



Ministry
of Justice

Process Evaluation of the Acquisitive Crime Electronic Monitoring Project: 12 month+ cohort

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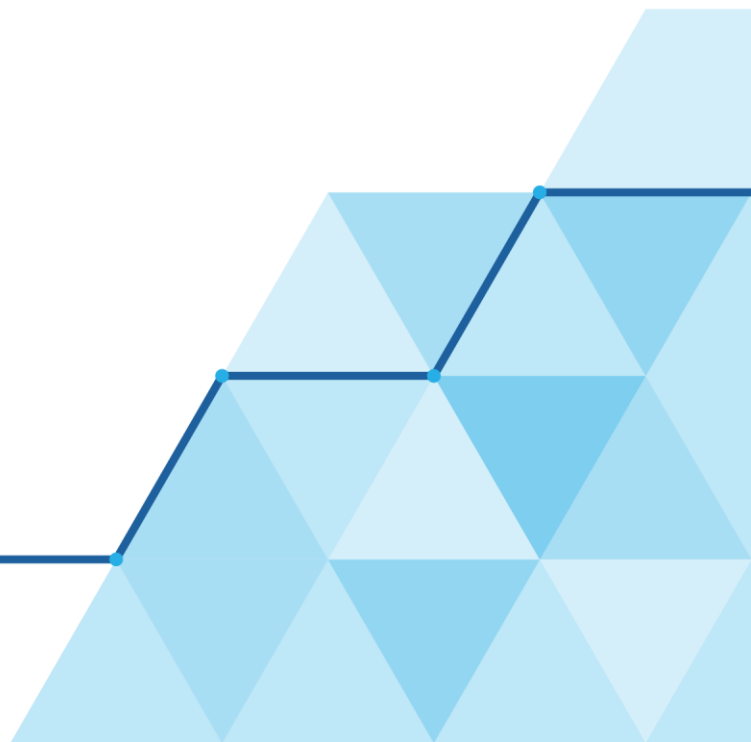
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1. Executive summary

As a result of legislation governing the use of Electronic Monitoring (EM) in 2021, the Acquisitive Crime (AC) Project began as a pilot, which mandated that Global Positioning System (GPS) EM tags be installed on certain prison leavers in England and Wales. After commencement of the relevant legislation, those individuals eligible for automatic enrolment in the project were most acquisitive offenders¹ who were newly released from prison on licence and who were residing in specific geographic areas.

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand whether the mandatory location monitoring, enabled by GPS technology, acts as a reoffending deterrent and to what extent the project supports the police in detecting further acquisitive offences among people on probation who are being monitored.

This report sets out a summary of the findings of the process evaluation led by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in respect of the project. The report explores stakeholders' views and experiences of the project to understand how it was implemented, its successes and any challenges, as well as its perceived benefits. A summary of the quantitative management information is also provided.

This process evaluation report provides insights, including views from people on probation, that will aid interpretation of the subsequent impact and economic evaluation stages, which will be conducted and published at a later date following this report.

1.1 Methodology

The process evaluation of the EM AC intervention involved a mixed approach, analysing quantitative data on the use of EM and qualitative interviews of prison leavers and practitioners.

The quantitative data of the AC Project were supplied by the EM service provider and analysed to provide a distribution by geography and by month. EM data was also matched

¹ Offenders who commit theft (including burglary) or robbery.

to management information recorded by the Probation Service using unique identifiers to obtain estimates of use by various protected characteristic and other characteristics, which were subject to missing values and potential data input errors. Those prison leavers who were wrongly enrolled in the AC Project were ignored for the purposes of analysis. The analysis includes comparisons with respect to all prison leavers released on an adult licence between go-live and June 2022, where relevant.

The qualitative data regarding stakeholders' perceptions were obtained using interviews that were conducted among police officers, probation practitioners, MoJ Hub staff, EM service provider staff and people on probation who were enrolled in the AC Project. The main limitation was that the views expressed by respondents were only representative of those individuals who volunteered to be interviewed. In particular, the number of people on probation respondents was small.

1.2 Key findings

Quantitative data

Between the AC Project's go-live date in April 2021 up to June 2022, the available data drawn from management information systems indicated that:

- There were an estimated 1,528 valid AC order starts in total, of which 91 per cent resulted in a successful EM tag installation. Among valid AC order starts, there were an estimated 1,437 unique individuals, of whom 92 per cent were the subject of a tag installation.
- An in-depth HMPPS verification exercise during early 2024 of eligibility within a sample of almost 500 AC order starts resulting in tag installation found that there was a number of orders over the period up to mid-January 2024 that did not fall within the scope of the legislation establishing the AC Project.² This verification exercise identified 14 summonses/charges involving prison leavers who had been "crime mapped" due to their AC location monitoring post-release, seven of whom were subsequently reconvicted as of May 2024.
- The average number of AC order starts was 55 per month during the first six calendar months, which then increased to about 130 per month following the

² Remedial action is underway within HMPPS to address this situation.

geographic expansion of the AC Project in late September 2021 from six to 19 police force areas.

- The West Midlands police force area was the single largest contributor to total volumes over the period.
- The average duration of AC enrolment among people on probation was estimated to be 190 days. The median duration was 174 days. However, it was found that the maximum legal limit of 12 months enrolment in the AC Project was exceeded in around one per cent of AC order starts resulting in a tag installation and that the sentence expiry date was exceeded in almost one per cent of these cases, both of which were attributed to administrative errors in not ending the order in time.
- The average predicted reoffending risk within 24 months, as measured by the static risk factors in the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS), was estimated to be 63 out of a maximum score of 100, and the median OGRS value was 67. The average OGRS value among all prison leavers released on an adult licence over the same time period was 58, and the median was 64.
- The most likely Risk of Serious Harm (RoSH) in any future offending was the “medium” category, which applied to 60 per cent of AC order starts. Among all prison leavers released on an adult licence, the typical RoSH category was “medium”, which applied to 50 per cent of this group over the same time period.
- In terms of protected characteristics associated with each AC order start, where recorded, the available data indicated that the cohort was: almost entirely male (95%); most likely to be 25–44 years old (73%); largely White (80%); unlikely to have any religious faith (59%); about as likely as not to report some kind of disability (47%); mostly heterosexual (99%); nearly all composed of British citizens (96%); and unlikely to have a gender identity that was different from their sex (1%). The distributions within protected characteristics had many similarities to those of all prison leavers released on an adult licence over the same time period, although some differences remained.
- With regard to the combined protected characteristics of ethnicity, religion and nationality, the most common combination among AC order starts was White, no religion and British citizens at over 52 per cent of cases, where recorded. White,

British citizens of any religion represented around three-quarters of all AC order starts.

- There were no material differences in the estimated distributions of reoffending risk or protected characteristics between AC order starts and those starts resulting in an EM tag.

Overall perceptions of the project

The police, the MoJ AC Hub and EM service providers³ were generally positive about the project. One perceived benefit that they highlighted was a belief that it deterred people on probation from committing further crime. Although there were many aspects of the project that probation staff highlighted as positive, they had concerns about staffing constraints on delivery.

Some frontline probation practitioners expressed the opinion that location monitoring using GPS EM tags contradicted the intended aim of rehabilitating offenders. In particular, it was mentioned by some respondents that they deemed the use of the tag to be more punitive than rehabilitative.

Police respondents liked the capability of the project's crime mapping⁴ tool, and they expressed a desire to have direct access to the AC Self-Service Portal.⁵

Use of tools

Frontline probation practitioners reported the work involved in supervising a case under the AC Project was not accurately reflected in the workload management tool.⁶ Many probation respondents stated that most repeat offenders within the project generally required more frequent checks to ensure they were complying with their EM AC order. For instance, this involved requests from the police to assess a possible match to the offender's location and an acquisitive offence. It was reported that the probation workload

³ Respondents were from EMS Capita, which provided the field and monitoring service, and Airbus, which provided the IT capability for crime mapping.

⁴ Where the location data of an AC monitored person on probation were matched against police crime data to determine whether the monitored person was in the vicinity of an acquisitive crime around that time.

⁵ A tool available to probation practitioners to manage people on probation monitored under the AC Project. It is used to check compliance against licence conditions. The software service provider is the EM provider Airbus.

⁶ A tool which analyses the cases held by a probation practitioner and provides a percentage output reflecting their work capacity.

management tool failed to account accurately for this time spent assessing the tagging data on behalf of the police, which was often seen as time-consuming.

A common feature used on the Self-Service Portal by frontline probation practitioners was the live location feature to assess EM battery breaches⁷ and places of interest for monitored people on probation. It was reported that this tool was beneficial in managing people on probation and encouraging compliance, such as using the tool to check their compliance in relation to exclusion zones and curfews. Alongside these perceived benefits, challenges were raised in having manually to filter times and dates on the portal to assess physical movements. Some frontline probation practitioners commented that this process could be automated because they said it can take up a significant portion of their time.⁸

Training and support

Respondents had mixed views on whether sufficient training and support was received throughout the project. The MoJ Hub caseworkers and frontline probation practitioners discussed the difficulty of carrying out tasks efficiently because they felt that they had received limited training. An example of this includes probation respondents experiencing difficulties in understanding how to interpret the location monitoring data on the Self-Service Portal.

Data issues

There were mixed views from police force respondents as to whether the data sharing arrangements adequately support the aims of the project. Some police respondents stated that having access to the Self-Service Portal would positively contribute to the effective management of offenders. In some instances, police reported that data sharing improvements would enable a more efficient response to episodes of EM non-compliance.

⁷ Confirmed instances of EM non-compliance with respect to any part of the person on probation's monitoring requirements – e.g., curfew, flat battery, entering an exclusion zone. It is then a matter for the probation practitioner to determine whether a formal licence breach has occurred.

⁸ An automated system to assess offender's movements is specifically prohibited in guidance.

The MoJ Hub reported errors in the data they received from both the police and EM providers, resulting at times in a backlog of unreliable data received from some police forces.

Partnership working

Challenges were reported in relationships with EM providers – notably, delayed communication from the service providers and delays in installing EM tags on eligible people on probation.

Staff resources

While most stakeholders generally identified that staff resources were sufficient at the time of interview, concerns were raised about being under-resourced if the AC Project workload were to increase.

Frontline probation practitioners commented that monitoring the GPS tag on the Self-Service Portal was resource intensive. Probation respondents suggested that additional staff would be required if the workload were to increase so as to continue assessing the location data and thus ensuring the effective management of AC monitored people on probation.

The findings from probation staff suggest that the AC Project has negatively affected the already resource constrained Probation Service, given that a successful national roll-out of the intervention relies on being adequately staffed.

People on probation eligibility

Probation respondents highlighted that the most common reason for not monitoring people on probation when they were otherwise eligible under the AC Project was unsettled accommodation. As accommodation details were sometimes not confirmed until the day of release from prison, probation practitioners said that they were unable to provide the necessary details to EM service providers in a timely manner to install the EM tag.

There were also mixed views on the process for assessing AC eligibility. Some probation practitioners reported that the process was straightforward, whereas others stated the process can be labour intensive and could be streamlined, such as by receiving clearer guidance on eligibility.

Feedback from people on probation

Notwithstanding the limited number of respondents, monitored people on probation highlighted the perceived advantages and disadvantages of being supervised under the AC Project. While only a small sample, the respondents felt that being electronically monitored under the project had helped them to live a law-abiding life.⁹ In particular, they said that the GPS tag had allowed the opportunity to avoid exposure to negative influences, such as encouraging them to avoid contact with individuals associated with their prior offending.

There were also some perceived negative impacts of the GPS tag which related mainly to mental health and wellbeing, including discomfort with wearing the tag. The respondents described the difficulty in concealing their tag from members of the public due to the large size and the weight of it, especially in the summer months. Concerns were also raised around being continuously monitored by authorities, which caused feelings of paranoia among some monitored people on probation.

Simplifying the project

Some respondents believed there were ways in which the project could be simplified and streamlined, such as making the eligibility criteria clearer and reducing the 12 hour time frame¹⁰ for crime mapping.

1.3 Implications

Stakeholders who participated in the qualitative data collection were generally positive about the AC Project. In particular, people on probation who participated in the research felt their enrolment in the project helped them to live a more law-abiding life, and there was a widespread view among stakeholders that this intervention acted as a reoffending deterrent among adult prison leavers released on licence.¹¹

⁹ Findings were based on a limited number of interviews with five people on probation.

¹⁰ The time window during which a monitored person's location could be matched to an acquisitive offence.

¹¹ This perception will be tested in the planned impact evaluation based on data extracted from the Police National Computer regarding the number of cautions and/or reconvictions in court within 12 months of prison release among the treatment group and a comparator.

In terms of an area for improvement, more effective quality assurance generally would help to avoid issues such as the wrongful enrolment of people on probation and with any inaccurate data provided by the police for crime mapping purposes.

Other areas for improvement included better communication between stakeholder groups (including clearer data sharing protocols) and additional training/guidance in relation to the AC Project, not least around how to interpret the location monitoring data. There were also suggestions by stakeholders to streamline some AC Project processes and to make easier the identification of eligibility.

Notably, the Probation Service does not appear to be adequately equipped for a further expansion of the AC Project given current staffing levels.

2. Introduction

The AC Project started in April 2021 when the Compulsory Electronic Monitoring Licence Condition Order 2021¹² came into force. This project entails the mandatory use of GPS tags with respect to qualifying offenders who have been released from prison on licence. The project began in six police force areas (PFAs) in mid-April 2021.¹³ The number of PFAs was expanded to 19 in late September 2021.¹⁴ Those people on probation who were initially eligible for mandatory enrolment were:

- an adult convicted of an in-scope acquisitive offence, including burglary and robbery, and the acquisitive crime was their principal offence;
- serving a standard determinate sentence of 12 months¹⁵ or more for the specific eligible offence;
- the prison leaver is released to live in an eligible police force area; and
- does not meet one of the exclusion criteria of living at an address without an electricity supply, has a physical impairment preventing them from wearing an EM tag or is mentally unable to comply with requirements of EM.

This eligibility for the AC Project is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

¹² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/330/made>

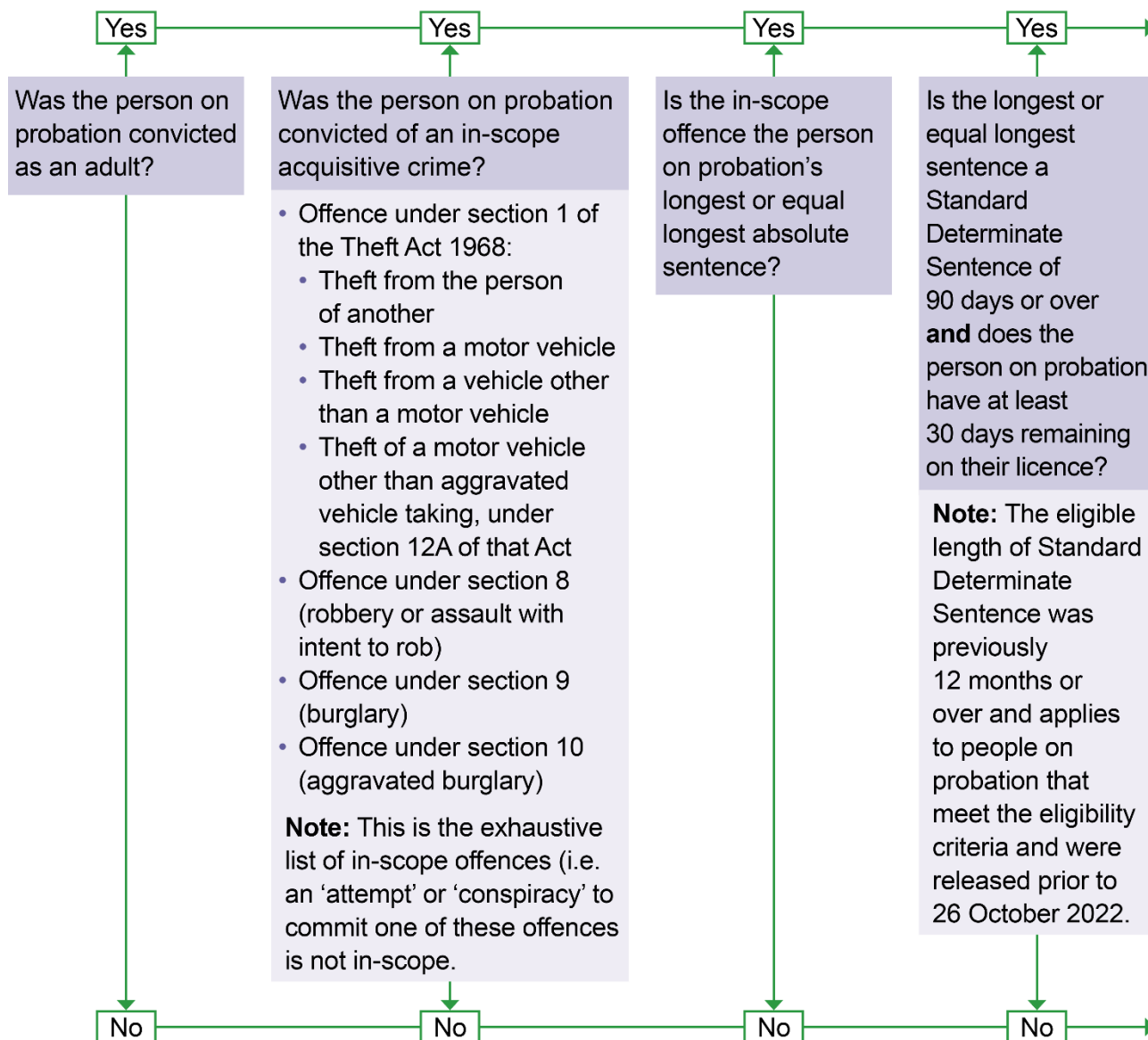
¹³ Avon & Somerset, Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Gwent, Humberside and West Midlands.

