

Sentencing Academy News

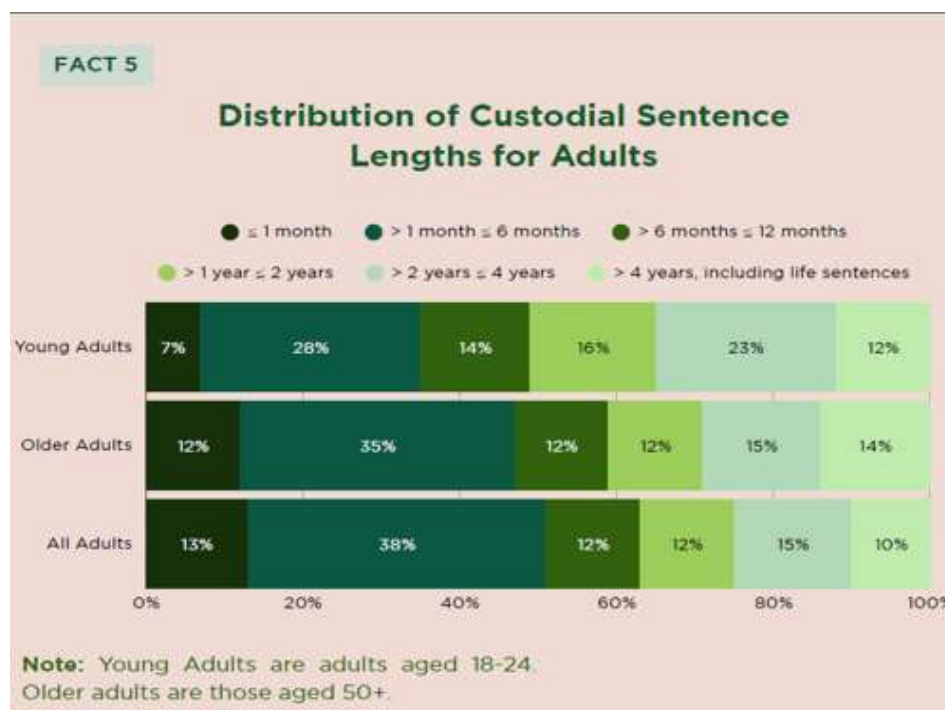
June / July 2026

Sentencing Hub updates

Over the summer, we have been busy creating new key fact sheets for the [Sentencing Hub](#). Our fact sheets break down complex sentencing issues into accessible and visual findings:

1. With the lengths of prison sentences increasing over the last two decades, the prison population in England and Wales is also ageing. But what does sentencing look like for older adults? In our [new fact sheet on sentencing older adults](#), we explore questions such as:

- How many older adults are sentenced every year?
- What are the offences for which they are most often sentenced?
- How does their reoffending compare to that of younger adults?



2. In June, it was announced that the non-custodial sentences given to three teenage boys for the rape of two girls would be reviewed under the unduly lenient sentence scheme. The scheme allows anyone to ask the Attorney General's Office

to review Crown Court sentences for serious offences in England and Wales that are deemed too lenient.

In our [new fact sheet on the scheme](#), we explain more about how it works in practice, including:

- How many cases are raised as unduly lenient by the public every year?
- What are the offences that are most often associated with the scheme?
- How many of these cases result in a sentence increase?

FACT 3

Only a minority of cases raised under the scheme are subsequently referred to the Court of Appeal for review.

Outcome	Cases*	Cases (%)
Application withdrawn	124	7%
Not in scheme	506	28%
Not in scheme and out of time	29	2%
Out of time	34	2%
Not referred to Court of Appeal	856	47%
Referred to the Court of Appeal	270	15%

*Out of a total of 1,819 cases raised between January 2025 and April 2026

3. Last, but not least, we have updated all of our key fact sheets with the most recent sentencing data available. Interested in how children and young adults were sentenced in 2025? Want to know more about the proportion of people who successfully completed their Suspended Sentence Order or Community Order? Find the answers and more about sentencing in 2025 in our [key fact sheets](#).

