



MORI Five-Year Report: An analysis of Youth Survey Data

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Background

MORI has conducted Youth Surveys for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) since 1999. The overall aim of the research has been to examine the experiences of crime, of both offenders and victims, among 11–16-year-old young people in mainstream education.

This report draws upon the past five years of survey data and explores some key issues in more detail, in particular focusing on:

- trends in offending and the profile of offenders¹
- characteristics of young offenders, particularly trends in age of first offence, likelihood of reoffending and victimisation
- trends in the nature of disposals given to offenders, including those who have committed violent crimes

Methodology

MORI has conducted the Youth Surveys via the MORI Schools Omnibus, from which pupils aged 11–16 complete questionnaires in class time in schools. All questionnaires were completed in interviewer-supervised, self-completion sessions.

Data have been weighted by gender, age and region according to data supplied by the Department for Education and Skills and the Welsh Office.

Comparing data over time

In this report, reference is made to previous surveys of young people conducted on behalf of the YJB from 2001 to 2005.

Over time, some questions have been altered and therefore cannot be trended, particularly the list of offences which young people may commit. This is noted in the appropriate sections of the report.

Presentation and interpretation of the data

When interpreting the findings it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of the population, and not the entire population of young people at school. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between sub-groups are therefore statistically significant. A guide to statistical significance is included in the appendices of this document.

¹ As a guide, results for the sample of all young people need to differ by +/- 2% or more to show a significant change year-on-year

Please note that this report will only draw on significant and statistically reliable differences in the data.

Publication of data

As with all our studies, these results are subject to our Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any publication of results requires the prior approval of MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy and misinterpretation.

Offending Behaviour

Offending levels have remained relatively static over the past five years. In 2001, 25% of young people admitted to having committed an offence in the last 12 months, compared with 27% in 2005. The chart below shows how offending levels have fluctuated only slightly since 2001.

Trends in offending levels

Q *Have you committed any criminal offence in the last 12 months? This may range from something like fare dodging (not paying for a train ticket) to stealing something*



Base: All young people

Source: MORI

This level of self-reported offending is in line with the 26% of young people aged 10–25 who said they had committed at least one offence in the preceding 12 months, according to the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS).²

Although not directly comparable because of the different methodology used to conduct the survey and the age groups included,³ the OCJS does provide a useful comparison to the YJB data.

² Young People and Crime: Findings from the 2004 OCJS Survey. Home Office 2005.

³ Around 5,000 people aged 10-25 living in private households in England and Wales were interviewed in 2004

Profile of Offenders

Generally, the Youth Survey data shows little change in the profile of offenders. Over the past five years, young people who offend are more likely to have been male and aged 14–16⁴ and a higher proportion of young people who are black have committed an offence, in comparison to their white peers. The age at which young people are likely to commit their first offence has remained stable (between the ages of 11 and 12), though there has been no clear pattern over time as to the age at which offending peaks.

For example, this year, as with the 2003 Youth Survey, offending levels appear to peak at the age of 15–16. In contrast, the 2004 Youth Survey findings indicate that offenders were more likely to be 14 year olds.

By way of comparison, among the cohort of young people included in the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime,⁵ offending increased significantly between the ages of 12–14, but then started to decline. Serious ‘delinquency’⁶ was found to peak at age 14. The OCJS, which includes young people aged up to 25, found that offending peaked among 14–17-year-olds for both males and females.

The Youth Survey data does show, however, that there have been fluctuations in the offending levels of certain age groups. Eleven, fifteen and sixteen-year-olds are all more likely to say they carried out an offence in the last twelve months in 2005 than in previous years, as the chart below illustrates.

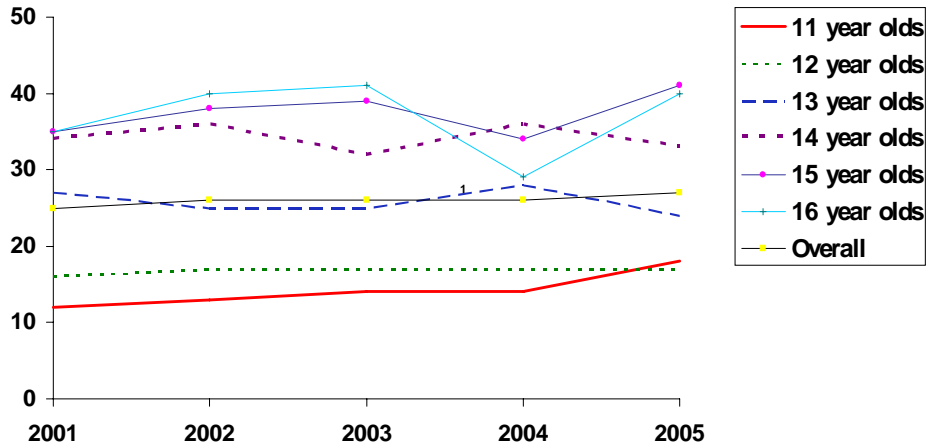
⁴ In 2001 the data for 15-16 year olds was combined

