



Prison Education and Accredited Programme Statistics, April 2024 to March 2025

Main points

Across public prisons in England, 51,727 prisoners completed an initial maths and/or English assessment

Of these prisoners, 47,415 took at least one maths assessment and 48,227 took at least one English assessment.

Prisoners took a total of 48,249 maths and 49,186 English initial assessments¹ across all levels

Most initial assessment results were at Entry level 1 – Entry level 3, comprising 69% of maths and 65% of English results across public prisons in England.

Where known, over half (57%) of prisoners who took an initial assessment and then enrolled on a course had a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), across public prisons in England

This varied by ethnicity and was highest for prisoners from white ethnic groups (61%) and lowest for those from the 'other ethnic group' (41%).

Across public prisons in England, 55,105 prisoners participated in courses and 49,135 prisoners achieved in a course²

Where known, 56% of prisoners who participated, and 55% of prisoners who achieved in a course, had an LDD confirmed through a screener.

Across public prisons in England, 23,294 prisoners participated in functional skills courses³ from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Over the same time period, 17,876 prisoners achieved in a functional skills course

More than half of functional skills learners participated in English (54%) and maths (52%), compared to a lower proportion participating in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (10%) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (7%).

¹ This is the total number of distinct assessments across levels - prisoners may undertake each assessment more than once over a year. Prisoners are counted once for each distinct level of outcome they are assessed at and once in the totals.

² This total includes both accredited and non-accredited courses. Achieving in a course means that the prisoner has completed all the work and has been awarded a grade or level.

³ Functional skills courses are defined as accredited courses, funded by the Prison Education Framework (PEF) that cover English, maths, ICT and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The number of starts for Accredited Programmes in custody increased

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, there were 5,456 Accredited Programme starts, a 1% increase when compared with the previous 12-month period.

The number of completions for Accredited Programmes in custody increased

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 4,908 accredited programmes were completed by prisoners, representing an increase of less than 1% compared with the previous 12-month period.

This publication covers the following reporting, for the 2024-25 financial year:

- 1) Initial assessment, participation, and achievement for prisoner education for adults in public prisons in England, based on data from CURIOUS and the HMPPS Performance Hub.*
- 2) Accredited programme starts and completions data, collected monthly from each prison establishment and collated centrally on the HMPPS Performance Hub.*

Statistician's Comment

Compared with the previous year, increases were seen in the number of initial assessments, participation and achievement in prison education. Over half of prisoners who took an initial assessment and went on to enrol on a course had a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD).

The majority of initial assessment outcomes were at Entry levels 1-3, with particular note that:

- Prisoners aged 50+ were more likely to have Entry level assessments in maths, compared with other age groups.
- Female prisoners were more likely to have Entry level assessments in maths, compared with male prisoners.
- Prisoners with an LDD were more likely to have Entry level assessments for maths and English, compared with prisoners without an LDD.
- Prisoners from the "other" ethnic group were more likely to have Entry level assessments for maths and English, and prisoners from the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic group were less likely to have Entry level assessments for maths and English, compared with other ethnic groups.

The number of prisoners starting and completing accredited programmes continued to see small increases, but have not yet reached pre-COVID levels.

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Introduction

This publication covers both prisoner education and accredited programme participation in custody. Prison education is an important part of any prison's regime. Improving prisoner literacy and numeracy, providing vocational training, and other opportunities for personal development can give prisoners the knowledge and skills they need to get jobs on release and turn away from crime. Prison education is proven to have a positive impact; prisoners who engage with prison education are less likely to reoffend.⁴ Programme accreditation is a separate system for ensuring that behavioural intervention and other similar types of programmes offered to offenders, which aim to reduce reoffending, have a proper theoretical basis and are designed in accordance with the 'What Works' literature⁵. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) commission a range of accredited programmes varying in complexity, and mode of delivery. Programmes have been developed to target the risks and needs for distinct types of offending behaviour.

In 2016, responsibility for the budget that was used to commission most prison education in England moved from the Department of Education to the Ministry of Justice, and in 2019 new education contracts were established. This reformed system moved decision-making on prison education closer to prison governors, who would be free to commission the education needed via two complementary frameworks - the Prison Education Framework (PEF) and Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). PEF provision includes a core curriculum of English, maths, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), whereas DPS provision is more niche and flexible, designed to allow governors to commission bespoke shorter-term provision, including careers guidance and sector-specific training such as roofing, or rail construction based on identified job market needs. Governors may use these complementary systems to make informed decisions on the education provided in their individual prison.

