

Custodial remand of children: a data briefing

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Introduction

“Every unnecessary remand to custody delivers consistently poor outcomes for the child remanded and costs the taxpayer hundreds of thousands of pounds per year for the placement. This is a tragedy for the child, the taxpayer and society.”

- A modern youth justice system: Foundations fit for the future, The Ministry of Justice

The number of children imprisoned in England and Wales has reduced considerably, but remand to youth detention accommodation (YDA) – or custodial remand – is still being used too often, particularly for Black and Mixed Heritage children. Data shows that most remands are short remands, over a quarter are for non-violent offences and Black and Mixed Heritage children are disproportionately remanded. Two thirds of children who are remanded to custody do not go on to receive a custodial sentence.

This data briefing summarises key statistics relating to the use of bail and remand for children in England and Wales. It combines an analysis of data taken from public statistics, Freedom of Information Act requests submitted by Transform Justice, and a survey of 96 youth justice service practitioners and youth court lawyers conducted in October and November 2025.

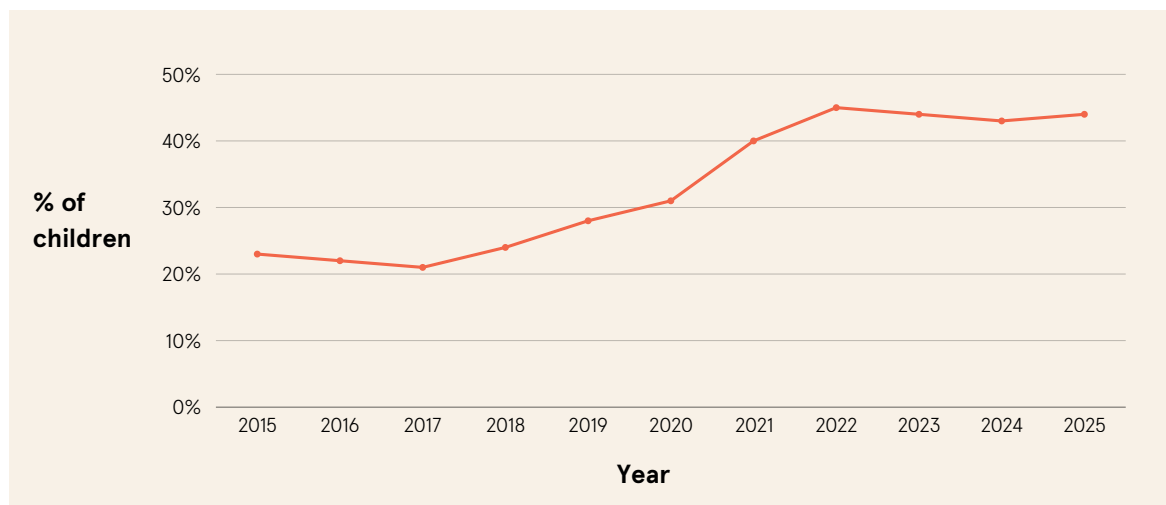


YOI Wetherby, 2017

How many children are on custodial remand?

The number of children in custody is decreasing year on year. In the year ending March 2025 the average youth custody population was 420, the lowest number on record. The number of children held on remand to YDA has also decreased – in the year ending March 2025 the average youth remand population was 185, marking a 24% decrease over the last 10 years. But the proportion of children in custody who are being held on remand has been increasing (see figure 1). It is currently 44%, over double the proportion of adults in custody who are held on remand.

