

# A FAIRER AND JUST SCOTLAND



## Policy 2:

**The length of time between reporting sexual assault crimes and prosecution should be reduced, so victims are able to access justice without significant delay.**

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### What's this all about?

Young people have told us that the waiting time between reporting sexual assault and their court hearing is too long, and they want this to be reduced. Reducing the time between reporting a crime and prosecution would go some way to reducing the emotional and mental impact on people harmed by sexual assault. The current system does not achieve justice, with young people feeling that people responsible for sexual assault are often allowed to walk free, which puts both the person harmed and the wider public in danger.

**"The current timeline leads victims to get fed up in the process and question whether they did the right thing coming forward in the first place. It leaves too long for intruding thoughts and too long for guilty people to walk free."**

– Young woman aged 14-17, Inverclyde

**"The average time between each event is months to even years. This needs to be fixed immediately."**

– Young woman aged 14-17, West Lothian

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### What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- Young people call for a justice system that goes further in protecting people harmed by sexual assault by offering more all-around support and eradicating inequality and discrimination.

**"The delay in receiving justice or support may for some even act as a deterrence for reporting the crime they have been a victim of. Long wait times prolong the weight of the incident(s) riding on a**

victim's back and leave potential offenders free to do as they please, in other words, many more people are in danger."

– Young man aged 14-17, Edinburgh

- **Young people want the justice system infrastructure to be reformed with resources more equitably distributed to better prevent and respond to sexual assault crimes.**

"Too many cases of sexual assault don't end up being prosecuted because of the wait time and the complicated process that comes with prosecution."

– Young woman aged 14-17, Aberdeen

- **Decision makers must protect funding for charities and organisations that deliver prevention and early intervention programmes and that support people harmed by sexual assault.**

"It should also cost less, if I was raped I wouldn't take it to court, I don't have the time or the money, it would really hurt me and my families life, there's a massive barrier."

– Young person aged 14-17, Orkney

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## Evidence and Support

- [Research](#) shows that only 22% of survivors of serious sexual assault reported the crime to the police.
- In 2020-21 2,176 rapes and attempted rapes were reported to the police, but only 152 were prosecuted and just 78 led to convictions ([Scottish Government](#)).
- In 2023-24 the average time between sexual assault offense and verdict was 4 years and 4 months ([Scottish Government](#)).
- Young women told the [Young Women's Movement](#) they had a deep mistrust of the criminal justice system, particularly the police, in the handling of sexual assault, and violence against women and girls generally.

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## What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP Consultations](#) include [SYP's response to the Scottish Parliament's call for views on the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill \(2023\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on young offenders; improvements to address anti-social behaviour; supports for victims of sexual offences; supports and measures relating to domestic, sexual and gender based violence and abuse; measures to improve safety of public transport.