⁵ Smith, D.J., McVie S., Woodward, R., Shute, J., Flint, J. and McAra, L. (2001) the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime: Key findings at ages 12 and 13.

⁶ Items included in the measure of serious delinquency were joyriding, carrying a weapon, damage to property, housebreaking, robbery and car-breaking.

Trends in offending levels

Q *Have you committed any criminal offence in the last 12 months?
This may range from something like fare dodging (not paying for a train ticket) to stealing something*



Base: All young people

While there have been fluctuations among age groups, the table below shows that there has been little change in the gender and ethnicity of offenders over the past five years.

Q Have you committed any criminal offence in the last 12 months?						
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
		%	%	%	%	%
Base: All		5,263	5,167	4,963	4,715	5,463
Overall		25	26	26	26	27
Age	11 years old	12	13	14	14	18
	12 years old	16	17	17	17	17
	13 years old	27	25	25	28	24
	14 years old	34	36	32	36	33
	15 years old	35	38	39	34	41
	16 years old		40	41	29	40
Gender	Male	30	31	32	31	33
	Female	20	22	20	20	21
Ethnicity	White	25	26	26	26	27

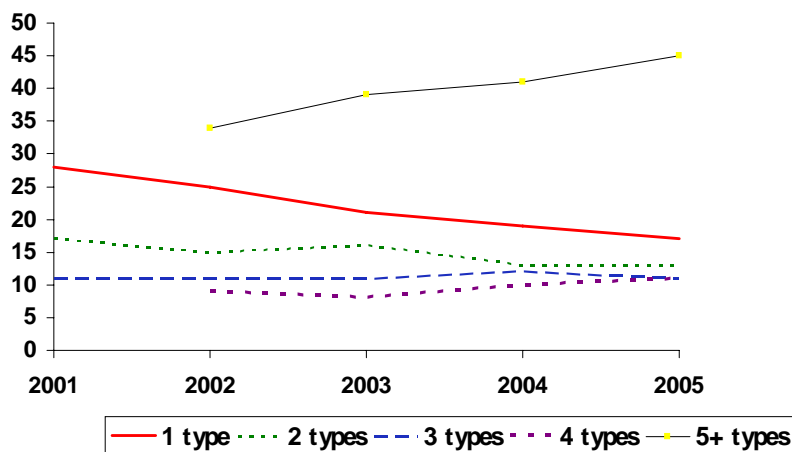
	Black	33	35	33	37	36
	Asian	18	14	23	20	18

Frequency of offending

By looking at the number of different types of offences committed as well as the actual number of times young offenders say they have committed a crime, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of patterns of offending.

The proportion of young people who say they have committed more than five *types* of offences has risen (from 34% in 2002 to 45% in 2005), while the opposite is true for those committing only one type of offence (28% in 2001, compared with 17% in 2005). With the overall level of offending remaining static, it appears that those who are offending are responsible for a wider range of offences each year.⁷

Numbers of different types of offences committed



Base: All who have committed an offence in the last 12 months

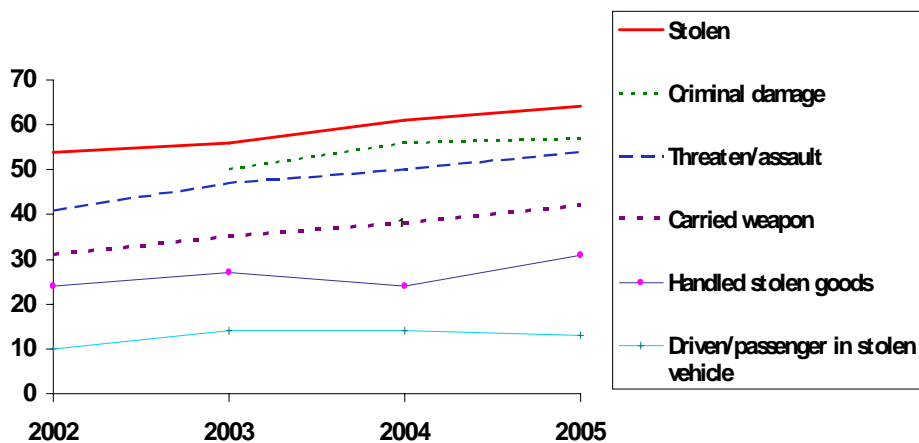
For every year of the survey, boys are significantly more likely to have committed five or more types of offences, but there is no clear pattern in terms of the most likely age that offenders are committing more than five types of crimes (in 2005, 14-year-olds are most likely to have committed the greatest number of different types of offences, whereas in 2004 it was 15–16 year olds).

⁷ In 2004 respondents were given the option of 4+ offences so data cannot be compared in this chart

Type of offence

Grouping offences together according to typology reveals some notable trends. The most significant increase has been in the proportion of young people handling stolen goods between 2004 and 2005 (from 24% to 31%), though there have been steady rises in the proportion of young people stealing (64% in 2005, compared with 54% in 2002), causing criminal damage (57% in 2005, compared with 50% in 2003) and carrying a weapon (42% in 2005, compared with 31% in 2002).

Different types of crime committed by offenders



Base: All young people

Characteristics of Offenders

There have been a few noticeable changes in the nature of the crimes being carried out by offenders and in the characteristics of offenders themselves:

Boys

The proportion of boys who committed their first offence aged 11 or under has fluctuated, though it peaked in 2005 (43% in 2003, 41% in 2004 and 48% in 2005).

Whilst the number of boys who say they committed other offences after they were caught by the police rose between 2003 and 2004 (from 57% to 65%), in 2005 this figure fell to 63%.

Being a victim of mobile phone theft has also risen, from 6% in 2003 and 2004 to 8% in 2005.

Girls

The age at which girls first start offending has remained constant (around three in ten committing an offence when aged 11 or under), as has the proportion who re-offend after being caught by the police (around 60%).

Ethnicity

There have been no discernible changes in the age at which white offenders first commit a crime (around 40% being aged 11 or under) or in the proportion reoffending after being caught by the police (around 60%).

The proportion who have been physically attacked has increased (from 10% in 2003, 13% in 2004, to 16% in 2005), as has the proportion who claim to have been threatened by others (27% in 2003 and 2004, to 29% in 2005).

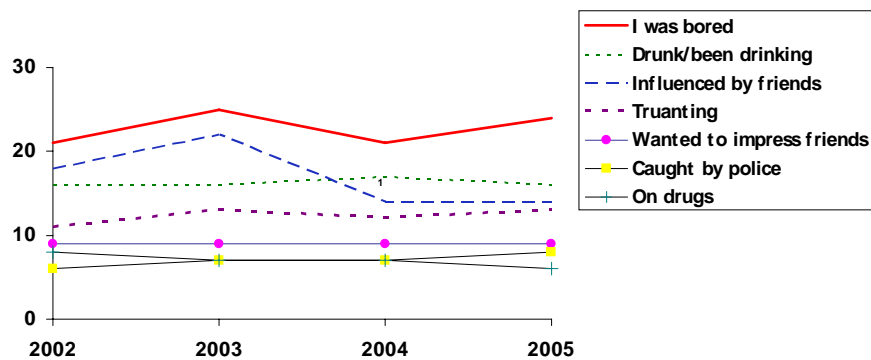
As with white offenders, there has been an increase in the proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) young people who have been threatened (from 19% in 2003, 20% in 2004, to 26% in 2005) and physically attacked (from 11% in 2003, 12% in 2004, to 16% in 2005).

Circumstances of offending

Among those who have committed an offence, motivations for their behaviour have changed little, and not significantly, since 2002. While there have been some fluctuations in the proportions of young people who say they were bored when they committed an offence (21% in 2002, 25% in 2003, 24% in 2005), this continues to be the most frequently cited reason. There has been a decrease in the number who say they were influenced by friends or others (18% in 2002, 22% in 2003, 14% in 2005) when they committed an offence, but no change in the number who cite drug or alcohol use (has remained around 7% and 16% respectively).

Circumstances of offending

Q Which of the following, if any, applied to you when you committed the offence(s) in the last year?