FIGURE 1: Proportion of children in custody who are on remand



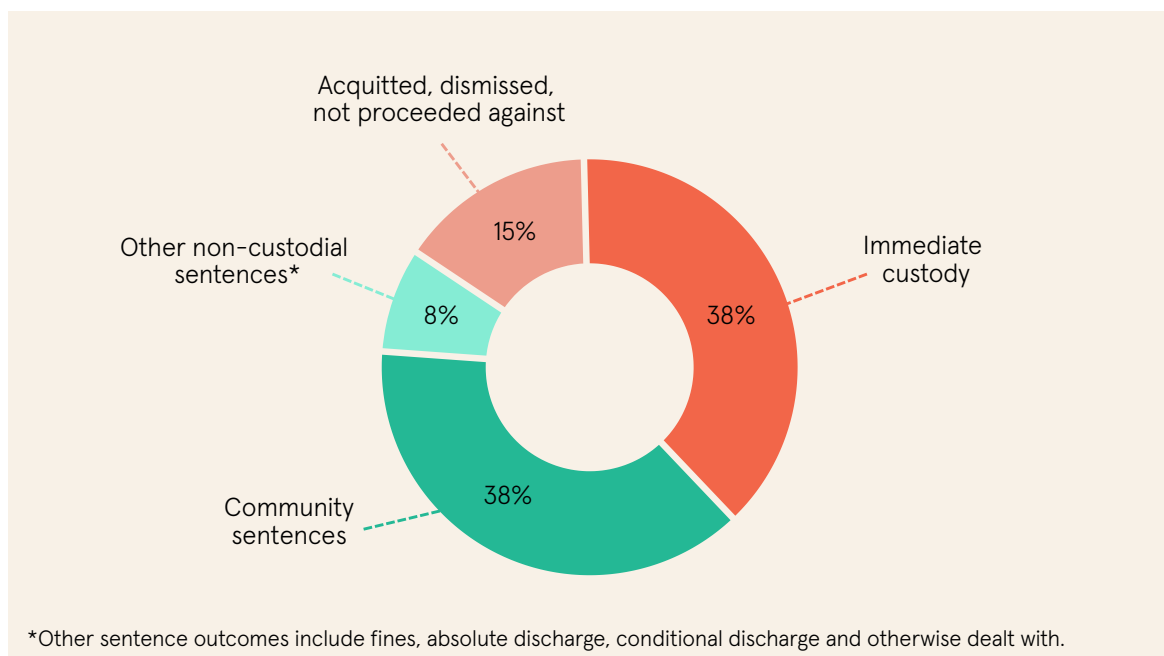
There were 11,092 remand or bail episodes of children in the year ending March 2025. Of these, 988 (9%) were remands to youth detention accommodation (YDA). A child can be remanded to YDA, also known as 'custodial remand', if they meet certain conditions. When a child is remanded to YDA they are detained in a secure children's home, secure training centre or a young offender institution (YOI).

422 (4%) were remands to local authority accommodation (RLAA). RLAA is when a child is not imprisoned but remanded into the care of the local authority, who is responsible for supporting them pending trial and finding them the most appropriate place to live, whether at home, with a relative, in foster care or in a children's home.

What sentences do children on remand receive?

Almost two thirds (62%, year ending March 2025) of children remanded to custody did not go on to receive a custodial sentence.

FIGURE 2: Outcomes of child remands, year ending March 2025



How long are children held on remand?

Almost two thirds (61%) of remands to custody were short remands of up to three months (see figure 3). Of these, 24% were between 1 to 7 nights. This suggests¹ that the child was remanded to custody before either being released on bail or RLAA. An inspectorate [report](#) from 2023 found that, of the cases they inspected, 23% of children were bailed after initially being remanded to custody. Such remands are unnecessary, damaging for the child and could have been avoided if the child was bailed or RLAA'd initially.

A recent HMIP [report](#) further examines short remands, particularly the reasons given for refusing bail in the first court hearing. The most common reasons were lack of accommodation, safeguarding concerns and the need for better bail packages. Bail was often granted once a more intensive bail package for the child was presented.



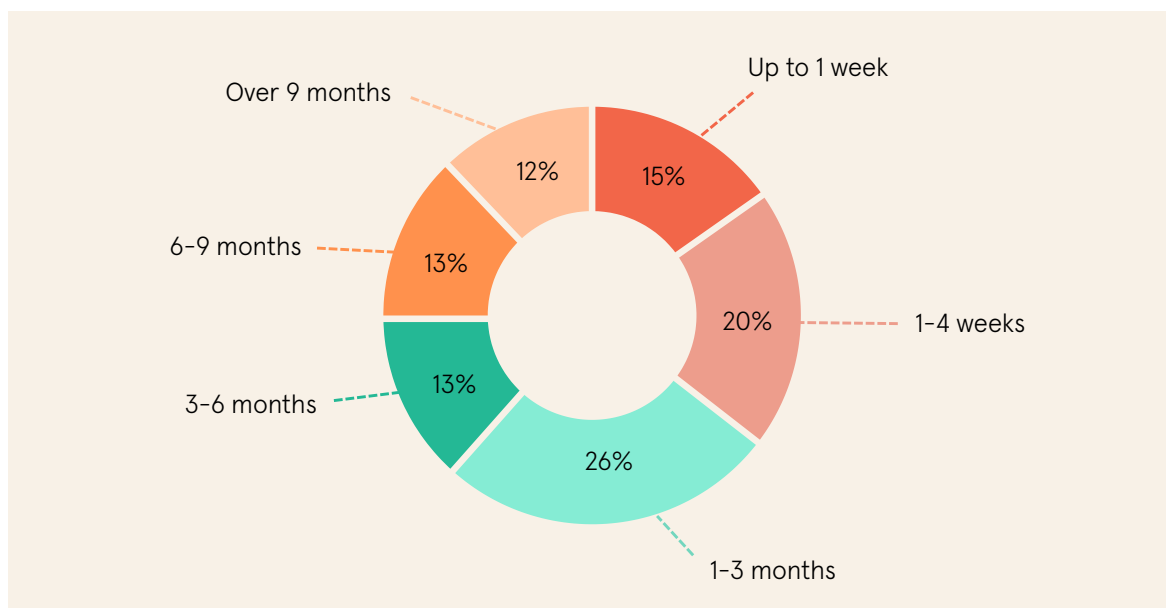
Custody suite at Birmingham Central Police Station

¹ The government does not produce data on reasons for remand.

The use of police remand – post-charge pre-court detention – is a driver for short custodial remands of children. 48% of surveyed practitioners said in their most recent case where a child was remanded by the court, the child had been detained post-charge by the police.

When the police decide to detain a child on remand (after charging them with an offence), the child has to appear in court either the same day or the next working day. This increases the time pressure on youth justice services and the defence to prepare their case and to try to put together a bail package for the child. Our survey found that in 40% of cases that resulted in custodial remand a bail package was not put forward. Similarly, a 2023 [joint inspection of remand to YDA](#) found that in almost three quarters of first remand hearings the youth justice services did not put forward a case for the child to be bailed.

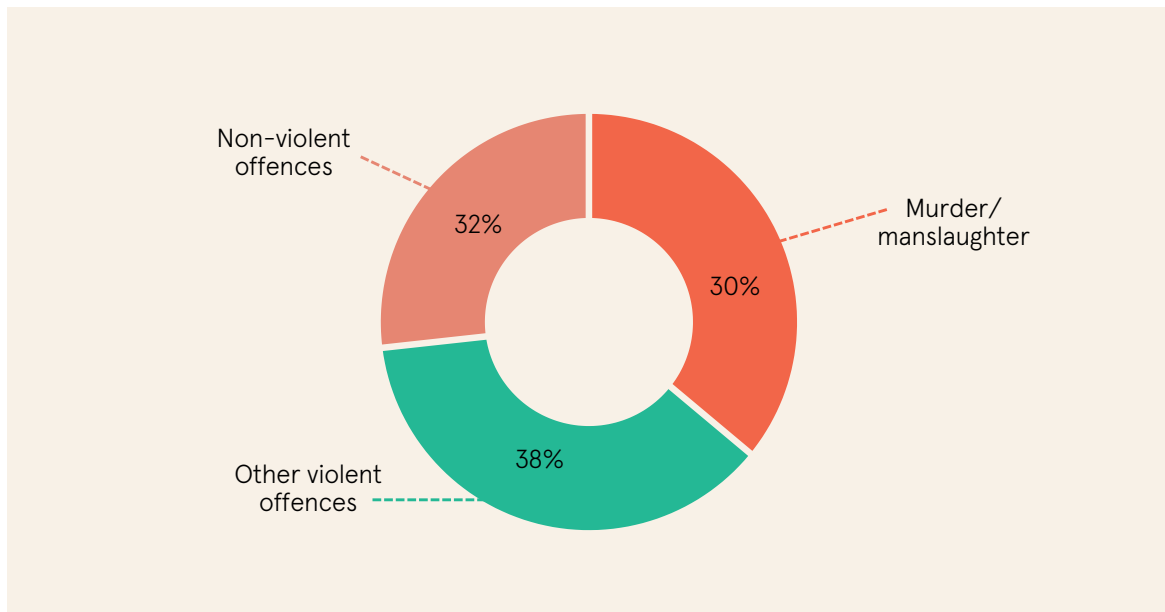
FIGURE 3: Length of remands of children, year ending March 2025



Why are children on custodial remand?

Almost a third (32%) of children on custodial remand for the year ending March 2025 were charged with a non-violent offence² (see figure 4).

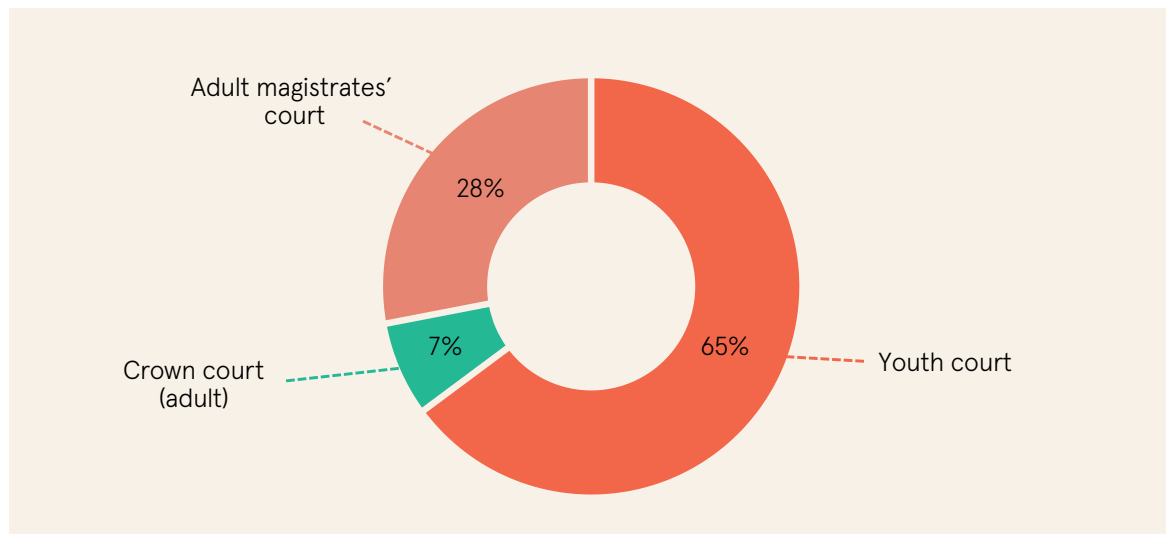
FIGURE 4: Population on remand in YDA by alleged offence groups, year ending March 2025



There were 1,364 court decisions to remand a child in the year ending March 2025. Around two thirds of remand decisions were made in youth courts, and a third were made in adult courts (Crown and magistrates').³

² We define violent offences as an offence with violence (actual or attempted) against a person and do not include possession of weapons (see Appendix 2).

³ Data from the YJB gained via FOI.

FIGURE 5: Where were child remand decisions made, year ending March 2025?

A youth court is a specialist magistrates' court designed for children. Child defendants normally appear before a youth court, but sometimes will instead appear at an adult magistrates' court. Youth courts tend not to be open every day of the week, meaning if a child is remanded by the police and must appear before the court the same day or the next working day, they could end up in an adult magistrates' court.

Adult magistrates' courts were 80% more likely to remand children to youth detention accommodation than youth courts, and twice as likely to remand to local authority accommodation.⁴

We asked practitioners about their most recent case where a child was remanded to custody (n=96). Factors contributing to the court decision to remand the child to custody were:

- Lack of suitable accommodation in the community - 29% (28)
- The child had breached their court bail conditions - 26% (25)
- Concerns about the child's welfare/safety - 24% (23)
- The child appeared in a Saturday court or an adult court - 32% (31)

Only 23% of practitioners felt the remand to custody was appropriate.

