

# Trends in criminal justice spending, staffing and populations 2008-2009 to 2017-2018

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## Introduction

This UK Justice Policy Review Focus looks at trends in key data about the criminal justice systems in each jurisdiction of the UK. It covers the main criminal justice institutions of the police, courts, probation and prison. The aim is to provide reliable, accessible data on trends in areas such as criminal justice spending, staffing, and the populations subject to criminal justice sanctions. It will be useful to policy makers, practitioners, researchers and anyone else with an interest in the criminal justice system in the UK.

## How to understand the data

The data we provide in this briefing gives a rough sense of the overall 'size' of the criminal justice system, in terms of funding, workforce and people processed by criminal justice institutions. Trends in these areas will be affected by a variety of complex interrelated factors, both within the criminal justice system and without. For instance, the number of people prosecuted in the courts will in part depend on the number of police officers available to arrest people in the first place, which in turn will depend on police budgets. On the other hand, the number of people arrested will

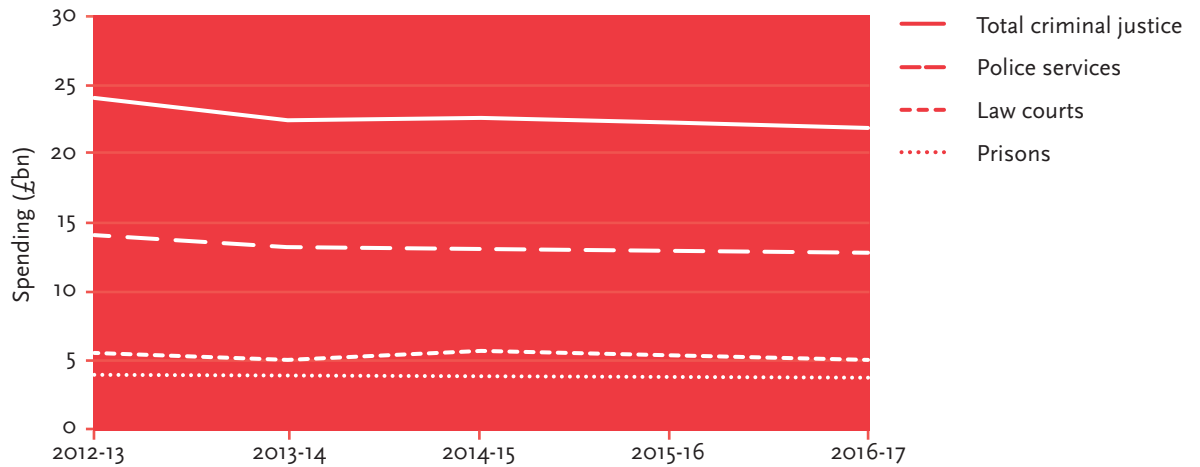
depend on demographic and other social factors such as the size of the specific populations targeted by the police.

Where possible we present data covering the ten-year period from 2008-2009 to 2017-2018 to get a meaningful understanding of current trends. The financial year 2017-2018 is the most recent year for which comparable data for each jurisdiction is available. All data is taken from official government sources. Data tables and a full list of references are available from our website: [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk)

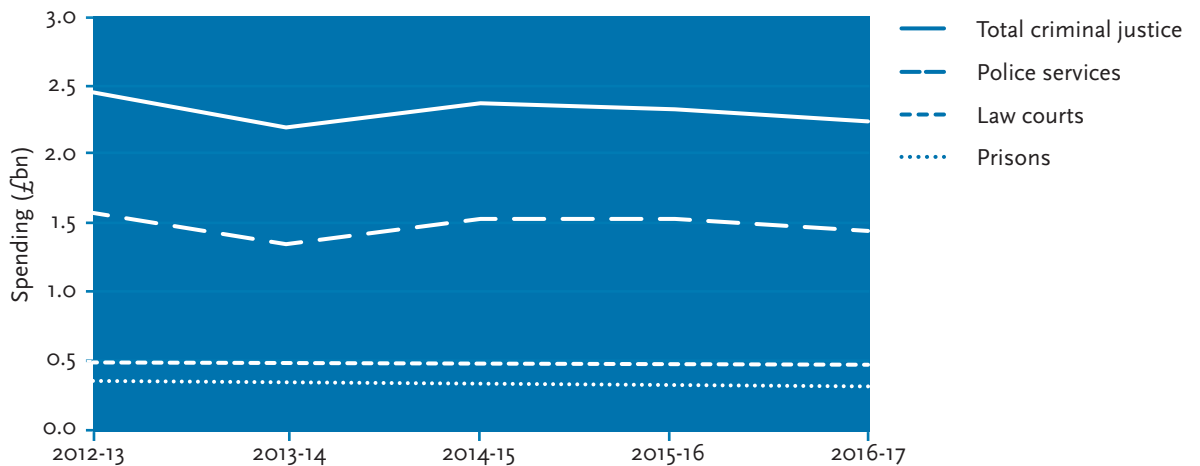
## Spending

This section focuses on criminal justice spending. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show real terms spending on police services, law courts and prisons in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland between the financial years 2012-2013 and 2016-2017. Figures 4, 5 and 6 show how much of total criminal justice expenditure each component made up. They are compiled from data produced by the Treasury for international comparison and attempt to be inclusive of spending by all government departments. They therefore include local as well as central sources of expenditure.

