

DEFERRED SENTENCES

Key Facts and Statistics

FACT 1

DEFERRED SENTENCING ALLOWS A COURT TO DEFER SENTENCING FOR UP TO 12 MONTHS. A COURT WILL ONLY DEFER A SENTENCE IF IT IS SATISFIED THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF JUSTICE TO MAKE A DEFERRAL ORDER. A DEFERMENT ORDER MAY IMPOSE REQUIREMENTS ON THE PERSON.

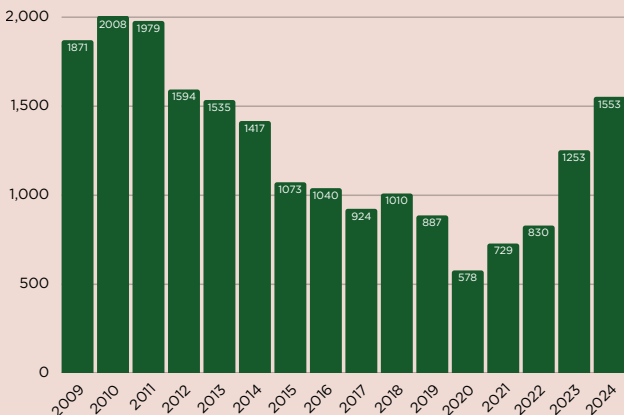
SENTENCES ARE OFTEN DEFERRED IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE PERSON TO COMPLETE A TREATMENT PROGRAMME OR FOR SOME OTHER PURPOSE INCLUDING A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE REQUIREMENT. IF THE PERSON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES THE REQUIREMENTS, THE COURT MAY DECIDE TO IMPOSE A DIFFERENT SENTENCE FROM THE ONE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSED PRIOR TO THE DEFERRAL PERIOD.

1,553

people received a deferred sentence in 2024.

FACT 2

The use of deferred sentences drastically decreased between 2009-2020, but has since started increasing.



Note: These statistics do not include the Crown Court between 2011 and 2020. For 2020-2024, Crown court data may be partial, as the court was switching case management systems, and some cases may not have been recorded. Even though the majority of deferred sentences occurred in the magistrates' courts, this graph may nonetheless be underestimating the number of deferred sentences.

FACT 3**From 2005-2020,**

men accounted for



of deferred sentences,

and women accounted for



of deferred sentences, with the other 1% being Not Stated/Other.

Even though a higher proportion of deferred sentences are imposed on men, women are slightly more likely to receive a deferred sentence. This is because women made up around 24% of all people sentenced from 2005-2020, but 27% of those who receive a deferred sentence.

FACT 4**Deferred sentences by offence category, 2020**

	Number of Cases deferred	Percentage of all deferred sentences
Theft and handling	239	43%
Violence	62	11%
Drug offences	31	6%
Fraud and Forgery	15	3%
Criminal Damage and Arson	10	2%
Motoring Offences	11	2%
Other	188	34%
<i>Total</i>	556	100%

Note: Data exclude deferrals in the Crown Court; percentages rounded. 2020 was the last year for which data on deferred sentences by offence category is available.

Fact 1:

1. Roberts, J. et al (2022). Deferred Sentencing in England & Wales. *Sentencing Academy*.
<https://www.sentencingacademy.org.uk/sentencinghub/research-policy/deferred-sentencing-in-england-wales/>.
2. Ministry of Justice (2026). FOI Ref: 260626038.

Fact 2: Data analysed from Ministry of Justice (2026). FOI Ref: 260626038; Ministry of Justice FOI Ref: 181004021; Ministry of Justice FOI Ref: 211214009.

Fact 3: Roberts, J. et al (2022). Deferred Sentencing in England & Wales. Sentencing Academy.
<https://www.sentencingacademy.org.uk/sentencinghub/research-policy/deferred-sentencing-in-england-wales/>.

Fact 4: Roberts, J. et al (2022). Deferred Sentencing in England & Wales. Sentencing Academy. Table 2.
<https://www.sentencingacademy.org.uk/sentencinghub/research-policy/deferred-sentencing-in-england-wales/>.