



Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales

Quarterly: April to June 2020

Prison population: 30 September 2020

Main points

79,235 prisoners in England and Wales as at 30 September 2020



The total prison population was 5% lower than at the same point in the previous year.

12,608 first receptions into prison between April and June 2020



The number of first receptions represented a fall of 31% compared to the same period in 2019, as a result of COVID-19 disruption to courts.

13,290 releases from sentences between April and June 2020



This was 15% lower than the same period in 2019. As the prison population shifts towards those serving longer sentences, we would expect fewer releases in a given period.

38,695 adjudication outcomes between April and June 2020



This was a fall of 27% compared to the same period in 2019. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 209 occasions – this was 96% lower than the same period in 2019.

5,909 licence recalls between April and June 2020



This was a 10% decrease on the same quarter in 2019.

224,587 offenders on probation at the end of June 2020



This number decreased by 12% compared to the number of offenders supervised as at 30 June 2019.

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

This quarter we have continued to see the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the prison population; in this release we are comparing the prison population as at 30 September 2020 with the same point in 2019. Over this period the total prison population has fallen by around 4,600, however this overall figure masks the trends seen for certain population groups.

The remand population (those held in prison awaiting trial, and those held in prison between trial and sentencing) has increased by 28% over the past year (to 12,274) and is now at the highest level for around six years. Conversely, the sentenced prison population has fallen by 10% over the past year (to 66,100), which represents the lowest level for 13 years.

This is in line with the effects of COVID-19 on the Criminal Justice System – in particular, delays in court hearings (evidenced by the increasing court caseload reported in the latest [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly](#) release). The effect of this on the prison population is that the normal system flow of individuals from the remand to the sentenced population (after sentencing at court) has been disrupted; resulting in more people held on remand, and fewer sentenced prisoners.

The prisoner flows data in this publication cover the period April to June 2020, which means that for the first time we are comparing a 'COVID-19 period' with the equivalent 'non COVID-19 period' between April and June 2019.

Over the past ten years, there has been a falling trend in the number of prisoner first receptions each year. However, over the past year (as a result of COVID-19 disruption to court processes) there has been a sharp 31% decrease; from 18,370 between April and June 2019, to 12,608 in the latest quarter.

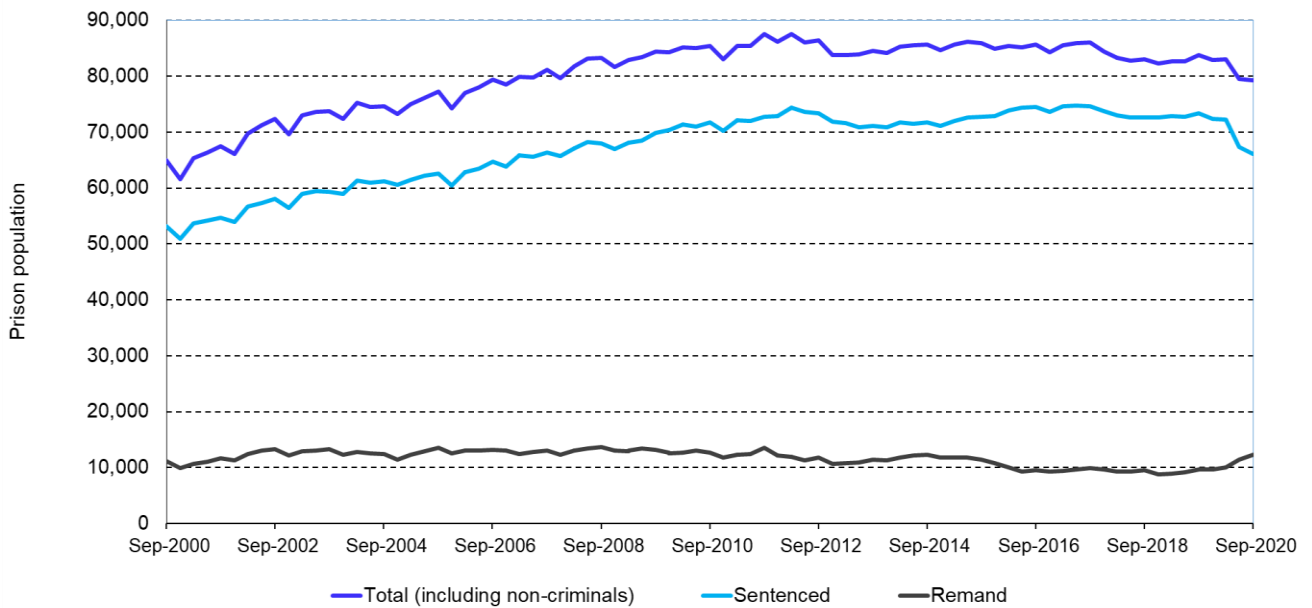
The effects of COVID-19 are also apparent in the number of incidences of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) in the latest quarter (an 88% fall compared to the same period in 2019); the number of incidences of prisoner transfer [between prisons] (a 64% annual decrease) and the number of occasions that Additional Days were awarded as punishment following a proven adjudication (which was 96% lower than the period April to June 2019).

1. Population

The prison population stood at 79,235 on 30 September 2020.

The sentenced prison population stood at 66,100 (83% of the prison population); the remand prison population stood at 12,274 (15%) and the non-criminal prison population stood at 861 (1%).

Figure 1: Prison population, September 2000 to 2020 (Source: Table 1.1)



Remand prison population

The remand population continued to increase across this quarter of 2020, continuing the trend set across 2019 and the previous quarters of 2020. It rose to 12,274, its highest value since 2014.

The remand population was 28% higher than at the same point 12 months earlier. The number of males and females in custody on remand rose by 29% (to 11,660) and 8% (to 614) respectively.

60% of those in custody on remand were being held for either:

- Violence against the person (26% of the remand population)
- Drug offences (24%)
- Theft offences (10%)

This rise was primarily due to marked increases from September 2019 to 2020 of 61% in the “Drug offences” remand population and 42% in the “Violence against the person” remand population.

Sentenced prison population

The sentenced prison population overall decreased by 10% compared to the same point 12 months earlier, standing at 66,100 on 30 September 2020. The decreases in population that happened in July-September (Q3) were less notable than the decreases in population that happened in April-June (Q2).

Broadly, there were notably large decreases in the population serving sentences of up to four years, and smaller decreases in the population serving indeterminate sentences or sentences of four years or more.

1 in every 7 sentenced prisoners (14%) was serving a recall sentence. This proportion has steadily increased across the last decade.

Sexual offenders

While this remains one of the largest offence groups of sentenced prisoners, the number has continued to fall since the recent peak in mid-2018. There was an 8% decrease (to 12,005) in the sentenced sexual offender population in the 12 months to 30 September 2020. This was the lowest number of sentenced sexual offenders since September 2015.

'Violence Against the Person (VATP)' and 'Possession of Weapons' offences

29% of sentenced prisoners were in prison for a VATP offence, this was approximately the same as the proportion at the end of the previous quarter, and a minor increase on the 27% proportion the population had remained at previously. It should be noted that the number of sentenced prisoners making up this population has itself remained roughly stable, but as a proportion has increased due to the decrease in the overall sentenced population.

After a continued rise since 2015, the sentenced 'Possession of Weapons' prison population decreased by 21% (to 2,383) between September 2019 and September 2020. Along with much larger offence groups (Theft and Drug offences), this substantial fall can be attributed to the current COVID-19 pandemic which has led to delays in court cases waiting to be heard, hence a rise in the number of individuals awaiting trial and sentence.

Extended Determinate Sentences (EDS)

EDSs were made available for courts to impose from December 2012. On 30 September 2020, 5,838 prisoners were serving such sentences, a 5% increase compared to the same time last year.

Indeterminate sentences

As at 30 September 2020, there were 8,840 (8,507 male; 333 female) indeterminate sentenced prisoners (those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences and life sentences) in the prison population, which represented an annual decrease of 5%.

There were 1,895 IPP prisoners as at 30 September 2020 which represented a decrease of 15% in the last 12 months. This figure has decreased since the June 2012 peak of 6,080. However, the number of IPP prisoners who have been recalled to custody continues to increase; in the past year the recalled IPP population grew by 13% (to 1,357). It should be noted that this increase has shown signs of easing, as between 30 June and 30 September 2020 there was a negligible change in the recalled IPP population, reducing from 1,359 to 1,357.

The proportion of the post-tariff IPP population has continued to increase. 94% of IPP prisoners were post-tariff as of 30 September 2020 compared to 93% at the same time the previous year.

The number of life sentenced prisoners (6,945) had decreased by 1% compared to 30 September 2019. There were 62 whole-life prisoners at the end of September 2020, plus an additional three in secure hospitals.

Recall to custody

The prison population who had been recalled to custody (9,250 prisoners) increased by 14% over the year leading up to 30 September 2020. This can be attributed to the rise in the number of offenders serving longer sentences, who (after their release) spend longer on licence, and (if recalled to custody) would likely serve longer in prison on recall.

Foreign National Offenders (FNOs)

There were 9,420 (2,603 remand, 6,019 sentenced and 798 non-criminal) foreign nationals held in custody and the HMPPS-operated Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) at Morton Hall as at 30 September 2020, which represented 12% of the total prison population.

While the overall prison population had decreased by 5%, the number of FNOs in the prison (and HMPPS IRC) population increased by 2% compared to 30 September 2019. The most common nationalities after British Nationals in prisons were Albanian (13% of the FNO prison population), Polish (9%), Romanian (8%), Irish (7%) and Lithuanian (4%). Of particular note, there was a 29% increase in the number of Albanian prisoners (to 1,203) between September 2019 and September 2020.

2. Prison receptions and admissions

12,608 offenders were received into custody as first receptions in the latest quarter.

9,065 remand first receptions, 3,486 sentenced first receptions and 57 civil non-criminal first receptions.

Offender first receptions

The total number of first receptions during Q2 2020 was 31% lower than the same quarter in 2019, in line with the longer falling trend over the past 15 years. The total number of first receptions in Q1 2020 was 3% lower than the same quarter in 2019; this change from 3% to 31% indicates there has been a large decrease in first receptions between Q1 and Q2 of 2020, which can largely be attributed to the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is discussed in more detail below.

There were 2,209 first receptions of foreign nationals during Q2 2020 (down 17% compared with April to June 2019). The five foreign nationalities with the highest numbers of first receptions in the latest quarter were: Albanian (426), Polish (314), Romanian (241), Lithuanian (123) and Irish (119). When taken together, these five nationalities accounted for more than half (55%) of the 2,209 first receptions of foreign nationals between April and June 2020.

Prison admissions

Compared to the same quarter in 2019, there was a small decrease in the numbers of recall and untried admissions (both by 4%; to 5,900 and 7,176 respectively), and a larger decrease in the level of convicted unsentenced admissions (by 22% to 3,856). The number of sentenced prisoner admissions was 46% lower than the same quarter in 2019 (to 7,576). When considering sentenced admissions by offence group, the largest decreases in admissions occurred in the summary motoring (down by 62%) and sexual offences (down by 61%) groups.

As discussed above, these decreases can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Overall, there has been a large reduction in the volume of court outcomes¹, as the operational capacity of the court estate was reduced, and trial hearings in Magistrates' Courts and jury trials in Crown Courts² were suspended in March 2020. In addition, Magistrates Courts were prioritising remand hearings (considering bail where appropriate), and interim Crown Prosecution Serving Charging Protocol was developed for prosecutors to ensure they focus on the most serious cases where remand in custody is likely, explaining the relatively larger decrease in convicted unsentenced and sentenced prisoner admissions. The phased reintroduction of jury trials during May 2020 continues, with court caseloads gradually increasing.

Almost half of all sentenced admissions during the quarter were for sentences of six months or less (3,649, 48% of sentenced admissions). When compared with the same quarter last year, the

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920479/ccsq_bulletin_apr_jun_2020.pdf

² <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/review-of-court-arrangements-due-to-covid-19-message-from-the-lord-chief-justice/>

sentence length band with the largest decrease in the number of admissions was 4 years or more (excluding indeterminate sentences), with a 63% reduction.

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 January and March 2020, 141 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.

3. Releases

13,290 offenders were released from custody in the latest quarter.

13,166 releases from determinate sentences and 124 from indeterminate sentences.

Prison releases from custodial sentences

The number of prisoner releases between April and June 2020 was 15% lower than the same quarter in 2019.

This overall fall was driven by a large decrease in the number of releases from sentences of 'less than 12 months' (of which there were 6,115 in the latest quarter) – which was 26% lower than the same period in 2019. However, this was somewhat offset by a small (2%) increase 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.

There was also a large (35%) fall in the number of indeterminate sentenced prisoners released between April and June 2020 compared to the previous year; with a 45% fall in number of IPP releases and a 24% drop in the number of prison releases from Life sentences. This likely reflects the effect of COVID-19 disruption on the normal Parole Board hearing process – which included a decision to suspend all in-person oral hearings.³

Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

2,825 offenders were released on HDC during the latest quarter – this represents a fall of 13% compared to the same quarter in 2019. This fall in the number released on HDC reflects the reduction in the size of the pool of offenders eligible for HDC (also 13% lower than the same period in 2019).

