



## Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales

Quarterly: October to December 2020, and Annual: calendar year 2020

Prison population: 31 March 2021

### Main points

**78,058 prisoners in England and Wales as at 31 March 2021**



The total prison population was 6% lower than at the same point in the previous year.

**14,634 first receptions into prison between October and December 2020**



The number of first receptions represented a fall of 15% compared to the same period in 2019, as a result of COVID-19 disruption to courts.

**12,716 releases from sentences between October and December 2020**



This was 20% lower than the same period in 2019. As the prison population shifts towards those serving longer sentences, we would expect fewer releases in a given period.

**35,069 adjudication outcomes between October and December 2020**



This was a fall of 30% compared to the same period in 2019. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 752 occasions – this was 84% lower than the same period in 2019.

**5,718 licence recalls between October and December 2020**



This was a 16% decrease on the same quarter in 2019.

**223,973 offenders on probation at the end of December 2020**



This number decreased by 10% compared to the number of offenders supervised as at 31 December 2019.

This publication provides offender management quarterly statistics for the latest date available and provides comparisons to the previous year.

For technical detail please refer to the accompanying guide, '[Guide to offender management statistics](#)'.

## Statistician's comment

This quarter we have continued to see the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the prison population; in this release we are comparing the prison population as at 31 March 2021 with the same point in 2020.

Large-scale COVID-19 restrictions within the UK came into effect in mid-March 2020, which means that for the first time we are comparing two 'COVID-19 time points'. However, it is important to note that many of the changes to operational prison regime did not come into effect until late-March / early-April 2020, and so it is likely that next quarter's publication (which will be comparing '30 June 2020' and '30 June 2021') will provide a more directly comparable 'COVID-19' picture in terms of prison population.

Between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021, the total prison population has fallen by around 4,900, however this overall figure masks the trends seen for certain population groups.

The remand population (those held in prison awaiting trial, and those held in prison between trial and sentencing) has increased by 22% over the past year (to 12,262). This is the highest 'as at 31 March' remand population figure for ten years. Conversely, the sentenced prison population as at 31 March 2021 has fallen by 10% over the past year (to 64,783), which (except for a month-on-month rise of around 100 from 28 Feb 2021) represents the lowest level for 15 years.

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

The prisoner flows data in this publication cover the period October to December 2020 (and also the annual calendar year 2020 figures), which means that we are comparing a 'COVID-19 period' with the equivalent 'non COVID-19 period' between October and December 2019.

Over the past ten years, there has been a steady falling trend in the number of prisoner first receptions each year. However, over the past year (as a result of COVID-19 disruption to court processes) there has been a sharp 15% decrease; from 17,306 between October and December 2019, to 14,634 in the latest quarter.

However, on a quarterly basis, the number of prisoner first receptions over the past two quarters (July to September 2020, and October to December 2020) show a rebound effect compared to the April to June 2020 quarter. This shows the impact of courts reopening (and associated increase in court activity) following the COVID-19 lockdown in Spring 2020.

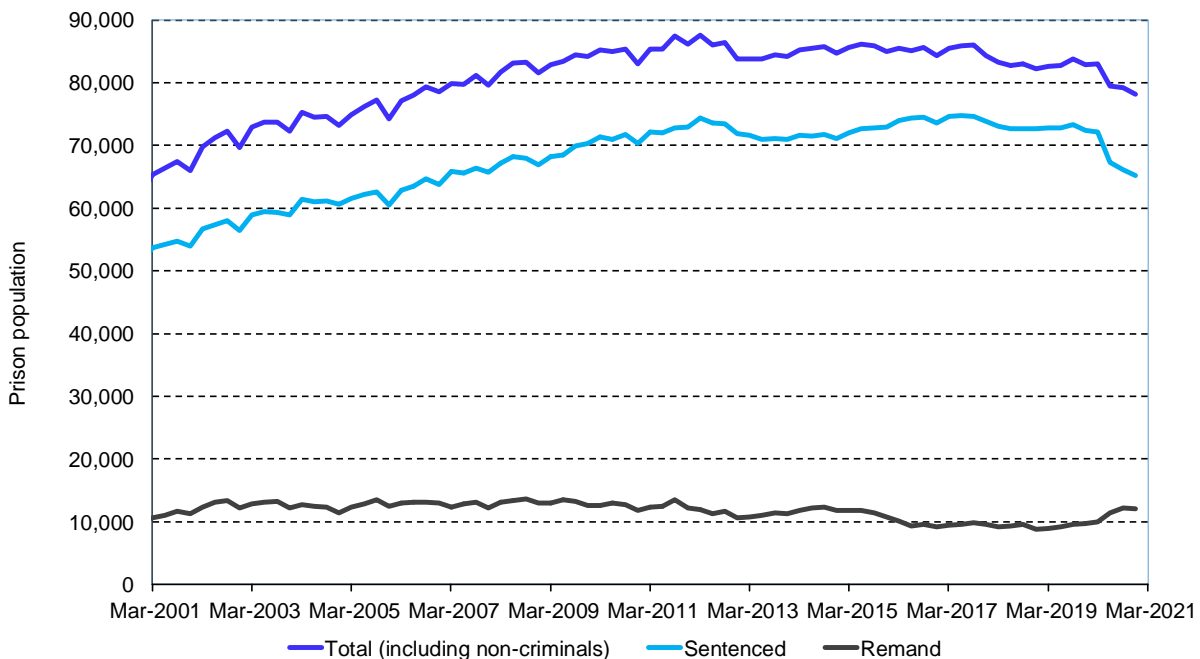
The effects of COVID-19 are also apparent in the number of incidences of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) in the latest quarter (a 63% fall compared to the same period in 2019); the number of incidences of prisoner transfer [between prisons] (a 30% annual decrease) and the number of occasions that Additional Days were awarded as punishment following a proven adjudication (which was 84% lower than the period October to December 2019).

