Ministry of Justice

Guide to HMPPS Annual Digest

2025-26

Ministry of Justice

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Introduction

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, with the goal of helping prison and probation services work together to manage offenders through their sentences. This HMPPS Digest 2025-26 publication provides a compendium of data across prisons and probation for the 12 months to March 2026.

The HMPPS Annual Digest 2025-26 contains:

a. A statistical bulletin, containing headline figures and further commentary.
b. Data tables and tools, containing the underlying data for each topic.
c. This guide, providing further technical details on the data.

Timeframe and publishing frequency

This publication is produced on an annual basis and provides information relating to financial years, with 2025-26 being the latest year.

Data quality

Data have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the level of detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. The nature of any administrative system means that there may be time lags with regards to when data is recorded. This means that any revisions or additions may not be captured in time to be included in the subsequent publication. Details of all administrative data sources used in the production of this release can be found in the Ministry of Justice Statement of Administrative Sources.[1]

Suppression of data

Low numbers may be suppressed to prevent disclosure and identification of individuals in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. The level of suppression required is determined according to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) methodology guidance[2].

Revisions

The reasons for statistics needing to be revised fall into three main categories: changes in source of administrative systems or methodology, receipt of subsequent information, and errors in statistical systems and processes. Procedures are constantly reviewed to minimise the risk of revisions. However, in the event that revisions are required, the publication on the website will be updated alongside information documenting the changes and any statistics affected within the tables will be appropriately footnoted. We regularly refresh our incident data for the latest financial year to reflect any updates to the information recorded. Release in Error is refreshed back to April 2022.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ministry-of-justice-statistics-policy-and-procedures
[2] https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/gssgsr-disclosure-control-guidance-for-tables-produced-from-administrative-sources/

1. Escapes, Absconds, Failure to Return from ROTL and Releases in Error

Public protection is core to the successful and effective delivery of offender management. In managing offenders in custody and in the community, HMPPS has the protection of the public, including victims, children and vulnerable adults, as an overriding aim in all its activity. HMPPS takes public protection and escapes from prison extremely seriously. An immediate investigation, independent of the prison, is completed following any escape to determine what went wrong and to learn lessons for the future. The majority of those who escape are quickly re-captured by the police, then charged and prosecuted. On return to prison, they are normally re-categorised and may be moved to a higher security establishment.

There are four types of incidents which result in a prisoner being unlawfully at large. These are escapes (including those from contractor escorts), absconds, failure to return from temporary release and release in error. Each of these is defined below.

These are monitored to analyse the frequency across the estate and identify any trends nationally, while taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.

Escapes

Escape from Establishment and Escort

A prisoner **escapes from prison** if they unlawfully gain their liberty by breaching the secure perimeter of a closed prison. It is also classified as an escape if a prisoner deliberately manipulates the situation to bring about an early release by, for example, impersonating another prisoner.

A prisoner **escapes from an escort** if they are able to pass beyond the control of escorting staff and leave the escort, the van, the premises (court, hospital etc.)

Escapes may involve overcoming physical security restraints or barriers, such as a wall or fence, locks, bolts or bars, a secure vehicle, handcuffs, or the direct supervision of escorting staff. Escapes are further distinguished by their seriousness, duration and circumstances:

- An incident is deemed to be an escape and included in the annual total if (i) the prisoner is at liberty for 15 minutes or more before recapture or (ii) the prisoner commits an offence before recapture.

The number of escapes are covered in four categories in the tables:

i. Prisons
Escapes by breaching the secure perimeter of prison grounds. This excludes escapes by Category A prisoners.

ii. Prison Escorts
Escaping the control of escorting prison staff. This excludes escapes by Category A prisoners.

iii. Contractor Escorts
Escapes from the secure vehicles or supervision of contracted prison escorts. This includes escapes from court where contracted prison escort staff have been notified of the requirement to escort a prisoner for admission to prison custody and are present in court.

iv. Category A escapes
This is an escape by a prisoner who is classed as Category A. Category A prisoners are those whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, the police or the security of the State and for whom the aim must be to make escape impossible.

The total number of escapes from prison custody is obtained by the sum of the four categories above.

Data is reported by prison establishments on central administration systems and collated on the Incident Reporting Module (IRS) on P-NOMIS.

Absconds

A prisoner absconds when he/she gains liberty without the need to overcome physical security restraints or evade direct staff supervision. In most cases, unlawfully at large (UAL) incidents from open prisons would be recorded as ‘absconds’.

Not all UAL incidents from open prisons are classified absconds. If an open prisoner gains liberty having been held in secure accommodation, awaiting transport back to a closed prison, from a security escort or escorting staff, then the incident is classified as an escape.