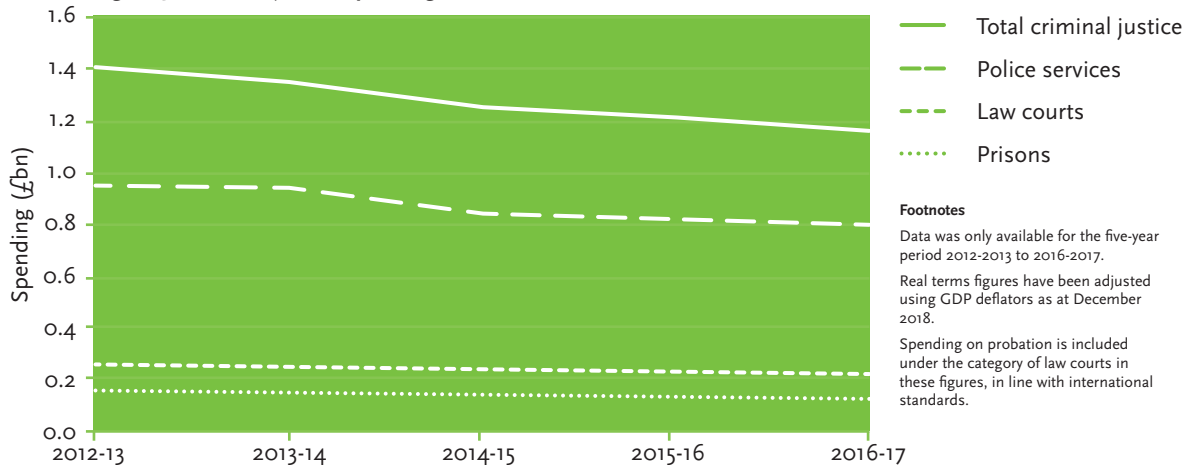
**Figure 1. Criminal justice spending in England and Wales**



**Figure 2. Criminal justice spending in Scotland**



**Figure 3. Criminal justice spending in Northern Ireland**



**Footnotes**  
 Data was only available for the five-year period 2012-2013 to 2016-2017.  
 Real terms figures have been adjusted using GDP deflators as at December 2018.  
 Spending on probation is included under the category of law courts in these figures, in line with international standards.

Figure 4. Proportion of total criminal justice spending in England and Wales, 2016-2017

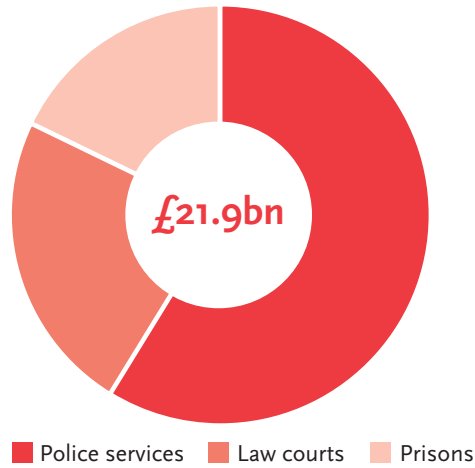


Figure 5. Proportion of total criminal justice spending in Scotland, 2016-2017

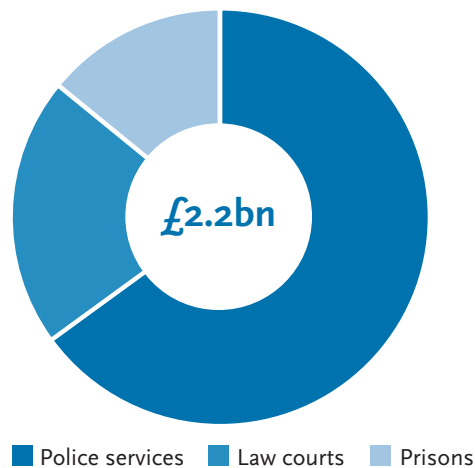
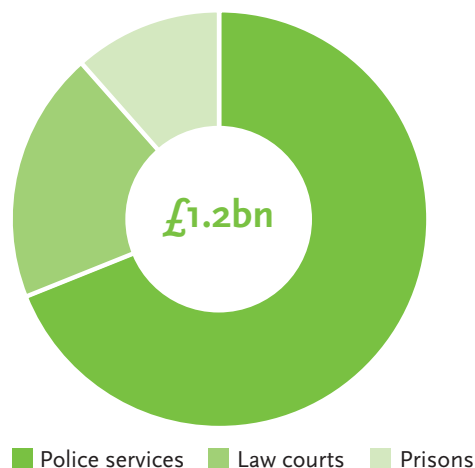


Figure 6. Proportion of total criminal justice spending in Northern Ireland, 2016-2017



All jurisdictions have faced real terms decreases in criminal justice expenditure over the five-year period. Northern Ireland faced the biggest squeeze, with overall spending down by almost a fifth in the five years to 2016-2017. England and Wales and Scotland both saw a fall of around ten per cent in overall criminal justice spending over the period.

In England and Wales, the biggest reductions in spending were in police services and law courts, with cuts of about ten per cent to each between 2012-2013 and 2016-2017. Spending on prisons fell by seven per cent in this jurisdiction over the five-year period, although the two years to 2016-2017 actually saw a ten per cent rise in this area after a 15 per cent fall between 2012-2013 and 2014-2015.

Prison was the area of criminal justice in Scotland which faced the biggest cut to expenditure between 2012-2013 and 2016-2017, falling by 16 per cent. Police services in Scotland saw cuts of nine per cent over the five-year period. Law courts in Scotland faced the lowest cuts to spending, with falls of seven per cent between 2012-2013 and 2016-2017.

In Northern Ireland, like in Scotland, it was prisons which faced the greatest contraction in expenditure over the five-year period, with spending down almost a quarter. Police services and law courts in this jurisdiction both fell by around 17 per cent between 2012-2013 and 2016-2017.

