



PBNI Annual Caseload Statistics, 2023/24

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Service users and caseload supervised by PBNI	4
Types of Order/Licence	5
Service user demographics	6
Service users by PBNI Directorate	7
Assessment, Case Management & Evaluation System (ACE)	8
Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI)	9
Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Others (SROSH)	10
Reports completed by PBNI for Court	11
Victims registered with PBNI	12
Appendix 1: Definitions	14
Appendix 2: Technical Notes	20

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the number of service users and the caseload i.e. the number of individual Orders and Licences supervised by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) on 31 March 2024, as well as providing comparisons with previous years.

The key findings are as follows:

- On 31 March 2024, 4,258 service users were supervised by PBNI, an increase of 3.7% on the equivalent figure for 31 March 2023 (4,108).
- The caseload supervised by PBNI increased by 7.3% between 31 March 2023 (5,488) and 31 March 2024 (5,886).
- Determinate Custodial Sentences (DCS) accounted for the largest proportion of caseload (34.9%) supervised by PBNI in March 2024, followed by Probation Orders (31.0%).
- As in previous years, males accounted for the majority of service users being supervised (89.1%).
- In March 2024, over one-third (35.7%) of service users supervised by PBNI were aged 30 to 39.
- The PBNI Belfast Directorate were supervising the largest proportion of service users in March 2024 (34.2%), followed by the Rural Directorate (30.0%).
- Of the service users being supervised by PBNI on 31 March 2024, 28.9% were identified as high risk under the Assessment, Case Management & Evaluation System (ACE).
- On 31 March 2024, 656 service users (15.4% of all service users supervised by PBNI) were being managed under the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI).
- In March 2024, 4.5% of service users supervised by PBNI (193 service users) were assessed as Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Others (SROSH).
- During 2023/24, 6,746 reports were completed by PBNI staff (excluding letters); the corresponding figure for 2022/23 was 7,101.
- The number of new victims registered with PBNI during 2023/24 was 323, a 3.2% increase on the 2022/23 figure (313).
- The total number of victims registered with PBNI increased by 2.5% from 471 on 31 March 2023 to 483 on 31 March 2024.

Introduction

Context

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Justice.

Probation's aim is to rehabilitate, reintegrate and reduce re-offending, by changing lives for safer communities. To do this Probation works:

- In Courts, providing pre-sentence reports to assist Judges to make decisions.
- In local communities, supervising community-based Orders and post-custody Licences.
- In Prisons, preparing prisoners subject to Licences for release.
- Directly with registered victims of crime through the Victim Information Scheme.

About this report

Statistics on PBNI caseload are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards by emailing Stats&Research@probation-ni.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the [OSR website](#).

This report presents data on the caseload i.e. the number of individual Orders and Licences being supervised by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) as of 31 March 2024 by type of Order/Licence along with comparisons with previous years.

Data are also presented at service user level as individual service users can be under supervision with PBNI for multiple Orders/Licences at any given time. In particular, breakdowns by gender, age and PBNI Directorate are provided. Some detail on the assessment of service users' likelihood to reoffend and those identified as higher risk, is also included.

The report also presents data on the number of reports completed by PBNI and the number of victims registered with PBNI by gender throughout the financial year.

Previously this report included data by offence category, however due to quality concerns relating to how the offence category was assigned when there were multiple offences this information has been removed. This methodology will be kept under review.

Background information about the different types of orders/licences and sentences as well as the different reports completed by PBNI is available in [Appendix 1](#). Technical notes about the source, presentation and quality of the data are available in [Appendix 2](#).

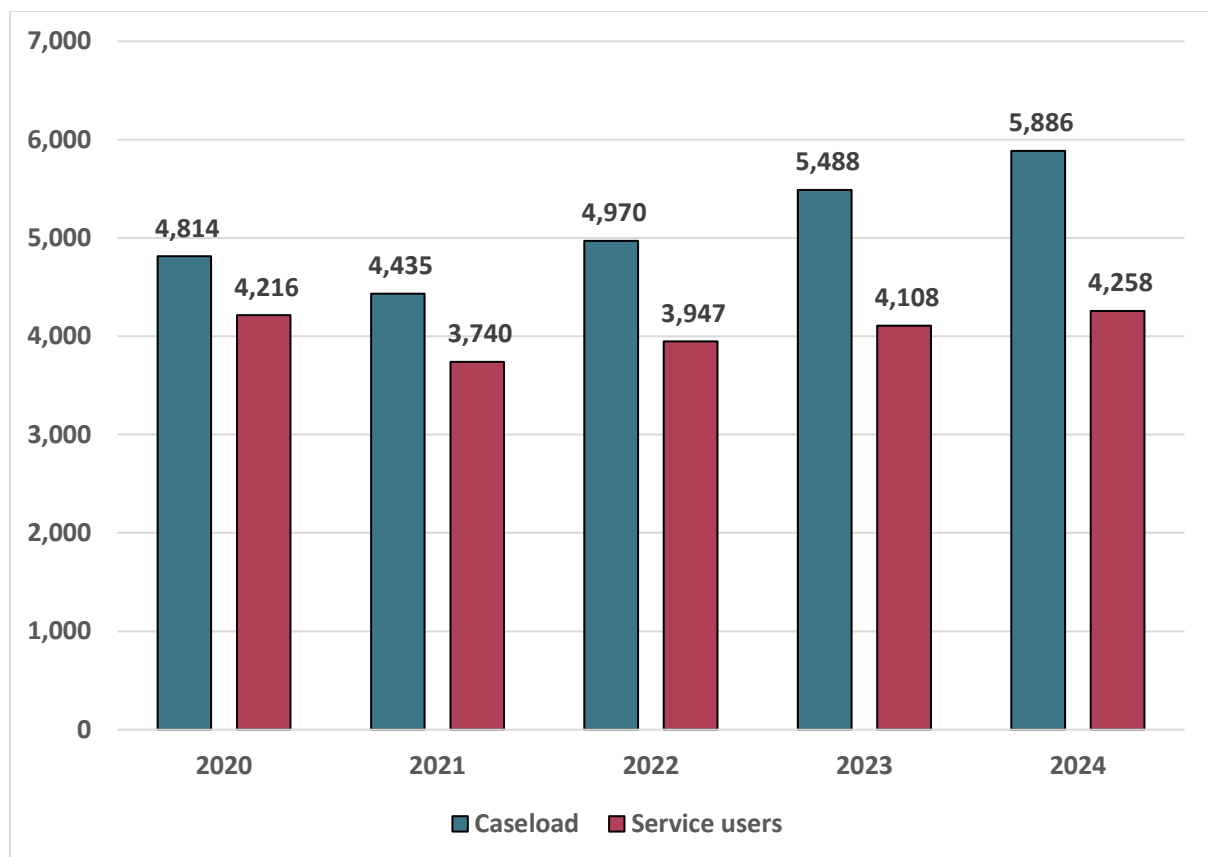
Data in all tables and charts in this report are available from the [PBNI website](#).

Service users and caseload supervised by PBNI

On 31 March 2024, 4,258 service users were supervised by PBNI, an increase of 3.7% on the equivalent figure for 31 March 2023 (4,108). This figure has increased over the last three years from a low of 3,740 following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The caseload i.e. the number of individual Orders and Licences supervised by PBNI increased by 7.3% between March 2023 (5,488) and March 2024 (5,886) and is the highest level of caseload recorded on 31 March over the last five years.

Figure 1 Service users and caseload supervised by PBNI, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024

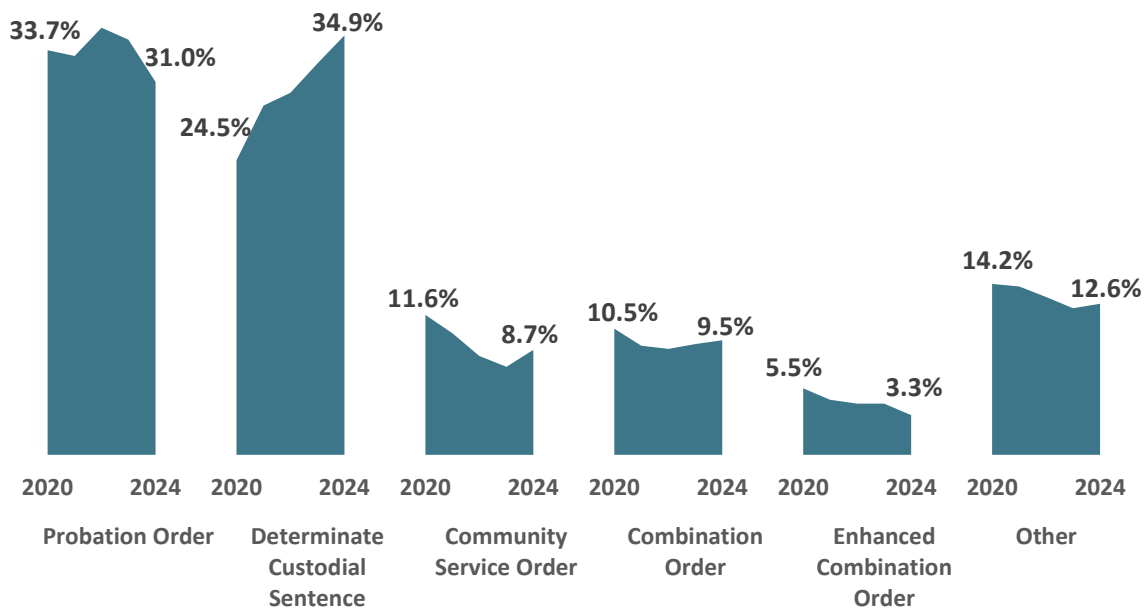


Types of Order/Licence

Looking at community-based Orders supervised in March 2024, the largest proportion (31.0%) was attributed to Probation Orders (PO), although this is a decrease from a high of 35.5% in March 2022. Conversely the proportion of Combination Orders and Community Service Orders (CSO) has increased in the last year to 9.5% and 8.7% respectively. The proportion of Enhanced Combination Orders (ECO) has decreased over the last five years reaching a low of 3.3% in March 2024.

Determinate Custodial Sentences (DCS) account for the largest proportion of the post-custody Licences supervised by PBNI. This figure has increased year on year from 24.5% in March 2020 to 34.9% in March 2024.

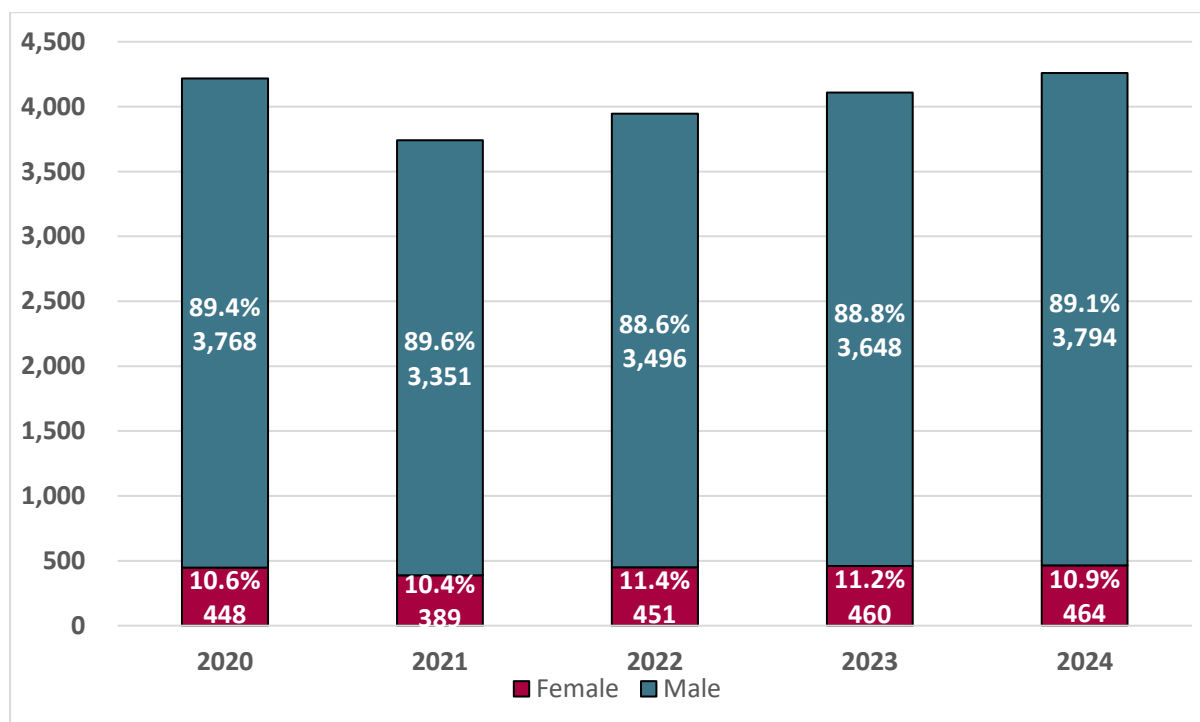
Figure 2 PBNI caseload by type of Order/Licence, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



Service user demographics

In March 2024 males accounted for 89.1% of service users being supervised. This figure has remained largely consistent ranging between 88.6% and 89.6% over the last five years.

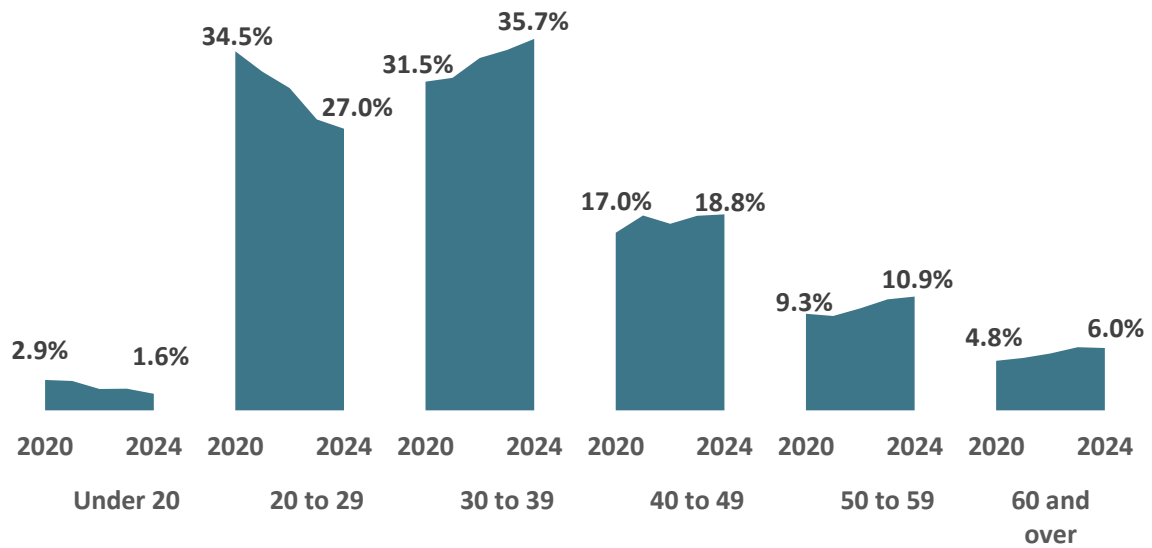
Figure 3 Service users supervised by PBNI by gender, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



In March 2020 the largest proportion of service users being supervised by PBNI were in the 20 to 29 age group (34.5%). However, in March 2022 the proportion of service users in the 30 to 39 age group (33.8%) surpassed those in the 20 to 29 age group (30.9%). This has remained the case in more recent years with the proportion steadily increasing to a figure of 35.7% in March 2024. In contrast the proportion of service users in the 20 to 29 age group has decreased in recent years to a low of 27.0% in March 2024.

Between March 2020 and March 2024, the proportion of service users in the under 20 age group has decreased whilst the proportions in the older age groups (40 to 49, 50 to 59 and 60 and over) have increased.

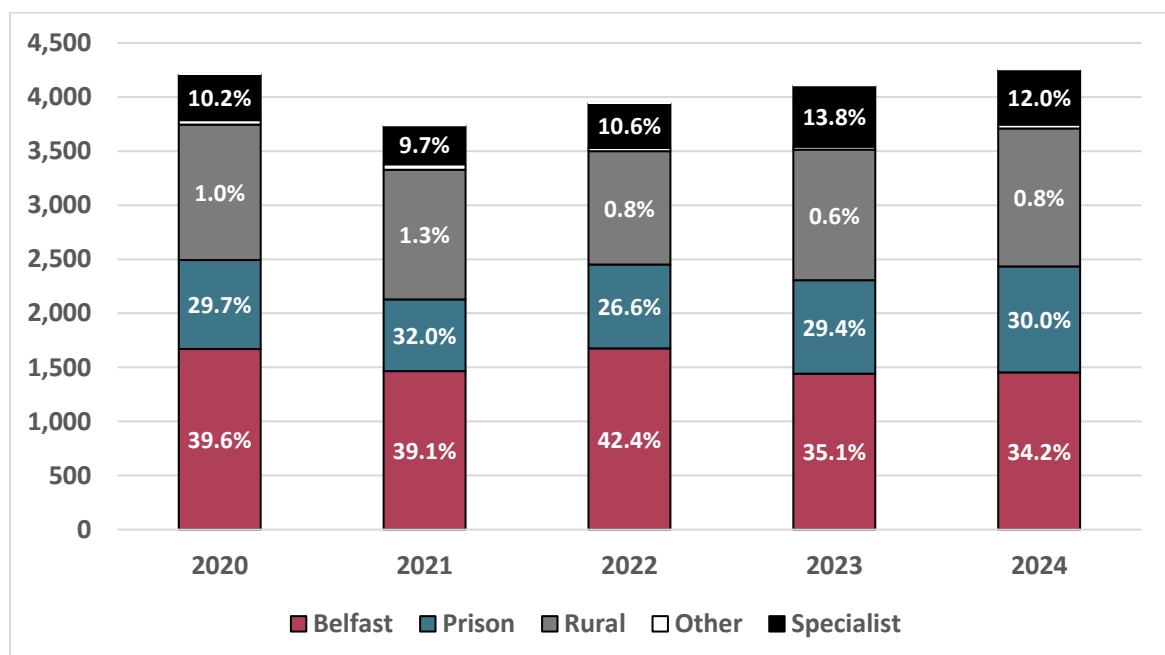
Figure 4 Service users supervised by PBNI by age, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



