



BRIEFING PAPER

Number CBP-04334, 23 July 2018

UK Prison Population Statistics

By Georgina Sturge

Contents:

1. England & Wales
2. Scotland
3. Northern Ireland
4. Cost per prisoner
5. International comparisons



Contents

Summary	3
1. England & Wales	5
1.1 Long term trends	5
1.2 Recent trends and projections	6
1.3 Sentence length and offences	7
1.4 Prisoner demographics	9
Age profile of prisoners	9
Nationality	9
Ethnicity	11
Religion	11
1.5 Prison overcrowding	12
1.6 Safety in prisons	14
Prisoner assaults	14
Assaults on staff	14
Self-harming	15
Deaths	15
Self-inflicted deaths	16
1.7 Incidence of drugs	16
1.8 Prisoner escapes and absconds	17
2. Scotland	19
2.1 Long term trends	19
2.2 Recent trends and projections	20
2.3 Current average daily population	21
2.4 Age profile of prisoners	21
2.5 Ethnicity and Religion	22
2.6 Supervision level	23
3. Northern Ireland	25
3.1 Recent trends and projections	25
3.2 Age profile of prisoners	26
4. Cost per prisoner	27
5. International comparisons	28
5.1 Prison Population	28
5.2 Cost	29

The underlying data to the charts are available in a separate [Excel file](#).

Cover image: [‘Wormwood Scrubs, in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London, viewed from outside behind the prison walls.’](#) Julian Tysoe, 18 October 2010. Free to use under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic licence.

Summary

This briefing paper explores data on the UK prison population, including the population size and change over time, the demographic profile of prisoners, safety in prisons, and the cost per prisoner.

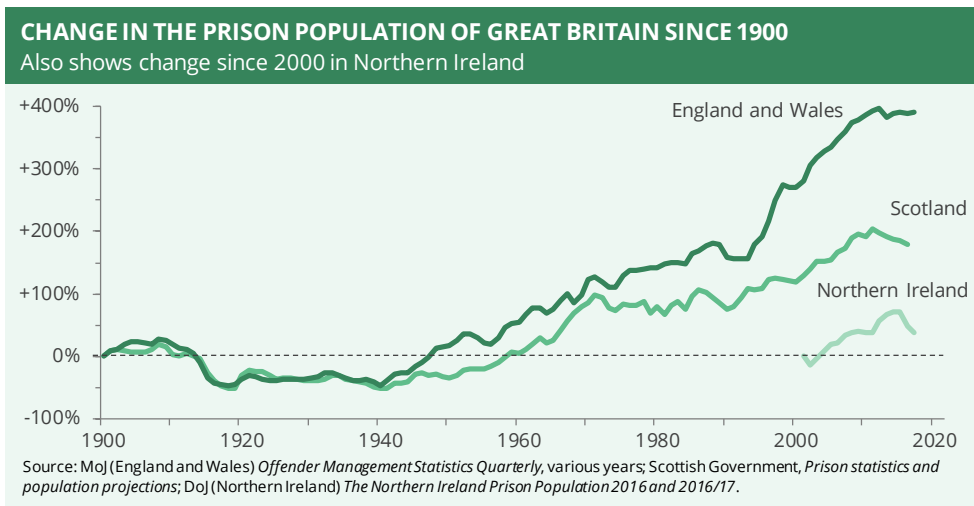
Prisons are a devolved, so UK prison statistics are published separately for England and Wales (the Ministry of Justice), Scotland (the Scottish Government), and Northern Ireland (the Department of Justice). This briefing also compares the UK with other countries.

Weekly prison population data are available for England, Wales and Scotland and quarterly data are available for Northern Ireland. The latest available data show a **current prison population of approximately 92,500**, comprising

- 83,430 in England and Wales (end of May 2018)¹
- 7,595 in Scotland (end of June 2018)²
- 1,475 in Northern Ireland (end of March 2018)³

In addition to these snapshots, all jurisdictions publish the average annual prison population, which was approximately 85,660 in England and Wales in 2017, and 7,550 in Scotland and 1,470 in Northern Ireland for the financial year 2016/17.

There is a general underlying, increasing trend in the number of people held in prison. The graph below shows prison population change relative to 1900 (and relative to 2000 for Northern Ireland).



The prison population of England & Wales quadrupled in size between 1900 and 2017, with around half of this increase taking place since 1990. The Scottish prison population almost doubled in size since 1900 and rose 60% since 1990.

The data series for Northern Ireland begins in 2000. Between 2000 and 2016/17 the prison population of Northern Ireland increased by 38%, although the prison population is currently at its lowest since 2010.

¹ Ministry of Justice [Prison population figures 2018](#)

² Scottish Prison Service [Prison Population](#)

³ Department of Justice [Prison Population Statistics 01 January 2017 to 31 March 2018](#)

To put the prison population in context, it is possible to calculate the number of prisoners per 100,000 people in the general population. At the most recent count there were:

- **179 prisoners per 100,000 of the population in England and Wales** in 2017
- **166 per 100,000 in Scotland** (2016/17) and
- **98 per 100,000 in Northern Ireland** (2016/17).

In each jurisdiction, prison population projections are made on a regular basis. At the most recent estimate, the prison population in 2022 is projected to reach 88,000 in England and Wales, 7,800 in Scotland, and 2,251 in Northern Ireland (approximately 98,000 in total).⁴

There are many other statistics on the prison population available for England and Wales which are published in the Ministry of Justice's [Offender Management Statistics Quarterly](#) (latest released in April 2018). The key findings are that, at March 2018:

- The prison population is ageing: in 2002, 16% were under the age of 21 compared with 6% in 2018 and the number over the age of 50 went from 7% in 2002 to 16% in 2018;
- Prison sentences were longer in 2018 than in 2010, with 46% being over 4 years compared with 33% in 2018⁵;
- Foreign nationals made up 11% of the prison population;
- People of non-white ethnicities made up 26% of the prison population compared with 13% of the general population.

Other data sources indicate that:

- At May 2018, 58% of prisons in England and Wales were over-crowded⁶;
- The number of reported assaults in prison in 2017 (29,500) was 13% higher than in 2016 and 44% higher than in 2015;
- The number of reported self-harming incidents (44,600) was 11% higher in 2017 than in 2016 and 94% higher than in 2007.⁷

Each jurisdiction also publishes data on the **cost per prisoner or prison place**. In 2016/17, the average direct annual cost per prisoner in England and Wales was £22,933. In Scotland the average annual cost per prison place was £35,325 and in Northern Ireland this figure was £53,408.

⁴ Ministry of Justice [Prison population projections 2017-2022](#), Scottish Government [Prison statistics and population projections Scotland 2013/14](#), Northern Ireland Prison Service [FOI Case No. 13:454](#)

⁵ Excludes indeterminate-length sentences

⁶ MoJ, [Population bulletin: monthly May 2018](#)

⁷ MoJ [Safety in custody quarterly: update to December 2017](#)

1. England & Wales

1.1 Long term trends

The Ministry of Justice has produced a time-series of annual average prison population for each year from 1900 to 2013. Since 2014, it has published a quarterly bulletin on the average prison population in the preceding 12 months.



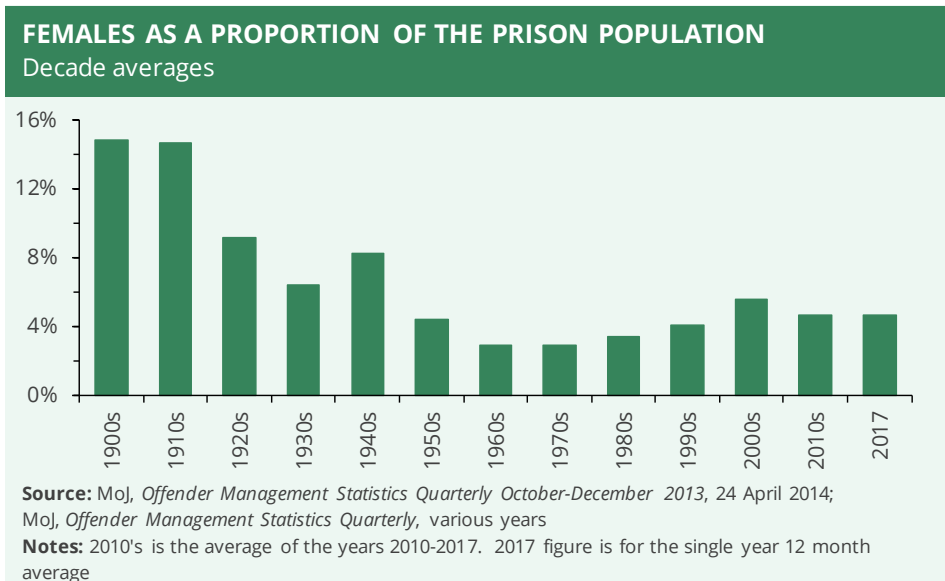
The average annual prison population increased from just over 17,400 in 1900 to around 85,700 in 2017 (more than quadruple). The prison population was relatively stable between 1915 and 1945. From 1940 the prison population grew steadily, although there was a small period in the early 1990s when it decreased for four consecutive years before rising steeply again in the subsequent decade. Since 2010, the average prison population has remained relatively stable.

To put the numbers in context, in 1900 there were 86 prisoners per 100,000 people in the general population and in 2017 there were 179 per 100,000. At the start of the 1940s there were around 33 prisoners per 100,000 people.

Gender

In 1900 there were 152 male prisoners per 100,000 men in the population. This rate has increased to 348 per 100,000 in 2017. There were 27 female prisoners per 100,000 head of female population in 1900. In 2017 this rate had decreased to 16 per 100,000.⁸

⁸ MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly October-December 2013*, 24 April 2014; MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*, various years

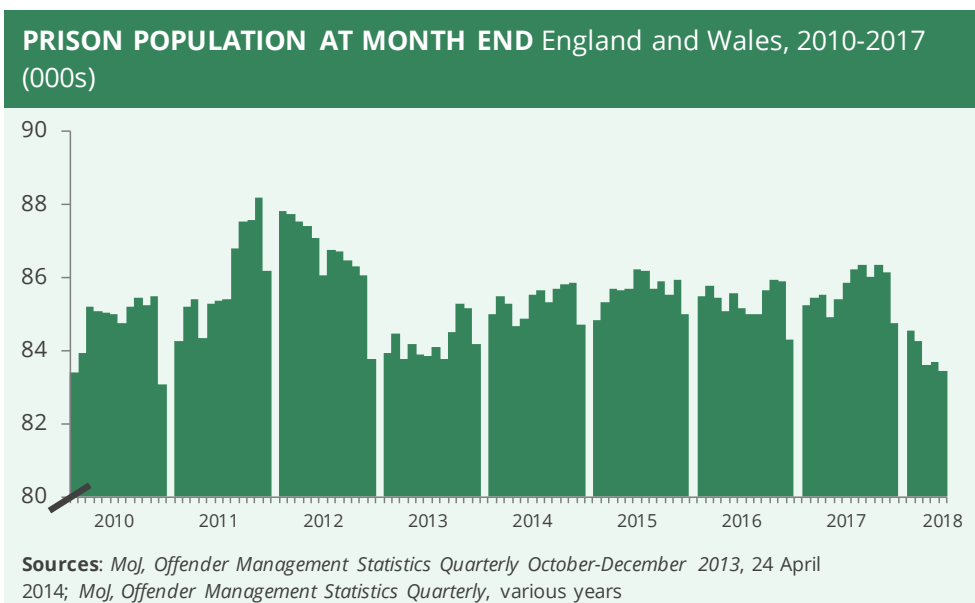


The percentage of females as a proportion of the prison population has fallen from 17% in 1900 to 5% in 2017. The lowest this figure has been during this period was 2% which occurred in 1968 and 1969.

1.2 Recent trends and projections

The prison population passed 80,000 for the first time in December 2006 and 85,000 in June 2010. In November 2011 the prison population reached its highest level of just over 88,000. As at 31 May 2018, the total prison population was 83,430.

The chart shows the prison population at month end since January 2010. Note that the Y (vertical) axis is truncated to make small changes more visible.

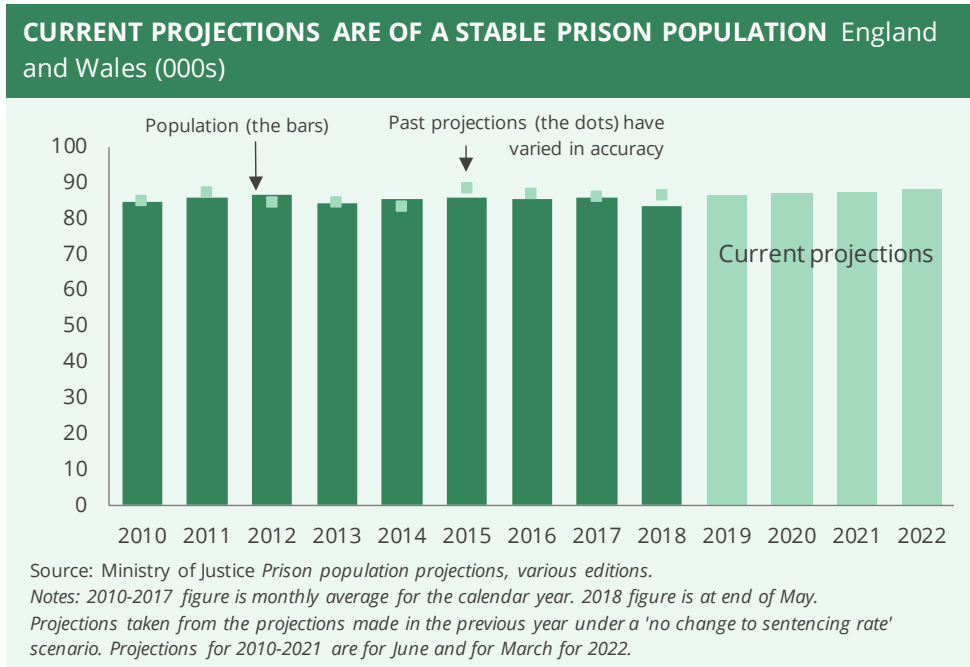


The rise in the prison population over the last months of 2011 can be, at least partially, explained by the remanding and sentencing of individuals following the riots in England in August 2011.⁹ The population in 2017 peaked in

⁹ See MoJ *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 6th-9th August 2011*, 13 September 2012.

November (86,327) which was the highest since September 2012. In May 2018, it was at 83,430, its lowest since December 2010.

The latest prison **population projections** were released in August 2017 and are shown below.



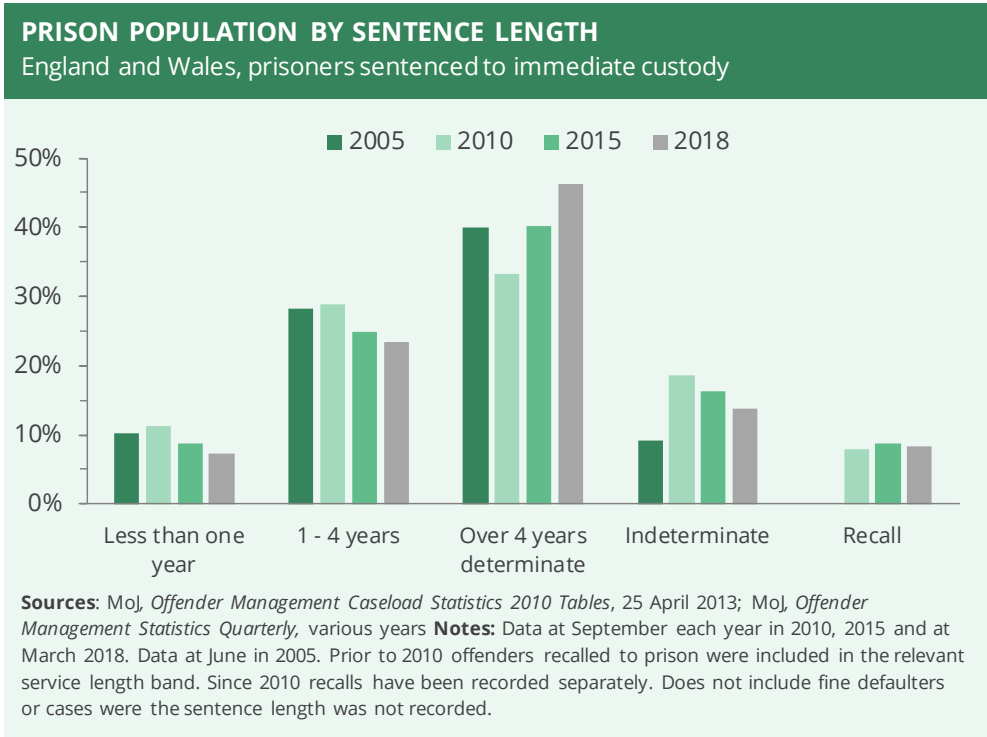
The projections forecast that the prison population will grow to 88,000 by March 2018. The projections include a rise in prisoners serving a determinate sentence and on remand and a fall in those serving indeterminate sentences (imprisonment for the public protection (IPP)).¹⁰ It may be noted that the true prison population at the start of June 2018 (83,400 prisoners) was 3,000 lower than the projection.

1.3 Sentence length and offences

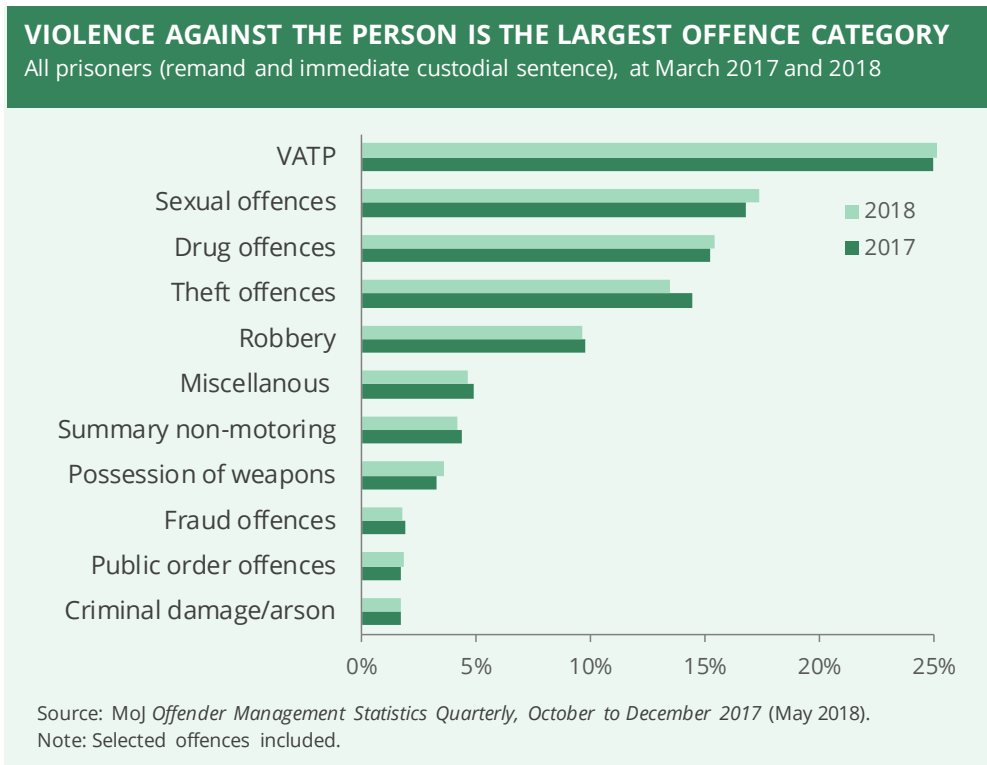
As at the end of March 2018 the most frequent length of sentence being served was a determinate¹¹ sentence of over 4 years. Around 46% of the sentenced population were serving this length of sentence. About a quarter of prisoners were serving sentences ranging between 1-4 years and around 14% had indeterminate sentences.

