



# Know your population: Community Justice

Final Report

May 2024

Topics: Community Safety, Equality, Housing and Community, Population

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# 1. Overview

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Community justice is where people who have broken the law are held to account and supported to reconnect and contribute to their communities. Where it is safe to do so, people who commit certain crimes receive community-based sentences. This can include treatment for underlying issues such as drug or alcohol addiction, unpaid work, fines and compensation, or restrictions of liberty such as electronic tagging and curfews. The evidence shows that community justice can help people stop breaking the law again, leading to fewer victims and safer communities.

This document is intended to support local improvement work in relation to national outcomes for Community Justice. The starting point for planning improvements is to know your population.

## Know your population

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### Poverty and deprivation

- There has been a decrease in the proportion of Fifers who feel they are managing well financially (now 51% compared to 58% pre-pandemic). Those in the most deprived areas of Fife are six times more likely to not manage well.
- Single households account for two thirds of all low-income households, and 89% of those in cash shortfall. Around 65% of low-income households are in fuel poverty.
- Mid-Fife is the area linked with highest levels of employment and income deprivation, with one fifth of the Levenmouth working age population employment deprived.
- The male employment rate in Glenrothes committee area is 59.2%, making it only area where percentage of females in employment (68.4%) is higher than males.
- Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath are the committee areas with the lowest percentage of vehicle ownership (68%–70%)

### Housing

- 23% of Fife housing stock is social housing, with almost 3 of 4 properties in this sector council houses. Cowdenbeath (34.6%) and Levenmouth (31.0%) have the highest proportion of social rented accommodation.
- 61.4% properties are owner occupied, ranging from 54.6% (Levenmouth) to 68.6% (South West Fife). North East Fife (14.9%) has largest percentage of private rents.
- Fife households in temporary accommodation have been increasing since 2020, to a new high of 1033 in 2023.
- There is a strong association between prisoners and homelessness, with estimates that between 15% and 32% of prisoners were either homeless or living in temporary accommodation prior to imprisonment.
- 79% of prisoners who reported being homeless before custody were reconvicted in the first year after release.
- Fife consistently has the second highest number of local authority homelessness applications from prison discharges, behind Glasgow City.
- The proportion of female homeless applicants in Fife as a proportion of prison discharges is increasing. Fife accounted for 8.6% of all Scottish applications in 2022/23, but 12.5% of all female applications.
- In 2022/23, 'Discharge from prison/hospital/care/other institution' was given as the main reason for a homelessness application by 92.6% of applicants.

## Health

- The proportion of the Fife population in receipt of prescriptions for anxiety and depression is greater in the most deprived areas (27.1%) than least deprived (15.3%), with Levenmouth seeing the highest rates.
- Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Levenmouth are the areas linked with the highest rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions. Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath are the only two Fife areas to be above the Scottish rate for alcohol-specific deaths.
- Fife (275.98 per 100,000) remains significantly above Scottish rate (228.36) for drug-related hospital admissions, having first overtaken this in 2010/11 - 2012/13.
- While Fife drug-related deaths for females are decreasing, those for males continue to increase.
- Those living in the most deprived areas are nearly three times more likely to be problem gamblers.

## Safer Fife

- The Fife crime rate has increased for the third consecutive year.
- Fife shoplifting charges increased to 77 per 10,000 population in 2022/23. Only Dundee City and Aberdeen City had higher rates.
- Fewer than 20% of calls to the police result in a crime being recorded, with there being a strong link with mental health distress in many cases.
- The number of Fife fire incidents was the highest since 2009/10. Fife's primary outdoor fire rate was considerably above the Scottish figure, and just short of West Lothian's peak local authority rate.
- Outdoor fires have increased in every committee area, with Kirkcaldy's increase of 86% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 being the largest of any committee area.
- In Fife 4,903 incidents of domestic abuse were reported in 2022/23, a 17% decrease from 2021/22. This was still above the 2019/20 figure, appearing to be a legacy of the increase in incidents seen during the Covid pandemic.

## Community Justice

- The proportion of community disposals continues to reduce to 12.8% of the Fife total in 2022/23. Of these, community payback orders accounted for the largest proportion.
- The percentage of community payback order with unpaid hours remains below pre-covid numbers, at around 55-60%.
- The average length of Fife community payback unpaid work hours is higher than the Scottish rate, at 140-160 hours.
- While the number of prison arrivals have seen a long-term decrease at Fife and Scottish level, the gap between Fife and the Scottish rate has been narrowing.
- There is a strong link between deprivation and offending. In the period 2009/10 to 2020/21, the most deprived 20% of deciles were linked with over half of prison arrivals. In contrast, the least deprived 20% never accounted for more than 3% of arrivals.
- There is evidence of a growing link between homelessness and prison, with the percentage of prison arrivals with no fixed abode seeing a long-term increase. Those with no fixed abode accounted for 9.1% of arrivals in 2022/23.

## 2. Fife Context

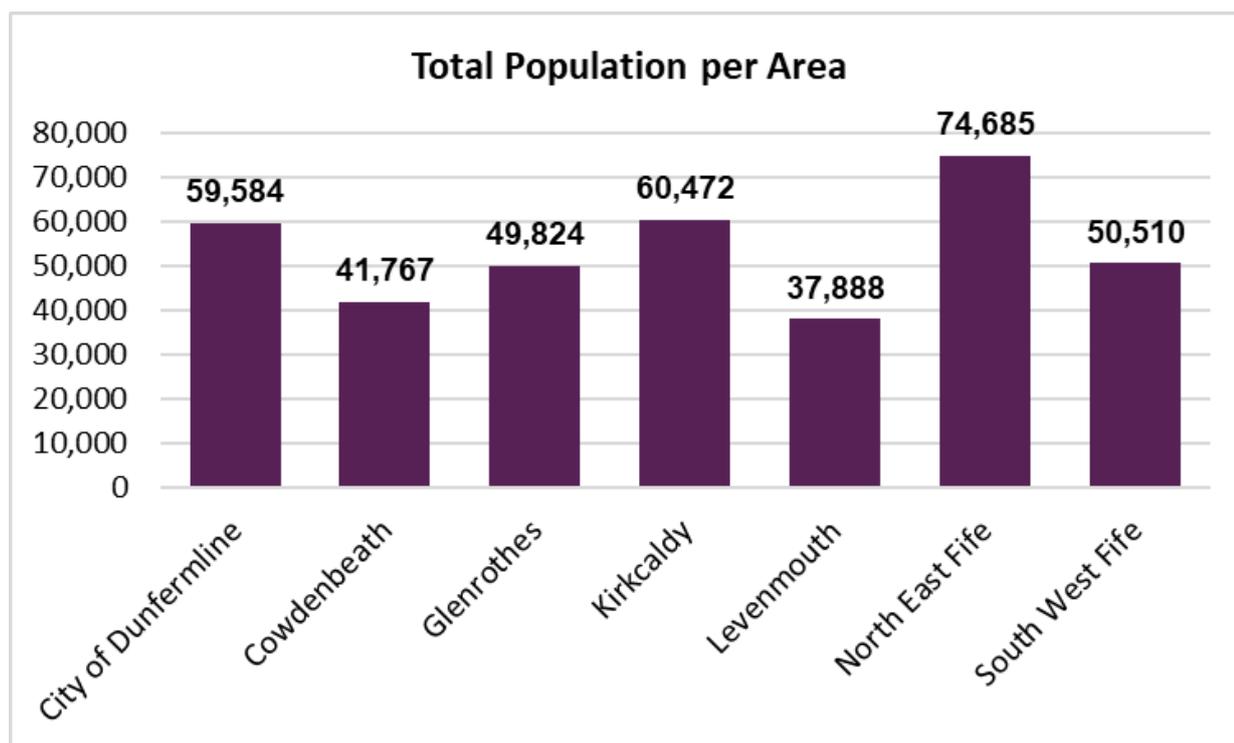
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Fife is the 3rd largest of 32 local authorities by population, and the 13th largest by geographic size, covering 1,325 square kilometres of land. Bounded by the River Tay to the north, and River Forth to the south, Fife's coastline extends for around 185 kilometres.

While Fife has a mixture of urban and rural settlements, two-thirds of people tend to live in urban areas, mainly in or near the three largest urban centres of City of Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes. The remaining people live in smaller towns or villages. Central and south Fife are characterised by a mainly urban and industrial landscape, while the southwest of Fife and most of the east of Fife, are more rural in nature.

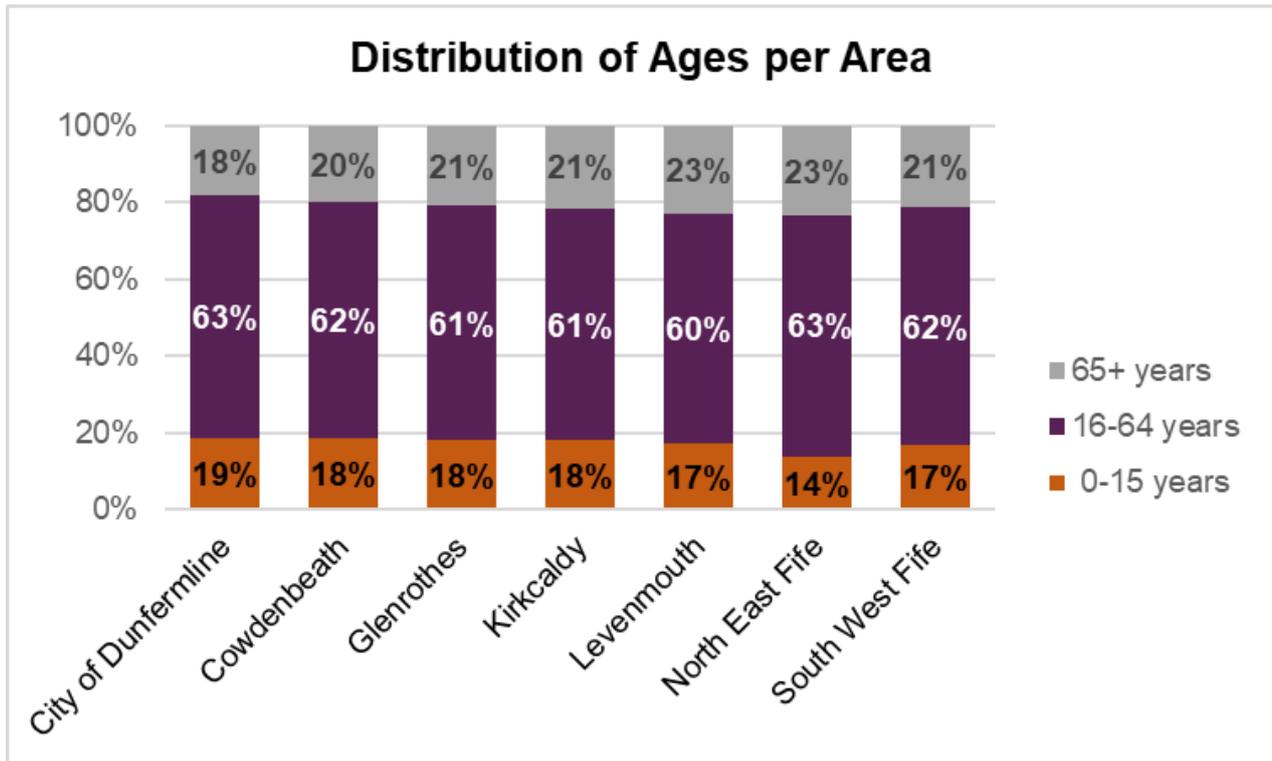
Fife has a decentralised structure based around 7 Area Committees, which are the same as Health and Social Care Localities. Each Area is built up from a local grouping of Fife's 22 multi-member Wards, within which are settlements (or towns). The differences between committee areas extend beyond settlement type. Each Area has a distinct profile, creating both challenges and opportunities for residents.

### Population



**Figure 1: Population of Fife by Area Committee (NRS:2021)**

As Figure 1 highlights, Fife's population is spread unevenly across the seven committee areas. At almost 75,000, the population of North East Fife is nearly double the population of Levenmouth, the smallest committee area by population size. North East Fife has the greatest land mass and, like South West Fife, encompasses many small villages and towns.



**Figure 2: Variation in the percentage of the population in key age groups (children (0-15), working age (16-64), and older people (65+)) by Area Committee (NRS: 2021)**

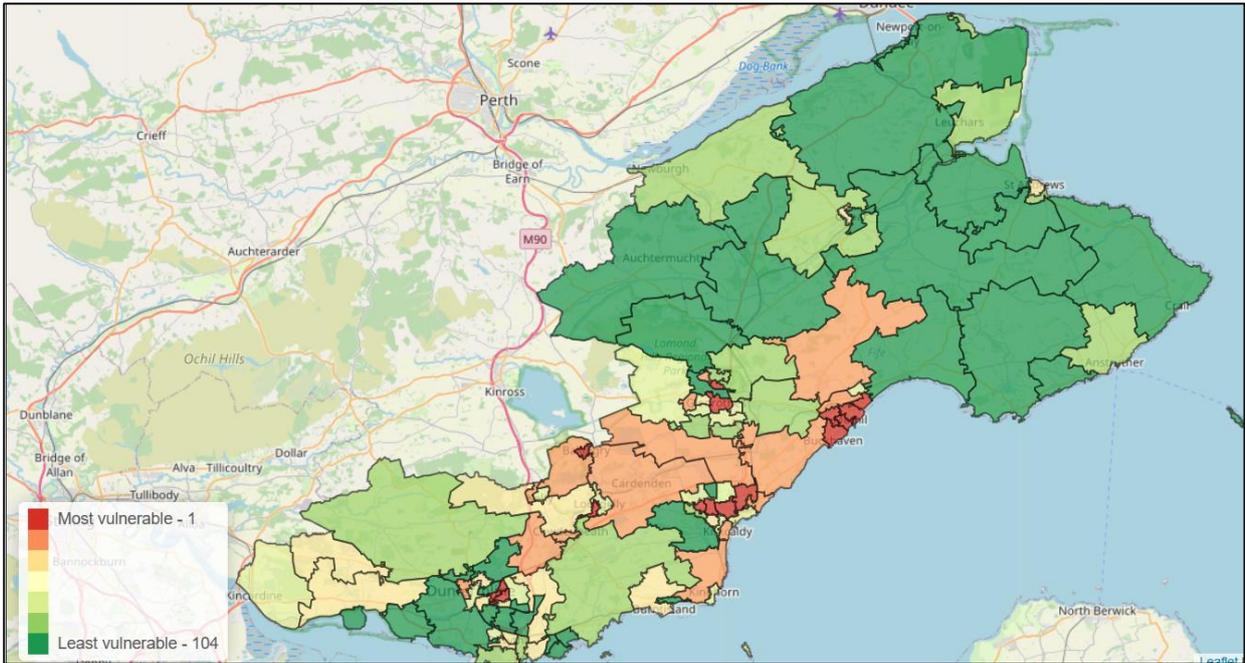
As Figure 2 highlights, there is some variation in population makeup between the seven committee areas, particularly in the divide between children and pensioner numbers. The proportion of working-age people is broadly similar across areas, ranging from a low of 60% in Levenmouth, to 63% in both City of Dunfermline and North East Fife.

Levenmouth, North East Fife and South West Fife are the areas with the greatest difference in the proportions of children and pensioners. At 14%, North East Fife has the lowest proportion of children, and the joint highest proportion of pensioners (23%). This imbalance may be affected by a higher number of rural population centres, with lower property sales and fewer facilities for families and young people.

## Poverty and deprivation

‘Employability, tackling poverty and preventing crisis’ is one of the six improvement policies identified in the *Fife Criminal Justice Social Work Improvement Plan, 2023-24*. This recognises that poverty and crisis are recurring themes experienced by Justice Service users. Understanding such pressure points will help identify areas and groups of greatest vulnerability, enabling a preventative approach.

Rates of deprivation vary across Fife and across demographics. Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Cowdenbeath are all linked with pockets of deprivation. Figure 3 shows the variation across Fife neighbourhoods on a range of key life outcomes (Community Planning Outcomes Profiling Tool). This highlights that poorer outcomes are firmly grounded in Place with Mid-Fife emerging as a particular area of concern overall within Fife.



**Figure 3: Map of Community vulnerability (Community planning outcomes profile)**

The ongoing effects of the cost of living crisis reach across social groups, and throughout Fife. While fuel costs are falling from a historic high and interest rates are likely to reduce by the summer of 2024, this is unlikely to have a significant effect on those affected. Food and fuel prices remain higher than they were pre-pandemic. Continued housing market instability, including rising rents, short-term mortgage deals and a shortage of affordable housing, will leave many Fifers in an uncertain financial situation.

**Financial resilience**

These pressures are reflected in a decrease in the proportion of Fifers who feel they are managing well financially (now 51% compared to 58% pre-pandemic). Those in the most deprived areas of Fife are six times more likely to not manage well than those in the least deprived areas of Fife.

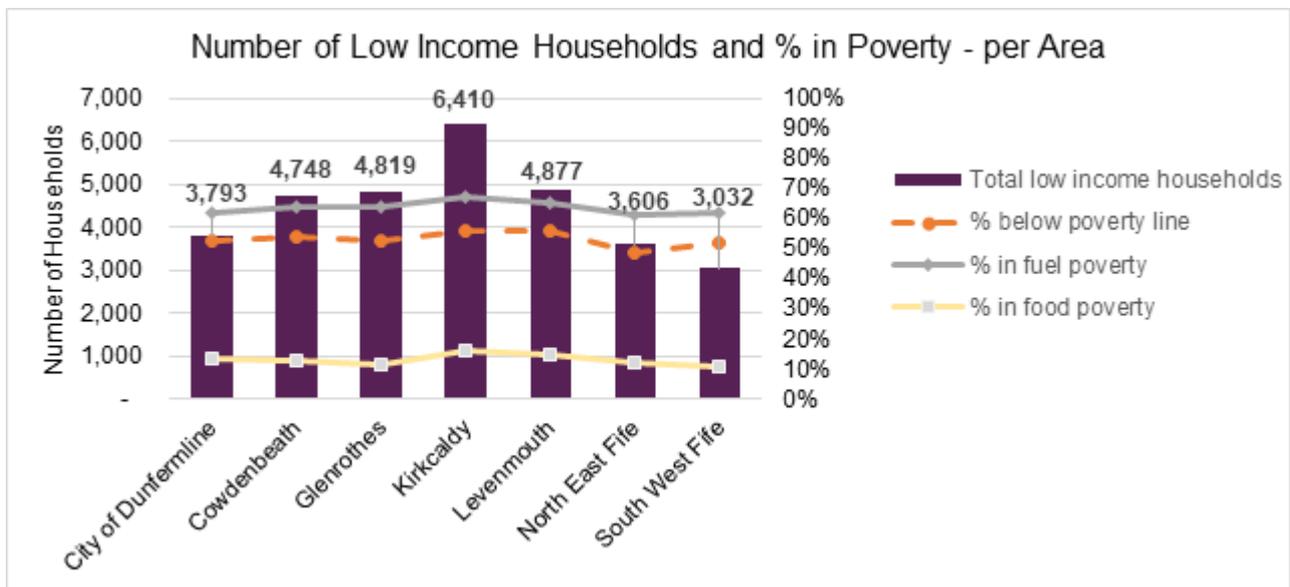
	Most deprived	Least deprived	Fife	Scotland
Manages well	38%	66%	51%	50%
Gets by alright	51%	32%	43%	41%
Does not manage well	12%	2%	6%	9%

**Figure 4: How households are managing financially, most and least deprived for Fife, compared with Fife and Scotland (Scottish Household Survey, 2023)**

As of January 2024, there were an estimated 31,285 low-income households in Fife (Low income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard). Figure 5 shows that single households are the largest group, accounting for two thirds of all low-income households, and 89% of those who are in a cash shortfall (expected take-home-income less than expected expenditure). Lone parents are the second largest group (17.5%), followed by couples without children (9.8%). Couples with children account for 5.1% of low-income households. 87.2% are coping financially (household take-home-income is greater than expected expenditure by £100). 16.7% of single low-income households are assessed as not coping financially.

	Coping	Struggling	At Risk or In Crisis (cash shortfall)	Total	% not coping
Couple with children	1,559	9	35	1,603	2.7%
Couple without children	2,868	73	131	3,072	6.6%
Lone parent	5,239	49	176	5,464	4.1%
Single	17,625	719	2,802	21,146	16.7%
Total Low Income Households	27,291	850	3,144	31,285	12.8%

**Figure 5: Financial resilience of low-income households by type (LIFT, January 2024)**



**Figure 6: Number of low-income households and % in poverty by Area**

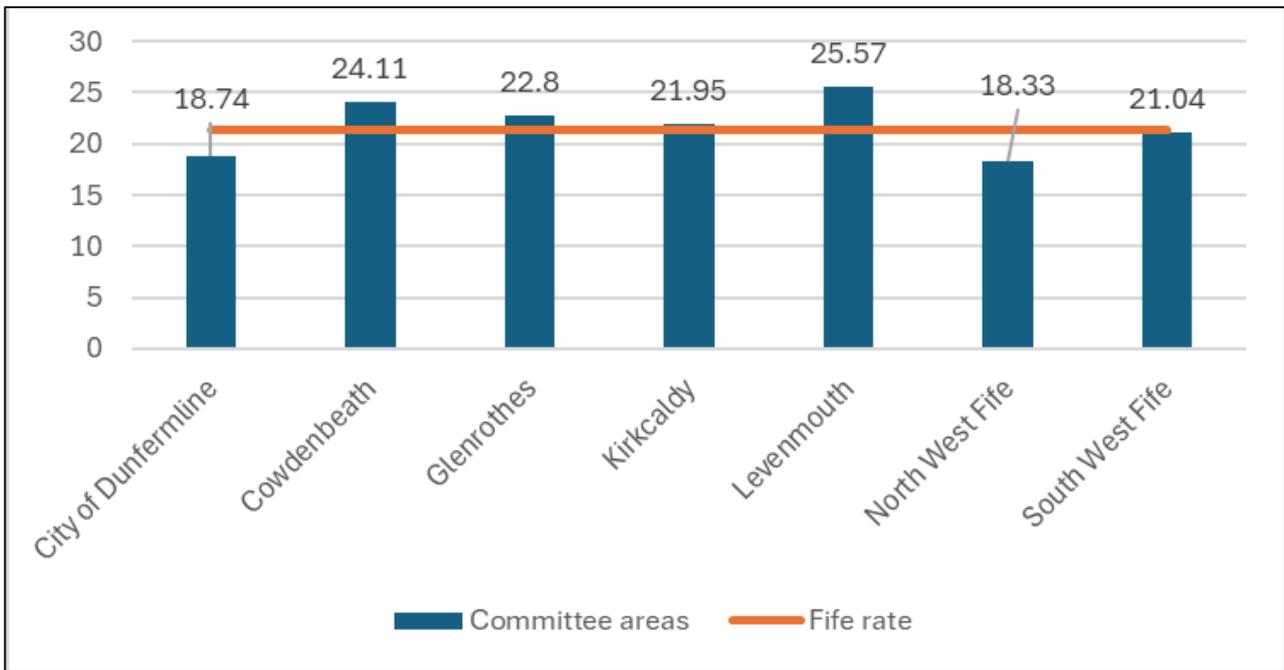
Figure 6 shows how low income households in Fife are distributed across each of the 7 Areas. Kirkcaldy has the highest number of low income households (6,410), with Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes having close to 5,000 low income households in each area. While the total number of low income households is lower in South West Fife, North East Fife and the City of Dunfermline areas, poverty follows a similar pattern across all of the areas. Not all low income households are living below the poverty line (less than 60% of median household income). More households are in fuel poverty than are in relative poverty (below poverty line). A minority of households are in food poverty, and this mirrors households who are in crisis because they do not have sufficient income to cover household living costs.

## Mental health

The cost of living crisis has been identified as having a significant impact on mental health, and the proportion of the population in receipt of prescriptions for anxiety and depression is significantly higher in Fife than Scotland. The rate in Fife’s most deprived areas is nearly twice that in its least deprived areas, with particularly high levels in Cowdenbeath.

Most deprived	Least deprived	Fife	Scotland
27.1%	15.3%	21.3%	20.1%

**Figure 7: Mental health (proportion prescribed prescriptions for anxiety and depression): most and least deprived, Fife and Scotland**



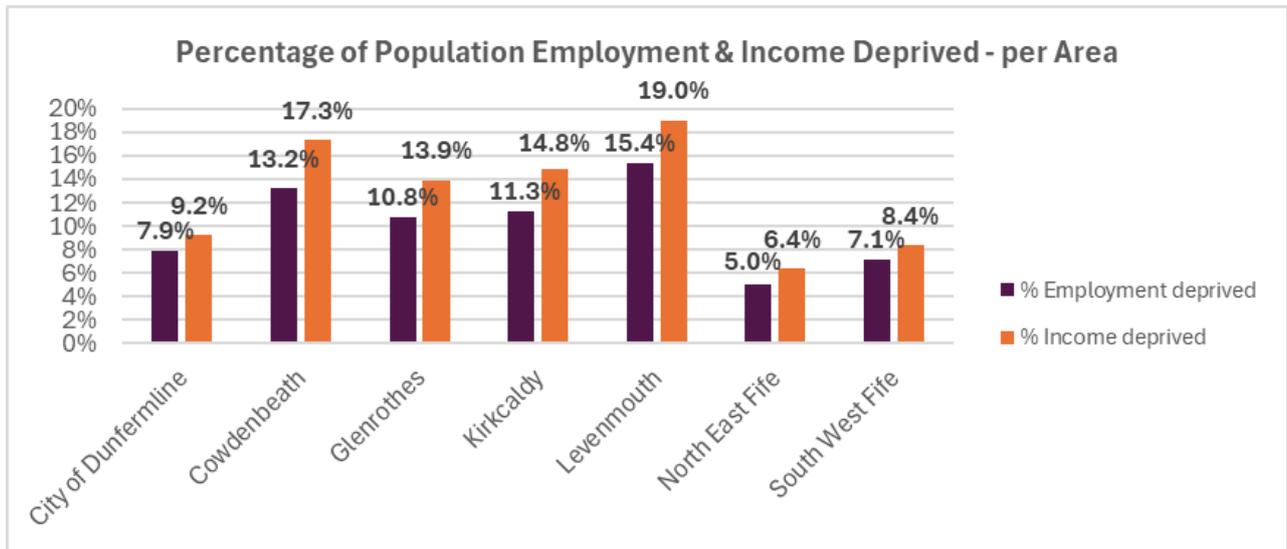
**Figure 8: Population prescribed drugs for anxiety/depression/psychosis**

Although Figure 8 suggests some association between poverty and increased prescription of medication, it is likely that other factors contribute to this. While Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath have the highest prescription rates, and areas of deprivation, rates in South West Fife are closer to Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes than they are to Dunfermline and North East Fife. These prescription trends mirror those for mental wellbeing data in Fife. The latest data (2018-22) for the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) shows the lowest average WEMWBS score (48.8) in Fife to be recorded in the Scottish Health Survey, continuing a downward trend that suggests mental wellbeing is decreasing (49.4 in 2017-21 and 49.9 in 2016-19).

