



Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland: 2023-24 – Part 2

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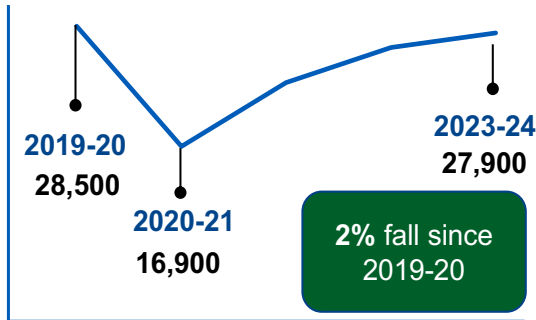
Key Points

- The number of justice social work reports submitted (including supplementary reports) rose by five per cent between 2022-23 and 2023-24 to 27,900. This was around the same level as the years immediately prior to the pandemic.
- There were 15,100 community payback orders (CPOs) commenced in 2023-24. This was three per cent up on 2022-23 but was the fourth lowest in the last decade. From 2014-15 to 2019-20, annual numbers ranged from 16,500 to 19,500.
- In 2023-24, 68.0 per cent of CPOs were issued with an unpaid work requirement. Slightly more (68.2 per cent) were issued with a supervision requirement.
- The average hours given as part of CPO unpaid work requirements increased from 127 hours in 2018-19 to 135 hours in 2023-24. The 2023-24 average was the highest in the last ten years.
- The successful completion rate for CPOs in 2023-24 was 71 per cent.
- Since the introduction of CPOs, 11.6 million hours of unpaid work or other activity have been carried out as part of successful unpaid work requirements.
- The number of CPOs in existence increased from 16,600 on 31 March 2023 to the highest level in the last six years, of 17,400 on 31 March 2024.
- There were 280 drug treatment and testing orders (DTTOs) imposed in 2023-24. This was an eight per cent fall from 300 in 2022-23 and the second lowest in the last ten years.
- The successful completion rate for DTTOs in 2023-24 was 51 per cent.
- Seventy-five per cent of all DTTOs which finished in 2023-24 had no breach applications.

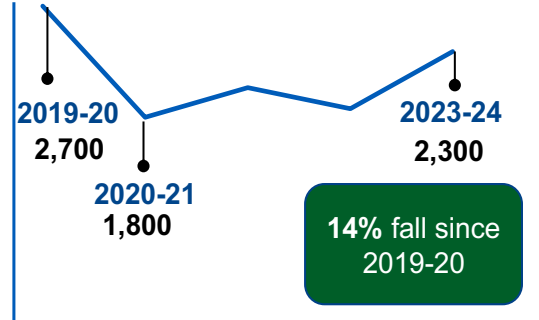
Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland, 2019-20 to 2023-24 – Part 2

Justice Analytical Services

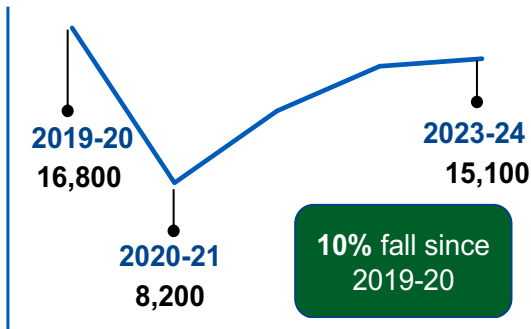
- ▶ JSWRs fell sharply in 2020-21 during Covid but were back to around pandemic levels in 2023-24



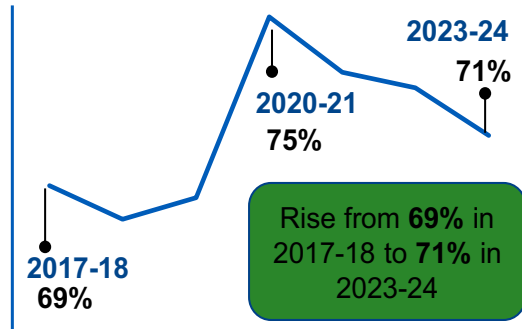
- ▶ Supplementary JSWRs fell sharply in 2020-21 during Covid and remain below pre-Covid levels in 2023-24



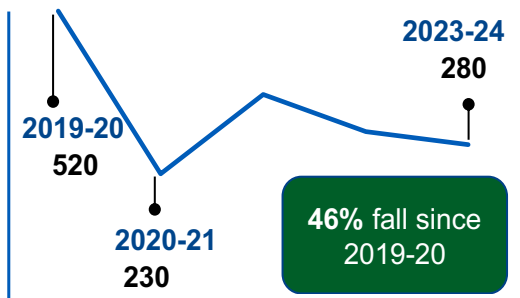
- ▶ CPOs imposed fell sharply in 2020-21 during Covid and remained below pre-pandemic levels in 2023-24



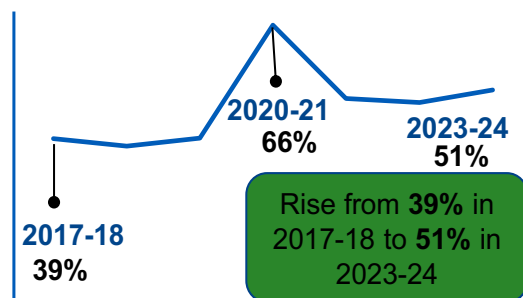
- ▶ CPO success rates rose in 2020-21 during Covid before falling to slightly above pre-pandemic levels in 2023-24



- ▶ DTTOs imposed fell sharply in 2020-21 during Covid and were only slightly higher in 2023-24



- ▶ DTTO success rates rose sharply in 2020-21 during Covid before settling at around 50% in the last three years



1 Introduction

The annual publication for [justice social work statistics](#) has been split into two parts for the first time this year. The splitting of the publication allows the reporting of part of the annual data collection to be provided to users about four months earlier. There has been no significant change to the data collected, only to the way it has been published. The 2023-24 local authority data and the main national trend data can be found in the additional datasets published alongside this report.

This publication is part 2 and the accompanying tables referred to throughout, provide statistics on the following areas of justice social work:

- Justice social work reports
- Community payback orders
- Drug treatment and testing orders

Part 1 of this publication included information and accompanying tables on these areas of justice social work:

- Diversion from prosecution
- Fiscal work orders
- Bail supervision
- Structured deferred sentences
- Statutory/voluntary throughcare
- Pre-release reports
- Home detention curfew assessments
- Court-based services

This was published in September 2024 as [Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland: 2023-24 – Part 1](#).

This improvement to timing is to support the recommendations from the [Review of Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland](#). More information on the recommendations can be found in [Annex C](#).

These statistics are [accredited official statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation has independently reviewed and accredited these statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

These statistics were accredited in July 2011, in [assessment report 128](#) on the UK Statistics Authority website.

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

2 Background

Local authority justice social work teams provide a range of services, including:

- assessments and reports to assist decisions on sentencing
- court services to assist those attending court
- bail supervision services as an alternative to custodial remand
- supervising people on court orders (e.g. community payback orders) to tackle offending behaviour
- supervising people who need to perform unpaid, useful work for the benefit of the community
- prison-based social work services to those serving custodial sentences
- preparing reports for the Parole Board to assist decisions about release from prison
- throughcare services including parole, supervised release and other prison aftercare orders to ensure public safety
- delivering group work interventions on programmes such as Caledonian and Moving Forward Making Changes

The data presented in this publication comes from justice social work management information systems for each of Scotland's local authorities. Further information on the collection and processing of the data is in [Annex A](#) and definitions are in [Annex B](#).

3 Statistical context

Interpretation of the trend data supplied in this publication needs to consider the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid) pandemic. There were significant public health measures, including two national lockdowns, in place during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 recording years. For example, many courts were temporarily closed early in 2020-21. There was also reduced capacity when courts reopened. This means that statistics for most areas of justice social work were impacted in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Caution is advised in comparing data from these two years to other years.

The numbers quoted in the text in this publication are rounded. The tables and charts published alongside this report contain unrounded figures. More information on this is available in [section 7](#).

Revisions to earlier years' data have been made back to 2019-20 for community payback orders and back to 2020-21 for drug treatment and testing orders, as a result of more up to date data being provided by local authorities.