Base: All who have committed a criminal offence in the last 12 months

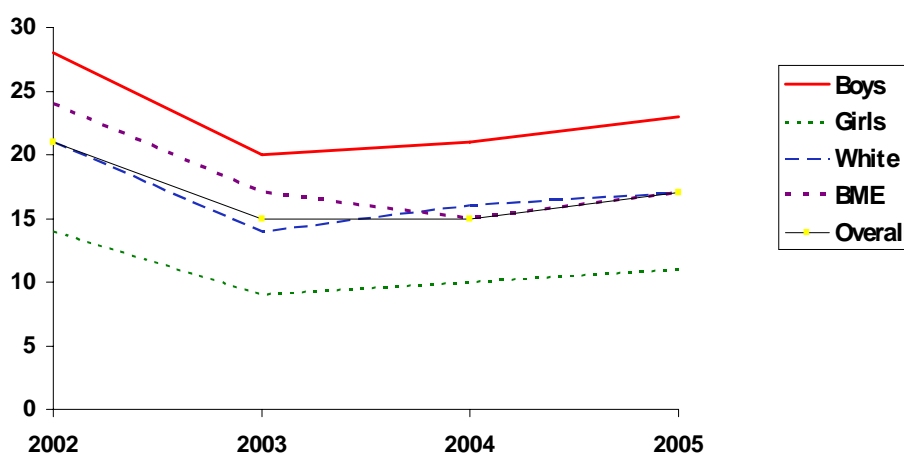
Though small base sizes make comparisons indicative only, findings tend to suggest that girls and 15–16 year olds are more likely to have committed an offence when they were drunk or had been drinking alcohol.

Violent Crime

Between 2002 and 2003 there was a decline in violent offending among all young people, with the proportion committing a violent offence falling from 21% to 15% overall. Since 2003,⁸ however, there has been a gradual increase in violent offending⁹ (from 15% in 2003 and 2004 to 17% in 2005). As the chart below illustrates, both boys and girls and white and BME offenders follow this pattern, with no significant deviations from the overall trend.

Trends in violent crime – gender and ethnicity

Proportion of young people who have committed a violent offence in the last 12 months



Base: All young people

The 2004 OCJS found that a very similar proportion of young people, 16%, had committed at least once violent offence (defined as assault or robbery) in the previous year. Eleven percent admitted to a more severe form of violence which caused injury. Violent offending was found to be most common among males aged 14–17, with men twice as likely as females to say they had committed a violent offence (20%, compared with 11%).

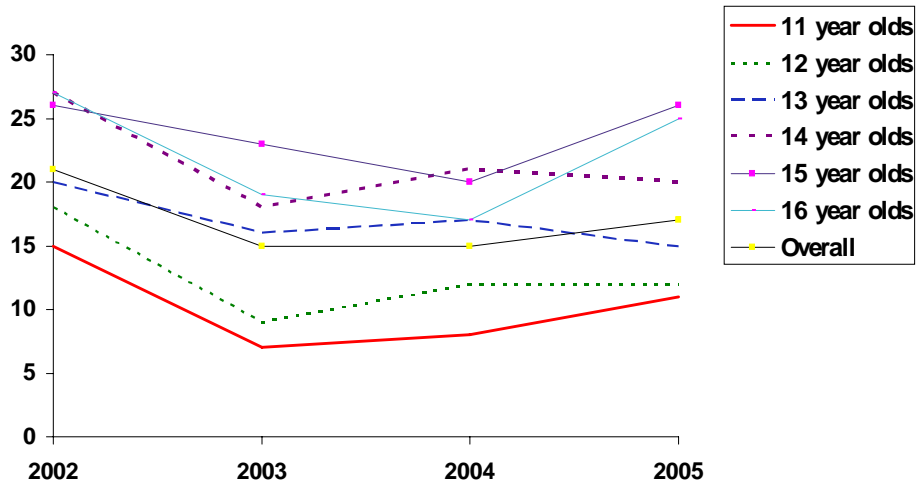
Analysing Youth Survey trends in the ages of violent offenders does show some significant differences, with the increase in violent offences particularly notable among 16-year-olds (rising from 17% in 2004, to 25% in 2005) and 15-year-olds (increasing from 20% in 2004, to 26% in 2005), as the chart below shows.

⁸ In 2001 the question on offences committed was worded differently and a number of the categories were not included or were worded differently. As a result, findings are not comparable with data from 2002–2005 so are not shown.

⁹ See appendices for definitions of violent offences

Trends in violent crime - age

Proportion of young people who have committed a violent offence in the last 12 months



Base: All young people

Specific violent offences

As noted above, there has been a gradual increase in violent crime since 2003, but there are variations by specific offence. As the chart below illustrates, the greatest increase is evident for the offences of ‘hurting someone without the requirement for medical treatment’ (plus thirteen percentage points since 2002) and ‘carrying a knife’ (plus twelve percentage points since 2002).

