

Information Bulletin

Office of
Crime Statistics
And Research

No 36

December 2003

Male Custodial Remands in South Australia: Trends in time spent – 1997 to 2001

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This Information Bulletin summarises the findings from a study of time remanded in custody by male defendants between January 1997 and December 2001. In particular, it presents information on:

- Trends in median time spent as at selected census dates; and
- Trends in time spent by 'length of time' category.

The results indicate that there has been an increase in the time spent on remand over this period, which has contributed to recent substantial increases in remand daily averages.

Introduction

Previous research by the Office of Crime Statistics and Research sought to explain increases in daily average male remand numbers between 2000 and 2001 by focusing on changing trends in admissions. It was found that while increases in admissions helped to explain the overall increase in daily averages it did not fully explain the strong increase noted in the early part of 2001.

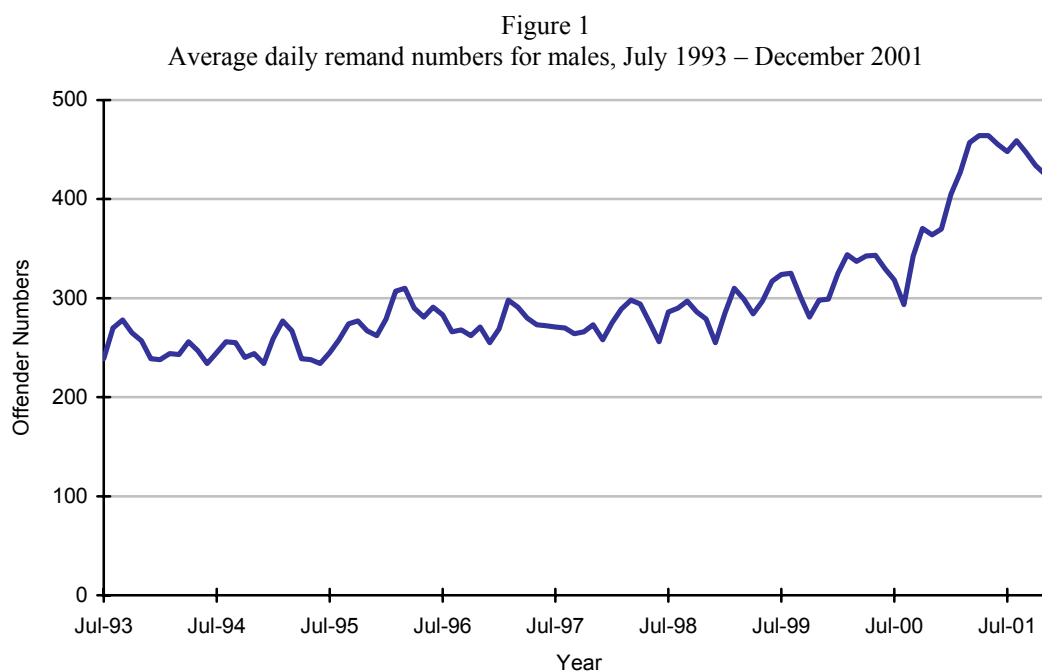
The aim of this Information Bulletin is to look more closely at the other key driver of remand numbers – namely, time spent on remand, to identify whether this variable has changed over time, and if so, whether these changes have contributed to the recent dramatic increase in daily averages.

Background

Figure 1 depicts the number of adult males remanded in custody each day, averaged for each month from July 1993 to December 2001. This shows two elements:

- first, a general increase commencing during 1999; and
- second, a particularly strong increase or ‘spike’ from December 2000 to May 2001.

As shown, the average number of males remanded in custody each day reached a high of 464 during May 2001 compared with 343 for the same month in the previous year. This represents an increase of 35.2%. While daily averages decreased between May and December 2001 (to 396 for the month of December 2001) they were still well above those recorded in the earlier part of the period depicted.

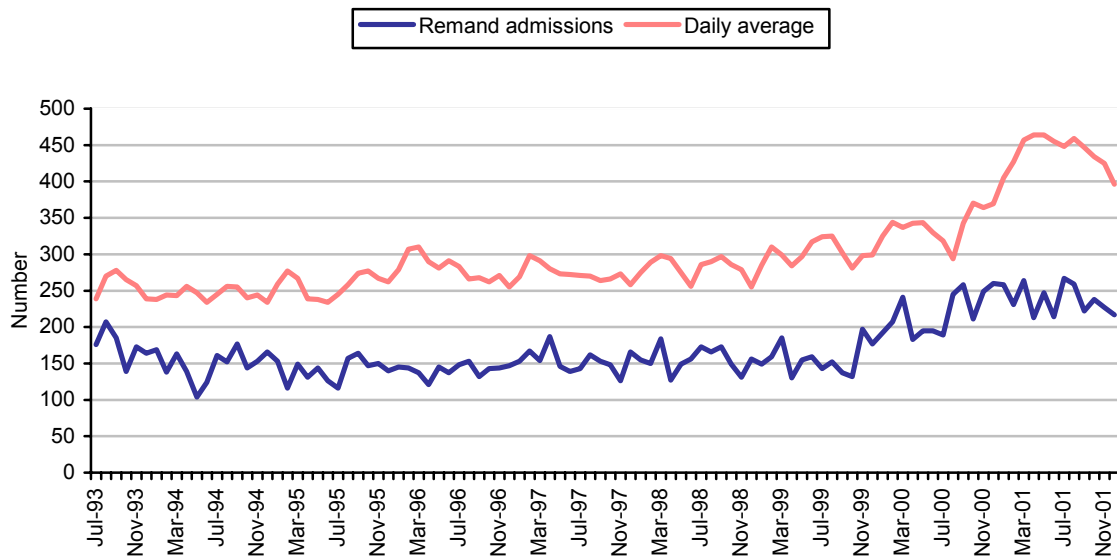


Daily averages are the result of two factors: the number of remand *admissions* and the *length of time* a person remains in custody. Increases in the daily average number of remandees may be the result of an increase in admissions and/or an increase in the amount of time spent on remand.