This publication includes data on prisoners' initial English and maths levels on arrival, and numbers participating and achieving in education courses, including functional skills (English, maths, ICT and ESOL) courses. These data are not a full picture of prison education – delivery outside of the primary PEF contracts, including some DPS provision, may not be captured in this report.

This publication includes data for those aged 18 and above in adult prisons in England. This is because education in Wales is a devolved matter and the youth estate is covered by separate education contracts and services, so these establishment types are therefore out of scope for this report. Tables have been provided for private prison education for each year since 2019-20; due to the data quality of non-PEF private prisons only being assured since mid-2024, no commentary has been provided in the report for private prison education, and all figures relate only to public prison education.

Further demographic breakdowns for accredited programmes data will be released as part of the HMPPS Annual Offender Equalities Report⁶.

More information on this publication can be found in the technical guidance published alongside this report.

⁴ Prisoner Outcomes data from 2017 – for more information see <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81c99840f0b6230269927f/pnc-ilr.pdf>

⁵ 'What Works' literature is a broad body of literature, an example of which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions>

⁶ The HMPPS Annual Offender Equalities Report is published as part of this collection: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmppps-annual-offender-equalities-report>

1. Initial assessments for maths and English

Across public prisons in England, 51,727 prisoners completed an initial maths and/or English assessment

Of these prisoners, 47,415 took at least one maths assessment and 48,227 took at least one English assessment.

Prisoners took a total of 48,249 maths and 49,186 English initial assessments⁷ across all levels

Most initial assessment results were at Entry level 1 – Entry level 3, comprising 69% of maths and 65% of English results across public prisons in England.

Where known, over half (57%) of prisoners who took an initial assessment and then enrolled on a course had a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), across public prisons in England

This varied by ethnicity and was highest for prisoners from white ethnic groups (61%) and lowest for those from the 'other ethnic group' (41%).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 51,727 prisoners completed an initial assessment that was registered on the CURIOUS system⁸. Initial assessments are taken before prisoners engage in learning and are separate to the courses discussed in Chapter 2 of this report. Tables 1.1 - 1.4 accompanying this publication contain information on these initial assessments.

In the year ending March 2025, 47,415 prisoners took maths initial assessments, a 7% increase compared with 44,508 in the previous year. In the same year, 48,227 prisoners took English initial assessments, an 8% increase compared with 44,777 in the previous year.

In total, there were 48,249 maths and 49,186 English initial assessments, across all levels, in the year ending 31 March 2025. A prisoner can take more than one assessment in each subject per year, and these assessments can have the same or a different grade. Only one assessment per prisoner, per grade, is counted in this total. Therefore, it is possible that the total number of initial assessments is higher than the number of prisoners reported, due to prisoners taking multiple assessments with different grades per year. It is also possible that there may be more initial assessments than this due to prisoners taking multiple assessments with the same grade per year. Initial assessments provide an indication of a learner's levels of English and maths (see table below).

⁷ This is the total number of distinct assessments across levels - prisoners may undertake each assessment more than once over a year. Prisoners are counted once for each distinct level of outcome they are assessed at and once in the totals.

⁸ CURIOUS is the system used to record data about prison education, for more information please refer to the technical guide

Figure 1.1: Assessment or course level alongside examples of what each level is equivalent to.

Initial assessment level / Course level	Example ⁹
Entry levels 1 - 3	Entry level functional skills Entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
Level 1	GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) - grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G Level 1 functional skills Level 1 ESOL
Level 2	GCSE - grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A*, A, B, C Level 2 functional skills Level 2 ESOL
Level 3	A Level (Advanced Level) Level 3 ESOL Level 3 NVQ (National Vocational Qualification)
Levels 4 - 8	All higher-level courses

Characteristics of prisoners taking initial assessments in maths

The majority of initial assessment outcomes in maths were at Entry levels 1-3 (69% of outcomes). This was common across most demographic groups, with the following exceptions:

- A higher proportion of assessments for those aged 50+ were at Entry levels 1-3 (73%) compared with other age groups (67% for 18-24; 69% for 25-49).
- A higher proportion of assessments for female prisoners were at Entry levels 1-3 (82%) compared with male prisoners (69%).
- A higher proportion of assessments for prisoners with an LDD were at Entry levels 1-3 (71%) compared with those without an LDD (62%).
- A higher proportion of assessments for prisoners from the “other” ethnic group were at Entry levels 1-3 (79%) compared with the other ethnic groups (64% - 70%).
- A lower proportion of assessments for prisoners from the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic group were at Entry levels 1-3 (64%) compared with the other ethnic groups (65% - 79%).

