



Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice

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Scotland's response to children in conflict with the law: What data exists?

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Introduction

Wherever possible, children who come into conflict with the law should be kept out of the adult criminal justice system and ideally diverted from formal systems altogether. Where this is not possible, the child's needs should be met through the Children's Hearings System. Despite this welfare system having been in place for several years, many children in Scotland get drawn into the adult criminal justice system. Due to the dual system approach, as well as the legalities around the definition of a 'child' in Scotland, the processes can be complex and difficult to understand. The [Child's Journey](#) and [Journey through Justice](#) are online interactive resources designed to help children, their families, and professionals understand the journey through the justice system.

As there are two separate - albeit linked - systems that children can become involved in, it can also be a challenge to monitor our national response to children who come into conflict with the law, and to identify whether we are responding in their best interests and meeting their developmental needs. Information is currently gathered by several organisations that children in conflict with the law may encounter - Police Scotland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Children and Families Social Work, Secure Care Services, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Justice Social Work, and the Scottish Prison Service. A lot of the available information is analysed and published by the Scottish Government. However, within the Scottish Government this information spans different directorates/teams and is contained within different statistical collections.

A further challenge in accessing information on our response to children in conflict with the law is that the age categories used within the various published reports differ, and children (those under 18 years of age) are sometimes grouped with young people (those under 21 years old). Additionally, on occasion, the information on children is not contained within the main report but needs to be accessed through additional tables in the supporting files. For these reasons, this paper collates the regularly published official statistics in Scotland, which are known to Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ), in relation to children in conflict with the law. Specifically, this paper documents what data exists, and where and when it was published, as well as providing the available data for the past five years.¹ Hopefully

¹ Information from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey has not been included as it is based on experiences and perceptions rather than children who have come into conflict with the law through detected crime.

this will make the information more accessible to individuals and organisations for whom it is relevant.²

Recorded Crime

Scottish Policing Performance Framework Annual Reports

The Scottish Policing Performance Framework Annual Reports used to include information on the number of detected crimes and offences by children and young people. However, since the establishment of Police Scotland and the merger of eight regional police forces, it has not been possible to access a national breakdown of the recorded crimes or offences alleged to have been committed by children. This is due to the crime recording systems used by Police Scotland having no facility whereby the age of the accused at the time of the offence can be easily extracted. The last figures available are therefore from the [2012/13 annual report](#).

Recorded Crime Statistics

The Scottish Government's Justice Analytical Services division (JAS) produces statistics on [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#). These are split by crime or offence group and by local authority, but not by age. Annual reports are published, with the latest report ([2022-2023](#)) being published in September 2023. [The Scottish Crime Recording Board](#) has been set up to support the production of accurate and objective statistics on crime in Scotland, and is chaired by JAS. As well as publishing annual National Statistics on recorded crime, a series of monthly Official Statistics were also introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a selection of research reports have been produced in recent years. The research reports provide some information in relation to children accused of offences and are detailed below.

[Recorded crime in Scotland: attempted murder and serious assault, 2008-2009 and 2017-2018](#). This report is based on a random sample of 1,101 police-recorded crimes of attempted murder and serious assault (550 from 2008-09 and 551 from 2017-18). The report details that in 2017-18, 17% of the serious assaults sampled involved at least one teenage perpetrator (aged between 13 and 19) and 1% involved at least one perpetrator under 13 years old.

² This paper is based on the official statistics known to CYCJ and our understanding and interpretation of them. Links are provided to the original data sources where more detailed information can be obtained.

[Recorded Crime in Scotland: Robbery, 2008-09 and 2017-18.](#) This report, which provides information on robberies recorded by the police, is based on a sample of police records from 2008-09 and 2017-18. The findings indicate that around one in five robberies (19%) involved at least one teenage perpetrator (aged 13-19) in 2017-18.

[Recorded crime in Scotland: 'Other sexual crimes', 2013-2014 and 2016-2017.](#) This report, which provides information about 'Other sexual crimes' which have come to the attention of the police, is based on a sample of police records. The research estimates that the increase in sexual crimes over recent years is largely due to growth in cyber-enabled 'Other sexual crimes' such as 'Communicating indecently' and 'Cause to view sexual activity or images.' It reports that almost a quarter of cyber-enabled crimes of 'Communicating indecently' and 'Cause to view sexual activity or images' had a victim and perpetrator who were both aged under 16 in 2016-17 (compared to 8% for non-cyber-enabled crimes of this type).

[Recorded Crime in Scotland: Handling offensive weapons.](#) This report provides information on crimes of handling offensive weapons recorded by the police and is based on a random sample of police-recorded crimes from April to September 2017. It indicates that around a quarter of perpetrators were teenagers (13-19 years old).

[Characteristics of police-recorded hate crime in Scotland: study.](#) Based on a random sample of police recorded crimes in 2018-19, this report presents findings on the nature of hate aggravated crimes in Scotland. In 2018-19, where hate aggravated crimes did not involve a police officer in the line of duty and a perpetrator was identified, around one in five (22%) had at least one perpetrator under the age of 18.³

[Non-Sexual Violence in Scotland.](#) Published in 2019, this report brings together official data on non-sexual violence from a range of sources in Scotland. Overall, there is evidence of a decrease in non-sexual violence by children and young people, particularly 16–24-year-olds.

³ Based on further analysis of the hate crime data.

Homicide Statistics

This statistical collection provides some information in relation to children accused of homicide. [Homicide in Scotland](#) statistics are published by the Scottish Government in October of each year, of which the latest is [Homicide in Scotland 2022-23](#). Based on the police-recorded crimes in these publications, the table below documents the number of children and young people accused of homicide by rate per million population over the past five years.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACCUSED OF HOMICIDE BY RATE PER MILLION POPULATION						
Year		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Under 16 years	Male	2	1	-	1	2
	Female	-	-	-	-	14
16-24 years	Male	21	12	15	12	-
	Female	4	1	2	-	1

Firearm Offence Statistics

There is also some information available on children from the [Crime and offences involving firearm statistics](#) collection. These reports provide information on crimes and offences recorded by the police in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved or where a firearm was stolen. The latest publication, [Recorded crimes and offences involving firearms: 2020-21 and 2021-22 statistics](#), was published in December 2023 by JAS. The main body of the report indicates that the main accused was under 16 years old in 16% of cleared up offences involving the use of a firearm (31 out of 195 offences) and that a further 22% of cleared up offences were committed by an accused aged 16 to 20 years (42 offences). In the supporting files the publication tables include further information in relation to children, which is detailed below.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACCUSED IN OFFENCES INVOLVING THE ALLEGED USE OF A FIREARM						
Year		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Under 16 years	Male	23	20	19	23	31
	Female	6	-	-	-	-
16-20 years	Male	40	18	32	21	41
	Female	1	2	1	-	1

The main firearms recorded in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm in 2021-22 were as follows:

- Under 16 years – 16 Air weapon, 7 Imitation, 1 unidentified and 7 other.
- 16-20 years – 1 shotgun, 4 pistol/revolver, 20 air weapon, 8 imitation, 4 unidentified and 5 other.

Domestic Abuse Statistics

The [Domestic Abuse in Scotland statistics](#) collection also contains information on children. This collection is published by JAS on an annual basis. The latest report, [Domestic abuse: statistics 2021-22](#), was published in November 2022. The following information has been taken from this collection of statistical reports to provide a picture of the number of children alleged to have been involved in incidents of domestic abuse over the past five years.

INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE RECORDED INVOLVING SUSPECTED CHILDREN						
Year		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Under 16 years	Male	99	119	373	393	579
	Female	17	24	91	76	194
	Not recorded or other ⁴	-	-	1	13	10
16-18 years	Male	909	911	1,024	919	939
	Female	317	320	316	333	284
	Not recorded or other ⁴	1	1	5	18	5

Additionally, data contained in the supporting files indicates that in 2021-22 there were 302 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police where both the victim and accused were under the age of 16 years. When the number of incidents where the victim and accused were both under the age of 19 years was calculated, this rose to 1,105.

⁴ 'Not recorded or other' includes both incidents where gender has not been recorded and is therefore unknown (almost 100% of Not recorded or other cases) and incidents where the victim or accused was recorded as transgender.

Drug Seizures Statistics

The [Drug seizures and offender characteristics statistics](#) collection is published by JAS and provides information on drug seizures recorded by the police. The latest report, [Drug seizure and offender characteristics: 2020-2021 and 2021-22](#), indicates that children and young people aged 0-19 made up around 12.6% of individuals accused of drug possession crimes in 2020-21 and 16% in 2021-22. No further information about children is provided within this statistical collection.

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Statistical Analyses

Where children are alleged to have committed an offence, they can be referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) on offence grounds.⁵ SCRA publish [official statistics](#) on an annual basis. Information from these official statistics has been drawn together below to provide information for the past five years.

The table below provides information on referrals to the Reporter on offence grounds over the past five years.

OFFENCE REFERRALS TO THE REPORTER					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total number of offence referrals	7,763	6,978	5,282	5,474	6,382
Total number of children referred on offence grounds	2,824	2,840	2,207	2,398	2,590
Total number of children with joint reports	1,147	1,228	1,090	1,233	1,309
Joint report – not in custody	1,142	1,224	1,078	1,224	1,299
Joint report – in custody	29	45	56	53	35

The latest report indicates that in 2022-23, of the 1,299 children who were jointly reported to the Procurator Fiscal (PF) and the Reporter whilst they were not in custody. In cases where the PF had decided, 82.4% of cases were subsequently referred to the Reporter. In contrast,

⁵ Children aged 8-17 years were able to be referred to the Reporter on offence grounds until November 2019. However, with the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years in Scotland children under 12 are no longer referred on offence grounds.

of the 35 children where joint reports were made whilst they were in custody, where the PF had decided, 74% were retained by the PF.

In 2023-22, there were 2,590 children referred to the Reporter on offence grounds. They were referred for 6,382 alleged offences. The following table shows the number of alleged offences over the past five years broken down by police crime grouping.

NUMBER OF ALLEGED OFFENCES BY 12-17 YEAR OLDS REFERRED TO THE REPORTER					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Non-sexual crimes of violence	183	226	167	216	308
Sexual crimes	482	479	381	430	533
Crimes of dishonesty	2,487	1,953	1,260	1,190	1,827
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	2,044	1,769	1,339	1,448	1,803
Other crimes	1,302	1,461	1,075	1,131	1,292
Miscellaneous offences	6,864	6,370	4,600	5,060	5,411
Motor vehicle offences	278	299	320	357	528
Total alleged offences	13,635	12,557	9,142	9,832	11,702

The report indicates that within these groupings, the most common types of alleged offences were assault, threatening or abusive behaviour, and vandalism.

The following table provides information on Reporter decisions in relation to children referred on offence grounds for the past five years.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN REFERRED ON OFFENCE GROUNDS WITH REPORTER DECISIONS, BY DECISION*						
Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Arrange a Children's Hearing (on new grounds)	199	168	155	79	102	79
No Hearing – CSO not necessary	1,182	1,090	1,219	831	858	990
No Hearing – CSO not necessary and refer to LA	745	707	696	533	650	792
No Hearing – Current	1,330	1,213	1,158	883	868	882



order/measures sufficient						
No Hearing – Insufficient evidence	225	229	178	131	137	164
No Hearing – Insufficient evidence and refer to Local Authority	New recording system has been introduced – this is not a category recorded on previous system			6	24	28
No jurisdiction	New recording system has been introduced – this is not a category recorded on previous system			10	45	29
Total	3,030	2,829	2,844	2,124	2,339	2,590

*Data in this table relates to cases decided in the year group as opposed to referrals received in it.

**The totals do not equal the sums as children can be referred more than once in the year and may have multiple Reporter decisions. The totals count each child once.

The information provided in the table below details the number of secure authorisations made by Children’s Hearings over the past five years. It should be noted that not all children with secure authorisations will have been referred on offence grounds and not all authorisations will necessarily have been implemented.

SECURE AUTHORISATIONS MADE BY CHILDREN’S HEARINGS					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of children with secure authorisations made by hearings within interim orders	116	97	73	68	84
Number of children with secure authorisations made by hearings within Compulsory Supervision Orders	97	96	69	65	71

Children’s Social Work Statistics

[Children’s Social Work Statistics](#) are published on an annual basis by the Scottish Government Children and Families Directorate. They are published in March each year and provide information on looked after children, children on the child protection register, and children in secure accommodation.