# 1. Population

The prison population stood at 78,058 on 31 March 2021.

The sentenced prison population stood at 64,783 (83% of the prison population); the remand prison population stood at 12,262 (16%) and the non-criminal prison population stood at 1,013 (1%).

Figure 1: Prison population, March 2001 to 2021 (Source: Table 1.1 and Previous Offender Management Statistics)



## Remand prison population

The remand population on 31 March 2021 was 22% higher than at the same point 12 months earlier, rising from 10,043 to 12,262. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected normal court operations, meaning that the caseload in both magistrates' and crown courts have risen, and prisoners have been held on remand for longer. The untried population stood at 8,308, and the convicted unsentenced population stood at 3,954, after rises of 26% and 15% respectively over the 12 months from 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The majority of those in custody on remand were being held for one of:

- Drug offences
  - 29% of the untried population
  - 30% of the convicted unsentenced population
- Violence against the person
  - 27% of the untried population
  - 19% of the convicted unsentenced population
- Theft offences
  - 9% of the untried population
  - 11% of the convicted unsentenced population

Within the untried population, the number of people being held on remand for drug offences nearly doubled between March 2020 and 2021; it rose by 96% from 1,246 to 2,436, while in the convicted unsentenced population the number rose by 42% from 824 to 1,174. Also notable is that the population being held on remand for theft offences decreased in the 12-month period, falling by 13% (from 842 to 730) and 16% (from 518 to 437) in the untried and convicted unsentenced populations respectively.

### **Sentenced prison population**

The sentenced prison population decreased by 10% in the 12 months leading up to 31 March 2021, falling from 72,187 to 64,783. Over this period, there were decreases across all sentence length bands except Extended Determinate Sentences (4% increase) and those in custody following a breach of their licence conditions (the 'recall population'; 3% increase).

The largest annual decreases have been for the shortest sentence length bands. The number of prisoners serving sentences of 'less than or equal to 6 months' has fallen by 33%, whereas there was a smaller fall of 10% in the numbers serving determinate sentences of '4 years or more'.

### **Sexual offenders**

The number of prisoners serving an immediate custodial sentence for sexual offences has decreased by 9% from 12,274 to 11,667 between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021. This is roughly in line with the overall 10% decrease in sentenced prison population, which means that this group continues to represent around 18% of the sentenced prison population.

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

On 31 March 2021, 19,474 people were serving immediate custodial sentences for VATP offences. Over the 12-month period the number serving these sentences decreased by 3% from 20,055, however with the overall 10% decrease in sentenced prison population this corresponded to a proportional increase from 28% to 30% of the sentenced population.

The population serving sentences for 'possession of weapons' offences has decreased by 20% from 2,801 to 2,236 in the 12 months leading up to 31 March 2021.

The substantial fall in the sentenced 'Possession of Weapons' prison population can be attributed to the current COVID-19 pandemic which has led to delays in court cases waiting to be heard, hence a rise in the number of individuals awaiting trial and sentence. The same can be said for much larger offence groups such as theft offences, drug offences, and robbery.

### **Extended Determinate Sentences (EDS)**

Extended determinate sentences were made available for courts to impose from 13 April 2015. On 31 March 2021, 6,041 prisoners were serving such sentences, a 4% increase compared to the same date in 2020. In comparison, almost all other sentence length bands have seen decreases in population.

### **Indeterminate sentences**

As at 31 March 2021, there were 8,738 (8,407 male; 331 female) indeterminate sentenced prisoners (those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences and life sentences) in the prison population. This represents an annual decrease of 4%.

There were 1,784 'unreleased' IPP prisoners as at 31 March 2021 which represents a decrease of 13% in the last 12 months. This figure has decreased by 71% since its June 2012<sup>1</sup> peak of 6,080.

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<sup>1</sup> The IPP sentence was removed as a sentencing option shortly after this.

Over the 12 months to 31 March 2021, the number of IPP prisoners recalled to custody increased by 2% from 1,328 to 1,350.

At point of sentencing, offenders are given a minimum period of time (“tariff”) that they need to serve in prison before they can apply to the Parole Board for release. The proportion of the IPP population who are post-tariff continues to increase; 96% of IPP prisoners were post-tariff as of 31 March 2021 compared to 94% at the same time the previous year.

The number of life sentenced prisoners (6,954) has decreased by 2% compared to 31 March 2020. There were 60 whole-life prisoners at the end of March 2021, plus an additional 3 being treated in secure hospitals.

### **Recall to custody**

The prison population who have been recalled to custody increased by 3% over the year leading up to 31 March 2021, rising from 8,933 to 9,182 prisoners.

### **Foreign National Offenders (FNOs)**

There were 9,850 (2,730 remand, 6,116 sentenced and 954 non-criminal) foreign nationals held in custody and the HMPPS-operated Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) at Morton Hall as at 31 March 2021, representing 13% of the total prison population.

While the overall prison population has decreased by 6%, the number of FNOs in the prison (and HMPPS IRC) population has increased by 6% compared to 31 March 2020. The most common nationalities after British Nationals in prisons are Albanian (16% of the FNO prison population), Polish (8%), Romanian (8%), Irish (6%), Jamaican (4%), and Lithuanian (4%).

## 2. Prison receptions and admissions

### Summary of 2020 prison receptions and admissions statistics

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**59,576 individuals were received into custody as first receptions in 2020.**

This is 17% fewer than in 2019, and 50% fewer than in 2010.

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#### First receptions – fewer people are being received into custody

The number of annual first prison receptions was broadly stable during the 15-year period between 1994 and 2009 (with an average of around 129,200 each year). Over the last 10 years (since 2010) the number of annual first prison receptions have fallen by 50%, to around 59,500 in 2020. This year, the decrease is more pronounced, reflecting the department's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, there was a large reduction in the volume of court outcomes<sup>2</sup>, as the operational capacity of the court estate was reduced, and trial hearings in Magistrates' Courts and jury trials in Crown Courts were suspended in March 2020<sup>3</sup>. While the phased reintroduction of jury trials began in May 2020 and court activity gradually increased, case disposals or outcomes are still lower than they were in 2019<sup>4</sup> due to the continued need for safety measures such as social distancing.

#### First prison receptions of Foreign Nationals

Around 1 in 6 of the total first prison receptions in 2020 were of foreign nationals. This 1 in 6 proportion has increased slightly this year, as compared to between 2015 and 2019 when 1 in 7 first prison receptions were of foreign nationals.

Five nationalities accounted for over half (52%) of the total foreign national first prison receptions in 2020: Albanians (1,469), Romanians (1,412), Polish (1,297), Irish and Lithuanians (both 514).

#### Prison admissions

In 2020, there were 29,272 untried prison admissions (i.e. for those on pre-trial remand); this is 1% lower than in 2019 and represents the lowest number since the start of the time series in 1990. Most untried prison admissions during 2020 were for an alleged violence against the person (VATP) or drug offence, with 2 in 5 untried prison admissions during 2020 being for one of those offences.

There were around 18,000 convicted unsentenced entries to custody during 2020 (i.e. after having been found guilty at court but awaiting their sentencing hearing). This represents a 10% decrease compared to 2019 and is the lowest level since 1990. For males and all convicted unsentenced admissions overall, around 2 in 5 prison admissions during 2020 was for a VATP or drug offence. For women, most (2 in 5) convicted unsentenced prison admissions were for a VATP or theft offence.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/920479/csq\\_bulletin\\_apr\\_jun\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920479/csq_bulletin_apr_jun_2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/review-of-court-arrangements-due-to-covid-19-message-from-the-lord-chief-justice/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>

There were 40,284 sentenced admissions to prison in 2020 (26% lower than in 2019). This also represents the lowest level since 1990. Nearly half (44%) of the sentenced admissions during 2020 were for short sentences of less than or equal to 6 months.