The majority of initial assessment outcomes in maths above Entry level 3 were at Level 1 (22%), and 8% percent of maths assessment outcomes were at Level 2 or above.

Characteristics of prisoners taking initial assessments in English

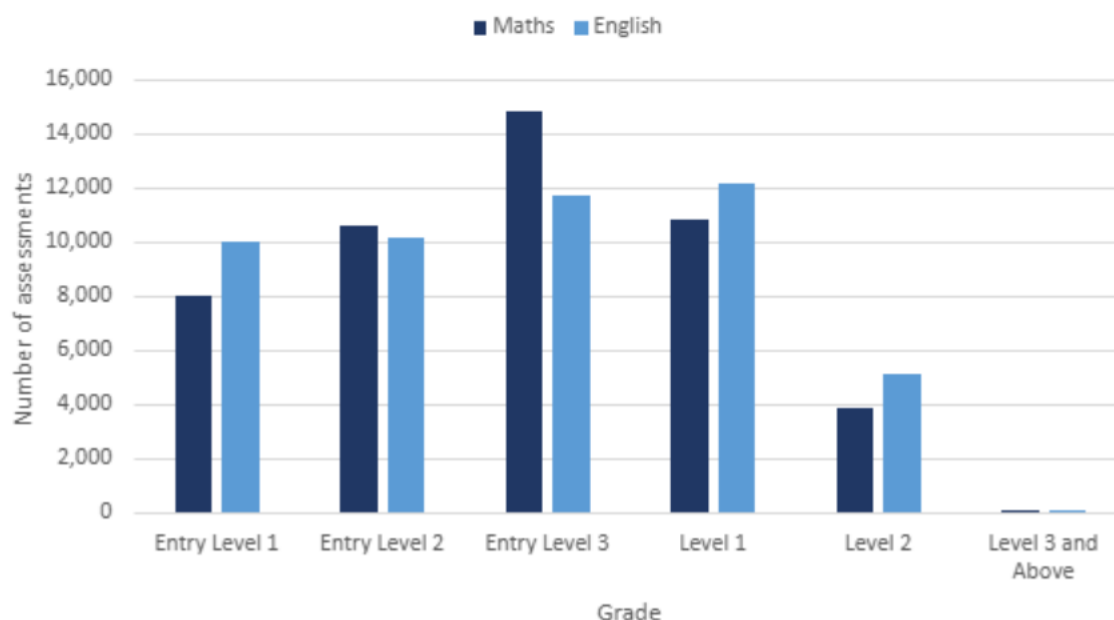
The majority of initial assessment outcomes in English were at Entry levels 1-3 (65% of outcomes). This was common across most demographic groups, with the following exceptions:

⁹ Further information on course levels can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

- A higher proportion of assessments for prisoners with an LDD were at Entry levels 1-3 (67%) compared with those without an LDD (57%).
- A higher proportion of assessments for prisoners from the “other” ethnic group were at Entry levels 1-3 (78%) compared with the other ethnic groups (57% - 66%).
- A lower proportion of assessments for prisoners from the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic group were at Entry levels 1-3 (57%) compared with the other ethnic groups (63% - 78%).

The majority of initial assessment outcomes in English above Entry level 3 were at Level 1 (25%), and 11% of English initial assessment outcomes were at Level 2 or above.

Figure 1.2: The number of maths and English initial assessments prisoners took, by outcome, for Public Prisons in England, 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 (Source: Table 1.1)



Out of all prisoners who had an initial assessment over the 12 months to 31st March 2025, 51% did not go on to enrol on a course in the same time period and so did not have available LDD data. Where known, 57% of prisoners who took an initial assessment and then enrolled on a course had an LDD and 43% did not.