4 Justice social work reports (JSWRs)

(Tables 1 to 4)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- There were 27,900 JSWRs submitted (including supplementary reports but excluding letters sent instead of reports) in 2023-24. This was five per cent higher than the level of 26,400 in 2022-23 and was around the same level as the years immediately prior to the pandemic.
- Full JSWRs followed a similar pattern, rising by four per cent in the last year to reach around pre-pandemic levels.
- Eighty-five per cent of full JSWRs in 2023-24 were for males.
- Thirty-three per cent of full JSWRs were for people aged 31-40 years old.
- Of those known, 53 per cent were reported as being unemployed.

The justice social work report (JSWR) was introduced as a criminal justice social work report (CJSWR) across Scotland from February 2011. Following the publication of [updated national guidance](#) in 2023, this is now known as a justice social work report. The JSWR ensures a consistent provision of information is provided, including the social worker's professional assessment. This report helps to assist in the sentencing process and to complement the range of other considerations, such as victim information and narratives from the Procurator Fiscal. In particular, the JSWR provides information on social work interventions and how these may prevent or reduce further offending. A court must request a JSWR:

- before imposing a custodial sentence for the first time or where a person is under 21
- when imposing a community payback order (CPO) with a supervision requirement or a level 2 (over 100 hours) unpaid work or other activity requirement
- when imposing a drug treatment and testing order
- when the person is already subject to statutory supervision.

The data collated includes full JSWRs and supplementary reports. A supplementary (or abbreviated) report template is used when a full report has been prepared in the recent past, and a briefer update is all that is required by

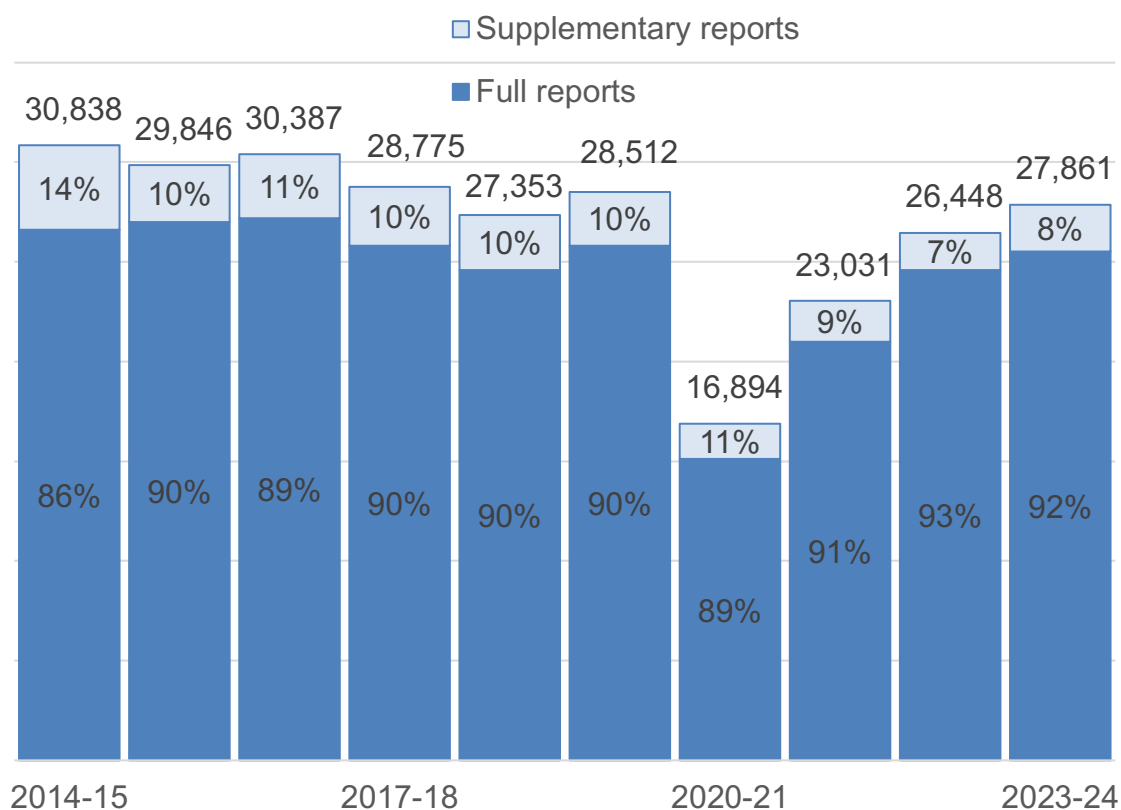
the court. Both report types exclude letters sent in lieu of reports which could not be prepared. To help with reporting the data in this publication, the report types will be known by the statistical categories full JSWRs and supplementary JSWRs respectively.

The total number of JSWRs submitted (including supplementary JSWRs) fell to 16,900 in 2020-21. Numbers have subsequently risen in each of the next three years, reaching 27,900 in 2023-24. This is around pre-pandemic levels, where the average was around 28,200 across the three years 2017-18 to 2019-20.

The number of full JSWRs also fell sharply between 2019-20 and 2020-21. Numbers then rose in both 2021-22 and 2022-23, before rising further, by four per cent to 25,500 in 2023-24.

The proportion of JSWRs that were supplementary in 2023-24 was eight per cent, the second lowest proportion in the last ten years.

Chart 1: The number of justice social work reports submitted has generally been steady over the last seven years, with the exception of the lower numbers over the period affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
Number of JSWRs submitted, Scotland, 2014-15 to 2023-24



Almost three-quarters of local authority areas showed an increase in JSWRs submitted between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Further information is in the [additional datasets](#) which are published alongside this publication.

4.1 Preferred sentencing options and outcomes for justice social work reports

(Tables 3 & 4)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- A community payback order (CPO) was recommended as a sentence in 44 per cent of full JSWRs. It turned out to be the main outcome for 42 per cent of reports.
- Custody was recommended in seven per cent of full JSWRs but was the main outcome for 14 per cent of reports.

The justice social work report writer provides a professional assessment on the suitability of available sentencing options. This assessment should highlight the individual's attitude to offending and motivation to change, as well as any risks and identified needs. It should also attempt to maximise the opportunity for the individual to change their behaviour and desist from offending. While the decision on sentencing is for the court to take, the expectation is that the professional analysis will cover substantive issues such as the need for specialist assessment where there are significant difficulties around substance use or mental health. There is also the expectation that the report will include an assessment of the suitability or otherwise of a CPO. This should include the individual's motivation to successfully complete the order.

The statistics in this section of the report relate to full JSWRs. Information on preferred options and main outcomes are not collected for supplementary JSWRs.

Forty-four per cent of full JSWRs in 2023-24 recommended the use of a CPO as a sentencing option. Nineteen per cent recommended a CPO with supervision but no unpaid work, while 12 per cent recommended unpaid work but no supervision and 13 per cent recommended both unpaid work and supervision. The proportion for unpaid work but no supervision has generally been falling over the last ten years. This reflects the fact that the proportion of CPOs being issued with unpaid work has also been falling over this period.

In addition, 14 per cent of reports recommended either a structured deferred sentence or a deferred sentence of three months or more. A further five per cent suggested a monetary penalty. Custody was the preferred option in seven per cent of reports. Eighteen per cent suggested some other form of sentence (including a restriction of liberty order or deferment for a drug treatment and testing order assessment). Twelve per cent of JSWRs gave no preferred sentencing option.

After the recommendations in JSWRs were considered as part of courts procedures, a CPO was given as the main outcome for 42 per cent of reports in 2023-24. Ten per cent of reports resulted in a CPO with unpaid work but no supervision, and 14 per cent resulted in an order with supervision but no unpaid work. In 18 per cent of cases, the main outcome was a CPO with both supervision and unpaid work.

Custody was the main outcome for 14 per cent of reports in 2023-24. The largest other main outcome categories in 2023-24 were a deferred sentence, a monetary penalty and a restriction of liberty order (11, six and six per cent of the total respectively).

