



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

Issued: 30 October 2014

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### **Peak age of offending rises as teens turn from life of crime**

The conviction rate for young men in Scotland has fallen by almost two-thirds in the space of a generation, according to new research.

The peak age of offending for men, which was 18 in the late 1980s, is now 23 according to the latest conviction figures. The peak age of offending for women has increased from 18 to 30. The findings suggest fewer young people are choosing a life of crime.

The study, based upon figures from the Scottish Offenders Index, tracked the number of convictions and the age of offenders between 1989 and 2012.

There were 9500 convictions per 100,000 men aged 16-20 for offences committed in 1989, which was the highest rate of any age group. By 2011, this had declined to only 3500 convictions per 100,000 men, with teenagers no longer having the highest convictions rate.

The rate of conviction for men aged 21-25 also declined by almost a third for offences committed over the same period, from 6200 per 100,000 to 4400 per 100,000.

Convictions rates for those over the age of 25 remained steady, meaning the average age at which people in Scotland are convicted of offending has increased.

The research was conducted by Ben Matthews from the Applied Quantitative Methods Network (AQMeN), based at the University of Edinburgh's School of Law. It will be presented as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Festival of Social Science on 4 November.

Professor Susan McVie, director of AQMeN, said: "We don't know exactly why this drop in young offenders has happened, but it is very likely due to a combination of factors. Better prevention measures to protect households and properties from crimes could be deterring youngsters. Also, dramatic changes in the way that the youth justice system operates in Scotland could also be responsible, meaning that children are kept out of the justice system for as long as possible."

Further AQMeN research presented at the Festival of Social Science will reveal further crime trends. In line with other western countries, Scotland has experienced a falling crime rate.

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People in Scotland are less likely than ever to become a victim of crime. The proportion of the population likely to escape being a victim of crime rose from 76 per cent in 1993 to 82 per cent in 2010/11.

However, those living in high crime areas continue to be disproportionately victimised, with 0.5 per cent of the population experiencing more than 10 per cent of all crime, including the most personal thefts, assaults and threats.

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