¹⁰ The House of Commons Library has a [briefing paper on IPP sentences](#).

¹¹ A 'determinate' prison sentence is for a fixed length of time. An 'indeterminate' prison sentence doesn't have a fixed length.



Prisoners in custody for violence against the person (VATP) offences accounted for the highest proportion of prisoners at the end of March 2018 (25%). Sexual, theft and drug offences each accounted for approximately 15% of the reason offenders were in prison.



1.4 Prisoner demographics

Age profile of prisoners

The proportion of offenders under the age of 21 has decreased since 2002 when they represented around 16% of the prison population. At the end of March under 21s accounted for 6% of the prison population – a decrease of approximately 6,000 since 2002.

The proportion of offenders aged between 21 and 29 also decreased over the last 5 years, accounting for 34% of the prison population in 2012 and 30% in March 2018. The proportion of 30-39 year olds has remained relatively stable (around 30%) except for a small dip in 2010. The proportion of prisoners aged over 50 has increased from 7% in 2002 to 16% in March 2018.

The chart below shows the change in the age profile of prisoners over the last 15 years looking at comparative data from June each year.

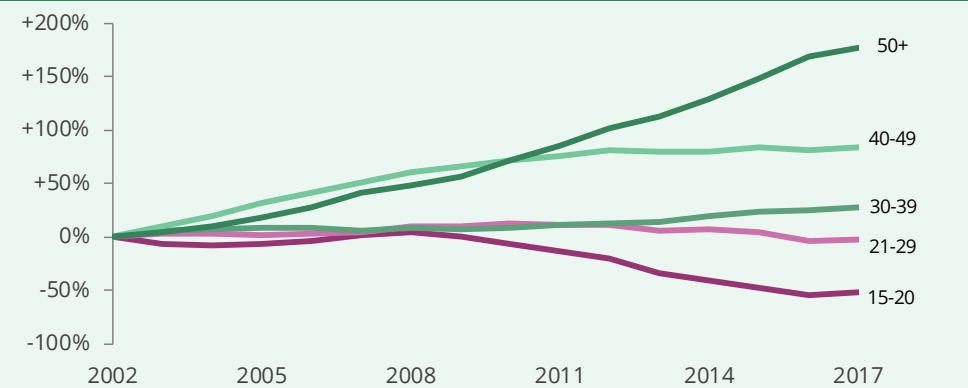
AGE PROFILE OF PRISONERS, MARCH 2018

England & Wales		
Age	Number	Percentage
15-17	645	1%
18-20	4,243	5%
21-24	9,834	12%
25-29	14,902	18%
30-39	25,218	30%
40-49	14,862	18%
50-59	8,616	10%
60+	4,943	6%
Total	83,263	100%

Source: MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*

PRISON POPULATION AGED 50+ ROSE THE MOST RELATIVE TO 2002

Change in prison population by age category, England & Wales



Sources: MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*, various years

Notes: Data at June 2002-2017, age groups combined

Nationality

At the end of March 2018 there were just over 9,300 foreign nationals within the prison population. Foreign nationals came from 162 different countries.¹²

¹² MoJ, [Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, March 2018](#).

NATIONALITY OF PRISONERS		
England and Wales, at 31 March 2018		
	Total	%
British Nationals	73,711	89%
Foreign Nationals	9,318	11%
Nationality not recorded	234	0%
All nationalities	83,263	100%
Africa	1,680	18%
Asia	1,306	14%
Central and South America	145	2%
European (EEA)	4,030	43%
Non-EEA European	976	10%
Middle East	460	5%
North America	65	1%
Oceania	24	0%
West Indies	632	7%
All foreign nationals	9,318	100%

Source: MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, March 2018. Table 1.7*

Foreign nationals from Europe accounted for the greatest proportion of all foreign nationals within the prison population (43% from EEA countries and a further 10% from non-EEA European countries).¹³ Those from Africa (18%) and Asia (14%) contributed the second and third largest proportion respectively. Prisoners originating from the European Union (excluding the UK) made up just under 5% of the total prison population.

The top ten countries foreign nationalities accounted for 49% of all foreign nationals.

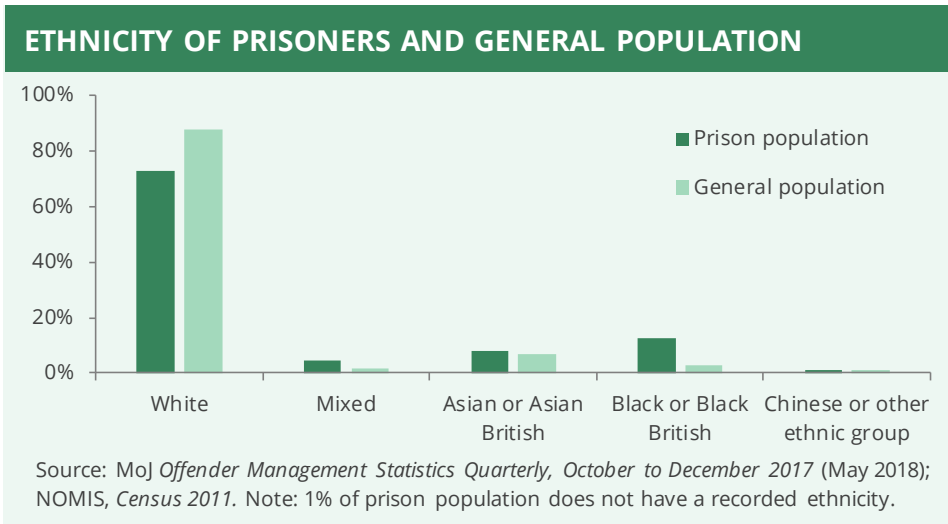
TOP TEN NATIONALITIES AMONG FOREIGN PRISONERS		
England and Wales, at 31 March 2018		% of foreign national prisoners
Nationality	Number	
Polish	802	9%
Irish	728	8%
Romanian	671	7%
Jamaican	495	5%
Lithuanian	402	4%
Pakistani	353	4%
Somalian	305	3%
Portuguese	276	3%
Nigerian	268	3%
Indian	262	3%
Other foreign nationals	4,756	51%
All foreign nationals	9,318	100%

Source: MoJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, March 2018. Table 1.7*

¹³ The European Economic Area (EEA) is the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Ethnicity

As at the end of March 2018, just over a quarter of the prison population was from a non-white ethnic group – this figure has stayed relatively constant since 2005.



As the graph illustrates, compared to the population as a whole, the non-white population is over-represented within the prison population. In the prison population, 26% identified as a non-white ethnicity, compared with 13% in the general population.

Religion

At the end of March 2018, just under half of the prison population was of a Christian faith (48%) – a decrease of just over 10 percentage points compared to June 2002. The proportion of Muslim prisoners has increased from 8% in 2002 to 15% in 2018. The proportion of prisoners with no religion in 2018 (31%) was down slightly from 31.5% in 2002.

RELIGION OF PRISONERS AND GENERAL POPULATION

England and Wales		% point		
	Number	Prison population	change on 2002	General population
Christian	39,839	48%	-10.2%	61%
Muslim	12,847	15%	+7.7%	4%
Hindu	379	0%	+0.1%	2%
Sikh	625	1%	+0.1%	1%
Buddhist	1,517	2%	+0.9%	1%
Jewish	480	1%	+0.3%	1%
No religion	25,711	31%	-0.6%	24%
Other	1,734	2%	+1.5%	1%
recorded	131	0%	+0.1%	7%
Total	83,263	100%	..	100%

Source: MoJ *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, October to December 2017* (May 2018); NOMIS, *Census 2011*

1.5 Prison overcrowding

A prison is classified as overcrowded if the number of prisoners held exceeds the establishments Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA). The CNA is the Prison Service's own measure of accommodation and represents the decent standard of accommodation that the Prison Service aspires to provide all prisoners.

