Official Statistics

Safer Communities and Justice Statistics Monthly Data Report: May 2025

A summary of justice and safer communities statistics.

May 2025

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Introduction

This report provides a general overview of a number of important justice and safer communities statistics. Data has been gathered from mainly Scottish Government statistics and may be subject to future revision as more recent data becomes available. The document is reviewed every month to keep it as up to date as possible. Please note, some justice and safer community partners publish their own statistics that are not covered in this compendium which may provide more current information.

Any newly updated summary statistics for the month are preceded by *** New ***

These statistics are official statistics. Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

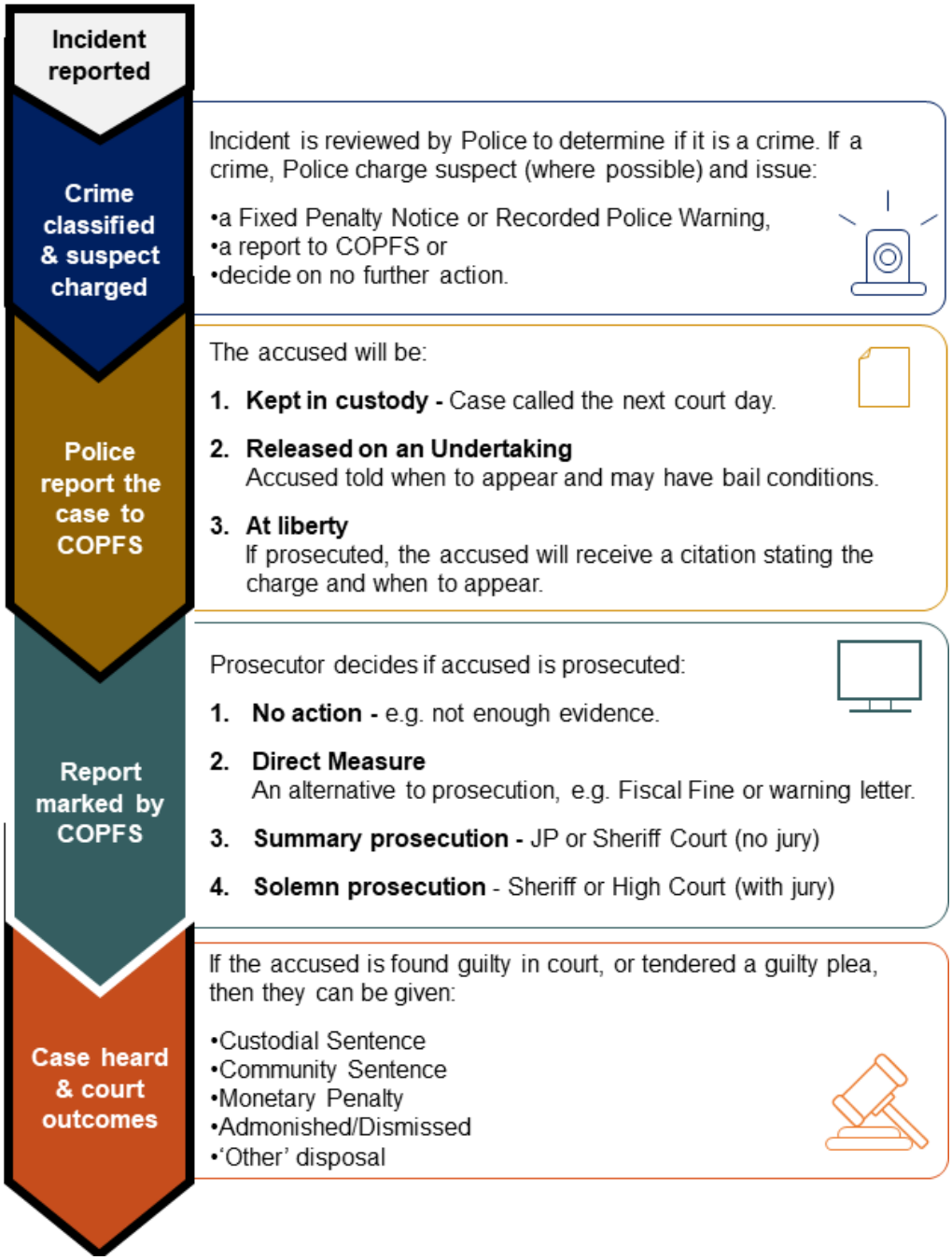
Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the Scottish Government website.

Last updated: 29 May 2025

How crime flows through the Justice System

The diagram below illustrates how crime flows through the justice system. Below the diagram is a text version of this information held within it.



Text from Diagram:

The first arrow is the reporting of an incident.

The second arrow is crime classification and suspect charge. This is where the incident is reviewed by Police to determine if it is a crime. If a crime, Police charge suspect (where possible) and issue:

- Fixed Penalty Notice or Recorded Police Warning,
- a report to COPFS, or
- decide on no further action.

The third arrow is police report the case to COPFS. The accused will be:

1. Kept in custody - Case called the next court day.
2. Released on an Undertaking - accused told when to appear and may have bail conditions.
3. At liberty - if prosecuted, the accused will receive a citation stating the charge and when to appear.

The fourth arrow is report marked by COPFS. The prosecutor decides if accused is prosecuted:

1. No action - e.g. not enough evidence.
2. Direct Measure - an alternative to prosecution, e.g. Fiscal Fine or warning letter.
3. Summary prosecution - JP or Sheriff Court (no jury)
4. Solemn prosecution - Sheriff or High Court (with jury)

The final and fifth arrow is case heard and court outcomes. If the accused is found guilty in court, or tendered a guilty plea, then they can be given:

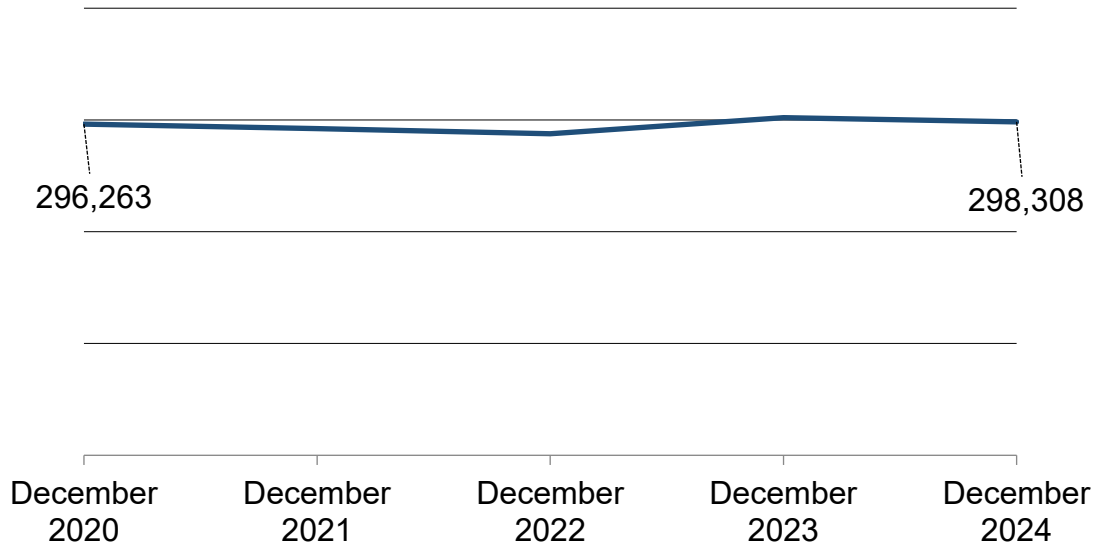
- Custodial Sentence
- Community Sentence
- Monetary Penalty
- Admonished/Dismissed
- ‘Other’ disposal

Crime in General

Statistics on crime in general

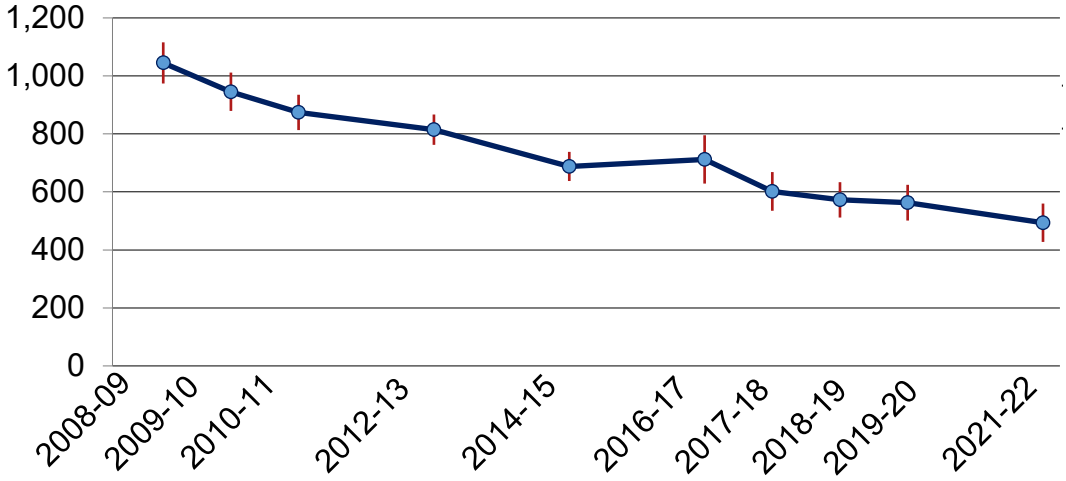
▶ **Police recorded crime is down 1% since year ending December 2023, and remains below the position immediately prior to the pandemic.** The total number of crimes recorded by the police in Scotland in the year ending December 2024 was 298,308. This was 3,768 crimes (or 1%) lower than the level recorded in the year ending December 2023.

Chart 1 : Number of crimes recorded by the police (in thousands) – December 2020 to December 2024



▶ **Crime has fallen by 53% since 2008-09.** Results from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) show that around one in ten adults were victims of crime in 2021-22 (10.0%), down from 11.9% in 2019-20. This compares to one in five in 2008-09 (20.4%). The estimated number of crimes fell by 53% since 2008-09, and by 18% since 2017-18.

Chart 2: Estimated total crimes (in thousands) – by survey year



▶ **Recorded violent crime decreased in the most recent year.** Non-sexual crimes of violence recorded by the police decreased by 2%, from 71,900 in year ending December 2023 to 70,637 in year ending December 2024. Common assault (down 1%) made up the clear majority (83%) of all non-sexual crimes of violence recorded in the year ending December 2024. 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 2021-22 was reported to the police.

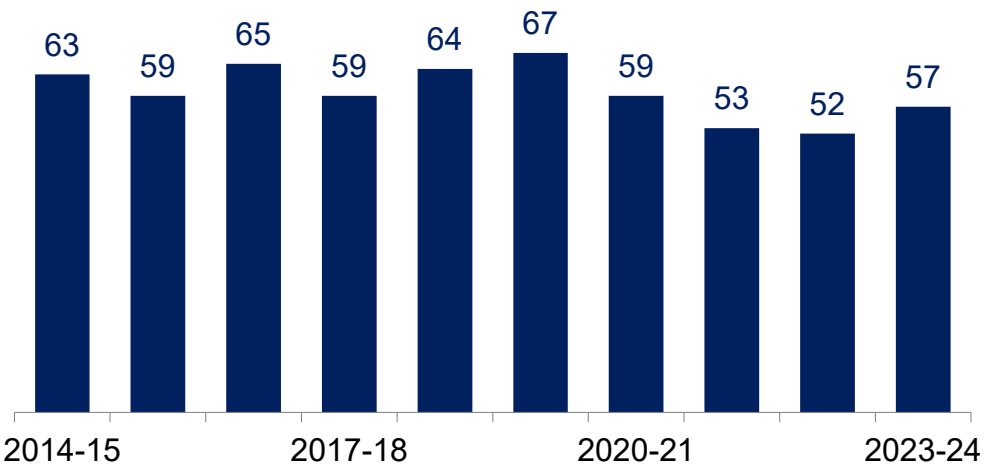
▶ **Recorded sexual crimes decreased in the most recent year.** Sexual crimes decreased by 2%, from 14,894 in the year ending December 2023 to 14,539 in the year ending December 2024. However, sexual crimes have been increasing in the long term. Multiple factors lie behind the long term increase in recorded sexual crime including for example - 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.

▶ **Increase in crime clear up rate.** The clear up rate for all recorded crimes was 54.1% in 2023-24, up from 53.3% in 2022-23. Crimes against society (91.4%), non-sexual crimes of violence (68%) and sexual crimes (57.2%) continued to have higher clear up rates in 2023-24 than crimes of dishonesty (33.1%) and damage and reckless behaviour (29.6%).

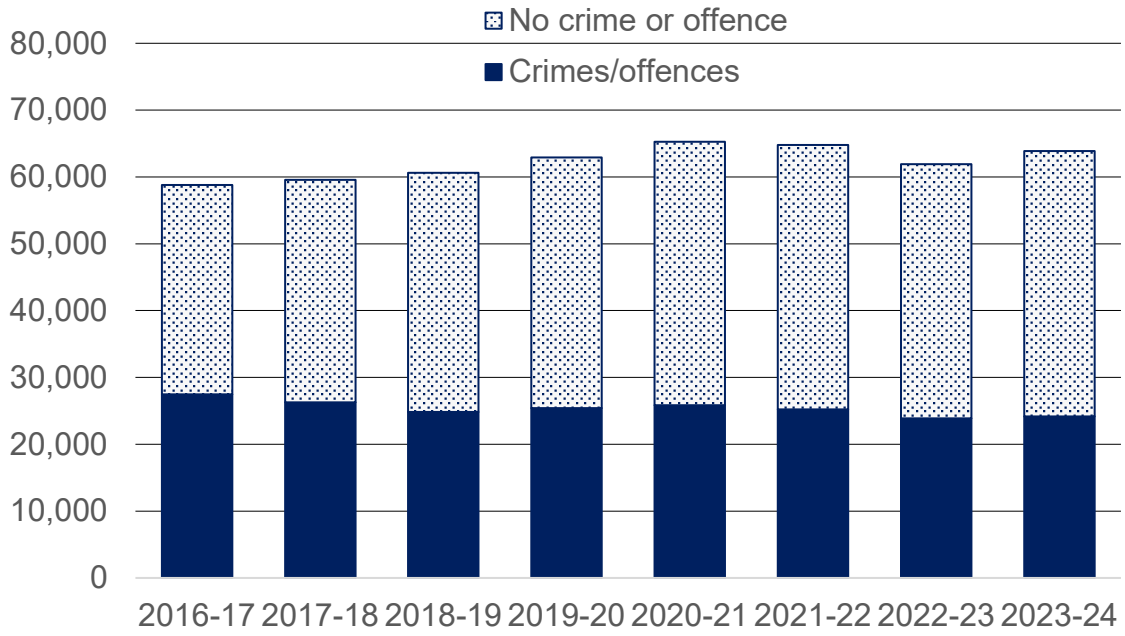
▶ **Number of victims of homicide at third lowest since 1976.** There were 57 homicide victims recorded by the police in Scotland in 2023-24, a 10% increase from 2022-23 but a 10% decrease from 2014-15.

