# Civil legal aid: Geographic trends analysis

**May 2025**

The Scottish Legal Aid Board

www.slab.org.uk

# Contents

# Executive summary

1. Applications for civil legal aid in 2023-24 were 13% down on 2014-15.
2. The total number of grants in 2023-24 was 7% higher than the total level in 2014-15.
3. Adults with Incapacity (AWI) cases are a very large factor in the rise in grants.
4. AWI grants have almost doubled (+82%) since 2014-15, while the number of non-AWI grants has fallen by 22% since 2014-15.
5. Non-family non-AWI cases have fallen more (down 48%) than family (down 16%) compared with 14-15.
6. By court location, three sheriffdoms saw a rise in non-AWI civil legal aid cases in 2023-24, most noticeably in Tayside/Central/Fife (TCF), and in North Strathclyde.
7. Glasgow City remains the largest local authority in terms of the use of civil legal aid by local applicants, constituting 14% of all Scotland in 2023-24.
8. Fife is now the second largest at 7.9%.
9. Civil legal aid is concentrated among the more deprived areas of Scotland.
10. By decile of deprivation (SIMD), 17% of grants in 2023-24 were in the most deprived decile and 43% in the three most deprived deciles.
11. Excluding AWI, this proportion increases to 54% of grants in the three most deprived deciles in 2023-24.
12. The national changes in the levels of civil legal aid certificates from 2014-15 to 2023-24 have been unevenly distributed across the deciles of deprivation – this is due to the uneven distribution of civil legal aid to start with.
13. Glasgow City also remains the largest local authority in terms of the supply of civil legal aid by local firms, constituting 22% of all Scotland in 2023-24.
14. City of Edinburgh is the second largest local authority in terms of the supply of civil legal aid by local firms, constituting 9.4% of all Scotland in 2023-24.
15. The total number of firm branches delivering civil legal aid fell by 26% between 2014-15 and 2023-24.
16. Every local authority saw falls in the number of local branches supplying legal aid other than East Ayrshire, which saw an increase from eight to 11 branches.
17. The largest falls were in the more rural and remote areas and those furthest from the Central Belt.
18. Some councils remain with higher levels of supply from branches in their area, but this is falling generally.
19. Again, larger falls in the same area supply are being seen in more rural and remote areas – Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders stand out as areas keeping higher levels of the same area supply.
20. Dumfries & Galloway saw only a small reduction (-18%) in the number of active branches, but Scottish Borders saw a much larger reduction in active branches, from 11 in 2014-15 to three in 2023-24, but the same area supply has remained at 82%.
21. In 2014-15 there were 1067 practitioners with civil legal aid cases granted at an average of 12 cases per practitioner.
22. In 2023-24 there were 791 practitioners with civil legal aid cases granted (a decrease of 26%) at an average of 17 cases per practitioner (a rise of 44%).
23. Over two-thirds of all cases (69%) are now being done by just over a quarter of all practitioners (27%).

24. Within the AWI subject we have seen a slight reduction in the number of active practitioners but a large increase in the concentration of AWI cases, and in the average number of AWI cases amongst the higher volume practitioners.
25. Fewer active practitioners are not doing AWI now than in 2014-15.
26. In Family, we have seen a large reduction in the number of active practitioners but increases in the concentration and the average number of cases amongst the practitioners remaining.
27. The proportion of all active civil practitioners who don't have family cases has increased from 27% to 36%.
28. The proportion of all active civil practitioners who had no non-family non-AWI cases in 2023-24 was two-thirds.

# Background and objectives

1. This work was undertaken to assist in our function of monitoring the availability and accessibility of legal services. This output serves to seek the views of Scottish Government as to whether the trends are in line with their policy expectations of the legal aid system.
2. Previous reports from the Law Society of Scotland have focused on the location of civil legal aid solicitors' firms and the location of criminal legal aid practitioners, whereas this work allows us to understand the location of applicants (used as shorthand here for applicants and clients), as well as firm branches.
3. We know from analysis of trends that changes in volumes of applications vary widely by different groupings of case subjects (for example, family law versus non-family) or types of assistance (for example, police station A&A versus summary legal aid). We also know from previous work on civil and criminal legal aid that sub-national areas can have varying trends.

The research objectives were to understand:

a. how trends in applications at the sub-national level compare to the national trend and between areas, by applicant and firm branch location
b. how trends in active practitioners at the sub-national level compare to the national trend and between areas, by applicant and firm branch location
c. how trends in active practitioners relate to volume of applications, by applicant and firm branch location
d. whether the usage of legally aided services vary by SIMD location of the applicant.

Where appropriate, per capita comparisons will be used.

We have also illustrated the trends through a few in-depth case studies of some specific exemplar areas to aid in discussions of policy. They may also be of use in providing reference material for the Remuneration Development project. The choice of these areas may be driven by the results of the initial analysis.

# Methodology

## Data Sources

The initial focus for the analysis was the most recent complete financial year at the time, 2022-23, and two comparison years of 2014-15 and 2018-19. These years were chosen based on the data available, as well as to enable views to be formed of trends pre and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequently the analysis was updated with 2023-24 figures. A number of different external data sources, provided by National Records of Scotland or SpatialData.gov.scot, have been used to enhance our data and facilitate the geographic analysis. These sources were:

- Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD)
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
- Data Zone Geography
- Area Population Estimates.

All these sources are subject to change and are updated at varying frequencies. To simplify the data management for the more advanced analysis, the focus was reduced to the years 2014-15 and 2023-24. For these years the closest data source historically was used. For example, for 2014-15 the SPD '2015-2' version was used and for 2023-24 the SPD '2024-2' version.

## Postcode geolocation

A multi-stage process was used to locate applicants. The Small User Postcode Directory[1] was used first to locate applicants with domestic addresses. Then non-located applicants were categorised into:

- outside Scotland
- prison
- hospital
- other in Scotland.

Applicants that were outside Scotland, in prison or in hospital were set aside, and the remaining applicants were located with the Large User Scottish Postcode Directory.

If applicants couldn't be located using either the small or large user postcode directories then the postcode of their solicitor firm branch was used. All firm branches can be located using their postcodes.

## Analysis

Applications counted by date received represent the most recent activity in terms of new cases starting.

Most new civil legal aid applications now do result in a certificate, but not all. Certificates counted by date certificated represent applications that were received, typically, one to three months previously. They represent, with more certainty, a level of legal aid activity commencing.

[1] Further details available at Scottish Postcode Directory 2025 - National Records of Scotland (NRS).

The analysis begins by looking at the volumes of applications made to SLAB (that is, received) as providing the most immediate representation of demand for legal aid. This is contrasted with the picture for the volumes of cases granted (that is, certificates).

Traditionally civil legal aid has been viewed as being made up of two main types of case:

1. Family and relationship matters (for example contact, divorce, residence).
2. Non-family (for example, housing, reparation, state benefits).

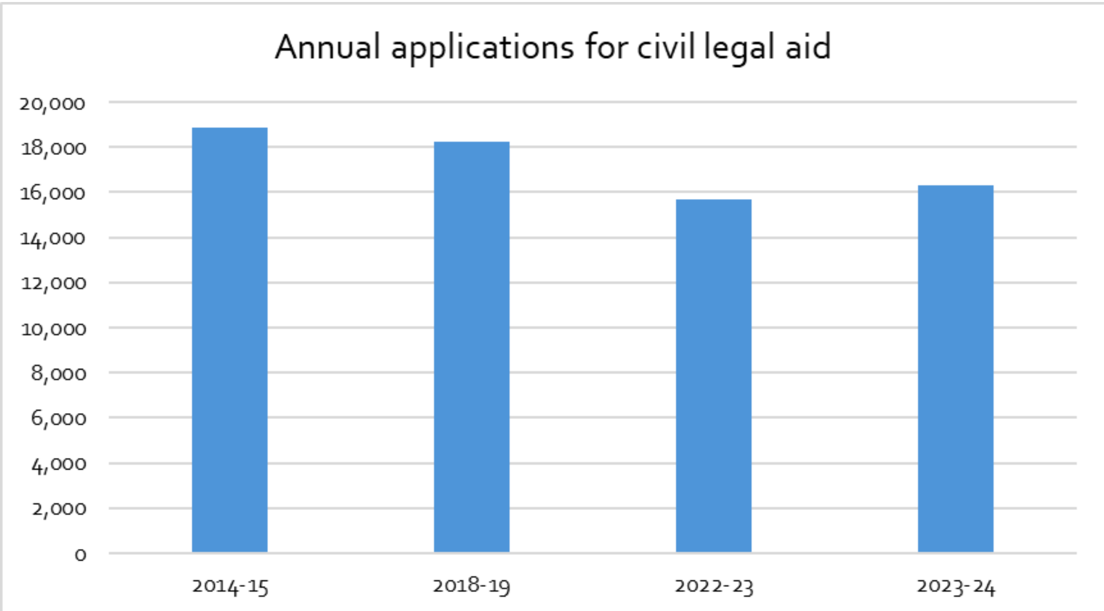
Adults with incapacity (AWI) cases, that is grants or renewals of guardianship orders, have always been grouped within non-family cases. Because of the continued growth in AWI and the very large share they now constitute of civil legal aid, and particularly non-family, we are now starting to present them as a separate grouping.

In data tables, colour scaling has been used to emphasise the distribution of change; red for decrease, white for little change and blue for increase.

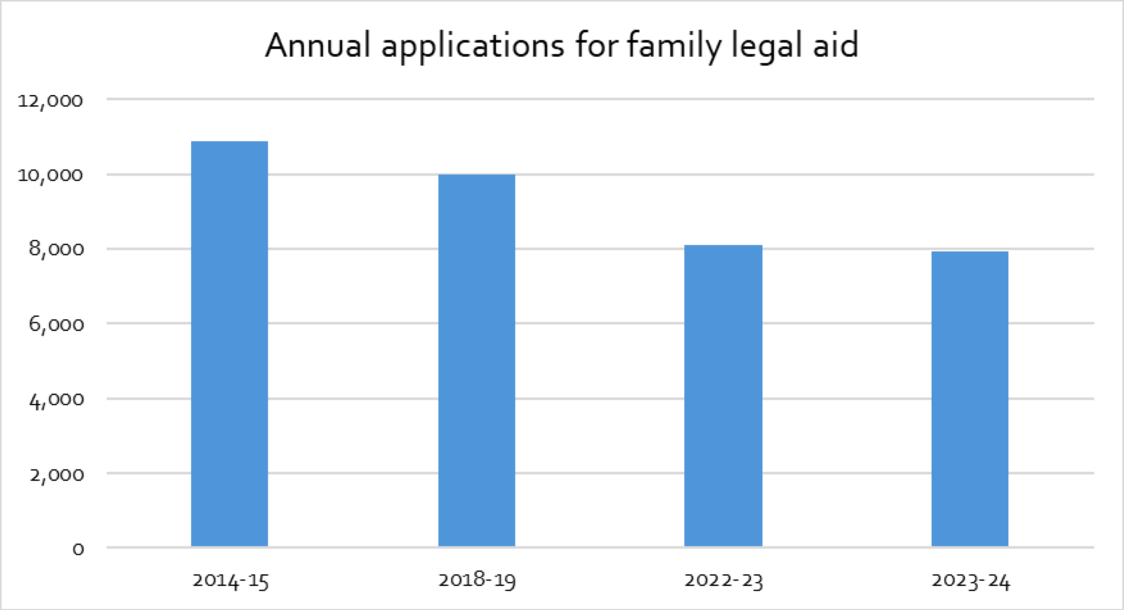
# Civil legal aid application volumes

## National level and by subject matter

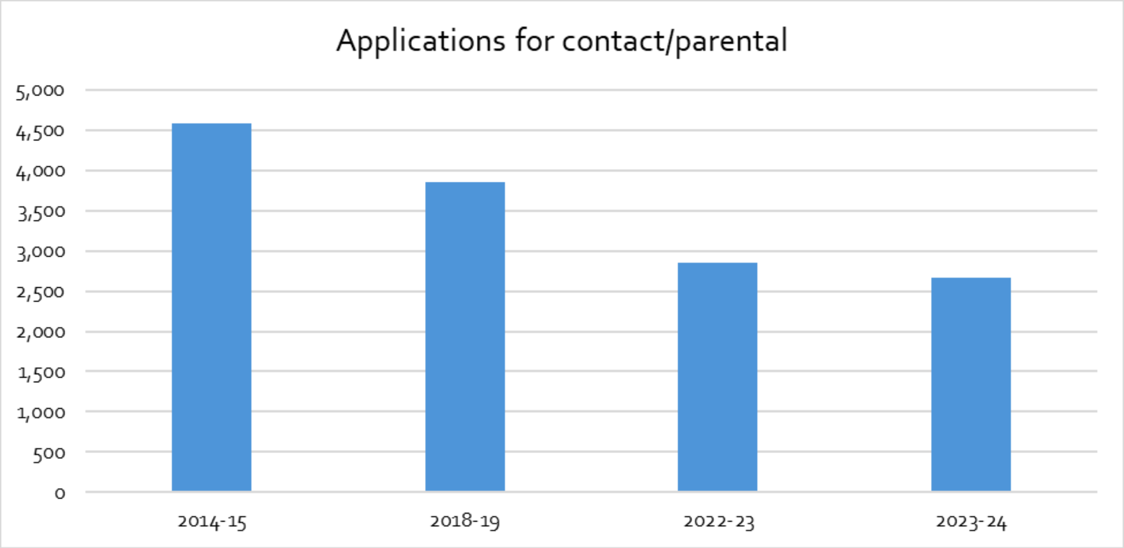
In 2014-15, we received just under 19,000 applications for full civil legal aid. Four years later, in 2018-19, this total was 3% lower at 18,200. A further four years later, in 2022-23, the total had decreased a further 14% to 15,700. In 2023-24 the total increased by 4% to 16,300.



Applications for family legal aid showed a steeper decline with an 8% drop to 10,000 in 2018-19, a further 19% drop to 8,100 in 2022-23, and a 2.2% decline to 7,925 in 2023-24.



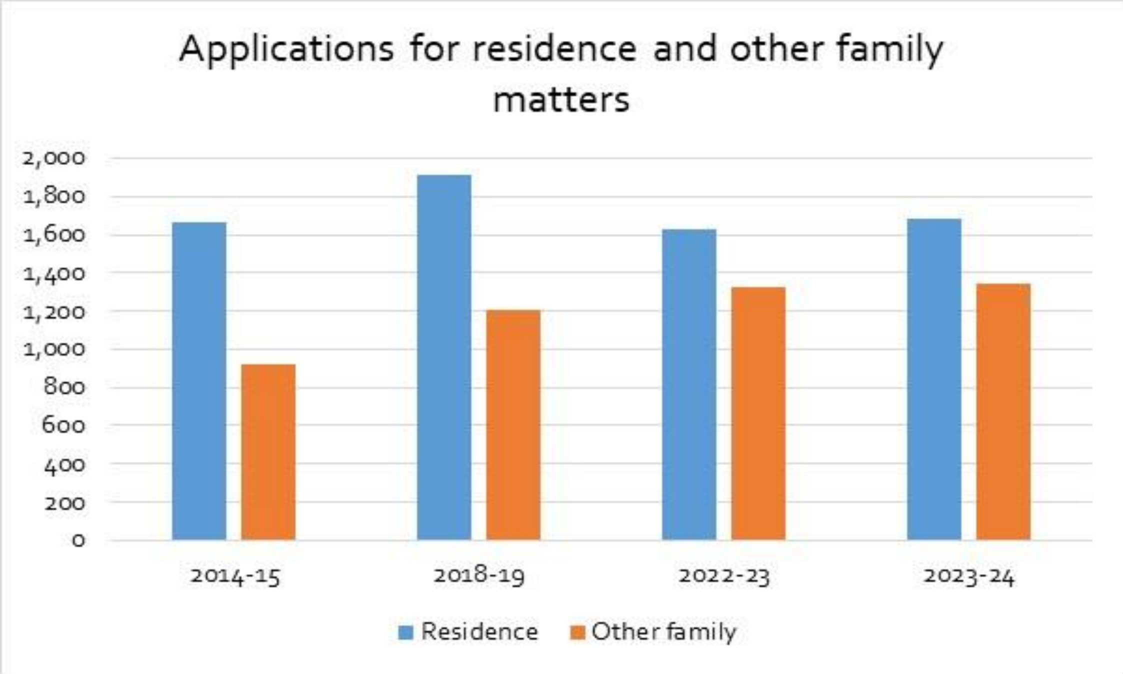

The largest subject area within family is contact/parental, which made up 42% of all family applications in 2014-15. The volume dropped by 16% to 3,850 in 2018-19 and by 26% to 2,850 in 2022-23. They made up 35% of all family applications in 2022-23. Volumes dropped a further 6% in 2023-24 to 2,670.