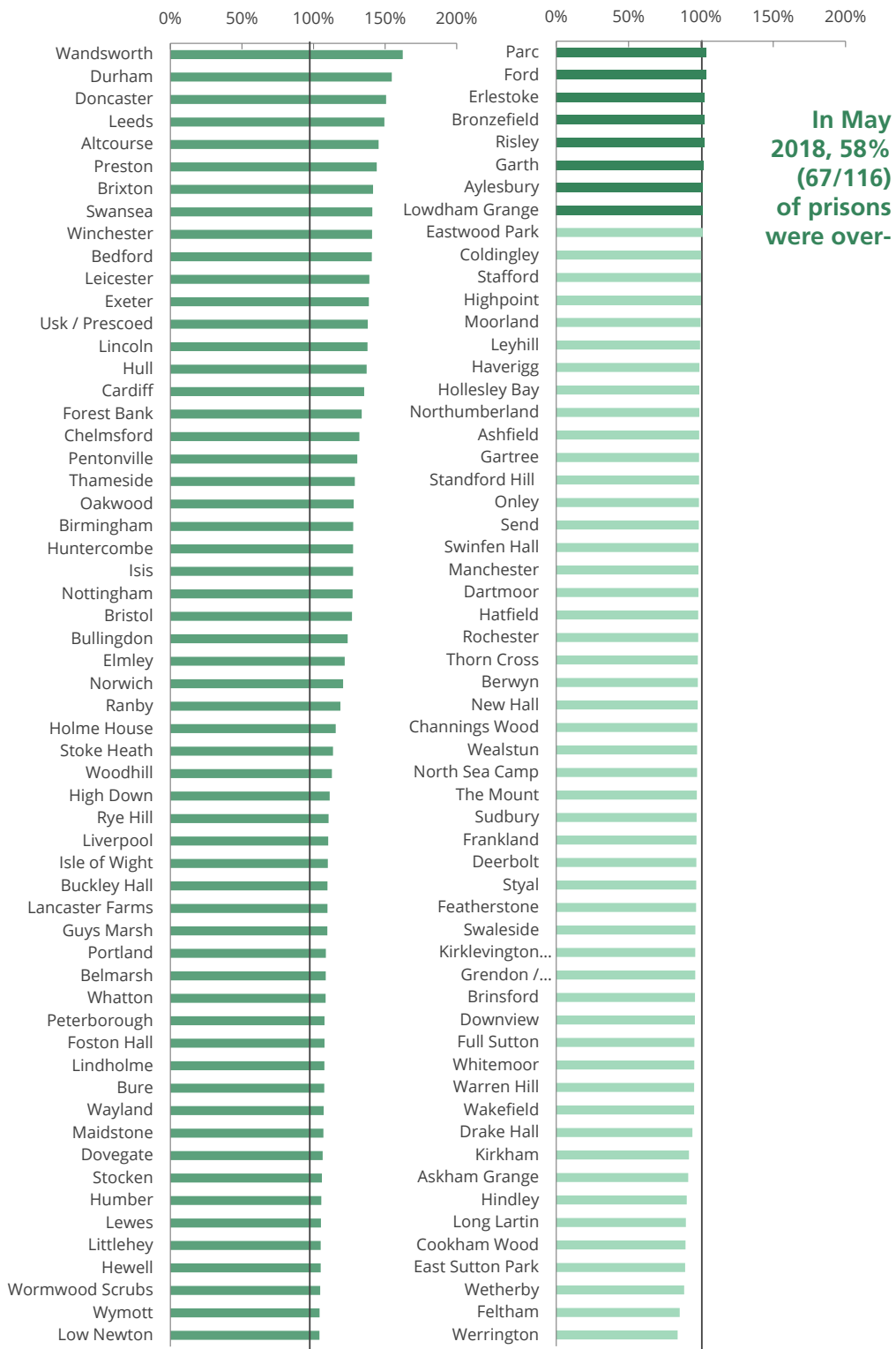
As at March 2018,¹⁴ 58% (67) of prison establishments were overcrowded.¹⁵ In total, overcrowded prisons held 8,600 more prisoners than the CNA of these establishments.

The chart below shows in use CNA for each establishment at May 2018. Those exceeding the CNA are shown in the darker colour.

¹⁴ MoJ, [Population bulletin: monthly May 2018](#)

¹⁵ Excludes Blantyre House and The Verne, which are listed but closed and excludes HMPPS Operated Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs).

PRISON POPULATION RELATIVE TO CERTIFIED NORMAL ACCOMMODATION



In May 2018, 58% (67/116) of prisons were over-

Source: MoJ Prison population figures: monthly bulletin, May 2018.

1.6 Safety in prisons

Prisoner assaults

In the 12 months to December 2017, there were just under 29,500 prisoner assault incidents¹⁶ within prisons. This was a 13% increase compared to December 2016 and a 44% increase from December 2015.



Of the assaults, 28,200 (96% of the total) occurred in male establishments. This was an increase of 13% compared to the 12 months ending December 2017. In female establishments there were just over 1,200 assaults (4% of the total) in the 12 months to December 2017. This was an increase of 23% on the figure a year earlier.

The rising number of assaults should be viewed within the context of the rising number of prisoners within the prison system. In the twelve months ending December 2007 there were 190 assaults per 1,000 prisoners. By December 2017 this rate had increased to nearly 344 per 1,000 prisoners. There was a dip in the early 2010s although from 2013 the rate has increased year on year.

Assaults on staff

In the year to December 2017, there were 8,429 assaults on prison staff, 864 of which were classed as 'serious'.

To take account of the increase in prison population, the table below shows the number of assaults on prison staff per 1,000 prisoners. Assaults on prison staff per 1,000 prisoners has more than doubled from 43 in 2007 to 98 in 2017. In the twelve months since December 2016 assaults on staff have increased by 23%.

¹⁶ This is the total 'assault incidents', it includes prisoner on prisoner assaults and prisoner assaults on staff. Figure also include incidents at HMPPS operated Immigration Removal Centres.

PRISONER ASSAULTS ON STAFF					
			Assaults on staff		
	Assaults on staff	Serious assaults on staff	per 1,000 prisoners		% change on 2007
2007	3,279	285	41		-
2008	3,219	284	39		-5%
2009	3,080	269	37		-10%
2010	2,848	302	34		-17%
2011	3,132	273	36		-12%
2012	2,987	260	34		-17%
2013	3,266	359	39		-5%
2014	3,640	477	43		5%
2015	4,963	625	58		41%
2016	6,844	789	80		95%
2017	8,429	864	98		139%

Source: MoJ, Safety in Custody Quarterly: update to December 2017
Notes: 2017 figures provisional

Self-harming

In the 12 months to December 2017 there were over 44,600 self-harm incidents. This was an increase of 94% compared to the 12 months to December 2007 and an increase of 11% compared to the 12 months to December 2016.

Of the self-harm incidents, around 81% occurred in male establishments. By comparison, in 2007, self-harm incident numbers between men and women had been almost identical, 11,534 and 11,914 respectively. Between 2007 and 2017 the number of individual males self-harming has more than doubled while the number of individual women self-harming has decreased by almost a tenth (11%).

The 44,600 self-harm incidents in year ending December 2017 were committed by 11,600 individuals,¹⁷ around 3.8 self-harm incidents per self-harming individual.¹⁸

Deaths

In 2017 there were 299 deaths of prisoners in custody, a 13% decrease on the previous year. Around 56% of the deaths were through natural causes, 23% were self-inflicted, 21% were classed as other (including those awaiting for further information on the cause of death) and less than 2% were the result of homicide.

¹⁷ Numbers of individuals should be treated as approximate, as the details of prisoners are not always recorded against each self-harm incident.

¹⁸ MoJ, *Safety in Custody quarterly: update to June 2017*, 26 October 2017



Self-inflicted deaths

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was relatively stable in the early 1980s at around 0.6. From 1987 the rate of self-inflicted deaths generally increased until reaching a peak rate in 1999 of 1.4 deaths per 1,000 prisoners. In 2016, the rate of self-inflicted deaths was close to the 1999 peak at 1.39 deaths per 1,000 prisoners, and in 2017 it was down again at 0.8.

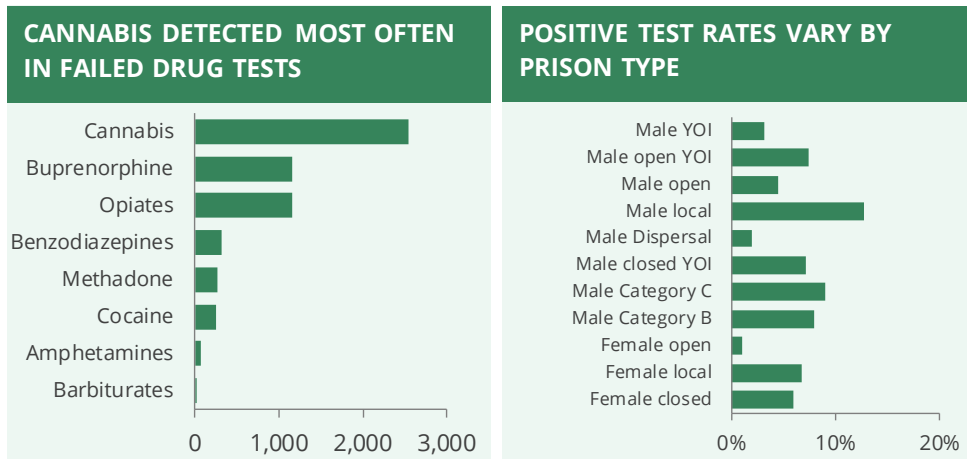
For comparison, the suicide rate in the general male population is approximately 0.16 per 1,000 (although the prison rate is for both sexes, the large majority of prisoners are male).

1.7 Incidence of drugs

The level of drug misuse in prisons is measured by the Random Mandatory Drug Testing programme (RMDT). The aim of RMDT is to test a random sample of 5% or 10% of prisoners each month (depending on prison capacity) and to monitor and deter drug-misuse.¹⁹

In 2016/17 there were 5,113 positive results recorded (9.3% of the 54,811 tests administered). The drugs which were tested for in 2016/17 and made up the RMDT rate included the substances shown in the graph below.

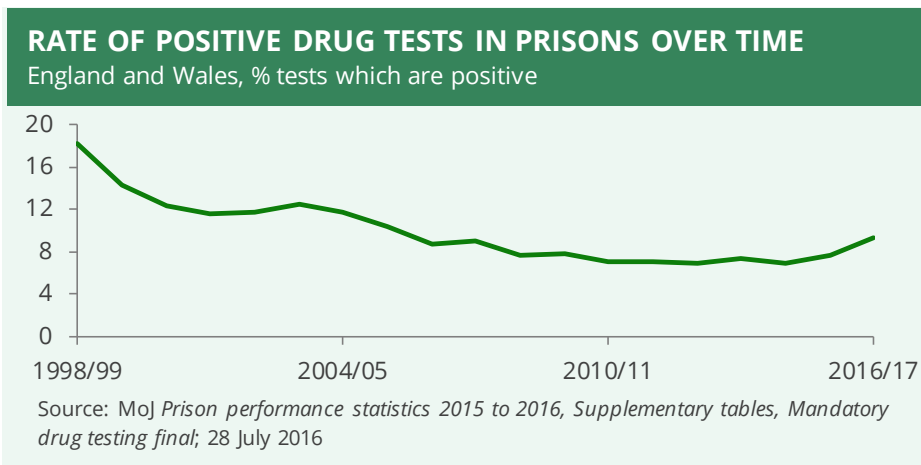
¹⁹ MoJ, *Annual NOMS Digest 2016 to 2017*, 28 July 2017



Source: MoJ *Annual NOMS Digest 2016/17, Supplementary tables, 'Random Mandatory Drug Testing'*: Table 7.2 and 7.3.

Note: YOI = Young offenders' institution

Between 1998/99 and 2014/15, share of prisoners testing positive for drug use from all randomly tested prisoners decreased from 18.3% to just below 7% respectively. The level has increased in recent years to 9.3% in 2016/17.²⁰



Source: MoJ *Prison performance statistics 2015 to 2016, Supplementary tables, Mandatory drug testing final*; 28 July 2016

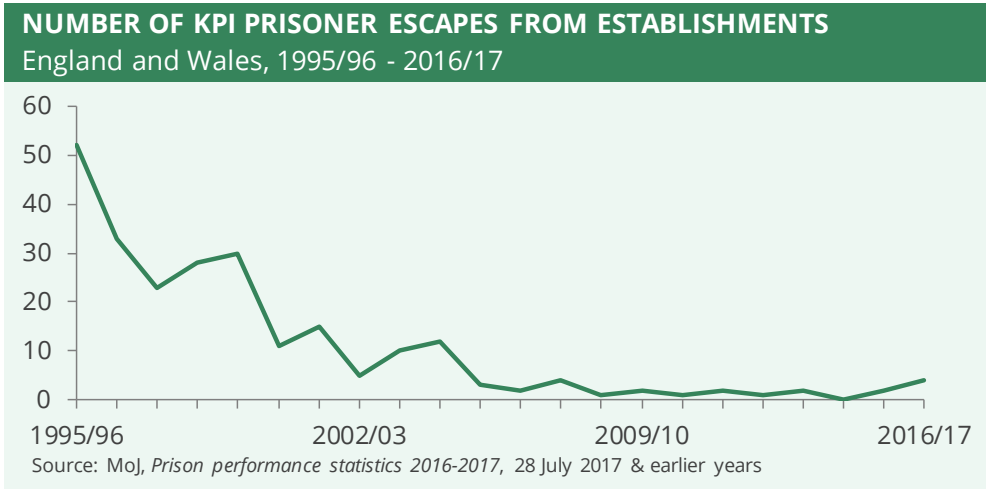
In 2016/17, the highest percentage of positive results from those tested came from the male category C prison, Kennet with 32.9% testing positive. Second was Bristol, a male local prison, with 31.3% and third was Liverpool, another male local prison with 24.8%. Data on drug testing since 1998/99 is available in [NOMS 2016/17, Supplementary tables, table 7.2](#).

1.8 Prisoner escapes and absconds

The number of KPI prisoner escapes²¹ has fallen since 1995/96 when 52 prisoners escaped. There were four KPI prisoner escapes in 2016/17. This was the highest figure since 2007/08. In 2015/16 there were two escapes and none in 2014/15.

²⁰ MoJ, *Prison performance statistics 2016 to 2017, Supplementary tables, Mandatory drug testing final*; 28 July 2017

²¹ An escape is deemed to be a Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) escape if (i) the prisoner is at liberty for 15 minutes or more before recapture or (ii) an offence is committed during an escape lasting less than 15 minutes.



The number of prisoner absconds²² has fallen in recent years. The highest recorded year was in 2003/04 when 1,301 cases were recorded and the numbers have decreased steadily since to 86 in 2016/17.



²² An 'abscond' is recorded when a prisoner is temporarily released but then does not come back.

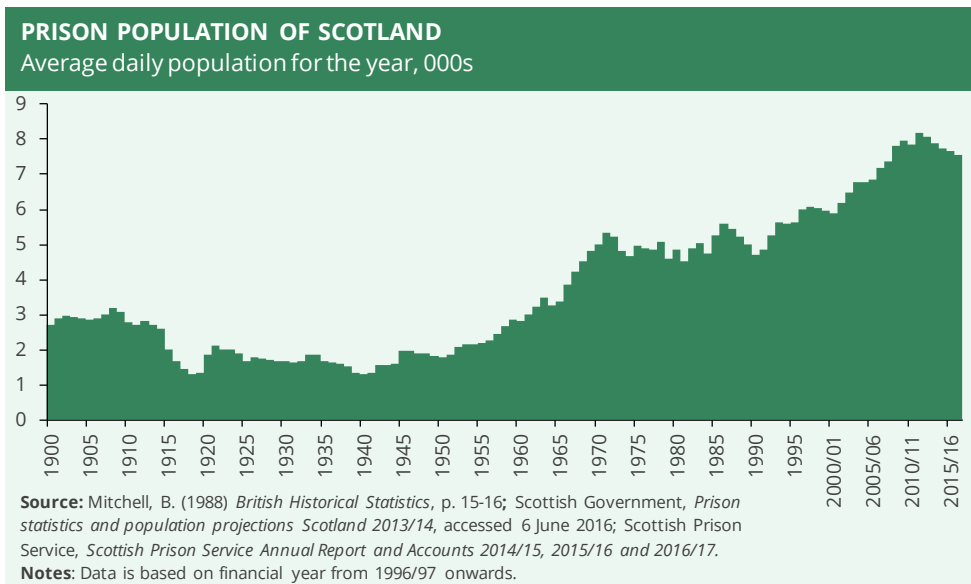
2. Scotland

The [Scottish Government](#) publishes a statistical bulletin on Scottish prison statistics annually as part of a series on different aspects of the criminal justice system.

On-going technical difficulties have led to substantial delays in the publication of detailed Scottish prisons data. Data for 2013/14 are the latest available from the Scottish Government²³ but [Scottish Prisons Service annual reports](#) provide some basic information up to the end of 2016/17.

2.1 Long term trends

The Scottish Government has produced the average daily number of prisoners in the Scottish prison system as far back as 1900.



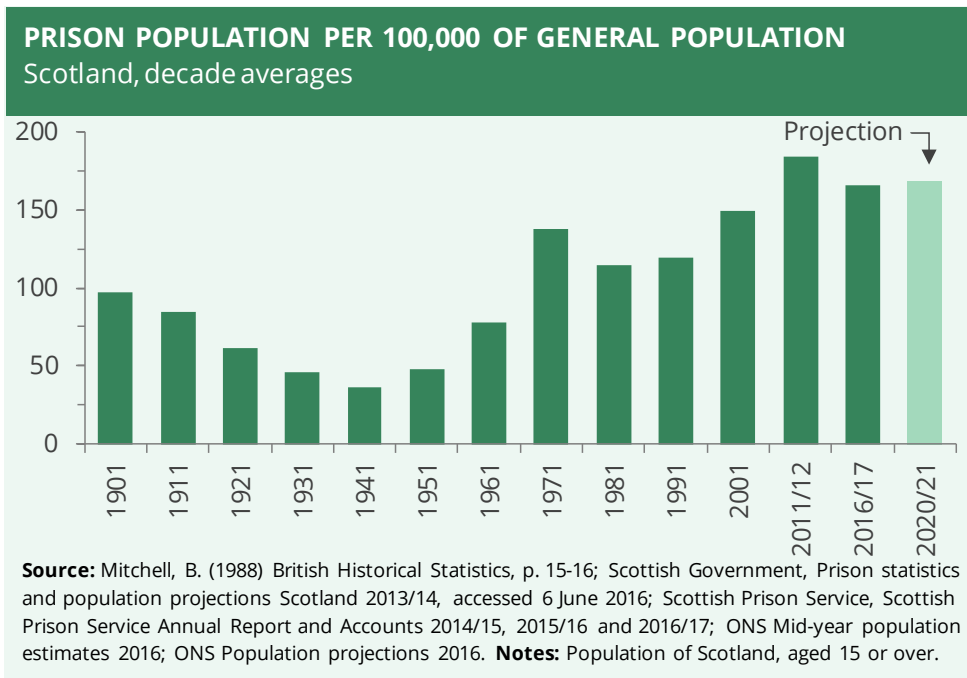
The average daily prison population increased from just under 2,700 in 1900 to just under 7,500 in 2016/17 (more than double). As in England and Wales, from the mid-1940s the prison population increased steadily until the 1970s where it remained relatively stable. Since 1990 the prison population again increased by 62%, reaching a peak of 8,179 in 2011/12.²⁴

The average daily prison population increased by 180% between 1900 and 2016/17. To put this increase into context the figure should be considered alongside population growth in Scotland - from approximately 3 million to 4.5 million (50%).²⁵

²³ Scottish Prison Service, *Annual report and accounts, 2016/17*

²⁴ See Table 10a in Appendix

²⁵ See table 10b in Appendix



In 1901 there were around 98 prisoners per 100,000 head of population in Scotland, dropping to around 36 per 100,000 in 1941. By 1971 this rate had risen to around 138 per 100,000. In 2016/17 there were 166 prisoners per 100,000 head of population.