Chart 3: Number of victims of homicide, 2014-15 to 2023-24



▶ **Increase in recorded domestic abuse incidents.** There were 63,867 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2023-24, an increase of 3% on 2022-23. In 2023-24, 38% of all incidents recorded by the police included the recording of at least one crime or offence.

Chart 4: Number of domestic abuse incidents, 2016-17 to 2023-24

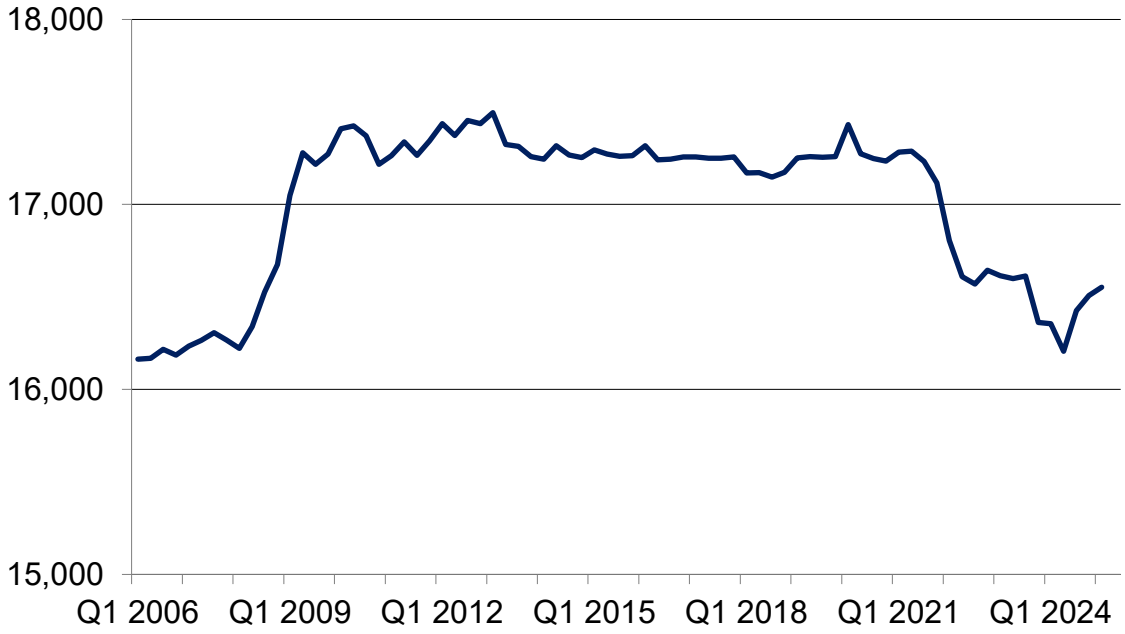


Policing

Statistics on policing

► *** New * There were 16,553 full-time equivalent (FTE) police officers in Scotland on 31 March 2025.** This was 319 (+2.0%) more officers compared to the position on 31 March 2007, and 197 (+1.2%) more than on 31 March 2024.

Chart 5: Number of police officers (FTE) - Quarter 1 2006 to Quarter 1 2025



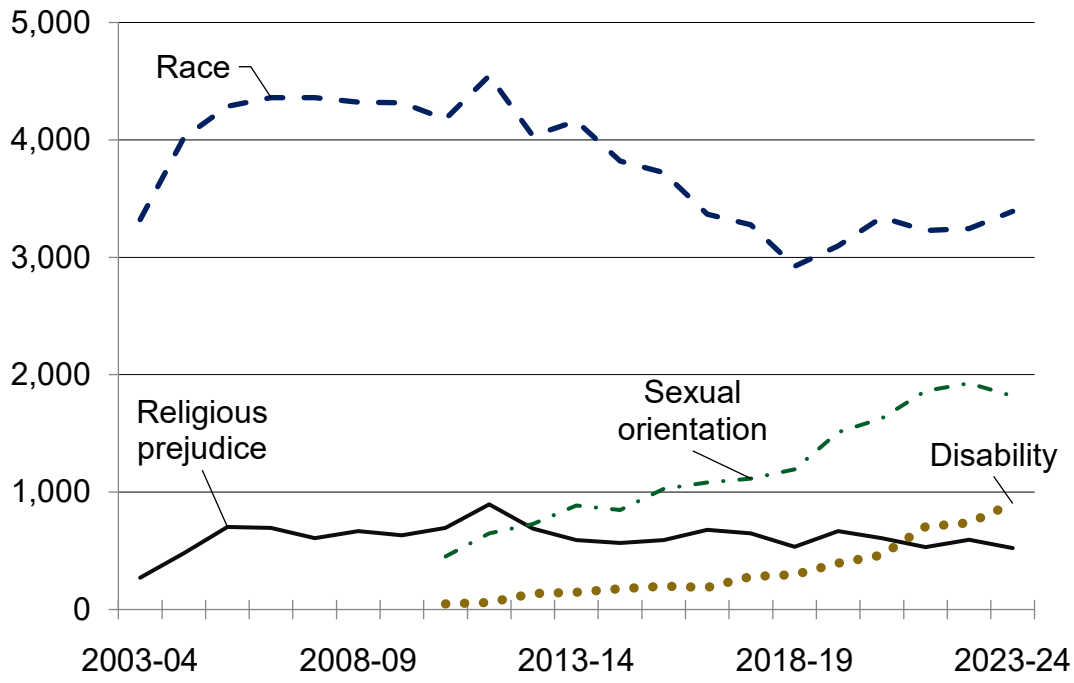
Hate Crime

Statistics on hate crime

► *** New * Numbers fell for police recorded hate crime.** The police recorded 6,227 hate crimes in 2023-24. This is less than 1% (or 30) lower than in 2022-23 and the lowest number since 2014-15. No clear trend can be seen in the total number of hate crimes recorded by the police in Scotland over 2014-15 to 2022-23, with four of the years following 2014-15 showing an increase and the other five showing a decrease. In 2023-24, 63% of hate crimes included an aggravator for race, 24% sexual orientation, 10% disability, 7% religion and 3% transgender identity.