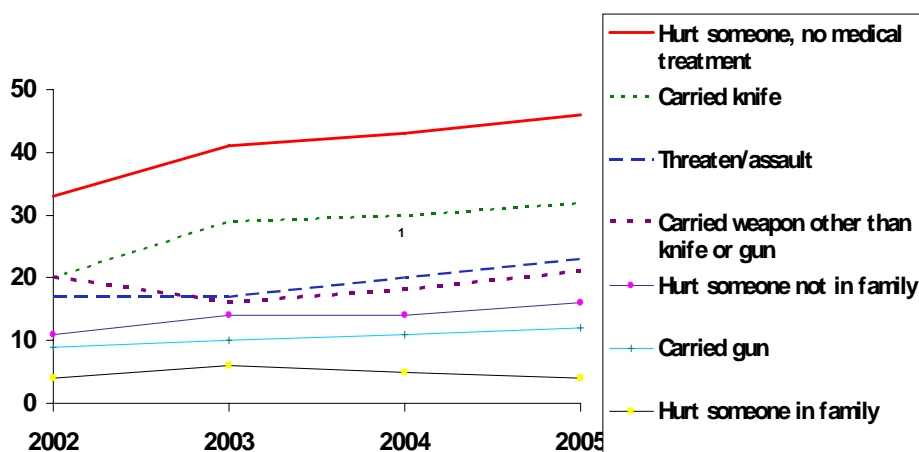
The increase in the proportion of young people hurting someone without them needing medical treatment is evident among both boys and girls: 37% of boys and 27% of girls admitted the offence in 2002, compared with 49% and 41% in 2005 respectively. Although the small base size means that findings are not statistically significant, the increase in this type of offending is most evident among black young people (28% in 2002, compared with 53% in 2005).

The rise in the number of young people carrying a knife is less marked among different sub groups, though between 2004 and 2005 there was an increase in the proportion of girls carrying this type of weapon (21%, compared with 15% in 2004). Among different ethnic groups, the increase is most evident among white offenders (29% in 2003, compared with 33% in 2005).

There has been least change in the proportion of young people carrying a weapon other than a knife or gun, carrying a gun and hurting someone in their family.

Trends in violent offending

Q What offences, if any, have you committed in the last 12 months?



Base: All young people

Deterrents to offending

Among young people, the fear of being caught is felt to be the number one deterrent to offending, though fewer now cite this reason than in 2001 (41%, compared with 39% in 2005). Fewer young people are also now concerned about parents' reaction and type of punishment – there has been a steady decline in the proportion of young people citing these as deterrents since 2003.

Deterring factors such as concern for the victim of the crime and having a mentor have remained at a consistent level over the past few years.

Q Which two of these things do you think has the biggest effect on stopping young people from committing crimes?					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	%	%	%	%	%
Base: All	5,263	5,167	4,963	4,715	5,463
The fear of being caught	41	41	47	38	39
Worry about how parents will react	41	40	42	40	36
Type of punishment	25	22	27	22	24
Fear of being punished	24	22	30	23	22
Attitude of friends	10	9	12	11	11
Meeting the victim	13	9	14	9	10
Having interesting things to do in spare time	9	7	10	10	9
Getting a good education	10	8	11	9	9
Concern for victims of the crime	7	7	10	9	8
Having a mentor/someone to look out for them	5	4	7	6	6
Don't know	7	8	8	11	14

Fear of being caught, type of punishment and the attitude of their friends tend to be stronger deterrents for girls, while boys are more concerned about how their parents will react.

Age is also a factor in attitudes to deterrents: 15–16-year-olds are more likely to see the type of punishment and the fear of being punished as an effective deterrent.