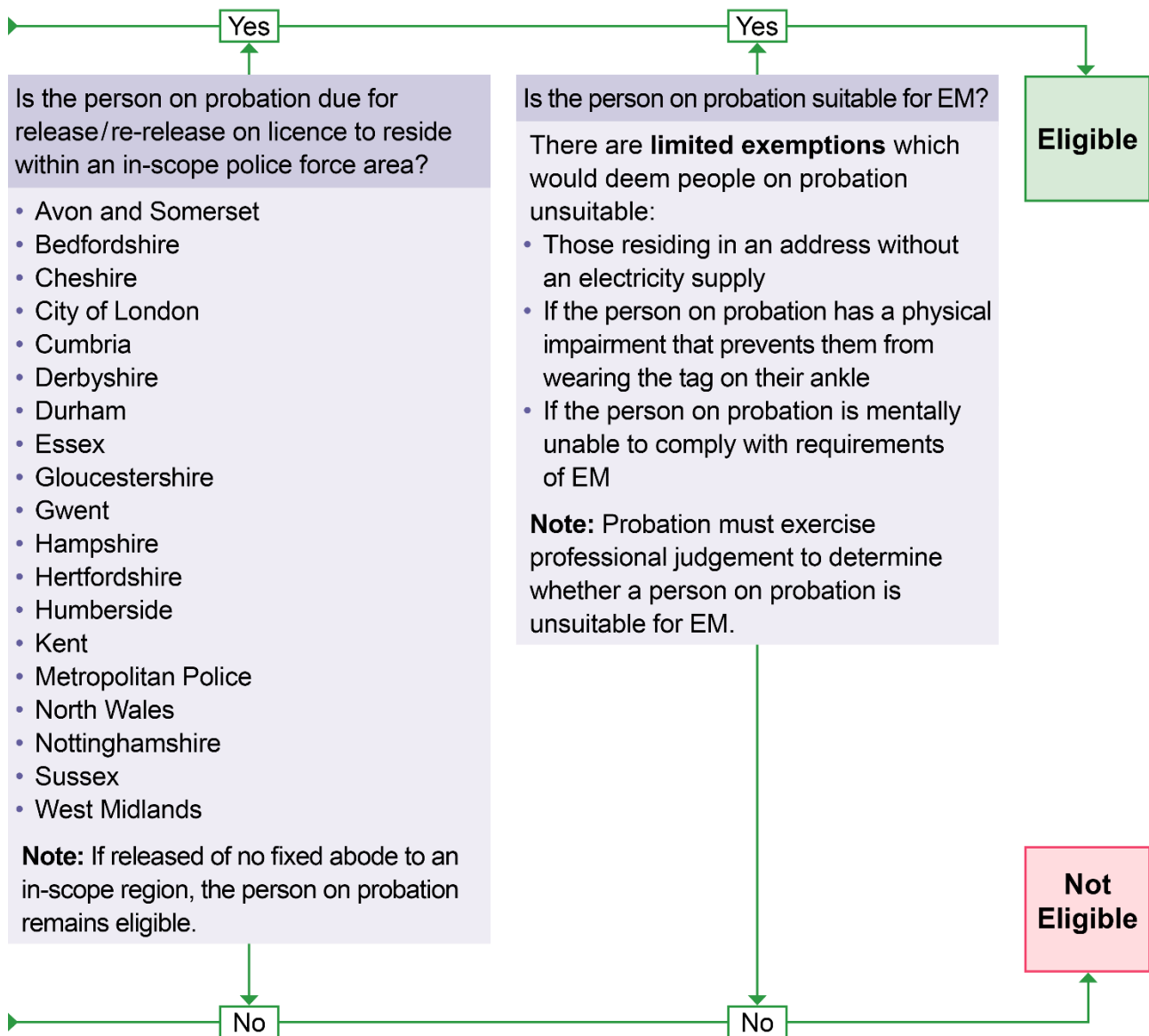
¹⁴ Bedfordshire, City of London, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Metropolitan Police, North Wales, Nottinghamshire and Sussex.

¹⁵ The custodial sentence threshold was lowered to at least 90 days in late October 2022. A process evaluation for the additional 3–12 month AC cohort is published separately.

Figure 2.1: Offender eligibility criteria for the Acquisitive Crime Project

To be in-scope for the Acquisitive Crime project, the person on probation must meet **all** of the following criteria. If the person on probation does meet the eligibility criteria, they **must** be tagged for the compulsory trail monitoring conditions and will take precedent over other EM cohorts (i.e. Alcohol Monitoring on Licence). For further detail, please see the **EM Acquisitive Crime – Probation Guidance**





2.1 Context of EM and the AC Project

Electronic Monitoring (EM)

EM was introduced in England and Wales during 1999 to support the criminal justice system.

It is a way of remotely monitoring and recording information on an individual's whereabouts or movements, using an electronic tag that is normally fitted to an individual's ankle. The tag transmits this information to a monitoring centre where it is processed and recorded in case management systems. Staff in the monitoring centre then review this information to see whether an individual is complying with the conditions of their curfew or other EM requirement. Where a monitored individual is not complying, the EM provider either acts on this information or provides it to the relevant authority to take any required enforcement action.

EM can be used as part of an individual's bail conditions, a community sentence and/or a prison leaver's licence conditions. EM can currently take various forms:

- Curfew monitoring – a time range during which the individual must remain inside their residence, which is monitored with a Radio Frequency (RF) tag, linked to a base station within the home. An associated use is Home Detention Curfew, which is open to suitable candidates for early release from prison.
- Location monitoring – an individual's whereabouts is recorded at all times using Global Positioning System (GPS) tags. The information generated is used by probation and can be made available to police to confirm the individual's location at the time of an alleged offence. A related use is exclusion zone monitoring, which determines whether an individual enters a prohibited area.
- Alcohol monitoring – a specialised tag that can detect the presence of alcohol in small quantities in the perspiration from an individual's skin so as to monitor compliance with alcohol abstinence requirements. This is typically used where alcohol consumption is considered to be a contributing factor in someone's offending behaviour.
- Special uses – in specific cases such as compassionate release from prison on temporary licence; and the limited number of high risk (e.g., Terrorism Act) people on probation who are subject to GPS tagging and other intensive management schemes.

At the end of June 2024, the total actively monitored EM caseload in England and Wales was approximately 20,900, of which 35 per cent was curfew monitoring, over 50 per cent was location monitoring and the remainder was alcohol monitoring.¹⁶

The MoJ has previously published an EM Strategy¹⁷ and associated update.¹⁸

Acquisitive Crime (AC) Project

Adult acquisitive offenders in England and Wales tend to have higher than average rates of proven reoffending: 21 per cent of those convicted of robbery and 50 per cent of those convicted of theft reoffend within a year, compared to around 22 per cent for all other principal offence types.¹⁹ This is coupled with relatively high rates of crime outcomes where the police investigation completed without the identification of a suspect: in 49 per cent of robbery cases and 74 per cent of theft cases, compared to 39 per cent of all recorded crime outcomes.²⁰

As part of the AC Project, data from GPS EM were also used for “crime mapping”. This overlaid reported crime data from the police with location monitoring data to identify any people on probation wearing an EM AC tag who were in the vicinity of a reported acquisitive crime within up to 12 hours of its occurrence. A match for a monitored individual occurred when there were a minimum of two consecutive GPS location points within the crime radius, currently defined as a 100 metre radius around the coordinates of a reported crime.²¹

There is limited UK and international evidence to date on the effectiveness of EM, where existing studies have mixed conclusions on its effectiveness in reducing reoffending. This project is intended to help build the evidence base regarding the most effective uses of EM through a series of evaluations.

¹⁶ For further statistics on EM use, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/electronic-monitoring-publication>.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electronic-monitoring-strategy>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electronic-monitoring-in-the-criminal-justice-system/electronic-monitoring-in-the-criminal-justice-system>

¹⁹ The 12 month reoffending rate among all adult offenders in 2021/22 was 25 per cent. Excluding all theft and robbery principal offences lowers this overall reoffending rate to 22 per cent. (Table A4a, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b0f637f2718c000dfb1c52/proven-reoffending-jan22-mar22-annual.ods>)

²⁰ Table 2.2, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023>

²¹ The crime radius was 150 metres at the start of the AC Project, which was reduced to 100 metres in September 2021 due to a large share of proximity alerts requiring no further action.

2.2 Evaluation aims and objectives

This report sets out the main findings from the process evaluation that was conducted to evaluate how well the AC project was delivered and how well it was seen to be operating in practice with respect to the initial cohort of eligible prison leavers released on licence – i.e., those sentenced to at least 12 months in custody where the principal offence was one of the eligible acquisitive offence types. The AC Project was expanded in October 2022 to those serving a shorter sentence of between 3–12 months. Views about this other AC cohort are published separately.

A series of future evaluation stages will also be delivered in respect of the AC Project for the 12 month+ cohort: (i) an impact evaluation to test whether location monitoring has had a statistically significant effect on 12 month proven reoffending of the treatment group relative to a counterfactual; and (ii) an economic evaluation which will assess whether the project's quantifiable benefits offset its estimated costs given the impact achieved.

This report focuses on the key findings from interviews conducted with those individuals involved in the project and provides insight from an operational perspective.

The objectives of the process evaluation were to:

- Understand how the AC Project was working from an operational perspective.
- Identify how probation and police managed people on probation who were enrolled in the AC Project and subject to Integrated Offender Management (IOM)²² arrangements.
- Gather the perceptions of people on probation monitored under the project.
- Identify the lessons learned and suggested improvements.
- Gather perceptions on whether the appropriate training and support was provided to use the capabilities of the project.
- Identify factors that worked well and less well for whom and why.

²² IOM refers to a multi-agency response to crime so as to identify and manage persistent and problematic offenders. (See <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-probation/specific-types-of-delivery/integrated-offender-management/> for further information.)

3. Methodology

3.1 Quantitative data

Data collection

Numerical data on the AC order starts that arose between April 2021 and June 2022 were provided by the main EM service provider, EMS Capita, to the MoJ as part of the business-as-usual activities required by the EM contract. This dataset was then matched to wider data contained in nDelius, which is the management information system of the Probation Service. This matching enabled analysis of protected characteristics and other variables such as risk of reoffending and risk of serious harm.

The data matching was undertaken using NOMIS and PNC numbers, which were provided by the EM service provider and manually corrected where necessary. A further check of the strength of matching was carried out using individuals' first names and last names plus dates of birth, as recorded by the EM service provider and by nDelius, all of which indicated a high degree of confidence in most cases. Poor matches were investigated and manually rectified so as to generate the best possible match. Following the correction of erroneous matching variables and the addition of missing identifiers, 100 per cent of AC order starts over the time period were successfully matched to individual people on probation recorded within nDelius.

The Open Geography Portal²³ was also employed to identify the police force area of each participant in the AC Project based on the postcode recorded for each AC start.

For the purposes of comparison, summary estimates of the same protected characteristics were also obtained from nDelius in respect of all prison leavers released on an adult licence across England and Wales over the same time period as the AC order starts. This totalled 75,882 prison leavers whose dates of releases were recorded on nDelius as falling between 12 April 2021 and 30 June 2022 inclusive. Note that not all of this group was

²³ <https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/>

made up of unique individuals – some of them would have been released from prison on more than one occasion during this period.

AC project issues

Analysis of the AC order starts up to June 2022 resulted in a finding that a handful of orders resulting in a tag installation had exceeded the maximum legal duration for AC enrolment. As a result, HMPPS undertook a comprehensive manual check during early 2024 of a sample of almost 500 EM orders that were classified as AC within the management information supplied by the EM service provider and that resulted in a successful tag installation. This check was intended as a wider one-off verification exercise to provide an additional quality assurance.

The sample was made up of three groups: all AC order starts up to mid-January 2024 associated with a subsequent summons or charge following crime mapping by the MoJ Hub; those AC order starts up to June 2022 where the matched data recorded on nDelius did not appear to be consistent with a theft or robbery principal offence type; and a random selection of other AC order starts up to December 2023 that were classified as AC.

The results of this verification exercise, which are set out in Table 1, indicate that each group in the sample experienced some wrongful enrolments in the AC Project over this time period: 20 per cent (or 101 members) of the overall sample contained invalid enrolments; and a further 20 per cent (or 98 members) could not be classified as either valid or invalid. Furthermore, 14 of the summonses/charges following crime mapping were of ineligible prison leavers, seven of whom were reconvicted as of May 2024, although it is not known how much weight was placed on the location monitoring data in securing a reconviction.

Table 1: Summary of HMPPS verification exercise

Group	Number	Valid	Invalid	Unclear
Summons/Charge	109	87 (80%)	14 (13%)	8 (7%)
Anomalies	189	63 (33%)	75 (40%)	51 (27%)
Random	195	144 (74%)	12 (6%)	39 (20%)
Total	493	294 (60%)	101 (20%)	98 (20%)

As a result of this, the HMPPS National Probation EM team has changed its processes and has checked all new EM AC order starts since April 2024 to confirm their eligibility. The team will continue this activity indefinitely until it is demonstrated that the revised quality assurance measures put in place following the results of the aforementioned verification exercise have had the necessary effect. Thereafter the team will undertake a 10 per cent sample of all EM AC order starts each month to verify that there is a consistently high level of adherence to the AC Project's eligibility criteria.

For the purposes of this process evaluation, all AC order starts found by the verification exercise to be ineligible or whose eligibility for the AC Project was unclear have been excluded from this report's quantitative summary.

Among the 1,652 separate order starts up to June 2022 that were originally classified as AC in the management information:

- 33 orders were excluded because they were found to be duplicates²⁴ or otherwise created in error;
- eight orders were excluded because they were found to be invalid due to the prison leaver being released to reside in an ineligible police force area, of which four resulted in an EM tag installation;
- 72 orders were excluded due to the HMPPS verification exercise (five from the "summons/charge" group, 48 from the "anomalies" group plus 19 from the "random" group), all of whom had an EM tag installed; and
- 11 orders were excluded on further investigation of the EM service provider data because they were found to be invalid following tag installation and the EM AC order then terminated shortly afterwards (e.g., due to an ineligible offence or an insufficient number of days remaining on licence at the point of release).

Following the aforementioned exclusions, there was an estimated total of 1,528 valid AC order starts between go-live in April 2021 and 30 June 2022, which corresponded to 1,437

²⁴ If the EM AC order is found to contain errors upon creation, the EM service provider's staff typically terminate the order on the same day or shortly afterwards and then create what is effectively a replacement AC order. However, the service provider's MI still retains a record of the erroneous AC order, which therefore resulted in a number of initial duplicates that had to be removed from the AC dataset at the outset.

unique individuals.²⁵ This represented six people who were the subject of three AC order starts each, 79 people who were the subject to two AC order starts each and the remaining 1,352 people who were the subject of one AC order start each.

Separately, there were an estimated 1,389 AC valid order starts over the period that resulted in a successful tag installation, which was made up of 1,318 unique individuals. This represented four people who were the subject of three AC order starts each, 63 people who were the subject of two AC order starts each and the remaining 1,251 people who were the subject of one AC order start each.

Limitations

As is common with administrative datasets that were not compiled for the purposes of research, some variables were subject to missing values and likely data input errors – notably, dates of release from prison and dates of recall to prison recorded on nDelius. These were manually corrected where identified and where possible to do so (e.g., using prison leavers' formal licences and/or revocation notifications collected by the EM service provider).

In addition to the AC issues highlighted above, other challenges were encountered regarding the available quantitative data:

- The recorded date of release from prison was extracted from nDelius by matching the NOMIS number of each AC start because, legally, the actual date of release from prison was the start of the individual's enrolment in the AC Project. Following the manual data cleaning that was possible, a comparison of the prison release date and the recorded AC order start date showed that: (i) the two dates were identical in 93 per cent of cases over the time period in question; (ii) the release date preceded the order start in six per cent of cases; and (iii) the release date exceeded the order start date in one per cent of cases.
- The recorded AC order end date did not always align with the actual end of AC location monitoring, which was also a function of the EM tag removal date and any date of recall to prison. In particular, there were instances when there was a significant delay before the EM service provider was informed of a recall. When

²⁵ Uniqueness was determined by distinct NOMIS identifiers.

eventually discovered, the AC order was terminated and the order end date then recorded as the date on which the order was terminated as opposed to the date of licence revocation. As a result, the revocation date was taken to be the AC enrolment end date if this was earlier than either the listed AC order end date or the date of tag removal.

- In the event that an individual who was enrolled in the AC Project returned to prison before the original AC order end date, the standard procedure was for the AC order to be terminated early and the EM tag removed (although not necessarily in that sequence). If the individual was subsequently re-enrolled in the AC Project following re-release from prison, then a new AC order and therefore a new “Subject ID” were created by the EM service provider, both of which were treated as a new AC order start in this report.

3.2 Qualitative data

Data collection

Interviews were held with respondents in 11 police forces and seven probation regions in the AC Project between June and September 2022 who volunteered to participate. This primary data collection was intended to solicit respondents’ views on the implementation, operation and perceived effects of the project.

The achieved sample for each stakeholder group was:

- 23 IOM police officers (five senior police officers and 18 frontline officers);
- eight respondents working for the private companies that were operating under contract to provide EM services (two senior members of staff and six other members of staff across EMS Capita and Airbus);
- 14 IOM probation practitioners (three senior probation practitioners and 11 frontline staff);
- 13 MoJ AC Hub staff²⁶ (four senior staff and nine caseworkers); and
- five people on probation who were being monitored under the AC Project.

²⁶ The majority of Hub staff interviewed were not in the permanent employment of the MoJ.

Approach

A total of 63 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted across the pilot areas via telephone or video call.

Questions were asked of stakeholders around: their experience of the AC Project; what they found worked well or less well; views on training offered; any improvements that could be made; views on the impact of the project for the criminal justice system; and what lessons could be learnt from the roll-out. Some questions put to respondents were adapted to their profession or circumstances.

The purpose of one-to-one interviews was to ensure that all respondents had sufficient time to discuss their experiences of the AC Project's implementation, perceived impact and future recommendations in detail. One-to-one interviews also ensured responses were not subject to any biases from other respondents.

With consent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse the interview transcripts. The coding framework incorporated both deductive coding (i.e., derived from predetermined themes) and inductive coding (i.e., themes emerging from responses).

The respondents' (MoJ Hub, police, probation staff and people on probation) data presented predetermined themes that met the objectives of the research – e.g., engagement with other stakeholders; perceived impact of the project on reoffending; identifiable improvements; and the perceived effect of location monitoring.

Analysing the respondents' data adopting an inductive coding approach presented new emerging issues from the roll-out of the project. For example, staffing levels, GPS tag functionality, data reliability and quality were reported.

Limitations

The main methodological challenge identified in the fieldwork was the recruitment of respondents. A key aim was to ensure the cohort demonstrated a representative sample of individuals with direct experience of the AC Project.

Participation was encouraged by periodically highlighting to stakeholders the advantages of being involved in the research, such as having the opportunity to feedback their experience and directly influence any further roll-out of the project. However, recruitment remained challenging, as many individuals expressed that they either had busy schedules or a lack of direct involvement in the project.

People on probation who were being monitored under the AC Project were a hard-to-reach subgroup, partly due to probation practitioners having an important role in putting forward monitored individuals expressing an interest to participate in the study. This indirect contact method presented issues in obtaining written consent forms and contact information in a timely manner. However, offering flexibility in the dates and times of interviews as well as extending the fieldwork schedule did encourage some participation.

As a result, a small sample size of five people on probation volunteered to be interviewed for the research, which means that the views presented by this group of respondents may not represent the full range of views held by people on probation. Furthermore, there were no interviews with individuals who had previously been monitored as part of the AC Project and recalled due to licence non-compliance, so findings do not encompass the full range of experiences in respect of this sub-group.

Despite the EM service provider G4S being encouraged to participate in the study, there were no volunteers from any G4S staff.²⁷

²⁷ G4S provided the EM tagging equipment.

4. Summary of quantitative data

This chapter summarises the main elements of the available management information regarding the AC order starts that arose between go-live in April 2021 and the end of June 2022. This time horizon corresponds to the period of the planned reoffending analysis for the 12 month+ cohort.

The estimates are based on the management information provided by the main EM service provider and on matched data extracted from nDelius, which is the Probation Service's case management system in England and Wales. The available MI was manually cleaned where data errors were identified and it was possible to do so.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the chapter summarise volumetric data for two groups over the period up to June 2022: every AC order start ("All AC orders"); and only those AC order starts that resulted in the installation of an EM tag ("All AC tagged").

Section 4.3 presents the percentage distribution of the estimated durations of AC enrolment, where there was a successful tag installation.

Sections 4.4 and 4.5 sets out the percentage distributions of reoffending risk and the various protected characteristics among all AC order starts ("All AC orders") and compares them to those of all prison leavers who were released on an adult licence ("All prisoners released on licence") over the same time period. Statistically significant differences are highlighted for these sections of the chapter.²⁸

The distributions associated with the subset of AC order starts that resulted in a successful tag installation are not represented separately in sections 4.4 and 4.5 because they are very similar to those of all AC order starts.

²⁸ A two proportion Z-test is used to determine whether there is a difference between two estimated percentages. A Welch t-test is employed to test whether the estimated means of two variables are different. A statistically significant difference for either test is determined by a "p value" of 0.05 or less. The "p value" represents the probability of an estimated difference being as large or larger if the null hypothesis of no difference is true, given the sample sizes in question.

All quoted percentages are rounded to the nearest one per cent so as to avoid spurious accuracy. In addition, estimates are suppressed where there were fewer than three individuals in any sub-group to protect the confidentiality of individuals and to prevent disclosure.

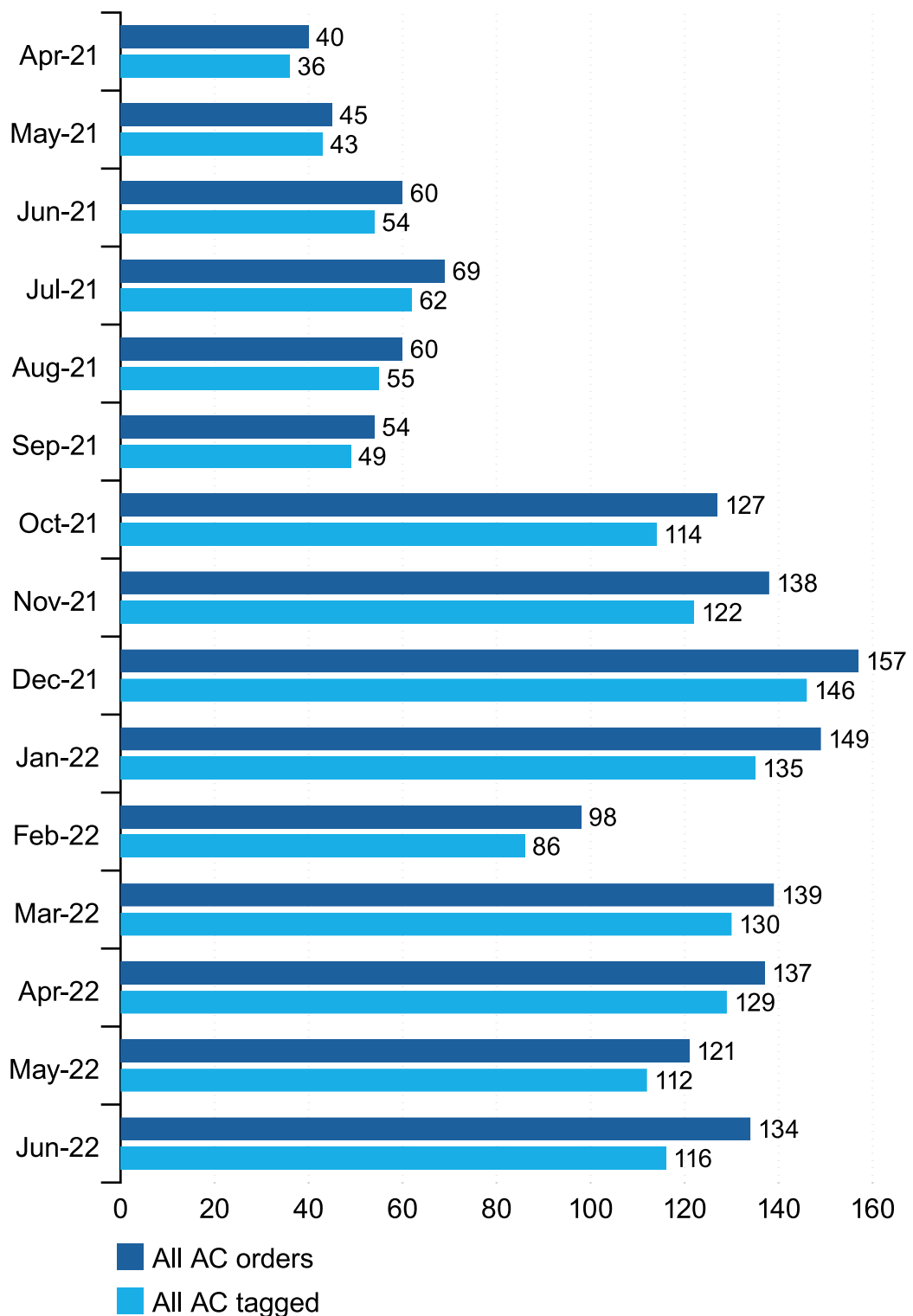
4.1 Volumes by month

There were an estimated 1,528 valid AC order starts in total between April 2021 and June 2022, based on the available management information and following an HMPPS verification exercise. During this time period there were 1,389 AC order starts that had a date of either tag installation or removal recorded in the available data. One can therefore infer that about 91 per cent of all AC order starts resulted in a successful tag installation.²⁹

Figure 2.1Figure 4.1 illustrates the reported number of AC order starts each month over the period in question.

²⁹ An unsuccessful tag installation is typically result of the subject not making themselves available on the appointed date. An early recall to prison is another reason why a successful tag installation does not take place.

Figure 4.1: Monthly number of AC order starts, April 2021 – June 2022



In the first six calendar months the number of AC order starts ranged between about 40 and 70 (or an average of 55) per month, while the number resulting in tag installations varied between around 35 and 60 (or an average of approximately 50) per month.

Following the expansion of the AC Project to an additional 13 police force areas in late September 2021, the number of all AC order starts increased to a range of 95 to 160 (or an average of some 130) per month between October 2021 and June 2022, while the number of tag installations increased to a range of 85 to 150 (or an average of approximately 120) per month.

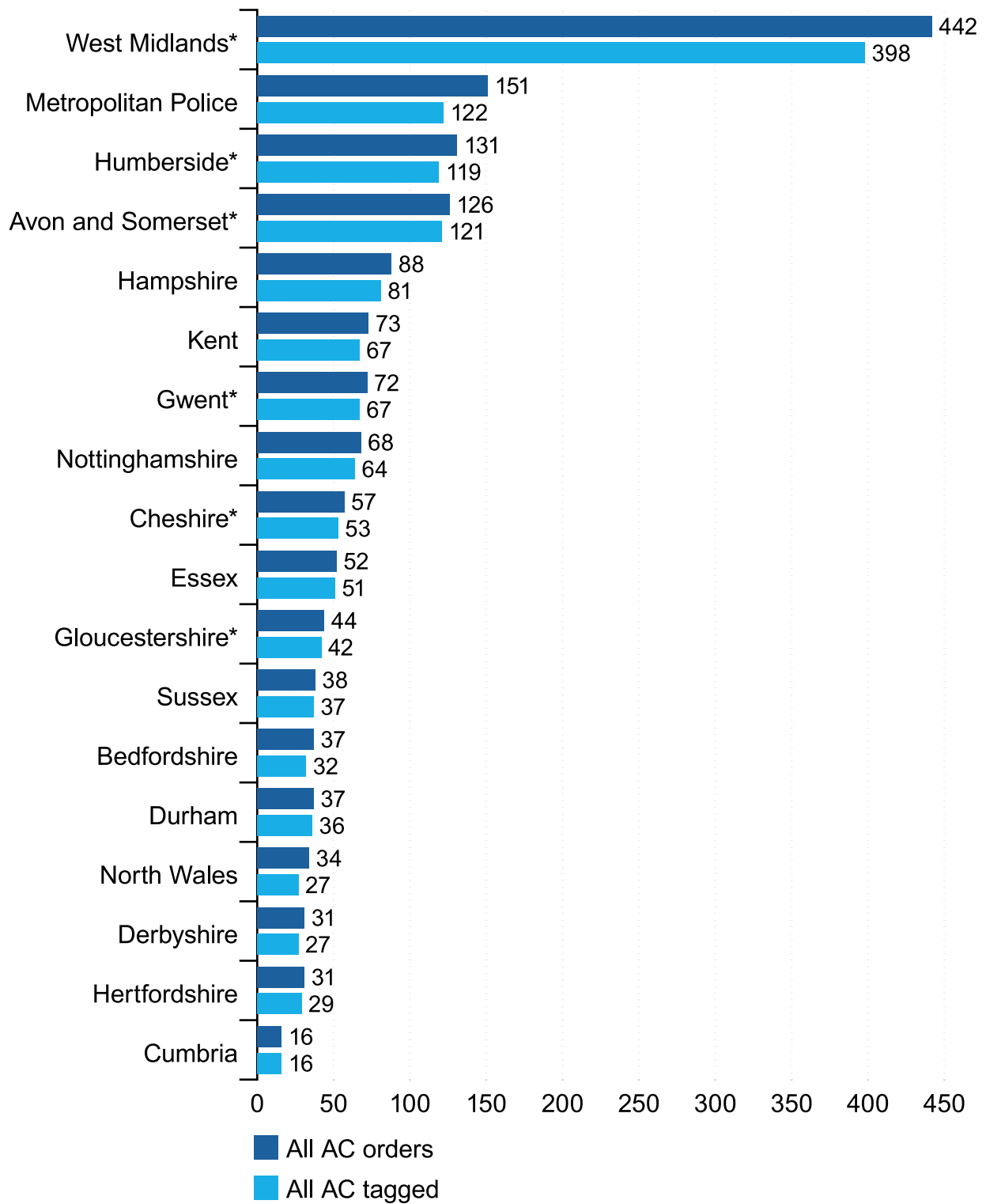
4.2 Volumes by region

Police Force Area (PFA)

Figure 4.2 shows the volumetric contributions of each of all 19 PFAs in descending order between the go-live date and the end of June 2022.³⁰

³⁰ Based on Open Geography Portal data (<https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/>).

Figure 4.2: Number of AC order starts by PFA, April 2021 – June 2022



* Denotes one of the six PFAs in which the AC project first went live during April 2021

During this period the West Midlands PFA made the largest contributions for both groups within the period: around 440 (or 29%) of all AC order starts; and about 400 (or 29%) of tag installations. This was followed in size by the Metropolitan Police, where there were around 150 (or 10% of) all AC order starts and about 120 (or 9% of) tag installations.

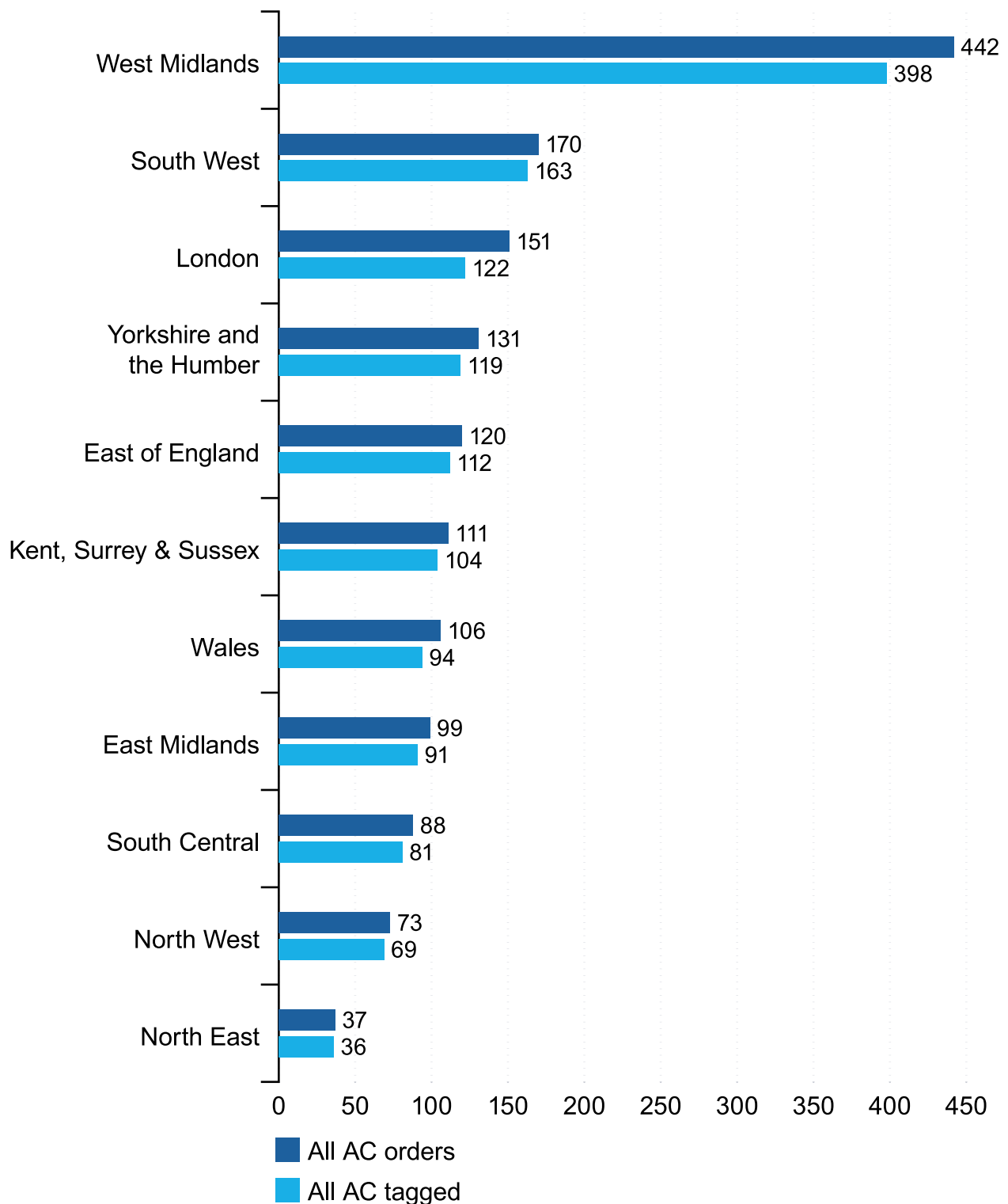
In contrast, the Cumbria PFA made the smallest non-zero contribution: close to 20 (or 1%) for each group. The City of London PFA was the smallest contributor overall with zero AC order starts and installations.³¹

Probation regions

Although the AC project is legally organised on the basis of PFAs, Figure 4.3 disaggregates for the purposes of illustration the total volume of all AC order starts and of successful tag installations by probation region for the period up to June 2022.

³¹ No postcodes in the available MI were matched to the City of London PFA over the period. This is likely because the PFA is the smallest in England and Wales by population – approximately 11,000 people resided in the City of London in mid-2022, which represented 0.02 per cent of the estimated England and Wales population. (Table P3, *Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables – September 2023*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>)

Figure 4.3: Number of AC order starts by probation region, April 2021 – June 2022



The West Midlands probation region made the largest contributions to the total volume over the period: some 440 all AC order starts and 400 tag installations (both 29% of their totals). This was followed by the South West probation region at around 170 (or 11% of) all

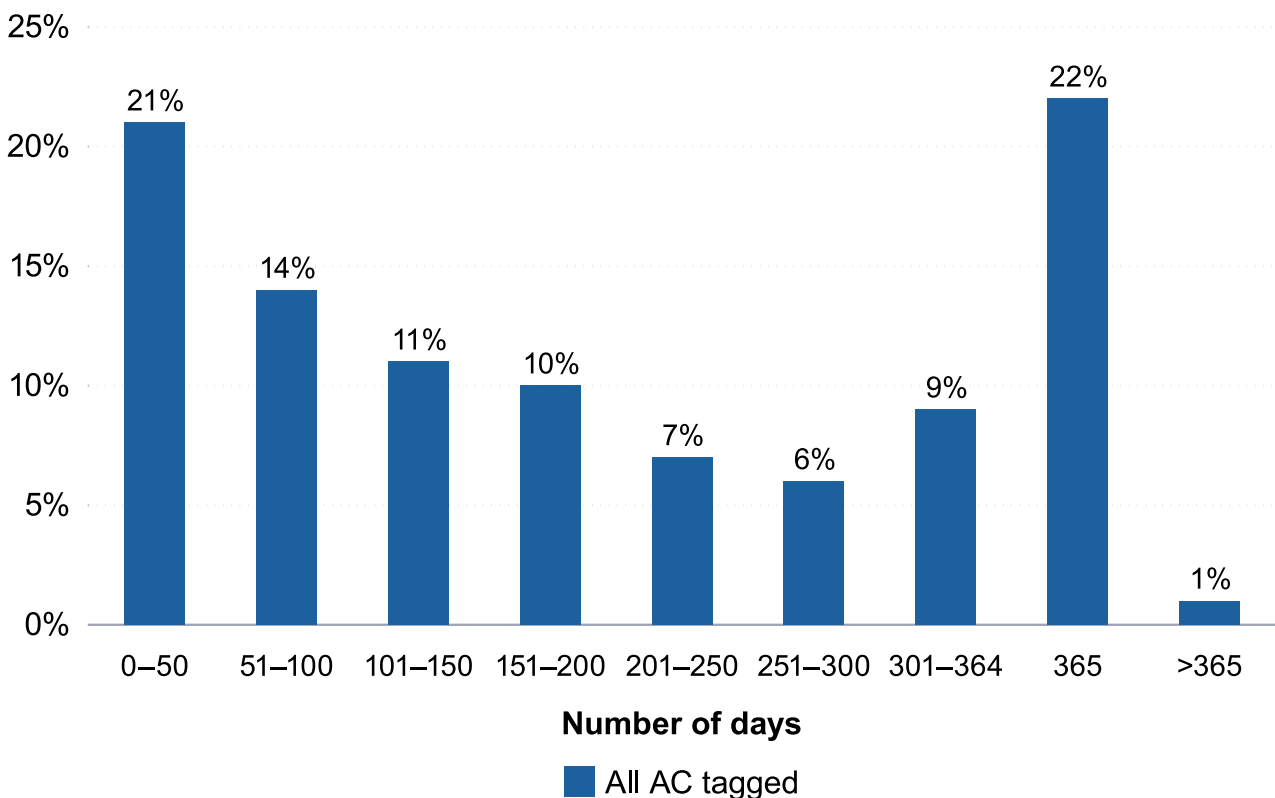
AC order starts and 160 (or 12% of) tag installations and by London at about 150 (or 10%) and 120 (or 9%) respectively.

The North East probation region made the smallest contribution to the total volume at close to 40 (or 2–3%) for both groups.

4.3 Duration of AC enrolment

The estimated distribution of the outturn duration of AC enrolment where there was a tag installation is shown in Figure 4.4. This estimate of the duration was based on the number of days between the recorded prison release date³² and the earlier of the recorded AC order end date, tag removal date or (where relevant) licence revocation date. The date of release was “day 0” and the first anniversary date of release was “day 365”.

Figure 4.4: Distribution of AC enrolment duration, April 2021 – June 2022



³² Legally, the AC Project “clock” starts on the date of release from prison on licence as opposed to either the date of tag installation or the AC order start date. The underlying legislation states that the total post-release duration of enrolment in the AC Project cannot exceed 12 months or the sentence end date, whichever is earlier.

The average number of days among AC order starts resulting in tag installation was estimated to be 190 days between the date of prison release and the end of the location monitoring. The estimated median duration of this time period was 174 days.

The single most common estimated duration was 12 months exactly in 22 per cent of AC order starts resulting in an EM tag, which was followed by the 0–50 day group at 21 per cent.

In one per cent of cases the duration was found to exceed the legal maximum of 12 months by between one and 66 days (or 15 days on average). Separately, the period of AC enrolment exceeded the sentence expiry date in almost one per cent of cases by between four and 151 days (or 57 days on average where identified).

On further investigation by HMPPS, it was established that administrative errors led to a small proportion of AC order starts having the condition imposed for longer than legally permissible over the period in question. These errors included the actual date of tag installation being used as the start of AC enrolment rather than the release date and miscalculations of the duration on the prison leaver's release licence.

4.4 Reoffending risk

This section of the chapter summarises the reported estimates of the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS) and the Risk of Serious Harm (RoSH) for two groups: all AC order starts; and a comparator of all prison leavers released on an adult licence.

OGRS is a statistical predictor of reoffending within 24 months based only on an individual's static risk factors – notably, age, sex and criminal history.³³ This predictor is expressed as a number between one and 100, such that values close to 100 indicate a high likelihood of reoffending within the time period and values close to zero indicate a low likelihood of reoffending.

RoSH is a statistical indicator of the likelihood of a future offence, if one occurs, that is considered life-threatening and/or traumatic, from which mental or physical recovery is

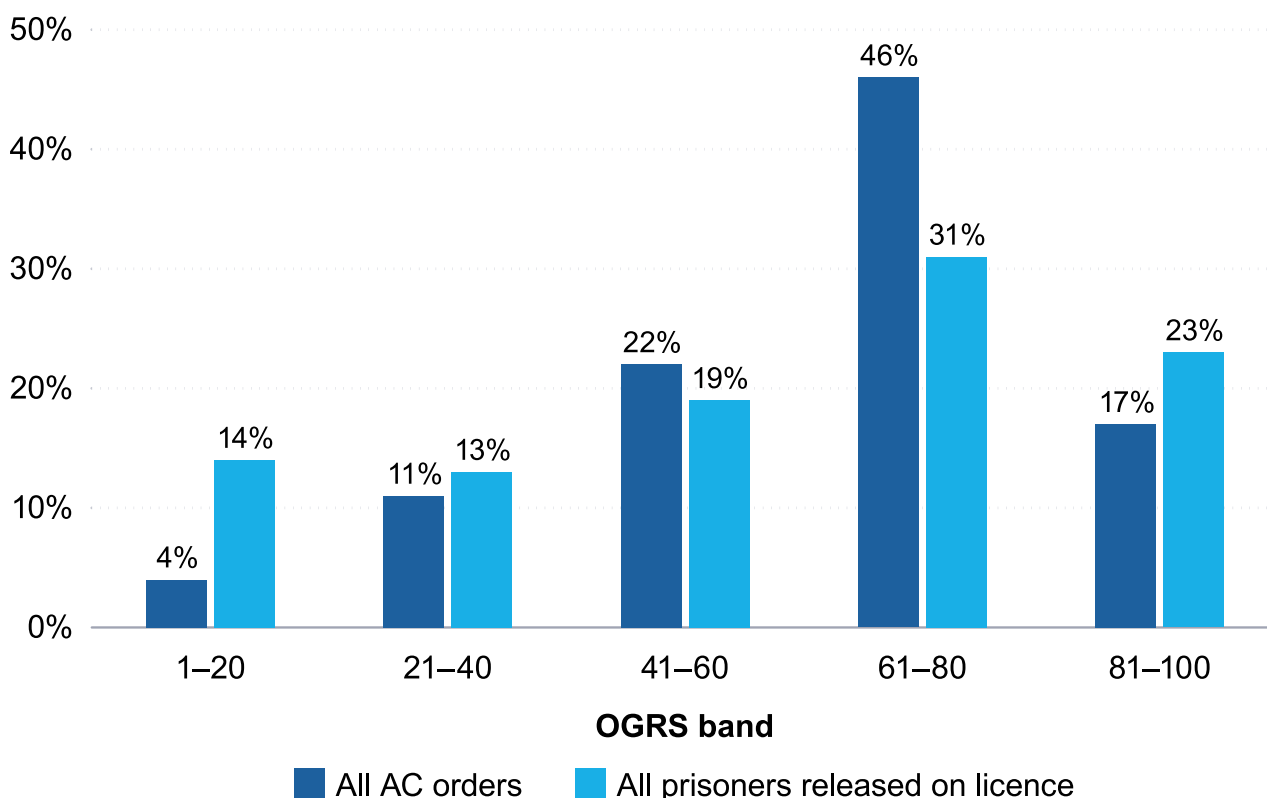
³³ See <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/1556521.pdf> for more information about OGRS.

expected to be difficult or impossible.³⁴ An individual's RoSH is normally represented as one of five broad categories that range from "low" to "very high".

OGRS

Figure 4.5 shows the estimated OGRS values within 24 months across five bands for all AC order starts³⁵ and all prison leavers³⁶ released on an adult licence, where recorded.

Figure 4.5: Distribution of OGRS values across five bands, April 2021 – June 2022



In general, AC order starts were more likely to have a higher reoffending risk than all prison leavers on an adult licence. For instance, the average OGRS value was 63 among the former and 58 among the latter, which was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$). The medians were 67 and 64 respectively.

All of the differences between the individual bands were statistically significant. The biggest difference was in the 61–80 band of OGRS values, where the proportion of all AC order starts was about 15 percentage points higher ($p < 0.01$). This was followed by the

³⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-risk-of-serious-harm-guidance-2020>

³⁵ N=1,520 after excluding the eight AC order starts for which no OGRS value was recorded.

³⁶ N=74,756 after excluding the 1,126 AC order starts for which no OGRS value was recorded.

41–60 band, where the proportion of all AC order starts was three percentage points higher ($p<0.01$).

In contrast, the proportions among all AC order starts were two percentage points lower in the 21–40 band ($p<0.05$), six percentage points lower in the 80–100 band ($p<0.01$) and ten percentage points lower in the 1–20 band ($p<0.01$) among all AC order starts.

RoSH

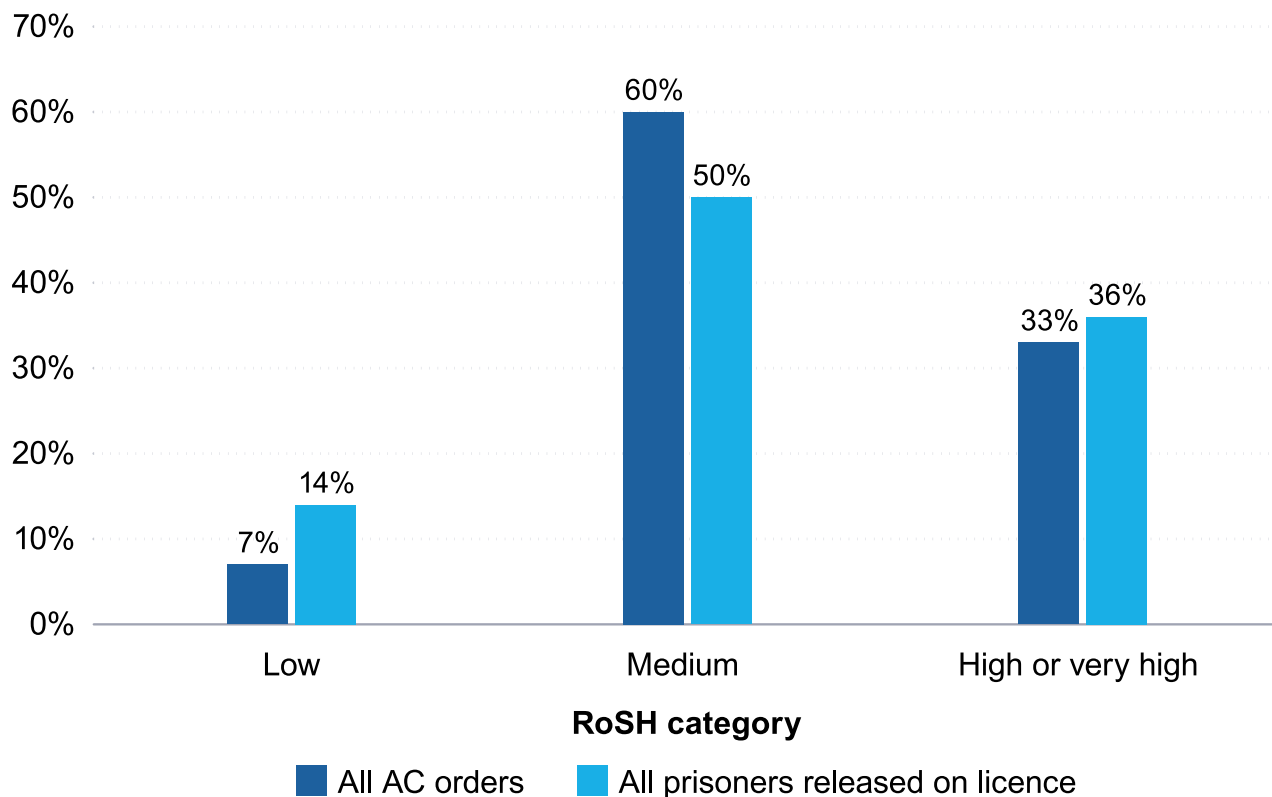
As shown in Figure 4.6, where recorded, the most likely risk of serious harm in any future reoffending was “medium” among all AC order starts³⁷ and among all prison leavers³⁸ released on an adult licence. However, the AC order starts were 10 percentage points more likely to be associated with the “medium” RoSH category, which was a statistically significant difference ($p<0.01$). The second most likely RoSH category among both groups was “high or very high”.³⁹

³⁷ N=1,517 after excluding the 11 AC order starts for which no RoSH estimate was recorded.

³⁸ N=73,760 after excluding the 2,122 prison leavers for whom no RoSH estimate was recorded.

³⁹ The “high” and “very high” RoSH categories have been combined so as to avoid the risk of identifying individuals.

Figure 4.6: Distribution of estimated RoSH, April 2021 – June 2022



In contrast, AC order starts were seven percentage points ($p < 0.01$) less likely than prison leavers on adult licences to have a “low” RoSH and three percentage points ($p < 0.01$) less likely to have a “high or very high” RoSH.

4.5 Protected characteristics

In the remainder of this chapter, the percentage estimates for various demographic variables are set out, which are based on the available management information from either the EM service provider or nDelius, where records were available.^{40,41} The estimates

⁴⁰ The available MI from the main EM service provider only records the protected characteristic of sex specifically, although age can be derived using the date of birth listed.

⁴¹ Estimates of a wider set of protected characteristics was derived using an extract from nDelius, which was obtained using matched NOMIS IDs as recorded by the EM service provider in the first instance. The available PNC number and associated date of birth were used to confirm the match and to correct it where necessary. To provide a final check, the strength of matching was estimated by separately comparing the similarity of first and of last names recorded in the combined EM service provider-nDelius dataset for all AC order starts. The average strength across the matched dataset was calculated to be 0.96 for both first and last names when examined independently, where a perfect match was defined as 1.00.

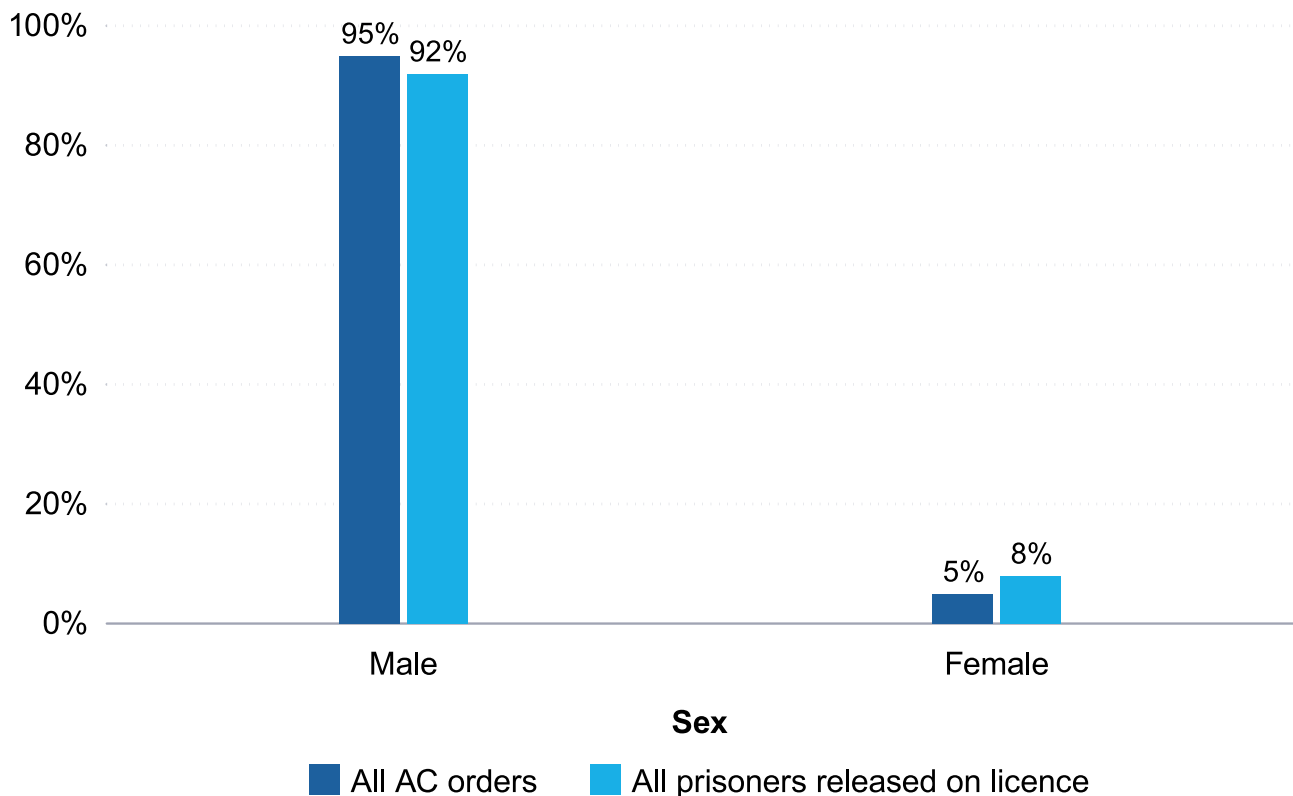
set out in this section are rounded to the nearest one per cent and therefore may not always sum to 100 per cent.

Estimated figures are presented for the distributions of protected characteristics among two groups: all AC order starts; and, as a broad comparator, all prison leavers released on an adult licence across England and Wales. The time period for both groups was April 2021 to June 2022 inclusive.

Sex

Figure 4.7 shows that the sex associated with all AC order starts⁴² was overwhelmingly male at 95 per cent. Only five per cent of this group was female, which was similar to the England and Wales prison population.

Figure 4.7: Sex distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



Compared to all prison leavers⁴³ released on an adult licence over the same period, the group of all AC order starts was three percentage points more likely to be male and three

⁴² N=1,528. There were no missing data with regard to sex.

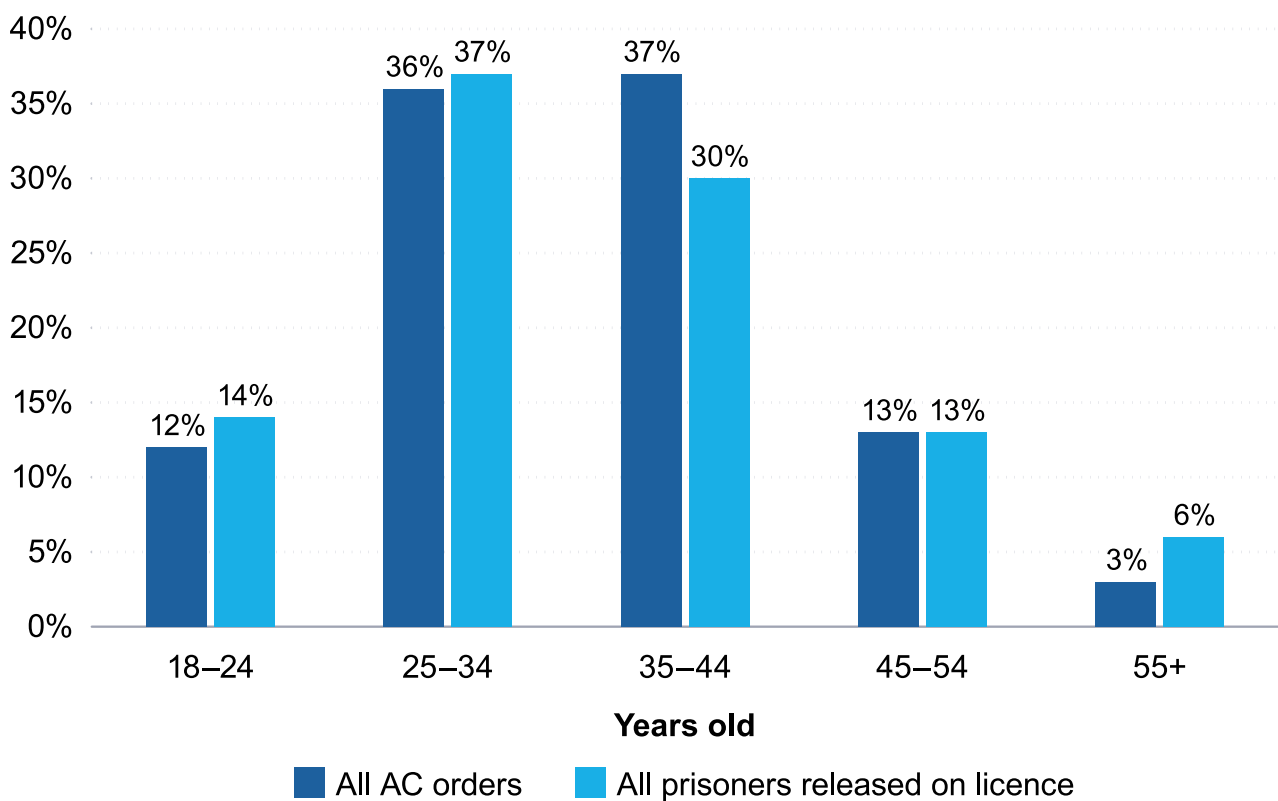
⁴³ N=75,783 after excluding the 99 prison leavers for whom no sex was recorded.

percentage points less likely to be female, which were both statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$).

Age

Figure 4.8 presents an age distribution, which is based on the age of the person at the time of the recorded start date for all AC order starts⁴⁴ and at the time of release from prison for the wider group of prison leavers⁴⁵ on an adult licence.

Figure 4.8: Age group distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



There were general similarities between the distributions of the two groups. For instance, the average age was 35 among all AC order starts and 36 among all prison leavers released on an adult licence, which was not a statistically significant difference. The median ages were 35 and 34 respectively. Moreover, some 70 per cent of each group was aged between 25 and 44 years old.

⁴⁴ N=1,528. There were no missing data with regard to age. The age groups of 55–64 and 65+ years old have been combined so as to avoid the risk of identifying individuals.

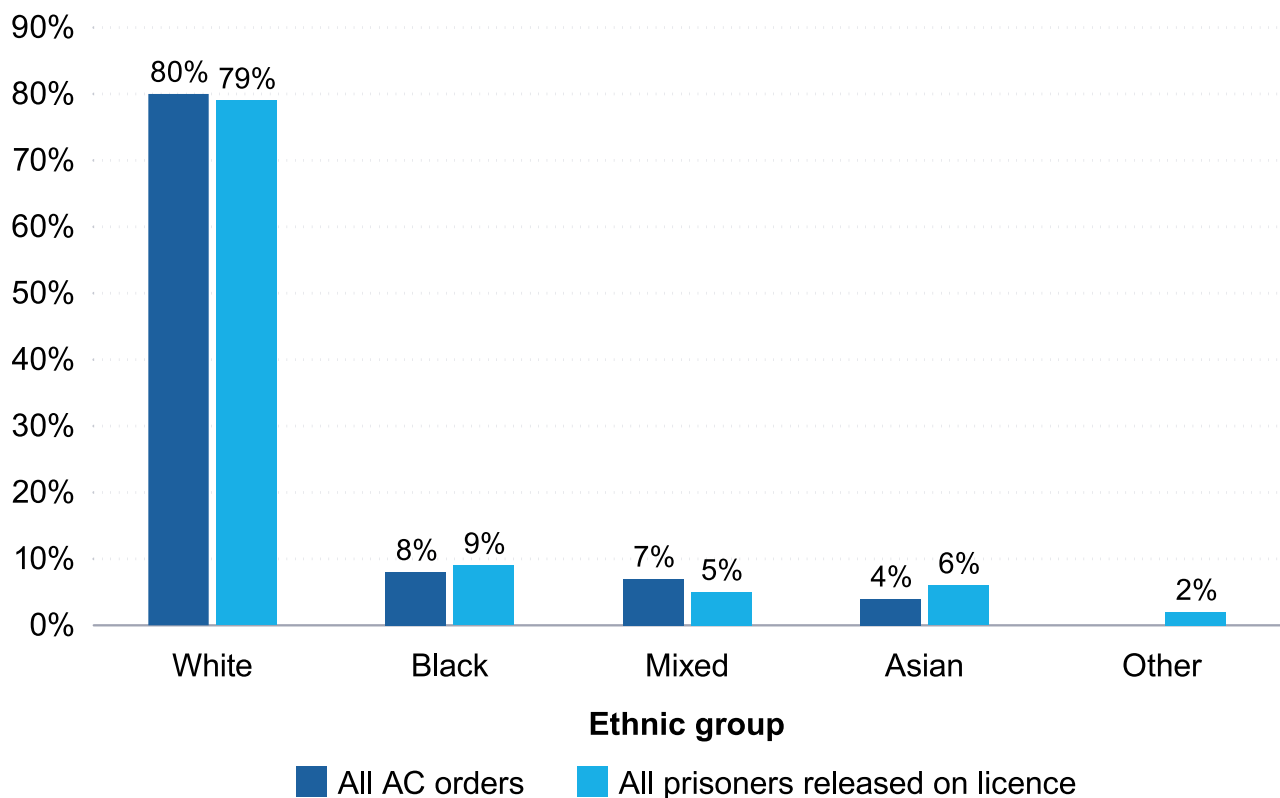
⁴⁵ N=74,105 after excluding the 1,777 prison leavers for whom no age at release was recorded.

However, the group of all AC order starts was seven percentage points more likely to be 35–44 years old ($p<0.01$). In addition, this group was three percentage points less likely to be 55+ years old ($p<0.01$) and two percentage points less likely to be 18–24 years old ($p<0.05$). There were no statistically significant differences between the groups of 25–34 year olds or 45–54 year olds.

Ethnicity

As illustrated in Figure 4.9, where recorded, the most common ethnicity among all AC order starts was White (at 80%). The next most common ethnicities were Black (8%), Mixed race (7%) and then Asian (4%). “Other” ethnicities were close to zero per cent.

Figure 4.9: Ethnicity distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



The distributions of the AC order starts⁴⁶ and adult licence prison leaver⁴⁷ groups were broadly similar over the time period – most notably, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups of White or of Black people.

⁴⁶ N=1,522 after excluding the six AC order starts for which an ethnicity was neither recorded nor disclosed.

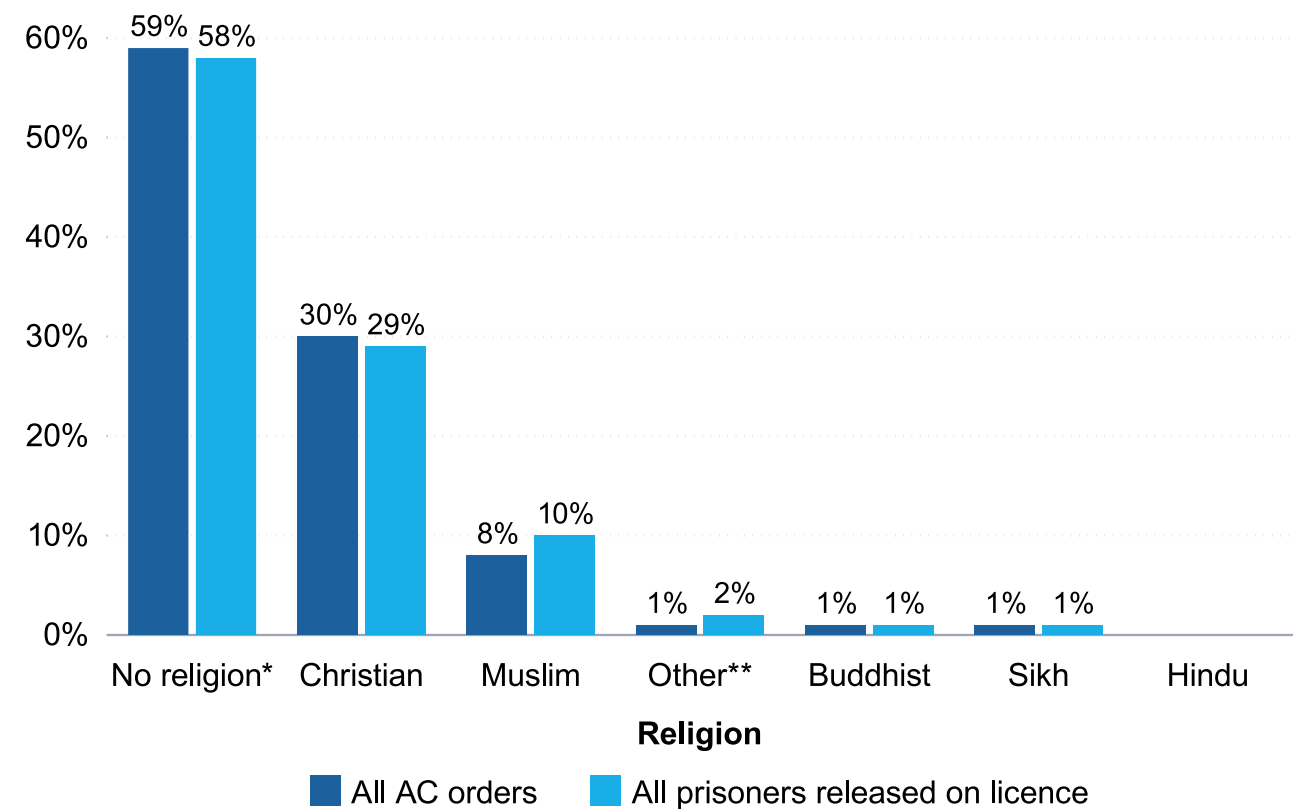
⁴⁷ N=74,618 after excluding the 1,264 prison leavers for whom an ethnicity was neither recorded nor disclosed.

The only significant differences were that the group of all AC order starts was two percentage points more likely ($p<0.01$) to be of mixed ethnicity, two percentage points less likely ($p<0.01$) to be Asian and one percentage point less likely ($p<0.01$) to have an “other” ethnicity.

Religion

Figure 4.10 shows that, where recorded, the most common religious faith among the groups of all AC order starts⁴⁸ and all prison leavers⁴⁹ released on an adult licence was “no religion” (close to 60%) followed by Christianity (around 30%). The least common religion presented in each group was Hinduism (close to 0%).⁵⁰

Figure 4.10: Religious faith distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



* Includes “agnostic” and atheist

** Includes Judaism

⁴⁸ N=1,304 after excluding the 224 AC order starts for which a religion was neither recorded nor disclosed.

⁴⁹ N=63,171 after excluding the 12,771 prison leavers for whom a religion was neither recorded nor disclosed.

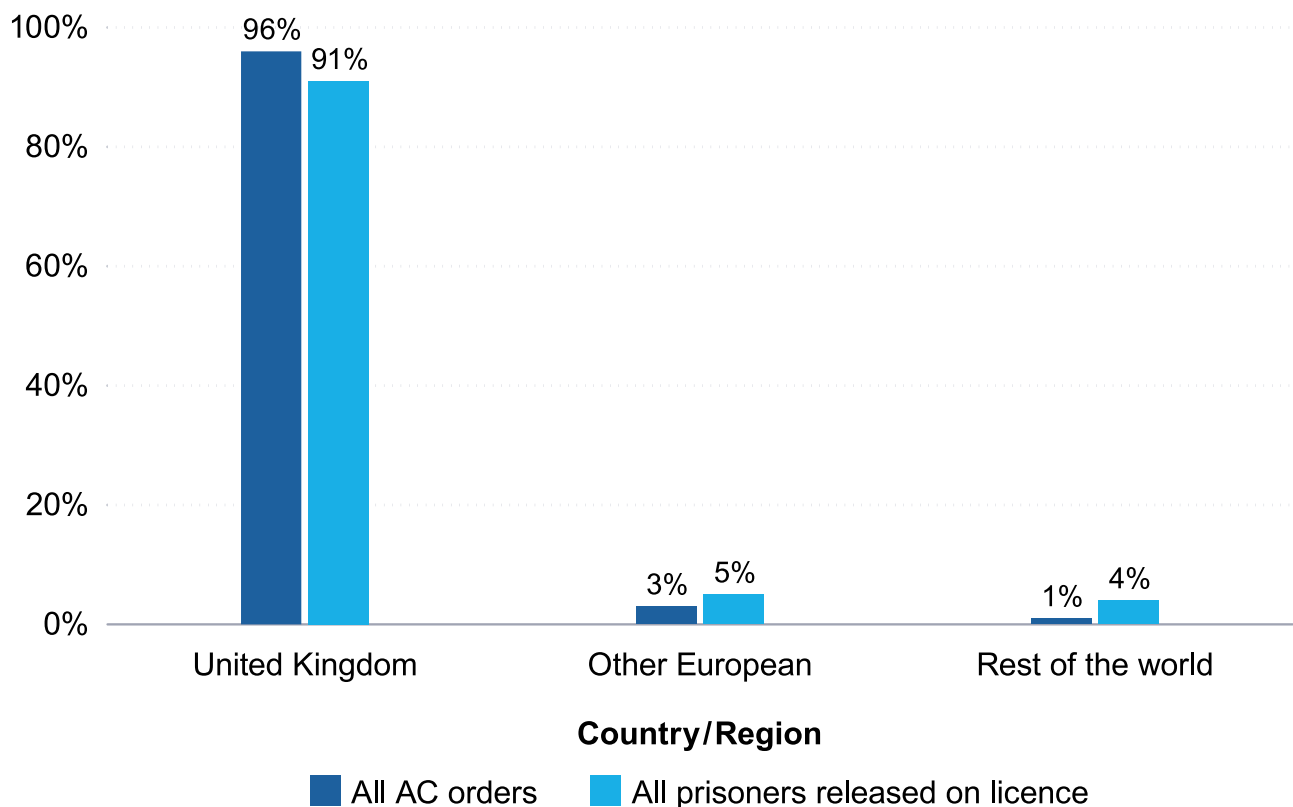
⁵⁰ Judaism has been combined with “Other” religions so as to avoid the risk of identifying individuals.

The overall distribution of religious faiths was similar between the two groups. Indeed, there was only one statistically significant difference with regard to religion: Muslims were two percentage points less likely ($p<0.05$) to be represented in the group of all AC order starts compared to all prison leavers.

Nationality

Where recorded, Figure 4.11 summarises the nationalities of the group of all AC order starts. This shows that the group was nearly all British citizens (96%) and that people from other European countries made up the next largest group (3%) followed by people from the rest of the world (1%).⁵¹

Figure 4.11: Nationality distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



In comparison to all prison leavers⁵² released on an adult licence, the group of all AC order starts was five percentage points more likely ($p<0.01$) to be British, two percentage points

⁵¹ N=1,501 after excluding the 27 AC order starts for which a nationality was neither recorded nor disclosed.

⁵² N=74,157 after excluding the 1,725 prison leavers for whom a nationality was neither recorded nor disclosed.

less likely ($p<0.01$) to come from other European countries and three percentage points less likely ($p<0.01$) to come from the rest of the world.

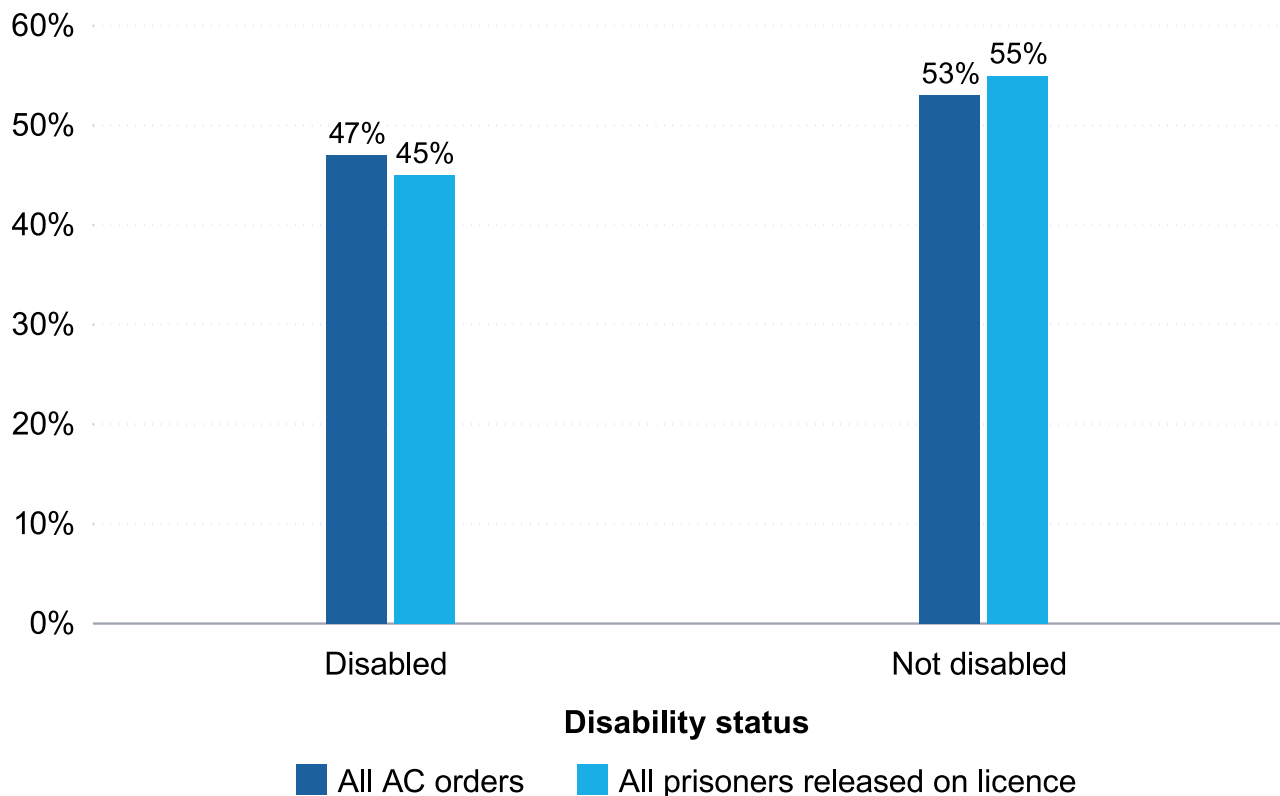
Despite these statistically significant differences, the likelihood of British nationality among both groups was still high, which was at least 90 per cent.

Disability

Just under half (47%) of the group of all AC order starts⁵³ was recorded as having a disability of some kind at release from prison – e.g., autism, dyslexia, hearing, learning, mental, mobility, disfigurement, speech and/or sight, as illustrated in Figure 4.12.

Consequently, just over half (53%) of the group did not have any disability recorded at release.

Figure 4.12: Disability status distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



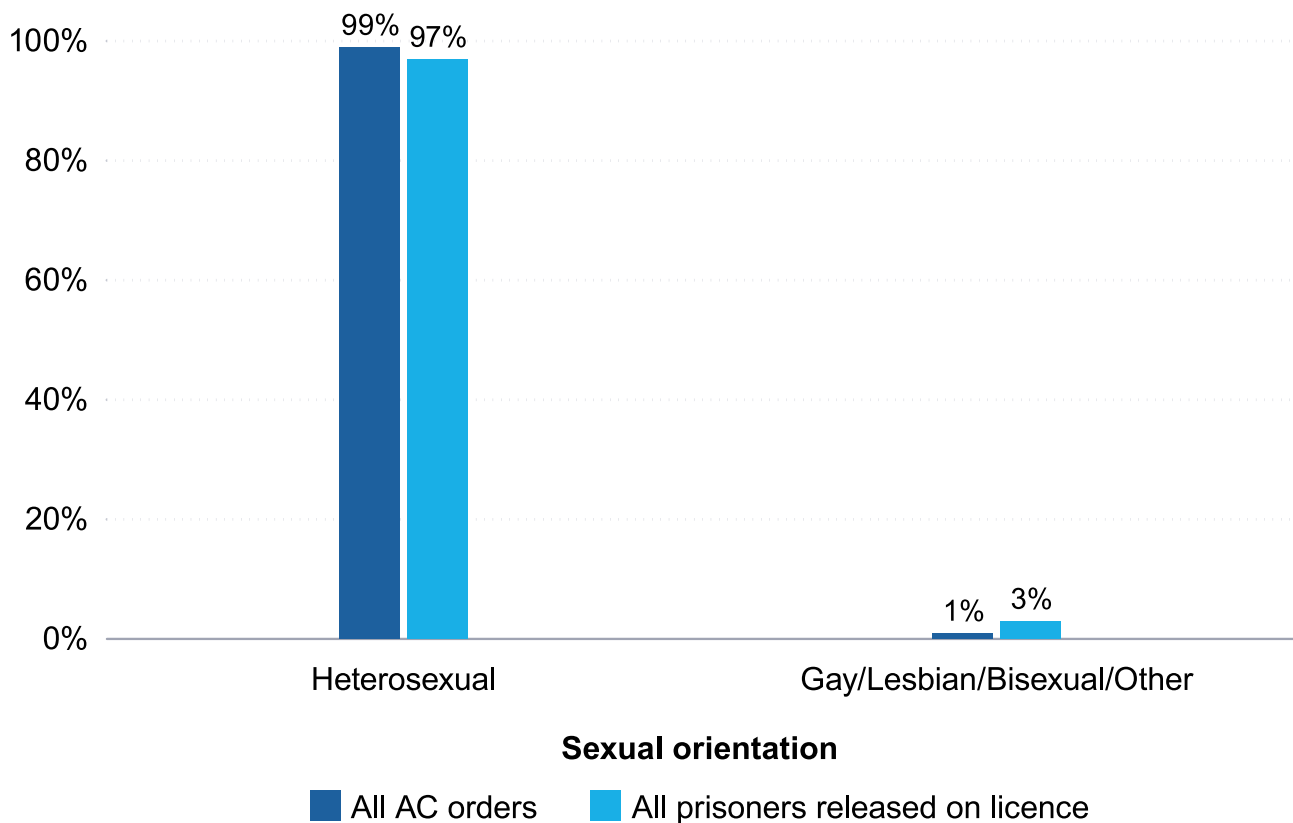
⁵³ N=1,528. There were no missing data with regard to a recorded disability status.

Among prison leavers⁵⁴ released on an adult licence, the proportion that had a recorded disability was similar (at 45%). There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups over the period.

Sexual orientation

Figure 4.13 shows that, where recorded, 99 per cent of the group of all AC order starts⁵⁵ described themselves as heterosexual, while around one per cent expressed a different sexual orientation.

Figure 4.13: Sexual orientation distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



This group was two percentage points more likely ($p < 0.01$) to describe itself as heterosexual than all prison leavers⁵⁶ released on an adult licence and two percentage points less likely ($p < 0.01$) to say that it had a different sexual orientation.

⁵⁴ N=75,784 after excluding the 98 prison leavers for whom no disability status was recorded.

⁵⁵ N=1,367 after excluding the 161 AC order starts for which a sexual orientation was neither recorded nor disclosed.

⁵⁶ N=68,080 after excluding the 7,802 prison leavers for whom a sexual orientation was neither recorded nor disclosed.

Gender identity

The ability to draw inferences about the likelihood of the group of all AC order starts that had a different gender identity to that of their legal sex was limited by incomplete data: 42 per cent of the available records for this group were missing within nDelius.⁵⁷

Where data were recorded, around one per cent of the group of all AC order starts expressed a non-binary gender identity, a different gender identity to their sex or preferred not to say.

With regard to all prison leavers on an adult licence over the period, 38 per cent of records on gender identity were missing.⁵⁸ Based on the recorded data, about two per cent of this group expressed a gender identity that was not the same as their sex.

Notwithstanding the lower response rates with regard to gender identity, the one percentage point difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Combinations of protected characteristics

Given the connections between ethnicity, religion and nationality in particular, Figure 4.14 sets out the distribution of the seven most common combinations of these three protected characteristics (PCs) among the group of all AC order starts, where all three variables were recorded.⁵⁹ The associated shares of all prison leavers released on an adult licence are also presented.⁶⁰

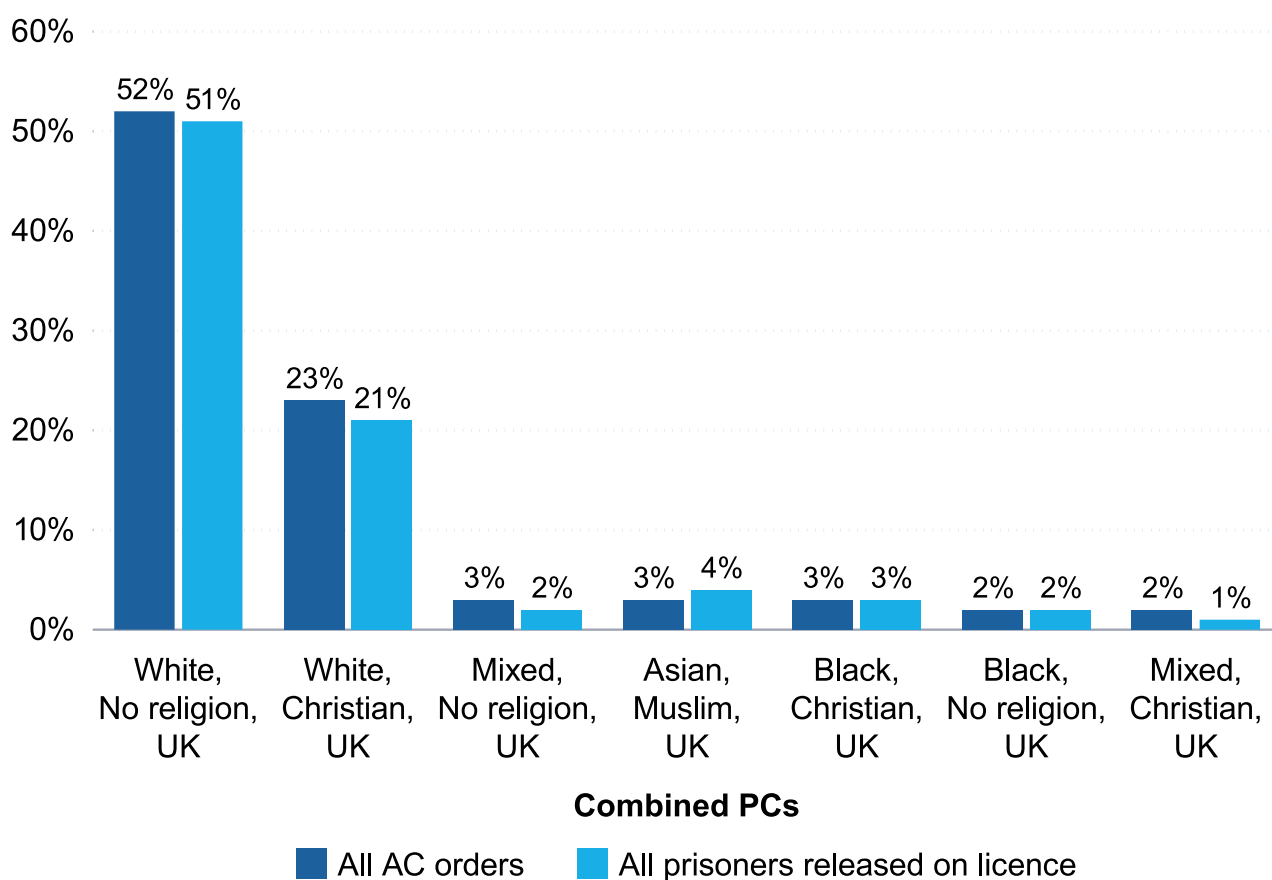
⁵⁷ N=892 after excluding the 636 AC order starts for which a gender identity was not recorded.

⁵⁸ N=46,784 after excluding the 29,098 prison leavers for whom a gender identity was not recorded.

⁵⁹ N=1,286 after excluding the 242 AC order starts for which any one of the three combined PCs was missing.

⁶⁰ N=62,436 after excluding the 13,446 prison leavers for whom any one of the three combined PCs was missing.

Figure 4.14: Most common PC combinations distribution, April 2021 – June 2022



There was only one statistically significant difference between the two distributions across the most common combined sets of ethnicity, religion and nationality protected characteristics: the Mixed ethnicity, no religion and UK subgroup of all AC order starts was one percentage point higher ($p < 0.01$) than among all prison leavers.

White, no religion British citizens made up the single largest share (51–52%) within both groups of all AC order starts and all prison leavers released on an adult licence. More generally, White British citizens of various religious faiths represented about three-quarters of each group.

Five of the seven most common combinations among all AC order starts related to non-White ethnicities: Mixed ethnicity, no religion British citizens (3%); Asian, Muslim British citizens (3%); Black, Christian British citizens (3%); Black, no religion British citizens (2%); and Mixed, Christian British citizens (2%).

None of the seven most common combinations among all AC order starts contained any citizens of countries other than the UK.

Overall, the top seven combinations of protected characteristics across all AC order starts represented 89 per cent of cases, which was four percentage points higher ($p < 0.01$) than among the associated combinations of prison leavers on adult licences over the same time period.

5. Overview of project roles

The AC Project takes a multi-agency approach by aligning with the established use of Integrated Offender Management (IOM). As the responsible officers for the AC cohort, the Probation Service can collaborate with other agencies, such as the police and MoJ Hub, through the IOM framework to enable a cross-agency response to crime. The sections below describe the roles of the stakeholders involved in the AC Project. The information should be considered in conjunction with the findings presented in this report.

5.1 Probation

Probation staff are responsible for identifying prison leavers for the AC Project. This is a compulsory licence condition, enshrined in legislation, where the people on probation who meet the eligibility criteria must have their location electronically monitored unless they are specifically exempt. Once they have been identified, the appropriate EM conditions must be added to the licence. Probation practitioners should work together with Prison Offender Managers to ensure that eligible individuals are prepared for release from prison with the EM tagging conditions. Probation practitioners are responsible for supervising and managing the whereabouts of monitored people on probation and collaborating with IOM partners.

Probation practitioners have access to the Self-Service Portal which helps to deliver the AC Project. Probation practitioners are responsible for amending or ending the EM AC order. The compulsory monitoring period is for the duration of the licence, up to a maximum of 12 months, commencing at the point of release from prison. This is not at the discretion of probation staff, so there are limited reasons for varying these conditions – e.g. if the person on probation subsequently resides in a police force area that is not one of the 19 currently eligible ones.

The GPS location data are automatically inputted into the Self-Service Portal to support probation practitioners with their management and rehabilitation activities, alongside supporting the police with the identification of re-offenders.

5.2 Prisons

Prisons should support probation staff, as the “responsible officers”, to ensure that the respective individual meets the eligibility criteria and that the licence is populated with the correct information. Prisons are responsible for calculating the prison leaver’s EM end date, which must be added to their licence.

Prison Offender Managers should collaborate with probation practitioners to ensure that eligible prison leavers are sufficiently prepared for being monitored under the AC Project upon release. Prisons are responsible for sending the licence and notification form to EM providers so as to organise the installation of the GPS tag.

5.3 Electronic Monitoring service providers

EMS Capita

EM field officers were employed by the main EM service provider, which was EMS Capita during the study period. When instructed to do so, field officers would install and remove EM tags from eligible people on probation, which would normally be undertaken between 7pm and midnight.

This company also provided the monitoring service and reporting on instances of EM non-compliance, which were conveyed to probation practitioners via the Self-Service Portal or via email. The main EM service providers also liaised with the monitored people on probation such as in cases where the tag battery dropped to 20 per cent. Field officers would visit a residence, such as when it was suspected the person on probation has tampered with their tag. If the person were not available for the EM equipment to be installed, field officers would make a second attempt. If they were unable to install the equipment on this second attempt, it would be recorded as an instance of non-compliance. The main EM service provider also provided caseload data to Airbus.

Airbus

Airbus was contracted by the MoJ to provide certain EM services – notably, the crime mapping for the AC Project. The company has developed the crime mapping tool used by the MoJ Hub. The crime mapping tool ‘matches’ data received from the police of locations that acquisitive crimes took place and data on the locations that monitored people on

probation have visited. The purpose is to see whether a person monitored under the AC Project was within 100 metres of a crime taking place at the time.

Airbus has also provided the Self-Service Portal technology which allowed probation staff to determine the locations of people on probation being monitored.

G4S

G4S was the company contracted by the MoJ to provide the GPS EM tags. No one from G4S participated in this research.

5.4 MoJ Hub

The results from the AC crime mapping tool are broken down into two sub-sections: “matched crimes” – namely, a crime search that locates an individual within two consecutive pings and a 100 metre crime radius, both of which are within 10 minutes either side of the reported crime time horizon; and “unmatched crimes” – those crime searches that have not met the criteria for crime matching).

The matched crimes are allocated to MoJ Hub Caseworkers so as to create a proximity alert report and to check the tag wearer’s details on the crime date against the tag wearer caseload provided by the main EM supplier. Once complete, the proximity alert report is quality assured by a Hub Manager. Following quality assurance, the report is sent to the police force that submitted the crime search.

After a proximity alert is issued, the Hub can provide further data in form of a contextual report, which allows for up to 12 hours of data to be requested by the police force to support their ongoing investigation.

Alongside contextual reports, the Hub also deal with urgent crime mapping requests from police forces. These requests are usually when there is either immediate risk to the public or a crime has missed the daily submission. An urgent request can only be accepted if there is not a named suspect.

The MoJ Hub will share a proportionate amount of information with the police force to assist investigations. It should be noted that the MoJ Hub is not responsible for servicing External Agency Requests.⁶¹ This is a matter for the main EM service provider.

5.5 Police

The police benefit from the crime mapping service to assist them with identifying re-offenders. If any monitored people on probation were found to be in the vicinity of a given crime, the police would receive a report from the MoJ Hub to support their investigation.

The police can also make queries to the EM service provider regarding certain people on probation monitored under the AC Project to ascertain their whereabouts at a particular time or live location. Police are required to complete an External Agency Request form to receive this data.

⁶¹ An External Agency Request (EAR) is a request for EM data relating to a person on probation that would not routinely be disclosed. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, there are strict conditions that have to be met in order to share data for law enforcement purposes.

6. Summary of qualitative data

6.1 Probation

Interviews were held with both frontline probation practitioners and senior probation officers. The senior staff interviewed had generally positive perceptions of the AC Project, in particular their belief in its ability to help rehabilitate and prevent the monitored person on probation from reoffending. However, some respondents felt that the project largely involved enforcement and data collection, which was believed by some probation staff to contradict the aim of rehabilitation.

Importantly, a recurring theme expressed by both senior and frontline probation staff was concerns about the volume of caseloads in general, not just specific to the AC Project, and the external pressures on staff. Staffing constraints across the Probation Service of England and Wales was a clear issue raised by respondents impacting upon the success of the project.

Frontline probation practitioners stated that some of the processes could be automated with the Self-Service Portal. They also commented that they wanted more training on the portal to understand the data more thoroughly and that clearer eligibility criteria would be helpful.

Additionally, probation respondents said that the communication with EM service providers could be improved, particularly relating to the processes of arranging tag installations and decision making. Like other stakeholders, a view existed that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the data sharing processes.

Perceptions of the project

Senior probation officer respondents were positive about the perceived impact on reoffending and rehabilitating people on probation. It was felt that use of the GPS tag has led to numerous 'success stories' with regard to producing qualified matches for crime mapping and excluding people on probation from investigation who were suspected of committing a crime. However, other respondents said that their time could be better spent.

“When I could literally be sitting with someone and helping them and changing their lives, which I literally came to this job to do, and it’s now not anything to do like probation is nothing to do with that anymore. It’s no longer helping someone. It’s now returning people to custody. And so, yeah, I just find that a lot of our things are admin whereas they’re not actually rehabilitation. So, it’s much more punitive and a bit more political than it’s ever been before, to be honest.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Frontline probation practitioner respondents raised concerns about the lack of clarity surrounding data sharing with the police, where it was highlighted that this uncertainty could increase the risk of data breaches. A common view among respondents was that it would be helpful to provide additional staff to undertake administrative tasks moving forward to ensure resources were used more efficiently.

Overall, probation respondents raised concerns regarding some aspects of the project including staffing, resources, guidance materials and data sharing arrangements.

Interactions with stakeholders

Probation staff who participated in the research had mixed perceptions of interactions with other stakeholder groups.

Respondents were positive about their engagement with the IOM police, and it was widely agreed that the roles and responsibilities were well understood. Staff commented that the monthly meeting with IOM police is a supportive communication channel. It was believed that these meetings were an efficient way to resolve any issues.

“It’s been really positive with the police, their Offender Management model is really closely aligned with ours...I’ve got another team where I work with the police and it’s very, very different, so I know that we’re very fortunate in that respect.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Communication with EM service provider staff was considered challenging. Probation respondents described instances where there were delays in EM field officers going out to approved addresses to install a tag. It was felt that this was due to a lack of standardised guidance for when a person on probation was unavailable to be installed.

An example was quoted of how field officers had failed to acknowledge emails which stated suitable times to visit an address for installation. As a result, field officers repeatedly visited addresses without success such that the eligible person on probation was not installed with a GPS tag for several days. A previous EM project also found the time it takes to fit a tag on an offender to be of concern to stakeholders (Kerr, Roberts, Davies & Pullerits, 2019).

Probation respondents raised concerns that these delays increase the potential risk of harm to victims and increase the likelihood of reoffending.

“...I know that we’ve experienced delays in the EM provider teams going out to the approved addresses and fitting the tag. So sometimes this can take two to three weeks and I think some people have been waiting longer for the tag to be fitted...”

IOM probation practitioner

There was a comment of how EM service provider staff sometimes wait for probation approval to install a tag following an unsuccessful visit to an eligible address.

“...They’ve moved into an address, they’ve gone to fit that tag, and that person’s not been there, or the person’s been asleep because they go really late at night and then they wait for probation to give them the go ahead to go get that re-fitted. And I thought it was my understanding it was an automatic process for them just to go back out...” **IOM probation practitioner**

Respondents described how improved timely communication between EM service provider staff and probation would help to avoid such circumstances.

Resources

Most probation respondents discussed resources in relation to staffing levels where they said they were either currently under-resourced or would be if demand were to increase further. Some respondents expressed that they were deeply concerned about particularly low staffing levels in their areas, which reportedly affected the ability to meet the needs of basic national standards, let alone the AC Project.

“It’s a really desirable and very successful Pathfinder, but to roll it out at a time when the Probation Service is at such critical staffing levels and we’ve just undergone unification⁶² and recovering from a pandemic, I’m not quite sure why they picked this moment to roll the Pathfinder in the way that they did, including increasing it to other areas and increasing the number of people on probation by virtue of their sentence, so I just don’t think the impact upon staff has been thought through properly.” **IOM senior probation practitioner**

It was commented that there was a lack of time that probation practitioners have available for each case, which was perceived to be impacting the success of the project.

“I think the Acquisitive Crime Project and the GPS tagging has the potential to be excellent and brilliant. But it’s only as good as how much time probation practitioners have got to get involved and use the portal to its full capability.”

“The actual checking of the tag makes our time and our resources so much worse”

IOM probation practitioners

A possible response to constrained staffing levels was suggested in the form of dedicated administrative support.

“I think it will be really beneficial to have sort of a separate team, maybe that can do more of the monitoring aspects of it or getting us notifications of any breaches or issues that are coming up.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Training and support

Senior probation staff were asked if frontline probation practitioners in their team received sufficient training to use the Self-Service Portal. Respondents felt that there were clear training and guidance materials available to support frontline staff in using the portal. However, it was suggested that training sessions with EM AC champions who were trained and knowledgeable regarding the portal would increase staff confidence in navigating and interpreting its outputs.

⁶² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strengthening-probation-building-confidence>

“...when I tell people that there’s a [Microsoft] Teams channel and there’s all the training videos on there, but they’ve said that there would actually be some value in sitting in an office, for example, with somebody like an EM AC champion, someone that was really good at using the portal to actually physically go through it with them...”

“So, I think it could be better and in the ideal world it would be good to set-up local champions to be able to do that in every office.”

IOM probation practitioners

There were comments that there were probation practitioners who were unable to attend training sessions due to workload pressures or capacity have found it difficult to use the portal.

Feedback from frontline probation respondents were mixed on feeling supported to use the portal. Like some senior probation officers, the respondents expressed that appropriate training programmes were in place and sufficient information had been provided on whom to contact if anything was unclear. Respondents holding this view reported that previous experience on the Buddi tag system⁶³ was particularly helpful because it had provided knowledge on how to interpret location monitoring data.

“There’s constantly training sessions being put on for probation practitioners and every time there’s updates or any changes that are made, we usually have a new round of training dates that come out which probation practitioners can just dial into on [Microsoft] Teams. So there has definitely been plenty of training.”

