



# PRISON SURVEY 2024

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**18<sup>th</sup> Series**

**Strategy and Improvement**

**Office of the Chief Executive**

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# Headline findings

- **Information gaps** come through the analysis as a consistent theme – from induction information on arrival to sentence management plans and critical dates, those in our care report either not receiving information, or finding the information they do receive to be unhelpful.
- 44% of respondents feel “very” or “quite safe” in their prison overall, and 20% said they feel “quite” or “very unsafe”. 31% of respondents said there were areas of the prison where they feared for their **safety**, with the hall generally and the corridor / stairwells being the areas causing most concern. 9% of respondents said they felt unsafe in their cell.
- More than one-third of respondents reported having been **abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted** by someone in this prison, with the most commonly cited behaviours being verbal abuse, threats or intimidation and bullying or harassment. Where an individual had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted, only one-third said they had reported it to staff.
- **Relationships** appear relatively healthy overall – people in our care mostly feel they get on well with officers in their hall, and respondents felt more positively about staff interest in their well-being, staff helping them to deal with problems and staff treating them with respect more than they did in 2019.
- However, the presence and **role of personal officers** is inconsistent; when asked if they currently had a personal officer, only one quarter of remand respondents answered ‘yes’, compared with half of STPs and three quarters of LTPs. More broadly, when asked if they have one to one supportive time with any members of staff, volunteers and/or peer mentors, almost three-quarters of respondents said “never”.
- In terms of procedural legitimacy, two-thirds of respondents said they do not trust in the **complaints** process and there is a sense of cynicism around **service user voice** (20% said they are asked for their opinion but things never change, and 44% said they aren’t ever asked). When asked how often they were given a reasonable explanation when they or their cell were searched in their prison, 40% of respondents said “never”.
- More than one-third of respondents described the **canteen system** as ‘fairly bad’ or ‘very bad’, compared with less than one quarter in 2019 - with the price and selection of goods seen as being problematic. Presumably reflecting ‘cost of living’ pressures, a number of free text comments referenced dissatisfaction with canteen limits and with wage rates – with ‘pay too low’ being the top reason for those in our care choosing not to work.
- 8 in 10 respondents said they are able to have a **shower** every day in their prison; but of those who were unable, the vast majority said they were able to shower every other day.
- **Food** is an area where respondents responded quite negatively, with the size of portions, condition of the food when it arrives and choice of menu cited as ‘Very bad’ or ‘Fairly bad’ by circa half of all respondents (with each having worsened since 2019). Three in ten male respondents said that they rarely or never get enough to eat.

- Survey results show high levels of variability in terms of access and satisfaction with different types of **health services**. Overall, respondents were most positive about the health services they more commonly experience e.g. nurses.
- Survey respondents collectively indicated 4,234 **prior mental health diagnoses**, equivalent to 1.72 per respondent. Nearly half of all respondents had been assessed or diagnosed with depression prior to their admission; yet more than half of respondents found mental health services “quite” or “very difficult” to access, and more than one third rated mental health services as “quite” or “very bad.”
- A little over half of all respondents said they have a **disability or a long-term health condition**, which is similar to the proportion seen in 2019. However, levels of satisfaction with the support offered to this group was low, with 38% of respondents reporting the quality of support to be “quite bad” or “very bad”.
- More than a third of respondents stated that they have used **illegal drugs** in prison, up from 29% in 2019. Of those, 49% believe that their drug use has decreased during their current period in custody, while 26% said their drug use has increase (or started) in prison.
- There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents who are **vaping** in prison, from 40% in 2019 to 64% in 2024. Lots of people want to give up but don’t know how to access services to help with nicotine issues in their prison.
- Survey results present a picture of **regimes** continuing to be impoverished post-pandemic; 15% said they had not left their cell for a least an hour the day prior because no activities were offered, and more than a quarter of respondents said the work or education activities they are signed up to take part in are cancelled or cut short ‘at least once per week’.
- Almost 70% of respondents said they were ‘Rarely’ or ‘Never’ offered activities in the **evenings** such as recovery groups, hobbies and exercise, and more than a third of respondents said the activities regime in their prison was worse than pre-pandemic. 45% of all respondents said they want free recreation to resume in the evening, with people most likely to say this in prisons with higher perceived safety.
- Work parties are the most “Regularly attended” form of **purposeful activity**, with more than 40% of respondents saying they attend at least once per week. Education and ‘Other prison jobs’ are also attended regularly, by around one-quarter of respondents each.
- However, **‘Skills training’** is only attended regularly by 8% of respondents, despite the most common reason for an individual choosing not to engage with education being a lack of relevance to life outside of prison and the most frequently cited ‘desired but unavailable’ activity being life skills courses.
- Comments related to **overcrowding** and **restrictive regimes** were one of the top two most cited issues within the qualitative data. Most notably, respondents report finding it difficult sharing cells that are too small for use as doubles, and dislike being locked in their cells for 22 or 23 hours a day.
- The most common ways for people to **maintain regular contact** with people outside the prison were: telephone (79%), in-person visits (51%), letter (40%), e-mail (35%) and video calls (26%). A tenth of respondents are not in contact with anyone outside the prison.
- Around 60% of respondents indicated that they had **children**, but only one-third of this number said they receive visits from them. When asked if they had

accessed a parenting support programme whilst in custody, only 155 people said “yes”.

- Only 15% of respondents reported that they have received **support for family issues**, typically from personal officers and family contact officers. When asked to rate access to the family contact officer in their prison, 574 respondents said ‘fairly or very bad’ compared with 365 who said ‘fairly or very good’.
- **Progression** comes through qualitative analysis as the other top cited issue, with waiting lists for programmes and staff being unavailable / inadequately trained to complete the paperwork in a timely manner mentioned as the most problematic aspects. Response rates for the quantitative progression questions in the PS24 were very low – suggesting that this tool and process was incapable of capturing the complexity of issues related to progression.
- **Overall**, there appears to be correlation between establishment size and general service quality. Although there were exceptions throughout, larger establishments generally had poorer access and quality of services compared with smaller establishments.

# PRISON SURVEY 2024

## Context

The Prison Survey was introduced in 1991. The Survey, which focuses on the core elements of prison life, is undertaken in each of the 17 Scottish prisons and is offered to all of those held in custody in Scotland. The frequency of the Survey has varied – initially undertaken every three years in the 1990s, then annually from 2001-2009 and then every two years from 2011. Due to the pandemic, the last Survey was undertaken in 2019; this 2024 edition (the 18<sup>th</sup> in the Series) therefore provides a timely update at a time of unprecedented pressure across the prison estate.

The Prison Survey remains important in two key respects. First, the Prison Survey provides a unique insight into life in Scottish prisons from the perspective of those who are in our custodial care; it furnishes a meaningful channel for the user’s voice to be heard. The Survey can inform change by contributing to thinking on the improvement of service delivery, however the feedback received from service users during the preparatory consultation exercise emphasised a need to ensure survey findings effect change. Second, the Prison Survey offers a rich data source which complements official statistics and provides a range of valuable insights into user voice.

The 2024 Prison Survey was deployed across the estate during the latter two weeks in April and the first week of May. In order to maximise participation, the Research team developed communications products to promote the PS24 process and worked with a ‘Single Point Of Contact’ at each establishment to support delivery.

The whole-service response rate was 30%, which is a slight improvement on the response rate achieved in 2019 (28%). However, response rates varied

considerably prison to prison (**see Annex A**). Rates were highest in the two CCUs (93% in Lillias and 79% in Bella), and lowest for HMPs Addiewell (8%) and Kilmarnock (15%). It should be noted that the Addiewell survey was conducted electronically through in-cell technology available in the prison, the first time this method has been adopted.

Demographic data on gender, age group, legal status and sentence length were captured as part of the survey to allow an assessment of how representative the survey sample is. Men appear underrepresented in the survey responses, which may be due to there being more choices for gender identity available in the survey than on PR2; this may also explain the higher numbers of transgender respondents in the survey than are present in PR2 data. Any analysis of any specific demographic sub-group should consider the size of the sample being examined; generalising from small sample sizes can lead to erroneous findings.

During 2023/24, the Prison Survey 2024 survey instrument was refreshed by a Working Group to improve the validity of the results. This included streamlining the survey tool to flow logically through the individual's journey through their sentence from arrival and induction to preparation for transitioning back into the community. Many of the sections retained continuity from previous Surveys, such as 'atmosphere and relationships', so permitting a limited number of time-series comparisons.

The questionnaire (**see Annex B**) comprised the following topics:

- About You – including demographics and questions about their life before being in prison
- Arrival, Induction and Information
- Atmosphere and Relationships – including questions on safety and discrimination
- Conditions, Provisions and Amenities
- Problems, Issues and Complaints
- Health – including questions on drug & alcohol use in the community, drug and alcohol use in prison, smoking and vaping, and naloxone
- Family, Parenting & Visits
- Learning and Activities
- Programmes and Progression
- Transition to the Community
- To End: More About You – including religion, ethnicity, gender/sexuality
- Open text box – any other comments/contributions

The format of the Bulletin follows these thematic topics.

# Detailed Findings

## Life before being in prison

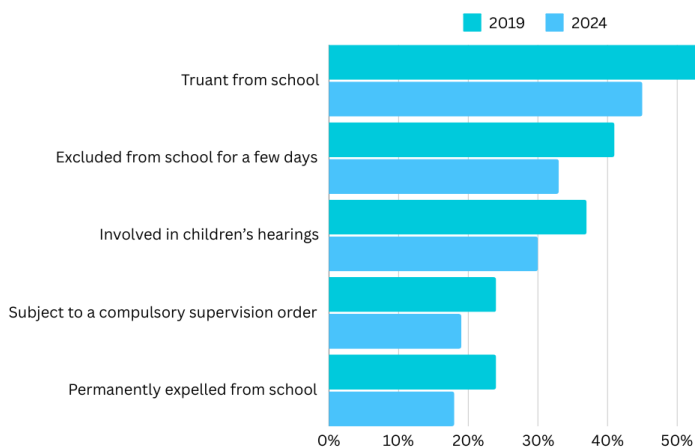
**Custodial history (Q6):** 42% of respondents stated that they had never been on remand before their current time in custody. This is an increase compared with PS19 when 27% reported never having been on remand before.

A total of 35% stated that they have been in custody between 1 and 5 times in 2024, compared with 29% in 2019. One in ten respondents stated that they had been in custody over 10 times, mirroring almost exactly the 2019 result.

**Q8:** 23% of respondents stated they received a custodial sentence because of breaching a community sentence, which is an increase of 5% compared with 2019 data.

**Care experience (Q9):** Respondents were asked if a Social Worker was involved in their lives while they were growing up; 42% stated that they did, while 55% said they did not. Those in our care were also asked a range of questions about their lives before custody (**Q11**):

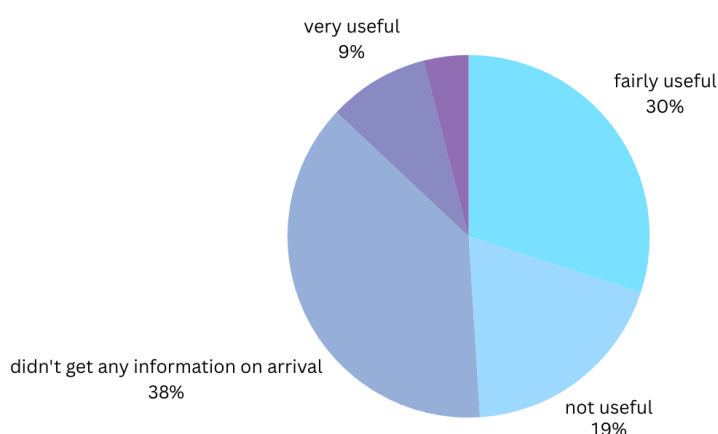
- 45% had been truant from school (52% in 2019),
- 33% had been excluded from school for a few days (41% in 2019),
- 30% had been involved in children's hearings (37% in 2019),
- 19% had been subject to a compulsory supervision order (24% in 2019),
- 18% had been permanently expelled from school (24% in 2019)



There does appear to be a relatively consistent decrease across these various measures since 2019 but it is not clear what factors might be driving this difference.

## Arrival, Induction and Information

**Induction (Q16):** When asked whether they found the induction information provided by staff when they first arrived at their prison to be useful 9% of respondents said they found it “very useful”, and a further 30% reported that it was “fairly useful”. 19% found the induction information “not useful” and 38% of the respondents stated they “did not get any information” upon arrival.



**Q17:** The majority of respondents felt they were treated with respect in reception on arrival to the prison (44%), however 12% felt they were treated with disrespect. 32% of respondents had a neutral experience and 7% did not remember.

**Q18:** Respondents were asked if issues were communicated to them well on arrival. A small proportion of respondents could not remember for each topic (less than 9%). Results showed a need to improve information provision in all areas, however those with the biggest need (i.e. those with the highest proportion of respondents said it had not been communicated well) included:

- Freedom of information (57%)
- Human rights / equality & diversity (55%)
- Service providers / community contact (54%)
- Programmes (52%)
- Prison rules / complaints (50%)
- Violence / anti bullying (47%)

## Atmosphere, Relationships & Safety

**Atmosphere (Q19):** The atmosphere in the halls was considered “very relaxed” or “fairly relaxed” by 45% of respondents. 23% indicated it was “neither relaxed nor tense”, and 27% said they considered it to be “fairly tense” or “very tense”.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, 42% of respondents said the atmosphere was “very relaxed” or “fairly relaxed” and 19% said it was “fairly tense” or “very tense”.