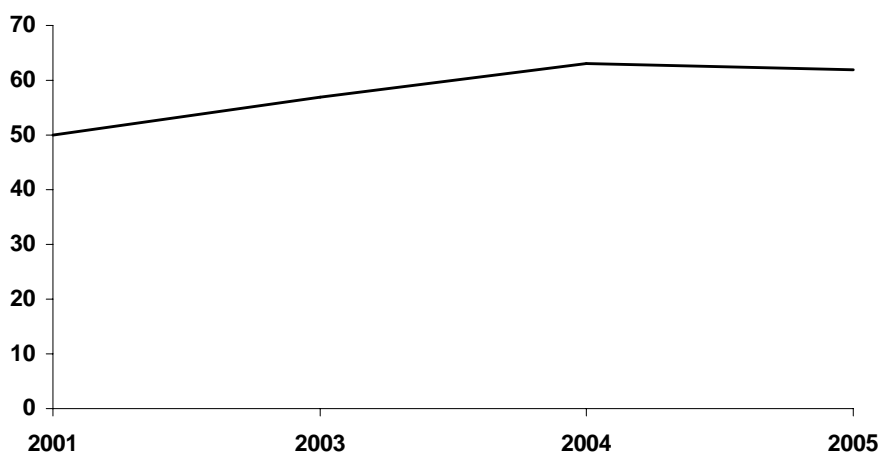
Those who have committed an offence or have been caught for a crime committed in the last 12 months are particularly likely to think that worry about the reaction of parents would be an effective deterrent for young people.

Offending and use of disposals

The proportion of young people reoffending after being caught by the police rose steadily between 2001 and 2004, but remained stable between 2004 and 2005,¹⁰ perhaps a reflection of the disposals given to young offenders. Indeed, the proportion of young people who have reoffended and say that ‘nothing happened’ after they were caught by the police has fallen, from 63% in 2004, to 47% in 2005. There has also been a corresponding rise in the proportion of young people who have received a reprimand, a Final Warning, or been contacted by a youth offending team (YOT).

Trends in re-offending

Q Did you commit any other offences after you were caught by the police?



Base: All caught by the police for an offence committed in the last 12 months

There has been an increase in the proportion of young offenders given a pre-court disposal¹¹ since 2002, though no discernible changes in the use of first tier, community or custodial sentences. A final warning is the most common type of disposal given to young people who have offended.

The 2004 OCJS found that among those who had committed an offence, the older young people in the sample (18–25-year-olds) were more likely to have been to court and receive a sentence than 10–17-year-olds. Less than one percent of all offenders had received a custodial sentence.

The 2003 OCJS also found that while contact in the last year was low among those who had committed an offence, a substantial minority of offenders, in particular those who

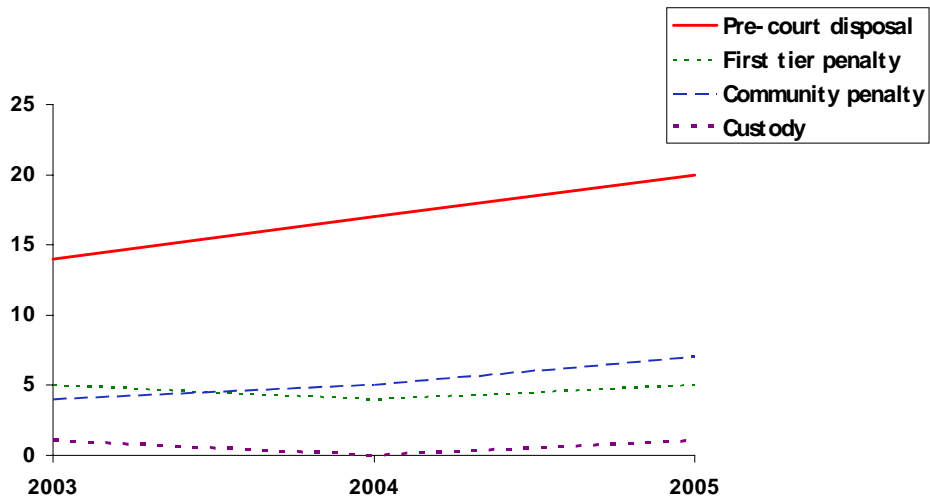
¹⁰ Due to the re-wording of the question in 2002, we are not able to compare the findings from this year

¹¹ See appendices for sentencing categories

had committed serious offences or offended prolifically had had contact with the Criminal Justice System at some point in their lives.

Trends in sentencing

Q Which, if any, of the following things have happened since you were caught by the police?



Base: All young offenders

Characteristics of offenders who have received a disposal

There are a few notable differences between offenders in terms of the type of disposal given after being caught by the police.

- Boys are more likely than girls to have received any type of disposal and more than one in five (22%) have received a pre-court disposal (compared with 17% of girls).
- The proportion of girls receiving a pre-court disposal increased significantly more between 2004 and 2005 than boys (from 12% in 2004 to 17% in 2005, compared with an increase among boys from 20% to 22%).
- White offenders are more likely than BME offenders to have received a pre-court disposal (21%, compared with 15% in 2005).
- The increase in pre-court disposals is most notable among 12-year-olds (increasing from 12% in 2004 to 22% in 2005) and 16 year olds (from 14% in 2004 to 20% in 2005).