While males remain more likely than females to report positive mental wellbeing (49.3 against 48.3) the gap between the sexes is reducing year on year, with the male figure reducing at a faster rate.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scottish health survey (<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-health-survey/>)

## Employment and income

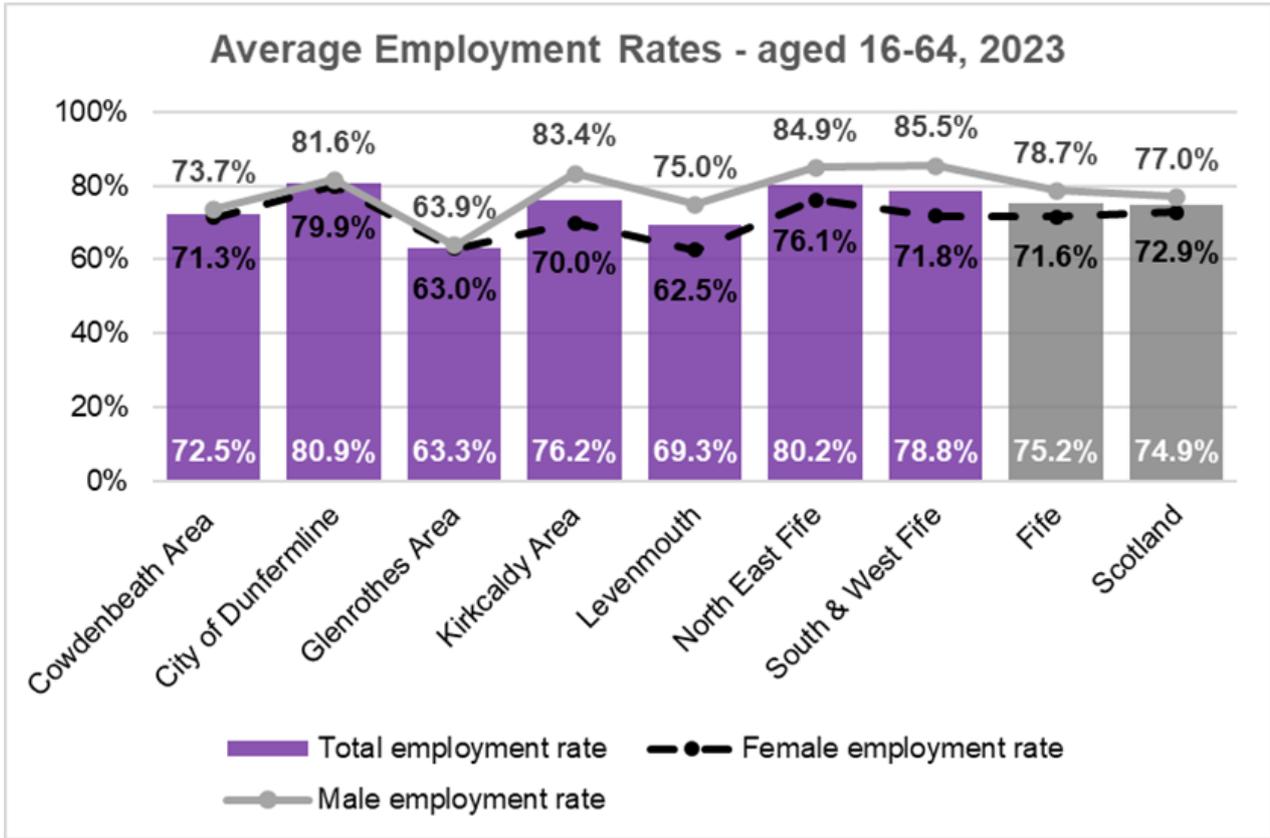


**Figure 9: Area committee: % employment and % income deprived (SIMD 2020)**

Figure 9 highlights the percentage of the working age population classed as employment deprived, and the percentage of the total population who are income deprived, highlighting the financial strain on many Fife residents.<sup>2</sup> The fact that income deprivation is higher than employment deprivation illustrates that the work secured by some Fifiers is not enough to lift them out of poverty. This is particularly acute in Levenmouth, where nearly one fifth of the population are classed as income deprived and 15.4% of the working age population are employment deprived.

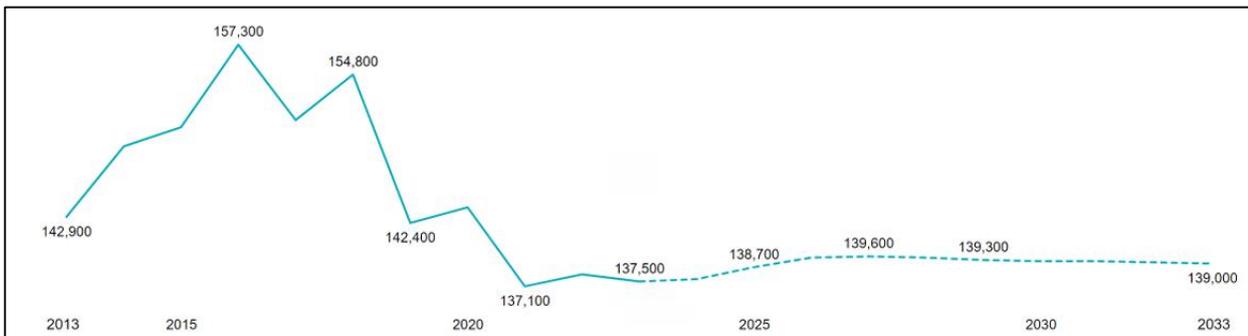
The Mid-Fife region, encompassing the area committees of Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes, all have rates of employment deprivation above 10%, as does Cowdenbeath. Many of these areas have seen a decline in traditional industries over the last decade, leading to factory closures and redundancies. Shop closures and other issues affecting town centres have particularly affected Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes, and employment opportunities there.

<sup>2</sup> **Employment deprivation**, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), is a measure of the percentage of the working age population (men aged 16-64 and women aged 16-60) who are on the claimant count, those who receive Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance or Severe Disablement Allowance, and Universal Credit claimants who are not in employment.



**Figure 10: Employment rates by area (Fife Local Economic Profiles 2022-2023)**

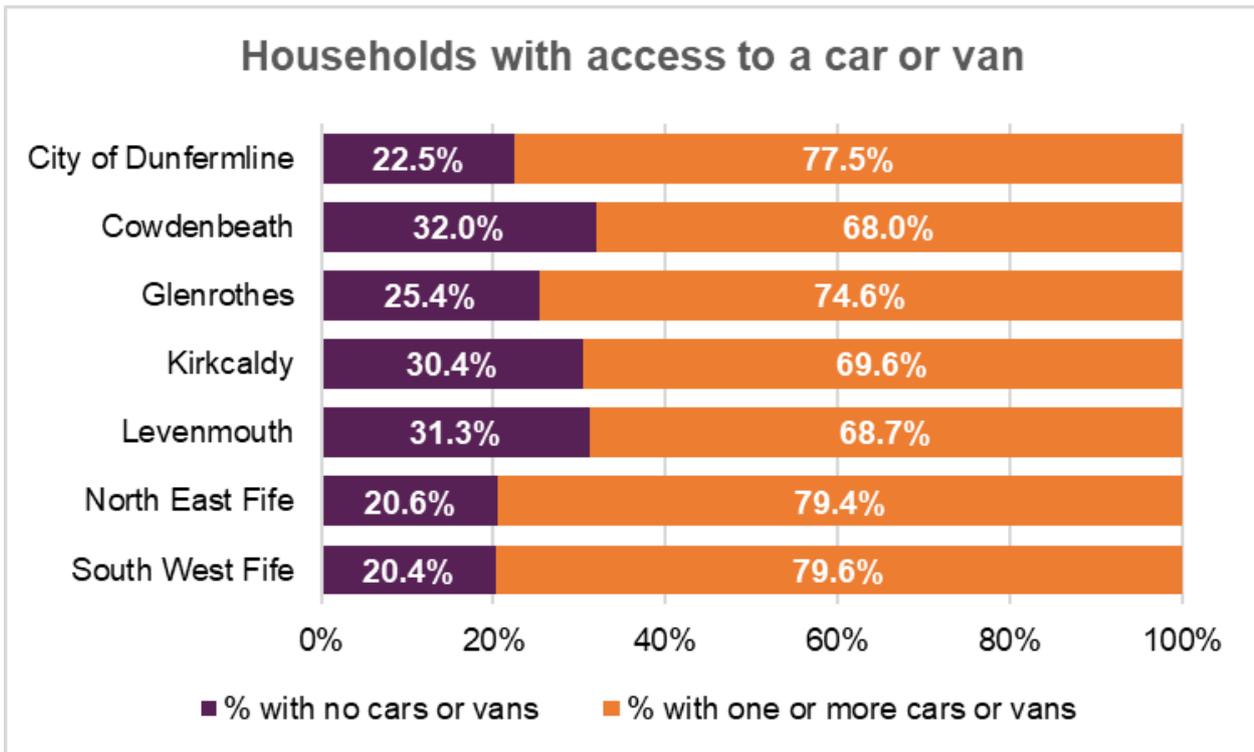
These trends are further highlighted in Figure 10, showing employment rates by committee area and gender. Particularly striking is the low level of male employment in Glenrothes, at 59.2%. This is the only committee area where the percentage of females in employment is higher than males.



**Figure 11: Employment and forecast employment (2013-2033) (people), Fife (Regional Skills Assessment, Oct 23)**

Figure 11 highlights the Fife employment trend since 2013. A sharp decrease in 2019 has been followed by a further contraction during the Covid pandemic, although numbers are projected to remain broadly stable towards 2033. However, it should be noted that such figures will not necessarily mean a shortage of available jobs. The changing age profile of Fife is leading to fewer people of working age, while there are also a growing number of Fifiers who are economically inactive, with mental health issues becoming more prevalent.

## Transport



**Figure 12: Fife households with access to a car or van**

In many parts of Fife, particularly rural areas, access to employment, learning and culture is adversely affected without access to a vehicle. The scarcity of public transport at certain times of day, and on some routes, means that this is not a viable option for all Fifers.

As Figure 12 shows, the rural areas of North East and South West Fife are linked with the highest level of vehicle use, in part due to reduced access to public transport. While other areas of Fife have a lower percentage of vehicle use, there are differences between urban areas. While around three quarters of households in City of Dunfermline and Glenrothes have access to vehicles, this falls to between 68% and 70% for Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath. With these being the three areas of Fife most affected by income deprivation, it is likely that the financial cost of owning and running a vehicle is partly responsible for these lower rates.

## Housing and homelessness

Owner occupied properties make up the largest proportion of houses in both Fife and Scotland, at around 61%. While levels of vacant private dwellings/second homes are also similar, at 4%, there are some differences in the makeup of social housing. While this accounts for 23% of the housing stock in both Fife and Scotland, almost 3 out of 4 properties in the Fife social sector are council properties. Across Scotland as a whole, the distribution is more even between Council properties and Housing association properties.

Committee area	% Owner-occupied	% Social rented	% Private rented
Cowdenbeath	55.9	34.6	7.4
Dunfermline	67.9	18.5	11.0
Glenrothes	62.0	25.1	10.7
Kirkcaldy	58.1	27.1	11.9
Levenmouth	54.6	31.0	10.4
North East Fife	61.0	14.1	14.9
South West Fife	68.6	17.8	10.1
Fife	61.4	23.0	11.3

**Figure 13: Housing tenure by Fife committee area, 2022 (Scottish Government)<sup>3</sup>**

As Figure 13 highlights, levels of affordable housing differ across committee areas. Cowdenbeath (34.6%) and Levenmouth (31.0%) have the highest proportion of social rented accommodation, more than double the proportion found in North East Fife.

The makeup of housing matters because affordability and availability are both factors that can limit access to housing. In an area such as North East Fife, with a low percentage of social rented accommodation and a large number of second homes in some towns and villages, many people may be unable to find an affordable home of their own.

In 2023, the average rent for a two bedroom property in Fife was £700 per month, compared to the Scotland average of £841, although rents vary across committee areas and between towns. Fife has seen increases in average rents above the rate of inflation for all property sizes (except one bedroom properties). While inflation has fallen in recent months, the impact of rising interest rates on mortgage costs has yet to be fully felt, with private landlords likely to pass any increased costs on to private tenants.

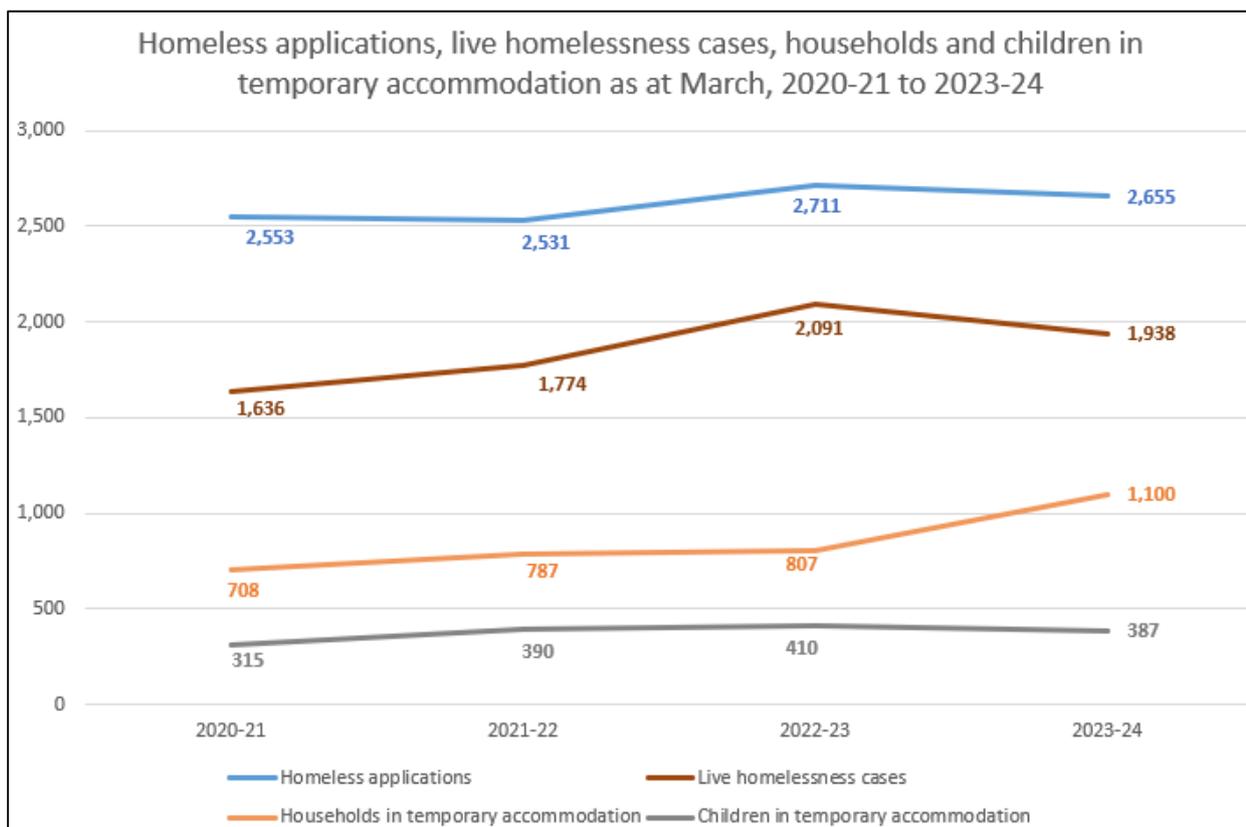
Support measures introduced to tackle the cost of living crisis, including a rent freeze and eviction ban are due to come to an end, with private tenants likely to face big rent rises and the restarting of evictions from April 2024. The removal of private accommodation from the rental sector has also increased pressure.

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<sup>3</sup> Housing statistics: Stock by tenure, 2022 (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-stock-by-tenure/>)

## Homelessness

Recognising the strains on the housing system and the people trying to navigate this, Fife Council declared a housing emergency in March 2024. Provision of social housing was noted as a key component in preventing homelessness. As part of this, the council has recently agreed a three year plan to tackle homelessness that highlighted the need for an estimated £67.3 million to help the escalating number of families without permanent housing. As Figure 14 highlights, the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased year-on-year since 2020, increasing to a new high of 1100 in March 2024.



**Figure 14 - Homelessness applications, live homelessness cases, households and children in temporary accommodation as at March, 2020/21 to 2023/24**

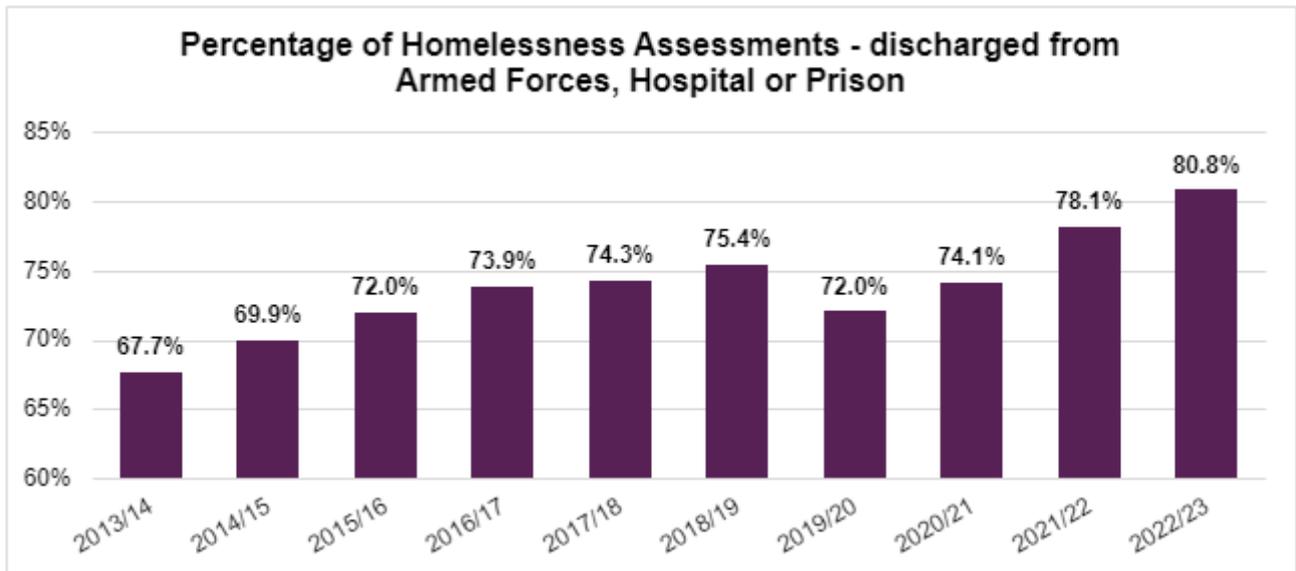
There is a strong association between prisoners and homelessness, both prior to and post incarceration. While estimates vary, it is possible that between 15% and 32% of prisoners were either homeless or living in temporary accommodation prior to imprisonment.<sup>4</sup> Even for those prisoners who did have settled accommodation, it is highly likely that this will be lost during their incarceration if they were living alone.

A 2012 study for the Ministry of Justice found that 60% of prisoners believed that having a place to live was important in stopping them reoffending in the future. Supporting this, 79% of prisoners who reported being homeless before custody were reconvicted in the first year after release, compared with 47% of those who did not report being homeless.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *No Fixed Abode*, (The Howard League for Penal Reform. 2013)

<sup>5</sup> *Accommodation, Homelessness and Reoffending of Prisoners: Results from the surveying prisoner crime reduction (SPCR) survey*, (Ministry of Justice. 2012)

There is a further risk that released prisoners who have no option but to ‘sofa surf’ may reconnect with old associates, thereby falling back into an unhealthy lifestyle that may lead to future offending. Such unsettled living circumstances may also make it difficult to monitor released prisoners and track their rehabilitation.



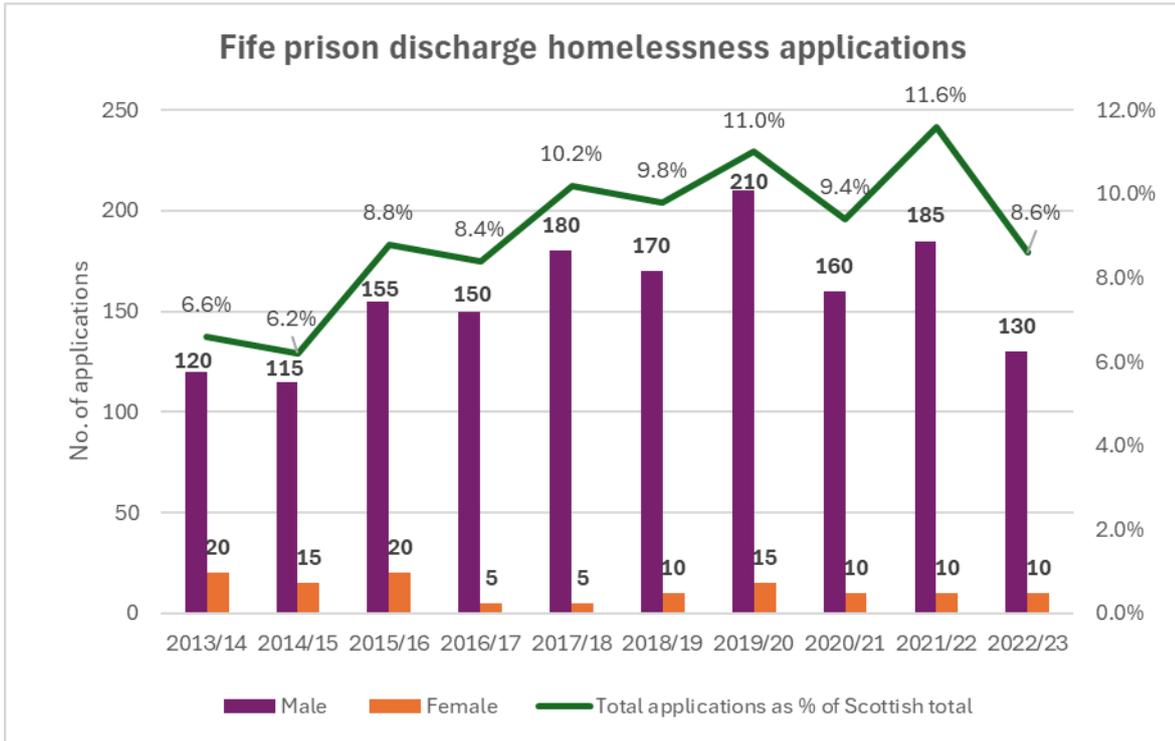
**Figure 15: Percentage of homelessness assessments assessed as priority need category ‘Household member discharged from armed forces, hospital or prison’ (Scottish Government)<sup>6</sup>**

Where possible, homelessness applications across Scotland linked to discharge from prison are linked with a category of priority need. Figure 15 shows the considerable proportion of such homelessness applications that are linked with the category of ‘Household member discharged from armed forces, hospital or prison’. The three years since 2019/20 have seen consecutive increases, with the 2021/22 Scottish figure of 78.1% and 2022/23 figure of 80.8% both setting new highs for this category.

In 2022/23, ‘Discharge from prison/hospital/care/other institution’ was given as the main reason for a homelessness application by 92.6% of Scottish applicants (92.9% of males and 87.5% of females).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> ‘Prison service homelessness, 2022-23: table 16’ (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-prison-homelessness/>)

<sup>7</sup> ‘Prison service homelessness, 2022-23: table 9’ (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-prison-homelessness/>)



**Figure 16: Fife prison discharge homelessness applications, 2013/14 - 2022/23 (Scottish Government)<sup>8</sup>**

Figure 16 highlights Fife homelessness applications linked to discharge from prison. While yearly applications have fluctuated in Fife over this period, the authority has consistently had the second highest number of applications in Scotland, behind Glasgow City. In 2022/23 the 140 Fife applications made up 8.6% of the Scottish total, down from a high of 11.6% in the previous year.

One interesting trend is how the gender balance of prison homelessness applicants has changed in recent years. While the number of Fife homeless applications by females has remained constant between 2020/21 and 2022/23, at ten per year, as a proportion of the Scottish figure this has seen a significant increase. While Fife had 8.6% of all Scottish applications in 2022/23, it had 12.5% of all female applications, up from 8.3% two years previously.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 'Prison service homelessness, 2022-23: table 1' (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-prison-homelessness/>)

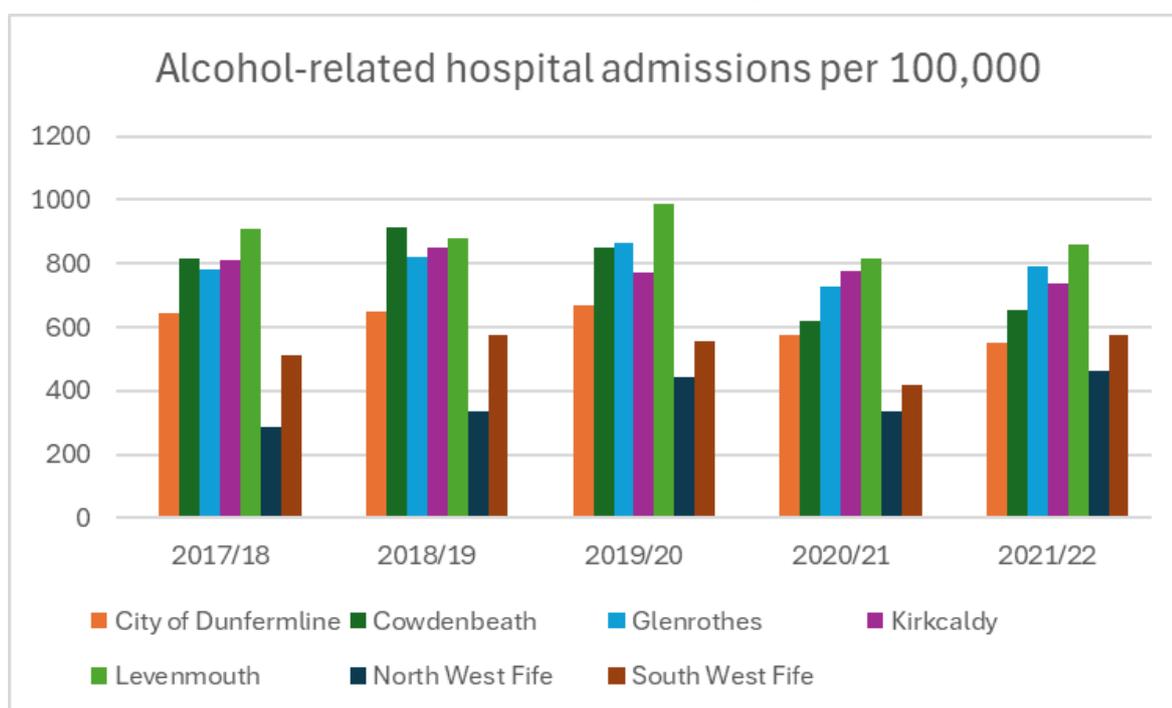
<sup>9</sup> 'Prison service homelessness, 2022-23: table 2' (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-prison-homelessness/>)

## Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol are a contributing factor to premature ill health and have a proven link with many types of offending. The broad classification of drug and alcohol use means that it is not limited to particular social groups or demographics, while the increase in diagnosed mental health conditions has led to a marked increase in the use of prescription drugs.