5 Community payback orders (CPOs)

(Tables 1 & 5 to 14 and [Charts 2-7](#))

5.1 Orders imposed

(Table 5)

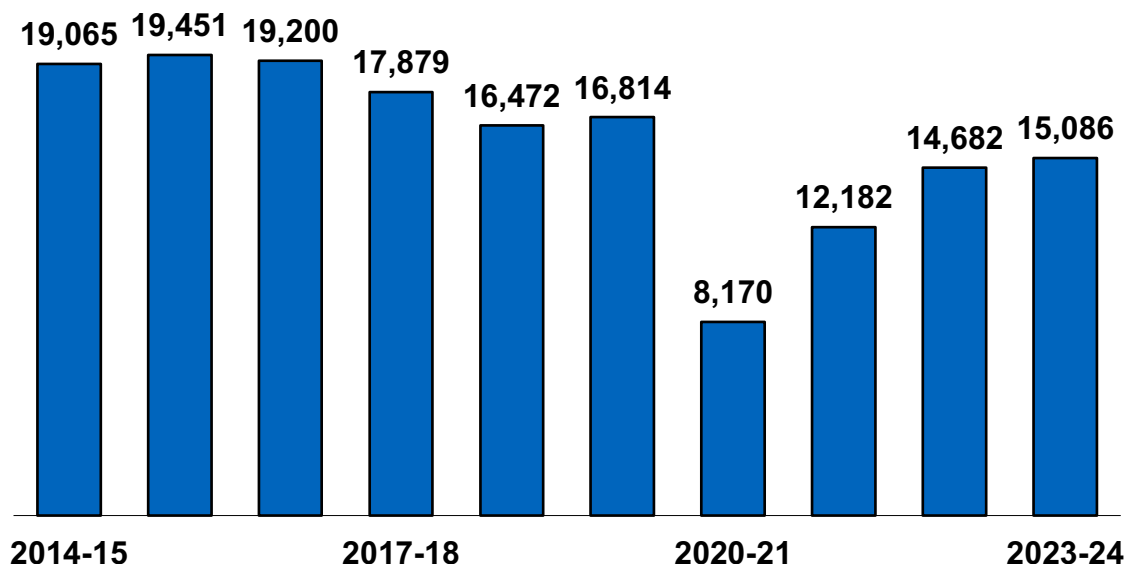
Key statistics for 2023-24:

- Around 15,100 CPOs were issued in 2023-24. This was three per cent higher than in 2022-23 but still lower than the years immediately prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Eighty-six per cent of CPOs imposed in 2023-24 were issued to males.
- Where ethnicity was recorded, 95 per cent of CPOs were for people who classified themselves as white.
- Where employment status was known, 70 per cent of those receiving CPOs were either unemployed or economically inactive. A further 28 per cent were in employment or self-employed.

CPOs are court orders which are imposed on individuals sentenced in relation to offences committed from 1st February 2011. Where a person is convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment, the court may, instead of imposing a sentence of imprisonment, impose a CPO. The number of CPOs issued in 2023-24 was 15,100, up three per cent on 2022-23 but still lower than any of the pre-pandemic years ([Chart 2](#)).

Chart 2 The number of community payback orders issued has risen in the last four years but remains below pre-pandemic levels.

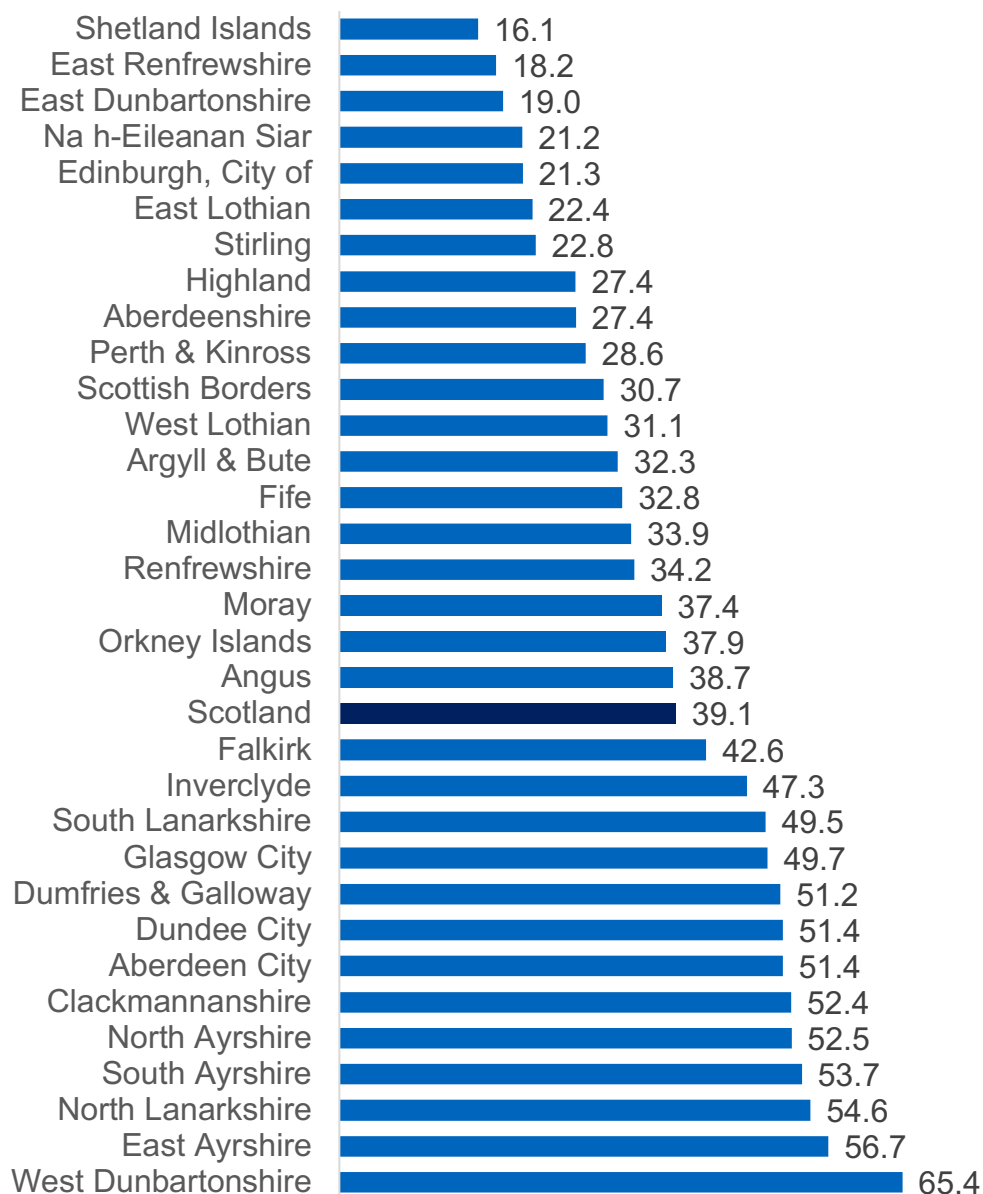
Annual community payback orders issued by courts in Scotland: 2014-15 to 2023-24



There was a rise in the number of CPOs in the initial years following their introduction on 1st February 2011. Numbers reached a peak of 19,500 in 2015-16. The total CPOs imposed then fell in the next three years to 16,500 in 2018-19, before a small rise to 16,800 in 2019-20. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting decrease in court business meant numbers fell sharply in 2020-21, to 8,200. Numbers recovered in each of the next three years, reaching 15,100 in 2023-24, still below the level prior to the pandemic.

Chart 3: The number of CPOs imposed per 10,000 population ranged from 16.1 to 65.4 in 2023-24.

CPOs imposed per 10,000 population for Scotland and local authority areas, 2023-24.



Note: Population estimates used for this graph are the mid-2023 estimates for the age range 16 to 70.

As expected with the rise in CPOs issued nationally, the number imposed per 10,000 population rose from 38 in 2022-23 to 39 in 2023-24 ([Chart 3](#)). Nineteen of the 32 Scottish local authorities saw a rise over this period.

In 2023-24, the highest number of CPOs imposed per 10,000 population was for those living in West Dunbartonshire (65), East Ayrshire (57) and North Lanarkshire (55). The lowest population rates were for those living in Shetland Islands (16), East Renfrewshire (18) and East Dunbartonshire (19). While the rate for City of Edinburgh was much lower than for Scotland as a whole, the city council areas of Aberdeen (51), Dundee (51) and Glasgow (50) were each higher than the national average. More detailed information by local authority area is in the [additional datasets](#) which accompany this publication.

