

# The Crane Report



INDUSTRY RECRUITMENT –

THE PRISON ESTATE

Section-5

## ABSTRACT

This section examines the construction industry's recruitment from the prison population amid a skills shortage. Evidence highlights risks including tool theft, exposure to violence, and heightened post-release mental health vulnerability, particularly among individuals convicted of theft. Drug poisoning exceeds suicide as a cause of death in this group. Comparisons between public and private prison systems reveal variations in discipline and post-release outcomes. The section also considers potential risks to female leaders when integrating individuals with histories of sexual or maternal violence, underscoring the need for careful risk assessment.

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## Balancing Rehabilitation with Risk: The Potential Impacts of Hiring Ex-Offenders into Construction

The construction industry offers a uniquely satisfying sense of accomplishment, but despite its appeal, the industry faces an ongoing and serious shortage of workers. One of the existing responses to this challenge is the recruitment of individuals from the prison estate. This approach serves a dual purpose:

- helping to rehabilitate former offenders
- addressing critical labour gaps

It is a policy deserving of support, given the proven societal benefits of successful offender reintegration.

Is there a heightened risk of tools theft?

Such reform minded initiatives are not without risks. In this section, we examine one of the more pressing concerns: the potential for *insider threats*. **Tool theft, already a significant and growing problem in the industry**, has had a tangible impact on the mental health of affected workers / victims. Of particular concern is that, among all adult-recorded crimes in the UK, theft carries the highest rate of reoffending.

Are ex-prisoners more vulnerable to suicide?

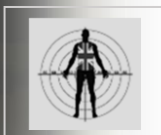
Moreover, while the industry has made commendable efforts to protect vulnerable workers from suicide, it must be acknowledged that individuals released from prison are statistically at an even higher risk of *felo-de-se*. If construction work environments are already associated with elevated suicide rates, then for those entering the industry post-incarceration, the risks may be even more acute.

Do ex-prisoners suffer PTSD, like ex-combat soldiers?

Companies like Kier Group, who are already well advanced in prison recruitment initiatives, likely have robust risk management policies in place and much experience to contribute to this evolving discussion. For others considering similar steps, this section offers guidance, context, and risk insight.

Critical to such a risk assessment is the lifestyle one experienced whilst incarcerated; were they subjected to violence or sexual abuse, or other forms of intimidation, either by other inmates or prison staff, and we examine this...

We begin by looking at a comparable policy implemented by the United States military during the Iraq War (2003–2011), which offers valuable lessons for managing both opportunity and risk when integrating higher-risk populations into demanding work environments.





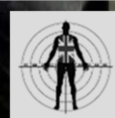


## U.S. Military “Surge” Era Recruitment and Criminal Backgrounds

During the Iraq War **surge period** (2007–2008), the U.S. military, particularly the Army, faced major recruitment shortfalls. In response, it lowered enlistment standards, including:

- **Issuing “moral waivers”** to recruits with felony convictions, including for assault, drug offences, and theft.
- **Relaxing educational standards**, allowing more early school leavers to enlist.
- **Raising the enlistment age limit.**

By 2007, the Army had issued over 500 felony waivers, including for serious crimes like burglary, aggravated assault, and even sex offenses in some cases.





## Negative Effects of Surge-Era Recruitment Policy

### 1. Discipline Problems and Criminal Activity

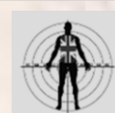
- **Increased In-Unit Crime:** There was a documented rise in disciplinary issues, drug use, violence, and theft within military units during this period. The Army Inspector General and GAO (Government Accountability Office) both noted higher instances of:
  - **Theft from military property and fellow soldiers.**
  - **Drug use**, particularly cannabis, cocaine, and prescription abuse.
  - **Sexual assault and harassment**, often linked to those with prior convictions.
- In some units, NCOs and officers reported they were spending disproportionate time managing problematic individuals, affecting operational readiness.

### 2. Reputation and Morale Damage

- Morale in some units suffered, especially when soldiers with clean records saw those with serious convictions getting second chances and compromising team trust.
- There were complaints from within military communities that the force was being “diluted” with individuals not suited for service, creating tension and resentment.



To build an accurate picture of suicide within the construction industry, we need real stories. That is why we are inviting participation in the [Stage 2 Investigation](#); an anonymous survey open to anyone with insights into lives lost or saved. The findings will be made publicly available to support the development of more effective intervention strategies and targeted policies.



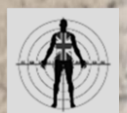




### 3. Post-Service Criminal Behavior

- In U.S.-based research, such as the National Post-Deployment Adjustment Survey (NPDAS) of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans, about 9% of respondents reported arrests after deployment. Arrests were significantly associated with prior criminal history, substance misuse, younger age, male gender, PTSD with high anger/irritability, and family violence exposure, but were “not significantly related to combat exposure.”
- Veterans' courts in the U.S. saw a rise in PTSD + criminal history overlaps, which complicated rehabilitation.
  - PTSD can increase impulsivity, aggression, or substance abuse, all of which are risk factors for criminal behaviour.
  - Veterans with a pre-existing pattern of criminal behaviour were more likely to reoffend when also dealing with untreated or poorly managed PTSD.
  - Estimates suggest that 21% to 71% have alcohol use disorder and 26% to 65% have drug use disorder.
  - Courts and rehab programmes had to untangle whether behaviour stemmed from pre-military character issues, combat trauma, or both. This made treatment, sentencing, and monitoring more complex.

These veterans were harder to help because they had both trauma-related mental health needs and prior patterns of criminal conduct, often feeding into one another.



## Can we draw any parallels with the construction industry?



### Lessons Applicable to UK Construction Recruitment from Prisons

<b>Drug Use</b>	Drug-taking, especially prescription or recreational, was difficult to control in the military even with structure and testing, construction sites will face an even greater challenge. (See Section-6 – Construction & Drugs).
<b>Team Trust</b>	Unit cohesion is key in both contexts, if ex-prisoners are not vetted carefully, site trust may erode quickly, particularly where thefts or misconduct occur.
<b>Recidivism Risk</b>	As in the military, those with serious prior convictions may reoffend unless deeply engaged in supportive rehabilitation programmes.
<b>Tools Theft</b>	Tools and materials are equivalent to weapons and gear in the military. Just as theft of military supplies demoralised units, site thefts could erode trust and productivity on construction sites and negatively impact the mental health of the victims.


**Unless they previously served in the military, construction industry recruits from UK prisons are unlikely to suffer from war-related PTSD**; however, prison can create PTSD through constant exposure to violence, threats, and isolation. Inmates may witness assaults, experience abuse, or live in a state of hypervigilance, all of which can overwhelm the brain's ability to cope.

The [2025 HMP Inspectorate of Prisons Assessment](#) reported that in 17 of the 38 prisons they inspected, prisoners were not safe enough. 20% of adult men said they felt unsafe, and in high security estates (the safest), 30% of men said they felt unsafe. Such living conditions lead to trauma responses that persist long after release.

***Later in this section, we will look at the UK prison estate, the cultures that exist within it, and attempt to paint a picture of what type of person could come out of it and into the construction industry. What are the risks of suicide for such individuals?***







## Recidivism – What are the Risks?

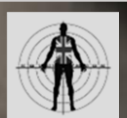
What did it take before they were sent to prison?

The UK prison estate is widely understood to be at maximum capacity (2025), with early release programmes, even for some serious offenders, being introduced by successive governments to free-up space. This has led to a considerable threshold for incarceration. Ministry of Justice data, reported on in the [Telegraph](#) showed that some prolific thieves had been convicted of theft up to 50 times before being sent to prison in 2020. In 2021 it was 49.

It is important to keep in mind that these figures are “convictions,” meaning the offender was caught. No serious person would ever believe that such an offender is caught every time they stole.

Whilst these figures raise **serious concerns about the associated risks of hiring offenders and potential thefts on construction sites**, we should not ignore the fact that many of these rehabilitation programmes have proved to be highly effective, not just in the UK, but in the US, Australia, and Canada.