Proportions varied by ethnic group, with the highest rates of confirmed LDD among the White ethnic group (61%) and ‘Mixed or Multiple’ ethnic group (53%).

Lower rates of confirmed LDD were observed in the remaining ethnic groups:

- 51% of prisoners where ethnicity was unknown or not provided.
- 44% of Black African, Caribbean, or Black British ethnic group prisoners.
- 43% of Asian or Asian British ethnic group prisoners.
- 41% of “other” ethnic group prisoners.

2. Education participation and achievement

Across public prisons in England, 55,105 prisoners participated in courses and 49,135 prisoners achieved in a course¹⁰. Where known, over half of these prisoners had a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD)

Where known, 56% of prisoners who participated, and 55% of prisoners who achieved in a course, had an LDD confirmed through a screener.

Prisoners participating and achieving in courses were very similar to those taking initial assessments regarding spread of age, sex, LDD status, and ethnicity.

Across public prisons in England, 23,294 prisoners participated in functional skills courses¹¹ from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Over the same time period 17,876 prisoners achieved in a functional skills course

More than half of functional skills learners participated in English (54%) and maths (52%), compared with a lower proportion participating in ICT (10%) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (7%).

In the tables that accompany this bulletin, Table 2.1 contains statistics for prisoner participation in courses and Table 2.2 contains statistics for course achievement. These are different to initial assessments.

The total number of prisoners participating across all courses in the year ending March 2025 was 55,105. This was a 10% increase on the 49,965 prisoners participating in courses in the previous year. Course level information is only available for accredited education courses. On average, 76% of accredited courses that prisoners participated in were a course Level 1 or higher (24% were Entry level courses). A prisoner can enrol in more than one course, at more than one level, per year. Only one course per prisoner is counted at each level. Therefore, it is possible that the total number of courses is higher than the number of prisoners, due to prisoners taking multiple courses per year.

A total of 49,135 prisoners achieved a grade in the year ending March 2025, an increase of 8% compared with 45,289 in the previous year. On average, 76% of accredited courses that prisoners achieved were at Level 1 or higher (24% were Entry level courses).

Functional skills courses

Table 2.3 accompanying this publication shows participation and achievement in all functional skills courses. Functional skills courses are offered as part of the core curriculum. Functional skills courses include accredited English, maths, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. These provide the fundamental skills that people need for their working and personal lives. Prisoners can study for the qualifications in practical ways and apply core skills to real-life situations. A functional skills level 2 is equivalent to a

¹⁰ This total includes both accredited and non-accredited courses. Achieving in a course means that the prisoner has completed all the work and has been awarded a grade or level.

¹¹ Functional skills courses are defined as accredited courses, funded by the Prison Education Framework (PEF) that cover English, maths, ICT and ESOL.

General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Courses are identified based on the funding type, level, accreditation, and subject.

There were 23,294 prisoners participating in at least one functional course, and 17,876 prisoners who achieved a grade in one or more functional skills courses. There was a 7% increase in the number of prison learners participating in a functional skills course in the 12 months to 31st March 2025, compared with 21,781 prison learners in the 12 months leading to 31st March 2024. Over the same period, there was a 4% increase in prisoner learners achieving a full or partial grade in functional skills, compared with 17,176 prison learners in the previous year.

More than a half of functional skills learners participated in English (54%) and maths (52%), compared with a lower proportion participating in ICT (10%) and ESOL (7%). The highest volume of learners participating in English and maths functional skills was at Entry level (6,382 and 6,216 prisoners, respectively).

The same trend was seen in functional skills achievement, with 54% of functional skills learners achieving in English, and 49% achieving in maths, compared with a lower proportion achieving in ICT (11%) and ESOL (7%). The highest volume of learners achieving in English and maths functional skills was at Entry level (5,226 and 5,389 prisoners, respectively).

3. Accredited programmes for offenders in custody

The number of starts for accredited programmes in custody increased

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, there were 5,456 Accredited Programme starts, a 1% increase when compared with the previous 12-month period.

The number of completions¹² for accredited programmes in custody increased

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 4,908 accredited programmes were completed by prisoners, representing an increase of less than 1% compared with the previous 12-month period.