People aged 26 to 40 accounted for 49 per cent of people getting a CPO in 2023-24. This was much higher than for those aged over 40 (28 per cent). By contrast, in the population as a whole aged 16 to 70 in Scotland, 28 per cent were aged 26 to 40 and 56 per cent were aged over 40.

The average age of people getting a CPO rose every year up to 2021-22, rising from 31.1 years in 2013-14 to 34.6 years in 2021-22. In 2022-23, for the first time, this remained around the same at 34.5 years. It then rose slightly, to 34.7 in 2023-24. In 2023-24, 23 per cent of CPOs were for people aged 25 and under. Those aged over 30 accounted for 61 per cent.

5.2 Requirements

([Tables 6 to 8](#) and [Charts 4-6](#))

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- A total of 68.0 per cent of CPOs were issued with an unpaid work requirement. Slightly more (68.2 per cent) were issued with a supervision requirement.
- The prevalence increased for eight of the ten CPO requirements between 2022-23 and 2023-24. The changes in prevalence were biggest for restricted movement (up from 1 per cent of orders to 2.1 per cent) and drug treatment requirements (up from 0.8 to 1.4 per cent).
- The average number of hours given as part of unpaid work requirements rose from 127 hours in 2018-19 to 135 hours in 2023-24.

There are ten potential requirements as part of a CPO at first imposition:

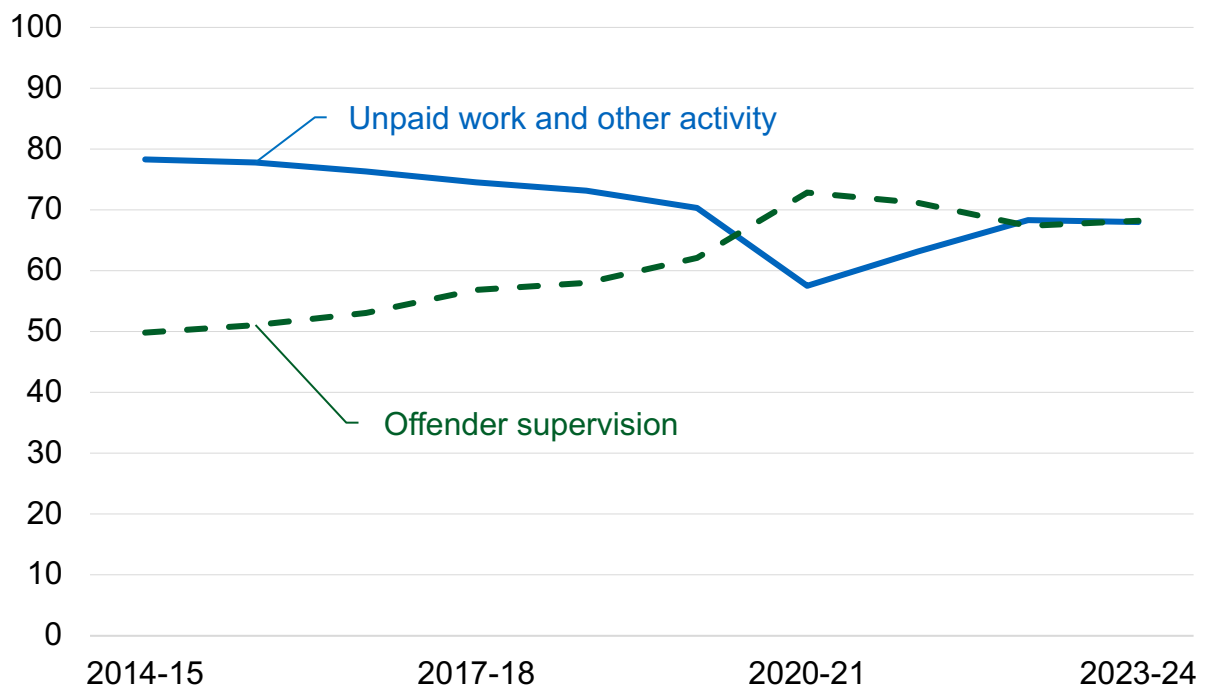
- Unpaid work or other activity
- Offender supervision
- Conduct
- Programme
- Alcohol treatment
- Compensation

- Drug treatment
- Mental health treatment
- Residence
- Restricted movement

Every order should have either or both an ‘unpaid work or other activity requirement’ or an ‘offender supervision requirement’. In the publication, these are generally referred to as ‘unpaid work requirements’ and ‘supervision requirements’ respectively.

Chart 4: Change in the prevalence of the two main CPO requirements with a general increase in supervision over the last ten years.

Percentage of unpaid work and supervision among CPOs imposed in Scotland, 2014-15 to 2023-24



For every year up to 2019-20, unpaid work was the requirement most issued as part of a CPO (Chart 4). The proportion of orders with unpaid work was high in the early years, covering 78 per cent of orders in 2014-15. This then fell slightly in each of the next five years, reaching 70 per cent in 2019-20. It fell sharply to 58 per cent in 2020-21 during Covid, before increasing to 68 per cent in both 2022-23 and 2023-24. It again became the most issued requirement in 2022-23 but, in 2023-24, there were around the same number of unpaid work requirements issued as there were supervision.

The proportion of orders with a supervision requirement rose each year between 2014-15 and 2019-20 reaching 62 per cent (Chart 4). The proportion then rose sharply in 2020-21 to 73 per cent during Covid. It fell in the next two

years, reaching 67 per cent in 2022-23, before rising slightly to 68 per cent in 2023-24.

In the years 2014-15 to 2019-20, around 56 to 58 per cent of supervision requirements were for 12 months or less. This fell to around 50 per cent both in 2020-21 and 2021-22 but rose to 53 per cent in 2022-23 and 55 per cent in 2023-24. The average length of supervision requirements across 2014-15 to 2019-20 was around 15.5 months. It was, however, much higher in 2020-21 (16.6 months) and in 2021-22 (16.9 months) during the pandemic, before falling to 16.2 months in 2023-24.

Even though the proportion of CPOs imposed with an unpaid work requirement in 2023-24 was the third lowest in ten years, changes in the length of hours have been occurring. The average number of hours given as part of unpaid work requirements rose from 127 hours in 2018-19 to 135 hours in 2023-24. A major driver behind this increase is that the prevalence of level 2 requirements (i.e. those with more than 100 hours) has increased from 52 per cent of all unpaid work requirements in 2018-19 to 59 per cent in 2023-24.

Chart 5: Over the last decade, for unpaid work requirements, the proportion where more than 100 hours were imposed has increased

Breakdown of unpaid work or other activity requirements by number of hours (percentages), 2014-15 to 2023-24