The following two tables are taken directly from [Children’s Social Work Statistics: 2020-21](#) and provide the information known about the capacity of secure care accommodation and about children in secure care accommodation over the past eight years. It should be noted that not all children are accommodated in secure care due to coming into conflict with the law.



Table 3.2: Secure care accommodation capacity^[1] and usage, 2014-2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change 2020-21
Places at year end	90	90	90	84	84	84	84	84	0%
Admissions during the year	232	249	256	248	210	217	194	177	-9%
Discharges during the year	226	245	253	257	213	210	194	178	-8%
Average number of residents during the year	74	82	85	76	80	79	82	76	-7%
Residents from within Scotland	67	76	72	56	45	53	53	47	-11%
Residents from outside Scotland	7	6	13	19	35	26	28	29	4%
Minimum number of residents during the year	60	71	77	67	73	71	75	64	-15%
Maximum number of residents during the year ^[1]	84	89	90	87	86	88	88	84	-5%
Number of nights emergency and short term beds used during the year ^{[2],[3]}	5	146	50	90	284	398	209	40	-81%
Number of residents emergency and short term beds used for during the year ^{[2],[3]}	3	13	11	25	42	55	28	17	-39%

^[1] Capacity: Young people can be admitted and discharged more than once during the year.

^[2] Four units reported having at least one emergency/ short term bed: Rossie School; Good Shepherd; Kibble; and St. Mary's Kenmure (see background notes for definition of an emergency bed).

^[3] The large drop in the use of emergency beds may have partly been due to a decrease in average occupancy rates and/or impacts of COVID-19.

Table 3.3: Young people in secure care accommodation by sex, age, disability and length of stay, 2014-2021^[1]

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% of 2021 total
Sex of residents^[2]									
Male	52	59	65	46	39	60	44	44	56%
Female	29	26	23	34	43	24	37	34	44%
Age of Residents									
13 years old or under	5	7	9	14	12	*	5	9	12%
14 years	12	18	18	18	18	*	13	13	17%
15 years	31	28	27	26	25	21	26	16	21%
16 years or over	33	32	34	22	27	55	37	40	51%
Residents with disability									
Yes	-	-	34	27	39	27	7	18	23%
No/unknown	-	-	54	53	43	57	74	60	77%
Length of stay of residents at year end									
Less than 1 month	13	17	20	26	10	21	17	17	22%
1 month to under 2 months	14	16	14	13	14	16	14	10	13%
2 months to under 3 months	14	13	14	12	13	9	6	5	6%
3 months to under 6 months	23	26	24	25	27	22	18	29	37%
6 months to under 1 year	9	*	10	*	14	11	16	14	18%
1 year or more	8	*	6	*	0	5	*	*	*
Total	81	85	88	80	82	84	81	78	100%

^[1] As at 31 July of each year.

^[2] Trans, intersex and non-binary individuals are grouped with males for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality.

* Cells represent numbers that are suppressed to maintain confidentiality.

The information in the following three tables is not contained within the main body of the Children's Social Work Statistics reports but has been obtained from the data provided in the Children's Social Work Statistics - Revised Additional Tables for the past five years. Further detail broken down by gender can be found in the additional tables. There is also information in the additional tables on the number and rates of children admitted to secure care accommodation by local authority.

Year	Placement prior to admission				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Parental home, Relatives or Friends	43	31	50	58	39
Foster Care or Children's Home	100	65	39	39	35
Residential School	51	64	66	64	59
Young Offenders Institute or Prison	*	*	6	*	*
Secure Accommodation	22	*	*	*	*
Other	29	21	30	26	27
Unknown	0	15	*	*	*

Year	Legal reason for admissions				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Section 44 (1)	*	0	7	0	0
Section 205	0	0	*	0	0
Section 208	*	*	*	*	*
Section 143	13	*	21	22	5
Compulsory Supervision Order	9	7	*	17	10
Interim Supervision Order	18	17	34	18	11
Committal to place of safety or temporary detention – Section 51	43	7	19	32	32
Pending a decision by the Reporter	83	88	74	44	60
Other	76	71	52	57	55
Unknown	0	12	*	*	*

Year	Destination on discharge				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Parental home, Relatives or Friends	45	38	50	59	42
Foster Care or Children's Home	59	33	29	35	25
Residential School	56	53	55	47	56
Young Offenders Institute or Prison	7	6	4	5	7
Secure Care	24	13	17	*	8
Other	61	53	49	41	36
Unknown	5	13	6	*	4

It is noted that 'Other' placement may include supported accommodation, independent living, hospital, assessment centre and close support.

