



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> August 2024</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Forensic Services Performance Year End Report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Fiona Douglas</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**PURPOSE**

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Financial Year 2023/24 for Committee consideration.

This paper is presented in line with:

- The Scottish Police Authority Scheme of Delegation

This paper is for discussion.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Forensic Services Performance Report is presented for financial year 2023/24.
- 1.2 This report captures conducted activity across SPA Forensic Services. This performance evidence also informs the content of the Authority's quarterly Strategic Police Plan Delivery Review and the Annual Review of Policing 2023/24.
- 1.3 The report demonstrates SPA Forensic Services delivery over the past year through the following:
  - Progress updates on Forensic Service commitments laid out in the business plan;
  - Qualitative performance data.

## **2. FORENSIC SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT – YEAR END**

- 2.1 Report appended.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

## **4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

## **6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

## **7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no social implications in this report.

## **8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

**10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

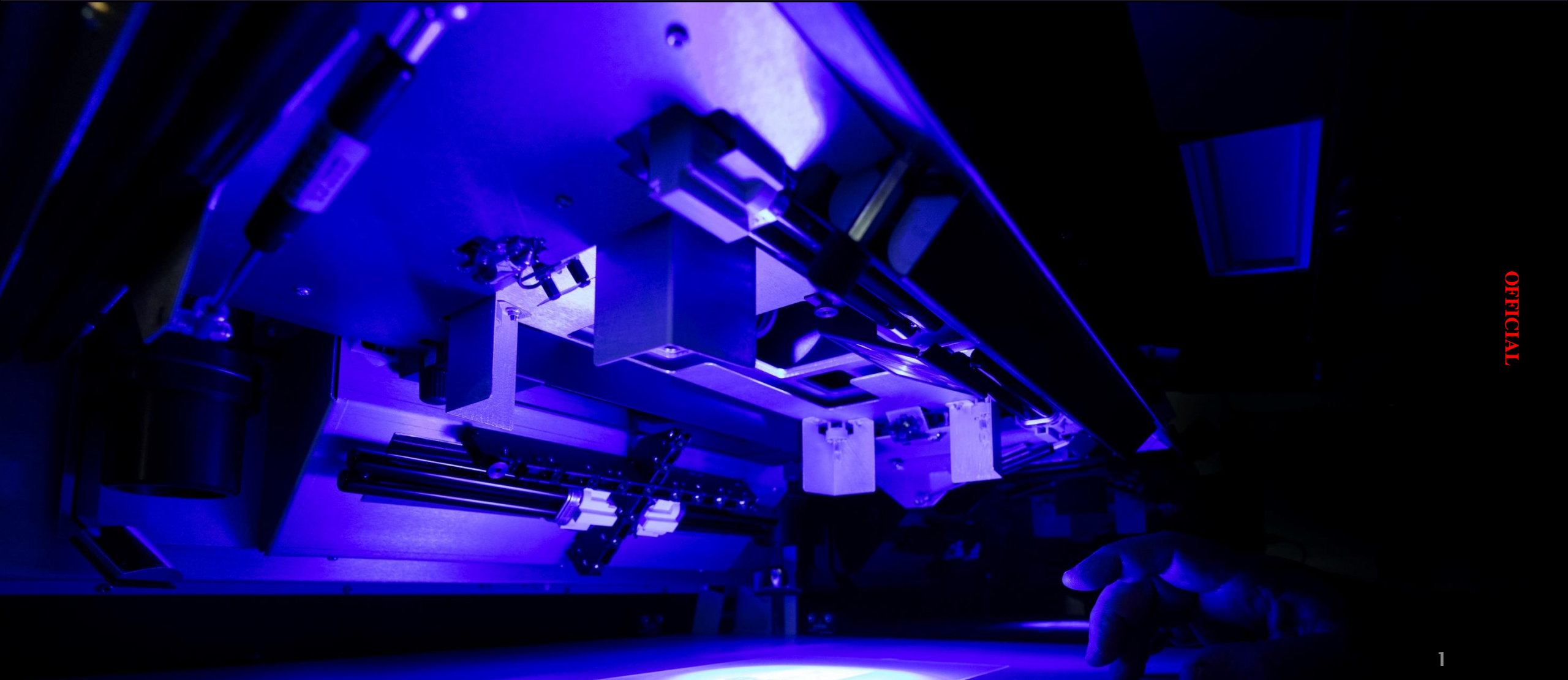
10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss the information provided in this report

# Forensic Services Performance 2023/2024

Year-end report for the SPA Forensic Services Committee



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Throughout the year Forensic Services has demonstrated delivery against agreed strategic outcomes and progress towards transformational change. We have continued to address performance issues and make improvements with a focus on increasing both capacity and quality. Previous concerns in relation to Criminal Toxicology have been tackled during this year, with a joint improvement group in place involving Police Scotland, the Authority, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and the Scottish Government. This group has reported regularly to the Authority's Forensic Services Committee with recent reports showing a significant reduction in case ageing. Work will continue in this area to ensure new levels of service are maintained.

Outside of Criminal Toxicology, capacity has exceeded demand and, as a result, the number of open cases at the end of the year has reduced from a total of 6,090 at the end of 2022-23 to 5,850 this year.

Other important developments this year have included the transfer of Post-Mortem Toxicology from the University of Glasgow to Forensic Services and the launch of a new National Scenes Tasking Unit in Dundee.

As part of the New Operating Model, a newly-strengthened senior management team is now in place, with additional posts now being recruited in key areas, which means Forensic Services are in a strong position moving into 2024-25.

The Forensic Services dedicated Cold Case Review Team was set up in 2013 with a primary aim to provide our customers, Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, with a more robust and consistent national cold case review service.

The team's 10-year anniversary was marked with a publication - *Cold Case Review Team. The first decade 2013- 2023* – [published on the SPA website](#) and discussed at the SPA Forensic Services Committee in October 2023.

The Forensic Services Cold Case Review Team has always worked closely with the Police Scotland Homicide Governance Review team, who are based at the Scottish Crime Campus, and the COPFS National Homicide Team. Over the past 10 years Forensic Services have worked on more than 70 cold cases. These cases have spanned the whole of Scotland and extended internationally through our work on the Lockerbie Bombing enquiry. Most of these cases are homicides and date as far back as the 1960s and up to 2019.

Some of the high-profile cases, the team were involved in during 2023-24:

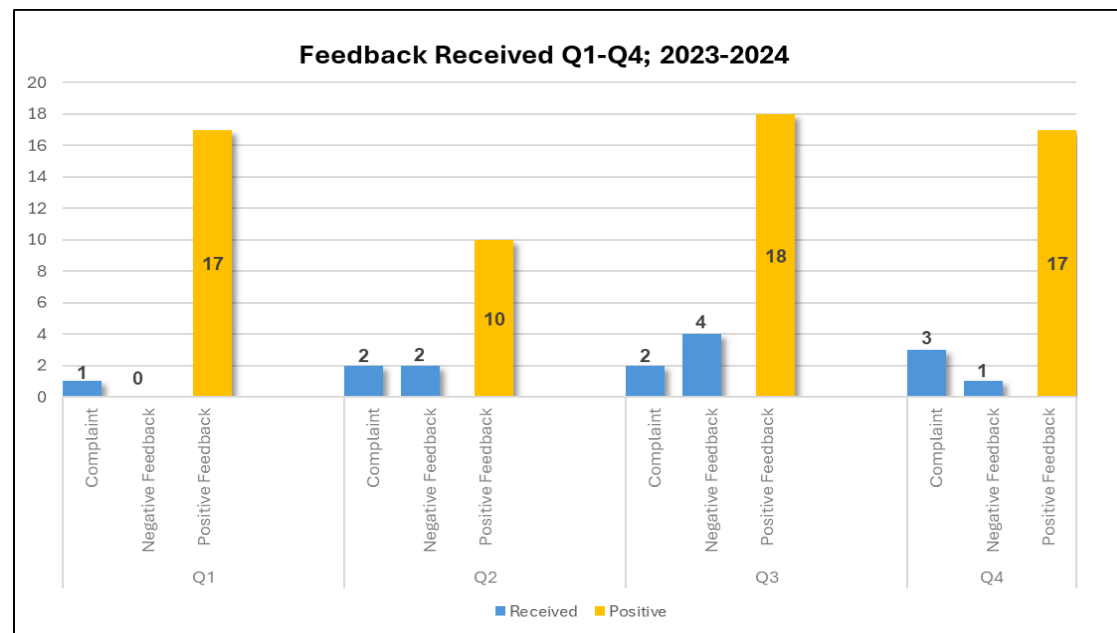
- Operation Bynum – the murder of Emma Caldwell in 2005 – Iain Packer was found guilty of murder in February 2024.
- Operation Fairing – the murder of 14-year-old Caroline Glachan by the banks of the River Leven in Alexandria in 1996 – Robert O'Brien, Andrew Kelly and Donna Marie Brand were convicted in December of the murder in December 2023.



