



Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales

Quarterly: October to December 2021, and Annual: calendar year 2021

Prison population: 31 March 2022

Main points

79,773 prisoners in England and Wales as at 31 March 2022



The total prison population was 2% higher than at the same point in the previous year.

15,000 first receptions into prison between October and December 2021



The number of first receptions represented a rise of 3% compared to the same period in 2020.

12,222 releases from sentences between October and December 2021



This was 4% lower than the same period in 2020. As the prison population shifts towards those serving longer sentences, we expect fewer releases in a given period.

37,987 adjudication outcomes between October and December 2021



This was a rise of 8% compared to the same period in 2020. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 675 occasions – this was 10% lower than the same period in 2020.

5,773 licence recalls between October and December 2021



This was a 1% increase on the same quarter in 2020.

238,500 offenders on probation at the end of December 2021



This number increased by 6% compared to the number of offenders supervised as at 31 December 2020.

This publication provides offender management quarterly statistics for the latest date available and provides comparisons to the previous year.

For technical detail please refer to the accompanying guide, '[Guide to offender management statistics](#)'.

Statistician's comment

In this publication we are reporting on the prison population as at 31 March 2022, with comparisons to the same point in 2021. Over this 12-month period, the total prison population has risen by around 1,700 (which represents a 2% increase) to 79,773.

The increasing remand population trend that we have seen since early 2020 has continued (a 4% increase between 31 Mar 2021 and 31 Mar 2022). This increase over the past 12 months is only evident in the 'convicted unsentenced' component of the remand population (which rose by 17%, compared to a 2% fall in the 'untried' population). This likely reflects the impact of partial court recovery following COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in an increase in the number of convicted prisoners awaiting sentence.

Between March 2021 and 2022, there was an increase of 2% in the sentenced prison population. This is the largest annual increase in the sentenced prison population we have seen since 2016 – which (as with the increasing 'convicted unsentenced' remand population highlighted above) reflects that the normal flow of individuals from the remand to the sentenced population (after sentencing at court) is continuing to recover following COVID-19 restrictions.

On the topic of COVID-19 recovery, the prison population has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels; the 31 Mar 2022 prison population is still around 3,200 below the level of 31 Mar 2020.

The prisoner flows data in this publication cover the period October to December 2021 (as well as additional annual statistics for the calendar year 2021), which means that we are comparing prisoner flows data between two quarterly 'COVID-19 periods' (the comparison period being October to December 2020). Though the spring 2020 COVID-19 lockdown dramatically affected the normal Criminal Justice System processes, by the summer many of the restrictions had been relaxed. The number of prisoner first receptions between October and December 2020 fell by 4% compared to the previous quarter (July to September 2020) as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown period in November 2020.

As such, in line with court recovery following COVID-19 we have seen a rise in the number of prisoner first receptions in the latest quarter (a 3% rise compared to October to December 2020). During the October to December 2021 quarter, there were 15,000 prisoner first receptions (which is around the same level as we have seen in both of the two previous quarterly periods); however, this is lower than the level of around 17,000 per quarter seen pre-pandemic.

As COVID restrictions on normal prison regime are relaxed we will see very large percentage changes in certain areas. For example, there were around 90,000 incidences of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) between October and December 2021 – this is a 104% increase (around twice the level) compared to the same quarter in 2020, but only a partial return towards pre-COVID levels of around 110,000 per quarter.

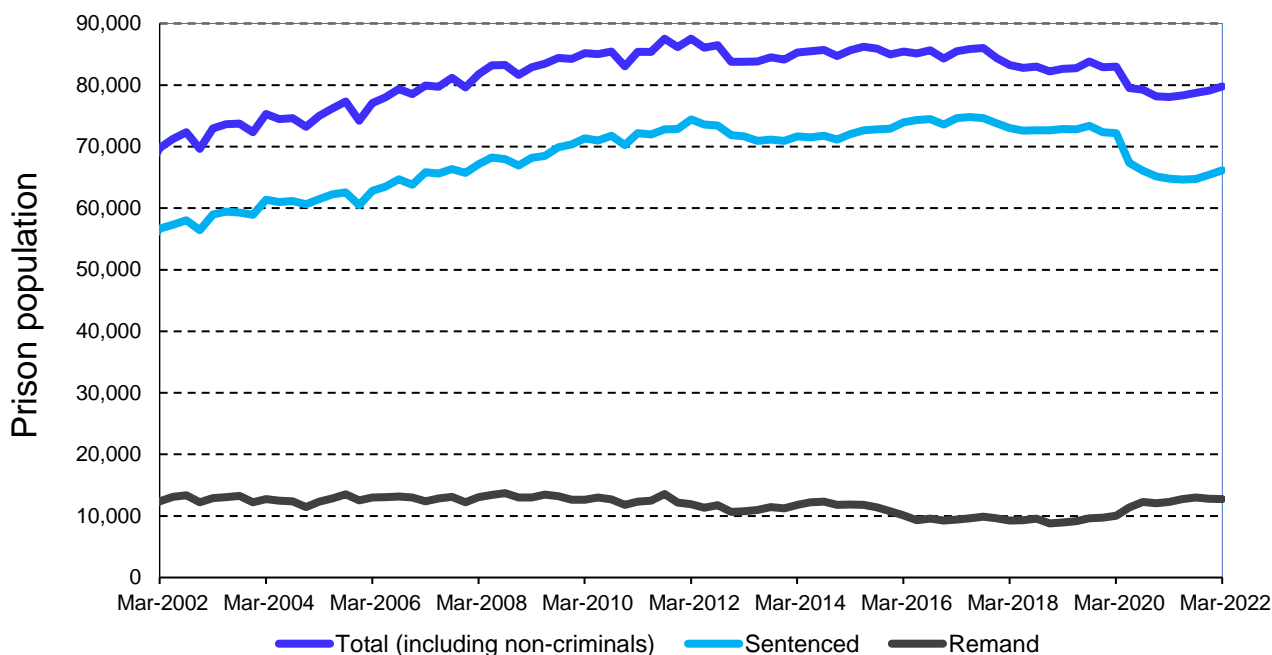
Large percentage changes can also be seen in a number of ROTL sub-types, for example the number of ROTL incidences for 'Maintaining Family Ties' has increased from 2,338 (between October and December 2020) to 9,004 in the latest quarter. This represents a percentage change of almost 300% (i.e. around 4 times as high as the same quarter in 2020). This is associated with changes in operational practices, moving away from COVID-19 restrictions that had been imposed on the prison regime.