Accreditation is a system for ensuring that intervention programmes offered to offenders, which aim to reduce reoffending, have a proper theoretical basis and are designed in accordance with the 'What Works' literature¹³.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) commission a range of accredited programmes¹⁴ that vary in length, complexity, and mode of delivery. Programmes have been developed to target the offender risks and needs for different types of offending. To achieve accreditation, programmes must be assessed to make sure they are targeting the right people, focusing on the right things, and being delivered in a way that is most likely to reduce reoffending. All HMPPS-commissioned accredited programmes are subject to quality assurance processes to ensure programme integrity is maintained and developed¹⁵.

Accredited programme¹⁶ delivery volumes have been increasing since 2020-21 after a long-term downward trend since 2009-10 (Figures 3.1 and 3.2, Tables 3.1 to 3.3)

Programme delivery was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷, significantly contributing to the low levels of both starts and completions reported in 2020-21. Levels of starts and completions have continued to increase since this point. The number of starts and completions in 2024-25 increased by 1% and less than 1% respectively, compared with 2023-24, with delivery of programmes continuing to recover towards pre-pandemic levels.

¹² Total volumes over the financial year for starts and completions will not necessarily match. This is because a prisoner who completed in the current financial year might have started the programme in previous years.

¹³ 'What Works' literature is a broad body of literature, one example of which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions>

¹⁴ A complete list of accredited programmes for offenders in custody can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmpps-accredited-programmes>

¹⁵ Details around the accreditation process can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions>

¹⁶ In this publication, programmes are grouped into one of eight categories: Domestic Violence, Extremism, General Offending, Mixed Cohort, Next Generation, Sexual Offending, Substance Misuse or Violence. For monitoring purposes, the higher-level programme type 'Offender Behaviour Programmes' (OBPs) in custody includes completions from the domestic violence, extremism programmes, mixed cohort, violence and general offending categories but excludes next generation, sexual offender treatment and substance misuse programmes, which are reported separately.

¹⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted accredited programme delivery. Delivery was mostly paused in March 2020 and, where delivery was able to resume under safe systems of work and infection control, it was limited to one-to-one or small group provision.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, volumes of starts and completions fell steadily between 2009-10 and 2020-21. This was mainly due to changes in accredited programme delivery in custody, driven by changes in programme ownership and reinvestment favouring longer, higher intensity programmes (including some one-to-one programmes) rather than shorter, moderate intensity programmes. The number of commissioned completions has therefore decreased despite maintaining investment.

Responsibility for running substance misuse accredited programmes shifted from HMPPS to the National Health Service (NHS). As of 1 April 2011, local NHS partnerships assumed these responsibilities. The large decreases seen reflect the fact that more offenders are completing programmes run by the NHS, rather than HMPPS¹⁸.

New programmes have been introduced between 2016-17 and 2024-25:

- Kaizen was introduced in 2017. Kaizen is a single model approach delivered to separate offending cohorts of either sexual offending (SO), interpersonal violence (IPV) or general violence (GV). Kaizen (SO) and Horizon have replaced all the delivery of Core and Extended Sex Offender Treatment Programmes in custody, with Kaizen also replacing the Self Change Programme (SCP) and Healthy Relationships Programme.
- Becoming New Me plus (BNM+) was also introduced as an alternative to the mainstream intervention Kaizen, replacing the former BNM (Becoming New Me) for sexual offending, and offering a learning difficulties and challenges approach for high intensity and interpersonal violence.
- New Me Strengths (NMS) was introduced as a single programme alternative to Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), Resolve, and Building Better Relationships (BBR), and replacing former Becoming New Me programme for sexual offending for those with learning difficulties and challenges.
- Mixed Cohort and the Building Choices (BC) programmes are the latest programmes to be introduced. Mixed cohort BNM+ or NMS programmes are delivered to cohorts with a mix of violence, interpersonal violence or general offending needs.
- Building Choices is succeeding the majority of the legacy accredited programmes offered by Interventions Services except for the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) and the Healthy Sex Programme (HSP), which will be retained and join Building Choices as part of the Next Gen offer. BC is being rolled out in phases across the prison estate, with full rollout across all commissioned sites expected by the end of 2025.

This transition to newer programmes accounted for some of the decrease in sex offender treatment programmes since 2016-17.