**UKAS ISO 17025 Compliance:** The UKAS Surveillance (Su2) Assessment of Forensic Services commenced 09 Oct 2023 and finished on 01 Dec 2023. Accreditation was recommended to be maintained subject to submission of appropriate evidence with a re-visit in Apr 2024.

UKAS confirmed the maintenance of Forensic Services accreditation to ISO 17025 on 09 Apr 2024. This is the 26th consecutive year of UKAS accreditation at Forensic Services.

UKAS will return to all Forensic Services' locations in November 2024 for the Su3 Surveillance Assessment which will take place between 04-29 November 2024.



**The number of recorded Complaints and Negative Feedback continues to remain low.**

### **Forensic Services Management System Compliance:**

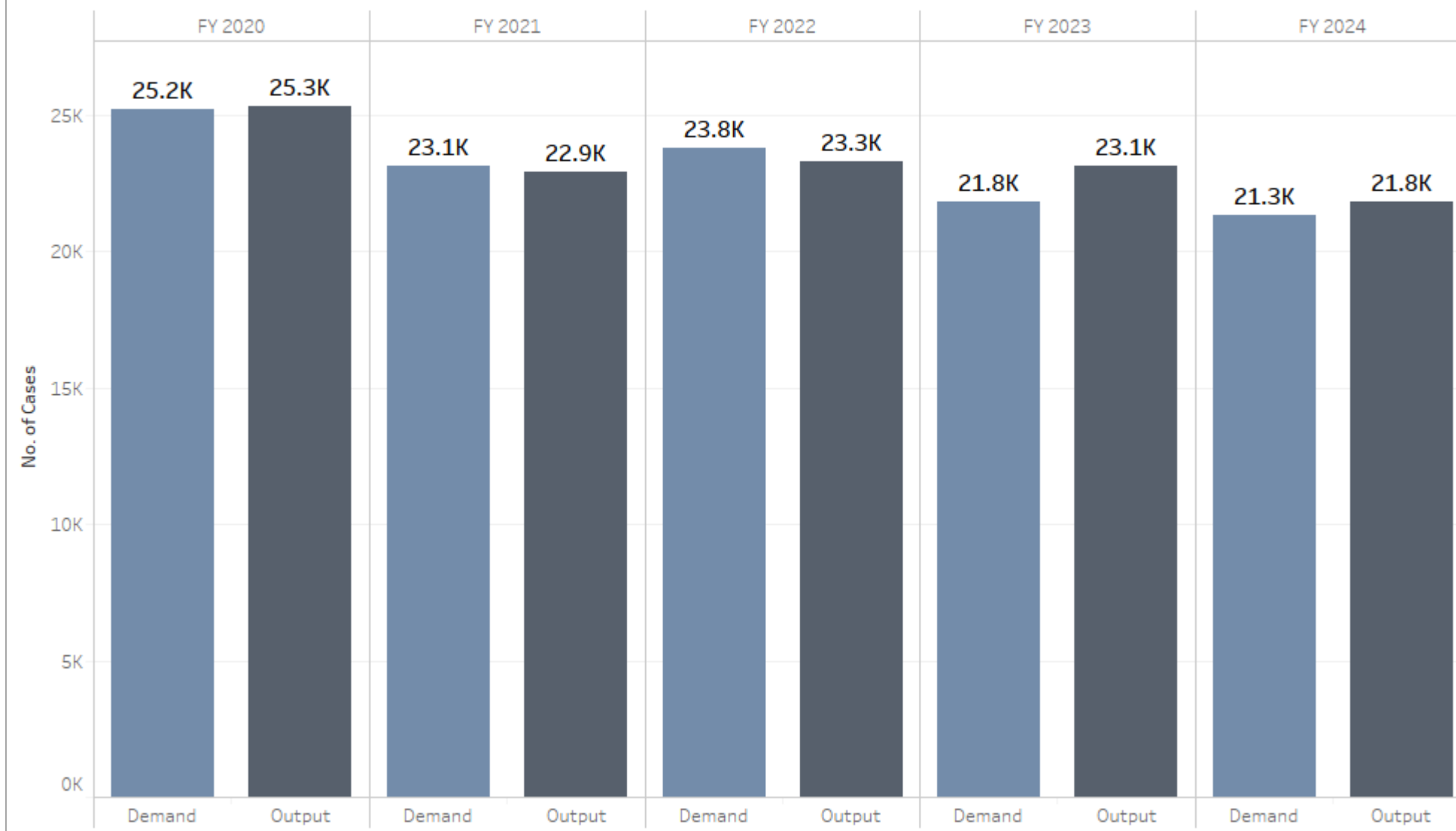
At the bi-annual Forensic Services Management System Review meeting it was concluded that the Forensic Services Management System remains *fit-for-purpose* against the requirements of the ISO 17025: 2017 standard and ILAC G19, with demonstrable improvement across many areas.

The Quality Improvement work plan will continue to drive improvements in Quality and Assurance in Forensic Services.



# Demand and output – five-year trend

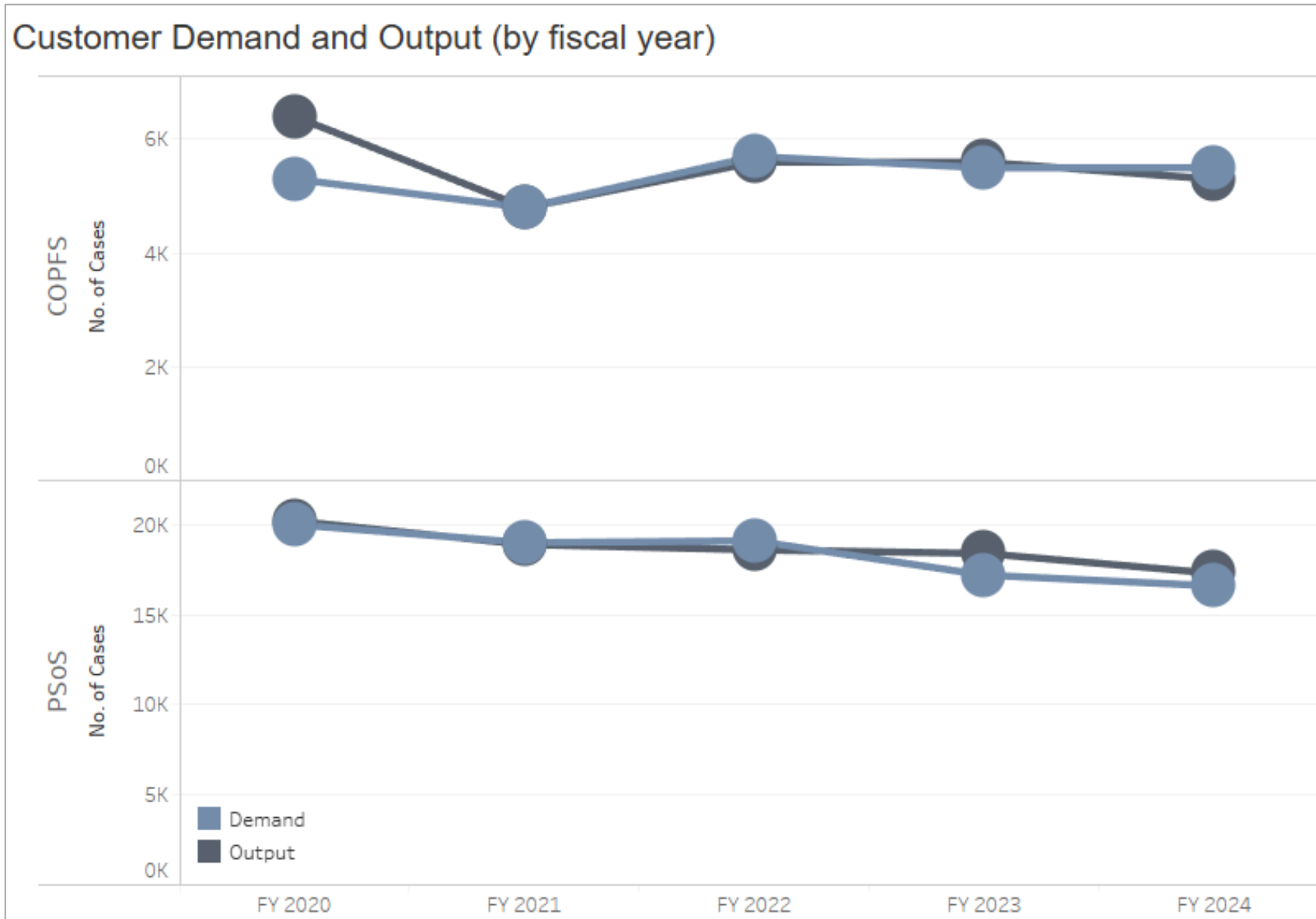
Laboratory Case Demand and Output (by fiscal year)