1. Population

The prison population stood at 79,773 on 31 March 2022.

The sentenced prison population stood at 66,167 (83% of the total); the remand prison population stood at 12,747 (16%) and the non-criminal prison population stood at 859 (1%).

Figure 1: Prison populations, March 2002 to 2022 (Source: Table 1.1 and previous Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publications)



Remand prison population

Following a decreasing trend since 2014, the remand population has dramatically increased since June 2019. As at 31 March 2022, the remand population was 12,747. Whilst this is the highest March remand population since 2009, it is the second quarter in a row where the remand population has been lower than the previous quarter, which is likely a result of the increased throughput of the courts following reductions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The untried prison population fell by 2% (to 8,140) when compared to the end of March 2021 whilst the convicted unsentenced population rose by 17% (to 4,607) over the same period as cases moved through the system.

Most of those in custody on remand were being held for either:

Violence against the person (27% of the untried population and 18% of the convicted unsentenced population)

Drug offences (27% of the untried population and 32% of the convicted unsentenced population).

Sentenced prison population

The sentenced population was 66,167 which is a 2% increase from the same point 12 months earlier. Broadly speaking, there were increases in the sentenced population serving sentence bands of 'less than 4 years' and decreases in the numbers of those serving '4 years or more' (apart

from a 3% rise in those serving the longest determinate sentences of 14 years or more and a 10% rise in those serving an Extended Determinate Sentence).

Drug offences

The number of prisoners serving immediate custodial sentences for drug offences has increased by 6% over the past year. There has also been a 27% increase in the convicted unsentenced population over the same period.

Sexual offences

While this is one of the largest offence groups amongst prisoners serving immediate custodial sentences, the population had been falling since mid-2018 after a record high since at least 2002. However, over the past year, the number has risen gradually again. There was a 5% increase (to 12,232) in the 12 months to 31 March 2022. There were also 32% and 23% increases in the number of untried and convicted-unsentenced prisoners respectively in this offence group over the same period.

Violence Against the Person (VATP)

Three in every ten (31%) inmates serving an immediate custodial sentence have been convicted of a VATP offence. This proportion has increased from the 'one in four' (25%) level seen in recent years.

Public order offences

Imprisonment in relation to public order offences has seen some of the largest increases over the past year. There have been an 13% increase in the sentenced population, a 38% increase in the convicted unsentenced population, and a 10% increase in the untried population when compared with March 2021. It is likely that this is primarily due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the justice system. The number of prisoners serving immediate custodial sentences for public order offences was unusually low in March 2021 (down 15% on the previous year) most likely due to the low number of defendants proceeded against in April – June 2020 (due to courts prioritising the most serious offences) and the relatively short average custodial sentence length for public order offences (7.1 months in 2020).¹ Despite the rise in the latest year, the number of prisoners serving immediate custodial sentences for public order offences is still lower than it was pre-pandemic.

Extended Determinate Sentences (EDS)

EDSs constitute a custodial term, the majority of which is served in prison, followed by an additional extended period of licence in the community. They can be imposed if the offender is found guilty of, or has a previous conviction for, a specific sexual, violent or terrorist offence. On 31 March 2022, 6,639 prisoners were serving such sentences; a 10% increase compared to the same time last year.

Indeterminate sentences

As at 31 March 2022, there were 8,610 (8,280 male; 330 female) prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) and life sentences). This represents a slight overall decrease (-1%) when compared with 31 March 2021.

The number of unreleased prisoners (7,056) serving life sentences has increased by 1% compared to one year ago whereas the number of unreleased IPP prisoners fell by 13% to 1,554. At point of sentencing, offenders are given a minimum time period ("tariff") that they must serve in prison

¹ Overview Tables Q5_3 and Ad-hoc table <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2021>

before they can apply to the Parole Board for release. The majority (60%) of the remaining unreleased IPP prisoners have been held for more than eight years beyond the end of their tariff.

The number of recalled prisoners serving life sentences increased by 12% to 661 when compared to March 2021 whilst the number of recalled Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners saw a 3% increase to 1,392.

