# SNP minister under fire as youth crime soars by hundreds of percent in Scotland



Concerns surrounding youth crime in Scotland have reached a critical juncture amid alarming statistics and rising public outcry. In a recent media appearance, Justice Secretary Angela Constance faced sharp criticism for downplaying calls for a hardline approach to tackle escalating violence among young people. Instead of assuming accountability, she attributed the surge in youth crime to various external factors, including local councils, schools, and the Westminster government. The Scottish Conservatives have labelled her response as emblematic of the broader 'total inaction' under the ruling SNP party.

Recent figures indicate a staggering 600 per cent rise in serious assaults committed by teenagers over the past five years, alongside a concerning 300 per cent increase in violence within schools. Such statistics have sparked significant debate within the Scottish Parliament, particularly following the tragic death of 16-year-old Kayden Moy earlier this month. Tory leader Russell Findlay described the current justice system as 'reckless,' pointing to insufficient discipline in schools and light sentencing for young offenders as critical failings that have resulted in rising fatalities and injuries.

During her appearance on BBC Scotland, Constance dismissed arguments advocating for tougher measures, insisting that historical approaches to discipline have been ineffective. “What families want is interventions that work, and the earlier the intervention the better,” she claimed, suggesting that a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding youth violence is essential. Yet, her comments drew further dissatisfaction, particularly from youth services advocates, who highlighted the direct correlation between significant cuts to youth services and rising crime rates.

Tim Frew, chief executive of YouthLink Scotland, emphasized the urgency of restoring funding, noting a dramatic 50 per cent reduction in council youth workers over the last eight years. Constance acknowledged the challenges but maintained that there are multiple threads to the rise in youth violence, requiring a comprehensive solution rather than a simplistic response. While she opened the door to the possibility of school exclusions for violent students, she insisted that removing children from classroom settings is rarely a productive outcome.

Despite her assurances, doubts linger about the efficacy of the government’s strategies, particularly in the face of rising crime statistics across the board. An official government report indicated a 4 per cent increase in recorded crimes for the year 2023-24, with non-sexual violence witnessing similar spikes. These figures reflect a broader trend noted by numerous sources, including a report indicating an 8 per cent increase in sexual crimes, raising alarms about the efficacy of current police strategies and sentencing guidelines—especially concerning offenders under 25.

Meanwhile, reports highlighting increased use of dangerous weapons in Scottish schools present a further layer of urgency, drawing attention to the 76 per cent rise in weapon-related incidents since the pandemic. This escalation underscores the fallout from deprioritising youth services and the capacity of schools and police to respond effectively to such challenges.

Additionally, the pressures on Scotland’s prisons further complicate the response to rising crime. A near 10 per cent increase in the prison population has led to overcrowding and raised concerns over staffing shortages, with implications for holding potentially dangerous offenders. The recent controversial proposal to release up to 500 criminals early has also stirred unease about what such measures could mean for public safety.

In light of these multifaceted issues, the Scottish public and policymakers alike are left grappling with the pressing need for effective intervention strategies that address the roots of youth crime, rather than merely the symptoms. With legislators calling for immediate action, the imperative to restore resources to youth services and re-evaluate existing policies has never been clearer. The stakes are high—both for the safety of young people and the broader community they inhabit.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14747941/SNP-minister-dodges-responsibility-soaring-youth-crime-dismisses-calls-tougher-discipline.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14747941/SNP-minister-dodges-responsibility-soaring-youth-crime-dismisses-calls-tougher-discipline.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.gov.scot/news/recorded-crime-in-scotland-2023-24/), [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/19/alarm-bells-as-sexual-and-violent-crimes-surge-in-scotland/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14747941/SNP-minister-dodges-responsibility-soaring-youth-crime-dismisses-calls-tougher-discipline.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.scotsman.com/education/terrifying-rise-in-number-of-scottish-pupils-using-dangerous-weapons-in-schools-4970019)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14747941/SNP-minister-dodges-responsibility-soaring-youth-crime-dismisses-calls-tougher-discipline.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/violent-offenders-among-those-who-32835308)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scotlands-prisons-under-acute-pressure-as-populations-rise-by-almost-10-per-cent-4358367)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/19/alarm-bells-as-sexual-and-violent-crimes-surge-in-scotland/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14747941/SNP-minister-dodges-responsibility-soaring-youth-crime-dismisses-calls-tougher-discipline.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.scot/news/recorded-crime-in-scotland-2023-24/> - This official Scottish Government report details crime statistics for the year 2023-24, highlighting a 4% increase in recorded crimes, from 289,362 to 299,780. Non-sexual crimes of violence rose by 4%, from 68,870 to 71,463, with common assault accounting for 83% of these incidents. The report also notes a 1% decrease in sexual crimes, from 14,602 to 14,484, marking the third-highest level since 1971. These figures provide a comprehensive overview of crime trends in Scotland during this period.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/19/alarm-bells-as-sexual-and-violent-crimes-surge-in-scotland/> - An article from The Telegraph reports a surge in sexual and violent crimes in Scotland, with violent crime increasing by 4% in the 12 months to June compared to the same period in 2019. Sexual crimes rose by 8% over the same period, including a 4% rise in rapes and attempted rapes. The piece also discusses concerns over police staffing levels and the potential impact of sentencing guidelines for offenders under 25, highlighting the need for urgent attention to these issues.
4. <https://www.scotsman.com/education/terrifying-rise-in-number-of-scottish-pupils-using-dangerous-weapons-in-schools-4970019> - The Scotsman reports a significant increase in the number of Scottish pupils using dangerous weapons in schools. Data reveals 194 recorded cases involving offensive weapons in schools over the past three years, a 76% rise from the 110 incidents in the three years prior to the pandemic. The article emphasizes the urgent need for action to address this concerning trend and prevent potential tragedies.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scotlands-prisons-under-acute-pressure-as-populations-rise-by-almost-10-per-cent-4358367> - An article from The Scotsman highlights the acute pressure on Scotland's prisons due to a nearly 10% rise in the prison population. Justice Secretary Angela Constance acknowledged the significant challenge posed by this increase, noting that further rises would seriously impact both staff and prisoners. The Prison Officers Association expressed concerns over overcrowding and staffing shortages, calling for an urgent and properly resourced plan to address the situation.
6. <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/violent-offenders-among-those-who-32835308> - The Scottish Daily Express reports on concerns regarding the Scottish Government's plans to release up to 500 criminals early from prison under new powers. Justice Secretary Angela Constance admitted that violent offenders could be among those released, raising 'extreme concerns' about the potential for reoffending. The article discusses the implications of this policy and the debate surrounding its implementation.
7. <https://www.northern-times.co.uk/news/violent-crime-surge-makes-highland-capital-s-city-centre-th-370620/> - The Northern Times reports a surge in violent crime in Inverness, making its city centre the third most dangerous in Scotland. Over six years, Inverness has risen from outside the top 50 Scottish trouble spots for violence to the worst behind Edinburgh and Glasgow. The article discusses the factors contributing to this increase and the concerns raised by local authorities and residents.