But have they succeeded in eliminating recidivism?







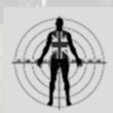
According to [Direct Line](#) (Insurance) Group, tools worth £98 million were stolen from tradespeople in 2023. In total, 44,514 incidents of tool theft were reported to police forces in 2023, a five per cent increase from 2022, which equates to a tool theft reported every 12 minutes.

The increase in thefts appears to be influenced by a combination of factors, including economic pressures and the high resale value of tools. Some “thefts” could in fact be related to fictitious insurance claims during times of economic downturns. **Evidence to suggest these crimes are related to the hiring of ex-offenders has *not* been established.**

The ratio of ex-offenders within the industry to those with no prior convictions or prison time is likely to be minimal given the size of the construction industry workforce. However, it must be pointed out that just 10% of offenders account for half of all crimes in the UK, with theft being a common offence among this group.

Concerns about ex-offenders are justified, but secure employment, and engaging with responsible work-minded people, is more likely to reduce the risks of temptation to reoffend. But which pull-factors will be stronger:

Reform Intentions Challenged	Reform Minded
Engaging with old friends / criminal networks	Engaging with new friends
Living in same neighbourhood	Moving on
Potentially higher rewards from ( <i>insider</i> ) crime	<i>Secure</i> regular income



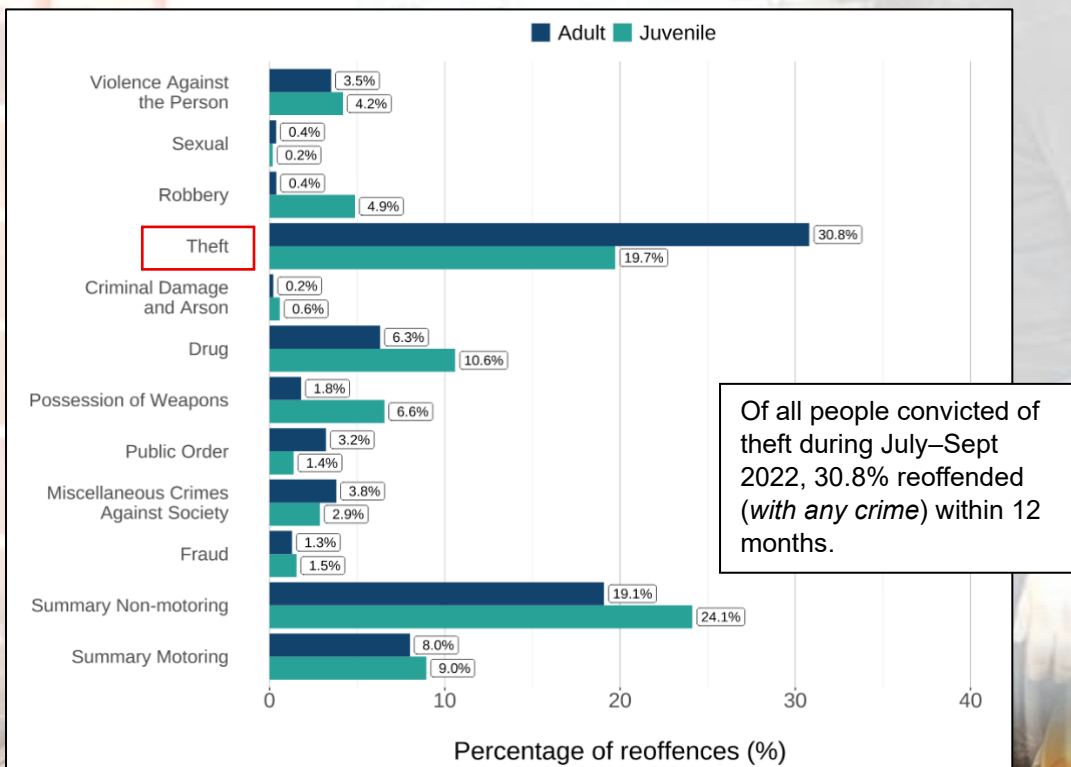


The concerns about recidivism are also understandable, and should any new hires commit offences on-site, against fellow construction workers, this could complicate further the fragility of some, **potentially adding to the mental health crisis of the established workforce?** According to a 2023 report by [NFU Mutual](#)...

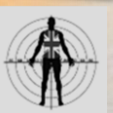
- 89% of tradespeople & contractors have been victims of theft.
- 34% of tradespeople claim that such thefts impact their mental health.

Workers who lose their tools can face financial pressure, job insecurity, and resentment, especially if they suspect a colleague is responsible. For self-employed contractors, a theft can halt work, delay income, and strain relationships with clients or main contractors.

We looked for data on individuals *originally convicted of theft* and found they had the highest overall reoffending rate among all offence groups, with 30.8% going on to commit at least one further offence within a year...

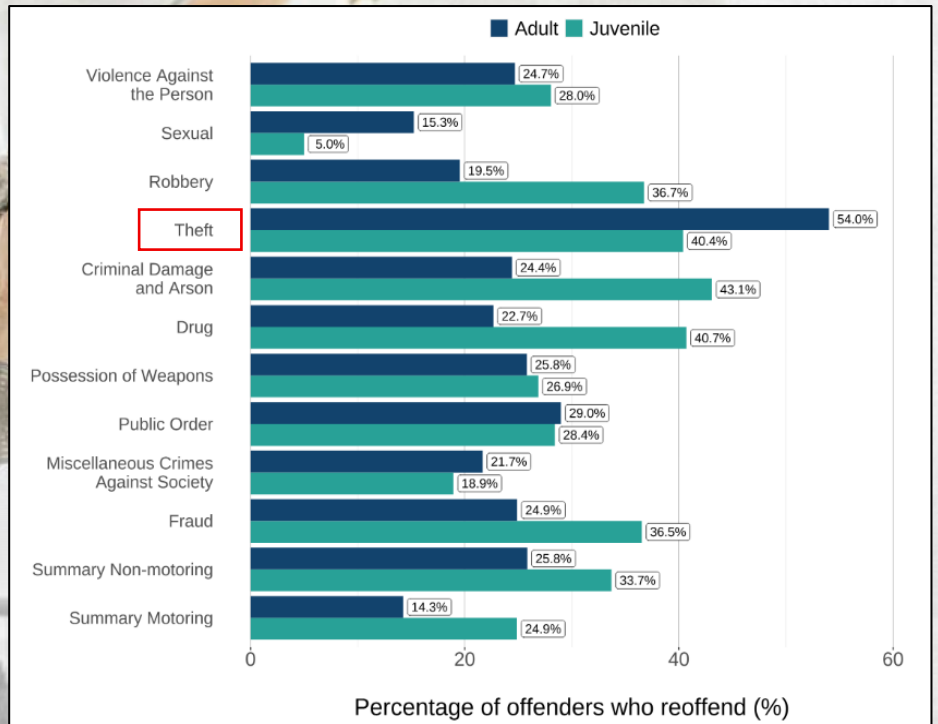


While the data does not specify what those new offences were, a separate analysis of reoffending patterns shows that 54% of all new crimes committed by reoffenders were theft-related, making it by far the most common reoffence...





Of all the *new crimes committed* by reoffenders in that period, 54% were theft offences.



- 31.5% of all proven reoffences occurred **within three months of release from custody** or receiving a non-custodial sentence (such as a court conviction, reprimand, or warning).
- This figure rises to 56.2% within six months, increasing at an average rate of 7.3% per month beyond that.







## Profiling the Offenders

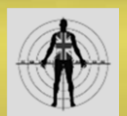
The most likely reoffender, based on Ministry of Justice data, is a young adult male whose index offence was theft, and who received a short custodial or non-custodial sentence. Nationally, males had a reoffending rate of 25.5%, compared to 18.1% for females. **Adults aged 18–24 were the highest-risk age group**, with a reoffending rate of 30.1%, suggesting that youth, impulsivity, and possibly peer influence remain key drivers of post-release behaviour.

**Sentence type** is another strong predictor: individuals released from short-term custodial sentences (less than 12 months) had a reoffending rate of 53.7%, the highest across all categories.

This group is especially relevant to construction firms, which often hire low-risk ex-offenders from this category through employment pathways intended to support rehabilitation.

Regionally, the North East of England reported the highest overall adult reoffending rate at 32.1%, followed closely by Yorkshire and the Humber at 28.5%. These same regions consistently rank highest for drug misuse, drug poisoning deaths, and male suicide rates, creating a broader public health context that cannot be ignored. We explain these patterns in detail in Section-6, Construction & Drugs.

Construction companies operating in these areas, or hiring from prisons in these regions, may be at heightened risk of onboarding individuals with overlapping vulnerabilities: addiction, instability, poor mental health, and by extension, suicidal risk.







## Insider Threats – Tools Thefts

To measure the level of “insider” crimes committed on construction sites, and or against construction workers elsewhere, we sought data on arrests made for **tools’ thefts** by submitting Freedom of Information requests to police services across the UK...

We wrote to all 48 UK police services asking:

- From the year 2000, how many construction tool thefts have you recorded?
- In the same period, how many arrests were made?
- Of those arrested, how many were employed within the construction industry?

We received common responses from all services that replied:

- Such a search would be cost-prohibitive.
- Occupational data is not a mandatory record.
- Construction tools’ thefts are not identifiable, but would simply fall under “theft.”

SECURITY

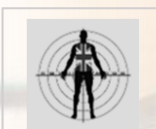




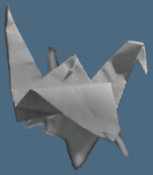
We then amended our questions and sent the responding police services links to news reports of tools' thefts' arrests in their respective areas. Some forces responded positively to this and we reproduce the data below. **However, several common factors appeared which the construction industry must consider as they move forward:**

1. There is no standard data collection system within the police services across the UK.
2. Offender (arrestee) **occupation** is not a "required data field" although it does appear to exist.
3. Construction tools is not a designated category, so cannot be searched later, nor can the offence be specifically accounted.
4. Searches can only be made using the Home Office Statistics Classification 041/00 which equates to the broader offence of Theft Employee – excluding thefts by contractors and other site visitors.

Force	Tool Theft Reports	Dishonesty crimes	Total Arrests	Insider Arrests / construction workers	Construction Worker Victim	Period
Derbyshire				10		No Dates
West Midlands	9			0		2021 – 2025
Bedfordshire	2773			8	21	2020 - 2025
Cambridgeshire				20		2018-2025
South Yorkshire						2020-2025
Northamptonshire	324			46		2016-2025
Staffordshire			16	6		2024-2025
Hertfordshire		7,281	407	60		2018-2025
West Yorkshire				2		2006-2023
Nottinghamshire			36	<15		2023-2025
Cleveland	1					2012
South Wales / Heddlu				4		2024-2025
Wiltshire			2			2024







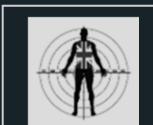
We concede it is difficult to draw any statistically relevant facts from this limited set, but what we might *cautiously note*:

Police Service	Insider Arrests	Comment
Hertfordshire	60 / 407 arrests	Highest insider rate reported (~15%), large dataset
Staffordshire	6 / 16 arrests	High insider proportion (~38%), but small sample
Bedfordshire	8 insider arrests	Reasonably sized data; 21 victims are also construction workers
Nottinghamshire	<15 / 36 arrests	Insider involvement present, unclear precision

If genuine and comparably measured, **this could suggest insider involvement ranges from 10–40%**, but we must treat that range very cautiously due to dataset variation.

In the case of Hertfordshire, they provided a separate list of occupations of those arrested, although no specific numbers for each trade:

Arrested Persons' Occupations Included	
Construction Industry	Bricklayer
	Builder
	Building Labourer
	Construction Worker
	Hod Carrier
	Labourer
	Plasterer
	Road Worker
	Roofer
	Scaffolder
Engineering	Air Conditioning Engineer
	Pipe Fitter
Motor Trade	Technician
	Mechanic
Power	Electrician
	Carpenter
Tradesmen	Carpet Fitter
	Plumber
	Window Cleaner





## Data Collection Flaws Hindering Threat Assessment

Despite the limitations of the current dataset, our analysis identified several systemic flaws that, if corrected, would significantly enhance the quality of insight and enable a more accurate threat assessment for the construction industry.

### Key Weaknesses in Current Crime Data Collection

#### 1. Occupation Not Recorded:

Police officers are *not required* to record the occupation of individuals at the point of arrest. Although an optional field exists on the arrest form, it is often left blank. This omission severely limits the ability to track incidents of insider theft within the construction sector.

#### 2. No Dedicated Crime Category for Construction Tool Theft:

Despite being estimated as a £100 million annual crime, theft of construction tools is not classified as a distinct offence. This undermines efforts to measure the true scale and patterns of this issue.

#### 3. Misclassification of Van Thefts:

Theft of tools from work vans is typically logged as “Theft from Motor Vehicle,” obscuring its clear relevance to construction-related criminal activity.

#### 4. No Recording of Location Type:

The type of premises where a theft occurs, such as a construction site, residential driveway, or garage, is not systematically recorded. This makes it difficult to distinguish between opportunistic and targeted offences.

### Engagement with Authorities

On 8 July 2025, we wrote to the [College of Policing](#), which advises on police policy, to highlight these data flaws and to request consideration for the introduction of a specific crime category dedicated to construction industry thefts. **As of this writing, no response has been received.**

In parallel, we noted that the [Equipment Theft \(Prevention\) Act 2023](#), addressing construction tool theft is currently progressing through the House of Lords. On 22 July 2025, we wrote to the following Members of Parliament involved with the bill to raise awareness of these issues, as the act does not appear to require the police to record this essential data; and inquire whether amendments could be made to address them:

- **Dame Diana Johnson MP** – Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention
- **Amanda Martin MP** – Sponsor of the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 bill
- **Matt Vickers MP** – Shadow Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire

***To date, none have responded.***





## Sincerity to Reform

A major risk factor for construction companies engaging members of the prison population is whether they (inmates) are sincere about reforming, or are they entering training programmes to demonstrate efforts to reform, in an attempt to accelerate their early release, *or will they pose a threat to other workers.*

### Duping Delight

Whilst not a clinical term, **Duping Delight** is a useful observational concept more commonly referenced in forensic psychology, law enforcement and lie detection training. The concept refers to the enjoyment or thrill that some individuals may experience when they successfully deceive someone.

## Behavioural Caution: Manipulative Engagement

While inmates may engage in training programmes with genuine reform intentions, risk assessors should be aware of a behavioural phenomenon sometimes observed in manipulative individuals, informally referred to as "duping delight." This refers to the subtle satisfaction some individuals may derive from deceiving others, especially when the deception results in personal gain, such as accelerated early release, criminal, or employment opportunities.

Their outward engagement may mask underlying antisocial or opportunistic motivations.

Staff involved in screening or mentoring should be trained to spot incongruence\* between verbal statements and behavioural cues, and should factor in broader behavioural history, institutional conduct, and psychological assessment, rather than relying solely on apparent enthusiasm or cooperation.

Instead of counting on purely man-to-man clinical assessments, those responsible for hiring ex-inmates should consider including actuarial assessments to evaluate the individual based upon wide ranging documentation, including police reports, probation reports, life antecedents, victim, and family reports, to name but a few.

The hiring team must always consider the benefits to the offender in being less than truthful.

\*In psychology, incongruence refers to the discrepancies between a person's perceived self, and their ideal self, leading to psychological discomfort. Because the two often fail to align, efforts to correct the disparity can lead to anxiety.