Service users by PBNI Directorate

In March 2022 over two-fifths (42.4%) of service users supervised by PBNI were supervised by the PBNI Belfast Directorate. This figure has decreased over the last two years to 34.2% in March 2024. In comparison the proportion of service users supervised by the PBNI Rural Directorate has increased from 26.6% to 30.0% over the same period. Similarly, those supervised by the PBNI Prison Directorate has increased from 19.6% in March 2022 to 23.0% in March 2024.

Figure 5 Service users supervised by PBNI by Directorate, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



Assessment, Case Management & Evaluation System (ACE)

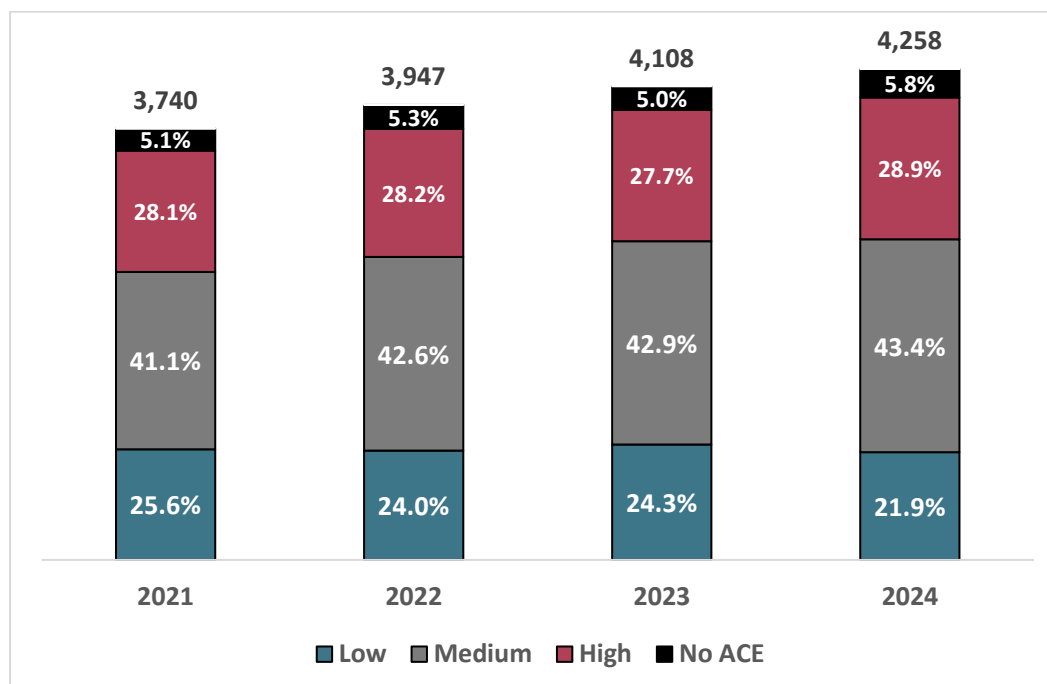
Assessment, Case Management & Evaluation System (ACE) is used to assess the likelihood of re-offending within a two-year period, based on the prevalence of various social, personal, and offending related issues. A scoring system is used to identify the likelihood of re-offending with a score of 0 to 15 indicating a low risk, a score of 16 to 29 indicating a medium risk and a score of 30 or more indicating a high risk.

Of those service users supervised by PBNI on 31 March 2024, 94.2% had an ACE assessment completed. This is a decrease on the figure for 31 March 2023 (95.0%) and is the lowest proportion seen over the four year period between March 2021 and March 2024.

In March 2024 over two-fifths (43.4%) of service users were identified as medium risk. This compares to 41.1% in March 2021. The proportion of service users identified as high risk in March 2024 was 28.9%, an increase on March 2023 (27.7%) which was the lowest proportion seen over the four year period. In contrast the proportion of service users identified as low risk decreased from 25.6% in 2021 to 21.9% in 2024.

It should be noted that ACE scores were unavailable in March 2020 due to the transition between case management systems therefore data has only been presented for a four year period.

Figure 6 Service users supervised by PBNI by ACE category, 31 March 2021 to 31 March 2024



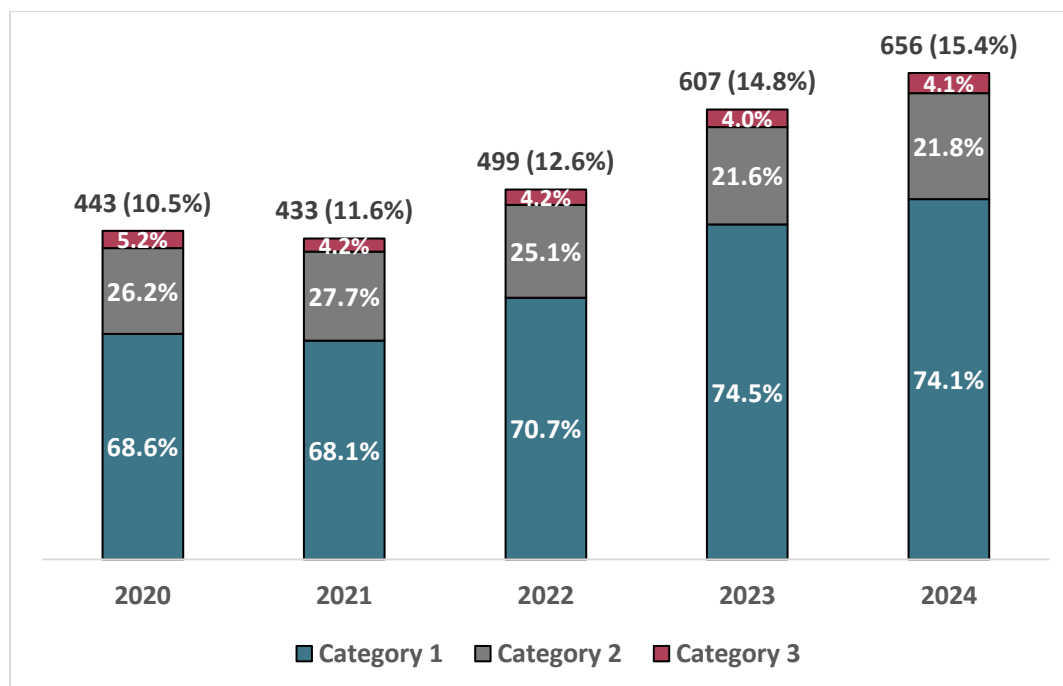
Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI)

Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI) provides assessment and management of the risks posed by certain sexual and violent individuals. Service users managed under PPANI are assigned a category from one to three, with Category 1 indicating low risk and Category 3 indicating high risk.

On 31 March 2024 656 service users (15.4% of all service users supervised by PBNI) were being managed under PPANI and were assigned a PPANI category. The proportion of service users managed under PPANI has been rising year on year since March 2020 when 10.5% of all service users supervised by PBNI (443 service users) were assigned a PPANI category.

Just under three quarters (74.1%) of service users managed under PPANI were assigned to Category 1 in March 2024. This compares to 68.6% of service users in March 2020. The proportion of service users assigned to Category 3 has remained largely consistent over the last four years following a high of 5.2% in March 2020.

Figure 7 Service users managed under PPANI by category, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



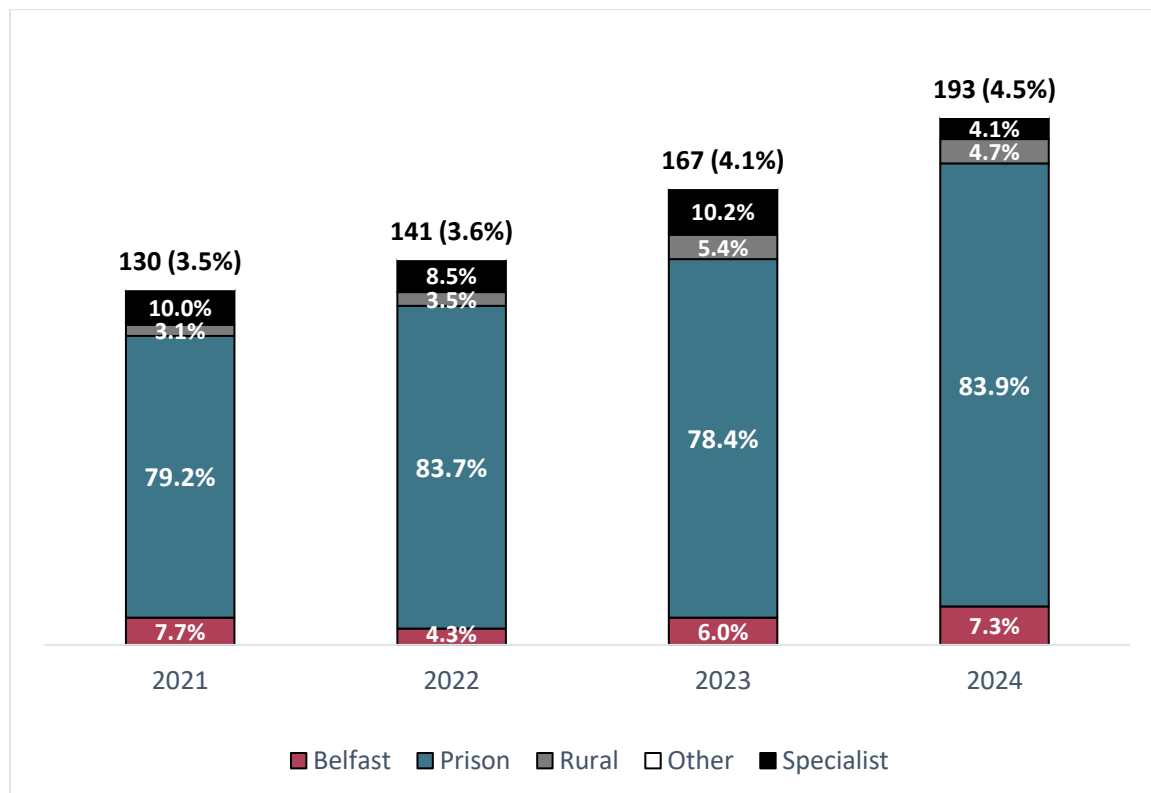
Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Others (SROSH)

Service users assessed as Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Others (SROSH), are considered to present a high likelihood of committing a further offence, causing serious harm.

In March 2024 4.5% of service users supervised by PBNI (193 service users) were assessed as SROSH. Over the last four years this figure has increased year on year from 3.5% in March 2021 (130 service users). Each year the majority of these service users have been allocated to the PBNI Prison Directorate (83.9% in March 2024).