Recall to custody

The overall population who have been recalled to custody (9,798 prisoners) has increased by 7% relative to the total a year earlier. This is the highest monthly figure since at least 2002. The increasing recall population is likely driven by a combination of factors such as an increase in the average length of determinate sentences and an increase in the number of people serving indeterminate sentences or sentences with an extended license, which result in an increase in the size of the population released on license from which the recall population arises.

Foreign National Offenders (FNOs)

There were 9,661 (2,636 remand, 6,216 sentenced and 809 non-criminal) foreign nationals held in custody as at 31 March 2022; representing 12% of the total prison population. The number of FNOs in the prison population has decreased by 2% compared to 31 March 2021, driven by a 15% fall in the number of non-criminal foreign national prisoners. The most common nationalities after British Nationals in prisons are Albanian (14% of the FNO prison population), Polish (9%), Romanian (8%), Irish (6%), Lithuanian (5%), and Jamaican (4%).

Prisoner Age

There were decreases in the number of prisoners in each age group under 30 whereas there was an increase in all the age groups above 30. For example, there was an 18% (-68 prisoners) decrease in the number of prisoners aged 15-17, a 4% decrease (-320 prisoners) in the number aged 21-24, a 4% increase (+1,108 prisoners) in the number aged 30-39, and a 9% increase (+280 prisoners) in the number aged 60-69 when compared to March 2021. This pattern of an ageing population holds across both the sentenced and remand populations (although is less clear in the female population) and is consistent with the longer-term changes seen over the last twenty years.²

² (Annual Prison Population: 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

2. Prison receptions and admissions

Summary of annual statistics

59,440 individuals were received into custody as first receptions in 2021.

This is virtually unchanged from 2020, and around 50% fewer than in 2011.

First receptions

The number of annual first prison receptions was broadly stable during the 15-year period between 1994 and 2009 (with an average of around 129,200 each year). Over the last 10 years (since 2011) the number of annual first prison receptions have fallen by around 50%, to around 59,500 in 2021. This is unchanged from 2020 and remains below pre-pandemic levels due to the continued need in 2021 for safety measures such as social distancing which have affected court activity.

First prison receptions of Foreign Nationals

Around 1 in 6 of the total first prison receptions in 2021 were of foreign nationals, the same proportion as in 2020.

Five nationalities accounted for over half (51%) of the total foreign national first prison receptions in 2021: Albanian (1,779), Romanian (1,189), Polish (1,090), Lithuanian (511), and Irish (506).

Prison admissions

In 2021, there were 27,660 untried prison admissions (i.e. for those on pre-trial remand); this is 6% lower than in 2020 and represents the lowest number since the start of the time series in 1990. The largest numbers of untried prison admissions during 2021 were for an alleged violence against the person (VATP) or drug offence, with 2 in 5 untried prison admissions during 2021 being for one of those offences.

There were 18,855 convicted unsentenced entries to custody during 2021 (i.e. after having been found guilty at court but awaiting their sentencing hearing). This represents a 5% increase compared to 2020. For males and all convicted unsentenced admissions overall, around 2 in 5 prison admissions during 2021 was for a VATP or drug offence. For women, the most common reasons (2 in 5) for convicted unsentenced prison admissions were for a VATP or theft offence.

There were 42,140 sentenced admissions to prison in 2021 (5% higher than in 2020). Around 2 in 5 sentenced admissions during 2021 were for short sentences of less than or equal to 6 months.

Compared to 2020, there was a 5% increase in the numbers of immediate custodial (non-remand and non-fine defaulter) sentenced admissions. The largest increases occurred for sexual offences (63% increase) and drug offences (32% increase). Immediate custodial sentenced admissions for theft offences continued to fall, with a decrease of 20% compared to 2020.

After being released from custody, if an offender breaches their license conditions, they can be recalled to custody. During 2021, there were 21,214 recall admissions to custody, this is a decrease of 10% compared to 2020. 64% (3 in 5) recall admissions in 2021 were for those recalled from determinate sentences of 12 months or more, compared to 4% for those recalled from an indeterminate sentence.

Summary of quarterly statistics

The number of first receptions between October and December 2021 was 3% higher than the same period in 2020 but remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Compared to October to December 2020, there were increases in remand admission types in the latest quarter (untried admissions rose by 1% and convicted unsentenced admissions rose by 8%). There was also an increase in the number of sentenced admissions, up 6% (to 10,941) compared with the same quarter in 2020.

Overall recall admissions were broadly unchanged compared to October to December 2020. Recall admissions from indeterminate sentences decreased by 7%, while those from determinate sentences were also broadly unchanged.

Former Members of the Armed Forces

When individuals are first received into custody, they complete a Basic Custody Screening (BCS) process. This serves to identify their needs in areas including employment, childcare and healthcare. As part of this process, they are asked whether they had served in the armed services.

Between October and December 2021, 127 matched individuals first received into custody answered that they had served in the armed services - this represented 2% of those who provided a response to the question at the point of their first reception during the latest quarter. This figure has been steadily falling over the past couple of years.

In October 2020, the MoJ published the third release of 'Ex-Service Personnel in the Prison Population' – which included an estimate of the numbers and characteristics of ex-service personnel in the prison population. This was published as part of the Offender Management Statistics; April to June 2020 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>

3. Releases

Summary of annual statistics

47,014 offenders were released from custody during 2021.

46,493 releases were from determinate sentences and 521 from indeterminate sentences.