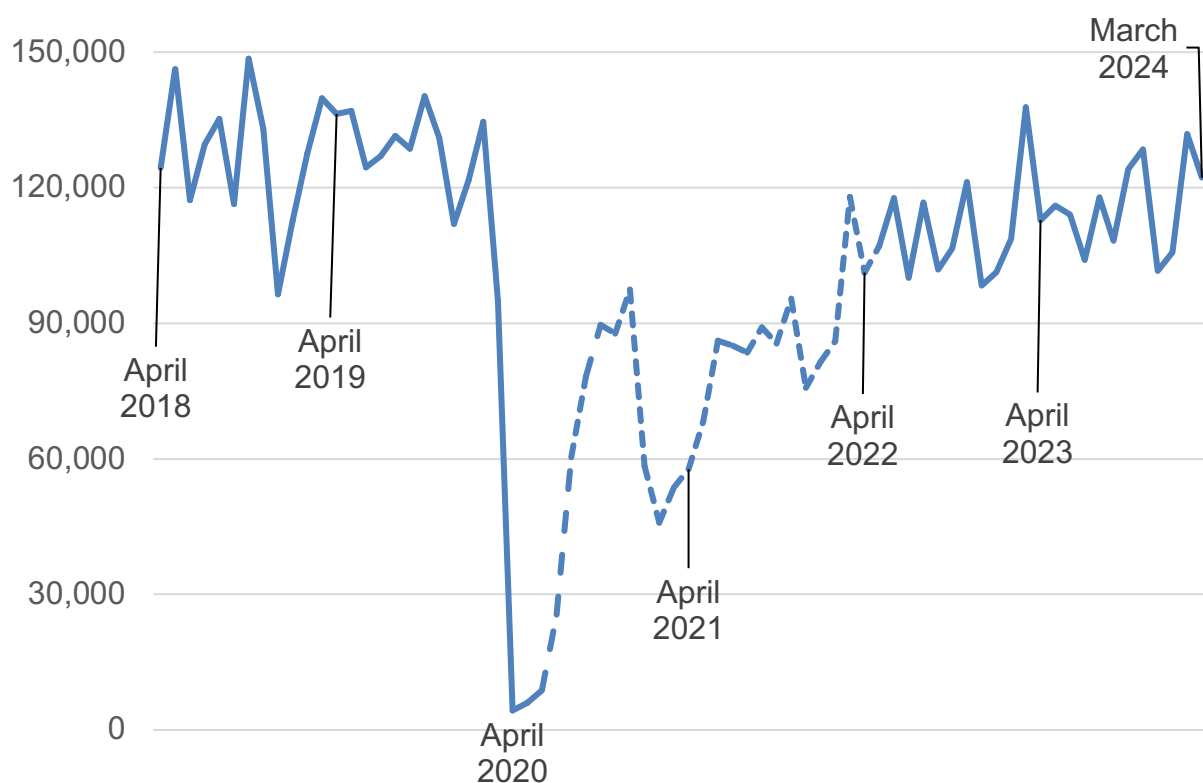


Chart 5 gives more detail on how the number of hours imposed has changed for unpaid work requirements over the last decade. In 2014-15, 54 per cent of requirements were issued with up to 100 hours (level 1). By 2023-24, this had

reduced to 41 per cent. By contrast, over the same period, there has been an increase in the prevalence of those issued with between 101 to 200 hours, from 36 per cent to 45 per cent. The increase in range for 101 to 200 hours imposed has contributed to the rise in average hours over the decade. The proportion of those with 201 to 300 hours imposed has ranged between 10 and 13 per cent over the last ten years.

Chart 6: The total number of hours of unpaid work requirements imposed fell sharply at the start of the pandemic and have since recovered to levels slightly lower than pre-pandemic.

Number of hours of unpaid work or other activity requirements issued as part of CPOs imposed, April 2018 to March 2024



Note: Dashed line indicates the Covid pandemic years 2020-21 to 2021-22.

Chart 6 shows how the total number of hours of unpaid work imposed by courts each month varied across the last six years. With the exception of one month, between 110,000 and 150,000 hours were given out by courts every month between April 2018 and February 2020. After the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, numbers dropped sharply and, although they increased in the rest of 2020, they remained at much lower levels. In early 2021, following the second national lockdown, numbers dropped sharply again, though not as dramatically as with the first lockdown in March 2020. Since February 2021, hours imposed has been on a generally upward trend, averaging around 116,000 per month across year 2023-24.

The type of orders issued in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 was influenced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Face-to-face delivery of unpaid work had

to be suspended for some periods and courts would have been aware of the challenges of delivering unpaid work. Factors relating to the nature of cases which had court hearings during the pandemic, and the circumstances of the individuals involved, may also have been a relevant factor.

After unpaid work and supervision, conduct and programme have been the most issued of the remaining requirements. Apart from a fall in 2022-23, the proportion of orders with conduct requirements has risen each year since 2015-16, up from six per cent in 2015-16 to 14 per cent in 2023-24. The proportion of orders with a programme requirement rose from five per cent in 2015-16 to nine per cent in 2020-21, before falling to seven per cent in 2022-23. This remained at seven per cent in 2023-24. With the exception of mental health treatment requirements, the prevalence for the rest of the requirements rose in 2023-24 compared with 2022-23.

After falling slightly in 2022-23, the average number of requirements per order in 2023-24 rose to 1.65, the highest level in the last ten years.

5.3 Time taken for orders/unpaid work requirements to finish

(Table 14 & Figure 1)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- On average, 131 hours were done as part of unpaid work requirements successfully completed during 2023-24.
- Around 11.6 million hours of unpaid work or other activity have been carried out since CPOs were introduced.
- It took around nine months on average to successfully complete an unpaid work requirement in 2023-24.
- Since the Covid pandemic, a lower proportion of orders have been finished in the same year as they were imposed.

The number of unpaid work requirements successfully completed fell by 26 per cent between 2014-15 and 2019-20, before decreasing sharply in the first Covid year 2020-21. Numbers rose in each of the last three years, reaching 6,700 in 2023-24. This was still lower than pre-Covid. Since the introduction of CPOs, around 11.6 million hours of unpaid work or other activity have been carried out as part of successful unpaid work requirements.

On average, there were 131 hours carried out for each requirement in 2023-24. This was the highest in the last ten years and four per cent higher than in 2022-23.

It took around nine months (274 days) on average to complete an unpaid work requirement in 2023-24, a reduction of 23 days from 2022-23. The average in

2023-24 was shorter than in the previous three years but longer than in the years 2014-15 to 2019-20, when it was around 212 days.

The longer periods of recent years was expected, particularly over the years 2020-21 to 2022-23, as a result of the [Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#). Over the period from April 2020 to September 2022, this extended time limits for completion of existing unpaid work requirements in CPOs by 12 months, and required any new requirements made to be given at least 12 months to complete.

Figure 1: Percentage of CPOs finished from year imposed, Scotland, 2017-18 to 2023-24

Year of imposition	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Still being processed
2016-17	30%	54%	14%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2017-18	z	28%	55%	15%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2018-19	z	z	28%	55%	13%	3%	1%	0%	0%
2019-20	z	z	z	26%	43%	25%	5%	1%	1%
2020-21	z	z	z	z	9%	58%	27%	5%	2%
2021-22	z	z	z	z	z	14%	56%	22%	7%
2022-23	z	z	z	z	z	z	17%	56%	27%
2023-24	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	19%	81%

Notes: z = data for a category that does not apply
 Calculated as row percentages. The row headings refer to the year imposed while the column headings refer to the year finished.

Figure 1 illustrates how CPOs are continually being processed by the justice social work system over a period spanning different years. For example, during 2023-24, there were CPOs being processed through the system which were imposed in each of the years 2019-20 to 2023-24. Figure 1 also shows the effect which the Covid pandemic had on how long orders took to finish.

There was a consistent pattern for CPOs imposed in the years 2016-17 to 2018-19 in that generally:

- Just under 30 per cent of CPOs were finished in the same financial year in which they were imposed.
- Around 55 per cent finished in the following year.
- Around 13 to 15 per cent finished in the second year after the imposed year.

The effect of the pandemic and changes in legislation can be seen in the percentage of orders being imposed and finished in the same year. For the last four years this ranged between nine and 19 per cent, while it was between 26 and 30 per cent for the years 2016-17 to 2019-20.

The percentage of CPOs finishing the next year was around 54 to 58 per cent for the years 2016-17 to 2022-23, apart from those imposed in 2019-20 and finishing in 2020-21 which reduced to 43 per cent, during the height of the pandemic. Even though these percentages were quite stable on the whole, the effect of fewer orders finishing in the year of imposition from 2020-21 onwards, has increased the proportion which finished in the second year after imposition. This has ranged between 22 and 27 per cent for orders imposed in the years 2019-20 to 2021-22, compared to 13 to 15 per cent for those imposed in 2016-17 to 2018-19.

For 2023-24, 19 per cent were completed within the year of imposition, the highest since 2019-20. The remaining 81 per cent were still being processed in 2024-25.

5.4 Timescales for implementation

(Tables 9 to 10)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

Where this information was known:

- Sixty-seven per cent of first direct contacts took place within one working day of imposition.
- Seventy-five per cent of first induction/case management meetings took place within five working days.
- Seventy per cent of unpaid work placements started within seven working days.

The [Scottish Government community payback order practice guidance](#) supports practitioners and managers in the delivery of CPOs. Further details on the guidance are in [Annex B](#).

Across all CPOs where this information was known, first direct contact took place within one working day of imposition for 67 per cent of orders imposed in 2023-24. This was slightly lower than in 2022-23, and lower than in the years before the pandemic, when it generally fluctuated between 75 to 77 per cent. In addition, in 2023-24, 17 per cent took more than five working days.

In 2023-24, where this information was known, 75 per cent of first induction/case management meetings took place within five working days. This was slightly down on 2022-23 and slightly lower than the levels pre-pandemic. Thirteen per cent took six to ten working days and 12 per cent took more than ten working days in 2023-24.