2.2 Recent trends and projections

Between 2004/05 and 2013/14 the average daily prison population increased by 17%. The number of male prisoners increased by around 16% and female prisoners by 30%. The proportion of female prisoners averaged around 5% of the average daily prison population over the period:

AVERAGE DAILY PRISON POPULATION IN SCOTLAND

By sex of prisoners

	Male	Female	Total	% Female
2004/05	6,444	332	6,776	4.9%
2005/06	6,521	335	6,856	4.9%
2006/07	6,833	354	7,187	4.9%
2007/08	7,004	372	7,376	5.0%
2008/09	7,413	414	7,827	5.3%
2009/10	7,538	426	7,964	5.3%
2010/11	7,418	436	7,854	5.6%
2011/12	7,710	469	8,179	5.7%
2012/13	7,598	459	8,057	5.7%
2013/14	7,462	432	7,894	5.5%
2015/16	7,271	404	7,675	5.3%
2016/17	7,185	366	7,552	4.8%

Source: Scottish Government, *Prison statistics and population projections Scotland 2013/14*; Scottish Prison Service, *Scottish Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts*

The current projections for the Scottish prison population were made by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) in December 2013.²⁶ The SPS make three alternative projections based on models of different scenarios that could affect the prison in-take. The 2013 projections predict that “the daily prison population in Scotland will remain stable over the projection period with an annual average of 7,800” until 2022/23. The actual prison population data from 2015/16 and 2016/17 have been slightly lower than projected.

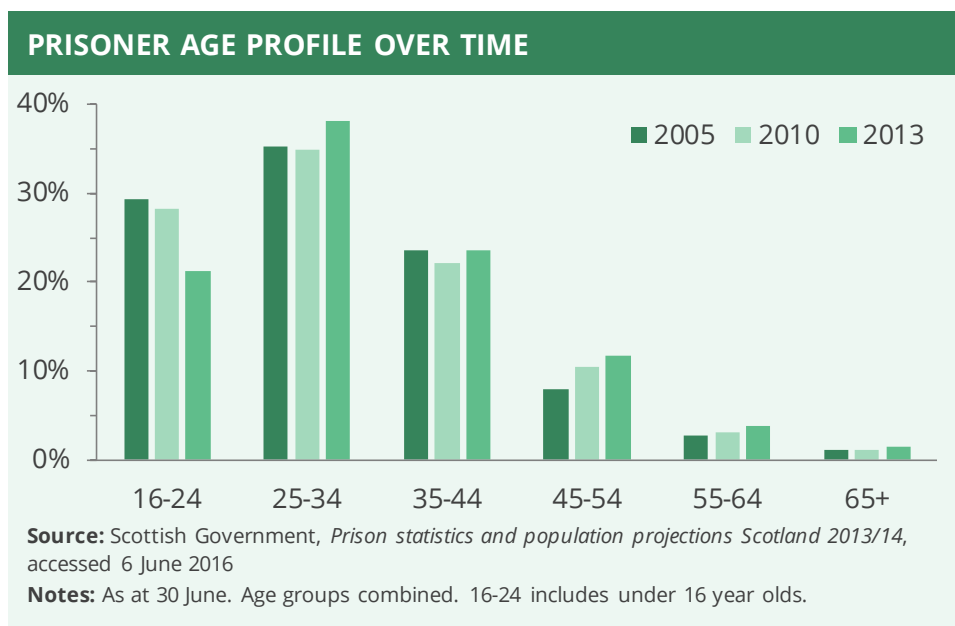
2.3 Current average daily population

The average daily prison population for 2016/17 was 7,552. Of those, 1,370 (18%) were prisoners on remand – either awaiting trial or sentencing.²⁷ Just under 6,200 (82%) were prisoners with sentences of which 54% were serving sentences of less than 4 years in length.

At 29 June 2018, there were 7,595 prisoners (excluding Home Detention Curfew) in custody.²⁸

2.4 Age profile of prisoners

At 30 June 2013 (the latest available data) around 59% of prisoners were under the age of 35. Just over one-fifth of prisoners were under the age of 25:



Between 2005 and 2013 the proportion of 16-24 year olds in prison reduced by 8 percentage points. The proportion aged 25-34 increased by 3 percentage points, accounting for just over 3,000 prisoners. The proportion of 35-44 year olds in 2013 was the same as in 2005. The proportion of those aged 45-54 increased by 4 percentage points compared to 2005. The proportion of those in categories 55-64 or 65+ increased by a small amount compared to 2005.

²⁶ Scottish Prison Service [Prison statistics and population projections Scotland: 2013-14](#)

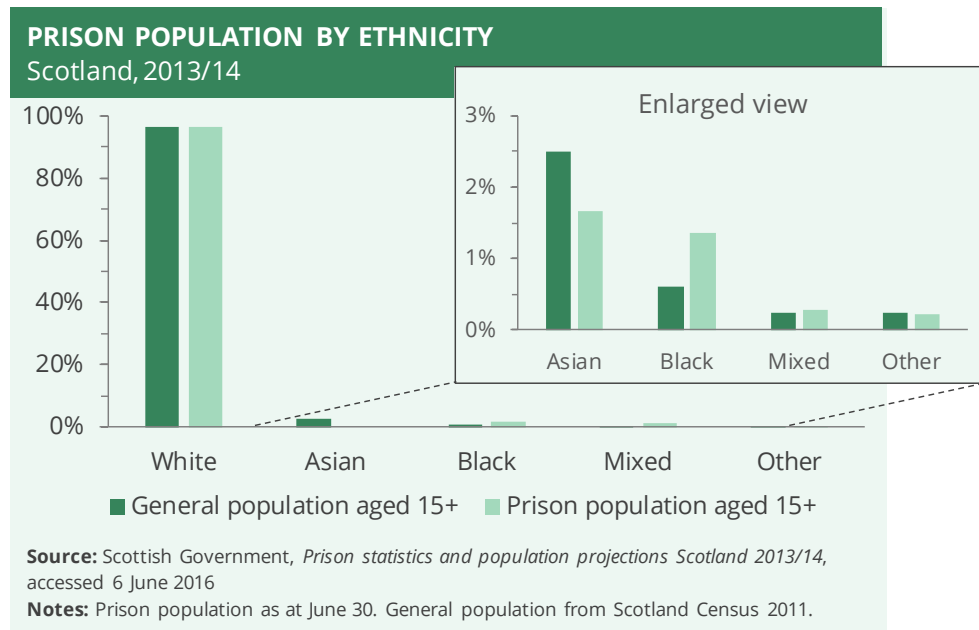
²⁷ Scottish Prison Service, *SPS Annual Report and Accounts 2015/16*, p. 74

²⁸ Scottish Prison Service, *SPS Prison Population*

2.5 Ethnicity and Religion

Ethnicity

At June 2013 the Scottish prison population was just over 96% white. Asian or black ethnicities accounted for just over 3% of the prison population. Around 0.5% of prisoners were from mixed or other ethnicities.

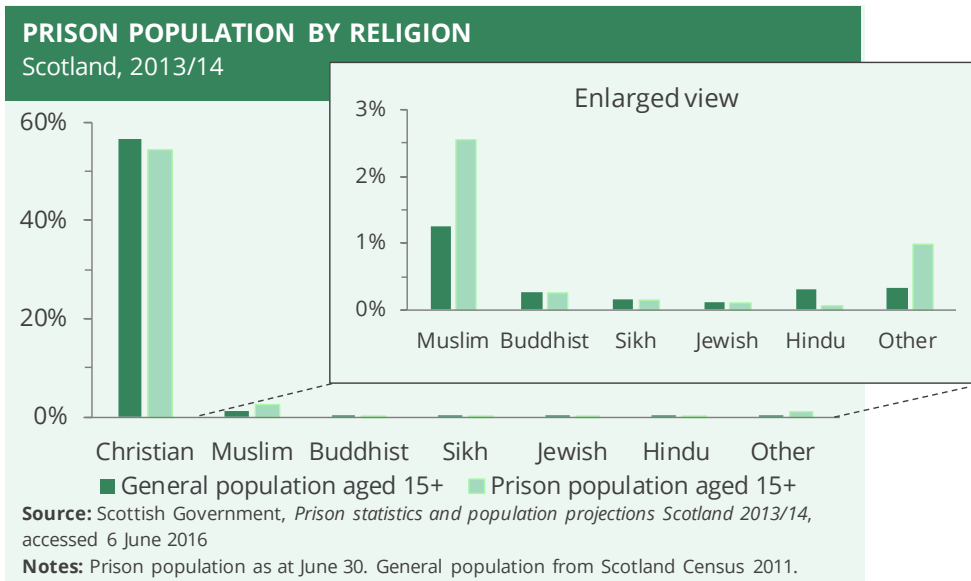


The Scotland Census 2011 suggests that the proportion of prisoners classified as being from a white ethnicity is the same proportion found among the general population. The proportion of people from Asian or Black ethnicities within the general population differed from the rate of the prison population. 2.5% of the general population was from an Asian ethnicity, whereas 1.7% of the prison population were reported as Asian. People from black ethnicities accounted for 0.6% of the general population and 1.4% of the prison population.²⁹

Religion

As at 30 June 2013 just over 4,600 prisoners (58% of the prison population) in Scotland indicated that they held religious beliefs. Of these, 93% were Christian (of various denominations). Muslim prisoners accounted for 4.4%. Together Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu and other religions accounted for 2.7% of the religious prison population. Just over 3,270 prisoners (42% of the prison population) held no religious beliefs.