12.9% Fife of females and 20.59% of males are linked with binge drinking, rates that are below the Scottish figure. Fife males, at 28%, are more likely than females (15%) to have alcohol consumption that exceeds recommended weekly limits. However, comparison with the Scottish figures shows this gender divide in a different light. While Fife males are 4% below the equivalent Scottish figure and therefore drink less than might be expected, the equivalent comparison is only 1% for females.

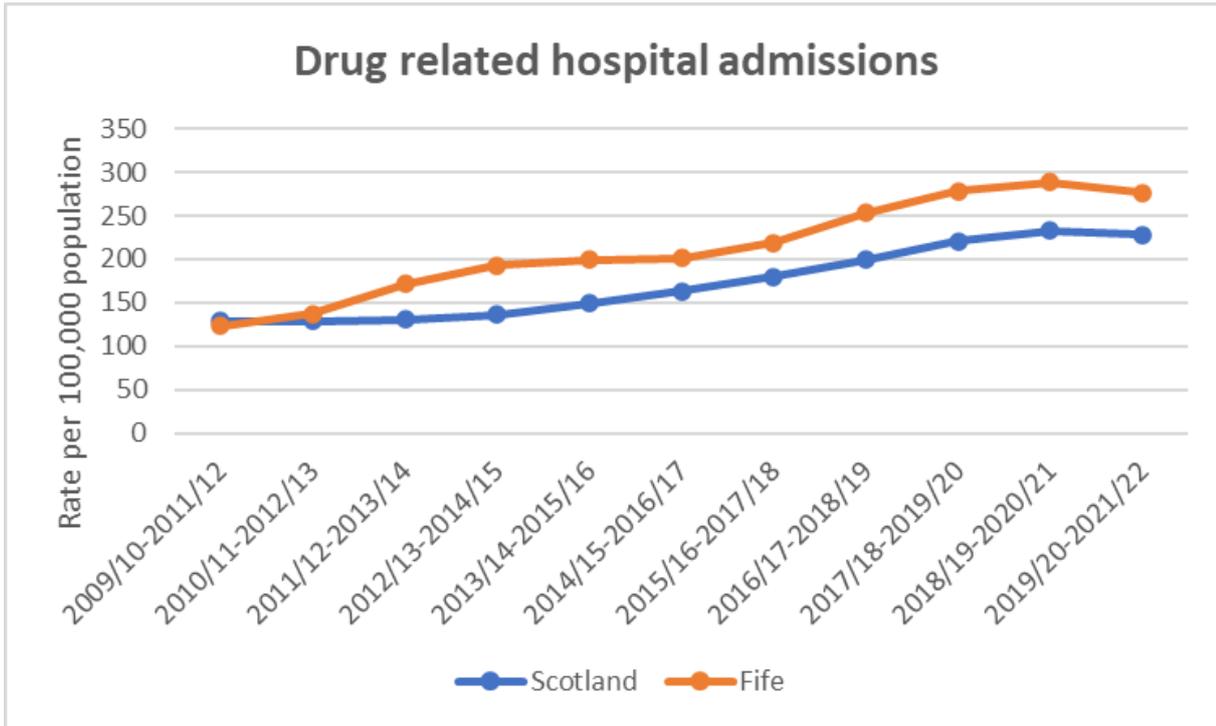
Analysis of alcohol-related hospital admissions reveals considerable variation across Fife. At 640.1 per 100,000, the Fife figure is only slightly higher than the Scottish rate of 611.05. While North East Fife, City of Dunfermline and South West Fife all have rates below the Scottish figure, Kirkcaldy (737.4), Glenrothes (789.28) and Levenmouth (861.62) are considerably higher. While Levenmouth has historically been the area linked with the greatest admission rate, Glenrothes has seen a steady increase since 2014/15.



**Figure 17: Alcohol-related hospital admissions per 100,000, 2017/18 - 2021/22 (ScotPHO profiles)<sup>10</sup>**

A similar pattern is evident for alcohol-specific deaths. At 32.2 per 100,000 population, the Levenmouth figure for 2017-21 is significantly above the Cowdenbeath figure of 24.05. Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath are the only two Fife areas to be higher than the Scottish rate of 21.1. Examining this by gender reveals that, at a Fife level, females have a higher rate (13.92) than the Scottish equivalent (12.8).

<sup>10</sup> ScotPHO profiles: Public Health Scotland ([https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO\\_profiles\\_tool/](https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO_profiles_tool/))



**Figure 18: Drug-related hospital admissions per 100,000, 2009/10-2021/22 (ScotPHO profiles)<sup>11</sup>**

As Figure 18 highlights, the last decade has seen Fife markedly diverge from the Scottish standardised rate for drug-related hospital admissions. Beginning in the period 2010/11-2012/13, Fife first overtook the Scottish rate, with this gap remaining consistent in the years since. The most recent data, for the period 2019/20 - 2021/22, has the Fife rate at 275.98 per 100,000, and the Scottish rate at 228.36.

Drug-related deaths in Fife have shown an upward trend for some years now, mirroring the Scottish trend. The 2021 figures see a Fife rate of 20.48 per 100,000 and a Scottish figure of 25.24. The Fife rate is affected by a decrease in the number of drug-related deaths linked to females, although the rate for males continues to increase.

<sup>11</sup> ScotPHO profiles: Public Health Scotland ([https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO\\_profiles\\_tool/](https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO_profiles_tool/))

## Gambling

Many types of gambling are legally available in Scotland, including bingo, slot machines, casinos, betting shops and the National Lottery. According to the Scottish Health Survey 2021, over half (58%) of adults have gambled in the last year. While many people gamble without adverse consequences others experience a range of health harms, including poor physical and mental health.

0.4% of adults are problem gamblers and 1.5% are at risk of gambling problems. If applied to the adult population of Fife (16 and over), the number of problem gamblers is estimated to be 1,244. Men (1,046) are significantly more likely to be problem gamblers than women (162), 0.7% and 0.1% of adults respectively.

A further 1.5% (around 4,666 adults in Fife) are likely to be at risk of moderate gambling problems (2.1% of men and 1.0% of women), based on a standard risk questionnaire. Men have consistently been more likely to gamble, and to be problem gamblers, than women since 2012.

Online gambling participation has doubled since 2012. The proportion of adults undertaking any gambling activities in 2021 has decreased significantly since 2012, whilst prevalence of adult gambling activity excluding the National Lottery has changed to a lesser extent. Gambling activity in the last 12 months varied by age, with the lowest prevalence amongst those aged 16-24 and highest for those aged 45-54 (35-44 when the National Lottery is excluded). Those aged 25-44 took part in the highest number of different gambling activities in 2021. 8% of adults participated in four or more gambling activities in the last year. More than double the number of men participated in four or more gambling activities in the last year than women.

There are significant inequalities in who is most likely to experience harm; those living in the most deprived areas were nearly three times more likely to be problem gamblers than those living in the least deprived areas (1.5% vs 0.5%).

Gambling affects mental wellbeing with women who gamble having lower mental wellbeing than men who gamble. In 2021, adults who did not participate in gambling in the past 12 months had, on average, higher levels of mental wellbeing (as measured by WEMWBS) than those that did. After excluding the National Lottery, this difference increases.

Young people can also experience harm from gambling. This may be harm from their own gambling or harm caused by parental gambling. It is estimated at around one in every 250 children aged 11-15 (0.4%) experience gambling problems in Britain.

### 3. Safer Fife

Community safety encompasses a range of issues including crime, antisocial behaviour, public perception of crime, and safety in homes and on roads. This broad remit reflects that community safety issues have the potential to affect all of Fife’s population. This makes it important that community safety trends are understood, allowing issues and areas of note to be promptly addressed.

#### Public perception

Residents’ perception of crime has often highlighted a disconnect with official figures, particularly through response mechanisms such as the Scottish Crime and Justice survey. Local authority findings are not yet available for the 2021/22 survey, but data for the 2018-20 period shows that Fife differs from the aggregate Scottish response in several key areas.<sup>12</sup> Fife respondents were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the police, specifically in agreeing that police in the area treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are, and that overall, people have a lot of confidence in the police in this area. This extends to a positive perception of contact with the police. Fife respondents were more likely to report being treated very/quite fairly (93.7%) and being very/quite satisfied with how police handled matters (79%).

Fife respondents were less likely to express confidence in the criminal justice system. 70.5% of respondents were confident that everyone had access to the justice system if they needed it. Only 52.4% of respondents were confident that the criminal justice system considered the circumstances relating to crimes when handing out sentences. Similar findings emerge from Fife People’s Panel Our Place survey, where respondents were asked to give their opinions about living in Fife, scoring categories between 1 (most need for improvement) and 7 (little need for improvement). Feeling safe was scored as 4.31 in the 2023 survey, a decrease of 0.37 from 2021. While North East Fife had the highest score, it also had the largest area decrease from the previous survey. Cowdenbeath (3.66) and Levenmouth (3.34) emerged as the areas that residents considered most in need of improvement.<sup>13</sup>

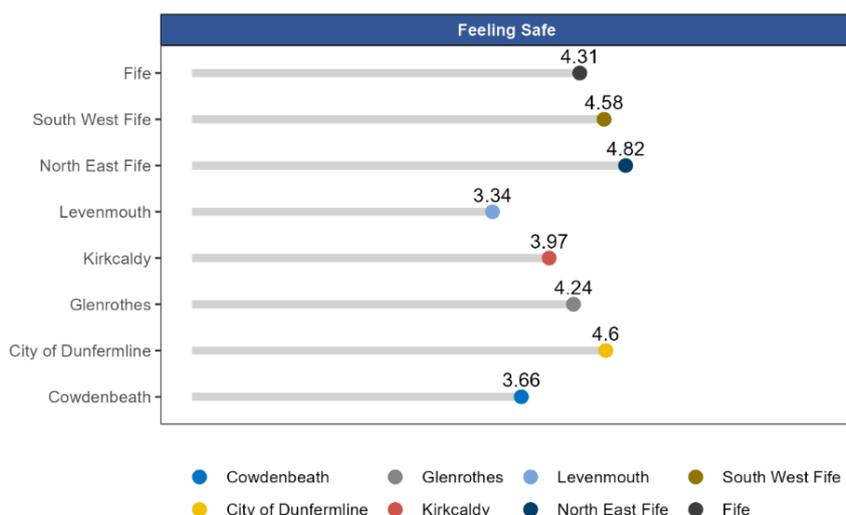


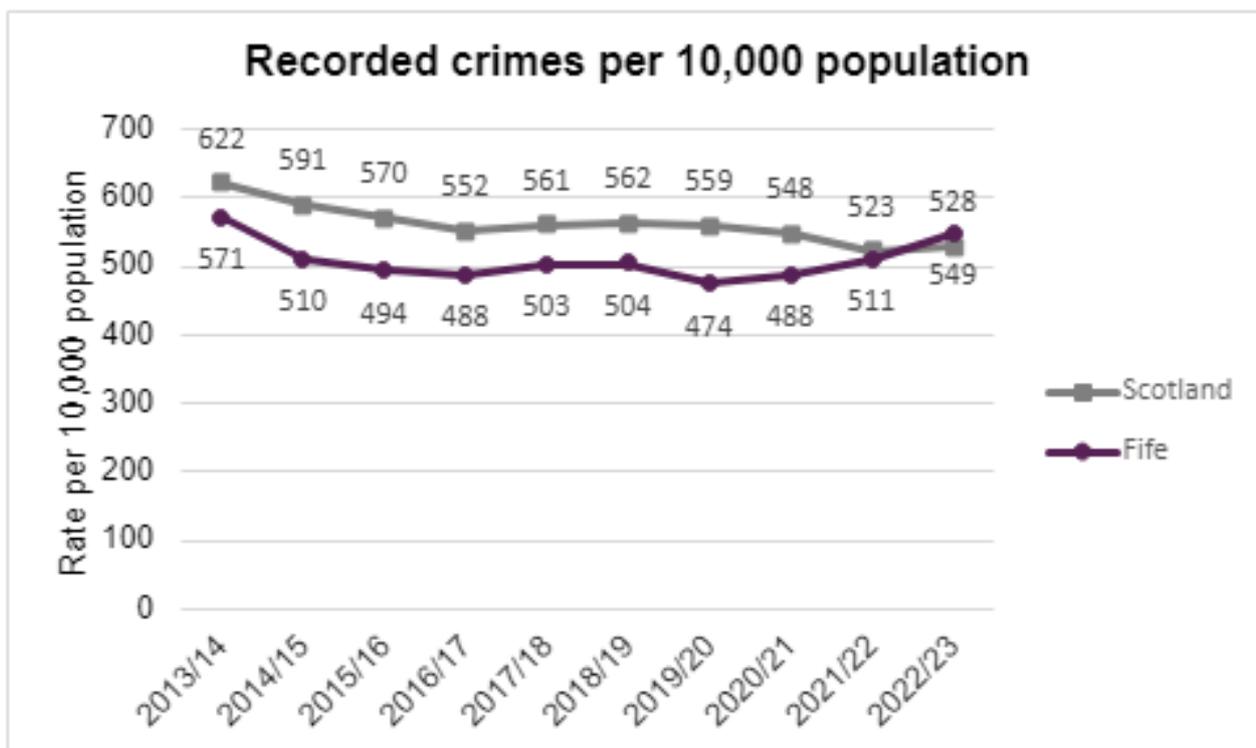
Figure 19: Community perception of area safety (Our Place Survey, 2023)

<sup>12</sup> [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(shinyapps.io\)](https://shinyapps.io/)

<sup>13</sup> 'Our Place: Living in Fife 2023' (Fife Council Research Team, 2024) [Our-Place-Fife-2023.pdf](#)

## Offending

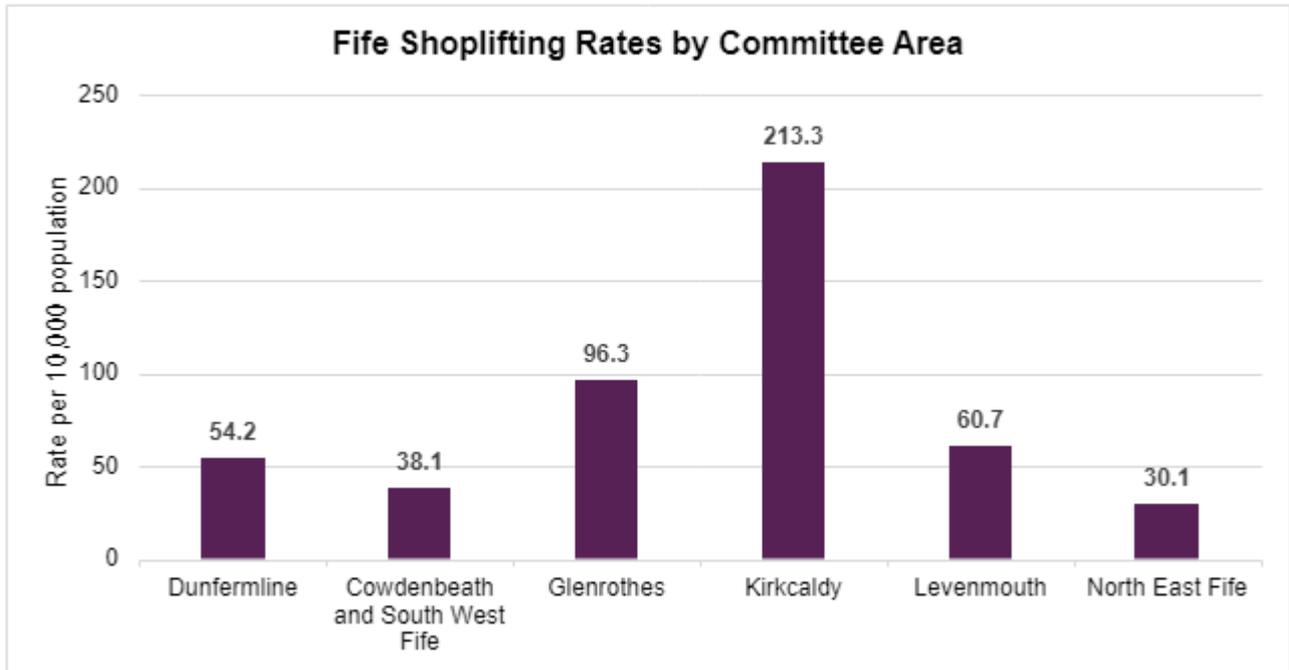
Crime and antisocial behaviour are areas heavily linked with community safety, and recent years have seen an increase in the Fife crime rate. 2022/23 marked the third consecutive year where the Fife crime rate per 10,000 population had increased. Perhaps more significantly, this rate of 549 crimes per 10,000 population represented the first time in a ten-year period where the Fife rate exceeded the Scottish figure.



**Figure 20: Recorded crimes per 10,000 population (Police Scotland Recorded Crime, 2022-23 Bulletin tables)<sup>14</sup>**

Much of this increase in charges was driven by crimes of dishonesty, with theft of a motor vehicle, shoplifting and fraud crimes all increasing to their highest level in the ten-year period. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, Scottish shoplifting offences increased from 42 to 52 per 10,000. The Fife increase was from 49 to 77, with only Dundee City (113) and Aberdeen City (79) having higher rates. It is unclear to what extent such crimes of dishonesty – particularly shoplifting – may be linked to the ongoing cost of living crisis.

<sup>14</sup> 'Recorded crime in Scotland, 2022-23', (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2022-23/documents/>)



**Figure 21: Fife shoplifting rates by committee area, 2022/23 (Police Scotland)**

As Figure 21 highlights, when shoplifting charges are considered against committee area population there are significant differences between Fife areas. This ranges from a high of 213.3 per 10,000 population in Kirkcaldy, to a low of 30.1 in NEF. Such differences cannot be explained solely by the number of shops in each committee area. Dunfermline, one of Fife’s main shopping areas, has a rate of only 54.2, behind Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Levenmouth. There is a risk that the way in which information is reported may mask any differences between Cowdenbeath and South West Fife Areas.<sup>15</sup>

The number of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents recorded by Fife Division saw a slight decrease between 2021/22 and 2022/23, from 24,350 to 22,961. This latter figure equated to 614.7 incidents per 10,000 population. Disturbance incidents were the largest category, accounting for 26% of recorded ASB incidents.<sup>16</sup> Analysis has highlighted that fewer than 20% of calls to the police result in a crime being recorded, with Police Scotland increasingly providing support to people experiencing mental health distress.<sup>17</sup>

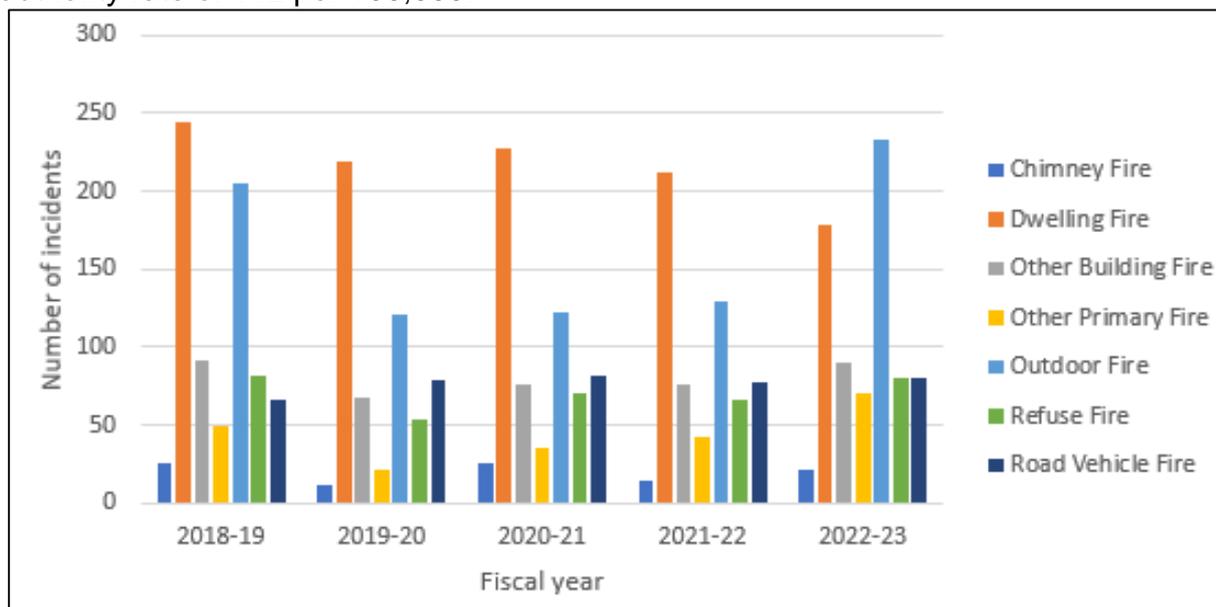
<sup>15</sup> Cowdenbeath and South West Fife are grouped together due to systems recording them under a single area code, making it difficult to split out.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Police Scotland: Management information council area report quarter 4, 2022-23’ (<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-are-performing/>)

<sup>17</sup> ‘Scottish Police Authority: Spotlight on Mental Health’ (<https://www.spa.police.uk/spotlight-on/mental-health/>)

## Fire activity

At 1,908, the number of Fife fire incidents was the highest since 2009/10. This was driven by considerable variation in several fire categories, including a 20% decrease in dwelling fires and a 33% increase in outdoor fires – particularly the category of grassland / woodland / crops. This gives Fife a total primary outdoor fire rate of 111.7 per 100,000 population. This is considerably above the Scottish figure of 65.7, and just short of West Lothian’s peak local authority rate of 112 per 100,000.



**Figure 22: Number of Fife fire incidents by type (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Fires dataset, 2009/10 - 2022/23)<sup>18</sup>**

Restrictions on movement during the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns have not led to a decrease in outdoor fires. Instead, the years since the introduction of the first lockdown in March 2020 have seen an increase in outdoor fires across every committee area. This is most apparent in Kirkcaldy, where there was an 86% increase in outdoor fires between 2021/22 and 2022/23. This was the largest increase of any committee area, with Kirkcaldy East remaining the most affected ward. Levenmouth incidents also remain high, driven by an upwards trend in the Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages ward.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Cowdenbeath	158	228	275	234
Dunfermline	100	108	127	146
Glenrothes	109	205	139	156
Kirkcaldy	130	196	181	336
Levenmouth	142	170	251	288
North East Fife	60	90	91	111
South West Fife	122	119	114	139
Fife	821	1116	1178	1410

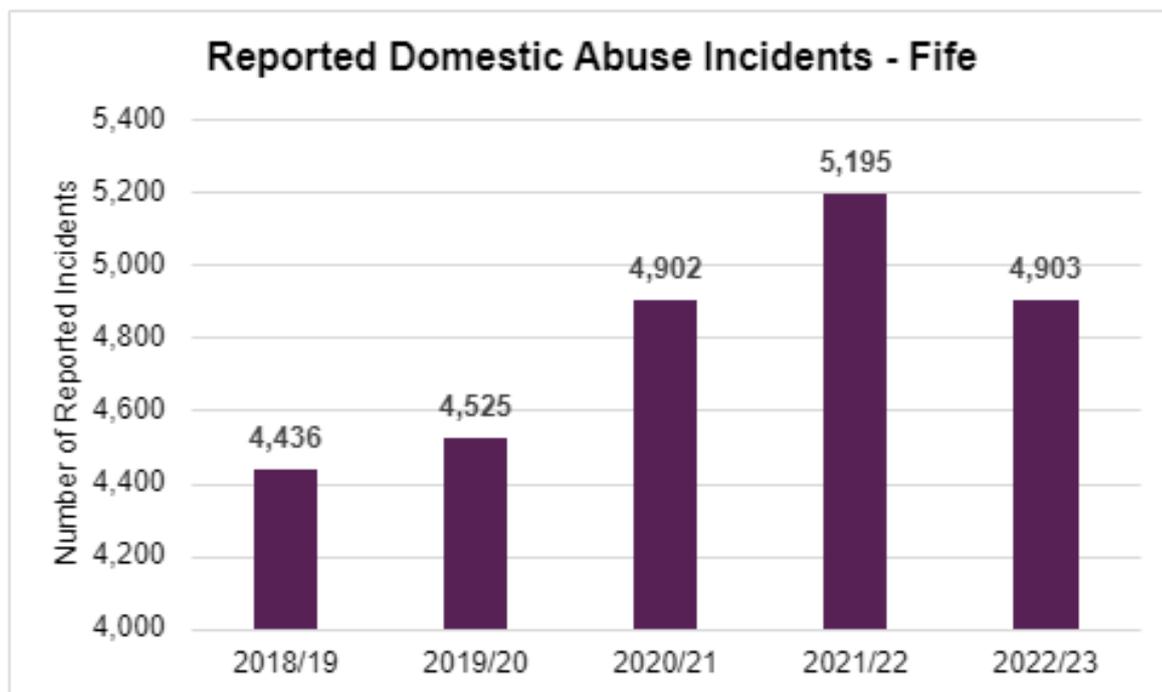
**Figure 23: Outdoor fires by Fife committee area, 2019/20-2022/23 (Source: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)**

<sup>18</sup> 'Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Fires dataset, 2009/10 -2022/23'  
<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about/statistics/>

## Violence against women

Violence against women (including domestic abuse and sexual abuse) continues to be a priority area within Fife, with there being recognition that the effects of the pandemic – including lockdown and linked social restrictions – had the potential to increase levels of risk for some women and children.<sup>19</sup>

In Fife, 4,903 incidents of domestic abuse were reported in 2022/23, a 17% decrease from the previous year. This is still significantly above the 2019/20 figure of 4525 incidents and appears to be a legacy of the increase seen during the Covid pandemic (Figure 24).



**Figure 24: Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents: Fife Division (Police Scotland, 2018/19 - 2022/23)**

An increase in crimes of indecency was also seen over the same period, following a similar pattern of a sustained rise into 2020/21 and 2021/22, followed by a slight decrease in 2022/23. This 2022/23 figure of 1,418 crimes was still 31% above the 2019/20 total.<sup>20</sup> Third sector sexual abuse agencies provided 7526 hours of support to survivors in 2022/23. The Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (FRASAC) received 556 new referrals (835 individuals), an increase of 57% on the previous year and the highest level recorded by the partnership.

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<sup>19</sup> *Coronavirus supplementary national violence against women guidance*

([https://www.cosla.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/19668/COVID-19-Supplementary-VAW-Guidance-Sept-2020.pdf](https://www.cosla.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/19668/COVID-19-Supplementary-VAW-Guidance-Sept-2020.pdf))

<sup>20</sup> Crimes of indecency describe a wide range of sexual offending, including sexual assault and rape. These include current and historic offending including in a domestic context. Police Scotland and local support agencies work together to ensure that victims and survivors are supported with recovery and reporting.

## 4. Community Justice

Community justice works towards the ultimate goal of prevention. Community justice measures are designed to stop people breaking the law again, working towards the outcomes of fewer victims and safer communities.

Such measures may take a variety of forms, including unpaid work, fines, imprisonment and restrictions of liberty (including electronic tags and curfews). The following information highlights both local and national data, highlighting trends and issues of note linked to these areas.

Figure 25 highlights the process for a crime passing through the criminal justice system, after the initial reporting of an incident. Reports passed to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) may lead to prosecution, with a guilty verdict resulting in the forms of disposal shown below.

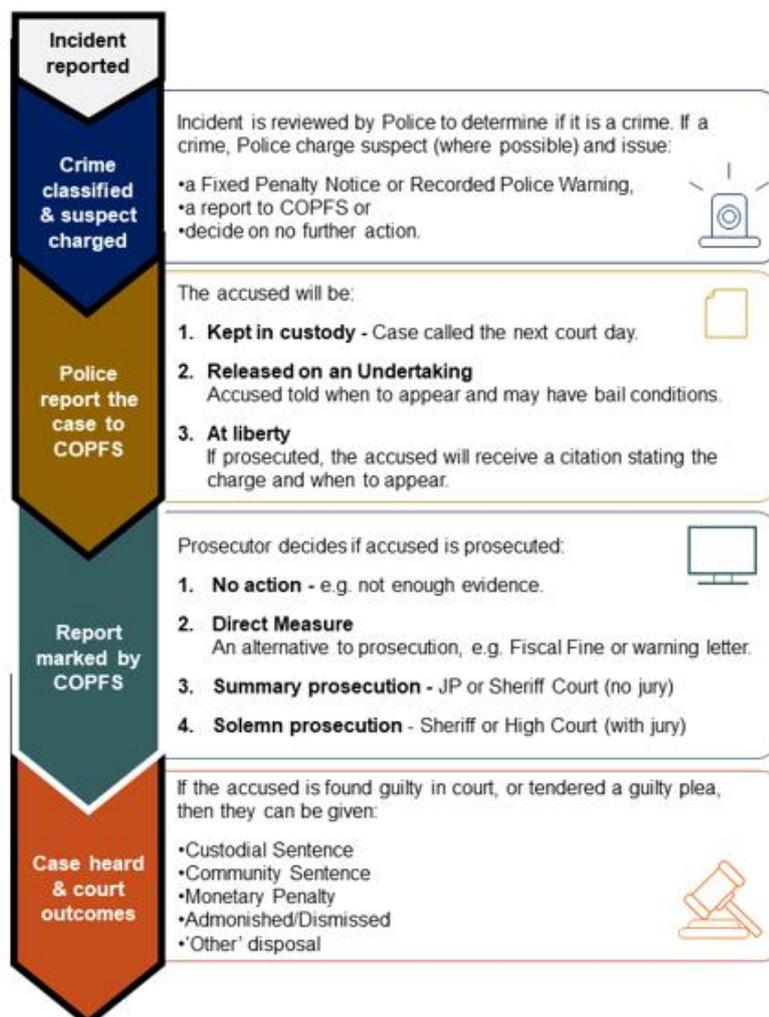


Figure 25: How crime flows through the Justice system (Scottish Government)<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Safer Communities and Justice Statistics Monthly Data Report: March 2024 (<https://www.gov.scot/collections/justice-analytical-services-safer-communities-and-justice-statistics-monthly-reports/>)

## Community sentencing

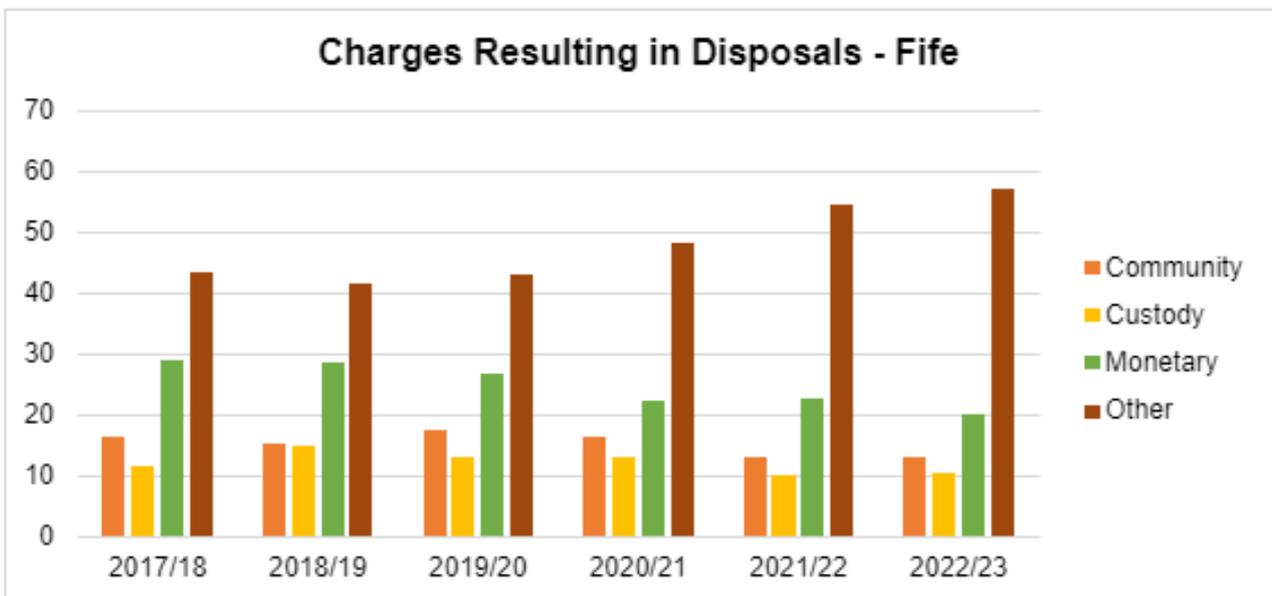
A community sentence is a way to address someone’s offending behaviour without sending them to prison. These sentences may include community payback orders, drug treatment and testing orders (DTTOs) and restriction of liberty orders (RLOs). Restriction of liberty orders, where the need for electronic monitoring of an individual is identified, are typically imposed at the same time as community payback orders.<sup>22</sup>

## Disposals

The disposal of a court case relates to the means by which the case has been closed.

Community sentence disposal categories include:

- Community – Including Community Payback Orders (CPO), Restriction of Liberty Orders (RLO), Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTO) and other community disposals not already mentioned.
- Custody – Including Imprisonment, Detention in a Young Offenders Institution, Extended Sentences, Supervised Released Orders, Orders for Life Long Restriction (OLR) and Life Sentences
- Monetary – Including fines and compensation.
- Other - Disposals which do not fall in any of the previous categories, including: admonishments, absolute discharge and orders relating to mental health and other issues



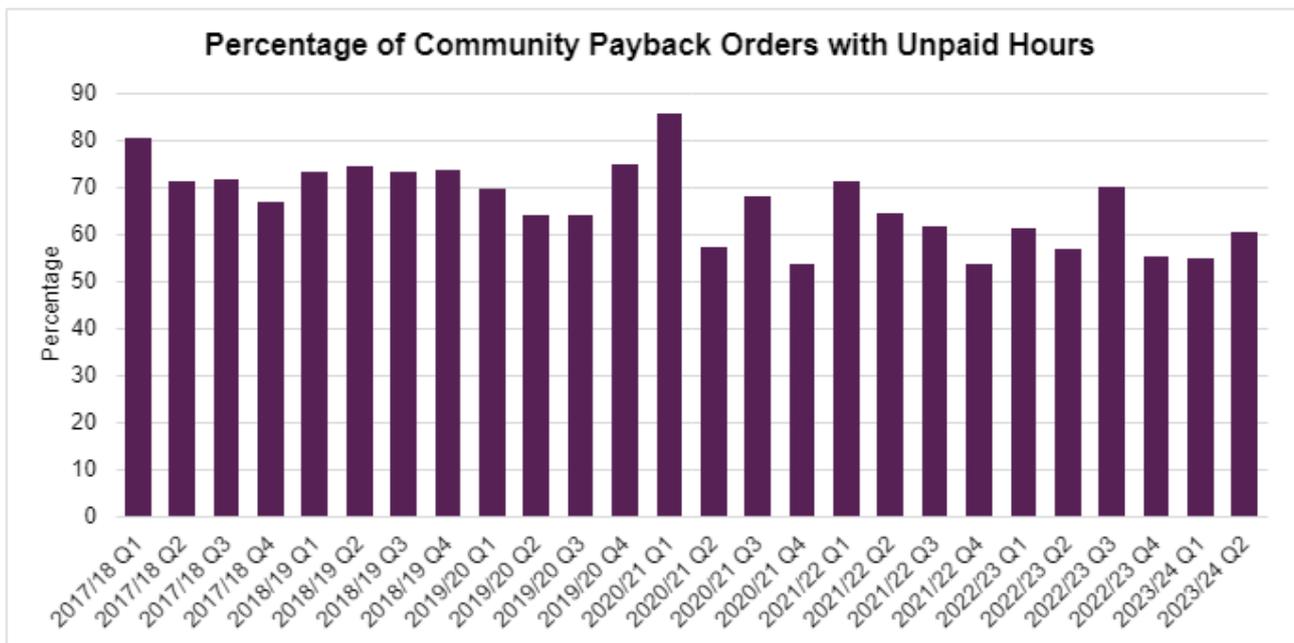
**Figure 26: All Fife charges resulting in disposals, FY2017/18 to FY2022/23 (SG Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard)**

Figure 26 highlights Fife charge level disposals, providing an overview of the percentage of disposals by type. This is linked to charges rather than number of people, as each accused person could potentially be associated with multiple charges.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Community payback order: practice guidance’ (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-payback-order-practice-guidance-2/pages/13/>)

Over the longer term, 'Other' disposals have been the largest group, with a particular increase since 2019/20. This may be, in part, due to an increase in orders linked to mental health. While the impact of the Covid pandemic on mental health has been disputed, the post-pandemic years have seen a steady increase in mental health referrals to the NHS.<sup>23</sup> The percentage of community disposals fell for the third consecutive year, to 12.8% in 2022/23.

Community payback orders accounted for the largest proportion of Fife community disposals. Of community disposals in 2022/23, Community Payback Orders had a disposal rate of 7 per 10k, Restriction of Liberty orders 2 per 10k and Drug treatment and testing orders 0.5.



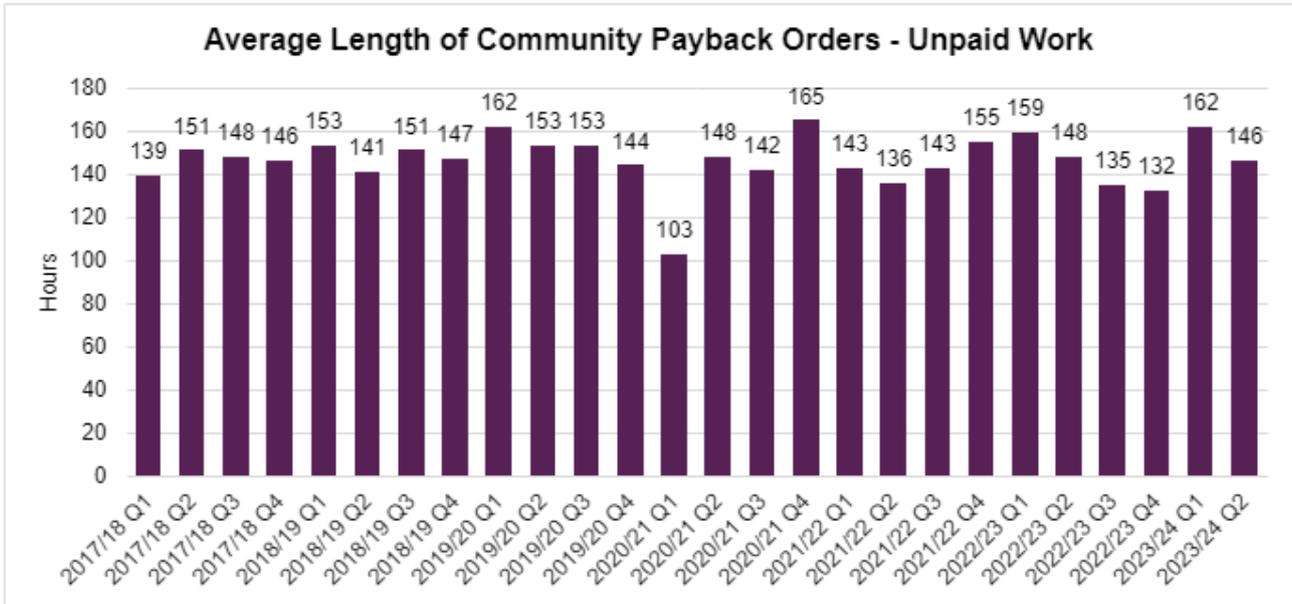
**Figure 27: Percentage of Fife community payback orders with unpaid hours, 2017/18 - 2023/24 (Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard)**

There appears to be no clear trend to the percentage of Fife Community payback orders with unpaid hours, ranging from a high of 85.7% in quarter 1 of 2020/21 to a low of 53.6% in quarter 4 of 2020/21. This is likely to be due to the variety of disposal options available for community payback orders, with the nature of charges considered affecting disposal options.