Prison releases from custodial sentences

In 2021, there were 46,493 offenders released from determinate sentences, a fall of 12% from 2020.

The year-on-year decreases were larger for shorter sentence bands (a 13% fall in the number of releases from determinate sentences 'less than 4 years'; compared to a 4% drop in releases from determinate sentences of '4 years or more'). This reflects the general trend in the prison population away from short sentenced offenders, to those serving longer determinate sentences.

The number of males released from determinate sentences fell by 11% between 2020 and 2021, while for females there was a drop of 15%.

521 offenders were released from indeterminate sentences in 2021; a 18% decrease overall compared to 2020, with releases from IPP sentences down 17%, and from life sentences down 19%.

The mean sentence length for those released from determinate sentences in 2021 was 26.6 months (a rise from 25.2 months for those released in 2020), which continues the longer-term increasing trend each year since 2015. The equivalent median sentence length remained at 12.0 months. Mean time served (including time spent on remand) also continued to increase in 2021, to 16.1 months. The equivalent median figure for time served fell slightly, from 6.1 months in 2020 to 6.0 months in 2021, ending a run of increases since 2015 – this is likely to be a temporary blip reflecting the reduction in short sentences resulting from COVID-19 impacts on court case prioritisation

Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

9,393 offenders were released on HDC in 2021, this is 13% lower than in 2020. This is in line with the falling number of offenders eligible for HDC – which fell by 11% over the same period. Given that HDC is available to offenders serving shorter sentences (of between 12 weeks and 4 years) as the prison population continues to shift towards those serving longer determinate sentences, we would expect the HDC eligible population to continue to fall.

Of offenders released on HDC in 2020 (the latest year for which recall data is currently available), 18% were recalled. This is unchanged compared to 2019 but is higher than 2018 (when it was 13%), and 2017 (7%).

Releases on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

In 2021, there were 245,508 incidences of ROTL. This is 33% higher than in 2020, which reflects the lifting of COVID restrictions allowing increased levels of normal prison activity (including ROTL), and represents a partial recovery towards pre-COVID levels.

Prisoner transfers

As with ROTL above, the incidences of prisoner transfer have also increased (by 13%) compared to 2020, a partial recovery towards pre-COVID levels. The number of individuals who received at least one transfer in the period, increased by 9%.

Summary of quarterly statistics

12,222 offenders were released from custody in the latest quarter.

12,112 releases from determinate sentences and 110 from indeterminate sentences.

Prison releases from custodial sentences

The number of prisoner releases between October and December 2021 was 4% lower than the same quarter in 2020.

The number of releases from sentences of 12 months to less than 4 years has continued to fall, with a small decrease of 5% between October and December 2021 as compared to the same period in 2020. This reflects the general trend in the prison population away from short sentenced offenders, to those serving longer determinate sentences. Additionally, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the prosecution of more serious offences has been prioritised, meaning that fewer prisoners have been received into prison and thus been released from the shorter sentences handed out for less serious offences.³

Between October and December 2021, there was a decrease, of 6%, in the number of prisoners released from sentences of 4 years or more (excluding indeterminate sentences), as compared to the same period in 2020. A larger decrease was seen for releases from indeterminate sentences, with a fall of 23%.

Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

The number of offenders released on HDC in the latest quarter dropped by 5%, to 2,338. The number eligible for HDC over the same period was 9,622, virtually unchanged compared to the same quarter in 2020.

Releases on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

Most ROTL was suspended for much of the pandemic period. HMPPS has, however, worked closely with public health authorities to re-introduce access to ROTL⁴ when and where it is safe to do so, and accounting for the changing national restrictions.

As a result of these changes to prison regimes, ROTL numbers have continued to increase in recent quarters. There were 90,101 incidences of ROTL during the quarter ending December 2021, which represents a 104% increase compared to the same quarter in 2020. Of the ROTL incidences in the latest quarter 69% were for 'Work Related' reasons.

³ https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/legal_guidance/Interim-CPS-Charging-Protocol-Covid-19-crisis-response.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

The number of individuals receiving at least one incidence of ROTL between October and December 2021 also rose following the changes to prison regimes, up 86% from the same quarter in 2020. 4,082 individuals were released on temporary licence in the latest quarter.

There were 182 Temporary Release Failures between October and December 2021. This is a rise of 40 compared with the previous quarter and 146 compared with the same period in 2020. TRFs as a proportion of temporary release incidences stood at 1 in 500 between October and December 2021.

Prisoner transfers

Between October and December 2021 there were 16,805 incidences of prisoner transfer, with 14,656 prisoners having at least one incidence of transfer. Both figures represent increases since the same period of 2020, with rises of 10% and 8% respectively.

4. Adjudications

Summary of 2021 prison adjudications statistics

There were 148,354 adjudication outcomes in 2021.

68% of these adjudications were proven.

During 2021 there were 148,354 adjudications – this is a fall of 7% compared to 2020. Of these, proven adjudications decreased from 103,273 to 100,696 (a 2% decrease) over the same period, driven by a large decrease in ‘unauthorised transactions’. This fall in adjudications can be seen across most demographic groups.

The continued overall fall in adjudications is likely due to government measures to preventing the spread of Covid-19. Since the start of the first lockdown in March 2020, most of those measures remained in place, with temporary regime changes in accordance with public health advice to account for differences in prisons across the country.