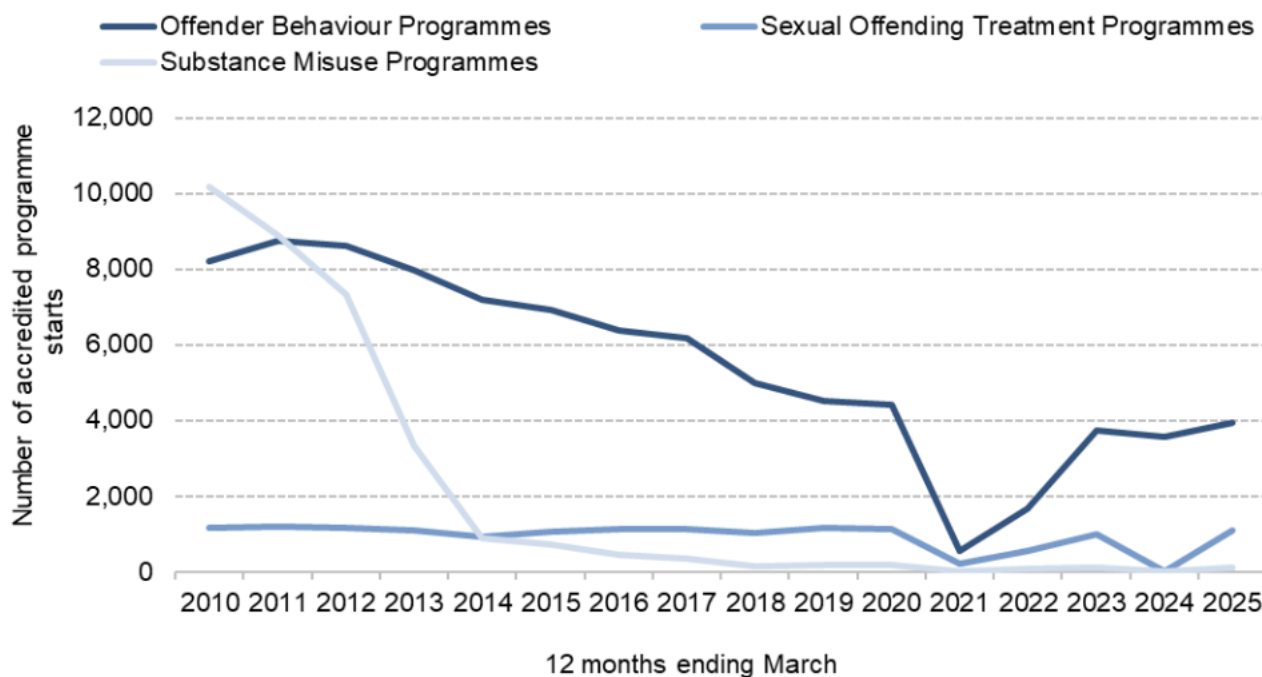
Starts in HMPPS-commissioned accredited programmes delivered in custody rose by 1% (5,456 starts) in the year ending March 2025, when compared with the previous 12 months (5,382 starts) (Figure 3.1, Table 3.1).

Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) made up the largest proportion of starts (72%), driven by a high volume of General Offending programme starts (59% of all starts). Volumes of starts in the OBP category were lower for violence programmes (7%), domestic violence programmes (5%) mixed cohort programmes (1%), and extremism programmes (less than 1% of the total volume of starts).

¹⁸ Except HMP Parc in Wales, which continues to deliver an accredited substance misuse programme within its contract - Pillars of Recovery.

The programme type with the second highest volume of starts was Sexual Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTPs), comprising 20% of starts. Finally, Building Choices (BC) starts made up 6% of the total whilst Substance Misuse Programme (SMP) starts made up 2% of the total volume of starts.

Figure 3.1: Number of starts¹⁹ for accredited programmes in custody, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2025 (Source: Table 3.1)



During the latest year, volumes of accredited programme completions have continued to rise (Figure 3.2, Tables 3.2 and 3.3).