The demand trend has been reducing over the past five years and the trend for the past year has reduced by 2%.

Group 3 crime has been the main reason for the five-year decrease as Group 3 crimes have not returned to levels recorded before the Covid pandemic.

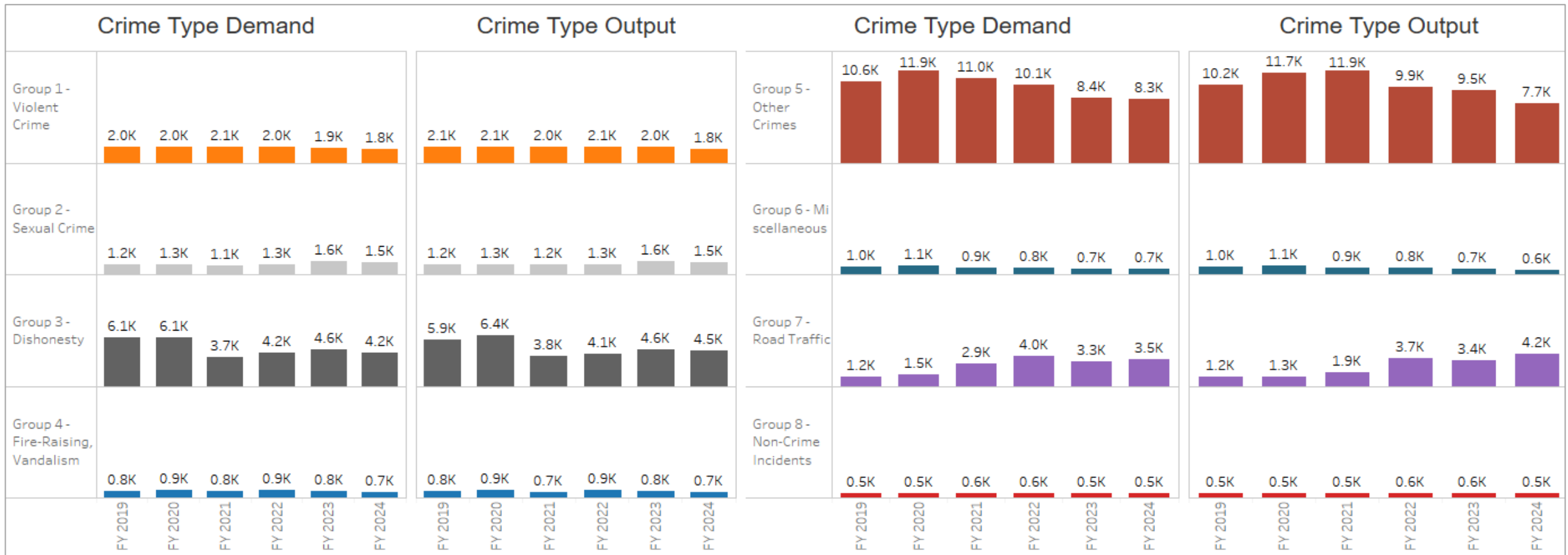
# Demand and output – five-year trend



Active case monitoring across all parts of Forensic Services manages the resourcing between COPFS and police Scotland to align to demand.

In line with the stated Operating Model objective, output for cases from police Scotland (primarily acquisitive crime cases) is greater than demand, which has the net effect of improving turnaround time.

# Demand and output by crime type



Demand and output remain broadly in balance for Groups 1-8 crimes. Of note, there remains continued high demand and output in relation to Group 7 (Road Traffic) crimes, which is driven mainly by Drug Driving casework. This represents c.300% increase in demand since FY2019. This level of demand has been supported by continuous outsourcing to balance capacity with demand.