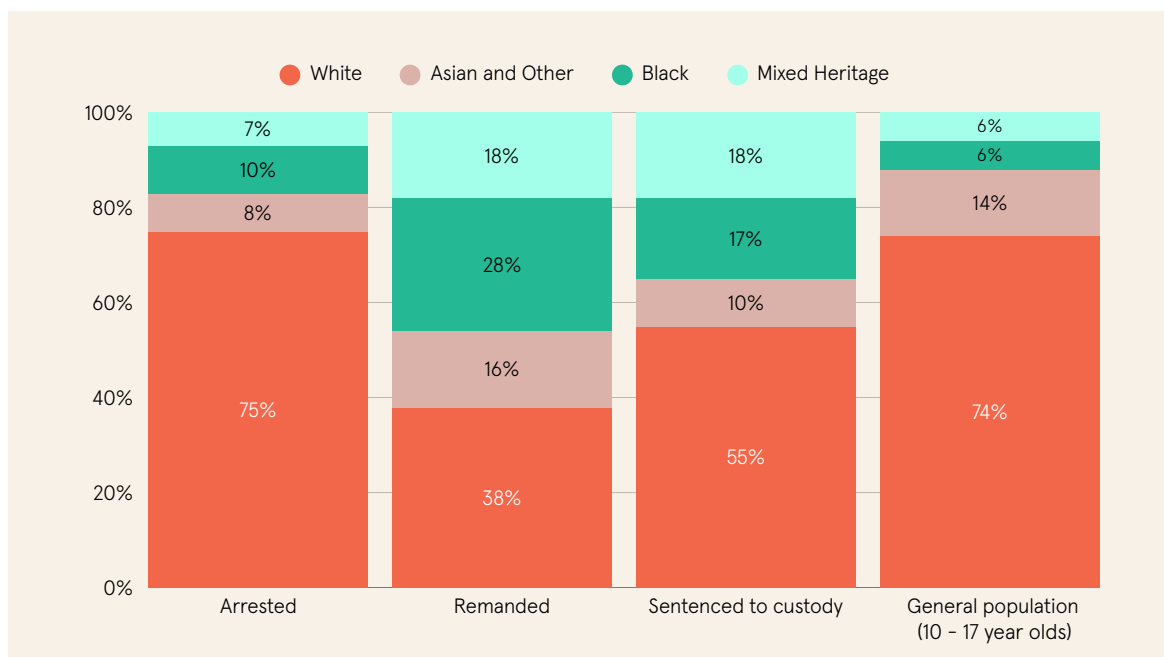
⁴ Data from the YJB gained via FOI.

Who are the children on custodial remand?

96% of the average youth custodial remand population are boys and 4% are girls. Over half (52%) are aged 17, 29% are 16 years old, 13% are 15 years old and 5% are aged between 12 to 14.

Almost two thirds (62%) of the average youth custodial remand population are from racially minoritised groups (see figure 6). This is compared with 26% of children in the general population. The disparity is most acute for Black and Mixed Heritage children, who are remanded at around 7.5 times the rate of White children.

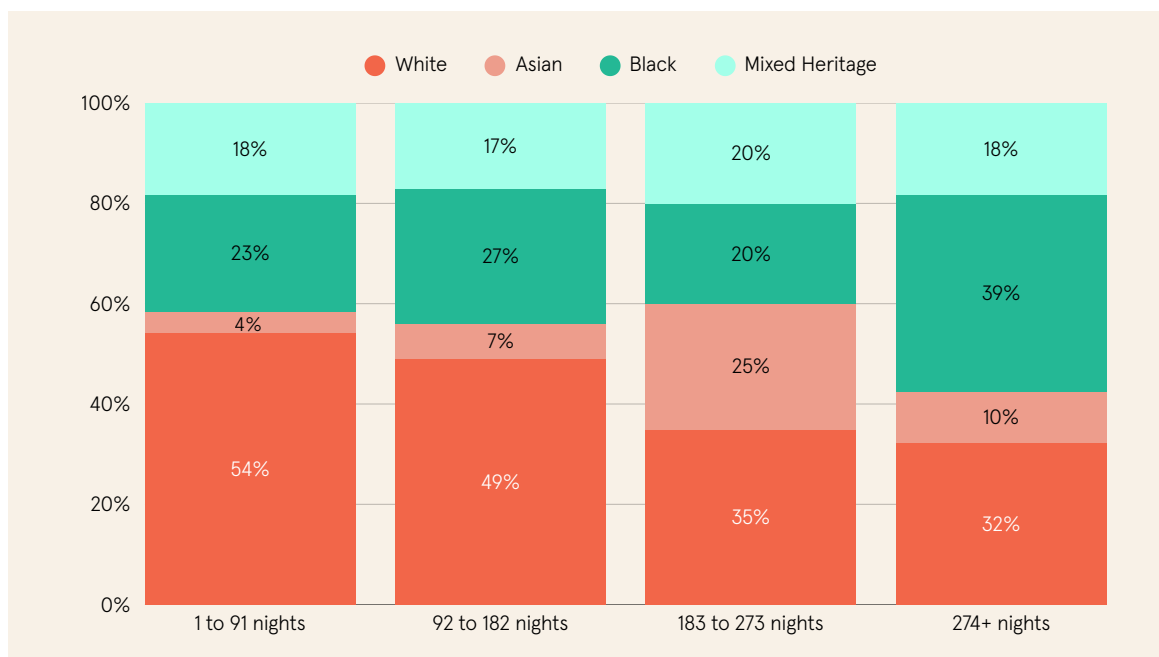
FIGURE 6: Racial disproportionality of children arrested, remanded and sentenced to custody compared with general population, year ending March 2025