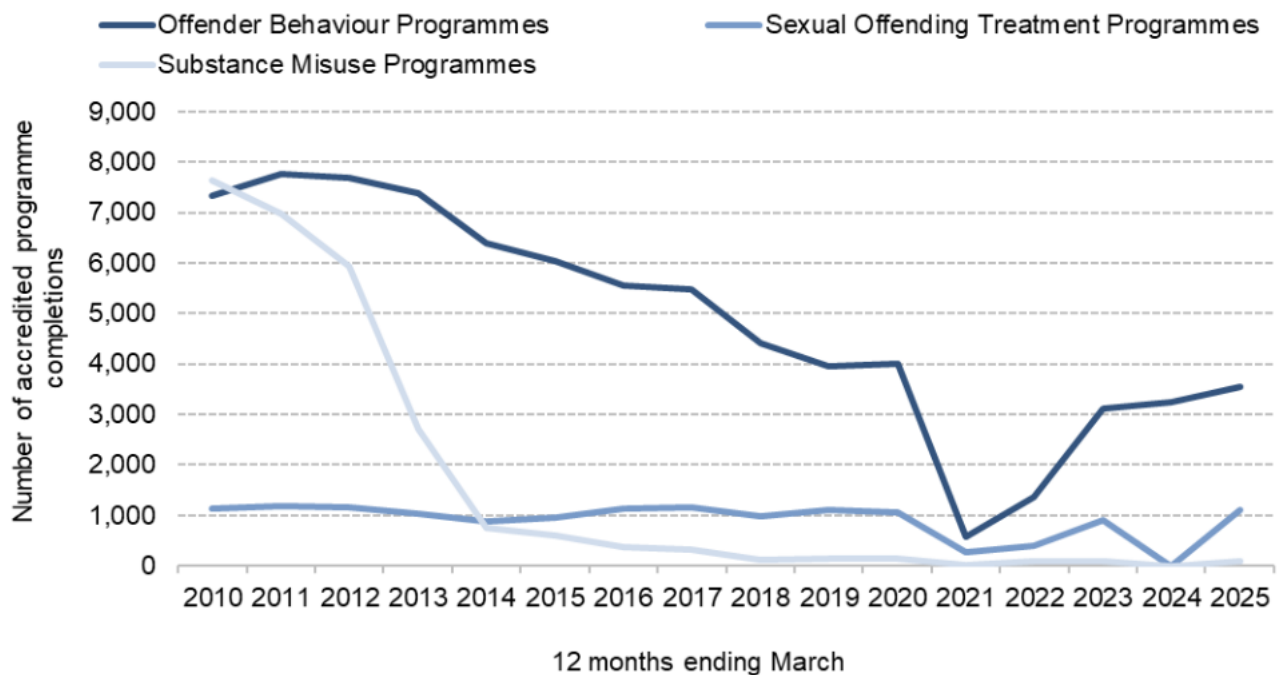
There were 4,908 completions in the year ending March 2025, up from 4,886 in the year ending March 2024, representing an increase of less than 1%.

Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) made up the largest proportion of completions (72%), driven by a high volume of General Offending programme completions (60% of all completions). Volumes of completions in the OBP category were lower for violence programmes (6%), domestic violence programmes (5%) mixed cohort programmes (1%) and extremism programme completions (less than 1% of the total volume of completions).

The programme type with the second highest volume of completions was Sexual Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTPs), comprising 22% of completions. Finally, Building Choices (BC) comprised 4% of all completions and Substance Misuse Programme (SMP) made up 2% of the total volume of completions.

¹⁹ Start volumes presented in this graph exclude Building Choices programmes, as they have not been rolled out across all prison estates. Mixed Cohort programmes have been counted under the Offender Behaviour Programmes category.

Figure 3.2: Number of completions²⁰ for accredited programmes in custody, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2025 (Source: Table 3.2)



²⁰ Completion volumes presented in this graph exclude Building Choices programmes, as they have not been rolled out across all prison estates. Mixed Cohort programmes have been counted under the Offender Behaviour Programmes category.

Further information

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from:

URL: uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

Accompanying files

The following products are published as part of this release:

- A statistical bulletin, containing commentary on key trends over time.
- A technical guide, providing further information on how the data are collected and processed.
- A set of tables covering key topic areas from this bulletin.

URL: www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-education-and-accredited-programme-statistics

Contact

Press enquiries should be directed as per the Ministry of Justice Press Enquiries webpage:

URL: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/media-enquiries

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Service Users Equality Performance Team at the Ministry of Justice:

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