Rationale	**Absconds are monitored to analyse the frequency across the open estate and identify any trends nationally, also taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.**
Technical description	An abscond is an escape that does not involve overcoming a physical security restraint or barrier such as that provided by a wall or fence, locks, bolts or bars, a secure vehicle, handcuffs or the direct supervision of staff. By definition, an abscond is only possible from prisons with open conditions
Data source	Data is reported by prison establishments on central administration systems and collated on the Incident Reporting Module (IRS) on P-NOMIS.
Calculation	This indicator is a simple count of absconds.

Failure to return from Temporary Release

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) is the mechanism under which offenders may be released into the community, generally towards the end of their sentences, for rehabilitative purposes. It can play an important role in public protection by allowing risk management plans for offenders to be tested in the community under strict conditions before they are released. It also provides a valuable means of helping offenders prepare for their resettlement in the community by, for example, finding work or rebuilding links with their families, which helps to reduce reoffending.

Failure to return from Temporary Release

A **temporary release failure** after a release on temporary licence (ROTL) occurs when a prisoner fails to adhere to any condition written into the licence that permits their temporary release. Such conditions include the date and time by which the prisoner is required to return to the prison and may also place restrictions on where the prisoner may go and whom they may visit during the period of release, etc.

Failure to return after release on temporary licence is the subset of the above where an offender has not returned to the establishment by midnight on the date of return given in the licence. In this case, the police will be notified that the offender is unlawfully at large, and appropriate contingency plans are activated. If the offender returns before midnight, this is recorded as a late return instead of a failure to return.

Rationale	**Failure to Return is monitored to analyse the frequency of failures to return across the estate and identify trends, taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.**
Technical description	Failure to return after release on temporary licence is the subset of Temporary Release Failures where a prisoner has not returned to the establishment by midnight on the return date. If the prisoner returns shortly after the designated time but before midnight, the failure may be classified as a late return. A prisoner who fails to return is considered to be unlawfully at large
Data source	Data is reported by prison establishments on central administration systems and collated on the Incident Reporting Module (IRS) on P-NOMIS.
Calculation	This indicator is a simple count of the subset of Temporary Release Failures that have been recorded as a Failure to Return.

Number of temporary release failures by reason for failure
Figures within table 1.3 and the data tool include a breakdown of the number of temporary release failures by reason for failure. These figures are published from 2017-18 onwards, prior to then this breakdown isn't possible.

As more than one type of failure may be present in any incident, the total number of different types of failures will be greater than or equal to the number of incidents. The numbers in table 1.3 count one type of failure per incident only based on the following order of priority:

- If any offence occurred, the type of temporary release failure will be "offence".
- If no offence occurred, but the prisoner was late returning to their place of custody, the type of failure will be "late" if they were back before midnight on the date they were due to return, or the type of failure will be "failure to return" if they had not returned by midnight on the date they were due to return.
- Any other type of failure will be recorded as "other". Other includes a breach of the terms of the licence, such as alcohol, drugs, gambling, behaviour, location, or bringing illicit items back into prison.
- If the type of failure is not known or not recorded, it will be shown as "unknown".

Still at Large

The number of prisoners who have escaped, absconded or failed to return from temporary release, and have not yet been apprehended by the police and returned to prison by the reference date (30 April 2025). The year given is the year of the original incident. The number of prisoners who were released in error and are still at large is not included.

Release in Error

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 prisons 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 was not in HMPPS custody. This can include those who are incorrectly released on an early release scheme. Examples 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. They will be unlawfully at large until and unless they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody. If the person released is not aware of the error and makes no attempt to evade arrest, then they have committed no 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.

Rationale	**Releases in Error are monitored to analyse the frequency across the estate and identify any trends nationally, while taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.**

Technical description	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 prisons 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 was not in HMPPS custody. This can include those who are incorrectly released on an early release scheme. If the person so released is not aware of the error and makes no attempt to evade arrest then they have committed no offence and in that sense they may not be at fault.
Data source	Data is reported by prison establishments on central administration systems and collated on the Incident Reporting Module (IRS) on P-NOMIS.
Calculation	The indicator is a simple count of the number of Releases in Error. Although this would be better considered on a rate basis (Releases in Error / total releases from prison), the denominator for this is not available. Releases from prison data only cover sentenced prisoners, and Releases in Error can include remand prisoners.

Compiling rates: Rates express the number of incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the at-risk group and are based on population figures published in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly. Rates give a more reliable indicator of trends than numbers of incidents because they take account of changes in the prison population over time.

Annual rates = the number of incidents occurring within a twelve-month period, divided by the average prison population at the end of each month within the same period, multiplied by 1,000. The prison population data is published in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publication (table 1.1, by month).

The number of absconds can include both absconds by prisoners held within open prisons and absconds held by prisoners in open conditions within closed prisons. The rate of absconds is only based on the population of prisoners held within open prisons, it does not include the number of prisoners held within open conditions in closed prisons.

2. Random Mandatory Drug Testing (rMDT) in custody

Rationale	Random mandatory drug testing provides a measure of drug misuse in prisons.
Technical description	The measure for the rate of drug misuse is based on the rate of positive drug tests under the random MDT programme. This provides an indication of the level of drug misuse in establishments. Random samples are those where a prisoner has been selected for testing, using a random prisoner selector on central systems. The programme produces a list of prisoner numbers in the required sample, plus a reserve list. All prisoners can be selected by the system for random MDT. If a prisoner is medically unfit to provide a sample, and this has been verified by a healthcare professional, another prisoner is selected from the reserve list. In the case of transferred prisoners, results for a sample are recorded against the establishment where the sample was taken. A sample is recorded as positive where an rMDT screening test is positive (or in cases where a screening test is positive but a confirmation test is requested, the confirmation test also returns a positive result). Furthermore, some positive samples will be mitigated and declared negative due to prescribed medication. The number of tests does not include spoilt samples which could not be tested or cases when the prisoner refuses to provide a sample. A sample that tests positive for more than one drug counts as one positive sample. This means that findings for each type of drug, showing the percentage of positive tests including each drug type, will add to more than 100%.
Data quality	The percentage of all prisoners misusing drugs is inferred from the test results of prisoners sampled at random within prisons. This means the findings are estimates rather than an exact measure of positive test results in the whole prison population. A confidence interval is calculated to indicate how much lower or higher the percentage of positive tests might reasonably be. This is done for data from financial year 2012-13. Differences in estimates between years are only commented on when there is no overlap between the confidence intervals. An important factor affecting the quality of rMDT estimates is the extent to which the testing panel covers the drugs that are prevalent in prisons at the time. In particular, new compounds of Psychoactive Substances (PS) may be in use but not yet testable. This list of drugs tested for is kept under review, with intelligence from prisons and detailed studies carried out periodically to identify if other substances have become

prevalent in prisons and should be added to the list. However, composition of these substances is rapidly changing, and so there is a time lag between a substance becoming prevalent in prisons to its detection and proposed addition to the list for rMDT testing, and being able to detect it in samples.[3]

The use of PS was first reported in 2017-18 following the addition of specified psychoactive substances (PS) to the rMDT testing panel during September 2016 with other PS chemical compounds added to the panel in subsequent months.[4] However, the HMPPS Digest for 2020-21 summarised that it was not possible to draw conclusions about the level of misuse of drugs including PS in subsequent years (the 12 months ending March 2019 and the 12 months ending March 2020). This is because of two new compounds of PS in circulation in prisons which could not at the time be identified by the rMDT test (and which were subsequently added to the testing panel in December 2019).

Because of the pause and subsequent disruption to testing due to the pandemic in 2020-21 and 2021-22 and underestimation of drug use in 2018-19 and 2019-20 due to time lags in updating the testing panel for new PS, readers are referred to the findings in the HMPPS Digest for 2017-2018.[5] In 2017-18, the percentage of positive drug tests (including PS) was 21.3%.

Steps have been taken to reduce considerably the time lags in updating the rMDT testing panel for new drugs. Since 2021-22, there is no longer a requirement for secondary legislation to be passed before new PS compounds can be added to the panel.[6] Also since 2021-22, the detailed study to establish which drugs and PS compounds are prevalent and should be testable is conducted twice a year rather than annually. These improvements will permit more frequent updates of the

[3] When a new PS is identified and before it is added to the list of drugs tested in rMDT, the laboratory must obtain a reference standard to identify the drug beyond reasonable doubt. This is a complex process requiring the drug to be synthesised from first principles and accredited for use by the relevant authorities.

[4] Substances tested for included common synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (SCRAs). Results for these tests were included from 2017-18 onwards, the first full and reliable performance year's data available.

[5] The latest data including for 2017-18 and past trends are given in HMPPS Annual Digest: April 2019 to March 2020 edition (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2019-to-march-2020). This includes full details of data quality which are summarised here. In the 2019-20 publication, the 2017-18 data has been adjusted for the over-sampling of small prisons.

[6] Until 2021-22, new PS compounds that are covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) 1971 could be tested for under existing legislation. In practice, that was as soon as the laboratory had obtained reference samples. If new compounds were not covered by the MDA 1971, these needed to be added to the list of specified drugs that can be tested for as set out in Prison and YOI Rules. This required secondary legislation (a statutory instrument) to add new PS compounds to the list.

	testing panel. Nevertheless, some time lag is inevitable during this updating process. This is particularly the case when introducing new compounds of PS, since there the laboratory must still produce an accredited reference standard. The list of drugs tested for is given in the Appendix A, including the most recent additions to the panel. A further aspect of data quality in rMDT is the extent of refusals to provide a sample for drug testing. Refusing to provide a sample is a disciplinary offence that may lead to additional time being added to the individual's time in custody. In 2019-20, the last year for which data was published, there were only 1,109 refusals (2.0%) out of 55,551 random mandatory drug tests attempted. The detailed breakdown of outcomes, by prison function, is included in Table 7.6 in the Excel file accompanying the publication that year. It shows all possible outcomes of rMDT that year, including refusals, administrative flaws (e.g. mis-recording by the prison) and sample spoilage (e.g. broken or otherwise compromised sample). These three categories accounted for a small proportion of tests attempted that year (2.7%), with 97.3% of all rMDT attempts successfully tested.
Impact on testing and data quality	As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, testing was suspended across prisons from April 2020 and testing only partially resumed from September 2020. Establishments were required to resume testing when they were operating at Stages 2 or 1 rather than at Stages 3 and 4 of the National Framework for managing Covid. This resulted in a significant drop in the number of completed tests throughout 2020-21 and continuing into 2021-22. Under normal circumstances, 121 establishments would have been expected to carry out rMDT. However, the numbers of prisons conducting rMDT each month has varied widely and not all participating prisons were able to meet the testing requirement of 5% or 10% of prisoners in those months. Because the percentage of positive tests varies considerably by prison and by types of prison (as pre-pandemic estimates have shown), it is not possible to produce reliable national estimates based on the findings in those prisons which were able to participate.
Data source	Monthly data from the drug testing laboratory.
Calculation	a=(b/c)*w*100 where: a) MDT Positive Rate. b) Total number of random drug tests that prove positive.

c) Total number of random drug tests carried out.
w) Weighting factor when calculating National rate:
"1.0" where 5% tests of prison population have been carried out
"0.5" where 10% tests of prison population have been carried out
When calculating individual prison rate:
"1.00" for all prisons

Random Mandatory Drug Testing

The level of drug misuse in prisons is measured by the random Mandatory Drug Testing programme (rMDT). The aim of rMDT is to test a random sample of 5 per cent or 10 per cent of prisoners in each prison every month (depending on the size of the prison population) and to monitor drug-misuse. A positive rMDT can be used as evidence in support of disciplinary proceedings that may lead to punitive action, including the potential for additional time being added to a sentence. RMDT also acts as a useful trigger for referring individuals into treatment services.

Adjusting (weighting) the results for the percentage of positive tests

RMDT is undertaken each month by testing a random sample of 5% of prisoners in prisons with 400 or more prisoners and 10% of prisoners in prisons with fewer than 400 prisoners.[7] This means prisoners in small prisons are relatively over-sampled and will have a greater influence on national rates of positive tests unless an adjustment is made to give a representative picture of small and large prisons.

From 2012-13 onwards, a new methodology has been implemented which adjusts the rates of positive tests in each prison to give more representative findings. The methodology adjusts the contribution that the number of positive tests in each prison makes to the national rate of positive tests depending on whether the prison was small (over-sampled) or large (under-sampled).

National rates adjusted in this way were first reported in the 2018-19 HMPPS Annual Digest. Notes to the tables to Chapter 7 indicate when the new or old methodology has been used. Estimates by type of drug are not adjusted.

Once national rates for drugs excluding PS are adjusted to be better representative of small and large prisons, national rates become slightly higher. The difference was less than 0.4 percentage points over the eight years from 2012-13 when the new methodology was implemented to 2019-20 when estimates from rMDT were last published (Figure 1).

National rates for drugs including PS are also higher following the same adjustment, the difference being between a half and one percentage point in the three years from 2017-18, when the use of PS was most reliably estimated, to 2019-20. (Figure 2).

[7] These testing levels are set annually, based on the average monthly population in the previous year.

Figure 1: Percentage of positive results from random Mandatory Drug Tests (excluding PS), the 12-months ending March 2010 to the 12-months ending March 2020

