

KIERAN MULLAN MP

(Bexhill and Battle)



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Robert Chote
Chair
UK Statistics Authority
Fry Building 1st Floor
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

14th January 2025

Our Ref: KM37507

Dear Sir Robert,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the use of a highly questionable statistic with significant limitations in the important field of criminal justice by a Government Minister

On the 24th July 2024, the Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice, Lord Timpson, stated in the House of Lords:

“The criminal justice system exists to keep the public safe, but it should not hold back the one in four working-age people in the UK with a criminal record from getting jobs.”

Lord Timpson was more recently quoted as repeating a variation of this claim in an interview with The Times published on 9 January 2025, stating:

“...around 25 per cent of adults in this country have a criminal conviction for a driving offence...”

This statistic appears to be based on data from the Police National Computer (PNC), compared against population data drawn from the statistical notice *Estimate of the number of individuals of working age (16-64 and 16+) with a nominal record on the Police National Computer*.

However, nominal records on the PNC include not only individuals with convictions but also those with cautions, pending prosecutions, and cases where no further action was required. Additionally, the PNC retains nominal records until at least 100 years after the individual’s birth, regardless of their date of death.

I am seeking clarity as to whether the dataset also contains records for individuals that are not resident in the UK. Furthermore, I understand individuals may appear in multiple categories, further complicating interpretation.

In response to a Written Parliamentary Question I submitted (available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-11-11/13530/>), the Ministry of Justice provided the following breakdown for offenders of working age:

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Table 1. Proportion of the records on the Police National Computer (PNC) in each category specified, by offenders of working age


Outcome	Proportion
Conviction	74.6%
Caution	9.6%
Pending	4.6%
No further action	0.5%

This breakdown highlights that at least 15% of the records are non-conviction records, and the percentage could be even higher in the working age sub group.

Given the potential for this statistic to influence public perceptions and policymaking, I urge the Statistics Authority to review and provide advice on the use of this statistic, given its significant limitations. I recognise the need to encourage employers and others to give second chances to those with criminal records. However, we should not use statistics to normalise criminality in pursuit of that goal.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and would be happy to provide further information or discuss this issue in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Kieran Mullan MP
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle

References

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-07-24/debates/6C3F5032-5C20-4B49-A20F-2D27E96E3809/King'SSpeech#contribution-61537CF3-D82A-41B7-8B07-2C5BA802C141>

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/ex-convicts-just-as-reliable-as-other-staff-says-prisons-minister-zsm5z2lqf>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/671a27f0da8fb5e23e65a435/Estimate_of_the_number_of_working_age_people_with_a_nominal_record_on_the_Police_National_Computer_pdf.pdf