# Demand and output

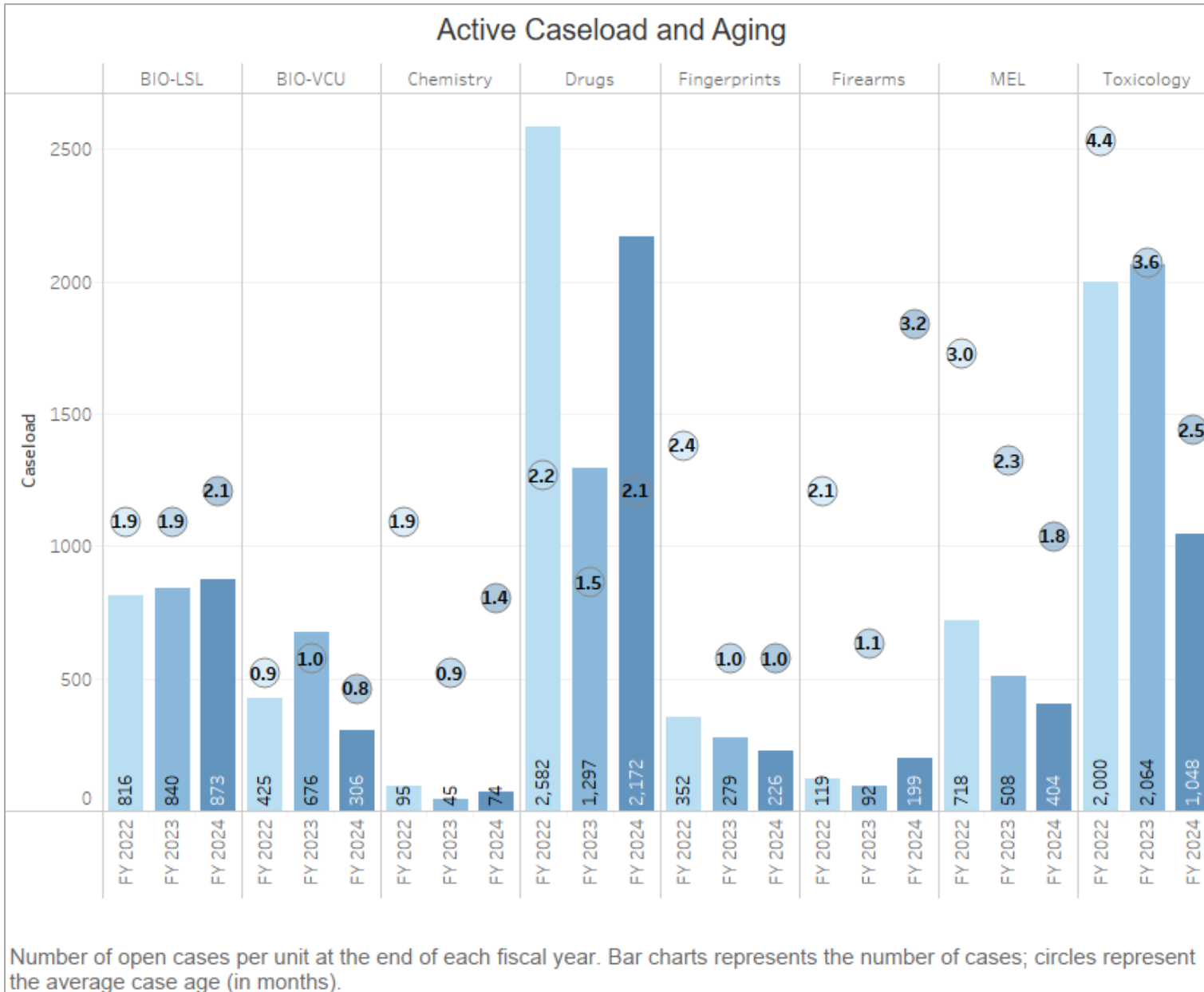


Demand and output were, generally speaking, balanced over the year right across Forensic Services.

The sections with smaller teams are impacted more by spikes in demand.

The implementation of the New Operating Model has been positive for staff advancement in careers. The implementation required extensive recruitment and training for staff which provided some management challenges throughout the year.

# Active caseload and case age



The active caseload (*Bar Charts*) shows the work in progress in Forensic Services.

The case age (*Circle Numbers*) indicates the average age of a case in months – i.e. the length of time the active case is in Forensic Services.

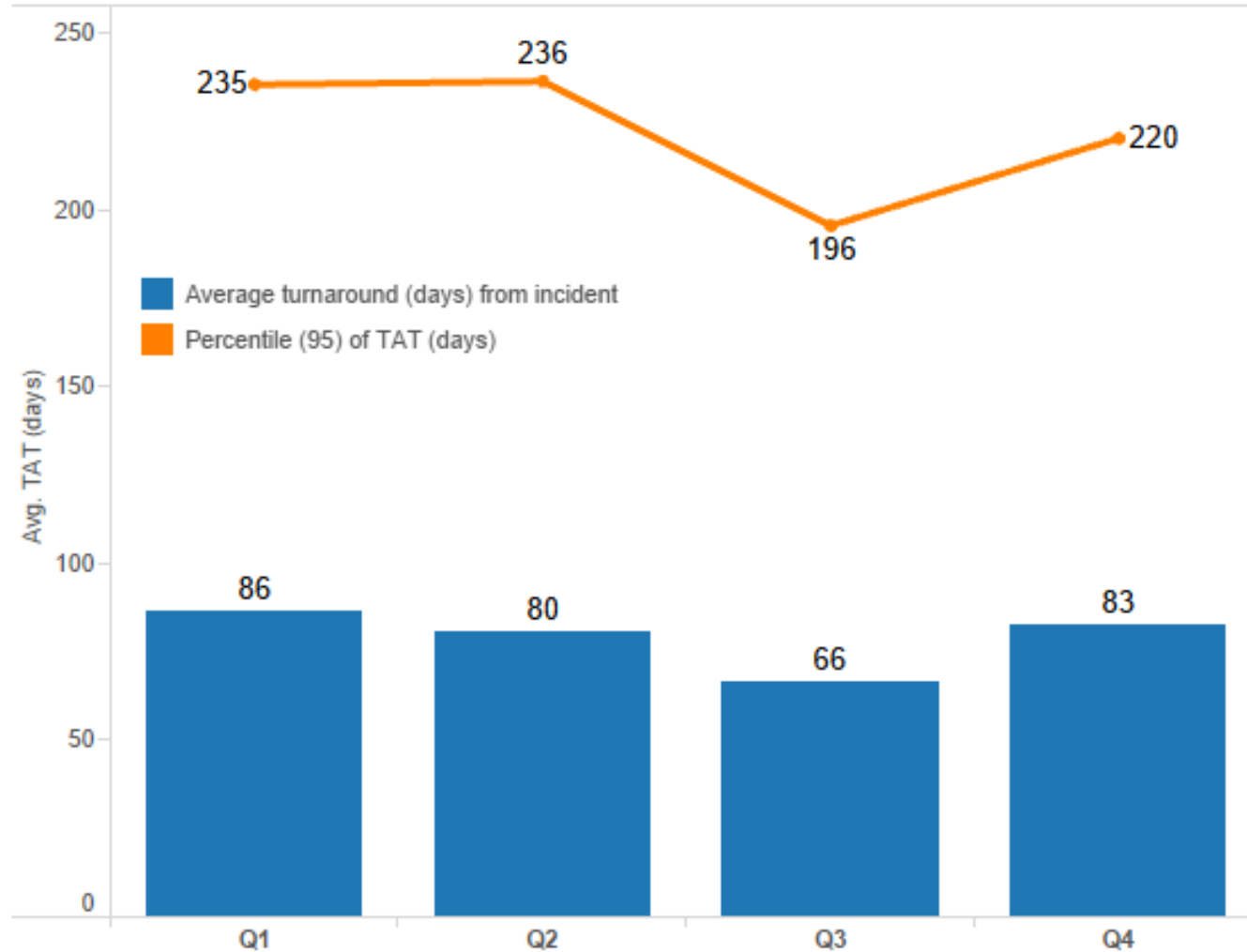
There has been an overall reduction in case demand in drugs, which has stabilised – capacity also reduced within the team, which improved during the second half of the year - this should result in a stabilisation of unit output in the next financial year. 10

Number of open cases per unit at the end of each fiscal year. Bar charts represents the number of cases; circles represent the average case age (in months).

# Mark Enhancement overview

## Mark Enhancement - Investigative turnaround times

average no. of days for cases to be reported, measured as monthly average, and as 95% of monthly cases



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As part of the New Operating Model, the Mark Enhancement service is being expanded into the Aberdeen and Edinburgh laboratories.

