

Prisoners say they are going hungry

PRISONERS in Scotland's jails say they are going hungry, because they almost never get enough to eat, according to a recent survey.

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) survey found three in ten male respondents claimed they "rarely or never get enough to eat".

Half of the convicts taking part in the poll complained about the size of portions and the quality of the food when it was served to them, saying it was "fairly bad" or "very bad".

The survey was carried out during the latter two weeks of April and the first week of May last year and focused on the core elements of prison life.

Around 8,000 inmates in Scotland's 17 jails were given the chance to have their say but only 30% or 2463 took up the offer.

More than one-third of respondents described the canteen system as "fairly bad" or "very bad", compared with less than a quarter in 2019 when the last survey was carried out.

The price and selection of goods was seen "as being problematic".

The SPS report says: "Food is an area where respondents responded quite negatively, with the size of portions, condition of the food when it arrives and choice of menu cited

as 'very bad' or 'fairly bad' by circa half of all respondents – with each having worsened since 2019.

"Three in ten male respondents said that they rarely or never get enough to eat."

The report adds: "Approximately 40% of respondents said they 'always get enough to eat' or 'usually get enough to eat'.

"However almost 30% said that they rarely or never get enough to eat.

"This varied by gender – only 14% of women versus 31% of men – and by size of establishment – with larger establishments tending to have more negatively rated provision."

An SPS spokesperson said: "This survey provides a valuable insight into the views of people in our care at a time of significant challenge from an extremely high and complex population.

"The survey covers a range of issues relating to the experiences of those living in our prisons. It highlights many areas of good practice, including the excellent relationships built by our staff but also identifies areas for improvement."

The news follows a recent HMIP inspection of Glasgow's Barlinnie jail which noted that prisoners "reported negatively" on the food.

Inspectors said: "It was worth noting, however, that most prisoners spoken to during the inspection acknowledged that they were in a prison with over 1300 prisoners to feed and that the kitchen was trying its best for them in difficult circumstances."

According to inspectors, the portion sizes at Barlinnie were good and many inmates agreed.

Their report added: "However... some disagreed and stated they

often used the readily available bread and butter to quash their hunger at mealtimes.”

They said Barlinnie operated a summer and winter menu rotating every three weeks with separate gluten free, kosher, vegan and halal menus and provided meals for religious festivals including Passover, Ramadan and Christmas.

The report said: “Inspectors examined the daily menu choices and found that the recommended daily intake for an adult of 2000 kcals a day could be met from the menu with additional canteen options available on each hall for those who could afford to buy extra food. It was seen that through choice a prisoner could make unhealthy decisions but could also meet their daily kcal intake through healthier options.”

The SPS say their staff work hard to serve varied and nutritious diets to prisoners while also ensuring value for money.