It should be noted that changes in recording practices prevent comparisons being made to data prior to March 2021.

Figure 8 Service users assessed as SROSH by Directorate, 31 March 2021 to 31 March 2024



Reports Completed by PBNI

PBNI staff fulfil a crucial role at Court. In particular they prepare a wide range of reports which assist the Judge or Magistrate to determine the most suitable type of sentence to impose or notify them of the circumstances surrounding breach of an order. PBNI staff also produce reports for the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland (PCNI) in relation to licences/sentences, however due to current recording practices statistics relating to the totality of these reports are not currently available.

During 2023/24, 6,421 reports were completed by PBNI staff. An additional 1,732 letters were prepared and sent to court. There has been a 9.6% reduction in the number of reports (excluding letters) completed between 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, the figure is 51.8% higher than the figure for 2020/21 when the Covid-19 pandemic prevented many Courts from sitting.

Magistrates Court Reports (MCRs) account for the highest proportion of reports completed (excluding letters), however this figure has reduced from 52.2% in 2021/22 to 47.3% in 2023/24. Crown Court Reports (CCR) and Pre Sentence Reports (PSR) have also reduced over the same time period from 21.5% to 18.0%.

Short Adjournment Reports (SAR) which were introduced in February 2023 as a pilot scheme accounted for 6.8% of the total reports completed (excluding letters) in 2023/24.

It should be noted that comparable data for individual report types is unavailable for 2019/20 therefore data has only been presented for a four year period.

Table 1 Reports completed by PBNI by type of report, 2020/21 to 2023/24

Type of Report	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Addendum Report	260	791	819	706
Breach Report	275	722	807	656
Crown Court Report (CCR)/Pre Sentence Report (PSR)	399	1,523	1,266	1,154
Magistrates' Court Report (MCR)	1,607	3,706	3,615	3,040
Short Adjournment Report (SAR) [Note 1]	z	z	88	438
Other Reports [Note 2]	172	344	373	328
Letter to Court	719	2,167	2,338	1,732
Missing Report Type	1,516	10	133	99
Total Reports (including letters)	4,948	9,263	9,439	8,153
Total Reports (excluding letters)	4,229	7,096	7,101	6,421

[Note 1] Short Adjournment Reports (SARs) were not introduced until 2023.

[Note 2] Other Reports include Probation Officers Report, Recall Report, Substance Misuse Court (SMC) Progress Report, SMC Suitability Report, SMC Assessment & Intervention Report, Revocation and Home Circumstance Report

Victims Registered with PBNI

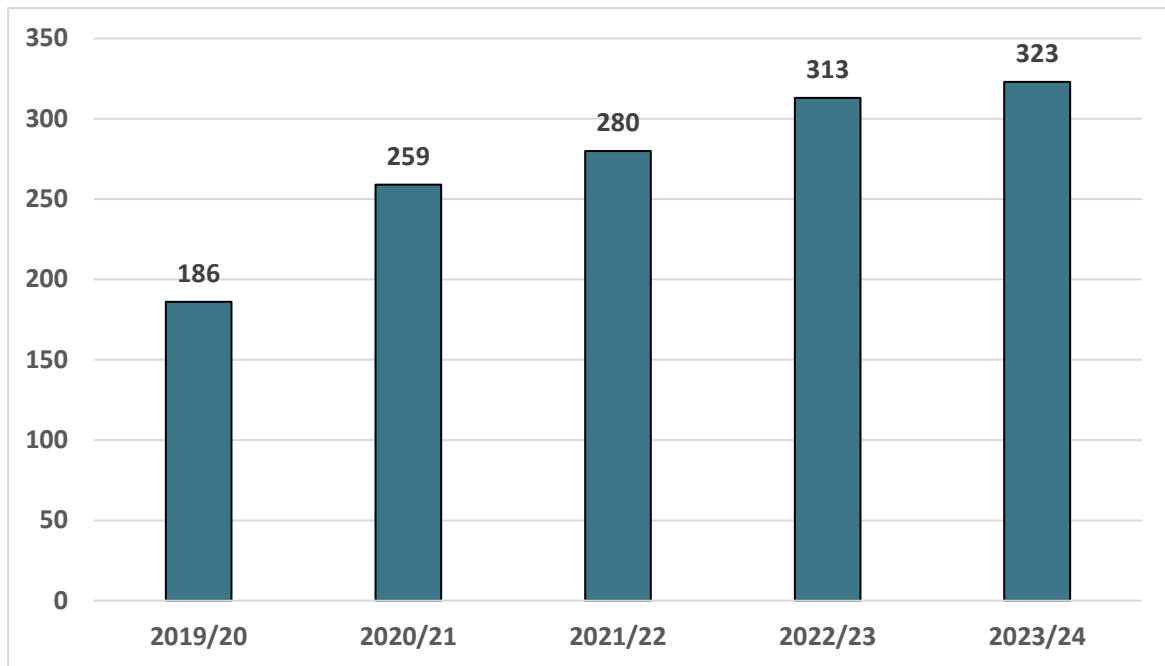
PBNI operate a Victim Information Scheme to assist victims of crime. This scheme is one of three victim information schemes in Northern Ireland. PBNI's scheme is managed by Probation's Victim Information Unit (VIU) with staff working closely with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) in a co-located team. All schemes are voluntary, so victims won't receive information about the sentence of the person who has offended unless they have registered.

The purpose of the Victim Information Schemes is to give victims information about the Criminal Justice System and key stages of the sentence of the person who has offended. Within PBNI registered victims will be provided with information on the sentence being supervised by PBNI and will receive this information in a manner which is accessible, understandable and supportive. Victims also have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about the person who has offended, be involved in direct or indirect restorative contact with the person, if they wish, and take part in the preparation of a victim report for the Parole Commissioners.

