# One Glasgow officer tasked with 176 active rape investigations amid deepening police crisis



Police teams in Scotland grappling with an alarming workload in rape and serious sexual assault cases are facing a crisis point, revealing the pressing need for reform and additional resources. Recent figures from a Freedom of Information request have disclosed a staggering situation: one officer in Glasgow is currently managing 176 live cases. This burden is unsustainable and raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of support for survivors during an already difficult time.

The magnitude of the crisis is underscored by statistics that reveal four senior detectives are collectively handling 584 ongoing cases of rape and domestic abuse in Glasgow alone. Sandy Brindley, Chief Executive of Rape Crisis Scotland, remarked, “One officer, no matter how good they are, cannot manage 176 rape investigations properly.” Her statement highlights the critical need for a system that allows survivors to report incidents safely and receive the attention their cases deserve.

Campaigners have expressed significant outrage over this situation, emphasising that survivors of these crimes are being "devastatingly" let down. The Scottish Police Federation has echoed these sentiments, warning that the current environment is leading to frontline officers feeling "broken." This revelation coincides with a broader trend; over the past decade, reports of rape across Scotland have surged by nearly a third, indicating that more victims are feeling empowered to come forward. However, the resources necessary to support this increase have not kept pace, straining the existing personnel and systems.

From April to September of last year, reported rapes jumped by nearly 20% compared to the same timeframe in 2022, translating to an average of six rapes each day. A police source noted that despite sexual offences accounting for approximately 70% of all High Court trials, the investigative resources dedicated to these cases are a fraction of what is needed. “It is significantly under-resourced,” they said, reflecting a concern that has long been flagged by officers within the sexual offences division.

While Police Scotland’s Assistant Chief Constable Steve Johnson acknowledged the increasing numbers as a sign that victims are gaining confidence in reporting crimes, he also stressed that the organisation is actively reviewing its workload and striving to ensure each report receives the thorough investigation it warrants. He stated, “Work is ongoing across the organisation to support our vision of policing, which includes strengthening the frontline.” However, the dire situation suggests that these measures might not be enough.

A broader context also illustrates the long-standing issues within the Scottish justice system concerning sexual crimes. Reviews carried out by the HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland have pointed to systemic weaknesses that have persisted over the years, hindering the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences. A 2017 thematic review found that conviction rates for rape were only 48%, significantly lower than the overall conviction rate for sexual crimes, which stood at 72%. These statistics are further compounded by the stress and trauma that victims experience during the prosecution process, often leading to disengagement from the system.

Recent calls for radical reform, as described by campaigners and various reports, highlight the urgent need for improvements in how rape cases are handled. Suggestions include quicker processing of cases, improved victim support, and increased funding to ensure that investigations are thorough and respectful of victims' experiences. The persistent delays in the justice system were also noted, with reports highlighting wait times that have escalated significantly following the pandemic, adding yet another layer of difficulty for survivors seeking justice.

As the pressures mount and the caseloads grow heavier, the strains on both the police and the judicial system become increasingly apparent. The situation not only demands immediate attention but also a comprehensive review of how Scotland handles sexual offences to restore faith in a system that aims to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/sex-crime-cops-at-breaking-35328434), [[4]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/thematic-review-investigation-prosecution-sexual-crimes/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/sex-crime-cops-at-breaking-35328434), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq6l47neg67o), [[5]](https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources-stats-key-info/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/follow-up-review-investigation-prosecution-sexual-crime/), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/16/call-for-radical-reform-of-scottish-system-for-prosecutions)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/delays-in-justice-system/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/sex-crime-cops-at-breaking-35328434> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq6l47neg67o> - In October 2024, Assistant Chief Constable Steve Johnson of Police Scotland stated that the 1,400 rape allegations reported over six months likely represent 'the tip of the iceberg'. This 19.5% increase compared to the same period in the previous year suggests a growing confidence among victims to report sexual crimes. The police are hopeful that this trend indicates increased trust in the reporting process. The 'That Guy' campaign, launched in 2021, aims to prevent sexual offending by addressing male behaviour and has been praised by campaigners for its proactive approach.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/follow-up-review-investigation-prosecution-sexual-crime/> - A 2020 follow-up review by HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland assessed the progress made by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in implementing recommendations from a 2017 review on the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes. The 2017 review had identified weaknesses in handling and prosecuting sexual offences, leading to a high number of women disengaging from the system. The follow-up review aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures, processes, and systems in ensuring cases are progressed expeditiously and to assess the quality and thoroughness of investigations.
4. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/thematic-review-investigation-prosecution-sexual-crimes/> - A 2017 thematic review by HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland examined the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes in the High Court. The review found that sexual crimes in Scotland had increased each consecutive year, reaching the highest level since 1971. Rape and attempted rape cases accounted for 17% of sexual offences, partly due to a widened legal definition. However, the conviction rate for these cases was only 48%, compared to 72% for all sexual offences. The review highlighted challenges such as the requirement for corroboration and delays in reporting by victims.
5. <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources-stats-key-info/> - Rape Crisis Scotland provides key statistics on sexual crimes in Scotland. In 2023-24, sexual assault accounted for 35% of sexual crimes, with a 5% decrease from the previous year. Other sexual crimes, such as causing to view sexual activity or images, accounted for 15%, and communicating indecently for 11%. The report also highlights that only 51% of rape and attempted rape trials result in a conviction, compared to a 91% overall conviction rate. Additionally, almost a quarter of these trials result in a 'Not Proven' verdict.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/16/call-for-radical-reform-of-scottish-system-for-prosecutions> - In November 2017, Rape Crisis Scotland called for a radical overhaul of the handling of rape cases after an official report identified weaknesses in the prosecution of sexual offences. The report found that many women found the prosecution and court processes traumatic and degrading, with some describing the experience as 'worse than being raped'. The Inspectorate of Prosecutions made 12 recommendations for reform, including quicker handling of cases and better support for victims. Rape Crisis Scotland advocated for more wide-ranging reforms to prevent re-traumatising victims.
7. <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/delays-in-justice-system/> - A report from The Sunday Post highlighted significant delays in Scotland's justice system, particularly concerning sexual assault cases. Data from the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service indicated that the average time between pleading diet and evidence-led trial had increased substantially compared to pre-pandemic levels. The backlog in summary cases was not expected to be cleared until March the following year. Survivors of sexual violence and abuse faced unacceptable delays, with some living for months or even years with cases hanging over them. Calls for significant reform in the criminal justice system were made to ensure survivors are treated with respect and fairness.