Most of the other family matters show the same progressive decrease as contact, apart from residence and other family matters.

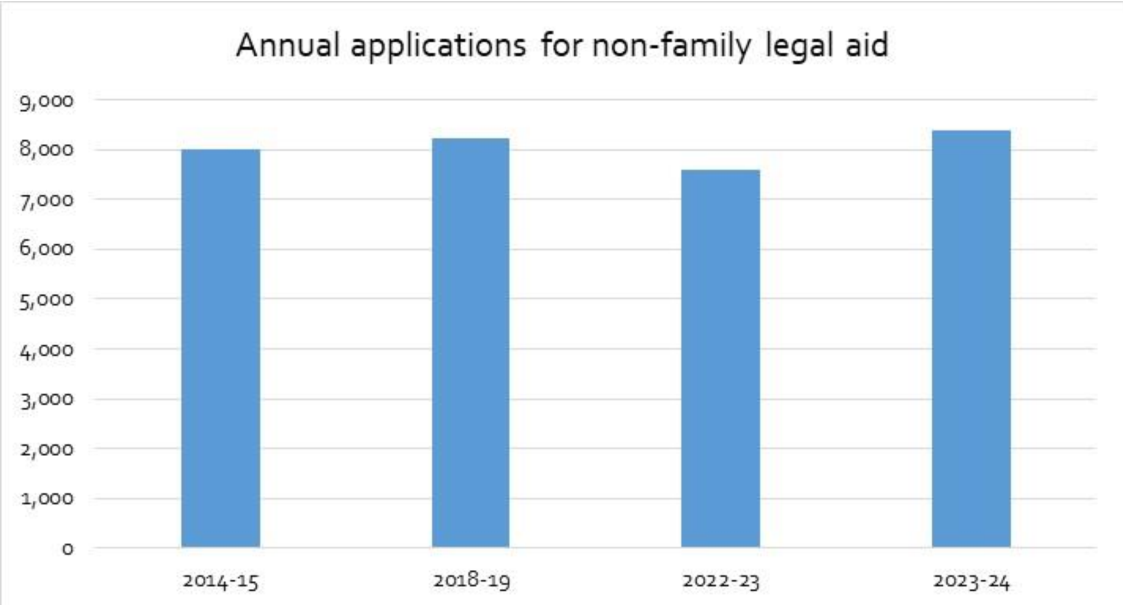
Residence saw a 15% increase to 1,900 in 2018-19, a 15% decrease to 1,600 in 2022-23, but then a 3.1% increase in 2023-24. Other family matters increased by 30% to 2018-19 from 2014-15 and by a further 10% to 1,300 in 2022-23 and 3.2% in 2023-24.

Most cases in other family matters constitute variations or contempt of previous civil decisions such as contact and residence. The increases here could be expected to lag the increases we saw many years ago in primary family areas, such as contact.



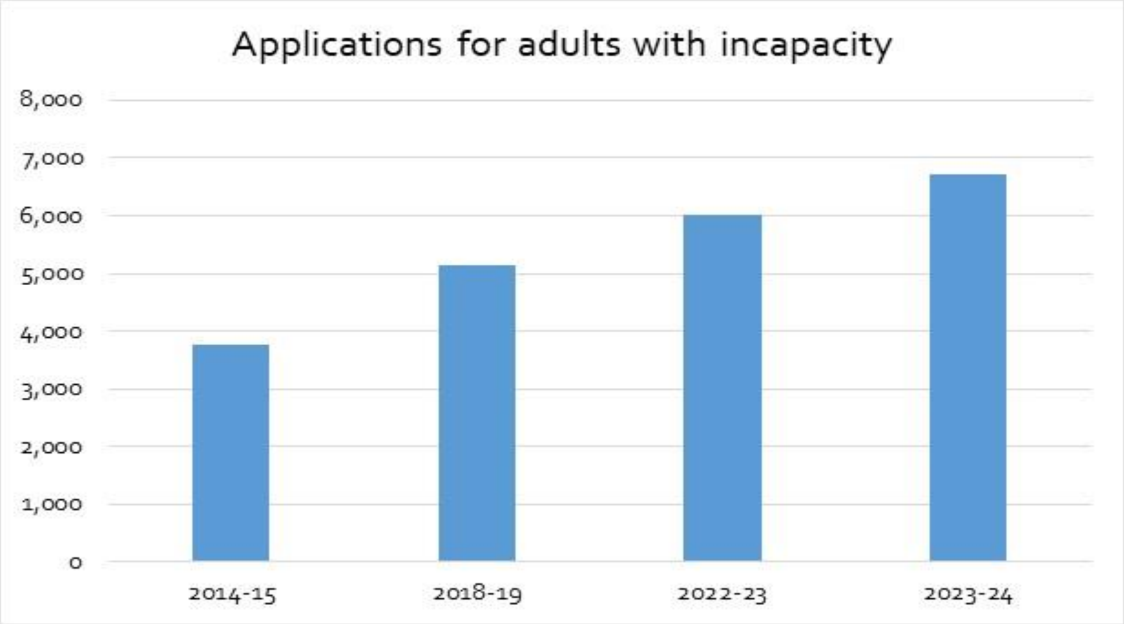

The trend in non-family areas of civil legal aid applications, in aggregate, has been quite different.

These rose by 3% to 8,200 in 2018-19, then fell by 8% to 2022-23, and then increased by 11% in 2023-24.



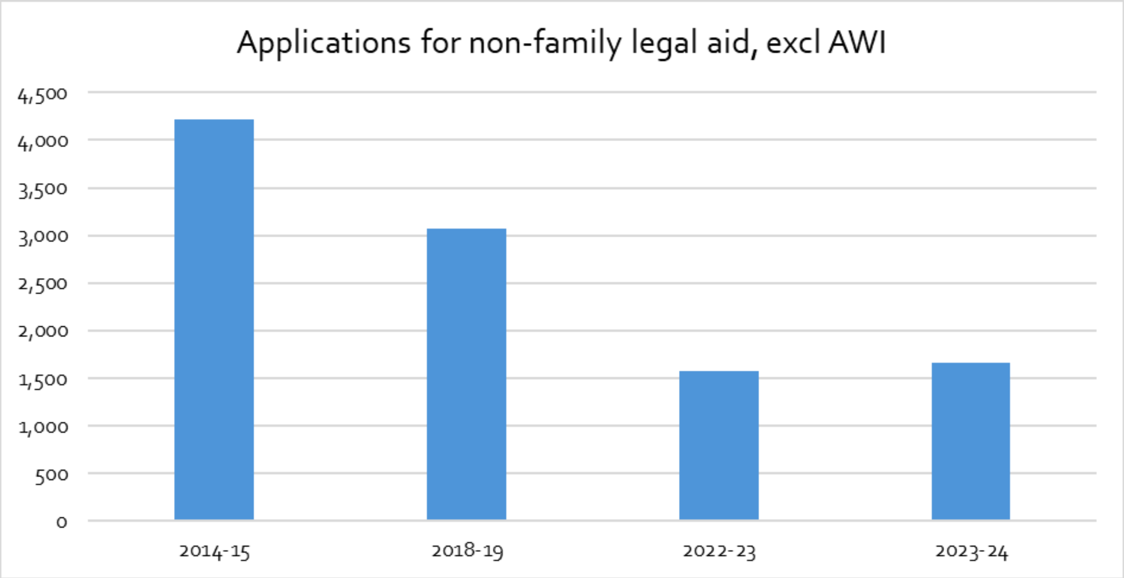
Adults with incapacity (AWI) is the largest constituent of non-family cases. AWI volumes rose by 36% between 2014-15 and 2018-19, then by 16% to 6,000 applications in 2022-23 and by a further 12% to 6,730 in 2023-24.

The 2023-24 figures represent 41% of all civil applications and 80% of all non-family applications.

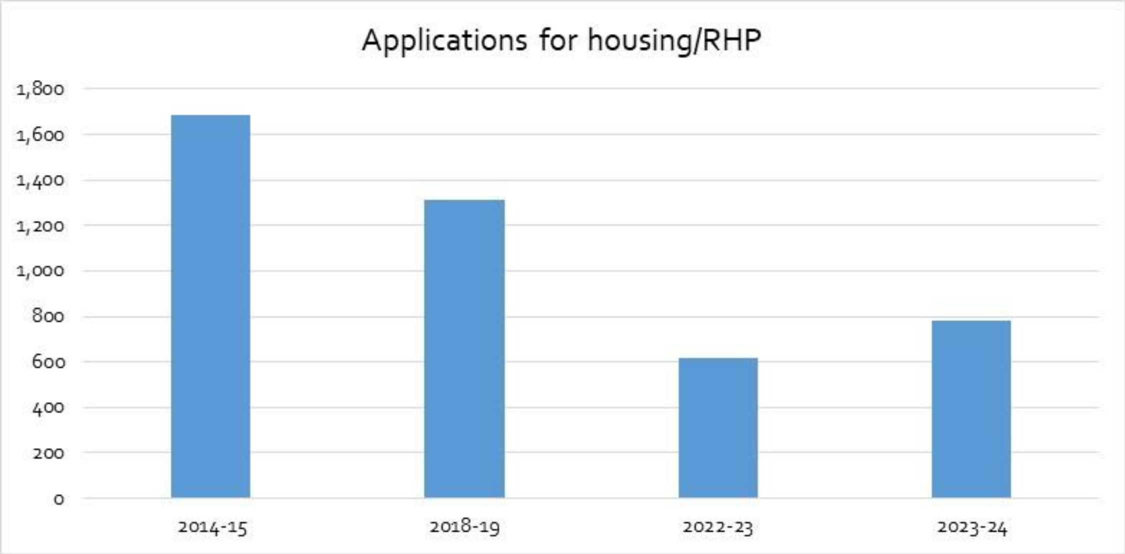



AWI is such a large and growing constituent of civil legal aid that their trend can dominate the overall picture.

Excluding AWI from the non-family applications, figures show a 27% fall between 2014-15 and 2018-19, a further 49% fall to 2022-23, but then a 6% increase between 2022-23 and 2023-24.



The second largest component of non-family applications, after AWI, are for housing/recovery of heritable property (RHP). These have shown a large decline, by 22% to 1,300 in 2018-19 and then by 53% to 600 in 2022-23. But in 2023-24 they grew 26% to 780.




# Civil legal aid certificate volumes

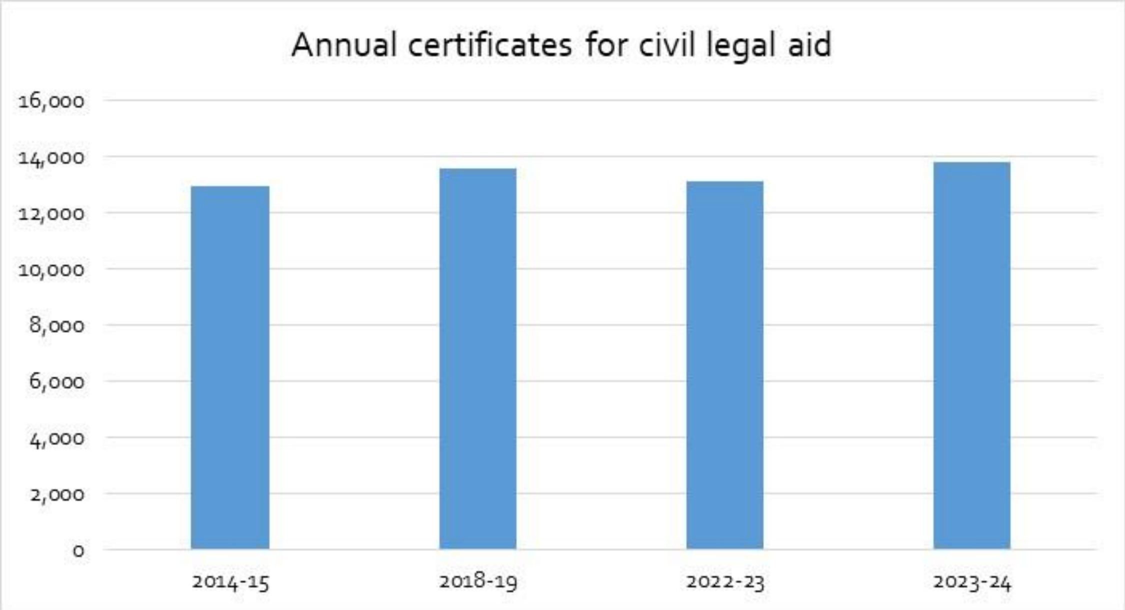
## National level and by subject matter

In 2014-15, we issued just under 13,000 certificates compared with the 19,000 applications for full civil legal aid.

In 2018-19, whilst applications were down by 3%, the total number of certificates increased by 5% to 13,600.

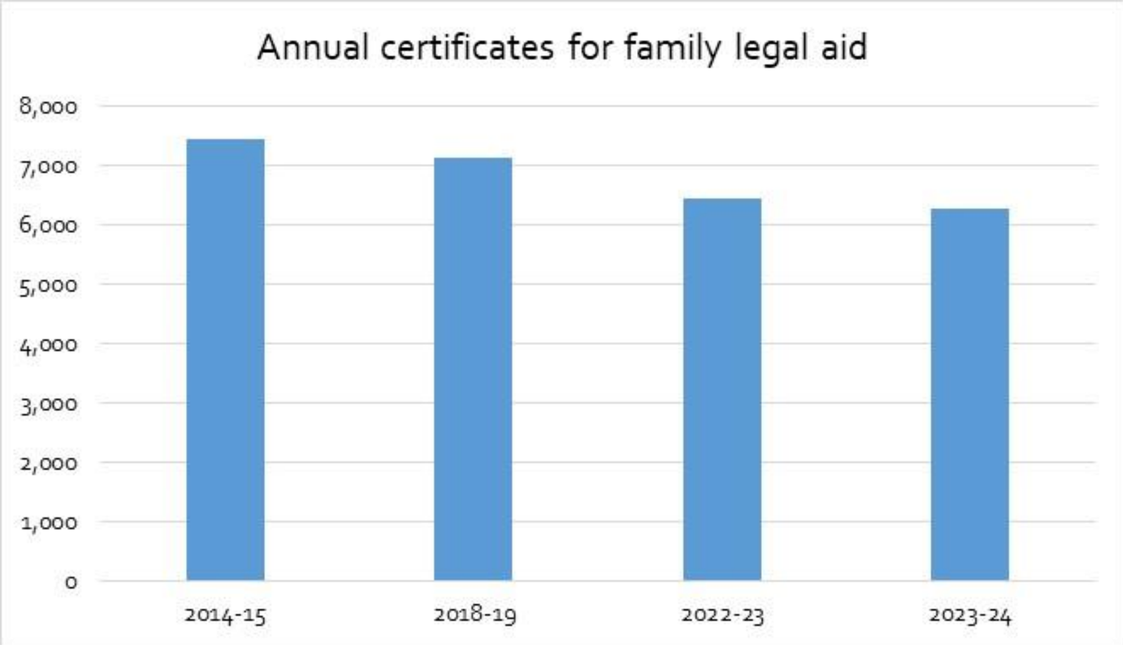
A further four years later in 2022-23, the total number of civil legal aid certificates issued had decreased by 3% to 13,100, but a level slightly higher than that of 2014-15.

In 2023-24, there were 13,800 certificates issued, which is a 5% increase in 2022-23 and 7% higher than in 2018-19.



Certificates for family legal aid showed a decline like applications, but not as pronounced, with a 4% drop to 7,200 in 2018-19 compared with the 8% fall for applications.

Then there was a 10% drop to 6,450 in 2022-23 compared with the 19% drop in applications. There was a 2.7% decrease in 2023-24, and the net change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 is down 16%.