Where the timescale was known, 70 per cent of unpaid work placements started within seven working days in 2023-24. This was higher than in 2022-

23 and was generally around the same level as the years prior to the pandemic

The lower proportions in 2020-21 and 2021-22 for these timescales were likely to have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health measures to keep people safe.

5.5 Orders finished (Tables 1 & 11 to 13)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- The successful completion rate for CPOs finished in 2023-24 was 71 per cent, similar to the rates prior to the Covid pandemic.
- Seventy-eight per cent of orders which finished during 2023-24 did not involve any breach applications during the duration of the order.

Orders finished include those that have been successfully completed or discharged early, orders that have been revoked due to review or breach and those finished due to death or other reasons. Those that transfer to other areas are also considered finished in the local authority that the individual has left and are included in the figures for the new local authority they have transferred to.

The successful completion rate for CPOs finished in 2023-24 was 71 per cent. This was lower than the three previous years, returning to levels similar to the pre-pandemic years. The completion rate is calculated by adding together the number of successful completions and early discharges, then dividing this by the total orders finished less orders which were transferred out of a local authority to a different area.

In 2023-24, among orders finished which were not transferred out, 15 per cent were revoked following a breach application to the courts. A further nine per cent were revoked following a review.

Seventy-eight per cent of orders which finished during 2023-24 did not involve any breach applications during the duration of the order. For the remainder, there were a total of 3,700 breach applications made. The vast majority of breach applications (83 per cent) were lodged with the court within five working days of the decision to make an application.

For CPOs revoked due to breach, the most likely outcome from courts (where the outcome was known) was a new CPO at 33 per cent. For a further 29 per cent, it was a custodial sentence. Those where there was no further action for social work accounted a further 19 per cent of orders revoked due to breach. For orders revoked due to review, 20 per cent of those where the outcome was known resulted in a custodial sentence and another 25 per cent got a

new CPO or a monetary penalty. The largest proportion, 38 per cent, resulted in no further action for social work. The category “no further action for social work” covers instances where any further action did not have social work involvement and the local authority were not advised of any further penalty e.g. an admonition or where the case was discharged.

5.6 Orders in existence at year end (Table 1 and [Chart 7](#))

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- The number of CPOs in existence on 31 March 2024 rose to 17,400, the highest level in the last six years.

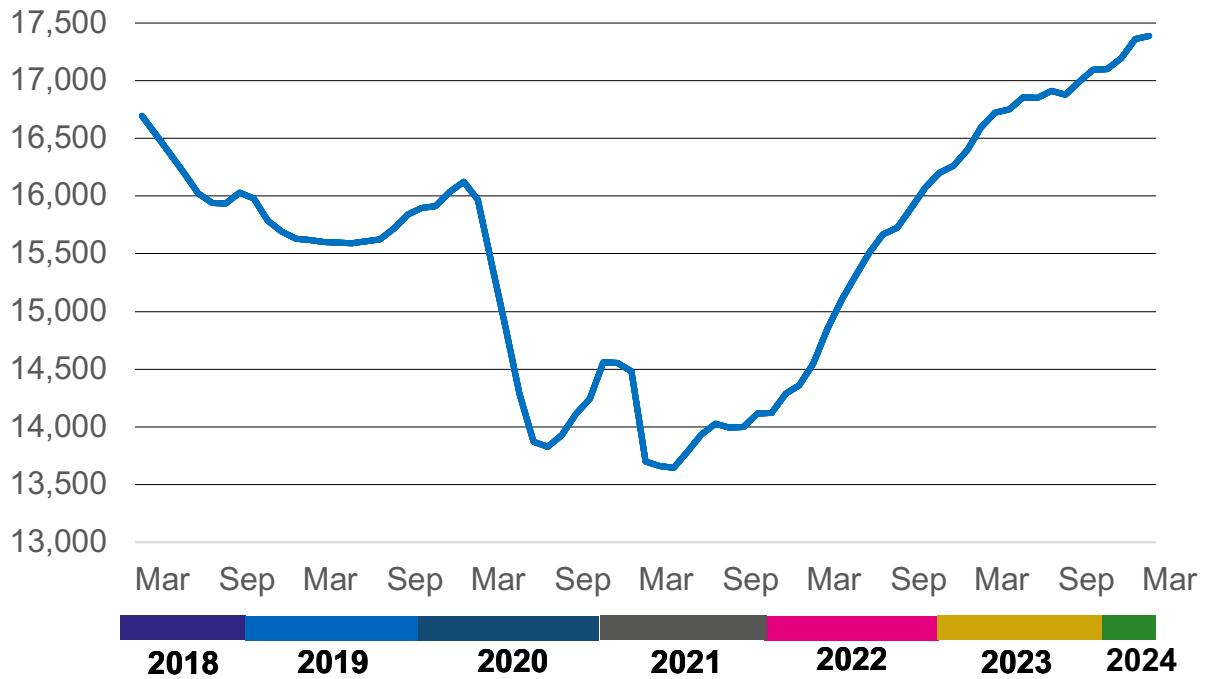
The number of CPOs in existence increased from 16,600 on 31 March 2023 to 17,400 on 31 March 2024. This was the highest in the last six years and the highest since March 2017.

[Chart 7](#) shows how the numbers in existence changed throughout the last six years. Numbers fell during 2018 then rose slightly between the middle of 2019 and the start of the pandemic. They then went down sharply in the period between March and August 2020, reflecting the closure over this period of many courts. Numbers picked up during the rest of 2020 as more cases were processed by the courts.

The drop shown in March 2021 was greatly influenced by [The Community Orders \(Coronavirus\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#) coming into force. Under these regulations, the specified hours for existing orders with unpaid work or other activity requirements were reduced by 35 per cent (except for requirements imposed for offences involving domestic abuse, sexual offences or stalking). Since May 2021, the number of CPOs in existence has consistently risen, though the level of this rise has been smaller during year 2023-24. This may reflect the fact that the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, which extended the time limits for the completion of existing unpaid work requirements in CPOs by 12 months, and required that any new requirements imposed during the period in which the legislation was in force had a time limit of at least 12 months, no longer applied after September 2022. [Section 5.3](#) shows that the progression of CPOs has improved since the Covid pandemic but is still below pre-pandemic level. This a factor in the lower number of orders finishing in the last few years, leading to the increase in the number of CPOs in existence over this period.

Chart 7 : The number of CPOs in existence fell to lower levels during the Covid years in 2020 and 2021 but have since increased, reaching 17,400 in March 2024.

Number of CPOs in existence in Scotland, at the end of each month from March 2018 to March 2024



Note: In order to better illustrate changes over the period covered by this graph, the vertical axis does not begin at number zero.

6 Drug treatment and testing orders (DTTOs)

(Tables 1 & 15 to 19 and [Chart 8](#))

6.1 Orders imposed

(Tables 1 and 15 and [Chart 8](#))

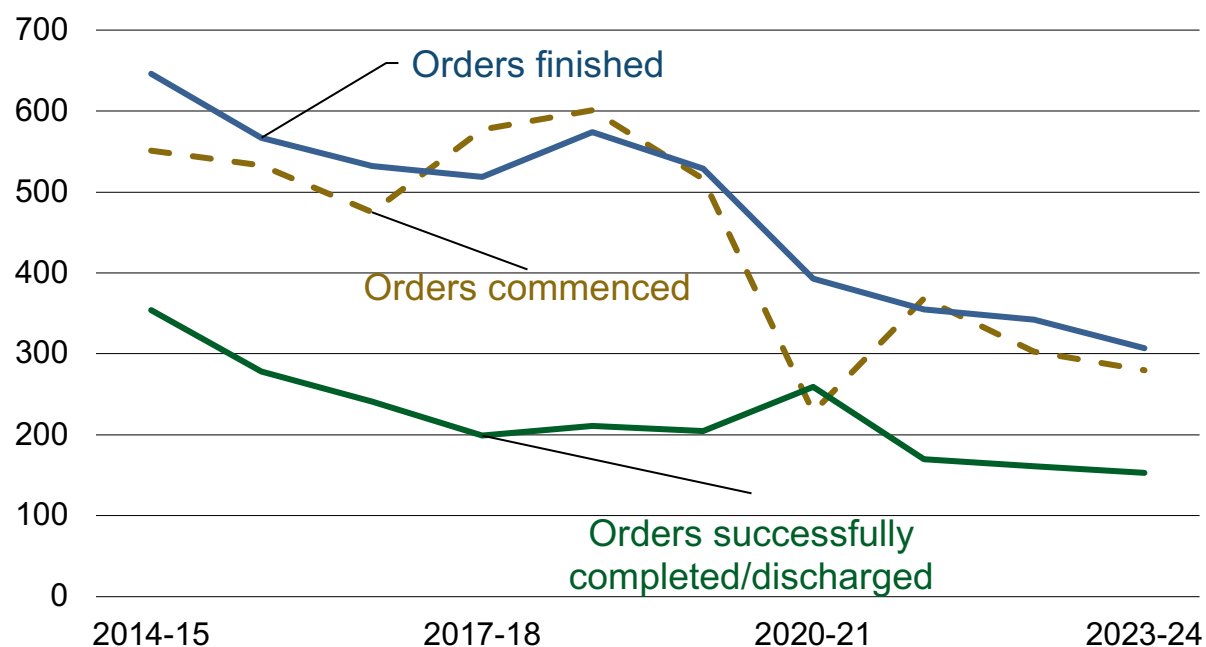
Key statistics for 2023-24:

- In 2023-24, there was 280 DTTOs imposed. This was an eight per cent decrease from 300 in 2022-23 and the second lowest in the last decade.
- Eighty-two per cent of DTTOs imposed were for people aged over 30.
- Males accounted for 83 per cent of DTTOs imposed.
- Ninety-eight per cent of those receiving a DTTO were unemployed or economically inactive.
- The average length of a DTTO was just over 18 months.

A drug treatment and testing order (DTTO) is a court-imposed disposal in Scotland that requires a person to undergo drug treatment and testing as an alternative to custody. The DTTO is an intensive disposal for people with substance-related offending who might otherwise get a custodial sentence.

Chart 8 : Drug treatment and testing orders have generally fallen over the last ten years.

Number of drug treatment and testing orders commenced, finished and successfully completed/discharged, Scotland, 2014-15 to 2023-24



During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of court cases could not be conducted. As a result, the number of DTTOs commenced fell sharply in 2020-21 and although it rose in 2021-22, it remained below the pre-pandemic years. In each of the years 2022-23 and 2023-24, the numbers fell, reaching 280 in 2023-24, the second lowest level in the last decade (Chart 8).

A key driver behind the fact that numbers were low in both 2022-23 and 2023-24 was that the DTTO service in Edinburgh was suspended to new assessments/orders from June 2022 to February 2023 and then again from June 2023. This was as a result of significant gaps in clinical provision due to recruitment challenges and the service therefore not having the capacity to provide treatment for additional people coming into the service.

During these periods of suspension, the service for people already subject to DTTOs was unchanged, for both clinical treatment and social work support. During the suspensions, courts were able to impose CPOs with drug treatment requirements. This allowed people to engage with mainstream substance use services and address other factors related to their drug use and offending. In addition, this disposal retained essential elements of DTTOs without the specific clinical element. As a result, 49 CPOs with drug treatment requirements were issued for the City of Edinburgh council area in 2023-24, compared with just three in 2022-23.

Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, the number of DTTOs imposed in City of Edinburgh and the neighbouring Midlothian and East Lothian council areas, fell by 17 per cent. The latter two councils had a partnership agreement in place to make use of Edinburgh DTTO services. By comparison, numbers in the rest of Scotland fell by only six per cent over the same period.

In every year from 2014-15 to 2022-23, people aged 31 to 40 formed the highest proportion of people receiving a DTTO. However, in 2023-24, the highest was those aged 40 and over (43 per cent of the total). This compared with 39 per cent for those aged 31 to 40.

6.2 Timescales for implementation

(Table 16)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- Where this information was known:
 - Seventy-four per cent of first direct contacts took place within one working day of imposition.
 - Eighty-four per cent of first case management meetings took place within five working days.

In 2023-24, for DTTOs where first direct contact was known, 74 per cent had contact within one working day of the order being imposed. In 13 per cent of cases, it took longer than five working days for this to take place.

Where known, the first case management meeting took place within five working days in 2023-24 for 84 per cent of orders. In nine per cent of these cases, it took longer than ten working days for the first meeting to take place.

The proportions for these timescales can fluctuate from year to year due to the small number of orders involved. The figures for the pandemic years 2020-21 and 2021-22 were slightly lower but, since then, figures have returned to at or slightly higher than pre-Covid levels.

6.3 Orders finished (Tables 1 & 17 to 19)

Key statistics for 2023-24:

- In 2023-24, 51 per cent of DTTOs were successfully completed.
- Twenty-four per cent of orders finished were revoked due to review with a further 14 per cent revoked due to breach.
- Seventy-five per cent of all DTTOs finished had no breach applications.

Orders finished include those that have been successfully completed or discharged early, orders that have been revoked due to review or breach and those finished due to death or other reasons. Those that transfer to other areas are also considered finished in the local authority that the individual has left and are included in the figures for the new local authority they have transferred to.

The percentage of orders successfully completed tends to be lower for DTTOs than for other social work orders. This is due, in part, to the complex needs of those involved and the intensity of the supervision involved in a DTTO.

The completion rate for DTTOs reached a high of 55 per cent in 2014-15, before falling to 39 per cent in 2019-20. This completion rate is calculated in the same way as for CPOs. It is done by adding together the number of successful completions and early discharges, then dividing this by the total orders finished less orders which were transferred out of a local authority to a different area.

The very high rate of 66 per cent in 2020-21 was likely to have been influenced by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Particular factors may have been the type of cases where it had been possible for the orders to finish and the fact that, over some periods, it was not possible to conduct testing. The completion rate was 51 per cent in 2023-24, the third highest in the last

ten years. Caution is advised in drawing any conclusions on completion rates over time, particularly over the pandemic years.

Among orders finished which were not transferred out, the proportion revoked due to review and due to breach in 2023-24 were 24 and 14 per cent respectively. A custodial sentence was imposed in 63 per cent of revoked cases in 2023-24 where the main outcome was known.

Seventy-five per cent of all DTTOs finished had no breach applications in 2023-24. Eighty-five per cent of breach applications were lodged with the court within five working days of the decision being made to make an application (see the [additional datasets](#) which accompany this publication).

7 Tables

The detail on the findings in this publication are drawn from the tables which are provided alongside the publication.

The following symbols are used throughout these tables:

low - a percentage which is not actually zero but is:

- Less than 0.05% if percentages are given to one decimal place.
- Less than 0.5% if percentages are given to the nearest whole percentage.

x - data which was not collected in the year(s) in question.

z - data for a category which did not exist in the year(s) in question.

Percentage figures given in tables and charts may not always sum to the exact totals due to rounding.

The data in the tables is drawn from administrative IT systems. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, it is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. The figures have been checked as far as practicable. However, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number in the tables. They are also updated, and quality assured on an on-going basis. The information in this publication supersedes that in any previous publications. It is advised that you always take the information from the most recent publication and associated tables, as the figures shown may differ slightly from those published previously. Where substantive revisions have been made to improve the quality of the data, the footnotes to the tables provide details of this.

Numbers in the tables are exact but, in the text, they are rounded for presentational purposes. The numbers in the text are generally rounded as follows:

- 1,000 to less than 100,000 – rounded to the nearest 100
- 100 to less than 1,000 – rounded to the nearest 10
- Less than 100 – unrounded

Also in the text, percentages are calculated based on the unrounded numbers and are then rounded to the nearest whole number.

Additional justice social work datasets can be found on [the Scottish Government's open data platform](#), under the “Crime and Justice” theme. It is hoped to expand the amount of justice social work data on this platform in 2025.

