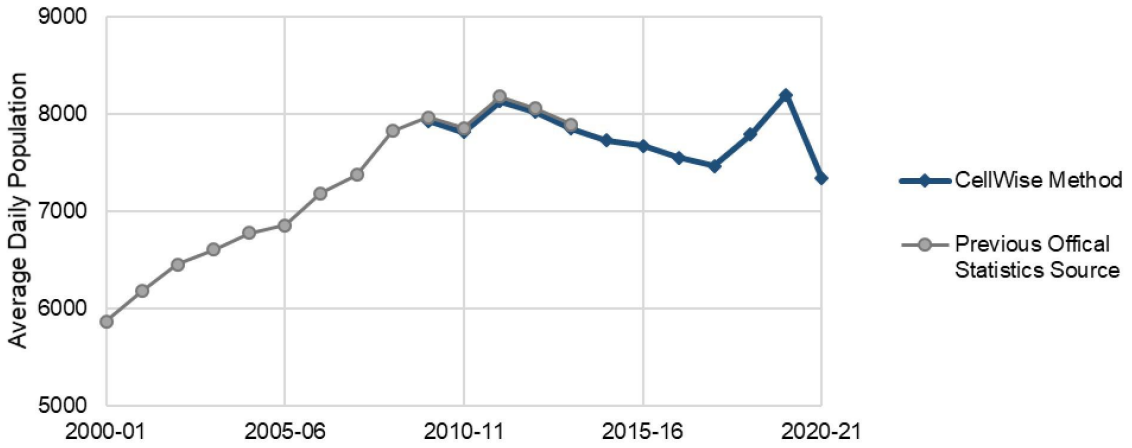
1 Average Daily Population

[Supplementary tables A1]

Responses to Covid related public health measures across the Justice System had a substantial impact on Scotland's prison population in 2020-21. The average daily prison **population**[5] in 2020-21 was 7,337 – a reduction of around 10% from the previous year (8,200), which directly contrasts the annual population increases occurring between 2017-18 and 2019-20.

Figure 1: Long-term trends in the average daily prison population, 2000-01 to 2020-21



1.1 Change in context - COVID impacts on the prison population

[Supplementary tables X1]

Using average daily population figures masks in-year changes in population levels. Under normal conditions, the changes occuring in the prison population on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis are small relative to the size of that population overall. However, coronavirus public health measures and the adaptations to these across the justice system, led to rapid and significant changes in the prison population from Spring 2020.

As Figure 2 shows, the average prison population fell rapidly in the first three months of the pandemic, from around 8,000 in March 2020 to just under 7,000 by June 2020. The population rose thereafter, and broadly stabilised from September 2020 at around 7,500.

[5] Technical Manual: Average daily population, https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics/pages/analytical-factors-and-measurements/#Average%20daily%20population