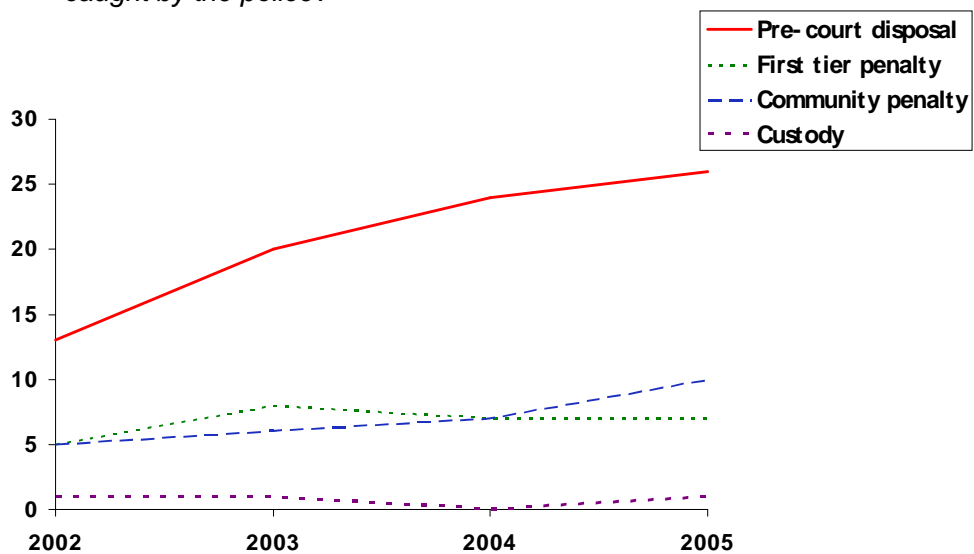
Violent offenders and sentencing

Detection rates vary according to the offence committed and are higher for those committing more serious crimes, such as carrying a weapon and assaulting or threatening others in public.

Offenders who have committed such violent offences are more likely to have received most types of disposal than offenders generally; the exception being the use of custodial sentences, where there is no difference between the two groups.

Trends in sentencing – violent offenders

Q Which, if any, of the following things have happened since you were caught by the police?



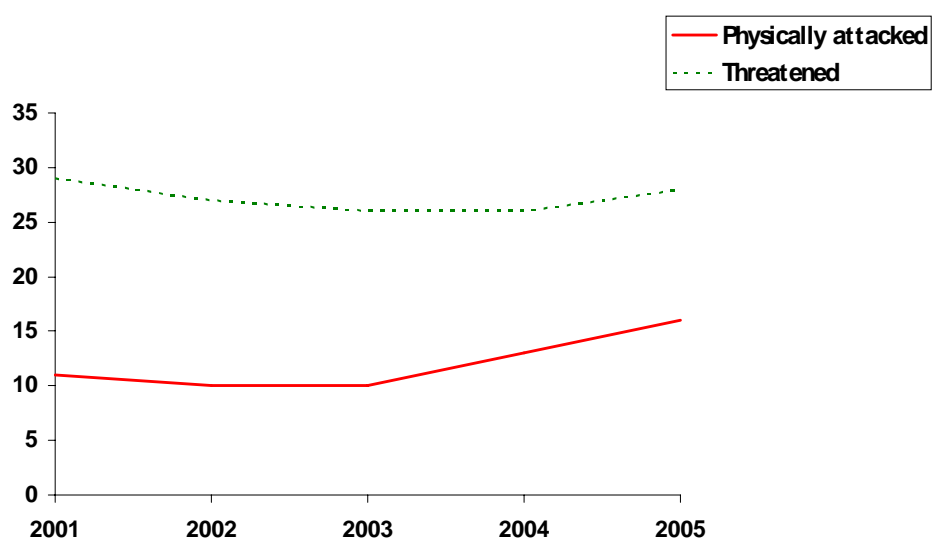
Base: All who have committed a violent offence

Victimisation

Together with this increase in violent offending, there has been a corresponding rise in the proportion of young people who say they have been threatened (since 2004) or physically attacked (since 2003), as the chart below illustrates.

Victimisation

Q Have any of the following happened to you in the last year?



