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# How much is too much?

*Caseload and workload in probation*

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# CEP audit 2022

- Reviews the extent to which the size of the probation caseload is viewed as problematic across Europe
- Links between workload, practice effectiveness, service quality and staffing arrangements
- Ways in which CEP members have sought to address the issue
- The role of CEP in facilitating debate about this issue.

## Identified these themes:

- Defining the words 'caseload and workload'
- The caseload and workload position across Europe
- Methods of measuring caseload and workload
- Considering the question 'how much is too much?'
- Ways of managing probation workloads
- Understanding the demand for probation services

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# Caseload or workload?

## No universally agreed definition

### Caseload:

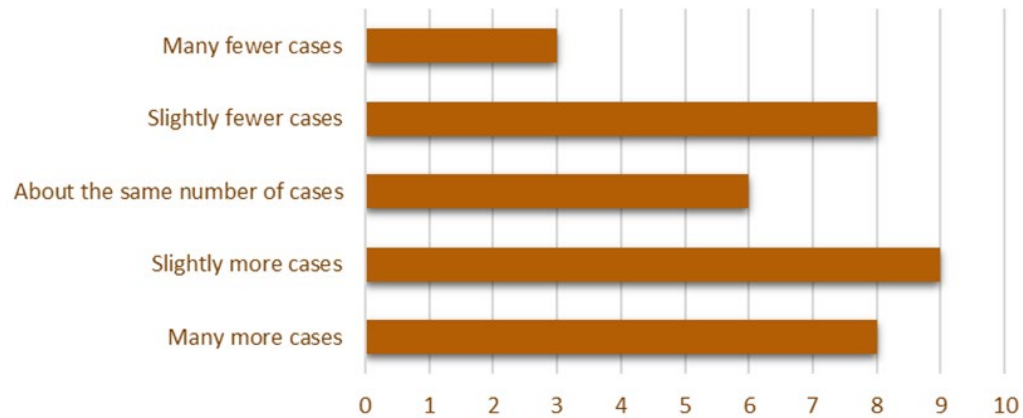
- Number of cases
- On a particular day or over a time period
- Sanctions, sentences or people?

### Workload:

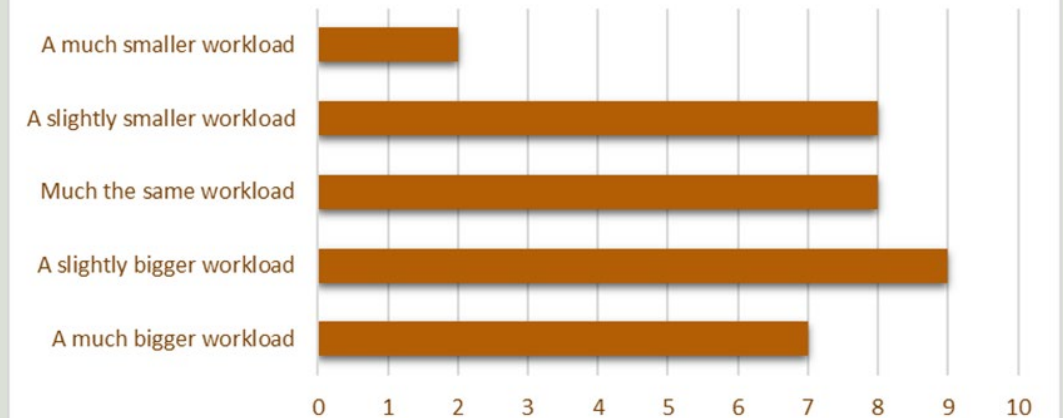
- Probation work not just about cases
- Perception of workload depends on support, training, supervision and other organisational factors

# What did the audit find?

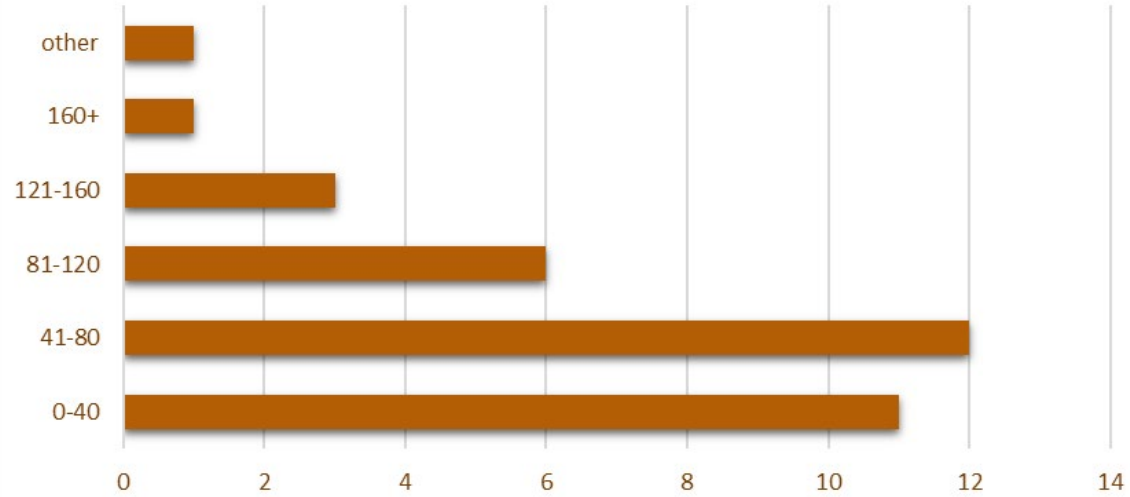
## 1.1 Compared with 5 years ago, our organisation is responsible for



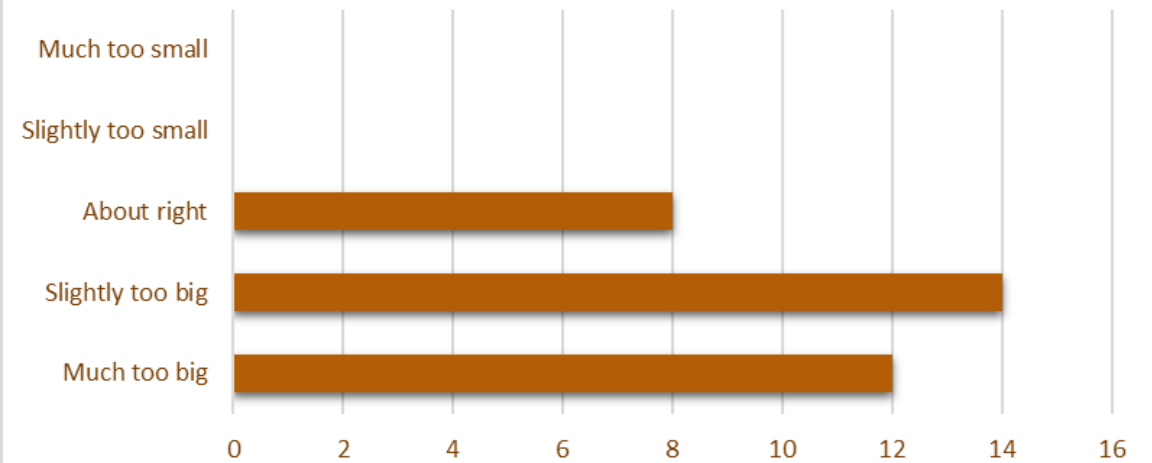
## 1.2 Compared with 5 years ago, staff who work with offenders have



### 1.5 Average number of cases



### 1.4 The workload of an average member of our staff is



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# How do we measure probation workload?

- Many probation services have a workload measurement tool
- Allocate weighting to types of cases and work tasks
- Time allowances based on existing practice (either from guidelines/standards or from practice observation)

## Questions

- Are these tools 'blunt instruments'?
- Do they reflect out-of-date practice or are they useful for current and future probation work?
- Are they useful at the practitioner level as well as at the organisational level?

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# How do we manage probation 'overcrowding'?

## Ideas from the audit

- Increase staff numbers
- Increase caseloads
- Prioritise high risk work
- Reduce frequency of contacts between staff and probationers
- Staff spend more time in the office and less time in the community/in prisons
- Outsource work to not-for-profit organisations and charities

## Questions

- How does your organisation deal with workload pressures?
- In your experience, what works well?

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# Probation overcrowding matters:

when workload is high '*quality is not as good as we want*

large caseloads lead to lower intensity supervision and the illusion that work is being done - '*we just pretend*

## A Role for CEP?

- An agreed definition of caseload and workload
- Sharing information about caseload and workload across Europe
- Raising awareness of probation overcrowding at national and international level