Annex A Data and Methodology

The annual aggregate justice social work return for local authority justice social work services was introduced for year 1999-00. It covered justice social work reports (as they are now known), community service orders and probation orders. The content and format of the return has changed over time. This is to reflect new developments and an increasing demand for information, as well as to clarify points of definition in relation to particular data items. As regards the topics covered by the part 2 bulletin, additional items in the past have included:

- supervised attendance, community service and probation orders (2000-01, removed from 2016-17 onward)
- drug treatment and testing orders (2003-04, removed from aggregate return from 2012-13 onwards as superseded by unit return)
- community payback orders (2011-12, removed from aggregate return from 2012-13 onwards as superseded by unit return)

Data for community payback and drug treatment & testing orders has been collected at unit level for each order since 2012-13. The aim of this change was to enable analysis of the process and outcomes for individual orders, which is not feasible through a collection of aggregate tables. This has allowed scope for looking at how each order progresses and provides more detailed information on outcomes. All 32 Scottish local authorities have been able to provide the CPO unit level data in each of the years 2013-14 to 2023-24.

After the introduction of the CPO, information on the legacy orders (community service, probation and supervised attendance orders) was phased out of the aggregate return.

Figures in this publication are extracted from live justice social work information management systems. The statistics presented for the most recent year reflect information on activity in the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Figures for earlier years may differ slightly from those published previously – see later in this Annex for examples of revisions.

Revisions are flagged up in the publication at the time but not in future publications. The current tables on the [Scottish Government crime and justice statistics website](#), including earlier data at sub-Scotland level, may be revised at any point if required. Revisions are highlighted in the relevant table.

As a result of information provided by local authorities with their 2023-24 unit returns, some revisions were made to the 2022-23 data and, to a lesser extent, earlier years' data. The main reasons for these revisions were:

- The inclusion in the 2023-24 data of orders which were in existence before the 2023-24 year, but which had been excluded from earlier years' data returns in error, and
- Some orders which were previously advised in the 2022-23 returns as being in existence at the end of that year, but which had actually been finished before then. Some authorities advised of substantial numbers of CPOs falling into this category. This was due mainly to orders not being closed off on their IT systems.

As a result of these changes, the total for CPOs finished in 2022-23 has been revised upwards by around 400 (four per cent). CPOs in existence on 31 March 2023 was revised downwards by around 500 (three per cent).

Figures in this publication on the number of new orders commenced are not collected on the same basis as those published in the [criminal proceedings publications](#). This is partly due to differences in the unit of analysis (cases versus orders). In addition, criminal proceedings data refer to the court rather than the local authority implementing the order.

The data obtained from local authorities comes from recording systems which are used for case management and for internal monitoring. Information on personal characteristics such as gender and ethnicity are taken directly from these systems. While recording practices may vary across local authorities, it is likely that the recording of gender and ethnicity will include a mixture of self-identified gender and possible gender as perceived by the justice professional recording the information, for example a case worker.

Administrative data will always be subject to some degree of error that arises in any large scale recording system. The data in this publication has, however, been quality assured as far as practicable. This is done through a series of validation processes before publication. As a result, the data is considered of good quality.

The aggregate return, which is how the data on justice social work reports is collected, includes electronic checks to notify local authorities of inconsistencies within the data. Where there have been big changes since the previous year, the local authority is asked to confirm the figures are correct. Once data returns from all authorities are in, some further analysis is carried out. This helps to detect any major changes to figures over recent time periods.

The unit level collections for CPOs and DTTOs include automatic checks built into the data loading system. This identifies errors in the information at an early stage for correction by local authority staff. The data is then checked for accuracy by the Scottish Government statistical team. Checks are also made to ensure there is consistency between 2023-24 and earlier years' data.

For several months during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 years, the DTTO service in Edinburgh was suspended to new assessments/orders. This led to an overall decrease in the numbers imposed during the years 2022-23 and 2023-24. More details are provided in [section 6](#).

In some parts of this publication, ratios are calculated per 10,000 people in the Scottish population. The population numbers used in these calculations are mid-year estimates for the appropriate year, published on the [National Records of Scotland website](#). For example, a ratio for the 2023-24 data would be calculated using the mid-year population estimates at 30 June 2023, for the population aged 16 to 70.

There are additional justice social work datasets at local authority level on [the Scottish Government website](#), and also on [the Scottish Government's open data platform](#).

England, Wales and Northern Ireland have different judicial systems. This makes comparing information on justice social work statistics unfeasible. Statistical information on their judicial systems can be found at:

- England and Wales: [Statistics at Ministry of Justice](#)
- Northern Ireland: [Department of Justice](#)

There are a range of other statistics on the Scottish judicial system:

- [Scottish Government Crime and Justice Statistics](#)
- [Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service – Official Statistics](#)
- [Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service - Publications](#)
- [Scottish Prison Service - Information](#)

Annex B Definitions

The following section provides a brief description of the main types of justice social work orders and reports. More information on social work orders and the operation of the justice system is in the [Criminal Proceedings in Scotland publications](#). Details on court services is in commensurate justice social work practice guidance.

The community payback order (CPO) was introduced by the [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#). The CPO replaced provisions for community service, probation and supervised attendance orders for offences committed from 1 February 2011 onwards. It is available to all courts, with some restrictions applying to justice of the peace courts in relation to treatment and programme requirements. For the period covered by this publication, there were up to ten different requirements which could be issued at the initial imposition of a CPO. The most common requirements issued as part of a CPO are unpaid work and supervision. Courts may not impose unpaid work on someone under 16 years old. Supervision must be imposed

for someone aged under 18. More information on the CPO is in the most recent [community payback order practice guidance](#).

The [drug treatment and testing order \(DTTO\)](#) is a high tariff disposal for people with more serious substance use related to their offending, who might otherwise receive a custodial sentence. This order includes the need for regular reviews by the court and for the person to consent to frequent random drug tests throughout the lifetime of the order. On the basis of these regular reviews, the judiciary may, among other courses of action, vary the conditions of the order. This may include varying the frequency of testing, varying the type of treatment or the frequency of attendance at treatment, revoking the order on the basis that satisfactory progress has been made or, in the event of non-compliance, revoking the order and re-sentencing the person for the original offence.

DTTOs were rolled out across Scotland in phases between 1999 and 2002. They are available to all courts apart from justice of the peace courts. In addition, the less intensive DTTO II was introduced in the Lothian areas (apart from West Lothian) in June 2008 for people committing lower tariff offences at a relatively early stage in their lives. The DTTO II is also available from justice of the peace courts and can additionally be issued in the Highland area.

Annex C Consultation

A [data user review of justice social work statistics](#) was conducted in 2023 and published on the Scottish Government website. This was done with the aim of engaging with a wide range of current and potential users of the data. The six main recommendations of the review were:

1. Improve the timing of published data – from 2024 onwards, the report should be split in two. This would allow some of the data to be in the public domain three to four months earlier.
2. Commentary to be changed to reflect some of the requests e.g., key points at the beginning of topics and more graphs/infographics to break up text.
3. Tables to be streamlined to allow filtering to make it easier to select different years and geographical breakdowns.
4. There were a number of requests asking for more data linkage. This would first require a review and likely changes to existing information governance arrangements, to ensure any future work in this area is compliant with data protection regulations.
5. Possible changes to the data collection method, possibly extending the use of the ProcXed.NET data platform to make data transfer between local authorities and Scottish Government more efficient.

6. Investigate and review the requests for additional data that relate to justice social work statistics.

This year the recommendations 1 to 3 have been completed. The publication has been split and the commentary reflects a number of the requests. The work of additional tables has also been progressed and now allows the user to more easily identify and select the data they want. During 2025, it is hoped that more data can be placed on [the Scottish Government's open data platform](#), the website for open access to Scotland's official statistics.

Recommendations 4 and 5 will be progressed in 2025. Out of the 13 data requests supplied for recommendation 6, the five below have been progressed to completion.

1. More timely statistics to support community justice strategy – the splitting of the publication has met this request.
2. Justice social work conversion data – a need for unit level data to see how preferred options compare to main outcomes – the aggregate collection provides this and is available in the additional tables and at local authority level from the justice social work reports.
3. More regular updates on local authority data – this is not possible at the moment as the data collection is not an automated process and the burden on local authorities would increase considerably. There is other management information on community sentencing that is more timely by [Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service – Official Statistics](#) and [Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard](#).
4. Unpaid work hours to support monitoring the system – there has been a new publication. [Community Payback Orders – Unpaid Work or Other Activity Requirements – May 2024](#) was published for the first time in August 2024.
5. Where services are shared, could they be split by local authority area – this is always requested but it is dependent on the management information system being able to provide this.

The rest of the requests for recommendation 6 will be investigated further in 2025.

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

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