IOM probation practitioner

In contrast, some respondents held the view that inadequate training was provided. Although they were aware of whom to contact if anything was unclear about using the Self-Service Portal, it was reported that interpreting the data was often challenging.

⁶³ A previous voluntary EM tagging system to encourage rehabilitation.

“I think that sometimes the issue people have is they can get on the portal, they can see all the spots and the confidence circles and the lines. But it [needs] interpreting.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Identifying eligible people on probation

Most respondents said that assessing an individual’s eligibility for the AC Project was a manual process whereby IOM leads would identify who was due to be released from prison. It was reported that spreadsheets were used to filter for the required eligibility factors in scope under the project. The information of who was eligible was provided to probation practitioners for them to ensure the correct licence conditions were attached once the prison leaver was released into the community.

There were mixed views as to whether it was deemed labour intensive to assess who was eligible. Some respondents felt the process could be streamlined, while some respondents stated it would be helpful if nDelius⁶⁴ could be set up to alert probation practitioners of cases which fall within the eligibility criteria. Alternatively, it was suggested that prisons could play a greater role.

“I think when people are in prison, the prison could perhaps identify them rather than it being down to our SPOC [Single Point of Contact] to do that and then just contacting us direct so that we can do the licence conditions rather than having to go through a third person.” **IOM probation practitioner**

It was also proposed that the project’s eligibility criteria could be simplified.

“Where the criteria could be simplified, that would also be helpful as well and making the offence criteria perhaps a little clearer. And also the exclusions around physical and mental health. And we’ve struggled with understanding what evidence we need to find to preclude somebody. So that also would be helpful to update [us].” **IOM senior probation practitioner**

Most respondents stated that the most likely reason for eligible people on probation not being monitored under the AC Project was unsettled accommodation. If the person was

⁶⁴ The Probation Service’s case management system.

released from prison and had no fixed address, they could not be monitored under the project until settled accommodation was secured.

There was a suggestion that human error and resource constraints play a role in missing any eligible individuals.

“The process that we’ve got set up either kind of regionally, globally or locally hasn’t captured the right people and all that and linked to that is that the way that we set up to begin with is admin staff were saying to practitioners, ‘this person has been identified as eligible; could you confirm that they are living in the Pathfinder area?’ That they’ve got the licence conditions and so on and so forth and the practitioner, because of their workload levels, wasn’t having time to respond to that request and the person was coming out of custody without the required conditions.” **IOM Senior Probation Officer**

It was commented that prisons can sometimes omit completing the necessary documentation to notify EM service providers that a person on probation was eligible to be monitored under the AC Project.

“I think there is a form the prison needs to fill out in order to alert the EM provider that a tag needs to go on. So, there was a lot of mopping up as the IOM lead sort of identifying people who should have had the tag but didn’t [then] getting that licence varied [then] getting the licence, once it’s varied, to the EM provider. So, yeah, that was quite time consuming.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Other possible reasons mentioned for eligible people on probation not being monitored were due to delays with EM service providers visiting their address to conduct an installation. Confusion around which offences were in scope was another reason given where some respondents stated that it would be helpful to have a list of qualifying offences. An example was given of how it can be confusing to assess eligibility:

“Sometimes we have had errors where they may have a qualifying offence, i.e., dwelling burglary, but when you look at them then they may have a 30 month sentence. But when you look at their order of imprisonment, they’ve only been sentenced like six months for the dwelling burglary. Which then means they’re not eligible, but on the surface, people say dwelling burglary, 30 month sentence, this person is eligible.” **IOM probation practitioner**

Use of tools

Frontline probation respondents discussed whether the Self-Service Portal has influenced the way they manage people on probation under the project compared to others, where it was recognised that the portal has assisted staff in managing and monitoring compliance.

“It’s definitely sort of easier to sort of point out you know... you were around this area yesterday. You know that that’s your exclusion. So you know sort of that’s where your role associates are, stuff like that. So, it’s just nicer to sort of bring in that personal element for them as well to know that yeah, you are on tag we can see what you’re doing.” **IOM probation practitioner**

A further view was that the Self-Service Portal has positively influenced the interactions between people on probation and their probation practitioners. In the view of some respondents, the real-time access of location data gives monitored people on probation the confidence to discuss their whereabouts and compliance with probation staff. This was perceived to be important because it demonstrated that people on probation were actively engaged in their rehabilitation and wanted to comply with their EM licence condition, such as charging the GPS tag regularly.

“[The portal] hasn’t changed the way I manage PoPs [people on probation], but I think it has changed the way sometimes they interact with me. Quite often I hear, ‘well, check my tag, you’ve seen where I’ve been’ or ‘I want to go away for the weekend to this place I’ll charge my tag’, ...I think they’ve been more confident in not getting into trouble for doing things...” **IOM probation practitioners**

However, some respondents felt that managing people on probation under the AC Project compared to those not under the project required greater enforcement. It was explained

that this largely involved making decisions about whether someone should be recalled to custody or court.

Examples were given where people on probation were recalled due to breach of curfew or failure to charge their GPS tag. Probation practitioners explained that this undermined the Probation Service's aim of promoting offender rehabilitation. It was argued by some respondents that the relationship with people on probation under the project was significantly poorer compared to other people they managed.

"It's much more enforcement. I have to be very clear with them: if you breach this tag you're going to be recalled eventually. I find my rapport with them is much poorer [sic], even for cases that I've worked with for years. It has gotten much worse since being on GPS tag because they just can't understand it, and they find it extremely punitive. They just resist anyone that works with them because of the GPS tag now." **IOM probation practitioners**

Most respondents raised concerns regarding the workload management tool accurately reflecting their capacity. A recurrent theme expressed by respondents was that the tool failed to consider the time it takes to manage each case individually. It was reported that monitored people on probation who have a significant record of poor compliance and EM non-compliance require additional management.

"The workload management tool just doesn't work [because], in my opinion, it doesn't take into account that offenders have to be seen three times a week. It doesn't take into account that I speak to a majority of mine every single day... I could spend hours on those crime maps in a day and the EM provider's work management tool will not reflect that."

"...someone who's a lot more chaotic, we pretty much would be checking their tag every single day...having to open up the portal, export it into an Excel sheet, go through all the data screenshot, put it into a Word document, explain what it is. It can take so much of your time... It's very tedious."

IOM probation practitioners

6.2 Police

The following insights were based on one-to-one interviews with police officers within the IOM units, including respondents involved in the crime mapping process. Overall, they spoke positively about the project, particularly how they believe that location monitoring under the AC Project has deterred further offences as well as helping to prove innocence in relation to a particular offence.

Senior police officers respondents suggested that reducing the 100 metre radius from a crime location and amending the 12 hour time window from the crime location would assist in the accuracy of qualified matches.⁶⁵ In addition, police respondents raised concerns with probation staff in receiving urgent tagging data in a timely manner and felt that there was a lack of understanding around the project among probation practitioners.

Perceptions of the project

Police respondents held generally positive perceptions about the project and focused on how they felt that the GPS tag acted as a deterrent from committing further crime. This was in line with previous research finding that EM increases an offender's perceived risk of being caught if they were to break the law or their licence conditions, thereby acting as a deterrent (Belur *et al.*, 2020). For instance, it was stated by respondents that qualified matches from crime mapping which have led to no further action may help deter future reoffending as the person on probation was aware their locations were being electronically monitored. It was felt that the project was an effective way of providing public protection.

"I think they're responding to being tagged, certainly from our point of view, they seem to be committing less or no crimes. It seems to be a very, very good deterrent...I think it's a wonderful deterrent to them. They know they're being tagged. They know they can be tracked and traced, and they seem to be not committing crimes, which is the whole point of the project. I think it's a very, very good preventative tool from our point of view." **IOM police officer**

⁶⁵ A qualified match refers to an offenders GPS location coinciding with an offence location.

Police reported that, in their view, the AC Project can also help to prove the innocence of a monitored person on probation when accused of a crime. It was felt that this facility had a positive effect on police resources.

“There’s one of our offenders who was thought to be involved in the crime straight away. His defence was, well, I’m actually on tag [and] very quickly we’re able to dismiss him from the incident and that he was alleged to have been involved in. So again, things like that, you know, we probably need to focus on case studies and show how it’s been successful to tag wearers as well.” **IOM police officer**

Interactions with stakeholders

Some police officers expressed that the roles and responsibilities were sometimes not well understood among probation practitioners. A view was shared among police that there was a lack of understanding on the part of probation practitioners in how to interpret the data within the Self-Service Portal. Police respondents described occasions where there have been difficulties obtaining the required information due to, it was argued, probation practitioners lacking the knowledge to access and assess the data. Police respondents stated this caused delays in receiving location information to help assess a possible crime match.

Some respondents suggested it would be useful to introduce in-person training sessions for probation on how to use the portal on the grounds that staff were previously trained remotely, which proved ineffective in the view of some police respondents.

“...what’s going on from a GPS tagging, a lot of the probation staff don’t know how to access the information or tell us they don’t know how to do it. Despite having done an online course regarding it. And they say it’s just too time-consuming to send us stuff through.” **IOM police officer**

There were mixed perceptions among police respondents regarding the engagement with EM service provider staff. Several respondents described how there have been delays in field officers installing EM tags on AC eligible people on probation and dealing with urgent requests.

For example, it was described how, on one occasion, an individual suffered medical issues due to the GPS tag being too tightly fitted. EM provider field officer staff were urgently contacted to remove the GPS tag, but it reportedly took over 48 hours for this to be rectified.

However, other respondents felt the tag installation process was smooth and that EM service provider staff were efficient in their work.

“They’ve been very, very good, especially for someone getting the installation done on prison releases... just kind of supporting that and making sure that they’re in at the right time frame and linking in with GPS to make sure the tag was fitted the night before...” **IOM police officer**

Resources

Overall, police respondents spoke positively about the staff resources available to effectively deliver the project. They highlighted that there were enough staff within the divisional IOM teams to manage the project’s current caseload.

Concerns were highlighted by some respondents about currently not having adequate resources to effectively manage offenders if the AC Project’s volumes were to increase and the 12 hour time frame were to remain.

A common view among police respondents was that the resources could be used more efficiently in the process of deciding whether to investigate a match⁶⁶ sent by the MoJ Hub. It was hoped that the decision-making process of assessing these proximity alerts could be streamlined for the future.

⁶⁶ A monitored person’s location could be placed in the vicinity of an acquisitive offence.

“We’re not struggling yet, I think. But as more and more people come out and are tagged, we’re going to have more and more enquiries and more and more investigations. That does take an awful lot of our time up on it, but I can see ... [as] more people get tagged that we’re going to have to reappraise the amount of resources we have and we put into the investigations into these proximity alerts. So yeah, in the future, I think we’re gone have to sort of get some more resources.” **IOM police officer**

Crime mapping

Many police respondents suggested that the crime mapping criteria could be refined to strengthen the confidence of qualified matches and reduce the workload pressure arising from manually assessing live movements. Some respondents suggested shortening the 12 hour time frame would be more appropriate.

“...if we had more proximity alerts come in then either you increase the number of people that can do the reviews, so you employ more staff to do it, or you reduce the window”. **IOM police officer**

A view was expressed that appointing an IOM Detective Sergeant responsible for further assessing proximity alerts would help to delegate tasks and improve productivity.

General issues

Police were positive about the training and support provided for the project where it was reported that roles and responsibilities were well understood within the forces. Concerns were raised regarding a perception of insufficient training among probation staff, as mentioned previously, and police being unable to access the Self-Service Portal directly.⁶⁷

Several respondents stressed that it would be beneficial for them to have direct access to the live movements of monitored people on probation, rather than requesting the information from other stakeholders. Police respondents widely agreed that gaining direct access would be more efficient by avoiding longer waiting times for urgent information and generally supporting ongoing investigations.

⁶⁷ There are also legislative constraints around data sharing under the Data Protection Act 2018.

“...Greater access will, I think, will make the system work a lot better from [an] applicant view. It’s a lot of information out there and there’s a lot more information which could be used...I think we’re underutilising what we’ve got here, and you’ve got individuals, you know, active, actively involved in serious crime. And we could be working a little bit more with them...”

IOM police officer

An instance was described when a person on probation committed an offence outside their home address. Upon request, probation staff provided the live data movements which showed the person was at home when the offence took place. The police requested additional data from probation because police officers wanted to assess whether the GPS tag was offline due to a method that some monitored people on probation reportedly use to attempt to block the EM tag’s GPS signal, resulting in their location being hidden. It was stated that the information was not provided in a timely manner because the probation practitioner had to retrieve the data from EM service providers first.

6.3 People on probation

These findings were based on interviews with five people on probation who were being monitored under the AC Project. Consequently, the limited number of respondents means that the inferences may not be fully representative of this group, although they still provide an insight into their views.

There were mixed perceptions of the EM tag from respondents, where some were largely negative about having the tag fitted and some were very positive. The positive perceptions were often about the perceived deterrence effect and the ability to exclude monitored people on probation from crimes within close proximity of their address. Negative aspects were largely focused on the practicality of the tag, a lack of information about the tag and the effect of having to wear it on the person’s mental health.

Positive experiences

Some respondents reported positive aspects of being location monitored such as acting as a deterrent to commit crime, which has also been found as in previous research (Hudson & Jones, 2016).

“There are certain places in town that if I went to I would call them danger zones and now, I’m not saying that if I didn’t have the tag on my foot I wouldn’t go to the danger zone, but having the tag on my foot guaranteed it as I was conscious and wearing that I didn’t want that tag to ping up somewhere I didn’t wanna be....the tag has helped me stay grounded.” **Person on probation**

Those respondents who were largely positive about wearing the EM tag reported that they were at a point in their lives where they wanted to be rehabilitated and that the tag had supported this desire. This is consistent with empirical evidence indicating that offenders can desist from reoffending for multiple reasons, such as their family (McNeill & Weaver, 2015), rather than an EM tag being the sole deterrent.

The tag was also seen positively as ruling out monitored individuals from crimes committed near to their location, which was also found to be an advantage by people on probation from previous research (Hudson & Jones, 2016).

“One good thing though that they said is if there’s a crime fit in a certain area that resembles my kind of crime, I can be screened off it. So that’s one good thing about the tag.”

“That’s eliminated me from a problem, so if I didn’t have it, it’s very possible I could have been questioned about that [crime].”

Persons on Probation

One respondent who was largely negative about having the tag did report it has helped in feeling safer.

“I do feel a tiny bit of safety [being on the tag] because they know for the last four months where I’m going and what I’m doing, it’s not until I do something different that they ask me, ‘where were you on this day?’. That makes me feel safe, as if my ex [partner] decides to do anything bad against me, then the tag’s on my ankle and people will know where I am if they need to find me.” **Person on probation**

Negative experiences

Some respondents reported that communication from EM service providers was inadequate. Examples included views that the time of tag installation was inappropriate⁶⁸ as was the frequency and time of day of telephone calls from the main EM provider post-installation.

There were also comments about unreliable location monitoring data and the possible adverse consequences this could have had.

“my tag was pinging up at two, three, four, five in the morning at certain locations two miles down the road and I categorically have not left the building and fortunately the cameras on the door and outside in the hallway confirmed I was in my room. But if it wasn’t for those cameras, I could have had myself a problem. Now we dug into it through the IOM police about why that could have been. And they said it could have been due to weather. But what actually upset me ... was if this pinged me to a certain address two miles down the road and something happened down there, because of my previous I could’ve had a lot of problems and I wasn’t even there ... But that hasn’t happened since.” **Person on probation**

Practicalities of the tag

Most of the respondents reported the tag was too large and some also reported it to be too heavy, uncomfortable and impractical. This feedback has also been obtained from people on probation in a previous EM project (Kerr *et al.*, 2019).

“I can’t get my work boots on because I can’t get them over it [the tag].”

“It’s like a big, massive brick on your ankle.”

Persons on probation

Some respondents reported that the EM tag gets in the way of showering and/or going to the gym. Most respondents said they wear extra clothing to try and hide the tag out of fear of being identified as an ex-offender in public and therefore judged by others, which was in line with previous findings (Howard, 2018).

⁶⁸ Guidance for EM providers states tagging can be typically done between 7pm and midnight.

“the tag could be smaller as well, it’s like walking round with a mobile phone to my ankle. In summer this was like punishment in itself, I’m having to wear boots in the blazing sun to try and hide it because I’m ashamed.” **Person on probation**

Mental health

Most respondents said that the tag had impacted their mental health.

“It’s more knocked my self-confidence. So my confidence and what I believe I am as a person because, in my eyes, I handed myself in [for] the crime I committed [and] I took full responsibility, had my victim empathy, did everything I possibly could do. And obviously this has knocked my confidence, so I had all the intentions in the world to go and do the education and go to college, and I don’t even want to do it. It’s like I just want to get up every day and just make sure I survived that day.” **Person on probation**

Other views expressed were that: wearing the tag made the monitored individual feel “low” at times; charging the tag led to anxiety as there was a need to return home in a timely manner to charge the battery; and fears the battery charger would malfunction, thereby resulting in a recall to prison. (It was proposed that having a backup charger would mitigate this fear.)

Previous research has also found wearing the tag has led to feelings of increased anxiety (Kerr *et al.*, 2019).

Confusion around the tag

There were complaints from respondents that: they were unaware of the conditions of the EM tag and had not received information from probation on this; they were unaware how long to charge the tag for and what the vibrations on the tag meant; and did not know where they stood in terms of employment opportunities such that they have rejected irregular days of work before because they did not want to get in trouble with probation for being at a different address.

There was also one comment about a belief that probation staff had access to all of the personal details, including the sleeping pattern, of monitored individuals.

6.4 MoJ AC Hub

The MoJ Hub findings were based on one-to-one interviews held with caseworkers and senior members of staff. Overall, Hub respondents were positive about the project, particularly highlighting the improvements in automation and technological development of the crime mapping tools.⁶⁹ As a result of this new development, respondents commented that crime mapping requests from the police were automatically matched to a crime location and no longer require analysis by the Hub caseworkers.

Like police staff, some respondents expressed the view that the crime mapping criteria should be amended to strengthen crime matches, such as reducing the 12 hour time window. Hub staff also reported that there were sizeable volumes of proximity reports requested by the police and not proceeded with because no one could be location matched to the offence.

A further challenge raised was the accuracy of data provided by EM service provider staff. In some instances, there were errors reported in the contact details, home addresses and monitoring conditions of people on probation.

Perceptions of the project

Overall, MoJ Hub staff spoke positively about internal staff structures and the Hub's efforts in improving the crime mapping processes. Respondents highlighted that the Hub acts as an interface between EM service providers and the police, thereby ensuring efficient collaboration.

It was reported that the revised system of crime matching (which requires a minimum of two consecutive GPS "pings" or location points within the 100 metre crime radius) no longer requires caseworkers manually checking reports. There was a common view that the system would ensure resources are used more efficiently, and police requests for crime mapping would be delivered in a timely manner. Senior staff felt that this development demonstrated the collaborative effort in continuous improvement of the AC Project.

⁶⁹ These improvements have been developed during the life of the project in response to feedback from the MoJ Hub.

However, some issues were mentioned by Hub staff regarding the current radius of a crime when assessing a crime match. It was thought that the current radius increased the risk of potential suspects not being identified because a landmark⁷⁰ can often cover a large area.