►**Small increase in overall hate crime charges.** There was an increase of 1.5% between 2022-23 and 2023-24, in the total number of charges reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service containing at least one element of hate crime. There were increases for race, disability and transgender identity. Religion and sexual orientation aggravated hate crime charges saw a decrease. Racial crime remains the most commonly reported hate crime, followed by crimes with a sexual orientation aggravator.

Chart 6: Number of charges reported to COPFS – 2003-04 to 2023-24



Community Safety

Statistics on community safety

▶ **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.

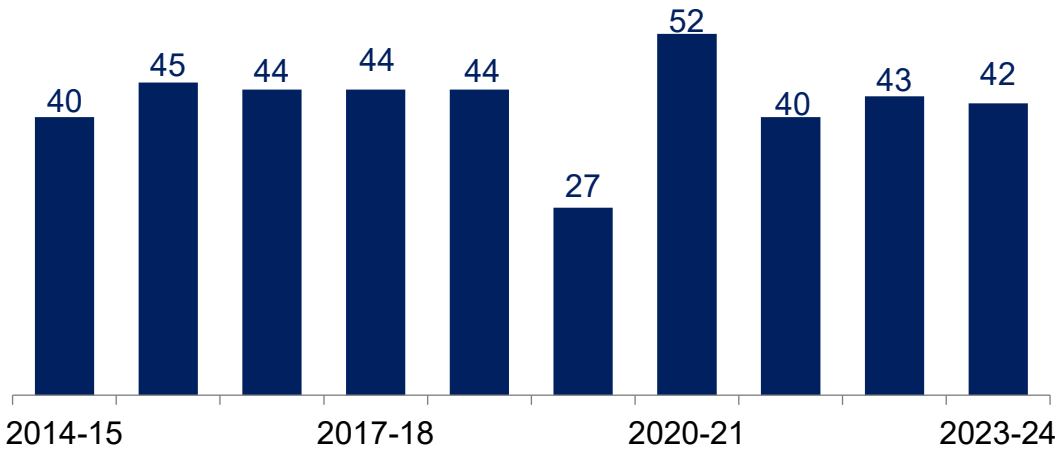
▶ **Most adults feel safe walking alone after dark.** The SCJS found that over three-quarters (76%) of adults said that they felt very or fairly safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark in 2021-22, unchanged from 2019-20 but an increase from 66% in 2008-09.

▶ **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 55% in 2019-20 and 61% in 2012-13.

▶ **Fall in emergency hospital admissions due to assault since 2014-15.** In 2023-24, there were 1,691 emergency hospital admissions due to assault, including 438 due to assault with a sharp object. These were, respectively, 33% and 18% lower than in 2014-15.

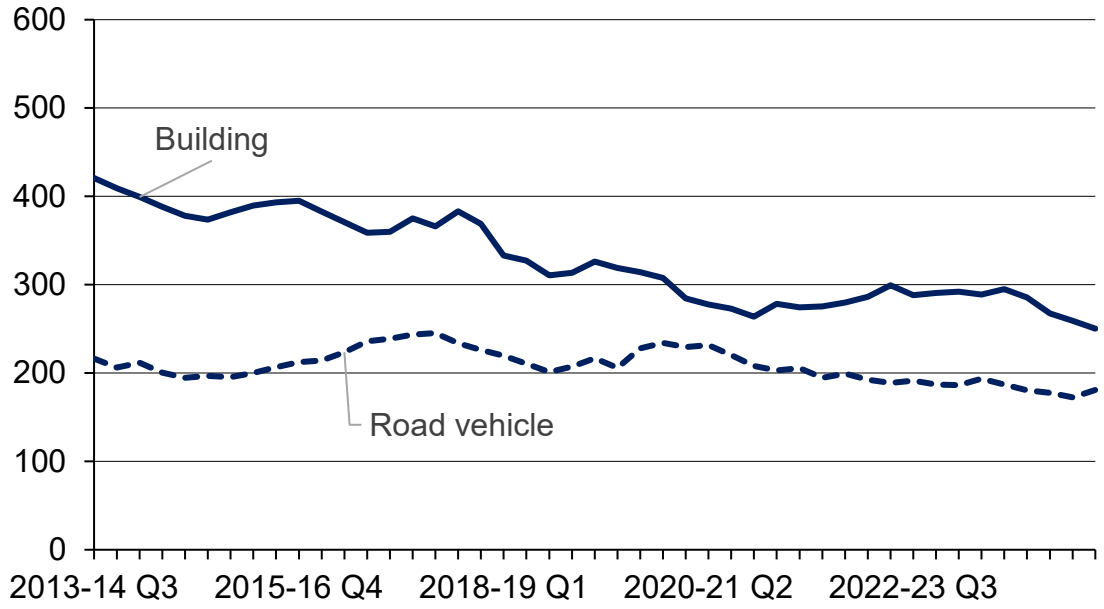
▶ **Number of fires fell 10% in the last year.** In 2023-24, there were 24,060 fires in Scotland, down 10% on 2022-23 and the lowest in the last ten years. There were 42 fire fatalities in 2023-24, down from 43 in 2022-23 and around the average for the last decade.

Chart 7: Number of fatal fire casualties – 2014-15 to 2023-24



► **Number of deliberate fires has decreased.** There were 223 deliberate building fires in 2024-25 Q3, down from 258 in 2023-24 Q3. There were 194 deliberate road vehicle fires in 2024-25 Q3, up from 161 in 2023-24 Q3.

Chart 8: Deliberate building and road vehicle fires, 2013-14 Q3 to 2024-25 Q3



Note: 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.

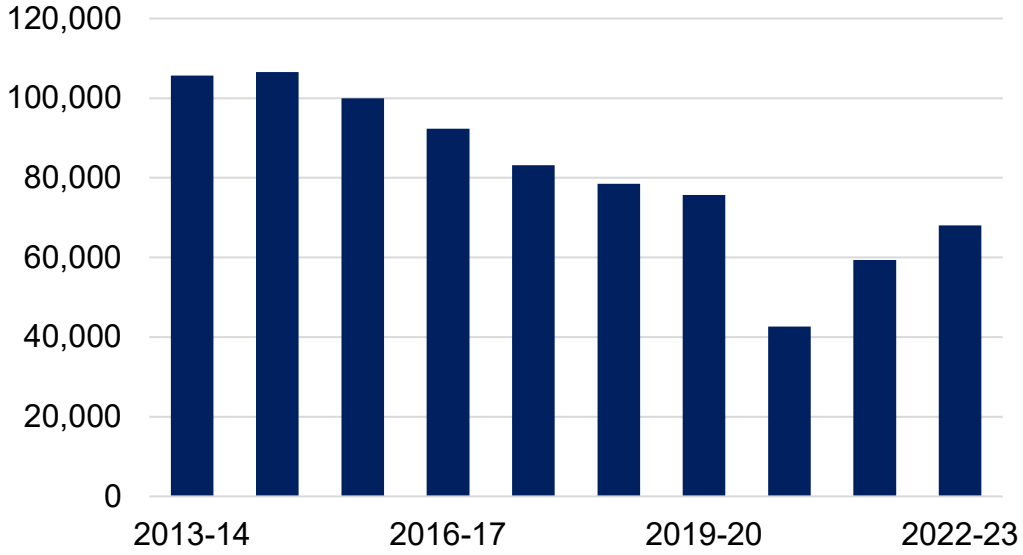
► **Unwanted fire alarm signals made up 17% of incidents in the third quarter of 2024-25.** Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) describe avoidable false alarm signals from a workplace, either from an automatic fire alarm or from a person. There were 3,140 UFAS incidents in 2024-25 Q3, which makes up 16.9% of all incidents attended in Q3. This is down from the previous year when UFAS made up 18.3% of all incidents attended in 2023-24 Q3. SFRS introduced a new policy in July 2023 which outlined a change in how automatic fire alarm call outs are managed and led to a decrease in the number of UFAS incidents attended.

Criminal & Civil Proceedings

Statistics on criminal and civil proceedings

▶ **Number of prosecutions and convictions in 2022-23 demonstrated the continued recovery of the justice system following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The number of people convicted in Scottish courts rose by 15% from 2021-22 to 68,067 but remain below a typical pre-pandemic year.

Chart 9: Number of people convicted in Scottish courts – 2013-14 to 2022-23



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

▶ **Rise in convictions across all groups between 2021-22 and 2022-23.** Convictions for non-sexual crimes of violences rose by the most (up 23%) followed by miscellaneous offences (up 22%). These were among four groups which were higher than their pre-pandemic (2019-20) levels in 2022-23. Crimes of dishonesty (up 8%) and sexual crimes (up 10%) rose by the least proportionately. Convictions for crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act increased by 11%, from 690 convictions in 2021-22 to 763 convictions in 2022-23.

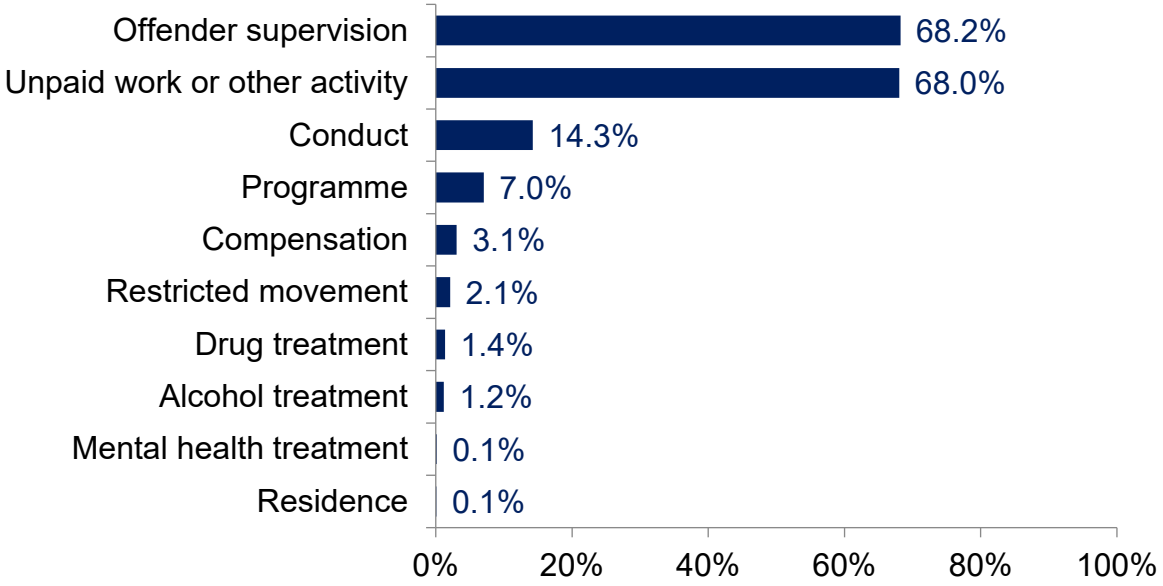
▶ **Rise in numbers of community sentences issued and new high in proportion of sentences in 2022-23.** The number of community sentences in court rose by 15% between 2021-22 and 2022-23, from 14,139 to 16,246, in line with the overall rise in convictions. The proportion of all convictions resulting 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 2022-23

was over twelve months (386 days) in length. This was 3% longer than in 2021-22, and 31% longer than the average of 295 days in 2013-14. The proportion of people receiving a sentence of less than one year remained at 73% in 2022-23, the lowest proportion of the last decade.

► **Community payback orders slightly more likely to have supervision than unpaid work.** There were 15,100 community payback orders imposed in 2023-24. This was 3% higher than in 2022-23 but still 10% lower than in 2019-20. In 2023-24, 68.0 per cent were issued with an unpaid work requirement, while slightly more (68.2 per cent) were issued with a supervision requirement.

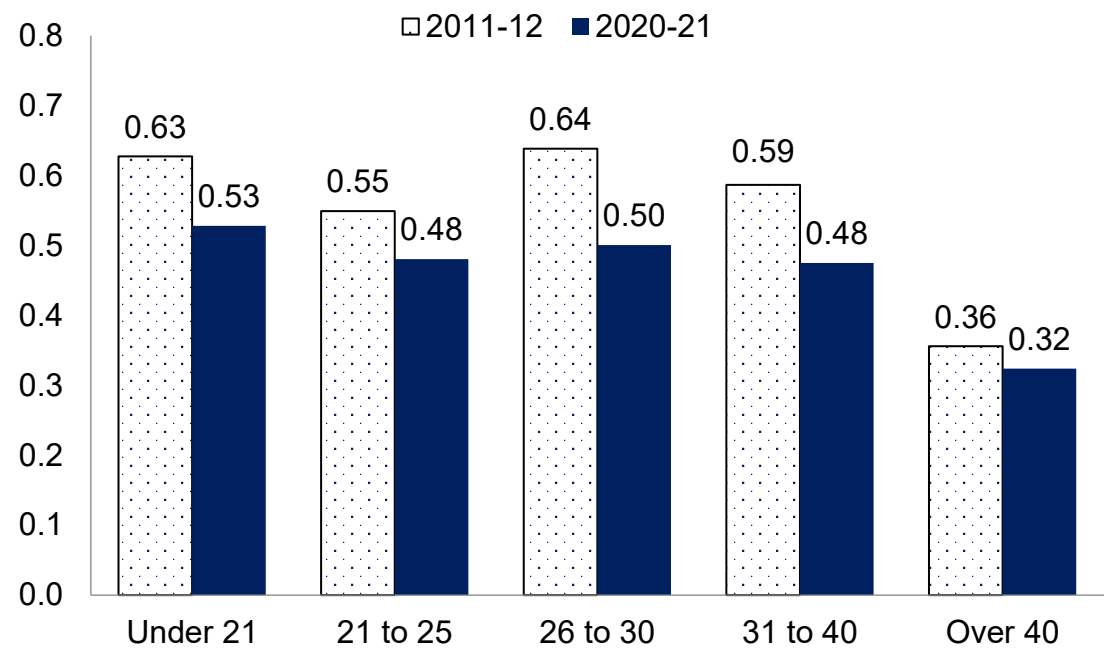
Chart 10: Community payback orders imposed – percentage of orders with different requirements, 2023-24



► **Reconviction rates are still yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, but have increased from the 2019-20 cohort.** The overall reconviction rate increased by 2.6 percentage points over the last year from 24.3% in 2019-20 to 26.9% in 2020-21. Data for 2020-21 was still affected by COVID-19, but the follow up period, up to March 2022 depending on when an offender entered the cohort, saw less COVID restrictions than the previous year.

► **The average number of reconvictions per offender has decreased over time.** The average number of reconvictions per offender was 20% lower in 2020-21 compared to 2011-12. The fall in the longer term was driven by younger age groups, with average reconvictions decreasing by 16% for under 21s, 13% for 21-25 year olds, 22% for 26-30 year olds, and 19% for 31-40 year olds. In contrast, average reconvictions returned to levels similar to a decade ago for those over 40.

Chart 11: Average reconvictions per offender by age, 2011-12 and 2020-21 cohorts



▶ **Number of children referred to SCRA on offence grounds rose by six per cent in the last year.** Statistics published by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) show that, in 2023-24, 2,733 children were referred to the reporter on offence grounds. This constitutes a rise of 6% from 2022-23 and is similar to the level of 2,761 in 2015-16.

▶ **The most recent ten years show a general downward trend in initiated civil law cases, latest figures show gradual recovery from the pandemic.** There were 60,943 civil law cases initiated across the Court of Session and sheriff courts in 2022-23 (excluding summary applications). This represents an increase of 13% from 2021-22.

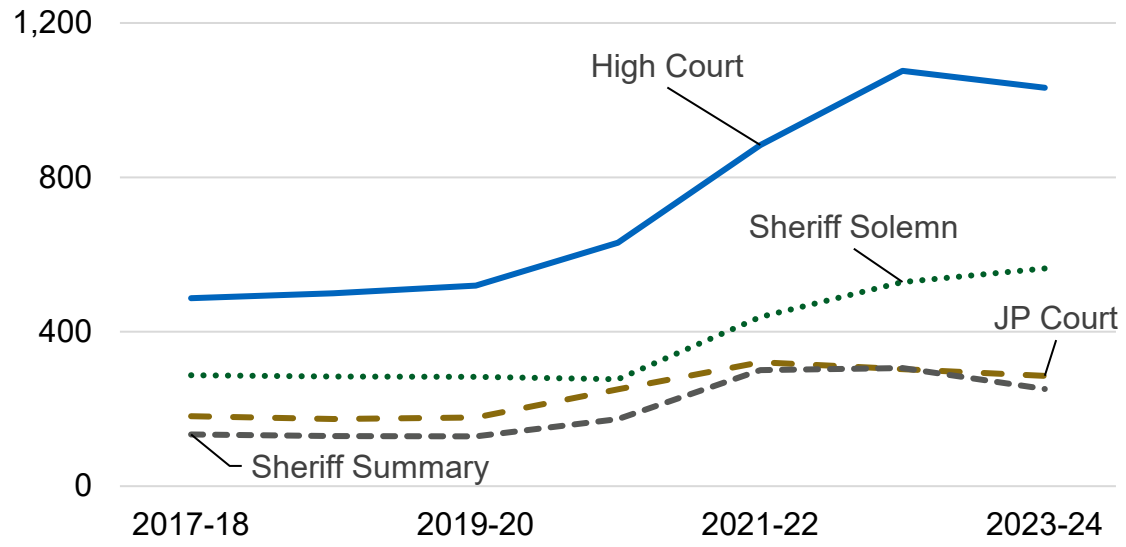
▶ **Most case types increased between 2021-22 and 2022-23, except family which fell by 7%.** The highest increases were seen in evictions (up 128%) and damages (up 28%). The increase in evictions follows a large Covid-related fall in 2020-21 to a record low. The increase in eviction initiations in 2022-23 is moving towards the levels observed pre-pandemic but is still 63% lower than in 2019-20. Damages too are still substantially lower than pre-pandemic levels (56% down on 2019-20). Personal injury (up 12%) and repossession (up 14%) recorded the lowest increases between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Justice Journey Times

Statistics on criminal justice journey times (offence date to verdict)

▶ **Median journey times decreased in 2023-24.** Median journey times decreased in high court and summary court in 2023-24 when compared to 2022-23. There were decreases of 4% in high court (from 1,076 to 1,032 days) and 18% in sheriff summary court (from 306 to 252 days). Sheriff solemn journey times increased by 7% (from 529 to 564 days).

Chart 12: Median time (in days) from offence to verdict by type of court, 2017-18 to 2023-24



▶ **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.** In solemn courts, the main drivers of journey time are the times from when the case is reported to COPFS to when it is registered in courts and the time from court registration to verdict. In general, for solemn courts the COPFS report to court registration times are higher than court registration to verdict times. In 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, median COPFS report to court registration time increased by 14% in high court and 11% in sheriff solemn court. Median court registration to verdict time remained stable in high court (11 months) and decreased by 9% to 117 days in sheriff solemn court, compared to 2022-23. In sheriff summary courts, the main driver of journey time is the time from court registration to verdict. In 2023-24, the median court registration to verdict time was around 4 months and the median COPFS report to court registration time was 24 days.

Chart 13: Median time (in days) - COPFS report to courts registration and court registration to verdict for high court, 2017-18 to 2023-24

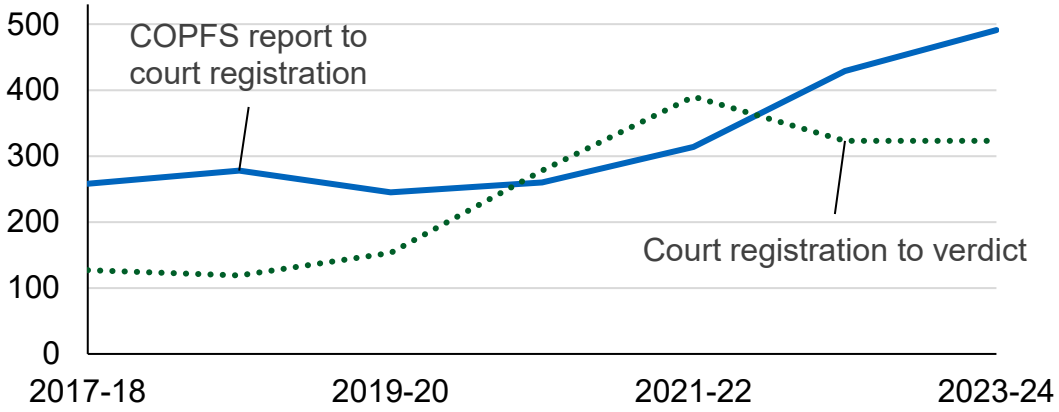
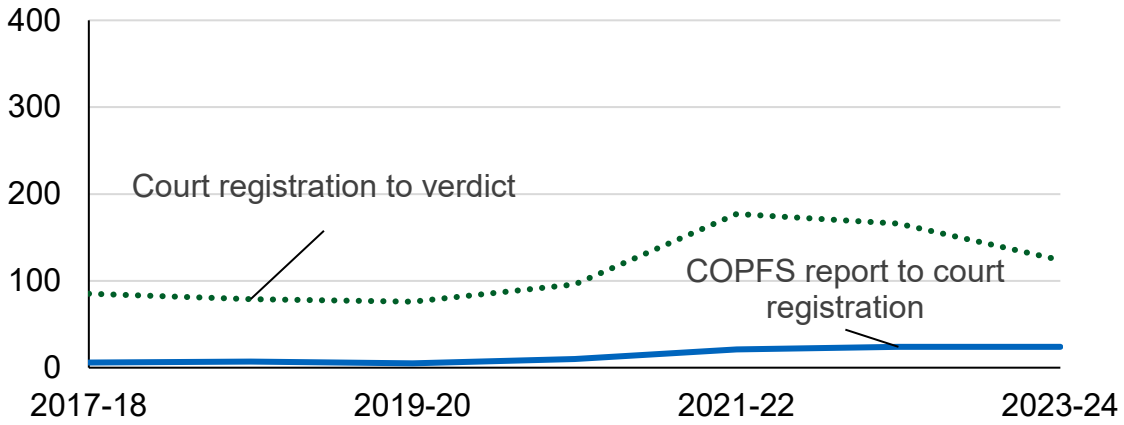