The total number of proven adjudications for ‘unauthorised transactions’ (those include possession of alcohol, drugs and other prohibited items), and ‘wilful damage’ offences decreased by 16% (to 25,191) and 2% (to 12,011) respectively in 2021. After a continuous rise until 2019, subsequent falls in these offences were due to the requirements and COVID-19 restrictions imposed on the prison regime, so as to reduce the spread of the disease in prison. The substantial fall observed in ‘unauthorised transactions’ offences in 2021 has been offset by a gradual rise in other categories. Offences of ‘disobedience and disrespect’ and ‘violence’ increased by 6% and 2% respectively after falling sharply in 2020. (Those offences account for 36% and 16% of offences respectively in 2021 and remain the largest offence groups.) Before the start of the pandemic, the proportion of proven adjudications which were cases of ‘disobedience/disrespect’ had been falling since 2011.

Use of ‘Additional Days’ as punishment

The upward trend in the number of occasions where additional days were awarded reached a peak in 2018. Since then there has been a continuous decline, with a fall from 6,113 occasions (2020) to 2,586 in the latest year, which has resulted in a fall of the number of additional days added to prisoners’ sentences from 102,826 (2020) to 40,270 (2021). This downward trend has been accelerated by the pandemic.

Taking these two sets of figures together, every time additional days were awarded as punishment in 2021, an average of 16 additional days were added (this compares to an average of 17 days in 2020).

Summary of quarterly statistics

There were 37,987 adjudication outcomes between October and December 2021.

This is an increase of 8% on the same quarter in the previous year. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 675 occasions in this quarter.

Two thirds (67%) of adjudications were proven.

There was a 6% increase in the number of proven adjudications (to 25,451) from the same quarter in 2020. This in turn resulted in a 10% rise in the number of punishments (to 43,613).

Offences of 'violence' and 'disobedience and disrespect' were the largest contributors to the increase described above. A third (35%) of proven adjudications were for offences of 'disobedience and disrespect', with the next largest category being 'unauthorised transactions' (27%). The numbers of proven adjudications for 'disobedience and disrespect' and 'violence' rose by 6% (to 8,866) and 20% (to 4,124) respectively on the same quarter of the previous year. There was also a 3% rise in 'unauthorised transactions' (to 6,785).

Although the number of proven offences for 'violence' increased in comparison to Q4 2020, this is still lower than the figures recorded up until mid-2019. The increase in these offences has however been continuous since Q1 2021 (inclusive) and quarterly averages have recently exceeded 4,000 offences. This increase is largely driven by the relaxing of measures implemented since March 2020 to reduce physical interactions amongst inmates and prison staff due to Covid-19.

Additional days were awarded as punishment on 675 occasions between October and December 2021; this is a 10% fall compared with the same period in 2020. A total of 10,299 days were awarded in the latest quarter – this is a 13% fall compared with the same quarter in 2020 (11,832 days between October and December 2020).

Although the overall number of adjudication outcomes increased slightly in comparison to Q4 2020, quarterly outcomes have not exceeded 40,000 since the start of the lockdown.

A number of policy interventions were made to suspend discipline hearings requiring an Independent Adjudicator (IA) between 23 March and 22 June 2020. Referrals to IAs, which are subject to new guidelines, have now resumed but are still held virtually. This impacted the number of referrals (1,046 for the quarter), which is far below the averages recorded before the lockdown.

In addition, other changes to the prison regime have been implemented to support operational delivery. These include new rules for governors, enabling them to: limit the movement of prisoners; implement social distancing; compartmentalise prisons to isolate symptomatic prisoners; quarantine new entrants; and so forth. These measures remain in place and taken together have reduced interactions between prisoners and staff, hence reducing the number of adjudications and related punishments⁵.

More information about the trends in Adjudications between 2011 and 2018 can be found in 'The Adjudications Story' publication.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

5. Licence Recalls

The number of licence recalls between October and December 2021 was 5,773, of which 386 were recalls from Home Detention Curfew (HDC).

The total number of recalls increased by 1% compared to the same quarter in 2020.

The total number of quarterly recalls trended upwards between October-December 2016 and July-September 2019. There was a marked increase in the number of quarterly recalls from early 2018 to July-September 2019, mostly due to increases in the number of HDC recalls and recalls of offenders from determinate sentences of 12 months or more. However, the number of quarterly recalls then trended downwards from the fourth quarter of 2019, including before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced, until 2021. There have been successive increases in the number of recalls in the last three quarters, partly due to relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, with the latest number representing a slight increase of 1% from the same quarter a year ago.

The guidance for courts and prisons implemented in 2020 has remained in place so as to assist courts, custodial and detention staff in addressing Covid-19 hence reducing the rate of transmission within prisons. This has had a continuing effect on the number of court proceedings and new entrants into custody⁶.

Following relative stability up to January-March 2020, the number of quarterly recalls of offenders released from a sentence of under 12 months had generally been falling until 2021. For the first time since July-September 2016, the number fell below 2,000 in April-June 2020 (partly due to the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions), and it has continued to stay below 2,000, although the latest figure (1,890) is an increase of 4% from a year ago.

Following general increases from late 2016, quarterly recalls of offenders with a sentence of 12 months or more (including those with indeterminate sentences), like the overall recalls, have trended downward since the fourth quarter of 2019 until 2021. Between October and December 2021, there were 3,883 recalls of such offenders, relatively unchanged from the same quarter in the previous year, but which represents a decrease of 3% compared with the previous quarter.