Releases on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

There has been substantial disruption to ROTL due to COVID-19 restrictions. At the end of March 2020, it was announced that all ROTL had been suspended – except in cases of prisoners working as 'key workers' or temporary release on compassionate grounds.⁴

As a result of these operational changes, there were only 12,643 incidences of ROTL during the quarter ending June 2020, an 88% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019. More than 80% of the ROTL incidences in the latest quarter were for 'Work Related' reasons.

Counted within the total ROTL incidences, between April and June 2020 there were 184 releases under the COVID-19 temporary release codes (of which, 66 were for Compassionate reasons [including risk-assessed pregnant and otherwise vulnerable prisoners], and the remaining 118 were released under the 'End of Custody Temporary Licence' scheme [which allowed for the release of low-risk offenders who were near to the end of their custodial sentence]).

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immediate-cancellation-of-all-face-to-face-hearings>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-qa-for-friends-and-family-of-prisoners#release>

As a result of the COVID-19 changes to ROTL, the number of individuals who received at least one incidence of ROTL between April and June 2020 was 82% lower than the same quarter in 2019. Only 794 individuals were released on temporary licence in the latest quarter.

There was a corresponding large fall in the recorded number of Temporary Release Failures (TRFs), with 16 TRFs between April and June 2020. This was a decrease of 188 compared with the previous quarter and a decrease of 125 compared with the same period the previous year. TRFs as a proportion of temporary release incidences remain at a low level; approximately only 1 in every 790 incidences of temporary release resulted in a failure between April and June 2020.

Prisoner transfers

At the end of March 2020, the Government announced that “as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, all non-essential transfers of prisoners have ceased. This is to contain the outbreak, and for the health and safety of prisoners and prison and escort vehicle staff.”⁵

There were 7,393 incidences of prisoner transfer between April and June 2020 – a fall of 64% from the same period last year. 7,129 prisoners had at least one incidence of a transfer during the quarter ending June 2020.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-qa-for-friends-and-family-of-prisoners#transfers>

4. Adjudications

There were 38,695 adjudication outcomes between April and June 2020.

This was a decrease of 27% on the same quarter in the previous year. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 209 occasions in this quarter.

61% of all adjudications were proven.

Around one third (32%) of proven adjudications were for offences of disobedience and disrespect, closely followed by unauthorised transactions (29%). The number of proven adjudications for 'disobedience/disrespect' and 'unauthorised transactions' fell by 30% (to 7,410) and 34% (to 6,785) respectively, compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The number of proven offences of violence had decreased by 37% (to 3,340) following growth in 2018, which then led to high volumes of offences. Since mid-2019, this increasing trend has been reversed with quarterly averages not exceeding 5,000 offences in 2020.

There was a 31% decrease in the number of proven adjudications (to 23,508) from the same quarter in 2019. This in turn resulted in a 33% fall in the number of punishments (to 37,547).

Additional days were awarded as punishment on 209 occasions between April and June 2020; this was 96% lower than the same period in 2019. A total of 3,935 days were awarded in the latest quarter – this represents a decrease of 95% from the same quarter in 2019 (86,357 days between April and June 2019). The average number of punishments per offence was 1.60. This has fallen compared with figures seen in recent quarters.

The sharp fall in adjudications followed the introduction of government measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. 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 have been subject to new guidelines, have now resumed but are held virtually. In line with the new regime, the mandatory drug testing programme (MDT) was suspended and this resulted in fewer adjudication referrals.

In addition, other changes to the prison regime were implemented to support operational delivery. These included new rules for governors such as: limiting movement of prisoners; implementing social distancing; compartmentalising prisons to isolate symptomatic prisoners, quarantine new entrants and so forth. Those measures taken together have impacted on the level of interactions between prisoners and staff, hence contributing to the reduction in adjudications, which subsequently led to a fall in punishments⁶.

More information about the trends in Adjudications between 2011 and 2018 can be found in '[The Adjudications Story](#)' publication.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

5. Licence Recalls

The number of licence recalls between April and June 2020 was 5,909, of which 562 were recalls from Home Detention Curfew (HDC).

The total number of recalls decreased by 10% compared to the same quarter in 2019.

The total number of quarterly recalls mostly continued to increase 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, partly due to increased HDC recalls and recalls of offenders from determinate sentences of 12 months or more. However, the number of quarterly recalls has continued to decrease in the last three quarters with the latest number representing a decrease of 10% from the same quarter a year ago, and a decrease of 12% from the previous quarter. Although the first two successive decreases occurred before the start of the COVID-19 lockdowns, the latest decrease is partly due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Following a decrease in January-March 2019, the number of quarterly recalls of offenders released from a sentence of under 12 months rose and stayed relatively stable at around 2,326 up until January-March 2020. In the last quarter, it dropped below 2,000 for the first time since July-September 2016, partly as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

A number of policies were implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and more effectively manage the prison population. Restrictions around new arrivals were introduced, with measures including medical assessment of new entrants, and isolation. Furthermore, the limited operation of criminal courts resulted in delays in court proceedings, which impacted on the volume of cases being processed by the courts⁷.

Quarterly recalls of offenders with a sentence of 12 months or more (including those with indeterminate sentences) have continued to decrease in the last three quarters, following a general increase from late 2016 to July-September 2019. Between April and June 2020, there were 3,956 recalls of such offenders, a decrease of 9% in comparison to the same quarter in the previous year.

The proportions of different ethnicities in quarterly recalls have remained relatively stable. Most of the recall population in Q2 2020 were white (80%), with a further 10% Black, and around 4% Asian.

There is usually more than one reason for recalling an offender who has been released on licence. In recent quarters, about 4 in 10 recalls involved the offender facing further charges. Non-compliance was given as one of the reasons in around 7 of every 10 recalls in April-June 2020, consistent with recent quarters.

Between April and June 2020, 94 IPP prisoners and 47 prisoners serving a life sentence were re-released, having previously been returned to custody for a breach of licence conditions.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-prisons-and-other-prescribed-places-of-detention-guidance/covid-19-prisons-and-other-prescribed-places-of-detention-guidance>.
<https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/review-of-court-arrangements-due-to-covid-19-message-from-the-lord-chief-justice/>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-march-to-august-2020>.

Offenders not returned to custody

Of all those released on licence and subsequently recalled to custody due to breaching the conditions of their licence between April 1999 and June 2020, there were 1,957 who had not been returned to custody by the end of September 2020.

A further 17 offenders had not been returned to custody as of September 2020 after recall between 1984 and April 1999, meaning the total number of offenders not returned to custody at the end of September 2020 was 1,974. These figures include some offenders believed to be dead or living abroad but who have not been confirmed as dead or deported.

Of the 1,974 offenders not returned to custody by 30 September 2020, 328 had originally been serving a prison sentence for violence against the person offences, and a further 57 were serving sentences for sexual offences.

6. Probation

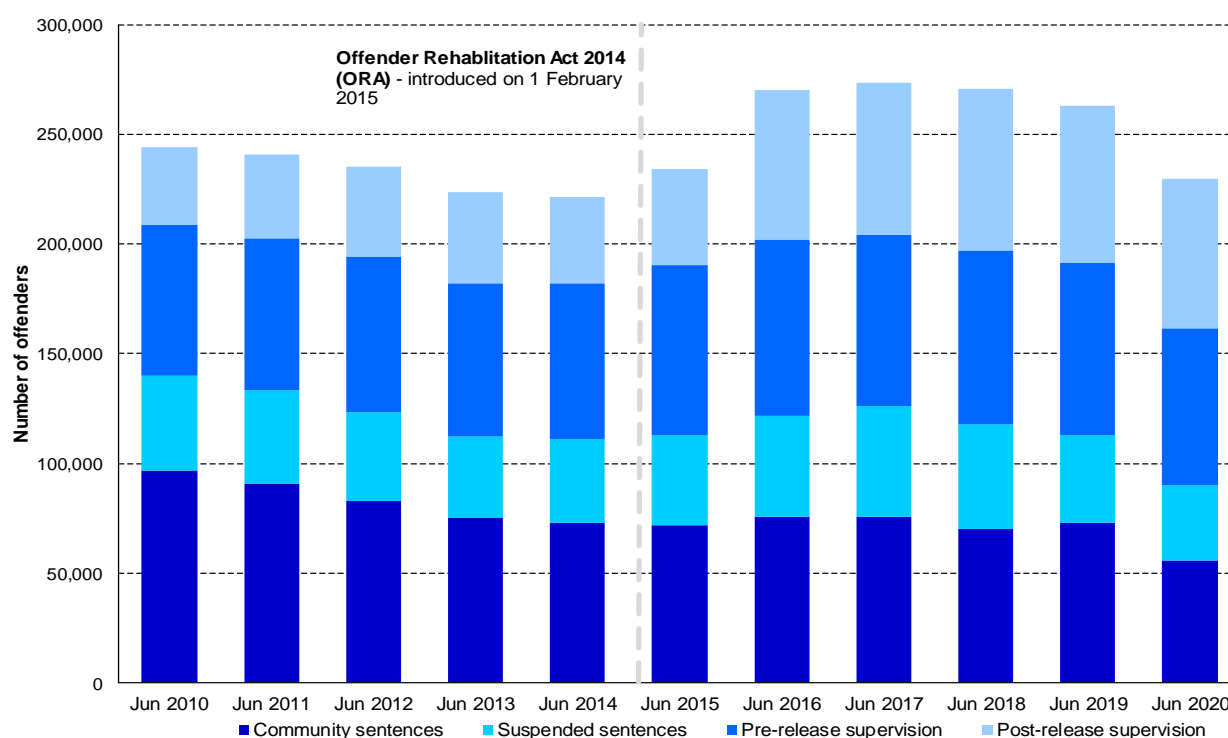
The total number of offenders on probation (i.e. court orders and pre/post-supervision) at the end of June 2020 was 224,587.