Chart 14: Median time (in days) - COPFS report to courts registration and court registration to verdict for sheriff summary courts, 2017-18 to 2023-24



► **There were differences in accused persons' journey times depending on the type of crime on registration.** The longest journey times were observed for accused people charged with at least one sexual crime and verdict issued in high court.

► **Historic offences increase overall journey times.** Journey times can be split by whether an offence was historic or not. The median journey time for accused in the historic sexual crimes group in high court in 2023-24 was around 11 years, down from around 13 years and 4 months in 2022-23 (-18%). In sheriff solemn court, median journey times for this group increased from around 7 years and 5 months in 2022-23 to around 8 years and 2 months in 2023-24 (10%). Median journey times for accused in the non-historic sexual crimes group remained largely stable in high court, at just over 3 years in 2023-24. It increased by 9% in sheriff solemn court from around 1 year 7

months in 2022-23 to around 1 year 9 months in 2023-24. The longest median journey times in the sexual crimes group are for rape and attempted rape. In 2023-24, the median journey time for non-historic cases of rape and attempted rape remained stable at around 3 years. For historic offences, median journey time decreased by 9% in 2023-24 to around 10 years and 8 months.

Prisons

Statistics on prisons

***New* The prison population rose over 2023 and 2024**

In April 2025 (up until the morning of Thursday 1st May 2025):

- the population decreased by 57 to 8,125
- 2,122 were on remand: 1,749 (22%) untried & 373 (5%) awaiting sentence. 6,003 (74%) were serving a sentence.
- 58% of arrivals were untried (547 of 949), 18% awaiting sentence (169) and 25% sentenced (233)

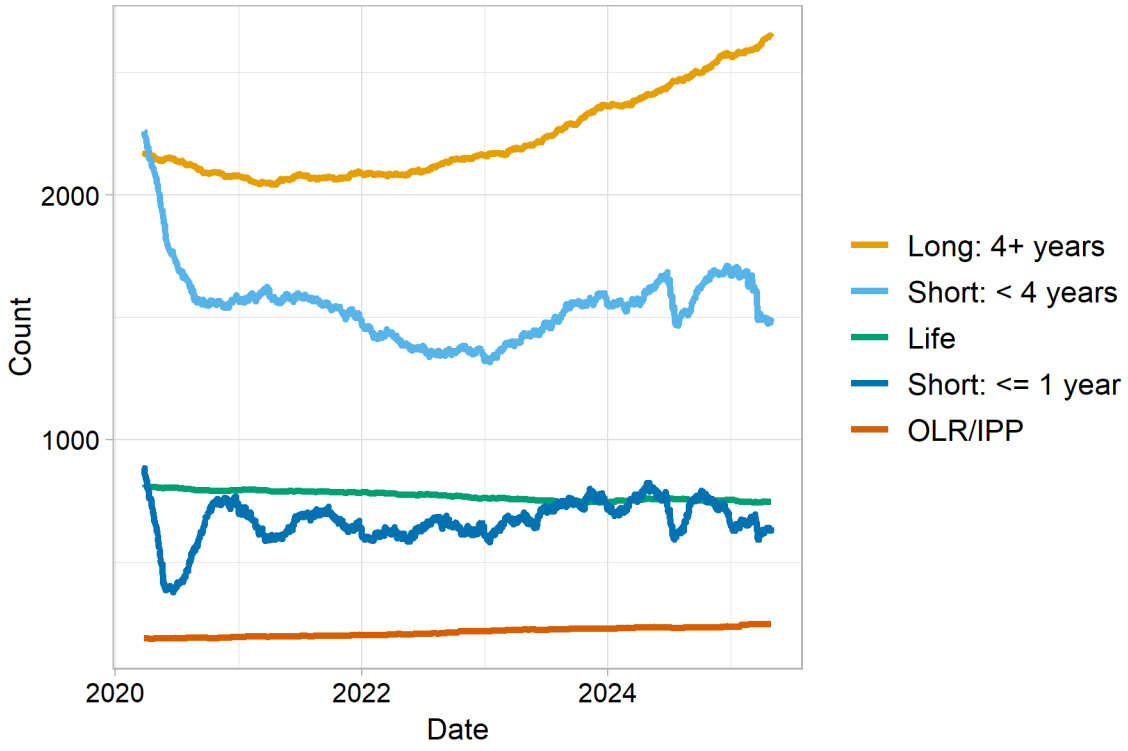
Chart 15: Prison populations (total and remand), 2019 to 1st May 2025

The prison population is high. While the prison population reduced considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been substantial growth since 2023.

Measures taken to manage prison population levels include an emergency early release (EER) of short sentenced prisoners (those serving an overall sentence of less than 4 years) in summer 2024 and new legislation to amend the release point of short sentenced prisoners in late 2024. The revised release point (from 50% to 40%) commenced in February 2025.

Changes occurring in the sentenced prison population vary by sentence length banding, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 16: Prison populations by overall sentence bands, 26th Mar 2020 to 1st May 2025



The populations serving short sentences (less than 4 years overall) fell substantially and rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas populations serving long (4+ years) and indeterminate (order for lifelong restriction (OLR) and life) sentences remained at similar levels to pre-pandemic.

The population serving overall sentences of less than or equal to one year has fluctuated since the pandemic but increased overall across 2023 and early 2024. It reduced sharply during EER in 2024 but recovered quickly thereafter. However in late 2024 this group declined and has been at a further reduced level since commencement of the revised release point for short sentenced prisoners (40%) in early 2025.

The population serving overall sentences of between 1 and 4 years had been declining since the pandemic. However it increased across 2023 and early 2024. During EER it decreased sharply but recovered quickly thereafter and stabilised at similar level to pre-EER until the commencement of the revised release point for short sentenced prisoners (40%) in early 2025.