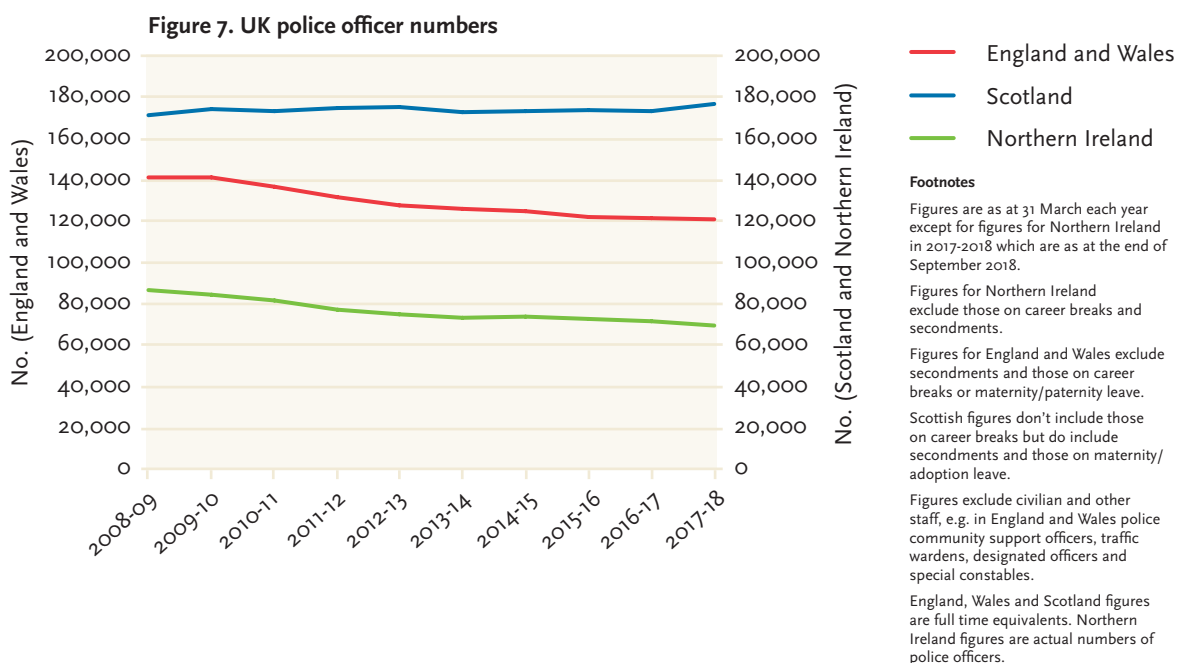
In all three jurisdictions spending on police services is by far the largest component of criminal justice spending, making up roughly two thirds of justice expenditure in each (60 per cent in England and Wales, 65 per cent in Scotland, and 69 per cent in Northern Ireland).

## Staffing

In this section, we examine the numbers of police, prison and probation staff over time, as they reflect changes in criminal justice policy overall as well as in the size and shape of the specific institutions.

Both England and Wales, and Northern Ireland

have seen significant reductions in police officer numbers since 2008-2009 (Figure 7). During 2017-2018 there were a fifth fewer police officers in Northern Ireland than there had been ten years previously. Similarly, police forces in England and Wales employed a sixth fewer officers in 2017-2018 than they had done in 2008-2009. Police officer numbers in Scotland, on the other hand, grew by four per cent during this time.



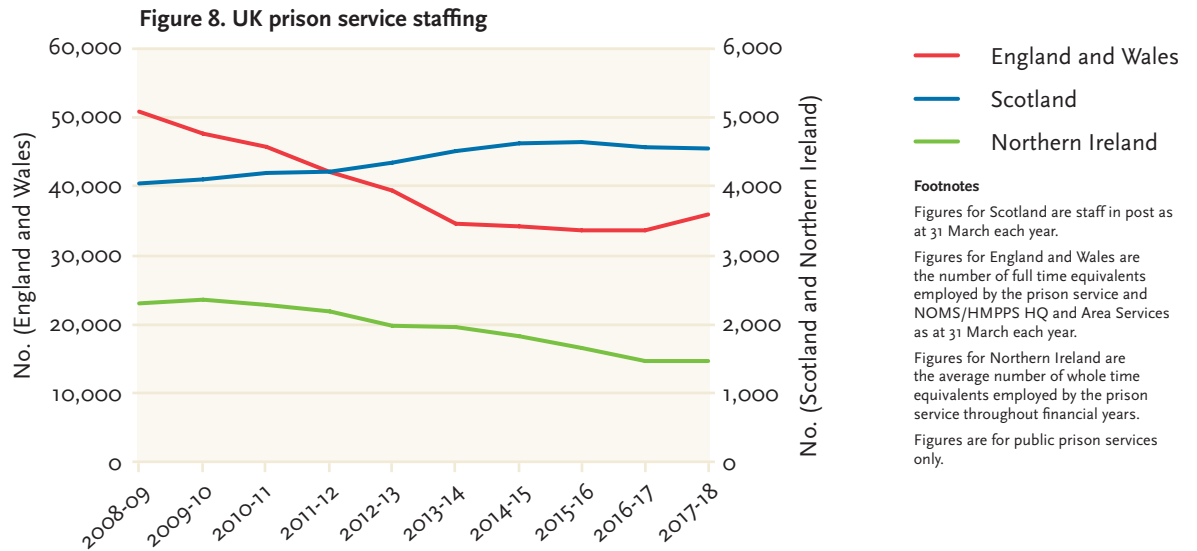
Prison staffing cuts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 2008-2009 (Figure 8) have been more drastic than cuts in police officer levels in these two jurisdictions.

Just shy of a third of the prison workforce in England and Wales was shed between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018. The decrease occurred in the first half of the decade and prison service staffing levels were then steady in the period between 2013-2014 and 2016-2017. The year to 2017-2018 saw a seven per cent increase in prison staffing. In recent years the Ministry of Justice has

sought to stabilise staffing levels in prisons amid widespread criticism that staffing and budget cuts have led to increases in suicides, self-harm and violence in prisons.

The prison service workforce in Northern Ireland contracted by a third between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018.

Again, bucking the trend seen in the other two jurisdictions, Scotland saw a 14 per cent increase in prison service staff. After rising at a consistent rate from 2008-2009 to 2014-2015, Scottish Prison Service staffing has remained at consistent levels.

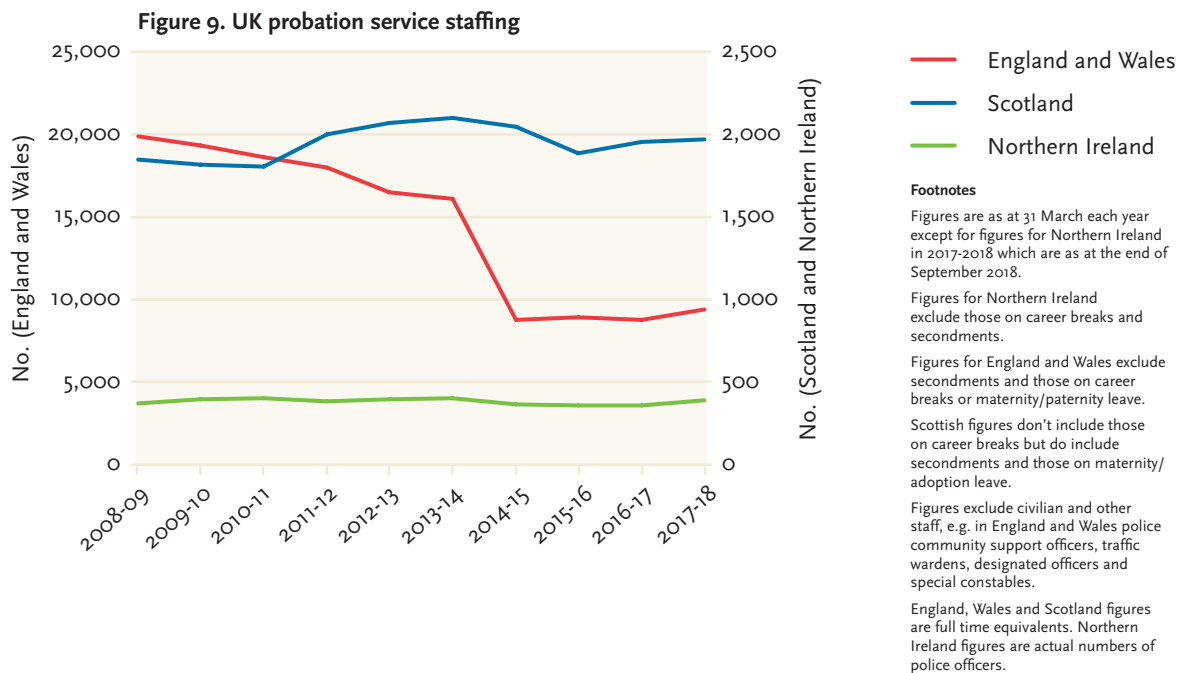


Trends in probation service staffing levels between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018 (Figure 9) have been inconsistent. Scotland’s workforce swelled by 14 per cent to a peak of 2,100 between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. Staffing levels then fell in the years to 2015-2016 before beginning to rise again afterwards, leading to an overall increase of seven per cent over the decade.

The trajectory of staffing levels in the public sector probation service in England and Wales has been mainly shaped by the transfer of a significant proportion of probation services to the private sector in 2014-2015. The number of probation staff employed in the public sector fell 46 per cent as a result. Central government is not responsible for the management of the new private Community

Rehabilitation Companies, and so data on the staff employed by them is not routinely published. Nevertheless, staffing levels in the unified public sector probation service which existed before the privatisation had already fallen by a fifth between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. Staff numbers in what remains of the publicly-owned probation service have stayed roughly the same in the years following the split.

Some fluctuation in the numbers of staff employed by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018 can be seen, but overall numbers remained relatively constant. Overall there was a six per cent rise in probation staff in Northern Ireland over the decade.

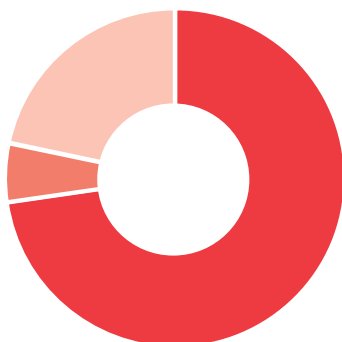


As with spending, we can see that the police make up the overwhelming majority of the criminal

justice workforce; around three quarters of the total in each jurisdiction (Figures 10-12).

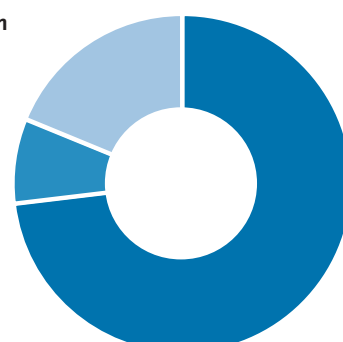
**Figure 10. Proportion of total criminal justice workforce in England and Wales**

- Police
- Probation
- Prison



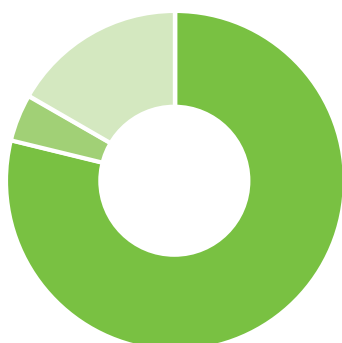
**Figure 11. Proportion of total criminal justice workforce in Scotland**

- Police
- Probation
- Prison



**Figure 12. Proportion of total criminal justice workforce in Northern Ireland**

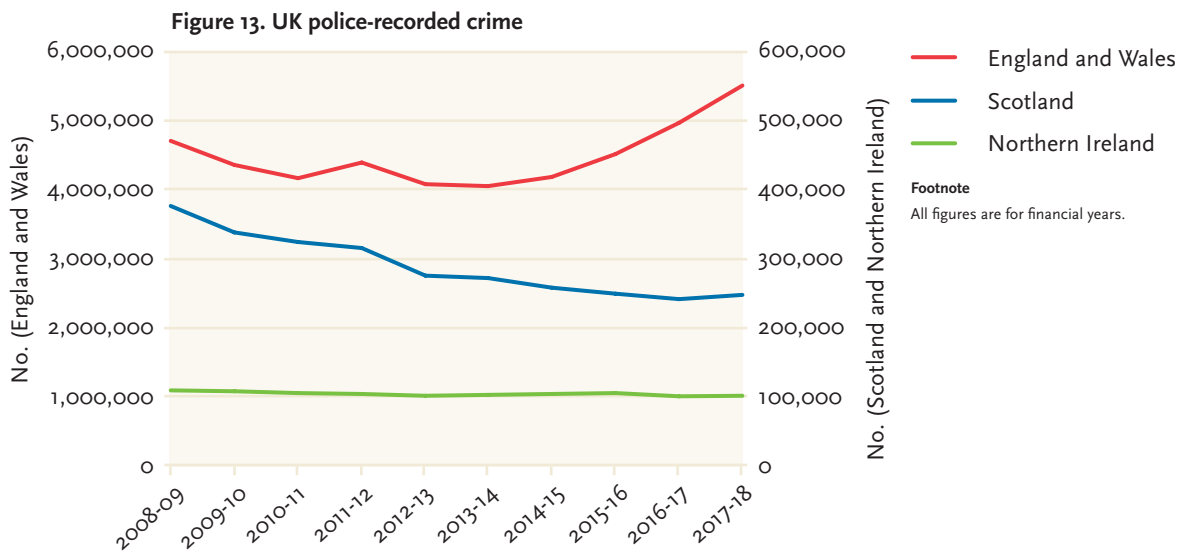
- Police
- Probation
- Prison



## Criminal justice process

The first figure in this section shows police recorded crime: alleged law-breaking brought to the attention of the police and recorded as a crime incident. As a measure of ‘crime’ its limitations have been well rehearsed. It reflects changes in police recording practices and their targeting of particular law-breaking activity, and fails to capture incidents not reported to the police. It does however provide the material on which the criminal justice system works, and offers an

insight into a large proportion of incidents that come to the attention of such a system. Figure 13 shows crimes recorded by the police between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018. Falls in recorded crime of 35 and ten per cent occurred in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively over the decade. Recorded crime in England and Wales fell by 14 per cent between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014, but has since risen by over a third, leading to an overall rise of 17 per cent over the ten years to 2017-2018.

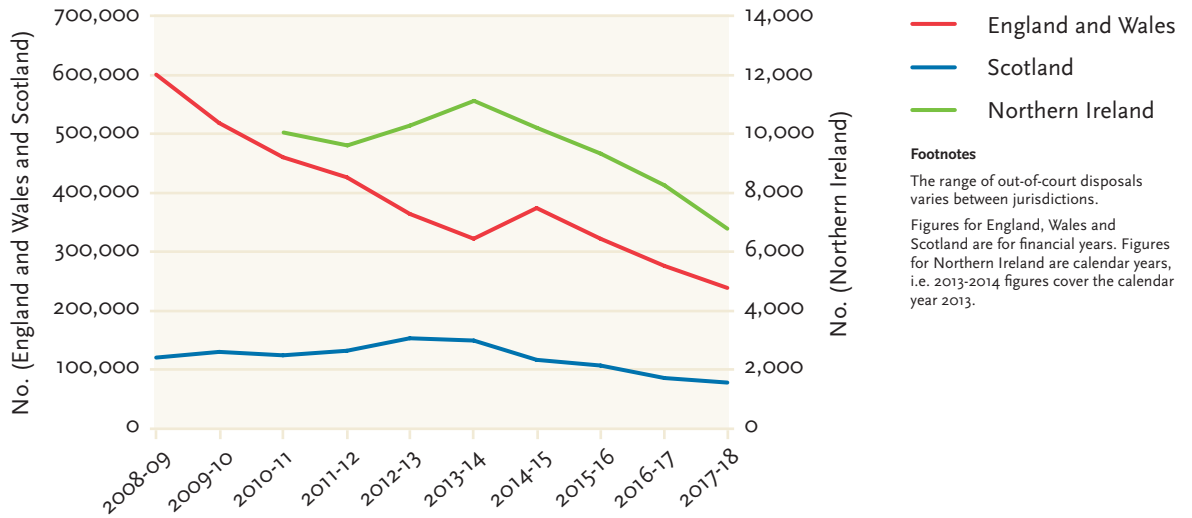


Figures 14 and 15 show out-of-court disposals and prosecutions and convictions, giving a sense of the overall number of cases processed by the criminal justice system.

Use of out-of-court disposals has fallen significantly in each jurisdiction. In England and Wales nearly two thirds fewer out-of-court

disposals were issued in 2017-2018 than in 2008-2009. In Scotland, use rose by over a quarter to 2013-2014, before falling by half, bringing overall decreases to over a third across the decade. Comparable data for Northern Ireland only exists from 2010-2011 and since then, the use of out-of-court disposals has fallen by a third.

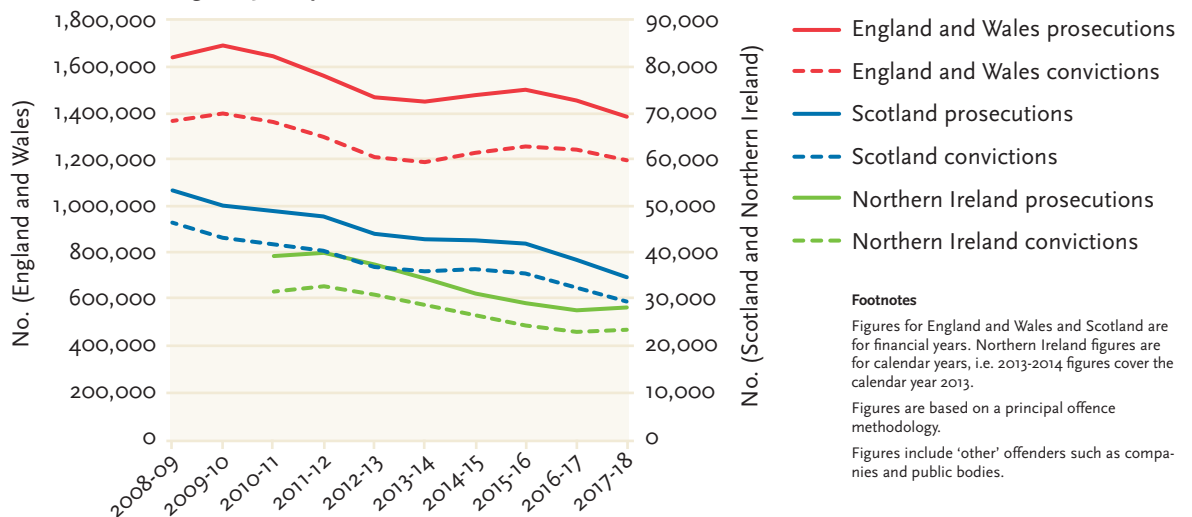
**Figure 14. UK out-of-court disposals**



Prosecutions and convictions in the courts (Figure 15) declined in every jurisdiction between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018. The biggest decrease occurred in Scotland, where there were over a third fewer prosecutions and convictions in 2017-2018 than in 2008-2009. In Northern Ireland both

prosecutions and convictions fell by over a quarter during this period. England and Wales saw the smallest falls, with 16 per cent fewer prosecutions and 13 per cent fewer convictions in 2017-2018 than in 2008-2009.