Compared to 2019, there was a 26% decrease in the numbers of immediate custodial (non-remand and non-fine defaulter) sentenced admissions. The largest decreases occurred for fraud offences (48% decrease) and theft offences (37% decrease).

After being released from custody, if an offender breaches their licence conditions, they can be recalled to custody. During 2020, there were 23,611 recall admissions to custody, this is a decrease of 6% compared to 2019. 3 in 5 (63%) recall admissions in 2020 were for those recalled from determinate sentences of 12 months or more, whereas fewer than 900 (4%) recall admissions were those recalled from an indeterminate sentence.

### **Summary of quarterly statistics**

The number of first receptions between October and December 2020 was 15% lower than the same period in 2019. This is in line with the longer falling trend over the past 10 years, but also reflects the continuing departmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic discussed above.

Compared to October to December 2019, there were decreases in remand admission types in the latest quarter (untried admissions decreased by 5% and convicted unsentenced admissions decreased by 11%). There was also a 20% fall in the number of sentenced admissions (to 10,280) compared with the same quarter in 2019.

Recall admissions also decreased in the latest quarter (a 15% decrease; to 5,408) compared to October to December 2019. Of which, the number of recall admissions from determinate sentences decreased by 15% and those from indeterminate sentences decreased by 4%.

### **Former Members of the Armed Forces**

When individuals are first received into custody, they complete a Basic Custody Screening (BCS) process. This serves to identify their needs in areas including employment, childcare and healthcare. As part of this process, they are asked whether they had served in the armed services.

Between October and December 2020, 164 matched individuals first received into custody answered that they had served in the armed services - this represented 2% of those who provided a response to the question at the point of their first reception during the latest quarter. This figure has been steadily falling over the past couple of years.

In October 2020, the MoJ published the third release of 'Ex-Service Personnel in the Prison Population' – which included an estimate of the numbers and characteristics of ex-service personnel in the prison population. This was published as part of the Offender Management Statistics; April to June 2020 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>

## 3. Releases

### Summary of 2020 prison releases statistics

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#### **53,253 offenders were released from custody during 2020.**

This consists of 52,617 releases from determinate sentences and 636 from indeterminate sentences.

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#### **Prison releases from custodial sentences**

In 2020, there were 53,617 offenders released from determinate sentences, a fall of 15% from 2019. The large drop in releases from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months accounted for 69% of this fall.

Releases from all determinate sentences of less than 5 years fell by 18% overall between 2019 and 2020; meanwhile releases from all determinate sentences of 5 years or more increased, by 6% overall. This reflects the general trend in the prison population away from short sentenced offenders, to those serving longer determinate sentences.

The number of males released from determinate sentences fell by 14% between 2019 and 2020, while for females there was a drop of 27%. Falls in releases from sentences of less than or equal to 6 months account for 67% of the drop in male releases, and 79% in female releases.

636 offenders were released from indeterminate sentences in 2020; a 15% decrease overall compared to 2019, with releases from IPP sentences down 27%, and from life sentences down 4%.

Mean and median sentence lengths continued to rise for those released from determinate sentences, to 25.2 months and 12.0 months respectively. Mean sentence lengths have increased annually since 2015, while median sentence length remained stable from 2015 to 2017 before also beginning to rise. Time served (including time spent on remand) also continued to increase, up to 15.3 months (mean) and 6.1 months (median). Both mean and median time served have risen annually since 2015.

#### **Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)**

The number of offenders released on HDC fell by 16% between 2019 and 2020, down to 10,789. This reflects the fall in the HDC eligibility pool, down 15% since 2019.

Of offenders released on HDC in 2019 (the latest year for which recall data is currently available), 18% were recalled. This compares to 13% in 2018, and 7% in 2017.

#### **Releases on Temporary Licence (ROTL)**

At the end of March 2020, it was announced that all ROTL had been suspended due to the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions – except in cases of prisoners working as ‘key workers’ or temporary release on compassionate grounds.<sup>5</sup> This impacted both incidences of ROTL and individuals released on ROTL in 2020, with falls of 58% and 30% respectively since 2019.

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



## **Prisoner transfers**

At the end of March 2020, the Government announced that “as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, all non-essential transfers of prisoners have ceased. This is to contain the outbreak, and for the health and safety of prisoners and prison and escort vehicle staff.”<sup>6</sup>

While restrictions did gradually ease throughout the remainder of 2020 allowing some transfers to resume, the overall figures were lower than those for 2019: incidences of transfer fell 33% and individuals transferred fell 22%.

## **Summary of quarterly statistics**

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### **12,716 offenders were released from custody in the latest quarter.**

12,573 were releases from determinate sentences and 143 from indeterminate sentences.

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### **Prison releases from custodial sentences**

The number of prisoner releases between October and December 2020 was 20% lower than the same quarter in 2019. This fall was driven by a large decrease in releases from sentences of less than 5 years, which was 24% lower than the same period in 2019.

The number of indeterminate sentenced prisoners released between October and December 2020 dropped by 18% compared to the previous year; with a fall of 42% in IPP releases, and an 8% increase in releases from Life sentences.

### **Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)**

The number of offenders released on HDC in the latest quarter was 2,461, a fall of 22% compared to the same quarter in 2019. This reflects the decrease in the number of offenders eligible for HDC which was 21% lower than in the same period of 2019, at 9,630. This is roughly in line with the decrease in the population serving sentences of under 4 years i.e. those potentially eligible for HDC.

### **Releases on Temporary Licence (ROTL)**

As a result of COVID-19 related operational changes (need a superscript “4” here) there were only 44,274 incidences of ROTL during the quarter ending December 2020, a 63% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019. However, since the second quarter of 2020 the number of ROTL incidences has increased quarterly.

The number of individuals receiving at least one incidence of ROTL between October and December 2020 was 59% lower than the same quarter in 2019.

‘Work Related’ reasons accounted for 82% of the ROTL incidences in the latest quarter. There were 14 releases under the COVID-19 temporary release codes, all for Compassionate reasons [including risk-assessed pregnant and otherwise vulnerable prisoners]. The number of such releases have fallen each quarter since their introduction.

There was a small quarter on quarter increase in the recorded number of Temporary Release Failures (TRFs), with 37 TRFs between October and December 2020, representing a decrease of 149 compared to the same period the previous year. The proportion of temporary release

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-qa-for-friends-and-family-of-prisoners#transfers>

incidences that resulted in failure was 1 in 1,197 between October and December 2020, compared to 1 in 640 in the same period of 2019.

### **Prisoner transfers**

Between October and December 2020 there were 15,301 incidences of prisoner transfer, with 13,562 prisoners having at least one incidence of transfer. Both figures represent decreases since the same period of 2019, with falls of 30% and 24%, respectively. These changes were to be expected given the restrictions placed on transfers at the end of March 2020<sup>2</sup>.

The ongoing easing of transfer restrictions led to incidences of prisoner transfer doubling between the quarters ending June 2020 and ending December 2020, with 7,425 and 15,301 incidences respectively.

## 4. Adjudications

### Summary of 2020 prison adjudications statistics

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**There were 159,696 adjudication outcomes in 2020.**

65% of these adjudications were proven.

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During 2020 there were 159,696 adjudications – this is a fall of 24% compared to 2019. Of these, proven adjudications decreased from 133,838 to 103,273 (23% decrease) over the same period and this has been driven by a large decrease in ‘violence’ and ‘unauthorised transactions’. These falls in 2020 are in contrast to the long-term trend of increasing adjudications, and can be seen across almost all demographic groups

The total number of proven adjudications for ‘violence’ and ‘unauthorised transactions’ offences both decreased by 27% (to 15,269) and (to 29,885) respectively. After a continuous rise for the last couple of years, their volume fell sharply. This was due to the requirements and restrictions imposed by the lockdown laws so as to reduce the spread of the disease in prison. The substantial fall observed in those offences has been recorded in all other categories. This has in turn impacted on the proportion of proven adjudications for ‘violence’ and ‘unauthorised transactions’ (those include possession of alcohol, drugs and other prohibited items), which has decreased slightly over the past 12 months to account for 15% and 29% respectively in 2020, but remains still high in comparison with other offences. The fall in the proportion of proven adjudications for ‘disobedience/disrespect’ has however been continuous since 2011 and until the start of the pandemic, after which it started to rise slightly. This unprecedented situation has led to an overall decline of the volume of all proven adjudications.

The continuous fall in adjudications followed government measures in preventing the spread of Covid-19. Since the start of the lockdown in March 2020, most of those measures have remained in place, with temporary regime changes to account for differences in prisons across the country, local restriction tiers and in accordance with public health advice.

More serious alleged breaches of prison rules are adjudicated upon by Independent Adjudicators (instead of Prison Governors).

A number of policy interventions were made to suspend discipline hearings requiring an Independent Adjudicator (IA) between 23 March and 22 June 2020. Referrals to IAs, which have been subject to new guidelines have now resumed but are held virtually. In line with the new regime, the mandatory drug testing programme (MDT) was suspended between April and June 2020 and this resulted in lower levels of adjudication referrals.

### Use of ‘Additional Days’ as punishment

The upward trend in the number of occasions where additional days were awarded reached a peak in 2018. Since then there has been a sharp decline from 19,685 occasions (2019) to 6,113 (2020), which has resulted in a fall of the number of additional days added to prisoners’ sentences, from 337,395 (2019) to 102,826 (2020). This fall has been further accelerated by the pandemic.

Taking these two sets of figures together, every time additional days were awarded as punishment in 2020, an average of 17 additional days were added (this average is unchanged compared with 2019).

## Summary of quarterly statistics

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### **There were 35,069 adjudication outcomes between October and December 2020.**

This is a decrease of 30% on the same quarter in the previous year. Additional days were awarded as punishment on 752 occasions in this quarter.

68% of all adjudications were proven.

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Over a third (35%) of proven adjudications were for offences of disobedience and disrespect, followed by unauthorised transactions (27%). The number of proven adjudications for 'disobedience/disrespect' and 'unauthorised transactions' fell by 13% (to 8,367) and 33% (to 6,568) respectively on the same quarter of the previous year.

The number of proven offences for violence has decreased by 33% in comparison to Q4 2019 (to 3,428) following growth in 2018, which then led to high volumes of offences. Since mid-2019, this increasing trend has now been reversed with quarterly averages not exceeding 5,000 offences in 2020.

There was a 25% decrease in the number of proven adjudications (to 23,942) from the same quarter in 2019. This in turn resulted in a 24% fall in the number of punishments (to 39,819).

Additional days were awarded as punishment on 752 occasions between October and December 2020; this is 84% lower than the same period in 2019. A total of 11,832 days was awarded in the latest quarter – this represents a decrease of 85% from the same quarter in 2019 (78,908 days between October and December 2019).

The average number of punishments per offence was 1.66. This is broadly in line with figures seen in the last quarter and before the impact of Covid-19. Lockdown measures implemented since March 2020 impacted on the average number of punishment observed in Q2 of 2020, however it has recently stabilised to reach levels between 1.64 and 1.66.

In addition, other changes to the prison regime have been implemented to support operational delivery. Those include new rules for governors; such as limiting movement of prisoners, implementing social distancing, compartmentalising prisons to isolate symptomatic prisoners, quarantine new entrants and so forth. These measures taken together have reduced interactions between prisoners and staff, reducing adjudications and related punishments<sup>7</sup>.

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

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

## 5. Licence Recalls

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**The number of licence recalls between October and December 2020 was 5,718, of which 500 were recalls from Home Detention Curfew (HDC).**

The total number of recalls decreased by 16% compared to the same quarter in 2019.

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The total number of quarterly recalls trended upwards between October-December 2016 and July-September 2019. There was a marked increase in the number of quarterly recalls from early 2018 to July-September 2019, mostly due to increases in the number of HDC recalls and recalls of offenders from determinate sentences of 12 months or more. However, the number of quarterly recalls has trended downwards in the last five quarters, the first two quarters before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. The latest number represents a decrease of 16% from the same quarter a year ago.

The guidance for courts and prisons implemented in 2020 has remained in place so as to assist courts, custodial and detention staff in addressing covid-19 hence reducing the rate of transmission within prisons. This has had a continuing effect on the number of court proceedings and new entrants into custody<sup>8</sup>.

Following relative stability up to January-March 2020, the number of quarterly recalls of offenders released from a sentence of under 12 months has been going down noticeably. For the first time since July-September 2016, the number fell below 2,000 in April-June 2020 (partly due to the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions), and it has continued to stay below 2,000. The latest figure (1,820) is a decrease of 7% from the previous quarter and a decrease of 22% from a year ago.

Quarterly recalls of offenders with a sentence of 12 months or more (including those with indeterminate sentences), like the overall recalls, have trended downward in the last five quarters following general increases from late 2016. Between October and December 2020, there were 3,898 recalls of such offenders, a decrease of 13% in comparison to the same quarter in the previous year.

Ethnicity proportions in quarterly recalls have remained relatively stable, with about 8 in 10 recalls being white, 9% being black and 4% being Asian.

There usually is more than one reason for recalling an offender on licence. Of recalls in October-December 2020, 41% involved a charge of further offending, 72% involved non-compliance, 28% involved failure to keep in touch, and 23% involved failure to reside.

Between October and December 2020, 141 IPP prisoners and 59 prisoners serving a life sentence were re-released, having previously been returned to custody for a breach of licence conditions. These together represent an increase of 27% from the same quarter a year ago.