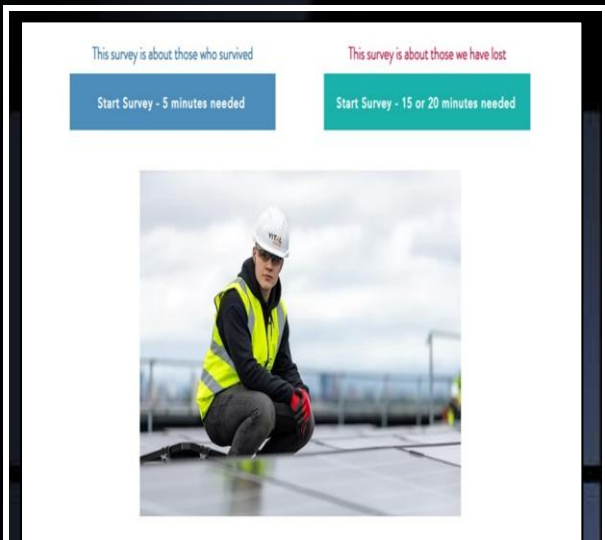
## Mental Health – What are the Risks?

The concerns relating to those hired from prison cannot be limited to their previous, or even potential future, acts of dishonesty; we must be concerned also about their mental health, and their own potential for suicide, and the impacts that may have on the existing workforce.

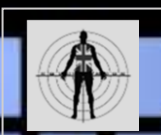
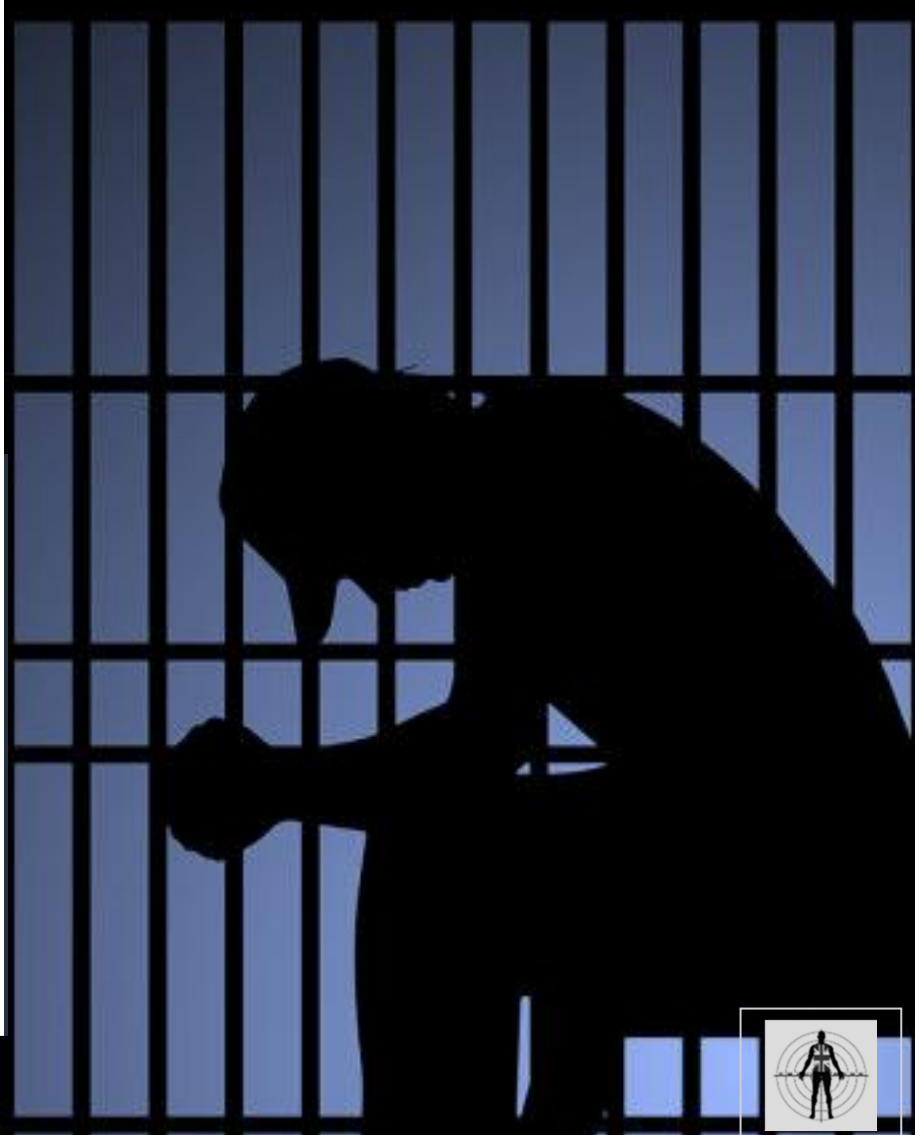
For instance, a study published in [The Lancet](#) in 2006 found that within the first year after release from prison, the suicide rate was 156 per 100,000 person-years, markedly higher than the general population rate, and in fact, considerably higher than the suicide rates recorded for construction workers (skilled 35:100,000 / unskilled 45:100,000). The most vulnerable period was within the first few weeks after release, particularly for those with mental health, social instability, and substance abuse issues.

This means that recently released prisoners are 3 to 4 times more likely to die by suicide than construction workers, and 15 times more than the general population. So, if we combine these risk factors:

**Ex-prisoner + construction + substance misuse =** a compounded high-risk zone that demands focused safeguarding, mental health interventions, and support systems.



This report cannot determine how many, if any, of the recorded suicides in the construction industry involved individuals with a history of incarceration. Yet this remains a vital element of the investigation. To explore this further, we have created an [anonymous survey](#) for those who have lost friends or loved ones, allowing us to examine the lead-up to the moment of death. Gathering such personal experience data will significantly enhance our ability to identify warning signs, intervene earlier, and ultimately save lives.







A later paper published in [Science Direct](#) (2025) provided more insight into the **post-prison mortality risks** across England and Wales (2019-2021). Although this paper did not detail suicide rates, it did highlight the risk of death from external causes, to include suicide, which remains elevated in the weeks and months following release.

*Comments*

**Death Rate Overall** 857 deaths per 100,000 person-years

- 1,260 per 100,000 for women
- 825 per 100,000 for men

*Women had an even higher rate than men*

**Leading Cause of Death:**

- Injuries caused nearly half (49%) of all deaths.
- The biggest killer was drug poisoning...

**Injuries**

- Unintentional causes (e.g. overdose, accidents)
- Intentional causes (e.g. suicide, homicide)

*"Injuries"*

**Suicide Risk**

- Suicide rates were 10 times higher than the UK general population.
- Women had suicide rates similar to men.

*Men usually show higher rates of suicide*

**Other Very Elevated Risks**

- Drug poisoning risk: 74x higher than general population
- Interpersonal violence deaths: 63x higher
- Suicide: 9.9x higher

**Timing of Deaths**

- Deaths peaked...
- Right after release
- Again around 6 months post-release

**Demographics of Death**

- Violent deaths: Mostly young and from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Disease-related deaths: Mostly older people

**Social Factors**

People who died were often...

- Homeless
- Unemployed
- Had breached parole or release conditions

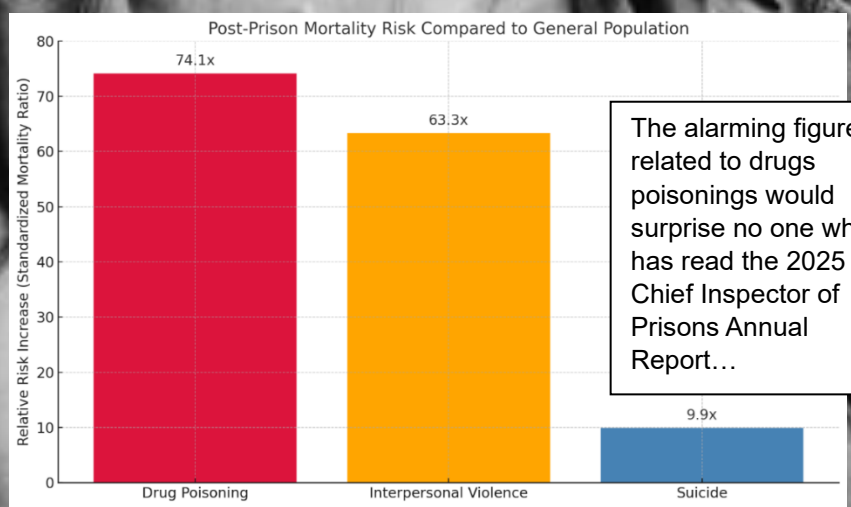
This study emphasises the high-risk period that is the post-release phase, not just for overdose but also suicide, violence, and preventable health issues, particularly when people lack housing, support, or work.





This graph illustrates data from the Science Direct paper, highlighting the significantly elevated mortality risks faced by recently released prisoners compared to the general UK population. Drug poisoning and interpersonal violence stand out as especially acute threats, while the risk of suicide is nearly ten times higher. As you will read in the Drugs Section, the line between suicide and drug poisoning / accidental death, is a very blurred one.

These findings once again cast doubt on the completeness of ONS suicide data within the construction industry, particularly regarding individuals with a history of incarceration. We therefore encourage readers to engage with our [anonymous online survey](#), designed to help uncover and address the specific risks faced by this vulnerable group.



The alarming figure related to drugs poisonings would surprise no one who has read the 2025 HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Annual Report...

**Chief Inspector: overwhelming ingress of illegal drugs is destabilising prisons and preventing rehabilitation**

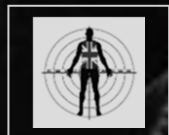
*"This has been another very difficult year for all those living and working in prisons in England and Wales. I cannot overstate my concern about the rapid and widespread ingress of illicit drugs."*

**HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Annual Report 2024-25**

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales  
Annual Report 2024-25

**"The overwhelming ingress of illegal drugs is destabilising prisons and preventing rehabilitation."**

Given the level of fear that exists within the prison population, it is quite possible that drugs are used as a coping mechanism. We provide more details on the prison system later in this report.







## Combining Theft, Mental Illness, & Suicide

If we combine the mortality data of those offenders who were **incarcerated for the offence of theft**; then we have a very concerning picture of the post-release phase, and we should thus consider, given our concerns for construction industry suicides, what level of assessment is going to be required when hiring those incarcerated for theft, relative not only to recidivism, but also the potential for suicide.

Cause of Death	Total Deaths	Theft as Offence	% of Deaths in This Category Linked to Theft
Drug Poisoning	547	190	35%
Suicide	133	26	20%
Alcohol Poisoning	17	2	12%
Infectious Diseases	98	14	14%
Interpersonal Violence	39	10	26%
Non-communicable Diseases	551	70	13%

### Notes:

- Drug Poisoning is the most common cause of death among people who had served time for theft.
  - 35% of drug poisoning deaths were former **theft offenders** (190 out of 547).
- Suicide was the second most relevant cause of death in this group.
  - 20% of suicides were among those previously imprisoned for **theft**.
- When combined, drug and alcohol poisoning and suicide account for nearly two-thirds of deaths (67%) among **ex-theft offenders**.

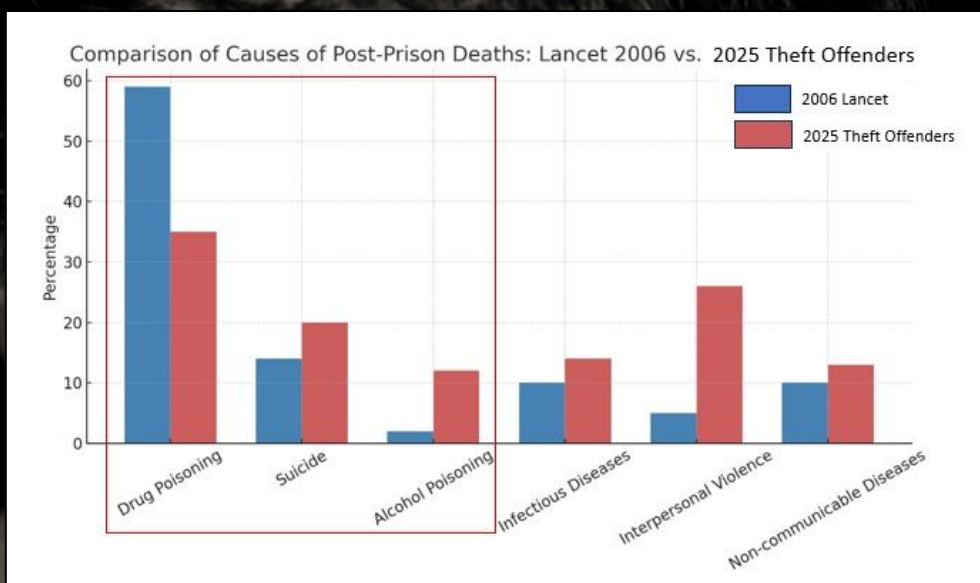
**Former prisoners convicted of theft, a key "dishonesty" offence, are significantly overrepresented in post-release deaths by drug poisoning and suicide.** These findings suggest that individuals jailed for theft may carry a high mental health and substance user risk, and may require some form of monitoring, as well as targeted suicide prevention interventions as they take up their roles within the construction industry.

**Habitual theft offenders might be more likely to reoffend, which could be an indication of the need to finance hidden personal drug addiction.**





If we compare the original 2006 Lancet findings with the 2025 Science Direct study...



### Notes:

- [The Lancet](#) showed that drug poisoning was the leading cause of death overall after prison release in the early 2000s at 59%.
- The more recent [Science Direct](#) study shows that among those imprisoned for theft, drug poisoning remains a major cause with 35% mortality rate.
- This might suggest that the offence type plays a role in post-release outcomes, possibly due to different drug use histories, socio-economic profiles, or levels of supervision.

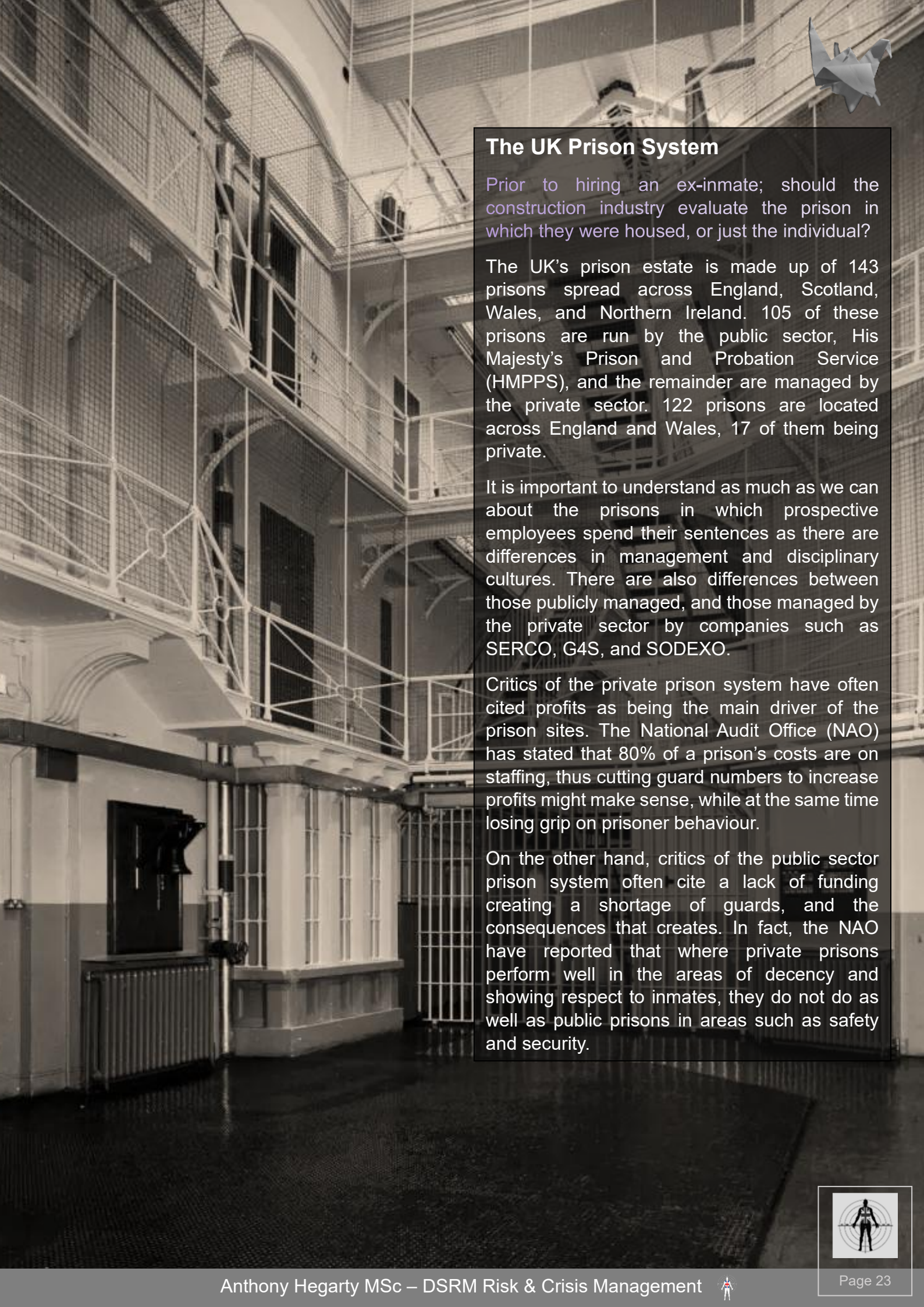
The distinction between the two reports could also affect suicide statistics, as **some recorded suicides may in fact be accidental overdoses**, potentially leading to an overestimation of the true suicide rate.

Thus far, we have outlined several risks associated with recruiting employees from the prison system, particularly the potential for continued criminal behaviour and mental health challenges, including elevated suicide risk. Drug-related issues will be addressed separately in Section-6, Construction & Drugs.

The final prison-related topic we have examined concerns the prison environment itself: where individuals were detained, and how those environments may impact their long-term mental health.







## The UK Prison System

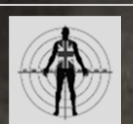
Prior to hiring an ex-inmate; should the construction industry evaluate the prison in which they were housed, or just the individual?

The UK's prison estate is made up of 143 prisons spread across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. 105 of these prisons are run by the public sector, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), and the remainder are managed by the private sector. 122 prisons are located across England and Wales, 17 of them being private.

It is important to understand as much as we can about the prisons in which prospective employees spend their sentences as there are differences in management and disciplinary cultures. There are also differences between those publicly managed, and those managed by the private sector by companies such as SERCO, G4S, and SODEXO.

Critics of the private prison system have often cited profits as being the main driver of the prison sites. The National Audit Office (NAO) has stated that 80% of a prison's costs are on staffing, thus cutting guard numbers to increase profits might make sense, while at the same time losing grip on prisoner behaviour.

On the other hand, critics of the public sector prison system often cite a lack of funding creating a shortage of guards, and the consequences that creates. In fact, the NAO have reported that where private prisons perform well in the areas of decency and showing respect to inmates, they do not do as well as public prisons in areas such as safety and security.





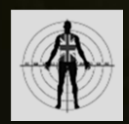


The question for the construction industry is which system is preferred when selecting candidates, or should they be treated the same? Which system provides the best rehabilitation and **the lowest risks of recidivism, mental illness, drug abuse and suicide?** It is also important to note that prisoners do transfer between public and private estates, and private and public estates, during their periods of incarceration, so actual success results may be inconclusive.

An April 2025 report published by Security Journal UK ([SJUK](#)) listed the top ten UK prisons based upon performance ratings. The factors for those ratings were:

1. Safety
2. Security
3. Respect
4. Purposeful Activity
5. **Preparation for Release**
6. Organisational Effectiveness

These Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are designed and implemented by [HMPPS](#). Perhaps the most important KPI for the construction industry would be **Preparation for Release – will they be suited to the industry?** It will surprise no one that 9 of the 10 prisons listed in this top 10 ranking are “open prisons” which tend to house low category prisoners, and those at the end of their sentences.

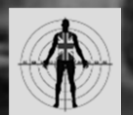




## The top ten prisons listed in the report are:

Rank	Prison	Public / Private	Prison Type	Education Offered
1	HMP Hatfield	Public	Open Prison Men	Warehousing, maintenance, horticulture, recycling, retail, barista. Works with The Manchester College.
2	HMP Askham Grange	Public	Open Prison Women	Construction-related education and vocational training.
3	HMP Kirklevington Grange	Public	Open Prison Men	8-week rail qualification, 6-week course in wind turbine technology.
4	HMP Haverigg	Public	Open Prison Men	Timber manufacturing, building, plastering, plumbing, industrial cleaning, and agriculture.
5	HMP/YOI Standford Hill	Public	Open Prison Men	Electrical installation, plumbing and information and communications technology.
6	HMP/YOI East Sutton Park	Public	Open Prison Women	Farming, butchery, horticulture and gardens, catering, vocational & distance learning, physical education.
7	HMP Hollesley bay	Public	Open Prison Men (18+)	Bricklaying, plastering, carpentry, painting & decorating.
8	HMP Warren Hill	Public	Closed Prison Men	Welding, carpentry, and catering workshops.
9	HMP Thorn Cross	Public	Open Prison Men	Construction trades, recycling, horticulture, hospitality, catering, and rail construction.
10	HMP Ford	Public	Open Prison Men	Painting & decorating, carpentry, engineering, cleaning.

HMP Brixton – Scaffold Training



## Prison Analysis 1

For the sake of this investigation, we were concerned about discipline, rehabilitation, potential for recidivism, suicide risks, and whether or not the institution being public or private has any bearing on outcomes.



The screenshot shows the Express news website. The main headline reads: "Dozens of prison staff arrested for supplying drugs to criminals in jail". The article is by STEPH SPYRO, Environment Editor and Senior Political Correspondent, dated 17:01, Sun, Mar 3, 2024. A small image shows hands gripping prison bars.

We looked first into the **discipline** demonstrated by **those who are employed in the prison system**, not just to secure the premises, but to set examples to those whom have been incarcerated. These incidents were the first to appear after a random Google Search for “prison officer scandals.”

Prison	Reported Incidents	Education
HMP Swaleside, Kent, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Prison officer Isabelle Dale, 23, was charged with misconduct for alleged sexual relationships with two inmates and involvement in a drug smuggling plot (2025).	Industrial cleaning, engineering, and horticultural work
HMP Feltham West London, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Officer Katerina Tatus was suspended over allegations of an inappropriate relationship with an inmate (2025).	Painting and decorating, bricklaying, motor mechanics
HMP Wandsworth South London, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Officer Linda De Sousa Abreu was sentenced to 15 months for engaging in sexual activity with an inmate, an incident that was recorded and widely circulated (2025).	Plumbing, tiling, carpentry & joinery, painting & decorating
HMP Bronzefield Surrey, England <a href="#">Private</a> (Sodexo)	Former inmate Beatrice Auty reported sexual harassment by a male officer and alleged that staff were involved in drug distribution within the prison (2024).	Offers Art, ESOL, IT, Cleaning Science, and Arts and Crafts
HMP Wealstun West Yorkshire, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Female prison guard, 26, who had phone sex with inmate and flooded his mother with more than 900 messages faces jail (2025).	Trowel trades, industrial cleaning, catering; Skills Bootcamp in Construction
HMP Lindholme South Yorkshire, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Prison officer jailed over affair with inmate (2025).	Bricklaying, plastering, painting & decorating, carpentry, plumbing, civil engineering
HMP Kirkham Lancashire, England <a href="#">Public</a>	Prison governor jailed for relationship with inmate (2025).	Bricklaying, painting and decorating, industrial cleaning, CAD, bench joinery
HMP Parc Mid Glamorgan, Wales <a href="#">Private</a> (G4S)	Four officers arrested for assault and misconduct amid a series of incidents; 13 inmate deaths occurred in the same year (2024).	Carpentry and metalwork vocational qualifications

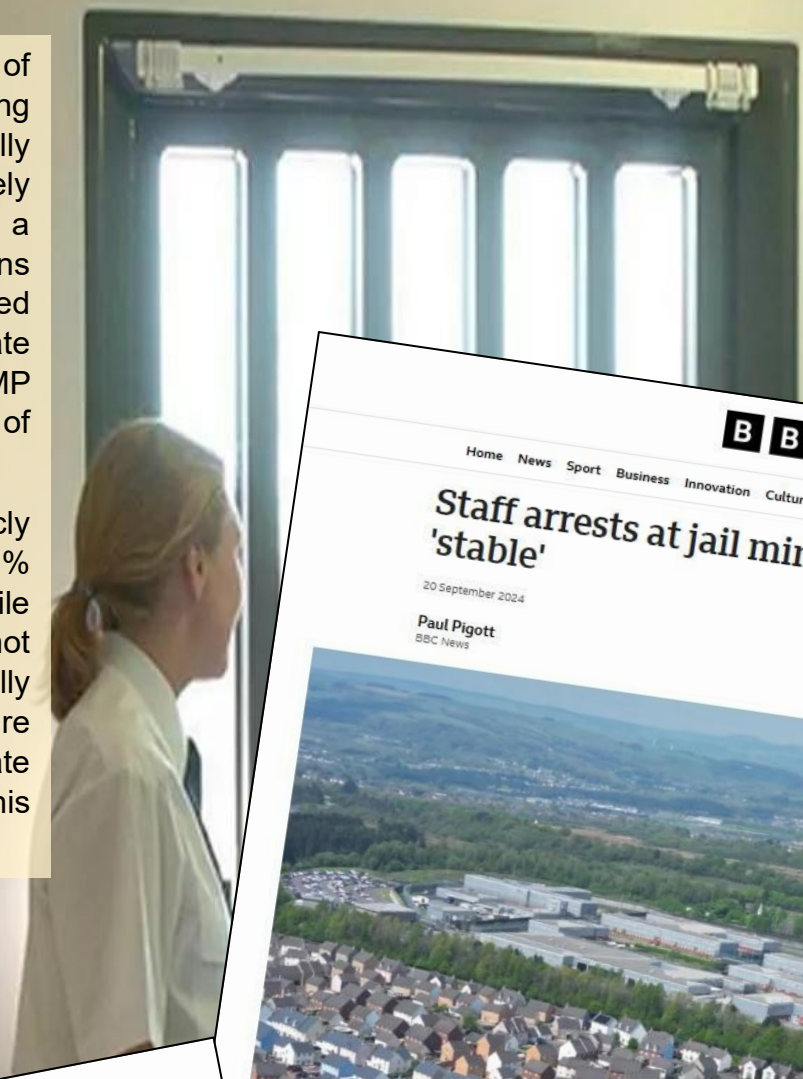






Preliminary analysis of misconduct prosecutions among prison staff reveals a potentially concerning trend within privately operated facilities. From a sample of eight UK prisons where guards have faced prosecution, two are private (HMP Bronzefield and HMP Parc), representing 11.76% of the UK's 17 private prisons.

The remaining six are publicly operated, accounting for 4.76% of the 126 public prisons. While this sample is small and cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire estate, the proportion of private institutions appearing in this cohort is notably higher.



**BBC**  
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## Staff arrests at jail minister said was 'stable'

20 September 2024  
Paul Pigott  
BBC News

Parc Prison is the second largest in Wales, after Berwyn in Wrexham

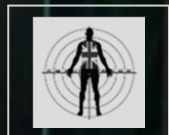
Four officers at a prison where 13 inmates have died this year have been arrested. South Wales Police detained the four on Friday on suspicion of assault and misconduct in public office, following reports of a series of incidents. Security company G4S, which runs HMP Parc in Bridgend, confirmed those arrested are all prison custody officers.

**BBC**  
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Audio Video Live

## Prison officers deal drugs and ask inmates for sex, BBC told

14 November 2024  
sima kotecha  
Senior UK correspondent • @sima\_kotecha

Next to a vandalised wire fence opposite HMP Bronzefield in Surrey, 28-year-old Beatrice Auty brushes away tears. The memories of her time inside the jail are too





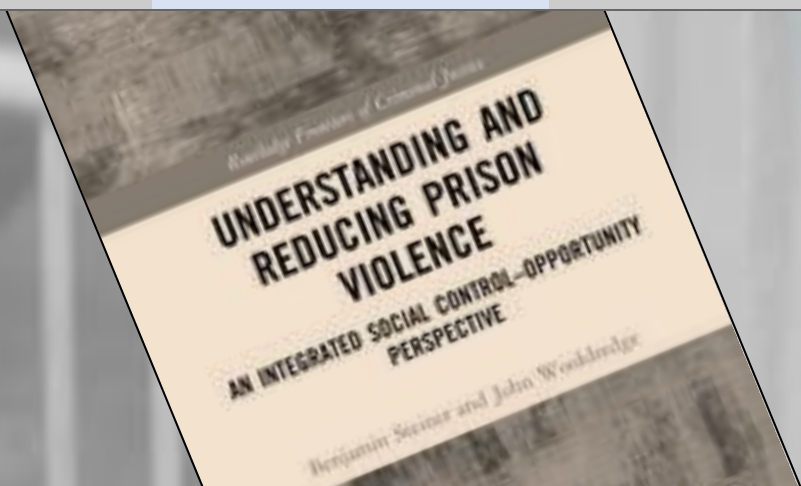


## Prison Analysis 2

Our second analysis examined **serious violence** within prisons, including inmate-on-inmate assaults, inmate violence against staff, and staff assaults on inmates, again suggests a disproportionate presence of private facilities. Of the seven prisons identified for such incidents, two are privately operated (HMP Five Wells and HMP Parc), representing 11.76% of the UK's 17 private prisons.

The remaining five are public, making up just 3.97% of the 126 public prisons. While the overall sample is small, the reappearance of HMP Parc, previously flagged for staff misconduct, underscores concerns around violence and safety in certain privately managed establishments.

Prison	Reported Incidents	Education
HMP Swinfen Hall Staffordshire, England Public	Category C prison for young men. Three violent incidents within weeks, resulting in five officers sustaining minor injuries (2025).	Involvement in fencing panel production suggests construction activity.
HMP Downview Surrey, England Public	Assaults on staff increased by 54% between 2023 and 2024, with 48 reported incidents (2024).	Vocational training offered; specifics not detailed
HMP Wandsworth South London, England Public	Recorded 1,044 assaults in a year, over half targeting staff (2024).	Plumbing, tiling, carpentry & joinery, painting & decorating
HMP Wakefield West Yorkshire, England Public	Reported 61 assaults on staff in the first half of (2023).	Focus on industrial cleaning and education.
HMP Five Wells Northamptonshire, England Private (G4S)	Staff reported daily assaults and a lack of control, with concerns over safety and equipment shortages (2025).	Level 1 construction courses, kitchen fitting, carpentry.
HMP Long Lartin Worcestershire, England Public	Prison guard is stabbed at maximum security jail holding notorious inmates in latest act of violence (2025).	Bricklaying, painting & decorating, woodcraft.
HMP Parc Mid Glamorgan, Wales Private (G4S)	Four officers were arrested for assault and misconduct amid a series of incidents; 13 inmate deaths occurred in the same year (2024).	Carpentry and metalwork vocational qualifications.







While the sample size remains limited, the appearance of certain privately operated prisons in both staff misconduct and institutional violence datasets suggests a pattern that warrants closer scrutiny.

These early observations raise important questions about whether structural differences, such as staffing levels, training standards, oversight, or profit-driven models, may be contributing to elevated levels of both misconduct and volatility in some private facilities.

Notably, private prisons represented 11.76% of the national private estate in both datasets, an identical figure that emerged independently, strengthening the case for further examination. More broadly, this line of inquiry should also consider the psychological impact on those incarcerated in such environments.

Further investigation is needed to determine whether such systemic factors are disproportionately affecting the private prison population, or whether these cases are statistical anomalies.

**Even when not directly subjected to violence, prisoners living in persistently volatile or aggressive environments often suffer significant psychological harm.**

The constant threat of assault, whether from fellow inmates or staff, can create a pervasive sense of fear and hypervigilance.

Over time, this chronic stress may contribute to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and long-term difficulties in reintegration upon release. For some, simply witnessing violence or hearing it occur nearby can be as mentally damaging as being physically harmed. In such settings, the prison becomes not just a place of confinement, but an environment of enduring psychological trauma.





## Sexual Violence

Whilst we have focused on theft across this part of the report, due to its strong links to recidivism, drug poisonings and suicides, it would be remiss of us to ignore the potential for sexual violence given the level of public concern that surrounds this category of crime.

While several UK companies have adopted progressive offender rehabilitation policies, the risks associated with certain categories of crime cannot be ignored. [Timpson](#), one of the country's most prominent employers of ex-offenders, has publicly stated that it does not consider applications from individuals with a history of sexual offences. This distinction reflects a growing recognition that while reintegration is important, the nature of a person's *past convictions* must be factored into future risk assessments, particularly where the safety of other employees or vulnerable persons is concerned.

High-profile cases in both the UK and abroad have demonstrated the serious consequences when these risks are underestimated, including instances of sexual assault and repeat thefts within the workplace.

Despite this, the construction industry may not have yet developed or published clear, sector-wide policies on hiring individuals with convictions for sexual offences. This gap raises not only operational and safeguarding concerns, but also the potential for litigation. Should an incident occur and the employer is shown to have failed to disclose or assess known risks of recidivism, they may be exposed to legal claims for negligence, particularly if the incident affects employees, subcontractors, or members of the public.







As the industry expands its involvement in prison-to-work schemes, clarity, and transparency in hiring policy, supported by legal and risk management advice, will be essential for protecting both people and reputations.

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Tech CEO  
Convicted of Sexual Assault  
**Employee Harm**


Lawrence Jones, the former CEO of UKFast, was convicted in 2024 for sexually assaulting a female employee. He had previously been convicted of drugging and raping two other women in the 1990s. Although his earlier offences occurred before his tenure at UKFast, the workplace assault underscores the potential risks associated with individuals who have a history of sexual misconduct.

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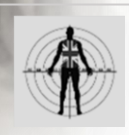
Goldman Sachs  
Employee Conceals Conviction  
**Reputational Harm**

In 2023, Ronan O'Grady continued working at Goldman Sachs' London office despite pleading guilty to eight counts of sexual assault against a child. He concealed his conviction from the firm, which only terminated his employment upon learning of it, months later. This case highlights the challenges employers face when employees fail to disclose serious convictions.

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Companies assessing offenders for employment may need to take their investigations back considerably farther than the offences which led to their “current” incarceration...*this relates to ongoing issues rooted in childhood trauma...*





## Childhood Trauma & Gender-Directed Violence

Clinical evidence has supported several crime causations relevant to assessing future workplace risk:

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### Fatherlessness

While the absence of a father figure is strongly associated with increased risk of gang involvement and criminal behaviour, often as a means of seeking belonging or male role models, it does not inherently indicate a risk to female colleagues or superiors. However, it can signal broader emotional instability or unresolved identity issues that may be relevant during rehabilitation and reintegration.

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### Violence or domination by female caregivers

There is stronger cause for concern where the individual's developmental years were marked by abuse or excessive control by a female caregiver, such as a mother or stepmother. Exposure to female-inflicted violence or sexual abuse has been linked to the development of deep-seated misogyny, sexual aggression, and hostility toward women in authority. This dynamic is of specific concern when assessing potential risks to female colleagues, especially those in leadership positions.

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These patterns are supported by studies in forensic psychology and trauma-informed therapy. Several key findings include:

- Violent offenders, including rapists, often report early emotional humiliation or physical abuse by maternal figures.
- A need to *regain control* or *reverse power dynamics* can drive certain crimes, especially where male ego or self-worth was damaged by dominant or abusive women.

Given the construction industry's advance in the expansion of women in their workforce, and particularly in leadership roles, it would be a tragedy to see those achievements hurt by such an offender.







There is no suggestion that all persons released from the prison system will replicate their crimes either within the workplace, or outside it. But it is the risk factors that must be assessed when gauging an individual's suitability for placement, **especially when under female leadership**, and particularly as they pertain to the broader risks of suicide.

### **Suicide Risk**

Understanding these early-life dynamics is not only essential for assessing potential behavioural risks in the workplace, but also for recognising suicide vulnerability, on both sides of a harmful incident.

### **The Hire (Ex-Offender):**

Individuals who grew up in violent, neglectful, or abusive households, whether through father absence or maternal aggression, are statistically more likely to suffer from unresolved trauma, depression, and emotional dysregulation.

If placed in an environment where they feel rejected, humiliated, or unable to succeed (e.g., under a female manager they subconsciously perceive as threatening), this can lead to self-destructive thinking or suicide, particularly if their coping mechanisms are weak.

### **The Female Victim:**

In worst-case scenarios, where a female colleague becomes the target of harassment, aggression, or sexual violence, the psychological toll can be devastating, especially if she raised concerns that she did not feel were adequately addressed.

Women who feel betrayed by their organisation's duty of care or left isolated after such incidents may suffer from anxiety, PTSD, or depression. In high-pressure industries like construction, such trauma can, tragically, contribute to suicidal ideation or action.







## Section Conclusion

This section has examined the risks and responsibilities involved in recruiting individuals from the UK prison estate into the construction industry. We have emphasised concerns around theft-related convictions, offences often linked to long-term criminal behaviour and substance dependency. Tool theft remains a widespread issue in the sector, causing not only material loss but also psychological distress among victims, including depression and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation.

Offenders imprisoned for theft frequently have multiple prior convictions, contributing to high post-release reoffending rates. This group also presents an elevated risk of suicide immediately following release. While the nature of the custodial environment, public versus private, may influence rehabilitation outcomes, current evidence remains inconclusive.

Beyond the offence itself, early-life experiences warrant careful consideration when assessing suitability for employment. Exposure to childhood neglect or abuse, particularly when perpetrated by a female caregiver, may shape attitudes toward women in authority, posing specific risks in workplaces with female leadership.

Recruiting from the prison estate therefore presents both opportunities and serious risks. Inclusive hiring can support rehabilitation, but it demands a clear-eyed understanding of behavioural risk, including theft, reoffending, and suicide vulnerability. Employers must consider more than the criminal record, factoring in early-life trauma, mental health history, and attitudes toward authority. These considerations are essential not only for safeguarding teams but also for reducing suicide risk across the sector.

In the following section, we focus on drug abuse, some of which may have originated during time served in prison. We will explain the clear links between drugs, mental health, and suicide.







## Investigation Stage 2 / Stage 3 - We Request Your Support

### Roadmap of the Investigation

#### Stage 1 – Desk-Based Investigation

Analysis of existing literature, statistics, international models, cultural influences, and industry narratives. (*This document.*)

#### Stage 2 – Survey of Experiences

In an online [survey](#) we are asking you to promote across the sector, designed to capture personal testimonies: what contributed to lives lost, and what brought others back from the brink. <https://www.dsrmrisk.com/survey>

#### Stage 3 – Industry Collaboration

Structured dialogues with construction firms, unions, and industry bodies to explore their views on root causes and the adequacy of current responses. We invite your input, thoughts, ideas, and what you see as solutions...***just a few lines*** - ***“What do you think is the problem?”*** (This phase is currently running in parallel with Stage 2)

Please send your thoughts to: [contact@dsrmrisk.com](mailto:contact@dsrmrisk.com) (Anonymous is Okay)

#### Stage 4 – Expanded Data

Incorporation of data from Scotland and Northern Ireland (*not currently included in official ONS reporting*), alongside further refinement of UK-wide analysis.

Together, these stages aim to provide both evidence and lived experience, enabling a clearer understanding of risk and more effective prevention strategies.

### Stage 4 will be the Final Crane Report.