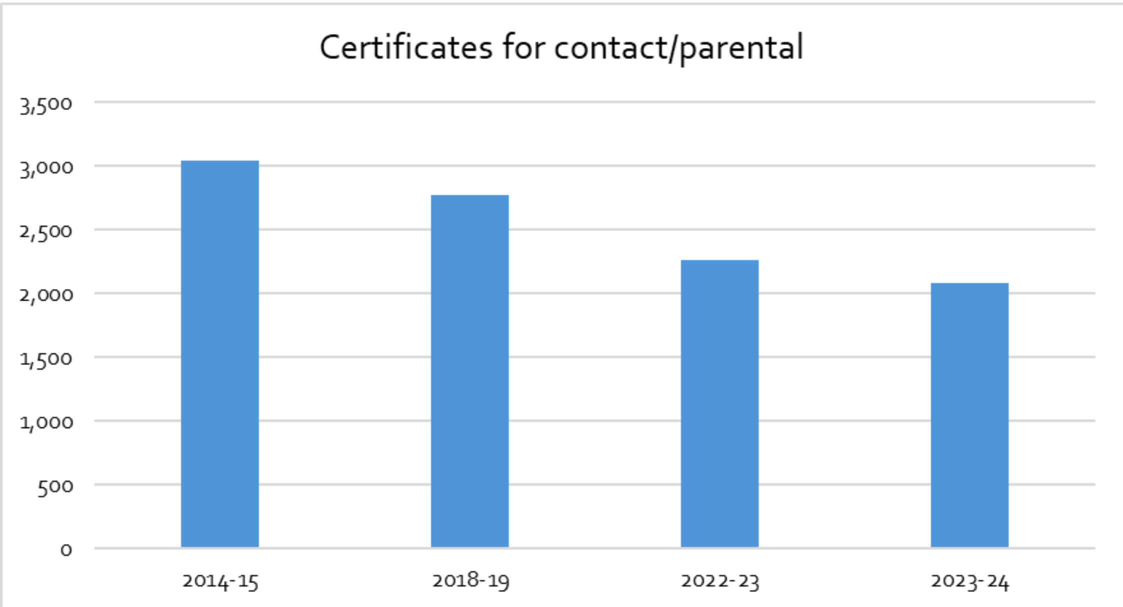



Contact/parental made up 42% of all family applications in 2014-15 and they were 41% of all family certificates.

The certificates volume issued here fell 9% to 2,800 in 2018-19 compared with the 16% fall in applications.

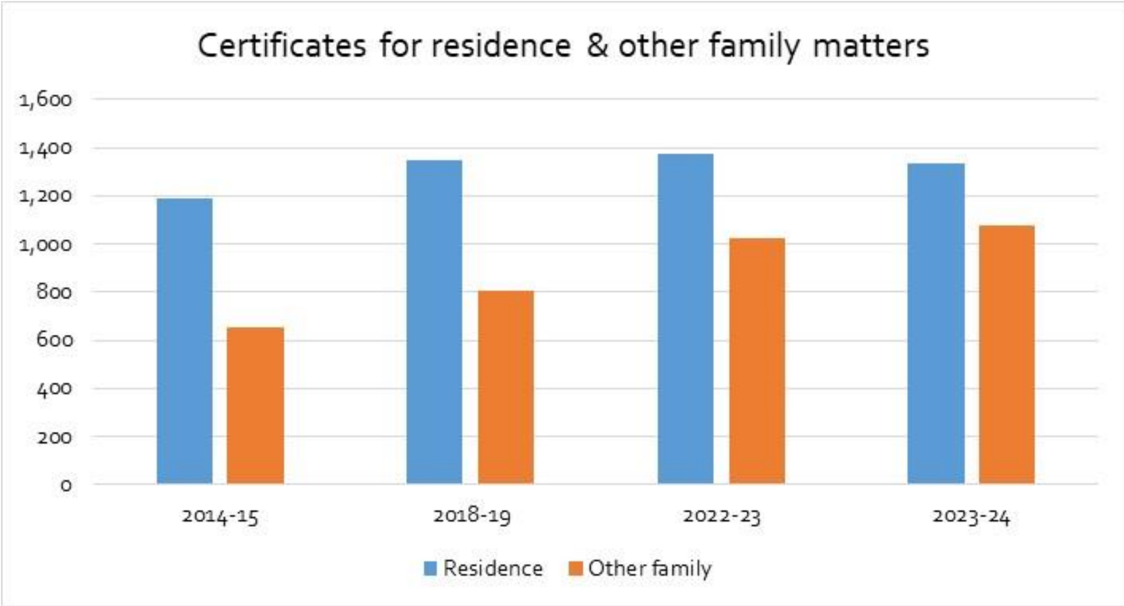
There has been a further 18% fall to 2,250 in 2022-23 compared with the 26% fall in applications.

There was an 8% decrease in 2023-24 to 2,086 which is 33% of all family certificates.




In summary for the family/matrimonial grouping, whilst there have been substantial decreases in some areas of family law, these are not universal.

Residence, and especially variation and contempt (family/mat other) have seen growth since 2014-15.



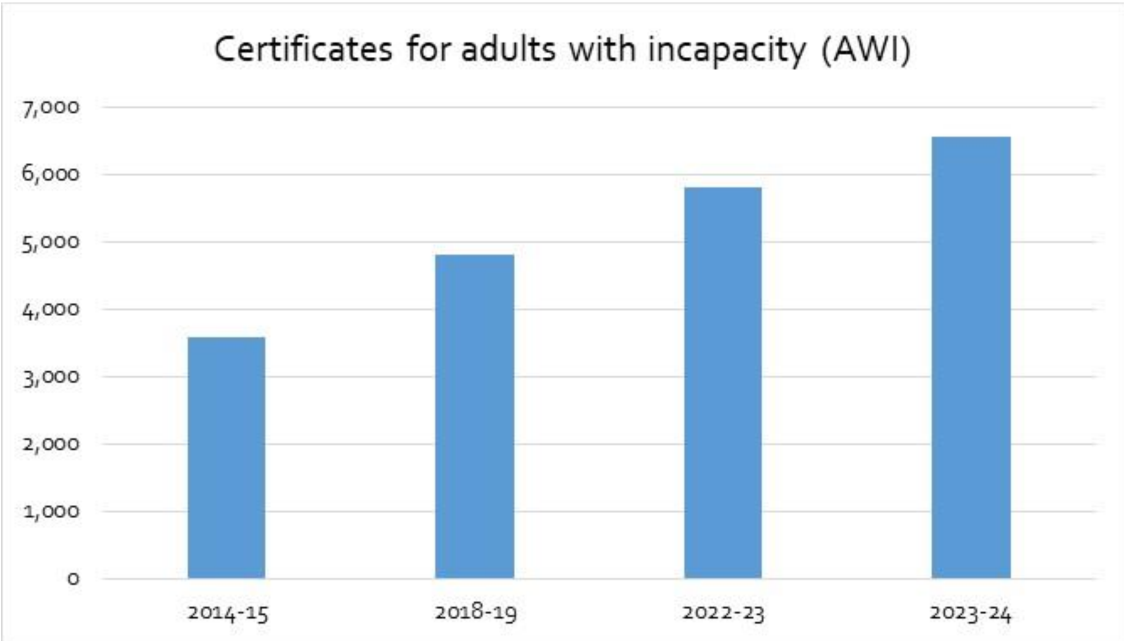

The largest component of non-family are AWI cases.

AWI application volumes rose by 36% from 2014-15 to 2018-19 and by 16% to 6,000 applications in 2022-23.

AWI cases granted AWI certificates rose by similar amounts; 34% from 2014-15 to 2018-19, 21% to 5,800 in 2022-23, and 13% to 6,546 in 2023-24.

In 2014-15, AWI represented 65% of all non-family certificates and 28% of all civil certificates.

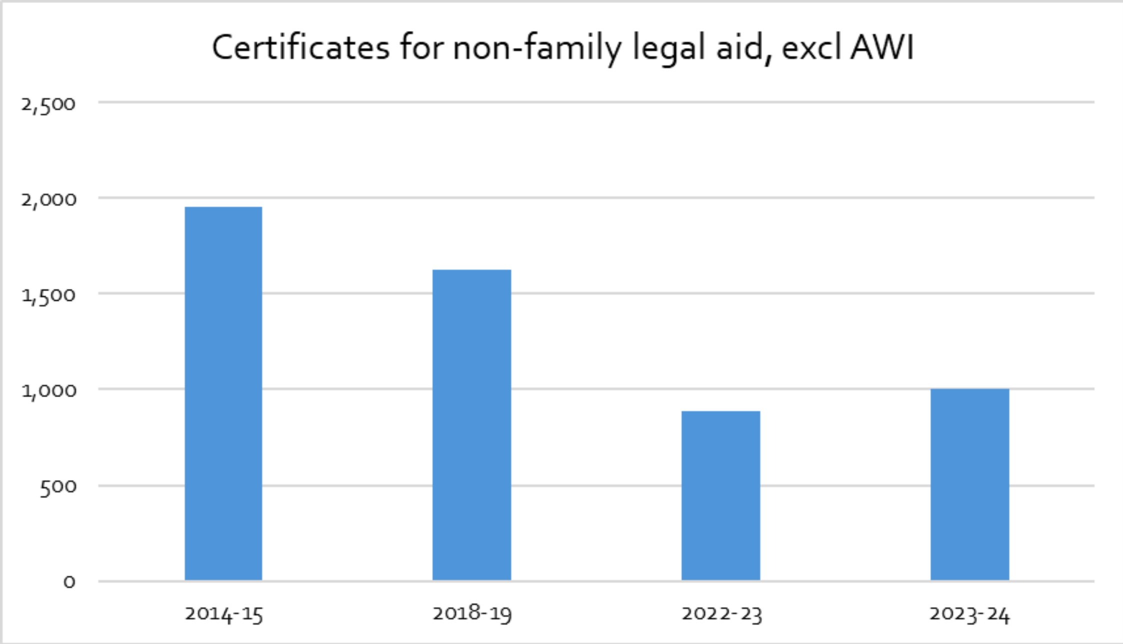
In 2023-24, they represented 87% of all non-family certificates and 47% of all civil certificates.




AWI is such a large and growing constituent of civil legal aid that their trend can dominate the overall picture.

Excluding AWI from the non-family certificate figures, data show a 17% fall from 2014-15 to 2018-19, a further 45% fall between 2018-19 and 2022-23, but then a 13% increase from 2022-23 to 2023-24.

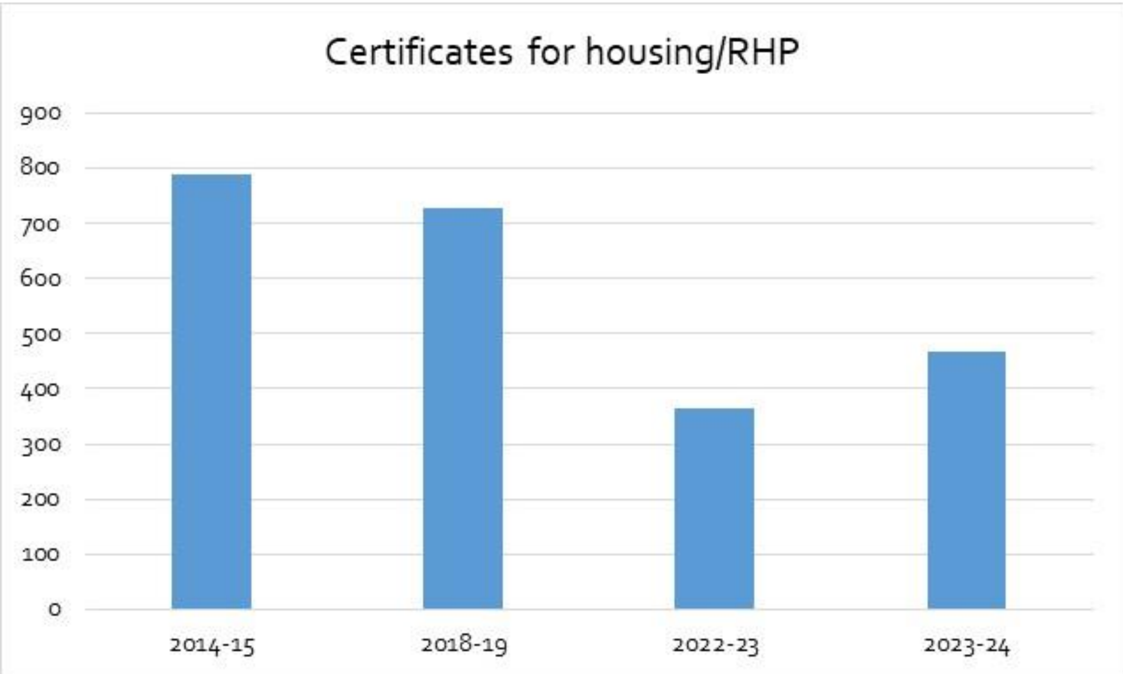
The net change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 is down by 48%.




The second largest component of non-family cases are for housing/recovery of heritable property.

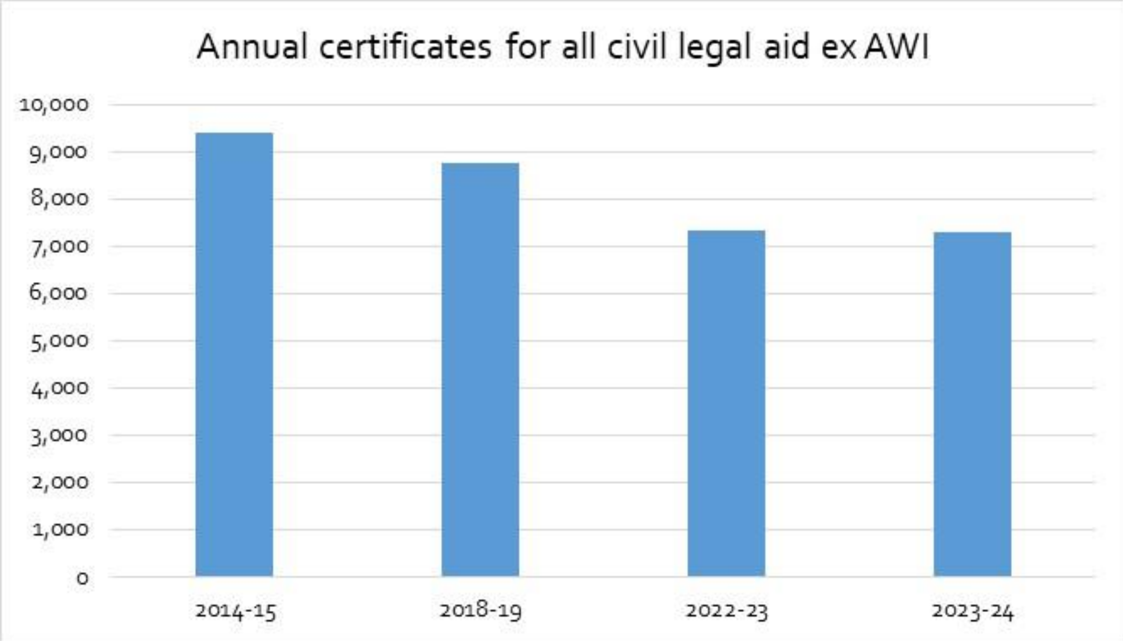
These followed applications, showing a decline by 7% to 730 in 2018-19 and then by 50% to 360 in 2022-23.

Then in 2023-24, they increased by 28% to 466.




Excluding AWI from all civil, the level of certificates has fallen by 7% between 2014-15 and 2018-19, then by 16% from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and by a further 0.7% from 2022-3 to 2023-24.

The net change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 is down by 22%.




## Sub-national by court location

The first level of geographic analysis below the national level we can look at is the location of the sheriff court where the civil legal aid action is being raised. From the location of the court we can analyse at the level of the sheriffdom the court is in.

Not all civil actions are raised in the local sheriff court, with a sizeable number raised in the Court of Session.

There are also several specialist courts, at the national level, such as the All Scotland Personal Injury Court and the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

### Sheriffdom – change

Table 1 below shows the breakdown of the trend in certificates by a sheriffdom and other courts structure. At the national level, as described above, we saw a 5% increase in the number of certificates issued from 2014-15 to 2018-19, followed by a 3% decrease in 2022-23. This was then followed by a 5% increase in 2023-24.

The overall change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 has been a 7% increase. These figures are shown in the 'Total' row below.

All sheriffdoms have seen net increases since 2014-15, apart from Glasgow and Strathkelvin, which is down by 9% since 2014-15, but it saw an 11% increase last year.

The Court of Session saw a large fall from 2014-15 to 2022-23 but most recently a 12% increase, so the net position is down by 36%.

**Table 1: National certificate volumes – court sheriffdom by year**

| Sheriffdom or other | 2014-15 | 2018-19 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2018-19 | 2018-19 to 2022-23 | 2022-23 to 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow and Strathkelvin | 2,446 | 2,500 | 2,001 | 2,229 | 2% | -20% | 11% | -9% |
| Grampian, Highlands and Islands | 1,269 | 1,374 | 1,363 | 1,453 | 8% | -1% | 7% | 14% |
| Lothian and Borders | 1,753 | 1,993 | 2,017 | 2,183 | 14% | 1% | 8% | 25% |
| North Strathclyde | 1,876 | 1,785 | 2,011 | 2,109 | -5% | 13% | 5% | 12% |
| South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway | 2,353 | 2,689 | 2,653 | 2,622 | 14% | -1% | -1% | 11% |
| Tayside Central and Fife | 2,645 | 2,658 | 2,689 | 2,814 | 0% | 1% | 5% | 6% |
| Court of Session | 623 | 503 | 354 | 397 | -19% | -30% | 12% | -36% |
| *Other Courts / Not Known* | *15* | *92* | *62* | *25* | *513%* | *-33%* | *-60%* | *67%* |
| **TOTAL** | **12,980** | **13,594** | **13,150** | **13,832** | **5%** | **-3%** | **5%** | **7%** |

## Sheriffdom by subject – change

To understand better the changes within sheriffdoms, we can examine them by the subject matters within a sheriffdom. Focusing on Glasgow and Strathkelvin, as the sole one to have a net fall, and Lothian and Borders, as the one to have risen the most, will provide a useful contrast, see Tables 2 and 3 below.

### *Glasgow and Strathkelvin Sheriffdom*

The grand total for Glasgow rose by 2% then fell by 20% and rose 11% to 2023-24 showing a net 9% decrease.

Within that, family fell by 12% then 15%, with a 3% increase from 2022-23 to 2023-24 showing a net 23% fall. Contact, divorce and residence all increased in 2023-24.

Within non-family, AWI rose strongly from 2014-15 to 2018-19 but then fell by 9% to 2022-23. No other sheriffdom saw AWI fall from 2018-19. Since then, AWI increased 19% in 2023-24 showing a net 43% overall.

Excluding AWI, Glasgow and Strathkelvin is down by 32% since 2014-15 but the last year saw a 5% increase due to the growth in the family/relationships area, as well as 10% growth in housing/recovery of heritable property (RHP).

**Table 2: Glasgow and Strathkelvin Sheriffdom – subjects by year**

| Subject | 2014-15 | 2018-19 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2018-19 | 2018-19 to 2022-23 | 2022-23 to 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appeals - family | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -100% | n/a | n/a | -100% |
| Contact/parental | 548 | 454 | 348 | 356 | -17% | -23% | 2% | -35% |
| Divorce/separation | 297 | 241 | 203 | 235 | -19% | -16% | 16% | -21% |
| Family/matrimonial - other | 63 | 90 | 110 | 87 | 43% | 22% | -21% | 38% |
| Property/monetary | 40 | 41 | 27 | 22 | 2% | -34% | -19% | -45% |
| Protective order | 63 | 43 | 37 | 26 | -32% | -14% | -30% | -59% |
| Residence | 187 | 195 | 179 | 204 | 4% | -8% | 14% | 9% |
| ***TOTAL - Family*** | **1205** | **1064** | **904** | **930** | **-12%** | **-15%** | **3%** | **-23%** |
| Adults with incapacity | 762 | 1003 | 915 | 1092 | 32% | -9% | 19% | 43% |
| Appeals - other | 12 | 4 | 0 | 2 | -67% | n/a | n/a | -83% |
| Breach of contract | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 100% | -75% | 0% | -50% |
| Debt | 27 | 13 | 7 | 9 | -52% | -46% | 29% | -67% |
| Discrimination | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Fatal accident inquiries | 5 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 60% | -25% | 17% | 40% |
| Housing/RHP | 338 | 331 | 134 | 148 | -2% | -60% | 10% | -56% |
| Medical negligence | 6 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 83% | -100% | n/a | -83% |
| Other | 60 | 44 | 22 | 25 | -27% | -50% | 14% | -58% |
| Reparation | 29 | 18 | 12 | 9 | -38% | -33% | -25% | -69% |
| ***TOTAL - Non-family*** | **1241** | **1436** | **1097** | **1299** | **16%** | **-24%** | **18%** | **5%** |
| **Grand Total** | **2446** | **2500** | **2001** | **2229** | **2%** | **-20%** | **11%** | **-9%** |
| **Grand Total ex AWI** | **1684** | **1497** | **1086** | **1137** | **-11%** | **-27%** | **5%** | **-32%** |

### *Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom*

Lothian and Borders in total rose by 14% from 2014-15 to 2018-19, followed by 1%, then 8% in 2023-24, producing a net 25% increase from 2014-15 to 2023-24 (see Grand Total row). Within that, family fell by 10% overall between 2014-15 and 2023-24 and non-family rose by 93%, the latter driven by a 138% increase in AWI.

Falls in family were smaller than in Glasgow, and the rise in family – other was larger. In non-family, AWI rose steeply (up 138% overall versus 43% for Glasgow). Housing rose from 2014-15 to 2018-19 but has had progressive falls since, so the overall fall is similar to Glasgow.

Lothian and Borders has a stronger family sector compared with Glasgow, even though Glasgow saw more of an increase in 2023-24.

Lothian's AWI sector used to be half the size of Glasgow's, but it has grown and is now just 5% smaller. Glasgow's housing legal aid sector is larger and saw a recent increase whereas Lothian and Border's housing decreased further.

**Table 3: Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom – subjects by year**

| Subject | 2014-15 | 2018-19 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2018-19 | 2018-19 to 2022-23 | 2022-23 to 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appeals - family | 3 | 0 | 0 | 22 | -100% | n/a | n/a | 633% |
| Contact/parental | 492 | 456 | 378 | 327 | -7% | -17% | -13% | -34% |
| Divorce/separation | 319 | 274 | 246 | 253 | -14% | -10% | 3% | -21% |
| Family/matrimonial - other | 79 | 126 | 145 | 191 | 59% | 15% | 32% | 142% |
| Property/monetary | 34 | 53 | 39 | 23 | 56% | -26% | -41% | -32% |
| Protective order | 53 | 56 | 26 | 26 | 6% | -54% | 0% | -51% |
| Residence | 186 | 202 | 218 | 210 | 9% | 8% | -4% | 13% |
| ***TOTAL Family*** | **1166** | **1167** | **1052** | **1052** | **0%** | **-10%** | **0%** | **-10%** |
| Adults with incapacity | 434 | 616 | 862 | 1033 | 42% | 40% | 20% | 138% |
| Appeals - other | 5 | 0 | 2 | 18 | -100% | n/a | n/a | 260% |
| Breach of contract | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 100% | 150% | -60% | 100% |
| Debt | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | -22% | -14% | 0% | -33% |
| Discrimination | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Fatal accident inquiries | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Housing/RHP | 83 | 161 | 58 | 48 | 94% | -64% | -17% | -42% |
| Medical negligence | 6 | 1 | 4 | 5 | -83% | 300% | n/a | -17% |
| Other | 36 | 30 | 23 | 14 | -17% | -23% | -39% | -61% |
| Reparation | 13 | 8 | 5 | 2 | -38% | -38% | -60% | -85% |
| ***TOTAL Non-family*** | **587** | **826** | **965** | **1131** | **41%** | **17%** | **17%** | **93%** |
| **Grand Total** | **1753** | **1993** | **2017** | **2183** | **14%** | **1%** | **8%** | **25%** |
| **Grand Total ex AWI** | **1319** | **1377** | **1155** | **1150** | **4%** | **-16%** | **0%** | **-13%** |

## Sheriffdom – change excluding AWI

The subject breakdowns within sheriffdoms illustrate that AWI volumes, and their growth, are dominating the picture within non-family cases and the overall picture, as we have seen before. If we exclude AWI from the overall analysis, we get quite a different picture. We see large falls across all sheriffdoms, all groupings and all periods except for growth in non-family between 2022-23 and 2023-24, most noticeably in Tayside/Central/Fife (TCF) and in North Strathclyde.

The growth here is primarily because of the housing/recovery of heritable property sector. In TCF it grew from 26 cases in 2022-23 to 77 cases in 2023-24. In North Strathclyde it grew from 52 to 84 cases which is the level it was at in 2014-15.

The 'Other' courts group showed sizeable growth in the period to 2018-19 because of the introduction of the new Sheriff Appeal court, which is now hearing appeals that were previously held within sheriffdoms, as Table 4 below shows.

**Table 4: Sheriffdom – family and non-family, excluding AWI, by year**

| Sheriffdom or other | Subject | 2014-15 | 2018-19 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2018-19 | 2018-19 to 2022-23 | 2022-23 to 2023-24 | 2014-15 to 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow and Strathkelvin | Family | 1,205 | 1,064 | 904 | 930 | -12 | -15 | 3 | -23 |
| | Non-family | 479 | 433 | 182 | 207 | -10 | -58 | 14 | -57 |
| Grampian, Highlands and Islands | Family | 735 | 734 | 642 | 635 | 0 | -13 | -1 | -14 |
| | Non-family | 154 | 79 | 44 | 40 | -49 | -44 | -9 | -74 |
| Lothian and Borders | Family | 1,166 | 1,167 | 1,052 | 1,052 | 0 | -10 | 0 | -10 |
| | Non-family | 153 | 210 | 103 | 98 | 37 | -51 | -5 | -36 |
| North Strathclyde | Family | 1,117 | 1,001 | 960 | 924 | -10 | -4 | -4 | -17 |
| | Non-family | 163 | 134 | 78 | 111 | -18 | -42 | 42 | -32 |
| South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway | Family | 1,364 | 1,474 | 1,420 | 1,326 | 8 | -4 | -7 | -3 |
| | Non-family | 235 | 149 | 81 | 57 | -37 | -46 | -30 | -76 |
| Tayside Central and Fife | Family | 1,773 | 1,642 | 1,405 | 1,363 | -7 | -14 | -3 | -23 |
| | Non-family | 211 | 111 | 56 | 121 | -47 | -50 | 116 | -43 |
| Court of Session | Family | 76 | 40 | 48 | 48 | -47 | 20 | 0 | -37 |
| | Non-family | 547 | 462 | 305 | 349 | -16 | -34 | 14 | -36 |
| Other Courts/Not Known | Family | 4 | 38 | 22 | 2 | 850 | -42 | -91 | -50 |
| | Non-family | 11 | 53 | 39 | 23 | 382 | -26 | -41 | 109 |
| **Total** | **Family** | 7,440 | 7,160 | 6,453 | 6,280 | -4 | -10 | -3 | -16 |
| | **Non-family** | 1,953 | 1,631 | 888 | 1,006 | -16 | -46 | 13 | -48 |

## Sub-national by applicant location

Trends can also be studied at a sub-national level using the location of legal aid cases from the applicant address information supplied with applications. This depends on the quality of the information supplied but we have a relatively high completion rate for civil legal aid.

Once we have their geographic location located, we can use this to conduct subsequent analysis by factors of interest to policymakers that can be linked via local geography, such as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

### Local authority – percent change

There is a wide variety of trends when certificate volumes are examined at the local authority level of the applicant's address. All 32 local authorities are shown in Table 5 below by the decreasing size of the civil legal aid supply in 2014-15, with the largest at the top and smallest at the bottom.

**Table 5: Local authority trends using applicant location**

| All cases by applicant council area | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | % change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | National share 2014-15 | National share 2023-24 | National share change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow City | 2,204 | 1,933 | -12 | 18 | 14 | -3.2 |
| North Lanarkshire | 1,037 | 1,030 | -1 | 8.3 | 7.7 | -0.6 |
| Fife | 934 | 1,051 | 13 | 7.5 | 7.9 | 0.4 |
| South Lanarkshire | 829 | 860 | 4 | 6.6 | 6.4 | -0.2 |
| City of Edinburgh | 751 | 884 | 18 | 6 | 6.6 | 0.6 |
| Dundee City | 497 | 455 | -8 | 4 | 3.4 | -0.6 |
| Renfrewshire | 471 | 411 | -13 | 3.8 | 3.1 | -0.7 |
| Highland | 415 | 508 | 22 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 0.5 |
| West Lothian | 385 | 547 | 42 | 3.1 | 4.1 | 1 |
| Falkirk | 375 | 338 | -10 | 3 | 2.5 | -0.5 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 367 | 448 | 22 | 2.9 | 3.4 | 0.4 |
| North Ayrshire | 366 | 443 | 21 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 0.4 |
| Aberdeen City | 306 | 294 | -4 | 2.5 | 2.2 | -0.2 |
| East Ayrshire | 292 | 407 | 39 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 0.7 |
| Aberdeenshire | 285 | 341 | 20 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 0.3 |
| Inverclyde | 268 | 245 | -9 | 2.1 | 1.8 | -0.3 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 266 | 303 | 14 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 0.1 |
| South Ayrshire | 254 | 329 | 30 | 2 | 2.5 | 0.4 |
| Perth and Kinross | 251 | 384 | 53 | 2 | 2.9 | 0.9 |
| East Lothian | 242 | 191 | -21 | 1.9 | 1.4 | -0.5 |
| Scottish Borders | 229 | 292 | 28 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.4 |
| Angus | 220 | 269 | 22 | 1.8 | 2 | 0.3 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 205 | 223 | 9 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 0 |
| Midlothian | 203 | 222 | 9 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 0 |
| Stirling | 182 | 175 | -4 | 1.5 | 1.3 | -0.1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moray | 163 | 164 | 1 | 1.3 | 1.2 | -0.1 |
| East Renfrewshire | 146 | 187 | 28 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.2 |
| Argyll and Bute | 139 | 161 | 16 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 0.1 |
| Clackmannanshire | 124 | 130 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 33 | 46 | 39 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Orkney Islands | 29 | 36 | 24 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0 |
| Shetland Islands | 21 | 35 | 67 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| **Domestic address total** | 12,489 | 13,342 | 7 | | | |
| **Non-domestic address** | 491 | 490 | 0 | | | |
| **Total** | **12,980** | **13,832** | **7** | | | |

Overall, as reported earlier, we have seen a 7% increase in certificates granted, from 12,980 in 2014-15 to 13,832 in 2023-24. There was a large variation in the number of certificates at the level of local authorities. East Lothian fell 21%, Renfrewshire was down by 13% and Glasgow was down by 12%.

The local authorities with the largest percentage increases from 2014-15 have been:

- Shetland Islands (67%)
- Perth and Kinross (53%)
- West Lothian (42%).

Glasgow City was the largest local authority in terms of the supply of civil legal aid in 2014-15 and this remains the case in 2023-24, but its national share shows considerable decline. In 2014-15, Glasgow City represented 18% of all civil legal aid cases in Scotland which fell to 14% in 2023-24, which is a fall of 3.2 percentage points. This is like the pattern shown by the Glasgow & Strathkelvin sheriffdom (that is, the case geo-located by court location) but the change is more pronounced.

The Glasgow change contrasts notably with the second largest authority by population, the City of Edinburgh, which saw an 18% increase in 2023-24.

Glasgow is more like Renfrewshire (Paisley) and Dundee City in terms of large-scale urban deprivation, both of which saw large decreases.

## Local authority – subject matter breakdown

There is a large difference in trends by subject within civil legal aid. The biggest subject influence is AWI, so firstly we can draw the same picture of trend by local authority but with AWI excluded, as Table 6 below shows.

Most local authorities are showing large decreases from 2014-15 to 2023-24, with the largest falls in Stirling (down 57%), Falkirk (down 43%), and East Lothian again (now down 42%).

East Ayrshire (+10), Scottish Borders (+9), the Northern Isles Orkney (+18) and Shetland (+25) are noticeable as areas that don't show this pattern and grew from 2014-15 to 2023-24, even with AWI cases excluded.

Other areas such as Fife did see absolute falls in volumes of non-AWI cases from 2014-15 to 2023-24 but because these falls were not as great as the national average their overall national share increased.