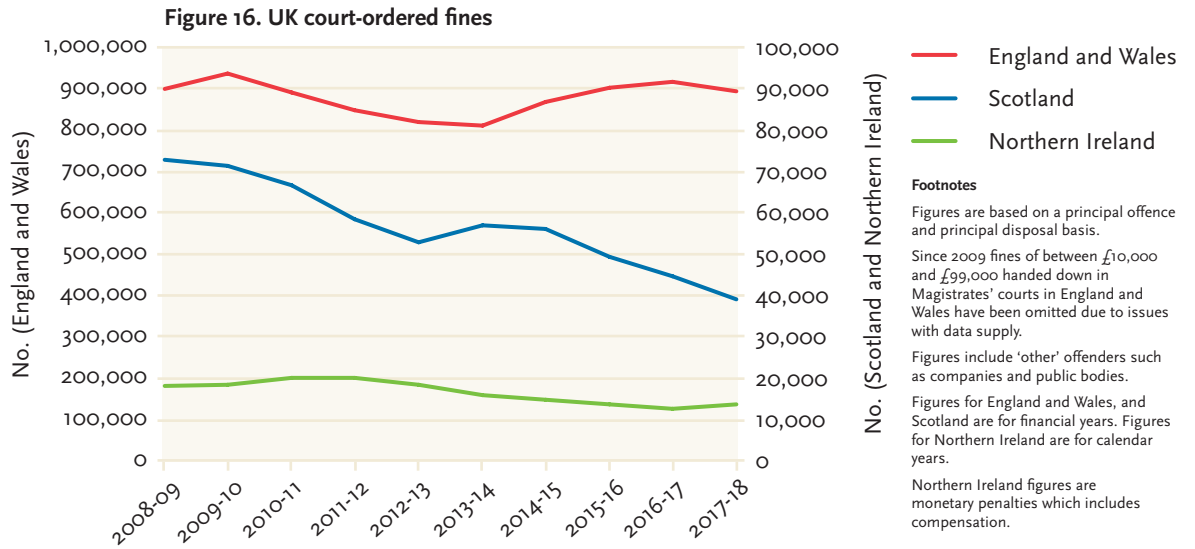
**Figure 15. UK prosecutions and convictions in courts**



Figures 16-18 show trends in the three main court-imposed sanctions: fines, and prison and community sentences. Fines are by far the most common court-imposed sanction, with nearly a million issued across the UK in 2017-2018. Use of court-ordered fines reduced significantly in

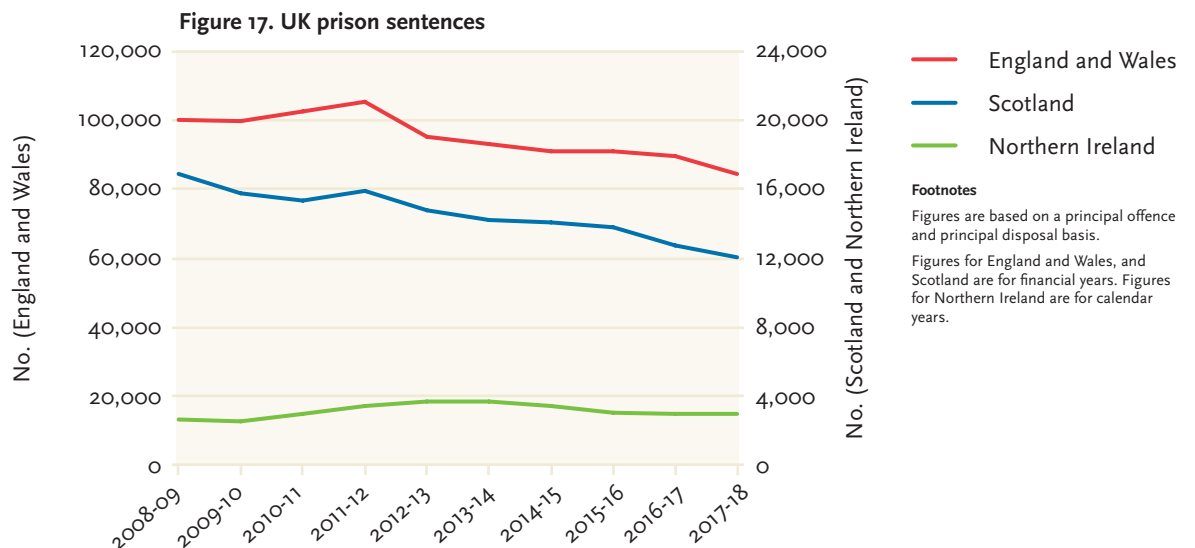
Scotland and Northern Ireland over the decade, with falls of a half and one quarter respectively. Up until 2013-2014 the number of court-ordered fines issued in England and Wales fell, but levels have since recovered, meaning there has only been a marginal decrease in fines over the decade.





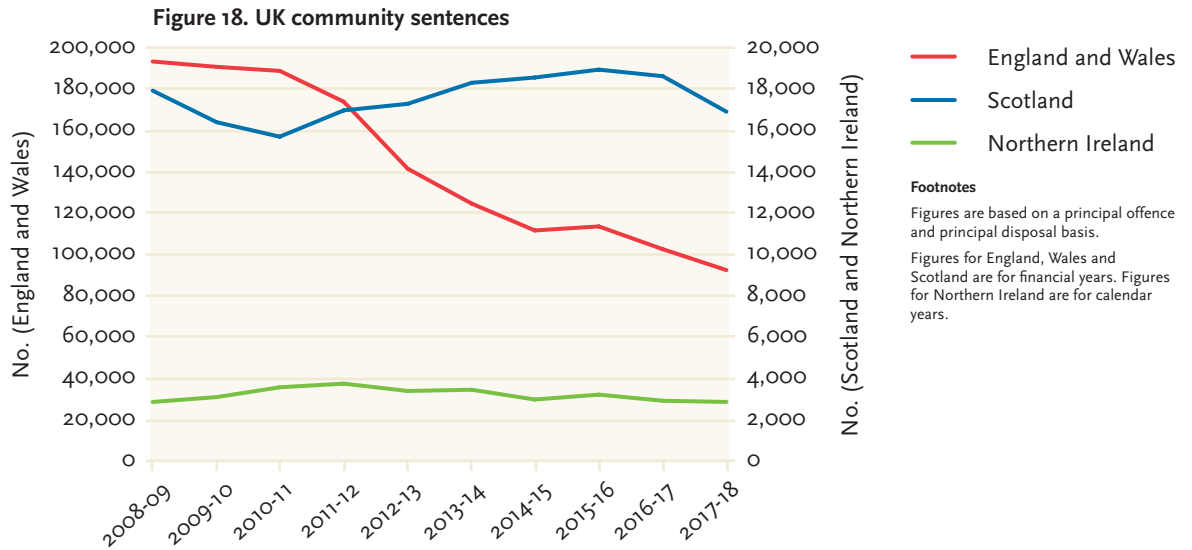
Numbers of prison sentences handed down by the courts in England and Wales, and Scotland decreased in the decade up to 2017-2018. Between 2008-2009 and 2017-2018 there was a 16 per cent fall in sentences of immediate custody in England

and Wales. In Scotland prison sentences fell by just shy of a third over the same period. Northern Ireland bucked this trend, with an increase in prison sentences up to 2013-2014, then a steady decline, producing a net increase of 13 per cent.



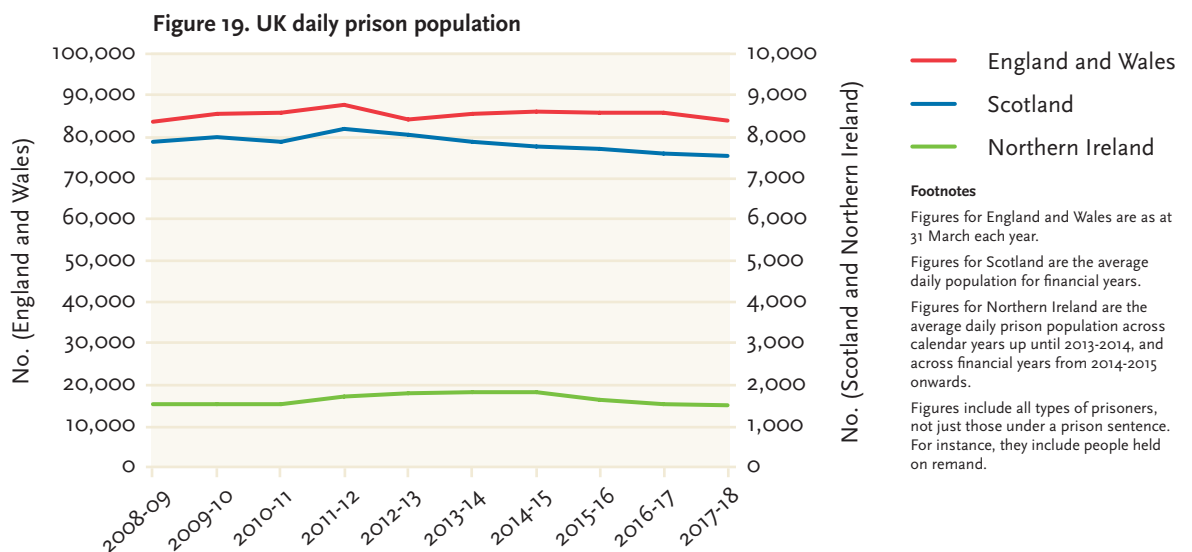
Trends in community sentences (Figure 18) diverged across the three jurisdictions in the ten years to 2017-2018. England and Wales saw a dramatic decline of over 50 per cent in the number of these sentences handed down in the courts over the decade, falling very sharply after 2010-2011. Courts in Northern Ireland issued increasing

numbers of these sentences up until 2011-2012, with numbers imposed rising by a third during this time. Community sentences then fell by a quarter up to 2017-2018. After declining in use to 2010-2011, the number of community sentences handed down in Scottish courts rose by a fifth to 2015-2016, before beginning to drop again.



Daily prison populations in all three criminal justice jurisdictions (Figure 19) were roughly the same in 2017-2018 as they had been in 2008-2009, but there were fluctuations during the decade. Northern Ireland saw the biggest changes, with a rise of nearly a quarter between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. The prison population then fell by a fifth in the years to 2017-2018. In England and Wales the prison population saw a marginal

increase of about six per cent between 2008-2009 and 2011-2012, followed by a four per cent drop in a single year. Prison numbers then rose marginally in the years to 2016-2017 before falling by about three per cent to 2017-2018. The Scottish prison population stayed constant in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 before rising by four per cent in 2011-2012. Prison numbers have since declined by nine per cent.



## Conclusion

As in previous years, the data outlined in this briefing shows a contraction in the footprint criminal justice occupies across the UK. In the main, the size of criminal justice institutions, in terms of spending and staffing levels, and the volume of cases processed and disposals handed out by those institutions, is falling.

Spending on criminal justice fell across all jurisdictions, with cuts greatest in Northern Ireland. Staffing levels fell in most of the criminal justice institutions in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland, but in Scotland there were modest increases in police, probation and prison staff numbers. The police dominate overall criminal justice spending and staffing in each jurisdiction.

There has been a general downwards trend in cases processed by criminal justice institutions across all the jurisdictions, although recent years have seen a steep rise in crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales.

Trends in sentencing are a little more mixed. The use of court-ordered fines has declined in Northern Ireland and Scotland, but has risen in England and Wales albeit after consistent falls in the first half of the decade reviewed here. The number of prison and community sentences handed out to convicted law-breakers has fallen in England and Wales and Scotland but risen in Northern Ireland. The number of people in prison in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland on any given day in 2017-2018 was roughly the same as in 2008-2009.

