

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Alastair McAlpine  
Chief Statistician  
Scottish Government  
(by email)

13 January 2023

Dear Alastair

**Assessment of the Scottish prison population statistics**

We have completed our [assessment of your Scottish prison population statistics](#) against the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These statistics were developed to fill a long-standing gap left by the discontinuation of the previous National Statistics in 2014. They provide valuable information on the Scottish prison population, so it is essential that they continue to be published.

We identified many strengths, including proactive engagement with users; high granularity of data; and sound methods used to the construct the statistics. We welcome your team's plans to link the prison population data with other data sources to add insight on a range of other topic areas.

We judge that the prison population statistics can be designated as National Statistics once improvements have been made in four areas. These include working with the Scottish Prison Service to explore producing more joined-up statistics on the Scottish prison population; and reviewing and publishing more-detailed information about your quality assurance process. It is good that your team has already implemented some of our recommendations to improve the statistics.

I am copying this letter to Amy Wilson, Head of Justice Analytical Services at Scottish Government, and Rose Munenura, Head of Justice Systems Analysis Unit at Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation