

SPS Quarterly Public Information Page

**Prison by Numbers Quarter 4
(January - March 2026)**

Unlocking Potential - Transforming Lives.

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1.0 Key Messages

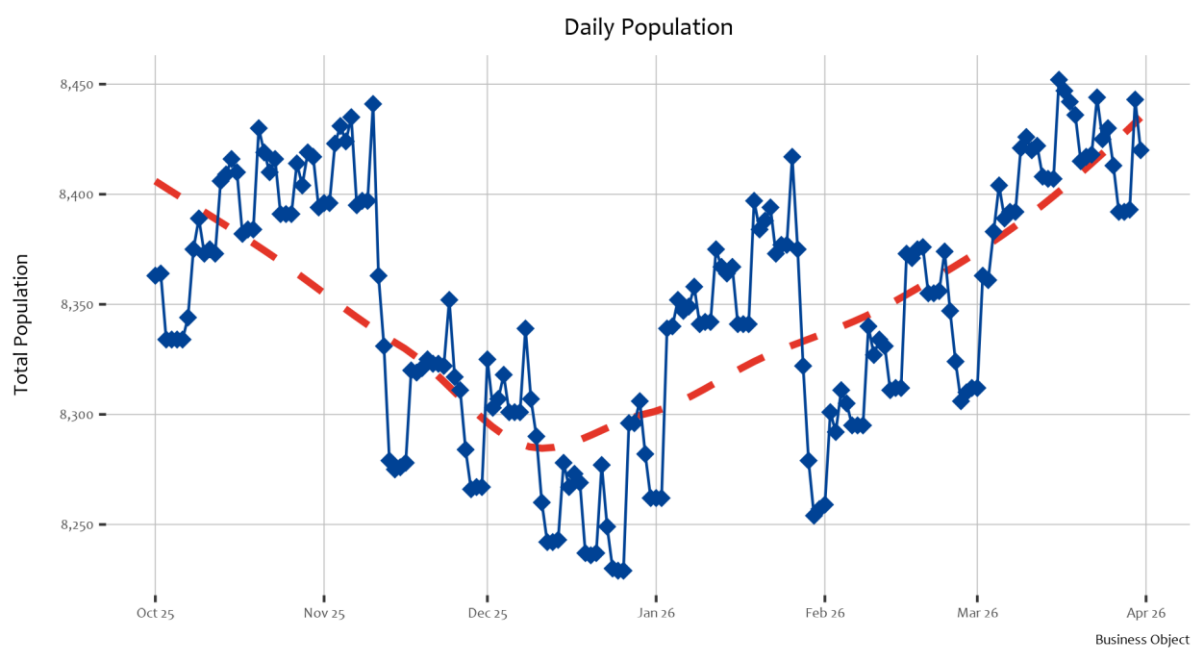
Key messages drawn from this quarterly report are as follows:

- The weekly average prison population increased by 1.7% in Quarter 4 25/26 (1st January to 31st March 2026) compared to the end of the previous quarter, despite the implementation of the emergency early release scheme. Compared to the same period last year, the prison population decreased by 1.1%.
- The remand population increased by 1.1% in Quarter 4 25/26.
- The long-term population increased by 2.2% in Quarter 4 25/26 while the short-term population reduced by 5.5%.
- The women's prison population rose by 1.6% between the last week of December 2025 and last week of March 2026.
- The population of those with a history of sexual offending increased by 1.3% in Quarter 4 25/26 compared to Quarter 3 25/26.
- Single cell occupancy increased throughout Quarter 4 25/26.
- In Q4 25/26, the majority of the prison population were British (91%), male (96%), white (92%), heterosexual (88%) and had a marital status of single (77%).
- The national rate of imprisonment in Scotland remained steady at 0.2% at the end of March. Rates of imprisonment equal to or above the national rate were observed in 10 of 32 Local Authorities.
- 41% of those in our care come from the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.
- The number of releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC) decreased by 55% in Q4 25/26 compared to the previous quarter, in part due to the emergency early release scheme.

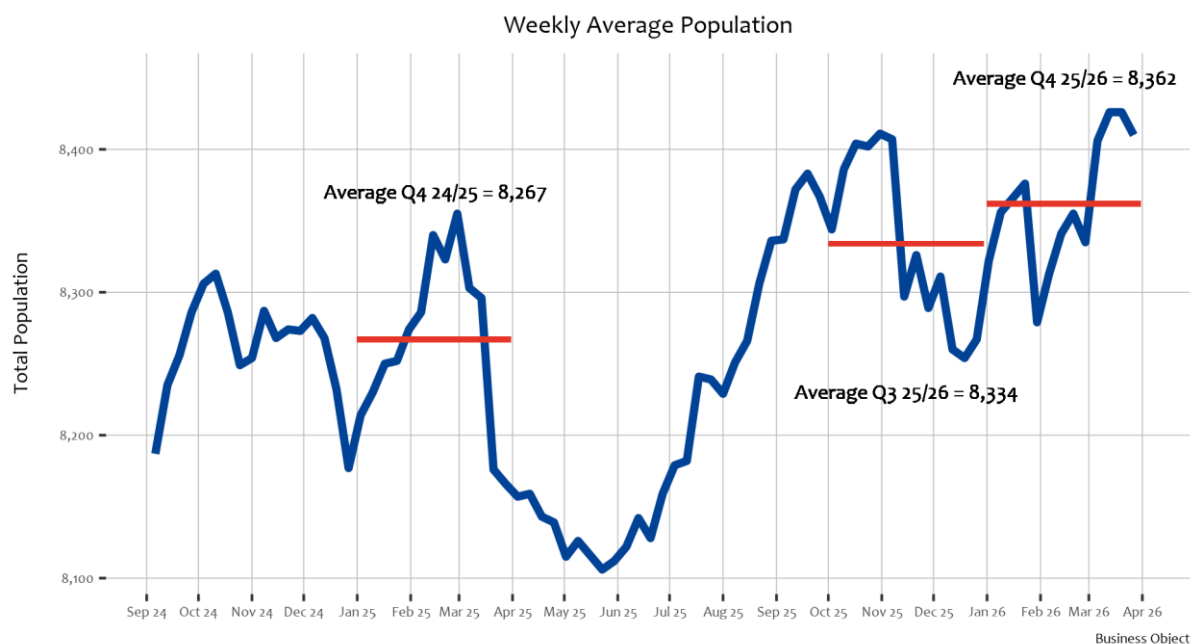
For general enquiries, please email SPSDataAnalysis@prisons.gov.scot.

2.0 Prison Population

The daily prison population increased steadily between January 2026 and March 2026, peaking at 8,452 on the 16th of March. Overall, the daily prison population increased 1.9% at the end of Q4 25/26 compared to the previous quarter (Q3 25/26). There were several notable decreases in the prison population observed during Q4, these coincided with the release of 269 individuals in tranches 4, 5 and 6 under the Early Release of Prisoners (Scotland) Regulations 2025, including 142 releases in January, 74 in February and 53 in March.



The weekly average prison population increased by 1.7% in the last week of Q4 25/26 compared to the last week of Q3 25/26. The quarterly average prison population rose by 1.1% in Q4 25/26 compared to the same period last year.



The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) also publishes Prison Population Reports illustrating the population in custody broken down by custody type, gender, and age, as well as the population on Home Detention Curfew by gender. The Prison Population Reports can be found at the links below:

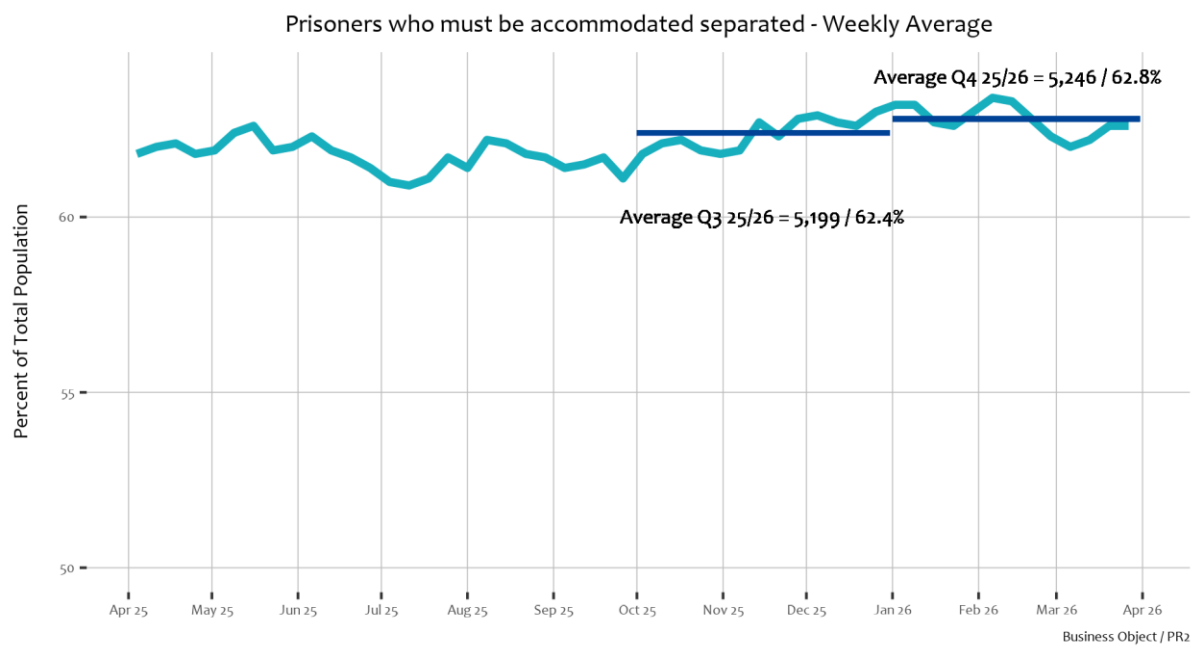
[Prison Population Report – Weekly time series](#)

[Prison Population Report – Annual Prison Population](#)

3.0 Complexities of Population

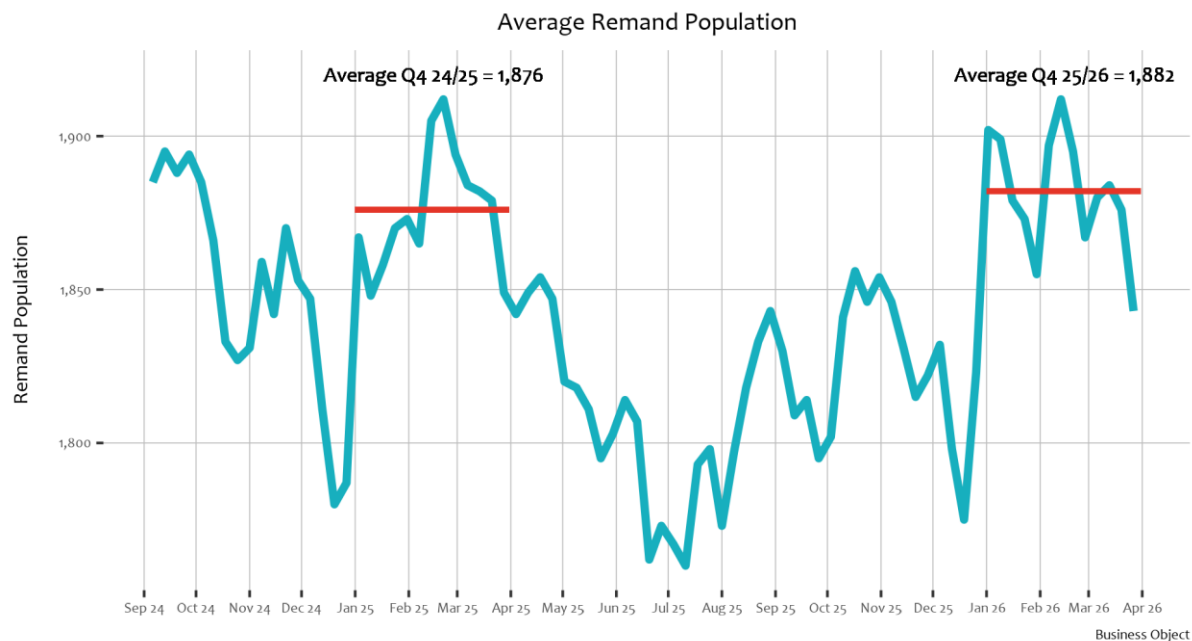
The rising overall population numbers are of concern in terms of ongoing management. However, another factor of note is the rising complexity of Scotland’s prison population. Many individuals need to be accommodated separately for a variety of reasons, including their legal status, gender, offence type, protection status, and/or health care needs, as well as residents with individual management needs.

The number of those in our care who must be accommodated separately slightly increased throughout Q4 25/26. An average of around 62.4% of the prison population, or 5,199 individuals, needed to be accommodated separately in Q3 25/26, compared to 62.8% of the prison population, or 5,246 individuals in Q4.



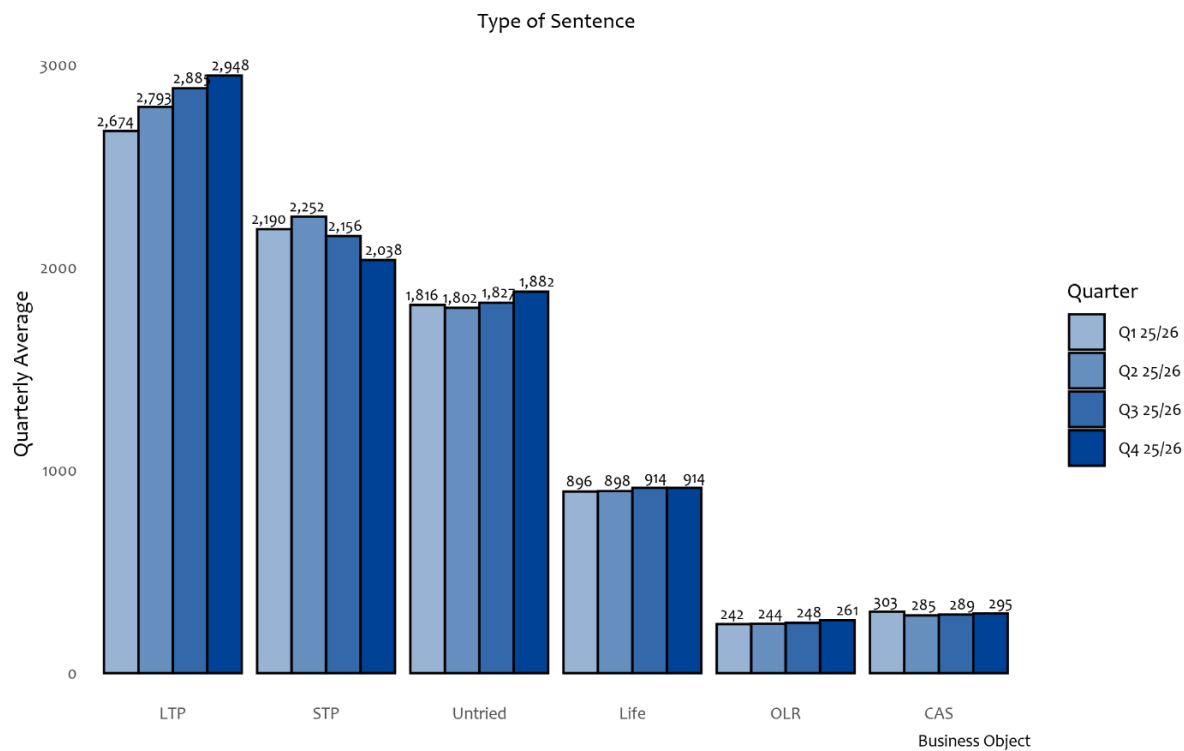
4.0 Legal Status (Sentenced & Remand)

The remand population increased by 1.1% in the last week of Q4 25/26 compared to the last week of the previous quarter. Compared to the same period last year, the remand population rose by 0.3%, from an average of 1,876 in Q4 24/25 to an average of 1,882 in Q4 25/26.



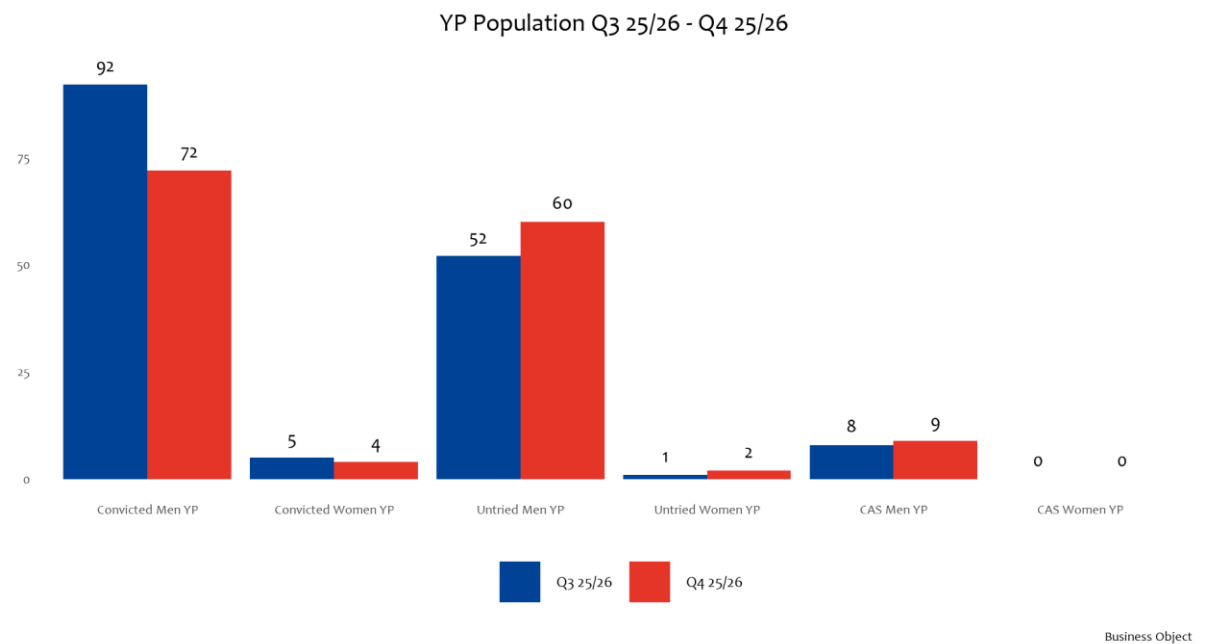
The number of individuals on remand remains high compared to the pre-pandemic period. In Q4 25/26, the remand population accounted for 22.5% of the total prison population. High numbers of individuals on remand can create management issues for establishments, such as people having to move to convicted halls early; and long periods on remand mean that individuals spend longer without access to the full regime.

The average long-term population rose to 2,948 in Q4 25/26, an increase of 2.2% compared to the previous quarter (2,885 in Q3 25/26). The average short-term population decreased from 2,156 in Q3 25/26 to 2,038 in Q4 25/26 (a decrease of 5.5%). Life sentences (including OLRs) remained broadly stable in the last two quarters.



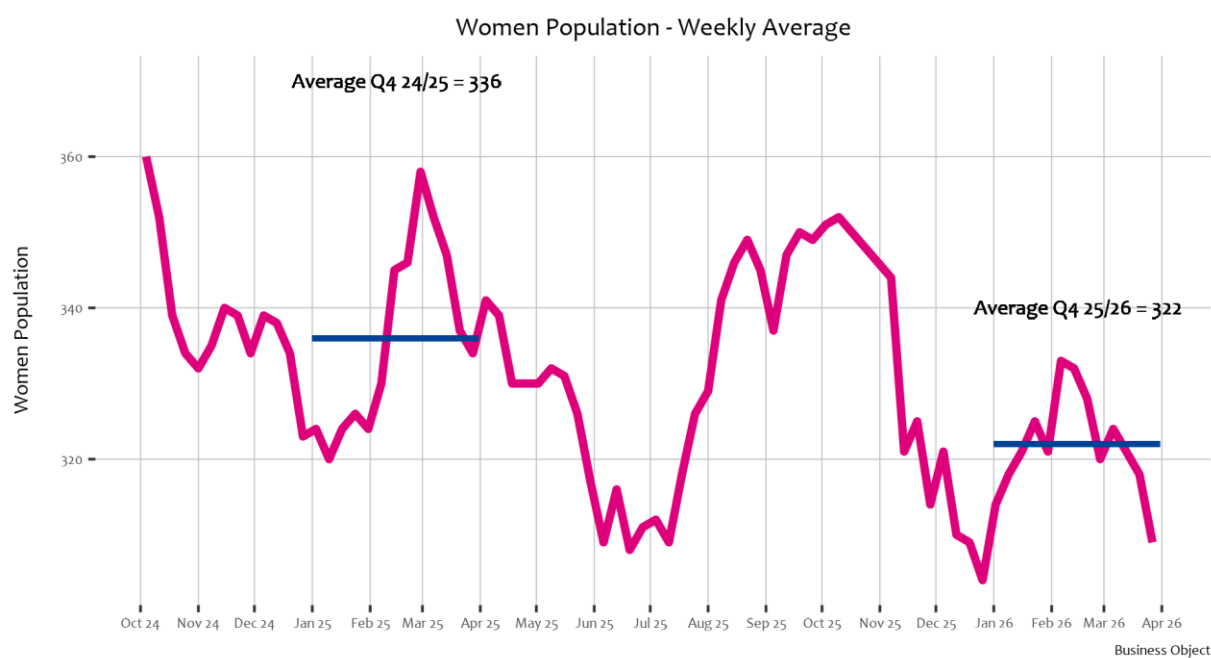
5.0 Young People in our Care

The average quarterly number of Young People (YP) in our care decreased from 158 in Q3 25/26 to 148 in Q4 25/26, a decrease of 6.3%. As observed below, the average number of Convicted Young People (YP) decreased by 21.7% over the period, while the number of Untried YP and CAS (Convicted Awaiting Sentence) YP increased.



6.0 Women in our Care

The weekly average women’s population slightly increased from 304 in the last week of December-25 to 309 in the last week of March-26, an increase of 1.6%. Compared to the same quarter in the previous year, the quarterly average women’s population reduced from 336 in Q4 24/25 and 322 in Q4 25/26. In the same period, the male population increased by 1.1%.



7.0 Equality and Diversity

The Scottish Prison Service aims to provide accessible services to meet the needs of those in our care. This means an ongoing commitment to promote equal opportunities through policies and strategies to promote equality throughout all our establishments. The following data presents an overview of the diversity of the 8,441 people in our care on 31st March 2026¹. Information regarding religious affiliation is not robust enough to publish at this stage. Further Equality and Diversity reports are available here.

Affirmed Gender

SPS defines affirmed gender as the gender in which a person lives their day-to-day life. It may differ from the gender assigned at birth, which is the gender a person was originally registered as on their birth certificate. Non-binary individuals identify themselves as having

¹ The Public Information Page is a working document. The inclusion of data on protected characteristics is being kept under review to ensure the public scrutiny requirements are met whilst protecting the privacy of those in our care.

no gender or as being on a gender spectrum² between man and woman. Gender-fluid is defined³ by “not having only one gender or moving freely between genders.”

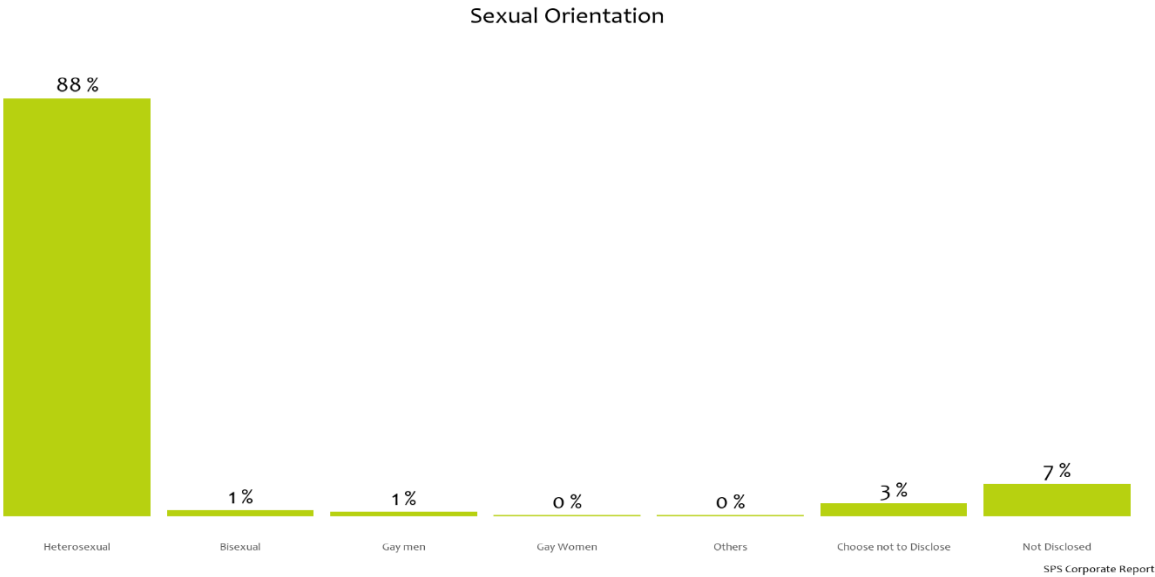
In Q4 25/26, 96% of the people in our care were recorded as men and another 4% were recorded as women. Trans men, trans women and non-binary/gender-fluid combined accounted for less than 1% of the total population. In total, there were 25 transgender people in custody at the end of Q4 25/26.



Sexual Orientation

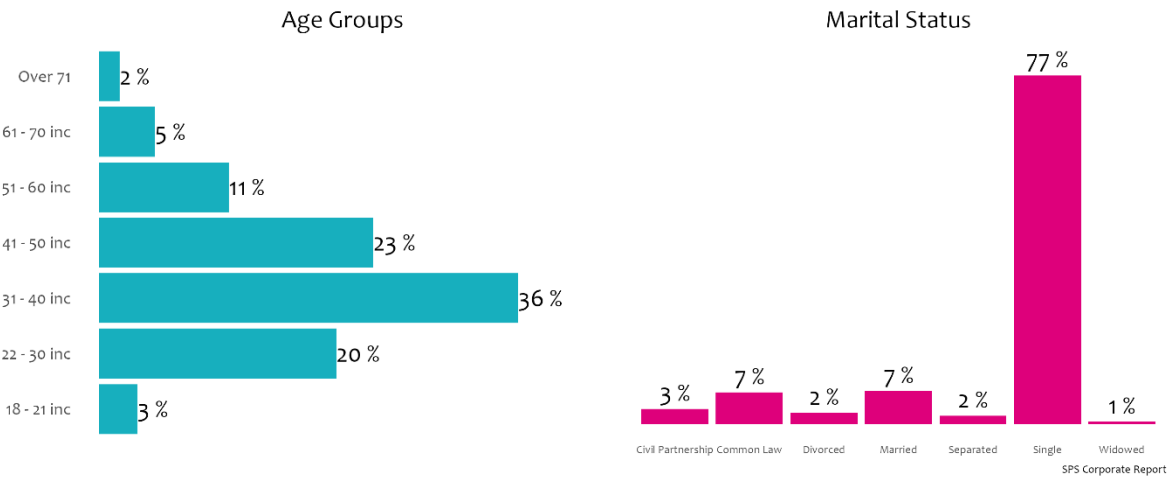
Most of the people in our care declared themselves as heterosexual (88%). Bisexuals, gay men and gay women combined accounted for less than 2% of the population. Another 3% preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation, while answers were not obtained from a further 7%. More details are illustrated in the chart below.

² Available on the [ONS website](#)
³ Cambridge Dictionary definition available on <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gender-fluid>



Age Group and Marital Status

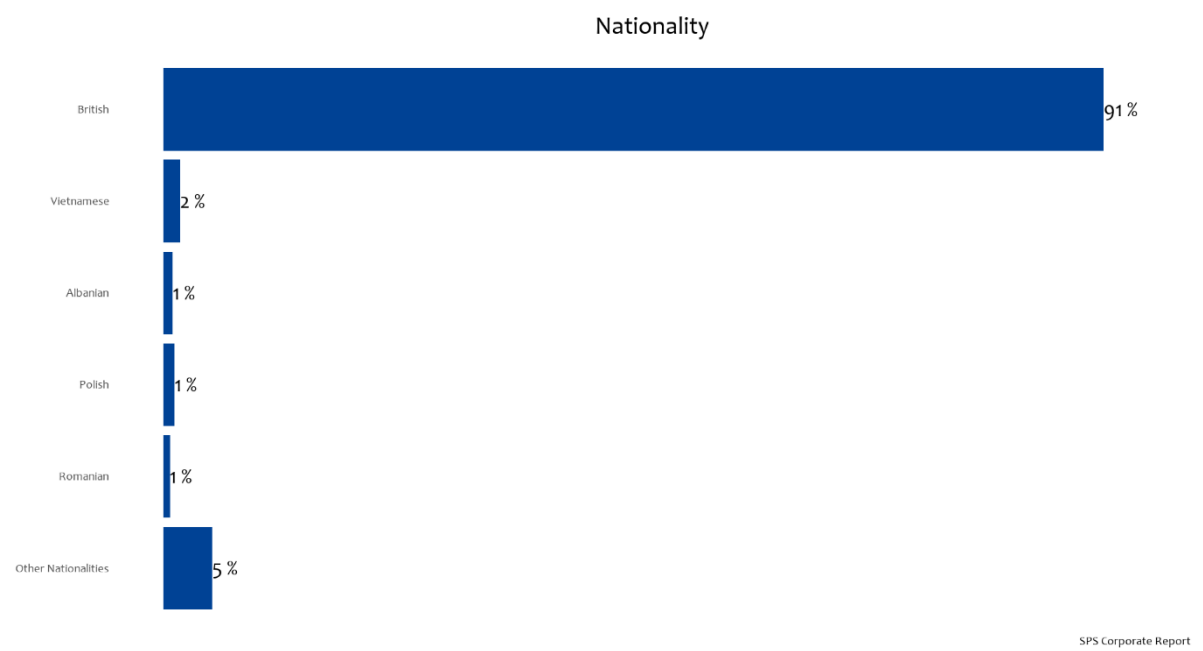
The chart below illustrates the prison population in Q4 25/26 by age group (left) and marital status (right). The most populous age group continues to be age 31-40 (36%), while the smallest group is individuals over 70 years old (2%).



77% of the people in our care reported themselves as single in Q4 25/26. Another 7% self-reported as “Common Law (or cohabitation with a partner)”. Married people accounted for 7% of the custodial population.

Nationality

British nationals accounted for 91% of the prison population in Q4 25/26, while Vietnamese nationals accounted for 2%. Albanian, Polish and Romanian nationals accounted for 1% each. All other nationalities⁴ combined represented 5% of the prison population in the same period.



⁴ The other nationalities are: Bulgarian, Somali, Nigerian, Latvian, Irish, Zimbabwean, Brazilian, Turkish, French, Lithuanian, Australian, Cuban, Italian, Iranian, Sierra Leonean, Gambian, Egyptian, Danish, Sudanese, Moroccan, Chinese, Indian, Hungarian, Pakistani, Eritrean, Iraqi, Ghanaian, Mexican, Syrian, Afghan, Libyan, Mauritanian, German, Norwegian, Israeli, Namibian, Greek, Algerian, Senegalese, Portuguese, Other African, Salvadoran, Slovakian, Bangladeshi, Jamaican, Botswana, Dutch, American, Other Asian, Sri Lankan, Ukrainian, Spanish, Czech, Chilean, Nepalese, Saint Lucian, Fijian, Canadian, Georgian, Indonesian, South African, Angolan, Tunisian, Undetermined, Congolese, Chadian, Ecuadorian, Emirati, Thai, Malaysian, Estonian, Zambian,

Ethnic Group

In Q4 25/26, 92% of the prison population declared themselves as white. African people comprised 1% of the population, while Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British people accounted for 3%. Those who declared themselves to be Caribbean or Black were 1%. Those who declared themselves as “Other Ethnic Group” and “Mixed or Multiple” represented 2% and 1%, respectively. More details can be observed in the chart below.



Disability

Eleven percent of the people in our prisons have told us that they have a disability. Another 87% did not report any disability, and 2% opted not to disclose.

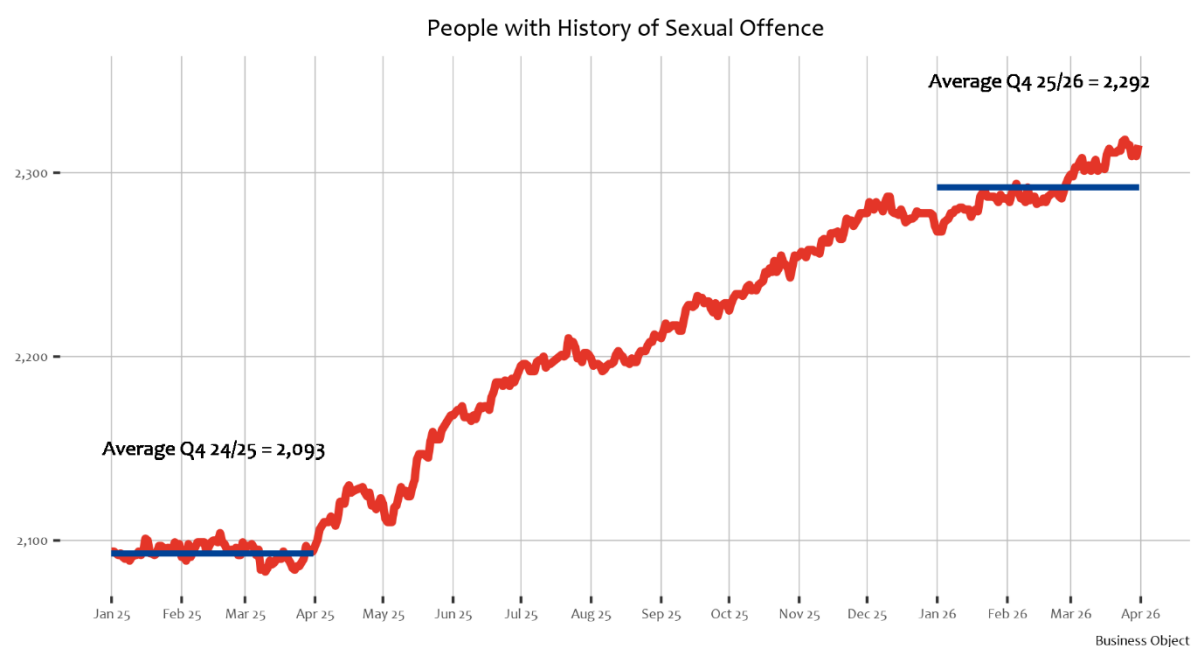
Disability	
Yes	11%
No	87%
Choose not to Disclose	2%

8.0 Protection Populations

There are people with a history of sexual offending in each of Scotland’s prisons, each of whom must be kept separate from the mainstream population.

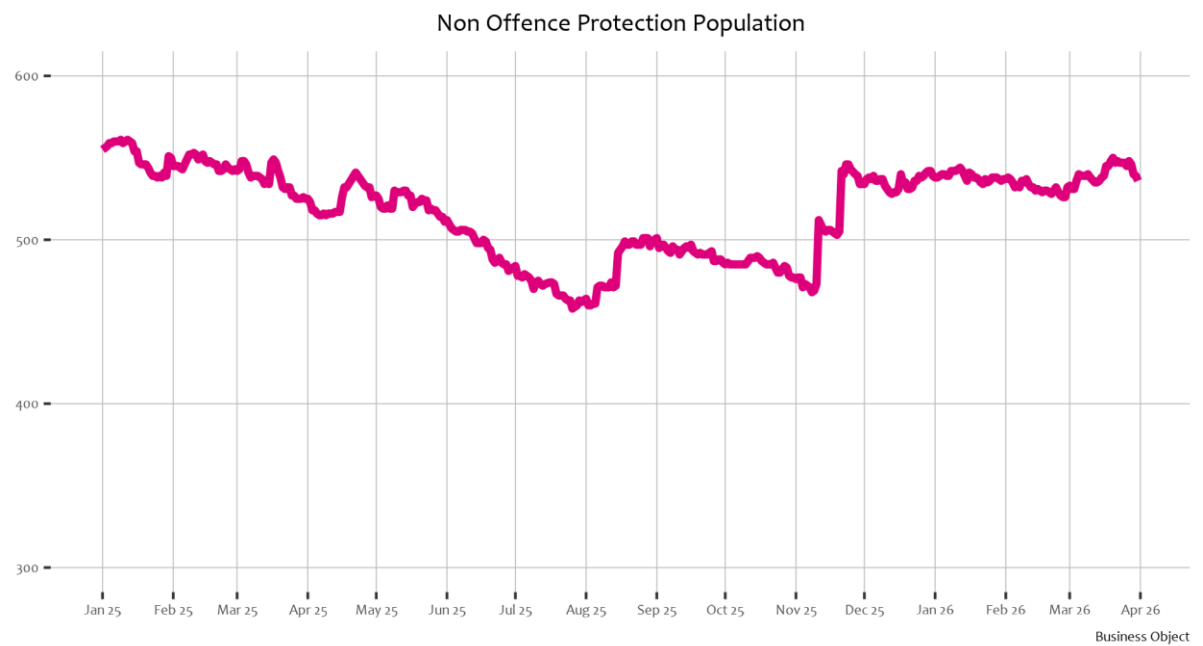
The graph below shows the average population with a history of sexual offending, which illustrates the impact on the operational running of each prison as accommodation needs grow for this group.

The average population with a history of sexual offending in custody increased by 1.3% in Q4 25/26 compared to the previous quarter. On average, the population of those with history of sexual offending in Q4 25/26 increased by 9.5% compared to the same period last year.



Non-Offence Protections (NOPs) also need to be located and managed separately from the mainstream population, due to being identified as at risk should they associate with specific individuals. There are a number of factors which can contribute to the application of these Protections, such as previous or current charges which have received negative media attention and could endanger the individuals, previous employment in the Police or Prison services, or having generated enemies and/or debts to an extent that there may be a risk to the individual should they be allocated into a mainstream residential area. This negatively impacts the operational running of the prison because NOP individuals sometimes need to be accommodated and managed separately, depending on the severity of need for protection status.

The quarterly average number of individuals within the NOP population increased by 5.5% to 537 in Q4 25/26, up from 509 in Q3 25/26.



9.0 Geography of Imprisonment in Scotland

When breaking down the average prison population by Local Authority (LA), we consider an individual’s LA to be the one which corresponds to the last known postcode on record for their home address.

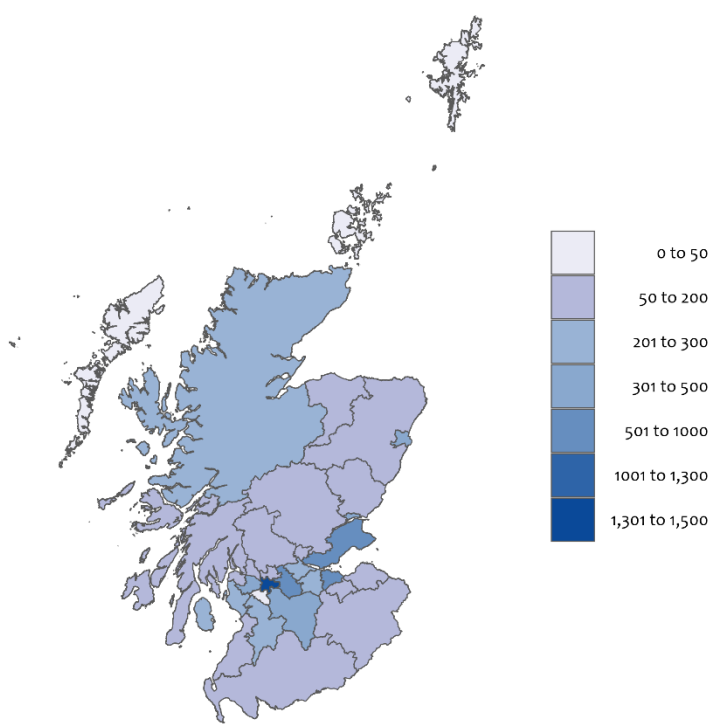
Individuals with last known postcodes in Glasgow City continued to comprise the largest proportion of the total prison population at 17.3% (1,452 individuals) at the end of Q4 25/26. The City of Edinburgh had the second largest prison population in Q4 2025/26 with 649 individuals, followed by North Lanarkshire (557) and Fife (543).

Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na H-Eileanan Siar have the smallest numbers of individuals in custody: these three Local Authorities combined comprise 0.6% of the total of residents in prison.

According to Prison Records, 6% of the people in our care recorded an address outwith Scotland and are therefore not associated with any Scottish LA. Another 0.8% do not have an identifiable address or do not have any address recorded in our system.

The map below illustrates the number of people in custody by LA on the last day of Q4 25/26 (31st March 2026).

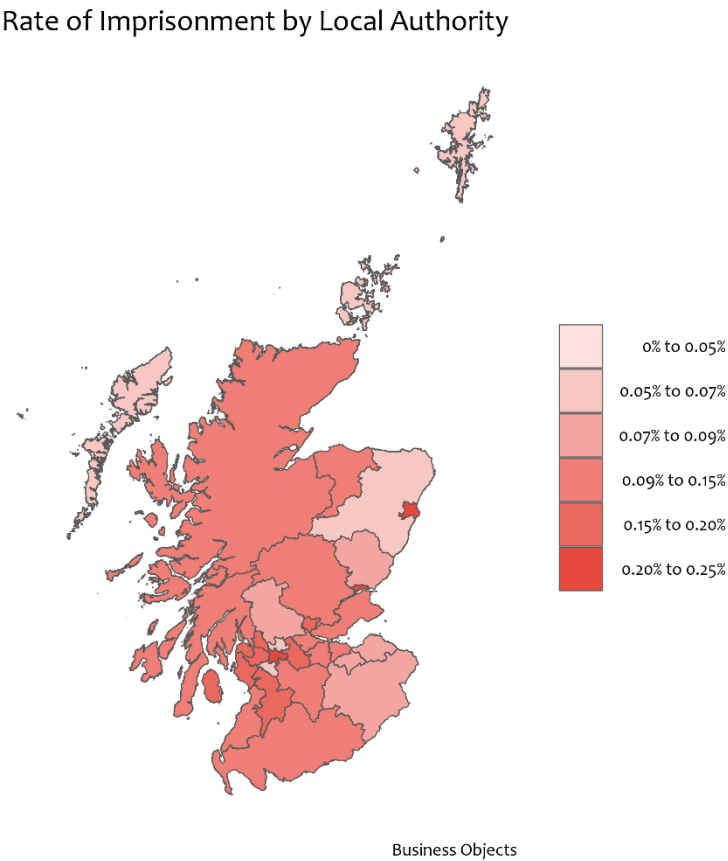
Number of People in Custody by Local Authority



Business Objects

The national rate of imprisonment in Scotland⁵ was 0.2% at the end of June. Rates of imprisonment equal to or above the national rate were observed in 10 of the 32 LAs.

The map below illustrates the rate of imprisonment by LA on 31st March 2026.



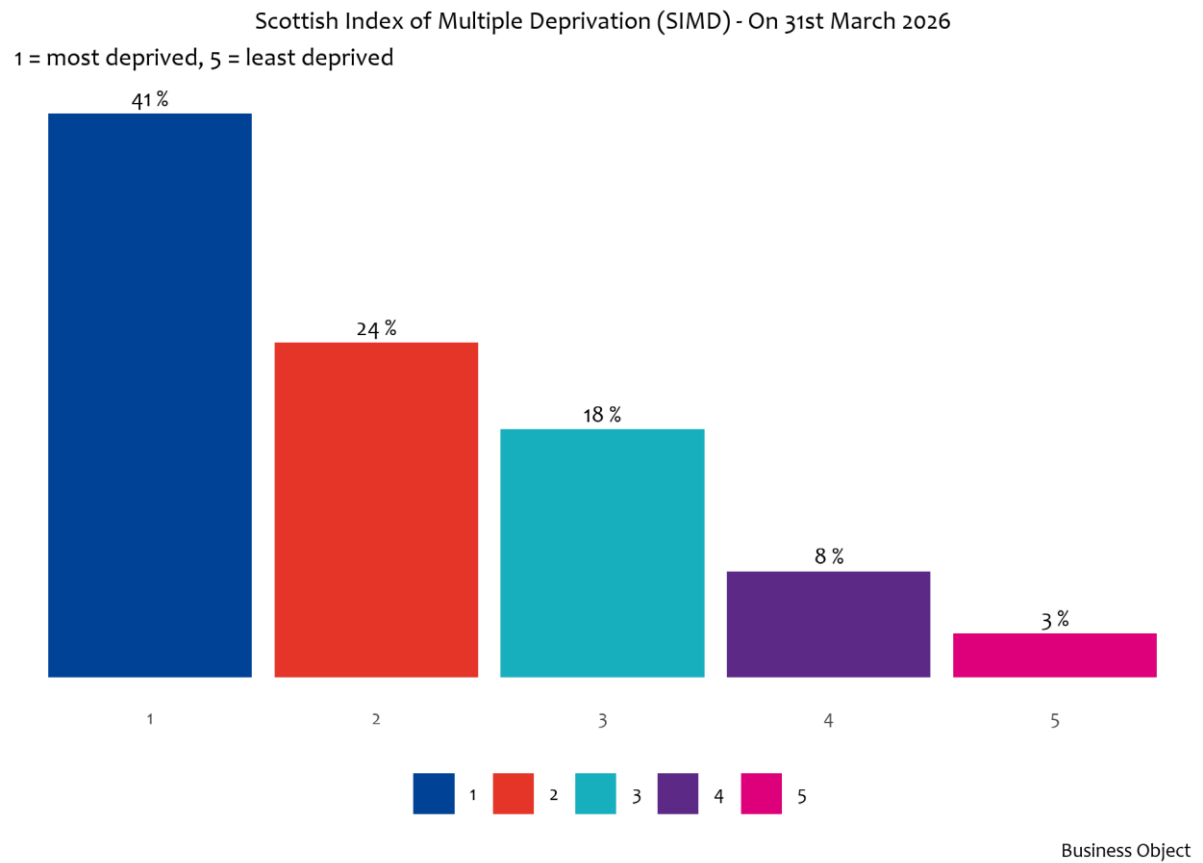
⁵ The Scottish population figures used to calculate the rate of imprisonment was obtained from [Scotland's Census 2022](#)

The table below illustrates the total number of individuals in custody on 31st March 2026, broken down by length of sentence and LA.

	Remand + Undetermined Sentence	Short Term Prisoners - Less than 4 years	Long Term Prisoners - Over 4 Years (including Life)
Aberdeen City	195	150	128
Aberdeenshire	88	42	39
Angus	44	18	19
Argyll and Bute	41	25	14
City of Edinburgh	326	182	141
Clackmannanshire	34	32	18
Dumfries and Galloway	76	70	45
Dundee City	175	117	102
East Ayrshire	95	64	63
East Dunbartonshire	28	22	16
East Lothian	45	30	23
East Renfrewshire	22	11	17
Falkirk	103	67	55
Fife	300	111	132
Glasgow City	750	363	339
Highland	119	83	63
Inverclyde	87	29	40
Midlothian	38	23	14
Moray	56	29	15
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	5	<5	10
No Fixed Abode	42	19	6
North Ayrshire	96	45	66
North Lanarkshire	277	137	143
Orkney Islands	8	<5	<5
Outwith Scotland	270	164	111
Perth and Kinross	88	45	36
Renfrewshire	156	84	69
Scottish Borders	57	20	21
Shetland Islands	8		<5
South Ayrshire	56	40	44
South Lanarkshire	218	136	99
Stirling	36	19	23
West Dunbartonshire	85	44	44
West Lothian	133	63	35

Deprivation

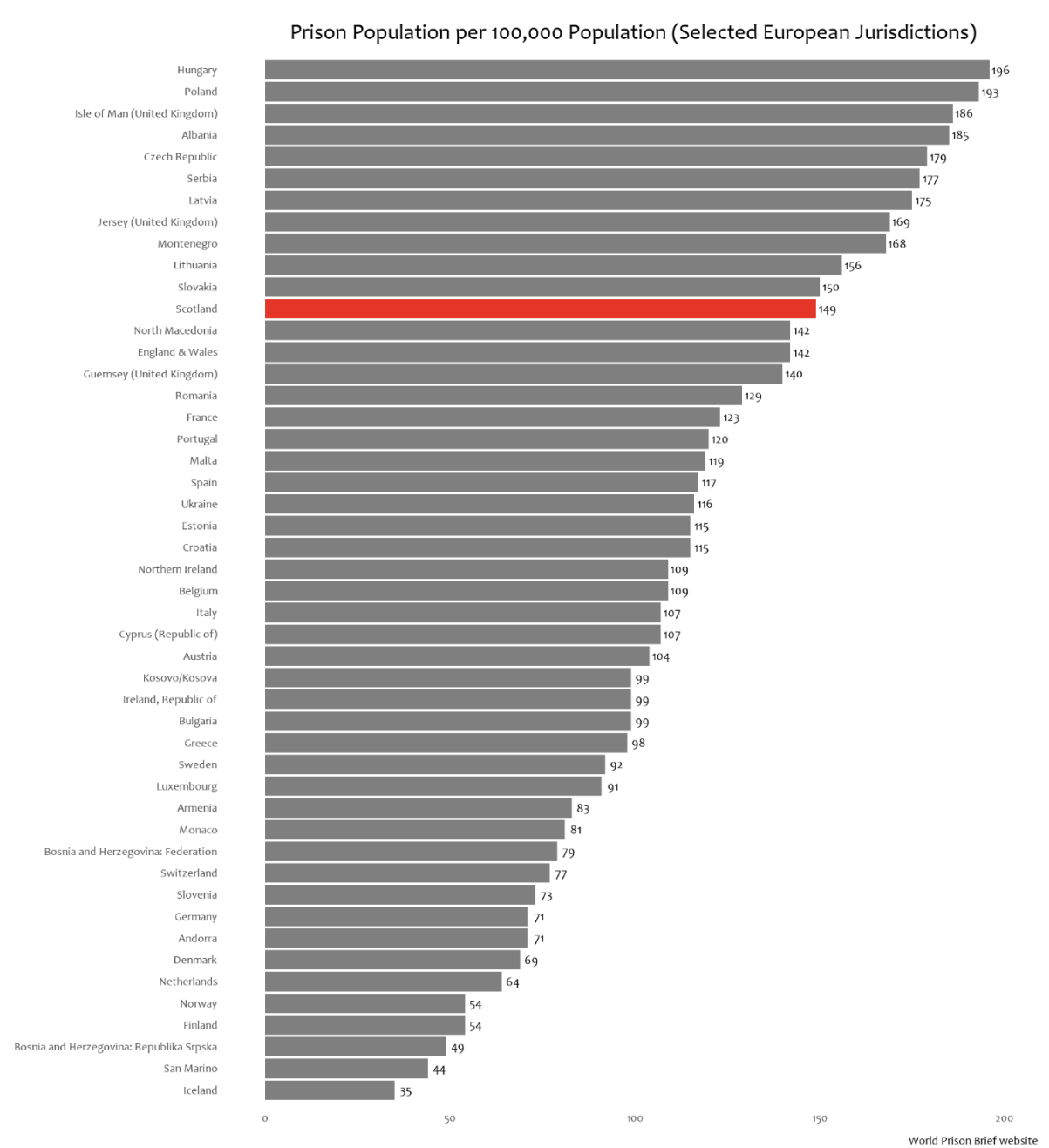
The data extracted from the Prison Records on 31st March 2026 indicated that 41% of the prison population came from the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland, while 3% came from the 20% least deprived areas⁶.



⁶ The Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small areas. SIMD ranks from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 6,976). This Public Information Page linked SIMD Geographical Data to the postcode of those in our care and focused on the areas below 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

10.0 International Comparisons

The figure below shows the prison population per 100,000 people for a selection of European countries⁷. Scotland has a rate of 149 prisoners for every 100,000 people.



⁷ [World Prison Brief](#), accessed in September 2025.

11.0 Prison Estate & Configuration

At the end of March 2026, nine establishments were operating at or over the agreed Assessed Capacity Tolerance (ACT). Another four establishments were operating very close to ACT.

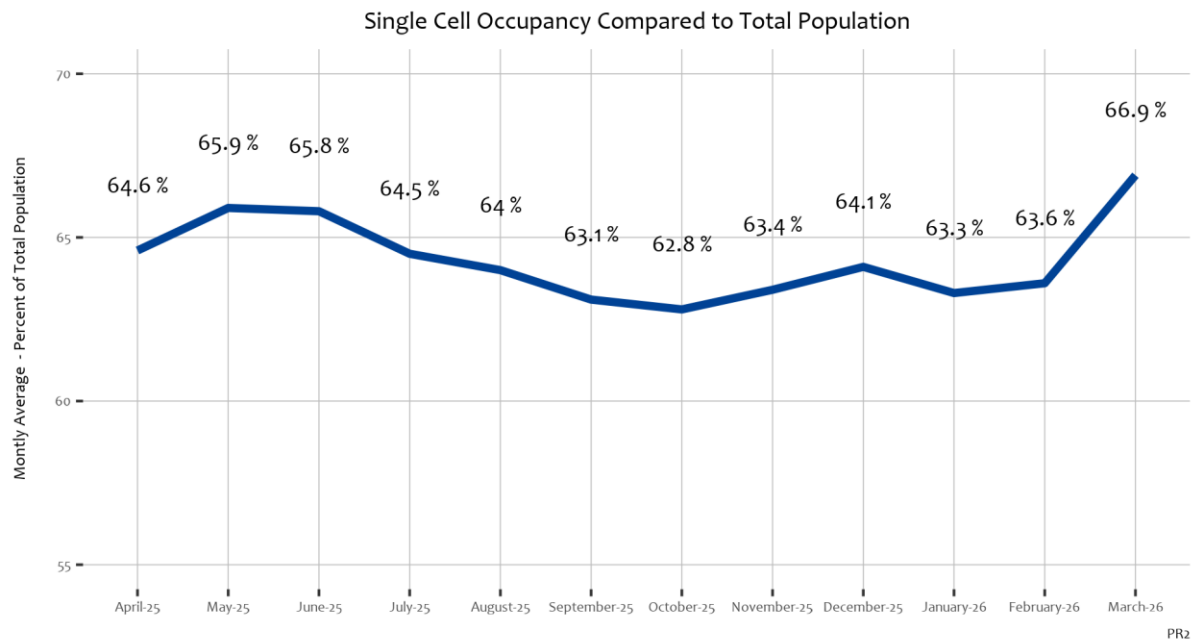
During Q4 25/26, the monthly average number of people accommodated in single cells decreased from 5,283 individuals in January to 5,265 in March, while the number of people accommodated in double cells increased by 2.6%.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the average number of people accommodated in double cells rose by 9%. In the same period, the average number of people accommodated in single cells remained stable.



PR2

Current Single Cell Occupancy (SCO) figures illustrate the impact that the rising and increasingly complex population is having on the ability to provide individuals with single cells. In the short term, SPS is unable to increase the capacity to offer individuals single cells, as this would require building new establishments or re-designing existing ones. Over Q4 25/26, monthly average SCO rose from 63.3% in January to 66.9% in March.



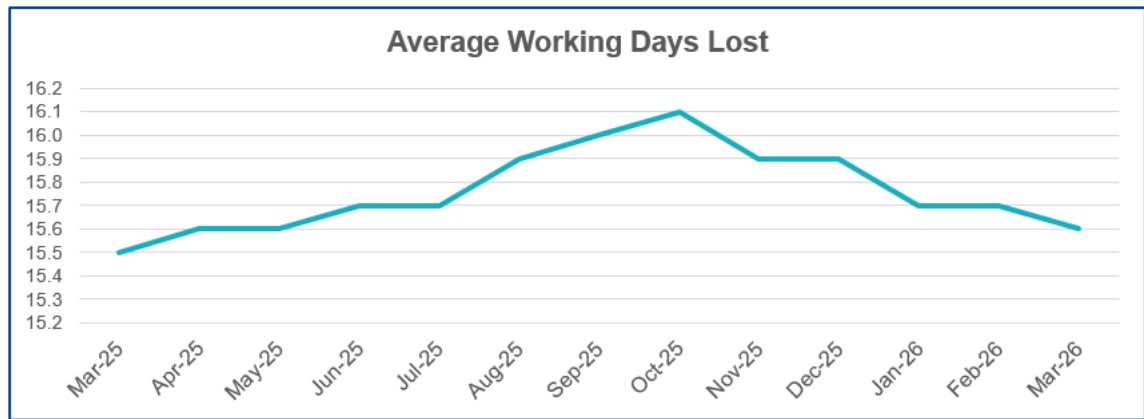
12.0 Staffing Levels

SPS currently has 5,219 employees (4,908 full-time equivalent (FTE)), as of the 31st March 2026. This is an increase from 31st December 2025 (5,157 employees, 4,847 FTE).

In Q4 25-26, there were 94 employees who left SPS; this is a slight decrease compared to 107 in Q3 2025/26. The top four leaving reasons in quarter were Personal Reasons, Retirement – Normal Age, Job Opportunity, and Retirement – Ill Health; these reasons account for 84% of Q4 leavers.



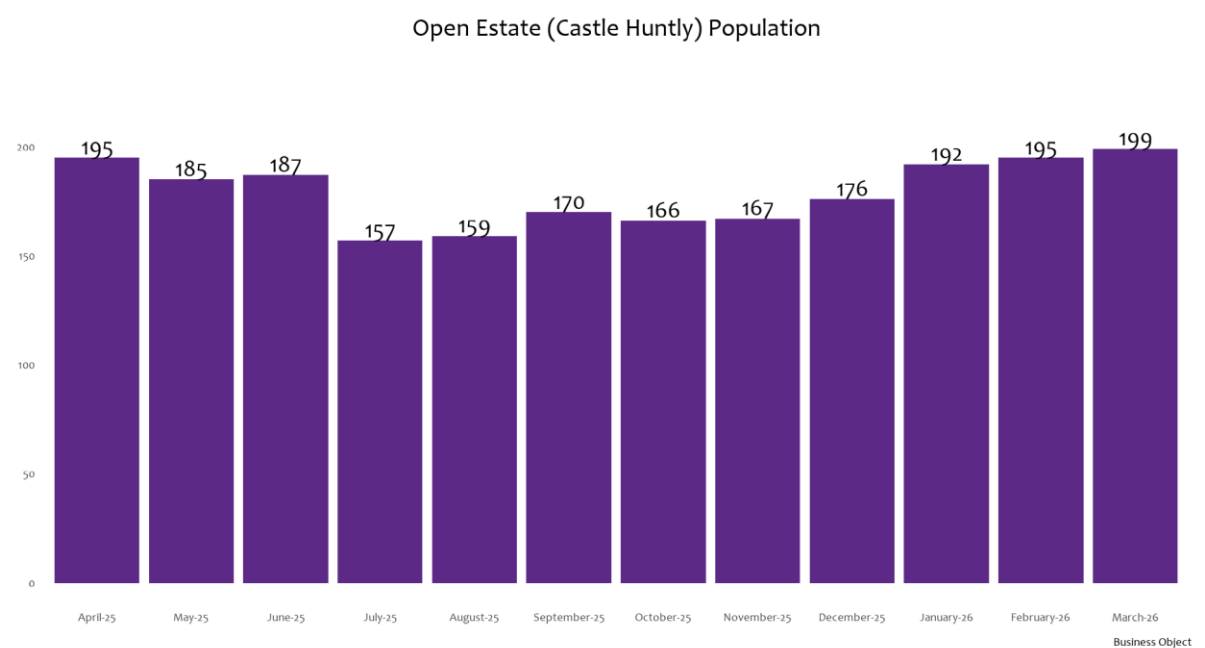
Staff sickness absence levels have slightly increased from 15.5 Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) in March 2025 to 15.6 Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) in March 2026.



13.0 Open Estate

To progress to less secure conditions, an individual must undergo case management and the level of risk of moving them must be agreed by the SPS and key partners. All members of the convicted population can be eligible once the criteria are met. This process is managed via Castle Huntly for adult males, HMP&YOI Polmont for Young People and HMP Stirling for the female estate.

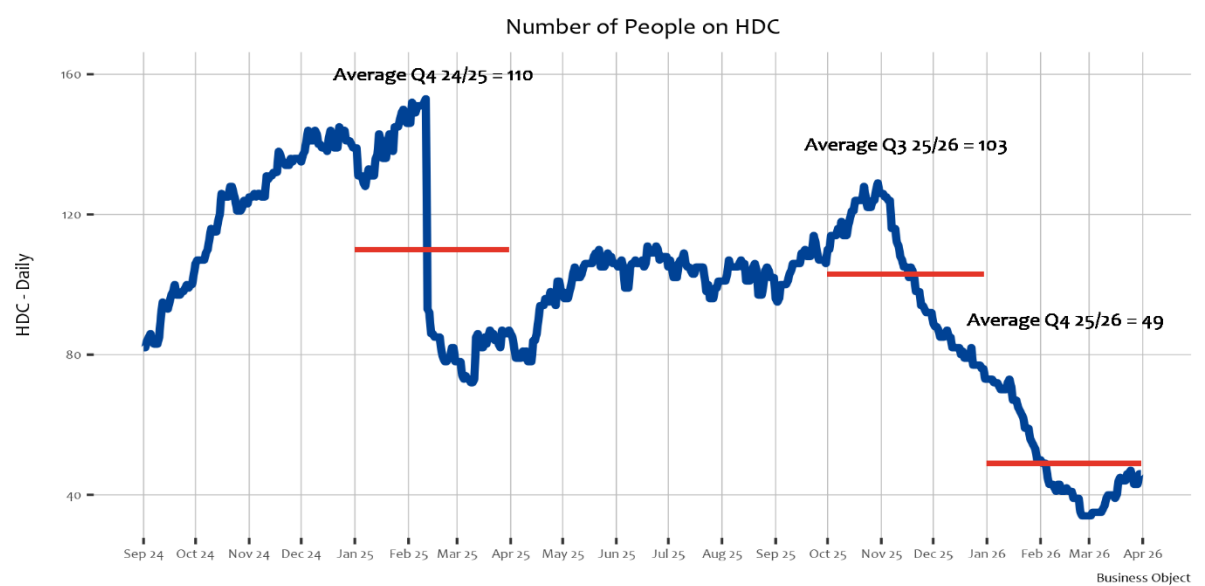
The population of Castle Huntly (also known as the Open Estate) increased slightly over Q4 25/26, from an average of 192 in January 2026 to 199 in March 2026.



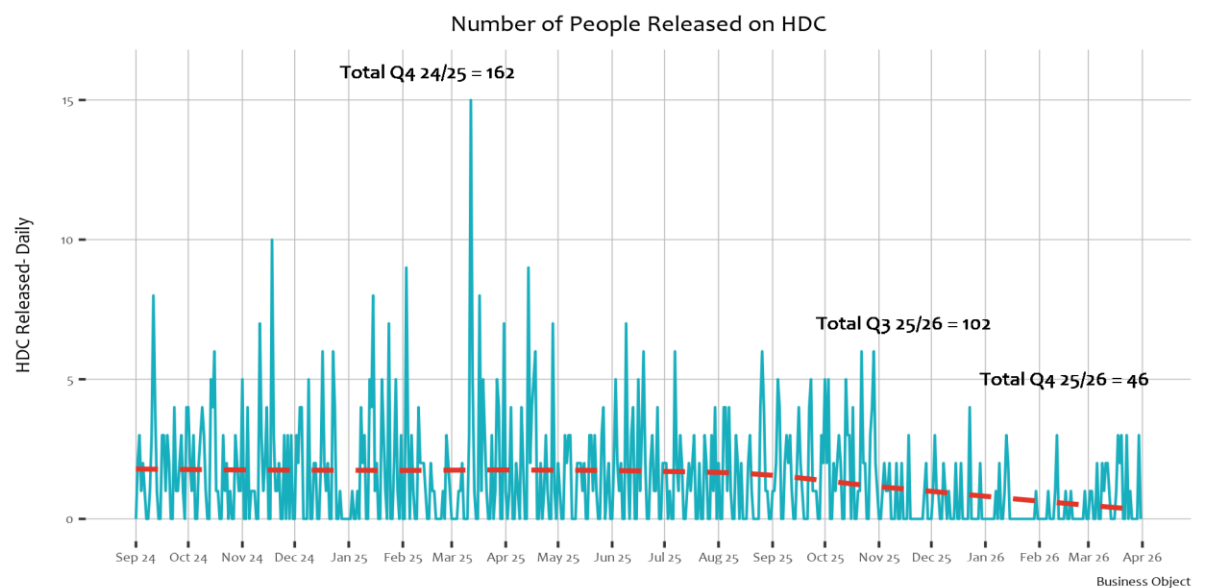
Identifying people held in less secure conditions within HMP&YOI Polmont and HMP Stirling is complicated by the structure of management information held by SPS. Work is underway to report upon these populations.

14.0 Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

The daily average number of people on HDC reduced from 103 in Q3 25/26 to 49 in Q4 25/26 (or 52.4%), with the lowest reaching 34 people on HDC at the end of February and beginning of March. Compared to the same period last year, the daily average number of people on HDC reduced by 55.5%. The reduction was recorded over the same timeframe in which three tranches of releases under the Early Release of Prisoners (Scotland) Regulations 2025 were carried out between January and March 2026.



There were 46 releases on HDC in Q4 25/26, a reduction of 55% compared to 102 releases on HDC in the previous quarter.



15.0 Face to Face & Virtual Visits

Due to an issue with data access, it is not possible to provide analysis of visits in this quarter. We will endeavour to fix this at the earliest possible opportunity.

16.0 Deaths in Custody

The Scottish Prison Service categorises the causes of deaths in custody into 5 categories:

- Homicide
- Natural Cause
- Suicide
- Unascertained- following medical investigation
- Undetermined intent/Overdose

In fiscal year 2025/26, there were 42 deaths in custody which was a reduction of 31% (19) from 2024/25. 45% (19) were the result of natural causes, 33% (14) were by suicide, 19% (8) were the result of incidents of undetermined intent or overdoses and 2% (1) could not be ascertained by medical partners.

There were 6 deaths in custody in Q4 25/26. This was a reduction of 8 from the previous reporting period (14 deaths) and of 9 from the same period in 2024/25 (15 deaths).

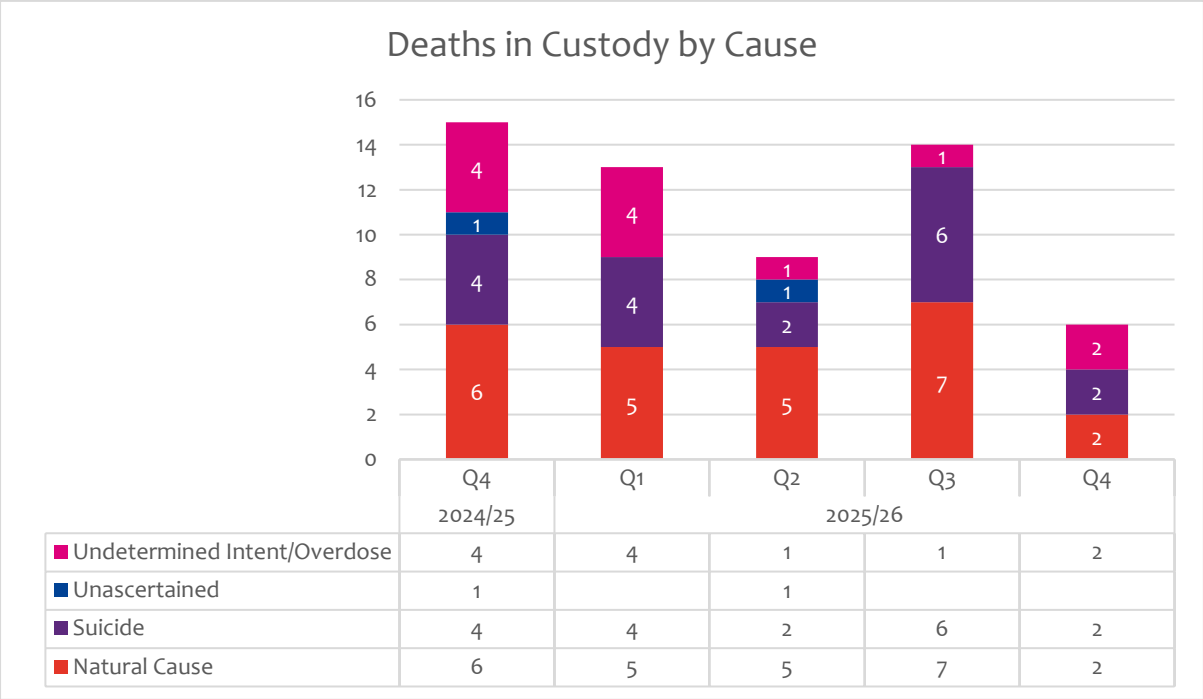


Figure 1 SPS Health Policy Data

All deaths in custody between Q4 24/25 and Q4 25/26 occurred in the adult male prison population. The age distribution can be seen below. 33% of deaths in Q4 25/26 occurred in men aged between 66 and 74.

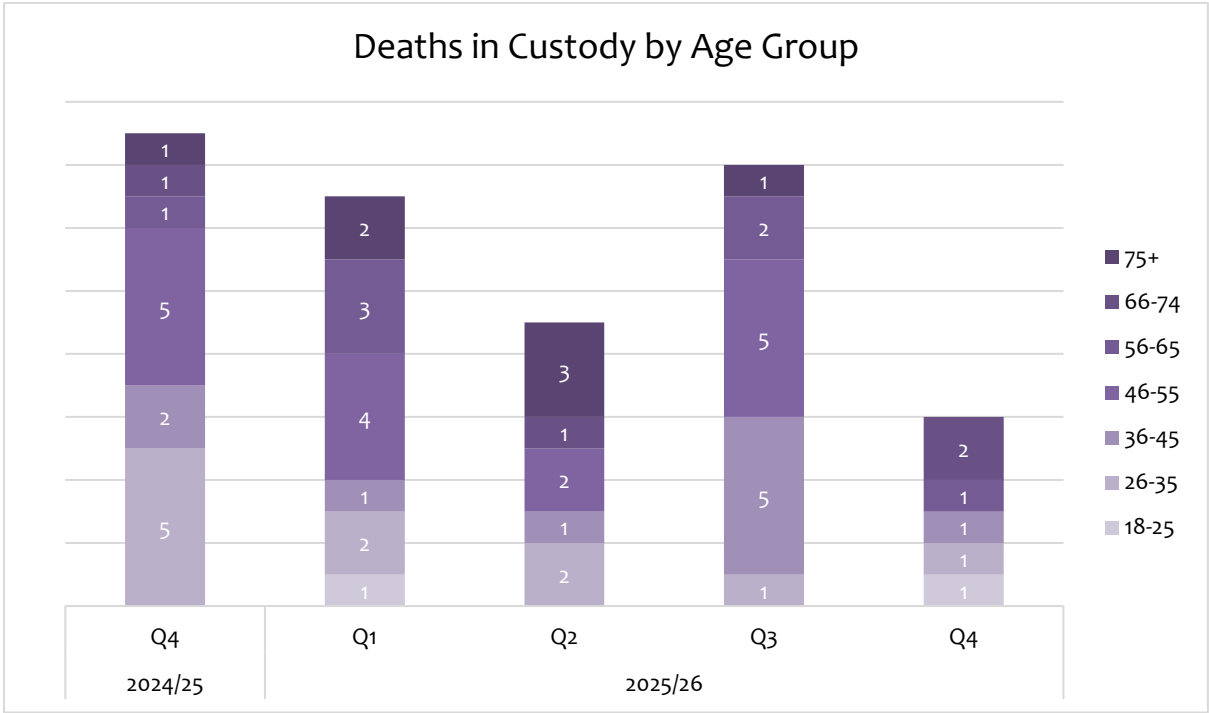


Figure 2 SPS Health Policy Data

17.0 Additional Information and Useful Links

About this report

The Public Information Page (PIP) is a quarterly report published by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to provide transparency about various metrics related to the running of prisons in Scotland. Data is extracted from SPS management information systems and compiled into the PIP report each quarter. Because this data comes from live systems and is extracted at various points throughout the year, it can differ from other similar data in the public domain, such as the Scottish Prison Population Statistics. The data compiled in this report is not subject to the same level of quality assurance as the official statistics, although every effort is made to ensure its accuracy before publication.

We seek to be as open and transparent as possible, while also upholding our statutory obligation to ensure those in our care have their personal information protected. We have improved the way in which we collate and present data on our transgender population and, following advice from information governance experts, will only provide information on the total number of transgender people in our care. We have also applied disclosure control throughout the report where small numbers might mean that individuals could be identified.

Other data sources

- **Parliamentary Questions**

A full list of Parliamentary Questions answered in the Scottish Parliament on the subject of prisons is available from the Scottish Parliament website [here](#).

- **Corporate Plan**

The Corporate Plan identifies a set of strategic themes and outcomes, which defines and shapes SPS priorities over the duration of that Plan. This is currently on the SPS website [here](#).

- **Prisons Plan**

COVID-19 has necessitated a change in planning arrangements. The SPS Delivery Plan can be found [here](#).

- **SPS Annual Report and Accounts**

The purpose of the Annual Report and Accounts is to provide an overview of the Scottish Prison Service, its purpose and activities. It also includes information on key risk and issues

for the organisation as well as a high-level summary of performance. The most recent Report is available [here](#).

- **Drivers of the prison population: crime and convictions statistics.**

The drivers of the prison population are the number of people committing crimes, the numbers convicted, and the number given custodial sentences each year. The latest statistics from Scottish Government and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service are provided below:

[Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2019-20](#)

[Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2020-21](#)

[Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2021-22](#)

[Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2022-23](#)

[Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2021-22](#)

[Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2022-23](#)

[Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2023-24](#)

[Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2024-25](#)

- **Prisons research and surveys**

SPS undertakes a range of research and evaluations of prison and related services. These reports will be uploaded at the time the reports are ready for publication. More information can be found [here](#).

- **Scottish Prison Population Statistics**

Data on Scottish prison population levels and characteristics, receptions to/liberations from prison. The last publication is available [here](#).

- **[Scottish Prison Interactive Analysis Tool](#)**

The Scottish Prison Population Statistics app contains a large amount of information on people in prison and their movements over the period 2009-10 through 2023-24. The app is designed to allow users to freely explore this information, giving users control over a wide range of options.

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Justice Analytical Services data report**

Monthly data report on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Justice System in Scotland, including information from Police Scotland, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, courts and prisons. All publications are available [here](#).

- **[Freedom of Information Responses](#)**

- **Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard**

The interactive dashboard contains information on charge level disposals from Scottish criminal courts. The data included in the dashboard is provided by the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Services (SCTS). For more information, please click [here](#).

- **Sex, gender identity, trans status – data collection and publication: guidance**

Guidance for public bodies on the data collection of data on sex and gender, available [here](#).

- **Tableau – Scotland’s Justice Statistics and Trends**

The Tableau is a data visualization tool that highlights publicly available data in a way that supports understanding of the community justice landscape at a local authority area level. More information can be obtained [here](#).

- **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)**

The purpose of the SIMD is that it “identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. It allows effective targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of area concentrations of multiple deprivation. More information is available [here](#).

- **The World Prison Brief**

The World Prison Brief is an online database providing free access to information on prison systems around the world. It supports evidence-based development of prison policy and practice globally. For more information click [here](#).

- [Scotland’s Census 2022 – Rounded population estimates](#)
- [Mid-2020 Population Estimates Scotland | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#)