Matt Ford is Research Associate at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

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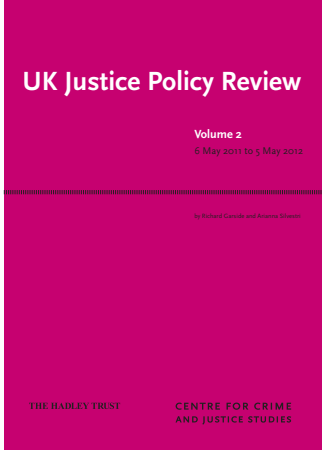
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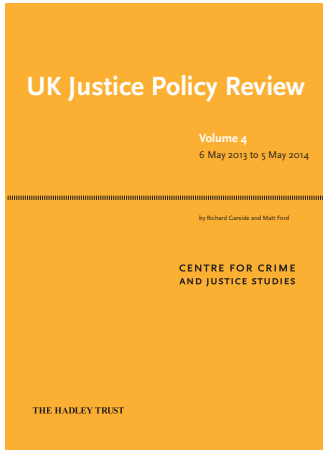
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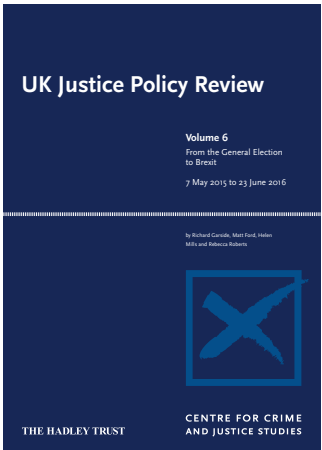
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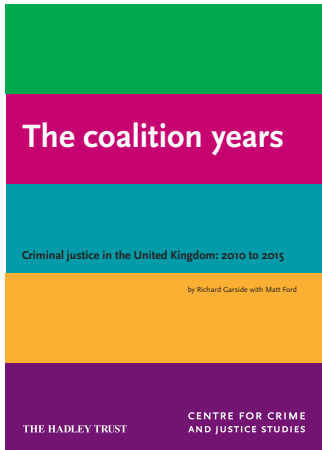
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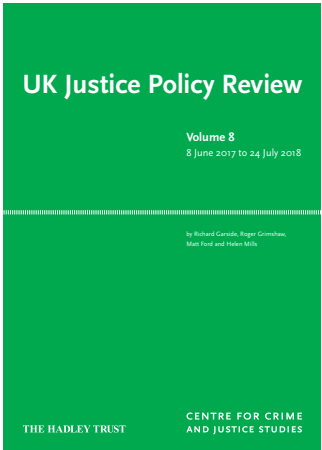
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## Assessing the 2017 General Election Manifestos

Richard Garside

**Introduction**

This UK Justice Policy Review Focus assesses the 2017 General Election manifestos proposals on crime and justice by the three main UK-wide parties: the Conservative, Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Responsibility for crime and justice is a shared centre of the interest of national and Northern Ireland. The manifesto commitments assessed here therefore relate only to the combined jurisdiction of England and Wales.

**What is in the manifestos?**

The three manifestos propose more than 100 individual crime and justice-related policies. Manifestos also contain proposals for strengthening the public, private, courts, and probation. Manifestos focus on strengthening youth justice, public transport and firearms areas (for example, violence against women, mental health, drug and alcohol). Manifestos also contain proposals for strengthening youth justice, public transport and firearms areas (for example, violence against women, mental health, drug and alcohol).

**Assessing the manifestos**

Some highlight examples of the full range of contrasting and complementary manifesto proposals and evidence available. This Focus report takes a different approach. It uses three criteria to assess the manifestos. It uses three criteria to assess the manifestos. It uses three criteria to assess the manifestos.

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Focus Issue 2 2017

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## Trends in criminal justice spending, staffing and populations

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**How to understand the data**

The data presented in this briefing gives a rough sense of the overall 'top of the criminal justice system' in terms of funding, workforce and people processed by criminal justice institutions. Trends in these areas are affected by a variety of complex interrelated factors, which the criminal justice system and activities. For instance, the number of people prosecuted in the courts will be dependent on police budgets. On the other hand, the number of people arrested will depend, amongst other things, on demographic factors such as the size of the specific populations targeted by the police.

**Spending**

This section focuses on criminal justice spending in the years to 2016-17. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show real terms spending on police services, law courts and prisons in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland between 2010-11 and 2015-16. Figure 4 shows how much of total criminal justice expenditure each jurisdiction spends. They are compiled from data produced by the Treasury for ministerial comparison and attempt to include spending by all government departments. They therefore include local and central sources of expenditure.

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## Young people, violence and knives - revisiting the evidence and policy discussions

By Roger Grimshaw and Matt Ford

**Introduction**

As well as providing an update on recent trends in the phenomenon of knife crime, this briefing seeks to review the subsequent development of policy responses that emerged as a result of trends in public safety. This critical review offers a present and future way to increase protection for populations at risk of a public health approach which draws on the expertise and research in particular what does a public health approach mean? It is a public health approach which draws on the expertise and research in particular what does a public health approach mean? It is a public health approach which draws on the expertise and research in particular what does a public health approach mean?

**What is the evidence?**

Our previous report supported by the Children's Commissioner was based on a thorough review and analysis of literature which established a clear judgement of how the evidence on gun and knife violence has been used in research, practice and policy. This briefing revisits the evidence on gun and knife violence from the Children's Commissioner's report in 2017. The briefing revisits the evidence on gun and knife violence from the Children's Commissioner's report in 2017. The briefing revisits the evidence on gun and knife violence from the Children's Commissioner's report in 2017.

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## Does stop and search reduce crime?

Ben Bradford and Matteo Tinelli

**Summary**

Despite recent declines in its use, stop and search continues to be one of the most controversial powers used by police in England and Wales. In each month there has been roughly 100,000 stop and search operations. The evidence on the effectiveness of stop and search in reducing crime is mixed. Starting with an overview of recent trends in the use of stop and search, we then discuss the evidence on the effectiveness of stop and search in reducing crime. The evidence on the effectiveness of stop and search in reducing crime is mixed. Starting with an overview of recent trends in the use of stop and search, we then discuss the evidence on the effectiveness of stop and search in reducing crime.

**Introduction**

After nearly 50 years of debate stop and search continues to be one of the most controversial powers used by police in England and Wales. Part of the reason for this longevity is that it provides a means to search for evidence of crime and to search for weapons, and very rarely, to search out in one of the most controversial powers used by police in England and Wales. Part of the reason for this longevity is that it provides a means to search for evidence of crime and to search for weapons, and very rarely, to search out in one of the most controversial powers used by police in England and Wales.

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