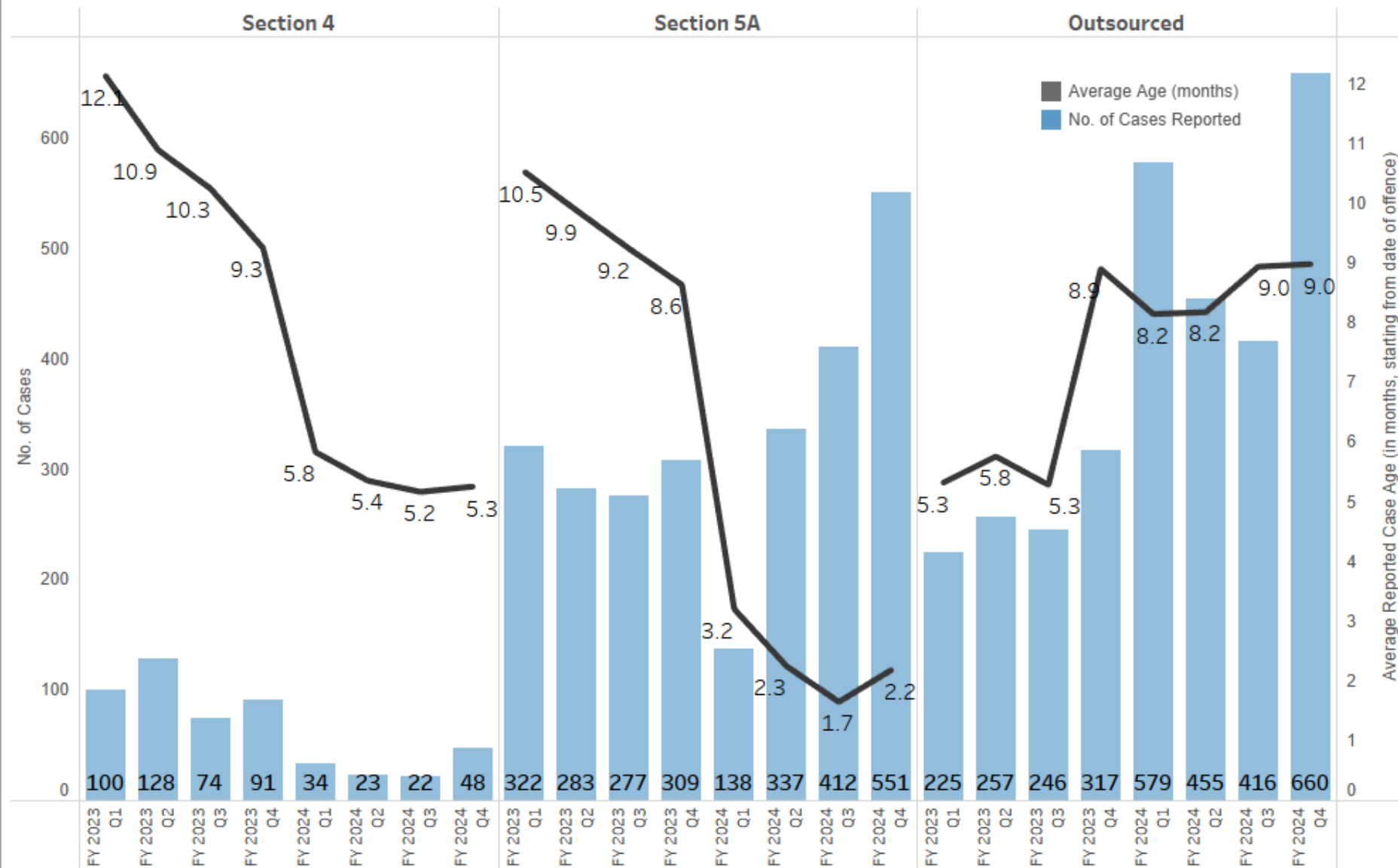
This will help deliver acquisitive crime cases locally, at the nearest the Forensic Services laboratory, as set out in the New Operating Model.

New laboratories have been designed, commissioned and equipment has been delivered and installed. An additional eight staff have been recruited, the majority internally.

Staff training, validation of methods and equipment is in progress and UKAS accreditation will be sought during 2024-25. Given the constraints of staff resourcing the service delivery has been as expected.

# Drug Driving overview

Toxicology - Drug Driving Case Output and Age 2022-23 to 2023-24



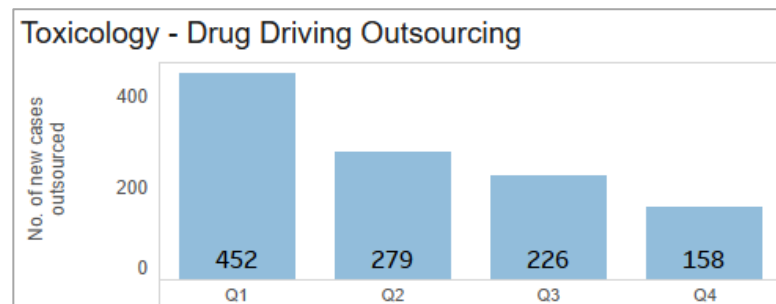
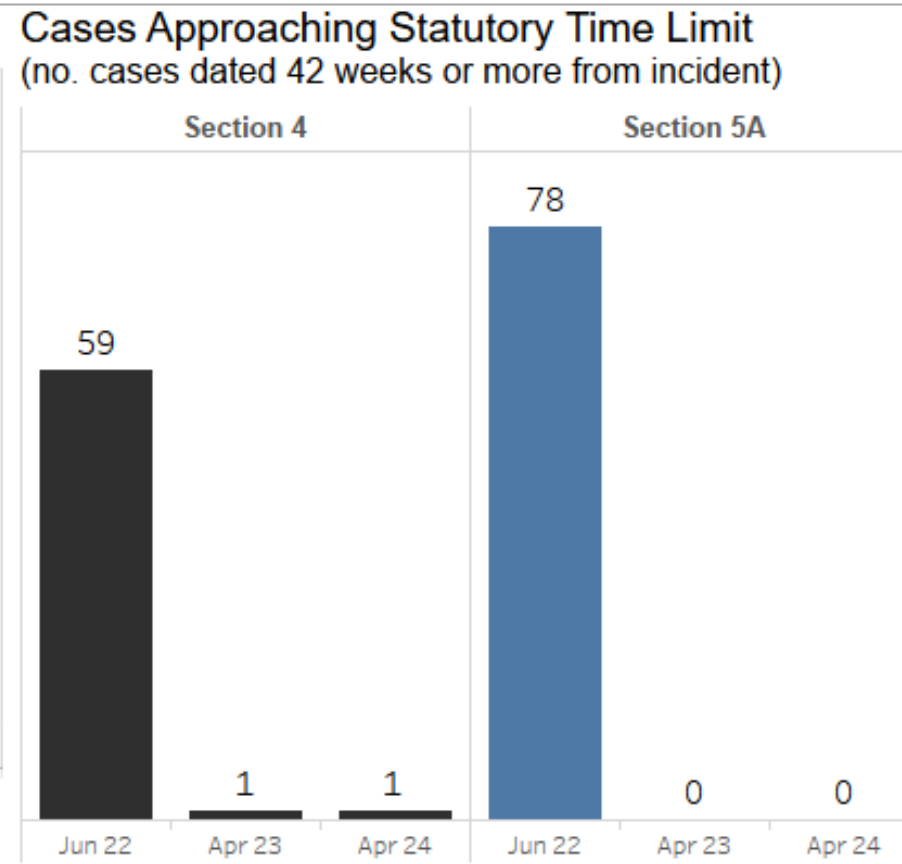
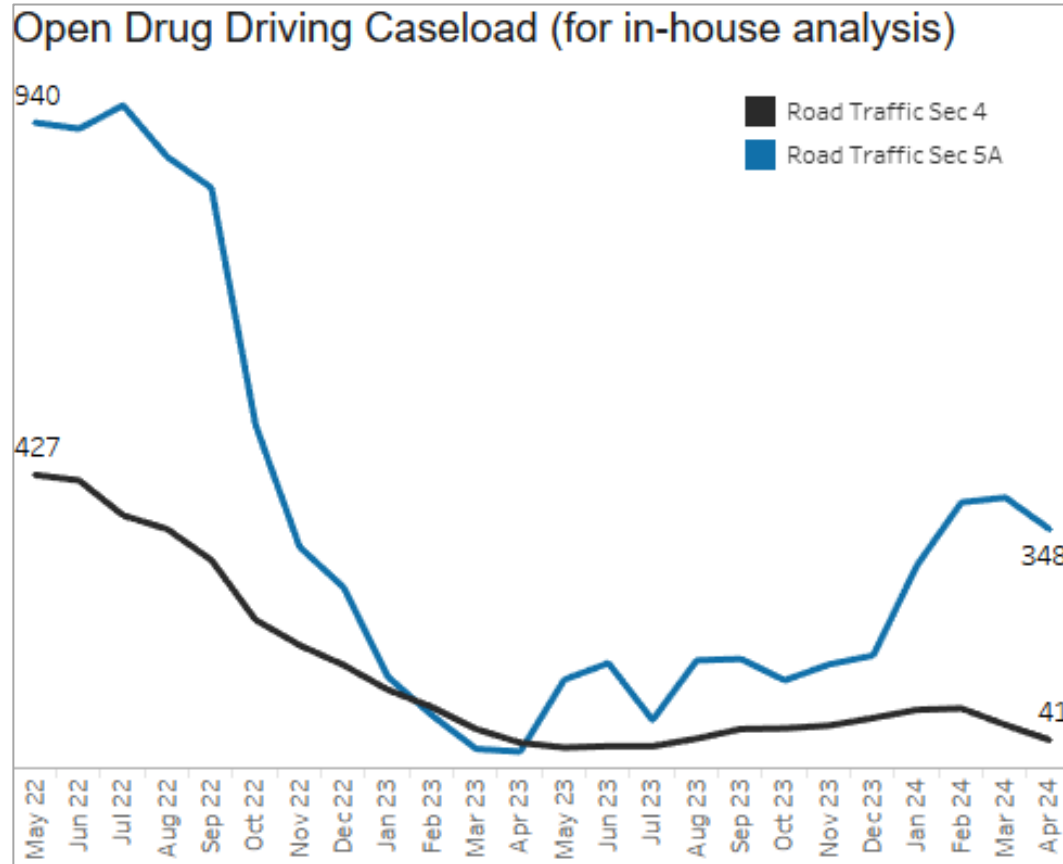
Inhouse compliance to case age - Section 5A has improved by 75% during this financial year.