**Table 6: Local authority trends, excluding AWI, using applicant location**

| Applicant council area | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | % change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | National share 2014-15 | National share 2023-24 | National share change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow City | 1698 | 1157 | -32 | 19 | 16 | -2.4 |
| Fife | 712 | 610 | -14 | 7.9 | 8.6 | 0.7 |
| North Lanarkshire | 687 | 544 | -21 | 7.6 | 7.7 | 0.1 |
| City of Edinburgh | 579 | 429 | -26 | 6.4 | 6.1 | -0.3 |
| South Lanarkshire | 553 | 453 | -18 | 6.1 | 6.4 | 0.3 |
| Dundee City | 405 | 297 | -27 | 4.5 | 4.2 | -0.3 |
| Renfrewshire | 305 | 214 | -30 | 3.4 | 3 | -0.4 |
| West Lothian | 295 | 316 | 7 | 3.3 | 4.5 | 1.2 |
| Highland | 294 | 236 | -20 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 0.1 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 286 | 238 | -17 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 0.2 |
| Falkirk | 273 | 156 | -43 | 3 | 2.2 | -0.8 |
| North Ayrshire | 253 | 219 | -13 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 0.3 |
| Aberdeen City | 246 | 153 | -38 | 2.7 | 2.2 | -0.6 |
| Inverclyde | 238 | 167 | -30 | 2.6 | 2.4 | -0.3 |
| East Ayrshire | 198 | 218 | 10 | 2.2 | 3.1 | 0.9 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 177 | 157 | -11 | 2 | 2.2 | 0.3 |
| Perth and Kinross | 176 | 189 | 7 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 0.7 |
| South Ayrshire | 176 | 166 | -6 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 0.4 |
| Angus | 175 | 130 | -26 | 1.9 | 1.8 | -0.1 |
| East Lothian | 173 | 100 | -42 | 1.9 | 1.4 | -0.5 |
| Aberdeenshire | 164 | 156 | -5 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.4 |
| Scottish Borders | 157 | 171 | 9 | 1.7 | 2.4 | 0.7 |
| Midlothian | 147 | 138 | -6 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 0.3 |
| Moray | 127 | 93 | -27 | 1.4 | 1.3 | -0.1 |
| Stirling | 127 | 55 | -57 | 1.4 | 0.8 | -0.6 |
| Argyll and Bute | 106 | 65 | -39 | 1.2 | 0.9 | -0.3 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 102 | 80 | -22 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0 |
| Clackmannanshire | 95 | 63 | -34 | 1 | 0.9 | -0.2 |
| East Renfrewshire | 71 | 63 | -11 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.1 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 22 | 14 | -36 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0 |
| Orkney Islands | 17 | 20 | 18 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Shetland Islands | 16 | 20 | 25 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Domestic address total | 9,050 | 7,087 | -22 | | | |
| Non-domestic address | 343 | 199 | -42 | | | |
| Total | 9,393 | 7,286 | -22 | | | |

A detailed subject breakdown for three council areas is shown below in table 8. These areas were chosen to illustrate a range of different types of change.

The Stirling local authority table below shows large decreases across almost all family and non-family subjects. The 'Family/matrimonial – other' and 'Residence' subjects showed the least decline in family. AWI is the only subject to have increased.

**Table 7: Stirling changes split by subject matter**

| Stirling grouping | Subject | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Change number | Change % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Family*** | Appeals - family | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a |
| | Contact/parental | 52 | 19 | -33 | -63 |
| | Divorce/separation | 26 | 13 | -13 | -50 |
| | Family/matrimonial - other | 7 | 6 | -1 | -14 |
| | Property/monetary | 3 | 2 | -1 | -33 |
| | Protective order | 4 | 1 | -3 | -75 |
| | Residence | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Total** | **103** | **52** | **-51** | **-50** |
| ***Non- Family*** | Housing/recovery of heritable property | 12 | 1 | -11 | -92 |
| | Immigration and asylum | 2 | 0 | -2 | -100 |
| | Judicial review | 1 | 0 | -1 | -100 |
| | Medical negligence | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Other | 8 | 1 | -7 | -88 |
| | **Total** | **24** | **3** | **-21** | **-88** |
| ***AWI*** | Adults with incapacity | 55 | 120 | 65 | 118 |
| | **Local authority total** | **182** | **175** | **-7** | -4 |

The East Ayrshire local authority table below is unusual in that family cases show a large increase (24%) in 2023-24, driven by the growth in 'Family/matrimonial – other' and 'Residence' subjects. AWI cases more than doubled. It also illustrates how much AWI dominates the non-family area, as just six of the 195 non-family cases in 2023-24 were not AWI. Non-family, excluding AWI, has fallen 78% between 2014-15 and 2023-24.

**Table 8: East Ayrshire changes split by subject matter**

| East Ayrshire grouping | Subject | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Change number | Change % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Family*** | Appeals - family | 0 | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| | Contact/parental | 75 | 71 | -4 | -5 |
| | Divorce/separation | 42 | 48 | 6 | 14 |
| | Family/matrimonial - other | 9 | 31 | 22 | 244 |
| | Property/monetary | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| | Protective order | 5 | 2 | -3 | -60 |
| | Residence | 36 | 55 | 19 | 53 |
| | **Total** | **171** | **212** | **41** | **24** |
| ***Non- Family*** | Breach of contract | 0 | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| | Debt | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| | Fatal accident inquiries | 1 | 0 | -1 | -100 |
| | Housing/recovery of heritable property | 14 | 2 | -12 | -86 |
| | Other | 8 | 0 | -8 | -100 |
| | Reparation | 1 | 0 | -1 | -100 |
| | **Total** | **27** | **6** | **-21** | **-78** |
| AWI | Adults with incapacity | 94 | 189 | 95 | 101 |
| | **Loc auth Total** | **198** | **218** | **20** | **10** |

The Glasgow City local authority table below shows a decline in family cases, but the growth in ‘Family/matrimonial – other’ and ‘Residence’ subjects are noticeable. Non-family also shows a big decline.

Appeals have decreased but not to zero, as shown by the court sheriffdom, which is due to the Sheriff Appeal Court now handling cases, so appeals appear less at a court/sheriffdom level, but they will still show based on the applicant location; the All Scotland Personal Injury Court will have a similar effect on reparation and medical negligence volumes at a court level.

**Table 9: Glasgow City changes split by subject matter**

| Glasgow City grouping | Subject | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Change number | Change % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Family*** | Appeals - family | 9 | 3 | -6 | -67 |
| | Contact/parental | 496 | 311 | -185 | -37 |
| | Divorce/separation | 249 | 188 | -61 | -24 |
| | Family/matrimonial - other | 53 | 91 | 38 | 72 |
| | Property/monetary | 30 | 20 | -10 | -33 |
| | Protective order | 54 | 25 | -29 | -54 |
| | Residence | 161 | 179 | 18 | 11 |
| | **Total** | **1052** | **817** | **-235** | **-22** |
| ***Non- Family*** | Appeals - other | 41 | 11 | -30 | -73 |
| | Breach of contract | 2 | 1 | -1 | -50 |
| | Debt | 16 | 7 | -9 | -56 |
| | Discrimination | 0 | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| | Fatal accident inquiries | 3 | 7 | 4 | 133 |
| | Housing/recovery of heritable property | 321 | 177 | -144 | -45 |
| | Immigration and asylum | 149 | 65 | -84 | -56 |
| | Judicial review | 10 | 34 | 24 | 240 |
| | Medical negligence | 12 | 4 | -8 | -67 |
| | Other | 65 | 24 | -41 | -63 |
| | Reparation | 27 | 9 | -18 | -67 |
| | **Total** | **646** | **340** | **-306** | **-47** |
| AWI | Adults with incapacity | 506 | 776 | 270 | 53 |
| | **Local authority total** | **2204** | **1933** | **-271** | **-12** |

## Local authority – per capita

The number of legal aid cases in any area will be related to the size and characteristics of the population who live in that area.

It is difficult to make direct comparisons across the 32 local authority areas in Scotland because they have widely differing sizes of population.

Mid-year population estimates for 2023 show that the population of Glasgow City (the largest) was almost 29 times the size of the population of the Orkney Islands (the smallest).

To facilitate more meaningful analysis, the number of civil legal aid certificates has been analysed in terms of the population size at that time, that is per capita.

The population of Scotland has grown by 3% between 2014 and 2023[2] but this growth has not been even across the country. For example, the population of Midlothian has increased by 13% while Na h-Eileanan Siar has reduced by 4%.

[2] 2023 is the most recent year for which local authority population estimates are available.

Per capita analysis will consider the size of the underlying population and the changes in that population.

Figures are quoted in terms of the average number of certificates per 10,000 population. The numbers of civil legal aid certificates for the two comparison years have been compared to the population sizes of the council areas living there at the time, please see Table 10 below.

The analysis is based on the mid-year estimate for the year[3] most closely overlapping with the financial year period. Figures for 2014-15 have been compared with the 2014 estimate. For 2023-24, the mid-year population estimates for 2023 have been used.

An additional colour scale running from light beige (low) to orange, brown and black (high) illustrates the varying levels of certificates per 10,000 population in the data tables. This colour scale is also used in the maps following.

The average number of certificates per 10,000 population across all Scotland in 2014-15 was 24. Glasgow had the highest number at 37, and Shetland was the lowest at nine.

The areas with the fewest number of certificates per capita were the island councils, Aberdeen City, and Aberdeenshire. This remained the situation in 2023-24; all three island authorities saw above average growth although their averages remain below the national average.

Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City now clearly have the lowest figures of 13 certificates per 10,000 people.

Over the nine years to 2023-24, the national average number of certificates grew by 4% to 25 per 10,000 population, with Glasgow dropping by 18% to 31. West Dunbartonshire and East Ayrshire now have the highest rate of 34 in 2023-24.

East Lothian had a 21% fall in the number of certificates granted over the nine years. At the same time the local authority saw a 11% increase in its population.

Combined, these factors mean that the per capita figure fell by 29% to 17.

[3] Mid-2023 population estimates - National Records of Scotland (NRS).

**Table 10: Civil legal aid certificates per capita by local authority**

| Applicant council area | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow City | 37 | 31 | -18 |
| City of Edinburgh | 16 | 17 | 9 |
| Fife | 26 | 28 | 11 |
| North Lanarkshire | 31 | 30 | -2 |
| South Lanarkshire | 26 | 26 | -1 |
| Aberdeenshire | 11 | 13 | 18 |
| Highland | 18 | 22 | 21 |
| Aberdeen City | 14 | 13 | -4 |
| West Lothian | 22 | 30 | 36 |
| Renfrewshire | 27 | 22 | -18 |
| Falkirk | 24 | 21 | -11 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 25 | 31 | 25 |
| Perth and Kinross | 17 | 25 | 48 |
| Dundee City | 34 | 30 | -10 |
| North Ayrshire | 27 | 33 | 24 |
| East Ayrshire | 24 | 34 | 40 |
| Angus | 19 | 23 | 24 |
| Scottish Borders | 20 | 25 | 25 |
| South Ayrshire | 23 | 29 | 30 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 19 | 20 | 6 |
| East Lothian | 24 | 17 | -29 |
| Moray | 17 | 17 | 0 |
| East Renfrewshire | 16 | 19 | 20 |
| Stirling | 20 | 19 | -7 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 30 | 34 | 15 |
| Argyll and Bute | 16 | 18 | 17 |
| Midlothian | 23 | 23 | -3 |
| Inverclyde | 33 | 31 | -6 |
| Clackmannanshire | 24 | 25 | 4 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 12 | 18 | 46 |
| Shetland Islands | 9 | 15 | 69 |
| Orkney Islands | 14 | 16 | 22 |
| **National average** | **24** | **25** | **4** |

Excluding AWI certificates from the analysis we get a similar but more pronounced picture. 2014-15 levels of non-AWI certificates per head of population were around 50% higher than they were in 2023-24.

The average number of non-AWI certificates per 10,000 population across all Scotland in 2014-15 was 18. This reduced by 24% to 13 in 2023-24. In 2014-15, Glasgow (29), Dundee (28), and Inverclyde (30) had the highest per capita levels, and Aberdeenshire was the lowest at six.

The areas with the fewest number of certificates per capita remained the island councils and Aberdeenshire. In 2023-24 the level in Na h-Eileanan Siar reduced to five per 10,000 people. Orkney and Shetland grew but still a low level at nine, while Aberdeenshire remained at six and Aberdeen City reduced to seven.

East Renfrewshire and Stirling reduced to six – Stirling with a 58% drop. East Dunbartonshire fell to seven. East Lothian saw a 48% fall in the number of non-AWI certificates granted per capita to nine per 10,000. The highest areas remained as Inverclyde, Dundee, and Glasgow but their levels had dropped by around a third.

**Table 11: Non-AWI certificates per capita by local authority**

| Applicant council area | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Glasgow City | 29 | 18 | -36 |
| City of Edinburgh | 12 | 8 | -31 |
| Fife | 19 | 16 | -16 |
| North Lanarkshire | 20 | 16 | -22 |
| South Lanarkshire | 18 | 14 | -22 |
| Aberdeenshire | 6 | 6 | -6 |
| Highland | 13 | 10 | -21 |
| Aberdeen City | 11 | 7 | -39 |
| West Lothian | 17 | 17 | 2 |
| Renfrewshire | 17 | 12 | -34 |
| Falkirk | 17 | 10 | -44 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 19 | 16 | -15 |
| Perth and Kinross | 12 | 12 | 4 |
| Dundee City | 28 | 20 | -28 |
| North Ayrshire | 19 | 16 | -11 |
| East Ayrshire | 16 | 18 | 12 |
| Angus | 15 | 11 | -25 |
| Scottish Borders | 14 | 15 | 7 |
| South Ayrshire | 16 | 15 | -6 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 10 | 7 | -23 |
| East Lothian | 17 | 9 | -48 |
| Moray | 14 | 10 | -27 |
| East Renfrewshire | 8 | 6 | -17 |
| Stirling | 14 | 6 | -58 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 20 | 18 | -10 |
| Argyll and Bute | 12 | 7 | -38 |
| Midlothian | 17 | 14 | -17 |
| Inverclyde | 30 | 21 | -28 |
| Clackmannanshire | 19 | 12 | -35 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 8 | 5 | -33 |
| Shetland Islands | 7 | 9 | 26 |
| Orkney Islands | 8 | 9 | 15 |
| National average | 18 | 13 | -24 |

Plotting the per capita figures on a map (as shown in figures 1 and 2 below) illustrates that in both 2014-15 and 2023-24 there are more certificates per head of population in the central belt and south-west Scotland, and that this intensifies by 2023-24.

Aberdeenshire is the sixth largest local authority by head of population in 2023 and Aberdeen City is the eighth. But Aberdeenshire is only the eighteenth largest in terms of non-AWI legal aid certificates granted, and Aberdeen City is the twentieth.

***Figure 1: Non-AWI certificates per capita by local authority, 2014-15***

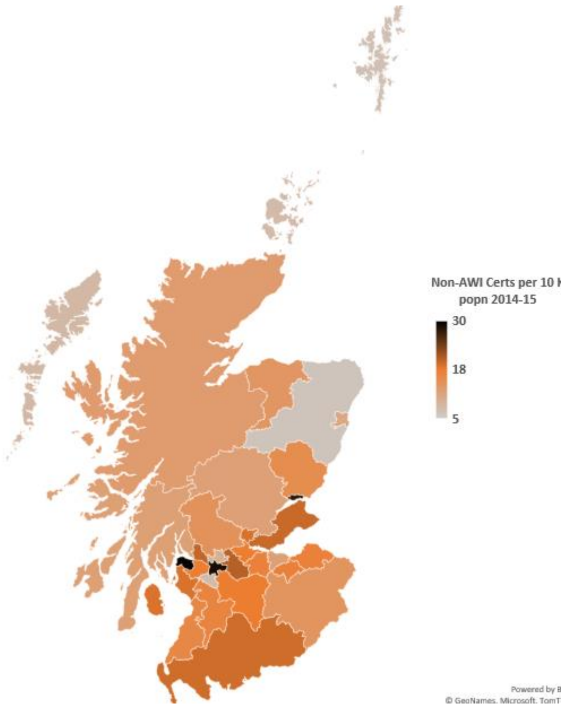
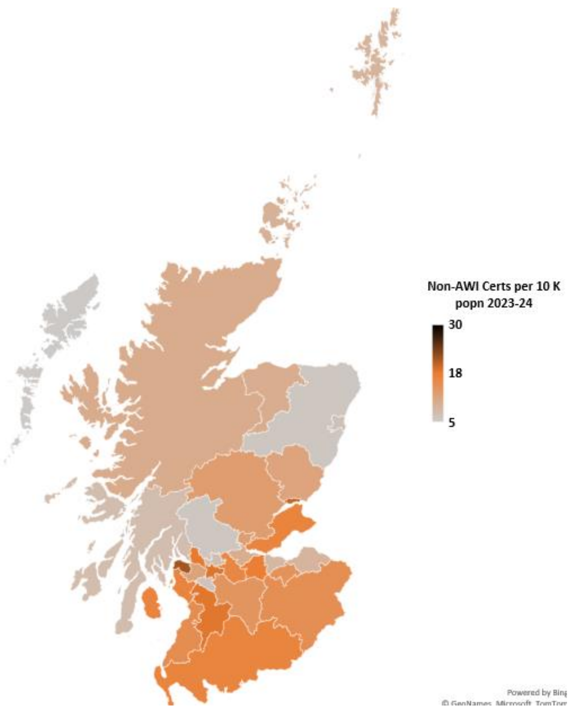



***Figure 2: Non-AWI certificates per capita by local authority, 2023-24***



## SIMD decile – percent change and by subject

The trends in civil legal aid have been analysed using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD is a relative measure of deprivation across small areas with roughly equal-sized populations called data zones – see Scottish Government's small area statistics for more detail. The applicant postcode has been used to place cases within these data zones.

If an area is identified as 'deprived', this can relate to people having a low income, but it can also mean fewer resources or opportunities. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime, and housing. SIMD ranks data zones from most deprived (ranked 'decile I') to least deprived (ranked decile X). The SIMD decile used for this analysis groups these data zones into 10 deciles of equal size, that is the number of data zones, and therefore roughly equal populations. Decile I contains the 10% most deprived data zones, decile X contains the 10% least deprived data zones.

Table 12 below shows the number of civil legal aid certificates granted for each of the 10 deciles of SIMD for the years being analysed.

The change column shows that the least deprived deciles (VII to X) had the most growth while the most deprived deciles (I, II & III) had decreases or little growth. In 2014-15, the three most deprived deciles accounted for 47% of all certificates that had been geo-located. In 2023-24 this had decreased to 43%.

**Table 12: Volume of all certificates by SIMD decile by year granted**

| Decile | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Volume change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Percentage change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Decile Share % 2014-15 | Decile Share % 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I (most deprived) | 2,415 | 2,261 | -154 | -6 | 19 | 17 |
| II | 1,868 | 1,877 | 9 | 0 | 15 | 14 |
| III | 1,570 | 1,664 | 94 | 6 | 13 | 12 |
| IV | 1,392 | 1,549 | 157 | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| V | 1,333 | 1,317 | -16 | -1 | 11 | 10 |
| VI | 1,039 | 1,067 | 28 | 3 | 8.3 | 8 |
| VII | 868 | 1,069 | 201 | 23 | 7 | 8 |
| VIII | 845 | 976 | 131 | 16 | 6.8 | 7.3 |
| IX | 680 | 903 | 223 | 33 | 5.4 | 6.8 |
| X (least deprived) | 479 | 659 | 180 | 38 | 3.8 | 4.9 |
| Total (located) | 12,489 | 13,342 | 853 | 7 | 100 | 100 |
| Non-domestic | 491 | 490 | | | | |

As we have seen, growth in AWI cases is hiding the fall in other subjects.

Table 13 below shows the same analysis with AWI cases excluded, showing that the relative falls are spread more evenly across all deciles of SIMD, although in absolute volume terms there are bigger drops in the more deprived deciles (I, II & III).

**Table 13: Volume of non-AWI certificates by SIMD decile by year granted**

| Decile | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Volume change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Percentage change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Decile Share % 2014-15 | Decile Share % 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I (most deprived) | 2,056 | 1,611 | -445 | -22 | 23 | 23 |
| II | 1,499 | 1,224 | -275 | -18 | 17 | 17 |
| III | 1,229 | 1,011 | -218 | -18 | 14 | 14 |
| IV | 1,043 | 866 | -177 | -17 | 12 | 12 |
| V | 954 | 676 | -278 | -29 | 11 | 10 |
| VI | 692 | 501 | -191 | -28 | 7.6 | 7.1 |
| VII | 561 | 454 | -107 | -19 | 6.2 | 6.4 |
| VIII | 507 | 335 | -172 | -34 | 5.6 | 4.7 |
| IX | 322 | 277 | -45 | -14 | 3.6 | 3.9 |
| X (least deprived) | 187 | 132 | -55 | -29 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| Total (located) | 9,050 | 7,087 | -1,963 | -22 | 100 | 100 |
| Non-domestic | 343 | 199 | | | | |

If we also look at just the AWI cases, shown in table 14 below, we can see that AWI growths (both absolute volumes and percent change) are also spread evenly across the deciles. The reason there has been disproportionate overall growth in less deprived deciles is because of the disproportionate distribution of non-AWI cases to start with.

**Table 14: Volume of AWI only certificates by SIMD decile by year granted**

| Decile | 2014-15 | 2023-24 | Volume change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Percentage change from 2014-15 to 2023-24 | Decile Share % 2014-15 | Decile Share % 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I (most deprived) | 359 | 650 | 291 | 81 | 10 | 10 |
| II | 369 | 653 | 284 | 77 | 11 | 10 |
| III | 341 | 653 | 312 | 91 | 10 | 10 |
| IV | 349 | 683 | 334 | 96 | 10 | 11 |
| V | 379 | 641 | 262 | 69 | 11 | 10 |
| VI | 347 | 566 | 219 | 63 | 10 | 9 |
| VII | 307 | 615 | 308 | 100 | 9 | 10 |
| VIII | 338 | 641 | 303 | 90 | 10 | 10 |
| IX | 358 | 626 | 268 | 75 | 10 | 10 |
| X (least deprived) | 292 | 527 | 235 | 80 | 8 | 8 |
| Total (located) | 3,439 | 6,255 | 2,816 | 82 | 100 | 100 |
| Non-domestic | 148 | 291 | | | | |

Because non-AWI cases are more concentrated in the more deprived areas, the less deprived areas have a higher proportion of AWI cases in their mix of cases. The effect of the uneven proportion of non-AWI cases to start with can be seen in table 15 below.

Decile I had more AWI cases than decile X in 2014-15, with 359 versus 292. It saw very similar growth in its AWI cases as decile X. In 2023-24, it still has more AWI cases, with 650 versus 527. But decile I had many more non-AWI cases in 2014-15, with 2056 versus 187. Both deciles saw large falls in their non-AWI cases (decile I by 22% and decile X by 29%). But the absolute size of the changes was very different: decile I non-AWI dropped by 445 cases; decile X non-AWI dropped by 55 cases. Accordingly, the overall net change is that decile I has seen a fall, while decile X has seen an increase. Both deciles have seen an increase in the proportion of cases that are AWI.

**Table 15: Change in the most (I) and least (X) deprived deciles**

| Decile | Measure | 2014-1 | 2023-24 | Volume change | Percent change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I (most deprived) | Non-AWI cases | 2056 | 1611 | -445 | -22% |
| | AWI cases | 359 | 650 | 291 | 81% |
| | % AWI | 15% | 29% | | |
| | **Total** | **2415** | **2261** | **-154** | **-6%** |
| X (least deprived) | Non-AWI cases | 187 | 132 | -55 | -29% |
| | AWI cases | 292 | 527 | 235 | 80% |
| | % AWI | 61% | 80% | | |
| | **Total** | **479** | **659** | **180** | **38%** |

## Sub-national by branch location

Trends can also be studied at a sub-national level using the address location of the branch of the firm that is providing the legal aid.

Coverage here is 100% because solicitors in firms, at a specific branch, make the legal aid application. We know the addresses of all firm branches operating.

### Local authority – percent change in cases

All 32 local authorities are shown in table 16 below by the decreasing size of the civil legal aid supply in 2014-15 being provided from firms located in that area, with the largest at the top and smallest at the bottom.

City of Edinburgh is now second in terms of the supply of civil legal aid provided by firms in the local authority, which compares with its fifth position based on the applicant's location we saw in table 5. Fife has also been growing in terms of a supply base while North Lanarkshire is decreasing.

In general, between 2014-15 and 2023-24 there has been more growth in the firms in larger local authorities at the top of the table, compared with those in the smaller authorities at the bottom.

East Lothian has seen the largest decline (other than Shetland), down 65% since 2014-15. The only local sheriff court in East Lothian was Haddington which closed in 2014.

Shetland has had no branches located there since 2014-15, but this does not appear to have hindered the growth in applicants from Shetland which grew by 67% between 2014-15 and 2023-24 (table 5). All three of the island council areas show the same phenomenon: the number of certificates supplied to the area has grown much more than the supply from branches in the islands.

**Table 16: Local authority case volume trends for all legal aid subjects using firm branch location**

| | | | | | % change | | | | National share (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Branch local authority** | **2014-15** | **2018-19** | **2022-23** | **2023-24** | **14-15 to 18-19** | **18-19 to 22-23** | **22-23 to 23-24** | **14-15 to 23-24** | **14-15** | **23-24** | **Change** |
| Glasgow City | 2,943 | 3,205 | 2,845 | 3,099 | 9 | -11 | 9 | 5 | 23 | 22 | -0.3 |
| City of Edinburgh | 1,097 | 1,175 | 1,225 | 1,299 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 18 | 8.5 | 9.4 | 0.9 |
| North Lanarkshire | 1,000 | 901 | 758 | 878 | -10 | -16 | 16 | -12 | 7.7 | 6.3 | -1.4 |
| Fife | 945 | 1,001 | 1,058 | 1,089 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 15 | 7.3 | 7.9 | 0.6 |
| South Lanarkshire | 671 | 739 | 819 | 782 | 10 | 11 | -5 | 17 | 5.2 | 5.7 | 0.5 |
| Dundee City | 655 | 647 | 520 | 577 | -1 | -20 | 11 | -12 | 5 | 4.2 | -0.9 |
| Renfrewshire | 478 | 476 | 466 | 491 | 0 | -2 | 5 | 3 | 3.7 | 3.5 | -0.1 |
| West Lothian | 441 | 525 | 543 | 624 | 19 | 3 | 15 | 41 | 3.4 | 4.5 | 1.1 |
| Highland | 408 | 494 | 368 | 478 | 21 | -26 | 30 | 17 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 0.3 |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 382 | 460 | 500 | 458 | 20 | 9 | -8 | 20 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 0.4 |
| Falkirk | 372 | 283 | 312 | 259 | -24 | 10 | -17 | -30 | 2.9 | 1.9 | -1 |
| Aberdeen City | 358 | 360 | 216 | 237 | 1 | -40 | 10 | -34 | 2.8 | 1.7 | -1 |
| South Ayrshire | 288 | 446 | 464 | 422 | 55 | 4 | -9 | 47 | 2.2 | 3.1 | 0.8 |
| North Ayrshire | 281 | 287 | 348 | 358 | 2 | 21 | 3 | 27 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 0.4 |
| East Ayrshire | 274 | 310 | 437 | 433 | 13 | 41 | -1 | 58 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 1 |
| Perth and Kinross | 265 | 274 | 346 | 380 | 3 | 26 | 10 | 43 | 2 | 2.7 | 0.7 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 244 | 227 | 283 | 255 | -7 | 25 | -10 | 5 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 0 |
| Inverclyde | 238 | 223 | 210 | 204 | -6 | -6 | -3 | -14 | 1.8 | 1.5 | -0.4 |
| Aberdeenshire | 217 | 268 | 260 | 225 | 24 | -3 | -13 | 4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 0 |
| Scottish Borders | 201 | 202 | 214 | 250 | 0 | 6 | 17 | 24 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 0.3 |
| East Lothian | 184 | 174 | 71 | 64 | -5 | -59 | -10 | -65 | 1.4 | 0.5 | -1 |
| Angus | 179 | 167 | 169 | 207 | -7 | 1 | 22 | 16 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 0.1 |
| Stirling | 167 | 198 | 199 | 173 | 19 | 1 | -13 | 4 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 137 | 96 | 91 | 101 | -30 | -5 | 11 | -26 | 1.1 | 0.7 | -0.3 |
| Moray | 131 | 105 | 154 | 148 | -20 | 47 | -4 | 13 | 1 | 1.1 | 0.1 |
| Clackmannanshire | 107 | 103 | 58 | 58 | -4 | -44 | 0 | -46 | 0.8 | 0.4 | -0.4 |
| Argyll and Bute | 99 | 80 | 41 | 81 | -19 | -49 | 98 | -18 | 0.8 | 0.6 | -0.2 |
| Midlothian | 92 | 91 | 91 | 63 | -1 | 0 | -31 | -32 | 0.7 | 0.5 | -0.3 |
| East Renfrewshire | 53 | 28 | 42 | 77 | -47 | 50 | 83 | 45 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
| Orkney Islands | 43 | 30 | 26 | 39 | -30 | -13 | 50 | -9 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 22 | 19 | 16 | 23 | -14 | -16 | 44 | 5 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0 |
| Shetland Islands | 8 | - | - | - | -100 | n/a | n/a | -100 | 0.1 | 0 | -0.1 |
| **TOTAL** | **12,980** | **13,594** | **13,150** | **13,832** | **5** | **-3** | **5** | **7** | | | |

The biggest subject influence we have seen is that of AWI. We can draw the same picture of trend by firm branch local authority but with AWI excluded, as shown in Table 17 below. Most areas show decreases without the contribution from AWI apart from East Ayrshire, and Perth and Kinross. Generally, the larger local authorities are gaining share, and the smaller ones are losing it.

Aberdeen and Falkirk stand out as local authorities with the biggest relative decline in share of the supply.

**Table 17: Local authority case volume trends for all legal aid subjects using firm branch location excluding AWI cases**

| | | | | | % change | | | | National share (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Branch local authority** | **2014-15** | **2018-19** | **2022-23** | **2023-24** | **14-15 to 18-19** | **18-19 to 22-23** | **22-23 to 23-24** | **14-15 to 23-24** | **14-15** | **23-24** | **Change** |
| Glasgow City | 2,222 | 2,221 | 1,831 | 1,906 | 0 | -18 | 4 | -14 | 24 | 26 | 2.5 |
| City of Edinburgh | 884 | 834 | 774 | 706 | -6 | -7 | -9 | -20 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 0.3 |
| North Lanarkshire | 681 | 632 | 630 | 615 | -7 | 0 | -2 | -10 | 7.3 | 8.4 | 1.2 |
| Fife | 662 | 518 | 398 | 449 | -22 | -23 | 13 | -32 | 7 | 6.2 | -0.9 |
| South Lanarkshire | 518 | 484 | 297 | 315 | -7 | -39 | 6 | -39 | 5.5 | 4.3 | -1.2 |
| Dundee City | 417 | 420 | 422 | 377 | 1 | 0 | -11 | -10 | 4.4 | 5.2 | 0.7 |
| Renfrewshire | 287 | 334 | 282 | 305 | 16 | -16 | 8 | 6 | 3.1 | 4.2 | 1.1 |
| West Lothian | 330 | 317 | 249 | 255 | -4 | -21 | 2 | -23 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 0 |
| Highland | 294 | 284 | 253 | 237 | -3 | -11 | -6 | -19 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 0.1 |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 205 | 276 | 270 | 202 | 35 | -2 | -25 | -1 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 0.6 |
| Falkirk | 285 | 252 | 161 | 216 | -12 | -36 | 34 | -24 | 3 | 3 | -0.1 |
| Aberdeen City | 181 | 224 | 269 | 249 | 24 | 20 | -7 | 38 | 1.9 | 3.4 | 1.5 |
| South Ayrshire | 306 | 190 | 138 | 104 | -38 | -27 | -25 | -66 | 3.3 | 1.4 | -1.8 |
| North Ayrshire | 282 | 252 | 71 | 81 | -11 | -72 | 14 | -71 | 3 | 1.1 | -1.9 |
| East Ayrshire | 215 | 173 | 129 | 138 | -20 | -25 | 7 | -36 | 2.3 | 1.9 | -0.4 |
| Perth and Kinross | 168 | 160 | 185 | 151 | -5 | 16 | -18 | -10 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 0.3 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 177 | 161 | 155 | 198 | -9 | -4 | 28 | 12 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 0.8 |
| Inverclyde | 176 | 161 | 117 | 137 | -9 | -27 | 17 | -22 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 0 |
| Aberdeenshire | 143 | 137 | 126 | 146 | -4 | -8 | 16 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 0.5 |
| Scottish Borders | 108 | 126 | 117 | 83 | 17 | -7 | -29 | -23 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0 |
| East Lothian | 119 | 116 | 106 | 61 | -3 | -9 | -42 | -49 | 1.3 | 0.8 | -0.4 |
| Angus | 143 | 112 | 79 | 90 | -22 | -29 | 14 | -37 | 1.5 | 1.2 | -0.3 |
| Stirling | 137 | 107 | 35 | 33 | -22 | -67 | -6 | -76 | 1.5 | 0.5 | -1 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 100 | 68 | 58 | 60 | -32 | -15 | 3 | -40 | 1.1 | 0.8 | -0.2 |
| Moray | 73 | 60 | 91 | 54 | -18 | 52 | -41 | -26 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clackmannanshire | 82 | 59 | 22 | 27 | -28 | -63 | 23 | -67 | 0.9 | 0.4 | -0.5 |
| Argyll and Bute | 78 | 40 | 20 | 18 | -49 | -50 | -10 | -77 | 0.8 | 0.2 | -0.6 |
| Midlothian | 51 | 45 | 37 | 43 | -12 | -18 | 16 | -16 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0 |
| East Renfrewshire | 19 | 13 | 10 | 16 | -32 | -23 | 60 | -16 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0 |
| Orkney Islands | 26 | 7 | 9 | 12 | -73 | 29 | 33 | -54 | 0.3 | 0.2 | -0.1 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 16 | 8 | - | 2 | -50 | -100 | n/a | -88 | 0.2 | 0 | -0.1 |
| Shetland Islands | 8 | - | - | - | -100 | n/a | n/a | -100 | 0.1 | 0 | -0.1 |
| **TOTAL** | **9,393** | **8,791** | **7,341** | **7,286** | **-6** | **-16** | **-1** | **-22** | | | |

## Local authority – active branches

The total number of firm branches delivering civil legal aid fell by 26% between 2014-15 and 2023-24. Every local authority saw falls other than East Ayrshire, which saw an increase from eight to 11 branches, see Table 18 below. The largest falls were in the more rural and remote areas and those furthest from the Central Belt. This trend was more pronounced when looking at just non-AWI cases.

