure on the number of offences committed – which poses a particular problem with a response category of "ten or more" for instance. The C&JS opted

15. This decision was based on discussions with the survey contractors and feedback from the feasibility study and cognitive interviews.

to use a banded approach for 'lifetime' offending, but asked respondents to give an 'exact' count of offences in the last year. This means that the range of responses is not artificially constrained and allows a finer differentiation between types of offender. However, it should be acknowledged that some respondents, for various reasons, may overestimate or underestimate the number of offences committed.

It is also important to note that the C&JS grossed up estimate of the number of offences committed by offenders is a count of individual instances of offending rather than of crime events. In a single crime event, for example, two offenders might be involved which would equate to two individual instances of offending. This is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Reference period

Interviews took place between January and July 2003. The 'last year' reference period pertained to the 12 months before interview.¹⁶ This was reiterated at each relevant question to ensure respondents understood the importance of the reference period. During the development phase the use of a paper calendar was tested to see if it helped respondents accurately recall events in the reference period. Feedback from respondents and interviewers suggested that this was not a particularly useful tool for most respondents and because it added considerably to interview length this was not used in the main stage.

Comparisons with other data sources

While the C&JS was developed with reference to other self-report offending surveys, it was not designed to be directly comparable with them. Nonetheless, some comparisons are made where relevant. Comparisons are also made with other data sources, including the British Crime Survey and the Offenders Index, though again these comparisons are problematic and the results should be treated with due caution.

16. Respondents were asked to think about the 12 months since the 1st of [month] 2002. So those interviewed in February were asked about the 12 months since the 1st of February 2002. The reference period therefore differed depending on the month of interview, but all offences would have fallen in 2002 or January to July 2003.

This chapter presents findings on overall patterns of offending. (Chapter 4 examines how we can differentiate serious or prolific offenders; Chapter 7 looks at the nature of offences reported to the survey.¹⁷) The focus is on the 20 core offences that were covered in most detail to provide a measure of the frequency and count of offending. These offences fall under seven broad offence categories:

- burglary (of domestic and commercial properties);
- vehicle-related thefts (thefts of and from a vehicle, including attempts);
- other thefts (including from place of work or school, shoplifting, thefts from the person and other thefts);
- criminal damage (to a vehicle and other property);
- robbery (of an individual or business);
- assault (with and without injury); and
- selling drugs (Class A and other drugs).¹⁸

While these are all legal offences, some respondents will inevitably, and quite correctly, report incidents that are relatively trivial, such as theft of a low-value item from work. Moreover, based on a random sample of the household population, the C&JS will inevitably pick up a relatively small number of high rate and serious offenders. Chapters 1 and 2 discussed these issues in more detail. Suffice it to say they need bearing in mind in interpreting the results.

The prevalence of lifetime offending

The C&JS estimates that just over four in ten (41%) ten-to 65-year-olds living in private households in England and Wales had committed at least one of the 20 core offences in their lifetime. Males were far more likely to commit an offence (52%) than females (30%).

Figure 3.1a shows the percentage of respondents admitting to at least one incident within the seven different offence categories. Across all offences, males were significantly more likely to be offenders than females. The only exception to this was for robbery which was particularly rare (less than 0.5% of respondents admitted to it).

17. Chapter 7 is based on detailed questions about the 'last' incident of up to six offence types committed. The rest of the report pertains to all offences reported at the 20 'core' screener questions.

18. The term drug selling is used as opposed to drug dealing because this more closely fits with the offence screener questions which ask about selling. Many incidents involved selling drugs to friends.

Among both males and females 'other theft', comprising theft from the workplace, theft from school, shoplifting, theft from a person and other thefts, was most common, followed by assaults (including those resulting in no injury to the victim). About a quarter of males and a tenth of females had at some time assaulted someone in such a way that they were injured. Lower proportions admitted other offences. Table A3.1 in Appendix A shows the results for the 20 core offences.

There are difficulties in interpreting patterns in lifetime prevalence by age. Older people will have had more time in which to offend, although at the same time they may understate their offending as incidents further back in time are more likely to be forgotten or even deliberately suppressed if the person no longer views himself/herself as an offender. Cognitive testing indicated that children were more likely than adults to respond literally. So, for example, a child who stole a small item from a school friend would admit to it, while an adult who had committed the same act many years ago would not - rationalising that it did not constitute a crime. With these caveats in mind Table A3.2 shows the results. Ever offending is highest among teenagers and gradually declines thereafter, suggesting that the probability of forgetting or concealing incidents does increase with age.

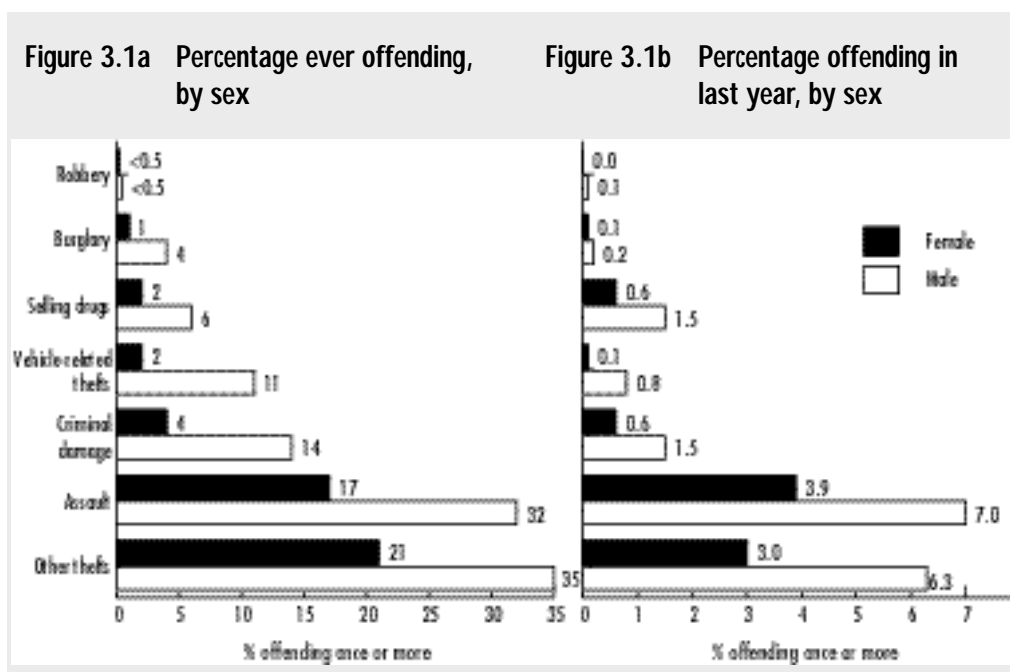
Frequency of lifetime offending

For each offence, offenders were asked how often they had committed it in their lifetime. (They could say whether it was only once, two or three times, or more often.) For most of the individual core offences a substantial proportion – between around 40 and 65 per cent – had only committed them once (Table A3.3). Theft from the workplace, selling drugs and non-injury assaults were more frequently committed, particularly selling drugs. Almost four in ten of those who had sold drugs had done so four or more times in their lifetime. So although relatively few people admitted to selling drugs, those who did had done so more frequently than was the case for other offences.

While it is not possible to derive an exact count of the number of offences committed, the indications are that almost a fifth (17%) of lifetime offenders had only offended once, while between 35 per cent and 40 per cent had offended on four or more occasions.¹⁹

The remainder of this chapter focuses on offending during the 12 months prior to interview.

19. Figures depend on whether one selects two or three as the figure for the count of those who committed each offence "two or three times".



The prevalence of offending in the last year

Ten per cent of ten-to 65-year-olds had committed at least one of the 20 offences covered during the 12 months prior to interview.²⁰ Again, males were more likely to have offended (13%) than females (7%). Prevalence levels were low for most offence categories (Figure 3.1b). Robbery and burglary were extremely rare. The most common offences were assault (5.4%) and other thefts (4.7%). Thus, while other thefts were somewhat more common than assaults on an ever basis, the reverse holds for last year offending. Similarly drug selling is somewhat more prominent in the last year picture than the ever picture, particularly for males. These changing patterns may well reflect the youthful nature of last year offending (see below), which is more driven by assaults and selling drugs. (Table A3.1 provides fuller details of lifetime and last year offending rates for the 20 core offences.)

Gender differences

Previous self-report offending studies have consistently shown that males are more likely to offend than females – although the gender gap varies according to the types of offence considered. The 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyle Survey (covering 12- to-30-year-olds) found that

20. Interviews took place between January and July 2003. Respondents were asked to think about the 12 months since the 1st of [month] 2002. So those interviewed in February were asked about the 12 months since the 1st of February 2002. The reference period therefore differed depending on the month of interview, but all offences would have fallen in 2002 or January to July 2003.

26 per cent of males had committed an offence in the previous 12 months, compared with 11 per cent of females (Flood-Page et al., 2000). Conviction data shows a greater gender difference, with males between the ages of ten and 45 being about four times as likely to have a conviction as females (Prime et al., 2001).

The C&JS results are in line with these previous findings. Overall, males were almost twice as likely to commit an offence in the last year as females (13% versus 7%). Among 12- to 30-year-olds the figures were 25 per cent versus 14 per cent – similar to the 1998/99 YLS despite the differences in the offences covered and survey design.

Females were significantly less likely to commit all offences categories, with the exception of burglary and robbery which was extremely rare for both males and females. The degree of the gender difference varied somewhat across offences, overall being smallest for assaults. This finding, though, was mainly driven by offending patterns among 18- to 25-year-olds. For young people aged between ten and 17 the gender differential was least apparent for 'other thefts', followed by assault.

Age differences

The burden of previous evidence has also been that younger people commit most crime, though again the age gap varies by source and offence type. The C&JS is unique among national self-report offending studies in surveying a wide age range. It confirms that offending peaks among younger people. Around a third of 14- to 17-year-olds had offended in the last year, and about a quarter of 12- to 13-year-olds and 18- to 19-year-olds (Table A3.5).²¹

Age and gender

There are some differences in offending patterns in the C&JS when age and gender are looked at together. Among males, offending peaks between the ages of 14 and 17 with around 40 per cent offending in the previous 12 months. Rates are significantly lower among 12- to 13-year-olds (25%) and 18- to 19-year-olds (29%). There is less fluctuation through the teenage years for females with the prevalence of offending remaining at around a fifth between the ages of 12 and 19 (Table 3.1).

21. The C&JS includes thefts from the workplace and from the school. The opportunity to commit these offences is highly related to age. Excluding these offences reduces the prevalence of offending among all age groups but does not alter the pattern – with offending still peaking among 14- to 17- year-olds (see Table A3.5).

These results broadly mirror those from other sources. Administrative data, for instance, show that the peak age for cautions and convictions in 2002 was 15 for females and 19 for males (Criminal Statistics, 2002). In the 1998/1999 YLS, the peak age of offending was also lower for females (14) than for males (18). Given different age/offending trajectories, the male to female ratio thus varies with age.

Types of offence

There are also some different patterns in the types of offence committed by males and females of different ages (Table 3.1). The main features are below. Property offences are all theft offences and criminal damage. Violent offences are all assaults and robbery, with results essentially reflecting the former since the prevalence of robbery is so low. More serious violence include only assaults with injury and robbery. Tables A3.4 and A3.5 present more detailed results by age.

- Female offending is almost exclusively restricted to assault (with and without injury) and other thefts. Males are more frequently involved in a wider range of offences.
- Both males and females aged between ten and 17 are significantly more likely to commit a violent offence than a property offence, albeit at different levels. However, if minor assaults without injury are excluded, violent/property rates become similar. After the age of 17 the prevalence of violence and property offending is similar (this applies to both males and females).
- For males violence peaks among 14- to 17-year-olds, at around a third. The peak age for property offending is 16 to 17. For females, the level of violent and property offending peaks in the teenage years – though within the 12- to 19-year-old age groups there are no significant differences.
- Drug selling appears to peak somewhat later – between 18 and 19 years for both males and females – though drug selling is rare and the differences are not statistically significant.

Table 3.1 Last year prevalence of offending, by age and sex (percentage committing once or more)

Percent committing ...	Property offence	All violent offence	More serious violence ²	Drug selling	Any offence	Base n
Males	7	7	4	2	13	4,676
10 to 11	9	14	9	-	20	313
12 to 13	15	18	12	<0.5	25	375
14 to 15	17	33	20	2	41	328
16 to 17	25	30	23	6	42	318
18 to 19	16	18	14	8	29	276
20 to 25	10	9	6	5	20	602
26 to 35	8	5	3	1	13	595
36 to 45	5	3	2	1	9	672
46 to 65	3	1	1	-	4	1,197
Males 10-17	16	24	16	2	32	1,334
Females	4	4	3	1	7	5,050
10 to 11	3	5	3	-	8	271
12 to 13	9	15	8	<0.5	21	338
14 to 15	13	18	12	2	23	299
16 to 17	10	15	11	2	21	327
18 to 19	9	11	8	5	20	204
20 to 25	6	6	4	1	11	723
26 to 35	3	2	2	1	6	742
36 to 45	2	2	1	<0.5	3	700
46 to 65	1	1	<0.5	<0.5	2	1,446
Females 10-17	9	13	8	1	18	1,235
All	5	5	3	1	10	9,726

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents.
2. Excludes assault without injury.

Number of offenders in England and Wales

By applying C&JS estimates of the prevalence of offending to the population in England and Wales aged between ten and 65, one can estimate the number of people who had committed at least one of the core offences covered by the survey during 2002/2003.²²

Overall, it is estimated that 3.8 million people aged between ten and 65 had committed at least one offence covered by the survey in the last year. Around 2.1 million had committed

22. Incidents of offending could have occurred at any time from January 2002 to July 2003 depending on the date of interview. 2003 population projection estimates for the England and Wales resident population, supplied by Government Actuary's Department, were used. There was a total of 19,224,864 males aged between ten and 65, and 19,278,566 females.

a violent offence, including 1.3 million committing assault with injury. An estimated 2.1 million had committed a property offence, and 400,000 a drug selling offence. (For Class A drugs alone, there were 150,000 offenders.)

These estimates are based on the accounts of offending given by respondents in the C&JS. For reasons discussed, one cannot be entirely sure that all those who may have offended were prepared to admit to this. The estimated number of offenders, therefore, could fall short of the 'real' number. Moreover, the estimates derive from a sample of the population and are thus subject to sampling error. Another sample may have resulted in different estimates. However, one can calculate the precision of the estimates. Table 3.2 indicates the range of estimates within which there is a 95 per cent chance that the true figure falls. So for example, one can be 95 per cent confident that the total number of 'last year' offenders is between 3.6 and 4.1 million, based on the proportion who admitted offending in the C&JS.

The overall figure breaks down into around 2.5 million male and 1.3 million female offenders in the last year. In terms of age, there were 1.4 million juvenile offenders (aged between ten and 17), 0.9 million aged between 18 and 25 and 1.6 million aged between 26 and 65. Thus although people over the age of 25 are less likely to offend, numerically they are still a significant group of offenders. Table A3.6 shows the figures for males and females of different age groups, with confidence intervals.

Table 3.2 Number of offenders in England and Wales (in millions)

Number committing...	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate
Any offence in last 12 months	3.8	3.6	4.1
Violent offence in last 12 months	2.1	1.9	2.3
Property offence in last 12 months	2.1	1.9	2.3
Drug selling in last 12 months	0.4	0.3	0.5

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Lowest and highest estimates based on 95% confidence interval range.

Comparisons with known offenders

It is difficult to compare C&JS estimates with figures of known offenders. First, criminal justice statistics usually count offending events rather than offenders. They therefore overstate the number of people convicted or cautioned, since some could have offended more than once. Second, and conversely, such statistics will undercount offenders unless all those involved in an incident are cautioned or convicted, which will not always be the case.

Despite these difficulties, it is clear that the C&JS gives a far higher estimate of the number of offenders than statistics from the criminal justice system. There were around 400,000 cautions or convictions in 2002 for the types of offence covered in the C&JS,²³ compared with the 3.8 million estimate from the C&JS. This is to be expected. The C&JS will include a large number of people who have only committed relatively minor offences that never come to the attention of the police, and which might not necessarily have resulted in a formal response if they had.

Number of offences

Thus far the focus has been on the proportion and number of offenders in England and Wales living in private households. It is also possible to estimate the rate of offending in the sample.

The C&JS estimates a mean annual offending rate of 0.77 offences averaged across the sample. This equates to 770 offences per 1,000 ten- to 65-year-olds in England and Wales. These include the 20 'core' offences against individuals, households and organisations covered by the survey, but will not be a full count of crime because not all types of offence are covered. At the same time, many minor offences will be included and some incidents that will have taken place outside England and Wales.²⁴ The estimate is also subject to a relatively wide margin of error. There is a 95 per cent chance that – based on offences respondents were prepared to admit to – the 'true' number of offences committed per 1,000 population lies between 560 and 980.

It is reasonable to ask how C&JS offence estimates compare with British Crime Survey crime estimates. In fact, though, the comparison is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the BCS covers crime events in England and Wales, while the C&JS covers individual instances of offending some of which may have occurred outside England and Wales.²⁵ Second, the offence coverage differs in the two surveys, though this can be controlled for to some extent.²⁶ Third, there are differences between the C&JS and BCS in how they record offences. For example, the BCS includes an extensive set of follow-up questions to ensure reported incidents are correctly classified, and meet legal criteria. This is not the case in the C&JS, which relies simply on carefully worded screener questions which are meant to elicit

23. If someone is cautioned or convicted twice for example they will appear twice in the 400,000 figure (source: Criminal Statistics, 2002). The C&JS, of course, excludes those of 65 and over but all indications are that this group has low levels of offending and form a very small number of offenders in official statistics.

24. Chapter 7 shows that one per cent of 'last' incidents reported to the survey took place outside England and Wales.

25. The C&JS estimate of individual instances of offending will always be higher than the number of crime events because more than one offender can be involved in a single crime. Unfortunately there is relatively little robust information on co-offending available to adjust the estimates, though the C&JS did collect some information.

26. The C&JS includes offences against commercial and public bodies, offences against children and drug dealing, unlike the BCS.

instances of behaviour that are meant to be 'criminal'. These and other factors mean that C&JS and BCS results are hard to align with much precision.

However, it is worth examining to what extent the two surveys' estimates differ – if only to help understand the nature of the two data sources. Restricting the C&JS to a subset of offences most comparable to those in the BCS and making adjustments for co-offending suggests that both sources give similar counts of violent crime. However, the C&JS under-counts comparable property crime relative to the BCS. This is likely to be because the highest rate offenders are under-represented in the C&JS sample and are responsible for a considerable proportion of crimes reported to the BCS. Evidence from surveys of convicted offenders shows that their rates of property offending greatly exceed rates of violent offending (Budd et al., forthcoming).

Volume of crime committed by young offenders

One objective of the C&JS was to estimate the proportion of crime attributable to young people. This has not been possible from national self-report surveys to date since they have not covered both younger and older people. (A partial exception was the 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyles Survey, which included people up to the age of 30. It found that the prevalence of offending fell after the age of 21, though it did not report on the proportion of offences committed by juveniles as opposed to young adults.)

Statistics of known offenders suggest that young people account for a disproportionate volume of crime. In 2002, the highest per capita rate of cautions and convictions for indictable offences for males was among 18- to 20-year-olds, and for females among 15- to 17-year-olds (Criminal Statistics, 2002).

The C&JS confirms that young people account for a disproportionate share of the volume of crime. Of the incidents measured, 35 per cent were committed by ten- to 17-year-olds (comprising only 14% of the sample), and 31 per cent by those aged between 18 and 25 (13% of the sample).

Young males account for the majority of crime committed (Table 3.3). Males aged between ten and 17 (7% of the full sample) accounted for 22 per cent of all the offences committed, and the same proportion of offenders. Males aged between 18 and 25 (again 7% of the sample) accounted for rather more offences (26%), but fewer offenders (15%) – indicating a higher rate of offending among those who said they had committed crimes. Females aged between ten and 17 (7% of the sample) accounted for 13 per cent of all offences. Overall, males aged between ten and 25 (14% of the sample) accounted for almost half (47%) of all offences committed.

Table 3.3 Proportion of offences, offenders, and sample accounted for by males and females, by age

	Male			Female			Total
	10-17	18-25	26+	10-17	18-25	26+	
% of all offences in last year	22	26	24	13	5	10	100
% of last year offenders	22	15	28	12	9	14	100
% of the sample	7	7	36	7	7	37	100

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Results are based on the 9,612 respondents who had information on number of offences committed.

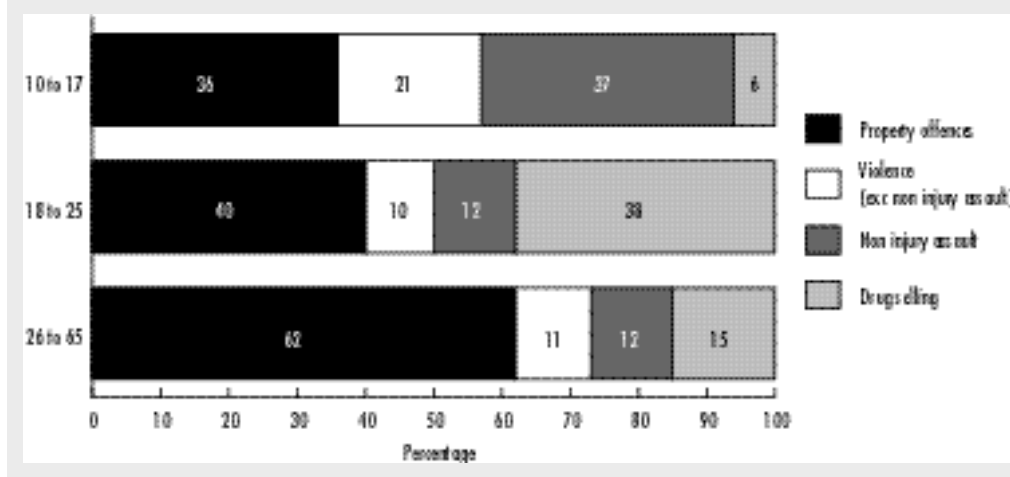
Profile of offences committed

Of all offences reported in the survey, just under half (46%) were property offences and just over a third (36%) violent offences – 60 per cent of these being non-injury assaults. Drug selling accounted for 18 per cent of offences committed.

The distribution of offences varied by age and sex. Almost a half (48%) of incidents committed by males were property related, 21 per cent were drug selling, 17 per cent were non-injury assaults, and 14 per cent more serious violence. For females, non-injury assaults were a far higher proportion at 31 per cent, drug selling a lower proportion at 11 per cent. Property offences formed 42 per cent of offences by females, and more serious violence 16 per cent.

Figure 3.2 shows how the profile varies by age group for males and females combined. Among juveniles (aged between ten and 17), violent offences account for the majority of incidents (58%), although non-injury assaults were dominant. Among those aged between 26 and 65, property offences were more numerous (62%). For those aged between 18 and 25 there is different distribution, with drug selling offences almost as common as property crimes.

Looking at violence in more detail shows that non-injury assaults account for over a third of crime by ten-to 17-year-olds. Among juveniles, non-injury assaults are most common, while among adults the proportion of non-injury and injury assaults is similar.

Figure 3.2 Profile of number of offences committed in different age groups

Non-core offences

This report focuses on the 20 core offences asked about in detail. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the C&JS also asked about handling stolen goods and various fraud and technology crimes. The approach taken was not the same as for the core offences. Many of the questions were restricted to people aged 18 and over and respondents were only asked if they had committed the offence in the last year. Here these other 'non-core' offences are briefly examined.

Overall, nine per cent of those over the age of 18 had committed a technology offence (dominated by illegally downloading software or music), eight per cent had handled stolen goods and six per cent had committed some form of fraud. The prevalence of these crimes is significantly higher than the core offences, with comparable figures for property crime, violent crime and selling drugs being four, three and one per cent respectively (see Table A3.7). Including the additional offences increases the overall prevalence of offending among those aged 18 and over from seven per cent to 23 per cent.

Young people aged between 18 and 25 were more likely to have committed handling, fraud or technology crimes than older people – 41 per cent had done so, compared with 20 per cent of 26- to 35-year-olds and 13 per cent of those aged between 36 and 65. This pattern held for the three offence categories separately, though was less pronounced for fraud.

The remainder of this report focuses only on the core offences. A subsequent report will cover in more detail handling, fraud, and technology offences.

The previous chapter provided useful indicators of the extent of criminality in England and Wales. However, it did not differentiate prolific offenders from those who had only offended a few times, or serious offenders from those who committed minor offences. This chapter looks at these distinctions. The focus is on offending in the last year. Frequency of offending is discussed first.

Frequency of last year offending

The C&JS asked offenders exactly how many times they had committed each offence in the preceding 12 months. Table 4.1 shows frequency of offending by offence category and, where numbers allow, by offence type. Drug selling was committed frequently (as was the case with lifetime offending). Almost half of those who had sold drugs had done so six or more times, with a mean rate of 13.9 offences per offender. Among those who had committed property offences, a fifth had done so six or more times, with a mean rate of 6.8 offences. For violent offences (assault and robbery), again a fifth had offended six or more times, with a mean rate of 5.4 offences. Assaults are by far the main component of violence, so the picture is dominated by these.

Table 4.1 Frequency of offending in last year among those who had committed each offence

Number of times committed	Once	Two or three times	Four or five times	Six to nine times	Ten or more times			Base n
	Percentages					Mean	Median	
Property offences	35	31	14	6	14	6.8	2	628
Vehicle-related thefts	60	14	7	5	14	4.8	1	78
Other thefts	30	34	16	5	15	6.5	2	543
Theft from work	30	37	20	3	11	4.9	2	292
Theft from school	41	40	9	3	7	3.2	2	201
Theft from shop	37	13	12	22	16	6.4	3	105
Criminal damage	57	27	5	5	7	3.6	1	159
Other damage	53	26	7	3	10	3.5	1	111
Violent offences	43	25	11	9	11	5.4	2	743
Assault	43	24	11	9	11	5.3	2	741
Assault - with injury	55	29	7	3	7	3.3	1	505
Assault - no injury	43	22	19	4	11	5.1	2	466
Drug selling	23	19	8	9	40	13.9	5	139
Sold other drugs	22	19	12	14	34	8.4	5	137
All offences	35	26	12	8	18	8.3	2	1149

Notes:

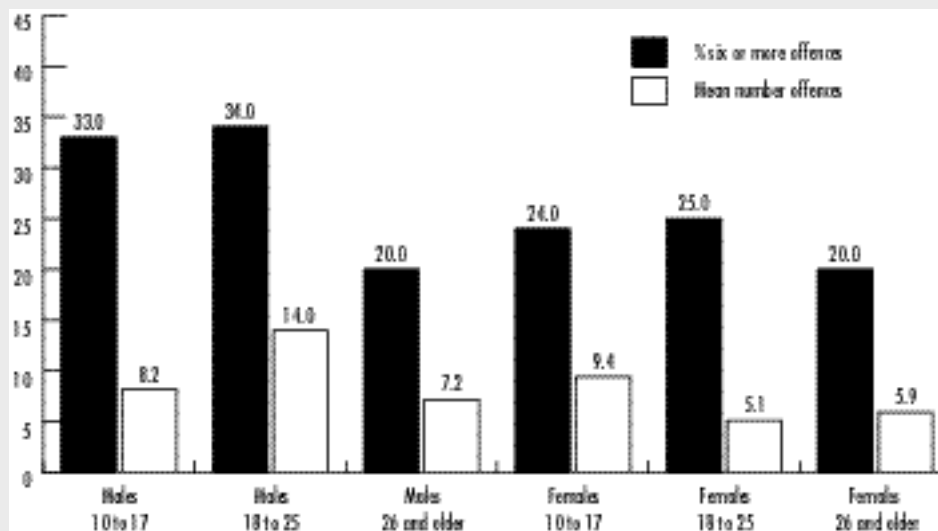
1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey. Weighted data. Based on those committing each offence.
2. The number of robbery and burglary offenders are too low to present the results separately, though they are included in violent and property offences respectively.

Turning to offending overall, just over a third (35%) of those who had offended in the last year had done so only once. A further quarter (26%) had committed two or three offences. Thus, the majority of those who offended did so infrequently. However, a quarter (26%) had committed six or more offences in 12 months, with almost one in ten committing 20 or more. The mean number of offences per offender in the 12-month period is 8.3, while the median value is two. The difference reflects the fact that the mean is influenced by a relatively small number of cases with very high values. The median, which splits the score distribution in the middle, is less influenced by extreme values.

The rate of drug selling is far higher than for other offences. But even if drug selling is excluded, the overall mean rate of offending falls only slightly to seven offences per offender, while the median remains at two. This is because a relatively small number of respondents sell drugs compared with other offences.

Younger males were the most frequent offenders. A third of 10- to 25-year-old male offenders committed six or more offences, compared with a quarter of female offenders in this age group (Figure 4.1). Among male offenders, the mean rate of offending appears to be highest for those aged from 18 to 25, while among female offenders the highest rate is among 10- to 17-year-olds. However, these figures are not significantly different to the rates for the other age groups so should be treated with caution. Similarly, although female offenders aged ten and 17 appear to have higher rates than for the same aged males, this is again not statistically significant. See also Table A4.1.

Figure 4.1 Rate of offending in last year among offenders, by age and sex



Prolific offenders

The terms persistent and prolific offending are sometimes used interchangeably. Some analysts conceptualise persistence in terms of offending over a long period, confining the term prolific for high rate offending in a short period. In contrast, some studies define persistence in terms of the number of offences committed in a relatively short period, such as 12 months. In the 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyles Survey, for instance, persistent offenders were seen as those who had offended on three or more occasions during the year.

The main focus of the C&JS was on offending over a 12-month period. The term prolific offender is used to identify those who commit a relatively large number of offences in that time. For the most part, 'prolific offending' is defined here as committing six or more

offences in the year, although one can examine different thresholds of prolific offending.²⁷ Table 4.2 illustrates this. For example, based on a definition of three or more offences in a year, almost a half (48%) of last year offenders (or 4% of all those aged between 10 and 65) can be classified as prolific offenders. However, with a definition of ten or more offences, only 18 per cent of last year offenders (2% of all 10- to 65-year-olds) would be so classified.

The differential between male and female offenders becomes larger the more stringent the definition. Across the full age range, a fifth of male offenders had committed ten or more offences, compared with 14 per cent of female offenders.

The level of prolific offending was similar among ten- to 17-year-old offenders and those aged from 18 to 25, but far lower among older offenders. In terms of the sample overall, around ten per cent of ten- to 25-year-olds in the sample had committed three or more offences in the last year, while about five per cent had committed ten or more.

Table 4.2 Percentage of last year offenders (and sample) committing defined number of offences

Percentages	Number of offences in the last 12 months								
	Three or more		Six or more		Ten or more		Twenty or more		Base n
All	48	(4)	26	(2)	18	(2)	9	(1)	1149 (9612)
10 to 17	51	(12)	30	(7)	20	(5)	10	(2)	580 (2486)
18 to 25	53	(9)	31	(5)	22	(4)	12	(2)	302 (1790)
26 and older	43	(2)	20	(1)	14	(1)	7	(<0.5)	267 (5336)
Males	49	(6)	28	(3)	20	(2)	11	(1)	741 (4608)
10 to 17	52	(15)	33	(10)	23	(7)	11	(3)	374 (1285)
18 to 25	54	(12)	34	(7)	25	(5)	15	(3)	200 (870)
26 and older	43	(3)	20	(1)	16	(1)	9	(1)	167 (2453)
Females	47	(3)	23	(1)	14	(1)	6	(<0.5)	408 (5004)
10 to 17	49	(8)	24	(4)	15	(2)	8	(1)	206 (1201)
18 to 25	51	(6)	25	(3)	16	(2)	7	(1)	102 (920)
26 and older	42	(1)	20	(1)	10	(<0.5)	4	(<0.5)	100 (2883)

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey. Weighted data.
2. Figures in brackets are based on whole sample.
3. Note that the figures are not additive - i.e., three or more includes all offenders/sample who had offended three or more times - not three to five times only.

27. The decision to use six or more offences to define prolific offenders was based on the need to have a cut-off that differentiated offenders while ensuring that there were a sufficient number of prolific offenders for subsequent analysis.

Serious offenders

As discussed in Chapter 1, self-report studies are often criticised for the inclusion of relatively trivial offences. The C&JS core offences all pertain to legal offences, though some incidents may nonetheless be relatively minor. Identifying the relative seriousness of different offences is difficult. Some offence types seem more serious than others by virtue of their description (for example, assaults resulting in injury will be more serious than assaults with no injury, and actual thefts more serious than attempts). Nonetheless for many offences relative seriousness is likely to vary according to what actually took place. An incident of criminal damage, for instance, may or may not have been more serious than a shoplifting incident, depending on the degree of damage done, or the amount stolen.

To gauge the nature of incidents reported to the survey, detailed information was collected about the last (or only) incident of each offence type committed in the last year, up to a maximum of six.²⁸ This covered details such as value of property stolen or damaged and the type of force used.²⁹ This information provides useful contextual information about the nature of offences reported to the survey, and findings are presented in Chapter 7. However, it is hazardous to use it to estimate the proportion of offenders who committed a serious offence since the last incident may not have been the most serious committed.

Thus 'serious' offenders are defined using the 20 core offence types. For the remainder of this report serious offenders are defined as those who have committed any of the following offences in the last 12 months:

- Theft of a vehicle
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Theft from the person
- Assault resulting in injury
- Selling Class A drugs

Based on this definition, 41 per cent of those who had committed an offence in the last year had committed at least one serious offence. This equates to four per cent of the sample aged from ten to 65. (In terms of lifetime offending, 21% had committed a serious offence.) Assaults with injury are the main driver of serious offending for males and females across all age groups. Just under 80 per cent of serious offenders were so defined because they had committed only injury assaults. This was more often the case with females (86%) than males (75%).

28. To keep the interview length to an acceptable level, only six offences were asked about in detail. For those who had committed more than six offences, there was a priority selection scheme.

29. The physical and emotional impact on victims will also be a factor in seriousness, but the offender may well not know this.

Table 4.3 shows how serious offending varied by age and sex. It gives figures for both last year offenders and the sample as a whole. Among ten- to 25-year-old offenders, the proportion of male and females who had committed a serious offence is fairly similar. However, female offenders aged over 25 were more likely to have committed a serious offence than their male counterparts. This is entirely due to them being more likely to commit an assault with injury; 31 per cent of female offenders aged 26 and over had done so compared with only 21 per cent of male offenders of the same age (Table A4.2).

Table 4.3 Percentage of last year offenders and sample defined as serious offenders

	% of last year offenders defined as serious	Base n	% of sample defined as serious offenders	Base n
All	41	1230	4	9859
10-17	53	640	13	2598
18-25	44	313	7	1835
26-65	28	277	2	5426
Male	43	793	5	4757
10-17	55	411	17	1351
18-25	45	207	10	891
26-65	24	175	2	2515
Female	40	437	3	5102
10-17	50	229	9	1247
18-25	42	106	5	944
26-65	36	102	1	2911

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey. Weighted data.

Overall, though, males were more likely to be serious offenders – reflecting the fact they are more likely to offend per se. Almost one-fifth of all males aged from ten to 17 (17%) were classified as serious offenders. Among males and females, serious offending peaked between the ages of 14 and 17 (23% of 14- to 17-year-old males and 12% of 14- to 17-year-old females had committed a serious offence) (Table A4.3).

The volume of serious crime

In terms of the number of last year core offences committed, a quarter were serious. A higher proportion of crimes committed by males was serious (28%) than those committed by females (20%). Offences committed by 18- to 25-year-olds were more likely to be serious (35% were), than those by younger (26%) or older offenders (15%). Thus, although young people aged

from 18 to 25 are somewhat less likely to commit serious offences per se than those aged from ten to 17, a higher proportion of offences they do commit are serious. Again, assaults with injury drive this result, since, if it was committed, it tended to be committed more frequently.

Table 4.4 shows the proportion of serious offences and offenders accounted for by males and females of different age groups. While analysis of all offences suggests a relatively even split between males of different age groups (each being responsible for about a quarter of all incidents – see Table 3.4 in Chapter 3), the pattern changes when the focus is on serious offences. Over a third (36%) of serious incidents were committed by 18- to 25-year-old males, a further 25 per cent by ten- to 17-year-old males and only 16 per cent by older males. That young males aged from ten to 25 are responsible for a disproportionate volume of crime is even more marked, then, for serious offences.

Table 4.4 Proportion of serious offences, serious offenders, and sample accounted for by males and females, by age

	Male			Female			Total
	10-17	18-25	26+	10-17	18-25	26+	
% of serious offences in last year	25	36	16	11	7	4	100
% of serious offenders	31	17	17	15	9	13	100
% of the sample	7	7	36	7	7	37	100

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

An offender typology

It is possible to create a typology of ‘last year’ offenders based on the number and types of offences committed. Prolific offenders are those who committed six or more offences; serious offenders are those who committed at least one of the offences defined as serious above.

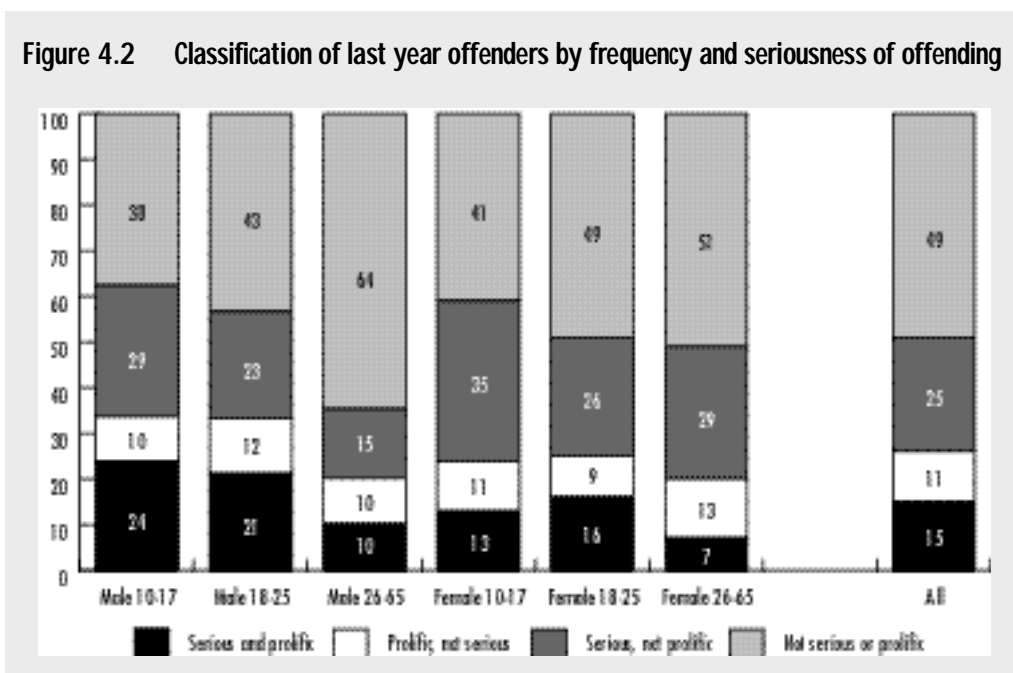
Overall, 15 per cent of last year offenders were both serious and prolific (a key group), 11 per cent were prolific but had not committed a serious offence, and a further 25 per cent had committed a serious offence but were not prolific.

A similar proportion of male and female offenders were serious or prolific (50% and 53% respectively – the difference not being statistically significant). However, there were some different patterns for male and female offenders. Female offenders were less likely to be serious and prolific than male offenders, and more likely to be serious but not prolific. This pattern held across age groups.

So, while males are more likely to offend than females and if they do so are more likely to offend frequently, female offenders do not differ significantly from their male peers in their propensity to commit a serious offence. If anything, older female offenders are more likely to commit a serious offence than males, driven by their propensity to commit injury assaults.

Overall younger offenders were more likely to be serious or prolific than older offenders. Around six in ten offenders aged between ten and 25 were, compared with four in ten of those aged over 25. A fifth of young offenders were serious and prolific (the key group).

Figure 4.2 presents the results by sex and age. See also Table A4.4.



The number of serious or prolific offenders

Examining the sample as a whole (as opposed to offenders only), five per cent of ten- to 65-year-olds were classified as serious or prolific offenders. Males aged from 14 to 17 were most likely to be in this group – around a quarter (24%) were. Among females of the same age, 13 per cent were serious or prolific offenders.

Those who were both serious and prolific offenders are of key interest. Of the entire sample, this applied to two per cent of males, and one per cent of females. The highest figure

among males was for 14- to 17-year-olds (12% of 16- to 17-year-olds; 9% of 14- to 15-year-olds). Among females serious and prolific offending remains under five per cent for all age groups. Details are in Table A4.5.

Again by applying 2003 population estimates to the survey figures, one can estimate the number of people in England and Wales who can be classified into different offender groups. In total, the survey estimates that there were 1.8 million serious or prolific offenders (95% confidence interval: 1.6 to 2.0 million). There were 880,000 serious only, and 390,000 prolific only offenders. The number of offenders in the key interest group – serious and prolific – totalled 540,000.

Table 4.5 presents the results by age and by sex (Table A4.6 gives the associated confidence intervals). Around three-quarters of serious and prolific offenders were male. Just under a half were aged from ten to 17. Around a quarter were aged over 25.

Table 4.5 Number of serious or prolific offenders (in thousands)

	Serious but not prolific	Prolific but not serious	Serious and prolific
All	880	390	540
Males	520	250	400
Females	370	140	140
Aged 10 to 17	390	130	250
Aged 18 to 25	210	100	170
Aged 26 to 65	300	170	130

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Sub-totals may not add to totals because of rounding. Figures to the nearest ten thousand.

The volume of crime committed by prolific offenders

It has already been established that the majority of respondents had not offended at all during the 12 months prior to interview, and that among those who had the majority had done so only a few times. Only 26 per cent of offenders (2% of the sample) had offended six or more times in the year (see Table 4.2). Taking this a step further, it is possible to identify the proportion of crimes accounted for by those who offended most frequently.

Table 4.6 shows that 62 per cent of all offences were committed by nine per cent of the most prolific offenders – i.e. those admitting 20 or more offences in the last year. This amounted to one per cent of the sample. Those who committed six or more offences (a quarter of offenders, or 2% of the sample) were responsible for 82 per cent of all offences.

Two-thirds of offences committed by males were attributable to 11 per cent of male offenders, while just over half of offences by females were committed by six per cent of female offenders. This suggests an even greater concentration of offending among female offenders than among male offenders, albeit driven by a relatively small proportion of female offenders who have unusually high offending rates. Table A4.7 presents the results by age.

Other self-report offending surveys have also shown that a small minority of prolific offenders account for a large proportion of all crime (Flood-Page et al., 2000; Farrington and West, 1993; Huizinga et al., 1995). The extent of the concentration depends on the types of offender and offence covered and how offences are counted. The YLS, for example, reported that around ten per cent of offenders (aged from 12 to 30) accounted for just under a half of all offences. This suggests somewhat less concentration than indicated by the C&JS. However, the YLS only collected banded frequency data on incidents committed and the calculation of the total number of offences was based on the lower bounds (e.g. for 6 to 10 offences the value of 6 was used). It is thus likely that the YLS underestimates the concentration of offending.

A model based on the Offenders Index also shows that crime is concentrated. This estimated that, based on conviction data, there were about one million active offenders at any one time. Of these, the 100,000 most prolific (those with three or more convictions during their criminal careers) accumulate at least 50 per cent of all standard list convictions (Criminal Justice: The Way Ahead, 2001).³⁰

The evidence thus suggests that focusing crime reduction measures on high rate offenders could bring disproportionate returns. Further analysis of the C&JS is being undertaken to identify the factors associated with prolific and serious offending.

30. These estimates are intended to be indicative of the concentration of offending; with different assumptions the figures will vary (Home Office Occasional Paper No 80, 2003).

Table 4.6 Proportion of sample, offenders, and offences accounted for by prolific offenders

Number of offences	Male			Female			All		
	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences
None	88	-	-	94	-	-	91	-	-
One	4	35	4	2	36	5	3	35	4
Two	2	16	4	1	18	5	2	17	4
Three to five	3	21	9	2	24	13	2	22	10
Six to nine	1	8	6	1	9	9	1	8	7
Ten to nineteen	1	9	12	<0.5	8	15	1	8	13
Twenty or more	1	11	66	<0.5	6	53	1	9	62
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Results are based on respondents who have definite information on prevalence and count of offending.

This chapter examines to what extent offenders and offences are dealt with by the police and courts. First, the C&JS results on the prevalence of offending are compared with data on convictions in England and Wales. The proportion of offenders who have experienced various official sanctions, and the proportion of offences processed through the criminal justice system are then estimated. Finally, an estimate is made of the proportion of offences committed that involved offenders already known to the system.

Self-reported offending versus convictions

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Home Office's Offenders Index (OI) holds conviction histories of about seven million individuals. Comparing OI data with the C&JS provides an indication of the extent to which conviction data underestimates actual levels of offending. It should be borne in mind that the offences covered by the two sources differ, and some adjustment has to be made for that. The OI covers all 'standard list' offences, comprising all indictable offences and some of the more serious summary offences. This is a broader range than the core offences included in the C&JS. For example, motoring offences and sexual offences are not in the C&JS measure. Of the C&JS core offences, attempted vehicle thefts and theft from the person are not standard list.

The OI can be used to estimate the proportion of the 'current' general population with a conviction for offences comparable with the C&JS. Table 5.1 compares OI results for 2001 with the survey estimates (the table also shows the unrestricted OI figures for all standard list offences). Two main points emerge.

- As would be expected, the prevalence of offending is far higher than the prevalence of conviction. For example, while nine per cent of 18- to 20-year-old males have had a conviction according to the OI, 63 per cent had committed an offence according to the C&JS and 41 per cent a serious offence. The differential is less among older age groups. On the one hand, this may be because if older people offended frequently, they will have a greater chance of having a conviction. On the other hand, it may well reflect the fact that the C&JS is likely to underestimate lifetime offending among older people. This is because, as discussed in Chapter 3, older people are likely to have forgotten incidents that happened when they were young and may be more likely to deliberately conceal incidents because of embarrassment or because they consider the incident too trivial to mention.

- The male to female offending ratio is far less than the conviction ratio. Thus while the likelihood of conviction for males aged from 18 to 20 is over four times that for females, the prevalence of offending is only 1.3 times higher.

Table 5.1 The percentage ever convicted and ever offended, by sex and age

Age group	Comparable subset of offences					
	% with conviction in the OI		% with conviction for C&JS offence in the OI		% admitting offence ever in C&JS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-17	2	-	2	-	53	37
18-20	12	2	9	2	63	51
21-45	28	6	22	5	59	33

Notes:

1. Source: The Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. The Offenders Index.

The OI data show that 24 per cent of males and seven per cent of females born in 1953 had a criminal conviction for a standard list offence covered by the C&JS by the age of 46. On the basis of those in the C&JS sample aged 46, 49 per cent of males said they had committed at least one of the comparable offences in their lifetime, and 30 per cent of females. This difference is not as large as might be expected given the existing evidence on the level of attrition between offences committed and convictions (see later in this chapter). The relatively small gap between C&JS figures and OI convictions may again signify the failure of older people to report to the survey all the offences they have committed.

There are difficulties in comparing conviction and C&JS offending data in addition to the issue of respondent recall discussed above. For instance, although the analysis presented is based on comparable offences this will not be an exact match. The C&JS uses relatively broad offence types whereas some legal offences are more finely differentiated. It may also be the case that offences reported to the survey are subsequently 'no-crimed', for example because of insufficient evidence, or are reclassified by the criminal justice system into an offence not included in the 'standard list' set. Nonetheless, the results at the aggregate level confirm a substantial gap between offending levels and conviction.

Further work comparing the C&JS and the Offenders Index is planned. This will help to explore the differential between offending and conviction in more detail. It will also throw further light on the validity of self-report offending data. Farrington (2003b) summarises previous research into the issue of the validity, concluding that validity is high for young males but less established for other groups.

General contact with the criminal justice system

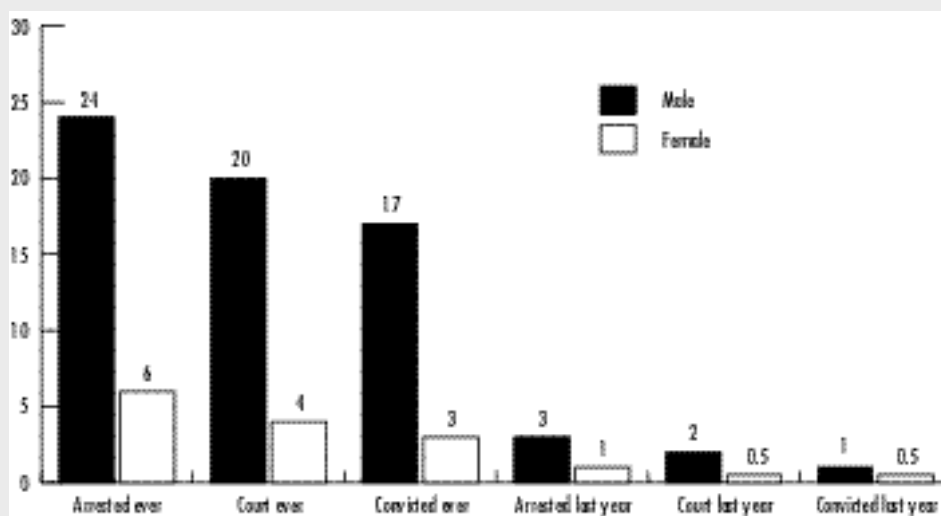
The C&JS asked all respondents about various types of contact they might have had with the criminal justice system, and whether this had been in the last year. Respondents were asked whether they had been:

- arrested by the police
- taken to court charged with an offence
- fined by a court
- given a community sentence by a court
- given a custodial sentence by a court

The focus here is not exclusively on contacts arising from the 20 core offences which respondents were asked about in the survey, but any contact arising from criminal or suspected criminal activity. Contact with the criminal justice system relating to specific offences committed is addressed later in the chapter.

Overall, 15 per cent of all respondents had been arrested at some time in their lives, 12 per cent had been to court charged with an offence, ten per cent had received a fine or community or custodial sentence. Only two per cent had been arrested in the last year. Males were far more likely to have had contact with the criminal justice system than females (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Contact with the criminal justice system, by sex



Note: Conviction refers to being given a fine, custodial, or community sentence

Table 5.2 presents the results by age. The figures for the per cent ever taken to court for an offence are fairly close to the unrestricted OI figures given in Table 5.1 on convictions. For example, 11 per cent of males aged from 18 to 20 interviewed said they had been to court charged with an offence at some time, while the OI shows 12 per cent of 18- to 20-year-old males had a conviction. These comparisons are of course not exact. If anything, one would expect the C&JS court appearance figure to be higher since the OI figures only include convictions for standard list offences, whereas the C&JS question relates to any criminal offence and will include some cases where the person was not convicted. The alternative C&JS measure of those given a fine, community or custody sentence does not, of course, cover all possible disposals e.g. conditional discharge. Finally, as the C&JS is based on a sample, the results are subject to sampling error. Given these caveats, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions but it seems likely that a small proportion of respondents forgot or otherwise failed to report that they had previously been to court.

Table 5.2 Contact with the criminal justice system, by sex and age (all respondents)

Percentages	Male			Female		
	10-17	18-20	21-45	10-17	18-20	21-45
Ever arrested	7	25	30	3	13	8
Ever been to court	2	11	24	1	3	6
Ever given fine, community or custodial sentence	1	6	21	<0.5	2	4
Arrested in last year	3	6	3	1	3	1
Been to court in last year	1	5	2	<0.5	1	1
Given fine, community or custodial sentence in last year	1	3	2	<0.5	1	<0.5

Notes:

1. Source: The Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

2. Table is restricted to those aged under 46 to allow comparison with figures in Table 5.1.

Offenders' contact with the criminal justice system

Lifetime offenders

Those who admitted core C&JS offences were, not surprisingly, more likely to have had contact with the criminal justice system, though this may not have necessarily been in relation to the core offence(s). A quarter of those who had offended at some time had been arrested, and a fifth had been to court charged with an offence. The figures were somewhat

higher for those who had committed a serious offence (33% had been arrested) or offended on six or more occasions during their lifetime (35% had been arrested) (Table A5.1).³¹

Last year offenders

For those who had offended in the last 12 months (one in ten of the sample), six per cent had been arrested by the police in the last year, three per cent had been to court charged with an offence, and two per cent had been given a fine, community or custodial sentence. While these figures suggest that only a very small proportion of active offenders are sanctioned, two caveats apply.

- The most important is that many of the offences measured by the survey will have been relatively minor, and would not have been expected to have resulted in a formal sanction. Most of those who steal from school or work, for instance, will not be caught, and even if they were, the incident might not have been brought to police attention. The British Crime Survey shows that many victims of crime choose not to report to the police because they consider the matter too trivial (Kershaw et al., 2000).
- Delays in the detection and processing of criminal cases will mean some offenders may be arrested and sanctioned after the survey interview took place for those offences committed in the reference period. On the other hand, active offenders who also offended before the reference period may well have been sanctioned for those prior offences in the survey period.

Prolific offenders (those who had committed six or more offences) and those who had committed serious offences in the last year were somewhat more likely to say that they had had some contact with the criminal justice system (Table A5.1). Eight per cent of prolific offenders and 11 per cent of serious offenders had been arrested in the last year, compared with just four per cent of last year offenders who were neither serious nor prolific. Among those who were both serious and prolific 14 per cent had been arrested, seven per cent had been to court, and six per cent convicted in the last year.

Contact for 'core' offences

In addition to estimating general contact with the criminal justice system, it is also possible to assess the proportion of last year offenders who were proceeded against for the specific

31. It is not possible to exactly identify those who had committed six or more offences in a lifetime so these figures are indicative only. Respondents were only asked a banded frequency item for each offence – once, two or three times or four or more times. To compute number of incidents the lower figure was used i.e. 'two or three times' counted as two and 'four or more times' as four.

offences asked about in the survey. Overall, 12 per cent had been spoken to by the police about at least one of their offences, although not necessarily arrested.³² Three per cent had been taken to court and one per cent convicted.

Table A5.2 shows figures for specific offence types. For the following offences around a fifth of offenders were spoken to by the police:

- Criminal damage to property (20% of those committing this offence were spoken to)
- Vehicle-related thefts (18%)
- Theft from a shop (17%)
- Assault with injury (16%)

Other offences were less likely to result in police contact. Those who committed thefts from work or school or sold drugs were least likely to have been spoken to by the police about their offence.

The 1998/1999 YLS also measured whether young people had contact with the criminal justice system for offences they admitted to. The approach taken was similar to that here, though the offence coverage and question wording differed. Overall, the YLS found that 12 per cent of last year offenders aged from 12 to 30 had received a caution or been taken to court for an offence. The C&JS estimate for last year offenders aged between 12 and 30 is similar – 13 per cent were spoken to by the police about a ‘core’ offence.

Offences dealt with by the criminal justice system

The previous section indicated the extent to which offenders had contact with the police or courts. The C&JS was also designed to enable estimates to be made of the proportion of specific offences committed that resulted in formal sanction. Those who had offended in the last year were asked for each incident whether the police contacted them about it, whether this resulted in a court appearance and whether they were convicted.³³ In interpreting the results, it is again important to recognise that many offences would have been relatively minor and may not have warranted an intervention. Delays inherent in bringing offenders to justice will also mean that the results underestimate the proportion of offences that were dealt with.

32. For the offence-specific questions, respondents were asked if the police had spoken to them about the incident(s) rather than whether they had been arrested. Thus this figure is higher than the arrest figure of six per cent.

33. For every offence type admitted to respondents were asked the number of incidents that resulted in police contact, court and conviction. These questions were not restricted to six offence types only – unlike the detailed questions on the nature of incidents reported in Chapter 7.

Overall, six per cent of incidents measured by the survey resulted in the offender being spoken to by the police, with one per cent resulting in a court appearance and less than one per cent in a conviction.³⁴ The likelihood of an incident being detected and proceeded against varied across offences (Table A5.3). For violent incidents 11 per cent resulted in police contact, for property incidents four per cent. Less than 0.5 per cent of drug selling incidents resulted in police contact.

The offence most likely to result in police contact was assault with injury – 19 per cent of such incidents did so. For all other offences the figures were appreciably lower. Whether incidents result in police contact is influenced by whether or not the police come to know about them, and then the information available to identify the perpetrator. Assaults, with the probable exception of domestic violence, are more likely to be visible than some other offences, and victims will at least have some information to help the police identify the perpetrator. Thus, the higher rate of contact is not surprising and is in line with other data. Around four in ten assaults were reported to the police according to the 2002/03 BCS, while the detection rate was 54 per cent (Simmons and Dodd, 2003). This suggests that just over 20 per cent of assaults should have resulted in an offender being charged.

Attrition between the number of offences committed and the number resulting in a conviction is well documented. Using British Crime Survey data on the number of offences as a baseline, it has been estimated that only two per cent of offences in 1997 resulted in a conviction (Barclay and Tavares, 1999).³⁵

Proportion of offences accounted for by known offenders

Previous chapters have discussed how many core offences, as measured by the C&JS, are accounted for by juveniles and prolific offenders respectively. This chapter now looks at how much crime is accounted for by those who have had some form of contact with the criminal justice system.

Table 5.3 gives results based on different forms of contact ever and in the last year. It shows that offenders known to the police are responsible for a disproportionate volume of crime. For example, the 15 per cent of respondents who had been arrested at some point in their lives were responsible for just over a third of offences measured in the last year, while the two per cent of respondents arrested in the last year were responsible for 16 per cent of offences. Thus, dealing effectively with those already known to the system could have a considerable impact on crime.

34. These figures are based on the proportion of incidents. They may be lower or higher than the proportion of offenders dealt with for a specific offence type depending on which offenders are dealt with and for how many offences.

35. This figure is not directly comparable with the C&JS estimate, being based on a different set of offences with no adjustment for co-offending.

Even so, the majority of offences (64%) reported to the survey were committed by those who had never had contact with the criminal justice system. This is to be expected given that many offences measured by the survey will be relatively trivial.

Looking at serious offences only, 29 per cent of incidents were committed by those arrested in the last year, while 56 per cent were committed by an offender who had never had contact with justice agencies.

Table 5.3 Proportion of crime committed by known offenders

	No contact with CJS	Arrested		Charged with an offence		Convicted	
		Ever	In last year	Ever	In last year	Ever	In last year
% of sample in group	85	15	2	12	1	10	1
% of last year offences accounted for by group	64	36	16	23	12	21	12
% serious offences accounted for by group	56	44	29	30	25	29	25

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

This chapter discusses some preliminary findings from the C&JS in relation to the nature of criminal careers, in particular when people begin and cease offending, career duration, and reasons for desistance. It also explores the extent to which offenders commit a range of offence types or specialise in one or two.

The findings are based on cross-sectional data. This places limits on what can be said about offending careers. Respondents can only look back in time, which introduces a possible element of retrospective bias – error in recalling the time and sequence of events. Also younger respondents may be reporting on a relatively short time, after which offending may begin or may not continue (see Farrington (2003b) and Loeber and Farrington (1997) for further discussion). It is also not possible to identify from the data how individual offending patterns change over time. Richer data will emerge with future sweeps of the survey in which the longitudinal ‘panel’ element will be better able to track developments in, and influences on, offending over time.

In this chapter, a distinction is made for analysis purposes between those who said they had offended in the last year, and those who said they had offended only before this. For simplicity, the former are called ‘active offenders’, the latter ‘non-active offenders’. Reference is also made to serious and prolific offenders, who form subgroups of active offenders (see Chapter 4).

Age of onset

Those who had ever committed an offence were asked at what age they had first committed it. We can thus determine age of onset on an individual offence basis, as well as for offenders as a whole. It should be remembered that respondents may have committed other offences or delinquent behaviours not covered in the C&JS, or not included here among the 20 core offences with which this report deals. This may have been at an earlier (or later) age. Moreover, because respondents were asked to think about the past, they may have forgotten relevant incidents. It should also be recognised that age of onset estimates are influenced by the age of those interviewed. For example, a ten-year-old can only have an age of onset up to the age of ten, while a 65-year-old can potentially have an age of onset up to the age of 65. Thus if only 65-year-olds had been interviewed a later age of onset would have been estimated.

Age of onset varied somewhat across offence type. Table A6.1 presents the full results.

- Shoplifting and, not surprisingly, theft from school started early; the mean age of first offence was 13. Of those who had shoplifted at some time, 21 per cent had done so before the age of ten.
- Drug selling and damage to a motor vehicle had a relatively late onset – the mean age at first offence being 20 and 19. The late mean age of onset for vehicle damage is perhaps surprising. It may be influenced by ‘road rage’ type incidents between drivers though the C&JS does not collect evidence to test this.
- Theft from the workplace also had a later onset (mean age 22), but this is less unexpected given occupational patterns.

The relatively high proportion of people who had committed some offences at an early age might initially seem surprising. For example, nine per cent of those who had committed a commercial burglary at some time had done so before the age of ten; as had ten per cent of those who had committed theft from a person. This is likely to reflect the diverse nature of incidents. Commercial burglaries, for instance, could include trespassing onto vacant properties and causing damage; thefts from the person could include taking things from fellow school pupils in incidents of bullying.

Among all those who had offended at some point in their lives, the mean age of onset was 15. The mean age for males was 15, and a year older for female offenders (16). Just over ten per cent of offenders had started offending before the age of ten (the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales), though again many of the offences involved may have been relatively trivial (Table A6.1). For serious offences, the mean age of onset was 17 (16 for males; 18 for females).

Previous research has suggested that earlier onset of problematic or anti-social behaviour is associated with escalation into more serious and prolific offending (Loeber and Farrington, 1997). It is possible to examine this by focusing on active offenders (i.e. those who had committed an offence in the last year). Overall, the mean age of onset among active offenders was 14. However, among active offenders classified as serious and prolific, the mean age of onset was lower at 11, while among prolific offenders only it was 12. Offenders who had committed a serious offence in the last year but were not prolific had a relatively late mean age of onset at 16 (Table A6.2). Compared with prolific offenders, serious non-prolific offenders were more likely to include females and those whose only offence had been assaults resulting in injury.

Age of desistence and length of offending

The term desistence is used for offenders who have ceased offending for a given period. Different studies have used different time periods free of offending to define desistence – for example, one year, two years or five years. Given that offenders may be active and inactive at different periods and move into different types of offending, it is difficult to determine from cross-sectional surveys (or even short-term longitudinal studies) whether respondents have desisted permanently.

The C&JS indicates that three in ten respondents had committed a core offence at some time but not in the year preceding the survey. Of these non-active offenders six in ten had been offence-free, at least in relation to the core offences, for more than five years.

For non-active offenders (those who had not offended in the last year), the average age at last offence was 23, though 15 per cent had stopped offending before the age of 14 and a further 18 per cent before the age of 18. Among females, the mean age at which they stopped offending was lower (at 21) than for males (23). Looking only at those who had not offended for five years the mean age at last offence is one year lower (20 for females and 22 for males).

Table A6.3 shows the results for individual offences. For example, among those who had stolen a motor vehicle at some point but not in the last year, the average age of last offence was 17. The age of desistence was older for drug selling (23), assaults (22), vehicle damage (20), and theft from the workplace (27). The average age offenders desisted from serious offending was 21.

Restricting analysis to non-active offenders, it is also possible to examine the length of criminal careers. This, of course, is only in relation to the offences covered, and is not exact being based on age at first and last offence counted in the survey. For example, if the age of first offence was 14 and age at last offence was 16 the actual length of time between the first and last offence could be from just over one year to just under three years. Three out of ten non-active offenders had definitely offended for less than a year. However, at least a quarter offended over a period of more than nine years – although this is not to say they offended throughout. Males had lengthier criminal careers than females (Table 6.1). Almost four in ten non-active females had definitely offended for less than a year; a quarter for males. Those who had committed a serious offence at some point had longer careers – only 19 per cent definitely offended for less than a year, compared with 40 per cent of those who had not committed a serious offence.

The results on career length are broadly similar if the focus is on those who had not offended for five years.

Table 6.1 Length of criminal careers among those who have desisted (non-active offenders)

Length of criminal career	Males desisters	Female desisters	All desisters
	%	%	%
Definitely less than 1 year	25	38	30
Less than 1 year to less than 2 years	5	5	5
More than 1 year, less than 3 years	5	4	5
More than 2 years, less than 4 years	3	4	3
More than 3 years, less than 5 years	4	4	4
More than 4 years, less than 10 years	15	11	13
More than 9 years, less than 15 years	11	7	9
More than 14 years	17	10	15
Unknown	15	17	16
Base n	1,693	1,210	2,903

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Desisters are those who have offended at some time but not in the last year
3. There is some overlap between the categories because of uncertainty about the exact time between first and last offence. However, respondents are only assigned to one category.

Reasons for desistence

Non-active offenders were asked why they had not committed an offence again. It should be borne in mind that what they said could reflect more their current thinking than reasons at the time; some respondents may have post-rationalised their reasons for having stopped offending.

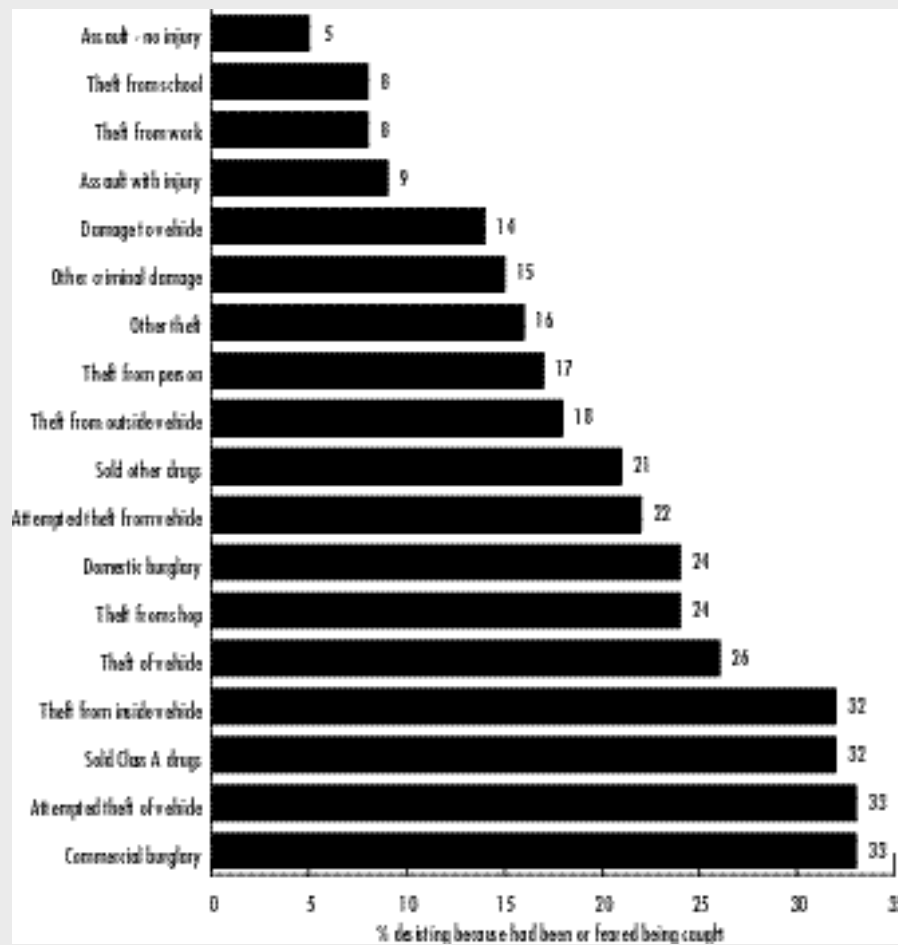
By far the two most commonly cited reasons were that 'I knew it was wrong' and 'I grew up and/or settled down'. The percentages giving these responses varied by offence type but ranged from 53 per cent for selling Class A drugs to 83 per cent for damage to property. For those who said they 'grew out of crime', it may simply have been that moral constraints overrode the excitement seeking or peer pressure that previously encouraged them to offend. Previous research has suggested that, particularly for young men, a stable relationship with a non-offending partner, or moving away from a peer group encourages desistence (Farrington, 2001).

Being caught by the police, or fear that this could happen and the likely sentence that would result, was cited by a substantial minority of those who had admitted to: burglary; vehicle-

related thefts; shoplifting and drug selling (Figure 6.1). The impact of an official sanction in deterring offenders, therefore, appears to be relatively strong, but certainly not the main factor.

The pattern for drug selling differs somewhat from that for property and violent offences. Only a quarter of former drug sellers said they gave up dealing because 'I knew it was wrong', while for other offences between 42 per cent and 59 per cent said this. Conversely, while a third of drug sellers said stopping using drugs was a reason why they gave up selling, this was mentioned by a very small proportion for property and violent offences. Table A6.4 gives the full results.

Figure 6.1 Percentage who said one reason for desisting was experience or fear of being caught



Specialisation versus diversification

An important question in criminal career research is to what extent offenders specialise, or engage in many different forms of offending. Do those who commit property offences also commit violent offences, for example? There are several ways of looking at this using C&JS results both on a lifetime and last year basis.

Given that some offence types are similar in nature (e.g. theft of a vehicle and attempted theft of a vehicle), seven broad offence categories were looked at (burglary, vehicle-related theft, other theft, criminal damage, robbery, assault, and drug selling). A half of lifetime offenders (active and non-active) had only committed offences within one of the seven offence categories; a further quarter had offended in two categories. The degree of specialisation is, not surprisingly, higher when looking at the last year: three-quarters of active offenders had committed offences within only one of the seven categories in the period.

Table 6.2 Number of offence categories committed

Percentages	Active and non-active offenders	Active offenders
Number of offence categories	...in lifetime	...in last year
One	51	76
Two	26	13
Three	12	4
Four	6	1
Five	2	1
Six or seven	1	<0.5
Unknown but at least one	2	5
Base n	4,174	1,263

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

On a lifetime basis, female offenders were less likely to commit offences in more than one category than males (37% of female offenders had done so; 53% of males). However, when focusing on last year offending there is no difference (17% of female active offenders, 20% of male active offenders). Active offenders aged from 12 to 19 were most diverse on this measure, though still around six in ten had only committed offences in one category in the last year (Table A6.5).³⁶

The degree of specialisation found in the C&JS reflects the fact that the survey identifies a considerable proportion of people who have only committed a few minor offences. Those

36. Age patterns are not explored on a lifetime basis because length of recall period is determined by age.

who have contact with the criminal justice system tend to be more diverse. Restricting the analysis to lifetime offenders who had received a court sentence demonstrates this. Around two-thirds of these offenders had committed two or more offence categories, with a fifth committing offences across four or more categories.

Offending profile

Looking at the three broad offence groupings of property crime, violent crime and drug selling, the most common offending patterns on a lifetime basis were:

- property crime only (35% of active and non-active offenders)
- property crime and violent crime (32%)
- violent crime only (22%).

The profile among male and female offenders differed somewhat, with males being more likely to offend across groups (Table 6.3). For females the most common pattern was property crime only; for males it was a mixture of property and violent crime, closely followed by property only.

Table 6.3 Offence profile among active and non-active offenders

Percentages	Male offenders	Female offenders	All offenders
Offence profile in lifetime	%	%	%
Property offences only	32	39	35
Violent offences only	20	25	22
Drug selling only	1	1	1
Property and violence	35	28	32
Violence and drug selling	1	<0.5	<0.5
Property and drug selling	3	2	3
Violence, property and drug selling	8	4	6
Any property offence	78	74	77
Any violence offence	64	58	61
Any drug selling offence	11	7	10
Base n	2,507	1,667	4,174

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A6.6 presents the last year offence profile for active offenders. On this basis, active female offenders were most likely to commit violent offences only (41%), followed by property offences only (34%). Male active offenders were more evenly split between

property offences only (38%) and violent offences only (34%). Juvenile offenders were most diverse, with 22 per cent committing both property and violent offences in the last year. One in ten 18- to 25-year-old active offenders had only sold drugs.

Endnote

A key issue in criminal career research is the extent to which it is possible to differentiate between different career paths and offender types. For example, Moffitt (2003) distinguished between life course persistent offenders and adolescence limited offenders. While the former have lengthy and often diverse criminal careers, the latter tend to have short careers limited to adolescence, with behaviour often influenced by peers. Furthermore, criminal career researchers have argued that the factors that influence the onset of offending behaviour are not necessarily the same as those that contribute to persistence (e.g. Blumstein et al., 1988).

The cross sectional data currently available from the C&JS indicates that many offenders only offend during a short period, although a significant group do have lengthy criminal careers. However, this is based simply on retrospective data relating to age of first and last offence. It is not known to what extent offending in this time was sporadic or continuous, how frequent offending was during offending periods, or what offences were committed at different points

Further work will be undertaken to examine the differences between offenders and non-offenders, and to identify factors associated with serious and prolific offending. While the 2003 C&JS will be able to provide useful findings, the future longitudinal data will provide a far richer source of data on criminal careers. In particular, it will enable the examination of continuity and discontinuity over time in offending patterns and developmental sequences in problem behaviours.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the C&JS included an incident form to collect details of offences committed in the last year. A maximum of six incident forms could be completed, with a priority selection procedure used if the number of offences exceeded six. If someone had committed a particular offence more than once, they were asked about the most recent incident. This technique is commonly used in survey research to reduce the burden on respondents, and because some may find it difficult to remember earlier incidents. What it means, though, is that the details collected are for one incident only, which may or may not be typical of others.³⁷

The incident form was used to provide an insight into the nature of offences measured by the survey, in particular the severity of incidents. It also collected information on co-offending and offender motivation.

The incident forms (n = 1,960) were comprised of:³⁸

- Burglary – 19 incidents
- Vehicle-related thefts – 91 incidents
- Other thefts – 631 incidents
- Criminal damage – 157 incidents
- Robbery – 9 incidents
- Assault – 901 incidents
- Drug selling – 152 incidents

The number of incidents of burglary and robbery are too small to present detailed results, though they are included in overall results for property crime and violent crime respectively. Drug selling incidents did not receive the full incident form, but only a question to ascertain to whom the respondent had sold drugs. In 95 per cent of incidents the respondent had sold drugs to a friend.

Where numbers allow, results have been analysed by sex and age. The age grouping used is from ten to 15, from 16 to 25 and 26 or older – in line with response categories to questions on the age of victims and co-offenders.

37. Whether or not offenders who have committed more than one offence actually do report on the last incident is unknown. Some may remember a particular incident better than others and report on this, even if it was not strictly the last one.

38. Incident forms were only asked for offences committed in England and Wales (99% were).

Where and when incidents happened

Whether offenders commit offences in their own locality or travel elsewhere has implications for the interpretation of various data sources and crime reduction policies. Overall, 42 per cent of offences were committed in the local area (within 15 minutes of home). Two-thirds of vehicle-related thefts, just over half of criminal damage offences, and a half of assaults were committed locally. Other thefts were less likely to be local – only 28 per cent were (Table A7.1). Research in Sheffield also showed that the vast majority of offender movements are relatively short – more than half of crime trips being less than two miles. High volume crime was highly localised, especially domestic burglary and criminal damage offences (Wiles and Costello, 2000).

The timing of offences differed somewhat by offence type. The majority of assaults happened in the evening or afternoon. A third of vehicle-related thefts happened in the afternoon, and a further third at night. Other thefts were particularly likely to happen in the afternoon – 46 per cent did (Table A7.1). These results generally accord with the pattern of victimisation reported in the BCS.

The age of perpetrators was associated with the timing of incidents. Nearly a half (46%) of incidents committed by young people aged from ten to 15 happened in the afternoon, compared with a third of incidents by older people. Incidents involving older perpetrators were most likely to happen in the evening or at night – around four in ten did so. This pattern is even more pronounced for assaults – around two-thirds committed by older people happened in the evening or at night. For most offence types there were no differences in when males and females committed incidents. However, assaults committed by males were most likely to take place in the afternoon (37% did so), while assaults by females were most likely to happen during the evening (35%).

Seriousness of the incidents

As discussed in Chapter 2, self-report offending surveys inevitably pick up some relatively trivial incidents, even if they are legally offences.

At the beginning of the incident form, respondents were asked to describe what happened in their own words. This was to assess whether respondents were erroneously reporting incidents that were clearly non-criminal. The descriptions suggest that on the whole the incidents were offences, though it was difficult to assess severity in many cases.

There were also several pre-coded questions on the seriousness of incidents. These are discussed below. The answers are from the offenders' perspective only. Offenders will

usually be unable to offer much information about the extent of any injury, or emotional impact on the victim, and consequently they were not asked about this.

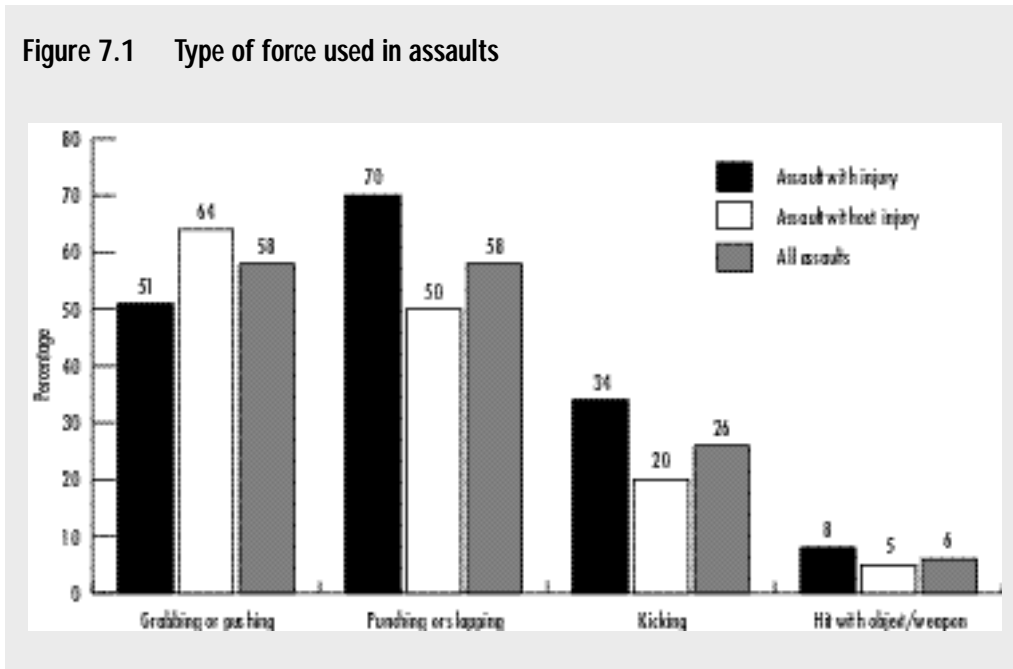
What type of force was used?

The majority of assaults involved the offender grabbing or pushing (58%) or punching or slapping (58%) the victim (Figure 7.1). The victim was kicked in a quarter of assaults; six per cent involved someone being hit with an object or weapon. Grabbing or pushing was more common in assaults without injury, but punching or slapping was more common in injury assaults, as was kicking.

Males and females displayed a fairly similar pattern in the type of force they used. The main difference for injury assaults was that females were more likely to hit the victim with a weapon or object than male perpetrators. This might be because females use weapons or objects to compensate for their relative lack of physical strength. For non-injury incidents females were far more likely to say they had punched or slapped the victim than males. Again this latter finding might be influenced by differences between males and females in their physical strength. If male perpetrators had punched or slapped someone, they would in general be more likely to injure them. If actions other than grabbing and pushing are defined as excessive force, then females were more likely to have used this than males for all assaults (77% vs 67%). However, this pattern was apparent for those over the age of 16 only – in incidents among 10- to 15-year-olds, females and males were equally likely to use excessive force.

Overall, those aged from ten to 15 and from 16 to 25 used similar levels of force – 72 per cent of assaults committed by the former and 76 per cent of assaults committed by the latter involved excessive force. The figure is far lower for incidents by older people – 56 per cent.

Figure 7.1 Type of force used in assaults



The value of damage

Those who had committed criminal damage were asked to estimate the cost of the damage they did.³⁹ About a sixth of incidents (16%) involved damage valued by the offender at under £5. About six in ten incidents were estimated at £100 or less. Damage was estimated at over £500 in 14 per cent of offences (Table A7.2).

There are incident forms for only 157 criminal damage offences (66 of these were against vehicles). It is difficult therefore to explore how the severity of incidents differed by age and sex. The data indicate that young people under the age of 15 are more likely to commit both the most trivial and most serious incidents.⁴⁰ However, these differences are not statistically significant due to the small sample size and even if they were it might be that young people are less able to put a 'realistic' value on the damage caused.

The value of stolen property

Only a small proportion of theft incidents involved stealing money (5%), credit cards (1%) or drugs (<1%). The majority of incidents involved theft of other types of property (Table

39. Respondents were asked to select from pre-coded categories.

40. Among 10- to 15-year-olds, 42 per cent of incidents were valued at £20 or under, while 19 per cent were valued in excess of £500. The respective figures for incidents committed by older people were 27 per cent and nine per cent.

A7.3).⁴¹ Those who had stolen other property were asked to estimate the cost of replacement.⁴² Overall, 62 per cent of incidents involved property valued at under £5, and 91 per cent at £100 or less. There was more significant loss of over £500 in only two per cent of incidents. Across property thefts as a whole losses were lower than for criminal damage.

Losses varied across offence types. Shoplifting incidents resulted in the greatest loss (14% resulted in losses of over £500 – similar to the figure for criminal damage). The vast majority of thefts from school or the workplace were of low value.

There were no clear patterns by age and sex in the value of property stolen.

Victims

Victim offender relationship

Offenders were asked how well they knew the victim(s) prior to the incident. In three-quarters of incidents (excluding those that were directed against a business or organisation⁴³) the offender already knew the victims in some way (just over half involving victims who the offender knew well). There was a clear difference between offences, with assaults and 'other thefts' being more likely to be against victims known to the offender (Table A7.4). Only 20 per cent of violent incidents were against strangers.

Assaults committed by females and young people were more likely to involve a victim known well. Females knew the victim well in 77 per cent of incidents, with the equivalent figure for males being 49 per cent. Likewise 71 per cent of assaults committed by ten- to 15-year-olds were against people known well, compared with around a half of assaults committed by older people.

Those who had committed an assault against someone they knew were asked what their relationship was to the victim. Most incidents were against friends (38%), partners (11%) or other relatives (26%) (Table A7.5). Males were most likely to have assaulted a friend (46% of incidents) followed by other relatives (19%), whereas females were most likely to have assaulted a relative (38%), partner (27%) or friend (27%). Assaults committed by ten- to 15-year-olds were most likely to be against their siblings (36%) or friends (49%), while 36 per cent of assaults by people of 25 and over were against partners.

41. Information was not collected on exactly what was stolen. The 2004 C&S asks for details of what was stolen.

42. Respondents were asked to select from pre-coded categories.

43. Those who had committed a workplace, school, shop or other theft were first asked if the property stolen belonged to an individual or the organisation/business. They were not asked how well they knew the victim if they said the property belonged to an organisation or business. Commercial burglary and commercial robbery were also excluded.

Victim characteristics

Details of the victims' age and sex were only asked for incidents of assault.

The majority of assaults (78%) were against males only; 14 per cent were against females only, while seven per cent involved both males and females (Table A7.5). Of incidents committed by males, 92 per cent involved a male victim. The high level of male-on-male assault applied across age groups. Female-on-female assault was less common – 40 per cent of the assaults committed by females involved a female victim; 51 per cent involved a male victim. Assaults committed by girls aged from ten to 15 were more likely to be against another female (57% were), than assaults by older females (25%).

In terms of age, three-quarters of incidents were against victims aged between ten and 25. They were aged from ten to 15 in 37 per cent of incidents, and 16 to 25 in 38 per cent. (If there was more than one victim, only the youngest was asked about.) Only one per cent of victims were over 45.

Victims tended to be of a similar age to the offender. In three-quarters of incidents by ten- to 15- year-olds and 16- to 25-year-olds the victim was in the same age group. Just over a half of incidents committed by those over the age of 25 were against people aged 25 and over.

Co-offending

The extent of co-offending is an important research question – for one because if only one member of an offending group is caught this may have little impact on crime figures if co-offenders continue to offend.

Almost a quarter (24%) of offences involved one or more co-offender, though this differed across offence types. The majority of vehicle-related thefts (62%) and a considerable proportion of criminal damage incidents (44%) were committed with others. A third of vehicle-related thefts involved three or more co-offenders, as did 28 per cent of criminal damage incidents. Violent offences and other thefts were far less likely to involve co-offenders; around a fifth did so (Table A7.6).

Respondents who had offended with others were asked about their co-offenders. In two-thirds of incidents, the co-offenders were male. Just under a fifth of incidents involved mixed sex co-offenders and 15 per cent female only co-offenders. Male offenders tended to offend with other males (in 81% of incidents the co-offenders were male only; in 17% both male and female and in 2% female only). Female offenders, on the other hand, offended with

other females in 48 per cent of cases, with males in 30 per cent of cases and with both males and females in 22 per cent of cases.

The majority of co-offenders were aged from ten to 15 (39%) or from 16 to 25 (41%). Very few were under the age of ten (3%) or over 45 (2%). Co-offenders tended to be within the same age group as the respondent. This was the case in 83 per cent of co-offending incidents committed by ten- to 15-year-olds, and 75 per cent of incidents committed by 16- to 25-year-olds.

The majority of co-offenders were friends (71%), though 18 per cent involved a partner or relative, and 17 per cent a work colleague. Very few co-offenders were strangers. There were some differences between property and violent offences, with the former more likely to involve friends and partners, the latter other relatives and work colleagues.

Motivation for offending

Respondents were asked whether or not they had planned the offence and why they felt they had committed it (Tables A7.8 and A7.10). The utility of asking offenders about their motivations has been subject to some debate (Farrington, 1993). It has been argued that people find it difficult, if not impossible, to understand their complex mental processes and will have little insight into their motives. Offenders may also use the opportunity to minimise their culpability (e.g. I was drunk). It is also likely that people are more aware of the immediate situational motives than longer-term factors that contribute to their offending.

The majority of offences (78%) happened on the 'spur of the moment'. This was particularly so for assaults. Other thefts were the most likely to be planned (28%). The results are similar for males and females and across age groups.

The reasons given for offending differed considerably across the offence groups.

- For vehicle-related thefts, the most common reasons were because the offender was 'bored or had nothing else to do' (32%) or 'for the fun or the buzz' (33%). Being drunk was cited in 16 per cent of cases.
- For other thefts, the most common reason was because the offender 'wanted the money or what was stolen' (34%) – in line with the more planned nature of these incidents.
- Assaults were mainly driven by being annoyed or upset with someone. Over a half (54%) gave this as a reason, although almost a third (31%) said self-defence was a factor.

- A range of reasons were given for committing criminal damage, including boredom (23%); the buzz (18%); being annoyed by someone (22%); revenge (22%); and being drunk (26%).

Motivations were generally similar for males and females, though males were more likely to cite self-defence for incidents of assault (34% versus 24% for females), while females were more likely to cite being annoyed (70% versus 45% for males).

The role of drugs and alcohol

Offenders were asked if they had taken alcohol or drugs at the time of the offence. This does not, of course, necessarily imply this caused the offending. The question on why they offended, discussed above, addressed this more directly – being under the influence of alcohol and drugs were possible responses.

Alcohol

Alcohol is now recognised as an important spur to offending, in particular through impairing judgement. The C&JS showed that, overall ten per cent of incidents were committed when the offender had taken alcohol but not drugs; and two per cent when the offender had taken both drugs and alcohol. This differed across offences (Table A7.9). It was most common in relation to criminal damage (40% of incidents were committed when the offender had been drinking, or drinking and taking drugs) and vehicle-related thefts (31%). The contribution of alcohol was, perhaps surprisingly, lower than this for assaults: in only 17 per cent of incidents of assault did the offender say he/she had been drinking (or drinking and taking drugs). This in part reflects the nature of assaults committed by children. A far higher proportion of assaults committed by young adults involved alcohol. Just over a third (37%) of assaults committed by males aged from 16 to 25 had happened when the offender had been drinking; 28 per cent of incidents by females aged from 16 to 25.

Across offences as a whole, six per cent of offenders said what happened was at least in part a result of them being drunk (Table A7.10.) In line with results above, a higher proportion of criminal damage incidents (26%) and vehicle-related thefts (16%) were directly attributed to being drunk than violent incidents (7%). The role of alcohol in violence was again highest among 16- to 25- year-olds – at 14 per cent.

The 2001/02 British Crime Survey estimated that offenders were 'under the influence of alcohol' in around a half of assaults (Flood-Page and Taylor, 2003). The BCS is, of course, based on victim perceptions. It seems likely that victims will attribute incidents to alcohol if there

is any evidence alcohol has been consumed, regardless of whether it influenced the offender or not (which victims are unlikely to know with any certainty). The C&JS measure of the offender having consumed alcohol is therefore the better measure to compare with the BCS. That this figure (17% of assaults committed by an offender who had been drinking) is still far lower than the BCS estimate in part reflects the inclusion of incidents against children in the C&JS. Restricting the C&JS to assaults committed against adults gives a figure of 30 per cent of incidents involving alcohol. This is closer to the BCS figure but still some way off. The remaining difference may reflect a difference in the profile of assaults picked up by the surveys and some degree of over-reporting by victims. Victims may make erroneous judgements based on the offender's demeanour or the location of the incident (see Budd, 2003)

Drugs

Drug use is now also recognised as a fuel to offending, particularly in stealing to fund a drug habit. Overall, three per cent of incidents were committed when the offender had taken drugs, and two per cent when both alcohol and drugs had been taken. Again, this varied across offence groups (Table A7.9). Offenders had most often used drugs (sometimes with alcohol) at the time of vehicle-related thefts (11%) – echoing the pattern for alcohol alone. Having taken drugs (or drugs and alcohol) was generally more evident in property crimes than in violence.

For offences as a whole, two per cent of offenders said that being under the influence of drugs contributed to the offence (rather less than for alcohol at 6%). The influence of drugs was higher for shoplifting than other offences, at eight per cent. The figure was also relatively high (5%) for vehicle-related thefts.

There is another C&JS question that bears on the role of drugs in offending, located in the series of questions about drug use. Those who said they were current drug users were asked whether in the last year they had committed a crime to buy drugs. Only one per cent of all drug users said they had committed a crime to buy drugs (this equates to 0.2% of the whole sample). Looking at all last year offenders again just one per cent had committed a crime to buy drugs (65% had not used drugs at all in the period; 34% had used drugs but not committed a crime to buy drugs). On the basis of drug users who said they had committed a core theft offence in the last year the figure rises to just four per cent.

These findings suggest that drugs are a factor in offending for only a very small group of offenders covered by the survey. This is not surprising given the population and offence coverage of the C&JS. It reflects the type of offenders (often minor) and drug users (often recreational) picked up by the survey. Serious offenders and problematic drug users are less likely to live in private households (for example, being in prison or homeless) and even if

they do may be less likely to participate in the survey. Surveys focusing on offenders more entrenched in the criminal justice system show a different picture. For example, a survey of male prisoners found that of those who had used drugs in the year prior to custody, over a half said that they had committed offences related to their drug taking in some way (Ramsay, 2003). This was usually to fund their drug habit, with 45 per cent of drug using male prisoners having committed an offence to get money for drugs. (This equates to 32% of all prisoners interviewed).

Patterns of drug use and links with offending will be examined in more depth in subsequent reports.

The importance of sanctions

Offenders were asked about their views on the likelihood of being caught by the police or someone else at the time of the incident and how concerned they were about the consequences (Table A7.11).

In the majority of incidents, perpetrators felt it was either very unlikely (58%) or fairly unlikely (15%) they would get caught. However, in about a fifth of incidents they felt that this was likely to happen. This suggests that the offenders identified in the survey overestimate their chance of being caught given that only six per cent of last year incidents actually resulted in police contact (see Chapter 5).

For most incidents the offender was not worried about the consequences of being caught. In only 14 per cent of incidents was the respondent worried. There were some differences across offence type. For instance, a higher proportion of those involved in vehicle-related thefts thought they were likely to get caught and were concerned about the consequences. A similar proportion of those who committed an assault resulting in injury thought they would be caught, but they were less concerned about the consequences.

Males were generally more likely to think they might get caught than females, especially for assaults - 18 per cent of males thought it 'very likely' they would get caught for an assault compared with six per cent of females. Those aged from ten to 15 were also more likely to say they thought they would get caught at the time of the incident - 26 per cent of them reporting that it was 'very' or 'fairly' likely. Concern about the consequences of being caught was similar across males and females and across age groups.

There was little difference in perceptions of being caught and the consequences for planned incidents and those committed on the spur of the moment, although perpetrators were more

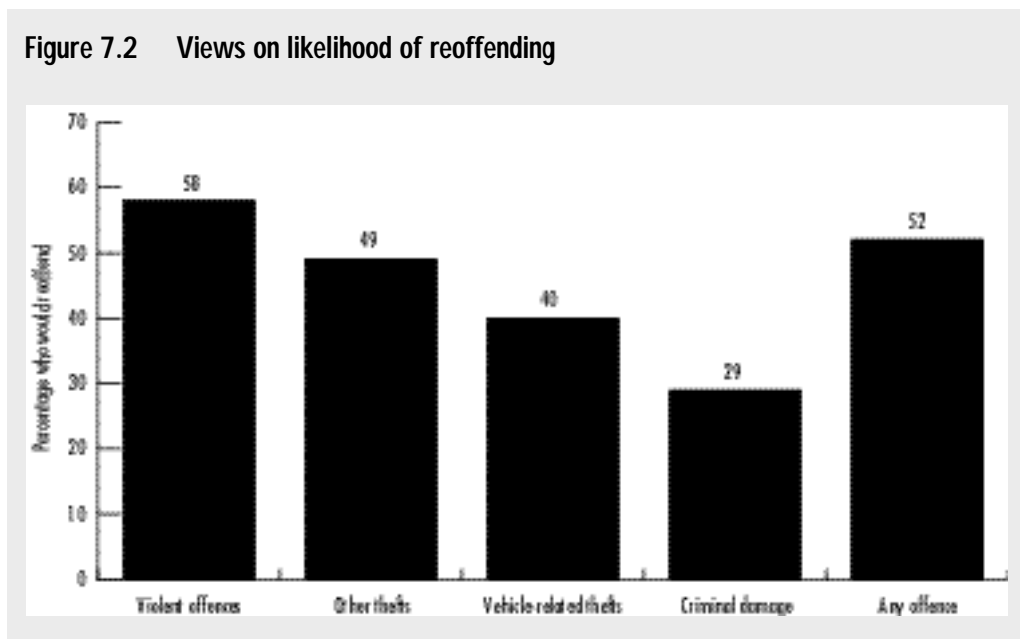
likely to be 'very worried' about the consequences of being caught in 'planned' incidents (10% compared to 5% in the unplanned group).

The question arises as to why people who think it likely they will be caught commit the offence at all. Looking at motivations for offending, a higher proportion of those thinking they were likely to get caught said they offended because of revenge, were annoyed by someone, or were acting in self-defence. These spurs to offending, then, seem to serve to override concern about being caught. There might also be a degree of post-rationalisation since those who were actually caught by the police were most likely to say they were concerned about this at the time of the incident. (In 69% of incidents the police came to know about, the perpetrator had thought this likely at the time).

Views on re-offending

Respondents were asked if they thought they would commit the offence again. In a quarter of incidents (26%) offenders said they would not, in a half (52%) they said they would, and in about a fifth they did not know. Overall, males were more likely to say they would reoffend (55% of incidents) than females (46%). Older perpetrators were more likely to see themselves as re-offending (65% of incidents by those aged over 25) than younger offenders (51% of incidents by 10- to 15-year-olds). Figure 7.2 below shows the results by offence group. Those committing assaults were most likely to say they would commit one again.

Figure 7.2 Views on likelihood of reoffending



As one would expect, those most concerned about the consequences of being caught at the time of the incident were less likely to say they would commit the offence again (31% of incidents compared with 61% where the offender was unconcerned about consequences). Interestingly, those who had committed incidents that actually resulted in police contact were as likely to say they would commit the offence again (50%), as those who had no contact (53%). It is difficult to unpick this given the small number of incidents that resulted in police contact. However, assaults formed a higher proportion of contact incidents than non-contact incidents, and as seen above, those who commit assaults tend to be more likely to say they may commit an assault again.

The 2003 C&JS is an important survey of around 12,000 people in England and Wales. It offers new information about offending in the general population, covering a much wider age range (from ten to 65 years) than has been surveyed to date. Both its high response rate and 'cutting edge' methodology enhance the reliability of results. This chapter assesses how the C&JS adds to our knowledge and provides an overview of some key findings.

Do we know the level of offending?

The question of how many people offend depends critically on the definition of 'offending'. The C&JS did not attempt to cover all forms of offending; and indeed it is questionable whether any survey could realistically do so. The C&JS omits, for example, sexual offences. 'Marginal' offences, such as under-age drinking and fare evasion, were covered in the survey, as were handling stolen goods, various forms of fraud, and technology offences (e.g. sending viruses, illegally downloading software). These have been omitted in this report, which focuses instead on a set of 20 'core' offences for which the fullest information was collected.

The 20 core offences pertain to behaviours that people would have recognised as against the law, even if they might view some of them as 'the sort of things lots of people do'. Certainly, as has been emphasised, some individual incidents were relatively trivial in nature (e.g. assaults without injury, and thefts and damage incidents of small monetary import). This is an inevitable consequence of self-report techniques that essentially try to elicit more serious offending through questions that will also uncover incidents at the less serious end of the spectrum.

There are reasons why it was important to collect information about low-level offending. For one, such offences can add up to a significant problem at the aggregate level. It is also important as a means of differentiating the serious or prolific offender from the occasional transgressor. The inclusion of trivial incidents will certainly inflate the estimated number of offenders and offences measured, but in this respect the C&JS is no different from other self-report surveys that now have substantial currency. (For instance, the MORI Youth Survey of 11- to 16-year-olds is used by the Youth Justice Board to monitor levels of youth crime.)

The C&JS shows that about four in ten people had committed at least one core offence at some time, with one in ten doing so in the last year. The majority of those who had offended

tended to have only done so occasionally. It suggests, then, that most citizens are generally law-abiding. If the focus is on serious or prolific offenders, then the number of offenders halves with five per cent of all ten- to 65-year-olds, or an estimated 1.8 million people, falling into this group.

The concentration of offending

The C&JS provides further evidence that a small fraction of the population accounts for a substantial proportion of all offences. Here, just under a tenth of last year offenders (1% of the sample) accounted for 62 per cent of all offences. This concentration of offending is broadly in line with other work, although estimates vary according to data source, and what offenders:offences ratio is taken. In the 1953 male Offenders Index (OI) cohort, for instance, 25 per cent of offenders (8% of the population) accounted for over 60 per cent of convictions. In the cohort in the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development, six per cent of males accounted for about 50 per cent of all convictions up to the age of 40 (Farrington and West, 1993). The Youth Lifestyle Survey suggested that about ten per cent of offenders were responsible for about 50 per cent of offences (Flood-Page et al., 2000), though this is likely to underestimate concentration somewhat due to the method used. On the basis of analysis of the Offenders Index, it has been estimated that ten per cent of active offenders account for 50 per cent of convictions (Criminal Justice: The Way Ahead, 2001).

The implications of the strong concentration of offending among a key group of prolific and persistent offenders is now reflected in many strands of activity on the part of the police, and central and local government. Essentially, this activity focuses on identifying and targeting high rate offenders, on supporting the criminal justice system in catching and bringing them to justice, and on offering effective rehabilitative programmes. Additionally, there is now full recognition of the need to focus early intervention work on those young people most likely to become prolific offenders.

Crime and Justice Survey estimates in comparison with other sources

There will be interest in how the C&JS results compare with other sources of information about the volume of offences and offending levels, although there are inevitably difficulties in comparing results from different sources.

The number of offences

The C&JS measures individual instances of offending rather than crime events. It does not take into account co-offending – a crime event could involve more than one offender.

Aligning the C&JS with British Crime Survey to compare estimates of crime events is therefore difficult. However, restricting the analysis to a comparable subset of offences and adjusting for co-offending suggests the C&JS gives a similar count of violent crime but a lower count of comparable property crime. The lower property crime count indicates some degree of under-reporting by offenders, but is perhaps more due to the population coverage of the C&JS. The highest rate offenders, who contribute most to crime, are under-represented in the survey (being excluded if they are in custody and perhaps less likely to participate if they are in the community). That there are differences between different data sources is inevitable. What is important is understanding these differences and utilising the most appropriate data for a particular purpose.

The extent of youth offending

In terms of self-reported offending levels, the two main sources of comparison are the Youth Justice Board survey of 11- to 16-year-olds, and the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyle Survey (YLS). There are some difficulties here due to differences in sample design, questionnaire design, offence coverage, and mode of administration. The Youth Justice Board survey, for example, is a school-based, paper and pencil survey and has a single offence screener that is then followed up to identify offence types committed. The 1998/1999 YLS has more similarities with the C&JS but did not use Audio-CASI and the wording of the offence screeners differed.

Despite these differences, C&JS results on last year prevalence of any offence for 11- to 16-year-olds is 25 per cent, close to the Youth Justice Board survey estimate of 26 per cent for pupils in mainstream schools. C&JS results are also in line with those from the YLS if based on the same age range of 12- to 30-year-olds (19% in both).

Despite the differences between the YLS and C&JS these results might be suggestive of stability in youth offending over time. Thus, although the offence screeners differed in the surveys, it might be that they nonetheless covered similar offences in terms of severity. The stability of offending levels in the surveys might point, then, to a picture of little change in offending by young people. Less optimistically, changes in offending and the differences in methodology may have cancelled each other out. It is impossible to know for sure, but the evidence from the YJB Youth Survey suggests reasonable stability in youth offending since 1999 (Youth Survey, 2003).

The C&JS will in due course provide robust evidence on trends in offending by juveniles and young adults.

Who offends?

In line with previous self-report offending surveys and criminal justice statistics the C&JS shows that males are more likely to offend than females. This applies across the age range and the offences considered, with males responsible for around three-quarters of offences reported.

Female offending was dominated by assaults, particularly those that did not result in injury. However, males were still almost twice as likely as females to have committed an assault in the last year, and a higher proportion of male assaults involved injury. Female assaults were particularly likely to be of a domestic nature – against partners or other relatives.

While administrative statistics show that juveniles and young adults are more often convicted than older people, before the C&JS there has been no national self-report survey to confirm whether this also holds for offending. In looking across ages ten to 65, the C&JS confirms the dominance of offending by juveniles and young adults. Thus, ten- to 25-year-olds (27% of the sample) accounted for two-thirds of offences measured by the survey. This is even more apparent if the focus is only on serious offences – with ten- to 25-year-olds being responsible for 80 per cent of offences. Even so, offending among older people should not be discounted.

Why do people offend?

Surveys of known offenders (e.g., prisoners or arrestees) suggest that drugs play an important role in offending behaviour, with offending rates particularly high among hard drug users. The C&JS shows that this is far less the case when the focus is on offenders in the general population and the offence coverage wider. Very few offenders had taken drugs at the time of their offences, and even less said drugs were a factor in their offending behaviour. In only two per cent of incidents did the offender say that being under the influence of drugs contributed to the offence. This was highest for shoplifting at eight per cent. Furthermore, among all drug users, only one per cent had committed a crime in order to buy drugs in the last year. The role of alcohol was more prominent, with six per cent of incidents being attributed to alcohol. Interestingly, the role of alcohol was more apparent for criminal damage and vehicle-related thefts than for assaults.

The C&JS shows that for the general population, offending is often spontaneous and more often relates to 'being bored' or 'wanting fun'. Many of those who had stopped offending simply attributed this to growing up.

The Justice Gap

The C&JS provides evidence on the extent of the gap between actual offences committed and those brought to justice. Previous analysis based on various sources of data estimated that only two per cent of offences resulted in a conviction (Barclay and Tavares, 1999). The C&JS confirms that only a very small proportion of all offences committed result in a conviction – less than one per cent, though this will be an underestimate due to time delays in processing cases. A higher proportion lead to police contact at six per cent.

However, given that a key part of attrition is that victims choose not to report minor incidents to the police in the first place, what the C&JS adds is what it says about the contact serious or prolific offenders have with the criminal justice system. It shows a substantial minority, about a third, of the most serious or prolific offenders do come into contact with the criminal justice system at some point. Clearly, this means they are identifiable to the authorities and thus appropriate interventions can be taken.

The story so far and the future

To conclude, the 2003 C&JS shows that while offending at some time is relatively common, only a small proportion are active offenders and these are primarily young people, particularly young males. Furthermore only a minority of these active offenders offend frequently or commit serious offences. Those who do so are the group of key interest to the criminal justice system. Focusing policy efforts on prolific young offenders could bring substantial dividends in crime reduction if initiatives are successful in addressing the offending of this key group. The survey suggests there is cause for some optimism in that the criminal justice system does at some point have contact with a substantial minority of serious or prolific offenders – they are therefore identifiable. Being able to identify them early to put in place preventative measures will be important.

The C&JS collected considerable information on the background and behaviours of respondents to add to knowledge about the risk factors most closely associated with offending, and in particular serious and prolific offending. This report has not covered these, but work is ongoing. The continuation of the C&JS to collect important longitudinal information will provide further evidence on risk factors and the development of delinquent behaviour. The findings will help inform the development and focus of appropriate preventative and rehabilitative strategies.

Table notes

The following conventions apply:

All %s and means presented are based on appropriately weighted data.

<0.5 indicates a figure less than 0.5%.

'-' indicates no respondents in the given category.

The base n is the number of respondents (unweighted) upon which figures are based. Results are not presented if the base n is less than 50. Where the base n is less than 100 the results should be treated with caution as the estimates are subject to large fluctuations.

Table A3.1 Lifetime and 12 month prevalence of offending, by sex

Per cent committing...	...in lifetime			...in last 12 months		
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All
Any property offence	39.8	22.2*	30.9	7.5	3.5*	5.5
Burglary	3.8	0.9*	2.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
Domestic burglary	1.1	0.2*	0.6	-	-	-
Commercial burglary	3.5	0.8*	2.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Vehicle-related thefts (including attempts)	10.8	1.6*	6.1	0.8	0.1*	0.5
Theft of a motor vehicle	4.7	0.7*	2.7	0.3	0.1	0.2
Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	1.6	0.2*	0.9	0.1	-	0.1
Theft from a vehicle (outside)	5.8	0.6*	3.2	0.4	-	0.2
Theft from a vehicle (inside)	2.0	0.2*	1.1	0.2	-	0.1
Attempted theft from a vehicle	1.8	0.2*	1.0	0.1	-	0.1
Other thefts	35.1	20.8*	27.9	6.3	3.0*	4.7
Theft from person	0.8	0.4*	0.6	0.2	- *	0.1
Theft from work	20.3	9.1*	14.6	4.3	1.7*	3.0
Theft from school	12.4	7.4*	9.9	1.5	0.8*	1.1
Theft from shop	16.8	10.2*	13.5	0.7	0.7*	0.7
Other theft	8.3	3.7*	6.0	0.7	0.3*	0.5
Criminal damage	14.3	3.9*	9.0	1.5	0.6*	1.0
Damage to a motor vehicle	6.2	1.9*	4.0	0.7	0.3*	0.5
Other damage	11.4	2.4*	6.9	1.0	0.4*	0.7
Any violent offence	32.4	17.2*	24.8	7.0	3.9*	5.4
Robbery	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.1	-	-
Personal robbery	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	-	-
Commercial robbery	0.2	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
Assault	32.3	17.1*	24.7	7.0	3.9*	5.4
Assault with injury	23.9	11.8*	17.8	4.4	2.6*	3.5
Assault – no injury	21.0	11.0*	16.0	4.3	2.4*	3.3
Any drug offence	5.7	2.1*	3.9	1.5	0.6*	1.1
Sold Class A drugs	2.1	0.7*	1.4	0.6	0.2*	0.4
Sold other drugs	5.5	2.0*	3.7	1.5	0.6*	1.0
Any offence	51.5	30.2*	40.8	13.2	6.9*	10.0
Base n	4,763	5,125	9,888	4,676	5,050	9,726

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents.
2. Base n given is for any offence. This differs for the various offences depending on the number of respondents who said 'don't know' or refused to answer.
3. * indicates that females were significantly less likely to have committed (at 5% level).

Table A3.2 Prevalence of offending in lifetime, by age

Age	% committing in lifetime			
	Any offence	Property offence	Violent offence	Drug selling
10 to 11	27	16	18	1
12 to 13	38	25	29	<0.5
14 to 15	57	39	43	3
16 to 17	61	47	42	6
18 to 19	59	47	39	11
20 to 25	51	39	32	10
26 to 29	51	39	33	9
30 to 35	45	36	27	5
36 to 39	42	34	24	5
40 to 45	44	32	26	2
46 to 49	37	27	19	1
50 to 55	29	21	15	1
56 to 59	27	23	13	<0.5
60 to 65	23	15	11	<0.5
All	41	31	25	4

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents.

Table A3.3 Frequency of offending in lifetime, by offence type

Percentages	Number of times committed in lifetime			Base n
	Once	Two or three times	More often	
Property offences				
Domestic burglary	42	27	17	62
Commercial burglary	48	25	19	224
Theft of a motor vehicle	58	19	12	262
Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	55	22	7	107
Theft from a vehicle (outside)	58	28	9	343
Theft from a vehicle (inside)	51	16	22	122
Attempted theft from a vehicle	54	21	10	111
Theft from person	50	35	5	88
Theft from work	22	42	25	1,254
Theft from school	39	37	14	1,173
Theft from shop	38	37	19	1,355
Other theft	41	30	15	660
Damage to a motor vehicle	64	23	6	459
Other damage	47	31	10	765
Violent offences²				
Assault with injury	38	36	15	1,904
Assault - no injury	32	36	18	1,715
Drug dealing offences				
Sold Class A drugs	12	35	37	139
Sold other drugs	18	33	38	413

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on lifetime offenders.
2. Includes robbery. Results are not presented separately for robbery because base numbers are below 50.

Table A3.4 Last year prevalence of offending, by age and sex

Per cent committing	Burglary	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	Any property offence	Robbery	Assault	Any violent offence	Any drug offence	Base n
Males	<0.5	1	6	1	7	<0.5	7	7	2	4,676
10 to 11	-	2	6	2	9	-	14	14	-	313
12 to 13	1	3	12	5	15	<0.5	18	18	<0.5	375
14 to 15	1	3	14	7	17	<0.5	33	33	2	328
16 to 17	2	6	17	9	25	1	30	30	6	318
18 to 19	1	3	13	4	16	-	18	18	8	276
20 to 25	1	1	9	2	10	-	9	9	5	602
26 to 35	-	<0.5	8	1	8	-	5	5	1	595
36 to 45	<0.5	-	5	<0.5	5	-	3	3	1	672
46 to 65	-	<0.5	2	-	3	-	1	1	-	1,197
Males 10-17	1	3	12	6	16	<0.5	24	24	2	1,334
Females	<0.5	<0.5	3	1	4	-	4	4	1	5,050
10 to 11	-	<0.5	3	-	3	-	5	5	-	271
12 to 13	-	1	7	2	9	-	15	15	<0.5	338
14 to 15	1	1	11	3	13	<0.5	18	18	2	299
16 to 17	<0.5	<0.5	9	2	10	-	15	15	2	327
18 to 19	-	1	8	<0.5	9	-	11	11	5	204
20 to 25	-	<0.5	5	1	6	-	5	6	1	723
26 to 35	<0.5	-	3	1	3	-	2	2	1	742
36 to 45	<0.5	-	1	<0.5	2	-	2	2	<0.5	700
46 to 65	-	-	1	<0.5	1	-	1	1	<0.5	1,446
Females 10-17	<0.5	1	8	2	9	<0.5	13	13	1	1,235

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents.

Table A3.5 Last year prevalence of offending, by age

Per cent committing...	10 to11	12 to13	14 to15	16 to 17	18 to 19	20 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 65
Any property offence	6.2	11.9	15.0	17.6	12.6	8.0	5.7	3.5	2.0
Burglary	-	0.3	0.8	0.9	0.3	0.3	-	0.1	-
Domestic burglary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Commercial burglary	-	0.3	0.8	0.9	0.3	0.3	-	0.1	-
Vehicle-related thefts	1.0	1.9	2.2	3.1	2.9	1.3	0.6	0.2	0.2
Theft of a motor vehicle	0.3	0.2	1.1	1.5	1.3	0.5	-	-	-
Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	-	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	-	-	-
Theft from a vehicle (outside)	0.5	1.3	1.2	0.7	0.4	-	0.1	-	0.1
Theft from a vehicle (inside)	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.2	-	-	-
Attempted theft from a vehicle	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.3	-	0.1	-	-	-
Other thefts	4.7	9.6	12.5	13.2	10.5	7.0	5.0	3.2	1.8
Theft from person	-	0.9	1.2	0.5	-	0.2	-	-	-
Theft from work	-	0.3	0.4	4.1	7.6	6.3	4.4	2.8	1.6
Theft from school	3.3	6.9	8.9	8.8	2.3	0.2	-	0.1	-
Theft from shop	1.1	3.7	4.9	1.7	1.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.2
Other theft	1.0	2.0	3.1	1.6	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.3	-
Criminal damage	0.8	3.4	4.9	5.7	2.2	1.4	0.9	0.3	0.1
Damage to a motor vehicle	0.2	1.0	2.5	1.4	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.2	0.1
Other damage	0.6	2.8	3.9	4.8	1.8	0.7	0.5	0.1	-
Any violent offence	9.5	16.9	25.4	22.6	14.7	7.0	3.8	2.5	1.2
Robbery	-	0.1	0.3	0.6	-	-	-	-	-
Personal robbery	-	0.1	0.3	0.6	-	-	-	-	-
Commercial robbery	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assault	9.5	16.8	25.4	22.5	14.7	7.0	3.8	2.5	1.2
Assault with injury	6.0	10.1	15.9	16.6	10.8	4.6	2.4	1.7	0.5
Assault - no injury	5.5	10.6	17.0	12.1	7.5	4.1	2.6	1.4	0.8
Any drug offence	-	0.3	2.0	4.0	6.2	3.1	1.1	0.5	0.1
Sold Class A drugs	-	-	0.4	0.5	1.6	1.4	0.6	0.2	-
Sold other drugs	-	0.3	2.0	3.8	6.0	2.9	1.1	0.4	0.1
Any offence	14.3	23.1	32.4	31.9	24.3	15.4	9.3	6.1	3.1
Any offence excluding work and school place thefts	12.6	21.0	30.1	27.4	19.7	10.9	5.6	3.4	1.6
Base n	584	713	627	645	480	1,325	1,337	1,372	2,643

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents

Table A3.6 Estimates of number of offenders in England and Wales (millions)

Numbers in millions	Number of offenders		
	Best	Lowest	Highest
All	3.84	3.57	4.11
10 to 17	1.39	1.28	1.49
18 to 25	0.92	0.81	1.03
26 to 65	1.57	1.37	1.78
Males	2.53	2.31	2.75
10 to 17	0.90	0.81	0.98
18 to 25	0.58	0.50	0.67
26 to 65	1.06	0.89	1.23
Females	1.32	1.16	1.48
10 to 17	0.49	0.42	0.56
18 to 25	0.34	0.27	0.40
26 to 65	0.52	0.40	0.63

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. 95 per cent confidence intervals presented. Uses GAD projections for population in 2003.

Table A3.7 Last year prevalence of offending among those over the age of 18, by sex

Per cent committing. in last 12 months		
	Males 18-65s	Females 18-65s	All 18-65s
Any property offence	6.0	2.7	4.3
Any violent offence	4.1	2.5	3.3
Any drug offence	1.4	0.6	1.0
Any 'core' offence	9.3	4.8	7.5
Base n	3,342	3,815	7,157
Any fraud offence	7.3	4.1	5.7
Work expenses	2.8	1.0	1.8
Social security benefit fraud	0.5	0.4	0.5
Tax evasion	2.6	1.2	1.9
Insurance fraud	1.3	0.7	1.0
Credit card fraud	0.9	1.0	1.0
Handling stolen goods	8.9	6.2	7.6
Buying (suspected) stolen goods	8.5	6.0	7.2
Selling stolen goods	3.0	2.4	2.7
Technology crime	13.0	4.7	8.8
Hacking	0.6	0.1	0.4
Sending viruses	0.4	0.1	0.3
Illegally downloading software/music	12.8	4.6	8.7
Any handling, fraud or technology	24.7	12.8	18.7
Base n	3,293	3,738	7,031
Any core, handling, fraud, technology	30.3	16.4	23.2
Base n	3,233	3,695	6,928

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents. Base n given is for any offence. This differs for the various offences depending on the number of respondents.

Table A4.1 Number of offences committed in the last 12 months by offenders, by age and sex

Percentages	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six or more	Mean ²	Median	Base n
Age									
10 to 11	39	24	5	2	2	27	7.0 (7.0)	2	78
12 to 13	33	17	10	7	8	26	9.2 (9.2)	3	140
14 to 15	31	15	10	8	5	31	10.0 (9.4)	3	182
16 to 17	30	15	10	9	3	33	7.4 (6.5)	3	180
18 to 19	35	13	5	7	6	34	8.4 (6.2)	3	106
20 to 25	33	13	13	7	4	29	12.0 (8.3)	3	196
26 to 35	35	17	5	6	8	29	9.0 (7.7)	2	116
36 to 45	40	16	14	2	11	16	4.7 (3.9)	2	81
46 and older	45	24	12	6	5	9	5.0 (5.0)	2	70
Males	35	16	9	6	6	28	9.1(7.4)	2	741
10 to 17	30	17	8	7	5	33	8.2 (7.5)	3	374
18 to 25	31	15	9	6	5	34	14.0 (9.5)	3	200
26 and older	41	16	9	6	8	20	7.2 (6.3)	2	167
Females	36	18	11	7	6	23	6.9 (6.4)	2	408
10 to 17	35	16	11	8	5	24	9.4 (9.3)	2	206
18 to 25	39	10	13	9	4	25	5.1 (4.4)	3	102
26 and older	34	24	11	4	7	20	5.9 (5.1)	2	100
All	35	17	10	6	6	26	8.3 (7.0)	2	1,149

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on last year offenders
2. Figures in brackets exclude drug selling.

Table A4.2 Percentage of last year offenders who had committed serious offences

% last year offenders	Male			Female			All
	10-17	18-25	26+	10-17	18-25	26+	
Theft of vehicle	4	5	-	2	3	-	2
Burglary	2	3	<0.5	1	-	2	2
Robbery	1	-	-	<0.5	-	-	<0.5
Theft from person	3	1	-	1	-	-	1
Assault with injury	51	35	21	48	37	31	36
Selling Class A drugs	1	11	4	-	5	4	4
Any serious	55	45	24	50	42	36	41
Base n	411	207	175	229	106	102	1,230

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on last years offenders.

Table A4.3 Percentage of sample who had committed a serious offence

% serious offenders	Males	Base n	Female	Base n	All	Base n
10 to 11	10	321	3	276	6	597
12 to 13	13	379	8	335	11	714
14 to 15	21	331	13	302	17	633
16 to 17	24	320	11	334	18	654
18 to 19	15	279	8	211	12	490
20 to 25	8	612	4	733	6	1,345
26 to 35	3	608	2	747	3	1,355
36 to 45	2	681	2	707	2	1,388
46 to 65	1	1,226	<0.5	1,457	<0.5	2,682
All	5	4,757	3	5,102	4	9,859

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents.

Table A4.4 Offending profile of last year offenders

Percentages	Offended in last year				Base n
	Not serious not prolific	Serious not prolific	Prolific not serious	Serious and prolific	
Males	50	22	11	17	741
10 to 17 (%)	38	29	10	24	374
18 to 25 (%)	43	23	12	21	200
26 to 65 (%)	64	15	10	10	167
Females	47	30	11	11	408
10 to 17 (%)	41	35	11	13	206
18 to 25 (%)	49	26	9	16	102
26 to 65 (%)	51	29	13	7	100
All	49	25	11	15	1,149
10 to 17 (%)	39	31	10	20	580
18 to 25 (%)	45	24	11	20	302
26 to 65 (%)	60	20	11	9	267

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on last year offenders.

Table A4.5 Offending profile of the sample

Percentages	Not		Offended in last year			Base n
	offended in last year	Not serious not prolific	Serious not prolific	Prolific not serious	Serious and prolific	
Males						
10-11 (%)	81	8	6	1	3	309
12-13 (%)	78	8	7	1	5	358
14-15 (%)	62	15	11	5	9	314
16-17 (%)	60	14	10	4	12	304
18-19 (%)	72	10	8	4	6	271
20-25 (%)	81	9	4	2	4	599
26-35 (%)	88	7	2	2	2	589
36-45 (%)	92	5	2	1	<0.5	669
46-65 (%)	97	3	1	<0.5	<0.5	1,195
Females						
10-11 (%)	93	3	1	2	1	268
12-13 (%)	82	9	5	2	1	325
14-15 (%)	78	7	9	2	4	291
16-17 (%)	81	8	7	1	2	317
18-19 (%)	81	7	6	3	3	201
20-25 (%)	90	6	2	<0.5	2	719
26-35 (%)	94	2	2	1	<0.5	739
36-45 (%)	97	1	1	<0.5	<0.5	698
46-65 (%)	98	2	<0.5	<0.5	-	1,446
Males (%)	88	6	3	1	2	4,608
10 to 17 (%)	71	11	8	3	7	1,285
18 to 25 (%)	79	9	5	3	5	870
26 to 65 (%)	93	5	1	1	1	2,453
Females (%)	94	3	2	1	1	5,004
10 to 17 (%)	84	7	6	2	2	1,201
18 to 25 (%)	88	6	3	1	2	920
26 to 65 (%)	96	2	1	<0.5	<0.5	2,883
All (%)	91	5	2	1	1	9,612

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on all respondents

Table A4.6 Number of serious or prolific offenders (in thousands) – confidence intervals

	Serious but not prolific		Prolific but not serious		Serious and prolific	
	High estimate	Low estimate	High estimate	Low estimate	High estimate	Low estimate
All	1,020	750	480	300	650	430
Males	620	410	330	180	500	310
Females	460	280	190	80	190	90
10 to 17	450	320	170	90	300	200
18 to 25	270	160	140	60	220	120
26 to 65	390	210	240	100	190	70

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Lowest and highest estimates based on 95 per cent confidence interval range. Figures given to the nearest 10,000.

Table A4.7 Proportion of offences accounted for by prolific offenders

	10 to 17 year olds			18 to 25 year olds			26 to 65 year olds		
	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences	% of sample	% of all offenders	% of all offences
Number of offences									
None	77	-	-	83	-	-	95	-	-
One	7	32	4	6	34	3	2	39	6
Two	4	17	4	2	13	2	1	18	5
Three to five	5	21	9	4	22	8	1	23	13
Six to nine	2	10	8	2	9	6	<0.5	6	6
Ten to nineteen	2	10	15	2	9	11	<0.5	6	12
Twenty or more	2	10	60	2	12	69	<0.5	7	57
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A5.1 General contact with the Criminal Justice System, by offending profile

	% arrested		% been to court		% fined		% community sentence		% custody	
	Ever	In the last year	Ever	In the last year	Ever	In the last year	Ever	In the last year	Ever	In the last year
Lifetime offenders										
All lifetime offender	25	na	19	na	16	na	4	na	2	na
Serious offence	33	na	25	na	21	na	6	na	4	na
Offended six or more times ²	35	na	27	na	22	na	5	na	4	na
Last year offenders										
All last year offenders	24	6	15	3	12	2	4	1	2	<0.5
Serious offender	28	11	16	5	12	4	6	1	3	1
Prolific offender	34	8	18	4	16	3	7	2	3	<0.5
Serious and prolific	38	14	18	7	16	6	9	3	4	<0.5
Not serious or prolific	20	4	13	2	10	2	2	<0.5	1	<0.5

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Respondents were not asked exact number of incidents, only if they had committed each offence once, two or three times or four or more times. The lower values of two for 'two or three' and four for 'four or more' were used in calculating the number of incidents.

Table A5.2 Percentage of offenders with contact with the Criminal Justice System regarding their offence

	% where police spoke to offender	% resulting in court appearance	% resulting in a conviction	Base n
Any property offence	9	2	1	675
Vehicle-related thefts (including attempts)	18	4	2	81
Other thefts	5	1	1	560
Theft from work	1	-	-	292
Theft from school	5	2	-	201
Theft from shop	17	3	2	105
Other theft	14	3	3	69
Criminal damage	20	6	3	161
Damage to a motor vehicle	14	6	6	76
Other damage	20	6	2	111
Any violent offence	14	3	2	766
Assault with injury	16	3	2	505
Assault – no injury	9	2	1	466
Any drugs offence	4	3	<0.5	144
Sold other drugs	2	1	<0.5	137
All offences	12	3	1	1,263

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on last year offenders.
2. Number of offenders too small for burglary, robbery, theft from person, individual vehicle theft offences and selling Class A drugs to present results separately. These have, though, been included in respective offence categories.
3. 'Don't knows'/refused included in base.

Table A5.3 Proportion of offences resulting in contact with the Criminal Justice System

	% where police spoke to offender	% resulting in court appearance	% resulting in a conviction	Base n
Any property offence	4	1	<0.5	4,064
Vehicle-related thefts (including attempts)	6	2	1	302
Theft of a motor vehicle	7	1	1	118
Theft from a vehicle (outside)	6	4	2	103
Burglary	3	<0.5	-	120
Other thefts	3	<0.5	<0.5	3,134
Theft from person	2	1	1	61
Theft from work	3	-	-	1,342
Theft from school	3	1	-	651
Theft from shop	3	1	1	695
Other theft	3	1	1	385
Criminal damage	7	2	1	508
Damage to a motor vehicle	5	2	2	169
Other damage	8	2	1	339
Any violent offence	11	1	<0.5	4,094
Assault with injury	19	2	<0.5	1,474
Assault – no injury	6	1	<0.5	2,589
Drug offences	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	1,844
Sold Class A drugs	<0.5	<0.5	-	979
Sold other drugs	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	865
All offences	6	1	<0.5	10,002

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Number of offences too small for robbery and some individual vehicle theft offences to present results separately. These have, though, been included in respective offence categories.

Table A6.1 Age of onset by offence type (based on those who had committed each offence)

Percentages	Under 10	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-25	26 or older	Mean age	Base n
Burglary										
Domestic burglary	6	8	10	28	19	2	8	4	16	62
Commercial burglary	9	8	23	28	14	8	2	2	14	224
Vehicle-related thefts (including attempts)										
Theft of a motor vehicle	1	3	7	33	21	17	6	5	17	262
Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	1	3	6	36	26	18	2	2	16	107
Theft from a motor vehicle (outside)	3	7	19	27	18	13	4	4	16	343
Theft from a motor vehicle (inside)	2	11	15	31	12	11	6	1	15	122
Attempted theft from a motor vehicle	3	4	13	31	19	18	2	-	15	111
Other thefts										
Theft from person	10	14	18	23	4	8	10	2	15	88
Theft from work	<0.5	1	1	4	19	16	32	16	22	1,254
Theft from school	13	14	26	22	9	5	4	1	13	1,173
Theft from shop	21	16	25	21	5	3	3	2	13	1,355
Other theft	18	25	18	13	10	6	6	3	14	660
Criminal damage										
Damage to a motor vehicle	2	7	12	20	13	12	12	14	19	459
Other damage	9	11	22	23	11	7	6	3	14	765
Assault										
Assault with injury	10	9	11	17	11	10	12	11	17	1,904
Assault – no injury	10	10	12	15	9	8	14	11	17	1,715
Drug offences										
Sold Class A drugs	-	-	1	8	22	21	28	13	20	139
Sold other drugs	<0.5	<0.5	2	15	23	24	23	7	19	413
Any offence	14	13	14	14	8	6	8	7	15	4,174

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

2. 'Don't know's' included in the base. A small number gave age between zero and four. These have been treated as 'don't know'. Means based on those who gave age so base is somewhat lower than indicated in Base n column.

Table A6.2 Age of onset by offender profile

Percentages	Age of onset										Base n
	Under 10	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-25	26 or older	Mean age		
Offended in lifetime (%)	14	13	14	14	8	6	8	7	15	4,174	
Offended in last year (%)	16	16	17	12	5	3	6	6	14	1,263	
Serious and prolific offender (%)	27	18	19	7	3	1	6	-	11	198	
Serious offender, not prolific (%)	11	19	20	14	6	5	3	10	16	311	
Prolific offender, not serious (%)	17	19	22	13	4	3	1	3	12	128	
Neither serious nor prolific (%)	15	15	14	13	6	3	9	7	15	512	

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Don't knows included in the base for percentages. A small number gave age between zero and four. These have been treated as don't know. Means based on those who gave age so base is somewhat lower than indicated in Base n column

Table A6.3 Age of desistance by offence type, among those who have not committed in the last year

Percentages	Age of desistance										26 or older	Mean age	Base n
	Under 10	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-25	26 or older					
Burglary													
Domestic burglary	2	4	4	26	17	8	10	19	18	61			
Commercial burglary	5	5	18	28	11	10	10	7	16	202			
Vehicle-related thefts (including attempts)													
Theft of a motor vehicle	<0.5	3	6	24	24	21	11	6	17	226			
Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	-	-	3	27	28	23	8	3	18	93			
Theft from a motor vehicle (outside)	2	5	14	29	17	17	8	4	17	307			
Theft from a motor vehicle (inside)	-	10	10	28	6	19	14	3	16	108			
Attempted theft from a vehicle	1	3	10	23	16	22	14	2	16	95			
Other thefts													
Theft from person	4	16	14	23	11	6	7	10	17	67			
Theft from work	<0.5	<0.5	1	2	9	11	28	38	27	955			
Theft from school	7	7	14	26	20	10	6	2	16	966			
Theft from shop	14	12	20	24	10	5	6	4	15	1,247			
Other theft	11	10	17	14	9	8	10	8	17	586			
Criminal damage													
Damage to a motor vehicle	2	5	10	19	13	15	16	12	20	380			
Other damage	4	8	16	27	15	9	12	2	16	648			
Assault													
Assault with injury	5	4	8	12	10	11	19	21	21	1,386			
Assault – no injury	3	4	7	12	10	9	18	25	23	1,232			
Drug offences													
Sold Class A drugs	-	-	<0.5	1	10	19	40	21	23	98			
Sold other drugs	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	5	11	19	36	21	23	272			

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. 'Don't know' included in the base for percentages. A small number gave age between zero and four. These have been treated as 'don't know'. Means based on those who gave age so base is somewhat lower than indicated.

Table A6.4 Reasons for desisting from offence

Percentages	I knew it was wrong	Grew up, settled down	Friends/family found out	Didn't want friends or family to find out	Had been caught by police	Didn't want to get caught by police	Worried about harsh sentence	Stopped using drugs	Base n
Burglary									
Domestic burglary	47	48	6	8	10	13	5	9	61
Commercial burglary	50	55	9	6	16	18	5	7	202
Vehicle-related thefts									
Theft of a motor vehicle	48	41	12	4	13	12	3	2	226
Attempted theft of a vehicle	49	43	9	3	15	17	3	10	93
Theft from outside a vehicle	56	47	5	5	6	11	3	1	307
Theft from inside a vehicle	57	53	6	5	17	14	6	5	108
Attempted theft from a vehicle	51	56	7	2	11	12	2	6	95
Other thefts									
Theft from person	42	33	9	10	8	9	-	4	67
Theft from work	49	23	2	3	2	4	1	<0.5	955
Theft from school	46	38	4	4	2	5	2	<0.5	966
Theft from shop	59	42	10	7	9	15	3	1	1,247
Other theft	51	35	9	6	6	10	2	2	586
Criminal damage									
Damage to a motor vehicle	52	41	5	2	5	7	3	2	380
Other damage	58	53	7	6	6	9	2	1	648
Assault									
Assault with injury	43	35	4	2	4	4	3	<0.5	1,386
Assault – no injury	42	31	3	1	1	3	2	<0.5	1,232
Drug offences									
Sold Class A drugs	26	40	5	3	4	19	17	31	98
Sold other drugs	26	42	3	4	3	16	4	33	272

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. 'Don't knows' included in the base for percentages. Other reasons given that are not included in the table were 'My school found out', 'I didn't want to lose my job', 'I got a job', 'Some other reason'. Base n too small for robbery.
3. Per cents sum to more than 100 because more than one answer could be given.

Table A6.5 Number of offence categories committed in the last 12 months, by age and sex

Percentages	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six or seven	Base n
All (%)	76	13	4	1	1	<0.5	1,263
10 to 11 (%)	81	9	3	-	-	-	85
12 to 13 (%)	63	13	6	3	-	-	170
14 to 15 (%)	62	19	5	3	2	1	204
16 to 17 (%)	58	22	8	3	2	-	204
18 to 19 (%)	63	21	8	3	1	-	114
20 to 25 (%)	79	13	4	<0.5	1	-	203
26 to 35 (%)	83	11	2	1	-	-	125
36 to 45 (%)	88	4	3	-	-	-	86
46 to 65 (%)	92	5	-	-	-	-	72
Males (%)	75	13	5	2	1	-	809
10 to 17 (%)	62	17	7	4	2	<0.5	423
18 to 25 (%)	73	16	6	1	2	-	208
26 to 65 (%)	87	7	2	1	-	-	178
Females (%)	77	13	3	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	454
10 to 17 (%)	67	17	4	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	240
18 to 25 (%)	75	14	5	1	-	-	109
26 to 65 (%)	87	8	1	-	-	-	105

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Based on last year offenders. Base includes 'don't know' responses.

Table A6.6 Offence profile among last year offenders

Percentages	10 to 17	18 to 25	26 to 65	Male	Female	All
Offence profile	%	%	%	%	%	%
Violent offences only	43	33	33	34	41	37
Property offences only	23	32	52	38	34	37
Drug selling only	1	11	3	4	3	4
Violence and property	22	10	5	13	11	12
Violence and drug selling	2	2	2	2	1	2
Property and drug selling	1	4	4	3	3	3
Violence, property and drug selling	3	5	<0.5	3	2	2
Unknown	6	2	2	3	5	3
Base n	663	317	283	809	454	1,263

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. Based on last year offenders.

Table A7.1 Whether the offence happened in the area local to the respondent and at what time of day the incident occurred

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
Happened in local area	66	28	54	34	51	49	50	42
Base n	91	622	151	898	419	466	885	1,777
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Morning (6am to noon)	8	16	11	15	5	9	7	11
Afternoon (noon to 6pm)	34	46	17	42	35	29	32	37
Evening (6pm to 10pm)	22	13	19	15	27	27	26	20
Night (10pm to 6am)	33	7	32	13	16	29	22	17
Don't know	2	17	18	15	15	9	12	14
Base n	91	631	157	898	431	470	910	1,808

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A7.2 Value of items damaged

Percentages	Vehicle damage	Other damage	All criminal damage
Amount of damage	%	%	%
Less than £5	21	15	16
£5 to £20	12	20	17
£21 to £50	14	13	13
£51 to £100	7	12	10
£101 to £500	18	11	13
£501 or more	16	13	14
Don't know	11	17	16
Base n	66	91	157

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A7.3 What was stolen and value of stolen items, by offence type

Percentages	Theft from work	Theft from school	Theft from shop	Other theft	All thefts
Money	1	2	1	5	5
Credit cards	-	-	-	8	1
Drugs	-	1	-	-	<0.5
Something else	96	89	87	83	91
Base n	283	182	95	51	694
Value of stolen property	%	%	%	%	%
Less than £5	68	62	57	*	62
£5 to £20	19	31	8	*	20
£21 to £100	7	5	17	*	9
£101 to £500	6	2	5	*	7
£501 or more	1	-	14	*	2
Base n	266	164	80	38	607

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. All thefts also include other offences where something was stolen (burglary, robbery, theft from person, thefts from vehicles).

Table A7.4 How well the offender knew his/her victim, by offence type

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not at all	59	25	49	46	14	28	20	25
Had seen before	1	4	10	5	5	9	6	6
Knew by name	2	18	13	10	11	15	12	12
Knew well	21	45	24	28	66	49	59	53
Other	8	6	9	8	5	3	4	5
Base n	91	72	157	320	431	470	909	1,229

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Excludes incidents against organisations or businesses (i.e. commercial robbery, commercial burglary and other thefts where the victim was an organisation or business).

Table A7.5 Characteristics of assault victims

Percentages	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All assaults
Number of victims			
One	68	62	66
Two	11	12	12
Three	7	9	8
Four or more	13	17	15
Sex of victim			
Male	79	76	78
Female	13	16	14
Males and Females	7	8	7
Age of victim²			
Under 10	9	4	7
Between 10 and 15	39	34	37
Between 16 and 25	33	45	38
Between 26 and 45	17	16	17
Between 46 and 64	1	1	1
Ethnicity of victim³			
White	96	92	94
Black	7	6	7
Asian	6	12	8
Other	<0.5	5	2
Base n	376	423	799
Relationship to offender³			
Partner	10	13	11
Child	4	3	4
Parent/sibling/other relative	29	21	26
Friend	41	32	38
Neighbour	3	2	2
Colleague	9	5	7
Someone else	18	34	24
Base n	312	319	631

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. Age of youngest victim.
3. More than one answer could be given.

Table A7.6 Involvement of co-offenders, by offence type

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal Damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Committed on own	38	79	56	73	78	81	80	76
One other	13	7	8	10	4	5	5	7
Two others	16	6	8	6	7	3	5	6
Three others	27	5	7	6	6	4	5	6
Four others	2	1	4	2	<0.5	1	1	1
Five others	2	<0.5	2	1	2	3	2	1
Six or more	2	2	15	3	2	3	3	3
Base n	91	631	157	898	431	470	910	1,808

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A7.7 Characteristics of co-offenders, by offence type

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
Sex								
Male	67	50	68	59	76	82	78	67
Female	7	25	6	17	11	13	12	15
Both	26	25	26	24	13	5	10	18
Age²								
Under 10	-	1	1	-	7	7	8	3
Between 10-15	29	47	51	42	36	31	35	39
Between 16-25	74	41	51	46	31	39	33	41
Between 26-45	-	6	11	13	30	25	28	19
46 and over	-	3	-	2	2	1	2	2
Ethnicity²								
White	99	93	100	95	93	94	93	94
Black	2	11	26	11	11	14	12	12
Asian	1	5	3	3	31	10	14	8
Other	0	2	9	3	-	7	3	3
Relationship to offender²								
Partner	3	9	8	11	3	1	3	7
Relative	8	4	5	5	12	31	18	11
Friend	88	74	96	78	57	69	61	71
Colleague	1	5	20	13	32	11	24	17
Someone else knew	2	11	4	8	7	13	9	8
Stranger	9	-	1	2	5	12	7	4
Base n	61	158	77	309	66	72	140	449

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.
2. More than one answer could be given.

Table A7.8 Was the offence spur of the moment or planned?

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal Damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Spur of moment	58	65	82	66	90	94	92	78
Planned	14	28	9	26	3	4	3	15
Don't know	17	5	8	6	4	2	3	5
Refused	11	1	2	3	3	1	2	2
Base n	91	631	157	898	431	470	910	1808

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data.

Table A7.9 Whether the offender had taken alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Drugs only	1	3	1	4	1	2	1	3
Alcohol only	21	2	35	6	13	18	15	10
Drugs and alcohol	10	2	5	3	1	3	2	2
Neither	43	93	54	83	83	75	80	81
Base n	91	631	157	898	431	470	910	1,808

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data

Table A7.10 Motivation for the offence

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
Bored/nothing else to do	32	11	23	15	12	5	9	12
For the fun/buzz	33	5	18	9	15	3	10	9
Friends encouraged me/dare	5	4	9	4	2	2	2	3
Annoyed/upset by someone	2	2	22	4	53	55	53	28
Revenge	8	5	22	8	13	20	16	12
Upset/frustrated	-	-	<0.5	-	-	-	-	-
Self-defence	-	-	1	-	23	41	30	15
Wanted money/item stolen	4	34	<0.5	29	-	-	-	15
Couldn't afford item	1	6	-	5	-	-	-	3
Was drunk	16	2	26	6	5	10	7	6
Under influence of drugs	5	1	<0.5	2	-	1	1	2
Minor offence	-	11	-	9	-	-	-	5
Other reason	22	38	10	34	20	6	14	24
Don't know	12	6	7	6	1	3	2	4
Don't want to answer	22	6	2	7	3	2	2	5
Base n	91	629	157	986	431	470	910	1,806

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. More than one answer could be given.

Table A7.11 Attitudes of respondent to the likelihood of being caught and their concerns about the consequences

Percentages	Vehicle-related thefts	Other thefts	Criminal Damage	All property offences	Assault without injury	Assault with injury	All violent offences	All offences
How likely get caught	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	6	5	13	6	14	14	14	9
Fairly likely	22	8	9	9	5	14	9	9
Fairly unlikely	26	17	26	19	12	13	12	15
Very unlikely	29	67	43	61	57	49	54	58
Don't know	5	2	9	3	10	11	10	6
Refused	12	1	-	2	2	<0.5	2	2
How worried about result	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very worried	7	8	4	8	2	5	4	6
Fairly worried	20	9	13	11	4	7	5	8
Not very worried	18	27	32	26	16	22	19	23
Not at all worried	36	54	46	51	72	60	67	59
Don't know	7	1	4	2	4	5	5	3
Refused	11	<0.5	1	2	1	1	1	1
Base n	91	631	157	898	431	470	910	1,808

Notes:

1. Source: 2003 Crime and Justice Survey, weighted data. More than one answer could be given.

Appendix B

Methodology

The 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS) was conducted jointly by the National Centre for Social Research and BMRB Social Research. Both agencies collaborated with the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate in its design. The methodology is outlined below. Further details can be found in the survey Technical Report (Hamlyn et al., 2004).

The sample

Main sample

The sample was designed to give, after appropriate weighting, a representative sample of people aged from ten to 65 living in private households in England and Wales. The sample comprised 10,079 people aged from ten to 65, 4,574 of whom were in the ten to 25 age range.⁴⁴

Addresses were selected from the Small Users Postcode Address File (PAF) using a stratified, multi-stage random probability design. At addresses with more than one household containing someone between the age of ten and 65 only one household was selected using a random selection procedure. At each selected household one person aged between ten and 65 was selected, again at random. No substitution of respondents was allowed.

Focused enumeration was used to boost young people aged from ten to 25 in the sample. This was done by issuing for half of core addresses a further four addresses – the two addresses each side on the PAF.⁴⁵ Interviewers were told to interview anyone aged from ten to 65 at the core address but only those aged 10 to 25 at adjacent addresses. Ideally, the interviewer determines if anyone is eligible at the adjacent addresses by asking at the core address. The interviewer only calls at adjacent addresses if they have been told someone is eligible, there is any uncertainty about eligibility, or they have been unable to get any information at the core address.

Initial estimates from the British Crime Survey suggested that 25 per cent of households should contain at least one person aged from ten to 25. In practice the eligibility rate for the adjacent addresses proved to be somewhat lower at 17 per cent. The reasons for this are discussed in Hamlyn et al. (2004).

44. The total number of completed interviews was 10,085. However, a small number of cases were dropped due to data errors/key missing data. A small number of respondents (N=3) were aged 66 at time of interview, but as they were aged 65 at time of selection they have been retained.

45. The addresses, although adjacent on the PAF, may not always be geographically adjacent to the main address, though the majority are. Interviewers therefore had to make sure they were familiar with the location of all addresses listed for the purposes of focused enumeration.

Ethnic minority (non-white) booster sample

In addition to the main sample, an ethnic minority (non-white) booster sample of 1,882 people aged from ten to 65 was interviewed. Increasing the number of non-white respondents is often done in large-scale surveys since representative samples generate a relatively small number of non-white respondents. To generate the booster sample, postcode sectors were first divided into high and low groups on the basis of non-white population.⁴⁶ In high density sectors, interviewers visited individual addresses issued for selection to identify eligible addresses. In low density areas focused enumeration (see above) was used. Addresses were issued in sets of five (adjacent on the PAF) and interviewers could screen these to find a suitable informant at any one of the five addresses who could tell them if any residents in the five addresses were non-white.

Fieldwork period

The interviews took place between mid-January and end of July 2003.

Response rates

The response rate for the main sample was 74 per cent. For the ethnic minority booster sample, it was somewhat lower – 45 per cent in low density areas and 53 per cent in high density areas (Table B.1). The main reason for non-response at eligible addresses was refusal by the selected individual or by the household before the respondent could be selected and non-contact.

Table B.1 Response rates

	Main sample		Non white booster sample	
	Core sample	Youth boost	High density	Low density
Issued addresses	13,250	27,560	6,300	45,600
Residential and eligible	9,306	4,310	2,085	1,727
Productive	6,892	3,187	1,114	772
Response rate (%)	74.1	73.9	53.4	44.7

Notes:

1. Calculation of this response rate includes correction for the unknown eligibility cases following recommendations from the Office for National Statistics. The Technical Report has further details.

46. High density areas were those with 19 per cent or more of the households headed by someone from a minority ethnic group according to the 1991 Census. Low density areas had between one per cent and 18.9 per cent. Data from the 2001 Census were not available at time of sample point selection.

The interview

The interview consisted of 11 modules (detailed in Table B.2). The questionnaire was developed in consultation with research and policy colleagues and academics.⁴⁷ The questionnaire was thoroughly tested. Cognitive interviewing and pilot work was done to test comprehension, understanding and relevance. This work included children and young people known to have offended and taken drugs. A final dress rehearsal pilot was undertaken to test interview length.

Table B.2 Interview content

Module	Mode	Age range ¹
Household box, socio-demographic information	CAPI	10-65
Area and social capital	CAPI	10-65
Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System	CAPI	10-65 (but most questions of 16-65s only)
Victimisation	CAPI	10-65
Anti-social behaviour	A-CASI	10-25
Fraud and technology crime	A-CASI	18-65 (some questions 10-65)
Offending – count	A-CASI	10-65
Offending – nature	CASI	10-65
Drug use	CASI	10-65
Alcohol use	CASI	10-65 (some specific questions for 10-17s)
Family, education, and health	CASI	10-65

Note:

1. This is the broad age range covered in each module. Within modules specific questions were targeted at different age ranges.

CAPI, CASI and Audio-CASI

The entire interview questionnaire was converted into a computer programme so that the interview could be conducted using a laptop computer. Computer-assisted interviews are a common mode of administration for large-scale surveys. For further discussion of the advantages of computer assisted interviews see O'Reilly et al., 1994.

The C&JS used three separate computer-assisted modes during the course of the interview – CAPI, Audio-CASI and CASI.

47. In particular, questions on fraud and technology crime were developed from proposals submitted by Professor Mike Levi (Cardiff University), Dr Mike Sutton (Nottingham Trent University), Professor Susanne Karstedt and Dr Stephen Farrall (Keele University). The draft questionnaire was peer reviewed by Professor David Farrington (University of Cambridge), Bernard Gallagher (University of Huddersfield), Susan McVie (University of Edinburgh), Andrew Percy (Queen's University), and Professor Janet Walker (University of Newcastle).

CAPI

The first half of the interview was conducted face-to-face with the interviewer reading the questions from the computer screen and inputting the answers (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing, CAPI). This approach was adopted for the least sensitive questions at the beginning of the interview and allowed the interviewer to build rapport with the respondent.

CASI

The second half of the interview was conducted as a self-completion survey, with the interviewer giving the respondent the laptop to enable him/her to input his/her responses directly. Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) has been widely used to collect information that could be regarded as sensitive. Self-completion techniques increase confidentiality. They allow respondents to report behaviours or attitudes without having to admit these directly to another person.

While the advantages of CASI have been well documented, there are also disadvantages. CASI requires respondents to be willing and able to use the computer and sufficiently literate to read from the screen. Most respondents, even those who have never used a computer before, are able to use CASI quite competently after some initial practice questions undertaken with interviewer help. However, for those who are unable to read the questions, CASI cannot be used in its traditional form, and in many surveys the interviewer is instructed to conduct the self-completion as a face-to-face interview to allow respondents to continue. Although, this is usually only permitted when no one else is present, the confidentiality of self-completion is forfeited.

Audio-CASI

Audio-CASI is a variant of CASI. This allows those with literacy problems to still use the CASI facility. With Audio-CASI the questions and responses are pre-recorded and respondents listen to them through headphones. At each question the sound file is automatically triggered or can be triggered by the respondent hitting a specific key on the keyboard. As long as respondents can recognise numbers they are able to proceed with confidentiality maintained.

Audio-CASI had not previously been used for a large-scale household survey in England and Wales. The disadvantages of using it for an adult household population are often considered to outweigh the benefits. Questions and response sets must be kept short because the amount of information that can be retained by a respondent is limited. Audio-CASI also increases the time it takes to complete a questionnaire and can prove frustrating for respondents who do not require it. However, given the sensitivity of the C&JS questions,

the fact that children as young as ten were being interviewed and that offending is correlated with low levels of literacy, it was important to give respondents the option of Audio-CASI.

One option tested was to offer Audio-CASI to respondents who indicated that they would have difficulty with CASI. This did not prove successful. Respondents were sometimes too embarrassed to admit to difficulties and often opted for interviewer administration instead. Therefore, Audio-CASI was the default option in the main stage survey. All respondents were given headphones and instructed to use the Audio-CASI facility. While many literate respondents soon realised they did not need to listen to the question and responses (they also appeared on the screen and respondents could enter a response at any time – interrupting the voice), it allowed those needing Audio-CASI to proceed without embarrassment or need for interviewer help.

The Audio-CASI facility was only used for the three modules that directly asked about offending behaviour. At the end of these modules the questionnaire reverted to normal CASI. The reason for this was that the content of the latter half of the questionnaire was not appropriate for Audio-CASI administration (having long response sets, multiple-response and numerous textfills).

How was Audio-CASI received?

Overall, 94 per cent of the main sample accepted both Audio-CASI and CASI elements of the interview (Table B.3). Only six per cent requested that the interviewer administer all self-completion elements. The most common reason for requesting interviewer administration was dislike of computers (61% gave this as a reason). Younger respondents were most likely to accept the self-completion method, probably because of their greater familiarity with computers. Among the non-white booster sample 12 per cent opted for interviewer administration. These respondents were more likely to give language problems as a reason.

Table B.3 Response to the self-completion components (main sample)

Percentages		Male			Female			All
		10-17	18-25	26 or older	10-17	18-25	26 or older	
A-CASI	CASI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Accepted	Accepted	98	98	91	99	96	91	94
Interviewer read	Interviewer read	2	2	8	1	3	9	6
Accepted	Interviewer read	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	-	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Accepted	Refused	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	-	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Interviewer read	Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Because the C&JS was the first large-scale household survey to use Audio-CASI, respondents were asked to what extent they listened to the questions and whether they found it useful. The results differed depending on how Audio-CASI operated. The National Centre for Social Research used a programme that automatically triggered the 'voice' each time the respondent moved to a new question. The BMRB programme required the respondent to hit a specific key to trigger the 'voice' and so they could more easily proceed without actually listening to the questions – simply reading from the screen as with standard CASI. Thus, while around three-quarters of National Centre respondents listened to all questions, only four in ten BMRB respondents did so. Similarly, two-thirds of National Centre respondents said Audio-CASI was useful compared with four in ten BMRB respondents. Younger respondents and those in the non-white sample were more likely to listen to questions and find the technique useful (Table B.4).

Given that reading ability is key to the success of the normal CASI technique, respondents were asked if they had any difficulty reading and interviewers also assessed respondents' reading ability. Interviewers assessed that only one per cent of the main sample had a lot of difficulty in reading the questions, with four per cent having some difficulty. Among respondents, three per cent said they had everyday reading difficulties. Reading problems were higher among the non-white sample, reflecting language differences, and younger respondents. Those with self-assessed reading difficulties were particularly likely to find the Audio-CASI useful – around three-quarters did.

Table B.4 Reading difficulties and reactions to Audio CASI

	Interviewer assessment of reading ability ¹		Respondent assessment of reading ability ¹	Reaction to Audio CASI ²	
	A lot of difficulty	Some difficulty	Some problems in everyday life	Listened to all or some questions	Very or fairly useful
Main sample (all)	1	4	3	60	52
10-11-year-olds	2	16	7	73	73
12-13-year-olds	1	7	6	69	68
14-15-year-olds	1	4	5	63	53
16-17-year-olds	1	2	2	55	51
18-25-year-olds	1	3	3	53	45
26 and older	1	4	1	60	50
Non white sample (all)	3	12	5	66	61

Notes:

1. Based on all respondents.

2. Asked of those who accepted the Audio-CASI module.

Involvement of others during self-completion

Interviewers were asked to ensure that respondents had privacy during the self-completion modules. While it was acceptable for others to be in the room with the respondent, they were discouraged from looking at the screen. Table B.5 shows that in relatively few cases did third parties look at the screen, though this was more likely for the youngest respondents.

Interviewers had to assist respondents during the self-completion modules in eight per cent of cases – again higher for younger respondents.

Table B.5 Involvement of others in the self-completion (main sample)

Percentages	Age group						All
	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-25	26 and older	
Involvement of others in self-completion							
Any one present	75	66	56	35	27	21	32
Parent present	69	59	49	28	9	1	16
Child present	13	11	10	5	8	5	7
Someone looked at the screen	23	11	8	4	3	2	5
Interviewer assistance required during self-completion							
No assistance required	74	89	94	98	96	92	92
Some assistance required	18	9	4	2	3	6	6
A lot of assistance required	9	2	2	<0.5	1	2	2

Interview length

The average length of interview was 50 minutes for the main sample, 59 minutes for the non-white boost sample. However, interview length was highly variable. Some interviews lasted in excess of 90 minutes while others were less than 30. Length was influenced by degree of involvement in offending and drug use. Those who had taken a drug or committed an offence in the last 12 months had an interview averaging about 60 minutes.

Fieldwork procedures

All interviewers working on the survey were personally briefed about requirements and procedures. A leaflet and letter were prepared for respondents explaining the background to the survey and what their involvement would entail. Participation was entirely voluntary. Those who did participate were offered a £10 voucher in recognition of their time and contribution. While the use of such payments is not common in general household surveys, and evidence on the impact on response rates is at best ambiguous, it was felt the burden on potential respondents in the longitudinal design should be recognised.

Weighting

Given the complex sample design, a sophisticated weighting system was adopted to restore the representativeness of the sample. Weights were separately computed for the core sample, and the youth and non-white booster samples. Sampling and non-response weights were used. Weights were then optimised by comparing weighted data to the Census information on age, sex and region. For analysis purposes, the core and youth boost samples have been combined with the latter being down-weighted as appropriate. Technical details about the weighting process are in Hamlyn et al. (2004).

Methodological considerations

Several methodological issues warrant discussion as they bear on how the results presented in this report are interpreted.

Sample coverage

The C&JS only covers people aged from ten to 65 resident in private households in England and Wales. It omits those living in communal or institutional establishments, such as custodial institutions, residential homes, hospitals and hostels, and the homeless. A feasibility study commissioned by the Home Office concluded that a full-scale communal establishment survey was not warranted. The inclusion of such establishments would not significantly impact on overall offending and drug use estimates and to be implemented successfully in some establishments the research instrument and procedures would have required substantial modification (the feasibility study report can be accessed at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/offending1.html>).

Those under the age of ten and over the age of 65 were omitted for various reasons. Ten is the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales. The proportion of children younger than this engaged in criminal behaviour is likely to be very small. Furthermore any attempt to directly interview children aged under ten would have required a different approach. Those aged over 65 were omitted because again it is likely that only a very small proportion would be involved in criminal behaviour.

Sampling error

As with any sample survey the results are subject to sampling error – i.e. the results from a sample selected from the population could differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population had been surveyed, or another sample taken. The degree of error depends on the size and design of the sample and the size of the estimate of interest. The C&JS has a relatively large sample but the estimates will still be subject to error. Statistical theory enables the calculation of the degree of error for any estimate. Table B.6 below illustrates the degree of error associated with different estimates and sample sizes (assuming a design factor of 1.2). So for example, if an estimate is ten per cent based on a sample of 100 then one can say one is 95 per cent confident the 'true' value (had the population been interviewed) falls within the range of plus or minus seven percentage points (i.e. between 3% and 17%). However, had a sample of 1,000 been interviewed the error would be much smaller – plus or minus just two percentage points (i.e. between 8% and 12%).

This report draws on the statistically robust and significant results. Where differences between subgroups are highlighted the differences are statistically significant at the five per cent level unless otherwise stated. This means one can be 95 per cent confident that the difference holds in the population.

Table B.6 Illustration of 95% confidence interval ranges

Sample size	Sample estimates - percentages					
	5% or 95%	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	95% confidence interval - percentage points +/-					
	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
100	5	7	9	11	12	12
200	4	5	7	8	8	8
400	3	4	5	5	6	6
800	2	2	3	4	4	4
1,000	2	2	3	3	4	4
5,000	1	1	1	2	2	2

Notes:

1. Estimates of the range are based on 95 per cent confidence intervals, assuming a design factor of 1.2. Figures rounded.

Non-response bias

Although the response rate of 74 per cent for the main sample is relatively high for a national survey covering such sensitive areas, it may be that non-respondents differ in some key respects to those who do respond. A non-response model was developed and used in the construction of weights. This model utilised information collected from interviewers about the type of property and the area in which it was located to predict response (see Hamlyn et al. (2004) for a technical discussion).

Offence coverage

The survey does not cover all legal offences. In particular very serious offences including homicide and sexual offences are omitted. The main focus of the C&JS was on 20 core offences, and the wording of questions on these was carefully considered to reflect legal definitions. However, it should be recognised that within any of these legal categories the nature of the incident could vary greatly.

The survey also covered some other offences – for example, fraud and handling stolen goods, but in less detail and these are only briefly reported on here.

Accuracy of responses

A key issue is whether respondents give truthful and accurate answers when asked about their offending. Some may deliberately conceal their involvement in offending, while some may choose to exaggerate. Others may be unable to remember whether incidents fell within the defined recall period, or may find it difficult to recollect exactly how many times they had offended. Despite these potential problems, it is generally accepted that self-reports are

reliable and valid indicators of delinquency and offending (Farrington et al., 1996; Hindelang et al., 1981).

Several measures were taken in the C&JS to encourage respondents to provide truthful and accurate answers. Interviewers reminded respondents of the confidentiality of their answers and CASI and Audio CASI were used to reinforce this. The questionnaire was designed to encourage respondents to admit to behaviours and the importance of the recall period was impressed upon them. While these measures cannot guarantee all respondents provided accurate and truthful answers, the evidence is encouraging. At the end of the interview 97 per cent of respondents said they answered all questions on offending truthfully with a further three per cent saying they had answered most truthfully. The figures are similar for drug use. Table B.7 shows the results by age and sex. The group that prompt the most concern are males aged from 16 to 17 – with a slightly lower 91 per cent saying they answered all offending questions truthfully.

The analysis presented in this report is based on all respondents regardless of whether they said they answered all offending questions truthfully or not. Analysis was undertaken excluding those who said they had not been completely truthful. However, this did not effect the overall last year prevalence rates or alter the age related patterns.

Table B.7 Honesty in answering offending and drug use questions (main sample)

	Offending questions		Drug use questions	
	All truthful	Most truthful	All truthful	Most truthful
Males				
10-11 year olds	96	4	98	2
12-13 year olds	95	4	96	3
14-15 year olds	96	2	93	5
16-17 year olds	91	7	91	7
18-25 year olds	94	5	93	5
26 and older	97	2	97	2
Females				
10-11 year olds	97	2	98	1
12-13 year olds	98	1	97	3
14-15 year olds	96	3	94	5
16-17 year olds	98	1	95	4
18-25 year olds	98	2	95	4
26 and older	99	1	98	2

The 20 core offence screener questions are detailed below.

Vehicle thefts

- O1StVh Now thinking about things you may have done, even if it was a long time ago. Have you EVER stolen or driven a vehicle without permission, even if the owner got it back?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1AtVh Have you EVER **tried, but failed**, to steal a vehicle, or drive it away without permission?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1OfVh [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned] have you EVER stolen any parts off the outside of a vehicle?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1InVh [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned,] have you EVER stolen anything from inside a vehicle?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

- O1AtBk [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned,] have you EVER tried, but failed to steal anything from inside or parts off the outside of a vehicle?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

- O1CDVh [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned,] have you EVER damaged any vehicle in any way on purpose, for example, by scratching it or breaking a window?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

Burglary and Criminal Damage

- O1BgDw The next questions are about some other things you may have done. Have you EVER gone into someone's home **without their permission** because you wanted to steal or damage something?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1BgND Now thinking about other types of buildings such as a factory, office, shop, hospital, school etc. Have you EVER gone into any of these types of buildings without permission because you wanted to steal or damage something?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

O1Burn [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned,] have you EVER damaged anything that didn't belong to you **on purpose**, for example, by burning, smashing, or breaking it?

Please include things like rubbish bins, bus shelters, trains etc.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Don't want to answer

Robbery and theft from person

O1RobC Have you EVER used force, violence or threats against anyone **in order** to steal from a shop, petrol station, bank or any other business?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Don't want to answer

O1RobP [Apart from anything else you have already mentioned,] have you EVER used force, violence or threats against anyone **in order** to steal something from them?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Don't want to answer

O1TPer Have you, **without** using force, violence or threats, EVER stolen anything someone was carrying or wearing, for example by taking something from their hand, pocket or bag?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Don't want to answer

Other thefts

O1TWrk [Apart from anything you have already mentioned,] have you EVER stolen anything from where you work, or used to work?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Don't want to answer

- O1TSch [Apart from anything you have already mentioned,] have you EVER stolen anything from any of your schools or colleges?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1TShp [Apart from anything you have already mentioned,] have you EVER stolen anything from a shop without using force, violence or threats?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer
- O1TOth [Apart from anything you have already mentioned,] have you EVER stolen anything else?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

Violence

The next few questions are about incidents that did not involve stealing or trying to steal. For these next questions, please include your family and people you know, as well as strangers.

- O1Vinj Have you EVER used force or violence on **anyone** on purpose, for example, by scratching, hitting, kicking or throwing things, which you think injured them in some way?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

- O1ViNI [Apart from these incidents,] have you EVER used force or violence on anyone on purpose, which you think did NOT injure them in any way?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

Drugs

- O1Aarg Have you EVER sold Class A drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, crack or ecstasy, to anyone, including friends?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

- O1ODrg Have you EVER sold any other illegal drugs, such as cannabis, to anyone, including friends?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Don't want to answer

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