Other News

Independent Review of the Prison System in England and Wales

The Government has announced the launch of an independent review of the prison system, to be led by the Right Honourable Amber Rudd, supported by a panel of experts. This major review will assess the long-term challenges facing prisons and make recommendations to improve their resilience, performance and effectiveness. The review is expected to report by December 2026 and will consider a broad range of challenges, including security risks, safety and decency issues, capacity pressures and workforce challenges.

A Call for Evidence has been launched to inform this review and this closes on 31 August 2026. The document is available [here](#).

Sentencing Council round-up

The Sentencing Council has launched a consultation on its strategic objectives for 2027-2030, alongside two new guidelines consultations. The Council's proposed objectives are: developing and revising sentencing guidelines; producing and using analysis and research to support evidence-based decision-making; fulfilling the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty; and promoting public understanding of sentencing.

The Council is also consulting on amendments to the *Imposition of community and custodial sentences* guideline following the enactment of the Sentencing Act 2026. Perhaps of widest interest will be the nature of the guidance to be given to sentencers on how the exceptional circumstances provision in relation to the presumption of suspending a custodial sentence of 12 months or less will work in practice. The Council is also seeking views on: the detail under each of the new community requirements created by the Sentencing Act 2026; amendments to aid clarity in the section on time remanded in custody or on qualifying curfew; and amendments to the detail under Rehabilitation Activity Requirements.

The consultation on the Council's strategic objectives closes on 30 October 2026 and the consultation document is available [here](#).

The consultation on the amendments to the *Imposition of community and custodial sentences* guideline closes on 2 September 2026 and the consultation document is available [here](#).

Additionally, the Council has launched a consultation on a proposed new guideline covering the offence of endangering another during a sea crossing to the UK. This consultation closes on 30 September 2026 and the consultation document is available [here](#).

The Sentencing Council has also published its Annual Report for 2025/26 and this is available [here](#).

Other Publications

Roberts, J.V. and Pina-Sánchez, J. (2026) *From Principles to Populism: Sentencing in England and Wales*. Crime and Justice

This chapter appears in the annual publication 'Crime and Justice' edited by Michael Tonry. Chapters in this series present state of the art reviews of policy and practice

on some key subject in the field of criminal justice. Sentencing in the nations of the United Kingdom has evolved significantly over the past 20 years. The UK provides an interesting contrast with many other common law countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand where little has changed: sentencing remains a highly discretionary phase of the criminal process. In the absence of statutory or judicial guidelines, trial courts determine sentence guided only by their court of appeal. The most important development has been the creation of sentencing councils and the introduction of statutorily-based guidelines which have transformed sentencing in England and Wales, and to a lesser degree, Scotland.

In this chapter, Julian Roberts and Jose Pina-Sánchez explore recent developments in sentencing in the United Kingdom. Limitations on space preclude coverage of all three jurisdictions. Accordingly, the focus is on England and Wales, although the authors provide some limited discussion of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Although the nations share many common elements, important differences exist, principally with regard to guideline structures. The most significant development has been the creation of sentencing councils and the introduction of guidelines. As a result, sentencing is now more transparent, predictable and democratic. The English (and Scottish) guidelines are largely descriptive in nature, reproducing rather than changing judicial practice. As a result, they do not address problems of sentence inflation; prison overcrowding; and political interference. Analyses of recent sentencing practice reveal a significant increase in the length of prison sentences over the past decade. In addition, the use of community orders has declined. Despite the existence of independent sentencing councils (in England and Wales and Scotland), politics continue to determine the nature of sentencing policy and the sentencing practice. In 2025, the Government commissioned a review of sentencing in England and Wales and subsequently introduced reform legislation (in 2026). This created a legislative presumption against the imposition of short prison sentences.

The chapter is available to read [here](#).



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