Criminal Proceedings

JAS publish information on [Criminal Proceedings in Scotland](#). This is published on an annual basis, the latest of which is the [2021-22 report](#), which was published in October 2023. The reports provide statistics on criminal proceedings concluded in Scottish courts, as well as on a range of measures available as alternatives to prosecution issued by both the police and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Although the reports provide information on age, the youngest age grouping in the main body of the reports is under 21 years old, so children are not separated out. The exception to this is the reporting on Restorative Justice Warnings and Early and Effective Intervention (EEI), which are police disposals available only for 12- to

17-year-olds. Data shows that the number of referrals for EEI has increased steadily since their introduction. In 2021-22, the total number increased by 30%, from 4,133 to 5,367, in 2020-21.

However, in the supporting files there is an [additional table for youth convictions](#) which provides some information on 12- to 17-year-olds, including by local authority area. Based on this additional information, details of non-court disposals and court proceedings are provided below.

Non-court disposals

In Scotland, there are several non-court disposals that can be utilised for children where police have reason to believe that they have committed an offence and meet the necessary criteria. The use of these disposals for 12- to 17- year-olds over the past five years (taken from the [additional table for youth convictions](#)) is detailed in the table below. It should be noted that Recorded Police Warnings (RPW) and Antisocial Behaviour Fixed Penalty Notices (ASBFPN) cannot be issued to children under the age of 16, or to children aged 16 or 17 who are subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order.

12- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS RECEIVING NON-COURT DISPOSALS					
Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
ASBFPN*	529	465	377	252	
Other Police Disposal	500	359	418	276	
Early and Effective Intervention	5,110	4,259	4,249	3,660	
Recorded Police Warning	1,718	1,974	1,834	1,717	
COPFS** Disposals	630	387	368	252	
All	8,487	7,444	7,246	6,157	

*ASBFPN = Antisocial behaviour fixed penalty notice; **COPFS = Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Court proceedings and outcomes

In Scotland, children aged 12 years and over can be prosecuted in the criminal justice system. The table below (taken from the [additional table for youth convictions](#)) shows the number of 12- to 17-year-old children proceeded against in court by offence/crime type over the past five years.

12- TO 17-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN PROCEEDED AGAINST IN COURT					
Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Non-sexual crimes of violence	121	114	109	104	58
Sexual crimes	30	44	39	29	9
Crimes of dishonesty	280	193	223	142	48
Fire-raising, vandalism, etc.	104	91	142	77	32
Other crimes	549	441	371	317	205
Miscellaneous offences	768	683	533	391	174
Motor vehicle offences	220	206	168	148	78
All crimes and offences	2,072	1,772	1,585	1,208	604

The table below shows the outcomes for 12- to 17-year-olds proceeded against in court over the past five years (more detailed information can be found in the [additional table for youth convictions](#)).

12- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS PROCEEDED AGAINST IN COURT BY OUTCOME OF COURT PROCEEDINGS					
Outcome	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Not guilty	342	283	252	199	61
Other Sentence*	419	403	374	286	161
Remit to Children's Hearing	98	86	84	89	31
Community sentence	681	571	452	392	201
Custody	198	131	180	57	42
Financial penalty	334	298	243	185	108

*The other sentence options appear to include Admonishment and Absolute Discharge.

In the supporting files, one of the [Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2020-21](#) tables provides information on the number of children convicted broken down by gender. This information is detailed in the table overleaf and shows the number of children convicted over the past five years.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN CONVICTED*					
Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
All under 16 years**	17	11	12	15	7
Male under 16 years	13	10	11	15	6
Female under 16 years	4	1	1	-	1
All 16-17 years	1,713	1,478	1,321	1,004	536
Male 16-17 years	1,493	1,277	1,166	884	482
Female 16-17 years	220	201	155	120	54

*Figures in table are calculated as ratios per 1,000 of the Scottish population

**Under 16 figures uses mid-year population estimate for those aged 8-15

Justice Social Work Statistics

The Scottish Government publishes [Justice Social Work Statistics](#) on an annual basis. These are compiled each year by JAS and provide information on justice social work reports, community payback orders, drug treatment and testing orders, diversion from prosecution, throughcare and bail.

The reports provide information on the group of 16- to 17-year-olds who are involved with Justice Social Work. The information below is taken from [Justice Social Work Statistics: 2022 to 2023](#). It should be noted that the figures in the tables below also include the small number of children under 16 that became involved with Justice Social Work.

Diversion from prosecution

Where children are reported to the Procurator Fiscal for an alleged offence and the nature of the offence does not demand prosecution in court, then diversion from prosecution can be considered as a prosecutorial action so that a meaningful intervention can be put in place to address the child's needs. There is a rebuttable presumption for children that an alternative to prosecution will be in the public interest, and where an identifiable need has contributed to the alleged offence, then active consideration will be given to diversion.

The data in the table overleaf (taken from [Justice Social Work Statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)) provides information on the number of 16- to 17-year-olds where diversion from prosecution was commenced.

NUMBER OF DIVERSION FROM PROSECUTION CASES COMMENCED					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
16–17-year-olds	560	650	590	692	659
Percentage of cases across all ages	30.3	32.7	26.5	25.9	25.1

Criminal justice social work reports

A justice social work report must be requested where a person is under 21. The table below shows the number of justice social work reports submitted for 16- to 17-year-olds over the past five years.

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK REPORTS SUBMITTED					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
16– 17-year-olds	742	589	307	330	361
Percentage of cases across all ages	3.0	2.3	2.0	1.6	1.5

Social work orders

The following tables and information provide details of social work orders commenced or imposed for 16- to 17-year-olds over the past five years.

COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDERS COMMENCED					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
16- 17-year-olds	438	349	151	157	135
Percentage of cases across all ages	2.7	2.1	1.8	1.3	0.9

FISCAL WORK ORDERS COMMENCED					
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
16- 17-year-olds	36	30	3	7	6
Percentage of cases across all ages	5.7	12.1	2.5	9.2	4.4

Over the past five years, only three Drug Treatment and Testing Orders were commenced for children. One of these was in 2017-18, one in 2020-21, and the other in 2021-22.

Information on the age of individuals who had a Structured Deferred Sentence imposed was first collected in 2019-20. This shows that in 2019-20 there were 49 Structured Deferred Sentences imposed for 16- to 17-year-olds, which was 5.5% of the overall number imposed. In 2020-21 there were 45 imposed which was 10%; and in 2021-22 there were 43 imposed which was 4.6%. In 2022-23 numbers rose to 65 which was 4.9% of overall orders imposed.

Prison Statistics

The Scottish Government's [Prisons Statistics](#) collection is published by JAS. There is also now an interactive analysis tool that allows the statistics to be explored by age. The most recent report is the [Scottish prison population statistics 2022-23](#). Based on the information within the supplementary tables in the supporting files, the following tables have been developed to provide information on the number of children in custody and the legal status of them, the index offence, length of index sentence, and average time spent in custody.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN SPENDING ANY TIME IN PRISON OVER THE PAST YEAR BY LEGAL STATUS					
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Untried	108	75	56	54	38
Convicted awaiting sentence	84	57	26	22	13
Sentenced	75	39	17	8	10
Unknown	1	2	-	-	2



NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN SPENDING ANY TIME IN PRISON OVER THE YEAR BY THE INDEX OFFENCE GROUP 2022-23			
	Untried	Convicted Awaiting Sentence	Sentenced
Non-sexual crimes of violence	15	7	6
Sexual crimes	6	-	-
Crimes of dishonesty	4	1	-
Damage and reckless behaviour	-	-	1
Crimes against society	15	3	2
Antisocial offences	1	4	1
Miscellaneous offences	0	0	0
Road traffic offences	0	1	1
Other – not classified	0	0	0

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN SPENDING ANY TIME IN PRISON OVER THE YEAR BY THE LENGTH OF THEIR INDEX SENTENCES 2022-23	
Index sentence length	Number of individuals spending any time in prison over the year
0<=3 months	4
3<=6 months	0
6<=12 months	5
12<=18 months	0
18<=24 months	1
2<=4 years	1
4<=10 years	0
10+ years	0
Life	0

AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS CHILDREN CONTINUOUSLY SPENT IN PRISON PRIOR TO DEPARTURE					
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Average number of days served continuously	57.2	45.9	61.0	57.2	36.3

Reconviction of Offenders Statistics

The [Reconviction of Offenders Statistics](#) collection is published by JAS. The statistics provide reconviction rates for offenders released from custody or given non-custodial sentences. Whilst in the main body of the reports the youngest age grouping is all those under 21, the additional local authority reconvictions table in the supporting files provides some information on under 18-year-olds. Specifically, it can be grouped by all under

18-year-olds, 17-year-olds and 16-year-olds and details the number of children reconvicted, reconviction rate, number of reconvictions, and the average number of reconvictions per child. It can also be broken down by local authority area and gender. Based on the [Reconviction rates in Scotland: 2019 to 2020 offender cohort](#) additional tables, as well as those for previous years, the tables below provide information on the reconviction rates⁶ for all children for the latest five years of data available. This set of data is available at a slower rate than other data sets, as there is a one-year follow-up period that reconvictions are counted in to calculate one year reconviction rates.

RECONVICTION RATES FOR ALL UNDER 18-YEAR-OLDS					
Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of children	1,000	910	788	725	590
Number of children reconvicted	406	369	295	281	179
Reconviction Rate (%)	40.6	40.5	37.4	38.8	30.3
Number of reconvictions	826	777	649	565	329
Average number of reconvictions per child	0.83	0.85	0.82	0.78	0.56

RECONVICTION RATES FOR 17-YEAR-OLDS					
Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of children	723	670	577	533	433
Number of children reconvicted	282	263	213	205	132
Reconviction Rate (%)	39.0	39.3	36.9	38.5	30.5
Number of reconvictions	544	542	442	381	237
Average number of reconvictions per child	0.75	0.81	0.77	0.71	0.55

⁶ The definitions of reconviction rate and average number of reconvictions per offender are described in the statistical bulletin.



RECONVICTION RATES FOR 16-YEAR-OLDS					
Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of children	277	239	211	192	157
Number of children reconvicted	124	106	82	76	47
Reconviction Rate (%)	44.8	44.4	38.9	39.6	29.9
Number of reconvictions	282	235	210	184	92
Average number of reconvictions per child	1.02	0.98	1.00	0.96	0.59

The body of the report [Reconviction rates in Scotland: 2019 to 2020 offender cohort](#) provides details of subsequent non-court disposals for Early and Effective Intervention and Restorative Justice Warnings, which are police disposals only available for 12- to 17-year-olds. The tables below provide information on these for the latest five years available.

INDIVIDUALS GIVEN POLICE DISPOSALS AND SUBSEQUENT NON-COURT DISPOSALS, BY DISPOSAL TYPE – POLICE DISPOSAL: EARLY AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION					
Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of individuals	5,103	4,537	4,316	3,691	3,741
Repeat non-court disposal rate	23.6	24.7	22.2	22.7	20.2
Average number of repeat non-court disposals per individual	0.41	0.46	0.39	0.37	0.34

INDIVIDUALS GIVEN POLICE DISPOSALS AND SUBSEQUENT NON-COURT DISPOSALS, BY DISPOSAL TYPE – POLICE DISPOSAL: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WARNING					
Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of individuals	281	283	333	255	290
Repeat non-court disposal rate	27.8	23.0	24.9	22.7	19.3
Average number of repeat non-court disposals per individual	0.52	0.42	0.45	0.35	0.27

Conclusion

There is a reasonable amount of information available in relation to how we respond to children who come into conflict with the law in Scotland. However, due to the number of organisations involved, the dual system approach and the wide spread of places where this information is published, it is not always easy to find and access. This is further compounded by the different age categorisations used across the statistical collections. The fact that information on children (all those under 18 years old) is not always reported within the main body of reports may serve to hide the fact that in Scotland there are many children who are being responded to within the criminal justice system designed for adults. A new way of publishing this data that increases the visibility of the numbers of children being proceeded against in the criminal justice system is required.