²⁹ Scotland Census, *Census 2001-2011*



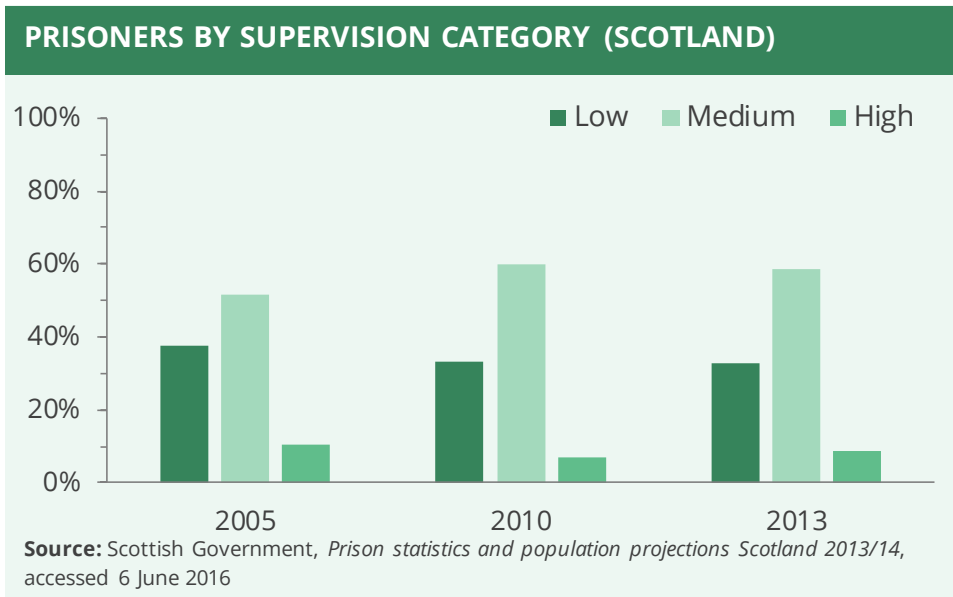
The proportion of Muslims among the prison population was greater than that amongst the general population. According to the 2011 Census³⁰, Muslims accounted for around 1.2% of the Scottish population aged 15 and over. In prison the proportion was over twice that at 2.5%. Aside from the “other” grouping, no other religion had a higher proportion of representation in prisons than among the general population. Individuals with no religious identity accounted for around 41% of the general population and just over 41% of the prison population.

2.6 Supervision level

Prisoners in Scotland are rated as to the level of supervision they require whilst in custody. A prisoner with high supervision requires all activities and movements authorised, supervised and monitored by a prison officer. Prisoners rated as requiring medium supervision are subject to limited supervision. Prisoners with low supervision are subject to minimum supervision and may also be allowed to participate in activities within the wider community.³¹

³⁰ Scotland Census, *Census 2001-2011*

³¹ Offenders Families Helpline, *Prisoner Category*, accessed 1 July 2016.



At 30 June 2013 just under 60% of prisoners were classified as requiring a medium level of supervision whilst in custody. Just over a third were considered to be a low risk and under 10% were considered to be a high risk.

3. Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland [Department of Justice](#) (DoJ) has produced statistics on the prison population in Northern Ireland from 2000 onwards. From 2000-2014 these were produced by calendar year and from 2014/15 onwards they are published by financial year.

In the financial year ending March 2017, the average daily prison population in Northern Ireland was 1,472. This was 8% lower than in the year ending March 2016 but 38% higher than in the year 2000.



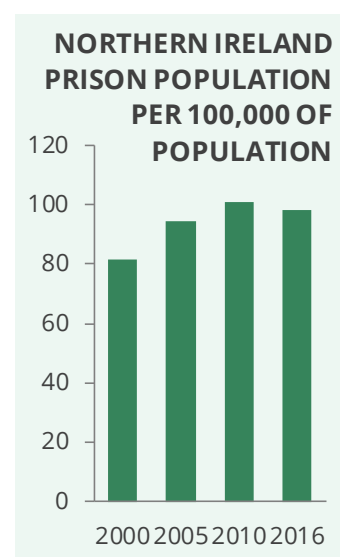
3.1 Recent trends and projections

The average daily prison population in 2000 was just over 1,000. After a drop in 2001 the population increased year on year until 2008 when the population was 63% higher than in 2001. From 2011 the population again increased year on year until 2014

In 2014 calendar year, the average daily prison population was around 1,830. The average figure for 2014 was 71% greater than for the same period in 2000. In 2016/17, the average daily population was 20% lower than in 2014.

In 2000 there were around 82 prisoners per 100,000 head of population. In 2016/17, this had increased to 98 per 100,000 although that was the lowest level since 2010.

The DoJ does not routinely publish **prison population projections** however it does produce them and has released them under Freedom of Information (FoI) requests.



The most recent projections to be disclosed were made in 2012 and predicted a rise in the prison population to around 2,250 by 2022.³² However, since these projections were made, the prison population has fallen, rather than risen as predicted. In each year since 2012, the actual prison population has been lower than the 'best' case (i.e. lowest) projection made in 2012. It is highly likely that the projections have now been revised down.

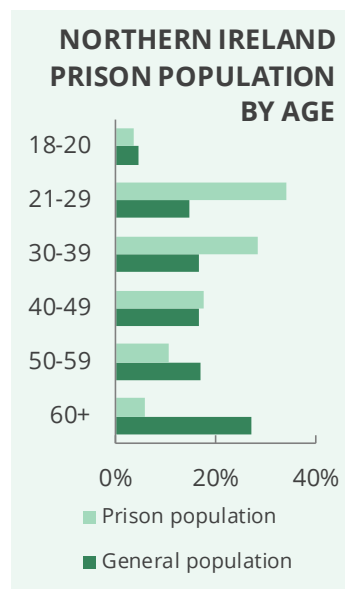
3.2 Age profile of prisoners

People aged 21-29 accounted for 34% of the prisoner population in 2016/17 compared to 15% amongst the general population.^{33,34}

Prisoners aged 30-39 accounted for 28% of the prison population and 40-49 and 50-59 year olds accounted for 18% and 11% respectively.

Prisoners aged 60 years and older accounted for 6% of the prison population, compared to 27% of the general population.

The graph shows the age distribution in the prison population. Please note that only prisoners sentenced to immediate custody are shown here.



³² Northern Ireland Prison Service [FOI Case No. 13:454](#)

³³ [Northern Ireland DoJ, The Northern Ireland Prison Population 2016 and 2016/17, 27 September 2017: Table 2](#). Please note that these figures are only for the prison population sentenced to immediate custody and do not include those on remand.

³⁴ [NISRA, NI mid-year population estimates 2017](#)

4. Cost per prisoner

The cost per prison place and cost per prisoner in England and Wales are published in the Ministry of Justice's [Prison and Probation Performance Statistics](#) collection. These include the cost per prisoner at individual establishment.

In **England and Wales, the total average cost per prisoner in was £22,933** in 2016/17, down from £24,249 in 2015/16 (a decrease of 5.4%). These figures include direct costs only and when total expenditure on the prison system is taken into account, the cost per prisoner in 2016/17 was £35,371.

In Scotland, the Prison Service publishes these figures slightly differently, using cost per prisoner place. According to its [Annual Report and Accounts](#), **the average annual cost per prison place in Scotland was £35,325** in 2016/17, up slightly from £34,399 in 2015/16.³⁵ It is not clear whether this includes all expenditure or direct resource expenditure only.

In Northern Ireland, the Prison Service also publishes an annual figure of the cost per prison place in its [Annual Report and Accounts](#). In 2016/17, the **annual cost per prison place in Northern Ireland was £53,408**, down from £57,643 in 2015/16.³⁶

For comparison, the cost per prison place in England and Wales in 2016/17 was £24,664, taking into account direct expenditure only, or £38,042, taking into account all expenditure.

³⁵ Scottish Prison Service [Annual Report and Accounts 2016-2017](#), Appendix 8a, p.80.