The relationship between the average number of adult males remanded in custody per day and the corresponding number of admissions from July 1993 to 2001 is illustrated in Figure 2. As shown, while overall trends were relatively similar, the increase in the number of male admissions was not as pronounced as the increase in daily averages in remand and occurred somewhat earlier. The main increase in admissions occurred between 1999 and 2000, whereas for daily averages, although there was also an increase during 1999 and 2000, a more dramatic increase occurred in early 2001, peaking in May 2001 (n=464). This discrepancy suggests that the increase in daily averages cannot be solely

attributed to an increase in the number of admissions and must in part also reflect an increase in the amount of time individuals are spending in remand.

Figure 2
Male remand admissions per month and daily numbers in remand
(average for each month) – July 1993 to December 2001



This Information Bulletin therefore focuses on this second driver – namely the length of time spent on remand - and presents the findings of an analysis of time spent on remand by male defendants between January 1997 and December 2001.

Methodology

The Department for Correctional Services extracted data on males remanded in custody as at the last Friday of each month from January 1997 to December 2001. For each monthly ‘snapshot’, information was provided on:

- The total number of male remandees on that day; and
- The number of days each remandee had been in custody up to that point in time.

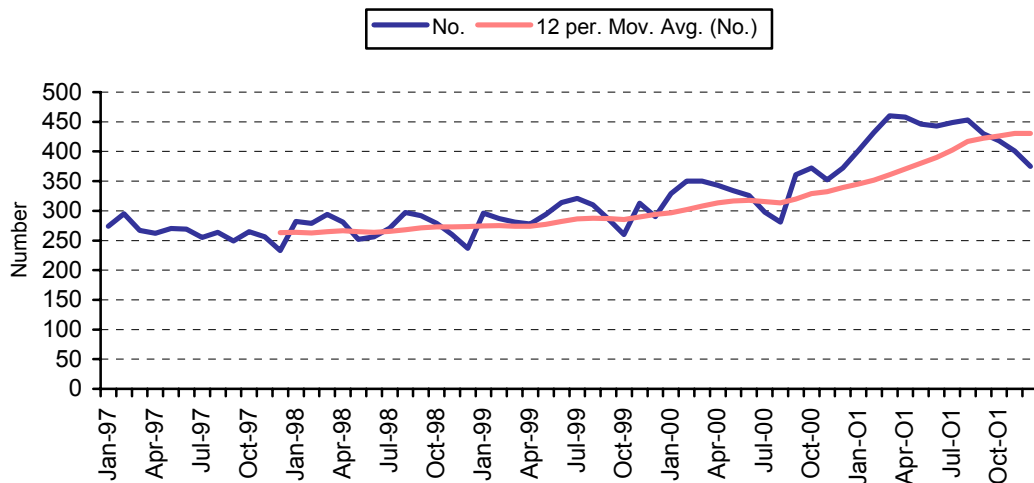
Results

Number of males remanded in custody

Figure 3 shows the number of males remanded in custody, as at the last Friday of each month, for the months January 1997 to December 2001. It should be noted that this graph represents a snapshot of one day per month. This is different from Figure 1, which represents the average number of custodial remandees per month over the same period. However, despite the different counting methods, the overall trend is similar in each of the graphs.

As shown in Figure 3, there was a steady albeit gradual increase in the number of males remanded in custody during 1998, 1999 and the first half of 2000. The increase became more marked in the second half of 2000 and was then followed by a decrease from early 2001.

Figure 3
Number of males remanded in custody on the last Friday of each month,
January 1997 to December 2001



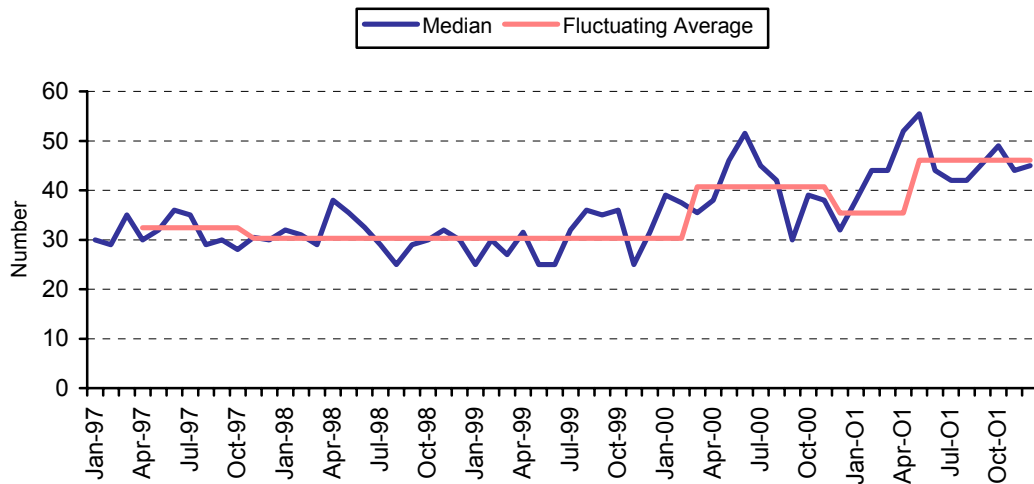
Trends in median time spent in remand

Figure 4 shows the median number of days that male defendants had spent as custodial remandees as at the last Friday of each month, from January 1997 to December 2001.

As shown, the median number of days spent in custody was generally lower in the first three years depicted. Medians ranged from between 25 and 38 days during the 1997 to 1999 period, compared with a range of 30 to 55.5 days during 2000 and 2001.

The trendline (fluctuating average) shows more clearly the increase in median times over the period. Up to February 2000 the average was 30.3 days. This figure rose to 40.7 days between March and November 2000, before dropping to 35.4 in the period December 2000 to April 2001. The decrease was not sustained and the average rose again to 46.1 for the period May 2001 to December 2001.

Figure 4
 Median number of days spent remanded in custody as at the last Friday of each month,
 January 1997 to December 2001



Trends in time spent by ‘length of time’ category

An increase in the overall median time spent in custody as at the last Friday of each month does not indicate exactly where these increases have occurred. For example, is the increase due to a greater number of defendants in custody for two to three months, or three to six months, or more than six months? To answer this question, the following analysis details trends in the number of males in remand by ‘length of time spent’ category.