This represented a 12% decrease compared to the end of June 2019.

As at 30 June 2020, there were 224,587 offenders supervised by the Probation Service (Figure 2), representing a 12% decrease compared to the 30 June 2019. Over the same period, court order caseload decreased by 20% from 111,197 to 88,639, with the number of offenders on a community order (CO) decreasing by 24%, whilst those on a suspended sentence order (SSO) with requirements decreased by 15%. The total caseload of offenders supervised before or after release from prison at the end of June 2020 was 139,590, representing a decrease of 6% since the end of June 2019.

The scale of the differences between the latest caseload figures and those from the same period a year ago can be mainly attributed to reduced court activity following the response to the COVID-19 pandemic; both the Magistrates' Court and Crown Court saw sharp decreases in their workload in the period April-June 2020⁸ and consequently, this has had an impact on the number of offenders on the probation caseload.

Figure 2: Number of offenders under Probation Service supervision, 30 June 2010 to 30 June 2020 (source for 2018 to 2020: Table 4.6; source for years prior to 2018: Table 4.7)



Operational restrictions following the response to COVID-19 have also had a considerable impact on the number of individuals starting supervision. Between April and June 2020, 7,935 offenders started court orders, representing a 72% decrease compared to the same quarter last year. Over the same period, the number of offenders starting COs decreased by 78% to 4,383 and the

⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>

number of offenders starting SSOs with requirements decreased by 57% to 3,419. Additionally, those starting pre-release supervision decreased by 44% to 11,824.

Between April and June 2020, 6,796 requirements started under COs and 5,795 requirements started under SSOs, which represented decreases of 78% and 57% respectively, compared to the same period in the previous year. Under both COs and SSOs, the biggest reductions were seen for unpaid work requirements (decreases of 84% and 69% respectively) compared to the same quarter in the previous year, as well as drug treatment (decreases of 83% and 65% respectively) and alcohol treatment (decreases of 83% and 64% respectively).

In terms of the most frequently used combinations of requirements, the rehabilitation requirement remains the most common requirement included within a CO or SSO. Under COs, rehabilitation requirements, and rehabilitation combined separately with drug treatment and alcohol treatment requirements decreased by 77%, 84%, and 84% respectively in April to June 2020 compared to the same period a year ago. Under SSOs, rehabilitation alone decreased by 47%, whilst rehabilitation combined separately with drug treatment and unpaid work requirements both decreased by 67%.

Of court orders terminated between April and June 2020, 78% of 12,895 COs and 80% of 6,634 SSOs (for the supervision period) were terminated successfully, i.e. ran their full course or were terminated early for good progress.

In the quarter April to June 2020, there was a 76% decrease in the number of pre-sentence reports (PSRs) prepared by the Probation Service compared to the same quarter in 2019. 89% of custodial sentences proposed in PSRs resulted in that sentence being given in the year ending June 2020, 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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Next update: 28 January 2021

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

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