Statistician's comment

"Figures presented in this statistical release show proven reoffending statistics for the July to September 2020 offender cohort. Proven reoffences are measured over a one-year follow-up period and a further six-month waiting period to allow for offences to be proven in court.

Reoffending figures for this latest cohort, as well as more recent offender cohorts, highlight the continued volatility as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These statistics are likely to continue oscillating in the short-term before potentially more stable trends are observed as we move further away from the periods of lockdowns.

This latest offender cohort coincides with the latter stages of the first lockdown imposed due to the pandemic as well as the phased reopening of the courts. As the courts reopened (from late May 2020), the number of criminal cases processed between July and September 2020 increased; this follows the sharp reductions during the period of court closures between April to June 2020. Consequently, the number of offenders in the July to September 2020 cohort increased substantially by 79.8% compared to the previous quarter. However, the latest quarterly cohort still saw the second largest year-on-year reduction in the timeseries (a decline of 20.8%, Figure 1).

Furthermore, the reoffending follow-up and waiting periods for this cohort overlap with the second and third national lockdowns.[1] While there were no court closures during these two lockdown periods, police recorded crime data have shown overall reductions in the reporting and recording of many crime types during periods of lockdown.[2] Similarly to the offender cohort size, therefore, the number of reoffenders also fell over the same period (a decline of 25.7%), again representing the second largest year-on-year reduction in the timeseries.

The overall proven reoffending rate was 24.4% for the July to September 2020 offender cohort, a 1.6 percentage point decrease from the same quarter in 2019. It follows a sharp increase in the rate for the previous cohort, which followed a more recent downward trend in the rate".

[1] The first national lockdown was implemented on 23 March 2020 and transitioned to phased reopening until August 2020 (including a limited number of jury trials resuming from 18 May 2020). The second national lockdown was implemented on 5 November 2020 and returned to a three-tier restriction system from 2 December 2020. The third national lockdown was implemented on 6 January 2021 and transitioned to phased reopening until June 2021.

[2] Police recorded crime figures (including monthly trends) can be found at:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice