

**Justice Analytical Services (JAS)  
Safer Communities and Justice Statistics Monthly Data  
Report**

**December 2023 edition**

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# Introduction

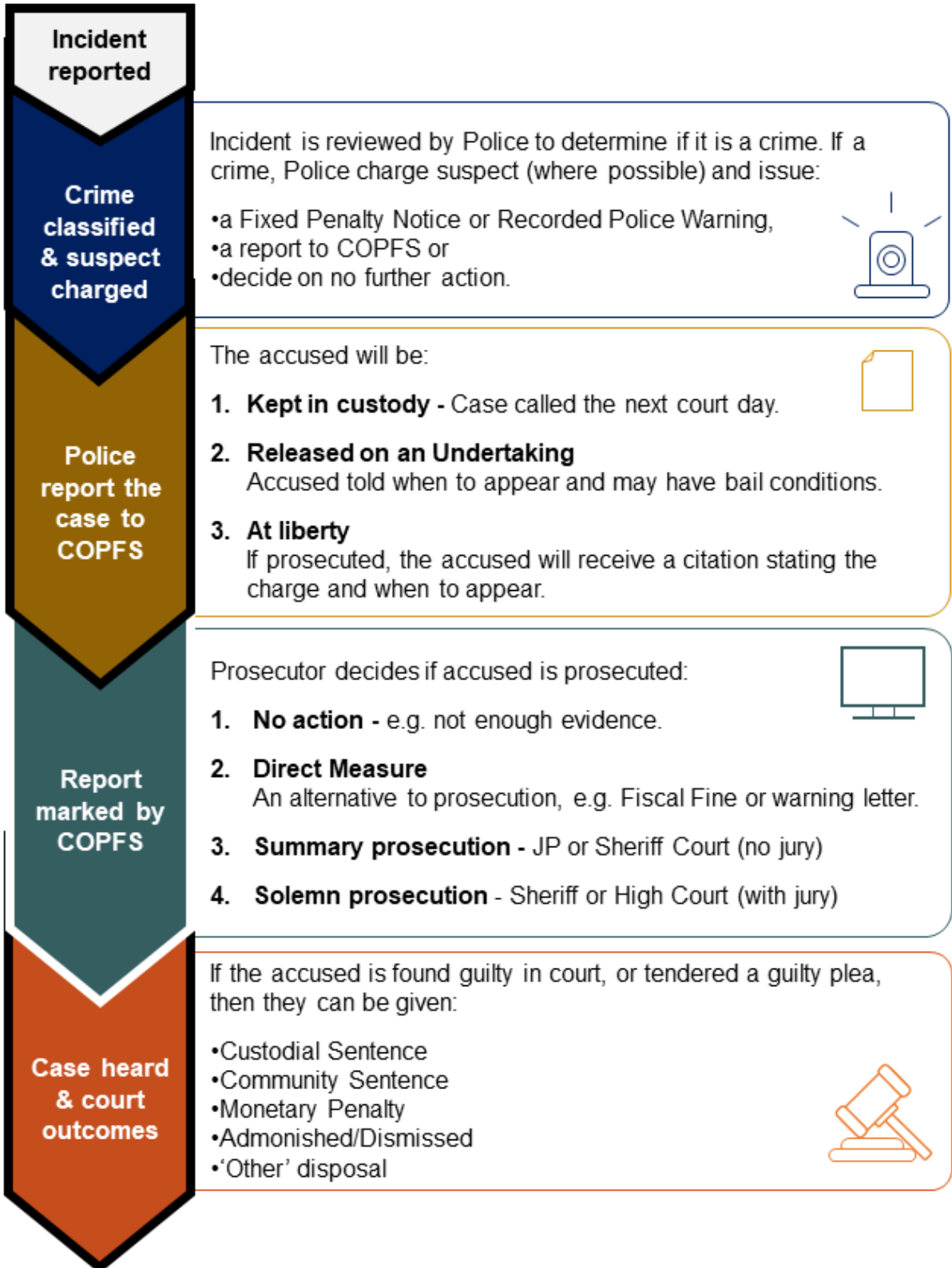
This report provides an overview of a number of important justice and safer communities statistics. Data has been gathered from a number of different sources and may be subject to future revision as more recent data becomes available.

Any newly updated summary statistics are preceded by \* New \* and are also marked in **yellow** background.

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# How crime flows through the Justice System

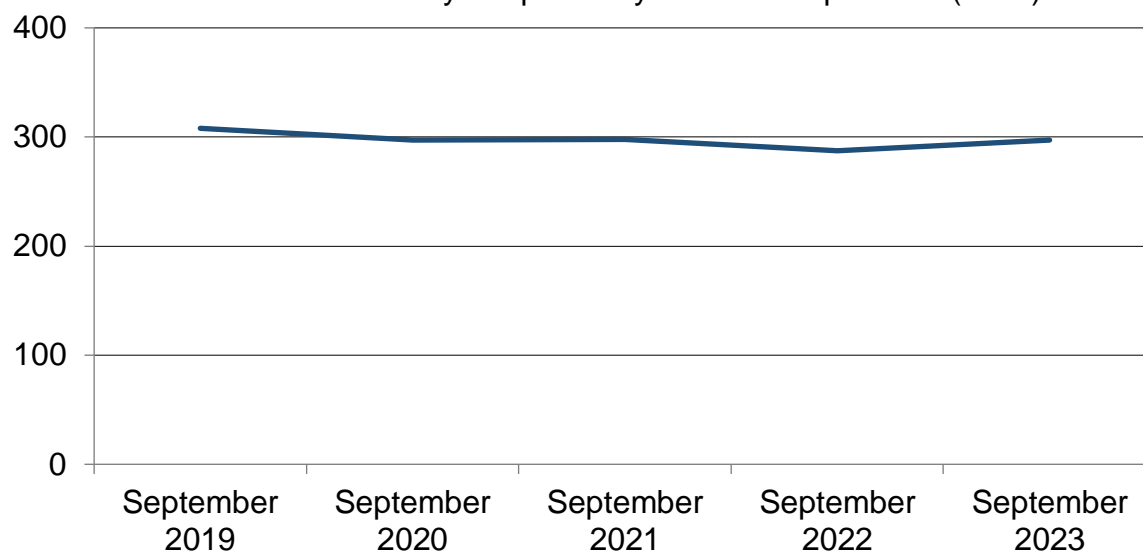


# Crime in General

## Summary statistics on crime in general

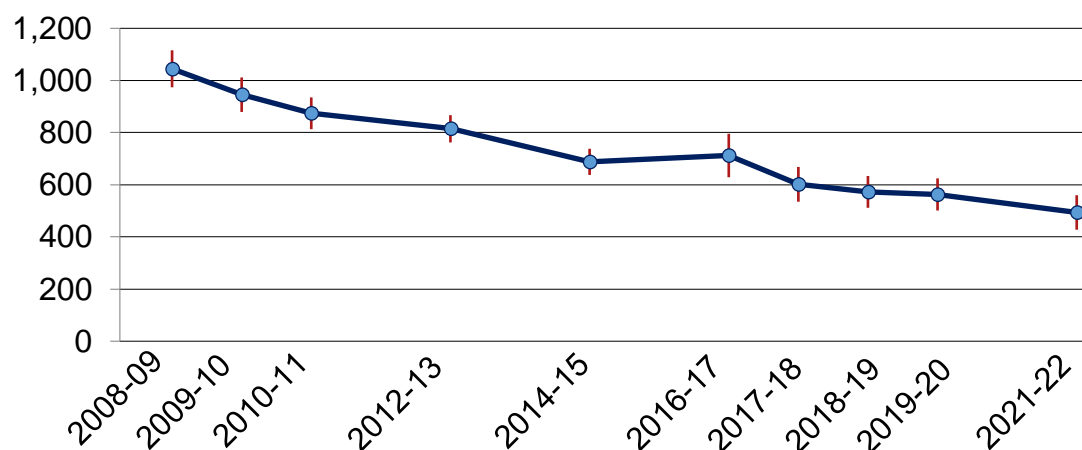
▶ **\* New \* Police recorded crime is at one of the lowest levels seen since 1974 and is down 3% since the year ending September 2019.** The total number of crimes recorded by the police in Scotland in the year ending September 2023 was 297,425. This is 10,051 crimes (or 3%) higher than the level recorded in the year ending September 2022.

Number of crimes recorded by the police - year to 30 September (000s)



▶ **\* New \* Crime has fallen by 53% since 2008-09.** Results from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) show that around 1 in 10 adults were victims of crime in 2021-22 (10.0%) compared to 1 in 5 in 2008-09 (20.4%). The estimated number of crimes fell by 53% over the same period, and by 18% since 2017-18. The SCJS detected no change in the overall victimisation rate between 2019-20 and 2021-22.

Estimated total crimes (000s)



▶ **\* New \* Recorded violent crime increased in the most recent year.** Non-sexual crimes of violence recorded by the police increased by 3%, from 69,353 in the year ending September 2022 to 71,571 in the year ending September 2023. Common assault (up 2%) makes up the clear majority (83%) of all non-sexual crimes of violence recorded in the year ending September 2023. The SCJS showed the volume of violent crime fell by nearly three-fifths (58%) between 2008-09 and 2021-22 and that an estimated 34% of violent crime in 2019-20 was reported to the police.

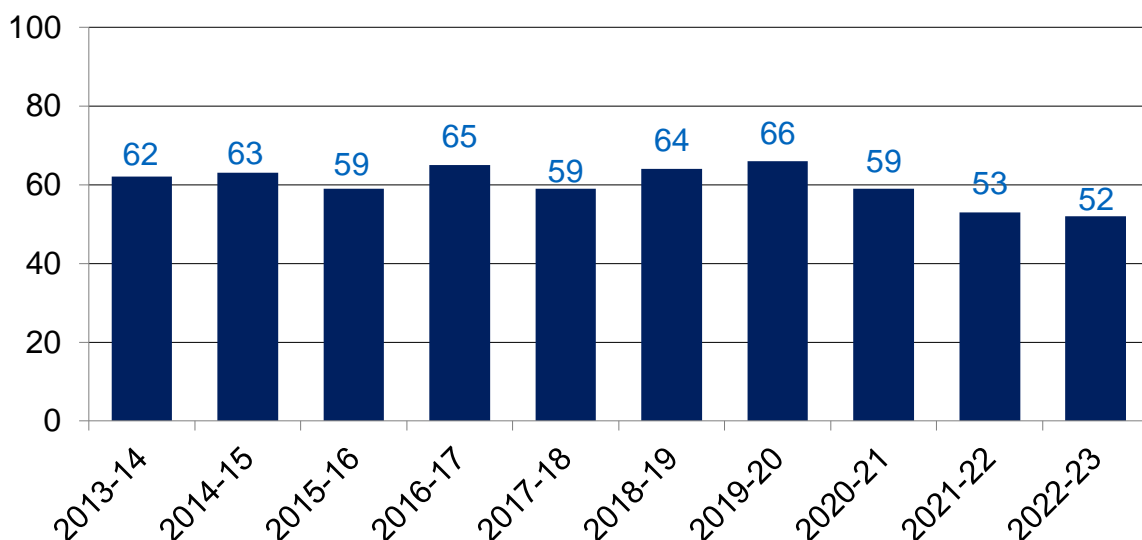
▶ **\* New \* Recorded sexual crimes decreased in the most recent year.** Sexual crimes decreased by 1%, from a high of 14,838 in the year ending September 2022 to 14,704 in the year ending September 2023. Multiple factors lie behind the long term increase in recorded sexual crime including a greater willingness of victims to come forward, more historical reporting, more online offending and the impact of new legislation. The SCJS for 2018-20 (2018-19 & 2019-20 combined) estimated that 3.6% of adults experienced at least one serious sexual assault since the age of 16, unchanged from 2008-09.

▶ **Women more likely to experience partner abuse.** The SCJS, for 2018-20, estimated that 3.2% of respondents had experienced partner abuse in the year prior to interview. A higher proportion of women than men experienced this, at 3.7% and 2.6% respectively.

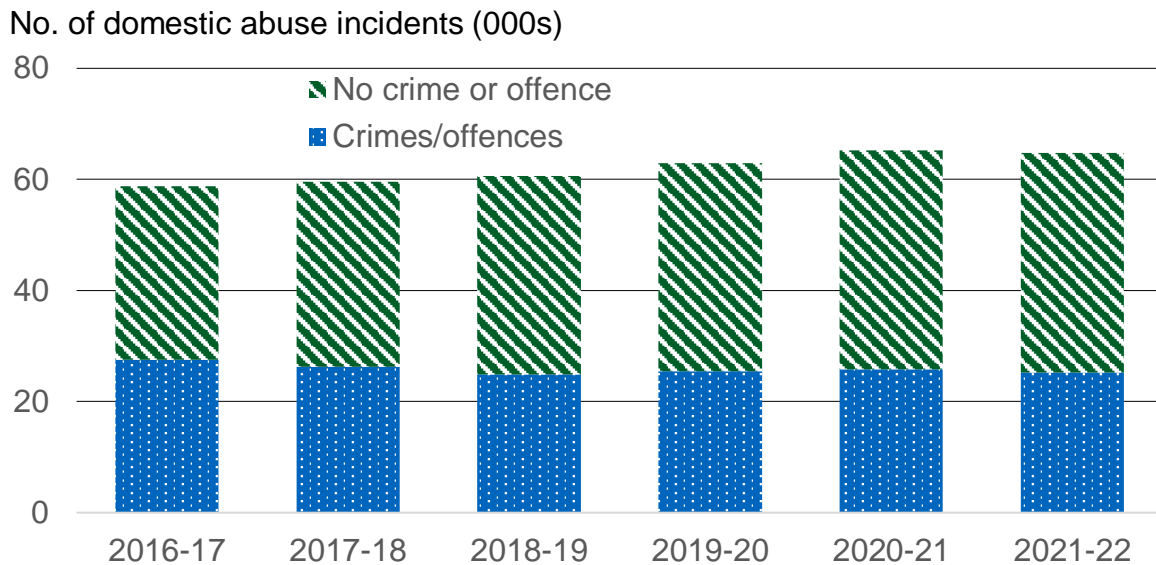
▶ **Decrease in crime clear up rate.** The clear up rate for all recorded crimes was 53.3% in 2022-23, down from 54.0% in 2021-22. Crimes against society (93%), non-sexual crimes of violence (67%) and sexual crime (53%) continued to have higher clear up rates in 2022-23 than crimes of dishonesty (31%) and damage and reckless behaviour (29%).

▶ **Number of victims of homicide at record low.** There were 52 homicide victims recorded by the police in Scotland in 2022-23, a 16% decrease from 2013-14 and the lowest value since comparable records began in 1976.

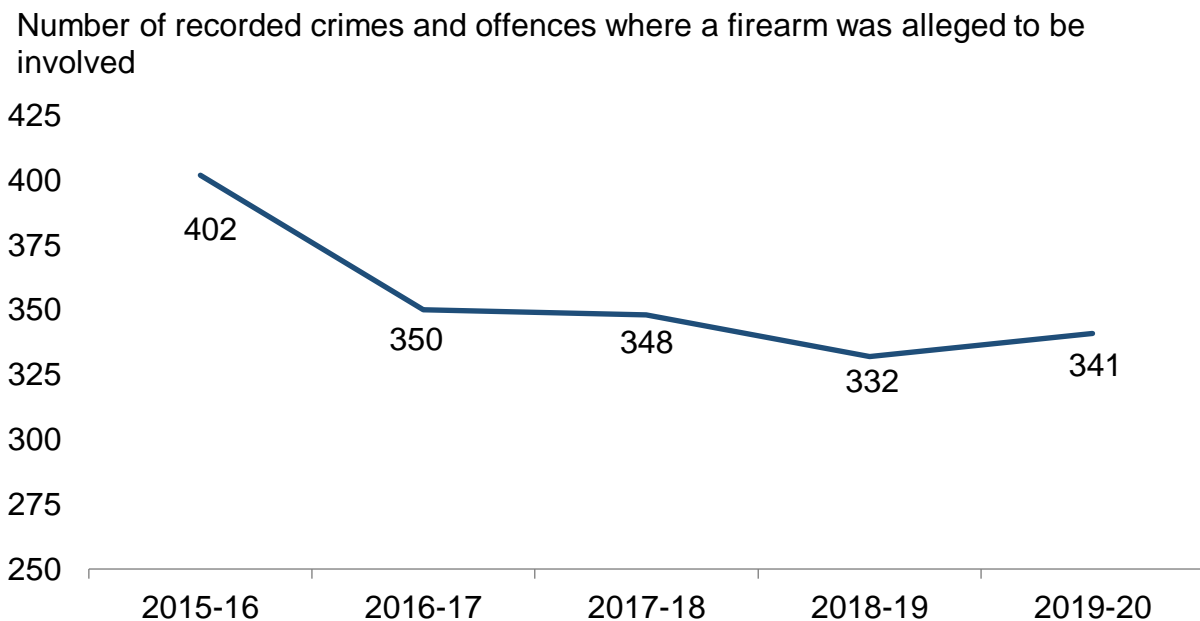
Number of victims of homicide



► **Slight decrease in recorded domestic abuse incidents.** There were 64,807 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2021-22, a decrease of 1% on 2020-21. In 2021-22, 39% of all incidents recorded by the police included the recording of at least one crime or offence.



► **Small increase in firearm offences.** Between 2018-19 and 2019-20 the number of crimes and offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved increased by 3% (from 332 to 341 offences). The 2018-19 and 2019-20 totals are the lowest and second lowest, respectively, since comparable records began in 1980.

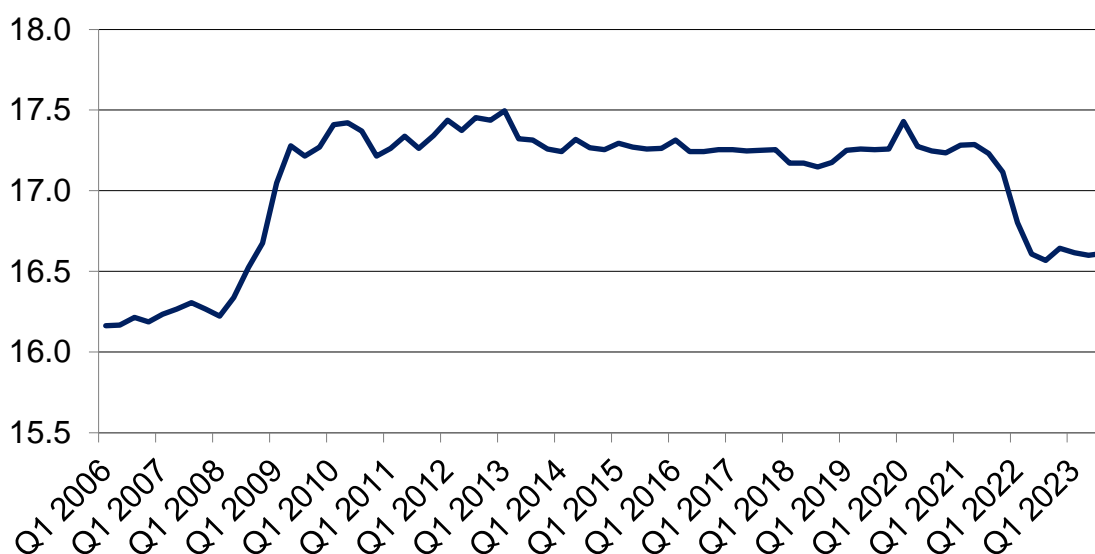


# Policing

## Summary statistics on policing

▶ There were **16,613 full-time equivalent (FTE) police officers in Scotland on 30 September 2023**. This was 379 (+2.3%) more officers compared to the position on 31 March 2007, and 43 (+0.3%) more than on 30 September 2022.

Number of police officers (FTE) (000s)





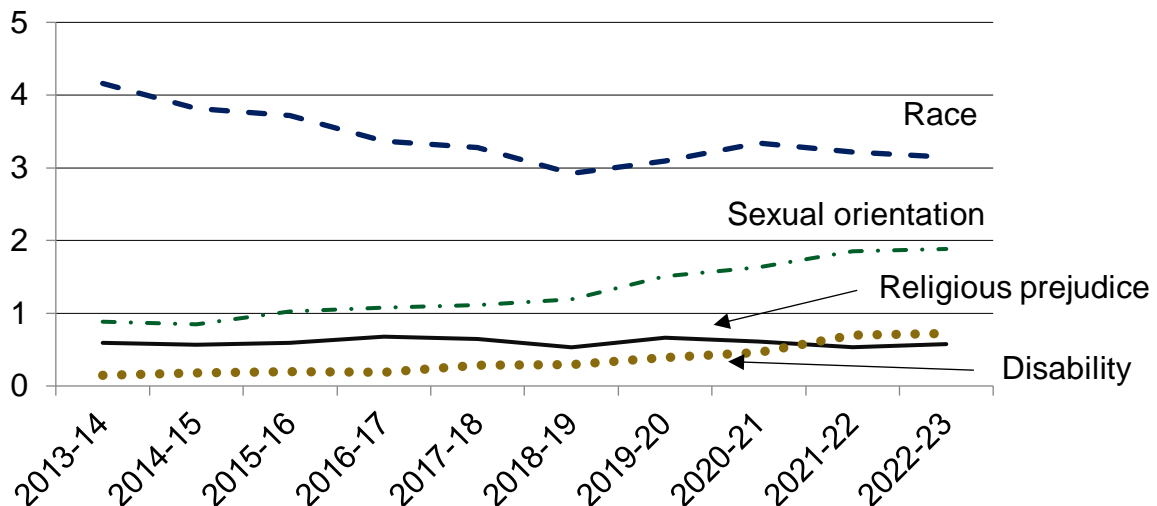
# Hate Crime

## Summary statistics on hate crime

▶ **Numbers stable for police recorded hate crime.** Between 2014-15 & 2021-22, the number of hate crimes recorded by the police was relatively stable, at around 6,300 to 7,000. In 2021-22, 62% of hate crimes included an aggravator for race, 27% sexual orientation, 8% disability, 7% religion and 3% transgender identity.

▶ **Marginal decrease in overall hate crime charges.** There was a decrease in the number of charges reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22 for race and transgender identity. Religion, sexual orientation and disability aggravated hate crime charges saw an increase. Racial crime remains the most commonly reported hate crime, followed by crimes with a sexual orientation aggravator.

No. of charges reported to COPFS (000s)



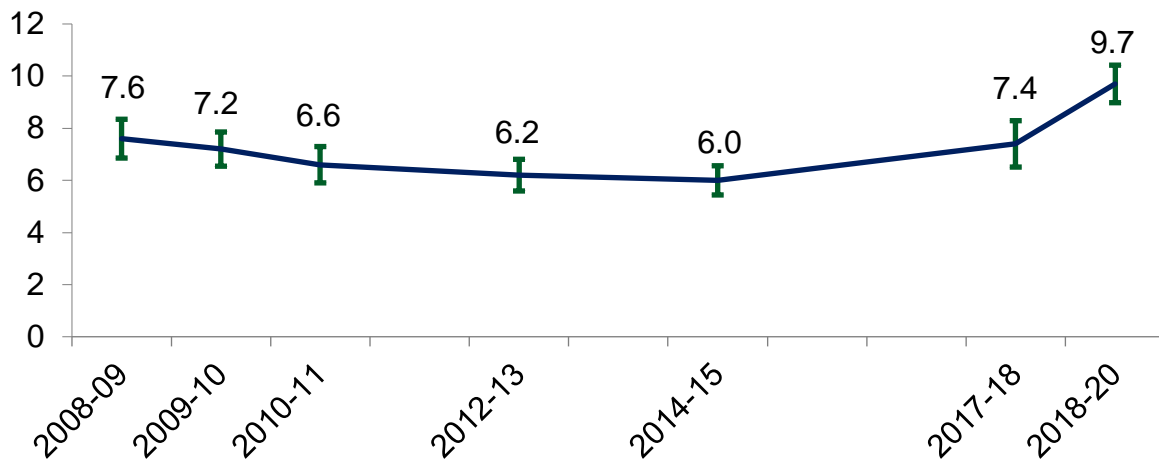
# Drugs

## Summary statistics on drugs

▶ **The proportion of adults reporting use of comparable illicit drugs has risen.**

Results from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) show that in 2018-20, 9.7% of respondents reported taking one or more of these drugs in the 12 months prior to interview. This has increased from 7.6% in 2008-09 and 7.4% in 2017-18. The drugs listed in the survey questionnaire are the same for both 2017-18 and 2018-20, enabling a direct comparison. There was an increase from 9.5% in 2017-18 to 13.5% in 2018-20 for overall self-reported drug use in the 12 months prior to interview.

Percentage of adults reporting use of comparable illicit drugs



To have a more comparable measure since 2008-09, the figures in this chart exclude poppers, glues, solvents, gas or aerosol and prescription only painkillers not prescribed to the respondent.

# Community Safety

## Summary statistics on community safety

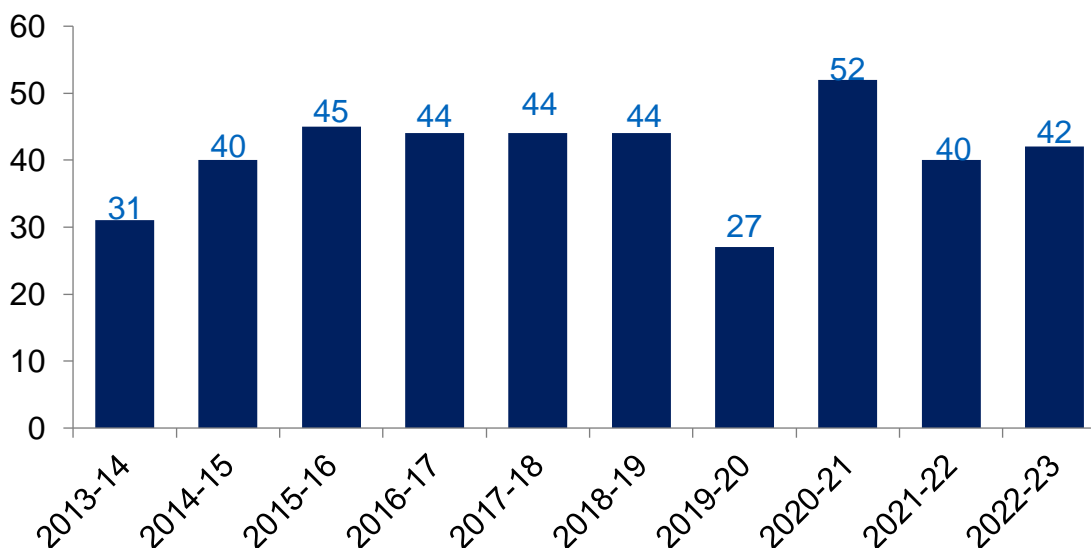
▶ **\* New \* Improved public perception of local crime rate since 2008-09.** The public feel safer in their local communities. The SCJS found that, in 2021-22, 76% of adults thought that the local crime rate had stayed the same or reduced in the past two years. This shows an improvement from 69% in 2008-09 and 73% in 2019-20.

▶ **\* New \* Most adults feel safe walking alone after dark.** The SCJS found that over three-quarters (76%) of adults said that they felt very or fairly safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark in 2021-22, unchanged from 2019-20 but an increase from 66% in 2008-09.

▶ **\* New \* Just under half of adults say police are doing a good or excellent job.** The SCJS reported that, in 2021-22, 49% of adults said that the police in their local area were doing a good or excellent job, down from 2019-20 (55%) and 61% in 2012-13.

▶ **Number of fires fell 3% in the last year.** In 2022-23, there were 26,825 fires in Scotland, down 3% on 2021-22 but 7% higher than in 2020-21. There were 42 fire fatalities in 2022-23, up from 40 in 2021-22 but similar to the number in most years across the last decade.

No. of fatal fire casualties

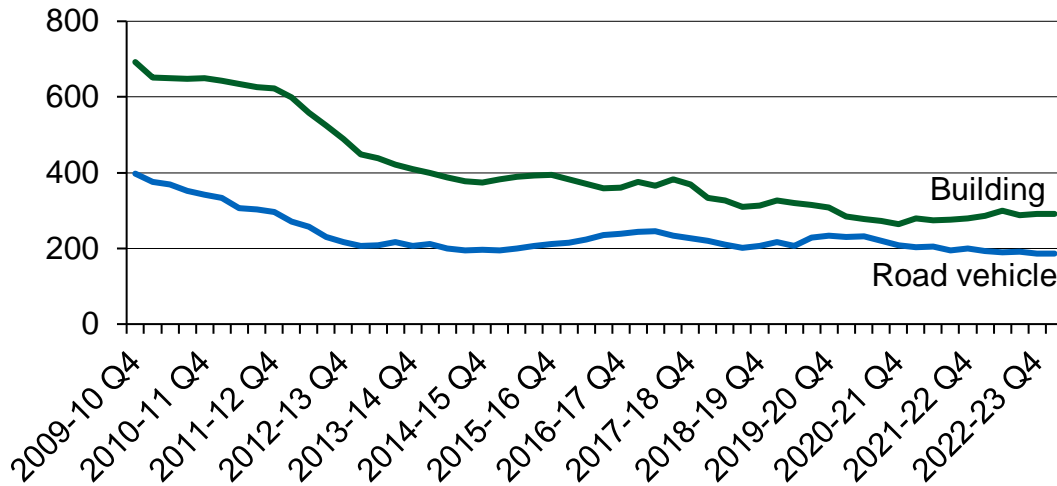


▶ **Sharp fall in emergency hospital admissions due to assault since 2013-14.** In 2022-23, there were 1,600 emergency hospital admissions due to assault, including 405 due to assault with a sharp object. These were, respectively, 48% and 31% lower than in 2013-14.

## Further detail on fire statistics

There were 372 deliberate building fires in quarter 1 of 2023-24, up from 370 in the same quarter of 2022-23. Over the same period, the number of deliberate road vehicle fires fell from 185 to 182. There has been a long-term downward trend in deliberate building and deliberate road vehicle fires since this series began.

Deliberate building and road vehicle fires



The figures used in this chart are the average of the quarter in question and the three quarters prior, in order to allow for seasonal variation.

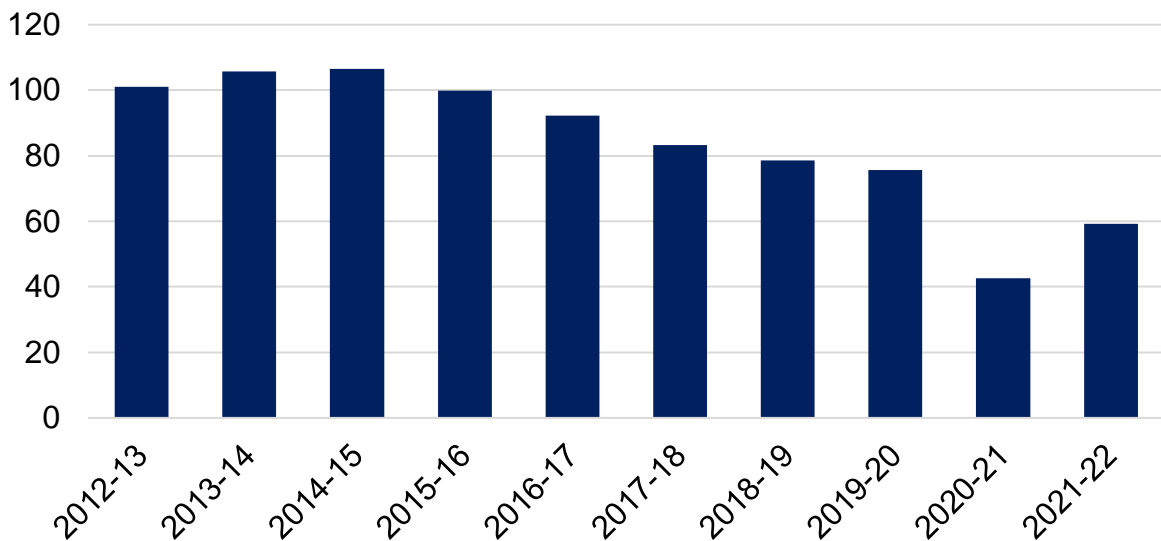
Unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) describe avoidable false alarm signals from a workplace, either from an automatic fire alarm or from a person. There were 7,082 UFAS incidents in quarter 1 of 2023-24, which made up 26.7% of all incidents attended in that quarter. This is slightly down from the previous year where UFAS made up 27.3% of all incidents attended in that quarter.

# Criminal & Civil Proceedings

## Summary statistics on criminal and civil proceedings

▶ **COVID-19 continued to impact prosecutions and convictions in 2021-22.** The number of people convicted in Scottish courts rose by 39% from 2020-21 to 59,295, but remain below a typical pre-pandemic year.

Number of people convicted in Scottish courts (000s)

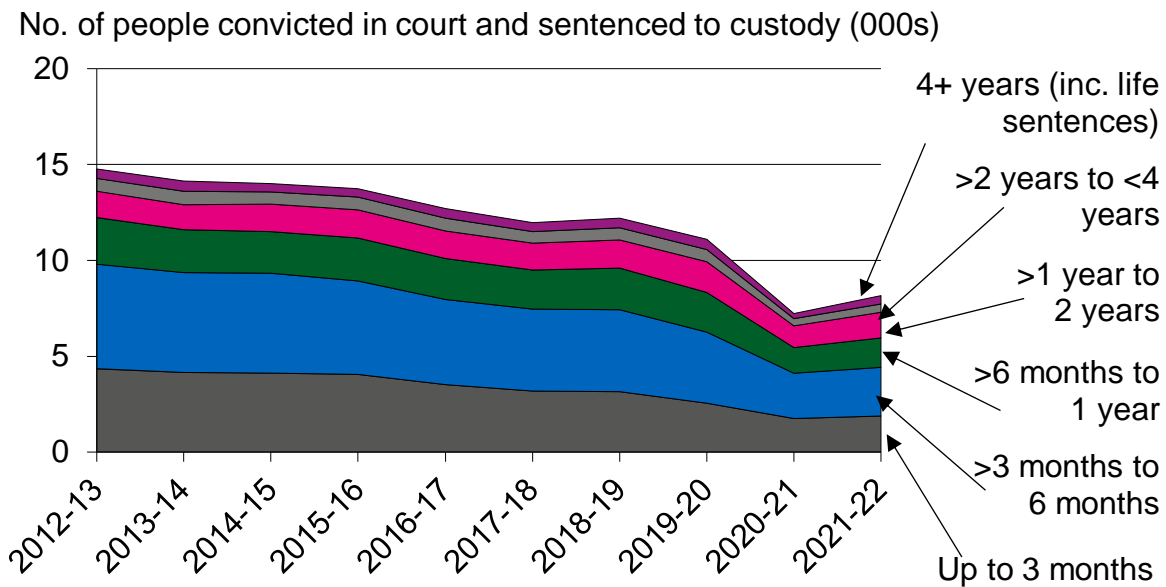


Data from 2020-21 and 2021-22 are affected by the pandemic and should not be considered indicative of long term trends.

▶ **Rise in convictions across all groups between 2020-21 and 2021-22.** Convictions for Sexual crimes rose by 52% and are the only group to exceed their pre-pandemic (2019-20) level. Road traffic offences rose the most proportionally (up 76%) and Crimes of dishonesty the least (up 7%). Convictions for crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act increased by 81% (689 convictions) in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21 (381 convictions).

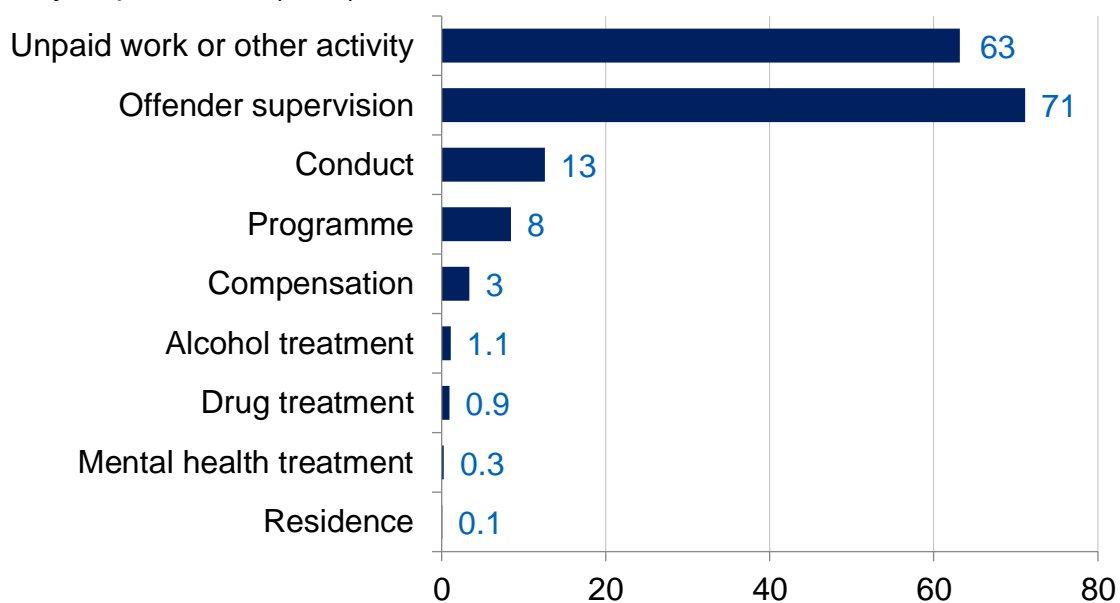
▶ **Rise in numbers of community sentences issued and new high in proportion of sentences in 2021-22.** The number of community sentences in court rose by 45% between 2020-21 and 2021-22, from 9,783 to 14,160, in line with the overall rise in convictions. The proportion of all convictions resulting in a community sentence rose to 24%, the highest in the past decade.

▶ **Average custodial sentence exceeds one year.** For those who are convicted in court and sentenced to custody, the average sentence in 2021-22 was over twelve months (376 days) in length. This was 14% longer than in 2020-21, and 32% longer than in 2012-13 (284 days). The proportion of people receiving a sentence of less than one year fell by two percentage points to 73% in 2021-22, the lowest proportion of the last decade.



The 2020-21 and 2021-22 data reflect the impact of Covid-19 across the justice system, and should not be interpreted as indicative of longer term trends.

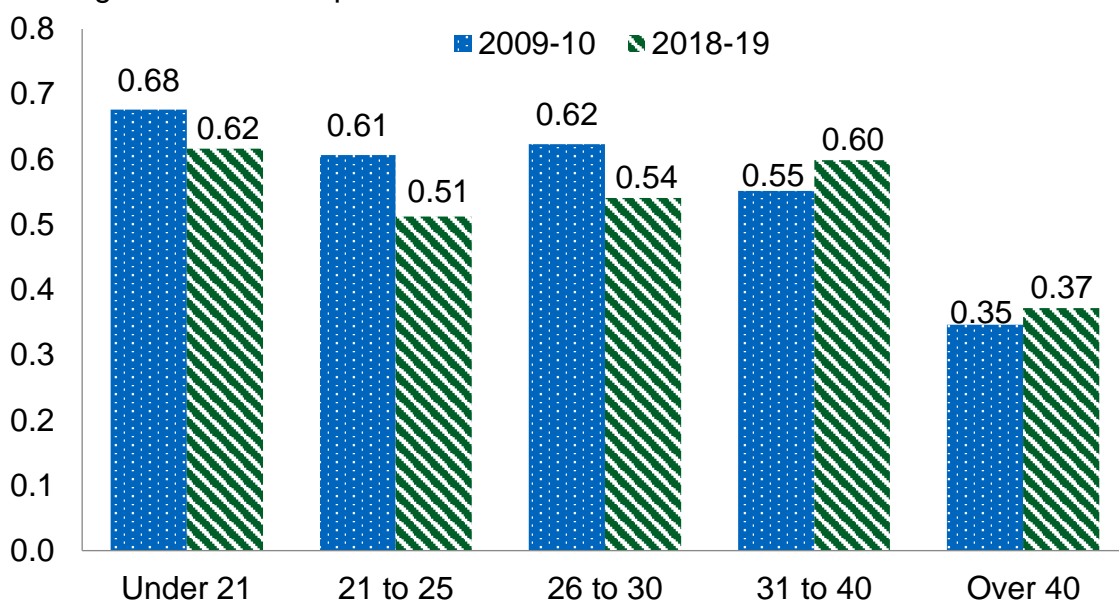
▶ **Community payback orders still more likely to have supervision than unpaid work.** There were 12,150 community payback orders imposed in 2021-22. This was 49% higher than in 2020-21 but still 28% lower than in 2019-20. The difficulties with delivering unpaid work due to Covid-19 was a major factor in more orders being issued with offender supervision requirements (71%) than unpaid work or other activity requirements (63%).



► **Covid-19 impacted the reconviction rates for the 2019-20 cohort.** The reconviction rate decreased across almost all categories. The overall reconviction rate was 24.1% in 2019-20, which is a 4.5 percentage point decrease from 28.6% in 2018-19. The data from the 2019-20 cohort mainly reflects the impact of COVID-19 across the justice system, and should not be interpreted as indicative of longer term trends.

► **Prior to COVID-19 affected data, the average number of reconvictions per offender has decreased over time.** The average number of reconvictions per offender was 8% lower in 2018-19 compared to 2009-10. The fall in the longer term was driven by younger age groups, with average reconvictions decreasing by 9% for under 21s, 16% for 21-25 year olds, and 13% for 26-30 year olds. In contrast, average reconvictions increased for the older age groups over the decade, with increases of 9% for 31-40 year olds and 7% for those aged over 40.

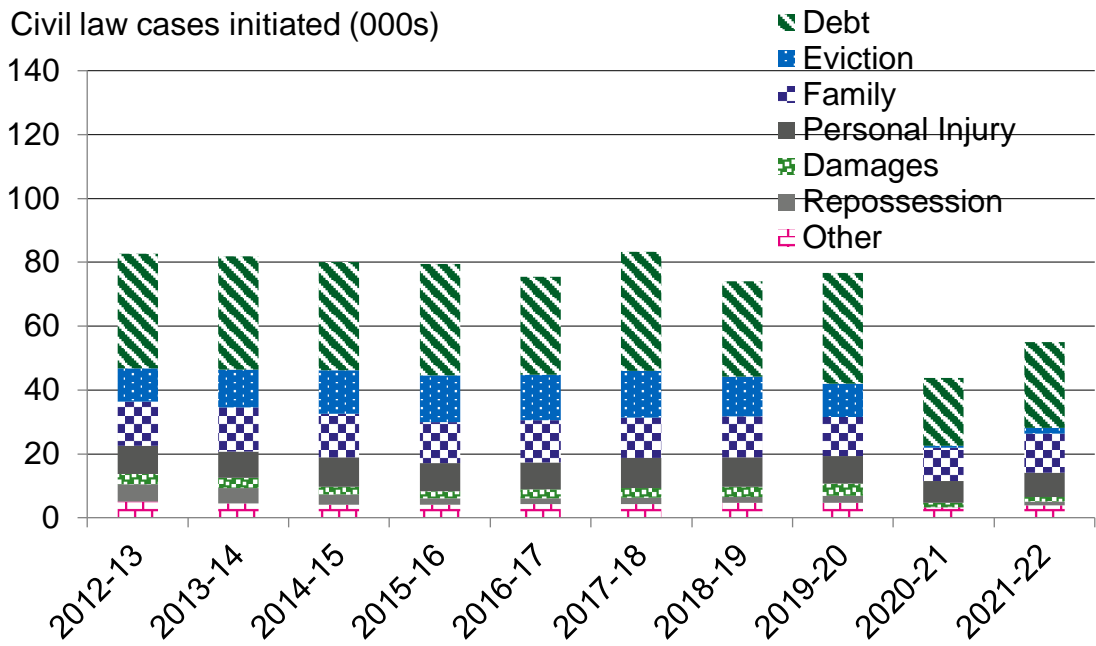
Average reconvictions per offender



► **No. of children referred to SCRA on offence grounds down by five per cent in last 10 years.** [Statistics published by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration \(SCRA\)](#) show that, in 2022-23, 2,637 children were referred to the Reporter on offence grounds. This constitutes a decrease of 5% since 2013-14.

► **The most recent ten years show a general downward trend in initiated cases, though the latest figures show some recovery from 2020-21.** There were 53,866 civil law cases initiated across the Court of Session and sheriff courts in 2021-22 (excluding summary applications). This represents an increase of 23% from 2020-21.

► **Most case types increased since 2020-21, except damages which fell marginally.** The highest increases were in repossessions (up 1,204%) and evictions (up 200%). The increase in repossessions follows a large Covid-related fall in 2020-21 to a record low. The increase in initiations in 2021-22 brings numbers closer to the pre-pandemic levels but still 46% lower than in 2019-20. Evictions too are still substantially lower than pre-pandemic levels (84% down on 2019-20). Personal injury (up 12%) and family (up by 17%) recorded the lowest increases. Damages saw a 4% decrease from 2020-21.





# Justice Journey Times

## Summary statistics on journey times in the Scottish criminal justice system

### ▶ COVID-19 impacted the journey times in the Scottish Criminal Justice system.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic (up to and including 2019-20), 90% of accused reported to COPFS which were not marked for prosecution in court had their cases closed within one year of the offence being committed. This has fallen to 81% in the years during and following the pandemic. The same happened for accused prosecuted in criminal courts, during the pre COVID-19 period, 84% of the accused proceeded against in criminal courts had a disposal issued within one year of the offence being. However, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic this percentage has decreased to 61%.

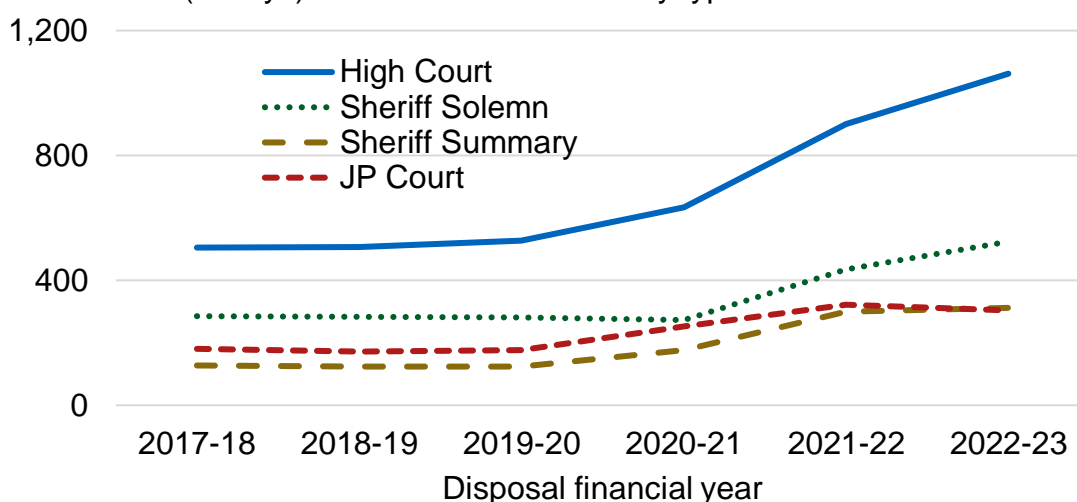
### ▶ Median journey times (from offence date to case closed) for cases closed by COPFS increased post pandemic and were longer for accused marked as “No Action”.