Ethnicity proportions in quarterly recalls have remained relatively stable, with about 8 in 10 recalls being white, 8% being black and 4% being Asian.

There usually is more than one reason for recalling an offender on licence. Of recalls in October-December 2021, about 33% involved a charge of further offending, 72% involved non-compliance, 29% involved failure to keep in touch, and 25% involved failure to reside.

Between October and December 2021, 127 IPP prisoners and 54 prisoners serving a life sentence were rereleased, having previously been returned to custody for a breach of licence conditions. These together represent a decrease of 10% from the same quarter a year ago.

Offenders not returned to custody

Of all those released on licence and recalled to custody due to breaching the conditions of their licence between April 1999 and December 2021, there were 2,113 who had not been returned to custody by the end of March 2022.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-and-prisons>

<https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/message-from-the-lord-chief-justice-courts-recovery/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

A further 17 offenders had not been returned to custody as of March 2022 after recall between 1984 and April 1999, meaning the total number of offenders not returned to custody at the end of March 2022 was 2,130. These figures include some offenders believed to be dead or living abroad but who have not been confirmed as dead or deported.

Of the 2,130 not returned to custody by 31 March 2022, 341 had originally been serving a prison sentence for violence against the person offences and a further 64 for sexual offences.

6. Probation

Summary of annual statistics

The total number of offenders on probation (i.e. court orders and pre/post-release supervision) at the end of December 2021 was 238,500.

This represents a 6% increase compared to the end of December 2020 and an increase of 2% compared to December 2011.

In March 2020, operational restrictions were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures, which included temporary court closures, led to a proportionally larger decrease in the number of offenders starting probation supervision in the period April to June 2020 compared to previous quarters. Although the pandemic continued to have an effect on overall figures for 2021, the extent of this is reduced compared to the previous year, with more recent probation starts and caseload figures recovering towards pre-pandemic levels.

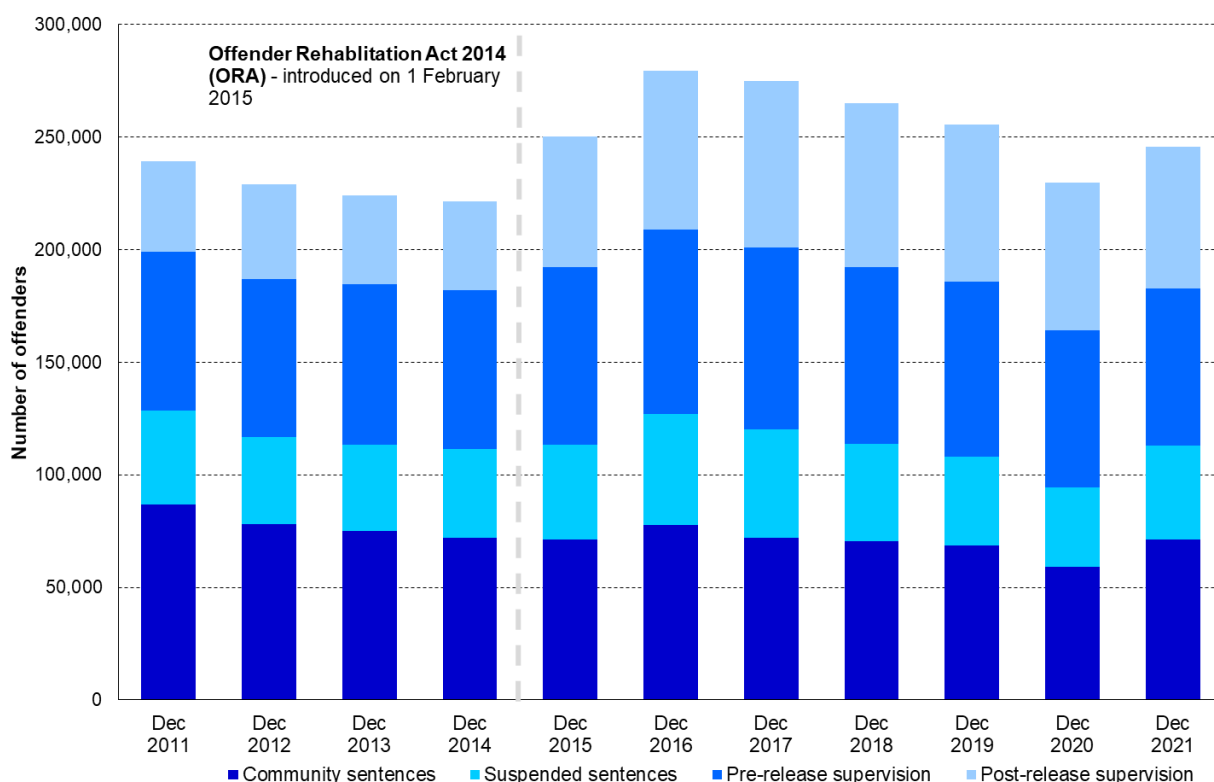
Following year on year decreases from 2011 to 2014, the number of offenders supervised by the Probation Service increased to 267,146 in 2016. However, at the end of December 2020, the total probation caseload stood at 223,973, representing a 10% decrease compared to 31 December 2019 and a 16% decrease since 2016. By the end of December 2021, the probation caseload had risen to 238,500 (Figure 2), which is an increase of 6% since December 2020 and is only 4% below the figure recorded at the end of December 2019, showing signs that the caseload figures are recovering to pre-pandemic levels⁷.