### **Offenders not returned to custody**

Of all those released on licence and recalled to custody due to breaching the conditions of their licence between April 1999 and December 2020, there were 1,988 who had not been returned to custody by the end of March 2021.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-prisons-and-other-prescribed-places-of-detentionguidance/covid-19-prisons-and-other-prescribed-places-of-detention-guidance>.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-duringcoronavirus-march-to-december-2020>

A further 17 offenders had not been returned to custody as of March 2021 after recall between 1984 and April 1999, meaning the total number of offenders not returned to custody at the end of March 2021 was 2,005. These figures include some offenders believed to be dead or living abroad but who have not been confirmed as dead or deported.

Of the 2,005 not returned to custody by 31 March 2021, 347 had originally been serving a prison sentence for violence against the person offences and a further 61 for sexual offences.

## 6. Probation

### Summary of 2020 probation statistics

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**The total number of offenders on probation (i.e. court orders and pre/post supervision) at the end of December 2020 was 223,973.**

This represents a 10% decrease compared to the end of December 2019 and a decrease of 6% compared to December 2010.

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In March 2020, operational restrictions were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures, which included temporary court closures, led to larger decreases in probation starts and caseload during the quarterly period April to June 2020. Whilst figures for the two subsequent quarters<sup>9</sup> showed signs of recovery following the easing of restrictions, the consequences of the pandemic have had a considerable impact on probation figures for 2020 overall.

Following a year on year decrease from 2010 to 2014, the number of offenders supervised by the Probation Service increased to 267,146 in 2016. However, at the end of December 2020, the total probation caseload stood at 223,973 which represents a 10% decrease compared to 31 December 2019 and a 3% increase since 2014.

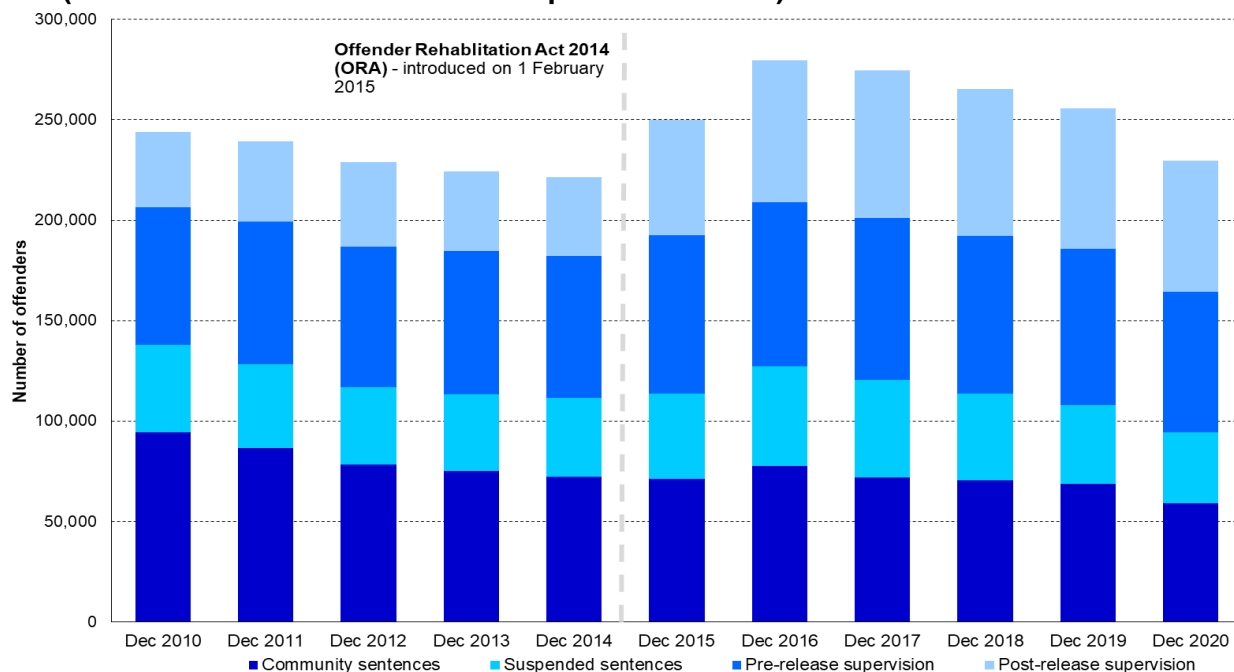
The increase in caseload between 2014 and 2016 can be explained by the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) in February 2015 where all offenders on a custodial sentence are subjected to statutory supervision on release from prison. Previously, only adults sentenced to over 12 months in custody and all young offenders were subject to statutory supervision.

The number of offenders supervised before or after release from prison increased by 23% since 2014 to 134,746 at the end of December 2020. Compared to the same point in 2019, that number decreased by 8%, with those supervised under post-release decreasing by 6%.