In 2022-23, median journey times for accused persons with a COPFS “No action” marking were around 11 weeks longer than for accused persons marked for direct measures (e.g. a warning letter or a fiscal fine).

### ▶ Median journey times for accused prosecuted by courts (from offence date to verdict) increased post pandemic.

Across all court types, median journey times of accused persons increased in 2021-22 (post pandemic) when compared to 2019-20 (pre pandemic). Furthermore, except for Justice of the Peace (JP) courts, all other court types saw an additional increase in median journey times over the latest financial year 2022-23. Median journey times for accused persons in solemn cases were longer than those for accused in summary cases.

Median time (in days) from offence to verdict by type of court

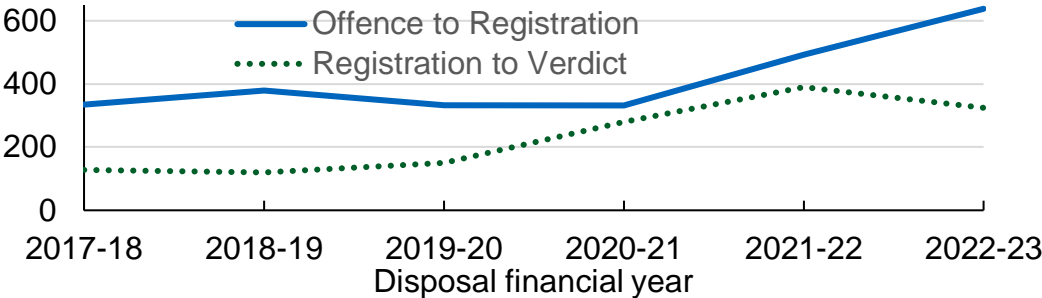


### ▶ The time associated with different parts of an accused person's journey in the justice system varies depending on the type of court their case is allocated.

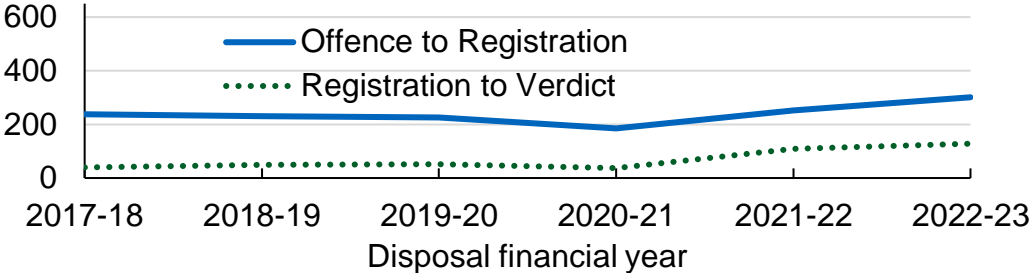
Median offence to registration time for accused persons in High court were around 21 months and median registration to verdict time were 11 months; offence to

registration time in Sheriff solemn court were around 10 months compared to 4 months for registration to verdict. In contrast, for sheriff summary courts registration to verdict times are in general longer than offence to registration times - median offence to registration journey times were around 2 months compared to a median of about 6 months for registration to verdict.

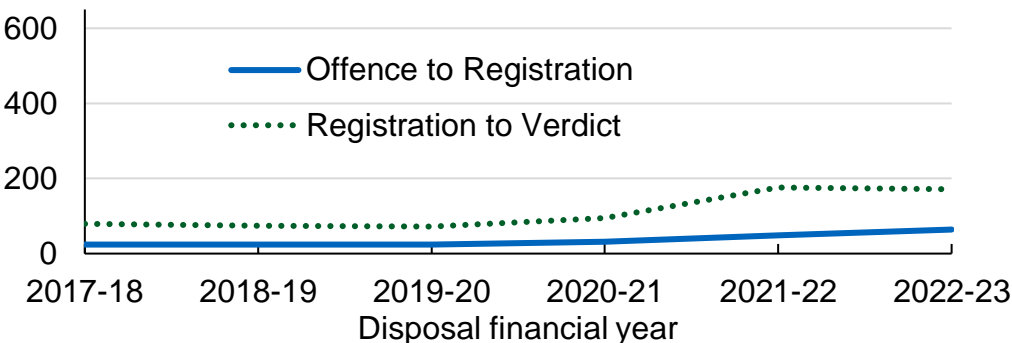
Median time (in days) - offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court, High Court



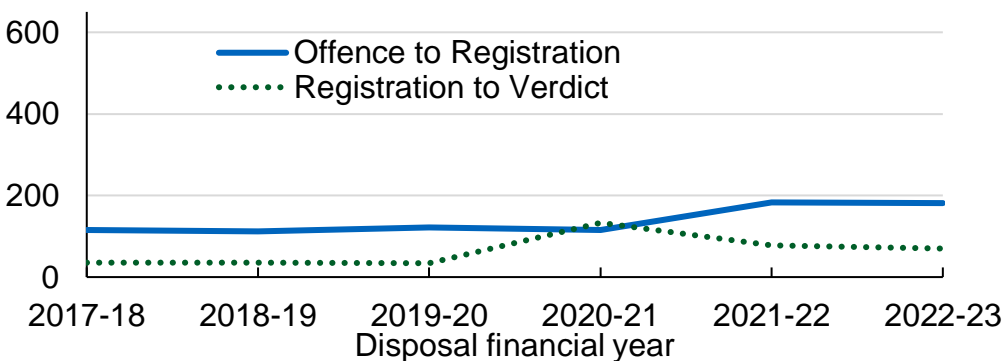
Median time (in days) - offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court, Sheriff Solemn



Median time (in days) - offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court, Sheriff Summary

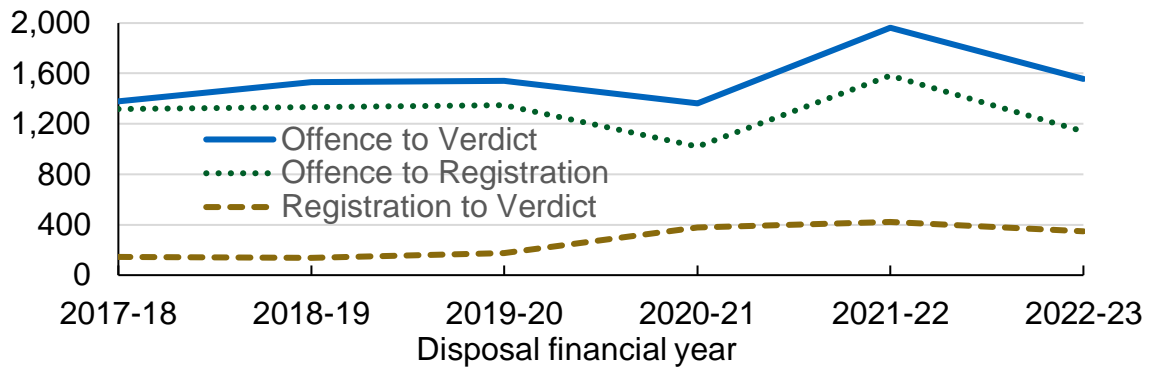


Median time (in days) - offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court, Justice of the Peace

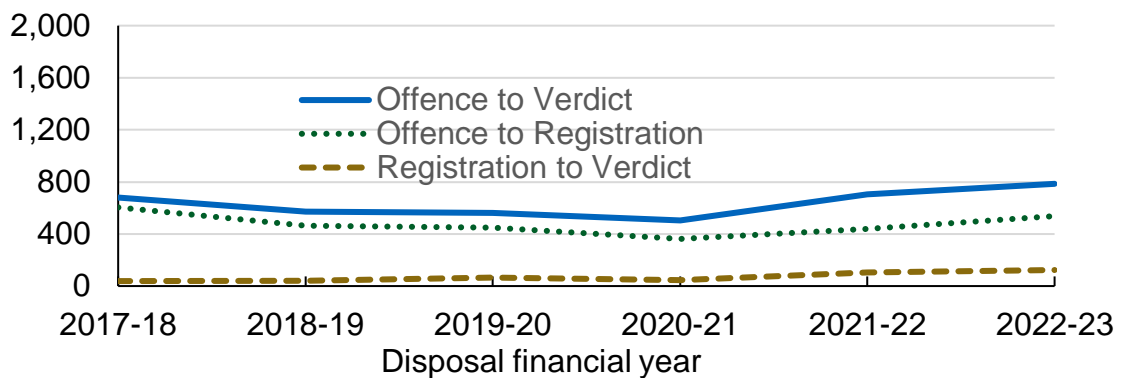


► **There were differences in accused persons' journey times depending on the type of crime on registration.** The longest journey times were observed for accused persons charged with at least one sexual crime and prosecuted in High court – with a median time of around four years in 2022-23.

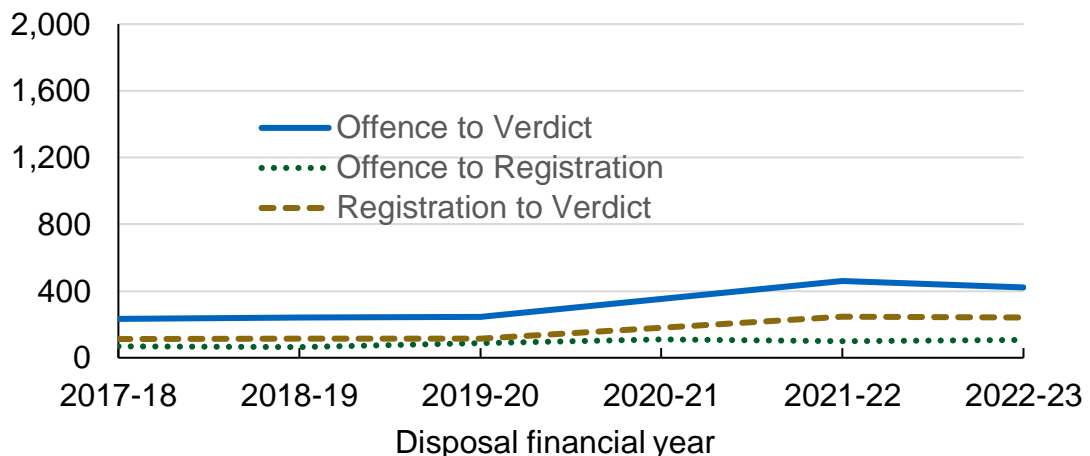
Median time (in days) - Offence to verdict, offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court for sexual crimes group accused, High Court



Median time (in days) - Offence to verdict, offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court for sexual crimes group accused, Sheriff Solemn



Median time (in days) - Offence to verdict, offence to registration and registration to verdict by type of court for sexual crimes group accused, Sheriff Summary



# Prisons

## Summary statistics on prisons

**\* New \***

### ▶ The prison population has risen during 2023

In November 2023 (up until the morning of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023):

- the population increased by 30 to 8,008
- 2,132 were on remand: 1,774 (22%) untried & 358 (4%) awaiting sentence. 5,876 (73%) were serving a sentence.
- 59% of arrivals were untried (565 of 960), 20% awaiting sentence (196) and 21% sentenced (199)

While the overall prison population continues to be lower than pre-pandemic levels, there has been a sustained increase in 2023 and the number of people held on remand remains at a historic high (see charts below).

Chart: Prison populations (total and remand), January 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023



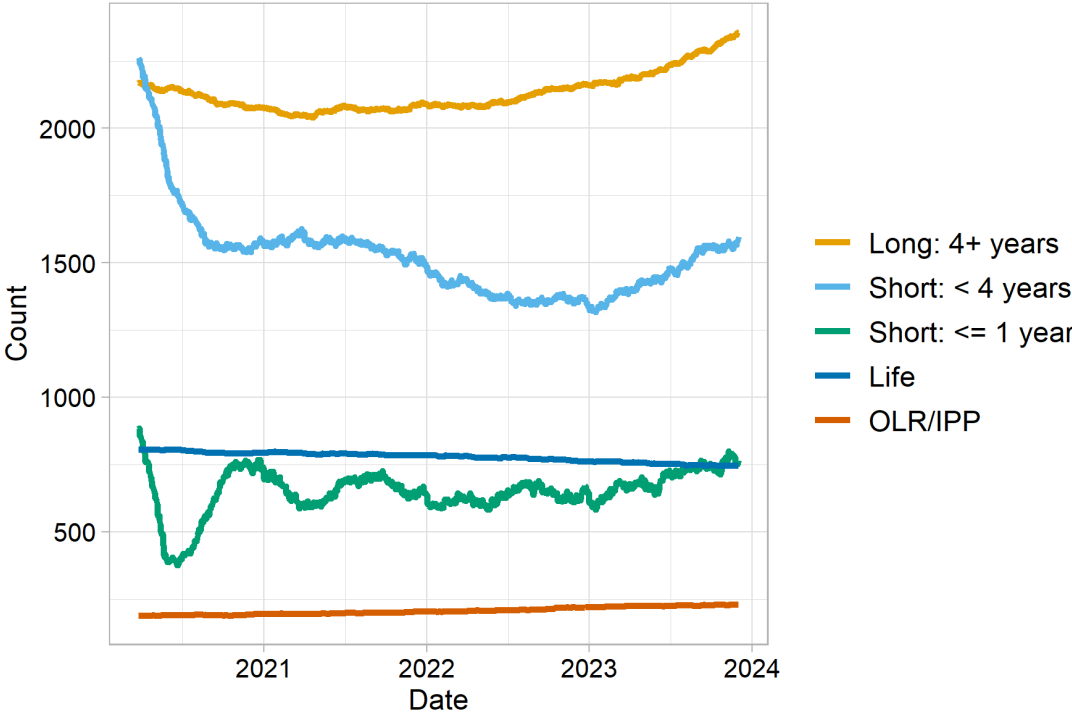
[Friday population figures published by the Scottish Prison Service](#), show that the prison population rose from around 7,500 in April 2018 to around 8,300 in November 2019, but fell sharply in the early days of the lockdown in 2020. This was due to a fall in arrivals to custody and the early release of prisoners.

Following a rapid growth in the remand population to September 2020, the prison population stabilised between 7,300 and 7,600 across 2020-22. However, growth across 2023 has led to a higher prison population, reaching a post-pandemic maximum of 7,994 on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023. This growth is driven by a rise in both remand and sentenced arrivals to custody. See the [Scottish Prison Population Projections](#) for more detail on these changing patterns.

The remand population was at its lowest point of 1,114 on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020, but grew to over 2,000 by September 2020. Following a period of relative stability, the remand population has grown further. On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 it peaked at 2,312. People on remand are required by law to be housed separately from sentenced prisoners.

Change in the sentenced prison population varies by sentence length, as shown in the chart below. The populations serving short term overall sentences (less than 4 years) fell substantially and rapidly during 2020, whereas populations serving long term and indeterminate sentences remained at similar levels to pre-pandemic. The population serving life sentences has seen a small and gradual decline since 2020, which has continued in 2023. The population serving sentences of less than or equal to one year increased in the first months of 2023; that population has started to fall more recently. The population serving sentences of one to four years has increased during 2023. Populations serving overall sentences of more than four years, as well as those serving Orders of Lifelong Restriction, have seen continuous increases over a longer period and now exceed pre-pandemic levels.

Chart: Prison populations by Overall Sentence, 26<sup>th</sup> Mar 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023

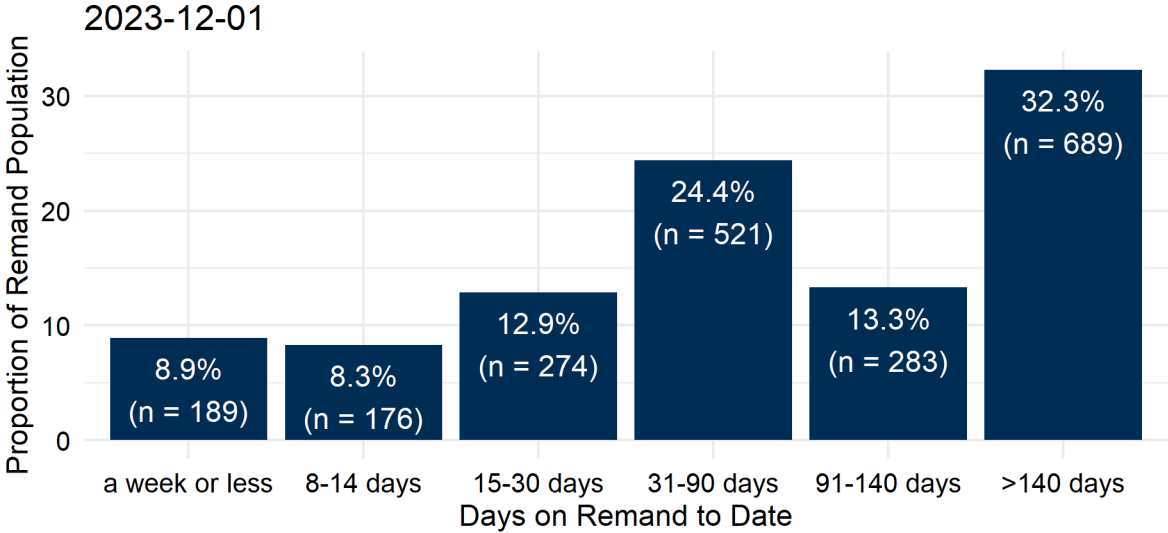


## Time on Remand to Date

**\* New \***

Among the 2,132 people on remand as of the morning of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 , the median continuous time spent with this status to date was 74 days.

Chart: Banded continuous time on remand to date, % of remand population



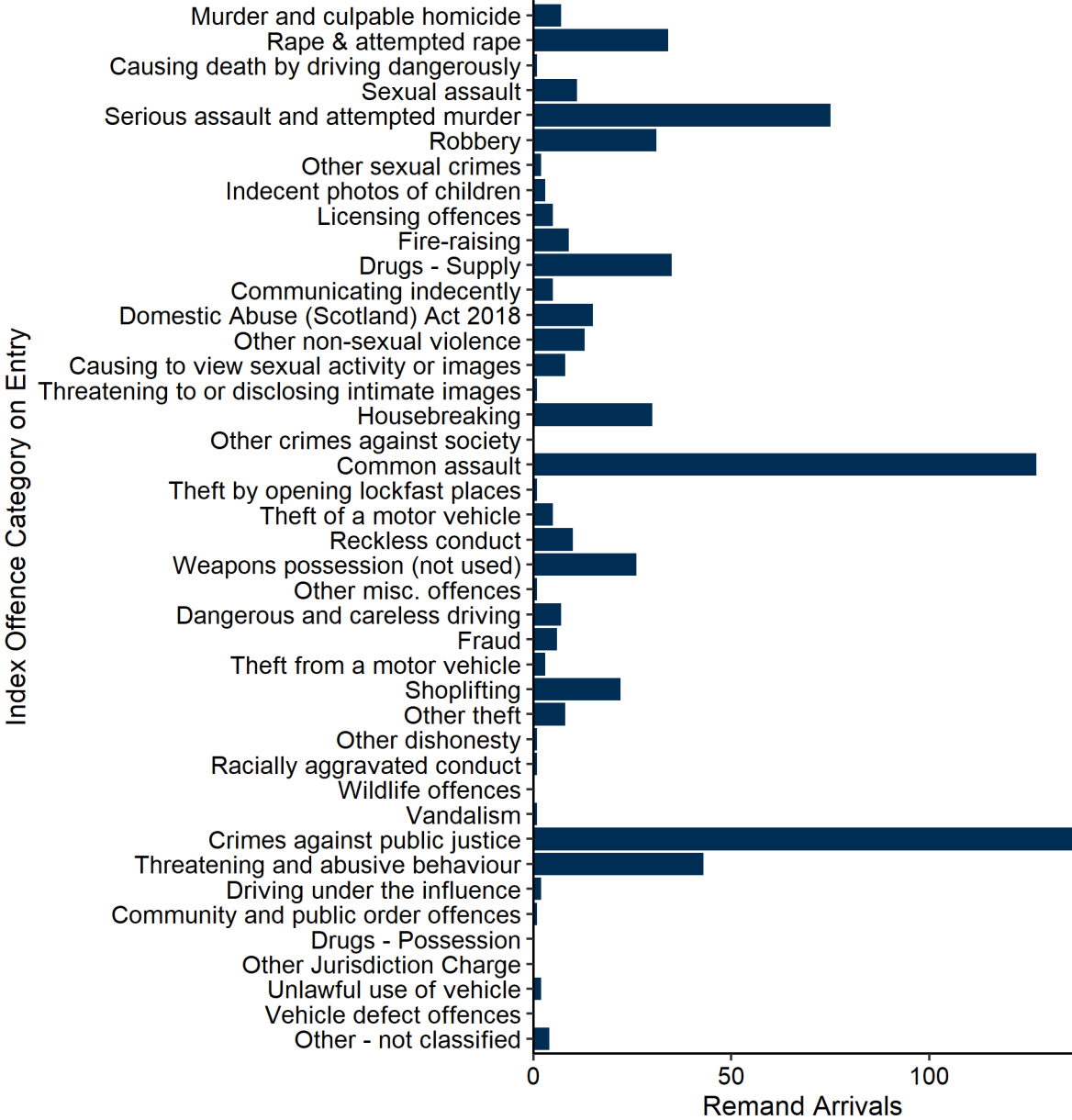
**Note:** The remand population includes individuals whose trial has commenced but not concluded, as well as those awaiting commencement of a trial. As a result, the figures referenced above reflect only that an individual has held the same status for an extended period, but do not reflect the relationship between these times on remand and the ongoing court procedure(s) to which they relate.

# Remand Arrival Offences

**\* New \***

There were 692 remand arrivals to prison with known offence types in November, awaiting trial or sentence for the following alleged index offences.

Chart: Index offence category on entry of arrivals to remand



**Note:** Double-counting may occur where an individual arrives, is absent from prison for one or more nights in the month, and then returns before the end of the period. Where an individual has multiple alleged offence types in a single stint, the offence towards the top of the list in the chart is used as the index offence.

# Topic Page

## Scottish Government prison population modelling

A [full report on the projected prison population up to the end of March 2024](#) was published on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. It included the second projections to be published since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the main aim was to help with planning and policy development.

Forward projections from October 2023 to March 2024 were produced using 'microsimulation' scenario modelling which simulates prison arrivals and departures to help estimate the number of individuals in prison on a particular date in the future. This modelling performs well, when using accurate assumptions, but there is nevertheless uncertainty in the projections which increases with time. These projections provide a range of possible scenarios in which the population varies from roughly flat over the coming months to potentially increasing to over 8,600 in March 2024.

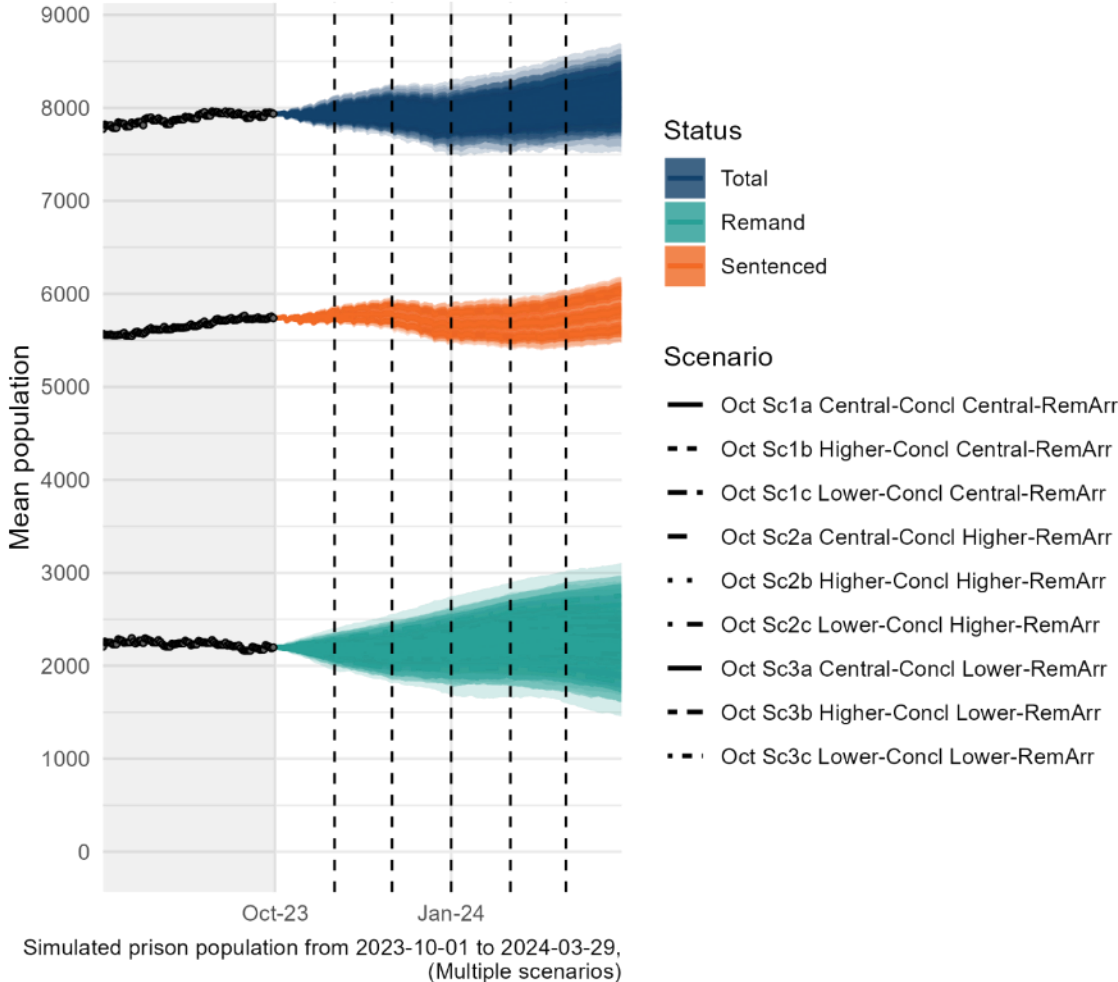
The above projections to March 2024 indicate that:

- The overall prison population in Scotland is most likely to either remain stable or rise slightly between October 2023 and March 2024, with a projected range of between 7,500 and 8,650 for the average daily prison population in March 2024. On 1st October 2023, the prison population was around 7,950.
- It is most likely that the remand population will remain stable but it may increase or decrease between October 2023 and March 2024. If it decreases because of enhanced monthly case conclusions, this may contribute to an increased sentenced population as more individuals transition from remand.
- It is most likely that the sentenced population will either remain stable or rise slightly; it may rise if the overall rate of transition from remand to the sentenced population increases or if there is a greater inflow of individuals directly from the community into the sentenced population.



### Future prison population estimates

The chart below shows the latest prison population projections for October 2023 to March 2024. It includes 50%, 75% and 95% confidence intervals for all scenario variants. The actual population is shown as a series of black points.



# Sources and Further Information

## Sources and further information

The information presented in this report is primarily drawn from a range of Official Statistics sources. In the case of fire and prisons statistics, more recent analysis of administrative data has been used, whilst recorded hate crime information comes from a Social Research publication.

### Police activity:

- Quarterly [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#) bulletin. This contains National Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland.
- [Homicide in Scotland Statistics](#). Annual National Statistics on crimes of homicide recorded by the police in Scotland.
- [Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland Statistics](#). Annual Official Statistics on police recorded domestic abuse in Scotland.
- [Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics Scotland](#). Quarterly Official Statistics on the number of full-time equivalent police officers in Scotland.
- [Characteristics of police recorded hate crime in Scotland: study](#). Social Research study into the nature of police recorded hate aggravated crimes in Scotland.

### Courts and prisons data:

- [Criminal Proceedings Statistics in Scotland](#). Annual National Statistics on criminal proceedings concluded in Scottish courts and on a range of measures available as alternatives to prosecution.
- Annual [Civil Justice Statistics](#) bulletin. This contains Official Statistics on civil justice and court reform as recorded by the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS).
- [Scottish Prison Population statistics](#). Official statistics on Scottish prison populations, exploring population levels and composition and change over time.
- [SCTS Official Statistics](#). Includes quarterly data on fines, financial penalty collection rates, and criminal court activity in Scotland.
- [Journey Times in the Scottish Criminal Justice System](#). Assesses an accused person's criminal justice journey time from offence date to case conclusion or verdict.

### Other:

- The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#) (SCJS) is a large-scale social survey which asks people about their experiences and perceptions of crime and the justice system in Scotland. The most recent release was for 2021-22.
- [Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland](#). Annual National Statistics on justice social work activity in Scotland.

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