The increase in the probation caseload between 2014 and 2016 can be explained by the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) in February 2015 under which all offenders on a custodial sentence are subjected to statutory supervision on release from prison. Previously, only adults sentenced to over 12 months in custody and all young offenders were subject to statutory supervision.

Between 2014 and 2016, the number of offenders supervised before or after release from prison increased by 37% to 149,522. At the end of December 2021, this figure fell to 131,949, representing a decrease of 10% since 2019 and a decrease of 2% compared with 2020.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

Figure 2: Number of offenders under Probation Service supervision, 31 December 2011 to 2021 (source: Table A4.13 of the annual probation tables)



The total court order caseload decreased by 13% between 2011 and 2014 to 109,353 and then increased in 2016 by 14% to 124,643. Following a gradual decline between 2016 and 2019, it decreased over the next year by 12% to stand at 93,027 at the end of December 2020, and then rose by 19% to 110,965 in the year up to December 2021; this is 4% higher than in 2019.

Following a 16% decrease in the number of offenders on a community order (CO) from 2011 to 2014, the number increased in 2016 before decreasing to 58,402 at the end of December 2020. Over the year 2021, the number of offenders on a CO increased by 20% to 70,371, the highest figure since 2017. Similarly, those on a suspended sentence order (SSO) with requirements decreased from 2011 to 2013 by 8% to 38,227 before increasing in 2016 to 49,541. The number subsequently decreased again to stand at 35,198 at the end of December 2020, followed by a 19% increase in 2021 to 41,892, the highest figure since 2018.

The total number of offenders starting a court order or pre-release supervision by the Probation Service in 2021 increased by 3% to 146,238 following the lows of 2020.

In 2021, there were 91,849 court order starts, representing a decrease of 41% since 2011, but a 15% increase since the lows of 79,621 in 2020. Specifically, 60,315 COs were started in 2021, representing a decrease of 46% since 2011 and a 14% increase since 2020. Following a similar trend, there were 32,730 SSOs with requirements commenced in 2021, which was a decrease of 31% since 2011, but increases of 22% and 4% compared to 2020 and 2019 respectively.

The average length of COs starts increased from 13.2 months in 2020 to a series high of 13.5 months in 2021. The average length of SSOs starts also increased from 17.8 months to a series high of 18.3 months over the same period.

As a result of ORA being implemented in February 2015, the number of offenders starting pre-release supervision in custody increased by 114% from 45,063 in 2014 to 96,594 in 2016. Between 2019 and 2020, this figure decreased by 20% to 65,505 and then, unlike court order starts which saw an increase in 2021, decreased by 9% to 59,809 in 2021.

In May 2020, a new alcohol abstinence and monitoring requirement for COs and SSOs was introduced under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 and was rolled out nationally from winter 2020. As a result, 691 rehabilitation requirements combined with alcohol abstinence and monitoring requirements were started under community orders in 2021 and, consequently, became one of the top ten frequently used combinations of requirements.

Between 2011 and 2019, the total number of pre-sentence reports (PSRs) prepared by the Probation Service decreased by 49% to 103,004, reflecting the downward trend in the number of offenders sentenced in all courts over the same period.^{8,9} This number then fell by 34% in 2020 to a series low of 68,077 before increasing by 30% in 2021 to 88,657.¹⁰

Summary of quarterly statistics

Between October and December 2021, 37,192 offenders started court order or pre-release probation supervision (Figure 3), representing decreases of 7% on the previous quarter and 11% compared to the same quarter a year ago.