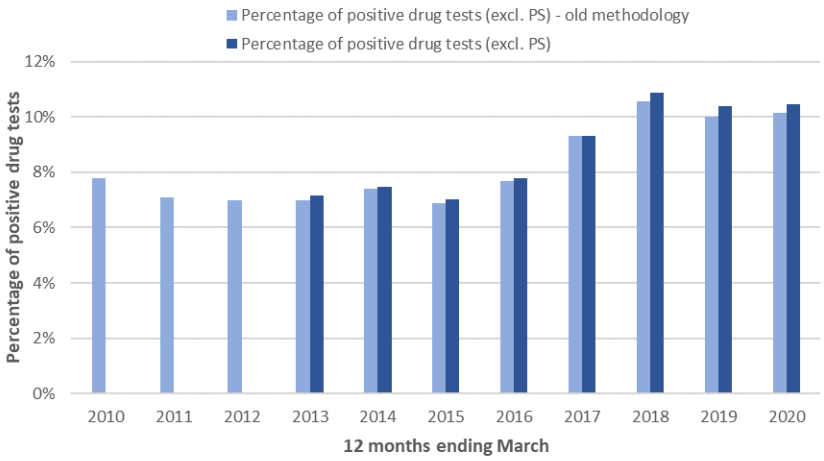
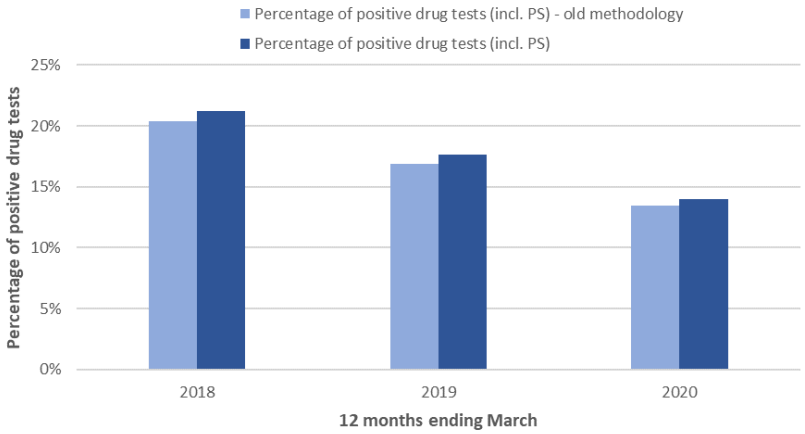


Figure 2: Percentage of positive results from random Mandatory Drug Tests including PS, the 12-months ending March 2018 to the 12-months ending March 2020



Note: As explained in Chapter 7 of the HMPPS Annual Digest, the percentage of positive tests is considered an underestimate in the 12-months to March 2020, and to a lesser extent in the 12-months to March 2019.

3. Protesting Behaviour

Definition:

Prisons use contingency planning to deal with incidents of disorder. The objective of the contingency planning is to ensure incidents are resolved with the minimum risk of harm to staff, prisoners, and the public, and that there is a return to normal operations and regime as swiftly as possible.

Barricade / prevention of access, hostage, concerted indiscipline, and incident at height are all sub-types of protesting behaviour incidents. The following is a list of definitions used for these sub-types:

- **Barricades/prevention of access:** Where one or more offenders deny access to any part of a prison, by use of a physical barrier, to those lawfully empowered to have such access.

- **Hostage incidents:** Where one or more persons are, unlawfully, held against their will by one or more individuals (either static or on the move). For the purpose of this metric, this excludes unlawful detention by HMPPS but does include hostage incidents where collusion was suspected or confirmed.

- **Concerted indiscipline:** An incident where two or more prisoners act together in defiance of a lawful instruction or against the requirements of the regime of the establishment. The act of indiscipline can be either active or passive (e.g. for a passive sit down protest) and the protagonists do not necessarily need to be acting in a common cause.

- **Incidents at height:** An incident at height is defined as any incident that is occurring at a place above or below ground level where a person could be injured if they fell from that place. This category can come in many forms including, but not limited to, prisoners on the netting, climbing up bars or on the roof, or where there is a risk of falling into an opening in a floor or a hole in the ground.

The reporting system used for incidents does not enable us to report multiple incident types for the same incident. Where an incident covers more than one incident category (i.e. hostage and assault) then we expect to have two separate incidents created. Where multiple sub-types of an incident occur during the same incident this would be recorded as a single incident, against the most appropriate sub-type (normally the most serious).

Generally, an increase in protest activity (e.g. protesting incidents, complaints about the regime, petitions, etc) will provide an early and strong indication that there has been a shift in prison thinking. HMPPS continuously monitors regime delivery, incident activity, intelligence assessments and complaints to gauge stability tolerances across the Prison estate. Should the position change, HMPPS will be able to identify this quickly and use the intelligence to inform incident management strategy moving forward. HMPPS continue to perform regular reviews of their tactical resources to ensure they have sufficient staff available to deploy for

incident resolution, and have strengthened previous arrangements with the military and police.

Compiling rates: Rates express the number of incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the at-risk group and are based on population figures published in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly. Rates give a more reliable indicator of trends than numbers of incidents because they take account of changes in the prison population over time.

Annual rates = the number of incidents occurring within a twelve-month period, divided by the average prison population at the end of each month within the same period, multiplied by 1,000. The prison population data is published in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publication (table 1.1, by month).

4. Finds

It is the priority of HMPPS to ensure prisons are places of safety and reform, including by removing the supply of illicit drugs. Since the publication of the White Paper Prison Safety and Reform in 2016, HMPPS has taken additional steps to disrupt the supply of illicit items, such as drugs, into prisons. For example, in 2018 we announced the rollout of specialist search teams to conduct body, property, cell and area searches across the estate. In April 2019 HMPPS published its National Prison Drug Strategy. One of its key pillars covers how prison staff can restrict the supply of drugs into their prisons.

In August 2019, a £100m investment in prison security was announced. This investment will enhance our ability to detect attempts to bring drugs and mobile phones into prisons by prisoners, visitors and staff, while mobile phone detection and blocking technology stops illicit phones from working in prisons and enables them to be retrieved. HMPPS is also expanding its Counter Corruption Unit and strengthening intelligence-led operations and investigations with law enforcement partners to disrupt organised crime, including the conveyance of drugs and mobile phones, into prisons.

It is important to consider with incidents of finds in prisons, that an increase in numbers may be as a result of more items being found although not necessarily attributable to any one particular security counter-measure, rather than more items being present in prisons.

There was a change in the way finds were recorded in March 2022. The reason for the change was to make it easier for prisons to record incidents where multiple items were found within one incident, the list of changes are highlighted below:

- Each find incident now enables the prisons to select single or multiple types of find initially. For incidents with only a single type of find, the prisons select the type of find from a drop down list, and can now input this information much quicker. For incidents with multiple types of find, it should still be easier for prisons to input this information, so may result in small increases in some of the individual finds categories.
- For drug finds, the “unknown” category is now at the top of the drop down lists for both drug type and drug weight, so may result in additional “unknown” drug type and drug weight finds in future. Ketamine was also added as an option, this would previously have been included within the unknown category.
- A new type of find was added, with “other digital finds” now included. This included options such as laptop, tablet, games console, smart watch and media streaming devices, and should result in a decrease in the number of finds where the finds categories are “other mobile related items” and “unknown”.

All of these changes may lead to changes in data recording practices and should result in improvements in the quality of the data. The inclusion of new categories and changes to some of the existing categories mean that finds incidents prior to March 2022 are not directly comparable with later figures, so caution needs to be taken when interpreting changes over the years.

In the finds chapter there is also a section on drone incidents. Drone incidents include all drone sightings, including UAV landings, crashes, recovery, conveying unauthorised articles into the establishment restricted fly zone or where the drone is believed to be photographing

prisoners, staff or parts of the buildings fabric. To be reportable as a drone sighting incident, the drone must have been seen by staff (rather than heard or observed by a third party). Where multiple drones are seen at the same time this should be recorded as one drone incident. Drone incidents are recorded separately from find incidents and are not included in the finds total. It is important to consider with incidents of sightings in prisons that an increase in numbers does not necessarily indicate more drone incursions. It may simply indicate more focused reporting. Trends should not be directly attributed to any one particular security counter-measure.

5. Crowding

Population

The average number of prisoners within each establishment per year. Prison Population figures have been used for the basis of any data that displays a rate or proportion of the prisoner population. Within prison population, there are three specific measures of population:

- Individual Prison Population = {Sum of monthly population} divided by {number of months prison was operational}
- National Prison Population = {Sum of monthly population} divided by 12 months.
- Public, and Privately Managed Prison Total Populations = {Sum of Individual Prison Population for Public Prisons} and {Sum of Individual Prison Population for Privately Managed Prisons}

Rationale	**To monitor prison population.**
Technical description	The population in the Digest is a monthly average of each prisons' population and a national monthly average of prison population. Monthly population figures are taken on the last day of each month. Where a prison has not been operational for the full year, the average is only taken of the months that the prison had a population and was operational. Therefore, the sum of each individual prison will not reconcile with the national total in all of the years shown.
Data source	Monthly data from prison establishments entered into the P-NOMIS system.
Calculation	Individual Prison Population at establishment level: a= (b1+ b2+b3+b4+b5+b6+b7+…._)/c where: a) Individual Prison Population. b) Population in individual prison in month 1 (b1), population in individual prison in month 2 (b2) etc. c) Number of months that the prison was operational during the year. National Prison Population level: d = (e1+e2+…..e12)/12 where: d) National Prison Population e) Prison population in month1, month2, … to month 12 Total Population in Public or Privately Managed Prisons: f= (a1+a2+a3+a4+a5+a6+a7…)

	where: f) Average prison population across all public or all privately managed prisons a) Individual Public, or Privately Managed Prison Population at Establishment Level

Crowding in custody – all accommodation

Prisoner Crowding

The percentage of prisoners held in crowded accommodation.

Rationale	**To monitor and to maintain crowding within acceptable levels.**
Technical description	Crowding is the count of total number of prisoners who, on the last day of the month, are held in a cell, room or dormitory where the number of occupants exceeds the baseline certified normal accommodation of the cell, room or dormitory. This includes the number of prisoners held two to a single cell, three prisoners in a cell designed for one or two and all prisoners held in larger cells or dormitories where the total occupancy exceeds the baseline certified normal capacity. For example, if 12 prisoners occupy a dormitory with a baseline certified normal capacity of 10, then the 12 prisoners should be counted as crowded. If the population of an establishment is higher than the certified normal accommodation, then at least this number should be reported as crowded. An establishment where the population does not exceed the In-Use CNA may be holding prisoners in crowded conditions, depending on operational requirements within the establishment.
Data source	Monthly data drawn from P-NOMIS and Prison Cell Certificates collated in central performance systems.
Calculation	Crowding rate for the year is calculated by summing the crowding figure for each month and prison population figure for each month. The total crowding figure for the year is then divided by the total population for the year and expressed as a percentage to show the rate of crowding.

Crowding in custody - doubled cells

Prisoner Crowding in Double cells

The percentage of prisoners held in crowded doubled accommodation (2 are held in a cell that is designed for one).

Rationale	**To monitor and to maintain crowding within acceptable levels.**
Technical description	Crowding in double cells is measured by the count of prisoners who, at unlock on the last day of the month, are held two to a cell with a baseline certified normal accommodation of one. Both of those prisoners are then counted as being held in crowded conditions.
Data source	Monthly data drawn from P-NOMIS and Prison Cell Certificates collated in central performance systems.
Calculation	The rate of crowding in double cells for the year is calculated by summing the count of prisoners held in crowded doubled accommodation for each month and prison population figure for each month. The total crowding in double cells figure for the year is then divided by the total population for the year and expressed as a percentage to show the rate of doubling.

Crowding policy

Further details on the certification of prison accommodation can be found in the Certified Prisoner Accommodation Policy Framework[8].

The level of crowding for each prison is set by senior operational managers in HMPPS in agreeing the operational capacity of each establishment. Usable operational capacity is the best assessment of the total number of prisoners that the estate can readily hold taking into account control, security and the proper operation of regimes including single cell risk assessments. It allows for the fact that prisoners are managed appropriately by sex, risk category and conviction status and that the population will not exactly match the distribution of places available across the country. As of March 2025, useable operational capacity was set at 1,350 places (the “operating margin”) below the overall capacity of the prison estate. This increased to 1,640 places in July 25.

No prison will be expected to operate at a level of crowding beyond that agreed by a senior operational manager.

Further information on prison functions can be found on GOV.UK.[9]

[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/certified-prisoner-accommodation-policy-framework

[9] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisons-and-their-resettlement-providers

6. Prisoners' Earnings

The Prisoners' Earnings Act (PEA) commenced on 26 September 2011. It enables prison governors to impose a levy of up to and including 40 per cent on wages over £20 per week (after tax, national insurance, any court ordered payments and any child support payments) of prisoners who have been assessed as being of low risk of absconding or re-offending and allowed to work outside of prison on temporary licence, in order to prepare for their eventual release.

The PEA states that the amounts arising from the levy can be directed to four purposes:

- to prescribed voluntary organisations concerned with victim support or crime prevention
- into the Consolidated Fund to contribute to the prisoner's upkeep
- to the prisoner's dependants
- to an investment account held on the prisoner's behalf

In 2011 Ministers decided that all the funds allocated to the Ministry of Justice from the imposition of the levy would be paid to voluntary organisations concerned with victim support, and prescribed Victim Support for this purpose. Over £2m has already been raised for support for victims of crime.

Rationale	**The Prisoners' Earnings Act (PEA) commenced on 26 September 2011. It enables prison governors to impose a levy of up to and including 40 per cent on wages over £20 per week (after tax, national insurance, any court ordered payments and any child support payments) of prisoners who have been assessed as being of low risk of absconding or re-offending and allowed to work outside of prison on temporary licence, to prepare for their eventual release.**
Technical description	The PEA provides that the amounts arising from the levy can be directed to four purposes: • to prescribed voluntary organisations concerned with victim support or crime prevention; • into the Consolidated Fund to contribute to the prisoner's upkeep; • to the prisoner's dependants; or • to an investment account held on the prisoner's behalf.
Data source	The data are sourced from monitoring systems used by prisons. Information on prisoner earnings subject to the Prisoners' Earnings Act 1996 for 2025-26 was provided by the following establishments:

	Askham Grange, Channings Wood, Downview, Drake Hall, East Sutton Park, Eastwood Park, Ford, Foston Hall, Hatfield, Haverigg, Hollesley Bay, Huntercombe, Kirkham, Kirklevington Grange, Leyhill, Low Newton, North Sea Camp, Norwich, Prescoed, Send, Spring Hill, Standford Hill, Stoke Heath, Styal, Sudbury, Thorn Cross, Wetherby.
Calculation	a = b1+b2+…b12/c where: a) average number of active prisoners per establishment b) b1 is number of active prisoners in month 1, b2 is average number of active prisoners in month 2 (calculate for each month that the prison has active prisoners) c) the number of months that the prison is active d=e/f where: d) average net earnings per prisoner e) total net earnings f) average number of prisoners that provided information g=h/f where: g) average net deductions per prisoner h) total net deductions

7. Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 (CAS-2)

The Community Accommodation Service, Tier 2 (CAS-2) is a contracted service which provides short-term accommodation for those who have no suitable accommodation and may otherwise be held in custody. The service is available for those on Bail, Home Detention Curfew, on licence and at risk of recall due to loss of accommodation, and by discretion to those to be released as Homeless at Conditional Release date. The CAS-2 service provides up to 2 hours per week support to each resident; provision of CCTV in all sites; provision of Wi-Fi in all sites with the issue of a basic smartphone to all residents and the rollout of wheelchair accessible bed spaces.

The CAS-2 contract was previously supplied by Stonham, part of Home Group, from June 2010 until 17 June 2018. Nacro supplied the contract from 18 June 2018 to October 2022 (previously known as the Bail Accommodation and Support Service). Nacro commenced delivery of the replacement CAS-2 service from October 2022.

Further information on prison functions can be found on GOV.UK.[10]

Rationale	**The Community Accommodation Service, Tier 2 (CAS-2) provides support to courts and prisons in achieving the best use of custody through the provision of suitable accommodation in a variety of locations in England and Wales, to following groups in the following priority: 1. Bailees; 2. Individuals subject to Home Detention Curfew; 3. Individuals referred because of risk to Recall to prison due to loss of accommodation, or those who could be re-released following recall if they had suitable accommodation; 4. Individuals who are referred from Approved Premises; and 5. Individuals referred due to being homeless at their conditional release date.**
Technical description	Community Accommodation Service, Tier 2 (CAS-2) provide accommodation to Service Users, defined as adult offenders and defendants who are aged eighteen or above who are referred by a Referrer to the Supplier as a potential recipient of the Services and fall within at least one of the following groups: a. individuals who have been: 1. granted a Bail Order by a Court and who might otherwise be remanded in custody; or 2. released from remand on a Bail Order; b. individuals who are released early from prison subject to an HDC; c. individuals who are part of the Alternative to Custody Recall.
Data source	Information is provided directly by the contractors – Nacro.
Calculation	This is a simple count of the number of referrals to the CAS-2 service by referral type and originating organisation and location. It is possible during any given year for a prisoner to receive more than one CAS-2 referral.

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisons-and-their-resettlement-providers

Appendix A – Drug Groups Tested

The following 'traditional' drug groups were tested in 2019-20 and included in the 2019-20 rMDT rate – the last estimates published for rMDT – and the most recent changes to the panel are given later:

- Cannabis
- Opiates
- Cocaine
- Benzodiazepines
- Amphetamines
- Methadone
- Barbiturates
- Buprenorphine

Tramadol (a traditional drug) was added to the testing panel in March 2020 and will be reported for samples collected from 1 April 2020 onwards. No positive tests for Tramadol were included in the rMDT estimates for the 12-months to March 2020. Barbiturates were removed from the panel following the introduction of Tramadol testing.

RMDT for psychoactive substances (PS), as defined in the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, was rolled out for specified PS in prisons during September 2016 with further new tests added in subsequent months to test for various other PS chemical compounds. Substances tested for included common synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (SCRAs). Results for these tests are included from the 2017-18 financial year onwards, the first full and reliable performance year's data available. In mid-November 2019, two new psychoactive substances were added to the testing panel and the results were included in the rMDT metrics for samples collected from December 2019 onwards. However, time lags in the addition of these new PS in November 2019 led to an underestimation of drug use in prisons in both 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The panel of PS in use during the 12-months to March 2020 included:

- AB FUBINACA metabolite
- APICA-N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- 5F-APICA-N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- APINACA-N-4- Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- MDMB CHMICA metabolite
- 5F-APINACA-N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- PB22 3 Carboxyindole metabolite
- 5FPB22 3 Carboxyindole metabolite
- XLR-11 N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- UR-144 N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- AM2201 N-4 Hydroxypentyl metabolite
- AB PINACA metabolite
- APINACA carboxypentyl
- AM2201 5 hydroxyindole metabolite
- 5F-MDMB PINACA desmethyl metabolite

- MAM2201 4 hydroxypentyl
- 5F-MDMB-PICA metabolite – added November 2019
- 4F-MDMB-BUTINACA metabolite – added November 2019

Although rMDT reporting has not resumed due to the pause in testing from April to September 2020 and subsequent disruption to testing, there have been additions to the panel:

- Tramadol (April 2020) (with the subsequent removal of Barbiturates)
- Gabapentin/Pregabalin (April 2021)
- Ketamine (November 2021)

An in-depth study concluded in 2023, looking specifically for new SCRA compounds in 2,000 samples. This was targeted to establishments with known or suspected SCRA problems, establishments where seizures of SCRAS was reported and prisons carrying out MDT in high volume, but experiencing low SCRA positivity compared to similar sites.