

Two thirds of prisoners re-offend

Almost two thirds of inmates re-offend within two years of their release from prison, according to latest figures.

Statistics published by the Scottish Government showed the reconviction rate was almost as high for those who had been sentenced to probation.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill described the figures as unacceptable.

He said there were also too many people re-offending after receiving community sentences - even though that figure had fallen over the last decade.

The statistics, compiled by Scotland's chief statistician, examined reconviction rates in 2003/04.

Community service

In total, 45% of those released from prison or given non-custodial sentences were reconvicted within two years. The figure has remained fairly constant since 1995/96.

Re-offending rates were higher for men than for women across all age groups.

Some 64% of those released from custody and 61% of those placed on probation were convicted of another crime within two years.

The reconviction rate for those given community service was 39%, down from 49% in 1995/96.

" I believe that the time is now right for a more focussed approach to the community disposals available to the courts "

Kenny MacAskill
Justice Secretary

The rate for those who were given a monetary penalty by the courts remained fairly static over the same period, standing at 41% in 2003/04.

While 26% of people with no previous convictions were reconvicted within two years, that figure rose to 75% for those with more than 10 previous convictions.

The justice secretary said the reconviction rate for those released from prison was "not acceptable".

"Although the percentage of people reconvicted following community service has fallen 10 percentage points in 10 years, there are still too many people on these kind of sentences who are re-offending," said Mr MacAskill.

"I believe that the time is now right for a more focussed approach to the community disposals available to the courts.

"That is why we are currently reviewing community sentences to revitalise them. We want tough community sentences to protect the public and improve reparation and rehabilitation for persistent offenders."

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