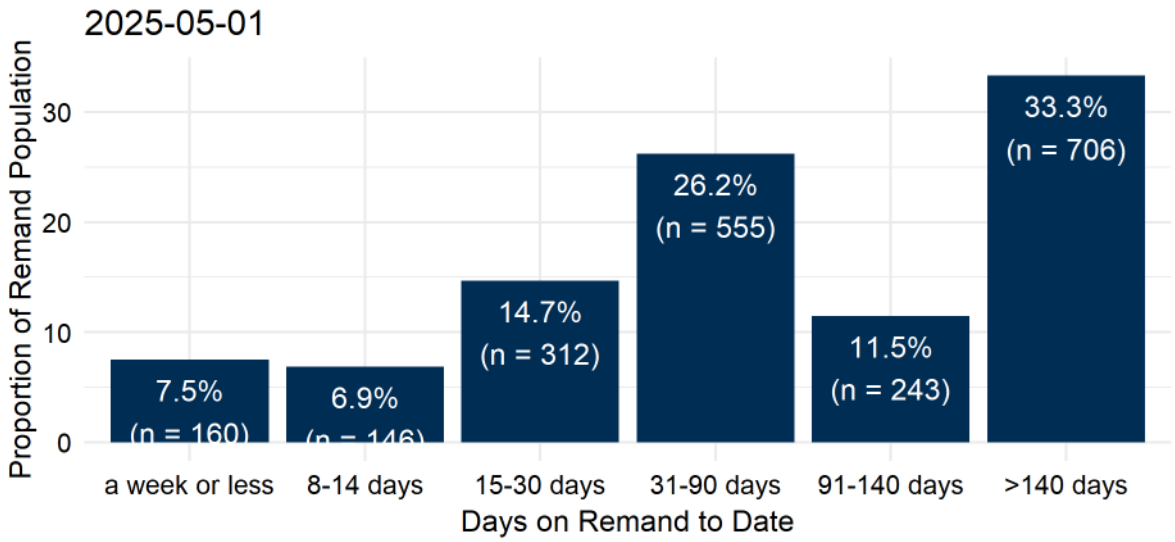
The population serving long sentences (4+ years) has been increasing since early 2022 (+27% from 2,090 on 1st Jan 2022 to 2,648 on 1st May 2025). The population serving indeterminate sentences has been stable overall over the same period, although small changes have occurred within this group – the number serving life sentences has declined, while the number serving OLR sentences has increased.

While recent changes in prison population levels have been largely driven by changes in the sentenced population, the remand population remains high. The remand population reached its lowest point of 1,114 on 24th April 2020, but grew rapidly thereafter to record high levels. It has continued to fluctuate at a high level to date. On 14th May 2024 the remand population reached a peak of 2,360. People on remand are required by law to be housed separately from sentenced prisoners.

Time on Remand to Date

New Among the 2,122 people on remand as of the morning of Thursday 1st May 2025, the median continuous time spent with this status to date was 76 days.

Chart 17: Banded continuous time on remand to date, percentage of remand population

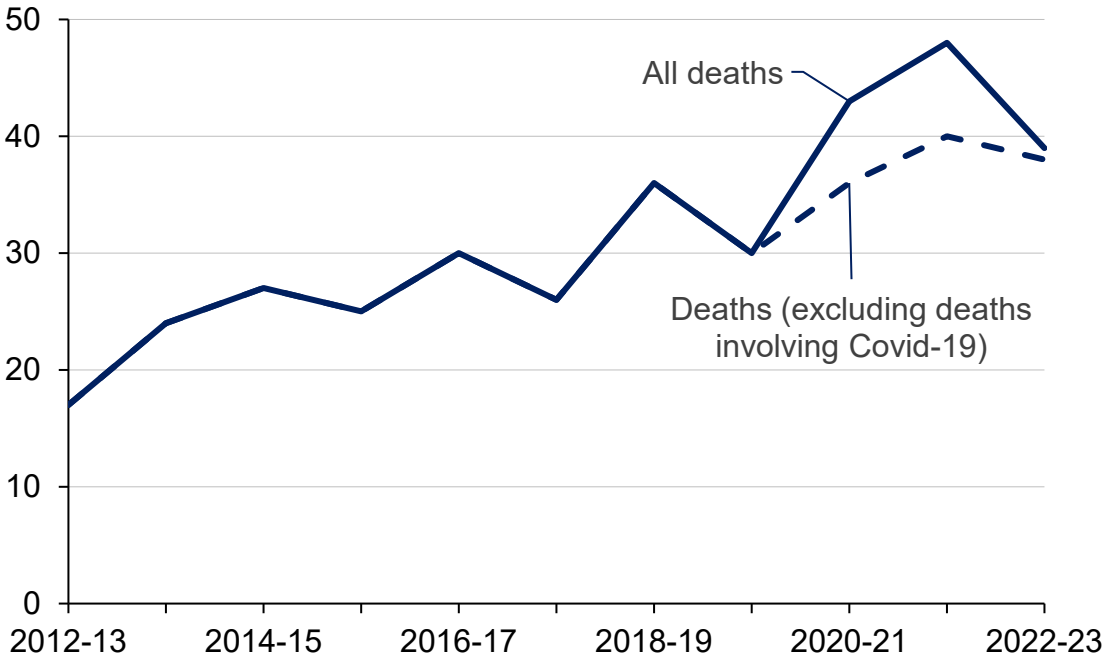


Note: The remand population includes individuals whose trial has commenced but not concluded, as well as those awaiting commencement of a trial. As a result, the figures referenced above reflect only that an individual has held the same status for an extended period, but do not reflect the relationship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

Deaths in Prison Custody

There were 345 deaths in prison custody between the financial years 2012-13 and 2022-23. The annual number of deaths occurring in prison custody fluctuated between 2012-13 and 2022-23, but there has been a general upward trend. Of these deaths: 105 were due to probable suicide, 71 were due to diseases of the circulatory system, and 50 were as a result of drug misuse. There was a total of 16 deaths that involved COVID-19.

Chart 18: Number of deaths in prison custody recorded in each financial year, 2012-13 to 2022-23



Using standardised mortality ratios (SMRs) has demonstrated that the risk of death in the male prison population has been significantly lower than in the male general population of Scotland in each year between 2012-13 and 2022-23. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the risk was closer to that of the general population but remained significantly lower.

Links to recently published information

This includes links to the publications that have been marked as *** New *** and any other statistical or research publications produced by Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services between 28 April and 22 May 2025:

- Community Payback Orders – Unpaid Work and Other Activity Requirements – February 2025
- Hate crimes recorded by the police in Scotland, 2023-24
- Police officer quarterly strength statistics: 31 March 2025
- Scottish prison population projections: April 2025

Sources and further information

The data in this report is drawn from a range of Official Statistics sources. For 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 Accredited Official Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland.
- Homicide in Scotland Statistics. Annual Accredited Official 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 Accredited Official 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 and projections. Accredited Official statistics on Scottish prison populations, exploring population levels and composition and change over time.
- Deaths in Prison Custody 2012-13 to 2022-23 - gov.scot. An Official Statistics in Development Publication, exploring deaths in prison custody and composition and change over time.
- SCTS Statistics. Includes data on criminal and civil court activity as well as fines and financial penalty collection rates 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. Quarterly updates on journey times are available in the journey times interactive dashboard: https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-criminal-justice-system-journey-times-dashboard/

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 Accredited Official Statistics on justice social work activity in Scotland.

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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More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the Scottish Government website.

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