While unpaid work is the most common requirement of a community payback order, there are ten potential requirements that can be allocated depending on the nature of the crime. These include supervision; compensation; programmes; residence; conduct; restricted movement; treatments (mental health, drugs or alcohol).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> 'Mental health crisis from covid pandemic was minimal - study' (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-64890952>); *Spectator data hub: Mental health* (<https://data.spectator.co.uk/mental-health>)

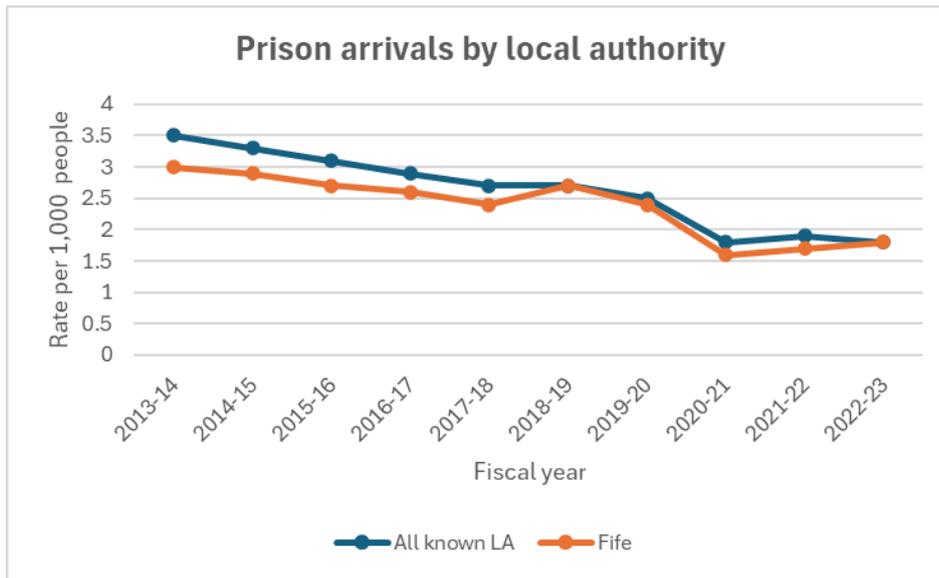
<sup>24</sup> Scottish sentencing council: Community payback orders (<https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk/about-sentencing/community-payback-orders>)



**Figure 28: Average length of Community Payback Orders unpaid work hours, 2017/18 - 2023/24 (Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard)**

Figure 29 highlights the average length of unpaid work hours associated with Community Payback Orders. The fluctuation in Fife figures is particularly notable when compared with those for Scotland as a whole. The Scottish figure ranges from 134-144 hours, while in Fife the range is from 103-162. This is affected by a significant drop in the first quarter of 2020/21, likely due to the first national lockdown. In 2023/24 to date the Fife average has increased to 146 hours in quarter 2, after a steady decrease in 2022/23.

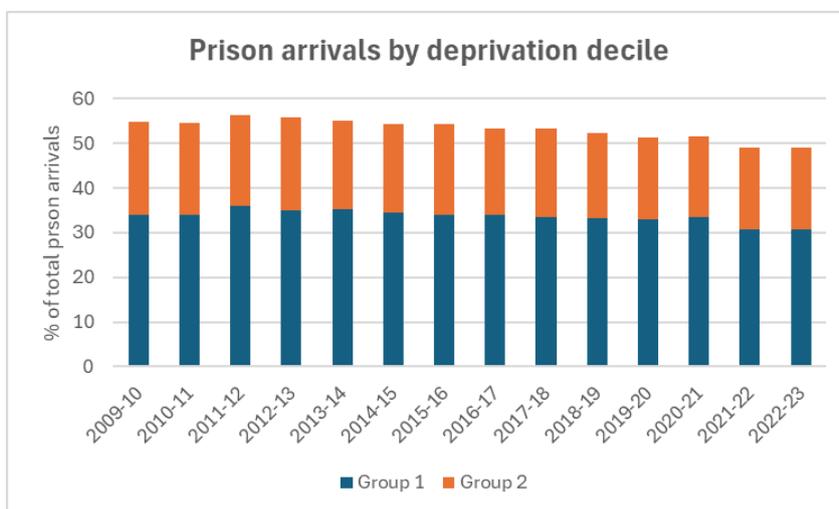
## Prison sentences



**Figure 29: Prison arrivals by local authority (Scottish prison population statistics, 2022-23)<sup>25</sup>**

Figure 29 compares the prison arrival rate for Fife convictions against those in Scotland. It shows that while prison arrivals have decreased at both a national and Fife level, the gap between Fife and the national rate has reduced. A Fife increase for consecutive years resulted in the Fife and Scottish rate both being 1.8 in 2022/23.

Deprivation is known to be strongly linked with offending, meaning that local authorities with greater levels of deprivation – and certain areas within them - may be linked with a higher rate of prison arrivals. This is explored further in Figure 30.



**Figure 30: Prison arrivals by deprivation deciles 1 and 2 (Scottish prison population statistics 2022-23)<sup>26</sup>**

<sup>25</sup> Arrivals are classed as the number of times someone arrives in prison in the period, and may include counting of multiple arrivals per person. *Scottish prison population statistics, 2022-23, Worksheet C2* (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2022-23/documents/>)

<sup>26</sup> *Scottish prison population statistics, 2022-23, Worksheet C3* (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2022-23/documents/>)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies the places in Scotland where people are experiencing disadvantage across various aspects of their lives. Scored against seven categories, the cumulative ranking sees datazones scored from 1 (most deprived) to 10 (most deprived).<sup>27</sup>

Figure 30 clearly demonstrates that the most deprived areas of Scotland are consistently linked with the largest proportion of prison arrivals. Individuals in group 1 registered themselves at addresses in the most deprived 10% of areas, based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016, and those in group 2 within the most deprived 20% of areas. This means that over the period 2009/10 to 2020/21 the most deprived 20% of deciles were linked with over half of all yearly prison arrivals. In contrast, the least deprived 20% of areas never accounted for more than 3% of arrivals in any year during this period.

Financial Year	No Fixed Abode	Arrivals	% NFA (arrivals)
2013-14	554	19306	2.9
2014-15	623	18540	3.4
2015-16	738	17905	4.1
2016-17	696	16446	4.2
2017-18	726	15324	4.7
2018-19	872	15595	5.6
2019-20	1076	14341	7.5
2020-21	940	10262	9.2
2021-22	884	10679	8.3
2022-23	960	10509	9.1

**Figure 31: Prison arrivals with no fixed abode (Scottish prison population statistics, 2022-23)<sup>28</sup>**

Figure 31 provides further information about the link between homelessness and prison discussed in section 2. What is evident from examining the data over a multi-year period is exactly how the proportion of prison arrivals with no fixed abode has increased. While this is perhaps most visible in the post lockdown period (increasing from 7.5% in 2019/20 to 9.1% in 2022/23), the increase had actually started some years earlier. Indeed, between 2014/15 and 2020/21, the percentage of no fixed abode arrivals increased every year. This suggests that the ramifications of the covid pandemic have only aggravated existing factors relating to homelessness and offending.

<sup>27</sup> Datazones are defined areas within a local authority with approx. 500-1000 households

<sup>28</sup> *Scottish prison population statistics, 2022-23, Worksheet C4* (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2022-23/documents/>)

## 5. Improving Community Justice Outcomes

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This document has sought to provide an overview of current trends and key issues within Fife that crossover with the work of community justice. Up-to-date data on key community justice areas should be considered against these, to help embed preventative work and ensure that aftercare provision is effectively targeted.

### Priority areas

Of the nine national outcomes linked with the Community Justice Framework, the following have a particular connection with the issues highlighted in this report and should be focused on going forward in developing a new Outcome Improvement Plan for Community Justice for Fife.

- 1. More people in police custody receive support to address their needs**
- 2. More people access services to support desistance and successfully complete community sentences**
- 3. More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence**
- 4. More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence**
- 5. More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment**

These outcomes are considered below, alongside the linked priority actions (in italics) from the National Strategy for Community Justice:

#### **1. More people in police custody receive support to address their needs**

*Improve the identification of underlying needs and the delivery of support following arrest by ensuring the provision of person-centred care within police custody and building upon referral opportunities to services including substance use and mental health services.*

- There is evidence of an increasing link between mental health issues and contact with the police, with mental health distress associated with a large proportion of non-crime calls to the police. Early identification of such individuals, alongside sharing of information, will minimise risk of arrest and police involvement.
- Ill health due to drink and drugs continues to be an issue in Fife. Mid-Fife is strongly linked with alcohol-related harm, while Fife continues to be linked with a high rate of drug-related hospital admissions.

#### **2. More people access services to support desistance and successfully complete community sentences**

*Ensure that those given community sentences are supervised and supported appropriately to protect the public, promote desistance from offending and enable rehabilitation by delivering high quality, consistently available, trauma-informed services and programmes*

- Community payback orders continue to account for the largest proportion of Fife community disposals. Completion rates should continue to be monitored in order to assess the impact of unpaid work and other targeted measures.

### **3. More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence**

*Enhance individuals' access to health and social care and continuity of care following release from prison by improving the sharing of information and partnership-working between relevant partners*

- Data indicates that there is a strong link between deprivation and imprisonment, suggesting that some individuals may be entering prison with pre-existing health conditions. This makes it important that such conditions are recorded, and consideration given to any linked support that will be required upon release.

### **4. More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence**

*Ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are addressed consistently and at an early stage by fully implementing and embedding the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards across all local authority areas*

- Homelessness is strongly associated with prison, both prior to and post incarceration. With research highlighting the importance that having a place to live has on future reoffending, it is vital that the housing needs of individuals in prison are proactively addressed.

### **5. More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment**

*Enhance individual's life skills and readiness for employment by ensuring increased access to employability support through effective education, learning, training, career services and relevant benefit services*

- Employment rates vary across Fife, with particular challenges faced by residents of Mid-Fife. With many traditional industries vanishing, heavily affecting areas such as Glenrothes, it is of great importance that people with convictions can access all necessary support to increase their readiness for employment.

## **Further research**

The following issues have arisen during the course of this research or have been highlighted by practitioners. While they are outside the remit of this piece of work, they may benefit from future exploration to assess their impact:

- Throughcare upon prison release – identification of need as to who is managed. Consideration of how best to check progress of those released from prison
- Research into people coming out of prison with health conditions. Are these already evident when sentenced? If so, is there a link to lifestyle or home area?
- How to monitor the progress of people released from prison to best ensure support and information.
- The use of vignettes to provide personalised examples of the criminal justice process, illustrating people's journey through the system.
- Process diagrams to illustrate routes through the criminal justice system, intervention points, and service involvement.

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- *Scottish Prisons Service: 17<sup>th</sup> Prisoner survey 2019* (<https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-crime-and-justice-survey/>)
- *SPS Quarterly Public Information Page Prison by Numbers Quarter 1 (April - June 2023)* ([https://www.sps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Public%20Information%20Page%20%28PIP%29%20Quarter%201%2020239421\\_4063.pdf](https://www.sps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Public%20Information%20Page%20%28PIP%29%20Quarter%201%2020239421_4063.pdf))
- *UK Prison population statistics* (House of Commons Library, 2023) (<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04334/SN04334.pdf>)
- *Who's in prison? A snapshot of Scotland's prison population* (Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice research, 2023) (<https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Who-is-in-Scotlands-prisons-A-snapshot-of-Scotlands-prison-population-Final.pdf>)

# About this report

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Fife Council Research and Insight Team works on prioritised projects to deliver strategic insight for the Council and community planning partners in Fife.

We aim to deliver engaging high-quality general insight for those involved in delivering public services across Fife.

## Contact

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## Important Notes on this Report

1. This report has been commissioned by the Fife Community Justice Partnership.
2. Community justice is where people who have broken the law are held to account and supported to reconnect and contribute to their communities.
3. This document is intended to support local improvement work in relation to national outcomes for community justice.
4. The starting point for planning improvements is to know your population.
5. This report provides an overview of the Fife context, a baseline for community justice outcome measures
6. It concludes with suggested areas to focus on in developing an updated Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan for Fife, and other strands of work which could help inform partnership action in this area.