“I think there’s an issue at the moment with the landmark of a crime...So if the landmark is put in the middle of a venue, now if it’s somebody’s house, that’s relatively straightforward. But if it’s in a large building or an open mass space like Hyde Park for example...[and] somebody reports a crime, for example, I was robbed on Hyde Park. The landmark we are given is Hyde Park. Well, Hyde Park is about two miles radius. So [there will be a] 100 metre radius we might not be capturing.” **Hub staff**

Interactions with stakeholders

Concerns were reported regarding discrepancies within the data received from EM providers and police forces. Hub caseworkers and managers highlighted that there have been periodic errors due to the EM provider’s data, including subjects not within scope of the AC Project. As a result, proximity alerts have been issued for ineligible offenders and insufficient time was spent on quality assuring the data.

Respondents also stated there had been inaccuracies with the crime data sent by the police. A data discrepancy reported by Hub staff referred to police forces submitting crime data an hour behind owing to a failure to account for the transition from Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) to British Summer Time (BST) and other errors.

⁷⁰ The centre of a crime location such as a park.

“We morphed over to British Summer Time. So that’s an hour in advance and police, some police forces, are still submitting an hour behind, which is not in compliance with the specification for submission.”

“The police forces were submitting in UK GPS and the system was set up on World GPS so the locations of crimes could be anything from 50 metres out to 400 metres out, which – when you’ve got crime radius of 100 metres – means you would miss a number of such [crimes]. So that was an issue with design that was missed.”

Hub staff

Hub respondents stated that these systematic errors created a backlog of unreliable data from six police forces. It was emphasised that the Hub’s work was reliant on the accuracy of data received by stakeholders, which means that it can be labour-intensive when staff must spend significant time re-assessing previous work.

“...But it’s not perfect and we also have sometimes trouble with the data we see from the police, but it’s not always correct. They don’t submit it properly and we have errors with it.” **Hub staff**

Resources

When respondents were asked whether they had sufficient staff resources in place within the Hub to deliver the project, all stated there was enough resource at the time of interview. However, some respondents also reported that more resources would be needed if the project were to be expanded to further police forces.

There was a comment that it was difficult to predict how many staff would be needed in the future due to changing software and changes to staff skillsets.

“[The] question to answer currently [is] we have never obtained a resource model that meets operational needs because of the shifting ... design improvements and operatives becoming more professional in their approach. It’s been really difficult to gauge the staffing levels required.” **Hub staff**

Some respondents highlighted different scenarios where they would require additional staff in the Hub – e.g., the importance of staff training if the project were to be expanded to every police force in England and Wales.

“We would need to get new people in and we’d need to train them up and train them very quickly and actually that goes back to what we’re saying about structured training and documented procedures.” **Hub staff**

Training and support

Those Hub staff respondents who mentioned training felt that there was a lack of this on offer. They reported that they wanted “proper” training as well as documentation regarding how to carry out tasks. There was also a suggestion that roles and responsibilities between caseworkers and managers in the Hub needed to be more defined and tasks to be clearer.

Many respondents stated that better training materials would help new starters understand their role and the tasks they were required to do.

“I know some feedback from caseworkers is that there isn’t a lot of training material when you first start.”

“There should have been a video on training... So maybe for future people who want to start working in the Hub and a useful feature would be a to do list.”

Hub staff

One respondent reported that they had started to document team members’ roles which proved helpful.

6.5 EM service providers

The following insights were based on one-to-one interviews with staff who worked for EMS Capita and Airbus, which were two of the companies that jointly delivered EM services on behalf of the MoJ.

Views from the staff who participated were mixed. Some respondents largely discussed their interaction with MoJ Hub staff, whereas others highlighted their perspectives on the

implementation of the AC Project and its processes. Respondents generally perceived themselves as efficient in delivering consistent reporting to the MoJ Hub and prompt in addressing any data discrepancies identified. Some respondents believed that stakeholders were late in documenting the requirements at the point of implementation of the project.

The respondents also believed that communication with stakeholders, including the MoJ, had improved in comparison to the beginning of the project.

Perceptions of the project

Most respondents were generally positive about the AC Project so far.

“If somebody does commit a crime, you have more evidence available to you to know that they’ve committed the crime to give the evidence to CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] so that they can convict the individual.”

EM service provider member of staff

A view was expressed that prison leavers were more accepting of having the tag installed.

“We actually found out the people being moved from prison are a lot more acceptable for having kit installed because it is an alternative for them back out in the community. So we do tend to find that a lot more of them are available and willing to have it fitted.” **EM service provider member of staff**

Negative perceptions were more related to the implementation of the project. Respondents generally felt that communication was better at the time the interviews by the MoJ research team took place in comparison to the beginning of the project due to improved communication with stakeholders.

Interactions with stakeholders

Some respondents were positive about their interactions with other stakeholders.

“We’ve ensured that they’re kept up to date with the work that we’re doing. We’re providing regular reporting so that they know exactly where we’re at with the work that we’ve completed.” **EM service provider member of staff**

However, most respondents felt that communication with other stakeholders could improve.

“If we had those open communications and channels with each other, the smallest things would slowly just improve the service. But I think they’re probably not mentioned because they’re just little things here and there. So, I think just maybe stakeholder calls would be useful on a regular basis.” **EM service provider member of staff**

One example was quoted of the MoJ input having an adverse impact on the EM service providers’ work.

“When they [the MoJ Hub] do a quality check and they’ll come back and say it’s incorrect, we’ve put it on incorrectly or we’ve not addressed it. However, when you look at it, it’s the licence received that’s incorrect. So we’re not addressing with the original issuing organisation that they’re doing it incorrectly and we’re not educating them well, not always.” **EM service provider member of staff**

Some respondents expressed the view that the end user needs were overlooked at the start of the AC Project, which resulted in a crime mapping system being delivered that did not live up to the desired requirements.

“But I think we need to do more of that sort of actually talking to all the guys who sit at the keyboards and actually use the application (MoJ Hub) to try and understand better how they want to use it and improvements to it as well.”

EM service provider member of staff

Some respondents similarly stated that at the start of the project they felt they had been involved too late in the documenting of the requirements. Furthermore, some said that they wanted to be kept up to date by the MoJ in advance if it were expected that EM service providers’ work would expand in the near future.

This related to common examples from other respondents who argued that communication could be better in general – e.g., a better understanding of what the MoJ Hub staff do; and greater visibility on whether the project as a whole is considered to be working well.

Resources

All EM service provider respondents believed that they were well resourced to deliver the AC Project. Some respondents stated that back up resources were available if needed.

“We allocate resources to the project based on the workload at any moment in time, so we draw from a pool of developers, analysts, testers and allocate them to the project.” **EM service provider member of staff**

There was a comment that having adequate resources is reliant on having sufficient notice of changes.

“Obviously, the sooner we know about future requirements, the sooner we can prepare and plan to have the resources available.” **EM service provider member of staff**

It was also stated that EM service providers’ involvement in delivering the project did not have a large impact on resource need.

“Yeah, it’s not much of an impact, to be honest. It falls within our day-to-day which we need resourced overall anyway, and it falls within the general processes of it [which]are very similar to what we do anyway. So it wasn’t a big impact on resource.” **EM service provider member of staff**

7. Cross-cutting themes

There are several common themes across stakeholder groups that are summarised in this chapter.

Views of the tag

Some police, probation practitioner and people on probation respondents believed that use of the EM tag in the AC Project deterred re-offending.

On the other hand, other probation respondents viewed the tag as more punitive than rehabilitative, which was consistent with responses from people on probation who stated that the physical tag was uncomfortable to wear and created difficulties for them, such as not feeling they can wear certain clothing or carry out certain activities.

Although people on probation respondents did not explicitly say that they viewed the EM tag as a form of punishment, it can be inferred from their negative perceptions that some of them felt there was a punitive element to wearing the tag.

Delays in fitting tags

Both police and probation respondents said that they had experienced delays in tag installation on the part of the main EM service provider.

Staff resources

Police, the MoJ Hub and EM service provider respondents generally felt that they had enough staff resources at the time of their interviews to deliver the project.

The police stated that they would require more staff resources if the AC Project's caseload were to increase, and the MoJ Hub staff said they would also require more staff resources if the project were to be expanded to further police force areas.

Probation respondents, however, generally commented that they were already under-resourced to deliver the project or would be if the AC caseload were to increase further. This theme dominated interview responses from probation practitioners, in which answers to questions often involved probation staff resource constraints.

Training and support of probation practitioners

Some probation respondents stated that they found it difficult to use the Self-Service probation portal and interpret its outputs and that some respondents would benefit from training regarding how to use it.

Similarly, some police respondents also believed that further training could be beneficial for probation practitioners in how to use the portal most effectively.

Data issues

Probation, police and the MoJ Hub respondents all mentioned data issues within the AC Project.

Some probation respondents said that there was a lack of clarity regarding data sharing with the police and what exactly could be provided to them. Some police respondents stated that there were delays in probation practitioners checking location information and sending this data to police upon request. Some MoJ Hub respondents also noted that there were issues with both the police and EM service provider sometimes sending incorrect data to the Hub.

8. Implications

The reflections and suggestions in this chapter are based on feedback from individuals who contributed to the process evaluation of the AC Project. The respondents were probation staff, police officers, MoJ Hub staff, EM service provider staff and people on probation.

General perceptions of the project on the part of stakeholders were largely positive, although it was evident there were still areas for improvement. The MoJ intends to review the various suggestions and decide how to respond to them.

Data issues

Issues were identified where numerous respondents noted discrepancies with the data provided by EM service providers and the police. Importantly, it was reported that some police forces had been submitting incorrect data to the MoJ Hub following the move to British Summer Time, and it has become evident that a non-trivial proportion of people on probation enrolled in the AC Project should not have been. It is advisable that the police-provided data and the AC enrolments of people on probation are both properly quality assured.

Frontline probation practitioners raised concerns about the lack of clarity surrounding data sharing protocols with the police. Respondents highlighted that this uncertainty could increase the risk of data breaches. It would be helpful for data sharing practices to be made clear to all stakeholders.

Some police respondents felt that if they had access to the Self-Service Portal this would be a more efficient use of time, rather than waiting for stakeholders to send them location information. Previous research (Lockhart-Mirams, Pickles and Crowhurst, 2015) has also recommended that EM data should be directly available to police in a manner compatible with their management information systems. This proposal could be considered.

Resources

A key concern among police, the MoJ Hub and particularly probation respondents was a concern on staff resources if the AC caseload were to increase significantly or be rolled out to further police forces. Staffing constraints within the Probation Service were a recurrent theme that was potentially impacting on the success of the project.

The findings from this process evaluation indicate that the Probation Service was not sufficiently equipped for a further expansion of the project. Staffing levels should be considered within areas where the AC Project is already rolled out and considerable advance notification given to all stakeholders involved if the project were to expand in any way.

Probation respondents argued that there could be ways to address the probation practitioner staffing constraints by gaining administrative support to help with, for instance, monitoring EM non-compliance and other admin procedures. It was also felt that some processes could be streamlined to help them, such as by having a feature on nDelius set up to alert probation practitioners of cases that meet the project's eligibility criteria. Another suggestion was for the Prison Service to identify who was due for release and notify probation whether they were eligible to be monitored.

It was widely felt by probation respondents that the workload management tool does not accurately reflect the time spent in assessing tagging data on the Self-Service Portal to check compliance on the part of people on probation. The accuracy of the tool could be reviewed.

Additional training and guidance

Additional training and guidance related to the AC Project could be deployed to assist stakeholders further. Most probation practitioners and MoJ Hub staff stated they required some form of additional training. The Hub caseworkers suggested additional training and guidance in the form of videos and documentation on how to carry out tasks plus 'to do' lists detailing what was expected of their role. Guidance could also address concerns raised by MoJ Hub staff that they would like roles between caseworkers and managers to be better defined.

Probation staff suggested a list of qualifying offences under the project would be useful as a reference guide. Better guidance on what factors would exclude people on probation from AC monitoring, such as physical or mental health reasons, would also be useful. Furthermore, probation respondents felt training sessions with EM AC champions who were trained and knowledgeable regarding the Self-Service Portal would increase staff confidence in navigating and interpreting its outputs. Probation staff felt it would be useful to set up local champions in each office to act as support for colleagues using the portal.

There were concerns expressed by some police respondents regarding the adequacy of training provided to probation practitioners. These respondents were particularly concerned about the delays in receiving location data due to difficulty in probation staff interpreting and understanding data accessed through the portal.

AC “champions” were available to each probation region, although respondents indicated they were generally unaware of this. It is recommended that probation practitioners are made aware that AC champions are available at a regional level to assist them with queries regarding the Self-Service Portal. Consideration could also be given to creating tools to improve the accessibility of GPS information for probation practitioners to assist them in understanding the data as well as receiving additional training and guidance.

Some stakeholders requested training for other stakeholder groups. For instance, some probation respondents felt that EM service provider staff needed better guidance to deal with instances when a person on probation was not available for installation at an address. A written protocol for the EM service provider covering what to do in this scenario could be useful.

Improvements in stakeholder communication

EM service providers felt communication with all stakeholders could improve and suggested having stakeholder calls on a regular basis would help to resolve any problems such as data issues. Probation respondents also agreed that improved communication with EM service providers was needed.

Poor communication (including information sharing) between agencies/stakeholders is a common finding from previous EM research conducted in the UK (e.g., Kerr *et al.* 2019). Given the findings of this research, it could be inferred that communication could also be

improved by having clearer procedures and guidance in place for stakeholders prior to any further roll-out of the AC Project.

EM service providers also stated they were keen to learn of the success stories of using EM with people on probation as they do not receive feedback on this. It was suggested that the most practical way to share success stories with all stakeholders could be considered.

There was a suggestion that, for any future roll out of the project, it would be beneficial for the EM provider Airbus to discuss with end users (notably the MoJ Hub) what the software will look like and to agree requirements.

EM service quality

There was some police feedback that there had been an issue with a case where the location data indicated that the tag had been reported in a particular area which had not in fact been visited by the monitored person on probation. An understanding as to how this type of error could have occurred is suggested so as to avoid such an occurrence in other police forces.

Respondents who were monitored people on probation expressed concerns regarding the design of the tag, including its size. Despite the small sample of respondents, moving forward, the tags could be redesigned to be lighter and smaller for a more comfortable wear.

It is also suggested that EM service provider staff should also visit residences to install the tag and conduct welfare checks earlier in the day.

Furthermore, some stakeholders stated there were often delays with EM service providers installing tags on people on probation even in cases where the tag has caused medical issues. A review of the time it takes the main EM provider to install a tag once they have received a notification could be useful here.

Amendments to crime mapping

The police and MoJ Hub respondents both stated there could be ways to streamline the crime mapping offence criteria, suggesting the 12 hour time frame should be reduced to increase the confidence of qualified matches and staff time.

Police respondents stated that if the 12 hour time frame were to remain then additional resources would be required.

Furthermore, the size of the current 100 metre radius used in crime mapping could potentially be reviewed.

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Appendix A

Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in adherence to the MoJ Ethics Advisory Group (EAG) principles of: maintaining confidentiality; avoiding personal and social harm; and gaining informed consent with regard to participation. All ethical issues were considered by the MoJ evaluation team at the onset and throughout the course of the research. The process evaluation has undergone the MoJ's Analytical Quality Assurance (AQA) process by which an ethics checklist was completed.

All interviews were conducted by telephone or online using Microsoft Teams. The latter was used to record and transcribe the interviews in both instances. Written consent was obtained to ensure that respondents understood the purpose of their involvement and consented to being involved in the research. Participation in the research was voluntary, where it was made clear that stakeholders had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without any given reason. The interviewer also obtained consent from all respondents to take part in the interview verbally at the beginning of each session.

The MoJ evaluation team provided written information regarding the following elements prior to any qualitative data being collected:

- The purpose of the research and how the information would be collected.
- How the interview data would inform the process evaluation.
- How participation is voluntary.
- Confidentiality and anonymity.
- Withdrawing consent.

Respondents were informed that the information provided would be anonymised and treated in confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Respondents were informed their answers would be treated confidentially, although if they were to disclose any information that would indicate a risk of harm to themselves or others, then this information would need to be shared with the relevant bodies.

All recordings and transcripts have been stored securely, to which only members of the MoJ's EM Evaluation Team have access. The MoJ team has adhered to the Government Social Research policy regarding information security, data retention and the loss of personal or sensitive information.

Appendix B

Glossary

Term	Meaning
12 hour time frame	The time window in which an offender's location could be matched to an acquisitive offence (crime data sent by the police).
Acquisitive Crime	<p>An offence where the perpetrator obtains an illicit material gain. Those individuals who are electronically monitored under the AC Project will have committed any of the following principal offences:</p> <p>Offences under section 1 of the Theft Act 1968:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft from the person of another • Theft from a motor vehicle • Theft from a vehicle other than a motor vehicle • Theft of a motor vehicle other than aggravated vehicle taking, under section 12A of that Act • Offence under section 8 (robbery or assault with intent to rob) • Offence under section 9 (burglary) • Offence under section 10 (aggravated burglary)
British Summer Time (BST)	One hour ahead of Greenwich Meantime for daylight saving (in the UK) between March and October each year.
Crime Mapping	Where a GPS location data are matched against crime data to determine whether a monitored person on probation was in the vicinity of the crime.
Crime radius	This is defined for the AC Project as a 100 metre radius around the reported coordinates of a crime. At the AC Project's inception this was initially set as 150 metres and was later reduced to 100 metres in September 2021.
Curfew	A curfew requires a probation on probation to be present at their home during specified hours (for example 8pm to 8am).
Electronic Monitoring (EM)	EM (sometimes known as 'tagging') is a technology used for enforcement purposes within the criminal justice system of England and Wales – notably, curfews, location monitoring, exclusion zones and/or sobriety.

Term	Meaning
Electronic Monitoring (EM) service providers	The providers of EM services for the AC Project were EMS Capita, Airbus and G4S. For the purpose of this report, an 'EM provider' refers to both EMS Capita and Airbus. (G4S staff did not contribute to this evaluation.)
Field officers	Field officers are electronic monitoring service provider staff who are responsible for installing and removing the GPS monitoring at the offender's address or supported accommodation.
GPS tag	An electronic tag fitted around an individual's ankle. The tag uses signals from GPS satellites to calculate its location, which is then sent over a mobile network to a central monitoring centre.
Greenwich Mean Time	The legal time in the United Kingdom during the winter months of late October to late March.
Integrated Offender Management (IOM)	IOM refers to a multi-agency response to crime where agencies work together to identify and manage offenders.
Landmark	The centre of a crime location such as a park or a house.
nDelius	The Probation Service's case management system.
Person on probation People on probation	In the context of this report, the phrase refers to an individual serving a sentence in the community and being managed by the Probation Service. Eligible people on probation are those individuals who meet the criteria for the AC Project to be electronically monitored.
Probation practitioner	Refers to both frontline probation officers and senior probation officers.
Proximity report	The MoJ Hub provide proximity reports to the police which details when an AC monitored person on probation has been within the (100 metre) vicinity of a crime. This is for the purpose of assisting police investigations.
Self-Service Portal	A tool that manages offenders under the AC Project. It is used to check that people on probation monitored under the project are compliant with their licence conditions.
Standard determinate sentence	Where the court sets a fixed length for a custodial sentence following conviction.
Workload Management Tool	A tool which analyses the cases held by a probation practitioner and provides a percentage output reflecting their capacity.