Section 4 has also improved, with a 43% improvement in the age of active cases in progress

Challenges with the outsource provider capacity in Q3 posed a risk to output but, following close management, led to improvements from Q4.



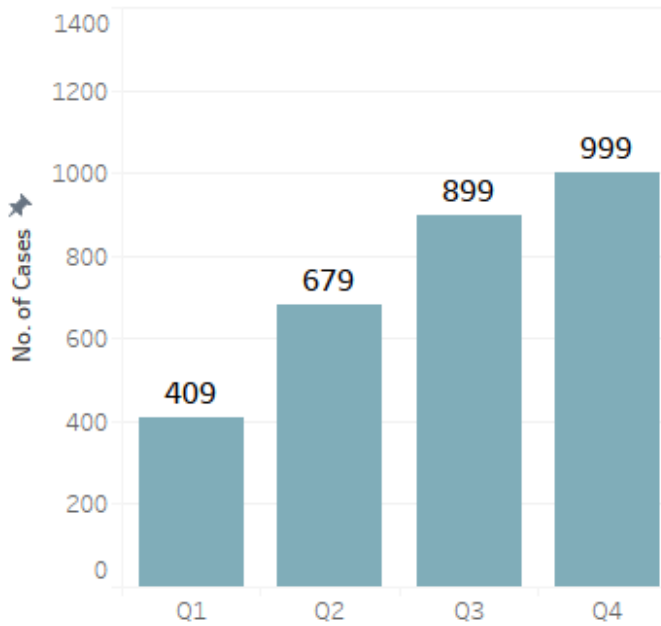
# Drug Driving overview



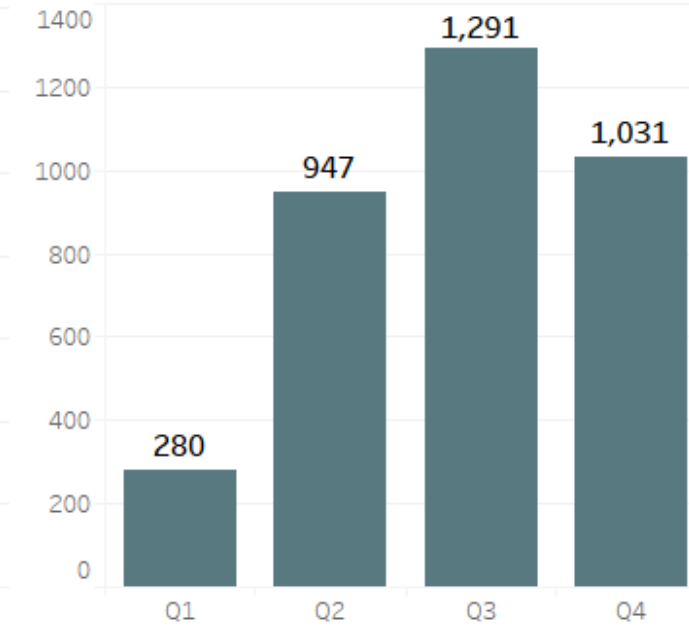
There continues to be proactive management (involving all partners) of any cases which may be at risk of exceeding statutory time limit.