Further details on all three schemes can be found [here](#).

The number of new victims registered with PBNI during 2023/24 was 323. This is a 3.2% increase on the 2022/23 figure (313) and a 73.7% increase on the figure for 2019/20 (186). This increase coincides with a change in the way PBNI contact victims. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic a letter and information leaflet providing details of the scheme were posted to the victim. During the pandemic PBNI moved to contacting victims by telephone with a letter being sent as follow-up. This new approach is currently still in operation.

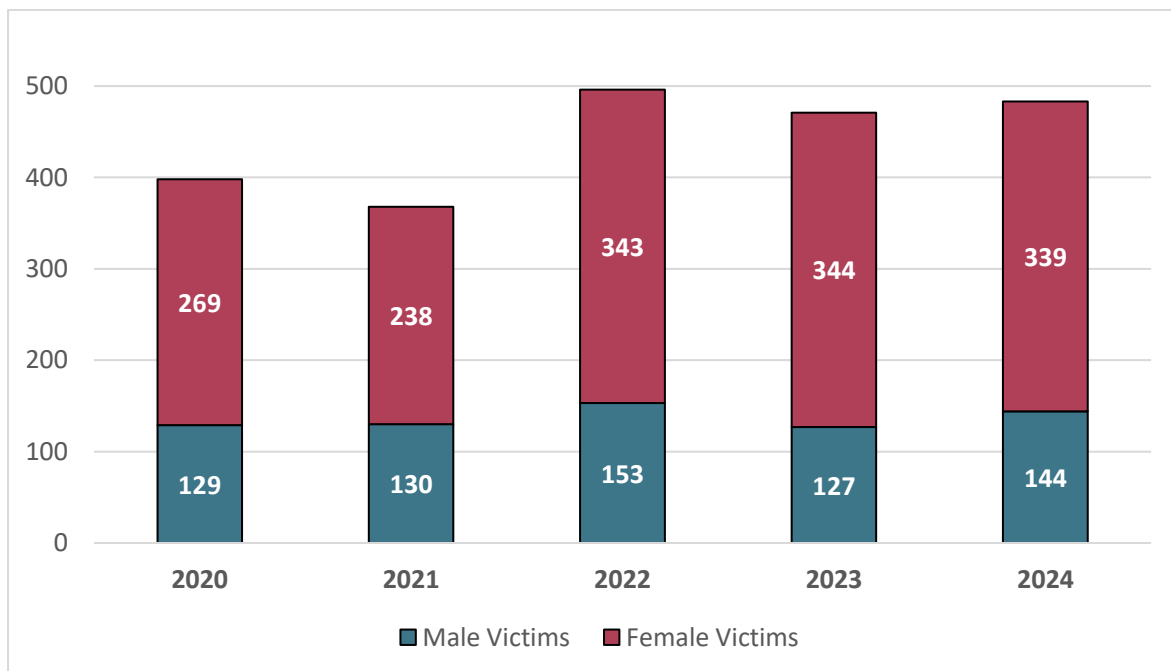
Figure 9 New victims registered with PBNI, 2019/20 to 2023/24



The total number of victims registered with PBNI increased by 2.5% from 471 on 31 March 2023 to 483 on 31 March 2024. This is a 2.6% decrease on the figure recorded in March 2022 (496) which was the highest recorded over the five year period between March 2020 and March 2024.

In March 2024 females accounted for 70.2% of the total victims registered with PBNI. This figure has fluctuated between 64.7% and 73.0% over the last five years.

Figure 10 Total victims registered with PBNI by gender, 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2024



Appendix 1: Definitions

PBNI Glossary of Orders and Sentences

<p>Combination Order</p>	<p>Combines a Probation Order and a Community Service Order. The period of Probation supervision can last from 1 to 3 years. The Community Service part of the Order can range from 40 to 100 hours and must be completed as instructed.</p>
<p>Community Service Order (CSO)</p>	<p>Requires an offender to do unpaid work in the community. It may be given to someone 16 or over if the offender consents and is between 40 and 240 hours and must be completed within 12 months.</p>
<p>Custody Probation Order</p>	<p>Requires an offender to serve a period of imprisonment followed by a period of supervision in the community (the period of supervision will be 1 to 3 years commencing on date of release) and is unique to Northern Ireland. This order cannot be made unless the offender consents. Although Custody Probation Orders remain on the statute books, Determinate Custodial Sentences were made available from 1 April 2009. This is only a valid disposal where the offence was committed prior to April 2009.</p>
<p>Determinate Custodial Sentence (DCS)</p>	<p>Requires an offender to serve a period of imprisonment followed by a period of supervision in the community. The court will specify the length of both custody and community supervision at sentencing. This will be the standard determinate sentence for all offenders and has been available to the courts from 1 April 2009.</p>
<p>Enhanced Combination Order (ECO)</p>	<p>A pilot Order with a focus on rehabilitation, reparation, restorative practice, and desistance, and has been available to a number of pilot court divisions from October 2015. The period of Probation supervision can</p>

	last from 1 to 3 years. The Community Service part of the Order can range from 40 to 100 hours and must be carried out at an accelerated pace.
Extended Custodial Sentence (ECS)	This may be given at court if the offender has been convicted on indictment of a specified offence, where a life sentence or Indeterminate Custodial Sentence is not appropriate. The court must be of the opinion that there is a significant risk that the offender will re-offend and that such re-offending is likely to cause serious harm to members of the public. The sentence involves a portion of time spent in custody (at least 1 year) and a period under licence conditions (extension period). Prisoners will be referred to the Parole Commissioners of Northern Ireland (PCNI) approximately 6 months prior to the mid-point of their sentence and must demonstrate that they can be safely released into the community. If PCNI direct release, the prisoner will remain on licence for the remainder of the custodial term as well as the licence period set by the court.
GB Transfer Licence	An individual subject to licence may, given the agreement of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, transfer to Northern Ireland from another jurisdiction in Great Britain.
Indeterminate Custodial Sentence (ICS)	It may be given at court if the offender has been convicted on indictment of a specified offence, where a life sentence is not appropriate, but an Extended Custodial Sentence is not sufficient. The court must be of the opinion that there is a significant risk that the offender will re-offend and that such re-offending is likely to cause serious harm to members of the public. No release date is given for an ICS. Offenders serving an