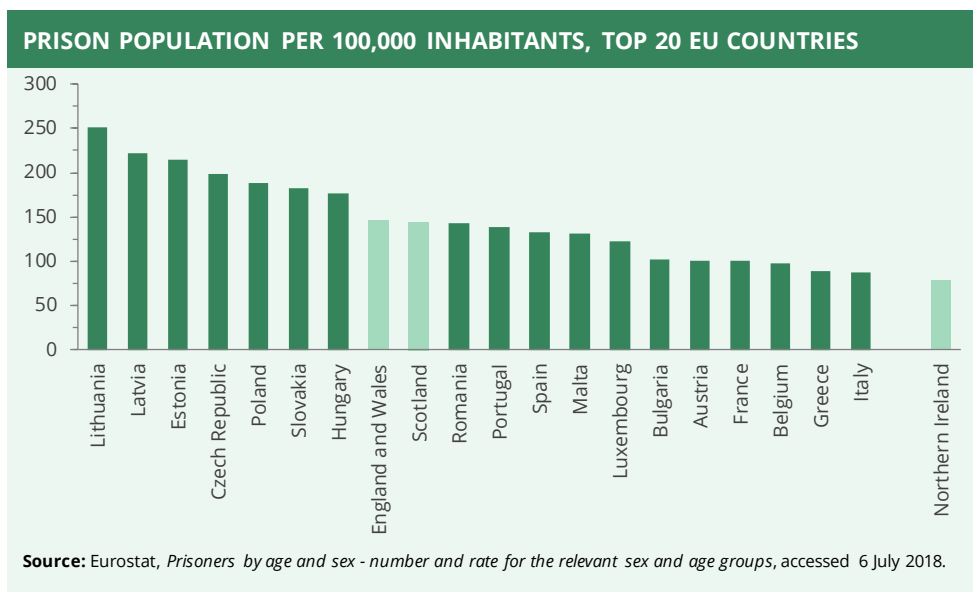
³⁶ Northern Ireland Prison Service [Annual Report and Accounts 2016/17](#), p.13.

5. International comparisons

Comparisons between countries should be made with caution. All countries have different criminal justice systems and different levels and varieties of prison establishments.

5.1 Prison Population

[Eurostat](#) publishes the number of prisoners per 100,000 head of population for EU countries. The latest complete dataset including all the UK jurisdictions is for 2015. Rates per 100,000 head of population for the UK jurisdictions may differ from those stated earlier in this briefing as rates are for the entire population, rather than just the population aged 15 and older.



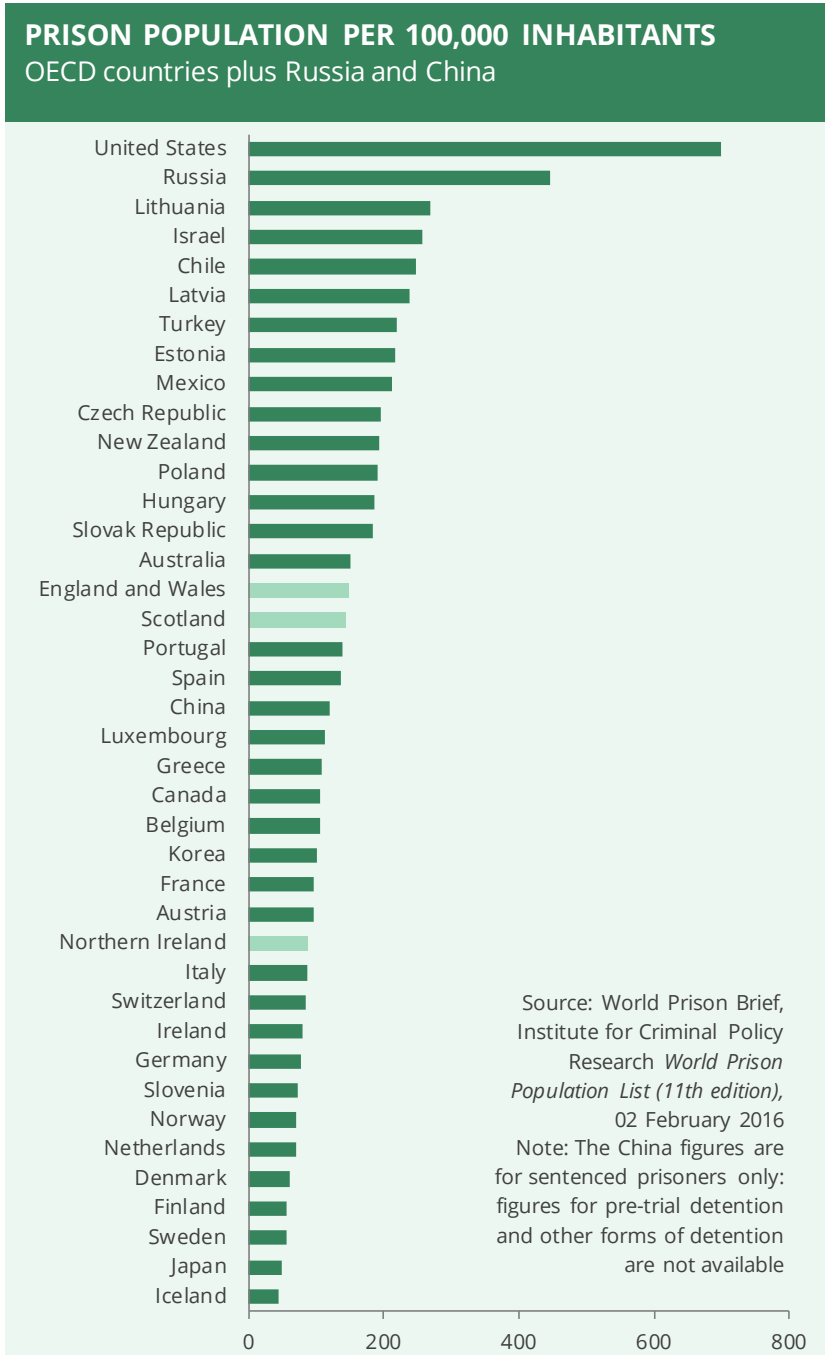
According to the Eurostat data, England and Wales had 146 prisoners per 100,000 head of population, the 8th highest rate among EU countries and the highest amongst western European jurisdictions.³⁷ Scotland had the 9th highest with 145 prisoners per 100,000. Northern Ireland had 78 prisoners per 100,000 of population and was ranked 23rd.

Outside of Europe, the data on prison population are more patchy and harder to compare across jurisdictions. Nonetheless, the Institute for Criminal Policy Research keeps a database – the [World Prison Brief](#) – containing broadly comparable data on prison indicators.

The chart below shows the prison population per 100,000 inhabitants in OECD countries and in Russia and China in 2016.³⁸ England and Wales ranks the 16th highest among these countries, Scotland the 17th, and Northern Ireland the 28th.

³⁷ Note that these figures are different to those in other sections of this briefing because they are calculated using the whole population (not just those aged 15 or over) as the denominator.

³⁸ The OECD is the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#)

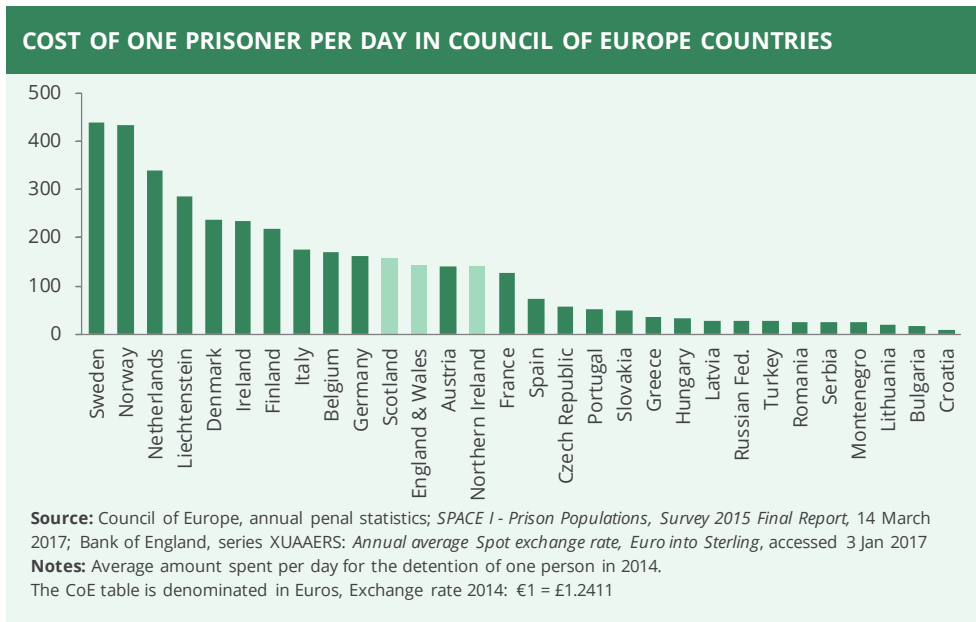


5.2 Cost

The Council of Europe's (CoE), annual penal statistics publish the cost per inmate figures for selected countries.³⁹ The most recent data are for 2015 but are incomplete. The figures for 2014 are complete and are shown in the graph below, having been converted from Euros to Pounds using the exchange rate of €1 = £1.2411.⁴⁰

³⁹ Council of Europe, annual penal statistics; *SPACE I - Prison Populations, Survey 2015 Final Report*, 14 March 2017

⁴⁰ Bank of England, series XUAAERS: Annual average Spot exchange rate, Euro into Sterling, accessed 3 Jan 2017



The available data for European countries in 2014 show that Sweden and Norway spent the most per prisoner, at £439 and £432 respectively. Figures for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are all around £150 a day.

The figures are not directly comparable across countries since in some cases different expenses are included in the calculation of prisoner cost.

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).