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<sup>9</sup> The latest Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly bulletin (available at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020)) shows that disposals in both the Magistrates' Court and Crown Court rose sharply in the period July to September 2020, and continued to rise gradually in the period October to December 2020, following the sharp declines seen in April to June 2020.

**Figure 2: Number of offenders under Probation Service supervision, 31 December 2010 to 2020 (source: Table A4.13 of the annual probation tables)**



The total court order caseload decreased by 19% between 2010 and 2014 to 109,353 and then increased in 2016 by 14% to 124,643. However, it has decreased in recent years to 93,027 at the end of December 2020, which is a 12% decline compared to the previous year.

Following a 23% decrease in the number of offenders on a community order (CO) from 2010 to 2014, the number increased in 2016 before decreasing to 58,402 at the end of December 2020; this represents a 14% decline since the end of December 2019. Similarly, those on a suspended sentence order (SSO) with requirements decreased from 2010 to 2013 by 12% to 38,227 before increasing in 2016 to 49,541. The number subsequently decreased again to stand at 35,198 at the end of December 2020, representing a 10% decrease compared to the previous year.

For offenders starting supervision by the Probation Service, there were 79,621 court order starts in 2020, representing decreases of 51% since 2010 and 23% since 2019; specifically, 52,937 COs were started in 2020, representing decreases of 55% and 28% compared to 2010 and 2019 respectively. Following a similar trend, there were 26,801 SSOs with requirements commenced in 2020 which was a decrease of 44% since 2010 and of 15% compared to 2019. The average length of COs starts increased from 12.4 months in 2019 to 13.2 months in 2020 and the average length of SSOs starts increased from 17.2 months to 17.8 over the same period. As a result of ORA being implemented in February 2015, as explained previously, the number of offenders starting pre-release supervision in custody increased by 45% from 45,063 in 2014 to 65,505 in 2020.

The total number of pre-sentence reports (PSRs) prepared by the Probation Service decreased by 68% between 2010 and 2020 to 68,077. However, this can be partly explained by the downward trend in the number of offenders sentenced in all courts over the same period. In the year ending September 2020, the number of offenders given sentences for community



sentences, SSOs and custodial sentences decreased by 67%, 26% and 35% respectively compared to the year ending September 2010.<sup>10</sup>

### **Summary of quarterly statistics**

During the quarter October to December 2020, 17,161 offenders started COs, representing a decrease of 5% compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The number of offenders who started SSOs with requirements increased by 11% to 8,451 between October and December 2020, compared to the same quarter in the previous year. Whilst those starting pre-release supervision decreased by 19% over the same period.

Overall, 26,562 requirements were started under COs between October to December 2020, with unpaid work, drug treatment and alcohol treatment decreasing by 7% to 8,136, 36% to 722 and 25% to 681 respectively, whilst accredited programmes increased by 2% to 2,072 since the same quarter in 2019. Between October to December 2020, 14,584 requirements were started under SSOs, with unpaid work decreasing by 5% to 3,605 and accredited programmes increasing by 16% to 1,491 compared to the same period in the previous year.

In terms of the most frequently used combinations of requirements under COs, rehabilitation combined with unpaid work increased by 1% to 3,000 and accredited programmes combined with rehabilitation increased by 11% to 664 whilst rehabilitation combined with drug treatment decreased by 33% to 449 in October to December 2020 compared to the same quarter last year. Under SSOs, accredited programmes combined with rehabilitation and unpaid work decreased by 2% to 359, whilst rehabilitation combined with unpaid work and rehabilitation combined with curfew increased by 7% to 1,563 and 38% to 512 respectively.

Of court orders terminated from October to December 2020, 72% of 12,075 COs and 79% of 6,743 SSOs (for the supervision period) were terminated successfully, i.e. ran their full course or were terminated early for good progress.

In the quarter October to December 2020, there was a 6% decrease in the number of PSRs prepared by the Probation Service compared to the same quarter in 2019. Furthermore, 87% of custodial sentences proposed in PSRs resulted in that sentence being given in the year ending December 2020, representing the highest concordance between sentence proposed and sentence given.

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<sup>10</sup> Table Q5.1a in the Criminal Justice System Quarterly Statistics publication ([www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2020)) states the number of offenders sentenced at all courts in the 12 months ending September 2010 to the 12 months ending September 2020.

## Further information

This publication presents quarterly and annual data trends.

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

## Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A '[Guide to Offender Management Statistics](#)', which provides comprehensive information about data sources and quality, as well as key legislative changes.
- A document outlining the '[Users of Offender Management Statistics](#)'
- A set of data tables, covering each section of this bulletin, including a prison population data tool.

## National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.



It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained and reinstated when standards are restored.

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