The proportion of Black and Mixed Heritage children (and indeed all children from racially minoritised groups) on remand is much higher than the proportion at arrest or of those sentenced to custody.

Children from racially minoritised groups also spend longer on remand than White children, spending a median number of 74 nights on remand versus 41 nights. The proportion of children from racially minoritised groups in the remand population increases as the length of remand increases (see figure 7 below).

FIGURE 7: Length of time spent on remand by racial group, year ending March 2025



Data gaps on custodial remand of children

This paper summarises how custodial remand is currently being used for children, based on published and FOI'd data. But we need better data and research on the following:

- Reasons for remand
- Proportion of child remand population awaiting trial and awaiting sentence
- Drivers for racial disparity in custodial remand – published data on racial disproportionality in remand populations, broken down by youth justice service or youth justice region, would be a good place to start
- Success of different bail and RLAA conditions in supporting children and preventing offending, including impact of alternative and out-of-area accommodation
- Levels and impact of post-charge pre-court police remand of children, broken down by force

Conclusion

The current picture of child custodial remand shows the urgent need to reduce the number of children held on it. Far too many children – especially Black and Mixed Heritage children – are unnecessarily remanded: some are held for very short periods of time, many for non-violent offences and most do not go on to receive a custodial sentence. It is timely that the government has committed to reduce custodial remand of children by 25% in their recent [white paper](#). There is already good practice in driving down custodial remand across England and Wales, and we are keen to showcase this more in our upcoming regional events.

Appendices

Appendix 1: what are the different types of bail and remand?

Bail: where a child is charged with an offence and the court releases them on bail while they are awaiting their trial	Unconditional bail	The court imposes no conditions on the child's bail.
	Conditional bail	The court imposes conditions on a child's bail, such as curfews, exclusion zones (areas the child cannot go) or reporting and engagement requirements with the youth justice service (YJS)
	Bail supervision and support	Provided by the YJS to help children comply with bail conditions.
	Intensive support and supervision (ISS)	An intensive bail package. Conditions are likely to include tagged curfews and voice verification.
Remand: when a child is charged with an offence and refused bail by the courts	Remand to local authority accommodation (RLAA)	A child can be remanded into the care of the local authority, who is responsible for supporting them pending trial and finding them the most appropriate accommodation. This can be living at home, with a relative, in foster care or in a children's home.
	Remand to youth detention accommodation (YDA)	A child can be remanded to YDA, which is effectively remanded to custody, if they meet certain conditions. YDA can be a secure children's home, secure training unit or a young offenders' institution (YOI).

Appendix 2: population of children on custodial remand by offence

Average monthly population in youth detention accommodation on remand, by type of offence, year ending March 2024 (incorporating YJS stats and FOI data)

- Murder/manslaughter = 36%
- Wounding/GBH = 18%
- Possession of an offensive weapon = 9%
- Attempt murder = 9%
- Robbery = 5%
- Domestic Burglary = 4%
- Sexual Offences = 3%
- Drugs = 2%
- Other violent offences = 2%
- Breach of Statutory Order = 2%
- Other non-violent offences = 10%

This report has been created in partnership with Co-op Foundation, Co-op's charity. We're working together to end the unnecessary imprisonment of children.



Foundation

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