# Post-Mortem Toxicology overview

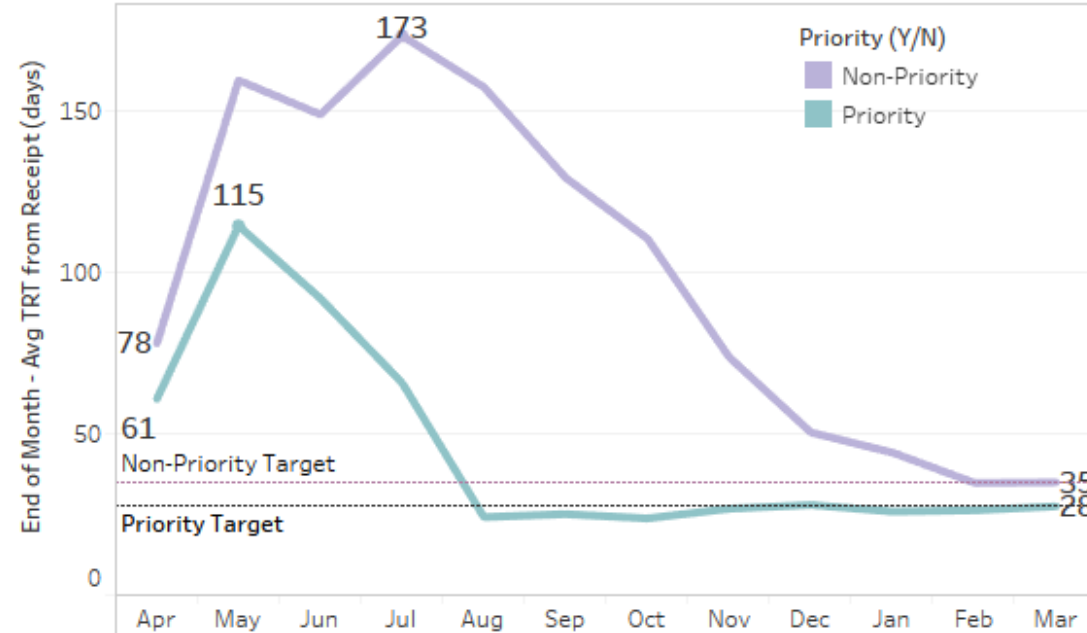
### Case Demand - Moorepark Lab



### Case Output - Moorepark Lab

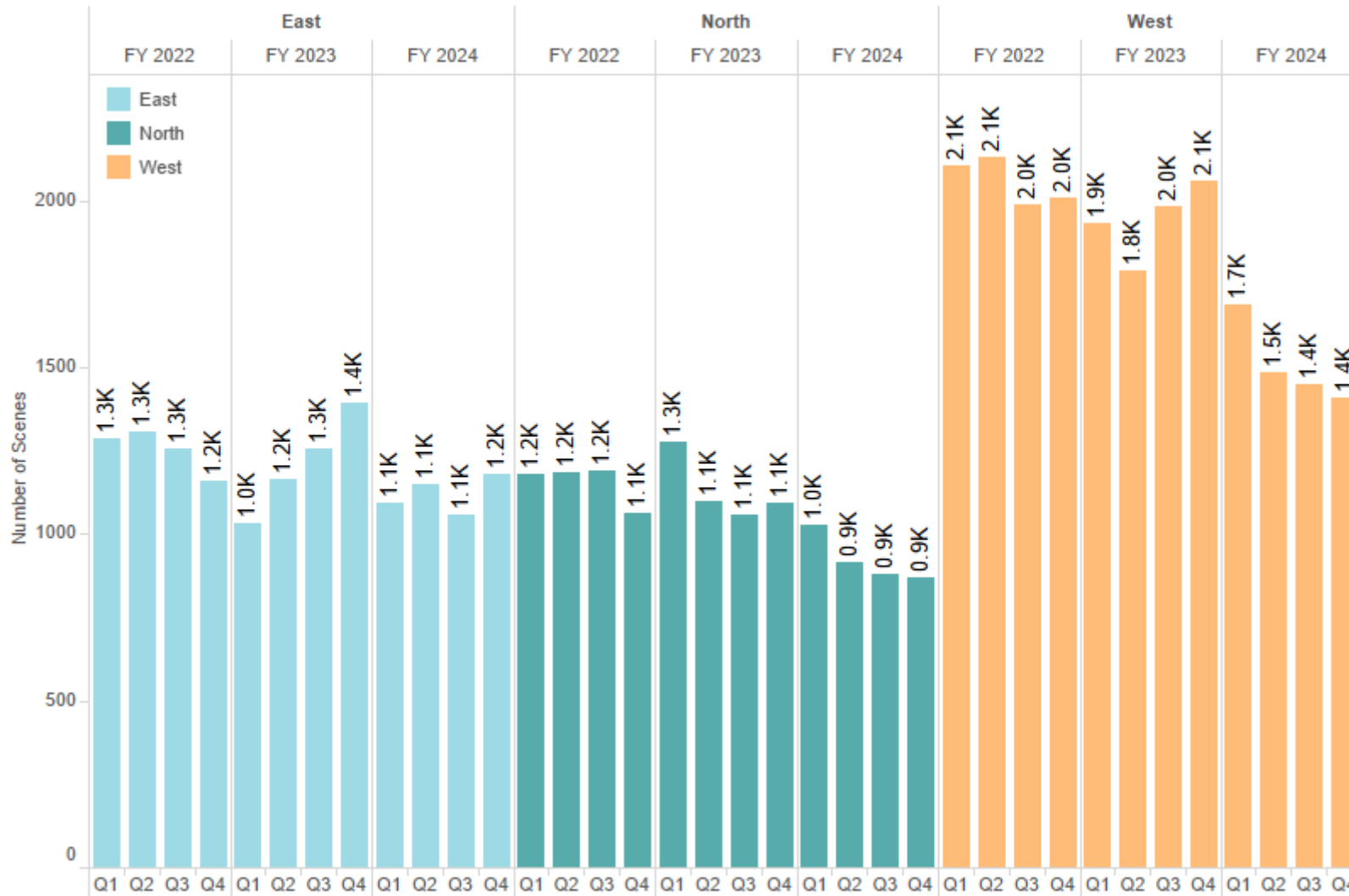


### Case Turnaround Times



The integration of this service into Forensic Services has delivered significant improvements during the financial year. This is largely due to staff dedication and resilience, which has delivered a sustained reduction in in-house caseload and improvement in both priority and non-priority turnaround times.

# Scenes attended overview



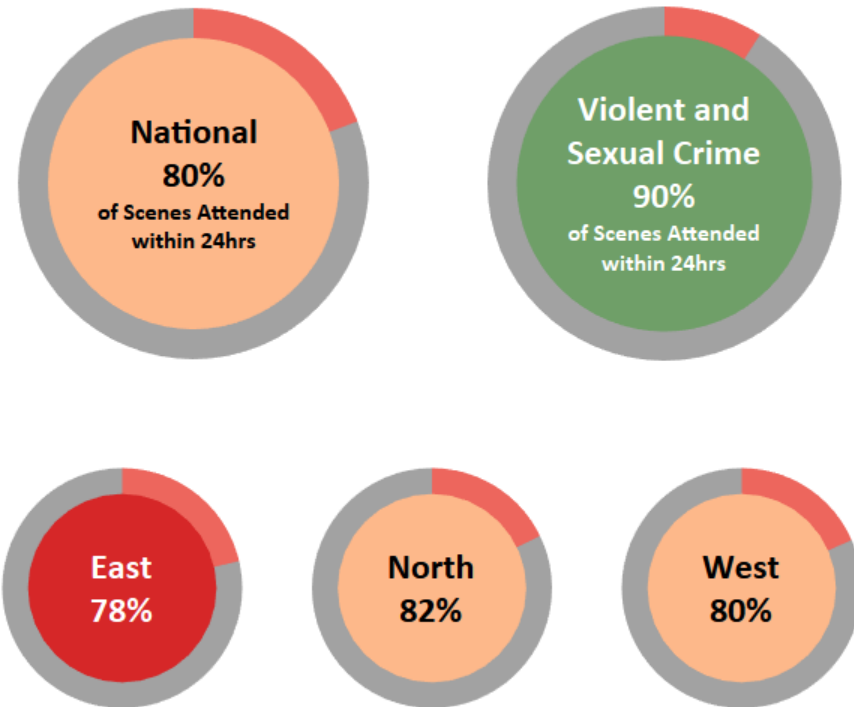
Search and Recovery Scene Examination provide a largely reactive service.

The introduction of the new National Tasking Unit in April 2023 has provided a more consistent approach to attendances which has delivered improved effectiveness and efficiency of the service.

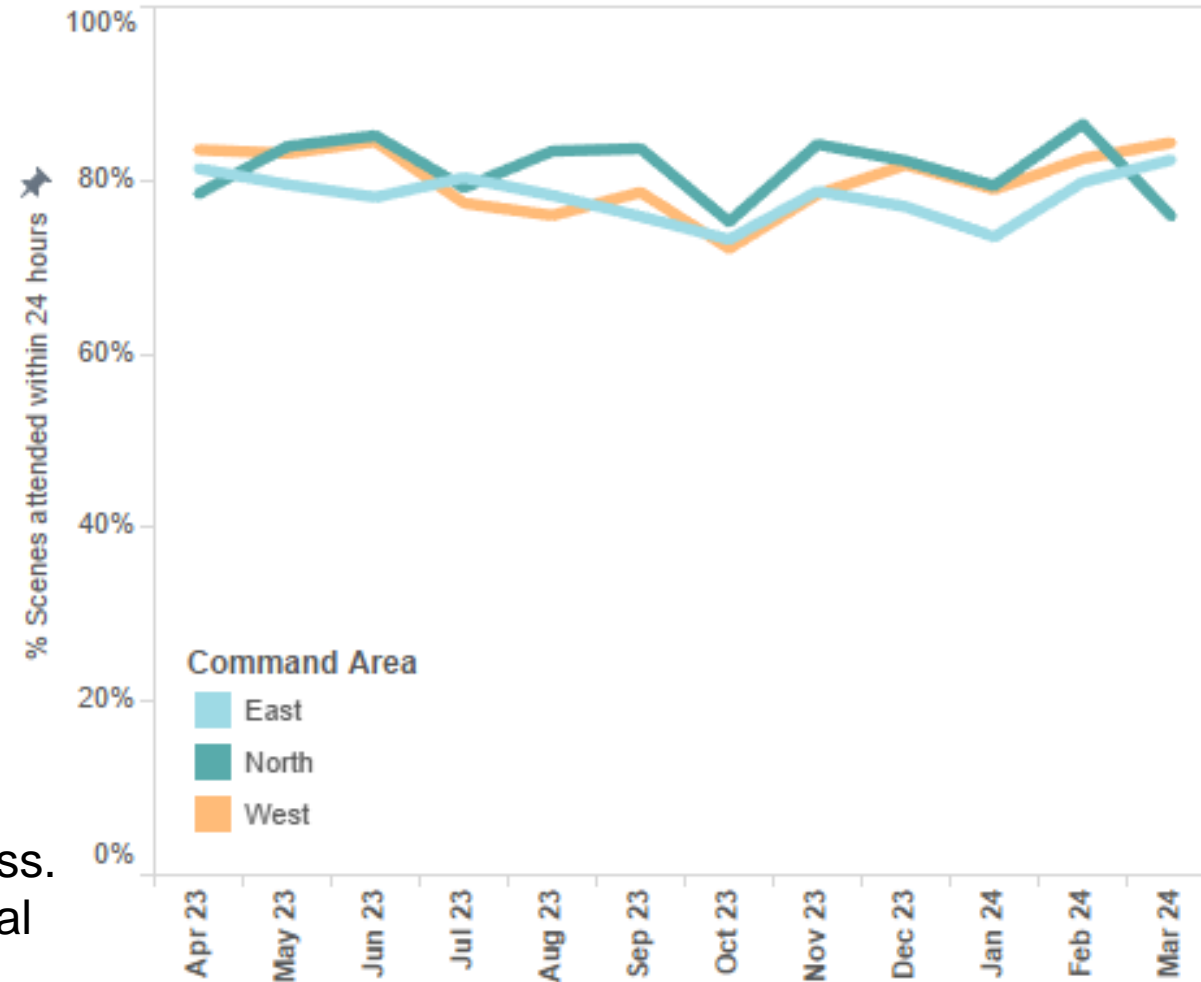
There has been an improvement in the response times for non-serious crime scene attendance.