From the data extracted by the Department for Correctional Services, male remandees were grouped into seven categories: namely, remandees who had spent:

- 1 to 7 days;
- 8 to 14 days;
- 15 to 30 days;
- 1 to 2 months;
- 2 to 3 months;
- 3 to 6 months; and
- More than 6 months

The following graphs show trends in time spent on remand by these time categories. Two graphs are presented for each category.

- The first graph shows trends in the actual number of males remanded in custody per time category. For example, Figure 5a shows that, as at the last Friday in January 1997, there were 46 male prisoners who had been on remand between one and seven days.
- The second graph shows trends in the proportion of all remandees who fall within this particular time category. For example, as shown in Figure 5b, these males represented 16.8% of all male remandees in custody on that day.

Trends in time spent: males in custody who had served between 1 and 7 days

- As shown in Figure 5a, the number of males in custody on the last Friday of each month who had served between one and seven days fluctuated considerably over the period depicted, ranging from 30 in December 2001 to 66 in August 2001. However, as shown by the trendline (12 month moving average) there was no evidence of an upward trend with numbers recorded at the end of the period generally consistent with those recorded during 1997 and 1998.
- As shown in Figure 5b, of all male remandees in custody on the last Friday of each month, the proportion who had been there for a period of one to seven days ranged between 7.6% (May 2001) and 24.7% (October 1997). However, the trendline indicates that the proportion accounted for by this group has been declining since mid 1999. In other words, males who, on a given day, had spent only a very short period on remand now account for a lower proportion of all remandees than was the case in earlier years.

Figure 5a
Number of male remandees who had spent 1 to 7 days in custody

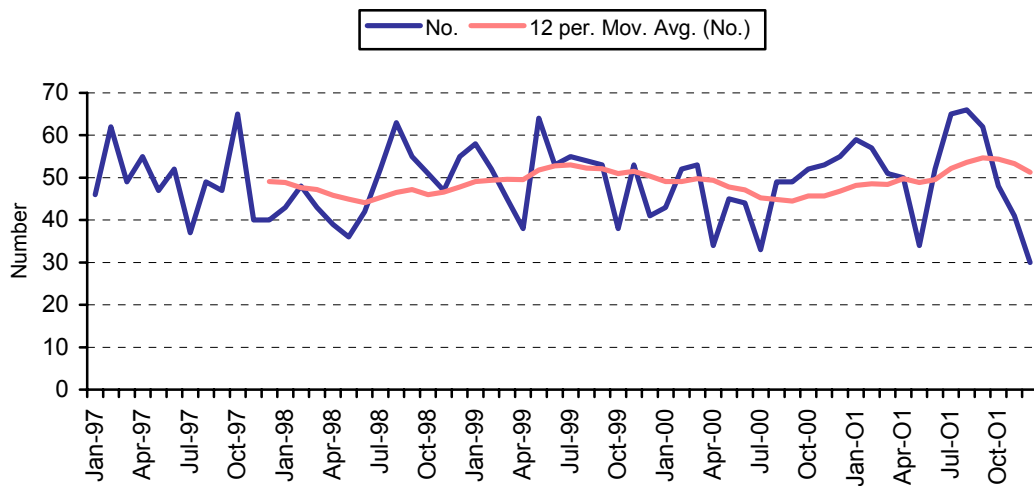
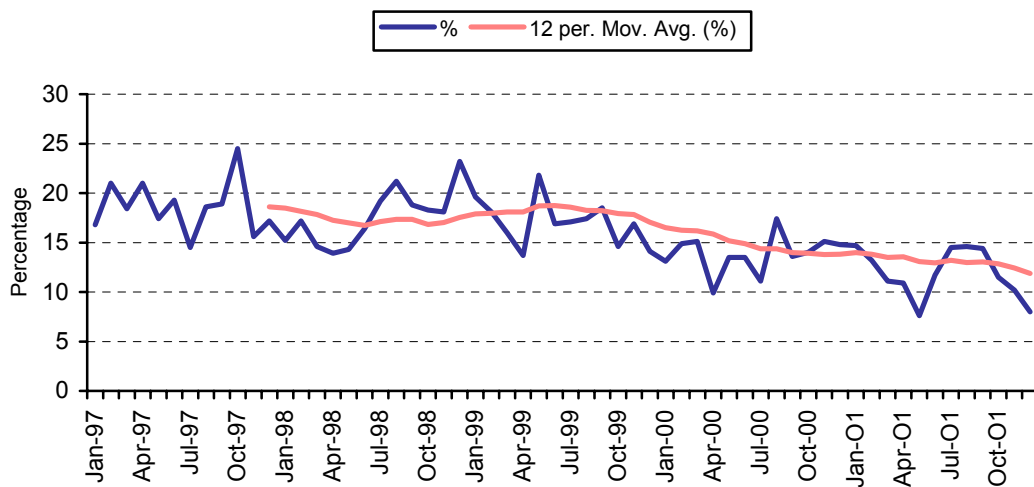


Figure 5b
Males in custody who had spent 1 to 7 days, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody between 8 and 14 days

- The number of males in custody on the last Friday of each month who had served between eight and 14 days ranged from 17 to 52 over the period depicted (see Figure 6a). However, when these data are smoothed using a 12 month moving average, relatively little variation is evident.
- In contrast, as Figure 6b shows, the trendline for the proportion of males in custody for this time period shows a decline (from approximately 13% down to approximately 9%).

Figure 6a
Number of male remandees who had spent 8 to 14 days in custody

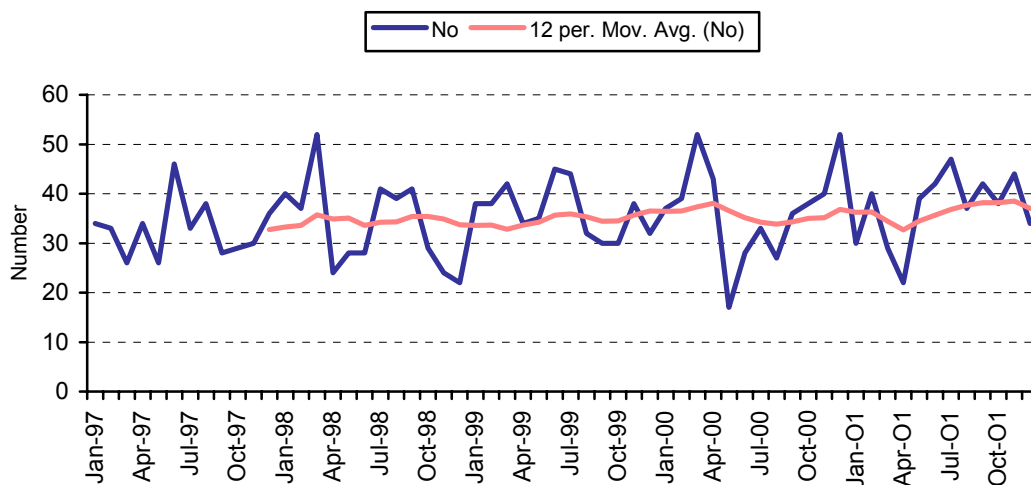
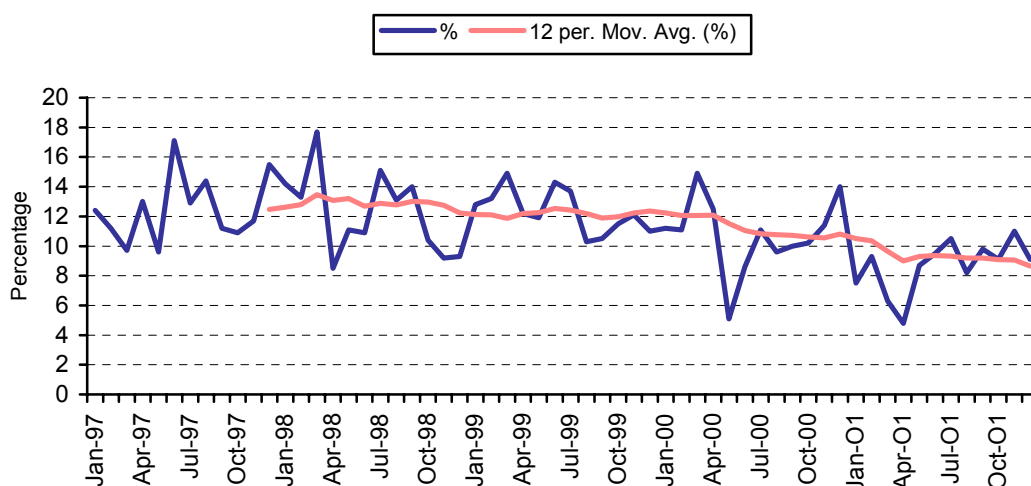


Figure 6b
Males in custody who had spent between 8 and 14 days, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody between 15 and 30 days

- Despite monthly fluctuations, Figure 7a shows that the actual number of males in custody, on the last Friday of each month who had spent 15 to 30 day in custody increased over the period depicted, particularly during the first half of 2001.
- However, as indicated in Figure 7b, the number of males in custody for a period of 15 to 30 days declined, albeit only slightly, as a proportion of all males remanded in custody.

Figure 7a
Number of male remandees who had spent between 15 and 30 days in custody

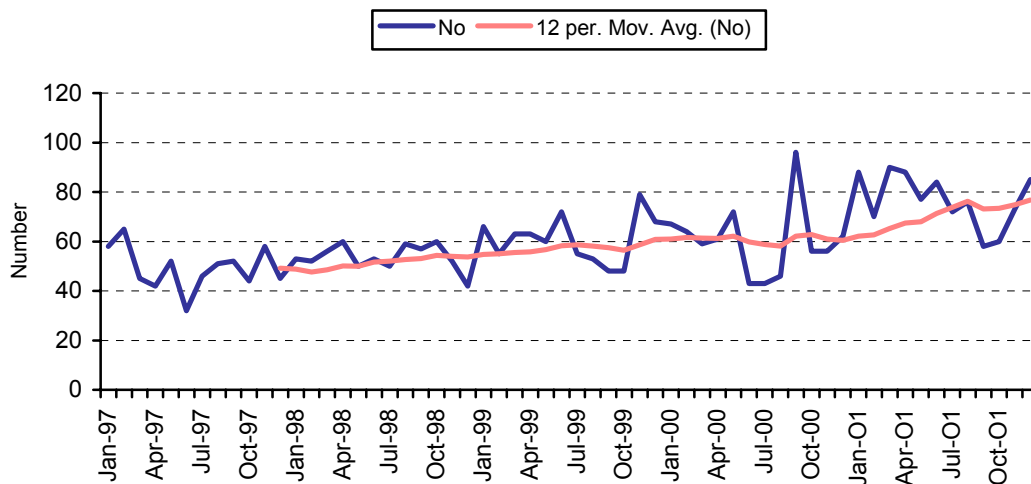
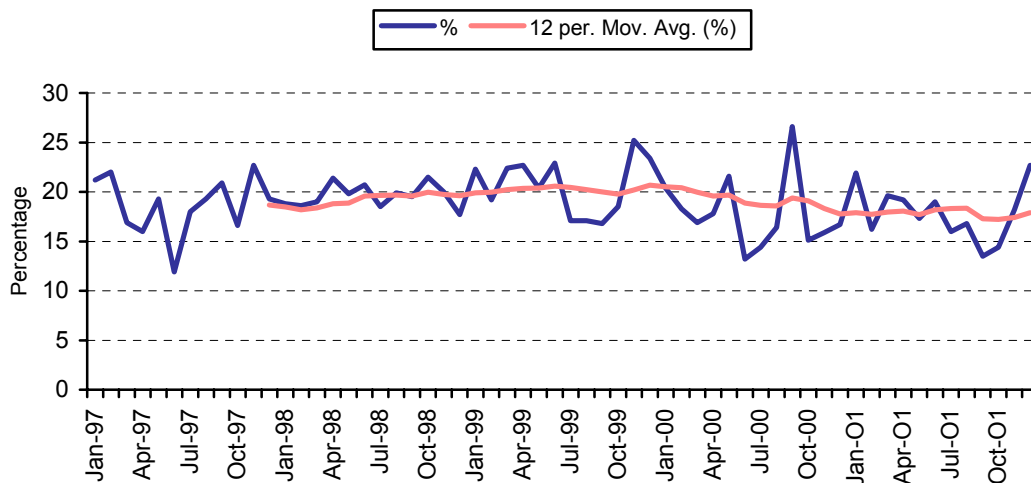


Figure 7b
Males in custody who had spent between 15 to 30 days, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody for 1 to 2 months

- The actual number of males in custody who, on the last Friday of each month, had been in custody for a period of one to two months increased substantially in the latter part of the period depicted, particularly from August 2000 (Figure 8a).
- However, as a proportion of all male remandees, the number of males in custody who had served between 1 and 2 months remained stable (Figure 8b).

Figure 8a
Number of male remandees who had spent between 1 and 2 months in custody

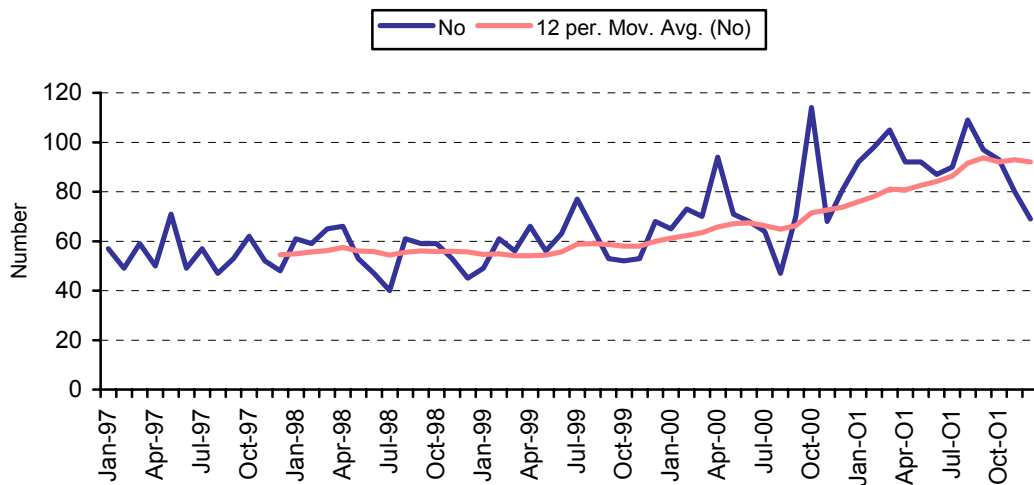
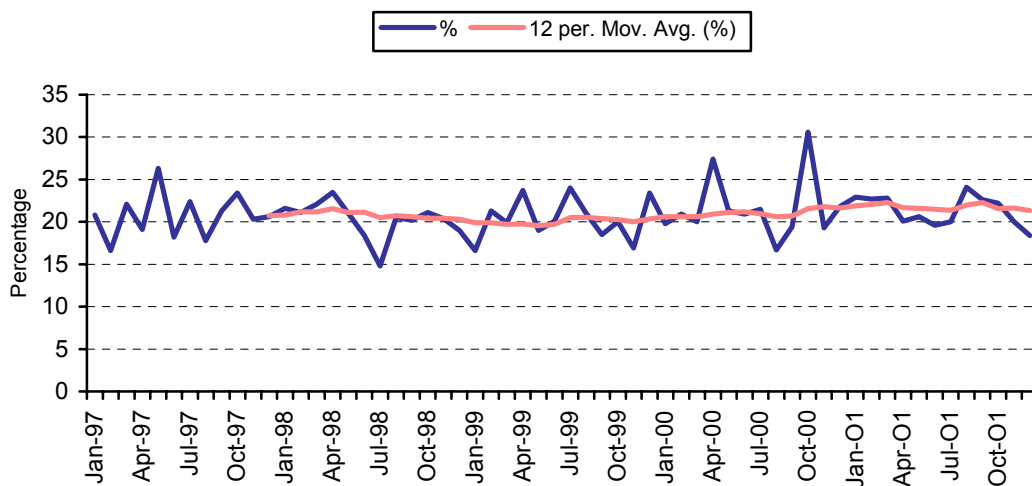


Figure 8b
Males in custody who had spent between 1 and 2 months, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody for 2 to 3 months

- In contrast to the previous graphs, Figure 9a indicates that the number of males in custody on the last Friday of each month who had spent between two and three months increased over the period depicted. This increase was particularly pronounced in the first four months of 2001, when numbers rose from 37 in December 2000 to a peak of 78 in April 2001. Following that peak, numbers fell again, and by December 2001 had returned to pre-2001 levels.
- As a proportion of all remandees, the number of males who had spent between 2 and 3 months in custody also increased from around 10% to about 14%. However, this upward trend seems to have levelled off in the latter part of 2001.

Figure 9a
Number of male remandees who had spent between 2 and 3 months in custody

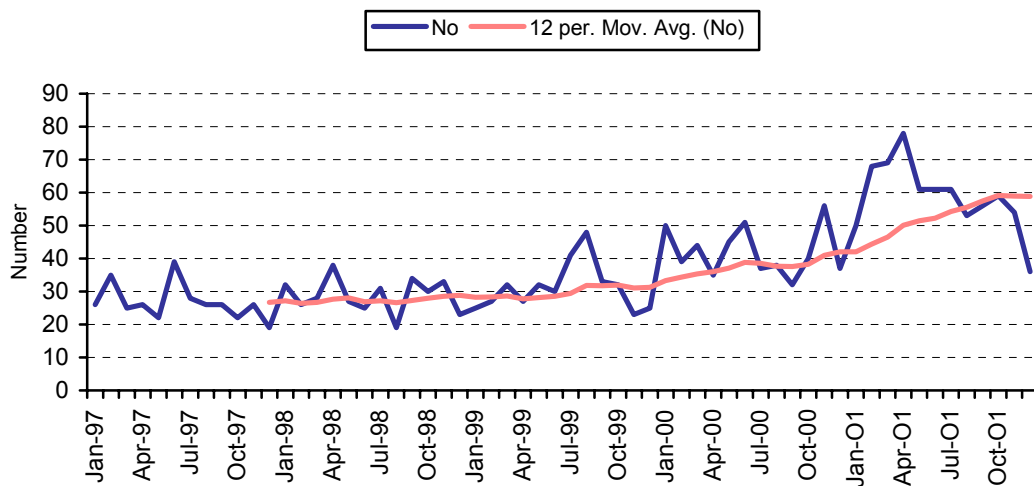
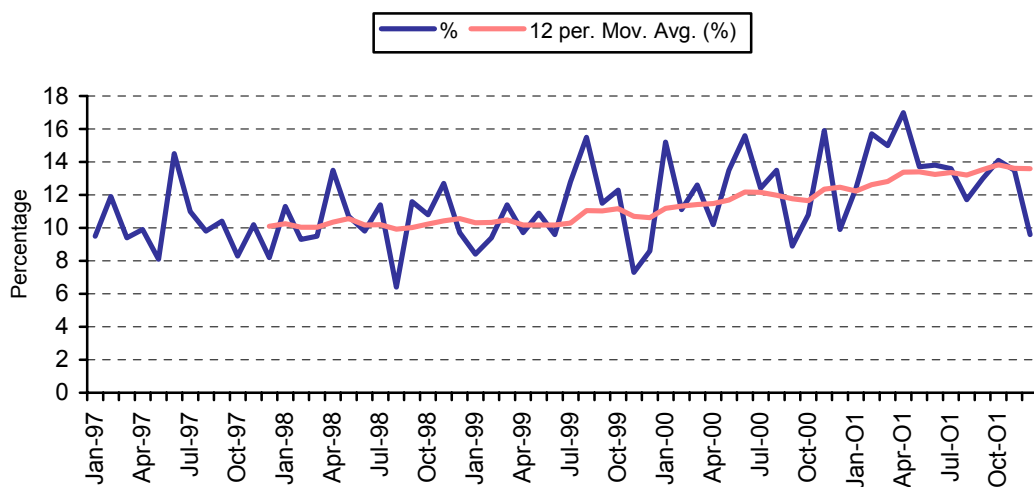


Figure 9b
Males in custody who had spent between 2 and 3 months, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody between 3 and 6 months

- The number of males in custody who had spent between 3 and 6 months in custody on the last Friday of each month increased during the period depicted. There was a particularly sharp increase in the first half of 2001, with numbers increasing from 43 in January 2001 to a peak of 103 in May 2001. Although numbers have since declined, they remain considerably higher than in the pre-2001 period.
- As a proportion of all male remandees, the number of males who had spent between two and three months in custody increased. In May 2001, this group accounted for 23.1% of all male remandees, compared with 14.4% in May 2000 and 10.9% in May 1999.

Figure 10a
Number of male remandees who had spent between 3 and 6 months in custody

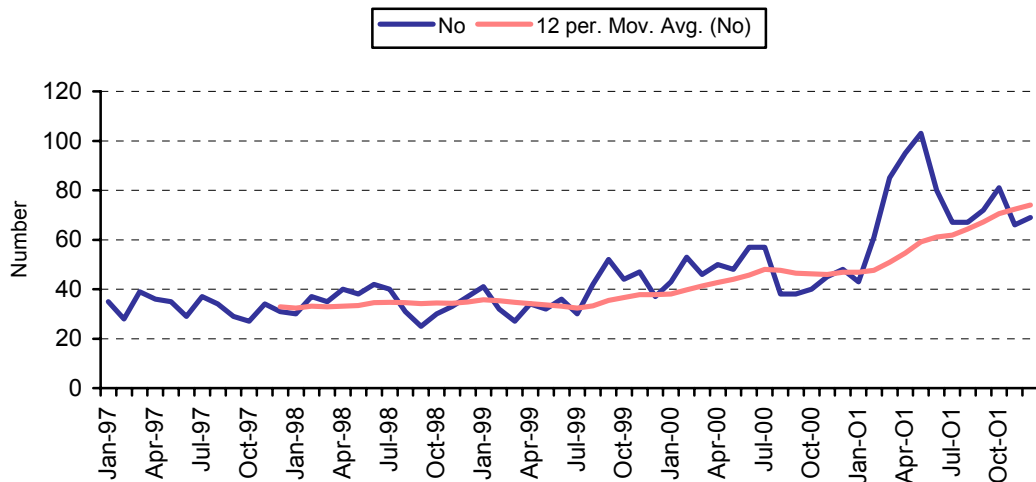
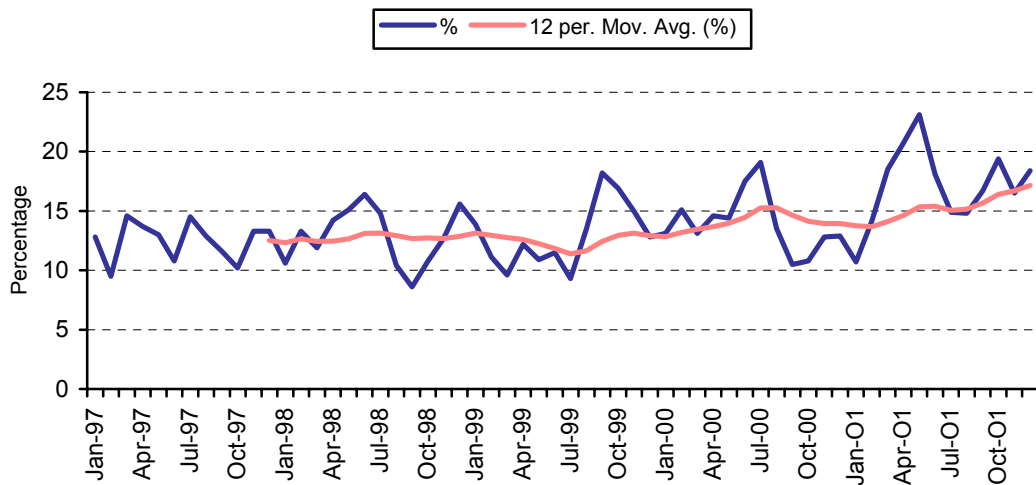


Figure 10b
Males in custody who had served between 3 to 6 months, as a proportion of all male remandees



Trends in time spent: males in custody for more than 6 months

- There was a substantial rise in the number of males in custody who had spent a period greater than six months in custody as at the last Friday of each month. Numbers rose from 19 in December 1999 to 52 in December 2001.
- There was also an increase in the proportion of male remandees who had spent six months or more in custody. The first large increase occurred in early 2000, when the proportion accounted for by this group increased from 7.3% in January to 12.8% in August 2000. Numbers then declined, reaching a low of 6.7% in March 2001 before climbing back to 13.9% in December 2001.

Figure 11a
Number of males who had spent more than 6 months in custody

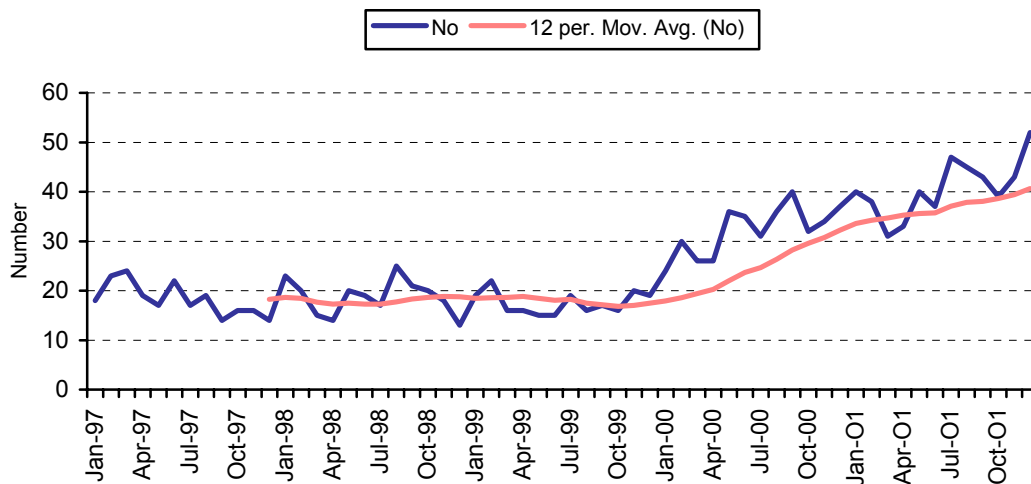
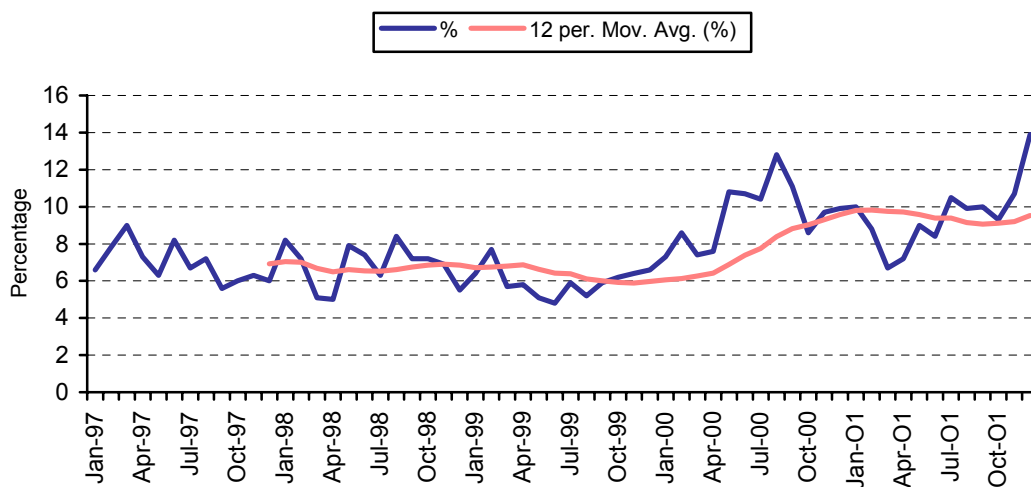


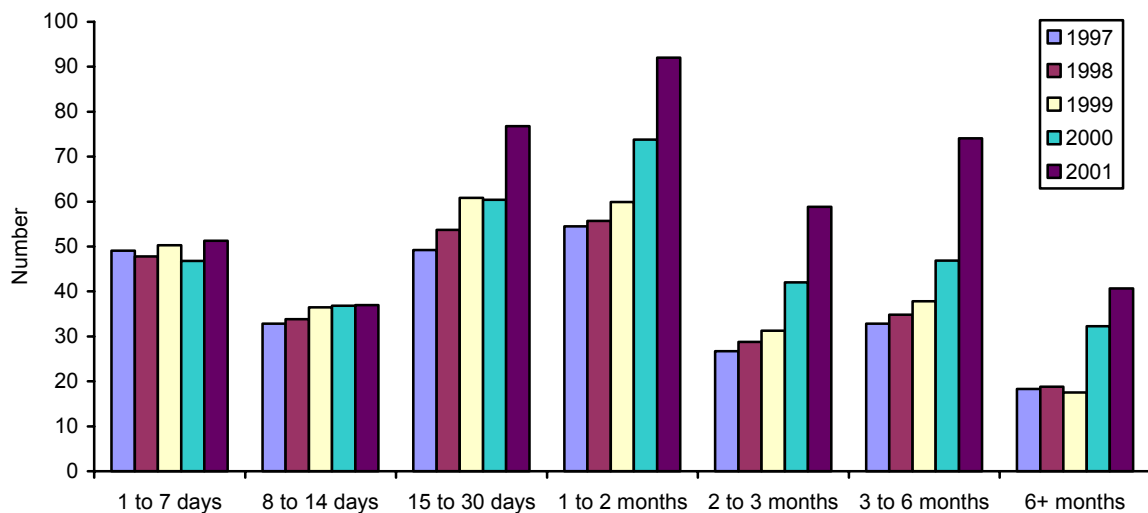
Figure 11b
Males in custody who had served more than 6 months, as a proportion of all male remandees



Number of males held on remand per time category, averaged across each calendar year

The results detailed in the previous section looked at trends in time spent on a monthly basis. To simplify the trends and enable easier comparison across the years, the number of male remandees within each time spent category as recorded on the last Friday of each month was summed over a calendar year and then divided by twelve, to approximate an average number for each year. The results are shown in Figure 12a and 12b.

Figure 12a
Average number of males in custody by time spent, 1997 to 2001



Trends in the daily average number of males in each time spent category, as shown in Figure 12a, are summarised below.