Base: All young people

This increase in victimisation is fairly consistent across different demographic groups (with the exception of 12 and 13-year-olds), though there are some differences worth noting. In particular, the rise in the proportion of young people who have been threatened is marked among 11 and 15–16-year-olds and Asians and likewise, 15–16-year-olds are now much more likely to have been physically attacked than they were a few years ago.

The tables below show how victims of each offence are broken down by age, gender and ethnicity.

The proportion of boys who have been the victim of physical assault has increased steadily since 2003 (from 15%, 18% in 2004 and 22% in 2005).

As with boys, there has been a steady increase in the number of girls who have been physically attacked (6% in 2003, 8% in 2004 and 10% in 2005) and also in those who have been threatened by others (21% in 2003, 23% in 2004 and 25% in 2005).

The small number of Black and Asian young people in the sample make comparisons indicative only, but like their white peers, the proportion who have been threatened or physically attacked appears to have risen since 2003.

% who have been physically attacked in the last 12 months

		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
		%	%	%	%	%
Base: All		5,263	5,167	4,963	4,715	5,463
Overall						
		11	10	10	13	16
Age						
	11-years-old	9	7	7	11	13
	12-years-old	9	8	9	12	11
	13-years-old	11	9	11	13	14
	14-years-old	9	11	12	15	17
	15-years-old					
	16-years-old	14	14	12	15	22
Gender						
	Male	15	14	15	18	22
	Female	6	6	6	8	10
Ethnicity						
	White	11	10	10	13	16
	Black	9	12	10	13	17
	Asian	8	8	11	12	14

% who have been threatened in the last 12 months

		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
		%	%	%	%	%
Base: All		5,263	5,167	4,963	4,715	5,463
Overall		29	27	26	26	28
Age	11-years-old	26	21	21	23	26
	12-years-old	29	25	27	24	22
	13-years-old	30	26	28	27	26
	14-years-old	29	30	27	27	30
	15-years-old	32	31	26	29	36
	16-years-old					
Gender	Male	33	30	30	29	31
	Female	25	23	21	23	25
Ethnicity	White	30	28	27	27	29
	Black	24	26	19	25	28
	Asian	20	17	19	17	22

Victimisation and offending

The Youth Survey data suggests that there is a link between victimisation and offending: those who have committed an offence are significantly more likely to have been the victim of a crime than those who have not committed a crime.

For example, in 2005, 65% of those who have committed an offence had been a victim, compared with just 44% of those who had not committed any crime. This same pattern is evident in both the 2004 and 2003 Youth Surveys.

Appendix A: Offences defined as 'violent'

- Hurt someone, but they did not need medical treatment
- Carried a knife
- Carried a gun
- Threatened/assaulted others in public
- Carried a weapon other than a knife or gun
- Beat up or hurt someone not in your family, causing them to need medical treatment
- Beat up or hurt someone in your family, causing them to need medical treatment

Appendix B: Disposal categories

Pre-court disposal

- I received a Final Warning
- I had to apologise to the victim
- I received a reprimand
- I was contacted by the YOT

First tier penalty

- I had to pay some money
- I went to court

Community penalty

- I was given a curfew
- I had to do some work in groups with other young people
- I had to do some work in the community
- I received an ASBO
- I received an ABC
- I had to visit an Attendance Centre
- I had to attend a drugs programme
- My parents received a Parenting Order
- I went before a Youth Offender Panel
- I was referred to a Youth Inclusion Programme
- I received ISSP
- I had to attend an intervention programme
- I received an ISO
- I was referred to a Youth Inclusion Support Panel

Custody

- I was sent to prison for young people/a young offender institution

Other disposals

- I had to go to school every day
- I was made to go to school
- I was given help to find somewhere to live
- I was able to do new activities

Appendix C: Statistical reliability

The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the total ‘population’, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the ‘true’ values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘95% confidence interval’.

Size of sample on which survey results is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 interviews	6	9	10
500 interviews	3	4	4
5,463 interviews (2005 Schools Omnibus Survey)	1	1	1

Source: MORI

For example, with a sample of 5,463 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus 1 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be ‘real’, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is “statistically significant”, we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume ‘95% confidence interval’, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below.

Size of sample compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 and 100	8	13	14
250 and 100	7	11	12
500 and 250	5	7	8
1,000 and 500	3	5	5
1,000 and 1,000	3	4	4
1,500 and 1,500	2	3	4
4,715 and 5,463 (2004 and 2005 Schools Omnibus surveys)	1	2	2

Source: MORI