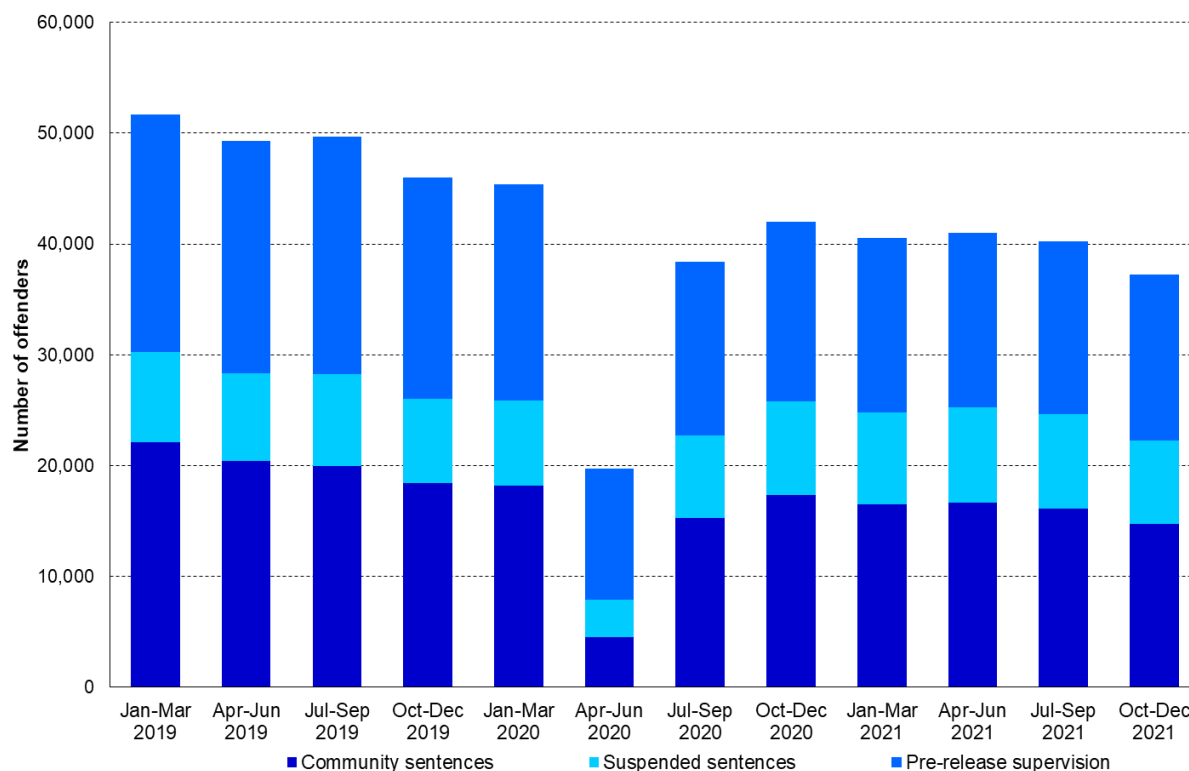
During the quarter October to December 2021, 14,566 offenders started COs, representing a 9% decrease compared to the previous quarter and 15% decrease compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The number of offenders who started SSOs with requirements between October and December 2021 decreased by 12% to 7,541 compared with the previous quarter; there was an 11% decrease compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Those starting pre-release supervision decreased by 4% in comparison with the last quarter and by 8% compared with the same quarter last year to 14,933.

⁸ Table Q5.1a in the Criminal Justice System Quarterly Statistics publication (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2021) states the number of offenders sentenced at all courts in the 12 months ending June 2011 to the 12 months ending June 2021.

⁹ In the year ending June 2019, the number of offenders given sentences for community sentences, SSOs and custodial sentences decreased by 51%, 20% and 27% respectively compared to the year ending June 2011; a decrease of 39% was seen when comparing the combined number of these sentences across this period.

¹⁰ A sharp decrease in offenders sentenced between April and June 2020 caused by temporary court closures resulting from COVID-19 operational restrictions was followed by increases over the latter end of 2020 and into 2021 due to courts reopening and increasing workload again. The combined number of offenders sentenced to community sentences, SSOs and custodial sentences consequently increased by 5% between June 2020 and June 2021, potentially contributing to the rise in PSRs prepared over 2021.

Figure 3: Number of offenders starting supervision under the Probation Service, January to March 2019 to October to December 2021 (source: Table 4.1 of the quarterly probation tables)



Overall, between October and December 2021, 23,344 requirements were started under COs and 13,471 under SSOs, representing decreases of 12% and 8% respectively compared to the same period in the previous year. Rehabilitation remains the most common requirement included within a CO and SSO, although compared to the same quarter a year ago, the number of rehabilitation requirements started under COs fell by 11% to 9,592 and under SSOs fell by 7% to 5,915. The most notable changes to requirements commenced under COs between October to December 2020 and 2021 were increases of 38% to 208 and 24% to 846 in the number of mental health and alcohol treatment starts respectively. Meanwhile accredited programmes and unpaid work saw decreases of 34% to 1,371 and 17% to 6,766 respectively. Under SSOs, the number of starts decreased in most requirement types over the same period. In particular, accredited programmes saw a decrease of 17% to 1,232. However, mental health requirements started under SSOs increased by 35% to 108 compared to the same period in 2020.

The effects of the introduction and national roll out of the alcohol abstinence and monitoring requirement from winter 2020 continue to be visible as the number of alcohol abstinence and monitoring requirements started in October to December 2021 increased by 9% to 554 for COs and 14% to 310 for SSOs since the previous quarter.

In terms of the most frequently used combinations of requirements under COs in October to December 2021, rehabilitation requirements combined with accredited programmes decreased by 40% to 401 and rehabilitation requirements combined with accredited programmes and unpaid work decreased by 37% to 445 compared to the same period a year ago. Conversely, there were 26% and 5% increases over the same period for rehabilitation requirements combined separately with alcohol treatment and drug treatment requirements respectively. Under SSOs, rehabilitation requirements combined separately with accredited programmes, curfew and alcohol treatment requirements decreased by 26%, 10% and 10% respectively.

Of the 10,504 COs and 5,247 SSOs terminated between October and December 2021, 73% and 77% respectively were terminated successfully, i.e. ran their full course or were terminated early for good progress.

In the quarter October to December 2021, the total number of PSRs prepared by the Probation Service decreased by 6% to 21,450 compared to the previous quarter and by 2% compared to the same quarter in 2021.

Furthermore, 88% of immediate custodial sentences proposed in PSRs resulted in that sentence being given in the year ending December 2021, representing the highest concordance between sentence proposed and sentence given.

Further information

This publication presents quarterly and annual data trends.

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency, and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A '[Guide to Offender Management Statistics](#)', which provides comprehensive information about data sources and quality, as well as key legislative changes.
- A document outlining the '[Users of Offender Management Statistics](#)'
- A set of data tables, covering each section of this bulletin, including a prison population data tool.

National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.



It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained and reinstated when standards are restored.

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