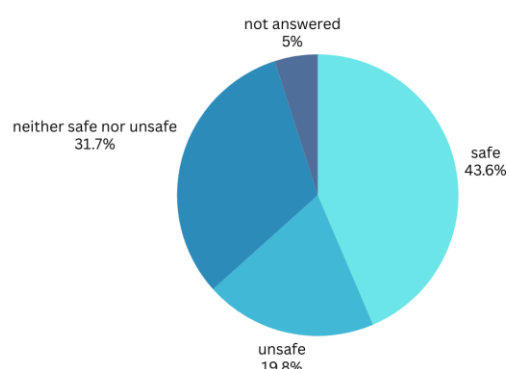
<sup>1</sup> The non-response rate was 4.7% in 2024, compared with 17.1% in 2019 – this limits the power of direct comparison.



**Relationships (Q20):** when asked to indicate how well they got on with each of the following:

- **Others in custody in their hall:** 82% of respondents indicated OK / Fairly well / Very well.
- **Officers in their hall:** 90% of respondents indicated OK / Fairly well / Very well.

**Safety (Q21):** 44% of respondents feel “very safe” or “quite safe” in their prison overall. 32% reported feeling “neither safe nor unsafe”, and almost 20% said they feel “quite unsafe” or “very unsafe”.



**31% of respondents said there were areas of the prison where they feared for their safety**, with the hall generally and the corridor / stairwells being the areas causing most concern. **9% of respondents said they were unsafe in their cell.**

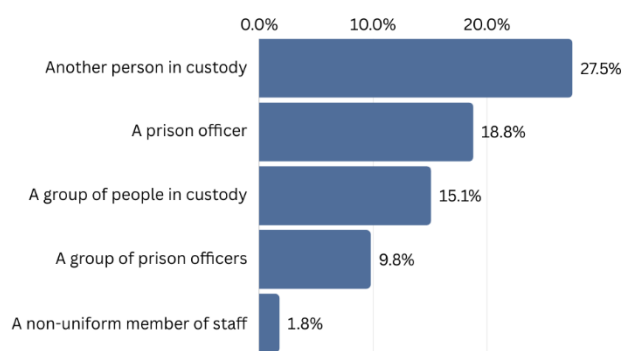
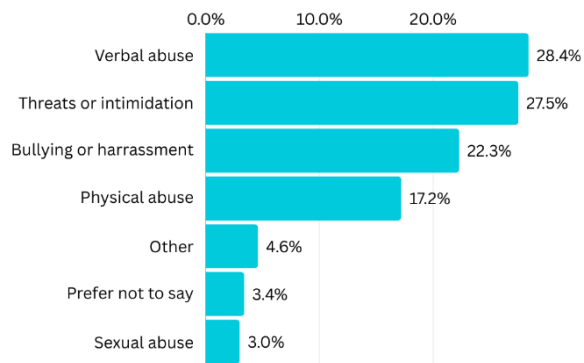
**Q22:** More than one-third of respondents reported having been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by someone in this prison (7% frequently, and 29% occasionally):

- The most commonly cited behaviours were: verbal abuse (28%), threats or intimidation (28%) and bullying or harassment (22%).<sup>2</sup>
- The person most commonly cited as responsible was: another person in custody (28%, or 667 respondents), a prison officer (19%, or 457 respondents) and a group of people in custody (15%, or 366 respondents).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked to tick all that apply.

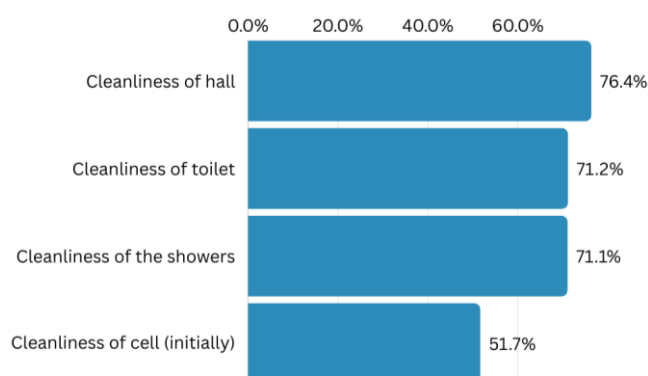
<sup>3</sup> Respondents were again asked to tick all that apply.



**Q23:** Where an individual had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted, only one-third said they had reported it to staff. 54% said they hadn't reported it, and 13% preferred not to say.

## Conditions, Provisions & Amenities

**Cleanliness (Q26):** Respondents were generally happy with the cleanliness of the showers (71% indicating OK / Fairly Good / Very Good), of the toilet area (also 71%) and of the hall more generally (76% indicating OK / Fairly Good / Very Good). Rates of satisfaction were markedly lower with regards to the cleanliness of their cell when they first moved in – with only 52% of respondents indicating it was OK / Fairly Good / Very Good. This pattern mirrors that seen in the 2019 data, though all scores are higher in 2024; with circa 60% of respondents satisfied with the cleanliness of showers, toilets and the hall, as compared to 43% of respondents being satisfied with the cleanliness of their cell when they first moved in.



**Showering (Q27):** 78% of respondents stated that they are able to have a shower every day in the prison they are currently resident in (17% said they were unable and 5% did not respond to this question). Of those who were unable to shower every day, the vast majority (almost 90%) said they were able to shower every other day.

**Laundry:** 85% of respondents said they were able to get their clothes washed at least once a week, with a further 5% indicating they got their clothes washed every 2-3 weeks (Q28).

66% of respondents said they had bed linen washed every week, with a further 9% saying they had it washed every two weeks (Q29). However, 12% of respondents indicated that they 'never' had their bed linen washed.<sup>4</sup> In 2019, 64% of respondents said they had their bed linen washed every week and 6% indicated they never had it washed.

**Food (Q32):** In relation to food:

	Very bad/Fairly bad		Ok/Fairly good/Very good	
	2019	2024	2019	2024
The time at which meals are served	27%	33%	73%	62%
The size of portions	46%	48%	54%	47%
The condition of the food when you get it	50%	51%	50%	44%
The choice of menu	45%	47%	55%	49%

<sup>4</sup> The non-response rate was 7.3% in 2024, compared with 25% in 2019.

For each of the four aspects, respondents were more likely to answer the question, and to answer it negatively.<sup>5</sup>

**Q33:** Approximately 40% of respondents said they “always get enough to eat” or “usually get enough to eat”. However almost 30% said that they rarely or never get enough to eat. This varied by gender (only 14% of women versus 31% % of men) and by size of establishment (with larger establishments tending to have more negatively rated provision).

**Canteen (Q35):** The canteen system as whole was described as “very good” or “fairly good” by 22% of respondents (compared with 23% in 2019); 38% said it was “OK”, whilst 34% described it as “fairly bad” or “very bad” (compared with 23% in 2019).<sup>6</sup> Within this overall assessment:

- **Accuracy of orders:** Respondents were relatively content on this aspect, with 84% indicating OK / Fairly Good / Very Good (an improvement on 2019, when it was 68%).
- **Price of goods:** Respondents were relatively dissatisfied with this provision, with only 42% indicating OK / Fairly Good / Very Good (worsening since 2019, when it was 49%).
- **Selection of goods:** Respondents were also relatively dissatisfied on this aspect, with only 45% indicating OK / Fairly Good / Very Good (similar to 2019, when it was 43%).



<sup>5</sup> The non-response rate for Q32 was circa 5% in 2024, compared with circa 24% in 2019.

<sup>6</sup> The non-response rate was 6.3% in 2024, compared with 24.4% in 2019.

## Problems, Issues & Complaints

**Q36:** When asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

	Rarely / Never	Some of the time	Most / all of the time	Non response
Staff here care about my well-being	35%	22%	37%	6%
Staff here offer support to help me deal with my problems	33%	22%	39%	6%
Staff treat me fairly when applying the rules	13%	23%	59%	6%
I am treated with respect by staff in this prison	12%	23%	61%	5%
In this prison, there is someone I can talk to if I feel worried or sad	38%	17%	39%	7%

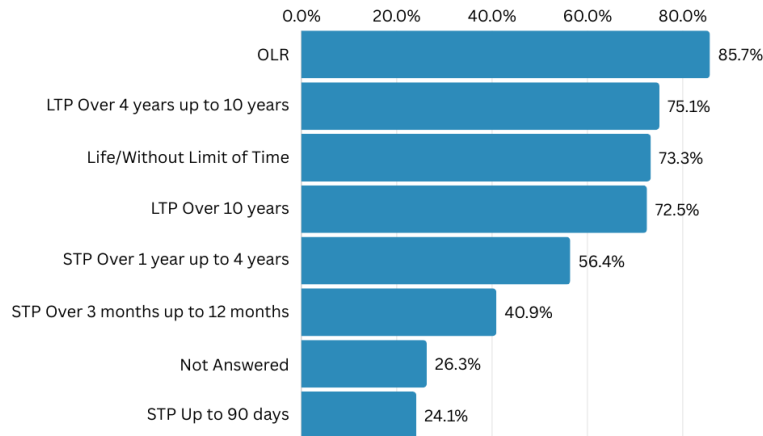
Three of these statements can be compared with 2019 results: <sup>7</sup>

- **Staff here care about my well-being:** 37% in 2024 is an improvement on 2019, when 23% of respondents indicated Always / Often (but with a non-response rate of 26%).
- **Staff here offer support to help me deal with my problems:** 39% in 2024 is an improvement on 2019, when 25% of respondents indicated Always / Often (with non-responses = 26%).
- **I am treated with respect by staff in this prison:** 61% in 2024 is a big improvement on 2019, when 29% of respondents indicated Always / Often (with non-responses = 37%).

**Complaints (Q37):** 83% of respondents confirmed that they know how to make a complaint. Around one quarter of those responding said they were satisfied with the time taken to respond a complaint, while almost half were not. When asked if they trust in the complaints process, two-thirds of respondents said they do not trust in the process.

**Personal Officer (Q38):** Overall, 57% of respondents said they currently have a personal officer, however this varies considerably by group: only 26% of remand prisoners answered 'yes' to this question, compared with 50% of STPs and 75% of LTPs. 12% of all respondents confirmed that they do not have a personal officer currently, while 27% do not know if they have one.

<sup>7</sup> A five-point scale was used in both survey tools; they aren't an exact match but they are similar enough for comparison. In 2019, the scale was Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never; and in 2024, the scale was All of the time, Most of the time, Some of the time, Rarely, Never.



1,561 respondents went onto rate their personal officer in terms of helpfulness: 60% described their personal officer as “quite helpful” or “very helpful” and 22% described their personal officer as “neither helpful nor unhelpful”. Only 17% described their personal officer as “quite unhelpful” or “very unhelpful”.

**Service user voice (Q39):** when asked if people in custody in their prison were ever asked for their opinions by staff on things like food, canteen, healthcare and other issues:

- 4% said ‘Yes, and things often change’
- 12% said ‘Yes, and things sometimes change’
- 20% said ‘Yes, and things never change’
- 44% said ‘No, people in custody are not asked’
- 14% said they didn’t know and 6% did not answer this question

**Q40:** when asked how often they were given a reasonable explanation when they or their cell were searched in that prison, 14% of respondents said “every time”, 13% said “most times”, 24% said “sometimes” and 40% said “never”. 9% did not answer this question.

**Q41:** when asked how well the system for accessing their personal property worked in their prison, 6% of respondents said “very well”, 21% said “quite well”, 21% said “quite badly” and 30% said “very badly”. 6% did not answer this question.

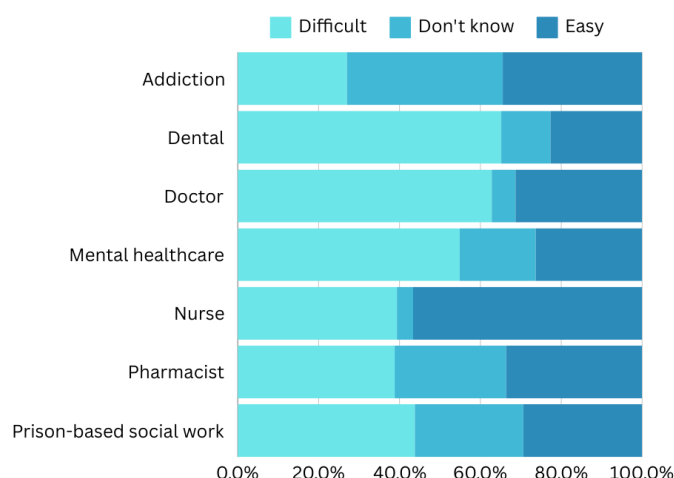
## Health

**Q42:** when asked if they were seen by a health professional when they arrived at their prison, 76% of respondents said “yes”. 12% said “no”, 8% couldn’t remember and 5% did not answer.

**Q43:** 88% of respondents said they know how to access healthcare in this prison. 5% said they did not and 8% failed to answer this question.

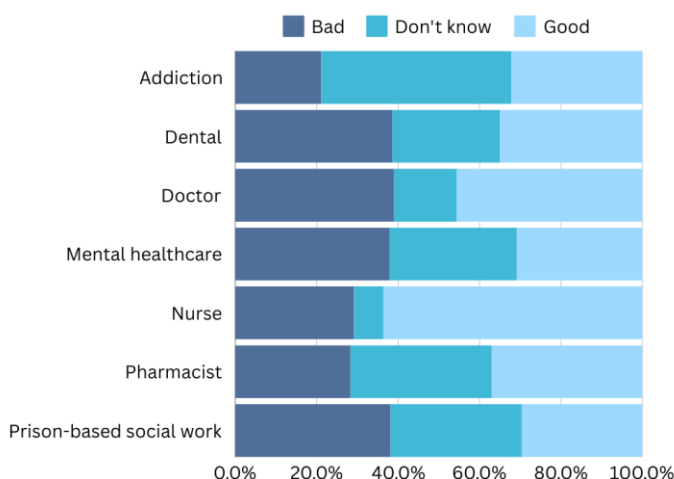
**Q44.** Dentistry was the most challenging type of healthcare to access with 61% of respondents reporting it to be “quite” or “very difficult”. 60% of respondents also felt Doctors were “quite” or “very difficult” to access, compared with 51% for mental health services and 25% for addiction services. The easiest health service to access

in prison, according to the respondents is a Nurse, with 54% describing it as “quite” or “very easy”.