# Scenes attended overview

Timeliness Scenes attended within 24hrs of request 2023-24

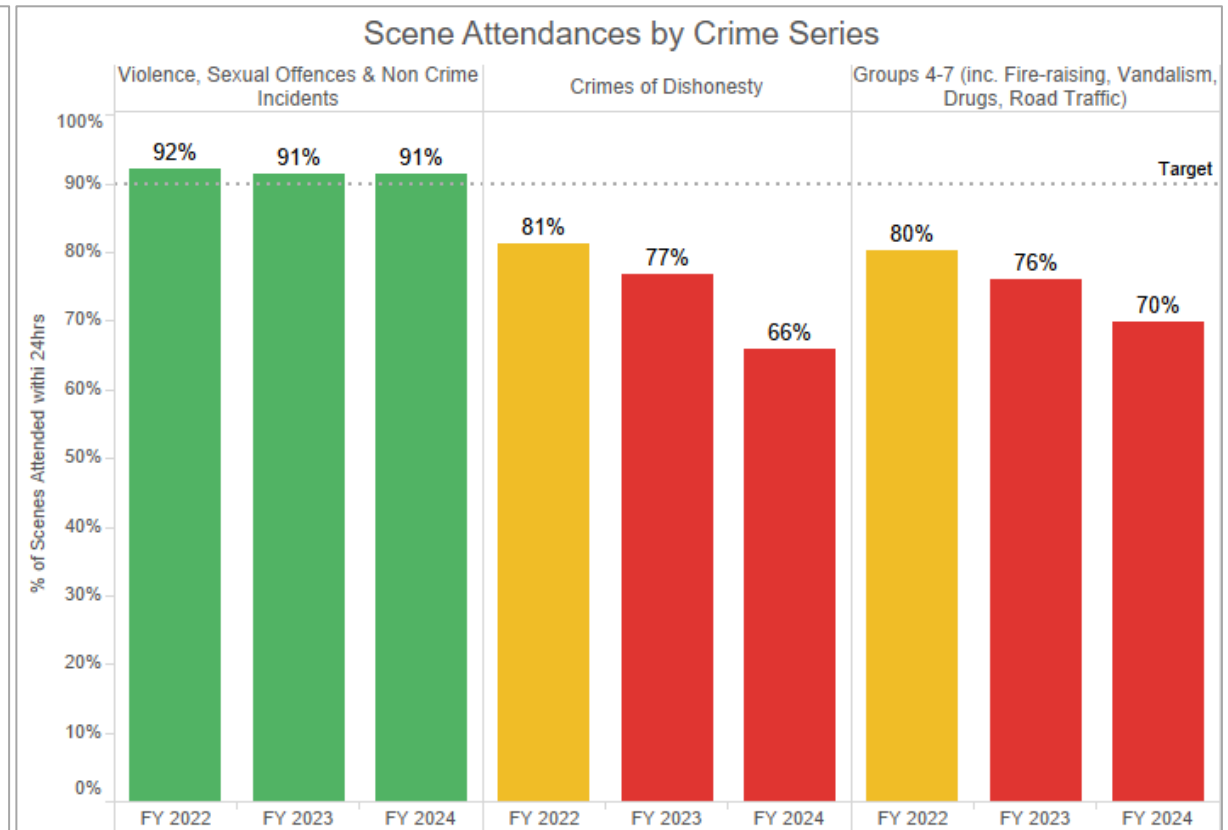
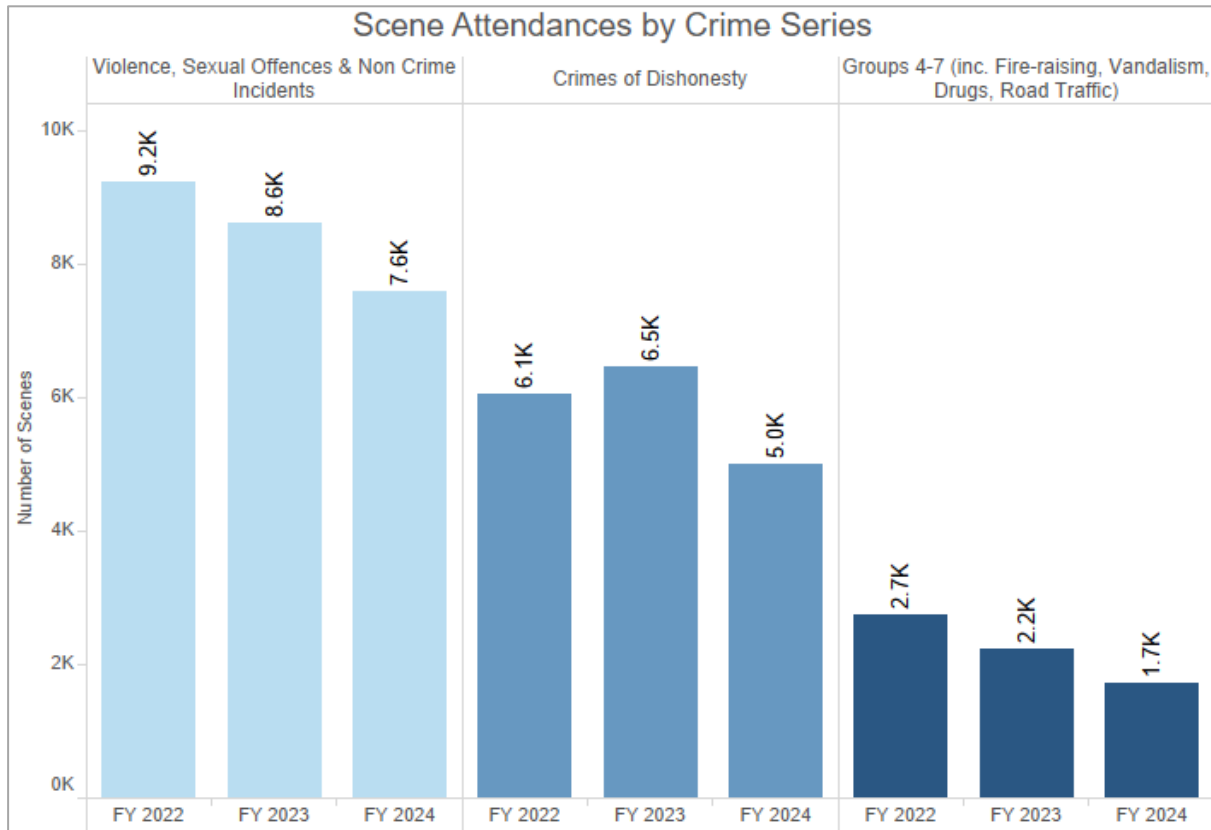


### National Timeliness Trending



During 2023-24 there has been an improvement in timeliness. There was an anticipated service dip while several additional staff were being trained during the financial year.

# Scenes attended - overview



The demand for scene attendance by Forensic Services has, in general, declined over the past three years (and is more pronounced in the West and East geographical areas).

The performance in relation to the KPI for attendance at scenes remains strong for the most serious of cases (exceeding the KPI) but has declined for the remaining crime types. This is forecast to improve.