	ICS will be given a “tariff” date which is the earliest date that they may become eligible for consideration for release by the PCNI. The tariff is a minimum of 2 years. An ICS prisoner will remain in custody until they have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the PCNI that they can be released safely into the community.
Inescapable Voluntary	These are offenders who continue to be supervised by PBNI on a voluntary basis following the end of their sentence, usually for the purposes of completing programmes. These are not statutory orders.
Juvenile Justice Centre Order (JJCO)	It requires a young offender (aged between 10 and 17 years) to spend time, normally three months, in a Juvenile Justice Centre and then be supervised in the community by a probation officer, normally for three months.
Life Sentence Licence	An offender serving a life sentence will be released from custody on licence. An individual must comply with the conditions of his licence in order to remain in the community and not be returned to custody.
Probation Order (PO)	POs can last between 6 months and 3 years and puts the offender under the supervision of a Probation Officer for that period. The order may have extra requirements. Offender consent is required.

Remand/Sentence	It refers to persons who are remanded in custody awaiting sentence or who are subject to a custodial sentence not involving PBNI supervision on release, with whom PBNI works in order to assess individual risks and needs.
Sex Offender Licence	Article 26 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 makes provision for all offenders convicted of a sexual offence to be released on licence under the supervision of a Probation Officer.
Supervised Activity Order	It requires an offender to do unpaid work in the community. It may be given to someone 16 or over if the offender consents and lasts between 10 hours and 100 hours and must be completed within 12 months.
Supervision and Treatment Order	It requires the specified person to be under supervision for a period of not more than 2 years; and to submit, during that period to treatment under the direction of a medical practitioner with a view to the improvement of his mental condition.

PBNI Glossary of Reports

Addendum Report	is provided to courts to supplement information contained within a Pre-Sentence report, where one has been completed within the previous 12-month period, or to address a specific issue at the request of the Court.
Breach Report	is provided to courts to provide an account of the circumstances leading to breach, details of the non-compliance, an outline of actions taken by the supervising officer, and proposed options available to the court.
Home Circumstances Report	is written by a Probation Officer, usually following a home visit, and provides a suitability assessment of an offender's proposed residence prior to their release from custody.
Home Leave Report	is written by a prison-based Probation Officer, and provides a suitability assessment of a prisoner's proposed temporary release from custody.
Magistrates' Court Report (MCR)	is a brief focussed report written by a Probation Officer supplied to Magistrates' courts to assist in sentencing decisions and can be completed on the day. This report type was piloted in five Courts between 1 November 2016 and 31 March 2018 but has been available to all Magistrates the courts from 1 April 2018.
Parole Commissioners/Life Sentence Unit Reports	provide Parole Commissioners with information prior to release; covering offender's attitude to supervision, response to PBNI interventions, risk assessment, post-release supervision plan, and recommendations for release.
Pre-Sentence Report (PSR)	is written by a Probation Officer on an offender before sentencing at court. The purpose of the report is to provide the Judge with information to assist in the

	sentencing decision. From 1 April 2018, this format of report will be presented solely to Crown Courts.
Short Adjournment Report (SAR)	was introduced in February 2023 as a pilot scheme and continues to operate as such. The report is a summarised version of the Magistrates' Court Report and was introduced as a measure to assist with the management of resources in relation to PBNI caseload. There are a range of offences which make cases unsuitable for a SAR and the District Judge also has discretion to ask for a full MCR if they wish to do so.
Probation Officers Reports	are generic reports that Probation Officers provide to courts, for the purposes of providing an update to Sentencers or request an amendment or an extension of an order.
Recall Report	is provided to Parole Commissioners of Northern Ireland (and copied to the Public Protection Branch of the Department of Justice) when the decision to initiate recall proceedings has been taken by PBNI. The report provides an account of the circumstances leading to recall, details of the non-compliance, an outline of actions taken by the supervising officer, and proposed actions to reduce risk in future.
Revocation Report	is provided to courts to provide an account of the offender's circumstances, an explanation for the need for revocation of the order and to assist in the re-sentencing decision

Appendix 2: Technical Notes

Data Source

In this report the primary data source for data from April 2020 onwards is the PBNI's electronic case management system (ECMS), used for the day to day management of cases and orders supervised by PBNI. Prior to April 2020 data was sourced from the Probation Information Management System (PIMS).

Data relating to victims is collated and validated by the PBNI Victim Information Unit and provided to the PBNI Statistics and Research Team on request.

Analysis and Presentation of Statistics

The data used in this report is extracted using the reporting tool within ECMS (Report Studio) and a custom build query tool called 'the Cube' which operates within Microsoft Excel. The data is validated, maintained and analysed using a combination of Microsoft Access and Microsoft Excel.

For ease of use, figures are presented as whole numbers throughout the text, tables and charts. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place. Data tables are published alongside this bulletin in Microsoft Excel.

Data Quality and Validation

The PBNI's electronic case management system (ECMS) is a live system with multiple users that relies on staff to input information. Therefore, like many administrative systems, the resultant statistics are potentially subject to error, timely updating of information or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. As the system is used for the day to day case management, this helps to moderate these issues. A suite of validation reports have been designed to help administrative staff identify errors and make corrections, where possible.

Historical data was revised in the Annual Caseload Statistics Report 2021/22 to ensure records with equivalent case statuses were included. As a result, data published prior to this is not directly comparable.

Data by offence category, previously included within this report, has been removed due to quality concerns relating to how the offence category was assigned when there were multiple offences. This will be kept under review.