**Q44a:** When asked to rate the quality of health services in their prison, the most highly rated were nurse services (60% of respondents saying they are “quite” or “very good”) and doctor services (43% saying “quite” or “very good”). All other services had circa 30% of respondents rating them “quite” or “very good”.

Overall respondents were most positive about the health services they more commonly experience (e.g. nurses), and results showed high levels of non-responses for more specialist health provision such as addiction services.



**Q45:** The proportion of respondents with a disability or a long-term health condition (a condition lasting 12 months) was 54%, compared with 57% in 2019. When asked how well the prison supports them to manage their disability or long-term illness, 38% of respondents reported the quality of support as “quite bad” or “very bad”. The proportion who stated “quite well” or “very well” was much smaller at 18%. 31% said “neither well nor badly” and non-response was 13%.

**Q48:** Respondents collectively indicated 4,234 prior diagnoses when asked whether they had been assessed or diagnosed with any of the following prior to coming into prison:<sup>8</sup>

Conditions	Number of respondents with previous diagnoses	Proportion of all respondents
Depression	1,128	46%
Anxiety / Panic disorder	852	35%
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	521	21%
ADHD or ADD	396	16%
Dyslexia	318	13%
Personality Disorder	262	11%
Schizophrenia / Psychosis	189	8%
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	176	7%
Autism (Aspergers)	139	6%
Dyspraxia	93	4%
Eating disorder	83	3%
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome	55	2%
Dementia / Alzheimer's	22	1%

**Q50:** 49% of respondents said they used drugs in the community prior to coming into custody. 32% said they were under the influence of drugs at the time of the offence increased, up from 28% in 2019. 30% stated that the drug taking was a problem for them in the community, also up from 25% in 2019. 14% of the respondents stated that they are worried that their drug taking will be a problem when they get out custody, compared with 16% in 2019.

**Q51:** 55% of the respondents said they used alcohol in the community prior to imprisonment, with 31% saying they were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence. In 2019, 28% of the respondents reported being drunk at the time of their offence.

**Q52:** 35% of respondents stated that they have used illegal drugs in prison, up from 29% in 2019. Of those, 49% believe that their drug use has decreased during their current period in custody, while 26% said their drug use has increased (or started) in prison. At **Q53**, 17% of respondents indicated that they had used illegal drugs in prison in the last month. Rates of non-response for this section on drugs and alcohol were high, presumably reflecting the fact that many prisoners felt unwilling to disclose information on this topic.

**Q54:** 15% of respondents said they had (ever) been supplied with Naloxone and 4% (90 people) said they had administered it to someone in the last 12 months. 24% of

<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked to tick all that apply. However, this number is likely to be an underestimate as many prisoners may feel unwilling to disclose information on this topic.



respondents said they had received training on recognising the signs and symptoms of an overdose whilst in that, or any other, prison.

**Q61:** 17% of respondents reported having consumed illicit alcohol during their time in that prison. When asked if they had needed and received support for alcohol consumption since arriving in the prison, 6% said “yes, the support is/was helpful” and 3% said “yes, but the support is/was not helpful”. 7% answered “no, but I need this support”.

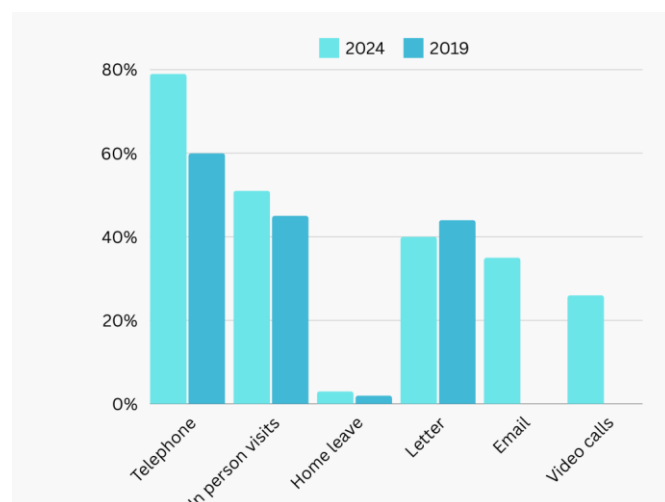
**Q57:** There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents who are vaping in prison, from 40% (879) in 2019 to 64% (1,579) in 2024. 47% of those vaping want to give up; but more than half of those responding to **Q58** said they don’t know how to access services to help with nicotine issues in their prison.

### Family, Parenting & Visits

**Q62:** 59% of respondents indicated that they had **children** (1,443 individuals). 34% said no, and 8% did not answer this question. But when asked at Q62b, ‘If you have children, are you receiving visits from them?’: one third of individuals said “yes” (502) and two-thirds said “no” (989).

**Q63:** When asked if they had accessed a **parenting support programme** whilst in custody, only 155 people said “yes”. 1,952 said “no” and 356 respondents did not answer this question.

**Q64:** Respondents reported using the following **methods to maintain regular contact with people outside the prison**:



*\*A tenth of the respondents were not in contact with anyone outside the prison.*

**Q65:** A total of 33% of respondents have **in-person visits from family and friends** weekly or fortnightly. A further 14% reported in-person visits monthly. Quite a large proportion of respondents did not answer the question about in-person visits (15%). 21% of respondents reported never having an in-person visit from friends and family.

**Q66:** The frequency of **video calls** was limited with only 23% of respondents having video calls daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly. 48% never had a video call. There did not appear to be any correlation with age. Larger establishments had substantially higher numbers of those reporting ‘never’.

**Q67:** Respondents were asked to describe various components of visit access and quality. Facilities for disabled visitors was largely unanswered (47%). A total of 28% of respondents rated the length of in-person visits as 'fairly bad or very bad' and 22% also found the timing to be an issue. A substantial proportion of respondents also rated the length and quality of video calls poorly (24% and 22% respectively).

**Q68:** When asked if there were any particular problems for people visiting the respondent in prison, nearly half of respondents said "yes". The most commonly cited problems were: distance (37%), cost (28%), time limits (22%) and location of the prison (19%).<sup>9</sup>

**Q69:** Only 15% of 360 respondents reported that they have received support with their family issues. Of those, personal officers and family contact officers appear the people who provided most assistance with their family issues. Almost 74% of the respondents stated that they did not have anyone helping with their family issues, however, it is not possible to confirm if those individuals never needed any support or if they asked for support but it was not provided. 23% of respondents rated access to the family contact officer as 'fairly or very bad'.

**Q69a:** Of the 360 respondents who received support with their family issues, Personal Officers reportedly provided the most help (161), closely followed by Family Contact Officers (133).<sup>10</sup>

## Learning, Activities & Regimes

**Literacy / numeracy (Q70):** Most respondents reported feeling "Very confident" or "Fairly confident" reading in English (83%) and writing in English (78%), though this result will be skewed by the fact that those less confident in English would be less likely to respond to the survey. 76% of respondents reported feeling "Very confident" or "Fairly confident" using numbers (52%).

Respondents were then asked to say if they wanted help to improve on these skills: 20% said yes in relation to reading, 26% said yes in relation to writing and 27% said yes in relation to numbers.

**Confidence using computers:** Two-thirds of respondents said they felt "Fairly confident" or "Very confident" using computers. 13% reported feeling "Slightly confident" and 12% felt "Not at all confident". However, 37% subsequently said they would like help to improve their ability to use computers.

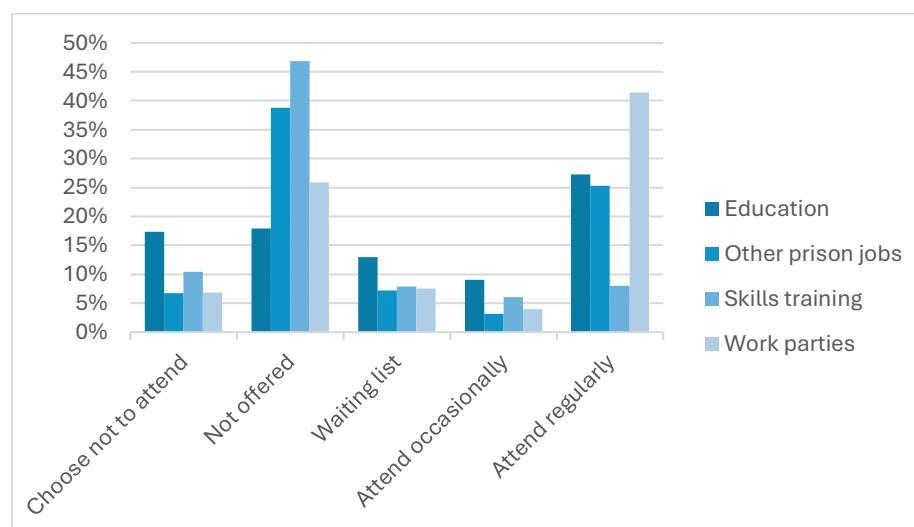
**Purposeful Activity (Q71):** Work parties are the most "Regularly attended" form of PA, with more than 40% of respondents saying they attend at least once per week. Education and 'Other prison jobs' are also attended regularly, by around one-quarter of respondents regularly attending each. 'Skills training' is only attended regularly by 8% of respondents.

For Education: 18% of respondents said it had not been offered, 13% said they are on the waiting list and 17% said they had chosen not to attend. Nearly half of all

<sup>9</sup> Respondents were asked to tick all that apply.

<sup>10</sup> Respondents were asked to tick all that apply.

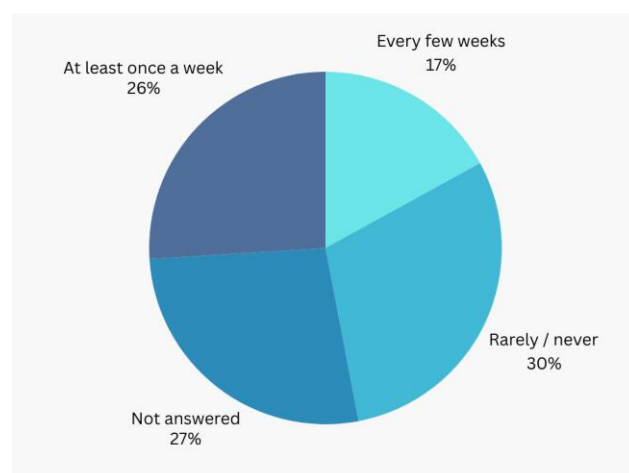
respondents said 'Skills training' had not been offered, compared with 39% for 'Other prison jobs' and 26% for Work parties.



**Q72:** Where an individual had chosen not to work, the most commonly cited reasons were: pay being too low (19%) and health reasons (15%).

**Q73:** Where an individual had chosen not to engage with education, the most commonly cited reasons were: courses not being relevant to life outside of prison (13%) and health reasons (9%).

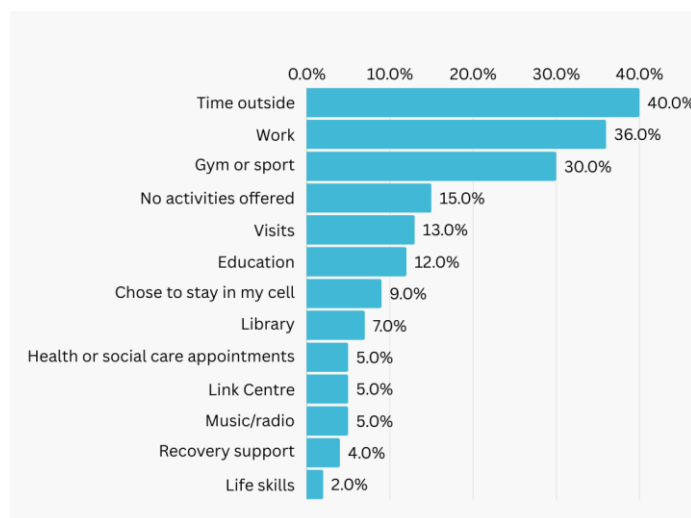
**Regime (Q74):** When asked how often the work or education activities they are signed up to take part in are cancelled or cut short: 26% said "At least once per week", 17% said "Every few weeks" and 30% said "Rarely" or "Never". This varied by establishment & the overall range was 8% - 40%.



**Q75:** When asked if there were any work, education/skills and activities that they would like to do but haven't been offered, the most commonly cited answers were: life skills courses (31%), other prison jobs (kitchen, laundry, passman, 26%), work shed jobs (23%), education courses and support (23%) and library visits (21%).

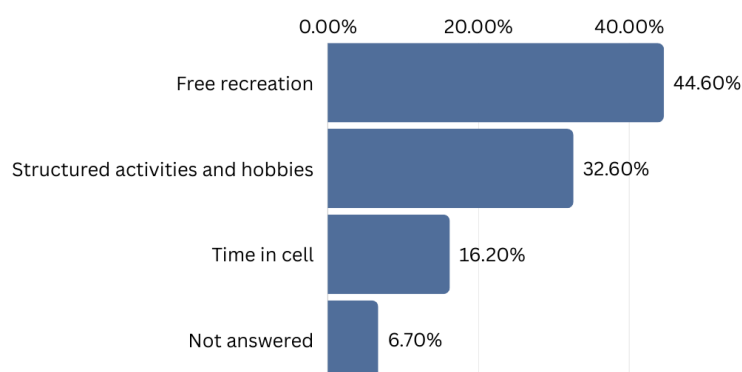
**Q76:** Respondents were asked whether they left their cell yesterday for at least an hour to undertake activities (aside from mealtime): 40% said they had for time outside in the fresh air, 36% said they had for work and 30% said they had for gym /

sport. 9% of respondents said ‘None, activities were happening but I choose to stay in my cell but 15% said ‘None, no activities were offered’. <sup>11</sup> Proportions were higher in larger establishments.



**Q77:** Respondents were asked if they had been offered activities in the evenings such as recovery groups, hobbies and exercise: 13% said “Daily” and another 13% said “2 or more times a week”. 24% said “Rarely” and 45% said “Never” (in some establishments this was as high as 74%).

**Q78:** Respondents were asked how they would you prefer to spend their evenings if given a choice: 45% said “Free rec”, and one-third said they would like “Structured activities”. Only 16% indicated that they would prefer to spend that time in their cell.

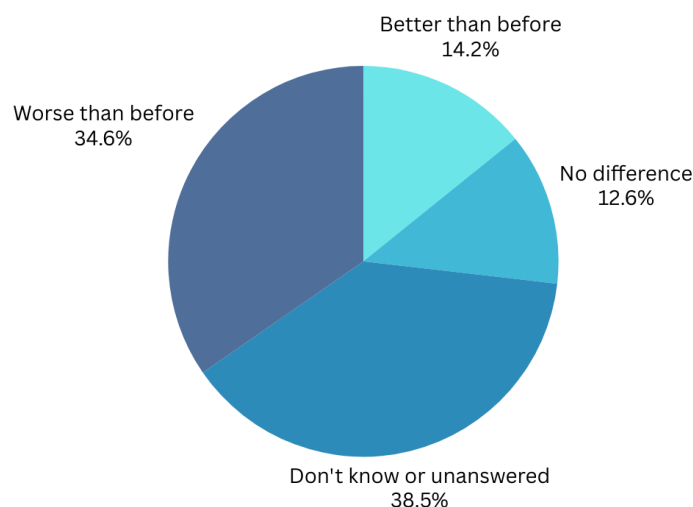


**Q79:** When asked if they have one to one supportive time with any members of staff, volunteers and/or peer mentors, 74% of respondents said “never”. 7% said “2 or more times a week”, 7% said “monthly” and 4% said “daily”.

**Q80:** Respondents were asked to rate the current daily activities regime in prison compared to before the onset of Covid-19: more than a quarter said it was “much worse than before”, and a further 9% said it was “slightly worse than before”. 13% noticed “no difference”, 8% said it was “slightly better than before” and 6% said it

<sup>11</sup> Respondents were again asked to tick all that apply.

was “much better than before”. 31% said they “don’t know” which likely indicates that they have entered that particular prison since the end of the pandemic.



## Programmes and Progression

The data returned from respondents was unclear in this category. Overall, around three-quarters of respondents skipped the questions related to programmes and progression.

**Programmes (Q81):** Respondents were asked if they have attended a programme: most respondents skipped this question but of the 559 individuals who did answer it, 83 said “yes”, 418 said “no” and 58 indicated that they “didn’t want to”.

However, **Q81a** asked those that had responded “Yes” at Q81 to indicate which programmes they had attended (respondents could tick all that apply) and many more than 83 people replied – indicating that the manual ‘skip logic’ failed, thus undermining data quality. For example, 156 people said they had attended “Constructs” (Cognitive Behaviour), 104 said they had attended “Self-change” (Violence), 104 had attended “Discovery” (Anger) and a further 96 had attended “Pathways” (Substance use).

When asked at **Q81b** if they had completed the programme, 622 individuals responded: 59% said “yes” and 41% said “no”. And when asked at **Q81c** if they had found the programme useful, 502 individuals responded; of which, 60% said “yes” and 40% said “no”. This very closely reflects the result for a similarly worded question in the 2019 survey.<sup>12</sup>

**Q82:** Respondents were asked if they are on the waiting list for a programme: only 73 people (3%) answered “yes” to this question; 206 (8%) answered “no” and 95 (4%) said the question did not apply to them, with the vast majority of respondents (85%) choosing not to answer this question.

<sup>12</sup> In 2024, the question read: ‘Did you find the programme helpful?’, whilst in 2019, the question read: ‘Did you find [the programme] useful to address issues related to your offending?’.

However, **Q82a** asked those that had responded “Yes” at Q82 to indicate which programmes they are on the waiting list for (respondents could tick all that apply) and again many more than 73 people replied. For example, 139 people said they were on a waiting list for “Moving Forward 2 Change” (Sexual Offending), 121 people said they were waiting for the “Self-change Programme” (Violence), 74 were waiting for “Constructs” (Cognitive Behaviour) and a further 74 were waiting for “Discovery” (Anger).

**Progression (Q83):** When asked if they needed a Generic Programmes Assessment, only 14% of respondents said “yes”. 22% said “no”, 15% said they “don’t know” and the remaining 49% of respondents did not respond to this question.

**Q84:** Respondents were asked, if applicable to them, whether all their critical dates had been met to enable them to progress through the system (Open Estate, National Top End, Community Custody Unit): only 7% of respondents said “yes”. 23% said “no”, 16% indicated that this question was “not applicable” and the remaining 54% of respondents did not respond to this question.

**Q84a** asked those that had responded “No” at Q84 to indicate if that had caused their sentence to run over tariff: 8% of respondents said “yes”. 11% said “no”, 8% said they “don’t know” and 9% indicated that this question was “not applicable”. 64% of respondents did not respond to this question.

**Q84b** asked those that had responded “No” at Q84 to indicate if that had affected the timing of any Parole Board: 11% of respondents said “yes”. 7% said “no”, 8% said they “don’t know” and 8% indicated that this question was “not applicable”. The remaining 67% of respondents did not respond to this question.

**Q85:** When asked if they had a Sentence Management Plan, only 9% of respondents said “yes”. 26% said “no”, 28% said they “don’t know” and 6% indicated that this question was “not applicable”. The remaining 31% of respondents did not respond to this question.

## Transition to the Community

**Q86:** 14% (335 respondents) stated that they are due to be released in the next three months; 55% (1,361 respondents) stated that they are not. Of those 335 individuals due to be released, 50% confirmed that they are “very well prepared” or “quite well prepared”. Furthermore 24% were “neither well nor badly prepared”, while 23% stated that they are “quite badly prepared” or “very badly prepared” (**Q86b**).

**86b:** Respondents were asked if they were receiving help with various issues prior to their release. Considering all responses (including those not due to imminent release), the following areas were those where individuals said they were already receiving help: arranging benefits (295 respondents), finding accommodation (282 respondents) and mental health support (217 respondents). The level of interest in receiving help to support release was very high; the list below shows the number of individuals saying they were *not currently receiving help but did want it*:

- Arranging benefits (455 respondents)
- Mental health support (440 respondents)
- Getting employment (428 respondents)
- Finding accommodation (427 respondents)
- Setting up education or training (366 respondents)
- Physical health support (341 respondents)
- Support for drug use (240 respondents)
- Support for alcohol (201 respondents)

# Conclusions

The key themes identified in Prison Survey 2024 provide a contextual insight into the pressures of a rising prison population, as well as wider societal impacts driving the complexity of the population (such as mental health, substance misuse etc). The findings do point to consistent calls for service delivery improvements particularly in the areas of food & canteen and family support. In addition, the findings are also consistent with areas of work which we know we need to prioritise such as: overcrowding, the need to enrich regimes (maximising time out of cell despite population pressures); and, progression, programmes & case management.