The following councils saw falls of 50% or more in the number of firm branches delivering non-AWI legal aid: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, Shetland Islands, and Stirling.

Focusing on just AWI cases, there was also a decrease in the overall number of branches, but this was smaller (-21%). Four council areas saw an increase in the number of branches delivering AWI legal aid: Dundee City, Inverclyde, South Ayrshire, and West Lothian. But again, many of the more remote councils saw large decreases in active branches.

**Table 18: Active branches by local authority**

| | **All cases – Branch count** | | | **Non-AWI cases – Branch count** | | | **AWI Cases – Branch count** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Branch council area** | **2014-15** | **2023-24** | **% Change in active branches** | **2014-15** | **2023-24** | **% Change in active branches** | **2014-15** | **2023-24** | **% Change in active branches** |
| Aberdeen City | 26 | 13 | -50% | 23 | 11 | -52% | 15 | 6 | -60% |
| Aberdeenshire | 13 | 8 | -38% | 10 | 4 | -60% | 12 | 6 | -50% |
| Angus | 14 | 7 | -50% | 13 | 6 | -54% | 8 | 5 | -38% |
| Argyll and Bute | 15 | 6 | -60% | 14 | 3 | -79% | 7 | 5 | -29% |
| City of Edinburgh | 45 | 43 | -4% | 37 | 34 | -8% | 25 | 22 | -12% |
| Clackmannanshire | 7 | 4 | -43% | 7 | 2 | -71% | 4 | 3 | -25% |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 22 | 18 | -18% | 19 | 14 | -26% | 17 | 15 | -12% |
| Dundee City | 26 | 20 | -23% | 23 | 16 | -30% | 9 | 11 | 22% |
| East Ayrshire | 8 | 11 | 38% | 8 | 11 | 38% | 7 | 6 | -14% |
| East Dunbartonshire | 7 | 5 | -29% | 5 | 4 | -20% | 5 | 4 | -20% |
| East Lothian | 8 | 4 | -50% | 8 | 3 | -63% | 6 | 2 | -67% |
| East Renfrewshire | 7 | 5 | -29% | 5 | 4 | -20% | 4 | 2 | -50% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Falkirk | 16 | 12 | -25% | 16 | 10 | -38% | 9 | 9 | 0% |
| Fife | 44 | 32 | -27% | 41 | 31 | -24% | 28 | 23 | -18% |
| Glasgow City | 138 | 119 | -14% | 126 | 99 | -21% | 72 | 60 | -17% |
| Highland | 19 | 13 | -32% | 18 | 11 | -39% | 12 | 9 | -25% |
| Inverclyde | 9 | 7 | -22% | 8 | 4 | -50% | 4 | 5 | 25% |
| Midlothian | 3 | 2 | -33% | 3 | 1 | -67% | 2 | 1 | -50% |
| Moray | 7 | 4 | -43% | 5 | 4 | -20% | 5 | 4 | -20% |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 4 | 2 | -50% | 2 | 1 | -50% | 3 | 2 | -33% |
| North Ayrshire | 14 | 11 | -21% | 13 | 10 | -23% | 12 | 10 | -17% |
| North Lanarkshire | 37 | 29 | -22% | 37 | 26 | -30% | 24 | 19 | -21% |
| Orkney Islands | 3 | 1 | -67% | 3 | 1 | -67% | 3 | 1 | -67% |
| Perth and Kinross | 15 | 10 | -33% | 15 | 9 | -40% | 8 | 7 | -13% |
| Renfrewshire | 22 | 14 | -36% | 21 | 11 | -48% | 14 | 9 | -36% |
| Scottish Borders | 11 | 3 | -73% | 11 | 3 | -73% | 8 | 3 | -63% |
| Shetland Islands | 1 | 0 | -100% | 1 | 0 | -100% | 0 | 0 | n/a |
| South Ayrshire | 16 | 13 | -19% | 16 | 9 | -44% | 7 | 11 | 57% |
| South Lanarkshire | 40 | 29 | -28% | 33 | 23 | -30% | 29 | 25 | -14% |
| Stirling | 13 | 7 | -46% | 12 | 5 | -58% | 8 | 4 | -50% |
| West Dunbartonshire | 12 | 9 | -25% | 12 | 9 | -25% | 8 | 6 | -25% |
| West Lothian | 13 | 12 | -8% | 12 | 12 | 0% | 6 | 7 | 17% |
| **Total** | **635** | **473** | **-26%** | **577** | **391** | **-32%** | **381** | **302** | **-21%** |

## Sub-national applicant location and branch location

Analysis was conducted of supply by comparing the applicant location with the branch location. This was done by comparing the council area location of applicants compared with that of the firm branch of their case. Because we have seen a large difference in trends between non-AWI cases and AWI cases, this analysis was split into those two main subject areas.

In table 19 below, the supply of cases by applicant council area is reported in terms of total supply and supply from the same council area. For example, in 2014-15, 77% of the cases for applicants in Aberdeen City were supplied from firm branches also located in Aberdeen City.

In 2023-24 this ratio had fallen to 33%. In total, 78% of non-AWI cases were same area supplied in 2014-15 and in 2023-24 this figure was 71%.

**Table 19: Non-AWI subjects, cases supplied from the same area by applicant council area location**

| | 2014-15 | | | 2023-24 | | | % change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Applicant Council Area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Percent cases same area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Percent cases same area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Area supply** |
| Aberdeen City | 246 | 189 | 77% | 153 | 51 | 33% | -38% | -73% | -44% |
| Aberdeenshire | 164 | 74 | 45% | 156 | 50 | 32% | -5% | -32% | -13% |
| Angus | 175 | 126 | 72% | 130 | 80 | 62% | -26% | -37% | -11% |
| Argyll and Bute | 106 | 61 | 58% | 65 | 15 | 23% | -39% | -75% | -34% |
| City of Edinburgh | 579 | 491 | 85% | 429 | 362 | 84% | -26% | -26% | 0% |
| Clackmannanshire | 95 | 66 | 70% | 63 | 22 | 35% | -34% | -67% | -35% |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 286 | 274 | 96% | 238 | 225 | 95% | -17% | -18% | -1% |
| Dundee City | 405 | 389 | 96% | 297 | 247 | 83% | -27% | -37% | -13% |
| East Ayrshire | 198 | 125 | 63% | 218 | 160 | 73% | 10% | 28% | 10% |
| East Dunbartonshire | 102 | 35 | 34% | 80 | 29 | 36% | -22% | -17% | 2% |
| East Lothian | 173 | 116 | 67% | 100 | 20 | 20% | -42% | -83% | -47% |
| East Renfrewshire | 71 | 12 | 17% | 63 | 5 | 8% | -11% | -58% | -9% |
| Falkirk | 273 | 230 | 84% | 156 | 94 | 60% | -43% | -59% | -24% |
| Fife | 712 | 621 | 87% | 610 | 557 | 91% | -14% | -10% | 4% |
| Glasgow City | 1698 | 1540 | 91% | 1157 | 1031 | 89% | -32% | -33% | -2% |
| Highland | 294 | 238 | 81% | 236 | 161 | 68% | -20% | -32% | -13% |
| Inverclyde | 238 | 185 | 78% | 167 | 113 | 68% | -30% | -39% | -10% |
| Midlothian | 147 | 54 | 37% | 138 | 32 | 23% | -6% | -41% | -14% |
| Moray | 127 | 91 | 72% | 93 | 42 | 45% | -27% | -54% | -27% |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 22 | 15 | 68% | 14 | 2 | 14% | -36% | -87% | -54% |
| North Ayrshire | 253 | 158 | 63% | 219 | 117 | 53% | -13% | -26% | -9% |
| North Lanarkshire | 687 | 512 | 75% | 544 | 357 | 66% | -21% | -30% | -9% |
| Orkney Islands | 17 | 11 | 65% | 20 | 10 | 50% | 18% | -9% | -15% |
| Perth and Kinross | 176 | 144 | 82% | 189 | 142 | 75% | 7% | -1% | -7% |
| Renfrewshire | 305 | 227 | 74% | 214 | 169 | 79% | -30% | -26% | 5% |
| Scottish Borders | 157 | 128 | 82% | 171 | 140 | 82% | 9% | 9% | 0% |
| Shetland Islands | 16 | 8 | 50% | 20 | 0 | 0% | 25% | -100% | -50% |
| South Ayrshire | 176 | 143 | 81% | 166 | 131 | 79% | -6% | -8% | -2% |
| South Lanarkshire | 553 | 323 | 58% | 453 | 274 | 61% | -18% | -15% | 2% |
| Stirling | 127 | 94 | 74% | 55 | 36 | 66% | -57% | -62% | -9% |
| West Dunbartonshire | 177 | 135 | 76% | 157 | 115 | 73% | -11% | -15% | -3% |
| West Lothian | 295 | 245 | 83% | 316 | 253 | 80% | 7% | 3% | -3% |
| **Total** | **9050** | **7060** | **78%** | **7087** | **5042** | **71%** | **-22%** | **-29%** | **-7%** |

Only Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, and Midlothian had same area supply levels below 50% in 2014-15. In the period to 2023-24, there was a large decline in overall non-AWI cases and the level of same area supply also decreased widely.

Two areas saw increases: East Ayrshire increased same area cases by 28% and same area supply by 10 points, and Scottish Borders increased same area cases by 9% and same area supply stayed level at 82%.

City of Edinburgh saw similar sized falls in all non-AWI cases and same area supply cases, so its level of same area supply stayed high at 84%. Shetland saw a small volume increase in the number of non-AWI cases but in 2023-24 none of these cases were being supplied from Shetland.

Moving on to look at AWI cases in the same fashion, we get the data shown in table 20 below. Overall, the level of the same area supply ratio for AWI cases was lower than for non-AWI cases in 2014-15 but it was little changed in 2023-24. In total, 68% of non-AWI cases were same area supplied in 2014-15 and this only declined by one point to 67% in 2023-24.

The level of supply of AWI cases increased generally with local variations. In some areas, same area supply kept pace but in other areas it didn't. For example, Aberdeen City saw a 135% increase in AWI cases but there was only a 64% increase in same area supplied cases – so the same area supply ratio fell by 20% points.

Midlothian had a low level of same area supply in 2013-14 (25%), and there was a 50% increase in AWI cases but the number that were same area supply fell 71% – accordingly the same area supply ratio fell by 20% points.

East Lothian had 62% same area supply in 2014-15, and total AWI cases increased 32% but same area cases fell 42% – so the overall level of same area supply fell by 35% points. East Ayrshire had 67% same area supply in 2014-15, and total AWI cases increased 101% but same area cases rose 124% – so the overall level of same area supply increased by 8% points.

**Table 20: AWI only cases, supplied from the same area, by applicant council area location**

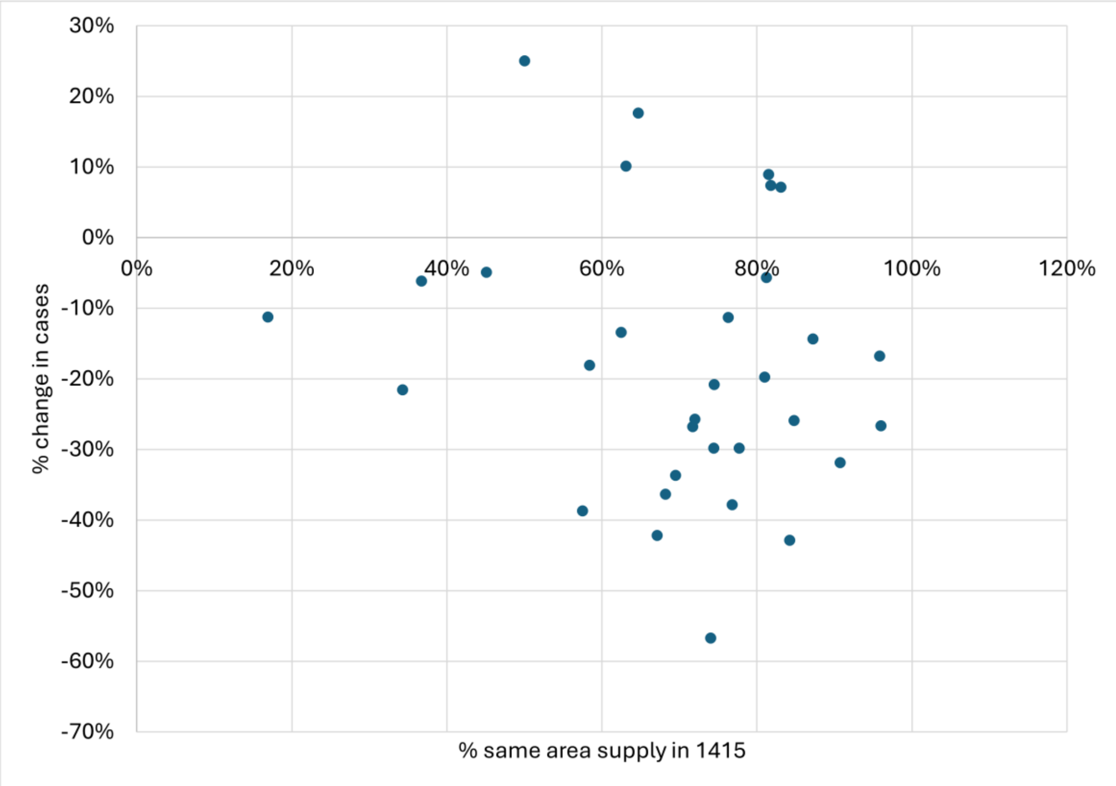
| | 2014-15 | | | 2023-24 | | | % change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Applicant Council Area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Percent cases same area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Percent cases same area** | **Total cases** | **Same area cases** | **Area supply** |
| Aberdeen City | 60 | 39 | 65% | 141 | 64 | 45% | 135% | 64% | -20% |
| Aberdeenshire | 121 | 86 | 71% | 185 | 82 | 44% | 53% | -5% | -27% |
| Angus | 45 | 29 | 64% | 139 | 87 | 63% | 209% | 200% | -2% |
| Argyll and Bute | 33 | 14 | 42% | 96 | 47 | 49% | 191% | 236% | 7% |
| City of Edinburgh | 172 | 103 | 60% | 455 | 318 | 70% | 165% | 209% | 10% |
| Clackmannanshire | 29 | 10 | 35% | 67 | 12 | 18% | 131% | 20% | -17% |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 81 | 72 | 89% | 210 | 191 | 91% | 159% | 165% | 2% |
| Dundee City | 92 | 83 | 90% | 158 | 136 | 86% | 72% | 64% | -4% |
| East Ayrshire | 94 | 63 | 67% | 189 | 141 | 75% | 101% | 124% | 8% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East Dunbartonshire | 103 | 39 | 38% | 143 | 38 | 27% | 39% | -3% | -11% |
| East Lothian | 69 | 43 | 62% | 91 | 25 | 28% | 32% | -42% | -35% |
| East Renfrewshire | 75 | 14 | 19% | 124 | 20 | 16% | 65% | 43% | -3% |
| Falkirk | 102 | 50 | 49% | 182 | 109 | 60% | 78% | 118% | 11% |
| Fife | 222 | 180 | 81% | 441 | 364 | 83% | 99% | 102% | 1% |
| Glasgow City | 506 | 403 | 80% | 776 | 629 | 81% | 53% | 56% | 2% |
| Highland | 121 | 101 | 84% | 272 | 221 | 81% | 125% | 119% | -2% |
| Inverclyde | 30 | 19 | 63% | 78 | 50 | 64% | 160% | 163% | 1% |
| Midlothian | 56 | 14 | 25% | 84 | 4 | 5% | 50% | -71% | -20% |
| Moray | 36 | 26 | 72% | 71 | 49 | 69% | 97% | 88% | -3% |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 11 | 5 | 46% | 32 | 19 | 59% | 191% | 280% | 14% |
| North Ayrshire | 113 | 84 | 74% | 224 | 175 | 78% | 98% | 108% | 4% |
| North Lanarkshire | 350 | 243 | 69% | 486 | 325 | 67% | 39% | 34% | -2% |
| Orkney Islands | 12 | 11 | 92% | 16 | 7 | 44% | 33% | -36% | -48% |
| Perth and Kinross | 75 | 61 | 81% | 195 | 137 | 70% | 160% | 125% | -11% |
| Renfrewshire | 166 | 121 | 73% | 197 | 152 | 77% | 19% | 26% | 4% |
| Scottish Borders | 72 | 53 | 74% | 121 | 88 | 73% | 68% | 66% | -1% |
| Shetland Islands | 5 | 0 | 0% | 15 | 0 | 0% | 200% | n/a | 0% |
| South Ayrshire | 78 | 61 | 78% | 163 | 135 | 83% | 109% | 121% | 5% |
| South Lanarkshire | 276 | 169 | 61% | 407 | 261 | 64% | 47% | 54% | 3% |
| Stirling | 55 | 30 | 55% | 120 | 69 | 58% | 118% | 130% | 3% |
| West Dunbartonshire | 89 | 57 | 64% | 146 | 78 | 53% | 64% | 37% | -11% |
| West Lothian | 90 | 70 | 78% | 231 | 175 | 76% | 157% | 150% | -2% |
| **Total** | **3439** | **2353** | **68%** | **6255** | **4208** | **67%** | **82%** | **79%** | **-1%** |