- The daily average number of remanded males who, on the last Friday of each month, had spent 1 to 7 days in custody varied little between 1997 and 2001 (from 49.1 to 51.3).
- The number who had spent 8 to 14 days in custody increased only slightly over the period, from 32.8 in 1997 up to 37.0 in 2001. The increase in this category occurred between 1998 and 1999, with the average number remaining stable since then.
- In contrast, the average number of males in custody for a period of 15 to 30 days increased substantially between 1997 and 2001, from 49.2 to 76.8. For this time category the major increase occurred between 2000 (average of 60.4) and 2001, when numbers increased from an average of 60.4 to 76.8.
- There was also a sharp increase in the average number of males who, by the last Friday of each month, had spent one to two months in custody, from 54.5 in 1997 up to 92 in 2001. Large increases in this time category were recorded in both 2000 and 2001.
- The number of males in custody who had spent a period of two to three months more than doubled between 1997 and 2001, from 26.7 to 58.8. As with the one to two month category, the increases mainly occurred in 2000 and 2001.
- A similar trend is shown for the average number of males remandees who had spent between three and six months in custody (from 32.8 in 1997 to 74.1 in 2001), with the major increase occurring in 2001 (from 46.9 in the previous year to 74.1).

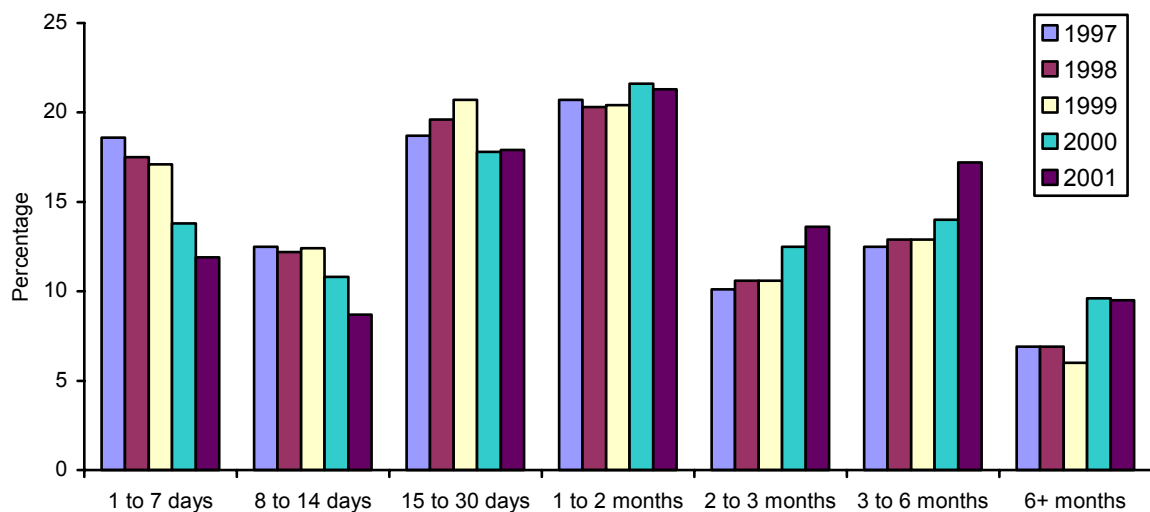
- For male custodial remandees who had spent six months or more in remand as at the last Friday of each month, the average number more than doubled, from 18.3 in 1997 to 40.7 in 2001. However, the increase was most pronounced between 1999 and 2000.

In summary, there have been considerable increases in the annual average number of male remandees for five of the seven time categories, with some categories doubling between 1997 and 2001. For most, the increase in the average number occurred in 2000 and/or 2001. The two categories where numbers had not increased were those at the lowest end of the spectrum – ie the short termers who had been in remand for 1 to 7 days and 8 to 14 days.

Number of male remandees per time category as proportion of all male remandees

Figure 12b shows the number of males within each time category (as measured on the last Friday of each month) averaged over the full year and expressed as percentage of the number of males remanded in custody (on the last Friday of each month) averaged over the full year.

Figure 12b
Males remanded in custody by time category as a proportion of all male remandees in custody on the last Friday of each month, averaged over the year 1997 to 2001



- As shown, in each year depicted, on average, on the last Friday of each month, the one to two month category accounted for the highest percentage of remandees (approximately one-fifth) closely followed by the 15 to 30 days category (between 17.8% and 20.7%).
- Over the five years shown, there were clear decreases in the proportion of male remandees who, on the last Friday of each month, had been in custody for short time periods of 1 to 7 days and 8 to 14 days. Conversely, there were increases in the proportion of remandees who had spent longer periods of 2 to 3 months, 3 to 6 months and over six months.
- As a result of these shifts, in 2001, the profile of time categories was somewhat different from earlier years. While the one to two month and 15 to 30 days categories still accounted for the highest percentage of remandees (21.3% and 17.9% respectively), in contrast to previous years, the third highest was the three to six months (17.2%) group, followed by the two to three month category. The percentage of remandees who had spent a very short period (between one and seven days) dropped to 11.9% - the third lowest – while those who had served 8 to 14 days accounted for the lowest proportion of all male remandees.

Summary

In this Information Bulletin, trends in time spent on remand by male defendants between January 1997 and December 2001 were analysed to investigate whether individuals were spending longer in custodial remand.

The results, based on an analysis of remandees in custody on the last Friday of each month between January 1997 and December 2001, indicated the following:

- Over this five year period, there has been an increase in the median number of days males had spent in custody.
- The number of remandees who, on the last Friday of the month, had spent relatively short periods in custody (ie 1 to 7 days and 8 to 14 days) remained relatively stable while the numbers serving longer periods (15 to 30 days, 1 to 2 months, 2 to 3 months, 3 to 6 months and over six months) all increased, particularly in 2000 and 2001.
- Consequently, there was an overall decline in the proportion of remandees who had spent short periods in remand, and a corresponding increase in those spending longer periods. To illustrate, in 1999, just over 30% of remandees in custody on the last Friday of each month had spent less than 15 days, while just under 30% had spent two months or more in custody. By 2001, only 20% had been remanded in custody less than 15 days, while 40% had spent two months or more in custody.

These preliminary findings therefore demonstrate that the recent substantial increases in daily averages on remand are due to both an increase in overall admissions and an increase in the time spent on remand. The next area of enquiry is to identify the reasons for this increase in time spent.