



Transparency Data

Releases in Error, England and Wales

Releases in Error from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Policy Background

A prisoner is released in error if they are released when they should otherwise have remained in HMPPS custody and the prisoner or a third party has not deliberately played a part in the error. This data is inclusive of releases in error from HMPPS establishments and Prisoner Escort Custody Services, but does not include any incidents where HMPPS carried out the terms of an order but the order did not reflect the lawful order made by the court due to a HMCTS administrative error, or where the individual did not enter HMPPS custody.

Number of Recorded Releases in Error

The number of recorded releases in error that occurred from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 was 179.

Month	Number of Release in Error incidents
April 2025	11
May 2025	21
June 2025	22
July 2025	20
August 2025	14
September 2025	22
October 2025	19
November 2025	16
December 2025	8
January 2026	8
February 2026	10
March 2026	8

Data on releases in error are regularly published in the HMPPS Annual Digest (latest data to year-ending March 2025): [HMPPS Annual Digest, April 2024 to March 2025 - GOV.UK](#).

Limitations and further Information

This publication of transparency data presents the number of releases in error from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. These are counts of all recorded releases in error occurring from HMPPS custody during this time period as drawn from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System (IRS). Data on releases is based on the information available at the time. It may be the case in some circumstances that information on a case is brought to light that either confirms or disproves a release in error.

Consequently, figures may change over time, and particularly in recent months as there has been less time for such cases to be detected. In the past, these revisions have tended to be upwards.

Examples of releases in error may include misplaced warrants for imprisonment or remand, recall notices not acted upon or sentence miscalculation, where a prisoner is released earlier than their correct release date, or where there is an error at the point of final discharge. Releases in error from HMPPS happen due to a variety of issues. This data is inclusive of releases in error from HMPPS establishments and Prisoner Escort Custody Services, but does not include any incidents where HMPPS carried out the terms of an order but the order did not reflect the lawful order made by the court due to a HMCTS administrative error, or where the individual did not enter HMPPS custody.

If the person released is not aware of the error and makes no attempt to evade arrest, then they have committed no additional offence and in that sense, they may not be at fault. If it is believed that the situation was manipulated by the prisoner, for example by taking the identity of another person, then this will be classified as an escape, and not a release in error.

This data has been extracted from a live operational reporting system. As with any data extracted from administrative systems, it is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and may be subject to revision if the underlying data changes.

The monthly figures provided were correct as of extraction on 08 April 2026. Please note that they are not directly comparable with volumes published in the HMPPS Annual Digest, as the HMPPS Annual Digest allows additional time after the reporting period to capture and quality assure incidents that were reported late. As a result, the total presented here is likely to be revised.

Subsequent revisions to releases in error data also mean that this data differs from that previously published in

[Releases in Error from 1 April 2025 to 31 October 2025.pdf](#) (which was also based on manual reconciliation across data sources rather than solely on IRS), or

management information and live operational data shared with the Dame Lynne Owens' Independent Review into Releases in Error.

The Owens review found that statistics on releases in error could be improved to better reflect the totality of releases in error, and that there is currently limited understanding of the true extent of risk presented by releases in error. MoJ will work, including with ONS, to improve how our recording and reporting reflect the true position.

Releases in error should be interpreted with due caution in the context of trends in releases and changes in the operational environment, as relatively small numerical changes can have a disproportionate impact on apparent trends.

Accompanying files

- None

Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/media-enquiries>

Non-Press enquiries relating to this publication should be sent to:

Prison Safety Statistics and Analysis Team

Analysis Directorate,
Ministry of Justice,
102 Petty France,
London,
SW1H 9AJ

Email: OMSQ-SiC-publications@justice.gov.uk

© Crown copyright Produced by the Ministry of Justice; Alternative formats are available on request from OMSQ-SiC-publications@justice.gov.uk