To further explore the issue of understanding the change in the volume of cases at the applicant council level, we can plot change by council versus the level of same area supply, as shown in figure 3 below. No clear relationship can be seen. Most councils experienced a decline in the number of non-AWI cases over time, and this happened for those councils which had high levels of same area supply and those which had low levels.

The councils that didn't show a decline in non-AWI cases were Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, East Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Perth and Kinross, and West Lothian. It is notable that these are all more rural councils and that they had levels of same area supply of between 50% and 83% in 2014-15. But there are many rural councils with similar levels of same area supply which saw declines, for example Angus on 72% saw a 26% decline and Highland on 81% saw a 20% decline.

*Figure 3: Non-AWI cases, analysis of change versus same area supply*




# Active practitioners

## National level

In 2014-15, there were 1067 active[4] civil legal aid practitioners who had 12,980 cases granted, shown in Table 21 below. The average number of cases per practitioner was 12 but the case load was not distributed evenly.

21% of practitioners (225) had just one or two cases granted and in total their cases constituted 2.4% of all cases. 16% of practitioners (168) had 23 or more cases granted in the year and these cases constituted 47% of all cases.

**Table 21: Active practitioners and caseloads 2014-15**

| Case load | | Number of practitioners | % of all practitioners | Average cases per practitioner | Total number of cases | % of all cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cases granted per practitioner per year | 1 - 2 | 225 | 21% | 1 | 308 | 2.4% |
| | 3 - 6 | 229 | 21% | 4 | 1,006 | 8% |
| | 7 - 12 | 245 | 23% | 9 | 2,230 | 17% |
| | 13 - 22 | 200 | 19% | 17 | 3,378 | 26% |
| | 23+ | 168 | 16% | 36 | 6,058 | 47% |
| | **Total** | **1,067** | **100%** | **12** | **12,980** | **100%** |

[4] For this analysis, 'active' was defined as a practitioner with one or more civil legal aid cases granted in the year.

In 2023-24, the number of active practitioners had reduced by 26% to 791, as shown in Table 22 and Table 23 below. The number of cases granted in 2023-24 had increased by 7% to 13,832.

Consequently, the average number of cases per practitioner had increased 44% to 17.

The number of practitioners who had just one or two cases granted had decreased in volume to 171 but this remained 22% of the total number of practitioners. Their cases constituted 1.7% of all cases.

The number of practitioners who had 23 or more cases granted in the year had increased to 27% of the total and their cases now constituted 69% of all granted cases.

**Table 22: Active practitioners and caseloads 2023-24**

| Case load | | Number of practitioners | % of all practitioners | Average cases per practitioner | Total number of cases | % of all cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cases granted per practitioner per year | 1 - 2 | 171 | 22% | 1 | 232 | 1.7% |
| | 3 - 6 | 148 | 19% | 4 | 615 | 4% |
| | 7 - 12 | 119 | 15% | 9 | 1,105 | 8% |
| | 13 - 22 | 138 | 17% | 17 | 2,355 | 17% |
| | 23+ | 215 | 27% | 44 | 9,525 | 69% |
| | **Total** | **791** | **100%** | **17** | **13,832** | **100%** |

**Table 23: Changes in practitioners and caseloads 2014-15 to 2023-24**

| Case load | | Number of practitioners | % of all practitioners | Average cases per practitioner | Total number of cases | % of all cases (% points) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cases granted per practitioner per year | 1 - 2 | -24% | 0.5% | -1% | -25% | -0.7% |
| | 3 - 6 | -35% | -2.8% | -5% | -39% | -3.3% |
| | 7 - 12 | -51% | -8% | 2% | -50% | -9% |
| | 13 - 22 | -31% | -1.3% | 1% | -30% | -9% |
| | 23+ | 28% | 11% | 23% | 57% | 22% |
| | **Total** | **-26%** | **0%** | **44%** | **7%** | **0%** |

At a national level there has been a sizeable fall in the number of active practitioners.

There remains an uneven distribution of cases amongst all practitioners; some do very few legally aided cases whereas others do a large number. But there has been an increasing concentration of cases amongst the busier practitioners.

The biggest decline has been seen in the mid-range band practitioners (those handling seven to 12 grants a year), where their number has halved from 245 to 119 and their caseload has also halved from 2230 to 1105.

Over two-thirds of all cases (69%) are now being done by just over a quarter of all practitioners (27%).

## By subject matter

Based on the analysis above, we have grouped the practitioner analysis into three key subject matter areas:

1. Adults with incapacity.
2. Family.
3. Non-family non-AWI.

Within each of these areas we have analysed the number of practitioners who are active in that area over the two years we are focusing on: 2014-15 and 2023-24.

In the tables below, the following terms have been used, with an explanation of their meaning below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Count** | Number of active practitioners |
| **Column N %** | Percent of all active practitioners |
| **Mean** | Average number of cases per practitioner |
| **Sum** | Total number of cases |
| **Column Sum %** | Percent of all cases |

Overall, the number of AWI active practitioners decreased 17% from 466 in 2014-15 to 388 in 2023-24. The number of non-AWI active practitioners decreased 33% from 601 in 2014-15 to 403 in 2023-24.

The number of AWI practitioners doing fewer cases decreased but the number doing more cases (eight or more) increased. The eight to 16 band increased by 23% and the 17+ band increased by 151%.

An increasing share of the AWI case load is being done by practitioners with 17 or more cases per year. In 2014-15, there were 53 such practitioners who were responsible for 48% of all AWI cases.

In 2023-24, the number of practitioners with 17 or more cases had more than doubled to 133, and they were responsible for 76% of all AWI cases.

The number of civil legal aid practitioners who didn't do AWI has dropped. In 2014-15, there were 601 other civil legal aid practitioners who did not do AWI, which is 56% of the total base.

In 2023-24 there were only 408 civil practitioners who didn't have AWI cases, which is 51% of all practitioners.

**Table 24: Active practitioners within AWI**

| Active practitioners AWI caseload 2014-15 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 2 | 168 | 36% | 1 | 245 | 7% |
| | 3 - 4 | 96 | 21% | 3 | 334 | 9% |
| | 5 - 7 | 74 | 16% | 6 | 432 | 12% |
| | 8 - 16 | 75 | 16% | 11 | 852 | 24% |
| | 17+ | 53 | 11% | 33 | 1724 | 48% |
| | **Total** | **466** | **100%** | **8** | **3587** | **100%** |
| | No AWI | 601 | 56% | | | |
| **Active practitioners AWI caseload 2023-24** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 2 | 70 | 18% | 1 | 94 | 1.4% |
| | 3 - 4 | 51 | 13% | 3 | 176 | 2.7% |
| | 5 - 7 | 42 | 11% | 6 | 243 | 3.7% |
| | 8 - 16 | 92 | 24% | 12 | 1071 | 16% |
| | 17+ | 133 | 34% | 37 | 4962 | 76% |
| | **Total** | **388** | **100%** | **17** | **6546** | **100%** |
| | No AWI | 403 | 51% | | | |
| **Changes in AWI caseloads 2014-15 to 2023-24** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 2 | -58% | -18% | -8% | -62% | -5% |
| | 3 - 4 | -47% | -7% | -1% | -47% | -7% |
| | 5 - 7 | -43% | -5% | -1% | -44% | -8% |
| | 8 - 16 | 23% | 8% | 2% | 26% | -7% |
| | 17+ | 151% | 23% | 15% | 188% | 28% |
| | **Total** | **-17%** | **0%** | **119%** | **82%** | **0%** |
| | No AWI | | -5% | | | |

In AWI we have seen a slight reduction in the number of active practitioners (-17%) but a large increase in the average number of AWI cases per practitioner (from eight to 17), as well as the concentration of AWI cases among higher volume practitioners.

In family cases, the number of active practitioners has decreased by 35% to 510 in 2023-24. The average number of family cases per family active practitioner has increased from nine in 2014-15 to 12 in 2023-24.

An increasing share is being done by the busiest practitioners. In 2014-15, those with 16 or more cases constituted 18% of the active base and 50% of all family cases. In 2022-23 the absolute number with 16 or more cases had fallen slightly, from 144 to 141, but this constituted an increased proportion of all family practitioners at 28%, and their share of all family cases had increased to 68%.

For the busiest family practitioners (those with 16 or more cases), the average family caseload has increased from 26 in 2014-15 to 30 in 2023-24. But there are decreasing numbers of family practitioners within all case load bands, and the proportion of all active civil practitioners who don't have family cases has increased from 27% to 36%.

**Table 25: Active practitioners within family**

| **Active practitioners family caseload 2014-15** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | 117 | 15% | 1 | 117 | 2% |
| | 2 - 3 | 126 | 16% | 2 | 312 | 4% |
| | 4 - 7 | 200 | 26% | 5 | 1078 | 14% |
| | 8 - 15 | 197 | 25% | 11 | 2211 | 30% |
| | 16+ | 144 | 18% | 26 | 3722 | 50% |
| | **Total** | **784** | **100%** | **9** | **7440** | **100%** |
| | No family | 283 | 27% | | | |
| **Active practitioners family caseload 2023-24** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | 79 | 15% | 1 | 79 | 1.3% |
| | 2 - 3 | 83 | 16% | 2 | 195 | 3.1% |
| | 4 - 7 | 93 | 18% | 5 | 481 | 8% |
| | 8 - 15 | 114 | 22% | 11 | 1247 | 20% |
| | 16+ | 141 | 28% | 30 | 4278 | 68% |
| | **Total** | **510** | **100%** | **12** | **6280** | **100%** |
| | No family | 281 | 36% | | | |
| **Changes in family caseloads** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | -32% | 0.6% | 0% | -32% | -0.3% |
| | 2 - 3 | -34% | 0.2% | -5% | -38% | -1.1% |
| | 4 - 7 | -54% | -7% | -4% | -55% | -7% |
| | 8 - 15 | -42% | -2.8% | -3% | -44% | -10% |
| | 16+ | -2% | 9% | 17% | 15% | 18% |
| | **Total** | **-35%** | **0%** | **30%** | **-16%** | **0%** |
| | No family | | 9% | | | |

In family, we have seen a large reduction in the number of active practitioners and increases in the concentration and in the average number of cases amongst the practitioners remaining. As a proportion of all civil legal aid practitioners, there are now more solicitors who do not do any family work.

**Table 26: Active practitioners within non-family non-AWI**

| Active practitioners non-family non-AWI caseload 2014-15 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | 204 | 41% | 1 | 204 | 10% |
| | 2 - 2 | 100 | 20% | 2 | 200 | 10% |
| | 3 - 4 | 87 | 17% | 3 | 286 | 15% |
| | 5 - 8 | 55 | 11% | 6 | 349 | 18% |
| | 9+ | 55 | 11% | 17 | 914 | 47% |
| | **Total** | **501** | **100%** | **3.9** | **1953** | **100%** |
| | No non-family | 566 | 53% | | | |
| **Active practitioners AWI caseload 2023-24** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | 125 | 47% | 1 | 125 | 12% |
| | 2 - 2 | 52 | 20% | 2 | 104 | 10% |
| | 3 - 4 | 38 | 14% | 3 | 128 | 13% |
| | 5 - 8 | 21 | 8% | 6 | 126 | 13% |
| | 9+ | 30 | 11% | 17 | 523 | 52% |
| | **Total** | **266** | **100%** | **3.8** | **1006** | **100%** |
| | No non-family | 525 | 66% | | | |
| **Changes in non-family non-AWI caseloads** | | | | | | |
| **Case load** | | **Count** | **Column N %** | **Mean** | **Sum** | **Column Sum %** |
| **Cases granted per practitioner per year** | 1 - 1 | -39% | 6.3% | 0% | -39% | 2.0% |
| | 2 - 2 | -48% | -0.4% | 0% | -48% | 0.1% |
| | 3 - 4 | -56% | -3.1% | 2% | -55% | -2% |
| | 5 - 8 | -62% | -3.1% | -5% | -64% | -5% |
| | 9+ | -45% | 0% | 5% | -43% | 5% |
| | **Total** | **-47%** | **0%** | **-3%** | **-48%** | **0%** |
| | No non-family | | 13% | | | |

In non-family non-AWI, we have seen a large reduction in the number of active practitioners and a slight decrease in the average number of cases amongst the practitioners remaining. To summarise the changes from 2014-15 to 2023-24:

| **Change in:** | **AWI** | **Family** | **Non-family non-AWI** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total cases** | 82% | -16% | -48% |
| **Total active practitioners** | -17% | -35% | -47% |
| **Average cases per active practitioner** | 119% | 30% | -3% |

For the three different subject groups, we are seeing distinct differences in the supply of active practitioners, but all three areas have seen a fall in the number of active practitioners.

AWI has had a large increase in the number of cases and so a large increase in the average caseload. Family has seen a smaller fall in the number of cases but a larger decrease in the number of active practitioners, so there has also been an increase in the average caseload.

Non-family non-AWI has seen a very large fall in the number of cases, and a large fall in the number of practitioners, with a small decrease in the average caseload.

These three different profiles suggest that the supply of practitioners is not directly related to the case work available. Rather that the supply of practitioners is decreasing across all sectors, and that it is decreasing the most in the sectors where the case work is decreasing the most.

## Further information

If you would like further information about this research, please contact the Research team at research@slab.org.uk.