At a corporate level, findings will be considered by Policy Leads across Directorates, informing annual delivery planning processes where appropriate. The Research team are also liaising with the Operations Directorate to ensure that establishments have a strong line of sight on the key issues emerging locally. Within the limitations of current population and budgetary pressures, SPS is keen to pursue improvement in areas of most concern to those in our care.

Looking forward, this is likely to be the last Prison Survey of its kind i.e. paper-based, covering all themes together. With the imminent implementation of in-cell digital services across the estate, we envisage an electronic, targeted and thematic approach moving forwards, with a greater focus on qualitative insights. The Research team will be collating 'lessons learned' for the 2024 Prison Survey to inform the deployment of future surveys into 2025 and beyond.



## Annex A: Response rates by Sub-population groups

*Table A1: Response rates by establishment*

Establishment	Average population	% of Average population	No. of PS24 responses	% of PS24 responses	% Participation for PS24
Addiewell	716	8.7%	59	2.4%	8%
Dumfries	186	2.3%	83	3.4%	45%
Inverness	113	1.4%	40	1.6%	35%
Low Moss	835	10.1%	367	14.9%	44%
Stirling	98	1.2%	35	1.4%	36%
Barlinnie	1418	17.2%	438	17.8%	31%
Bella	14	0.2%	11	0.4%	79%
Glenochil	732	8.9%	238	9.7%	33%
Edinburgh	927	11.2%	243	9.9%	26%
Grampian	454	5.5%	163	6.6%	36%
Greenock	238	2.9%	60	2.4%	25%
Kilmarnock	624	7.5%	94	3.8%	15%
Lillas	15	0.2%	14	0.6%	93%
Open Estate	165	2.0%	60	2.4%	36%
Perth	678	8.2%	260	10.6%	38%
Polmont	513	6.2%	187	7.6%	37%
Shotts	540	6.5%	111	4.5%	21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,266</b>		<b>2,463</b>		<b>30%</b>

*Table A2: Response rates by Gender*

Gender	No. of PS24 responses	% of PS24 responses	% within the Population
Male	1,991	80.8%	96.6%
Female	132	5.4%	4.4%
Not Answered	323	13.1%	
Other	10	0.4%	
Prefer not to say	7	0.3%	

*Table A3: Response rates by Age*

<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>17 or under</b>	5	0.2%	0.1%
<b>18-20</b>	72	2.9%	2.3%
<b>21-25</b>	209	8.5%	8.5%
<b>26-30</b>	311	12.6%	14.6%
<b>31-40</b>	768	31.2%	35.8%
<b>41-50</b>	524	21.3%	22.0%
<b>51-60</b>	286	11.6%	10.9%
<b>61 or over</b>	223	9.1%	5.7%
<b>Not Answered</b>	65	2.6%	

*Table A4: Response rates by Legal Status*

<b>Legal Status</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>Convicted</b>	6,009	77.4%	72.7%
<b>Remand</b>	1,967	22.6%	23.8%
<b>Convicted Awaiting Sentencing</b>			3.4%
<b>Awaiting deportation</b>			0.1%

*Table A5: Response rates by Sentence Length*

<b>Sentence Length</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>STP Up to 12 mons</b>	249	10.1%	8.5%
<b>STP Over 1 year up to 4 years</b>	411	16.7%	20.9%
<b>LTP Over 4 years up to 10 years</b>	779	31.6%	24.2%
<b>LTP Over 10 years</b>	193	7.8%	5.2%
<b>Life / Without Limit of Time</b>	191	7.8%	10.7%
<b>OLR</b>	84	3.4%	2.8%
<b>Not Answered</b>	556	22.6%	
<b>Not Convicted</b>			27.8%

The PS24 survey tool did not include a question on legal status specifically; rather, in order to compare with PR2, we marked an individual as on remand where they did not provide a length of sentence at Q3.

*Table A6: Response rates by Transgender Status*

<b>Transgender Status</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>Yes</b>	27	1.1%	0.2%
<b>No</b>	2,244	91.1%	99.8%
<b>Not Answered</b>	158	6.4%	
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	34	1.4%	

*Table A7: Response rates by Sexual Orientation*

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>Straight / Heterosexual</b>	2,091	84.9%	87.7%
<b>Gay / Lesbian</b>	69	2.8%	1.0%
<b>Bisexual</b>	103	4.2%	1.2%
<b>Other</b>	25	1.0%	0.2%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	75	3.0%	2.7%
<b>Not Answered</b>	100	4.1%	
<b>Not Obtained</b>			7.1%

*Table A8: Response rates by British Nationality*

<b>British Nationality</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>Yes</b>	2,261	91.8%	92.5%
<b>No</b>	115	4.7%	7.5%
<b>Not Answered</b>	87	3.5%	

*Table A9: Response rates by Ethnicity*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>
<b>Scottish</b>	1,897	77.0%
<b>Other British</b>	232	9.4%
<b>Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish, Pakistani British</b>	59	2.4%
<b>Gypsy traveller</b>	37	1.5%
<b>African, African Scottish, African British</b>	26	1.1%
<b>Irish</b>	27	1.1%
<b>Polish</b>	22	0.9%
<b>Arab, Arab Scottish, Arab British</b>	12	0.5%
<b>Indian, Indian Scottish, Indian British</b>	13	0.5%
<b>Black, Black Scottish or Black British</b>	10	0.4%
<b>Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, Caribbean British</b>	7	0.3%
<b>Chinese, Chinese Scottish, Chinese British</b>	3	0.1%
<b>Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish, Bangladeshi British</b>	1	0.0%
<b>Not Answered</b>	117	4.8%

It has not been possible to compare this data with MI held in PR2 at this time. This will be done as part of the Equalities and Human Rights deep dive analysis.

*Table A10: Response rates by Religion*

<b>Religion</b>	<b>No. of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% of PS24 responses</b>	<b>% within the Population</b>
<b>Church of Scotland</b>	462	18.8%	16.9%
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	420	17.1%	15.0%
<b>Other Christian</b>	195	7.9%	6.8%
<b>Muslim</b>	102	4.1%	5.5%
<b>Jewish</b>	32	1.3%	3.3%
<b>Buddhist</b>	12	0.5%	0.4%
<b>Hindu</b>	8	0.3%	0.2%
<b>Sikh</b>	5	0.2%	0.1%
<b>Other</b>	104	4.2%	2.5%
<b>None / No Affiliation</b>	959	38.9%	49.4%
<b>Not Answered</b>	164	6.7%	

## Annex B

### Questionnaire



Prison Survey 2024  
Final (19-03-24).pdf